

1978-2018

40

Park, Partners & Preservation

2017-2018 Lowell National Historical Park



Established with the mission to preserve and tell the stories illustrating the American industrial revolution, **Lowell National Historical Park** reaches a landmark of 40 years in 2018. Immersed in the city's authentic backdrop, the efforts of the park continue to be focused on historic preservation intertwined with sharing the history of industrialization and its legacies through the facilities, park staff and volunteers, and alongside a progression of engaged partners.



Observing & Celebrating 40 YEARS OF Historic Preservation

Action initiated by 1960's and 70's community activists concerned with the destruction of Lowell's historic landscape led to the establishment of the park and Lowell Historic Preservation Commission and the ongoing preservation of vital components of Lowell's industrial and historic setting.

Annual Mill Development Tracking –

- 5.312 million square feet of mill space
- 5.177 million square feet – or 97.74% – rehabilitated to new uses or currently being developed.
- 134,000 square feet remain for development
- Recent projects that have accessed the National Park Service Federal Historic Tax Credits include:
Massachusetts Mills Picker Building; Hamilton Mill No. 6, and Lowell Community Health Center. The Assets Powerhouse and Hood Mill on Thorndike Street are also under development.

OVER
97%
DEVELOPED

Through these four decades, there have also been many visitors and inquiries seeking to discover Lowell's success in preservation that's blended with community engagement and innovation. As always, Lowell is ready to share. In September, 2017, the park, *Lowell Historic Board* and *Preservation Massachusetts* hosted the biennial state wide preservation conference with more than 400 attendees. Other recent visitors included Harvard Graduate School of Design, MIT Sloan School of Management, and the International City/County Management Association that brought a delegation from China. The park, City and Lowell Heritage Partnership also presented at the *World Canals Conference* along the Erie Canal in Syracuse, NY.

Downtown Commercial and Residential

A stroll down Kirk Street reveals the rehabilitated residences that are a model for adaptive preservation. Beginning with buildings that are now Oblate Priest



retirement home residences, Madison Security Group offices, and a branch of Community Teamwork's offices, they come to a close at the *Kirk Street Agents' House*. This particular historic setting, once home to the Massachusetts and Boott Mills agents, and now park headquarters, has a facelift in progress. The brown clapboard wing visible from Paige Street, got a tremendous reconditioning this summer, with patching, repairs, and painting completed by the park's painting and building staff. This work precedes a pending full overhaul of the brick portions of the primary building. Look for that work to come.

Celebrating the Canalways and Riverwalk

Visitors and residents are broadly aware of Lowell's canalways and riverwalk. Not many are familiar with the full extent of these walkways as quality-of-life enhancing amenities. Since the 1985 Canalways Plan, the development of canal walkways and the Riverwalk have been possible because of federal transportation funding programs accessible due to the park's presence in Lowell. And, the planning and development continues. The historical canals become accessible with the addition of walkways - for neighbors, visitors, and business people seeking to stretch their legs or move about downtown. Future additions to keep an eye on include Riverwalk segments from Boott to the Concord River and upgrades to the Esplanade at the Pawtucket Falls.



"Simply incredible. I've been multiple times over the years. Learning about the history of Lowell was fascinating as it is one of the cities that built America. The National Historical Park is very well maintained and the staff are quite knowledgeable. Definitely recommend if you happen to be in the area or are looking for a day trip." — *Google Maps Review*



Several projects and events highlight the canals and river as valuable community amenities. The *Lowell Heritage Partnership* lighting efforts continue and are on the cusp of unveiling the feature lighting of the Cox Bridge connecting Downtown and Centralville over the Merrimack River. The park undertook the replacement of walkway lighting along the *Eastern Canal at Boott Mills*. In April 2017, DIY Lowell and partners presented the first *Points of Light Lantern Celebration* at the Western Canal at Ecumenical Plaza. On meeting success, that event continues this year.

Lowell's Locks and Canals Historic District is on the National Register of Historic Places. The canal system includes both visible and hidden features. Park workplans take on cyclic projects directly to assure canal system structures, such as gatehouses and lock chambers are maintained. The park staff bring their expertise and project management skills to preserving unique canal and waterpower features.

