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To Preserve the Nation's Past: The Growth of Historic Preservation in the National Park Service During the 1930s

HARLAN D. UNRAU AND G. FRANK WILLISS

THE DECADE of the 1930s was one of the most significant and creative in the history of the National Park Service. An important part of the ferment of the decade concerned the emergence of historic preservation as a legitimate component of the service's mission. Governmental reorganization in 1933 more than quadrupled the number of historical sites in the National Park system; a growing public consciousness of the importance of preserving examples of the nation's historical and archaeological heritage provided the impetus for the acquisition of new areas, increased appropriations, and legislation that authorized a nationwide historic preservation program; emergency programs, designed to help the nation work itself out of the Great Depression, provided the where-withal for new programs. As the Park Service grappled with the challenge thrust upon it, it found itself in the forefront of a burgeoning nationwide historic preservation movement.

The preservation of historical and archaeological sites became a responsibility of the Department of the Interior with passage of the Antiquities Act in 1906 and of the National Park Service at its establishment in 1916. The legislation establishing the Park Service named "historic conservation" as an important responsibility of the new bureau. Pursuant to the Antiquities Act of 1906, the Department of the Interior, as early as 1916, had under its jurisdiction seven national monuments of historical and archaeological interest, as well as Mesa Verde National Park. These areas were placed under the National Park Service upon its

establishment and formed the initial nucleus of its system of "historic sites."¹

From 1916 to 1928 the number of historical and archaeological areas administered by the National Park Service increased to sixteen. The forward thrust of the agency into the acquisition, preservation, and development of historical and archaeological parks received tremendous impetus when Horace M. Albright became the new director of the Park Service on January 12, 1929.

As director from 1929 to 1933 Albright launched the agency on a new course in historic preservation destined to influence greatly the future growth and direction of the National Park system. The first opportunities to put the agency squarely into the field of historic preservation and development came with the establishment of George Washington Birthplace National Monument on January 23, 1930, and of Colonial National Monument on December 30, 1930. Thus, the foundations of a program in historical park development were laid and the initial steps taken that would eventually place the Park Service in a leadership role in the emerging historic preservation movement in the United States.²

The growing importance of historical areas in the National Park system and the wide variety of new questions, issues, and problems that these areas presented led to the creation of a historical division in the Branch of Research and Education, headed by Harold C. Bryant, in 1931. On September 10th of that year, Verne E. Chatelain, chairman of the history and social sciences department at Nebraska State Teachers College, was appointed to head this division with the title of park historian. Chatelain's responsibilities belied the title. He was assigned responsibility for extending and coordinating the historical and archaeological research program of the Park Service; supervising the service's activities in the fields of history and archaeology; assisting in the formulation and implementation of policies and methods of procedure for

1. *20th Anniversary: National Park Supplement to Planning and Civic Comment* 11 (October-December 1936), 24-25.

2. Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States Before Williamsburg* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), Vol. 1, 469-509; *Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service*, 1930, 6; *Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service*, 1931, 8; Executive Order 1929, December 30, 1930, Department of the Interior, Memorandum for the Press, For Release, November 16, 1933, and Public Law No. 510, 71st Congress, H.R. 12235, July 3, 1930, Papers of Horace A. Albright, Department of Special Collections, University Research Library, University of California at Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California, Box 184; Public Law No. 34, 71st Congress, S. 1784, January 23, 1930, and "Washington Birthplace National Monument, Wakefield, Virginia," n.d., Box 157, Albright Papers; and U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Lands, *Creating the Colonial National Monument, Hearings Before the Committee on the Public Lands, House of Representatives, Seventy-First Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 8424 to Provide for the Creation of the Colonial National Monument in Virginia* (Washington D.C., 1930).

preservation, interpretation, and development in the parks; initiating studies of policies relative to new area acquisition and techniques of restoration and reconstruction; and providing professional judgment on a wide range of new historical area proposals emanating from Congress.³

In his role as the first historian employed in the Washington office, Chatelain had the task of attempting to reorient the organization from its long-standing concern with western natural areas to a new awareness of its responsibilities for eastern historical parks and preservation issues. As part of his effort to educate the Park Service to historical values, he called a history conference in Washington in November 1931. Among the recommendations that Chatelain supported for inclusion in the overall philosophy of the agency's programs and policies were that historical activities were a significant part of the educational program of the National Park Service and that historians should be key participants in developing and promoting such educational work through research, publication, interpretation, public relations, and the establishment of museum, library, and archival collections.⁴

During the next eighteen months Chatelain refined his thinking further regarding the function of a historical program in the National Park Service and the formulation of a policy for the development of a system of national historic sites. On November 19, 1932, Director Albright appointed a committee consisting of Chatelain and Roger W. Toll, superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, to address these topics. On December 12 they submitted a report to the director which concluded that the National Park Service should "actively advocate, investigate, and promote a proper national historical policy" to comply fully "with the desires of Congress." To accomplish such an objective, the Park Service should conduct a comprehensive study of the entire system of historical sites in the country, establishing standards for national historical sites and classifying areas "pertinent to the development of the Nation."⁵

Later, on April 21, 1933, Chatelain submitted another lengthy memorandum to Assistant Director Arthur E. Demaray that detailed his conception of a historical program for the agency. The memorandum stated

3. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 513–14; *Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service, 1931*, 16; Memorandum for the Press, Immediate Release, August 7, 1931, and Russell to Chatelain, November 23, 1931, 101, History (General), Central Classified Files, 1907–49, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Chatelain to the Director, February 20, 1935, 201–13, Administrative (General), Central Classified Files, 1907–49, Organization, RG 79, NA; and Interview of Verne E. Chatelain by Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., September 9, 1961, 1–3, (typescript MS on file at library, Harpers Ferry Center, Harpers Ferry, West Virginia).

4. "Historical Conference," November 27, 1931, Old History Division Files, Washington Office (WASO), National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

5. Toll and Chatelain to Director, December 12, 1932, 201–15, Administrative (General), Central Classified Files, 1907–49, Policy, RG 79.

Chatelain's belief that "the historical work of the National Park Service is dependent upon the acquisition of a historical mind by those who control its administration, or at least upon their willingness to leave the problem to the historically-minded." According to Chatelain, no conception of the historical activity of the Park Service would be complete unless it attempted "to tie the individual problem to the larger patterns of history." The historian must find these patterns and then relate "any other problem with which we are working to that scheme." The "sum total of the sites which we select should make it possible for us to tell a more or less complete story of American History."⁶

In June 1935 Chatelain wrote on the role and interpretive objectives of the historical and archaeological areas in the National Park system. He observed that the underlying National Park Service policy concerning those areas was utilization of "the uniquely graphic qualities which inhere in any area where stirring and significant events have taken place to drive home to the visitor the meaning of those events showing not only their importance in themselves but their integral relationship to the whole history of American development." In other words, the interpretive task of the Park Service was "to breathe the breath of life into American history" and "to recreate for the average citizen something of the color, the pageantry, and the dignity of our national past."⁷

One of the first historical programs to be established in the parks was at Colonial National Monument. The impetus for such a program was the sesquicentennial observance of Lord Charles Cornwallis's surrender to the Americans at Yorktown in October 1781. Although the historical program was well underway before Chatelain assumed his office, he nevertheless would play a significant role in its future development along with the local park historians.

By June 1931 William M. Robinson, Jr., an engineer from Georgia who had written several historical works on the Confederate navy, had been hired as superintendent. Two professionally-trained "ranger historians," characterized as a new breed of Park Service employee, had been employed to commence a program of documentary research and planning that was a necessary prerequisite for the preservation, restoration, and interpretation of the earthworks and historic structures at Yorktown and solving the restoration problems at Jamestown. The two historians, B. Floyd Flickinger, a faculty member at William and Mary, and Elbert Cox, a graduate student at the University of Virginia, found themselves almost completely without guidance at first because they represented a new discipline.⁸

6. Chatelain to Demaray, April 21, 1933, Old History Division Files, WASO.

7. "History and Our National Parks," [June 1935], Old History Division Files, WASO.

8. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*: 1: 501–05, and *Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service*, 1931, 16.

During the next five years the historical program at Colonial was developed under the general guidance of Chatelain. The major objective of the historical program became the hope that Colonial would "serve as a link to bind the past to the present and be a guide and an inspiration for the future."

