



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF INTERIOR

THE JOHN P. PARKER HOUSE AND MUSEUM RECONNAISSANCE SURVEY

RIPLEY, OHIO
APRIL 2018



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The preparers of this reconnaissance survey would like to thank the John P. Parker Historical Society for meeting with them and providing access to the John P. Parker House and Museum.

This study has been prepared for the Secretary of Interior to explore specific resources and advise on whether these resources merit further consideration as a potential new park unit. Publication and transmittal of this report should not be considered an endorsement or a commitment by the National Park Service to seek or support legislative authorization for the project or its implementation. This report was prepared by the United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, Midwest Region. For more information, contact:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is a preliminary evaluation of the John P. Parker House and Museum in Ripley, Ohio to determine the likelihood that this site would qualify for inclusion in the national park system. In order to be considered for inclusion, an area must meet the criteria for national significance, suitability, and feasibility and must demonstrate that management by the National Park Service would be superior to any other management. A reconnaissance survey is a preliminary resource assessment to gather data on a potential study area and assess the possibility of including those resources as a unit of the national park system. The conclusions in this study do not provide a final or definitive answer to the question of whether or not an area qualifies for inclusion in the national park system, but rather determine whether or not further evaluation in a special resource study is warranted. This report includes a description of the John P. Parker House and Museum and an evaluation of the current resources and operation of the site.

The John P. Parker House and Museum, currently owned and managed by the John P. Parker Historical Society, is the restored home of abolitionist and entrepreneur John P. Parker (1827-1900). As a conductor on the Underground Railroad at the height of the abolitionist movement, John P. Parker helped runaway slaves from the South escape to freedom across the Ohio River. A freed slave himself, Parker was also a renowned African American entrepreneur and inventor who acquired a several patents in the 19th century. The site was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980 and designated a national historic landmark in 1997 for its connection to the abolitionist movement.

The national significance of the John P. Parker House and Museum was established prior to this study through its national historic landmark designation. A preliminary evaluation of suitability finds that the site offers a unique opportunity to highlight the experiences of an African American who was a conductor on the Underground Railroad, a businessman, and an inventor. In addition, this preliminary evaluation finds that the site would also likely meet the feasibility criteria for inclusion as a

unit of the national park system. The site is currently in good condition, but development of the site as a unit of the national park system would require initial one-time costs for web development, signage, construction, and production of activities and ongoing costs for staffing and operation.

It is uncertain if the Parker site needs direct management by the National Park Service. The site is already associated with the National Park Service as part of the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program and its designation as a national historic landmark. Its current owner, the John P. Parker Historical Society was founded in 1996 and has had tremendous success in securing grant funding and volunteers to offer a high quality visitor experience. Society members are concerned, however, about the sustainability of the organization and the future of the property without government management. The National Park Service suggests that the society increase membership recruitment efforts and explore opportunities to partner with organizations such as the Ohio History Connection and the John Rankin House for long-term protection. The Ohio History Connection currently partners with Ripley Heritage, Inc. in the management of the John Rankin House, and this partnership could be extended to include the John P. Parker House and Museum. The society also could explore partnerships with other local and regional historic sites to develop new interpretations of African American history in southern Ohio. The National Park Service recommends that a special resource study be authorized to explore public involvement and develop potential management alternatives for the John P. Parker House and Museum. A special resource study could also evaluate the potential for the site to be designated as an affiliated area of the national park system.

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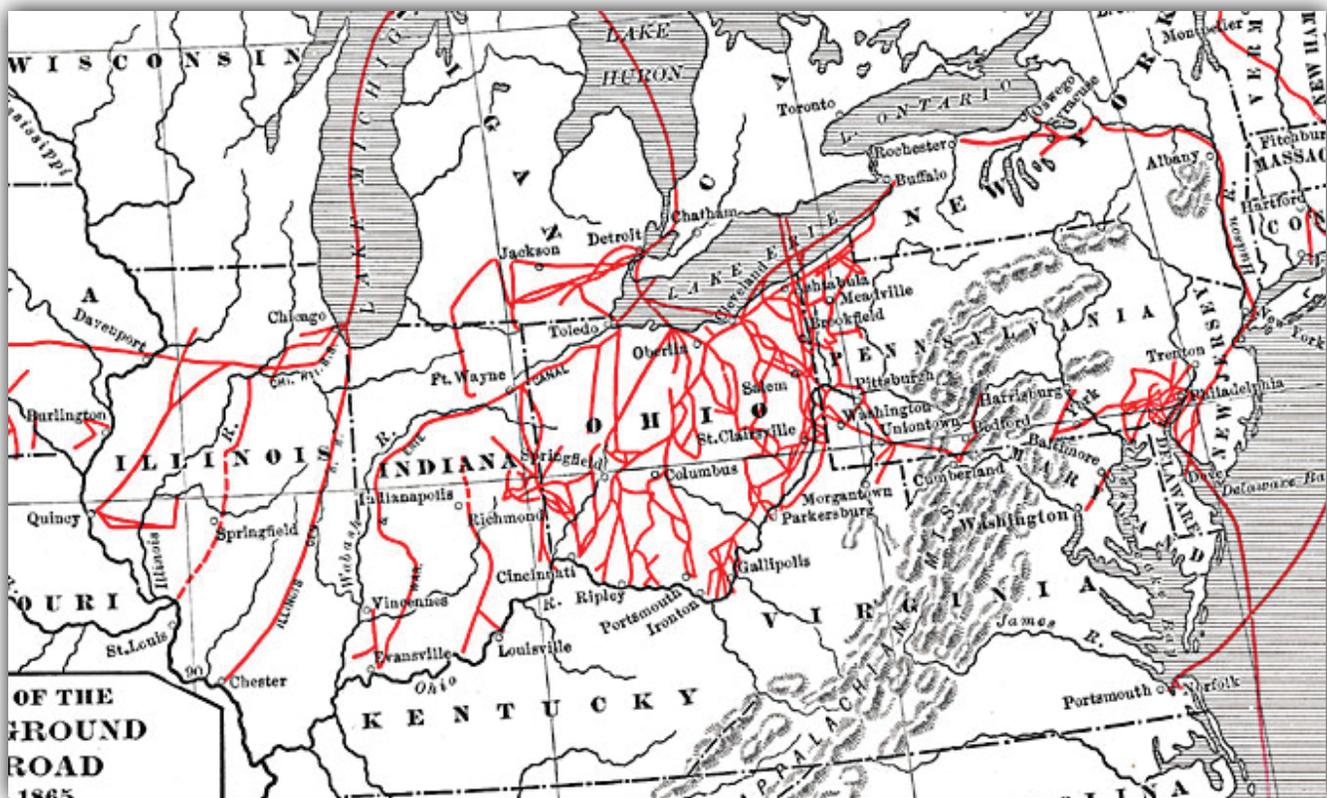


Figure 1: Compiled from "The Underground Railroad from Slavery to Freedom" by Wilbur H. Seibert (1898) this image maps the most well-known routes of the Underground Railroad from 1830-1865. Ripley, Ohio is highlighted as a major channel of the Underground Railroad along with other cities such as Cincinnati, OH and Louisville, KY (Hart 1906: 230).



Figure 2: John P. Parker House and Museum, Ripley, Ohio, owned and operated by the John P. Parker Historical Society since 1994. The property became a national historic landmark in 1997. NPS photo.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this reconnaissance survey is to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the national significance of the John P. Parker House and Museum (figure 2) and the suitability and feasibility of including those resources in the national park system. The reconnaissance survey also evaluates the need for management of these resources by the National Park Service. The study will provide a recommendation as to whether further investigation in the form of a special resource study would be appropriate.

In July 2015, Ohio Senator Sherrod Brown sent a letter to the director of the National Park Service

(NPS) requesting that a reconnaissance survey be conducted to determine the eligibility of the John P. Parker House and Museum in Ripley, Ohio, to be a unit of the national park system (appendix A). The preliminary determinations of a reconnaissance survey are based on congressionally defined criteria (appendix B); however, the resulting conclusions are not considered final or definitive. If a reconnaissance survey concludes that a site is potentially eligible, a special resource study is recommended. A special resource study (SRS) can be conducted only if authorized by Congress and signed into law by the President of the United States.

In contrast to a reconnaissance survey, a special resource study is designed to provide definitive findings of a site's significance, suitability, and feasibility and the need for direct NPS management and, if these criteria are met, to identify and evaluate potential resource protection strategies, boundaries, and management alternatives. A special resource study, unlike a reconnaissance survey, also involves opportunities to engage the public in the study process.

In March 2016, a team from the NPS Midwest Regional Office traveled to the John P. Parker House and Museum. The team met with the current owner of the site, the John P. Parker Historical Society, to discuss the operation and management of the site and described the reconnaissance survey process by which a potential new unit is evaluated, based on demonstrating the site's national significance, suitability, and feasibility and the need for NPS management.

CRITERIA FOR INCLUSION IN THE NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM

The following criteria must be met in order for a site and its resources to be considered for inclusion in the national park system (appendix B):

National Significance: Determination of an area's national significance is made by NPS professionals in consultation with scholars, experts, and scientists following four specific criteria (NPS Management Policies, 2006), which state that a resource will be considered nationally significant if it meets the following conditions:

- It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.
- It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.

- It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study.
- It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

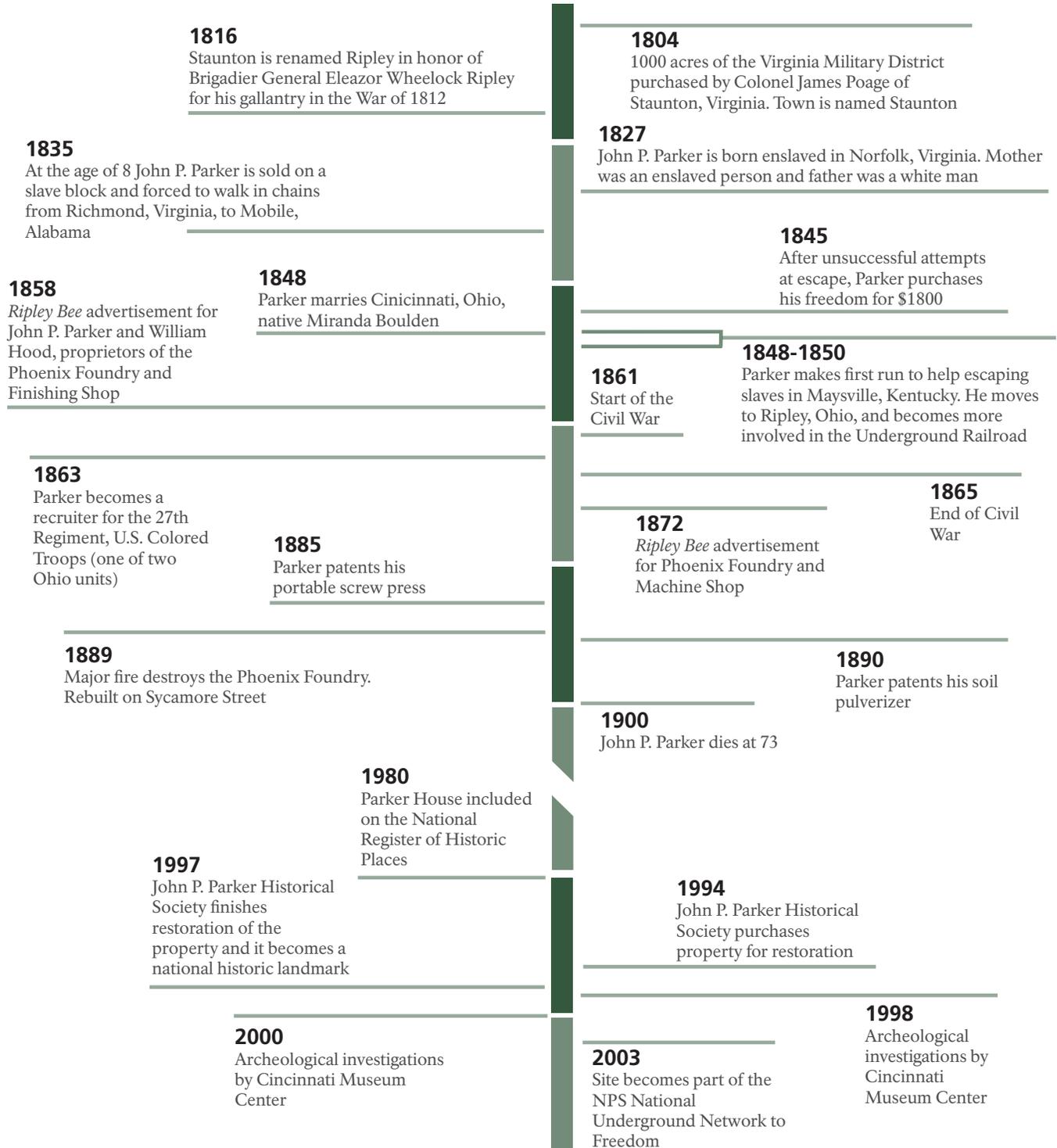
For cultural resources, national significance is evaluated using the national historic landmark (NHL) criteria (appendix C). Because the John P. Parker House and Museum was previously designated as a national historic landmark, the national significance of the site has been established.

