

Final Report

Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan

for

Camden County History Alliance

of the

Camden County Historical Society

for

Historic Site Management Grant from

the Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Grant Program

of the New Jersey Historic Trust.



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Executive Summary and Recommendations

Final report

Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan

This report provides an overview of the yearlong Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan, and the development of Camden County History Week. Held from October 13 to 21, 2018, this nine-day event served as the major focus of this year long grant. The grant was awarded to the Camden County Historical Society (CCHS). This project has been accomplished with financial assistance from the Historic Site Management Grant from the Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Grant Program of the New Jersey Historic Trust.

About Camden County History Alliance

The Camden County History Alliance (CCHA) was established in February 2016 to identify financial resources, increase the number of visitors, and institute projects that promote Camden County heritage. Today it is an association of 48 Camden County history organizations, historic sites, and support agencies. The Alliance membership includes 17 historic sites open to the public, four organizations that provide services to history organizations, in partnership with organizations like the county events office, Rutgers, and The Cultural and Heritage Commission that seek to bolster tourism. The remaining 27 groups are historical societies and lineage organizations, such as Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution. Since its founding, the Camden County Historical Society staff has managed CCHA with Bonny Beth Elwell, Research Librarian at the Historical Society as its coordinator.

Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan

The Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan had three major goals:

1. To understand the organizational capacity of the 17 historic sites in Camden County in order to create a large, joint event that met their needs and current abilities;
2. To create and implement Camden County History Week, as a joint marketing event for as many of the partner organizations to participate as possible; and
3. To create a brand for the Camden County History Alliance through the design of a logo and the distribution of quality publications for Camden County History Week.

Camden County History Week was a major event of the Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan. A special thanks is extended to our gracious sponsors, the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT), for their generous support of three grants in the last two years.

Our 2017 survey of the Alliance partner organizations identified eight concerns to overcome in order to create a large, joint marketing effort for heritage tourism in Camden County and for the upcoming Camden County History Week. We highlight these concerns and how we overcame them in order to create a robust joint marketing effort for Camden County History Week in Chapters 3 and 4.

Overview of Camden County History Week

Some of the highlights and accomplishments of Camden County History Week gleaned from the Visitor Survey and November 2, 2018 Feedback meeting with CCHA partner organizations were:

- Thirty-two (32) of the 48 CCHA organizations participated in the first ever Camden County History Week
- Eighty five percent (85%) of the organizations open during History Week were run entirely by volunteers
- All eight staffed historic house museums were open for visitors during History Week
- 1,006 visitors attended one or more events at one of 32 sites open for programs
- 223 volunteers worked at a historic site over the nine day event
- \$1,206 was donated at various sites open during History Week
- 303 surveys were completed by visitors during Camden County History Week

Other things we learned from the two evaluation activities:

More than a third (365) of visitors came by themselves, and 29% came in family groups. A remarkable number, more than half (54%) were first time visitors to a historic site they visited, but 40% had visited that site once before. More than a third of all visitors (37%) said they visited another site during Camden County History Week but more than half (54%) said they did not visit any other site during History Week.

More than half (54%) learned about History Week by word of mouth, a highly important medium for growing our base of supporters. Twenty-eight percent (28%) learned about the event from Facebook, 20% learned about it via email and finally, 16% learned about History Week from the CCHA e-newsletter. More than half (51%) picked up a Passport/event guide, but close to a third (29%) did not pick up a Passport/event guide. We are uncertain if this was because volunteers at sites were not clear on its purpose or use, or because of other reasons.

We asked one question about the economic impact of History Week, but found it was a bust. More than half (54%) spent only between \$1 to \$10 during History Week, and 11% spent between \$11 to \$25 during History Week visiting sites. This information was disappointing but not surprising considering it was a first time event.

An overwhelming number of visitor survey respondents provided their zip code and name, and 81% gave their email address. All of these emails have been included in the CCHA e-newsletter data base.

Conclusions

There were many successes resulting from Camden County History Week.

The Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan created:

- Planned and implemented a joint marketing event called Camden County History Week held on October 13 to 21, 2018
- A volunteer steering committee
- Offered a monthly e-newsletter where all CCHA partners could promote their events
- Collected emails from partner organizations, the data base now contains close to 2000 emails
- Greatly expanded followers for the CCHA Facebook page, now up to 500 followers

- A successful grant application by Dr. Jack O'Byrne to the Rohrer Foundation for \$10,000 to pay for design and printing of History Week materials. The grant permitted us to:
 - Publish four color rack cards for 21 sites and supplied sites with rack card racks
 - Publish a black and white Passport/event guide, and provided passport rubber stamps
 - Publish a large scale, folded, four color Heritage Trails Map and Guide
 - Purchase domain names www.camdencountyhistoryweek.com and www.camdencountyhistoryalliance.com
- Conducted three short but effective educational activities for CCHA bi-monthly meetings
- Evaluated History Week in a comprehensive and thorough way through this grant
- Offered recommendations for further development of heritage tourism in Camden County

During Camden County History Week October 13 to 21, 2018:

- All 17 historic sites were open for History Week, and offered a variety of programming for adults and children
- All of the eight (8) historic sites with staff offered specialized programs for visitors
- Half (15) of the CCHA 31 history organizations/historical societies offered educational program during History Week
- All but four (4) of the organizations open for History Week collected names, email addresses, and zip codes through the visitor survey
- More than half, 54%, of all visitors learned about History Week by Word of Mouth
- All organizations had an opportunity to ask for donations or memberships from History Week visitors
- History organizations were creative and undertook new activities for visitors during History Week
- All of the open ended comments, except one, from the visitor survey were highly positive about History Week and wanted to see it continue.

As a result of working together, the CCHA partners:

- The Camden County History Alliance has grown to 48 partners
- The historic sites began to think about joint programming between nearby sites
- All organizations were forced to plan a year ahead for History Week, and to begin planning earlier in the season for their own events
- More sites are posting regular monthly events on their Facebook pages, which are reposted to the CCHA Facebook page
- More volunteer led sites are open regular hours (at least monthly) to the public
- First time visitors to History Week will now receive the e-newsletter and are exposed to the fine educational programming across the entire Alliance network, every month

Recommendations

Plan other coordinated events

- CCHA partners should decide if they want to host another large collaborative event in 2019 and whether it should be in the Spring or Fall
- As an alternative or in addition to a large event, CCHA should consider monthly heritage trail themed events starting in April 2019
- Establish a committee to fundamentally rethink the intent and use of the Passport

- Find grants or seek donations in order to reprint the Heritage Trail Map/Guide in 2019 with an expanded print run of at least 10,000 maps, so all sites can get at least 250 each

Broaden communication efforts

- Redouble our efforts to engage the Camden County Outreach Office and VisitSouthJersey.com to publish and promote our work
- Work in partnership with the individual organizations so that they do not rely on the CCHA as the sole promoter of their events
- Continue to expand the email list to more than 3000 by the end of 2019, add timely articles of interest to the newsletter content, and repost and offer links to articles about individual sites to the e-newsletter
- While email marketing might be cheap or free, it does not reach all of our constituents. We must use the CCHA Magazine to get the word out about collaborative events to those without email
- The CCHA partners can do more to repost and share their announcements to social media

Referrals between sites

- Docents at the historic sites should become more familiar with other sites on their Heritage Trails so they can make high quality referrals to visitors about the other 17 historic sites open to the public.
- Form a committee to explore how historic site docents could become “certified ambassadors” by the CCHA, so they could make referrals to other sites

Opportunities for Heritage Trails

- Do more with the Heritage Trails, other than to identify them on the bottom of the rack cards and introduce the theme on the Heritage Trails Map/Guide
- CCHA partners should designate a specific month for each of the seven Heritage Trails from April through October and designate the monthly e-newsletter to that theme
- Create a coordinated marketing effort by the sites on the heritage trail to cross market their activities by cross posting their events on each other’s Facebook feeds
- If there is interest in developing more school/family involvement, create a committee to further develop this work for the CCHA partners

Provide more training opportunities

- Provide in depth training about volunteer recruitment and retention during 2019
- Continue to offer half hour peer to peer training at all bi-monthly CCHA meetings
- Make CCHA partners aware of nearby training and grant opportunities available through the e-newsletter

Heritage Tourism Plan expansion recommendations

- Place a historic marker at every CCHA site open to the public by the end of 2020
- Get more historic sites on travel websites such as Trip Advisor, Yelp, journeythroughjersey.com, visitsouthjersey.com, and VisitNJ.org
- Continue to encourage sites to collect and report visitor statistics at CCHA meetings
- Use Instagram and Twitter to communicate about the work of CCHA
- Use Clio, a free history app that is being used by many sites and history organizations around the country to provide a platform for those interested in taking tours of architecture and historic sites
- If funding can be secured, create a separate web site for CCHA

- Create a committee to explore whether to create seven colorful Heritage Trails brochures that highlight all the sites on the trail and create one or more routes between them and identify funding for such.

2. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the yearlong Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan and the development of Camden County History Week. This event, which was the major focus of this year long grant, was held from October 13 to 21, 2018. This project has been accomplished with financial assistance from the Historic Site Management Grant from the Preserve New Jersey Historic Preservation Grant Program of the New Jersey Historic Trust.

About Camden County History Alliance

The Camden County History Alliance (CCHA) was established in February 2016 to identify financial resources, increase the number of visitors, and institute projects that promote Camden County heritage. Today it is an association of 48 Camden County history organizations, historic sites, and support agencies. The Alliance membership includes 17 historic sites open to the public, and four organizations that provide services to history organizations such as the County Events Office, Rutgers, and Cultural and Heritage Commission partner to promote tourism. The remaining 27 groups are historical societies and lineage organizations, such as Daughters of the American Revolution and the Sons of the American Revolution. Since its founding, the Camden County Historical Society staff has managed CCHA with Bonny Beth Elwell, Research Librarian at the Historical Society as its coordinator.

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1. To understand the organizational capacity of the 17 historic sites in Camden County in order to create a large, joint marketing event that met their needs and current abilities;
2. To create and implement Camden County History Week, as a joint marketing event, for as many of the partner organizations to participate as possible;
3. To create a brand for the Camden County History Alliance through the design of a logo and the distribution of quality publications for Camden County History Week.

Camden County History Week was a major activity of the Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan which has been gratefully supported by the New Jersey Historic Trust (NJHT) through three grants in the last two years.

Grant funding for Heritage Tourism Plan

The first phase of the Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan was funded in June 2017 by a \$5,000 NJHT Heritage Tourism License Plate Grant. This grant paid for a survey of the then 41 (now 48) CCHA partner organizations to determine their organizational capacity, and visitor readiness. The results of the first grant was 140-page findings report and a memo that identified seven heritage theme-based trails that would link together the interpretation provided at the historic sites and history organizations in the county and encourage visitors to get to more than one site. More than 80% of the history organizations associated with Camden County History Alliance are volunteer run.

The second grant (this grant) for \$28,750 implemented a monthly e-newsletter with now 2000 email addresses, and peer to peer learning exchanges held at bimonthly meetings. Donna Ann Harris the consultant providing

services for this grant, wrote and oversaw development and printing of a 19" x 42" four color heritage tourism map/guide, 21 four color rack cards for historic sites open to the public, and a black and white Passport/visitor guide and stamps for History Week October 13 to 21, 2018. Dr. Jack O'Byrne, Executive Director of the Camden County Historical Society wrote the \$10,000 successful grant to the Rohrer Foundation that paid for design and printing of all the History Week publications.

The third and final phase of the Heritage Tourism Plan focused on three evaluations we undertook of History Week, funded by a \$5,000 September 2018 New Jersey Historic Trust Heritage Tourism License Plate Grant. The evaluations were a visitor survey a feedback meeting held on November 2, 2018 with representatives of CCHA partner organizations that participated in History Week and compiled visitor statistics, funds raised and number of volunteers that participated during History Week. The results of this third grant was 119-page findings report which documented the surveys and provided recommendations for the future heritage tourism work for Camden County.

Scope of work changes

The budget submitted to the NJHT for this Historic Site Management Grant also included a request for funds for a Preservation Plan for Pamona Hall, in addition to the Heritage Tourism Plan. The NJHT chose to fund the Heritage Tourism Plan as submitted and not the Preservation Plan.

Our submitted budget focused on planning for the Heritage Tourism Plan, and not the implementation aspect of Camden County History Week. As such, our submitted proposal included the Phase 1 survey, and no printing costs because implementation of Camden County History Week fell outside the scope of the submitted budget.

When funds were awarded for this grant, we revised our scope of work to include the implementation of Camden County History Week. We did this because we had already received and completed a License Plate Grant which permitted us to survey the CCHA partners and understand their organizational capacity.

Therefore, the focus of our work on this grant permitted us to change the scope of work and add implementation of the Camden County History Week. The grant fundamentally changed from the creation of the Heritage Tourism Plan to the implementation of Camden County History Week. The revised scope of work was a breakthrough for the Alliance as they could realize one of their main goals: to create a large event together.

With this new scope of work came the need to identify funding for printing for History Week from other sources, which was not include in the original grant submitted to NJHT. Dr. Jack O'Byrne of the Historical Society prepared a successful grant application to the Rohrer Foundation for \$10,000 to pay for the printing we needed for History Week. The grand total for design, printing, rack card racks, and rubber stamps for the event came to \$10,000.

The next chapter provides an overview of the organizational capacity of the 17 historic sites that are partners of the Alliance, as well as the 27 historical societies, and four service organizations. Based on the initial survey of Alliance partners in the summer of 2017 through the first License Plate Grant for the survey, we identified eight main issues that the Heritage Tourism Plan needed to address. We also have detailed our efforts to

overcome some of the organizational capacity limitations of the History Alliance partner organizations as we prepared for Camden County History Week.

3. Organizational Capacity and Development of the Heritage Tourism Plan

Organizational Capacity of Alliance Members

The Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan was developed with the organizational capacity of the Alliance members in mind.

The first phase of the Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan was funded in June 2017 by a \$5,000 New Jersey Historic Trust Heritage Tourism License Plate Grant. This grant paid for Heritage Consulting Inc. to study and understand the then 41 (now 48) CCHA partner organizations through a 40-question survey to determine their organizational capacity, and visitor readiness. Through a combination of phone and in-person surveys, we engaged with 38 of the organizations, fully 90% of the partner organizations. The in-person surveys allowed the consultant Donna Ann Harris to gain trust and to glean more information than survey form alone could provide.

The first grant resulted in 140-page findings report as well as a memo that identified seven heritage theme-based trails. The heritage trails effectively link historic sites to history organizations in across the county while encouraging visitors to see more than one site.

The recommendations from that Phase 1 grant provided advice to the Alliance for activities they could undertake independent of the Heritage Tourism Plan in the interim between Phase 1 completion and decision making by the NJHT concerning later phases of funding. We were delighted when this grant, the Heritage Tourism Management Grant, for the Heritage Tourism Plan was announced. This decision permitted us to include implementation of the Camden County History Week event as part of the work product for this grant.

Our 2017 survey of the Alliance partner organizations identified the following eight overriding concerns to surmount in order to create a large, joint marketing effort for heritage tourism in Camden County and for the upcoming Camden County History Week. Below, we highlight each concern to be addressed and the implications for creating a robust joint marketing effort of Camden County History Week.

a. Not enough volunteers; few paid staff

While there are 17 historic house museums open to the public that are members of the Alliance, only eight (8) have paid staff.

Alliance members with paid staff open during Camden County History Week

1. Barclay Farmstead Museum, Cherry Hill
2. Battleship New Jersey Museum and Memorial, Camden
3. Historical Society of Haddonfield, Haddonfield
4. Indian King Tavern, Haddonfield
5. Holocaust Museum, Cherry Hill
6. Camden County Historical Society, Camden

7. Walt Whitman House, Camden
8. Camden Shipyard and Maritime Museum, Camden

This means that 11 of the historic sites are **managed by entirely by volunteers**. Although volunteers are integral to historic site management, the nature of volunteer-run sites results in different organizational capacities than sites that are run by paid staff. The primary concern is the number of volunteers that are actively involved at the site. As common sense would suggest, more volunteers result in more organizational capacity.

Our survey and on-site interviews with the historic sites, whether staffed or not, acknowledged the **difficulty in securing volunteers** as well as the challenges of an aging volunteer pool. The volunteer corps at each site varies widely. The majority have less than 20 people who help regularly. We learned that four (4) sites have less than ten (10) volunteers to manage or interpret their important historic public site. The sites with the fewest number of volunteers are the Peter Mott House, the two Pennsauken Historical Society properties, and the Historical Society of Winslow Township that leases a farmhouse from the County for their headquarters.

Volunteer-run Traditional House Museums Sites Open for Camden County History Week

1. Berlin Train Station, Long a Coming Historical Society, Berlin
2. Burroughs Dover House, Pennsauken
3. Collings Knight House, Collingswood
4. Gabriel Davies Tavern, Glendora
5. Griffith Morgan House, Pennsauken NJ
6. Magnolia Train Station, Magnolia Historical Society, Magnolia
7. Peter Mott House Lawn Side Historical Society, Lawnside
8. Quaker Store, Stratford Historic Preservation Commission, Stratford
9. Whitman Stafford House, Laurel Springs
10. Winslow Township Historical Society, Winslow Township and
11. Haddon Township Historical Society

Five (5) Historical Societies Open During Camden County History Week

1. Gloucester City Historical Society, Gloucester
2. Clementon Historical Society
3. Heights Heritage League, Haddon Heights
4. Glover Fulling Mill Park, Haddon Heights
5. Haddon Heights Historical Society

Even the eight (8) sites complete with paid staff, regularly rely on volunteers to help with school groups, events, and fundraising. In order to address this matter, we hosted a panel discussion about identifying and engaging volunteers during a CCHA meeting in April 2018. However, more research and effort are needed to address volunteer recruitment and retention. Two sites under the jurisdiction of the NJ State Parks, the Indian King Tavern Museum and Walt Whitman House, use volunteers extensively to bolster their small paid staffs.

