

Forging a System, 1916 to 1933

By August 1916 the Department of the Interior oversaw 14 national parks, 21 national monuments, and the Hot Springs and Casa Grande Ruin reservations. This collection of areas was not a true park system, however, for it lacked systematic management. Without an organization equipped for the purpose, Interior Secretaries had been forced to call on the Army to develop and police Yellowstone and the parks in California. The troops protected these areas and served their visitors well for the most part, but their primary mission lay elsewhere, and their continued presence could not be counted on. Civilian appointees of varying capabilities managed the other national parks, while most of the national monuments received minimal attention from part-time custodians. In the absence of an effective central administration, those in charge operated with little coordinated supervision or policy guidance.

Lacking unified leadership, the parks were also vulnerable to competing interests. Conservationists of the utilitarian school, who advocated the regulated use of natural resources to achieve “the greatest good for the greatest number,” championed the construction of dams by public authorities for water supply, electric power, and irrigation purposes. When the City of San Francisco sought permission to dam Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park for its water supply in the first decade of the 20th century, the utilitarian and preservationist wings of the conservation movement came to blows. Over the passionate opposition of John Muir and other park supporters, Congress in 1913 approved what historian John Ise later called “the worst disaster ever to come to any national park.”

“The rape of Hetch Hetchy,” as the preservationists termed it, highlighted the institutional weakness of the park movement. While utilitarian conservation had become well represented in government by the U.S. Geological Survey (established in 1879), the Forest Service (1905), and the Reclamation Service (1907), no comparable bureau spoke for park preservation in Washington. The need for an organization to operate the parks and advocate their interests was clearer than ever.

Among those recognizing this need was Stephen T. Mather, a wealthy Chicago businessman, vigorous outdoorsman, and born promoter. In 1914 Mather complained to Interior Secretary Franklin K. Lane, a fellow alumnus of the University of California at Berkeley, about the mismanagement of the parks. Lane invited Mather to come to Washington and do something about it. Mather accepted the challenge, arriving early in 1915 to become assistant to the Secretary for park matters. Twenty-five-year-old Horace M. Albright, another Berkeley graduate who had recently joined the Interior Department, became Mather’s top aide.

Previous efforts to establish a national parks bureau in Interior had been resisted by the Agriculture Department's Forest Service, which rightly foresaw the creation and removal of more parks from its national forests. Lobbying skillfully to overcome such opposition Mather and Albright blurred the distinction between utilitarian conservation and preservation by emphasizing the economic potential of parks as tourist meccas.

A vigorous public relations campaign led to supportive articles in *National Geographic*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and other popular magazines. Mather hired his own publicist and obtained funds from 17 western railroads to produce *The National Parks Portfolio*, a lavishly illustrated publication sent to congressmen and other civic leaders. Congress responded as desired, and on August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson affixed his signature to the bill creating the National Park Service. The National Park Service Act made the new bureau

National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather on a visit to Indiana Dunes in late October 1916. Mather and Horace Albright had come to evaluate the qualities of the proposed "Sand Dunes National Park." The NPS was a brand-new institution when this photo was made: President Woodrow Wilson had established the agency in late August while running for a second term. After this inspection, Albright and Robert Sterling Yard returned to Mather's Chicago residence to await the outcome of the November election. The initial results were not promising. Albright recalled Yard sitting with his hand on his head, crying, "We're lost—everything is lost." It wasn't until Friday of that week that the results from California ensured Wilson's second term and the future of the new agency.



responsible for the 35 national parks and monuments then under Interior, Hot Springs Reservation, and “such other national parks and reservations of like character as may be hereafter created by Congress.” In managing these areas the NPS was directed “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”

Lane appointed Mather the Service’s first director. Albright served as assistant director until 1919, then as superintendent of Yellowstone and field assistant director before succeeding Mather in 1929. Mather was initially incapacitated by illness, leaving Albright to organize the bureau in 1917, obtain its first appropriations from Congress, and prepare its first park policies.

The policies, issued in a May 13, 1918, letter from Lane to Mather, elaborated on the National Park Service’s mission of conserving park resources and providing for their enjoyment by the public. “Every activity of the Service is subordinate to the duties imposed upon it to faithfully preserve the parks for posterity in essentially their natural state,” the letter stated.

