



Lowell National Historical Park

2016/2017 REPORT

Centennial Year of Engagement *Weaving Community Ties and Partnerships*



There is an energetic rhythm and enthusiastic pace at Lowell National Historical Park, after all, one of the primary stories here is the textile industry. Throughout the Centennial year of the National Park Service in 2016, the park's efforts wove together a celebratory showcase. Recent accomplishments connect multiple threads through the staff, partners, volunteers, history, community, and the urban environs that represent the past year's activities and forecast future possibilities.

Community Ties

Centennial Community Engagement Team and Network

The National Park Service Centennial offered a springboard to emphasize Lowell National Historical Park's connection to a magnificent inventory of the nation's resources, highlighting Lowell's role in telling America's stories, and engaging with the city's communities about how those stories are told.

The park's Centennial Team collaborated to develop the traveling "*Community Weaving Project*" and "*Bringing the Park to the People (BP2P) Series.*" From April to September, park staff joined neighborhood-based events across the city to engage new audiences. Attendees contributed to the Community Weaving Project by writing thoughts about their community on neighborhood color-coded ribbons that were woven into a "fabric" and later displayed at the Visitor Center, reflecting a full 12 months of engagement. Lowell Walks co-hosted exploratory neighborhood treks at many BP2P sessions.

As the year progressed, the park's media presence and Centennial focus grew. The *#Lowell Connects 100 Parks 100 Stories* social media campaign investigated Lowell links to the extensive network of 417

units in the National Park System. Staff also exhibited their creative handiwork through amusing videography series

the Book of Boott and Behind the Scenes, which shared the history and operations of the park.

The park celebrated *NPS Founders' Day* over the course of two event-filled days. On August 25th, park staff, partners, and community members gathered at

the Lowell City Hall steps to commemorate Lowell as a special place and park with a program and flag-raising. Speakers included Congresswoman Niki Tsongas, Mayor Edward Kennedy, Superintendent Celeste Bernardo and former Lowell Historic Preservation Commission Director Fred Faust. Attendees then enjoyed a lunchtime concert with US Airforce Heritage Band - Rhythm in Blue. On Saturday, the park superintendent offered the Lowell Walks program "the History of Lowell National Historical Park" where over 100 participants heard from presenters from the park's past. The day's celebration continued at Boarding House Park with a full afternoon of programming encompassing music, dance, children's literature, a Ranger mini-cruiser, and an operating Draper loom. Ingrid Hess read her recently-published book "*Mr. Magnificent's Magical Merrimack Adventure.*" The day culminated with the premiere performance of "*The Pulse of the Machine: the Beat of our Hearts,*" a production created through the park's partnership with *UMASS Lowell Music Department, Angkor Dance Troupe, and Fly Orb Productions.* The show included community Irish, African, and Cambodian music and dance that showcased the melding of Lowell's communities and cultures performed to the beat of an operating loom.

Inspired by the NPS birthday, over 40 Lowell-based organizations formed the *Centennial Partners Network* and convened and/or worked together to review and plan opportunities for shared programming. The network valued the collaboration and continues meeting quarterly to build connections among the varied organizations.

New Audiences

The Mill City Steampunk Festival emerged as a project borne of literary roots, as the park partnered with UMASS Lowell professor Diana Archibald's Lowell Victorian Fiction class, Lowell Makes, and Mill No. 5 to blend the genre of Steampunk with the historical resources of Lowell and capture the players via imagery technology.

What's New About the Past is a changing temporary exhibit venue in the Visitor Center providing a forum for sharing elements of Lowell's stories. Last spring, "*Girl Power! Female Engineers in Lowell*" highlighted 19th century women's contributions to Lowell's industrial past and the contemporary groundbreaking plastics engineering research of UMASS Lowell students Elizabeth and Laura Kender.





Legacy programs that engaged the community as collaborators and participants took on a Centennial theme. *Kids Week* and *Playcation* hosted thousands of youngsters and families who engaged in week-long itineraries of programming. *Women's Week 2017* bridged the history of Lowell's female mill workforce to current issues and evolutions with the theme "Women Taking a Stand – Roaring into the Future".

Participants in *Spindle City Corps (SCC)*, a youth employment partnership between the park and *Community Teamwork (CTI)*, contributed to the park and city. Several teams of SCC youth completed park maintenance projects while the Community Action Team (CAT) staffed "Art in the Park" at Free Fun for Kids offerings at Boarding House Park. In recognition of their volunteer efforts in the community, SCC members received the *2016 NPS Northeast Region George and Helen Hartzog Award for Outstanding Volunteer Youth Group*.