At *Boott Mills*, water enters raceways and penstocks before flowing through turbines then exiting via wasteways back to the lower section of the Merrimack River. Repairs to the penstock from the Eastern Canal below the covered visitor entryway into the Boott courtyard assured this canal infrastructure will remain intact.

At *Wannalancit Mills*, the 1897 Victor-Standard turbine that was once part of that mill's power system has been



scoped out with the plan to return it once again to operating condition at the River Transformed Exhibit.

Recent preservation projects also included repairing and replacing masonry at Guard Locks and Northern Canal Guard Gates Gate House, painting and repairs to the Great Gate Gatehouse, along with a planning project to renovate the Hamilton Gatehouse.



The National Park Service has established *Foundation Documents* as the current manner for capturing and sharing each park's resources, values, and history as a "foundation" for planning and management. The park's Foundation Document was released in 2017 thanks to a concerted effort between the park's planners and the NPS planning center in Denver, Colorado.

Two Page Spread clockwise from top left:

- Park staff prepare Kirk Street Agents' House for painting.
- Floating lanterns light up the Western Canal during the Points of Light Lantern Celebration, highlighting community engagement and canal preservation.
- Robbie Cataldo and Mike Pelotte view interior of turbine pressure case at the River Transformed Exhibit.
- Masonry work in the Boott Mill #6 Penstock assures mill and canal infrastructure preservation (2 images).
- Chuck Parrott leads tour for statewide preservation conference.
- Peter Aucella and Christine Bruins guide delegates from China through the Boott Mills courtyard.



Partners: A Critical Ingredient

Like steadfast friends, some partners have stood side by side with the park for over 40 years. Some through short ventures and others have begun or grown or morphed to new levels. Through these decades the park attained much through collaboration with partners. For that we are grateful and look forward to future incarnations of shared successes.

The University of Massachusetts Lowell (UML) is in the forefront of enduring partners.

With visions of integrating Lowell's preserved landscape into Lowell's public school history experiences, the partnership of the *Tsongas Industrial History Center (TIHC)* was born – a true partnership in which both the park and UML are interwoven. It is notable that the TIHC has hosted more than 1.3 million students and educators over 25 years. Today, Lowell Public School students attend TIHC programs in Grades 3, 4, 5, 7, and 8. In the past year, outreach has included: TIHC partnering with *Acre Family Child Care's* 4th Annual STEAM Fair opportunities with child care providers; as a recipient of an "Every Kid in a Park" grant from the *National Park Foundation*, transportation was available for more 4th grade students to attend TIHC programs; and the TIHC is collaborating with the *Smithsonian Institution* and UML's *Southeast Asian Digital Archives* offering local educators sessions to integrate Asian Pacific American stories into engaging lessons. A *National Endowment for the Humanities* funded workshop, "Social Movements and Reform in Industrializing America: The Lowell Experience," is returning in 2018, offering 72 educators an intensive week of immersive experiences.

Beyond this quintessential education collaboration, UML connections offer beneficial outcomes.

The Center for Lowell History (CLH) at the Mogan Cultural Center holds key content to Lowell's history. Through the years, temporary exhibits have graced the



halls of the Center, often aligned with CLH and park projects. Partnering with CLH and local graphic designer Mark Van Der Hyde, the *Branding Lowell Exhibit* takes an in-depth look at how design and the quest for identity have put their mark on Lowell.

The Saab Center With clear links to the legacy of immigrant experiences in Lowell, the Saab Center for Portuguese Studies at UML and the park partnered last December to host a conference, "*Migration and Millwork: Portuguese Communities in New England*" at the Boott Mills, including a facilitated panel presentation, "The Portuguese Immigrant Experience in Lowell Since the 1960s."

Across Lowell, long and short term, engaged partnerships are as vital as air.



Community Teamwork For several decades, summer employment experiences in the park have been possible for about 30 local youth through a partnership with Community Teamwork. Over time, *Spindle City Corps (SCC)* has expanded from teams focused on trail, canalway, and maintenance projects to including trade skills, community action teams, and internships in cultural resources and visitor services.