At the same time, it reflected Mather’s and Albright’s conviction that more visitors must be attracted and accommodated if the parks and the NPS were to prosper. Automobiles, not permitted in Yellowstone until 1915, were to be allowed in all parks. “Low-priced camps ... as well as comfortable and even luxurious hotels” would be provided by concessioners. Mountain climbing, horseback riding, swimming, boating, fishing, and winter sports would be encouraged, as would natural history museums, exhibits, and other activities furthering the educational value of the parks.

The policy letter also sought to guide further expansion of the System: “In studying new park projects, you should seek to find scenery of supreme and distinctive quality or some natural feature so extraordinary or unique as to be of national interest and importance.... The national park system as now constituted should not be lowered in standard, dignity, and prestige by the inclusion of areas which express in less than the highest terms the particular class or kind of exhibit which they represent.”

The first national park following establishment of the National Park Service was Mount McKinley in Alaska, reserved in 1917 to protect the mountain sheep, caribou, moose, bears, and other wildlife on and around North America’s highest mountain. The incomparable Grand Canyon National Park, incorporating the Forest Service’s Grand Canyon National Monument, followed in 1919. Other national parks established through 1933 included Lafayette, Maine, in 1919 (renamed Acadia in 1929); Zion, Utah, in 1919; Utah in that state in 1924 (renamed Bryce Canyon in 1928); Grand Teton, Wyoming, in 1929; and Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico, in 1930. Like Grand Canyon, all these except Grand Teton incorporated earlier national monuments.

Casa Grande Ruin Reservation remained under Interior’s General Land Office until 1918, when it was proclaimed a national monument and reassigned to the NPS. Two Alaska monuments proclaimed during the period, Katmai and Glacier Bay, were each larger than any national park and until 1978 were the System’s largest areas. Katmai, established in 1918, protected the scene of a major volcanic eruption six years before. Glacier Bay, established

in 1925, contained numerous tidewater glaciers and their mountain setting. Congress made both of them national parks in 1980.

Badlands National Monument, South Dakota, and Arches National Monument, Utah, both established in 1929, became national parks in the 1970s. Badlands was the first national monument established directly by an act of Congress rather than by a presidential proclamation under the Antiquities Act. By the beginning of the 21st century Congress had established more than three dozen national monuments, although about a third of them no longer retained that designation. Through the 1920s the National Park System was really a western park system. Of the Service's holdings, only Lafayette (Acadia) National Park in Maine lay east of the Mississippi. This geographic bias was hardly surprising: the West was the setting for America's most spectacular natural scenery, and most of the land there was federally owned—subject to park or monument reservation without purchase. If the System were to benefit more people and maximize its support in Congress, however, it would have to expand eastward—a foremost objective of NPS leadership.

In 1926 Congress authorized Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and Mammoth Cave national parks in the Appalachian region but required that their lands be donated. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., who gave more than \$3 million for lands and roads for Acadia, contributed more than \$5 million for Great Smoky Mountains and a lesser amount for Shenandoah. With such private assistance, the states involved gradually acquired and turned over the lands needed to establish these large natural parks in the following decade.

But the Service's greatest opportunity in the East lay in another realm—that of history and historic sites. The War Department had been involved in preserving a range of historic battlefields, forts, and memorials there since the 1890s. Horace Albright, whose expansionist instincts were accompanied by a personal interest in history, sought the transfer of these areas to the NPS soon after its creation. He argued that the NPS was better equipped to interpret them to the public, but skeptics in the War Department and Congress questioned how the bureau's focus on western wilderness qualified it to run the military parks better than the military.

After succeeding Mather as director in 1929, Albright resumed his efforts. As a first step he got Congress to establish three new historical parks in the East under NPS administration: George Washington Birthplace National Monument at Wakefield, Virginia; Colonial National Monument at Jamestown and Yorktown, Virginia; and Morristown National Historical Park in New Jersey, where Washington and the Continental Army spent two winters during the Revolution.

Morristown, authorized March 2, 1933, was the first national historical park, a more descriptive designation that Congress would apply to Colonial in 1936 and three dozen more historical areas thereafter. Of more immediate significance, Colonial's Yorktown Battlefield and Morristown moved the NPS directly into military history, advancing its case for the War Department's areas. They would not be long in coming.

