



U.S. Congressman

Nick Rahall*WORKING FOR WEST VIRGINIANS*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
JANUARY 30, 1991CONTACT: JIM ZOIA
(202) 226 - 7761**RAHALL SEEKS NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM STATUS
FOR MERCER COUNTY'S BRAMWELL**

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- U.S. Rep. Nick J. Rahall (D-WV) today introduced into the new Congress legislation to establish, as a unit of the National Park System, the Bramwell National Historical Park at the Mercer County community renown for its turn-of-the-century coal baron era mansions and coal camps.

"As I have noted in the past, it is my intention to seek as part of my Southern West Virginia Coal Heritage Initiative the establishment of what I like to call the 'Colonial Williamsburg' of coal towns. We have been fortunate to find in Bramwell some outstanding, and what I believe to be nationally significant, historical, cultural and architectural values relating to the coal mining heritage of southern West Virginia," Rahall said in introducing the bill.

A portion of the Town of Bramwell, where the historic 'coal baron' homes are located, is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places as an historic district. With assistance from the West Virginia Division of Culture and History, the local Bramwell Historic Landmarks Commission is in the process of working to expand the existing historic district to include the outlying Coopers, a former company-run coal camp, and other areas within the corporate boundary of the town. While a National Register of Historic Places listing denotes that the area is of local, regional or national historical significance, it does not provide the type of status or economic development potential that a unit of the National Park System does.

Rahall said his legislation adopts the proposed expanded National Register listing boundary for the purpose of the park. "As such, both sides of our coal heritage--management and labor--will be represented."

The proposed Bramwell National Historical Park is envisioned as being a 'living' unit of the National Park System in a manner similar to the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park in West Virginia. People would continue to make the area their homes. For this reason, the legislation makes a number of specific provisions to protect private property rights: acquisition of land could only take place with "willing sellers" and the National Park Service would not have access to private residential property within the Park without the advice and consent of the owner. Development of the Park would be outlined in a management plan, which would be devised by the National Park Service with public input and through consultation with the Bramwell National Historical Park Advisory Committee established by the bill.

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Rahall noted that a number of developments have taken place since he first introduced the bill last year. Aside from the progress that has been made on expanding the existing National Register listing, which he believes enhances the bill's prospects in Congress, the legislation was already the subject of a Congressional hearing conducted by the Subcommittee on National Parks and Public Lands on September 18, 1990, at which time testimony in support was received from the Mayor of Bramwell, Harry Donnal Murphy; Louise Stoker, the Chairman of the Bramwell Historic Landmark District; Beth Hager, the Curator of History for the Huntington Museum of Art; and Commissioner Bill Drennen of the West Virginia Division of Culture and History.

In addition, as part of the fiscal year 1991 appropriation bill for the Interior Department, Senator Robert C. Byrd inserted funds for the National Park Service to conduct an official study of Bramwell. In addition, Rahall said that he has received a commitment from the chief of the Park Service's Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) to send a staff member to Bramwell.

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SIDEBAR

Aside from National Parks like Yellowstone and Great Smokey Mountains, there are many types of designations within the National Park System including National Monuments, National Rivers, National Seashores, National Battlefield Sites and Parks, National Recreation Areas, National Historic Sites and National Historical Parks.

The following units of the National Park System have been established in West Virginia: the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, the New River Gorge National River, the Gauley River National Recreation Area and the Bluestone National Scenic River. All but Harpers Ferry were established under legislation sponsored by Rep. Rahall.

Many National Historic Sites encompass the home of a President, e.g. Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site at Hyde Park, New York, and the Lincoln Home National Historic Site at Springfield, Illinois, or other famous people, e.g. Longfellow National Historic Site at Cambridge, Massachusetts and the Edison National Historic Site at West Orange, New Jersey. In addition, there are numerous National Historic Sites for Revolutionary War and Civil War forts.

However, there are quite a few National Historic Sites and National Historical Parks which deal with cultural and historic values not unlike what exists at Bramwell.

For example, the Hampton National Historic Site located at Towson, Maryland, was established to ensure the preservation of Georgian mansions built during the latter part of the 18th century. The Lowell National Historical Park in Lowell, Massachusetts, involves America's first planned industrial city with exhibits and tours telling the story of the industrial revolution. The park includes mill complexes and worker housing among other items. Of the 136 acres involved, only 4 acres are federally owned with the remaining in private hands.

In all, there presently exists 63 National Historic Sites and 26 National Historical Parks nationwide. A National Historical Park generally is an area of greater physical extent and complexity than National Historic Sites.
