

THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
AND  
THE AFRO-AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

1990:

An Independent Assessment from the Black Perspective

by

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Afro-American Institute for Historic Preservation  
and Community Development

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Memorandum

To: Regional Director, NARO  
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 Superintendent, Petersburg National Battlefield  
 Superintendent, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park  
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 Superintendent, Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine  
 Superintendent, Gettysburg National Military Park  
 Superintendent, Fort Sumter National Monument  
 Superintendent, Fort Pulaski National Monument  
 Superintendent, Castillo De San Marcos National Monument  
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From: Chief Historian

Subject: **The National Park Service and the Afro-American Experience 1990**

I commend to your attention the subject study (copy attached) prepared by Richard E. Miller for the Afro-American Institute for Historic Preservation and Community Development. Mr. Miller's direct and jargon-free text makes for easy and understandable reading.

I urge you to consider his recommendations for the interpretive programs of the parks he has analyzed and to incorporate them into your interpretive planning schedules, as appropriate. Some of his ideas might be susceptible of immediate action. To the extent that is so, I would encourage it.

Attachment

*Ed. Bruner*

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Prince George's County Memorial Library System Branch Library, Oxon Hill, MD. Philadelphia Free Library, Philadelphia, PA. Martin Luther King Library, Washington, DC. Pentagon Library, Arlington, VA. Chesapeake City Library, Chesapeake, VA. Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Avery Institute, Charleston, SC. Penn School Community Center, Frogmore, SC. U. S. Marine Corps Museum, Parris Island, SC. Florida Historical Museum, Tallahassee, FL. The Seige Museum, Petersburg, VA. Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, VA. Valentine Museum, Richmond, VA. Old Fort Jackson Museum, Savannah, GA.

## PREFACE

This report, an assessment of the National Park Service (NPS) and its relations with the Afro-American public, is essentially the outcome of visits I made to units of the park system in eleven eastern states and the District of Columbia between June and November 1990. As a consultant hired by the Afro-American Institute for Historic Preservation and Community Development in conjunction with its co-operative agreement with the NPS I conducted independent research and regularly submitted progress reports to the NPS History Division. Those reports contained details regarding my methodology and documented my activities in the hope that timely action would be taken on some of my recommendations. Important advice and liaison assistance was provided by Ben Levy, Ed Bearss and others in the NPS divisions of History and Interpretation.

I had originally planned to revisit each of the five NPS units featured in the 1978 assessment conducted by Washington's Howard University entitled, Afro-American History Interpretation at Selected National Parks and known as the Howard Study. However, various time limitations and the difficulty of finding assistance for field work made it repeatedly necessary to modify my visitation list. Eventually, Fort Davis, Perry's Victory, Chalmette, and other sites in the central and western states were eliminated and several sites in the northeast were added to the schedule. These changes were made purely for logistical considerations and do not imply that the importance of Afro-American themes at the units visited is any greater or less than

at those which were not.

Hopefully, assessment visits can be resumed in the months ahead. Meanwhile, I present this study <sup>is</sup> based largely on my experiences with units on the eastern seaboard but with conclusions which I believe will have relevance to the national system.

NPS sites where the primary theme for interpretation is the life of a Black American (B. T. Washington, M. L. King, etc.) have received only passing consideration. Reference has been made to some of the programs at such locations and interpretive materials known to be in use. However, I have tried to remain focused on the the "non-Black" sites and what the NPS is doing or might do to attract the Afro-American visitor and to integrate Black history into its interpretation of the American experience in general.

Any discussion of the Afro-American experience must at some point consider the subject of slavery. Since at least 1988 the NPS has been engaged with the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) in developing a policy on how this particularly controversial issue should be interpreted.

Early in 1990 a report was produced by Dr. Hayward Farrar, a representative of the HBCU under contract with the NPS Mid-Atlantic region which dealt extensively with slavery at five NPS sites in that region. Additional research and debate is in progress. In order, I suppose, not to create confusion with those undertakings I was urged to avoid the slavery issue in this report.

It was always my intention to promote the more "heroic" aspects of the Black experience in this country and to de-emphasize the degradations associated with slavery. I deeply believe that emphasis on the positive is the key in stimulating interest within the Black community in its own history. Nevertheless, the fact is that many of our proudest heroes were slaves, escapees from slavery, or in some sense products of that institution. I have not hesitated, therefore, to elaborate about these connections where required.

The authors of the Howard Study frankly promoted the contention that "professional historians are best qualified to undertake the task of analyzing NPS presentations." My credentials in sociology and history are admittedly humble by comparison with the team from Howard University and other scholars of the HBCU, some of whose conclusions and ideas I have felt obliged to criticize at points in this paper.

What I have tried to do is place myself in the role of the "common park visitor" <sup>(U)</sup> albeit one with a modestly sophisticated and definitely Afro-American point of view. My recommendations are for improvements I believe an ordinary Black person would find attractive and appeal to his or her sense of pride and dignity while filling in some of the genuine gaps in American history as it has been conveyed by the NPS.

I have often felt that academics, Black and White, have given too little consideration to these ends regarding the "common visitor" <sup>(U)</sup> I have also developed the <sup>(U)</sup> feeling that "professional historians" have been rather unappreciative of the

Right on.  
I could  
agree  
more.

abilities as well as the sensitivities of NPS interpreters as a group. Hopefully, I have made it clear when my ideas are derived from those of some insightful NPS interpreter. I also hope interpreters and other park personnel will appreciate the "real life" philosophy I try to express. A bibliography is provided, but I have avoided footnotes and scholastic pretensions.

What follows is essentially a one person performance. I have tried to give credit in the text to others where it is due, but the responsibility for the end result is mine alone.

[A note regarding terminology and usage: Throughout this report the racial descriptions "Black" and "White" are capitalized, a practice I hope the NPS and the rest of the federal government will soon adopt universally and officially. I have also used "Black" interchangeably (more or less) with the term "Afro-American"  $\bar{\lambda}$  an expression of "nationality" which I personally prefer over the more fashionable "African-American"  $\bar{\lambda}$ ]



I. INTRODUCTION. The following is an overview of historical interpretation as conducted by the National Park Service, its policies and priorities relating to multicultural and 'inclusionary' obligations, plus an explanation of the basic contention that legitimate and locally relevant Afro-American themes can and should be developed for most of the system's historical units.

The Inclusionary Imperative.

Controversy in the area of historical interpretation and its ultimate goals arose within and without the National Park Service (NPS) even as it acquired administrative responsibility for its first historic sites in the 1930s. The intention expressed by Verne E. Chatelain, the NPS's first chief historian, that additions to the system should eventually 'tell a more or less complete story of American history' has not been achieved to anyone's full satisfaction. It is unlikely that it ever shall be.

ate/ain

As noted by NPS historian Barry Mackintosh in Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective (Perspective, 1986), thematic balance was often less a consideration than local public and political pressure when it came to acquisition of new properties for the park system. Whether by official policy or the natural instincts of park interpreters, sites 'honoring' historical figures have been committed to positive portrayals and 'because 'honoring' to some

degree has motivated the establishment of most historical parks. units of the system focusing on wholly negative aspects of America's past are virtually non-existent. Since the 1960s, the NPS has been faced with the relevance of its interpretive activities in the light of what many describe as the revolutionary social changes which have taken place especially the newly achieved political influence of the Black race among other 'minority' groups. Interpretive programs at many if not most of the NPS's historical units are directly subject to the demands of Afro-Americans for recognition of their race's participation in the totality of America's history.

A new, 'inclusionary' or 'multicultural' approach is insisted upon by those who recognize that NPS priorities were previously focused almost entirely upon the 'positive' historical accomplishments of Americans of European descent.

In 1990 some 88 National Historical Landmarks (NHLs) out of ~~more~~ <sup>than</sup> over 2,000 across the country had been officially recognized for their connection with the Afro-American experience. Most of these achieved NHL status as the result of a major initiative launched in connection with the country's Bicentennial celebration in 1975. Beginning with the George W. Carver National Monument (NM) in 1943, a handful of sites honoring Afro-Americans have been incorporated as full-fledged units of the National Park System: Booker T. Washington NM (1956), Frederick Douglass Home (1962), Tuskegee Institute National Historic Site

(NHS) (1974), Maggie L. Walker NHS (1978), Boston African American NHS (1980), Martin L. King NHS (1980), and the Washington Black History Trail (1989). Hopefully, more of the Black-oriented NHLs and some sites presently not even on that list will be elevated to inclusion in the National Park System. Meanwhile, the participation of Blacks in events commemorated by the NPS at many other locations has generally been neglected.

Often the Black connection at these sites involves some aspect of slavery, some racially tainted legal injustice or points out some other negative aspect of the American past. Some might call it inherent racism which has kept Blacks out of the interpretive picture, others a Eurocentric idealism combined with a tradition of emphasis on the positive. Whatever the explanation, the Nation's Black citizenry can rightfully complain that it has been ill-served by NPS programs over the years. Even as a new interpretive ethic which places honesty on a par and in combination with accuracy has become officially endorsed, the perception has persisted that the NPS commitment to racial inclusion has been less than wholehearted.

In the last quarter century the term 'multicultural' has gained popularity in the NPS, and (rightfully) it has come to include a broad spectrum of racial, ethnic, regional, religious, and socioeconomic constituencies. But as the breadth of this inclusionary imperative has expanded, the question of Afro-American themes has remained peculiarly sensitive.

Interpreting the Black role is a responsibility with which some park rangers (managers, historians, and interpreters) still seem reluctant to deal. While some easily embrace the inclusionary philosophy when it involves the role of White women, Native Americans or other minority groups, they seem to find Afro-American subjects best avoided. Certainly, it is true that a large segment of the White public <sup>^</sup>the NPS's primary visiting constituency <sup>^</sup>would just as soon have this situation remain the norm.

The Wright and Wells Field Guide for Evaluating NPS Interpretation describes the concept of 'baggage' as 'the totality of attitudes, values, motivations and beliefs brought to the interpretive experience by the visitor as well as the interpreter.' It seems clear that the baggage of racism still weighs heavily on all concerned.

The most popular training guide for new NPS interpreters is W. J. Lewis' Interpreting for Park Visitors. From its list of the nine major goals in interpretation these three can be highlighted: '...to help visitors have an inspirational, relaxing, good time...to provide visitors with an escape from the pressures which assault them...to show the relationship of what is being observed (experienced) to the lives of the observers...'

The first two of these goals equate to those mandatory in any successful host-guest relationship, and for most interpreters these considerations have always been paramount. At many parks the number of Black 'observers' (i.e. visitors) remains

artificially low and their appreciation and enjoyment of park programs artificially less than it might be. Often this has had as much to do with an extra measure of anxiety on the part of the Afro-American  $\bar{\lambda}$  the 'baggage' carried by many into multi-racial situations of the host-guest variety  $\bar{\lambda}$  as it has had with the institutional racism still widely discernable about the 'White' NPS establishment.

It must be recognized that the expectations and ultimately the edification of 'majority' visitors (i.e., non-Blacks) are likely to be significantly affected by the presence or absence of Blacks in any group interpretive experience. Any racial implications appropriate to the third goal regarding relationship(s) to the observer(s) need to be presented in a palatable, relevant manner for all visitors, regardless of individual ethnicity or the make up of observer groups.

This study was not intended to be a performance evaluation of individual interpreters. However, interpreters  $\bar{\lambda}$  Black and White  $\bar{\lambda}$  at several of the sites visited by the author expressed creative ideas and demonstrated remarkable abilities to achieve inclusionary presentations. The recommendations included later in this assessment are intended to correct observed deficiencies, to point out overlooked 'relationships' and to provide for the 'inspirational, relaxing, good time experience' of more Black visitors. Hopefully, these suggestions will aid and inspire park rangers with less experience or fewer resources than others in establishing relevant interpretations of the Afro-American

experience for the educational benefit of all observers.

Black History As an Interpretive Theme.

Naturally, the Afro-American experience is a 'primary' or 'major' theme for interpretation at those NPS units sometimes unofficially identified as 'Black' or 'Black-oriented' ~~the~~ the ones specifically honoring the lives of famous Black personalities. Since the Howard Study in 1978, and thanks at least in part to the assessment provided therein by Cassandra Smith-Parker, Black history has also become one of several primary themes at the Harpers Ferry NHP where an important new museum on the subject was in an advanced stage of development in 1990.

A review at the NPS Interpretation division of available Statements for Interpretation (SFIs ~~required~~ required to be submitted annually by each NPS unit but frequently years overdue) in 1990 showed that Arkansas Post was one of the rare units declaring that 'the contribution of the [B]lack people is an integral part' of their program. I was told the same held true for the Jean Lafitte NHS (Chalmette) where a new 'cultural park' was recently dedicated. Chalmette had been found lacking at the time of the Howard Study (1978). At any rate, that park's SFI was not ~~of~~ <sup>on</sup> file in 1990.

When the controversy on how to deal with slavery is resolved it seems likely that Black history will become a primary theme at Hampton and other NPS units interpreting life in the antebellum South. Meanwhile, these and several other sites (Bent's Old

Fort, Colonial, Fort Davis, Richmond, etc.) list Afro-American topics as secondary or 'minor' themes for interpretation. Judging from the SFIs, in some cases this recognition may be largely theoretical. The SFI format requires that any inherent appeal to a 'minority' culture be identified. In response to this requirement several parks which might have otherwise ignored the possibility now seem to recognize that Blacks may have figured into their history at some point. However, the often used notation 'more research needed' seems to be adequate for taking the pressure off when it comes to developing specific new interpretations. Pressure would seem to be the least at smaller parks in rural areas where there may be few militantly concerned Blacks in the local population.

On the other hand, in visiting various parks in urban areas it is interesting to observe how some units have elaborated on what might at best be considered historical footnotes in order to establish a Black connection    even when there is no Afro-American theme identified in the SFI and/or when the possibility for more broadly based connections and interpretations clearly exists.

At Philadelphia's Thaddeus Kosciusko NM it is significant for the NPS to point out that the Polish revolutionary's concern for democracy included some provocative correspondence with Thomas Jefferson on the insufferability of American slavery. Of more questionable relevance (stretching the point as it were) is the inclusion of an early Afro-American writer, William Wells

Brown in a display at the Edgar Allen Poe NHS. Unlike the other literary figures pictured, there seemed to be no direct connection between this man and Poe's life or writings. Surely, more relevant would be a discussion of Poe's racial views (if any are known) as a Southerner living in the North during slavery days or an elaboration on Poe's characterization (or lack thereof) of Afro-Americans in any of his writings <sup>7</sup> a likely tangent on a basic discussion of nativisms vs European allusions in his work and something most students of Poe's life and writings would appreciate.

In a similar vein, the exhibits at the General Grant National Memorial in New York City contain a very enlightening panel on the career of the first Black to graduate from Harvard University, Richard T. Greener, a Grant protegee who among other things served as United States consul in Vladivostok during the critical period of China's Boxer Rebellion and was secretary of the Grant Monument Association. Streeter was certainly an important player in the erection of Grant's tomb and perhaps we should be thankful for the recognition of his ~~totally~~ remarkable career in such a prestigious setting. However, of much broader relevance would be some discussion of Grant's presidential administration and the pivotal affect on Afro-Americans of its Reconstruction policies in the Southern states. Here, ideed, is an example of how the NPS will go to great lengths to stress the positive at facilities where important figures are honored and how Black perspectives have been left out of the story because



the portrait of the honoree and the country as a whole which they provide may be less than totally flattering.

A singular opportunity exists at Baltimore's Fort McHenry NM to explore an important but (by traditional NPS standards) controversial theme regarding the Black experience during the War of 1812. An existing exhibit panel and information sheet profiles the military service of five Blacks who served with U. S. forces in the struggle against the British: four sailors and William Williams, a private in the 38th U.S. Infantry regiment who died in the bombardment of Fort McHenry in 1814, one of the few Blacks known to have served in the nominally all-White regular Army of that era. This is all well and good. However, a modern Black visitor would certainly appreciate an interpretation which included some discussion of the legendary battalion of some 200 Black 'colonial marines' which was recruited from the 5,000 or more runaway Black slaves who flocked to British lines early in their invasion of the Chesapeake Bay.

These men responded to the British promise of freedom from American bondage and served on the 'enemy' side in engagements at Bladensburg, MD, and Washington, D.C., as well as aboard the British ships firing at Fort McHenry. Traditional interpretive thinking would downplay these facts, the idea of Americans (even American slaves) being disloyal to their country must sound like the depths of negativism. For today's Afro-Americans, however, the boldness of those intrepid fugitives must be as soul stirring as the gallantry so often hailed by today's White Southerners

regarding their <sup>disloyal</sup>~~treasonous~~ Confederate forebearers in the Civil War.

If the latter theme can be neatly included and even dominate others as it has at a dozen NPS locations, the theme of Black rebellion against an oppressive American government should be considered acceptable and 'relevant'  $\bar{\lambda}$  even demonstrative of traditional American values like the love of freedom.

Local community relations and the political sensitivities in cities like New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore  $\bar{\lambda}$  especially the immediate need to provide local minorities with an interest in landmarks of another era which may now be in the midst of their own depressed neighborhoods  $\bar{\lambda}$  help to explain why the NPS might give prominence even to rather extraneous tidbits of information. But in other places, where external inclusionary pressures are probably less, recognition of truly pivotal connections have been missed if not deliberately overlooked. An outstanding example is the Horseshoe Bend National Military Park (NMP) where the primary theme is the Creek Indian War of 1813-14.

The Creek Confederation was the largest of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes all of which had connections of some sort with Blacks as well as Whites among their American neighbors. The background of the war is discussed at the Horseshoe Bend visitor center with exhibits and audiovisuals, but an observer in 1990 would most likely leave with not the slightest indication that the Black race existed  $\bar{\lambda}$  certainly, he or she would be unaware that the issue of Black slavery was intertwined in disputes

between the "New Way" and "Old Way" factions in the Creek tribe and that the important "Old Way" (i.e., Red Stick or Upper Creek) leader Jim Boy was of Creek and African descent.

