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FALL 2022
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FEATURES

28

Your Park Stories

A collection of tales from the field.

38

Time Travel

An illustrated journey through John Day Fossil Beds National Monument.

By Amy Berenbeim

44

'First, Tell the Truth'

Once one of the largest slave markets in the South, Forks of the Road is now part of the National Park System. Is Natchez ready to excavate its troubled past?

By Janisse Ray

44

LONGTIME ADVOCATE

Ser Seshsh Ab Heter-C.M. Boxley walks across Forks of the Road in Natchez, Mississippi. Owing in part to Ser Boxley's persistence, the landmark was recently added to Natchez National Historical Park.

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COVER:

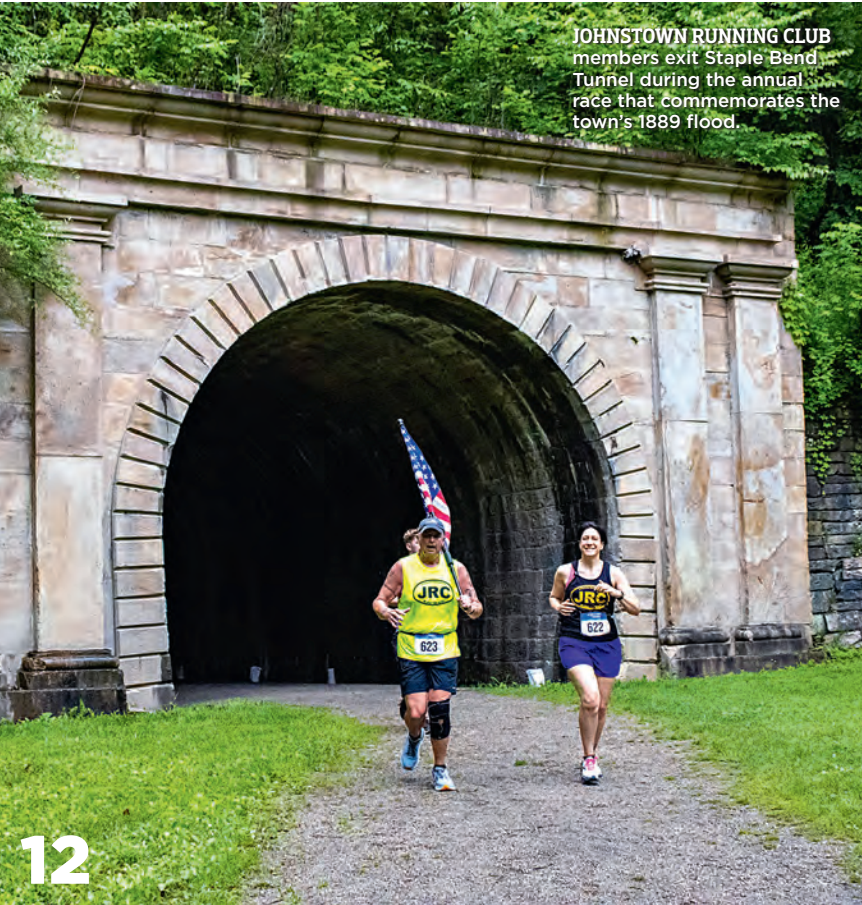
A LINOCUT PRINT of Blue Basin in John Day Fossil Beds.

BY AMY BERENBEIM



CONTENTS

JOHNSTOWN RUNNING CLUB members exit Staple Bend Tunnel during the annual race that commemorates the town's 1889 flood.



12



10



18



22

DEPARTMENTS

FALL 2022 / Vol. 96 No. 4

3 President's Outlook

4 Editor's Note

6 Letters

8 Echoes

10 Trail Mix

So long to single-use plastics, a new name for an old mountain, chasing the past in Johnstown, horse antics at Assateague, a visitor center for Stonewall.

22 Denizens

Florida's latest invasive species is a 4-foot-long South American lizard with a taste for eggs. Ecologists fear it could devastate ground-nesting animals in the Everglades and beyond.

By Jacob Baynham

24 Findings

As higher visitation and climate change increasingly threaten artifacts, can the Park Service afford to leave them in place?

By Julia Busiek

58 Backstory

A century ago, a college student in "cavewoman" attire reportedly braved bears, freezing temperatures and a bearskin-clad suitor in the wilds of Rocky Mountain National Park. Did any of it actually happen?

By Nicolas Brulliard

60 That Was Then



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A New Hope?

I arrived at Denali National Park and Preserve with this summer's solstice, excited for a meeting with NPCA's Board of Trustees. Over several busy days, we celebrated recent successes, discussed future plans and were inspired by the Indigenous leaders who helped us better understand how a proposed mining road, which NPCA strongly opposes, threatens numerous Alaskan communities and parks.

We were able to spend some time exploring too, enjoying a dreamlike float on the Nenana River under the light of the midnight sun. But our time in Denali was surreal for another reason: Smoke from the wildfires ravaging the parched Alaskan landscape nearly caused us to be evacuated. Many Alaskans were far less fortunate: The fires produced unhealthy air quality and forced some from their homes. This year's wildfires in Alaska had, by the time of our visit, burned more than 1 million acres – the earliest date in at least 32 years for reaching that regrettable milestone.

