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*Richmond, Virginia*  
*“Let Our Experience Help You”*

December 13, 2013

**BUILDING ON RICHMOND’S HISTORICAL ASSETS:  
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING TOURISM**

Earlier this year, *Richmond Times-Dispatch* Editor Tom Silvestri argued that the city should not forget history in promoting tourism, but it must not neglect other potential draws for visitors including sports events, festivals, the arts, and the James River. A follow-up Public Square meeting hosted by the *Times-Dispatch* to poll people for ideas to boost tourism in the region carried Silvestri’s theme farther. A panel of six tourism-related people listened to ideas from the audience on how the city might proceed. Of the dozen or so ideas brought forward, only three involved history.

It is not the purpose of this report to confirm or reject putting other factors ahead of history tourism in Richmond, although it is our opinion that history is the city’s greatest resource and truly its compelling difference in attracting visitors. The rich and long history of this region will remain a constant draw for tourism, while other trends will come and go. Therefore, this report concentrates primarily on history tourism.

## **WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HERITAGE TOURISM?**

It is no secret that heritage tourism can generate economic growth in a community by attracting visitors who have an interest in the past. This form of travel includes attracting visitors to architectural landmarks, archaeological sites, battlefields, historical museums, historic districts, landscapes and neighborhoods. It can involve experiencing the heritage of a community through festivals and commemorative events. Visiting libraries and archival collections is also an important growing element in heritage tourism. The primary benefit of heritage tourism is the money spent by visitors from outside the host community. This spending can have a ripple effect in a community that supports direct employment in the historic attractions and indirect employment in hotels, restaurants and transportation services. Studies reveal that heritage tourists tend to spend more per capita than most other categories of tourists.

A second benefit of heritage tourism is the community pride and vitality generated by preserving places of historical significance; sustaining museums with important historical collections; and producing festivals and events. The activities are directly connected to collective memory and community identity.

Finally, a vigorous heritage tourism program can contribute to the history education of residents in a community, especially students. Understanding the value and meaning of history is fundamental to participating as a citizen in a democracy. This is

especially true on the local level where every issue that confronts a community has a connection to the past. The successful integration of heritage tourism and local history education can result in greater support by citizens for historical institutions and the retention of young people as workers and residents in their hometown.

### **PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS: RICHMOND'S CHALLENGE**

After years of being ignored by the travel media, Richmond is being discovered. Several articles over the last two years tout the wide variety of arts and cultural attractions the region has to offer, from a nationally recognized art museum to an array of performing arts organizations. An article in *U.S. Airways Magazine* last year, for example, noted: "Virginia's Richmond region may be the best kept secret on the East Coast, but who knows for how much longer . . . . Something is happening here, and it's getting harder to keep it a secret."

It is obvious from this recent coverage that history gives the Richmond its real "compelling difference"—those things that make it distinctive and compel people to visit and spend their money. Frommer's travel guidebook recently announced Richmond as one of its "Top Destinations in the World," one of only three spots in the U.S., noting its unusually rich Civil War heritage. The Huffington Post declared Richmond as "A City of Historical Significance, Emerging Artists and Great Food."

Publicity like this is encouraging, but Richmond has a long way to go until it is a widely recognized historical attraction. People may have a general idea that the city is historical, but many have little idea of what historical resources are available to visit.

Overall travel and tourism are big business in Virginia, and visitation has risen in recent years, having a positive effect on jobs and the economy. A recent report from the Virginia Tourism Corporation (VTC) notes that tourism increased by 8% in 2012, in part because of increased attendance at the Dominion Riverrock and Richmond Folk festivals.

A recent article in the Richmond *Times-Dispatch* reports that visitor interest in history is strong, particularly the Civil War, and has grown, especially during the conflict's sesquicentennial (2011 to 2015). Civil War travel information is requested by some 20% of all visitors to Virginia, and is the VTC's most popular custom fulfillment item is its "Civil War Package."

The Civil War Trust (CWT), which is a client of Bryan & Jordan Consulting, proclaims the benefits of Civil War tourism. Last year the CWT conducted a survey at thirteen battlefield sites in Virginia (including Richmond), and determined that on average, visitors spent almost \$80 per person, per day, which is more than 50% higher than other travelers to Virginia.

Richmond has benefitted from the Civil War sesquicentennial, with related attractions in the area reporting increases in visitation. The highly acclaimed movie, *Lincoln*, produced and directed by Steven Spielberg, was filmed almost entirely in Richmond and Petersburg, and has focused attention on the region. A special "Lincoln Movie Trail," created in both of those cities has received a strong response.

