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de Teel Patterson “Pat” Tiller
December 11, 2017

Interview conducted by Antionette Condo
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My Narrative
The Administrative History of the National Heritage Areas Coordinating Office

de Teel Patterson “Pat” Tiller
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This transcript was reviewed by Antoinette J. Condo
The narrator was asked to review the transcript but did not.

de Teel Patterson "Pat" Tiller Interview: December 11, 2017

Heritage areas dropped administratively into my lap. In the period when I was Deputy Associate Director for Cultural Resources for the NPS I was aware of heritage areas. Didn't know much about them other than what I got at briefings. At one time in the structure of the cultural resources directorate it was in the partnership and recreation programs, Sam Stokes and that crowd. Not sure why it was moved. It got switched over from the recreation partnership program and landed in historic preservation cultural resources side of the family. That's how I ended up inheriting it. There was a tug of war whether the epicenter of the heritage area administration would be in the Washington office or in the field, the regional offices. The most aggressive advocates for running it out of the regional offices were our buddies in Philadelphia, Jim Pepper, Sandy Rives and Marie Rust. The Philadelphia gang was most interested in the day-to-day supervision, oversight, the other regions less so. Most of the heritage areas were east of the Mississippi. Alaska and Yuma Crossing came along later. It was in our portfolio, but a lot of the day-to-day involvement was coming out of the regional offices, particularly Philadelphia.

How heritage areas work: That is a complicated question. The heritage area movement goes under many names, and it is happening all across the globe. Japan has a system, the Philippines has a system, the United Kingdom has a system, France has one, South Africa has one. I am most familiar with the ones in France. I think I have visited ten or twelve of them. The way the French do it, I'll use that as a model even though I am aware that the model in Japan and the Philippines is similar. The government works with localities to sell the idea. They help build a popular base for this thing, this whole notion. It is a bottoms-up movement where local landowners, governments, colleges, universities, businesses like restaurants and farms. Some of them in France are more rural, some are more farm oriented, some are more urban, some are suburban, some are industrial. The government leads these complex negotiations, that often times last for years, for people to have these visioning sessions to decide what makes this area unique and important and what do you want to do to save this way of life? Whether it's fishing in the Aquitaine or grape growing in Burgundy or whatever it is..., this cultural complex natural recreational historic landscape. After years of negotiations with the entities and the local governments involved, all the key actors sign a compact that they all agree to put hearts and minds and budgets and efforts into running this place to meet various goals. Each one of them is different, some wildly so. The highest priority in one in which I spent some time was renovation of abandoned industrial structures and jobs for young people. In another one it's maintaining the timbering industry. These things take a long, bottom-up nurturing development. In France they are called Parc naturel.

In the United States this program has, to my mind, gone way off track to what the model should be. It is generally viewed as basically pork. I had a student in a class at George Washington University a while back and I was prattling on about heritage areas, and all of a sudden, he put his hand up and said, "My grandmother lives in that one." Next class he reported that he called his grandmother. She had no idea she was in a heritage area.

Heritage area development: Deny Galvin used to refer to this as, "We have a lot of the ornaments, but they have never authorized the Christmas tree." It is all tied up in that. We are not doing it the right way. Generally, although those sorts of earmarks don't exist much

anymore on the Hill, there has never been a full discussion on the NPS role in this. In France, for instance, the government, both national and local governments, are heavily involved but the main helpmate is a private non-profit. It is an organization of all the areas. Something like the Alliance (of National Heritage Areas). They get some money from the government, but the heritage areas also pay into them. They are the ones that manage all that negotiating. They have huge public meetings about what makes this place special. Why do you want to do this? What's being lost? What do you want preserved? One of them, because of the John Deere tractors that everyone was buying that would not fit into the traditional farm stone barns and sheds all over the country, the government responded to that and paid some sort of offset so people could continue to use the old farming equipment. Therefore, the cultural landscape was preserved rather than tearing down the wonderful stone barns and putting up Butler buildings.

Oversight: The issue of internal control, which is finding out what the government's money is being spent on and making sure it's being spent correctly; there needs to be, if we are going to continue this model here in the states, there's got to be a central function somewhere.

