



"Where History Lives"

Genesee Country Village & Museum
New York State Division of the Budget
Public Hearing
November 17, 2007

Good afternoon. My name is James Mossgraber and I am the Senior Director of Development for the Genesee Country Village & Museum. I would like to thank the New York State Division of Budget for this opportunity to speak today. In the brief time I have, I would like to focus my remarks on the criticality of state support for museums and cultural institutions as provided through the New York State Department of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, specifically the ZBGA grants program and through the New York State Council on the Arts.

First, I want to state that funding, for our institution, from these two state agencies amount to less than 3% of our contributed annual income. So why is ZBGA and NYSCA support so important to organizations like Genesee Country Village & Museum? New York State agency grants are essential, well beyond the actual amount of funds received. Federal granting agencies as well as national foundations and even major individual contributors often look to the level and continuity of state support as a valid indication of institutional stability and accomplishment.

However, the most fundamental justification for continuing state support for major museums such as Genesee Country Village & Museum is the positive economic impact to the local community. My institution has an annual operating budget of \$4 million of which approximately 94% finds its way back into the local economy. With 32 full-time employees, 17 part-time yearly employees and over 160 part-time seasonal employees, the museum is a major employer in the southwest quadrant of Monroe County.

It is also important to state that of the 200 part-time seasonal employees a substantial number are retired people living on incomes that are both modest and fixed and area youth, who gain valuable work experience that will increase their employability in the future. In addition to the obvious economic impact of the museum's payroll, the institution, compelled by its extensive collection of historic structures and artifacts, spends an averaged \$300,000 to \$500,000 annually with local contractors; painters, masons, roofers, plumbers and carpenters for all manner of repairs and conservancy needs. In addition, with over 700 acres and over 75 buildings on the campus to support and maintain, the museum spends tens of thousands of dollars on standard facilities expenses such as electric power, heating fuel, vehicle maintenance and premise security.

While it is accurate to label Genesee Country Village & Museum as a history museum and an educational institution, we are also an employer, a customer and a positive force for economic development and job creation and retention.

As New York State redoubles its efforts to attract tourists from across the country and around the world by investing tens of millions of dollars in the “I Love New York” promotion, it is important to note that institutions like ours is the “product” that the state is marketing. We are a major attraction, recognized nationwide as one of the most comprehensive and authentic living history museums in America.

Since the museum opened in 1976, thousands of visitors from across the United States and indeed, from around the world, have been captivated and enlightened as they step back in time to experience life in 19th-century America. Of the averaged total of 150,000 people who visit annually, approximately 25 % reside outside of New York State.

In closing, New York State’s support of premier cultural and heritage-themed attractions through programs like ZBGA and NYSCA are critical to the ongoing viability of these institutions. And, in turn, these organizations are essential to preserving our state’s history, protecting our ecological landscapes and living collections, attracting tourists and the revenue then represent and adding to the quality of life and education for our fellow New Yorkers.

Thank you very much for your time and for this opportunity to make these remarks on behalf of Genesee Country Village and Museum.