

BATTLEFIELD UPDATE

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NEW GETTYSBURG TOWER RAZING PROPOSAL ADVANCES

A proposal to purchase and dismantle the controversial National Tower at Gettysburg National Military Park (*Battlefield Update*, Number 52) this month was expanded to include a proposed new state-of-the-art battlefield history center on the cleared site.

James Holechek, a retired Maryland executive who succeeded in raising funds for a new Maryland Monument dedicated last fall at the Gettysburg park, recently established the National Tower Fund, which is dedicated to buying and dismantling the Gettysburg National Tower in 1995. The privately owned 310-foot-tall steel tower has loomed over the nation's most renowned Civil War battlefield since 1972. Holechek's current proposal to remove the tower and its visual blight was met with some local concern about the resulting loss to the local tax base should the tower be razed.

To counter these concerns, the National Tower Fund currently is seeking private investors who will purchase and raze the tower and develop a history and conference center on the site, which would be donated to the National Park Service. The plan calls for the



developer to operate the center for 10 to 12 years in order to amortize the loan on the property. Carrying out this proposal "would mean that one of the Gettysburg National Military Park's highest land acquisition priorities could be accomplished in its centennial year without any NPS funding," according to a briefing statement issued this month by the park. The tower site is listed in the park's 1993 land protection plan as a high-priority site for inclusion in the park's boundaries. Congress approved public law 101-377 in 1990 to expand the park's boundaries, including the tower site, but no acquisition funds were provided and are not expected to become available in the foreseeable future," according to the briefing statement.

Holechek says the tower's owner, Overview Limited Partnership, will consider purchase offers until the end of April. The tower and land were appraised in 1994 at \$6.6 million. Holechek has written to such high-profile potential investors as Hollywood producer/director Steven Spielberg to explain the project and to seek their interest. His outline for the history center calls for a developer "willing to create a new environment to instruct, educate, and entertain the 1.6-million visitors to the park each year." Among

the ideas for the center are a high-tech visual presentation of the Gettysburg battlefield using an IMAX or other visual imaging system that could capture a 360-degree view filmed from the top of the tower before it is demolished. Other proposals call for weekly seminars and interactive video displays.

Support for the tower razing and new history center has been given by the Gettysburg National Military Park Advisory Commission and the Friends of the National Parks at Gettysburg. John A. Latschar, superintendent of the Gettysburg National Military Park, says razing the National Tower is among the park's major goals during its 1995 centennial year. Other goals include "protecting the rest of the lands in the new boundary and, of course, preserving the battlefield for the enjoyment of this and future generations."

Further information about the tower plan is available from the National Tower Fund, Galleria Atrium, Suite 206, 1407 York Road, Lutherville, MD 21093, telephone (410) 296-8131.

ABPP ASSISTANCE HIGHLIGHTED AT COIN CEREMONY

Kentucky's Mill Springs Battlefield, a major recipient of assistance from the **American Battlefield Protection Program**, was showcased on January 21 during the first public showing of mock-ups of the 1995 Civil War Battlefield Commemorative Coins. The ceremony was held on the 133rd anniversary of the

battle and also marked the battlefield's recent selection as a National Historic Landmark.

U.S. Treasurer Mary Ellen Withrow displayed the representations of the three new coins, which will be sold starting in March. Proceeds from the sale of the 3.3-million coins are expected to raise between \$7 million and \$21.5 million for the Civil War Trust's battlefield preservation efforts. "The Department of the Treasury is proud to be a part of this great effort," said Withrow. "It demonstrates how public and private sectors can work together to enhance historic preservation."

Among the featured speakers at Mill Springs were: U.S. Rep. Hal Rogers (R-KY); Mill Springs Battlefield Association President Bill Neikirk; National Park Service Special Assistant to the Director for Military Sites Ed Bearss; Civil War Trust Executive Vice President Matt Andrews, Kentucky Heritage Council Executive Director David L. Morgan; Kentucky State Secretary of the Education, Arts, and Humanities Cabinet Sherry K. Jelsma; and National Park Service representative Mark Barnes. All of the speakers "underscored the importance of building partnerships, particularly at the local level, to preserve our significant Civil War treasures," notes Bearss, who outlined **ABPP's** contributions at Mill Springs. This assistance includes: development of the Mill Springs Preservation Plan in 1993 with \$20,000 from **ABPP** to the Mill Springs Battlefield Association; development of the Mill Springs Interpretation Plan and interpretive wayside signs in 1994 with \$22,000

