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PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF PARK MUSEUM PROBLEMS IN TIME OF WAR

By Carl P. Russell, Supervisor of Interpretation,
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(A paper presented before the Science Section, 37th Annual Meeting of the American Association of Museums, May 19, 1942, Williamsburg, Virginia)

The great scenic parks of the country and the Nation's most significant historic sites themselves are museums in true sense—museums of the out-of-doors. The most famous of these areas are included in the National Parks System, but hundreds of important historic sites and scenic gems are preserved as State Parks. They are the foci of our national character and culture.

For many years it has been agreed generally that the public services rendered in these shrines and beauty spots encourages a good national morale through recreation and the pride that comes to men and women who see in them a native land of great bounty, lasting traditions and thrilling beauty. The rallying of American spirit that accompanies public use of national and state parks constitutes something of an influence on the national victory program during any emergency.

These facts, no doubt, will be accepted as evident. It would seem to

follow then, that park programs should be conducted most energetically in times of war. There are some practical problems, however, to be met and solved. It is those problems about which I shall speak, and my thoughts are directed especially upon the national parks and monuments.

Proposed inroads upon park resources

Now, as was the case during World War I, threats are made to draw upon the areas of the National Park System for timber, livestock grazing rights, minerals and water supply. Emergency landing fields are sought, maneuver grounds and training areas are asked for by the military, enemy aliens' concentration camps are designated and other proposals for park use may be made which constitute inroads upon established precedent contrary to basic service policy. Park resources are to be likened to the most precious of museum accessions. Any museum director who is the custod-

ian of a Revolutionary War cannon will resist demands to melt that relic as scrap iron unless the acute national need for such action is shown.

To date the National Park Service has been reasonably successful in adjusting proposals of these types in a manner so that cooperation in the war effort has not suffered, and so that little harm has resulted to the areas. In taking a stand on proposals of this nature perhaps the Service exposes itself to the criticism that its conservation policy is not entirely in sympathy with the all-out war effort. Such criticism would not be justified. In war as in peace the highest form of conservation is still the **wisest** use of our possessions. The National Park Service is committed to the idea that it should hold the national parks in their original character and as free as possible

from the disturbing evidences of the turmoil about us. It is our responsibility to evaluate the relative importance and the possible effect of each proposal. No sacrifices that are proved to be essential to winning the war and to which no alternative exists will be opposed but the burden of proof rests upon those who propose the sacrifices.

Limitation of travel imposed by War

Rubber shortage, gas rationing and priorities on transportation by common carrier have relegated national park travel to a place of minor importance in the travel picture. In April, 1942, the number of national park visitors dropped to one half the number that went to the parks in April 1941. It seems likely that the summer months will witness still greater decline. At first thought it



may seem that this condition closes the door of opportunity to serve. We should not be too hasty in accepting that idea.

The Nazis have made it an objective to provide the Germany citizenry with relaxation and recreation. England has made it a governmental duty to provide her industrial workers with recreational facilities. It has been reported that museum attendance in England has jumped to new highs during this war. At this moment Great Britain is establishing national parks and nature preserves in the British Isles—something that never was done before. There is a reason. England has studied the problem of fatigue under the stress of war and has determined that when men are worked too hard production of war materials falls off. A drive has been made by the government to establish more recreational areas, to provide more facilities for rest and relaxation, and to transport citizens to these areas and facilities.

During the past several months a number of British fighting ships have put in to United States ports for repairs and replenishment of arms. The crews of these vessels have been taken to areas under the administration of the National Park Service and given opportunity to rest. Special provision for transportation was necessary, of course.

It would seem that similar special provisions can be made to transport our own workers and their families, perhaps, to certain national parks

and monuments. To the best of my knowledge the agencies responsible for citizen health and morale have not considered this possibility. It is quite necessary to define a government policy that will distinguish this type of travel for essential rest and recreation from the "pleasure trips" now banned by the lack of rubber and congestion of common carrier facilities. If such distinction is made, I am sure that the National Park Service can adjust its programs so as to distinguish the war-time recreation from business-as-usual in the national parks and monuments. If morale-building agencies and transportation companies can get together in bringing industrial workers to the parks the National Park Service will do its share in making the travel worthwhile.

Curtailment of National Park Service facilities

Parallel with the physical limitations to park travel is the executive and legislative vigilance evident now in the Bureau of the Budget, the House, the Senate and elsewhere in the high places. Most of us are acquainted with the survey being conducted by the Senate for the purpose of eliminating unnecessary employees and programs of the Federal Government. We have noted the drastic cuts made in the appropriations for those agencies not engaged in waging war. Those of us who read the Congressional Record observe the trend of legislation affecting many non-defense activities.