One of the titanic struggles of the history of the NPS, now a hundred and two years old, is, who has the power and control; Washington office, the regional offices, or the parks? A classic struggle that has been going on for over a hundred years. When you ask who's running things, the people in Philadelphia were extremely aggressive, it's ours, it's ours, it's ours, keep out, keep out, keep out. In other places the regions didn't much care. Some of the most successful heritage areas to my way of thinking were those that either had a national park unit in the heritage area or nearby. The heritage area of which I am most familiar is Cane River in Louisiana. There is a national park unit smack dab in the middle of it. In addition to which, the National Center for Preservation Technology and Training is there also. A double dose of NPS Smokey Bear hat wearing presence in the heritage area. It is probable the best ones are close to that. Essex is also one of the best ones. Essex has at least two NPS historic sites and one NPS regional visitor center which also serves the heritage area.

If we have federal money flowing, there has got to be oversight. I think the model, I think this goes back to Deny Galvin who seems to be the paterfamilias of this program in the NPS, the whole notion of developing plans and mission statements and three-and-five-year operational plans and the money comes through federal appropriation. Ideally the NPS role wherever it is, Philadelphia, Washington, or Minuteman Park outside of Boston, we have the fiduciary responsibility of federal dollars to make sure the taxpayers are getting what they paid for. The rest of that should be as a partner. Technical assistance and support, creating advisory boards, helping them find other funding sources, that sort of business. I would keep oversight control to the minimum necessary. In this case it would follow the federal funding. The rest of it, I think, should be in partnership. My experience has been, in Cane River and Essex, NPS is a partner, a friend, a participant, a fellow traveler. I think that's the correct balance.

NPS staff attitudes about heritage areas: If you are a student of the NPS going back to the 19teens and 1920s there has always been a fierce independence with the national park units themselves. They were generally run by men. Many of them were former military. The Army was actually the first manager of Yellowstone and Yosemite. National Park units until very recently were run like colonels on their military bases. I can't say they had life and death control

over everything, but they were very strong. The phenomena of regional offices and how the Washington office functioned was a very small bureaucracy and there was strong control over what happened at a national park at the national park. That is still a strain in the National Park System and Service. The rubber hits the road at the park units. There is always this tugging back and forth. The recent scandal of sexual harassment in a number of the park units, there is a long history of when something goes wrong suddenly control is yanked back to Washington or the region. Regarding the sexual harassment, Washington has exerted more control on the story and finding out what goes on. That's going to continue. This is true of John Deere tractors, true of IBM. It's part of the dynamics of business. The power in the central office, region, or field goes back and forth and back and forth.

In the Northeast Region there was a heavy embracing of heritage areas for a number of reasons. In other regions less so. Some, particularly the western regions, view heritage areas as a drain on the body politic and off mission. It varies from personality to personality and mindset to mindset. Some of the areas in the Northeast seem to be smaller and heritage centered. As you get to the west, they tend to be natural conservation resources centric. They kind of view things like the SHPO programs, and UPARR, and Land and Water Conservation Fund, those external programs, as off mission, particularly when the budgets are tight. There is a feeling in a lot of the Service that but for these programs this money would go to the parks and fix exploding toilets and septic fields and repave roads and let me hire interpreters and law enforcement. Our brothers and sisters in the national park units are really struggling. Congress keeps adding units. In terms of real dollars, the money to run parks keeps going down and down and down. So, heritage areas are viewed kind of by a lot of the park service, and it's not a criticism of them because what they have to do is so hard and so important. It's like, "What? I don't have time for that program. I've got to worry about what is within the boundaries of my military base."

It is true that NPS has taken a long time to understand its role related to heritage areas. We can say that it is because Congress hasn't authorized a program. We don't have a line appropriation for funding oversight staff in Washington and the regions. Over time some (heritage areas) have been successful some not as much. The answer lies in the fact that heritage areas, state historic preservation offices, tribal historic preservation offices, certified local governments, UPARR, Land and Water Conservation Fund programs, all of these have been disparaged by the NPS. Called external programs. Not seen by some in the NPS, even high-level officials in the NPS, as core NPS business. That changes from regional director to regional director, superintendent to superintendent, director and director associateships and people in the assistant secretary's office and the Secretary's office. This goes to a larger question.