Lowell Summer Music Series Since 1990, the *Lowell Summer Music Series and Free Fun for Kids* have enjoyed high praise from many quarters. *The Lowell Festival Foundation* partnership with these annual series has supplied many a summer camper and summer concert-goer with unforgettable outdoor performances. For 2018, the line-up is coming together including dates with David Crosby, Rhiannon Giddens, Brian Setzer, and Ladysmith Black Mambazo.

“Fantastic, especially for kids — As a historian, a national parks fan, and a dad of three little kids, I enthusiastically recommend Lowell. It is perhaps the most informative, well-planned, and fun historical park we have been to — the Junior Ranger program is AWESOME! We only had an hour to spend and wound up staying for four. Take your time!” — *Trip Advisor Review*



Lowell Folk Festival In 2017, the 31st Lowell Folk Festival saw a wide-ranging schedule of traditional music, performances, crafts, and food under sunny skies and comfortable temperatures. Since 1987, millions having enjoyed the transformation of downtown Lowell into a unique performance venue during the last full week-end each July. The park, along with *the City, National Council for Traditional Arts, Greater Merrimack Valley Convention & Visitors Bureau, Greater Lowell Chamber of Commerce, and the Lowell Festival Foundation* each have an ownership stake in the collaborative production of this iconic Lowell event.

Public Matters: A Program in Civic Engagement, presented through a partnership with *The Lowell Plan*, gathers a cohort in January, meeting regularly through June, participating together to discover Lowell and leadership insights.

Angkor Dance Troupe (ADT) is now established as one of the “accomplished and experienced U.S. – based *Cambodian traditional arts organizations.*” ADT has an active itinerary of performances and dance education, recently expanding into Khmer language and traditional Cambodian musical instrument training that fulfills the park’s mission of interpreting local cultures. Whether “Monkeying Around” during Kids Week or sharing choreography insights during Your City Saturday programming, many visitors benefit from the park’s partnership with ADT.



PARK(ing) Day returned to downtown Lowell in September in partnership with the *City of Lowell, DIY Lowell* and others. Amidst the parking spaces, passers-by connected, whether enjoying lunch, competing at cornhole, discovering sustainability in recycling opportunities, or playing that giant game of Jenga.

Kids’ Week during school vacation in February and **Lowell Women’s Week** in March annually each illustrate the ability of Lowell organizations to assemble and present a resourceful agenda of new experiences. With thanks to partners and staff, these two series offer a glimpse into the expanse of partnership possibilities in Lowell.

Lowell Walks, *Dick Howe’s* initiative-turned-institution for 10:00am on summer Saturday mornings, begin at the Visitor Center, each an opportunity for expanding the appreciation and insights into so many aspects of Lowell.



National Park Foundation In 2017, through a *National Park Foundation “Active Trails”* grant and the engagement of a slate of partners, the “*Wellness on the Walkways (WoW)*” series became a familiar offering to new audiences. Partners spanned *Lowell Community Health Center, YWCA Lowell, Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association, Lowell Middlesex Academic Charter School, and the Lowell Senior Center.* WoW featured a bright palette of offerings to the general public as well, with events investigating recreational, creative, and energetic opportunities along these paths through Lowell.

Two Page Spread clockwise from middle left:

- Shout out to the 2017 Community Action Team of Spindle City Corps.
- Celeste Bernardo joins Marcus Santos and aNova Brazil leading the street parade to open Lowell Folk Festival 2017.
- Wellness on the Walkways hike treks through Lucy Larcom Park.
- Angkor Dance Troupe expands with traditional music program.
- THCA shares industrial history teaching insights with TEA Fellows in the Yankees & Immigrants workshop.

Park: Creating Success Every Day

The occasion of the park's 40th anniversary on June 5th causes pause to consider all those who have and continue to contribute, as staff and volunteers, along with our partners, at many levels through the years. Recent accomplishments exemplify the park's perennial "can do" spirit.

