

Turning Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley into an Internationally-Recognized Visitor Destination

In the beginning, or as we like to call it, the mid 1980s, Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley offered little in the way of attracting visitors to the region. Sure, we had a couple of major attractions and a rich industrial heritage (being home to our country's industrial revolution is no small thing). But they came with a regional economy on the decline, some of Rhode Island's poorest communities, and an extremely polluted industrial river, whose only message to visitors was, "approach at your own risk." Today, thanks to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and many partners, the Blackstone Valley is considered one of Rhode Island's most significant visitor destinations, and a region where even our poorest communities have become more attractive places to live and work. Home to some of Rhode Island's most visited attractions and only national park, the Blackstone Valley, through its many historic sites and museums, is THE place to relive our great industrial heritage. It is a major arts destination and location of some of our state's finest, most unique, dining establishments. Its many parks, farms and open spaces containing miles of waterways, hiking trails, bike paths, and abundance of wildlife and fall foliage make it one of the state's outdoor recreational hotspots. At the heart of that renaissance is the Blackstone River which is now a haven for boaters, wildlife watchers, and fishermen.

Since its creation in 1985, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has been a leader in transforming Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley into an internationally- recognized visitor destination — a strong, vibrant region for visitors and residents alike. Working in conjunction with local communities, state and federal governments, and like-minded nonprofits and businesses, the Council has not only increased the number of visitors and enhanced their experiences, but strengthened the region's economy, created a stronger, cleaner environment, and improved the quality of life for Blackstone Valley residents.

With no mansions or ocean beaches, the Council built on many of the assets existing in the region prior to the Council's creation: a rich, cultural heritage and historic legacy, ethnic diversity, the Blackstone River, parks and recreational facilities, existing attractions such as the Pawtucket Red Sox, Twin River, Slater Mill, and a number of other historical attractions. Our success has been built upon the belief that healthy, vibrant and unique communities become stronger visitor destinations since proud residents, after all, are more likely to encourage people to visit their hometowns.

The Council's work involves creating positive change with regard to community values by developing and promoting coordinated, responsible and sustainable tourism in Rhode Island's Blackstone Valley communities. It is unique among Rhode Island's regional tourism councils in its use of sustainable tourism principles to improve quality of life, preserve the region's history, build a stronger, cleaner environment, and celebrate our cultural heritage – all of which contribute to making the region a stronger destination for visitors and home for residents.

These overarching missions are met through direct approaches including:

- 1) social justice & voice,
- 2) youth, adult & elder education,
- 3) urban planning & design,
- 4) community development,
- 5) disaster resiliency,
- 6) event & festival programming,
- 7) support of local entrepreneurs,
- 8) the arts & creative development, and
- 9) promotional support.

Sustainable development demands that we improve our lifestyle and the quality of a region while preserving and building on the region's environment and natural resources, culture and heritage, health and safety needs, and other positive components. To be sustainable, a community must strive to: avoid decreasing biodiversity, avoid consuming resources faster than they are renewed, recycle and reuse virtually all materials, and rely primarily on resources of its own region. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council believes that the use of sustainable tourism principles has played an important role in building a stronger region for residents and visitors by improving upon environmental quality, cultural appreciation and interpretation, historical preservation, and overall quality of life. Through its Blackstone River and environmental cleanup efforts and education programs, the Council has become one of the most stalwart environmental educators and patrons of the region.

As you might expect, trying to turn a region with so many drawbacks into a visitor destination was not easy. While it was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution, in the mid 80s, when it came to booming economics, it was on the outside looking in. Bob Billington got the idea when a Factory Outlet Association he created in 1984 attracted shoppers to the region who, he thought, might also be interested in local restaurants and attractions. The Rhode Island Division of Tourism offered a matching grant to begin the effort, stipulating that local communities contribute the same amount. Setting out to convince local government and civic groups, the only question was whether he would be met with a snicker, guffaw, or the all too frequent belly laugh. He persevered, however, and each community eventually met the matching grant, with many more groups and individuals coming over to his side during the next few years.

In 1985, the Tourism Council was born with Billington elected President. Rallying support in the early years among local and statewide agencies and tourism directors was difficult. But with the help of several corporations and businesses that recognized the real value of tourism to the region's residents, and the National Guard and Heritage Corridor promoting environmental cleanup and other projects, he convinced many supporters to come aboard. With the purchase of the 49-passenger Blackstone Valley Explorer Riverboat and public river tours came the dawn of the Blackstone River being the centerpiece of efforts to attract visitors to the region and build up the pride and spirit of those living and working here.

The Council has worked and partnered with local communities, planning and development groups, foundations, environmental and river cleanup groups, nonprofits, state, local and federal governments, and businesses to carry out its mission. It has worked closely with the Statewide Tourism Division and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, in addition to international communities and entities in the United Kingdom, Brazil, Colombia, Canada and Taiwan. The broad partnerships, in conjunction with the Council's three decades of experience, have meant there is an unparalleled capacity for regional sustainable development.

How did it begin? The following tells the story of establishing a tourism industry in the Blackstone River Valley:

1983

- Bob Billington formed the Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet Association in March, the kick-off was held on June 1 at the Slater Mill Historic Site. "For years, people with money in their pockets have been zipping along Interstate 95 in Rhode Island and just driving by us", explains Robert Billington, owner of a small factory in the state's severely depressed and idle

- Blackstone Valley. "It's time to tell them to stop."
- The Blackstone Valley is now part of the Americana Trail established by Bristol County Development Council of Massachusetts The trail goes from Mystic, CT to Plymouth, MA
 - A Conference on Tourism was organized by Gov. Garraghy and held at the Biltmore Plaza. Gov Garraghy invited 500 tourism professionals to attend the first Governor's Conference on Tourism.
50,000 Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet brochures were produced and distributed nationally.
 - An article by reporter Karen Hupp in The Evening Times suggested to Mayor Kinch that it's time to think about tourism in Pawtucket. The reporter suggested the mayor consider a riverboat, shops and condominiums, travel brochures promoting restaurants and places of interest and of course, the Slater Mill.
 - A 15-division Oktoberfest Parade was held in Pawtucket and a crowd of 30,000 attended.
 - The Cumberland Conservation Commission took preliminary steps to obtain sponsorship of a project to develop a linear park on the Cumberland side of the Blackstone River. Land was recently acquired by the town of Lincoln
 - City of Central Falls contributed \$600 to promote factory outlets and local businesses.

1984

- The Northgate Tollhouse in Lincoln is proposed as a site for a new Tourism Info Center for the Blackstone Valley per Ed McDermott, President of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society
- A beautifully-designed four-page ad promoting the Blackstone Valley was featured in Yankee Magazine's *Travel Guide to New England*
- U.S. Sen. Claiborne Pell took a four-mile ride on the Providence & Worcester Railroad with the RI Dept. of Environmental Management to view possibilities for a linear park and a bike path from Providence to MA.
- Candidate for Lt. Governor Frank Licht made a pitch for a more comprehensive focus on state tourism in Rhode Island and complimented the efforts of the Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet Association and the RI Hospitality Association
- The Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet Association has plans to produce additional guides to include restaurants and places of interest in the Blackstone Valley
- Rep Mabel Anderson represented Pawtucket at the second Governor's Conference on Tourism at Bryant College
- Robert Billington and the Blackstone Valley Factory Outlet Association was praised by Thomas McCaghren, Public Information Officer for the State of Rhode Island, at a meeting at the Slater Mill Historic Site. In referring to the formation of the Factory Outlet Association and the new idea of a Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Mr. McCaghren stated, "Bob Billington had a dream and look what he's doing with it..."
Robert Billington has asked that the cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley contribute between \$1,800 - \$4,500 to benefit the formation of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

- The Blackstone Valley is now part of the *The Americana Trail*. The Trail stretches from Mystic, CT to Plymouth, MA and is distributed nationally.

1985

- Bob Billington founded the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- The Council will be headquartered at the Northgate Tollhouse in Lincoln. No contributions have been received yet from the local cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley.
- U. S. Heritage Corridor status for Blackstone River and Canal gains support of two panels.
- Published *Blackstone Valley Historic Sites* brochure
- Six communities in the Blackstone Valley formerly approved the Tourism Council to promote tourism on their behalf: Pawtucket, Woonsocket, Cumberland, Lincoln, North Smithfield, Central Falls
- \$10,000 was raised in grants and donations by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to attract tourists to the region
- The Blackstone Valley was featured in an expanded promotion in the 1985-1986 Official Guide to Southeastern New England
- Edwin McDermott, a member of the Board of Directors of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, received a State Recognition Award at a Tourism Week luncheon sponsored by the Department of Economic Development
- Federal legislation was recently filed to designate the Blackstone River and Canal from Worcester to Providence as a National Heritage Corridor
- Blackstone Valley slogan announced: *The Fiber That Wove America's Spirit*
- Blackstone Valley featured in *Americana Trail Magazine*
- Blackstone Valley featured in *Yankee Magazine* in article about factory outlet shopping
- Tourism Council featured at Big E in Springfield, MA
- Tourism Council published *Island Summer in the Valley and Northern Rhode Island*
- 16-page Blackstone Valley Visitor Guide published by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hailed by Tourism Director David Diprete as a great co-operative undertaking. Guide was developed by Edwin McDermott of the Blackstone Valley Historical Society and David W. Balfour of the RI Hospitality Association with assistance from travel/tourism students from the Sawyer School of Business in Pawtucket.
- Pohlson Galleries, formerly located in Pawtucket and run by the Joseph Billington of Cumberland has moved from Pawtucket to a new location in Cumberland
- Yankee Magazine highlighted the Blackstone Valley in an 11-page feature story complete with text and many beautiful color photos
- Tourism Council published *Blackstone Valley Fall Foliage Guide*
- Annual revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$7,550 in 1985

1986

- Billington hired as first full time director
- Board of Directors elected to the Tourism Council
- \$5,000 was raised from local Chambers of Commerce, Blackstone Valley cities and towns and private individuals and matched by the RI State Department of Economic Development

- A Celebration was held at Northgate Tollhouse in Lincoln to commemorate formation of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The celebration included guest speakers and over 20 exhibitors from the Blackstone Valley and music by Pendragon.
- A \$5,000 legislative grant was presented to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council by the Rhode Island State Senate
- Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor signed into law
- Blackstone Valley featured in *Official Guide to Southeastern New England* 1985-1986
- Federal government authorizes the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
- The RI General Assembly approved the first hotel room tax. In September, 4 percent of hotel and motel room surcharge was added to the state's existing 6 percent sales tax. Half of the new tax, or two percent of room charges, is being turned over to one of the six new regional tourism organizations to finance promotions.
- Received \$10,000 job training funds from RI Department of Employment and Training
- The RI Department of Environmental Management, city officials and a large group of volunteers under the OSCAR Riverbank Rescue Project (Ocean State Cleanup and Recycling) held a large clean-up of the Blackstone River in September
- Former Cumberland Mayor Rick Alger helped the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council apply for 501(C)3 status as a non-profit educational corporation
- Published *Holidays in Pawtucket* and *Christmas in the Valley* brochures
- Published *Blackstone Valley Historic Mills* brochure
- Over 4,000 tourism information packets were sent out
- Bob Billington and other representatives from the Tourism Council volunteered at the "Big E" in Springfield, MA
- Partnered with the National Guard to remove trash from the Blackstone River
- May Day Celebration with Cumberland Company
- Bob Billington attended RI Bed and Breakfast Conference
- Interns from Sawyer School worked at the Tourism Council in 1986
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$9250 in 1986
- Blackstone Valley published first *Christmas in Pawtucket* brochure

1987

- Ribbon-cutting ceremony and reception held to commemorate Tourism Council's new headquarters at Northgate Tollhouse on April 6
- Published *Blackstone Valley Banner Tours*, highlighting 24 sites in the nine Blackstone Valley communities, with \$2,500 grant from National Trust for Historic Preservation
- First nine interns from Johnson & Wales Department of Travel and Tourism working with Tourism Council to develop familiarization tours, prepare bus tour packages, and uncover leads for travel writers
- 6,000 mail inquiries from customers fulfilled
- Published *Blackstone Valley Passport Sample Tour Packet, Springtime in the Blackstone Valley, Blackstone Valley Summer Events, and Christmas in the Valley* brochure

- American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) trade magazine *Travel News* highlighted Blackstone Valley in 2 page color spread
- Published Second edition of *Blackstone Valley Tourism Guide*
- Culminating a three-year effort, the Town of Smithfield has signed on to support the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Now all 8 cities and towns are represented by the Tourism Council
- Published *Blackstone Valley Restaurants* listing
- Published *Blackstone Valley Group Planning Guide* for trade use only
- Attended the second annual New England Marketplace on Cape Cod where Bob Billington met with over 50 group-tour planners
- Tourism Council advertised in *Travel Holiday*, *Yankee Travel Guide*, *ASTA Travel news*, *The Americana Trail*, and *Country Living Magazine*
- Ed McDermott from the Blackstone Valley Historical Society led a group of volunteers fulfilling visitor information packets
- Travel writers from the *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, *RI Magazine*, *The Original New England Guide*, and *Yankee Magazine* were invited to join familiarization tours of the Blackstone Valley along with motor coach tours along with touring consultants, and motor coach tour operators
- Received \$1,000 grant from RI Department of Economic Development to purchase computer for office
- Tourism Council displayed at the second annual Worcester Travel Show sponsored by the Worcester Telegram & Gazette
- Published *Blackstone Valley's Historic Mills, A Self-guided Tour in and Around Pawtucket and Central Falls* with a grant from Rapid Printing and the RI Committee for the Humanities
- Bob Billington met the Prime Minister of Tourism from the Government of Madeira
- Worked with Channel 6 on video of the Blackstone Valley
- Tourism Council publishes *Summer in the Valley and Northern Rhode Island* event calendar
- Tourism Council printed *Christmas in Pawtucket* brochure
- Tourism Council ran full page ads in *Yankee Travel Guide* and *Travel Holiday* magazine
- Bob Billington teaches class at Learning Connection on a *Blackstone Valley Shopping Excursion*
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$58,243 in 1987
- *Christmas at the Park* celebrated at Slater Park in Pawtucket in cooperation with Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and City of Pawtucket

1988

- Launched the slogan "*Destination Blackstone River Valley – Something New, Something Different*"
- 18 itineraries developed for groups to tour Blackstone Valley
- Scheduled over 20 bus Tourism Council annual meeting held at 2 George St , Pawtucket
- 20 bus tours of the Blackstone Valley along with Conway Bus Tours and other bus companies highlighting the area as a tourism destination
- Fulfilled 10,000 mail requests for information on the Blackstone Valley
- Tourism Council publishes *Fall Foliage* brochure, an 85-mile driving tour of the Blackstone Valley and *Holidays in the Country Blackstone Valley Rhode Island* brochure

- Robert Billington sworn in as commissioner to Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
- Tourism Council published three different *Woonsocket Walking Tour Guides*
- Financial support in 1988 provided by the Greater Woonsocket Chamber of Commerce, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Slater Companies, Pawtucket Red Sox, Blackstone Valley Historical Society and Conway Bus Service
- Pawtucket and Cumberland are featured in this spring's *Yankee Travel Guide*
- Tourism Council publishes first full-color brochure featuring Blackstone Valley
- Tourism Council advertised in *Yankee Travel Guide, The Original New England Guide, Bon Appétit, South Coastal New England, Americana Trail, and Travel Holiday*
- New brochures published: *Landmarks in Pawtucket, Factory Outlet Tour Guide, and Christmas in the Valley 1988*
- A Familiarization Tour of The Blackstone Valley was developed by Johnson & Wales interns. Tour leaders from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont and Newport were introduced to the Blackstone Valley.
- Bob Billington attended the National Conference on Historic Canals in Morris, IL
- The Tourism Council welcomed the first convention to the Blackstone Valley, The Society for Preservation of Old Mills (SPOOM). The three day convention with 200 attendees was headquartered at the Comfort Inn, Pawtucket.
- Tourism Council partners with The Learning Connection to offer three tours: A Fall Foliage Tour of the Blackstone Valley, A Factory Outlet Tour and a Blackstone River Towpath Tour
- Stories about the Blackstone Valley appeared in newspapers in Buffalo, NY, Boston Hartford, New Haven, New London, and Springfield, MA
- The Blackstone Valley Traveling Exhibit represented RI at the nation's largest film show in California. Members of the RI Film Commission brought the exhibit to show producers and directors possible movie locations in RI and the Blackstone Valley
- The Tourism Council Traveling Exhibit was also featured at the Bristol County Development Council Marketplace in March and the Pennsylvania Bus Association Marketplace in April
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$57,710 for 1988
- 23 busloads of visitors toured the Blackstone Valley for one-day tours in 1988

1989

- The Blackstone Valley Traveling Exhibit was featured at the Power Expo staged by the Providence Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor gains federal funding
- Chariot World Travel of Boston attended a seven-hour familiarization tour of the Blackstone Valley
- Launched Blackstone Valley Tourism One, 16-foot rubber raft secured thru Navy surplus
- State VIP's and journalists got first look at a surprisingly scenic river that had been shunned for decades

- First part-time staffer co-ordinates educational tours of the Blackstone Valley including 8 interpretive canoe trips, 4 interpretive bus tours and 2 train excursions in cooperation with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and the National Park Service
- First Fall Foliage map of the Blackstone Valley was published.
- Gail Antunes of Cumberland was commissioned to make the official Rhode Island State Quilt. Robert Billington of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council coordinated the project for the State Department of Economic Development.
- Published first comprehensive map of the Blackstone Valley
- 1st Travel Experiences trade show held at Lincoln Greyhound Park in conjunction with Conway Tours. This International marketing exposition attracted 400 travel planners and over 50 attractions from the East Coast
- Eight foot tall William Blackstone character appears at special events and parades including the Providence Quintessential Expo, Pennsylvania Bus Association Trade Show, RI Leukemia Society Luncheon, the Newport Winter Carnival, the South Coastal New England Marketplace in Galilee, and Pawtucket St Patrick's Day Parade, the Pawtucket Autumnfest Parade and the Octoberfest Parade in Woonsocket
- The Council's Traveling Trade Show Exhibit was featured at the Providence Convention and Visitor Bureau trade show in January
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council won the Best of Show award for their tourism exhibit at the South Coastal New England Trade Show in April in Galilee
- Tourism Council published *Blackstone Valley Fresh Water Guide* that highlights areas to swim, water-ski, fish or launch boats or canoes in the Blackstone Valley
- Leonard Panaggio of Newport inducted into the William Blackstone Society at the annual dinner in June
- Chicken family-style dinners featured in Yankee Magazine
- Began development of the long-range *Regional Comprehensive Tourism Plan*
- Five pairs of interns from Johnson & Wales and Bryant College are preparing a familiarization tour of the Blackstone Valley for group tour leaders. They're also developing another "fam" tour to train people who run restaurants, hotels, and historical sites of interest in the Blackstone Valley
- The RI Historical Preservation Commission has designated the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to study historic sites throughout RI with an eye toward fully developing their tourism potential
- AAA of South-Central New England held their annual dinner in April at Twelve Acres in Smithfield. Bob Billington gave a talk on the Blackstone Valley
- Bob Billington represented the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in Washington, DC in March and met with Sen. Claiborne Pell and Sen. John Chafee about appropriating more money to the National Heritage Corridor
- In June, Bob Billington attended a conference in St Paul, MN sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Bob Billington attended the second annual Canal Conference in eastern Pennsylvania in September.

