



# The Lowell Volunteer Partner

Issue No. 5 • Spring, 2007

Lowell National Historical Park

## Firefighting and Other Park Volunteering



Two Lowell Volunteer Firefighters in a photograph provided by Lieutenant Jason Strunk. The full photograph will appear in an exhibition at the Mogan Cultural Center beginning June 10

In this issue, you will find information about volunteering for events like the Lowell Summer Music Series, Earth Day and Doors Open Lowell.

There are many other park opportunities: Trolley Crew Flagger (page 6), Assistant Museum Teacher (See story on **Pam Meppelink** on page 5), Volunteer Park Ranger and Volunteer Maintenance Assistant (page 3).

How about learning the archaic skills of a **Lock Tender** (page 4), or trying out pioneering volunteer positions as **Gatehouse Keepers** and **Canal Stewards** (page 4)?

If you are looking to add to your life experiences (or your resume), consider becoming a volunteer at Lowell National Historical Park or one of its many partners. Call 978-275-1740 or email [Lowell\\_NHP\\_Volunteers@nps.gov](mailto:Lowell_NHP_Volunteers@nps.gov).

**The Mogan Cultural Center wants your photographs for exhibits on Lowell Firefighting and Boxing in Lowell. Just letting the park scan your old photographs for these and other special exhibits qualifies you as a park volunteer. See page 5.**

## Earth Day Clean-up Seeks Hundreds of Volunteers

The Earth Day Clean-up on Saturday, April 28 is one of several major events happening during **Earth Week Plus**. Like last year, the starting place for the clean-up will be the Middlesex Community College Cafeteria. The time to show up is 8 AM. If you are running late you may still go to the cafeteria and sign up.

Other Earth Week Plus events include the **Rain Barrel Distribution** on April 21, the **Open Lowell Community Greenhouse** on April 22, and the food, music, education, and fun of **EarthFest** on April 28 after the clean-up.

**See page 2 for locations, hours, and more details.**



Picking up rubbish and still having fun during Earth Day 2006: Deb Harding (left) and Diane Lemire.

## Do You Know Jack?



Orange County Regional History Center collection

## Volunteer to Staff On The Road: Jack Kerouac's Original Scroll Manuscript Exhibit

By Jack Herlihy, Kerouac Exhibit Curator

Lowell National Historical Park is recruiting volunteers to assist in staffing the Jack Kerouac **On The Road, Original Scroll Manuscript Exhibit** that will be at the Boott Cotton Mills Museum Gallery from June 15 to September 14, 2007. Candidates should have an interest and background in American History, American Literature, (Beat Literature a plus), Lowell History, or the Humanities. Kerouac enthusiasts and those who understand Kerouac's work in the larger context of American Literature and his connection to the Lowell community are welcome to apply.

We are particularly seeking folks that can make weekend commitments for three to four hour shifts to assist in exhibit staffing. Availability for an occasional special event that will coincide with Kerouac programming throughout the summer is also a plus.

For more information, call 978-970-5241 and ask for Jack Herlihy.

## Earth Week Plus: Rain Barrels, a Greenhouse, a Clean-up and a Festival



**HARNESSED-UP!** Why practice climbing skills in the mountains when you can scale the relatively gentle canal slopes of Lowell and pick up wind blown trash. Join the **Lowell Canalwaters Cleaners**.

**Earth Week runs April 21 through April 28. All events go on 'rain or shine'.**

**Rain Barrel Distribution on Saturday, April 21, 12 to 4 PM:** At the greenhouse in front of the park's Maintenance Building (intersection of Aiken and Father Morissette), the city will distribute rain barrels for collection and conservation of water (\$66.50 each). Call Gunther Wellenstein, city recycling coordinator, at 978-446-7277 for more details.

**Greenhouse Fun on Sunday, April 22, 12 to 4 PM:** At the greenhouse (intersection of Aiken and Father Morissette), learn about community gardening and other Lowell environmental efforts with lots of hands-on fun in celebration of Earth Day. Call Deb Harding at 978-710-3320 for details.