In January 1936 B. Floyd Flickinger summed up a presentation on the historical methods that had been used in the colonial historical program. The first obligation in accepting custody of a historic site, according to Flickinger, was preservation, a concept that was considered only as a means to an end. The second phase was physical development, which aimed at rehabilitation of a site by means of restoration or reconstruction efforts. The third and most important element was interpretation of the site, with preservation and development activities being valuable in proportion to their contribution to this phase. To organize the historical program at Colonial, general research and special studies had been conducted for "a comprehensive accurate history of the area" and "the selection, in order of importance, of the different parts of the whole story" to be used as a basis in the selection of objects for physical development.⁹

Verne Chatelain also became actively involved in the National Park Service effort to acquire land for a new historical area in Morristown, New Jersey, the site of the Continental Army's winter encampments in 1776-77 and 1779-80. After visiting the site at the request of Director Albright in April 1932, Chatelain recommended the site as a "Federal Historical Reserve" as it possessed every possible qualification for a first-class historical park.¹⁰ A conference was arranged in January 1933. Officials of the Washington Association of New Jersey, which owned the Ford Mansion that had served as Washington's headquarters at Morristown, local civic and business leaders, Louis C. Cramton, special assistant to the Secretary of the Interior, and Chatelain, representing Albright, attended. The draft of the park bill adopted by the conferees included a provision for new legal status for the concept of a national historical park. Such a park would not come into being by means of a presidential proclamation as did national monuments. Congress itself

9. "Historical Methods Used in the Development of Colonial National Monument," paper presented to Session on Archaeological and Historic Sites, Meeting of American Planning and Civic Association, Washington, D.C., January 23, 1936, in Albright Papers, Box 9, and "Statement of National Park Service Program for Colonial National Historical Park," [1936], Albright Papers, Box 184. Also see Department of the Interior, Information Service, for Release, February 9, 1941, for a description of the preservation, interpretation, and development of the program adopted for Jamestown as the result of a cooperative agreement between the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities and the National Park Service in September 1940, Albright Papers, Box 184.

10. Chatelain to Director, April 16, 1932, in U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Lands, *Creating the Morristown National Historical Park: Hearings Before the Committee on the Public Lands, House of Representatives, Seventy-Second Congress, Second Session, on H.R. 14302*. . . (Washington D.C. 1933), 28-30.

would set up the terms under which the park would become operative. In so doing, the draft bill gave the proposed national historical park "the rank and dignity equal to the scenic program in the West."¹¹

The bill for establishment of Morristown National Historical Park was submitted to both houses of Congress in mid-January 1933. After hearings were held the House committee on public lands reported that Morristown fully measured up to national park standards because it met the criteria of "national interest" and "outstanding value" from a "historic point of view." Thus, the term "national historical park" used in the proposed legislation was found to be "advantageous" by the committee.¹²

The act, providing for the establishment of Morristown National Historical Park, was signed by President Herbert C. Hoover on March 2, 1933.¹³ Arno B. Cammerer, who succeeded Albright as NPS director in 1933, observed that Morristown had "fittingly" been chosen as the first national historical park. Bureau historians were soon busily engaged in studying historical sites throughout the nation in the expectation that additional parks thus designated would be added to the National Park system in the future.¹⁴

In later years Chatelain observed that the addition of Morristown had a significant impact on the development of the historical program in the National Park Service. According to him the Morristown historical program

was the point of departure in the development of the . . . separate historical program within the park program, because the Morristown program gave us a chance, first of all, to develop a new concept . . . the concept of a national historical park and using those great values at Morristown which had so much to do with the story of the American Revolution, we could not only apply the term National Historical Park to this area under the provisions of the act that Congress passed but we could administratively set up the kind of historical program for the first time that I had begun to feel was necessary. That involved, of course, having these areas first of all, under men trained historically to know what the legitimate objectives of the area ought to be, and then to work toward a realization of those objectives. . . . From the outset at Morristown the people there, as well as I myself, insisted that the direction of the program should be historical, and under trained historians to work clearly toward the realization of legitimate historical values. . . .¹⁵

11. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 516–21, and Interview of Verne E. Chatelain by Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., December 17, 1971 (typescript MS on file at HFC).

12. U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Lands, *Morristown National Historical Park, N.J.*, 72d Cong., 2d sess., 1933, H. Rept. 1962, 2–3.

13. Public Law No. 409, 72d Congress, S. 5469.

14. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1933, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1933*, 159.

15. Interview of Verne E. Chatelain by Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., September 9, 1961.

From the 1916 National Park Service establishing act, Park Service officials and their allies in Congress had campaigned to consolidate all national monuments and historical sites in the National Park system. On June 10, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 6166, initiating a general reorganization of executive departments. Section 2 transferred administration of all parks and monuments under the War Department and Forest Service as well as all parks, monuments, and public buildings in the District of Columbia to the National Park Service.

By the time of the reorganization of 1933 the historical program of the National Park Service had been underway for less than two years. Nevertheless, the foundations for a fully-developed historical program had been laid through the pioneering efforts in research, preservation, and interpretation at George Washington Birthplace and Colonial national monuments, and Morristown National Historical Park. The reorganization of 1933, which quadrupled the number of historical areas in the National Park Service by adding some fifty-seven such units, made the Park Service the leading park management agency in the United States virtually overnight.

The reorganization of 1933 fulfilled long-sought efforts to unify federal parks and monuments in one system. The tremendous growth of historical areas placed new demands on the service, creating, in particular, the need for additional personnel with training in history.¹⁶ The various New Deal emergency relief and funding programs were crucial to the implementation and extension of the embryonic Park Service historical program. The influx of money and personnel that became available to the agency as a result of its involvement in the New Deal public works programs presented great opportunities to the service in carrying out a program of preservation, restoration, planning, and interpretation of historical areas.¹⁷

Under the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) program that was organized during the spring of 1933, the National Park Service was assigned the responsibility of directing the vast program of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the preservation, development, and interpretation of both National Park system units and state parks having historical and archaeological values. Archaeological projects undertaken through federal emergency funds were jointly supervised by the Park Service and the Smithsonian Institution. Park Service historical and archaeological personnel guided the technical phases of the historical and archaeological activities of the CCC and provided state authorities

16. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1934, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1934*, 170–71, 182.

17. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 532–48, and "Notes on Historical and Archaeological Program, Prepared for Educational Advisory Board," by Verne E. Chatelain, ca. 1934, Old History Division Files, WASO.

with assistance in developing preservation policies while they further refined the historical policies governing historical areas in the National Park system. Through these efforts, the Park Service began to play a direct role in historic preservation at both the federal and state levels.¹⁸

The ECW field organization in the historical parks provided for the position of historical technician in order "that the general viewpoint of the NPS toward the development of historical sites could be represented." The historical technician was the field representative of the Park Service who was "above all familiar with the aims and objectives of the historical program."

The functions and duties of the historical technician included responsibility for: (1) interpreting the aims and objectives of the Park Service historical program as applied to the work projects; (2) furnishing historical advice on the relative importance of the historical remains on proposed work; (3) furnishing historical information necessary for work projects decided upon; (4) custodianship of historical and archaeological artifacts found during the course of emergency conservation work; (5) providing technical expertise on the use of the park by the public; and (6) directing the park educational program.¹⁹

At the beginning of the ECW program the historical technicians had no other assistance than that rendered by "so-called miscellaneous or cultural foremen." Appointed under the CCC field organization, these foremen, later classified as historical assistants, were primarily young men with training in history or the related social sciences. Of the thirty-five assistants that had been hired by 1934, nearly half had master's degrees or doctorates in these fields. They were responsible not to the technicians, however, but to the work superintendents.

The task of recruiting, training, and educating qualified historical technicians for the ECW program fell to Chatelain. In later years he observed:

My primary problem [as chief historian] was to take a man trained in history and make a real Park Service man out of him. Some men trained in history never fit that bill successfully, even men well-equipped in the field of history, simply because they couldn't translate themselves into Park Service men, thinking Park Service ideas. Some men were good in the books, but they couldn't deal with the public. Some men were good in the books, but they couldn't deal with the physical conditions on the ground. They couldn't move from the one

18. John D. McDermott, "Breath of Life: An Outline of the Development of a National Policy for Historic Preservation," March 1966, 28, Old History Division Files, WASO, and "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1939, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1939*, 270–71.

