

CONNECTING THE
Heart & Soul
OF AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

EDITION NO. 7 | OCTOBER 2023

RESTORATION





ANDRE CARROFLOWER



WHAT IS RESTORATION?

Is it the removal of invasive weeds that have choked a wetland or rehabilitation of an abandoned building back to its former glory? Or is restoration something less tangible like reconnecting a community to its riverfront or reviving artistic traditions central to a region's cultural heritage? Or returning sovereignty to native peoples? In

National Heritage Areas (NHAs), restoration can have many meanings, but the common thread is that every NHA project is a grass roots, community-driven public-private partnership.

From the first NHA established in 1984 to the seven new NHAs established this year, National Heritage Areas work with community partners across 36 states and territories in environmental restoration, historic preservation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism to ensure the diverse landscapes, histories, and cultures of our nation are preserved and celebrated.

This issue focuses on the incredible restoration work of several NHAs and their community partners. These partnerships are vital to the work we do. So, too, are the youth. In West Virginia for instance, 4-H students have

helped the Appalachian Forest NHA and their partners restore red spruce forests by planting saplings each spring. In The Last Green Valley NHA, 80 middle school students gathered with community leaders to discover and restore the stories of enslaved individuals. Through our restoration work, historic buildings have been rehabilitated and saved from demolition; endangered rivers, species, and forestlands have been protected; and Indigenous food practices and traditions have been preserved—to name but a few.

The ripple effect of our restoration work cannot be underestimated for it leads to ongoing conversations and celebrations of our natural and cultural heritage, in addition to increased opportunities for community outreach and education.

Together, with our hundreds of partners and thousands of volunteers, NHAs are working not just to restore physical assets, but to build connections and community and through this work, to restore our faith in one another and the promise of America.

SARA CAPEN

Chair, Alliance Of National Heritage Areas | Executive Director, Niagara Falls National Heritage Area

(Above) Prophet Isaiah's Second Coming House in Niagara Falls, NY is a tremendous testament to the Restoration work that can be accomplished by NHAs, their community partners, and members of the local community.

After receiving prophetic visions to use his hands to share the gospel of Christ and his return, Isaiah Robertson began to adorn his Ontario Street home with elaborate art designs. He soon became known as "Prophet Isaiah." Visitors from all over the world have come to see his incredible artistry.

After Robertson's passing in 2020, the Kohler Foundation, Inc. purchased the home to preserve it from demolition and disrepair and appointed the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area (NFNHA) as its long-term steward. Through the NFNHA and conservation efforts of B.R. Howard & Associates, the Prophet Isaiah Second Coming House is now a community space that balances conservation and preservation needs with artistic, educational, and community endeavors.

■ NIAGARA FALLS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA | NEW YORK | DISCOVERNIAGARA.ORG

Recovering Red Spruce Forests

Before the late 1800s, West Virginia's forests included about one million acres of red spruce. Only a small fraction remained after extensive commercial logging decimated the mountain forests at the turn of the 20th century. Red spruce now covers about 178,000 acres at high elevations in the Allegheny Mountains thanks to natural regrowth and conservation efforts.

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area supports organizations like the West Virginia Division of Forestry, the Monongahela National Forest, and the Nature Conservancy with our AmeriCorps Program. Appalachian Forest National

Heritage Area AmeriCorps members, like Kacey Shifflett, help conserve and enhance natural assets with partners like the West Virginia Division of Forestry. The West Virginia Division of Forestry has managed the Red Spruce Restoration project at Kumbraw State Forest for the past three years. Each May, local 4-H students have been helping them plant roughly 1,000 red spruce saplings.



Restoring red spruce forests benefits the

diverse wildlife that depend on red spruce to survive. Roughly 300 wildlife species rely on the red spruce for food and shelter including the Cheat Mountain salamander, saw-whet owl, and West Virginia northern flying squirrel. The forest's shade keeps the soil moist and stream temperatures cold, which is important for native fish species like brook trout.

The resilience of the Appalachian Forest is shown by the recovery of the landscape from the logging boom. Scientific management methods are used today to conserve forestlands for multiple purposes: ecological stewardship, recreation and tourism, and sustainable harvest of forest products.

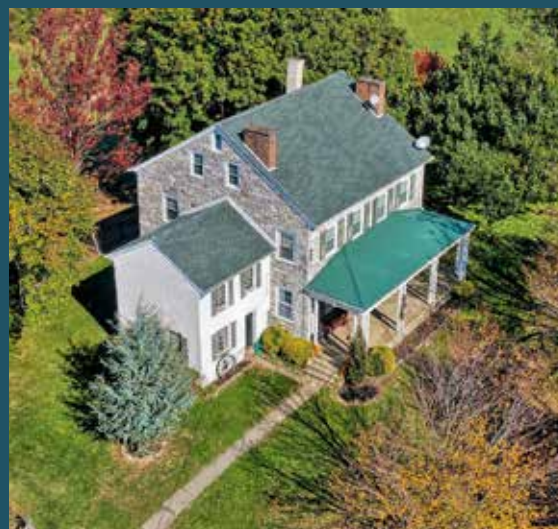
■ APPALACHIAN FOREST NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA WEST VIRGINIA & MARYLAND | APPALACHIANFORESTNHA.ORG



SAVING A GATEWAY *to* FREEDOM

Since 2017, Susquehanna National Heritage Area (SNHA), Preservation PA, and The Conservation Fund (TCF) have worked to save the historic but endangered Mifflin farmstead near the Susquehanna River in York County, Pennsylvania from demolition for warehouses. The site will now serve as the Susquehanna Discovery Center & Heritage Park -- a new SNHA-managed venue for visitors to learn about the area's rich cultural heritage and the site's key role in America's Underground Railroad and Civil War.

