

based attack against Fort Gaines should be marked and interpreted.

Recommendation #14. *Interpretive brochures should be done for Fort Blakeley, Mobile sites, and Citronelle.*

Recommendation #15. *The Mobile Museum and Historic Blakeley Authority should work together to interpret the Battle of Mobile. Special emphasis should be paid to the story of the United States Colored Troops.*

Recommendation #16. *A transportation mechanism, such as a shuttle van, to and from the docks at Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines should be initiated.*

Issue #2. *The infrastructure and lands at Fort Morgan, Fort Gaines, and Fort Blakeley need repair, maintenance, and safety mechanisms put in place.*

Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines are over 150 years old. Fort Blakeley has artifacts and sites reaching back over 300 years. The forts served a military function for over 100 years. Once they passed their usable service life, they were abandoned into the public-private sector. As public funding is limited, many worthy and basic tasks, such as maintenance, have had to be deferred.

At Fort Morgan the staff and basic funding is sufficient to perform routine maintenance, but, insufficient to upgrade or improve the existing presentation. Conversely at Fort Gaines and Fort Blakeley manpower funding and maintenance equipment is insufficient to maintain the sites at a high level of attractiveness or efficiency.

Safety is a significant concern at all three sites. The site managers cannot continue to count on luck to ensure visitors's safety. Many sites accessible to the general public are potentially dangerous and inadequately marked. Poisonous snakes are found within all three sites; however, no warning signs or emergency instructions are posted.

Many important and difficult repairs are beyond the capability of the paid staff. The problem is particularly acute at Fort Gaines where the mortar has been wind blasted out of the areas between

many of the bricks. The problem threatens the structural integrity of portions of the fort.

The needs at Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines are not limited to the bricks and mortar of the forts. The visitor amenities are also becoming outdated particularly the museum at Fort Morgan. Walking trails need to be restructured to expertly guide visitors to the key sites within the complex.

At Fort Gaines the resources exist for a quality museum within one of the bunkers. Fort Monroe has successfully accomplished the challenge of using the infrastructure of the fort to present a great museum, but, considerable support is required to provide the resources to proceed here. Other buildings such as the old officers quarters need restoration to provide another interpretive site.

Fort Blakeley is a unique case. It has extraordinary potential as an archeological site, camping site, picnic area, nature sanctuary, educational site, and battlefield park, but, it must handle those functions in a responsible manner. A full and diverse visitors center should be authorized, funds appropriated and a structure built.

Fort Blakeley is in immediate need of a strategic usage plan. The site managers must maintain roads within the state park, an unnecessary tasking for which none of the rangers are qualified to perform. The practice of permitting reenactors to camp, entrench and reenact in the core area of the battlefield must be dealt with. Historical artifacts have been disturbed and removed by relic hunters and the historic appearance of the field has been altered. Walking trails have been laid out to follow the crest of some of the entrenchments thus further eroding these fragile structures.

At all three sites, friends groups have the ability to catalyze the use of local resources to accomplish maintenance and improvement tasks at the parks. Another source of help may include organizations such as the Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts of America, and National Guard. Regardless of the path(s) selected much work needs to be done.

Recommendation #17. The Mobile Convention and Visitors Corporation, Historic Blakeley Authority, and the Alabama Gulf Coast Convention and Visitors Bureau should form a working group to baseline Fort Blakeley's heritage tourism requirements. A Five Year plan should be developed and implemented.

Recommendation #18. *Forts Morgan and Gaines must have funds for structural repair.*

Recommendation #19. *A visitors center should be established at Fort Blakeley. Museums and visitors centers at Fort Morgan and Fort Gaines should be modernized.*

Recommendation #20. *Site managers should plan and implement a prudent public safety program.*

Recommendation #21. *Site managers should seek legal advise concerning their liability for special events which are conducted on site.*

Recommendation #22. *Historic artifacts relating to Fort Gaines should be restored to and remounted within the fort.*

Recommendation #23. *Action to acquire or protect 27 acres, currently outside Fort Blakeley State Park, should be initiated before a credible development threat raises the market value of the property.*

Recommendation #24. *Historic Blakeley Authority should seek county or state assistance to perform a full archeological survey of Fort Blakeley.*

Recommendation #25. *Historic Blakeley Authority should complete a preservation plan to document current and projected activities for the park.*

Recommendation #26. *Historic Blakeley Authority must be provided with on-site maintenance equipment and manpower or be included in a county maintenance plan for its landscape and roads.*

Issue #3. *New Funding Strategies are Needed.*

The three sites which are the focus of this report are all functional and open to the public. Tourism has already provided some profit at Fort Gaines.

As mentioned before, Fort Morgan is funded through an appropriation from the **Alabama Historical Commission**, Fort Gaines through a line item budget the **Dauphin Island Park and Beach Board**, and Fort Blakeley through an appropriation from the Alabama legislature. Moneys for capital improvements are available through competitive grant programs at the **Alabama Historical Commission** and other agencies. The amount of money that is available is insufficient to meet the capital needs of these sites.

