

ALLIANCE *of* NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS

CONNECTING THE
Heart & Soul
OF AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA
is helping to preserve Louisiana's Creole culture through the National Register of Historic Places program in Downtown Eunice.



EDITION NO. 8 ★ FEBRUARY 2025

Visit us online at NationalHeritageAreas.us

ANHA PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



SARA CAPEN
Chair, Alliance of National Heritage Areas | Executive Director, Niagara Falls National Heritage Area

Who Tells the Story of Agriculture in America? National Heritage Areas Do.

This past October, the Alliance of National Heritage Areas gathered in Waterloo, Iowa, to experience the remarkable work of the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area. Attendees saw firsthand the powerful partnerships and initiatives preserving the rich agricultural legacy of Iowa, a state whose impact is felt on tables across the nation.

Every day, Americans are connected to Iowa through the food we eat. As the nation's leader in egg, pork, and corn production, Iowa plays a vital role in feeding the country. Yet, too often, we take for granted the connection between our meals and the hardworking farmers who make it all possible.

While Iowa is home to two important National Park Service sites, neither focuses on the story of agriculture. It is

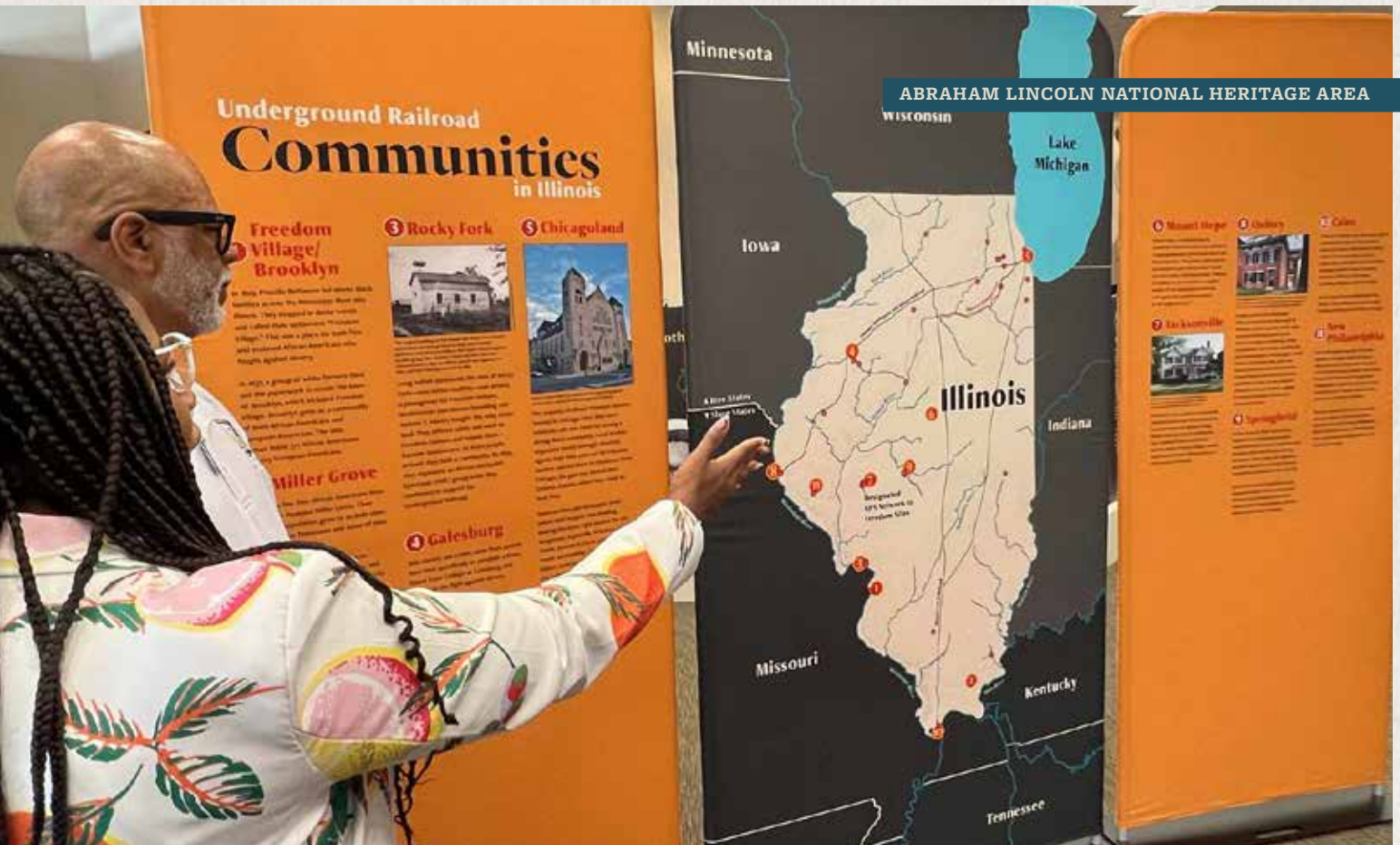


Dave Austin

the mission of the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area to preserve, promote, and protect the sites and stories of agriculture in Iowa. ***Without the Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area, this critical history of agriculture in Iowa simply would not be told.***

The Silos and Smokestacks National Heritage Area is one example of 62 National Heritage Areas leveraging the powerful model of public-private partnerships to revitalize communities that are the founding fabric of our

nation. The heart of National Heritage Areas is the stories of the people who built our country and continue to support it today. Whether it is farmers, steelworkers, coal miners, or auto workers, these are not only the people who built American industries through their labor but also the people who built the communities that Americans call home. National Heritage Areas protect the people and places that make America great.



JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

**ILLINOIS
UNDERGROUND
RAILROAD**



The secretive nature of the Underground Railroad network across the country makes it a difficult topic to share with the public easily. Due to its nature, few written documents, photos, and content are available. So, how does one share a vital story when access to traditional material is unavailable?

