

2012 VACo Achievement Awards
Category: Regional Collaboration
Applicant: Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation

Introduction

It all started with the answer to a question, “You want to do *what?*” That was Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation’s response to the idea of re-enacting 40 horses pulling an 80,000 lb. locomotive along a major state highway as part of a Sesquicentennial Commemoration of the Civil War weekend event. This brief conversation started a three-year planning process for what would ultimately become the *Great Train Raid*, one of several events held as part of the Town of Strasburg’s year-long 250th Anniversary Celebration.

In 2008, several community stakeholders gathered to discuss the idea of reenacting Col. Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson’s raid of locomotives from Harper’s Ferry as part of the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War and part of the five-year Sesquicentennial Commemoration set to begin in 2011. Around the table for the first few meetings were representatives from the Town of Strasburg, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation (Frederick County), and a few individual historians and reenactors.

At almost the same time, the Town of Strasburg was considering the creation of celebratory events for the town’s 250th anniversary also in 2011. The group was quite well-rounded and included governmental and private enterprise representatives from the Town of Strasburg, Shenandoah County Administration, Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation, Strasburg’s Chamber of Commerce, Hometown Strasburg, the Strasburg Heritage Society, the Shenandoah County Historical Society, and several interested individuals.

It happened that Sarah Mauck, a member of both grassroots committees and a member of Strasburg Town Council, asked for the groups to come together and combine efforts. So, what started as two separate events combined into one collaborative enterprise called the “Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee.” From late 2008 through 2010, this group discussed how to celebrate the town’s anniversary while also commemorating the area’s Civil War events as part of the Sesquicentennial Commemoration. What came from these meetings ultimately created Strasburg’s year-long 250th Celebration that included a *New Year’s Celebration* in December, 2010; a *Commemorative Geocaching Series* and

Commemorative Geocoin; Founding Families Celebration & Dedication; Community Library Lecture Series; the



Strasburg Duathlon; the Great Train Raid; Strasburg Heritage Association's PotteryFest; and Founder's Weekend.

These were all first-time events scheduled around other "legacy" events including *Strasburg's Homes Tour, Mayfest Celebration, Independence Day Celebration, and the Route 11 Yard Crawl.* These legacy events incorporated Strasburg's heritage as part of their themes, schedule of activities and entertainment.

So, from late 2008 through the end of 2011, the Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee researched, planned, gathered, fundraised, and staffed these new events through regional collaboration, partnering, and cooperation. And through all of these successes, several events have now become permanent fixtures on the yearly calendar; these include the Strasburg Duathlon and Strasburg's Geocaching Series (and geocoin), which are both still organized and executed as partnership between Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation and the Town of Strasburg. The hard work and dedication of this regional committee, made up of county government officials, town officials, local citizen volunteers, and a myriad local business stakeholders, not only had a very successful three-year planning and implementation process, but initiated two new legacy events that will continue to promote cooperation and collaboration and provide keepsake mementos from every event. There remains also a great foundation upon which the communities can plan and implement future partnership events and activities.

Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee

Beyond event coordination and partnership work, the Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee had the overarching task of fundraising for the year-long celebration as well as promotion and marketing of each and every event. The Town of Strasburg committed \$10,000 in FY11 for use by the committee with the expectation that it would be refunded from proceeds from the events; this "seed money" was essential in helping the committee begin the fundraising process. The commitment meant that the committee needed to raise all its funds and/or hold events that would pay, at a minimum, 50% of their costs.

Subsequently, several subcommittees were created including Fundraising, Great Train Raid, Great Train Raid Logistics, and Recreation. The intention was that the actual activities and events and fundraising was to be handled at the sub-committee level, while the overarching group would make short- and long-term decisions together.

Before all sub-committees could get started with any promotion or fundraising, the Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee needed to create an identity for the celebration. Members contacted a local artist—Hilary White—to

create an identity that would be used for all advertising, promotions, and fundraising needs. She created the Strasburg 250th logo, and it was colorized and digitized by Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation.

Then, the Fundraising Committee started work in early 2010 to begin collecting corporate and individual sponsorships to supplement and support the events. Accordingly, the Strasburg Duathlon was priced to actually cover 80% of its expenses with corporate sponsorships used to offset the remaining portion. The Great Train Raid was also designed to generate revenue from specialty keepsake mementos available for purchase such as water bottles, commemorative coins, shirts, hats, books, medallions, whistles, bags, and more.

