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Denis P. “Deny” Galvin
January 20, 2016

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

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Interest in Heritage Areas: The first mention of heritage areas I could find in my calendars was 1987. It was probably not the first time I paid attention. It had to do with Congressman Murtha and Johnstown and what finally became the Paths of Progress. When I first came to Washington in 1985 Ira Whitlock, who ran our congressional liaison office, took me up to meet with Mr. (John) Murtha who was on our appropriations committee. He was in many ways more powerful than Mr. Yates who was the chair. He was sort of a Tip O'Neil type character. He had Alleghany Portage and Johnstown Flood in his district and recognized that coal and steel were going away, and he wanted to do something with tourism and recreation in and around Johnstown. He used to have a television program that was on in his district on Sunday morning. I went and talked to him on the general subject of what NPS could do for Johnstown.

I had been deeply involved and seen the development of Lowell, Massachusetts. When Congressman Paul Cronin and later, Senator Paul Tsongas started acting on Lowell, we had a commission study, called The Brown Book. I got involved in writing the legislation with them. The agreement was that NPS would manage certain sites in Lowell, e.g., the Boott Mill and Marston Mill and there would be a larger area which included most of downtown and that would be under the purview of a federal commission. I had this experience that dealt with the larger urban landscape and what preservation brought to the table. In private conversations with Mr. Murtha and on his television show I talked about the idea that the Lowell model might fit in western Pennsylvania. That led to a study called the Western Pennsylvania Roads study, which led to the *American Industrial Heritage Project* which led to the *Paths of Progress*. We had a larger landscape approach including the historical sites of greater Johnstown. That money came from Mr. Murtha. In the course of that experience my vision started turning away from Lowell and the federal commission. I started looking at Illinois & Michigan, Blackstone, and Delaware and Lehigh. I went through all three pieces of legislation and in 1988 I pretty much had in my mind what heritage areas should encompass and what they needed to be successful etc. So, I went from the specific working with Mr. Murtha's (AIHP) industrial heritage project to the general policy idea. I knew what needed to go into heritage areas stuff.

In 1988 I went on a tour of the New Jersey coast with Senator (Bill) Bradley. He wanted to knit it all together to make it a tourist attraction. We drove with a bus load of people associated with the New Jersey coast from Sandy Hook down to the cranberry fields. Further down to the Delaware Bay and back north to Atlantic City. That started me off with Bradley and I probably said to him that what he had there was probably a heritage area. We started working on it in 1988 and got it dedicated in 1993.

Around that same time, mid-1989, Cynthia Pollack, who was superintendent at Salem Maritime, started telling me that we needed a bigger vision up there than just the two parks, Salem and Saugus. Charming parks, but very small, and really no influence on the surrounding area. Former Congressman (Michael) Harrington who owned a hotel there, and Tom Leonard, president of the largest bank in the county, were really interested in how to get people to come to and stay in Salem. As I got to talking with them and working with Cynthia, I decided the best thing to do would be to put a planner from the NPS Service Center there for a year or so just to try to figure out what was going on there.

With Cynthia, we decided to put a planner, Mike Spratt, in the area. Mike spent a year there pulling things together and his plan became the Essex Heritage Area. That probably started in 1989 or 1990. They invited me to come up for the first planning meeting in Salem with Cynthia, Mike, Tom Leonard, and another planner from Denver, Ann Moss. Tom Leonard still thought that no one would come to Salem except for the witch story. Ann, the Denver planner, told them that they needed more than concentrating on Salem. They needed to look at the whole county.

We discussed this expansion from just Salem to be a broader area including Essex. The locals, under the guidance of the NPS, decided to include the whole county and tell more than just the witch story. Expanded with maritime heritage and early settlement and early industry which are now the themes of the Essex Heritage Area. Senator (Edward M. Ted) Kennedy got us the money to do the new Peabody Museum/Visitor Center. Witches of Salem are not one of the major themes of the heritage area.

