

We, the history community in the State of New Jersey, in order to educate all residents about the importance of our state's history; to enrich our communities, families, social lives, and scholarship; and to inspire with a vision of the state's past and future that can be shared by our diverse citizenry and by all levels of government, do hereby endorse this history plan. We call upon the public to support its goals and our elected officials to do all in their power to enact its recommendations.

The History Plan

- ***Unites*** all its stakeholders - the Governor and Legislature, public history agencies, libraries and archives, schools and universities, historic preservationists, museums, historic sites and historical societies-behind shared goals, and a vision that results in a vibrant future for our history and the enhancement of our cultural life
- ***Clarifies*** the issues, sets achievable goals, and proposes sound strategies for reaching those goals
- ***Leads*** by identifying the projects we must undertake and the tools we will need to make New Jersey's history accessible to all
- ***Coordinates*** the activities of the history community including the public history service agencies with the state's Development and Redevelopment Plan by bringing the arts, history, and humanities together to create "Communities of Place"
- ***Preserves*** our historic sites and resources- public and private- for the enjoyment of our citizens and the building of pride in our state
- ***Contributes*** to our state's economy through heritage tourism and historic preservation
- ***Informs*** the public policy process
- ***Suggests*** an agenda for improving public history in New Jersey

Why a State History Plan?

A State History Plan can serve as a unifying document for a diverse constituency. It should be officially recognized as a public statement, endorsed by the history community, which lays the groundwork and provides the guidelines for specific action to direct public policy and to encourage the provision of adequate resources for history institutions.

What New Jersey Can Be

New Jersey is a state of dynamic and diverse communities—places we are proud to call home, and places that will live in the collective memory long after we are gone—because they celebrate their common lives in their physical and built environments and shared cultural experiences.

We can be a state that attracts people to see and experience vibrant and interesting cities as well as small and large suburbs that are distinctive expressions of their pasts surrounded by permanently protected, restored, interpreted and accessible sites, buildings, public facilities and homes. Home towns, not sprawl, should define New Jersey's 566 municipalities in every county and region. New Jerseyans will benefit economically and culturally now and in generations to come.

All this we can do. We can preserve and protect, we can inspire and encourage, and we can instill concern and pride for the State of New Jersey. Strong historical organizations and societies and locally concerned citizen groups, cultural and heritage commissions, and local, county and state agencies, parks, museums, and recreational facilities already exist. We can and must build on all their people and resources not just for the short term but for the possibility of something far greater— a better, more prosperous and enriched life for all.

The State History Plan is visionary, yet achievable

What the History Plan Says

Quite simply, the history plan is both a document and a guide. The document sets forth a series of recommendations for action by our public leaders. Legislators and other policy makers can look here for ideas and guidance for their goals and agendas. Here they can see our thinking about how state, county, local, public, and private history services should be expanded; here they can see what must be done to preserve, promote and enjoy our historic sites; here are recommendations for the development of New Jersey's heritage tourism industry; here are identified the programs necessary to promote research and publication in order to make New Jersey history known; here are recommendations for educating adults and school children about New Jersey history; and here are guidelines to carry us from plan to reality.

The public can look here to see where we are heading, to recognize what roles they must play, and what actions they can and should support. All of us can find an example of how to think about our public history activities now and as we reassess our progress in the years to come. A plan guides us to a future, but a plan does not fulfill itself. A plan starts a process that invites review, assessment, clarification, and rededication. The plan is how we talk to ourselves about what we want for our children and for our children's children.

Where Are We?

In June 1997, the Task Force on New Jersey History submitted *A Heritage Reclaimed: Report of the Task Force on New Jersey History* to Governor Whitman and to the legislature. This four-volume document outlined dozens of recommendations and evaluated public history in terms of heritage tourism, historic sites and artifacts, scholarly research and publication, education, and the structure of history within state government. The report noted New Jersey's remarkable heritage—barely matched by any other state—but also documented much decay and neglect.

