

UPPER HOUSATONIC VALLEY HERITAGE AREA, Inc

ANNUAL REPORT - 2003

This year saw significant progress towards our goal of being designated and functioning as a National Heritage Area. The National Park Service's Feasibility Report, concluding that we meet the criteria for designation, was released in February and forwarded to Congress. Representatives Nancy Johnson and John Olver and Senators Lieberman, Dodd, Kerry and Kennedy promptly introduced enabling legislation in the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House bill was passed in October and has been sent to the Senate for its consideration in 2004.

The legislation designates our organization as the Management Entity for the Area and we are continuing to evolve to carry out this role. Early in the year two new Directors were elected, Steve Sears, Vice President of Crane & Co., and Dan Bolognani, marketing director of the Interlaken Inn and current President of the Northwest Connecticut Travel Council. Both bring broad experience and expertise to our operation.

Drawing on the NPS Report and the twelve public meetings of recent years, we are developing the groundwork for a ten year strategic plan of goals, structure and operations. This will entail further public meetings during 2004 as we seek to tie the heritage activities with the area's economic and educational structures. We are planning our third October Weekend of Heritage Walks and are working with local organizations to develop broad area heritage trails and projects.

We continue to increase public awareness and support, a key to becoming a successful heritage area. We have met with numerous groups in the area, appeared on local media, distributed newsletters and progress reports and established a web-site. The National Park Service produced a handsome brochure summarizing its feasibility study and we have distributed more than 30,000 copies. We seek the help of all in getting the word out.

During 2003 we received significant financial contributions from the National Park Service that have enabled us to continue our growth. Local public support is also important, not only providing needed funds but also permitting us to partially match the NPS grants. We thank our generous contributors in 2003:

**Russ Cohen
Susan E. Lott
Carol Nelson
Crosby Wells**

**Friends of Beckley Furnace
Salisbury Association
The Bicycle Tour Company**

**Interlaken Inn
Wake Robin Inn
Salisbury Rotary Club**

We look forward to continuing progress in 2004, as we work with the many organizations and interested individuals to celebrate the heritage of the beautiful Housatonic Valley.

Ronald D. Jones, Chairman