These days, because of the rapidly changing climate, the unprecedented now seems to happen with alarming regularity. In the span of just a few weeks this summer, the nation bore witness to the unthinkable in our national parks: Yellowstone devastated by historic floods; the grand sequoias of Yosemite's Mariposa Grove sprayed by portable sprinklers to save them from encroaching wildfires; the critical reservoirs of Lake Powell and Lake Mead evaporated to the lowest levels to date. For everyone who has been calling and waiting for decisive action on climate change, it begged a familiar question: If not now, when?

As I write this letter, there is new reason for hope. In August, Congress passed legislation that will be the nation's largest ever climate deal. As a compromise bill, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 may not be perfect, but it represents meaningful progress on clean energy and climate change – and its provisions include nearly \$1 billion to support the National Park Service in implementing and staffing climate adaptation and resiliency programs.

An old proverb says it is always darkest before the dawn. Let's hope that this is just the first light of a new day for our climate future.

With gratitude,
Theresa Pierno



COURTESY OF AMY BERENBEIM

Ballad of John Day

Artist Amy Berenbeim started creating comics in 2018, inspired by a backpacking trip along California's Lost Coast Trail. "Comics allow me to zoom in on specific moments in time (usually based on experiences in nature, where I do my best reflecting and processing)," she said in an email. "It's like the energy of combining music and lyrics."

Amy's comics (including the one featured inside and excerpted on the cover) especially appeal to me because of the medium she uses, linocut printing. It's a laborious process: First, she makes a drawing, then she transfers the image to linoleum, and after that, she carves the design into the block using chiseling tools. Finally, she coats the block with ink and presses the design onto paper. Multicolor prints require going through this process repeatedly, using a new block or gradually carving the same block to build up the final image.

"I really like the constraints," said Amy, who first learned to print when she was an art student at University of Puget Sound in Tacoma. "It's not as utterly open-ended as painting, which can feel paralyzing to me."

When I initially approached Amy about creating a feature-length travel story comic, I didn't have a specific national park in mind. She quickly came up with Oregon's John Day Fossil Beds National Monument. "A lot of Pacific Northwesterners haven't even heard of the park, but then you Google it, and it's a premier destination for geologic research," she said. "I'm kind of a geology nerd, and I couldn't wait to see it up close. It did not disappoint!"

Neither did the quiet hours and days she and her husband spent in the park, and the rare solitude they found there. "Unplugged time in nature is so good for our nervous systems and mental health, particularly in an era where our attention is relentlessly in demand," she said. "That's when I feel most creative and most myself."

We are thrilled to share Amy's artwork with you in this issue. Turn to page 38 to see how her park reflections moved from her head to her hand to the block to the print to the page.

Rona Marech
NPMAG@NPCA.ORG

EDITOR IN CHIEF: Rona Marech
SENIOR EDITOR: Nicolas Brulliard
ART DIRECTOR AND PHOTO EDITOR: Nicole Yin
ASSOCIATE EDITOR: Katherine DeGroff
FEATURES DESIGN: Jessie Despard
DESIGN CONSULTANT: Selena Robleto

NATIONAL PARKS
777 6th Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-3723
202.223.6722; npmag@npca.org

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WHO WE ARE

Established in 1919, the National Parks Conservation Association is America's only private, nonprofit advocacy organization dedicated solely to protecting, preserving and enhancing the U.S. National Park System.

WHAT WE DO

NPCA protects and enhances America's national parks for present and future generations by identifying problems and generating support to resolve them.

EDITORIAL MISSION

National Parks magazine fosters an appreciation for the natural and historic treasures found in the parks, educates readers about the need to preserve those resources, and illustrates how member contributions drive our organization's park-protection efforts. The magazine uses the power of imagery and language to forge a lasting bond between NPCA and its members, while inspiring new readers to join the cause. National Parks magazine is among a member's chief benefits. Of the \$25 membership dues, \$6 covers a one-year subscription to the magazine.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Members can help defend America's natural and cultural heritage. Activists alert Congress and the administration to park threats, comment on park planning and adjacent land-use decisions, assist NPCA in developing partnerships, and educate the public and the media. Sign up to receive Park Notes, our monthly email newsletter at npca.org/join.

