

"The establishment of this National Heritage Corridor will provide for the people great benefits from the enhanced quality of life in our region, as well as a unique tool for new opportunities in economic development and tourism."

—Congressman Don Ritter

"Nothing defines the special qualities of our region better than the Delaware and Lehigh Canals: the history, the recreational opportunities, the cultural heritage, the simple beauty. This is an opportunity to preserve these qualities for the future."

—Congressman Peter Kostmayer



# Delaware & Lehigh

## NAVIGATION CANAL NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Preserving Our Nation's Industrial and Cultural Heritage

**The rich cultural and industrial history** which links the communities of the Delaware and Lehigh Valleys has been recognized by the United States Congress in its recent designation of the Delaware and Lehigh Navigation Canal National Heritage Corridor. Federal designation provides an opportunity for state, local and private interests to use the region's past to stimulate and guide its future.

The Corridor's designation will ensure that the preservation of significant cultural landscapes and their associated structures is incorporated into new development and revitalization strategies that will improve the quality of life for the valleys' residents.

### The Canals and the Valleys

During the 19th century, more than 5,000 miles of towpath canals provided our young nation with its first effective transportation system. The Lehigh Navigation and Delaware Canal system occupy a significant place in the history of American canals, both then and now.

In 1818, Philadelphians Josiah White and Erskine Hazard secured large anthracite coal tracts in Carbon and Schuylkill Counties, and began to develop the Lehigh Navigation System in order to transport the coal to coastal markets. To finance and develop their great enterprise, they formed the Lehigh Coal and Navigation Corporation, which would become the first large-scale integrated American corporation: developing and

controlling mining, transportation, manufacturing and marketing for an enormous region.

By 1845, the Lehigh Navigation had grown to include seventy-two miles of towpath canal and flatwater, extending from White Haven to Easton, a canal with locks of unprecedented size. To bring the anthracite to the canal from their mines beyond the valley's mountain walls, the Corporation built the nation's first railroad of significant length—a gravity line from Summit Hill to Mauch Chunk—and a sixteen mile inclined plane railroad from White Haven to Ashley, near Wilkes-Barre. In 1832, the Commonwealth completed the sixty-mile Delaware Canal between Easton and Bristol, in order to extend the reach of the Lehigh Navigation System.

The canals transported agricultural products from the highly productive farms that can still be seen in the two valleys. The canals provided water power to drive innumerable factories that developed along their routes, and they were the cause of the birth and/or growth of the many villages, towns and cities that are found here. The Corporation had a primary role. Its efforts were also responsible for providing the nation with a new and important fuel—anthracite—a development which would make possible the Industrial Revolution.

In 1840, at Catasauqua, anthracite was first commercially utilized as a blast furnace fuel in the production of iron. The Corporation provided capital,

land, waterpower and raw materials to promote this and other new industries. The area grew into the most productive ironmaking region in America, maintaining that distinction until 1885. It can be said that the modern military/industrial complex began here with the 1880s US Navy contracts given to Bethlehem Iron for guns and armor intended to rebuild the Navy into a modern sea power.

The canals' most active period was from the 1830s to the 1860s. Later, devastating floods, and the development of railroads and highways caused the decline of the system. By 1929, it was transporting less than 10% of its peak traffic. The Delaware Canal ceased operation in 1932, and is today significant as the most intact, accessible and fully watered canal in the Nation. Portions of the Lehigh Navigation continued to operate until 1942, when a flood shut down what had become America's last and longest operating towpath canal.

### Local and Federal Conservation Efforts, 1931-1981

As the canals ceased operations, citizen groups and state and local governments stepped in to preserve portions of the canals and adjacent historic and environmental resources. In 1940, the Commonwealth acquired the Delaware Canal and much of the adjacent land for the Theodore Roosevelt State Park. Additional state, county and local parks have also been

established in the corridor. 90% of the land adjacent to the Lehigh Navigation is maintained as public open space. Citizens' preservation organizations such as the Friends of the Delaware Canal and private landowners along and near both canals have done a great deal to preserve the historic structures and landscape of the valleys.

The federal government, through the United States Department of the Interior, has a twenty year history of interest and activity in the corridor. The Delaware Canal was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974 and was made a National Historic Landmark in 1978. Twenty-one miles of the Lehigh Navigation Canal are on the National Register, and in 1979, the Lehigh Navigation Canal Heritage Trail was designated a National Recreation Trail. The *National Urban Recreational Study* (1977) recognized the significant historical, environmental and recreational opportunities of the Delaware Canal area, and the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service's 1981 study, *Lehigh Canal*, made recommendations for revitalization of the Lehigh Canal and its environs.