**Earth Day cleanup on Saturday, April 28, 8 a.m. to 12:30 PM:** Come dressed to get dirty and make a dent in a winter's worth of litter and debris along our canals and waterways! Bring your own gloves for picking up trash, but some recycled gloves will be pro-

vided, if you do not have any. Pre-register at [Lowell\\_NHP\\_Volunteers@nps.gov](mailto:Lowell_NHP_Volunteers@nps.gov) or by calling the Lowell NHP Volunteer Office at 978-275-1740. Location: Kick-off with speakers and site assignments at Middlesex Community College Cafeteria, East Merrimack St., next to the Doubletree Hotel.

**EarthFest on Saturday, April 28, 12 noon to 3 p.m.:** Environmentally themed educational fun with live music and lots of hands-on activities for families. Call Bev Perna of Tsongas Industrial History Center at 978-275-5100 for details. Location: Rogers Middle School on South Common.

**Bonus Event: Great American Clean-up on Saturday, May 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.:** Join with Keep Lowell Beautiful, Lowell Canalwaters Cleaners, and neighborhood groups in city-wide clean-up. Call Lowell NHP volunteer office at 978-275-1740 for details.

## Introducing a Free City-Wide Resource: The Community Gardens Greenhouse

By Janice Pokorski

The Community Gardens Greenhouse focuses on educational gardening workshops that encourage collaboration, creativity and innovation while fostering relationships that transcend ethnicity, character, class, and age. Environmental development is an increasingly important aspect of Lowell's open space and recreation plan. When people have an appreciation for the natural environment, they're more willing to care for and value their property, parks in their neighborhoods, and require that they be kept clean, safe and accessible.

This project accomplishes two primary objectives. It establishes strategic horticultural, environmental enhancement and community-building initiatives in our city and neighborhoods. At the same time, and perhaps, more importantly, it engages residents in highly urbanized areas in developing conservation and community ethics that reinforce the vital connection between community conservation, local empowerment and volunteerism.

Although community gardening and environmental initiatives on their own cannot solve all the problems associated with urban blight, they are an effective way of creating momentum for change. The Community Gardens Greenhouse partners with Lowell residents and local resources that support growth within the horticultural community.

Opportunities to Lowell Acre residents' include direct land and field work, practical workshops involving the cultivation requirements of vegetables, fruit cultivars, herbs, flowers, and the specifics of soil management including composting, seed sowing and fertilization, alternative methods of weed, insect, and disease control, as well as participating in and learning about Earth Day and Arbor Day projects and celebrations.

Special workshops, seminars and community forums on horticultural topics of specific issues expose residents to the interconnection of horticulture, agriculture, politics, and health.

This community gardening initiative represents the determination of the Community Gardens Greenhouse volunteers and newly activated residents to improve the overall quality of life in the face of often overwhelming obstacles such as crumbling abandoned buildings and vacant lots, criminal elements and non-empowered residents. See their website at <http://www.communitygardensgreenhouse.org>.



Left to right: Janice Pokorski with Ton Seang, Thong So, and Hum Aun sharing a good laugh.

## Volunteer Maintenance Positions: The Tradition of Preserving and Protecting Cultural and Natural Resources

In many parks, the Maintenance 'Rangers' along with the Law Enforcement Rangers are the only employees that the visitor sees. The questions that NPS maintenance employees get asked are often the same those heard at the visitor center. The general public may get confused because the maintenance staff wears a similar uniform and is expected to represent the park and the National Park Service in the same manner as every other employee.



Two UML Ski Team members at the Lower Locks on April 14, 2007 assisting with constructing a walkway improvement. Matthew Flynn is on the left and Jonathan Hillman.

The real emphasis of maintenance positions though is to preserve and protect the resource through remedying safety problems, building new facilities, fixing, cleaning, beautifying, mowing and gardening. At Lowell NHP the volunteer maintenance positions are filled by people across the spectrum: retired people, the already employed, people who just want the exercise, neighbors who want to improve an adjacent park area, and youth groups like the Spindle City Corps.