Suitability: A property is considered suitable if it represents a resource type that is not currently represented in the national park system or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another agency or entity.

Feasibility: To be considered feasible, an area must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and to accommodate public use. The area must have potential for efficient administration at a reasonable cost. Other important feasibility factors include land ownership, acquisition costs, current and potential use, access, level of local and general public support, and staff or development requirements.

Need for Direct NPS Management: Even if a resource meets the criteria of national significance, suitability, and feasibility, it will not always be recommended that a resource be added to the national park system. There are many excellent examples of important natural and cultural resources managed by other federal agencies, other levels of government, and private entities. Evaluation of management options must show that direct NPS management is clearly the superior alternative.

RIPLEY, OHIO AND JOHN P. PARKER TIMELINE



JOHN P. PARKER HOUSE AND MUSEUM STUDY AREA

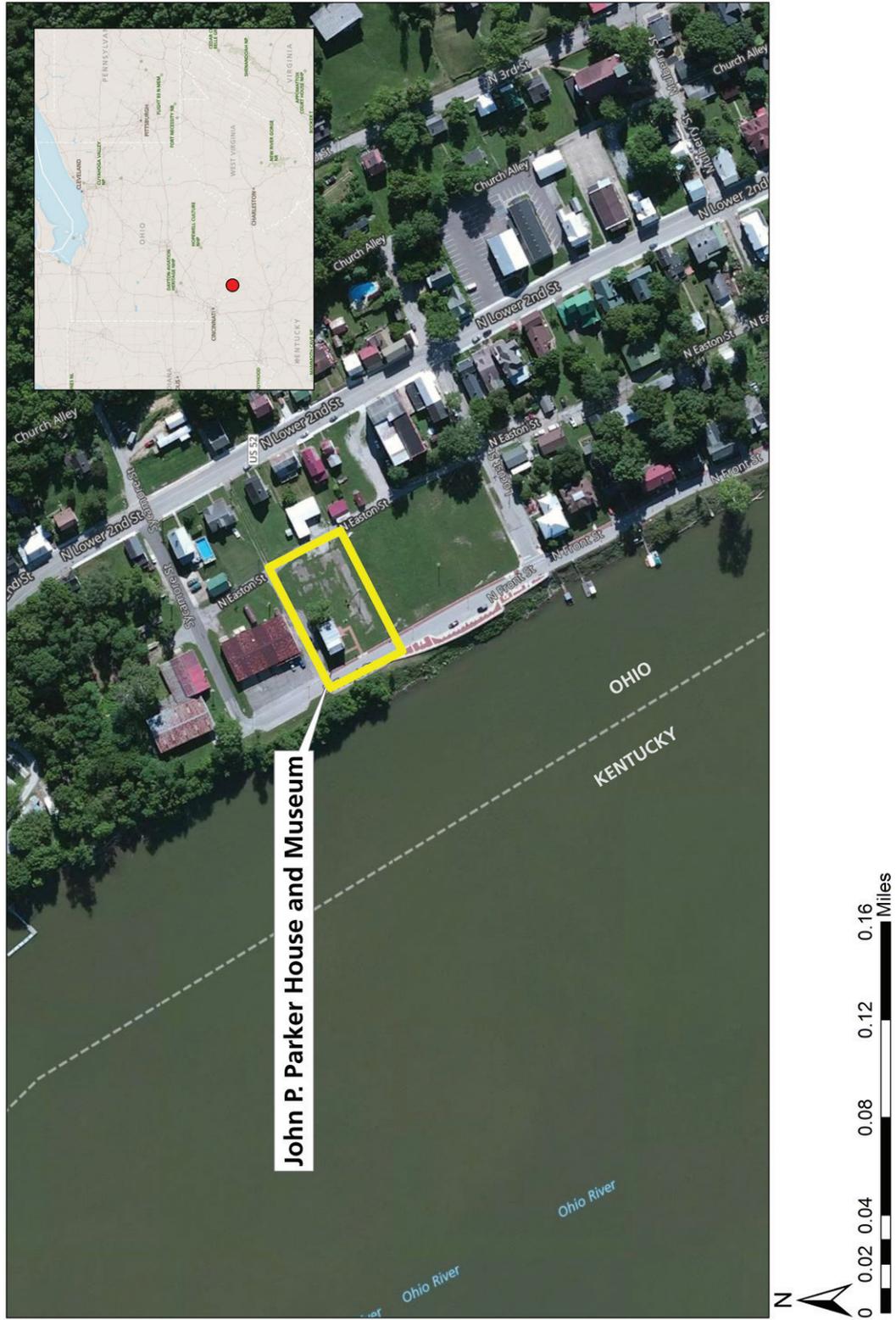


Figure 3: Overview of John P. Parker House and Museum study area.

HISTORIC CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

John P. Parker is best described as a champion for civil rights who struggled to obtain freedom and equality for himself and other African Americans. His involvement in the Underground Railroad, the nation's first civil rights movement, and his later activities as an entrepreneur and mentor encouraged African American self-determination in pre- and post-Civil War United States. The summary that follows is mostly from the national historic landmark documentation for the John P. Parker House and Museum, and Underground Railroad Network to Freedom documentation, and John P. Parker's posthumous autobiography, *His Promised Land* (Sprague 1998).

HISTORIC CONTEXT

John P. Parker was born enslaved in Norfolk, Virginia in 1827 to a black mother and white father. Sold on a slave block at the age of eight, Parker was forced to walk on a chain gang from Richmond, Virginia, to Mobile, Alabama. In Alabama, Parker was purchased by a well-to-do doctor to be a house slave and care for his two sons. The doctor's sons taught him to read and write from their extensive family library. In *His Promised Land* Parker detailed his first encounter with an abolitionist while accompanying the doctor's sons to Yale University. Traveling through Philadelphia, a center of Quaker abolitionist activity, Parker received a message from an unknown man telling him "to be ready tonight." Confused by this message, Parker went to the doctor, who immediately sent him back to Mobile (Sprague 1998: 31). The doctor gave him two choices: be sold as a field slave or learn a trade. Parker was first apprenticed to a white plasterer who beat him so badly he was sent to the hospital. Here he encountered more abuse from a white female care worker who would beat her patients "senseless" (Sprague 1998: 33). Parker protested, "seized the whip and gave the white woman a sound beating, then ran out of the house,

knowing full well what would happen if [he] was caught" (Sprague 1998: 33). This encounter led to Parker's first escape attempt in which he stowed away aboard a steamer in New Orleans that was bound for the north.

Parker's capture and subsequent return to bondage did not quell his desire for freedom. He escaped again and, while waiting at the docks his master discovered him. The doctor took him back to Mobile and placed him with the owner of a foundry to learn the trade. "It was natural bent, so I went at it with a will, so that I was soon a full-fledged molder" (Sprague 1998: 62). His reputation for stubbornness caused him to be dismissed from iron molder positions in Mobile and New Orleans, and the doctor made arrangements to sell him as a field hand. Fearing the brutal conditions of the cotton field, Parker persuaded a Mobile widow and patient of the doctor, Mrs. Ryder, to purchase him with the intent of allowing him to buy his freedom. Within two years, at the age of 18, Parker purchased his freedom for \$1,800 he accumulated while working as an iron molder.

Parker left the south as a free man and traveled throughout the Midwest working at his trade. He moved to Cincinnati, Ohio and in 1848 married Miranda Bolden, a free-born African American woman from Cincinnati. In Cincinnati, Parker first became involved in the Underground Railroad at the insistence of a local barber who needed help rescuing two fugitive enslaved females in Kentucky. The barber intended to go upriver to Ripley, Ohio, a town with an active freeman settlement on the Ohio River, and steal a skiff while Parker traveled into Maysville, Kentucky, to retrieve the fugitive slave girls. After several failed attempts the barber returned to Cincinnati, but Parker was determined to help the girls and stole into Kentucky by himself and successfully led them to safety across the Ohio River. With this first act, Parker was initiated

into the network of “conductors” on the Underground Railroad.

Parker moved to Ripley, Ohio (figure 3), between 1849 and 1850 and became more deeply entrenched in Underground Railroad activities as a “conductor” and “extractor,” becoming “one of its most active, daring, and successful operatives, settling defiantly in Ripley, his house right on the Ohio River’s northern bank” (Griffler 2004: 42). Perhaps the most dangerous role for Underground Railroad operatives was that of

an extractor. The punishment for extractors was prison and even death, and the largest rewards were usually offered for them. Some African American extractors would repeatedly venture into the southern slave states and aid escaping slaves to the North. As an extractor Parker would cross into slave-owning Kentucky, connect with parties of runaway slaves, and then lead them safely across the Ohio River. A replica of the skiff he used to navigate the dangerous waters of the Ohio River is on display at the museum. Parker is credited with hundreds of rescues in the two



Figure 4: Street scene of Ripley, Ohio, circa 1900. By 1900 Ripley, Ohio, was already experiencing an economic downturn because of decreased river traffic due to railroads. Courtesy of Ohio History Connection.

“...[Ripley] was as busy as a beehive. There was not town along the Ohio River except Cinicnnati that was in its class.”

- John P. Parker

decades prior to the end of the Civil War. Until the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act in 1850, Parker kept a diary detailing the runaways he helped to freedom. Parker’s autobiography states that he recorded 315 names by 1850 before he burned the diary fearing it could be brought against him as evidence for helping fugitive slaves. According to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, “any person aiding an escaped person, obstructing the arrest of a fugitive, or concealing a fugitive would be subject to punishment and fine. Those seeking

a fugitive slave had the right to “remove such fugitive person back to the State or Territory from whence he or she may have escaped,” using “such reasonable force or restraint as may be necessary under the circumstances of the case” (Fugitive Slave Act, 1850). Bounty hunters actively raided African American border communities searching for fugitives and conspirators to bring back across the Ohio River. These communities became the battleground of the anti-slavery struggle.

African American and white abolitionists worked together in the Underground Railroad taking on different roles. Like many African American conductors, John Parker “was often a leader of the whites in perilous rescue work in addition to always carrying on an independent campaign for his race” (Griffler 2004: 90). White operatives such as the Reverend John Rankin (figure 5), a well-known abolitionist and Presbyterian in Ripley,

would provide a safe house and armed defense if necessary against bounty hunters. Rankin would place a lit candle in his window to lead slaves across the river, and his home served as a “beacon which could be seen from across the river, and like the North Star was the guide to the fleeing slave” (Sprague 1998: 86). The Rankin house was “a fortress protected against attacking masters. . . [and Rankin and his sons] beat back their assailants” (Sprague 1998: 86). The joint efforts of Rankin and Parker made Ripley a major escape route, rivaling Cincinnati in the number of fugitive slaves rescued, and they assisted as many as 1,000 enslaved persons to freedom.

During his time as a conductor and into the antebellum period in America, Parker was a prominent African American businessman operating the Phoenix Foundry between 1850 and 1900. The foundry was located on the same property as Parker’s house from 1850 until a fire in 1889 forced the business to move (figure 6).

