

Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area Feasibility Study



Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area Feasibility Study Overview

The upper Housatonic Valley is noted for its scenic landscape and traditional New England towns. Writers, artists, and vacationers have visited the region for over 150 years, making it one of the country's leading cultural resorts. Incomparable to communities in the hills of western Massachusetts and northwestern Connecticut, the upper Housatonic Valley is considered by many to be the epitome of a civilized, independent, and thoughtful retreat.

Many visitors and residents alike, however, are unaware of the underlying history and culture that have shaped and been shaped by the region's landscape. The

Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area has been proposed as a means of heightening appreciation of the region, preserving its natural and historic resources, improving the local economy and quality of life, controlling undesirable growth, and promoting the clarity of the Housatonic River.

Under the federal Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area Study Act of 2000, the National Park Service has conducted a study of the suitability and feasibility of establishing the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area in Connecticut and Massachusetts. The report, addressing eight general criteria for creating a national heritage area, found that the upper Housatonic Valley is a singular, geographical and cultural region. The valley has made significant na-

tional contributions through its iron, paper, and electrical equipment industries, its scenic beautification and environmental conservation efforts, and literary, artistic, musical, and architectural achievements.

The feasibility study examined three management alternatives for achieving these objectives: 1) Continuing current practices; 2) Establishing a national heritage area; 3) Creating a privately organized local heritage area. The study recommended the alternative of a national heritage area as the most effective for accomplishing the region's goals. A heritage area would enhance the quality of historical, cultural, and natural attractions and increase connections between them. Continuing current practices would not provide any new resources or avenues for celebrating and preserving the region's heritage,

while a privately organized heritage area would lack the prestige and the resources of a national heritage area. Creating a national heritage area in the Upper Housatonic Valley requires congressional designation.

The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (UHVNHA) has served as the catalyst for the heritage area study. UHVNHA, which has a broad membership of nonprofit organizations, local governments, and interested individuals, is proposed to be the organizational entity to manage the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area. UHVNHA was incorporated as a private nonprofit organization in 2000 to promote creation of a national heritage area. This heritage group has organized special projects, including historic tours, walking tours, conferences, and brochures.

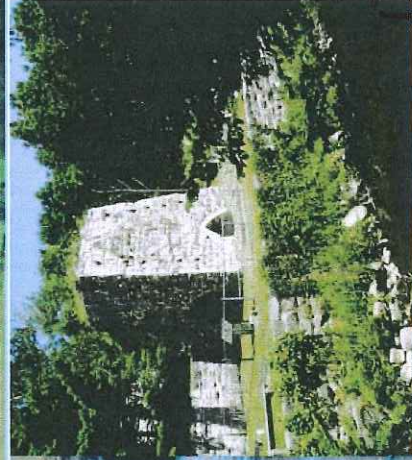


Illustration: Robert G. Schmitt, courtesy of the author. Photo: Bob M. Smith

Heritage Themes of the Upper Housatonic Valley

The feasibility study has identified four major themes that tell the story of the upper Housatonic Valley. The heritage themes reflect a strong "sense of place" and are connected by the region's landscape.

I. Cultural Resort

The upper Housatonic Valley is noted for a long-standing literary tradition, the work of prominent artists and architects, and world-class music, dance, and theater. Herman Melville wrote *Moby-Dick* while living at Arrowhead in Pittsfield, and Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote *House of the Seven Gables* at Stockbridge. Other important authors who lived or vacationed in the region were Oliver Wendell Holmes Sr., Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Edith Wharton, and James Thurber. Prominent artists, whose work is exhibited at local studio museums, include Daniel Chester French, Henry Hudson Kitson, Norman Rockwell, George L.K. Morris, Suzy Freydingbush, and Eric Sloane. The painters and writers have promoted the region's reputation as a pastoral Arcadia where one could pursue a life of culture in harmony with nature.

During the late 19th century, New York business magnates built over 75 lavish estates around Lenox, MA, and Stockbridge, MA. A large number of estates survive. Joseph Choate's Naumkeag House & Gardens, Stockbridge, MA, is a Stanford White—designed masterpiece. Edith Wharton's Lenox home, The Mount, was recently restored. Lenox's Ventfort Hall, which was owned by J.P. Morgan's sister, is being made into the Museum of the Gilded Age.

