Heritage Partnerships:

National Designation, Regional Promotion and the Role of Local Preservation Organizations

by

Elizabeth Morton

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Urban and Regional Planning
at the

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Author

Department of Urban Studies and Planning
August 9, 2006

Certified by

Professor Emeritus Gary Hack
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by

Professor Frank Levy
Chair, Ph.d Committee
Department of Urban Studies and Planning

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I examine the impact of one important type of “heritage partnership,” the National Heritage Areas (NHA) program, on historic preservation activities at the grassroots level. NHAs, often termed the “future of our National Parks,” have been administered by the National Park Service since the mid-1980s. These projects aim to mobilize local initiatives around a common set of distinct community assets and foster public-private partnerships addressing preservation and development issues on a regional scale.

The two case studies I use to explore this issue are the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission (or “Path of Progress”). My analysis focuses on the relationship between two key players: the federal government and local preservation organizations (LPOs). I use the cases to test two hypotheses: 1) By valorizing local resources, national designation will benefit the organized preservation movement; and 2) By crafting and promoting a distinct regional heritage, these projects will mobilize grassroots institutions to work together.

To achieve the objectives of local engagement and partnerships, NHAs try to in effect create two new resources, both reliant on grassroots actors: a transformed sense of regional identity and a regional infrastructure committed to its stewardship. My research shows that while some organizations have benefited from these projects in important ways, the transition to this more holistic outlook is often problematic for LPOs since it runs counter to fundamental assumptions about the role of heritage and community-based initiatives.

While this dissertation includes an examination and comparison of two case studies, it also addresses much larger concerns regarding the nature of the partnership between federal and local actors in the United States. A historical and theoretical review highlights serious unresolved tensions about the role that the NPS is able to play in meeting the many demands of local advocates; it also brings to light the agency’s inability to develop criteria for what merits attention in the face of political pressure, the historic lack of a comprehensive national preservation policy, and the preservation field’s ever broadening agenda.

Thesis Supervisor: Gary Hack
Title: Professor Emeritus of Urban Design
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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

Over the past three decades, publicly sponsored heritage promotion initiatives designed to revitalize large regions have proliferated across the United States. These projects, which advocates term "heritage partnerships" or "place-based development," aim to go far beyond traditional heritage tourism -- their scope is more ambitious conceptually and geographically.

The objectives of these efforts are: 1) empowering citizens and community-based organizations by mobilizing local initiatives around a common set of unique community assets; and 2) creating public-private partnerships to address preservation and development issues on a regional scale. Although economic development is one goal, organizers assert that their projects will also result in a broad array of other benefits, including enhanced pride in place, strengthened local institutions and better-coordinated regional planning. This dissertation seeks to distill the experiences of an important type of heritage partnership, the National Heritage Areas (NHA) program, by examining the impact of two of these federal projects on historic preservation activities at the grassroots level.

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2 Over the years, a variety of other terms have been coined to describe these projects, such as “cultural conservation” and “asset-based” development and “heritage-based” development. Throughout this dissertation I will generally use the term “heritage partnerships,” since it is the term now most frequently used to describe National Heritage Areas.
National Heritage Areas, administered by the National Park Service (NPS) since the mid-1980s, were among the earliest heritage partnership programs. Although they have thus far resisted standardization, NHAs have proven to be immensely popular and are now considered by many to represent the future of our National Parks. Indeed, the NPS states that today 16% of the population of the United States, and 5.4% of the nation’s land area, falls within the boundaries of a National Heritage Area.³

In contrast to traditional National Parks, in which the NPS owns and manages large contiguous resources, in “partnership parks” the agency tries to inspire a diverse set of public and private actors to preserve groups of scattered sites, linked by a common theme. Despite expansive agendas, which might include historic preservation and interpretation, environmental remediation, economic development and growth management, the federally-designated commissions guiding these projects have no formal authority to acquire property or otherwise enforce their mandates. Although commissions have a limited budget for capital projects, technical assistance and seed grants, a large part of how they operate is by providing an informational framework to change attitudes and inspire action by other stakeholders. NHA campaigns exemplify the increasing practice of “packaging” heritage resources together for the purposes of interpretation and marketing.⁴ The overall message put forth by the projects introduce two new concepts to the public, which I will refer to as “leading ideas:”

1) You live in a nationally significant area and this can bring benefits to you; and

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2) You live in a distinct region and it is in your best interest to work collaboratively with other regional actors.

In projects with such broad goals and such a diverse group of stakeholders, it is difficult to make an assessment of overall project success or indeed to explore all aspects of the program. This dissertation therefore focuses on the relationship between two key players in these case studies: the federal government and local preservation organizations (LPOs). Why focus on LPOs? First, as detailed in Chapter 2, the American preservation movement has largely been driven by the efforts of LPOs, with or without direct governmental support. In addition, as the stewards of the region’s historic resources, operators of many tourist-oriented sites, and potential advocates for sensitive development policies, grassroots preservation organizations are pivotal to the success of heritage tourism and development initiatives. Finally, the long-term sustainability of these temporary federal interventions will depend upon a strong network of local organizations to carry on the vision of the campaign. In the words of a prominent heritage area leader, NHAs are a “federal attempt to create a grassroots movement.”

From the two leading ideas presented above, we can derive two overall hypotheses about the impact of NHAs on local preservation organizations:

1) By valorizing, or “adding value” to local resources, national designation will benefit the organized preservation movement; and

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5 Statement by Elizabeth Watson, Chair, National Coalition for Heritage Areas. Personal interview 12 December 1995.
2) By crafting and promoting a distinct regional heritage, these projects will engage and mobilize grassroots institutions to work together.

While this dissertation started as an examination and comparison of two case studies, along the way I found that these issues were embedded within much larger concerns regarding the nature of the partnership between federal and local actors in the United States. The analysis reveals serious unresolved tensions about the role that the NPS is able to play in meeting the many demands by local advocates; it also brings to light the agency’s inability to develop criteria for what merits attention in the face of political pressure, the historic lack of a comprehensive national preservation policy, and the ever broadening agenda that preservation is supposed to address. Therefore, the dissertation is introduced by two chapters that explore the larger issue of federal-local partnerships. Chapter 2 provides a historical overview of the evolving relationship between the federal government and grassroots preservation efforts in the United States. The chapter emphasizes NPS’ struggle to promote rational policy while addressing the priorities of legislators and a committed yet disparate set of community representatives.

A critical assumption of heritage partnership projects like NHAs is that the government can act as a catalyst for some type of “civic renewal.” Chapter 3 presents a review of the literature that addresses the prospects for using the heritage partnership campaigns to inspire civic identity and collective action. Although these ideas are often taken as articles of faith, the literature suggests the campaigns’ leading ideas are in fact the source of scholarly debate and moreover, that there are many gaps in the literature that call out for further exploration. Overall, the chapter stresses that a critical ingredient in catalyzing partnerships is establishing a common sense of identity.
Next, the dissertation presents a description of two cases of one type of heritage partnership – the National Heritage Area construct. The two case studies detailed in Chapter 4, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission (or “Path of Progress”) are two of the earliest examples of this model of public sector sponsorship. The Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, the "birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution," was designated by the NPS in 1985. The Corridor spans two states (Massachusetts and Rhode Island) and includes 20 local governments. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission was established as an independent commission within the Department of Interior in 1988; it was an outgrowth of the America’s Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), established in 1986 and administered by the National Park Service. The area encompasses 9 counties, nearly 400 local governments and 9,000 square miles, unified by their contributions to the rise of American industry.  

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7 In 1999, the project was renamed “The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor,” in memory of one of its strongest Congressional supporters. Since my research was conducted before it had been renamed, I will continue to use terms like “the Blackstone Valley” project. In Southwestern Pennsylvania the project changed names several times and a number of closely related initiatives sometimes operated simultaneously. If events happened before 1988, I generally refer to the project as AIHP; after that project was phased out I will usually refer to the project as the SPHPC.
National Heritage Areas

1) 1984 Illinois & Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor
2) 1986 John H. Chaffee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor
3) 1988 Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor
4) 1988 Path of Progress National Heritage Tour Route
5) 1994 Cane River National Heritage Area
6) 1994 Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley National Heritage Corridor
7) 1996 Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area
8) 1996 Augusta Canal National Heritage Area
9) 1996 Cache La Poudre River Corridor, 1996
10) 1996 Essex National Heritage Area
11) 1996 Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area
12) 1996 Tennessee Civil War National Heritage Area
13) 1996 Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area
14) 1998 South Carolina National Heritage Corridor
15) 1998 Shenandoah Valley Battlefields National Historic District
16) 1998 National Coal Heritage Area
17) 1998 Ohio and Erie National Heritage CanalWay
18) 1996 MotorCities National Heritage Area
19) 2000 Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor
20) 2000 Lackawanna Heritage Valley National Heritage Area
21) 2000 Schuykill River National Heritage Area
22) 2000 Wheeling National Heritage Area
23) 2000 Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area
24) 2003 Blue Ridge National Heritage Area
25) 2004 Mississippi Gulf National Heritage Area
26) 2004 National Aviation Heritage Area
27) 2004 Oil Region National Heritage Area

Figure 1: National Heritage Areas as of July, 2006
Chapters 5 and 6 provide an account of the nonprofit preservation sector ten years after the establishment of the Commissions. NHAs were specifically intended to be temporary and ten years was the original time frame envisioned for the projects by Congress and project organizers. How were LPOs influenced by the federal designation and the reconfigured regional construct during the critical period that laid the groundwork for the campaigns? The findings of these chapters are primarily based on interviews conducted with representatives from local preservation organizations in 1997 and 1998 and represent the state of affairs at that time. These groups had all been involved in the NHA campaign in a relatively substantial way, such as receiving a grant, being featured on maps of major sites or working on a joint project. In keeping with the broad scope of the partnership projects, groups ranged from historical societies to tourist sites to advocacy groups, and also included a few locally based environmental and economic development organizations whose agendas were broad enough to encompass heritage. This data was supplemented by interviews with Commission staff, NPS employees, and other community stakeholders, as well as extensive review of project documents and media coverage. Including the background research and early informational interviews, the main focus of the research, or the study period, were the years between 1992 and 1998.

The first hypothesis, discussed in Chapter 5, revolves around a concept integral to American preservation policy: the symbolic power of a national designation. Government recognition is intended to raise public awareness and lead to a stronger community concern for historic resources. In the cases under study, designation as a National Heritage Area is said to offer a variety of intangible benefits, from pride to widespread publicity to a "seal of approval." But

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what was the real “value added” of national designation to these communities and more specifically, to LPOs? Did the federal designation change the way the resources were perceived or presented? Did the federal designation change the degree of community support for heritage groups?

Within the set of NHA projects, these case studies represent two ends of the spectrum with respect to association with the federal government. The Blackstone case is considered to be the heritage area most closely associated with the NPS, complete with a staff of Rangers and interpretive materials in the style of traditional NPS sites. In contrast, despite the fact that it received by far the most federal money of any heritage area, the Southwestern Pennsylvania effort positioned itself as an atypical, maverick type of federal project. The SPHPC was largely initiated, and assisted, by NPS planners. However, partially in response to the lack of support by the NPS Regional Office, the SPHPC ultimately broke away from what it posited as the bureaucratic and philosophical constraints of the agency and dissociated itself from NPS traditions and imagery.

The key findings of this chapter include:

• After ten years, the national “label” in and of itself did not have much resonance for LPOs in either project. The designation was at best confusing and at worst, a distraction or a competitor.

• The ways that the NHA projects presented their federal ties had a great influence on how they were perceived by the public; in short, the “face” of the federal government mattered. To the extent that the designation was effective, the most positive aspect (in terms of public exposure
and benefits to nonprofits) was the association with the National Park Service, a widely popular “brand name” that came with its own prestige and symbolic power.

- The way that LPOs responded to the federal designation was often influenced by preexisting attitudes about government (federal, state and local), and the nature of the prior relationships they had developed with public agencies.
- In these small towns, the relationship with local government was often a surprisingly critical factor in the extent to which groups were able to achieve their goals. With a few notable exceptions, nonprofits by and large reported that the neither the federal designation nor the regional construct made local governments more supportive of LPO efforts or of preservation in general. However, state governments were more likely to “follow” federal designation with complementary action that helped some LPOs.

The second hypothesis, discussed in Chapter 6, has percolated in the United States for many years, but has gained momentum over the past few decades; it is based on the premise of the power of heritage as a regional mobilizer and unifying agent. Proponents claim that, despite the mixed success of past regional planning efforts in the United State, a common heritage is a powerful construct that can draw people together across large areas. However, this heritage must often first be defined and articulated, so that the region can be viewed as a whole, “where its history, geography, culture and natural features are coherent and convey one place.”

In National Heritage Areas, NPS staff and federally designated commissions use heritage to try to craft a product, a distinct regional identity, and to inspire a process, regional alliances and

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cooperation. In this chapter, I examine whether LPOs had expanded their vision of local resources and situated their heritage in a regional context after the NHA designation. Had nonprofits developed a sense of obligation for, or at least affiliation with, a larger region; had they sought to gain influence (and visibility) by joining forces with other actors throughout the region to pursue common goals?

While both of the selected cases involve the reconfiguration of regional identity, the resources they had to start with were quite different. While there are distinct cultural barriers between the two states and among various local jurisdictions, the Blackstone Valley region is physically unified by a natural and formerly economic link: the 40 mile-long Blackstone River Valley. Although for decades the area had been a self-described "backwater," burdened with the polluted and abandoned remnants of its industrial past, the BVNHC and its partners tried to transform both the river and the settlements along it into community assets and the basis for economic recovery. Among the original National Heritage Areas, Southwestern Pennsylvania was the least well defined as a region. To change this situation, the Commission put together an aggressive information packaging and public awareness campaign to help educate the public about the region’s resources and identity, with the overarching theme of the "Path of Progress." The "Path" itself is a 500-mile long ring (consisting of portions of various existing roads) winding its way around the perimeter of the region, linking different points of historical interest.

As described in Chapter 2, the succession of nontraditional "partnership" parks suggests increasingly ambitious assumptions about the capacity of heritage to create the "common thread" needed for community revitalization. The aim of these projects has evolved from redeveloping
established urban cores to reinvigorating an ecosystem of manmade and natural linkages to, finally, creatively packaging a loosely linked set of resources into a reinvented identity for a large, amorphous region.

Among the key findings of this chapter are:

- The process of reaching consensus on regional boundaries, imagery and names was contentious, even in the more naturally defined region; there was often tension between the mandate for a broad expansive vision, the need for a specific and defensible definition, and the desire of LPOs to retain the local identities they had worked hard to foster. Overall, questions about the legitimacy of the boundaries diminished the credibility of the project to many LPOs, which made them less supportive of the campaign.

- Despite some perceived benefits, a new or enhanced regional image was not of compelling interest to many LPOs. In most cases, uniqueness and local connections were much more highly valued than a larger regional affiliation.

- For many groups heritage is highly prized for its contribution to community social life, but this “civic” interest does not typically extend into a commitment to being a “regional citizen.” Participating in local heritage activities seemed to cultivate and reinforce local identities, but it did not automatically inspire the desire to participate in collective action at the regional level.

- LPOs faced some significant practical obstacles to participating regionally, such as lack of staff to attend meetings; difficulty in regularizing operations; and institutional rivalries. Overall, more incentives were needed to ensure greater ease of participation.
To achieve the objectives of local engagement and partnerships, these NPS projects try to in
effect create two new resources, both reliant on grassroots actors: a transformed sense of regional
identity and a regional infrastructure committed to its stewardship (and equipped to take
advantage of new opportunities). Each of these components requires LPOs to look beyond
themselves and their traditional focus. My research shows that while some organizations have
benefited from these projects in important ways, the transition to this more pragmatic and
holistic outlook is often problematic since it runs counter to fundamental assumptions about the
role of heritage and community-based initiatives. Further, while many welcome the new
emphasis on “places” (as opposed to “monuments”) as a more accessible and relevant way of
valuing resources, the vagueness of the meaning of these new designations makes it very
difficult to determine what should or should not be designated. The breadth of the agendas,
without any formal selection criteria encourages the continuation of the political influence on
designation and raises questions about the appropriate role of the federal government as
standard-bearer.
CHAPTER TWO:
THE EVOLVING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FEDERAL
GOVERNMENT AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

National Heritage Areas emerged in the mid-1980s as an attempt to use national designation (and a limited package of assistance) as a rallying point for public-private partnerships in large economically depressed regions. According to NPS, the key features that distinguished National Heritage Areas from traditional National Parks were that: 1) they had significance to a large region; 2) they were located in the midst of a living community; 3) they strove for economic development, usually in the form of tourism, as an explicit goal (along with historic preservation and environmental conservation); and 4) they were not administered by the federal government, but by public/private partnerships.¹

While the increasingly popular heritage areas were said to herald a “sea change”² in our assumptions about National Parks and preservation, this chapter shows that many of the premises have deep roots in theory and practice. Moreover, a review of the history of the preservation movement in the United States reveals that there has been a broad and disparate set of actors

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involved, with an equally broad set of motivations and values. These issues, which will be discussed further in Chapters 5 and 6, suggest some significant challenges to be faced by campaigns to create a distinct product (a new regional image) and a new type of process (regional collaboration).

On its face, historic preservation is concerned with treasured objects -- saving or restoring structures and elements of the built environment. However, like most aspects of urban planning, there have always been a mix of social and economic motivations in play that have emerged in various combinations since the first organized efforts in the 19th century. The account in this chapter, covering the historic interrelationships between federal and grassroots preservation efforts, stresses two of these ideals that are of direct relevance to the heritage area program.

As described in the introduction, the first theme of my study is the symbolic power of national designation. Accordingly, throughout this chapter I examine the evolution of various types of national recognition and the motivations of communities (and the National Park Service) in seeking designation. What has the government had to offer and what have local preservation organizations (LPOs) wanted from the government? The chapter makes it clear that most preservation activity in the United States is intensely local; the federal government does not drive most initiatives and it was never intended to. Nonetheless, communities have persistently sought national recognition and involvement due to the combination of inspirational and practical benefits they assume a prestigious federal imprimatur will confer. However, in contrast

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to its popular image as a powerful, neutral authority, NPS has always administered a highly political “unsystematic system,” repeatedly struggling to promote a rational planning framework while satisfying the priorities of legislators and a committed yet wildly disparate set of community representatives. NPS has created a series of programs to professionalize and legitimate preservation as a field, but its history is one of continual experimentation to find appropriate ways for the federal government to encourage dynamic community-based efforts.

The second theme of the study is the ability of heritage to unite and mobilize various constituencies in a large region. Therefore, this chapter pays special attention to campaigns to rally large sections of the populace around the preservation of community assets or common historical themes. As the chapter shows, intense attachment to local historic resources has not automatically translated into concern for a broader set of regional quality-of-life issues or into a coherent alliance of like-minded preservation organizations. The limited focus and resources of typical small preservation organizations do not always lend themselves easily to comprehensive planning. Even as the field has gained in prominence over the years, and preservation has slowly gained stature as both a cause and a legitimate public enterprise, its growth has been one of accretion and diffusion rather than consensus or centralization.

The breadth of the preservation constituency naturally results in a diverse set of ways that heritage is valued: as a political opportunity; as a “cause;” as a science; or as a matter of local identity. Simultaneously addressing the values and demands of a number of players will be vital

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to the success of heritage areas as they try to benefit communities. While these values can often overlap, they also result in some areas of ambivalence and tension for LPOs and the NPS, which will be discussed throughout the dissertation.

II. AMERICA’S EARLIEST PRESERVATION EFFORTS: 1800s to the Civil War

As in many new nations, the first preservation efforts in the United States were inspired by a devotion to the Founding Fathers. In the early decades of the 19th century, small groups of people formed to commemorate icons and heroic events associated with American independence. However, despite their overwhelmingly patriotic motivations, early preservationists were offered little support by any level of government during this time period. In fact, in a pattern that would recur over many years, some of the most notable campaigns entailed trying to protect historic sites from the actions of government agencies.  

The Mount Vernon Ladies Association Sets the Stage

In the 1850s, the Mount Vernon Ladies Association (MVLA) did a great deal to raise the profile of preservation in the United States. From an apparent vacuum of public indifference and government inaction, the group launched an extremely effective preservation campaign, which set the tone for preservation efforts for decades to come. In 1853, the rumor that the 200 acre Mount Vernon estate would be purchased for a hotel and tourist attraction prompted South

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6 Plans reportedly included a racetrack and saloon.
Carolinian Ann Pamela Cunningham to rally the “Ladies of the South” to save this “sacred” site
from the desecration of commercial “manufacturers and manufactories.” Cunningham proved
to be a highly skilled organizer, publicist and fundraiser. Although the Virginia legislature
would not allocate funds to purchase the property, after several years it did grant an
unprecedented charter to the MVLA in 1858, entrusting it to “purchase, hold and improve”
Mount Vernon. In order to raise the money needed, Cunningham devised an elaborate national
network with a system of regents in each state.

The MVLA’s success shaped many of the assumptions about how preservation would work in
the United States. First, its story aptly illustrates one of the field’s dominant narratives – that it
is private citizens (and, especially in the early years, usually women) who must bear primary
responsibility for the stewardship of the nation’s historic treasures. Moreover, the story of the
MVLA’s “against all odds” victory underscores the spontaneous and somewhat quixotic nature
of many preservation campaigns. Cunningham, a frail spinster with no particular standing or
expertise, prevailed in spite of an uncooperative private owner and an indifferent federal and
state government, and this precedent for “accomplishing the seemingly impossible...has been the

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8 Murtagh, Keeping Time.

inspiration of preservation efforts ever since.”

As time went on, the lack of a comprehensive system for heritage protection and the decentralized nature of the movement continued to necessitate this approach of optimistic small groups forming to save community landmarks.

Second, MVLA inspired many other groups, who assumed that the transcendent qualities of their own landmarks would generate wide interest and draw energies and donations from a broad interested public. However, as described below, lacking the draw of an association with a unique figure like George Washington, most subsequent efforts to mobilize a national or even regional preservation campaign were not successful.

III. POST-CIVIL WAR TO THE 1920s

Historical Organizations

This era marks the beginning of a significant divergence in tactics and missions among preservation groups. One dimension of the split is between the “curatorial” focus, which sought to isolate and protect the integrity of monuments, and the “urbanistic focus,” which saw preservation as interrelated with other reform movements. Another type of split was the distinction between those who saw their role as a contributor to a general cause (curatorial and

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12 Mulloy, History of the National Trust; Murtagh, Keeping Time. As impressive as Cunningham’s victory was, her ambitions were even larger than saving Mount Vernon -- her group hoped that diverting public attention to their patriotic cause would help alleviate sectional strife leading up to the Civil War. Lindgren, “A spirit that fires.” See also Lowenthal, D. 1985. The Past is a Foreign Country. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

urbanistic) and the many more whose concerns were the specific social values, such as prestige or stability, that preservation reinforced in their communities.

The upheaval of the Civil War and the centennials of various phases of the American Revolution intensified nostalgia for the “presumed unity of the early days of nationhood.” By 1876, there were more than 75 state and local historical societies, and although the primary focus of these groups was genealogical and archival materials, they were indicative of a growing interest in American cultural identity. As one commentator explains, “early preservationists helped write cultural narratives for a country without a king or crown.”

Historical associations were often content to commemorate history through plaques and markers, and did not necessarily see their missions as preserving historic places per se. When buildings were saved, it was usually a result of an ad hoc effort of a group formed specifically for that purpose; subsequently these structures would typically be turned into house museums. In 1895, 20 house museums had been established in the United States; by 1905 the number had increased to 100.

Although interest in national icons remained strong, heritage was also beginning to take a more personal bent as citizens tried to connect their own story to that of the flourishing nation.

Hereditary organizations founded in the 1880s and 90s, such as the National Society of Colonial

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15 Murtagh, *Keeping Time*, p. 26. Historical organizations were particularly active in the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions, where they often continued to commemorate Revolutionary sites and heroes.
Dames, Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and Native Sons of the Golden West, sponsored preservation activities through their local chapters. Descendants of New England farmers and antebellum Southern planters, witnessing industrial encroachment on their families’ agrarian lifestyle, formed the basis for many early preservation groups.

Some preservation advocates of this time, usually in large metropolitan areas, were viewed as progressive reformers, working with a loose alliance of civic groups trying to mitigate the destructive effects of unrestricted capitalism. In many cases, preservation was a “background value” in a campaign to regularize the disorderly and haphazard growth of cities. During this time period, preservationists also sought common cause with advocates of environmental conservation and urban parks. Some of the most prominent turn of the century groups were devoted to both scenic and historic resources, such as the Trustees for Public Reservations in Massachusetts and the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society (ASHPS), which operated mostly in New York City.

Thus, by the early decades of the 20th century preservation organizations were driven by a diverse set of motivations. But despite some obvious affinities with overarching national movements such as City Beautiful and good government, the majority of the activity at this time suggests that the main attraction of preservation was local interest and benefit. Pluralism was

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20 Ibid.
21 Interestingly, as early as 1876, when orators pleaded with the public to save the Old South Meeting House, indisputably a monument of national importance, they stressed local benefit. Bostonians, they cautioned, “must not permit the destruction of the one thing that set their city apart from all other American cities.” Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p.105. Notwithstanding this early instance of “defensive localism” rhetoric, the preservation of Old South (like Mount Vernon, a complex and improbable victory) was one of the handful of cases that was assisted by well-
emerging as a powerful counterweight to the ideal of nationalism; despite burgeoning local pride, it was difficult to convince a broad public that threatened resources in other communities merited attention. Groups repeatedly tried and usually failed to replicate Cunningham's success at mobilizing national preservation campaigns to save historic buildings in their towns.\textsuperscript{22} Despite the fact that preservation was an explicit part of their mission, even large and well-established groups like the Colonial Dames and the DAR faced strong opposition to spending national funds on particular historic buildings and had to delegate most preservation activity to local chapters.\textsuperscript{23}

The number and variety of local preservation groups astonished a turn of the century English observer; C.R. Ashbee reported to the English National Trust in 1901 that he doubted that the disparate views and activities characterizing the American movement could ever be unified by a centralized organization.\textsuperscript{24} As the years progressed, communities increasingly sought to commemorate their own distinguished personages and landmarks, a drive fueled by the growing sentiment well expressed by a 1919 preservation fundraiser that "there is not a town in New England so small or so poor that there is not ample scope for a historical society."\textsuperscript{25} As the movement blossomed without guiding principles, significance became less a matter of formalized standards and more a matter of local will and enthusiasm. The sentiment that every locality merits a historical society presages the common aspiration (after government policies

\textsuperscript{22} Even when they were not able to mobilize national campaigns, groups would still sometimes manage to save the buildings.

\textsuperscript{23} Hosmer sums up the frustration felt by those trying to appeal to the "American public as a whole" like this: "Almost every building, no matter what hopes its would-be preservers might have cherished, turned out to be a local museum. Even houses connected with nationally important figures were finally rescued by people who lived near the buildings themselves...Whether it originated with a national organization or not, preservationism [sic] inevitably terminated as a local activity in the hands of dedicated amateurs." \textit{Presence of the Past}, p. 152.

\textsuperscript{24} Murtagh, \textit{Keeping Time}.

\textsuperscript{25} Hosmer, \textit{Presence of the Past}, p. 114.
were established) that every town could merit some type of official recognition and, later, that every community contains something of sufficient interest to attract tourists.

**Federal Government Initiatives**

The concept of public sector responsibility for preservation was similarly ill defined during this time period, with only occasional and scattered gestures of support by the states and the federal government. The first significant federal government policy was the 1906 Antiquities Act, passed in response to heavy lobbying by relatively well-organized environmental and scientific groups concerned about vandalism and looting of Native American sites in the west. The Antiquities Act, which allowed the President to designate and protect national monuments (which could be “historic, natural or scientific resources”), built on the prior attention Congress had given to the protection of natural areas through the designation of several western parks and monuments.

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26 Besides Congressional allocations for Revolutionary War memorials in 1777, the only federal intervention on behalf of heritage had been the 1864 purchase of General Robert E. Lee’s mansion, Arlington House; most writers view this as a highly symbolic political gesture designed to prevent Lee’s family from reoccupying the property.  
27 The movement to protect natural areas was in fact generally called “preservation” at this time, and only much later came to be known as “environmentalism.” See Runte, A. 1987. *National Parks: The American Experience*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.  
28 In an exception to the intensely local focus of most preservation advocates, many of the key organizers of the efforts to protect the west were eastern Brahmins and academics. Massachusetts activists were also instrumental in creating the Adirondacks Forest reserve. Already the natural environment seems to have been accepted as a more “universal” cause than heritage preservation. However, like heritage in years to come, it was considered to have significant instrumental value. Protecting and marketing scenery was also put forward as an important way to bolster American standing at home and abroad. Parks were intended to foster nationalism (natural wonders were “America’s cathedrals”) and to stimulate the economy through tourism. See Holleran, Roots in Boston, and Runte, *National Parks*.  
29 The provisions of the Act (which also prohibited looting of artifacts) only covered resources on federal land and kept those resources under the jurisdiction of the variety of agencies that already had jurisdiction over the land. For example, since many early historic sites were battlefields or somehow related to war, they were under the jurisdiction of the War Department; others were under the stewardship of agencies like the Department of Agriculture.
In 1916, the National Park Service was established within the Department of Interior to promote and administer the increasing number of national parks, monuments and reservations. "Historic sites," considered the traditional focus of the east and south, were thus joined with the "parks" and natural wonders of the west into one system. At the time preservationists were concerned that the position of the former would be overshadowed by the prominence of the latter, and indeed the wisdom of this arrangement has been the source of much debate throughout the years. However, as elaborated in Chapter 5, most agree that the inclusion of historic resources within the NPS, which has assumed an almost mythic status in the American consciousness, increased the prominence of the movement. It also provided preservation with a rational planning framework that would greatly influence aspects of its future development.

The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA)

The most prominent group of its time, SPNEA was a harbinger of both trends to come in preservation and of some of the philosophical differences that would continue to characterize the field. The organization was founded in 1910 by William Sumner Appleton, who insisted that the aesthetic qualities of architecture (rather than just their historical associations) were valid criteria for preservation. SPNEA purchased "interesting" structures in a variety of styles throughout New England, operating some as museums and keeping many as functioning contributors to their neighborhoods.

Three main points illustrate the group’s significance to the themes of this chapter. First,

Appleton was part of a new mostly male cohort of collectors and scholars who devoted serious,

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almost scientific, attention to American building types and artifacts. Despite his lack of compensation, he represented the vanguard of preservation “professionalism” for decades. Appleton pioneered both exacting standards for house museum conservation and interpretation and unconventional income generating strategies, such as leasing with restrictive covenants, to go beyond what he saw as the limited house museum vision. Unlike Cunningham, he did not try to mobilize public opinion through massive patriotic campaigns, but rather through diligently researched publications. Second, unlike many City Beautiful-inspired contemporaries, who increasingly lobbied for government stewardship of the natural and built environment, Appleton firmly believed that preservation belonged in the hands of private groups.

Finally, SPNEA’s work is indicative of a broader, more holistic vision of the historic environment that was beginning to emerge. The group saw its mission as a regional one, an attempt to preserve “the New England scene” across six states. While Appleton was successful in operating his own highly visible regional group, his attempts to prod what he termed “one home organizations” into a more disciplined and expansive approach were typically frustrated. Further, his efforts to preserve larger architectural settings, such as townscapes, were thwarted by his constant need to attend to scattered brushfire emergencies.

31 Like Ann Pamela Cunningham, Appleton was from a wealthy family and he volunteered his services for 37 years.
32 These years saw the beginning of debates over the proper stewardship of historic sites and, when critics started questioning for example, the appropriateness of MVLA’s “close corps of women” controlling access to a national treasure, Appleton weighed in heavily against what he saw as the corrupting influence of politics. Hosmer, Presence of the Past. See also Lindgren, “A spirit that fires.”
33 SPNEA was actually the second regional group, and was modeled to some extent on the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, founded in 1888.
34 Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 240.
IV. WILLIAMSBURG (1926) TO WORLD WAR II

SPNEA’s frustrations were emblematic of how difficult it was for small organizations to significantly influence the built environment, given the twin obstacles of industrial expansion and the low level of public appreciation. The “genteel classes” of preservation advocates had thus far only managed to “carve out some historic enclaves,” such as battlefields and farmsteads, and had not effected a major change in public awareness.

Colonial Williamsburg

Ironically, it was the unprecedented philanthropy of two of the nation’s most prominent industrial barons that opened the doors to large-scale preservation efforts and captured the imagination of the general public. John D. Rockefeller’s Williamsburg restoration project and Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village, which began in the 1920s and opened in 1933 and 1934 respectively, are credited with sparking wide interest in vernacular architecture and the everyday life of prior eras. These idealized visions of pre-industrial America soon became popular tourist destinations.

Of relevance to this discussion, these projects, especially Williamsburg, also heralded important changes in assumptions about how nonprofits and governmental agencies should operate. First, these two “open air museums,” along with the many others they inspired over the subsequent two decades, presage an increase in the scale of preservation activity. Although these sites remained

35 Wallace calls these “parenthesized places.” See Wallace, Reflections, p.172.
36 The Reverend W.A.R. Goodwin, the organizer of the Williamsburg effort, convinced Rockefeller to restore an entire 18th century town, including the streets and landscaping. Ford created Greenfield Village, a much smaller endeavor, to represent a kind of composite American village.
“enclaves,” their example helped make the transition from single house museums to historic districts. In addition, the large number of interdisciplinary professionals hired with Rockefeller money forged the first real training ground for preservation research and, especially, practice. Finally, the success of these projects gave many organizations dreams of “Williamsburg-style” restorations in their own community; in the absence of a local philanthropist (Rockefeller spent nearly $100 million), the federal government was seen as the logical benefactor.

