

**CROSSROADS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION:  
SITE PARTICIPATION ASSESSMENT FOR REVOLUTION NJ  
FINAL REPORT**

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## Revolution NJ: Site Contribution Report

### Executive Summary

Hargrove International, Inc. helped compile a 2019-2020 assessment report on visitor readiness, interpretation and site conditions of more than 150 sites in the state related to interpreting the Revolutionary War. As the report’s research occurred prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hargrove International, Inc. conducted a four-prong research project in the Summer of 2021 to update individual site visitor readiness status, explore plans for programming, and determine interest in participating in future Revolution NJ activities. An initial list of 64 sites (identified to have some type of Rev War interpretation) were invited to participate in this research project. Despite exhaustive efforts by the Crossroads staff, only 26 site managers responded to an e-survey. However, their answers corresponded with other key research findings.

KEY FINDINGS	
<b>Finding 1</b>	Lack of current and easy-to-find trip planning information online deflates travelers’ interest and also hurts the credibility of the site.
<b>Finding 2</b>	Lack of staff is a major challenge to enhancing visitor readiness, post-COVID.
<b>Finding 3</b>	Historic site managers need to partner with local tourism industry professionals to maximize opportunities for growing heritage tourism.
<b>Finding 4</b>	The lack of primary source documentation/ ability to conduct historic research has limited some sites’ ability to interpret themes more diversely and from different perspectives.
<b>Finding 5</b>	Sites don’t always use research to inform their interpretive planning and marketing.
<b>Finding 6</b>	Many sites do not take advantage of low- or no-cost marketing tools and strategies to promote their site.

These findings demonstrate key deficits in developing and delivering diverse and inclusive experiences for 21<sup>st</sup> Century visitors that result in positive social media posts and in-state spending. Lack of staffing is particularly worrisome; even if sites are restored and interpreted, staffing is required to open the doors and welcome visitors. Given these fundamental concerns, investment in a core group of state- and other-managed sites is recommended to achieve the greatest impact for Revolution NJ. These 15 sites, when visitor ready, can be considered essential anchors to growing heritage tourism, especially in anticipation of 2026.

Potential Core Sites	Location	Management
<b>Boxwood Hall State Park</b>	Elizabeth	NJ DEP
<b>Dey Mansion</b>	Wayne	Passaic County
<b>East Jersey Old Town Village</b>	Piscataway	Middlesex County
<b>Fort Lee Historic Park</b>	Fort Lee	Palisades Interstate Parkway Commission
<b>Indian King Tavern State Historic Site</b>	Haddonfield	NJ DEP
<b>Liberty Hall Museum</b>	Union	Liberty Hall Museum, Inc.
<b>Monmouth Battlefield State Park</b>	Monmouth	NJ DEP
<b>Morristown National Historical Park</b>	Morristown	NPS
<b>Old Barracks Museum</b>	Trenton	Old Barracks Association
<b>Princeton Battlefield State Park</b>	Princeton	NJ DEP
<b>Proprietary House</b>	Perth Amboy	NJ DEP/ Proprietary House Association
<b>Red Bank Battlefield</b>	National Park	Gloucester County Parks & Recreation
<b>Rockingham State Historic Site</b>	Franklin	NJ/DEP

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Trenton Battle Monument	Trenton	NJ DEP
Washington Crossing State Park	Titusville	NJ DEP

### INVESTING IN VISITOR-READINESS

Staffing, programming and interpretation are additional costs not factored into these capital improvements. Once sites are ready for visitors, funding and management is needed to staff historic sites with the caliber of personnel required to deliver exceptional educational experiences with a support team to operate and maintain the site. A minimum of three professional staff -- site manager, interpreter, and visitor services specialist -- are required to host visitors, deliver programs and maintain operations at each site (not including maintenance and other support staff).

Coordination of site activities, programs and marketing is also needed, requiring additional professional staff to oversee the development and integration of activities into seamless delivery of travel experiences. A staffing ecosystem that complements the capital infrastructure is required to ensure maximum growth and sustainability of heritage tourism leading up to and beyond 2026.

To make all this work, dedicated heritage tourism personnel must be appointed to supervisory positions in the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, DEP/State Parks and Crossroads, to guarantee that there is coordination and integration at the state level to leverage resources and opportunities regionally and locally for maximum results. The three statewide positions are needed to assist in the development of heritage product, creation of tour itineraries, fostering of regional and local collaborations between 18<sup>th</sup> Century heritage sites and other historic sites and tourism entities, and ensure the delivery of quality heritage tourism experiences - from inception to hosting and evaluation.

### OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

As time is short to prepare for the 2026 Commemoration, several immediate needs surfaced in addition to the foundational investment for infrastructure and staffing. Increased competition from other states challenges New Jersey's potential to increase its heritage tourism market share. Strategies are needed to resolve the lack of engagement between the heritage community and tourism industry, increase consistent communication among stakeholders involved in Revolution NJ activities, and provide leadership to direct the implementation of the Revolution NJ vision for impactful results.

Site managers participating in the research identified several strategies to help overcome the existing challenges:

- **Traveling Thematic Exhibits:** to help expand the reach of programs available to visitors in more locations
- **Regional Education and Ideation Workshops:** to start building more collaboration among heritage partners and tourism industry professionals
- **Interim Staffing and Recruitment Incentives:** to establish opportunities to grow the heritage tourism workforce through existing educational/training institutions and new programs
- **Recognition and Reward Programs:** to celebrate achievements and showcase best practices for other sites to emulate.

The state and its collective partners is encouraged to act now on these recommendations so New Jersey can rightfully claim its significant role in heritage tourism, and reap the economic benefits of this industry sector.

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# Preparing for Revolution NJ

In April 2020, Clarke Caton Hintz, in partnership with Hunter Research and Hargrove International, presented to the leadership of Revolution NJ - a public-private partnership consisting of the New Jersey Historical Commission and the Crossroads of the American Revolution Association, Inc. -- an assessment report on visitor readiness, interpretation and site conditions of more than 150 sites in the state, related to interpreting the Revolutionary War. Investigation revealed varying levels of readiness required to host visitors during the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our nation's independence and beyond. The report outlined the preservation and visitor readiness strategies necessary to prepare sites as contributors to this important commemoration, to enhance New Jersey's brand, and to increase the economic impact from heritage tourism.

The report identified and assigned sites to four categories of visitor readiness:

- **Attractors:** sites motivating heritage travelers to visit New Jersey (the main reason to visit)
- **Attractions:** sites added to a planned visit to New Jersey (enhancing an existing itinerary)
- **Tour While There:** sites potentially visited while visitors (motivated for other reasons) are in New Jersey
- **Community Resource:** sites of importance to local community and heritage

The assessment also revealed that some sites could elevate their visitor readiness, especially with relevant thematic programming, the addition of visitor services, and/or the expansion of operations/ access/ staffing. While the report provided a detailed lens on the current state of Revolution-era sites and recommended enhancements to improve the visitor readiness and preservation of these historic sites, it did not prioritize next steps. Further investigation is necessary to learn about sites' individual plans to prepare for/engage in the Revolution NJ commemorative activities and identify collaborative strategies for developing heritage tourism programs -- such as trails and itineraries -- that encourage linger-longer experiences in the state.



**Competitive State**

While this report builds on the research conducted for the 2020 Site Assessment Report, it is important to understand the basis for this more exhaustive analysis. Helping define a more manageable focus area requires a knowledge of consumer trends and desired outcomes relative to heritage tourism. The last year has been turbulent, impacting not only operations of sites but also consumer confidence and perceptions of travel.

For New Jersey to realize its potential for heritage tourism, Hargrove International investigated neighboring states and Revolutionary War destinations to better understand the competition for visitors and their spending. Research of New Jersey's current heritage tourism performance and market share also revealed opportunities and challenges for growth. These indicators provide a baseline for future comparison and performance benchmarks. Hargrove also investigated consumer trends impacted by the pandemic and societal issues to decipher market opportunities and challenges.

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### Heritage Tourism: Background/Context

One reason heritage tourism is valued as a market sector is the consistent profile of the heritage traveler. The heritage traveler is typically:

- Older (49)
- More Affluent
- Educated
- Married
- Frequent Traveler -- taking 3.61 leisure trips in the last three years (pre-COVID) compared with 3.4 trips for the general traveler
- Spends more on travel, an average of US \$1,319 per trip versus US \$820 for general leisure traveler
- More likely to stay in a hotel, motel or B&B.<sup>1</sup>

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present. It includes cultural, historic, and natural resources.”

Heritage travelers, like many leisure travelers, are motivated by several factors. In recent years (pre-pandemic), these desires have become more important to destination selection and required ingredients in quality travel experiences:

- Interest in experiencing “something new/different,” preferably “educational”
- Importance of sensory immersion at an interesting destination, location
- Desire to seek out little known destinations nearby, “off the beaten path” or nostalgic locations
- Prefer to shop for items they can’t find at home (67%) or in a unique shopping atmosphere (52%)
- Want to engage with locals

When developing and marketing heritage experiences, especially related to the Revolutionary War, New Jersey sites and destinations must consider how to meet these expectations of 21<sup>st</sup> Century travelers.

### Heritage Tourism in New Jersey

While the last economic impact study for Heritage Tourism in New Jersey was published almost a decade ago (2012), the statistics are still impressive. According to the Tourism Economics report generated for the New Jersey Heritage Tourism Task Force, heritage tourism generated 11 million visits in 2012, resulting in \$2.8 billion in visitor spending. Heritage tourism supported nearly 38,000 total jobs.

More recent research conducted by the New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism demonstrates a continued impact from heritage tourism, reflected in 6% of all New Jersey travelers engaging in a historic site activity in 2019.<sup>2</sup> However, the pandemic severely crushed visitation -- especially to indoor

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *Mandala Research LLC, 2013*

<sup>2</sup> Source: “2019 New Jersey Visitor Profile” (March 2020) by D. K. Shifflet & Associates for the New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism, Activity Participation: page 74

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facilities faced with shuttering their doors and cancelling events. Visiting historic sites plummeted in New Jersey to 1% in 2020, yet is poised to rebound as places reopen post-COVID. Still, New Jersey has an upward climb to reach the national average of visitation to historic sites (13%).

### Heritage Tourism in Neighboring States/Competitive Set

As indicated in the graph below, neighboring and competitive states outperform New Jersey in almost every category associated with heritage tourism. New York and Pennsylvania, in particular, capture sizeable market share in comparison to New Jersey, especially in visiting historic sites and national/state parks.