During the 20th century, the upper Housatonic Valley became the country's preeminent summer classical music resort, with the establishment of Handelwood (summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra), Music Mountain, the Norfolk Music Festival, South Mountain Concerts, the Aston Magna Festival, the Berkshire Choral Festival, the Berkshire Opera Company, and other venues. Theater has been represented by Shakespeare & Company, the Berkshire Theatre Festival, and Tri-Arts at the Sharon Playhouse. The Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival is the foremost international summer dance festival in the country.

Monument Mountain, Great Barrington, MA. Photo credit: Traciea of Boverman.



Pittsfield's Berkshire Museum is a comprehensive regional museum with offerings in art, history, natural science, and cinema. Although there are many summer cultural festivals and artist colonies across the United States, none has the reputation or concentration of cultural venues of the upper Housatonic Valley.

II. Shaping a Scenic Landscape

By the early 1800s, much of the area had been cleared for farming. The iron industry required extensive tree-cutting to make charcoal to fuel the furnaces. After the Civil War, when the papermaking industry started to use wood pulp as a raw material, that industry put further pressure on the forests. In 1869, 75% of the region was deforested, while today 75% of the land is covered with trees.

Even though much of the region's forest was cleared, artists and vacationers started to visit the upper Housatonic Valley because of its scenic qualities. In order to preserve the region's landscape, wealthy residents established nature preserves on large tracts of land. Stockbridge's David Dudley Field, Jr., built carriage drives on Monument Mountain, encouraging the public to enjoy mountain scenery. Secretary of the Navy William Whitney created an enormous game preserve in Lee, MA, Lenox, MA, and Washington, MA, with a landscape plan by Frederick Law Olmsted's firm.

By the early 20th century, when the income tax and a changing economy forced wealthy families to give up their estates, several of these areas became state parks and forests. They included Ooster Mountain State Forest (Whitney's game preserve) and Beartown State Forest (once part of the estate of engineer Fredrick Pearson), in Massachusetts, and Dennis Hill, Kent Falls, Macedonia Brook, Mohawk Mountain, and Campbell Falls, in Connecticut.

Stockbridge, MA, originated the movement for community beautification when it established the nation's first village improvement society, the Laurel Hill Association, in 1851. Stockbridge became an icon of the American small town when Norman Rockwell moved there in the 1950s and used it as the subject of many of his best-known works. The Norman Rockwell Museum, in Stockbridge, helps perpetuate popular perceptions of the area as a slice of Americana.

Col. John Ashley's House, Shelburne, MA—House of Rockwell Inc.



The Appalachian Trail, which stretches the length of the upper Housatonic Valley in Connecticut and Massachusetts, is the country's foremost regional hiking trail. Efforts to clean up the Housatonic River are making its banks available for public enjoyment.

III. Cradle of Industry

Two of America's earliest industries had a conspicuous presence in the upper Housatonic Valley. The iron industry began to develop in the 1730s, drawn by the presence of high-grade iron ore. Forges and furnaces manufactured cannons and supplies for the Continental Army during the American Revolution. During the 19th century, the region's iron industry manufactured armaments, tools, and train wheels. After the Civil War, the region's industry became less competitive, and the last iron furnace closed in 1923.

Of 44 iron furnaces operating in the upper Housatonic Valley between 1735 and 1923, portions of 6 furnaces remain. The Beckley Furnace State Park, East Canaan, CT (operated 1847–1918), is the best-preserved iron furnace. The Hootley-Williams House Museum, Lakeville, CT, tells the story of the area's leading ironmaking community. The Connecticut Antique Machinery Association Museum, Kent, CT, includes the Mining and Mineral Museum, which explains the history of iron mining in the region. Also at this site is the Kent Iron Furnace (1826–1892) and the Sloane-Stanley Museum, which features an outstanding collection of Early American iron tools and the studio of artist Eric Sloane.

Papermaking began in 1810 with the founding of Crane and Company in Dalton, MA. Crane still manufactures paper used for U.S. currency. Crane's Old Stone Mill Rag Room is a papermaking museum. By the 1840s, southern Berkshire County was the center of the country's paper industry. America's first wood pulp paper operations originated in Curtisville, MA, and Lee, MA.

The foremost 20th-century industry in the region was General Electric's manufacturing of electrical generation equipment in Pittsfield, MA. Besides its advances in electrical equipment, General Electric also made important innovations in plastics at

Pittsfield. The downsizing of General Electric since the 1980s has hurt the local economy, and PCR released by the plant have polluted the Housatonic River.

