



President Lincoln's grant of the Yosemite Valley to the state of California in 1864 was the beginning of America's national park system. Yosemite National Park (California).





NPS responsibilities for preserving cultural heritage were significantly expanded by President Franklin Roosevelt in the 1930s: Washington Light Infantry Monument, Cowpens National Battlefield (South Carolina).



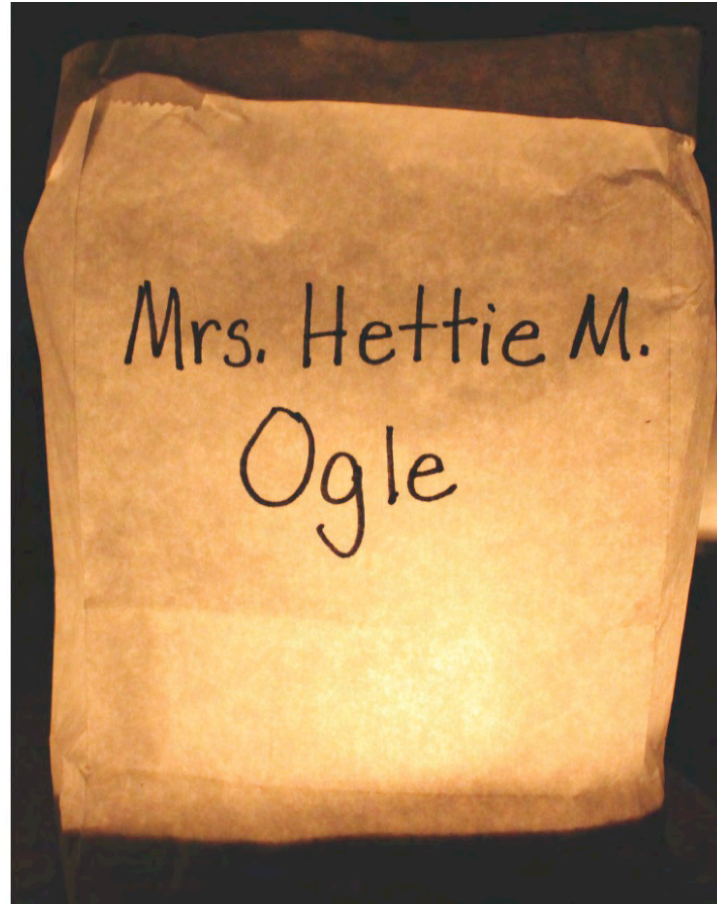


Parks are now designated for their ecological as well as scenic and recreational values: Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve (Colorado).



Devils Tower National Monument (Wyoming) was the first monument to be proclaimed under the Antiquities Act.





National parks abound in opportunities to ponder the significance of everyday American lives: (left) Historic Hensley Settlement cemetery at Cumberland Gap National Historical Park (Kentucky/Tennessee/Virginia); (right) Luminaria in memory of flood victim, Johnstown Flood National Memorial (Pennsylvania).



Shoreline parks are now an important part of the national park system: Female Kemp's ridley sea turtle returns to Gulf of Mexico after nesting, Padre Island National Seashore (Texas).





Recreation has always been an important part of the national park experience: (left) Sunbathers at Crater Lake National Park (Oregon); (right) Ranger-guided hike at the Fiery Furnace, Arches National Park (Utah).



As part of the New Deal, the National Park Service conducted comprehensive nationwide surveys of scenic road corridors and coastlines, recommending greater public access to these landscapes. New categories of parks were added to the national park system, including national seashores, beginning with Cape Hatteras (North Carolina), and national parkways, beginning with Blue Ridge Parkway (North Carolina / Virginia).





The Vietnam Veterans Memorial and Washington Monument, both part of the National Mall and Memorial Parks (Washington, D.C.), are among the many urban parklands, historic sites, monuments, and greenways the National Park Service is responsible for in and around the nation's capital.



The history of military technology is interpreted at Fort Pulaski National Monument (Georgia).





Superb examples of craftsmanship can be found in many national parks: Lincoln Bridge, Chickasaw National Recreation Area (Oklahoma).





Volunteers such as these historical reenactors are an indispensable part of the national park system: (left to right) Buffalo Soldier, Nicodemus National Historic Site (Kansas); washerwoman, Ninety Six National Historic Site (South Carolina); firing muskets at Saratoga National Historical Park (New York).





The size of the national park system was more than doubled in 1978 when President Jimmy Carter, in a sweeping declaration, used the Antiquities Act to proclaim a large number of national parks in Alaska. Double Glacier, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve (Alaska).





Many national parks were established explicitly to protect important ecological regions and biodiversity. Badlands National Park (South Dakota).





Glimpses of the ancient: (left) Bristlecone pines, such as this one in Great Basin National Park (Nevada), are among the oldest living things on Earth; (right) Vistas at Grand Canyon National Park (Arizona) are a chance to peer into deep geologic time.





There are many ways you can experience our national park system—on vacations, on weekend excursions, or even on a daily basis for many of you who live near a national park. You might connect with the national park system through school and community programs, websites, social media, and park volunteer programs. Mojave National Preserve (California).