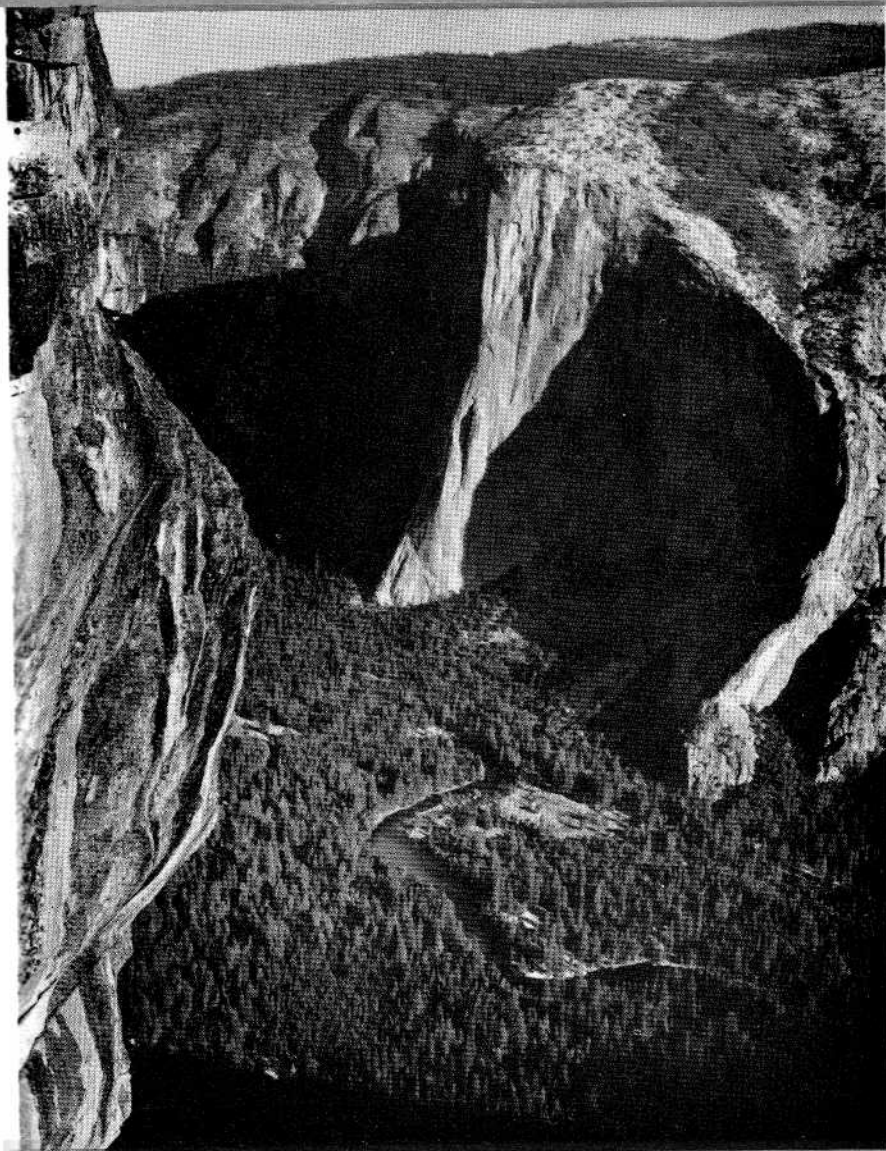
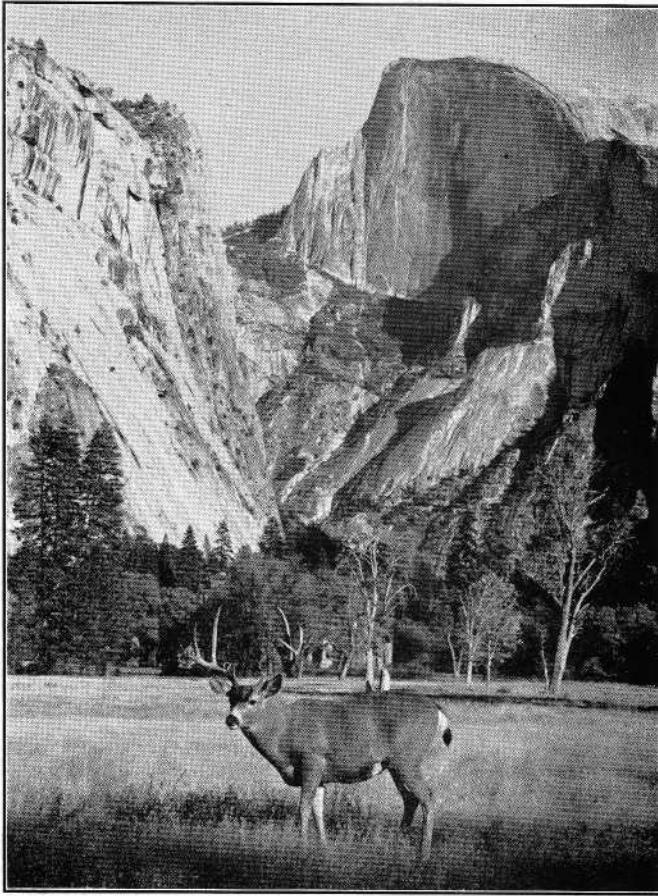


