Economic Benefits of Civil War Battlefields

Summary of Existing Data and Analysis

April 2012

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Prepared for Civil War Trust

by

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I. Background and Overview

In 2006, the Civil War Trust released its Blue, Gray, and Green report, which presented findings from primary research it commissioned into economic impacts of Civil War tourism at 20 battlefield sites.

Building on that study, the Trust contracted with The Harbinger Consulting Group to review more recent data and analysis of economic benefits associated with Civil War battlefields, particularly related to tourism. The results of this review are reported in this research summary, and highlighted in the 2013 Blue, Gray & Green brochure.

The research resulted in five main, substantive findings:

1) Visitors to Civil War battlefield parks and historic sites provide significant economic benefits to nearby communities.

2) Educational and commemorative events and reenactments—such as those planned to commemorate the Civil War sesquicentennial—attract additional visitors and can add significantly to a site’s economic impact.

3) The sesquicentennial has already boosted attendance at many Civil War sites, a trend that is expected to continue for the duration of its four-year span (2011-2015).

4) Civil War travelers are “high value” visitors.

5) Studies of cultural and heritage tourism and the economic benefits of historic preservation suggest economic values associated with Civil War travel and battlefield preservation as subsets of the broader categories.

Six additional points provide a context for understanding these findings, and the availability of relevant data and analysis:

1) Existing studies that estimate economic impacts related to Civil War battlefields and Civil War tourism are scarce.

2) Visitation numbers reported in different sources often varied widely for the same site.

3) Analyses of economic impacts use different methodology.

4) Visitor projections for sesquicentennial events are rare, and estimates of economic impact of sesquicentennial events and increased visitation are rarer still.
5) The economic impacts of cultural and heritage tourism and investments in historic preservation and heritage areas have been more thoroughly studied than Civil War tourism specifically.

6) Economic benefits of Civil War sites, beyond those generated by visitor spending, are typically not quantified in existing studies and data sources.

II. Summary of Research Performed

Initial research focused on nine states where most Civil War tourism is concentrated: Georgia, Maryland, Missouri, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Research fell into three main categories:

1) Identifying studies, reports, and data that focused on visitation, visitor spending, and economic impacts associated with Civil War tourism;

2) Identifying studies, reports, and data that focused on visitation, visitor spending, and economic impacts associated with heritage tourism more broadly. Civil War travelers are a subset of this broader category, which has received more attention than the specific subset of Civil War travelers; and

3) Identifying additional analyses or indicators of economic benefits associated with Civil War battlefields and related values, such as open space.

Following the initial collection of publications and data, we narrowed the focus to five states in which we sought information including visitation projections for planned sesquicentennial events, as well as visitor data for major Civil War sites. These states were Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.
III. Methods

Document and information collection was done through a combination of Internet research and personal correspondence:

1) The initial Internet search for current research included search terms such as “Civil War tourism,” “Civil War economic impacts,” “Civil War traveler,” “sesquicentennial tourism,” “Civil War parks visitation,” “Civil War tourism research,” “heritage tourism studies,” and “heritage tourism impacts,” along with other variations on these themes. Searches were conducted for each target state and major Civil War battle site.

2) Universities doing related research were identified and contacted to seek out unpublished information on the subject of Civil War tourism impacts.

3) A number of non-profit organizations active in Civil War tourism and historic preservation and travel were consulted.

4) Organizations developed to support and market commemorations of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War in the five target states were asked for information regarding planned events and visitation projections for them.

5) State tourism departments in the five target states were consulted for available data and analysis. Convention and Visitors Bureaus and Chambers of Commerce in battlefield communities were polled for visitation numbers and studies.

6) The National Park Service (NPS) website was used to identify appropriate Civil War related sites and gather visitation numbers. Economic impact estimates for NPS sites were taken from those generated using the Park Service Money Generation Model (MGM2). Similarly, each target state’s Parks Department or Department of Natural Resources website was consulted, and additional contact was made with the appropriate division for further information.

