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Rick Perkins,
*Hopewell Culture National
Historical Park*

Brandon Smith,
Tecumseh Outdoor Drama

Kathy Styer,
Adena Mansion & Gardens

Bryan Wickline,
Chillicothe Paints

CVB STAFF

Melody Young
Executive Director

Gene Betts
Communication Assistant

Ashley Lawson
Receptionist

2016 MEMBERSHIPS / AFFILIATIONS

Local
Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce
Ross County Historical Society
Adena Mansion & Gardens
Tecumseh Outdoor Drama
Pump House Center for the Arts
Downtown Associates
Chillicothe Kiwanis Club
Friends of Hopewell
Chillicothe Challenge
Feast of the Flowering Moon
Majestic Theatre
Southern Ohio Storytelling Festival
Chillicothe Paints
Ross County Historical Society

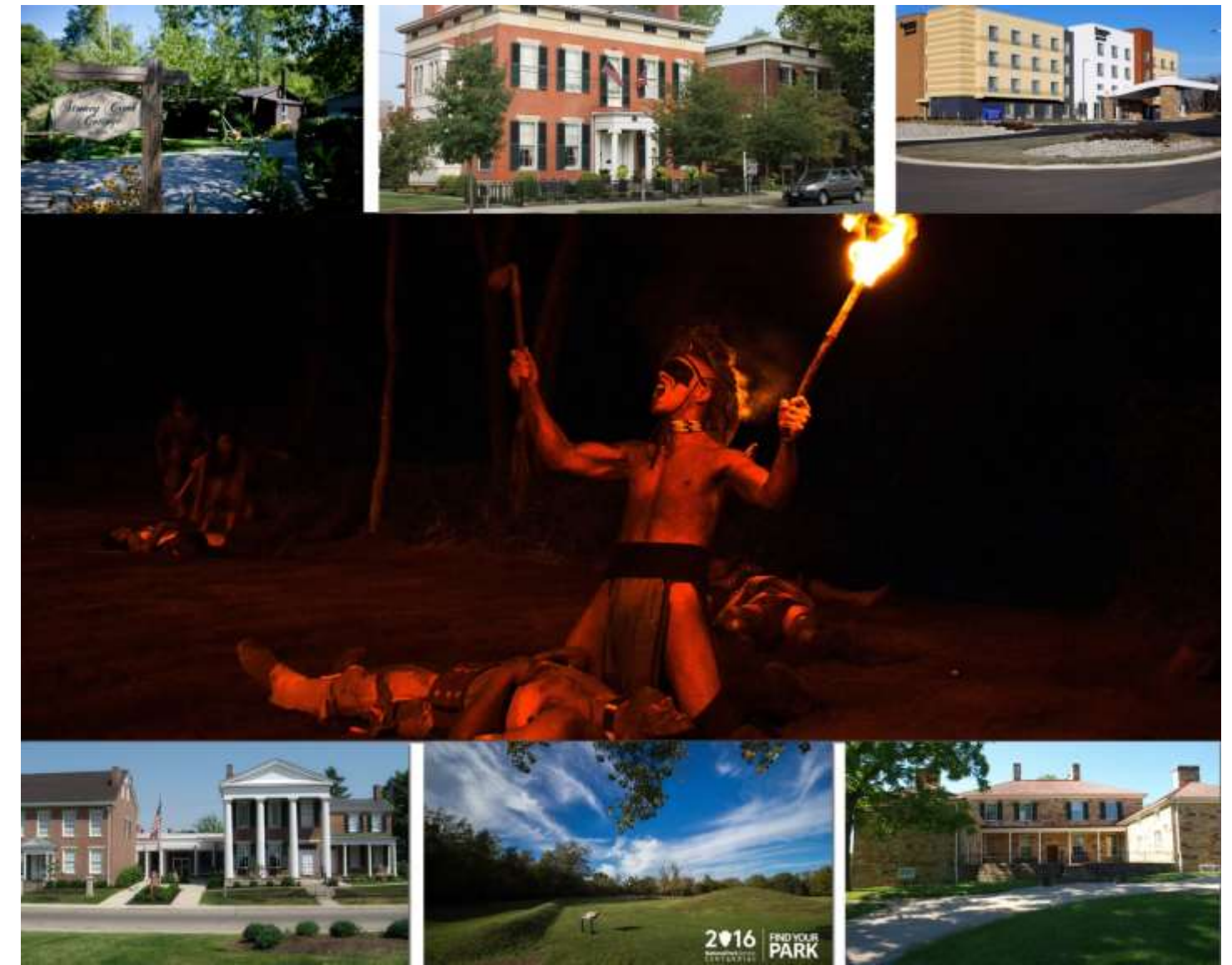
State
Tourism Ohio
Ohio Association of Convention & Visitors
Bureau (OACVB)
Ohio Travel Association
Ohio History Connection
Ohio Traveler
Ohio Appalachian Country

