



Lowell

Thirty-Five Years Hence: Continuing Revolutions

Continuing the Revolution

This June will mark the thirty-fifth anniversary of the establishment of Lowell National Historical Park. Whether related to industrialization, immigration, or revitalization – the park, its partners, and communities continue to creatively share Lowell’s stories, preserve its past, and envision its future. The spirit of collaboration that is Lowell is reflected in the many programs, projects, and partnerships found within this report.

It is hard to imagine that five years have passed since the park engaged community members to celebrate thirty-years of achievements and to plan for the future.

As part of this process, the park and partners developed themes that we’ve highlighted in this report to capture the past year’s accomplishments. As we had much to celebrate this year, we also confronted the challenges brought on by the budget cuts imposed by the recent sequestration of the federal budget. But just as Lowell’s founders transformed the waters of the Merrimack River into power for mill manufacturing, the park and its partners continue to transform challenges to successes.

Historically, Lowell has been a place of invention and innovation. Our snapshot

of the past year is proof that this holds true today. And as we look to the future, there is still much to do. How can we use the park’s history to engage people in discussions about today’s industrialization, worker’s rights, immigration, global warming? How can Lowell’s history and resources become relevant to under-represented communities who may not be connected to the park? How should the National Park Service continue to play a vital role in revitalizing Lowell’s economy? One thing is certain, we won’t find solutions alone. Won’t you join us?

Celeste Bernardo, Superintendent

The Park’s Footprint Evolves

Healthy Explorations
The Lowell Plan and the Park created a map/guide of the Canalways and Riverwalk to share the extent of these waterfront amenities with residents and visitors alike. A walk along Lowell’s Canalways offers an outlet and reveals Lowell’s historic landscape. Assembling the routes available along Lowell’s Canalways, a new brochure (top right) suggests directions and ties themes together, with the completed story available online.

Canalways and Cultural Districts
Opportunities, cultural and creative, continue to emerge...
When the Massachusetts Cultural Council offered recognition to community cultural districts, the City responded rapidly. With the Cultural Organization of Lowell (COOL) coordinating, the “Canalway Cultural District of Lowell” was identified and accepted by the Council in 2012. Specific district goals include: to attract artists and cultural enterprises; encourage business and job development; establish the district as a tourist destination; preserve and reuse historic buildings; enhance property values; and foster local cultural development. Much of this district overlaps the Park’s boundaries.



Opposite page:
Celeste Bernardo, Superintendent, joins Congresswoman Niki Tsongas and Interior Secretary Kenneth Salazar in a Pawtucket Dam briefing.

Right:
Hamilton Mills rehabilitation took a huge step forward with Lowell Community Health Center opening in Mill 6.



Preserving the Spirit of Place

Redevelopment Progress
Lowell’s historic landscape is preserved mill by mill while celebrations occur for completed mill redevelopment projects bringing new uses to solid mill structures. The NPS-administered Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program has and still offers a balancing factor to making notable rehabilitation projects of historic structures feasible. The Lowell Community Health Center opened its new facility in the renovated and restored Mill No. 6 of the Hamilton Mills, bringing their formerly widespread service sites throughout the city into one central location. Next door, the Counting House Lofts project has received approval for both historic and housing tax credits. All told, the 5.2 million square feet of mill space available has reached 91.5% of actual or approved redevelopment.



The (Next) Greatest Generation

Spindle City Corps

Assisting to maintain the City’s canalways and other resources, the Spindle City Corps (SCC) Maintenance Crews keep grounds and sites looking great. SCC is a Park partnership with Community Teamwork Incorporated (CTI). In 2012, an additional branch of SCC, The Spindle City Stars, donned period costumes, researched historical figures, and paired that content with their own experiences for dramatic presentations. These vignettes introduced the public to an expanded view of Lowell as they awaited the start of canal boat tours.



TIHC 20th Anniversary

The Tsongas Industrial History Center, a partnership with the University of Massachusetts Lowell, engaged with new audiences and curriculum explorations during its twentieth anniversary this year. Programming included developing Bridging the Watershed for school classes, hosting the Mass Memories Road Show, and a celebratory birthday party at the Bellegarde Boathouse. The ongoing success of the TIHC education programs was also recognized with an unprecedented eighth consecutive year of teacher development workshops funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

Art in the Park to Your City Saturdays

Families and summer campers found new activities at Boarding House Park this summer complementing the “Free Fun for Kids” performances on the stage. Through storytelling and hands-on crafts, Park Rangers found novel approaches to share Lowell with youngsters. That program’s success evolved to monthly “Your City Saturdays” during the autumn to spring seasons.