Why would you want to consider volunteer maintenance jobs? You are in high school or college and you want to earn some money during the summer time and work for the park. (See sidebar on "Financially Supported Volunteering".) Perhaps, you have a job where you are talking to people all day long and you just want to get out of the office, exercise, and breathe fresh air.



Sarah Hallock, Another ski team member

You may want to try an exotic job like **Volunteer Lock Tender**, which is an almost extinct opportunity in the job market. Perhaps, you may know the art of carpentry, construction, and automobile repair. You could even fill a niche that hasn't been conceived. Find out and contact the Volunteer Office at 978-275-1740.

## Financially Supported Volunteering?

The **Student Conservation Association** gives its participants small stipends to work in summer positions throughout the National Park Service. Lowell National Historical Park has benefited from the past several years by hosting SCA's. More information about this program can be found at [www.thesca.org](http://www.thesca.org). By the way, SCA's are not always students.

**Work-Study Students: The University of Massachusetts - Lowell and Middlesex Community College** have graciously provided their students the opportunity to receive experience at Lowell NHP. Work-Study students, paid with federal funding, often are employed on campus, but as far as the park is concerned they are 'volunteering' to help our operations.

**Operation ABLE**, one of the many programs at the **Career Center of Lowell** at 18 John Street. The goal of Operation ABLE is to put displaced employees over the age of 50 back in the workforce. The park's Mogan Cultural Center and the Interpretation Division have benefited from the services of two individuals *who chose* to work at Lowell NHP instead of other partnering organizations. The Volunteer Office and the park is very grateful to Operation ABLE and the Career Center.

**Spindle City Corps**, a program of **Community Teamwork Inc.** and the National Park Service sends teams of youth to work on outdoor projects for the park during the summer. The youth clear vegetation, paint, assist with landscaping, and other projects, while getting paid. The park provides supervision and an educational atmosphere, but otherwise receives the services of the youth groups, who are actually paid by a federal grant.

## Volunteer Park Rangers: A Proud Tradition

The job title has the same ring as Park Ranger. The tradition of park ranger goes back to the U.S. Army securing Yellowstone, America's first National Park. The proud tradition continues with the National Park Service, founded back in 1916, and its mission to preserve and protect America's special natural and historic places.

Volunteer Park Rangers at Lowell NHP can be Work-Study students at UMass-Lowell and Middlesex Community College, interns from other colleges, Student Conservation Association members, or traditional volunteers. (See sidebar on compensated volunteering.) They can work at the Visitor Center giving out general information, the Boott Cotton Mills giving short talks at the mill model, or giving longer tours in the canal system, gatehouses, and along the historic city streets.

Besides the great position title, benefits include getting training so that you can expound on themes about the onset of large scale industrialization, the change from an agrarian to urban society, the crucial role of women in assisting this transformation, early canal transportation, water power and so much more.



Mike Gaulin started volunteering in high school. He can be seen working in the Visitor Center, the Boott Mills, and canal tours. Amy Glowacki, photographer.

If this interests you, contact the Volunteer Office at the park.

## Learn the Archaic Skills of Lock Tending



Anna Augusta, Maintenance Employee and Lock Tender Extraordinaire

Just mention in a conversation that you have experience working as a **Lock Tender** and watch jaws drop as you explain the job. List your experience on your resume helping to lift boats weighing tons as much as ten feet in the water and you will induce much curiosity, wonderment and quite a distraction at the personnel office.

Consider that lock tending is a very rare position in the United States. It is performed in a few state parks and at the C&O Canal National Historical Park in Maryland and Washington, D.C. Very few people ever get a chance to do or even see this activity. Yet, the Lowell canals are in your backyard and here is your chance.

If you are physically able to move a very heavy canal gate arm mounted on a pivot, use your back properly, follow safety procedures, and work consistently 4 or 5 hours per week in the summer and early fall, you too could learn the archaic skills of being Lock Tender. This job is available on a daily basis from late June through early September and on weekends, September through Columbus Day.

Reflect on what your career may have been if you were working in 18th, 19th, and early 20th century America. **Give the Volunteer Office a call at 978-275-1740.** We would like to talk to you about this almost bygone position that once employed many individuals and families living in special lock houses along America's thousands of miles of canal ways.

