

son's Charlamoff, Cross and Christmas. He also tried many native seedlings and Swedish varieties. I think he must have tried more than one hundred kinds of apples. He did not plant every variety sent out but only those that were especially promising. His location in Carver County was so far north that his experiments were of unusual interest and value to the people of Minnesota. His work, in fact, amounted to his carrying on at his own expense and in a most careful way for more than a quarter of a century what amounted to a private experiment station. He proved to the people of Minnesota that apples could be profitably grown in this section; that some of the varieties imported from Russia were especially adapted to this section and could be depended upon. He also showed that many of them were worthless, and his labor of sifting

the good from the bad Russian varieties of apples has been very helpful and valuable. He was a natural investigator and freely imparted the results of his experience. His reports to the horticultural society from year to year have done much to encourage the development of pomology in Minnesota and surrounding states."¹⁵

¹⁵ *Report*, 1898, p. 193-194.

THE PHOTOGRAPH of Peterson on page 63 is from Minnesota Horticultural Society, *The Minnesota Horticulturist*, 26: 163 (facing) (May, 1898); those on pages 65 and 66 are from American Institute of Swedish Arts, Literature, and Science, *Yearbook*, 1945, p. 106; that on page 68 was taken by the author.

THE EDITOR'S PAGE

YELLOWSTONE TO VOYAGEURS: THE EVOLUTION OF AN IDEA

THE IDEA of a national park, insofar as it is part of the historical record, can be traced to George Catlin, the famous artist-explorer of the American West. Back in 1832 Catlin had in mind setting aside the whole wind-swept prairie of the buffalo and the Indian — extending from Mexico to Manitoba — rather than the familiar mountain-rimmed valleys of today's national parks. But Catlin was ahead of his time by a generation, and nothing came of his vision of preservation for the future.

It was 1872 before the national park idea first took form in the creation of the 2,000,000-acre Yellowstone National Park. The park implemented the new, uniquely American concept of public-land use combined with natural preservation that was to spread around the world during the century which followed.

In 1971, ninety-nine years after Yellowstone's "birth," the most recently created national park — Voyageurs — was established in the Kabetogama Peninsula area of northern Minnesota. It is the nation's thirty-sixth national park, and Minnesota is the twenty-fourth state to have such a park.

Minnesota's links with the development of the national park system over the past century have been intimate and varied. The man who is credited with marshaling support for a national park at Yellowstone, for instance, is Nathaniel P. Langford, who was a Mon-

tana vigilante and western explorer before returning to St. Paul in the 1870s and eventually serving as president of the Minnesota Historical Society from 1905 until his death in 1911. During Yellowstone's first five years, Langford served without compensation as its superintendent and defended it against exploitation.

Among others with Minnesota connections who joined the ranks of the National Park Service was Conrad L. Wirth, who was director from 1951 to 1964. Wirth was the son of Theodore Wirth, Minneapolis' famed superintendent of parks for many years.

THE NATIONAL PARK EXPERIMENT is a dynamic one, but it was born of mixed motives and from the very beginning has been plagued by an inherent contradiction. In creating a national park the United States took a bold and novel step in land-use planning and public service: it set aside a sizable chunk of western real estate to be preserved as "a pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." But how does one preserve a pleasuring ground? On the one hand, idealists sought to safeguard and preserve the great scenic wonders and geographical mysteries which grew in scope and scale when contemplated with awe from distant urban centers. On the other hand, commercial interests such as railroads and concessionaires, by concentrating on the "pleasuring ground" aspect, diminished and demeaned the natural wonders through an all-too-successful effort to attract city dwellers to the parks.

