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Preface

This paper, the tenth in a series of white papers sponsored by the Kean University Center for History, Politics, and Policy, examines the opportunities for education and tourism as the state commemorates the 350th founding of the colony of New Jersey. Drs. Jonathan Mercantini and Terry Golway provide the historical context for the commemoration and explain how the state could use the anniversary to re-energize interest in New Jersey's history. The white paper series is co-edited by Dr. Sadeghi and Dr. Callahan, faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership at Kean University.

About the Contributing Authors

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New Jersey at 350: Using the Past to Inform the Present

Jonathan Mercantini and Terry Golway

Problem Statement

While New Jersey students spend a year studying New Jersey history in the fourth grade, they receive little additional exposure at the higher grade levels. Some of the state's highest-achieving students, including those who take Advanced Placement history classes, have less time to spend on New Jersey history because their focus is on preparing for college placement course exams.

In addition, tighter school budgets disproportionately affect local and state history education as well. In particular, the number of field trips has declined since the economic crisis beginning in 2007. The lack of emphasis on state history extends to the college level. Aspiring Social Studies teachers are not required to take a course in New Jersey history in order to receive their certification and there are no specific state or local history questions on the PRAXIS II certification exam. This year, however, the state can seize on a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to commemorate the state's rich and diverse history through planned celebrations of the 350th anniversary of New Jersey's founding. With state support and enthusiasm, the commemoration could inspire new interest in the state's history among scholars and the general public. That new awareness could provide an opportunity to properly market New Jersey as a destination for history-minded tourists, an economic-development strategy that has been neglected for many years.

Background to the 350th Anniversary Commemoration

On June 24, 1664, James, Duke of York, acting on behalf of his brother King Charles II of England, issued a royal charter granting two favorites of his, Lord Berkeley and Sir George Carteret, ownership of a swath of land between the Hudson and Delaware Rivers. The charter referred to these lands as New Jersey, in honor of Carteret's defense of the English Channel island of Jersey during the English Civil War.

To mark the 350th anniversary, the New Jersey Historical Commission has selected three themes – *liberty*, *innovation*, and *diversity* – through which the history of New Jersey will be told and commemorated.

For centuries, New Jersey's history has been the nation's history on a micro level. From encounters between Europeans and the Lenape Indians who lived here for centuries to the catastrophe known as Superstorm Sandy, from great historical moments like Washington's crossing of the Delaware to quiet victories, like that achieved by Thomas Peterson, the first African-American to vote following passage of the 15th Amendment, New Jersey has been on the leading edge of historical change.

The themes of the state's history are really the themes of American History. In New Jersey we see the expansion of democracy: New Jersey was the first state that allowed women to vote, from 1776 until 1807. For legions of immigrants, first from Europe and Africa, and later from Latin America and Asia, New Jersey is where they were welcomed, and sometimes not so welcomed, to America. Industrialization made the state a manufacturing giant and, during two world wars, an arsenal of democracy, leading to the growth of Newark, Paterson and Camden. World-famous innovators, especially Thomas Edison and Albert Einstein, made their homes in New Jersey, creating important legacies to the pharmaceutical and technology companies of today. Stronger and increasingly more rapid transportation networks, from rudimentary roads and canals to interstate highways, created pathways to the future.

Of course, the state has not been spared the ravages of history. New Jersey was the last northern state to abolish slavery. Contests over woman's suffrage, a struggle led by native New Jerseyan Alice Paul, extend from the eighteenth century to the twentieth. Urban unrest during the 1960s left scars visible even today. The state continues to deal with the legacies of de-industrialization in Camden and other urban centers. And, most recently, the devastation of Superstorm Sandy served as a powerful example of the effects of climate change.

Understanding New Jersey's history is crucial to solving the challenges we face today. All of which makes 2014 the perfect time to examine more deeply the use of history in New Jersey. This paper will examine two of the most important arenas with regard to history in New Jersey: Education and Tourism.

Creating an Awareness of New Jersey History

A variety of history professionals has come together to improve the quality and number of learning activities related to New Jersey history for K-12 educators. The New Jersey Historical Commission created an Education Committee from among its NJ350 Steering Committee. That group found that there was a lack of good and easily available New Jersey history learning activities. From that starting point, the NJ350 Education Committee worked in two areas. The first was to identify and curate extant learning activities already available on the Internet. The second was to solicit learning activities from educators around the state and commission some additional activities on several topics and themes. The result will be approximately 25 fresh learning activities as well as links to approximately 20 web sites which house state history activities. All of these will be available on website for the upcoming anniversary, www.officialnj350.com.