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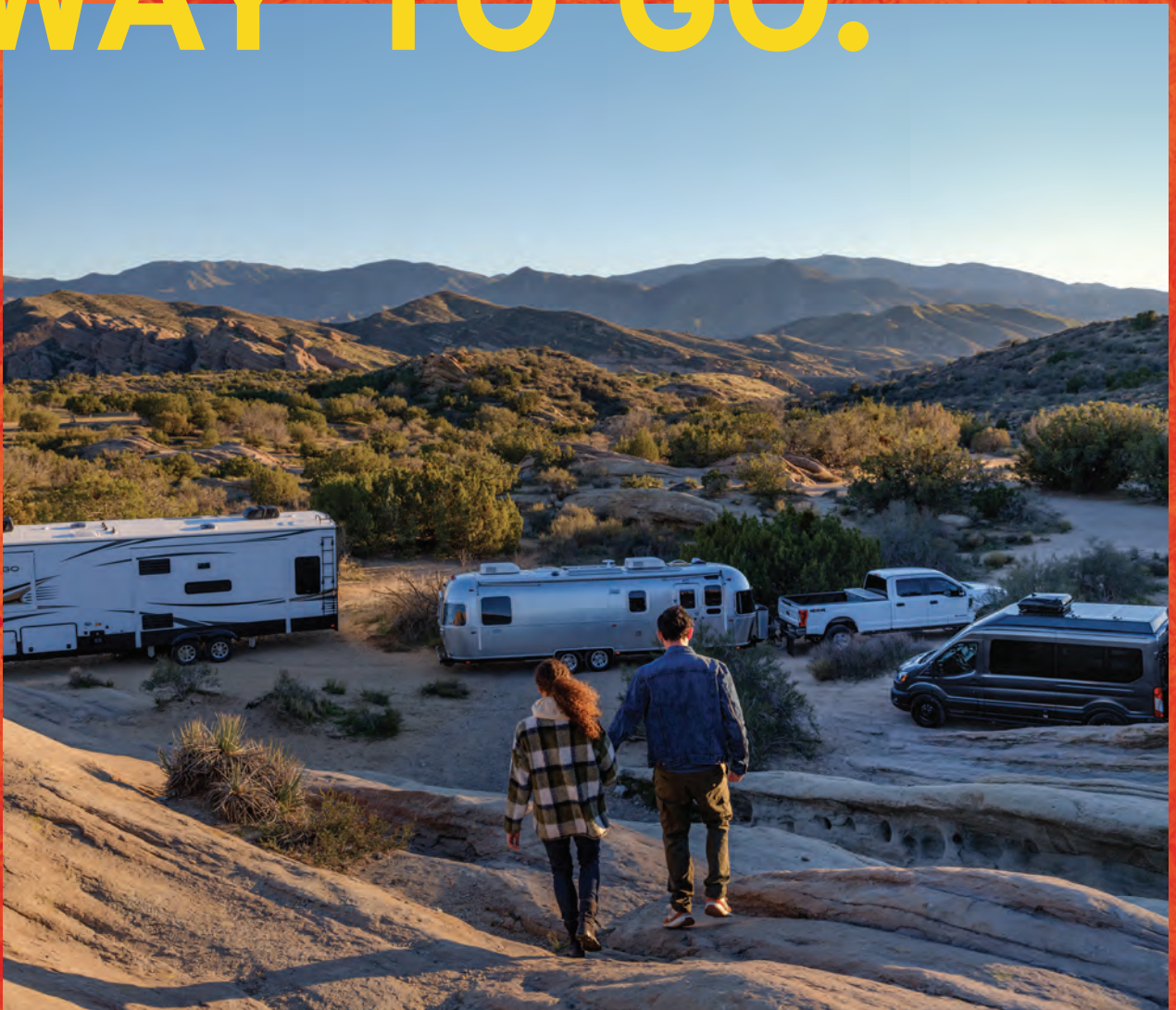
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FLASHING BACK

I was mesmerized by Katherine DeGroff's interview with author Kathryn Miles and the excerpt from Miles' book in "Trailing Justice." The night I came out to my parents as lesbian in fall 1997, one of the first comments my mother made was to express concern for my safety based on the recent murders of Lollie Winans and Julie Williams. As Vermonters who love to hike and camp, my family was rattled by their deaths, and the event shaped my parents' sense of how queer women are at risk in the wilderness. I recall reassuring my mother that I was safe at my college campus and would make careful decisions elsewhere. Revisiting that traumatic act of violence via Miles' and DeGroff's writing, I was chilled all over again. Yet I was also warmed by Miles' account of the dedicated Park Service law enforcement rangers who have not only attended to the case these long years but have honored the spirit of those amazing women. I hope the FBI allocates resources to solve the murders once and for all, and I hope that Miles' book sheds light on the women's lives and deaths, and the ways nature shapes us all!

MEREDITH BAGLEY
West Hartford, CT

LIVING HISTORY

Many thanks for a most informative Summer issue of National Parks, especially "An Alabama Album." As some of this history comes under attack by repressive political forces, I applaud you for keeping stories about the fight for civil rights alive for your readers.

JOE DEFILIPPO
Owings Mills, MD

SAY WHAT?

I am puzzled by Theresa Pierno's statement that "national parks are warming twice as fast as the rest of the country"

("President's Outlook"). Since parks are located across the country, what is "the rest of the country"? The implication is that the climate within a park is different from the climate of the surrounding area. What does "twice as fast" mean? How is that measured, and over what period of time? I would like to read the source of her statement.

SHARON MILLER
Newport, NC

Several readers wrote in with similar questions. Here's the scoop: "Disproportionate magnitude of climate

change in United States national parks," a 2018 paper by Patrick Gonzalez (the subject of the "Glass Half Full" story in the Summer issue) and his colleagues, found that park lands experienced double the mean annual temperature increase that U.S. lands as a whole experienced between 1895 and 2010. Essentially, many parks are located in the Arctic, at higher elevations or in the arid Southwest ... the very places most keenly feeling the impact of warming temperatures.