The Voluntary Sector: House Museums

This time period saw a widening split between professional practice (rapidly gaining expertise and increasingly interested in larger contexts) and the manner in which preservation was more typically practiced at the local level. The enthusiasm generated by Williamsburg and Greenfield Village built upon, and undoubtedly helped, the growing number of house museums, which continued to be the primary focus of activity for most private organizations into the 1950s. Despite the burgeoning popularity of these sites and a general rise in the quality of interpretation, there was little uniformity in curatorial or restoration standards. The small number of preservation scholars and “professionals” were often dissatisfied with the practices of small organizations, which continued to be formed quickly due to specific threats to prominent buildings and which were guided by charismatic individuals rather than coherent principles. Local volunteers saw the significance of their heritage as a “given,” while professionals worried

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38 A 1935 study noted the “millions of visitors who annually toured some 500 historic house museums.” Mulloy, History of the National Trust.
39 In fact, there was not even a generally accepted word to describe the phenomenon until the phrase “house museum” was coined in 1933. See Hosmer, Preservation Comes of Age.
about credibility of the practice as a whole. By the beginning of World War II, critics were warning that there were too many house museums, with little rigor exercised in deciding what to save and why.\footnote{For example in 1941, Henry-Russell Hitchcock decried the “regional myopia” of groups who insisted on viewing their old houses as historic shrines without considering the broader context. Hosmer, Presence of the Past, p. 261.}

**Federal Programs**

Although their efforts may have lacked strong philosophical underpinnings, these local volunteers were typically operating with little to no institutional support. In the early years of this time period, federal efforts seem as *ad hoc* as those of private organizations. As provided by the 1906 Antiquities Act, the President would occasionally declare National Monuments; these and any National Historical Parks designated by Congress were usually the result of intensive lobbying by private groups, as opposed to any criteria or policies about what to acquire.\footnote{State governments were also largely reactive, occasionally responding to the entreaties of local preservation groups. State involvement in the 1920s ranged from funding surveys to purchasing buildings to financing restoration projects. In the 1930s, following California’s lead, several states incorporated preservation programs into their existing state parks systems to take advantage of New Deal employment programs. However, except for a few pioneering cases described below, there was little development in terms of state (and local) preservation legislation until the end of World War II. See Mulloy, History of the National Trust.}

The profile of preservation was raised by the second director of NPS, Horace Albright, who greatly increased the agency’s focus on historic sites and helped engineer the 1933 presidential order to finally consolidate all park areas into the Department of the Interior. Also in 1933, two New Deal programs directed by NPS helped move the preservation field in important new directions. First, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)\footnote{HABS hired unemployed architects to make photographs and measured drawings of structures across the country for a national archive.} refined professional standards by devising consistent recording methods and expanded the scope of preservation by examining “locally significant” resources ironically ignored by many local groups, such as barns,
mills and lighthouses. While the program focused only on recording and not preserving buildings, it is significant in that for the first time the federal government was getting involved with buildings that it did not own. In addition, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), which developed national parks among other projects, further strengthened the government’s role in managing the built environment. Influenced by the emergent field of landscape architecture, NPS and the Bureau of Public Roads jointly funded parkways like Skyline Drive and the Natchez Trace in the 1930s, which created jobs and provided scenic vistas. Foreshadowing debates about the National Heritage Area program, even during this time period parks supporters were expressing concerns that the multi-purpose New Deal projects diverted attention from “traditional” parks.

While these New Deal programs were significant, preservationists realized that they were just emergency measures and pressed for more federal involvement. In 1935 the NPS had stewardship over only 23 buildings, some of them of dubious quality, and the United States was the only major western nation with no formally adopted preservation policy. A study that year contrasted the growth of private preservation activity (like Williamsburg) and visitorship to historic sites with the limited involvement by the federal government; this report led to the passage of the Historic Sites Act in 1935, which offered great hope to local groups who lobbied for its passage. The Historic Sites Act was designed to lay the foundation for coherent preservation planning on a national level. The Act enabled the NPS to embark upon three broad

43 Murtagh, Keeping Time.
44 Conservation Foundation, National Parks for a New Generation.
45 Mulloy, History of the National Trust.
types of activities: establishing an information base through surveys and research; acquiring and operating sites and buildings either by itself or through cooperative agreement with private groups; and initiating interpretation and public education programs.

With the aim of developing a national preservation plan, NPS began a Historic Sites survey in 1936. In order to develop criteria for inclusion, staff selected and studied 15 themes and began an extensive project to identify sites of national and local significance that fit the themes. The ultimate goal was to have “chains” of sites spread across the country, linked by carefully researched exhibits and interpretive materials. However, despite the attempt at rational planning in this landmark legislation, “the older method of using congressional power continued to be the most effective way of forcing the government to save a significant site.” Local historical societies proved to be effective lobbyists, and their Congressmen in turn made hundreds of requests to NPS for new park units or other assistance. NPS staff were compelled to set aside their own agenda and return to their reactive mode, and survey work was largely discontinued after two years.

There was, however, an increasing amount of positive interaction between NPS and local preservationists after 1935. The 1935 Act allowed NPS to provide technical assistance and over

46 The HABS program was reauthorized under this legislation. Later the program expanded to include the Historic American Engineering Record and was renamed HABS/HAER.
47 The NPS originally thought that all the sites judged by the survey to be of national significance would become units of the park service. See Morton, What do we preserve?
48 Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, p. 850.
49 The process for designating parks was already politicized by the 1920s. The first director of the NPS reportedly suffered a nervous breakdown after recommending against designation of a park adjacent to property of the Secretary of the Interior. See Conservation Foundation, *National Parks for a New Generation*.
50 In fact Hosmer speculates that only one site, Pennsylvania’s Hopewell Village, came into the NPS system during this time solely on the basis of an NPS staff recommendation, making it perhaps “the only example of the Historic Sites Act being used in the way it was originally intended.” *Preservation Comes of Age*, p. 685.
the next six years the agency became, along with the Williamsburg staff, the primary source of technical expertise for individuals and groups interested in restoring historic sites. There were areas of difficulty, however, when dealing with volunteer groups. Since the expanding knowledge base about preservation methods was not usually accessible to local enthusiasts, NPS sometimes found itself uncomfortably at odds with work that had already been performed and unwilling to get involved when asked.\textsuperscript{51} In the 1930s and 40s, NPS expertise had the greatest impact on groups in cities such as Charleston, SC and Monterey, CA, who had embraced a community-wide planning orientation and had been able to forge a coalition between various interest groups and the public and private sectors. In these cases, plans developed with assistance from NPS (and other sources) culminated in local regulatory controls, further developing the link between preservation groups and urban planning. In the 1940s and 50s, towns like Alexandria, VA and Winston-Salem, NC also enacted “Charleston-style” ordinances.\textsuperscript{52}

Other “urban preservationists” in New Orleans and Saint Augustine, FL conducted pioneering work in planning but were frustrated by conflicts with NPS over the approach to development. While preservationists hoped for massive “Williamsburg-style” restorations financed by the federal government and some type of federal recognition, NPS was not willing to support projects without coherent plans and authentic interpretation. In these and other towns, the new

\textsuperscript{51} On the flip side, in the 1930s and 40s, two of the most prominent house museum organizations actually successfully fought off federal overtures to either buy or administer their properties. One congressman, objecting to the MVLA charging admission to a national “shrine,” advocated a federal takeover. In addition, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation resisted any federal involvement with Monticello, withstanding President Roosevelt’s call for federal acquisition and the NPS’ offer of a cooperative agreement. See Hosmer, \textit{Preservation Comes of Age}, p. 188.

breed of urban preservation group would often be bogged down by an inability to develop a clear consensus and rally broad based community support. This is not entirely surprising, given that they were venturing into essentially uncharted territory. The expansion of focus from single homes to neighborhoods and districts necessitated a shift not only in the minds of preservation advocates but also in the attitudes of a diverse set of actors in the economic and political spheres.

V. POST WORLD WAR II to 1966

A New Voice: The National Trust for Historic Preservation

After the end of World War II, the lack of federal support prompted preservationists to call for a nongovernmental body to coordinate national efforts and promote standards and long-range goals for the movement. 53 With the strong support of the NPS, local groups and interested professionals lobbied for the creation of a “national trust;” they also lobbied for a Congressional charter to give new organization “quasi-public” status comparable to the Smithsonian, an entity well known to the public. In 1949, the charter was signed to establish the National Trust for Historic Preservation, to “further the policy enunciated in the Historic Sites Act [of 1935] and to facilitate public participation in the preservation of sites, buildings, and objects of national significance or interest.”

The Trust also aimed to serve as a bridge between the federal preservation program and local advocates. A large part of the organization’s early efforts was to “mobilize the public to form preservation groups” and provide assistance and information to existing preservation

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53 The historical branch of the National Park Service was essentially closed at the outset of World War II, when federal preservation activity was considered nonessential.
organizations. In addition, the Trust served as a lobbyist on behalf of private organizations and resource in preservation emergencies, which grew frequent due to threats from the urban renewal and highway programs.

In the meantime, aided by the new road construction, tourism to traditional historic sites boomed and professionals continued to worry that their cause would be undermined by the proliferation of less than noteworthy structures restored by well-meaning amateurs. The President of Colonial Williamsburg and the National Trust’s Committee on Standards and Surveys advocated the idea that restored buildings open for exhibition should demonstrate a certain level of significance and authenticity.

Pursuing a new focus on education “in the broadest sense of the term,” the Trust launched an ambitious program of conferences, publications, and outreach campaigns in the late 1950s. Despite its best efforts, however, the Trust and other advocates were fighting an uphill battle, and this time the consensus was that the answer lay in increased levels of federal involvement. The Great Society programs and Lady Bird Johnson’s particular interest in beautification created

54 Mulloy, History of the National Trust, p. 13.

55 Wallace provides these statistics about the rise of mass tourism and visitation to historic sites in the 1950s and 60s: “Colonial Williamsburg’s paid attendance went from 166,000 in 1947 to nearly 710,000 in 1967, and the increase was not unusual. Old Sturbridge went from less than 12,000 to over 520,000 in the same period, and Greenfield Village passed the 1,000,000 mark in 1960. Between 1960 and 1962 attendance at all historic sites in Massachusetts went up 50 percent.” This phenomenon, Wallace continues, was not limited to the most famous sites. By 1964, tourism was one of the top three industries in 29 states, and historic tourism was making up an increasingly large share of the market. See Wallace, Visiting the past, p. 176.

56 Mulloy, History of the National Trust, p. 24.

57 A public-private report commissioned in 1963 to be the first comprehensive report on preservation in the United States noted that: “While the vast majority of European preservation efforts were government operated and financed, more than two thirds of American efforts were privately financed and administered.” Cited in Mulloy, History of the National Trust, p. 68.

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a federal climate more favorable to cultural issues. As an outgrowth of the First Lady’s 1965 White House Conference on Natural Beauty, a public-private committee on historic preservation was formed under the auspices of the U.S. Conference of Mayors; the committee’s report, *With Heritage So Rich*, played a major role in securing the passage of the landmark preservation legislation passed the following year.

VI. 1966 TO THE 1980s: Leaping Forwards and Backwards

The 1966 National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) is widely considered to represent the “big leap forward;” it set forth a broad governmental agenda of identification, standard setting, protection, and incentives. Given the American political system and the history of the preservation movement thus far, it was not surprising that the programs outlined in the act depended on a state-federal partnership and retained a focus on private initiative. Nonetheless, it firmly established the federal government as an active and, for a time, well financed player in the preservation field. The Act: 1) established the National Register of Historic Places; 2) created a Historic Preservation Fund, which offered matching grants to support “bricks and mortar” rehabilitation work, survey and planning efforts by the states, and a special set-aside for

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58 The National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts were established in 1964 and 1965 respectively.
61 See Fowler, The federal preservation program.
62 In addition to the NHPA, the 89th Congress, often known as “The Preservation Congress,” also passed bills directing the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Transportation (DOT) to provide for the protection of historic sites.
63 The National Register can include “sites, buildings, objects, districts, and structures significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, and culture.” Properties can be deemed significant at the national, state or local level. A National Historic Landmark program, with a much more limited focus on buildings of national significance, had been established in 1960.
the National Trust; 64 and 3) established the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, which, most significantly, administers the “Section 106” process, an assessment of the impact of any federally funded or licensed project on properties on or eligible for the National Register. This legislation solidified the agency’s role of encouraging the preservation of historic resources that, by and large, they do not own or control. 65

This marked expansion of the role of the federal government had a very direct and immediate impact on local organizations. First, in a major shift, the new National Register program extended NPS’ focus from nationally significant sites to those of state and local significance as well. 66 The state agencies responsible for administering the National Register nomination process (which became known as State Historic Preservation Offices or SHPOs) 67 helped to raise local consciousness by organizing advocates to participate in the nomination of resources. The National Register survey and nomination process has become a standard way for local preservationists to document community resources, promote public awareness and, in many cases, argue for the establishment of a municipal preservation commission. 68 In addition, the

64 “Bricks and mortar” grants were secured by states, which passed them on to local governments, organizations or individuals at their discretion. “Survey and planning” grants supported the activities of states as outlined in the 1966 legislation, including preparing state plans and National Register nominations. The matching grant to the National Trust, the only private organization specified in the law, was for program support.
66 By 1987, less than ten percent of National Register listings were of national significance. Fowler, J.M. 1987. The federal government as standard bearer. In The American Mosaic.
67 In an early instance of voluntary decentralization, Secretary of the Interior Udall decided to make states responsible for the National Register nomination process immediately after the passage of the NHPA. The National Register is therefore “essentially a state and local program in which the federal government reacts to those... resources which the states and localities recommend as worth preserving.” Murtagh, Keeping Time, p. 73.
68 Many organizations formed in the late 1960s and 1970s specifically to conduct community surveys and prepare National Register nominations and, although they are often assisted by professional consultants and state agency staff, local groups have conducted the majority of this work ever since. Lyon, E.A. 1987. The states: preservation in the middle. In The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation’s Heritage.
matching grants offered within a few years by the NPS and the Trust enabled local groups and historical societies to begin work on “long postponed” projects.69

This local focus was in tune with a variety of progressive social forces in the 1960s and 70s. “Preservation is people” was a commonly used slogan, tying the cause to the populism of the environmental and civil rights movements. It was also coincided perfectly with the patriotic enthusiasm sparked by the impending Bicentennial. Influenced by the growing prominence of the “new social history” movement, which stressed “accessible” and “relevant” ways to collect, disseminate and view history, most Bicentennial efforts focused less on national heroes and more on the exploration of local identity.70 Out of this mixture of patriotism, populism and celebration emerged the notion that communities could be “empowered” by their history and by participating in preservation activities.71

This sense of empowerment was not merely personal. The Section 106 provisions of the 1966 Act (along with other contemporaneous legislation such as the National Environmental Protection Act) gave preservation groups the legal standing to fight or delay demolition and the chance for high profile challenges to federal or federally licensed projects.72

69 Andrews, Historic preservation in the private sector, p.170. Although the amount of Historic Preservation Fund appropriations proved to be disappointing, the standards attached to the receipt of the NPS money influenced the quality of work that was conducted.
71 Groups like the Oakland Heritage Alliance formed to champion preservation through “direct action,” with the goal of “presenting the story of Oakland as a continuing saga in which we all participate and all make decisions.” Fonfa, L. 1990. Ten years of O.H.A. Oakland Heritage Alliance News. Vol.10, no. 2-3 (Fall-Winter 1990), pp 1-3.
72 NEPA was passed in 1969.
As in the City Beautiful era, the planning and development orientation of the new-style preservation advocates made them receptive to the overtures of the business community during the late-1970s recession.\(^{73}\) “Preservation is Progress” coexisted with “Preservation is People” as slogans for the Trust and other organizations\(^{74}\) while developers and preservationists united around the new concept of “adaptive use,” which stressed the incorporation of historic structures into the cityscape by altering their use to better suit contemporary needs.\(^{75}\) The historic preservation tax incentives contained in the 1976 Tax Reform Act (TRA) provided the real fuel for the new adaptive use approach, setting off an unprecedented surge of private sector investment in preservation.\(^{76}\) A small but visible “back to the city” movement and prominent “festival market” projects also enhanced the public impression of historic urban areas. Historic districts, which increased from fewer than 25 in 1966 to nearly 2,000 in 1987,\(^{77}\) were also becoming increasingly attractive to the public sector as vehicles for economic development and tourism.

\(^{73}\) By the 1970s, over 200 cities had regulations governing historic resources; by the 1990s, the number of historic preservation ordinances was estimated at 1800. Weyeneth, Ancestral architecture. For an interesting discussion of preservationists’ dual role as market regulators and market participants, see Kaufman, N. 2004. Conclusion: Moving forward: Futures for a preservation movement. In Preservation a History. See also Mason, Historic preservation, public memory.

\(^{74}\) Mulloy, History of the National Trust.

\(^{75}\) Bucking the more typical urban renewal strategy, “pro-market preservation” emerged in a few cities in the late 1950s, notably Providence, RI, as a response to the loss of their industrial economic base. Greenfield, B. 2004. Marketing the past: Historic preservation in Providence, Rhode Island. In Preservation a History.

\(^{76}\) In brief, the TRA provided tax benefits for the substantial rehabilitation of income-producing structures “certified” by the Secretary of the Interior; in most cases this means buildings individually listed on the National Register or those contributing to a National Register district. The TRA also enacted disincentives for the demolition of these properties. Further modifications to the tax code in 1978 and, most significantly, the passage of the Economic Recovery Tax Act (ERTA) in 1981 made historic rehabilitation even more advantageous and attracted very substantial investment. For good overviews of the TRA and later tax policies, see Fowler, The federal government as standard bearer and Wallace, Reflections.

\(^{77}\) This estimate is provided by Stipe, R.E. 1987. Historic preservation: the process and the actors. In The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation’s Heritage. Most of these were established since 1976.
It was not only real estate developers who were searching for new sources of profit; "[w]hole towns whose economies had been demolished by long-term capital flight or the recession tried to exploit the tourist potential inherent in their history." Following precedents such as Santa Fe in the 1950s, cities like Denver self-consciously promoted their historic character as a competitive advantage in economic development; in both of these cases the identity put forward combined authentic resources with a heritage image carefully selected and honed for market appeal. Once again, preservation was called upon to have a transformative effect, but this time not only on individuals but also on large metropolitan economies.

A brief look at movement's umbrella group, the National Trust, at this time suggests that in the late 1970s and 80s preservation had gained substantial public support. Trust membership jumped from about 11,000 in 1966 to 41,000 in 1973 to 185,000 in 1986. The organization continued to embrace both a grassroots focus and a business-oriented mentality. After 1966, especially when Historic Preservation Fund allocations were high, the Trust made a significant effort to foster local groups, offering technical assistance, survey consultants, and programs of grants and loans. In 1980 it also moved more deeply into the development field by opening the National Main Street Center, in cooperation with the International Downtown Executive Association, designed to promote revitalization of older business districts.

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Wallace, Reflections, p.189.
Trust membership figures vary, sometimes widely, depending on the source. These figures are provided by Andrews, Historic preservation in the private sector; and Stipe, Historic preservation process and actors.
While this time period leading up to the establishment of NHAs may have been the heyday of the “movement,” it also shows it at its most diffuse. The diverse variety of organizations that might be considered “preservation” groups has always made counting them difficult; Stipe estimates that by the mid-1980s there were 2,000 to 3,000 “actively engaged” preservation organizations, while Wallace states that by 1976 there were 6,000 such groups.\textsuperscript{81} Hosmer notes that as early as the 1930s, individual groups did not seem to be evolving in their approaches or goals; rather, the movement was growing through a process of “accretion.”\textsuperscript{82} A group that formed, for example, in the 1870s to save a house, would continue to operate more or less the same way for decades, coexisting with waves of new groups that would spring up with different slants. The dichotomy observed earlier between planning-oriented groups and house museum organizations was more sharply drawn in the activist 1960s, when advocates resented the lack of participation of historical societies in public hearings and protests.\textsuperscript{83}

In contrast to the environmental movement, which formed numerous national nonprofit organizations concerned with various aspects of the field, the Trust has remained the only major preservation organization at the national level.\textsuperscript{84} Many observers in the 1980s realized that the Trust’s umbrella was straining to open wider and wider.\textsuperscript{85} While many wanted to disassociate

\textsuperscript{81} Stipe, Historic preservation process and actors; and Wallace, Reflections. Although my focus is on locally based groups, the rise of national special interest groups (some of which did have local chapters) must also be noted. An array of organizations were launched in this time period, such as the Friends of Terra Cotta, Friends of Cast Iron Architecture, the League of Historic American Theatres, and the Society for Commercial Archaeology. Several important professional associations were also established, as was Preservation Action, a “national citizens’ lobbying group.” The number of statewide organizations also increased dramatically, from 14 in 1976 to 42 in 1987. Andrews, Historic preservation in the private sector, pp.221. See also Howard, J.M. 2003. Nonprofits in the American preservation movement. In A Richer Heritage.

\textsuperscript{82} Preservation Comes of Age, p. 183.

\textsuperscript{83} Andrews, Historic preservation in the private sector.


\textsuperscript{85} Prominent academics and practitioners speculated about “problems of prosperity” that accompanied its recent surge in popularity, leaving the Trust with a “wildly contradictory constituency.” Wallace, Reflections.
themselves from their historic origins in the house museum movement, some felt that the Trust’s mission had been transformed to a too overtly “political” one of issues like ethnic diversity, while others accused it of “scurrying towards its real estate right and away from its populist left.”

In 1979, a Trust official proudly pronounced that “After decades of saving presidents’ birthplaces and war heroes’ headquarters, the preservation movement has leapfrogged into alliances with environmentalists, developers, and merchandisers.”

“Leapfrogging” proved to be an apt metaphor for the transient quality of some of these new preservation alliances. The Reagan administration sharply decreased budgets for federally funded preservation programs, including grants to the SHPOs and the National Trust. The significant reductions in the Historic Preservation Fund and new regulations prevented nonprofits from accessing federal acquisition or rehabilitation grants; many considered this a “major step backward.” Even though its scope was limited to income-producing properties, the success of the tax-credit program was repeatedly used to argue that additional federal expenditures were not necessary. The alliance with developers would also prove to be weaker

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86 Interestingly, in recent years house museums and open-air villages have enjoyed a resurgence of popularity. See Lea, D. 2003. America’s preservation ethos: A tribute to enduring ideas. In A Richer Heritage.
87 Barthel, Collective memory and historical identity, p. 21.
88 Wallace, Reflections, p. 193. Barthel provides an interesting observation by Lowenthal, which suggests one reason that Britain has been more successful in centralizing its preservation movement. According to Lowenthal, in England’s “more openly and unconcernedly elitist” society, only a select few are considered to have the “requisite expertise and ancestral taste” to become heavily involved in preservation. This sentiment extends even to developers, with whom, Lowenthal asserts, Americans are much more likely to cooperate. Barthel, Collective memory and historical identity, p. 23 and p. 121.
89 Cited in Wallace, Reflections, p. 84.
90 The 1980 amendments to the NHPA generally further decentralized authority to states. Some responsibilities were also delegated to local governments “certified” as having effective review and management capabilities. The National Trust also suffered sharp cuts in federal funding and, partly due to controversy about the Trust’s advocacy activities, federal support was completely phased out by 1998. Amidst stated priorities of government retrenchment, many other types of organizations in fields such as the arts, housing, economic development and neighborhood improvement also lost significant portions of their federal support during this time period. See Boris, E.T. and C. E. Steuerle, eds. 1999. Nonprofits and Government: Collaboration and Conflict. Washington, DC: Urban Institute.
91 Lyon, The states.
92 Fowler, The federal government as standard bearer, p.62.
than expected. The 1986 Tax Reform Act overhauled the tax credit system, making it much less attractive to large developers in particular and investment in historic rehabilitation plummeted.\textsuperscript{93} Moreover, attempts to develop a robust alliance with environmental and recreation interests had not resulted in significant changes in policy or public perceptions.\textsuperscript{94}

Thus, despite their growing numbers, in the late 1980s -- with direct and indirect funding, and even supporting regulation, continually under question -- preservationists in the public and private sectors searched for new strategies. Many preservationists continued to seek strength by reaching out to address new issues and constituencies. As one author describes it, "New historic districts were being discovered every month... Preservation became ‘good business’ for some, for others it was ‘community life,’ and for many it was the ‘right to have beauty.’"\textsuperscript{95} An NPS official put a less-positive spin on the situation in 1986, saying, "When you’re playing defense, you don’t strategize very well."\textsuperscript{96}

\textbf{VII. THE HERITAGE AREA “MODEL”}

Into this continual negotiation between federal responsibility and nonprofit stewardship, between professional standards and amateur enthusiasm, and between the public good and the private interest came the National Heritage Area program.

\textsuperscript{93} Lea notes that the tax credits are being widely used again. See America’s preservation ethos.
\textsuperscript{94} For example, preservation had been grouped with environmental and recreational issues in a newly formed Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service within the Department of the Interior under the Carter administration, but it was returned to its traditional administrative home with the NPS by Reagan. Ibid.
For some years NPS had experimented with expanding the concept of parks to include private properties and land under state or local control. The 1961 designation of the Cape Cod National Seashore (a partnership between the federal government, six towns and private property owners) was the first in a series of initiatives to conserve seashores and lakeshores in the 1960s and 70s. The designation of two major parks in 1972, Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City and the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) in San Francisco, demonstrated a continued interest in shoreline preservation. Experiments in large-scale urban park units continued in the 1970s with the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area and Pinelands National Reserve. In addition to a general public interest in the natural environment, designation of these parks was fueled by the urban parks movement, which pushed for parks in areas more accessible to populated areas (mostly in the east). Recalling the City Beautiful era, parks were considered a means with which to alleviate some of the social and economic needs of America's declining cities.

The most direct precedent for the National Heritage Area concept was an earlier NPS project in Lowell, MA, considered the most renowned case of a city "turning an extremely negative image into tourist-historic success." Lowell -- America's "first planned industrial community"-- had suffered greatly from the effects of economic restructuring when, sponsored by influential politicians, it was designated both a state park and the first "National Historical Park" in the mid-1970s. A total of about $1 billion in local, state and, especially, federal expenditure followed. As opposed to Cape Cod, where the federal government owns the majority of the land, in Lowell

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97 Established in 1968, the Wild and Scenic Rivers System and the National Trail System are other types of units within the Interior Department whereby the federal government, local governments and property owners jointly manage resources.

98 The accessibility of the park unit to millions of people was an explicit rationale for creating the Cape Cod unit.

the government owns very little; however, a federally appointed commission was granted the
power of land acquisition and condemnation. Reminiscent of Williamsburg, within the decade,
Lowell's apparent transformation had established the "pattern of aspiration" for post-industrial
communities throughout North America and Europe.100

Although cultural landscapes were provided for in the 1966 Act, NPS had not immediately
embraced the idea.101 The National Heritage Area designation was first given “almost by
default” to the Illinois & Michigan Canal (I & M) in 1984; the new type of park was invented
after the NPS resisted efforts to designate the I & M a National Park unit.102 After three more
areas were designated by Congress, including the Blackstone (in 1986) and Southwestern
Pennsylvania (1988) projects, NPS officials, initially unenthusiastic about the heritage area
concept, began trying to design a formal program with criteria and standards.103

As will be discussed in further chapters, several efforts since then to formalize the heritage area
program have met with stiff Congressional resistance.104 Regardless of the merits of the
particular projects, as elaborated below, they are indicative of the continued practice of
designating parks and historic sites through the actions of Congressional appropriations
committees rather than through the recommendation of the NPS. After a decade of dramatic
Congressionally-led expansion of the National Park System in the 1970s, Secretary of the
Interior James Watt tried to sharply limit the scope of NPS programs and budgets in the 1980s.

100 Ibid.
Ph.D. dissertation, Tufts University.
103 Jabbour, Folklife.
104 As discussed in the final chapter, the latest legislation to try to establish standards for the program was introduced
to the United States Senate in February 2005 but has not yet been voted on in the House.
Nontraditional parks were singled out as diverting attention and resources from the system's
"crown jewels,"\textsuperscript{105} and the NPS director from 1989-1993 was one of many voices lamenting the
"thinning of the blood" of the National Parks system.\textsuperscript{106} However, at the same time as the
Reagan administration was drastically cutting back NPS operating budgets, Congress accelerated
its own appropriations of millions of dollars in capital expenditures for what some viewed as
simply local economic development projects unworthy of national attention.\textsuperscript{107} In a time of
general government retrenchment and stasis in other federal preservation programs (that, some
argue, continues to this day), the heritage area program has continued to increase significantly.\textsuperscript{108}

Despite allegations of "park barrel," a term that originated in this time period, the practice of
designating heritage areas gradually gained legitimacy. In the 1980s and 90s cultural landscapes
were increasingly accepted by NPS as an interesting and important type of resource;\textsuperscript{109} the
agency produced scholarly analyses of classification systems, developed criteria for nomination
of rural historic landscapes to the National Register and provided training for evaluation and
management.\textsuperscript{110} At the same time, planners began to show a renewed interest in regional
approaches to resource management and the notion of fostering a "sense of place."\textsuperscript{111} Other
federal agencies established programs with affinities to heritage areas in the 1970s and 80s, like
the Department of Transportation Scenic Highways program and the Environmental Protection

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{105} Runte, National Parks.
\item\textsuperscript{106} Ridenour, J.M. 1994. \textit{The National Parks Compromised: Pork Barrel Politics and American Treasures}.
Merriville, IN: ICS Books.
\item\textsuperscript{107} Ibid.
\item\textsuperscript{108} Jabbour, Folklife.
\item\textsuperscript{109} A variety of terms have been used to describe this type of resource over the years, including "greenline parks,"
"cultural landscapes" and "vernacular landscapes" among others. Mitchell, Cultural landscapes. See also Keller, G.P. and J.T. Keller. 2003. Preserving important landscapes. In \textit{A Richer Heritage}.
\item\textsuperscript{110} Keller and Keller, Preserving important landscapes. 2003.
\item\textsuperscript{111} For a good summary of the writing on the concept of "sense of place," see Jabbour, Folklife; and Kaufman, Moving forward.
\end{itemize}
Agency’s place-based or “community-based” programs reliant upon voluntary local participation. Moreover, states and even private entities have increasingly instituted “heritage area” programs of their own.

Perhaps influenced by the political and financial difficulty of setting aside new large tracts of land, the overall trend has been to continue to establish NPS “partnership” parks; in general these all entail some type of federal recognition without a permanent commitment of federal funds and require the collaboration of a variety of nonfederal actors. The popularity of heritage areas is indicative of their appeal to the combination of overlapping ways heritage is valued described in the introduction of this chapter. Large scale regional projects continue to be viewed as a political opportunities; heritage continues to be viewed as a means with which to foster local identity and empowerment; and complex interjurisdictional landscapes are increasingly seen as important and authentic resources by the academic and professional communities. Each of these strands have been evident since the early days of the preservation movement but, as outlined in Chapters 5 and 6, they will not automatically work effectively together without some conceptual shifts.

Although they are heralded as the future of our national parks, heritage partnerships such as NHAs are confronted with many of the unresolved issues that have challenged the field of preservation in the United States since its inception. In a major report entitled Collaboration and Conservation: Lessons Learned in Areas Managed Through National Park Service

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113 State programs go by a wide variety of names. The Massachusetts Heritage State Parks, for example, focused on “mature industrial cities.”
Partnerships,” national experts cited a number of difficulties in operationalizing and even describing the heritage partnership approach.\textsuperscript{115} The need to “more successfully forge long-term partnerships with local organizations and communities to plan and manage these areas” was among the major challenges.\textsuperscript{116} Also at issue was the meaning of the federal designation; elaborating the variety of terms used to describe partnership areas, authors call for a clarification and strengthening of the conceptual linkages between projects like NHAs and the NPS.\textsuperscript{117} An additional source of confusion was the prevalence of words such as “partnership,” and “empower” to describe the long-term relationship NPS is trying to foster at a regional scale.\textsuperscript{118} The ambiguity of all of these concepts, according to the authors, impedes acceptance of the partnership park model by both the NPS and the general public.

This dissertation aims to make a contribution to this discussion by, first, simply describing the impressions that local groups held about the NHA projects in their communities. Further, the discussion brings to light the ways in which two overriding ideas – the power of federal designation and the notion of distinct and coherent regions – can influence the ways in which local organizations might participate in these partnerships.

\textsuperscript{115} Conservation Study Institute. 2001. \textit{Collaboration and Conservation: Lessons learned in areas managed through National Park Service partnerships}. Conservation Study Institute: Woodstock Vermont. The Conservation Study Institute (CSI) is a program of the NPS that conducts research and convenes forums, with a special focus on heritage partnerships.

\textsuperscript{116} CSI, \textit{Collaboration and Conservation} [2001], p. 3. Note that there are two publications entitled \textit{Collaboration and Conservation}, published in different years.

\textsuperscript{117} Projects have variously been called cultural conservation, affiliated areas, non-traditional parks, partnership parks, partnership areas, etc.

\textsuperscript{118} CSI, \textit{Collaboration and Conservation} [2001], p. 6.
CHAPTER THREE:

PROSPECTS FOR INSPIRING PARTNERSHIPS
THROUGH NATIONAL DESIGNATION AND
REGIONAL PROMOTION

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Heritage Area (NHA) program is emblematic of a distinct shift in how the National Park Service functions, albeit one that has in practice been largely driven by Congressional requests. While NPS still owns and operates parks on large expanses of land, it is also increasingly called upon to play a catalytic role within existing communities: one that may be symbolically powerful but that does not involve a significant long-term dedication of taxpayer funds to capital projects.

Although the model of NPS’ “partnership park” in Lowell, MA was extremely influential in sparking interest in the revitalization of older industrial cities, National Heritage Areas differ from Lowell in several important ways. In particular, they extend over a much greater geographic area without the authority and impressive level of financial resources enjoyed by their predecessor.\(^1\) Despite their expansive agendas, the Congressionally-appointed Commissions that oversee the projects have no formal authority to acquire property or otherwise

\(^1\) Annual federal appropriations vary widely have averaged under $1 million. As elaborated in Chapter 4, one notable exception is the Southwestern Pennsylvania case, which was much more successful in garnering federal and state funds.
enforce their mandates. A critical component of the National Heritage Areas strategy, therefore, is the use of information, considered by some to be the “lightest” and also the least expensive form of government action, as a tool to change attitudes and inspire action by other stakeholders (Schuster 1997b).

Inspiring other actors is especially crucial since Heritage Area Commissions are designed to be temporary interventions by the federal government. By providing heritage education and interpretation, along with technical assistance and seed grants, the projects try to build up community-based organizations and local sentiment in order to create a sustainable “grassroots movement.” Further, through valorization and promotion of a regional vision, each commission hopes to engender a sense of interdependency that will eventually influence the decision-making process of regional businesses and institutions.

A statement from one of the original NHA’s Master Plan typifies the breadth of the community benefits the organizers envision and the linkages they see between awareness of national significance, education, pride, regional identity and engaged local actors:

In the course of this Plan, the many efforts to make the Corridor more accessible and meaningful -- both physically and intellectually, through education and interpretation -- will demonstrably strengthen "pride in place," in residents. By fostering greater knowledge and appreciation of the region's history and its remarkable cultural and physical diversity, the Corridor will become integrated into the lives of all residents. Every schoolchild will understand the role which his or her community and forebears played in the development of a great nation. In the long run, a heightened awareness of the Corridor's identity and value will foster a sense of stewardship for resources, a deeper connection to communities and the land and neighbors, and a commitment to sustaining and improving the region's quality of life, making the Corridor a better place to live and work. (Delaware & Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor Commission. 1992).³

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2 The Commissions that manage National Heritage Areas consist of representatives from local, state and federal governments, as well as sometimes from business and community groups.
3 Each NHA is required to prepare and submit a Management Plan after it is authorized.
The passage above demonstrates that, like many issue campaigns of the late 1980s and 1990s, heritage area projects assert that they can effect some type of “civic renewal” (Sirianni & Friedland 2001). One of the most critical steps in inspiring collective action is developing a common sense of identity. Speaking generally about civic mobilization, Sirianni & Friedland outline theoretical and empirical work that demonstrates the need to define “an operative ‘we’” that acts in the public arena. They argue that guiding the efforts of campaigns should be “an elaborated master frame that establishes critical commonalities and complementarities” and a credible way to link these to broader social movements (2001: 236).