These steps were undertaken in consultation with, and with assistance from, Civil War Trust staff.
IV. Summary of Findings

1) Visitors to Civil War battlefield parks and historic sites provide significant economic benefits to nearby communities.

While available information does not support drawing general conclusions that apply to all Civil War battlefield parks and historic sites, visitation associated with specific Civil War sites provides significant economic benefits to nearby communities. Many battlefields are located in rural areas where their economic impacts may be more keenly felt than in larger, urban areas with more economic diversity and activity.

Examples of these impacts:

a) In five states—Missouri, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia—15 National Park Service-affiliated Civil War battlefields and historic sites attracted 15.8 million visitors in 2010. These visitors spent nearly $442 million in communities close to those parks. That spending supported:
   • $151 million in income for local workers and business owners;
   • 5,150 local jobs; and
   • $248 million in value added to the local economy (including labor income, profits and rents, and indirect business taxes).¹

b) In the four-state Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area, ten Civil War national parks attracted seven million visitors in 2007. Visitation to these parks supported 5,100 jobs and $92 million in wage and salary income in the area.²

c) National parks are not the only Civil War attractions. In the five states listed above, major state and local Civil War battlefields, historic sites, and museums drew over 20 million visitors in 2009.³

d) At 20 Civil War battlefields surveyed between 2003 and 2005, out-of-town visitors added $11.7 million per year to local government tax revenues, and $21 million to

¹ Economic impact estimates from Stynes 2011 (see List of Relevant Publications). List of included parks and data summary in Appendix worksheet entitled MGM2 Five State NPS.

² Journey Through Hallowed Ground 2009 (see List of Relevant Publications).

³ List of included sites and visitation figures in Appendix worksheet entitled 5 States Visitation.
state tax revenues. Average contributions per visitor were $2.92 in local taxes and $5.22 in state taxes.

According to the study’s authors, tax revenues from these visitors help pay for state and local services, including services that permanent residents use but visitors do not. In other words, visitors can help communities make ends meet.⁴

⁴ Davidson-Peterson Associates 2006 (see List of Relevant Publications).
2) Educational and commemorative events and reenactments—such as those planned to commemorate the Civil War sesquicentennial—attract additional visitors and can add significantly to a site’s impact.

a) Despite blazing heat, the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the First Battle of Manassas (July 21–24, 2011) brought a flood of visitors to the City of Manassas and neighboring Prince William County. Compared to July 2010, city restaurant revenues were up $811,500, resulting in a 14 percent increase in meal taxes collected by the city. The benefits were concentrated in the historic Old Town, where shops collected 55 percent more sales tax revenue than in July 2010.5

b) In 2011, Fort Sumter National Monument in Charleston, South Carolina — which averages roughly 200,000 visitors a year — drew a record-high 328,000 total visitors, with nine days of special events in April alone boosting visitation by 26 percent over the previous April. Visitation to the site of Fort Moultrie, where re-enactors camped and performed daily musket and heavy artillery drills, more than doubled during the same month. The trend has continued through 2012: In the first three months of the new year, visitation at Fort Sumter has already climbed an additional 11 percent.6

c) In Richmond, Virginia, 2011 attendance at the Museum of the Confederacy exceeded 2010 levels by 25 percent. A new branch museum opening in spring 2012 in Appomattox will give more than 200,000 annual visitors to Appomattox Court House National Historical Park ready access to pieces from the world’s largest collection of Confederate States of America artifacts—all in plenty of time to pique interest in the 150th anniversary of the April 1865 battle that led to General Robert E. Lee’s surrender to General Ulysses S. Grant and ended the war in Virginia. At Appomattox Court House NHP, 2011 visitation was up 20 percent over 2010 levels.7

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5 City of Manassas 2011 (see List of Relevant Publications).


d) Bentonville Battlefield, in Four Oaks, North Carolina, typically attracts some 30,000 visitors annually. In 2009, visitation was just over 34,000. But by September 2010, the battlefield had already received nearly 77,000 visits that year. The reason for this dramatic increase was the reenactment that marked the 145th anniversary of the Battle of Bentonville. This event alone drew 50,000 visitors over the course of a weekend, with an estimated $5–6 million local economic impact.8

e) During the week of April 12, 2004, in Charleston, South Carolina, a burial ceremony was held for the crew members of the H.L. Hunley submarine, which was lost during the Civil War. The event nearly doubled visitation at the Charleston Museum that week.

