

What are California's Oldest Local Parks?

by Jeff Ohlfs

At last year's California Parks Conference, myself and a few other PRAC members were curious about what are California's oldest local parks. The beautiful setting of Yosemite was an inspiration to being the first California State Park and depending on who you talk to, the first national park. I decided to take on this challenge.

As the unofficial historian for Joshua Tree National Park, I was intrigued to see that our local park systems were just as bad about their administrative history as the National Park Service. As parks, we are challenged with interpreting not only the natural areas but also their cultural history. And, we do a good job of that. However, we don't know our own agency's history. I was dismayed at the "I don't know" response. I challenge each of you to start working on your agency's history.

After a year of telephone calls, here is what I found out. I telephoned every county and the historically older cities in California. Seven counties couldn't answer my question. Some of these counties have members in PRAC.

The oldest city park is the El Pueblo de Los Angeles established in 1781 in Los Angeles. I had a second question, when did the city establish a formal parks and recreation department? Los Angeles took the prize again with 1889. It was interesting to note that out of the 20 cities, 12 had parks created before any formal agency to administer them. The oldest city park in the nation is Boston Commons established in 1634.

The oldest county park is Portsmouth Square established in 1839 in San Francisco. San Francisco may be considered a city more than a county. So, I'll give you the runner up. Volcano Armory Park was established in 1854 for Amador County. Either of these two parks makes them the oldest county park in the country! San Francisco has the oldest county parks and recreation agency established in 1870. Again depending on your preference for San Francisco as a city or county, the next runner up was Santa Barbara County claiming 1890. Six counties have no parks and no agencies. Fourteen counties have parks but no specific parks and recreation agency. These parks are usually cared for by the public works department. Finally, 33 of the counties had parks created before any formal agency to administer them.

I know I've raised some eye brows out there. I invite anyone who wants to challenge this unofficial survey to share their agency or park's story with us.

From the Oval Office In the Double Wide...

OH DEER!!!

So have you ever had one of "those" days? Well here is a true story of one of mine...

It all started with a friendly call from Ranger Jewel Johnson. She had received a call that a large doe had impaled itself on a fence and had died overnight. Ranger Jewel arrived at the family's home, loaded the deer into her patrol truck, and called for my advice on the best park area for the deer disposal. It turns out my patrol area covered a large wilderness area with deep canyons perfect for this situation.

Jump to three weeks later. While on routine patrol, I encountered a park visitor standing by herself with that look of...you know the look...kind of like a cross between "oh no it's the Ranger" and "I really need your help." As I approached the park visitor I could hear her calling her off-leash dog that had obviously gone over the side of a fire road. When I looked over the edge I saw a very overweight Dalmatian who was unable to climb back up to the top. Being the "helpful" ranger, I began to make my way down the canyon towards the dog. As I got closer to the dog, the dog began growling and moving further down into the canyon. I was just about 20 feet from the canyon bottom when my day took a turn for the worse. I lost my footing and began to somersault down those last 20 feet to bottom of the canyon. I certainly remember the THUD sound and the wetness of my back from lying in the creek. In that moment, I was laying face up looking up at the park visitor who at this point had the look of sheer terror on her face. It took me just a few moments to check on my overall safety...can I see my feet move? Just as I looked over my right shoulder, I happened to notice a clump of fur. Fur, you may ask? Yes, fur. Yup, you guessed it...in the entire Santa Monica Mountains I landed on Ranger Jewel's Deer!! When I got back on my feet, I felt the wetness had soaked through not only my uniform but into my vest and under shirt. It turns out that wasn't water...have you ever landed on top of a three week old dead deer that had been sitting in the sun? There I stood in my uniform, dotted with tufts of fur and deer-slime while getting barked at by a dog. I composed myself as best I could and herded the dog up the hill. The dog made it about half way up with me behind it shooing it like cattle on a cattle drive, when all of a sudden the dog stopped, turned, and bit me. Finally, when the visitor and dog were reunited, she just looked up and without me having to say a word said, "Thank you so much, I will make sure I put my dog on a leash next time." Upon returning to my patrol truck, I made sure to not lean back on the seat. And, for the final touch, as I reached for my sunglasses I realized that they were no longer on my head. I knew where they were, I just figured one trip to the bottom of the canyon was enough for one day.

See You There,

Dave Updike

The Passing of an Amazing Park Professional

by Marie Fong

It is with great sadness that I write of the sudden and unexpected passing of a truly talented Park Professional. On April 10, 2008, Scott Lee Brothers, born March 18, 1963, passed away. Scott is survived by his father, Russell Brothers, his much loved children, Garrett, Grant and Denice and his beloved Sherry. It is not enough to say that Scott, a life-long Nevadan, was a friend to all, a loving and caring father, an avid hunter and an honorable man. Within Scott was a unique combination of strong characteristics and humorous traits made him well loved and respected by all who knew him.

