

**Preserve America Presidential Awards**  
**The Corinth and Alcorn County Mississippi Heritage Tourism Initiative**

Advisory Council on Historic Preservation

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**Program Text:**

The initiative sprang from an effort led by the Siege and Battle of Corinth Commission and its partners to preserve a single remnant of a Civil War battleground and grew into a comprehensive, multi-faceted preservation and heritage tourism effort. It includes motor tour packages, 20 miles of affiliated hiking and biking trails, public accommodations and arenas, improvement of a local unit of the Shiloh National Military Park including an interpretive center, and educational displays. Other improvements include preservation and interpretation of the 1857 Verandah House (a National Historic Landmark), revitalization of a historic downtown including creation of a National Register Historic District, developing a local museum in a historic railroad depot, and preservation and interpretation of the African American story of the Corinth Contraband Camp which included formation of a local African American Historic Society.

**Additional Information:**

The Preserve America Initiative emphasizes getting involved with the special places of American history, and that's exactly what the local community did here. Civil War battleground preservation is widespread, but the people of the town of Corinth and Alcorn County didn't passively wait for the National Park Service (NPS) to do its good thing but became actively involved to make preservation, interpretation, and accessibility to history and heritage resources much more broadly available to many more people than otherwise would have been the case. It was a true partnership among all levels led by local concern and effort.

When a new subdivision threatened the existence of "Battery F," a Civil War artillery earthwork in Alcorn County, local citizens rallied to save it and touched off a 20 year effort that has greatly matured and come to fruition in the past few years.

The Siege and Battle of Corinth Commission, a unique city-county entity, dates to 1993. It first created a master plan to guide efforts towards preservation and interpretation. Realizing the importance of public involvement and connection, 20 miles of hiking and biking trails were created to reach the widely scattered sites of significance to Civil War history. Trailhead Park was created with public restrooms and an outdoor stage to serve as a point of entry to the trail system. A local African American Historic Society was formed to help assist with development of Contraband Camp Park, which is a 20-acre archaeological site to the east of Corinth where enslaved people took their early important steps toward freedom.

Other important recent efforts were development of a comprehensive heritage tourism plan, and opening a new NPS-managed interpretive center that conveys the story of Corinth's importance as a railroad center, the battle of Corinth, how the battle of Shiloh affected the community and region, and the significance of the Corinth Contraband Camp. As it gained momentum and enthusiasm, this effort has helped inspire related projects including fundraising to restore parts of the historic downtown of Corinth, developing a local museum in the historic railroad depot, and installation of interpretive signs at the 1854 Jacinto Courthouse.

The team that did all this, led by the Siege and Battle of Corinth Commission, included: NPS and its American Battlefield Protection Program; city, county, and state governments; Mississippi's members of Congress; Mississippi Department of Archives and History; the Conservation Fund; National Geographic Society; Mellon Foundation; Civil War Preservation Trust; Mississippi Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks;

Mississippi Department of Transportation; Corinth Convention and Visitor's Bureau; Main Street Corinth; The Alliance (regional economic development entity); Corinth's "Keep America Beautiful" organization; Northeast Mississippi Museum Association; University of Mississippi; Mississippi State University; the Blue and Gray Education Society; Mississippi Development Authority's Division of Tourism; the National Trust for Historic Preservation; the Monticello Foundation; the Appalachian Regional Commission; United Daughters of the Confederacy; Sons of Confederate Veterans; and various volunteers historians, researchers, and archaeologists.

### **CRITERIA FOR AWARDS**

The Preserve America Presidential Awards are annual awards given to organizations, businesses, government entities, and individuals for:

- exemplary accomplishments in the sustainable use and preservation of cultural or natural heritage assets;
- demonstrated commitment to the protection and interpretation of America's cultural or natural heritage assets; and
- integration of these assets into contemporary community life, combining innovative, creative, and responsible approaches to showcasing historic local resources.

The recipients are chosen through a national competition administered by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Department of Commerce, and the Department of the Interior, in cooperation with the Executive Office of the President.