



Advisory Committee Meeting #4, October 23, 2007
Religious Freedom Byway
Charles and St. Mary's Counties, Maryland

Introduction -- Carolyn began with Byway's interpretive opportunities and challenges

Opportunities:

- high quality visitor attractions located at fairly regular intervals
- beautiful scenery/natural environment
- relatively undeveloped rural area (but recognize development pressures, esp. in Charles Co.)
- many rich stories – many potential themes
- close to multiple metropolitan areas – potential visitors

Challenges:

- sometimes must drive long distances between attractions
- lack of wayfinding/signage (Jim will speak to Terry about possible improvements)
- few sites offer significant visitor experiences
- limited interpretation – how many sites are open regularly, have informative panels, offer tours, etc.
- lack coherent themes – lots of great stories but need to relate them to one another – make Byway a coherent experience
- need visitor services (i.e. restrooms, gift shops, etc.) – visitors will stay longer if comfortable

Byway Themes – Peter introduced revised primary and secondary interpretive themes

Primary Interpretive Theme:

The Founding of Maryland

- *Knowledge of History*
- *Heritage destinations are primary places to learn about history*
- *Basis for telling wide range of stories (but do not want range to become so wide that this byway no longer unique)*
- *Broader marketing message*
AND the reflection of national events/stories in the state's history
*Relationship to national significance very important!
(Maryland is one of only four places where this story can be told.)

Secondary Interpretive Themes:

Drawn by the Water and the Land

- *Ecology of the Lower Potomac River*
- *Before the Fall: Land Use and Ecology of the Piscattaway Peoples before 1634*
- *Europeans Take Possession: Land Use and Ecology of Early Settlement, 1634 to 1689*

Struggling to Establish a Colony – most of the sites come together here

- *The Vision of Lord Baltimore: a place of stability and prosperity* – Capital is moved to Annapolis in 1689. Vision was to create a prosperous and stable colony for financial success. Separation of church and state – not for religious freedom. Religious tolerance/freedom theme is fundamental to story, but it is not WHY Maryland was formed. **
Catholics stayed “under the radar” of government. Created a manor system – feudal system to promote loyalty. Lords recruited priests to come and serve the manor. Manor system eventually broke down – what is the story? Manor was taxed, not individual?
- *English and Catholic: a practical program of survival in sidestepping religious conflict*
- *The Manor System: a feudal system to promote stability*
- *The Challenge of Recruitment: who came and why*
- *Watching your Back: fending off challenges in England*
- *Absentee Management: the colonial government develops a mind of its own*
- *Realities on the Land: things were different than expected*
- *Conversion and Decimation: the Piscattaway disappear* – perhaps “seem to disappear” or “decline” – Piscattaway groups still exist in area. Not nationally recognized, but have three museums in Charles Co. and have annual festivals/events
- *Challenges to Authority: competition, uprising and rebellion*
- *Co-opting the Colony: the Protestant Revolution of 1689 ends it*

**Where does the religious story fit in? Religious freedom issue is more of a practical approach by Calvert.

- Founded in survival of the Catholics. (Dating back to England)

- Act of Religious Tolerance – division of church and state – those are **ideals that formed to forge the nation** – how it relates to what we are today as a country – should be part of the story. Should compare and contrast settlements in different states – what role did churches have in government and daily life?

(Especially important in marketing to separate the byway from other places, like Jamestown – this ideal is unique to Maryland)

- Constitution – makes separation of church and state into American law

- Story of conversion of Indians

Needs to be included in primary theme – need to show national relevance; also critical for marketing – want to appeal to larger population

Tobacco – Commerce and Conflict

- *Creating a Prosperous Economy*
- *International Export*
- *Cultivating Tobacco: how tobacco is grown*
- *Indentured Servants to Slavery* – feudal system breaks down and plantations emerge
- *Port Towns*
- *Revolutionary War* – continues through Civil War
- *Ties to the South*

Potential Interpretive Sites – Peter identified four anchor sites and 17 secondary sites that could tell the stories along the Byway

Anchor Sites

1. *Thomas Stone National Historic Site*
Thomas Stone has revolutionary ties and bought Haberdventure as plantation, but ancestors tie to manor system
Stone was born and grew up near Port Tobacco
Great grandfather (?) was governor of Maryland, Governor William Stone
2. *St. Clement's Island Museum*
3. *Historic St. Mary's City* – Freedom of Conscience monument
Don't want the Byway to be all about St. Mary's
4. *Sotterly Plantation*
not directly along Byway, but within two turns
encouraged by St. Mary's City to include and has visitor services

Secondary Sites

1. *Mount Carmel Monastery*
2. *Smallwood Retreat House*
3. *Purse State Park*
4. *Friendship Farm Park*
5. *Christ Church, Ironsides (Old Durham Church)*
6. *Port Tobacco Historic District*
7. *St. Thomas Manor* – has accessible restrooms, video facility, occasional activities
8. *Christ Episcopal Church*
9. *St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church*
10. *Leonardtwn*
11. *St. George's Protestant Episcopal Church*
12. *Cecil's Mill Historic District*
- ⇒ 13. *Piney Point Lighthouse Museum and Park* – has restrooms, gift shop, two galleries, museum, historic boats park – Could be fifth anchor site????
14. *Trinity Episcopal Church*
15. *St. Mary's College of Maryland*
16. *St. Ignatius Church*
17. *Point Lookout State Park*

Additional Comments

- Seem to be focusing on 1638-1689 time period – concern that time frame is too narrow and may exclude much of Charles Co. history which happened later
- Look at resources through a lens/filter – primary theme provides the lens/filter
- Need to communicate to the visitor the connection between regional history and how it influenced the country's development
- Roz can share PowerPoint through Museum Association meetings in the next week to get comments and feedback
- "Ties to the South" sub-theme opens opportunities to expand stories
- Themes stop at Civil War – what is the relevance today? Is there a way to tie to Civil Rights, tolerance, etc? How do we make it interesting for young people today?

- End interpretation with a question – what does this have to do with our present times?
Encourage visitors to make connections.
- For each site have to determine
 - What are the themes
 - What are the stories (Native American, Jesuit, manor, integration, tobacco production, indentured servants, slaves, the underground railroad, tenant farms, etc.)
 - Need exhibits to talk about both the bigger picture and some of the smaller sites – how do they relate?
 - What kind of visitor experience existed or is planned?
- Visitors are not going to experience stories along Byway in chronological order – how can we convey coherent message regardless of where visitor begins on Byway?
- Need to develop smaller itineraries – 1 to 3 hours long
- Story of churches is about the community around which the church was organized
- Churches – need to determine which are open, which are open by appointment, which might be willing to open for certain hours, or which would be receptive to interpretive panels/other interpretive tools
- How does the story of this area relate back to the story of the nation's founding? Series of documents influential in writing the Constitution – Act of Religious Toleration was one of these documents
- Need to use people as a way of telling the story – everyone from leaders to artisans, workers, slaves, etc.
- Leonardtown -- really the only town along the byway – was originally a port town
- Need historians to vet the story, then have sites and stories reviewed by a diverse group
- Historical resources:
 - Georgetown University Jesuit Archive
 - Chesapeake Bay Gateways
 - Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail

Next meeting

Date: November 29, 2007

Time: 1:30-3:30pm (tentative)

Place: Thomas Stone National Historic Site

6655 Rose Hill Road

Port Tobacco, MD 20677