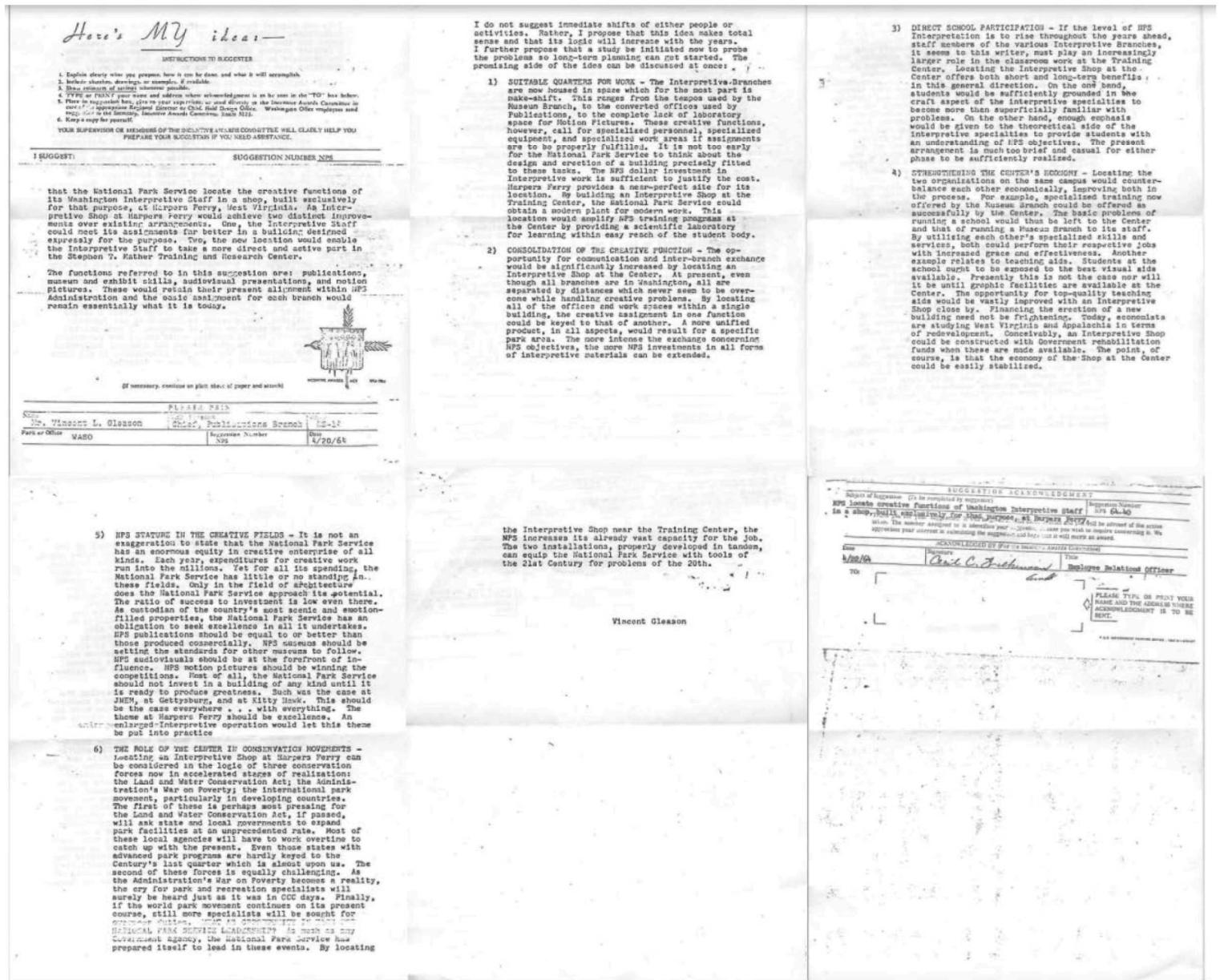




Harpers Ferry Center

HFC Idea



Below is the trascribed text from above images

Here's My Idea

Submitted by: Mr. Vincent Gleason, Title – Chief, Publications Branch, GS-14

Park or Office: WASO

Suggestion Number: NPS 64-40

Date: 4/20/1964

I suggest that the National Park Service locate the creative functions of its Washington Interpretive Staff in a shop, built exclusively for that purpose, at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

As Interpretive Shop at Harpers Ferry would achieve two distinct improvements over existing arrangements. One, the Interpretive Staff could meet its assignments far better in a building designed expressly for the purpose. Two, the new location would enable the Interpretive Staff to take a more direct and active part in the Stephen T. Mather Training and Research Center.

The functions referred to in this suggestion are: publications, museum and exhibit skills, audiovisual presentations, and motion pictures. These would retain their present alignment within NPS Administration and the basic assignment for each branch would remain essentially what it is today.