—Editors

Send letters to National Parks Magazine, 777 6th Street NW, Suite 700, Washington, DC 20001-3723. Or email npmag@npca.org. Include your name, city and state. Published letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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Echoes

"We are literally making a choice to wipe out these things that are gems of our world, that are gifts for us to pass down."

Stephanie Kodish, NPCA's senior director and counsel of the Clean Air and Climate programs, as quoted in The New York Times about the irreversible impact human-caused climate change is having on national parks, which are suffering from sea-level rise, more frequent, intense storms, and more devastating wildfires. June's unprecedented flooding in Yellowstone National Park and surrounding areas destroyed bridges and roads and threatened the livelihood, homes and well-being of residents in gateway communities.

"We gain much more than we lose by taking a direct look and a candid look at our history and our past."

NPCA's senior director of Cultural Resources, Alan Spears, speaking to NPR about a slate of proposed national park sites that would preserve stories of the fight for civil rights. One of those sites would commemorate the life and legacy of Emmett Till, a teenager whose 1955 murder helped shape the course of the civil rights movement.

"This would be a really great representation of the incredible Latino population in California that needs to be highlighted."

Sally Garcia, NPCA outreach manager, describing the importance of expanding the national park site that honors César Chávez and the farmworker movement to the San Francisco Chronicle. In June, Rep. Raul Ruiz and Sen. Alex Padilla introduced a bill in Congress to increase the scope of the existing César E. Chávez National Monument by creating a new, multi-site, multi-state national historical park.



PHOTO: JUNE FLOOD WATERS RAVAGED THE NORTH ENTRANCE ROAD AND OTHER PARTS OF YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK, MONTANA.



JACOB W. FRANK/NPS VIA AP IMAGES



Ditching Disposables



©PRZEMYSŁAW KLOS/DREAMSTIME.COM

The cat's out of the non-recyclable, non-compostable bag: National parks have a trash problem. Business as usual in the nation's more than 420 park units produces around 70 million pounds of garbage each year, much of that in the form of one-and-done plastic products, such as straws, bottles and bags. Thankfully, Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland decided to shake up the status quo by singling out single-use plastics in a June secretarial order. The directive, which follows an executive order on sustainability that President Joe Biden signed last December, would phase out the sale and use of these

items in national parks, wildlife refuges and other public lands by 2032.

"This is really a strong statement from the secretary," said Sarah Barmeyer, NPCA's senior managing director of Conservation Programs. Reducing our dependence on these petroleum-based products not only benefits the climate, Barmeyer said, it lightens the burden on park waste management systems, decreases litter on lands and waterways, and helps protect wildlife from plastic ingestion. "The Park Service *should* be leading on this," she said.

—K.D.

Naming Right

Mount Doane, a mountain in Yellowstone National Park whose name was deeply offensive to local Tribes, was recently renamed First Peoples Mountain — years after Native advocates first started pushing for the change.

The 10,551-foot peak in the southeastern part of the park was previously named after Gustavus Cheyney Doane, a U.S. Army officer who played a big part in a raid on a camp of Piegan Blackfeet in the Montana Territory in 1870 that resulted in the deaths of around 200 people — mostly women, elderly men and children. Doane never expressed public remorse for his actions. Instead, he bragged about his role in what became known as the Marias Massacre when later in life he applied — unsuccessfully — for the position of Yellowstone superintendent.

The application for the name change, which was presented to the National Park Service in 2017, originally met resistance from local officials, but the proposal gained traction as a wave of statue removals and place name changes swept through the nation. "The country is coming to a reckoning with history," said Tom Rodgers — also known as One Who Rides His Horse East — a member of the Blackfeet Nation who worked on the campaign to rename Mount Doane. "It's not revenge. It's a reckoning."

The name change was supported by the Park Service and approved unanimously in June by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, the final arbiter in place name questions. "Now we can begin to really heal from all these deaths," Rodgers said.

—N.B.



FIRST PEOPLES MOUNTAIN (center) rises between Top Notch Peak (foreground) and Mount Stevenson (back right).

NPS/JACOB W. FRANK

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STAPLE BEND TUNNEL, part of Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site, is a course highlight for many of the Path of the Flood runners.

COURTESY OF NATHAN MADISON

Following the Flood

How a foot race helps one Pennsylvania town remember a historic tragedy.

“You’re the nicest bunch of 200 people I’ve seen,” joked Clifford Kitner as he surveyed the dozen or so runners shaking out limbs and bouncing on their toes in the 57-degree mist of a late May morning. From this sheltered spot, a half mile as the crow flies from Johnstown Flood National Memorial, you could hear the rushing water of the South Fork of the Little Conemaugh River but not see it.

Kitner, the executive director of the Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority, had expected a larger crowd. After all, hundreds of people had registered for the race, and some 170 people had signed up for the

full-length 14-mile course. But given the optional rolling start (a concession to the ongoing pandemic), only a ragtag cluster remained to embark on the race together. As watches and phones hovered at 7:59 a.m., Kitner counted down.

At zero, the group jogged along the gravel path and disappeared into a tunnel of trees. The course follows the river along the Path of the Flood Trail. Runners cross the open expanse of a reclaimed coal mining waste site (locally called a “boney pile”), pass through the picturesque Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site’s Staple Bend Tunnel (a 901-foot-long flickering

cocoon, thanks to dozens of paper bag luminaries), and crest a few steep hills before dropping into the sleepy Saturday morning streets of Johnstown, Pennsylvania.