IV. Revolutionary War Era and Development of Democracy

The upper Housatonic Valley was the site of several important events during the American Revolution. The Sheffield Declaration, an early petition of grievances against British rule, was drafted at Colonel John Ashley's House (maintained by the Trustees of Reservations) in 1773. Millias from Ethan Allen's original home in northwest Connecticut joined the "Green Mountain Boys" in their capture of Fort Ticonderoga in 1775.

After the Revolution, a deep economic depression spawned Shays' Rebellion in western Massachusetts. Battles occurred at Sheffield, MA, and Stockbridge, MA. The rebellion persuaded many Americans of the need to adopt a stronger federal government and the U.S. Constitution.

When the Massachusetts State Constitution (1780), which was the world's first written constitution, asserted that all men are created "free and equal," Sheffield black slave Elizabeth Freeman ("Mumbet") brought a legal claim to obtain her freedom, which courts granted. This led to Massachusetts being the first state to abolish slavery, in 1783.

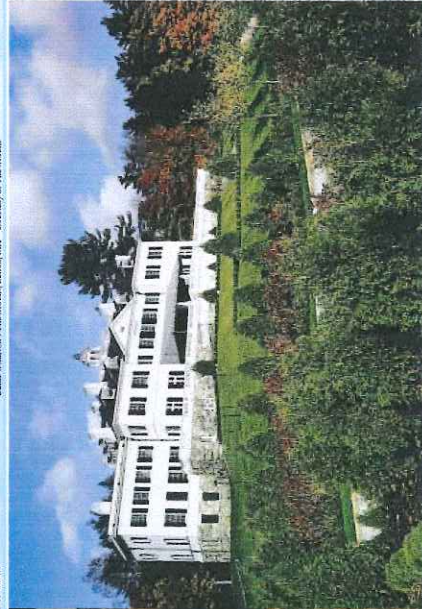
Pioneer civil rights leader W.E.B. DuBois wrote *The Souls of Black Folk* and helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

V. Other Heritage Themes: Mohican Indians, Shakers, Historic Towns

At the time of European colonization, the Mohican Indians were highly settled in the upper Housatonic. Stockbridge's Mission House was the home of Reverend John Sergeant, who oversaw a mission to convert local Indians to Christianity starting in 1734. This was a center for a Christian Indian community until it departed to the west in 1783, eventually relocating to Wisconsin as the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians.

Western Massachusetts and upper New York State were hospitable to the Shakers, who were one of 19th-century America's best-known communal sects. The Hancock (MA) Shaker Village is one of the country's foremost interpretive sites of Shaker culture.

The upper Housatonic Valley has an extensive collection of historic buildings dating as far back as 1734, when English settlement began in the area. The historic town centers have a plethora of meetinghouses, commons, houses, and public buildings, many of which are on the National Register of Historic Places. Historic houses open as museums include: Bidwell House, a 1750 parsonage in Monterey, MA; the 1715 Colonel John Ashley House, in Sheffield, MA; the Revolutionary-era Dan Raymond House, in Sheffield; the Gay-Hoyt House, which was built in 1775 in Sharon, CT. There are three covered bridges in the region: Bull's Bridge in Kent, CT; the West Cornwall (CT) Covered Bridge, and the Sheffield (MA) Covered Bridge.



Edith Wharton's The Mount, Lenox, MA—Courtesy of The Mount

Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area

The National Heritage Area Concept

A national heritage area has a distinctive history and geography, nationally important resources, and a story of broad interest to tell. The United States Congress officially designates national heritage areas and funds them through the National Park Service budget. There are 23 designated heritage areas. Though the National Park Service provides



From left, top: Lake Umbagog, Vermont; Lake Umbagog, Vermont; Lake Umbagog, Vermont.

technical expertise, the work and success of national heritage areas lies squarely with the citizens of the area.

Heritage areas may be developed around a common theme or industry that influenced the culture and history of the region. In the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, for example, the water-powered mills



Gate Light House Museum, Shelton, CT. © Hugh Vaughan

represent the beginning of the American industrial age. There are heritage areas for the Erie Canal, Hudson River Valley, Essex County in Massachusetts, the Quinebaug and Shetucket Rivers Valley of northeastern Connecticut and Massachusetts, and the steel industry in western Pennsylvania.