By this time, I had had a lot of hands-on experience with heritage areas. I knew what kind of worked and didn't work. How to sound out the locals on what they wanted. It was an important learning thing for me. My shorthand model for heritage areas is just four questions. What around here is worth saving? What stories do those places tell? Who is interested in saving them? How do the rest of the people feel about it? Local areas are not just interested in what is on the national register. They are reflecting local values. The story that the heritage area tells is the most important part of the thing. Not just the colonial houses but what stories do the buildings tell that are important to the history of America. Important to visitors and locals.

The ship *Friendship* is an amazing story. We got the money in 1994. Mary Bane was Congressman (Sidney R.) Yates' chief of staff and she had been around Washington since the FDR administration. When we got in to see Mary Bane, we knew this was something important to Mr. Yates. Building the *Friendship* was very controversial. We had real historic sailing ships in San Francisco we didn't have money to repair. Here we were in Salem trying to build a replica. Mr. Yates was conscious of that dichotomy. Salem sent schoolkids down to lobby in Congress for the building of the *Friendship* modeled on the ships that had come into Salem harbor in early days. On all of these Essex projects Senator Kennedy was the key. He argued with Senator (Robert) Byrd to put it in the Senate appropriations bill. There were no historic ships left like the ships that went in and out of Salem in the 1790s/1800s when it was the largest port in the United States. But there was a model ship, half size, in the Peabody Museum that was accurate, so we used that model to build the *Friendship*. Congress put up the money to build it. The ship was built on the Hudson River and floating but had no rigging and the shipbuilder went broke. A ship fitter from New England towed it down the Hudson and around the southern New England coast and into Salem harbor. With volunteer crew and maintenance, *Friendship* is today fully outfitted and sails around New England doing educational programs. It sits at the pier where dozens of those ships sat in the 1790s. If I have ever seen a dream come true it was the, *Friendship* coming into Salem Harbor.

Then I got involved in Blackstone. Jim Pepper was at Blackstone, one of the first heritage areas, and had been going for quite a while. I thought at the time that he needed Service Center help and help from Harper's Ferry to pull together interpretive plans. Just brought in some resources

to improve what was already a successful project. So, those four heritage areas were my hands-on experience with heritage areas.

I was probably the only one in Washington who saw the heritage areas as a very interesting legislative approach to preserving important features in large landscapes.

In early 1990s I thought that maybe heritage areas ought to be like the Wild and Scenic Rivers and Historic Trails. A generic piece of legislation that you amend when each area is designated. I thought that might be a good idea for heritage areas. 1992 was kind of a key year for all of that. We did a symposium in Cleveland because of John Debo at Cuyahoga. John Debo had done a lot of work on the whole Countryside Commission approach in Britain. He is a resource on how you pull these large cultural landscapes together. Congressman (Ralph) Regula was the champion for the Ohio and Erie Canal Corridor legislation even though it was not in his district. In 1992, John Bradley and I did a series of public meetings in New Orleans and elsewhere. The public didn't come but a lot of state park directors and college professors did. Michael Conzen, a geographer from University of Chicago was interested. He said the NPS is really composed of superlatives. You guys are interested in the highest, the biggest, the oldest. That is not what interests geographers. We are interested in why stone walls in southern Ohio are different from stone walls in southern Illinois. That is how the definition of *nationally distinctive* came into being. It has now changed to be *nationally important* but that is not what we had proposed.

Earlier when I was in Denver, Ervin Zube at University of Arizona in Tucson was going on sabbatical and called to ask if I had a job that he could do. I told him that he could go to all the unusual legislative models for parks that don't fit the Yellowstone model, i.e., the federal government owns it all. Places that have a public/private management. Places where Congress formed a model where NPS would manage but not own all the land. Like Cape Cod and Upper Mississippi River. Zube did his study, and he said the first time we came up with this model was Canyon De Chelly. Congress authorized President Hoover to do an executive order to create the park but not to own the land. The park was created in 1929-30 at the sufferance of the Navaho council. We administer and do interpretation in Canyon De Chelly but do not own land there. It has been an up and down relationship but is maintained.