Arguably the strongest and most impactful director of the NPS served during Kennedy-LBJ and into the Nixon administration, George Hartzog. I was lucky enough to get to know Director Hartzog the last few years of his life. I was talking to him one day and we were picking at this question. In particular I was asking him why in the early days of the historic preservation program '65-'66 when all those external programs like the National Register were created, it was not a foregone conclusion that they were going to come to the NPS. There was talk of putting them at Commerce, in HUD, even discussion of creating some little super cultural agency. I asked Director Hartzog, "How come you worked aggressively to make sure that these national preservation programs came to the NPS? Were you interested because you thought it was part of

the NPS mission beyond the borders of the parks or did you want to have control over something that could cause a lot of trouble or annoyance to the NPS?" He smiled very broadly, tapped the side of his nose and wouldn't answer. The truth of the matter, I think it's both.

Mrs. Kennedy when she was First Lady was friends with the French Minister of Cultural Affairs, André Malraux, and was seriously contemplating the notion of creating a heritage and cultural ministry in the United States like they had in France. There were some initial discussions of that and would have pulled together groups like the National Trust and all the historic preservation organization, National Endowment of the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, Smithsonian, Library of Congress all pulled into a super little heritage cultural agency. The idea died with the Kennedy administration.

I think the NPS largely views it as competition for money and time. There are people in the NPS that do understand it. But I'm talking about the body politic. I think it's viewed, "but for these bloody programs, that money would come to us." More so than ever because money is getting tighter and tighter for the NPS. I'm not being critical of my brothers and sisters in the park units. I don't know how they do the work. I really don't. I took my niece and nephew a year or so ago up to Shenandoah. There were no ranger led talks and tours. They used to do ones for the wildflowers in Big Meadows. I asked the superintendent and he said they had to cut them out because we don't have the money. Infrastructure, everything from septic fields to roads to toilets to roofs on buildings, they are in terrible shape. The backlog is phenomenal. Lots of people who work for the NPS are second and third generation and they work in the park units at embarrassingly low pay. I don't know how they make ends meet. They see these things that are not really park oriented and don't see the need.

NPS heritage mission: The notion of the NPS mission being beyond the borders of the units of the Service, I think in theory, makes a lot of sense. But, when you put the NPS under a lot of stress- budget, political- the tendency is to try to pull in the side bars and keep to your knitting. With the heritage area programs as well as FPOs, SHPOs, Land and Water, all of those *external* programs they sort of get valued and they don't. People love 'em, they hate them. They're part of our mission. They distract from our mission. It kind of depends on the time and place that you ask that question. As an administrator I did think we should have them. The NPS is the closest thing that this nation has to a heritage ministry. Not a cultural ministry which would be singing and dancing at the Kennedy Center. In the best of all possible worlds the NPS should serve as, and it basically does, as our nation's heritage ministry.

The heritage areas, as they function now don't fulfill the role of the NPS heritage mission because, referencing my student's comment that his grandmother is in one and she didn't even know she was. It goes back to how they are created, how they are formed. Pretty much everybody in the United States knows what the Register of National Historic Places is. Every nation, even some of the most struggling nations have a registry of historic places. They are called different things; landmarks list, heritage property list or something like that. Everybody in this country has probably heard of the National Register, few understand it is with the NPS.

Now, NPS has been pretty effective if you look at, we just passed the 50th anniversary of the National Historic Preservation Act, America's relationship to heritage and historic preservation

in the mid '60s and look at where it is today. It's been a remarkable ride. People value greatly heritage, historic place, sense of place and that old building downtown that makes us unique. In a nation of Banana Republics and McDonalds and every town looks exactly like the next town there is this great awakening too. We have something unique here whether its battlefields or a little historic district in the town, whether it's an old church that defines the skyline. By any measure the Act has been wildly successful. There is a predisposition in the country now for all sorts of reasons for it to be a popular movement. Legally and in court decisions they are all one and one influences the other inexorably. That is the great, to me, message of heritage areas. What makes it an exciting intellectual exercise but also an administrative exercise and I don't think we still get it. NPS itself (doesn't get it.) I don't think Congress gets it. Congress makes stupid decisions like making all of Tennessee a heritage area for the Civil War. There is an administrative reason for why it happened. The Congress still views them as pork to send home. Some person with pull goes in and agitates to the member of Congress. "I want one of these." "Oh, yah, yah, you contributed a lot." There is a lot of that. I think the people on the ground in the heritage areas, they get it. Because, if you are talking about Essex or Yuma Crossing the intellectual line behind this is its nature and its history. It's people and critters, environment. They are all tied together. They see themselves as a unified phenomenon.