Using that event as a guide, the Office of Tourism Analysis at the College of Charleston estimates that three major Civil War sesquicentennial events and 20 smaller events planned in South Carolina will attract a total of 7,000 out-of-town visitors with a total impact of $7.6 million. Anticipated economic benefits include:

- $2.8 million in income for local workers;
- 118 jobs created; and
- $576,000 in sales and excise tax revenues.9

f) During the four years of the sesquicentennial, the Pennsylvania Civil War Road Show—housed in a 53-foot tractor trailer—will travel the Commonwealth. Many of its scheduled stops will be in conjunction with other Civil War and heritage events, or at Civil War sites. The Road Show is expected to reach an estimated 720,000 visitors who would not have otherwise attended the host event or traveled to the host site. These visitors are expected to spend $29 million in host communities, with a total, four-year, economic impact of $75 million, and for each of the four years:

- 233 jobs; and
- $5.3 million in income for local workers.

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8 Benton Battlefield State Historic Site visitation figures obtained from the site manager. Reenactment attendance figures and economic impact estimates obtained from the Smithfield/Johnston County Visitors Bureau. Impact was estimated using the Destination Marketing Association International standards for calculating economic impact of events in the local area. This formula estimates day trip visitor expenditures at $59 and overnight visitor expenditures at $159, and uses a multiplier of 1.7 to estimate total economic impact.

9 Office of Tourism Analysis 2009. (See List of Relevant Publications.)
Since many Road Show visitors are expected to travel from out of the area, the total spending estimate includes $7.8 million for lodging and accommodations, yielding approximately $470,000 in hotel tax revenues for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Also, the presence of the Road Show is expected to attract attention to the host events and sites, as well as provide a range of other benefits that are equally difficult to quantify, including:

- Educational benefits;
- Tourism promotion;
- Enhancing the Commonwealth’s national and international reputation;
- Contributions to the public record of previously unknown Civil War artifacts, documents, and stories;
- Increased membership in historical societies and museums; and
- Encouragement of collaborations among historical societies, museums, libraries, and other organizations.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^{10}\) Econsult Corporation 2010. (See List of Relevant Publications.)
3) The sesquicentennial is expected to boost attendance at many Civil War sites during its four-year span (2011-2015).

An analysis of visitation at 15 National Park Service Civil War sites in the years before, during, and after the Civil War Centennial (1961-1965) suggests that the centennial may have prompted increased visitation at Civil War sites. Visitations at two of the 15 sites examined (Appomattox Courthouse National Historical Park and Arlington House/The Robert E. Lee Memorial) rose during the centennial, and returned to pre-centennial levels in the following years. Overall, however, this visitation analysis suggests a broader pattern of increasing visitation at Civil War sites that began during the centennial and was sustained after the centennial’s conclusion.11

By spring 2012, 30 states had formal commissions or initiatives in place to coordinate and market the commemoration of the Civil War’s 150th anniversary. The Virginia Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War Commission identified the four-year span as being rich with educational, economic, and tourism opportunities. Tourism promotion professionals in some Civil War-rich areas anticipate significant visitation increases.

Tom Riford, President of the Hagerstown-Washington County (Maryland) Convention and Visitors Bureau noted visitation at Civil War sites in the area had already begun to increase in 2010. “We are already seeing an upward trend in visitation at our historical parks (Antietam National Battlefield, South Mountain State Battlefield, Fort Frederick, and others). Antietam is reporting a nine-percent increase THIS YEAR, and last year was up over the year before.”12 The battle’s 150th anniversary will not occur until September 2012.