The Barclay Farmstead Museum in Cherry Hill, which has one paid staff member in the form of a Cherry Hill Township employee, has more than 150 volunteers on their roster. They too felt that they did not have enough

volunteers to offer the variety of programming necessary for the 160 guests that visited during Camden County History Week.

Implications for History Week.

Between the months of January and April 2018, the consultant visited 19 sites. During these visits, we stressed the need to recruit more volunteers for History Week programming. These visits, held six months in advance of the History Week event, were designed to reinforce the need for more volunteers and encourage sites to securing enough volunteers for the event. In addition, this topic of volunteer recruitment was addressed at the peer to peer informational exchanges during the April 2018 bimonthly meeting. At the peer to peer information exchange, we showcased sites that have active recruitment efforts year-round.

Although some sites were successful in recruiting more volunteers, not all were able to do so. During a feedback meeting following the event on November 2, 2018, some individuals complained that sites were unable or reluctant to recruit new volunteers to their ranks. Yet, it is important to note that difficulty attracting volunteers is a national concern, not an issue confined solely to Camden County. More effort must be directed towards addressing this topic. Recommendations for ongoing volunteer recruitment and retention training will be discussed in our conclusion chapter.

b. Not open during regular posted hours

Our 2017 survey revealed that 12 of the 26 history organizations open to the public or roughly 50% were open by appointment only and were **not open during regular posted hours**. This was largely due to lack of volunteer staffing. This was a critical obstacle to overcome, as it is essential for sites to be open during regular, convenient hours for visitors in order to make any joint marketing effort successful. Heritage visitors want predictable open dates and times so they can make plans for drop-in visits.

Implications for History Week

Throughout the course of our yearlong project, we were able to educate and encourage the volunteers running the 17 historic sites to begin to remain open at least monthly on the weekends. Additionally, volunteers were encouraged to plan and advertise their programming far in advance by posting year-long event schedules on their web site or Facebook pages.

We believe we have made great improvements on this matter during our work together on the Heritage Tourism Plan. Only two sites were listed open only by appointment on their History Week rack cards, while there were 12 that reported they were only open by appointment according to the 2017 survey.

c. Little tracking of visitation or collecting visitor statistics

Increased visitation is one of the three objectives of the Alliance. As can be expected, the Alliance organizations **are small**. Throughout the research process, we discovered that half of the sites welcome **less than 500 visitors yearly**. Only four (4) of the 17 sites greet more than 5000 visitors a year. Yet, the collaborative effort of History Week has already reaped benefits for even the smallest of sites, as their History Week attendance produced far above their usual number of visitors for a fall weekend.

While most historic sites use sign-in books to count visitors, we learned that **most sites do not keep or report monthly visitor statistics**. One of the long-term goals of the Heritage Tourism Plan is to collect these numbers in order to chart our successes more effectively.

Implications for History Week

Data collection about visitors does not seem to be a concern of the volunteer run sites. Collecting and reporting volunteer statistics is a voluntary activity. The sites that collect and report statistics today, do so because their agency, such as a state park, requires it, or because entities that receive the NJ Historical Commission General Operating Support Grants require it for grants. However, for most Alliance members, there is no requirement to collect visitor statistics.

We believe that the collection of this information is crucial because it provides baseline data to show performance year over year. To make sites aware of the necessity and simplicity of this activity, we collected visitor statistics for History Week through the visitor survey. We learned that 1,006 visitors attended one or more events at one of 32 sites open for programs during History Week. Yet, the Alliance must do more work in order to encourage sites to collect visitor statistics throughout the year. These recommendations will also be addressed in the Conclusion and Recommendations chapter.

d. More collaboration needed

Our initial survey identified that **more could be done to encourage collaboration** or links between nearby sites. Since one of the main objectives of the CCHA is to encourage more visitation to partner organizations, such collaborations can be enhanced by making referrals of visitors to other sites in the area.

Implications for History Week

In response to this concern, we created seven heritage trails to link sites together thematically. We also created rack cards for display at 21 sites to encourage visitors to see nearby sites or to draw thematic connections through interpretation. The rack cards also identify open hours, which compelled many of the sites to identify their regular open dates so these could be included on their schedule for the year.

In 2019, the Alliance will be working with volunteers and staff to increase their basic knowledge about nearby sites in order to make appropriate referrals to visitors by undertaking “familiarization (aka FAM)” tours. The best way to learn about visitor offerings at other sites is for docents to make a visit and take a tour themselves, so that they may be able to tell visitors know what to expect at neighboring sites. In addition, we are recommending that training on **making visitor referrals** be offered to the CCHA partner organizations in 2019.

e. Communication and joint marketing needs

Among the main needs for the Alliance members which were uncovered during the Phase 1 survey work, was the need to jointly promote their work to a broader cross section of potential visitors.

Implications for History Week

Beginning in April 2018, the Alliance began a quarterly e-newsletter to promote History Week. After the first issue in Spring 2018, we quickly realized that a **monthly e-newsletter was better suited** to promote events of individual Alliance partners throughout the year and for History Week. A monthly e-newsletter brings more timely information to our readers and has been a popular activity for Alliance partners. The lead time to create a press release or poster for publication necessitates that sites think far in advance to prepare materials for submission.

We gathered mailing lists from all the Alliance organizations to **create one large, mailing list** that would market individual events to a broader cross section of potential visitors. Our 2017 survey revealed that not all Alliance organizations collect email addresses or use email lists to bring news to their members. This posed an opportunity for the Alliance to **collect the email lists** of as many Alliance organizations as would provide them to create one large email list for joint marketing purposes. For example, a local historical society would mail out 100 flyers announcing their events to their mailing list. By gathering mailing lists together, now 2000 people get the same flyer electronically as one of the events being promoted every month. All would benefit by having their events marketed to far more people than their own list, as a form of enlightened self-interest. Four organizations have their own privacy policies and were consequently unable to share their email lists with us. These groups, however, partnered with the CCHA and forwarded the CCHA e-newsletter directly to their members instead, which added an additional 500 names to our newsletter recipients. According to Mail Chimp, we achieve a consistent 25-29% open rate for our monthly e-newsletter.

f. Creating a brand for the Alliance and History Week

Because the grant budget did not allocate any funds for design or printing for History Week, we sought support for design and printing from another source. Dr. Jack O'Byrne of the Historical Society prepared a successful grant application to the Rohrer Foundation for \$10,000 to pay for the printing needed for History Week. The grand total for design, printing, rack card racks, and rubber stamps for the event was \$10,000.

Implications for History Week.

All the printed materials for History Week were branded with a consistent logo, colors, design and quality to reinforce the value of a collaborative marketing effort.

- We printed 21,000 four color rack cards for 21 public organizations that wanted rack cards. Each group received 1000 cards. Each partner organization was given 425 rack cards, and every other site received 25 cards each from the other sites. We provided simple metal rack card racks to the 21 organizations, so that the rack cards could be neatly displayed.
- A four-color, oversized, folded 19" x 43" Heritage Trails Map/Guide was printed. 5000 maps were printed, and each organization received a packet of 40 maps. This map was organized around and introduced the seven thematic heritage trails identified in the Phase 1 grant.
- We printed 6000 Passports/event guides, and each organization was given a bundle of 100. This guide included all the events being held at the 32 partner organizations.

- Each organization received a small rubber stamp with the CCHA logo and their choice of colored stamp pad to use on the Passport. We offered a grand prize to the person who submitted a Passport with the most stamps. The winner was a young man who submitted a Passport with 10 stamps.
- Each group received 100 copies of a visitor survey. Each copy was customized with the name of their organization. The completed surveys were collected and tabulated in order to create a report. We also held a feedback meeting on November 2, 2018 for the sites that participated. See EE in the Appendix for the corresponding notes on that meeting.
- We provided a PDF version of a four-color flyer for Camden County History Week to be used as a Facebook, web site post, ad or hard copy poster.

g. Creating Thematic Heritage Trails.

Our initial research indicated that an annual project like History Week was useful, but that the sites could better market themselves more frequently if they were organized into thematic heritage trails.

Implications for History Week

We saw an opportunity to **tie together the 17 historic sites and other history organizations to seven heritage trails** based on common themes. We envisioned these seven heritage trails are being used to move visitors to multiple sites. These themed heritage trails are:

1. Built in Camden County—25 organizations
2. 20th Century Stories—21 organizations
3. Women in History—15 organizations
4. Many Faces of Camden County—23 organizations
5. Colonial Times—16 organizations
6. African-American Heritage—18 organizations
7. Rivers, Roads & Rails—11 organizations

Our initial intent was to encourage each organization located on a thematic trail to be open one specific weekend a month. This schedule would be marketed through the newsletter. Unfortunately, we received immediate push back primarily from the volunteer-run sites. They felt that being open another weekend a month was just too difficult for their current volunteers. Such scheduling makes it impossible for them to volunteer around their individual open days or be open additional weekend days. Still, they agreed that the heritage trails were worthy, but that they would need to be represented as an additional phase of work after History Week was completed.