That said, Richmond continues to significantly trail other historic attractions despite having a “Trove of History” as proclaimed in *U.S. Airways Magazine*. In VTC’s 2011 report on tourism in Virginia, Richmond was not in the “Top 25 Attractions Most Frequently Visited.” Of the twenty-five attractions listed in the VTC report, sixteen were historic sites (Colonial Williamsburg was first, Mount Vernon third, Jamestown fifth). Of those sixteen, eight were Civil War attractions. Again, Richmond was not to be found in the Top 25, despite its rich historic resources.

The Civil War Trust also reports that in ranking visitation to battlefields on the East Coast, Richmond falls far behind. Gettysburg attracts approximately 1.2 million visitors a year. Antietam, Manassas (Bull Run), and the Fredericksburg area battlefields draw more than 500,000 each; yet Richmond area battlefields only about 120,000. Petersburg has a little more than 175,000 visitors. Richmond has done its history, its citizens, and economy a disservice by not preserving and promoting its Civil War battlefields which should at least equal the more heavily visited Civil War sites, resulting in higher tourism dollars and repeat visitors. The possibility of a merger between the National Civil War Museum at Tredegar and the Museum of the Confederacy (MOC) holds great promise for creating a significant attraction at the historic Tredegar Iron Works site on the James River, part of which is managed by the National Park Service.

We do not suggest that Civil War alone should fuel Richmond’s tourism effort. The city, for example, has an unusually rich African-American heritage. Governor Bob McDonnell’s recent announcement that his biennial budget includes \$11 million for the

development, creation, and enhancement of the Slavery and Freedom Heritage Site is a major commitment to ensuring that a crucial component of the history of Richmond and the Commonwealth is told properly. The fact that Richmond was a leading market in the slave trade should not be ignored. This new heritage site will serve as a memorial and an attraction for tourists, involving Lumpkin's Jail, the African American Burial Ground, and a planned slavery museum that has been long championed by former Governor L. Douglas Wilder. The state funding, if approved by the General Assembly and matched by \$5 million from the city council, would go a long way in making Richmond a major national attraction for African American history.

With plans also well underway to open a new and greatly enlarged Black History Museum (a client of Bryan & Jordan Consulting) interpreting all of Virginia's African-American history under one roof in the old Leigh Street Armory, Richmond can serve as an important attraction to learn about this vital component of American history. A potential partnership with the Smithsonian's soon-to-open Black History Museum in Washington could greatly enhance exhibitions and programs at the Richmond museum.

How Richmond can attract a larger audience, however, is the central question to be addressed by us. The region has much to offer. It is a state capital. It is not "off the beaten path." For that matter, the city sits at the crossroads of two of America's most heavily traveled Interstate highways on which millions of people travel every year without stopping to see what Richmond has to offer. One cannot find a more historic region in America than within a one hundred mile radius of Richmond. Within that area,

people can visit and learn about the real first families of Virginia (native Americans), the first permanent English settlement in North America, the site of the last major engagement of the American Revolution, the birthplaces of numerous Founding Fathers and seven future Presidents, scores of sites relating to the African-American experience, dozens of museums and places relating to the Civil War, and a plethora of other sites that allow visitors to more fully understand their nation's history.

It is obvious to the authors of this report that most Richmonders do not have a full appreciation of the history of their city and the surrounding region. There has been an ongoing debate regarding the public's lack of knowledge of history. Numerous observers like Pulitzer Prize winning historian David McCullough argue, "we in our time are raising a generation of Americans who are woefully ignorant of our history." This concern is nothing new, and numerous examples of raising the alarm about public amnesia regarding the past can be found as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup>-century.

That said, several studies have demonstrated that most Americans have at least some knowledge of our national history, but very little of their local history. Bryan & Jordan Consulting recently administered a twenty question quiz on Richmond history to fifteen adults, all of whom have at least a college degree. The questions they were asked could not be considered "trick questions" or "picky." Each related to a significant event or person in the city's history. Of the fifteen people who took the quiz, ten failed, two received "D's," two received "C's," and one achieved an "A." The latter majored in history at the University of Virginia. This quiz will appear in the Richmond *Times-Dispatch* on December 22, 2013.

Although similar results would probably be found in other cities, it makes one wonder if the lack of knowledge of our own community's history has led to lethargy when it comes to promoting Richmond as a city steeped in a long and rich history. If our own people do not understand and appreciate their local history, how can we expect others to see Richmond as a go-to place for history? While many European countries require students to learn their local history first, a practice not followed in the U.S.

Because teachers cannot deviate from the Virginia Standards of Learning, Richmond's history can be taught only superficially in the schools. Perhaps a regular feature in a variety of media sources—newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet could run regular features with a title such as “Did You Know?” or “Finding Richmond's Past” that would familiarize citizens with the long and rich history of the region.