The trail, in keeping with its name, mirrors the route taken by a deadly deluge more than 100 years ago. On May 31, 1889, an earthen dam at the foot of Lake Conemaugh burst after record rainfall. Water roared down the valley, draining the 2-mile-long manmade lake within an hour. Downstream, a 40-foot-high tidal wave derailed trains and hoovered up trees, rocks and homes. Firsthand accounts paint a horrifying picture of the devastation: houses “crushed like eggshells, against each other” and “whole blocks swept away as if by magic.” The flood

not only took the lives of 2,209 people, it left 27,000 residents homeless and paved the way for disease, such as typhoid, to rage through the community.

Johnstown eventually rebuilt, nearly doubling its population within two decades as immigrants and industry titans arrived to stoke the glowing maws of the town's steel and iron mills, using ore and coal quarried from nearby seams. The town's location — snuggled between the folds of the Allegheny Mountains and the coursing waters of the Little Conemaugh and Stonycreek rivers — proved as much a curse as a boon, however. Repeat, if less severe, floods battered Johnstown throughout the 20th century. Then in the 1990s, the steel mills closed, and the town's economy imploded, dragging its identity with it.

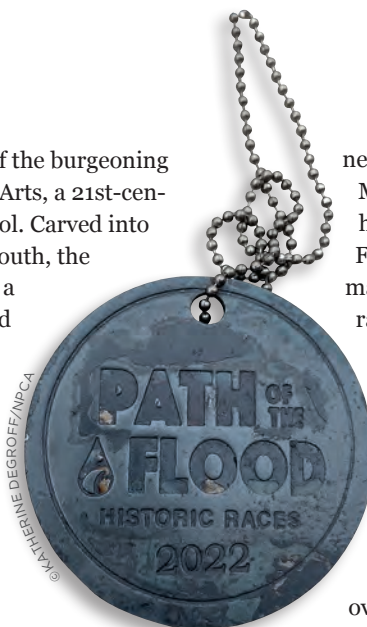
Once again, Johnstown proved resilient. Rather than viewing its flood-stricken, boom-and-bust past as an encumbrance, the community chose to celebrate its rich heritage. Blocks of brick-faced mills and miles of snaking railroad tracks combined with active preservation efforts and a host of historical markers ensure that the town's manufacturing heyday remains front of mind for those visiting the century-old downtown. A few miles away, Johnstown Flood National Memorial preserves the tale of that defining disaster while Allegheny Portage Railroad National Historic Site protects a transportation corridor between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia that was hewn by grit and ingenuity in the 1830s.

Meanwhile, the town began leveraging its aging infrastructure as a springboard for reinvention. A former Carnegie library found new life as the Johnstown Flood Museum. A couple of blocks west, an octagonal blacksmith shop dating from the late 1800s became

the centerpiece of the burgeoning Center for Metal Arts, a 21st-century forging school. Carved into a hillside to the south, the Inclined Plane — a specially designed rail to convey people, animals and materials up a hill with a 70% grade — transitioned from serving the now-shuttered Cambria Iron Company to shuttling tourists. Soon, the Johnstown Train Station, a stately relic from 1916, will be transformed into a town visitor center.

In this 20,000-person burg, where past and present are encouraged to rub elbows and revitalization reigns, commemorating the catastrophic 1889 flood with a community race seems entirely apropos. Johnstown has “had its time,” said Rich Sievers, who has run in seven of the eight Path of the Flood races. “But events like this are helping.”

Of course, new endeavors often



need masterminds. Enter Mark Voelker. A contracted helicopter pilot with the U.S. Forest Service and retired U.S. marine, Voelker conceived of the race in 2008 after flying over the area. He'd read David McCullough's book about the tragedy and run pieces of the flood path as part of his military training. But when he saw the valley laid out below him and imagined 20 million tons of water churning over the South Fork Dam and barreling toward town, inspiration struck. He recalls thinking: “It kind of would be a crime if we didn't do this.”

Voelker approached the National Park Service and the Johnstown Area Heritage Association about his vision in 2012. His original plan was modest: a one-time race in 2014 to coincide with the 125th anniversary of the flood. But the nearly 500-person turnout and community enthusiasm convinced him to make the event an annual tradition.

“It's more than just a competitive race,” said Caytlin Lusk, program coordinator with the Cambria County

Barton to the Rescue

Five days after the flood of 1889, 67-year-old Clara Barton arrived from Washington, D.C., along with workers from the American Red Cross. It would be the organization's first major crack at disaster relief. The Philadelphia Red Cross also rushed to the scene to provide much-needed medical aid, but Barton focused her efforts on sharing supplies — clothing, food and furnishings — and overseeing the construction of “Red Cross hotels” and prefabricated homes for the stranded townspeople. She remained in town for nearly five months, to the everlasting gratitude of the Johnstown residents. In 1892, the town sent Barton a check to aid in the Red Cross' Russian famine relief efforts. And 125 years after the flood, local dignitaries dubbed a river crossing near the Peoples Natural Gas Park the Clara Barton Memorial Bridge.