Another example (which again demonstrates the NPS's relatively greater comfort in dealing with Native American themes) may be found at Fort Smith NHS. I have yet to visit Fort Smith, but as indicated in its SFI (1980) and descriptive literature, this facility has placed interpretive stress on the "Indian Removal" theme with no recognition of the various Afro-American considerations relevant to U.S. Indian policy in the southeastern states or Blacks among the Cherokee, Creek, and other "Civilized" Indian tribespeople who were removed and resettled in what became Oklahoma. Nor has attention been paid to the fort's role in the Civil War during which it was headquarters for noteworthy operations by units of "United States Colored Troops" (USCTs) as well as the Union Indian Brigade (in which a number of "Black Indians" and White half-breeds also served) in Arkansas and surrounding states.

Likewise, a choice has apparently been made at several Civil War-related sites in the east to avoid pivotal Afro-American aspects of that conflict. The most recent SFI (1982) for Antietam National Battlefield states that the staff is "continuing the exploration of minority involvement in the Battle of Antietam, but the Emancipation Proclamation is certainly the most positive development stemming from the Union victory on this field." It was not deemed worthy even of secondary theme status.

From the Afro-American viewpoint this document deserves celebration no less than that enjoyed by the revered Gettysburg Address at the NPS National Military Park and cemetery where its reading is commemorated.

Legitimate secondary themes on the Afro-American experience should be possible in the interpretative programs at a majority of NPS locations  $\bar{\Lambda}$  even in cases where there may never have been a significant physical presence of Blacks at the site. The New England industrialization theme at Lowell NHP begs for a comparative interpretation with the South's cotton culture without which the textile mills of Massachusetts could not have been sustained. The Black slave laborer was an anachronistic but indispensable element in the complexity of America's Industrial Revolution and should be worth a permanent exhibit in the spacious facilities which presently discuss only the system's northern, manufacturing component.

In some cases managers and interpreters have righteously sought to expand their presentations and to become more inclusionary (at Fort Sumter, Fort Frederica, etc.) only to be frustrated by restrictive enabling legislation. The existence of this constraint may be a convenient excuse for some, but it does in fact seem to be the main reason a few parks have not broadened their interpretations to achieve inclusionary goals.

In creating a new interpretation, relevance to a park's primary theme is always an obligation. To emphasize unrelated trivialities not only leaves the NPS open to criticism from

experts in the subject area but also to charges of patronization from the minorities the NPS may purport to acknowledge in doing so. The latter is especially true when (as may often be the case) the possibility exists for the development of entirely new major and minor themes for interpretation. Potential themes may be controversial, but interpreters are ultimately better off emphasizing the most broadly relevant of alternative possibilities  $\bar{\lambda}$  for Afro-American topics no less than for any other.

Meanwhile, just as the achievements of Euro-American leaders and heroes have been emphasized out of all proportion to mundane elements in the lives of America's White masses, there need be no feeling of dishonesty in emphasizing the more dramatic achievements of the small minority of Blacks who, even during the era of slavery (for example), managed to gain a measure of freedom, fame, or fortune. Such stories should be placed in proper context, respecting the fact that bondage was the ~~actual~~ condition of the vast majority. Nevertheless, the Afro-American deserves an opportunity for relevant hero worship at NPS shrines no less than any other constituency. The possibility of providing this opportunity should be an important standard for relevance/inclusion in the creation of all new interpretations.

II. APPROACHES TO INCLUSION. In the following paragraphs a variety of NPS historical interpretations are examined for their inclusionary content. Discussed also is the potential for enhancement of Afro-American themes through the vehicles of living history, audio-visuals, visitor center exhibits, and outreach efforts during Black History Month and other special occasions.

### Living History.

The level of enthusiasm for historical narration by costumed interpreters (rangers and volunteers) in the first person is clearly inconsistent among NPS professionals.

At Petersburg NB seasonal employees in Union and Confederate uniform played a key role in interpreting the epic seige of that city during the Civil War. At the same time, however, the participation of volunteer Civil War military re-enactors was looked upon with disfavor.

At the nearby Richmond National Battlefield Park (NBP), on the other hand, there was a marked aversion toward the use of staff members in costumes, but volunteers in period dress (for special events at least) seemed to be welcomed.

Interpreters at Harpers Ferry NHP were among the most philosophical. They tended to view period dress along with handicraft demonstrations, etc. as rather frivolous pretensions which were nevertheless useful tools for drawing the unconcerned into more serious third person lectures and other interpretations of the park's primary themes.

Certainly, period costumes add 'color' to any presentation, appeal to the ~~curiosity~~ natural curiosity in all visitors and tend to soften the image of the ranger-interpreter for those who might find a uniformed lecturer unattractive.

The Mackintosh Perspective discloses that 'living history' or 'living interpretation' became widely fashionable in the NPS during the mid-1960s only to draw considerable criticism from several quarters in the 1970s. The emphasis placed on demonstrations of period crafts, colorful military technologies, 'every day life' etc. while obviously entertaining and popular with visitors was felt too often distracting from the primary themes at many parks. Of particular interest are the comments delivered by interpreter Frank Barnes regarding the Richmond NBP's summer program for children in 1973 (as quoted by Mackintosh): 'the battlefield where authentic camp life (but without an enemy to worry about) and safe firings, sometimes skirmishes and misleadingly misnamed 'sum fun' almost make it so attractive that one wonders why more people don't take up a military career.' Barnes also criticized the NPS 'living farms' program as it had been established at the Booker T. Washington NM: '[T]he Booker T. Washington farm comes out as a charming scene, of course, complete with farm animals with picturesque names, with almost no indication of the social environmental realities of slave life (indeed, how far can you go with 'living slavery'.

The NPS's interpretation policy regarding slavery is still being debated and a more thorough assessment belongs in a different report; however, I must note that the study produced by Dr. Hayward Farrar for the NPS's Mid-Atlantic region in 1990 recommended the greater use of living history and 'more staff,



especially [Black interpreters who are willing to do first person interpretations.] I must suggest that it is very optimistic to suppose that agreeably satisfactory results can be achieved or sustained by relying predominantly or even just heavily on living history and first person narrative techniques when it comes to this subject. The comments of rangers at Richmond NBP may be instructive:

As was the case elsewhere in the system (see the Mackintosh Perspective excerpts above) living history was popular at Richmond through the 1970s, but enthusiasm declined at least for two reasons: cost effectiveness (often more costumed interpreters were employed than there were visitors at the presentations), and the evolution of what we have called the inclusionary imperative. Regarding the latter, Richmond's chief interpreter saw that it would be necessary to bring slavery to 'life' as part of the Richmond story, but he had serious reservations about requiring his Black staffmembers ~~to~~ especially, his female rangers ~~to~~ to assume the roles and wear the costumes of slaves. A negative reception from visitors, Black and White, was anticipated; the desirability of truly 're-living' the Civil War was questioned (see Barnes' quote above); and living history was eventually dropped in favor of a modern perspective on the subject as provided by rangers in NPS uniform with only the occasional use of invited, volunteer Civil War re-enactors. ('B' Company, 54th Massachusetts Infantry Regiment a group composed of Black re-enactors from the Washington, D.C. area participated in two

events at Richmond in 1990.)

Perhaps a juxtaposition of Blacks as slaves with Blacks as U. S. soldiers in the 1864-65 campaigns would have mollified negative public reactions (at least those from the Black community), but personnel and cost intensiveness would likely have been the undoing of any new, inclusionary living interpretations in the program at this particular park.

NPS Interpretive Guidelines (again quoting Mackintosh) include the following with regard to living history criteria for honesty and accuracy: "the reactions of historic people to past ideas and events are described in the context of past ideas and perceptions. We do not assume or suggest that historic people reacted to or felt about certain situations the way we would unless there is strong evidence to support that pattern....The individual experiences, events, or ideas being presented are chosen and expressed in such a way as to portray the full contribution or personalities of the ethnic group, culture or people whose history is being commemorated."

From the Afro-American viewpoint a number of considerations come to mind. First of all (for minority groups in general) the non-availability of ethnic re-enactors can cause any interpretation to fall apart by inclusionary standards. It would seem a political and practical necessity that first person narratives of the Afro-American experience have Black interpreters as narrators, but for various reasons this may not always be possible.

At Petersburg for example, there have apparently never been more than two Blacks employed (for whatever reason) as Union soldiers in the demonstration camps which are so important in that park's overall program. In the summer of 1990 there was only one. On his days off there were in effect no Black soldiers in the Petersburg campaign. (The question of why so few Blacks have been employed in such positions will be discussed later.)

Parks like Castillo de San Marcos NM where the NPS works closely with organized community groups in staging living history programs (inside and outside the confines of the park itself) also report difficulty in attracting Black participants <sup>^</sup>even when an inclusionary community spirit is righteously professed.

Meanwhile, a number of Black actors and artists have become renown as theatrical interpreters of the Afro-American experience. Their professional services might be employed to good advantage for special events (Black History Month-programs, etc.) at more parks than have already done so.

Obviously, it would be better to have more Blacks in costume (rangers or volunteers) at places like Petersburg and Castillo, but a more effective approach for insuring consistency in the enhancement of Afro-American subjects across the board would be inclusionary audio-visuals at exhibit areas, reinforced with static displays and hand out literature.

Living history has its place, and when it comes to demonstration of the old technologies which were inexorably intertwined with life styles and life itself this approach cannot

be replaced. Regarding the Afro-American community in particular, the NPS should do what it can to encourage the grass roots development of local volunteer groups (the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry may provide a model for similar organizations) <sup>^</sup> groups which could go beyond the confines of the NPS and its various interpretive themes to render valuable and diverse community services.

But for all the things that might be done, it is clear that living interpretations of controversial issues like slavery will have difficulty in meeting the criteria outlined in NPS guidelines. It would take a long time for the visitor to sit through narratives expressing all points of view (if, indeed, all could be identified). Meanwhile, it is likely that some in any audience would be offended as narrators argued their positions without concession or compromise with the sensibilities of today's observers.

In any routine, ongoing interpretive program contrasting views on particular themes must be efficiently balanced and synthesized using full advantage of the perspectives subsequent history has provided. This is more likely achieved when rangers provide third person interpretations and are supported by audio-visuals and other resources designed with the proper inclusionary content.

Former NPS historian Marcella Sherfy's remarks in the NPS publication In Touch (May 1976, as quoted in Mackintosh) are quite appropriate: "Even having steeped ourselves in the

literature of the period, worn its clothes, and slept on its beds, we never shed [present] perspectives and values. And from those perspectives and values, we judge and interpret the past. We simply cannot be another person and know his time as he knew it or value what he valued for his reasons.... Time past has, very simply, past.'

#### Audio-visuals.

The orientation films for the 'Black' NPS units were, in my opinion, of remarkably good quality. The film on Booker T. Washington, for example, was surprisingly thorough in its examination of his ideological disagreements with other Black intellectuals like W. E. B. DuBois. It effectively fostered an appreciation for this man for whom it was long fashionable for many to express disparagement.

Among the films reviewed on Washington, G. W. Carver, and Frederick Douglass the only negative comment I heard from fellow viewers (from a Black school teacher to be precise) was that the flogging scene in the Douglass film was too bloodily graphic and potentially upsetting to younger viewers. Most would disagree with this judgement, but perhaps it should get a 'PG' rating.

Orientation films at other, 'non-Black' units were a mixed bag from the Afro-American perspective.

The film at George Washington's Birthplace included a view of a Black farm worker, and while there was no comment regarding

the social status of the man represented <sup>^</sup> likely a plantation slave <sup>^</sup> the inclusionary requirement seems to have been met without infringement on the main theme of the park: the childhood of the first president in the idyllic if not enchanted surroundings of his <sup>half</sup> brother's estate on the Potomac. (The film's mood was well sustained by the costumed interpreters employed at the park <sup>^</sup> Black and White <sup>^</sup> who provided living history demonstrations on colonial farm life. These interpreters seemed well-enough prepared to discuss the roles played by Black slaves on such an estate if asked, but as one might expect, this did not appear to be a subject for general elaboration or emphasis.)

Black faces were also noted in the orientation films for Morristown NHP <sup>^</sup> and Richmond NBP. The latter production, Richmond Remembered, was so poor in quality, however, and had such marginal relevance to the battles interpreted in the park that the rangers were almost embarrassed to show it. This dramatization might be considered inclusionary, but the typical Black viewer would hardly be impressed. In contrast to the visually pleasant and silent images at George Washington's Birthplace, the cheap production values and the poorly expressed dialogue in the Richmond film stimulate little introspection and permit virtually no empathy for either the White characters or the Blacks who come off as rather offensive stereotypes.

I was personally disappointed in seeing no Black faces in the otherwise handsomely produced film on the Revolutionary War's Yorktown campaign at the Colonial NHP. It was a fine, recent

film; but I looked in vain for the expected close up of a Black soldier representing those known to have been enrolled in the First Rhode Island Regiment ~~7~~ none was provided, even in the final review of the American forces at Cornwallis' surrender.

At Chickamauga NMP I reviewed their new and spectacular multi-media presentation (opened 1990) which included a montage of vintage photographs and an imaginary conversation of Union and Confederate veterans at the park's original dedication. The former included one or two images of Blacks who fought for the Union on other battlefields (none of the U. S. Army's "Colored" units was in action at the Chickamauga battle ~~7~~ a fact it would not have hurt to make clear), and the latter included a comment about how Blacks were brought into the Union Army, fighting at <sup>Bend</sup> Milliken's Bend, Port Hudson and Fort Wagner.

Efforts to be inclusive at Chickamauga come off as feeble -- implying in the dialogue that the Black military role remained isolated or experimental. Likewise, the mandate of relevance to the park's main theme was thoroughly violated in discussing the three familiar but distant engagements while failing to mention the involvement (or lack thereof) of Blacks in the local, Tennessee-Georgia region either before or after the Chickamauga and Chattanooga battles. (It is sad to have to say it, but when NPS cameras zeroed in on a few Black visitors who attended ceremonies for the Chickamauga Park's centennial, one had to wonder what it was that could possibly have attracted them to that event.)

Milliken's

Many parks were observed to have audio-visual materials of an older vintage ~~and~~ mostly slide and sound shows dating from the 1950s which were ~~were~~ said to be scheduled for replacement ~~and~~ and some parks were on the verge of receiving audio or video support for the first time. In the latter category was the City Point Unit of the Petersburg NB. During my visit there I was immediately struck by the fact that the relatively new guide brochure told the City Point story without mentioning that the awesome Union military force which occupied the property in 1864-5 and its huge civilian work force was largely composed of Afro-American personnel ~~and~~ the civilian force almost entirely so. The script for the complementary audio program which was still being produced contained none of the pertinent racial points either. Several parties seemed rather embarrassed to have these facts pointed out, but I was later assured that steps were taken to introduce inclusionary references into the audio script.

The audio-visual program at Horseshoe Bend NMP is an especially good example of what Blacks should find offensive about the older NPS offerings. The finale of the slide and sound show can be described as classically insensitive regarding the outcome of the battle and what the NPS narrator calls 'its affects on all Americans, Red and White.' In the context of 1814 the Red people involved considered themselves independent, with their land unjustly divided between Spanish as well as American interlopers. Blacks at that time had no citizenship rights, but those native to the United States deserve identification as



'Americans' no less than any other race. Their future in Alabama was certainly determined as much as anyone else's by the outcome of the 'battle' at Horseshoe Bend.

Since Afro-American themes will likely remain secondary in most parks it would be unrealistic for the NPS to produce major films on the Afro-American experience for individual units -- inclusion of some sort in the primary program would be adequate. In the case of the several parks devoted to America's wars, however, the enhanced interpretation of secondary Black themes could be effectively and economically supported by films tailored for relevance and use at more than one location.

A single film on Afro-Americans in the Revolutionary War could be scripted for applicability and regularly run at sites from Minuteman to Yorktown. However, the complex nature of the Afro-American experience in the Civil War would be best served by two or more films devoted to regional activities stressing examples of active Black support for the Union cause with proper recognition given to both the slavery issue as the underlying cause of the conflict and the South's exploitation of and dependence on Black labor to sustain its war effort.

One film featuring the Black soldiers, sailors, and assorted other personalities who gained fame in the Union's Department of the South would be relevant and useful to interpretations at Fort Pulaski and at Forts Moultrie and Sumter. Another, dealing with Blacks in the western theater, might be scripted to fit in with interpretations at Vicksburg, Brices Crossroads, and Tupelo (even

Chickamauga/Chattanooga and Kennesaw Mountain).

Certainly, a fine production could be developed around the 'contraband' laborers and the many USCT regiments of the Armies of the Potomac and the James. Besides becoming a regular feature at NPS Civil War units in the Mid-Atlantic region, such a docudrama, using well-drilled Black re-enactors, could prove to be popular in the form of an educational videotape with sales potential throughout the country.

#### Visitor Center Displays and Exhibits.

Inclusion in a park's static exhibits is of paramount importance. Visitors may not have time for a lecture or film presentation, but most have a few minutes to browse the museums which are a basic feature of most visitor centers. Many Blacks are likely to do their browsing with a critical eye for what ever may or may not pertain to the racial/ethnic connection.

As noted in the introduction, several units have recognized this likelihood and have gone to some lengths to address Afro-American anxiety. Deliberate efforts in a variety of settings have been identified, some of which have to be characterized as tokenism. Recommendations for improving exhibits at specific parks will follow. Meanwhile, certain patterns observed in 1990 deserve deeper consideration.

It is clear that the benefits of the inclusionary imperative for the White park visitor and the importance of his or her edification with regard to the Afro-American experience is not

always recognized. Given the existing imbalance in the racial composition among visitors this is not surprising. But the idea that Black-oriented material is a waste of exhibit space because Black patronage may be low definitely misses the point. Unfortunately, this is an attitude which seems to exist at some park units.

Though not expressed in such terms by the staff at Petersburg NB, it would appear that thoughts of wasted space were behind the removal of an exhibit on Black soldiers to make room for other 'temporary' displays. The Black-oriented feature had been created largely in response to recommendations made in the Howard Study (1978). The Petersburg center has been waiting for expansion funding for many years and space is certainly at a premium (an auditorium for showing improved audio-visuals is also sorely needed). However, enlightened Afro-Americans might travel to Petersburg expecting to find the Black soldier exhibit a permanent fixture <sup>or</sup> even a model for other parks to emulate. Regretably, such expectations would have been unfulfilled in the summer of 1990.