Embracing 89 acres of historic landscape linking the Mifflin house to the Susquehanna, this project is an exceptional opportunity to preserve and share the story of this gateway to freedom for Black Americans in the early 1800s -- those who escaped slavery and endured danger to get here, those who harbored and helped them to safety, and those who cultivated



the community alliances essential to the network's success. The site was also central to the June 28, 1863 Civil War battle between Union militia defenders and Confederate troops, just before the burning of the covered bridge across the Susquehanna to stop the invaders' advance. This engagement set the stage for the Battle of Gettysburg three days later.

Following years of collaboration by project partners, funders, landowners, and the developer, TCF purchased the Mifflin site in 2022 for subsequent transfer to SNHA in 2023. Following adaptive use of the historic house and barn as interpretive centers, the site will serve as SNHA's primary visitor center for sharing the nationally important stories of the Susquehanna National Heritage Area.

■ **SUSQUEHANNA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA** | PENNSYLVANIA
SUSQNH.A.ORG



1400 block of Market Street today



▲ ▼ Renderings of restored buildings in use as both commercial and residential space



Wheeling Heritage's Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program Promotes Restoration

Four historic preservation projects in Wheeling, West Virginia are in the works with funding from the "Wheeling Historic Revitalization Subgrant Program" from Wheeling Heritage. In 2021, Wheeling Heritage received a \$750,000 Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant from the National Park Service. This grant works to foster economic development in rural communities through the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

These four projects were selected to receive funding in the first round.

1. **1400 BLOCK OF MARKET STREET** This once set of dilapidated historic buildings at the 1400 Block of Market Street will be restored to their former glory by activating

the first floors for commercial use, and utilizing the upper floors for residences.

2. **BERRY SUPPLY BUILDING** The Berry Supply Building housed the oldest Wheeling business before shutting their doors in 2018. Work has been diligently occurring since 2019 to rehabilitate this building into the first waterfront commercial development along the Ohio River in decades.
3. **SMART CENTRE** 1410 Main Street was previously home to the Goodwin Drug Company for nearly 100 years. Funding will help Libby and Robert Strong's project move forward to relocate their interactive science center.
4. **HUGHES HOUSE** Friends of Wheeling sprang into action to save the antebellum Hughes duplex, located at 722-724 Main Street, after it fell into disrepair. Since then, they have worked to stabilize and rehabilitate the duplex into two residential homes which will be assets to the North Wheeling Historic District.

Wheeling Heritage was recently awarded a second Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization grant and will continue the subgrant program into 2024.

■ **WHEELING NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
 WEST VIRGINIA | WHEELINGHERITAGE.ORG



RESTORATIVE BEAUTY

The Schuylkill River Restoration Fund

You might not think of a garden at a children’s preschool as stormwater runoff mitigation, but that is exactly what the team at Charlestown Playhouse created with their grant from the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund.

Since 2006, the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund has granted over five million dollars to organizations and municipalities for watershed projects that address stormwater run-off, agricultural pollution, and abandoned mine drainage mitigation. The fund is a public/private partnership among Constellation Nuclear, the Delaware River Basin Commission, and Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area in Pennsylvania.

At the Charlestown Playhouse, local landscape architect, Don Pell, worked with the board and staff to create a tiered garden filled with native plants that slows the flow of water from the fields above the school to the roadway below. In the years before the garden was constructed, the road in front of the Playhouse would often become icy and dangerous in cold weather.

Now, thanks to hardy plants, a layer of pea gravel, and the reinforced soil they create, water remains in the garden, nourishing it for years to come. The project was a labor of love for the entire school community, with children as young as two years old planting over 25 species of flowers and grasses.

Other projects may not be quite as beautiful, but they all serve to improve the watershed and protect the historic natural resource of the Schuylkill River. This grant program begins each year in January with funding typically awarded in May or June.