The Reorganization of 1933

On March 3, 1933, President Herbert Hoover approved legislation authorizing Presidents



Located on Virginia's Northern Neck peninsula, George Washington Birthplace National Monument was dedicated with ceremonies, including costumed interpreters, in 1932. Controversy regarding the accuracy of the substantial architectural design and materials of the reconstructed birthplace weighed heavily on the agency's emerging historical programs and helped lead to the adoption of the Historic Sites Act of 1935. Photograph by George A. Grant/NPS.

to reorganize the executive branch of the government. He had no time to take advantage of the new authority, for he would leave office the next day. The beneficiary was his successor Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Hoover had arranged to give the government his fishing retreat on the Rapidan River in Virginia for inclusion in Shenandoah National Park. On April 9 Roosevelt motored there to inspect the property for his possible use. Horace Albright accompanied the party and was invited to sit behind the President on the return drive. As they passed through Civil War country, Albright turned the conversation to history and mentioned his desire to acquire the War Department's historical areas. Roosevelt readily agreed and directed him to initiate an executive order for the transfer.

Roosevelt's order—actually two orders signed June 10 and July 28, effective August 10—did what Albright had asked and more. Not only did the National Park Service receive the War Department's parks and monuments, it achieved another longtime objective by getting the national monuments then held by the Forest Service and responsibility for virtually all monuments created thereafter until the 1990s. It also took over the National Capital Parks,



Washington's Headquarters Museum at Morristown National Historical Park in New Jersey. After the Smithsonian Institution, the National Park Service operates the second-largest museum system in the United States. Throughout its history museums have been an important part of the agency's educational mission. Photograph by Carol Highsmith.

then managed by a separate office in Washington. When the dust settled, the Service's previous holdings had been joined by a dozen predominantly natural areas in eight western states and the District of Columbia and 44 historical areas in the District and 18 states, 13 of them east of the Mississippi.

The reorganization of August 10, 1933, was arguably the most significant event in the evolution of the National Park System. There was now a single system of federal parklands, truly national in scope, embracing historic as well as natural places. The Service's major involvement with historic sites held limitless potential for the System's further growth.

Unlike the War Department, the NPS was not constrained to focus on military history but could seek areas representing all aspects of America's past. Management of the parks in the nation's capital would give the NPS high visibility with members of Congress and visitors from around the nation and invite expansion of the System into other urban regions. Although the big western wilderness parks would still dominate, the bureau and its responsibilities would henceforth be far more diverse.

National Capital Parks

The parks of the nation's capital are the oldest elements of today's National Park System, dating from the creation of the District of Columbia in 1790-91. On July 16, 1790, President George Washington approved legislation empowering him to appoint three commissioners to lay out the District, "purchase or accept such quantity of land ... as the President shall

deem proper for the use of the United States,” and provide suitable buildings for Congress, the President, and government offices. The next year Washington met with the proprietors of lands to be included in the federal city and signed a purchase agreement resulting in the acquisition of 17 reservations. In accordance with Pierre Charles L’Enfant’s plan for the city, Reservation 1 became the site of the White House and the President’s Park, including Lafayette Park and the Ellipse; Reservation 2 became the site of the Capitol and the Mall; and Reservation 3 became the site of the Washington Monument.

A century later the nation’s capital park system received two major additions. Rock Creek Park, Washington’s largest, was authorized by Congress on September 27, 1890—two days after Sequoia and four days before Yosemite. Some of the same legislative language that the California parks inherited from Yellowstone appeared in this act as well. Rock Creek Park was “dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States,” and regulations were ordered to “provide for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, animals, or curiosities within said park, and their retention in their natural condition, as nearly as possible.” Its value as a preserved natural area increased with the growth of its urban environs (although the NPS has magnified its significance since 1975 by listing the park with its California contemporaries as a discrete National Park System unit).

East and West Potomac parks, on the other hand, were artificially created on fill dredged from the Potomac River in the 1880s. In 1897 Congress reserved this large reclaimed area for park development, and in the 20th century it became the site of the Lincoln, Jefferson, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorials; Constitution Gardens; and the Vietnam Veterans and Korean War Veterans memorials, among other features.