Yosemite Nature Notes





Ahwahnee Meadow—Half Dome in the distance.

Photo by Anderson.

Cover Photo: *View down Yosemite Valley from Taft Point — El Capitan in distance*, By Ansel Adams from "Yosemite and the Sierra Nevada," text by John Muir, 64 photographs by Ansel Adams. Reproduced by kind permission of Houghton Mifflin Company.

Yosemite Nature Notes

THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF
THE YOSEMITE NATURALIST DIVISION AND
THE YOSEMITE NATURAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION, INC.

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HAS PROTECTION WORKED DESTRUCTION?

By Harry C. Parker, Associate Park Naturalist

Editor's Note: This article, offering some thought stimulated by Mr. Ernst's story of the "Vanishing Meadows in Yosemite Valley," published in the May issue, likewise does not constitute an official statement from the staff of Yosemite National Park.

In his article on the vanishing meadows in the Valley, Mr. Ernst has drawn attention to the decrease of the open lands therein from 750 acres in 1866 to 327 acres in 1937, and infers that this is a "problem wrought through the activities of well-intentioned but ill-advised conservationists." He further cites various "old timers" who knew the Valley in the very early days and who made unfavorable comparisons with the conditions of the scenery as found two or three decades later. He uses an illustration of the obliteration by trees of a view of Bridalveil Fall as an example of the "loss of numerous sublime views of the falls, the cliffs and broad, open park-like vistas stretching on through the Valley."

This article brings to mind Dr. Russell's statement, "The fairly simple task of setting aside representative bits of wild country as visualized by early national park proponents is now a complex undertaking in land management that must be coordinated with the whole structure of government and fitted into the economic framework of the nation." Where should we start and where should we stop in the artificial management of areas that are by mandate of the people's Congress pre-

sumably to be kept in as nearly their natural state as possible and handed down to oncoming generations with as little impairment of natural values as is consistent with public use?

In the same article cited above, Dr. Russell further states that an important value of each area in the National Park System is to be found in the capacity of the areas to serve as great, natural repositories of scientific and historic treasures. And, later, "The areas constitute useful 'check plots' for comparison with other wild areas which are not so carefully protected." These are all matters of recorded National Park Policy and the preservation of great natural areas is accepted as one of the prime purposes of the National Park System. They certainly admit of only the **necessary minimum** of artificial management, for purposes of administration and for proper public use.

But when it comes to altering the scenery, who is to set the standard by which the scenic values of Yosemite Valley shall be "managed"? In Mr. Ernst's discussion, we have numerous quotations from early travelers and residents as to what they thought of the matter.

However, these people had a con-

temporary who has not as yet entered the picture, Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., the first administrative officer of the area when it was set aside as a public reservation and given in trust to the State of California.² He is credited with being the "father" of the profession of landscape architecture in America, and had, even at that early date (1864), achieved a position of eminence. He had a profound understanding of the basic principles of land management for public welfare, as a result of **wide travels and years of practical experience** along those lines.