This was the challenge of the Abraham Lincoln National Heritage Area (ALNHA), also known as Looking for Lincoln. The heritage area covers a vast swath of Central Illinois. It is mandated to tell the stories of Abraham Lincoln’s life, times, and legacy, including the stories of freedom seekers moving through the area.

Our solution was the creation of a traveling exhibit entitled “Journey to Freedom: The Underground Railroad in Illinois.” ALNHA commissioned a professional firm to design the exhibit. Eight individuals were chosen to tell

the stories of freedom seekers and advocates of the abolitionist movement. Their stories take visitors through the challenges and dangers faced by all those involved; and highlight the many obstacles encountered.

The exhibit is accompanied by classroom educational materials, first-person re-enactment videos, and a custom website that adds an extra dimension to the information presented. Where imagery was unavailable, custom illustrations were produced to bring the individuals to life.

The exhibit is expected to travel the state for the next decade, highlighting this nationwide, yet highly personal, story integral to our state and national heritage. It will have a positive economic impact on each community/organization that hosts the exhibit and promote increased visitation.

IllinoisUGRR.org



TOP: The Missouri River Heritage Mural installation on an Interstate 94 bridge pier, August 2023. The top left is master artist Greta McLain of Goodspace Murals. Mid-right is a local artist trained in the process.

ABOVE: Bismarck Expressway Pedestrian Tunnel Mural painting session at Good Shephard Lutheran Church in Bismarck, North Dakota.

LEFT: Installation of the Carnegie Library's community-driven mural in Grafton, North Dakota.

AMERICAN HERITAGE FROM THE NORTHERN PLAINS

NORTHERN PLAINS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

A HERITAGE OF EXPLORERS, PIONEERS, FARMERS, RANCHERS, AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE ARE INTERTWINED ON AN 80-MILE LENGTH OF THE MISSOURI RIVER IN CENTRAL NORTH DAKOTA.

Lewis and Clark, the Three Affiliated Tribes, immigrant settlers, forts, steamboats, railroads, and more are the stories shaped by the Missouri River in the Northern Plains National Heritage Area (Northern Plains NHA). The Northern Plains NHA interprets, preserves, and educates; we make this heritage relevant by building individual and community pride, increasing tourism, energizing communities, and revitalizing neighborhoods.

The Northern Plains NHA's Missouri River Heritage Mural project coalesced with three goals:

- 1) Create and install a community-informed heritage mural
- 2) Train local artists in the mural-making process through a "train the trainers" approach
- 3) Empower the locally trained artists to seed more heritage murals throughout the Northern Plains NHA and North Dakota

All three goals were realized.

Because of the Northern Plains NHA's initial \$35,000 investment, four murals are in various stages from production to completion. The Missouri River Heritage Mural project's first mural is approximately 40 feet tall and four interstate lanes wide. This completed mural is on a bridge pier on Interstate 94 in central North Dakota.

Community input sessions informed the heritage content of the mural. This included cultural elements: a young man with a traditional braid and the words Mni Waconi on his shirt, which is Lakota for "water is life"; the Hidatsa heirloom gardener, Maxi'diwiac, or Buffalo Bird Woman; and immigrant groups represented by the Germans-from-Russia farmers and the Scandinavian/

Norwegian wood carvings. Elements of nature also populate the mural.

After the North Dakota Department of Transportation's Tribal Consultation Committee reviewed the design, the community production started. Over 400 community hands under-painted the first colors on large fabric squares. Juniper Environmental, LLC donated art space. Historic downtown Bismarck, the BisMarket at Kiwanis Park, the Sons of Norway Park (Sverdrup Lodge #107), and the Bismarck Veteran's Memorial Public Library hosted painting sessions. After the under-painting, master artists over-painted each piece and assembled the mural on the concrete bridge pier.

Inspired by the Missouri River Heritage Mural, the Grafton Beautification Committee mobilized and commissioned a mural for their historic Carnegie Library. The Bismarck Expressway pedestrian tunnel mural is in production and will be installed in the summer. A fourth mural is already planned for Mandan, North Dakota. Additional Northern Plains NHA murals are underway in partnership with the Bismarck Parks & Recreation District, AARP North Dakota, Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health, and the Missouri Valley Heritage Alliance-Fort Abraham Lincoln Foundation.

The Northern Plains NHA's original \$35,000 Missouri River Heritage Mural investment in this community mural process resulted in more than \$350,000 in non-federal investment in public murals in the Northern Plains NHA and throughout North Dakota. Just as important, hundreds upon hundreds of residents have been brought together in conversation and community. The Northern Plains NHA and North Dakota now boast several trained artists who can activate and teach our community-driven mural-making process.

Revitalization in Oil City

You've got to know when to hold 'em; know when to fold 'em. The Oil Region Alliance, manager of the Oil Region National Heritage Area (Oil Region NHA) in northwestern Pennsylvania is doing just that with two revitalization projects in Oil City.

The Oil Region NHA is holding the 65-acre, four-building Venango Campus transferred by Pennsylvania Western University Clarion following the closure of the branch. By seeking new tenants, the Oil Region NHA will ensure the property flourishes once again. The Oil Region NHA is providing opportunities for local vocational instruction to expand literally in terms of classroom space as well as class size and potential scope. We are also preserving the intention of the original donors by maintaining the location as a vibrant center for education and the arts with additional outdoor recreation offerings, which can be enjoyed by residents and guests alike.

The Oil Region NHA is folding a 1960s hotel, and by folding, we mean razing the building and preparing the site for new development. Besides being dilapidated beyond reasonable repair, the structure's current position blocks the downtown's access to the Allegheny River and adjacent Justus Park, a trailhead along the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail and gathering point for live music and community celebrations. Removing this physical barrier is a major step forward in reimagining the riverfront with better connections to the downtown. Furthermore, this project symbolizes the Oil Region NHA's reprioritization of outdoor recreation amenities central to community enhancement efforts and parallel to historic preservation projects.