It was also disturbing to hear the remark at Castillo de San Marcos NM that the existing exhibit on Black soldiers in Spanish St. Augustine was 'too wordy' <sup>or</sup> reminiscent, I suppose, of the formerly popular but recently unfashionable 'book on the wall' style of museum exhibition. With important archeological discoveries recently unearthed at the nearby Fort Mose site (formerly an outpost of the Castillo now owned by the State of

Florida but deserving of inclusion in the NPS system) the subject of Black fugitives from Anglo-American slavery in Spanish Florida particularly their organization under the military leadership of the Afro-Cuban Captain Francisco Menendez in the 1730s is one deserving even more elaboration.

A picture being truly worth a thousand words, that of former ranger Charlie McCleod in Spanish uniform an integral part of this exhibit made a dramatic impression. Like other exhibits at the Castillo, however, neither the photograph of McCleod nor the narrative in this display were up to the highest standards of museum quality under any stylistic criteria. ("Museum quality" is a standard of construction which Black-oriented interpretations should be considered worthy of achieving no less than any other. Such considerations aside, however, any suggestion that this particular interpretation could be improved by reduction of its narrative content is highly suspect.)

Enhancement of Afro-American themes could be quickly achieved for the benefit of all visitors by the installation of modest pictorial and three dimensional displays at several of the other parks visited. A rendering of a Black soldier in the uniform of the Revolutionary War's First Rhode Island Regiment at the Yorktown Battlefield visitor center would help to compensate for the absence of inclusionary images in that facility's orientation film (a life sized cut out figure has apparently been proposed previously).

A Black Indian in authentic Creek costume should be part of a new

display at Horseshoe Bend NMP describing with greater 'honesty' the issues which lead to the Creek War. A mannequin in the form of a Black 'contraband' in the modified military garb worn by the U.S. Military Railroad Construction Corps laborers should be displayed in the great collection at Gettysburg NMP commemorating the various organizations which served in connection with that epic battle. Photographs of Blacks among American prisoners of war should be featured at Andersonville NHS's P/O/W Museum <sup>2</sup> these would not even require commentary to achieve the desired inclusionary affect.

The predictable reluctance of interpreters to burden visitors with more than they may wish to deal on the controversial subject of race in American life can be obviated by thoughtfully selected, strategically placed photographs, with or without captions; and the willingness of visitors to seek further enlightenment can be comfortably stimulated.

A most interesting situation was discovered at Fort Pulaski NM where the chief interpreter had employed an Afro-American in Confederate uniform during the summer of 1990. The rangers eagerly awaited comments from visitors about the Black man in the Rebel suit, being armed with the knowledge that a handful of free Blacks did in fact wear the uniform as musicians in the Georgia militia. The rangers seemed quite disappointed that no one ever asked about the apparent incongruity.

While their desire for an entertaining experience without controversy may have suppressed their eagerness to ask any

questions, it is likely that many visitors left with the wrong impression <sup>either</sup> thinking that Black Confederates were common or that affirmative action had been carried to new extreme, in effect forcing history to be re-written with Blacks standing in for the White Rebels.

This shyness to ask questions and hesitancy to introduce 'heavy' subject matter to visitors might easily have been overcome with a photograph at the visitor center and a brief message such as: 'The Confederate soldier in this picture is actually a park ranger representing one of the handful of free Blacks who served as muscians with the Georgia militia in 1861. The Union Army officially began the recruitment of free Blacks and liberated Black slaves as infantry soldiers in 1863.'

#### Black History Month and Other Special Occasions.

Black History Month grew out of Carter G. Woodson's original Negro History Week celebration (the week containing Frederick Douglass' and Abraham Lincoln's birthdays). It is still largely a movement of Woodson's descendent organization, the Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH). Without much attention paid to the ASALH's annual theme, however, diverse organizations have adopted Black History Month (designated as February, but now effectively beginning with Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday in January) as the time to dust off any Afro-American materials held on file and put them on display. This has become such a routine drill in some places that many have

become cynical over the results and suggested that the movement actually detracts from inclusionary goals.

Black historian Joe H. Mays has written that "Black History Month segregates Black America from the history of White America." Others would contend that most Whites see it at best as an occasion to dispense with obligations to recognize the Black community on an annual basis by means of displaying ostentatious but simplistic tidbits of information.

It should go without saying within the NPS that minority group visibility relevant to a park's primary and secondary themes should be continuous through the year and that interpreters should not revert to an exclusionary approach at the end of February. However, the point made by rangers at Harpers Ferry NHP that White visitors tend to immediately reject and avoid presentations (lectures, tours, etc.) labeled as "Black" should be given careful attention. The inclusionary message should be delivered throughout the year, and interpretations of the Afro-American experience should not convey an impression that they are exclusionary or devoid of relevance to the White observer.

At several parks Black History Month has been a season to initiate special outreach efforts to neighboring Black communities, and this would seem quite appropriate. In some places Black educators and others have come to look forward to visits by NPS rangers to their classrooms and/or invitations to special programs at NPS sites. In some cases these activities

have had direct relevance to local park themes (as at Petersburg); in others rangers have served as experts on generic Black history subjects like the participation of Blacks in the Civil War (as at Chattanooga).

Liaison, including the mailing of teacher packages and program bulletins, should be maintained with educators and recreation directors in the Black community throughout the year, but NPS visibility should be rejuvenated and the relevant connections of specific parks with the Afro-American experience deserve re-emphasis during February.

For several years the Petersburg NB has co-sponsored a Black History Month program with the local Richard Bland Junior College. Beginning with the lectures on Black soldiers at the Petersburg battle, the topical range has broadened to include diverse performances and speakers on various subjects. By all accounts the public reception of these programs has been excellent. However, in the absence of facilities at the NB, programs have been regularly staged at the Richard Bland campus. In light of this it might be asked, "Is the public fully appreciative of the NPS role as co-sponsor?" In cases like this the NPS should not be timid in tooting its horn and should insure that its contribution be publicized to the maximum extent feasible. Regrettably, flyers for the 1990 program did not emphasize the Petersburg NB connection.

The subjects highlighted in annual displays at Fort Moultrie (Fort Sumter NM) included such diverse regional subjects as the



South Carolina Sea Islands and their indigenous African-American culture (1988), the period of post-Civil War occupation and Reconstruction in Charleston (1989), and the roll of Sullivan's Island (Fort Moultrie) and its quarantine 'pest houses' as the country's largest entry port for African slaves (1990). These exhibits <sup>f</sup> clearly intended for the edification of visitors in general <sup>are</sup> are said to have been recognized and acclaimed at echelons at least as high as the NPS's Southeast Region.

Occasions having special significance for the Afro-American community are certainly not limited <sup>to</sup> the month of February. Important dates and commemorations during the year should be of equal interest to inclusion-minded staff at NPS recreational and natural units as well as the historical parks. Multicultural heritage celebrations and summertime events like the National Black Family Reunion have attracted large numbers to the Mall in Washington, DC, and other NPS sites. Where this has not occurred (and unfamiliarity on the part of the Black organizations concerned is suspected) the NPS should extend invitations to utilize facilities as appropriate.

Whenever the Black community can be apprised of the Afro-American connection with a particular park unit (or of the NPS commitment to inclusion in general) and openings for either volunteers or career interpreters exist, the need for Blacks to assist in lending credibility to NPS efforts should be made clear. <sup>indeed</sup> indeed it can be posed as a community challenge and obligation. A well-conceived presentation connected to Black History Month or

other commemorations of special significance may be just the thing which would inspire applications from historically minded Afro-Americans who otherwise might know little or nothing about the NPS.

III. PATTERNS OF MISAPPREHENSION. The goal of achieving a broadly inclusionary interpretation of American history and representative participation of the Afro-American community in all National Park Service activities is hampered by two major barriers: the institutionalized racism which has persisted in the National Park Service at every echelon and the legacy of a traditionally inferior status which has weighed heavily upon many Blacks as they tentatively pursue the opportunities and accept the challenges of fuller participation whether as observers or interpreters in the activities of the Service. Meanwhile, the presence or influence of dedicated Black interpreters working in harmony with talented rangers of other races is the source of the NPS's most effective inclusionary efforts.

Anxiety in the NPS.

In the introduction of this report the suggestion was made that racism was still at the heart of the matter when it comes to the difficulties we have tried to define and to address. Certainly, overtly racist policies and practices are not tolerated in the NPS and by now they should have practically ceased to exist. If this were fully the case, however, there would be no requirement for this study. If we concede that problems remain, let us insure that the problems with which we began is well understood.

In 1933 Carter G. Woodson lamented that American history had been written by Whites and anything not written by Whites could not be regarded by them [the real Americans] as history at all. As he saw it: 'The Negro author, then, can find neither a publisher nor a reader; and his story remains untold.' This thought and other facts of life were expressed in Woodson's highly influential treatise, The Mis-Education of the Negro.

For all the professed dedication to inclusion at the highest echelons of the NPS interpretation and history divisions, there are definite indications that the issues raised by Woodson are not well understood and that the need for fundamental change in the tradition of White supremacy has not been accepted.

The Mackintosh Perspective touched on a number of rather recent philosophical concerns at the NPS which if analyzed from the non-White viewpoint in general and the Afro-American perspective in particular can be regarded as subtly racist if not downright sinister. The caution expressed by former NPS chief historian Robert Utley (1973) with respect to the embellishment of Polish-American contributions suggests the prevailing sentiment:

'In our new awareness of minority and ethnic roles in our history, we must rigorously guard against exaggerating them in an effort to atone for past neglect.' Without apparent malice Utley predicted that areas featuring Indian-White relations would be especially 'vulnerable'.

From the Afro-American viewpoint, the entire system is seen

as deservedly vulnerable. Such cautionary appeals, attached to calls for greater sensitivity, effectively implant the idea among the lower echelons that inclusionary goals can be viewed as fadish and political. It is implied, certainly, that any deeply seated views on White (specifically, Anglo-Saxon) supremacy need not be abandoned since (reading between the lines) the NPS leadership harbors the same views and priorities.

It is remarkable, of course, that such cautions can seldom be found openly expressed in relation to Afro-American historical concerns. An exception, however, is seen in the case of research done at the behest of the George W. Carver Birthplace in 1960 which allegedly failed to substantiate the man's reputation as an influential, world-class scientist. The NPS attempted to place these findings in perspective at the time (if it sincerely tried to suppress them as MacIntosh declares, it did a suspiciously poor job of it); but since then it has pointed to the affair ad nauseum as one of its few object lessons regarding the consequences of too much faith in an honoree's reputation. The question must be asked: 'Is the folklore surrounding this Black person's life somehow less worthy of the protection traditionally accorded Whites honored at various other memorials?' At any rate, the frequent resurrection of the subject in contexts such as Mackintosh's Perspective may be seen by many Afro-Americans (cynicists to be sure) as a back-handed slap at a racial hero, delivered by the NPS.

It is also galling that Mackintosh would cite the Frederick

Douglass home as an example of an NPS unit where a visitor center was out of place <sup>as</sup> 'superfluous' and 'intrusive' as the apparently infamous center at Philadelphia's Independence NHP <sup>is</sup> essentially a waste of the taxpayer's money, reflecting a lack of confidence in personal interpretive services compared to exhibitions and audio visual media. The Afro-American observer must surely take issue.

Some would say personal interpretive services have long been uneven at Frederick Douglass, but putting their quality aside, the visitor center and accoutrements at that park serve a critical educational function and lend prestige to this important site <sup>the</sup> prestige which MacIntosh implies is not deserved.

While it might be unfair to call the NPS leadership 'racist' (many of its policy makers have promoted very deliberate and largely successful inclusionary initiatives), it is only a statement of fact to call it essentially 'lily white'. Like the rest of the Interior Department, it has been observed to be rather more so than other branches of the Federal government. In this respect, of course, it is not unlike the other institutions, public and private, national and regional with which it has traditionally shared responsibility for preserving and interpreting the Nation's cultural legacy.

This project could not have been undertaken without the full and enthusiastic support of the NPS. But that the situation in 1990 regarding traditions and stereotypes remained reminiscent at least of that described by Woodson in 1933 is indicated by the

responses of some Washington staff members to initial proposals made in connection with the current effort. Expressions of caution and some rather bizarre comments and assumptions about 'expertise' and 'perspectives' were put forward. One could sense the fear that exaggeration of the Black role in certain areas was certainly imminent. Was this the result of a passionate regard for the inclusionary imperative or were other dynamics at work?

Historical theory dies hard. Despite <sup>more than</sup> ~~over~~ half a century of Black assertiveness ~~it~~ clear and repeated demonstrations that the Afro-American experience is (as Woodson would say) ultimately 'Shakespearean' in its qualities and its potential for interpretation ~~it~~ for many in high places the Black race remains barely worthy of their time and energy when it comes to any serious curriculum.

#### Afro-American Anxiety.

The reasons for the statistically low levels of interest shown by Black citizens in NPS programs at various park sites may be quite complex. Suggested explanations include the factors of distance, admission costs, exclusionary (anti-Black or otherwise offensive) historical interpretations, and the general 'mis-education' of the Black constituency which has alienated much of it from mainstream America and its institutions.

It is clear that sites like Fort Davis and Bent's Old Fort where substantive efforts have been made to interpret the Afro-American experience on the western frontier will always suffer

from low visitation due to their remoteness from Black population centers. The difficulties in recruiting Black rangers for service at such sites are well summarized in the comments from Fort Davis NHS published (1986) in response to the Howard Study of 1978 (see Robert L. Nunn, 'A Review of the Results of the Study by Howard University of 'Afro American' History Interpretation at Selected National Parks').

Meanwhile, entrance fees have been recently introduced at a few locations in or near large concentrations of Black people. All concerned see the fees as an abhorrance, potentially limiting the access of all budget conscious Americans regardless of race; but rangers report that Black visitation (low or limited very predominantly to school groups before the fees became an issue at Petersburg NB, Harpers Ferry NHP and elsewhere) has not appreciably changed since they were imposed.

More relevant to this report are the questions of identification with what is represented at the various historical units and especially the legacy of generations of mis-education which has resulted in serious misapprehensions regarding the NPS and (in many cases) the real meaning of the Afro-American heritage. In 1978 the Howard Study cited rumors of bias in favor of the Confederate cause as one reason why Blacks were disinclined to patronize or apply for positions at Petersburg NB. The park staff has long stated that this was a false conception, pointing out that White Southerners have regularly criticized their interpretations as slanted in favor of the 'Yankees'. In



1990 several areas of concern were noted at Petersburg, but the notion that a Black visitor might be subjected to a pro-Confederate interpretation of the Civil War was not substantiated.

The same could be said for Richmond NBP although the Black visitor would look in vain for inclusionary signs at the park's main visitor center at Chimborazo Park.

Located in a predominantly Black section of the city, the Richmond center was the scene of at least one incident in 1985 when a Black visitor protested the exhibition of the Confederate flag on the premises. The NPS should consider itself lucky that this did not blow up into something more serious. The Confederate flag, even when displayed in a quasi-historical context, should be expected to create controversy in a Black neighborhood. Adverse consequences of such a display might be mitigated if the Black community was assured that heroic symbols of its own Civil War history were respectfully exhibited. But displays at Chimborazo were old, and the Afro-American experience was not addressed among them.

At any rate, the fact that nothing apparently came of that incident reflects (more than anything else) the general disinterest which the Black community has so often shown toward the NPS (as well as toward the Civil War that pivotal chapter in everyone's heritage with which the NPS has long been associated) a disinterest which the sincerest efforts of many park rangers have failed to overcome.

Earlier, we discussed the NPS concern for relevance in response to the social pressures of the 1960s when many American institutions were virtually laid seige by Afro-Americans professing the doctrine of Black nationalism. In fact, the NPS got off rather lightly during that era of confrontation. Perhaps because the Black population as a whole (including most Black historians and educators) had always been out touch with the NPS, activists failed to recognize the agency's potential for influence (through its historical interpretation activities) as one of the country's premier social arbiters.

If it is correct, as Black nationalists have said, that Whites as a race have never conceded their self-ordained role as the proper interpreters of all that has taken place on this planet; it can also be said that it has been only with great difficulty that many Blacks have shaken themselves free of the notion of White supremacy. Indeed, some would say that far too many have never done so.

In The Mis-Education of the Negro Carter Woodson criticized the Black educational establishment for its traditional acquiescence in the majority group's alleged goal of 'keeping the Negro in his place' and the now familiar Black Studies curricula established on many college campuses as a result of the Black nationalist movements of the 1960s was an eventual outgrowth of his sentiments. Despite Black Studies and Black Nationalism (indeed perhaps because of the seperatist philosophy that many advocates of the movements have endorsed) the notion that our

(Black) history and heritage are second-rate has remained internalized in many of our people.

Those of us who have been broadly educated and are more or less comfortable in interracial situations possess a willingness to examine such sensitive issues as American slavery and racial segregation which many others do not share. Among those dedicated to the Black Nationalist agenda there may be intense interest, but it may not be 'politically correct' for them to involve themselves with the NPS and similar components of the White establishment. Such individuals (it is sad to say) represent a new chapter in the 'mis-education' story <sup>^</sup>one which has seen the increased polarization of the races, a tendency which if it is not reversed must ultimately prove self-destructive.

The 'common' Black visitor may not recognize the mis-education process as an influence on his or her attitudes regarding the NPS. But the fashions of the quai-si-elite have always had an important impact.

Rangers concerned with the apparent failure of the Black community to do its share in achieving inclusionary results should pro-actively investigate local attitudes using contacts in the schools, fraternal organizations and other likely venues for arousing interest in the local Afro-American heritage.

In the Southern states where the HBCU may be available for assistance, these institutions should be called upon. Unfortunately, those rangers (Black and White) working the

hardest to achieve inclusionary goals and expressing a variety of theories regarding the uneven support they have received from Afro-Americans seem to have one feeling in common: their greatest disappointments have had to do with the HBCU. Rangers at several parks in the South described how they had gone to great lengths seeking qualified cooperatives and seasonal employees at HBCUs and at other area institutions with large minority group enrollments <sup>↑</sup>visiting campuses on career days and at other times. They bemoaned the lack of interest generally shown by potential HBCU recruits as well as the indifferent support provided by HBCU officials. --

The outcome of the current joint project concerning slavery interpretation may contribute to balancing the scales. Meanwhile, with the exception of Tuskegee University (site of the Tuskegee Institute NHS) and the alumni association of the now defunct Storer College in Harpers Ferry, WV (both of which have vested interests in NPS interpretations regarding their campuses), the HBCUs have done precious little in the way of recruiting, volunteer assistance or original research for the NPS.

