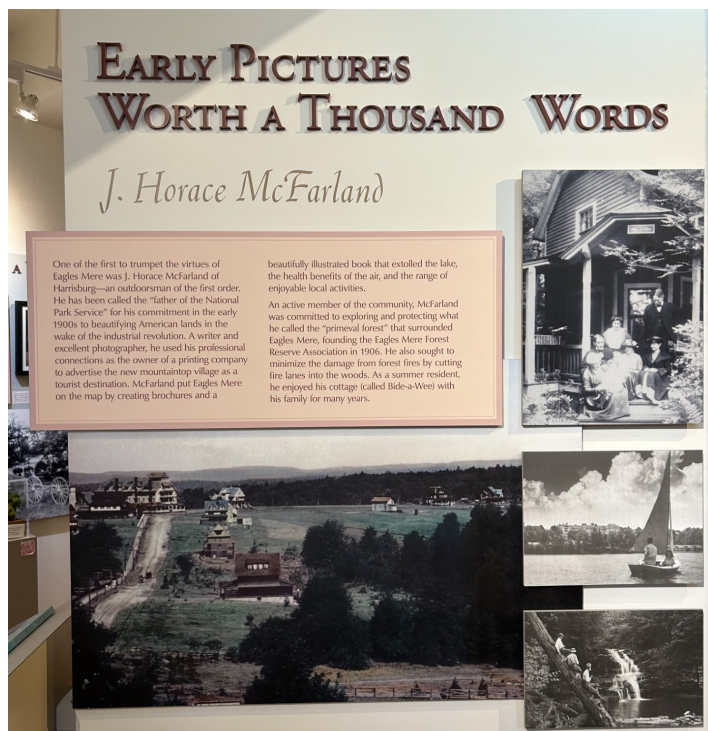


HERITAGE INTERPRETATION PLANS

INTRODUCTION

Heritage Interpretation Plans provide a structured approach to conveying information and stories about heritage sites to those visiting. While Heritage Interpretation Plans can be used at all levels, from single historic sites to regional planning efforts, this toolkit focuses on the method used in Chester County, Pennsylvania. A Heritage Interpretation Network was developed at the county level and is comprised of four primary categories: Gateways, Heritage Centers, Interpretive Sites and Viewing Corridors. Heritage Interpretation Plans place heritage sites into one of these categories based on a site's size, accessibility, location, amenities and ability to connect sites by theme and story.



Interpretive wall display at the Eagles Mere Museum in Eagles Mere, PA.

Addressing historic resources is already a requirement of municipalities through their comprehensive plan, and an interpretation plan can build off the work already done by providing more detailed goals and implementable recommendations for specific historic resources.

Interpretive plans for regions identify ways to connect and organize sites thematically so the area presents a cohesive story that helps reinforce the importance of a region's history with visitors and residents alike.

APPLICABILITY

Heritage Interpretation Plans can be undertaken by a single municipality but, typically, themes and storylines do not follow set municipal boundaries. These plans serve better as multi-municipal projects since they can connect sites across a region and more cohesively tell an area's unique and broad story. They can be used to:

- Develop an identity for a region and further enhance a sense of place
- Guide a municipality's future initiatives
- Provides access to residents and visitors on the history of their area
- Tell a fuller history
- Deepen connections to the area
- Increase interest and participation in municipal activities relating to historic resources



IMPLEMENTATION

While Heritage Interpretation Plans can differ in structure, the content and goals are generally the same.

1. Initial research, data collection, and identification of historic resources within a region
2. Development of interpretive themes based on the area's history
3. Determine capacity of each resource for visitation, presenting interpretive materials, and programming
 - a. Sites can function as Gateways, Heritage Centers, and Interpretive Sites
4. Development of storylines for sites that highlight the identified interpretive themes
5. Create a conceptual design for heritage sites that include interpretive media such as outdoor waysides or indoor exhibits
6. Identify potential methods for connecting sites by foot, cycling, or driving
7. Develop implementable recommendations that can be phased if necessary

SUCCESSFUL CASE STUDIES

Heritage interpretive planning has been conducted at the county, municipal, and individual site level in various forms over the years. The first formal Heritage Interpretation and Connectivity Plan was prepared in 2022 for the Brandywine Battlefield and included seven

municipalities across Chester and Delaware Counties.

- Brandywine Battlefield Heritage Interpretation and Connectivity Plan, 2022

Other examples outside of Chester County take different formats to cover different themes, density of study areas, and levels of interpretation. Though stylistically different, the goals are similar.

- River Crossings Heritage Interpretation Plan, Edmonton, Canada, 2017
- Dix Park Cultural Interpretation Plan, Raleigh, North Carolina, 2024
- Boston Freedom Trail is a good example of an implemented concept.



Interpretive wayside at Birmingham Hill Preserve, Chester County, PA.



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