

## America's Lost National Park Units: A Closer Look

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IN 1991, ALAN HOGENAUER (1942–2013) published two papers (1991a, 1991b) in *The George Wright Forum* on the topic of lost park units. These comprised five categories that park units could fall within: proposed, authorized but never established, established and active, separately established but eventually absorbed, and delisted sites. The 26 sites in the last group were formerly part of the national park system but have been removed, and received the most attention. The numbers have changed somewhat since Hogenauer wrote about them, as the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, was delisted in 1994 and the Oklahoma City National Memorial (created in 1997) was delisted in 2007. But aside from these papers by Hogenauer and one by Barry Mackintosh, a National Park Service (NPS) bureau historian (Mackintosh 1995), very little attention has been given to these places. It is safe to say the prevailing attitude towards them has been one of disdain and they are seen as being unworthy of ever having been in the national park system. The goal of this paper is to examine these delisted sites more closely. A closer examination shows that they tell us more about the history of the park system than might be thought. Rather than being exceptions to the rule of selecting only high-quality sites to become park units, the delisted sites were actually quite typical.

Hogenauer provided general descriptions of the various delisted units, but no details or maps. Unfortunately, he also provided no sources or references for his descriptions. However, the National Park Service Office of Legislative and Congressional Affairs (National Park Service 2016) has collected all laws and proclamations relating to the national park system, and these can be accessed through their website. This was the primary source of information used here. All of the delisted units Hogenauer discussed, with the exception of Wolf National

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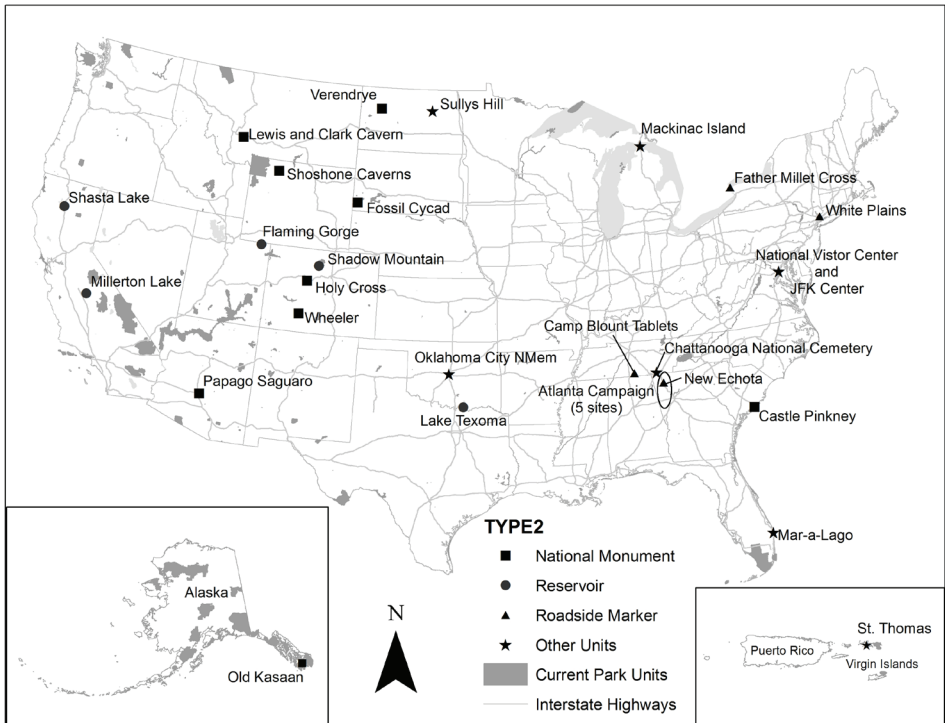
Scenic Riverway in Wisconsin (for which no information could be found showing it to have been an established unit), were found and mapped (Figure 1).