In the context of preservation, “packaging” a common set of historic assets is one type of information campaign governments use to try to achieve these goals. As described by Schuster, in these initiatives agencies craft a coherent narrative to make what might be a disparate assortment of resources “more than the sum of its parts” (1997b). The promotion of heritage has become an integral part of place marketing by the public sector, which often coordinates and/or finances the “re-branding” of cities to gain a competitive edge and attract tourists (Holcomb 2001, Judd & Fainstein 1999).

From a practical point of view, public sector involvement in place marketing schemes is seen as necessary and appropriate due to the free rider problem (Holcomb 2001). However, in the case of heritage, the presence of the government is also said to have particular symbolic potency. A recurrent theme of this dissertation is the claim that although heritage is embedded in particular communities, to gain appeal it must often be revealed and “valorized” by outside agents.
Valorization has been described as the “(re)appraisal of heritage goods” through a public process (Klamer & Zuidof 1999: 31) and this word “(re)appraise” underscores the dual nature of many public interventions: raising consciousness of what exists and reorienting perceptions about what exists.

Following the concept of a “master frame” establishing “commonalities and complementarities,” this dissertation examines two leading ideas NHA projects use to try to inspire other actors to complement their agenda. The projects seek to reappraise local heritage by promoting these two new notions to the public:

1) You live in a nationally significant area, and this can bring benefits to you; and
2) You live in a distinct region and it is in your best interest to work collaboratively with other regional actors.

What does a review of the literature suggest about the prospects for inspiring NHA partnerships through national designation and regional promotion?

II. NATIONAL DESIGNATION AND VALORIZATION

The first leading idea is based on a notion integral to American preservation policy: the symbolic power of a national designation. The related hypothesis is that by valorizing local resources, national designation will benefit the organized preservation movement. In the United States, and many other countries, designation is one of the primary policy instruments used to promote preservation. As suggested in Chapter 2, both preservationists and policymakers have long viewed special designation as a critical contributor to the image of communities. In the words of
one report, the “act of labeling something as heritage distinguishes it from other places...[and] adds new meaning and value” (Avrami, Mason & de la Torre 2000:8).

A national designation is intended to impart special significance to a resource and efficacy to preservation campaigns. Despite the fact that federal labels, such as National Register status, are often accompanied by little in the way of funding or increased regulation, they are highly sought after because of the presumed “value added” offered by a federal imprimatur. Among the benefits national designation is thought to provide are education, pride and association with a prestigious centralized institution.

**Education**

A critical assumption of both agencies and project advocates is the basic tenet that citizens take cues from government labels and lists. As explained in Chapter 2, one theory driving much of preservation practice in the United States is that “government visibility and leadership strengthens private citizens’ concern for their heritage” (Murtagh 1997: 155). State recognition has long been seen as a vehicle to spark interest in resources that were underappreciated. As the Virginia State Historian put it when arguing for the passage of the 1935 Historic Sites Act, Americans needed an “awakening” from their ignorance of historic resources and federal leadership was the critical element that could make this work (Hosmer 1981: 575).

In general, educational campaigns are employed to increase interest and support for causes considered of public benefit. Through education, the notion is that government can “cultivate
taste” in heritage, inspiring rather than directly providing more of a public good. The attempt to cultivate taste is clear in the NHA program. For example, the Blackstone project describes its goals this way: “Unlike interpretation in other park areas, our unique interpretive mission is to build public understanding and support for the protection of our important historic and natural resources.” In sum, this literature suggests that a federal label will focus the attention of the public and raise consciousness about local resources.

**Pride and Self-Esteem**

Once communities gain awareness of their historic significance, preservation proponents assume that this knowledge will make them proud. The use of heritage to promote respect for American values has long been appealing to social crusaders and policy makers in the United States, especially at the turn of the 20th century. Drawing public attention to the inspirational examples of national heroes helped “construct civic identities,” especially for recent immigrants in need of socialization (Barthel 1996).

The presumed stigma of being “any town” (or “not much of a town”) drives many efforts to increase prestige through heritage education and honorary labels. The strong desire to remain (or become) “distinctive” has historically compelled city boosters to call for public sector intervention in places like Boston, Santa Fe and Denver (Hosmer 1965, Wilson 2004 and Morley

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4 Heilbrun and Grey describe the demand for the broader field of art as a “cultivated” taste, meaning that “one has to be familiar with a given form of art to develop a taste for it, and the more familiar one becomes, the stronger the taste grows” (1993: 362).

More recently, in many instances the agenda has shifted slightly: to construct new, more positive identities for residents of an area suffering from disinvestment and decline. Scholars promoting heritage area-style projects assert that the government must find a way to impart significance to “communities that lack distinctive cultural profiles in the public mind or whose public images have been shaped by mistaken or stereotypical notions” (Hufford 1994: 4).

Thus, esteem has become something of a public good, which the government tries to provide through information strategies such as designations. As suggested by the passage from the NHA Master Plan above, a significant benefit of the National Heritage Area or Commission label is said to lie in its ability to inspire pride. In the two case studies under discussion, the NPS was called in by Congress to try to boost the image of communities after industrial flight left them with degraded environments and high unemployment rates. The designation of the regions as “National Heritage Areas” illustrating the “birthplace of the industrial revolution” and the “Path of Progress” suggests that residents can view their work, and/or that of their ancestors, as part of a larger notable achievement. The spiritual uplift that in the 19th century was to come from visiting patriotic sites is now thought to derive from living in an area deemed to be of special importance. In sum, one assumption of the practice of endorsing particular resources as “nationally significant” is that federal designation will have a positive impact on community pride.

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6 While local “founder’s days,” parades, and pageants have been around for generations, in recent years state-sponsored festivals, awards, rotating honorary designations, etc. have been increasingly institutionalized and sought after by communities searching for a competitive edge (Mikunda 2004).

7 An important aspect of many of these heritage area efforts, and a primary reason many have attracted such Congressional support, is that they are located in economically depressed regions.
Association with a Prestigious Centralized Institution

The public policy literature provides useful insights into the powerful role that prestigious institutions can play in influencing public opinion. Edelman focuses on the ways that government agencies can use symbols to lend support to collective action campaigns. Of special relevance to the practice of national designation is Edelman’s argument that representatives of high levels of government “are assumed to have special sources of intelligence not available to the naïve observers themselves” (1971: 59). Moreover, he argues, the federal government is often well qualified to play a symbolic role as a representative of a “greater whole” and as a protector of less powerful actors.

Speaking more broadly about culture, DiMaggio provides insights into the ways in which cultural goods are appreciated not only for their intrinsic values but also because of “what they say about their consumers to themselves and to others” (2000: 38). The social significance of culture, therefore, provides an opportunity for agents to repackage resources to convey a more symbolically powerful meaning. According to DiMaggio, in order to transform cultural resources (the mastery of which is important to people in a specific context) into cultural capital (which he defines as “sets of cultural goods and capacities that are widely recognized as prestigious”), there must be a “nationally authoritative institutional system” capable of valorizing them and “ritually potent cultural classifications” with which organizations can readily identify (2000: 40;58).

Thus, the public policy literature suggests that a critical component of the power of a national label is the authority of the agency that bestows it. Creating “cultural capital” is the type of
outcome envisioned by NHAs, and the credibility of the National Park Service is a significant part of the strategy. In the absence of a nongovernmental body that DiMaggio would expect in the arts field, the NPS seems uniquely situated to convey authority due to its stature as the most popular public agency (Stipe 1987a). As further discussed in Chapter 5, NPS and its iconography (such as the parks, rangers and Smoky the Bear) have assumed an almost mythic status in the public consciousness and these associations are aggressively promoted by some NHAs. To many, the NPS name suggests a guaranteed level of quality of resource and visitor experience. In the words of a top NPS official, one of the goals of the National Heritage Area program is that projects will benefit from this federal “seal of approval.”

The opportunity to serve as a model endorsed by a government agency is also thought to inspire pride. As outlined in Chapter 2, the formalization of the federal government’s role in the 1966 NHPA legislation meant that the NPS could initiate pilot programs in hopes of influencing preservation practice nationwide (Mulloy 1976, Stipe 1987). Putting forth “model” projects is a strategy frequently used in preservation and many NHA project organizers often imply that being posited as national model by a trusted agency like the NPS will bring prestige to the community and benefit local actors.

In general, an association with a prestigious centralized agency can also be powerful due to the perception that the label is the outcome of a neutral and scientific investigation. The federal government is often thought to provide a rational planning framework that might transcend

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8 Ridenour echoes this assertion, reporting that the figures come from Roper polls. He also states that the NPS is much more popular than its counterpart in England, which does not own parks but rather protects them through a well-developed regulatory system (1994:45).
9 Samuel Stokes, personal interview.
parochial concerns. A much repeated maxim in preservation is that the basis for good practice lies in four steps: establishing criteria for significance; conducting surveys, evaluating the results against the criteria; and giving those resources that meet the criteria some “official” designation (Stipe 2003a). However, although this may seem like a dry policy exercise, the public process is often not so systematic. As Chapter 2 demonstrates, communities have long engaged in “rent-seeking” behavior, lobbying for the intangible and practical benefits that federal designation is said to confer (Hosmer 1981, Schuster 2002). This would support paying attention to the extent to which the credibility of the NHA designation is colored by perceptions about the legitimacy of the process.

Another common result of national designation is that it triggers other government actions. State and local programs often “piggyback” their own programs on federal initiatives; in fact, although project organizers take pains to stress that the federal government will not have any influence on land use itself, this is a critical assumption of the NHA program. In part, this is because the federal government by and large can only regulate its own properties and the impact of its own actions (Fowler 2003). However, it gains power through the “ritual form of bribery,” whereby the federal government offers assistance to its state and local counterparts (in the form of grants, loans or other incentives) with regulatory “strings” attached (Stipe 2003a: 27); this assistance is often limited to resources that have gained some type of official historic status. In fact, recognition by the federal government is thought to influence other public actors largely on the

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10 At the insistence of “property rights” advocates, new NHA legislation must contain “opt-out” provisions for individuals who do not want to be included in the designated area.
basis of its “moral persuasiveness” (Mulloy 1976). This would suggest that another benefit of NHA designation would be that it could influence the actions of other public sector actors.

What do these theories suggest about the impact of NHAs on LPOs specifically? Since the NHA designation is meant to educate the general public, one would expect that LPOs -- who already have a demonstrated interest in heritage -- might be especially knowledgeable about the designation’s meaning and consider it a valuable tool for raising public awareness of local resources. Further, one would expect that groups could and would seek to gain prestige by associating themselves with the nationally significant story and with the authority of the centralized institution. Finally, one would expect that groups might employ the federal designation to gain access to expertise and other sources of support.

Critical Debate about Government Valorization

Although there is little literature focusing on heritage areas per se, public investment in heritage as a revitalization strategy attracted much critical attention in the 1980s and 90s, when these NHA projects were emerging. Scholars contended that the government too often used its symbolic power and authority to promote its own agenda when shaping the urban environment; to illustrate their arguments, critics grouped historic preservation together with a variety of other issues such as gentrification, the privatization of public space, and the creation of inauthentic theme parks (Sorkin 1992, Boyer 1994). A number of commentators, especially in Europe, have

\[11\] Here Mulloy is specifically referring to the Section 106 process, in which the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation seeks to minimize the impact of the actions of other federal agencies on properties and districts on (or eligible for) the National Register of Historic Places.
analyzed the economic and political forces that "produce" space (Lefebvre 1979),12 highlighting what they saw as the relationships between heritage, urban development, global economic restructuring and the emergence of conservative political forces (Corner 1991, Lumley 1988, Robins 1991, Zukin 1991).13

According to these critics, many urban development efforts since the 1970s have been tainted by the government's agenda of employing heritage as a force for stability in a time of economic or political uncertainty. They claim that by packaging an "official" heritage, often for the purposes of tourism, public officials mask the physical and economic displacement of disinvestment and redevelopment. During the course of these efforts, Boyer argues, "the right to own the historic image of the city was transferred from the private to the public realm, where it could be safely guarded by municipal authorities" (1994:407). Others assert that the public sector offers high profile cultural and heritage initiatives in order to distract citizens from the intractable problems of the inner city and the government's unwillingness to invest in long-term solutions (Harvey 1989, Walsh 1992). Abrams argues that the government increasingly sends in "cultural repair workers" to ameliorate the affects of capital flight and bolster the resultant flagging sense of esteem and identity (1994). The concern about the government's imposition of its own agenda is especially strong in heritage initiatives, such as NHAs, which take place in living communities. Too often, Fitch states, local citizens are discouraged from participating and "the 'native inhabitants' are, on their own terrain, merely passive spectators of the touristic process" (1982: 403).

12 This outlook is best articulated by Lefebvre, who cautions that mediators impose their own ideologies upon the urban environment; contemporary capitalist space, he argues, tends to be homogeneous, commodified, hierarchical and administratively controlled (1979:286). Interestingly, in the case of industrial heritage tourism, the space of the former mode of production (heavy industry) is reconfigured to suit the needs of an information-based society.

Based on the skepticism about the motivation and influence of powerful outside actors, this literature would not predict that an outgrowth of these projects would be an informed and mobilized public. Rather, it suggests an alternative hypothesis: LPOs are unlikely to capitalize on heritage designation because they will not feel their story has a meaningful link to that promoted by the government.

**NHAs: A New Approach to Designation**

The National Park Service is, of course, aware of the general criticism leveled against efforts to impose top-down visions on local communities. The organizers of NHA initiatives stress that local residents, not only outside tourists, must be considered the "audience" for the campaigns and outline the need for community participation, community-based interpretation, and a focus on the living traditions of community members (Hufford 1994).

While some literature suggests that being part of a well-known and highly respected system is critical to the success of a project, many (even within NPS) stress that large scale partnership projects necessitate a different view about the meaning of designation. While assuming many of the benefits of federal valorization described above, they promote a broader concept of “place-based education” (NPS 2004). Some scholars assert that one problem with federal preservation policy has been the imposition of standards representing the “national interest” on local resources (Hufford 1994). Others, lamenting the fact that preservation has not achieved the popularity of the environmental movement, feel that the public can in fact be alienated by esoteric language such as the National Register standards and call for a more flexible and
generous approach to labeling communities. Rather than continuing to talk exclusively about “landmarks,” they argue that new constructs recognizing “whole places” (such as cultural landscapes, watersheds, etc.) will be able to encompass a “wider range of associative values” and generate more public support (Stipe 2003b: 464). In sum, these authors suggest that new types of designations with a broader meaning and less rigid standards, such as NHAs, will be an especially effective way to “imbue a physical entity with significance” in the public mind (Hufford 1994:4).

In addition to a broader definition of what constitutes heritage, “place based” approaches call for a more local involvement in project management. A popular discourse in public policy during the 1980s and 90s revolved around government “devolution;” this entailed a shift of the responsibilities of the federal government to public or private entities that, it was assumed, would better address local needs and also constitute a test of local demand. While one type of devolution entailed a sharp cutback in federal responsibilities and funding, National Heritage Areas represented a second type, in which “standardized” government approaches were replaced by more flexible ones, with autonomous community-level organizations playing a significant role in policies and programs (De Vita 1999, Wuthnow 1999). Fundamental to this approach is the expectation that local actors, including nonprofit organizations, can provide the type of energy and civic commitment necessary to effect community-wide change.

The federal government, however, still has an important part to play. Discussing “civic environmentalism,” a movement similar to “heritage partnerships,” Sirianni and Friedland insist that “a strong federal role is often required to trigger civic approaches” (2001:85). Young
provides a useful classification for describing possible relationships between government and nonprofits, distinguishing between adversarial, supplementary and complementary. A recent trend, he states, is that government agencies try to cultivate a positive complementary relationship with nonprofit organizations by acting as a “cheerleader and encourager” (1999:31).

By designating communities as a type of national park without assuming control over them, the NHA program is premised on many of these same notions of devolution and complementarity. Recalling public policy analysts who argue that community groups must see themselves as “co-producers” not just recipients of civic renewal campaigns, “place-based” advocates assert that constituents must share in forming the message of these heritage initiatives (Hufford 1994). This literature suggests that in NHAs, local groups can gain many of the symbolic benefits of designation outlined above without the requirements and direct oversight of government. In the words of one advocate, these partnership projects allow for “a broader dissemination of the natural and cultural resource preservation ethic because more people will end up living closer to nationally treasured resources…[They] enable more people to have an emotional connection to the National Park System.”

In a recent NPS publication about NHAs, this “place-based education” approach is said to benefit regions by:

- Investing communities with stewardship by strengthening local connections to heritage and landscape
- Bringing local stories to the surface and telling them more authentically
- Building understanding between different local cultures
- Encouraging integrative thinking

14 Tom Gilbert, quoted in NPS, Collaboration and Conservation [2001]:15.
• Building local pride and cohesion
• Engaging younger generations in stewardship
• Building trust between the local community and federal partners (Tuxhill, Mitchell & Brown 2004:23).

As the list immediately above demonstrates, the notion of “place-based” strategies encompasses aspects of both leading ideas: the power of a federal designation and the notion of a regional construct.

III. REGIONAL PROMOTION AND NARRATIVES

Many NHAs have embraced the concept of “place” as a central focus of their campaigns, using “place” more or less as a synonym for “region.” Although the term is often not precisely defined, inherent in the notion of place is a landscape scale and a multiplicity of stakeholders (Bray 1994, Tuxhill, Mitchell & Brown 2004). One useful way of encompassing both of these ideas is the concept of places as “local ecosystems” (CSI 2001).

As described in Chapter 2, heritage has often been viewed as a mobilizer of diverse (and sometimes non-contiguous) stakeholders, despite some disappointing outcomes. Today, despite the mixed success of past regional planning efforts, heritage narratives continue to be viewed as powerful tools for inspiring regional consciousness and collective action (Vale and Warner 2001). The second overriding hypothesis tested by the dissertation is that by crafting and promoting a distinct regional heritage, these NHA projects will engage and mobilize grassroots institutions. One goal of National Heritage Areas is that once residents realize that they have a distinctive, overarching story, they will join forces to pursue a cooperative agenda of regional promotion and stewardship.
This dissertation considers both the geographic and social aspects of the regional construct that NHAs try to promote, and the suggested interrelationship between the two. The power of the regional construct can be discussed by breaking it down into two components: the role heritage plays in the construction of regional identity and the role heritage plays in promoting regional collaboration. A subtle undercurrent of both components is the role heritage plays in fostering social life and “civic engagement.”

The Role Heritage Plays in the Construction of Regional Identity

NHA advocates emphasize the “human need to relate to physical place,” echoing the literature calling for the integration of the concept of “place” or “whole place” into preservation (Tuxhill, Mitchell & Brown 2004). Regions are an especially significant type of entity to these scholars, who call for the recognition of “places” as distinct resources in and of themselves (Kaufman 2004, Stipe 2003b).

While some observers claim that the increasingly globalized culture and economy have weakened community identity, a number of commentators argue that regionalism has been enjoying a renaissance both in the United States and internationally (Robins 1991, Wilson 2004). Recalling the regionalist revivals of the 1920s and 30s, they assert that projects like NHAs “celebrate the distinctiveness of a geographic region” (Mitchell 1996) and these regional differences often provide the grist for place marketing campaigns.
In contrast to the critics who are suspicious of the social production of space, many regionalists have traditionally viewed the social construction of regions as a natural, affirmative process. Predating the concern about the effects of globalization by many decades, Mumford attributed regional movements to a universal need to foster "compensatory organic elements," i.e. the indigenous geographic, historic and cultural distinctiveness, in a period when the uniformities of the machine civilization are being overstressed" (1938:305). One of the strongest early proponents of regionalism, Mumford acknowledges that although there is a need for some shared physical and economic characteristics, all regions are to some extent arbitrary. "Nature," he states, "provides the materials. Conceptually and concretely, man designs the structure. The region... is a collective work of art. That is why it requires the actions of men... to define it" (Mumford 1938:315).

To regionalists, this process of definition is not an arbitrary displacement of reality, but an attempt to focus and "clarify" it; to Mumford, this is what genuine planning is all about. Another eminent regional scholar explains, "It is man who, by molding the land to his own purposes, brings out its individuality. He establishes a connection between its separate features. He substitutes for its incoherent effects of local circumstances, a systematic concourse of forces. It is thus that a country defines and differentiates itself" (Vidal de la Blache in Vance 1951:167). More recently, the Conservation Foundation offers an interesting parallel argument; speaking primarily of “traditional” parks in natural areas, the Foundation notes, “Paradoxically, naturalness and authenticity are achievable amid a developing society only by sophisticated management” (1985:xxxii).
One way the organizers of heritage partnerships have attempted to stitch regions together is through the use of narrative or themes, such as the “birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution” or the “Path of Progress.” Further, by "creating a product," such as a heritage corridor or tourist route, project managers can contribute to place-making by heightening regional distinction (Robins 1991:39). All of these theories suggest that promoting regional heritage can be an effective way to articulate the meaning of a region and to connect people to place. They further imply that it is often only through the active hand of an interpreter (or mediator) that a recognizable representation of a region can emerge.

*Debates about the social impact of “packaging” regional heritage narratives*

Some scholars argue that it is necessary to foster shared narratives in order to encourage social ties (Rowe 1991). Many feel that cultural heritage has a unique narrative power. As Jensen puts it, cultural heritage is a “collection of seemingly permanent myths or ideologies embodied in particular groups, communities or nations” and which “play[s] an important part in creating a sense of community” (Jensen 2000:38).

The planning literature also reveals a longstanding belief that awareness of cultural identity can have a significant impact on the quality of “civic engagement.” Regional planning pioneer Geddes, for example, believed that surveying and educating the population about their natural and cultural resources through regional surveys would "recapture past civic life" which had been eroded by impersonal political and economic forces (Hall 1990:142). Lynch also speculates that area-wide heritage education may “increase the political cohesion” of regional residents (1980:189). As Bianchini notes, since the 1970s, in the United States and Western Europe, the
governments have tried to use cultural and tourism policy to "encourage forms of public life accessible to all residents...encourage face-to-face interaction and promote community rebuilding" (1993). Socialists in Europe specifically have tried to use heritage and culture to "give people back their identity" and "renew the public's commitment to the political sphere and give fresh stimulus to local and regional alliances" (Hoyau 1988:32). All of these authors imply that policymakers could use heritage narratives to positively influence community cohesion and alliances.

Critical discourse in the late 1980s, when NHAs were first being established, demonstrates significant concern about the ways in which heritage narratives were being presented in similar projects. Robins argues that when place-specific attributes, such as cultural and natural distinctiveness, are strategically exploited to attract outside tourists and industry, tensions can arise over the best image – or heritage – to market (1991). A few critics talk specifically about regional development campaigns. In *Inventing New England*, for example, Brown argues that the image of a pastoral "old New England" region did not exist until a desperate search for new economic activity in the late 19th century inspired the marketing of a nostalgic haven to tourists weary of the new industrial order. Ironically, these efforts brought the very commercialization that tourists were trying to flee (Brown 1995). Other observers demonstrate that regional planning and development efforts capitalizing on heritage in Appalachia and New Jersey's Pine Barrens, for example, have had the unintended affect of romanticizing, distorting or, at worst, destroying local culture (Mason 1992, Whisnant 1981). These experiences support a careful look at how the effects of the overriding narratives promoted by outside mediators are perceived by local actors.
Other scholars object to the ways in which project managers “packaged” history to convey stories in a more engaging fashion; in their view heritage was typically reduced to an ornamental and devalued marketing tool (Boyer1994, Hayden 1986). By presenting history "safely" and uncritically as entertainment, critics feared that mediators distanced residents from their past by removing meaningful, perhaps provocative, connections between historical events and contemporary social and economic forces.

Some critics also have doubts about the claims that heritage based development fosters civic engagement. In order to truly revitalize the public realm, some argue, heritage projects must be based upon a dual commitment to improved indigenous cultural capacity and improved social life of localities, instead of merely consumption-oriented tourist strategies (Bianchini & Schwengel 1991). Others assert that projects are often not designed to allow the expression of multiple publics, and insist that the definition of culture must be generous enough to ensure that a broad segment of the public does participate (Abrahams 1994, Abrams 1994, Worpole 1991).

Many of the critics worried about the blurring of education and entertainment are concerned about the public's passive acceptance of imposed texts and messages. However, Samuel challenges the assumption that pleasure is almost by definition mindless, asserting that there is no evidence to support the claim that "people are more passive when looking at an old photographs or film footage, handling a museum exhibit, following a local history trail, or even buying a historical souvenir, than when reading a book" (1994:271). He dismisses the underlying "conspiracy theory" of those who "assert that historical change is engineered by
ruling elites and popular taste is ... at the mercy of ...the manipulations of the media" (1994:264). Mellor argues that most critics base their assumptions on textual analysis and that little to no attention is paid to people on site and their potential for active and informed negotiation with their environment (1991). This debate supports paying attention to the ways that the public responds to the themes of heritage campaigns and to the extent to which community members feel inspired to participate.

The Role Heritage Plays in Promoting Regional Collaboration

As detailed above, NHAs have ambitious agendas, which usually encompass some combination of resource protection, community education and economic development through tourism, as well as more abstract goals like “enhanced pride in place” and “livability.” These multiple agendas raise some concerns about how well a collaborative approach might work. Mason draws our attention to the variety of stakeholders involved with any heritage preservation initiative; he stresses that each one may attribute quite different values to heritage (ranging from economic to educational to aesthetic) or may attribute a cluster of values to heritage but rank them quite differently in terms of importance (1999:2). While Mason accepts this as inevitable, Salamon, talking about public policy in general, points out that in projects in which the federal government seeks to limit its role to a “catalytic” one, differences in priorities can stymie the results. He argues that indirect federal programs often suffer from what he terms as “incongruence… between the goals of the federal government… and the goals of the non-federal implementing agents” (1995:27). Salamon describes a “public management paradox,” whereby federal programs with clear performance standards (which make them the easiest to implement) are hard to enact due to resistance by implementing agents. Conversely, those programs
designed to accommodate the different priorities of a broad variety of actors (i.e. the easiest to enact) turn out to be the hardest to implement because of the way program details are intentionally (and necessarily) left vague (Salamon 1995: 31). Although the lack of formal criteria and standards has allowed NHAs to attract a broad range of advocates, this literature suggests that these popular projects may encounter conflicts between stakeholders when it comes time for implementation.

How might we expect LPOs specifically to participate in regional partnership campaigns? In some ways LPOs seem poised to play a key role in promoting the regional civic mission of National Heritage Areas. A growing body of literature asserts that, in general, nonprofit organizations can be instrumental in fostering civic identities and inspiring collective action (Reid 1999:291). Many critics posit that cultural participation opportunities provided by LPOs build social bonds within communities. Jeannotte provides a useful overview of literature about the possible links between cultural participation and collective benefit, and between cultural capital and social capital. She suggests that while it is often difficult (and perhaps fruitless) to distinguish between cause and effect, “a very important feedback loop...may exist between cultural capital and civic society/social capital that has not hitherto been acknowledged” (2003:47).

LPOs embody the argument put forward by many scholars that heritage is inherently a collective enterprise. Discussing the distinctions between history and heritage, Lowenthal stresses that the latter “celebrates that valued by a group,” and facilitates identity formation (cited in Morley 2004:287) Fundamental to the concept of “heritage,” as many commentators understand it, is
that it is specifically designed to be shared -- within a specific social group and/or through presentations to outsiders (Lowenthal 1985). In policy formulation and debate process, local preservation organizations are thought to contribute the concern for the “inherent social value that historic resources give to a community” (Mayes 2003:169) and are considered to be “the key to constituency building” (Cofresi & Radtke 2003:131).

But just because LPOs might contribute to local attachment and social life, does this mean that they will naturally gravitate toward a regional identity and a commitment to collaborate with other actors on a regional set of concerns? This is a critical assumption of most partnership parks that remains largely unexplored and may be informed by concepts from the literature on social capital. Putnam seems to aptly describe many LPOs when he talks about the positive features of “bonding” social capital, which cultivates and reinforces narrowly defined identities such as ethnicity or neighborhood (2000). However, he goes on to assert the particular importance of fostering “bridging” social capital, which can generate the “broader identities and reciprocity” needed for regional collective action.

These “catalytic” campaigns must rely on a network of organizations that are inspired to work for common cause despite some variations among their essential goals. Discussing preservation, Havel argues that “partnerships can only work if each party benefits with respect to its original mission. Government seeks to protect the public interest...and nonprofit organizations seek to promote the common interests of their supporters” (1997:198). Some scholarship suggests that there should be benefits to nonprofits who participate in the type of networks promoted by partnership parks. According to Boris, “networks and coalitions are particularly important to
small groups because they connect their mission to a larger vision, their members to other people
and their resources to additional resources for political influence” (1999:307).

Other scholarship suggests that nonprofits do not always network in a manner that would result
in a sustainable region-wide partnership. In a study of a foundation-sponsored initiative that
encouraged cultural organizations to form networks, Ostrower argues that although the construct
of coordination is symbolically powerful for project sponsors, nonprofits do not always realize
the long term benefits that partnerships were supposed to provide (2005). Groups incurred
unexpectedly high costs, faced logistical difficulties, and felt that the initiatives took them in
directions tangential to their stated mission. Perhaps most importantly, networks typically did
not last beyond the specific grant period funded by the foundations. Jeannotte cites one of the
few studies of cultural group networks, which examined the extent to which arts and culture
groups were embedded within their own neighborhood, along with the frequency with which
they interacted with groups outside their own locales. The study found that any networks formed
were “strategically constructed,” focusing on the practical needs of “organizational maintenance”
rather than “community engagement” (2003). Despite the multidisciplinary approach promoted
by partnership parks, some scholars argue that there is little evidence that “historical appreciation
fostered by house museums,” for example, will “carry over to a wider enthusiasm for larger
environmental issues and values” (Cofresi & Radtke 2003:144).

Literature also suggests that simply within the community of LPOs, there may be significant
challenges in coordinating agendas. As elaborated in Chapter 2, just as the “state” is not a
singular concept in the United States, the nonprofit heritage sector is a heterogeneous and diffuse
set of groups that have typically worked independently. Stipe estimates that today there are over 10,000 national, state and local organizations, and asserts that occasions in which the "convergence of financial or political interests" compel groups to work together are the exception rather than the rule (2003b:460). Compared to other causes, the preservation field has relatively little in the way of established hierarchies or networks. There are few national organizations with state and local branches and many groups (especially the small ones prevalent in many NHA communities) are not accustomed to regular interaction with other local organizations, state advocacy groups, "umbrella" groups like the National Trust or government agencies (Howard 2003). These factors may have discouraged the tradition of trust and reciprocity among organizations that Putnam argues would increase the likelihood of the success of regional development projects (2000). This literature suggests that LPOs may be unwilling or unable to participate effectively in collaborative efforts to further NHA goals.

IV. CONCLUSION

It seems obvious from the above discussion that heritage, and regions, are inherently fluid, political constructs, which will always involve some degree of selectivity and simplification. It also seems clear that the preservation movement is the United States is far from a monolithic enterprise controlled by the government -- especially the federal government --but rather, a complex and loosely associated set of activities by politicians, civil servants, other professionals and local advocates. A nuanced exploration of the relationship between the multiple actors and multiple values involved seems necessary.
As stated above, National Heritage Areas are a federal attempt to foster a grassroots movement. But we know very little about what really happens at the grassroots. Clearly, influencing local attitudes and behavior is key to the success of these projects. However, despite the increasing public investment in these projects and the growing tendency to assign designations to large areas, there is very little empirical work to help us understand how community residents and institutions respond to heritage-based development campaigns.\textsuperscript{15} Unfortunately, there is not much evidence provided by the preservation or planning literature supporting either the testimony about the positive impacts of designation or the arguments about the influence of the government’s agenda on community perceptions of heritage (Light 1995, Merriman 1991). Several scholars have called for more sustained research on the public’s response to both heritage presentations and to other planned environments presumed to be ideologically charged (Fainstein & Gladstone 2001, Prentice 1993, Vale 1992).

In addition, little data has been gathered on the effectiveness of indirect mechanisms like public awareness marketing campaigns and on how these campaigns might affect local actors (Wyszomirski 2002:213). Although collaborations between nonprofits are often proposed as an effective way to meet policy goals, De Vita points out that scant research has been conducted on how often these partnerships are being formed or how well they work (1999). More generally, there has been very little serious study of nonprofit preservation organizations at all, especially the small groups that operate in the towns and rural communities that make up most heritage areas, and indeed in most communities nationwide (Howard 2003 and Rosenstein 2006).

\textsuperscript{15} The empirical work that does exist tends to focus on the demographics and expenditures of tourists (actual and projected). For an overview of a recent increase in empirical and theoretical work on NHAs, see http://www.cr.nps.gov/heritageareas/REP/research.htm. See also McCarthy 2005.
In recent years, scholars promoting a “place-based” approach to heritage have called for paying closer attention to the impact of heritage preservation efforts on daily lives, rather than focusing on just the content or the policy process (Bray 1994, Stipe 2003b). The remainder of this dissertation is an attempt to explore precisely this type of impact, with a specific focus on how NHA campaigns have influenced local preservation organizations.
CHAPTER FOUR:

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE TWO CASE STUDIES

This chapter provides an overview of the two regions, the evolution and focus of the commissions and the variety of LPOs operating in each region. After these subjects are addressed, the chapter provides a brief summary of the ways in which each commission promoted the concepts of national significance and the regional identity during the study period.

I. BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Brief History and Character of the Region

The Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor (BVNHC), established in 1986, stretches 46 miles between Worcester, MA and Providence, RI. The 400,000 acre river valley includes 24 local governments and a half million residents.\(^1\) Its unifying feature is the Blackstone River and Canal system.\(^2\)

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\(^1\) At either end of the Valley, Worcester and Providence have populations of just over 150,000. The towns in between are much smaller. In Massachusetts, 5 of the 11 original corridor communities have populations under 5,000 and the remaining 6 have populations under 13,000. The more urbanized Valley communities in Rhode Island range in size from about 10,000 up to about 70,000. Figures are based on the population at the time of designation.

\(^2\) The Canal functioned between 1828 and 1848.
Figure 2: Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor.
It was on the banks of the Blackstone River, at Slater Mill in Pawtucket, RI, that water power was first harnessed for industrial use in 1793. The hundreds of textile mills that rapidly sprang up along the river banks are credited with spawning the American Industrial Revolution, which, an NPS study states, effected "the complete transformation of American life, and character."³ Other aspects of the Valley’s history considered to be nationally significant include the fact that: it pioneered the Rhode Island System of Manufacturing; it was the first ethnically and religiously diverse area of New England; and that its industrial and transportation system were instrumental in the development of the second and third largest cities in New England.⁴ The Valley’s heyday was between the Civil War and World War I, coinciding with what is posited as the "golden age of American industry." Valley communities were home to leading textile mills and machine shops, and also manufactured a variety of other products such as rubber goods, wire, loom shuttles, hats and axes.