Today the history community is pleased to report that the Governor and the legislature have implemented several of the Task Force report's recommendations.

- Many of the state agencies involved in history have been moved into one department.
- Open Space legislation has provided funding for the New Jersey Historic Trust for the next ten years.

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- There is interest in rehabilitating our history infrastructure to provide the raw material for a much improved heritage tourism potential.
- The “Bagger Bill” grant fund for operating support and programming for history organizations is now a reality.
- A new Cultural Trust Fund, based on a public/private partnership, has been established to provide stable funding for the arts, history and humanities, revealing the state’s commitment to assure that New Jersey’s remarkable past will continue to be preserved, studied and shared.

What is to be done?

Expand History Services Statewide

New Jersey has many organizations and agencies concerned with history. In the public sector are the New Jersey State Museum, the New Jersey Historical Commission, the State Archives, the State Library, the New Jersey Historic Trust, the Division of Parks and Forestry (which includes the Historic Preservation Office and the state historic sites) and the County Cultural and Heritage Commissions. In the private sector are the Advocates for New Jersey History, Special Collections and University Archives at Rutgers University, the New Jersey Historical Society, the League of Historical Societies of New Jersey, Preservation New Jersey, the New Jersey Association of Museums, the Newark Public Library, the Newark Museum and a myriad of history museums, societies, sites, and institutions of higher learning. In addition to these organizations devoted to history, there are many whose mission relates to history, such as the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, the Office of Travel and Tourism, New Jersey Network, and school and local libraries. Our goal is to bring greater coordination of and support for history activities and to foster communication and collaboration within the history community.

Recommendations:

- Continue to improve the operation of public and private history agencies by determining the needs of the state's history community and devising ways to meet those needs.
- Develop a state historic site tourism plan to determine the needs of government-owned historic structures in order to integrate them into their communities and to assume a larger role in the public life of the citizens of the state. This plan must address issues such as maintenance, staffing, interpretation, collections management, marketing, visitor services as well as bricks and mortar assessment and accessibility.
- Expand and increase the operating and grants budget of the New Jersey Historical Commission so that the Commission can better support excellence in the history community. Provide greater flexibility in the budgetary regulations governing the grants program of the New Jersey Historical Commission so that grant funds can best be utilized to meet the needs of the public and the history community.
- Seek to utilize the services of professional and/or volunteer staff who have the appropriate training and expertise to improve administration and interpretation at history organizations.
- Encourage counties to establish and support cultural and heritage agencies.

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- Improve and expand the ability of county cultural and heritage agencies to support history activities in their counties through increases in county funding, state re-grant programs, and technical assistance services.
- Enhance the missions of the New Jersey State Museum, the State Archives, Special Collections and University Archives at Rutgers University, and the New Jersey Historical Society, so that they become showplaces for New Jersey history. In these institutions, staffing and conservation activities should be increased and traveling exhibits developed.
- Establish at the State Museum a major, permanent exhibition (accompanied by educational programming) devoted to our state's heritage.
- Create a field office of history museum services at the New Jersey State Museum to provide a full range of on-site technical support and training for history museums throughout the state.
- Encourage training and support for professional staff as well as volunteers in museums, historical societies, and historic sites. Initiate a program to increase and incorporate volunteerism.
- Encourage counties and municipalities to appoint local historians as enabled by state legislation.
- Expand the use of public media such as NJN, Channel 12, a New Jersey history channel, and history list services in educating the citizenry about New Jersey history.
- Support efforts to enhance inclusiveness and diversity in the public record of New Jersey history. With a broad and accurate interpretation of New Jersey history, new audiences can come to share the state's heritage.
- Upgrade the services of the Division of Archives and Records Management to teach and advise public and private organizations that have archival and manuscript collections. This service should include conservation, retrieval, and computer access.
- Develop and nurture public/private partnerships to create a strong infrastructure for history services.
- Coordinate the activities of and increase interagency liaison among history service agencies.