- Council to publish *Restaurant Guide to the Blackstone Valley* covering all nine cities and towns
- Six locations in the Diamond Hill area of Cumberland joined together to offer a one-day tour called Country Crossroads. Phantom Farms, Diamond Hill Vineyard, The Granary, Daze-End Herb Farm, Calico Shack, and With Heart and Hand. Other tours will be held throughout the year.
- Our new brochure, *Blackstone Valley Historic Mills* placed among the top four trade show pieces entered in the competition of the New England Travel and Tourism Research Association in Boston.
- The *Guide to the Ocean State* featured the Blackstone Valley in 1989
- Published *A Guide to Factory Outlets* in Blackstone Valley
- The Tourism Council has received a grant of \$4,800 to have Louis Lind research and write a brochure on Rev William Blackstone. Miss Lind is a free-lance writer and was a reporter for the Woonsocket Call for 25 years.
- A group of visitors from Italy, attending the second annual Convocation of Constantinian University in Providence visited the Blackstone Valley
- The Tourism Council assisted Smith-Appleby House in publishing a new four-color brochure
- The Tourism Council supplied photos of Smithfield to Almac's of Smithfield to be used for promotional purposes. Other Blackstone Valley photos have been featured in the *Original New England Guide*, *New England Getaways Magazine*, and the RI Department of Environmental Management.
- Our new *Christmas in the Valley* brochure increased attendance at the Blackstone Valley Historical Society Festival of the Trees, Christmas in the Park, the historic Daggett House, and the Loeff Carousal, and the Smith-Appleby House in Smithfield.
- Tourism Council published Fall Foliage Travel Guide to Blackstone Valley
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$102,729 in 1989
- Tourism Council publishes 1st comprehensive *Blackstone Valley Visitor Map*
- Two train trips from Valley Falls to Worcester roundtrip on Providence & Worcester Railroad sell out for October 14 and 15.
- Tourism Council produces *The Fiber That Wove America's Spirit*, video on the Blackstone Valley with music by Pendragon
- Bob Billington travels to Washington, DC with contingent to speak to RI and MA representatives on Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor

1990

- The Blackstone Valley now has its own theme song, video, and regional map
- Postage stamp featuring the Slater Mill and commemorating 200 years of statehood for Rhode Island is issued this year at Slater Mill
- Produced *The Fiber That Wove America's Spirit*, the Blackstone Valley's first promotional videotape. The video includes our new theme song, *The Working River*, written and produced by Pendragon
- RI State quilt created by Gail Antunes of Cumberland, Blackstone Valley Tourism one of sponsoring agencies
- Received \$400 grant from RI Arts and Tourism Commission to distribute it's promotional video, and companion music tape

- Tourism Council received \$1,000 check from Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc from profits from 1st Travel Experiences Trade Show
- The recently published *Blackstone Valley map* highlights local resources, points of interest, events, city streets, fishing spots and hiking trails
- Project Zap planned to clean up the Blackstone Valley on Earth Day in April
- Launched 20 passenger Glass-bottom boat cruises of the Pawtucket River in cooperation with Luther Blount of Blount Marine to test the viability of a permanent boat on the Blackstone River
- Over 350 people went on the historically-narrated cruises of the Pawtucket River. Betty Johnson and Jim Wheaton prepared the historical script for celebrity tour guides. Many local businesses helped defray costs and made the tours possible.
- Launched three-year "Let's Build a Boat" campaign to raise \$50,000 to build the 49-foot Blackstone Valley Explorer riverboat, designed by Luther Blount of Blount Marine, Warren, Rhode Island.
- Starting selling golden hammer pins as part of the "Build the Boat" campaign to help defray building costs of the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Launched the first working boat on the Blackstone River since 1848. Blackstone Valley Tourism I allows us to easily take the government's decision-makers as well as travel writers to some of the most scenic sights in the valley.
- Louise Lind compiled comprehensive information about William Blackstone, the area's first settler.
- A new brochure about Rev. William Blackstone, written by Louis Lind and illustrated by Rae White, received a donation from the Blackstone Valley Historical Society to help with production costs
- Spent hundreds of hours working on a cultural heritage and land management plan for the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission
- Our 8ft tall mascot, William Blackstone, made 24 public appearances including parades and festivals.
- Completed contract with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission to research the marketing possibilities of 50 sites around the state.
- Received publicity in countless newspaper articles and several local, regional and national magazines.
- Tourism Council continues to coordinate "A Taste of the Blackstone Valley" bus tours for tour groups
- Tourism Council publishes *Christmas in the Valley* brochure
- Produced *A Walking Tour of Pawtucket* brochure and a *Freshwater Recreation Guide to the Blackstone Valley*
- Fall Foliage Train trips in October on the Providence & Worcester Railroad produced by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council were a sell-out. Two train tours were held in October
- Get-a-Way Tours of CT has booked 12 one-day tours, Conway bus Co. is doing a record number of one-day tours and groups have booked overnight tours for 1991
- Former crewmen from the USS Bache and their wives visited sites in the Blackstone Valley during a two-day stay.
- A beautiful Rhode Island state quilt by fiber artist Gail Antunes will embark on a tour of libraries, museums, and other sites in Rhode Island.

The quilt, which took over 2,000 hours to make was coordinated by the Tourism Council

- The Tourism Council is working with local city and town planners in the Blackstone Valley as they prepare their community comprehensive plan
- Bob Billington worked with United Artists of Taunton to produce a half-hour TV special on the Blackstone Valley
- The Blackstone Valley holds a prominent place in Brenda Fine's book *Hidden in New England*
- Blackstone Valley was featured in the Boston Globe and Yankee Magazine.
- Holly Begley of the Slater Mill and Janice O'Donnell of the Children's Museum were invited to the White House by First Lady Barbara Bush to receive general operating support awards
- Out of state buses from New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut are bringing visitors to the Blackstone Valley
- Tourism Council is now selling baseball caps and T-shirts with the Blackstone River Valley logo along with *The Fiber that Wove Americas Spirit* and *The Working River* music cassette by Pendragon.
- Blackstone Valley's chicken-family-style dinners highlighted in *Yankee Magazine*
- Tourism Council coordinates *Working River* fundraiser at Slater Mill. New video, *The Fiber that Wove Americas Spirit* will be shown and Pendragon will perform songs from their new music cassette, *The Working River*
- The Tourism Council is now advertising in *Yankee Magazine*, *Yankee Magazine Travel Guide*, *the Original New England Guide*, *New England Group Tour Magazine*, *New England Travel Tour Guide* and *VISTAS published by the Pennsylvania Bus Association*.
- Bob Billington spoke to over 30 groups about tourism in the Blackstone Valley this year
- Over 27 group tours visited the Blackstone Valley in 1990
- Grant of \$4,8000 received from the Rhode Island Foundation
- Tourism Council participated in the Groden Center/Mazda Bike Race
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$110,182 for 1990

1991

- Moved Tourism Council headquarters to larger office space at Blackstone Valley Electric Co. building on Route 116 in Lincoln, RI
- Gov Bruce Sundlun takes a riverboat cruise on Blackstone River and donates \$100 towards the Council's fundraising efforts to build a riverboat to tour the various sections of the Blackstone River.
- Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission approved \$250,000 funding to Visitor's Center in Pawtucket
- Paul and Dorothy Blackstone and their son John, direct descendents of William Blackstone from Branford, CT, tour the Blackstone Valley in October
- Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission approves \$10,000 grant and \$25,000 grant
- Held 16 fall foliage riverboat rides leaving from the Pawtucket Harbor.
- Held first "Turn It Around With Tourism" tele-conference at Bryant College in conjunction with South County Tourism, RI Division of Tourism, Johnson and Wales University, University of Rhode Island, Bryant College, and Small Business Development Center

- Developed a comprehensive 23 town event collection and event calendar project under contract with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission
- Organized two public motor coach tours of the National Heritage Corridor in November
- Tourism Council offered four train excursions through the Blackstone Valley on the Providence & Worcester Railroad
- Sponsored the 1st annual Blackstone Valley Christmas Craft Fair at offices of Blackstone Valley Electric Company
- Co-coordinated the 1st annual "Santa on the River" event bringing Santa into the Valley by boat
- Bob Billington attended the Bristol County Travel Development Council travel show in Hyannis, and the Pennsylvania Bus Association travel show in Harrisburg, PA
- The Rhode Island Foundation awarded a grant to Louise Lind to do research on Rev William Blackstone
- *Something New – Something Different* is new message from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- *Destination Blackstone River Valley* will be on banners and our new theme is: *Visit My Home – Blackstone River Valley.*
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$109,596 in 1991
- Congressman Jack Reed, Congressman Ron Machtley, Sen. Claiborne Pell, and Sen. John Chafee accepted our request to be honorary chairmen of the "Build the Boat Campaign".

1992

- Published *Regional Comprehensive Tourism Guide* for the Blackstone Valley
- Organized 2nd "Turn it Around with Tourism" conference at Bryant College with Dr. Pat Manheim of Johnson and Wales University
- *Events of the Week*, a regular media release, was sent to over 300 media outlets
- Organized the Comeback Coalition, a group that would galvanize over four dozen nonprofit and for profit organizations to work together to re-make the image of Pawtucket,
- The Steamboat Muster will be the focal point of the Comeback Coalition
- Began working with Rhode Island Department of Economic Development and state-wide regional tourism councils and Lt. Governor Roger Begin on the development of a Visitor Signage program
- Co-coordinated 1st Annual Steamboat Muster in Pawtucket. 21 steamboats came to celebrate the Bicentennial of Steam in August
- A poster offering Polar Spring water during the water crisis in Pawtucket during the Steamboat Muster won a prestigious Nettie Award for design
- City of Pawtucket awarded \$250,000 grant from Blackstone River Valley Heritage Corridor Commission to open Visitor Center at former Peerless building in Pawtucket
- Began first internship program with Bryant College
- Began the process of working with RIDEM, RIDOT, and FHA to re-open the I-295 Information Centers under the jurisdiction of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Completed the *Blackstone Valley Regional Comprehensive Plan*
- Began first full-time internship program with Sawyer School

- Johnson and Wales senior marketing class involved in 1993 event planning
- Promoted the Blackstone Valley Region at the Pennsylvania Bus Association Group Leader Show in Harrisburg, PA
- Produced the second official Blackstone River Valley, Rhode Island map
- Presented Blackstone riverboat tours on a glass-bottomed boat owned by Luther Blount of Blount Marine. Of Warren. Partners included the Town of Cumberland, Citizen's Bank, Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, and the Cumberland Company for the Performing Arts. The first day of tours was a floating planning session with Governor Sundlun and 180 public officials from Rhode Island. The Cumberland Company performed on the banks of the Blackstone River. 27 riverboat tours on the glass-bottom boat were held over the three day period.
- Worked to secure a Lincoln- Mercury car commercial for filming at Lincoln Woods State Park
- Participated in the Blackstone Valley Exposition '92 at Lincoln Mall presented by Cumberland Company for the Performing Arts
- *Turn it Around With Tourism*, a national network teleconference devoted to the organization of rural tourism initiatives, was held at Bryant College and organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Over 700 people attended the *Travel Experiences Trade Show 1992* at Lincoln Greyhound Park for group tour planners in October
- Began work with Smithfield, Glocester, and Burrillville to expand the National Heritage Corridor boundaries
- Developed and coordinated a work/education program called the Youth Tourism Development Team for economically and disadvantaged youth for the Northern Rhode Island Private Industry Council
- Assisted in the dedication of the Valley Falls Heritage Park, a 2.3 acre site of a 19th century textile mill which was developed with local, state and federal funding
- During the last two years, over 1,300 passengers traveled on the Pawtucket River in a glass-bottom provided by Luther Blount of Blount Marine
- The Tourism Council will coordinate three motor coach tours of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor that are open to the public. The tours will run from the Slater Mill in Pawtucket to Waters Farm in Sutton, MA. With dinner at Wright's Dairy Farm.
- City of Pawtucket purchased the Peerless Building in Pawtucket in June.
- Bob Billington attended tourism conference in Kansas City, MO on new economic options for rural America
- Russian TV crew visits Slater Mill, Pawtucket Red Sox and Jaswell Farm
- Explorer tours feature Haunted River Tours
- Tourism Council to publish comprehensive Calendar of Events
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$128,013 for 1992

1993

- Year-long celebration planned to mark the 200th anniversary of Slater Mill.
- *Experience the Making of America* logo designed by Gates Leighton Associates of East Providence to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the Slater Mill.

- The name *Blackstone Valley Explorer* was chosen from 150 entries by the public as the new name of the riverboat being built by Luther Blount of Blount Marine of Warren, RI.
- Golden Hammer pins are being sold to support construction of the 49 passenger riverboat, the Blackstone Valley Explorer.
- New England Labor History Conference to be held at Woonsocket City Hall in April, 1993 co-sponsored by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and other Valley organizations.
- An official Laying of the Keel was held in March for the Blackstone Valley Explorer, the new 49-passenger riverboat being built by Blount Marine of Warren for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- A preview of the 21.5 mile bike path from Uxbridge, MA to Roger Williams Park will be held in June.
- Launched 49 passenger Blackstone Valley Explorer, the first riverboat on the Blackstone River in 170 years
- First tours left from the Pawtucket Harbor on the Blackstone Valley Explorer. Explorer then moved to Cumberland and then Woonsocket for tours
- Sen Pell and Gov Sundlun rode on the Explorer in Valley Falls
- Representatives from the Amber Valley in England will attend the Bicentennial Celebration in October of the American Industrial Revolution in the Blackstone Valley including Charles Cutting, Mayor of Amber Valley and his wife Jenny Cutting, former Mayor of Ripley
- Yankee Magazine featured an 18-page color story on the Blackstone Valley
- A Rubber Ducky Race was held in the Blackstone River. Over 900 rubber duck were dumped into the river from the John Street Bridge raising funds for the Blackstone Valley
- Organized the *Making of America Celebration Tour* visiting the nine cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Slater Mill. An official delegation from the Amber Valley were honored guests on the tour
- Published Fall *Foliage Guide to the Blackstone Valley*
- Blackstone Valley featured in Sunday edition of The Boston Globe
- Fleet Bank donates \$15,000 towards Celebration Tour of the Blackstone Valley
- A 30'x70' sandy cove was developed at the site of the State Pier in Pawtucket. Work is being done by local youths participating in a Northern RI Private Industry Council program overseen by the Tourism Council
- A cruise on the Vista Jubilee of Blount Marine in Warren leaving from the State Pier in Pawtucket is a highlight of the 2nd International Steamboat Muster
- South County Tourism and Blackstone Valley Tourism organized a Rhode Island Bed and Breakfast Bus Tour that toured bed and breakfasts in Newport and South County.
- 2nd International Steamboat Muster held in October in Pawtucket
- Rhode Island Quilt designed and made by Cumberland resident Gail Antunes to be on display at the White House over Christmas

- Bob Billington to attend National Tour Association convention in Atlantic City, NJ for the first time
- Bob Billington announces he will seek Federal money under the National Highway Transportation Act of 1991 to build a boat landing at Pawtucket Pier for a future water shuttle from Pawtucket to Providence
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council showcased the Blackstone Valley Explorer at the RI Convention Center grand opening
- Tourism Council coordinated meetings with the RI Transportation Enhancement Advisory Committee on how to spend \$3 million dollars each year for the next five years through the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1992.
- Tourism Council schedules a seminar on "How to Start a Bed and Breakfast" at the King's Inn in Lincoln.
- Musical group Pendragon and Mark Joel Levitt to perform his new play Allison and the Blackstone at Slater Mill to mark 200th Anniversary.
- The Tourism Council organized a motor coach tour in May of the Blackstone Valley which includes a tour of the Slater Mill and a chicken family-style dinner at Wright's
- A Civil War encampment was held at Chase Farm in May and co-sponsored by the Tourism Council and the Committee to Keep Lincoln Rural.
- Development of the Valley Falls Heritage Park on Broad Street, Central Falls should be completed by the end of 1993. Completed development will include picnic tables, historical signage, and re-location of the Stillwater Bridge from Smithfield.
- Tourism Council offers the video "The Fiber That Wove America's Spirit" to organizations in the area to showcase historic sites, cultural attractions and history of the Blackstone Valley.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council will sponsor the Rhode Island Tourism Unity Luncheon in May at King's Inn in Lincoln in Celebration of National Tourism Week.
- The first full-colored oversized postcard of the Blackstone Valley is available
- A new Blackstone River Valley Guide will be published four times a year in the Rhode Island Vacation Planner in partnership with the Tourism Council and the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce.
- A series of self-guided tours are available from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Tours include: The Heritage Tour, The Shoppers Tour, The Industry Tour, and the Church Tour.
- Sally Bruckshaw, marketing development officer for the Borough Council in the Amber Valley in England, visited the Blackstone Valley in June of 1993
- The 225th Anniversary of Samuel Slater's birthday was celebrated at the Slater Mill in June as part of the 200th anniversary of the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution.
- Blackstone Canal Conservancy group started by Val Stegemoen
- Bob Billington and other officials discuss the idea of having a toy museum in the former Peerless Department store in cooperation with Hasbro and calling it America's Toy Museum.
- The Tourism Council sells Golden Hammer pins for \$10 to fund a 49-passenger riverboat for tours on the Blackstone River.
- The Cumberland Company officially opened the new Blackstone River Theater in Central Falls in July.

- The Tourism Council is selling a *Fantastic Things to Do* coupon book as part of a creative fund-raising effort to raise money for the Blackstone Valley Explorer.
- The Tourism Council was awarded a \$40,000 loan through the RI Department of Economic Development to use towards paying for the construction of the Blackstone Valley Explorer.
- Santa Claus arrived at the School Street Pier by boat on his way to light the Christmas tree at Pawtucket City Hall. The Tourism Council arranged his visit and also organized a contest for decorated boats to accompany him up the Pawtucket River. Residents were also encouraged to decorate their cars and prizes were awarded.
- 70 exhibitors attended the Travel Experiences Expo at Lincoln Park
- The Blackstone Valley was the location for the League of Rhode League Historical Societies day-long event in October.
- Three fall foliage train trips on the Providence & Worcester Railroad were held in October. The tours are also sponsored by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
- Motor coach tour of the Blackstone Valley and Explorer boat tour planned for September sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Canal Conservancy
- Area youth recruited through the Northern RI Private Industry Council were hired for summer jobs to clean up the State Pier in Pawtucket prior to the Pawtucket Steamboat Muster in August.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$171,858 for 1993

1994

- Signed Blackstone Valley/Amber Valley Compact in Belper, England with delegation from Blackstone Valley traveling to Amber Valley to celebrate the signing and participate in "twinning ceremony" with Belper, England
- RiverClassroom program on the Blackstone Valley Explorer offers history, ecology and wildlife education to students
- President Bill Clinton visited the Portuguese Social Club in Pawtucket while in Rhode Island in November.
- President Clinton was presented with a Pawsox hat and a key to the City of Pawtucket by Mayor Bob Metivier along with other mementos of his visit
- Bob Billington presented the President with a framed photo of Slater Mill and a Mill Folks doll made by Park Ranger Suzanne Buchanan
- Factory tours in the Blackstone Valley planned for Tourism Week in May
- 3rd Annual Steamboat Muster held in August
- Blackstone Valley Explorer schedules boat tours on the Narrow River
- Tourism Council will host officials from Amber Valley with BBC and TCI documentaries planned
- Historic Celebration Bus Tour planned to celebrate the 200th Anniversary of Slater Mill. Motor coaches will travel to all 9 communities in Blackstone Valley in October
- Fleet Bank gives \$14,000 donation to Tourism Council to promote Experience the Making of America motor coach tour
- Cyril Maskery, President of the Belper Historical Society, and his wife visited the Blackstone Valley in September to meet with Mayor Bob Metivier and members of the community

