

Our History

In 1946, Congress recognized "cooperating associations," which are federally recognized not-for-profit associations whose purpose is to help educate park visitors about the national park system through the sale of educational products and to support park programs and projects not readily achievable by federal funds and personnel. Cooperating associations enhance visits to the national park system by operating bookstores, developing educational products and supporting the educational/interpretive programs of the National Park Service.

In May 1947, several active National Park Service rangers gathered at Gettysburg National Military Park (Gettysburg, PA) to organize Eastern National Park & Monument Association (now called "Eastern National"). Eastern National was established as a 501(c)3 cooperating association to serve a network of parks that could not sustain their own individual cooperating associations.

In the beginning, there was no capital to launch Eastern National, so our founders passed the hat and collected \$147. They used that money to develop a single title, "Abraham Lincoln in His Own Work and That of His Contemporaries." It was sold in Eastern National's first agency, Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site in Hodgenville, KY and from there the association grew.

Today

These days, Eastern National is partnered with over 150 national parks and other public trusts. In addition to the National Park Service, we work with the US Army Corps of Engineers, USDA Forest Service and several state-run agencies.

The principle of sharing still exists among our parks. Eastern National was founded because most small parks could not sustain their own cooperating associations, yet needed the help that an association provides (e.g., operation of retail outlets, management of sales staff, development of educational publications specific to park, etc). The larger parks help sustain retail operations at the smaller parks, so that all Eastern National bookstores receive the same level of service and standard of excellence.