Educate our Citizens

By American standards, our state is ancient, multi-cultural, and diverse. Our contribution to the establishment and development of the United States is well known and documented. Every child and adult living in New Jersey should understand and take pride in its history, in the accomplishments of its heroes and heroines, and in its role in the building and defense of our nation.

Recommendations:

- Mandate the study of New Jersey history for new teacher certification, for currently certified teachers who have not had this training, and within the continuing education requirements for teachers trained outside New Jersey.
- Provide continuing teacher training in New Jersey studies for secondary as well as elementary school teachers.
- Improve the teaching of New Jersey history through the use of computer technology.
- Increase the level of funding to museums, historical agencies, historical societies and historic sites to produce and disseminate educational materials and presentations.
- Increase the level of state funding for teachers to develop and disseminate their own resources, curricula and research materials.
- Marshal public history interests in an effort to encourage more New Jersey materials and more inclusiveness and diversity in New Jersey history teaching.
- Require consideration of textbooks including more New Jersey materials, and integrate more New Jersey materials throughout the curriculum.
- Encourage all New Jersey residents to learn about New Jersey history and to advocate for celebrating its heritage.
- Encourage state, county, and municipal elected officials to learn about New Jersey history and to consider its relevance and importance in their decision-making.
- Reintroduce essays containing the history of New Jersey in the *State of New Jersey Manual of the Legislature of New Jersey* and other official documents and guides.

Promote Heritage Tourism

National and state surveys confirm what many historical societies, museums and historic sites already know—more and more individuals and families choose to visit sites of historical importance when planning their vacations. Economic impact studies demonstrate the great economic benefits of this choice for the general state economy as well as the multiplier effect for hotels, restaurants and other tourism service industries. More important, perhaps, is the knowledge that these “heritage tourists” are seeking cultural value and educational experience. By supporting heritage tourism efforts and promoting partnerships among the state’s museums, historic sites, the Office of Travel and Tourism, and commercial tourism ventures, we can provide engaging and authentic experiences.

Recommendations:

- Develop ways to “put history where people are” such as “Main Street” programs, mini museums and displays in public spaces.
- Increase the level of authenticity presented at historic sites through proper interpretive programming. Support and encourage professional interpretive practices and standards through technical service workshops and mentoring programs, similar to Pennsylvania’s “Raise Our Sites” program.
- Reach out through heritage tourism agencies and local chambers of commerce to attract more diverse audiences by assisting museums, historical societies, and historic sites in developing and implementing marketing strategies.
- Join private industry with historic sites, historical societies, and federal, state, and local government to develop regional tourism attractions. Create partnerships that build capacity, link historic sites and commercial enterprises, and use resources efficiently.
- Encourage ways and means of providing a pool of insurance coverages for historic sites.
- Restore the matching grant program previously developed by the Division of Travel and Tourism to encourage heritage tourism projects.
- Provide technical assistance to historic sites to assist in developing projects and submitting grant applications to appropriate funding sources.

- Create a Historic Site Tourism plan and implementation program through the work of a committee to include representatives from the museum, historical society, and historic site communities along with the Office of Travel and Tourism and the tourism service industries.
- Inaugurate a New Jersey cultural and history internet site to provide the traveling and touring public with information and linkages to all historic sites, resources, public history services, calendars of cultural and historical events and related programs statewide.
- Provide uniform signage and maps to historic sites from major roadways.
- Initiate an historic marker program as a means of creating public awareness. Develop a grant program, administered by the New Jersey Historical Commission and/or the State Historic Preservation Office to enable local communities to place the markers at buildings and other sites related to New Jersey history.

