

2016
National Park Service
CENTENNIAL

Lowell National Historical Park

2014/2015 REPORT

Centennial Goal for the National Park Service:

*Connect with and create the next generation
of park visitors, supporters, and advocates.*



Visitors

Guests, tourists, sightseers, travelers, explorers, trekkers...

The park has taken a fresh look at utilizing community engagement methods to connect with new audiences and invite them to be park visitors. This focus has broadened our understanding of who our current audiences are and encouraged us to reach out and invite new constituents to join in discovering the many facets of Lowell. Ongoing efforts are providing numerous avenues for the community and general public to discover and rediscover Lowell NHP. In this year leading up to the NPS Centennial, all are invited to “Find Your Park,” here in Lowell and across the country. This entrée welcomes all, and offers potential building blocks for future roles as supporters and advocates

Strategic Encounters

LoWellness Festival: More than 275 people from Lowell’s diverse communities came out on a rainy day for the LoWellness Festival at the Boott Cotton Mills in April 2014. The LoWellness Festival forged new community partnerships that established the local health and medical care communities’ use of parks as a tool for healthy living. Partners included Lowell Community Health Center, Lowell General Hospital, Mill City Grows, WIC, Angkor Dance Troupe, Greater Lowell Boys and Girls Club, Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust, and Lowell Recreation Department.

Lowell 3rd Grade Civics Day: One day in early June, over 1,100 Lowell third-grade students visited the park as one of several Civics Day experiences in downtown Lowell. Asked “Who do the national parks belong to?” they departed understanding the answer, “ALL of US!”

Two Very Active Weeks: Lowell Kids Week and PLAYcation take place during school vacation weeks in February and April. In both weeks, thousands of youth and their families engage in an array of free, interactive activities offered by the park and over twenty partners throughout the city and enjoy a fee-free weekend at the Boott Cotton Mills Museum and at National Park areas across the country.

Lowell: The Continuing Revolution premiered at the Visitor Center in April 2015. The film is the culmination of a two-year effort, working with NPS Harpers Ferry Center and Aperture Films of California. The park took on the challenge of sharing Lowell’s many-layered story in a 17-minute orientation film. The city became the film studio with the brick walkway in front of the Mogan Cultural Center re-framed as a busy 19th-century street and “mill girls” returning to operate the looms at the Boott Mills and worship at St. Anne’s Episcopal Church.

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Left: Growing green at the LoWELLness Festival.

Right: Popping up in the community. Orientation filming sees Mill Girls return to the weaverroom.



Creative Connections

Photography Weekend: With a robust itinerary of photography events throughout Lowell in May 2014, the park hosted “Who is Lowell?: Portraits of the City,” an exhibit showcasing the photographic work of students from Lowell High School’s Freshman Academy at the Boott Cotton Mills Museum.

Ceramic Program: Working with Cambodian master sculptor Yary Livan of Middlesex Community College, local families went hands-on creating and firing their own works in the traditional wood-fired kiln located at the park maintenance facility.

Lowell Folk Festival 2014: Over 20 outstanding musical acts, folk crafts, and foodways made the festival the place to be the last full weekend in July. The street parade kicking off the Festival included community members bearing the flags of over 15 countries alongside recent US citizens carrying US flags.



Lowell Summer Music Series: For 25 years, the Series has offered musical events at Boarding House Park. This past summer saw some new sounds as well as returning favorites in Amos Lee, Trombone Shorty, Lyle Lovett, and Marcia Ball. For the younger set, the Series presents Free Fun for Kids, hosting thousands at the park for weekday events including trolley rides and rangers offering hands-on activities.

Your City Saturdays and Your City Summer: These programs build local audiences of families with young children by offering creative, intergenerational activities on a drop-in basis, and engaging young visitors in actively connecting Lowell’s past and present.

Dream Rocket: In partnership with Kansas-based International Fiber Collaborative, the park and over 900 students in Massachusetts and across the nation participated in a unique art project. Students used textiles and fibers to illustrate the theme of “Who Am I? Personal Connections to Immigration or Migration.” These pieces were displayed at the Boott Cotton Mills Museum and will join thousands of others to create a giant piece of art work that will cover a 385 foot reproduction of NASA’s next generation rocket.