As Hogenauer (1991a) noted, these sites are distributed across the country. However, there are in fact geographic patterns among the delisted units. Most can be fit into one of three groups: national monuments (NMs), western reservoirs, and roadside markers. Each group has a different geography as well as a unique story about its role in the shaping of the national park system. Not all the delisted units fit into these three sets of stories. The fates of the National Visitor Center, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and Oklahoma City National Memorial lie in management issues (Hogenauer 1991; Mackintosh 1995), while Sullys Hill entered the national park system because its original overseeing agency was within the Department of Interior, which administered national parks before NPS was created (Harmon 1986). It was dropped from the system because it did not meet the standards later developed by NPS. The strange saga of Mar-a-Lago National Historic Site (NHS) has been discussed in detail by Rettie (1995).

### National monuments

Ten of the delisted units were abolished national monuments, mostly in the West. These are

**Figure 1.** Location of the delisted national park units.



perhaps the best known of all the units and the ones whose stories best fit the narrative of lost units. South Dakota's Fossil Cycad NM was established in 1922 and is legendary within the park system for being delisted after having lost the resource it was created to protect (Santucci and Hughes, n.d.). It was one of several national monuments in the Black Hills, and is today bisected by US Highway 18 north of Edgemont. Of the national monuments that were eventually delisted, Wheeler NM was the first, created in 1908 to protect a small area of high-altitude badlands in the Colorado Rockies near Creede (Szasz 1977). Holy Cross NM included the Mount of the Holy Cross, a 14,005-foot-tall peak in the central Rockies named for the appearance of a cross of snow in its crevices during spring. Papago Saguaro NM preserved rocks and saguaro cacti outside of Phoenix, Arizona (Swarth 1920), while Old Kasaan NM preserved an abandoned Alaska native village on Prince of Wales Island in the Alaskan panhandle (Norris 2000). Shoshone Cavern NM was created in 1909 near Cody, Wyoming, only six months after it had been discovered (Roberts 2012). Montana's Lewis and Clark Cavern NM was created in 1908 and remains a state park today. Verendrye NM was created to commemorate the route of explorers who traveled the northern plains almost 100 years before Lewis and Clark (Smith 1980).

These lost monuments were, in their geography and features, typical of others that were being created and which were retained in the national park system. Fossil Cycad was only one of many fossil-based western national monuments. Others still in the system include Dinosaur, Petrified Forest, Agate Fossil Beds, Fossil Butte, John Day Fossil Beds, Hagerman Fossil Beds, and Florissant Fossil Beds (Mackintosh 1991). The trend continued with President Obama's 2015 proclamation of Tule Springs Fossil Beds NM in Nevada. Like many other early national monuments, such as Devils Postpile, Pinnacles, Natural Bridges, Rainbow Bridge, Capulin Volcano, Arches, and Cedar Breaks, Wheeler and Holy Cross were created to protect geological oddities. The two delisted cave units were among many national monuments and a few national parks created to preserve caves, including Wind Cave and Mammoth Cave national parks, and Jewel Cave, Carlsbad Caverns, Lehman Caves, Timpanagos Cave national monuments (in several cases, the monuments discussed here have since been redesignated as or absorbed into a national park).

What caused the delisted units to be eliminated from the national park system? These delisted national monuments were made possible by the Antiquities Act of 1906, one of America's most important and best-known conservation laws (Sellars 2007). The act allows the president to proclaim areas of federal public land as a national monument, which has been done more than 100 times (national monuments can also be created by Congress, but none of those delisted were established this way). The intent of the act was to allow for the timely preservation of objects of scientific interest (originally archaeological sites). Preserving a scientific curiosity under the act did not originally involve any judgment or consideration about whether a site could be developed for tourism (Rothman 1991). Only once NPS was created and became intent on developing the varied national parks and monuments under

its jurisdiction did tourist development become an important factor in the evaluation of a potential national monument. This was especially important for those sites, such as Zion or Bryce Canyon, for which monument status served as a temporary status on the way to full “parkhood” (Righter 1989; Rothman 1989). Not all sites met both sets of standards. The fact that delisted national monuments were not developed for tourism does not mean they were not worthy of protection or that their proclamation was not a valid use of the Antiquities Act.