NATIONAL AVIATION HERITAGE AREA

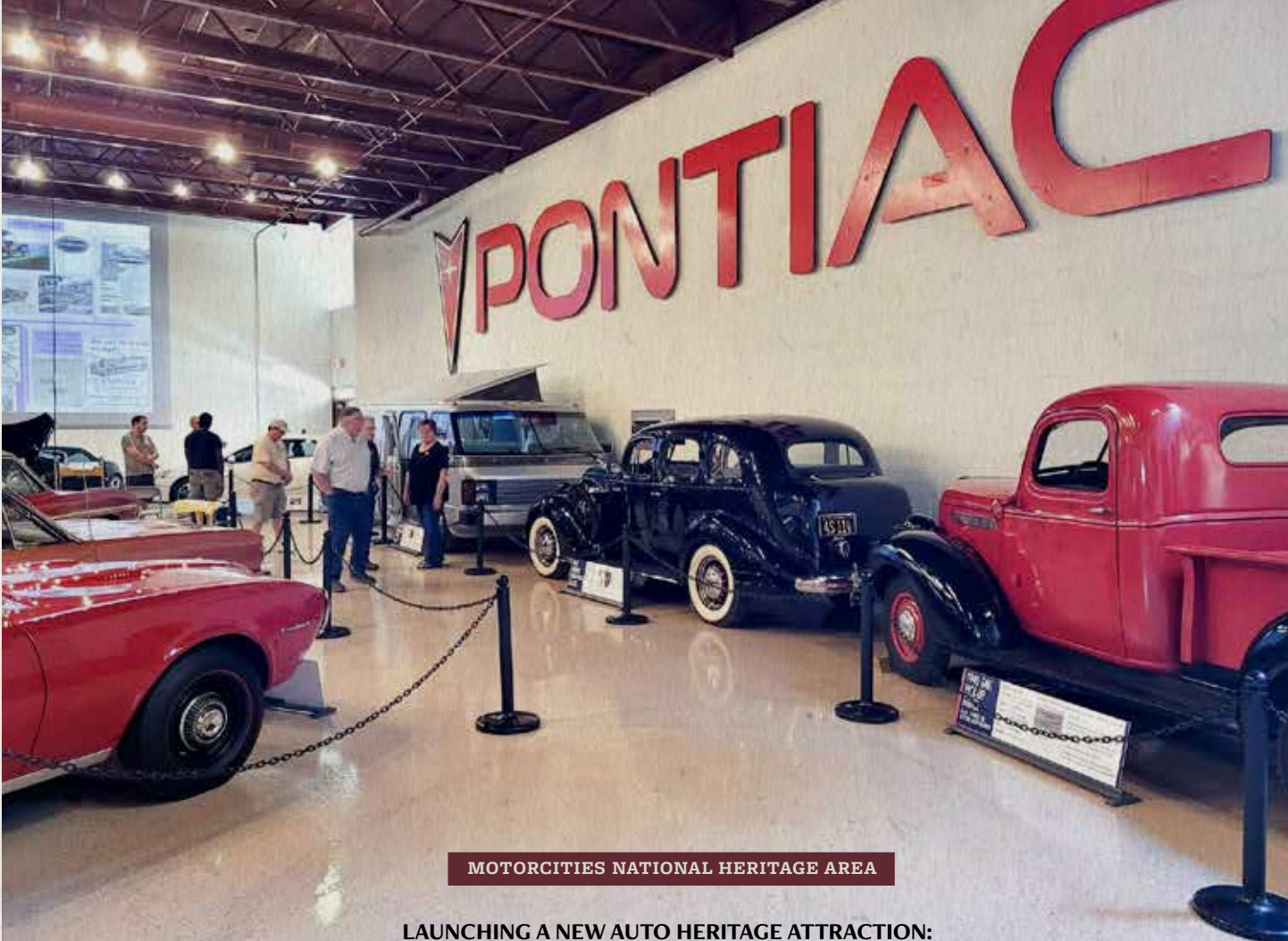
New Tourism Trail Celebrates Ohio's Pioneering Aviation and Space Leadership

From the Wright brothers' invention of powered flight to Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon, Ohio is known for world-renowned aviation and aerospace pioneers. In 2024, the National Aviation Heritage Area (National Aviation HA) partnered with the Ohio Travel Association to unite more than 30 aviation and space heritage sites in the Ohio Air & Space Trail, a program of the America250-Ohio Commission. The trail features seven themes: innovation, training, preservation & flying experiences, service to country, the birth of aviation, space exploration, and aviation feats & spectacles.

The trail grew out of earlier work by the National Aviation HA, the State of Ohio, and JobsOhio in 2021 to leverage the state's aviation and space heritage as one tool in the economic development toolkit to promote the State of Ohio as the best place to do aviation and aerospace business today. Historians can draw a direct line between the Wright brothers' technical flights at Huffman Prairie Flying Field to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, the state's largest single-site employer with more than 38,000 people working inside the fence. And Ohio is the top supplier to Airbus and Boeing according to JobsOhio, the state's economic development agency.

The National Aviation HA's mission is to preserve and develop aviation and space assets and promote the heritage and future of aerospace. The National Aviation HA is excited to continue leveraging Ohio's aviation and space heritage with this trail and other economic development projects.

The Ohio Air & Space Trail road trip information is available at America250-Ohio.org/trails-and-tales.



MOTORCITIES NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

**LAUNCHING A NEW AUTO HERITAGE ATTRACTION:
The Pontiac Transportation Museum**

A highlight of 2024 in Michigan’s MotorCities National Heritage Area was the opening of the Pontiac Transportation Museum, the area’s first brand-new attraction in many years.

This new museum, located in a repurposed elementary school donated to an enterprising group of volunteers, was years in the making. The MotorCities National Heritage Area supported efforts to make the new attraction a reality with grant funding and promotional assistance.