We provided background on each heritage theme on the oversized Heritage Tourism Map/Guide, and on each rack card. In 2019, the Alliance has agreed to designate dates in May as the Built in Camden County Heritage Trail weekend. Alliance volunteers are now gathering information from the 26 organizations that interpret architecture about their event on Saturday May 18, 2019. Each site will have their own educational programming for adults and children, which will be marketed through the e-newsletter and social media outlets.

h. Additional training needed

Upon inquiring about **training needs** in our initial survey, we learned that the partner organizations were not taking advantage of relevant training programs being offered nearby by MARCH, at Rutgers Camden. We understood that these programs were being produced by outside “experts.” Not only did they require fees, but an excess of time to attend, and were often held at inconvenient times during the week. Volunteers were reluctant to attend. We believed that if we could highlight high-quality work of peer organizations in the Alliance, in short, half hour presentations during the Alliance meetings, we could provide quality educational content, close to home, and from people they knew and trusted.

Implications for History Week

During the months leading up to History Week, we developed three peers to peer informational panels, held at the bi-monthly CCHA meetings. Three short but effective thirty-minute educational activities were held on volunteer recruitment, collecting and using visitor statistics, and an overview of events planned for History Week. These panels were all well received by Alliance partners and will continue to be held.

The next chapter provides an overview of the activities undertaken by the consultant to promote, prepare, and evaluate Camden County History Week.

4. Heritage Tourism Plan Goals and History Week

The following is a summary of tasks to create Camden County History Week. These tasks undertaken by the consultant, Donna Ann Harris of Heritage Consulting Inc. during the development of the Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan. This summary also includes a review of the various communication and outreach efforts to promote, prepare, and evaluate History Week. A more extensive overview of the tasks organized by month is included in Appendix GG.

The Camden County Historical Society was notified of its successful grant application, this very grant, on November 2017. Prior to the receipt of this \$28,750 grant, the consultant completed a \$5000 New Jersey Historic Trust License Plate Grant for Heritage Tourism in order to learn about the organizational capacity, and visitor readiness for the then 41 organizations involved in the Camden County History Alliance group. See Appendix A in the back of the report for the Findings Report for the Survey project. This report from the first grant also contains a list of seven heritage themes for the historic sites and organizations to be linked together. These themes were used to create the Heritage Trails Map and Guide (See Appendix A for the list of heritage themes is Chapter 3 in the Survey Findings Report).

Startup activities

The beginning months of this grant were spent gathering information from the Alliance partners and laying the ground work for Camden County History Week. At the January 18, 2018 bi-monthly Alliance meeting, the attendees agreed to host Camden County History Week on October 15 to 22, 2018. In June 2018, the Steering Committee agreed to extend History Week from October 13 to 20, 2018 to accommodate some sites that were holding major events on the weekend of October 13 and 14.

The consultant prepared a memo about the possible printing needs for Camden County History Week (see Appendix B). Dr. Jack O'Byrne used this information for a successful \$10,000 grant application to the William Rohrer Foundation. This grant funded the design and printing of four-color rack cards, a large four-color folded Heritage Trails Map and Guide, and a black and white Passport/ Event Guide, all of which were printed and made available to the partner organizations in late September 2018. We solicited bids for printing based on an RFP.

Using a job description that was circulated, six volunteers were solicited to serve on a Steering Committee. The committee met monthly until August when it meets weekly to review the drafts and designs of the published materials. We also circulated a Commitment Form to all Alliance partners outlining the understanding for their participation in History Week. See Appendix G for the Commitment Form document.

E-newsletters

The e-newsletter to promote the organizations and History Week needed several foundational documents including guidelines for submission, a privacy policy for the emails collected, and use policy for the email list itself. All these documents were created by the consultant.

The first e-newsletter went out on March 8 and was called Spring 2018 newsletter (see in Appendix K along with all the other e-newsletters produced for the grant). After the first issue, the consultant and Bonny Beth Elwell, the coordinator of the Alliance activities from the Camden County Historical Society, agreed that a

monthly newsletter would better serve the CCHA partner organizations. This work to create a monthly newsletter was outside the scope of work, and unbudgeted in both time and costs. We both believed a monthly newsletter was an important addition to the Camden County Heritage Tourism Plan. Each month, the consultant solicited and organized the stories for the newsletter, which Bonny Beth edited. The newsletter included the required NJHT credit line.

There were 1561 unique names on this first mailing list, culled from almost 2000 names from lists provided from 12 Alliance partner organizations. According to Mail Chimp, we achieved a 26.5% open rate at 397 opened. This rate remained consistent throughout the year. From the email addresses from the visitor survey and other events held at partner organizations, we then added to the mailing list. There are now approximately 2000 people who receive the newsletter as of March 2019.

Site Visits

In late January through April 2018, the consultant made site visits to the 19 Camden County historic site organizations open to the public. The consultant and interns took notes at all 19 site visits (See Appendix J for corresponding notes). The purpose of the site visits was to:

- understand their operations and interpretive activities,
- talk about their plans for History Week,
- review the commitment form document,
- show examples of the types of documents we will print for History Week,
- confirm the heritage trail(s) for each site,
- discuss the upcoming e-newsletter and
- ask for emails and stories for upcoming newsletters

These 19 interviews confirmed what we had already learned from the previous survey. The volunteer-run sites were indeed hindered in their ability to provide educational programming for visitors because they do not have the staff capacity for large groups of visitors. Some sites said that they were worried they would not be able to recruit additional volunteers for the October event.

In addition, we learned that some sites do not have up to date membership brochures to hand out to visitors to encourage donations to the organization. Although most sites showed us their visitor sign in book, most were not collecting email addresses, or counting the number of visitors per open day. We encouraged them to do so. Many noted that visitors do not want to supply this information. Collecting visitors' information and reporting it remains a concern. We make recommendations about this matter in the next chapter.

As a result of these site visits, we supplied a simple chart that could be used to collect visitor statistics including the collection of email addresses. This form was circulated to the Alliance partners meeting in February 2018. We understand that many organizations are still using their sign in books. Some but not all, are now asking for email addresses and zip codes from visitors.

Peer to peer information exchanges

We held three peers to peer information exchanges at the bi-monthly Alliance meetings to provide high quality best practices information to the group. This activity was not included in the scope of work. Providing

educational content during Alliance meetings was an excellent opportunity to deepen and broaden the organizational capacity of the volunteer-led sites. The purpose of these informational exchanges was to share best practices used by Alliance sites. The topics for the informational exchanges came from the topics from the initial survey. The consultant identified possible speakers on these topics during the site visits.

At the April 2018 CCHA bi monthly meeting, the consultant hosted a panel discussion on volunteer recruitment with Battleship New Jersey, the Historical Society of Haddonfield, and Pennsauken Historical Society organizational representatives offering helpful hints for volunteer recruitment based on their experience. Additionally, we hosted two other educational sessions, a peer-to-peer informational exchange on collecting and using visitor statistics with the Camden County Historical Society and Gabriel Daveis Tavern in June. In August, the focus of the informational exchange was to highlight the variety of educational activities being held across the county for History Week.

Printing and designing publications

Two graphic designers were retained to provide designs for the Rohrer funded publications for History Week. Kimi Tallent, the graphic designer on the CCHS staff, created save the date cards/announcement and the 21 rack cards. Philip Green, an independent graphic designer, was hired to prepare the flyer, Passport/Event guide, and the Heritage Tourism Map and Guide. Bonny Beth Elwell worked closely with both designers to review their edited work as well as with the printer to review the proofs. The consultant wrote the copy for the Heritage Trails Map and Guide and Passport/ Event Guide which Bonny Beth edited.

For History Week, we produced:

- 1000 rack cards for each organization (total 21,000). We created bundles of 25 each for all sites that participated. The host organization would get a total of 425 rack cards, and every other site would get 25 each from their peers (See Appendix Q).
- 5000 copies of the Heritage Trails map/guide. Each organization got a packet of 40 maps (See Appendix R).
- 6000 Passports, and each group received a bundle of 100(See Appendix S).
- A small rubber stamp with the CCHA logo and choice of colored stamp pad for each group (See Appendix T).
- 100 copies of a half page size customized visitor survey for each group (See Appendix U).

Prizes

To encourage people to visit and see many sites during History Week, we offered a series of prizes for those who used the Passport. The person who collected the largest number of validated passport stamps in their Passport, won the Grand Prize. Battleship New Jersey provided one family overnight stay on the Battleship. A gold prize was four admission passes for a family to the Center for Aquatic Sciences at Adventure Aquarium in Camden. There were also four silver prizes, \$20 gift cards to Wawa. The Grand Prize ten stamp winner of

the Battleship overnight stay was announced at the November 2 meeting, along with random winners of the other prizes.

Comments about the redesign of the Passport can be found in the Conclusion and Recommendations chapter.