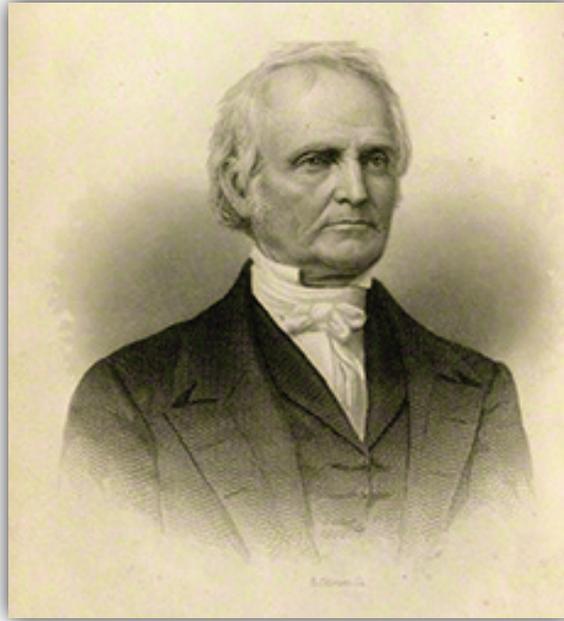


Figure 5: The Reverend John Rankin (pictured here) was a prominent abolitionist and, with Parker and his 13 sons, rescued more than 1000 escaped slaves. This image is courtesy of the Cincinnati Museum Center.

“A lighted candle stood as a beacon which could be seen from across the river, and like the north star was the guide to the fleeing slave”
(Sprague 1998: 84)

It produced metal goods for manufacturing, agricultural, and domestic use. Parker was one of a few African Americans to acquire patents in the 19th century, obtaining three of the seventy-seven patents issued to African Americans before 1886. The “screw or Tobacco Press” was patented by Parker in 1885 and is arguably his most successful (US Patent No. 318,215). As a black entrepreneur, Parker represented the African American quest for self-determination, particularly in terms of economic independence and self-sufficiency. By being in business for himself, Parker threw off the yoke of exploitative labor conditions and the oppression of slavery that he believed took “from a human being the initiative, of thinking, of doing his own ways” (Sprague 1998: 25).

Although too old to serve in the Civil War, Parker continued his struggle against slavery by helping hundreds of African Americans obtain positions in the Union ranks (Griffler 2004: 128). This recruitment of African American soldiers was important to the achievement of freedom, as the Civil War was a proving ground for African American manhood and to undermine notions of inferiority, and thereby demonstrate African American fitness for citizenship and inclusion.

Parker also served as a community leader and mentor to young African Americans. He mentored a young Colonel Charles Young, encouraging his thirst for knowledge by providing

him access to his personal library. Charles Young would go on to attend the United States Military Academy at West Point becoming only the ninth African American to attend the academy and in 1884 the third to graduate. Colonel Charles Young enjoyed a long and distinguished military career until his death in 1922. His home in Xenia, Ohio is now a national park system site. Charles Young became the first African American national park superintendent because of his service managing and maintaining Sequoia National Park in northern California (NPS 2016).

Parker and his wife raised six surviving children at their Front Street home, which they lived in as early as 1849 and where Parker lived in until his death in 1900. A voracious learner, Parker instilled this trait in his children. By his own exertions and creativity Parker was able to send his children to college. His three sons became teachers and principals. His daughter, Hortense, became one of the first African American graduates of Mount Holyoke College.

Parker's remarkable journey from slave, freeman, abolitionist, entrepreneur, and then community leader and mentor are part of his commitment to African American freedom and advancement. Parker obtaining his own freedom and then helping others to do the same, his entrepreneurship, his recruitment of "colored soldiers," his mentorship of Colonel Charles Young, and his valuing of education are all part of the visitor experience at the John P. Parker House and Museum.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

Ripley, Ohio

Ripley, Ohio, was founded on about 1,000 acres of the Virginia Military District purchased by Colonel James Poage of Staunton, Virginia, as early as 1804. Poage opposed slavery and was determined to live in a free state. Originally known as Staunton, Ripley was remained on February 23rd, 1816, in honor of Brigadier General Eleazor Wheelock Ripley for his gallantry in the War of 1812. Located fifty miles

upriver from Cincinnati, Ripley was one of the great Ohio River shipping ports in southern Ohio. Parker described Ripley in 1845 as "busy as a beehive" with "a group of lively men there that made it the center of industry and finance" (Sprague 1998: 97). Front Street in downtown Ripley was dominated by industrial use, and businesses along the street included the city gas works, Ripley Mill and Lumber Company, The Ohio Piano Company, and John P. Parker's Phoenix Foundry.

Ripley is well known as a center of abolitionist activity before and during the Civil War because of its position along the Ohio River within the "borderland." The "borderland" was the strip of land between the northern and southern states and between freedom and slavery. It stretched the length of the Ohio River, which separated slave-holding Kentucky and Ohio, a free-state (Sprague 1989: 69). Described as both a "river of freedom and a river of slavery," the Ohio River was a crucial channel of trade between farmers and merchants of the north and the slave plantations of the south (Griffler 2004: xiii); however, because Ohio was a non-slave owning state, it became the front line of the struggle to help African Americans attain their freedom and for many the first stop on the Underground Railroad (Griffler 2004: 2). Because of the economic interconnectedness of the Ohio River port communities and southern slave trade, many on both sides of the river were vehemently pro-slavery. Parker, commenting on the feelings toward slavery, characterized Ripley, Ohio, as torn by "fierce passions" that divided the town into factions (Sprague 1998: 72; Griffler 2004: 114).

The African American community in the Ripley area was primarily the result of a large migration of freed slaves from Virginia. Samuel Gist, a slave-owning man in Virginia, freed his slaves upon his death in 1815. As many as 350 former slaves moved to Ohio and established several communities. These free African American communities on the Ohio River's northern bank became the epicenters of intense conflict. In these communities fugitive slaves could find shelter and assistance to continue their journey north

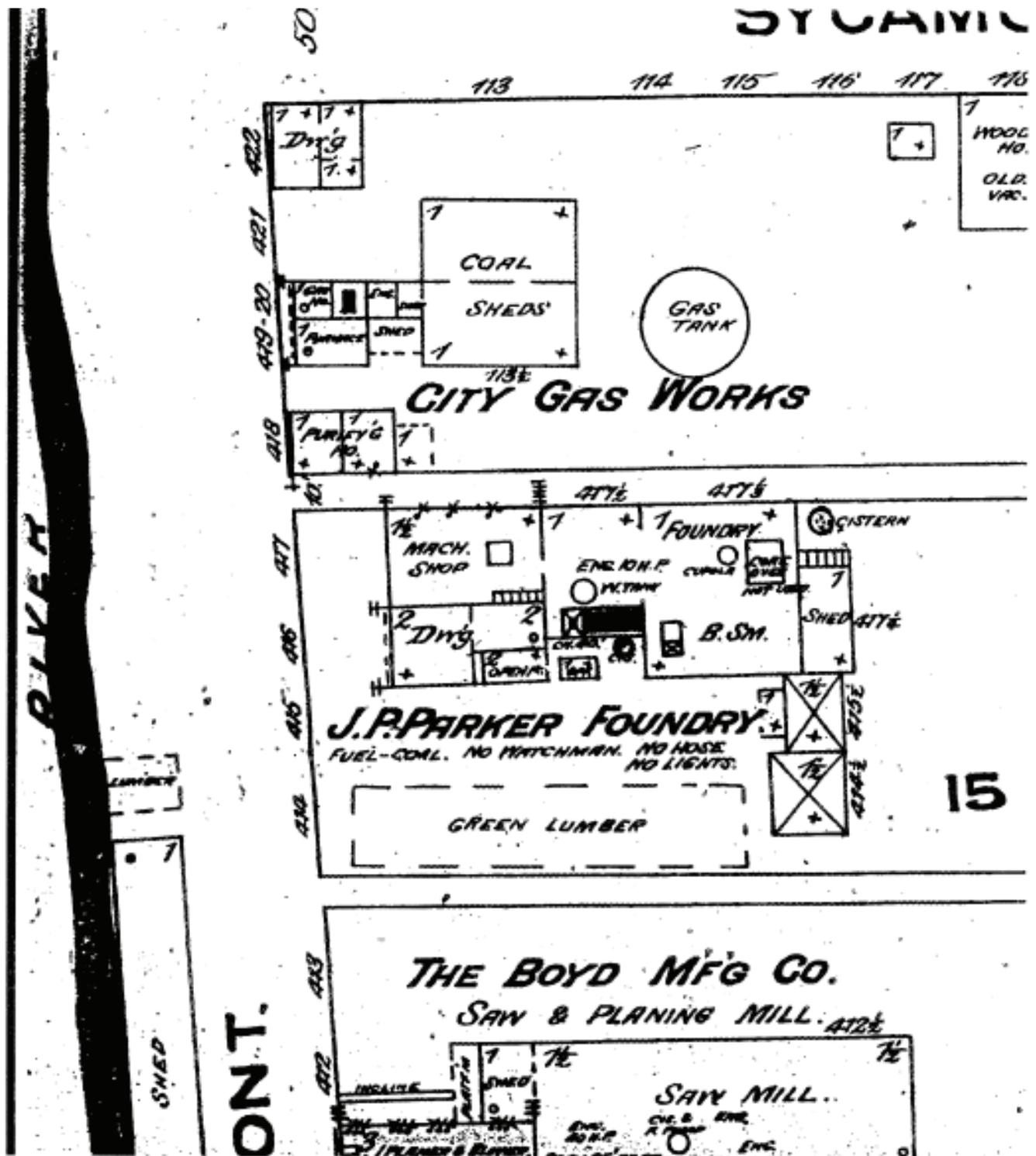


Figure 6: 1886 Sanborn Fire Insurance map of the John P. Parker House and Phoenix Foundry. A major fire in 1889 destroyed the foundry and other surrounding properties, and the Phoenix Foundry was rebuilt down the street (Genheimer 2001: 10-11).

to freedom. The success of the Underground Railroad was predicated on the persistence of African American communities along the Ohio River. African American communities served as a “beacon for others to follow across what was being transformed into a veritable River Jordan” (Griffler 2004: 32). For fugitive slaves the Ohio River was known as the River Jordan. In the Bible the crossing of the River Jordan of the Israelites is the final step in their escape from slavery in Egypt into the Promised Land of Jordan. This reference to the Ohio River as the River Jordan is immortalized in the spiritual songs of the period that became well known among slaves in the United States as code for escape (Salafia 2013).

After the Civil War and in the wake of the expanding railroad networks, Ripley and other port communities fell into rapid economic decline due to decreased river traffic. Today the village of Ripley in Brown County, Ohio, has a population of about 1,738. It includes a 55-acre national historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places that includes residential and commercial buildings. The most notable section

of the national historic district is Front Street and comprises four to five blocks of homes once owned by antislavery activists who worked as conductors on the Underground Railroad. Various monuments commemorate Ripley’s abolitionist history. The Liberty Monument (figure 7) memorializes local antislavery figures the Reverend John Rankin, Colonel James Poage, Thomas McCague, Thomas Collins, Dr. Alfred Beasley, Theodore Collins, Samuel Kirkpatrick, John Parker, US Senator Alexander Campbell, and others outside Ripley who served fugitive slaves in connecting routes north throughout the surrounding “borderland.”

The John P. Parker House and Museum

Built between 1845 and 1850, the original property of the John P. Parker House and Museum comprised the two-story home and an adjoining one-and-a-half story brick machine shop. A one-story frame foundry and blacksmith shop extended about 80 feet from the rear of the machine shop. The property possesses an unobstructed view of the Ohio River and is



Figure 7: To honor the abolitionist history of Ripley, Ohio, the town erected the Liberty Monument in 1912 to celebrate those who participated in the Underground Railroad. Courtesy of the Ohio History Connection.



Figure 8: Prior to its designation as a national historic landmark, and subsequent restoration, John P. Parker's house was described as in "a severe state of dilapidation." Courtesy of John P. Parker Historical Society.

less than 100 feet from the river's bank. Parker purchased his home sometime between 1849 and 1850, and the house and foundry were occupied by the Parker family from 1850 to 1900. Upon Parker's death in 1900, his wife Miranda took control of the estate. It later became a rental property and storage facility for coal and oil distributors who took advantage of its close proximity to the river. Prior to its designation as a national historic landmark, the house was described as being in a "severe state of dilapidation" (NHL nomination, 6) (figure 8). In 1994, the John P. Parker Historical Society purchased the home for restoration. The John P. Parker Historical Society now operates the building as a historic museum and interpretation center.