Such a program is timely as Richmond is the beneficiary of a remarkable opportunity to promote itself in less than three years. Indeed, world attention will be focused on the city in September 2015 when it hosts the UCI World Cycling Championships. The event is expected to bring an estimated 450,000 visitors into the area, and provide a \$135 million benefit to Virginia, of which some \$86 million would go to the metropolitan Richmond region. International media coverage will also be a major component of a once in a lifetime event.

We need to develop a strategy that will create a buzz about Richmond and cultivate tourism, locally, nationally, and internationally. We also need to think about

increasing inter-generational tourism, targeting grandparents and their offspring, for which there is great potential in Richmond.

## **FACTORS OF SUCCESS FOR HERITAGE TOURISM: DOES RICHMOND HAVE THEM?**

There are seven key factors in the development of a successful heritage tourism program. How does Richmond score on those factors as follows?

- 1) **Product** - Creating a large and unique inventory of heritage resources such as landmark buildings; archeological sites; significant museums, libraries and archives; landscapes; and historic neighborhoods and districts is the first step in product development. These resources need to be authentic and they need to have integrity. There should be general community agreement that these resources are worthy of preservation and that there should be sufficient commitment of support, financial and in-kind, to prepare and sustain these resources as heritage tourist attractions.

For a city its size, Richmond has an unusually large and strong inventory of history related sites and institutions. With some thirty-six museums in the metropolitan area, Richmond has as many, and in some cases more, museums than other larger cities such as Atlanta, Charlotte, Nashville, and Memphis.

In addition to numbers, Richmond is home to unusually significant historical collections and exhibitions. Housed at the Virginia Historical Society, Museum of the Confederacy, Library of Virginia, and the Valentine's Richmond History Center, they cumulatively represent one of the country's richest collections of Americana found anywhere in the United States. The city and its immediate confines also are home to a large array of significant historic sites including the State Capitol, St. John's Church, the White House of the Confederacy, the historic falls of the James River and Tredegar, Hollywood Cemetery, numerous Civil War battlefields, historic Jackson's Ward, the Maggie Walker House, Agecroft and neighboring Virginia House, Monument Avenue to name just a few. This array of museums will be strengthened if the proposed slavery museum mentioned earlier in this report becomes reality. It would be difficult to find a city comparable in size of Richmond with such a large inventory of significant historic resources.

- 2) **Partnerships** - Successful tourism programs in cities around the country almost always have horizontal integration and alignment of heritage resources especially along thematic lines. These include joint tickets sales, shared public transportation to assist visitors, joint-marketing endeavors, shared administrative functions, and in scores of other ways. Educational institutions and government agencies often are included as partners with heritage resources. Although there are some modest partnerships among Richmond cultural and historical

institutions, they are limited and have not been models for other communities to follow.

- 3) **Branding and Packaging** - Vertical integration of hospitality industry such as restaurants, hotels, bus and specialty tours, conventions, sporting events, festivals and conferences is needed. Richmond Region Tourism has clearly branded the city's history as the connecting link to all other attractions and activities. Hotels and restaurants as well as many of the special events that take place in the city have adopted this theme. Specialty travel companies, such as Tauck Tours, have positioned Richmond historic sites in their high-end products. We will suggest continued use of the history in branding, but broadening it to incorporate other important factors as well.
- 4) **Promotion and Marketing** - The research and identification of key populations to target for heritage tourism; sale of heritage tourism products; branding and campaigning for community heritage resources must be done. Seniors (especially grandparents), families with older children, the African-American community, the LGBT community, New Americans, and genealogists are the top priority audiences who have the greatest potential interest in visiting the historical attractions in the Richmond region.
- 5) **Planning** - A community strategic plan for heritage tourism would establish a strategic direction and goals based on the integration of the product, partnerships, packaging, and promotion. The plan should identify the needs for preservation

and the opportunities to invest in the expansion of heritage resources. Key members of the tourism industry should develop and manage the plan and report periodically. As the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War reaches its conclusion, there is an opportunity to redefine Richmond's long-term strategic advantages and identify new goals and priorities. One idea, based on market research conducted by Richmond Region Tourism, is to identify the State Capitol as the starting point and "must see" attraction for heritage tourists and other visitors to the city.

6) **Public Safety** - All of the elements that are listed above are meaningless without a safe and secure community. Years ago Richmond had a much-publicized high murder rate and serious drug trafficking problem, which are major deterrents to a vital tourism market. Increased resources and a change in policing tactics have significantly improved public safety, so that Richmond is poised to attract visitors in much larger numbers than in the past.