## Why Being a Gatehouse Guide Is Very "Cool" On a Hot Summer Day

Nestled in the heart of the downtown on the edge of the Merrimack Canal is an unusual red brick structure that is completely different from the other four or five story structures on Merrimack Street.



Looking a bit like a stranded cottage from a bygone era, this beautiful build-

ing catches the eyes of many Lowell visitors. They ask: "*What is this place?*"

The unique building is the **Moody Street Feeder Gatehouse**. It is "cool", because it is so unexpected. It is a throwback to the "Canal Age" heyday, when swiftly moving waters powered the giant mill buildings.

Inside this gatehouse you will find huge gears and an elaborate mechanism to lift and drop underwater and in-pipe gates. This particular gatehouse lets extra water into the Merrimack Canal from a subterranean canal-way that runs under the extension of Moody Street.

During summer weekends for the past four years, downtown visitors fortunate enough to encounter **Barb and Bill**

**Rawnsley**, have learned quite a bit about the fascinating engineered canal underground. Being Lowellians, Barb and Bill know local history and many good stories. Their gatehouse is a great place to hang out and get out of the sun or rain.

Barb and Bill Rawnsley invite you to help them. The Rawnsley's (and other park rangers) will train you so that you could talk to visitors about the gatehouse, its gears, the underground canals, the might of Lowell's water power, and many other sundry topics.

**Call the Volunteer Office for the more information about the Gatehouse and Canal Steward Volunteer Positions at 978-276-1740.**

## Two Gatehouses Needing Volunteer Adoption and Stewardship

### Lower Locks



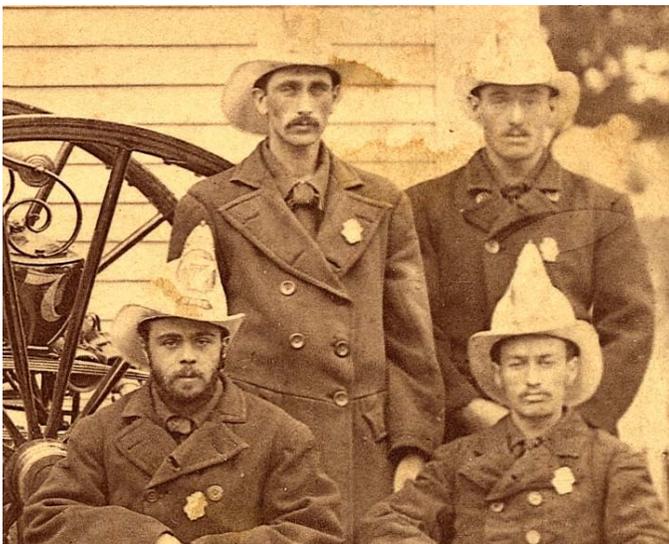
### Swamp Locks



*Both Lower Locks and Swamp Locks are available for volunteer adoption. These gatehouses have important stories to tell.*

*Volunteers are also needed to patrol the canal ways, meet visitors, and report on damage, maintenance and safety issues.*

## Volunteer Contributors Hope for Knock Out With Boxing and Firefighting Exhibits



Upcoming programming at the Mogan Cultural Center will feature the one-two punch of Boxing and Firefighting in Lowell. Picture provided by Lieutenant Jason Strunk.

**Here is how you can help:** The Mogan Cultural Center seeks assistance from anyone in the community who has information and pictures about Lowell City Firefighting. The Firefighters of

Lowell Exhibit will open on June 10. If you want to become a volunteer contributor to this effort contact Lieutenant Jason Strunk of the Lowell Fire Department at [jstrunk866@aol.com](mailto:jstrunk866@aol.com).