Top Activities at the Destination <sup>3</sup>								
Relevant Activities	U.S.	New Jersey	NJ without AC	New York <sup>4</sup>	Pennsylvania	Maryland	Virginia	North Carolina
Historic Sites	13%	6%	9%	18%	19%	8%	15%	10%
Parks (national, state)	15%	4%	6%	19%	10%	14%	14%	13%
Touring/ Sightseeing	16%	5%	6%	20%	13%	12%	10%	13%

### NEW YORK

A record-high 265.5 million visitors to New York spent nearly \$73.6 billion in 2019, a 17% increase since 2015. Tourism generated \$9.1 billion in state and local taxes; each household in New York would need to be taxed an additional \$1,248 to replace the visitor taxes received by the state and local governments in 2019.<sup>5</sup>

### NORTH CAROLINA

Per a study by Tourism Economics, the impact of domestic and international travel on North Carolina in 2019 was \$29.2 billion, employing more than 242,000 residents. According to the “2020 North Carolina Visitor Profile” report, “Historic sites” is the fourth top activity of overnight visitors (14%), followed only by visiting friends/ relatives, shopping and going to the beach. Seven percent of day visitors to North Carolina include “Historic sites” as an activity, again in the fourth spot behind visiting friends/ relatives, shopping and rural sightseeing.<sup>6</sup>

### PENNSYLVANIA

<sup>3</sup> Source: “2019 New Jersey Visitor Profile” (March 2020) by D. K. Shifflet & Associates for the New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism, Top Activities at the Destination (Competitive Set, Chart 47): page 74

<sup>4</sup> Source: “2019 New Jersey Visitor Profile” (March 2020) by D. K. Shifflet & Associates for the New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism, Top Activities at the Destination (Competitive Set, Chart 47): page 74

<sup>5</sup> Source: “Economic Impact of Visitors in New York 2019” by Tourism Economics for Empire State Development, <https://esd.ny.gov/industries/tourism>; <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/NYC-2019-NYS-Tourism-Economic-Impact.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Source: “2020 North Carolina Visitor Profile” report produced by Visit North Carolina, a unit of the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, page 16, <https://partners.visitnc.com/contents/sdownload/72251/file/2020-North-Carolina-Visitor-Profile.pdf>

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A January 2016 report by the University of Pittsburgh<sup>7</sup> reports that tourists spent an estimated 7.5 million days/nights in Pennsylvania's 12 Heritage Areas, purchasing \$2 billion worth of goods and services. The total contribution of heritage visitor spending (direct, indirect and induced effects) to the Commonwealth's economy was 25,708 jobs and \$798 million in labor income.

The research also indicated that five heritage areas -- PA Route 6, National Road, Allegheny Ridge, Lincoln Highway, and Susquehanna Gateway -- contribute positive economic impacts to their respective regions. This impact is evidenced through the creation of new tourism-related business (more than 151 in the past five-10 years) and creation of new heritage product (attractions/events) cited as the motivation for travel to the area.

### Other Revolutionary War/Heritage Tourism Destinations as Competition for New Jersey

#### MASSACHUSETTS

Massachusetts hosted 28.1 million domestic person trips in FY 2020; over 1.1 million (4.5% of total travelers) were from New Jersey. Direct spending by domestic and international visitors totaled \$24.9 billion in CY 2019, generating \$1.6 billion in state and local tax revenue and supporting 155,500 jobs.

In CY 2019, Massachusetts welcomed 2.4 million international visitors; 74% were from overseas and 26% were from Canada. Of the top activities of domestic travelers in FY 2020, 11.3% visited Historical Places/Churches; 11.4% visited Museums; and 10.3% visited State/National Parks.<sup>8</sup>

#### SOUTH CAROLINA

South Carolina tracks several categories of activities considered subsets of heritage tourism. While going to the beach, shopping and visiting relatives were the top three leisure activities of domestic travelers in CY 2019, 13% of their approximately 31 million domestic travelers visit "Historic sites/Churches." Urban sightseeing attracts 11% of visitors, rural sightseeing is an activity of 9% of domestic travelers. Eight percent visit "Old homes/mansions, State park/Monuments/Recreation areas, Zoos/Aquariums/Aviaries and Museums" (one category).<sup>9</sup>

#### VIRGINIA

Heritage tourists spend almost \$7.7 billion each year in Virginia. An additional \$430 million is spent annually by heritage tourism sites for operational expenditures, rippling throughout the state's economy, giving an additional boost of \$6.5 billion to the economy and generating \$1.3 billion in taxes. Virginia Commonwealth University's 2017 report to Preservation Virginia on the "Economic Impact of Heritage Tourism in Virginia" further states that more than 105,000 jobs are supported by the direct and

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<sup>7</sup> Source: "The Economic Impact of Pennsylvania Heritage Areas" (January 2016) produced for the Center of Rural Pennsylvania by McGrath, John M., University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown, with David Primm and William Lafe [https://www.rural.palegislature.us/documents/reports/PA\\_Heritage\\_Tourism\\_2016.pdf](https://www.rural.palegislature.us/documents/reports/PA_Heritage_Tourism_2016.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Source: "2020 Annual Report" (April 2021) Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism, pages 3, 12 and 13, [https://www.visitma.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020\\_Annual\\_Report-Final.pdf](https://www.visitma.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020_Annual_Report-Final.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Source: "Total Domestic Travel to South Carolina" (updated September 2020) South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation & Tourism, <https://embed.widencdn.net/pdf/plus/scprt/jnaqrizzuu/Total%20Report%202019.pdf?u=kceaj9>



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indirect impacts of heritage tourism spending in the Commonwealth. Heritage tourism also generates more than \$640 million in state and local taxes, and more than \$700 million in federal taxes.<sup>10</sup>



### **Consumer Trends and New Markets Impacting Heritage Tourism Potential**

A January 2020 post on the American Association for State & Local History website titled “National Park Service Visitation and American Engagement with History” reflects on how certain sites are seeing increases in visitation while other more traditional sites are experiencing a decline in attendance. Analysis of historic site visitation at National Park units indicates that interest in history is changing. The NPS data suggests that “Americans are not ignoring historic sites, but rather visiting those that tell more relevant and engaging histories.”<sup>11</sup>

Given that leisure travelers in general have expressed interest in recent years (both pre- and post-pandemic) of more immersive/local experiences, the more diverse interpretation of sites -- offering relevant stories for multiple audiences -- is important.

44% of the U.S. population is projected to be multicultural in 2030 (Source: U.S. Census 2020)

#### **Consumer Trends**

MMGY Travel Intelligence, a global leader in market research, recently produced several insightful reports profiling “The Black Traveler,” a barometer on “Travel Safety” and the Impact of COVID-19 on “Travel Intentions.” Analysis of the 2020 Census also revealed some consumer insights worthy of consideration:

- Asians had the biggest growth rate of any demographic group, increasing by almost 30% over the past decade. Almost two-thirds of that growth was driven by international migration.
- The Latinx population grew by 20% since 2010, with almost three-quarters of that growth coming from a natural increase.
- The Black population grew by almost 12% over the last decade.

The recent shift in American demographics reveals that 44% of all U.S. travel spend is now from multicultural travelers.<sup>12</sup> The MMGY “2021 Portrait of American Travelers” also underscores four consumer trends:

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<sup>10</sup> Source: “The Economic Impact of Heritage Tourism in Virginia” by Accordino, J. and Fasulo, F. , Virginia Commonwealth University Center for Urban and Regional Analysis, L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, (February 2017) for Preservation Virginia, [https://cura.vcu.edu/media/cura/pdfs/cura-documents/HeritageTourism\\_FINALE\\_02-16-17.pdf](https://cura.vcu.edu/media/cura/pdfs/cura-documents/HeritageTourism_FINALE_02-16-17.pdf)

<sup>11</sup> Source: “National Park Service Visitation and American Engagement with History” (January 2020) by W. Maclane Hull and John Garrison Marks for AASLH, <https://aaslh.org/nps-visitation/>

<sup>12</sup> Source: MMGY Travel Intelligence 2019 DK Shifflet’s TRAVEL PERFORMANCE/Monitor, as presented by D. Guerrero at “Teaching Through Tourism” Symposium on 11-10-21.

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1. **Diverse travelers are awakening to the power of global travel and self-fulfillment:** 47% of U.S. leisure travelers are influenced by a destination that offers diverse cultural experiences that reflect their own culture.
2. **Social justice movements, racial and gender inequity are casting a light on perceived inequities in travel:** 42% of U.S. leisure travelers are more aware of racial, ethnic, sexual and physical inequity when it comes to travel than they were two years ago.
3. **Equitable representation becomes a priority for younger generation and diverse travelers:** 33% of U.S. leisure travelers are influenced by a destination's racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, sexual or accessible diversity and/or inclusiveness.
4. **Concerns of safety and feeling welcome emerge as barriers to equitable and inclusive travel for a variety of groups:** 57% non-white travelers feel they have to be more aware of their surroundings when traveling because of identity, cultural background, heritage or lifestyle.<sup>13</sup>

The findings in these and other research reports help shape and inform the potential for New Jersey to increase market share through its Revolutionary War experiences, if they are developed appropriately and are visitor ready.

### New Markets

Two key markets to target are African Americans and LatinX/ Hispanic Travelers. These audiences seek out authentic, place-based activities and attractions that are often showcased by the diverse and dynamic experiences at heritage destinations.

- According to the MMGY Travel Intelligence report on “The Black Traveler: Insights, Opportunities & Priorities,” **Black U.S. leisure travelers** spent \$129.6 billion on domestic and international leisure travel in 2019. They are inspired by visiting someplace new and experiencing different cultures and are most interested in cultural activities when they visit a destination.
- MMGY’s “Vistas Latinas: A Landmark Study of U.S. Travelers of Hispanic Descent” reports that **Hispanic U.S. leisure travelers** spent \$113.9 billion on domestic leisure travel in 2019. Transportation and food and beverage account for the largest share of spending (52%); shopping accounts for 14%. Hispanic travelers are interested in “brand-new dining experiences” while on a leisure trip, recognizing the potential for culinary tourism as part of a heritage destination experience.<sup>14</sup>

Two other markets important to grow heritage tourism include:

- **Educational Travel:** According to Future Market Insights, the global educational tourism market is valued at US \$399.8 billion. It is anticipated to have an impressive compound annual growth rate of 17.2% between 2021 and 2031. North America leads the educational tourism market

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<sup>13</sup> Source: MMGY Travel Intelligence 2019 DK Shifflet’s TRAVEL PERFORMANCE/Monitor, presented by D. Guerrero in the “Consumer Trends Impacting Travel” session at the “Teaching Through Tourism” Symposium on 11-10-21.

<sup>14</sup> Source: MMGY Travel Intelligence 2019 DK Shifflet’s TRAVEL PERFORMANCE/Monitor, presented by D. Guerrero in the “Consumer Trends Impacting Travel” session at the “Teaching Through Tourism” Symposium on 11-10-21.

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and is expected to account for almost one third (31%) of the global market share in the next decade.<sup>15</sup>

- **Ancestry-focused Travel:** The rising interest in genealogy, as evidenced by programs like Ancestry.com and 23 and me, have stimulated the desire of travelers to seek out their ancestral roots. Some immigrants travel back to their original homeland, others seek out destinations where their ancestors migrated to. Helping these travelers locate and connect with destinations that have a personal story affords a very targeted marketing opportunity for heritage tourism. “Countries that are known for their history of immigration are the most popular places for (heritage) travelers to originate. The U.S. is the most popular, followed by Canada and Australia. Airbnb has found that travelers ages 60-90 are the most likely to take ancestry trips, but these kinds of vacations could trend younger in the future.”<sup>16</sup>

Understanding the potential impact of these audiences and consumer trends will help New Jersey appropriately develop, market, and host experiences that attract these travelers and their spending. Positive experiences may also yield enhanced brand image and social media accolades.