Boarding House Park is an urban oasis in the Mill City from June to September. Music emanates from Boarding House Park thanks to the park partnership with the Lowell Festival Foundation. *Lowell Summer Music Series (LSMS)* returned hosting over 21,000 guests at 18 concerts and offering free kids shows to over 5,000 youth as rangers and other staff engaged the youngsters at the "Art in the Park" booth. The LSMS received a Merrimack Valley Magazine Award in the "Activity at Historic Venue" category which noted the park as a "beautiful setting bursting with local history." *The Lowell Folk Festival* filled the park in late July as that event celebrated 30 years. In September, over 450 people gathered in Boarding House Park to enjoy the talents of competitors in the *Banjo & Fiddle Contests*. This 31-year tradition, brought back by dedicated volunteers, attracted young and old who showcased bluegrass, old timey, and traditional ethnic banjo and fiddle music.

Lowell Walks, hosted by Richard (Dick) Howe, Jr., returned for a second summer, and attracted enthusiastic audiences Saturday mornings to tours led by specialists on local cultural and historical topics. The walks inspired a temporary exhibit, produced in partnership with the UMass Lowell Center for Lowell History at the Mogan Cultural Center, that examined past, present, and future roles of walks and walking in the mill city.

The offering of federal lands access program *Every Kid in a Park (EKIP)* passes continued nationally and locally for a second school year, as the park invited fourth graders to discover their federal lands via waived entrance fees for these students and families. The park issued over one thousand passes to fourth graders for use during one school year. With EKIP grant funding from the National Park Foundation, the park hosted 558 youth and students, introducing new audiences in partnership with local schools and organizations.

The Centennial and Beyond!

A collaborative partnership is set in motion around the *National Park Foundation's* recent award of an *Active Trails Grant* to the park and its partners who together will activate Lowell's open spaces and increase public use and awareness of the extensive network of resources, including Lowell's canalways and Riverwalk.

The Centennial Team's work continues beyond 2016 as the park looks to the future. Projects and programs including the Acre Tour Brochure, Kids Week, Your City Saturdays, Playcation, and Women's Week are ongoing, with new insights gained from our collective Centennial experiences.

Top Bar from left to right:

Lowell High School choir performs the "Children's Earth Anthem" in honor of the NPS Centennial

Students check river water data aboard the James B. Francis during an Every Kid in a Park program

Center three images: Three performances at the NPS Centennial Founders' Day program: The McGonagle School of Irish Dance, Angkor Dance Troupe, and African Osibi drummers and dancers

Lowell Walks participants experience the Boott Mills stair tower

Lowell's Banjo & Fiddle Contests returned to Boarding House Park

Spindle City Corps members tackle a tangle of vegetation along the canalway

Bottom left: Aqua String Band at the 2016 Lowell Folk Festival parade

Bottom right: Charles Dickens visits Trolley 1601 during the Mill City Steampunk Festival



Partnerships

Centennial Partnership Highlights

The park connected with neighbor national parks in eastern Massachusetts during the Centennial. Lowell and *Minute Man National Historical Park* staff and volunteers marched in Lexington's Patriots Day parade in April. In May, the park staff visited the recently created *Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park* at Slater Mill in Pawtucket, RI, to discuss parallels between the two industrial heritage sites. One highlight included a visit to the reproduction working water-wheel where Lowell's Senior Architect Chuck Parrott revealed his contribution in designing and installing the structure a decade earlier. *Salem Maritime National Historical Park* reached out with a proposal to highlight the NPS Centennial at two community parades: the Haunted Happenings Grand Parade – "100 Years of Parks and Play" in Salem, and the City of Lights parade in Lowell. Lowell NHP's river boat trailer became the platform for a spectacular Centennial float representing the national parks in Massachusetts, and engaging staff, volunteers, and community members.

The Lowell Folk Festival observed a significant benchmark in 2016, with 30 festivals since the first Lowell-hosted National Folk Festival in 1987. The festival producing partnership includes the park, the *City of Lowell*, the *Greater Merrimack Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau*, the *Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce*, the *Lowell Festival Foundation*, and the *National Council for the Traditional Arts*.

