Heritage Corridors: Pathways to History
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Top left: Restored wagon near Alcove Spring, Kan. Photo by Jim Riehl.
Middle: Colorado’s scenic byways sign. Photo by Sally Pearce, CDOT.
Top right: Scenic river crossing in the Laurel Highlands in western Pennsylvania. Photo courtesy of the Allegheny Trail Alliance.
Introduction: Heritage Corridors as Pathways to History

The United States is crisscrossed with miles of natural waterways, almost forgotten canal systems, abandoned rail lines, historic paths and trails that served both Native Americans and early explorers, and historic roads such as the National Road, the Lincoln Highway, and Route 66. These heritage corridors serve as links to powerful themes of our past: telling the story of how European powers fought for dominion of the western frontier, how the raw materials that fed the industrial revolution were transported by a complex system of rivers and canals, how the intercontinental railways spurred commerce and new settlement patterns, and how a national system of roads and highways fostered the American car culture that endures today.

Concern for the protection and continued use of these heritage corridors is now bringing people together across political and disciplinary boundaries, working to address the challenges presented by fragmented local governments, unplanned growth, and changing economic realities. They realize that effective management of these corridors is needed not only to preserve natural, historic, and recreational assets but also to bring economic opportunities to corridor communities.

Perhaps because of the plentitude of these linear resources, the United States is a leader in managing heritage corridors. Our byways programs are a model for other countries; past investments in regional rail systems have left a legacy of rights of ways ripe for conversion into trails; heritage areas have been established to recognize distinctive landscapes and associated stories; and citizens in every state have organized efforts in trail and greenway planning. However, as we look over this landscape there is more work to be done to conserve these connections and to expand the benefits beyond their direct borders to adjacent communities, states, and the country as a whole.

Heritage Corridors

This issue of Forum Journal looks at the many different types of heritage corridors and how communities have come together in innovative ways to recognize, manage, and interpret them.

Linda McKenna Boxx, president of the Allegheny Trail Alliance, tells how that organization has worked to create the Great Allegheny Passage. Connecting Washington, D.C., to Pittsburgh, Pa., it is the longest multipurpose trail in the country, following a network of canals and rail lines that once carried raw materials such as coal and forest products as well as manufactured goods. Today millions of hikers and bikers enjoy the scenic and recreational qualities of the trail, and “Trail Towns” along the route are learning how to cater to them.

Historic roads and byways are another important corridor resource with a storied past. The National Road, a 90-mile stretch from Cumberland, Md., to Wheeling, W.Va., was the first federally funded highway project. Completed in 1818, it connected the eastern seaboard with what was then the western frontier. However, later road networks—Route 66 in particular—were originally cobbled together from unpaved local and state roads.

Heritage Corridors

In their article on Route 66, Kaisa Barthuli and Michael Romero Taylor look at effective strategies for managing this legendary highway and its uniquely American structures and towns.

The National Scenic Byways Program is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration. The program recognizes certain roads as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways, based on one or more archeological, cultural, historic, natural, recreational, and scenic qualities. The real work in preserving these highways and byways, however, is accomplished by grassroots collaborative efforts.

The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program is recognized nationally for offering one of the oldest and best-supported statewide partnerships to assist communities in developing and promoting outstanding highway touring experiences. Program Coordinator Sally Pearce explains in her article how the Colorado initiative assists both federally recognized byways and state-designated roads, and coordinates funding and support from numerous state and federal agencies.

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2008, the National Trails System Act authorizing designation of National Trails was passed by Congress in 1968. Ten years later the category of National Historic Trail (NHT) was added to the existing Scenic and Recreation Trails. As a category, the historic trails are designated by Congress to commemorate historic and prehistoric routes of travel that are of significance to the entire country. The first four established—the Oregon, Mormon Pioneer, Lewis & Clark, and Kilaroo—were all well known and collectively touched or crossed 15 states. Although the Trails Act was originally crafted for long-distance hiking trails—such as the Appalachian and Pacific Crest National Scenic Trails—since 1983 only historic trails have
There are also corridors that encompass whole regions. The 37 National Heritage Areas and hundreds of state and regional heritage areas incorporate rivers, canal systems, historic highways, trails, and greenways. The National Park Service offers information on best practices and management for heritage areas on its website at www.nps.gov/history/heritageareas. Janie Headrick’s article on the Texas Heritage Trails Program explains how one state has successfully incorporated the idea of thematic driving trails within a regional context.

Principles of Corridor Management

Whatever the corridor, be it a watercourse, road, or rail transportation system or a less obvious route or region where history was made, all benefit from some sort of management framework. The articles in this issue identify some of the principles that are common to all successful heritage corridors initiatives. The following principles offer strategies to overcome the challenges of working across boundaries:

1. Partnership—Corridor projects of any scale require complex partnerships based on mutually agreed upon goals. While partnerships may begin around individual projects, stronger partnerships are built on a foundation of consensus-based planning. The diversity of partnerships also matters. A strong network includes nonprofits, governmental entities, and business interests. A recent evaluation demonstrated that partnerships in heritage corridors can become more far-reaching and complex over time as more and more organizations (partners) align their mission with the mission of the heritage corridor.

2. Regionalism—By definition corridor projects are regional in nature. They stretch across political boundaries, and some—Route 66 and Lincoln Highway, for example—cross states and extend across the country. Although challenging, planning around corridor resources is an effective approach to regional and even interstate cooperation. Governmental partners look to the corridor programs to build community capacity at the local level and to deliver services in a cost-effective manner.

3. Landscape Scale—Corridors do not exist as linear elements in a vacuum. Most heritage corridor initiatives go beyond the waterway or historic roadway and incorporate the surrounding landscape and the adjacent communities. They recognize that the significance of the resource includes the setting and the people who live there. Corridors differ from other protected areas in that they are lived-in, dynamic places where the past and the future can coexist and, one hopes, thrive.

4. Public Involvement—Heritage corridor projects at their most successful are founded as grassroots efforts. Almost all projects—whether to conserve a watershed, revitalize a transportation route, or develop a trail—begin as local initiatives. Many are also locally managed with the partnership and assistance of state and federal agencies. This grounding in the local communities gives these projects the staying power to survive changes in political leadership.

5. Interpretation—This is the glue that holds heritage corridors together across multiple boundaries. Placing the individual sites and stories in a larger historical context builds connections between people and places. An understanding of a region’s shared heritage not only brings people to the table, it also seems to keep them there. By involving the people who live in a region in telling its history from their perspective, underrepresented parts of the past are also revealed.

Conclusion

Heritage corridor and byway initiatives preserve part of our American heritage and, just as importantly, help revitalize local economies that may have been left behind by deindustrialization and the forces of a global economy. Preservationists, Main Street coordinators, and all who care about sustainable community development can learn a lot from the experts who are working on corridor and byway initiatives, all of whom have learned to work on a landscape scale and to forge effective public-private partnerships.

Finally, we all can learn a lesson from heritage corridor managers on storytelling. Whether it is the haunting memoirs of the Cherokees who traveled the Trail of Tears in southern Illinois, the rough-and-tumble mining history of Colorado, or the “open road” adventures of early tourists who drove Route 66, these themes have the power to create linkages and jump the most daunting barrier.

Brenda Barrett is the National Coordinator for Heritage Areas at the National Park Service.
The Great Allegheny Passage and Its Trail Towns: Connecting Recreation, Tourism, and Community Redevelopment

Linda McKenna Boxx

Anyone who watches national football played in Pittsburgh at Three Rivers Stadium might be familiar with the dramatic positioning of Pittsburgh within the “three rivers.” The Monongahela and the Allegheny converge at a point to form the Ohio River. This point is the western terminus of one of America’s longest multiple-use trail systems, which combines a canal towpath with a rail-trail and connects with Washington, D.C., more than 300 miles away.

The Great Allegheny Passage is a long-distance, multiple-use trail connecting Pittsburgh to Cumberland, Md. It follows a historic corridor—creating significant community redevelopment and improving the quality of life for local residents along the way. It joins the C&O Canal towpath at Cumberland to continue the off-road experience to our nation’s capital.

When the first nine-mile stretch of the trail opened in Ohioyle State Park in 1986, it was an immediate sensation. Public support to use the trail and build more grew rapidly—as more and more people experienced first-hand the nearly level woodland trail on an abandoned rail bed that followed the scenic Youghiogheny River, a trip that had been the railroad’s sole privilege for over 100 years.