### The Global Heritage Tourism Market Potential

As New Jersey Division of Travel & Tourism invests a great deal of its marketing budget in attracting international visitors, it is important to understand the potential for growing this particular segment of the heritage tourism market.

The National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO), a division of the International Trade Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce, “provides market intelligence and statistics to the tourism industry to help identify international markets where their goods and services will be well received.” The office produces two relevant reports demonstrating the market potential for cultural heritage tourism and international visitation to national parks/ monuments.

According to the NTTA’s 2020 Inbound Profile of Cultural-Heritage Travelers:<sup>17</sup>

- 56% of all overseas visitors to the U.S. (almost 22.5 million) engaged in cultural heritage activities in 2019
- While international visitation severely declined in 2020 (by 84%), almost half of these overseas travelers to the U.S. engaged in cultural heritage activities (47%)
- 15% of overseas visitors to the U.S. engaging in cultural heritage activities in 2019 were from the United Kingdom; it consistently remains the number one inbound overseas market for cultural heritage sites/destinations

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<sup>15</sup> Source: “Educational Tourism Market Study” (September 27, 2021) by Future Market Insights, <https://www.futuremarketinsights.com/reports/sample/rep-gb-13880>

<sup>16</sup> Source: “The Rise of Heritage Travel: A new way for tourists to find themselves” (February 26, 2020), Airbnb, <https://breaktheicemedia.com/the-rise-of-heritage-travel/>

<sup>17</sup> Source: National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO), International Trade Association, U.S. Department of Commerce: Inbound Market Profiles: Overseas Visitors to the United States, Activity Profiles: Cultural - Heritage, downloaded via <https://www.trade.gov/travel-and-tourism-research>

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- The main purpose of these overseas travelers engaging in cultural heritage activities is vacation/holiday (62.2%) although visiting friends/relatives is also a strong motivation (19.2%)

Key Activities Engaged in by Overseas Travelers in 2019	
Activity	Percent
National Parks/ Monuments	60.4%
Art Gallery/ Museum	50.6%
Historical Locations	45.0%

### The Heritage Tourist: COVID's Impact

The pandemic brought travel to a halt. According to the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH)'s 2021 National Visitation Report, institutions around the country experienced a massive decline in visits during the pandemic. This decline cut across regional and size distinctions, leaving few institutions unaffected. Many institutions remained entirely closed to the public for half of 2020, and only operated with significant capacity limits and other restrictions once they finally reopened.

During the forced home stays, destinations and attractions around the world focused on delivering inspirational messaging and virtual learning opportunities to keep customers engaged. Museums shared collections, historic homes provided lectures and programs on a variety of topics, and tourism marketers shared videos and games as a distraction from the COVID crisis. Researchers monitored consumer attitudes and sentiments toward travel during this period. What became abundantly clear was the important role of travel, the desire to travel safely and to explore familiar (nostalgic) places.

Racial discourse escalated during the pandemic, in part due to the death of George Floyd. The 1619 Project also brought to light the need for more education and recognition of the contributions made by enslaved African Americans to the country's development and prosperity. An outcome is a more concentrated focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice at organizations, in programs, in education and policy. Diversity and inclusion are particularly a focus of more travel experiences, as destinations seek to expand the programs, products and marketing that reflect, represent, and are relevant to more diverse and often underserved audiences.

## Update on Site Visitor Readiness & Engagement

As mentioned in the previous section, COVID-19 impacted many organizations and agencies that manage or own historic sites. New Jersey heritage sites were not immune to this impact. The pandemic required closure of sites in 2020, as well as a move to touchless activities and eventually online programs. Staffing and operations were also negatively affected by the pandemic, as most organizations faced reduction in (or elimination of) revenues. National Park Service units and state buildings, including museums/historic sites and visitor centers, were closed for more than a year.

While federal and state relief helped some institutions and organizations survive COVID, the fallout from the pandemic is continuing through 2021. Vaccinations and relaxed safety guidelines are accelerating

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reopening of some sites, but variant strains raise concerns about possible re-closing or limitation on group gatherings and the negative impact on traveler intentions. Many sites still face an uphill battle as visitors seek safe outdoor experiences rather than indoor encounters.

Hargrove International, Inc. conducted primary and secondary research to determine specific needs and opportunities to advance historic site readiness for potential contribution to Revolution NJ activities as well as long-term participation in a heritage tourism ecosystem.

This report provides a status update on 64 designated *attractors*, *attractions* and *tour while there* sites. From June–August 2021, Hargrove International conducted four research strategies:

1. A digital marketing audit of their websites as to the information communicated to consumers (including status of opening, virtual programming, and other visitor information);
2. An online investigation of these sites' Trip Advisor and Google Business listings, as well as their proximity to other heritage assets/visitor services necessary to attract visitors and contribute to tourism's economic impact;
3. An invitation to complete a detailed 30-question e-survey to obtain additional information about their current state and query interest in future Revolution NJ activities;
4. Telephone conversations with 13 of the site managers (respondents to the e-survey) to conduct a deeper dive into the needs and desires of sites interested in Revolution NJ participation.

The research analysis reveals some major hurdles as well as opportunities for New Jersey to advance its goal to become a recognized heritage tourism destination. The analysis also serves as the foundation for recommendations on sites, themes and technical assistance to focus on as priorities for 2026. Supplemental information is provided separately to support these findings in the form of detailed reports for each site.



### Current Status of Sites

#### Openings and Closures

COVID-19 continues to impact many historic sites as organizations deal with safety guidelines, particularly for indoor programs and visits. Staffing concerns and shortages also negatively impact reopening for many sites. Government agencies are also reopening federal, state or locally owned sites at varying schedules and staffing guidelines, further compromising the ability to promote or measure access accurately.

Initial online research and subsequent e-survey responses demonstrate how confusing the reopening information is for visitors. A review of websites in May 2021 revealed the lack of current information on site accessibility. Websites of some government-managed or owned sites had not been updated since before COVID (pre-March 2020); others focused on all their restrictions and what is not permissible -- a very uninviting strategy for coaxing visitors to a site!

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The 27 e-survey respondents further amplified the inconsistency of reopening schedules: 18 had a definitive date (but as the chart below indicates, no uniform reopening date), seven mentioned varying operational protocols depending on facility and specific use (particularly citing indoors versus outdoors activities/tours); one mentioned a fall date (due to construction rather than COVID-19); and one site had not decided when to reopen.

Opening Date	Number of Sites	Specific Site Comments
April	4	April 1 (2), April 15 (2)
May	2	May 4; one site open “depending on facility and specific use”
June	4	June 1, June 6, June 12; one not specific as to when in June
June-July	1	Outdoors open June 1; indoor house tours resume July 1
Summer	1	“Reopened to COVID 19 protocol tours” (no specific date)
July	9	July 1 (2), July 2 (2), July 6, July 10, July 15, July 18; limited indoor reopening in July (no specific date)
September	3	September 9; One site was not specific as to the reopening date in September; Another “currently by appointment, will resume open hours and events in September”
Fall	1	Due to construction project (no specific date)
February 2022	1	Due to new exhibit
Not Decided	1	

**FINDING 1: Lack of current and easy-to-find trip planning information online** deflates travelers’ interest and also hurts the credibility of the site.

Regular website and social media updates must be a priority for communicating with potential (and repeat) customers. Sites need to use digital media and marketing as a way to inform and educate rather than frustrate visitors.

*(Note: During the time of the initial analysis (Summer 2021), the [New Jersey State Parks’](#) website was under development, adding to the confusion of information output. Typically, organizations/agencies maintain a current functioning website while a new site is being developed so there is a seamless flow of information. Allowing Friends’ groups to coordinate and deliver content through their own channels may also be an alternative strategy for state and local parks to share timely updates and information with visitors.)*

### Visitor Readiness

As stated above, many sites are still limiting access and/or incorporating safety guidelines during opening hours and tours. Until destinations are fully open to the visiting public, visitor readiness remains a moving target. Given that the pandemic has lingered longer than anticipated, and continues to cause havoc globally, sites need to pivot and offer alternative ways of engagement.

The majority (19) of survey respondents will keep the same hours/days of operation when they reopen; only four of 27 will reduce hours. However, given the fact that some of these sites were only open one weekend or three days a week prior to COVID, this “status quo” is not necessarily moving toward greater access. During the Site Assessment conducted in 2019, the lack of consistent and available days

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of operation was one of the greatest frustrations when attempting to create itineraries for travel to multiple sites.

**FINDING 2: Lack of staff** is a major challenge to enhancing visitor readiness, post-COVID.

Volunteers are difficult to recruit, especially due to COVID and generational shifts. Older populations -- the typical profile of the historic site docent or local Friends/historical society member -- are less inclined to volunteer due to health and safety concerns. Of the considerations listed regarding what it would take for the site to be open to the public more days/hours of the week, staffing was mentioned by eight respondents. Funding was also listed, mostly as a vehicle to hire staff rather than to depend on volunteers.

A complexity when dealing with staff is the number of sites that are owned by public institutions, either county or state. Flat budgets over the past decade have negatively impacted experience delivery. Often, staffing is inadequate to conduct the necessary programming, visitor services, and maintenance required at a host site. Marketing functions are often consolidated and therefore websites do not get updated as frequently as necessary with real-time trip planning information. Further dependence on "Friends" organizations to staff or fundraise for site improvements is an additional challenge to consistent offering of experiences and sustainability.

Helping privately-operated sites -- typically run by nonprofit organizations -- increase fiscal and human capacity (and overall organizational sustainability) is essential to increasing visitor readiness. This investment in assistance will also help the institutions realize some of the other programming and maintenance objectives that are required to deliver quality visitor experiences.

State/municipalities also need a similar investment in both human and site resources. In the interim, helping sites understand how to convert guided tours into self-guided options may be a short-term solution.

### Existing Partnerships

A digital search with a goal of identifying contributing lodging, dining, retail and entertainment options near the historic sites with Revolutionary War connections focused on assets located within a five-mile radius. Several examples surfaced.

**DISTINCTIVE DINING:** Recognizing that culinary experiences are high on the preferred list of heritage tourist activities, research identified 34 farm-to-table restaurants, historic taverns, inns and restaurants serving local specialties located near 24 sites. Half of these dining establishments are located within five miles of 11 sites; seven food/drink establishments are within 10 miles, and another six are located within 16 miles of an historic site.

**BREWERIES/WINERIES:** Bergen and Cape May counties had the greatest number of breweries/wineries near historic sites. A dozen breweries or wineries are located within five miles of Historic Cold Spring Village. (The Cold Spring Brewery at Historic Cold Spring Village has the distinction of being the state's first nonprofit microbrewery.) Tomasello Winery in Wycoff (Bergen County) is located 4.3 miles from The Hermitage. Three breweries in Bergen County -- Brix City Brewing in Little Ferry, Hackensack

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Brewing and Alementary Brewing Co. in Hackensack -- are located within five miles of Historic New Bridge Landing.

**HISTORIC LODGING:** Identifying distinctive lodging to complement heritage experiences is important to encourage visitors to stay longer in New Jersey. Research identified 30 historic hotels and inns located near Revolutionary War-associated sites. Not surprisingly, Cape May County had the largest offering of distinctive accommodations, with 13 historic inns and B&Bs located near Historic Cold Spring Village. Six other properties are located less than five miles from five different historic sites. Additional lodging is available further away from other sites, with 11 properties a distance of six to 22 miles from a historic site.