Regions use heritage areas for educating residents and visitors about the region, protecting its natural and cultural heritage, and enhancing the economy through business investments, job expansion, and tourism. Nonprofit organizations are primarily responsible for managing heritage areas. Heritage areas do not have land-use regulatory powers.

State Farm, Housatonic, NY. © Eric Linscott, State Farm

Feasibility Study

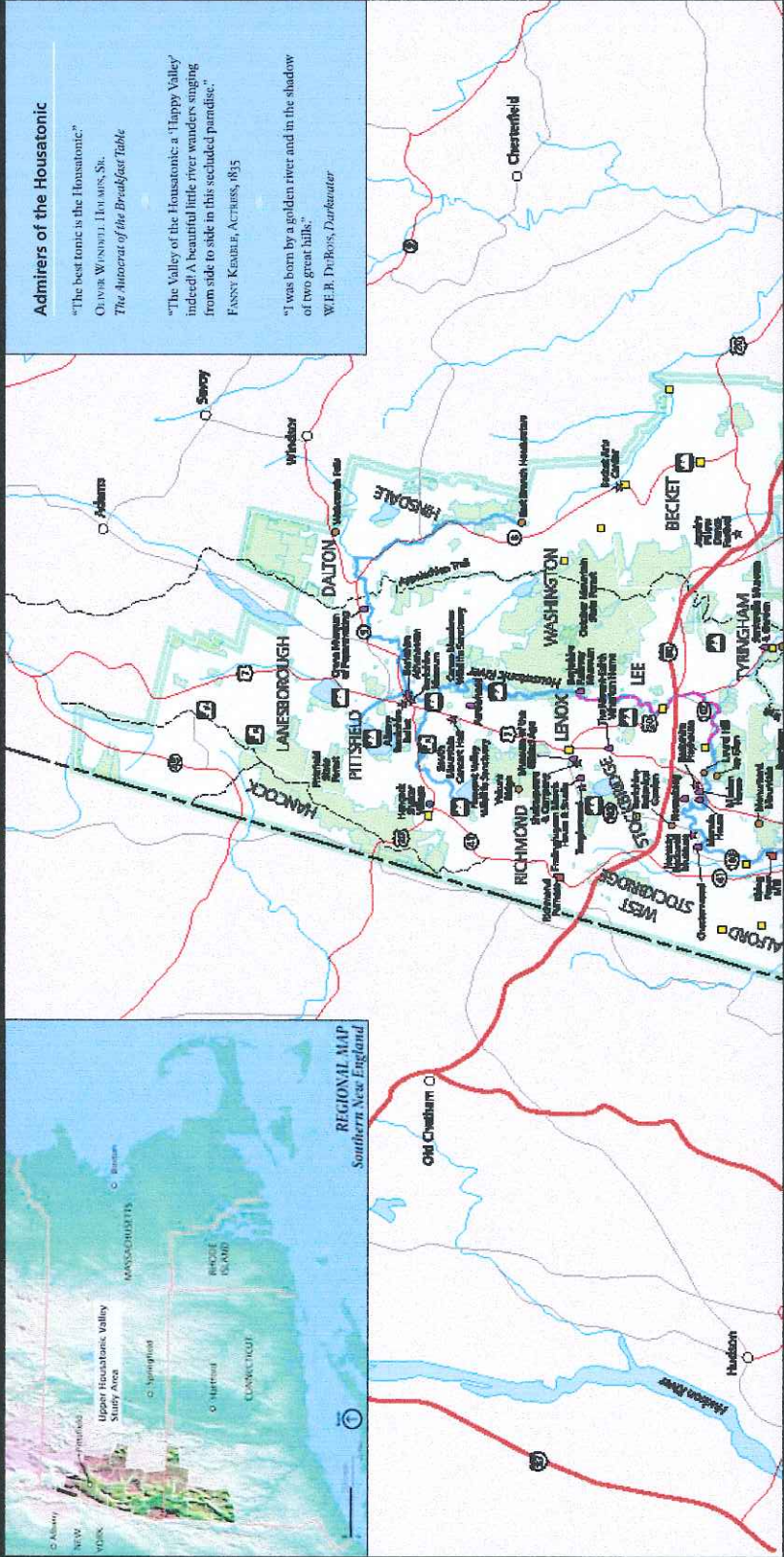