Portraits of a Family: The park partnered with the Justice Resource Institute’s GRIP Program to mount and install an art exhibit entitled “Portraits of a Family.” Teens created a series of collages that reflected their own lives and experiences.

In March, the park’s visitor center hosted a presentation and community discussion of *The Golden Door*, a play using song, story, and dance to highlight different perspectives on the immigrant experience.

Left: Crafting ceramics at the Cambodian Kiln.

Reaching Out

Meet Us on the Merrimack: Many regularly stroll, bike, or otherwise travel the Merrimack riverfront walkway at the DCR’s Vandenberg Esplanade. For the second summer, Rangers shared a glimpse of the park’s offerings with short boat rides for visitors along this popular venue at the Bellegarde Boathouse.

Lowell Women’s Week: In March 2015, the park joined in celebrating 20 years of Lowell Women’s Week acknowledging the contributions of the women of Lowell – from those who have come before to those here today.

UMass Lowell Parent Tours: This was the third year for the park collaborating with UMass Lowell to offer a series of evening tours for UMass Lowell Student Parent Orientation.

Downtown Lowell First Thursdays: In its second year, this grass-roots initiative encourages residents to come downtown after work to check out art galleries, museums, restaurants, and other local businesses in Lowell. Visitors are encouraged to “Be inspired, hear music, make art, and start your weekend early in Lowell!”

Pop Up Museum: For Lowell’s Harvest Festival and National Public Lands Day, park staff “popped up” temporary, community-created exhibits, working with visitors to add their own objects and stories to the display and making connections with their neighbors’ stories.

Holiday Happenings: Park staff hosted make-and-take craft activities at the Visitor Center in partnership with the city’s Halloween Trick or Treat Stroll attracting over 450 children to their national park. The park rolled out its “Holly Jolly Trolley” as part of the City Of Lowell’s “Festival of Lights,” complete with Ranger Elves and free guided trolley rides for 625 visitors.

Supporters

Fans, devotees, disciples, believers, followers, admirers...

Support comes to the park from all corners of the Lowell community and beyond, and is fostered through numerous relationships – from well-established to quite recent. Some originate from those visiting the park, others from deep-rooted partnerships of many years providing services independently or alongside the park. Regardless of source, the support brings overlapping connections for expanding multi-directional understanding: by park staff of the community and by the community of what the park and National Park System offer.



Getting the Word Out

Social media can certainly create a BUZZ, and that derives from local and virtual supporters. The park's likes, friends, and followers continue to grow. The summer digital media team was everywhere, collecting videos and photos and sharing that content on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. The "Behind the Park" series featured six videos sharing the inside scoop on the canalways, local churches, the Lowell Folk Festival, and trolley operations.

The avenues toward support lead in many directions. "Coffee with a Cop" partnered park LE Rangers with the UMass Lowell and Lowell Police Departments and took just that approach: if you java it, they will come. Thanks to funding and training from the National Dialogues on Immigration Program, our "Moving Conversations" program applied facilitated dialogue techniques to engage the public in discovering the personal and universal context of Lowell's changing neighborhoods. The Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust and Lowell Film Collaborative continued the Eco Film Series, sharing environmentally themed shows at the Visitor Center. The Angkor Dance Troupe expanded their traditional dance training offered at the Mogan Cultural Center and hosted a film series on the history of Cambodian Dance.

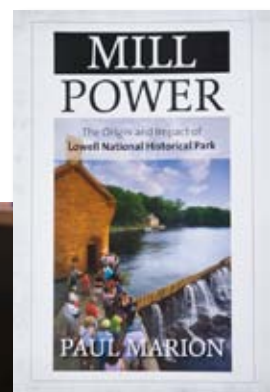
In August, NPS Director Jonathan Jarvis chose a Lowell neighbor, Chelmsford, as a stop on a tour celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), an NPS program which brings outdoor recreation amenities and opportunities to local communities. Speakers included the Director, Congresswoman Tsongas, Lowell NHP Superintendent Bernardo, and several state and local officials.