Those first few miles through Pennsylvania’s Laurel Highlands have been extended to the north and the south to become a premier rail-trail, the longest in the East. In late 2006 the connection to the C&O Canal was made, joining 132 miles of the Passage to the 184 miles of towpath, making this two-trail seamless journey the longest multipurpose hiking and biking trail in the country.

The Great Allegheny Passage is becoming the engine of a new economy as the region grows as a tourism destination. Today it attracts more than half a million visitors annually from all over the world, who spend tens of millions of dollars on food, lodging, and equipment. At the same time, it is providing close-to-home recreational opportunities.

The combined trail is unique in North America. Nowhere else can you experience natural beauty and so much of America’s history, on an easily accessible nearly level trail, all of which can be traveled by bike or on foot, in close reach of millions of people.

The Passage follows a historic corridor that tells the 18th-century story of colonial times and the making of our nation. It tells the story of the growth of our nation in the 19th century as an industrial giant, tells the 20th-century story of rebirth: rebirth of a post-industrial region and its rivers, and the development of a new economy that is based on this heritage and bike-based tourism.

Assembling the Corridor

The difficult work to create a trail that would connect Pittsburgh to Washington started more than 30 years ago. The substantial, nearly heroic, progress made to date is a tribute to the many determined volunteer leaders, elected officials, helpful public agencies, and others who believed that bicycle touring would have universal appeal. Building rail-trails appealed to the civic-minded who volunteered: The trail preserved the history of the town’s railroad and the industries it served, while converting it for local recreation and tourism use.

Most of the length of the Great Allegheny Passage lies on two abandoned rail corridors: the 87-mile Western Maryland Railway Connellsville Extension and the 43-mile Pittsburgh and Lake Erie (P&LE), from Connellsville, Pa., to near McKeesport, Pa. The remaining 20 miles to downtown Pittsburgh will combine a variety of short lines, connecting railroads, public land, and industrial and commercial properties whose owners have sold or granted easements on
The rest of corridor acquisition was accomplished in a variety of ways. The remaining miles of the Western Maryland Railway were obtained by government agencies. To the south, Somerset County acquired most of the corridor from the railroad in the late 1980s, but not until some parcels had been purchased by private owners. Reestablishing the corridor took several years, and in some areas only an easement exists for the trail. This section is owned by the county and managed through a partnership with a volunteer-based trail organization and supported by a recently enacted hotel tax.

The State of Maryland obtained its 20-mile section with great difficulty. The alignment between Cumberland and Frostburg is a rail-with-trails section, and working out issues related to safety and liability with the scenic railroad that uses the active tracks required extensive negotiations. Acquisition of the remaining five-mile-long parcel took nearly 20 years to negotiate and conclude. When the final section in Maryland opened to trail users at the end of 2006, making the long-awaited connection to the 184-mile C&O Canal towpath, there was a deep, collective sigh of relief. This section of trail is also owned by the county and is supported by a nonprofit trail association.

To the north, 43 miles of the P&LE were acquired and rail-banked in 1991. This allowed the Regional Trail Corporation, a nonprofit organization created by the three Pennsylvania counties that this section passes through, to buy the corridor at a discount but with the provision that rail service might be reinstated at some time in the future. This section is managed by a well-organized corps of volunteers, with names such as “Charlie’s Chain Gang” and the “Over the Hill Gang.” A strong sense of commitment and pride in the local sections of this large trail keeps the trail quality high.

The “gap in the GAP” is the Steel Valley Trail section, which is located between McKeesport, where the trail currently ends, and the Pittsburgh city limits, about 10 miles to the west. Because there was no clear path of abandoned rail lines for the trail through the Monongahela Valley, with active railroads still very much in operation, trail building is very difficult. The Steel Valley Trail Council recently became a chapter of the Regional Trail Corporation to take advantage of group liability insurance and to receive the peer support that this mature organization has to offer. Working closely with Allegheny County, the council is now working to assemble the corridor and construct the trail, which will then be turned over to the county to own. The council will provide monitoring and maintenance services.
The City of Pittsburgh owns its trail, except for the piece within Point State Park. There is a maintenance partnership agreement with the nonprofit, membership-based Friends of the Riverfront.

**Funding Construction**

To date approximately $60 million has been spent over 30 years to acquire and develop the Great Allegheny Passage. It is estimated that nearly $10 million more will be required to complete the difficult Steel Valley section.

Much of the expense of building the trail was rehabilitating several major railroad structures. Many bridges, viaducts, and tunnels allowed the railroad to create an easy grade through this northern Appalachian region. It has been a financial challenge for the trail builders to repair and convert these structures for recreational use.

Funding came from a variety of sources. Trail building leaped forward in 1991 with the passage of a federal transportation bill, ISTEA, which provided funding for “enhancement” projects. Trails qualified and suddenly there was major funding to tackle the big structures and the long length of this trail system. Subsequent acts (TEA-21 and SAFETEA-LU) kept the enhancement funding available.

That “miracle money,” however, came with a price—trails built with enhancement funding had to meet arduous federal design and engineering requirements. Construction timetables, to the frustration of builders, bikers, and trail communities, were prolonged.

Both the states, Maryland and Pennsylvania, have awarded much funding to trail development. Each has grant programs that have been essential in leveraging the federal funding. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania used its capital budget funding, supplemented with Land and Water Conservation funding, to repair the Big Savage Tunnel, at a cost of nearly $12 million. Several western Pennsylvania private foundations contributed substantially, and gifts from corporations and individuals were significant.

**Forming an Alliance**

Beginning in the late 1980s, the trail builders had been meeting informally, helping each other with the common challenges and sharing lessons learned. In 1995 the seven groups decided to formalize that association and come together in a confederation they named the Allegheny Trail Alliance. The ATA’s purpose was clear: finish the trail and market it well so that the communities that had been stripped of their economic vitality by the loss of heavy industry could be healthy once more through a tourism economy.

When the trail was first conceived in the mid-1970s, there was no natural name for the entire system. So as trail building began at the local level, sections were given local names. Many still refer to the “Yough River Trail” or the “Allegheny Highlands Trail.” But as the trails began to connect, the multiple names were confusing and counter-productive. Sections were coming together to fulfill the original long-distance vision and one trail name was clearly needed. The naming of the system took several years of balancing local concerns and understanding what this trail system was. In 2001 the name of “Great Allegheny Passage” was enthusiastically agreed on as the system name.

The ATA works mostly with volunteer efforts, but contracts out for back-office support and management of specific projects. To promote and enrich the trail experience the ATA works much like a heritage park, but activates like-minded partners rather than staff. With so much need for capital, there was a real reluctance to hire and retain too much staff. A variety of partnerships were developed to get specific jobs done.

ATA works closely with the three-county tourism promotion agency covering the Laurel Highlands region. Seeing the actual and potential growth for tourism, the agency has been taking over more of the marketing responsibilities. Staff at Laurel Highlands answers the ATA telephone hotline and fulfills requests for information.
tracks, requiring extensive negotiations relating to safety and liability. Photo courtesy of the Allegheny Trail Alliance.

Inventing “Trail Towns”

In 2001 the Passage reached a major milestone: A six-mile segment was completed which connected 70 miles of trail to another 24 miles, making the trail an impressive 100 miles long. It was now one of the longest multiple-use trails in the country, and the bike touring traffic began to accelerate. In order for the trail communities to fully benefit, the relationship between them and the trail needed to be strengthened. These new visitors in spandex wanted a high quality tourism experience, but some businesses along the trail were slow to take advantage of the new opportunities.

To meet this challenge, the ATA created a concept called “Trail Towns.” With funding from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Park Service, ATA convened a group of knowledgeable professionals from public agencies and nonprofit organizations across the state to develop a framework, a guide, for community development. Its purpose would be to help trailside communities transform themselves so they could more fully benefit from increasing numbers of trail users.

Because “Trail Towns” was essentially a community and economic development model, it was decided early on to pattern it after the Main Street approach. Several towns along the Passage were at various stages of involvement with the Pennsylvania Main Street program, so using the same structure, the same logic, and the same vocabulary would make it easy to overlay a “Trail Town” component onto a traditional “Main Street” program. The trail is the new Main Street, where many visitors are likely to come in on their own power.

The Trail Town model was piloted in a few communities. Planning charrettes and assessments on a few towns’ layout in regards to bicycles and foot traffic (“walkability”) were performed to help develop a manual. A checklist was created so that leaders in potential Trail Towns could easily assess what physical improvements, public services, and business functions trail users might need. Extensive research was conducted to incorporate best practices and useful tips into the manual. It was written with community leaders in mind.