■ **SCHUYLKILL RIVER GREENWAYS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
PENNSYLVANIA | SCHUYKILLRIVER.ORG

Cultivating Identity

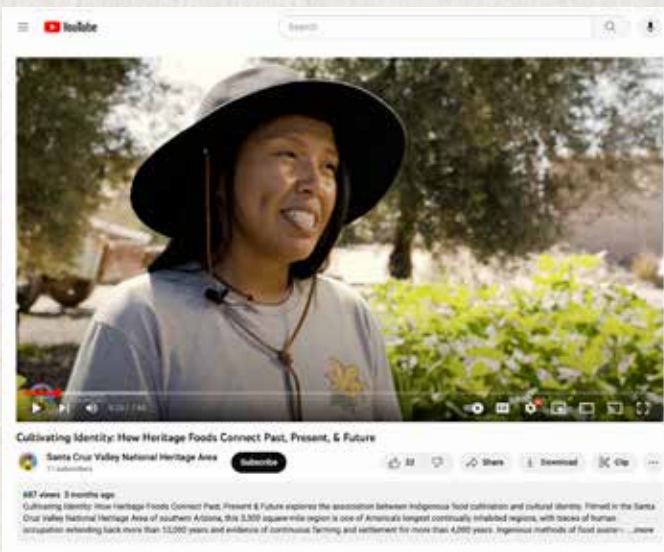
“What are you without identity? What are you without language? What are you without a story that tells where you come from? What are you if you can’t remember?”

—Maegan Lopez,
Tohono O’odham Nation, Arizona

So begins the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area’s (SCVNHA) short film entitled “Cultivating Identity: How Heritage Foods Connect Past, Present, & Future.” Created in 2023 with the participation of multiple organizations in the heritage foods community, this powerful 7-minute film by Dominic Rischard helps restore faith in community by listening and learning from those who understand the importance and necessity of keeping cultural traditions alive.

This film shines the light on the methods of indigenous food sustenance and crop cultivation developed by the Tohono O’odham and their ancestors within our 3,300 square-mile heritage area in southern Arizona. This is one of America’s longest continually inhabited regions, with traces of human occupation extending back more than 12,000 years and evidence of continuous farming and settlement for more than 4,000 years.

The film reveals why it is critical to keep these practices and traditions alive, especially as we face a changing climate. As a community, we can all draw upon the wisdom and importance of this type of agricultural practice as we move toward an uncertain future where water scarcity is a pressing topic.



As one YouTube viewer wrote, “This video is spot-on, and more people need to hear it and listen to the wisdom here. Thank you for sharing.” Watch it at www.youtube.com/watch?v=AXXH6ZILAis

■ **SANTA CRUZ VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
ARIZONA | SANTACRUZHERITAGE.ORG



Restoring Salmon Habitat in the Mountains to Sound Greenway

Since 2005, the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust has worked alongside Washington State Parks, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, other partners, and thousands of volunteers to restore more than 60 acres of streamside habitat within Lake Sammamish State Park. Removing invasive weeds and planting more than 50,000 native trees and shrubs (so far) have created a cascade of benefits for salmon, including Chinook salmon (a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act).

Salmon start their lives in freshwater streams, migrate to the ocean to mature, then return home to reproduce. Salmon need clean, cool streams to be healthy; our restoration work seeks to improve these conditions. Streamside trees provide shade to cool the water, which is increasingly important for salmon survival in a warming climate. Branches and leaves fall into the water and attract insects eaten by young salmon, while downed trees improve stream complexity and provide essential shelter from strong currents and predators.

The Greenway Trust is now preparing to implement a major in-stream restoration project that will build on the streamside restoration work of the last two decades. The project will involve placing more than 400 large logs in the streambed to create a mix of pools and riffles which will make the stream more suitable for salmon survival.

With 1.3 million annual visitors to the State Park, this highly visible project provides ongoing opportunities for public outreach and community education about salmon conservation, habitat restoration, and the natural and cultural heritage of the Greenway NHA.