Press for History Week

During July, the consultant prepared two History Week press releases for Bonny Beth's review. One release was a general event announcement and the other was a listing of all the events that would appear in the Passport when it was printed. Bonny Beth sent these releases out to the regular press contacts for the Camden County Historical Society during late August and again in early September.

We received one large article in the *Courier Post* newspaper and four smaller articles in the *Retrospect*. Copies of all the traditional media we received can be found in Appendix DD.

During August and September, the consultant posted daily about the events planned by the CCHA partner organizations for History Week to the CCHA Facebook page. During History Week, the consultant posted to the CCHA Facebook page about every event happening two days prior to each event. In addition, the consultant posted throughout the day about activities. All these events had specially designed flyers created by Bonny Beth Elwell. On average, we received 20 to 200 likes per post.

The week after History Week, the consultant posted four different thank you posts to recognize the work done by the designers, the Steering Committee members, the CCHA partners, the NJHT our funder, and Bonny Beth Elwell and consultants.

See our recommendations regarding better press coverage in the conclusion and recommendations chapter.

History Week

October was the big month as Camden County History Week had finally arrived. During History Week, both Bonny Beth and the consultant wanted to visit with as many sites as possible to see firsthand how the events went, the size of the crowds, and to get direct feedback from visitors. Bonny Beth visited 18 sites during History Week, while the consultant visited 20 with only two overlaps.

Both Bonny Beth and the consultant saw that attendance was modest at all the sites visited. Some volunteered sites complained that they did not have enough volunteers, but the vast majority were pleased with the turnout at their event. A more detailed discussion of the feedback meeting can be found in the Evaluation Report found in Appendix EE.

Evaluation

In August, we learned that the consultant's CCHA application for the License Place Grant was successful for the evaluation component of History Week

More than 300 surveys were submitted by the organizations participating in History Week (See Appendix EE for this report). The second form of evaluation for History Week was held during a meeting with the

organizational representatives that participated. We held a two-and-a-half-hour feedback meeting of all the CCHA partner organizations on November 2, 2018. Approximately, 20 organizations attended. Another five organizations sent their feedback via email. The purpose of this meeting was to gain feedback about the event: what worked, what did not work, how the event could be improved for the coming year, and how sites could be open once a month for tourism programming.

The consultant wanted to gather a third form of evaluation to gather some additional statistics from the sites open to the public during History Week, including gross number of visitors, number of volunteers and funds collected as donations during the event. This information is available in Appendix Y. The consultant developed a brief presentation about both evaluation efforts and created a list of recommendations for the next Camden County History Week, on January 18, 2019 (See Appendix BB for the presentation).

These visitor statistics for History Week also appeared at the December 12, 2018 New Jersey Historic Trust Board meeting where we made a presentation about the project (See Appendix X).

Many of our recommendations for the future of History Week and the CCHA are culled from the November 2, 2018 feedback meeting and the visitor survey. The write up of the November 2, 2018 meeting can be found in the Findings Report for the Evaluation Grant found in Appendix EE.

The next chapter contains our conclusion and recommendations for the continuation of History Week, and the continuing work of the Camden County History Alliance.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section focuses on the overall successes of History Week and lessons learned for any future county wide heritage tourism activities. Recommendations appear in **BOLD** for the CCHA for heritage tourism activities for the next few years given the consultant's experience working with the group for close to two years over three grants.

Overall Success

As a first time event, Camden County History Week was a great success. The nine months lead up to History Week brought five more organizations into the alliance, **the alliance has grown to 48 partners.**

A total of 32 Alliance partners were open for History Week. All 17 historic sites chose to be open for History Week and offered a variety of programming for adults and children. All of the eight (8) sites with staff offered specialized programs. Some programs were planned well before History Week dates were announced. Nine (9) historical sites that are run by volunteers offered programming for visitors during the nine day event.

We were delighted that about **half – 15 of the 31 history organizations/historical societies participated in History Week** – including some historical societies, hereditary organizations, and service organizations like MARCH, and the Center at Camden County College chose to offer programs for History Week.

Visitors were highly positive about the event and encouraged the CCHA to continue to offer the event next year, based on the open-ended comments on the visitor survey. See all their remarks in the Evaluation Report in Appendix EE.

Putting on a large county wide event took an entire year to plan since there was a certain amount of learning that was needed by all organizations:

- to understand visitor nomenclature,
- to create systems like the collection of an e-newsletter mailing list and creating a newsletter template,
- collecting data for rack cards,
- gathering consistent and complete information for the Heritage Trails Map/Guide, and
- identifying specific educational activities for each organization that planned to participate for the Passport.

We asked for information several times from each organization. The consultant visited with each site open to the public, early in the year in January through April 2018, to discuss the programming they might like to offer later in the year for History Week. The initial visit also helped to reinforce the need to plan in advance for volunteers, visitors, and membership materials to hand out during History Week.

Working together as a growing alliance and getting to know other site representatives was another pointed success of History Week. Sites **began to think about joint programming** with other sites nearby.

One of the most valuable things we did with the Visitor Survey was to **collect names, email addresses, and zip codes**. As these names are added to the others in our current email list, we can continue to market our history organizations and any Heritage Trail or History Week events in the future.

All sites had the **opportunity to ask for donations or memberships** from visitors who came to their site due to History Week publicity. More than of \$1100 was raised in new funds from History Week visitors. One site obtained an artifact donated during History Week. Seeking additional donations is an untapped opportunity and we make recommendations below.

History Week offered all the sites the opportunity **to be creative and undertake new activities for visitors**, which might not have happened without a countywide effort.

History Week also forced the group to **plan a year ahead and to begin planning earlier in the season** for their own events. Some sites had an increase in turn out above a normal Saturday or Sunday at their location.

Expanding the Alliance

The Alliance accepts additional partners when they contact Bonny Beth Elwell at the Camden County Historical Society. Yet, there is no overall plan to approach other potential partner organizations at present. **We are recommending that the Alliance consider whether they are reaching all of the potential partners**, especially all the historic sites open to the public. At an Alliance bi-monthly meeting, a call can be made to the partners to determine if the Alliance is missing any sites. If so, Ms. Elwell can extend an invitation participate to the appropriate sites.

Bimonthly meetings

The History Alliance holds bi-monthly meetings because it seems to be a happy medium between quarterly and monthly meetings. Most of the organizations already have their own monthly meetings to manage their own organizations. **The Alliance may want to reconsider if bi-monthly meetings continue to make the most sense** given the planning of the fast approaching 2019 October History Month for the 24 organizations that are participating in the May 2019 Heritage Trails, around the heritage theme Built in Camden County.

More sites are open at least monthly for regular hours

In our initial survey of the then 41 CCHA partners in June of 2017, we learned that 12 of the 17 of the historic sites were open primarily by appointment only. Over the course of the last year, in preparation for History Week, only one of the CCHA partner sites (Whitman Stafford House) advertised themselves on their rack card as only being open by appointment. This is a major breakthrough for the CCHA and for most of the volunteer run historic sites. While most of the volunteer run historic sites are open only monthly, **more sites are posting regular monthly events throughout the year**, which can be promoted through the CCHA e-newsletter.

First time visitors

With so many first-time visitors (**54% of all visitors were first-time visitors**) coming to History Week, we are able to sort the data base and provide sites with the names and emails of their visitors if they want the

information and want to do any email marketing. However, using an email list for marketing or membership is not a common activity for the volunteer run historic sites.

First time visitors are critical to the growth of membership and event attendance at historic sites. First time visitors must be invited back to reinforce that the experiences they had once at your organization will be similar or better in the future. These first time visitors should be invited to events and activities that promote learning or enrichment. These people are not likely to return to participate in a run of the mill board meeting. Rather they may want hands on activities for children or adults, lectures, or other events similar to those held during History Week.

Now that we have included all of these **first time visitors into the e-newsletter, they continue to be exposed to the fine educational programming across the entire Alliance, every month, through the newsletter.** The more interesting the activity, the more likely the first time visitor is to return.

Word of Mouth marketing

More than half, 54%, of all visitors learned about History Week from Word of Mouth. Word of mouth marketing (WOMM) is perhaps the most effective form of advertising according to Forbes Magazine, as it is free exposure. Word of mouth marketing is also highly trusted because friends and family can provide firsthand experiences about an event or activity and recommend it to their friends.

People trust information they get from peers more than if they saw the event advertised in a paid environment (TV, Radio, newspaper ad, Facebook ad, or other paid media). Those that attended an event will likely come again to another event at a historic site they know.