Climate Friendly Parks

The “Climate Friendly Parks” program is a system-wide designation to individual national park sites completing specific milestones of conservation and sustainability in operations. Lowell NHP is on the road toward attaining the designation, with a developmental workshop completed, documentation compiled, and a Climate Change intern focused on data organization and training. The Park’s sustainability efforts continue with energy tracking, solar and wind power stations, LED lighting, and electric vehicles in the fleet.



Exporting the Lowell Experience

Interior Secretary Salazar Visits Lowell

On the invitation of Congresswoman Tsongas to visit Lowell, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar arrived in Lowell to accept an honorary degree from the University of Massachusetts at Lowell in May 2012. While in the City, the Secretary toured Lowell National Historical Park, viewed the Pawtucket Dam, and visited several Lowell redevelopment projects. In his keynote at the University graduation that weekend, the Secretary referred to the cooperation among the Park, University, and City as “great examples for all the rest of America.” And added, “The world should see what they’re doing in Lowell.”

National Park Foundation Board Visit

The National Park Foundation is the charitable organization congressionally chartered for national park support. Their board, including NPS Director Jon Jarvis, experienced Lowell during a jam-packed tour in May 2012 incorporating a canal boat ride, a brief trek in the Hamilton Canal District, as well as the full breadth of happenings in the Boott Mills complex – from the Park’s museum and education programs to viewing the redevelopment for housing in Boott Mills Apartments.

Opposite page:
Clockwise from top: Free Fun for Kids at Boarding House Park, Secretary Ken Salazar tests a waterwheel at TIHC, Spindle City Corps touches up canalway railings.

Right:
National Park Foundation Board members experience the assembly line in “Workers on the Line” at TIHC.

Park Break Boston

Along with Boston National Historical Park and Boston African American National Historic Site, the Park partnered with the George Wright Society for Park Break Boston 2012. For one week in October, eight graduate students from across the country immersed themselves in discovering the cultural resources and management challenges at the three national park areas. Each student emerged from the intense exposure and shared their reactions to the stories, experiences, and thoughtfully offered opportunities for reaching a higher level of relevancy and increasing diversity in the NPS.

Dickens in Lowell

A nineteenth century “rock star” was feted in Lowell in 2012, the bicentenary of Charles Dickens’ birth. The exhibit, “Dickens and Massachusetts: A Tale of Power and Transformation” reflected on Dickens’ visits to America, their impact on his writing, and Dickens profound and continued literary influence. More than fifty theme-related events between February and October investigated and celebrated all things Dickens and some imagined, spanning from the International Dickens Society Symposium, to film screenings, to a steampunk soiree.



Pathways to Learning

Next Generation of Community Programming

With a grant from the Theodore Edson Parker Foundation, the Lowell Heritage Partnership and Park are reaching out to the community to increase the relevancy of how stories are told and enhancing opportunities for stewardship and engagement. Listening sessions, training in facilitation, and program pilots will frame this grant’s first phase.

Lowell Folk Festival

That last full weekend in July 2012 saw the twenty-sixth Festival since the first National Folk Festival arrived in Lowell in 1987. The Festival, the Park, and the City have each evolved during those intervening years. Boarding House Park and the “Dutton Street Dance Pavilion,” also known as the Visitor Center parking lot, host the evening concerts. A parade of nations kicks everything off on Friday evening with the members of Lowell’s many communities with flags of more than twenty nations accompanying the parade band from City Hall to Boarding House Park. In 2012, Jorge Arce Comparsa Boricua, the Puerto Rican parade tradition, kept that beat along the way.



Angkor Dance Troupe: 25th Anniversary Celebration

Blending the traditions of Cambodian dance with the moves and music of today, the Angkor Dance Troupe celebrated their 25th anniversary with a premier production of their own “Aspara Dancing Stones.” The troupe hosts lessons and programs in the Mogan Cultural Center, where “Cambodian dance provides a poignant reminder of the beauty and spirituality of our culture and helps us build a more stable foundation for our children.”