While the region once boasted "the hardest working river in the country," its fortunes began to decline in the 1920s with the migration of mills to the southern states.⁵ The Great Depression and further industrial restructuring extended a long period of economic depression.⁶ As mills

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⁴ Discussing the national significance of the Valley, the Commission lists the following distinguishing features of the region: "It was the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution; it represents the first widespread industrial use of water power in the United States; it was where the Rhode Island System of manufacturing was developed; it was the first ethnically and religiously diverse area of New England; and its industrial and transportation system were crucial to the development of the second and third largest cities in New England." BVNHC, CHLMP, p. vii.
⁵ The ascendancy of an alternative kind of organization, the Lowell Model, also contributed to the decline of industry in the Valley.
⁶ Worcester and Providence had suffered from considerable out-migration since the 1940s. While the populations of the smaller towns had remained relatively stable, they have also experienced significant losses of manufacturing jobs. See NPS 1985. Blackstone River Corridor Study: Conservation Options.
were abandoned, the Valley became a self-described “backwater,” left with a high unemployment rate\(^7\) and stigmatized by the severely degraded state of the river and its environs.\(^8\)

Like many heritage projects, the NHA designation and Commission gained public support by appealing to a broad set of concerns. In the 1980s, economists predicted major growth for the region, given its position within the “Golden Triangle” of New England’s three largest cities, Boston, Worcester and Providence. The Boston area in particular was enjoying an economic boom (known as the “Massachusetts Miracle”) and after observing its affects on other areas of New England, policymakers and citizen activists became concerned that unplanned suburban development might mar the quality of life and character of the Valley that had withstood decades of neglect.\(^9\) At the same time, there was recognition that coordinated promotion and stewardship of these resources could be one of the focal points in an economic development strategy for the Blackstone region.

**Genesis of the Project and Early Local Efforts**

In the early 1980s, a number of local and state initiatives had helped generate public interest in the area’s heritage and in the idea of promoting a regional identity. While a major goal was community education, these efforts also strove to replicate well-known models and gain prestige by attracting outside recognition.

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\(^7\) Unemployment peaked at about 14% in 1982.

\(^8\) Since the earliest days of industrialization in the Valley, the Blackstone River and Blackstone Canal had been used as dumping grounds for industrial byproducts, hazardous waste and raw sewage.

\(^9\) The growth pressure did not materialize as quickly as expected since the regional economy suffered a downturn in the late 1980s.
In Massachusetts, the first major event was the 1981 establishment of the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, which includes 18 sites clustered tightly around the river and canal.\textsuperscript{10} The Heritage Homecoming festival, encompassing a larger region of 11 towns, is commonly cited as another watershed in sparking local enthusiasm. Massachusetts State Representative Richard T. Moore organized the event, which he modeled after Newburyport, MA’s very popular “Patriot Homecoming” celebration. First held in 1986, the Homecoming festival focused attention on the new State Heritage Park; it was also designed to build local pride and encourage tourism by highlighting a variety of other community sites and institutions.\textsuperscript{11} Inspired by this nascent sense of regionalism, many of the same festival organizers spearheaded a successful campaign for these Massachusetts communities to collectively gain “All American City” designation as The Blackstone Valley.\textsuperscript{12}

A complementary but largely independent effort was taking place on the Rhode Island side of the border. Environmental activism typical of the late 1960s and a 1972 river clean-up campaign, strongly supported by the \textit{Providence Journal}, are credited with sparking the general idea of restoring the river for recreational use.\textsuperscript{13} However, early participants recall that the driving force for Corridor designation was less a grassroots groundswell than the result of innovative environmental planners in the State Department of Environmental Management, who had already

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{10} The park is part of the Massachusetts Heritage State Park system, begun in 1978 to promote public-private partnerships in “mature industrial cities;” it was the first such park to encompass more than one community. The main “partners” in developing this park are the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (DEM); the Blackstone River and Canal Commission; and the Blackstone River Watershed Association, which played a key role in advocating for the establishment of the park. The River and Canal Commission has “watch dog” powers over new development on lands adjacent to the state park.

\footnotetext{11} The festival continues to this day, still encompassing the same 11 MA communities.

\footnotetext{12} The Blackstone Valley was awarded this status in 1988, inspiring parades and special Heritage Homecoming celebrations.

\end{footnotes}
been working on small river projects. In the late 1970s and early 80s, the state sponsored meetings, attended by some Massachusetts counterparts, to explore environmental, recreational and economic development opportunities provided by the river. In the early to mid-1980s, bolstered by land donations and bond money, Rhode Island environmental planners completed resource inventories and park master plans for the river region in their state.

In addition to the heritage preservation and environmental stakeholders, the newly formed Blackstone Valley Tourism Council of Rhode Island saw the advantages of marketing the Valley as a distinctive destination. Seeking to expand and diversify the source of their relatively small tourist market (primarily based on factory outlet shops), this consortium of local businesses also played a key role in developing support for a heritage tourism strategy.\(^\text{14}\)

**Early Relationship with the NPS and Congress**

Concurrent with these efforts, local representatives were lobbying for some type of involvement by NPS. In 1983, Congressional representatives from both states requested that NPS assess the national significance of the region’s resources and develop a linear heritage park. The resultant study found that while the Valley resources were nationally significant, a large-scale park managed by the NPS was not feasible.\(^\text{15}\) However, a “positive but limited” federal role was supported.

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\(^{15}\) NPS. 1985. *The Blackstone River Corridor Study: Conservation Options*,
The structure of the heritage corridor concept was crafted out of “instinct and opportunity” by early NPS planners in the region.\textsuperscript{16} It is clear that Lowell, MA was very much on the minds of some organizers.\textsuperscript{17} Two of the early participants had worked on the Lowell project and were thus aware of how traditional parameters of a national park might be stretched to fit local resources.\textsuperscript{18} They also felt that the community’s request for a more traditional NPS park project would be “dead on arrival” and tried to help the community “frame the right question” in its request for assistance.\textsuperscript{19}

**Commission Structure and General Operations**

The legislation officially designating the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, and providing for the federally-appointed 19 member Commission (P.L. 99-647) was passed on November 10, 1986.\textsuperscript{20} As outlined in the legislation, the general purpose of the Corridor project was to provide a management framework for the retention, enhancement and interpretation of regional resources. The legislation charges the Commission with developing and implementing a “unified historic preservation and interpretation plan” to guide Corridor development and with “supporting public and private efforts in economic revitalization” consistent with the goals of this plan.

\textsuperscript{16} Personal interview, 13 March 1997.
\textsuperscript{17} Despite the much lower level of government funding and oversight associated with the NHC, Lowell, well known in New England, was often brought up in initial public meetings as an example of a successful precedent for a new NPS partnership approach. Representatives from Lowell attended early organizational meetings and local press concurrently carried positive accounts of the city’s transformation.
\textsuperscript{18} In addition, some planners and community members had visited the only National Heritage Corridor at the time, the I & M Canal NHC in Illinois.
\textsuperscript{19} Personal interview, 13 March 1997.
\textsuperscript{20} The Commission, appointed by the Secretary of the Interior, includes: one delegate designated by the Director of the NPS; the State Historic Preservation Officer; the Department of Environmental Management Director and Department of Economic Development Director from each state; two representatives of local government from each state; and two additional gubernatorial appointments from each state, representing relevant interests.
For the first five years of the project’s life\textsuperscript{21} (1987 to 1991), the BVNHC’s budget from NPS averaged about $350,000; during the study period (1992 to 1998), the average federal appropriation had increased to about $1.3 million per year.\textsuperscript{22} By 1998, a total of $11.2 million had been appropriated by Congress.\textsuperscript{23} During the study period, the Corridor budget was divided into: Commission Operations; Technical Assistance (appropriations through the NPS for technical specialists in historic preservation, planning and design, and National Park Rangers); and Development (from a Congressional line-item appropriation to provide funding for preservation and demonstration projects outlined in Commission’s Plan). All federal funds must be matched by non-federal sources.

The 1986 legislation authorized the Commission for an initial five year period, with a provision for renewal of five more years (until 1996) if necessary and if supported by the Governors of each state. Although the Commission was specifically designed to be temporary, in 1996 it was renewed for ten more years. The Commission’s current term will expire in November 2006 and it is again seeking renewal; in conjunction with the Conservation Study Institute of the NPS, it is exploring various ways that it could continue a relationship with the agency.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{21} The Secretary of the Interior did not appoint the Commission itself until 1988.

\textsuperscript{22} In its enabling legislation the Commission was authorized to receive $250,000 per year, though this was later amended to $350,000. In 1990, an additional $1 million per year in demonstration funds was authorized annually for FYs 1991, 1992 and 1993. In later years, more demonstration and development funds were added.

\textsuperscript{23} Updated appropriations totals appear in Tuxhill, Mitchell and Huffman, Reflecting, p.17. Federal appropriations have risen since 1998 and in recent years have averaged about $2 million. By 2005, the Commission had received a total of about $24 million in NPS funding.

\textsuperscript{24} Tuxhill, Mitchell and Huffman, Reflecting. As discussed in the conclusion, Commissions have consistently pushed for reauthorization and only one NHA has actually “graduated” out of the DOI system; the rest continue to get federal funding. The first NHA to lose its authorization, the I & M Canal, is currently trying to get reauthorized. When the authorization period ends, the project retains its NHA designation, but is no longer under the purview of the NPS and no longer eligible for the pool of NHA funds.
The staff of the Commission, who are all considered NPS employees, grew gradually as the BVNHC received more funding, fluctuating somewhat with changes in yearly appropriations. In early years, the Commission had about 5 staff, supplemented by NPS Rangers; by 1998 this had grown to 13 professional and administrative staff and 9 park Rangers. In addition, several NPS technical specialists in other branches of the agency dedicated part of their time to the BVNHC.25

While its legislation does not allow the Commission to own and operate sites itself, some of its most tangible projects were providing assistance to key sites listed in the Cultural Heritage and Land Management Plan and, most visibly, supporting new visitors centers in the region (in conjunction with state parks and tourism officials, and a nonprofit organization).26 The most substantial support was given to two centers that opened in 1997. The first was a southern visitor center in Pawtucket adjacent to Slater Mill, managed by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. In addition, the Commission provided seed money for the Woonsocket Museum of Work and Culture, owned and managed by the Rhode Island Historical Society. Each of these centers explored different themes laid out in the Commission’s Interpretive Plan.

The breadth of the Commission’s agenda exceeds that of many heritage areas. The seven “big priorities” pursued during the study period include: coordination and consistency; interpretation/education; recreation; environmental conservation; land-use planning; and

25 BVNHC, 1997 Annual Report. The Roger Williams National Memorial in Providence, RI was added to the Commission’s administrative purview in 1985; the site has four administrative staff and four Rangers, but these are not included in the staff counts here. The memorial is a landscaped park commemorating the man who founded the state of Rhode Island in 1636.

26 This management plan, completed in 1989 and amended in conjunction with the reauthorization in 1998, was mandated by the original NHA legislation. It is a primary component of the Commission's information strategy, and is based on the following technical reports: Historic Resources Inventory; Design Guidelines and Standards; Interpretive Plan; Land Use Management Plan; Economic Assessment; and Tourism Resources Inventory.
economic development and tourism.  

According to the Deputy Director of the BVNHC, unlike more recent organizers focused on economic development, the Commission considers the Corridor a "protection and enhancement strategy." Both preservation and economic development advocates urged the Commission to "strongly market the identity of the valley as a special, distinctive place." National significance and regional coherence are considered to be critical components of promoting this identity.

The Nature of the LPOs in the Region

The broad spectrum of groups in the region recalls Hosmer’s assertion that the preservation field has grown by “accretion.” As shown in Table 1, the organizations I studied had a diverse set of primary missions.

The BVNHC’s major historic attraction has been Slater Mill Historic Site, which is administered by an LPO founded in 1921. Slater Mill is often termed the Valley’s “jewel in the crown;” it is featured prominently in NHC materials and its picture appears on the cover of the Corridor’s NPS brochure. One stated goal at the outset of the BVNHC project was to “make Slater Mill the best small museum in America.” Although the Society that owns and operates the site was struggling during the study period, it had the largest staff of any group in the region, including 2 full-time and 18 part-time employees. One other accredited historical museum with a

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28 Personal interview, 16 October 1998.
29 Ibid.
30 BVNHC, 1992 Annual Report, p. 3.
31 The former Director shuddered at the potential headlines he anticipated around the time that the BVNHC was established: “Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution gone bankrupt.” While it was not NPS’ intention, Commission funding “carried” Slater Mill for two years by contracting with the site’s staff to conduct historic resource inventories and provide other services associated with the establishment of the NHC. Personal interview, 26 February 1997.
professional curator operates in the region, the Willard House and Clock Museum. Both of these museums have operating budgets of $250,000 or less. There are also several other historic sites owned and operated by unstaffed LPOs, often historical societies or hereditary societies. As seen in the methodology chapter, these groups had operating budgets of under $25,000.

Among the other groups surveyed are the single staffed community-based preservation advocacy group in each state (in Worcester, MA and Pawtucket, RI) and several unstaffed preservation advocacy groups in other communities. There are also several not-for-profit tourism bureaus and Main Street organizations that promote heritage based economic development, which do employ small staffs. Reflecting the field as a whole, many LPOs interviewed for this study had been operating in a low-profile way for decades with very modest operating budgets.

Table 1. Number of groups by type in survey sample, Blackstone

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary mission of organization</th>
<th>No. of groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum or tourist site</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical societies that own tourist sites</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical societies that operate others’ sites or rent sites</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical societies without sites</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Festival</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation advocacy with site</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation advocacy without site</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development/tourism marketing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 My study did not examine the Museum of Work and Culture since it had so recently opened and because it was not a community-based institution.
33 Since my study focuses on heritage, I do not examine the handful of community groups with an environmental conservation focus.
34 The complete list of specific LPOs I studied and the methods I used to select them are more fully described in the methodology chapter.
As described in later chapters, LPOs owned several sites targeted as critical properties for restoration and protection in the Management Plan. The Commission did not support local organizations with large capital grants, but in many years it offered matching grants for projects that furthered BVNHC goals. Nonprofits (along with government agencies and individuals) were eligible to compete for these funds, and several groups used these grants as seed money to finance rehabilitation projects. 35

An NPS study predating the NHA designation notes the “central role” that these small organizations have played in fostering the region’s historic buildings and intangible heritage, despite a lack of coordination and very little public sector support. 36 However, LPOs did not find a well-defined role within BVNHC operations. The Management Plan contains little discussion of how LPOs will participate and there is no designated “seat” for any nongovernmental organization on the Commission (although “at large” or local government representatives occasionally have affiliations with LPOs). 37

How the Commission Promoted National Designation and Significance

The Commission pursued several strategies to communicate to the public the national significance of their resources. NPS planners envisioned that recognition by the federal government could draw the attention of tourists and “bolster the self-image” of the valley,

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35 For example, in FY 1993, $200,000 was specifically put aside to fund “small, quirky projects that might be overlooked.”
36 NPS, Conservation Options, p. 21.
37 During the years of my study, the only NGO representative was from the Rhode Island Blackstone Valley Tourist Bureau.
“thereby encouraging and sustaining local efforts.”

An important component of the “recognition” strategy was the research and interpretation of sites, which were seen as “undervalued” by NPS. The other major federal role envisioned was coordination of federal, state and local policies to protect resources and mediation of conflicts over resource use.

The Commission tried to use the national designation to dramatically reshape perceptions about the value and potential of the river valley and suggest a more positive future. Project organizers often used the Blackstone River itself as a proxy for the general well-being of the Valley and it had been in poor shape for many years. Since the earliest days of industrialization in the Valley, the river and canal had been dumping grounds for industrial byproducts, hazardous waste and raw sewage. Indeed, in the decades prior to designation, the Blackstone River was reportedly commonly referred to as “a sewer with history.” At a local event, a regional EPA official quipped, “The Blackstone Valley is the birthplace of the American Industrial revolution, but it’s also the birthplace of industrial pollution.” After the “comeback” effort was underway, the press and local politicians often stressed the dramatic disjuncture between the old view of the river as a degraded liability and its new status as a nationally significant historic resource.

As mentioned above, the BVNHC is considered to be the National Heritage Area most closely associated with the NPS. Although in the early years the Commission spent much of its time

38 NPS, Conservation Options, p. 2.
39 Ibid.
42 Reporters and politicians often cited their own sensational stories of how, for example, a friend’s dog died from playing in the Blackstone or how as daredevil teenagers they would defy their parents and play on the perilous and forbidden riverbanks. Williams, T. 1995. The Blackstone now runs blue. Audubon, November-December 1995. p. 26-31.
struggling to build credibility within the NPS and gain reauthorization, the Regional Office
generally provided very strong support to the project; one NPS official described the project as
the “favorite child” of the Regional Office.\textsuperscript{43} Despite the fact that it is technically an “affiliated
unit of the National Park System” and not a typical National Park, the Blackstone Corridor has
an official NPS brochure resembling that of any other National Park.\textsuperscript{44} The strategic value of
association with the agency is stressed by the \textit{Management Plan}, which states “The NPS’ active
and visible presence in the Corridor is an important symbol of the Blackstone River Valley’s
national significance to visitors and residents.”\textsuperscript{45}

Figure 3: An NPS Ranger on the staff of the BVNHC

The presence of the National Park Service was reinforced by the placement of the headquarters
and staff within the area, as opposed to administration from an NPS regional office. This
strategy was intended to humanize government and provide face-to-face contact with the public.
A very critical part of this “face” is the contingent of NPS Rangers, who lead tours of Valley
towns and of the river. Rangers also participate in interpretive programs at various historic sites
in Blackstone communities, most actively at Slater Mill and the two state parks. They also

\textsuperscript{43} Personal Interview, 29 March 2005.
\textsuperscript{44} Each of the original NHAs were given this awkward label.
\textsuperscript{45} BVNHC. CHLMP, p. 42.
conduct school programs, which expose thousands of children to the corridor concept. Since 1993, an NPS Ranger has hosted an award-winning cable television series called “Along the Blackstone.” In addition, the NPS “Volunteers In Parks”(VIP) program has attracted citizen participation in corridor activities, and provides additional “uniformed presence” throughout the Valley.  

Figure 4: The NPS promotes the BVNHC on its website and brochures with its familiar arrowhead logo.

Signs were also an important part of the Commission’s strategy to market small projects as a set of resources with national significance; describing the signage program, the Executive Director stated, “The Blackstone Valley is nationally significant, it should look it.” Starting in 1996, large brown and white highway signs were placed at the gateways to the Corridor with smaller

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46 The BVNHC estimated that by 1992 10,000 school children had seen the presentations made by its five Rangers in area classrooms.


48 Judd and Fainstein explain that it is often signs that invest a place with significance. They cite Britton’s explanation that “Many attractions are unrecognizable as such except for one crucial element-the markers: these are any information or representation that labels a site as a sight.” Judd, D. and S. Fainstein. 1999. The Tourist City. New Haven: Yale University Press, p. 4.

49 BVNHC, 1992 Annual Report, p.3.
directional signs on major roads within the Corridor itself. Each of the 46 historic villages within corridor boundaries and 8 sites received BVNHC signs with its the stylized waterwheel logo. In addition, a number of heritage sites received wayside panels, which the Commission calls its “24-hour Rangers.” In addition to producing the wayside signs, the Commission facilitates the provision of expertise by other NPS offices, which sometimes assist organizations with interpretation or rehabilitation projects.

An important aspect of the BVNHC is its “federal consistency clause,” known as “Section 9,” after its place in the enabling legislation. Similar to the Section 106 provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act, under Section 9 federal agencies must consider commission purposes when designing or funding programs and “to the maximum extent practicable” avoid adverse impacts on the Corridor. This provision, along with the priority of influencing regional development, encouraged the Commission to take high profile stands on controversial land use issues. For example, although Section 9 has no real “teeth” except for the ability to delay a project, it was successfully used in 1992 to get a Massachusetts parcel in the Corridor removed from a list of potential sites for a regional airport. Aggressively citing the region’s NHA status, the Commission convinced the Governor to take a well-publicized canoe ride down the Blackstone, after which he declared the site in question “too nice” for an airport.

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50 The nature of the NHC highway signs was the subject of much debate among the staff and commissioners. Those who prevailed argued strenuously that the sign should be brown and white, to resemble those of other government-sponsored tourist attractions, as opposed to a more commercial-oriented one.
52 This clause reflects the early NPS planners’ focus on resource protection and knowledge of similar language in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
The Commission also weighed in on a variety of controversial land use issues, by, for example, objecting to excessive water withdrawal from the river and opposing a proposed landfill in an environmentally sensitive area.\textsuperscript{53} Even though Commissioners have themselves publicly expressed the ambiguity of this power to regulate or review development, they have used the NHC status as the basis for their arguments. According to the Deputy Director, because it is a federal entity, “people think our power goes way beyond what it does.”\textsuperscript{54}

As noted in Chapter 3, the federal government often promotes “model” projects and indeed, in early years NHA advocates in both regions mentioned the fact that they were viewed as a model as often as any other indicator of success, such as preservation or economic development. As discussed above, both regions had grown accustomed to negative publicity about the polluted environment, unemployment, and political scandals; thus, being a model of anything seemed to be in and of itself notable. When representatives did visit from specific communities seeking information about the heritage area program, they were given prominent coverage by the local media. Project promoters and the media often cited national attention as positive spin-offs of a federal designation. Discussing the BVNHC in 1992, an article states that “The efforts of the [Corridor] have often been hailed as a model of civic ingenuity.”\textsuperscript{55} In the words of a tourism official that same year, “we’re finally on the cutting edge of something.”\textsuperscript{56} As the BVNHC was seeking reauthorization in 1996, the fact that it was a national model was frequently used as a

\textsuperscript{53} The landfill was ultimately rejected by the state, amidst claims by the developer that someone “planted” an endangered species of salamander on his property.

\textsuperscript{54} Personal interview, October 16, 1998.


justification for further funding. Similarly, the prestige of being among the "select few" NHAs was viewed as significant to Congressional representatives and heritage area promoters.\textsuperscript{57}

The Commission also acted to direct other public funds from state and federal sources, particularly for environmental cleanup. The Deputy Director indicated that the Army Corps of Engineers and the EPA were both attracted to the region during the study period because of its federal designation. For example, in July 1998, the Blackstone and Woonasquatucket Rivers were designated one of 14 "American Heritage Rivers" by the Environmental Protection Agency, which brought a further package of federal grants and technical assistance.\textsuperscript{58}

Interestingly the BVNHC was the "community representative" chosen to administer the program, as opposed to the local groups or agencies designated in most other American Heritage River projects, suggesting that the Commission had gained credibility as an advocate for the region.\textsuperscript{59}

\textbf{The Nature of the Region and How the Commission Promotes the Regional Construct}

Maintaining and promoting the integrity of the region has been of paramount importance for the Corridor from the start. The first management plan states that "today, the most significant resource of the Blackstone River Valley is its 'wholeness,' the unique survival here of representative elements of entire 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} century production systems. Few places exist where such a concentration of integrated historic, cultural and natural resources has survived and

\textsuperscript{57} A review of the web sites of other NHAs show that most use the designation to stress the uniqueness of their resources. The South Carolina National Heritage Corridor is typical in describing itself as "one of a select number of National Heritage Areas." See \url{www.sc-heritagecorridor.org}. Accessed January 9, 2005.

\textsuperscript{58} The American Heritage Rivers Initiative (AHRI) is similar to the National Heritage Area program in that it emphasizes local "empowerment." without regulation, through a temporary (five year) program. Its stated mission is "helping river communities restore their environment, revitalize their economy, renew their culture and preserve their history." Environmental Protection Agency. N.d. What is the American Heritage Rivers initiative?

\textsuperscript{59} This may also suggest a lack of capacity among other groups or agencies.
can be made accessible by interpretation, preservation and other management strategies.”

However, many observers feared that the sense of interconnection between the river, the many adjacent mill communities and the surrounding rural landscape had been attenuated or lost. As the Commission characterized the situation, the time when these elements formed “a working system had just about passed from living memory.”

The BVNHC’s focus on the Blackstone River recalls the approach of the early regionalists such as Mumford and Geddes, who tended to base regional constructs upon natural features. The concept of the Blackstone Valley is familiar to residents of Worcester and Providence counties, understood roughly as the communities along the banks of the Blackstone River. However, deciding what exactly to include within the BVNHC boundaries proved to be problematic. When the Corridor boundaries were drawn up, they encompassed the Heritage Homecoming communities on the Massachusetts side and the area that environmental planners considered the watershed on the Rhode Island side. Even the definition of watershed was the source of much disagreement; eventually the Corridor included the whole political jurisdiction of any area that included a tributary of the river. Despite the fact that early designation efforts came from small towns and were largely based on the system of mill villages, portions of Worcester and Providence were included in the boundaries of the NHC. Many early proponents argued that these cities had little to do with the river corridor, but were included to attract political support and encompass major population centers. In the early 1990s, additional communities began lobbying for inclusion in the Corridor. After extensive deliberation, the Commission agreed to support the inclusion of some of these towns, provided that additional funds were allocated.

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60 BVNHC, CHLMP, p.vii.
62 Critics pointed out, for example that the river changes its name in Providence.
four communities were formally added in the reauthorization legislation signed in 1996, increasing the boundary areas by 60%.  

Figure 5: The campaign's waterwheel logo

The Blackstone was the first bi-state NHA, and transcending state boundaries to promote a coherent Valley identity was a significant goal of the Commission. For example, the 1993 NPS Corridor brochure was the first document to present both sides of the border together on one map as a unified “Blackstone Valley.” The Commission tried to play a key “behind the scenes” role in encouraging a common vision by both states. For example, highly aware of the symbolic significance, it heavily supported the acquisition of what was considered one of the most significant natural areas in the Valley in order to make a bi-state park; this effort involved working closely with two state environmental agencies and providing extensive technical assistance to a local land trust. The establishment of the Blackstone River Gorge Bi-State Park was seen as a critical step in furthering the BVNHC’s regional vision.

To make the regional corridor concept more accessible, the BVNHC supported a few efforts to create engaging regional personae and pageants. For example, it funded a Tales of the

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63 The additional towns were Burrillville, Glocester and Smithfield in RI and Leicester, MA. In addition, the portion of Worcester, MA that was included was expanded from a small section to the whole city.
Blackstone historical pageant, and popular events loosely based on history, such as the Steamboat Muster in Pawtucket. It also tried to popularize its “brand” to the broader public by developing a Blackstone Valley license plate in Massachusetts.\textsuperscript{64}

As elaborated in Chapter 6, the most important symbol of the campaign was the river and its industrial history.\textsuperscript{65} As the years progressed, river restoration gained increasing prominence in Commission efforts, and it supported efforts to monitor and improve water quality with the goal of making the Blackstone “fishable and swimmable.” Like many of the earliest regional planning efforts, the project sought to “unearth” this former community asset, most notably by opening it up to new recreational uses. In pursuit of this, the Commission funded or co-sponsored a variety of community events such as canoe races, river cruises and river clean-up days.

Corridor-wide identity programs were designed to focus the attention of local stakeholders on a common set of resources and concerns. The BVNHC tries to market LPOs as a set of resources all contributing to an overarching story of the industrial revolution. Individual initiatives are connected through a unifying logo (the stylized water wheel), the signage system, and in Corridor publications like calendars and a walking tour series. The Commission also sponsors numerous “Valley-wide” events and encourages groups to cross-promote their sites and programs. Projects with a “regional” perspective or that involve partnerships are given

\textsuperscript{64} The Blackstone plate is one of three specialty plates that support the Massachusetts Environmental Trust.

\textsuperscript{65} Major interpretive themes identified in early planning studies were: Work; the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution; and the BVNHC itself “as a national model of conscious self-revitalization based on heritage.” BVNHV, CHLMP, p.12.
preference in grant programs. All of these efforts aim to convince organizations of the benefits of working collaboratively.\textsuperscript{66}

II. SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Brief History and Character of the Region

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission (SPHPC) was established in 1988. SPHPC was an outgrowth of the America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), which had been administered by the NPS since 1986. The project area includes 9 counties and nearly 400 municipalities, an area of over 8,000 square miles.\textsuperscript{67}

In the SPHPC enabling legislation, the region is recognized for nationally significant heritage resources related to three types of heavy industry: transportation; iron and steelmaking; and coal mining. Southwestern Pennsylvania was the site of notable achievements in civil engineering that enabled the transport of people and goods westward across the Allegheny Mountains, which run through the center of the region. Successive transportation feats in the region included the construction of: the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal, and its accompanying portage railroad in the 1830s; the Pennsylvania Railroad; and several significant turnpikes and highways.

\textsuperscript{66} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{67} The counties include Fayette, Somerset, Bedford, Fulton, Westmoreland, Indiana, Blair, Cambria and Huntingdon.
The interdependent industries of railroads, coal, and iron and steel that flourished here between about 1850 and 1950 made a strong contribution to America’s development into an industrial superpower. In the 1850s, the Cambria Iron Company was founded in Johnstown and by the 1870s it was the largest and most productive steel maker in the United States. Altoona, the other major population center, had the largest concentration of railroad shops in the nation during its peak in the 1920s. Coal mines and coal towns dominated the economy and landscape of other

parts of the region during the first half of the 20th century, especially in Cambria, Somerset and Indiana Counties.  

The industrial restructuring of the second half of the 20th century had severe repercussions for the region, particularly the urban centers which lost significant numbers of both jobs and residents. In the early 1980s, for example, Johnstown had the highest unemployment rate in the nation, at 25%; the rate for the region as a whole was about 11%. As will be discussed in later chapters, this narrative of “boom to bust” to determined rebirth colors many of the Commission’s later efforts.

**Genesis of the Project and Early Local Efforts**

As far back as the late 1970s Congressman John P. Murtha, together with civic leaders (notably the publisher of the Johnstown *Tribune-Democrat*), began to press for federal assistance to the region for tourism planning, which they viewed as a promising opportunity for economic diversification and development. In contrast to the BVNHC, there was little concern that resources were threatened by growth pressures; the sense of urgency was almost entirely due to the state of the economy. In 1981, a new Superintendent, Randy Cooley, was appointed to oversee the two NPS sites in Murtha’s district: the Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic

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70 One account of the industrial restructuring states, “After World War II, Altoona became a veritable poster child for the woes of one-industry towns. When diesel locomotives replaced steam engines on the nation’s railroads, the need for such extensive rail shops vanished. PRR closed one shop after another, putting thousands of skilled machinists out of work.” [www.explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=677](http://www.explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=677).  
71 SPHPC. 1998. *Art of the Possible: Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission 1988-2000,* p.5. Between 1979 and 1989 the median household income dropped more than 10% (compared to small rise of 0.8% statewide). Between 1980 and 1990 the area’s population shrank by -1.4% (compared to a statewide rise of 0.1%). SPHPC. N.d. *The heritage partnership challenge,* p. 29.
It was soon apparent that Cooley embraced Murtha’s large-scale vision and the two developed a close working relationship.

At this time, the NPS regional office did not support further development of the two existing NPS sites or further community planning initiatives. Nonetheless, Murtha and Johnstown leaders were determined to work with NPS in developing sites for heritage tourism; as such, they accepted that NPS support would “be guided by Superintendent Cooley and supported by the appropriations route, not through the standard National Park Service community support system.”

Inspired by the Natchez Trace Parkway then being developed in Tennessee and Mississippi, Murtha wanted NPS to explore a similar parkway project in his region. While that approach was deemed infeasible, he did secure funds for a more traditional NPS study. This report, completed in 1985, spotlighted opportunities for tourism activity centered around Altoona and Johnstown. One of the proposed alternatives, a broader collective effort by national, state and local interests throughout the region, was endorsed by local leaders and NPS was directed to develop another plan to further this concept.

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72 This NPS site is near the South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club, about 15 miles upriver from Johnstown, whose dam failure had caused the flood.
73 Albright, J. n.d. America’s Industrial Heritage Project: Annotated chronology and guide to sources 1986-2990. Unpublished report. Like the BVNHC, the region had prominent Congressional representatives; by the mid 1990s they had each served 11 terms. In addition to Murtha, a Democrat who chaired the Defense subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee, the region also was home to Representative Bud Shuster of Everett, senior Republican on the House Public Works Committee.
74 The report was entitled Reconnaissance Survey of Western Pennsylvania Road and Sites.
During the initial five months, the name of the project evolved from the "Allegheny Highlands Project" to the Western Pennsylvania Heritage project, to finally, at the suggestion of Congressman Murtha, "America's Industrial Heritage Project." In December 1986 an "Ad Hoc Heritage Preservation Commission" was named to oversee the project and develop an Action Plan to forward the goals of the legislation. Once the Action Plan was completed in 1987, Murtha and other Congressional leaders introduced a bill to establish a permanent Heritage Preservation Commission.

**Early Relationship with the NPS and Congress**

By 1986, AIHP consisted of a complex set of arrangements among different branches within the NPS. The project was based out of Cooley's office, the Allegheny Portage Railroad NHS (ALPO); Cooley, rather than the NPS Regional Office, would act as liaison with Congress and with the local community. NPS' Denver Service Center provided many important services, including research and design services for NPS sites and other partner sites, as well as a full-time project manager onsite at ALPO from 1987-1991. In addition, staff from the Historic American Buildings Survey and Historic Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) division began a five year task of detailed surveying and recording of individual historic resources; this would eventually become the largest HABS/HAER field effort since the WPA era.\(^{75}\) While Johnstown and Altoona had emerged as the "urban anchors," the larger project area also included, among many other attractions, four NPS sites (Cooley's two sites; the Fort Necessity National Battlefield, commemorating the French and Indian War; and the Friendship Hill National Historic Site, the estate of early 19th politician and financier Albert Gallatin).

\(^{75}\) Albright, Annotated Chronology.
Johnstown was emerging as a key focus of attention, and not only because of its severe economic conditions. Community leaders hoped to use the impending centennial of the catastrophic 1889 Johnstown Flood as a way to spur reinvestment. The newly formed Johnstown Flood Centennial Committee sent a representative to the initial AIHP meeting and it became the “major private sector participant” in the AIHP project’s initial years.

Like the Blackstone Valley NHC, organizers in Southwestern Pennsylvania tried to win community support by associating themselves with the “model” revitalization project in Lowell, MA. Representatives from the NPS project made a highly publicized visit to Johnstown in May 1987 and slide shows of Lowell were shown to community leaders in Johnstown and Altoona. AIHP also hired the same firm that produced the Lowell Plan in the 1970s to develop the Johnstown Plan in 1988.

Commission Structure and General Operations

The SPHPC was designated in November 1988 (P.L. 100-698) as a separate agency of the Department of the Interior. The Commission, described as its “parent organization,” would now oversee the AIHP project, which had moved out of the NPS ALPO Office into its own space in Hollidaysburg earlier that year. Cooley had been officially named Executive Director of AIHP earlier in 1988 and all AIHP staff became “Commission staff.”

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76 In 1982, Murtha secured funds for a concept plan study at NPS’ Flood Memorial. As will be discussed later, both this NPS site and the local organization that maintained the Johnstown Flood Museum in downtown Johnstown received substantial federal appropriations throughout the tenure of the AIHP and SPHPC projects, both independently and as specified parts of AIHP/APHPC budgets.

77 Albright, Annotated Chronology.
After a long delay, SPHPC Commissioners were appointed in early 1990. The functions laid out for the Commission in its enabling legislation are as follows: making grants and loans to industrial sites on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places; coordinating efforts of federal, state and local governments as well as the private sector in “furthering historic preservation and compatible economic development;” developing standards for heritage preservation projects consistent with NPS standards; and providing technical assistance to groups seeking funding from the Commission or other sources. In addition, the legislation provided for the designation of the “Southwestern Pennsylvania Industrial Heritage Route” and included an initial list of sites to be linked by the route.

