

FACT SHEET, HR 11662
THE LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

-Designated a National Historical Landmark

The Interior Department report stated..."Lowell occupies an especially significant place in the nation's history. The virtually unaltered waterways, together with the surprisingly little altered mills and their machinery, form what is probably the most historically significant aggregation of early 19th century industrial structures and artifacts in the United States."

-National Historical Park Recommended by National Park Service

In February 17, 1978 testimony, NPS Director William J. Whalen stated before the House Subcommittee on National Parks...
"Lowell -- more so than any other city -- (can) portray the beginning of commerce and industry in America. Lowell presents an opportunity for preservation that should not be lost."

In an April 4, 1978 letter, after such questions were raised on the House floor, Congressman Tsongas wrote to NPS Director Whalen:

"What is the position of the National Park Service as it relates to the national significance of Lowell?"

Director Whalen responded...

"It is the professional opinion of the National Park Service and supported by the December 22nd, 1977, designation by Secretary Andrus of the Locks and Canals Historic District in Lowell, Massachusetts, as a national historic landmark, that the area encompassed by the National Historic Park boundary (map reference Lowe 80,008A) is nationally significant. Although H.R. 11662 provides for a sharing of operation and management responsibilities of various properties within the park boundary, this in no way diminishes the national significance of the resources."

-National Trust for Historic Preservation Endorses Park

"The City of Lowell and its surrounding area comprise an historically significant community which played an important role in the industrial revolution in America...The National Trust is hopeful that the Congress will act to ensure the preservation of Lowell."

-Historians Concur with NPS Finding on National Significance

- a. Margaret Terrell Parker..."The city's origin and growth constitute the first instance in America of the development of a city of the primarily industrial type."
- b. Harry C. Dinmore..."The energy supplied by its carefully controlled waterpower gave birth and enduring life to the industrial revolution in this country."

- c. Robert Vogel, Curator of Industrial Archeology, Smithsonian Institution... "Since literally the moment of its inception, Lowell -- the first planned industrial community in the Western Hemisphere -- has never been very far from the public's eye. During its spectacular rise as a manufacturing complex that almost perfectly combined business and industry with a theretofor unheard of attention to the human needs of its workers, it was a magnet for visitors from around the world who recognized the noble experiment for the pioneering venture that it was, and enthusiastically took it as a model."
- d. Douglas L. Griffin, Chief, Historic American Engineering Record, Department of Interior... "It would not be an exaggeration to state that Lowell was the premier industrial city in the United States during the first half of the 19th century. Indeed it lost its pre-eminent position in the second half of the century, but that in no way detracts from Lowell's importance in the development of the American Industrial Revolution in America. Lowell is a particularly valuable historical document because the quality and breadth of its early structures still survive."

LOWELL FILLS A GAP IN THE PARK SYSTEM

In a study conducted by the National Park Service, it was concluded that the theme... "America at Work is the most poorly represented of any in the National Park System." A second theme relating the Lowell, that of Society and Social Conscience is described as "clearly one of the weak areas of the system's representation." In fact, of 13 sub-themes represented in Lowell, 5 are partially or poorly represented, and 8 are not represented at all.

On April 6, 1978, National Park Service Assistant Director Ira J. Hutchison was asked the following question by Senator Clifford Hansen before the Senate Subcommittee on National Parks and Recreation...

- Q. "Do you feel that the physical resources and the cultural and historical story that Lowell has to tell are adequately represented in other units of the National Park System?"
- A. "No sir, I do not."

COST

H.R. 11662 authorizes \$18.5 million for NPS and \$21.5 million for the Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, both over a ten year period.

The cost is down from an NPS estimate of \$54 million prior to agreement on this substitute legislation.

The Commission cannot be thought of as a \$21.5 million dollar Commission. This must be thought of as a \$40 million national park. The Park Service and Commission both must carry out their responsibilities if Lowell is to be preserved. NPS duties, as costed at \$18.5 million,

anticipates that the Commission, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and the City of Lowell will share responsibilities and certain costs.

Major reduction of Commission funds would upset the balance of the preservation partnership that H.R. 11662 envisions. It is this formula that substantially lowers federal costs. A traditional park approach would probably cost some \$60 to \$70 million. This is "the genius of the approach of H.R. 11662", as NPS Director Whalen states in his April 10, 1978 letter.

(see attached estimated cost sheet for specific figures)

THE PLAN: COOPERATIVE MANAGEMENT AND PRESERVATION

The National Park Service states that a "genuine partnership" is essential if the Lowell National Historical Park is to succeed.