The last major addition to the nation’s capital park system before the reorganization was the George Washington Memorial Parkway. A 1928 act of Congress authorized the Mount Vernon Memorial Highway, linking the planned Arlington Memorial Bridge and Mount Vernon, to be completed for the bicentennial of Washington’s birth in 1932. In 1930 Congress incorporated the highway in a greatly enlarged George Washington Memorial Parkway project, which entailed extensive land acquisition and scenic roadways on both sides of the Potomac River from Mount Vernon upstream to Great Falls. Although never fully completed as planned, the project proceeded far enough by the 1960s to buffer significant stretches of the river with parkland.

The parks of the nation’s capital were managed by a succession of administrators, beginning with the commissioners appointed by President Washington to establish the federal city. From 1802 to 1867 the city’s public buildings and grounds were under a superintendent and then a commissioner of public buildings, who reported to the Secretary of the Interior after the Interior Department was established in 1849. In 1867 the parks and buildings were turned over to the chief engineer of the Army. His Office of Public Buildings and Grounds ran them until 1925, when it was succeeded by the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital. The latter office, still headed by an army engineer officer but directly under the President, lasted until the 1933 reorganization. The office’s responsibility for federal buildings as well as parks then passed to the National Park Service, and it was

Individual System Shapers: Olmsted, Wright, Tilden

The national parks you visit today owe much to individuals who worked from both inside and outside the System to shape its landscape and philosophy. Among these were Frederick Law Olmsted, George Melendez Wright, and Freeman Tilden.

Frederick Law Olmsted (1822–1903) is the acknowledged father of landscape architecture in the United States. Well known for his naturalistic design for New York City’s Central Park and many other urban parks, Olmsted was instrumental in the setting aside of Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa sequoia grove as the nation’s first natural reservation in 1864. Yosemite became a national park in 1890. Frederick Law Olmsted National Historic Site in Brookline, Massachusetts, honors his life and work.

Working as a naturalist in Yosemite National Park in the 1920s, George Melendez Wright became increasingly concerned about the impact of humans on wildlife. As the Service’s first chief of its wildlife division, he instituted formal studies of wild species, evaluating threats and proposing solutions for endangered species. In 1936 Wright died in an automobile accident at age 31. His holistic view of park management—that parklands are inseparable from the world around them—lives on through the George Wright Society.

Born in 1883 near Boston, Massachusetts, Freeman Tilden was a prolific writer from a young age. In the 1940s, at the urging of NPS director Newton Drury, Tilden began to write about national parks and their value to America’s heritage. His focus soon shifted to the presentation of a park’s story to visitors; he advocated not just a recitation of facts but the forging of a connection between the visitor and the park. Tilden’s 1957 book *Interpreting Our Heritage* sets forth the guiding principles for how the National Park Service shapes the visitors’ experience. Tilden died in 1980.

renamed the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations in Roosevelt’s executive orders. The bureau carried this unwieldy title for less than seven months, regaining its old name in a March 2, 1934, appropriations act; but it did not shed the public buildings function until 1939.

The term National Capital Parks (usually capitalized) has been variously used since the reorganization as a collective designation for the national parklands in and around Washington and as the name of the NPS office managing them. Today National Capital Parks officially denotes only those miscellaneous parklands in the District of Columbia and nearby Maryland not classed as discrete units of the National Park System. The designation thus excludes the major presidential and war memorials and certain other NPS-administered properties in the Washington area. But it is often used informally to encompass them as well.

National Memorials

National memorials in and outside Washington formed the most distinctly different class

of areas added in the reorganization. Among them are such great national symbols as the Washington Monument and the Statue of Liberty. Although these and several other National Park System memorials bear other designations, they qualify as memorials because they were not directly associated with the people or events they commemorate but were built by later generations.

The first federal action toward a national memorial now in the System came in 1783, when the Continental Congress resolved “that an equestrian statue of General Washington be erected where the residence of Congress shall be established.” L’Enfant’s plan for the city of Washington provided a prominent location for the statue, but Congress provided no funds for it. A private organization, the Washington National Monument Society, acquired the site and began construction of an obelisk in 1848, but its resources proved inadequate. Not until 1876, the centennial of American independence, did the government assume responsibility for completing and maintaining the Washington Monument. Army engineers finished it in accordance with a simplified design, and it was dedicated in 1885.