A recent mild expression of a member of the House may be quoted as a fair example of the average legislator's attitude: "Our Government should be engaged only in activities that are for the public interest, and these activities should be measured in the light of our present situation, and their necessity in the prosecution of the war."

I hope I will not be misunderstood. Diversions, deferments and curtailments should be made, of course, if they will hurry the winning of the war. The National Park Service already has made notable reductions in its programs. But there is a law of diminishing returns which must not be forgotten. The "public interests" referred to by the Congressman includes an interest in the maintenance of the Nation itself during the present struggle. It embraces, too, a preparation for the peace to come.

Someone has said, "How can we expect to combat forces in remote places, that worship only power and materials, without first making effort to keep our own ideas of worth in good order?" I hold to the idea that the safeguarding of our national heritage preserved in our great scenic parks and historic shrines is one important way of keeping our own ideas of worth in good order. These natural values and cultural treasures will not take care of themselves. A continuing program of preservation, research and interpretation is necessary. That means em-

ployment of a staff—a staff possessed of the capabilities of a great museum staff. On the walls of the amphitheatre of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery is inscribed a significant expression of thought:

"When we assumed the soldier we did not lay aside the citizen."

Just now there does seem to be some tendency to throw certain deep concerns of citizenry out of the window.

The Criterion of justified "defense expenditures"

In selecting our measuring stick for defense spending we may well take a leaf from our allies. In England today, in the face of devastating raids and possible invasion, museums double their effort and national parks come into existence. This new cultural activity costs money—money which some leaders harried by military reverses might have insisted be diverted to "practical" use in fighting the enemy. Uninformed critics may conclude that city museums and the "great museums of the out-of-doors," the National Parks and Monuments of the United States, are not very important to the Nation in time of war, but if they do, I believe that it is a conclusion based on fallacious premises.

Astute leaders will not forget that cultural institutions help to make taxes collectable and spirit invincible.



A BLESSED EVENT NEAR THE MUSEUM

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

In connection with a reel depicting the animal life of Yosemite National Park, we had been attempting for some time to take motion pictures of a doe with fawns. Yosemite fawns are usually born in July, and in order to gain maximum interest we wanted to photograph them in the stage of earliest infancy. Other duties, poor light, or the unavailability of the animals at the time desired always seemed to interfere, and as the season progressed, it appeared that our photographic efforts would have to be deferred until next season insofar as that subject was concerned.

At 5 o'clock on the afternoon of August 20, it was, therefore, both a thrilling and unexpected surprise to discover that a doe had just given birth to twin fawns. The situation was even more ideal for photographic purposes since the blessed event had occurred just a short distance from the museum. Better cooperation could hardly be expected.

From an eye witness the first fawn saw the light of day at 4:40 p. m., while the second of the pair had

been born some 15 to 20 minutes later. When observed by the writer these twins were but a few minutes old, yet were attempting to nurse.



Unperturbed by the audience of seven or eight people who had gathered on hearing of the birth, the doe proceeded to care for her young by caressing them tenderly with her tongue. Later, she bedded down beside them amid the protecting shel-

ter of a rank growth of bracken ferns near a Coffee Berry bush.

Early the next morning the doe and twins were still in the same location. Later the mother—probably apprehensive of the interest and attention her offspring would create on the part of human beings—led them away to a more secluded spot bordering the museum garden fence, which was well protected by vegeta-

tion. The fawns, with wobbly knees now somewhat stronger, followed the doe who encouraged and coaxed them along with a series of plaintive bleats.

Thus it was a distinct pleasure not only to have the opportunity of photographing this recent addition to the Yosemite deer family, but also to record the unusually late birth of twin fawns on August 20.

SNOWPLANT SEEKS COVER OF A TENT

By Ranger-Naturalist Russel Lewis

On July 1, 1942, we noticed something of a blood-red color protruding through the floor of our tent-cabin in the Mariposa Grove Campground. On taking up a floor board we discovered the brilliant red shafts of



three beautiful snowplants (*Sarcodes sanguinea*). The fact that this plant was growing under our tent floor proves that as a saprophyte it

needs no sunlight. Like other saprophytes, it lacks the green chlorophyll which is present in most flowering plants. The chlorophyll is the material in the leaves which in the presence of sunlight helps manufacture plant food. These saprophytes live on decaying organic material and need no sunshine. Therefore, it is just as logical to find the snowplant under a tent as in other shaded forest areas.