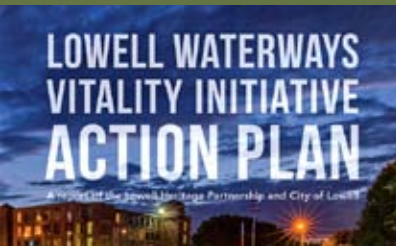
The event, during the last full weekend in July, drew appreciative audiences who enjoyed traditional American and international folk music and performances, observed and participated in folk craft demonstrations from across New England, and consumed the tasty foods of Lowell's diverse ethnic populations. A *Theodore Edson Parker Foundation* grant enhanced the Festival's fundraising efforts. This FREE festival incurs costs of over \$1 million to produce! With more than 130,000 attending annually, the benefits to Lowell cannot be underestimated.

25 Years of Tsongas Industrial History Center (TIHC) Partnership

The park's education partnership with the *University of Massachusetts Lowell Graduate School of Education* established the TIHC at the Boott Mills in 1991. During the 2015-2016 school year, TIHC offered 1,563 programs hosting 47,000 students and educators. TIHC is celebrating its 25th anniversary between October 2016 and September 2017. The experiences of student and educator attendees, along with the evolving accomplishments, are impressive, and this year's activities are no exception. Across this anniversary year, projects, programs, and outreach efforts continue expanding the TIHC reach:

- In October, an event hosted past and current staff and partners at the TIHC, celebrating past accomplishments and future opportunities.
- Energy transfer technology is made more accessible to learners via interactives created with *NPS Centennial Challenge* matching funds. These new program elements are receiving an excellent response from TIHC learners in their quest to understand how simple machines work – and how that applies to mill machinery.
- A film "*A School for Kids Like Me*" was completed for the TIHC Yankees & Immigrants program, providing context for the 19th century Irish immigrant experience during a Town Meeting roleplay activity. Students draw meaningful conclusions as they learn about a period in Lowell's history when immigrants' access to public education was in question.
- Educators arriving from across the country attended the "*Inventing America: Lowell and the Industrial Revolution*" workshops, made possible with the *National Endowment for the Humanities* grant awarded for an unprecedented tenth year.
- The Water Room workshop experience expanded with the development of the *Splash app*, adding a





digital component to tracking data from the hands-on learning of water wheel rotations and canal system building.

- TIHC hosted *Kids Take the Lead Day* – bringing student workshop and camp participants back with their families; extended day programs to Lowell Public Schools; and working with the LPS on the *Summer Newcomer/Refugees Programs* by hosting 125 students originally from Africa, Central and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Central and South America.
- In April, the locally rooted and produced film *“Browsing Through Birke’s”* was paired with UMASS Lowell student-developed curriculum and a refugee experience panel thanks to assistance from a *Mass Humanities* grant.

The *Brush Art Gallery* at Market Mills partnered with the park to present *“Telling America’s Stories: 100 Years of the National Park Service”* in May, closing out on the 38th anniversary of the park’s creation on June 5th. The show invited artistic expressions of the impact of national park experiences, and drew responses from over 40 artists inspired by parks spanning from Cape Cod to Yosemite. The Brush is celebrating a 35th birthday in 2017.

Shining light on historical resources and waterways offers new perspectives. The *Lowell Heritage Partnership’s (LHP)* activation of the Swamp Locks area during September’s *First Thursday* event demonstrated the potential in reimagining vibrant uses of Lowell’s remarkable and underused canalways. The event included lighting, music, and programming complemented by Barbara Poole’s *Veils of Color for Lowell* along the Pawtucket Canal. The LHP’s *Lowell Waterways Vitality Initiative Action Plan*, created through a series of public meetings, offers a variety of new place-making ideas to make the city’s historic waterways more accessible, active, and vibrant.

Public Matters: A Program in Civic Engagement, made possible through the park’s nine-year partnership with *The Lowell Plan*, welcomed a new class of 20 participants in January 2017. The engagement of a diverse array of active and emerging Lowell leaders is intentional, and several could be heard at the podium as presenters at the 2016 Lowell Plan Annual Breakfast.

The *National Endowment for the Arts “Imagine Your Park”* grant program announced three Lowell

recipients: the Lowell Festival Foundation for the 30th Lowell Folk Festival; the *Cultural Organization of Lowell* for the *Creaticity: Lowell Art and Maker Festival* (September 16-17, 2017); and the *Greater Lowell Community Foundation* for the rehabilitation of the public art piece *“Pawtucket Prism”* at the confluence of the Pawtucket Canal and Concord River. The Foundation worked with the park, *Eastern National, Lowell Heritage Partnership, UMass Lowell, Middlesex Community College, Lowell Parks and Conservation Trust*, and *private donors* to have *Michio Ihara* repair and adapt his sculpture.