What is more, the delisted sites were comparable to retained sites in their lack of development. The other fossil, cave, and geological-oddity monuments were, at the time of their creation, generally no larger than those that were delisted (Table 1). Most western monuments of that era, for example Gila Cliff Dwellings, Montezuma Castle, or Tonto, had little or nothing in the way of facilities until Mission 66 completely transformed them in the 1950s and 1960s (Russell 1992; Protas 2002; Dallett 2008). Wheeler, Holy Cross, and Fossil Cycad were not enlarged or developed, and this is as much a reason for their delisting as it was the cause. One can argue that they were eliminated before Mission 66 could transform them in similar ways.

### **Roadside parks**

Several delisted sites were little more than roadside markers or monuments, all in eastern states. New Echota, for example, was simply a stone obelisk marking the site of the Cherokee nation’s capital city near Calhoun, Georgia, sitting on one acre of land. These are perhaps the hardest to understand today, but that is because they were not originally a product of the national park system. Before the 1933 reorganization many national monuments were administered by the Department of Agriculture and the Department of War. The latter department also had a number of national military parks, battlefields, and similar units, all of which were transferred to NPS along with its national monuments. Some of these dated back to the late 19th century when Gettysburg, Chickamauga and Chattanooga, Shiloh, and Vicksburg all became battlefield parks (Lee 1973). After these were designated, proposals for many more battlefield parks soon emerged. Antietam was also preserved in 1890, but rather than preserving the entire battlefield only key locations were made part of the park (Lee 1973; Snell and Brown 1986). This approach became the “Antietam Plan,” followed by a number of later battlefields.

Calls for battlefield preservation accelerated after World War I, leading to a study of how this could most effectively be carried out (Lee 1973). It was recognized that there were different groups of battlefield sites, some large (as with Gettysburg), those organized along the Antietam Plan, and smaller sites only commemorated by markers or monuments. In 1926 this distinction was formalized into three groups of military parks: Class I (large), Class IIA (small), and Class IIB (markers) (Lee 1973; Dilsaver 1994). In Class IIB were those “[b]attlefields of sufficient historic interest to be worthy of some form of monument, tablet, or marker to indicate the location of the battle field” (Dilsaver 1994: 72). It was not expected that

Name	Created	Delisted	Origin	Current Status
<b>National Monuments</b>				
Lewis and Clark Caverns	1908	1937	Presidential proc	State park
Wheeler	1908	1950	Presidential proc	National Forest
Shoshone Cavern	1909	1954	Presidential proc	BLM
Papago Saguaro	1914	1930	Presidential proc	City park
Old Kasaan	1916	1955	Presidential proc	National Forest
Verendrye	1917	1956	Presidential proc	State Park
Fossil Cycad	1922	1956	Presidential proc	BLM
Castle Pinkney	1924	1956	Presidential proc	Private
Holy Cross	1929	1950	Presidential proc	National Forest
<b>Small Markers and Memorials</b>				
Father Millet Cross	1925	1949	Presidential proc	State Park
White Plains	1926	1956	Congress	Roadside marker
New Echota	1930	1950	Congress	State Park
Camp Blount Tablets	1930	1944	Congress	Roadside marker
Atlanta Campaign	1944	1950	Sec of Interior proc	Roadside markers
<b>Reservoir-based NRAs</b>				
Millerton Lake	1945	1957	Interagency agreement	State Park
Shasta Lake	1945	1948	Interagency agreement	National Forest
Lake Texoma	1946	1949	Interagency agreement	Army Corps/State Park
Shadow Mountain	1952	1979	Interagency agreement	National Forest
Flaming Gorge	1963	1968	Interagency agreement	National Forest
<b>Other units</b>				
Mackinac NP	1875	1895	Congress	State park
Sullys Hill	1904	1931	Congress	US Fish & Wildlife Service
Chattanooga National Cemetery	1933	1944	Congress	Veterans Affairs
St. Thomas NHS	1960	1975	Sec of Interior proc	Local museum
National Visitor Center	1968	1981	Congress	Private
Mar-a-lago NHS	1972	1980	Sec of Interior proc	Private
JFK Center for Performing Arts	1972	1994	Congress	Foundation
Oklahoma City NMem	1997	2007	Congress	Local

**Table 1.** The delisted national park units.

Class IIB sites would become permanent units of the national park system, because “on fields where single monuments have been erected it has been the policy of the Government, as soon as they have been completed, to transfer them to some local association for care and maintenance” (Dilsaver 1994: 72). However, by 1933 a number of these small sites were still in War Department ownership and transferred to NPS.