Preserve and Enjoy our Historic Properties

For centuries, in many areas of the world, the preservation of historic sites has been a major component of public policy. In the United States, a “tear-down and build-new” philosophy has been dominant, but fortunately this short-sighted attitude has changed dramatically, particularly during the last quarter-century. However, New Jersey’s historic properties (state-owned, municipal, county and private-non-profit) are still underfunded and in many cases mismanaged and poorly interpreted. In order for citizens of the state as well as heritage tourists to enjoy our historic properties, these unfunded needs must be addressed.

Recommendations:

- Protect and preserve all state-owned historic structures and sites. Funds included in the state budget that are intended to improve the operation and interpretation of state-owned sites should be used specifically for those purposes.
- Improve visitor access and amenities at historic sites by including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
- Fund an historic structures report and master plan of all state-owned historic sites.
- Protect and promote the preservation of county, local and private non-profit historic sites, structures and cemeteries by continuing to increase operating, program, and capital support of the grant programs administered by the Historical Commission, the Historic Trust (through the Garden State Preservation Trust Fund), and the Cultural Trust.

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- Protect and preserve the important battlefields of New Jersey.
- Protect and preserve all significant archeological sites and all other historic structures and sites on public lands and lands acquired through Green Acres, Open Space and other such programs.
- Encourage historic preservation through tax and other incentives for property owners, downtown districts, and businesses.
- Encourage and support the designation of local historic districts.
- Encourage local governments to adopt historic preservation ordinances, create historic preservation commissions, appoint municipal historians and apply for “Certified Local Government” status
- Establish an annual Governor’s award for municipalities that best preserve and enhance their architectural and historic heritage.
- Encourage local citizen advocacy.
- Mount a publicity campaign to promote educational opportunities in and benefits of historic preservation. In making decisions, members of planning, historic preservation, and zoning boards of adjustment should be trained to apply appropriate historic preservation principles.
- Create an emergency intervention program that identifies and rescues threatened historic properties and sells them with proper protection from future threats.
- Expand existing programs to include historic preservation as a criterion for grant and/or loan funding when the project includes, or may cause impact on, historically significant buildings, structures or landscapes.

Expand Research and Publication

Strong and accurate scholarly research is the basis for all history services and programs. Collecting, conserving and disseminating the resources of our libraries, archives, museums and historical societies is crucial to telling New Jersey's important story.

Recommendations:

- Promote research and publication on New Jersey history to recover our past and make it known.
- Foster research on diversity in New Jersey history.
- Encourage research, teaching, writing and archiving of New Jersey history at all our centers of higher education.
- Support genealogical research and facilities.
- Establish centers for the study of New Jersey history at the private and public universities statewide funded by grants administered by the New Jersey Historical Commission as well as grants and endowments from the private sector.
- Increase recognition for New Jersey scholarship by creating an appropriate Governor's award to recognize individual achievements in public history.
- Expand the scope of the existing grant program, and establish a technical assistance program administered by the State Library to assist county, local, college, university and private historical libraries, museums, historical societies, and archives in the collection, conservation, preservation and accessing of New Jersey materials.
- Make accessible by internet the art, artifact, archaeological, manuscript and other collections of New Jersey historic materials through agencies such as Special Collections and University Archives at Rutgers University, the State Library, the State Archives or the Newark Public Library.
- Create and fund a New Jersey history electronic data center within the State Library or State Archives to coordinate statewide planning and cooperation in such fields as the acquisition, organization, cataloguing and conservation of collections; the production of data bases, guides, archives, indices, special collections and other reference works; and the application of computer technology to historical library collection services both public and private.

Implementation — From Plan to Reality

Over the next five years, the recommendations contained in this plan will be translated into actions with specific tasks and measurable results. Public and private participation in this process is critical. We must encourage the history community and history-related groups to mobilize, collaborate and organize to advocate for implementation of these recommendations.

The plan and the progress towards its goals will be reviewed annually, and a new planning process will begin during the fourth year, building upon successes and learning from experiences in order to sustain the process of creating a better New Jersey.