Boxing has had a long colorful history in the city of Lowell and the exhibit opening in October 7, of 2007 should be quite a blockbuster. If you want to contribute to this project, please contact one of several committee members: **Keith Rudy at 978-996-6738, Kathy Frechette at 978-458-3702, and Mehmed Ali at 978-275-1826.**

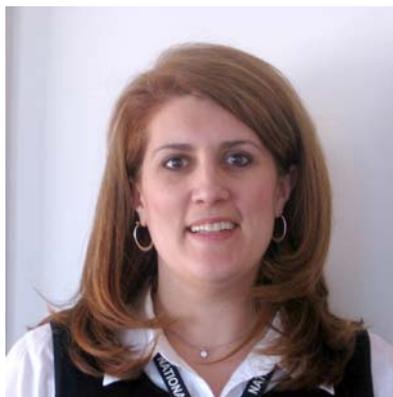
Currently, much of the information that has been collected deals with the period of about 1905 to the present. According to **Mehmed Ali**, the Coordinator of the Mogan Cultural Center, contributors have not been able to find much from the 19th century.

The mission of the exhibits at the Mogan Center is to spark interest in history, educate the public, and collect information that otherwise might become lost for future research purposes. Exhibits at the Mogan Center have been occurring since the 1989.

In the 1990's an attempt was made to make photographic copies of all materials in these exhibits. Now all the photographs and display items can be scanned easily and saved for posterity in digital format. Your temporary contributions to the exhibits (you will get your items back), will help researchers and students for a long time to come.

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## A Volunteer Gets Hired Into a Paid Position



Pam Meppelink, April 2007

She came to the Tsongas Center with experience volunteering at the American Textile History Museum and being a home maker for her children. In fact her experience

It does not happen often, but occasionally volunteers get offered paid positions. **Pam Meppelink** is fortunate enough to be one of the lucky ones. She started work as a Volunteer Assistant Museum Teacher at the Tsongas Industrial History Center and now she has the position of Museum Teacher.

working at home got her interested in the whole field of education. She particularly enjoys the "Ah-Ha moment", when young people suddenly understand things and make connections.

Pam has always loved history and the national parks. Growing up in the Midwest, via Lansing, Wisconsin, and St. Louis, she frequently visited eastern and western parks with her family.

Pam remembers her first few days as a volunteer at the Tsongas Center being a bit overwhelming. "The park covers a rich texture of interrelated themes of technology, history, and culture." There is a lot to learn professionally as well. At the Tsongas, volunteers get to see so many teaching styles. There are also the hands on activities that help make the experience so much fun for the students.

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## Summer Music Series Seeks Customer Oriented Regulars

The Lowell Summer Music Series is a great way to get out of the house on Friday or Saturday nights, volunteer for the park, and enjoy great live music. You could work the gates, sell tickets, serve food, work in security, or help keep aisles clear while roving through the audience. Excellent customer service skills are required. *You should commit to work Fridays or Saturdays for the whole series that runs from the end of June through the first week of September.*

John Marciano, its director, says that musically this will be "the biggest and best season in 18 year history of the Lowell Summer Music Series by far." This likely means that there will be larger crowds flocking to see the selected musical talent. It also means that the volunteers will have to depend on each other ever more to make sure that the operations are running smoothly.

**Interested in the Lowell Summer Music Series? Call John Marciano at 978-275-1783.**



Sue MacNamara at 2006 Marcia Ball Concert. Ray Houde, Volunteer Photographer

## Doors Open Opportunities

By Christina Briggs

Now in its 5th year, the Doors Open-Lowell event provides an inside look at the preservation of over thirty of Lowell's historic buildings, many not normally open to the public. Buildings will be open to the public on Friday evening, May 18th from 6-9pm and on Saturday May 19th from 11:00-6:00. Volunteers are needed to staff sidewalk information booths and historic building sites. The primary job of the sidewalk information site volunteer is to direct Doors Open visitors to open house sites and to provide general information to visitors on dining, shopping, rest-rooms and other Lowell amenities when asked. Volunteers at historic building sites are needed to help guide visitors through the buildings. Contact 978-275-1740 for more information.

## Trolley Museum Opportunities

By Christina Briggs

The Seashore Trolley Museum, Kennebunkport, Maine recently opened a satellite museum on Shattuck Street in Lowell, Massachusetts; The National Streetcar Museum at Lowell. The museum's current exhibit, "On Track: Transit in the American City" presents the history of public transit in Lowell within the context of the broader American transit history story. The exhibit provides information on the complexity of the developing industrial landscape and the role that affordable transportation played in the creation of industrial cities such as Lowell. In partnership with the Lowell National Historical Park, the museum also operates an historic New Orleans streetcar on the Park's industrial rail line.