The legislation authorized $3 million for Commission activities over its ten-year term, with a requirement that the funds be matched by non-federal sources. As further discussed in Chapter 5, throughout the life of the project there has been a large discrepancy between the budget requests of the NPS and the allocations by Congress. Between 1988 and 1993, SPHPC received between $8 million and $15 million in federal funds each year. Between 1993 and 1998 the budgets were significantly reduced, but the overall federal funding for the SPHPC over the ten-year period far exceeds that of the Blackstone and any of the other NHAs.

Commission staff size varied from year to year depending on projects, averaging about eight during the study period. However, the Commission also used its federal funds to contract with a

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78 Similarly to the Blackstone, it took over a year for Commissioners to be formally named. The Commission consisted of 21 members, with one representative from each county, one representative each from the State of Pennsylvania’s Historical and Museum Commission and Department of Community affairs; four representatives from the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission; four representatives from Laurel Highlands, Inc., two members appointed by the NPS Director who have experience in historic preservation; and the director of NPS (ex officio) or his delegate.

79 $150,00 was appropriated to the Secretary of the Interior specifically for marking and providing assistance to sites along the route.
large number of NPS employees in other offices to conduct studies and provide services to area sites.

**General Activities**

To a greater extent than the Blackstone project, the SPHPC focused on heritage-based tourism. Its mission statement reads: “Through the conservation and commemoration of [the region’s] sites and stories, the commission will spark economic development in the region.” Overall, the Commission sought to promote a message that would valorize heritage and facilitate regional cooperative action. In the words of one official document, “The key to understanding the AIHP is to view it as a massive coordination effort.”

The Commission’s first annual report divided its efforts into five types: research, planning, design, construction and cooperative agreements. Over the years these activities represented a broad mix of grants, incentives and capital investments. The Commission’s *Comprehensive Management Plan* (CMP), completed in 1992, focused on the development of 13 specific sites, including 4 NPS sites, 1 state owned site and 7 sites administered by private operators or LPOs. Its most significant effort over the first ten years was in two central counties: Blair and Cambria. Major investments were made in the region’s primary urban areas of Johnstown and Altoona, as well as in downtown Windber.

As of 1998, the Commission had given out $1.5 million in grants and loans for renovation of historic properties and had made an additional $1.4 million in loans through its Progress Fund.

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80 Albright, Annotated Chronology.
aimed at heritage-tourism businesses. Overall, by 1998 the Commission had invested $88 million in regional historic sites and attractions.

Unlike the Blackstone Commission, the SPHPC was rarely publicly involved in controversial land use issues. However, it did have a decided environmental focus, at least in part due to the potential for outdoor recreational opportunities to generate tourism. Together, nature and culture were promoted as the region's heritage and basis for potential economic growth.

The Commission operated a broad variety of information programs, including curriculum projects, folklife documentation, and public archaeology; it also published a series of maps and brochures spotlighting area resources.

The Nature of the LPOs in the Region

Compared to the BVNHC plans, SPHPC documents articulated a clearer agenda for participation by LPOs and other associations. The CMP, stressing the “partnership approach” that characterizes most of these efforts, calls for cooperation among the public and private sectors. In addition the CMP urges community residents to “do their part” to improve the economy and attract tourists, by, for example, maintaining historic buildings, opening up churches for public tours, and pushing for historic district legislation. “Private sector organizations,” states the plan, “whether garden clubs, chambers of commerce, economic development interests, or

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83 SPHPC, Art of the possible, p.6.
neighborhood groups, should reorient their respective focuses on the achievement of the overall goals." 84

The Commission also instituted a much more formal public participation process for LPOs. Among the Commissioners were several representatives from LPOs and local organizations were also represented on the four Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs). 85 In addition, many local organizations served on the nine county heritage committees, which provided input into the county heritage maps and recommendations for county-by-county project funding. LPOs were also often invited to participate in, and testify at, a variety of community forums.

The two largest LPOs in the region are headquartered in the two urban areas. Each of these groups entered into several cooperative agreements with NPS, which was instrumental in developing and marketing their sites and significantly increasing the scope of their operations. 86

The Johnstown Area Heritage Association is the most established LPO in the region and the only one with a professional curator; JAHA owns and operates the Johnstown Flood Museum and several other sites. 87 The Johnstown Flood Centennial, with the theme “Triumph of the American Spirit,” consumed much of the energy and attention of the Commission in AIHP’s

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84 SPHPC, CMP, p. 22.
85 TAGS were groups of interested citizens addressing issues such as tourism.
86 The general concept of the SPHPC cooperative agreements is as follows: “The Federal Commission identifies the significant resource sites for interpretation of [its] themes ...[and] provides technical support and planning assistance for project development. The Commission provides some federal funding assistance for capital construction of visitor facilities at identified sites of national significance. The Commission seeks out partners (public or private non-profit organizations, municipalities etc.) who agree to operate and manage the developed sites without long-term public assistance.” Railroaders Memorial Museum, n.d. Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum Project Summary.
87 The organization started as the Johnstown Flood Museum Association but expanded its mission in conjunction with the Centennial projects. Shortly after the study period, in 1999, JAHA opened the Johnstown Discovery Center, focusing on the social and ethnic history of the town.
earliest years.\footnote{An estimated 700,000 visitors from outside the area were attracted to Centennial activities in 1989.} In conjunction with the Centennial, the Commission entered into a cooperative agreement with JAHA to substantially upgrade the modest, financially strapped museum. The Commission also provided funding for the upgrading of other sites related to the flood and, in together with other state and federal partners, sponsored urban revitalization schemes and marketing plans to “enhance the national image of Johnstown.” Later, JAHA entered into other cooperative agreements with NPS to complete other projects, such as folklife documentation.

The second major LPO beneficiary of Commission funds and expertise was the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum. In 1989, the museum signed a cooperative agreement with NPS to develop a $5.8 million visitors center at Horseshoe Curve National Historic Landmark, an engineering marvel that enabled the passage of steam engines across the Allegheny Mountains; the center opened in 1992.\footnote{The SPHPC provided most of this money, with $1.5 million coming from Penn DOT and in-kind and cash contributions from the Museum.} While the Horseshoe Curve center was being developed, the Commission conducted a 10-year management plan for a new museum facility and eventually funded design and construction money for the first phases of building; altogether the Commission’s contribution was $6.4 million to the $20 million dollar expansion, which opened in 1998.\footnote{Railroaders Memorial Museum, Project Summary.}
Table 2. Number of groups by type in survey sample, Southwestern Pennsylvania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary mission of organization</th>
<th>No. of groups</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Museum or tourist site</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical societies that own tourist sites</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical societies that operate others’ sites or rent sites</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical societies without sites</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preservation Advocacy with site</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Specialized interest” group</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic development/tourism marketing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While these two groups have operating budgets of over $1 million, like in the Blackstone Valley, there is a rich variety of much smaller groups, ranging from historical societies to living history villages to specialized groups like the Bedford Covered Bridge Society. Most of these groups interviewed rely heavily on volunteer efforts, even if they do sometimes have a modest staff. As in the case of the Blackstone Valley, half of them have budgets of under $25,000. Grants and cooperative agreements with the smaller LPOs supported a broad range of activities. Historical societies might receive a few thousand dollars for an exhibit or walking tour brochure; an expanding LPO might receive $40,000 for marketing and site development plan.91

How the Commission Promotes National Designation and Significance

Like the BVNHC, the SPHPC argued that national recognition is a way to improve the image of the region and the self-esteem of residents. In contrast to the Blackstone Valley, where many of the jobs had long fled, the memories of being an industry leader were still vivid to many

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91 See, for example, the 1994 Annual Report.
residents of Southwestern Pennsylvania and the repercussions of industrial restructuring were a more recent shock. The AIHP project began when there was a crisis mentality, rather than the longer-term stagnation felt in the Blackstone Valley. In Johnstown, formerly considered the "king of steel," the inferiority complex was especially acute. In the words of one LPO representative, "The Johnstown identity has been under assault for the last 15 years. There is a mythology of periodic natural disasters – and then we rally and come back. Then in the early 1980s, the steel industry fell apart, and we couldn’t really do anything." 

A 1990 planning document laying out the Commission’s vision describes the region at a "crossroads," with the educational and inspirational contributions of the SPHPC showing a clear way forward:

A region that is steeped in rich ethnic and cultural heritage; a region that contributed mightily to the industrial revolution and subsequent economic growth of this county; a region that for more than 100 years was one of the most prosperous regions of the United States; a region that during the 1970s and early 1980s suddenly found itself in chaos, economically depressed, with significant unemployment, and undergoing ridicule as part of this nation’s rust belt – this region is once again fighting back through the tenacity and spirit of its residents and is once again proud of its past and looks forward to using its past to transform itself into one of the most interesting and economically sound regions of the 21st century.

SPHPC had a complicated and evolving relationship with NPS. The “victory against all odds” mentality of the region was often mirrored in the language project organizers use to describe their own initiative. The Commission-sponsored Annotated Chronology is one of many documents that acknowledge inconsistent or lukewarm support by both the regional and

93 Another community leader links the area’s poor self-image to its frequent floods, explaining, “Perhaps it’s because the Good Lord chooses to wash us away every five years.” Personal interview, 2 February 1998.
94 AIHP. Partnerships in parks and preservation. 1990.
Washington NPS offices. From the beginning, Cooley took pains to stress the Commission’s distinction from NPS and contrasted its expansive agenda to the conventional, “inward looking” mission of the Park Service which he felt had inhibited the heritage area movement.

Despite this desire to seem separate from NPS, the project initially made extensive use of agency expertise, especially in its early years. Even though it was established as an independent entity within the Department of Interior, and was not technically under the NPS umbrella, in early years there were up to 55 NPS staff working on the project in some capacity. By some estimates, in some years up to 50% of the Commission’s budget went to the either the four pre-existing National Parks in the region or through contracts to NPS’ Denver Service Center, which provided interpretive and planning services. Early on, the Commission did at times capitalize on the credibility of NPS staff and programs to raise awareness of heritage resources. For example, although it did not have uniformed Rangers on its own staff, the Commission was able to use Rangers from the NPS sites in the region to conduct tours of important sites, notably on the train route between Johnstown and Altoona.

The Commission played a traditional federal role -- providing expertise and a national set of standards -- by inventorying thousands of resources, which provided baseline data for many National Register, National Register Historic Districts and National Historic Landmark

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95 For example, it states that at the project’s early stages “one senior NPS official had described the project as a ‘handful of fog’ that no one wanted to stop but that no one wanted to assist either.”
96 Personal interview, 23 September 1996. In 1987, the AIHP’s Annotated Chronology notes that AIHP would work much faster than the typical NPS project and that their dynamism had begun “to convince the public that this was not just another government effort imposed from Harrisburg or Washington.” Many other references of this nature appear in issues of the Commission’s Prospects newsletter from 1994-1995.
97 Most of these were based in NPS’ Denver Service Center or Harper’s Ferry (WV) Center.
nominations. Recalling the claims that the federal government can increase community concern through education, the Commission enlisted HABS/HAER staff to play a “missionary” role in the community; their professional renderings of over 2,700 industrial resources presented to the community were said to “stir civic pride” and generate support for the overall AIHP project. The SPHPC also operated a Technical Assistance Center, in cooperation with NPS staff, for several years in the early 1990s.

In early 1992, the NPS field office in the AIHP region closed and the Commission assumed sole responsibility for managing the project. NPS continued to serve as a “technical advisor,” providing staff support in areas like resource evaluation and interpretation upon request. In 1994, the Commission stopped using any NPS or DOI logos in its materials, stating that it was time to time to “spotlight itself.” For the rest of the study period, the logo for the Commission’s “Path of Progress” campaign (a stylized letter “P”) became the most obvious Commission symbol, and maps and tour brochures looked more like typical tourist literature than material produced by a government agency. The approximately 600 “P” signs found on many main roads were the greatest physical reminder of the Commission’s presence in the regional landscape.

Figure 7: The Path of Progress logo

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98 The significant increase in all of these listings is summarized in SPHPC, Art of the Possible, p.6.
99 Albright, Annotated Chronology.
National significance was seen as an important justification for the project. Early planning documents (and indeed the authorizing legislation) stress that, to avoid the perception of pork barrel, the focus of the initiative should be nationally significant sites and themes (meaning on or eligible for the National Register).\textsuperscript{100} Interestingly, however, as elaborated in Chapter 5, drawing distinctions between national and local significance soon became somewhat problematic.

SPHPC often stressed that local stories were important in and of themselves and professed wariness of interference by the NPS and its standards.\textsuperscript{101} Still, some sort of federal imprimatur remained desirable. The Commission sought to gain prestige by acting as a maverick and a model for an additional new type of federal designation, a National Heritage Tour Route. (Although it gained this status, extensive lobbying to create a system of National Tour Routes has been unsuccessful and the “Path of Progress” remains the only one).

To an even greater extent than the Blackstone case, project organizers consistently argued that the fact that they were a “national model” legitimated their efforts and justified reauthorization and/or budget increases. Murtha and Cooley frequently asserted that the project was emulated by heritage campaigns across the country, by other federal agencies\textsuperscript{102} and indeed by the NPS itself. A typical statement was that “We’re laying the ground work for a new direction in the National Park Service... a partnership between the Park Service and various state and local organizations.”\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{100} Annotated Chronology.
\textsuperscript{101} For example, in an interview, Cooley stated that a federal commission was an “unnatural act committed on the region” that brought with it fears of government control. Personal interview, 23 September 1996.
While the BVNHC sometimes stood in opposition to other government agencies to protect resources, the Commission rarely exploited the "moral high ground" of its national historic significance and played a limited role in advocacy or land regulation issues. The image of the SPHPC was not that of a "defender" of resources as much as a promoter of them.\textsuperscript{104} Again following the traditional expectation that the federal government provides expertise, it funded a planning position (with a focus on heritage tourism planning) in each of the nine counties for one year.

Despite the lack of support by the NPS, the Commission exploited its federal status by very actively partnering with other government agencies and accessing a broad range of other federal and state funds for areas like environmental remediation and transportation enhancements.\textsuperscript{105} The Commission developed an especially strong relationship with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC).\textsuperscript{106} The PHMC’s Pennsylvania State Heritage Park Program, established in 1990, complemented the efforts of AIHP by focusing on industrial heritage-based tourism development. Three of these state parks fell either entirely or partially within SPHPC boundaries.\textsuperscript{107} The Commission also worked extensively with Penn DOT, the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission, and state and regional development agencies.

\textsuperscript{104} The SPHPC did participate in a variety of general community welfare campaigns, such as black lung outreach program. The lack of growth pressure in this area may well have contributed to this posture.
\textsuperscript{105} Among other sources, in 1994 (the height of the Commission funding), the Annual Report shows the following partnerships and matching funds: $4.8 million in Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act (ISTEA) funds; $18.5 million from the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs; $1 million in Community Development Block Grant funds; and $2.1 million in State Parks capital funds. See SPHPC, 1994 Annual Report, p.28.
\textsuperscript{106} The PHMC is Pennsylvania’s official history agency, and its Executive Director serves as the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).
\textsuperscript{107} The Allegheny Ridge State Heritage Park was designated in 1992, followed by the National Road Heritage Park Corridor and the Lincoln Highway Heritage Park Corridor.
SPHPC was unique among NHAs in declaring it would “opt out” of the heritage area system and affiliation with DOI when its authorization period expired. In 1996, it spun-off a non-profit development arm, the Allegheny Heritage Development Corporation (AHDC), a nonprofit heritage development incubator providing technical assistance and heritage services to businesses and organizations in the region (and elsewhere). The mission of AHDC was to “create sustainable heritage communities.”

Throughout much of its life, the project’s relationship to NPS and the other NHAs has remained ambiguous. From time to time it asserted the value of the connection for example, for instance citing the benefits of the Path of Progress being featured on the Alliance of National Heritage Areas (ANHA) website. Despite the Commission’s previously stated desire to “opt out,” Murtha later supported reauthorization and Congress authorized the Commission to receive up to $3 million per year and in fact, the Commission was appropriated several years of retroactive funding.

The Nature of the Region and How the Commission Promotes the Regional Construct

To a much greater degree than the BVNHC, the “hand of man” is apparent in attempts to define and promote the Southwestern Pennsylvania region. Unlike other heritage areas, authorizing legislation did not give a name to the region, only to the Commission; thus, it has been left to

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109 Personal interview, 23 September 1996.

110 SPHPC. 2001. Westsylvania Connections. ANHA is a membership group comprised of the nationally designated NHAs and other interested parties. Various versions of the project’s name appear on lists of NHAs maintained by NPS and the Alliance for National Heritage Areas.

111 Personal interview, 29 March 2005.
project organizers to formulate the project's identity. Until the designation of the entire state of Tennessee,\textsuperscript{112} SWP was by far the largest heritage area in the country.

Overall, the Commission describes its strategy as an integrated, regional resource based approach to development.\textsuperscript{113} However, like the relationship with NPS, the integrity of the region is presented ambiguously. In its CMP, the Commission does not shy away from stating the challenges of shaping a coherent message in a region where the diversity of cultures "almost defies description."\textsuperscript{114} In another study prepared under the direction of the SPHPC, the author concluded: "Population...location and terrain all suggest that this is not a 'natural region.'"

As described above, although the original focus on the AIHP effort centered on the Allegheny Mountains, the project boundaries quickly expanded to include a nine county area closely corresponding to the political districts of its key supporters.\textsuperscript{116} From the outset, however, the project aggressively tried to advertise the national significance of its ensemble of industrial achievements while at the same time positioning itself as on the cutting edge of a "whole-place"

\textsuperscript{112} This area, called the Tennessee Civil War NHA, was designated in 1996.  
\textsuperscript{113} SPHPC, Turning the Corner, p. 18.  
\textsuperscript{114} SPHPC, CMP, p. 6.  
\textsuperscript{115} Ray, M. 1993. Regional networking within the AIHP service delivery area. Unpublished paper, George Mason University. The persistence of the Commission in describing the weakness of the regional construct in later years is somewhat curious. Perhaps it is justification for the long time it takes to develop regional identity and the need for continued support. In 2001, for example, a publication by the Westsylvania Development Corporation remarked that it was clear that "this was a place with no recognizable regional identity." The article goes on to cite a cultural geographer's assertion that "nowhere within metropolitan North America is there a weaker sense of regional affinity than in the cities of western Pennsylvania and adjoining portions of neighboring states." SPHPC, Westsylvania Connections, p.5.  
\textsuperscript{116} The AIHP and SPHPC boundary included all of Murtha's 12\textsuperscript{th} District and the part of Republican Bud Shuster's 9\textsuperscript{th} District that encompassed railroad resources, along with portions of 3 other congressional districts. Like in the case of the Blackstone Valley, the projects faced several attempts by politicians to extend the boundaries of the project. For example, shortly before the enabling legislation was passed, the project had fought off efforts to add heavily populated Allegheny County and add two Senate-appointed and two House-appointed members of Commission to "add more national interest" to the project. Allegheny County subsequently formed the basis for a new NHA, the Rivers of Steel. Albright, Annotated Chronology.
regional philosophy. Summarizing the more abstract and expansive set of organizing principles for the region, the first words of the CMP are: “It’s called the experience of place.”\footnote{SPHPC, CMP, p.6.} In contrast to the BVNHC’s focus on the river, the SPHPC recommends that its interpretive strategy be “theme driven” rather than object-driven; “the stories are paramount,” the plan reads, “the resources are complementary.”\footnote{Ibid, p. 51.}

The Commission continually worked to solidify what it argued was an emerging sense of regionalism by promoting themes that could unify heritage resources, but it faced some significant challenges. At the outset of the project, a number of regional constructs already existed in some parts of the area, most related somehow to the Allegheny Mountains that run through its center.\footnote{For example, the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Corporation and the Laurel Highlands state tourism promotion agency each have designated seats on the Commission.} Unlike the Blackstone Valley, which consists primarily of small towns sandwiched between two metropolitan areas, the two urban areas of Johnstown and Altoona are, to a large extent, this region’s central focus geographically and conceptually. However, these industrial centers have historically perceived each other as fierce competitors. Moreover, like the Blackstone Valley, although the area was home to important industrial sites large portions of the region remained rural.

As detailed in Chapter 6, the Commission has experimented with a variety of different logos and names for the region, some of them existing simultaneously. In 1994 the Commission dropped the America’s Industrial Heritage Project name on the grounds that it was “too confusing” and introduced two new “brands” that suggest a strong belief in the ability of stories to organize
From the region’s disparate sites, the Commission explained, “a single image begins to emerge: The Allegheny Experience: An American Transformation.” In conjunction with the Allegheny Experience, the Commission created a new tourist route, stating “In a seemingly overwhelming and disparate region, we came forward with a workable themes and a uniting destination: the Path of Progress.” The “Path” is a 500-mile long ring of existing roads winding its way around the perimeter of the region, linking 21 points of historical interest with a coordinated system of signage and wayside exhibits. In contrast to the 47 mile route originally proposed by NPS planners, following the path of the Allegheny Portage Railroad, the Path of Progress covers 200 years of history and seeks to address more universal themes appealing to the “human experience.”

Part of the rationale for this regional circuit was that by developing a regional circuit, smaller community-based sites would get “their share” of visitors and the larger and more popular sites would avoid over-commercialization. Tourist rack cards were produced for all sites on the Path with the unifying Commission logo and LPOs were given incentives to use “Proud to be Part of the Path of Progress” phrase prominently on their own publicity.

The Commission also funded County Heritage Sub-loops for each of the nine counties, highlighting many smaller sites and recreational opportunities. Although there was no additional

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121 SPHPC. 1994. Path of progress ready for summer fun. Prospects, Vol. 2, no.3, June 1994. As described in Commission literature, this narrative is a microcosm of two centuries of American history: “the experience of the people who live in the Allegheny Mountains and their foothills and adjacent plains is, collectively, the story of the transformation from rural agrarian society through the Industrial Age and into the modern era.” This language is included in each of nine County Heritage Guides.
123 It is the “Path” that was designated the first National Heritage Tour Route.
signage installed, a map was produced in the same style as the Path map with information about up to 37 sites. The belief that these linear constructs “erase boundaries” is also evident in the SPHPC’s decided stress on trails projects and its heavy support and promotion of the State Heritage Park Corridors.

Over the next few years, in an attempt to present heritage in an engaging and accessible fashion, the Commission introduced two of its own inventions to provide unifying narratives to the public. The first was a mythical figure called the "Allegheny Traveler," whose regional adventures were created by a marketing firm hired by the SPHPC. Billed as the region’s “storyteller,” the Traveler was depicted in a mass-produced comic book and a 40-foot balloon that appeared in various festivals and events throughout the region. At the end of the study period, the Commission had begun to promote the concept of “Westsylvania,” a long-forgotten construct from the colonial period and began publishing a regional magazine by that name.124

124 According to the Commission, the region’s settlers petitioned to create a 14th colony called Westsylvania in 1776, but the effort did not get far due to the more pressing issues of declaring independence from England. See www.westsylvania.org.
Figure 8: The SPHPC produced 500,000 of these The Allegheny Traveler comic books.

Following up on the Commission’s prior PathFinder newsletter, Westsylvania magazine tries to promote regionalism by including stories from “Along the Path.” In addition to local heritage sites, Westsylvania includes stories about rails to trails projects, local entrepreneurs and others involved in regional heritage promotion or preservation.

Aided by its substantial federal funding, the Commission also tried to improve the regional tourist infrastructure by supporting state tourist efforts, marketing plans and sponsoring a number of large marketing and economic impact studies of tourist sites in the region. Reminiscent of the program run by the NPS and other historic areas, Passport ticketing program was introduced in the central part of the region (within the Allegheny Ridge State Heritage Park) in 1996. The Passport allowed entrance to multiple sites that met certain standards of “visitor readiness.”
In addition to these regional marketing efforts, the Commission designed networking events for groups along the Path. For example, in 1996 it held its first Discovery Fair to build awareness of regional attractions to residents and among the groups themselves; that year 70 sites attended.

Using language very similar to that of the Blackstone organizers, the Commission tried to be a “keeper of the regional perspective,” “floating over” and guiding independent local efforts until the regional construct had firmly taken hold. For example, for many of its grant and loan programs, it stated that it would give preference to applications that promoted regionalism.

Despite the very significant difference in budgets, the Blackstone Valley National Heritage Corridor and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Preservation Commission pursued many similar strategies. Both tried to improve the image of their region by stressing its national significance and further bolster their credibility by positioning themselves as national model. However, without nearly as many resources, the BVNHC exploited its association with a prestigious central authority, NPS, to try to communicate the idea that the region was special and must be protected. In contrast, after the initial years of the project, the SPHPC positioned itself an innovative form of federal partnership, one that represented economic opportunity.

As elaborated in Chapter 6, with respect to regional consciousness, both instituted region wide identity programs and sought to promote partnerships. The BVNHC approach was reminiscent of early regionalists, who sought to “unearth” natural assets and the community connections to them. The SPHPC in contrast promoted a more abstract notion of “place” and demonstrated a determined belief in the power of stories to unite stakeholders. As will be discussed in the

125 Interview, 23 September 1996.
following chapters, these differences could play a key role in influencing how LPOs responded to the campaigns.
CHAPTER FIVE:
THE IMPACT OF NATIONAL DESIGNATION ON
LOCAL PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

In its recent publication “What is a Heritage Area,” the NPS elaborates a number of ways in which communities can gain from the national designation. Recalling the ideas laid out in Chapter 3, many of these advantages are highly symbolic, related to the “educational and inspirational opportunities” afforded by the designation and the enhancement of community pride. Association with the NPS and its familiar arrowhead symbol as a “branding strategy” is also described as a significant benefit. Throughout the discussion is repeated reference to the fact that the mission of the agency is protecting “nationally important” resources, implying that NHAs will gain a measure of credibility and prestige from the designation. Although it stresses that the financial and technical assistance it can offer is limited the NPS also describes the way that, through NHAs, the agency can provide expertise and assist in leveraging other government resources.

One hypothesis tested by this dissertation is that the valorization of local resources with a national designation will benefit the organized preservation movement. What has been the

impact of NHA on LPOs in these two project areas? Despite the great differences in scale, some of the approaches the two cases used to promote the idea of national significance are quite similar and in many respects LPOs interviewed had similar responses. However, although the NPS played a large role in both efforts initially, the two NHAs took very different paths in how they eventually related to this prestigious centralized institution and in how they employed political symbolism to represent their mission. These differences had a great influence on how each project was viewed by the public and by LPOs specifically. These findings are of critical concern due to an ongoing debate about the extent to which new NHAs should be associated with the NPS and its iconography.

II. BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Attitudes about Government in General

As noted in Chapter 3, a common theory in preservation is that citizens take cues about the value of their resources from government labels. Interestingly, LPOs in each NHA region reported that their community perceptions were already strongly related to their attitudes about government and governance. As I argue below, these attitudes seemed to influence their receptivity to the NHA designation and project.

In the Blackstone Valley, the identity of many towns had been closely tied to the fate of the predominant industry. Prior to deindustrialization, private firms had assumed many of the roles of the local government and provided residents with a sense of purpose and identity. The Valley, according to one resident, historically functioned as a “company town extended to 20 towns.”

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2 She added, “the company did everything, providing churches, ball fields and cemeteries.” Personal interview 19 March 1997.
Perhaps in part because of this legacy, many LPOs reported widespread public distaste for state and/or local government. State government was frequently described as “far away,” or “not paying attention.” According to some groups, communities felt betrayed by successive waves of industrial flight and deeply resented that State Houses had done nothing to “fix” the situation. NPS staff and LPOs reported that “bad blood between the state and local communities” had created an environment of suspicion and mistrust.

The impression of local government in the Valley was usually even worse; local leaders were often described as of poor quality and parochial. Rhode Island’s politicians had a longstanding reputation for being corrupt, and in the years immediately prior to the NHA designation public disgust was extremely high when a series of political scandals culminated in the arrest of one the Valley’s mayors. According to LPOs, the scandals, followed by a highly publicized water quality crisis, led to a tangible sense of shame about the self-interest and incompetence of local politicians in the Rhode Island section of the Valley.  

The Massachusetts portion of the Valley was not plagued by the same type of scandals, but LPOs often complained about the lack of qualified town administrators and planners and the limited vision of local Selectmen. Many individuals and LPOs were greatly concerned with impending growth and the local governments’ incapacity to respond proactively to protect community character; a typical comment was that local representatives had their “heads in the

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3 Residents had been ordered to boil their tap water or buy bottled water.
4 A typical comment was that of one LPO board member, who stated, “not one Selectman had read the town’s master plan.” Interview 30 April 1997.
sand.” The lack of professionalism that characterized many small New England governments (and the resistance to centralized planning) was seen as dangerously outdated.

Much of the rationale for federal designation in each region was colored by the sentiment that it was “our turn” to be recognized. Discussing the (Rhode Island) Blackstone Valley Tourism Council (which worked closely with the Commission), an editorial entitled “Proud of ourselves again” explained, “Propelling the council’s hard work is its unshakable certainty that folks in this corner of Rhode Island have just as much right as Newporters to feel proud of their history, waterways and landscape.”

Associations with the Federal Government and with the NPS

Overall, federal involvement in the Blackstone region seemed to be warmly welcomed and nobody interviewed recalled any opposition to the federal commission. In addition to the involvement of a very popular agency, the heritage area designation brought with it the continued attention of its Congressional sponsors. Congressional representatives included two Kennedys (one on each side of the border) and the senior Senator John H. Chafee of Rhode Island, and association with these powerful individuals by many accounts lent prestige to BVNHC efforts. The Commission’s Deputy Director explained that “eight Congressmen fight for the microphone every time we have an event.” One project manager attested that the presence of these VIPs at sites or events “suddenly makes everyone agree on their significance.”

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7 Personal interview, 16 October 1998.
8 Personal interview, 5 October 1998.
The Corridor’s major site, Slater Mill, gained a great deal of visibility as the backdrop for speeches by prominent politicians.

Interestingly, several LPOs reported that the presence of an NPS office made “the feds” seem more responsive than their own local or state government. This strategy, described by a BVNHC staff member as “the touchy-feely live in the community approach,” represented a departure from the typical practice whereby communities are served by regional offices. The Commission’s Deputy Director described his situation as “I’m federal, but I’m acting like local.” This base in the Valley enabled NHC staff to attend many meetings on local issues and, according to many LPOs, their presence could greatly enhance the prestige of the meeting.

As mentioned above, the BVNHC is the heritage area most closely associated with the NPS and the agency seemed particularly well positioned to represent government assistance in the Valley, given its clean and competent image. One of the most visible and influential aspects of the federal commission to the LPOs and general public was the staff contingent of uniformed Park Rangers, referred to as “image enhancers” by BVNHC personnel. The authority and stature of the Rangers in their “Smoky the Bear hats” made a significant impact on those interviewed.

The participation of Rangers at special events and community tours was the benefit of national designation most commonly cited by LPOs. Park Rangers were used as a selling point when describing local events and tours and were often featured prominently in media coverage of the

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9 The significance of the office seems borne out by the political pressure to relocate the Commission office from its original location in Uxbridge, MA (home of the influential state representative who championed the project) to Woonsocket halfway through the original ten year authorization period, to “spread the wealth” throughout the region and give each state “its share.”

10 Personal interview, 16 October 1998.
broad-based “heritage” events endorsed by the BVNHC. The flexibility of the NHA designation allowed the NPS to associate itself with a broad range of community events and the Rangers provided the “emotional connection” to the Park Service that NHAs aimed to provide. A typical article describing events “planned cooperatively with the Commission,” where Rangers were likely to appear, listed a potpourri of activities including antique shows, picnics, a bluegrass music concert, a smithery demonstration, a riverboat tour and a strawberry social.\(^\text{11}\)

Along with the Rangers, the traditional National Parks were a powerful frame of reference for most interviewees. Many groups, and many media accounts, enthusiastically boasted that the region had Rangers “just like Yellowstone..., just like the Statue of Liberty.”\(^\text{12}\) When a valuable piece of land was threatened, community members rallied to save it by describing it as “our Grand Canyon.”\(^\text{13}\) In some ways, thinking of themselves relative to the iconic National Parks made Blackstone LPOs slightly defensive about their own significance. A number of local groups compared their resources to other more famous National Parks, explaining, “Well of course we have no Canyon De Chelly” or “we’re no Yellowstone.” Nonetheless, this demonstrated that LPOs clearly respected the NPS as an institution that connoted quality.

**The Power of National Recognition**

As discussed in Chapter 3, NHA organizers argue that national publicity and the opportunity to serve as national model bring important benefits to local communities. In general, although outside approval is highly prized by the media, members of Congress and project management, the prestige associated with the heritage area program was usually not very compelling to LPOs.

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Although groups enjoyed the occasional opportunity to be showcased, the idea of participating in a larger project viewed as a national model did not seem to have much resonance, with the exception of one or two of the larger museums that felt that they might benefit from increased tourism. As described below, this lack of interest is probably exacerbated by widespread confusion reported by LPOs about what the “heritage corridor” designation actually meant.

In the Blackstone Valley, although the concept of a National Park was very appealing, the distinction between a National Park and an NHA was not clearly understood and the NHA “brand” was seen as somewhat unwieldy. Despite the pains of the NPS headquarters to try to manage tourist expectations by stressing the distinction, the (Massachusetts) Blackstone River Valley Chamber of Commerce (BVCC) states in its promotional material: “In the Blackstone Valley, you don’t have to travel far to go to a national park...you’re in one.”14 The instructional material for tour guides at one site featured on the BVNHC map prompts docents, “do you know you live in a National Park?” and suggests that those who might stumble over the lengthy name “think of it in two parts... Blackstone River Valley...National Heritage Corridor.”15 Indeed, Senator Chafee himself reportedly had to compose a jingle as a mnemonic device to recall the Corridor’s full name while speaking at public events.16

Beyond these two examples, it was surprisingly rare for LPOs to mention the BVNHC in their own publicity. Although they were generally supportive of the campaign, LPOs had not given much thought to how they might capitalize on the designation to gain support for or strengthen

15 Chestnut Hill Meeting House docent brochure, March 1998.
16 This was noted with irony by the Executive Director of the BVNHC at a ceremony formally changing the name of the project to the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in 1999, posthumously honoring one of the program’s main advocates in Congress.
their own organizations. While they often felt that general community awareness of heritage might have increased, nearly all of the LPOs reported that attendance and membership figures were static and that they were having difficulty maintaining an enthusiastic volunteer base. Nonetheless, groups rarely sought to raise their own profile by associating themselves with the BVNHC by, for example, mentioning it in their own publicity or using its slogans. Even the Corridor’s flagship site, Slater Mill, did not promote the corridor concept or the designation in its own interpretive materials. A representative from a nonprofit concerned with revitalization stated that although their marketing studies suggested that businesses liked the “look” of historic buildings, she didn’t feel that the NHA status would have an impact on attracting new businesses (nor did they use the Corridor in their own marketing efforts). Organizations typically saw themselves as supporting the BVNHC efforts rather than the other way around; “We try to help them all we can,” was how one historical society characterized it.