When the Trail Town Manual was released in 2006, an implementation strategy had already been formulated. One of the advisors on the Trail Town Steering Committee was David Kahley, CEO of The Progress Fund, a nonprofit organization that makes loans to tourism and agricultural related businesses in the area that the trail passed through. Because of its economic development expertise, The Progress Fund was invited to take on the role of organizing the financing and administration of the Trail Town Program along the Great Allegheny Passage.

Many local foundations in western Pennsylvania saw the Trail Towns Program as an important rural development strategy, and others saw how the trail was transforming the region into an international destination. Grants from several foundations were matched by funding from the state to put together operating support and to finance grants and loans to communities and businesses in trail towns.

Two staff members have been on board since early 2007 and the communities are aggressively turning to the Trail Town staff for assistance. Staff members are currently working with local communities on such projects as expanding the wayfinding signage, conducting joint marketing activities, and producing town brochures. In addition, the Trail Town Program is assisting one community’s efforts in joining the Main Street program and helping others with design, loans for businesses, and marketing.

A staff person for the national Rails-to-Trails Conservancy remarked at a conference, after a presentation about the Trail Towns concept, “Who would have thought that western Pennsylvania would be showing the world how to do trail development?” The back-handed compliment was taken in its best way. And now the Great Allegheny Passage, connecting dozens of communities through this dynamic long-distance trail, has been recognized by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy as its first inductee into its Hall of Fame.

Linda McKenna Box volunteers as president of the Allegheny Trail Alliance.
Preserving Route 66: A Federal Perspective

Katia Barthul and Michael Romero Taylor

We have all driven automobile highways as an inevitable necessity of our daily lives. While we often take them for granted, on closer inspection their impact on society and the built environment is profound. Increasingly, the history and importance of America’s highway systems have come under serious consideration by scholars, governmental organizations, and the general public. Indeed, as highways change and evolve to meet modern-day needs, efforts have emerged to preserve the architectural, engineering, and social elements of our historic 20th-century automobile highways. These routes are part of a long continuum of cultural corridors, following in the footsteps and wagon ruts of others such as El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, the Santa Fe Trail, and the Oregon Trail. Over time, stage stops, camp sites, and watering holes morphed into gas stations, motels, and cafes.

The significance of our historic highways is beginning to be recognized as part of our recent past, but many questions and issues remain regarding these as living, evolving corridors. How do we balance the use and driver-safety needs of these corridors with the desire to preserve them? How do we evaluate the significance of a highway and its roadside architecture and determine what should be preserved? This article looks at Route 66 as a case study, and federal efforts to address these questions.

Brief History

Created in 1926 as part of the nation’s first federal highway system, Route 66 stretches 2,400 miles across the country connecting Chicago to Los Angeles. Initially linking a series of largely unpaved local and state roads, it took 10 years to pave the road from end to end. It quickly gained popularity through extensive promotional efforts by the national U.S. Highway 66 Association, and because it was the shortest, best-weather route connecting the industrial Midwest to the California coast. It facilitated the movement of Dust Bowl migrants, World War II military operations, and mass westward migration, and played a key role in the phenomenon of automobile tourism. In general, as part of the U.S. Highway System, Route 66 inspired the unprecedented transformation of the landscape and culture of America to the automobile-oriented society that it is today. Over time, Route 66 became immortalized through the arts, including literature, film, music, and television. Although decommissioned as a federal highway in 1985, it continues to hold a special place in American consciousness. Eighty-five percent of the original highway is still drivable, and attracts tourists from all over the world.

Establishment of the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program

Soon after its decommissioning in 1985, associations in each of the eight states through which the route passes began to organize independently to preserve and promote travel on Route 66. Initiatives were also undertaken by state historic preservation offices, departments of transportation, and federal agencies to mark the highway and to survey and nominate historic Route 66 properties to the National Register of Historic Places. With all these various efforts and attention, the question persisted, what are the most effective strategies for managing a long-distance historic road?

Due to the strength of public interest in preserving the route, the U.S. Congress passed an act in 1990 to conduct a Special Resource Study to evaluate the historical significance of the corridor and options for its preservation. Led by the National Park Service (NPS), the study involved an extensive two-year process of research and public consultation.

The study found that an essential element of the route’s significance rests in its dynamic and idiosyncratic character, which should be preserved. It
was recognized that much of the road had evolved through uncoordinated “mom and pop” efforts. It was also recognized that much of the route still serves as an active transportation corridor covering multiple jurisdictions, each with unique interests in growth and change. Concern was expressed that a standardized management approach at the federal level could change many of Route 66’s local and unusual qualities. However, it was also recognized that a lack of coordination and preservation guidance could place historic resources at risk. The study made it clear that a flexible, comprehensive management approach that acknowledged both the historic and living, evolving needs of Route 66 was essential.

Completed in 1994, the study identified a preferred management alternative that would establish a federal program of preservation, and technical and financial assistance. The hallmarks of this alternative were flexibility and partnerships between local groups and the federal government. Visitor services would continue to be locally driven and managed, with federal technical advice made available on request. This would allow local activities along the route to continue promoting the idiosyncratic nature and spirit of the road, with the provision of elective, state and national preservation assistance.

In 1999 Congress directed the NPS to create the Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program as called for in the study’s preferred alternative. Established in 2001, the program collaborates with partners to help set guidelines and priorities for the preservation of the Route 66 corridor, with all initiatives based on the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Historic Preservation. It is important to note that in its enabling legislation, the NPS program is specifically directed not to prepare an overall management plan for the Route 66 corridor, but rather to encourage the development of local preservation plans to help maintain the unique nature of the route.

The program provides limited technical assistance and cost-share grants for preservation projects, and acts as a clearinghouse of Route 66 preservation information. The program also facilitates the development of archive and research materials, including the collection of oral histories. Intended as a “seed” or stimulus program, the program is tasked with identifying a nonfederal entity or entities to perform the functions of the program after its sunset date in 2009.

In 2004, the secretary of the interior appointed a Federal Advisory Council for the program. The 15 members of the council—representing Route 66 associations, state historic preservation officers, state departments of transportation, and the Federal Highway Administration—meet at least annually and are active throughout the year in providing advice on various aspects of the program’s implementation.

Identifying and Evaluating the Resources

When the program first started up, a primary need was to develop a comprehensive inventory of existing historic Route 66 properties. While historic contexts studies and partial surveys had already been conducted in four states, the program staff worked with state historic preservation offices (SHPOs) to continue this work and to nominate eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places. To date, more than 2,500 buildings, roadbeds, bridges, and other properties have been recorded, and over 120 properties have been listed in the National Register for their association with Route 66 (many more are eligible). The data assembled by each SHPO have been entered into a common database that can be queried for such informa-
tion as the number of motels along the route, National Register eligibility, condition, architectural style, and current use. This database is used to help establish priorities for preservation initiatives and as a tool for local communities in the development of local management plans. A GIS map is also being developed, which will greatly increase the usefulness of the database.

A national historic context and Multiple Property Documentation Form have also been developed and are currently under review by the Keeper of the National Register. Associated property types include roadbeds, bridges, gas stations, garages, cafes, motels, and roadside parks, among others.

Through the survey and identification process, a number of pressing preservation issues were revealed. Primary issues include lack of awareness of Route 66 as historically significant, lack of corridor management plans, development pressures, neglect and abandonment, and obsolescence. In response, the NPS program has worked closely with private individuals, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and others to help raise awareness about the issues. Through community meetings, workshops, and conferences, understanding of the history of Route 66 and the importance of preserving it continues to grow.

Aiding Local Efforts

Successful protection and preservation of the significant and representative resources along Route 66 is happening through a synergy among private individuals, businesses, governmental agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Many of the preservation success stories reflect increasing public awareness about the importance of preserving and continuing the use of the resources, not only because of pride in having them, but also for the economic revenues generated at the local level through continued or reuse of the historic properties.

In Flagstaff, Ariz., for example, the city is looking at options for protecting and enhancing Route 66 as a special district through its community. The NPS has assisted this effort through the preparation of a National Register Multiple Property listing for the city’s assemblage of eligible motels. As part of the initiative, the city is developing financial and other assistance programs to promote the preservation and use of motels as heritage tourism destinations.