Many organizations and local governments across the country have been interested in how this national park works within the community. The city and park host many delegations seeking to bring ideas back to their own communities. Now there is a book, *Mill Power: The Origin and Impact of Lowell National Historical Park*, authored by Paul Marion, to convey that many-layered story. Recently published, *Mill Power* was launched at the Visitor Center in October, with contributors reading excerpts and the author sharing his extensive experiences in Lowell.

Left: Social media team highlights youth project in progress

Below: Volunteers celebrate another successful Lowell Folk Festival.

Author Paul Marion at *Mill Power* book release.



Tsongas Industrial History Center – Expanding Horizons for Teaching and Learning

The Tsongas Industrial History Center (TIHC) forges new ground every year and the reach extends well beyond the nearly 50,000 students attending workshops annually. This University/Park partnership shines in sharing Lowell with educators and students.

“Their Stories: Lowell’s Youth and the Refugee Experience,” an exhibit in the Mill Girls and Immigrants exhibit, opened in September. Led by TIHC and in conjunction with the International Institute of New England, Lowell Office and UMass Lowell professor Susan Thomson, the exhibit features the narratives of five young people who hail from Bhutan, Burma, Congo, and Iraq. Each has their own perspective and story, but all share the commonalities of the refugee experience.

Having hosted the NEH-supported “Inventing America” teacher workshops for eight years, the TIHC completed the “Re-inventing America” project, which makes the workshop content (like presenter talks and TIHC workshops, photos, and primary documents) available digitally to teachers everywhere. And, with renewed NEH support, the Inventing America workshops continue for an unprecedented ninth year in 2015.

TIHC coordinated the Massachusetts Institute for Teaching Science (MITS) teacher institute, hosting several days in Lowell.

During the 2014-15 school year, TIHC received funding from a National Park Foundation grant to support schools from Nashua, NH to attend programs. TIHC also hosted five weeks of summer camp, pairing the recreational with the historical and scientific in five different summer camp programs.

Youth Rule!

The earlier the engagement, the better the potential for developing supporters. Many families bring their younger family members to national parks, and with the park’s many family-friendly programs and events, this is especially true in Lowell. The park also benefits from the support of youth through several sources:

SCIP – Student Career Intake Program:

The park hosted two SCIP students through the NPS Academy – a region-wide development program. Both helped lead the Youth Program Summit for 150 youth from 11 NPS youth programs on Thompson Island in the Boston Harbor Islands on a beautiful day in August.

Spindle City Corps – In partnership with Community Teamwork, Inc. (CTI) the park employs high school students in teams that tackle such diverse tasks as backlog maintenance projects along the canals, theatrical presentations sharing Lowell’s history, and preservation skills internships.

Extending the Park’s Reach

Volunteers make a commitment to contribute directly, and the park values these supporters immensely. In fiscal year 2014, Lowell’s “Volunteers in Parks” contributed over 80,000 hours, assisting to achieve the park’s goals.

As part of the community engagement grant through the Lowell Heritage Partnership with funding from the Theodore Edson Parker Foundation, the park sponsored an “Innovators in Community Engagement” workshop to help develop strategies and networks for drawing visitors, supporters, and advocates. In October, Sharon A. Reinckens (Smithsonian Institution Anacostia Community Museum in Washington DC), Cassie Chin (Wing Luke Museum in Seattle, WA), and Lisa Junkin Lopez (Jane Addams Hull-House Museum in Chicago, IL), participated in a two-day session to share their engagement strategies. Their sharing culminated in a Boott Cotton Mills Museum “hack”, giving participants a hands-on immersion in shifting approaches to telling Lowell’s stories, and thoughtful ideas leading us into the future.