While the OMB cleared position called for an advisory commission, NPS always favored supplemental historic preservation grants (\$17.8 million) to carry out preservation tasks that would supplement their own acquisition and restoration. NPS originally envisioned a state and local plan for preservation, an advisory role for the commission, and final approval by the Secretary. Funds would come in the form of a non-matching supplemental NPS grants. Following a March 8, 1978 compromise and the introduction of H.R. 11662 as a substitute, NPS has stated that, in their best professional judgement, the plan will work and represents an excellent new approach to national parks.

In his April 10, 1978 letter, Director Whalen states...

"The Administration realizes that no precedent exists for our recommendation that supplemental grants be made by the National Park Service. However, we believe that the precedent is warranted at Lowell due to its unique ability--more so than any other city--to portray the beginning of commerce and industry in America..."

"As I testified before the House, the differences between the Administration's position and H.R. 11662 are not over whether we should employ a unique approach to preservation but rather concerns about the size of the federal commitment of dollars and the scope of the federal partnership responsibilities."

"...The genius of the approach of H.R. 11662 is that although it could have proposed that this area be administered as a 'traditional park,' it does not. Instead, the proposal envisions a genuine partnership of federal, state, and local efforts to conserve a living historical landscape.

The preservation strategy in this bill is based on an intensive two-year study by the Lowell Historic Canal District Commission, as mandated by Congress in 1975. This legislation also reflects hundreds of hours of consultation with the National Park Service. The bill has been further modified by the House Interior Committee to insure that preservation activities in Lowell will be directed solely towards significant historical and cultural properties.

Major preservation and intensive visitor use would be directed towards a nationally significant two-by-five block area. Within this "historic core area", the Commission, the State, and city would have preservation responsibilities for all structures. Every building here relates directly to the corporated system of early Lowell and was built between 1825 and 1860, with the exception of the early 1900 Lowell High School extension. Efforts would be made to restore the structures (other than the High School) here to their 19th century appearance.

This two-by-five block area, plus the canal system and associated structures, would constitute the Lowell National Historical Park.

Lands directly adjacent to the park, containing a high concentration of historic properties, have been included in the Lowell Historic Preservation District.

This bills divides preservation, restoration, and management responsibilities between the National Park Service and a federally funded Lowell Historic Preservation Commission, established under the Department of Interior.

THE PURPOSE OF THE COMMISSION

- (a) Preserve and develop nationally significant properties that relate to the American Industrial Revolution and the people who are part of this story;
- (b) Protect the resources within the park and preservation district from development and activities inconsistent with the goals established in H.R. 11662;
- (c) Encourage the Federal, State, and local governments to cooperate to the maximum extent practicable;
- (d) Establish educational and cultural programs and activities to encourage the appreciation of the resources of the park and preservation district; and
- (e) Enter into such agreements as may be necessary to provide essential services to visitors to the park and preservation district as defined in H.R. 11662.

To explain how the roles of the National Park Service and the Commission were determined, it must first be understood that the Lowell Park strategy is a direct result of the unique nature of the resource represented in Lowell.

Historic Lowell is not connected with famous people or specific political events. It is, rather, the embodiment of an era, a change in the American way of life by the development of industry and the creation of an industrial society. This idea cannot be illustrated with the utilization of a small number of isolated historic structures.

The essence of understanding the significance of Lowell is in the interrelationship of the scenic areas, rivers, canal system, and historic buildings which symbolize the cultural development of modern industrial America. The plan is concentrated in the historic core area where these relationships can best be seen.

The physical nature of the resource is also unique...without precedent for the National Park Service. The extent of nationally significant buildings is vast. Yet, traditional fee acquisition approaches to preservation are not well-suited for an urban area. Therefore, maximum preservation participation by the private sector is essential. The legislation designates historic areas and buildings which can maximize this process. Easements, grants, and loans can provide preservation incentives and extremely limit the need for acquisition.

However, the National Park Service strongly opposed any requirement that the agency purchase easements, enter into agreements, or administer a grants program. The agency did recognize the need for additional preservation activities. The National Park Service suggested before the House Subcommittee on National Parks that \$17.8 million be made available for historic preservation activities to complement their limited efforts. There is a history in Lowell of successful inter-governmental cooperation on behalf of park goals. The Lowell Historic Canal District Commission was well received and did a remarkable job. Therefore, it was decided that a federal-state-local commission could best coordinate State Heritage Park plans, local and private efforts with National Park Service goals. The alternative is for the federal government to shoulder major financial and leadership tasks. No one would find this acceptable. Furthermore, a solution that simply limited federal activity to scattered sites would make standards unenforceable and encourage incompatible use of adjacent properties.