7) **Signage, Traffic Flow, and Parking** - Of greater concern is making the city easier to access and navigate. This has been an ongoing complaint from visitors to Richmond for many years. An effort to establish more and better signage to various attractions could go a long way to correcting this problem and should be accelerated. Parking is another issue, and discourages some people from taking advantage of downtown attractions. In addition to having to feed meters, many visitors use the limited parking garages downtown, many of which are not convenient to the downtown attractions. The Virginia State Capitol, for

example, has a large parking deck nearby that is restricted to state employees during the week, but is closed altogether on weekends and sits unused.

## **HERITAGE TOURISM: STATE CAPITALS**

As government centers, state capitals can have certain built-in strategic advantages for heritage tourism. Capitol buildings are often architectural landmarks and objects of civic pride. The activities of state governments attract a rich variety of people engaged in politics, business, industry, social reform, education and culture whose stories become part of the city's history. Additionally, state capitals are repositories of historical documents, public records, and archives that are valuable resources for scholars, genealogists, and students, making them gateways to regional history.

Of four state capitals surveyed, only Nashville and Annapolis offered useful comparative information for Richmond's Heritage Tourism Initiative.

Capital cities of Harrisburg and Hartford were studied for this survey; however, they do not embrace their historic narrative in the same way as Nashville or Annapolis. We do not feel that they serve as a useful model for Richmond to follow. For that matter Harrisburg, in its efforts to revive its riverfront and invest in historic preservation and interpretation provides a cautionary tale. By overspending on developing museum

attractions and not devoting enough money to marketing, Harrisburg fell far short of visitor expectations and has struggled ever since.

The lessons learned from Harrisburg and Hartford illustrates the importance of heritage tourism that is based on authenticity and careful planning. Investments in infrastructure will not necessarily sustain tourism merely because a museum has a strong collection or has hired a celebrity architect. In the mid-1990s, Richmond had experience with this kind of overreaching and overpromising when the Valentine Museum opened a satellite site, Valentine Riverside, a \$22.5 million facility dedicated to telling the story of Richmond's social and industrial history. The museum grossly overestimated annual attendance, and closed within one year, leaving its parent museum to struggle for nearly a decade. Many of the factors for success for heritage tourism that we discussed earlier in this report were not present and only exacerbated the problems that Valentine Riverside faced. Better models to follow are Nashville and Annapolis.

Nashville is one of the most popular tourist destinations in America but not because of its role as a state capital. Before 1960, Nashville was best known for its 19<sup>th</sup> century heritage, as home for presidents Andrew Jackson and James K. Polk and the site of a major battle of the Civil War. Jackson's home, the Hermitage, is a beautifully preserved site located a few miles from downtown. It is filled with extraordinary original collections that tell the story of America's seventh president and one of the dominant figures of his time. Many cities, especially those that are centers of political power,

would build their tourism strategy around a site like the Hermitage. However, the phenomenal rise of the country music industry in the past fifty years transformed Nashville into “Music City” the home of the Grand Old Opry, the Ryman Auditorium, and the Country Music Hall of Fame. These attractions and the live music scene concentrated along Broadway lure more than 6 million visitors to Nashville annually. In recent years, the city has launched a \$600 million expansion of its convention center that includes a major addition to the adjoining Hall of Fame.

Annapolis boasts of its 18<sup>th</sup> century heritage with “more surviving 18<sup>th</sup> century architecture than any other American city.” What makes the State Capitol in Annapolis a tourist attraction is that it has been integrated into the city’s core narrative. The Capitol building—the Maryland State House—is marketed as a part of a larger heritage story, a story associated with the American Revolution and Early National period. The presence of the U.S. Naval Academy and its fine museum is another tourist attraction that supports the theme of early National as well as maritime history. The location of the city on the Chesapeake Bay reinforces this narrative and ties the city’s tourism initiative to its current popularity for sailing and other marine activity. Very few cities in America can make the connections between historic, natural, scenic, and recreational resources. We feel that Richmond can be one of those unique cities.

## THE HERITAGE TOURISM AUDIENCE

Several audiences should be priorities for any future heritage tourism initiative in Richmond. The interests of these audiences overlap and are not mutually exclusive.

One important factor to keep in mind is the demographic profile of who is most interested in history and likely to spend time and money to enjoy it. The accompanying chart is relevant to that discussion. Based on extensive research done by historians David Thelan and Roy Rozenwieg in the 1990's, and followed up over the last year by a study conducted by Charles Bryan, it is apparent that "history grows with age." In other words, for most people interest in history grows as they age.

