



Foundation Document Overview

Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park

New Jersey

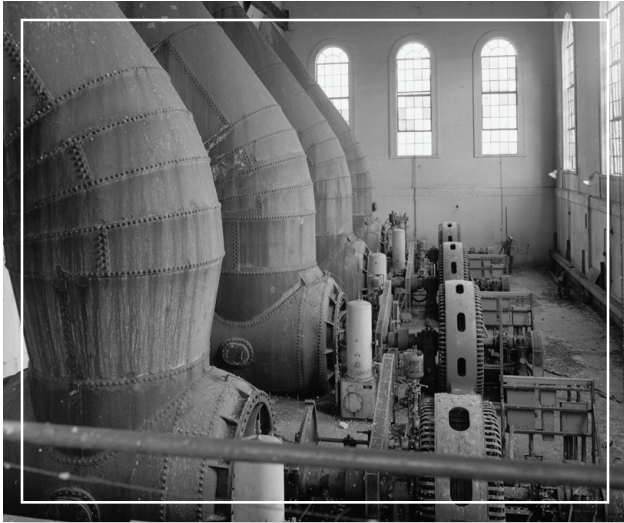


Contact Information

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Purpose



The purpose of PATERSON GREAT FALLS NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK is to preserve and interpret the natural beauty of the Great Falls of the Passaic River and the industrial, cultural, and recreational landscape that formed around its endless source of power. The park and surrounding national historic landmark district illustrate the successful evolution of a manufacturing society that drew from the diversity and innovations of the American people for more than two centuries.



Significance

Significance statements express why Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- The Great Falls of the Passaic River, with its natural chasm and 77-foot waterfall, provides an extraordinary scenic and geologic resource in the midst of an industrialized city and opportunities for relaxation, contemplation, and inspiration.
- Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park and the national historic landmark district provide one of the best opportunities to view a complete hydropower system from its source above the Great Falls of the Passaic River to its transformation into power for the mills and the surrounding community. Alexander Hamilton's vision of a model manufacturing city, a central part of his economic strategy for the nation, is embedded in this industrial, cultural, and natural landscape.
- Paterson's raceway system illustrates American ingenuity as the country grew to become a major industrial nation. The raceways offer an outstanding opportunity to interpret the city's industrial past and the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures' role as a manufacturing incubator making it possible for immigrants to start businesses with limited resources and capital.
- The entrepreneurship and innovations of Paterson's industrialists and workers allowed the city to thrive and evolve over time in a long continuum of industrial use that continues today. Paterson's success can be attributed in large part to immigrants who brought their creativity and experience to the city seeking a better life; a trend that has continued throughout the city's history.
- Hinchliffe Stadium is one of the best examples of a professional Negro League baseball venue. The stadium was specifically sited above the Great Falls so patrons could have a commanding view of Paterson's ever-evolving industrial, social, and natural landscape.

Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Geologic Formation and Features**
- **Hydrologic Systems**
- **Historic Structures, Archeological Resources, and Ruins**
- **Raceway System**
- **Hinchliffe Stadium**
- **Natural Scenic and Industrial Landscape Views**
- **Experiential Elements of the Falls**

Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Historic Mill Buildings**
- **Milling Community**
- **Museum Collections**
- **Passaic River National Natural Landmarks**



Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **The Natural Beauty that Inspired and Powered a Revolution.** The Great Falls in the heart of Paterson has drawn people and inspired them—both for its natural beauty and for the power and the energy that it promises.
- **The Economic Vision that Shaped America.** Paterson was founded on Alexander Hamilton’s vision that freedom and independence for the United States would be based in a manufacturing economy that required a diversity of talents with promises of a better life for its people.
- **Innovation and Opportunity (the Power of American Manufacturing).** Through diversification of industries, technological innovation, and successive waves of industry and immigration, Paterson continued to exemplify and reinvent Hamilton’s vision of a planned manufacturing center for more than two centuries.
- **Race, Recreation, and Respite.** While the nation struggled with issues of race and civil rights, Paterson’s Hinchliffe Stadium was home field for two Negro League baseball teams—the New York Black Yankees and New York Cubans—and a municipal sports and entertainment venue that offered respite from factory work and fostered civic pride.



Description

Opportunity, innovation, immigration, the American Dream—the ideas and principles that formed the cornerstone of the United States are represented today at Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park. The stories of our industrial heritage are the stories of America in the 21st century.

Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park encompasses approximately 52 acres adjacent to the Passaic River in the city of Paterson, west of the city's downtown center. Paterson, approximately 15 miles from Manhattan as well as downtown Newark, is within the greater New York–Northern New Jersey Metropolitan Area and is the county seat for Passaic County. Portions of the park fall within the Great Falls of the Passaic River / Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures National Historic Landmark Historic District and Great Falls of Paterson–Garret Mountain Natural National Landmark. It also includes Hinchliffe Stadium National Historic Landmark, significant for its role in the history of Negro professional baseball in 20th-century segregated America.

The park consists of the natural, cultural, and historic resources associated with the Great Falls of the Passaic River, the hydropower system it feeds, and a 220-year period of industrial history. The Great Falls is an outstanding example of the country's natural history, formed millions of years ago. The geologic formation created an extraordinary 77-foot fall into a naturally occurring 280-foot chasm that attracted American Indians and later Colonial-era tourists. By the late 18th century, entrepreneurs, investors, and government officials, led by Alexander Hamilton, sought to harness the power of the river through the Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures.

The resulting concentration of 19th and 20th century industrial buildings and structures, connected to a water power system of raceways fed by the Passaic River just above the Great Falls, illustrates the growth and evolution in industrial planning, architecture, and engineering in the United States from 1792 to 1945.

The park is situated in and serves one of the most ethnically and socioeconomically diverse communities in the country. There are more than 50 ethnic groups represented in a population of some 160,000. Many of the descendants of older waves of ethnic immigrant groups live in nearby suburban communities that surround Paterson. Today, there is a tremendous opportunity to introduce diverse communities to the National Park Service through outreach, on-site programs, youth work programs, and the enhancement of educational and recreational opportunities within the park's boundaries, and to do so in cooperation with both public and private partners.

Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park is one of many partnership parks in the national park system. In a partnership park, many parties cooperate to preserve the park's resources and provide experiences for visitors and to accomplish the vision for the park. Today the park has numerous partners who support a variety of park activities and operations. Several have formal agreements with the National Park Service, but many of the park's partnerships are collaborative with less formal arrangements. Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park represents an evolving idea of a park in an urban setting that brings a national park experience “close to home” and whose ownership and management are shared by a group of partners. This approach has many advantages and brings great flexibility in responding to opportunities and challenges as technology and innovation are quickly moving forward.