The John P. Parker House and Museum now includes the original two-story brick home, completely restored in 1997 by the John P. Parker Historical Society, and an adjacent park area with benches, a mini-amphitheater, and several outdoor displays of antique iron foundry equipment (figures 9 and 10). The interior of the house and museum is entirely restored, and exhibits are on the first and second floors. Many of the original features were saved during the restoration, including most of the walls, the second story floors, and the staircase. An open porch on the second story enclosed to allow more space for exhibits. The first exhibit room of the museum houses a series of artistic renderings documenting Parker's life story, beginning with his walk from Virginia to Alabama and culminating in his heroic rescue of the two young fugitive slaves on his first daring journey into Kentucky as an extractor. The next room is decorated in the original plaster stencil design recovered from a sheet found when the house was restored. The wall exhibits display some of the recovered archeological materials from 1998 and 2000 excavations as well as details about Parker's children. The "Forge for Freedom" exhibit is in the upstairs of the house and museum details Parker's achievements as an entrepreneur and his role as a community leader, abolitionist, and mentor to young African Americans. The bedroom was restored with period appropriate



Figure 9: Antique foundry equipment, contemporary with Parker on display at the John P. Parker House and Museum. The John P. Parker Historical Society intends to build a pavilion at this location.



Figure 10: Archeological excavations in 1998 and 2000 at the John P. Parker House and Museum conducted by the Cincinnati Museum Center recovered ceramic cups, glass bottles and iron nails.

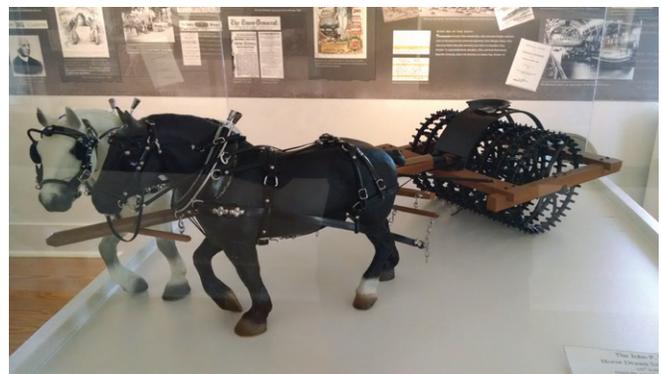


Figure 11: Students at the University of Cincinnati School of Architecture constructed a model of Parker's soil pulverizer and donated it to the "Forge for Freedom" exhibit.



Figure 12: Bedroom on the second floor of the John P. Parker House and Museum restored with period appropriate furniture and decorations. NPS photo.

furniture and decorations including a bed, quilt, dresser, dressing table, mirror, and clothing on display (figure 12).

The Phoenix Foundry

The Phoenix Foundry was referred to by many names between 1850 and 1900 including J.P. Parker Foundry, Phoenix Foundry, and later Ripley Foundry and Machine Shop. The earliest mention of Parker and his foundry operation is in an 1858 Ripley Bee advertisement. John Parker and William Hood were the proprietors of the Phoenix Foundry and Finishing Shop, which operated at the Front Street address (figure 13). They built and repaired steam engines, furnished castings for mills, constructed threshing machines, and manufactured sugar mills and sugar pans. Brass castings and wrought iron work were also made to order. In another Ripley Bee advertisement, the foundry stated that it “offer[s] the best variety of Sugar Mills for sale,

cheaper than any foundry between Cincinnati and Wheeling.” In a June 5th, 1872, Ripley Bee advertisement, J.P. Parker is listed as the sole proprietor of the Phoenix

Foundry and Machine Shop. It highlights sugar mills and steam engines, but also details the manufacture and repairs of boilers, portable engines, reapers, plows, corn crusher, iron frames for school house seats, and sash weights. In 1880 Parker is listed as the manufacturer and dealer in McCole’s Patent Soil Pulverizer. It has been suggested that as many as 25 men were employed at the Phoenix (Weeks 1971: 155).

A major fire 1889 destroyed the rear part of the property including the foundry, cupola furnace, core oven, blacksmith shop and rear sheds. Damage to the foundry was too extensive to repair and the business was moved to a nearby

warehouse on the north side of Sycamore and Front Street. Archeological investigations in 1998 and 2000 by the Cincinnati Museum Center located the former foundry site. Currently the site is vacant and is covered by grass and gravel.

Archeological Resources

In 1998 and 2000 the Cincinnati Museum Center conducted archaeological excavations at the John P. Parker House and Foundry site. Initial excavations in 1998 led by Dr. Robert Genheimer sought to identify archeological resources impacted by proposed renovations to the house porch. The results clearly indicate a major burning episode consistent with evidence of the fire in 1889. Upon the acquisition of the adjacent property in 2000, the site of a former tobacco warehouse, archeological excavations revealed the location of the foundry site. The National Park Service awarded the John P. Parker Historical Society a grant through the Challenge Cost Share Program to conduct additional archeological testing. The goals of the 2000 investigation were to identify both domestic and industrial features at the site, evaluate their integrity and archeological potential, and prepare an archeological development plan for the John P. Parker Historical Society. These excavations exposed 51 historic features and more than 10,100 items. The majority of the archeological features uncovered were associated with the foundry including foundations, piers and footings, post molds, wooden floors,

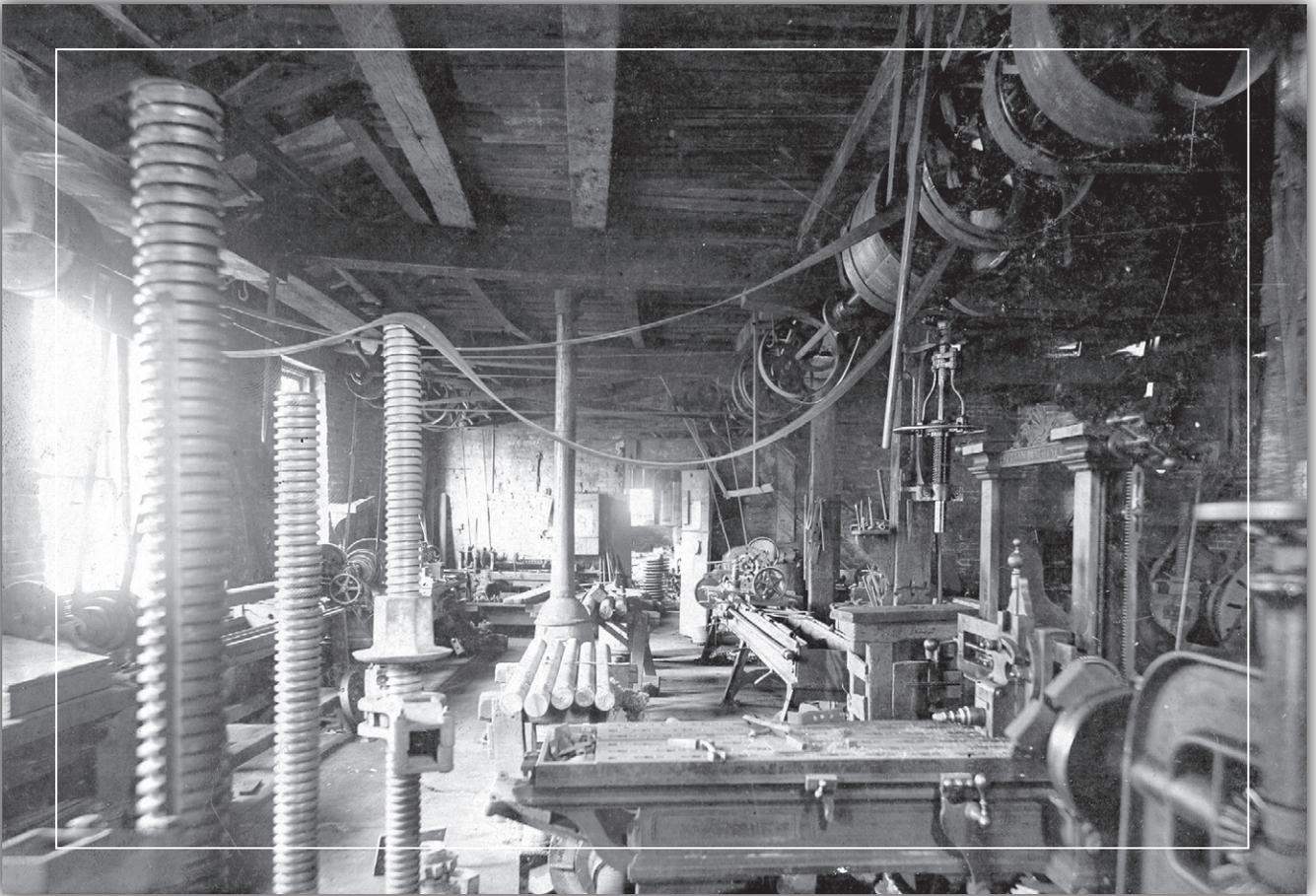
structure floors, and a part of the oven/furnace floor. Investigators recommended that further archeological work be conducted at the archeological site and cited the potential to yield important information regarding the industrial activities of African American businesses in the antebellum period of the Ohio River Valley. The artifacts recovered from the excavations are housed at the museum with limited curation and interpretation. Currently, the site is covered with gravel and grass (figure 14).



Figure 13: Advertisement for Parker and Hood's Phoenix Foundry and Finishing Shop in the *Ripley Bee* of March 12th, 1859 (Ohio Memory 2016).



Figure 14: The current archeological site of the Phoenix Foundry located directly behind the John P. Parker House and Museum. NPS photo.



“ - upwards of 25 men were employed at the Phoenix ”

(Weeks 1971: 155).

Figure 15: Interior of the Phoenix Foundry circa 1900 where approximately 25 men were employed. Courtesy of Ohio History Connection.

EVALUATION OF RESOURCE SIGNIFICANCE

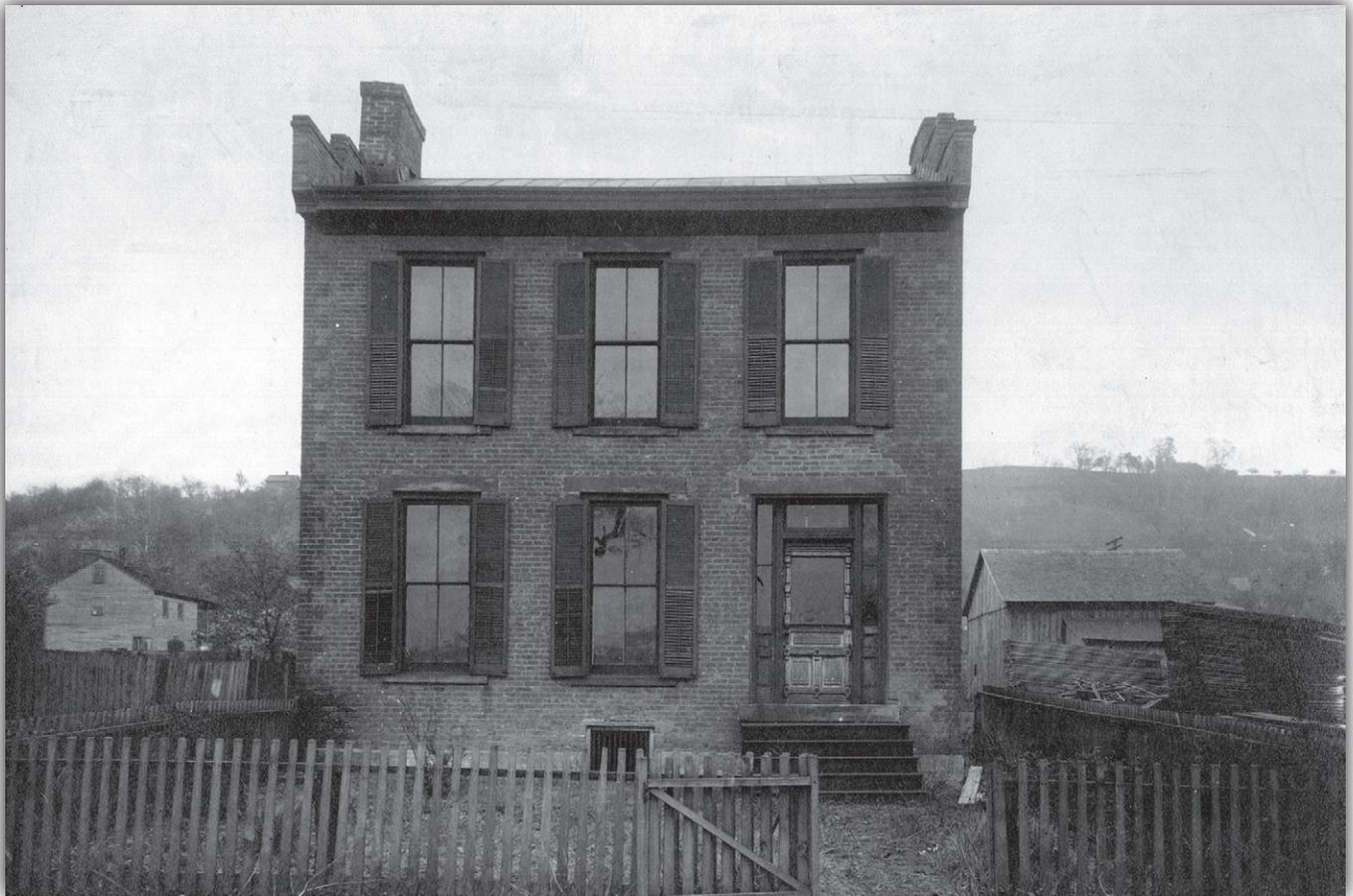


Figure 16: Prior to its designation as a national historic landmark and subsequent restoration, John P. Parker House, circa 1910. Courtesy of the Ohio History Connection.