19. Memorandum to ECW Historical Organization, March 18, 1935, 201–13, Administration (General), Organization, Central Classified Files, 1907–49, RG 79. Also see Wirth and Lee to Sixth Regional Officer, June 19, 1935, CCC Material, Box 2, HFC.

area to the other. I had to create a new kind of technician, I think, and train him.²⁰

Chatelain assumed, additionally, responsibility for coordinating the historical program in the National Park system as well as the ECW State Park program, and establishing uniform historical research and preservation policies. In effect, a branch of historic sites was established with Chatelain as acting assistant director and a small staff paid with emergency funds to oversee the increased historical activities of the National Park Service—a step that would later pave the way for passage of the Historic Sites Act in 1935. Accordingly, he had Elbert Cox assigned to his office in the fall of 1933 to provide assistance in hiring historians, establish a centralized research staff at the Library of Congress, and review reports prepared in the field.²¹

Conferences were also organized to aid in the formulation and articulation of a National Park Service philosophy of historic preservation and a policy of administering historical areas. For example, B. Floyd Flickinger chaired a Conference of Historical and Archaeological Superintendents in Washington on November 23, 1934. At the conference Chatelain pleaded for better-quality restoration work based on thorough research and supervised by trained personnel, urged development of a more thorough historical interpretation program, and defended the idea of historic sites as educational tools, citing the nearness of the new park areas to the metropolitan areas of the East.²²

Thus by late 1934 many of the barriers that made the movement toward a national policy of historic preservation more difficult had been removed. The reorganization of 1933 had concentrated administration of all federally-owned historical and archaeological areas in one agency. The National Park Service employed a staff of professional historians

20. Interview of Verne E. Chatelain by Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., September 9, 1961. For more information on the selection, training, and activities of historical technicians and assistants under the ECW program, one should consult the typescript manuscripts of taped interviews with some of these men on file at the Harpers Ferry Center. Among the most pertinent interviews that should be consulted are: Roy E. Appleman, Elbert Cox, T. Sutton Jett, Edward A. Hummel, Herbert E. Kahler, Charles E. Hatch, Jr., Merrill J. Mattes, Edwin W. Small, George A. Palmer, Melvin J. Weig, Charles W. Porter III, Francis F. Wilshin, and Rogers W. Young. Also see: "Notes on Historical and Archaeological Program Prepared for Education Advisory Board," by Verne E. Chatelain, ca. 1934; "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1933, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, 1933, 167–68; and Wirth to Chatelain, December 8, 1934, Old History Division Files, WASO.

21. Cox to Chatelain, January 8, 1934, and Chatelain to Cox, September 1, 1934, Old History Division Files, WASO; Setser to Chatelain, April 12, 1934, CCC Material, Box 2, HFC; and Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 539–40. Chatelain remembers taking a 6,000-mile automobile trip to all the military parks in 1933 ("the big year for the historical program") to "accept the surrender" of the War Department superintendents (some of whom stayed on and made good Park Service superintendents).

22. Cammerer to Flickinger, September 25, 1934, and "A National Parks Historical-Educational Program," August 21, 1933, by Carlton C. Qualey, Old History Division Files, WASO, and Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 569–70.

capable of providing the technical knowledge and skill that it needed to carry out its programs. Through the many relief programs large sums and personnel were available to carry out a comprehensive historical program. Through the many assistance programs federal officials had the opportunity to become acquainted with the major problems of the states and localities in the field of historic preservation.²³

One of the first steps in the direction of the formulation of a national policy for the preservation of historic structures was the creation of the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) by the National Park Service in 1933. Charles E. Peterson, chief of the Eastern Division of the Branch of Plans and Design of the Park Service, originated the idea of a nationwide plan using 1,000 unemployed architects, draftsmen, and photographers during a six-month period to secure, by measured drawings and photographs, as complete a graphic record as possible of the rapidly disappearing examples of early architecture and historic structures throughout the United States. Park Service officials quickly approved Peterson's proposal, submitting it to Secretary Ickes on November 15, 1933. It was approved by the secretary and the Federal Relief Administration by December 1.²⁴

The opportunity for cooperation in this venture was offered to and accepted by Edward C. Kemper, executive secretary of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), and Dr. Leicester B. Holland, FAIA, who served both as chairman of the Institute's Committee on the Preservation of Historic Buildings and as head of the Department of Fine Arts in the Library of Congress. The Park Service placed Thomas C. Vint, chief of plans and design in the Washington office, in charge of administering HABS. He was assisted by Thomas T. Waterman, John P. O'Neill, and Frederick D. Nichols. By late 1933 the United States had been divided into thirty-nine districts (six states in the northwest were left out because of winter weather conditions and the relatively low number of architects there who were unemployed), each with a district officer nominated by the AIA and appointed by the Secretary of the Interior. Upon appointment these officers contacted the local Civil Works Administration (CWA) officers to secure architects and draftsmen for the field parties.²⁵

By early January 1934 most field parties were in operation. On February 15, however, the CWA began a gradual phasing out of its programs and officially ended its funding on May 1. At the height of this first phase of its activity, HABS employed 772 persons in preparing measured drawings and pictorial histories of some 860 buildings.²⁶

23. McDermott, "Breath of Life," 30.

24. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *The Historic American Buildings Survey* (Washington D.C., 1936), 1-2.

25. *Ibid.*, 2-4.

26. *Ibid.*, 2; McDermott, "Breath of Life," 29; and "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1934, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1934*, 166, 197.

The success of the program was acknowledged, nevertheless, as steps were taken to endow the program with a formal charter. On July 23, 1934, a memorandum of agreement was signed by the National Park Service, the American Institute of Architects, and the Library of Congress to insure a permanent organization for the coordination and continuity of HABS. Under the memorandum the American Institute of Architects, through each of its sixty-seven chapters, had the responsibility of identifying and cataloging structures built before 1875 whose architectural merit or historical association made them a significant part of the cultural heritage of the United States. The Park Service would carry out the actual work of preparing measured drawings and taking photographs. The Fine Arts Division of the Library of Congress agreed to serve as the repository for the HABS inventory forms, drawings, and photographs. The advisory board continued in its same capacity with the aforementioned personnel.²⁷

Emergency relief appropriations obtained from various New Deal agencies, as well as collaborative student graduate work arranged in cooperation with universities and colleges, allowed HABS to continue during the Depression years. In the early period HABS programs were operated by local field teams in the vicinity of the architects' homes. In fiscal year 1940, however, an effort was made to distribute the coverage of HABS programs on a wider basis. A unit was established in Washington to coordinate the program of four special field groups that would work out of Boston, Richmond, St. Louis, and San Francisco. Each of the four special units was given a station wagon and a travel allotment to enable it to operate over a wider area.²⁸

By the end of 1940, funding and manpower had been reduced for HABS because of the hostilities in Europe. The survey virtually ceased during the American involvement in World War II, but early in 1941, some eight years after its commencement, a HABS catalogue was published containing entries for 6,389 structures recorded with 23,765 sheets of drawings and 25,357 photographs.²⁹

The reorganization of 1933 revealed the lack of a comprehensive nationwide program for the selection, acquisition, and preservation of historical and archaeological sites. The federal government had been

27. *The Historic American Buildings Survey*, 2–5, 11–15; Charles E. Peterson, "Thirty Years of HABS," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 40 (November 1963), 83–84; McDermott, "Breath of Life," 29–30; and Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 548–62.

28. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1940, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1940*, 174, and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Division of Information, For Release, September 18, 1939, Press Releases Before 1940, A38, HFC.

29. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1941, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1941*, 299, and Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1980) 190–92.

unable to plan, promote, and develop a well-rounded national program for the preservation of American historical and archaeological sites under existing legislation. Certain periods of American history were well represented in terms of historical areas, while others equally important in the growth and development of the nation were ignored. A well-rounded pageant of America in terms of historic sites had never been projected, and no systematic evaluation of the historical resources of the nation had ever been undertaken. Before 1933, leadership in the preservation of historic properties came primarily from historically minded individuals, patriotic societies, and private groups.

Several factors helped to focus attention on the need for new legislation in the field of historic preservation in the early 1930s. Civic and private groups, motivated by community pride and anticipated commercial benefits, sponsored a large number of bills for the establishment of additional historical areas in the National Park system, pointing out the need for a systematic investigation of sites to insure wise selections. HABS directed attention to the vast number of important historical structures that were rapidly disappearing and the need for a comprehensive policy of selection based on high preservation standards. Leaders in the preservation movement who were familiar with historical activities in other countries called attention to the fact that while the United States had been the leader in the effort to preserve its outstanding scenic areas, it had only initiated haphazard efforts in the preservation of historical areas compared with the massive preservation efforts in many European countries.³⁰

Early in November 1933 Major Gist Blair, son of Montgomery Blair, Postmaster General under President Abraham Lincoln and owner of the Blair House that would one day become the nation's guest house, visited President Roosevelt. Blair felt the need for a general plan that would coordinate the activities of the federal government in the field of historic preservation with those of the states and municipalities. On November 10 Roosevelt sent a note to Blair, inviting him to give "consideration to some kind of plan which would coordinate the broad relationship of the federal government to state and local interest in the maintenance of historic sources and places throughout the country. I am struck with the fact [that] there is no definite, broad policy in this matter." Roosevelt asked Blair to talk the matter over with Secretary Ickes and observed that legislation might be necessary.³¹

30. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 562–64; Herbert E. Kahler, "Ten Years of Historical Conservation under the Historic Sites Act," *Planning and Civic Comment* 12 (January 1946), 20–21; and U.S. Department of the Interior, *Report to the Secretary of the Interior on the Preservation of Historic Sites and Buildings*, by J. Thomas Schneider (Washington, D.C., 1935), 16–19.

