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August R. "Augie" Carlino
March 22, 2016

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My Narrative
The Administrative History of the National Heritage Areas Coordinating Office

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Pre NHA experiences: I had a degree in political science and speech and rhetorical communications. I was living and working in Washington DC for a congressman from Pittsburgh. I worked for him for a number of years on economic and development issues. A lot of his focus was economic revitalization and getting jobs back in the region. After I left the Hill, I was a lobbyist for a large multinational law firm for a number of years but with no connection to Pittsburgh.

I was happy there in DC, but my wife wanted to move to Pittsburgh. I knew I wasn't going to be a lobbyist in the sense of DC lobbying, so I had to think about a career change. It took about a year before I heard that Senator Heinz was trying to save a part of an old mill at Homestead to turn it into a NPS site. There was a group of people working on this with money from the Heinz Endowments. They really didn't know how to go about getting federal money in this project. I met with the lady in charge of the Steel Industry Heritage Task Force. I wasn't sure if she wanted to hire me as a lobbyist or a staff person. The \$40K grant from the Heinz Endowment paid my salary as a staff person. The concept of the heritage area, as we know them today, didn't exist beyond that project at that time.

Coincidentally, the legislation for the Southwest Pennsylvania Heritage Preservation Commission area was going through Congress; this was in 1988 or '89. It called for a study on Allegheny and Washington counties industrial history. Right at this time Pennsylvania was beginning to establish its heritage parks program. The Steel Industry Heritage Task Force wanted someone who would know how to work the system in Harrisburg and DC to find money. That was 28 years ago. In 1992 the Steel Industry Heritage Task Force incorporated, Steel Industry Heritage Corp.

Heritage work: I would not have been your regular hire for a history type of job, I'm a lobbyist. The job of running a heritage area is sort of reflective of everything that is on the ground in the community. You just have to have someone who'll roll up their sleeves and get the job done.

The NPS was partnering with Pennsylvania's Department of Community Affairs (now Department of Conservation and Natural Resources) on regional planning efforts for some of the state heritage areas. They were hosting a heritage area program at the state level mirrored after New York and Massachusetts state heritage areas but wanted Pennsylvania programs to focus on old industrial communities as a tool in the toolbox toward community revitalization and economic redevelopment. This incorporated tax incentives, historic main street, brown fields redevelopment. I thought there was a lot of money out there that could be had to enhance the heritage effort. Early on we got DOD money to do recordings of older industrial facilities which, when WWII came along, were taken over and used to support the war effort. DOD's Legacy Fund could be used to restore some of the old industrial facilities. We knew that some of our industrial facilities had been defense facilities during WWII and then turned over to private companies. So, there was money in the defense funds to do recordings of these old military buildings. They were historic buildings and could not be torn down and were no longer usable as such without restoration. We made the argument that these mills fit in their funding

requirements. They were recorded, a mitigation plan written to meet section 106 of the federal preservation law, and then they could be torn down and converted to other uses.

God forbid they would have to create a national park in an old steel mill. It was beyond anything anyone could comprehend cost and size wise. It presented a lot of challenges for everybody all around. I have learned a lot and enjoyed the job.

The Alliance of National Heritage Areas: The Alliance was not thought of until we got to the Annapolis meeting (April 1997). None of us (NHA managers) knew each other. There was no collaboration. It was a pretty diffuse effort back then. We were trying to get designated as National Heritage Areas and didn't really know there were others out there like us. We were taking our lead from Harrisburg who told us we should go after the federal designation because there would be money for it.

I got invited to Annapolis in April 1997 to a meeting of the national program. Doris Dyen of my staff came with me and she was a great organizer. We got there and I discover that there are eight other people in the room all from newly designated National Heritage Areas. We are given a packet of information of rules and regulations that NPS came up with and were told that we were to agree to them before we left in a day and a half. Some of the things on the list were contrary to what was in our designation legislation and management plans. People started asking similar questions. Doris found that we were not the only ones in the room in the dark, and everyone else was feeling a little sketchy about this. We decided the best thing for us to do was to get together privately and find out what we really had to agree to. By this time tempers were beginning to get on edge in the room.

Doris felt that getting people aside, getting people to talk about their problems with this without NPS people would be the best way to defuse an incident from becoming worse. I told Doris to get a room in another hotel on the other side of town to have a private meeting. If we were going to come together, I wanted the NPS not to see that this was happening. We spent about 12 hours in that conference room. And that was where the Alliance was born. We all committed that we were going to work with the NPS, but we were not NPS employees and didn't fit the system that the NPS was creating.