To simply say that Scott was the Range Master at the Washoe County Regional Shooting Facility does not even begin to scratch the surface. Scott's management of the Range was truly amazing. An isolated, inhospitable, desert post turned into a pleasant destination when you knew Scott was there. His endless patience and focused concern for safety kept the combination of multiple agency personnel and general visitors at the Range safe, but also happy. In the days following his death, many visitors to the Range were greatly shaken. Staff covering the Range witnessed again and again, the disbelief and sadness this loss created within the public. After making the long trek

to the Range one visitor upon hearing the news simply reloaded his vehicle and left, knowing he could not focus on the target under such a sorrow burden. Scott's charismatic personality had that effect on everyone.

Scott's work as an Inmate Supervisor for the Washoe County Sheriff's Office brought him many more close relationships. Those who had the privilege to know Scott understood that he was the type of man who loved law enforcement and everyone associated with it. It was commented on at sad occasion of his memorial service: "that if the measure of a man, is the friends he has" then the array of people at the memorial service reflected what a remarkable person he was; friends, family, co-workers, park visitors, and other flooded the service. The service was also attended by an amazing collection of agencies: Washoe County Sheriffs Department, Sparks Police Department, Reno Police Department, military personnel, FBI, Washoe County Park Rangers, and many more.

Scott Lee Brothers will be deeply missed by his family, friends and both the law enforcement and military community. Our thoughts and prayers are with all who are mourning this loss.

Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.

Ralph Waldo Emerson, poet/philosopher

Little Mussels Big Problems

by Brian Christensen, Director of Region 2

A recent find of the nonnative Zebra Mussel in a reservoir at the north end of San Benito County, California has sent local agencies scrambling to come up with a plan to stop the spread of this invasive species. 1-3 year old mussels were found along the shore line of San Justo Reservoir at the beginning of this year. This small but crucial body of water is used as a holding area before the water is pumped through a maze of pipe lines to irrigate agriculture land throughout the San Juan and Silicon Valley's. The problems that local agencies are up against are that the small mussels clog up and impede water flow in the pipes used for inlets and outlets, cling to anything including boats, can survive out of water for 1-5 days, and reproduce by the millions. The biggest concern is the potential spread and economical devastation this small mussel could have on California.

The Zebra Mussel was imported from Russia to the Great Lakes in the 1990's and is estimated by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services that they could have a \$5 Billion dollar impact from 2000 to 2010 in the Great Lakes region. The reason for the large dollar amount is for the construction

of a parallel water system and the maintenance of the infrastructure. If the mussels were to spread from this small lake a domino effect would be inevitable throughout California. This small lake is now the focus on a state wide plan to stop this invasive mussel from spreading throughout California's fragile ecosystem.

In some of the counties around the infected area and the Central Valley have already implemented polices regarding the possible spread of the mussels. Some are as simple as closing water ways to boaters from counties around the infected San Justo Reservoir and others are extensive as decontaminating each boat with hot pressurized water before entering the water. The Santa Clara County, the agency I work for, is putting a plan together to hire individuals to inspect each and every boat wishing to use the water. In any case this little mussel will put a strain on all of use involved in protecting and providing California's biodiversity to the public. Find out what your agency is doing and help protect California.

Be safe, go green!

Recommended Ranger Books

by Matt Cerkel

Over the years, I read a number of books that have been about the ranger profession. Some are helpful and informative and some look at the lighter side of being a ranger. I am going to mention a few of my recent favorites.

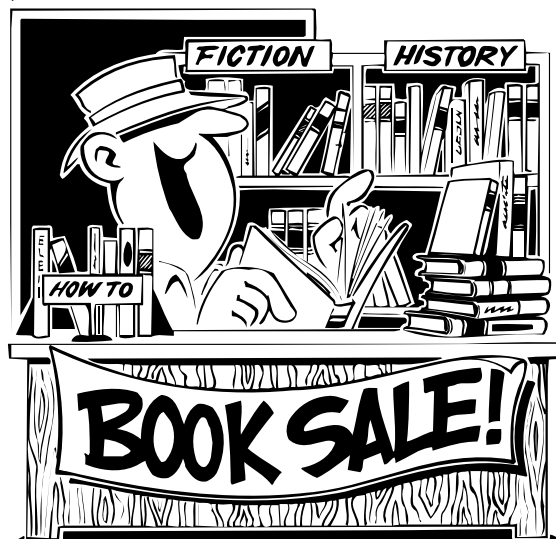
The first book is "*National Park Ranger An American Icon*" by Charles R "Butch" Farabee Jr. It is an outstanding history of rangers in the National Parks from the earliest days to modern times. It discusses all the duties NPS rangers performs, the Stetson hat, the evolution of the ranger and is overall an easy, but an informative read. Since much of what we do as rangers can, at least in part, be traced back to the National Park Rangers it is a good read from anyone in or interested in the ranger profession. One quote from the introduction of the book I really enjoy is "...Park Rangers are an amalgam of Jedi Knight, favorite teacher, and Smokey Bear. As stewards of our nation's treasures, they are heir to five thousands years of tradition: they celebrate this legacy with pride, reflect it with humility. It is a privilege to be called ranger; but the title must be earned, gained through credibility, confidence, and ardor. Their reputation is hard won, they profit from those laboring before them: a rough mix of explorer, pioneer, conservationist, lawman, and teacher. Job description alone does not make rangers, and they certainly are not rangers just because a visitor says so. It is attitude and choice "a fervor for the resource and dedication to public service." Personally, I would love to use this someday when I'm a supervisor and it's a new ranger's first day of work. Being a ranger is more than a profession it is a passion.

