



Preserving Memory: Seminars in the Preservation and Presentation of History for National Park Service Managers

Complementing the larger, nationwide discussions generated by both the New York City and Atlanta workshops, smaller seminars are being held throughout the Northeast Region to give park superintendents, program managers, and park partners opportunities to think about and discuss the way we conceive of places and manage their preservation and interpretation. The seminars, entitled "Preserving Memory," explore the issues, dilemmas, and challenges that arise in presenting and preserving America's heritage. Led by Ed Linenthal, Professor of Religion and American Culture at University of Wisconsin, Oshkosh, the seminars are discussion-based and participants read articles and case studies dealing with a variety of topics and issues. Participants also keep a writing portfolio to be used as a resource throughout the seminar and are encouraged to argue a point out on paper or reflect on readings or discussion.

"A well facilitated open discussion of some of the most difficult issues [the NPS] faces. In an organization where there is so little opportunity for reflection and thoughtful discussion, this seminar is very valuable."

Each seminar, although following the same general format, includes local NPS case studies designed to ground the seminar discussions in a real life national park situation. The seminars encourage NPS staff, managers and partners to think broadly and critically about the value and meaning of their park stories and the associated physical resources.

"This was really excellent in every way. Ed is a terrific teacher - thoughtful and provocative. I feel so privileged to have been able to attend. I was describing one day's discussion to a neighbor one evening and she said, 'Wow! You have such a great job.' She's right."

The first seminars, held at Valley Forge NHP, Golden Gate NRA, and Richmond National Battlefield Park generated much positive response. Participants noted the value of the seminars in providing a chance for personal and professional reflection, discussing difficult ideas freely in a "safe" environment, and revealing, through the case studies, the conflicts and dilemmas in interpretation and resource management. Additional seminars are planned for 2003.