Olmsted left the position of Chairman of the first Yosemite Commission in 1867. In 1890, with 23 years of perspective, he made this statement concerning the true public values of Yosemite Valley.³

"A systematic removal of all the young trees of the Valley would be equivalent to the destruction in the course of time, of just what the State of California stands voluntarily pledged to **hold, inalienably, for all time.**"⁴ That is to say, the distinctive charm of the scenery of the Yosemite does not depend, as it is a vulgar blunder to suppose, on the greatness of its walls and the length of its little early summer cascades; the height of certain of its trees, the reflections in its pools, and such other matters as can be entered in statistical tables, pointed out by guides and represented within picture frames. So far, perhaps, as can be told in a few words, it lies in the rare association with the grandeur of beautifully disposed great bodies, groups and clusters of trees . . . I felt the charm of the Yosemite much more at the end of a week than at the end of a day, much more after six weeks when the cascades were nearly dry, than after one week, and when, after having been in it, off and on, several months, I was going out, I said, 'I have not yet half taken it in.' . . . Even men of unusually happy endowment and education, who have not also, the results of considerable working experience, can rarely have much forecasting realization of the manner in which charm of scenery is to be affected by such operations as commonly pass under the name of 'improvements'."

This opinion, together with those cited by Mr. Ernst, gives an indication of how varied can be the fundamental tastes which would govern the criteria by which a "management" program might be set up. We can go further. There are foresters who tell us that here in the Valley the ponderosa pine reaches its greatest development, that here we have one of the few places where the ponderosa pine and Jeffrey pine overlap in their ranges. To them, this may be the most significant value, not meadows. There are geologists who state that we have no need to fear the destruction of the real values of the Valley by human use, so long as Half Dome and the other major geological features are unmolested. How should the "manager of scenery" deal with all these factors?

On countless occasions I have shown visitors the first comprehensive picture of Yosemite Valley, drawn by Ayres in 1855, on display in the History Room of the Yosemite Museum. This view clearly portrays the open character of the Valley floor in the discovery era and I have pointed out to the visitors that, largely due to protection, the forests have increased to a great degree. This was done merely as a matter of dispensing factual information, than with the intention of directing their thinking. I have never yet heard a murmur of complaint, but rather an expression of appreciation for the presence of the forests today.

Before the War, it was my pleasure to guide a number of auto caravans about the Valley, naming and pointing out the chief features. Never did I hear a complaint that the vis-

2. *Yosemite Nature Notes*, Vol. XXV, No. 9, September, 1946.

3. *Governmental Preservation of Natural Scenery*. Privately printed at Brookline, Mass., March 8, 1890.

4. At the time of Olmsted's statement, Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove were under the jurisdiction of the State.

itor couldn't see the scenery for the trees. At Warwona Tunnel View, I did often hear expressed admiration for the way in which the forest hides so effectively the works of man, including a summer daily average of 8,000 campers, so that one can get the feeling of complete wilderness beauty and the grandeur of the handiwork of God. This same point is brought out effectively in Mr. Ernst's illustration of the view from near Union Point (his Figure 4). It can be emphasized even more strongly, if one will watch at night for the myriad lights which show just how much is hidden by the trees.

On these same auto caravans I have heard many an expression of gratitude for the coolness provided by the same stretch of forest which is decried by Mr. Ernst for having obscured a view of Bridalveil Fall near Black's Spring. Just around the corner lies Valley View, which gives an incomparable look at the fall and its relationship to the surrounding scene.

Yes, one can still find "numerous sublime views," as witness in "A Self-guiding Auto Tour of Yosemite Valley"⁵ which is illustrated with modern photographs of points of interest and sublime beauty. There are ample vistas from which the major features may be seen, admired and appreciated, some of these a heritage from State Park days and which are now preserved because of historic precedent. Further, so long as we have a river in the Valley, there will be open places from which to view major features.

Since others have expressed their opinion of scenic values, I should like to give mine. To see what clearing the Valley would do for the scenery, one should go to Hetch

Hetchy and watch the visitors. The long, monotonous expanse of granitic walls seldom holds the attention long, even when the beautiful falls are running, and soon the average visitor is leaning over the dam looking at the concrete, or watching the spillways. Here is a Yosemite, without trees! Or one should take a trip into some of the canyons in the northwest part of the park, where he can travel for miles with few or no trees. Unconsciously, he soon finds himself seeking relief from the sameness and wishing for some shade. The granite walls do not hold the eye for long. Repetition soon palls and "familiarity breeds contempt," or at least apathy.