- Mayor John Nelson and his wife Maureen of Belper, England visited Blackstone Valley in October to strengthen ties between Belper and Blackstone Valley
- Sally Bruckshaw, a tourism officer for the Amber Valley and her husband visited Pawtucket in June at the invitation of Bob Billington
- Sally Bruckshaw visits Blackstone Valley in October to promote Amber Valley at Travel Experiences Trade Show at Lincoln Park
- Tour developed of Slater Mill Pond for Blackstone Valley Explorer to leave from dock at Slater Mill
- Christmas in the Valley brochure printed
- The Niagara Prince, 175 foot long cruise ship built by Blount Marine of Warren had maiden voyage from Warren to pier in Pawtucket before being sent to Erie Canal
- New tour, Ghosts Along the Blackstone, developed by the Cumberland Company, for Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Blackstone Valley featured in media for many different ways to enjoy fall foliage: by car, by train, by foot, by air, by riverboat and by canoe
- New handicapped access ramp installed on banks of Blackstone River near Slater Mill Historic Site
- Over 23,849 passengers traveled on Blackstone Valley Explorer in 1994
- Tourism Council receives \$2,500 grant from the Ocean State Charities Trust for Riverclassroom program
- Tourism Council receives \$12,000 grant from Narragansett Bay Commission for Riverclassroom program.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism will receive \$10,000 from RI State Senate and an additional \$5,000 from Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act for new docks in Pawtucket for Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Valley residents welcome Santa as he arrives by boat at the Pawtucket Pier
- Senate gives final approval to a bill that provides \$1.05 million to cover expenses of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer ran boat trips on the Narrow River this year. Tours also took place on the Pawtucket, Providence, Seekonk, and Blackstone Rivers.
- In 1994 the Blackstone Valley Explorer hosted 237 school tours, 100 ecology tours, 137 historical tours, 333 public tours, 80 group tours, 14 charters, and 60 entertainment tours.
- The Blackstone River Theatre on Broad Street in Central Falls, formerly the home of the Cumberland Company, was re-opened as a musical venue by Russell Gusetti of Pendragon.
- Bob Billington was selected as Pawtucket Citizen of the Year by the Pawtucket Kiwanis.
- The RI State Senate approved \$10,000 and \$5,000 was granted from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act to construct a temporary landing in Pawtucket.
- Bob Billington proposes an idea for two water shuttles to go between Pawtucket and Providence to help reduce traffic congestion on Route 95.
- Approximately 25,000 people attended Oktoberfest held on Roosevelt Ave and grounds of the Slater Mill in October
- Bob Billington was named the Clemente Narcisse Greater Pawtucket Citizen of the Year for 1994 by the Kiwanis Club of Cumberland.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$301,069 for 1994

1995

- Purchased the Blackstone Valley's first trolley in 60 years in partnership with Conway/ Grayline
- Developed River in the Classroom program that offered students rides on the Blackstone Valley Explorer along with lessons in the history of the Blackstone River, ecology and wildlife
- William J. Brew 3rd of Narragansett was appointed as the agency's new River Studies Program ecologist in April.
- As part of the 10th anniversary celebration the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is publishing a Blackstone Valley Visitor's Resource Guide
- The City of Woonsocket has been awarded a \$350,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop a museum devoted to the history of labor in the Blackstone Valley.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$333,556 for 1995
- William Blackstone, the first settler of the Blackstone Valley, was honored at the Old Slater Mill on May 5, the 400th Anniversary of his birth in Belper, England. Relatives Elizabeth Blackstone and Dr. Robert Blackstone, direct descendants of Blackstone from Sacramento, California, attended the dinner. A series of events honoring the Rev. Blackstone were held throughout the day.
- Robert Billington was elected President of the Old Slater Mill Historic Site in February, 1995.
- A Civil War Expo was held at the Lincoln Mall in February. Robert Hunt Rhodes, whose memoirs were quoted extensively in Ken Burns Civil War series The Civil War, attended and sold copies of his book.
- A Mardi Gras celebration including the crowning of the Mardi Gras Queen, a dinner, a fashion show and activities for children was held in Woonsocket in February.
- A Photo Contest in honor of William Blackstone's 400th Birthday was held in the Blackstone Valley. The theme of the contest is to highlight children and families enjoying the cultural, historical, natural, educational, recreational or commercial sites in the Blackstone Valley.
- An event was held on March 6 at the Blackstone Monument in Valley Falls to mark William Blackstone's 400th birthday. Rev. Jeffrey Jencks of St John's Episcopal Church offered a prayer. Many of Blackstone's descendents were present.
- Edwin Bearss, a National Park Service Chief Historian, spoke at the Blackstone Valley Electric Company auditorium in February, 1985 on the Civil War and President Abraham Lincoln. Mr Bearss is the author of 12 books on the Civil War.
- Bob Billington of the Tourism Council and the Pawtucket Rotary Club are formulating ideas to develop America's Toy Museum of the World to be based at the former Peerless Building in Pawtucket.
- Lincoln Almond was inaugurated as Rhode Island's Governor in January and he said he "was proud to say I'm from Central Falls."
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was represented at the RI State House at festivities honoring Governor Almond's Inauguration as Governor. Information about the Blackstone Valley Explorer was passed out at the celebration which was open to the public.
- The Blackstone Valley will now have a nation-wide audience. The Arts and Entertainment Network has picked up the videos which were locally

produced by the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and will feature them on the History Channel.

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council announced its first International Trade mission to Montreal. Anne Conway and Mary Lou Morrisette Moran will represent the Blackstone Valley and meet with 200 travel Canadian travel agents.
- A fanciful map showcasing the voyage of the Blackstone Valley Explorer up and down the Blackstone River was designed by Neville Lassotovitch, a Barrington-based artist and graphic designer.
- A new book, *Belper, Looking Into the Past*, by Audrey Barrass, went on sale recently at the offices of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Belper, England and Pawtucket, Rhode Island are twin cities.
- A Blackstone River Festival was held on May 19-22, 1995 on the banks of the Blackstone River in the Central Falls/Valley Falls area. Highlights included all-day paddling skills classes, an evening concert of Sea Shanties with the Wickford Express, Allison and the Blackstone-story-telling by Marc Levitt, with music by Pendragon, Blackstone Valley Explorer riverboat rides and free walking tours and storytelling at the Blackstone Heritage Park.
- The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor celebrated its 10 year anniversary in March at the Woonsocket Depot.
- Citizens Bank presented a \$3,000 check to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for disadvantaged youth to take part in the ecological/cultural boat excursions on the Blackstone Valley Explorer.
- An adventurous journey called Dinosaur Discovery Tours led by Dinosaur Detective Dick Drake (Bob Calvert) and his assistant explorer Sir Oliver Ellsworth Worthington were held in May on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from the dock in Central Falls.
- Students studying ecology boarded the Blackstone Valley Explorer to study the ecology of the Blackstone River. The boat was recently reconstructed to allow access under shallow bridges.
- A series of public hearings were held in the Blackstone Valley in May, 1995 about the proposed 22 mile Blackstone Valley Bike Path which will connect to the 14 ½ mile East Bay Bike Path.
- Plans are in place to have the former Peerless Building on Main Street, Pawtucket be the new home of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The Planning Department of the City of Pawtucket will have offices on the 3rd floor. The Pawtucket Rotary Club has plans to develop a Toy Museum on the 1st floor along with a Visitor Center for the National Park Service.
- Free boat tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from Central Falls are being offered to Central Falls city residents as part of the city's Centennial Celebration.
- The City of Central Falls, the Lincoln Public Works Department and the Department of Environmental Management cleaned up the Blackstone Canal for public recreational use.
- Jo and Donna of Baer's River Workshop of Providence have seen a resurgence of people canoeing and kayaking in the Blackstone River during the past few years.
- Bob Billington, Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, announced the city's worst-kept secret, the filming of the movie *American Buffalo* by Pawtucket native, Director Michael Correntee. The

movie starring Dustin Hoffman will be filming in the Pawtucket area very soon.

- It's estimated that the filming of American Buffalo by Pawtucket native Michael Correntee will bring in approximately \$1 million dollars to the local economy. Dennis Franz and Dustin Hoffman will star in the movie.
- 84 year old Mr Savastano cast a metal image of a buffalo which will be the centerpiece of the Pawtucket Walk of Fame on Exchange Street, Pawtucket in front of the newly-named Riverside Diner. Mr Savastano has been casting images in metal for 60 years and was asked to work on the project by Leo Leclerc, a Board member of the Tourism Council. Mr Savastano also made a buffalo pin which will be on sale at Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Director Michael Correntee, and Dustin Hoffman, Dennis Franz and Sean Nelson, stars of the film American Buffalo put their hands into cement at the newly-created Pawtucket Hall of Fame on Exchange St, Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council will offer walking tours of the set and location where the movie American Buffalo was filmed. Tours are \$2 per person and the six-passenger bicycle will be available for rent.
- The Tenth Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held at the King's Inn in Lincoln in September. Louise Lind and the late Clinton Johnson were named to the William Blackstone Society by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Shining Star Award winners included Paul Prachniak, Bob Schultz, Janice Kissinger, Gene Conway, John Lefrancoise, Jack Lawhead, Helen Moroney, Barbara Kissick, the Franco-American Jubilee, and the Civil War Encampment in Lincoln.
- A western-style barbeque dinner cruise was held on the Blackstone Valley Explorer. The tours departed from the docks located on Broad St, Central Falls.
- The Tourism Council sponsored a Fall Foliage Train Trip on the Providence & Worcester Railroad round-trip from Cumberland to Worcester in October.
- Attendees at the annual Tourism Unity Luncheon at the Westin Hotel were treated to a special video presentation by Michael Correntee on American Buffalo. It was announced that tourists spent a total of \$1.47 billion dollars in Rhode Island in 1994.
- Bob Billington was appointed by President Clinton to the White House Conference for Travel and Tourism which will be held on October 30-31 in Washington, DC.
- John Nelson, the Mayor of Belper, England visited the Slater Mill and the Blackstone Valley in September. Mayor Nelson and his wife were guests of the Tourism Council on the Providence & Worcester Railroad on the Fall Train trip to Worcester sponsored by the Tourism Council.
- British officials from the Amber Valley in England will be featured at the Travel Experiences 1995 Travel and Tourism Exposition at Lincoln Park in October.
- Representatives from the Blackstone Valley including Council President Robert Billington and local mayors will be visiting the Amber Valley in England from June 7-13 to foster the Blackstone Valley-Amber Valley relationship.
- State tourism professionals visited Gloucester in May as part of the annual Whistle-stop tour sponsored by the State Department of Tourism, as a highlight of the Blackstone Valley portion of the tour. A scavenger hunt was held highlighting the many antique shops in Chepachet.

- A new access-handicapped ramp was installed on the banks of the Blackstone River in back of Pawtucket City Hall. Free tickets were given out by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for rides on the Explorer to handicapped residents to encourage them to take a ride on the Explorer and use the new handicapped ramp.
- Bob Calvert, a Pawtucket native who has appeared on *Spencer for Hire* and *As the World Turns*, will perform Broadway show tunes on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in June.
- The Hartford Courant featured the Blackstone Valley in a multi-page story in the Sunday edition. The story featured the Slater Mill, the Blackstone Valley Explorer and the Brown & Hopkins Country Store.
- A slot machine covered in mud and estimated to be over 40 years old was found during a Blackstone River clean-up by Ryan Billington and friend Eric Hogan. Tourism Director Robert Billington thinks that the slot machine was thrown into the river during a gambling raid in the Broad Street, Cumberland area years ago.
- "A Search for William Blackstone" weekend was held on the Blackstone Valley Explorer with tours leaving from the dock in Central Falls. Local actor David Ely portrayed William Blackstone.
- William Blackstone's 400th Birthday Party was held on March 5th at the Slater Mill Historic Site. A 17th century style dinner was served and included Cheate bread, boiled capons, roast chine of pork, minced turkey pie and apple tart.
- Robert Billington, David Macaulay and Al Klyberg were inducted into the William Blackstone Society in 1996 at Twin River in September.
- Paul Kazarian of Japonica Partners donated \$10,000 towards the mortgage on the Blackstone Valley Explorer. Mr and Mrs Kazarian were given the Explorer Cup for their generous donation.
- The Niagara Prince, the 170 ft. cruise ship built by Luther Blount and Blount Marine, sailed up Narragansett Bay and docked at the School St Pier in Pawtucket in August. Luther Blount brought the cruise ship up from Newport to test ballast tanks on the voyage.
- Providence Journal reporter M. Charles Bask took a ride on the Blackstone Valley Explorer on a "Wilderness tour" through the Central Falls, Cumberland, and Lincoln area.
- The Town of Lincoln purchased Hearthside House on Breakneck Hill Road in Lincoln for \$300,000
- Pat Salisbury of Rapid Printing received the Blackstone Valley Tourism Award at the annual Tourism Unity Luncheon held at the Westin Hotel in May.
- The Tourism Council co-sponsored a two-day heritage event in August with the Manville Sportsmen's Club of Lincoln. The event featured a Minuteman bivouac, a Native American. A series of Scottish activities will be held on Sunday.
- The Franco-Americain Jubilee was held in Woonsocket in August and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was a co-sponsor.
- Actor David Ely portrays Samuel Slater for children in the River Classroom program
- On the 25th Anniversary of Earth Day, many residents in the Blackstone Valley participated in Earth Day clean-ups in the area.
- Mayor Robert Metivier, Mayor Thomas Lazieh, Congressman Patrick Kennedy and Robert Billington greeted the Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt when he visited the Slater Mill and toured the Blackstone

Valley National Historic Corridor. He also toured the Blackstone River on the tour boat the Blackstone Valley Explorer

- The Blackstone Valley Explorer launched its second season of boat tours with a cruise on the Blackstone River behind Slater Mill Historic Site. Captain Mary Pat Driscoll once captained the boat *Sam Patch*.
- Tours of the historic Blackstone Canal in Central Massachusetts are now available onboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Robert Billington was elected to his second term as President of the Old Slater Mill Association. It was announced at the annual meeting of the Slater Mill that a new Visitors Center will open at the former Peerless Building on Main St, Pawtucket in September of 1996.
- Robert Billington was appointed by Governor Almond to serve on the RI Rivers Council
- The Tourism Council began selling 1st edition, *Cumberland by the Blackstone – 250 years of Heritage* by Dave Balfour and Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane on behalf of the Town of Cumberland
- The Tourism Council purchased the Blackstone Valley Surrey, a new six-passenger bicycle which participated in four parades
- Bob Billington attended the White House Conference on Tourism in October in Washington, DC.
- A new Derwent Valley Heritage Corridor, based on the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor, is being planned in England where Belper is located. Bob Billington first visited Belper, England, which is the birthplace of Samuel Slater, in 1993. An Amber Valley/Blackstone Valley Compact was signed in 1994 by representatives of both organizations.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council recently joined the American Bus Association to give the Blackstone Valley wider exposure to hundreds of destination marketing organizations.
- The Burrillville high school band performed a world premiere of Blackstone River Echoes, which was composed by Robert Clark and commissioned by the Christa McAuliffe Fellowship Program Project.
- John Marsland and the Friends of the Blackstone received a national Made a Difference award sponsored by USA Today for their clean-up work on the Blackstone Canal.
- The 4th Annual Steamboat Muster was held in September, 1995 on the State Pier in Pawtucket. A dinner/dance and cruise on the Vista Jubilee, built by Luther Blount of Blount Marine, was also held during the weekend of the Steamboat Muster.
- The 1995 Phoenix Award was presented to Robert Billington and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council by the American Society of Travel Writers. The Tourism Council was recognized for efforts in aggressively developing tourism in the Blackstone Valley, which the travel writers noted increased 11% annually, faster than any other region in Rhode Island. In the fiscal year 1994-1995, more than 30 tour companies brought in group tours to the Blackstone Valley.
- More than 10,000 people attended the Opening Day of the 14th Octoberfest in downtown Pawtucket
- Robert Kennedy, Jr. and Patrick Kennedy made a strong pitch in October for naming the Blackstone River an American Heritage River
- Charlie Hall and the Ocean State Follies performed at the Travel Experiences Trade Show at Lincoln Park. The trade show, now in its seventh year and produced by Conway Tours and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, has become a major event in the area.

- Robert Billington attended the first ever White House conference on Travel and Tourism along with 15 other representatives from around the country. Mr Billington was nominated by President Clinton.
- Free boat rides on the Blackstone Valley Explorer were provided by the New England Treatment Company to 570 Woonsocket 5th graders
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer, the first vessel to ply the waters of the Blackstone River in 147 years, has given tours to 24,000 people since it started tours in 1993.
- 30 tourists visiting from France enjoyed a tour on the Blackstone Valley Explorer, a lobster dinner at the Bocce Club, and a visit to the Museum of Work and Culture in October.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council purchased a 6-passenger surrey thru Cycleworks in Cumberland with funding provided by Citizens Bank, Cumberland Farms, Vanesse Hangen Brustlin, Fournier Jeep Eagle, C and M Realty, H and J Enterprises and the City of Central Falls. The surrey made a debut in the Pawtucket Octoberfest Parade in October.
- A framed print of Geddes Farm by Lincoln artist Peter Stanton of North Smithfield was raffled off by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in October.
- The Christmas in the Valley brochure for 1995 was produced by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and was available for no charge to the public.
- Aa three -day Fall Foliage Tour of the Blackstone Valley was featured in the October edition newsletter of Yankee Magazine.
- The tour highlights Wright's Farm Restaurant, Diamond Hill Vineyard and the Slater Mill among other valley highlights.
- John and Rita Fransham, residents of Belper, England, visited the Blackstone Valley for a month and were featured in the Central Falls Centennial Parade flying the Belper flag from their car.
- Santa Claus kicked off "Christmas in the Valley" with his arrival at the Slater Mill in Pawtucket and was welcomed by area children. Park Ranger Suzanne Buchanan read a holiday story titled " A New Coat for Anna". Visitors were asked to donate used coats in good condition which were donated to needy residents.
- The American History Showcase shown on the A & E Channel will feature the videos on the history of the 20 cities and towns that make up the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor. The videos are produced by Chuck Arning, a Park Ranger at the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and cover the cities and towns that straddle the River in Rhode Island and Massachusetts.
- Congressman Patrick Kennbedy announced that the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was awarded a grant for \$1500 to expand its program of providing educational heritage brochures for school children. The grant was made possible by Congress to the National Trust for Historic Preservation.
- The Catholic Oak tree which stands near the entrance to the Ann & Hope in Cumberland is a red oak and was once the site of where William Blackstone preached. It is featured in the Notable Rhode Island Tree Calendar of 1996.
- The Tourism Council will offer a new program in 1996 aboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer called "River in the Classroom" which will educate students about the importance of the Blackstone River. Ocean State Power will donate \$5,000 to get the program started. The donation

starts the fifth anniversary of the company's production of its first megawatt of power.

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received a \$10,000 grant from the Rhode Island State Senate.

1996

- In May, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosted the 45-members and families of the Thornton's Brass Band from Amber Valley, England. The band performed in all nine Blackstone Valley communities as well as Providence to over 4,000 people. The concerts cemented the relationship between the Blackstone Valley and the Amber Valley, in England.
- The City of Pawtucket and the Pawtucket Riverfront Commission met in August to consider the future of the parcel of land next to the State Pier in Pawtucket owned by Dr Paul Healey.
- New round-trip tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from the Old Oyster House Restaurant in East Providence to the Providence waterfront were offered daily in August by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- State Sen. Sandra Hannaway presented a \$5,000 legislative grant to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in March.
- Expanded and re-located Blackstone Valley Tourism Council headquarters and full-time Blackstone Valley Visitor Center to 171 Main Street, Pawtucket
- Dustin Hoffman and Dennis Franz came to Pawtucket to film *American Buffalo*. The Pawtucket Hollywood Walk of Fame commemorates filming *American Buffalo* in Pawtucket with handprints of the stars and director Michael Correntee
- Film director Michael Corrente was honored at a rally and reception at the Slater Mill shortly before the world premiere of Corrente's film *American Buffalo* at the Showcase Cinema in Warwick. The event was sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- The Tourism Council developed a year-round consumer event calendar which is distributed to 40,000 visitors yearly
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council assisted with the 11th Annual Rhode Island Historic Preservation Conference in Pawtucket
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council produced a free 1996 *Blackstone River Valley Rhode Island Visitor Resource Guide* - the first comprehensive Visitor Guide on the Blackstone Valley
- The 5th Annual Pawtucket Steamboat Muster, was held in August at the State Pier and featured a Steamboat Parade, music, food, pony rides, games for kids, entertainment and Billy Martin's Big Top Circus.
- A *Bay Queen Sunset Cruise* was also held on August 16th from the State Pier in Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered a \$35 group tour package for visitors as part of the only New England appearance of a special 150th anniversary exhibit by the Smithsonian Institution. The "Experiencing America Tour" of the Blackstone Valley will include a 45-minute tour on the Blackstone Valley Explorer and a bus or trolley ride to the RI Convention Center to view the 100,000 square foot exhibit which is the largest show ever put on by the Smithsonian or any other museum.
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer offered special tours in Woonsocket for two cruises on the Blackstone River to help raise much-needed funds for a new roof at the Masonic Temple in Cumberland. The Cumberland Masonic Temple will be the new home of the Blackstone River Theater.
- 18 months and 23,000 passengers later, Bob Billington of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has a new nautical vision for two 75-passenger, 57 foot boats that will shuttle commuters between Pawtucket and

Providence before and after work and be used mid-day for interpretive excursions on the Pawtucket and Seekonk Rivers.