For those events that simply didn't have the opportunity for revenue generation, corporate and individual donations were utilized to meet those expenses. The Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee tracked all revenues, expenses, in-kind donations such as facility space, equipment/supplies, signage, and advertising, and provided monthly updates to the Town of Strasburg which acted as the committee's "bank." At the conclusion of the final event in 2011, and once all revenue and expenses were collected and paid, the Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee was able to return the initial \$10,000 to the town and had \$1,500 remaining in revenue for a final thank-you ad for all sponsors and volunteers, as well as a volunteer thank-you event.

Event Summary

Each event had a special theme or activity related to the town's 250th anniversary or the Sesquicentennial Civil War Commemoration, and each event also had a different group of collaborators or specialists while the overall Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee handled promotion, marketing, coordination of supplies and equipment, and fundraising. Below is a summary of each event its key stakeholders.

Strasburg's New Year's Event Celebration – December 31, 2010: This event was the kick-off to the year-long 2011 celebration and was pure entertainment for the local residents. Key planners for this event included the overall Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee but lead planner was Hometown Strasburg, a local organization that promotes volunteerism via events and activities. The goal was to provide a fun, family-themed night while promoting all of the upcoming 2011 events. A local business owner donated the Signal Knob Recreation Center for the event, and activities held there that night included three different musical entertainers, free



swim time, bingo, kid's crafts, face painting, bowling, business displays, and food/drink available for purchase. The end of the night concluded with a celebratory midnight balloon drop. Over 500 parents and children attended the evening; to get in, they had to purchase a keepsake "button" which was created from the Strasburg 250th Logo. Volunteers came from the Town of Strasburg, Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation, Hometown Strasburg, Strasburg's Chamber of Commerce, and key individual volunteers.

Commemorative Geocaching Series – January 1, 2011: Geocaching is the sport of finding hidden treasure using a GPS and latitude and longitude coordinates. This year-long activity was designed to highlight the Town of Strasburg's history while promoting outdoor activity and recreation. Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation took lead on this project, creating the multi-geocache series and creating the commemorative geocoin that would be each geocacher's reward at the end of the series. The geocoin utilized the Strasburg 250th logo as well as the Strasburg Ram, the mascot for the local schools. Since the Town of Strasburg and the Strasburg Heritage Society already had a fantastic walking tour highlighting the town's history, the cache series was built around the 8-10 stops and historical markers along the walking trail. Geocachers not only had to find the markers, they had to read the historical notes and then answer questions in order to get the coordinates to the next stop. Another local business—the Hotel Strasburg—agreed to partner with the town and parks and recreation to become the final stop and be the "keepers of the coins." In the end, geocachers would retrieve their final reward at the final stop and hopefully, stay for lunch/dinner and enjoy the historical ambiance of this stop along the walking tour. Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation monitored the activity through the www.geocaching.com website where the geocache series was listed; via comments by participants, the series could be adjusted or the coin supply could be restocked. This activity continues into 2012 as there were plenty of trackable geocoins still available.

Founding Families Dedication – February 27, 2011: This special day was created to pay homage to the founding families of Strasburg. A special presentation "Strasburg's Early Days & First Families" was provided by historian and local native Daniel W. Bly as well a dedication of a permanent town monument (bronze marker set in native limestone) to honor the town's founding 250 years ago. During this event, an out-of-print book outlining Strasburg's settlement and founding families, "Story of Strasburg" by Virginia Hinkins Cadden, was reprinted and made available for purchase, and attendees enjoyed refreshments afterwards. Strasburg Heritage Society and the

overall Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee co-planned this event which turned out to be a lovely day for local residents, leaving behind a permanent marker noting the town’s establishment and founding families.

Community Library Lecture Series – March 19, 2011: This was the first in a series created for the town’s 250th celebration. This first edition in the series was “Strasburg During the Great Depression: A Look at the 1930s.” The Strasburg Town Library staff took lead on this program with assistance from the Strasburg Heritage Association. From past research, photos, and residents input, they created a wonderful series that captured Strasburg during this timeframe. The event was at capacity in the town’s library and received very good feedback.