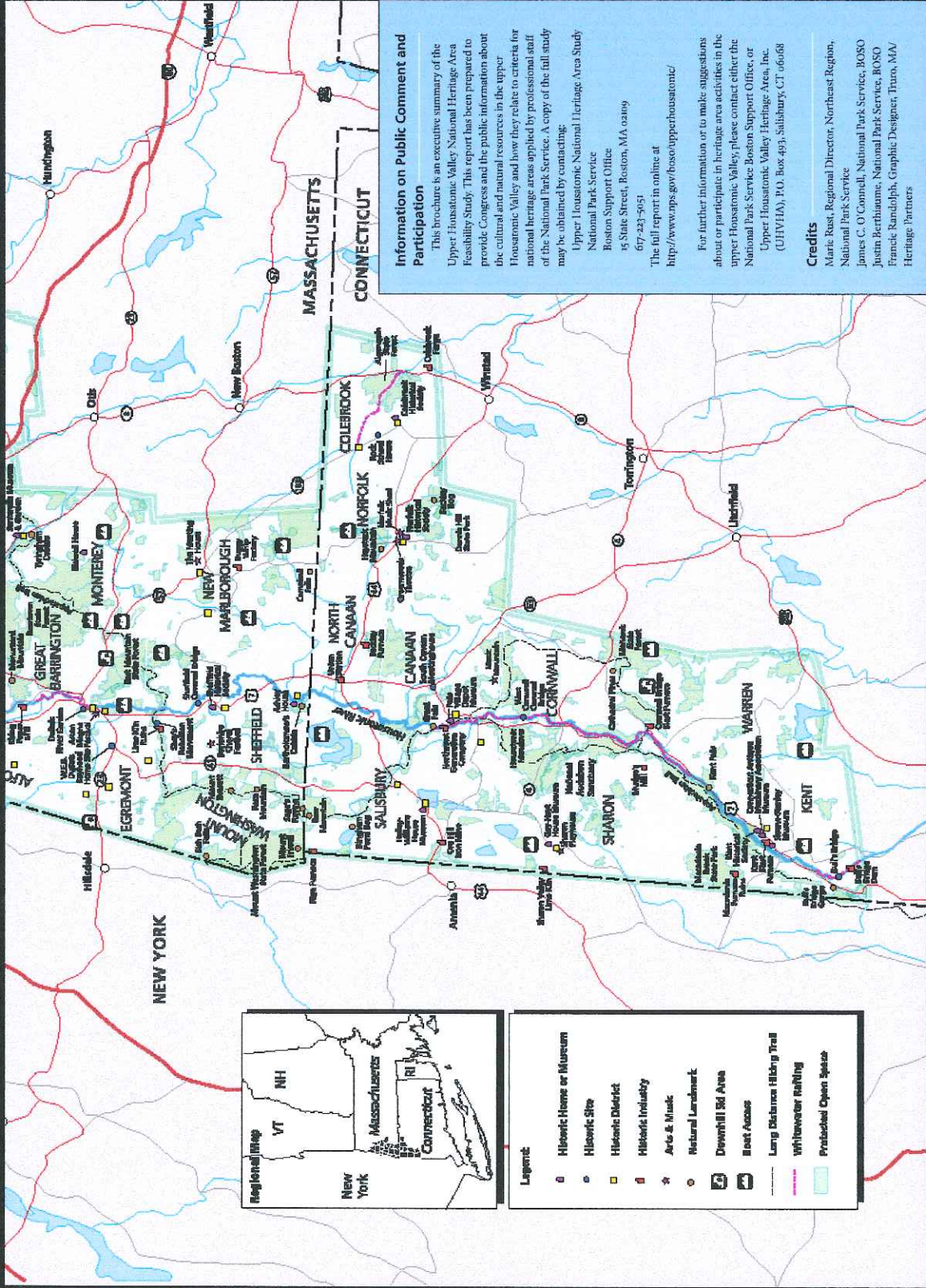
Admirers of the Housatonic

"The best tonic is the Housatonic!"
OLIVER WINSWELL, 1760-1836, Sic.
The Anticlerical of the Breakfast Table

"The Valley of the Housatonic: a 'Happy Valley' indeed! A beautiful little river wanders singing from side to side in this secluded paradise."
FANNY KEMBLE, ACTRESS, 1835

"I was born by a golden river and in the shadow of two great hills."
W.E.B. DU BOIS, *Darkwater*