“MotorCities [National Heritage Area] was essential to the

Pontiac Transportation Museum getting off to a successful start,” said Terry Connolly, chair of the organization’s board. “They provided timely and targeted grants, which inspired more donations from generous individuals. Perhaps even more important was their role in facilitating cross-talk within our region and publicizing some of our early progress.”

A ribbon cutting was held in July at a grand opening event, and the Pontiac Transportation Museum was off and running. The museum tells the story of the variety of vehicles manufactured in Pontiac -- not just the ones

carrying the General Motors brand of the same name.

The venture is already creating a positive impact in a city that has experienced 40 years of economic decline due to industrial disinvestment. Just under 4,000 visitors from multiple US states and 15 countries have enjoyed the museum in its first seven months.

As part of phase two, another 10,000 square feet of space will open in the spring of 2025, featuring even more vehicles from the museum’s impressive collection.

WALKTOBER



The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor collaborates with more than 130 partner organizations annually to create Walktober, our signature program for exploring the Heritage Corridor during peak fall foliage season. This year, Walktober drew more than 110,000 people to our rural regions of Connecticut and Massachusetts.

Partnerships are the driving force of The Last Green Valley Heritage Corridor's work to ensure our rural slice of the northeast remains that way

despite being in one of the nation's most developed and populated regions. Walktober, in its 34th year, relies on those connections to bring more than 250 unique programs to the public from the autumnal equinox in September to the first weekend of November. Visitors and residents experience hikes, bikes, farm tours, historic and cultural events, and more highlights that make The Last Green Valley National Heritage Corridor extraordinary. Walktober has attracted tourists from all over the northeast, the nation, and beyond (including

Europe and South America) to enjoy fall in New England.

By partnering with local farms, businesses, and non-profits, Walktober participants are encouraged to visit farm stands, restaurants, museums, natural areas, and historic New England villages and downtowns. Studies show that outdoor recreation and heritage cultural programming enhance local economies, and The Last Green Valley's Walktober significantly boosts The Last Green Valley Heritage Corridor's communities every year.

HONORING AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE

The Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area (Crossroads NHA) is dedicated to connecting the people and places of New Jersey's rich Revolutionary heritage to inspire community pride, stewardship, and civic engagement. Situated in one of the original 13 colonies, the Crossroads NHA raises the profile of New Jersey's crucial participation in the American Revolution. Working with local historical agencies, nonprofits, and statewide partners, the Crossroads NHA fosters economic growth through heritage tourism, marketing, public education, and professional development for its Heritage Partners and the public.

The Crossroads NHA's branded interpretive signage program recognizes events and places significant to the American Revolution at heritage area and statewide sites, builds relationships between nonprofits and businesses to support the program, and leverages those relationships to strengthen local economies.

The Crossroads NHA is the nonprofit partner working with the New Jersey Historical Commission, a division of the New Jersey Department of State, to plan New Jersey's official commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution. Authorized by the state legislature, the partnership, RevolutionNJ, is working to engage the entire state in the commemoration through a series of initiatives exploring the history of the American Revolution, its context, and its legacy. Developing school curricula with the New Jersey Department of Education, promoting local government and organization participation, presenting public programs such as Tavern Talks, and supporting reenactments of some major battles of the war, the Crossroads NHA and RevolutionNJ are in the thick of things. Learn more at RevolutionaryNJ.org.



REMEMBERING THE FREEDOM SEEKERS

Illinois and Chicago played an important role in the experience of freedom seekers. Before the Civil War, thousands of freedom seekers traveled from the South seeking to escape enslavement. Many passed through Chicago's south side. Chicago provided a place to rest before they moved on to Canada. Bronzeville-Black Metropolis National Heritage Area and partner organizations are researching the history of the Chicago to Detroit Freedom Trail, also known as the historic Sauk Trail; the goals are to identify, preserve, and promote historic places along the route in Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan.

Indigenous people used the Sauk Trail for centuries to travel back and forth from what is now Detroit to the Mississippi River. In 1825, the federal government signed an agreement with the Potawatomi Indians that allowed the use of the Sauk Trail during the country's westward expansion into new territories. Freedom seekers followed the same path.

A significant place along the Chicago to Detroit Freedom Trail is within the Bronzeville-Black Metropolis National Heritage Area. The Quinn Chapel AME, one of the oldest black congregations in Chicago, was a place of safety and comfort for many freedom seekers. It will be the starting point of the Chicago to Detroit Freedom Trail.

Bronzeville-Black Metropolis National Heritage Area is working with Quinn Chapel as they create a museum that curates both the stories of freedom seekers and the story of the Great Migration. The collaboration includes providing tours to people visiting the area and verifying historical facts surrounding other regional freedom sites.





Above: Hurricane Helene left most counties within the Blue Ridge NHA devastated. Pictured is the Riverview Station Art Center in Asheville, NC.

Right: White Horse Black Mountain hosts a fundraising concert featuring Unspoken Tradition—proceeds benefited affected community members.



RALLYING BEHIND OUR COMMUNITIES IN
THE **WAKE** OF
HURRICANE HELENE

On September 27, 2024, Hurricane Helene destroyed Western North Carolina. A majority of the 25 counties within the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area boundaries were among those most impacted. Water and wind swept through entire communities, roads, and forests. Water, power, and communications were impacted for weeks in many areas, with some towns still lacking services. Additionally, the region's economy is heavily tourism-based. The storm hit during peak leaf season and left many in economic peril, with a 70% drop in tourism.

In response to this tragedy, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area has worked to connect partners with resources. We created a comprehensive online resource page, Hurricane Helene Recovery - Updates and Resources, which can be found at BlueRidgeHeritage.com/hurricane-helene-aftermath-updates-and-resources/. We assessed damage to people and places through surveys and one-on-one contact and advocated for federal, state, and private support.

A craft magazine will be published in January 2025 to help direct visitors and locals to artists, galleries, and other organizations that are sites on our Blue Ridge Craft Trails. We've also launched an online Winter Market to help promote sales for craft artists.