Innovative and positive programs are needed to meet the current and future needs of these sites. *Fees* are a reality of life at most attractions. Collecting user fees generates a recurring fund which is independent of taxpayer support. The end user pays up front for the availability of the resource which meets their immediate need. The modest fees charged at Forts Morgan, Blakeley, and Gaines could be a significant component of a new funding strategy which meets future needs at the sites.

Currently, fees collected at Forts Morgan and Gaines are pooled into a central fund as a form of payback for the appropriated expenditure. At Fort Gaines, admission fees are combined with gift shop sale profits to generate additional money to run the fort. At Fort Morgan admission fees are presumably returned to the general fund of the state of Alabama. If the figure of 100,000 visitors is relatively accurate the fort operates at a loss of some \$100,000/year. At Fort Blakeley the state funds cover the cost of operations and maintenance, but, park admission and camping fees do not come near offsetting the taxpayers' investment.

It appears that current levels of funding meet the immediate needs to operate the parks, that is salaries, repairs and so forth. The real deficiency is in capital investment funds. Every business needs venture capital to give it a chance to succeed. The operation of a **Mobile Campaign Heritage Trail** deserves the same investment. Without it, the infrastructure will be inadequate to attract visitors in the numbers necessary to generate the revenues required to make the attraction profitable.

There are several ways to generate funds. A combination of public and private sector funding is the most promising. Capital investment should come from a revolving fund. Based upon current visitation levels and a relatively limited physical plant, it appears that the Forts Morgan and Gaines have the potential to run profitably. Fort Blakeley needs a large infusion of capital funding to build

an infrastructure which is capable of attracting visitors in the numbers needed to make it self sufficient.

At Fort Morgan, the **Alabama Historical Commission** should look to the fort as its own source of capital funding. Operations and capital investment should be projected and funding sources established. One obvious solution would be to continue funding the daily operations and maintenance as it currently is done. The Commission could then build a package of capital investments and enhancements to be funded from the admission revenues at the fort. Over a period of time the fort would pay for it's own capital improvements and might even eventually be weaned from state funding altogether. In reality, the state may be reluctant to pass enabling legislation for this to happen. In that instance, it may be possible to attach a surcharge to the Fort Morgan admission fee. Funds could be earmarked to accomplish the necessary repairs and growth without seeking direct appropriation.

Another mechanism is already in place and may be structured to fill in the shortfalls. The **Defenders of Fort Morgan** is a friends group with some very impressive community members. Friends groups have a spotty record of success around the country, but, in their best form are capable of doing what the government cannot or will not do. In other instances, they can form an effective advocacy group to encourage public officials to tend to the needs of the site. Properly structured, focused, and managed the **Defenders of Fort Morgan** could become a revenue generating, membership organization capable of solving many of these challenges.

At Fort Gaines the success of the current operation is dependent upon the effective and inspired leadership of the current manager supported by the Director of the Park and Beach Board. The same suggestions which were made for Fort Morgan are relevant here. The issue of operating revenue is touchy because of how the funds circulate. The revenues from the fort form part of the public revenue base for the local government. The profitability of the fort suggests that capital improvements can and should be budgeted from an escrow of those profits. Many of the issues relating to compensation and benefits for the employees can be solved by a judicious and ambitious budget based upon past performance.

If the budget of the **Dauphin Island Park and Beach Board** cannot afford the loss of revenue generated by the fort, perhaps they would permit the fort to establish a \$1 or \$2 capital

investments surcharge to fund its own work. A \$25 comprehensive tour ticket could easily be marketed. Both Morgan and Gaines would net \$2 from each visitor and a pass for the ferry could be included.

The fledgling **Friends of Fort Gaines** could and should serve the same function as the **Defenders of Fort Morgan** and should be organized to accomplish the same types of tasks.

Marketing a "Friends" group is a challenging opportunity. Without spending a single penny on postage there are nearly 150,000 candidate members coming through the gates of the two forts each year. With creative and respectful solicitation of even a \$5 membership for an annual newsletter each Friends group could generate the funds necessary to accomplish all but the most expensive tasks.

The situation at Fort Blakeley is perhaps the most challenging of all. It cannot currently support itself. Conversely, as a large state park with many tourism attractions nearby, it requires special state attention from the state to ensure it is a representative and attractive site within the state park system.

There is a government role and responsibility in fundraising. For many years the relics of America's glorious heritage have aged and in many instances deteriorated beyond reasonable economic repair. Organizations such as **CAMP (Council for America's Military Past)**, the **Civil War Fortifications Study Group**, and the **National Trust for Historic Preservation** are all devoted to preserving these relics and have done so with varying degrees of success. It is time to advocate bold new programs. One such initiative should be raised with Federal legislators--the establishment of a **Historic Restoration Super fund**. In fact on March 4, 1999 the president proposed a strong derivative of that idea. Such funding could be written with fairly restrictive provisions to force state governments to provide some form of matching funds on eligible projects. Another possible revenue source is the recently reauthorized **Transportation Efficiency Act (TEA) 2000** money.

A private sector initiative could be raised by following the model established for the restoration of the **Statue of Liberty**. The mechanisms are relatively simple and the techniques could be copied with a high probability of success.