NEWS OF THE FLOOD captivated the nation, jump-starting a monthslong relief effort.

pipled up: “When they hand you a glass with a ticket for a free beer.”

By the time this spirited contingent of 14-milers set out, several people who’d opted for an earlier start and a shorter distance had already trickled over the finish line and into Peoples Natural Gas Park, a brownfield site turned concert venue. No one seemed the least bit bothered that the after-party kicked off before 8 in the morning and wrapped by noon. Brandishing their custom medals and stamped beer openers (below) that were hand-forged at the nearby Center for Metal Arts, participants headed to the corner bar to sample a pour from the local brewery. A few flopped onto the massage tables in the medical tent. Others grabbed a slice of pizza while the Whiskey River Panhandlers plucked and strummed on stage.

Though race times were posted and Voelker took the stage to announce the winners for each course length, speed seemed an afterthought for most of the 546 runners in attendance. Even the

top men’s finisher in the 14-mile category, Dean Banko, who cruised to the front with a time of 1 hour and 25 minutes, appeared more interested in cheering his buddies toward the finish and talking to out-of-towners than celebrating his win.

Every now and then, someone would mosey down to the Stone Bridge, an unassuming landmark a stone’s throw from the festivities. Here, against the bridge’s stalwart arches, the roiling waters came to a stop 133 years ago — a fact that the town, and these runners, have never forgotten.

—KATHERINE DEGROFF

Conservation and Recreation Authority, which manages the trail. “It’s soaking in history.”

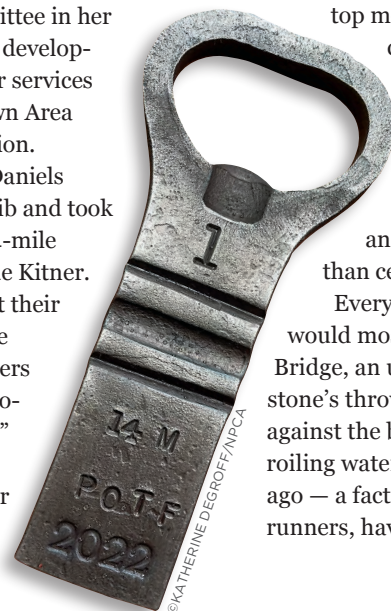
Stephanie Daniels, longtime leader of the local running club and the daughter of a steel mill worker, said she’s particularly fond of the last leg of the course, which flanks the darkened mills. She has participated in marathons around the country but said there’s something special about her hometown race. “It has beautiful scenery, and it tells a story,” she said. “I love the fact that it tells a story.”

Though the event has evolved over the years — runners now have their choice of three course lengths — the inviolable aspects for Voelker remain the same: a clear focus on history, free registration for those under 18, and proceeds that benefit Johnstown.

Next year, organizers anticipate that a new, roughly half-mile segment of the trail will allow runners of the 14-mile course to start at the breast of the failed dam and pass through the historic lakebed. The county recreation

authority, which has expanded off-road sections of the trail since 2002, is partnering with the Park Service to secure funding for this last (rather first) piece of the puzzle. Once completed, the entire trail “will be as close to the path of the flood as you can get without running down the middle of the river,” said Deb Winterscheidt, who serves on the race committee in her role as director of development and member services with the Johnstown Area Heritage Association.

On race day, Daniels suited up in her bib and took her place at the 14-mile starting line beside Kitner. When asked about their favorite part of the trail, several runners laughed before chorus-ing “the finish.” A man with gelled hair and two water bottles strapped to his chest