RCCVB MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Ross-Chillicothe Convention and Visitors Bureau is the growth and prosperity of area economic development through tourism. The Bureau's primary focus is to assist, attract and educate residents, travelers, and partners. It will function as an economic driver of the hospitality industry in general through promotion of extended or overnight visits to the areas of Chillicothe and Ross County, Ohio.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2016



Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau



Greetings,

Travel and tourism continue to be leading economic drivers for Ross County and for the State of Ohio. The Ross-Chillicothe Convention and Visitors Bureau (RCCVB) is the major organization committed to promotion of the hospitality industry and to bringing travelers to the area for any variety of reasons: to visit area attractions, for meetings or conventions, for sporting events...or just to explore and enjoy this little section of Ohio as a premiere travel destination.

This is the 2016 Annual Report for the RCCVB. It showcases what the Bureau has accomplished during the past year and where it's headed...or our hopes and aspirations...for 2017. We are privileged to bring you this report each year.

Many factors contribute to the overall impact of tourism. The RCCVB works diligently to boost the local economy. But without the dedication of countless industry partners—the attractions and entertainment venues, hotels, local shops, restaurants, etc., etc., etc.—the full force of the industry as a driving component of the local economy cannot be fully appreciated. We salute and express profound appreciation to all our partners.

Ohio has seen continued growth in visitor spending; Ross County is no exception. The Bureau and its Board of Directors are excited about the area's appeal and our continued hopes as we move into 2017. With this Annual Report, we reiterate our commitment to market, to assist, to develop, and to brand Chillicothe and Ross County as the travel destination truly "Where To Be" and most definitely not to be missed.

Melody Young
Executive Director

David M. Polk
President

CAMP SHERMAN DAYS

The centennial anniversary of Camp Sherman in Chillicothe will be on July 1, 2017. Many organizations in the community are coming together to present "Camp Sherman Days" from July 1st through July 9th. This anniversary celebration will feature historical reenactments, tours of Camp Sherman, a Vaudeville production, parade and many other activities and events.

The centennial days also will encompass many established events to help promote Camp Sherman Days within the community. The event will partner with the City of Chillicothe's Firework Display, Rotary's First Thursday, Chillicothe Kiwanis's Pancake Breakfast, and Chillicothe Civic Theatre's Run, Walk & Boom 5K, with more coming on board during further organizing efforts.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

A focus of the Community Visioning Team is to establish Chillicothe and Ross County as a destination for mountain biking in the hope of hosting a bike festival in the future. Participants within the visioning team met with an organizer from the International Mountain Biking Association in the fall to discuss what Ross County would need to do in order to become a biking destination.

Currently there are several miles of mountain bike trails within area State Parks, but the ultimate goal is for Ross County to have 50 miles of trails, critical to developing this type of destination. The visioning team is currently looking into hosting a bike festival in 2017 to showcase what Ross County already has and bring awareness to potential cyclists of what could happen with improvements.

NATIONAL ACTS COMING TO ROSS CO.

Visitors come to a community because of the attractions and/or events taking place. During the summer of 2017 there are several national musical acts coming to Ross County. For example, "Live on the Mountain" music series produced by The Scioto Society will host Dailey & Vincent, Lonesome River Band and Ricky Skaggs to name several.

