

Organizational History

The auto industry and labor movement helped establish the United States as a global industrial powerhouse, forge creation of the middle class, supply our military with the tools needed to defend democracy, and mobilize the country to enable innovation and prosperity. Detroit and Southeastern Michigan built the auto industry and have been home to countless influential people, organizations, and events within the labor movement. Yet, over time, memories fade. As facilities became obsolete, industry expanded globally, and technology altered the nature of manufacturing, the region's rich automotive and labor heritage risked being buried by the sands of time. Along with it, would go critical lessons about American ingenuity, the inter-relationships between management and labor, the power of solidarity, and the inevitable bond between economic and community change. Also lost would be the pride, inspiration, and hope that emerge within a region as its residents and institutions realize the impact they and their ancestors have had on the nation and world. Recognizing this risk, a diverse group of individuals and organizations began the painstaking work of preserving this heritage. Their efforts led to the creation of the MotorCities National Heritage Area to serve as a permanent force for mobilizing and coordinating the array of stakeholders whose resources and participation are vital to preserving this heritage, educating the world about its impact, and using the largest concentration of auto-related sites in the world to stimulate tourism and community revitalization.

The creation of the MotorCities National Heritage Area (MCNHA) exemplifies the grassroots collaboration that MCNHA has worked hard to facilitate since its birth. MCNHA's origins lie decades before its birth when a group of citizens concerned historically significant sites might be abandoned or torn down worked together to preserve them. Over two decades, they helped the Durant-Dort Carriage Company Office, the Ford River Rouge Complex, and the Highland Park Ford Plant acquire National Landmark designation. They

also helped the Deaborn Inn, Nankin Mills Nature Center, the Newburgh Mill, the Phoenix Mill, and the Wilcox-Plymouth Mill acquire State Historic designation as part of an effort to create the Ford Heritage Trail, self-guided tours of a trail of villages initiated by automotive pioneer Henry Ford around small manufacturing mills in the early 1900s. Project champions advocated with the National Park Service (NPS) to recognize the Trail through its Conservation Assistance Program. Although the Trail was not formally recognized through the program, the

Public Law 105-355
105th Congress

An Act

To authorize the Automobile National Heritage Area in the State of Michigan,
and for other purposes.

Nov. 6, 1998
[H.R. 3910]

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of
the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

TITLE I—AUTOMOBILE NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA OF MICHIGAN

Automobile
National
Heritage Area
Act.
16 USC 461 note
[table].

SEC. 101. SHORT TITLE.

This title may be cited as the "Automobile National Heritage Area Act".

SEC. 102. FINDINGS AND PURPOSES.

(a) FINDINGS.—The Congress finds that—

(1) the industrial, cultural, and natural heritage legacies

experience energized project champions who broadened the focus to include more areas with historical significance and forged a broader coalition of community organizations, businesses, individual volunteers, and congressional contacts. DaimlerChrysler, Ford, General Motors, and the United Auto Workers were all major supporters, and the coalition's tireless efforts led the NPS to advise the coalition to seek designation as a National Heritage Area to achieve national recognition for the preservation efforts and open access to financial and technical assistance not otherwise available.

In the mid-90s, the 100th anniversary of the automobile presented a window of opportunity for the coalition to broaden understanding of, and support for, their efforts during this period of heightened attention to the auto industry. Their intensified advocacy led to virtually unanimous support by Michigan's congressional

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: STORY BOARDS TO WALKING TOURS

When the Dearborn Chamber of Commerce converted the lower level of the Clara Bryant Ford Library (Bryant Library) to include the Dearborn Visitor and Dearborn Visitor and Welcome Center. They asked MCNHA to provide \$10,000 to create story boards to educate residents, students, and tourists about the rich history of Dearborn and its role in the automobile industry. MCNHA provided the funds and helped the Bryant Library restore some of the aging architecture within the historical structure.



The following year, the Chamber of Commerce and the Dearborn Historical Society collaborated with MCNHA to develop a unique tourist experience. Using the Wayside exhibits initiated by MCNHA in Dearborn, a biking, driving, and walking 77-page guide of 68 historic sites was put together to promote tourism in Dearborn. This tour will be launched during 2013 and promoted during the Henry Ford 150 Celebration.

delegation which co-sponsored legislation initiated by Congressmen John D. Dingell (D-MI) and Joe Knollenberg (R-MI) to officially designate an area covering more than 10,000 square miles, 13 counties, nearly 260 municipalities and townships, 15 watersheds, 6,000,000 residents, and over 1,200 auto- and labor-related sites as the MotorCities National Heritage Area. Congress passed the legislation, which was signed into

law on November 6, 1998 by President Clinton. The designation confirmed that southeast Michigan possessed nationally unique natural and historic, man-made resources that combined with human activity to create a unique cultural landscape that told a compelling part of the American story. Furthermore, it confirmed the importance of creating an entity to shepherd efforts to preserve and promote that heritage.