INTRODUCTION

For a resource to be determined nationally significant, it must meet all of the following four criteria:

- It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource
- It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural themes of our nation's heritage.
- It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study.
- It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.
- The national significance of cultural resources is evaluated using the national historic landmark criteria for designation

(NPS Management Policies 2006, § 1.3.2). The national historic landmark (NHL) criteria are given in appendix C.

In 1997 the John P. Parker House and Museum was designated a national historic landmark. It was determined to be nationally significant under national historic landmark criteria 1 and 2 for the period 1853-1865 because of (1) its association with national history of abolitionism and (2) its association with the life of a nationally significant person, John P. Parker.

The John P. Parker House and Museum property represents the time when Parker was most active in his abolitionist efforts. It was from his home

that Parker participated in the Underground Railroad as a conductor aiding hundreds of escaped slaves into the north. Moreover, the property is the first and primary location of Parker's foundry business. For more than 40 years Parker operated the Phoenix Foundry during which time Parker obtained several patents in the field of agricultural technology. Due to his success as a black entrepreneur and his role in the Underground Railroad Parker was a community leader throughout his life. He recruited hundreds of African American soldiers for the Union Army during the Civil War and mentored Colonel Charles Young and encouraged his education by giving him access to his personal library.

Previous designations of significance have not emphasized the John P. Parker House and Museum's importance as an industrial center. The complex spanned from Front Street to Second Street and comprised at least eight interconnected buildings (see figure 6). At the foundry Parker developed several patents such as his "Portable Screw Press" (US Patent No. 318,215), a portable press that would pack tobacco into barrels or hogsheads. The press was made of wood and iron and could be moved easily between locations. A replica of the press constructed by the students of the University of Cincinnati's School of Architecture is on display in the "Forge for Freedom" exhibit in the museum. Parker's other patents include a follower screw for the press (US Patent No. 304,552) and a soil pulverizer in 1890 (US Patent No. 442,538; figure 17). According to W.E.B. DuBois, in the year 1901 only 55 black inventors held more than one patent. Parker held three of the seventy-seven issued to African Americans before 1886 (Weeks 1971: 155; Genheimer 2001: 4).

Parker is known to have conducted his business at the location of the John P. Parker House and Museum from 1858 to 1889, until a major fire spread from the nearby Ripley Mill destroying the shop and seriously damaging most other buildings on the lot including the house. Parker eventually rebuilt his shop on an adjacent lot on Sycamore Street. Though not established as a facet of the site's national significance in the national historic

landmark designation under both criteria 1 and 2, the importance of Parker as an inventor and entrepreneur could be found to contribute to the site's national significance through further study and comparative analysis.

CONCLUSION

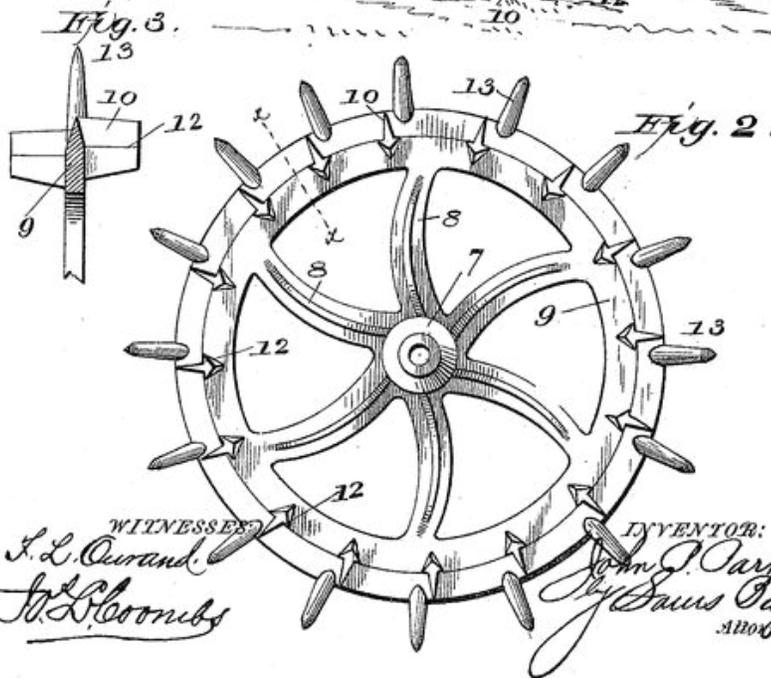
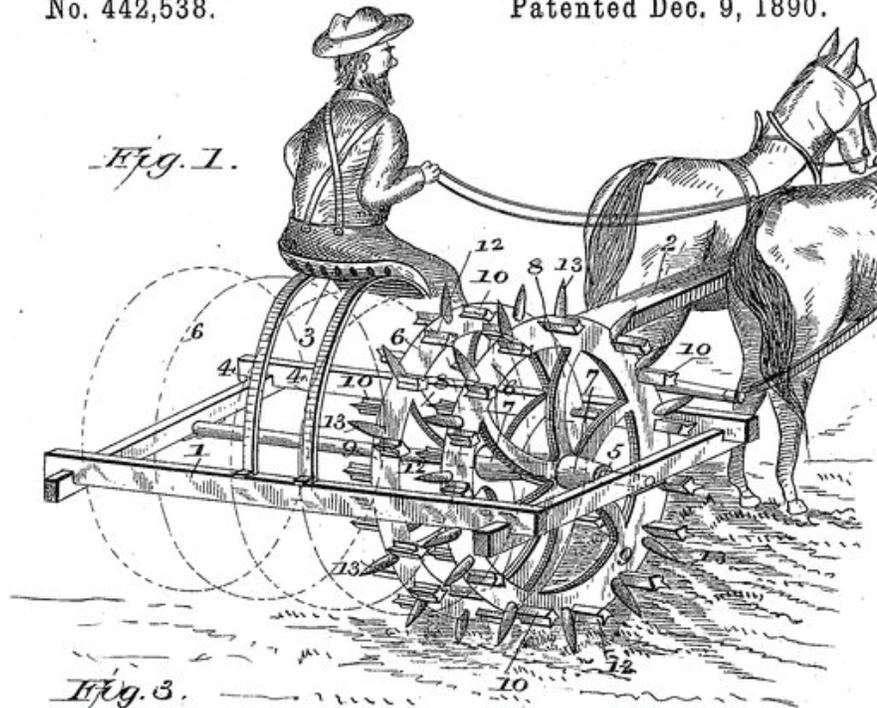
By designating the John P. Parker House and Museum as a national historic landmark, the National Park Service has established the national significance of the site for its connection with John P. Parker and his efforts as an active participant in the Underground Railroad. The national historic landmark documentation for the John P. Parker House and Museum potentially could be updated to assess the national significance of the John P. Parker House and Museum in respect to Parker's activities as an African American entrepreneur in antebellum America.

(No Model.)

J. P. PARKER.
SOIL PULVERIZER.

No. 442,538.

Patented Dec. 9, 1890.



WITNESSES:
S. L. Curand
M. D. Coombs

INVENTOR:
John P. Parker
By James Jaggard
ATTORNEY

THE BIRDS FETERS CO., PHOTO-LITHO., WASHINGTON, D. C.

Figure 17: John P. Parker's "soil pulverizer" patented in 1890 (US Patent No. 318,215).

EVALUATION OF SUITABILITY

INTRODUCTION

An area is considered suitable to be included in the national park system if it meets the following requirements:

An area is considered suitable for addition to the National Park System if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented on the National Park System, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or in the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined on a case by case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparable managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected on the National Park System or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.

(NPS Management Policies 2006, § 1.3.2 “Suitability”) (appendix A).

To evaluate suitability, the following were considered as similar “resource types”: historical areas which share overlapping periods of significance (1850s to 1900), geography (along the Ohio River), and themes (abolitionist movement and African American entrepreneurship). In the following paragraphs a preliminary evaluation of

the study area’s suitability for inclusion the national park system is done by comparing similarly themed sites managed by the National Park Service and other entities. The sites chosen for comparison are the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park, George Washington Carver National Monument, Frederick Douglass National Historic Site, John Rankin House, and sites on the NPS Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. Additional sites such Nicodemus National Historic Site, Brown v. Board of Education



Figure 18: Harriet Tubman, a prominent abolitionist and civil rights activist, aided thousands of enslaved people to freedom as an extractor and conductor in the Underground Railroad. Photograph taken between 1860 and 1875. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

National Historic Site, and Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site are recognized in the NPS Midwest Region as important sites representing the African American story in the United States; however, these sites commemorate the post-Civil War era and are, therefore, not included.

DESCRIPTION OF COMPARABLE SITES

Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park in Cambridge, Maryland commemorates her contributions as a conductor on the Underground Railroad and her role in the politics of freedom and social equality for African Americans and women. Harriet Tubman (figure 18) dedicated her life to the pursuit of freedom for others repeatedly risking her life to guide almost 70 enslaved people north to freedom. Her service continued into the Civil War, during which she was a nurse, a scout, and a spy. In 1896, she founded one of the first homes for the aged in Auburn, New York in 1896. The national historical park boundary encompasses approximately 25,000 acres of federal, state and private lands in Dorchester, Talbot and Caroline counties of Maryland and properties in Auburn, New York. The properties reflect various points in her life from enslavement, to being a conductor and advocate for civil rights. In 2014, legislation was signed authorizing the national monument in Maryland and properties in Auburn, New York to be designated the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park. This park is also listed as part of the NPS Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

The Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park and John P. Parker House and Museum represent similar themes, as outlined by their national historic landmark documentation including their relationship to creating social institutions and reform movements, particularly the abolitionist movement. Extractors such as Parker and Tubman

represent the rarest form of abolitionist activity. By venturing into slave states of the south and guiding escaping slaves to the north both Parker and Tubman put themselves at tremendous risk. Although this story is presented at both sites they represent two distinct points in the Underground Railroad. Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Historical Park reflects the struggle for slaves escaping from bondage in Maryland, whereas the John P. Parker House and Museum represents the destination for many fugitive slaves seeking freedom across the “River Jordan.” In contrast to the themes of the John P. Parker House and Museum, Harriet Tubman’s life as a female African American abolitionist is a distinct difference from John P. Parker’s experiences as a freed African American man.

George Washington Carver National Monument

The birthplace and childhood home of George Washington Carver, the George Washington Carver National Monument in Diamond, Missouri celebrates the life of an individual who was born into slavery at the end of the Civil War and, after gaining his freedom, was committed to scientific advancement and the improvement agriculture, especially in the impoverished south. Carver (figure 19) was an innovator of agricultural techniques and helped adapt areas of poor soil in the south for cultivation. Established in 1943, the George Washington Carver National Monument was the first unit of NPS dedicated to an African American. Visitors to the site can experience a comprehensive museum as well as a guided tour of the surrounding landscape and his childhood home.