31. Roosevelt to Blair, November 10, 1933, Old History Division Files, WASO; McDermott, "Breath of Life," 31; and Ronald F. Lee, *Family Tree of the National Park System* (Philadelphia, 1972), 47.

Blair conferred with Interior officials and at his request Director Cammerer provided him with a "Statement of Principles and Standards" that delineated the Interior Department's conception of the role that the federal government should play in historic preservation. The first section stated the principles and standards governing the selection of historical areas for inclusion in the National Park system. The criteria were the first such standards drafted by the Division of History and had not yet appeared in print as an official policy statement. According to the document the determining factor in the preservation of a historic site by the federal government was whether the site possessed "certain matchless or unique qualities which entitle it to a position of first rank among historic sites." The remainder of the sites should be preserved by state or local governments or by private or semi-public organizations. To determine which sites possessed the quality of uniqueness, Cammerer suggested that the National Park Service should conduct a national survey every ten years beginning in 1935 and classify sites by listing them as "Potential National" or "Non-Potential National." He also recommended that a five-member national board on historic sites, composed of noted historians, architects, and archaeologists, be appointed to assist in the "Decennial Survey" activities and aid in the classification and preservation of historic sites by making appropriate recommendations.³²

Blair also gathered information and documentation from R. C. Lindsay, the British ambassador, concerning British legislation and historic preservation practices. He forwarded these materials to President Roosevelt on March 7, 1934, who in turn sent them to Secretary Ickes three days later.³³

Soon thereafter Blair submitted his own proposal calling for the formation of a national preservation commission that would administer and coordinate a wide variety of historical activities. On May 23 Ickes responded to the proposal in a letter to Roosevelt, which had been drafted by Chatelain, echoing the Park Service's interest in developing a broad preservation policy but opposing the creation of a new federal agency when the service had just consolidated its administration over all federal historical areas. Ickes argued the commission would be a needless duplication of Park Service prerogatives in leading the development of a national preservation policy and would put the historical program back into the hands of amateurs at a time when professional historians had been brought in to bring order to the federal system of historic sites.

32. Cammerer to Blair, December 18, 1933, 12-33, National Historical Areas, General, Central Classified Files, 1907-36, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, Record Group 48, NA; McDermott, "Breath of Life," 32; and "A National Policy for Historic Sites and Monuments," by Verne E. Chatelain, n.d., Old History Division Files, WASO.

33. Lindsay to Blair, March 3, 1934, Blair to the President, March 7, 1934, and FDR to Ickes, March 10, 1934, Old History Division Files, WASO.

Ickes felt the Department of the Interior had the capability necessary for the coordination and administration of historical resources and urged setting aside of Blair's plan in favor of a broad new survey under the National Park Service.³⁴

During this time various preservation groups became actively interested in the promotion of a comprehensive national program of historic preservation. The General Society of Colonial Wars, of which Blair was a member, established a Committee on the Preservation of Historic Monuments and the Marking of Historic Sites. The committee held meetings in May and June 1934 in Washington and Williamsburg and conferred with Interior officials and various congressmen. The Williamsburg board of directors, which had been watching the Park Service historical program with interest, also became interested in the movement for a national policy of historic preservation and gave tentative consideration to the idea of turning over Colonial Williamsburg to the Park Service.³⁵

During the summer of 1934 the National Park Service was influenced by these historical groups as well as by Chatelain's continual prodding for an expansion of the existing historical program. As a result the bureau began to press more earnestly for the necessary legislation to implement a national program of historic preservation.

At the same time Director Cammerer and Secretary Ickes discussed the need for a historic sites and buildings branch within the National Park Service for the purpose of developing a federal historical restoration and preservation program.³⁶ On September 28 Ickes ordered Solicitor Nathan Margold to prepare a draft bill creating within the National Park Service a Division on Historic American Buildings and Antiquities to

supervise and coordinate the collection of drawings, photographs, historical sketches, and other data on historic American buildings. It would maintain a library of the same. It would also have authority to restore historic American buildings. The bill should give this Division or the Secretary of the Interior, for the use of this Division, power to accept gifts, either inter vivos or testamentary, including either money or property, which shall be devoted to the acquisition and maintenance of historic American buildings, etc.

As future events would bear out, this request and recommendation by Ickes would lead to three important events in the implementation of a

34. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 565–66, and McDermott, "Breath of Life," 33.

35. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 566, and McDermott, "Breath of Life," 33–34.

36. Burlew to Demaray, September 10, 1934, 12-0, Administrative, Central Classified Files, 1907–36, RG 48; *Brief History of the National Park Service*, 33; Carl P. Russell, "The History and Status of Interpretive Work in National Parks," *The Regional Review* 3 (July 1939), 12; and "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1935, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1935*, 190–92.

national program of historic preservation with the National Park Service as the leading agency in the process: establishment of a Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, passage of the Historic Sites Act, and establishment of a National Park Trust Fund Board.³⁷

After looking into the matter Margold came to the conclusion that further information was needed to draft the proposed bill. Because of his long-held interest in historic preservation under the aegis of the National Park Service, Horace M. Albright, by now a successful businessman, persuaded his friend John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to back a detailed comprehensive study of preservation work and legislation both in the United States and Europe, including an analytic study of the administrative structure of the Park Service's historical program. The study would provide the Secretary of the Interior with the necessary background information to enable his office to draft a comprehensive historic preservation bill. Shortly thereafter, Ickes appointed J. Thomas Schneider, a graduate of Harvard Law School who was working in Newark, New Jersey, as his special assistant to undertake the study.³⁸

Schneider toured a number of historical areas in the eastern United States, discussed the proposed historic preservation legislation with Park Service historians, preservation authorities representing various public and private organizations, and the staff at Colonial Williamsburg, and gathered data on European legislation and practice. In early January 1935 he drafted a bill with the help of assistant solicitor Rufus G. Poole, incorporating the overall plan for a national program of historic preservation as well as the administrative machinery for a national park trust fund board. On January 25 he officially turned over the draft bill to Ickes, noting that the bill was general in tone because he hoped to gather more specifics during his upcoming journey to Europe for incorporation in the bill at a later date. While in Europe he hoped to study European preservation policy and practice first hand and gather data for a report that he was preparing for Ickes.³⁹

The Historic Sites Act represented a popular idea at a time of economic crisis when the nation needed a sense of its cultural heritage. The proposed bill, drafted by Poole and Schneider, and its companion bill to create a national park trust fund board, quickly found influential congressional sponsors as well as the support of President Roosevelt, who signed the act in late summer of 1935.⁴⁰

37. Ickes to Margold, September 28, 1934, Old History Division Files, WASO.

38. McDermott, "Breath of Life," 35, and Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 566-67.

39. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 570-71; McDermott, "Breath of Life," 36; Schneider to Ickes, January 25, 1935, 12-33, Legislation, Central Classified Files, 1907-36, RG 48.

40. For a legislative history of the Historic Sites Act see U.S. Department of the Interior, Natural Resources Library, Law Branch, comp., *Historic Sites, Buildings and Antiquities Act of 1935, Public Law 292, 74th Congress, 1st Session, 49 Stat. 666*, July 1980.

The Historic Sites Act was viewed by many in the historic preservation movement in the United States as “the Magna Charta in the program for the preservation of historic sites” and provided evidence to them that “a new cultural nationalism” had arrived.⁴¹ By committing the federal government to a continuing effort in the preservation of the places important in American history, the act profoundly influenced the course of the historic preservation movement in the United States and placed the National Park Service at the forefront of that movement.⁴²

The act declared “that it is a national policy to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings, and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States.” To execute this policy, Congress conferred a broad range of powers upon the Secretary of the Interior to be exercised through the National Park Service. These powers included the responsibility to: “(1) conduct a national survey of historical and archaeological sites, buildings, and objects to determine which possessed exceptional value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States; (2) acquire personal or real property by gift, purchase, or other means provided that the general fund of the treasury was not obligated without a specific congressional appropriation; (3) contract or make cooperative agreements with federal agencies, states, municipal subdivisions, corporations, associations, or individuals to preserve, maintain, and operate historic properties; (4) initiate a research program to determine the facts and develop an educational program to convey the information to the public; and (5) restore, reconstruct, rehabilitate, preserve, and maintain historic structures, sites, and objects of national importance acquired under its provisions provided that treasury funds were not committed without prior approval from Congress.” The act also established the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments to supercede the National Park Service Educational Advisory Board. The new advisory board was to advise the Secretary of the Interior on matters of national significance, additions to the National Park system, and administrative policy.

For the first time the federal government had developed a general policy broad enough to deal with the problem of the preservation of nationally significant historic sites, buildings, and objects. Armed with this sweeping legislation, the National Park Service was in a position to exert a major influence on historic preservation, interpretation, and development on a nationwide basis. Broad and flexible, the new law prom-

41. “History and Our National Parks,” [1935], Old History Division Files, WASO, and McDermott, “Breath of Life,” 2.