Learn more: mtsgreenway.org/issaquah-creek

■ **MOUNTAINS TO SOUND GREENWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA** | WASHINGTON | MTSGREENWAY.ORG





Bridging Divides & Building Trust

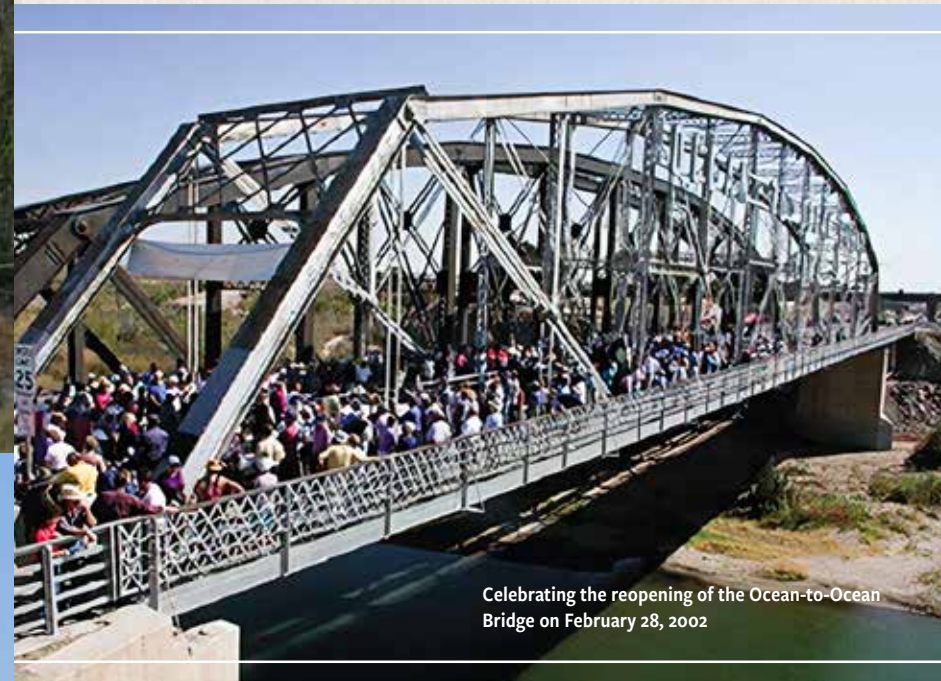


(Above) Restored marsh at Yuma East Wetlands provides habitat for hundreds of bird species including the endangered Yuma Ridgway's rail. (Left) Historic adobe preservation initiated by the Yuma Crossing NHA spurred private economic development in historic downtown Yuma.

The mission of Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (YCNHA) is to restore the riverfront of the Lower Colorado River at Yuma, Arizona as well as its downtown. So how is it that restoring an historic bridge helped make wetlands restoration possible? There had been a historic divide between the City of Yuma and the Quechan Indian Tribe—ever since the U.S. military took control of the Yuma Crossing away from the Quechan in the 1850s. Distrust and suspicion weighed heavily on the relationship. If environmental restoration of the Yuma East Wetlands was going to happen, cooperation between the City and the Tribe was imperative, especially considering that the Tribe owned two-thirds of the land.

On February 28, 2002, tribal and city residents met on the bridge to celebrate its re-opening which both literally and figuratively reconnected the communities. “This was the moment when I knew we were building trust,” Flynn said.

Thereafter, a strong partnership developed among YCNHA, the Quechan Tribe, and the City of Yuma. Over the next ten years, more than \$10 million of local, state, and federal funds were invested in clearing the land, installing irrigation systems, and ultimately planting 250,000 native trees and bushes. Groves of cottonwoods have grown as tall as 50 feet. The partnership grew to include the Arizona Game and Fish Department and the Bureau of Reclamation’s Multi-Species Conservation



Celebrating the reopening of the Ocean-to-Ocean Bridge on February 28, 2002

“ This was the moment when I knew we were building trust. ”

The Yuma East Wetlands project was also technically challenging, with high soil salinity, restricted river flow, and a jungle of dense non-native vegetation covering the waterfront. “It was going to be difficult to undertake a complex 400-acre restoration effort without close cooperation, and we had not yet earned the trust of the Quechan Tribe,” says Charles Flynn, retired Heritage Area Director. Fortunately, Flynn was able to focus on another project which both the City and the Tribe very much wanted -- restoration and re-opening of the historic “Ocean-to-Ocean Highway Bridge.” Built in 1915, the bridge connected tribal land to downtown Yuma, but was closed in 1989 due to structural deficiencies. YCNHA moved ahead with design and secured \$1 million in grants, but they needed \$400,000 as local match. Amazingly, on a handshake, the City and Quechan Indian Tribe agreed to split the cost for local share.

Program. In 2013, the partners entered into a 50-year agreement to ensure ongoing maintenance and enhancement. The Yuma East Wetlands is now considered a model for wetlands restoration in the desert Southwest.

A very different type of restoration was also taking place in the historic downtown. Yuma had slowly lost many of its adobe structures. Located in the heart of downtown Yuma, three adobe buildings along Madison Avenue were rescued from demolition by a unique partnership between the YCNHA and a local contractor, Dave Pauletto. After the YCNHA completed the restoration of the largest adobe, Dave Pauletto stepped forward to complete the restoration of the other two, ultimately placing all three back into private ownership. “Pauletto Compound” is now a keystone in the revitalization of downtown Yuma.

■ YUMA CROSSING NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
ARIZONA | YUMAHERITAGE.COM

FINE TUNED

Initiative to Support Emerging Artists

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area's Fine Tuned project was first imagined as a "hand up" for emerging traditional musicians in the mountains and foothills of North Carolina. The musicians needed to find a way back into the performing music scene that the pandemic had fundamentally changed.

Western North Carolina has one of the strongest musical traditions in the country, a tradition passed from person to person over the generations. This music grew into the forms it takes today with contributions from Cherokee, Scotch-Irish, African, and Continental European styles. Fine Tuned searched for the ideal musicians to honor the diverse traditions by representing them through the participants' backgrounds and musical styles. Fine Tuned showcases styles from ballads to Sacred Steel and musicians with Cherokee, Scotch-Irish, African, and Hispanic heritage.



The mentorship and collaboration-themed professional development project continued the centuries-old model of relationship-based transmission and applied 21st century ideas. Seasoned practitioners in the musical field joined in to create new opportunities for training and experience. Participants in the program gained new partnerships, professional recording experience, and rich lessons in career and performance planning.

In late summer 2023, *Fine Tuned: Volume One*, the vinyl LP, will be available for purchase. This album documents the work of the project and showcases the current and diverse sounds of traditional music in our region. Western North Carolina didn't need its musical culture to change, but it did need an added energy and expanded focus to rebound as masks came off and crowds gathered again.