- A Summer Safari Tour on the Blackstone River was offered this year with a tour on the Blackstone Valley Explorer followed by an escorted tour with a llama through the woods of the Blackstone Gorge. The Llamas are provided by The Llama Farma of Cumberland.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council moved into new offices at the Benjamin Chester Building, 171 Main St, Pawtucket.
- Trolley tours sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council were offered at the Jubilee Franco-Americain in Woonsocket.
- Michael Corrente is scheduled to shoot the movie *Outside Providence* in Rhode Island and parts of the Blackstone Valley.
- Fall Foliage tours were offered in the Blackstone Valley by trolley, by riverboat, on the Blackstone Valley Explorer, by train, on the Providence & Worcester Railroad, by car, on an 85-mile fall foliage self-guided tour, by air, by airplane or helicopter from North Central State Airport, by canoe. Explore the foliage along the Blackstone River, by foot, traverse the quaint country villages and historic sites with a National Park Service Ranger, and by bicycle, along the Blackstone Valley Bike Path
- Bobby and Peter Farrelly and Michael Corrente were honored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council at their annual meeting at Sher-le-Mon in Cumberland. Bobby and Peter Farrelly recently produced the movie *Dumb and Dumber* starring Jim Carrey and Michael Corrente recently produced the movie *American Buffalo* starring Dustin Hoffman and Dennis Franz.
- Bob Cox and Eugene Peloquin were honored at the Annual Meeting with Special Recognition Awards. Bob Cox for his efforts in establishing the Cumberland Historic District and his participation in writing the Regional Comprehensive Plan for the Blackstone Valley. Eugene Peloquin, the Executive Director of the Business Volunteers for the Arts, was praised for his efforts in helping raise funds for various events and for his wonderful participation in helping the Tourism Council present it's various programs throughout the year.
- The Massachusetts State Police were assisted by the staff of the Blackstone Valley Explorer when they were able to use the Explorer as a diving platform to try to recover a handgun that was believed to have been used in the suicide of a Burrillville man who's body was found near the banks of the Blackstone River in Millville.
- Pioneered a historic river voyage from the Old State Pier in Pawtucket to Waterplace Park located in Capital Center in Providence with Pawtucket Mayor Robert Metivier and Providence Mayor Vincent "Buddy" Cianci at the helm of the Blackstone Valley Explorer.
- In cooperation with the Llama Farma of Cumberland, developed the first Blackstone Valley Llama tours along the Blackstone Canal in Lincoln and the Blackstone Gorge in Blackstone, MA.
- The Tourism Council organized the first annual Blackstone Valley Tourism Council "Going Places" Auction at St. Mary's Antiochian Church in May.
- Work began at what will be the new home of the William Blackstone Monument in Valley Falls, Cumberland. The project will cost \$162,300 according to Town Engineer David Boulay.
- The second annual Jubilee Franco-Americain was held in Woonsocket in August featuring arts and culture, music, dance, theater, film, lectures and forums, visual arts, culinary arts, and children's programs. The event was held over four days.
- Offered the 1st River Studies Scholarship Program in cooperation with the Narragansett Bay Commission
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer provided historical tours, from eight venues throughout the Blackstone Valley of northern Rhode Island, the South County area of Rhode Island, and nearby Massachusetts. New this year are tours of the Pawtucket River and special tours of the Slatersville Reservoir in North Smithfield. Dinosaur Discovery and Haunted River

Tours are also featured. Popular tours include leaving from the Slater Mill, Central Falls, Blackstone George, Pawtucket East Providence Waterfront, and Woonsocket Falls.

- The Tourism Council produced a free guide to the 21 factory outlets in the Blackstone
- A 682 pound pumpkin, the fifth largest in New England and grown by John F. Castellucci of Smithfield, was on display at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center at 171 Main St, Pawtucket. The pumpkin won First Prize at the Topsfield Fair in October.
- Pioneered the first riverboat tours along the Wood-Pawcatuck River in Westerly, in cooperation with the South County Tourism Council and the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association
- The Blackstone Valley Travel and Tourism Trade Show at Lincoln Park was held in October. A record number of exhibitors participated and Charlie Hall and the Ocean State Follies performed. Marge Desrosiers of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council coordinated the event which was co-sponsored by Conway Tours of Cumberland.
- The Tourism Council used a side-scan sonar, in cooperation with Bryant College's Department of Science Technology, located what may prove to be the lost canal boat in the Blackstone River in Millville, Massachusetts
- Gene Peloquin, Director of the Business Volunteers for the Arts, and Bob Billington, President of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, successfully coordinated an event at the Providence Performing Arts Center to bring arts organizations, local tourism councils, and small businesses together at a successful early morning meeting.
- Thomas Shannahan, the local expert on area Civil War veterans and a keeper of a collection of paintings by Central Falls most famous artist, Lorenzo deNevers, who painted President Eisenhower, FDR and baseball great Ted Williams was inducted into the William Blackstone Society.
- A new boat and canoe launch was constructed at Cold Spring Park in Woonsocket. The ribbon-cutting was held in November.
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer was docked at the lower Slatersville Reservoir during the new car show in North Smithfield in September. The Seventh Annual Rhode Island Custom Car Show was held on the grounds of Philips Components at Pound Hill Road and Industrial Drive.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is offering limited edition *American Buffalo* pins for \$3 to promote the walking tour of the movie *American Buffalo* directed by Michael Corrente and starring Dustin Hoffman and Dennis Franz.
- The movie *American Buffalo* premiered at the Showcase Cinema in Warwick in September. The movie was followed by a reception at the Roger Williams Park Casino
- The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor was funded for an additional year for \$1.02 million under a provision included by Sen. H John Cahefee in a federal spending bill.
- The Corridor is approximately 26 miles long and includes museums, parks, historical buildings and waterways in 20 communities in Rhode Island.
- The Slater Mill Historic Site celebrated its 75th Anniversary in September featuring guest speaker John Kenneth Gailbrith.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation allotted \$880,000 to two passenger vessels to shuttle passengers from Pawtucket to Providence. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council will manage the project and provide the balance of the funds needed with help from the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, the RI Port Authority and the cities of Pawtucket and Providence. The allocation was announced by Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy.
- A roundtrip Fall Foliage tour from Cumberland, RI to Worcester, MA on the Providence and Worcester Railroad was held on October 19.
- The U.S. Department of Transportation allocated \$4 million towards the Blackstone River Bikeway Project The projected path for the completed

bikeway will run 21 miles from India Point Park thru downtown Pawtucket and Central Falls, Valley Falls, Lincoln and Woonsocket and on to the Massachusetts line. The completed bike path will eventually allow bicyclists to travel from Bristol, RI to Worcester, MA.

- The Tourism Council offered Haunted River Tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in Woonsocket leaving from Market Square. Bob Calvert and Raconteur Productions have produced the *Ghosts Along the Blackstone* tours for three years. Mr. Calvert, the writer, director and producer of the tours, has an impressive resume which includes appearances on *Masterpiece Theatre*, *Spenser for Hire*, and the popular soap opera, *As the World Turns*. Bob Calvert and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council also offered haunted happening tours on the Blackstone Valley Trolley.
- Hillary Clinton visited the Slater Mill in Pawtucket, RI the day before election day to ask voters to support her husband in the Presidential election. Bob Billington, as President of the Slater Mill Association, gave Mrs Clinton a tour of the oldest cotton mill in America. It was Mrs. Clinton's third visit to Rhode Island.
- Plans are being made for the World Canal Conference which will be held from October 14-17, 1997. The conference is hosted by the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and coordinated with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Old photos of Cumberland are being requested for a new book, *Cumberland by the Blackstone*, which will be written by Joyce-Hindle Koutsogiane and Tourism Council President David W. Balfour.
- Repairs to the Slater Mill Dam and the rotted wooden spillway were delayed in mid-October because of recent storms and the rain-swollen river. River levels reached over 10 feet in recent days in October creating unsafe working conditions. The original dam was built of wood, stone and debris over 200 years ago to support the Slater Mill, the oldest cotton-spinning mill in America. The \$100,000 project has already been delayed a few times for various reasons.
- A new program called *Travelers* on the Discovery Channel filmed a show on the Slater Mill and Autumnfest in October. The cast members also visited the Llama Farma, a llama farm in Cumberland and took a ride on the Blackstone Valley Explorer. The show will reach 83 countries around the world.
- An underwater survey was taken in October of a Millville section of the Blackstone River by two RI state archeological divers from the state Board of Underwater Archeological Resources to look for the bulk of an old Blackstone canal boat that possibly plied the waters of the Blackstone River between 1828 and 1848.
- Graham Knight from the Derwent National Trust in the Amber Valley in England visited the Slater Mill and the Blackstone Valley. Mr Knight plans to use the Blackstone Valley as an excellent example moving forward as The Derwent Valley is the first Historical Corridor in England.
- James Pepper, Executive Director of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, and Bob Billington, President of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, received the Pride in Rhode Island Award from the Greater Providence Chamber of Commerce.
- A \$1,000 matching grant was awarded the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's grant program, the Preservation Services Fund. The grant will be used to support an interpretive guide training program.
- Sen. Jack Reed announced \$4 million in Federal money to the Blackstone River Bikeway and \$1.2 to buy two commuter ferries to shuttle passengers from Pawtucket to Providence.
- The Pawtucket Bridge Mill Power Station and Hydro Power Plant which celebrated a century-old role as a generator of electricity, was inducted into the Hall of Fame by the Hydro Review, the national trade magazine for the hydro-electric industry.

- The Blackstone Valley Explorer toured the Slatersville Reservoir during the Slatersville *Slaterfest Celebration*.
- The first tours of the Blackstone River narrated in French onboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer will be held in October. The two tours scheduled for October 20 will be narrated by Explorer tourguide Sue Bernier and will focus on the importance and influence of French immigrants and the French culture to the city of Woonsocket.
- A walking Tour of Historic Central Falls is available at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center. The guide includes 35 sites in the Square Mile City and is produced by Historic Central Falls.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor was featured in a front page, ten page article in the Akron Beacon Journal in November.
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor celebrated its 10th Anniversary at the Depot in Woonsocket in February. U.S. Sen. Ted Kennedy, U.S. Sen. Claiborne Pell, U.S. Sen Jack Reed and U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy attended.
- Santa arrived by boat on the Blackstone River in back of the Slater Mill Historic Site and families formed a motorcade to continue to Slater Park for *Christmas in the Park* organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Recreation Department of the City of Pawtucket.
- The Blackstone Valley Holiday Shopping Tour included visits to select specialty shops in Central Falls, Cumberland, Lincoln and North Smithfield in December by motorcoach. The new tour was produced by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- President Clinton signed a law on November 12 extending funding to the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor for 10 more years. The operations budget was doubled to \$650,000. The Clinton signing also extended the boundaries of the Corridor to include all of Worcester plus MA.
- While taking a tour on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in 1994, fourth-grade students of Connie Hurd came up with the idea of a canoe launch at Cold Spring Park in Woonsocket. In 1996, their wish came true as their former teacher Mrs. Hurd cut the ribbon to officially open the canoe launch at the park.
- The new offices of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center are scheduled to open in September, 1997 at the Benjamin Chester Building, 175 Main Street, Pawtucket. The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission provided \$500,000 and the Rhode Island Public Transit Authority will be spending \$480,000 for improvements to the building for restrooms and a waiting area for passengers waiting for buses in downtown Pawtucket. The balance of the money will come from the city of Pawtucket and from private groups such as the Champlin Foundation.
- The third annual *Christmas in the Valley* publication produced by The Valley Breeze in conjunction with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council published 25,000 copies. The publication highlights holiday events from Pawtucket to Woonsocket.
- The Blackstone Valley Christmas Trolley ran the *Sights and Lights* holiday tours in December from the Lincoln Mall and featured lighting displays in the Blackstone Valley. The tours were sponsored by the Lincoln Mall and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- The Federal government's decision to award ownership of two proposed river shuttle boats to the state instead of a local agency, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, was a result of standard federal policy not a hijacking of the project by government officials it was announced in December.
- The 192-page book, *Cumberland by the Blackstone*, which includes over 300 photos and text about Cumberland by David W. Balfour, Board Chairman of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, and Cumberland principal Joyce Hindle Koutsigane, Ed.d went on sale in December.
- Robert Billington, Executive Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, proposed an extensive three-month study of the Pawtucket

River that would involve extensive public output. The study would seek to develop a broad-based public consensus on the best way to re-develop the river banks. Billington suggested that the study could be paid for by \$5,000 coming from the Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency and \$5,000 from the Dunn Foundation.

- Bill Brew, the first river ecologist hired by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is making trips into the classroom during the cold winter months. Bill waded knee-deep into the Blackstone to bring back water samples to the young children. Some of the samples included insects, fish and tadpoles.
- The Tourism Council is starting to book schools eager to participate in the two new environmental education programs instituted by the Council this year: River in the Classroom and Blackstone Valley Trolley Tours. The River in the Classroom program will teach students about river development, canals, waterpower, water quality and mill villages. The Blackstone Valley Trolley Tours will teach students about the history of their particular town.
- New 19th century reproduction light poles and light fixtures with halogen lamps were installed along the Broad Street Bridge in Valley Falls in December.
- The William Blackstone Monument and park on Broad Street, Cumberland was dedicated in December.
- Dressed in a long black coat, scarf and top hat, Bob Billington, Executive Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, helped to deliver holiday pizzas from Dominos Pizza in Pawtucket to benefit the *Merry Christmas Fund* of the Pawtucket Times.
- A new *Winter Events in the Blackstone Valley* tourism kit was produced by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council featuring events and activities to do in the area.
- The Blackstone Valley Trolley was used for the first time for the popular *Gallery Night Tours* in Providence where participants visited the many art galleries in the city.
- Bob Billington announced that the remaining \$6,000 mortgage on the Blackstone Valley Explorer should be paid by the end of 1996, four years after having the boat built. Billington plans to "sink" the mortgage payments in a small metal box in the Pawtucket River where the first riverboat tours were held.
- The Champlin Foundation granted \$8,600 to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to make the trolley handicapped accessible.
- The new Blackstone Valley Visitor Center receives inquiries from an average of 561 visitors per week either by mail or in person.
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer, the council's 49-passenger riverboat, carried 21,784 passengers from May to October of 1996. That figure includes the 7,000 school children who learned about the environment and the history of the Blackstone River on the Explorer this year.
- Since 1993, more than 75,000 passengers have toured the Blackstone River on the Blackstone Valley Explorer.
- Suzanne Buchanan, a National Park Service Ranger, visited local Blackstone Valley schools in December to read *A New Coat for Anna*. The classic story illustrates a selfless mother's plight to trade personal items with farmers, spinners, and tailors to secure a coat as a Christmas present for her daughter. Because of hearing the story read, many area school children were encouraged to donate hundreds of used coats to the needy in the Blackstone Valley.
- The video *Woonsocket, A City on the Move* premiered at Harris Hall in December. The video was produced by the Greater Woonsocket Board of Realtors and the City of Woonsocket and cost \$15,000 to produce.
- Steve Hamblett, Publisher of the Providence Journal, called a RI Tourism Forum together to engage the local tourism councils in discussing ways they could better work together to promote the state and their respective areas.

- The annual revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was 4352,753 for 1996.

1997

- Established plans for Blackstone Valley Watershed Council
- Hosted World Canal Conference in the Blackstone Valley – October 1997
- Developed Christmas trolley tours through Lincoln, Cumberland and Central Falls
- Purchased second riverboat, the 10-passenger Spirit of Blackstone Valley
- Planned Tourism Business Networking events
- Published *Christmas in the Valley*, a 24-page flyer done in cooperation with The Valley Breeze
- Blackstone Valley Explorer purchased a mobile operations center with support from Fleet Bank
- Received Eisenhower Grant through Bryant College which was used to purchase 11 laptop computers for the River in the Classroom
- Initiated the RI Tourism Directors Roundtable
- Hosted delegation from Amber Valley, England
- Introduced Seymour De Vallee – the Blackstone Valley Chicken, to promote chicken family-style dinners in the Blackstone Valley
- Hosted the New England Foundation for the Arts weekend
- Conducted trade missions to Amber Valley and St Hyacinth, Quebec
- Partnership established with Johnson & Wales as a travel practicum site
- Hosted a reception for Sile de Valera, Minister of Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht & the Islands of the Republic of Ireland
- Hosted delegation from St Hyacinth, Quebec to further Sister City association with Woonsocket
- Developed Christmas trolley tours for Burrillville, Glocester, Smithfield, and North Smithfield
- Assisted with program for Riverfront Development for Pawtucket
- Participated in Southern New England Hospitality Trade Show
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was over \$393,105 for 1997
- Accomplished having Glocester, Burrillville and Smithfield being recognized as part of the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor
- Hosted First Lady Hillary Clinton on a tour of the Slater Mill
- Completed first year of operation at the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center in Pawtucket serving over 25,000 people from 26 cities and towns in Rhode Island, 47 states, Washington, D.C., and 25 countries

1998

- Blackstone River received the prestigious designation of an American Heritage River
- Established "Rhode Island Rivers Day," to celebrate the Blackstone River's impact on the community and honor its volunteers
- Established the RI Film Forum
- Assisted in the organization of the RI International Film Festival and premiere of the movie *Something about Mary*
- Christmas Light Tours on the Blackstone Valley Trolley
- Brought two English soccer teams to the Blackstone Valley
- Worked with the Town of Glocester to develop the Chepachet Village Committee to develop a vision for Main Street Chepachet
- Received a grant from the Paul Newman Foundation to equip the Blackstone Valley Explorer with reconnaissance equipment
- Pawtucket's Mayor James Doyle and over 50 officials tour the city of Woonsocket with Mayor Susan Menard to learn how to revitalize Woonsocket.
- In March, Robert Billington, Director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, wrote an editorial for the Providence Journal suggesting that

we celebrate Rhode Island Rivers Day on the Blackstone River every year.