During the centennial France offered the Statue of Liberty as a gift to the United States. Congress authorized acceptance of the statue, provision of a suitable site in New York Harbor, and preservation of the structure “as a monument of art and the continued good will of the great nation which aided us in our struggle for freedom.” In effect a memorial to the Franco-American alliance during the Revolution, the Statue of Liberty was dedicated in 1886. President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed it a national monument under the War Department, its custodian, in 1924.

In 1911 Congress authorized construction of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington’s Potomac Park, directly aligned with the Capitol and the Washington Monument. The completed masterpiece of architect Henry Bacon and sculptor Daniel Chester French was dedicated in 1922. Another classical memorial to Lincoln, enshrining his supposed birthplace cabin at Hodgenville, Kentucky, had been privately erected in 1907–11 from a design by John Russell Pope, architect of the later Thomas Jefferson Memorial in Washington. The birthplace property was given to the United States in 1916 and administered by the War Department as Abraham Lincoln National Park. It was ultimately redesignated a national historic site after it came under the National Park Service, but the character of its development makes it in effect a memorial.

Other memorials authorized by Congress before 1933 included one to Portuguese explorer Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo in San Diego, proclaimed Cabrillo National Monument under the War Department in 1913; Perry’s Victory Memorial, Ohio, in 1919; Mount Rushmore National Memorial, South Dakota, in 1925; Kill Devil Hill Monument (later Wright Brothers National Memorial), North Carolina, in 1927; George Rogers Clark Memorial in Vincennes, Indiana, in 1928; and Theodore Roosevelt Island in Washington, D.C., in 1932. Cabrillo National Monument and Kill Devil Hill Monument were transferred from the War Department and Theodore Roosevelt Island from the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital in the reorganization, which also gave the NPS fiscal responsibility for the commissions developing the Mount Rushmore and George Rogers Clark memorials.

The NPS received Mount Rushmore itself in 1939 and the Clark memorial under a

1966 act of Congress authorizing George Rogers Clark National Historical Park. Several historic sites proposed for this park were never acquired, leaving it essentially a memorial area. The NPS had no responsibility for Perry's Victory Memorial, constructed by another commission, until 1936, when Congress authorized its addition to the National Park System as Perry's Victory and International Peace Memorial National Monument. The superfluous national monument suffix was dropped in 1972.

The Lee Mansion in Arlington, Virginia, transferred from the War Department in the reorganization, was ultimately retitled Arlington House, The Robert E. Lee Memorial, by Congress in 1972. (Because the house was directly associated with Lee and has been restored to the period of his occupancy, it would more appropriately be designated a national historic site.)

National Battlefields and Cemeteries

The first official step to commemorate an American battle where it occurred was taken in 1781. Inspired by the Franco-American victory over the British at Yorktown that October, the Continental Congress authorized "to be erected at York, Virginia, a marble column, adorned with emblems of the alliance between the United States and His Most Christian Majesty; and inscribed with a succinct narrative of the surrender." Funds were then unavailable, and Congress did not follow through until the centennial of the surrender in 1881, when the Yorktown Column was raised as prescribed a century before. It is now a prominent feature of Colonial National Historical Park.

The battlefield monument idea received major impetus in 1823 when Daniel Webster, Edward Everett, and other prominent citizens formed the Bunker Hill Battle Monument Association to save part of Breed's Hill in Charlestown, Massachusetts, and erect a great obelisk on it. Webster delivered a moving oration before a large audience at the cornerstone laying in 1825, the 50th anniversary of the battle. The Bunker Hill Monument demonstrated how commemorative sentiment might be crystallized and was the prototype for many other battlefield monuments. During the centennial years of the Revolution, Congress appropriated funds to supplement local contributions for monuments at Bennington Battlefield, Saratoga, Newburgh, and Oriskany, New York; Kings Mountain, South Carolina; Monmouth, New Jersey; and Groton, Connecticut. Like the Yorktown Column, the Bunker Hill, Kings Mountain, and Saratoga monuments were later included in National Park System areas.