In photographing the scenery, why does the photographer seek something to "frame" his view? If the vast, sheer granite expanse of the Valley walls is aesthetically so valuable, why not make the exposure without the embellishment of anything extraneous. As for contact experience, so long as we have the talus slopes with their comparatively sterile growing conditions, the visitor who desires may climb right to the walls, touch the stone, and gaze skyward to his heart's content.

Finally, from my experience in Pate Valley, the upper Merced drainage and similar spots I have found that one gains the best appreciation of the wonderful walls by getting up high and not from the floors of the valley they enclose. Some of Mr. Ernst's illustrations, though not used for this purpose, demonstrate this admirably.

In winter, there are now about 100,000 visitors to Yosemite Valley. After a snowstorm it is the snow-clad branches of the trees, with the pattern varying according to species, that brings forth the oft-heard phrase,

"veritable fairyland." While the etched patterns of the snow and ice on the walls of Cathedral Rocks and similar spots excite admiration and wonder, it is the overall effect of the lacy pattern formed by white-encrusted branches of the deciduous trees and the statuesque beauty of the blanketed pine boughs that really move the visitor to an appreciation of the marvellous change of scene wrought by a winter storm in the Valley; and, when he thinks of it, an expression of gratitude to his Government for having preserved all of this for him.

One notes that it was more than fifty years ago that Galen Clark made his plaint that all the open meadow ground was being covered, yet we still have meadows, some of them knee deep in water in summertime, thereby inhibiting tree growth, and around the margins of which

seedlings of trees are not present in appreciable numbers.

Has protection worked destruction? My answer is that it has worked destruction to parts of a few meadows, valued mainly by the "old timers" for pasturage, but it has likewise immeasurably enhanced the spiritual values of the Valley and made it possible for us to receive three-quarters of a million visitors a year with the minimum of scars to the natural charm of the scene as viewed from above. At the same time it has made their stay for more pleasant in providing shelter for campers and a cool relief from the summer's heat as one travels about enjoying the wonderful vistas, towering walls and majestic domes. It has also indubitably contributed, through the protection of trees, to the superior beauty of Yosemite Valley when the snow decked branches transform the scene to one of glorious splendor.

GLACIER POINT IN WINTER

By Dorothy R. Mayer

Editor's Note: Mr. and Mrs. George L. Mayer spent the winter of 1948-1949 alone at Glacier Point in charge of the hotel properties at that place.

OUR PACK RAT FRIENDS

When we took over the care of the Mountain House in December, we were introduced to a pair of pack rats¹ who shared the living room and were already quite tame. They lived under the counter behind the steam trays and had a beautiful nest built of slices of stale bread. We were warned to hide anything we did not want to lose; and sure enough, every morning we would discover a neat pile of spoons, spectacles, rolls of film, scissors, in fact anything movable. They even carried large brushes which made a wonderful clatter as they dragged

them through awkward spaces. They seemed to enjoy making a noise to attract attention—suddenly jumping on anything that would rattle, or chasing each other along the counter at lightning speed.

Later they had a peculiar habit of scratching the hollow wall of the counter with their front feet at approximately the same time every evening, and especially if there was any loud conversation. It seemed to excite them and they would become unusually active and bold, often sitting on the table beside us pretending to eat an old dried-up apple, which was usually ignored, and all

1. Gray Bushy-tailed Wood Rat *Neotoma c. cinerea* Ord.

the while, keeping their sharp, beady eyes on our every movement—then suddenly without warning, dart across the floor under our feet. I'm sure out of sheer mischief.

These little animals were so tame



they would take food from our hands and ask to go out into the kitchen by gnawing at the corner of the door, then waiting while we opened it for them. They had been in the habit of eating in the kitchen, and one of them was just recovering from severe foot burns, having inadvertently run across the hot stove. We thought it might be simpler to feed them near their nest in the living room rather than have them at large, selecting their own food, so every night we placed a plate of assorted scraps on the counter for them. They seemed to be satisfied with this new arrangement, for the plate was always cleaned and they no longer tried to go to the kitchen. Furthermore, evidently feeling that since the food was donated and not stolen, it was no longer necessary to leave any trade. From then on, nothing was ever disturbed in the room though they still loved to tote large objects, such as brushes, for the sake of the noise they made. This was sheer exhibitionism.