We got a group of people together for a seminar on heritage areas in January 1992 at Tumacacori, Arizona to talk about heritage areas. We had it at a ranch owned by the University of Arizona. I can't remember who we invited. It was two or three days long. Ervin Zube pulled it together with probably University of Arizona facilitating. Halfway through the discussion I decided that everybody should just go off someplace and write down what they thought a heritage area was and come back in a couple of hours. A guy from California wrote the beginnings of the definition of a heritage area that we use today. Having worked on all these individual projects I now was working on a generic approach. Pulling all these people in to work on heritage areas, people like Mike Spratt and Judy Hart.

Almost all the rest of the time until I retired at the beginning of 2002, I was working on trying to get legislation. Working with Congressman (Maurice) Hinchey and Steve Hodapp, staff for the House Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Land. 1995 was a big year for the legislation. The House passed it.

Budget: The 1997 budget was easy because it was during the Clinton Administration and we were running surpluses. We put money for heritage areas in the 1997 budget because we thought we would have legislation by that year. The budgeting for those eight years was how we got money for the heritage areas.

The idea of setting up an office really started with Judy (Hart). She started in Sam Stokes office. A lot of the champions who were interested left, Senator Bradley, Congressman Hinchey and then we had congresses that really weren't interested in passing anything. At that Cleveland seminar, John Debo said parks are created one at a time why not create heritage areas one at a time. I now would be content with that. I would do just two things legislatively and administratively with heritage areas. I would move the funding from NR& P to ONPS to stop the uncertainty every year. You wouldn't get this \$7 million deduction each year.

OMB just sees heritage areas as another hand in the federal pocket. They should still call it the Bureau of the Budget. Some OMB staff have been interested in policy. But, for the most part they are just interested in numbers and not interested in large cultural landscapes. Just see this as another way for locals to get their hand in the federal billfold. It's inaccurate for one thing. Heritage areas are very cheap.

Sunsetting: Another thing I would do about heritage areas, get rid of the idea that federal involvement expires after a period of time. I never thought they would expire. The standard answer to the question is, "We couldn't get the legislation without putting the federal expiration in there." I'm not sure that's true, but that is the model we had. And, I think it has outlived its usefulness. Hardly any of them have expired. They are always renewed by the Congress.

I'm not saying generic legislation isn't a good idea. The notion that the federal interest in these areas goes away after ten years is just not supportable policy. I know the money is a factor too. These are like national parks. They are national heritage areas forever. The federal government did a lot in terms of planning and funding them, and the federal government should be with them forever. I think heritage areas should be funded out of ONPS. There are non-parks funded, e.g., long distance trails and Wild and Scenic Rivers out of ONPS. They would be much better protected from year to year, I believe.

Legislation language changes over time: I don't remember specifically pushing special features. I do think the feasibility studies, the plans, were all worthwhile steps. The plan is very important. The plan is essential because that is when all the stakeholders get to sit at the table and try to dope out what the future of the place might be. I think the specificity is just part of the evolution of the idea. Not good not bad. As the idea matures people begin to want more specifics. All Congress really did to the stuff we were proposing was to put in redundant language that nothing will compete with state law etc. was politically important. Only a few were interested in the policy issues, Congressmen Hinchey and Hefley. Steve Hodapp worked for me at the Service Center before going to Congress. I spent a lot of time with Steve in 1995 on the heritage bill. The subcommittee was not opposed. I think all the specifics that have been added is just kind of what happens with policy. It gets more complicated.

I'm okay with creating heritage areas one by one now. I think generic legislation is a good idea. It may be just a function of a Congress that comes along that wants to do this. I would just be tweaking things now.

NPS staff attitudes toward heritage areas: It was always because they thought it was taking money from the real parks. When Roger (Kennedy) was director we took the National Leadership Council to Salem so they could see how a heritage area worked particularly with a couple of national parks in the matrix.