The Blue Ridge National Heritage Area launched the Heritage Hearth charity drive, collecting handmade knit and crochet items for the residents of Western North Carolina. Individuals and organizations nationwide have sent boxes of warmth and hope. To learn more about Heritage Hearth, visit us at BlueRidgeHeritage.com/heritage-hearth-a-handmade-charity-drive/.

To support traditional musicians and venues, the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area partnered with White Horse-Black Mountain to host a fundraising relief concert featuring the band Unspoken Tradition.

Appalachian traditions and natural open spaces are essential to maintaining our culture's identity in adversity. Heritage sites, music and craft artists, venues, the outdoors, and cultural festivals are the backbone of our rural towns, generating consistent foot traffic and supporting ancillary businesses such as restaurants, lodging, and transportation services.

As the Blue Ridge National Heritage Area continues to plan its part in helping rebuild this unique and vital area, we see hope and resilience among our people and feel gratitude to all who provide aid.



Empowering Eunice

Located in south-central Louisiana, the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area works to enhance the unique identity of our American landscape by preserving and promoting our heritage and fostering progress for local champions who create authentic, powerful connections between people, culture, and the environment. Atchafalaya National Heritage Area's Community Empowerment program provides technical assistance to rural communities in the Heritage Area to create and enhance community spaces and connections to recreational and cultural assets.

Louisiana Main Street, with assistance from the Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, Eunice Main Street, the Acadiana Planning Commission, and the Eunice Chamber of Commerce, applied to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for downtown Eunice. Recognition as an NRHP district would affirm downtown Eunice's historic relationship to Creole culture in Louisiana. Additionally, NRHP certification allows eligible historical buildings, like the Liberty Theatre and surrounding structures, to take advantage of state and federal tax credits on renovation projects. As many historical buildings are directly tied to Creole and Cajun culture, keeping these buildings in use

ATCHAFALAYA NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA



is critical to preserving that history and encouraging rural economic development.

The partnerships formed during this process will enhance efforts to preserve Creole culture in Eunice. Aside from using tax credits to revitalize historic buildings, other streetscape improvements are being considered. The Atchafalaya National Heritage Area, working with state and local partners, will continue the momentum and utilize Eunice's past to inform its future.

SANGRE DE CRISTO NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Preservation & Interpretation

The Sangre de Cristo National Heritage Area (SdCNHA) covers over 3,000 square miles in south-central Colorado. It is named after the 14,000-foot Sangre de Cristo Mountains that define the eastern edge of the San Luis Valley (one of North America's largest alpine valleys). Evolving over 11,000 years of human habitation, the area showcases a unique blend of Native American, Hispano, and Anglo cultures reflected in its people, art, and traditions. The area's

geographic isolation and its residents' strong ties to the land have helped preserve its rich cultural heritage.

The SdCNHA participated in restoring and preserving the Sociedad Protección Mutua de Trabajadores Unidos (SPMDTU) Headquarters in Antonito, Colorado. The SPMDTU was created to combat the exploitation of Hispanic workers by mine owners in the San Luis Valley. The building is now meticulously restored to its original condition, with community plans to ensure its relevance and future use. For more information, visit SPMDTU.org.

The SdCNHA creates interpretive signage for key historic sites within the heritage area, including three signs at the former location of the "Mexican School." The school was central to the Maestas Case, a pivotal moment in the fight against educational segregation by the Mexican-American community in southern Colorado. For more information, visit MaestasCase.com.

The SdCNHA is dedicated to preserving and interpreting the rich history of southern Colorado and collaborates with residents to highlight key cultural milestones. By engaging communities and supporting historic preservation, the SdCNHA celebrates our shared past and creates opportunities for future growth and development.