George Washington Carver and John P. Parker share comparable stories as freed men and African American innovators. Both were members of a small group of African Americans who received patents for inventions. Carver and Parker were mentors in the African American community. Parker actively mentored Colonel Charles Young and recruited African Americans for the Union Army during the Civil War. Carver was also a role model and mentor for African Americans as a philosopher who was in contact

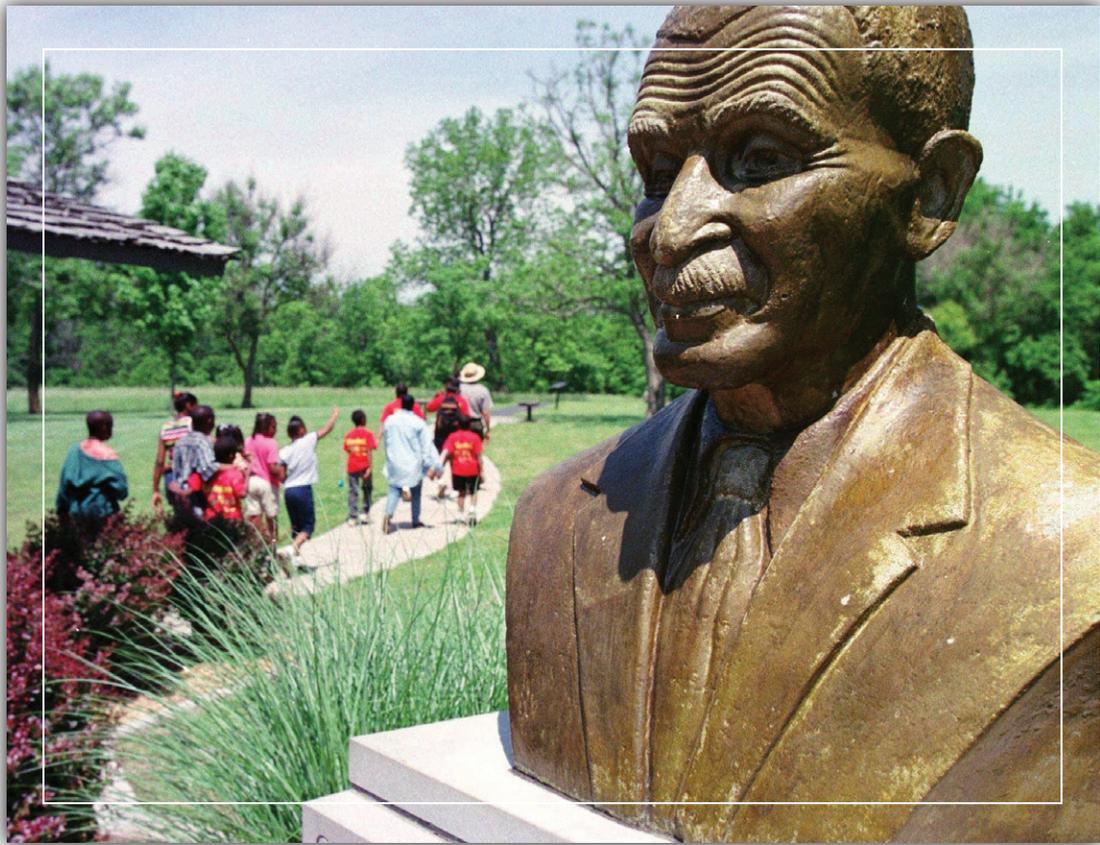


Figure 19: The George Washington Carver National Monument was the first NPS unit dedicated to an African American. It commemorates Carver as a botanist and inventor who devoted his life to the promotion of agricultural innovation and education. Courtesy of Public Radio East (Demby 2014). NPS photo.

with influential thinkers such as Gandhi. Both were committed to innovation in the realm of agriculture because of its significance to the African American community, who were the primary labor-force in the industry. Parker developed new machines to improve the yield and efficiency of cultivation whereas Carver worked to educate farmers on best agricultural practices and alternative crops to increase crop yields. The George Washington Carver National Monument preserves the childhood home of Carver rather than the scene of his most significant activities. Significant for his tremendous leaps in agriculture science, Carver conducted his most significant work on peanuts and alternative crops at Tuskegee University in Alabama. In contrast, the John P. Parker House and Museum is the location of Parker's most significant activities as a conductor and inventor. Finally, the Carver site does not hold the same potential for understanding the

abolitionist movement in the Pre-Civil War era as does a site significant to an active abolitionist or in a significant geographic region to abolitionism such as the "borderland" of the Ohio River.

Frederick Douglass National Historic Site

Preserving the home of Frederick Douglass at Cedar Hill, the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Washington, DC, provide interpretation of one of the most famous 19th century African Americans. Visitors to the site can learn about Douglass's escape from enslavement on Maryland's eastern shore, his efforts to abolish slavery, and his struggle for rights for all oppressed people. The site commemorates his journey from enslavement to prominence and achievements against overwhelming odds. As a place, Cedar Hill houses an extensive collection of original Douglass objects and provides an

unparalleled opportunity to connect with Douglass's life and accomplishments. In addition, the site allows visitors to experience Douglass as a great American leader who advocated for broad-ranging social justice issues including abolition, civil rights, and equal education regardless of race or gender.

The Frederick Douglass National Historic Site in Washington, DC is not the site of Douglass's most significant activities as an abolitionist, but rather preserves his later home in Washington, DC which he first occupied in 1872. The Douglass site is not the location of his most significant Underground Railroad activities. In contrast, the John P. Parker House and Museum is the site of Parker's abolitionist and civil rights activities throughout his life until his death in 1900. Both Douglass and Parker were leaders in the African American community as well as instrumental in the recruitment of "colored soldiers" during the Civil War.

Both sites represent the journey of a man through enslavement to success despite racial prejudice. Although Douglass and Parker were both integral to the abolitionist movement they played markedly different roles. Douglass was a public advocate for the anti-slavery movement, publishing anti-slavery newspapers and his autobiography during this tumultuous time, whereas, as an extractor in the "borderland" Parker was actively involved in the movement and protection of escaping slaves into Ohio.

The John Rankin House

The John Rankin House is a national historic landmark owned by the Ohio History Connection, a statewide nonprofit that works in partnership with the State of Ohio, and is operated on their behalf by Ripley Heritage, Inc. (figure 20). It is considered one of Ohio's best documented and most active Underground Railroad "stations". The Rankin House is included on the NPS Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program. Visitors can take a guided tour of the site and "learn how the Rankin family and their neighbors in Ripley and other

nearby communities helped fugitives escape from slavery to freedom via the Underground Railroad" (Ohio History Connection 2016). The Reverend John Rankin and his 13 sons are believed to have helped more than 1,000 fugitive slaves while living here.

Both the John Rankin House and the John P. Parker House and Museum represent related experiences of the abolitionist movement. Rankin and Parker often worked together to achieve freedom for individuals escaping enslavement. Reverend Rankin, a white Presbyterian minister, achieved notoriety for his participation in the Underground Railroad and is commemorated by a monument in Ripley, Ohio (see figure 6). In contrast, Parker represents the experiences of African American abolitionists who are often unrecognized as active participants and leaders in the Underground Railroad. Moreover, as this study notes, Parker's role as an African American business owner and inventor was a markedly different experience from that of Reverend John Rankin.

NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program sites

The NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program has identified close to 600 sites, programs, and facilities in the United States and beyond which interpret and commemorate the Underground Railroad (appendix D). The program builds on and is supported by community initiatives around the country as well as legislation passed in 1990 and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998. Historic places and educational or interpretive programs associated with the Underground Railroad are eligible to use or display a uniform network logo, receive technical assistance, and participate in program workshops. Sites affiliated with the program are not units of the national park system, and do not receive operating support from the National Park Service (appendix D).

Many sites along the Ohio River have been identified as particularly significant in the actions



Figure 20: The John Rankin House National Historic Landmark in Ripley, Ohio, operated by the Ohio History Connection. Reverend John Rankin was a Presbyterian abolitionist who collaborated with John P. Parker to save hundreds of enslaved people. NPS photo.

of the Underground Railroad. Sites such as the White Hall State Historic Site, the home of Cassius Marcellus Clay (an emancipationist, newspaper publisher, Minister to Russia, and friend to Abraham Lincoln), document important abolitionists and “stations” in the “borderland.” The John Rankin House and the John P. Parker House are included on this list of important abolitionist sites. In 2003, the National Park Service accepted the John P. Parker House and Museum and “A Forge for Freedom,” the Parker interpretative educational program, for inclusion in the NPS National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

CONCLUSION

Although many sites have been identified in association with the Underground Railroad and abolitionist movement, few yield the same potential to understand the lives of African Americans in pre- Civil War and antebellum America as does the John P. Parker House and Museum. Sites within the national park system which occupy a similar date of significance to the John P. Parker House and Museum such as the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument, George Washington Carver National Monument, and the Frederick Douglass National Historic Site offer insight into our understanding of African American abolitionists and innovators. John P. Parker’s life as a freed slave, abolitionist, and inventor in southern Ohio is not yet adequately represented in the NPS system or protected by any other entity. Although sites such as the John Rankin House in Ripley, Ohio have been identified as national historic landmarks and in the NPS Network to Freedom program, the John P. Parker House and Museum presents a unique opportunity to highlight the courageous efforts of black abolitionists and preserve resources related to his active period as an Underground Railroad conductor, and highlight the theme of African American entrepreneurship. This survey finds that the criteria for suitability as an NPS unit would likely be met in a full special resource study.



Figure 21: Artistic rendering of John P. Parker's frustration with enslavement while walking on a chain gang from Richmond, Virginia, to Mobile, Alabama, at eight years old. These illustrations of Parker's life by the Mark Priest are on exhibit at the John P. Parker House and Museum. NPS photo.

EVALUATION OF FEASIBILITY

INTRODUCTION

An area is considered feasible for inclusion in the national park system if it is:

- (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and
- (2) capable of efficient administration by the Service at a reasonable cost.

(NPS Management Policies 2006, § 1.3.3 "Feasibility") (appendix B).

Factors considered when evaluating feasibility include, but are not limited to the following:

- size
- boundary configurations
- current and potential uses of the study area and surrounding lands
- landownership patterns
- public enjoyment
- potential costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration, and operation
- access

- current and potential threats to the resources
- existing degradation of resources
- staffing requirements
- local planning and zoning
- the level of local and general public support (including landowners)
- the economic/socioeconomic impacts of designation as a unit of the national park system

A reconnaissance survey is limited in scope and does not include broad public input and review, and therefore, some factors cannot be fully addressed, such as the level of public support, availability of land acquisition, and socioeconomic impacts of designation as a unit of the national park system. For the purposes of this survey, a preliminary evaluation of feasibility for the John P. Parker House and Museum was conducted for some of the above factors. For those factors not evaluated, potential concerns were identified.

Size and Boundary

The John P. Parker House and Museum is now all that remains of an integrated residential and manufacturing establishment at this site. Dating to about 1850, the site consisted of the Parker Home and the foundry, which was known at various times as the J.P. Parker Foundry and the Phoenix Foundry. The complex originally comprised the present two-story brick dwelling with a contiguous one-and-one-half story brick machine shop along the west elevation and a one-story frame foundry and blacksmith shop extending about eighty feet to the rear. Three smaller frame sheds projected from the northeast corner of the foundry, and a cistern was located just outside the northwest corner of this rear structure (Genheimer 2001 1–15).

Today, the John P. Parker House and Museum is an L-shaped two-story brick building set on a village lot of about 0.50 acres and approximately 100 feet wide. Behind the John P. Parker House

and Museum the property extends to an alley and the properties on Second Street. The now vacant rear yard is currently used for long-term parking of trucks and other vehicles and provides adequate parking for visitors to the site. Archeological excavations of the rear yard have been conducted to locate the former foundry. The house and museum is physically accessible; there is a lift in the main entrance, and thresholds and sidewalks are accessible for all visitors. A one-story tobacco warehouse southeast of the property at the corner of Locust and Front streets was destroyed by fire in 2000 and is now the John P. Parker Memorial Park. The park was not included in the survey study area because it is not directly related to the life of John P. Parker.