Information on Public Comment and Participation

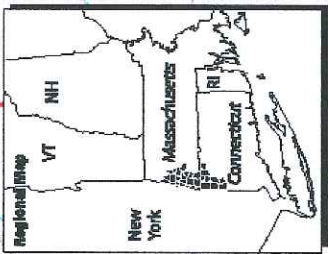
This brochure is an executive summary of the Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area Feasibility Study. This report has been prepared to provide Congress and the public information about the cultural and natural resources in the upper Housatonic Valley and how they relate to criteria for national heritage areas applied by professional staff of the National Park Service. A copy of the full study may be obtained by contacting:

Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area Study
 National Park Service
 Boston Support Office
 15 State Street, Boston, MA 02109
 617-237-5051
 The full report is online at
<http://www.nps.gov/upperhousatonic/>

For further information or to make suggestions about or participate in heritage area activities in the upper Housatonic Valley, please contact either the National Park Service Boston Support Office, or Upper Housatonic Valley Heritage Area, Inc. (UHVHA), P.O. Box 493, Salisbury, CT 06068

Credits

Marie Rust, Regional Director, Northeast Region, National Park Service
 James C. O'Connell, National Park Service, BOSO
 Justin Berthiaume, National Park Service, BOSO
 Francie Karadolph, Graphic Designer, Truro, MA
 Heritage Partners



Legend:	
	Historic Home or Museum
	Historic Site
	Historic District
	Historic Industry
	Arts & Music
	Recreational Landmark
	Designated 501 Area
	Black Access
	Long Distance Hiking Trail
	Whitewater Rafting
	Proposed Open Space

1W22

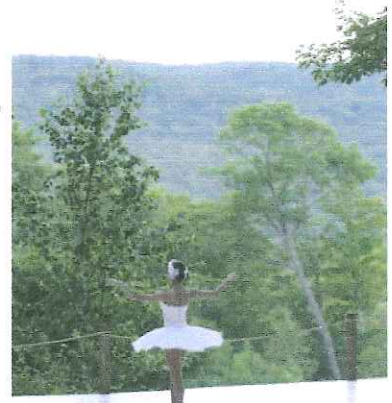


Why a National Heritage Area?

To preserve and celebrate our cultural, historical and natural resource heritage.

Cultural Resort

The upper Housatonic Valley is noted for a long-standing literary tradition, the work of prominent artists and architects, and world-class music, dance, and theater.



Shaping a Scenic Landscape

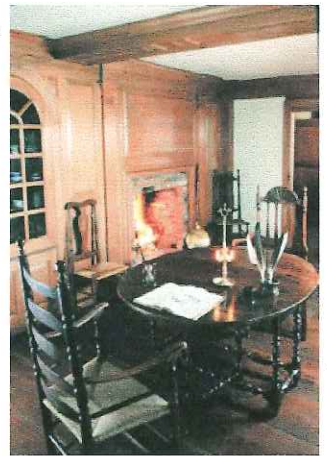
A phenomenon occurred in the Upper Housatonic Valley of identifying natural resources at risk, the unrealized potential of the landscape, and the planning for restoration and implementation of restoration and beautification on a large scale.

Cradle of Industry

Two of America's earliest industries had a conspicuous presence in the upper Housatonic Valley. Wide availability of superior iron ore and the rich resources of the hills and riverways spawned vigorous growth in the iron- and paper-making industries.

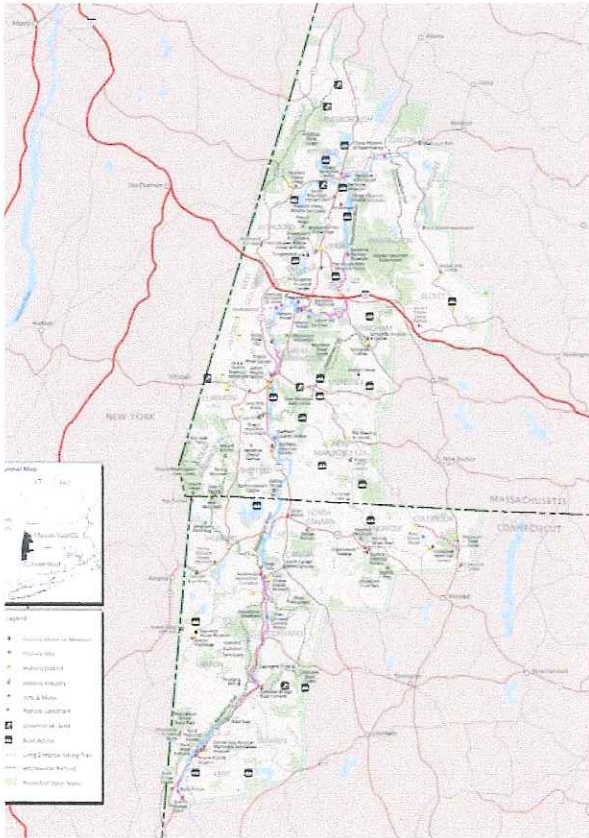
Revolutionary War Era and Development of Democracy

