



St. Paul's Church, near Still Pond

INTRODUCTION

This study for the Upper Eastern Shore has been prepared for the Heritage Partnerships for Maryland's Upper Eastern Shore to examine the feasibility of heritage area recognition, planning, and possible certification under the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program. The purpose of this study is to gauge the region's potential for heritage area development. This determination is made after identifying the significant stories the region has to tell, examining the type and extent of available resources, and analyzing the potential for organizations within the region to work cooperatively. Also identified in this study are the major issues, challenges, and implementation opportunities that were discovered in this early stage. The next steps of heritage planning, which are outside the purview of this document, will be: (1) application for state recognition, (2) management planning, (3) application for state certification, and (4) implementation of tourism and interpretive programs and investment.

This study is divided into five parts. Chapter One provides an introduction to the Maryland Heritage Preservation and Tourism Areas Program and heritage area development. It introduces the four counties of the Upper Eastern Shore and discusses demographics, economic development, and planning for each county. This provides the background information for an analysis of each county's capacity for

heritage development. The chapter closes with a presentation of the potential vision for the heritage area derived from public workshops.

Chapter Two summarizes the significance of the cultural, historic, and natural resources of the Upper Eastern Shore region and includes a historical overview of the region, an introduction to its historic and natural resources of statewide significance, and an examination of the state of stewardship in the region. Finally, this section identifies the key issues to be addressed by the region concerning its historic and natural resources.

Chapter Three outlines the primary, marketable themes upon which interpretive programs can be based. The story of the Upper Shore region includes many themes which will be used as the basis for interpretation. These themes and their geographic distribution throughout the region are discussed. Strategies for linkages, potential interpretation partnerships, and sources of public education and involvement are identified. Theme-based schemes are proposed in terms of maximizing both the potential tourist experience and public and private investment.

Chapter Four analyzes ways to manage heritage interpretation and development strategies. This section presents possible management structures and identifies potential partner agencies and organizations. Their roles are discussed and the key issues of heritage area management are examined.

Chapter Five makes recommendations, discusses the Maryland Heritage Area Authority (MHAA) requirements, introduces economic development and tourism considerations, summarizes the findings of the report, and anticipates the next steps in heritage planning for the region.

METHODOLOGY

In October 1997, the National Park Service sponsored a heritage workshop to explore heritage development in the region. Following this workshop, the Heritage Partnerships for Maryland's Upper Eastern Shore formed to study heritage development options for the region. It formed an ad hoc task force, the Heritage Area Planning Team (HAP Team), consisting of representatives from county offices and local organizations. The HAP Team, with financial and technical support from the Maryland Historical Trust, hired JMA/Watson, a consulting firm based in Bladensburg, Maryland, to help determine the feasibility of the region becoming a successful heritage area. Chambers of commerce, historical societies, county commissioners, museums, educational institutions, and environmental organizations are among the interests represented in the HAP Team. The consultant met regularly with the team to discuss and direct the course of the project. During these meetings the team generated the themes and analysis represented in this study.

The consultant gathered the necessary background information on the cultural, historic, and natural resources. This was collected from the state and county departments of planning, natural resources, and tourism; local historical societies and museums; and other locations. To this end, the consultant worked with county staff and other interested individuals, whose assistance proved extremely valuable during the course of the study. By collecting relevant project information, coordinating meetings and other work sessions, and providing guidance about whom the consulting team should interview, everyone who assisted the consultant enabled the data review and analysis portions of the study to move forward efficiently.

Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot Counties possess an abundance of literature documenting the history and cultural traditions of the region. In preparing this study, the consultant undertook an ongoing process of gathering and gleaning information from the available literature. Types of literature reviewed as part of the study included local histories, historic resource surveys, soil surveys, National Park Service documents, local planning documents, open space plans, recreation plans, tourism studies and information, regional calendars of events, natural and historic resource maps, historical maps, oral histories, folklore books, and archeological reports. These sources were supplemented with interviews with local interested individuals, groups, and institutions. The HAP team added input received from a series of public workshops held before the consultant was retained. The consultant pursued field reconnaissance throughout the region and took part in guided tours of each county to gain an understanding of the character of the regions.

THE PROJECT ASSIGNMENT

In preparing this study, the consultant was charged with defining one or more proposed areas for potential recognition by the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, and furthermore required to answer two questions for each area. Affirmative answers to both of these questions are needed to proceed toward successful recognition, certification, and heritage development. First, does the Upper Eastern Shore possess the cultural, historic, recreational, and natural resources needed to develop successful tourism strategies? Second, does the region possess the necessary leadership to create, coordinate, and manage a successful heritage tourism area? This report finds that the answer to both is yes.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that heritage area development continue with any potential heritage area including all four counties. After considerable study of the natural and cultural resources and landscapes, potential interpretive themes, and existing linkages of the Upper Eastern Shore, and furthermore the consideration of potential management arrangements, the consultant has identified the entire four-county

study area as a single potential heritage area. The region's resources and themes are intertwined to such a degree, and the landscapes are of such character and integrity, that it is difficult to divide them on any objective basis. While each county might potentially tell most if not all of the interpretive stories identified later in this report, collectively they stand to take greater advantage of their opportunities, not only in terms of interpretation but also in terms of landscape and habitat protection, and recreation development. Water trails, in particular, seem ideally suited for promotion, and would best be designed and developed on a multi-county basis.

From the standpoint of management, the argument for collaboration is if anything even greater. These small counties—with correspondingly limited staffs—would fare better in fundraising, public capital investment, and promotion by cooperating on a regional basis, rather than undertaking duplicative efforts that, on an individual basis, each county might find difficult to support.

Finally, while the notion of four counties as a single area seems large on its face, this is in fact a rather small area within the state of Maryland, traversed in under two hours by car in any direction. It is large enough for visitors (and residents) to experience a significant portion of the Chesapeake Bay region, yet convenient enough to establish single bases—among a number of outstanding choices—for multiple days of outings. In comparison to most heritage regions in Pennsylvania—which has something of a built-in bias for multi-county regions—this region is smaller than all but one or two (both single counties) to be found in that state.

The consultants furthermore find the proposed Upper Eastern Shore Heritage Area to be feasible based on the MHAA Selection Criteria for the application for recognition and when compared to the “Ten Core Components of a Successful Heritage Area” identified by MHAA (see Appendix B). The Heritage Partnerships for Maryland's Upper Eastern Shore is in a position to create the stewardship and visioning teams to produce and implement a management action plan for effective and successful heritage tourism development.