We should reinforce and engage with all of our e-newsletter subscribers to regularly share announcements about events and activities they see on the CCHA Facebook page with their friends and family members. **Any event posting and the newsletter itself should be easy to share with contacts** across all the major social media channels. Essentially, the 1200 people who attended the first ever History Week are our “brand ambassadors” to others, because they were highly positive about the event (based on their comments in the visitor survey) and have the ability – **if we ask them frequently – to recommend our events and our work to others, as if from a trusted friend.**

Engaging our fans in our work

The CCHA should use WOMM to engage more people in its work by continuing to invite e-newsletter subscribers to participate in events at all of the partner organizations. We should be asking visitors to tell us about events or activities they might want to participate in, and actually plan events to meet those needs. We can ask our Facebook fans to share experiences they have at the sites and to post photos of themselves having fun to the CCHA Facebook page. Finally, **we are recommending that the CCHA site administrators should make the Facebook conversation two-way, by regularly responding to comments or postings from fans, or asking questions designed for fans to provide feedback.**

Social media was a good source for spreading the news about events. Only one Facebook post about History Week was boosted through one paid \$20 ad, just before the event began. This was effective, bringing in the

highest number of views, over 400. Twenty-eight percent (28%) of visitors said they learned about History Week from Facebook, four people saw it on Instagram, and one on Twitter.

Informal Training Successes

As part of the CCHA bi-monthly meetings in the lead up to History Week, we **offered half hour peer-to-peer learning opportunities**. We learned from MARCH, which offers training and workshops for historic sites, that none of the CCHA organizations had participated in any of their trainings in the past. This led us to realize that perhaps hearing from peers rather than outsider “experts” might generate better reception and interest by CCHA partner organizations. These small educational efforts were viewed positively by those attending.

We are recommending that these half hours peer to peer learning opportunities continue at CCHA bi-monthly meetings throughout 2019, and the topics should be planned. Suggested topics might include: making visitor referrals to other sites; creating collaborative marketing efforts for heritage trails; working with teachers and school districts; reposting your content to Facebook and other social media platforms; responding to criticism about your site on social media; and promoting your site on travel websites and Yelp.

Lessons learned

Based on the 2018 History Week activities and publications, we are suggesting the following refinements as lessons learned.

Timing for History Week/Month/Heritage Trail Month

There were several complaints about hosting a large collaborative event in the Fall when many of the sites already have existing and long standing events. **We are recommending that the CCHA partners decide if they want to host another large collaborative event in 2019 and whether it should be in the Spring or Fall.** While many felt that a large collaborative event was worth doing, a week—in fact nine days-- just did not seem long enough. There were several suggestions for a month long event to take the place of History Week.

Regardless, if a Spring time, month long event is to be held say in May, then the CCHA partners must identify the month at the January 2019 meeting. The consultant said that it took six weeks to collect the event details from all sites for the 2018 History Week Passport publication. Therefore, sites must identify their events by February 15, so they can be collected for design and printing by April 1 for a May month-long event. A spring month-long event in May seems unrealistic given the tight turn around needed. Additionally, the work to gather events from the sites would now fall to Bonny Beth Elwell, who works part time at the Historical Society, so any CCHA event planning must fit in and coincide with Bonny’s other duties.

If a Fall event is preferred, then the month should be chosen at the January 2019 meeting, so that sites can begin planning for their events to be promoted. Event details for History Week/Month would need to be collected by July 15, so that design and printing can be completed by September 1.

As an alternative to a large event, perhaps the CCHA should instead turn to monthly heritage trail themed events starting in April 2019. Again, at the January 2019 CCHA meeting, the Alliance partners would have to designate each month for one of the seven heritage themes, thus creating a yearly calendar for the group. Sites would have to begin planning immediately for the events they wanted to promote for the April 2019 e-

newsletter. There are additional recommendations about the Heritage Trails further in this section. It would be ideal if all the sites on the heritage trail could agree for the month to be open one specific Saturday from 12PM to 4PM which would be promoted in the e-newsletter. Events occurring at other times during the heritage theme designated month would also be promoted in the e-newsletter. A communication plan would also be needed to promote all the Heritage Trail events for each month.

Passport has to be rethought

We are recommending that a committee be established to fundamentally rethink the intent and use of the Passport. It is possible that the Passport/event guide's execution was too complicated for a first-time event for both the sites and the visitors using the Passport.

The Passport/event guide's purpose was to be an inexpensive, black and white printed list of the History Week events, a location for passport stamps, and to announce the prizes. Perhaps these activities should be separated. If the Passport's intent was changed to being merely a listing of sites open to the public with space for stamps for those who visit, then a simpler color or black and white publication could be created. Printing and design costs would have to be identified. Grant funds or sponsorship/ads would also be needed.

There were complaints about the small size of the type on the Passport in order to get all the activities of the 32 organizations listed. The Passport was printed in black and white and thus viewed as less attractive than the color Heritage Trails map/guide and four color rack cards, which were highly praised for their design. Perhaps the event guide could be separated from the Passport and become a more informal listing, again perhaps in black and white. The design and printing costs would have to be identified as well as funding or sponsorships/ads.

The Passport, like the Heritage Trails map/guide, was available to sites on September 29, only three weeks before the start of History Week. This was perceived as not far enough in advance to permit the sites to market the event extensively to visitors. The short window for the use of the Passport also limited its effectiveness. For sites open only one weekend of the nine-day event, visitors could hardly understand the scope of History Week, let alone take advantage of the collaboration between open sites.

The printed materials, if they are printed for a specific event such as a longer History Month, need to be available at least six weeks to two months in advance of the event start date. Certain tourism web sites need information six months in advance.

Finally, the site volunteers who were charged with stamping the Passport found explaining the use of the Passport to be too complicated. Most sites did not use the Passport to its full potential, as a means to direct visitors to other sites. Sites will need to train volunteers about the use of the Passport in advance so that they are ready to make referrals to other sites on common heritage trails or nearby sites.

Perhaps the Passport should be used to market a month long effort if History Week is turned into a History Month. The committee might consider creating one substantial grand prize offering rather than several small prizes or leave the smaller prizes to be marketed on the visitor survey instead. Several CCHA partners suggested that the surveys should be the vehicle for announcing prizes which might increase the number of people who filled out the survey.

More and better publicity

The partner organizations on the whole were pleased with Camden County History Week, there were some significant weak spots regarding marketing the event.

- **Publicity beyond CCHA press releases, and Facebook posts**

The biggest disappointment was around publicity. Many of the volunteer run sites had expected both radio and TV to be principal means for promotion of History Week, and perhaps these were unrealistic assumptions given there was no money for any kind of paid advertising. We had hoped to rely on the Camden County Outreach office and VisitSouthJersey.com to publish this nine-day event. Neither organization posted it to their newsletters or web sites. **Redouble our efforts to engage the Camden County Outreach office and Visit South Jersey.com to publish.** Bonny Beth had posted the event to the VisitNJ.org web site, but we did not see much traction from that advertising venue.

- **Traditional press releases**

Bonny Beth Elwell distributed at least two press releases a month in advance of the event to the usual news outlets that the Camden County Historical Society uses. One large news article was in the local *Courier Post* and *the Retrospect*. We found that individual history organizations relied too much on outside (CCHA) promotion instead of doing their own promotions of History Week. **Work in partnership with the individual partner organizations so that they do not rely on CCHA promotion of their events, in addition to doing their own promotions of their work and any collaborative effort.**

- **CCHA E-Newsletter**

The Camden County History Alliance Facebook page, along with the monthly CCHA e-newsletter, were used as the primary vehicles for publicity for History Week. The e-newsletter was originally designed to be quarterly. After the first quarterly edition, we realized that a monthly newsletter was needed, and made the switch quickly. The consultant worked with student interns who sorted all the stories/articles sent in by CCHA partners by date and sent this monthly compilation to Bonny Beth Elwell who uploaded it to the free Mail Chimp template. We realized also that we needed an “index” at the start of the newsletter to display all the events for the month in one place. The index was presented with open links to the notices or PDFs from the partner organizations. This proved popular and made it easy for viewers that were interested in particular dates or organizations to find their favorite. We have retained this format throughout.

- The October e-newsletter had a record 55 stories from the 32 partner organizations that had multiple events and activities throughout the nine-day event. The visitor survey also brought us more than 250 more names to add to the data base which is now close to 2000. These names/emails came from all of the sites that were willing to share theirs. Four sites, for privacy reasons, were not able to submit their email addresses to the big list, but, they in turn send the monthly CCHA newsletter to their membership. We know that an additional 500 people get the newsletter from those sources. The open rate has been steady at between 24 to 28%. **We recommend expanding the CCHA mailing list to more than 3000 by the end of 2019, add timely articles of interest, and repost and offer links to articles about individual sites.**

- **CCHA Facebook Page**

The consultant posted daily to the CCHA Facebook page for 30 days prior to the start of the History Week describing the upcoming events and activities planned at each of the 32 sites open for the nine-day event. She also posted the day's events on the CCHA Facebook page during the event. There were four thank you postings after the event.

The CCHA Facebook page now has close to 500 followers. We asked sites that had their own Facebook pages to repost CCHA posts, but few did that. As one of the CCHA Facebook page administrators, the consultant reposted any site announcement of their activities to the CCHA Facebook page. **The CCHA partners can do more to repost their announcements to social media and we recommend additional training for CCHA partners on this topic.** There is currently no active Twitter or Instagram page for the CCHA. These platforms will bring different people to the mailing list and provide the CCHA with exposure beyond Facebook.