Some LPOs felt that the ambiguity of the designation – and its connection to LPOs -- prevented them from using it to increase their local base of support. A typical remark is that of a director of a local civic group, who said that the designation had not significantly helped their efforts since it was a “complicated concept” for the general public. Interestingly, although she was grateful for the assistance and exposure provided by the NPS Rangers, one major site director felt that the association of her site with the federal government confused the general public and hurt fundraising; “People think we’re already ‘taken care of,’” she said, adding that to the public their name “already sounded like a federal site.”

17 Interview, 7 October 1998.
18 Interview, 14 October 1998.
19 Interview, 8 October 1998.
20 Interview, 8 October 1998.
BVNHC promoters argued that pride was a significant outcome of the designation, as well as justification for additional federal investment. Did local organizations notice (and benefit from) any positive changes in community esteem? LPO representatives made it clear that they themselves had long been proud of their heritage and that it was this pride that drove many of their grassroots efforts. As elaborated in Chapter 6, each group had a distinct and well-articulated rationale for why they should feel proud of their individual communities. The impact of poor community image was felt most by those LPOs whose mission included tourism; “residents have a hard time imagining why anyone would want to come here,” according to a tourism council official.

About half of the Blackstone groups felt that the designation had helped raise local public awareness and pride. The President of the regional (within MA) Heritage Homecoming group stated, “people no longer grow up saying the Valley is ‘crummy,’” like he did as a child. This more positive attitude has lent credence to the LPO’s efforts, which consisted largely of organizing a regional heritage festival each fall. However, despite increased awareness and increased attendance at the events they promote, he acknowledged that membership and energy in his own group had decreased significantly since the initial burst of enthusiasm around the time of NHA designation. Almost without exception, both community-focused and tourist oriented LPOs reported that relatively low levels of local awareness and support threatened the health of

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21 For example, the fact that the Corridor was a “source of tremendous civic pride” was one of the main arguments for renewed funding in FY 1993 by Rhode Island senators. Pitch made for $2.7 million in corridor funds. The Call. May 16, 1992, p.4.
22 Mandeville, Hidden treasure.
23 Personal interview, 7 October 1998.
their organization and that these issues were a top priority. As the director of one local museum noted, “Proud doesn’t get them in the door.”

In fact, the great majority of visitors to the NHA attractions, like most tourist sites, were from outside the area. While attracting national attention and developing local consciousness need not be mutually exclusive, various stakeholders prioritized them quite differently. The director of the most established advocacy group, for example, dismissed the national designation as a tourist strategy, explaining that gaining national stature was tangential to their mission of preserving local resources. As elaborated in Chapter 6, other LPOs, even those who operated sites, often did not see a compelling link between tourism and economic development and their own missions as local institutions.

One way the Commission tried to convey national significance was through its signage. About half of the LPOs thought that the highway and directional signs had helped increase public awareness, though only a few felt that their site benefited directly. Occasionally, the signs generated controversy. In one Massachusetts town, Commission signs were criticized for being out of scale for the “quaint New England” look they were trying to promote. Playing off the fact that the town’s name meant “place of many rocks,” locals complained that the village common should be renamed “place of many signs.” Perhaps anticipating this type of reaction, the

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24 Personal interview, 8 October 1998.
25 The signs had been installed relatively recently and number of LPOs, as well as the Commission, complained of the time it took to get through the bureaucratic process (five years for the highway signs and one year for the waysides). Many noted the fact that they were going up as a tangible sign of progress just as the Commission was pushing for reauthorization.
26 Personal interview, 30 April 1997.
BVNHC Director had explained to the press, "[T]he last thing we'd like to do is pollute the Valley with bad signs."  

Slater Mill was the first nonprofit organization to receive a wayside sign and the group's director called it an indispensable benefit. "The minute they were put up, people started coming by and reading them," she said. The ability to convey information outdoors was critical for a site that, like the majority of Valley sites, was not open every day. However, this was also one of the very few cases cited in which there were some turf battles between an LPO and the Commission over institutional identity. According to another Slater Mill representative, although the professional staff was not particularly bothered, the volunteer board of this long-standing LPO felt threatened by the federal involvement in the site, insisting on more prominence for their organization on the NPS-provided wayside exhibit. Further, despite the benefits of having Rangers frequently giving tours, some objected to them having keys to the mill and, worried about perceptions about exactly who was responsible for the site, designed their own uniform to distinguish themselves from the Rangers.

Impact of the Designation on LPO-Government Relations:

Designation as a Sign of Significance and a Way to Publicize Threats

The BVNHC used its federal label, along with powerful symbolic associations of the NPS, to try to encourage both the local population and outsiders to view the Valley as a distinctive place.

Another component of the "place marketing" strategy was promoting the designation as an

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28 Personal interview, 8 October 1998.
29 Personal interview, 10 December 2000.
impartial “seal of approval” from national authorities. This approach worked especially well in influencing other government agencies, which in turn could help LPOs.

As explained in Chapter 4, the Commission’s “Section 9” authority allowed it to play a role in what Edelman calls “the ritualization of conflict,” which shapes the “myth of symbiotic social order in which the weak are protected.”\(^{30}\) Although its power in the airport siting case was largely symbolic, the victory gave the NHC designation some credibility in the community and positioned the Commission as something of a crusader. Edelman notes that the form of political action is often more critical than the substance of the rhetoric used, and this seems borne out by some of the Blackstone Commission’s successes in exploiting its “moral” authority, despite the ambiguity of the designation. Community members consistently mentioned the Governor’s canoe ride as a public relations coup, which focused attention on the federally endorsed value of the river. At the dedication of the bi-state park, attended by Senators and Governors from each state, the BVNHC Executive Director asserted that this dramatic site represented a “good story about good government.”\(^{31}\) Having an ally with the moral authority of a federal commission was of great benefit to those local groups who were interested in influencing preservation policy but who felt too small to make much of a difference.

Indeed, the heritage area designation seems to be most effective in influencing other government entities; in the words of one group representative, “bureaucracy loves bureaucracy.”\(^{32}\) The experience of these LPOs seems to bear out the claim that a national “sign of approval” can confer practical and symbolic advantages. About one third of groups mentioned that the

\(^{31}\) Personal interview, 5 October 1998.
\(^{32}\) Personal interview, 26 January 1998.
designation’s “cachet” helped them in some way in their dealings with other government entities. First, a number of groups had asked the NHC office for letters of support, feeling that the NPS letterhead would make their grant requests to public agencies more competitive; indeed, Commission-supported grant applications to the Massachusetts Historical Commission (often prepared with assistance from NHC staff) had had a 100% success rate. Representatives of both state’s State Historic Preservation Offices confirmed that the federal designation had caused them to view the Blackstone Valley more strategically as a region; in Massachusetts, for example, the valley was targeted for survey and planning grants. Other LPOs explained that the Commission had also educated them about other public funding sources and encouraged them to apply.

A federal seal of approval is said to connote a certain level of quality. Ironically, despite the implication of selectivity, the Deputy Director of the NHC explained that the Commission’s grants come with fewer “strings” than state grants. Indeed, several LPOs in the region attested that they felt the NHC was more “efficient” than the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which they felt imposed too many rules in conjunction with its grants. However, LPOs felt that receiving a Commission grant was an important opportunity to attract additional funds. A typical story is that of the E.N. Jenckes Store in Douglas, MA. The Corridor provided the local historical society with matching funds to develop a preservation plan and pay for initial preservation work by NPS regional office staff. The full restoration (which, by the LPO’s choice, was done by the NPS interpretive office in conjunction with local contractors) was then made possible by large grants from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.34

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33 Personal interview, 16 October 1998.
While state governments (who rely heavily on federal money) generally seemed receptive to cooperating with the BVNHC, the federal designation had much less direct effect on local governments. In the Blackstone Valley, citizens indicated a markedly mixed and inconsistent degree of local support, which seemed almost entirely determined by the politicians in office. Among the complaints of LPOs were that their local officials were suspicious of the federal commission; resentful if they were not chosen to serve as one of the handful of local representatives on the commission; and generally did not feel that they would gain much personally by efforts to improve the region. One group’s president expressed it this way, “If we had a mayor who capitalized on it, it might make a difference.”35 The relative lack of influence on local government was very unfortunate, since interviews revealed that town support, however small, was often a very significant contributor to the health of LPOs. In some cases, local government had assisted groups in modest but critical ways such as offering office space, publicity and initiating cooperative projects. In contrast, in other cases, LPOs reported that the hostility of local officials to their cause had severely affected their operations and their public standing.

The Commission’s Section 9 authority gave it a certain moral standing when dealing with other public agencies. However, like all NHAs, it had to walk a fine line between seeming powerful and not seeming too threatening to local sovereignty or private property rights.36 Not surprisingly, many interviews revealed tensions about the extent to which the federal government

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35 Personal Interview, 19 October 1998.
36 Undoubtedly contributing to the NPS’ popularity is the fact that in contrast to state agencies, it does not regulate and is barred from even owning property in the region. Despite this, when the Corridor was reauthorized, concerns by “property rights” advocates resulted in a provision enabling individual property owners to “opt out” of the Corridor,
could or should get involved in local preservation policies. Representatives from activist groups in the Corridor tended to be disappointed by the lack of symbolic support the Commission could offer them during tough local political fights. In two of these cases, losing a very public preservation battle resulted in a serious loss of credibility and stature for the groups involved. At times, advocates felt that the label was “not strong enough” to influence other key stakeholders. Both LPOs and the Commission itself noted that its limited powers and influence could not, for example, prevent a donut shop from locating on one of Massachusetts’ historic town commons, prominently featured in an NHC brochure. Despite a concerted public awareness effort, including Ranger walks, wayside exhibits, high profile Commission meetings and Commission-funded charrettes, a local preservation ordinance in Slatersville, RI was overwhelmingly defeated in the early 1990s. More than ten years after the NHA designation, no new local historic districts had been established and in fact, one Rhode Island district had actually been “de-listed” due to property owner objections.\(^\text{37}\) While these setbacks for preservationists can certainly not be attributed to the NHC, they underscored the fact that the Commission had a long way to go in promoting stewardship at a local government level.

III. SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Attitudes about Government in General

As in the Blackstone case, community attitudes about national designation in Southwestern Pennsylvania were colored by regional preconceptions about what to expect from government.

\(^{37}\) Since the study period, several towns have adopted a zoning overlay district to protect rural character around a major highway interchange. See McCarthy, Designation.
The “company town” mentality that lingered in much of the Blackstone Valley was also very apparent in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Echoing sentiments heard in the region’s mining and railroad towns, a local preservation advocate conveyed the sense of shock residents experienced with the decline of the steel industry: “Your birthright was to work in a steel mill and all of a sudden it wasn’t there. The whole way of life was in disrepute.”

Unlike many of the groups in the Blackstone Valley, who complained about a distant “state house,” LPOs in Southwestern Pennsylvania often spoke highly of state agencies, singling out the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) and the Governor as supporters of their cause and occasionally praising the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation or their State Representative. With a few notable exceptions, discussed below, groups also gave generally positive reviews to local governments despite their acknowledgement of the often-limited capacity of small town administrations. Overall, organizational representatives did not convey the sense that they stood in opposition to, or had to overcome the failures of, state or local government.

However, if there is one thing that many of these communities, and the two regions, shared it was the defensive posture that in their general dealings with government they had collectively not “gotten their due” and had been passed over for opportunities enjoyed by other parts of the state. In the SPHPC region, residents also often drew distinctions between themselves and other

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38 Personal interview, 26 September 1996.
39 The Governor at that time was Thomas Ridge.
40 Interestingly, these attitudes seem to reflect historical relationships between government and preservationists. Early New England preservation groups often formed in opposition to government actions to due to its perceived inability to act, while in the Mid-Atlantic States, a more cooperative relationship had been established since the 19th century. Hosmer, Presence of the Past.
parts of their own county. In the town of Indiana, PA, many residents felt that "their corner" of the county was "left behind" by the state's unwillingness to widen key roads that communities felt were critical to economic development and tourism efforts. In Cambria County, residents of the northern part of the county felt overshadowed by attention paid to Johnstown. The predominant sentiment expressed in the media and by LPOs was not that they needed a "savior" (like the BVNHC), but that they had gotten a bad deal and needed their "fair share."

Associations with the Federal Government and the NPS

The notion that the region was "entitled" to official recognition by the federal government was even more palpable in Southwestern Pennsylvania, probably because of the severity of the most recent economic crisis. Geographic distribution and economic factors, as opposed to neutral professional analysis, were clearly considered to be powerful justifications for gaining national historic status. This type of rhetoric was frequently used by the project's main sponsor, Murtha, who explained, "I've been going head-to-head with my cohorts out West...[who have] been getting [money] for their parks for years," adding, "It's our turn now."41 Local press asserted that the "languishing" region "has been overlooked too long by Uncle Sam and we're counting on Murtha to see that his long-awaited...gifts don't stop."42

The Southwestern Pennsylvania project differed significantly from the BVNHC project in its deviation from the "nationally authoritative institutional system," the NPS. As outlined in Chapter 4, the SPHPC was not supported by the NPS Regional Office, and perhaps out of necessity the project consistently positioned itself as a maverick agency, more responsive and

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dynamic than a traditional National Park. The Commission placed no particular public emphasis on the four NPS sites within the region, despite the fact that these parks absorbed a substantial portion of the project’s budget. Although the Commission did not employ Rangers as staff, it did occasionally use Rangers from some of the area’s NPS sites to participate in important local events such as train rides between Johnstown and Altoona. However, in such a large region the public relations impact of a Ranger tour was obviously much more limited. Very few groups mentioned Rangers or anything related to National Parks when asked about the benefits of federal designation. Consequently, while the public image, however hazy, of the BVNHC was mostly of Rangers and the National Park system, in Southwestern Pennsylvania the federal association was predominantly that of the area’s Congressional representatives. As described below, the prestige of a strong tie to Congress became somewhat tainted with widely publicized accusations of “park barrel” and, indeed, its perceived opposition to the way that the NPS should operate.

Although the primary reason for the intense scrutiny was most likely the sheer magnitude of the SPHPC budget, the project’s credibility also suffered because of the historically unresolved confusion and ambivalence about the federal government’s role in supporting local resources.43 In 1994, a segment of the television show Inside Edition entitled “National Park – or Pork” contrasted the project to Yosemite National Park and Grant’s Tomb. One of the aims of the program, according to its producer, was to question “whether local heritage sites should be part

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43 Probably contributing to this attitude was the fact that during much of the study period, the federal government in general received a lot of bad publicity. In addition to pork barrel spending, controversies about large federal budget deficits, the proposed presidential line-item veto, and a federal government shutdown contributed to public skepticism about Congress and the White House.
of the National Park Service." The Director of the Railroaders Memorial Museum in Altoona, a major recipient of AIHP/SPHPC funding prominently featured in the segment, responded in the press that the story of the railroad workers that built the transportation network that crossed the country was at least as important as Grant. Striking a more conciliatory tone about national standards, Cooley asserted that the story of the transportation, coal, iron and steel industries had national significance, and for that reason, the project could not be called "pork."

The most highly publicized criticism came as a result of a 1993 General Accounting Office (GAO) audit of the project, requested by Rep. Bruce Vento, Chair of the National Parks Subcommittee. The GAO report inspired a number of detractors to seize upon the question of whether the project had been "properly authorized." The report stressed that although only a total of $3 million had been authorized in the project’s initial 1988 legislation, $63 million had been appropriated through 1992; these appropriations were added in "closed door" meetings of the Appropriations Committee, upon which Rep. Murtha sat as a powerful senior member, bypassing deliberations by Rep. Vento’s National Parks subcommittee. Vento was widely quoted as saying the project was "careening out of control."

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45 SPHPC had been targeted before and the project was subject to several additional waves of critiques over the years. In 1992, its $380,000 for Commission operations was one of a handful of Pennsylvania projects mentioned in an unsuccessful "Porkbuster" bill. In March 1993, AIHP was one of 66 items in the "Pork Book," a report published annually by Citizens Against Government Waste. At times the project was misrepresented or sensationalized, as in a March 1993 NBC news segment reported that AIHP was using federal funds to acquire an entire historic district in Hollidaysburg, PA for $9 million. Again in 1995, despite a drastically reduced budget of $3.6 million, SPHPC (and Rep. Murtha) was cited as an egregious example of "pork" by the Citizens against Government Waste. In 1997, the $760,000 appropriation for the SPHPC was one of four projects cited in the summary of a Heritage Foundation as "parochial" and unworthy of federal funding. See Freeman, G. 1997. Memo to the President #6: Candidates for a Line-Item Veto in the Interior and Related Agency Appropriations Bill. The Heritage Foundation. October 28, 1997.
Interestingly, the harshest criticism came from those contrasting the project to the perceived integrity of the NPS. Although press coverage and public debate did not always reflect a sophisticated understanding of the budgetary process, it implied a respect for the agency’s objectivity and procedures. The ambiguity of the Commission’s association with the NPS was turned against the project by watchdog groups, who asserted the campaign drained badly needed resources from revered natural sites like Yosemite and Yellowstone. Reporters frequently cited the fact that AIHP projects did not appear on the NPS’ “priority list;” one critic stated, “Almost all of the money being blown on the project would not have been spent if it had been a typical part of the U.S. Park Service.”

Many of the very qualities put forward by the Commission as innovative and positive, such as local pride, community choice and economic development (which had long influenced U.S. preservation policy as a whole) were presented as almost an affront to the NPS. The projects’ emphasis on developing the sites most conducive to tourism was also derided. The Pittsburgh Post-Gazette editorialized that “the likelihood that the heritage designation will contribute to economic development of an area, if a consideration at all, should only be a secondary one.” “Nor,” the paper added, “should it be contingent on the energy level and enthusiasm of its local boosters.”

Unlike the BVNHC, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission did not position itself as a crusader for the protection of resources, but rather as an economic development strategy. While

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47 Pork or preservation? 1993. Post-Gazette. July 18, 1993, p. D2. The Pittsburgh area had strongly pushed to be included in the original AIHP project and later successfully established its own Rivers of Steel NHA.
very exciting for many, this strategy also attracted a fair amount of cynicism and unease. The skepticism was due in part to a general misunderstanding about the federal government’s interest in local resources, as well as a general lack of appreciation for vernacular industrial resources.\footnote{\textit{For example, the great majority of properties listed on the National Register are of local significance. Fowler, The federal preservation program.}} Describing an AIHP grant a grassroots group received to prepare a National Register nomination, a columnist in the local paper questioned, “Are vacant storefronts historical landmarks?”\footnote{\textit{It was Ollie, not an earthquake, that shook capital. 1993. Tribune-Democrat, April 18, 1993.}} Another writer dismissed the notion of “creat[ing] tourist attractions out of old houses; polluted, abandoned buildings; and defunct coal mines, mills, railroad tunnels and iron furnaces.”\footnote{\textit{Stock, Oink.}}

The groups most closely tied to the SPHPC project, which had benefited greatly from major capital projects and technical assistance, suffered from the waves of bad publicity. Interestingly, some of the groups felt tainted by projects in other towns that they did feel were insignificant; they felt “guilty by association.” “After a while you feel you should be embarrassed for every federal dollar you got,” stated one activist.\footnote{\textit{Personal interview, 26 September 1996.}} One LPO representative explained that the local enthusiasm and good will they had built up in the community had been greatly eroded by the media coverage; now, he explained, “you have to be careful who you say heritage tourism to or you will get laughed at.”\footnote{\textit{Personal interview, 2 February 1998.}} Other smaller groups were not affected so directly, but all were familiar with the controversy and many alluded to the resultant public skepticism about the project as a whole.

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\item [48] For example, the great majority of properties listed on the National Register are of local significance. Fowler, The federal preservation program.
\item [49] It was Ollie, not an earthquake, that shook capital. 1993. Tribune-Democrat, April 18, 1993.
\item [50] Stock, Oink.
\item [51] Personal interview, 26 September 1996.
\item [52] Personal interview, 2 February 1998.
\end{itemize}
The Power of National Recognition

As described in Chapter 4, the fact that the project was a national model was often used to defend it against the park barrel claims. As in the Blackstone case, LPOs generally only expressed mild interest in the fact that the effort might be a national model. The tourist-oriented groups felt that a much more pressing concern was that they gain credibility by becoming part of a well-defined national system, whether it be a National Heritage Tour Route system or a National Heritage Partnership program (both of which were heavily and unsuccessfully promoted by SPHPC organizers). In public hearings, representatives from the major LPOs testified that their groups would only benefit from the newly gained National Heritage Tour Route designation if a robust and well-publicized new system were created for this unique category. For example, in one forum, a local advocate noted that the “fact that the Path of Progress is unique means that there is no developed context or set of expectations for visitors.”

Many tourist-oriented LPOs were surprisingly knowledgeable about other existing and proposed NHAs across the US, often voicing concern that there were “too many” or that other efforts lacked coherence. Overall, groups wanted to be recognized as part of an elite group, but not replicated too widely.

Given their demonstrated interest in heritage, one would expect LPOs to be able to serve as ambassadors to the general public about the heritage area campaigns. In general, however, in both regions there was widespread confusion among the LPOs about the program’s name, mission and activities. This was especially notable in Southwestern Pennsylvania; here, even though the resources invested in communities were often substantial, the resonance of the designation itself and the campaign seemed quite weak. Group representatives made statements

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53 SPHPC, Turning the Corner, p. 24.
like "Nobody knows we are nationally recognized" and "Generally speaking, unless you are an insider, you can’t follow the players."\textsuperscript{54} Phrases like "nationally recognized" and "federal partnership" did not seem to have the same kind of resonance as "National Parks," and as yet seemed just as esoteric as the national standards criticized by "place-based" advocates.

Contributing to the confusion was the number of pre-existing institutions and designations in local communities. In the SPHPC region, for example, there were already four National Park units\textsuperscript{55} and three State Heritage Parks; the latter projects in particular worked closely with the Commission efforts to promote similar themes and pursue similar goals. In Johnstown, where there were also a number of National Register and local historic districts, the directors of both the local museum and the "alternative" labor-oriented grassroots group reported that around town all their efforts were lumped together (along with those of the local, state and federal governments) into one convenient term. Each director reported that community members often said to them, "Oh, you work for 'the heritage.'"\textsuperscript{56}

The complexity of the "partnership park" concept is evident in the following "catch phrase" from the newsletter cover of a small grassroots group, who tried to position itself within the scope of regional activities:

\begin{quote}
The 1889 South Fork Fishing and Hunting Club Historical Preservation Society, a non-profit corporation chartered under the laws of Pennsylvania, is the only Forest Hills District organization recognized by the State of Pennsylvania and by the United States Department of the Interior's Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission and the National Park Service to represent the District in the State Allegheny Ridge Heritage Park program and the Federal Southwestern Pennsylvania
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{54} Personal interviews, 26 January 1998; 2 February 1998.

\textsuperscript{55} Several community members attributed some of these National Parks to Murtha’s influence as well.

\textsuperscript{56} Personal interviews, 2 February 1998 and 3 February 1998.
Heritage Commission project. The Forest Hills District encompasses seven (7) self-governing (3 township and 4 boroughs) administrative units. There did seem to be some prestige associated with involvement with the Commission, but respondents were not always well informed about its operations. Individuals (and institutional representatives) were often not sure about whether they themselves “sat on” the Commission, had been appointed to a county advisory or other topic-specific advisory body, or whether they had simply attended public meetings. Most of the LPO representatives interviewed did not get the name of the project exactly right, often spending a great deal of time trying to remember the correct phrase. Although it had been rejected by the Commission as “too confusing,” the term that seemed most easy to recall correctly was the project’s original name “America’s Industrial Heritage Project” or “AIHP;” a substantial number of LPOs interviewed still referred to the program this way.

An obvious contributor to the confusion about the SPHPC was the rapid succession of campaigns promoted by the Commission as it sought to devise the most marketable identity. Salamon notes the tendency for groups seeking federal funding to constantly devise new programs and approaches in order to “cover their bases” and seem novel, and it is unclear whether Cooley’s continual reinvention was driven by this motivation or by his professed impatience with “staying in one place.” Regardless, the result was that the terms even the most informed local groups most often used to describe the effort were “Murtha’s project” or simply “Randy Cooley.”

58 Several representatives incorrectly stated that they were “on the Commission.”
59 During one interview, an LPO director (who had received a SPHPC grant) fielded a phone call from someone asking for assistance in reaching the Commission; he spent ten minutes trying (unsuccessfully) to track down the correct name and number in his telephone directory and files.
61 Personal Interview, 23 September 1996.
terms do not suggest that most LPOs consider themselves “co-producers” of the campaign, which some scholars argue is necessary for genuine civic engagement.

Quite surprisingly, a number of organizational representatives did not know or remember that they had received money from the Commission. This could be partially attributable to the turnover in volunteer board members and staff, as well as to the number of players involved in the region-wide effort. In any case, in many instances Commission assistance made no long-lasting impression on the institution and it therefore seemed unlikely that these LPOs would effectively leverage the federal “seal of approval” to attract private sector or general public support.

Even if it did not greatly improve public awareness in every community, federal involvement provided important moral support to some LPOs. Many group representatives, even those who had not remained active, said that they had enjoyed the novelty of going to meetings with important federal officials and NPS staff. In sharp contrast to the many statements in Commission reports, LPOs almost without exception spoke highly of the NPS’ early involvement and did not express any reservations about the agency’s presence in the region. A couple of groups reported that association with the NPS and/or the federal government validated their own efforts and made them seem part of a bigger mission, even in the face of public hostility or indifference. In one small town, a notably well-organized and risk-taking LPO had met with continual opposition from local elected officials; recalling the sentiments of those fighting the airport siting, this group felt very “empowered” by working in conjunction with NPS
staff (provided by AIHP) to prepare a local preservation plan and by the professionals’ opinion that they were “a model local group.”

Overall, groups may have gained something psychologically by working closely with the federal commission, but were not often able to translate the national designation it into a broader base of public support. For example, reflecting on the first ten years of the SPHPC project, a leader of one very active and very supportive LPO testified:

It is no secret that the Heritage Preservation effort [in] Southwestern Pennsylvania would have been impossible without the direct involvement of the United States Government and the power and resources it represents. I personally would not have undertaken the National Register Historic District project in St. Michael without this support. I am positive that most if not all of the other site managers shared this same opinion.

However, he added, “Even with the knowledge of the U.S. Government’s direct support, unfortunately only a small percentage of the total population was even interested. I know that our project in St. Michael was one of the best supported programs in the total project but, frankly, I was a little disappointed in the degree of interest of our citizens in the importance of the project with regards to community pride and the economic potential it represented.”

The Impact of the Designation on LPO-Government Relations

Perhaps in part due to the lack of growth pressure, the Commission did not often involve itself in land use issues in any confrontational way. Like the Blackstone project, it provided technical assistance and educational programs for local governments. The Commission-funded planner position for each county usually focused on tourism issues, as opposed to preservation

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62 "We set up headquarters here in my kitchen," said the group’s president, with the enthusiasm of a presidential campaign operative. Personal Interview, 28 January 1998.
63 Walter Costlow, quoted in SPHPC, Turning the Corner, appendix.
ordinances. Because Commission grants were often tied to National Register status, the region saw a large increase in Register listings and parallel research on historic structures and districts. However, LPOs reported that after ten years there was little in the way of sustained new efforts by local governments to support preservation and few new local historic districts (which would be subject to development review).64

Although LPOs did not generally report as much hostility by local governments as their counterparts in the Blackstone Valley, there were some problems. The director of one of the region’s flagship sites reported that, probably due to the perception that its large new museum facility would generate lots of revenue, the local school district was trying to revoke its property tax exemption; this, he stated, would have crippled his institution. Other smaller LPOs stated that their struggling towns felt that supporting preservation with public funds was not a wise investment -- it was considered too economically risky. About one quarter of LPOs reported that the fear of having to raise taxes made local governments less receptive to the idea of historic preservation. Overall, many LPOs reported some skepticism from their local government about the viability of heritage based development as an economic revitalization strategy.

To an even greater extent than the Blackstone project, the Commission was able to capitalize upon its federal status by leveraging other state and local government programs. The SPHPC tapped other federal funding sources (most notably related to transportation) for projects like bike trails, which helped broaden the constituency for preservation; it also supported groups pursuing projects broadly related to transportation (or projects in their communities that were complementary to the SPHPC mission). As noted above, of greater interest to more traditional

64 A notable exception was Johnstown, which had recently seen a renewed interest in preservation planning.
heritage groups, the Commission worked very closely with relevant state agencies and the
PMHC channeled a considerable amount of money and attention into developing State Heritage
Parks to complement SPHPC efforts. More than half of the groups interviewed had received
some type of funding that they felt was at least partially attributable to the SPHPC designation.
One LPO director reported that “What Cooley has been able to do is bring along the state as a
significant funding source” for larger groups; although he did not necessarily see the state as a
reliable long term funding source, for several years it had been his most important one.65

In the words of the SPHPC, “by 1995, the Commission had helped to establish a network of
organizations that understood the process of obtaining public funding...Throughout the region,
organizations that had been financially dependent on bake sales, membership dues, special
events, and the philanthropy of their communities were now being awarded major grants”
through state sources and from the federal ISTEA and TEA-21 programs for transportation-
related enhancements.66 However at the time of the interviews, with the exception of the two
largest groups, LPOs were still reliant on these types of low-scale earned income schemes and
few had developed stable long-term funding or revenue sources.67 Like in the case of
Blackstone, even though the Commission had funded many specific projects in their
communities, the groups themselves were often not growing. Although several groups had
developed large new facilities with Commission assistance, local attendance and support had not
yet increased significantly and as discussed further in the conclusion, the sustainability of these
projects was often questioned.

65 Personal interview, 2 February 1998.
66 SPHPC, Art of the Possible, p.8.
67 From his office in a high school basement, the president of one LPO that had received two grants from the
Commission several years ago listed his main objective as “getting a revenue source beyond candy sales to
students.” Personal interview, 26 January 1998.
IV. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In Chapter 3, I outlined three corollaries to the overriding hypothesis about federal designation. The section below will explore these three corollaries as they relate to the two case studies.

- **LPOs would be especially knowledgeable about the designation’s meaning and consider it highly relevant to their mission**

Policymakers assume that designation will result in education and that education will result in coordinated actions by key stakeholders. One problem with these NHAs, however, was the general confusion about what the designation meant after it had been gained. Beyond the respect for the NPS, the broader meaning of the project and its unique designation was very unclear to LPOs. To most groups, the designation remained a vague, if benign idea. However, a few groups pointed out some detrimental aspects, considering it distracting, embarrassing, threatening or simply irrelevant.

The Southwestern Pennsylvania project in particular suffered due to the lack of a distinct image and rationale without the “cover” of the NPS. Strong marketing of the group of National Heritage Areas as a system tied to the well-known parks would help educate the public about the unique qualities of this designation and give it more legitimacy within the community. The NPS has made moves in this direction since the study period, encouraging the formation of an Alliance of National Heritage Areas and providing a staff coordinator to provide technical assistance and promote designated areas. It seems that a relatively modest investment in
marketing and public relations could help all these public investments work more effectively and leverage more public good will and matching funds.

- **Groups could and would seek to gain prestige by associating themselves with the nationally significant story and with the authority of the centralized institution.**

These two cases clearly demonstrate that the credibility of the NHA designation was colored by the perceptions about the legitimacy of the process. Chapters 2 and 3 suggest that despite its often *ad hoc* experimental procedures, the NPS and its imagery has long represented a “nationally authoritative institutional system” that inspires respect and connotes impartiality and quality to the general public. These two cases represent two ends of the spectrum with regard to association with the NPS. This research confirms that that the image of the agency is indeed important to the local communities and that stakeholders gained personal prestige and/or pride by its participation in both projects. Various types of prestige were important for different types of groups, depending upon whether their priorities were outside views or community relationships. In any case, the notion of being associated with the National Parks was much more powerful and positive than simply being associated with the federal government partnership approach or with a link to Congress. A new type of designation (the National Heritage Tour Route) without a preconceived set of expectations made much less of an impact on the local community.

This issue is timely since dozens of proposed NHA have been proposed over the last several years and legislation formalizing a heritage areas program is again under consideration by Congress. While the legislation governing each of the 27 current NHAs varies, the trend has
been away from federally-appointed commissions and away from a substantial NPS presence. Debates about the use of NPS staff, Rangers and the "arrowhead logo" suggest that the agency prizes its "brand name" and imprimatur, but recently designated areas are pushing for more formalized ties.\textsuperscript{68} If the region wants a strong NPS tie, and if the NPS can come to terms with a system of criteria and standards, it seems like the "value added" of Rangers and commitment of resources from the Regional Offices would be a very worthwhile additional investment. Because of the popularity of the agency, it is able to venture into unusual areas without seeming too threatening. If another entity is chosen to manage a project, such as a private organization or a state government, great care should be taken to ensure that it has a high level of credibility due to the weak meaning of the designation itself.

- **LPOs would employ the federal designation to gain access to expertise and other sources of support.**

  One important benefit for the more sophisticated LPOs was the ability to leverage other sources of government money by using the national imprimatur. Along with several cases of state and federal "piggybacking" on the NHA designation, this suggests that other government entities are the stakeholders more likely to be influenced by this federal program. At times actions by these other agencies have brought great benefits to LPOs. However, as the Blackstone case illustrates, NHAs are greatly limited in their ability to affect government at the local level, which would help LPOs the most.

One way to help guide policy is through consistency provisions like Section 9, which did benefit the Blackstone groups interested in development issues. Although new model NHA legislation

\textsuperscript{68} Brenda Barrett, Coordinator, National Heritage Areas, NPS. Personal interview March 29, 2005.
under discussion contains mild language encouraging other agencies to act consistently with NHA objectives, the Blackstone case shows that stronger language can result in high profile preservation victories that also burnish the Commission’s public standing. Consistency provisions are in keeping with other federal preservation law, such as Section 106, and since they are geared toward influencing public sector actors; as such, they allow a Commission to position itself as an advocate for the public, as opposed to as a regulator.

NHAs are an information strategy in which the federal government plays the role of a “cheerleader and encourager” rather than the sole provider of services. However, DiMaggio notes that in order for cultural resources to be converted into “cultural capital,” there must be not only a “strong centralized currency,” but, critically, local groups ready to appropriate it. In the case of these LPOs under study, the “partnership park” idea had generally not taken hold. Many groups said that the designation was beneficial, but it was difficult to demonstrate many ways they had capitalized upon it. Some NHAs, like the BVNHC, have instituted training programs for public officials. These sessions could be expanded to address the needs of LPOs or, alternatively, joint programs could be instituted to in order to build trust and familiarity.

Part of the reason for the lack of “ownership” by LPOs was probably the way that the projects were seen as a deliverables, “entitlements” bestowed upon them by their Congressmen or by outside experts. NHAs should aggressively try to educate LPOs about what the designation means, how it relates to local initiatives and how the organizations might benefit from expanding their interests into issues like tourism or environmental quality.