Ironically, when they were children, many people remember fondly "playing history" -cowboys and Indians, pirates, American Girl dolls, fantasy war. But many were turned off to history when they were students subjected to a dull litany of facts and dates in the classroom. As young people and young adults, other factors in their lives—graduating from college, commencing careers, getting married, starting families, living a child-centered life—dominated their interests and attention well into their forties. But studies show, as seen in the chart, when people reach 50 years of age, the past begins to attract their interest. They have reached the half-century mark and they become more reflective, often wanting to put their own lives in perspective. They begin to lose grandparents and parents, often regretting not having asked them more questions about their past. They become "empty nesters" and their lives no longer revolve around their

children. When they reach retirement age, the amount of their leisure time increases dramatically. Large numbers of this older generation have the financial resources to indulge in their growing interest in history.

How, when, and where do they spend their resources on history? Television analysts report that the majority of audiences watching history-related programs, particularly documentaries, is fifty years of age or older. Members of the History Book Club are mostly males past the half-century mark in age. Attend a lecture at the Virginia Historical Society or an alumni college course at a local university and you will find audiences whose hair is mostly gray, white, or non-existent.

This component of our population is also traveling in large numbers, and often with children and grandchildren. James Lardear of AAA's travel division, reports that three generations of a family are booking tours in rapidly growing numbers with the grandparents paying much of the costs. In 2011, the U.S. Tour Operators Association reported that half of its members cited an increase in what is now dubbed "Grand Travel." Upscale Tauk Tours anticipated this trend more than ten years ago, and launched its highly successful "Tauk Bridges" program, offering special packages crossing three generations.

Grandparents who are retired or semi-retired Baby-Boomers, more so than previous generations, are taking advantage of opportunities to connect with their grandchildren. Large numbers of retired people are moving near their children and

grandchildren. With plenty of spare time and financial resources, grandparents can take their grandchildren on vacation with or without their parents, who often have dual careers that make simultaneous vacations difficult to schedule. Travel experts expect this trend will continue as more Baby-Boomers retire.

In response to this growing demand, AAA has published *Travel With Your Grandkids* to help grandparents plan their vacations. While this guidebook covers a wide range of activities, from hiking to visiting theme parks, heritage related travel strikes a strong responsive chord with grandparents who are eager to share their interest in the past with their grandchildren. Richmond is centrally located almost midway on the East Coast, making it an ideal meeting place for three-generation tourists. Grandparents who have retired to Carolina or Florida find Central Virginia to be a half-day drive and ideal “meet in the middle” location for a vacation with their children and grandchildren. Businesses and communities that adopt a targeted marketing strategy promoting historical assets stand to benefit from this growing trend in tourism. The Tauk Tours idea of building bridges between grandparents and their grandchildren for travel is a concept that should be broadened into an overall marketing strategy.

Business-related travel deserves scrutiny as well, particularly with some interesting changes in how it is done and who participates. Professor Thomas Cullen of Cornell University’s School of Hotel Administration observes that “business travel” has been traditionally segregated from “leisure travel” in developing marketing strategies. The

travel industry, he notes, can no longer assume that business trips are for business only. “Children are not only traveling more with grandparents, they are traveling with parents who increasingly take kids along on a business or convention trip. Adults also are traveling more frequently with their spouses to business conventions and other activities involving professional development.

On the other hand, Professor Cullen also contends that communications technology is gradually replacing traditional business travel as a younger, more technological savvy generation of business people move into decision-making positions. Currently, business travel accounts for about 60 percent of all travel, but within fifteen years, leisure travel is projected to eclipse it.

To reach these audiences requires an approach that recognizes the various ways they learn about Richmond and make decisions to visit must be developed. One approach is to devise programs and tour packages that fit generational interests. The audiences, which often overlap, include

- People fifty-years and older (genealogists, museum visitors, battlefield tours, etc.) who are on their own
- Families with children aged 10 to 18 (museums, battlefields, combined with more outdoor activities)
- Grand Travel—intergenerational travel (all of the above)
- African American community

- LGBT community

Richmond Regional Tourism has recognized the potential of these audiences and needs the support to continue its efforts for further cultivation.

In determining how to allocate scarce dollars to promote heritage destinations, it is critically important not to overlook the local audience. While they do not stay overnight in hotels, they are the best advocates for bringing potential customers to Richmond. It has long been understood that a large percentage of visitors to Richmond attractions have come to the city primarily to be with friends and relatives. While here, local citizens serve *de facto* as a corps of knowledgeable and passionate ambassadors for the history of Richmond and its surrounding counties. This is one strategy that could separate Richmond from its competitors.

Family and friends play a crucial role in the growing African-American travel market. This segment of the American population mirrors that of the population in general. Most African-American travelers are nearly 50-years old or older, are married, have college degrees, and according to one survey they “outrank all other Americans in visiting historic places and museums.”