- The Central Falls Landing Project is back on track with \$120,000 in Entitlement funds sought from HUD. The City of Central Falls bought the metal building on the site in December 1997 which it wants to sell or move for \$85,000. The city advertised the site hoping to attract \$500,000 in private investment.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offered Christmas trolley tours of Cumberland, Lincoln, Woonsocket and North Smithfield on select dates in December.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council receives a grant for \$3,000 from actor Paul Newman's Foundation to benefit educational and research efforts on the council's boats.
- The Blackstone Valley Watershed Council holds its first meeting at Bryant College. The Watershed Council is being organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council through a grant from the Rhode Island Foundation.
- Laid the keel for the Samuel Slater, the British-built canal boat
- Created the 1st American well-dressing with artists from Amber Valley, England
- Brought an Erie canal boat to the Pawtucket River
- Organized two Elderhostel programs in the Blackstone Valley
- Became a Yankee Magazine Community Partner and raised \$1,200 for the Samuel Slater Canal Boat
- Participated in the planning of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket
- Received a grant from Ocean State Charities to computerize the Group Tour Division
- Submitted the lone bid to operate the commuter water shuttle service between Providence and Pawtucket
- The Blackstone Valley is included in Smithsonian Institution's "America's Snapshot Tour".
- Hosted Discover New England Tourism Summit with other State Tourism Regions
- Launched a second riverboat, the "Spirit of the Blackstone River Valley".
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$394,367 for 1998
- Johnson and Wales started a Practicum Site at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center. Approximately 100 students per year work at the Council headquarters seven days a week

1999

- Water Cruises of Rhode Island launched the Hope and Renaissance European-style ferry boats to shuttle commuters between Providence & Pawtucket. Water Cruises is a partnership between Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Conway Grayline of Rhode Island
- POLAR EXPRESS™ Train Ride, launched with permission from author Chris Van Allsburg and publisher Houghton Mifflin
- Moved Tourism Council headquarters to a new office at 175 Main Street, Pawtucket across from the Historic Slater Mill.
- The new headquarters includes an information kiosk, the Slater Mill Gift Shop and Gallery, the Pawtucket Arts Collaborative Gallery, a movie theater, RIPTA bus station, and Tourism Council offices
- Tourism Council headed Pawtucket Arts Festival
- The Council work closely with the US Army of Corps of Engineers, the US Natural Resources Conservation Commission, Save the Bay, and the National Park Service

- The Tourism Council publishes an *Official Visitor Guide to the Blackstone Valley*. 25,000 copies are distributed annually. In addition, a collection of brochures is published each year highlighting local restaurants, ethnic foods, special events, factory outlet shopping, and train, trolley and river tours.
- We have contracts this year with the City of Pawtucket, the National Park Service, the RI Economic Development Corporation, and the RI Department of Transportation.
- We have developed projects for the RI Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, the Pawtucket Preservation Society, the city of Woonsocket.
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$353,893 for 1999
- Our trolley and Double-decker bus are licensed by the RI Public Utilities Commission and our boats are regulated by the US Coast Guard
- The Tourism Council serves as an internship and practicum learning site for Johnson and Wales University, the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, Bryant College, the Community College of Rhode Island, the Sawyer School, and the RI State Internship Program.

2000

- The Tourism Council produced the first *Polar Express* train rides on the Providence & Worcester Railroad in cooperation with Rhode Island author Chris Van Allsburg
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat built by C.T.P. Fox Boatbuilders of Cambridgeshire, England arrived in Central Falls in January
- Launched the British Canal Boat, the Samuel Slater which provides daytime cruising, tea tours and overnight accommodations on the Blackstone River
- *The Spring Scenic and Heritage Railway Tour* to Putnam, CT was held on the Providence & Worcester Railroad on Saturday, May 20th.
- The Blackstone Valley Institute was held at Bryant College in March. The Institute sponsored the conference called *The Blackstone Valley in an Emerging Global Economy* and had over 100 people in attendance
- Melanie Debarros, branch manager of the Broad Street branch of Fleet Bank presented a check for \$500 to Bob Billington for Central Falls students to tour the Slater Mill
- The Blackstone Valley hosted an Elderhostel for senior citizen's 55 and older from April 30 to May 5. The program is titled *From Fields to Factories: the Blackstone River Valley of New England*
- Ron Buzzard, the Mayor of Belper, England spent a day in Chepachet hosted by Blackstone Valley board President Dave Balfour. He also met with Mayor James Doyle of Pawtucket
- RI Rivers Day was held on June 17 at the Central Falls Landing. The Samuel Slater Canal boat was available for tours as well as the Blackstone Valley Explorer. A festive canoe and kayak parade was held and awards were presented
- Chainsaw artist Michael Higgins of Tiverton carved a statue at the Veterans Auditorium in Pawtucket for a pilot of a TV show called *Weird and Wonderful*. Higgins donated the 800-pound, white pine wood and the statue will be donated to Fallon Elementary School in Pawtucket
- The map of the Blackstone Valley that is made up of tiles and manufactured by Folia Industries and laid on the floor of the Visitors Center in late 1999 has already begun to warp and plans were made to replace it
- Neville Lassotovitch designed William Blackstone and Betty The Learned Elephant for state-wide Mr. Potato Head campaign
- The William Blackstone Potato Head, designed by Neville Lassotovitch, was unveiled at the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center in Pawtucket

- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was highlighted in the American Canals Magazine in Spring, 2000
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat welcomed the first overnight visitors in May
- Bird-watching tours were offered in May onboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from Central Falls Landing
- Cruises to see the Tall Ships in Newport on the Hope or Renaissance ferry boat where held in July leaving from the Point Street Landing in Providence
- A 5 oz. souvenir bottle of Autocrat coffee syrup is for sale by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Tours of the Providence River during Waterfire nights were held on the Spirit of the Blackstone Valley. Tours to Waterfire are also available on the Hope and Renaissance ferry boats owned by Water Cruises of RI, LLC
- The John H Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor presented Heritage Partnership grants to help build the Samuel Slater Canal Boat, and to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for development of a Blackstone Valley Educator's Guide website
- Betty the Learned Elephant, the Potato Head designed by Neville Lassotovitch was completed and placed at the Manton Free Public Library in Glocester
- 1st RI Dragon Boat and Taiwan Day Festival – introduced Dragon boat racing to the Blackstone Valley
- The Narragansett Bay Commission donated a 1985 Chevy Suburban to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Crown Collision donated services to fix the truck. The truck also has a hitch on the back which can be used to tow the Tourism Council's boats
- Bob Billington attended the largest travel trade show in the world in Taiwan and consulted with the Taiwanese on their new International Tourism Plan
- Blackstone Valley Watershed Council provided \$250 scholarships to 10 high school students for the first time
- The Blackstone River Theater which will be located at the former Masonic Temple on Broad St in Cumberland announced a grand-opening will be held in April, 2000
- Hosted an 18 person tour group from the Amber Valley in England
- Tours of the Blackstone Gorge on the Blackstone Valley Explorer were held from May-July. Tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer along with a visit to the Southwick Zoo in Mendon, MA were held in July.
- The 15th Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held in June at Spring Lake in Burrillville. Megan Epler Wood, President and founder of the EcoTourism Society was the guest speaker. Dave Balfour was inducted into the William Blackstone Society
- Bob Billington served as Grand Marshall of the Autumnfest Parade in Woonsocket
- The Tourism Council hosted sold-out Christmas Trolley Tours in Burrillville, Smithfield, North Smithfield, and Lincoln
- A Rubber Ducky Race was held in the Blackstone River. Over 900 rubber duck were dumped into the river from the John Street Bridge raising funds for the Blackstone Valley
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council is selling watercolor pictorial maps of the Blackstone River Valley Rhode Island and a similar design of the Blackstone River Valley of Massachusetts for \$15. The maps were drawn by artist Rosalind H. Sturges Allen
- The Hope and the Renaissance, two ferry boats owned by Water Cruises, LLC offered commuter and leisure rides from Pawtucket to Providence
- The cumulative passenger total since the shuttle service began in July, 1999 was 8,459 passengers on both ferries.

- *Seal Watch and Nature Cruises of Narragansett Bay* sponsored by Water Cruises of Rhode Island, LLC were held in March on the Hope and Renaissance ferry boats
- Fall Foliage Train trips on the Providence & Worcester Railroad from Cumberland –Worcester roundtrip were held on October 14
- A week-long Rivers Project led by Bob Williams, a professor of Science Education at Southern Illinois University, was held in July onboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Nine teenagers from the Narragansett Boat Club in Providence were rescued by the Captain and crew of the Hope ferry boat after their eight-oared rowing boat capsized on the Seekonk River on August 2. The Hope is owned by the Tourism Council and Conway Tours Grayline
- An informational video on Taiwan was shown at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center for a week celebrating the friendship between Taiwan and Rhode Island. The U.S Olympic basketball team will play the Taiwan Olympic Team at McCoy Stadium on August 1.
- The Council invested in the development of a computerized ticketing program
- During the period from September 1 to November 30, 1999, 23,251 visitors visited the newly opened Blackstone Valley Visitors Center.
- Walmart of Woonsocket donated \$2,500 towards the publication a book called "*A Month in the Blackstone River Valley*" which will be a hard-covered coffee table book about the farms, fields, factories and families of the Blackstone Valley
- Bob Billington and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council received a 1999 Coastal Clean-up Award from the RI Audubon Society, the Department of Environmental Management, and Bank Boston for working to protect the waters and coastline of Rhode Island
- First Annual Chinese Dragon Boat Races were held in Pawtucket as part of the Convergence Arts Festival
- Tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer were held on the Blackstone River leaving from Market Square in Woonsocket and focused on the cultural heritage of the French and Franco-Americans who settled in Woonsocket
- Canoe rentals were available from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council through the the Blackstone Canoe and Kayak Company
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was over \$1,026,876 for 2000

2001

- The Tourism Council led a cultural/tourism/economic development tour to the Amber Valley in England as part of the Amber Valley/Blackstone Valley Compact
- Began work on the Central Falls Landing project. Partial funding for river landing portion was provided in a grant from the ISTEAF funds, administered by RIDOT
- A birdhouse-making workshop at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center was held in February and sponsored by the Tourism Council
- Tom Ward, publisher of *The Valley Breeze*, published the *Visitor Guide to the Blackstone Valley*
- Bob Billington participated in the Brazil National Tourism Marketplace. Rhode Island and Sergipe, Brazil are sister states
- The City of Pawtucket received a Millennium sculpture from the town of Belper, England
- 28 people from the Amber Valley visited the Blackstone Valley to strengthen our ties with Belper, England, the birthplace of Samuel Slater
- Tourism Council managed the Build Out Analysis Plan funded by the National Heritage Corridor for RIDEM and the nine Blackstone Valley communities

- Tourism Council worked with the BRVNHCC, the Providence & Worcester Railroad, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and others to host the first Blackstone Valley Greenway Challenge which is a run, canoe and bike event
- The Tourism Council hosted the headquarters for the city-wide arts festival, Convergence Pawtucket
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council began working with RIDEM on the *Blackstone River Action Plan*. The Plan will establish one document that will address all of the needs of the Blackstone Valley Watershed in Rhode Island
- Hundreds of visitors have stayed overnight on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat since it's launching in 2000
- *Trout Unlimited* wrote a story highlighting the Blackstone River in their Winter 2001 edition
- Donna Rochon, a Pawtucket artist and business owner, was hired as the program manager of the Convergence Pawtucket Arts Festival
- *Preservation Magazine* featured the Blackstone River Valley in the September/October 2001 issue. The Blackstone Valley was used as a success story by the National Trust in the publication *Stories Across America*
- Tourism Council staff attended the NTA conference in Salt Lake City, Utah – the largest motor coach sales event in the United States
- *The Blackstone Valley Christmas Trolley Tours* will pass houses in Cumberland that are on the *Deck Your Doors* contest sponsored by Residential Properties, the Valley Breeze and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Special Christmas trolley tours thru Pawtucket's Winter Wonderland are offered for the first time
- Special two-hour Christmas trolley tours will travel from Burrillville to Winter Wonderland in nearby Connecticut for two trips in December
- *Visit My Home – New England's Historic National Park* stickers are available at no charge to residents of the Blackstone Valley
- The House Appropriations committee approved \$1.5 million dollars for the third phase of the Blackstone Valley Bikeway per U.S. representative Patrick Kennedy
- The Hope and the Renaissance, two commuter ferries owned by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Conway Bus Tours were put up for sale due to low ridership
- The Blackstone Valley Watershed Council celebrated ZAP the Blackstone clean-ups in April to celebrate Earth Day
- WaterFire boat tours on the *Spirit of the Blackstone* were offered on select dates from May to September
- *Spring Birding Tours* were held on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in May
- Radio personality and storyteller Florence Markoff presented a lively narrative on famous and not-so-famous Rhode Islanders at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in April
- Bob Billington visited the Amber Valley in May
- The Visitors Center in Pawtucket was the venue for this year for the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce Legislative Session
- The Pawtucket Foundation took a tour on the Blackstone Valley Trolley in June led by Dan Sullivan from Collette Tours
- The fourth annual Rivers Day event was held at Central Falls Landing in April
- Six high school seniors were awarded scholarships from the Blackstone Valley Watershed Council in April at the Rivers Day celebration
- Blackstone Valley destinations chosen as editor's picks in Yankee Magazine include Water Cruises of Rhode Island, the Samuel Slater Canal Boat, the Blackstone River Bikeway, Wright's Farm Restaurant, and Chan's in Woonsocket
- The William Blackstone Potato Head received world-wide attention after being banished from Belper, England to a new location. Stories on Mr

Potato Head were in the Daily Telegraph, ABC Radio in England, The Daily Sun, the Mirror, BBC Radio, the Associated Press, along with local newspapers and TV stations in the United States

- For the first time, all 24 communities in the Blackstone Valley celebrated Project ZAP with clean-ups of the Blackstone River on Earth Day in April
- The Tourism Council welcomed youth soccer players and their chaperones from Belper, England in May to play in a soccer tournament, attend a Pawsox game and visit local places of interest in the Blackstone Valley
- For the second year in a row, the Dragon boat races and Taiwan Day Festival was held on the Blackstone River in Pawtucket
- A Spring Blossom Railway Tour was held in May on the Providence & Worcester Railroad. The historically narrated tour train traveled from Cumberland, RI to Gardner, Ma roundtrip
- The Blackstone Valley Visitor Center received a wooden female millworker in March carved by chainsaw artist Michael Higgins of the Magic Garden in Tiverton
- A storm drain stenciling program throughout the Blackstone Valley sponsored by the Tourism Council was held in April
- William Blackstone Potato Head was shipped to England and received national and International publicity
- Developed the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council website with Dave Goldstein which brought the Council fully online
- America House of Newport was chosen to develop the Tourism council's marketing campaign. The firm will develop several PR campaigns, trade show exhibits, media advertising and promotional rack cards
- Yankee Magazine featured an 18-page color story on the Blackstone Valley
- A Rubber Ducky Race was held in the Blackstone River. Over 900 rubber duck were dumped into the river from the John Street Bridge raising funds for the Blackstone Valley
- The Tourism Council led ZAP the Blackstone on Earth Day. 700 volunteers participated in community clean-ups and storm drain stenciling
- Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket welcomed 93,000 visitors to the Blackstone Valley
- Tourism Council offered three Elderhostel summer tours presenting historic and cultural aspects of the Blackstone Valley
- The Tourism Council and Conway Tours completed a two-year ferry transportation contract for the operation of ferry boat service between Pawtucket and Providence, under the direction of RIDOT. While 55% of our passenger goal was achieved, the operation ran safe, on time and offered great service.
- The Council retired it's working boat, Blackstone Valley Tourism One and sold Hovercraft Tourism 3 , an experimental vessel used along the Blackstone River
- The Tourism Council joined the American Bus Association
- The Tourism Council is now online with a website developed by David Goldstein and his company INTAP
- Strategic marketing plan was completed for the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor. Dan Yaeger Associates led the collaborative effort to create a united voice, logo and promotional campaign for the Tourism Council, the National Heritage Corridor, and the Blackstone Valley Visitors Bureau in Massachusetts.
- Produced the 5th *Christmas in the Valley* guide to holiday activities
- The Opening Gala for the Convergence Arts Festival was held at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in September
- The Artist Studio Trolley Tours, part of the Pawtucket Convergence Arts Festival, will be held in September

- In September, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council listed 17 ways to see the Blackstone Valley including by train, by bike, by canoe, by riverboat, etc.
- The Annual Meeting of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held in September and the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Gene and Rita Conway of Conway Tours – Grayline. Dana Newbrook was inducted into the William Blackstone Society
- The original restored film on Project ZAP was shown at the Visitors Center in Pawtucket in September
- Chainsaw artists and wood sculptors Michael Higgins and Billy Rebele carved two small children of millworkers out of large logs at the Veteran's Memorial Amphitheatre in Pawtucket in September as part of the Convergence Art Festival
- Rose Lavoie of the Gloucester Heritage Society received the 2001 Rhode Island Tourism Achievement Award from Governor Lincoln Almond at the annual RI Tourism Unity Luncheon at the RI Convention Center
- The Renaissance ferry boat that is owned by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and Conway Tours-Grayline was leased to a private company that plans to ferry commuters from Liberty Island Park in Jersey City, N.J. to a dock in Lower Manhattan near Ground
- Elderhostel offered tours to seniors over age 55 in Rhode Island and the Blackstone Valley. Elderhostel has offered tours in Rhode for the past six years organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Numerous articles about Mr. Potato Head being sent to Belper, England appeared in newspapers all over the United States and Great Britain
- Tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from Market Square, Woonsocket were available from August – November. Haunted River tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from Market Square were held in October
- Tours of the Blackstone Valley and Woonsocket were part of the National Preservation Conference in Providence in October
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council reported that the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center saw an increase of 33.9 percent in traffic for the year ending as of September, 2001
- *Christmas in the Valley* was published by The Valley Breeze in November. In past years, the Tourism Council has published a *Christmas in the Valley* brochure. It has now been expanded to a newspaper insert by The Valley Breeze in partnership with the Tourism Council
- A Mr. Potato Head comic strip debuts in the Times. Garfield creator Jim Davis and his assistant Brett Koth are the creators of the comic strip
- For the second year in a row, the Polar Express tours on the Providence & Worcester Railroad were held in November
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$894,148 for 2001
- The Tourism Council hosted Christmas trolley tours in Burrillville, North Smithfield, Smithfield, and Lincoln

2002

- Purchased 1981 British model, 78-passenger double-decker tour bus from England
- Created worldwide publicity for the Blackstone Valley after sending 7-foot tall William Blackstone Mr. Potato Head to England
- Launched tourblackstone.com website promoting attractions, events and other Blackstone Valley information
- Bob Billington attended World Canal Conference in Montreal, Canada
- Bob presented a sustainable tourism development paper in Hong Kong at an International conference on tourism

- Attended the Pow Wow in New Orleans, one of the largest travel shows in the United States
- A *Spring Blossom Train trip* was held on the Providence & Worcester Railroad in May
- The Tourism Council sponsored a *Fall Foliage train tour* on the Providence & Worcester Railroad that traveled from Cumberland, RI to Gardner, MA round-trip
- A special *RI Rivers Day Birding Tour* was held in June on board the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- The Blackstone Valley Watershed Council presented two \$500 scholarships to two local high school students who have shown a strong commitment to the environment
- The Blackstone Valley Watershed Council thru a legislative grant sponsored by Sen. Marc Cote presented nine \$250 scholarships to area high school students
- Blackstone Valley Explorer Riverboat *Wilderness Tours* leaving from the Central falls Landing held in July
- A *Safari Cruise of the Blackstone Gorge* on the *Spirit of the Blackstone* with a trip to Southwick Zoo was held every Saturday in August
- A cruise on the Blackstone River, recently designated an American Heritage River, took place every weekend from August to November leaving from the Woonsocket Landing at Market Square
- NASCAR driver Doug Hurst made an appearance at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket as part of a blood drive sponsored by the RI Blood Center and the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce
- A Farm Stands brochure was produced in May by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in co-operation with the Blackstone Valley Visitors Bureau
- U. S. Representative Patrick Kennedy and other federal, state and city officials were on hand to open segment 5 of the bike path from Front Street to Quinville in Lincoln in June
- RI Rivers Day was held in June at the Central Falls Landing
- Thundermist Tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from Market Square in Woonsocket were held from August to November
- Bob Billington was presented with a special arts award from the Northern RI Council on the Arts
- Louis Yip received the Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award in May from Governor Lincoln Almond at the annual RI Tourism Luncheon at the RI Convention Center
- The annual photo contest *Pawtucket Mills: Our Past and Our Future* sponsored by the Convergence Arts Festival will be on display at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center during the month of September
- Haunted River Tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer were held in October leaving from Market Square in Woonsocket
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council awarded official designation by the Rhode Island Rivers Council
- Water quality testing equipment was upgraded on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in collaboration with Narragansett Bay Commission
- The Samuel Slater was featured in a story by the Associated Press this year and the story appeared in over 200 national and international publications
- Feature stories about the Blackstone Valley appeared in *Preservation Magazine*, a publication by the National Trust for Historic Preservation
- A cover story appeared in *Group Tour Magazine*