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CHAPTER SIX:

THE IMPACT OF REGIONAL PROMOTION ON LOCAL PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

I. INTRODUCTION

The second overriding hypothesis tested by the dissertation is that by crafting a distinct regional heritage, these National Heritage Areas will engage and mobilize grassroots institutions. The concept of regional promotion put forth by NHAs is two-fold. The first part is that a distinct region exists and embodies a meaningful shared heritage. The second aspect of the regional construct is the argument that stakeholders will gain benefits by working collaboratively. The NPS describes the desired impact of NHAs on LPOs specifically: “Heritage areas and corridors link small historical organizations and historic preservation groups into a framework of regional interpretation. They encourage partnerships between preservation organizations, open space advocates, and local governments to preserve heritage landscapes.”¹ In the Blackstone case, the Commission promotes the concept of the Valley as an “interdependent place” linked by a “common set of economic, natural and cultural resources.”² The aim of the SPHPC implies a

² BVNHC, The Next Ten Years, p. 8.
similar desire to fostering an ecosystem, or, in its words, “a network of sustainable heritage communities.”

In Chapter 5, the case studies were presented separately in order to stress the differences in how the approach to national designation affected the attitudes of LPOs. In contrast, this chapter is organized around common ideas of regional distinction and regional collaboration; this structure reflects the many similarities in how organizations responded, despite the very different types of region promoted by each case study. Although the projects were not entirely unsuccessful in their campaigns, the chapter shows that variations in attitudes, motivations and capacity can impede the participation of LPOs.

II. REGIONAL DISTINCTION

As described in Chapter 3, some writers argue that promoting a shared heritage is a powerful way to connect people to regions. Chapter 4 describes how Commissions, as outside mediators, try to reveal or foster regional heritage through selected themes and strategies. How have LPOs responded to these aspects of the campaigns?

Regional Definition

The most common definitions of the Blackstone Valley provided by LPOs revolved around the river, canal and the mill villages. The health of the river was a powerful symbol to communities, and protecting this natural asset was strongly supported in general. However, a broad sense of interconnectedness along the Blackstone was not in evidence in most communities. Not

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3 Personal interview, 23 September 1996.
surprisingly, organizations in riverside communities like Uxbridge and Woonsocket closely identified with the valley, but several LPOs in other locales cited their distance from the river as evidence that they were “on the map,” produced by the BVNHC but “out of the corridor.” Distances of less than two miles led some to describe themselves as “out of the mainstream.”

Complicating regional definition was the fact that although many groups did identify with the Blackstone Valley, the concept had existed independently in the two states prior to the designation with little acknowledgement or interaction between groups on either side of the border. According to the director of Slater Mill Historic Site, her community often expressed its rootedness in place by saying “I was born in the Valley, and I’ll die in the Valley;” however, they would be referring exclusively to the Rhode Island side. The director of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, also based in Rhode Island, related a telling anecdote: shortly before the formation of the Commission, he participated in a trade show and was shocked to find a booth by a Massachusetts organization with an almost identical name (the Blackstone River Valley Visitors Bureau). “We didn’t even know they existed,” he explained. Towns closest to the borders such as Millville, MA and Woonsocket, RI reported the strongest identification with their counterparts across the state line. As the distance grew from the border, local representatives increasingly mentioned the “thick black line” that separated the two states.

Both Commissions faced pressure to expand their thematic and geographic focus. In the Blackstone, despite some lack of agreement over what constituted the region in the first place,

4 Personal interviews, 30 April 1997; 19 October 1998.
5 Personal interview, 8 October 1998.
the expansion diminished the legitimacy of the effort to many LPOs. Almost without exception, groups stated that they did not consider Worcester (or Providence) part of “the Valley” and nearly all of them also disagreed with the addition of the four new communities; some described them as “ridiculous” or “way out.” Groups within the original corridor boundaries resented the newer communities and the competition they might represent. These sentiments reflected those of the NPS and BVNHC staff interviewed, all of whom were in favor of tightly focused boundaries for this and other National Heritage Areas. The fact that the region was defined by outside mediators made some highly cynical. Even after the new boundaries were formalized, one key Corridor staff member stated, “I have never been to Leicester and I may never go.” In the opinion of an employee of a tourism organization heavily supported by the BVNHC, the Corridor was “purely a political construction, with no integrity as a region.”

Given the novelty of the regional construct, it is not surprising that none of the Pennsylvania groups said that their primary geographic identification coincided with the boundaries of the SPHPC project. The abstract story-based region had not gained wide acceptance among LPOs. Overall, groups did not see much advantage in identifying with a broader area -- more than half the LPOs adamantly volunteered that they were not in the same region as certain other towns or counties in the area. Many groups echoed the sentiment expressed in the Blackstone that they had never been to another portion of the region, and therefore could not feel an allegiance to it. In interviews, groups identified with more than ten different smaller areas, such as the Southern Alleghenies, or occasionally with the largest towns such as Johnstown or Altoona.

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7 Personal interview, 16 October 1998.
Interestingly, the specialized historical focus of some groups gave them even more unique regional identifications. The Pioneer Historical Society of Bedford County, for example, identified with the “Bedford region,” which encompassed the much larger 18th century boundaries of the county. The curator of the Blair County Historical Society, which owned several iron-related sites, was alone in identifying with “the Juniata region;” he explained that the Juniata river, of which Blair County was the headwaters, had been widely known as the “best iron-producer in the country” at one time. As further elaborated below, groups tended to identify with whatever made them feel most significant.

**Regional Themes**

Although the interpretive plan of the Blackstone project outlined a variety of themes, the overall narrative was relatively focused: the story of “America’s hardest working river” and the industries it spawned during the early decades of American industrialization. The Southwestern Pennsylvania project initially stressed industrial themes, but gradually tried to engage people through broader stories such as the Allegheny Experience, the Allegheny Traveler and the Path of Progress.

In general, groups were very supportive of the idea of packaging a coherent story and cross-promoting regional attractions. Even LPOs that were not concerned with tourism agreed with the notion that the “sum can be greater than its parts.” However, promoting a regional scale identity presented a number of challenges for the Commissions, which had a very difficult time satisfying competing urges to be both focused and inclusive.
Stressing the benefits he thought groups would gain by associating themselves with a coherent regional message, SPHPC director Cooley dismissed what he termed the “everyone has their own” approach to heritage.⁹ He hoped that by first building pride at an individual or local level, it would develop into a shared vision. However, although almost every group agreed with the goal of transforming the negative image of the region as a whole, many organizations in both NHAs had been cultivating their particular place-based identity for many years and were wary about being asked to change their own approach. Recalling the “single-house” organizations that frustrated SPNEA’s Appleton, they usually felt that the significance and appeal of their resource was a “given,” without any connection to an overarching theme.

There were some exceptions, especially in Southwestern Pennsylvania, where the groups received significantly more capital funds, along with professional interpretation services. The Johnstown Flood Museum, whose mission had been limited to the story of the flood, evolved into the Johnstown Area Heritage Association, and expanded its scope to address other AIHP themes in the city, including iron and steel making, immigration and ethnicity.¹⁰ Other groups that did not identify with heavy industry adopted aspects of the theme of transportation, and found it to be a powerful way to establish relationships with other sites that they had not considered before.¹¹

Besides the debate about the project boundaries, in both regions there were controversies over the logo for the regional initiative, with certain groups feeling that they were not reflected. For

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⁹ Personal interview, 23 September 1996.
¹⁰ It continues to position itself as preserving and interpreting the “nationally significant stories” of Johnstown and the potential of these stories to build a new cultural tourism industry.
¹¹ Personal interview, 5 February 1998.
example, each region, despite the original emphasis on industry, has a significant amount of agricultural land. While this was finessed somewhat in both regions with an expanded “from farm to factory” theme, interviews often revealed an urban-rural split. The original AIHP logo with three industrial workers did not seem appropriate for a working farm site, for example. Some in Bedford County, PA were insistent that the industrial image promoted by the Commission “was not us.” A tourism official explained that urbanites visited his county to get away from the city; “porch rocking” was one of the activities that he promoted in his tourist material. Several of the most active Massachusetts groups in the BVNHC (and many of the Heritage Homecoming communities), were also concerned with rural heritage, which only served to distinguish themselves further from their more urban Rhode Island counterparts who identified more closely with the mills. In the words of a Rhode Islander, the Massachusetts side had an undue “reverence for agriculture” that made them act superior. Indeed, one of the most active regional advocates on the Massachusetts side continued to contrast his side of the valley with the “crummy” industrial towns in Rhode Island.

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12 Personal interview, 5 February 1998.
13 Personal interview, 1 May, 1997.
14 Personal interview, 7 October 1998.
The regional story was not usually the one that groups identified with most strongly. Following in the tradition of groups and civic boosters since the 19th century, communities liked to associate themselves with what made them most unique and celebrated their very particular place in history. The sites that had grown up independently and gave character to local communities, including some of the biggest tourist draws, did not always fit neatly into the overall theme. Southwestern Pennsylvania's Indiana County, for example, was most interested in marketing
itself as “the birthplace of Jimmy Stewart” and the “Christmas tree capital of the world.” One of the larger LPOs in the region, the Jimmy Stewart Museum looked somewhat incongruous on the Path of Progress, as did Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, also on the map.  

The president of one Blackstone historical society felt that their most notable claim was being the site of “America’s first woman voter.” While supportive of the BVNHC, she contrasted her group’s approach to that of the Commission’s, saying, “We have many stories we can tell.” In general, even those communities focused on industrial themes were highly specialized, perhaps reflecting their legacies as company towns. A district in Worcester celebrated its status as the place “where wire was invented” and a Pennsylvania county “found its niche” by celebrating its achievements in “coal-fired electricity.”

To expand its vision, the SPHPC gradually embraced a more universal set of narratives, focusing on the “human experience.” What impact did the newly invented regional constructs have on LPOs? Predictably, representatives from industrial areas were worried that this “something for everyone” approach diluted the power of the strategy. No group mentioned the project’s overall theme, “the Allegheny Experience” in discussing the region, suggesting that it had not been widely adopted. The “Path of Progress” concept was well known, though viewed with some skepticism by some who felt that “signs do not make a region.”

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15 The Commission posits, “Some careful thought would place “It’s a Wonderful Life” into the SPHPC industrial heritage themes as well.” Bern, L. 1993. Capitalizing on our “wonderful life.” In Prospects, Vol. 1, no. 6, December 1993. Fallingwater was generally not an active participant in the overall Southwestern Pennsylvania campaign, although it ties with Horseshoe Curve as the top tourist attraction; each attracted about 125,000 per year.

16 Personal interview, 14 October 1998.


18 Personal interview, 29 January 1998.
campaign as coming “from above,” one LPO described the route that connected them as the “magic highway in the sky.” LPOs did not find the stylized “P” symbol that replaced the AIHP “three industrial heads” logo controversial but found it rather generic. Unlike the Blackstone case, there were no reported turf battles over sign placement, perhaps because the vastness of the region made groups less protective of their “turf.”

Even with a broad theme, creating a linear organizing principle necessitated some selectivity and this caused problems for some organizations. In Southwestern Pennsylvania, the Path of Progress construct alienated some groups, despite the fact that the Commission funded detailed “sub-loops” for each county, which included many additional sites. Recalling the statements from the Blackstone groups who felt “out of the corridor,” a number of groups considered themselves “off the Path” if the route did not directly pass their particular site. In Southwestern Pennsylvania, there was competition among groups for who would be, for example, “the canal town” on the map. In essence, once a line was drawn someone always felt they fell outside of it.

For the tourist-oriented LPOs trying to work in tandem with the SPHPC, the continuing attempt to reposition the region through new images and slogans was frustrating. Although some LPOs described a variety of ways in which they had provided input to the Commission on other issues, none of them felt they had participated meaningfully in the formulation of the regional constructs. Many groups expressed bewilderment at the frequent changes of letterhead and campaigns. In the words of one director, “We [LPOs] have a clear product in mind that we want to build. Our challenge is to move it forward, not to constantly try to reinvent it.”

19 Personal interview, 2 February 1998.
major organization complained of “too many heritage products,” arguing that it was confusing to
the public. 20

The new “engaging” regional symbols supported by the Commissions had not made much of an
impact on LPOs. In the Blackstone Valley, none of the LPOs mentioned the small-scale
historical pageants or new traditions (like the Steamboat Muster) intended to reinforce regional
identity, although these received generally favorable reviews by the press. Perhaps groups did
not know that the Commission had supported these efforts, but in any case they did not come to
mind when discussing the definition or development of regional character.

In the SPHPC region, the Allegheny Traveler balloon and comic book, which had garnered much
more widespread publicity, received mixed reviews from LPOs. A minority thought that the
marketing campaign was a good idea, although they were confused as to the Commissions’
apparent lack of follow through with the concept. Most interviewees were somewhat amused by
the idea, but felt that the funds should not have been spent on “stories,” but on infrastructure or
local project support. Despite marketing studies by the SPHPC that suggested an increase in
general public awareness, none of those interviewed felt that the campaign had directly benefited
their organization. 21

Overall, interviews suggested that a region was not an entity with which most community
representatives readily identified; this undoubtedly reduced the amount of energy LPOs were

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20 Personal interview, 26 January 1998.
21 It can sometimes be difficult to reconcile the statements of some of the LPOs with extensive survey research that
suggests a more positive view of the impact of the SPHPC’s campaigns on public awareness and site visitation. If
we assume that those studies are correct, it is possible that changes are as yet imperceptible to the LPOs; it is also
possible that statements by LPOs reflect a general mood of cynicism in light of the decreases in SPHPC activity.
willing to devote to furthering a regional campaign. A telling remark was made by one of the most influential early community promoters of the BVNHC, who sat on the board of an LPO. Admitting that she had turned down offers to sit on the Commission, she explained, “The more I learn about the Valley, the more I want to focus on my own town.”

III. REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

The Social Value of Heritage

Evidence from these organizations strongly supports the notion that one of the most fundamental priorities of LPOs is the “inherently social value” that heritage provides to communities. Especially in the smaller towns that make up many NHAs, this social value may reinforce the tendency to think locally. As might be expected, groups had deep roots in the local community and their sense of obligation lay there. Even larger institutions usually saw serving the community as one of their primary responsibilities, reinforced by the fact that they relied on a substantial amount of volunteer effort. More than three quarters of the groups described an important social role their groups played for members, describing sock hops, picnics, yard sales and festivals as primary activities. A generous definition of heritage resources, including things like the national high school champion drum and bugle corps and traditional campfires, accentuated this social aspect.

22 Personal interview, 8 October 1998.
23 Mayes, Preservation law.
24 Unfortunately, many of the older groups reported that the social aspect of their activities was diminishing, in part due to the aging of the core members. However, a few groups noted that younger newcomers to the organization related to each other on the basis of issues, rather than a set concept of heritage. Some interviewees felt that this might led their group in a more activist direction.
LPO members expressed a variety of motivations for their initiatives. For some in each region, there was a direct family tie to a resource. In about half the cases, the heritage group had grown out of another celebratory community event; for instance, in Pennsylvania, several groups reported that interest had initially been generated by a town Centennial. About the same number stated that their activities were an outgrowth of a high school alumni organization, a park clean up effort or another more general “civic” activity. Although it was not stressed very much by these LPOs, social status within the community is often another reason to join a group; in the words of one LPO president in the Blackstone Valley “some members only join thinking of their obituaries” in the local newspaper.25 In sum, heritage was often a “background value” within a general town- or borough-focused concern.

The motivation for these efforts did not have a great deal to do with a desire for outside affirmation or connections to a larger network or set of causes. Many LPOs seemed to bear out Boris’ assertion that some civic activities are not necessarily geared toward motivating change, but for conserving and protecting local values.26 Their functions seemed to represent what Putnam calls “bonding social capital,” which reinforces tightly knit ideas of community, as opposed to the “bridging” variety, which he argues is necessary to spark regional scale cooperation.27 The Commissions hope that by participating in engaging events that foster local identity, they can eventually serve as the bridge to promote a regional sense of stewardship.28

27 Bowling alone.
28 In a typical Heritage Homecoming Festival in the Valley, NPS Rangers appeared amidst road rallies, helicopter rides, and Heritage Chorale concerts. Similarly, at a Labor Day weekend festival, among the crafts and food booths were “remarkable attractions—the Dam Duck Race, Dunking Booth, Bingo, Spectacular Fireworks, Military
Cooley explained that in his view, “all of heritage development is based on” this premise of first building pride at an individual or community level and then using that pride to promote a concept of shared heritage. However, there were some real barriers, philosophical and practical, that could prevent groups from moving to this next level.

**Regional Collaboration**

*Diversity of Organizational Goals*

The public policy literature suggests that partnerships work best if each party feels it is achieving something in line with its original mission. However, as argued in Chapter 2, it has historically been very difficult to engage LPOs in campaigns reflecting a wider set of interests. Have these NHAs been able to generate concern by LPOs for a broader “placed-based” approach, with an interconnected set of concerns?

In addition to historic preservation, the BVNHC devoted significant energy to land use, environmental and growth management concerns. Besides the airport siting and river quality issues mentioned above, the Commission was also deeply involved in the planning associated with the new 146 interchange which would connect the region to the Massachusetts Turnpike. The Commission promoted a regional mindset as a way to protect the health and character of the area.

To a large extent, while perhaps personally supportive of managing growth, Blackstone interviewees had not participated in many activities related to environmental quality or

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29 Personal interview, 23 September 1996.
conservation.\textsuperscript{30} For example, although its primary purpose was to promote the “rich heritage of rural tradition,” it was difficult for one group to move beyond maintaining the integrity of its historic country store (the restoration of which was heavily supported by the NHC). This LPO consciously avoided getting involved in critical local planning issues, like a controversial proposed historic district and the dump strenuously opposed by the BVNHC. The president explained that land use was “not their mission” and that the group feared that appearing to lobby for a cause would jeopardize their nonprofit 501c3 status.\textsuperscript{31} Perhaps reflecting the aforementioned distaste for local government, a surprising number of other groups also mentioned the desire to avoid “politics.” As elaborated below, part of this reluctance could easily be due to the already overstressed volunteers and staff. The director, and sole employee, of one local advocacy group, reported that she resented the additional pressure to get involved in “civic” campaigns when she faced so many challenges in her own town.\textsuperscript{32}

As he pursued the economic development agenda of the SPHPC, Cooley stated that the challenge was “how do we take heritage that is personal and turn it into something commercial.”\textsuperscript{33} As mentioned earlier, groups themselves were often not confident about the role they could play in promoting tourism or enhancing the region. Aside from the flagships, many LPOs in both areas were skeptical about the economic potential of regional heritage tourism, even if they operated a tourist site and would benefit from it. For many LPOs heritage had an instrumental value, but

\textsuperscript{30} The Commission did have more luck mobilizing environmental groups and broad based efforts to clean up the river. However, although they had hoped to encourage the formation of a regionwide group, the closest they had been able to come was the formation of the Blackstone River Watershed Association, which only covered the Rhode Island section.

\textsuperscript{31} Personal interview, 19 October 1998.

\textsuperscript{32} Personal interview, 8 October 1998.

\textsuperscript{33} Personal interview, 23 September 1996
rather than economic development it was public awareness or other kinds of community services,
and they saw these as very distinct spheres.

For some organizations, outside interest-based affiliations were much stronger than regional
ones. These LPOs saw greater benefit from information sharing and collaboration with similar
specialized groups, such as other clock or railroad museums. The tendency of groups to
specialize was most evident in the case of the Bedford County Covered Bridge Society, which
had been featured prominently in SPHPC literature. The president of the group was moved to
tears speaking about the rewards of assisting other bridge groups across the country, but had little
interest in building on her considerable local success by active participation in the regional
campaign. This experience calls into question the assumption that groups will naturally seek to
enhance their influence through collaborating with others in their region.

Finally, at times the BVNHC encountered difficulties getting groups to follow through with an
identifiable Valley “look” after initial project funding. For example, the Corridor paid for
walking tour brochures but had trouble getting communities to use consistent formats; in the end
one group decided to decline the funding and create one independently. The director of the
Willard House and Clock Museum, one of the largest LPOs in the Blackstone Valley, was very
grateful for the highway signs the commission paid for, which he said helped boost his
attendance by 25%. However, he described his struggle with the Commission when he wanted
to install additional signs: rather than use the official waterwheel version, which he considered

34 She was also not aware of another covered bridge preservation effort in another part of the Southwestern
Pennsylvania region.
35 Personal interview, 19 October 1998.
“too stylized,” he preferred to design his own sign with a clock, which, moreover, he felt he could erect much more quickly and inexpensively.36

**Regional networking**

When asked about evidence of regional collaboration, BVNHC representatives generally pointed to increased collaboration by some state agencies. With respect to LPOs, a Commission staff member admitted that that “getting groups to work together is more important to us than it is to them.”37 To encourage this, the Blackstone Commission sponsored frequent meetings for officials, planners and citizen advocates, in an attempt to create networks of stakeholders facing similar issues. Some larger LPOs had attended these, particularly when the meeting related to tourism. In the Blackstone Valley, funding from the Commission strengthened some pre-existing networks of nonprofits and sites, such as the Heritage Homecoming regional fall festival. But besides this effort, there was little interaction between groups, and the directors of the largest LPOs often did not know one another. One Commission staffer made efforts to organize a regional consortium of educators and librarians in the early years of the project, but these initiatives reportedly languished after the individual member left. (The fact that this staff member was replaced by a planner suggested to one community group that the focus of the Commission’s efforts would be primarily on government policy, not on the nonprofit sector.)

In Southwestern Pennsylvania, one major success with regards to networking was the county heritage committees set up as advisory bodies to the Commission. Many representatives from various groups reported that they did benefit greatly from meeting their counterparts within their

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36 Personal interview, 30 April 1997.
37 Personal interview, 19 March 1997.
county and had subsequently worked on some collaborative projects. Nonprofits also participated in other committees set up to address issues like tourism promotion. However, at the end of the study period, when Commission funding for LPOs had been drastically reduced, attendance at these meetings had by all accounts fallen steeply since groups had much less incentive to participate.

Interestingly, the groups most likely to collaborate in the BVNHC were the most traditional of groups, historical societies; in fact, the Blackstone Valley Historical Society (of Rhode Island) was the only real coalition of local heritage organizations in the region. In Southwestern Pennsylvania, historical societies were also among the most well informed and engaged with their counterparts throughout the region. Perhaps this is due to the relatively developed field of historiography and archival research and the relative lack of political and “turf” issues in this field. However, with some exceptions, these organizations were the least likely to actively participate in the NHA efforts, probably since their traditional focus has not been planning.

What were some of the impediments to networking and collaboration? More than half the groups cited practical constraints, most notably the lack of time and staff. Just to participate in the collaborative process required a certain level of organization that was not always available to LPOs. The volunteer leader of one group, who already spent an estimated ten hours a day on its sites and collections, said, “we don’t have time to go to meetings when we are faced with these huge piles of documents [to catalog].”

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38 Personal interview, 19 October 1998.
Many of the professionals interviewed described the Blackstone as a “hard case” for a civic campaign because of the nature of the population. The Valley citizenry was often described as blue-collar, unsophisticated, and without much leisure time; a number of people mentioned the paucity of “professional volunteers” that typically become community activists or historical society docents. While this was not necessarily evident in my research, it does suggest some challenges in working in the small communities that often make up NHAs. Early planning documents for the BVNHC described the small towns’ preference for working independently and contrasted their self-reliance with the larger towns at the ends of the corridor, who were much more accustomed to petitioning government for assistance and working collaboratively.  

In Southwestern Pennsylvania, one of the major issues was the sheer size of the region, which impeded easy cross-country collaboration or meetings. For example, several groups said they did not attend the Commission-sponsored region-wide Discovery Fairs, especially after the first year, since they were too far away. Other campaigns like Christmas promotions or calendars, which did not involve having to travel, were considered to be a much more efficient way to benefit LPOs.

Impediments to networking in the Blackstone case were reinforced by the difficulty of coordinating public agencies across state lines. In particular, the economic development agencies rarely cooperated with each other due to the intense economic rivalry between the two states. As a result, there were independent Blackstone Valley tourism guides listing sites in each state (which looked quite different from one another) and a separate Blackstone Valley fall

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39 NPS, Conservation Options, p. 22.
festival in each state.\textsuperscript{40} However, LPOs reported that the Blackstone Commission’s own cross-marketing campaigns helped alleviate some of the problem. LPOs often showed a genuine interest in cross-promoting other sites, and attributed this to the Commission’s influence. In the word of one LPO, “there will never be a central magnet” in the Blackstone Valley; another stated, “there are no “wow” sites.\textsuperscript{41} The creation of NPS brochure, maps specifically highlighting historic places, and the regional calendars were all considered very helpful in educating the public about their sites and did not generate the same skepticism as the larger scale SPHPC constructs.

The BVNHC also provided funds to the public tourism agencies in both states to organize joint marketing campaigns for heritage sites.\textsuperscript{42} For example, one agency coordinated the block purchase of postcards and advertising to get nonprofits substantial discounts. However, some nonprofits had limited capacity or incentive to participate in some of the other joint marketing campaigns. For example, groups praised the Commission for regularly collecting and distributing brochures from 80 different tourism-related sites and businesses. However, many LPOs had nowhere to put all of these brochures and some were reluctant to send their brochures (which represented a major expense) to sites that they knew little about, fearing that they would be thrown away.\textsuperscript{43}

There were also some difficulties with the BVNHC-funded walking tour brochures of each corridor community. Many LPOs did not have a facility that was open to the public more than

\textsuperscript{40} Heritage Homecoming still represents the same 11 original in Massachusetts, and has not expanded to encompass either the new NHC towns in Massachusetts or Rhode Island.


\textsuperscript{42} The tourism agency in the Rhode Island section in particular has been a critical player in all Commission efforts.

\textsuperscript{43} Personal interviews, 30 April 1997; 8 October 1998.
one or two times per week nor were the offices of their small town administration always open; thus, there was no central point for tourists to pick up the brochures in town. Similarly, the suggestion to coordinate opening hours, an integral part of joint marketing, was quite difficult to implement. The majority of groups did not have full-time staff and if they did, they already felt overburdened without adhering to a strict schedule.\footnote{One group advertised its hours of operation by simply “putting up the flag” when a volunteer was present. Another significant site had a sign asking visitors to stop by a neighbor’s house and pick up the key.}

Given the problems in implementing a relatively simple cross marketing campaign, it is not surprising that a more formalized one caused problems for many LPOs in Southwestern Pennsylvania. SPHPC’s pilot multi-site Passport program was very unpopular among LPOs, and even the most well staffed groups had trouble administering it. The Director of the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum reported that since it took three to four minutes to explain the program to each visitor, the group had to hire more reception staff and waiting time increased. In his words, the Passport became one more piece of the “smorgasbord” of ways heritage had been marketed. Moreover, since his site was “already the hot draw” he felt that the smaller groups gained exposure while he bore the transaction costs.\footnote{Personal interview, 26 January 1998.} Other tensions between volunteer and professional groups lend credence to Ostrower’s assertion that volunteer cultural groups do not always enjoy an equal status in partnerships. One LPO representative described the problems the group had trying to participate in the Passport program even though it did not charge admission; although it would not make money, it wanted the public exposure. While its request was eventually successful, the experience convinced the group that partnerships were often “not
interested in volunteers. 

Like in the Blackstone case, many groups could not guarantee the set hours required to participate and the pilot program was discontinued after two years.

III. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In Chapter 3, I asked what the literature about NHAs would suggest about the impact of the regional promotion on LPOs. The sections below synthesize these ideas into two sections, regional distinction and regional partnership, and explore how they relate to the two cases.

Regional Distinction

It is difficult to articulate a coherent identity for most regions. The particular challenges of these regions are the two states in the Blackstone Valley project and the size and amorphousness of the area in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The particular place-based identities of LPOs were often at odds with that put forth by the NHA organizers and that fact diminished the credibility of the projects to local groups. In both cases, historic awareness often reinforced a tightly focused sense of community as opposed to an association with a broader region. This suggests that it is not safe to assume that small groups will coalesce around a regional heritage in the absence of strong incentives.

In the Blackstone case, despite disagreement about who was included, there was broad acceptance that there was something called the Blackstone Valley. Even if an organization was not actively participating in a river-related project, the concept of protecting a natural asset was powerful and the construct of a “corridor” seemed tangible. In Southwestern Pennsylvania, the

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46 Personal interview, 4 February 1998.
more abstract notion of “place” promoted by the SPHPC failed to gain wide acceptance. It is hard to tell how much of the problem was due to the rapid turnover of campaign narratives and how much was due to the challenge of being inclusive without being generic. Overall, the experience of the SPHPC suggests that a project cannot create a region by sheer force of will.

As a policy matter, it seems most effective to choose an area for NHA status that has already demonstrated a shared sense of integrity as a region. Although this seems like an obvious point, it is an important one given the limited public funds available and the high demand for projects across the country. As discussed in the conclusion, new heritage areas typically are authorized to receive no more than $10 million over a 15-year period, and NHAs will have to rely on the power of information without a significant capital improvement budget. If the goal of the program is in fact regional development, having to invent a region before promoting it does not seem to be the most worthwhile use of public funds, especially if the time period is only 10 or 15 years. Overall, as discussed in the conclusion, promoting an affinity to a region requires a long-term strategy.

**Regional Partnerships**

Despite a varied set of arguments in its favor, promoting regional planning has always been difficult. So it is not surprising that LPOs did not find it easy to act regionally, given the inter-jurisdictional and interdisciplinary nature of the campaigns.

As these cases show, the regional imperative is often driven by politicians, who see the appeal of bringing a large project into a particular district. In addition, regional planning and regional
perspectives are supported by state and federal agencies, which see the benefits of a coordinated approach to resources and addressing problems. These cases demonstrate that in order to attract support for designation, NHAs do accumulate a broad set of concerns that go well beyond heritage. Although the particular role of LPOs in these campaigns may be to provide a sense of civic identity, they usually get their rewards from the community level and may not have the breadth of vision needed to think regionally. Moreover, as elaborated in the conclusion, they may not have the organizational capacity to act regionally.

In order to move from a “bonding” to a “bridging” function, LPOs need to feel that they will gain influence or other tangible advantages by participating in regional campaigns. Without obvious benefits, it will hard to maintain enthusiasm in light of the logistical difficulties and costs incurred in participating. NHAs need to spell out a much clearer role for LPOs in these projects, assigning them seats on Commissions and committees and treating them as distinct types of organizations with different needs as opposed to a generic “civic” public. The concluding chapter suggests that “civic engagement,” “authenticity” and “pride,” all qualities that LPOs are thought to provide, are in fact not always complementary and that different types of groups have decidedly different priorities.
CHAPTER SEVEN:
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

I. HERITAGE AS A “PLATFORM FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT” IN THE CASE STUDIES

While there is still no precise definition of “heritage partnerships,” a key distinction between this approach and simple heritage tourism is its explicit focus on fostering some type of civic engagement. This latter term can also quite hard to define, but with respect to NHAs it is useful to look at a recent Conservation Study Institute (CSI) report, which describes the ways in which heritage might be a “platform” for civic engagement.¹ The process outlined here is that after an area is designated an NHA, the national significance of the heritage fuels pride in place, inspires community participation, and, through links to contemporary issues, motivates a sense of stewardship for resources.² A return to the case studies reveals that while these impulses need not be adversarial, there may be tensions between civic goals and authenticity goals, and between professional standards and community enthusiasm. The following vignettes from the two case studies reveal some of the promising aspects of NHAs and some of the inherent dilemmas that arise when balancing social motivations alongside heritage and economic concerns.

The Most “Civic” Projects are Not Always the Most Authentic…and Vice Versa

Commission grants and technical assistance often provided much-needed help to small groups in designing exhibits, conducting historical research, packaging walking tours and generally presenting history in a more “professional” way. Both Commissions, for example, sponsored oral history programs, which enriched local groups’ efforts to present accurate and compelling social history.

While national designation is posited as a way to increase community esteem, local groups reported that what generated the most pride, and the biggest source of local support, were entertaining activities like festivals. For example, the National Folk Festival that came to Johnstown after the Centennial celebration unintentionally grew into one of the local heritage association’s major activities.3 JAHA’s director readily admitted that although it is billed as an ethnic and cultural celebration, he does not think the festival helps perpetuate local cultural traditions; the attraction for the crowd of over 100,000 is more the “free music, food booths and carnival atmosphere.”4 However, the local interest has been “overwhelming” and has greatly increased the group’s stature in the community. Corporate sponsorships associated with the festival have become the LPOs “gravy train,” helping to fund its less popular advocacy and rehabilitation programs and ensuring a steady revenue source. JAHA was in fact nearly the only group interviewed in the region that seemed to be in sound financial shape.

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3 The National Folk Festival, which moves from town to town for a three-year periods, with the intention of leaving behind a “legacy” festival; it came to Johnstown from Lowell, MA, which had hosted it from 1987-89. Once the national festival moved on in 1993, JAHA took over complete responsibility for the event and renamed it the Johnstown FolkFest.

4 Personal interview, 2 February 1998.
In the Blackstone Valley, Waters Farm Days has served a similar purpose on a 1757 farm site in the town of Sutton, MA. For more than 25 years, this festival has been one of the region’s most popular tourist events, where Indian knife fights, sleigh rides and antique cars are popular attractions. A key board member of the volunteer led LPO that helps the town manage the property explained that of the thousands of festival visitors, only about 200 stop to visit the historic farm house. He argued that this demonstrated that although historic resources are a “nice backdrop,” they are alone not usually interesting enough to generate sustained public interest; this necessitates creating supplementary more entertaining activities.  

By many accounts these projects, which utilized hundreds of volunteers, made substantial contributions to community to identity and to social cohesion. The Commissions’ broad mandates and flexible guidelines allowed them to support both of these LPOs efforts in a relatively substantial way with grants and technical assistance. Without a strict NPS imperative to support “authentic” history, the Commissions were able to participate in programs that excited the local population.

Among LPOs, there were conflicting expectations of what a federal presence would mean in terms of quality and authenticity of heritage presentation. With the indirect “partnership” approach, Commissions generally are not in a position to heavily influence the end product or require that it meets certain standards. Interestingly, in neither region did Commissions publicly express concern about the quality of various sites. However, reminiscent of the historical debates between amateurs and professionals, the larger groups in each region worried about the effect of this hands-off approach on authenticity at other sites. In Blackstone, one of the region’s

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two professional curators expressed reservations about the Commission’s “no strings” support of heritage efforts guided by volunteers, such as those at Waters Farm. Discussing the SPHPC campaign, a representative from one of the staffed groups stated, “What I have seen has been good history and bad history. There has been a serious tradition of empowering community groups that aren’t ready to do their own history.” A tourism professional in the region was also concerned that the Commission was promoting sites that were “not yet ready to be publicized,” jeopardizing the overall image of the initiative. To these group representatives, the involvement of the federal government implied that the work should be held to certain standards, which conflicted with an indirect “encouraging” role the Commissions often wanted to play.