A list of these assets is available as a separate excel spreadsheet. Research also investigated whether other historic attractions and sites were located nearby (within five miles) to further expand the availability of history- or place-based experiences of interest to heritage travelers. Further investigation is required to determine whether opening hours/days are consistent with the operations of Revolutionary war sites.

**FINDING 3: Historic site managers need to partner with local tourism industry professionals (attractions, marketers, restaurants, lodging, tour companies and other service providers.)**

Only seven of the 27 survey respondents indicated some type of collaboration with either the local tourism bureau or a private sector partner (restaurant, brewery, inn/hotel, other attractions, etc.); 14 do not have any current partnerships and three did not know. As this is a key outcome for the New Jersey Office of Travel & Tourism, forging partnerships between the tourism industry partners and historic sites is vital.

The Elizabeth Destination Marketing Organization was cited as a strong partner for Boxwood. The site participates in current programs and events sponsored by the City of Elizabeth (National Night Out) and Union County (Four Centuries in a Weekend).

The Meadowlands Chamber of Commerce and the Morris County Visitor Bureau were also recognized as partners supporting/marketing local historic sites.

Passaic County is fortunate to have both historic sites and the local destination marketing organization (tourism bureau) housed in one department. While the professional staff wears many hats, the integration affords a holistic approach to heritage tourism development, marketing and management.



### *Thematic Programming/Events*

The original report identified 131 sites (of the 150 investigated) that include some type of interpretation. Of the visitor ready sites meeting at least the Tour While There criteria, 64 had some type of interpretation pre-COVID. The interpretation of these sites often focuses on military strategy.



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Other site interpretation includes rural life, industrial heritage, individuals -- women, Patriots and Loyalists -- associated with the site, and Quaker history.

### Alignment with Revolution NJ Interpretive Framework

Some of the seven key themes identified in the Revolution NJ Framework are currently interpreted at historic sites, with one or two themes more prevalent than others. The majority of e-survey respondents (23) currently interpret “New Jersey as a ‘Battleground,’” the most utilized of all Revolution NJ themes, in part because of its broad definition. Seven sites said they currently interpret “all” of the themes, although the level and quality of interpretation is not known.

Revolution NJ Interpretive Themes: Current and Proposed Interpretation (Per 26 Site Respondents to Survey)			
Theme	Interpreting Now	Interest in Interpreting in Next Three Years	Priority Order to Develop (#1 as top)
New Jersey as a “Battleground”	23	18	8
“Revolutionary Ideals”	17	18	5
The Historical Process	17	18	0
Property and Sovereignty	16	17	1
Inclusion/Exclusion	14	17	3
Movement of a People	10	18	1
Political Participation	8	17	0
None	1	9 skipped	9 skipped

Sites tend to focus on the well-known facts and themes rather than delving into lesser-known stories that are unique to New Jersey. Some sites go beyond traditional interpretation of the Revolutionary Era in New Jersey by focusing on “the American Revolution’s effect worldwide -- both as a global conflict and inspiration to other colonies (such as Haiti)” and focusing on “Slavery in Quaker New Jersey.”

**FINDING 4:** The lack of primary source documentation/ ability to conduct historic research has limited some sites’ ability to interpret the themes via broader, more diverse and inclusive stories from different perspectives.

If New Jersey plans to differentiate itself from other states as a “Crossroads”, then stories need to go beyond the battlefield and its generals. While military heritage will attract many visitors, the casual traveler motivated by visiting friends and relatives or for other purposes may find more diverse stories uniquely relatable and relevant to present. The good news is that 24 of the sites are beginning to investigate different, yet inclusive, storylines.

Focusing on what happened during conflicts -- to Free Blacks, women, children, immigrants, religious congregations -- helps connect the past to present, and provides a relevant/relatable context. The aged, the infirm, the indentured and the enslaved also experienced conflict; their stories are vital to telling the full story of the Revolution. The stories can be further broadened to share the impact on commerce, landscape, farms, and businesses. These research-based interpretive themes help expand the opportunity to attract new and diverse audiences to New Jersey heritage experiences.

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Offering credible research and interpretation assistance is vital to help sites create a more compelling quilt of stories to showcase. And to build on one of the earlier findings, “identifying living history staff that can learn and demonstrate historic skills” underscores the broader interpretive needs.

A key to engaging 21<sup>st</sup> Century travelers is developing and delivering diverse and inclusive experiences from different experiences. Given the impact of the Revolution on much of the state, New Jersey has a rare opportunity to present a host of different Revolutionary Era stories from multiple perspectives.

### Current and Proposed Types of Programming

Guided tours and special events continue to be the mainstay of content delivery, with 84% of the 27 survey respondents planning to offer these program formats when they reopen. Group tours (particularly school groups) and permanent exhibits tied as the second most popular content delivery strategy (80%), followed by self-guided tours (69%) and temporary exhibits (61%). More than half of the respondents (14) said they will add new amenities in the next year. These enhancements include:

- More/new events (specifically citing special events and fundraisers, a Tavern Night event)
- More exhibits
- A short film
- Wayside exhibits for key points/moments of the Battles of Trenton across downtown
- Expanding the gift shop and offering special programs, such as temporary exhibits on local history and Black history
- Advanced tour reservations, special programs, kiosk, updated museum exhibit
- Advanced ticketing for free tours and programs on Eventbrite

Looking further out to the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary, 16 of the 27 survey respondents plan to add new amenities in the next five years. Some of the improvements/ enhancements include: Interactive displays, construction of the Voorhees Dutch Barn, building restoration to increase capacity for small group programming, three new Visitor Centers, updated parking areas, online ticket sales and advanced payment/registration, Leni Lenape wigwams, and new waysides/pathways and temporary exhibits.

Some sites plan to translate content into other languages, although 15 didn’t know if this was a possibility. Four of the five responding “yes” will translate information into Spanish, one may translate material into Portuguese.

### Virtual Programming

During COVID, virtual programming was a particularly important strategy for historic sites and museums to maintain a presence with their community. Online programming, guest lectures, tours via Facebook Live, and other digital strategies help attract visitors seeking interesting content as well as potential travelers investigating future trips to New Jersey. More than half of the survey respondents currently offer some type of virtual program; however, the quality and frequency are not known.

All of the sites want to continue virtual programming. One site recognized the need for a more stable internet connection to offer live virtual programming. Another needs assistance on how to create dynamic virtual programs. Continuing to monitor the desire for virtual programming and providing

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technical assistance on how to create these digital tools will be important to keep sites top of mind -- especially if future shutdowns occur due to the recurring pandemic.



The survey respondents do not have a preference for certain markets. Most just want more visitors. Families, multi-generational groups, student/youth groups, and adult groups slightly edge out adult leisure visitors but as one respondent said, “we are open to all!” One site did specify that artists, architects and artisans are wanted. Another site is interested in “academic outreach to secondary and tertiary (school) programs for interpretive tours and research resources for their own coursework.”

Marketing Tools Used by Survey Respondents	
Medium	Usage by Survey Respondents
Social Media: Facebook	92%
Brochures/ Rack Cards	72%
Online Advertising	60%
Print Advertising	44%
Videos (You Tube)	44%
Social Media: Instagram	42%
Social Media: Twitter	32%
Earned Media (journalist articles, blogs, videos)	24%
Social Media: TikTok	16%
Group Tour/Itineraries	12%
Promotions (incentives, offers)	8%
Social Media: Pinterest	8%
Packages	4%

Events are also used as a vehicle to attract on-site visitors. Websites are considered a key marketing tool for many of the sites, and managers also post content on other online local and heritage tourism websites.

Given the interest in hosting groups (particularly school and multi-generational groups), the lack of group tour information and itineraries is surprising. Helping sites understand how to market to groups will be important to grow this audience segment.

**FINDING 5:** Sites don’t always use **research to inform their interpretive planning and marketing** strategies.

Sites need to obtain and utilize market research to inform programming and special events. By working closely with their local destination marketing organization/ tourism bureau and accessing state tourism research, site managers can better understand what visitors are seeking in experiences. Utilizing visitation trending data available from national organizations (such as the Alliance of American Museums, American Association for State & Local History), site managers can customize their

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programming and target their marketing to attract appropriate local, state, regional, national and international audiences.

Not surprisingly, marketing budgets are small, if they exist at all. Of the 20 survey respondents\*:

- 6 have no money allocated for marketing (volunteer/in-kind only)
- 6 have a marketing budget of \$1,000 or less
- 3 have marketing budgets from \$1,001 to \$5,000
- 2 have marketing budgets of \$25,001 to \$50,000
- 2 have a marketing budget of \$50,001 to \$100,000
- 1 has a marketing budget over \$100,000

*\*Note: Seven survey respondents skipped the question. Also noteworthy, the question did not specify whether the respondent was included in a regional or statewide budget or was using dedicated site funds for marketing, although comments referred to their structure and how marketing was funded.*

State Parks rely on agency-wide marketing in general; some Friends organizations contribute funds, particularly for promoting special events. Counties will also post information on their website and social media platforms.

Interestingly, with TripAdvisor being a major source of user-generated comments and reviews, only nine of 24 respondents manage their site listing (nine do not and six did not know; three skipped the question.) Google business listings are also an important awareness tool for trip planning and visitor information. More than half (12 of 22) respondents have a Google business listing, but seven didn't know if they did, and three do not have (three respondents also skipped the question). This is a fundamental tool to provide real time information to travelers.

**FINDING 6:** Many sites do not take advantage of **low- or no-cost marketing tools** and strategies to promote their site.

**Basic marketing tools such as Google My Business, TripAdvisor monitoring, and website/social media posts can keep sites top of mind with key audiences. Identifying volunteers, staff, interns or other workforce available to help with these ongoing communication needs will be important to drive traffic and maintain visitor interest.**

While survey results and other research unveiled several needs, especially for struggling organizations and institutions, it is equally important to understand the motivations of sites doing well. What benefits can be provided to the sites that have dedicated marketing budgets, are using (and conducting their own) market research, maintaining a strong social and digital media presence, working with media and hosting familiarization tours, actively promoting their site to targeted audiences, and most importantly, delivering consistently high-quality experiences?

### Priorities & Recommendations

The initial list of 150 sites for assessment, and even the 64 sites with some type of interpretation, still represent too large a list to focus on for meaningful impact. Therefore, this findings report helps hone in on the sites that present the greatest opportunity for elevating New Jersey's brand as a heritage tourism destination, increasing the heritage tourism ecotourism, and contributing to an economic bump during the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. As not all the sites with interpretation participated in the e-survey, Hargrove International conducted additional research to determine the likelihood of these sites' impact based on story, location, and current/potential visitor experience.

It should be noted that this section of the report is concerned with identifying sites that, when taken together, can promote and economically sustain **an ongoing, full-time Revolutionary War heritage tourism program** in New Jersey. Many sites in New Jersey have significant links to telling the Revolutionary War story that are important as local resources or as attractions for special events, but are either not regularly staffed and open to visitors or do not interpret the American Revolution as a central theme.