Change of language in NPS statements to Congress regarding designation of heritage areas: *{In 2003 in testimony on heritage area designation bills the NPS began suggesting that no new heritage areas be designated until program legislation was passed}* Number one, it didn't do any good, Congress still has not passed program legislation. And two, I don't think it was any more complex or subtle than these things keep popping up everywhere and we do not have the yardstick and the management infrastructure to run these things. We just were trying to bring some order to these things. Deny Galvin's favorite statement, "We've got all the ornaments, but we need a Christmas tree to hang them on." I don't think it was anything more mysterious than that. It was just becoming a real drain on the time and efforts. Some of the heritage areas were very successful in lighting and igniting interest locally in governments, bringing tourism. Some just kind of sat there. NPS managed these things whether it was the region or a nearby park as best we could. We were starting to develop a huge program worth millions of dollars in federal appropriations and we simply did not have the administrative infrastructure to monitor the money, to provide the technical assistance. It was always kind of done on the side and on the margins. I agreed that we had this program exploding and no way of managing it. It was a growing phenomenon, a positive one, but the NPS just did not have the where-with-all to run it.

Funding mechanism: We never had criteria to answer the question (of the best funding mechanism for heritage areas). The unofficial idea was that you would get federal funding for x number of years during which time that would help you get on your feet. You would develop mission statements and a constituency, and you would consult and would find local governments that would start contributing because they value this thing. After x number of years, you would go off the federal dole. Federal money was viewed as a catalyst, a start-up, as a let's get some gasoline in the engine, get it running. Let you get your legs and develop funding mechanisms. To me, that always made sense. That is the one I am familiar with, the French model. I don't know if it came from anyone before Deny Galvin or not. The first time I ever heard of heritage areas was from Deny. The spoken concept paradigm was x number of years. Help you get

started. You can hang the NPS arrowhead. It is an affiliated area. The congressional appropriation would then go cold turkey. That was the model for funding. It never happened. I guess it is just considered a permanent appropriation in the budget. I am surprised that Congress hasn't noticed it and hasn't 'x'ed out heritage areas from the budget. I agree with the model of getting federal money for start-up, then start tapering off, then no more federal funding.

NPS interest in heritage areas: One of the early drivers for this idea was more and more people/communities were coming to the NPS and to the Congress wanting new NPS units to be nominated for their coal area, for their old auto plants, areas that needed help. Deny used to talk at great length that this was an alternative to keep adding more and more units to the NPS. They could get the imprimatur of the NPS arrowhead and the technical assistance, but they aren't going to join the system.

Contribution of NPS to the heritage areas: There is no one quite like the NPS in terms of nature conservation and heritage conservation in the country. If there is going to be an entity from the federal government that's muddling around in all this, working with locals and regional people, NPS is it. It makes sense. You are continually running your head into the wall of the more traditionalists that say, "Our business is the parks. That is all we should get involved in. We can barely take care of them now. Don't add all this stuff." My opinion is the answer is both. There is nobody else to do it. Natural and historical conservation is now in the mainstream of America. The beauty of the heritage area movement is that it blends them together. It asks important research questions about why we look this way, why do we do this, what is the effect of all these things. The American public is more tuned to this sort of thing than ever before in our history. If you develop that ethos, you develop that interest, that inclination, you will support national parks all the more. The people who love national parks will become interested in all these issues in their own neighborhoods. To me, it's a mutually benefiting model. (The NPS and heritage areas.)

Going back to Jackie Kennedy. I like the notion of having an arts agency or cultural ministry. Something like that in the United States government structure. We're the only developed nation that doesn't really have one.