Strasburg Duathlon – Saturday, April 9, 2011: Part of the focus of the 250th Celebration was to highlight Strasburg’s recreational facilities and historical sights. Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation took lead on this event and created the Strasburg Duathlon, a 5k run, 30k bike, and 5k run through the Strasburg Town Park and River Walk, downtown historical district, and along scenic routes throughout Shenandoah County including battlefields and pastoral vistas. Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation partnered with the Town of Strasburg’s Public Works Department and received cooperation from the Virginia Department of Transportation, the Town of Strasburg’s Police Department, and the Shenandoah County Sheriff’s Department. Many volunteers for this event came from the overall Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee, but many interested individuals and employees from local businesses volunteered their time to help cover intersections, set-up and break-down equipment, cover water station breaks, and monitor the transition areas. For a first-time event, it went very well with 61 racers participating on local streets and county roads. No traffic issues arose, and all racers safely completed the course, ending at the Strasburg Town Park with a racers’ party and awards ceremony. Items created for this event were a commemorative t-shirt using the Strasburg 250th logo along with custom-labeled water bottles promoting Great Train Raid event which followed in May.



Library staff took lead on this program with assistance from the Strasburg Heritage Association. This was another well-attended event with more positive feedback.

Great Train Raid – May 27-29, 2011: In the Spring of 1861, shortly after the outbreak of the Civil War, the Confederacy desperately needed to increase its small supply of railroad rolling stock. In response to this, Colonel Thomas J. Jackson contrived and executed a brilliant scheme to appropriate a large number of locomotives, railroad cars and other pieces of equipment from the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, then under his control on the northern edge of Virginia. The result was an episode in the War Between the States, the logistics of which continue to amaze everyone on both sides of the Mason-Dixon Line, and those that study the Civil War.

Jackson's plan was to amass and then trap rolling stock between Point of Rocks, Maryland and Martinsburg. To accomplish this, he informed B & O president John Garrett that the trains passing through Harpers Ferry at night were disturbing his troops, and henceforth would only be allowed to move between 11:00am and 1:00pm. The net effect of this curfew was to bottle up trains on both sides of Harpers Ferry. Jackson then sent troops to sever the rail lines near Point of Rocks and Martinsburg (then Virginia).

On May 24, 1861, his men began to seize some 40 locomotives and nearly 400 railroad cars that had accumulated. They dragged many of them to Winchester, and then to Strasburg. From there, some of the materials were moved by rail and some dragged by land, to Staunton, a distance of 125 miles from Martinsburg. At Staunton, the equipment was loaded onto the tracks of the Virginia Central Railroad and distributed throughout the South (*from the American History Forum*).

The story of this historical event generated significant debate within committee meetings—Did the raid really happen? Is there research to prove the event took place? How do we reenact an 80,000 lb. locomotive being pulled by 40 horses? Much discussion and research took place for over a year before the actual event began to take shape. What the committee quickly realized is that it was going to take a great effort by multiple agencies, individuals, and businesses if the event was to be successful. To start, the first agency to become involved was the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). The Great Train Raid Committee, a subcommittee of the Strasburg 2-5-0, met with VDOT representatives to discuss rules and regulations and policies behind using State Route 11 for this procession; members discussed weight limits, time frames, intersections with Interstate 81 and other state roads,

town routes, parking and traffic flow, signage, etc. Once our parameters were set by VDOT, the committee began its focus on finding the locomotives. After much research, the group knew it could not use a real locomotive due to weight restrictions and turning radius. So, the question was posed to some very talented mechanics and fabricators—“Could you build a replica of one of the locomotives taken in the Great Train Raid of 1861?” The answer was yes, and locomotive #208 was born; #208 was a replica of a Dutch Wagon taken in the raid at Harper’s Ferry. Through research by Arthur Candenquist, the builders knew the size, design, color, and details such as lights, smoke stack, and more. The locomotive was built over the course of six-eight months as pieces had to be fabricated from scratch and/or fabricated out of existing pieces such as drainage culverts (made the body of the engine).



This reenactment was the foundation to the year-long celebration and it was the largest undertaking by the Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee along with the Great Train Raid and Great Train Raid Logistics Subcommittees. It was planned to be a large event, accommodating 10,000+ tourists and residents, and required coordinated efforts between the Virginia Department of Transportation, Frederick County Sheriff’s Department, Warren County Sheriff’s Department, Shenandoah County Sheriff’s Department, Virginia State Police, Virginia National Guard, DBI, Inc., all local Strasburg businesses, Town of Strasburg Administration, Town of Middletown Administration, Shenandoah County Administration, Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation, Strasburg Museum, Strasburg Heritage Association, Hometown Strasburg, Strasburg Chamber of Commerce, Warren County Tourism, Winchester-Frederick Tourism, Shenandoah County Tourism, Shenandoah Valley Battlefields Foundation, Cedar Creek Battlefield Foundation, Signal Knob Recreation Center, Dr. Valerie Babcock from Hackwood Equine, Inc., Strasburg Fire Department, Strasburg Rescue Squad, Shenandoah County Fire & Rescue, Shenandoah County Public Schools Transportation Department, Old Dominion Draft Horse & Mule Association, Sons of Confederate Veterans, individual reenactor groups, individual speakers/historians, Arthur Candenquist, main historian for the Great Train Raid, Mort Kunstler, artist, the star attraction, the #208 Locomotive, and the star attraction’s lead designer and builder, Conly Crabill.