#### *General Observations and Overarching Issues*

This additional research and investigation of current operations at key sites related to the Revolutionary War era identified several overarching issues. If New Jersey wants to develop a sustainable infrastructure and ecosystem to grow heritage tourism, three major concerns need to be addressed.

1. State-owned sites are an integral collection to the Revolution NJ brand. However, the majority of these sites face severe issues of staffing, need for ongoing maintenance, lack of expanded and updated exhibits/ programming, and limited marketing, particularly websites. Professional staff that allows the sites to be open consistent hours/days of operation (typically a minimum of five days a week, including at least one weekend day) and the ability to host tours/groups is a particular need if the state wants to competitively grow heritage tourism.
  - Some sites - **Boxwood Hall** and **Princeton Battlefield** - have critical infrastructure needs that are necessary to provide basic services (public bathrooms!) to visitors (and comply with ADA guidelines for historic sites)
  - **Monmouth Battlefield** needs upgraded, and operational, museum exhibits and exterior interpretation, as well as events and programming to attract visitors and cultivate repeat visitors
  - **Trenton Battle Monument** needs a functioning elevator or stairs to permit access to the observation deck, new interpretation specifically related to Washington's artillery location, and grounds maintained for safe exploration/parking.
2. Nonprofit organizations managing independent sites or "Friends" groups supporting state-owned historic sites also need to ramp up/maintain consistent levels of staffing so sites can be

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open consistently. Additionally, some of these entities require technical assistance/instruction in other areas of museum/site operations, marketing, curation, and programming. Quality and consistency of experience delivery is paramount to a positive heritage destination brand.

- **Historic New Bridge Landing**, for instance, needs relevant interpretation (related to the Revolutionary War) and programming, and needs to be open at least five days a week.
  - Other sites -- particularly **Proprietary House** and **Fort Lee** -- need significant revamping of exhibits and visitors services in order to be contributing heritage tourism assets.
3. All historic sites need to be more connected to, and engaged with, the larger travel & tourism industry. Fostering opportunities where they can interact with -- and partner with -- other segments of the travel & tourism industry will facilitate greater potential for experience development and cross-marketing.
- Only a few site managers indicated partnerships with the local tourism bureau.
  - Very few sites collaborate with private sector entities -- such as restaurants, breweries and/or B&Bs -- to create itineraries and packages for visitors.

Historic site managers must also be more responsive to, better yet pro-active, regarding Revolution NJ requests and opportunities. Without an educated and informed group of stakeholders, silos may arise and sites will feel disconnected from statewide activities, programs and events.

These overarching issues are deeply concerning, and impact the state's ability to realize its heritage tourism goals. The significant challenges regarding visitor readiness, which have escalated due to and during COVID, must be addressed in order for the state to advance its Revolution NJ agenda.



### *Creating a Heritage Tourism "Core"*

#### **New Jersey's Unique Proposition for the Revolutionary War Era and Heritage Tourism**

New Jersey has the competitive advantage of discovery -- where visitors can learn diverse perspectives of the events leading up to, during, and resulting from our country's founding. As the location for pivotal battles recognized as the turning point of the Revolution, New Jersey must showcase sites associated with the "10 Crucial Days" to provide a context of its importance to America's story. However, to expand heritage tourism and its economic impact, the state should utilize its geographic location as "the Crossroads" to offer broader educational opportunities "beyond the battlefield" for school groups, heritage travelers, and life-long learning enthusiasts.

Focusing on often-forgotten stories of immigrants, African Americans, women, soldiers, Patriots, Loyalists and Native Americans, told at locations around the state, helps visitors experience history where it happened. The struggles, divisions, prejudice, and injustices experienced two centuries ago are relevant and relatable to issues of today. Stories of courage, triumph, perseverance, and self-reliance also resonate as a foundation of the American spirit. These diverse, inclusive stories provide a competitive edge for New Jersey; no other state can explore and deliver the breadth and depth of common every-day experiences where virtually every county and citizen was touched by war.

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A core group of sites that convey these different perspectives and impacts are required to demonstrate why a visit to New Jersey is essential to understanding the complexity and relevance of our country's founding. Shared through a variety of voices -- from generals and historical figures to lesser-known, often overlooked individuals and communities -- the place-based stories weave a tapestry of experiences not fully presented in any other state. Collectively, these stories present a marketing opportunity where only in New Jersey can visitors learn about what happened on *and* beyond the battlefields.

New Jersey's experience during the American Revolution combines events of national significance (including the fact that George Washington spent one-quarter of his time as Commander of the Continental Army in the state) with a compelling story of the impact the war had on a diverse population. This is a story that other Revolutionary War destinations do not tell. In addition to stories of the state as a nationally significant battlefield, New Jersey's interpretive program includes a wealth of stories on property and sovereignty (constant foraging raids during nearly eight years at the crossroads of a civil war), inclusion and exclusion (slavery, culture, gender), and living up to Revolutionary ideals -- all stories that can engage with, and have relevance for, a 21<sup>st</sup> century audience.

A nexus for telling this multi-faceted story is a proposed Experience Center in Trenton. The plan for this center is discussed in a separate report. However, for New Jersey to be able to market itself as a Revolutionary era destination, **the Experience Center must be complemented by a network of high quality history sites consistently open to the public.**

The criteria for designating a core is based on what is needed to provide a comprehensive experience through a collection of sites that are professionally staffed and regularly open to visitors. As such, there is not a set number of sites required to create a marketable full-time Revolutionary era heritage tourism destination. However, given New Jersey's size and the different facets of its nationally important story, approximately 10-15 sites which can be brought online to meet the core criteria should be considered as a target.

### Criteria for "core" site designation:

- The American Revolution period is the primary, or a highly significant, element of the site's interpretation.
- Professionally trained interpretive staff (preferably with living history interpretation)
- Open to visitors a minimum of five days per week, including at least one weekend day (seasonal operation considered)
- ADA accessibility, including bathrooms
- Parking for both cars and buses (preferably dedicated), with high-visibility external signage
- Reception area with visitor information and gift shop.

The reality is that few Revolutionary War era sites in New Jersey currently meet all these criteria.

**Significant investment is needed for a critical mass of sites to attain this level of visitor readiness.** This report identifies candidates for contributing to the destination "core" based on current conditions, location, and ability (or potential ability) to tell key pieces of the overall New Jersey American Revolution story.

New Jersey is fortunate to have three National Park Service (NPS) units that have some association with the Revolutionary period: **Morristown National Historical Park, Paterson Great Falls National Historical**

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**Park and Gateway National Recreation Area (Sandy Hook Lighthouse).** However, only Morristown currently interprets the era and its importance/relevance. The Great Falls story focuses on the post-war industrialization era, but the roots of that development are in the American Revolution. The connection to Alexander Hamilton and the proposed construction of a visitor center can help connect these visitors to the New Jersey American Revolution heritage tourism network. The Sandy Hook peninsula served as a safe haven for Revolutionary War foragers, including former slaves aligned with the Loyalists, as well as a staging area for British troop embarkations to New York City. The lighthouse is original to the Revolutionary War period but highlights this history in a cursory way. Given the sheer number of visitors to Sandy Hook during the summer, working with NPS to heighten this compelling Rev War heritage could help promote interest in exploring the state's other Rev War sites.

This report identifies 15 sites -- one national park, nine state sites/parks (including two that are privately operated) and five locally/privately owned sites -- whose association with the Revolutionary Era is significant or have the potential to offer a high quality Rev War experience. This list, when visitor ready, could form the core sites required to tell the full Revolutionary Era story and serve as the bedrock for a destination marketing campaign.

*Note: The fieldwork pertaining to site visitor readiness was conducted in 2019. Some conditions may have changed since those pre-COVID days. Additionally, the potential development of other high-profile sites in New Jersey's Revolutionary War network has emerged since the initial study. As such, this list of "core" sites should be considered with some flexibility as the work proceeds. This section also identifies other visitor-ready sites that do not primarily interpret the American Revolution but should be seen as valuable partners for providing a multi-themed experience for heritage travelers with interest in the American Revolution story.*

Ultimately, the core sites must provide a unique heritage tourism story -- New Jersey-based, but with appeal to a broad and diverse audience of visitors -- that will be a catalyst for economic growth. With appropriate staffing and oversight, they can be charged with documenting visitation and spending (with consistent tools) to demonstrate the visitation impact to New Jersey. Defining and articulating the benefit for their participation will be vital to keep these sites engaged.



## PROPOSED CORE SITES

NATIONAL PARK SITES					
Site	Location & Management	Story/Interpretation	Key opportunities and challenges	Visitor ready status	
<b>Morristown National Historical Park</b>	Morristown, Morris Twp., Harding Twp. (Morris), Bernardsville (Somerset)  National Park Service	Commemorates the sites of the Continental army's 1777 and 1779-1780 winter encampments, the latter being the coldest winter on record. The park also maintains a museum & library collection related to the encampments, and the Ford Mansion, which served as George Washington's headquarters.	MNHP is already a core visitor-ready attractor for interpretation of the Rev War in NJ  Battlefield NJ themes: GW HQ, commemorates "event" of national significance  Other themes: impact on local population; ideals; sovereignty; inclusion; ideals	Days open*	7
				ADA accessible	Y
				Bathrooms	Y
				Car parking	Y
				Bus parking	Y
Gift shop	Y				

STATE OWNED AND OPERATED SITES					
Site	Location & Management	Story/Interpretation	Key opportunities and challenges	Visitor ready status	
<b>Boxwood Hall State Historic Site</b>	Elizabeth (Union)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	This was the home of Elias Boudinot, who served as Commissary General of Prisoners and President of the Continental Congress during the Revolutionary War, and hosted luminaries such as George Washington and Alexander Hamilton. This history and the history of the building's other inhabitants is interpreted at the site through period rooms.	This site is being considered a core site because of the compelling story it can tell about the war "behind the scenes," its location, and its engaging interpretive experience. However, the site requires significant upgrades to meet visitor needs. Also, the current high-level interpretation is dependent on one person, the current site manager. Changes in personnel could significantly impact the experience.	Days open*	5
				ADA accessibility	Some
				Bathrooms	N
				Car parking	N
				Bus parking	N
Gift shop	N				

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			<p>Note: if privately operated sites within walking distance of Boxwood also became visitor ready, they could be packaged as a visitor experience.</p> <p>Battlefield NJ themes: Major figures (GW, Hamilton); the war behind the scenes</p> <p>Other themes: property; sovereignty; life on the home front; inclusion</p>		
<b>Indian King Tavern State Historic Site</b>	Haddonfield (Camden)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Completed in 1750, the Indian King Tavern was the site of the ratification of New Jersey's first state constitution in 1776 and also witnessed the British march to Monmouth in 1778. These topics along with the broader colonial and 18th century periods serve as the site's primary interpretive themes.	The site is in need of a visitor center. As with other state-operated properties, staffing is a fundamental challenge.  Battlefield NJ themes: Important events (NJ Constitution, march to Monmouth)  Other themes: property; life on the home front	Days open*	5
				ADA accessible	N
				Bathrooms	N
				Car parking	N
				Bus parking	N
				Gift shop	N
<b>Monmouth Battlefield State Park</b> <i>(plus Craig House)</i>	Manalapan/Freehold Twp (Monmouth)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	The Battle of Monmouth, the longest and largest one-day artillery battle of the war, took place here on June 28, 1778. The site primarily interprets the events from that battle through tours, exhibits at the visitor center and events at the battlefield and Craig House.	The visitor center exhibits need upgrades. The battlefield needs interpretive signage when guided tours are not available (friends group provides weekend walking tours). Lack of wheelchair/walker accessible paths.  Staffing levels are low and someone is not always available (for questions, to start the film, etc.)	Days open*	7
				ADA accessible	Y
				Bathrooms	Y
				Car parking	Y
				Bus parking	Y
				Gift shop	Y