from **ABPP** to the Mill Springs Battlefield Association; professional staffing for the Mill Springs Battlefield Association in 1994 with \$25,000 in **ABPP** funds; creation of a Mill Springs Battlefield video, with \$1,000 from **ABPP** to local Troop 79 of the Boy Scouts of America; and presentation of **ABPP's** Battlefield Preservation Award in 1993 to both the Mill Springs Battlefield Association and the Kentucky Heritage Council for their outstanding leadership and efforts to preserve America's Civil War battlefields.

FRYE NAMED INTERIM PRESIDENT OF APCWS

Dennis Frye was appointed as the interim president of the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites effective January 1. He replaces A. Wilson Greene, who has accepted the new position of executive director of Pamplin Park Civil War Site near Petersburg, VA.

Frye, a founding member and trustee of APCWS, has taken a leave of absence from his job as Chief Historian of the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. Frye also was the cofounder and first president of the Save Historic Antietam Foundation. APCWS Chairman Tom Richards says that Frye's "leadership, experience, and vision will allow the association to continue the remarkable record of preservation successes initiated by outgoing president A. Wilson Greene."

The **ABPP**, which has worked closely with the APCWS on numerous projects, wishes both Dennis and Will great success in their new work.

ABPP FUNDS VICKSBURG CAMPAIGN CONFERENCE

The **American Battlefield Protection Program** is funding the Vicksburg Civil War Campaign Preservation Conference on February 14-15 in Jackson, Miss. The conference, sponsored by the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites (APCWS) and the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, is being planned by the Blue and Gray Education Society. Conference attendees will examine the potential for creating a Vicksburg heritage trail that connects significant related sites.

"Vicksburg is more than a single site," says APCWS President Dennis Frye. "It is a siege unparalleled in America's history. The entire campaign is a masterpiece of tenacity and military skill, worthy of study and historic interpretation." Conference participants will discuss various possibilities for linking such related Vicksburg Campaign sites as Port Gibson and Champion's Hill in order to help the more than one-million annual visitors at the Vicksburg National Military Park to better understand the campaign.

"Progress has occurred in preserving the still pristine sites associated with the final phases of

the Vicksburg Campaign," Frye says. "These sites pave the road to Vicksburg and are absolutely essential to an understanding of events there. Happily, those sites retain their Civil War character and appearance. Their proximity to prominent state roads presents the opportunity to add these battlefields to the travel itineraries of hundreds of thousands of tourists."

Among the conference's speakers are **American Battlefield Protection Program** historian Rebecca Shrimpton and Mississippi Department of History and Archives representative Michael Beard.

The Blue and Gray Education Society also is organizing a seminar planned for February 17-19 at the Old Capitol Building in Jackson. The society is a Danville, VA-based nonprofit educational organization committed to battlefield interpretation, public education and quality scholarship. Ed Bearss, the National Park Service's Special Assistant to the Director for Military Sites, will lead three days of tours and lectures. For further information, contact Len Reidel, the society's executive director, at (804) 836-1518.

INDIAN WARS CONFERENCE PLANNED AT FORT SMITH

The Fort Smith National Historic Site has issued a call for papers and presentations for "War and Reconstruction in Indian Territory: A History Conference in Observance of the Fort Smith Council," which is planned for September 15-16.

One-page proposals and a brief resume should be submitted by March 1 to Julie Galonska, Park Historian, Fort Smith National Historic Site, P.O. Box 1406 Fort Smith, AR 72902. Among the suggested topics are the involvement of Indians in the Civil War, refugee from Indian Territory during the Civil War, and the issue of a consolidated government for the Indian Territory. Poster sessions, multimedia, and nontraditional presentations also will be considered.

The conference marks the 130th anniversary of the meeting of the Fort Smith Council, a session designed to reestablish formal relations among the tribes and the United States government following the Civil War. Representatives of both the Union and Confederate factions of 10 Indian nations met with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at Fort Smith.

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