Communities and states are increasingly showing interest in being designated as Route 66 National Scenic Byways. To date, three states have achieved this status, while two others are actively working toward designation; others are sure to follow. Designation requires the development of a statewide corridor management plan, although communities are encouraged to develop their unique attributes. While the emphasis of these plans tends to be tourism development, preservation is increasingly being seen as fundamental to these efforts.

The NPS program also has been providing technical and financial assistance toward historic preservation projects. Through its cost-share grant program, the NPS has assisted 79 projects, the majority being restoration or rehabilitation of properties such as gas stations, motels, cafes, and neon signs. The cost-share grant program is competitive, with rankings based on a variety of factors such as National Register eligibility, benefit to the public, length the property was in use during the period of significance, and ability of the applicant to administer the grant. Grants are intended as seed money, and range between $2,500 and $50,000. The majority of projects have had positive results and benefits to the public, as many properties and businesses have been revitalized. A number of research and educational projects have also been assisted by the grant program, including oral history, archive material development, a model sign ordinance, and educational curriculum projects.

In addition to roadside architecture, the program has been working to promote the preservation of road segments and bridges. Roads and bridges are continually maintained, and often upgraded, to meet modern safety requirements, but such work often threatens their historic integrity. With
Preserving the Historic Road Conference has helped bring highway and preservation professionals together to address these challenges. The NPS program will help coordinate the next conference, to be held September 11-14, 2008, in Albuquerque, N. Mex.

It is important to note that a large majority of preservation along Route 66 occurs without the direct involvement of government agencies. Some organizations take on local preservation projects and put sweat equity into bringing threatened buildings back into use. The Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program offers guidance and assistance in many of these efforts through linking local initiatives up with potential technical and financial sources.

Future Preservation Efforts for Route 66 and Other Historic Highways

Recently there has been increased interest in Route 66, both domestically and abroad. The release of the enormously popular animated movie Cars by Disney/Pixar, about a fictional small town on Route 66 that was bypassed by the interstate, has encouraged young and old alike to take to historic highways to experience those unique places that still offer “the real thing.”

The fascination with America’s wide open spaces and its roadside architecture has motivated thousands of tourists from all continents to travel the open road. International tourists realize that traveling Route 66, and other historic highways in the United States, provides an immersion into authentic America, with journeys that are filled with discovery and the unexpected. This increase in heritage tourism provides the bread and butter for many small “mom and pops” to stay in business, as well as encouraging adaptive use of many of the historic properties along the route.

The listing of Historic Route 66 motels on the National Trust for Historic Preservation 2007 List of America’s 11 Most Endangered Historic Places (http://www.nationaltrust.org/) and Route 66 on the 2008 World Monuments Fund Watch List of 100 Most Endangered Sites (http://wmf.org/) has brought even more public attention. These listings have highlighted the preservation needs along the road, as well as stimulated action at the local, state, national, and global level to develop strategies to address the preservation challenges.

Because of its cachet, Route 66 was able to capture the attention of decision-makers and the public. However, there are scores of other U.S. historic highways that feature similar engineering marvels, significant roadside architecture, and cultural landscapes that warrant preservation and continued use (i.e. Lincoln Highway, National Road, Dixie Highway). There is a pressing need for a systematic assessment of this country’s historic roads with decisions made as to how the most representative and significant aspects of our 20th-century highway heritage will be considered, managed, and preserved.

Internationally there are also significant and representa-
The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program

Sally Pearce

You’ve heard the term, you’ve seen the signs, and you’ve read the brochures. But do you know what exactly a “scenic byway” is? Most people assume it’s a road with beautiful scenery, recreational opportunities, wildlife viewing, and geological wonders. They are not wrong. The name certainly implies these features—but in Colorado, beautiful scenery is a given; history is what makes the byways unique and that’s why the routes are officially called Scenic and Historic Byways. But a lot more goes on behind a scenic byway designation than just the name.

The Colorado Scenic and Historic Byways Program, one of the oldest formal programs in the country, was established in March 1989. The program is a statewide partnership intended to provide recreational, educational, and economic benefits to Coloradans and visitors through the designation, interpretation, protection, infrastructure development, and promotion of a system of outstanding touring roads. It is also a grassroots program—routes are nominated by local communities and approved by a governor-appointed commission, but managed at the local level.

There are currently 25 designated Scenic and Historic Byways located across the state, totaling 2,524 miles. Ten of these byways are also part of the collection known as America’s Byways®, designated by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation as All-American Roads or National Scenic Byways. The routes vary from paved two-lane state highways to gravel county roads and four-wheel drive only dirt roads. All of Colorado’s designated scenic byways are marked by distinctive signs depicting the columbine (the state flower) to identify and commemorate the special status of the route. The Top of the Rockies sign also shows the America’s Byways logo, identifying its national designation.

Local Byway Organizations

Each byway has an organization, composed of representatives from county and municipal government, local historical societies, federal and state agencies, and other interested parties, who are generally responsible for the interpretation, promotion, and protection of the byway. Some organizations are formally incorporated; some have non-profit status, while others are loosely organized. Most members of byway organizations are volunteers who wear many other hats in their community. Each byway organization has completed a byway management plan that creates a framework for the implementation of the local program, and also has undertaken short-term projects that can build momentum and participation for more difficult long-term projects.

Colorado Department of Transportation, and are featured on the program’s website (www.coloradobyways.org).

The Scenic and Historic Byways Commission and staff work in partnership with local byway organizations as well as numerous state and federal agencies including the Division of Wildlife, State Parks and Outdoor Recreation, Colorado Historical Society, Colorado Tourism Office, Colorado Council on the Arts, the U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service. Grants from the Federal Highway Administration, the Colorado State Historical Fund, Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund, private foundations, and a variety of other sources provide funding to accomplish the goals of both the Byways Commission and the individual byway organizations.

Colorado’s scenic byways are marked by distinctive signs to identify and commemorate the special status of the route. The Top of the Rockies sign also shows the America’s Byways logo, identifying its national designation. Photo by Sally Pearce, CDOT.
The headframe from the Yankee Girl Mine, established in 1882, has long been a prominent feature along the San Juan Skyway on Red Mountain Pass. The headframe was threatened with demolition for several years, but in 2006 it was purchased by a new owner who subsequently put both the headframe and the surrounding 23-acre parcel under a conservation easement. The Yankee Girl Mine, threatened with demolition, has been purchased by a new owner, ensuring its preservation.

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values of the scenic byway and
the community.

A series of fast-moving, game-oriented activities train
locals to create both emotional and intellectual connections
with travelers, to link the interests of travelers with
meaningful places, and to articulate a deep pride in the
area. Participants identify
specific elements of their
byway that are unique and
exceptional, understand what
resources have been protected
to date, and learn how to share
the significance of the commu-
nity with the traveling pub-
lic. The training also teaches
active listening techniques
and how to use existing inter-
pretive tools. The program
was recently awarded the
2007 Scenic Byways Award
for Visitor Experience from
the American Association of
State Highway and Trans-
portation Officials, the Fed-
eral Highway Administration,
and the America’s Byways
Resource Center.

Colorado Tourism
Office Heritage
Tourism Partnership

Another recent accomplish-
ment is a renewed partnership
between the Colorado Scenic
and Historic Byways Program
and the Colorado Tourism
Office. The state Tourism
Office was an active partici-
pant in the development of the
Colorado Scenic and His-
toric Byways Program but lost
its funding in 1993 when vot-
ers discontinued a tourism tax.
The state legislature reinstated
funding for tourism in 1999
and the Colorado Tourism
Office was created in 2000.
After five additional years of
limited funds, a recent jump in
funding has allowed the office
to finally get back to the busi-
ness of promoting Colorado.

At the start of 2005, the
Tourism Office commissioned
a comprehensive market study
of heritage travel in Colorado,
began including heritage-
based materials in the state’s
marketing efforts, and under-
took a strategic planning
process focusing on heritage
tourism. As a result of the
planning process it rediscovered
the scenic and historic
byways program—a ready-
made group of 25 heritage-
based itineraries, chock full of
authentic historic experiences.

Colorado byway organi-
sations are now reaping the
benefits of recognition by the
Colorado Tourism Office’s
Heritage Tourism Program,
which is funded in part by
grants from the State Histori-
cal Fund. For the first time,
this year’s Official State Vaca-
tion Guide features all 25
byways, and also identifies
those designated as America’s
Byways with the logo and a
description of the national
program. Colorado byways
now have a presence in state
advertising campaigns and
on the state’s official website
(www.colorado.com) with edit-
torial content, photographs,
maps, and links to local byway
groups and attractions.