Each year, the town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, attracts three million visitors, about half of whom go to Gettysburg National Military Park. Local tourism authorities expect visitation to grow to as many as 4 million in 2013, the 150th anniversary year of the Battle of Gettysburg and President Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. The additional economic impact could top $100 million.13

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11 See Appendix worksheet entitled Centennial NPS Visitation. Proving a causal relationship between the centennial and increased visitation would require further analysis.

12 Personal communication, November 2010.

4) Civil War travelers are “high value” visitors.

The Civil War travel market is a big one. According to a 2010 survey, 31 percent of U.S. adults reported significant interest in visiting a Civil War site or trail while traveling on a leisure trip. The potential market is more than 72.2 million American adults.¹⁴

The Civil War Trust’s *Blue, Gray, and Green* report concluded that Civil War travelers are “terrific guests.” They are energetic, involved, and eager to stay in the area longer than other travelers. They are the kind of “high value” visitor that many travel destinations seek.

a) A profile of Civil War travelers in Virginia revealed that these travelers stayed in Virginia an average of 1.5 nights longer than the typical tourist. Civil War tourists also spent more money per day and per trip than the average tourist.

- Daily spending in Virginia for all travelers surveyed averaged $52. At an average of $80 per person, per day, Civil War travelers spent 54 percent more.
- Total spending per trip was also higher for Civil War travelers, who spent more than double what the average tourist spent during his or her Virginia trip ($374 per Civil War traveler compared to $158 per “average” tourist).¹⁵

b) As a group, Civil War tourists are better-educated and more affluent than both the general population and other heritage travelers. On average, they:

- Earn $66,000 per year (household income);
- Are well educated, with a high proportion (51 percent) of college graduates.¹⁶

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¹⁵ Research Division, Virginia Tourism Corporation 2010 (see List of Relevant Publications).

¹⁶ Davidson-Peterson Associates 2006 (see List of Relevant Publications).
5) Studies of cultural and heritage tourism and the economic benefits of historic preservation suggest economic values associated with Civil War travel and battlefield preservation as subsets of the broader categories.

Heritage (or cultural) tourism is a broad category that encompasses Civil War travel, and that has been the subject of more economic analysis than the narrower topic. These analyses provide a context for understanding the importance of the subsets of Civil War travel and Civil War historic preservation.

a) A 2009 report based on an extensive study of the travel and spending patterns of cultural and heritage travelers in the United States found that the 78 percent of domestic leisure travelers who participated in cultural or heritage activities account for 90 percent of the economic impact of domestic tourism. In other words, heritage travelers spend more than travelers who are not so inclined.

Heritage travelers tend to travel more frequently than non-heritage travelers, reporting an average of 5 leisure trips in the past 12 months, compared to 4 trips for non-heritage travelers.

Spending an average of $994 per trip, more than 118 million heritage travelers contribute more than $192 billion annually to the U.S. economy.17

b) A 2010 profile of overseas cultural and heritage visitors to the United States reports that 68 percent visited historical places, 41 percent visited cultural heritage sites, and 34 percent visited national parks.18

c) State-level studies echo some of the themes uncovered in this nationwide research:

- In Pennsylvania, a study of heritage tourism found that heritage travelers made up 12 percent of leisure travelers in 1997, but accounted for a disproportionately large 25 percent of all tourist spending.19 A 2011 study reports that heritage tourism operating expenditures and visitor spending support significant economic impacts:

17 Mandela Research LLC 2009 (see List of Relevant Documents).

18 U.S. Department of Commerce 2012 (see List of Relevant Documents)

19 D.K. Shifflet & Associates Ltd. 1999 (see List of Relevant Documents).
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Visitor Spending</td>
<td>$1.0 billion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Expenditures</td>
<td>$2.9 billion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Employment</td>
<td>37,000 Jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total State Tax Revenues</td>
<td>$90 million</td>
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- In Missouri, a 2005 study found that, while culturally motivated visitors do not spend significantly more time or money per trip in the state, they do visit more frequently than other travelers. On average, Missouri heritage tourists take two more trips per year than the typical visitor, thus spending more money on their travels (an extra $800 per year for residents and $1,450 for non-residents).\(^{21}\)