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			<p>Battlefield NJ themes: Commemorates major event of national significance; major figures</p> <p>Other themes: property; ideals</p>		
<b>Princeton Battlefield State Park</b>	Princeton (Mercer)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	The Battle of Princeton was fought here (and in the neighboring town) on January 3, 1777. The park contains the Thomas Clarke House, the dwelling in which General Hugh Mercer died after the battle. The battlefield and house primarily interpret the battle and the Revolutionary War through signage and monuments/markers, with some tours and exhibits.	<p>The only extant building in the park (Clarke House) needs significant upgrades, including ADA access (and the park paths provide limited access for wheelchairs). Also, the park is not staffed regularly, so the experience is mostly self-directed. Full-time staffing is necessary to market this as a destination site.</p> <p>Battlefield NJ themes: Commemorates major event of national significance</p> <p>Other themes: sovereignty; inclusion; ideals</p>	Days open*	5
				ADA accessible	N
				Bathrooms	N
				Car parking	Y
				Bus parking	Y
				Gift shop	N
<b>Rockingham State Historic Site</b>	Franklin (Somerset)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Rockingham (the main building has been relocated a number of times, but now sits on a plot close to its original location) served as George Washington’s final wartime headquarters, where he wrote his farewell orders.	<p>This is a multi-faceted facility (3 buildings) in an attractive setting. Key challenge is full-time staffing for a compelling interpretive program.</p> <p>Battlefield NJ themes: Major figures (last GW HQ) and events (along Road to Morristown, Washington-Rochambeau Route)</p>	Days open*	5
				ADA accessible	Y
				Bathrooms	Y
				Car parking	Y
				Bus parking	Y
				Gift shop	Y
<b>Trenton Battle Monument</b>	Trenton (Mercer)	The Trenton Battle Monument, a 148-foot column with an	This site is currently not open. However, getting it to visitor-ready status should be	Days open*	0

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	NJ Department of Environmental Protection	observation deck, commemorates the American victory at the First Battle of Trenton on December 26, 1776. The observation platform near the top of the monument looks over the 18th-century street pattern of Trenton, where the battle occurred. Washington massed his artillery onsite for the battle.	considered a priority because of its significance to the Revolutionary War. The monument elevator or stair access needs to be repaired/replaced and staffing provided.  Battlefield NJ themes: Commemorates major event of national significance  Other themes: property; impact on local population	ADA accessible Bathrooms Car parking Bus parking Gift shop	N N N N N
<b>Washington Crossing State Park</b>	Titusville (Mercer)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Washington Crossing State Park is the location of the point at which General Washington crossed the Delaware River from Pennsylvania to meet Hessian troops in Trenton. The site primarily interprets its significance to the Revolutionary War through exhibits, tours and public programming at various locations on the park grounds.	Staffing can be erratic and either the Johnson Ferry House or the Visitors Center may be closed without warning due to staffing levels. Staffing is supplemented by friends group, but full-time staffing is necessary to market this as a destination site.  The current visitors center is dated, but a new facility is funded and is in the planning phase.  Battlefield NJ themes: Commemorates major event of national significance; significant artifact collection	Days open*	7
				ADA accessible	Y
				Bathrooms	Y
				Car parking	Y
				Bus parking	Y
				Gift shop	Y

## Revolution NJ: Site Contribution Report

STATE OWNED, PRIVATELY OPERATED SITES					
Site	Location & Management	Story/Interpretation	Key opportunities and challenges	Visitor ready status	
<b>Old Barracks Museum</b>	Trenton (Mercer)	The Old Barracks was constructed in 1758-1759 to house British soldiers during the French and Indian Wars.	This site is visitor ready and provides a unique, highly-rated experience with living history interpreters. It is already an “Attractor” site.  Battlefield NJ themes: major events of national significance (TCD), life during wartime (inoculation, life of a soldier);  Other themes: inclusion; divided loyalties  Although located on the State House grounds, it lacks identification with a department of state government.	Days open*	5
				ADA accessible	Y
	Bathrooms	Y			
	Car parking	Y			
	Bus parking	Y			
	Gift shop	Y			
<b>Proprietary House</b>	Perth Amboy (Middlesex)	The Proprietary House, constructed in 1761-2, is the only extant Royal Governor’s mansion in the country. Its only occupant as royal governor was William Franklin, the son of Benjamin Franklin. The younger Franklin was arrested by Patriots here in 1776. The building was later converted into a hotel and then a boarding house. Today, Proprietary House primarily interprets the 18th century history of the building through period rooms.	This is a nationally significant site – as the only original Royal Governor’s mansion and for the colorful story of William Franklin.  The friends association utilized volunteers to provide tours on select days prior to COVID. However, this site requires restoration, professional staffing and interpretation in order to be marketed as a destination attraction.  Battlefield NJ themes: Major figures (Franklin), only extant 18 <sup>th</sup> century royal governor mansion in country	Days open*	0
				ADA accessible	Y
	Bathrooms			Y	
	Car parking			Y	
	Bus parking			Y	
	Gift shop			Y	
	Proprietary House Association				

## Revolution NJ: Site Contribution Report

			Other themes: property; inclusion (slavery); ideals; divided loyalties		
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OTHER SITES (joint, county, local, private)					
Site	Location & Management	Story/Interpretation	Key opportunities and challenges	Visitor ready status	
<b>Dey Mansion</b>	Wayne (Passaic)	Dey Mansion was constructed during the 1770s and served as General Washington's headquarters in 1780. The site currently interprets the 18 <sup>th</sup> century and the Revolutionary War through period rooms and public programming.	<p>Although no major events occurred here, the site offers a high quality interpretation of one of the many Washington HQs dotted throughout New Jersey.</p> <p>A crucial element will be maintaining regular opening hours and consistent staffing levels.</p> <p>Battlefield NJ themes: Major figures (GW HQ)</p> <p>Other themes: property; ideals; impact on the local population</p>	Days open*	0
				ADA accessible	TBD
	Bathrooms			Y	
	Car parking			Y	
	Bus parking			N	
	Gift shop			N	
<b>East Jersey Old Town Village</b>	Piscataway (Middlesex)	The site is a collection of reconstructed and restored buildings from a variety of eras that were relocated to this spot as an ersatz village in the 1970s. The site interprets life in Central Jersey from the late 17 <sup>th</sup> to early 20 <sup>th</sup>	<p>While this site is not an “authentic” location itself, the fact that it is regularly open and staffed (and the County has plans for enhancing living history interpretation here) offers potential for being marketed as a core site. Specifically, it can be a point of entry for</p>	Days open*	5
	Middlesex County			ADA accessible	Y
				Bathrooms	Y
				Car Parking	Y
				Bus Parking	Y

## Revolution NJ: Site Contribution Report

		centuries. Of significance for the Revolutionary War era are the Indian Queen Tavern (which hosted figures such as Washington, Adams, Franklin) and the Raritan Landing exhibit.	telling stories of area events (such as the July 4 <sup>th</sup> <i>feu de joie</i> in 1778) as well as the overarching story of the war's impact on the local populace. This would require dedicating resources for devoted exhibits and/or interpretive programs.  Battlefield NJ themes: Major figures (GW, Franklin, Adams);  Other themes: property; impact on local population; forage wars	Gift Shop	Y
<b>Fort Lee Historic Park</b>	Fort Lee (Bergen)  Palisades Interstate Park Commission	Fort Lee Historic Park occupies the location of an overlook used by American troops during the Revolutionary War and marked the start of a hasty retreat from the British that ultimately led to the events of the Ten Crucial Days. The park interprets the Revolutionary War through a reconstructed encampment.	This location and view are striking and evocative. The site is technically "Visitor Ready," but the condition of the museum exhibits, lack of visitor engagement, and having to pay to park before knowing the experience are elements that need to be addressed to make this a marketable heritage tourism attraction.  Battlefield NJ themes: Major event (defense of Hudson, retreat before TCD)  Other themes: property	Days open*	5
				ADA accessible	Y
				Bathrooms	Y
				Car parking	Y (pay)
				Bus parking	Y
				Gift shop	Y
				ADA accessible	Y
<b>Liberty Hall Museum</b>	Union Twp (Union)  Liberty Hall Museum, Inc.	Liberty Hall was constructed in 1772 and has served as the home of several influential political figures, including William Livingston, the first governor of the State of New Jersey. The home	This site provides a range of interpretive tours and programs and is considered an "Attraction."  Battlefield NJ themes: major figures (GW, Livingston);	Days open*	5
				ADA accessible	Y
				Bathrooms	Y
				Car parking	Y
				Bus parking	Y

## Revolution NJ: Site Contribution Report

	(Kean University location)	was visited by significant guests during the Revolutionary War. This history, along with the histories of the building's other inhabitants, is told through tours of the several furnished structures on the property.	Other themes: property; impact of war; ideals	Gift shop	Y
<b>Red Bank Battlefield and Whitall House</b>	National Park (Gloucester)	The site of a Revolutionary War battle during the defense of Philadelphia and the dwelling of an 18 <sup>th</sup> century Quaker family, Red Bank Battlefield along with the James and Ann Whitall House primarily interprets Quaker life and the Revolutionary War through the battlefield and historic house museum.	This is a lovely park and numerous upgrades have been made to the house (including ADA accessibility) in the past few years. Resources are needed for full-time staffing and interpretation.  Battlefield NJ themes: Significant event (defense of Philadelphia), major figure (Von Donop)  Other themes: Quaker community; impact on local population; property; ideals	Days open*	4
	Gloucester County			ADA accessible	Y
				Bathrooms	N
				Car parking	Y
				Bus parking	Y
Gift shop	N				

*\*Note: "Days open per week" is based on post-pandemic schedule as available.*

### SUPPORTING SITES

It would not be feasible to bring all significant state-owned sites up to destination marketing-ready status at the current time – particularly with regard to regular and consistent staffing. This includes the state-operated sites with significant connections to the American Revolution (e.g. Wallace House, Hancock House, Long Pond Ironworks). Some locally operated sites have the potential to interpret significant stories but have indicated that they do not have plans to open to visitors on a regular basis (e.g. New Bridge Landing, some of the "Five Generals" houses). Other sites that may already be visitor ready (such as Historic Walnford, Cold Spring Village, Batsto Village, Ringwood Manor, and the Hermitage) offer limited opportunity at the current time for an immersive Rev War experience, although that could change. Some other sites that are in the planning or construction phases could potentially be included as core sites as they are developed (e.g. Benjamin Cooper Tavern in Camden, 1759



