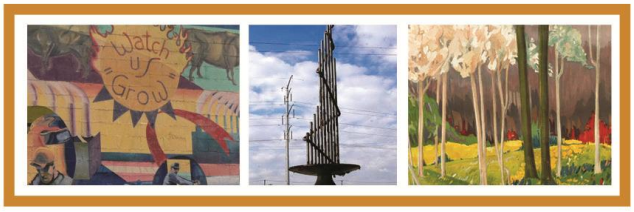

THE ARTS IN NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

The 15th Annual Calumet Heritage Partnership Conference, *Art and Heritage: The Making of the Calumet Region*, explores the role of the arts in expressing, defining, and building connections around heritage in the Calumet region. We hope the conversations that emerge from this meeting will help to establish why the arts matter to a proposed Calumet National Heritage Area and how a national heritage area designation could build on the arts in the region to enhance quality of life.

The arts are important to local economies, residents' and visitors' sense of place, and the building of social bonds (Bender, Morley et al., Silver and Miller, Wali et al.). The arts work well as key components of many existing National Heritage Areas (NHAs), both as unifying assets and as resources that are nurtured by heritage area status. Some NHAs have an obvious strong relationship with the arts; for example, in Louisiana's Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, music and food are recognized as especially prominent aspects of regional heritage (http://www.atchafalaya.org/index.php). However, many NHAs that encompass areas with lesser-known arts culture have worked to highlight local art as a regional strength. For instance, the South Park National Heritage Area in Colorado helps produce an annual music and visual arts gathering called "Festival in the Clouds," and provides visitors an "Artisan Trail" guide to help them locate artists and arts communities that fit their interests (http://www.southparkheritage.org/arts-culture).

The following short summaries highlight the place of the arts in a few NHAs. It is important to remember that each of the 49 NHAs is uniquely structured and thematically focused according to the best judgments of its local organizers and management entity. These examples were selected to show how some NHAs show strong support to the arts and to suggest the diversity of approaches that could be used in a potential Calumet National Heritage Area. [iii]

Atchafalaya National Heritage Area (Louisiana) www.atchafalaya.org

An American-Indian word, "Atchafalaya" (uh-CHA-fuh-lie-uh) means "long river." Established in 2006, the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area stretches across 14 parishes in south-central Louisiana. It is a culturally rich region, home to the widely recognized Cajun culture as well as a diverse population of European, African, Caribbean, and Native-American descent. The heritage area's website is organized under four themes: food, music, language, and tradition. Specific arts and culture highlights include:

Art & Cultural Heritage Tours

- At Baton Rouge, there are museums, exhibits and galleries such as Shaw Center for the Arts, LSU Museum of Art, Baton Rouge Gallery, and the Louisiana Art Science Museum, as well as the Baton Rouge Music Tour and Baton Rouge Culinary Tour.
- Cultural Festival Tours highlight the music, art, food and other traditions of Mardi Gras and Festival Acadiens.
- At Lafayette, there is a Creole Heritage Tour focusing on the food and music of the descendants of African and French settlers. The tour is combined with special events like Festival International de Louisiane. Some of the Creole sites visited are St. Edward's Roman Catholic Church (first church of the first African-American Catholic Parish in the U.S.) and Longfellow-Evangeline State Commemorative Area and Plantation.

School Curricula

- Available for download from the heritage area website, these lessons frame the arts as part of the unique cultural developments that resulted from the intersection of diverse people, historic events, and the natural ecosystem of the region.

Blue Ridge National Heritage Area (North Carolina) www.blueridgeheritage.com

The mission of the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area Partnership is to protect, preserve, interpret, and develop the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of Western North Carolina. The NHA encompasses the twenty-five westernmost counties of North Carolina. Blue Ridge NHA includes the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Blue Ridge Parkway, and the Appalachian Trail. The cultural traditions of the area have their roots in Africa, Europe, and North America. The Blue Ridge NHA presents these traditions under the themes of craft, music, Cherokee heritage, agricultural heritage, and natural heritage. Three examples follow:

Music

The Blue Ridge Music Trails of North Carolina is available as a printed or web based guide to the regions musical offerings, including an events calendar and interactive map.