Although much has been done at local, county, state and federal levels in a variety of locations along the canals, the coordinated planning which can link the various efforts, programs and sites into something more than just the sum of the parts has been missing. Now that the interstate highway system in this region is largely completed, the valleys are experiencing rapid

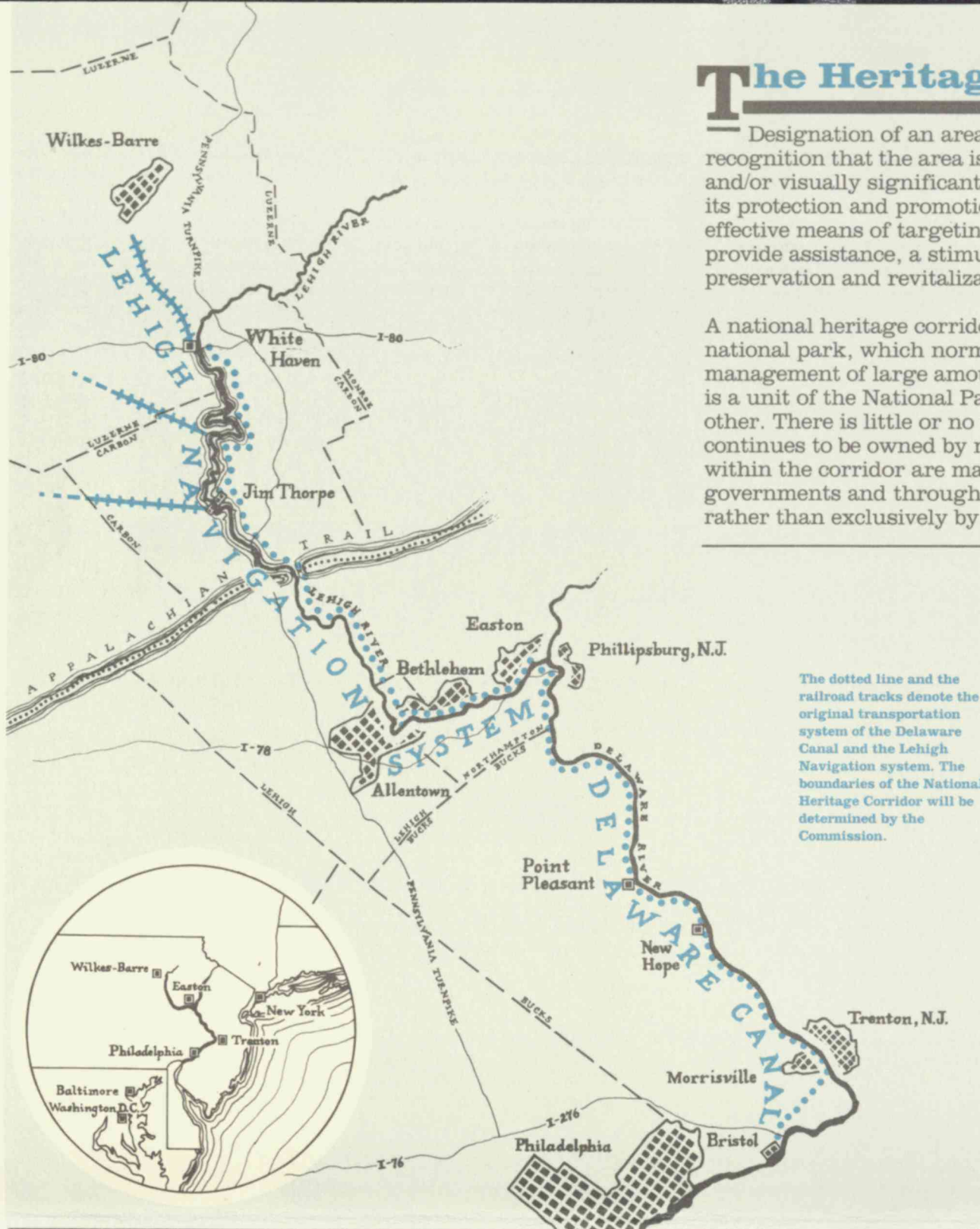
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# The Heritage Corridor Concept

Designation of an area as a national heritage corridor is a recognition that the area is historically, culturally, environmentally and/or visually significant, and that it is worthy of federal action in its protection and promotion. The heritage corridor program is an effective means of targeting the use of limited federal funds to provide assistance, a stimulus and coordination for extensive local preservation and revitalization efforts.

A national heritage corridor is an alternative to a conventional national park, which normally requires the federal acquisition and management of large amounts of land. A national heritage corridor is a unit of the National Park System, but it is a "park" unlike any other. There is little or no federal land acquisition – the land continues to be owned by many parties; and the land and resources within the corridor are managed cooperatively with state and local governments and through voluntary agreements with landowners, rather than exclusively by the National Park Service.



The dotted line and the railroad tracks denote the original transportation system of the Delaware Canal and the Lehigh Navigation system. The boundaries of the National Heritage Corridor will be determined by the Commission.