- *Yankee Magazine* included a feature story on the Blackstone River Valley
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer and the Samuel Slater Canal Boat were featured in a cover story in *Newsday Magazine* in June
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was featured in a story in *Rhode Island Roads Magazine* in July
- The Samuel Slater was featured in an article in *UK Waterways Magazine*
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was featured in a story in the *Narragansett Bay Journal*
- The Tourism Council, in collaboration with the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor presented the first customer service training program for 35 front-line managers
- Ten different tours were offered this year through the Elderhostel program. Blackstone Valley Tourism has participated in Elderhostel for the past six years
- Bob Billington attended the National Tourism Association Convention in Houston, Texas
- The Blackstone Valley hosted 25 guests this year from the Amber Valley
- The Tourism Council received a grant from the Austin T. Levy Foundation to produce a Distance Learning Program about the Blackstone Valley to classrooms around the country
- The City of Pawtucket received a Literature and Promotion Award from Northeastern Economic Developers Association in September for the tourism brochure *Pawtucket: Let Us Entertain You!* designed by Neville Lassotovitch
- The 12-passenger river craft *Spirit of the Blackstone* offered tours on the scenic Whitins Reservoir in Douglas, MA in JULY
- A story on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat was featured in *Waterways World* magazine in June
- The Pawtucket Arts Collaborative opened an art gallery at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket
- *A Bugs of the Blackstone Tour* led by Tammy Gilpatrick was held on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in June
- *Group Tour Magazine* featured tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer and the Samuel Slater Canal Boat in June
- Bristol County Savings Charitable Foundation donated \$3,500 to the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for sculptures
- The RI Dragon boat Festival and Taiwan Day was held in September. Southwest Airlines provided a \$200 plane ticket for each member of the winning team or the team can decide to divide up \$3,000
- Blackstone Valley Tourism continues to work with the city of Central Falls on the redevelopment of Central Falls Landing. A new boat landing and docks are under construction
- \$510,000 in funding for the construction of four new river landings on the Blackstone River will come from the state and federal money appropriated under the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century
- The Tourism Council continues to host the Christmas Trolley Tours in Burrillville, North Smithfield, Smithfield, Cumberland and Lincoln
- Bob Billington and Mary Harrington attended the National Tour Association Convention Trade Show in LA.
- \$10,000 was collected by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in honor of Shawn Nassaney and his girlfriend Lynn Goodchild who perished on 9-11 when their hi-jacked plane crashed into the World Trade Center. A

scholarship fund was set up and a check was presented to St Raphael's Academy in Pawtucket as Shawn was a 1998 graduate of the school.

- An *Ecology Cruise* on the Blackstone Valley Explorer was held in July
- British Tea Tours were offered on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council unveiled The Blackstone Valley Passport. The Passport offers discounts to historic and cultural attractions, riverboat tours, performing arts, restaurants, retailers, and gift shops
- Betty Johnson, local author and historian, received the William Blackstone Award from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council at the Council's annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony. Governor Lincoln Almond and gubernatorial candidates Myrth York and Donald Carceiri also spoke
- Two Fishing trips on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from the Cumberland side of the Blackstone River were offered in July
- A puppet show and exhibit by Dan Butterworth Puppets was on display at the Slater Mill Gallery at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in December
- A Bicycle Tour map of the Blackstone Valley was available from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in partnership with the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island
- During two different Polar Express train trips, the Providence & Worcester Railroad collided with two parked cars that were parked too close to the railroad tracks near the new bike path on a Saturday and Sunday in November
- *The Blackstone Valley Christmas Light Tours* on board the Blackstone Valley Trolley and the British Double decker bus were held in December
- *Turn it Around With Tourism*, a national network teleconference devoted to the organization of rural tourism initiatives, was held at Bryant College and organized by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Over 700 people attended the *Travel Experiences Trade Show 1992* at Lincoln Greyhound Park for group tour planners in October
- The Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$789,920 for 2002

2003

- 1st Easter Bunny Express train ride on the Providence and Worcester Railroad left from Cumberland, RI in April
- Bob Billington of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council elected to serve as chairman of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in cooperation with the Blackstone River Watershed Council, presented the 30th Anniversary of Project ZAP in Lincoln.
- Great American Cleanup partnership in cooperation with nine Blackstone Valley communities collects over 7,000 tires along the Blackstone River
- DeTours provided self-guided maps featuring themed tours in the Valley
- The Tourism Council led a group of 12 Blackstone Valley citizens on a tour of the Amber Valley in England in May
- British Double-decker bus was profiled as a feature article in AAA Southern New England March 2003 newsletter
- Received grant from Narragansett Bay Commission to provide scholarships for students to participate in ecology program on the Explorer

- Presented catch and release programs on the Explorer to acquaint people to the recreational uses of the Blackstone River
- The Samuel Slater canal boat was featured in Rhode Island Monthly and the Providence Sunday Journal and as a "hidden treasure". The Blackstone Valley also featured in an article in Fodor's Travel Guide
- The Blackstone Valley Watershed Council in partnership with the Heritage Corridor, the Blackstone River Watershed Association, the Blackstone Headwaters Coalition and the Mass Audubon Society started a watershed-wide, citizen water-quality monitoring program
- The Blackstone River Watershed hosted a waterway clean-up in April at the Blackstone River State Park in Lincoln
- Blackstone Valley Watershed Council hosted a Blackstone River clean-up in May as part of the Great American Clean-Up
- The Valley Breeze, in partnership with the Tourism Council, published the Blackstone River Valley Visitor Guide Spring/ summer, fall and Holiday editions. Over 60,000 copies were published each season
- The Tourism Council received a \$6,000 donation of Blackstone Valley paintings from local artist Peter Campbell
- Bob Billington attended the Travel Industry Association of America trade industry expo in St Louis, MO
- Joined with Elderhostel to present state-wide and regional heritage tours featuring the Blackstone Valley
- A shopping trip to the Wrentham Village Premium Outlets was held on the Tourism Council's Double-decker bus on two Saturdays in May
- *A Walk in the Footsteps of Samuel Slater* tour was held on the Tourism Council's Double-decker bus on various days throughout the summer
- **Rides to Waterfire in Providence on the Tourism Council's double-decker bus are offered by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.**
- Participated in the Discover New England Travel & Tourism Summit highlighting regional cultural destinations
- The Valley Breeze was the recipient of the Rhode Island Division of Tourism Blackstone Valley Award at the State Tourism Luncheon in May
- Leon Mathieu Seniors were special guests on the Blackstone Valley Double-decker bus tour on the Cox Cable "road trip" travelogue in May
- A Double-decker bus tour and Chicken Family Style Dining at Wright's Farm was held on various dates in the summer
- *Discover Rhode Island's Work Life of the French Canadians* tour on the Tourism Council's Double-decker bus was held on various days throughout the summer
- The Tourism Council provided office space to the Gamm Theater as they transition moving from Providence to Pawtucket
- Historic Adventure Double-decker Bus Tour
- The Tourism Council completed a business plan and early designs for the Blackstone River Exploration and Research Center with assistance from Ocean State Charities, the Heritage Corridor, Morris Nathanson Design, and the Narragansett Bay Commission
- The Blackstone River Watershed council with the Blackstone Rivers Project, Mass Audubon, Broad Meadow Brook and BRVNHCC presented a Clean Water Festival at which over 10 schools from Worcester to Central Falls presented projects on clean water
- The Blackstone River Watershed Council secured a \$250,000 open space grant through the Rhode Island Department of Environmental

Management to go towards the purchase of the Blackball property in Cumberland

- A Spring Historic Shopping Train Excursion to Putnam, CT was held in June.
- Blackstone Valley hosted artists and visitors from Belper, England as part of the twinning between Pawtucket and Belper
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the South County Tourism Council presented an interpreted bus and walking tour of King Philip's War in April. Passengers boarded the 72-passenger British Double-decker bus owned by the Tourism Council and traveled the approximate route troops took to the Great Swamp Fight.
- The Blackstone Valley Watershed Council provided 10 \$250 scholarships to graduating seniors in the Valley
- Historic Adventure Double-decker bus tours were held in June
- As part of Project Zap in June, the public was invited to enjoy scenic tours along the Blackstone River aboard the Spirit of the Blackstone Valley
- A Fall Foliage Train trip to Putnam, CT was held in October
- The Polar Express Train trips were held in November
- The observance of the signing of the 212-year old Polish Constitution of May 3rd was held at the Visitors Center in June. Polish food, polka music, Polish video presentations, and other exhibits were featured at the event.
- A poetry reading by Norah Pollard, daughter of Pawtucket jockey Red Pollard,
- All nine cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley participated in clean-ups in the Blackstone Valley as part of the Keep America Beautiful 50th Anniversary
- Blackstone River Watershed Council received a \$7,500 grant from the RI Rivers Council
- Annual revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$841,130 for 2003
- 3,000 tires hauled from the banks of the Blackstone River during spring clean-up event
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat was available for overnight stays and British Tea Tours
- "Tour Rhode Island, There's No Place Like Home" planned a one-day bus tour of Rhode Island to familiarize Rhode Islanders with local tourism spots. 1,000 Rhode Islanders will learn about favorite visitor destinations throughout the state from tourism professionals

2004

- Cycleblackstone.com promotes the Blackstone Valley Bike Path
- Eventblackstone.com lists and promotes Blackstone Valley events
- Blackstone Valley Canoe Trail civic art project
- Representatives from the Blackstone Valley along with Rep Patrick Kennedy travel to Taiwan to receive six Dragon boats
- Ronzio becomes the official pizza of the Blackstone Valley. 100,000 pizza boxes will carry the image of the British-built canal boat, the Samuel Slater all over the state
- RIPTA donates 12 passenger mini-bus to Blackstone Valley Tourism The mini-bus was made handicapped-ready with a grant from the June

Rockwell Levy Foundation They also provided a grant to create a wheelchair ramp for the double-decker bus

- State and local officials cut ribbon at Central Falls Landing to commemorate a Blackstone Valley Tourism Blackstone River Valley Canal Transportation and Navigation System.
- Mayor King and an 11 member delegation from the Amber Valley visited the Blackstone Valley to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the twinning of Amber Valley and the Blackstone Valley
- An article about our William Blackstone Potato Head appeared in the London Guardian newspaper
- Over 3,000 tires were collected from the Blackstone River by the Friends of the Blackstone during the Great American Clean-up. Firestone Tire company will recycle the 3,000 tires for free.
- The Easter Bunny made a surprise visit to the local newspaper offices to promote our upcoming Easter Bunny Train trips on the Providence & Worcester Railroad
- A new Blackstone Valley road map was designed by Arrow Map Inc. of South Easton, MA. The map includes all nine cities and towns in the Blackstone Valley along with points of interest.
- Easter Bunny train trips were held on the Providence & Worcester Railroad on April 3
- State Tourism officials have created 22 differently-themed bus tours to travel the state on May 1 to show that "There's No Place Like Home"
- A Spring Shopping Tour to Putnam, CT on the Providence & Worcester Railroad was held on June 12.
- Five new dragon boats are being donated to the RI Dragon boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival by Taiwan
- A preview of the Dragon boats was held at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in March
- RI Dragonboat Festival and Taiwan Day was held in September
- Blackstone Valley Visitors Center hosts Taste of Pawtucket Gala in September to kick off Pawtucket Arts Festival
- Preserve America honors the Blackstone Valley with a White House citation from US Senator Lincoln Chafee and Assistant Secretary of the Interior Lynn Scarlett
- Blackstone Valley Tourism received \$5,000 in environmental funds from the Upper Blackstone Water Pollution Abatement District because the Tourism Council was forced to cancel boat tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer. In October of 2003, an overflow of untreated raw sewage flowed into the river from Millbury's water treatment plant when they lost power for three hours.
- The seventh annual RI Rivers Day was celebrated on June 19 with the opening of the Blackstone Riverboat Landing and dock in Central Falls. Highlights of the day included a ribbon-cutting, entertainment, awards and presentations, and a number of water activities including canoe and kayak rentals, free rides on the Blackstone Valley Explorer and British Tea Tours on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat. Rep. Patrick Kennedy and Sen. Jack Reed attended.
- RI Rivers Month was celebrated in June with canoeing, kayaking, hiking, fishing, arts and crafts, and theatrical and musical events throughout the state.
- Transportation to the Tall Ships in Newport on a British double decker bus offered by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in July

- Blackstone River Pizza cruises held on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in August at Central Falls Landing
- Free Saturday Night at the Movies held at Central Falls Landing in August
- Fall Foliage Train tours on the Providence & Worcester Railroad from Cumberland, RI to Putnam, CT held on two dates in October
- Polar Express train rides leave from Cumberland, RI to Uxbridge, MA
- A new series of four different bicycle tours are being planned as a new visitor attraction in partnership with the John H. Chafee National Heritage Corridor, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Blackstone Bike Tours will feature overnights and visits to local attractions.
- American Heritage River Tours were held along the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving
- Thundermist Tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer were held in October departing from the Woonsocket Landing
- Haunted River Tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer were held in October leaving from the Woonsocket Landing
- Overnight Tours on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat and British Tea Tours leaving from the Central Falls Landing were held this year
- The Polar Express movie premiers at Showcase Cinema in Seekonk and Providence Place Mall
- Christmas in the Valley is the name of two new regional self-drive tours developed by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Each tour comes with it's own map to make planning and driving easier
- Blackstone Valley Christmas Lights Tours on the British-style double-decker bus were offered in December
- The Travel Industry of America reported that the Blackstone Valley employed 1,240 people in tourism-related industries generating a \$24.4 million payroll in 2004. The nine communities that make up the Blackstone River Valley generated \$8.1 million in state and local taxes and travel expenditures in the area were \$99.2 million.

2005

- Over 4,000 people participated in "Footsteps in History" event, "Five Centuries in Three Days," a culmination of the Preserve America Communities Award
- Obtained licensing by Warner Brothers to host THE POLAR EXPRESS™ Ride
- Created Dineblackstone.com database of Blackstone Valley restaurants and eating establishments
- Promoted Double-decker bus tours
- The Blackstone River Theater received the 2005 Governor's Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award at the Rhode Island Tourism Unity Awards Luncheon
- RiverSing, a gathering of local choral and musical performers, helped celebrate Rhode Island Rivers Day in June along the banks of the Blackstone River
- State tourism representatives visited St Ann's Arts and Cultural Center in Woonsocket on the annual Whistlestop Tour celebrating Rhode Island Tourism Week
- A Spring Shopping Train trip to Putnam, CT on the Providence & Worcester Railroad was held in June

- The second annual Tour Rhode Island "There's No Place Like Home" celebration was held in Rhode Island in May. The event featured 24 buses that highlighted different tourism attractions in the state
- DeTour maps highlighting various tours in the Blackstone Valley were published and are available at the Visitor Center
- The latest stretch of the Blackstone Bikeway from the former Lonsdale Drive-In to the Pratt Dam in Lincoln was formerly opened in June
- *Expedition 2005*, a four-day, 50-mile kayaking and biking expedition which starts in Worcester and ends in Pawtucket was held in June
- The Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament and Silent Auction was held at Crystal Lake Golf Course in June
- The 20th Anniversary of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was celebrated throughout the year with the Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament at Spring Lake, Burrillville in June, a Chowder Reception onboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer in Central Falls in July, an Ice-Cream Party and visit to the Penny Arcade at Spring Lake, Burrillville in August, a Wine and Cheese Reception at Diamond Hill Vineyard, Cumberland in September, a Reception at the covered bridge in Lincoln Woods in October, a Chicken-family style dinner at Cricket's Restaurant in Smithfield in November, and a Candlelight Reception at Brown & Hopkins Country Store in Chepachet in December.
- The Belper Youth Soccer Team visited the Blackstone Valley for a one-week visit starting on May 28 as part of the on-going partnership between the Blackstone Valley and the Amber Valley in England
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer held various boat tours on the Blackstone River leaving from the Central Falls Landing. Some of the tours offered included Twilight Cruises, Family Fishing Cruises, an early evening nature cruise with the Audubon Society of Rhode Island and Bag Lunch Boat Tours.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor unveiled the Blackstone Canoe Trail, a year-long travel promotion aimed at highlighting the recreational and eco-tourism destinations located in central Massachusetts and northern Rhode Island. The campaign will feature dozens of brightly painted fiberglass canoes strategically located in various locations within the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor from Worcester to Providence
- The Belper Youth Soccer Team from Belper, England visited the Blackstone Valley in June and played games against three local youth soccer teams.
- The 20th Anniversary of the Tourism Council was celebrated with a special event each month from June 2005 to May 2006. All of the nine cities and towns were represented. Some of the events included an Ice cream Party at Spring Lake in Burrillville, a Wine and Cheese Reception at Diamond Hill Vineyard, and a reception at Brown and Hopkins Country Store in Chepachet.
- Senator Lincoln Chafee and Mark Jewell of the National Park Service tour the Blackstone Valley with Bob Billington
- The Providence Journal ran a series "*Summer in the City*" highlighting special events in the Blackstone Valley RI and Massachusetts such as music festivals, boat tours, kayaking and canoeing on the Blackstone River.

- Construction was started on the new Blackstone Valley Gateway Center on Rt 295 in Lincoln.
- A pontoon boat owned by the Tourism Council partnered with the Fogarty Center, the PARI Independent Living Center and the Ocean State Center for Independent Living to offer Waterfire tours to people with disabilities.
- Summer evening Nature Cruises were offered on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in July
- The M/V Providence Piers will present "Cruises to Waterfire" leaving from Festival Pier in Pawtucket in Saturdays in the summer
- The northbound Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center on Rt. 295 will open in November
- The Tourism Council received a \$1000 donation from Walmart towards the Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament and Polar Express Train trips
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat offered overnight tours on the Blackstone River and British Tea Tours
- The RI Dragon boat Festival and Taiwan Day Festival attracted more than 30 teams to compete in the dragon boat races
- 130 attractions in the Blackstone Valley RI and Massachusetts will celebrate Footsteps in History on Columbus Day Weekend. The event is sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, and the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sponsored a Fall Festival and Shopping Excursion train trip to Putnam, CT in October
- The Tourism Council celebrated its 20th Anniversary at the Kirkbrae Country Club in September and honored Chris Van Allsburg, author of *The Polar Express*
- 45-minute Christmas trolley tours with Santa were held in December
- Polar Express train trips departed from the Ann & Hope in Cumberland
- The Hollywood film *Hard Luck* starring Sybill Shepherd and Wesley Snipes was filmed at Franklin Farm in Cumberland in December
- The double-decker bus previously owned by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was sold to Philadelphia Trolley Works Company and is now operating in Philadelphia
- A four-day, 50 mile Expedition down the Blackstone River from Worcester to Pawtucket was held in June. *Expedition '05* involved 25 kayaks and 50 people.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$864,145 for 2005

2006

- **The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was presented with the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Ulysses Prize for Innovation in Tourism Management for contributing to a positive change with regards to community values in Rhode Island over the past 20 years. The prize was presented in Madrid, Spain.**
- Received UNWTO.sBEST certification
- Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center opens off I-295 in Lincoln
- Hosted "RI Tourism Sustainability" Conference
- Tours on the Blackstone River on the Blackstone Valley Explorer and the Samuel Slater Canal Boat will resume in May in the Central Falls/Valley

Falls area. Tours will start up again since the docks have been repaired after being damaged by flood waters months ago.