■ **BLUE RIDGE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
NORTH CAROLINA | BLUERIDGEHERITAGE.COM



Restoring History, Honoring Humanity

Eighty middle school students in The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor arrived at the Woodstock, Connecticut town common on a bright June morning. Tumbling out of buses, they gathered with community leaders for a ceremony honoring the life and humanity of Cuff Fellows, who had once been enslaved in their hometown. The students worked with local historians to examine primary sources for clues about Cuff's life, giving voice to his story through essays, poetry, and song.

Five-year-old Cuff was purchased in 1767 "for a pistereen" by a local family who freed him in 1798. The students uncovered evidence Cuff was an accomplished worker who helped build their community both before and after his manumission. Yet as a freed American, Cuff was attacked by slave catchers. Cuff had not only the fortitude to fight them off, but the respect of townspeople and a local attorney who helped him file an assault and battery complaint.

Cuff's final resting place is unknown, but a Witness Stone now honors him at the First Congregational Church in Woodstock where Cuff had been a member.

The Last Green Valley has partnered with the Witness Stones Project which seeks to restore history and honor the humanity of enslaved individuals, to uncover stories like Cuff Fellows' throughout the National Heritage Corridor. Middle and high school students are linked with historians to conduct research and tell the stories of enslaved people. The impact of this program is significant, shining a light on the often ignored practice of enslavement in New England.

■ **THE LAST GREEN VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR**
CONN. & MASS. | THELASTGREENVALLEY.ORG



SEE THE LIGHT

BAKERS ISLAND LIGHT STATION

serves as a focal point for maritime history in the Essex National Heritage Area. Authorized by President George Washington in 1796, the station has been providing safe passage for boats approaching Salem, Massachusetts harbor for more than two centuries. The current station includes the 1820 lighthouse, two 19th century keeper's houses, and three ancillary buildings.

The harsh maritime environment and violent Nor-easter storms create immense challenges to maintaining and restoring the property's

historic structures. These tasks are compounded by the lack of a dock and the short summer season during which supplies, building materials, and workers can be safely landed on the rocky beach. Essex Heritage is very fortunate to have a loyal crew of volunteers who work on the island every Wednesday from June to September. Even with their help, the list of renovation projects remains very long.

A major boost to the restoration of Bakers Island Light Station was provided recently from an unexpected source. Jonathan Knight of New Kids on the Block (NKOTB) and his business partner in historic house restorations, Kristina Crestin of Kristina Crestin Design, decided to bring some of their star-power to bear on renovating the 1873 Assistant Keeper's House.



At a fundraiser in June, New Kids on the Block fans mingled with traditional building preservationists, donating funds for repairs and bidding on special auction items such as NKOTB concert tickets. It was wonderful to see such a diverse community rally together to preserve this unique piece of American history!

■ **ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
MASSACHUSETTS | ESSEXHERITAGE.ORG

THE ART OF LOUISIANA FRENCH

“Ici on parle français.” It is a phrase you will find in many windows and on storefronts throughout the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (ANHA). It means, “Here, we speak French.”

But it’s not just any French. Louisiana is home to a unique dialect known as Louisiana French, or the language spoken by the French and Acadian people who eventually settled in Louisiana. It is a combination of the native French these settlers spoke and the Spanish, Native American, Creole, and African languages. While some words and phrases remain the same, such as “Allons!” meaning “Let’s go,” others differ. For example, “shrimp” in International French is “crevette,” whereas the tasty morsel is a “chevette” in Louisiana French.

This dialect is still spoken in rural and urban areas throughout the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area. That is why ANHA is partnering with the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana (CODOFIL) to both preserve the living language and restore it for generations to come. CODOFIL and ANHA partnered with Louisiana French-language champions, Télé-

Louisiane, to develop cartoons and materials for teachers to use in classrooms to teach students Louisiana French.

“Les Aventures de Boudini et Ses Amis,” tells Cajun folktales in Louisiana French for children to enjoy.

For the adults, ANHA is working with the Saint Luc French Immersion and Cultural

Campus to open a French

Immersion school for college students and the general Louisiana workforce. Through these efforts, ANHA is working to reinvigorate this unique dialect for generations of Louisianans to come.

■ **ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
LOUISIANA | ATCHAFALAYA.ORG



Collaborating for a Healthy and Resilient Poudre Watershed

The Cache la Poudre River Watershed, one of the largest drainages in northern Colorado and the state’s only Wild and Scenic River area, contains the Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area (Cache NHA). At 1,219,038 acres, the watershed provides drinking water to 350,000 residents and supports approximately 185,000 acres of agricultural land. In 2009, the watershed’s lower basin was designated a National Heritage Area due to its rich history and culture, especially as it relates to the development of Western water law and water delivery systems.



The watershed is no stranger to natural disasters, which has led to a wide range of collaborative restoration efforts. In the last decade, roughly 300,000 acres of the watershed have burned; the lower river experienced major flooding in 2013. The expensive and devastating aftermath of wildfire and floods revealed the necessity to minimize risk and increase watershed resilience.