A practice initiated with the grant continues in the Community Engagement Team, which gathers weekly to investigate lead-ins for community engagement opportunities through the exchange of ideas and information. The communications and sharing in this forum has raised awareness of inter-related opportunities and partnerships that expand the understanding of the array of communities that we serve and helped to extend the park’s external reach.

Below: Spindle City Corps wrapping up the summer at Youth Summit.



Advocates

Believers, promoters, activists, campaigners, crusaders, champions, fighters...

Champions of Lowell National Historical Park promote the park, its mission and goals in a myriad of ways every day. Advocacy rises in partners, neighbors, employees, visitors, supporters, and within organizations. The park gratefully acknowledges all those who have been believers and crusaders for this park and the National Park Service. Sharing some of those is a pleasure and comes with a note that we can only highlight a few here. There are many others and we appreciate every park champion out there!



Recognizing Success

■ *Kicking off the National Park Service Centennial:* Founders Day, August 25, 2016 will mark the exact one hundred year anniversary of the creation of the National Park Service. The celebration got off to an early start, on Founders Day 2014, and will continue this year and through 2016.

■ *The Lowell Heritage Partnership*, a community partnership engaged in preserving and enhancing Lowell's natural, built, and cultural heritage, has been an advocate for the park since its inception in 2000 and is approaching its 15th anniversary in 2015.

■ *Peter Aucella, Assistant Superintendent*, was recognized in two forums: He received the 2014 Thomas G. Kelakos Community Spirit Award from the Kiwanis Club of Greater Lowell in April and Preservation Massachusetts' Community Spirit Award for his efforts to preserve the Pawtucket Dam at a Preservation Massachusetts event in Worcester in October.



Left: Public art restoration underway.

Right: Maintenance Team gathers for Founders Day.

Sharing the Lowell Model

The Park hosted many individuals and organizations throughout the year and presented at professional gatherings, including:

■ NPS Deputy Director Peggy O'Dell, National Park Foundation Senior Vice President Grants and Programs Susan Newton, and two representatives from the Kellogg Foundation in October. The group visited this park and Rosie the Riveter National Historical Park in CA to see the powerful impacts National Parks can have in urban areas.

■ National Parks Conservation Association regional representatives.

■ WCRB radio interview regarding the city and park partnership over 35 years and collaboration on the Riverwalk.

■ NPS Chief of Conservation and Outdoor Recreation Program Bob Ratcliffe.

■ TIHC presented at: UTeach Conference with University of Massachusetts Lowell Graduate School of Education in Austin, Texas, the National Council for the Social Studies in Boston, and the New England Museum Association in Cambridge.

■ National Park Advisory Board subcommittee on urban parks.



Professionals and Professionals in Training

The park benefited from temporary assignments and projects – both Lowell staff temporarily taking on new positions within the park or at other national park sites and other parks’ staff stepping into roles here.

- **Dave Byers:** detail as Media and Communications Specialist
- **Nissa Fink:** from Boston African American NHS to Lowell as Chief of Interpretation
- **Jack Herlihy:** to Minute Man NHP as Curator
- **Phil Lupsiewicz:** to Minute Man NHP as Chief of Planning and Communications
- **Tess Shatzer:** to Acadia NP as instructor for Interpretive Coach Training
- **Diana Shiba** collaborated with administrative staff at Marsh Billings Rockefeller NHP to share knowledge in financial management and business practices.
- **Becky Warren:** to Boston Harbor Islands NRA as Interpretation and Visitor Services Supervisor

Interns

- **Adam McNeil:** summer intern in cultural resources. Adam, a student at Florida A & M University majoring in History, joined the Park through the Cultural Resource Diversity Internship Program of the National Park Service.
- **Christopher Hayes:** completed his one year National Park Foundation Transportation Fellowship, assisting with planning for future trolley operations in the city.
- **UMass Lowell Students:** Visitor and Resource Protection had several UMass Lowell police department interns spend time with our protection staff for several weeks, shadowing and assisting during a training class.