42. John D. McDermott, “Thirty Years Under the Historic Sites Act: The History Program of the National Park Service,” [1965], 1 (typescript manuscript on file in Old History Division Files, WASO).

ised much for the future of the preservation movement in the United States.⁴³

The National Park Trust Fund Board legislation, which was largely modeled on the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board created on March 3, 1925, made provision for administering gifts on bequests of personal property by state and local governments, private organizations, and individuals. These bequests were to be held in a trust fund for use by the Park Service in the acquisition, preservation, and restoration of historic sites and other areas of scientific and geological interest. Money or securities in the fund were to be invested or reinvested from time to time by the Secretary of the Interior in a manner to be determined by the board, consisting of the secretaries of the Treasury and Interior, the director of the National Park Service, and two individuals to be appointed by the president for five-year terms.⁴⁴

Discussions regarding the creation of a separate division of historic sites and buildings in the National Park Service had set into motion events that would result in passage of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. Nearly two months before passage of that act, the Department of the Interior authorized the formation of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings in the service's Washington office, headed by Chatelain, then acting assistant director.⁴⁵

As acting assistant director of the new branch, Chatelain and his successors had a general responsibility for all matters historical. He oversaw implementation and administration of interpretive and museum programs in historical areas, developed and maintained relationships with other agencies and groups, advised the Branch of Land Acquisition and Regulations in approving new historical areas, consulted with the Branch of Engineering and Plans and Design on construction in historical areas, conferred with the Branch of Operations on budget and per-

43. Lee, *Family Tree*, 48; McDermott, "Breath of Life," 42; McDermott, "Thirty Years Under the Historic Sites Act," 1–2; *Brief History of the National Park Service*, 33–35; Herbert E. Kahler, "Ten Years of Historical Conservation under the Historic Sites Act," *Planning and Civic Comment* 12 (January 1946), 21–22; "Historical Conservation Through the National Park Service," [1935], Old History Division Files, WASO; Department of the Interior, Memorandum for the Press, For Release, September 30, 1935, Press Releases Before 1940, A38, HFC; and Kahler to Tolson, January 7, 1953, Advisory Board—Functions, Rules, Establishment, Advisory Boards and Commissions, WASO. For an in-depth study of the specific provisions of the Historic Sites Act see McDermott, "Breath of Life," 43–74.

44. Department of the Interior, Memorandum for the Press, For Release, September 14, 1935, Press Releases Before 1940, A38, HFC; Barton to Director, August 16, 12-0, 1935, Trust Fund Board, Central Classified Files, 1907–36, RG 48; and White to Gill, April 21, 1939, Old History Division Files, WASO. The first two presidential appointees were J. Horace McFarland of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and Louis Hertle of Gunston Hall, Virginia. The first donation to the fund was a \$5,000 gift from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer for use of the facilities in Sequoia National Park in filming "Sequoia." Ickes to Adams, November 6, 1935, 12-0, Trust Fund Board, Central Classified Files, 1907–36, RG 48.

45. Cammerer to Washington Office and all Field Offices, August 1, 1935, 201–13, Administration (General), Organization, Central Classified Files, 1907–49, RG 79.

sonnel matters, and reviewed and approved master plans and individual project plans. It was his duty, finally, to initiate and put into effect a national policy of historic preservation, including the Historic Sites Survey, under the guidelines of the Historic Sites Act.

The ultimate mission of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings was expressed through the field historical staff. The personnel of that staff performed directly the historical interpretive function and carried out a large portion of the research program. Representing the branch in the office of the park superintendent or the regional office, they advised their supervisors in all matters pertaining to history and archaeology, including interpretation and physical planning and development.⁴⁶

By September 1935 the National Park Service was actively engaged in framing a code of procedures to serve as a guide in directing the varied activities under the Historic Sites Act. The code was designed to include basic regulations and policies that were to be followed in carrying out the provisions of the act and governing its enforcement.⁴⁷

By this time William Schneider had submitted his study entitled "Report to the Secretary of the Interior on the Preservation of Historic Sites and Buildings," and his research was used in formulating the directives to put the Historic Sites Act into operation. The report included data that was used to draft the code of procedure.⁴⁸

In February 1936 the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, in co-operation with the legal staff of the Department of the Interior, finalized and issued the code of procedure. The three individuals who were most responsible for the code's contents were Chatelain, Merritt Barton of the department's legal staff, and Ronald F. Lee. The regulations in the code included a six-step process to be taken before bringing an area into the National Park system as a national historic site, which was an entirely new type of area designation.⁴⁹

In early February 1936 Secretary Ickes announced the appointment of eleven members to the advisory board as provided for in the Historic Sites Act. The eleven members were noted historians, archaeologists, and preservationists representing all geographical areas of the nation.

The advisory board held its first annual meeting in Washington, D.C., on February 13–14, 1936. On the agenda were topics ranging

46. Acting Assistant Director to Field Historians, August 27, 1937 (with attached "Organization and Functions, Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings," August 27, 1937), 201–13, Administration (General), Organization, Central Classified Files, 1907–49, RG 79.

47. Department of the Interior, Memorandum for the Press, For Release, December 3, 1935, Press Releases Before 1940, A38, HFC, and Barton to Demaray, September 5, 1935, Central Classified Files, 1907–49, 201, Administration (General), RG 79.

48. Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 576, and *Report to the Secretary of the Interior on the Preservation of Historic Sites and Buildings*, by J. Thomas Schneider.

49. Acting Secretary of the Interior to the Director, National Park Service, February 28, 1936, 1st Advisory Board Meeting, Minutes and Resolutions, Advisory Boards and Commissions, WASO.

from the ways and means of procuring funds for the preservation of historic sites to the drafting of a model law suited to the needs of state legislatures in recommending the preservation of local shrines and landmarks.⁵⁰ The meeting was addressed by Ickes, Cammerer, and Chatelain, who outlined important phases of the historical work of the Park Service and suggested plans for comprehensive action under the scope of the new legislation.⁵¹

At its second meeting on May 7–9, 1936, the advisory board adopted a number of resolutions concerning historic preservation. The principal one to be approved concerned a general statement of principles relating to the selection of historical and archaeological sites that Chatelain had submitted to them. The statement observed that the “general criterion” for selecting areas for the National Park system “whether natural or historic, is that they shall be outstanding examples in their respective classes.” Since the number of federal park areas “must be necessarily limited,” care “should be exercised to prevent the accumulation of sites of lesser rank.” In the historical and archaeological fields, national areas were to be “carefully chosen upon the basis of important phases of American history,” the areas selected collectively presenting “an adequate story of American progress from the earliest beginnings of human existence down to comparatively recent times.” To ascertain the standards for selecting historic sites, it was desirable to outline the stages of American development and list possible sites illustrative of each stage. In the study of these lists it was expected that attention would be centered upon particular sites which, because of their outstanding historic value, important historic remains, and general availability, would be “said to be the best examples in their respective classes.” It was these sites which were to be “saved, developed, and interpreted by the federal government” through the National Park Service. Historic and archaeological areas other than those selected for attention by the federal government were to be protected and interpreted by state, local, semi-public, and private agencies with the active encouragement of the Park Service.⁵²

One of the most significant programs to be organized by the National Park Service as a result of the Historic Sites Act was the Historic Sites Survey. The vast number of requests for federal assistance, which numbered more than 500 by early 1937, combined with the provisions of the

50. Cammerer to Secretary, February 19, 1936, Central Classified Files, 12–33, National Historical Areas (General), 1907–36, RG 48, and Department of the Interior, Memorandum for the Press, For Release, February 11, 1936, 1st Advisory Board Meeting, Minutes and Resolutions, Advisory Boards and Commissions, WASO.

51. Department of the Interior, Memorandum for the Press, For Release, February 13, 1936, 1st Advisory Board Meeting, Minutes and Resolutions, Advisory Boards and Commissions, WASO.

52. Resolutions on Policy and Procedure Adopted by the Advisory Board, May 9, 1936, 12–33, National Historical Areas, General, Central Classified Files, 1907–36, RG 48.

act itself, made a comprehensive national survey of historic sites an essential first step toward the achievement of a national program of historic preservation.