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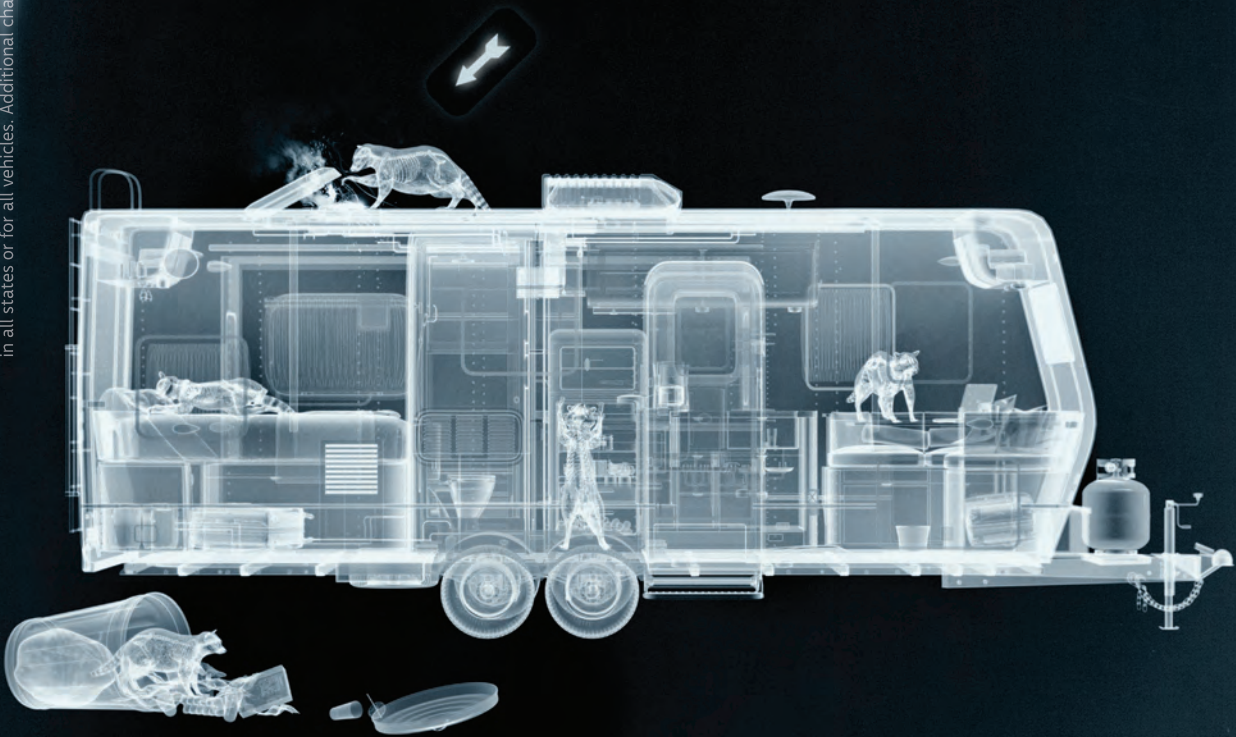
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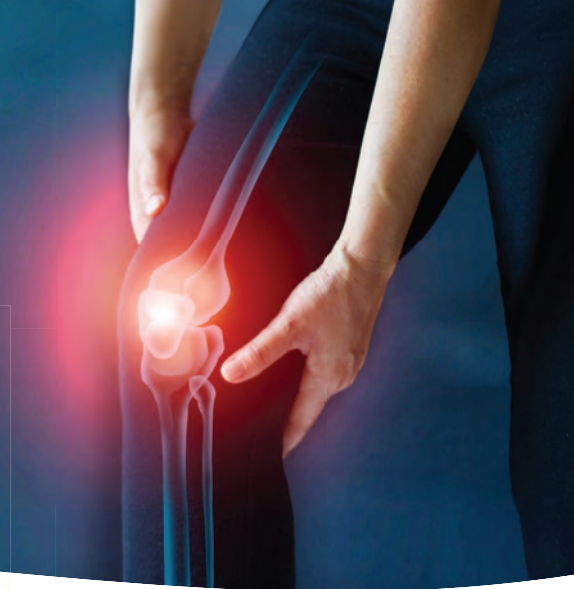
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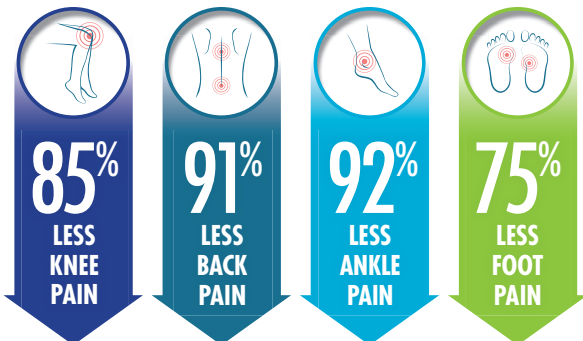
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A Hoof Too Far

An aggressive stallion from Assateague Island National Seashore gets relocated.

You can't go home again. That adage proved true for one unruly horse this spring when Assateague Island National Seashore exiled Delegate's Pride.

The park site's feral, free-roaming equines — likely the descendants of mainland horses brought to Assateague in the late 1600s — are one of its main attractions. Visitors love to see these beach-bathing beauties prancing in the waves, the ocean breeze whipping their manes and tails. They're so popular, in fact, that the seashore's Friends group, the Assateague Island Alliance, often auctions off naming rights for the colts and fillies after they're 3 months old.

Unfortunately, the ponies — much like Yogi Bear — have learned to associate campgrounds, picnic areas and even cars with food. Staff take preventative measures and post warnings, but visitors don't always follow the rules.

Delegate's Pride, who earned the nickname "Chip" (as in "chip off the old block") for his similarity in both temperament and appearance to his dad, Sham, took these stealthy raids one step farther than most. If a beachgoer disrupted his dine-and-dash plans or park staff attempted to distract him from tempting treats, the horse stood his ground or lashed out. Since 2017, his go-to move has resulted in five of the seashore's nine reported horse-caused visitor injuries.

"He's not a biter. He's a kicker," said Hugh Hawthorne, Assateague's superintendent. And a strong one at that. His hooves are responsible for at least one broken leg, one cracked shoulder and



PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATHY SHERBERT/WWW.KRSMAGES.COM

DELEGATE'S PRIDE, photographed in 2018 in Assateague Island National Seashore. The stallion was re-homed this year after too many feisty encounters with visitors.

numerous ghastly bruises, the latter suffered by guests and staff alike.

The stubborn bay's penchant for trouble and the park staff's fear that he could kill someone one day left them no choice, Hawthorne said. Delegate's Pride had to be re-homed.

The journey for the 13-year-old walnut-colored stallion was a lengthy one. First, he was separated from his 70-odd herd mates and quarantined at a property in Maryland, where he was immunized and gelded in preparation for interstate travel. Then, he was secured in a horse trailer for a jolting, 1,400-mile drive before undergoing additional quarantining at his new forever home: Black Beauty Ranch in the small town of Murchison, Texas.