Recent surveys indicate that African-American tourists are interested in a variety of activities, most of which involve families, attending festivals, religious events, going on

heritage related trips, and attending family reunions, an activity that connects them with their past.

There is a need to realize that heritage tourism is one of several strategies that Richmond can use to build and sustain its tourism industry. Just as heritage attractions need to create packages and partnerships with each other, they must also become part of the broad package of events, festivals, and cultural attractions that bring visitors to the city.

Richmond is poised to become a trendy location for tourists, and should develop and implement long-range ideas that set the city apart. Richmond should strive to be a trendsetter and create experiences found nowhere else. Combining its great historic resources with a number options for outdoor activities, including whitewater rafting on the James River; trails for biking, running, and walking; rock and wall climbing; and organized sports, Richmond can rival and even surpass Annapolis as a unique tourist on the East Coast.

In order to maximize Richmond's great historic resources we are suggesting maximizing several options that are not mutually exclusive. Each one puts emphasis on certain major historic themes and institutional partnerships. Each can be enhanced with the creation of bike and hiking trails, living history interpreters, boat based activities on the James River, and interpretive programs that change every year, thereby enticing visitors to return. Each already has been developed and implemented by the Virginia

Tourism Corporation. With these options, visitors to the Richmond Metro area will be able to explore more than four centuries of Virginia and American history, while enjoying our natural resources and lively arts and dining scene. The options are as follows:

**Option 1 (Civil War emphasis)**

*The north-south corridor from Fredericksburg to Petersburg*

Fredericksburg/Chancellorsville/Wilderness/Spottsylvania battlefields; Richmond battlefields (both '62 and '64 campaigns); Petersburg battlefield; Pamplin Historical Park; Hopewell (Grant's HQ); Museum and White House of the Confederacy; Tredegar; Virginia state capitol; Virginia Historical Society (VHS); Valentine Richmond History Center; White Oak Museum (in Falmouth near Fredericksburg). This option is basically in place now with the highly successful Civil War Trails program.

**Option 2 (Colonial/Early American emphasis)**

*The east-west corridor from Jamestown to Charlottesville*

Jamestown; Colonial Williamsburg; Yorktown; James River Plantations; St. John's Church (Richmond); Virginia state capitol; VHS; Valentine History Center; Wilton House Museum; Agecroft Hall; Virginia House; John Marshall House; Scotchtown; Henricus Historical Park; Monticello;

Montpelier. Like Option 1, this option can be carried out by two Jamestown-related trails and the Road to Revolution Trail.

**Option 3 Crossroads of American History/Treasures of Richmond history)**

The four-quadrant corridor combining options 1 and 2, and adding the State Capitol (architecture); Library of Virginia (genealogy); and Hollywood Cemetery (three presidents buried there).

**Option 4 The Crossroads of Freedom: from Slavery to Emancipation to Civil Rights**

Includes Jamestown, Colonial Williamsburg, Richmond (Maggie Walker House, Jackson Ward, Black History Museum, proposed slavery museum and Slavery and Freedom Heritage Freedom Site), and Moton Civil Rights Museum in Farmville.

**TEN RECOMMENDATIONS**

The ten recommendations below are made with giving Richmond a competitive advantage over other cities.

(1) Begin to Position and Market Richmond as the headquarters for the “Crossroads of American History”

As discussed above, few, if any, cities in the United States can match Richmond and its surrounding region for the richness and breadth of history encompassed within. The unusually large number of historic sites it has to offer spans more than four centuries of American history. If we match those assets with a host of other things for families to do, including numerous outdoor activities, sporting events, and festivals, Richmond can have a serious competitive edge over other cities in the eastern United States. Its location at the intersection of two of the country’s busiest Interstate highways and within a day’s drive of nearly one-third of the population of the United States, Richmond has the ability to attract visitors in greater numbers than it has in the past. The VTC and the Richmond Visitor’s Bureau have done a good job of using history to encourage people to visit the region, but we believe that rather than concentrating mainly on Civil War and colonial history, taking a broader approach that encompasses all of American history gives Richmond a competitive edge.

In the late 1970s and early 80s, B&J founding partner, Dan Jordan, then a history professor at VCU, worked with the Richmond Chamber of Commerce to develop a theme “Visit Richmond and Experience Four Centuries of History.” Using this idea, he organized and oversaw a Saturday Academy to train certified tour guides. The Richmond Chamber of Commerce, Historic

Richmond, Inc., and the Junior League of Richmond backed this program enthusiastically. With tours scheduled through the Chamber of Commerce, the program thrived for years, but unfortunately was phased out with a depressed economy and subsequent budget cuts in the late 1980s.