When angry at each other, the rats made a loud thumping noise, with their tail apparently. One evening they had quite a battle for we heard a terrifying scream or squeal—the

only time we ever heard them utter a sound. We were unable to see what was going on. It took place under the counter, but the battle lasted quite some time and we fully expected to see one of them thoroughly mangled. They never seemed to play any more together or even live together, though they apparently were unhurt.

Their activities were not confined to the living room. They had a way of getting up through the walls and running between the floors, and could even go outside over the upstairs balcony. Bits of wood were packed in and left up there to rattle around over our heads at night. They could come down into the hot water heater cupboard, and if the door was open, get into the kitchen. One night they made a raid on the kitchen and carried off a whole tray of corn muffins which they dearly loved.

They apparently have auxiliary quarters right over our heads in the bedroom where they keep a choice collection of rocks and heavy iron objects for the express purpose of bouncing and rolling them, a sort of bowling alley between the rafters. I'm sure this is done for our special benefit as they sleep all day and only become active in these quarters at night and when we are trying to sleep.

They seem to have a definite sense of humor and mischief, very much like the squirrels which they resemble more than the rats—except for the large ears. Their fur is light brown and white underparts, quite thick of body and a fluffy tail, more like a ground squirrel. Large bright button eyes and tiny neat white "hands"—a very attractive little animal.

So far there has been no family and perhaps we made a mistake in

their sex when we named them "Herman and Min."

The most curious thing to my mind is how these little wild creatures adapted their habits to ours in our winter of shared existence. They slept under the counter all day ignoring our activities all around them, awakening at night, accepting the food we offered them, playing a little in the evening, making very little disturbance.

Strangest of all, though there were countless small objects left about in the room, shelves of all the summer stock of cosmetics, candy, films, cigarettes, silverware, etc., nothing

was ever disturbed after we started feeding them, despite the fact that this collecting or trading is one of their most characteristic habits. At first we were kept busy replacing objects which were purloined and stacked for us on the floor—a whimsical collection, never twice the same. Nothing was ever destroyed, not being curious as to the contents of the strange looking packages apparently.

They accepted their free board and room as naturally as any domestic animal, obviously showing their appreciation by causing as little disturbance as possible.

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO

(No. 5)

By Carl P. Russell, Park Superintendent

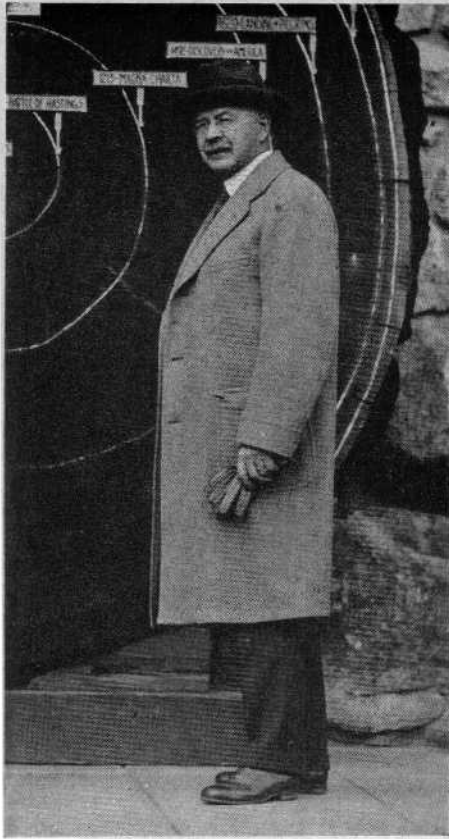
In a previous article (*Yosemite Nature Notes*, April, 1949) an account was given of the success of Ansel F. Hall in arousing the interest of the American Association of Museums in the museum needs of Yosemite National Park. As a result of representations made by Mr. C. J. Hamlin of the Association, Rockefeller support was obtained for the project and on July 15, 1924, Superintendent W. B. Lewis received the following telegram from Arthur E. Demaray of the National Park Service, Washington, D. C.:

"Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial appropriated July eleventh, seventy-five thousand five hundred dollars for construction, equipment, and maintenance for period of three years of museum building; fifty thousand for building, ten thousand for equipment and furnishing, ten thousand five hundred for personnel for three years, and five thousand for expenses of committee on museums. Committee will send Dr. H. C. Bumpus to park to study range of exhibits."