The National Park Service Mission is: "To cooperate with others to spread the benefits of preservation throughout the country and the world." That sentence now may be more important than the Organic Act. You can't really protect Yellowstone unless the neighbors and the state are interested in protecting it. The problems facing the parks are now almost all coming from outside the park. But few of them can be solved by a NPS decision, e.g., the power line across the James River next to Jamestown. That is a Corps of Engineers decision. Salem and Saugus are way better off than they were. The first time I went to Saugus the water wheels weren't running. If you have community support for these parks, then you have a much better chance of preserving them. The cooperative mission is integral to doing this. If you have communities that say this is a good idea for tourism or whatever, they are going to be more likely to come to your aid when the parks are in peril. Heritage areas are part of it. Rivers and Trails are part of it. The National Register is part of it. The tax act is part of it. There should be somebody from the park who is knowledgeable about all programs going on in the areas around them. There have been 49 National Heritage Areas designated since 1984 and Congress created 69 units of the NPS in that same time period. Heritage areas are a big deal. Why? Because Congress likes them.

Whether it is a good idea or a bad one it is Congress' idea of how to solve problems in a large landscape. There are other ways to do that. But Congress likes them, so how can NPS manage this idea to support the whole organization?

NPS director support: (James) Ridenour in his book, *The National Parks Compromised: Pork Barrel Politics and America's Treasures*, pages 19, 69, and 88 mentions heritage areas. His motivation was different. His position was big on *thinning the blood*. He saw heritage areas as a way to avoid thinning the blood. I don't remember any of the other directors really leading the parade on heritage areas, but none of them were against it.

Loran Fraser and I worked on the 2nd Century Commission. We took the 2nd Century Commission to Lowell and Essex to see these unusual roles that the NPS plays. They just couldn't say enough about what the NPS had done for Lowell. I remember going around town with Patrick J. Mogan, superintendent of schools in Lowell, in 1974-75 and he would say, "These buildings are beautiful, they should be saved." Lowell looked like Dresden then. I thought he was crazy because the buildings were so awful. He had the vision of what could be. Preservation writ large and the NPS at the center of that preservation can make a difference. It's important to get local people to say what around here is worth saving. Everyone has something they want to save. National Heritage Areas allow them to do that at their own scale.

I don't think there are any visionaries in the Congress anymore. Where are the John Seiberlings, Craig Thomases, the Bruce Ventos? I think it is really what happened when the Congress flipped in '95. Big policy initiatives like this don't make their way through Congress these days.

Responsibilities WASO and Regions: There is a sort of tension between Washington and regions. There really weren't a lot of people working on it (heritage areas) in Washington or the regions. For the most part it was planners like Deirdra Gibson in Philadelphia who was working on Delaware and Lehigh. My preference was always that the Service Center do the plan. I always felt that the regions were too close to the parks, too close to the political levers. The planning should be done by the Service Center which was independent. The regional director approves the plan and gets the final say. But when the regional director is involved in making decisions about the plan during the planning process, you lose something. You lose that ability to create a conflict. Having someone independent look at plans is really valuable for coming up with a good solution. People who were really interested in heritage areas in the NPS were probably less than 20. It all started on the east coast. My guess is that most of the employees of the NPS don't even know what a heritage area is. I have a hunch that the regions that have had National Heritage Areas for the longest such as the Northeast, have the most input into the heritage area development. They are more mature in heritage area management than other areas.

Commission vs NGO: I never went away from commissions. To me the commission is an alternative. The question is who is going to govern this. It just happens over time that in many instances you get a non-profit that is in existence before you have a heritage area. From my experience non-profits frequently worked as well as federal commissions. Getting commissions set up is cumbersome. To get all the nominations completed in the NPS and DOI, to get them all approved, is a convoluted process. I don't think an NGO is better, it is just easier than a commission to get up and running. Doing a nonprofit proved to be easier.

In 1994 I went on a Potomac River trip with Secretary (Bruce) Babbitt and Congressman Steny Hoyer, and we discussed heritage areas. Steny was interested in a Potomac National Heritage Area. I think it was the first time Secretary Babbitt was ever exposed to the heritage area idea.