



Skill Builders: How To Identify A Potential Story

As with so many aspects of your byway, the story and its interpretive program are flexible. Find what appears to be the most compelling and interesting byway story and work with it. If you find that you need to amend and alter it in the future – good! This will give your byway vitality and changing interest for travelers.

There are six basic ways to find interesting story ideas along your byway.

1. Tap Your Knowledge

Your own local knowledge will be sufficient to start down the byway story path. While you may not know every detail of the history or ecology of the byway, you probably know the high points.

You probably know what will be interesting to travelers. Imagine you are the visitor. What is special about the places that you like to visit when you are away from home? Test and expand your ideas with those of others in the community.

2. Talk With Interesting And Knowledgeable Individuals

If your area has a history of tourism, many people, such as tourism officials, entrepreneurs, and travelers, have been exploring this topic for a long time.

If you aren't a historian or naturalist, then talk to people who are. Many parks, forests, and other public sites already have interpretive research and programs in place. Check with public land management professionals.

Create a list of 10 to 15 people who know involved with the area or who hear other people's stories. These might include history buffs, long-time residents, amateur geologists, folk culturalists or politicians. Ask them what stories or facts are most interesting about the people, land and history of the road.

3. Meet With The General Public

Public meetings can offer important opportunities to identify story ideas that have support from the community. These meetings are often fun and energizing for people. There is no important fiscal matter or regulatory debate at issue. You are just asking people to think about what's great in their community and how to tell that story.

4. Drive There & Look Around

While you would typically confirm and enhance story ideas during the inventory process, a drive along the byway may unveil a story. Consider yourself a tourist and, with fresh eyes, see what intrigues you. Stop to ask questions about unusual buildings or natural sites. Take photos and find experts who can explain the photo's story.

5. Visit The Library Or Other Research Sites

Read up on local history, ecology, culture and issues. Find a new idea to pursue.

6. Bring In Experts

State or Indian tribe historic preservation offices, local planners, university professors, Cooperative Extension agents, and tourism professionals can all be helpful. The best place to start is with your State, Indian tribe or Federal Agency scenic byway coordinator. He or she can direct you to people familiar with both your region's qualities and with the scenic byways program.