On a bunch of butcher-paper we pounded out a charter and elected a chairperson, Dan Rice from Ohio & Erie Canalway. The new and old designated areas were represented. The National Heritage Areas that had been working a year or two or three were really concerned about new ways of doing things. We told NPS that we needed to take these regulations home and talk about them some more and come back and over time come to some agreement. We would not be pushed around and just said no to it. We wrote this up and signed and copied all our congressmen and senators and this created a firestorm. NPS knew we were serious and understood that they had to pay attention to our concerns.

The things that were proposed (by the NPS) were never implemented. They were so outlandish.

The Alliance was joked at by several NPS people. Someone from Philadelphia called me and said, "Oh, so you think the Alliance is really going to do something?" I told him I met eleven other strong-willed individuals, besides myself, that day and we were not going to be railroaded.

For the first couple of years, we did not have a very happy friendly relationship with the NPS. The first people who worked there were very bureaucratic; very stuck in their ways; were trying to have us as a square peg pounded into a round hole. And, wanted us to fit into everything that the NPS said and how they did things. We knew that the flexibility that heritage areas had allowed us to do things at times more quickly and efficiently. We knew that we were created outside the NPS and wanted the government there as our partner. It was just trying to control the situation.

In defense of the NPS, when those new nine areas were designated the NPS was probably as blind-sided by that as any of us in that room. All of a sudden, they had so many to deal with, entities that were not commissions. There was nothing in the legislation that told them how to deal with that. They were writing regulations to impose on everyone rather than putting them out for public comment for several months like they do everything else. I think partly it was as much of a surprise and shock as to us. It was NPS' effort to come to grips with the situation.

By the September 1997 Akron meeting, the Alliance was organized enough to the degree that we were starting to put together an action plan, creating agendas and ways to make the organization effective so that it would represent and provide support to all the areas. We had elected officers, set up committees, created dues. When we got together those first couple of meetings, September in Akron, November in Salem, we had many days' worth of meetings. Long, long, long discussions.

It didn't take me long in that room in Annapolis to convince them that, these are my direct words, "We were created in a bill that is part of the NPS, but our bosses are our congressmen and senators, that is who we have to answer to, and they control our purse strings." If I have a problem with the NPS I just call one of my congressmen or one of my senators and the congressman calls the Philadelphia office. That matter is instantly taken care of.

We have in common that we are all National Heritage Areas, and that is about the limitations of the commonness. We all act and operate differently. It has been a struggle not just to get the NPS to realize that, but new heritage areas, that weren't at the table, to understand that too. A lot of these folks think the only way to operate is the way they operate. As much as the Alliance has held together on paper, the Alliance has had a lot of internal struggles. To this day we have battles with our members. There is a feeling of unfairness that some National Heritage Areas get more money than others. That feeling of unfairness causes a breakdown in the ability of the organizations to work together.

Not every National Heritage Area is a member of the Alliance. Some don't like the people in the Alliance, some don't like the Alliance, some don't feel they need to (be a member).

The Alliance does not work against those folks that are not in the Alliance. We recognize that everything we advocate for will have across the board ramifications. We are pushing right now

to expand the budget and that progress is shared by all. Right now, we are trying to get the appropriations raised for all. Those that have been underfunded all these years need to get their funding up. That means that some National Heritage Areas that are not members (of the Alliance) will benefit as well.

Alliance accomplishments: The Alliance has seen a budget that has never been eliminated. Up 'til Jon Jarvis we did not ever have a NPS director support the National Heritage Areas the way that Jon does. OMB hates the National Heritage Areas. The zeroing out or 50% reductions (in NPS budget request) that comes every year is not necessarily the NPS not wanting the heritage areas but rather OMB doing it. Before, OMB would say no heritage area money and NPS would say that's okay because we want them to go away too. That is my idea.

If it wasn't for the Alliance, National Heritage Areas would have died a long time ago and there wouldn't be 54. We created mentoring programs around the country with training classes. The local group would pay our travel expenses and we would tell them what they needed to do, e.g., how to talk to the Congress, who to talk to in NPS, the regional office, the Washington office. The network has evolved enough that the Washington office has pretty much taken up the mantle now of letting them know what they need for designation.

The partnership has to exist where it benefits us as much as it benefits the NPS. Early on it was not set up that way. With those regulations and what we struggled with for several years. Set up that this is how the NPS wants it to be. Some things were okay, but others were not. When they weren't, we said no. We were butting heads with the people in the NPS administrative office.