Employee Transitions

Employees do move along to new and intriguing positions, careers, and vocations. For the contributions they have made, we thank each of those who have started on a new path in the past year:

- **Corrado (Charlie) Corsetto,** retired
- **Kevin Heffernan,** retired
- **Lynne Koser,** retired
- **Cindy Laurenza,** retired
- **Ellen Frost,** retired
- **Kerry Olson,** to Chief of Interpretation Santa Monica Mountains NRA
- **Marieke Slovin,** to new horizons in Arizona

Resource Management

- **Refreshing the Mill Girls & Immigrants Exhibit:** Students and families alike step into the mill girl era at the Mill Girls & Immigrants Exhibit at the Mogan Center. Maintenance staff renewed the Mill Girl boardinghouse with fresh coats of paint and varnish. Included in the refreshed exhibit is an 1832 Square Grand Piano, recently acquired from Minute-man National Historical Park. The piano is a great addition that helps recreate the historic atmosphere and tell more of the cultural story of the mill girl era.



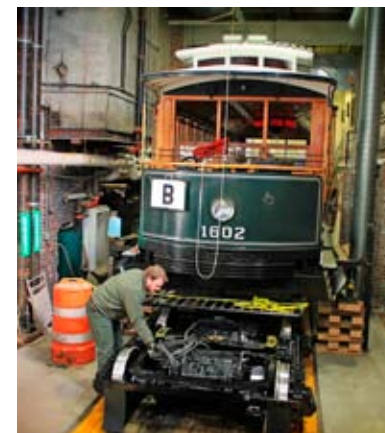
- **Trolley Truck Repair:** Trolleys receive routine maintenance in the park. This year the trolley “truck” wheel assemblies were shipped out to GOMACO, the original trolley builders in Ida Grove, Iowa, for servicing.

■ **Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation Arborist Project:**

In June, arborists from across the NPS came to Lowell for training and a tree management project that helped preserve some of the park’s historic resources with strategic pruning and removal of dead standing trees.

- **Preserving Public Art:** With toothbrushes, hot wax, and blow torches, a team of conservators from the Collections Conservation Branch of the NPS Museum Services Center meticulously restored several of Lowell’s Public Art pieces, including *Stele for the Merrimack* by the Wannalancit Mill, *The Worker Statue* at Mack Plaza, and *Homage to Women* at Market Mills Park.

- **Dam Decision:** National and local advocates supported efforts to preserve the Pawtucket Dam in its historic configuration. Per this year’s court decision, Boott Hydropower, Inc. has approval to install a modern crest gate on the dam. The park will work with BHI to assure that the dam remains a centerpiece of Lowell’s industrial story for future generations.



Left: Servicewide tree crew in Lowell. Tuning up the trolleys.



2015 Community Awards

The Lowell Heritage Partnership and Lowell National Historical Park partner on these awards and continue to see amazing, heartfelt nominations annually. We are grateful for the dedicated efforts that provide opportunities for celebrating contributions in the realms of cultural heritage and historic preservation.

This year we recognize and celebrate:

Excellence in Historic Preservation

Whistler House Museum of Art, as an advocate for history and creativity, for their continued strategic approach to preservation of the Whistler House, especially the recent kitchen restoration and modernization.



Excellence in Cultural Heritage

Patricia Fontaine, Ed.D., for collaboration with University of Massachusetts at Lowell and Lowell Parks & Conservation Trust on developing student engagement at the preserved Hawk Valley Farm and the Cambodian community celebration projects.

Roger Brunelle, as a charter member of Lowell Celebrates Kerouac, for over 30 years of scholarship, research, and public programming to share Jack Kerouac, his French Canadian roots, and his literary legacy.

Student Excellence in Cultural Heritage

Youth Connections, a partnership of the First Parish Church of Groton and the International Institute of New England, Lowell Office, for their multicultural outreach and exchange programs, including the Global Heart event, sharing student refugee experiences with and among local youth.



Design: Higgins & Ross

Photography: Front cover: Higgins & Ross

Back cover: left, courtesy of Youth Connections;

above, courtesy of Whistler House Museum of Art

Interior photo of ceramics: Jen Myers

All other photos courtesy of Lowell National Historical Park