Crafts

The North Carolina mountains and foothills have become a major center of handmade crafts in the U.S. Today, over 4,000 craftspeople live and work in Western North Carolina, producing traditional and contemporary crafts. The Blue Ridge NHA website has a "Featured Artist" and a "Traditional Artist Directory" to help visitors find artists and art forms.

Cherokee Heritage

Members of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians cultivate traditions and welcome visitors to learn more about Cherokee history and heritage at a variety of locations like the Museum of the Cherokee Indian. On the second Saturday in June, the museum sponsors the "Cherokee Voices Festival" which features craft demonstrations, storytelling, and performances of traditional music and dance. It also offers classes and seminars, including those taught by Cherokee master artists to preserve Cherokee traditions, such as the language, music, and crafts. The Museum also sponsors the Southeast Tribes Festival held during the third weekend in September.

Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area (New York) www.hudsonrivervalley.com/Home.aspx

The Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area collaborates with residents, government agencies, non-profit groups and private partners to interpret, preserve, and celebrate the nationally-significant cultural and natural resources of the Hudson River Valley. The area stretches across the state of New York from Saratoga Springs south nearly to New York City. The Hudson River Valley NHA organizes its work around seven themes: Architecture; Corridor of Commerce; Freedom & Dignity; Art, Artists, and the Hudson River School; Landscapes & Gardens; Revolutionary War; Environment. The Art, Artists, and the Hudson River School theme provides a framework for showcasing museums, art galleries, and historic sites to the Hudson River Valley. A search on the heritage area's website based on this theme produces three pages of museums with historic and contemporary art, historic architecture, and outdoor sculpture gardens or parks. A sampling of the range of these offerings includes:

Museums and Centers

- The Hudson River Museum offers varied attractions from art exhibits to a planetarium and its new interactive Hudson Riverama.
- The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art is an international leader in contemporary art exhibition.
- Storm King Art Center has over 100 monumental sculptures spread across grounds. They explore the relationship between art and nature.

Historic Sites

- Thomas Cole National Historic Site is the home and studio of Thomas Cole, founder of the Hudson River School of landscape painting. It features personal effects and unique vistas.
- Olana State Historic Site, a Persian-style villa was the estate of artist Frederic Edwin Church, who was one of the most important Hudson River School painters.

Churches

Union Church of Pocantico Hills contains modern stained glass by Marc Chagall and Henri Matisse commissioned by the Rockefeller family.

The Illinois &Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor (Illinois) www.iandmcanal.org

The Illinois &Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor runs the roughly 96 miles from Chicago to the Illinois River at La Salle Illinois, following the path of the old I&M Canal. It was the first ever National Heritage Corridor, and is "an outdoor museum where visitors can explore the diverse stories of this living landscape." A major focus of this NHA is sharing the story of how the Canal was greatly responsible for Chicago becoming the most important city in America's Heartland, using this story to draw people to the communities and ecosystems of the corridor. Art is routinely used in telling these stories, reflected in the examples that follow:

Lectures

Lectures organized and promoted through the NHA's speakers' bureau are regular offerings in corridor communities. Some speakers highlight and draw on the arts; as for instance the October 16th, 2014 lecture "Searching for Marquette: A Pilgrimage in Art" drew on monuments and artworks to tell the story of the first European visitors to the region.

Publications

Passage to Chicago: Traveling the Illinois and Michigan Canal in 1860 is a graphic novel commissioned by the Canal Corridor Association and funded through a Kickstarter campaign. It is due for release at the end of 2014. The book uses illustration, graphics, maps and text to tell the story of what it would have been like to travel from LaSalle to Chicago using the Canal in the year before the outbreak of the Civil War. The artist/author Tom Willcockson has a 17 year relationship working with the Canal Corridor Association, is the managing entity of the NHA.

Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area (Mississippi) www.msdeltaheritage.com

The Mississippi Delta National Heritage Area seeks to preserve and promote the landscape, culture, and history of the Mississippi Delta in the northwestern portion of the Mississippi. Social changes swept across the Delta in the 20th century, empowering its majority African American population and focusing America's attention on some of the best and worst moments of the Civil Rights Movement. The Mississippi Delta NHA strives to save vibrant traditions and places, enhance community and cultural pride, and advance the appreciation and understanding of the Delta's important past and its continuing contributions to the American story. The arts are and have been a crucial part of community life and resilience in the Delta and they are important highlights of the heritage area, as exemplified in the following:

The Culture of the Blues and the Birth of an American Sound

Both blues and rock'n'roll sprang from the Mississippi River Delta. These influential musical styles would grow beyond the borders of the region to spread across the United States. The Heritage Area includes 'juke joints' where the blues was cultivated and is still celebrated today. The area also showcases the homes and graves of the people who were active in the development of the blues. Regular festivals keep the traditions of the blues alive.

Growing More than Cotton: The Delta as a Wellspring of Creativity

The area features sites related to the literary culture of the region. The Delta was home to many famous American poets and authors whose work developed in response to the social climate of the area. The works of Tennessee Williams, Walker Percy, William Alexander Percy, and Shelby Foote would resonate with a wide audience and become national classics.

Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area (Pennsylvania) www.riversofsteel.com

Established in 1996, The Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area encompasses seven counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. Rivers of Steel is committed to preserving, interpreting, and managing the historic, cultural, and natural resources related to Big Steel and its related industries. It builds on the area's "transition from heavy industry to high technology and diversified services, and supports the new regional economy by promoting tourism and economic development" based on the region's industrial history. Rivers of Steel NHA not only hosts a large population of artists, art centers, and museums, it is home to one of the more unique examples of an intersection between the arts, heritage, shared history, and community. In 1997, a group of renegade Pittsburgh artists who were members of the Industrial Arts Cooperative broke into the grounds of the shuttered Carrie Furnace site to build a large-scale guerilla art project. They succeeded, and the result was what is now known as "The Carrie Deer," a giant deer head crafted from cast-off materials on site. Rather than decry the sculpture as vandalism, the heritage area chose to celebrate it as an example of placemaking, revitalization of industrial spaces, and celebration of industrial environments. The Carrie Deer is now an iconic symbol of Rivers of Steel NHA, and just this year the heritage area raised funds for the sculpture's conservation. Arts offerings of the Rivers of Steel NHA span the traditional to the contemporary, as illustrated in the examples that follow:

Museums

The Westmoreland Museum of American Art houses a significant collection by internationally recognized American masters, but has been most lauded for its consistent commitment to the arts and artists of Southwestern Pennsylvania. Notable exhibits for their explicit concern with exploring regions were *Made in Pennsylvania: A Folk Art Tradition,* and *Born of Fire: The Valley of Work* that presented the "art, music, and history of Pittsburgh's Big Steel Era."

Art & Architecture in the Ohio-Beaver Route

Saint Nicholas Chapel is the heart of the Carpathian Mountains and the steel mill region of Western Pennsylvania. Its walls are lined with ten colorful and iconic scenes of the life of St. Nicholas of Myra.

Events

The Urban Art Tour & Graffiti Workshop brings learning to the underground culture of graffiti, the history of graffiti and how it continues to evolve today as an art form.

Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area (Iowa) www.silosandsmokestacks.org

The Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area covers the northeast Iowa region, including the cities of Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Davenport, Waterloo, Dubuque, and Iowa City. Its mission is to preserve and tell the story of American agriculture and farm life, and it often uses the arts to carry out this mission. For instance, the NHA partners with the Amana Arts Guild and the Amana Heritage Society to highlight the artisanal traditions of the Amana religious communities first settled in the mid nineteenth century. Additionally, Silos & Smokestacks NHA recently held an event encouraging communities to document and share art objects that were made by residents' ancestors and early settlers to the region. A few other examples of arts in the Silos & Smokestacks NHA follow:

Museums

- Cedar Rapids Museum of Art and the Dubuque Museum of Art offer a general appreciation of art.
- Jenson Meacham Memorial Art Museum and Farm highlights arts through the lens of agriculture.

Events

- The "Art of the People" event/exhibit at the Carnegie Cultural Center focuses on art as a commonality between many cultures.

Centers

- Waterloo Center for the Arts has gallery exhibits, classes, ceramics, digital art studios, and the Phelps Youth Pavilion. The center acts as an interactive children's museum focused on cultural and agricultural exploration.