The economic disadvantages of a career in NPS interpretation are discussed below. Suffice here to say that the HBCUs cannot be faulted for counseling many potential NPS recruits in other directions (the same has to be said of predominantly White colleges and universities seeking the best for their graduates). The Black schools must be admonished, however, for often allowing

what might be called a misguided political agenda to supersede the vital role they (their student bodies, faculty and alumni) should have long been playing in the guidance of the NPS toward inclusionary goals.

Recognizing their special responsibility to correct what today might be called the 'mis-apprehension of the Afro-American' the HBCU should appreciate the NPS for what it is and what it could be, encouraging history-minded young Blacks to avail themselves of seasonal and permanent employment opportunities especially as interpreters when feasible. HBCU history professionals should volunteer their services to the NPS where the need exists. But above all they should familiarize themselves with the National Park System and be ready at all times to hold the NPS accountable regarding the inclusionary imperative in all its programs.

#### The Black Ranger.

Within the NPS, most Black rangers fall into that category of urban park employees stereotyped as 'typical civil servants' which is to imply that (unlike their counterparts at rural, wilderness and recreational parks) they are more interested in a steady job than any noble ideals like protecting the environment, shaping the values of the younger generation, or preserving the memory of some great cause or hero. The self-sacrifice and work ethic that the career of a truly 'dedicated' ranger certainly entails is supposedly alien to the typical urban staffer

particularly those who are Black and more specifically to those working at Black theme oriented units. As with other uniformed organizations a fraternal mystique is noticeable among some rangers which suggests an unwritten code of values with which it may be difficult for any cultural outsider (especially members of minority ethnic groups) to contend.

Considering the stereotype image and recognized obstacles to their full professional and social acceptance in the Service, it is perhaps remarkable that so many fine, enthusiastic Black rangers were noticeable in the course of this assessment. In stark contrast to the stereotype. The role of the Black ranger in the development as well as the delivery of inclusionary interpretations is vital. The NPS must make every effort possible to attract qualified, historically-minded candidates. The following paragraphs are derived from the comments provided by one such candidate who accepted the challenge:

The Service prefers to hire persons with a four<sup>1</sup>-year degree or college students working on a degree. This makes sense in terms of the type of information and complex social systems that rangers are responsible for interpreting. However, the availability of college trained applicants is dropping off and many rangers being hired for the first time do not have degrees of any kind.

For a variety of reasons the per capita ratio of 'African-American' males attending college is at a point substantially lower than in the recent past <sup>1</sup> though the figure is somewhat

the NPS have to wait up to nine months before submitting an application after they find out about the job.

The Cooperative Education program seems to have much to recommend it as it provides a direct link between staying in school, summer jobs, clearly stated job expectations and permanent status in the NPS. Students are placed in the NPS after a specified period with appropriate opportunities for their performance to be evaluated. The Co-op Program seems to work, but does not appear to be heavily employed with colleges and universities traditionally associated with African-Americans.

Parks are asked to perform both recruiting duty and to set up and administer the Co-op Program over long distances from their base of operation without additional financial or personnel support. Understandably, these functions often are given a low priority. (People I know say that many parks rely on the Regional Offices to pursue minority recruitment while others say the Regions rely on the individual parks.)

All these problems must be remedied before significant progress can be made in the recruiting, employment and retention of minority employees in the National Park Service. Well-timed, frank and thorough discussions held at HBCUs would enable the NPS to hire greater numbers of qualified African-Americans. Park service managers should increase their commitment to attending career day and job fair activities and should focus their attention on the fall. If the application for summer employment is ready in the fall, recruiters can help students and others

enhanced for Black females. Meanwhile, Blacks possessing a two- or four-year degree or who are willing to adapt themselves to a significantly non-traditional career even if only for a summer season are often not interested in a GS-3 or GS-4 salary. These pay rates do not compare favorably in urban areas where even delivering pizza can pay as much as \$12.00 per hour.

"~~Deterrant~~ factors in addition to the low pay rate are the costs of travelling to the duty station, food, and lodging. Students from the Black community traditionally stay with their families over the summer break and often take advantage of room and board at home. Many are also uncomfortable at the prospect of being culturally isolated in regions where African-American visibility is low.

The seasonal application process is designed to allow applicants to apply at several parks across the country each year. The application is not simple and cannot be photocopied like the Standard Form 171 application for permanent employees.

The extra work and inflexibility of the application blunts the interest of some potential applicants as does the lack of interface between recruiting efforts and the application deadline.

Applications for summer seasonal jobs are due by January 15th of the winter prior to the job itself. Many college students are encouraged by the job fairs and other city or state supported efforts to begin looking for work in the spring. This means that those candidates interested in summer employment with



prepare for the January 15th deadline." [How nice it would be if the deadline could be extended into February when recruiters could take advantage of the heightened awareness of Black History Month to encourage young Blacks with the notion that they could play a role in interpreting that history through the NPS.]

#### Examples of Interaction.

Without exception among the parks assessed for this report, the ones presenting the most remarkably inclusionary interpretations had Black personnel directly involved at some critical point in their development. It is an entirely subjective opinion; however, I strongly believe that the presence on their staffs of Black rangers like Charlie McCleod at Castillo de San Marcos and Mike Allen at Fort Moultrie contributed considerably toward what seemed to me very positive attitudes regarding the exploration of Black-oriented issues. These two men were also known to rangers at other parks (Fort Frederica and Horseshoe Bend, respectively), and their reputations as talented and conscientious interpreters served the cause of inclusion better than anything else could have.

[Regretably, McCleod has left the NPS (I did not meet him, but his co-workers made it abundantly clear that he was a dynamic and well-respected personality). Ranger Allen may also find a more lucrative future elsewhere.]

Though the two men named enjoyed solid reputations as researchers and local historians in their own right, the most

significant thing about their contribution may be the inspiration they provided to other, White staff members to explore and produce Black-oriented theme interpretations themselves. I will confidently generalize that potentially enthusiastic White interpreters would hesitate to go as far as they might in exploring Afro-American subject matter if there were no available Blacks (like Allen or McCleod) in their peer group who could be used as sounding boards for their brainstorming.

Many examples of outstanding interracial interaction were observed. The four-person team of three Whites and one Black responsible for developing the new Afro-American museum at Harpers Ferry NHP is a fine example. Rangers Melinda Day, Don Larson, Gwen Roper, and Marsha Starkey have achieved a tremendously positive result. When it opens in 1991 the Harpers Ferry facility promises to be the best of its kind in the National Park System.

The atmosphere at Fort Frederica was also especially encouraging. There, the lead ranger, Kevin McCarthy who is White was a storehouse of information regarding the Black presence in the region during the colonial period. He had formerly worked at Castillo de San Marcos with Charlie McCleod and was apparently responsible for stimulating a high level of interest among staff members both Black and White in Afro-American themes (the level of interest in 1990 contrasted sharply with that observed during a visit in 1989 when none was apparent). It should also be noted that Valerie Hunter, a Black employee of the Fort Frederica

Association (officially the Spanish interpreter/co-ordinator) played a more visible role in the park's interpretive programs than had been observed of such personnel elsewhere. During my visit she was busily engaged in arranging for the display of at Fort Frederica of the University of Florida's traveling exhibit on archeological studies done at St. Augustine's Fort Mose related to its Black garrison in the 18th century.

Despite the keen interest, McCarthy expressed his frustration that enabling legislation which specified interpretation of the British military fortifications and the colonial period made the development of formal interpretations on Afro-American as well as the many potential Native American connections with Fort Frederica and the Sea Islands region artificially difficult. Nevertheless, the situation at that unit in 1990 might serve as a ~~fine~~ model for other parks when it comes to multicultural community relations.

It is very commendable that NPS personnel were apparently so active as volunteers in the historical and cultural revival programs which have been produced in the neighboring St. Simons Island region. (McCarthy, himself, seemed to enjoy a special relationship with Doug and Frances Quimby, the principal organizers of the annual Black-oriented Georgia Sea Islands Festival.) Meanwhile, Black visitation in the summer of 1990 was estimated at a surprisingly high 15% with a large share made up of local Blacks who are said to make a habit of bringing guests (family members home for reunions, etc.) to visit the Fort <sup>at</sup> a

remarkable trend, not noted to exist at other NPS units visited.

[If Fort Frederica's visitation pattern can be substantiated over time at a facility whose programs must be characterized as of marginal interest from the Afro-American perspective it must be credited to the remarkable success of the staff in fostering good will through the its community interaction. With only slight hesitancy, considering the brevity of my visit, I have to give the Fort Frederica staff high marks for their sensitivity in the areas with which I was particularly concerned.]

Beside the encouraging scenarios at such places as Harpers Ferry and Fort Frederica, I have to comment on the negative experience reported by seasonal interpreter Robert Roberts at Petersburg NB.

The participation of Blacks as seasonal, costumed interpreters at Petersburg has been controversial. Apparently, there were no Black male interpreters prior to 1983. In 1989 there were two men in costume. In 1990 there was only one (plus one female of several years service at the visitor center). Officially, the reason for only one Black male was the lack of suitable applicants. It was also indicated that the performance of at least one previous Black interpreter was less than satisfactory.) The allegation was made, however, that qualified Blacks had received no acknowledgement to their formal applications while former White seasonals and their friends were hired automatically. (Note: No one denied that applications

came about due to independent interest and not as the result of any systematic recruiting effort.)

If selections were made on the basis of who the applicant knew rather than what he knew, then Robert Roberts, the one Black interpreter (grandson of a longtime park maintenance employee) was probably hired on the same basis as the Whites, but he was still resentful of the racial tokenism his position represented. A quota for female seasonals clearly existed, but the situation for Black males appeared to be more complicated. Whereas Whites had the opportunity to portray Union or Confederate soldiers, any Blacks hired were limited to the Union forces. The unofficial quota for Black males was alleged to be one or two. Predictably, the token Black in 1990 was at a disadvantage in dealing with his White counterparts in on-the-job tests of will of the type which are all too common in our racist society. For example, Roberts indicated that some White seasonals liked to bait him with cynical questions about his views on apartheid, etc., and remarks intended to probe the limits of his tolerance. The NPS should consider itself lucky that this individual chose to deal with such pressures on a man-to-man basis rather than to complain of harassment. A less determined individual might have abandoned the NPS long ago, leaving Petersburg without even a token representative of the Black soldiers who played such an important role in the history commemorated. If Robertson's description is even vaguely accurate and representative of the situation elsewhere in the system, the NPS should expect that

potential Black recruits would be properly reluctant to apply (or if they were hired to remain) when required daily to work with White counterparts of longer experience, heady with their professional superiority and likely to include a substantial portion of quasis-Rebels of 'un-reconstructed' mentality.

#### IV. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

##### A. RICHMOND NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD PARK. (Visited July 23, 1990.)

Richmond NBP (along with Petersburg National Battlefield) should be recognized as a key location for the study and representation of the Black soldier's experience during the Civil War in Virginia ~~As~~ in particular with respect to the several regiments of United States Colored Troops (USCTs) in the Army of the James which participated in the Battle of Chaffin's Farm southeast of Richmond on 29-30 September 1864. That dramatic episode is presently commemorated at the NBP's Fort Harrison unit. Perhaps the most significant subject for interpretation is the engagement known as the Battle of New Market Heights (NMH, see Appendix <sup>↑</sup>) That action involving Paine's Division of USCTs against ~~Cross's~~ <sup>Bass's</sup> Texas Brigade on the morning of 29 September 1864 resulted in the award of 14 Congressional Medals of Honor to members of the Black regiments. Of the three main engagements (Fort Harrison, Fort Gilmer, and New

Market Heights) making up the overall Battle of Chaffin's Farm, the one at New Market Heights, along VA Rte. 5, was <sup>one of</sup> the highlights of the day and the event most likely to attract Afro-American interest and visitation.

1. References to the Battle of 29-30 September 1864.

Official records of the Union Army refer to the 'Battle of Chaffin's Farm (Fort Gilmer, New Market Heights, Fort Harrison, Deep Bottom)'. Popular works on Afro-American military history generally refer to Chaffin's Farm and/or New Market Heights as the battle(s) in which the USCTs distinguished themselves. It is unfortunate, therefore, that the encompassing NBP visitor center takes its name from Fort Harrison and that the NPS has commonly applied this name (the least significant reference from the Afro-American perspective) in its published information about the extended Battle of Chaffin's Farm. Likewise, due to an unfortunate coincidence, it is regrettable that any reference to a battle at 'New Market' is generally assumed by the public at large to mean the site of the same name in the Shenandoah Valley which has long been remembered for the valor shown there by the VMI cadet corps in an entirely different battle with no Afro-American connections. It is recommended that the title 'Chaffin's Farm' be utilized as the preferred and proper name for the two-day battle and that 'Chaffin's Farm/Fort Gilmer', 'Chaffin's Farm/New Market Heights', etc. be used, as appropriate, by interpreters and in all printed materials when describing elements of the larger operation. Consideration

should be given also to the renaming of the visitor's center and the Fort Harrison unit itself. The site was once called Fort Burnham; but Chaffin's Farm has the greater historical relevance, and that name should be restored.

2. Tour Map. The NPS should reprint its tour map insuring that New Market Heights is identified with a blue circle in the same manner as all 'other battle sites not part of park' on the tour route.

3. Co-operation with Henrico County. In the spirit of Secretary Lujan's <sup>American</sup> Battlefield Protection <sup>Program</sup> Plan the NPS needs to take at least a strong supporting role regarding the county's projected 'Planning Proposal Study' to encourage the following:

a. That the park planned for the property which includes Signal Hill is appropriately named to identify it with the Battle of New Market Heights (e.g. 'New Market Heights Memorial Park').

b. That the park provide audio-visual interpretation (wayside or visitor center-type displays in keeping with the highest NPS standards) of the New Market Heights Battle with full recognition of the USCTs involved <sup>especially</sup> the 14 Medal of Honor Winners.

c. That Virginia State Highway Department historical markers be erected on Rte. 5 at the northwestern extremity of New Market Heights (near I-95 below Signal Hill) to commemorate the combat of 29 September 1864 and at the southeastern end (near Turner Rd. below Camp Holly) to commemorate the action of 29



September and the two other skirmishes associated with these fortifications.

d. That land be set aside at the park for the eventual erection of a monument to USCT regiments of the Armies of the James and Potomac, the goal being a statue in the classic style of a Black Union soldier to be constructed with contributions solicited from Black veterans groups, fraternities and other interested parties throughout the country.

e. That the Richmond Metropolitan Recreation Corridor pilot project be utilized as a forum to promote visitation to the new park, Fort Gilmer, the Fort Harrison visitor center and cemetery; all of which should be incorporated into a Richmond Area Black History Trail which would link these and various other Afro-American historical sites in the region.

f. That Black community organizations are encouraged to sponsor Civil War study groups, re-enactor groups, period costume drill teams, etc., which could, among other things, provide volunteer docents and support for various commemorations and interpretive efforts.

4. Black History Study. The study presently identified in 1990 as a research need should be completed with the guidance and co-operation of knowledgeable members of the local Black community. In addition to the story of the USCTs in the 1864 campaign, the study should emphasize the changing fortunes of Richmond's Black community from antebellum times to recent years particularly segments of the Black community residing adjacent

to park units like Chimborazo. Development of the study in such a way would foster community interest in and identification with the NBP, and the study would become a beneficial tool for indigenous community groups as well as NPS interpretive staff in years to come.

5. Exhibits at Chimborazo Park. Pending the general upgrading of all display materials in the NBP's downtown visitor center it is recommended that some of the existing exhibits be modified immediately.

a. The Richmond Hospitals display, "Confederate Doctors" lends itself to enhancement with a caption describing the service of "Confederate Nurses." The pioneering efforts of White Southern women in the latter capacity have been commemorated in museums elsewhere. The pivotal<sup>roll</sup> of Southern Blacks <sup>↖</sup> slave and free, male and female <sup>↗</sup> should be emphasized here.

b. The display regarding 1864 defenses should succinctly make the point that while the Confederate fortifications were largely constructed with Black slave labor, they were ultimately assaulted and occupied by Union forces which included a large component of Black soldiers. Room should be found for at least one illustration of the troops which were the first to enter the city after the Confederate evacuation.

c. As a new theme for exhibition consideration should be given to Union espionage efforts in Richmond, and credit should be given in such a display to the Blacks who

figured prominently in these activities.

d. New site bulletins, films, and other graphics focusing on the USCTs at Chaffin's Farm (intended primarily for use at the the Fort Harrison unit) should be incorporated and utilized with the program at Chimborazo as well.

6. Exhibits at Fort Harrison. The present display describing the contribution of the USCTs is good, but it could be improved.

a. Apparently, no photographs have been discovered of Blacks at the Chaffin's Farm battlements. However, portraits exist of many, if not all of the Black ~~Congressional~~ Medal of Honor Winners, the most prominent of whom in later years was Christian Fleetwood. A profile describing his remarkable achievements (denied a commission because of his race during the war, he was later an officer in the D.C. National Guard) would be more appealing to the Black visitor than some of the contemporary caricature-type illustrations now on display.

b. A profile of the Union commander who directed the offensive of 29 September 1864 would also be appropriate. Given the title "Beast" during his administration of New Orleans earlier in the war and derided by historians thereafter, Maj. Gen. Benjamin Butler deserves credit as a bold planner in the Chaffin's Farm episode; and for his various initiatives on behalf of the Black race starting with his famed declaration at Fort Monroe, VA., that refugee slaves be considered "contraband of war," not to be relinquished to their Rebel masters.

c. Mention should also be made of the unofficial Army of the James or 'Butler' Medal which the General devised and awarded to his 'Colored Troops' after his observation of their gallantry at New Market Heights. (Unfortunately, he was not on hand to observe the even greater gallantry displayed at Fort Gilmer later the same day  $\lambda$  USCTs in that slaughter deserved but received neither the ~~OMH~~ nor the Butler medal, the only decorations then in existence for U.S. soldiers). The Army never acknowledged the Butler Medal, but it is a handsome and noteworthy article which should at least be illustrated in the Fort Harrison display.