- "Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Tourism Economic Impact" study with assistance from the Travel Industry Association of America
- Blackstone Alert website provides information in case of weather and other emergencies
- Tourism Council Initiates the Keep Blackstone Valley / Keep America Beautiful program
- The White House presented the Blackstone Valley, through the RI State Historical and Preservation Commission, a \$120,000 grant to produce Footsteps in History for the next two years
- Hosted the Blackstone Valley Flood Forum with the Northern RI Chamber of Commerce, Code Red and New Commons
- The 20th Anniversary of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was celebrated with various events throughout the year including a Dessert Reception at the Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket in January, a Valentine's Dance at the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center in Pawtucket in February, a Victorian Reception at Hearthside in Lincoln in March, an Apple Blossom Reception at Smith-Appleby in April, and the 200th Anniversary of the Slatersville Mill in May
- Tourism Council organizes the largest *Tour Rhode Island, There's No Place Like Home* event to date. Over 1,200 Rhode Islanders toured their home state
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosted a state-wide conference on Voluntourism
- Over 18,000 people attended the RI Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival

2007

- The Tourism Council received world-wide publicity in Dubai, UAE, by the World Travel and Tourism Council, winning top Tourism for Tomorrow Destination award
- The Tourism Council won the Sbest Certification from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). The accreditation recognizes excellence in the Tourism Council's destination management and was created to promote improvement in competitiveness and sustainability of tourism destinations around the globe.
- Published the Rhode Island Green Visitor Guide for the Blackstone Valley uses all environmentally-friendly methods and materials, and highlights eco-friendly destinations, activities and environmental principles
- The Blackstone Valley Green Tourism Symposium was held at the Visitor Center in April
- The Tourism Council introduced the International Foods of the Blackstone Valley booklet, to promote multicultural dining offered in the historic Blackstone Valley region. More than 70,000 brochures were published.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council sponsored the Easter Bunny Express Train trips in April. The train trip featured an Easter Bonnet Contest and participants were given an Easter Basket by the Easter Bunny.
- RiverSing was held on the banks of the Blackstone River in June. The event featured choral and musical performers, food, dance, and more along the river.

- “Free Sundays” aboard the Explorer riverboat, sponsored for public enjoyment by the Citizens Bank Foundation
- Attendance figures for the Route 295 Blackstone River State Park Visitor Center is over 35,000 visitors per month
- Established the Blackstone Alert River Safety program
- Consuela Sherba and Patricia Zacks received the Person of the Year Award for the Pawtucket Foundation
- Sponsored Rivers Day and *RiverSing* on the Blackstone River
- Brought the *Vista Jubilee* back to the Blackstone Valley for a “down river cruise” sailing out of Pawtucket. Proceeds to benefit the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center.
- Managed over 75 overnights and chartered British Tea Tours on the Samuel Slater Canal Boat
- DineBlackstone.com which highlights local restaurants is the most recent website developed by the Tourism Council
- Marc Kohler presented the stories of Captain Marcus, The Pirate of the Blackstone Valley at the Visitor’s Center during February school vacation
- Chicken family-style in the Blackstone Valley was highlighted in an article in the Boston Globe in March
- French-Canadian Heritage in Woonsocket is featured in The Boston Globe
- David W. Balfour and Joyce Hindle-Koutsioigne wrote *Cumberland by the Blackstone* book
- *Rhode Island Rivers Day* was celebrated on June 16 at the Central Falls Landing with boat tours, Dragon boat rides, arts and crafts and an award ceremony.
- From June to November, *Footsteps in History* will promote 24 events in the Blackstone The Blackstone Valley Secret Ingredient Food Tours were featured in many local publications and were very popular
- *The Dynamite Cook-off*, sponsored by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Northern Rhode Island Council on the Arts and Jen’s Dish talk show was held in River Island Park in Woonsocket in September
- The Sunset Cruise on the Vista Jubilee roundtrip from Pawtucket to Narragansett Bay was held in July
- The Great Road Historic District received the 2007 Governor’s Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award at the Rhode Island Convention Center in May
- The Tourism Council was presented a citation by Rep. Ray Church for winning the SBest Certification from the United Nations World Tourism Organization for international distinction in tourism
- Chicken family-style in the Blackstone Valley was featured in the Boston Globe in January.
- Janice Kissinger was appointed new CEO of the Slater Mill.
- The Blackstone, a restaurant and music club owned by John Lefrancoise, will move into Hope Artiste Village in Pawtucket
- French-Canadian Heritage in Woonsocket was featured in the Travel section of the Boston Globe
- Article on Samuel Slater and the Slater Mill was featured in Reflections Magazine in March
- The Samuel Slater Canal Boat and the Blackstone Valley Explorer were lowered into the Blackstone River in May to begin their new season. Tours from the Central Falls/Valley Falls location were discontinued last

year because the docks were destroyed and had to be rebuilt since being destroyed by raging waters during the flood of October 2005.

- A ribbon-cutting was held in June for the section of the Bikeway from the Lonsdale Drive-in to the Pratt Dam in Lincoln
- Bob Billington appeared on NBC 10 News Sunrise with Frank Colletta in February
- The fourth annual *Tour Rhode Island - There's No Place Like Home* bus tours, which were coordinated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, allowed over 1,200 Rhode Islanders to tour their home state. 20 tour options were offered and participants were able to tour the Newport Mansions, visit the Slater Mill, tour downtown Providence, take a ferry to Block Island, and visit local wineries among other Rhode Island highlights.
- *Footsteps in History*, which includes 24 events on 24 separate weekends from June to September in the 24 communities of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor was a highlight of 2007. The event was co-ordinated and promoted by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$939,925 as of 2007

2008

- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful program is certified by Keep America Beautiful
- Awarded \$50,000 Preserve America grant for the Broad Street Regeneration Project
- Initiated Broad Street Regeneration Project with Mayors of Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland
- Organized *Tour Your Own Backyard* tours
- "Blackstone Valley Salsa" and "Blackstone Valley Dynamite Sauce" food contests
- Events of the Week, a regular news release was emailed to over 300 media outlets and linked to a widening network of websites.
- The Tourism Council joined Facebook and Twitter
- Citizens Bank Foundation provided \$5,000 grant to sponsor "Free Sundays on the River" aboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Bob Billington was highlighted in The Senior Digest in November. Mr Billington received four prestigious awards in 2008 including the Tom Roberts Prize for Creative Achievement in the Humanities from the RI Council for the Humanities, The Destination Award from the World Travel and Tourism Council, The North American Travel Personality of the Year Award from the World TRavel Awards, and the Heritage Award from the Pawtucket Foundation.
- Tourism Council recognized as a sustainable tourism development pioneer on the Center for Sustainable Destinations website by the National Geographic Society
- The Council's Sustainable Tourism Laboratory is recognized by the RI Economic Policy Council in the State of Rhode Island
- The Blackstone Valley Canoe Trail is highlighted in a new coffee table book, *American Art on Parade* highlighting community folk art in all 50 states. The canoes were hand-painted by local artists depicting images of Valley destinations and attractions.
- Initiated the Broad Street Winter Festival

- Hosted motor coach trip to President Obama's Inauguration in Washington, DC
- Coordinated the Ribbon Cutting for the Cherry Tree Project along Roosevelt Ave. and organized the Cherry Blossom Festival and planting of Cherry trees
- Navigant Bank becomes the naming sponsor for the Blackstone Valley Polar Express with a \$10,000 grant
- Received a Rhode Island Foundation grant to establish the *Blueprint for Sustainable Tourism*
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$980,656 for 2008

2009

- Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory accepted as partner to: Global Sustainable Tourism Alliance of the United Nations Foundation; Rain Forest Alliance; United Nations World Tourism Organization.
- The Tourism Council sponsored a bus trip to Washington, DC for the Inauguration of Barack Obama in January.
- Civic Tourism II Conference dealing with sustainable tourism concepts hosts 180 participants
- The sixth annual Tour Rhode Island, coordinated by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, featured 24 bus tours which will tour different parts of the state was held in May
- Blackstone Alert had a meeting at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket and heard a report of the Flood of 2005 and how it affected businesses in the Blackstone Valley
- Brown & Hopkins Country Store, located in Chepachet, is the oldest continuously operated country store in America. Brown & Hopkins celebrated 200 years in 2009.
- "Achievement in Rhode Island Sustainable Tourism" Award (ARISTA) acknowledges the efforts of qualified non-profit organizations incorporating sustainable practices
- A preview of the new bridge design for the Pawtucket River Bridge was held at the visitors Center in downtown Pawtucket
- *The Family Guy* tours were held at ComiCon Providence, featuring destination sites mentioned in The Family Guy TV show produced by RI native Danny Smith and RISD graduate Seth McFarland.
- Central Falls native Viola Davis was nominated for an Academy Award as Best Supporting Actress for her role in *Doubt* starring Meryl Streep.
- 60 Cherry trees were planted along Roosevelt Avenue in Pawtucket and Central Falls in April to celebrate the RI Cherry Blossom Festival. The Cherry Tree planting was initiated and financed in part by Louis Yip and Sunny Ng of Tai-O Corporation of Central Falls and Pui-O Corporation of Pawtucket. The trees were planted as the first phase of a multi-year plan
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council published The Green Visitor Guide as part of the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory. The Guide is geared to visitors who seek an environmentally friendly experience.
- *Special Occasion* breakfasts held at Comfort Inn, Pawtucket including Valentine's Day Breakfast, St. Patrick's Day Breakfast, Easter Bunny Breakfast, May Day Breakfast, and Breakfast with Santa

- Book signing of *The TV Maitre D' Cookbook* with Joe Zito and Linda Beaulieu was held at the Visitors Center in March
- EventsBlackstone.com website instituted
- Events sponsored by Blackstone Valley Tourism Council were featured in *The New York Times*, *Gourmet Magazine*, and *Ohio.com*.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism is offering free copies of the new Green Visitor Guide geared to travelers who seek an environmentally friendly experience.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism sponsored a Blackstone Alert Project to talk about the Flood of 2005
- Rhode Island's Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory is inaugurating a \$250 cash prize and trophy for the Achievement in RI Sustainable Tourism Award.
- The Tourism Council coordinated 24 specially themed bus tours in Rhode Island in May as part of Tour Rhode Island.
- Cherry Blossom Festival held on Roosevelt Ave, Central Falls with dedication of the newly-planted cherry trees and a parade featuring helium-filled Cherry Blossom balloons that are based on the design used in the Macy's and Rose Bowl Parades.
- Sixty cherry trees planted on Roosevelt Avenue in Pawtucket and Central Falls. Planting of the trees was initiated and financed by Louis Yip and Sunny Ng of Tai-o Corporation. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls, Collette Tours and the Pawtucket Foundation led the project.
- The Great American Clean-Up was held as part of Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful in June.
- A new book *Landscape of Industry: An Industrial History of the Blackstone Valley*, published by University Press of New England was for sale at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council offices.
- Kip's Restaurant in Pawtucket celebrated 50 years in August, 2009.
- A celebration was held in September at Slater Mill to mark the construction of the long-awaited fish ladders on the Blackstone River.
- A Backyard Tour was held in October and featured apples and pumpkins, local produce along with fresh dairy products, honey and baked goods.
- A French Festival River Cruise was held on the Blackstone Valley Explorer featuring a boat ride on the Explorer and a special lunch which included a dynamite sandwich, a tour of the Museum of Work and Culture, the movie *Hidden in the Blackstone Valley*, and a visit to the French Farmers Market.
- The Pawtucket Film Festival, as part of the Pawtucket Arts Festival, was held at the theater at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council became the first US agency to be Certified in Tourism Governance by the UN World Travel Organization to adopt their international procedures.
- Danny Smith, producer and writer for *The Family Guy* TV series, was honored at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Annual Meeting with the Excellence in the Arts Award. Donna Houle and Gaery Furtado were inducted into the William Blackstone Society. The Brown & Hopkins Country Store received the Footprints in History Award.
- A KeepSpace initiative which seeks to foster broad-based respectful partnerships among residents, local businesses, non-profit

organizations, and municipal and state agencies met at the Blackstone Valley Visitors Center in August.

- The 5th Annual Heritage Golf Tournament was held in June at the Crystal Lake Golf Course in Burrillville.
- A fundraiser for the Blackstone Valley Explorer called Keep-the-Boat-Afloat was held at Hope Artiste Village in June
- The Tourism Council sponsored a French Meat Pie Contest and a Dynamite contest
- The Pawtucket Foundation sponsored the 5th Annual Pawtucket Proud Day in June. The volunteers constructed the first Habitat for Humanity project in Pawtucket.
- The 10th Annual RI Rivers Day was celebrated in June with a special three day celebration at the Central Falls Landing
- The popular Secret Ingredient Food Tours were held weekly in the Blackstone Valley and featured foods from many different ethnic restaurants including Portuguese, Greek, Columbian and Cape Verdean.
- Blackstone Valley Explorer Tours were held from May-October leaving from the Central Falls Landing
- Citizens Bank Foundation sponsored selected free tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Several Pawtucket schools participated in the River Classroom program onboard the Blackstone Valley Explorer with scholarship funds provided by the City of Pawtucket Community Development Block Grant Program.
- Wright's Farm Restaurant of Harrisville won the Blackstone Valley Regional Tourism Award at the Rhode Island Tourism Unity Luncheon in May
- *Abraham Lincoln: Face to Face* was held at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in April. The event featured original paintings by artist Peter Campbell, music by the Heritage String Quartet and a reading by Ricardo Pitts-Wiley.
- The Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory workshop was held at the Visitor Center in May .Online journalism pioneer Sandeep Junnaker, creator of the New York Times On Line and professor at the City University Graduate School of Journalism was the guest speaker.
- Bob Billington was chosen as Tourism Personality of the Year by the World Travel Awards.
- Fundraiser for the Blackstone Valley Explorer called "Keep the Boat Afloat" was held at Hope Artiste Village in June.
- French Meat Pie Cook-off and Dynamites contest held in September at French Farmer's Market
- Rhode Island River's Day celebration held June 19-21 with tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer and award presentation to Citizens Bank.
- Fall Foliage Train rides to Putnam, CT on the Providence & Worcester Railroad were held in October
- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful held The Great American Clean-up in April
- Celebration to bring back fish ladders to the Blackstone River was held at Slater Mill in September
- *The Family Guy* Executive Producer Danny Smith honored with Blackstone Valley Excellence in the Arts Award at Tourism Council Annual Dinner

- A new tour called *French Festival, Factories, and Fun* was held on the Blackstone Valley Explorer in September
- *Farm Fresh Fall Tour* held in October highlighting Brown and Hopkins Country Store, lunch in an authentic roadside tavern, shop for antiques, apples, pumpkins, and fresh dairy, honey and baked goods.
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council hosts first meeting of new think tank called *KeepSpace* at Blackstone Valley Visitor Center. *KeepSpace* was founded by Rhode Island Housing.
- First ARISTA Awards presented by Tourism Council for notable achievement in Sustainable Tourism
- International Star Diamond Award by the American Academy of Hospitality Sciences was accepted by Gov. Donald Carceiri at the State House in January on behalf of the state tourism agencies of Rhode Island
- Bob Billington was honored as the recipient of the Mary Brennan Stars of the Industry Award
- The popular Polar Express train rides leaving from the Ann & Hope in Cumberland were held in November
- Last minute Polar Express and other holiday gifts can be purchased at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center at 175 Main Street, Pawtucket
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in partnership with the Blackstone Valley Merchants Association, the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls and the town of Cumberland are sponsoring 'Santa Claus is Coming to Broad Street' in December. Santa will travel down Broad Street in a fire truck from Cumberland Town Hall and visit local businesses
- Breakfast with Santa was held in December at the Comfort Inn in Pawtucket
- Polar Express Holiday Gift Shop open at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for last minute gifts
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for 2009 was \$915,585

2010

- The Polar Express was moved to the 19th century train depot in Woonsocket
- Blackstone Culinaria continues to produce weekly food tours at restaurants in the Blackstone Valley
- Coastal Wine and Chocolate presentation held at Blackstone
- The 1st Annual Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Festival featured Asian & American culture together with a parade, dancing, demonstrations, cherry tree plantings May Breakfast, and the first-ever Cherry Blossom 5K road race on Roosevelt Ave, Pawtucket
- Cherry Pie Bake-off was held at the Slater Mill Historic Site to celebrate the Cherry Blossom Festival
- An exhibition of artwork honoring cultural diversity is now open at the Collaborative Gallery at the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center
- Many different cultures are featured in the Secret Ingredient Food Tours including Japanese, Vietnamese, Chinese, Mexican, Guatemalan, Mediterranean, Portuguese, Spanish, Indian, Greek, Irish and Senegalese

- Some of the restaurants featured include The Village Restaurant, Chepachet Farm, Enn Japanese, Chan's Fine Oriental Dining, Taqueria Lapito, River Falls, Jac's Wraps, The Pillsbury House, Jaswell Farm, Grace Note Farm, and Hose Company
- Expanded the 3 hour Behind-the-Scenes Leisurely Bicycle Tours of the Blackstone Valley
- The City of Pawtucket will receive \$200,000 from the Environmental Protection Agency for clean-up of the State Pier in Pawtucket
- The 11th annual Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival will take place in August
- The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission formed a non-profit because the Corridor's commission is due to expire in October 2011. The non-profit will embrace the same policies and operate under the same by-laws as the commission to the extent applicable by law.
- The Blackstone Valley Bikeway will ultimately extend 48 miles from Providence, Rhode Island to Worcester, MA. Currently 10 miles of the bike path are open to the public. An additional 2.5 miles of bikeway are completed in Worcester and Millbury.
- Colette Vacations were named to Travel & Leisure Magazine's Worlds Best Awards in the category of Tour Operators and Safari Outfitters
- Hosted 150th Anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's visit by train to the Blackstone Valley in May
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in cooperation with the US Census Bureau is encouraging residents of the Blackstone Valley to be counted in the next census. The Tourism Council will pass out tote bags containing information on the census at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket along with information on the Blackstone Valley
- A derelict playground at Galego Court in Pawtucket was transformed into a community garden with the help of the New Urban Farmers. The Pawtucket Foundation with 100 volunteers volunteered to prepare and plant the garden on Pawtucket Proud Day in June
- For the fourth year in a row, the Citizens Bank Foundation will sponsor Citizens Bank Free Sundays on the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Kenny Loggins will be performing with the Boston Pops at McCoy Stadium as part of the Pawtucket Arts Festival
- Kerry Clark, a senior at Woonsocket High School and a graduate of the Woonsocket Area Career and Technical School, created a Blackstone Valley Visitor guide in Braille. Mr Clark, who is legally blind, presented it to Bob Gilson, the volunteer coordinator of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
- Lincoln Train trip was featured in *Victoria Magazine*, *AAA Magazine*, *Lincoln Forum*, and the *Boston Globe*
- Fall Foliage train trip featured in *Yankee Magazine*
- Created and developed the Rhode Island Family Guy Tour in partnership with Quahog.org
- RI Family Guy Tour featured on New York 1 with host Val D'elia
- Created Roosevelt Avenue Cultural Mile Tour
- Presented Responsible Tourism Conference with guest speaker Martha Honey
- Participated in long-range planning session for Tourism Cares
- Coordinated RiverUsers Conference
- Worked with town Planner Tom Kravitz on plans for Burrillville Bike Path

- Co-hosted presentation on the history of the William Wheat Chocolate Factory
- Hosted Board of Directors of the Chocolate Preservation Society of America for four days in the Blackstone Valley
- Hosted world winners from ASHOKA Change Makers Geotourism Challenge Competition who participated in exploring the Blackstone River Valley as part of the BVTC Sustainable Laboratory
- Attended Changemaker Conference in Washington, DC
- Received a grant for and coordinated the efforts for the Roger Williams – William Blackstone Trail for the striping of a safe bikeway
- Coordinated French Meat Pie Bake Off at French Farmer’s Market in Woonsocket
- 341,008 visitors to Rte 285 Visitors Center in Lincoln
- Hosted Jim Leach, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities as part of Mr. Leach’s 50 state visit to promote cultural programming
- Bob Billington attended WTAT Summit in Beijing, China with Louis Yip in May as the winner of the 2008 World Travel and Tourism Award
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was accepted as a member of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council
- *In Your Own Backyard* Bus Tours continue to showcase hidden gems in the valley
- Attended the 15th Annual Discover New England Tourism Summit and International Marketplace in Newport
- Partnered with AAA and the Woonsocket Call in an ad campaign to promote all Rhode Island attractions
- Bob Billington did several earned media interviews and appearances to promote Sustainable Tourism development programs
- The Blackstone Culinaria food tours received extensive media coverage in local media
- *Free Sundays on the Blackstone* funded by Citizens Bank
- *Tour Rhode Island – There’s No Place Like Home*, the state-wide event, was managed by the Tourism Council
- Coordinated *Footsteps in History* event in October
- Coordinated *Table for Two* program which promotes outside dining along Broad Street in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland
- Welcomed over 80,000 visitors to Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket including visitors from overseas, school groups, and tourists
- Instituted flat screen advertising program at the Route 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln
- Presented Sustainable Tourism Development Conference with guest speaker Costas Christ to develop planning and strategy for the next generation of tourism in Rhode Island emphasizing sustainable resources
- Worked with all Rhode Island tourism districts and RIEDC on a five-year strategic plan
- Hosted a national group of educational tour planners attending the 2010 Education Travel Conference in RI, who volunteered in a community service project with the Tourism Council’s Broad Street Initiative
- Electronic recycling programs held monthly in cooperation with Indie Recycle
- The RI Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival received extensive coverage in New England media. A front-page story in the Providence

Journal Go! section highlighted the Dragon boat Races and included a full page color photo.

- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council introduced Leisurely Bicycle Tours in the Blackstone Valley
- The Exchange Street Bridge in Pawtucket is named for Pawtucket native Morris Nathanson at a ceremony held in September
- The Blackstone Valley Fall Train and Shopping Excursion on the Providence & Worcester Railroad traveled to Putnam, CT for the Great Pumpkin Festival. The Festival featured arts and crafts, side-walk dining, a Fall Bazaar and antique shopping.
- Buy Local of the Blackstone Valley Merchants Association served hot chocolate to the public at the Blackstone Valley Polar Express
- Participated with Joe Garlick of WNDC with a VISTA community project
- Through its urban outreach efforts, the Tourism Council worked closely with tourism partners and communities in assisting the US Commerce Department in getting active participation in the 2010 national census
- Led Blackstone Valley partnership to write a HUD grant raising \$10,000 to create Sustainable Tourism effort in the Blackstone Valley
- Morris Nathanson awarded the Blackstone Valley Excellence in the Arts Award by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council at Annual Meeting
- Blackstone Valley Visitor Center wins funds for a major make-over, which will include new and better lighting, state-of-the-art multi-media displays and all new décor.
- A Living History of The William Wheat Chocolate Mill was presented at the Madeira Club
- Annual revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council for 2010 was \$808,710

2011

- 1st Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame commemorates Rhode Island's musical heritage through a museum and annual induction ceremonies
- An on-road bike path was established linking the Blackstone River Bikeway with the East Bay Bike Path allowing folks to pedal from Woonsocket to Bristol – a total of 33 miles
- Tourism planners from around the country and the globe are participating in the Blackstone Valley Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Lab to learn more about “sustainable tourism”
- The 3 hour “Behind the Scenes Leisurely Bike Path Tours” were expanded to 13 guided tours from Pawtucket to Lincoln and two new trips from Lincoln to Woonsocket
- The Tourism Council coordinated efforts to bring Taiwanese performing artists who were touring the USA to the International Charter School in Central Falls
- The Tourism Council helped coordinate the Colombian Festival Parade in Pawtucket and Central Falls
- Blackstone Valley Culinaria Tours are very popular with participants traveling to a different restaurant every Wednesday where they enjoy a cooking demonstration and a meal
- Seven *There's No Place Like Home* bus tours were held in the Blackstone Valley. Participants traveled to such diverse locations as Spring Lake Arcade in Burrillville, Wright's Dairy Farm in No Smithfield, McCoy Stadium in Pawtucket and went on a tour led by a ghost hunter from Chepachet!

- Mars, Inc. donated \$35,000 to build an interactive park and canoe launch in Central Falls near the location of the first chocolate factory in the country
- *A Family Guy* Bus Tour was developed for Comic-Con, Providence in partnership with Chris Martin from Quahog.org
- Route 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 293,183 visitors
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$848,348 for 2011

2012

- Chocolate Mill Overlook Park dedicated in Central Falls
- First inaugural concert and ceremony for the Rhode Island Music Hall of Fame was held at Hope Artiste Village in Pawtucket.
- Hachiko monument unveiled in Woonsocket
- Cherry Blossom Festival held in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket
- Work continues on the Broad Street Initiative in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland
- 20th Anniversary of the Blackstone Valley Explorer was held in April
- U S Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell and National Park Service Director Jonathan Jarvis visited the Blackstone Valley in May
- Blackstone Valley Tourism participated in the "So New" tours to promote southern New England as a destination
- Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and the new RI State Society selected the first Cherry Blossom Princess in many years. The Princess was crowned by Governor Chafee and represented Rhode Island at the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, DC
- The Tourism Council helped to raise private donations along with the cities of Pawtucket and Central Falls to light the stone bridge that links the two cities
- The Rte 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 87,238 visitors
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,035,120 in 2012

2013

- Cupid Ball held at Blackstone Valley Visitor Center to introduce the new Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess
- Ghost Army exhibit, film and reception held at the Stadium Theater in Woonsocket
- Sharrow marking system to allow on-road biking and connect bikeways
- Blackstone Valley Tourism coordinated the efforts to build the state's first urban campground on the shores of the Blackstone River at River Island Community Park in Central Falls
- Tokyo's Haichi Summit was celebrated in Japan and the Tourism Council sent a greeting letter along with a Haichi banner and Hachi brochures commemorating the movie *Hachi - A Dog's Story*, starring Richard Gere, which was filmed at the Woonsocket Train Depot. A statue of Hachi is at the Depot and attracts many Japanese visitors every year.
- The lighting of the new Route I-95 Bridge took place in September with the Tourism Council in the forefront of having artists involved in the new design.

- A low-cost marketing plan was developed by the Tourism Council to highlight the outdoor recreation, history and rural charm of the town of Burrillville. The Council also developed a website VisitBurrillville.org.
- A \$40,000 grant was received from the Rhode Island Foundation's Initiative for Nonprofit Excellence
- The Council signed a contract with RIDEM to manage the Gateway Visitor Center on Route 295 and to find a food vendor for the location.
- The Cumberland town planner and the Tourism Council worked together to revitalize Valley Falls Heritage Park. The Council worked to secure funding from RIDEM and the National Park Service to restore interpretive signs at the historic site
- The Rte 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 63,994 visitors
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$958,065 as of 2013

2014

- Special Polar Express Event held at the Woonsocket Depot to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the movie, featuring: author Chris Van Allsburg, Warner Brothers, Rail Events, Lionel Trains, and artist Patrick Kinkade.
- Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park received official designation
- The Blackstone Shop, a new store featuring hand-crafted jewelry and artwork by local artists as well as Polar Express-themed gifts opened at the Visitor Center in Pawtucket
- Pawtucket River Bridge Concerts feature DotAir and Louisiana Nights shows
- Tourism Council worked on Burrillville geotourism project
- The Sea Research Foundation and the Tourism Council have launched a new science program that has middle-school students exploring the river's depths with a remote-controlled, video-equipped submersible device, and a miniature version of the robot submarine that Robert Ballard used to explore the wreck of the Titanic.
- The Samuel Slater canal boat was re-launched after a five-year hiatus. The canal boat can be used for tours, corporate events, birthday cruises and as a floating bed-and-breakfast.
- Leisurely Bike Tour Program takes cyclists to historic locations throughout northern Rhode Island including Pawtucket, Lincoln, Woonsocket, Smithfield, and Burrillville
- Yankee Magazine named the Leisurely Bike Tours a top recreational attraction
- A May conference was organized to discuss the future of Rhode Island's bikeways with officials from the RI Department of Environmental Management
- The Pawtucket River Bridge and the Pawtucket-Central Falls stone bridge added 100's of LED lights to illuminate the arches with the help of the Tourism Council
- The Cherry Blossom Festival was held this year in Pawtucket, Central Falls and Woonsocket. A Main Street clean-up in Woonsocket was held this year previous to the Festival made possible with a \$5,000 grant from Bud Light and McLaughlin and Moran
- The Tenth Annual Heritage Golf Tournament sponsored Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was celebrated in June at Crystal Lake Country Club

- Tourism Council representatives traveled to England's Amber Valley in July to solidify their relationship with the area where Samuel Slater lived before emigrating to Pawtucket where he built the Slater Mill, the first water-powered spinning mill in America
- Bob Billington attended the Cultural Heritage Tourism Conference in Washington, DC where he met with 25 national organizations
- Rte 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 53,351 visitors
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,144,528 as of 2014

2015

- Paths to Progress RI advocates for completion of the state bike path system
- Three-wheel bike to transport and deliver tourism literature in the Blackstone Valley
- Drone video of the Valley
- Planned the first American Girl Train Trip based on Grace Thomas, an American Girl Doll of the Year who is from the Blackstone Valley
- Established the Blackstone Valley Heritage Environmental Trust Fund to enhance environmental educational work in the Blackstone Valley
- The Rte 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 68,699 visitors
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,381,025 for 2015

2016

- State awarded \$10 million for bike path construction as part of the Green Bond
- Created the Paths to Progress Committee to begin the effort to complete the bike paths, not only in the Blackstone Valley but throughout the state.
- Collaborated with the city of Woonsocket and Riverzedge Arts in the rebranding and repositioning of the city's Main Street Arts and Entertainment District
- Bob Billington traveled with local officials and historians to Quebec as part of a mission by the Museum of Work and Culture, the city of Woonsocket and other local leaders to re-establish social, cultural, and economic development ties between Woonsocket and Quebec
- The Tourism Council organized officials from Pawtucket, Central Falls, and Cumberland to re-start the Broad Street Regeneration Project, which the Council initiated in 2009
- The Council partnered with the other Rhode Island regional tourism directors and the state's new Chief Marketing Officer to reformat Rhode Island's state tourism and marketing efforts
- The Tourism Council re-christened the 40-passenger Blackstone Valley Explorer after a major renovation and updates. The Council also announced a partnership with Mystic Aquarium, conducting environmental education tours along the Blackstone River and adjacent waterways.
- The American Girl Doll Train ride was held again this year to commemorate Grace Thomas, the American Girl Doll of the Year 2015 who is from the Blackstone Valley.

- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,766,170 for 2016

2017

- Worked with consultants Nail Communications, RDW Group, MMGY Global (via its public relations arm NJF), and the RI House Legislative Commission to Study Tourism Marketing to strengthen the state's new tourism strategy and programming.
- Partnered with Delin Design, Tai-O Corporation, Rock Spot Climbing, and the City of Pawtucket to illuminate the Morris Nathanson Bridge (formerly the Exchange Street Bridge) in Pawtucket.
- The Tourism Council along with the state-wide Paths to Progress Committee successfully led the fight for a state bond to increase funds for the state-wide bike path, including building additional miles for the Blackstone Valley portion of the bike path.
- A coordinator was selected in March 2017 to manage the reinvigorated Broad Street Regeneration Initiative. The position is funded by the Rhode Island Foundation.
- The Council supported a successful grant for the new train station being built in Pawtucket and Central Falls.
- The Tourism Council participated in the state's celebration of Quahog Week and promoted the establishment of new breweries.
- The Council supported regional farming efforts and farmers markets through partnering with the state on a new farms brochure
- Partnered with Al's Waterfront Restaurant in East Providence to produce a series of public tours on the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- The Rte 295 Visitor Center in Lincoln welcomed 80,296 visitors in 2017
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$1,740,869 for 2017

2018

- Invited Megan Epler Wood to speak at a lab workshop to discuss the United Nations's Green Economy Tourism Report
- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful received a grant to host a cigarette litter prevention campaign installing 50 cigarette butt collection containers in bus shelters and municipal locations
- Michelle Moreno-Silva was crowned Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess by Governor Gino Raimondo on March 16 at the State House
- Supported over 1400 volunteers that assisted in the 2018 Great American Cleanup removing over 23 tons of litter from the Blackstone Valley
- Enhanced the Blackstone River Bikeway experience so visitors now have a listing of bike-friendly stops that offer local history, nature viewing and a variety of special foods to try in the area
- Added additional biking off the Blackstone River Bikeway to include a route to explore all nine Blackstone Valley municipalities with an on-road route called Circle Blackstone
- Celebrated the 25th Anniversary of the Blackstone Valley Explorer in August at Pawtucket's Festival Pier
- Broad Street Regeneration Program received the RI Foundation Award
- RI Chinese Dragon Boat Festival had 30 teams in competition
- Sponsored and assisted with the Levitt Amp Music Series, a 10-week eclectic music event in Woonsocket
- The Blackstone Valley 33rd Annual Awards and Luncheon Meeting was held at Twin River Event Center in October. Morris Nathanson and Denise Panichas were inducted into the William Blackstone Society. R1 Karting received the Blackstone Valley Excellence in Tourism Business Award and Slatersville Village was honored with the Footprints in History Award. The Excellence in the Arts Award was presented to the Stadium Theatre, and the Blackstone Valley Rising

Star Millennials in Tourism Award was presented to Mayor James Diossa of Central Falls.

- Movie screenings of four classic Halloween films held at Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in October in partnership with Mill City Haunts of Pawtucket
- Annual Fall train trip on the Providence & Worcester Railroad thru the Blackstone Valley to Putnam, Ct held in October
- A Blackstone in Bloom municipal competition and Tree Hunger Tuesday are two initiatives that were started in 2018 by Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful Coordinator Donna Kaehler. Five locations were spruced up during the inaugural Blackstone in Bloom program and the Tree Hugger cleanups collected 1,900 pounds of litter.
- Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful conducted four corporate Earth Day litter cleanups that engaged 75 volunteers and removed 2,800 pounds of litter.
- Great American Cleanups removed more than 20 tons of litter from the Blackstone Valley.
- The Rt. 295 Visitor Center welcomed 64,422 visitors
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$2,047,22 for 2018

2019

- The Art League of Rhode Island Exhibition on Twisting Fibers was held at the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council and adjacent Gallery 175 in Pawtucket from March 8 – May 8, 2019.
- East Providence native Margaret Rogers was crowned 2019 Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess by Governor Gina Raimondo on March 29 at the Rhode Island State House.
- Roger Brooks, President and Founder of Destination Development Association was the guest speaker on May 19 at the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development Laboratory. Since 1981, Roger has assisted more than 2,000 communities with their downtown development place-branding, tourism, and marketing efforts, and he is now one of the most widely recognized experts in the field.
- The Annual Heritage Golf Tournament at Crystal Lake Golf Club in Burrillville was held in June.
- The Tourism Council partnered with Don Leighton and Arek Galle from Beta Engineering, Morris Nathanson, Louis Yip, and Sue Marra of the City of Pawtucket to plan the new Rev. William Blackstone statue that will be located on the corner of Exchange Street and Roosevelt Avenue in Pawtucket, The statue is being designed by Peruvian artist Peruko CCoacatty of West Kingston.
- Leah Hill was hired as coordinator for the Broad Street Regeneration Project - a collaborative effort between Central Falls, Cumberland, Pawtucket and the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The goal is to ensure Broad Street as a thriving, safe, walkable and multi-commercial corridor.
- 25 years of the Amber Valley/Blackstone Valley Compact was commemorated in July with a visit to Belper, England by representatives from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. Tourism Council President Bob Billington, Deborah Billington, Director of Operations Natalie Carter, Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful Co-coordinator Donna Kaehler, Linda Dewing, Pawtucket Mayor Donald Grebien, Central Falls Mayor James Diossa, and Council Board Member Louis Yip traveled to England. A short presentation of the film Slatersville by Christian de Rezendes was featured during the visit to Belper.
- A new book *Haichi and Friends* by Italian author Anastasia Ormeron tells the story of the dog Haichi which is commemorated by a statue at the train station in Tsu, Japan and at a replica of the statue at the Woonsocket Train Depot.
- Ethan Kent from Project for Public Spaces headlined a public workshop on September 26 at Twin River before our annual luncheon. Ethan spoke about place-making as a transformative approach to economic development.
- The Council's education development department received a Pawtucket Community Development Grant that funded Watershed Detectives, a new

in-class environmental program that includes photographs donated by James Hunt Photography.

- For the second year in a row, the Tourism Council sponsored and assisted with the 10-week Levitt Amp Music Series at River Island Park in Woonsocket, an eclectic music event held every Friday in the summer that brought in local and national bands.
- The 20th Anniversary of the Rhode Island Chinese Dragon Boat Races and Taiwan Day Festival was celebrated on September 7 with the addition of six new boats brought to the city from Taiwan.
- The Tourism Council partnered on the New England Franco route with Anne Conway from the Museum of Work and Culture. The Trail will connect Biddeford and Lewiston, ME, Manchester, NH, Lowell, MA, and Woonsocket, RI and showcase the cities' French - Canadian culture.
- The annual Fall Foliage train trip on the Genesee and Wyoming Railroad to Putnam, CT was held on October 19. Over 380 passengers enjoyed antique shopping, dining, an arts and crafts festival, a farmers market, and the Great Pumpkin Festival.
- Bruce Tillinghast and Russ Gusetti were inducted into the William Blackstone Society at the Tourism Council's 34th Annual Awards Ceremony and Luncheon at Twin River Event Center on September 26. The Arnold Mills Fourth of July Parade received the Footprints in History Award for 2019.
- The volunteer staff at the Blackstone River State Park I-295 Visitor Center worked more than 650 hours over the course of 2019
- For the third consecutive year, the Blackstone Culinaria program received a Providence Journal Critic's Choice Award in the Culinary Innovative category. Food tours were held in several communities with more than 300 patrons enjoying exclusive dining experiences at 10 Blackstone Valley restaurants. We continued our combined Explorer Riverboat - food tours. All the events were well-attended and many were sold out.
- New hotels opening in the Blackstone Valley included the Twin River Casino Hotel and Home2Suites Hilton in Smithfield
- Annual Revenue for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was \$2,201,902 for 2019

2020

- A Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess was chosen. The National Cherry Blossom Festival was canceled in Washington, D.C. because of Covid -19. Crowning of Rhode Island Cherry Blossom Princess was canceled
- A new sign, based on the Hollywood sign, was installed at The Landing in Central Falls on the corner of Broad St and Madeira Avenue.
- Rhode Island Dragon Boat Festival and Taiwan Day was canceled for 2020
- The 35th Annual Meeting and Awards Ceremony for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council were postponed until April, 2021
- *Swampscare*, Halloween-themed boat trips, were held in October on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from Central Falls Landing
- *Search for Santa*, Christmas-themed boat trips were held in November and December on the Blackstone Valley Explorer leaving from Central Falls Landing

2021

- *The Ghost Army* tank built for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council in 2019 was sent to the D-Day Museum in Virginia for exhibit
- The 36th Annual Celebration for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was held virtually in April. Over 200 Bananagram gift bags were sold for \$50 each filled

with Blackstone Valley and Rhode Island memorabilia in commemoration of the annual celebration. The gift bags were worth over \$300 each.

- The Rhode Island Dragon Boat Festival and Taiwan Day was canceled for 2021 due to concerns for Covid-19
- Nine single kayaks and nine tandem kayaks are being used in a new kayak program which will give lessons to 200 low to moderate-income school children from the City of Central Falls during the summer. The program will be run by the Tourism Council and the City of Central Falls.