Mr. Hall was designated Executive Agent for the American Association

of Museums and made responsible for the handling of the Yosemite Museum construction project. Mr. Herbert Maier who had done the architectural work for the proposed building was employed as his assistant. These men established themselves in Berkeley anticipating the recognition of a field headquarters for the administration of museum and interpretive programs in all western National Park Service areas. The present writer was already on the job locally as Park Naturalist, Yosemite National Park.

In time there came to Yosemite the Dr. H. C. Bumpus referred to in Arthur Demaray's original message regarding the gift of the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial. He proved to be a veritable bundle of energy and snappy administrative judgment—professional attainments which were nicely tempered with sympathy for the local workers in their adversities and by an abound-



H. C. Bumpus—N.P.S. Photo.

ing interest in the job of telling the story of a great national park through the medium of a "focal-point museum"—a designation which he coined while on the Yosemite job.¹ As chairman of a committee appointed within the American Association of Museums, Dr. Bumpus shaped the broad plan for the Yosemite Museum construction project and gave general supervision to curatorial work. One of his first suggestions had to do with the planning and construction of the Glacier

Point Lookout, an outpost of the Yosemite Museum which today still functions as naturalist headquarters at Glacier Point. Of this branch museum Ansel Hall writes:²

"My first activity upon returning to Yosemite National Park in August 1924 was to plan and erect a small building at Glacier Point which would be an outpost of the Yosemite Museum and would serve as a lookout station. It was at first intended that the cost of this building be regarded as a part of the total cost of the Yosemite Museum building. Fifty thousand dollars was appropriated by the Laura Spelman Rockefeller Memorial for this latter purpose. When it became necessary to sign a contract for this entire amount to be devoted solely to the Yosemite Museum, the Yosemite Museum Association took over the Glacier Point Lookout project. The following summary indicates the source of donations.

Yosemite Museum Association.....	\$ 990.78
Yosemite National Park Co.....	794.50
American Association of Museums....	270.50
National Park Service.....	143.18
Horseshoe Stage Route.....	6.60
	<hr/>
	\$2,205.56

The total cost of the building is \$1,543.56. The equipment to date consists of one splendid Zeiss Binocular Telescope costing \$662.00."

Mr. Maier designed the little structure and personally handled the rock work and the general construction problem on this, the first "Branch Museum" in the National Park System. For twenty-five years the Glacier Point Lookout has served the multitudes of people who have visited this famed vantage point. The building serves as the headquarters for interpretive personnel at Glacier Point and truly important work is done there in explaining the significance of the vast scene of the Merced Canyon and the spectacular summit country which unfolds to

1. Some account of the role played by Dr. Bumpus in planning the content of the Yosemite Museum and certain others among National Park Service museums is given in **Yosemite Nature Notes**, March 1928, pp. 20-23, and Dec. 1943, pp. 97-101.
2. "Report to Members and Trustees of the Yosemite Museum Association" by Ansel F. Hall, typed Ms. 6 pp., March 5, 1925. (In Yosemite National Park files.) For an account of the opening of the Glacier Point Lookout see **Yosemite Nature Notes**, July 14, 1925, pp. 54-55.

the spectator. The exceedingly modest outlay of costs as presented above does not in any way suggest the importance of this effective interpretive device.

Through years of heavy use the big Zeiss binoculars have worn out. The instrument now reposes in the storeroom of the Yosemite Museum awaiting the day when funds can be spared with which to make essential repairs. Exhibits, however, have improved through the years. Under the initiative of Park Naturalist Brockman, an excellent though small installation of exhibits was planned and prepared by the local park staff for the Glacier Point Lookout affording a self-operating interpretive service which is highly pleasing to the visitor who wishes to have a synopsis of the geology which lies behind the magnificent scene of mountain top, snow field, cirque, and abyss. The intimate relationship between the man-made devices and the soul-stirring display provided by Nature makes of this museum an exhibit-in-place. Here, actually, is the pioneer endeavor of the National Park Service to espouse the ideal of the "Museum of the Out-of-Doors."