## Contacts for Further Information

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## Local and Federal Conservation Efforts

### 1931-1981 Continued

urbanization as new businesses and residents move here, and pressure on the resources of the corridor is growing. The qualities which give the area its distinctive identity could easily be obscured without a thoughtful, areawide examination of the resources and their potential. The need has become apparent for a program of action which will allow all concerned individuals, organizations and government agencies to work together to conserve the canals and the region's cultural and industrial heritage.

### Federal Legislation Establishes a National Heritage Corridor

The framework for such a program is provided by the legislation for the

quality of life in the context of preservation, protection and enhancement of significant cultural, historical and recreational resources.

The legislation to establish the Delaware and Lehigh Navigation Canal National Heritage Corridor was introduced in February, 1988, by Congressmen Peter Kostmayer and Don Ritter. It was signed into law (Public Law 100-692) by President Reagan on November 18, 1988.

To carry out the provisions of the legislation, a federal commission of twenty-one members is established, including the Director of the National Park Service, one representative each from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, the Historical and Museum Commission,

Commonwealth, counties, towns, private organizations and individuals in planning and implementing an integrated strategy for protecting and promoting cultural, historical and natural resources. Policies and programs will be developed to preserve and interpret historic, cultural, scenic and natural resources, and to support compatible economic revitalization efforts. While the law requires that the plan be developed within two years of the first meeting of the Commission, the implementation of the Corridor plan will take place over a number of years.

Congress authorized \$350,000 to be used by the Commission annually in its work, with the provision that only fifty per cent of the Commission's actual costs may be underwritten by Federal funds. Donations and/or matching funds may make up the balance. The National Park Service will provide assistance in the development and implementation of the plan, which will be reviewed and approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

The law provides that the Commission may acquire land, but only by donation or with donated funds on a willing seller basis. Upon acquisition, the land must be transferred to a public agency.

The Commission may establish advisory groups in order to foster public involvement and the sharing of ideas, goals and concerns for the Corridor. There will be extensive opportunities for public involvement at all stages, through the advisory groups and through public workshops, meetings and special events.

The goal of the legislation is to involve citizens, organizations and local government in making decisions about the area, and to use this

interactive involvement in building a consensus toward action on the future of the Corridor.

### Benefits of the Legislation

The establishment of the National Heritage Corridor will provide a number of benefits for the region.

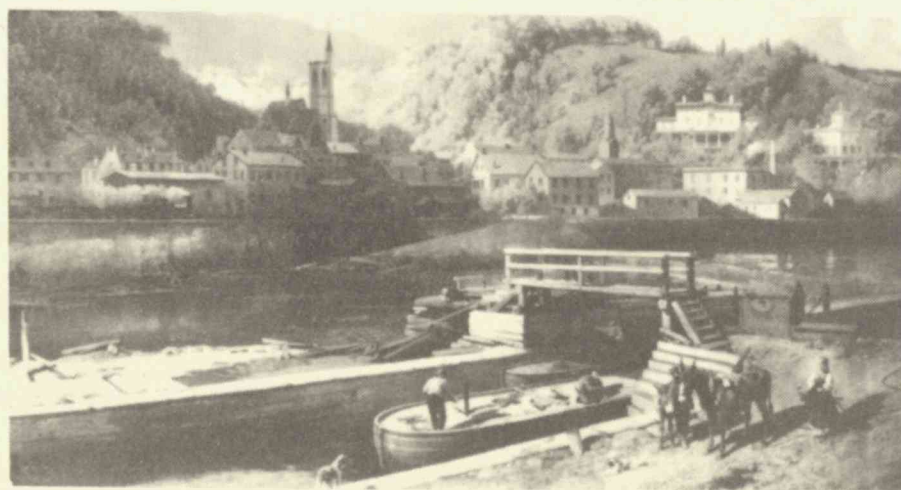
- The designation will bring national attention to the area and its special qualities.

- The resulting growth in the tourism industry and the Corridor's eligibility for federal and state funding from related programs will attract additional private initiatives in development and will make preservation action economically attractive.

- The legislation provides a framework for carefully coordinating what has already been accomplished with current and future initiatives, resulting in the most effective possible plan for the future of the Corridor. It also provides for a citizen voice in forging these decisions.

- Implementation of the plan for the Corridor will help to stimulate revitalization efforts; forging public/private partnerships; identifying development opportunities; and supporting historic preservation, recreation and conservation projects.

- Designation will encourage economic redevelopment that respects the important historic, cultural and recreational resources of the community. The goal is to create new economic vitality while maintaining the high quality of life in the valleys.



National Heritage Corridor. The legislation provides for a planning process that will involve the regional community in discussions and plans about future economic revitalization, stimulation of employment opportunities, and maintenance of the

the Department of Commerce/Economic Development Partnership and the Department of Community Affairs, eight representatives from local government, and eight private citizens.

The Commission will take a proactive role in assisting the