7. New Visitor Center. A new Fort Harrison visitor center (interpreting the Chaffin's Farm battle, etc.) has been proposed for construction at least since the NBP's 1971 General Management Plan. To be located at or adjacent to the Fort Harrison National Cemetery, it is recommended that this facility complement the construction and the interpretive themes proposed above for facilities at New Market Heights. It should contain adequate space and equipment to showcase films such as the one proposed below along with expanded static displays. The center should also call attention to the Fort Harrison Cemetery itself which is something of a monument to Afro-American military history in its own right  $\lambda$  containing the graves of many Black veterans (many, presumably, with living descendants in the Richmond area), the grave markers reflect a cross-section of the segregated military units in which Black citizens served and died

from the Civil War through World War II.

8. Film on Black Soldiers. Richmond Remembered. the present orientation film for the NBP leaves much to be desired from the Afro-American point of view. It is recommended that a first class film be produced on the subject of the USCTs and their contribution to the Union victory in Virginia. A script could be based upon the memoirs of Christian Fleetwood of the 4th USC Infantry Regiment which saw action at Petersburg as well as at Richmond. An actor in costume portraying Fleetwood could narrate the film on screen while re-enactors such as those associated with the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry could be employed at small cost for recreated combat scenes. The resultant production could be utilized on a daily basis along with other audio-visuals for orientation purposes at both the Richmond and Petersburg Parks. It should also be marketable on videotape to Afro-American educators and others around the country.

9. Site Bulletin on Black Soldiers. Augmenting the recommended film, an illustrated brochure or handbook on the subject of Black soldiers in the Armies of the James and the Potomac should be carefully developed and made available for visitors at Richmond, Petersburg and other eastern Civil War parks. Funds from sales by the Eastern National Park and Monument Association have already been proposed for such a project.

B. PETERSBURG NATIONAL BATTLEFIELD. (Visited July 24, 1990)

A "pressing issue" for the park was improvement of its wayside exhibits which are said to date from the <sup>1950s</sup> ~~1960s~~ or earlier. Recommendations for enhancement of these (as well as interior displays at the visitor center) made in 1978 and NPS concurrence were formalized in 1986, but in 1990 virtually nothing had changed.

A display in the visitor center mentioned ~~Sergeant~~ <sup>Sgt.</sup> Decatur Dorsey as one of the 21 soldiers awarded the ~~Congressional~~ Medal of Honor at the Battle of the Crater, but it contained no photograph or other-likeness. The permanent exhibit on USCTs which has long been recommended did not exist. (Apparently, an exhibit with this theme was on display for <sup>more than</sup> over a year; but it was removed in 1989 to make room for an exhibit commemorating the 125th anniversary of the Battle of the Crater which was still in place in 1990.)

1. Hiring of Black Seasonals. A goal should be set immediately to recruit, cultivate, establish and sustain a cadre of Black seasonal interpreters comparable in quantity and quality to the pool of White seasonals which existed in the 1990 season. Regardless of their ~~actual~~ proportions in the battles of 1864-65, if it evolved that a majority of those in Union Army uniforms during the park's interpretive programs was Black this would certainly be better than the alleged policy of limiting their number to one or two. If the recent hiring pattern is not changed it can be anticipated that friction will develop as new,

less flexible personalities become involved; substantiating the allegation (convincingly refuted in 1990) that the park serves essentially to promote a White, pro-Confederate agenda. The park should make every effort to obtain an experienced Black reenactor for a leadership position as an instructor and role model for future seasonal hires.

2. Decatur Dorsey Monument. The Decatur Dorsey Institute (founded by Kelvin G. Miles of Asheboro, NC, a former seasonal interpreter at Petersburg) was created to build a monument to the USCTs, named in honor of Black Medal of Honor recipient, Decatur Dorsey. The project was said to be in an advanced stage of the authorization process in 1990. It is recommended that the park publicize this undertaking and lend its support to the extent permissible officially or unofficially.

3. Visitor Center Annex. A suitable facility is required for the presentation of films and special programs of all kinds but especially (from the Afro-American viewpoint) the film proposed for joint use by Petersburg and Richmond NBP describing the role of USCTs in Virginia and presentations such as the Black History Month Programs co-sponsored by the NPS but now limited to facilities at Richard Bland College. It is recommended that the long-discussed visitor center annex which is intended primarily to provide additional office space be approved and funded with its potential for insuring a more inclusionary interpretation of the Afro-American experience given full acknowledgment.

4. GMP and IP. The need for a new General Management Plan and Interpretive Prospectus is long overdue. The 1986 'Review' indicated the GMP would be 'initiated in 1986 or 1987' to reflect the overall needs of the park and that the IP would then be revised to reflect recommended changes to enhance the Afro-American perspective. So far none of this has happened. It is recommended that these projects be expedited.

5. Permanent Black History Exhibit. It is extremely disappointing that the 'permanent' display promised in the 1986 'Review' turned out to be only temporary. Its content cannot be judged at this time, but it can be assumed that if it were attractively done it would serve as an important educational tool and magnet for Afro-American visitors. It is recommended that the former exhibit be restored immediately and enhanced as necessary to insure it meets the highest NPS standards. This exhibit along with a complementary brochure (proposed as a joint project with Richmond NBP in 1986 or earlier and part of more recent recommendations for that facility) should be given the highest priority.

6. Wayside Exhibits. The need for improved wayside exhibits has long been recognized. The Howard Study proposed that the service of Blacks on the battlefield be emphasized by discussion of individual regiments in these exhibits and elsewhere. This proposal was soundly rejected as inequitable in the 1986 'Review of the Howard Study.' There are valid arguments pro and con, but a sensible approach would be to utilize the



designator 'U/S/C/T)' wherever applicable. The sign referring to 'Hinck's Union Division' for example could be easily changed to read 'Hinck's Division of U.S. Colored Troops' and convey the inclusionary message which is the goal of these recommendations.

7. Community Relations. Outreach efforts such as the one to the predominantly Afro-American student body at the neighboring Robert E. Lee School are to be encouraged. The utilization of teachers at all levels to heighten in their students and thence in entire families an appreciation for the heritage preserved at the park is perhaps the best thing that can be done. It is also recommended that Black Civil War re-enactment groups such as the 54th Mass. Company B, based in Washington, DC, be invited to encampments at the park to augment NPS interpreters with first person interpretations of their own. Such events should be publicized as extensively as possible and hopefully would inspire the creation of homegrown organizations of the same kind in Petersburg.

C. HARPERS FERRY NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK. (visited 25 July 1990)

In 1978 Cassandra Smith Parker produced an impressively thorough report on the Afro-American experience at Harpers Ferry and its interpretation by the NPS at its National Historic Park. Included in the Howard Study, the Parker report described Harpers Ferry, of all the NPS landmarks, as 'perhaps [the] best suited to become a center for the study and presentation of Black history'.

It is roundly credited for heightening awareness and stimulating the expanded interpretive programs which were in effect or under development in 1990.

Unlike such parks as Petersburg National Battlefield, Harpers Ferry has had money to follow and execute its Interpretive Prospectus. The NHP has received special funding over the years to preserve or restore its 19th century buildings and artifacts and to commemorate the important events of its history, many of which have strong Afro-American associations. This funding is due largely to the efforts of West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd and his special interest in the NHP and its activities.

Beginning with the Development Concept Plan of 1979 Black history became a primary theme for the Harpers Ferry National Historic Park. The 1988 Statement for Interpretation describes four major themes, each of which will have one or more separate museums dedicated to its interpretation. The major themes are as follows: John Brown, the Civil War, Industrial Development, and Black History.

Aside from the projected Black History Museum (scheduled to open in 1991), the John Brown Museum (opened in 1982-83) has important associations for the Afro-American visitor. Three buildings and a 20 minute orientation film are devoted to Brown, his abolitionist cause, his conspirators and the raiders (Black and White) with whom he attempted to seize the Harpers Ferry armory in prelude to the slave insurrection he hoped to lead in

1859.

Also, an exhibit on Harpers Ferry's Storer College and its representative role in the history of Afro-American education was previously on display (1982) in what has now become the park visitor center. It is planned that this exhibit will be moved to its own building in the 'lower town' area while the campus buildings themselves (located in the more inaccessible 'upper town' area) will remain in use as NPS administrative offices. This 'museum' (to include a research center devoted to the history of the college in a regional and national context) is an ambitious, home-grown undertaking, representing a commendable degree of cooperation between concerned NPS staff and Storer College alumni. (NOTE: An extensive oral history project involving the alumni is underway; and a 'history committee' is currently preparing (summer 1990) a 'physical' history of the college. Meanwhile, a formal 'social' history is a stated but as yet unprogrammed goal.)

The Black history exhibit at Harpers Ferry promises to be one of the most substantial Afro-American interpretations within the NPS. The most remarkable thing about it is the fact that it was developed with such ~~apparent~~ energy, sincerity, and thoroughness by the local park staff research team--none of whom is a specialist in Black history and three of whom out of the four are White.

The exhibit was funded in 1989. The initial opening date of 1990 was extended until August 1991 in order to enhance the

project with additional data obtained through recent research.

Creatively using state of the art audiovisuals, the exhibit entitled 'Black Voices from Harpers Ferry' will include stations describing local patterns of the Afro-American experience.

Slaves, pre-Civil War free colored, north-bound runaways, post-Civil War freedmen, and citizens struggling for equality in later years will all be represented by historical residents of Harpers Ferry with audio recitations of their unique personal stories.

A special section entitled 'Learning' will include oral histories of Storer College graduates (including former Nigerian prime minister Nnadi Azikwe?).

1. John Brown Museum. John Brown has been a hero to Afro-Americans since 1859. However, there has long been a feeling by some in the Black community that his adoration grew at the expense of earlier Black insurrectionists whose place in history many have forgotten. One of the important references in the Parker report, Benjamin Quarles' Blacks on John Brown (Urbana; University of Illinois Press, 1972), describes the editorial debate between Black journalists after the Civil War on whether Afro-Americans should give priority to erecting a monument in memory of John Brown or to one recognizing Nat Turner, the most successful Black slave insurrectionist of the antebellum South. Since it is unlikely a NPS museum will be erected any time soon to the memory of Nat Turner, the John Brown Museum seems a likely place to profile this important American. Excerpts from the debate among Blacks over monuments to these men

would certainly be of interest to today's Black visitor and should be on display. It is also recommended that a display be developed placing John Brown (visually and symbolically) in perspective among a pantheon of earlier Black slave insurrectionists in the United States and from elsewhere in the Americas including Turner, Denmark Vesey, Jemmy (of South Carolina's Stono Rebellion), Toussaint L'Ouverture (Haiti's national hero), and others.

2. Black History Museum. The exhibits planned for this facility are impressive and successfully personalize the general Afro-American experience through the Civil War years in a way not achieved anywhere else. When it comes to the post-Civil War years, however, the unique evolution of Harpers Ferry and the general situation for the relatively small Black population in the new state of West Virginia palpably contrasts with that experienced by Blacks elsewhere in the country. The turmoil of Reconstruction politics and the reign of terror to which Black activists were subjected in most areas of the Deep South were not part of the Harpers Ferry experience. While agreeing that the exhibit should concentrate on local subject matter, in the interest of providing out of state visitors with the fullest possible educational experience, it is recommended that exhibits clearly make the point when contrast with more typical patterns is evident. If no lynchings ever occurred in Harpers Ferry, for example, the point should be made that the community was relatively free of the violence which made lynch law and

injustice almost the norm for the Black race in many places during the years following slavery.

3. W.E.B. DuBois. The NPS presently commemorates the lives of two of the most important Black leaders of the post-Civil War period, Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, with dedicated historical units within its system. However, the third figure in a natural trio of philosophical giants has gone without recognition. That person is W.E.B. DuBois. While DuBois must certainly be discussed in any exhibit proposed to recognize the Niagara Movement and other milestones of the civil rights struggle at the NHP, this man is deserving of an enhanced interpretation in his own right. It is recommended that a profile of this Black leader describing his intellectual and philosophical alternatives to the prevalent guidance of Booker T. Washington be included within any exhibit with audio-visual elaboration and a site bulletin providing details of his life and those of other Black leaders inside and outside the Niagara Movement during that important period.

4. Hayward Shephard Monument. Controversial as this Daughters of the Confederacy monument to the free Black man killed by John Brown's gunmen may be, the idea of keeping it in place but forever underwraps is insulting to Shephard's memory and to all concerned. It is indeed ironic that more outdoor public art was erected by Southern Whites to Blacks they considered "loyal" during the Civil War than has been erected by Blacks (or Whites) to Black Union Army veterans or heroes of the

abolition movement. (Other examples exist in Tennessee, South Carolina, etc.). The most offensive aspect of the Shephard monument seems to be its allusions to 'faithful darkies, etc.' Thankfully, NHP interpretation of this footnote to history can be enhanced with the priceless story of the Black woman from Storer who boldly spoke out at the statue's dedication, confronting the Confederate Daughters with the fact of Black service in the cause of the Union and the destruction of slavery. It is recommended that this monument be re-dedicated and plaques installed beside the original recognizing the role and the cause of the Black freedom-fighters who accompanied John Brown on his raid.

5. Site Bulletins and Publications. So much of the material developed for the projected Black History Museum at the NHP is unique and useful educationally that it deserves to be reproduced in the manner of the best quality NPS publications. The NHP Black history research team should undertake to publish its background materials by whatever means are available. This team has done a remarkable job, and it is recommended their achievements be recognized officially by the highest echelons of the NPS.

6. Descriptive Terminology and Style. It is again recommended that standard practices be developed within the NPS for capitalizing the racial descriptives 'Black' and 'White' and for using phrases like 'Afro-' and/or 'African-American'. Judging from the 1988 SFI for Harpers Ferry NHP there is presently no consistency even within individual documents.

(NOTE: The authors of the 1978 "Howard Study" used the lower case "b" for "black" while the NPS itself capitalized the word in its 1986 "Review" of the study.) It should be remembered that the word "negro" was not generally capitalized until the federal government made it policy to do so in the 1930s. While it may not yet be government policy, the NPS should recognize that the Black visiting public would appreciate this gesture in any context but especially in presentations whose purpose is to represent their cultural heritage. Visitors might accept the lower case style in older exhibits and literature <sup>and</sup> even the obsolescent terms "Negro" and "Colored" should not be offensive when used in the proper context; for example, in references to the U.S. Colored Troops of the Civil War. However, a much more favorable reception of new displays and exhibits can be expected when references to the Black race are capitalized.

D. YORKTOWN, COLONIAL NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK. (Visited 23 July 90.)

The siege of Yorktown in 1781 was the final episode in the military struggle for American independence. Serving with the Patriot forces during the siege was the First Rhode Island Regiment, a unique organization which at that time counted Afro-Americans as 75% of its enlistees. The unit had fought with distinction in the North prior to Yorktown and was often complimented for its military efficiency among the other regiments in Washington's Franco-American army. Its role at



Yorktown may have been minor, but it was not without important symbolism. Like most of the American force, the Blacks from Rhode Island are notable primarily for their presence among those willing to fight for American independence. The symbolism of this presence at the War's climax can itself serve as the basis for a respectable Afro-American interpretation by the NPS.

Having recently visited Baltimore's Fort McHenry and observed the site bulletins and plaques on display regarding the Blacks who had participated in that event, I assumed that such interpretive efforts were in vogue, but Yorktown seemed to be behind the times.

My greatest disappointment was in not seeing any Black faces in the facility's impressive audio-visual displays or in its interpretive film.

1. Representation of a Black Soldier. The 1989 goals for Colonial NHP called for the construction of new, full-size cut outs to show a Black soldier of the First Rhode Island for the 'Fortunes of War Program' at Yorktown and a Black family (to use with the White family) for the 'Colonial Family Program' at Jamestown. It is recommended that these installations be completed as quickly as possible.

2. Black Virginians in the Revolutionary War. A permanent exhibit <sup>should</sup> be developed at the Yorktown visitor center around the Afro-American theme. The exhibit should briefly describe race relations in Revolutionary Virginia and how Blacks (slave or free) were generally denied the opportunity to enlist

in that colony's Patriot forces--a policy that British governor, Lord Dunmore used to great propaganda advantage early in the war, emancipating Black slaves by the hundreds to serve with Loyalist forces (particularly, his Ethiopian Regiment at the Battles of Kemp's Landing and Great Bridge near Norfolk in November and December 1775). (Note: the Loyalists were eventually defeated, but Lord Dunmore was sincere enough to insure that his Black recruits were evacuated from the colony with the White British personnel. Eventually, 20,000 Black refugees left the newly independent States for the British promise of freedom in other parts of its empire <sup>^</sup> Canada, the West Indies and Sierra Leone in West Africa.) ~~Note:~~ The Afro-American's decision to support either the Patriot or the Loyalist cause was generally a personal one based on which side offered the best deal in terms of humane treatment and ultimate manumission from slavery in return for his services. Certainly, neither camp included general abolition as a political objective. Among all the colonies some 5,000 Blacks were credited with having borne arms for the Patriots. These points should be made quickly and succinctly to all park visitors.)

3. Information Brochure. The static display should be complemented with a site bulletin containing the same information or expanded to describe the Afro-American role as represented at other Revolutionary War sites within the NPS system. An expanded bulletin could be part of interpretation/education efforts at the various historical units.

E. FORT MCHENRY NATIONAL MONUMENT AND HISTORIC SHRINE.

(Visited 7 July 1990.)

The visitor center contained a wall-mounted briefing on the activities of five Afro-Americans during the War of 1812 including those of ~~Private~~<sup>Pvt.</sup> William Williams of the 38th U.S. Infantry Regiment who died of wounds received during the bombardment of 1814 <sup>^</sup> the Shrine's primary historical theme.

The availability of this material was gratifying and rather unexpected since so little attention had been given the subject at other sites where the Black contribution might have been considered more noteworthy (e.g. Yorktown, VA.).

Concerning the secondary themes of events at the fort and in the city during the Civil War, however, some significant possibilities for interpreting Afro-American involvement seem to have been overlooked.