The park story is full of ironies. Yellowstone was created during the administration of Ulysses S. Grant, long considered one of the nation's worst presidents. Grant's other bequest to conservation turned out to be a distinctly negative one. Indeed, he has been described as "the chief cook of the great barbecue" of our natural resources, and until 1916 Yellowstone Park was protected by none other than the United States army and its voracious corps of engineers. Equally ironically, the man most often given credit for fathering the national park system idea, John Muir, was funded by California gas and light corporations in his futile fight to save the virgin Yosemite National Park from despoilment by the construction of the Hetch Ketchy Dam. Nor was the dedicated Muir included in Theodore Roosevelt's famous White House conference on conservation in 1908 which was attended by governors, Supreme Court justices, and many other officials. Ironically, too, the first director of the National Park Service, created in 1916, was a millionaire borax salesman, Stephen T. Mather, whose park program was aided and abetted by railroad lobbyists in Washington. Meanwhile, the arch enemy of the national park service concept was Gifford Pinchot, a federal bureaucrat and Theodore Roosevelt's chief forester, who also coined the term "conservation." Pinchot was a utilitarian who wanted parks managed for multiple use by the National Forest Service.

Contradictions persist today. A visitor to Gettysburg or the Grand Canyon will find more suburban sprawl and other encroachments than spiritual retreat. At Grand Teton National Park, where the second international conference on national parks will convene this fall, mountain vistas look down on modern highways, a jetport, and at least one man-made lake. This list of environmental anomalies could be extended. Despite, or more likely because of, such paradoxes, national parks have a compelling hold on the American mind. Where but in our great parks can one find such a variety of remnants of our national heritage — a quiet battlefield, interlacing lakes surrounded by granite cliffs, a mountain meadow, a portage over a height of land?

Do our national parks serve the commonweal as they are designed to do? Who uses the national parks? What is their educational mission? These and other questions were vigorously debated at a conference on the future of national parks held at Yosemite in April, 1972. Various interests squared off: wilderness preservationists wishing to hold the line on numbers of visitors and development; urban minorities pressing the National Park Service to realign its priorities in the direction of the poverty-stricken inner city; interpreters, including historians, archaeologists, and biologists,

being alienated by their own federal bureaucracies; and park service administrators attempting to reconcile such divergent interests.

Though the Yosemite conference gave a nod to the great achievements of this uniquely American 100-year experiment with parks, its preoccupation was with failures and inadequacies. The conference mirrored the age we live in through its impatience with established structures and its widening of the rift between groups.

Today, the National Park Service embraces almost 300 separate parks, sites, memorials, and the like, a majority of which are concerned with history. That majority, however, is highly misleading. What is a preponderance in numbers turns out to be just the reverse in allocated resources. In terms of acreage, personnel, and budget, historical areas are treated poorly. They suffer from lack of interpretation and also misinterpretation. The park service remains predominantly a land-management agency. Humanistic, social, and scientific concerns, interpretation, and education — though represented by highly motivated and articulate personnel — too often are relegated to a low rung on the ladder of priorities and stifled by a too-ready response to the creature-comfort demands of the park visitor. This imbalance of priorities is brought out dramatically by the fact that, of the 7,000 employees of the National Park Service, a meager twenty are involved in historical preservation. Among the first programs to be cut back in times of retrenchment is field interpretation; among the last to go is grass mowing.

The national parks are a great achievement in which all of us can take pride. Yet, they are beset with problems as they serve a nation substantially different from that which Yellowstone, the first park, was created to serve. As the United States has urbanized and industrialized, people have moved closer to the parks. Accessibility to park areas has grown faster than have programs to cope with new and urgent demands. Now 100 years old, the national park system is challenged as never before to accommodate people and still preserve the parks. To succeed may well be the park service's foremost challenge of the second century.

One thing is certain. Our Yellowstones and Voyageurs will be preserved only by an understanding public, and they will be used wisely only by a public sensitive to the attributes which caused them to be designated national parks. Among the priorities that need to be moved upward is interpretation. Only a public that perceives the reasons why the national parks were created in the first place will care about safeguarding them for the future.

RUSSELL W. FRIDLEY, *Director*



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