National Heritage Area designation was a great accomplishment, but it was the launching point, not the destination. Work began earnestly to create MCNHA as a nonprofit entity to manage the heritage area efforts and formalize the strategy that MCNHA would pursue. The first major step in this direction was crafting a general management plan (GMP), an effort that began in 2000. Understanding the need for a specific strategy that would collectively utilize the ground level participation of citizens, governments and other nonprofit organizations in the private sector, MCNHA plotted out its course of action. Boundaries of the heritage area were drawn out, a tour of the region's corridors was conducted for the purpose of an environmental assessment, and volunteers assembled a Geographic Resource Inventory, which chronicled numerous auto and labor heritage sites.

MCNHA rallied over 350 people to participate in planning meetings, compiled over 1,000 resources within the inventory, and established the three programmatic areas, education, preservation, and tourism. After widespread circulation and public review of over 700 copies of the GMP draft, the plan was approved on May 14, 2002 by the Secretary of the Interior and MCNHA was officially validated as a regional entity to interpret and share the MotorCities story. MCNHA's mission to preserve, interpret, and promote the automotive and labor heritage of Michigan by encouraging revitalization through conservation, increasing auto-related tourism, and developing and deploying auto- and labor-related educational and informational programs would drive its efforts.

With the GMP approved, MCNHA could fully access federal funding to implement its preservation, tourism, and education plans. The inventory conducted by MCNHA highlighted the vast number of heritage sites, their distribution across the region, and the needs and opportunities they presented. Clearly, no one organization could handle all of the potential projects. Instead, cultivating and sustaining partnerships would be essential to success. To foster such partnerships, MCNHA implemented a grant program to provide critical project-level financing to leverage commitments from additional partners. The program also opened the door for MCNHA to provide technical assistance and facilitation services to applicants to help improve their internal capacity and the potential for project success. MCNHA recognized that building capacity at the community level and aligning otherwise separate projects throughout the region held the most promise for sustaining auto- and labor-related preservation, tourism, and education and stimulating regional action to create a true identity for the heritage area.

Over time, MCNHA has complemented its grant program with a variety of initiatives to further its preservation, tourism, and education efforts. Programs to foster partnerships outside of the grant program, build organizational membership, create shared learning opportunities for stakeholders, coordinate and jointly promote previously uncoordinated tourism efforts, and craft new vehicles for learning about the region's auto and labor heritage were adopted. For all of these programs, building and strengthening partnerships and collaboration at the community and regional levels have been core principles. In 2009, in response to community stakeholders who sought more opportunities to participate in heritage preservation, MCNHA expanded its catchment area to include more of the region. This broadened the number of Stewardship Communities—local communities taking responsibility for preserving and promoting their automotive and labor heritage with the support of MCNHA—and increased the potential for creating a unified, regional vision for heritage preservation and promotion.

Since its inception, MCNHA has implemented its mission by steadfastly focusing on empowering partnerships, working as an intermediary to connect organizations with one another and resources critical for preserving and promoting southeast Michigan's automotive and labor heritage. It has directly provided more than \$1 million to more than 100 organizations to make almost 200 important preservation, tourism, and education projects a reality. It has helped leverage more than \$6 million in additional financing and in-kind support that otherwise might not have been accessible to these

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- *More than \$1,000,000 provided to grantees to enable preservation, tourism, and education projects*
- *More than 100 automobile and labor heritage organizations engaged*
- *Almost 200 preservation, tourism, and education projects supported*
- *More than \$6,000,000 leveraged for projects*
- *Forged unified marketing strategies for auto- and labor-related tourism events through Autopalooza*
- *Ensured critical regional tourism events, like Concours d'Elegance stayed in the region*
- *Established and maintained collaborative network of more than 100 organizations involved in automotive heritage*

projects. MCNHA has been a critical force in aligning previously separate projects and events for mutually beneficial gains, such as shared marketing and economies of scale. In the process, MCNHA has brought valuable technical expertise to organizations to help build their capacity to enact and sustain successful heritage preservation, education, and promotion efforts. Most importantly, MCNHA has played a vital role in building and sustaining an on-going network of more than 100 organizations involved in automotive heritage preservation. It is a linchpin in that network facilitating connections among network members and instilling a unified vision to guide the network's efforts to build understanding of the evolution and impact of southeast Michigan's rich automotive and labor history among the

hundreds of thousands of people with whom network members come in contact each year.

MCNHA and its partners have made tremendous progress in preserving and promoting the region's auto and labor heritage. Historic sites have been preserved and put into new, productive uses. People throughout the region and nation have improved their understanding of the important role played by the southeast Michigan's auto and labor heritage. Coordination among the array of organizations working to sustain the region's heritage has improved. Auto- and labor-related tourism has become a vital component of Michigan's overall tourism strategy. Yet, much work remains. Many of the more than 1,200 auto- and labor-related resources identified in MCNHA's resource inventory need help to ensure preservation. Auto- and labor-related attractions and events in the region need help with coordination and promotion to maximize their tourism and educational impact. Collaborative efforts are necessary to build on the educational gains created so far. It is essential to have an organization whose sole focus is facilitating and coordinating the efforts of the many individuals and institutions engaging in heritage-related work at the community level. MCNHA has established itself as that organization, and it looks forward to its next decade of work driving collaboration to preserve, promote, and capitalize on southeast Michigan's automotive and labor heritage.