New and Special Visitor and Student Offerings

Junior Ranger Program: Discerning between third graders and 8th graders can be a key to engaging the younger set in discovering Lowell's history. The revision of Lowell's Junior Ranger Program was completed this year, and families can now tap these experiences at three distinct levels.

Volunteers have pitched in since the founding of this Park. In 2017, volunteers contributed almost 80,000 hours. Their numerous roles fulfill many park needs, and make events such as the Lowell Folk Festival possible. Thank you all for your contributions that aid in the park's success!



Suffolk Mill Interactives: An NPS Centennial Challenge grant with the Tsongas Industrial History Center provided the incentive for a collaboration for new hands-on interactives to convey the concepts of power transfer at Suffolk Mill. Students in the Power to Production workshops now explore that process effectively and those hands-on exhibits received a 2017 NPS Northeast Region Achieving Relevance Award for Interpretation, Education, and Volunteers.



James B Francis, Chief Engineer of the Proprietors of Locks and Canals in the 19th century, is noted for the planning and calculations that allowed Lowell's waterpower system to transform the might of the Merrimack River into millpowers so effectively. When Francis' descendants visited in the summer of 2017, they were hosted at the park and received recognition on the front page of the Lowell Sun.

The park received a **YMCA USA grant** and was able to conduct eight special boat programs this summer with three partners, serving over 250 local youth.

The park sales of **America the Beautiful senior passes** experienced an eight-fold increase in sales through late August last summer after notification of a pending price increase. Staff adapted smoothly to the influx of interested visitors seeking this lifetime pass, issuing nearly 7,000 mostly in July and August.

Community connected programming fosters new audiences, and across this year family-focused programming in **Wellness on the Walkways, Your City Saturdays, Your City Summer, and Hands On History** saw curious visitors exploring park offerings.

Archeology Month in October offered specialized insights into the construction of Lowell's industrial infrastructure through boat tours and waterpower system investigations specially arranged to focus on Lowell's waterpower complex.

Reaching Out Online

Connecting with new audiences is continuous. Curiosity and interest arise in unusual circumstances. Social media offers broad links and fosters communication. During the summer of 2017, a city bridge project unearthed a 19th century hand-dug well under Market Street. Lowell's City Engineer shared the discovery story

Two Page Spread clockwise from top:

- Visitors and staff board the riverboat Francis Cabot Lowell.
- Rangers in the Lowell Folk Festival street parade.
- WE Committee and Traci Shorb recognize Patrick Harkins as Employee of the Quarter.
- Park Volunteer Mike Krawczyk receives the Centennial Volunteer Challenge Coin from Resi Polixa and Celeste Bernardo.

"Nothing will bring you closer to the original dreams of our modern society than a visit to Lowell National Historical Park. Without a doubt, I promise you a great experience on the waterways during a canal tour... Lowell is more than just a town outside of Boston, it is the birthplace of the industrial revolution.

Google Maps Review

with the park social media team. And, with over 14k views, this video was the park's biggest social media hit of the year.

That, along with reaching over 7,000 Facebook followers this year and winning the *2017 Northeast Museum Services Center March Madness* social media contest, are testaments to the broad interest in park happenings aided by additional visibility online.



Arrivals and departures over the past year:

Arrivals: David Burns and Gordon Slaugh, Maintenance Mechanics; Bryce Waldrop, Architect; Meredith Reister, Allison Horrocks and Andrew Donovan, Park Rangers; Emily Pronovost, Museum Specialist; Stephen Graves, Safety and Occupational Health Specialist.

New Positions within the Park: Emily Anstey, Park Ranger; David Byers, Supervisory Park Ranger; Michelle King, Administrative Program Specialist; Jens Peill-Meininghaus, Buildings Supervisor; Veronica Valdez, Administrative Assistant.

Departures: Staff: Jack Herlihy, John Balczukiewicz, Jim Byington, and Carl Kresge each retired; Victor Medina, now with Groundwork Hudson Valley.