Cambodian Kiln

Yary Livan, a master ceramicist from Cambodia and adjunct professor at Middlesex Community College (MCC), sought to share his traditional skills widely. At the College, Art Professor Margaret Rack focused on sharing Livan’s skills with students. Through a partnership with the Park, along with funding support from the Theodore Edson Parker Foundation, a site at the Park’s Maintenance Shop grounds became the site of a wood-fired kiln. The project also brought the only other known trained Cambodian ceramicist, Proeung Kang, to Lowell, allowing the two masters to work together. The first kiln burn in September accompanied a Lowell Folklife Series program with an audience attending to discover the process and await the eventual reveal of 90% of the intact fired items completed at a later date. Two subsequent kiln burns have already produced master and student works, illustrating the celebrated tradition of conveying fine art skills between generations. MCC has received an NEA-funded grant to continue this program.



Thoughtful Giving and Stewardship

Hurricane Sandy Recovery

Hurricane Sandy blew into the east coast taking a heavy toll on many areas, including national park sites in New York and New Jersey. Six Park staff in Maintenance and Law Enforcement provided support to the recovery effort: Matt Collins and Traci Shorb with Incident Command Center duties; Charlie Raye, Marc Mousseau, Mike Comtois, and Rich Hansen with direct involvement with stabilization and repair.

The Lowell Plan: Public Matters

In partnership with The Lowell Plan, Public Matters: Lowell’s Emerging Leaders completed the fourth cohort in June 2012, with the program’s network of participants connecting in unexpected ways. The fifth cohort began in January 2013, bringing total participation to nearly one hundred in this leadership and civic engagement initiative. Scanning faces at most any public event around Lowell frequently includes alumnae, whether presenting, participating, or attending.

Lowell Summer Music Series

Summer nights once again saw an impressive line-up at Boarding House Park. The 2012 schedule presented Lyle Lovett, KD Lang, and John Mayall, among others. In 2013, Jeanne D’Arc Credit Union has stepped in as the premier sponsor, and we all look forward to warm evenings with Indigo Girls, Joan Baez, Buddy Guy, and Solas among those booked.

Community College Service Learning

Students at Middlesex Community College step out of their classrooms and into service learning opportunities – sometimes with the Park. This year brings the 20th anniversary of MCC’s program, and the continued outreach to engage students with their school’s community brings the students hands-on experience and direct benefits to recipient organizations, including the Park.



Opposite page: (left to right)
Jorge Arce begins the Lowell Folk Festival Street Parade; Angkor Dance Troupe performance; Wood-burning kiln ribbon-cutting.

Right:
Lowell Summer Music Series at Boarding House Park.



2013 Community Awards

For the seventh year, a partnership between the Park and the Lowell Heritage Partnership recognizes contributions in Lowell for excellence in historic preservation, cultural heritage, and special acknowledgments.

Excellence in Historic Preservation

Lowell Community Health Center

For preserving Mill No. 6 of the Hamilton Manufacturing Company through a renovation and redevelopment into a combined medical and community health center. Working with Durkee, Brown, Viveiros & Werenfels Architects and the community the Center serves, this integrated facility opened in February 2013.

Excellence in Cultural Heritage

Dr. Patrick J. Mogan

We sadly note the passing of Dr. Patrick J. Mogan and note his decades of leadership in celebrating Lowell's cultural heritage. As the namesake of the Mogan Cultural Center in the Park, we celebrate his contributions to instigating the creation of a national park in Lowell. Without his passionate vision for pulling Lowell's history and culture into the limelight, many features and landscapes around the City might be very different today.

Lowell Southeast Asian Water Festival

For 16 years this summer event along the Merrimack River (shown at left) has been sharing and celebrating Southeast Asian traditions and culture, with an emphasis on the significance of water both in spirit and livelihood, for current and future generations.

Richard Howe, Jr.

Carrying on the tradition of sharing Lowell's history as told through the Lowell Cemetery, Richard illuminates the Cemetery's historic landscape along with the contributions of the spectrum of individuals interred there, whether a century or a year has passed.

Albert Lorenzo

For dedication in researching, writing, and publishing five in-depth volumes on the Lowell canal system that have become a go-to resource for many, as well as for his generous assistance to those researching these topics.

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Photography: Higgins & Ross: cover and all interior photos except Pawtucket Dam Group, NPF Board, Lowell Folk Festival, and Cambodian Kiln.

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