

Civic Engagement, Shared Authority, and Intellectual Courage

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Dedication

WE DEDICATE “CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, SHARED AUTHORITY, AND INTELLECTUAL COURAGE” to the memory of National Park Service historian Richard West Sellars (1935–2017). Dick will long be remembered as the historian who held up an analytical mirror to NPS’s management of natural resources. *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History*, published in 1997 and reissued in 2009, provided the administrative motivation for the NPS Natural Resource Challenge, a multi-year initiative to revitalize the agency’s natural resource and science programs.

Dick’s long career with NPS (1973–2008) was spent in western parks, which gave him the breadth of experience to critique the full scope of the agency’s resource management responsibilities. During the mid-1960s, he worked as a seasonal ranger-naturalist in Grand Teton National Park. After completing a Ph.D. in western history at the University of Missouri–Columbia in 1972, he accepted a position with the NPS Southwest Regional Office in Santa Fe, New Mexico. From 1979 to 1988, he oversaw the region’s programs in history, archaeology, and historic architecture. He also oversaw underwater archaeology programs throughout the national park system. From his base in Santa Fe, he later carried out special assignments as acting superintendent at various western parks and as NPS liaison to the Dallas County Historical Foundation for the task of preserving and interpreting the Texas School Book Depository and Dealey Plaza in Dallas, site of the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy. In 2008, the year he retired, Dick received the Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award.

Additionally, Dick lectured on preservation philosophy, policy, and practice at NPS training centers, universities, and professional meetings. He also maintained a very wide network of colleagues through his affiliations with the Western History Association, American Society of Environmental Historians, Forest History Society, National Council on Public History, and the George Wright Society, with which he had a special relationship. Dick served as GWS

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president in 1999–2000, and, in 2011, the society presented him with its highest honor: the George Melendez Wright Award for Excellence to recognize his career-long contributions.

Dick intended to follow *Preserving Nature* with a similar exegesis on cultural resources management in NPS. Unfortunately, that project remained unfinished when he died on November 1, although he published two shorter works that give us good insight into his thinking about the early decades: *Pilgrim Places: Civil War Battlefields, Historic Preservation, and America's First National Military Parks, 1863–1900* (Eastern National, 2005) and “A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation—The Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act,” *Natural Resources Journal* (University of New Mexico School of Law), vol. 47, no. 2 (2007).

By dedicating “Civic Engagement, Shared Authority, and Intellectual Courage” to Dick’s memory, we continue to recognize his contributions to history and interpretation in the National Park Service.