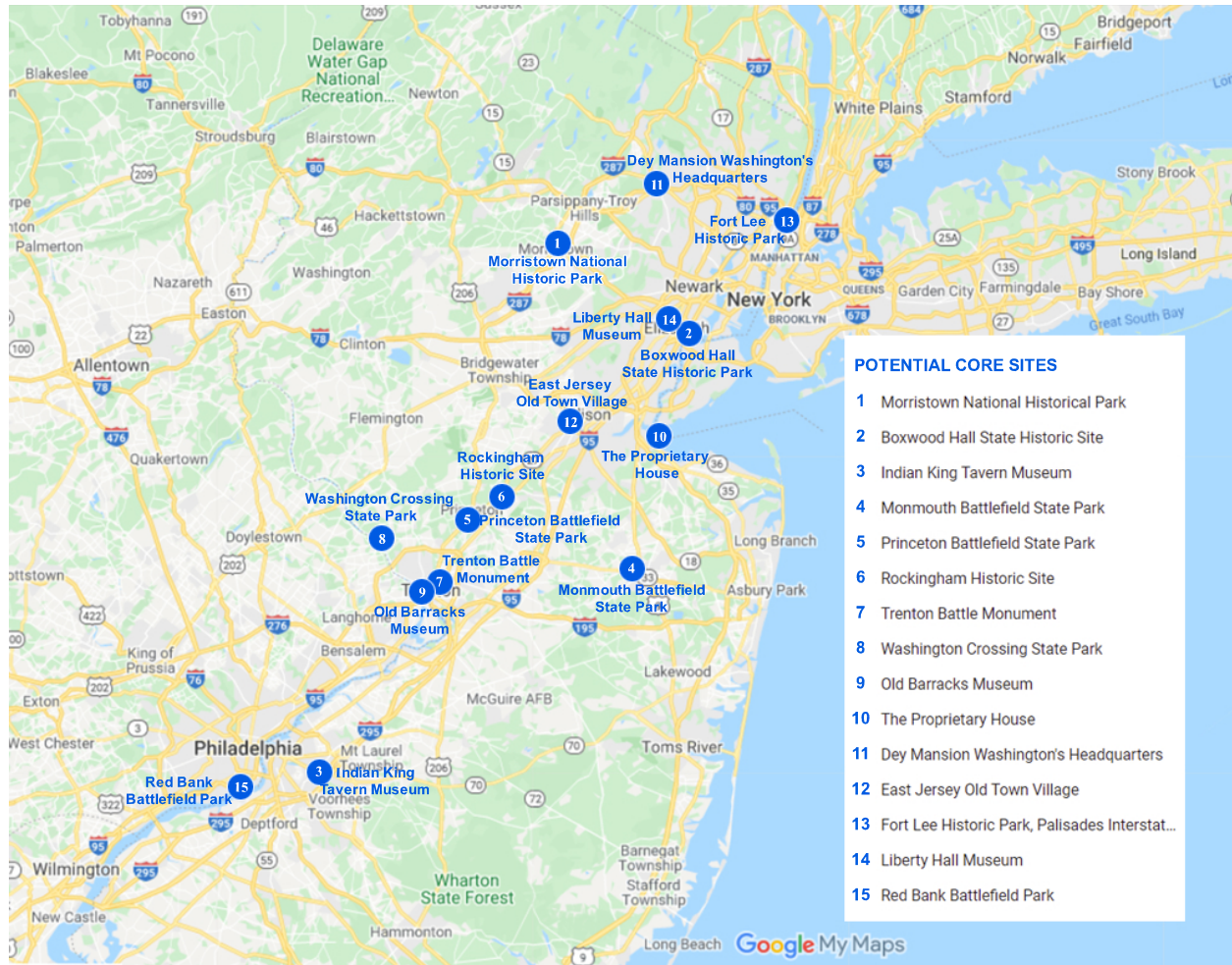
## Revolution NJ: Site Contribution Report

Vought House in Hunterdon, Howe Farmstead in Somerset). In any event, all these sites can serve as partners to the core American Revolution heritage tourism attractions through special events and programming.

<b>KEY PARTNERS that are currently (or soon will be) Revolution NJ visitor ready</b>			
<b>Site</b>	<b>Location &amp; Management</b>	<b>Story/Interpretation</b>	<b>Key linkages</b>
<b>Morven Museum and Garden</b>	Princeton (Mercer)  Historic Morven, Inc.	Home of Richard Stockton (Declaration of Independence signer) and witness to Battle of Princeton aftermath.	Morven is a multi-era cultural heritage museum. Its visitor services and location make it a good adjunct for the Rev War heritage traveler who is looking for a wider variety of experiences on a longer trip.  Themes: life during wartime; impact on local population; diversity
<b>Paterson Great Falls National Historic Park</b>	Paterson (Passaic)  National Park Service	This park primarily interprets the nation's post-Rev War industrial era. Alexander Hamilton helped organize the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures in 1791, which founded Paterson as a manufacturing city harnessing the power of the falls. Hamilton was inspired to build on this location during a picnic here with Washington and Lafayette after the Battle of Monmouth in 1778.	Does not yet have a visitors center, but one is in the planning stages. Integration of Rev War era interpretation to be determined.  Themes: Major figures (George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, Lafayette); the war as the beginning of building American industry

## Revolution NJ: Site Contribution Report

STATE-OWNED SITES that could make a future contribution to Revolution NJ			
Site	Location & Management	Story/Interpretation	Key linkages
<b>Hancock House</b>	Lower Alloways Creek (Salem)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	A massacre event occurred here. Illustrates the impact on local population and divided loyalties.	Site is “off the beaten path” for most heritage travelers and does not interpret an event of national significance. However, combining this site with sites in Salem and Greenwich could tell a story of the impact of war on a local population, set apart from the main crossroads of the conflict. This would require significant investment and coordination among the various site operators.  Themes: Event illustrating impact on local population.
<b>Long Pond Ironworks</b>	West Milford (Passaic)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Iron supplied the Continental Army	The site is inset in a natural area. Combined with nearby Ringwood Manor, this could serve as complementary sites with the Dey Mansion county site and the Great Falls National Park to provide an extended-stay/more immersive experience in this part of the state.  Themes: Supplying the war; impact on local population.
<b>Wallace House &amp; Old Dutch Parsonage</b>	Somerville (Somerset)  NJ Department of Environmental Protection	Wallace home was used as George Washington’s HQ during Middlebrook cantonment. The adjacent parsonage also has connections to colonial era figures and life.	Wallace House is not currently included among the core sites because of staff response indicating significant refurbishment needs that must be addressed first. At some point in the future, this site can be a focal point, along with other local sites known collectively as the “Five Generals” houses, for telling the Middlebrook story.  Themes: Major figures; life during wartime; impact on local population; diversity



As the map demonstrates, most of the sites are located along the I-95 North/South Corridor. This may help when developing itineraries for New York and Pennsylvania residents (two of the major origin markets for New Jersey). Identifying ways to connect experiences for travelers to the Shore will also be important, especially for the family/ visiting friends and relatives markets.

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### *Investing in Heritage Product Development & Visitor Readiness*

The 2020 site assessment report conducted for Revolution NJ identified structural, conservation, preservation, infrastructure, and other exterior building needs required to make the sites visitor ready for 2026. The costs in that report are estimates of the capital improvements necessary to transform these historic structures and sites into contributing heritage tourism attractions. The total cost to address the needs of the state-owned sites is estimated to be between \$31 and \$67 million, depending on the number of sites included in the initial “core” and the priority level of need. Costs for addressing the needs of non-state core sites range from \$7 to \$22 million. Some of these needs have already been addressed, or have been appropriated funding to address, since the initial study’s fieldwork was conducted in 2019. Revolution NJ should work closely with these sites to identify the current, precise capital needs of these core sites. Regardless, these figures do not take into account costs associated with enhancements of exhibits, programming, or staffing that are also needed to make these sites truly visitor ready.

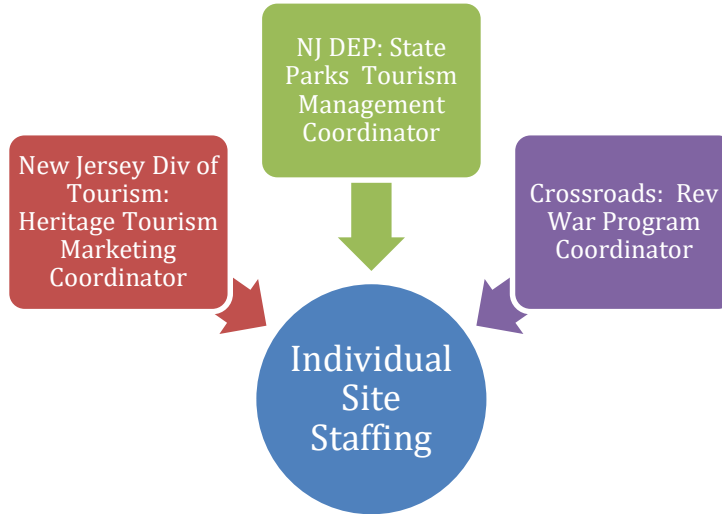
#### State Coordination

Staffing, programming and interpretation are additional costs not factored into these capital improvements. Once sites are ready for visitors, funding and management is needed to staff historic sites with the caliber of personnel required to deliver exceptional educational experiences with a support team to operate and maintain the site. **A minimum of three professional staff -- site manager, interpreter, and visitor services specialist -- are required** to host visitors, deliver programs and maintain operations at each site (not including maintenance and other support staff). Lack of staffing is a problem for nearly all sites at the current time, but it is particularly acute among state-owned sites. Coordination of site activities, programs and marketing is also needed, requiring additional professional staff to oversee the development and integration of activities into seamless delivery of travel experiences. A staffing ecosystem that complements the capital infrastructure is required to ensure maximum growth and sustainability of heritage tourism leading up to and beyond 2026.

Because the vast majority of potential core sites are operated by the state, **a holistic approach to managing and staffing them as New Jersey’s American Revolution destinations should be considered.** Possible approaches include reorganizing the management of these sites within DEP or entering into a partnership agreement with a local or private entity to manage the sites’ interpretation and visitor services collectively.

To make all this work, **dedicated heritage tourism personnel must be appointed to supervisory positions in the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, DEP/State Parks, and Crossroads**, to guarantee that there is coordination and integration at the state level to leverage resources and opportunities regionally and locally for maximum results. The three statewide positions are needed to assist in the development of heritage product, creation and marketing of tour product/ itineraries/ events and promotions, fostering of regional and local collaborations between 18th Century heritage sites and other historic sites and tourism entities, and to ensure the delivery of quality heritage tourism experiences — from inception to hosting and evaluation.

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There are precedents for these recommendations. Three states already demonstrate how collaboration and dedicated staff yield results:

### **EXAMPLE of Integrated Programs: Arkansas**

The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism was expanded to become the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism to integrate complementary aspects of the visitor experience delivery system under one department.

- Arkansas State Parks manages 52 state parks and promotes Arkansas as a tourist destination.
- Arkansas Heritage preserves and promotes Arkansas' natural and cultural history and heritage through four historic museums and four cultural preservation agencies.
- Arkansas Tourism improves the state's economy by generating travel and enhancing the image of the state.

Each of these entities work together in the preservation, development, marketing and management of heritage tourism. State conferences consistently include sessions on heritage tourism.