Schuylkill River National Heritage Area (Pennsylvania) www.schuykillriver.org

The Schuylkill River National Heritage Area is in the valley of the Schuylkill River in southeastern Pennsylvania. It runs from Pottsville to Philadelphia, through Schuylkill, Berks, Chester, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties. The NHA interprets and promotes the river's history during the American Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, as well as its natural environment and recreational use. The Schuylkill River NHA contains a variety of arts offerings. A bit of this range is illustrated in the following examples:

Folk and Traditional Arts

The diverse ethnic communities support a number of traditional artists such as Pennsylvania German redware potters, Ukrainian pisanki (Easter egg) painters, Irish dancers, and Mennonite quilters. Many artists sell their wares at the region's fairs and festivals and at local museum shops and galleries.

Art Centers

Phoenix Village Art Center offers personalized support and instruction to all ages through their community supported educational, studio, and gallery resources.

Public Art

The region has significant public art offerings, with Fairmount Park alone containing around 700 pieces.

South Park National Heritage Area (Colorado) www.southparkheritage.org

The South Park National Heritage Area promotes Central Colorado's mining, recreation, and ranching heritage, promoting the arts as inspired by the mountain landscape and shaped by local resources and heritage. The South Park NHA and its partners aim to connect and highlight arts offerings for area visitors, as exemplified in the following:

Artisans Trail

The Park County Artisans Trail was created to help find local artists and their best quality artwork. Visitors can experience the creative environment as the artists are willing to meet and share their studio workshops. Bucking Horse Gallery and Coyote Creek Gallery are two outlets for people to visit and view art work of the area.

Art & Music

The Festival in the Clouds, which began as a venue for local artists and musicians in 1997, has blossomed into a full-fledged music festival. It features 25 bands and 40 regional artists each year with the addition of children's activities and dancing.

Wheeling National Heritage Area (West Virginia) wheelingheritage.org

The Wheeling National Heritage Area aims to conserve the city's setting, resources, and history, including its role as the birthplace of the state of West Virginia during the Civil War. Due to three major transportation routes: the Ohio River, the National Road, and the B&O Railroad, Wheeling played a crucial role in connecting people and products in the nineteenth century and became a vital manufacturing center. The mission of the Wheeling NHA is to lead community efforts to recognize, communicate, and preserve Wheeling's heritage and serve as a catalyst for economic revitalization through public/private partnerships. The following examples illustrate that efforts to promote pride and historical memory are easily bound up with artistic and aesthetic expression:

The Wheeling Artisan Center

The Artisan Center is a tribute to the city's rich cultural heritage, it includes: The Emporium (shop with a lively mix of arts and crafts), "Made in Wheeling" Exhibits (highlighting industrial heritage), and The Loft (exhibition space for arts/ethnic festivals, etc). Facilities such as the Wheeling Artisan Center, Heritage Port, Intermodal Transportation Center, and Wheeling Stamping build a sense of pride in the core of the city, encouraging new opportunities in the core of the Heritage Area.

Upper Ohio Valley Historical Review

This 42- year-old publication focuses on local history and includes more than 150 articles on topics from exhibition and theater reviews to biographies of influential members in the community. Not only does this publication contain a cache of art and political discourse, the publication itself is also an important collection of local literature and civic pride.

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[iii] Data for the summaries was gathered primarily from each National Heritage Area's website, cited below heritage area name in each entry. We also used 1) The National Park Service's online National Heritage Areas interactive map (http://www.nps.gov/maps/full.html?mapId=01a03739-ab0c-40eb-bc3d-6791d3bb67fa) and 2) The Alliance of National Heritage Areas' similar interactive map (http://www.nationalheritageareas.us/heritage_areas.html) for additional information. They are both portals that link to the websites and other pages about the individual heritage areas.

[ii] This document was prepared by The Field Museum: Madeleine Tudor, Applied Cultural Research Manager; Mario Longoni, Urban Anthropology Manager; Hannah Burnett, Intern; Maricruz Gutierrez, Intern; Tommy Rosenbluth, Volunteer.