Current and Potential Uses of Study Area

Prior to its purchase by the John P. Parker Historical Society the building was seriously dilapidated and at risk of collapse. Using grants from the Ohio Arts Council, Ohio Humanities Council, National Park Service, National Endowment for the Humanities, and National Trust for Historic Preservation, the house was stabilized, public programs were developed, an archaeological investigation of the property was conducted, and a well-researched and documented interpretative educational program was developed. The John P. Parker House and Museum currently operates as a museum and interpretation center, and tours on Friday, Saturday and Sunday are available seasonally or by appointment. The center is staffed by seasonal volunteers. Professionally designed exhibits depict and communicate the historical context in which Parker and his courageous contemporaries influenced and shaped the history of the United States. Future projects planned by the society include building an interpretive building at the site of the former foundry and a pavilion to house antique foundry equipment and a replica of Parker's soil pulverizer. In 2003 the National Park Service accepted the site and its associated



Figure 22: “Forge for Freedom” exhibit at the John P. Parker House and Museum. NPS photo.

interpretative program, “A Forge for Freedom,” for inclusion on the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom.

Land Ownership

The John P. Parker House and Museum is currently owned and operated by the John P. Parker Historical Society, a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of John P. Parker materials.

Public Enjoyment Potential

There are substantial interpretative materials in the form of museum exhibits and interpretive displays on site. Dr. Daniel Vivian, assistant professor of history at the University of Louisville, recently assessed the interpretation of the Parker story at the John P. Parker House and Museum (Vivian 2011). The “Freedom Forged by Fire: The Legacy and Life of John P. Parker” exhibit is listed on the NPS Network to Freedom and is the most substantial interpretative exhibit at the site (figure 20). It is organized around four themes: “Bondage to Freedom,” “Resistance, Rebellion and Reform,” “Industry and Invention,” and “The Parker Legacy.”

According to Vivian (2011 66), the Ohio region “arguably leads the nation in interpretation of the Underground Railroad” and the network of operatives, houses and routes that were used to assist runaway slaves in the years leading to the Civil War. Related sites include the John

Rankin House in Ripley, Ohio, and the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati. These sites along with the John P. Parker House and Museum attract visitors from across the country. The museum provides docents for interpretation and numerous exhibits delivering an informative “portrait of Parker’s life and antislavery activism and succeeds in highlighting the importance of a long-overlooked figure” (Vivian 2011 66).

Costs

The cost for acquisition, development, staffing, and operation of the John P. Parker House and Museum as a unit of the national park system would depend on the nature of the park unit and the role of the National Park Service. For the purposes of this survey, similar park unit operations and costs were identified. A full range of management options is beyond the scope of this reconnaissance survey, and thus costs associated with possible management scenarios were not analyzed.

An examination of similar NPS units can provide guidance on potential operating costs and staffing requirements for the study area. William Howard Taft National Historic Site in Cincinnati, Ohio, and William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site in Hope, Arkansas, are comparable units of the national park system in size and resources. The staffing levels and operating costs for these sites are likely similar to what would be required for the National Park Service to manage the John P. Parker House and Museum. Based on the 2014 and 2015 fiscal years, operation of the William Howard Taft National Historic Site required 5-6 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff and an annual budget of about \$462,309. Similarly, the President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site required 7-8 FTE and an annual budget of \$750,000 and \$900,000 for the 2014 and 2015 fiscal years.

Future capital outlays would likely be minimal in the short term, given the recent comprehensive rehabilitation of the site. Staffing of the unit would

likely be minimal based on the size of the property and visitation at similar sites. Operating expenses could be minimized through staff sharing with the William Howard Taft National Historic Site. On-site management might require additional space due to limited space in the home itself. Currently there is one small office at the site, but this would not be sufficient for NPS operations. Start-up costs for an NPS unit at the John P. Parker House and Museum would likely be for signage, rental of a staff office, and development of web materials and plans. Overall, based on comparisons with the William Howard Taft and the President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home national historic sites, management of the John P. Parker House and Museum as a unit of the national park system would require 5-7 FTE staff and an annual budget of \$500,000 to \$800,000.

Threats to Resources

The NPS team noted no major deficiencies during their site visit in 2016; however, sustainability of the John P. Parker Historical Society and management in the future could be a concern. The John P. Parker Historical Society faces organizational instability due to both decreasing membership and aging of current society members who are invested in maintenance of the site. The John P. Parker House and Museum is in a formerly industrial waterfront area of Ripley, and there are no known threats to the setting of the John P. Parker House and Museum.

Public Support

Because of the preliminary nature of a reconnaissance survey, public comment is not solicited as it would be in the special resource study process. Even so, during the course of this study, expressions of support were received from individuals and organizations. Many letters and petitions were sent to the National Park Service in support of the John P. Parker House and Museum's inclusion in the national park system. Various community members highlighted Parker's significant contributions to the abolitionist movement and his work as an inventor and successful businessman. The Adams

County Historical Society sent a letter declaring its support for designation of the John P. Parker House and Museum as an NPS unit. Other letters of support noted that designation of the John P. Parker House and Museum as an NPS unit would likely have a positive socioeconomic impact on Ripley, Ohio, and attract more attention to other Underground Railroad sites in the region.

CONCLUSION

Based on the available information, this survey finds that the criteria for feasibility as an NPS unit would likely be met. Adaptation of the current site infrastructure into a unit would likely require minimal one-time expenses for minor renovations and development of interpretive materials and ongoing expenses for staff, staff offices, and maintenance.

NEED FOR DIRECT NPS MANAGEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The final criterion for evaluating a potential unit of the national park system is its need for direct NPS management instead of protection by other public entities or the private sector (NPS Management Policies 2006 (§1.3.4 “Direct NPS Management”). The criterion requires a finding that direct NPS management is the clearly superior alternative.

The John P. Parker House site has been designated a national historic landmark and has been included in the NPS Underground Railroad Network to Freedom. In addition to these designations, the John P. Parker Historical Society partners with several organizations for a number of purposes, including:

- Cincinnati Museum Center (archeological study)
- Cincinnati Preservation Association (technical assistance)
- National Park Service (Save America’s Treasures Grant for archeological study and Network to Freedom Program designation)
- National Trust for Historic Preservation (grant for program / exhibit development)
- National Underground Railroad Freedom Center (advocacy / research intern)
- Ohio Arts Council (grant for site stabilization)
- Ohio General Assembly (appropriation for restoration)
- Ohio History Connection (formerly Ohio Historical Society) (technical assistance)
- Ohio Office of Historic Preservation (advocacy / technical assistance)

The John P. Parker Historical Society purchased the property in 1994 and completed restoration in 1997. Between 1998 and 2003 it successfully applied for grants totaling 2.2 million dollars to support site stabilization and repairs (Vivian 2011 67). Additional funding for interpretative educational programs was provided by the National Park Service, Ohio Humanities Council

National Trust for Historic Preservation, and National Endowment for the Humanities. Interpretation at the site has yet to realize its full potential. The current exhibits make “good use of historical images and are handsomely styled and well produced . . . in combination with the artifacts displayed they do a good job of supplementing” the docent expertise (Vivian 2011 69). Management by the National Park Service could expand the interactive capabilities of the site by incorporating conventional text panels, more inviting media to display information rather than binders of text, and a more sophisticated exhibit design (Vivian 2011 73). More emphasis could be placed on the larger role of Parker within the context of a complex and changing American society. Further management of content could strengthen Parker’s story and the history of the Underground Railroad as a response to social and racial hierarchies that structured life in 19th-century America.

Currently, there is concern for the future of the site’s management centers on the sustainability of the John P. Parker Historical Society. The society has done a great job with limited resources by effectively utilizing both its dedicated volunteers and grant funding to support the operation of the site. With about two dozen members, the John P. Parker Historical Society has garnered a remarkable amount of grant funding and interest in the site and, arguably, accomplished more than many larger organizations. If the society could continue to operate at this level indefinitely it would be the best manager for the site; however, the increasing scarcity of grant monies, which have been the basis for much of the society’s success, may adversely affect future operation of the site. In addition, the society’s board is aging and has reached its capacity for programming. It is struggling to attract new members and does not believe it has achieved organizational sustainability. Although the board has expressed a desire to relinquish its responsibilities



Figure 23: View of the Ohio River from the John Rankin House looking toward Kentucky. NPS photo.

for the site, it could be possible to rejuvenate the board through new members and clearer focus.

In addition to continued management by the John P. Parker Historical Society other management options could include collaboration with the Ohio History Connection, which has an established presence in Ripley as managers of the John Rankin House. The Ohio History Connection provides funds for maintenance of the John Rankin House, and day-to-day operation is left to its partner, Ripley Heritage, Inc. This arrangement seems to be working well for the John Rankin House. Several John P. Parker Historical Society members are also on the Ripley Heritage, Inc., board. If the Ohio History Connection acquired the John P. Parker House and Museum and partnered with the John P. Parker Historical Society, it could be a more efficient management model than NPS management. The John P. Parker Society has concerns, however, about the long-term status of the Ohio History Connection and its properties based on previous downturns and funding lags and supports possible NPS management of the John P. Parker House and Museum. The situation with the Ohio History Connection could change

over time, and this potential management strategy could be revisited.

CONCLUSION

The need for NPS management cannot be definitively determined without a special resource study to evaluate the situation. Other management options exist and should be examined more fully to determine their viability. Opportunities exist for partnerships with other historically related sites such as the John Rankin House. Cooperation with other African American historic sites in the state and region could provide the possibility of a new program between related sites, but further development or discussion of these possibilities is outside the scope of this study, and a special resource study is the appropriate vehicle for this examination. In addition, a special resource study would allow for discussion with both the general public and local residents about their opinions of the site and its management. A special resource study could also evaluate the potential for the site to be designated as an affiliated area of the National Park System (see appendix B for more information about affiliated area status).

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The national significance of the John P. Parker House and Museum was determined during its designation as national historic landmark and is based on the site's connection with the life of prominent abolitionist John P. Parker. The National Park Service recommends that documentation for the site be updated to potentially extend the evaluation of national significance to include John P. Parker's life as an African American entrepreneur and inventor. A preliminary evaluation of suitability indicates the John P. Parker House and Museum is likely suitable for inclusion in the national park system because it represents a resource preserved and interpreted for public enjoyment that is not currently represented in the national park system. A preliminary evaluation for feasibility indicates that the criteria for feasibility are likely to be met in a full evaluation. Creating a unit of the national park system would require one-time expenses for construction and development of interpretive materials and ongoing expenses for staff, staff offices, and maintenance.

It is uncertain if the Parker site needs direct management by the National Park Service. The site is already associated with the National Park Service as part of the Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program and its designation as a national historic landmark. Its current owner, the John P. Parker Historical Society was founded in 1996 and has had tremendous success in securing grant funding and volunteers to offer a high quality visitor experience. Society members are concerned, however, about the sustainability of the organization and the future of the property without government management. This National Park Service suggests that the society increase membership recruitment efforts and explore opportunities to partner with organizations such as the Ohio History Connection and the John Rankin House for long-term protection. The Ohio History Connection currently partners with Ripley Heritage, Inc. in the management of the

John Rankin House, and this partnership could be extended to include the John P. Parker House and Museum. The society also could explore partnerships with other local and regional historic sites to develop new interpretations of African American history in southern Ohio. The National Park Service recommends that a special resource study be authorized to explore public involvement and develop potential management alternatives for the John P. Parker House and Museum. A special resource study could also evaluate the potential for the site to be designated as an affiliated area of the national park system.



Figure 24: Artistic rendering of Parker's legacy as an extractor and champion for civil rights. These illustrations of Parker's life by artist Mark Priest are on exhibit at the John P. Parker House and Museum. NPS photo.

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Appendix A: Reconnaissance Survey Request Letter

SHERROD BROWN
OHIO
COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
BANKING, HOUSING,
AND URBAN AFFAIRS
FINANCE
VETERANS' AFFAIRS
SELECT COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

July 20, 2015

Mr. Jonathan Jarvis
Director
National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Jarvis:

I urge the National Park Service (NPS) to use its authority to conduct a reconnaissance survey to explore the suitability of designating the John P. Parker Historic Site a unit of the NPS. Located in Ripley, Ohio, the Parker House reflects Ohio's significant role in the Underground Railroad, and the incredible work of former slave John P. Parker in helping nearly 1,000 slaves escape to freedom. Official NPS incorporation of this structure would demonstrate the historic importance of the site and provide overdue recognition of John Parker.