- In Arkansas, heritage travel accounted for 16 percent of all state tourism in 2004, with heritage tourists spending one-third more per person than other Arkansas travelers. That year, Arkansas heritage travelers spent a total of $891 million, supporting 21,500 jobs and $319 million in personal income in the state, and putting $74 million in tax revenues into state and local coffers.\(^{22}\)

Other studies have focused on the economic benefits of heritage areas and historic preservation, often attempting to quantify return on investment of public funds into historic preservation as an economic development strategy.

a) Maryland’s state Heritage Area Program is designed to promote economic activity by protecting historic areas and fostering heritage tourism. A 2003 study found that the investment of $3.6 million in grants and $8.9 million in total development costs for Maryland’s seven oldest heritage areas has returned $4.61 on the dollar. The state gained nearly 3,400 jobs and almost $17 million in state and local tax receipts annually.\(^{23}\)


\(^{21}\) TNS Travel & Transport 2005 (see List of Relevant Documents).

\(^{22}\) Arkansas Historic Preservation Program and Center for Urban Policy Research 2004 (see List of Relevant Documents).

\(^{23}\) Heritage Area Preservation and Tourism Program 2003 (see List of Relevant Documents).
b) A 2004 study of the economic impacts of visitor spending in seven national heritage areas found that 25,000 visitors to these areas spent $2.5 million locally. This spending supported:

- 51 jobs;
- $780,000 in wages and salaries; and
- $1.2 million in value added (including labor income, profits and rents, and indirect business taxes).\(^{24}\)

c) A 2008 study analyzed the economic impact of visitation to Pennsylvania’s Heritage Tourism Areas. It found that visitors to these areas spent more than $300 million a year, the majority of which (85%) came from overnight visitors.\(^{25}\)

d) Another Pennsylvania study reports that proximity to a designated historic district boosts the value of homes. The 2011 study found that housing prices in Philadelphia increase an average of 1.6 percent for each mile closer to a national historic district, and 0.5 percent for each mile closer to a local historic district.\(^{26}\)

e) In West Virginia, historic preservation activities contributed an estimated $1 million in tax and other revenues for the state government in 1996. During that same year, heritage tourism created 520 jobs and supported $47 million in total business volume.\(^{27}\)

f) In Arkansas, historic preservation activities contribute $97 million to the state’s economy each year, and:

- Support more than 2,300 jobs in the state;
- Add $364 million in personal income; and
- Generate $78 million in state and local tax revenues.\(^{28}\)

\(^{24}\) Stynes, D. J. and Y.Y. Sun 2004 (see List of Relevant Documents).

\(^{25}\) Heritage Pennsylvania 2008 (see List of Relevant Documents).

\(^{26}\) Econsult Corporation 2011.

\(^{27}\) West Virginia University Bureau of Business and Economic Research 1996 (see List of Relevant Documents).

V. Explanatory Notes for the Findings

Following is some background that provides a context for the findings, and for understanding the limitations of available data and analyses.

1) Existing studies that estimate economic impacts related to Civil War battlefields and Civil War tourism are scarce.

   With a few notable exceptions, we found few studies that attempted to estimate economic impacts related to the operation of, and tourism at, Civil War sites. (See the “List of Relevant Documents” section below for a brief description of these studies.)

   As a group, sites administered by the National Park Service have the most thorough and standardized system for estimating visitation, visitors’ expenditures, and economic impacts in nearby communities. At a smaller scale, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation collects visitation data and produces annual economic impact estimates for each of Virginia’s state parks, including three Civil War-related parks: High Bridge Trail, Leesylvania, and Sailor’s Creek state parks.

   While most Civil War sites we contacted track visitation, in general, economic impacts for Civil War sites outside the National Park Service are rarely estimated.