Volunteers are needed to help staff the museum so that the museum can increase its visitation hours and operate its programs with greater consistency. The exhibit is currently open year-round Thursdays through Sundays from 11:00 until 4:00. The trolley operates March through November from 11:00 until 4:00. Volunteers are needed to staff both the exhibit as well as to assist in flagging the operating trolley. Volunteers would receive training in both the exhibit and trolley operation so that they could rotate through both positions. Volunteers would be encouraged to participate if interested in the on-going development of museum exhibits and programs.

Volunteers expressing an interest in operating a trolley could participate in regular training programs provided by the Seashore Trolley Museum to become certified operators. Contact 978-275-1740 or [Lowell\\_NHP\\_Volunteers@nps.gov](mailto:Lowell_NHP_Volunteers@nps.gov).

**Looking To Change Tracks?  
Become a Trolley Volunteer.  
Call 967-275-1740.**



## Introducing: Walk-In And Volunteer At the Last Minute

This summer beginning June 2nd on Saturdays through September 29, you can volunteer for a project at 'Last Minute' as a walk-in. Most projects anticipated at this time involve manual labor. Call 978-275-1740 in advance if you want to find out what you may be doing or if you are bringing a large group that we need to plan for. Otherwise, just show up by 9 AM at the Maintenance Shop on Aiken Street.

It may be possible to select from a number of activities. You could be painting, looking for graffiti to report, working in the **Community Greenhouse**, picking up trash, or doing any number of things. If it is raining, call 978-275-1740 and find out if a different location and an indoor activity is planned.

## Volunteer Calendar Events

Some of the dates and times may be subject to weather or last minute changes.

April 21 from 12-4 PM: Earth Day: Rain Barrels & Greenhouse Tours. See story on Earth Week Plus events page 2.

April 22 from 12-4 PM: Earth Day Community Gardens Open Greenhouse.

April 28, 8:30-12: Earth Day Clean-up & 12-3: EarthFest @Rogers School

May 5: Great American Cleanup and Canal Cleanup

May 8: Volunteer Council Meeting, 6PM @ Booth 5th Floor

May 12: Opening of ArtVenture

May 17-19: Doors Open Lowell

June 2: Acre and Western Canal Clean-up

June 15: Opening of a Kerouac's Scroll Exhibit

June 30: Lowell Summer Music Series begins

July 12: Employee and Volunteer Night at the Spinners Ballpark, \$6.50 per person. Picnic or Barbeque before the game. More details to come.

July 27-29: Lowell Folk Festival

For more information about how to sign up as a volunteer for the park and other park partners call **978-275-1740** or send an email to [Lowell\\_NHP\\_Volunteers@nps.gov](mailto:Lowell_NHP_Volunteers@nps.gov).

## The New Location of the Volunteer Office and the Recent Open House

Thanks to many of you who attended the Open House held on March 13th on the Fifth Floor of the Boott Cotton Mills Museum building. About 75 of you visited us over four hours. It was great to see you again and we hope that you had to opportunity to find old friends and meet new people.

Our special thanks go out to volunteers **David Chieh, Aphrodite Vierkant, Janice Pokorski, and Debbie Harding** who helped us over the evening. **Ray Houde** showed his excellent photographic essay on the flood of 2006. We also want to thank Park Ranger **Jim Roberts**, who presented a special program on the Canal System of Lowell and **Alex Demas**, musician and Park Ranger, who graciously helped us out at the last minute by playing banjo tunes.



David Chieh at an information table.

*The Volunteer Partner contains stories by Chris Briggs, Janice Pokorski, Jack Herlihy, and Paul Mueller. For this issue the editor was Paul Mueller. Become a contributor! Contact 978-275-1740 or [Lowell\\_NHP\\_Volunteers@nps.gov](mailto:Lowell_NHP_Volunteers@nps.gov).*