In addition, many local
byway groups have developed
strong relationships with the
State Welcome Centers—
especially beneficial since
seven of the eight welcome
centers are located directly
on designated byways. And two
new publications are currently
being developed in partner-
ship with the Scenic and His-
toric Byways Commission to
highlight the scenic byways.

The Colorado Tourism
Office recently awarded funds
to four regional groups in the
state to conduct pilot projects
to help advance heritage
tourism in Colorado. Project
goals include contributing to
local economies, supporting
historic preservation, creating
cultural vitality, and conserv-
ing natural landscapes. All
four regional projects were
either initiated by or included
a designated byway organiza-
tion as a partner. Grant awards
of $55,000 per project have
gone on to leverage more than
$1 million in additional proj-
support. The Colorado
Tourism Office is looking to
expand the pilot program in
the coming years—and byways
will no doubt be in the middle
of it.

Maturing Byway
Organizations

When the program started
back in 1989, most byway
organizations were interested
in interpretation and promo-
tion, so the early projects and
activities were aimed prima-
ry at developing brochures
and providing tourist informa-
tion. A wide variety of
brochures, videos, audio tapes,
and historic touring guides

Participants at a Delta
County Tourism Board
workshop respond to
an active listening
demonstration, part of
the Grassroots Training
Program. Photo by Sally
Pierce, CDOT.
Top of the Rockies National Scenic Byway

The Top of the Rockies, 115-miles of high mountain splendor, connects the towns of Leadville, Minturn, and the Copper Mountain Resort with Twin Lakes, Independence Pass, and Aspen. The route offers the visitor an abundance of Colorado history including early-day fortune-seeking miners and the brave men of the 10th Mountain Division. The Top of the Rockies, a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway since 1993, was designated as a National Scenic Byway by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation in 1998.

Sitting in the shadows of Colorado's two highest mountain peaks, the 1859 Hayden Ranch is located along the Top of the Rockies National Scenic Byway. The historic ranch, which operated mainly as a hay ranch through the 1890s, provided feed for the horses and mules serving Leadville’s mining industry. After the turn of the 19th century, the ranch turned to cattle grazing but was only used seasonally after 1947. By 1998, when the City of Aurora purchased the ranch for water rights, the historic buildings had significantly deteriorated.

Through the efforts of the Lake County Open Space Initiative, of which the byway organization is a key member, 60 acres were donated to Lake County and 1,411 acres were sold to the Bureau of Land Management. In order to preserve the historic structures, a bargain sale was made to Colorado Preservation, Inc., the statewide nonprofit organization, for the 36.2 acre homestead portion of the property. Currently Aurora is considering an agreement with Colorado State Parks to manage 360 acres along the Arkansas River as part of the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area.

The Top of the Rockies byway organization is participating in two projects related to this important resource. First, it acquired grant funds to help with the master plan and construction of the Hayden Meadows Recreation Area, now a rest and interpretive area for the Top of the Rockies National Scenic Byway. The site also serves as the northern gateway to the Arkansas Headwaters Recreation Area, a demonstration project for the Arkansas River Restoration Project, and for accessible fishing access along the byway. The 60-acre site includes a seven-acre fishing and water storage pond, interpretive trails, handicap accessible fishing docks, viewing platforms, and public restrooms.

Top of the Rockies is also working in partnership with Colorado Preservation, Inc., and Colorado Mountain College-Timberline Campus in the effort to stabilize the 16 historic structures on the homestead property. The byway group helped raise funds to match a State Historical Fund grant for Phase I that will stabilize the Large Barn, Bunk House, and Ranch House. Other matching funds for this grant are provided by Colorado Mountain College Foundation, Environmental Protection Agency, Lake County, and the Greater Arkansas River Nature Asso-
Grants from the State Historical Fund, Great Outdoors Colorado, and the Idarado Resources Damages Trust Fund (part of a $1 million settlement between the State of Colorado and Idarado Corp regarding mine reclamation) helped secure the future of the old mining town of Ironton. Grant funds also helped stabilize the historic structures remaining in town. Photo by Sally Pearce, CDOT.

drives in America. Spanning elevations from 6,200 to 11,000 feet, the Skyway passes through five distinct life zones offering a diversity of natural and historic resources. This route was the first byway selected as a Colorado Scenic and Historic Byway in 1989, and was also one of the first designated All-American Roads, selected to represent the “Best of the Best” byways by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation in 1996.

Protection of the San Juan Skyway effort has long been a multi-stakeholder effort. Some of the more notable accomplishments include publication of the award-winning A Historical Touring Guide to the San Juan Skyway and the development and installation of interpretive signage for 23 locations, several of which are large scenic interpretive pullouts and some that also serve as hiking and biking trailheads.

In the face of increasing growth and development pressures, the San Juan Skyway partners developed a vision to preserve and enhance the very scenic, natural, agricultural, and outdoor heritage resources that led to the byway’s national recognition. Beginning with a 1997 preservation plan, the group conducted a survey of historic structures such as railroad trestles, water tanks, and mining structures, then established a priority list of threatened sites and landscapes along the byway corridor. The plan included historic assessments, structural plans, recommended actions, and preliminary cost estimates for preserving these resources.

This effort led to an award-winning regional multi-county land conservation and historic preservation initiative that to date has stabilized and restored 22+ historic structures, raised in excess of $32 million for land conservation, and preserved more than 12,000 acres of high priority working ranches and historic mining and railroading landscapes.

The first phase, in 2001, raised $14.5 million to protect 9,500 acres dotted with historic mining and railroad structures above Telluride, Ouray, and Silverton in the Red Mountain Pass area. The second phase was a 2004 project, with grants from the National Scenic Byways Program and the Great Outdoors Colorado Trust Fund, that has protected landscapes involving five working ranches, preserved key mountain viewsheds in the Uncompahgre Valley, and constructed a bridge on the South Fork of the San Miguel River that links together several miles of the Galloping Goose rail-to-trails project. Work in progress includes constructing recreational improvements at Silverton’s 130-acre Molas Lake Park, consolidating the internationally renowned Ouray Ice Park under city ownership, and a significant open space acquisition in Ophir with dollars from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund.

A $15 million phase three is being developed for the acquisition of conservation easements on seven high priority scenic working ranches. The group will also seek to protect several high alpine basins surrounded by isolated tracts of private property, including one that has closed traditional public access to the Lizard Head Wilderness and three 14,000-foot peaks and another that is a very popular winter and summer backcountry recreation area on Red Mountain Pass threatened by land development and unmanaged off-road vehicle use.

So the next time you are driving along a scenic byway, as you take in the beautiful scenery, visit historic sites, and experience the local culture, think about the hard work of local residents, appreciate the extra effort that has taken place behind the scenes, and be thankful for the passion of many that have helped you enjoy your drive along America’s Byways.
Historic Trails: From the Past to the Future?

David J. Welch

“...and that perhaps 20,000 died along the route.” The emigration established the United States as a continent-spanning nation and provided the resources for the development of the United States as a world power. It also fundamentally altered the Native American culture that had evolved over 12,000 years or more. These are the stories the trails tell.

National Historic Trails

In 1968 Congress passed the National Trails System Act authorizing designation of National Trails. In 1978 the category of National Historic Trail (NHT) was added to the existing Scenic and Recreation Trails. Today 17 trails have been designated as NHTs ranging from Hawaii’s 15th-century Ala Kahakai Trail to the Selma to Montgomery 1965 civil rights march route. The common aspect of each is the significant role they played in our history.

The Act provides for designation of the trail routes, but does not specifically provide for their protection or preservation. Limited protection is provided by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 (as amended), in particular Section 106, and the implementing regulations 36 CFR 800. The operative word is “limited” since nowhere does federal law prohibit destruction of a historic resource like a historic trail. Furthermore, NHPA clearly reflects a focus on buildings or sites, not linear features that may extend for thousands of miles.

The Oregon and California trails are each about 2,000 miles long. The earliest emigrant trail was the Oregon Trail which traverses modern northeast Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming, Idaho, and Oregon. The route was pioneered by the fur trappers and first used by emigrants to the “Oregon Country” in the mid-1830s.

The California Trail also had its major jumping-off points in western Missouri. It follows the Oregon Trail, with some variations, until southeastern Idaho. From there it heads southwest and eventually crosses the Sierra by several routes to the Sacramento area. Along the way, each trail has numerous alternate routes and cutoffs. It has been estimated by the National Park Service (NPS), which has administrative responsibility for these trails, that the total length when all routes and cutoffs are considered exceeds 12,000 miles. Of that total it has been estimated that only a small fraction retain the integrity necessary to be classified as “contributing” under Section 106. Only contributing segments of the trails receive any consideration for preservation.