On December 8, 1936, the National Park Service issued "A Statement of Policy" that would serve as a guide in implementing the survey. According to the statement, the purpose of the survey was "to acquire an adequate system of sites, without encumbering the system with sites of insufficient importance, and without assuming more maintenance responsibility than can be met." In this matter the service would adhere "to the principle whereby the criterion for determining the acquisition of a site is the unquestionable major significance of the site in national history."⁵³

That same day Director Cammerer approved a memorandum setting forth the initial procedures to be followed in conducting the survey. According to the memorandum, the Historic Sites Survey was "probably the most important single project now before the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, and in its ultimate effects one of the most significant projects of the National Park Service." On the basis of the survey, the National Park Service would select the historical and archaeological areas recommended for federal protection. The "number of such areas, their character, their geographic distribution, their relation to the park system, and the financial responsibilities involved" would "all constitute major problems of the survey."

The memorandum also outlined the scope and methodology to be used in carrying out the survey. It was to represent a nationwide geographic distribution, include a well-rounded variety of historic sites, and cover each of the principal periods in the course of American history. Four steps were to be followed in implementing the survey: (1) an inventory or index catalogue of the important historical and archaeological sites was to be prepared; (2) field investigations and research studies for the more promising areas were to be conducted; (3) areas were to be classified according to their national or non-national significance; and (4) development of a national plan for the preservation of important historical and archaeological sites was to be carried out in cooperation with various national agencies and state planning boards.⁵⁴

At its fourth annual meeting on March 25-26, 1937, the Advisory Board approved the general policies and procedures for the Historic Sites Survey as adopted by the National Park Service. To facilitate the classification process the board recommended that the historical and archaeological sites be classified with reference to special themes cover-

53. "A Statement of Policy to Guide the Service in the Matter of the Historic Sites and Buildings Survey, As Authorized by Public Law 292, 49 Stat. 666, 74th Congress," December 8, 1936, Old History Division Files, WASO.

54. Spalding to Director, October 12, 1936 (approved December 8, 1936), and *ibid.*, October 17, 1936, Old History Division Files, WASO.

ing the chief periods of American prehistory and history. Through this method, which was adopted by the Park Service, historical or archaeological sites would be placed under one of these themes for comparison with other sites illustrating the same subject. The best example or examples would then be chosen for protection and inclusion, where otherwise not well maintained or preserved, within the National Park system. Sites of lesser importance would be recommended for state or local protection and development. Where possible these would be handled through the ECW state park program of the National Park Service in order that their development through state means might fit in with the system of national areas belonging to the same theme. Accordingly, there were twenty-three historical themes under which historic sites were to be classified and twelve cultural groupings under which archaeological sites were to be classified.⁵⁵

As preparation for the Historic Sites Survey began, the list of twenty-three historical themes was reduced to fifteen, and archaeological cultural groupings were similarly reorganized and reduced in number.⁵⁶ By 1941, when wartime budget restrictions began to curtail the survey, reports or preliminary studies had been prepared on such historical themes as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century French and Spanish sites, colonial Dutch and Swedish sites, seventeenth-century English sites, western expansion of the frontier to 1830, and western expansion of the frontier, 1830–1900. Work also had begun on two thematic studies: eighteenth-century English sites and American Revolutionary War sites. Some 564 historical sites and 334 archaeological sites had been inventoried and 16 sites had been recommended by the advisory board and approved by the Secretary of the Interior as units of the National Park system.

Reports on archaeological sites had been prepared on several themes, including Early Man in North America, Prehistoric Sedentary Agriculture Groups, and Historic Sedentary Agricultural Groups. The survey of archaeological sites had been carried out in cooperation with Harvard, Columbia, Michigan, Louisiana State, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia universities—one of the leading projects being the Middle Mississippi

55. 4th Advisory Board Meeting, March 25–26, 1937, at Washington, D.C., Minutes and Resolutions, Advisory Boards and Commissions, WASO.

56. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1938, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1938*, 3. According to Herbert E. Kahler, advisory board determinations of national significance with respect to historic sites were kept confidential in the 1930s. Because sites found to have national significance were considered to be prospective units for the National Park system, there was concern that owners would become alarmed about federal designs on their properties. Not until after World War II, or perhaps not until the inauguration of the National Historical Landmarks program, were the board's determinations publicized, and then nationally significant properties were announced in large numbers to allay fears that the NPS might be after particular sites.

Valley Archaeological Survey comprising sections of eastern Arkansas and western Mississippi.⁵⁷

After the survey was halted by the war, it remained moribund until late 1957 when it was resumed by the National Park Service. By 1965 approximately 3,500 sites and buildings had been studied and evaluated by the survey.⁵⁸

Between the reorganization of 1933 and passage of the Historic Sites Act in 1935, four areas having historical or archaeological interest became units of the National Park system: Ocmulgee National Monument, Georgia (June 14, 1934); Thomas Jefferson Memorial, District of Columbia (June 26, 1934); Fort Jefferson National Monument, Florida (January 4, 1935); and Fort Stanwix National Monument, New York, (August 21, 1935).⁵⁹

The first historical area to come under federal administration through the provisions of the Historic Sites Act was the setting for one of the most problematical projects in historic preservation—the Jefferson National Expansion Memorial in St. Louis, Missouri—inasmuch as unemployment relief and urban renewal were probably more significant facets of the project than were historical questions. In 1933 public officials and business and civic groups formed a Jefferson National Expansion Memorial Association to support a project to renovate the waterfront area in the city by turning it into a park and establishing a national expansion memorial. The federal government became interested in the park proposal, and on June 15, 1934, President Roosevelt signed into law an act establishing the United States Territorial Expansion Memorial Commission to develop plans for a national memorial commemorating Thomas Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase, and westward national expansion. On April 10, 1935, the governor of Missouri signed an enabling act authorizing cities of 400,000 or more inhabitants to issue bonds in aid of federal historic projects, and on September 10 St. Louis voted a bond issue of \$7,500,000 of which \$2,250,000 was made available soon thereafter. By executive order on December 21, 1935, President Roosevelt designated that “certain lands situate[d] on the west bank of the Mississippi River at or near the site of Old St. Louis, Missouri, possess value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States and are a historic site within the meaning of the said [Historic Sites] act.” The Park Service was designated as the bureau to develop the memorial and \$6,750,000 in federal funds were

57. Acting Supervisor of Historic Sites to Regional Supervisors of Historic Sites, November 20, 1940, Old History Division Files, WASO; “Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service,” 1940, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1940*, 174; “Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service,” 1941, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1941*, 298; and Kahler, “Ten Years of Historical Conservation,” 22–24.

58. McDermott, “Thirty Years Under the Historic Sites Act,” 7.

59. Lee, *Family Tree*, 44–45.

allocated to the project to be used with the \$2,250,000 from St. Louis for the acquisition, preservation, and development of the area. Work on clearing the area began on October 10, 1939, but the preservation and development work as well as the construction of the memorial itself was not completed until the 1960s. Despite the designation by President Roosevelt in 1935, the national historic site was not officially authorized until May 17, 1954.⁶⁰

Salem Maritime National Historic Site, the second such area (established March 18, 1938) to come into the National Park system under the provisions of the Historic Sites Act, was easier for the professional staff of the Park Service to deal with since it involved the acquisition, preservation, and interpretation of a major early American port that had gained significance during the colonial, revolutionary, and federal periods of American history. Other areas that entered the National Park system as national historic sites during the period 1935-41 were Hopewell Village National Historic Site, Pennsylvania (August 3, 1938); Old Philadelphia Custom House National Historic Site, Pennsylvania (May 26, 1939); Federal Hall Memorial National Historic Site, New York (May 26, 1939); Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, New York (December 18, 1940); and Fort Raleigh National Historic Site, North Carolina (April 5, 1941).

Additionally, seven national monuments, two national battlefield parks, two national historical parks, and one national memorial were added to the National Park system during the six-year period following passage of the historic sites act. The Chesapeake and Ohio Canal was placed under the jurisdiction of the National Park Service on September 23, 1938, as a result of the bankruptcy of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, but it was not officially declared a national monument and hence a unit of the system until January 18, 1961.⁶¹

The Historic Sites Act provided for a comprehensive research program "to obtain true and accurate historical and archaeological facts and information" relative to the nation's historical and archaeological sites. Under Chatelain's tutelage the Park Service developed a far-reaching research program, so energetic Harold Ickes informed Director Cammerer on June 11, 1936, that the Park Service was going too far afield in the matter of research. Accordingly, the director had Chatelain draw up a document describing the overall purview of the Park Service research program. On July 7 the document entitled "Statement Regarding the

60. Executive Order 7253, December 21, 1935, 205-01, Executive Orders, Central Classified Files, 1907-49, RG 79; "The Jefferson National Expansion Memorial: A Brief History of an Important Project," *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* 4 (April 1948), 177-79; and Hosmer, *Preservation Comes of Age*, Vol. 1, 626-49.