The postings on the CCHA Facebook page generated between 30 to 240 views for each posting. The most views came when larger and more well-known sites were posted such as the Battleship NJ and the Walt Whitman House. In sum, **continue to expand mailing list, add timely articles of interest, and repost and offer links to articles about individual sites.**

- **CCHA Magazine**

Over the last two and a half years, the CCHA has published and distributed 50,000 copies of a 42-page *Camden County Heritage* magazine to partner organizations, at festivals and events, and waiting rooms of area urgent care centers and doctor's offices. This bi-annual publication is organized by theme and includes an article about the efforts of the CCHA. It is an important, and timely vehicle for event planning for CCHA.

- **CCHA Web site**

There is a web site (one page) for the CCHA on the Camden County Historical Society web site. It contains a map of all the sites . The website serves as a helpful archive of all the e-newsletters sent during the Heritage Tourism Plan Grant. **A separate web site for CCHA is recommended for 2019 if funding can be secured.** The web site should include one page web pages for sites/organizations that do not have them already and include links to Facebook pages for those that use Facebook as their online presence. The new website should include all of the heritage markers placed by the CCHA, and all the publications produced to date (map/guide, rack cards etc.). The CCHA website should be the first place to go for information about history and heritage in Camden County.

A likely partner for the development of a web site is Hope Works Inc. a Camden nonprofit. It would be ideal if the web site included a blog to distribute our bi-annual magazine and expand our activities in the historic preservation arena through the distribution of timely civic information by the distribution of a news section and volunteer opportunities.

- **Other web sites, travel review sites**

Not all the 17 historic sites are listed on the Visit NJ web site, JourneythroughJersey, Yelp, or Trip Advisor. These web sites seem best suited for staffed sites where there are regular hours. JourneyThroughJersey, run by the New Jersey Historic Trust, might be a suitable first venue for some of the volunteer run sites that have a regular, yearly schedule identified so they can promote their

specific events and when they will be open each month during the visitor season (generally April through October).

- **Clio App**

Clio (theclio.com) is a free history App that is being used by many sites and history organizations around the county to provide a platform for those interested in taking tours of architecture and historic sites. The organization markets it as “Clio is an App that connects thousands of people to nearby culture and history.” We would use the App in conjunction with the website and newsletter. The App permits users to search for nearby sites, take a walking tour, create your own itinerary, or simply go for a walk or drive and let Clio show you nearby sites using our mobile app. There are other Apps available, but this seems to be simple to use and free. Someone would, however, have to spend the time to upload the information about each, into the app and include photos, maps etc. There seems to be pretty good coverage for the major house museums, but places like St. Joseph’s Polish Catholic Church should be on this App. (A quick check found that these were missing from Clio now: Historical Society of Winslow Township, St. Joseph’s Church, Old Quaker Store, Whitman Stafford House, Newtown Meeting House, Clementon Historical Society, Esther Rabb/Goodwin Center, Collings Knight House, Peter Mott House, Merchantville Historical Society, Glover Fulling Mill Park, Haddon Heights Historical Society, and Haddon Township Historical Society of Haddonfield.)

- **Paper versus online newsletters**

There are still several history organizations and some historic sites that must send paper copies of their newsletters and other communications to members who do not have access to a computer or prefer not to read messages on their mobile phone. While email marketing might be cheap or free, it does not reach all of our constituents. The article in the *Courier Post* about History Week was well read, so the CCHA cannot abandon paper or traditional media for reaching our audience. We must rely on the Magazine to get the word out, not only email.

Better or more frequent communication is needed between CCHA, sites, and site volunteers

We believe that the historic sites open for visitors did not stress that other sites were open for visitation. We also heard from the feedback meeting that History Week was too short to encourage visitors to go to other sites. Visitors did not plan to visit multiple sites because they did not know until they arrived that there were other sites open during the week. This was especially problematic at volunteer run sites that were stretched even being open two weekend days. Visitors did take rack cards indicating that they might make visits to sites in the future, but we did not build in any kind of tracking mechanism to the rack cards. Traditionally that would be a discounted admission, but since the vast majority of the CCHA sites are free to the public, another tracking means would be needed.

Site volunteers making referrals to other sites

Docents at the historic sites should become more familiar with other sites on their Heritage Trails so they can make high quality referrals to visitors about the other 17 historic sites open to the public. The work of encouraging visitors at one historic site to move on to other sites that might interest them is entirely in the hands of each historic site. The purpose of the rack cards and the Heritage Trails Map/Guide was to identify and locate other sites of potential interest for visitors. An enthusiastic docent talking about another site will do

far more than a rack card to get visitors out and about. **We recommend that historic site docents be trained to make good referrals to visitors to the collection of 17 historic sites open to the public.** Docents must become highly familiar with each other's offerings, so that they can make valued recommendations to inspire word of mouth marketing. No amount of paid marketing or advertising is worth as much as a recommendation from a trusted source. If the visitor had a good time and the family members learned something new, then site volunteers are in an excellent position to recommend other places to visit. But the recommendation is only as good as the direct knowledge about the other site: how to get there, when it is open, what to ask about, and how much it costs to visit (if any).

Learning about other historic sites in the network, especially by the hundreds of current historic site docents across the 17 organizations, might be accomplished by some kind of regular, half day van tour (often called a FAM for familiarization, tour), one or two times a year. **We recommend that a committee should be formed to explore how historic site docents could become a "certified ambassador" by the CCHA, so they could make high quality referrals. This could include documenting visits to six or more sites, but especially those on their own heritage trail.** Becoming a "certified ambassador" might mean being able to wear a button, "Ask Me About Other Historic Sites Nearby" as a means to chat up visitors about other offerings nearby.

Reprint the Heritage Trails Map/Guide

Only 5,000 maps/guides were printed, with only 40 available for each site open to the public. This tiny supply of the attractive Heritage Trails Map/Guide may have had unintended consequences. **We recommend reprinting the Heritage Trails Map/Guide in 2019, at least 10,000 copies, so that the 21 sites can get at least 250 copies.**

Heritage Trails have unmet potential

One of the main goals of the Heritage Tourism Plan was to create a series of heritage trails as a marketing device to permit interested visitors in understanding that there were more sites that might interest them. There were seven heritage themes identified during the first phase of this work as noted below:

1. Built in Camden County—25 organizations
2. 20th Century Stories—21
3. Women in History—15
4. Many Faces of Camden County—23
5. Colonial Times—16
6. African-American Heritage—18
7. Rivers, Roads & Rails—11

So far, little has been done with the Heritage Trails, other than to identify them on the bottom of the rack cards and introduce the theme on the Heritage Trails Map/Guide.

Monthly events around Heritage Trail themes

We recommend that the CCHA partners designate a specific month for each Heritage Trail from April through October and design the e-newsletter to that theme. An introductory article which can appear on the website and the e-newsletter would be needed to identify the theme and the sites with special programming

that month and the date all the sites are open. Most of this information is already on the Heritage Trails Map/Guide and can be reprinted. Sites with events on that trail should be promoted at the top of the newsletter. Other events occurring that month should appear below the featured activities for the month. **We recommend a coordinated marketing effort by the sites on the trail to cross market their activities by cross posting their events on Facebook feeds.** Finally, the CCHA Facebook page should include the colorful headline banner (used on the rack cards) to identify events during the month on the theme. Perhaps all events should be promoted twice in the month. It would be ideal if there was a short visitor survey available asking if visitors knew about the other sites available on that theme.

New Heritage Trails brochures

We recommend that a committee explore whether to create seven colorful Heritage Trails brochures that highlight all the sites on the trail and create one or more routes between them. Given that the number of sites on each Heritage Trail vary from the smallest Rivers, Roads & Rails with eleven stops, to the largest Built in Camden County with 25, this creates a brochure design challenge. We recommend that the Heritage Trail brochures be printed in color, branded to match the Heritage Trails Map and Guide, and sized to fit in the rack card racks at a number 10 envelope size. The smallest brochure may be a folded legal sized document with only 11 sites to promote. The largest however, may have to be much larger and have multiple folds to accommodate up to 25 sites. Design and printing costs will have to be identified, and the document printed with enough supply to last at least one year, so that each site could have at least 250 copies on hand of each trail brochure at the start of the year. 250 copies times 21 sites, times seven trails would be a print run of 36,750, far larger than any print run from History Week. These seven documents might supplant the Heritage Trails Map and Guide over time. There is only one site that is listed in all seven heritage trails: Camden County Historical Society. The Battleship New Jersey, and the Gabriel Daveis Tavern are listed in six trails. Support from the Camden County Events and Outreach office should be approached for the costs for printing or distribution to hotels and other sites where rack cards are displayed.