Another great ranger book is Jordon Fisher Smith's "*Nature Noir*." Smith was for many years a California State Park Ranger at Auburn State Recreation Area. The book is a no holds barred look at the ranger profession, the California State Parks and

a park and river he and his fellow rangers are suppose to protect while at the same time the government plans to inundate with the huge Auburn Dam. Reviews about Smith's book have been good and I would agree. Bill McKibben author of "The End of Nature" states about the book "Park rangers have one of the tougher jobs our society has yet devised-they come up against all the varieties of human unhappiness that a city policeman encounters, and they come up against nature in all her moods...This book will tell you things you didn't know, and in a strong and original voice." Mike Davis author of "City of Quartz" and "Ecology of Fear" stated "I can't make up my mind whether Jordon Fisher Smith is John Muir at the crime scene or Elmore Leonard with a backpack. In any event, this astonishing book, with its brilliant interweaving of murder, irony, and natural history, invents a new genre." "*Nature Noir*" is a must read.

Final, on the lighter side of being a ranger I highly recommend Jim Burnett's "*Hey Ranger*" and "*Hey Ranger 2*." Jim spent 30 years as an National Park Ranger and retired as a Chief Ranger. In that time he saw many incidents that were "stranger than fiction-and thus simply more interesting." As one reviewer stated "Jim Burnett's true tales of adventure ...are most often funny, sometimes poignant-and always entertaining." It is truly amazing that some park visitors can "show how little they actually know about the out-of-doors." But luckily for us Jim Burnett

has captured and put to ink some of these moments we as rangers know all to well and leaves us shaking our heads or just plain laughing (hopefully back at the station). Jim also tries to teach the reader not to be "a victim of your vacation" and for us rangers a great laugh. I'm thinking of stories I could submit for "*Hey Ranger 3*."



Save America's Treasures Solicits Applications

by Marie D. Fong, Park Ranger

The National Park Service in partnership with the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services is seeking applicants for its Save America's Treasures 2008 grant program. Save America's Treasures makes critical investments in the preservation of our nation's most significant cultural treasures. Grants are awarded for preservation and/or conservation work on nationally significant intellectual and cultural artifacts and nationally significant historic structures and sites. Grant amounts range from \$25,000 to \$700,000 to conserve collections and from \$125,000 to \$700,000 for historic property and sites projects. All the awards must be matched 1:1.

Beginning this year, Save America's Treasures will be accepting on-line applications only through www.grants.gov, the federal government grant website. Paper applications will not be accepted. Applicants are asked to register on www.grants.gov. Once your registration has been submitted, you can download the application package and begin filling out the various PDF forms. Once the registration is confirmed, which can take several weeks, applicants can then submit their final application through www.grants.gov

Complete guidelines, applications and information, as well as a database of previous Save America Treasure's awardees, can be found on the National Park Service Web site. Deadline for applications is May 20, 2008. For general information contact Kimber Craine at the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities or call 202/682-5661.

For additional information applicants can address questions to these partner agency contacts as well.

For Collections Projects

- Michael McLaughlin—***National Endowment for the Arts***
Phone:202/682-5457
E-mail:mclaughm@arts.gov
Web:arts.endow.gov
- Laura Word—***National Endowment for the Humanities***
Phone:202/606-8249
E-mail:lword@neh.gov
Web:www.neh.gov
- Christine Henry—***Institute of Museum and Library Services***
Phone:202/653-4641
E-mail:chenry@imls.gov
Web:www.imls.gov
- For Historic Property Projects—***National Park Service***
Phone:202/354-2020
E-mail:NPS_treasures@nps.gov
Web:www2.cr.nps.gov/hps/hpg



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