61. Lee, *Family Tree*, 44-45.

Activities in Historical Research of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings" was submitted to the secretary.⁶²

Asserting that the research activities of the branch were "an extremely important part of the work of the National Park Service," the statement noted that between January 1, 1935, and June 1, 1936, the research staff working with materials in the Library of Congress and in other federal departments had prepared more than 300 reports. Of these, 57 percent were prepared at the request of congressional committees or individual congressmen or because of the need to obtain data to render judgments upon bills pending before Congress which would affect the National Park Service. Some 38 percent of the reports were made in response to inquiries from field personnel or from other Park Service branches in Washington, while some 5 percent were prepared to answer requests from state agencies or historical and patriotic agencies.

Chatelain went on to note that the research program was based "on a true conception of the needs of the Park Service and a carefully planned program of meeting the day by day problems that come into the service." The studies were necessary "if the high professional standards" of the service were to be followed in the historical areas. The historical problems of these areas must be met if the National Park Service were to meet the obligation placed upon it by law "to recommend action on sites proposed for national administration, and to develop those which are required."

In handling these problems, Chatelain contended, historical research in Washington saved both time and money because of the research resources at the Library of Congress and the archives of the various federal departments. With such material at hand, a small efficient research staff in Washington could provide the essential historical information necessary to the handling of a large percentage of historical problems presented to the National Park Service without expensive travel to the field, and without using the time consumed in field investigations. Moreover, justification for a comprehensive investigation of historic places lay in the fact "that only by studying and reporting on them was it possible to secure the complete picture that was an essential preliminary to classifying sites according to their importance." Until this classification was completed, it would be impossible "to carry out fully the purposes for which the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings was created." Moreover, research, survey, and classification were fundamental responsibilities placed upon the National Park Service by the recent historic sites legislation.

62. Interview of Verne E. Chatelain by Edwin C. Bearss and Barry Mackintosh, January 25, 1983).

Chatelain argued that the National Park Service could not safely rely upon the accuracy of information provided by state and local agency historians. To meet the obligation placed upon the Park Service by the Historic Sites Act, the Park Service historians must "verify the historical truth" for themselves and "secure the information which meets our own particular problems." In conclusion he noted:

To maintain true professional standards, to handle the work involved promptly, efficiently and at as low a cost as possible, and through that means to cultivate true historical standards and a genuine and widespread interest in preserving the important remains of our national past is the fundamental justification of the work of the Research Division.⁶³

As the National Park Service became increasingly involved in the development of historical areas, there was a corresponding need to define the relationship between research and development. The Regional Historians' Conference held on June 6–10, 1938, recommended that the National Park Service adopt a draft research and development policy for historic sites that it drew up. Accordingly, Director Cammerer approved such a policy statement on June 20, 1938. The document stated that a basic function of the National Park Service was the preservation and interpretation of historic sites. To perform that function effectively, it was necessary that the relationship of historical and archaeological research to development programs of such areas be clearly understood. Such a research and development policy was needed to provide a framework within which the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings could provide technical research assistance to the administrative officers in charge of historic sites and to the branches directly concerned with planning and development. The essential points of the policy stated that it was a fundamental principle that research should precede actual development work. Furthermore, planning could be undertaken in an intelligent manner only in consideration of all the data revealed by research. Complete and accurate information and correct interpretation required trained and experienced professional personnel. Because the Park Service should be capable of instantly proving the authenticity of its work, the policy was adopted of fully documenting the plans for each interpretive or developmental feature involving historic or prehistoric remains so that the service could fully justify, at any time, any preservation, reconstruction, or restoration project on areas under its jurisdiction. In addition to such studies for specific restoration and development projects, research files and documented studies should be prepared on

63. Ickes to Cammerer, June 11, 1936, Cammerer to Ickes, July 7, 1936 (with attached "Statement Regarding the Activities in Historical Research of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings"), and Slattery to Ickes, July 18, 1936, 12–33, National Historical Areas, General, Central Classified Files, 1907–36, RG 48.

allied subjects such as ordnance, ceramics, and furnishings when they were involved in park development.⁶⁴

An example of a historical park program where research was tied closely to development was the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. On July 21, 1938, Ronald F. Lee, chief of the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, drew up the outline of a historical research program that would meet the needs of preservation, restoration, interpretation, planning, and development for the canal. The work program, which would require the services of two historians, included extensive historical research in primary source materials, preparation of a documented historical base map, collection of historical photographs, and utilization of research data in preservation, interpretation, and development plans.⁶⁵

From 1935 to 1937 the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, in consultation with technicians from other Park Service branches and the advisory board, held a series of discussions regarding the establishment of a "proper restoration policy" for historical areas new to the system. The result of these discussions, as approved by the advisory board at its March 1937 meeting, was incorporated in a memorandum signed by Arno Cammerer on May 19, 1937. The policies, one for general restoration, another for battlefield area restoration, and a third covering sample restoration, represented the first codification of a national historic preservation policy.⁶⁶

Examples of restoration work done by the National Park Service in the 1930s under the May 19, 1937, restoration policies included the Wick and Guerin houses and Ford Mansion at Morristown, the Lightfoot House at Colonial, Fort Pulaski, the Customs House and Derby and Central wharves at Salem Maritime National Historic Site, Fort McHenry, Hopewell Village, Officers' Quarters at Fort Laramie, and Peach Orchard at Shiloh.⁶⁷

64. Cammerer to Washington and All Field Officers, June 20, 1938 (with attached "Research and Development Policies for Historic Sites—Recommended by the Regional Historians' Conference, June 6–10, 1938"), Old History Division Files, WASO.

65. Lee to Tolson, July 21, 1938, 201–13, Administration (General), Organization, Central Classified Files, 1907–49, RG 79. For a critical review of the various park research programs in Region I, see Stauffer to Spalding, August 23, 1937, Old History Division Files, WASO.

66. Cammerer to all Washington Officers and Field Officers, May 19, 1937, Albright Papers, Box 138. Also see Spalding to Director, February 11, 1937, Old History Division Files, WASO, and "Restoration and Procedure Adopted by the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments, Fourth Meeting, March 25–26, 1937," 4th Advisory Board Meeting, March 25–26, 1937, at Washington D.C., Minutes and Resolutions Advisory Boards and Commissions, WASO.

67. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1937, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1937*, 46; "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1939, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1939*, 269; and "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1940, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1940*, 173, 194.

The National Park Service also formulated several other policy statements relative to the preservation of historical and archaeological sites. In 1937 steps were taken to upgrade the preservation and recording of archaeological sites and specimens and to provide general principles for the maintenance and preservation of prehistoric features and ruins. A memorandum was issued on March 31, 1937, establishing a set of guidelines for the preservation of archaeological sites and initiating a new system of recording archaeological specimens which included field accession cards, archaeological survey cards, and maps.⁶⁸

During the same years, the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, in consultation with the advisory board, developed tentative definitions and objectives for various types of historical and archaeological areas in the National Park system.⁶⁹ This was done to simplify the administration and provide for uniform standards of development and operation of the numerous historical and archaeological areas that were transferred to the Park Service as a result of the reorganization of 1933 as well as the many new areas which were proposed as units of the National Park system after passage of the Historic Sites Act. Definitions and objectives were adopted as preliminary guidelines for the following nomenclature designations of historical and archaeological areas by the advisory board in March 1937: (a) national historical and archaeological monuments, (b) national historical parks, (c) national military parks, (d) national battlefield sites, (e) national cemeteries, and (f) miscellaneous memorials.⁷⁰

Thereafter, there were various efforts to redesignate the historical areas of the National Park system to coordinate and simplify the nomenclature of these areas according to National Park Service standards. One of the chief attempts to accomplish this goal was the proposal in the legislative program submitted to the Interior Department solicitor on August 31, 1938, to combine all national military parks with the national cemeteries and designate them as national historical parks. Three national battlefield sites were to be transferred to the national historical park designation while the remaining national battlefield sites were recommended for the memorial category. While this reclassification was designed to streamline the administration of areas in the National Park system, it was also proposed in part to "eliminate much of the public

68. Evison to Superintendents of Areas Having Historical Interest, March 31, 1937, and Paul R. Franke, "Prehistoric Ruins and Their Preservation," August 13, 1937, Old History Division Files, WASO.

69. For a comprehensive study of the history and evolution of the nomenclature designations of historical areas in the National Park system, see the study prepared by Dr. Harry Butowsky which is attached to a memorandum from Director Russell E. Dickenson to Morris K. Udall, Chairman, House Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, dated January 28, 1981.