A revival of this program would be beneficial if Richmond positioned itself as the center of a remarkable historic region, the headquarters or starting off place for exploring American history. Working with other regional history attractions, special tour packages can be developed based on the options presented on pp. 20-22. Visitors can also be encouraged to stay in Richmond, where hotel rates that generally are lower than those in either the Washington, D.C. or Williamsburg areas.

(2) Encourage Greater Collaboration in Marketing, Programming, and Packaging among Regional Historic Attractions

Currently, collaborative efforts among Richmond museums and other attractions are limited. In the 1990's, Museum on the Boulevard (MOB), was a cooperative venture started with great promise. Involving some of the area's largest and most visited cultural attractions, MOB developed multi-institutional ticket packages, pooled resources for joint marketing, and even developed its own website. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, MOB is no longer functioning. For that matter, from what we can determine, collaboration among Richmond area museums and other cultural institutions is limited.

We strongly recommend that Richmond area museums to join forces to develop ticket packages, marketing efforts, and collaborative programs. An excellent example of this can be found in Charleston, South Carolina, with its “Museum Mile.” Visitors can purchase packaged theme tickets online or in person that include architecture, African-American heritage, the American Revolution, and the Civil War.

This collaborative effort should start with Richmond area museums, with the goal of eventually expanding it to museums and historic sites within driving distance. It would be a major advantage to the city and the museums if this can be accomplished by 2015 when the UCI World Cycling Championship is hosted in Richmond.

(3) Create a Regional Welcome Center in Old Main Street Station

Have VTC establish a welcome center in the Main Street Station to promote the “Crossroads of American History” region, as well as statewide tourism. In addition to having brochures and television monitors promoting tourism, the center would have a small theater for presentations on the area, and a small exhibition gallery displaying collections from area museums. A state-of-the-art website would provide the latest information on area activities. This idea was first presented by Willard Strickland of Richmond, in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

#### (4) Make Richmond a City of Reunions and Homecomings

Reunions and homecomings have become big business. Surveys reveal that family reunion planners base their decision on where to hold the event on a number of factors—hotel rates, meeting facilities, geographic location, ease of access, and things to do for people of all ages. One important factor going into the location of reunions is a historical connection to their family—an ancestral home, a Civil War or Revolutionary War battlefield where an ancestor fought, a location where slave ancestors lived or were sold, a place where a family can trace its colonial origins.

The number of people living elsewhere with roots in Virginia is huge. Between the end of the American Revolution and the beginning of the Civil War, scholars estimate that more than a million people moved out of Virginia and headed elsewhere, primarily to the south and the west. Of the one million, about a third were black, slaves who could be sold at high profit to their owners to work in the cotton fields of the Deep South and trans-Mississippi west.

A marketing campaign encouraging people to return to their roots in Virginia, especially Richmond, in targeted publications could help position the “Crossroads of American History” as a prime location to hold reunions.

#### (4) Make the Virginia State Capitol More Accessible to Visitors

The Thomas Jefferson inspired Virginia State Capitol is a living landmark of self-government in the United States. It has been the home of the oldest legislature operating in the Western Hemisphere, and also served as the official capitol building of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War. In use since 1788, the Virginia capitol contains a treasure trove of paintings, portraits, and statues denoting the history of Virginia and the nation as a whole. Unfortunately, access to the building is challenging for visitors, entailing finding a nearby parking garage. During the weekends, a large nearby parking garage for state employees sits closed and empty. We strongly encourage the appropriate officials to allow the garage to be open on weekends. This step will go a long way to encourage more people to visit what some experts proclaim as the country's most significant state capitol.

(5) Make the Canal an Icy Place

An idea presented last spring at one of the Richmond *Times-Dispatch's* Public Forums, would transform the downtown canal into a major ice skating trail during the winter months. This could be done at reasonable costs, and the return could be significant. A frozen ice skating pathway on the canal, winding along the river and along the city skyline, could draw large numbers of tourists to Richmond, to the point of making it a destination. Hotel packages combining history, the arts, shopping, and sports in the winter months could be developed to fit in with this unique winter activity. No doubt, vendors, shops, hotels, and

restaurants along the canal would reap the benefit of being close to the canal and this unique activity.

(6) Take Greater Advantage of the James River

The James River is not only a beautiful waterway; it is arguably one of America's most historic rivers, the first to be named. It provides the only Class 4 white water rafting in an urban setting. It has numerous walking trails along its banks. Many of the bridge abutments and nearby buildings date from before the Civil War. Each one of these could combine outdoor activities with history to intergenerational visitors. A "Lewis and Clark experience," for example, using costumed interpreters could prove popular. Although Lewis and Clark are associated with the West, they were both Virginians who were under the orders of Virginia born President Thomas Jefferson.