In May 2013, the Coalition for the Poudre River Watershed (CPRW) formed to facilitate watershed-wide planning and restoration. With a mission to improve and maintain the ecological health of the watershed through community collaboration, the CPRW works with partners at the local, state, and national level on planning, forest and river restoration, post-fire recovery, and citizen science projects. The CPRW and the Cache NHA collaborate yearly to plan the Poudre RiverFest, among other events, to educate the public about the importance of a resilient watershed and how we benefit from protecting our most precious natural resource: water.

To learn more about the CPRW visit www.poudrewatershed.org.

■ **CACHE LA POUDE RIVER NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
COLORADO | POUDREHERITAGE.ORG

Canal to Cloth

AN AUGUSTA AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCE

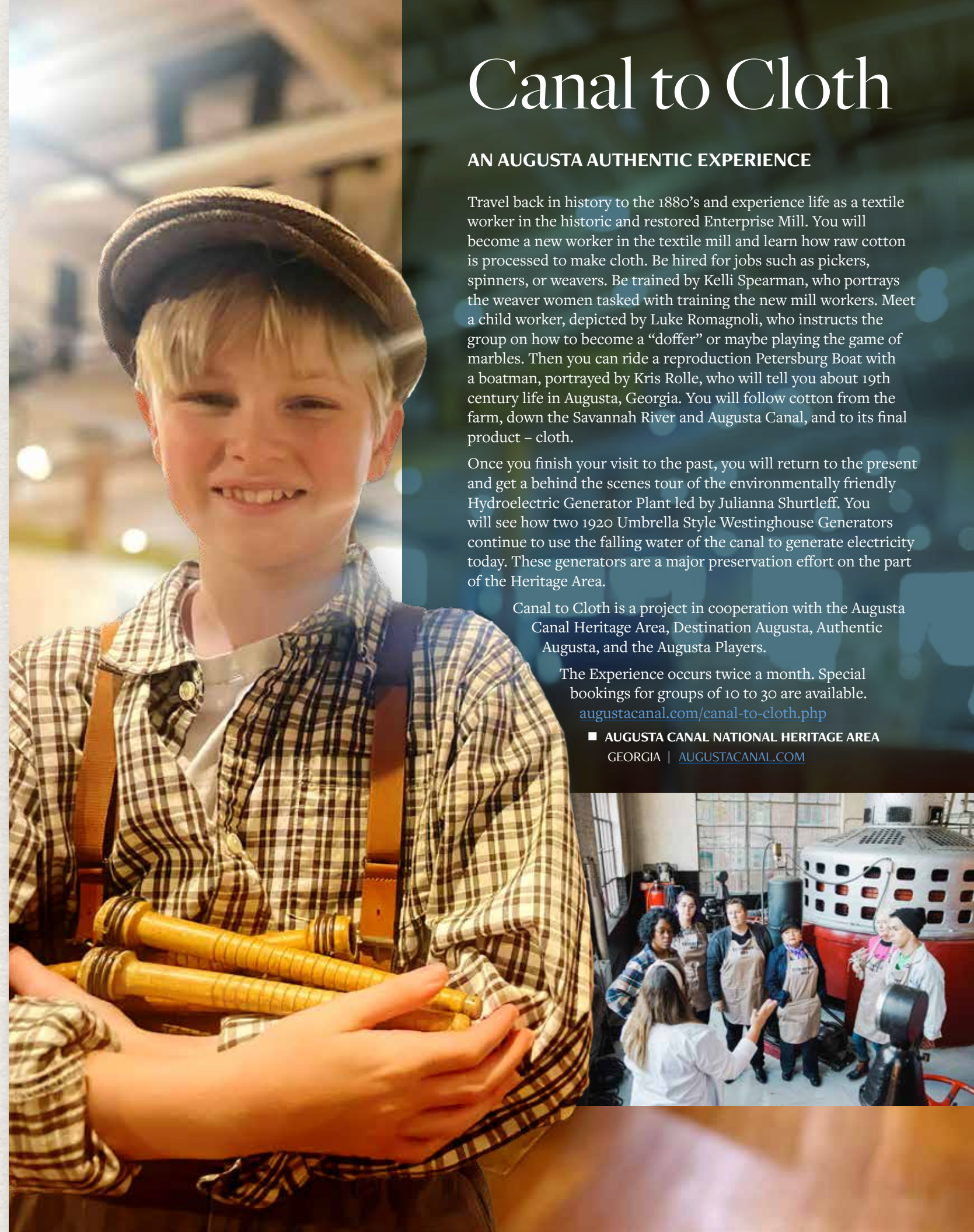
Travel back in history to the 1880’s and experience life as a textile worker in the historic and restored Enterprise Mill. You will become a new worker in the textile mill and learn how raw cotton is processed to make cloth. Be hired for jobs such as pickers, spinners, or weavers. Be trained by Kelli Spearman, who portrays the weaver women tasked with training the new mill workers. Meet a child worker, depicted by Luke Romagnoli, who instructs the group on how to become a “doffer” or maybe playing the game of marbles. Then you can ride a reproduction Petersburg Boat with a boatman, portrayed by Kris Rolle, who will tell you about 19th century life in Augusta, Georgia. You will follow cotton from the farm, down the Savannah River and Augusta Canal, and to its final product – cloth.