70. "Definitions and Objectives of National Historical and Archaeological Monuments, National Military Parks, etc.," 4th Advisory Board Meeting, March 25-26, 1937, at Washington, D.C., Minutes and Resolutions, Advisory Boards and Commissions, WASO.

criticism of the National Park system as presenting numerous inconsistencies and illogicalities in the similar designation of areas that are not, in fact, comparable in character." The proposal was defeated, but the issue of reclassification has continued to be discussed periodically to the present day.⁷¹

As early as 1936 the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings was preparing plans to incorporate historical site sheets in the master plans for historical and battlefield areas in the National Park system. This was designed to bring about a closer coordination of the research work at the parks and monuments with the park development programs as outlined in the master plans. Early examples included historical tour sheets, "culture" sheets, and educational sheets showing historical points of interest along with the roads and trails system.⁷²

By October 1937 it had been determined to use a separate historical sheet in the master plans for historical areas. This sheet would show the "historic" ground cover, buildings, fences, bridges, and roads. The master plans of the battlefield areas would have an additional sheet(s) showing battle line positions, troop movements, batteries, fortifications, ground cover, extant remains, and actual extent of the battlefield area.⁷³

As a result of numerous conferences between the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, the Branch of Plans and Design, and various regional representatives, a set of guidelines was established in May 1938 for the preparation of historical sheets in master plans for historical and archaeological areas.⁷⁴ The guidelines, which were sent to all field historians, were designed to assist them in preparing data for incorporation by the field representatives of the Branch of Plans and Design in the master plans. The data was viewed as important both for its "scientific" value and usefulness for park planning purposes. The guidelines stated that the historical sheet in the master plan for a historical area was intended to serve both as a base and as a guide for future park planning. By reference to the historical sheet, one should be able to determine

71. Lee to Moskey and Wirth, October 6, 1938, 201–15, Administration (General), Policy, Central Classified Files, 1907–49, RG 79. Despite the defeat of the proposal in 1938 there were several instances during this time when the designation of a particular area was changed. Examples of such changes include: Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Site to Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, June 26, 1935; Chalmette Battlefield Site to Chalmette National Historical Park, August 10, 1939; Abraham Lincoln National Park to Abraham Lincoln National Historical Park, August 11, 1939; and Fort McHenry National Park to Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine, August 11, 1939.

72. Supervisor of Historic Sites to Regional Historians, September 15, 1936; Tolson to Vint, Wirth, and Spalding, June 7, 1937; and Appleman to Branch of Plans and Design—North, October 25, 1937; Old History Division Files, WASO.

73. MacGregor to Director, July 6, 1937; Ludgate to Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings, October 14, 1937; and Appleman to Branch of Plans and Design—North, October 25, 1937; Old History Division Files, WASO.

74. Thompson to Files, November 5, 1937, and Lee to Spalding and Ronalds, November 23, 1937, Old History Division Files, WASO.

what features existed during the historic period in the area and by comparison with other maps to understand the character of the work of historical conservation, the degree of success attained by Park Service efforts, and the amount and character of the work still to be carried out if the historical area were to be fully developed and properly interpreted. The historical base map should be supported with historical evidence from primary sources and provide information regarding all the physical features of the area as they existed at the time of the maximum historical importance of the area. All other important physical objects or features existing in the area that likely had an influence during the battle or events which gave the area its prime historical significance were also to be noted and documented.⁷⁵

These guidelines were later incorporated into the manual of standard practice for master plan preparation in 1941. According to the manual, various historical and archaeological base maps were to be included in the master plans for areas designated as being of special historical or archaeological significance. The maps were to include such sheets as historical base, troop position, archaeological base, and historical or archaeological tour. In addition the maps would be accompanied by a general statement describing the site, assessing its significance, defining its period of maximum historical importance, evaluating its scientific, educational, and commemorative value, and containing a list of bibliographical references. An interpretive statement and historical or archaeological narrative would also be prepared.⁷⁶

During the late 1930s efforts were made to upgrade the interpretive activities in the historical areas of the National Park system. Improvements were made in various types of field exhibits, including sample "restorations," outdoor relief maps, orientation maps, trailside museums, and markers. An example of such sample restoration projects was the reconstruction of the Continental Army hospital, together with reproductions of a soldier's hut and officer's hut, at Morristown National Historical Park in 1936-37. As part of the interpretive program, field historians began to give public lectures sponsored by outside groups and to participate in numerous radio broadcasts in the vicinity of their parks.⁷⁷

In April 1940 a historical technicians conference was held at Richmond, Virginia, with Ronald F. Lee as chairman and Roy E. Appleman, Regional Supervisor of Historic Sites, Region I, as vice chairman. The

75. Lee to Field Historians, May 18, 1938, and Lee to Regional Historians, July 21, 1938, 201-13, Administration (General), Organization, Central Classified Files, 1907-49, RG 79.

76. Supervisor of Historic Sites to Vint, October 25, 1940, and "Section III, Interpretation, Historical and Archaeological Areas, Drawings and Outline," Manual of Standard Practice for Master Plans, 1941, Old History Division Files, WASO.

77. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1937, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1937*, 49-50.

purpose of the conference was to consider interpretive problems relating to the development and presentation of historical and archaeological areas. The subjects discussed included the objectives and standards of interpretive policy. It was stressed that care should be exercised to prevent the interpretation of historical areas from becoming too technical. The visitor was to be given a concise statement of major events and an interpretation of their significance to American historical development. Simplicity in presentation, however, did not imply superficial knowledge. Rather the complete mastery of history and period culture of historical areas by technical personnel was urged.⁷⁸

As early as 1936 National Park Service historians were involved in the publications efforts of the bureau. In that year they began preparing material for a new publication entitled *Glimpses of the Eastern Historical Areas*. They also prepared copy for seven informal leaflets on the historical areas in the National Park system that were designed to be given to visitors.⁷⁹

In 1939 a new series of informative bulletins on historical areas was planned, and the first booklet in the series, *Manassas to Appomattox*, was issued. Copy for seven other booklets in the series was transmitted to the Government Printing Office by June.⁸⁰

During the late 1930s the Branch of Historic Sites and Buildings and the Office of Information developed a publications program for historical and archaeological areas. In July 1940 a new publications program was announced that had the approval of the Committee on Publications and Director Cammerer. The principal types of publications of the new program included two-fold multilithed or printed leaflets, sixteen-page illustrated pamphlets, an NPS popular study series, and tour route literature.

In addition there were plans for a history and archaeology series to parallel the flora and fauna series that had been in existence for several years. Also under consideration was a research series that would publish original contributions by Park Service professional personnel in the fields of history and archaeology and a source material series designed for the printing of excerpts "from interesting and human original histori-

78. Johnston to National Park Superintendents, National Monument Custodians, Inspectors, Historical and Archaeological Technicians, May 17, 1940 (with attached Recommendations, Committee Reports, Minutes of Historical Technicians Conference, Region One, April 25-27), Old History Division Files, WASO. Also see Johnston to Superintendents, Historical Areas; Custodians, Historical Areas; Historical Technicians, November 9, 1940, and Roberts to Superintendents, Historical and Archaeological Areas; Custodians, Historical and Archaeological Areas; Historical Technicians, Archaeological Technicians, Inspectors, December 11, 1940, History of Interpretation to 1935, K1810, HFC.

79. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1936, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, 1936, 127.

80. "Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service," 1939, in *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior*, 1939, 286.

cal source material, or particularly good interpretive statements from great writers or speakers, applicable to areas" under Park Service jurisdiction.⁸¹

The decade of the 1930s was a significant period for the growth and development of the historic preservation movement in the United States. The quadrupling of historical areas in the National Park system as a result of the reorganization of 1933 placed the Park Service at the forefront of that movement. Public consciousness of the need to preserve our historical and archaeological sites resulted in larger appropriations, the acquisition of new areas, and the establishment within the agency of a Branch of Historic Sites charged with responsibility for the preservation, development, and interpretation of the significant cultural resources of the country.

Emergency relief programs designed to help the nation work its way out of economic depression provided the labor, funds, and materials to complete many park projects. The New Deal programs were invaluable in their role in training National Park Service personnel in historic preservation techniques and policies. Historians and architects, for example, learned about restoration and reconstruction by experimentation in state as well as national park areas around the country. This type of "hands-on" training would not have been possible without the influx of money and personnel during the 1930s.

At the same time, study and comparison of European historic preservation policies with those of the United States led to passage of the Historic Sites Act that granted to the Secretary of the Interior through the National Park Service authority to establish and implement a comprehensive national program of historic preservation. By the outbreak of World War II the basic foundations of such a policy had been formulated and implemented, and the stage was set for the full flowering of the historic preservation movement in the postwar decades.⁸²

81. Lee to Superintendents of Historical and Archaeological Areas, and Historical Technicians, July 15, 1940, Administration (General), Organization, Central Classified Files, 1907-49, RG 79.

82. Alvin P. Stauffer and Charles W. Porter, "The National Park Service Program of Conservation for Areas and Structures of National Historical Significance," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 30 (June 1943), 29; McDermott, "Thirty Years Under the Historic Sites Act," 1-3; Kahler, "Ten Years of Historical Conservation under the Historic Sites Act," 22-24; and McDermott, "Breath of Life," 76-101.