The *Angkor Dance Troupe*, a park partner active at the Mogan Cultural Center, extended cultural offerings to wider audiences as it began its 30th year celebrations. The Troupe’s *‘Young at Heart’* workshops garnered interest in discovering Cambodian dance, its annual residency at Merrimack Repertory Theatre produced *“Pin Panhchapor: The Harp and Five Colors of Harmony”* in November, and its dancers engaged youngsters during Kids Week and as part of TIHC summer camps.

On Aiken Street, firings at the ceramics kiln showcased the works of *Cambodian ceramicist and 2015 National Heritage Fellow Yary Livan*, as students from *Middlesex Community College*, educators, and community members learned from this master through courses and public programs. The specialized kiln operates via a partnership between the park and college, and offers programs to local educators, connecting their students to Cambodian arts and discovering the beauty of this cultural expression.

Top Bar from left to right:
Filming for “A School for Kids Like Me”

Public Matters 2016 cohort gathers.

TIHC 25th Anniversary with Congresswoman Niki Tsongas, Superintendent Celeste Bernardo, Director Sheila Kirschbaum, and former Provost Donald Pierson

City of Lights Parade

Cover detail of Lowell Waterways Vitality Initiative Action Plan

Ingrid Hess reads Mr. Magnificent’s Magical Merrimack Adventure

Cambodian music ensemble performs at the Lowell Folk Festival

Cambodian wood-fired kiln draws visiting dignitaries

Bottom left:
Angkor Dance Troupe performance at the Merrimack Repertory Theater

The Park Team



Volunteer and Intern Contributions Add to Engaging Fabric of Lowell

The NPS 100th anniversary in 2016 brought a special recognition to park volunteers who contributed over 201.6 hours (see what they did there?), in the form of the *VIP Centennial Challenge Coin*. Volunteer recipients in Lowell include Michael dela Vega, Ed Sousa, Garry Penderson, Luis Mangua, John Hassan, Lee Knust, Don Thomas, and Mike Krawczyk.

The park and community benefited from the contributions of several interns: *Centennial Volunteer Ambassador* Patrick Pham was a key to staffing the Bringing the Park to the People events and many other volunteer and community programs during the Centennial. The Hispanic Access Foundation, by way of the *Latino Heritage Internship Program*, hosted Daniela Sierra at the park for a second summer in 2016, continuing to extend the park's outreach to Lowell's communities. Look for Daniela to return during the summer of 2017. In partnership with the *Student Conservation Association*, NPS Academy Intern Marly Thomas worked at the park as part of

this experiential learning opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students.

All staff, volunteers, and many partners were in attendance at the *Parkwide Breakfast* at Boarding House Park in June and gathered for an all-park photo. Rose Fennell, Northeast Region Deputy Director, joined the group, shared greetings from the Region, and toured several park sites.

Preservation, Park Projects, and the Year to Come

Curatorial Collections

The park-held Proprietors of Locks and Canals on Merrimack River collection documents a corporation chartered in 1792, which by the late 19th century administered and maintained Lowell's canal system. The collection includes a large portion of the company's business records, 4,000 photographs, and over 9,000 historic architectural drawings, including original materials created by Kirk Boott and James B. Francis. The Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) in Andover is progressing through a project to conserve 200 drawings in the collection.

Fire Safety Updates

Boott Cotton Mills No. 6 is now home to the park Museum, Tsongas Industrial History Center, and a contingent of park and NPS Northeast Region offices. As we strive to preserve the park-owned sections of the largely intact mill complex, safe use remains paramount. Interior changes are required to remain compliant with fire code. Design is ongoing and construction is scheduled to begin in 2018 that will insert a new fire stair.

Mill Windows

Windows are a classic component of mill architecture, and weren't placed there for the outward view they could offer. Bringing that thought to 2017, the need to have the windows as intact elements of the building envelope is vital as the park continues to preserve this industrial resource. A second phase of window replacements occurred in 2016. The third – and largest – phase is pending for 2018.





Massachusetts Historic Preservation Conference 2017 will be held in Lowell, September 22. The park is partnering with **Preservation Massachusetts** and **Lowell Historic Board** enhancing the conference with numerous tours to share Lowell’s preservation stories with hundreds of conference attendees.

The park’s **Foundation Documents** will be finalized this year. This report, required of all NPS units, offers insights into park purpose, significance, fundamental resources and values, as well as the park’s key planning and data needs.