The "mystic chords of memory" elicited by such Revolutionary War monuments in both the North and the South helped draw the two sections together after the Civil War. Confederate veterans from South Carolina and Virginia participated in the Bunker Hill centennial in 1875, the first time former Union and Confederate troops publicly fraternized after the war. The practice of joint reunions later spread to Civil War battlefields, culminating in huge veterans' encampments at Gettysburg in 1888 and Chickamauga in 1889. Even before the Civil War ended, Pennsylvania had chartered the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association in 1864 to commemorate "the great deeds of valor . . . and the signal events which render these battle-grounds illustrious." A preservation society also began work at Chickamauga, Georgia, and Chattanooga, Tennessee. Prompted by veterans' organizations and others influential in

such activities, Congress began in the 1890s to go beyond the battlefield monument concept to full-scale battlefield preservation.

On August 19, 1890, a month before establishing Sequoia National Park, Congress authorized Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park. Three more national military parks followed before the century's end: Shiloh in 1894, Gettysburg in 1895, and Vicksburg in 1899. The War Department purchased and managed their lands, while participating states, military units, and associations provided monuments at appropriate locations. At Antietam, on the other hand, Congress provided for acquisition of only token lands where monuments and markers might be placed. It and other places where this less expansive policy was adopted were designated national battlefield sites. Antietam and most of the other national battlefield sites were later enlarged and retitled national battlefields.

The 1907 authorization of the Chalmette Monument and Grounds, commemorating the Battle of New Orleans during the War of 1812, departed from the recent focus on the Civil War. Guilford Courthouse National Military Park, North Carolina, authorized a decade later, encompassed the first Revolutionary War battlefield so preserved. Confronted with many more proposals, Congress in 1926 asked the War Department to survey all the nation's historic battlefields and make recommendations for their preservation or commemoration.

The results guided Congress in adding 11 more areas to the War Department's park system before the reorganization: the site of the opening engagement of the French and Indian War at Fort Necessity in Pennsylvania; the Revolutionary War battlefields of Cowpens and Kings Mountain in South Carolina and Moores Creek in North Carolina; and the Civil War sites of Appomattox Court House, Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County, and Petersburg

Washington Light Infantry Monument, Cowpens National Battlefield, South Carolina. NPS photo.





Girl Scouts place American flags at the headstones of soldiers at Andersonville National Cemetery, Andersonville National Historic Site, Georgia. Photograph by C. Barr/NPS.

in Virginia, Brices Cross Roads and Tupelo in Mississippi, and Fort Donelson and Stones River in Tennessee.

Roosevelt's initial executive order of June 10, 1933, had provided for all the War Department's domestic national cemeteries to come to the NPS along with its battlefield parks. At Horace Albright's urging, this wholesale transfer was amended in the supplementary order of July 28 to include only 11 cemeteries associated with the battlefields or other NPS holdings: Antietam (Sharpsburg) National Cemetery, Maryland; Battleground National Cemetery, Washington, D.C.; Chattanooga National Cemetery, Tennessee (returned to the War Department in 1944); Fort Donelson (Dover) National Cemetery, Tennessee; Fredericksburg National Cemetery, Virginia; Gettysburg National Cemetery, Pennsylvania; Poplar Grove (Petersburg) National Cemetery, Virginia; Shiloh (Pittsburg Landing) National Cemetery, Tennessee; Stones River (Murfreesboro) National Cemetery, Tennessee; Vicksburg National Cemetery, Mississippi; and Yorktown National Cemetery, Virginia.

Most famous among these is Gettysburg National Cemetery. The battle of Gettysburg was scarcely over when Governor Andrew Y. Curtin of Pennsylvania hastened to the field to help care for the casualties. More than 3,500 Union soldiers had been killed in action; many were hastily interred in improvised graves. At Curtin's request, Gettysburg attorney David

Wills purchased 17 acres and engaged William Saunders, an eminent horticulturalist, to lay out the grounds for a cemetery. Fourteen northern states provided the necessary funds. At the dedication on November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address. Gettysburg National Cemetery became the property of the United States in 1872, 23 years before establishment of the adjoining national military park.

Similar events took place on the other great battlefields of the Civil War. Congress recognized the importance of caring for the remains of the Union war dead with general legislation in 1867 enabling the extensive national cemetery system developed by the War Department. As at Gettysburg, each of the battlefield cemeteries was carefully landscaped to achieve an effect of “simple grandeur,” and each preceded establishment of its related battlefield park.