These sites were quite different from existing parks and monuments (Table 2). They were very small in size, centered on small markers, and often commemorated relatively minor events. They were more similar to the thousands of locally erected roadside historical markers that have proliferated nationwide than to a national park unit. What was NPS to do with these? They had no scenery, no large battlefield to tour, no historic homes, museums, or other trappings of parks at the time. Several solutions were evident. Many were increased in size and became conventional park units, such as Cabrillo NM. This was created in 1913 around a statue of Juan Cabrillo in Fort Rosecrans, near San Diego (NPS 2016). The boundaries originally encompassed 0.5 acres, but were later increased to include a lighthouse, coastal tidepools, and other attractions. Two small sites, Tupelo National Battlefield and Brices Crossroads National Battlefield Site in Mississippi, have remained much as they were. They still have the one-acre boundaries they possessed when transferred to NPS in 1933, and neither has any facilities other than a parking lot, cannons, and several signs.

The remaining small memorial sites were cut from the park system and turned over to local control, as was the original intent for Class IIB-type sites (Dilsaver 1994). Father Millet Cross is said to have been the smallest park unit ever created at 0.0078 acres, as it consisted of

**Table 2.** Small memorials transferred to NPS in 1933.

Name	Date	Original Size	Disposition	2014 size
Chalmette NHP	1907	Marker	Part of Jean Lafitte NHP (1978)	22,420.86 ac
Cabrillo NM	1913	0.5 ac	Expanded	159.94 ac
Kennesaw Mountain NBP	1917	Marker	Expanded	2,852.64 ac
Father Millet Cross NMem	1925	0.0074 ac	Delisted	—
White Plains NBS	1926	Tablet or marker	Delisted	—
Kill Devil Hill	1927	Monument	Expanded	428 ac
Cowpens NB	1929	max 1 ac	Expanded	841.56 ac
Monocacy NB	1929	max 1 ac	Expanded	1,647 ac
Appomattox Court House NHP	1930	approx 1 ac	Expanded	1,774.12 ac
New Echota	1930	max 1 ac	Delisted	—
Tupelo NB	1930	max 1 ac	Unchanged	1 ac
Brices Crossroads NBS	1930	max 1 ac	Unchanged	1 ac
Camp Blount Tablets	1930	Tablet or marker and bridge	Delisted	—
Atlanta Campaign NHS	1944	5 markers totalling 14.52 ac	Delisted	—

an 18x18-foot square around a cross in Fort Niagara, north of Buffalo, New York. However, White Plains and Camp Blount Tablets never had any acreage listed in NPS documents. The Camp Blount Tablets marker was to commemorate the site of Camp Blount (outside of Fayetteville, Tennessee), a meeting place for troops joining Andrew Jackson's campaign against the Creek Indians in 1813 (his victory against them the next year was commemorated by the creation of Horseshoe Bend National Military Park in 1956). The marker site was to include an 1861 stone arch bridge over the Elk River, though this bridge was constructed long after the events commemorated. The Atlanta Campaign NHS differs in that it was created in 1944 and was therefore an NPS site from the beginning. This unit consisted of five roadside markers on small plots of land along US Highway 41 between Chattanooga and Atlanta marking events from the 1864 Civil War campaign. The campaign is still commemorated at Kennesaw Mountain National Battlefield Park, a small War Department Class IIB site from 1917, later expanded and developed.

### **Reservoirs**

Five of the delisted units were western reservoir-based recreation areas: Shasta and Millerton lakes in California, Lake Texoma on the Red River between Texas and Oklahoma, Shadow Mountain in Colorado, and Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area (NRA) in Utah and Wyoming.