Threats to Trails

Threats to the trails, from a preservation perspective, have
A restored wagon rests in a swale near Alcove Spring, Kans. Note the parallel swales descending the hill, which is typical of many locations. This swale is MET Class 1 trail (using the classification system developed by OCTA). Photo by Jim Riehl.

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Historic Trails are administered by the National Park Service’s National Trails System Office (NTSO) in Salt Lake City. The office is led by a superintendent like any National Park, but it has no ownership of the trails. In fact, only a few small parcels of the California and Oregon trails are administered by the NPS and then only because they coincide with another historic site, such as Scottsbluff National Monument in Nebraska. However, a significant portion of the land through which the trails pass is under the jurisdiction of other federal agencies, primarily the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the United States Forest Service (USFS). Thus the NTSO largely attempts to influence a resource owned or administered by others (including private landowners). As one might imagine, the leverage exerted by the NPS is limited.

This problem is exacerbated by the conflicting management priorities of the federal agencies. Today a high priority for the BLM is development of energy resources, although the bureau is required to mitigate impacts to cultural resources. The USFS manages our forests with emphasis on timber harvests. Over the past 150 years this activity has destroyed the evidence of many trails in Oregon and California. Earlier I mentioned the effect of farming, over which little if any control can be exercised with respect to historic properties.

Another organization within the BLM that has the potential to have a significant impact on historic trail preservation is the National Landscape Conservation System (NLCS) office. This organization is concerned with protecting the settings and landscapes of historic resources, an important trail preservation issue. However, in the view of this writer, the NLCS has had little impact on decisions related to trail preservation. Day-to-day decisions are mostly in the hands of BLM field office managers acting in response to the guidelines of the state office. Often the work of archeologists in field offices is the single activity most relevant to trail preservation since they are involved in every permitting activity.

The following example helps to illustrate the interaction between development and preservation. One of the nation’s great energy resources is a gas field along the Pinedale Anticline in western Wyoming. The field runs roughly north-south for about 40 miles between Pinedale and Highway 28 and is crossed east to west by the 1858 Lander Road, a component of the California National Historic Trail. Pipelines from the field travel southwest toward Opal, Wyo. In their course they cross the Oregon and California trails (both the main route and the Sublette Cutoff) in relatively flat terrain with few opportunities to conceal or camouflage developments (the preferred approaches when a project cannot be avoided).

The BLM, along with the primary developers, the state historic preservation officer (SHPO), and interested parties including OCTA and the NPS have worked to define mitigation while permitting energy resources to be developed. OCTA preferred that the project not proceed, but it was recognized early on that was not a practical solution. Unlike the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, there is no effective political force working to protect the historic and cultural resources of western and central Wyoming.

In one area adjacent to the Lander Road, and at the point where the pipelines cross the trail, there is a clear and recognized adverse impact. Over months of negotiation mitigation was defined through a programmatic agreement. Trails and settings were lost, but due to the overriding national interests no one has seriously suggested that the project be rejected. This is the real world of trail preservation. We can only hope that other areas can be protected more effectively.

The Future

One might expect that the location of the trails and important alternates and cutoffs is well-known. At a macro-level this is true, but the knowledge is incomplete for many land-use decisions. These decisions require knowledge down to a few yards and comprehensive trail condition assessments. Archeological studies are often needed to verify routes. Knowledge to this level of detail is particularly important with respect to the placement of oil and gas wells, pipelines, and roads. On public lands, federal agencies are required by NHPA to inventory their resources, but due to other
Big Sandy Swale in Wyoming. The two tracks in the center is MET Class 2. It has been used by modern vehicles but overall the site retains its historic character. Berms on both sides are the lateral limits of the trail through the area. The entire swale was “excavated” as wagon trains stirred up dust in their passing that was blown away. Photo by David Welch.

Priorities, and to staffing and budget limitations, this is done only when a specific project is undertaken, if at all.

Let’s look at some actions that might be taken to improve the situation. I suggest the following:

1. A complete inventory of the historic trail resource. Trails are sometimes lost due to a lack of knowledge of their precise location and condition.
2. Action regarding high priority sites and segments as defined in management plans.
3. Improved management and cooperative efforts; better federal agency coordination and use of partners.

Trail Inventory and Assessment

OCTA has developed and applied a methodology for documenting and classifying trails, the Mapping Emigrant Trails (MET) Guide. The guide provides definitions of trail terms and a system for classifying trail conditions. The classifications range from Class 1 (trails that still retain their original character with no evidence of having been affected by motor vehicles) to Class 5 (trails that have been obliterated entirely and whose actual location is unclear).

These trail classifications have been incorporated into the Interagency Trails Data Standards which have been adopted by BLM, NPS, USFS, Fish and Wildlife, and Federal Highways and will be incorporated into nationwide standards for GIS trail data. The adoption of these classifications has wide ranging repercussions for historic trails all over the country, and is one of OCTA’s most significant accomplishments.

An important documentation project is now being conducted by the NPS. The NPS’s National Trails System Office is building a complete historic resource database for the Oregon, California, Mormon Pioneer, and Pony Express National Historic Trails. The database includes primary source documents, i.e., emigrant journals, newspaper articles, reminiscences, etc. It also includes aerial and other photographs, original survey maps, and many other source materials.

This NPS project is in its initial stages. In the words of Kay Threlkeld, the NPS project manager: “Someday we will have a complete record of all extant resources and the primary source material to back it up. The end goal being that we can tell people where the trail is, who owns the land, and have the original survey maps, aerial photos, and journals in the database to prove that the trail is where we say it is. My vision definitely exceeds my resources or ability to complete the work, but we have set up the structure, and can now process data as it comes in.”

High Priority Sites and Segments

As part of its trail administration efforts the NPS prepares comprehensive management plans for each trail immediately after it is designated. These documents identify “high priority sites and segments” in accordance with the National Trails System Act. Unfortunately, little has been done to actively protect these sites. Few have National Register nominations, although all are potentially eligible. The mechanism of identifying high priority sites and segments provides a means to better trail management and protection that is not being fully utilized.

Management

Despite the best efforts of the staffs of federal agencies, current trail management from a cultural resource perspective is falling short. Pristine trails and settings are lost continually. The priority of historic preservation is low and the primary advocate has little authority. Even if we ignore private, state, and local government ownership and management (which we should not), fragmented, uncoordinated, and conflicting on-the-ground management is pervasive among the NPS, BLM, USFS, and other federal agencies. Only when historic trails have a single manager with authority will their protection be assured. At the same time, this would provide the public with better opportunities for use and appreciation of the trails.

It should be clear at this point that historic trail preservation has many daunting challenges. Many place it in the “too hard” category, but I
believe OCTA’s efforts over the past 25 years have demonstrated effective preservation. More can be done without encroaching on the overlapping interests of others (energy, grazing, mining, urbanization). When the resource and its importance are better recognized at the planning level, viable solutions can be developed and implemented without excessive cost. Some would like to avoid this complexity, but we should resist in the name of our ancestors whose story the trails tell.

Conclusion

I would like to close with a personal note. Twelve of my ancestors traversed the Oregon or California trails. In fact, my great-grandfather, George Washington Welch, was born on the Applegate Trail near the present California-Nevada border. It is a special occasion when I visit a trail site where there is a high likelihood that my ancestors passed by a century and a half ago. In a setting with few modern intrusions, I can easily envision them walking stoically westward with the wagons creaking, harness and ox chains jangling, and oxen complaining. I hope that future generations will also have the opportunity to visit with the spirit of emigrants at sites along the trails and to sense the magnitude of their journey.

David J. Welch is a retired engineer who has pursued his interest in family and western history as a volunteer with the Oregon-California Trails Association. He has served that organization as president, as a member of the board of directors, and as the national preservation officer, the position he has held since 2001. For more information about the OCTA, visit www.octa-trails.org.

NOTES

1 Ezra Meeker, The Ox Team or The Old Oregon Trail 1852-1906, New York, 1907, p. 82.

2 The Mormon Pioneer Trail is coincident with the Oregon and California trails throughout much of Nebraska and Wyoming although Mormon use was heavier on the north side of the Platte River. The route to Salt Lake City from Fort Bridger was used by many Forty-niners once Salt Lake City became a place to rest and re-supply. Later, the Pony Express used many of the same routes, but it has unique segments also. Protection of the Oregon and California National Historic Trails also benefits these trails in many areas.