Once you finish your visit to the past, you will return to the present and get a behind the scenes tour of the environmentally friendly Hydroelectric Generator Plant led by Julianna Shurtleff. You will see how two 1920 Umbrella Style Westinghouse Generators continue to use the falling water of the canal to generate electricity today. These generators are a major preservation effort on the part of the Heritage Area.

Canal to Cloth is a project in cooperation with the Augusta Canal Heritage Area, Destination Augusta, Authentic Augusta, and the Augusta Players.

The Experience occurs twice a month. Special bookings for groups of 10 to 30 are available. augustacanal.com/canal-to-cloth.php

■ **AUGUSTA CANAL NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
GEORGIA | AUGUSTACANAL.COM



WATER WARRIOR

How Dr. Jacqueline Echols Helped Save Atlanta's South River

THIRTY YEARS AGO, THE JOKE WAS THAT PEOPLE COULD SMELL ATLANTA'S SOUTH RIVER BEFORE THEY SAW IT. "It was a mess," says Dr. Jacqueline Echols, Board President of the South River Watershed Alliance, a nonprofit that for more than two decades has worked to restore sections of the waterway. "There were numerous sanitary sewer spills. Every time it rained, millions of gallons of sewage poured into the river."

"Sadly, pollution of the South River from DeKalb County's sanitary sewer system goes back to 1961 when Snapfinger Wastewater Treatment Facility went online," says Echols. Echols got involved with the South River in the late 1990s during a federal consent decree to clean up pollution from Atlanta's sewage pollution problems. After a lengthy battle with the EPA, Echols and other environmentalists succeeded in

reducing the number and amount of sewer discharges into the river from four down to one.

When Echols took over as President of the South River Watershed Alliance in 2011, the river was badly neglected and considered one of the

The South River daylights just north of Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta International Airport and moves southeast through the city and the heart of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area, 20 minutes east of Atlanta. It's also a headwater of the Ocmulgee and Altamaha River basins, Georgia's largest freshwater system.

most endangered in the United States. Echols saw recreation as the key to rekindling interest in the waterway. So that same year, she implemented a regular paddling series for kayakers and canoers, and began work on the South River Water Trail that provides safe and legal access to the river. Concurrently, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance, the nonprofit stewards of the

National Heritage Area, worked closely with Echols to broadcast her mission, promote river events and recreation, and raise awareness around the South River's importance. "The only way to get the Georgia Environmental Protection Division to improve water quality is through recreation," says Echols. "And we've been running these programs ever since."

The impact has been huge. The paddling series and water trail brought more outdoor tourism and environmental awareness to the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area. Nearby municipalities and counties are following suit, creating water trail extensions and new boat launches. "Our goal is to have a water trail along the 40 navigable miles of this river," says Echols, "And that's already in progress."

In 2021, for the first time, Georgia Environmental Protection Division upgraded the water quality in the South River, changing the designated use of 13 miles from fishing to swimming. "And it's because people are recreating on it," says Echols with a smile. "They're rediscovering the South River."

■ **ARABIA MOUNTAIN NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
GEORGIA | ARABIAALLIANCE.ORG

Restoring Brownfields & Historic Buildings

As manager of northwest PA's Oil Region National Heritage Area (ORNHA), the Oil Region Alliance (ORA) propels restoration in several forms.

The ORA strongly supports historic preservation efforts in the ORNHA, and we have rehabilitated and reused several historic buildings in the region. In Oil City, ORA's main office is a rehabbed 1920s gas station, and our next-door office is a 1910 former Salvation Army citadel. The ORA is in the process of renovating the 1894 mixed-use Downs Building into retail space on the first floor with lodging above.

In Titusville, ORA owns the Tarbell House, the childhood home of investigative journalism pioneer Ida Tarbell. The ORA restored the building between 2007 and 2016 to approximate its 1870-1895 appearance and now uses it as a house museum and special events venue.

Just blocks away is another ORA preservation project, the Scheide House. Built around 1866, it was home to two generations of Standard Oil Company executives and their extensive collection of rare documents and books. ORA is in the process of rehabbing the property for a Cultural Preservation Center.



Tire clean-up efforts at a brownfield site in Oil City.

Beyond historic buildings, the ORA also drives restoration of the ORNHA with our brownfield reclamation programs, acquiring contaminated properties and working with agencies to remediate the land for new uses. We plan to replace landscaping at two ORA-owned properties with native plantings to encourage pollinator species to these areas while reducing the use of gas-powered lawn equipment.

The ORA intends these efforts to help restore the region for a brighter future.

■ **OIL REGION NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
PENNSYLVANIA | OILREGION.ORG

Bringing History Back

Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area has assisted in many historic preservation/restoration projects within three Colorado counties.

At Alamosa, examples of finished projects include the Bain Building and the Emperius Brothers Meat Market.