The 1867 act also led to preservation of an important battleground of the Indian wars. In 1879 the Secretary of War established a national cemetery on the Little Bighorn battlefield in Montana Territory, and in 1886 President Grover Cleveland reserved a square mile of the battlefield for what was then called the National Cemetery of Custer’s Battlefield Reservation. The War Department transferred the reservation to the NPS in 1940. Congress retitled it Custer Battlefield National Monument in 1946 and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in 1991. (To retain some titular recognition of Custer, the 1991 act also designated the cemetery within the monument Custer National Cemetery.)

Other national cemeteries acquired by the NPS after the reorganization were Andrew Johnson National Cemetery, part of Andrew Johnson National Monument, Tennessee, authorized in 1935; Chalmette National Cemetery, transferred from the War Department for Chalmette National Historical Park, Louisiana, in 1939; and Andersonville National Cemetery, part of Andersonville National Historic Site, Georgia, authorized in 1970.

Until 1975 the national cemeteries acquired in the reorganization were listed as separate units of the National Park System. Since then the cemeteries, while retaining their special identities, have been carried as components of their associated parks.

Other War Department Properties

As national monuments were being reserved under Interior Department jurisdiction, others were proclaimed on War and Agriculture department lands. Ten national monuments were on military reservations before their transfer to the NPS in 1933.

President William Howard Taft proclaimed the first War Department national monument, Big Hole Battlefield, Montana, in 1910 to protect the site of an 1877 battle between U.S. troops and Nez Perce Indians. Five later monuments resulted from a single proclamation by President Coolidge on October 15, 1924. Fort Marion National Monument, later retitled with its Spanish name Castillo de San Marcos, recognized an old Spanish fort in St. Augustine, Florida. Fort Matanzas National Monument protected an outpost built by the Spanish in 1742 to defend the southern approaches to St. Augustine. Fort Pulaski National Monument contained a brick fort built during the 1830s outside Savannah that had yielded under bombardment by federal rifled cannon in 1862. The Statue of Liberty, based on Fort Wood in New York Harbor, became a national monument (to which Ellis Island was added in 1965). A small national monument for Castle Pinckney in Charleston Harbor was later abolished.