3 Some estimates, which extend the period to 1869 when the transcontinental railroad was completed, raise this number to 500,000.

4 John D. Unruh, Jr., The Plains Across, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 1993, p. 120.

5 Merrill J. Mattes, The Great Platte River Road, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 1969, p. 82.

6 Ongoing analysis by the National Park Service.

7 A swale is a linear depression in the earth reflecting the trail’s presence. It is caused by erosion as the wind removes dust stirred up by passing wagons. Ruts are a depression clearly reflecting the wheels of the wagon and are most commonly found in soft rock over which the wagons passed. “Two tracks” are the reflection of modern vehicle use of an unimproved road which may overlay an emigrant route.

8 Ownership in this context relates to the federal jurisdiction over public lands.


The Trail of Tears Across Southern Illinois: Garnering State Support for a Historic Trail

As the National Trails System celebrates its 40th anniversary in 2008, descendants of Cherokees who traveled the Trail of Tears will count 170 years since that tragic event. Following the passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830 and the discovery of gold in their homeland in the southeastern United States, the Cherokee people were forced to abandon their homes and farms and relocate to Oklahoma Territory. Some 16,000 Cherokees in 27 detachments moved westward during the Cherokee Removal period of 1835-1839, some voluntarily, but the majority by force under the direction of General Winfield Scott during the winter of 1838-1839.

The Route

The Trail of Tears across southern Illinois stretches about 65 miles east to west between the Ohio and the Mississippi rivers. The original road was known as Lusk’s Ferry Road, after Major James Lusk who established a ferry across the Ohio River to Golconda, Ill. Lusk’s Ferry Road was an overland alternative to the water route, and thousands of Cherokees who had been driven from their homeland followed the road across the southern tip of Illinois.

In 1924 Illinois began a program of State Bond Issue (SBI) routes throughout the state, and in 1926 additional SBI routes were authorized, including Route 146, which roughly followed Lusk’s Ferry Road and the Trail of Tears. It was to be another 80 years before Illinois officially designated this route a historic highway, commemorating the Trail of Tears.

Early Efforts

After Grant Foreman published his book Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians in 1932, much research was done by southern Illinois historians and written up in the local newspapers. At this time,
The Trail—Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. In 2004 Illinois became the ninth TOTA chapter. As the “youngest” chapter, Illinois has had plenty of ground to cover. Although Illinois is almost 400 miles long from north to south, the Trail runs east-west across just the southern tip of the state. And, although the Illinois Trail only covers about 65 miles, it is one of the most significant sections of the entire Trail. It was in Illinois that most Cherokee deaths occurred, while enduring the harsh winter and waiting to cross the ice-covered Mississippi River. Although the Trail was well known locally, it had little state recognition. The Illinois Chapter began to take steps that would not only preserve and protect the Trail, but that would also increase statewide awareness and support. These are some of its successful strategies.

The Trail of Tears Association Is Established

The Trail of Tears was designated a National Historic Trail by Congress in 1987, and the National Park Service designated Route 146 an auto tour route. In 1993 the Trail of Tears Association (TOTA) entered into a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service for the protection and preservation of the trail. The TOTA intended a chapter in each of the nine states of the Trail—Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Tennessee. In 2004 Illinois became the ninth TOTA chapter.

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National Park Service Site Certification

In 2004 the Camp Ground Cemetery became the first site on the Illinois section of the Trail of Tears National Historic Trail to be certified as an official site by the National Park Service. Sandra Boaz, current president of the Illinois Chapter and a TOTA member since its inception, has lived almost all her life in Union County near the Camp Ground Cemetery site. Her ancestors, the Hileman family, offered camping space to the Cherokees and also burial space in the Camp Ground Cemetery to Cherokee families who lost loved ones due to disease and exposure. Family stories and local lore inspired her to begin efforts with the TOTA and the National Park Service to certify the site. In a ceremony at the site on September 19, 2004, Aaron Mahr Yanez, superintendent of the National Trails System, National Park Service, presented the certification in front of a crowd of about 75 people.

Location of Unmarked Graves Using Noninvasive Methods

In 1999 Harvey Henson, Jr., a geophysicist in the geology department of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, was approached by Boaz about the possibility of locating unmarked burials in the Camp Ground Cemetery with non-invasive methods. Soon after,

This 1951 map shows approximate locations of campsites along the Trail of Tears through Illinois in the harsh winter of 1838-1839. Berry’s Ferry across the Ohio River was originally known as Lusk’s Ferry. Camp Ground Cemetery is several miles to the east of Jonesboro. Used by permission of the Illinois State Historical Society. All rights reserved.

Harvey Henson, Jr., uses remote sensing techniques on a section of Camp Ground Cemetery believed to contain Cherokee graves. The cemetery, outside of Anna, Ill., became an NPS-certified site in 2004. Photo by Jeff Garner, SIUC Staff Photographer.
Henson did preliminary work and initiated a series of remote sensing studies using ground-penetrating radar, magnetic gradiometry, electromagnetic induction, and detailed Geographic Information System data on the approximately 60’ by 50’ section of the cemetery. An expanded study is now being supported by the National Park Service Cost Share Program and will be augmented by data from historians, oral histories, and family stories.

Naming of Site to Ten Most Endangered List

In 1820 the Bridges family established a tavern and wayside store in Buncombe, approximately halfway between the Ohio and Mississippi rivers. This became a Trail of Tears encampment site where the Cherokees stayed and traded. The property eventually passed out of the hands of the Bridges family. Unfortunately, in 1940 the tavern burned to the ground. However, a barn was built around the old wayside store and to this day the timber-plank walls of the original wayside store stand within the existing barn. The Bridges Wayside Store is the only known extant structure in Illinois with a connection to the Trail of Tears. Gary Hacker, president of the Johnson County Genealogical and Historical Society, prepared application papers to the Landmarks Preservation Council of Illinois (Landmarks Illinois). On March 1, 2006, Landmarks Illinois announced, in a press conference at the State Capitol, that the Bridges Wayside Store at Buncombe was included on its 2006 list of Ten Most Endangered Historic Places in Illinois. It is hoped that this may be the first step in saving the property, which could logically serve as the Illinois Trail’s interpretive center.

State Legislation Designating Historic Highway

When Hacker became an Illinois Chapter board member and began to participate in discussions on obtaining additional signage for Trail of Tears sites, he realized that the State of Illinois had never conferred historic status on Route 146, which roughly follows the Trail route. A letter-writing campaign and a meeting in 2006 brought together support from southern Illinois legislators, local government units, historical societies, chambers of commerce, and U.S. Senator Richard Durbin’s office. In December 2006 the Illinois legislature passed House Bill 0142 recognizing that “Illinois Route 146 is officially designated a historic highway and a route of the Trail of Tears; and be it further resolved, that the Illinois Department of Transportation is requested to erect at suitable locations, consistent with State regulations, appropriate plaques or signs giving notice of the designation.”

Oral History Project

In April 2007 the Illinois Chapter kicked off an ongoing oral history project with a meeting at the Camp Ground site in Union County, offering to videotape those who wished to share their family stories of the Trail. Fifty-five people attended, with close to a dozen sharing on-camera interviews in front of the attendees. All were urged to bring photos, documents, diaries, and newspaper clippings. Since the April event, phone calls and letters have been received from individuals who could not attend but wish to be interviewed. Media coverage, including newspaper articles and a feature news segment on WSIU-TV Carbondale, has also produced inquiries. Additional oral history meetings are being planned.

Programs and Presentations

The Illinois Chapter has led programs and presentations not only in southern Illinois but also in the Metro East area (across from St. Louis), Springfield, and the Chicago area. There have been programs, public meetings, and a membership booth in the Metro East area at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville and Cahokia Mounds State Historic Site. In Springfield, Henson presented a program at the Illinois State Museum on the remote sensing studies. Chicago-area public meetings have included programs at the Newberry Library and the Schingoethe Center at Aurora University. In southern Illinois, programs have been held at Camp Ground Church (Union
Texas Heritage Trails Program: A Regional Tourism Initiative

In 1998 the Texas Historical Commission (THC) established its regional tourism initiative—the award-winning Texas Heritage Trails Program (THTP). The THC based the program around 10 thematic driving trails established in 1968 by the Texas Department of Transportation at the request of Gov. John Connally. These 10 trails were designated and marked by blue-and-white iconic signs as part of Hemisfair, the celebration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of San Antonio. The driving trails range in length from 523 to 859 miles, totaling 6,962 miles across the state. The themes cover historic events such as Texas’ fight for independence and frontier forts, geographic features like forests, plains, lakes, mountains, hill country, and tropics, and rivers such as Brazos and Pecos.