I do not suggest immediate shifts of either people or activities. Rather, I propose this idea makes total sense and that its logic will increase with the years. I further propose that a study be initiated now to probe the problems so long-term planning can get started. The promising side of the idea can be discussed at once:

1. Suitable Quarters for Work— The Interpretive Branches are now housed in space which for the most part is make-shift. This ranges from the tempos used by the Museum Branch, to the converted offices used by Publications, to the complete lack of laboratory space for Motion Pictures. These creative functions, however, call for specialized personnel, specialized equipment, and specialized work areas if assignments are to be properly fulfilled. It is not too early for the National Park Service to think about the design and erection of a building precisely fitted to these tasks. The NPS dollar investment in Interpretive work is sufficient to justify the cost. Harpers Ferry provides the near perfect site for its location. By building an Interpretive Shop at the Training Center, the National Park Service could obtain a modern plant for modern work. This location would amplify NPS Training programs at the Center by providing a scientific laboratory for learning within easy reach of the student body.

2. Consolidation of the Creative Function—The opportunity for communication and interbranch exchange would be significantly increased by locating an Interpretive Shop at the Center. At present, even though all branches are in Washington, all are separated by distances which never seem to be overcome while handling creative problems. By locating all of the offices and work spaces within a single building, the creative assignment in one function could be keyed to that of another. A more unified product, in all aspects, would result for a specific park area. The more intense the exchange concerning NPS objectives, the more NPS investments in all forms of interpretive materials can be extended.

3. Direct School Participation—The level of NPS Interpretation is to rise throughout the years ahead, staff members of the various Interpretive Branches, it seems to this writer, must play an increasingly larger role in the classroom work at the Training Center. Locating the Interpretive Shop at the Center offers both short and long-term benefits in this general direction. On the one hand, students would be sufficiently grounded in the craft aspects of the interpretive specialties to become more than superficially familiar with problems. On the other hand, enough emphasis would be given to the theoretical side of the interpretive specialties to provide students with an understanding of NPS objectives. The present arrangement is much too brief and casual for either phase to be sufficiently realized.

4. Strengthening the Center's Economy —Locating the two organizations on the same campus would counterbalance each other economically, improving both in the process. For example, specialized training now offered by the Museum Branch could be offered as successfully by the Center. The basic problems of running a school would thus be left to the Center and that of running a Museum Branch to its staff. By utilizing each other's specialize skills and service, both could perform their respective jobs with increased grace and effectiveness. Another example relates to teaching aids. Students at the school ought to be exposed to the best visual aids available. Presently this is not the case not will it be until graphic facilities are available at the Center. The opportunity for top-quality teaching aids would be vastly improved with an

Interpretive Shop close by. Financing the erection of a new building need not be frightening. Today, economists are studying West Virginia and Appalachia in terms of redevelopment. Conceivably, an Interpretive Shop could be constructed with Government rehabilitation funds when these are made available. The point, of course, is that the economy of the Shot at the Center could be easily stabilized.

5. NPS Stature in the Creative Fields— It is not an exaggeration to state that the National Park Service has an enormous equity in creative enterprise of all kinds. Each year, expenditures for creative work run into the millions. Yet for all its spending, the National Park Service has little or no standing in these fields. Only in the field of architecture does the National Park Service approach its potential. The ratio of success to investment is low even there. As custodian of the country's most scenic and emotion-filled properties, the National Park Service has an obligation to seek excellence in all it undertakes. NPS publications should be equal to or better than those produced commercially. NPS museums should be setting the standards for other museums to follow. NPS audiovisuals should be at the forefront of influence. Most of all, the National Park Service should not invest in a building of any kind until is ready to produce greatness. Such was the case at JNEM, at Gettysburg, and at Kitty Hawk. This should be the case everywhere...with everything. The theme at Harpers Ferry should be excellence. An enlarged Interpretive operation would let this theme be put into practice.

6. The Role of the Center in Conservation Movements— Locating an Interpretive Shop at Harpers Ferry can be considered on the logic of three conservation forces now in accelerated stages of realization: the Land and Water Conservation Act; the Administration's War on Poverty; and the international park movement, particularly in developing countries. The first of these is perhaps most pressing, for the Land and Water Conservation Act, if passed, will ask state and local governments to expand park facilities at an unprecedented rate. Most of these local agencies will have to work overtime to catch up with the present. Even those states with advanced park programs are hardly keyed to the century's last quarter, which is almost upon us. The second of these forces is equally challenging. As the Administration's War on Poverty becomes a reality the cry for park and recreation specialists will surely be heard just as it was in the CCC days. Finally, if the world park movement continues on its present course, still more specialists will be sought.... WHAT AN OPPORTUNITY IN EACH FOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE LEADERSHIP? As much as any Government agency, the National Park Service has prepared itself to lead in these events. By locating the Interpretive Shop near the Training Center, the NPS increases its already vast capacity for the job. The two installations, properly developed in tandem, can equip the National Park Service with tools of the 21th Century for problems of the 20th.

Vincent Gleason

Suggestion Acknowledgment

Subject of Suggestion (To be completed by the suggester) - NPS Locate creative functions of Washington Interpretive Staff in a shop, built exclusively for that purpose at Harpers Ferry.

Acknowledged By (For the Incentive Awards Committee)

Date: 4/22/64

Signature: {ILLEGIBLE}

Title: Employee Relations Officer

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