The Lowell Historic Canal District Commission considered alternatives to the proposed commission structure with federal, state, and local officials. They concluded that--

- the entity could not simply be advisory
- state or local sponsorship was not feasible or desirable
- existing preservation mechanisms were inadequate

Furthermore, they found that a commission would offer the distinct advantages of--

- centralizing fund approval authority and reporting through the Secretary of Interior
- limiting National Park Service involvement to those functions that the agency is best equipped, and
- broadening the participatory base for planning and implementation

PRESERVATION IN LOWELL IS BASED ON A PARTNERSHIP

Activities in Lowell have never been dependent upon a federal "dole".

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has committed \$10 million in a Lowell State Heritage Park based on preserving the historic canal and river areas. The city has spent over \$2 million on downtown restoration and preservation activities. This activity has acted as an incentive for an additional investment of some \$50 million by the private and public sector directly relating to the theme of historic preservation that this Act is intended to carry out.

The proposed Commission would establish standards to assure consistency and further coordinate this effort. Local input would also be important to the Commission.

This partnership is perpetuated by the make-up of the Commission. There would be 7 local, 5 federal, and 3 state members.

SECRETARY'S AUTHORITY OVER COMMISSION

In addition to the Secretary's final approval power over both an index of historical and cultural properties of national significance and the Commission's preservation plan, there are specific "withholding of funds" provisions:

The Secretary can refuse to obligate or expend funds should it be determined that:

- 1) the City of Lowell has failed to establish regulations consistent with the Commission's (construction, preservation, and alteration) standards and criteria;
- 2) the City of Lowell has failed to notify the Commission of building permits or zoning variances for index properties; or
- 3) the Commission has not made good faith efforts to provide for preservation as specified in the Act, or failed to carry out the park preservation plan approved by the Secretary.

Furthermore, the Secretary has appointment power over all local and state Commission recommendations. Since terms are two years, the Secretary could prevent re-appointment of a member whose actions have not been consistent with the purposes of the Act.

THE LOWELL PARK HAS WIDE SUPPORT

The Park has been endorsed by the President's Advisory Council (this is the first time they testified in support of a national park before a Congressional Committee), Preservation Action, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the American Institute of Planners, the Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society, the National Parks and Conservation Association, Friends of the Earth, National Audubon Society, the national AFL-CIO, the Massachusetts Legislature (by resolution), and editorially by WBZ-TV in Boston, and the Washington Post.

THE LOWELL PARK IS NOT URBAN RENEWAL

Amendments will be suggested that specify that only properties of national significance can be acquired (by simple fee or interest therein) or receive grants or loans. Judgement of national significance will be made by the Secretary.

Therefore, no funds can go to properties unrelated to the nationally significant role that Lowell played in the American Industrial Revolution.

Congressman Tsongas, in his letter of April 4, 1978, asked...

"Can the Park Service differentiate between preservation activities and urban renewal (in Lowell)."

National Park Service Director Whalen responded in his letter of April 10, 1978...

"With respect to a concern about differentiating between urban renewal and historic preservation, let me state that in my opinion, the Lowell proposal is the very antithesis of urban renewal. As I pointed out earlier, the Secretary has already identified the Locks and Canals Historic District as being nationally significant. There is no question in our minds that the National Park Service should be in Lowell; and there is no question about our desire to be in Lowell, for Lowell presents a very unique opportunity to tell the story of not only America's emergence into the Industrial Revolution but also the story of the evolution of a city and how the great contributions of immigrants to this country impacted social and cultural institutions as well as industry in general. The genius of the approach of H.R. 11662 is that although it could have proposed that this area be administered as a "traditional park," it does not. Instead, the proposal envisions a genuine partnership of federal, state, and local efforts to conserve a living historical landscape."

Supporters of this legislation have gone out of their way to agree to minority amendments that clarify the powers of the Park Service and Commission in Lowell. This includes:

[in Committee] -19 amendments accepted from Mr. Sebelius including one reducing the size of the national historical park by one-half;

[House floor] -5 amendments which will be on the floor (which Congressman Tsongas is agreeable to) further clarifying the role of NPS and the Commission as requested by Mr. Sebelius; and

[House floor] -6 amendments which will be on the floor as a result of a clarification requested by Mr. Skubitz which limits acquisition, easements, grants, and loans to nationally significant properties

Following these clarifications, those who cry "urban renewal" are merely attempting to cloud this issue with emotional catch-phrases. Are the Independence National Historical Park or Boston National Historical Park "urban renewal" just because they are in urban areas? The story of the American Industrial Revolution cannot be told except in the city where it was born and where the physical structures symbolizing this process still exist.