Funding: The National Heritage Areas don't all get the same amount of money and they don't all need the same amount. The legislation says that they can get up to \$1m a year but doesn't mean they will. The whole issue of fairness.

Money has led to a lot of heated discussion and caustically worded emails. Martha (Raymond) and the ladies in the Washington office get blamed by some in the heritage areas for cronyism and favoritism while Martha is only carrying out the congressional intent. She can't dictate how the money is spent. It is unfair because she is only administering the law. She has taken on, way too many times from certain heritage areas, horrible personal attacks as to what they believe her intent was. I attribute it to a naïve understanding of the political state of affairs of those attacking her. National Heritage Areas work within a system of appropriations. We are not parks, where the NPS determines and dictates what the money is spent on. Because of that, Congress is always going to have the final say on our money. In the last few years Congress got ticked off with a process because of an attempt to get money taken from the hides of old National Heritage Areas to give it to new areas. When ten or fifteen areas complain to their pretty powerful congressional supporters, things happen. My argument to those who feel cheated is, go to your congressman. Some of them don't even go to DC to tell their congressman what they are doing and why they need money. If the lobbying system didn't work, we wouldn't be getting any money. Congress isn't going to give them more money if it doesn't know what they are going to do with it.

Rivers of Steel NHA: In 1995-6 legislation passed called, American Steel Heritage Area. A month or two later the state signed off on the management plans for us to be a state designated heritage area. We had done the feasibility and management plan for Pennsylvania which was a collaborative effort because we knew there were others working on a Pennsylvania designation. We had a loosely formed working group of the Pennsylvania sites.

We get money from the state and foundations here in Pittsburgh and I spend pretty much all of my time lobbying for money (including the federal funding). My staff works on the day-to-day operation of the heritage area and its programs. I have a luxury in my staff in that it works so well that I spend my time on policy issues and fund raising and general direction for the heritage area. I have longevity of staff and they are extremely dedicated. They know what to do. I don't micromanage.

We look at the money (grants we receive or dispense) as it is invested in the projects and extrapolate from that what that means to the overall growing of the community and improvement of the community. We do heritage tourism, historic preservation, cultural conservation, ethnography, records collection, oral history and conservation. All that does not necessarily fit into an economic development scheme of things. Say we got a \$25k grant for our archives department to go into Duquesne mill and pull out historic records and report on the records that were saved. People would say that that was a conservation project. But in the overall scheme of things that conservation of records was done, that report went to the state historic preservation office and then that historic preservation office signed off on maybe economic development administration money from the state to get a \$10m grant to redevelop that brownfield site. If we weren't there with that simple \$25K grant to do what was required by the federal law, that economic development money would not have gotten released as quickly at that site, the redevelopment would not have happened, and jobs would not have happened as soon at that site. We have measured all of our money that way. We have organized ourselves as a community development organization with the intent of being just one cog in the wheel of trying to help these communities rebuild. Our focus is to use history and heritage as a part of that rebuilding effort. People have begun to see that as a benefit. Everybody thinks of history as an obstacle. We have imposed nothing by way of regulations or authorities but have helped the community understand what those regulations and authorities are to them and get those things accomplished so that they can meet state or local laws and get to the next step. And then if you get there, we say put something in place to help people remember what it is, e.g., interpretive trails and signage and some of the structures. I don't want to capture everything in a time capsule.

Our trail (along the Monongahela River) was a perfect example (of restoration of a natural area) by taking an old coke line, the most polluted awful industrial waste site there is, and making it into a trail from which you can see great blue herons, bald eagles. Cleaning all that up has made a natural area.

Oversight: I do the oversight for my work plan with two of my staff. We then send it to the NPS Philadelphia office. The oversight process works exceedingly well. We used to have reports sit on (NPS) desks for a while. Now the process is efficient in the northeast region. If you would poll most of the National Heritage Areas, I bet they would say they wish they were in

the northeast region. The money is appropriated, Peter (Samuel) gets sign off from his budget office, we may get the money in six weeks.

Peter is extremely dedicated, a great partner, as are Martha and the ladies in DC. I couldn't always say that about the folks in DC.

Legislation: Private property rights came into play a lot stronger in some of them. It's part of the ongoing discussion we have with the NPS as to how the National Heritage Areas should be designated. The NPS knows one process of designation, and that is designating a site for an area that is going to be owned and operated by the NPS. When Congress tells the NPS it has authority to go out and do a special resources study and come back with recommendations, the recommendation is that it should be a park of the NPS. Next the NPS goes out to do a general management plan, not planning who is going to manage it but how it is going to manage the money needed. Heritage Areas are different. In the heritage area feasibility study, you cannot definitively answer the management questions because it is still too liquid at that time. What is unknown in the feasibility study is what is going to be done and the cost of it, that comes in the management plan. What the NPS is trying to do in prescriptive legislation is answer more of that up front in the feasibility study than what the older National Heritage Areas had to do up front. If the program legislation that has been introduced ever becomes law, it will be designated only after the management plan is done. I think the generic legislation has pluses and minuses.