Once the committee knew that the locomotive decisions were made and fabrication began, the members began focusing on securing the horses and mules to pull the engine as well as other procession members such as cavalry and enlisted reenactment troops along with other wagons and regalia; there was also a focus on the other

events that were to take place that weekend including an educational/lecture series, displays, demonstrations, reenactments other than the raid, food/beverage and logistic needs such as parking, restrooms, signage, animal care, waste disposal, and more. This was a large event covering three counties, two towns, an interstate, and local, county, and state roads.

Promotional items created for this event included posters, flyers, specialty advertising, event map and schedule, historical reference booklet, train whistles, conductor hats and scarves, bags, commemorative coins, coat pins, labeled water bottles, t-shirts, sweatshirts, and more.

The #208 engine remains as a permanent exhibit at the Strasburg Museum, on display for everyone to see and is placed outside near to a historical marker that tells the story of the Great Train Raid and how the procession moved through Strasburg 150 years prior.

Strasburg Heritage Association's PotteryFest – June 25, 2011: This event, highlighting Strasburg's deep pottery roots was cosponsored by the Strasburg Heritage Association and the Strasburg Museum. The Shenandoah Valley Pottery's Guild provided the volunteers for the pottery demonstrations, and another local volunteer did pottery appraisals. The event was designed to share the appreciation of pottery and share Strasburg's "Pot Town" history through lectures, demonstrations, appraisals, and networking. The Strasburg Museum was open all day and available for touring; they have quite a collection of Strasburg pottery already on display, but several local collectors also brought their own collections for display during the event.

Founders' Day Weekend – Saturday, November 5, 2011: This was the culminating event for the year-long celebration, and was handled by the Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee and Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation Department. To kick-off the morning, the committees hosted a Soup Cook-Off that was open to both restaurants and individuals; once the cooking competition was complete, attendees could sample all the wonderful, hearty soups made by the competitors. At the end of the sampling, awards were given to the competitors. The Shenandoah County Health Department partnered with parks and recreation to ensure that food and serving standards were met. Since the event was held so near to Veteran's Day, the committees decided to honor the local veterans with a concert by the U.S. Navy Quartet in the afternoon. During the entire event, the committees asked local business to set-up

displays in the venue's lobby and all previous 250th events were highlighted with photos and displays. This was a fun, light, end-of-the-year wrap-up celebration.

Summary

The Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee and the Town of Strasburg were extremely pleased with the extent and quality of volunteers to support this year-long celebration. The events were embraced by the business community and the residents; cooperation was witnessed all year-long as residents dealt with parking demands, traffic, visiting tourists, special events, and more. None of the events could have been created without the partnership between the many organizations listed above. Each organization played an important role, sometimes with only one event and sometimes with several events. Shenandoah County Parks & Recreation is very proud to have partnered with the Town of Strasburg and to have had a lead role in several events; it was a wonderful way to connect to the town's residents through collaboration and celebration.

And of course, the best part is that the town has a lasting memorial dedicated to its founding families and 250th anniversary, a replica engine, #208, bringing to life Strasburg's rail history, an athletic road race highlighting the town's recreational facilities and natural resources, and a year-round outdoor family activity promoting Strasburg's history and beautiful historic district.

We proudly submit the Strasburg 2-5-0 Committee and all of its events, partnerships, and collaborations for the 2012 VACo Achievement Awards. This group demonstrates all that epitomizes cooperation, collaboration, partnering, and multiple agencies and jurisdictions working together.

Event Keepsake Items Included with Application:

Great Train Raid Souvenir Program
Strasburg 250th Souvenir Commemorative Coin
Great Train Raid Reenactors Medallion
Great Train Raid T-Shirt (one of three designs)
Great Train Raid Bag (one of three designs)
Great Train Raid Train Whistle
Great Train Raid Sample Poster (all printed supplies were used in event promotion)
Great Train Raid Sample Rack Card (all printed supplies were used in event promotion)
Great Train Raid Sample Informational Sheet/Map (all printed supplies were used in event promotion)
Great Train Raid Water Bottle with Specialty Label
Photo Sheets from various events