REMEMBERING THE *AMERICAN REVOLUTION*

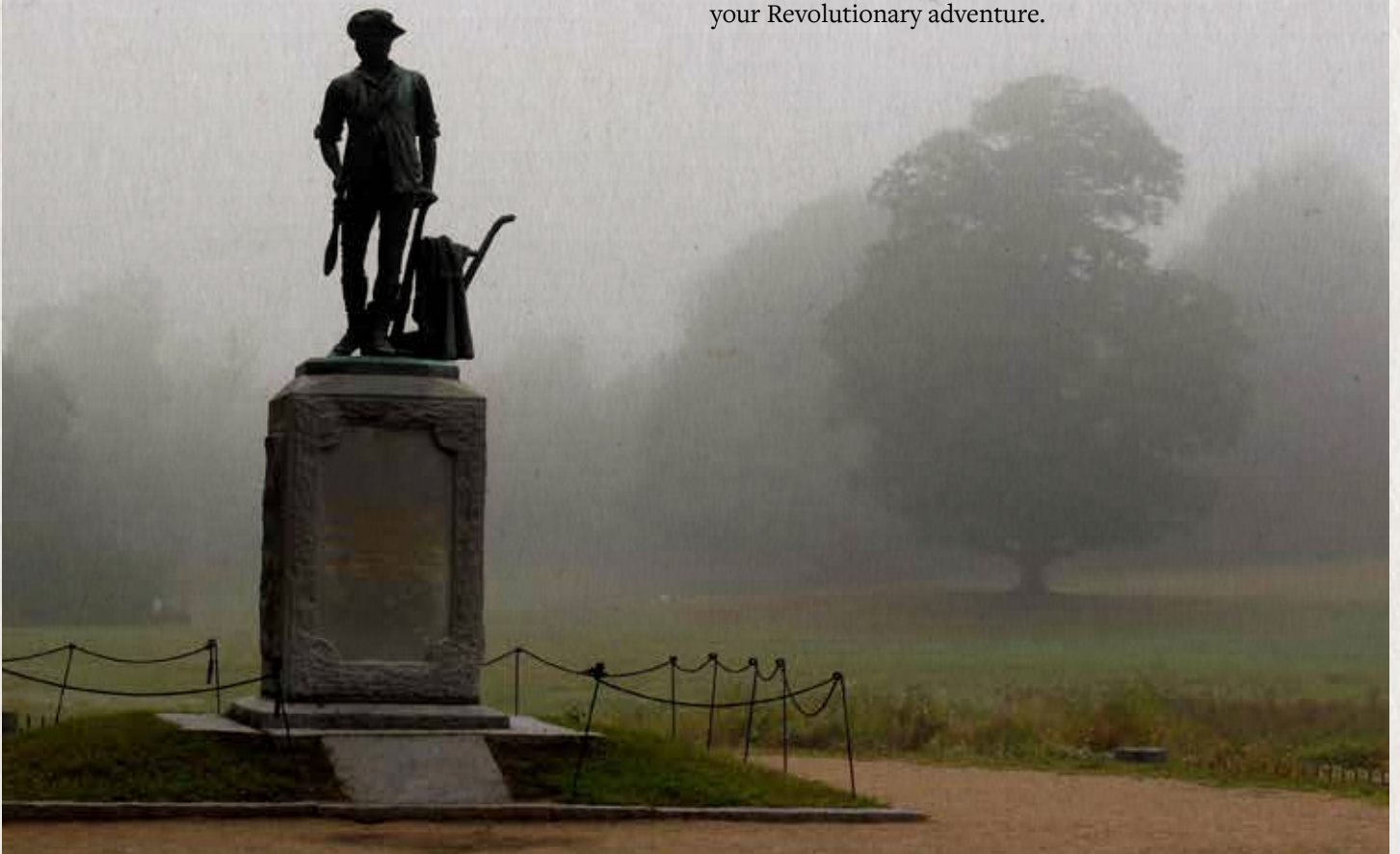
The American Revolution began within the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area (Freedom's Way NHA) and the region's sense of place is deeply tied to those seminal events. To support the 45 communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire within the Heritage Area as they commemorate the founding of our country, Freedom's Way NHA initiated *Revolutionary Stories: The Enduring Legacies of the American Revolution in the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area*, a multi-year endeavor to gather, record, interpret, and share stories about the people, places, events, and objects in the Heritage Area that relate to the period before, during, and after the American Revolution.

Revolutionary Stories is complemented by a series of curated, themed, itineraries featuring sites within the region with ties to the American Revolution.

How We Remember: A Survey of Revolutionary War Monuments, Memorials, and Markers in the Freedom's Way National Heritage Area, a comprehensive overview of the region's commemorative landscape with ties to the American Revolution, explores the evolution of more than 175 memorials, monuments, and markers within the Heritage Area to provide historical context that expands beyond Concord and Lexington and records who is memorialized and how.

Available through an interactive website that is a permanent repository of the project, *How We Remember* enhances public understanding of the Heritage Area's social and cultural fabric and the representation of the American Revolution within its communities.

Visit [Freedomsway.org](https://freedomsway.org) and download our free app, "Explore Freedom's Way NHA," to plan your Revolutionary adventure.





CACHE LA POUFRE RIVER
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

CACHE LA POUFRE RIVER:

WATER, WATER... EVERY WHERE?

The Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area in northern Colorado promotes the American story of agriculture, innovations in irrigation, water measurement, and water law which are vital economic drivers. This history is woven into the Heritage Area's identity. The Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area works to create a better understanding of the Cache la Poudre River as a lifeline to settlement and development in a mountainous desert region.

In 1874, conflict over water in the Poudre River reached a boiling point. Farmers who relied on the Poudre to keep their crops and gardens thriving woke up to find the river dry. Upstream neighbors were diverting water for irrigation. Their compromise laid the groundwork for what is now called Western Water Law, introducing the famous

premise "First in Time, First in Right," which is still the go-to rule in Colorado and many western states.

Moving forward 150 years, the region still struggles with water conflicts: usage, storage, cost, conservation, and quality. But today the Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area brings partners together to find solutions.

In 2025, the Cache la Poudre River National Heritage Area will host the 10th annual Poudre River Forum, where industry professionals, landowners, legislators, and community members will gather to learn about history and tackle water issues. This Forum celebrates our community's ongoing quest to manage our heritage and resources as the world transforms with new technology, people on the move, and the sands of time.



HISTORIC REVITALIZATION: Bruce Street School

ARABIA MOUNTAIN NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area spans 40,000 acres of the Georgia Piedmont, encompassing powerful historic sites, beautiful greenspaces, and two massive granite outcrops (called “monadnocks”) that defined life in our region. Converging on this landscape are intriguing cultural histories: from early settlers to immigrant rock cutters, freed slaves to Trappist monks.

“The Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area connects and shares the powerful history, rich culture, and engaging landscapes of this National Heritage Area for the benefit and enjoyment of all,” said the heritage area’s Executive Director Revonda Cosby. “In doing so, we revitalize some communities while bringing new recreational amenities and heritage opportunities to others.”

A key preservation project is the historic Bruce Street School. For several years, the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area has spearheaded a community-informed stabilization and revitalization of the ruins of DeKalb County’s first public school for Black folks.