In these last twelve years or so, and eight under Jon (Jarvis) we feel more included. We are still the red-headed stepchild to a degree so there is a benefit to the (program) legislation. There is a benefit to generic legislation and, if it is laid out as the legislation says, it will be better for the NPS.

At a hearing, Jan Mathews (NPS Associate Director for Cultural Resources) was asked a question by Congressman Rob Bishop, "What can't the local area do without the NPS?" The statement in her testimony was "The heritage area will be able to do things better with the federal government than is being done in partnership with only state and local cooperation." She couldn't answer because she only had the feasibility study. The chairperson of that heritage area couldn't answer the same question either. Now that's a problem. Bishop was all over her like white on rice.

Heritage areas are a business. You are creating a business to manage a complex set of resources and an extremely complex set of partners. Partners are being asked to come to the table with resources or asked to take on a project. While that works well in theory in the feasibility study, none of them really know what they are going to get into until those projects are laid out in the management plan. How can you create the business until the business plan is done? They should be designated as a planning entity until they get the management plan done. I think it would give the NPS a whole lot more control. I'm taking this from the Pennsylvania model. If you had to come to NPS to get money for the feasibility study; if NPS says okay; it sets them up on a three-year program and NPS helps them do their management plan. They shouldn't get their designation until the management plan is completed.

Let's say you have a feasibility study done and come to the NPS with it and you have funding and backing and the NPS gives you money to do the management plan. Why most heritage areas want to be National Heritage Areas is to get money for the planning. They shouldn't be designated at that point. If you throw the designation up front before any of the projects are identified and before the money is identified the National Heritage Area is going to stumble out of the block. Designated that way some have taken seven, eight, or nine years to get something done.

Program legislation is gaining popularity, but it is not going anywhere in the House while Congressman Bishop and western members are still in control of the House. If we had a Senate sponsor, I think it would move. Some in Congress think that the bill would create an earmark. Many of the senators who say they are in favor and would cosponsor legislation already have National Heritage Areas in their states. In any given year they may have an amendment to do on the already established area. And then they could not sponsor their own local heritage area bill and at the same time sponsor generic legislation. The senator would have to support the bill that has the direct effect on his constituency. All the senators interested in the legislation have another iron in the fire related to legislation for an existing area. We have been trying, with little success, to find a sponsor in the Senate. We have a bill in the House with 40 something co-signers both republicans and democrats.

We, the Alliance didn't support the (Senator Craig) Thomas bill in 2003. He got it passed through the Senate but not the House because we stopped it. It basically legislated in the problem we have now that heritage areas are legislated in before they should be designated. He expressed frustration at the NPS for bringing bills to the committee that they could not answer questions on. His legislation would have codified that process.

Here is another theory of why this legislation might never pass. You have these powerful blocks of congressmen or senators who are standing in the way of it. Have to get enough votes to get the bills out of the Senate or House. So, you have to put something in the bill for them. If there is a systematic approach to designating heritage areas, as the program bill will do, no National Heritage Area will have to come back for reauthorization. When we get a bill like that then we will have 51 Senators on board and then we get passed the roadblock.

The committee staff loves the fact that they can use the heritage area to horse trade on this bill get more in bigger bills like the omnibus bill. It (program legislation) may never pass for that one reason.

Criteria for National Heritage Areas: National significance should be the criteria. You'll hear the NPS say national importance. I use that word (significance) deliberately. Nationally important or nationally distinctive just dilutes. That's a game being played in the NPS by certain people who don't like heritage areas. In their view heritage areas can never be as significant as the NPS units. Keep national significant because otherwise it keeps the target on heritage areas by those who don't honor its integrity.

Sustainability: Every organization has to work toward sustainability. The biggest fallacy on the Hill and in NPS is that sustainability means self-sufficiency defined as meaning no federal

money. That is an unfunded mandate. If the federal government creates something there should be a federal role not just a title. If it doesn't want to create a heritage area managed by a federal commission but by a non-profit, they are going to have to have federal money because they are non-profit. They don't make money.