A discerning analysis of National Park Service Museum objectives was written by Dr. Bumpus at the beginning of his activity on the Yosemite project. He stated:

"The controlling fact governing the development of educational work in the national parks is that within these reservations multitudes are brought directly in contact with

striking examples of Nature's handicraft. To lead these people away from direct contact with Nature . . . is contrary to the spirit of this enterprise. The real museum is outside the walls of the building and the purpose of the museum work is to render the out-of-doors intelligible. It is out of this conception that a smaller specialized museum, the trailside museum, takes its origin. The primary purpose of the trailside museum is to provide means that will enable the visitor on his arrival at a point of vantage to derive a moderate, if not a maximum amount of benefit. It is an 'insulation remover' and provides a hookup between an object, or spectacle, charged with dynamic information and a mind receptive to informational impulses."³

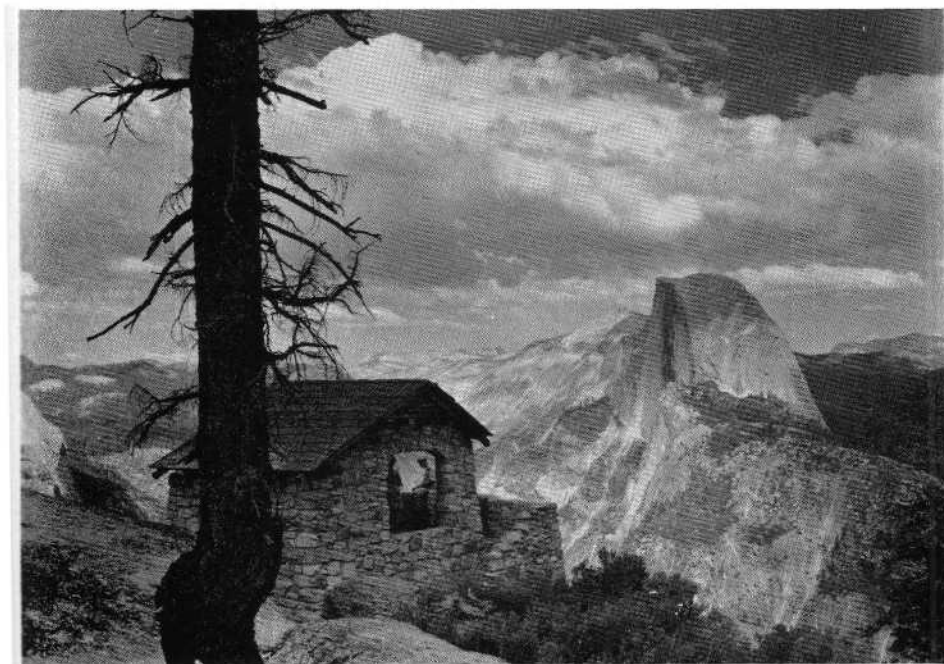
At the Glacier Point Lookout Dr. Bumpus practiced what he preached. In that charming but most unpretentious little building perched more than 3,000 feet directly above the Valley below was initiated a philosophy and a method which distinguish the educational work in all of the 174 areas of the National Park System. From such small acorns can great oaks grow. Theories have become practices in the years which have elapsed since the experimenting was done at the Glacier Point Lookout. More than a hundred small museums in national parks and national monuments now provide "hookups" of the kind contrived in the minds of Dr. Bumpus and his associates in 1924.

INCONSIDERATE BABY

One day early in June, Kit Parker stepped out of her house to check on daughter Betsy, age 14 months, who was having a sun bath in the side yard. Just then she heard a man on the nearby street exclaim to his companion, "That darned baby scared away our bear!" (H.C.P.)



3. Hermon Carey Bumpus, *Yankee Naturalist*, by H. C. Bumpus, Jr., University of Minnesota Press, 1947, p. 104.



Glacier Point Lookout—Half Dome and Clouds Rest in the distance.

Photo by Anderson.



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Dan Anderson