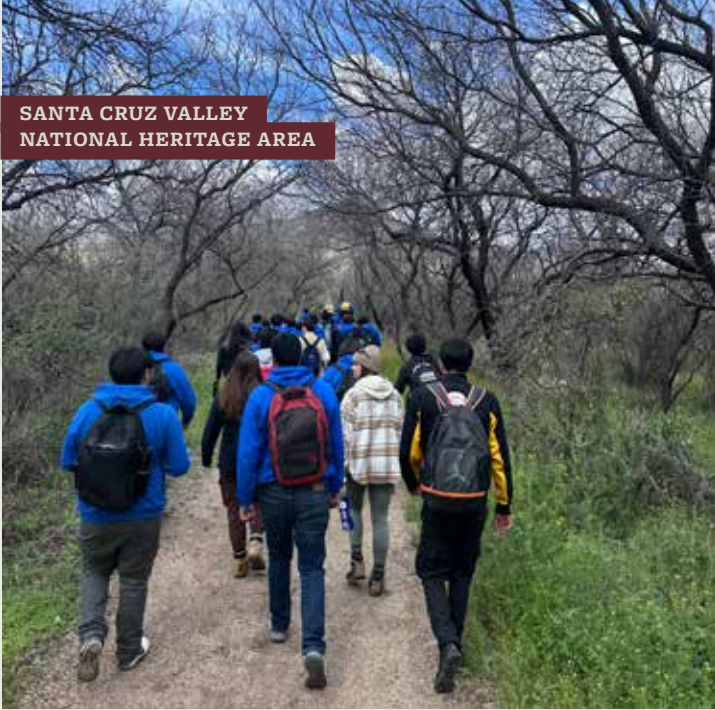
This tiny schoolhouse is a testament to Black education in the Jim Crow South. Some big names passed through

its granite-lined doors including Marcia Glenn Hunter, the first Black and female mayor of Lithonia, Georgia, and Howard Nathaniel Lee, the first Black mayor of Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

The revitalization has involved community engagement sessions, fundraising, and stabilization and

cleanup of the historic structure built by quarry workers nearly a century ago. Now contractors are ready to break ground on an approximately \$2-million transformation. Soon the crumbling edifice will shine as an outdoor museum and classroom dedicated to the resilient Bruce Street community.





INSPIRING YOUTH LEADERSHIP

The backbone of the Santa Cruz Valley National Heritage Area (Santa Cruz Valley NHA) is the Santa Cruz River in Southern Arizona. In 1775-76, an expedition of 240 people traveled 1,200 miles along this river to settle present-day San Francisco, California. Today, many initiatives of the Santa Cruz Valley NHA utilize the river as a vital community resource connecting our residents to the history, culture, and natural resources of the Santa Cruz Valley, despite the river's heavy pollution.

One Santa Cruz Valley NHA project hosted 140 high school students from the border town of Nogales, Arizona on guided tours of Tumacácori National Historical Park. The students learned about the region's unique culture and natural history at the Tumacácori mission. Hiking the Anza Trail, they explored the historical and archaeological

significance of the river and discovered how human and animal trails evolve, intersect, and affect all life. They trekked to a marshy river area by a 16-acre trash dam; large-scale garbage removal isn't possible, so community volunteers regularly come together to pitch in and pick up trash.

From their experience in the Santa Cruz Valley NHA, the students gained first-hand knowledge about the connections between natural, cultural, and historic resources. They were inspired to see the future of our heritage as part of their responsibility. The students' growth reminds us that valuing our past and our communities are the first steps in creating an inspired future — and that makes the work of the Santa Cruz Valley NHA so worthwhile.

CELEBRATING THE FOREST

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area promotes “forest heritage” in West Virginia and western Maryland. We focus on how human culture and the natural world have influenced and transformed each other to create our unique heritage area. We increase the capacity and amplify the work of willing partners in 18 rural counties. Our forest heritage story is told through projects in community development, conservation, and celebrating cultural and historical assets.

In 2023, a new matching grant program was established to award \$200,000 in grants to communities and non-profits which, in turn, leveraged an additional \$429,906 in matching funds raised by the grantees. Now in its second year, our grant program is re-invigorating our communities with investments in heritage education, visitor signage, and cultural tourism readiness.

Another important program is our partnership with AmeriCorps. This year we supported 34 AmeriCorps members at 20 organizations whose sites, programs, and activities saw over 39,860 attendees. These members delivered educational programs to over 5,000 people, treated and improved 1,052 acres of public land, and managed 1,501 hours of volunteer service. Our members assist local non-profits and federal and state agencies in educating students about the region's plants and animals; they teach summer campers skills to research their community's historical events.

The Appalachian Forest National Heritage Area is a public-private partnership that works hand-in-hand with residents in their communities to celebrate their heritage and tell their stories. We are delighted with our success in promoting our unique Appalachian culture while improving the region's economic opportunities.



**YUMA CROSSING
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA**

RESTORING THE LOWER COLORADO RIVER

The Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area (Yuma-Crossing NHA) has been working with the Yuma, Arizona community to reclaim a jungle of non-native vegetation (and a haven for crime) along its Colorado River waterfront. During the past twenty years, under the leadership of the Yuma-Crossing NHA, 400 acres of wetlands have been restored at the Yuma East Wetlands (YE-Wetlands).

The Yuma-Crossing NHA manages the YE-Wetlands on behalf of its partners: the Quechan Indian Tribe, the City of Yuma, the Arizona Game & Fish Department, and the United States Bureau of Reclamation (BOR). As a living but challenged landscape, the YE-Wetlands need constant care. In recent years, the Yuma-Crossing NHA has embarked on many initiatives to protect and enhance this precious resource.

- The Yuma-Crossing NHA amassed \$500,000 in funding and completed the Sunset View Wildlife Area in June 2024. Volunteers planted hundreds of trees at this new community nature park.
- In February 2024, the BOR committed five million dollars to increase the YE-Wetlands' long-term efficiency of operations. The design of capital infrastructure and improvements is currently underway.
- The Yuma-Crossing NHA is sharing its wealth of technical expertise with the Cocopah Indian Tribe helping expand restoration efforts throughout the area.

In March 2024, the YE-Wetlands was honored with the prestigious Environmental Excellence Award for Natural Environmental Preservation from Arizona Forward, an advocacy organization for the sustainability of Arizona's environment.

Through its many partners, volunteers, and the Yuma-Crossing NHA's entrepreneurial spirit the YE-Wetlands serves as a model for wetlands restoration in the Desert Southwest.



AmeriCorps Members like Kacey Shifflett assist state agencies like the West Virginia Division of Forestry with educational programs for local youth.