   Reliable estimates of economic impact depend upon a variety of factors including accurate visitor counts and proportions of local, non-local, day, and overnight visitation; information about visitor spending; and insight into how money circulates in the area economy.

   Many battlefields and Civil War sites are located in rural areas, run by small organizations on tight budgets, and lack the money, expertise, or staff capacity to gather reliable data and perform impact analyses. In our research we found that even the seemingly simplest of these data to collect—visitation numbers—often varied widely where there were estimates provided by different sources.

2) Visitation numbers for the same site, provided by different sources, often varied widely.

   For some parks, we were able to find visitation numbers from different data sources. In many cases, these estimates varied significantly.

   This frequently occurs because researchers use different approaches to estimating visitation when complete physical counts are not available. Many parks have multiple
entrances or are traversed by highways and roadways, and some keep attendance records only at specific visitor centers or museums and use these figures as the basis for generating overall attendance estimates.

Other sources of variation include differences in methods used to reduce actual visitation counts to adjust for sources of error such as double-counting the same visitors who exit and re-enter a park, or visit different parts of a park during the same visit; and assumptions about visitor party size where counts are primarily taken by counting the number of vehicles that enter.

3) Analyses of economic impacts use different methodology.

Just as different methods are used to estimate visitation, there are various approaches to calculating economic impacts of visitor spending. The NPS MGM2 model is a widely accepted model for estimating economic impact. Yet, even with the amount of effort that has been put into validating the MGM2 model and fine-tuning inputs, the accuracy of its estimates can vary greatly depending upon whether reliable, park-specific visitor and spending data have been collected.

Most economic impact models are built upon some type of “input-output” framework, in which visitor expenditures in different sectors of a local economy (e.g., for meals and lodging, fuel, guide services, or gifts) support further local economic activity. The idea is that local businesses spend the visitor dollars they take in to pay employees, purchase goods, and pay for rent, fuel, taxes, and other expenses. Some proportion of these expenditures is made locally, where the money can then be spent “again” by the businesses and individuals who receive it, and so on down the line.

Methods of estimating economic impact can vary greatly in how they calculate the “multipliers” that reflect how money is spent and re-spent in a local economy. The quality of the impact estimates further relies on accurate visitor counts (including breakdowns of local and non-local visitors, and day-trip and overnight stays); and how precisely visitor spending in the local area is understood.

Given variations among models and the quality of the data on which analyses are based—as well as different definitions of key features such as the “local area” in which the impacts are analyzed, or whether “jobs” are expressed as full-time equivalents or as a total of full-time and part-time positions—aggregating or comparing impact estimates from different sources can be tricky.

4) Visitor projections for sesquicentennial events are rare, and estimates of economic impact of sesquicentennial events and increased visitation are rarer still.
Few organizations have projected visitation or attendance for upcoming events commemorating the Civil War sesquicentennial. Again, most small communities and organizations lack the staffing or expertise to formulate these numbers, except informally.

Of the reports, studies, and articles that focus on the potential impact of upcoming Civil War sesquicentennial commemorations and events, few make specific economic impact projections.

5) The economic impacts of cultural heritage tourism and investments in historic preservation and heritage areas have been more thoroughly studied than Civil War tourism, and provide a broader context in which to understand the likely importance of Civil War travelers’ impacts.

6) Economic benefits of Civil War sites, beyond those generated by visitor spending, are typically not quantified in existing studies and data sources, but may be treated descriptively by using examples from particular sites or by looking at economic benefits related to broader functions of battlefields (such as open space preservation).

VI. List of Relevant Documents
Following is a list of significant published sources of relevant data and economic impact analysis. Additional information was gathered via telephone and e-mail correspondence.

1) Civil War Tourism Visitation and Impacts


Journey Through Hallowed Ground. JTHG National Heritage Area Delivers Economic Good News to Local Communities (press release). 2009. (http://www.hallowedground.org/content/view/427/57/)


2) Heritage Tourism and Impacts