School partners/youth engagement

CCHA partners believe that schools are a highly valuable audience for History Week activities. Less than half of the historic sites have ongoing relationships with teachers or their local school district who make regular school visits with their classes to the site. These organizations can continue building their relationships with area educators to include History Week or monthly educational programming. This effort to create and grow school visits is best left to individual sites that already have ongoing relationships. This topic might be a good one for a Peer to Peer panel discussion at an upcoming CCHA bi-monthly meeting. **If there is interest, then we recommend that a school/family involvement committee be created to further develop this work for the CCHA partners.**

For sites without an ongoing and active school program, we suggest a different approach. With so much focus on school testing, high bus costs, and in school class room time, the CCHA historic sites might be better served by developing appropriate, grade related, curriculum based “traveling trunks” that can be taken to the classroom by highly trained docents to bring educational lessons about their sites to children in the classroom. The CCHA organization itself, as a volunteer entity, is not able to establish or nurture individual school or school district relationships across the entire county with its scores of school districts. This work is best left to individual sites.

Another option is for the historic sites to market the Passport, or the new Heritage Trails brochures if printed, to youth programs such as scouts for events or badge opportunities. Some sites with already existing relationships with schools can build upon those relationships to market the thematic heritage trails or monthly events to area families by hosting kid friendly activities at each site. The creativity of the heritage trail partner organizations can make a significant difference in visitation at these sites.

The CCHA needs to further explain how to use the publications with visitors, and then the sites have to relay that information on to their volunteers that interact with visitors.

No way to track rack card use

The rack cards were an investment in the future of the CCHA, where the historic sites could use them to promote their peers' sites to visitors coming for events and programs. We did not provide a tracking device on the card, such as a reduced admission price, because all but four of the historic sites are open free to the public. We have no specific method to suggest for tracking the use of rack cards at this time.

A small handful of the sites complained that the rack card rack was large and clumsy and did not fit easily into a recreated or restored historic interior. These sites will find a location that makes sense to them for these popular and handsome displays of rack cards for the other house museums in the Alliance.

More volunteers needed

We knew from the initial Summer 2017 survey that undertaking a large event would stretch the capacity of the volunteer-run historic sites. History Week certainly did that. Volunteer recruitment is a recurring issue at both staffed and volunteer run historic sites and organizations. All of the volunteer run sites admit that they did not have enough volunteers to prepare and execute History Week, the way they wished.

Several groups complained that being open both days on the Oct. 20 and 21 weekend was too much work for their volunteers or that History Week led to cancellations of outreach appearances the previous weekend. Even for the site with the largest group of volunteers, Barclay Farmstead, where they have over 150 people on their volunteer roster, they did not have enough volunteers. Too few volunteers is not unique to Camden County, but rather all historic house museums throughout the country. History Week did press many beyond their comfort level, and in some cases we got feedback that this event was "too much work for our volunteers."

Sites admitted that they were not clear enough about their volunteer responsibilities for History Week and could have done better at explaining the tasks involved to their docents. They also acknowledged that the nature of History Week was not well communicated; for locals it was just the same as other events during the year.

We are recommending more in depth training about volunteer recruitment and retention during 2019.

Several sites do a good job recruiting and scheduling volunteers and perhaps they would be willing to share their secrets with their peers.

There is still resistance to gathering, using, and keeping visitor statistics

While the vast majority of sites have a sign-in book for visitors, they are not routinely collecting zip codes or email addresses for membership or event marketing. We asked early on for sites to provide visitor numbers, but none did so. Then we asked all for their visitor numbers, number of volunteers, and funds raised during the event. All but four sites complied, this is a marked improvement. Some of the volunteer run sites have yet to see the value of collecting visitor data. This is an area for serious improvement. More work must be done by the Alliance to ensure the collection of visitor statistics throughout the year. A potential incentive for data collection is a contest awarding the highest increase in visitation.

More focus on fundraising during collaborative Alliance events

Over an eleven hundred dollars was raised by sites during History Week. However, this sum could have been far larger with a coordinated effort to seek financial support from visitors during Alliance produced events. Virtually all Alliance partners, except for Battleship, Barkley Farmstead, Peter Mott House, Camden County Historical Society, and Maritime Museum are open, free of charge to the public. These five sites charge an entrance fee. Most have a modest membership fee, which is not required for entrance. The sites that raised funds during History Week had a jar or box available to visitors for donations. The passive fundraising efforts we witnessed at most sites during our visits, suggest that most visitors were not directly asked to donate. We recommend the addition of a donation box as a good first step.

Furthermore, we are recommending that a larger emphasis be placed on seeking donations from visitors. The most effective way to seek financial support is to make a direct ask at the end of any tour or event. A request like, "If you enjoyed your tour today, we would certainly appreciate your donation to support this historic site." would likely be effective. This brief reminder, made by the docent, or over a PA system if applicable, is highly effective in opening wallets.

If not opaque, the donation box or jar should have a few dollar bills in it, as well as at least several 5, 10- and 20-dollar bills to "salt" the box and encourage generous gifts. Membership forms should be handed to everyone who enters, or exits the site, so they can learn a bit more about the organization and donate to it if they wish.

Conclusion

The Heritage Tourism Plan for Camden County has moved the Camden County History Alliance very far in less than two years, but more work needs to be done. The volunteer run historic sites must see the benefit of continuing to cooperate with the Alliance and to produce events for CCHA joint programming. Education, training is still needed to help these organizations to grow into their potential as visitor attractions.

6.Credits

Donna Ann Harris, principal of Heritage Consulting Inc., wrote this document. We thank Glenn Ceponis of the New Jersey Historic Trust for this careful review of the first draft of this report.

Heritage Consulting Inc. is a Philadelphia-based Women’s Business Enterprise (WBE) consulting firm that aids non-profit organizations and government agencies nationwide in the following practice areas: downtown and commercial district revitalization, historic preservation, tourism product development, and non-profit organizational development. Donna Ann Harris is the firm principal.

Prior to her early career, Ms. Harris spent 15 years as an executive director of three start-ups and two mature historic preservation organizations. In these positions in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, she began membership drives in addition to leading strategic planning efforts, public relations and a capital campaigns and raising more than \$3.75 million in grants. Donna managed staffs ranging in size from two to ten and was responsible for organizational, project, and endowment budgets of up to \$2.6 million.

As a preservation planner with more than 30 years of professional experience, Ms. Harris has assisted citizen groups and government agencies with identifying appropriate reuses for threatened historic properties to ensure the long-term preservation and maintenance of the site. In the past 15years, Ms. Harris has been speaking about and consulting with historic house museums around the country concerning alternative uses and stewardship responsibilities. AltaMira Press published her book *New Solutions for House Museums: Ensuring the Long-Term Preservation of America’s Historic Houses* in 2007. A second edition is being written and publication is anticipated in 2020.

In addition, Ms. Harris has published articles about reuse of historic house museums in *History News*, the quarterly magazine of the American Association for State and Local History and *Forum Journal*, the quarterly journal of the National for Historic Preservation. In the past twelve years, Ms. Harris has spoken at more than 35 national, regional, and statewide conferences about her house museum research. Ms. Harris’ chapter on “Best Practices for Board Service for Historic Sites,” will be included in *Reimagining the Historic House Museum: Catalysts for Change*, edited by Kenneth Turino and Max Van Balgooy for Rowman and Littlefield, Publishers in 2018.

Ms. Harris earned a Master of Science degree in Historic Preservation from Columbia University in New York City, and a Master of Public Administration degree from the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. She holds a BA in American Studies and Art History from the State University of New York at Albany. Ms. Harris’ experience meets or exceeds the minimum professional qualifications defined in the Code of Federal Regulations (36 CFR 61, Appendix A) for an architectural historian.

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i. Appendix list of Key documents

- A. Findings Report from Initial Survey
- B. Memo about Printing Needs
- C. Scope of Work with Heritage Consulting Inc.
- D. Memo about Domain Names
- E. Guidelines for Submissions for E-Newsletter
- F. Volunteer Job Description for History Week Steering Committee
- G. History Week Commitment Document
- H. RFP Printing Gannett Foundation Grant Application
- I. Research on Email Platform
- J. Write ups of Site Visits to 19 Sites Open to the Public
- K. All E-Newsletters (Spring, March 2018 through December 2018)
- L. Quarter 1 2018 report to New Jersey Historic Trust
- M. Evaluation Grant Application to the New Jersey Historic Trust
- N. Goals for the Camden County History Week
- O. Q2 Report to the New Jersey Historic Trust
- P. Presentation about CCHA to the New Jersey Historic Preservation Conference
- Q. 21 Rack Cards for Historic Sites Open to the Public
- R. Heritage Tourism Map/guide
- S. Passport/Event Guide
- T. Rubber Stamp logo for Passport
- U. Flyer for Camden County History Week
- V. Visitor Survey sample
- W. Q3 Report to the New Jersey Historic Trust
- X. Camden County History Week by the Numbers 3
- Y. CCHA Wrap Up Survey: Visitors, Volunteers, and Donations
- Z. CCHA Heritage Trails List Final Version
- AA. Work Plan for Camden County History Week
- BB. PowerPoint Presentation for January 18, 2019 CCHA meeting
- CC. Q4 Report to the New Jersey Historic Trust
- DD. *Courier Post* and *Retrospect News* Articles
- EE. Findings report from Evaluation Grant
- FF. Summary of Monthly Tasks Undertaken by the Consultant