FOURTH ANNUAL TOURISM BANQUET

Continuing the tradition, the Bureau plans to hold its Fourth Annual Tourism Banquet to take place on May 8, 2017 at the Christopher Conference Center. The annual banquet was started by the Bureau to celebrate the local tourism industry with partners and serves as the kick-off event for local tourism. Dates for the banquet are always selected in conjunction with the National Travel & Tourism Week.

During the banquet, the Bureau will award and recognize some of the "best of the best" in the local industry with its Pineapple Awards. Partners nominate employees, peers, volunteers who go above and beyond in customer service, promoting Ross County as a destination, and in leading their teams to success. Objective industry leaders from outside the area assist the Bureau by reviewing the nominations and selecting winners who receive the coveted Pineapple Award in each category.

Awarded at the banquet will be "Front Line Associate of the Year", "Behind the Scenes Associate", "Volunteer of the Year", and "Director/Innkeeper of the Year." In addition, the Bureau will present a special award to the "Grand Pineapple." The ultimate honor bestowed on a member of the community who is a champion for local tourism.

CO-OP MARKETING

After a successful co-op campaign with partners in 2016, the Bureau again will be working with its partners in 2017 to promote co-op advertising opportunities. Co-op advertising features multiple locations and allows both the Bureau and its partners to share the advertising expense for larger ads. In 2016, the bureau and partners came together to execute a beautifully designed two-page ad in *Ohio Magazine*.

THE BUCK FIFTY

The Buck Fifty is a two-day, overnight relay race coming to Ross County in the spring of 2017. The race will take participants throughout the county. Runners utilize 60% back roads, 15% trails and the remaining 25% covering historic Chillicothe.

WEBSITE STATS

	<u>2016</u>	<u>2015</u>
Visits	63,820	52,957
Users	47,776	38,591
Pageviews	150,637	138,126

With a continued focus on ensuring a strong online presence, the Bureau is excited to report a 20% increase in sessions for its website, with a 24% increase of users accessing the site.

This translates to marketing efforts and supports that potential visitors were able to discover Ross County’s attractions, lodging options, shopping & dining choices and all of the events taking place in the community.

The RCCVB’s major source of social networking was via Facebook, and the page saw a 15% increase in followers during 2016. The Bureau also utilized Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, and YouTube.

AD PLACEMENT

- Byways Magazine
- Country Living Magazine
- Ohio Magazine
- LongWeekends Magazine
- Go Ohio Valley Magazine
- Columbus Best Driving Vacations
- Home & Away Magazine
- Media Network of Central Ohio
- WOUB – TV & Radio
- American Antiquities
- Ohio Appalachian Country Map/Brochure
- Ohio Travel Guide
- Ohio Traveler
- Chillicothe Ross Chamber of Commerce- Map
- Adventure Outdoors Magazine
- Ad-Rack
- Ross County Fair Book
- InSight Advertising
- Mason County, WV Visitors Guide
- iHeartMedia
- Ashland Times Gazette
- Alliance Review
- Daily Record
- Record Courier
- The Jeffersonian
- Aurora Advocate
- Hudson Hub-Times

ASSISTING VISITORS

Towards the end of 2016, a new location became a focus. With the new location established, the Bureau is looking forward to assisting more visitors in 2017. Since the location is close to Bridge Street, US Highway 23, and US Route 35. The Bureau is working with Ohio Department of Transportation, City of Chillicothe and Ross County to install traditional “Tourist Information” signs along these highways to direct travelers to the new location. Staff can easily steer visitors to local attractions, lodging facilities, local shops and restaurants.

In preparation for the upcoming tourism season, staff members from the Bureau will be visiting with frontline associates in partnering properties to ensure they are aware of the new location and how the Bureau can assist their guests. To help ensure that visitors have an exceptional experience, the Bureau wants to be able to interact with as many visitors to provide suggestions on activities, events and attractions to visit while in town. Staff members can also help guests obtain tickets to shows and productions where online ticketing is available.

MAJESTIC THEATRE EXPANSION

One of the many historic structures of downtown Chillicothe, the Majestic Theatre, is currently working on a grant from the Ohio Capital Bill that will improve the theatre with a new lobby and restrooms. Not only will such a renovation improve patron experience for concerts and other productions at the theatre, but also it will allow the Bureau to help market the 500-seat theatre as a space for meetings, conferences and presentations.



EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

During 2016, the Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau (RCCVB) invested \$141,236.89 in advertising and marketing Ross County as a tourism destination. This investment in advertising represented a 33% increase over 2015. Advertisements were distributed through print materials, digital advertisements, trade/travel shows and partnerships. Advertisements targeting leisure travelers were distributed in numerous geographical areas outside of Ross County to encourage additional overnight stays at local lodging facilities. Group tour operators were targeted through leads generated by RCCVB’s membership in *Ohio Has It*, which is an industry-led marketing partnership that showcases the experiences Ohio has to offer for motorcoach groups.

Continuing the approach established in 2015, the Bureau continued to fine tune its advertising and marketing plan to target ideal leisure visitors to the area. The process included analyzing ad sizes, placement, cost, and audience interest in print media and digital advertisements. This process assisted in making informed decisions when selecting avenues for advertising, ensuring that the ads were geared toward the audience demographics, showcased Ross County attractions to meet visitor interests, and purchased the right size ads to be noticed by the readers. The Bureau also was able to display the official *Ross County Visitors Guide* in all Travel Information Centers (TICs) in Ohio and select TICs in neighboring states through an investment from the City of Chillicothe.

Online advertising has become a popular platform for destination marketing organizations. Following this trend, the Bureau obtained banner ads on *Ohio Traveler* and *LongWeekends* websites. The banner ads provided a quick, captivating glimpse and gave users a clickable, direct link to RCCVB’s website to learn more about the area. The Bureau also is represented with a full page digital ad in the *Ohio Travel Guide’s* mobile app. Additionally the Bureau implemented the use of Google Adwords in 2016 during the tourism season to target audiences searching for travel destinations. The keywords targeted were relevant to Ross County’s tourist attractions and also targeted specific geographical audiences.

The online presence of the Bureau on social networking continues to play an important role in advertising and marketing. It also lets the Bureau connect with its followers to promote any upcoming events, attractions, and information on tourism in Ross County. Over the course of 2016, the Bureau’s social media grew 15% with followers. In addition to connecting with followers, the Bureau utilizes Facebook’s advertising elements. This has been shown to be effective in reaching younger generations.

A benefit of advertising in *Ohio Magazine*, *LongWeekends* magazine, and *Ohio Travel Guide* is that the Bureau receives consumer requests (leads) for more information on Ross County. RCCVB fulfilled 2,060 reader requests in 2016. This was an increase of 54% over the requests received in 2015. Of the requests, 431 were fulfilled electronically through email guiding users to the digital, online version of our *Visitors Guide* and 1,629 were fulfilled by mailing a physical copy of the *Visitors Guide*.

The 2017-2018 edition of the official *Ross County Visitors Guide* was completed in the fall through Great Lakes Publishing. Continuing with the design concept of a “storybook,” content was designed and written in the guide to allow area historical figures to tell their stories. Images used within the guide were selected to show real people having real fun and enjoying attractions first hand.

Overall, Ross County’s tourism sector held strong through 2016 with lodging tax receipts increasing 8% over the previous year. Many of the area attractions reported an increase in attendance. The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau anticipates lodging tax receipts to continue to increase through 2017 with the additional 81-room Fairfield Inn & Suites that opened in the fall. Continued growth and a strong tourism presence are definitely on the horizon for Ross County.

LODGING TAX

Following another successful year for tourism in Ross County, the Bureau is proud to report that 2016 was another year that saw an increase in lodging tax receipts. During the past year the Bureau received \$307,678.34, an 8% increase over 2015.

The increase is a direct result of additional marketing and advertising to leisure travelers and the higher demand for rooms in the Chillicothe market. Due to such a demand, lodging facilities have been able to avoid over-discounting rates.

Chillicothe is a destination for both leisure and corporate travelers. Many of the large corporations in the area and surrounding counties regularly utilize lodging individuals in the community.

CVB NEW LOCATION

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau Board of Directors and Staff made the decision to move the Bureau to a new location during the fall. The relocation decision was made to help improve awareness of the Bureau and to make it more convenient for visitors.