If the federal government pulls out and you have to go after corporation sponsorship and private money, then you lose your neutrality. They would give you money because they want you to endorse this philosophy or product. If I am a National Heritage Area but don't get the federal money, we may all have these big labels on us, e.g., "the Marcellus Shale Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area."

Management plan: The management plan needs to have more teeth in what the National Heritage Area should be doing. It should be more like a business plan. NPS needs to admit their limitation of understanding that (how to do business plans). They need to get out of the mindset that the way they do something is the only way to do something.

The Charting a Future for National Heritage Areas: *Charting a Future...* was a good compromise. Both sides got a little bit of what they wanted. Jon Jarvis became our biggest ally after his participation in those meetings of what could be done, what should be done, what was needed, and what couldn't be done. That document set the stage and began to turn the attitudes of the NPS. It brought Jan Matthews around because it was published under her. I think it helped with the Congress. We didn't have the National Heritage Areas caucus on the hill before that. It gave us a clear statement a unified vision of what NPS could do with private partners. It gave a view of what should and could be done in the next century of the NPS. I think that ideas from the, *Charting a Future...* continued to show up in the next several years of NPS documents, e.g., *Advancing the National Park Idea: National Parks Second Century Commission Report*.

The last set of National Heritage Areas in 2009 were better prepared by what they needed to do than the earlier ones. NPS has been able to help the later heritage areas in their planning efforts. Our heritage area really rode the coattails of the Pennsylvania heritage areas. NPS has come a long way on helping the areas in their planning. It has become a lot more thorough.

Successful National Heritage Area's needs: Money. Understanding that you live in a political world. Needs to have a board that is capable and active, and not spelled out in the legislation. My board knows that the success or failure of this organization depends on them. They work. Need a board that understands that it is a business that they have to provide counsel for, not micromanage. Need a good staff. You can't teach it, it seems to rely on personal traits, not study or work experience. Have to be able to hire enough people to get all the projects and lobbying done. We are merging with RiverQuest, an environmental education program. We are getting lots of money from the foundations to integrate them with us and rebuild their program. We will use their curriculum and help them with outreach.

Benefit to NPS: Pittsburgh had no NPS presence at all. Rivers of Steel helps them tell the story of one of the most significant economic stages of American and world history, the development of steel. As part of their urban agenda, it gets NPS into Pittsburgh, an extension of what they have in their western Pennsylvania parks. I love the NPS here, the trails they have

helped plan through the RTCA program. They are not nationally recognized trails but RTCA had a lot to do with helping get them done.

Future of the National Heritage Area initiative: It will eventually expand with a few more added. I hope it is given status formerly with program legislation. It clearly needs to have more money put into it. We have been successful, when we have mounted as an organization, a concerted effort. Until this year it was not possible to ask for more money, we didn't agree on it internally as an organization because there was animosity in the Alliance about who got more than others. But there is agreement now that there is a need for more money if that money goes to those that have been underfunded. There is a benefit to have heritage areas become more of a partner with national organizations in Washington. National Parks and Conservation is helping to get Alliance at the table to work with other organizations to address issues. It is important for us as an organization to tell others that even if they cannot be a National Heritage Area there are things they can get done; building stewardship, do something with state or local money. For the most part (we need) unrestricted money from states and NPS so we can be flexible about how we move our money.

How Rivers of Steel works with the NPS: It has evolved over time from Judy Hart to Martha (Raymond). It has been a roller coaster ride with national and regional NPS offices. Good times and bad times. Martha can do so much but is limited by what NPS superiors tell her. She has been an extremely good advocate for us in the NPS. With Jarvis she has had more accepting hierarchy than Brenda (Barrett) ever did. All the rules etc. during Judy's (Hart) time caused a lot of angst and was a very difficult time. I don't think they knew what to do except carry a set of regulations. That created an extremely contentious relationship with Judy. It has changed by way of the administration that those folks had to work with. I cannot speak highly enough of what Martha, and Heather, and Katie have done in order to position this program in the NPS. Getting the evaluations approved within the NPS and then signed off by the OMB. That was miraculous. We are very fortunate with this crew.

Changes of the program: Every year we have to battle this appropriations request. It would make us a whole lot easier if the budget would go with money for National Heritage Areas and why administration is asking for this amount. Then we could talk about what the money is used for, not start from the beginning to justify our request. The NPS could push back from OMB a lot harder than it has but it has bigger irons in the fire with OMB. Jarvis knew that he did not have to put all his eggs in the National Heritage Areas basket because he knew that I and Dan Rice and others would go to the Hill to get their money. Even though we have a meeting in Washington in February each year some people (from heritage areas) will go to Washington and never set foot on the Hill.