The THC decided to use these driving trails and signs to promote the heritage region as a cultural and historic sites, landscapes, events, customs, and traditions in every corner of the state, the THC created 10 heritage regions based around the established driving trails. The THTP is working in all of Texas’ 254 counties to encourage everyone interested in economic development through historic preservation to get involved. The THTP adapted the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s five principles and four steps for heritage tourism development as the basis of the program. (See www.culturalheritagetourism.org under How to Get Started.)

All 10 heritage regions have created regional organizations with a board of directors representing different geographic areas of the heritage region and a variety of preservation, tourism, and economic development interests. The THC’s heritage tourism staff works with each of the regional boards to establish an annual work plan to develop and promote the heritage region as a...
vide an additional marketing tool for the heritage regions. Each regional website provides information on cities, counties, and attractions within the region as well as information on the regional organization. The regional websites offer suggested itineraries and an interactive itinerary builder that allows travelers to develop their own routes for visiting the regions. To visit the regional websites go to www.thc.state.tx.us/heritagetourism/htprogram.html and use the colorful map at the bottom of the page to visit the desired region.

Effective Partnerships

The Texas Heritage Trails Program’s success is based on partnerships between many entities. The THC partners with state agencies, heritage region organizations, local preservation and heritage organizations, the tourism industry, and economic development organizations to preserve, protect, and promote cultural and historic resources.

Five state agencies charged with promoting tourism in Texas—Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism; Texas Department of Transportation; Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Texas Commission on the Arts; and the Texas Historical Commission—participate in a memorandum of understanding to work collectively to promote Texas tourism without duplicating services. These partnering agencies develop an annual strategic work plan with a strong marketing plan component. More information regarding this partnership is available at www.travel.state.tx.us/memorandum.aspx. This five-agency group also partners with eight additional agencies ranging from the Texas Department of Agriculture to the Texas Department of Public Safety. The State Agency Tourism Council

In 1968 blue-and-white signs were placed around the state designating 10 travel trails. Photo courtesy of the Texas Historical Commission.

The Texas Heritage Trails Program offers evaluations of heritage and cultural sites, such as the San Elizario Presidio Chapel outside El Paso, to address heritage tourism readiness and suggest ways to improve visitor experiences. Photo courtesy of the Texas Historical Commission.
meets quarterly to coordinate tourism activities across the state. Both these partnerships have been invaluable tools to bridge the gap between the tourism industry and historic preservation.

All Texas communities involved are encouraged to think regionally, rather than individually. Communities must learn to put aside Friday night football rivalries and to pool resources to develop and promote their heritage region. Regional partnerships have produced dramatic and positive results.

One example is the collaboration among eight frontier forts in the Texas Forts Trail Region. The forts did not cross-promote each other prior to the development of the regional program. Now these historic forts see the value in promoting each other to visitors in the region. The sites understand that if visitors stay longer in the region, everyone benefits. Those visitors stay overnight, buy gas, food, and entertainment. Cross-promotion and partnering have increased tourism within the heritage region as well as to the historic forts.

The Texas Tropical Trail Region, a 20-county heritage region in South Texas, has enabled the regional partners to accomplish many shared goals since they came together to apply for designation into the Texas Heritage Trails Program. Communities that had never worked together are now partnering to develop their region as a desirable heritage tourism destination. The regional board meets monthly in different communities around the region and had more than 70 people at a recent board meeting in San Diego. Best of all, this partnership has nurtured new friendships, new opportunities, and new preservationists.

“We have found that our regional communities are very excited to have us visit. They fill our meeting day with educational components such as tours of their museums, historic sites, and natural attractions as well as speakers who tell us about the heritage and culture of the city, county, and other sites of interest. Occasionally, sites not otherwise open to the public proudly opened their doors for us to tour,” says Nancy Deviney, secretary of the Texas Tropical Trail Region board.

**THTP Partnership Grants**

The financial assistance that THTP gives to the heritage regions is a crucial element of the heritage trails program. To date the THTP has provided regional partnership grants to six of the heritage regions. The grants, which are available to government and nonprofit organizations within the eligible heritage region, are for heritage tourism–oriented projects and require a one-to-one in-kind and/or cash match. This grant program has generated several exemplary preservation projects.

One of the most dramatic is the restoration of Fort Chadbourne in the Texas Forts Trail Region. Garland and Lana Richards, who own the land where the fort is located, formed a nonprofit organization for the restoration of Fort Chadbourne and applied for a $5,000 partnership grant provided by the THC to develop a tourist kiosk at the entrance to their ranch and the fort and a promotional brochure on the fort. The Richards then leveraged this grant funding to secure additional funding to restore and stabilize the site whose programs include an annual living history weekend. Photo courtesy of the Texas Historical Commission.

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Fort Chadbourne utilized a $5,000 heritage tourism partnership grant to secure additional funding to restore and stabilize the site whose programs include an annual living history weekend.
The Texas Heritage Trails Program was honored by the Preserve America initiative with the Presidential Heritage Tourism Award, presented in May 2005. This was one of only two awards given to recognize heritage tourism. It was earned through the hard work of the THTP staff, the regional coordinators, regional boards, and all the regional partners.

In March 2006 the THC received a $147,000 grant from Preserve America to develop a new training and assistance component of the THTP. This grant is being matched by the THC, creating a $350,000 endeavor. The project, entitled “Helping Communities Reach Their Tourism Potential,” provides in-depth training for community and site representatives on the successful development of heritage tourism. The training is being conducted in 10 regional workshops on three different topics—Collections Care and Management, Interpreting Historic Resources, and Exhibit Development and Design—totaling 30 regional workshops across the state. The first round of regional workshops provided assistance to more than 220 attendees. The workshops have afforded many small museums and historic sites the opportunity to get invaluable training for a nominal fee.

In addition to the regional site assistance workshops, the Preserve America grant also funded the THTP’s newest publication, the Heritage Tourism Guidebook. The guidebook is part of the curriculum for the regional workshops, but is also available for the public to use in developing a heritage tourism program or site locally. The guidebook was developed based on the four steps of the National Trust’s heritage tourism plan. It has been distributed to all 10 heritage region board members, regional coordinators, regional partners, the chair of each of Texas’ 254 county historical commissions, Texas Main Street managers, and other individuals interested in heritage tourism development for their community.

“The new guidebook is nothing short of superb! It’s a first-class publication with unlimited useful guidance and information. We applaud this singular effort to lead the way,” says William F. Haenn, chair of the Kinney County Historical Commission.

The guidebook includes a form and procedures for conducting a physical inventory of a community or county’s cultural and historic resources. It also has an extensive preservation and tourism directory for reference. The guidebook is available via mail or can be downloaded from the THC website: www.thc.state.tx.us/heritagetourism/hiprogram.html.
Since its inception, the Texas Heritage Trails Program has helped revitalize towns, increase visitation to cultural and historic sites, and raise awareness of the importance of historic preservation to the tourism industry. This nationally recognized initiative encourages residents to take pride in and celebrate their Texas heritage. By working together on a regional basis, many communities have benefited economically from the promotional opportunities and partnerships offered by this program.

Teresa Wims, a Texas Forest Trail Region board member and economic development director for Mount Vernon, has experienced first hand the benefits of the program. “Our town has a lot to see and partnering with the Texas Historical Commission has been a real asset for bringing visitors to Mount Vernon,” Wims says. “We can’t do it on our own, and the program, especially its training and networking opportunities, helps tremendously by increasing an understanding of heritage tourism. The commission has supported our efforts in preservation and has shown integral support for our tourism projects.”

Visitors are attracted to Texas’ mystique, and it has the infrastructure in cultural and historic resources to support that allure. From its diverse landscapes, Spanish missions, frontier forts, 225 historic courthouses, working farms and ranches, and numerous revitalized downtowns, Texas is filled with countless opportunities for heritage tourists to experience and enjoy. Come and experience Texas.

Janie Headrick is state coordinator, Texas Heritage Tourism Program, Texas Historical Commission.

Creating Pride and Awareness

Living historians create an interactive experience for heritage travelers in Texas. Photo courtesy of the Texas Historical Commission.