The Bureau felt that visitors to Ross County are most frequently utilizing US Highway 23 and US Route 35 when coming into the county. With this move, the Bureau's goal is to assist and direct more visitors to area attractions and to encourage longer stays.



With anticipation of seeing more visitors, the Bureau will also extend its operational hours to include Saturday hours from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Additionally, the Bureau's new location now offers visitors an always open lobby and the ability to access brochures after regular hours.

CVB NEW LOCATION (cont.)

The implementation of the souvenir shop within the Bureau was well received by visitors to the area. Items purchased as souvenirs can only continue to build awareness of area attractions and promote Chillicothe and Ross County as a destination.

FAIRFIELD INN & SUITES

With the opening of Fairfield Inn & Suites, Chillicothe's lodging ability has been expanded by eighty-one rooms. This is most significant in the market since demand by leisure and corporate travelers continue to grow.



Throughout the year, Ross County's hotels, cabins and bed & breakfast locations experienced maximum occupancy; some lodgers unfortunately were displaced outside of county. The Bureau feels that fewer overnight stays will be lost due to lack of rooms in the marketplace and looks forward to working with all lodging partners to help obtain maximum occupancy again in 2017.

ATTRACTIONS

Ross County saw a 16% overall increase in visitors to area attractions in 2016. When compared to the previous year, 2016 had an additional 15,879 visitors. Obtaining these metrics from partners helps the Bureau measure effectiveness of its marketing and advertising strategies.

ATTRACTIONS (cont.)

Hopewell Culture National Historical Park (HOCU) reported the largest boost in visitors with a 33.2% annual increase, totaling 58,058 visitors touring the earthworks. 2016 also marked a milestone for the National Park Service as they celebrated their Centennial anniversary, and locally, Hopewell opened Hopeton Earthworks to the public. HOCU visits undoubtedly will continue to increase as work continues toward attaining World Heritage designation.

As Tecumseh Outdoor Drama continues to expand its programming with concerts and special events, attendance has increased 7% for the 2016 season. The addition of "Live on the Mountain" music series and the Halloween event, "Haunted Mountain" has made a significant impact on ticket sales.

Outdoor recreation continued as a popular market segment and the Bureau showcased many and varied opportunities in Ross County for travelers. There was positive feedback regarding attendance at State Parks. Although an exact count of visitors was not available, rangers were able to confirm there were more visitors. The outdoor recreation market should continue to grow as effort is under way for a Mountain Bike Festival in 2017.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Ross-Chillicothe Convention & Visitors Bureau has always endorsed the importance of being involved in the community that it is promoting as a destination. By employees participating with area organizations' boards and committees, the Bureau is able to partner with organizers to build a stronger tourism destination for Ross County.

Melody Young, RCCVB Executive Director, was active throughout 2016 and is currently a board member for Chillicothe Kiwanis Club, Adena Mansion & Gardens, The Scioto Society, Ohio Appalachian Country, the Convention & Facilities Authority (CFA), the Majestic Theatre, the World Heritage Steering Committee, and regularly attends and participates in the Ohio Association of Convention & Visitors Bureaus (OACVB) and the Ohio Travel Association (OTA).

Gene Betts, RCCVB Communication Assistant, was likewise very active and is currently a board member for Downtown Associates, the Feast of the Flowering Moon, the First Capital District and the Majestic Theatre.

PROMOTIONAL ASSISTANCE GRANTS

As part of supporting the community, the Ross-Chillicothe CVB offers an annual Promotional Assistance Program to help contribute to the success of events or programs in the community. The program was developed to allow the Bureau to give back to the community and to help organizers promote an activity thereby increasing awareness and the potential for tourism visitation to the area.

Grants are considered and approved by the Board of Directors and funds are disbursed during the CVB's annual Tourism Banquet in May. In 2016, "The Bucky Fifty" was awarded \$2,000 towards its overnight relay race coming in 2017, the "Donald L. Soccer Complex" was awarded \$2,000 to help with bringing additional tournaments to Chillicothe, and finally the Mighty Children's Museum was awarded \$1,000 to go towards start-up of its non-profit museum for children.