The upper Housatonic Valley was the site of several important events during the American Revolution. Among these - The Sheffield Declaration, an early petition of grievances against British rule, was drafted at Colonel John Ashley's House (maintained by the Trustees of Reservations) in 1773. Other important events included Shays' Rebellion, and early civil rights movements.



Other Heritage Themes: Mohican Indians, Shakers, Historic Towns

At the time of European colonization, the Mohican Indians were lightly settled in the upper Housatonic. Throughout recent times, the Upper Housatonic Valley has proven to be a fertile destination for people of many backgrounds,



Upper Housatonic National Heritage Area

The Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area includes nine towns in Connecticut and twenty in Massachusetts.

Connecticut

Canaan, Colebrook, Cornwall, Kent, Norfolk, North Canaan, Salisbury, Sharon, and Warren.

Massachusetts

Alford, Becket, Dalton, Egremont, Great Barrington, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lanesboro, Lee, Lenox, Monterey, Mount Washington, New Marlboro, Pittsfield, Richmond, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Tyringham, Washington, and West Stockbridge.

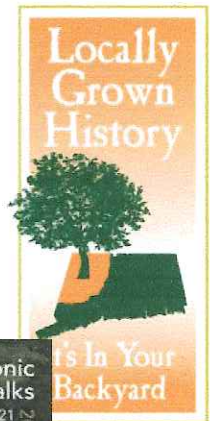
What is Housatonic Heritage doing?

You may recognize some of the ongoing heritage programs...



- o Heritage Walks Weekend (2002-2009), offering over 50 guided walks over two weekends;
- o African American Heritage Trail, included a full-length book, brochures, and special events;
- o Upper Housatonic Valley Experience, a educational course for local middle school and high school teachers in a curriculum on the region's history;
- o The 1734 - 1923 Iron Heritage Trail.
- o The Performing Arts Heritage Trail.
- o Locally Grown History

o Trails & Greenways Network



www.HousatonicHeritage.org
email: Info@HousatonicHeritage.org

Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area

PO Box 493
Salisbury, CT 06068

PO Box 611
Great Barrington, MA 01230

p. 860-435-9505
f. 860-435-6662



In partnership with the National Park Service

About Us/Directions: Why National Heritage Areas?

What Makes National Heritage Areas Valuable

National Heritage Areas are designated by Congress as places where natural, cultural, historic, and scenic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-important landscape. Inaugurated in 1984 with the designation of the Illinois and Michigan Canal National Heritage Corridor, the National Heritage Areas movement now encompasses 49 areas, ranging from factory towns and city neighborhoods to farmland and battlefields.

Though still relatively new, the National Heritage Area approach has already been incredibly successful, creating thousands of new conservation, preservation, and historian jobs in communities across the country. Each year, more and more regions seek recognition under the program – a testament to the need of such a program.

Some facts about National Heritage Areas:

- National Heritage Areas on average leverage every federal dollar into \$5.50 of additional public and private investment.
- National Heritage Areas engage the surrounding communities. In 2008, National Heritage Areas worked with more than 4,250 partners to complete projects
- ranging from the development of new elementary school curriculums to the removal of invasive species along our nation's waterways.
- There is a continued demand for the program. To date, Congress has established 49 National Heritage Areas, with increased interest from communities each year.
- An estimated 63.8 million people visited the existing 27 Heritage Areas in 2005.
- National Heritage Areas create jobs, generate revenues for local governments, and benefit local economies through revitalization and heritage tourism.
- According to a recent study, 118 million leisure travelers participate in cultural and heritage activities, contributing \$192 billion annually to the U.S. economy.
- On average, heritage travelers travel more often, spend more per trip (\$994 vs. \$611), and spend more on cultural and heritage activities than other activities.

<http://www.upperhousatonicheritage.org/index.php?catId=1&subCatId=47>