The Park Team

We welcome the arrival of new staff:

- Adam Geyster, Painter
- Jens Meininghaus, Maintenance Mechanic
- Bridget Peregrino, Park Ranger
- Matt Phillips, Painter Worker
- Veronica Valdez, Administrative Assistant

Staff development opportunities, with employees fulfilling temporary assignments whether from Lowell or another park, resulted in continuing the park functions and service mission:

- JoAnn Marcos as Acting Youth and Volunteer Program Coordinator
- Resi Polixa as Acting Youth and Volunteer Program Coordinator
- Laurel Racine as Acting Chief of Cultural Resources who moved to Lowell in this position full time in August
- Ryan Wright as Acting Chief Ranger, who moved to Lowell in this position full time in November

A few Lowell staff who have been promoted into new positions

- Cheryl Jones to Budget Officer
- Saoran Roeth to Budget Analyst

We also said farewell to several staff

- Eddie Allcock, Maintenance Mechanic, retired
- Greg Chagnon, Carpenter, retired
- Mike Comtois, Boott Maintenance Supervisor, retired
- Francesca DeSousa, Weaver, retired
- Rachel Edlund, Architect, retired

- Amy Glowacki, Youth and Volunteer Program Coordinator to Northeast Region Youth and Volunteer Programs
- Greg Jones, Supervisory Park Ranger, retired,
- Leilani Markland, Business Center Supervisor
- Enrique Melendez, Maintenance Worker, retired
- Charles (Chuck) Parrott, Architect, retired
- Linda Sopheap Sou, Chief of Interpretation & Education, to Lowell Community Health Center
- Jennifer Zazo Brown, Park Ranger, to National Museum of African American History & Culture/ Smithsonian Institution

In Memoriam: We sadly note the passing of two recent park retirees: Dick Cohan, formerly the Grounds Supervisor in August and Eddie Allcock, Maintenance Mechanic. Each brought their own engaged commitment to supporting the park’s success and we greatly miss their smiling faces.



Top Bar from left to right:
Rangers accompany “Kirk Boott” during the Lowell Folk Festival
Centennial Volunteer Ambassador Patrick Pham emcees Founders’ Day Mummies, “Kirk Boott, and “mill girls” at the Lowell Folk Festival
Lowell Folk Festival Volunteers
Bringing the Park to the People at Clemente Park
Boott Cotton Mills windows replacement project
Park Maintenance staff sport centennial tattoos
Time for a canal tour selfie

Bottom left:
Park Volunteers in Park (VIP) and Park Ranger “Find Your Park”

Above right:
All hands gather for a parkwide group photo



2017 Community Excellence Awards

In this, the eleventh year of the collaborative venture between Lowell National Historical Park and Lowell Heritage Partnership, we are recognizing community accomplishments in Lowell in the areas of cultural heritage and historic preservation by way of the Community Excellence Awards.

Excellence in Historic Preservation

St. Patrick Church, Interior Restoration

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, St. Patrick Church is located in Lowell's Acre neighborhood. Designed by Patrick Charles Keely and opened in 1854, the church interior has recently been restored to its original splendor. This project, undertaken by John Canning & Co. of Cheshire, CT, was a recipient of the 2017 Bulfinch Award from the New England chapter of the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art.

Jim Lichoulas, III for Mill No. 5 at Appleton Mills

An innovative and adaptive reuse of an historic mill space creates this indoor streetscape that generates creative retail and community-based activity. The setting is enhanced by elements of historic buildings salvaged from across New England and beyond and hosts this marketplace in an atmosphere that supports a community of shop owners providing an alternative shopping experience.

Excellence in Cultural Heritage

Ingrid Hess and "Mr. Magnificent's Magical Merrimack Adventure"

A charming story carries the reader along on the afternoon journey of current-day Lowell youth, guided by the mysterious Mr. Magnificent. Together, they experience visions of Lowell's history during an exciting airborne excursion. The colorful and playful imagery of this children's book is captured in detailed cut-paper art. The Mogan Cultural Center hosted a temporary exhibit sharing the book and the cut-paper art process. All third grade classes in Lowell Public Schools are receiving copies of the book.



Front cover:
NPS Centennial Founders' Day participants gather for a celebratory photograph at Boarding House Park

Back cover, top left:
St. Patrick Church interior restoration

Back cover, bottom left:
Mill No. 5 shop facades

Back cover, right:
Mr. Magnificent's book cover

Design Higgins & Ross

Photography

Front Cover: James Higgins

Partnerships Section:

Public Matters: Megpix

THC Group – Jennifer Myers

Waterways plan cover –

Solomon Office

Dancer – James Higgins

The Park Team Section:

Park group photo: MegPix

Tour selfie: Jennifer Myers

Back cover: Courtesy images

Lowell National Historical Park
67 Kirk Street, Lowell, MA 01852
www.nps.gov/lowe