NPS has long had an uneasy relationship with reservoirs (Harvey 1994; Righter 2005), and the first NRA, Lake Mead, was controversial in being created around such a lake (Dodd 2007). Rather than protecting unspoiled nature, the park would be centered on an artificial reservoir. This proved a popular type of park unit and the forerunner of many NRAs, national lakeshores, and national seashores. Lake Mead also pioneered a new way of creating a park unit. It was not signed into law or proclaimed by the president. It was instead created through an interagency memorandum between NPS and the Bureau of Reclamation. The bureau was well aware of the recreational potential of the new lake, but had no wish to be involved in the development or management of recreation. NPS essentially became a subcontractor to the bureau to develop and manage the lake for recreation.

This relationship was replicated at many other reservoirs, including all of those that were delisted. Curecanti and Lake Roosevelt NRAs were never legislatively created and are in fact still governed by their interagency agreements (McKay and Renk 2002). These sorts of arrangements can be found elsewhere. Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area in Tennessee and Kentucky was developed by the Army Corps of Engineers and then transferred to NPS. The Land Between the Lakes NRA (also in Kentucky and Tennessee) was created through similar interagency memorandums, though without the involvement of NPS (Foresta 2013).

The delisted reservoirs have a precedent in the 45 recreation demonstration areas (RDAs) established in the 1930s in that NPS was involved in developing recreational facil-



ities without intending to manage the site once completed. Nonetheless, 11 RDAs were incorporated into the national park system (Hogenauer 1991b), but the remainder were transferred to state parks or other local agencies, as planned. The RDAs are remembered with pride today; perhaps the delisted reservoirs should be as well. Today, affiliated areas of the national park system, such as national reserves and national heritage areas, represent another round of involvement by NPS in locations that the agency will not directly oversee.

## Conclusions

Why bother to examine places that were judged unworthy of being included in the national park system? They still have important lessons for us. Their existence and delisting reveals much about the evolution of the national park system, including the changing views of, and purposes for, creating national monuments, the diverse set of places that were brought into the system in 1933, and the ways NPS worked with other agencies to create an American recreational landscape. They were anything but a collection of poor-quality sites whose presence in the national park system was a mistake.

Another lesson is that the distinction between parks lost and those remaining in the system is not always very great. The delisted national monuments were entirely typical of their time and place, regardless of how deficient or limited they may seem to us today. These units should not be evaluated based on what little development they had, as many other units had equally little back then; like those other units, the delisted ones would quite likely have been developed and expanded had they remained under NPS. Lehman Caves NM, one of many small cave monuments, became part of Great Basin National Park, while the tiny Dinosaur NM (which was, at the time of its creation, one-quarter the size of Fossil Cycad) was expanded into a vast park unit in the 1930s. Further evidence of this comes from the experience of national monuments that were almost abolished but survived. The small and remote Gila Cliff Dwellings NM in New Mexico was almost delisted in 1955 before being expanded after more ruins were discovered (Russell 1992). Hopewell Culture National Historical Park started out as Mound City Group NM in 1923 and was nearly removed from the system in 1937, 1954, and 1956 (Cockrell 1999). It was eventually expanded and given a new name. There are many other nearly delisted units with which these could be compared (Ise 1961; Rettie 1995).

Any mention of delisted units raises the question of whether delisting has been a good or bad step for the national park system. Fears of watering down the system with inferior units have existed since the earliest days (Ise 1961) and Hogenauer (1991a, 1991b) felt that selective pruning of the park system could be beneficial. Others disagree, and feel that pruning, no matter how carefully carried out, could grow beyond the original intent (Rettie 1995). This discussion of delisted units suggests that parks are opportunities to create something; those parks lost are opportunities lost. Might not an expanded and still roadless Holy Cross or Wheeler park in the high Rockies be appealing? There was an attempt to create a national



military park out of the Camp Blount Tablets site in 1927 (Hogenuer 1991a), but any such opportunity is long gone. The old stone bridge collapsed in 1969, and the site of the original military encampment is now occupied by a WalMart store. A state historical marker commemorates the site, and a nearby city park includes a replica of the old stone bridge. Today Shoshone Caverns is known as Spirit Mountain Caverns but has still never been fully explored (Rhinehart 2011). There is reason to believe it is part of an extensive cave system, but the presence of hydrogen sulfide gas makes any deeper explorations (or tourist development) difficult. As a scientific curiosity it remains fascinating.

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