The Division of Arkansas Heritage (DAH) was created in 1975 to preserve and promote Arkansas' natural and cultural heritage as a source of pride and enjoyment for all. The original legislation named the agency the "Department of Arkansas Natural and Cultural Heritage" and grouped together culturally oriented divisions in one department. The agency name was changed to its current title in 1985. The impetus behind the creation of the division was to group together existing culturally oriented state agencies. Several legislators sponsored Act 1001 of 1975, which created the division and brought together five agencies. The division has grown over time. In 1990, the Delta Cultural Center was opened in Helena and added to the Division of Arkansas Heritage (DAH). In 2003, legislation created the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, a museum for African American History and Culture, and placed it under the direction of DAH.

### **EXAMPLE of Dedicated Staff: Kentucky**

The Kentucky Department of Tourism has a staff person dedicated to cultural heritage tourism, responsible for the supervision and development of cultural and heritage tourism initiatives in the state, representing both the Department of Tourism and the state in matters regarding cultural heritage

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tourism, and serving as Kentucky's advocate on related issues with federal, regional and national agencies, organizations and non-governmental entities.

### EXAMPLE of Dedicated Promotion & Recognition: Oregon

Two examples of how Travel Oregon promotes heritage tourism through distinctive promotions include the "Oregon Heritage Trees" (a strategy to combine the appeal for outdoor experiences with history and learning) and the "Oregon Mural Program" (visually expressing historic and cultural attributes of communities).

Oregon Heritage (the State Historic Preservation Office), a division of Oregon Parks, offers a variety of designations to recognize significant history and heritage efforts in the state:

- Oregon Heritage All-Star Community
- Oregon Heritage Tradition
- Oregon Heritage Statewide Commemoration
- Oregon State Heritage Area

These programs elevate Oregon's brand and destination image, expand its product recognition beyond nature/outdoors, and create synergy among diverse tourism/industry/heritage partners to leverage resources.

### Need to Develop New and Enhanced Heritage Product

Important to the expansion and sustainability of heritage tourism is the adding of visitor-ready sites to the heritage collection, and their inclusion in itineraries to create a critical mass of activities for visitors in key regions of the state. These Revolutionary Era attractions, when visitor ready and open regularly to the public, are also central to telling the other important stories about 18<sup>th</sup> Century New Jersey such as the Industrial heritage (**Shippen Manor**, **Batsto Village**, and **Long Pond Ironworks**) or court trials (**Old Salem**). Other sites associated with notable Revolutionary Era events and persons -- including the **Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum** (General Knox), **Trent House** (several owners, including a Tory doctor and a member of Washington's staff) and **Historic New Bridge Landing** (Baron von Steuben) -- provide additional opportunities to learn about the personalities and issues of the era. Other places where George Washington stayed -- **Rockingham State Historic Site** (where he penned his farewell) and **Wallace House State Historic Site** -- should be included on itineraries focusing on Washington's time in New Jersey. Visitor-ready historic sites interpreting other eras and themes (**Morven**, **East Jersey Old Town Village**, **Historic Walnford**, and **Greenwich Historic District**) can be featured in specific itineraries that help visitors spend more time (and money) in New Jersey. New sites (such as the **1759 Vought House** and the planned **Benjamin Cooper Tavern** renovation) that become contributing assets in the future should be incorporated into the heritage tourism infrastructure as appropriate.



### *List of Additional Recommendations*

The findings from this research demonstrate the importance of good communication, state leadership, and practical assistance that will strengthen local organizations so they can be stronger partners and

## Revolution NJ: Site Contribution Report

deliverers of quality visitor experiences. Ideally, this information will help Crossroads focus assistance to help jumpstart the development, interpretation, and marketing of sites as a foundation for growing heritage tourism in New Jersey.

As previously reported, funding and staffing are at the forefront of needs cited in both the telephone conversations and surveys with site managers. Some sites asked for specific technical assistance, such as help in researching/sourcing their history. Many of the respondents asked about grants and other funding sources to facilitate their proposed participation in Revolution NJ activities but also to keep the doors open, lights on, and hire/keep staff. The fragility of the nonprofit community, and funding for state/municipal owned sites -- impacted by COVID -- needs to be addressed if Crossroads seeks to expand its engagement and depend on sites to advance heritage tourism in the next five years.

It is also important to consider the Revolution NJ efforts as a catalyst for the longer goal of increasing heritage tourism in the state, using the initiative as a way to enhance the state's brand as a heritage tourism destination and also to demonstrate annual growth (in both visitation as well as spending) due to New Jersey's heritage assets. Utilizing the benchmarks cited in early planning documents -- for example, to increase New Jersey's market share, down from 7% in 2019 to 2% in 2020 (and compared to the national average of 14% in 2019)<sup>18</sup> -- will not only help in selling concepts to elected officials but also to funders.

### Greater Integration of Tourism Industry and Heritage Communities

Many historic sites work as silos rather than being integrated into the broader tourism industry. Helping sites understand the value and benefits of working with local, regional and state partners is key to increasing the economic impact from heritage tourism. This education may also underscore the responsibilities of hosting visitors, and lead to more dynamic and engaging (positive) visitor experiences (and ratings!)

Integration of heritage site managers and Friends organizational leaders with local and state tourism industry partners (destination marketing organizations, other attractions, restaurants, Main Streets, and lodging properties) at various conferences and meetings will begin the dialogue and discussion of ways to collaborate. This partnership and recognition of the heritage community as part of the travel industry is a key goal of the state tourism office and needs to be fostered.

### More Frequent Communication

Interestingly, only 19 of the 26 respondents to the e-survey are Crossroads Partners. Four stated they didn't know if they were, as they are state sites and unsure of the relationship between their agency and Crossroads. This finding affords an opportunity for greater education -- with individual sites as well as their managing agencies -- on what Crossroads does, how the organization is funded, and the benefits of membership. In the case of state agencies, clearly articulating how each individual site can utilize the Crossroads website to promote its programs and visitor experiences is important for inclusion and comprehensive coordination.

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<sup>18</sup> "2020 New Jersey Visitor Profile" (March 2021) DK Shifflet, New Jersey Activity Participation, Chart 46/Page 74

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In general, many historic sites responding to the surveys and in telephone interviews recognized that they are not informed -- in part because they have a full list of responsibilities. Identifying ways to get above the noise and focus on future, rather than the current crisis, is paramount to increased engagement.

### Request for State Direction

Several of the respondents mentioned the desire for state direction as to specific ways for engagement. Many asked about grants for programming, if there were signature events planned, and the desire to piggyback on what the state is doing rather than creating ideas on their own. This request for more direction may require Revolution NJ to accelerate its ideation and planning to provide more instruction to local sites. Having a dedicated person, or central coordinator, is key to moving ideas to implementation.

## Next Steps: Proposed Projects & Strategies

Analysis of telephone interviews, the e-survey responses, digital marketing activities, and investigation of other America 250 programs identified several needs and opportunities for growing heritage tourism in New Jersey. Addressing the issues listed in the Findings section is essential to long-term success. There are some other organic, outcome-oriented programs and services that may be appropriate for implementation in the next year.

### Traveling Thematic Exhibits

As many sites will not have the capacity to create their own exhibits, a collection of traveling exhibits may be an option to increase regional visitation. These thematic exhibits would allow sites to enhance their own interpretation, attracting audiences by enhancing the exhibits with special programs and customized local events. The Crossroads interpretive panels and pull-up banners are excellent examples of how shared information increases recognition among sites and recommends cross-marketing. Taking that concept to the next level, similar to The Smithsonian's Traveling Exhibits but themed to Revolution NJ storylines, could be a boost for second-tier sites.

New Jersey has a unique opportunity to promote itself not just as a battlefield, but also as the intersection of many storylines impacting people, land, and property throughout the Revolutionary Era. The important battles serve as signature events shaping the formation of the country and will attract military historians and dedicated heritage travelers. However, what happened beyond the battlefield affords a rich tapestry of concepts that relate to many of today's issues impacting the growth and sustainability of our nation and will resonate with residents as well as visitors. The human side of war makes conflict more personal and relevant. Helping tell these stories at connected locations across the state can lead visitors on a personal journey of transformational learning. Coordination will be key, as well as solid historical research and creative storytelling.



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### Regional Education and Ideation Workshops

Organizing facilitated workshops around the state to bring together historic site managers along with tourism industry partners will help build relationships but also begin the collaborative ideation required to create itineraries, multi-site programs and events. While statewide initiatives will be important for “plug and play” activities, building regional coalitions that can work together and cross-market will be integral to long-term on-site delivery of quality visitor experiences.

### Staffing & Volunteer Recruitment Strategies

Workforce development has become a priority for many businesses, especially post-pandemic. The aging of volunteers makes this priority even more urgent for nonprofits to identify docents to help deliver programs and services in the absence of paid staff. Increasing levels of staff at state parks and historic sites is needed, but until that investment is made local Friends’ organizations provide the human -- and often financial -- capital necessary for operations. Developing a recruitment toolkit and offering specific strategies and training -- such as volunteer identification, securing and managing internships, working with AmeriCorps and other entities that provide volunteers or support staff -- is a need articulated by several organizations. Identifying resources and potential collaborations with educational institutions is also important for story sourcing and research.

The broader organizational capacity and sustainability is also worthy of increased technical assistance. As many sites are currently at risk, identifying entities that can sponsor or provide this assistance may help heritage tourism grow. Some institutions may need to merge or consider other ways to generate revenues for sustainability. This institutional audit should be part of the technical assistance program when considering the sites to restore/enhance as core or contributing assets for Revolution NJ.

### Recognition and Reward

Some sites, especially those that currently offer exceptional experiences and contribute to not only the Revolutionary War story but also heritage tourism in general, may find that recognition and/or reward are welcome incentives for continuing to expand and enhance their offerings. Seeking a way to showcase these sites in a meaningful manner would serve as an example to others that quality work pays off.



## Conclusion

New Jersey deserves to be internationally recognized for its important contributions to our country’s founding. Sharing the stories with visitors is a key strategy for economic growth through heritage tourism. However, in order to increase national/international brand awareness and also attract visitors to experience the state’s 18<sup>th</sup> Century history, sites must be open and offer compelling, contemporary and relevant interpretation. Diverse and inclusive stories, on and beyond the battlefields, are required to fully deliver the robust educational experiences desired by travelers.

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This research revealed the deficits to visitor readiness and need for creating a heritage tourism ecosystem that will allow growth up to and beyond the Semiquincentennial in 2026. Capital improvements are foundational to ensuring important historic sites are preserved and protected. Staffing at core sites affords current and future generations of New Jersey residents and visitors the opportunity to experience - and learn from - the places where history happened. Marketing New Jersey's unique and diverse stories competitively positions the state among the 13 original colonies seeking to showcase their own contributions to our country's founding.

The restoration, interpretation, program/event development, marketing, staffing to afford quality experience delivery, and site maintenance are all essential components of the heritage tourism ecosystem and interdependent to sustainable outcomes. Each of these components require investment of capital and oversight for implementation to achieve the desired results: growth in heritage tourism and enhanced brand awareness of New Jersey as a heritage tourism destination. If the state, especially its signature collection of state parks, cannot fully embrace the responsibilities of hosting visitors, the outlook for growing heritage tourism in New Jersey is dire.

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