As suggested by Ralph White in a recent Public Square town hall meeting sponsored by the Richmond *Times-Dispatch*, barges could be employed to give visitors excursions up and down the river, observing the city skyline, while listening to an account of Richmond's history. These excursions easily could be modeled after several other highly successful waterborne adventures such as can be found in London, Paris, New York, and San Francisco.

A group named the James River Hikers has developed numerous hiking experiences to explore the region's history. The hikes they offer cover several topics, including the Civil War, slavery, and industrial history. We would

welcome additional tour ideas from the James River Hikers, and we would like to see biking trails developed along similar lines.

(8) Encourage Grand Travel

As discussed earlier, three generational travel is a growing segment of the tourism market. Richmond should try to reach out to older Americans whose interest in history is high and encourage them to come to the great crossroads of history. With a wide variety of historic sites and museums to see, and plenty of outdoor activities in which to participate, Richmond is a well positioned to tap into this special tourism audience.

(8) The Last World War II Reunion

The year 2016 will mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of America's entry into World War II. It is estimated that by then there will be fewer than 1 million veterans still alive from the 15 million who served during the war. Although the youngest of these living vets will be in their 90's, Richmond should consider hosting a grand reunion of these special Americans. Is it possible? In 1938, more than 2,000 veterans gathered for the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of Gettysburg. This remarkable event generated international media attention. Numerous organizations such as the Virginia War Memorial, the Virginia Historical Society, the Virginia Holocaust Museum, the museums at Forts Lee and Eustis, the Marine Corps Museum at Quantico, and the D-Day Memorial in Bedford

could combine efforts to pull off an event that could do as much as anything discussed above to shine the spotlight on Richmond.

**(9) Make Richmond a Prime Destination for African-Americans by Making Black History an Important Component of All Historical Attractions**

Charlotte Haymore, president of the Travel Professionals of Color Association contends that African-Americans and other minority travelers “have a genuine desire to connect with their past and are willing to spend money on leisure travel that provides them with a personal and rewarding heritage experience.” Communities that reach out to this niche market, she further argues, “will benefit and [will help] stimulate their local economy.” But to attract their interest in coming to Richmond, they must see themselves and their forebears represented in the areas historical attractions. While the new Black History Museum in the Leigh Street Armory, the Slave Trail, the Maggie Walker Home, and possibly a new slave museum will be draws to African-Americans, other historical institutions that do not have Black History as an integral component of their exhibitions or interpretive plan should do this as soon as possible. We can think of a number of local historical attractions where this is not the case, and we encourage them to do so as soon as possible.

Finally, it is a great challenge to find adequate funding for institutions that have Black History as core to their missions. In a George Washington University report on finding financial sustainability for African American museums in America, authors Randall Williams and Michael Worth observe that these museums “are underfunded due to historical barriers [and] cultural

preferences for charitable giving, institutional youth, and a dearth of professional business and museum skills.” We strongly recommend that some form of public funding be dedicated to supporting Black History organizations for both capital expenses and general operating support. Otherwise this key component of Richmond’s history will not reach its full potential.

(10) Start a RVA Awareness Campaign at Virginia Welcome Centers and Billboards in North Carolina and South Carolina

More than two million visitors pass through Virginia Welcome Centers annually. Although Richmond has brochures available for visitors to pick up, the city is easily overshadowed by other attractions—Virginia Beach, Colonial Williamsburg, Monticello, Mount Vernon, and Kings Dominion. Petersburg even has its own welcome center on I-95, south of the city, beckoning travelers to pay a visit to that historic city. Richmond has nothing comparable despite all that it has to offer tourists. We recommend that Richmond invest more funding in all welcome and rest centers with a theme along the lines of “Let RVA Surprise You,” or “RVA Has it All—History, White Water Rafting, World Class Art, Music, Great Food.” Also, we recommend renting billboard space along I-95 north in South Carolina and North Carolina not unlike old Burma Shave ads with teasers that would create awareness of Richmond and its attractions.

## CONCLUSION

Richmond arguably sits in the middle of one of the most historic regions in the country. Although this part of Virginia traditionally has been tied closely with the history of Colonial America and the Civil War, in reality it offers much more, and truly spans to full scope of American history. In that respect, it can rightly promote itself as “The Crossroads of American History” (playing on the crossing of I-95 and I-64 in downtown Richmond) or as “The Gateway to American History.” We urge our community leaders, representatives of the hospitality and travel industry, and those charged with overseeing our historic sites and institutions to consider these suggestions in hopes that they will encourage people to visit Richmond in numbers greater than ever before. As Governor McDonnell exclaimed in announcing his final budget: “Now is the time for everybody to coalesce around Richmond.”

Brent D. Glass

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