In addition, the New Jersey Council for the Humanities awarded a grant to produce additional learning activities directly tied to key people, events, and themes in the history of the Garden State.

The Link Between History and Tourism

History is also an important driver of tourism and tourist dollars in New Jersey. A July 2013 report by the group Tourism Economics, which was commissioned by the New Jersey Historic

Trust, shows that heritage tourism generated 11 million visits resulting in \$2.8 billion in tourist spending. Heritage tourism is also responsible for 37,527 jobs, according to the report.

These financial benefits are in addition to the cultural and educational benefits which result from greater awareness of and engagement with heritage tourism sites around the state. Overall, tourism is the fifth-largest industry in the state and heritage tourism is an important component of that industry.

The 350th celebration will serve as a tourist driver throughout the year. Signature events are planned for each month, while local and regional programming will help to bring residents and non-residents alike to heritage sites including Washington's Crossing, Thomas Edison Historic Park, the Alice Paul Institute and many others. Pop-up stores will be appearing in conjunction with these events in towns and municipalities across the state. The greater awareness of these sites from NJ350 marketing and publicity campaigns should lead to more visits and more revenue

The New Jersey Historical Commission hopes that the state's 350th anniversary year will create a vibrant legacy for future generations of New Jersey students. The events, programs, educational products, and commemorations promise to do just that. But there is more to be done. Too many students are unaware of the key moments in New Jersey history, and they have not learned the larger processes and contests that have made our state what it is today. And while heritage tourism is an important economic driver in the state, historic sites have faced reduced funding, leading to fewer hours and fewer new resources.

The good news is that interest in the state's history is unprecedented. The Historical Commission received three times as many grant applications for the 350th anniversary year than

it has for previous years. Given current budget levels, fewer than 20 percent of those applications can be funded. As the leading agency to promote New Jersey's history, increasing funding for the New Jersey Historical Commission is one way the Christie Administration can improve the access and dissemination of historical knowledge to teachers and the broader public.

Policy Recommendations

In order to give K-12 teachers the foundation they need to incorporate New Jersey History throughout the Social Studies curriculum, a three credit course in New Jersey History should be required of all social studies educators. A series of questions on state history should be added to the PRAXIS II exam which all teachers need to pass in order to be certified to teach social studies in public schools in New Jersey. A survey undertaken by the NJHC showed that nearly all of the state's public and private colleges and universities offer a course on New Jersey History. The New Jersey Historical Commission's 350th Anniversary Committee has made available a number of learning resources on the officialnj350.com website. And additional materials for teachers and students will be linked to the forthcoming "It Happened Here in New Jersey" webcasts to be launched later this year.

Moreover, the state's history can be integrated with other subject areas to provide additional opportunities for students to learn about New Jersey History. For example, a unit on the New Jersey Pinelands could include studying the flora and fauna of that vital region, as well as the history of people and the agricultural industry there.

Finally, the 350th Anniversary marks an ideal opportunity for the state's heritage tourism industry to market historic sites. Additional investment in this area would almost certainly yield a significant economic and cultural return on that investment. That effort should be replicated in

local school districts. State agencies and local school boards should work together to restore funding for field trips to the state's historic sites. These trips, long a staple of elementary and secondary school classes, have been cut back severely in recent years because of reduced public funding. These short-sighted cuts have reduced the visibility of the state's historic homes, battlefields, and museums, and have set back efforts to create a greater appreciation of New Jersey's history.

Conclusion

The anniversary year of 2014 will be filled with reminders of New Jersey's history. And there is much to celebrate in the accomplishments of the state's history, in the lessons learned through overcoming adversity, and in appreciating the modern legacies of that history. But the anniversary year also needs to be a time of reflection on the importance of history to our understanding of the present as well as the past and to create new opportunities for students, residents and others to learn about the critical themes that narrate New Jersey history. By requiring greater preparation and training in New Jersey History for pre-service teachers, offering those teachers and their students new, high quality learning activities and increasing financial support for education activities in social studies, including field trips, New Jersey students can achieve a great appreciation for the state's history. By providing financial and other resources for cultural heritage agencies, including the New Jersey Historical Commission, and promoting the many heritage tourism sites throughout the state, citizens of New Jersey and beyond can all share a greater understanding for New Jersey History and its significant role in the history of America.