John P. Parker was born into slavery in 1827 and purchased his freedom in 1845. At this time, Parker settled in Ripley, Ohio. Ripley had a long history as a transit point along the Underground Railroad for thousands of slaves seeking their freedom. Parker by 1854 was already an established entrepreneur and blacksmith in Ripley, yet risked his freedom by regularly crossing into Kentucky to help ferry hundreds of runaway slaves north. As a former slave, Parker represents the oft-untold side of the Underground Railroad, with freed African-Americans working to bring slaves to freedom and playing an essential role in the network of abolitionists ferrying people to the north. Beyond his work on the Underground Railroad, Parker was an accomplished ironworker, becoming one of the first African Americans to hold a patent, and was a successful businessman, as well.

Today, the John P. Parker House brings to life the journey of runaway slaves through the Underground Railroad and the story of the man who helped secure their freedom. The house has been restored and currently operates as museum tracing Parker's life and his role in the Underground Railroad, as well as touching on the greater historical themes of the era.

In 1997, NPS designated the house a "National Historic Landmark" and since that time its significance has been recognized, in the form of designated status, by the NPS Underground Network to Freedom, National Trust for Historic Preservation, National Endowment for the Humanities, and others. The owners of the site have already agreed to deed the house to NPS, making any transition into NPS trusteeship much easier. It is my understanding that the John P. Parker Historical Society is willing to work with NPS on this effort.

Memorializing the story of John P. Parker, preserving his home as a historical monument, and ensuring funding for future generations would reflect the courage, dedication, and nobility of freed slaves who risked their lives to make the Underground Railroad a path to freedom. I believe the Parker House has clear historic value to the nation, and would appreciate all due consideration to my request for a reconnaissance study. Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

Appendix B: NPS Management Policies 2006,

§ 1.3 Criteria for Inclusion

1.3 Criteria for Inclusion

Congress declared on the National Park System General Authorities Act of 1970 that areas comprising the national park system are cumulative expressions of a single national heritage. Potential additions to the national park system should therefore contribute in their own special way to a system that fully represents the broad spectrum of natural and cultural resources that characterize our nation. The National Park Service is responsible for conducting professional studies of potential additions to the national park system when specifically authorized by an act of Congress, and for making recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior, the President, and Congress. Several laws outline criteria for units of the national park system and for additions to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System and the National Trails System. To receive a favorable recommendation from the Service, a proposed addition to the national park system must (1) possess nationally significant natural or cultural resources, (2) be a suitable addition to the system, (3) be a feasible addition to the system, and (4) require direct NPS management instead of protection by other public agencies or the private sector. These criteria are designed to ensure that the national park system includes only the most outstanding examples of the nation's natural and cultural resources. These criteria also recognize that there are other management alternatives for preserving the nation's outstanding resources.

1.3.1 National Significance

NPS professionals, in consultation with subject-matter experts, scholars, and scientists, will determine whether a resource is nationally significant. An area will be considered nationally significant if it meets all of the following criteria:

It is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource.

It possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the natural or cultural

themes of our nation's heritage.

It offers superlative opportunities for public enjoyment or for scientific study.

It retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of a resource.

National significance for cultural resources will be evaluated by applying the National Historic Landmarks criteria contained in 36 CFR Part 65 (Code of Federal Regulations).

1.3.2 Suitability

An area is considered suitable for addition to the national park system if it represents a natural or cultural resource type that is not already adequately represented in the national park system, or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by other federal agencies; tribal, state, or local governments; or the private sector.

Adequacy of representation is determined on a case-by-case basis by comparing the potential addition to other comparably managed areas representing the same resource type, while considering differences or similarities in the character, quality, quantity, or combination of resource values. The comparative analysis also addresses rarity of the resources, interpretive and educational potential, and similar resources already protected in the national park system or in other public or private ownership. The comparison results in a determination of whether the proposed new area would expand, enhance, or duplicate resource protection or visitor use opportunities found in other comparably managed areas.

1.3.3 Feasibility

To be feasible as a new unit of the national park system, an area must be (1) of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure sustainable resource protection and visitor enjoyment (taking into account current and potential impacts from

sources beyond proposed park boundaries), and (2) capable of efficient administration by the Service at a reasonable cost.

In evaluating feasibility, the Service considers a variety of factors for a study area, such as the following:

- size
- boundary configurations
- current and potential uses of the study area and surrounding lands
- landownership patterns
- public enjoyment
- potential costs associated with acquisition, development, restoration, and operation
- access
- current and potential threats to the resources
- existing degradation of resources
- staffing requirements
- local planning and zoning
- the level of local and general public support (including landowners)
- the economic/socioeconomic impacts of designation as a unit of the national park system

The feasibility evaluation also considers the ability of the National Park Service to undertake new management responsibilities in light of current and projected availability of funding and personnel.

An overall evaluation of feasibility will be made after taking into account all of the above factors. However, evaluations may sometimes identify concerns or conditions, rather than simply reach a yes or no conclusion. For example, some new areas may be feasible additions to the national park system only if landowners are willing to sell, or the boundary encompasses specific areas necessary for visitor access, or state or local governments will provide appropriate assurances that adjacent land uses will remain compatible with the study area's resources and values.

1.3.4 Direct NPS Management

There are many excellent examples of the successful management of important natural and cultural resources by other public agencies, private

conservation organizations, and individuals. The National Park Service applauds these accomplishments and actively encourages the expansion of conservation activities by state, local, and private entities and by other federal agencies. Unless direct NPS management of a studied area is identified as the clearly superior alternative, the Service will recommend that one or more of these other entities assume a lead management role, and that the area not receive national park system status.

Studies will evaluate an appropriate range of management alternatives and will identify which alternative or combination of alternatives would, in the professional judgment of the Director, be most effective and efficient in protecting significant resources and providing opportunities for appropriate public enjoyment. Alternatives for NPS management will not be developed for study areas that fail to meet any one of the four criteria for inclusion listed in section 1.3.

In cases where a study area's resources meet criteria for national significance but do not meet other criteria for inclusion in the national park system, the Service may instead recommend an alternative status, such as "affiliated area." To be eligible for affiliated area status, the area's resources must (1) meet the same standards for significance and suitability that apply to units of the national park system; (2) require some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing NPS programs; (3) be managed in accordance with the policies and standards that apply to units of the national park system; and (4) be assured of sustained resource protection, as documented in a formal agreement between the Service and the nonfederal management entity. Designation as a "heritage area" is another option that may be recommended. Heritage areas have a nationally important, distinctive assemblage of resources that is best managed for conservation, recreation, education, and continued use through partnerships among public and private entities at the local or regional level. Either of these two alternatives (and others as well) would recognize an area's importance to the nation without requiring or implying management by the National Park Service. (See National Significance 1.3.1; Suitability 1.3.2)

Appendix C: National Historic Landmark Criteria 36 CFR § 65.4

The criteria applied to evaluate properties for possible designation as National Historic Landmarks or possible determination of eligibility for National Historic Landmark designation are listed below. These criteria shall be used by NPS in the preparation, review and evaluation of National Historic Landmark studies. They shall be used by the Advisory Board in reviewing National Historic Landmark studies and preparing recommendations to the Secretary. Properties shall be designated National Historic Landmarks only if they are nationally significant. Although assessments of national significance should reflect both public perceptions and professional judgments, the evaluations of properties being considered for landmark designation are undertaken by professionals, including historians, architectural historians, archeologists and anthropologists familiar with the broad range of the nation's resources and historical themes. The criteria applied by these specialists to potential landmarks do not define significance nor set a rigid standard for quality. Rather, the criteria establish the qualitative framework in which a comparative professional analysis of national significance can occur. The final decision on whether a property possesses national significance is made by the Secretary on the basis of documentation including the comments and recommendations of the public who participate in the designation process.

(a) Specific Criteria of National Significance: The quality of national significance is ascribed to districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States in history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture and that possess a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association, and:

(1) That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to, and are identified with, or that outstandingly represent, the broad national patterns of United States history and

from which an understanding and appreciation of those patterns may be gained; or

(2) That are associated importantly with the lives of persons nationally significant in the history of the United States; or

(3) That represent some great idea or ideal of the American people; or

(4) That embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen exceptionally valuable for a study of a period, style or method of construction, or that represent a significant, distinctive and exceptional entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or

(5) That are composed of integral parts of the environment not sufficiently significant by reason of historical association or artistic merit to warrant individual recognition but collectively compose an entity of exceptional historical or artistic significance, or outstandingly commemorate or illustrate a way of life or culture; or

(6) That have yielded or may be likely to yield information of major scientific importance by revealing new cultures, or by shedding light upon periods of occupation over large areas of the United States. Such sites are those which have yielded, or which may reasonably be expected to yield, data affecting theories, concepts and ideas to a major degree.

(b) Ordinarily, cemeteries, birthplaces, graves of historical figures, properties owned by religious institutions or used for religious purposes, structures that have been moved from their original locations, reconstructed historic buildings and properties that have achieved significance within the past 50 years are not eligible for designation. Such properties, however, will qualify if they fall within the following categories:

(1) A religious property deriving its primary

national significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance; or

(2) A building or structure removed from its original location but which is nationally significant primarily for its architectural merit, or for association with persons or events of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the association consequential; or

(3) A site of a building or structure no longer standing but the person or event associated with it is of transcendent importance in the nation's history and the association consequential; or

(4) A birthplace, grave or burial if it is of a historical figure of transcendent national significance and no other appropriate site, building or structure directly associated with the productive life of that person exists; or

(5) A cemetery that derives its primary national significance from graves of persons of transcendent importance, or from an exceptionally distinctive design or from an exceptionally significant event; or

(6) A reconstructed building or ensemble of buildings of extraordinary national significance when accurately executed in a suitable environment and presented in a dignified manner as part of a restoration master plan, and when no other buildings or structures with the same association have survived; or

(7) A property primarily commemorative in intent if design, age, tradition, or symbolic value has invested it with its own national historical significance; or

(8) A property achieving national significance within the past 50 years if it is of extraordinary national importance.

Appendix D: National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program

Public Law 105-203 the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Act of 1998 directs the National Park Service (NPS), to establish a program that tells the story of resistance against the institution of slavery in the United States through escape and flight. This story is illustrative of a basic founding principle of this Nation, that all human beings embrace the right to self-determination and freedom from oppression. Through this National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program (NTF), NPS is demonstrating the significance of the Underground Railroad not only in the eradication of slavery, but as a cornerstone of our national civil rights movement.

The NTF is coordinating preservation and education efforts nationwide, and is working to integrate local historical sites, museums, and interpretive programs associated with the Underground Railroad into a mosaic of community, regional, and national stories. There are three main components to the NTF:

- Educating the public about the historical significance of the Underground Railroad;
- Providing technical assistance to organizations that are identifying, documenting, preserving and interpreting sites, approximate travel routes and landscapes related to the Underground Railroad, or that are developing or operating interpretive or educational programs or facilities; and
- Develop a Network of sites, programs, and facilities with verifiable associations to the Underground Railroad, referred to as the "Network".

One of the principal objectives of the program is to validate the efforts of local and regional organizations, and make it easier for them to share

expertise and communicate with the NPS and each other.

What is the Network?

The Network is a significant but distinct part of the NPS' National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program. It is a diverse collection of elements comprised of historic sites, facilities and programs that have a verifiable association to the Underground Railroad. Individuals and organizations themselves are not eligible for the Network, but rather they can nominate the sites, programs and facilities that they work with. The Network incorporates a broad range of listings that have been nominated and evaluated for their association to the Underground Railroad and have met certain established criteria.

Inclusion in the Network does not guarantee that a threatened site will be protected or that preservation will occur. Nor does it guarantee that a program or facility will receive financial assistance for planning or development. However, by including an element in the Network, the NPS acknowledges its verifiable association to the Underground Railroad. This recognition may be used by advocates to draw support for their preservation and commemorative efforts.

Each listing in the Network is authorized to display the NTF logo, which will tell the public and all interested entities that the NPS has evaluated the site, program, or facility and acknowledges its significant contribution to the Underground Railroad story. Each listing will appear on the NTF website, and will so alert the public to its existence and documentation.

Back Cover: This is an exterior image of the Phoenix Foundry owned and operated by John P. Parker from 1850-1900. Photo courtesy of Ohio History Connection.

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April 2018