The Bain Building has been listed on the Colorado State Register of Historic Places since 1995; it's also on the City of Alamosa Historic Registry. The Bain family constructed this department store near the end of the Great Depression utilizing salvaged brick, timbers, steel and pressed metal ceilings from earlier buildings. In 1935, the Main Street storefront was opened, followed a year later by the Hunt Avenue wing. At one point it was the largest department store in the San Luis Valley. Bain's Department



Store reminds us of the difficult times the citizens of Alamosa lived through during the Great Depression. Restoration on the building was completed in 2023. Today it contains Rainbows End Thrift Store which is owned and operated by the La Puente Housing Authority, with second-floor living quarters.

Theo Emperius started the Chicago Meat Market on State Avenue and Main Street in Alamosa. The company was renamed the Emperius Bros. Meat Market when his sons Herman and Fritz Emperius took over. Fritz Emperius

later concentrated on the meat market and livestock; while Herman started the firm of Emperius & Dattelzweig buying, selling, and shipping livestock, hides, pelts, hay, grain and farm produce. The Emperius Building typifies the style of buildings constructed during Alamosa's boom years (1910-1920s). Restoration on this building was completed in 2019.

■ **SANGRE DE CRISTO NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**
COLORADO | SANGREHERITAGE.ORG



Downeast Maine National Heritage Area



Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

Landmark Legislation Extends Authorizations, Codifies NHA System, and Designates 7 New Areas

The National Heritage Area Act (PL 117-339), which was signed into law by President Biden on January 5, 2023, creates for the first time an official system of National Heritage Areas within the National Park Service. Supported by Unanimous Consent in the Senate and more than three quarters of the House of Representatives, the NHA Act codifies the relationship between the NPS and NHAs and recognizes the effectiveness of this public-private partnership model. In addition to reauthorizing 45 NHAs for 15 years, the Act created seven new NHAs:

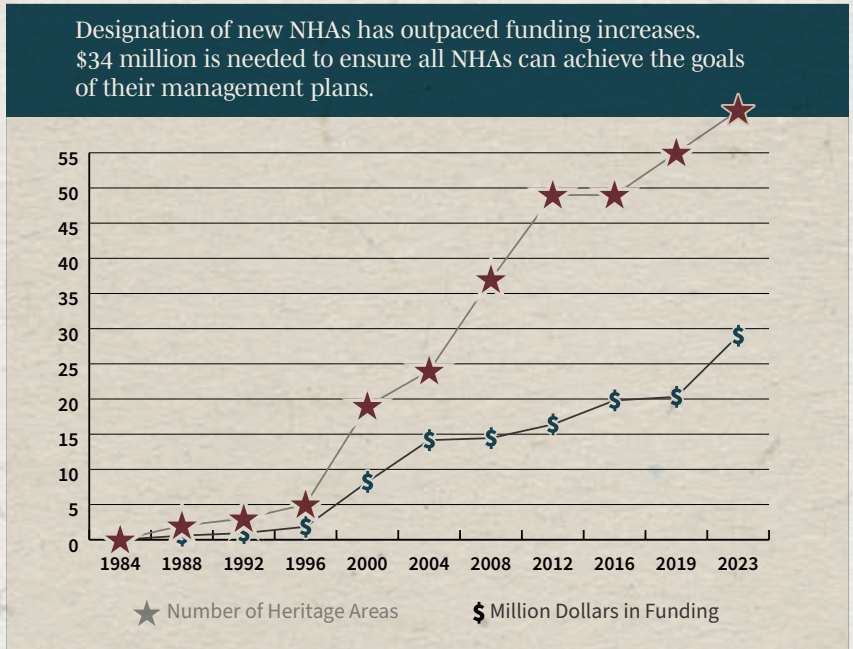
- Alabama Blackbelt (AL)
- Southern Maryland (MD)
- Bronzville-Black Metropolis (IL)
- Southern Campaign of the Revolution (NC, SC)
- Downeast Maine (ME)
- St. Croix (USVI)
- Northern Neck (VA)

With these additions, National Heritage Areas are now in 36 states and territories and represent a wide diversity of histories and cultures, each with their own stories to tell.

Ensuring the Future *for our* National Heritage Areas

With the passage of the National Heritage Area Act, we welcome seven new NHAs to our family, further expanding our ability to preserve and share the full story of our nation and to engage in even more communities. But with these additions — so important as we strive to be more inclusive in our telling of American History as our semiquincentennial approaches — comes a need for a modest increase in funding for the program.

As demonstrated by this chart, federal funding for heritage areas has not kept pace with the number of new NHA designations. The goal is now to authorize appropriations at a level that will allow all NHAs to meet their NPS-approved management plans, a figure of \$34 million at the current number of NHAs. While this small program represents less than 1% of the National Park Service budget, it is one of the Department of Interior’s most cost-effective programs. Historically, NHAs have leveraged public-private partnerships to match every federal dollar with \$5.50 in local, state, private, and corporate investments into local communities across the country.



To join the Congressional caucus on National Heritage Areas, please contact:

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