1. Blacks in the British forces. When the British invaded the Chesapeake in 1814 Black slaves greeted them as liberators and flocked to their lines as they had to Lord Dunmore's Loyalists a generation earlier. Many had to be turned away, but some 5,000 found refuge. A force of 200 fugitive slaves was hastily trained and formed into a <sup>+ b</sup> battalion of 'colonial marines' which fought with distinction on the British side at the Battle of Bladensburg and the occupation of Washington before participating in the attack on Baltimore. The current bulletin and displays on Blacks in the War of 1812 should

be revised to include information about the British 'colonial marines' <sup>and</sup> the incongruity of slavery in the new, 'democratic' republic and (with minimal cynicism) the unquenchable thirst for freedom which led so many Black slaves to side with the British invaders.

2. The First Casualties of the Civil War. A well-written NPS bulletin describes the events in Baltimore at the start of the Civil War which led to declaration of martial law and the transformation of Fort McHenry into the 'Baltimore Bastille'. <sup>and</sup> The Pratt Street Riot of 19 April 1861 is fully described, but there is no mention of the precipitating events of the previous day. Specifically, the incident of the assault on ~~Private~~ <sup>Pvt.</sup> Nicolas Biddle of the Pennsylvania Volunteers is overlooked. Like William Williams during the War of 1812 (see paragraph II, above) Biddle was the rare Black soldier in a White company. One of an unknown but considerable number of other Blacks at the outset of the war, Biddle seems to have been accorded the status of an 'honorary' White man so that he could join his Schuylkill County neighbors in forming the 'Washington Artillerists' (although some authors would later describe him as the 'servant' of the unit's White commanding officer). Biddle's role is noteworthy in that the pro-Confederate street mobs in Baltimore, already out to harass Union volunteers en route to Washington, singled him out for especially violent treatment. He was struck by missiles thrown from the crowd and severely injured. Upon their arrival in Washington, the artillerists were visited

*Abraham*  
by President Lincoln, and Biddle was acknowledged as the first casualty among the Union's volunteer defenders. (Note: six Regular Army soldiers (White) were casualties at Fort Sumter on April 14<sup>th</sup>, including Daniel Hough, the war's first fatality.) It is recommended that the 'Pratt Street Riot' bulletin be revised to include the Nicolas Biddle story or that a separate bulletin be developed.

3. Blacks from Baltimore and Maryland in the Civil War.

Two of the six Union Army regiments raised from Maryland's African population were composed predominantly of recruits from the Baltimore area, the 4th and 39th Regiments of U.S. Colored Troops. These regiments later served as prison guards in southern Maryland and had distinguished combat records in Virginia and North Carolina. <sup>Six</sup> ~~Five~~ Black Marylanders <sup>(one sailor and five soldiers)</sup> won <sup>Sgt.</sup> Congressional Medals of Honor during the war including ~~Sergeant~~ <sup>Sgt.</sup> Mary Christian Fleetwood a highly educated Baltimorean who later became a prominent citizen of Washington and an officer in the D.C. National Guard.

It is recommended that further research be done to clarify whether any of the Black units ~~actually~~ trained or served at Fort McHenry or elsewhere in Baltimore. A bulletin describing the contribution of Marylanders to the Union armed forces should be developed emphasizing the Black volunteers and conscripts (slave and free) who played such a conspicuous role.

4. Slave Laborers at Fort McHenry. Presumably, Black

slave labor was employed in the construction of Fort McHenry as

was the case later at Fort Sumter and other such facilities in the South. This fact should be included in related educational and interpretive literature.

5. Black Prison Camp Guards. The current site bulletin describing the "Baltimore Bastille" discusses the fact that Fort McHenry housed many Confederate <sup>POW's</sup> who were ultimately transferred to other locations, in particular to the largest Federal prison camp of them all, Point Lookout in southern Maryland. Black soldiers were employed at Point Lookout as guards for the Southerners, a policy the Rebels generally found outrageous if not humbling. A state park at Point Lookout in St. Mary's county contains a museum which tells this story quite vividly. It is recommended that the "Baltimore Bastille" bulletin be enhanced to include a description of Point Lookout and the irony of Confederate prisoners being transferred into the hands of the Black guardians. The existence of the park at Point Lookout and its historic programs should be advertised at Fort McHenry and interpretive materials from the Maryland park service should be made available.

F. GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK. (Visited 25 July 1990)

The Battle of Gettysburg in July of 1863 was the ~~biggest~~ of the Civil War and has been glorified more than any other in American history. Although large numbers of U.S. Colored Troops were in training on this date and some were in active service on

other fronts, none of the Black units was engaged at Gettysburg. The 1978 Howard Study discussed how the Black residents of southern Pennsylvania were mobilized to face the Confederate invasion with many taking up arms with volunteer defenders in Harrisburg and other communities. It also discussed such footnotes as the presence of Robert E. Lee's manservant, William Mack Lee, who was on hand during all the general's battles from Antietam to Appomattox. These facts are noteworthy but contribute little toward the enhanced interpretation of the Afro-American experience which we hope to achieve: i.e., one including the vital <sup>^</sup> indeed the dramatic and entertaining <sup>^</sup> elements which make NPS historical interpretations attractive to the public at large.

The exhibit entitled "Fighting for Freedom: the Black American Soldier in the Civil War" in the Gettysburg park's huge museum was researched and developed by William Gladstone of Westport, CT, and contained his unique collection of photographs and artifacts relating to the U.S. Colored Troops. These ~~were~~ <sup>are</sup> ~~apparently~~ on ~~long-term~~ loan to the NPS <sup>in</sup>. It is by far the most extensive display on this subject seen anywhere in the NPS system, and its educational value cannot be overestimated. However, nothing seen on display related the exhibit to the Gettysburg battlefield. Important information was contained about the eleven regiments of Black soldiers raised and trained in Pennsylvania (at Camp William Penn, Philadelphia). But it was not clear that the Union Army in Pennsylvania was even a

secondary theme for this park unit; and the placement of this exhibit in the center of an array of displays focusing on various aspects of the great Gettysburg campaign made it seem rather out of place. (The exhibit was not advertised or pointed out by direction markers that I could see, and I suspect that interested visitors might miss it entirely. On the other hand, some might stumble upon it and question its relevance in the midst of the Gettysburg theme.)

Both Gladstone and the Howard authors overlooked the most conspicuous contribution made by Blacks in support of the Union Army of the Potomac <sup>and</sup> the remarkable work of the U.S. Military Railroad (USMMR) Construction Corps and its labor force of Black "contrabands". It is upon the role of these men which this segment will concentrate in the hope of providing the basis for an enhanced interpretation which will be ~~completely~~ relevant to the locality and credible to the general student of the battle, while offering Afro-American visitors relevant personal images and thereby a sense of identification with and interest in this pivotal event of American history. See Appendix B.

1. Museum Exhibit. The Gettysburg park museum should be enhanced with representations of Union railroad personnel to include mannequins or life sized cut outs of at least a White locomotive engineer and a Black construction worker. The Black figure should be in an appropriately heroic pose (with a sledge hammer a la John Henry) in shirt sleeves with a Union forage cap and waistcoat (without insignia) <sup>and</sup> the representative garb of the



contraband laborer.

2. Brigadier General Herman Haupt and a Monument to Civilian Contributions to the Union Victory. The legendary feats of General Haupt and the officers of the USMRR and its Construction Corps should be summarized in an appropriate manner along with the tribute to the contraband laborers taken from his Reminiscences (as quoted in the Appendix). This summary should be included both in a photographic display within the museum and an outdoor monument of the sort provided to the memory of other organizations participating in the battle. An appropriately 'inclusive' means of achieving recognition for the construction men might be with a monument to all the 'civilians' in army service <sup>in</sup> a memorial with plaques recognizing the workers of the Quartermaster Corps (also predominantly Afro-Americans) as well as those of the USMRR and others. Whatever its scope or design, such a memorial should not fail to address the diversity of the civilian force and the fact that many were refugees from Southern slavery.

3. USCT Exhibit. The Black soldier display should be placed in better context with the events at Gettysburg. Attention should be called to the fact that while USCTs were not yet members of the Army of the Potomac their units would become attached by the time of Grant's 1864 offensive. It might also be noted that due to the Army's initial skepticism they would be kept in the rear, seeing little action during the advance from the Wilderness through Cold Harbor. It was not until the siege

of Petersburg that they came into their own as warriors in the Army of the Potomac.

4. Railroading in the Civil War. The neglected subject of railroads in the strategy of the Civil War should be amplified with an NPS bulletin or other publication. Such a project might best be developed as a joint effort involving the Manassas, Fredericksburg/Spotsylvania, Chickamauga/Chattanooga, and Kennesaw Mountain battlefield parks, as well as Gettysburg. Railroading was a major strategic factor in campaigns involving each of those battlefields during the war, and the Afro-American contribution to the USMRR Construction Corps (and as slave laborers for the Confederacy) can and should be emphasized respecting each campaign. In some instances this involvement might serve as the central focus for a park's Afro-American appeal in outreach and educational efforts of all sorts.

G. FORT MOULTRIE/FORT SUMTER NATIONAL MONUMENT.

(Visited Oct 15, 1990.)

Since its premiere several months earlier, the film Glory was reported to have stimulated nationwide interest in the exploits of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry during the campaign against Charleston, and Ranger Michael Allen was very active in gathering information and mailing out materials in response to a steady stream of requests. A new site bulletin regarding "Battery" Wagner and the inclusion of the subject in the latest revision of the park handbook had recently been completed by Ranger historian David Ruth. As early as 1984-85 the assault on Wagner (spearheaded by the Black soldiers of the 54th Mass.) was addressed at Fort Sumter in terms of "A Challenge from Morris Island" the title of a photographic exhibit which is still on display. This exhibit could be further enhanced, but despite what seem like the staff's best efforts, the extent of Afro-American interest in NPS programs at both Moultrie and Sumter remains disappointing. (NOTE: In years past, wreath laying ceremonies were sponsored by the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or other representatives of the Black community in the waters off what remains of Morris Island (the actual site of Fort Wagner has been lost to the ocean and no marker exists). These had been conducted in July on the anniversary of the battle and/or in January in conjunction with Emancipation Day activities. The NPS has no property on Morris Island and was not involved in these

activities. No one could say why, but for some reason the ceremonies seem not to have been conducted in recent years.)

The development of Afro-American sub-themes was obviously a subject of great interest among staff members and ideas were plentiful. The point was made that enabling legislation limited their ability to expand into new subject areas at Fort Sumter, but they felt there was carte blanche to broaden their themes at Fort Moultrie. So far, besides the special exhibits mentioned, a figurine has been installed to represent a member of the 35th U.S. Colored Troops, a unit of Black soldiers which manned the fort in 1866, and paintings done by a Black slave laborer are on display depicting scenes at the fort during its occupation by the Confederates. But fundamentally the park is dedicated to the commemoration of the Army's coast artillery corps and the defense of Charleston harbor.

1. African-American Heritage Trail. The Charleston area abounds in sites rich in Afro-American connections which seem not to have been fully recognized amidst an obvious concern for historic preservation on the part of the majority community. Something similar to the Black History National Recreation Trail created in Washington, DC, in 1988 should be relatively easy and inexpensive to develop and might even be extended down the coast as far as Port Royal Sound (whatever the ultimate feasibility of developing a Penn School unit and/or a separate Sea Islands Park — see Appendix C and Paragraph 4, below) ~~as proposed below~~ to encompass a variety of sites connected with the Stono Rebellion (NHL), Civil War battles associated with the

USCTs (Honey Hill, etc.), and notable personalities like Denmark Vesey, Robert Smalls (NHL), Harriet Tubman, et al. The NPS Boston Freedom Trail and its associated Black Heritage Trail or the locally sponsored Black Heritage Trail in Savannah might serve as better models for the Charleston situation, each being the outgrowth of unique local circumstances and opportunities. The potential for cooperation and/or competition with various community interests in South Carolina remains to be investigated. I would leave that up to the Fort Moultrie staff who seem ready and willing to do so; working as necessary with city agencies, local Black scholars, and such organizations as the Avery Institute. They would certainly achieve prestige for the NPS and hopefully go far in creating an increased interest on the part of the Black community in park programs generally.

2. Marker for Fort Wagner. Presently, there stands an aged bronze marker on the south rampart of Fort Sumter which says: "Morris Island 3/4 Mile South. Site of three Confederate batteries in the initial attack 1861. Confederate forces evacuated the island September 7, 1863, after a 58 day siege. Federal batteries on Morris Island bombarded Fort Sumter from 1863 to 1865." Nothing is mentioned about the most dramatic event of that 58 <sup>day</sup> siege, the attack on Battery Wagner, a.k.a. "Fort" Wagner, featuring the 54th Mass. on July 18<sup>th</sup>. The White soldiers who fought and died that day should not go unmentioned; but certainly, Afro-American visitors would appreciate an updated marker pointing out that yonder beneath the waves is the place

~~where their forebearers first~~ <sup>undying</sup> earned the respect of their White peers for their courageous but futile charge. A granite obelisk on Morris Island itself would be nice, but a simple, accessible plaque at Sumter would go a long way toward providing the kind of everlasting tribute which is so rarely found when it comes to commemorating the exploits of the segregated regiments of the "old army". It is recommended that the NPS take this step, in effect creating a monument in the form of a carefully worded marker associated with the "challenge from Morris Island".

3. "Fort" vs. "Battery". The decision to describe the fortifications attacked by the 54th Mass. as "Battery" Wagner vice "Fort" Wagner in the Fort Sumter handbook and the title of the related site bulletin/folder should be reconsidered. The technical definitions are all but irrelevant. Since 1863 the majority of writers have used "fort", the Boston monument to the 54th Mass. uses "fort", and the movie Glory uses "fort". The site bulletin text discusses the awesome firepower mounted within the Wagner works which stretched across the breadth of Morris Island. It also describes it as a "sand fort" and even reprints the label "Fort Wagner" as applied by whomever drew the vintage battle map which is included. Certainly the majority of Afro-American visitors would come expecting an interpretation of "Fort" Wagner, and it should be expected that some would feel downright insulted to find that the objective of their heroic 54th Mass. was in essence downgraded to mere "battery" status by the NPS in its official literature. The powers that be should

concede the esoteric point in this case and go with the more popular term. A panel at the visitor center defining "battery" "fort" "fortress" etc., and the evolution of each word's usage might be useful.

4. Penn Center, Frogmore, St. Helena Island, Beaufort County. The Penn School Historic District (already a National Historic Landmark) should be incorporated into the NPS system. An arrangement similar to that fashioned for the unit at Tuskegee University is suggested. The primary theme for interpretation at this new unit should be the Reconstruction period in South Carolina and the social changes produced by the Civil War. Rehearsal for Reconstruction: the Port Royal Experiment by Willie Lee Rose describes the significance of events in the Carolina Sea Islands ranging from the work of the Northern missionaries in educating the freedmen to the short-lived program of redistributing lands abandoned by the "rebels" (NOTE: The famous promise of "forty acres and a mule" was first enunciated in Maj. Gen. William T. Sherman's Field Order 15 of January 16, 1865, when he declared that the Sea Islands and adjacent coastal areas would be opened for settlement by the Black refugees who had attached themselves to his army during its march to the sea.)

Reconstruction did in fact begin in the environs of Penn Center. The Freedman's Bureau (est. March 3, 1865) grew out of the experiences of Federal officials involved in the initial "experiment" here, and Beaufort County was a center of Black

political power (personified in the career of Robert Smalls) for a longer period than anywhere else in the Deep South. This era of liberation followed by unfulfilled promises and disappointment for the Black race deserves recognition no less than the events at Fort Sumter. In addition, an NPS unit at this site could serve to interpret and foster preservation of the area's Black "Gullah" sub-culture. Anthropologists have recognized the uniquely African elements which survived here (particularly the evidence of direct connections with the rice planting culture of the "grain coast" today's Republic of Sierra Leone) through centuries of slavery and freedom--only to become increasingly diluted even as their significance in the study of Black Americana has become more important in recent years.

(NOTE: The local military exploits of Blacks during the Civil War might also be interpreted at Penn Center. However, it is suggested that this be treated in greater detail at Fort Sumter (see above) and especially in the expanded interpretation of the war's coastal campaign proposed for Fort Pulaski (see below).)

5. Sullivan's Island. The material collected at Fort Moultrie regarding the use of Sullivan's Island as an entry point for perhaps 40% of the African slaves transported to America should be gathered into a new NPS publication for sale throughout the system.

H. FORT PULASKI NATIONAL MONUMENT. (Visited Oct 16, 1990.)

It was my intention in including Fort Pulaski on my itineray



to find an appropriate, centrally located place from which the Civil War's entire southeastern coastal campaign could be interpreted--including the dramatic contribution of Black Americans on land and sea from Charleston, SC, to Jacksonville, FL. Admittedly, the African connection with the defense and recapture of Fort Pulaski itself was expected to be essentially non-existent. There was nothing on display regarding Black soldiers, but the rangers shared with me a few significant footnotes including the facts that USCTs were among forces stationed at the fort in 1865 while a few Blacks belonged to the Georgia militia and may have served within Pulaski as musicians if not as fighting soldiers between its seizure by the militia and its recapture by the U.S. Army in 1862.

1. The Coastal War. This subject should be developed as a secondary theme for interpretation. The park's exhibits have been scheduled for rehabilitation and redesign since 1977. When this eventually takes place, maps, timelines, and photo displays can be used to draw greater attention to events before and after the recapture of Pulaski--nationwide, but especially along the coast between the Carolinas and Florida in the Union's Department of the South. Among these events would have to be included the early recruitment of Black soldiers from among slaves liberated in the nearby Sea Islands and their eventual use in raids on the Georgia coast and at battles like Honey Hill, SC, and Olustee, FL. Presently these events are described nowhere in the NPS system. The role of the U.S. Navy might also be discussed to

include mention of the many Black sailors recruited for the campaign at sea. The Black theme could be emphasized during Black History Month; but hopefully photographs can be selected of representative regiments and ship's crews which would <sup>insure</sup> contain an Afro-American element on permanent display ~~for all visitors year round. That especially for that particular 30-40% of the school children~~ <sup>within that</sup> ~~which could be being Black~~

2. Blacks at Fort Pulaski. The USCT regiment which served at the fort in 1865 should be identified and information about its origins and service (and about other USCT units occupying sites in the Savannah area) should be acquired and made available. The subject of Blacks in the Georgia militia should also be clarified.