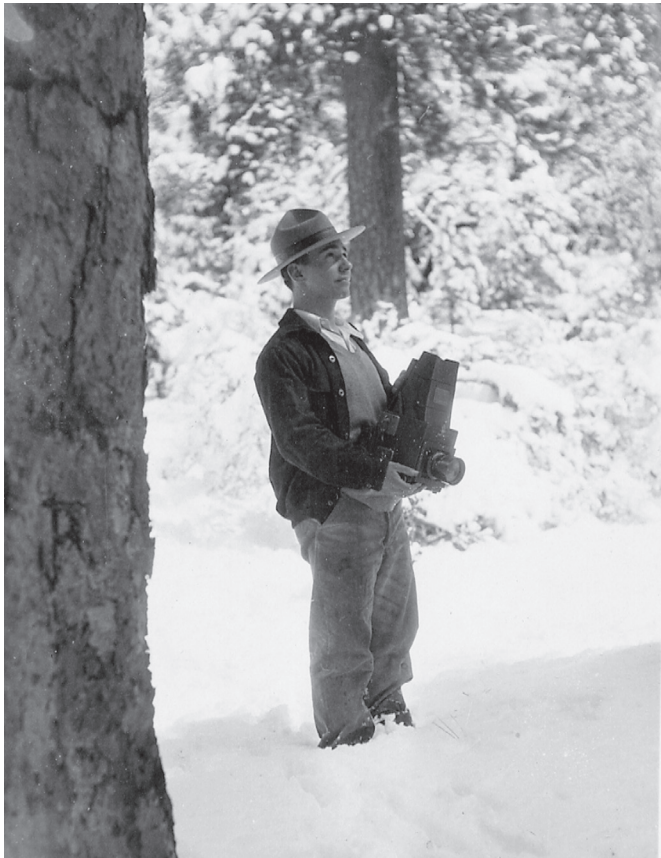


Providing public access to a wide variety of recreational activities has been part of the NPS mission since the 1930s. Inspirational views enjoyed by bicyclists riding in Grand Teton National Park in northwest Wyoming contrast with the historical inspiration found at historic sites in the East, such as at Guilford Courthouse National Military Park in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Two War Department areas acquired in the reorganization were then titled national parks. Abraham Lincoln National Park has been cited above in connection with memorials. The other was Fort McHenry in Baltimore. A 1925 act of Congress directed the Secretary of War “to begin the restoration of Fort McHenry ... to such a condition as would make it suitable for preservation permanently as a national park and perpetual national memorial shrine as the birthplace of the immortal ‘Star-Spangled Banner.’” Abraham Lincoln and Fort McHenry national parks received more appropriate designations after coming to the NPS, although the unique “national monument and historic shrine” label Congress gave the fort in 1939 might have been abridged.

Arlington, the estate across the Potomac from Washington, D.C., was inherited by Robert E. Lee’s wife from her father, George Washington Parke Custis, in 1857. During the Civil

NPS Chief Naturalist Charles P. Russell took this iconic view of George Melendez Wright at Yosemite National Park in 1929. That year, Wright independently funded a system-wide survey of national park wildlife. As noted by historian Richard Sellars, Wright’s untimely death in February 1936 “marked the beginning of the decline of National Park Service science programs.”



War the Union Army occupied it and the War Department began what became Arlington National Cemetery on its grounds. Lee's national reputation rose in later years, and in 1925 Congress authorized the War Department to restore Arlington House (also termed the Lee Mansion and Custis–Lee Mansion) in his honor. After the mansion's transfer to the NPS it was managed with the National Capital Parks.

The 1930 act authorizing the George Washington Memorial Parkway directed that Fort Washington, a 19th-century fortification guarding the Potomac approach to the capital, should be added to the parkway holdings when no longer needed for military purposes. The War Department relinquished it to the NPS in 1940. Fort Washington Park has been classified as a separate unit of the National Park System since 1975.

Agriculture Department National Monuments

Twenty-one national monuments were proclaimed on national forest lands under the Department of Agriculture before the 1933 reorganization. The first two were Lassen Peak and Cinder Cone in Lassen Peak National Forest, proclaimed by Theodore Roosevelt on May 6, 1907, to protect evidence of what was then the most recent volcanic activity in the United States. As previously noted, they were transferred to the Interior Department in 1916 as the nuclei of Lassen Volcanic National Park.

Fourteen of Agriculture's other monuments were also established to preserve "scientific objects." Especially noteworthy was Roosevelt's 1908 proclamation of Grand Canyon National Monument, comprising 818,650 acres within Grand Canyon National Forest, to impede commercial development there. Roosevelt's bold action was later sustained by the U.S. Supreme Court, confirming the precedent for other vast monuments like Katmai, Glacier Bay, and Death Valley. The Grand Canyon monument was superseded by Grand Canyon National Park when the latter was established under NPS jurisdiction in 1919. (A second Grand Canyon National Monument, proclaimed in 1932 and assigned to the NPS, was incorporated in the national park in 1975.)

On March 2, 1909, two days before leaving office, Roosevelt proclaimed another large national monument, Mount Olympus in Olympic National Forest, Washington. Encompassing 615,000 acres, it was intended to protect the Roosevelt elk and important stands of Sitka spruce, western hemlock, Douglas fir, and Alaska cedar. It formed the nucleus for Olympic National Park in 1938.

The other natural monuments included four caves: Jewel Cave in South Dakota; Oregon Caves in Oregon; Lehman Caves in Nevada; and Timpanogos Cave in Utah. In the National Park System they would join Carlsbad Caverns, Mammoth Cave, and Wind Cave national parks (and two national monuments later abolished: Lewis and Clark Caverns, Montana, and Shoshone Cavern, Wyoming). The first of only five archeological monuments in the group was Gila Cliff Dwellings, New Mexico, proclaimed November 16, 1907. It was followed by Tonto and Walnut Canyon in Arizona and then by Bandelier, New Mexico, established within the Santa Fe National Forest in 1916. President Hoover enlarged Bandelier and reassigned it to the NPS in February 1932, a year and a half before the reorganization. The fifth was Old Kasaan National Monument, Alaska, abolished in 1955.