Temporary Assignments Support Staff Development

Incoming: Julie Fonseca de Borges as Chief of Interpretation from Klondike Gold Rush (Seattle) NHP; Katie Keller, Education Technician of Keweenaw NHP, Patty Smith of Adams NHP as Museum Specialist.

Outgoing: Marc Mousseau, Jens Peill-Meininghaus, Rich Hansen, Mike Fernandes, and Charlie Tonetti each accepted assignments to assist with hurricane recovery in Florida, US Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

Partners: Best wishes to Joan Gagnon who retired from Eastern National after 29 years of service.

Looking forward to:

The Mill Girls and Immigrants Exhibit opened in 1989. The story of Lowell's immigrants has continued to evolve since that time. A planning process will begin this year for a new cultural identity exhibit that will convey this story.

A planning process toward integrating a vision for the park's Cultural Resources, Interpretation, and Education operations in the park is underway. Aiding this process, last summer, the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History shared their processes for community engagement through three workshops with the park. This coming June, there will be an authentic community engagement workshop to further this planning process.

A Trolley Condition Assessment is underway to assure that the park's iconic trolley operations continue, outlining and detailing the status and maintenance needs of the park's three replica trolleys and the complete system.



2019 America the Beautiful Lowell National Historical Park (Massachusetts) quarter:

While anxiously awaiting its release in the winter of 2019, staff travelled to Washington, DC to participate in the Citizens Coinage Advisory Commission who considered designs for the Lowell NHP quarter. Look for much more to come on this exciting release.



We sadly note the passing of Lowell Festival Foundation Executive Director, Craig Gates. Craig kept the festival rolling for six years, and his spirited enthusiasm will be shared in the future of the Festival.

2018 Community Excellence Awards

The Lowell Heritage Partnership and Lowell National Historical Park are recognizing these recent accomplishments in the areas of cultural heritage and historic preservation.



Above: Massachusetts Mills III, Picker Building before and after renovations.

Right: African Community Center ribbon-cutting with Congresswoman Niki Tsongas.

Below: Students Molly Mahoney and Kady Phelps with Professor Bob Farrant.



Lowell National Historical Park
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Excellence in Historic Preservation

Massachusetts Mills III – Picker Building Project

The preservation of the Picker House in the historic Massachusetts Mills complex reinforces a sense of time, place and development. The Picker House is among the most visible elements of the complex from the vista on the bridge on East Merrimack Street. The adaptive reuse of the complex has created 70 mixed income rental properties meticulously restored to match the city's historic building standards.

Excellence in Cultural Heritage

Gordon Halm for the African Community Center of Lowell

Gordon Halm has been a fixture in this community since he arrived in Lowell in 1995 from Ghana by way of Liberia. In his early years in the city, Halm was actively involved in the former African-Assistance center in Lowell until it closed. Since that time, Halm spent over a decade thinking how to return the center to his adopted city. Gordon hit upon a combination of improving the lives of African immigrants, refugees, and others through educational, social, and cultural initiatives. With a new vision, now in partnership with Community Teamwork, the center has returned to Lowell.



Student Excellence in Cultural Heritage

Kady Phelps and Molly Mahoney for "From the Atlantic Islands to Lowell, Massachusetts: Continuity and Change in the Mill City's Portuguese Community"

Molly and Kady, two University of Massachusetts Lowell students working with Professor Robert Farrant, researched and curated the exhibit, which consists of a narrative history of Portuguese immigration. The exhibition, a presentation of the Saab Center for Portuguese Studies, examines the experiences of individuals and families making a living in the mills and later in the manufacturing and high-tech industries, in many cases reaching aspects of the "American Dream" by allowing for improved professional opportunities for their children.

Design: Higgins & Ross

Photography:

Front Cover: Canalway, Boott Mills (before and after), Market Mills Courtyard (before and after), and Boarding House Park (before and after) by James Higgins

Preservation section: Lantern Celebration by Jennifer Myers

Partners section: Lowell Folk Festival by Kevin Harkins

Back Cover:

Top Left (2): Rees-Larkin Development

Middle right: African Community Center

Bottom left: Saab Center for Portuguese Studies at University of Massachusetts Lowell

All other photos: National Park Service