3. Co-ordination with other institutions. Presently, the best (possibly the only) interpretation of the Black presence in the coastal war south of Charleston is presented at the Parris Island Marine Corps Museum. Visitors interested in this subject (as well as in the Battle of Port Royal which set the stage for events at Pulaski) should be directed to Parris Island. Brochures, etc., pertaining to the Marine Corps' offerings should be made available at Fort Pulaski and other NPS locations.

4. See recommendations under Fort Moultrie/Fort Sumter regarding Penn Center Historic District.

I. FORT FREDERICA NATIONAL MONUMENT. (Visited Oct 17, 1990.)

My interest in Fort Frederica centered around its

involvement in the War of Jenkins' Ear, fought between the British and Spanish in 1739-41 and the role of fugitive Black slaves from South Carolina both in precipitating that conflict and as combatants--particularly at the Battle of Bloody Marsh (sometimes called the first decisive battle for European sovereignty in the Americas) which took place nearby on a site also managed by the NPS.

Slavery was originally prohibited in the Georgia colony, and Fort Frederica's settlers were all White. Many of the first Georgians had strong anti-slavery feelings and residents of Argyle and other settlements were known to have aided the Carolina fugitives en route to Florida. Whether this was also true of the Fredericans is unclear, but it seems doubtful-- Governor ~~Edward~~ Oglethorpe who resided at Frederica for some time was accused of capturing Carolina escapees and keeping them for his own use as slaves in violation of his own laws.

Fort Frederica was the first target of the Spanish offensive against the ~~English~~ <sup>British</sup> colonies in 1741. A sizable contingent of Blacks from the fugitive colony at Fort Mose (see Castillo de San Marcos, below) are known to have accompanied the expeditionary force of some 1500 men. However, research has not confirmed whether any of the Black fugitives were among the 500-700 Spaniards who ~~actually~~ engaged the British at Bloody Marsh in the only major fighting of the campaign.

Slavery came to Georgia officially in 1750. Fort Frederica was soon abandoned, and St Simons like the other Sea Islands

became home to a community of Blacks which was long notable for its retention of Africanisms in its common dialect, its folklore, religious practices, and other cultural elements.

1. Blacks and the War of Jenkins' Ear. An illustrated panel and printed handout material should be developed on the subject of Blacks and the War of Jenkins' Ear. It should be pointed out for all visitors that among the various factors leading to the conflict in colonial America was the Spanish record of harboring fugitives from English slavery. Spanish agents were also accused of instigating slave rebellion in the Carolinas, most notably in the Stono Rebellion of 1739. The participation of Africans from the Carolinas in the Spanish forces resisting Oglethorpe's expedition against St. Augustine in 1740 and their presence in the Spanish counter-offensive of 1741 should be highlighted. The handout material should prove beneficial for interpretations at Castillo de San Marcos as well as Fort Frederica (see below).

[NOTE: A new, in-depth study of the Black experience in colonial Georgia would be useful, and someone like Ranger Kevin McCarthy should be encouraged to undertake such a project. The attitudes of Frederica residents toward slavery as an institution should be further researched and described as well as the existence of what may be considered an early version of an Underground Railroad.]

2. The later history of St. Simons Island. The subject of St. Simons after the abandonment of Fort Frederica may best be presented at other local venues such as the St. Simons Museum of

Coastal History (and at the proposed expanded exhibit at Fort Pulaski). [From an Afro-American viewpoint it was an important site during the Civil War when (after White plantation owners fled following Fort Pulaski's fall) Black fugitive slaves made it their stronghold--resisting Confederate raiders on their own until help arrived in the form of the Union military which included the <sup>illustrious</sup> ~~illustrious~~ 54th Massachusetts.] Fort Frederica should continue and expand its efforts to advertise related interpretive programs in the area and to collect and distribute pertinent literature.

J. CASTILLO DE SAN MARCOS NATIONAL MONUMENT.

(Visited Oct 17, 1990.)

As at Fort Frederica, interest in this facility centered around the early 18th century Blacks from colonial South Carolina who escaped from English slavery, finding refuge in the Spanish settlement at St. Augustine. Plantation-type slavery did not then exist in Florida. The fugitives were declared free upon conversion to Catholicism and were trained to serve in Spain's military struggle with their former masters. An ambitious tour is being scheduled by the University of Florida which will share the preliminary results of their archeological findings at the remains of Fort Mose (the Castillo's northern outpost, established as a settlement for the Afro-Americans) with the rest of the country in 1991.

To quote the NPS staff, "Fort Mose has always been part of

the [Castillo] park's interpretation," but the research of the last two years has increased its emphasis. The Mose site itself is closed to the public as research continues, and it is likely to remain under Florida jurisdiction which is regrettable in that the Castillo and its main southern outpost, Fort Matanzas are both part of the NPS system.

Working in close harmony with local civic organizations, the Castillo utilizes a substantial number of volunteer interpreters and has regularly advertised its training clinics in 18th century gunnery, etc. With but a few exceptions, however, the NPS has had little success in attracting Black volunteers. This fact is said to reflect a general indifference and lack of identification with the city's Hispanic colonial heritage. Undoubtedly, it also reflects the racial segregation and Black exclusion in civic affairs which is the legacy of American St. Augustine. This is certainly ironic since the ethnic kinship of today's Afro-American citizens with the Black community of the earlier period may be closer than that of today's dominant Anglo community with the colonial Spaniards.

1. Captain Francisco Menendez. This leader of the Fort Mose company deserves a place of honor on the roll of Afro-American heroes. As a symbol of African-Hispanic solidarity and co-operation, his usefulness as a social role model for minority youth of today should be recognized and promoted. The NPS should do whatever it can to help achieve this. Menendez' life should be researched further (a biography is said to exist or be in the

works, but I have found nothing on him), and the NPS should dedicate an information folder to him specifically.

2. Park visitor study. It is recommended that the study which was said to be in progress be expanded to include an analysis of the attitude and concerns of local Blacks regarding the park, its programs and those of civic organizations with whom the park co-operates. This should be the first step in substantiating and hopefully overcoming the "general indifference" of St. Augustine's Black community. Leaders of various components of that community should be consulted when determining issues to be addressed and presented with the findings of such a study before conclusions are determined.

3. Black History Display. The idea that the current display on Blacks at the Spanish Castillo (described in the SFI as "temporary") was too "wordy" and needed shortening would be a step in the wrong direction. Plans call for upgrading all museum exhibits by 1992. Any changes to this display should only involve beefing up the text and illustrations to true museum quality. More and better illustrations would be especially helpful and distribution of the proposed site bulletins on Fort Mose (planned as a joint publication with Florida State authorities), "Blacks in the War of Jenkins' Ear" (see Fort Frederica recommendations, above), and Francisco Menendez. These materials should also be included in pre-visit teacher packages, etc.

4. Seminole History Display. Since the exhibit

dedicated primarily to the imprisonment of Chief Osceola and the Castillo's role as "Fort Marion" during the Seminole War of 1835-42 includes some discussion of the background of that conflict the door stands ajar for development of another tremendously important theme: Red-Black relations on the U.S. southeastern frontier. The Seminole War has been described as one in a series of conflicts properly called America's "Negro Wars". Whether included in the Black history display, an enhanced Seminole Indian display or an exhibit of its own; the fact should be made clear that Black fugitives from American slavery persisted in seeking refuge in Florida for more than 100 years following the War of Jenkins' Ear culminating with the tacit alliance between them and the Seminole nation. An extraordinary relationship developed between the Red race and the Black as well as the longest and costliest of America's "Indian" wars. Presently these dramatic events are given scant notice in the way of NPS interpretation. ~~In fact~~ This may be the most significant chapter in American history not addressed by the NPS. It should be taken on by the facility at Castillo de San Marcos and thoroughly interpreted from the Black as well as the White and Red perspectives.

K. ANDERSONVILLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE.

(Visited Oct 18, 1990.)

The story of how the Confederacy's threat to sell Black prisoners of war (POWs) into slavery and execute their White



(in part) and BRICES Cross Roads, N.C.,  
officers led to Union counter threats, the end of prisoner exchanges and ultimately to the emergence of places like Andersonville prison is well related in the recent best-seller, Battle Cry of Freedom by James McPherson. A panel in Andersonville's impressive visitor center/museum also mentions that the collapse of the Dix Hill exchange cartel in October 1863 was due to Confederate refusal to exchange Black prisoners.

As many as 200 Black soldiers captured at the Battle<sup>s</sup> of Olustee, Florida, may have been held prisoner at Andersonville, but exact figures on the prison population do not exist. The only firm statistics are those regarding the men who died, between three and four dozen of whom have been identified as Black. Little documentation exists about the Black prisoners at Andersonville, but so far there is no evidence of any racial segregation policy or persecution within the camp.

The interpreters at Andersonville seemed familiar enough with these facts, but the materials on display could certainly be made more <sup>in-</sup>exclusionary.

[Andersonville is administrative center for a new NPS unit in Plains, GA. dedicated to the life of President Jimmy Carter and the examination of life in a 20th Century town in the rural South. It is hoped that the NPS takes full advantage of this opportunity to include and interpret the important social changes affecting Afro-Americans in this region.]

1. Afro-American visibility at Andersonville prison.

The level of staff awareness is impressive among the

Andersonville interpreters, but the often expressed feeling persists that without audiovisual or graphic materials for support the majority of visitors will not ~~likely~~ receive the inclusionary perspective we hope to insure ~~for all~~. Special Black oriented displays have apparently been erected during Black History Month on a variety of subjects. In October 1990, however, the reference to the collapse of the Dix<sup>Y</sup> Hill cartel (see above) is the only mention of Blacks in the museum. The exhibit panel where it was dic<sup>S</sup>ussed could be easily enhanced with a few lines to indicate how Andersonville prison was <sup>one of</sup> the result ~~in no small~~ measure of the South's refusal to treat the North's Black soldiers as ~~legitimate~~ prisoners of war in 1863 and President Lincoln's determination to keep faith with a principle of equality--perhaps the most outstanding example we have. Notorious incidents at Fort Pillow, Tennessee, <sup>and</sup> Poison Spring, Arkansas ~~and elsewhere~~ <sup>April</sup> in 1864 demonstrated Confederate barbarity toward Black prisoners, but Yankees, Black and White seemed to have suffered the horrors of Andersonville on a more or less equitable basis. These points should be made in hand out literature as well.

2. "Bottom rail on top." This quotation symbolizes the irony of Blacks as camp guards for Confederate prisoners. It is taken from remarks attributed to USCTs at the Point Lookout prison in Maryland. A remarkable exhibit on Black soldiers is on display at the Point Lookout museum today. It is recommended that Andersonville staff incorporate photographic and other

(~~and~~ Ship Island, MS, ?)

~~materials related to that facility and the involvement of USCT guards at Elmira, New York and other places in its panels~~  
materials related to that facility and the involvement of USCT guards <sup>there and elsewhere (Elmira, NY; Ship Island, MS; etc.)</sup> in its panels discussing Union prison camps.

3. Photos of Modern U.S. POWs. Photos displayed in the POW Museum should be selected with some deliberation where possible to reflect the diversity of Americans who experienced capture and imprisonment in World War I (it may be hard to find photos with Blacks but it's worth a look), World War II (check especially among prisoners captured during the Battle of the Bulge), Korea, and Vietnam. Special displays during Black History Month might draw attention in their text to Black prisoners, but photos in the primary display should speak for themselves, particularly for the Korea and Vietnam periods <sup>the</sup> era of integration.

4. German POWs in the U.S. It was long a cause celebre that German prisoners were treated by U.S. authorities on the homefront better than were Black American G.I.s. Certainly, older visitors will remember the stories of Germans being invited to use facilities their Afro-American guards could not enter. Such memories might be bitter, but rather than provoke resentment among those who know what things were really like in the '40s it is recommended that visitors be reminded that there were serious inequalities underlying the democratic veneer of the time <sup>allow</sup> them to contemplate how much we have progressed.

L. HORSESHOE BEND NATIONAL MILITARY PARK.

(Visited Oct 19, 1990.)

The primary issue at Horseshoe Bend from the Afro-American perspective should be ~~the examination~~ of Black participation in the 1814 battle <sup>↑</sup> not so much on the side of the White participants (there is fragmentary evidence that one or two were so involved) ~~in the battle~~ but rather on that of the Creek <sup>subject</sup> Indians. The former ~~may~~ be worth a footnote or two, but the latter (along with the broader issue of Black assimilation into the Creek Nation) should be a major interpretive theme.

Available literature such as Kenneth W. Porter's Negro on the American Frontier covers the period of the Creek War (of which Horseshoe Bend was a major episode) from a Blackic perspective, describing the introduction of Black slavery among the so-called "Civilized Tribes" of the southeastern states as one move to control their curious habit of affording refuge to Black escapees from the White plantations. The subsequent conflict between the Upper and Lower Creeks reflected nothing so much as the choice of the latter to accept this strategy of the Whites (and their mixed-blood, White and Red offspring who aspired within the tribe to achieve their vision of the American Dream, vintage 1814) versus the choice of the former (also known as the "Red Sticks") to retain their independence and stand fast beside their Black neighbors and kinsmen.

It is well documented that Black warriors were prominent among the Creeks at the precipitous Fort Mims "Massacre". But I

have been unable to substantiate whether any were among the Red Sticks "massacred" at Horseshoe Bend. Testimony may be lacking regarding this <sup>matter</sup> battle, but I shall contend that the NPS unit at Horseshoe Bend is the place where the Black presence among the Creeks and the other southeastern tribes should be interpreted as a major theme, one way or another.

The park ranger had little knowledge about the Black connection but seemed to appreciate the need for a more inclusionary interpretation. She described her difficulty in stimulating the interest of at least one Black youngster who had created for himself a protective shell of indifference which interpreters need to recognize as the typical reaction of Black children (and even adults) when confronted with an educational experience obviously tailored for the "other" race. (See "Approaches to Inclusion", above.)

1. Origins of the Creek War. Existing panels purporting to describe the background of the conflict which led to the battle at Horseshoe Bend should be discarded immediately, and the text rewritten to tell the pivotal story of the fugitive slave issue and the African presence among the Upper Creeks and the other Indian tribes.

2. Orientation slide show and guide literature. The site brochure is overdue for revision. It and the audio text of the slide show should be re-written with language inclusionary of the Black race. Space should be found for a paragraph such as the following:

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ ?

"While the presence of Black warriors among the Red Sticks at Horseshoe Bend has not been fully substantiated, they are known to have played an important role during earlier events of the Creek War. Many escaped to Florida with the Red Stick survivors. There they continued their struggle for independence through the Seminole Wars which lasted <sup>officially</sup> until 1842 when Red and Black alike were finally subdued and most relocated west of the Mississippi River in what is now Oklahoma."

3. Books for Sale. Such titles as Negro on the American Frontier by Kenneth Wiggins Porter, Black Indians and Black West by William Loren Katz should be stocked and made available for interested visitors.

4. Representation of a "Black Indian". In an effort to arouse the curiosity of the many young Black visitors observed touring this park, a display based around the figure of a Black man or even a family group in Creek regalia should be created. A life-sized mannequin would be helpful  $\bar{\lambda}$  adjacent to the revised "origins" exhibit. In consideration of all the Black children who have been obliged to endure the present, misleading and exclusionary presentation, a special effort of this sort should not be considered an extravagance.

M. CHICKAMAUGA AND CHATTANOOGA NATIONAL MILITARY PARK.

(Visited Oct 20, 1990)

There were no Black army units involved in the primary theme battles at Chickamauga or Chattanooga so it was my intention to

promote the idea of interpreting the Afro-American experience with respect to the recruitment and training of USCT regiments in the Chattanooga area and their service with the Army of the Cumberland in Tennessee and neighboring states in the months following the earlier fighting.

There seemed to be little interest in the subject of local Blacks and their participation in the Civil War; at least not enough for any specific theme development. The park historian expressed his awareness of Blacks involved in actions at Nashville and Dalton, but these events seemed to be both too distant and too minor to merit interpretation at Chickamauga. (Again the limitations of enabling legislation were brought up.) The new (1990) Chickamauga visitor center with its altogether breathtaking multimedia show and elaborate timeline display purports to provide a perspective on the events and causes of the war (see "Approaches to Inclusion", above). The staff seemed quite ready, however, to sum up Black history in the western war theater with the observation that General Sherman did not want USCTs in his army.

1. Blacks in the Army and Department of the Cumberland.

The history of the Army of the Cumberland under Major General George H. Thomas (the "Rock of Chickamauga") subsequent to the great battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga would seem an appropriate subject for elaboration, and space certainly exists in the older section of the ~~elaborate~~ Chickamauga visitor center for a modest permanent display. For the sake of the inclusionary

imperative that Army's Black regiments should be worth a panel or two. The fact that General Sherman and others were reluctant to use them except to garrison rear areas during the Atlanta campaign should be pointed out as well as the fact that Confederate counteroffensives provided them with combat action at Dalton, GA; Pulaski and Nashville, TN; Decatur, AL; etc., along with expressions of satisfaction from General Thomas. The service of the 14th Regiment, U.S. Colored Infantry is especially well-known and should be highlighted.

2. Chickamauga Timeline. Between the existing film narrative and the timeline, a visitor might be left with the impression that the Union's use of Black soldiers remained either experimental or inconsequential. In general, emphasis has been placed on events leading up to 1863 with subsequent developments and the South's ultimate defeat given cursory treatment. The point should be made in the timeline, at least, that more than 150 regiments of "colored troops" were raised, mostly relegated to service in rear areas but proving their worth in some 39 "major" and hundreds of "minor" battles on all fronts from Kansas to Florida. Arguably, they provided the critical edge in manpower which led to Union victory.



N. BOSTON AFRICAN AMERICAN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE  
BOSTON NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK  
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK  
SALEM MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

(Visited 11-12 November 1990.)

Boston might seem an obvious choice for visitation being the site of many well-known (hopefully) episodes in which Blacks played noteworthy roles in the struggle for national independence as well as the subsequent struggle for fulfillment of our national ideals--the political and social movements leading to the Civil War. Although my mission <sup>has been</sup> is to concentrate on NPS units where the Black theme is considered "secondary" the existence of the Boston Black Heritage Trail as an attraction complementary to the Boston Freedom Trail (separate but equal?) was enough to excite my curiosity and compel me to offer an assessment.