The snowplants were quite abundant through the grove area this year. They often grow in clusters through the thick shaded blanket of pine needles near the edge of the melting snow banks. By June and July the snow in the Mariposa Grove is gone, and the snowplants are found in areas where the soil is quite moist. The floor of the tent apparently provided that moist protection, and gave us the thrill of having this delightful plant appear unexpectedly in our living quarters.



A LITTLE LIFE IN GHOST TOWN BODIE

By Ranger-Naturalist Russel L. Lewis

In his book "100 Years in Yosemite," Dr. Carl Russell has one chapter on early mining excitements east of Yosemite. The town of Bodie, California, has had its ups and downs in this mining business.

W. S. Body came from Poughkeepsie, New York in 1848. About eleven years later he crossed Sonora Pass with a group of other miners to prospect in the Mono area. Their find was a good one, but Mr. Body died in a snow storm in March 1860, while on the way to Monoville for supplies. The town's name of Body was later changed to Bodie.

The progress of Bodie was slow. From 1860 to 1877, an average of twenty votes were polled each year. In 1878, the Bodie Mining Company made a rich strike of gold and silver. The news spread rapidly through all the mining camps. By 1879, the town is said to have had over 10,000 residents.

Many of the residences and business places are still standing, but fires have destroyed many. Some of the mines are still being worked. The Standard Hill has been in operation almost continuously since 1879, and is said to have produced more

than \$75,000,000. Although Bodie is often referred to as a ghost town, there are more than 100 residents living there now. Most of them are involved with the mining companies.

A small museum is being established at Bodie by the Cains—long time residents there. Here the visitor will find many articles that tell the unwritten story of the boom days. Since mining was about the only occupation in that area, as various depressions came, people had to leave. Not being anxious to be loaded down, they left behind many interesting possessions, including sewing machines, some of which the Cains have placed in the museum. A Wells Fargo Express book tells another part of the story. On February 16, 1884, this company hauled a load of ore to San Francisco valued at \$32,682.79. A week later the load was \$29,272.60, while the next week it was \$26,292.71. Those are typical of the weekly shipments from one mine. Many other articles in the museum, such as record books, snowshoes for horses, lamps, guns, and letters bear witness of this former boom town of the west.

Mrs. Ella M. Cain has also made a wonderful collection of more than 500 Indian baskets which are also on display at the museum. Mrs. Cain's hobby of basket collecting began over 35 years ago. She has a basket water jug which was purchased from the Indians by her parents over 60 years ago. Another

basket water jug was made by blind old "Matchie," who was said to have been over 100 years old. Many of the baskets were purchased when the annual "Indian Field Day" was held in Yosemite Valley. Mrs. Cain knows Yosemite's Lucy Telles as one of the finest basket makers living today.

HIGHLIGHTING YOSEMITE'S HISTORY

By C. Frank Brockman, Park Naturalist

An article of particular value to those interested in the history of Yosemite National Park, written by Francis P. Farquhar and entitled "Walker's Discovery of Yosemite," appeared in the recently issued Sierra Club Bulletin (Vol. XXVII, No. 4; August, 1942). Mr. Farquhar, who has already contributed a great deal toward a better understanding of many historical aspects of the Sierra region through numerous publications on this subject, discusses certain aspects of the memorable journey of the Walker party from Salt Lake City to the Pacific Coast in 1833—an event of particular importance to this region in view of the fact that en route these men crossed the Sierra Nevada, and passed through the region now embraced within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park. They were thus the first white men to set foot in this area. Although Walker and his party have been generally credited with the discovery of the Giant Sequoia (*Sequoia gigantea*) which was in itself an event of particular interest, it was for many years a

matter of considerable conjecture as to whether or not this group of men actually saw Yosemite Valley, or whether the original discovery occurred 18 years later in 1851 by the Mariposa Battalion. The general consensus of opinion had been that Walker, although he passed through the area now incorporated in the park, did not actually observe the valley; that their route took them along the highland between the Yosemite and Hetch Hetchy and, as they were anxious to complete their long and arduous journey, did not explore the areas on either side of their route.

Mr. Farquhar, however, quotes several passages from pertinent early documents relative to this journey that shed new light on this interesting chapter of Yosemite History, indicating that these men were the first to view this great granite gorge.

The article, and the list of references which are given at its conclusion, should receive the attention of all who are interested in the history of Yosemite National Park.



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