James L. Kochan

"Stone Soup" Fund Raising: A Recipe for Success

Washington Association trustee Malcolm Dick and wife Mary examine 18th-century medical artifacts displayed in the War Comes to Morristown *exhibition during its opening reception on June 16,1995. Photo by Arthur M. McCrea.*

A typical story: your National Park has an important interpretive or resource protection project which, although a top priority locally, has been pushed back to the year 2005 in overall National Park Service planning—too many projects and too little money. The situation looks bleak unless other alternatives are developed on a local level. One recipe for success is the same as found in the tale of "stone soup."

At the close of one of many wars fought in 18th-century Europe, a discharged soldier is making his way homeward. He is ragged, penniless, and starving. The shrewd veteran comes up with a plan. He asks a villager for the loan of a kettle, in which he will make stone soup. Intrigued and promised a share of the soup in return, the villager produces the pot and the soldier sets stone and water to boiling. A small crowd of curious villagers gather to watch. The soldier slyly observes that the soup would be even better if he had some potatoes—quickly provided by another villager in return for a portion. "If I only had some onions, it will taste even better!" The story goes on and on in this fashion, with literally every villager contributing something to the communal pot. Enjoyed by everyone, the repast began from nothing more than a marketable idea.

Such was the situation at Morristown National Historical Park in 1993. An exhibit in the first floor gallery of the museum had been started in the early 1970s, but never completed once Bicentennial funding dried up. Displayed artifacts and fixtures were deteriorating. Carpeting was patched, frayed, and becoming a safety hazard. Although no federal funding was anticipated to correct these deficiencies for at least 10 years, the curatorial staff developed a conceptual plan to install a major exhibit in this area focusing on one of the park's primary interpretive themes. This document later became the "soup stone" for *War Comes to Morristown: The Impact of the Revolutionary War Upon a Small Village*, a major exhibition that opened in June 1995 following two years of preparation and "cooking."

In 1993, the Challenge Cost-Share Program (CCSP) was introduced by the National Park Service to stimulate new, innovative partnerships for park projects and programs. Essentially a matching grants program, CCSP leverages limited government dollars against outside funds or equivalent contributions of hours, materials, or services from partner organizations. Learning of this new funding source, Morristown NHP approached its Friends group, the Washington Association of New Jersey, to co-sponsor War Comes to Morristown. The trustees of the Association were enthusiastic and agreed to allocate $25,000—their "pot" to the park's "stone." Using this pledge as leverage, the park applied to the CCSP for "potatoes"—receiving a matching $15,000 (of the $25,000 requested) late that year. Unfortunately, CCSP grants are "one-year" funds, which must be obligated by the close of the federal fiscal year. To achieve this end, the park entered into a cooperative agreement (CA) to develop the exhibit with the Washington Association, the first such agreement between the Friends group and park in their 60 years of mutual support. The Association took on the role of principal fund raiser and contractor for the exhibition and the CCSP funds were transferred to them as part of the CA.

Founded in 1874 to preserve Washington Headquarters at Morristown, the Washington Association of New Jersey had operated that site as a private museum until 1933 when the structure, its significant collections, and related lands were transferred to the NPS, forming the nucleus for the first national historical park. Over the years, the Association continued its strong interest in the park's museum, research library, and resource protection programs, including providing critical support for artifact acquisition and conservation, book and periodical purchases, and other projects. This funding was normally drawn on interest earned from the Association's invested assets and usually exceeded no more than $10,000-$15,000 per year.

However, for the first time in its history, the Association was now engaged in a major, park-related, fund-raising campaign with a goal of $100,000. Early in 1994, park and Association "chefs" secured further contributions for the "pot," including an additional CCSP grant of $10,000 and a donation of $10,000 from the F. M. Kirby Foundation. A grant proposal to the National Park Foundation (declined the previous year), now brought in an another $10,000 of critical support. With $70,000 of the $100,000 goal in-hand, the Association contracted for design services while fund raising continued. Encouraged by the success to date, Association trustees solicited additional donations from local foundations, corporations, and private individuals as the exhibit went through the design and fabrication phases.

The Association, as principal contractor, was able to secure competitive bids from top museum design and fabrication firms without the constraints and limitations of federal procurement. Park curatorial staff provided professional oversight and project management, working closely with the Association board and their design and fabrication subcontractors through the entire project. By this process, overhead costs were minimized and the project was completed with a relatively quick turnaround, approximately 1-1/2 years at an overall cost of $185,000 (including in-park contributions of $85,000 in salaries, equipment, and supplies). This same exhibition's price tag, if managed through normal government contracting, is estimated at $275,000-$300,000 over a two- or three-year period.

Opening to acclaim and subsequently the recipient of a 1996 Partnership Leadership Award from the NPS Northeast Field Area, *War Comes to Morristown* is an excellent example of an innovative, cost-effective partnership project. By the Association's ready provision of a pot for the park's stone, the resulting soup soon whet the appetite of others—many of whom had earlier expressed little or no interest in supporting such park projects—and every new contribution improved the recipe. Finally, this public-private effort filled a longstanding park need—one that would have otherwise remained unfulfilled for another decade or more.

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Larry Bowers

Museum Exhibit Lighting Seminar

On March 6-8, 1996, over 150 conservators, curators, exhibit designers, architects, and other museum professionals from the United States, Canada, and Mexico attended a seminar and workshop on museum lighting. The three-day program was co-sponsored by the NPS Division of Conservation of the Harpers Ferry Center, and the Washington Conservation Guild.

The seminar and workshop were envisioned as a commingling of illumination science, lighting design, and conservation practice. The two-day seminar portion was moderated by conservation scientist Stefan Michalski, Canadian Conservation Institute, and lighting designer Steven Hefferan, Boulder, Colorado. A variety of speakers from related disciplines addressed topics on a wide range of issues which confront both lighting designers and conservators. The seminar concluded with a manufacturers' showcase and dinner during which attendees were able to view and handle a variety of the latest in exhibit lighting products.

The third day consisted of six workshops, followed by informative tours and gallery lighting evaluations by Richard Skinner, lighting designer at the Smithsonian's Freer/Sackler Gallery, and Gordon Anson, chief lighting designer, National Gallery of Art.

The event was made possible in part with funding from the NPS National Center for Preservation Technology and Training in Natchitoches, La. It was hosted by the National Archives and Records Administration at their beautiful new facility in College Park, Md.

Exhibit lighting is clearly an area that has experienced major changes in the past decade and museums are being deeply affected by the revolution in lighting technology. This professional training activity was designed to look at the technical advances in museum lighting and assess how museum collections preservation is being affected by these developments. Training emphasis was on achieving a successful balance between collections "use"and "preservation" and focused on integrating conservation requirements with interpretive and aesthetic concerns, cost efficiency and energy conservation.

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