Salem and particularly Lowell might be considered unlikely locales for Afro-American themes; however, Blacks played an especially significant role as merchant seamen during the period highlighted at the Salem Maritime unit, and the mills of Lowell--so solidly built on the base of free, White labor--were long sustained by (and the industrial revolution itself would have been unlikely without) the fruits of Black, slave labor in the southern states.

The close, symbiotic relationships which existed among the <sup>local interpretive agencies in both</sup> NPS and ~~its neighbors both in~~ Salem and Lowell was encouraging. They could, serve as a model for arrangements proposed above for

NPS units like Richmond Battlefield (regarding New Market Heights), Castillo de San Marcos (re: Fort Mose), etc.

The Lowell park celebrates the birth of the Industrial Revolution in the U.S. and the evolution of free labor in New England--beginning with the employment of native-born "mill girls" through the exploitation of cheaper, immigrant European workers as competition grew in later years. There were no Black faces to be seen among the impressive displays of photographs at the visitors center, and scant attention was given to the laborers in the South who worked the cotton eventually milled in the textile factories of New England. However, the rangers on duty readily shared the fact that the original industrialists, being morally opposed to slavery, deliberately elected to employ free labor in the textile mills despite the potentially greater profits to be enjoyed if Black slaves were utilized. Were it not for the moral convictions of these few men, it would seem, the nature of manufacturing in New England and throughout the country might have been entirely different from what it actually became in the early 19th century. With slavery firmly established in the North the institution might either have flourished nationwide longer than it did or died an early death without the regional strife which led to the Civil War.

In the abundance of material describing the sailors and merchants of Salem and their adventures in exotic lands at the end of the 18th Century, I looked in vain for any mention of Salemites engaged in the African slave trade. The park brochure

emphasizes the port's trade with China and the East Indies via the Cape of Good Hope. It also mentions trade in rum and molasses from the West Indies; cocoa, ivory and gold dust--all the products of the West African trade except the most important one: human beings.

[Note: In reviewing Samuel Eliot Morison's Maritime History of Massachusetts (available in the visitor center bookstore) it is apparent that ships from Charleston, SC, were the most active in the "nigger business" while sailors from Newport, Rhode Island, take the most heat among Northerners for their notorious involvement in the slave trade. The trade was officially banned in Massachusetts in 1783, and while a few Bostonians were subsequently accused of smuggling to other states, the West Indies, etc., the Salemites seem to have been especially sensitive to accusations of any association with slavery and, by their own accounts at least, rarely if ever were charges proven against them.]

It is disappointing that the park's otherwise impressive Handbook (#126) does not address this subject. In fact, nowhere does it mention slavery or Blacks at all.

Returning to Boston, the juxtaposition of the Black Heritage and Freedom Trails was somewhat disturbing. That Black Bostonians should have "their" trail and while others flock to the so-called Freedom Trail which links the city's "major" landmarks seems rather regrettable. I would like to ask why Bunker Hill, the Boston Massacre site and the Park Street Church are not

included on the Black Heritage Trail as well as the Freedom Trail. Likewise, I would ask why the African Meeting Hall and the Robert Gould Shaw Memorial are not listed on both entities. It may be a knee-jerk reaction, but it seems to me that some ill-advised choices were made here and that the inclusionary ideal may have suffered in consequence.

1. Lowell. Blacks may not have played a major role as compared to other ethnic groups in the industrialization of this city and its neighbors, but the very fact that this is the case in light of decisions made early on is worthy of interpretation. To insure that all visitors get this important message a panel should be displayed speculating how different our history might have been if Blacks had been imported to work in the New England mills as well as in the cotton fields of the South at the turn of the 19th century.

2. King Cotton. It comes to mind that no where in the NPS system is the cotton culture thoroughly interpreted. The colonial and antebellum plantation sites where the interpretation of slavery is considered so controversial (George Washington Birthplace, Booker T. Washington, Hampton, City Point) are all situated in tobacco country. Without resorting to living history, an interpretation of the southern cotton culture should be developed using photos and other audio-visuals to convey the technical and social developments sense Eli Whitney, complementing the industrial timeline of Lowell and emphasizing the exploitation of the field hand through slavery, sharecropping,

and the modern, mechanized agribusiness. Likely places to establish a state of the art A/V interpretation would be Tuskegee, AL; Natchez, MS or Plains, GA.

3. Salem. The audio-visuals have long been overdue for revision and the recently revised Handbook should be revised again. This needs to be done to include some mention of the American maritime slave trade which was flourishing during Salem's heyday. If research has shown that Salem's seafarers were never engaged in this activity this should be mentioned in the park material; if they seldom engaged, or if it cannot be proven that they engaged in it the point should be made in the appropriate terms. Whatever the case, the question should not go on being ignored. Likewise, in descriptions of the common seaman of those days it should be pointed out that the occupation was considered to be about one peg above slavery. As such it should not be surprising that so many escaped slaves and free Blacks (American and foreign) found employment on American sailing ships. The point needs to be made that into the 1850s (when Salem's heyday was at its end) the percentage of Black sailors on American merchantmen has been estimated as high as 50%.

4. Boston. Without further knowledge of the Black Bostonian's viewpoint I am somewhat hesitant to make this recommendation, but I think that some effort should be made to "integrate" the two NPS trails in Boston. Presently, a visitor may quickly observe that there is one trail for Blacks and another called "Freedom" which seems to be for everyone else.

## V. CONCLUSION

To conclude this discussion of relations between the NPS and its Afro-American constituency I will take the risk of appraising the situation at a<sup>b</sup> historical unit which I did not visit and which I will not name. These conclusions are based ~~solely~~ on information gleaned from the unit's SFI from 1987 and the ideas discussed earlier in this report.

The SFI emphasizes this park's primary theme of early settlement in the lower South. In an undoubtedly sincere expression of the park's inclusionary commitment it also declares (under "special population concerns") that the region's Black population and its contributions are duly incorporated into park interpretations. "Minority" visitation is counted as 25 percent of the total (comparatively, a very high figure), but it further states that "generally [B]lacks do not enter the visitor center; interested in fishing and picnicking."

The question needs to be asked: "Why do the Blacks seem so disinterested in the visitor center?" Could it be that for all the good intentions with which the displays were prepared they still reflect a Eurocentric bias and images which the Afro-American could or should feel to be offensive or at least uninspiring?

Under "Large Exhibits" the SFI for this unit lists silk screen images of ten figures representing the diverse elements of the area's pioneers. These include: French soldier, Spanish soldier, etc. They also include the "farmer's wife" (presumably

White) and the "slave".

*more than*

No details are provided, but surely the "slave" has been presented as the victim of injustice. Nevertheless, has the human dignity of the slave been adequately considered? The two soldiers, the farmer, etc., are provided with the dignity of nationality while the slave is given no comparable adjective. Subtle and inadvertent it may be, but whenever "inclusionary" or multicultural tableaux robs the Black participant of this fundamental of humanity the result must be negative.

While over 90 percent of Blacks in the early days were probably slaves it is still offensive or at least insensitive to deny the only African or Afro-American representative in such a group the dignity of a national or racial qualifier as was provided for all the others (excepting the White woman). Even with no other role models just to describe the figure in question as an "African" slave or a "Black" slave would offer the visitor room to speculate that "African" and "Black" are modifiers suitable for use in other circumstances with words like "soldier", "farmer", "president", etc.

To use the word "slave" by itself and illustrate a Black person reinforces stereotypical ideas. It suggests that Blacks were quintessential in that role, that Whites or Indians were never victims of slavery anywhere else, and that Black visitors today (the descendants of "the slave") must be themselves without nationality and therefore sub-human. (Of course, for many generations in this country being Black was prima facie evidence

that one was a slave. But the Black race today seeks the rejection of those particular generations as the totality of what is relevant to their identity.)

My choice of this example as a closing statement may be considered a pet peeve. Most of those enjoying the park's fishing and picnicking would likely not express their feelings in just this way, but they must certainly be turned off by the type of interpretation described. Such feelings might be mollified with the expedient of an adjective in the right place and emphasis on the Black man's resolve through the generations to remove himself from an unnatural condition of bondage despite the White race's determination to squelch his identification with anything else.

The NPS should consider interpretation of the Black experience a two-way proposition. As was stated earlier, whatever can be done (within reason) should be done to obtain and retain Blacks rangers. Properly educated interpreters who are themselves from minority groups offer the best likelihood of sensitizing their majority group peers and in so doing insure that an inclusionary interpretation is achieved for the park visitor.

A final image to convey is that of the Black Alabama school children touring the visitor center at Horseshoe Bend with their White classmates. How distressing it is from the Afro-American perspective to observe them being mis-educated to think that their ancestors had absolutely no role in the important events



described while that of their White schoolmates' was paramount. In 1990 the Creek Indians were no longer a force on the local social scene. As has been typical, their history had been romanticized in their absence and the impression created that early interaction with the "American" people involved the White race only. Is it any wonder the ranger would detect indifference to her lesson on the part of the Black children? Let us recognize this ego protective mechanism for what it is and break down the shell with sensitivity and legitimately inclusionary interpretation.

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APPENDIX <sup>A</sup> 1. The New Market Heights Controversy.

Despite its significance in Black military history (or perhaps because of it) New Market Heights (NMH) is not part of the park today. Not even the otherwise ubiquitous Virginia roadside historical marker is in place to identify its location.

In the late 1970s a proposal was advanced to acquire NMH and to establish a visitor's center and other facilities. This plan was abandoned during the Reagan administration. Resistance to the recognition or development of NMH by certain elements in the neighborhood has been notorious. Influential property owners have succeeded not only in preventing the designation of NMH as a National Historic Landmark and the erection of roadside markers; they have also brought enough pressure to bear that the location was excluded as an identified tour stop on the official Battlefield tour map. Since there has been no comparable resistance toward the identification of battlefield sites elsewhere in the Richmond area, the extent of the problem at the site of this victory by Black Union soldiers suggests nothing less than blatant racial prejudice.

New Market Heights is on the list of Civil War sites included in Secretary of the Interior Lujan's recently announced "American Battlefield Protection Plan." News releases describe a current project to "protect Richmond National Battlefield and other Civil War sites in the Richmond, VA. area." NPS staff in Richmond seemed not to have been privy to this planning in 1990. At any rate, just how this plan may apply to New Market Heights

\$ 135

is unclear except that no federal money is likely to be forthcoming for land acquisition (despite some \$50 million being recently approved to expand the popular battlefield park at Manassas, VA.).

Certain real estate adjacent to the Confederate defenses ~~actually~~ assaulted by the USCTs on 29 September 1864 (including an old fortification constructed by Union forces after the battle on Signal Hill) is presently in the hands of Henrico County. A park of some sort will eventually be developed on this site, but what facilities it will contain and how it might be used to commemorate the events which took place across the highway are uncertain. A "planning proposal study" remains to be funded locally.

The entrenchments marking the ~~actual~~ 29 September battleline are on inaccessible private property. It is important that these works be included <sup>m</sup> ~~on~~ the Register of Historic Places or designated as a National Historic Landmark; but even if this property ~~was~~ <sup>work</sup> "protected" by listing, that which is not part of someone's backyard would likely remain out of reach and overgrown with woodlands. It seems extremely doubtful the owners would allow on-site interpretation.

With the interest and backing of Secretary Lujan, Virginia's Governor Wilder, and other influential parties, commemoration of the battle by means of markers and interpretive waysides, either along Rte. 5 or within the county park site should be achievable at an early date. Such undertakings (so long overdue) would accomplish the educational and memorial objectives which should

be considered of primary importance at this site, whatever the  
outcome of the preservation campaign.



APPENDIX <sup>B</sup> U. S. Military Railroad Construction Corps.

~~Entirely~~ relevant to the Gettysburg battle theme is the role of the so-called Black 'contrabands' particularly those engaged as railroad construction workers. It was disappointing that these men were not alluded to either with a mannequin depicting them in the Gettysburg visitor center's vast collection of uniforms from the campaign (the Black civilian workers were typically provided fragments of army clothing without insignia) or with photographs and captions in <sup>the</sup> museum's exhibit on the U. S. Colored Troops (the William Gladstone exhibit). (Note: the latter did explain that contrabands worked around army camps at the rate of \$8.00 a month plus rations and clothing, but there was nothing specific regarding Gettysburg or the Railroad Construction Corps). Likewise, it was disappointing that the U.S. Military Railroads (USMRR) did not rate recognition as an organization either in the park museum or with a monument on the Battlefield.

It was noted that the Gettysburg battlefield contains more than 200 ~~bronze~~ tablets explaining the participation of every U.S. battery, brigade, division, corps, army and regular army regiment. These were installed before 1912 by the War Department when the park was under its jurisdiction. Units of 100 members or less have been recognized in this way. In addition, various other monuments have been placed by the states (Northern and Southern) and specific organizations to commemorate various units and individuals, and to the abstract theme of peace, etc.

Despite the fact that its make up was largely civilian, it is surprising that an organization as important as the USMRR has been overlooked, given the recognition it received for the magnitude and efficiency of its support at Gettysburg and in all the important campaigns of the western as well as the eastern war theater. Its legendary leader, Brigadier General Herman Haupt should have a statue of his own, and his glowing testimony to their dedication makes it clear that the service of many others has long been neglected. The White civilians who operated and maintained the trains, the army civil engineers, and especially the "Africans" who labored to build and re-build the roads under the pressure of battlefield requirements and often under the threat of Confederate marauders those patriots deserve the same recognition as soldiers who may have endured less.

One support unit commemorated on the battlefield is the Army of the Potomac Engineer Brigade whose citation reads: "...engaged in arduous duties from June 13th to July 18th, 1863 bridging rivers and transporting pontoons to enable the Army to cross the Potomac river and its tributaries into Pennsylvania and to recross it into Virginia". ~~Meanwhile,~~ The 50th New York Engineers (Br.) (a component of the brigade) has its own separate memorial which points out that it "participated in all campaigns...ending in Appomattox." None of these men served on the hallowed ground of the recognized Gettysburg battlefield, but they justly received recognition for the contribution they made in its environs.

The contribution of the Railroad Construction Corps was

likewise vital (probably more so), but has gone unrecognized. Its laborers (consisting at the beginning of detachments of White soldiers, but by the time of Second Manassas almost exclusively of Black civilians) also participated in all the campaigns through Appomattox. In July 1863 some 300 Black construction men and their White officers were quickly moved from their base at Alexandria, Virginia, to deal with the destruction wrought by the advancing Southerners on lines in Maryland and Pennsylvania. Repaired and reorganized with amazing swiftness, these lines were fully restored while the battle was in progress, providing replacements and supplies to the Army of the Potomac and evacuating the wounded. It should be noted that this was done in close co-operation with the Quartermaster Corps which also relied throughout the war on its sizable contingents of Black teamsters and other workers. The efficiency of the railroads was such that Union commander, <sup>May</sup> ~~General~~ <sup>George G.</sup> Meade was later criticized for not exploiting the advantage thus provided to pursue and destroy the retreating Confederates.

Recognition at the Gettysburg park of all those who helped achieve this important result (whether Black or White) is certainly appropriate and overdue. To quote Gen. <sup>meade</sup> Haupt regarding the Afro-American contribution:

While Generals who fought the battles have been eulogized and costly statues erected to their memories, the humble Corps, through whose fidelity and efficiency victories were rendered possible, have found no historian to do them honor. If there ever should be recognition of their great services, the faithful

contrabands will be justly entitled to their share; no other class of men would have exhibited so much patience and endurance under days and nights of continued and sleepless labor.'

Immediately after the Gettysburg campaign the construction men were back at work repairing the lines south of Alexandria which had been cut by Southern guerrillas during their sojourn to Pennsylvania. There they would carry on, often bearing arms to defend themselves against the Rebel raiders for whom they would always be prime 'military' targets.

guerrillas ne  
"partisans"

APPENDIX <sup>c</sup> 7. Penn School National Historic Landmark.

The NPS has recently acquired (May 1990) a new unit which will be administered from Fort Moultrie; namely, Snee Farm, the colonial estate of Charles Pinckney consisting of a plantation house and 25 acres of land at Mount Pleasant, SC. This new unit is awaiting operational funding and the staff is now discussing how to interpret the slavery issue when it is ready for opening. Since there is another study in progress on the interpretation of slavery (and I was specifically invited not to deal with the subject in this study) I will say no more about Snee Farm except to document the controversy surrounding the decision to acquire this property--preserving yet another Southern plantation house while overlooking properties more uniquely relevant to the Afro-American experience. Specifically, proposals had been discussed to bring the Penn School Historic District in Beaufort County, SC, under the wing of the NPS at Fort Moultrie; but these allegedly died from lack of a second by a former superintendent.

The facilities at the Penn School consist of a community center and historically significant structures related to the first efforts by Northern teachers to bring formal education to liberated Black slaves in the wake of the Union invasion of the Sea Islands in 1861--one of the most important social developments connected with the Civil War. The area was a headquarters for Union forces then blockading the Carolina and Georgia coasts and attempting to capture Charleston; it was where newly freed slaves were put into uniform and trained to fight in the Union Army for the first time and where Federal policies

identified with the post-war era of "Reconstruction" throughout the South were first put into effect.

The site, adjacent to Port Royal Sound, is also near the first European settlement in what is now the U.S. at Parris Island where--after abortive efforts by the Spanish and their African slaves to establish a base at the mouth of the Pee Dee River to the north--the French and then the Spanish settled and built colonies in the 1530s. The Spanish eventually abandoned their town of Santa Elena in favor of St. Augustine, Florida. (Most of the the original African slaves in these colonies escaped to the hinterlands becoming the first permanent, non-Indian residents of the country.)

On the basis of any number of factors (historical, scenic, recreational, cultural) a National Park should have been established in this area long ago. Its headquarters should be at the Penn School Historic District.

## THOUGHTS

- LEGISLATION (NPS-wide or Area specific) to clearly allow for multi-cultural or inclusionary interp.
- EO office responsibility to push inclusionary interpretation
- Grant from Eastern or NPF or Pugh or other to provide research basis for black (and other?) themes in Mid-Atlantic parks
- Specific work direction to Russ to give high priority
- Special recruitment for interpreters like the LE program?