These ideas are all viable alternatives to direct appropriation from the state or federal legislators. None the less, a spotlight should be held on properties which are deeded to public agencies. As stewards of our national heritage, public agencies must be reminded

of the public's expectations that they will maintain these American treasures for all to enjoy.

Recommendation #27. *Managing agencies for Forts Morgan and Gaines should examine the idea of using admission fees and gift shop profits to help them become self sufficient.*

Recommendation #28. *Managing agencies for the forts should examine the viability of permitting the forts to develop their own capital improvement fund through the designation of admission surcharges.*

Recommendation #29. *The roles and capabilities of nonprofit, membership based Friends groups should be examined and, where practical, established.*

Recommendation #30. *Alabama Historical Commission should seek to leverage its limited funding by baselining operating costs at Fort Morgan and allowing revenues generated by the sites to remain there. Funding would be allocated on a deficit basis.*

Recommendation #31. *The Alabama Historical Commission, in coordination with sister commissions in other states, should examine the possibility of petitioning its elected federal representatives to establish a Historic Buildings Restoration Super Fund.*

Recommendation #32. *The Alabama Historical Commission should consider bringing together a special work group to examine the needs of Fort Blakeley and to advocate appropriate legislative action to fund all of the recommended work.*

Recommendation #33. *Local representatives should ask the state of Alabama to consider the use of Transportation Efficiency Act 2000 (TEA2000) funds to upgrade the various sites within this campaign.*

Summary

Over the past 15 years, it has become obvious that heritage minded citizens have to carry the flag to save individual battlefields. After years of acting on instinct, quantitative and qualitative data shows that Americans can and will include heritage tourism on their itinerary during vacation periods.

The Gulf Coast has the distinct honor to be the custodian of the national shrines of heroism which compose the 1864-1865 Mobile Campaign. Here in the *Heart of Dixie*, the past has been preserved within easy reach of all who wish to visit it.

There is no immediate threat to the preservation of key sites relating to this campaign. This will allow officials to develop a thoughtful, integrated plan. A strong community and state commitment could earn considerable external support to assist in funding and executing the plan. This could result in a "Win-Win" situation--preservationists would achieve their goal of saving key battlefields, and communities would be rewarded in economic terms for their vision and investment in preservation.

Even the most considered plan will take time to develop, promulgate, adopt, fund, and execute; therefore, we recommend this report be given widest circulation and earliest evaluation to ensure the efforts of this working conference are not wasted.



BLUE & GRAY EDUCATION SOCIETY

The Civil War Around Mobile A Legacy of Pride, A Future to Fulfill!

The American pageant is a rich and uplifting story--punctuated as it is with the growth and maturity which comes from the experiences of the world's greatest experiment in democracy and freedom. No experience has seared itself deeper into our collective conscious than the War between the States. Today, Americans from all cultural and ethnic backgrounds are visiting these sites in record numbers. Heritage tourism is a vibrant and lucrative component of a region's economic health. Communities with the resources to display and the wisdom to preserve, interpret, and promote them are reaping outstanding rewards.

The Blue and Gray Education Society is pleased to announce that a preservation and education conference will be held on November 6-7, 1997 at the **Hilton Garden Inn on the Beach**, Orange Beach, Alabama. The event, *which is cosponsored and funded by the National Park Service's American Battlefield Protection Program*, is designed to examine the issues and opportunities presented by the collective sites which compose the story of the 1864 Battle of Mobile Bay and the 1865 Siege of Mobile at Spanish Fort and Fort Blakeley. Collateral sites such as those in Pensacola and on the Mississippi Coast are also of interest. *You have been identified ~~as a key person who should be invited to attend.~~* Accordingly, you are invited to participate.

The Blue and Gray Education Society, a nonprofit, tax exempt education group, is committed to revealing our past for our future through the study and understanding of the War Between the States by interpreting and preserving its battlefields, conducting high quality seminars, promoting and publishing scholarly research, and by facilitating worthy educational endeavors. In this mission the **BGES** has successfully completed interpretive work in Virginia and is seeking to broaden its reach to other states. This is the third such conference the **BGES** has organized and conducted. The previous two have had outstanding results with the work in Mississippi earning national attention and broad based support.

The sites relating to the battle of Mobile Bay and the siege of Mobile were documented as some of the most significant in the nation by the Congressionally chartered, **Civil War Sites Advisory Commission**. At the time of the original report, these sites were not thought to be endangered by encroachment or development; however, the recent attempt to unincorporate the city of Fort Blakeley and build a series of homes known as *Confederate Acres* suggests that a revisitation of the resources is both essential and timely.

There is little doubt the sites will attract visitors--attendance at Forts Morgan and Gaines clearly demonstrate the interest of the public. Although Fort Blakeley has a lower visitation rate it is in many ways more attractive because of the pristine nature of the area. Not to be forgotten is the objective of all these Civil War campaigns--Mobile is a beautiful and proud city with much to recommend it to the heritage tourist. Finally, Citronelle documents the final act in this sad drama--the surrender of Confederate forces to General E. R. Canby.

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