When the Commissions provided capital funds for large nationally significant projects, they did expect higher standards, and several Blackstone organizations struggled with their dual role as a community institutions and stewards of important resources. The two Blackstone groups that received the most capital funding during the study period described some growing pains that suggested some tensions between heritage as a civic enterprise and heritage as a more professional practice based on standards. One group described an emerging conflict over whether it should continue to hold a community flea market in its substantially rehabilitated historic meetinghouse. Another group also anticipated conflicts in deciding how to operate a newly rehabilitated store in a fashion that allowed both space for historic interpretation and “a

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6 Personal interview, 30 April 1997.
7 Personal interview, 26 September 1996.
8 Personal interview, 5 February 1998.
9 A historical example of this in the Valley was when, predating the formation of the Commission, Slater Mill decided to rehabilitate its facility to become more historically accurate according to its “period of significance.” When it painted the mill yellow, the new color caused a great uproar in the community, who had been used to seeing it red. The museum also discontinued such traditionally popular programs as a tropical fish show, in favor of more accurate social history. According to one employee, these actions “cut the community off at its knees” and greatly diminished the base of local support. Personal interview, 10 December 1996.

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place for old timers to reminisce.” Similarly, in Southwestern Pennsylvania the spectacular Horseshoe Curve viewing site had been used for decades as a local park and hangout for the families of those who had worked on the railroads. When the SPHPC-funded state-of-the-art visitors center and interpretive facility opened on the site, it had to institute an admission charge; this created significant public controversy and dramatically decreased local visitation.

Interviews with LPOs revealed that heritage can serve as a community binder even if it is not strictly authentic. Economics was the motivation behind one of the most impressively “engaged” groups in either region, the Gallitzin Area Tourist Council (GATC). The GATC evolved out of the Gallitzin Area Alumni Association after members of this group observed the AIHP investment in railroad sites in their region. Before the AIHP project, the town members did not see its twin railroad tunnels as a community asset. Explained the President, “we viewed the tunnels as a pain, spewing smoke as you walked across the bridge. [Then] ten years ago, someone pointed out it was historic and then we saw money spewing out.” Even though the town was historically a mining town (that trains happened to go through), they began promoting the tunnels, and repositioned themselves as a town associated with the railroads. Closely aligning themselves with the borough government (and heavily supported by the SPHPC), they helped fundraise for a viewing park and secure an old caboose car for a visitors center. The GATC now sponsors a variety of public events and the caboose car, manned daily by docents in railroad kerchiefs, serves as an important place for locals to gather for a daily coffee.

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10 Personal interview, 19 October 1998.
11 Personal interview, 26 January 1998.
12 Personal interview, 3 February 1998.
Reportedly, some of the locals who used to hang out at Horseshoe Curve now use this as an alternate gathering spot. ¹³

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¹³ Ibid.
Do We Need “Consensus History?”

Did the Commissions’ overall mandate to spark civic pride influence the interpretation and restoration of particular sites? Some critics fear that when a government agency sponsors a heritage initiative, it is likely to impose an agenda that may sanitize history or alienate the local population. Was there evidence of this in these NHA projects? In general, a great benefit of NHA status is said to be the expert knowledge that NPS can be provide. According to the agency, “Association with the National Park Service makes available significant technical expertise to assist with all stages of this process, from the identification of important resources to planning for preservation, interpretation and the education of future generations.” However, the agency is quick to point out that its involvement “is always advisory in nature; the NPS neither makes nor carries out management decisions.”

Indeed, LPOs in both regions were adamant that the Commissions had done nothing to interfere with their own interpretive message. One curator echoed the sentiments of all the professional organizations with Commission-supported sites, stating “As far as the story that gets told at individual sites…there has been no effort to dictate that or to sanitize that.”

Personal observations at many sites in both regions revealed a broad array of perspectives, many of which incorporated the unpleasant aspects of industrialization and deindustrialization. My examinations of the interpretive material also suggested that in both projects, interpretive specialists and grassroots volunteers by and large did not feel compelled to whitewash the ugly
aspects of the past.\textsuperscript{16} For example, the SPHPC stressed that sites in the region “do not hide the fact that they have dirty fingernails.”\textsuperscript{17} In a proposed certification program, sites “must acknowledge the negative aspects of history and show what we can gain from them.”\textsuperscript{18}

As the end of the last sentence illustrates, a common element of many efforts was the positioning of unpleasant historical events as part of a story of rebirth. Just as one of the themes of the BVNHC effort was “self-conscious revitalization based on history,” the “Path of Progress” showed the way forward in Pennsylvania. These phrases suggest that empowerment is one of the major motivations for the campaigns and that an affirmative message is needed to foster a “pride in place.” It is important to note that the Commissions are not unique in this regard; as described in Chapter 2, boosters have used heritage to promote an upbeat message for many years.

Moreover, the Commissions must be seen in the broader context of multiple actors trying to revitalize and promote each region. In the case of the Blackstone Valley, for example, Rhode Island businesses had formed a “Comeback Coalition” to promote a positive image for the region\textsuperscript{19} and the Governor of Rhode Island had in fact hired a public relations firm promote to “hype the Blackstone Valley as a community that pulls together in a crisis.”\textsuperscript{20} In both projects, a crisis – whether it be the quality of the water or the state of the economy -- becomes part of the story, but as the “before” part, in anticipation of the redemptive power of history.

\textsuperscript{16} The most graphic depiction of history in either region was a film at the NPS Johnstown Flood Memorial, funded by the AIHP project. This film, set in a graveyard, must be unique among NPS sites in that it posts a parental warning sign on the door of the theater. The local group’s own film (which won an Oscar) focuses on the rebuilding of the town and gives a more upbeat vision of survival.


\textsuperscript{19} A large part of the campaign was promoting an International Steamboat Muster, based on a 200-year old historical event on the river.

As described in Chapter 3, heritage campaigns within living communities face special challenges and responsibilities. Relative to the Blackstone Valley, a larger segment of the Southwestern Pennsylvania population was directly tied to the industries celebrated by historic themes; many more residents could remember when their region was an industrial powerhouse. Thus, in places like Johnstown there was some ambivalence about labeling industry as “historic” since many feared this might have an adverse affect on the town’s perceived economic viability. The local group had difficult time recruiting steelworkers to support the designation of the Cambria Iron Works as National Park site, a critical priority of the SPHPC, since some displaced workers and economic development officials continued to hope for industrial revitalization.

Some communities faced awkward issues when placing their undoubtedly significant history into the context of civic renewal. According to the JAHA Director, “How to position the flood – a devastating horrifying disaster – as a point of local pride is slippery.” He added, however, “the mythology put out there is that this is a community that’s been able to transcend disaster...sort of a triumph theme. It’s not really pushing the historical evidence too much to say something inspiring did happen.”\textsuperscript{21} A similar attitude was evident in an energetic group that had received an AIHP grant to produce an award-winning video about a 1940 mining disaster in their town. The fact that they produced a highly professional product with all local actors, including disaster survivors, gave the group a great sense of “empowerment.”\textsuperscript{22} Although the film did not hide the fact that the death of 63 men devastated this small community, its emphasis on “how the survivors survived” again illustrates the natural tendency to end with a positive message.

\textsuperscript{21} Personal interview, 26 September 1996.
\textsuperscript{22} Personal interview, 4 February 1998.
The impulse to promote celebratory stories was criticized as “consensus history” by the director of an alternative labor-oriented organization, the Open Hearth Education Project,\textsuperscript{23} which tried to represent the “other side of the story.” This anthropologist, the only interviewee in either of the regions to voice concerns about the “social production of space,” felt that a focus on positive messages created a false sense of progress and shielded some of the underlying injustices present in the region. He insisted that laid off workers should play a significant role in interpreting their own story at the steel mill site. As his OHEP colleague wrote in the group’s newsletter, “The Allegheny Traveler is fine spokesman…except for one small problem—he can’t speak. Hopefully, after he catches the crowd’s attention they will look to the five and six foot tall spokesperson on the ground for more information.”\textsuperscript{24}

The most notable controversy in a SPHPC project was in Windber, where the Scalp Level wayside and overlook station adjacent to a mining community generated some fierce local opposition. Some community members and historians objected to what they thought was an overly generous depiction by NPS planners of Berwind Coal and its role in this “model town;” the company, which departed in 1962, was notorious for what townspeople considered exploitative practices.\textsuperscript{25} In addition, some residents were apprehensive about the introduction of both the federal government and tourists. The director of the nearby museum funded by the AIHP/SPHPC was compelled to write a letter strenuously correcting misconceptions that: telescopic devices would allow tourists to look into homes; that the Mine’s listing on the National Register meant that people would be “kicked out of their homes;” and that visitors

\textsuperscript{23} OHEP was in fact supported by the Commission for several years.
\textsuperscript{24} Bartock, J. n.d. Facts and ideas about the “people principle” of heritage projects. Open Hearth Education Project newsletter.
\textsuperscript{25} The SPHPC urged NPS interpretive specialists in Denver to reconsider their depiction and also urged the local museum to include a union representative on their board.
would now be allowed to enter their property. Finally, a vocal group of residents felt that maintaining the facility would end up as a financial burden on the town, again demonstrating skepticism among some in the region about the economic potential of industrial heritage tourism.  

Figure 12: The Windber Coal Heritage Center stresses the positive aspects of the town's past.

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What is the Impact on LPO Capacity?

A critical issue remaining is that of LPO capacity. How equipped are LPOS to participate in NHA campaigns and what impact might participating have on the health of their group? A full analysis of each group’s budget and how it changed over time was beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the data from interviews and documents at the end of the projects’ first decades indicated that none had secured long-term funding sources and most expressed anxiety about their ability to maintain their organization.

It was often difficult for LPOs to take advantage of Commission programs since they did not have the expertise or staff available to apply for grants. One result of this lack of expertise was that when services were provided, consultants performed them. Particularly in Southwestern Pennsylvania, LPOs noted that there had not been a great deal of knowledge transfer between the professionals and the local groups. Interestingly, one of the larger LPOs in each region expressed a desire to become a service provider for smaller LPOs (and were somewhat frustrated at the competition represented by the Commissions).²⁷

Although the Commissions would like to ensure a certain level of quality at sites to sustain the tourist itineraries, some groups simply had no interest in becoming more professional. The President of the Covered Bridge LPO, whose savvy and persistence had earned her the ear of her Congressman and had forced the state DOT to change its practices, confessed that she had little interest in growing her organization for growth’s sake, asking, “What would we do with more

money?" 28 Another group in the BVNHC, who struggled to maintain three properties, was wary about applying for grants since the many other volunteers might resent the fact that someone was getting paid to do the organization’s work. Similarly, especially in Blackstone, groups avoided seeking money from government sources since they wanted to avoid “politics.”

The infusion of money into the SPHPC region suddenly greatly increased the size of small groups’ operations. One LPO (not included in the study) that reportedly had a bank account of under $1,000 before the AIHP project soon was overseeing a $900,000 rehabilitation project. 29 One of the project’s flagships, the Railroaders Memorial Museum, went from an operating budget of $99,000 in 1990 to $1.5 million in 1998. 30 How to sustain these expensive facilities with extra earned income was a serious concern to many in the community. If LPOs are expected to contribute to regional economic development, they will need a substantial amount of technical assistance and incentives.

Finally, the regional campaigns did not inspire the formation of any new entity that could take over in the event that the project did not get reauthorized. This was noted with some alarm in a 2005 study exploring options for the BVNHC as its second ten-year authorization was coming to an end. 31 The only group that had formed in the Valley with a region wide focus, ironically, was Corridor Keepers, formed with the sole purpose of getting the BVNHC reauthorized.

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28 Personal interview, 4 February 1998.
29 Personal interview, 2 February 1998.
30 Personal interview, 26 January 1998.
31 Tuxhill, Mitchell and Huffman, Reflecting on the past.
While I did not revisit any of the groups interviewed, the situation of the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum came to my attention and presents one cautionary case. After $16 million of state and federal investment during the late 1990s, by 2003 the museum was forced to close due to crippling debt and attendance far below expectations (about 50,000). Observers suggested a variety of possible reasons for the situation, including a saturated market for rail museums, the failure of professional staff to secure foundation money, and the retirement of the museum’s main Congressional sponsor, Representative Bud Schuster. After the SPHPC spin-off entity, the Westsylvania Heritage Corporation, took over as manager of the project, the museum was able to reopen with a greatly reduced staff. The fate of this flagship raises serious concerns about the necessity and capacity of LPOs to grow and accentuates the need for realistic long-term funding strategies for LPOs that do not rely on an unproven tourist market or line-item appropriations.

II. PARTNERING FEDERAL POLICY AND LOCAL EMPOWERMENT

One area of agreement is that NHAs aim to be a “partnership” strategy, a flexible “place-based” approach to preservation in which local actors are empowered through their participation.

Speaking generally about federal partnership approaches, DeVita notes that it “pose[s] a tension between equity, equality and uniformity on the one hand, and diversity and experimentation on the other.” Smith also points out that while nonprofits feel an intense and focused local mission, government must consistently justify why their allocation of funds is equitable and addresses a

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33 DeVita, Nonprofits and devolution, p. 214.
generally accepted set of needs. When talking about heritage, a very symbolic set of community values also comes into play, as well as a host of expectations about what heritage can accomplish, from entertainment to education, from personal empowerment to regional economic recovery.

A national designation is especially attractive when a community is under threat. In these two economically depressed regions, once known as “America’s hardest working river” and “the nation’s backbone,” there was a pervasive sense that each region’s contribution to the nation’s growth should be “paid back” somehow. Reminiscent of the Great Depression, when the Department of Interior received hundreds of requests from Congressmen, who wanted their districts “suitably recognized” by the NPS with some sort of designation, in the downturn of the 1980s National Heritage Areas became one important symbolic (and potentially economic) package that leaders could deliver.

While this “rent-seeking” may be regrettable, it is perhaps inevitable for several reasons. There has been a long tradition of political sponsorship within the NPS system. Exacerbating this is the lack of comprehensive public policy or a consistent funding base that applies to many sites. Too often this results in preservation evolving into a “special interest” and a “pet project” for legislators. As in the case of the NHAs, designation is often “demand-driven” as opposed to “resource-driven.”

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34 Ibid, p. 188.
35 Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, p.714.
As suggested in Chapter 2, one of the reasons that local advocates must appeal to their Congressional representatives for special funding is due to scarcity of formal preservation programs at all levels of government that provide funds for bricks and mortar projects.\(^{36}\) When isolated from their context, however, even the worthiest local project can make an appealing target, especially those associated with less familiar social history or industrial themes. Representative of the many articles written each year on pork barrel spending, a *New York Times* op-ed piece put it, “This [the adjournment of Congress] is the time of year when you realize how many different kinds of museums and monuments this lucky nation has been blessed with and how all of them are in need of constant infusions of federal aid to stay afloat.” The author continues: “Do you hear anybody saying ‘Elect me and I’ll get George W. Bush’s tax cut through’? Nooo [sic]. They say, ‘Elect me and I’ll deliver the National Monument for Slate Manufacturing.’ Or whatever.”\(^{37}\)

A Pittsburgh newspaper (whose own Steel Industry Heritage Project had received a disappointing federal appropriation of $3 million) editorialized in 1993 that “those of truly national significance deserve federal support” and called for a formal system of assessment and ranking “based on the value of the sites and their contribution to the nation’s history.” The *Post-Gazette* suggests that the task may have to be conducted like the contentious issue of military base closings: “as a package deal by an outside commission leaving members of Congress free from individual guilt…”\(^{38}\) Roe also suggests that the field as a whole, and local organizations in particular, would gain more credibility if their premises and methods were rooted in more

\(^{36}\) Line item funding is also attractive to members of Congress since they are relatively small projects with powerful appeal to local constituents.


\(^{38}\) Pork or preservation.
"scientific" methods, such as those used by environmental groups, instead of just on cultural claims.  

Serious obstacles to rational or comprehensive planning are presented by the intensely local nature of preservation in the United States. This phenomenon is partially a continuation of a long tradition of the United States, but it is also in part deliberately fostered by the federal government. This use of the NPS "seal of approval" to validate places like heritage areas marks a continuation of an emphasis since the 1966 NHPA on encouraging pride in overlooked local resources and "empowering" of residents and LPOs. This local focus is not well-understood by the general public and results in confusion about why every "proud" community is not entitled to federal designation; why local resources in other communities could be considered significant; and how a community could "graduate" from a temporary catalytic program like National Heritage Areas.  

III. NHAS TODAY

How have National Heritage Areas evolved since these two case studies were established? Over the past ten years, the number of heritage areas has grown from 6 to 27, with dozens being proposed each year. Appendix 1 shows that currently in the 109th Congress 26 new areas are proposed for designation or study, a combination of resource-based projects, regions associated with famous Americans, and more conceptual campaigns, like The Journey Through Hallowed

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39 Roe, The natural environment.
40 Discussing the possibility of the region losing its Section 9 protection if the Commission was not reauthorized, the NHC director asked, “How can we be nationally significant in 1996 and not in 1997?” (BVNHC, Annual Report 1996, n.p.)
Ground. Although a National Coordinator monitors and provides support to NHA activities, there is still no formal NPS program for heritage areas. A recent NPS document sums it up like this: “no idea has been as hard to conceptualize and reduce to standards, criteria and measures of public benefit than that of national heritage areas.” And with the added urgency of so many communities waiting in the wings (and the fact that areas consistently resist “graduating” and continue to receive federal funding) the debate continues about the nature, purpose and sustainability of NHAs. What can we learn from the case studies that might add insight to the discussion?

In contrast to the earliest projects, each of which organizers saw as sui generis, there has been some regularization of how NHAs are structured. Since 1996, most NHAs have been authorized for 15 years, with a maximum budget of $10 million over the entire project life; a maximum of $1 million is available for any single year. This lengthened time period seems to be a positive step in light of the two case studies. Overall, despite many individual positive outcomes, ten years after designation the LPOs I interviewed reported relatively little direct impact of the NHA campaign on either public opinion or their own activities; even strong supporters were usually not quite sure what it was the Commissions did. In the Blackstone case, part of this lack of perceived impact was most likely due to the fact that the Commission had to spend a great deal of time gaining credibility in Washington and pushing for reauthorization. The novelty and temporary nature of the NHA program made it more difficult for the Commission to build local

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42 After an extensive study, a bill as recently introduced to extend the BVNHC legislation for 20 more years.
consciousness. The Annual Report of 1994 admits that the Commission “made a sustained effort ... to seek national recognition while recognizing that projects on the ground would suffer.”

The size of the budget for new NHAs is obviously not substantial and does not allow for many large capital projects. As seen in the case studies, particularly in Southwestern Pennsylvania, other government agencies were often strong partners and the actors most likely to be influenced by both the designation and the regional strategy. The extent of the support of state agencies and the opportunities to leverage certain types of federal funding sources should be kept in mind when considering new NHAs; perhaps this should even influence the scope of the project from the outset. A realistic assessment of what public partnership opportunities might be available (and perhaps a required commitment) could help focus these broad projects and allow for more tangible successes early in the campaign. For example, in the Blackstone case, although the state environmental agencies were often praised participation by the economic development agencies was reportedly inconsistent at best. LPOs pointed out that the BVHNC had been trying to serve in this capacity itself, but local actors did not see economic development as a strength of the NPS staff or an area in which the NPS had any particular influence or competitive advantage. In addition, local government support and potential commitment to projects supporting NHA goals should be carefully assessed to ensure project viability and sustainability.

Even though 15 years is an improvement over 10 years, it is still not long enough to develop a self-sustaining project without strong partners ready to pick up the reins. If 15 years is

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44 As described in Chapter 4, the Commission had to be reauthorized after five years and again at ten years.
envisioned as a serious cut-off date, NHAs should work from the outset to try to foster or create new entities that will ensure the sustainability of the campaign. The cases demonstrate that existing organizations do not coalesce into networks or broaden their focus without strong incentives and NHAs should consider what could be done to develop regular meetings and interactions among the public and private sectors. Perhaps large grants that require participation by multiple actors could facilitate this, as long as groups are given incentives to overcome the additional burdens and costs of participating. In addition, if regional promotion is a goal, the NHAs designated should already demonstrate a strong measure of regional integrity. Even though narratives can be employed to enhance the campaigns, the case studies suggest that the public is more likely to have an emotional connection to smaller areas and naturally defined regions, as opposed to areas connected only by stories.

The trend in recent NHAs is away a strong federal presence; only 6 of the 27 NHAs today are managed by federal commission, the rest are managed by state agencies or nonprofit entities. The role of the NPS staff and symbols is also variable and the subject of debate. These case studies show that the NPS represents an immediately recognizable brand in local communities and that it can play an important role in exciting the public and drawing attention to resources. Even though the designation of national park sites has often been politically driven, this does not seem to be well-known or of concern to the general public. The system as a whole is by and large enthusiastically accepted and admired, both in the United States and internationally. To the extent that designation made any impression on LPOs, it was largely due to the involvement of the agency and, to a lesser extent, the prestige of attention from Congressional representatives. National endorsement and presence seems to be an important aspect of the NHA program.
After a large increase in NHA designations, the NPS adopted a somewhat more standardized approach to evaluation in 1999. The evaluation consists of four initial critical steps to be taken before congressional designation, including feasibility studies and analysis of public and private sector support for the project. Ten general suggested criteria were also laid out, involving an analysis of resources, recreational opportunities and economic activity, and other factors. A 2004 GAO report noted the vagueness of these criteria and called for a more systematic process for designation. In February 2005, the National Heritage Partnership Act was introduced, the latest in numerous attempts over the past ten years to establish a formal program and criteria for NHAs. Although it passed the Senate in July 2005, one year later it remains in Committee in the House.

One thing that has changed since these projects were first designated is the attitude of the NPS about NHAs. The agency has moved from resistance to general support of the concept of this type of partnership. However, although agency staff recognize the need for flexibility in how each local program is structured, they feel selection criteria and a formal program (such as those outlined in the current legislation) are “desperately needed.” If more rigor were allowed in selecting areas for designation, the agency would have a more defensible set of resources to work with and a region that had a better chance of attracting local enthusiasm and a national audience. More robust support by NPS headquarters would undoubtedly benefit the heritage area movement. A stronger endorsement of NHAs could, for example, make the regional offices

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46 United States General Accounting Office. 2004. National Park Service: A more systematic process for establishing National Heritage Areas and actions to improve their accountability are needed. Testimony before the committee on energy and natural resources, U.S. Senate.
47 The legislation is 109 S.243
more supportive. As seen in the two case studies, this made a critical difference in the extent to which the projects gained public legitimacy. A recent NPS report cites confusion even within the agency about what designation means and recommends using language that would “convey parity to partnership areas and traditional national parks.”

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a longstanding debate about whether the NPS is the appropriate agency to house federal preservation activities; detractors argue that it is confusing to the public and that preservation is relegated to a second-class status in comparison with natural parks. However, I argue that the agency can play a distinctive role within the diffuse set of preservation activities in the United States. One important aspect of this issue is the preservation field’s links to the environmental movement. Here I join the many scholars that call for increased integration of natural and cultural resources in public policy and this is where I see the NHA program as having great promise. In these case studies, the concept of a region seemed quite abstract to citizens, except as it applied to the river valley or the Allegheny Mountains, or some other natural feature. However, as seen in the Blackstone Valley, even when LPOs did not participate in the campaign, there was broad general acceptance of the need to restore the polluted river. In fact, the prestige associated with the NPS is primarily based on its set of natural resources and their determined protection by park rangers and Smoky the Bear.

The most successful national mobilization campaign is probably still that of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association. In the absence of a unifying symbol like George Washington today, the

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49 CSI, Collaboration and conservation [2001], p.20.

NPS has the potential to broaden American interest in historic preservation by more actively tying it to its traditional park activities. Marketing the NPS more strongly as, perhaps, our “national agency that protects great places,” might help legitimate NHAs and the preservation field as a whole. Recalling the successful environmental public awareness initiatives of the 1960s and 70s, the NPS could launch an information campaign educating the public about ways that those who care about the places they live can work to protect them. Rather than continuing to continually create new categories and brands, an information campaign explicitly tying together the resources of this well known and popular agency might be the best way to foster a grassroots movement throughout the United States.
METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact that National Heritage Area projects have on local preservation organizations and through this knowledge develop a better understanding of the dynamics of heritage partnerships between the federal government and grassroots actors.

I. CASE STUDY SELECTION

I chose two of the four earliest National Heritage Areas, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor (BVNHC) and the Southwestern Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission (SPHPC) as the foci of my dissertation analysis. I chose these cases because they were the "most different" of the four with respect to the issues of association with the federal government and regional coherence. The BVNHC is the heritage area most closely tied to the National Park Service and its regional office, while the SPHPC positioned itself as a maverick entity and stressed its distinction from the NPS. The Blackstone Valley is the most naturally defined region, whereas Southwestern Pennsylvania is the most ambiguous and self-consciously constructed.

I felt that the differences between the two cases might yield insights about the part that the NPS plays in shaping public perceptions about national designation, the viability of mobilizing cooperative activity over a large region, and the extent to which regional identity can be manufactured.

II. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In the initial stage of the research I reviewed the planning and policy documents that laid the groundwork for, set up, and guided the development of these NHAs. Administrative histories, annual reports, and cultural resource management plans provided information about past and current activities.

This research, combined with interviews by Commission staff and advocates in each region, provided me with initial lists of LPOs to interview. On trips to each region in 1996 I conducted interviews with representatives from some of the largest organizations, who also provided me with additional names.

Because of the breadth of the scope of the projects, and the lists of potential “partners,” I included a range of types of groups within my definition of a “local preservation organization.”
In addition to historical societies, historic sites and advocacy groups, I included several tourism related organizations that had worked closely with the Commissions.

As noted earlier, all of the organizations I selected for study had been involved in a relatively substantial way with the campaigns. In the case of the Blackstone, I contacted every group in the main Commission public awareness brochure highlighting heritage sites, “Historic Places of the Blackstone River Valley.” (Since I was interested in how groups had developed or changed due to involvement with the Commission, I only included groups from towns within the original corridor boundaries.) Groups either had stewardship over the sites illustrated or represented the main local contact associated with a site. I was able to interview 7 of the 8 groups listed in Massachusetts and 3 of the 4 groups listed in Rhode Island. Several other groups were recommended through key informants or through my own research, for a total of 14 groups.

In the case of Southwestern Pennsylvania, I focused on four counties due to the size of the region. Cambria and Blair Counties were the geographic center of the project and the original focus of the project at its inception. With the major sites in Johnstown and Altoona, these counties represented the most visible Commission investment. The two other counties, Indiana and Bedford, did participate in the SPHPC effort but to a lesser extent. Much larger sections of these counties were rural, in contrast to the industrial character of Cambria and Blair Counties. I contacted groups listed in the main Commission public awareness guide, the “Path of Progress” brochure, and was able to interview all of groups in these counties that had sites within the Path boundaries. In addition, I used the County Heritage Guides, review of press material and key informants to find additional groups. I was able to interview about 75% of LPOs that were listed in these county guides, for a total of 18 groups. Nearly all of these groups had received grant funding from the Commission and representatives from the majority of groups had served on Commission committees or attended planning meetings.

To get background information, some interviews of major groups were conducted in 1996. At this time I also conducted interviews with some Commission staff, NPS representatives and key representatives of the National Heritage Area movement. The bulk of the data was collected in interviews conducted in 1997 and 1998 of LPOs, Commission staff and other interested parties in the regions. The BVNHC interviews were conducted between April 1997 and October 1998. The SPHPC interviews were conducted over two weeks in January-February 1998. The rationale for this cut off date was that this point in time represented the end of the ten-year authorization period originally envisioned by Congress and project organizers.

The analysis of groups presented here represents their opinions and operations at that point in time. Similarly, although I have provided some information about how the Commissions have evolved since 1998, the analysis of the Commissions’ activities and attitudes are based on these interviews. Similarly, the list of interviewees includes their title or position at the time of the interview.
I interviewed either a staff member or volunteer board member of each group. In the case of larger groups in each region, I either interviewed multiple people or conducted follow-up interviews to try to get a broader range of opinions and historical experience. I used a structured questionnaire followed by a less formal open-ended conversation. Each interview took at least one hour. The basic topics included the history and general operations of each group and the interviewee’s perceptions of and participation in the Commission’s campaigns. I tried to allow interviewees to express opinions about the national designation or about regional promotion without prompting from me. If they brought up the topics, I asked a series of focused follow-up questions. If they did not bring up the subjects, I asked them at the end of the structured format.

While this may not be a representative sample of all groups in the regions, the fact that all of the groups had been involved in the effort may make it a “best case” scenario of the impact on local groups. Due to turnover typical of volunteer board and nonprofit staff, it is also possible that LPO representatives under-reported the groups past involvement with the Commissions. It is also possible that, although I stressed that I was interested in groups, interviewees gave me their personal opinion rather than an organizational perspective. I tried to compensate for this by supplementing the interviews with an examination of the Commissions’ annual reports, press accounts, and the LPOs’ own newsletters. In examining this additional material, I concentrated on the more recent years, from 1992 to 1998. I conducted several weeks of archival research in both the BVNHC’s offices and at the SPHPC’s archives at the Stapleton Library at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

A list of those interviewed is included below. The first section is a list of groups contacted and the names and titles of those interviewed. The second section is a list of additional people interviewed who were not affiliated with a particular LPO. Because of the sensitivity of some of the statements made by groups and other representatives, I have not included specific names when referencing interviews in the text of the dissertation; rather I have written, for example, “Personal interview, 2 February, 1998.” To protect the privacy of the interviewees, I am not including the corresponding dates with the list of interviewees here.
INTERVIEWEES FROM LPOs

BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY LOCAL PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blackstone River Valley Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Marty Green</td>
<td>Economic Development Dir.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chestnut Hill Meeting House Association</td>
<td>William Perry</td>
<td>Dir. of Tourism, Visitors Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>Douglas Historical Society</td>
<td>Margaret Carroll</td>
<td>Board member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heritage Homecoming</td>
<td>Nick Langhant</td>
<td>Board President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Central Falls, Inc.</td>
<td>Spaulding Aldrich</td>
<td>Chair</td>
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<tr>
<td>Main Street 2000 (Woonsocket, RI)</td>
<td>Mariana Bauman</td>
<td>Board President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Millville Historical Society</td>
<td>Diane Fournaris</td>
<td>Marketing Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pawtucket Preservation Society</td>
<td>Margaret Carroll</td>
<td>Board member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preservation Worcester</td>
<td>Janet Zwolinksy</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>Slater Mill Historic Site</td>
<td>James Igoe</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>Sutton Historical Society</td>
<td>Gail Fowler-Mohanty</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uxbridge Historical Society</td>
<td>Louis Hutchins</td>
<td>Curator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Waters Farm Preservation, Inc.</td>
<td>Pat Malone</td>
<td>Former Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Willard House &amp; Clock Museum</td>
<td>Ben McLaren</td>
<td>Board President</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Paul Brosnihan</td>
<td>Volunteer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mae Wrona</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Bud Gurney</td>
<td>Board member</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Stephens</td>
<td>Curator</td>
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SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA LOCAL PRESERVATION ORGANIZATIONS

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<th>Group</th>
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<tr>
<td>Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum</td>
<td>Peter Barton</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedford County Visitors Bureau</td>
<td>Dennis Tice</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bedford County Covered Bridge</td>
<td>Sandra Crawford</td>
<td>President</td>
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<tr>
<td>Blair County Historical Society</td>
<td>Tim Van Scoyoc</td>
<td>Curator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C&amp;I Trail Council</td>
<td>Dee Columbus</td>
<td>Board member</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallitzin Area Tourist Council</td>
<td>Dr. Art Julian</td>
<td>Board member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic Saltsburg, Inc.</td>
<td>Ann Palmer</td>
<td>Board member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historical &amp; Genealogical Society of Indiana Co.</td>
<td>Alice Lackner</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Johnstown Area Heritage Association</td>
<td>Richard Burkert</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dan Ingram</td>
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<td>Ron Carnevale</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Elizabeth Salome</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pamela Roub</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td>James Abrams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kay Williams</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Barbara Yetsko</td>
<td>President</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kahleen Shuler</td>
<td>Museum Director</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rep. Gary Haluska</td>
<td>Board member</td>
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<td></td>
<td>William McMinn</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<td></td>
<td>William Cramer</td>
<td>Director</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
INTERVIEWEES NOT ASSOCIATED WITH LPOs

**BVNHC Staff**
- Micheal Creasey: Deputy Director
- Liz McConnell: Cooperative Agreement Specialist
- Linda Neal: Liaison, NPS Northeast Field Office
- Diane Wendland: Community Planner/Landscape Architect

**SPHPC Staff**
- John Bennett: Program Manager
- T. Allan Comp: Resource Manager
- Randy Cooley: Executive Director

**NPS representatives**
- Brenda Barrett: National Coordinator, National Heritage Areas
- Rolf Diamant: Superintendent, Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site
- Samuel Stokes: Chief, Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

**Penn State**
- Dr. Deborah Kerstetter: Professor, School of Hotel, Restaurant and Recreation Management
- Dr. Chuck Strauss: Professor, School of Forest Resources

**Other affiliations**
- Shelley Mastran: Executive Director, National Coalition for Heritage Areas
- Elizabeth Watson: Chair, National Coalition for Heritage Areas
- Phil Zorich: Librarian and archivist, SPHPC collection, Indiana University of Pennsylvania
- Michael Lefevre: Community Preservation Coordinator, Penn Historical & Museum Comm.
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APPENDIX

National Park Service
National Heritage Areas

Updated May 1, 2006

HERITAGE AREA BILLS INTRODUCED, 109th CONGRESS

Program legislation
National Heritage Partnership Act (S. 243, H.R. 760) passed the Senate 7.27

National heritage area study bills
Chattahoochee Trace National Heritage Corridor (S. 2148, H.R. 4864)
Northeastern North Carolina Heritage Area (H.R. 1087)
Northern Neck National Heritage Area Study Act (H.R. 73)
St. Croix National Heritage Area (H.R. 61) passed the House 5.17 as part of H.R. 938; passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Southern Campaign of the Revolution Heritage Area (H.R. 1289, S. 1121) passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Trail of the Ancients Heritage Area (S. 1414)
Western Reserve National Heritage Area (H.R. 412) passed the House 3.14; passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
TOTAL: 9 study bills introduced on 7 areas

National heritage area designation bills
Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area (H.R. 1192, S. 973)
Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area (S. 200, H.R. 2099, H.R. 2297) passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203; H.R. 1099 passed the House 12.19
Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (S. 204, H.R. 522) passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Bleeding Kansas National Heritage Area (H.R. 413, S. 175) passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership (S. 322) passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Cherokee Overhill Territory National Heritage Area (H.R. 3158)
Confluence National Heritage Corridor (S. 2114)
Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area (H.R. 87, S. 825) passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (H.R. 956, S. 1898)
Great Basin National Heritage Route (S. 249) passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Gullah/Geechee Cultural Heritage Corridor (H.R. 694) passed the House 3.14.05; passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Journey Through Hallowed Ground National Heritage Area (H.R. 5195, S. 2645)
Mississippi River National Heritage Area (S. 1721)
National Mormon Pioneer Heritage Area (S. 163) passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Northern Plains National Heritage Area (S. 1544)
Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area (S. 63, H.R. 732) passed the House 5.17.05 as part of H.R. 938; passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (S. 2037)
South Park National Heritage Area (H.R. 4818, S. 2336)
Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (S. 429, H.R. 938) passed the House 5.17.05; passed the Senate 7.27 as part of S. 203
TOTAL: 30 designation bills introduced on 19 areas

Source: National Park Service, National Heritage Areas program

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