Volunteer tree planting event at the new Sunset View Wildlife Area

BRINGING THE STORY OF *American Agriculture* TO LIFE THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

SILOS & SMOKESTACKS NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

The story of American agriculture is a powerful one. The food we export has kept much of the world from starving. Iowa's only National Heritage Area, the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area (Silos & Smokestacks NHA) tells the story of Iowans leading the charge in American agriculture. In 1996, Congress recognized northeast Iowa's nationally significant resources and heritage related to American agriculture. With its headquarters located in Waterloo, the heritage area is spread over thirty-seven counties in northeastern Iowa.

The Silos & Smokestacks NHA emerged from the 1980's Farm Crisis as seven community volunteers searched for solutions to revitalize downtown Waterloo. The group discovered rich stories and resources that stretched beyond local city boundaries and encompassed a broad vision with many potential partners.

"Strong partnerships are the foundation of the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area. Through a network of sites, we are preserving and telling the story of American agriculture, and its global significance, with the help of partnerships and activities celebrating the land, people, and communities," said Candy Welch-Streed, Director of Partnerships.

The Silos & Smokestacks NHA has created a regional heritage tourism

program involving more than 80 communities and 117 sites and attractions. The diverse sites range from large museums with million-dollar budgets and large agricultural manufacturers, to small agricultural businesses, working farms, and volunteer-led community historical societies. Together, the Silos & Smokestacks NHA sites allow visitors to experience the story of agriculture in many places: in small towns and larger cities; along trails and country roads; and on farms, in natural areas, at local museums, and in historic buildings.

The Silos & Smokestacks NHA has built the framework — interpretation, signage system, site exhibits, visitor guides and rack cards, visitor kiosks, tours, and educational websites — that ties the agriculture stories from various sites together to create a quality visitor experience.

For nearly 30 years, the Silos & Smokestacks NHA has invested directly in its heritage area sites to help meet the mission of conducting preservation and interpretation activities connected to American agriculture. These investments include technical assistance, seed money for new projects and programs, educational assistance, capacity building, and awareness-building activities, thus elevating the quality of the heritage area individually and collectively.





Katharine Vogel

Hansen's Dairy

Hansen's Dairy has been in the family for more than 150 years. They started marketing their milk in 2004 to boost revenue so the family could farm together. Jordan Hansen shared, "We have benefited from Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area grants. A useful one has been the bus grants, which the Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area provides for school field trips. As a result, we have had a lot of students visit that otherwise would not have been able to."



Paul Grillo



Charley Stames

Wapsipinicon Mill Museum

"We would be lost without [the] Silos & Smokestacks National Heritage Area," said Leanne Harrison, a volunteer with the Wapsipinicon Mill Museum. "The heritage area has a large network we do not have access to without them. They are instrumental in boosting our visitor numbers."

SALUTE TO OUR 2025 HERITAGE CHAMPIONS

National Heritage Areas facilitate locally-driven economic development and conservation projects in hundreds of communities across 36 states and territories. This work would not be possible without steadfast support

from those who champion National Heritage Areas at the state and federal levels. We gratefully honor the Alliance of National Heritage Areas' 2025 Heritage Champions.



Sen. Ben Cardin (MD)



Rep. Raul Grijalva (AZ)



Rep. Darin LaHood (IL)

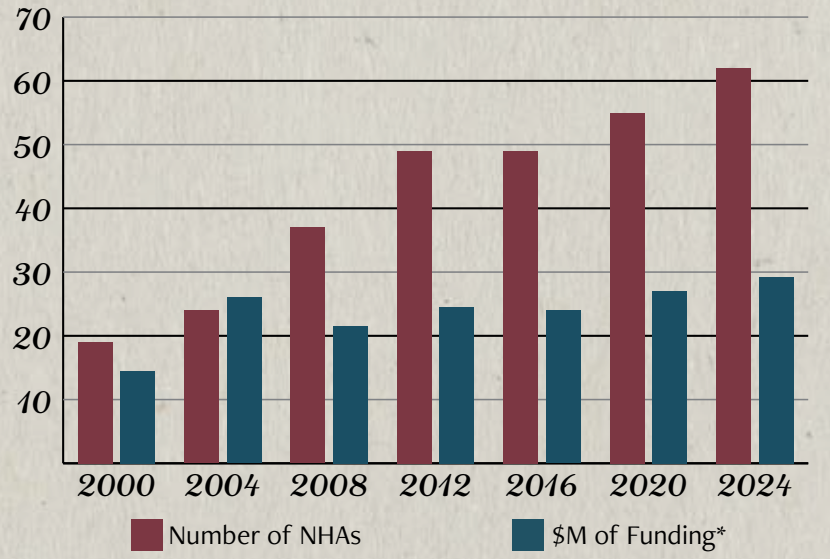


Gov. Doug Burgum (ND)

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREAS: Efficient, Effective, Essential

National Heritage Areas (NHAs) leverage public-private partnerships to make the most of every federal dollar appropriated by Congress. NHAs unite individual citizens, community organizations, and businesses to revitalize economies and achieve locally determined conservation goals. In the last 25 years, the number of NHAs has more than tripled – a testament to the effectiveness of NHAs. Funding for NHAs, however, has not kept pace with this increase, especially when adjusted for inflation. In 2004, NHAs each received, on average, \$1 million (adjusted for inflation to 2024) annually. Today, the average funding per NHA is roughly half that. The goal is to authorize appropriations at a level allowing all NHAs to meet their National Park Service-approved management plans, a figure of \$34 million at the current number of NHAs. While this small program represents less than 1% of the National Park Service budget, it is one of the Department of Interior's most cost-effective programs. Historically, NHAs have leveraged public-private partnerships to match every federal dollar with \$5.50 in local, state, private, and corporate investments into local communities.

*Designation of new NHAs has outpaced funding increases.
\$34 million is needed to ensure all NHAs can achieve
the goals of their management plans.*



**Adjusted for inflation to 2024 value*

To join the Congressional caucus on National Heritage Areas, please contact:

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