Delegate's Pride is not the only park pony to face such a fate. In 2011, an aggressive stallion named Fabio (apparently because of his luscious locks) found himself on a one-way trip to the ranch that

would one day welcome Delegate's Pride.

Though there's precedent for forced relocation, not everyone was happy to see the last of this troublemaking horse. A Change.org petition garnered nearly 1,000 signatures in support of returning Delegate's Pride to Assateague. "In my opinion," wrote petition-signer Lynn Westcott, "Chip was acting like a stallion." The general sentiment was that visitors should be, well, better visitors.

Hawthorne said the two main ways the seashore horses get habituated to humans is through accidental or intentional feeding and through what he calls "horse stalking," where pony-obsessed visitors hound the animals, snapping photo after photo. The result, Hawthorne said, is that the horses lose their fear of people, leading to more brazen behavior.

To keep people safe and ensure the seashore retains the rest of its herd, the Park Service asks the park's 2.7 million annual visitors to stay at least 40 feet

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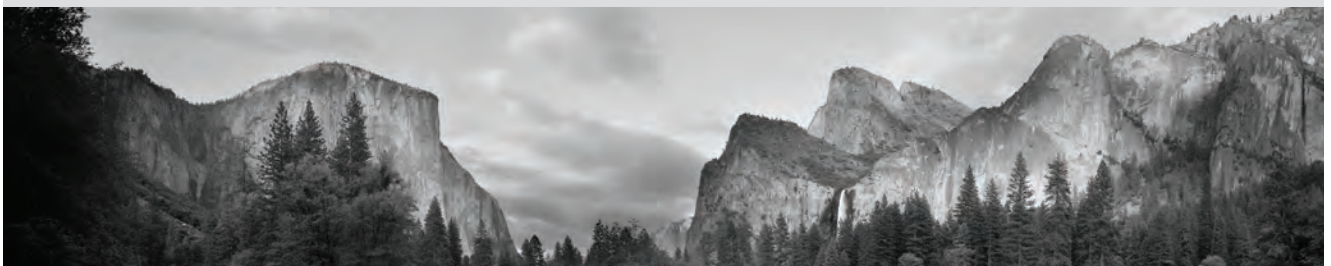
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Out in Texas, Delegate's Pride

has the chance to move beyond such shenanigans. His new home, which is a Humane Society of the United States sanctuary, offers 1,000 acres of picnic-free rolling grassland for the grazing pleasure of its equine inhabitants. "Our goal is to let them live as natural a life as possible," said Noelle Almrud, the sanctuary's senior director. Delegate's Pride currently shares a small pasture with a "buddy," but Almrud said she

hopes he'll soon be able to join the sanctuary's large herd. And with about 300 other unadoptable donkeys and horses to choose from, "he'll be able to pick his own friends," she said.

Perhaps he'll even catch a glimpse of Fabio, who — at the ripe age of 29 — is living out his twilight years in the cushy digs of a smaller paddock. "We call it senior living," said Almrud.

—KATHERINE DEGROFF



CHEERLEADERS pass the Stonewall Inn during the 2019 NYC Pride March.

COURTESY OF ANDREW NASONOV

Breaking Ground

Visitors to Stonewall National Monument can sit in the park across the street from the Stonewall Inn, the Greenwich Village bar that played an outside role in LGBTQ history. They can also slip into the bar or snap pictures, but the site has never had a museum where the public can go to learn the story of the 1969 rebellion, when patrons fought back during a routine police raid. That is about to change: Work began this summer on a multimillion-dollar, 3,700-square-foot visitor center. Slated to open in 2024, the space was actually part of the bar at the time of the

uprising. The privately funded center will serve as a home base for rangers and feature exhibitions, programs and art installations. "The opportunity to establish the first LGBTQ visitor center in the National Park System in the very place where the Stonewall Rebellion took place is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said Diana Rodriguez, the founder of Pride Live, a nonprofit that is partnering with the National Park Service to create the center. "To reunite the inn is pretty epic."

—R.M.

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UNLIKE PYTHONS, Argentine black-and-white tegus can be trapped effectively. Last year, 844 tegus were trapped in and around Everglades National Park.

culprits range from individual pet releases to unscrupulous importers to breeding facilities damaged by hurricanes — but by 2008 it was clear that Miami-Dade County had a self-sustaining wild population of Argentine black-and-white tegus. By 2017, the first tegu was documented in Everglades National Park, and a hatchling was discovered there in 2020.

“Right off the bat everybody understood it was going to be an emerging threat,” said Kevin Donmoyer, an invasive species biologist at the park. “They’re generalist feeders. They eat vegetation, fruits, insects, vertebrates and crustaceans. What worries us most is that they eat eggs.”

All ground-nesting birds and reptiles in the Everglades are at risk, Donmoyer said. Tegus have been documented eating alligator and gopher tortoise eggs and hatchlings. Other species, such as the Eastern indigo snake, the Cape Sable seaside sparrow and the Eastern black rail, are also vulnerable.

“Who knows what will push [species] from endangered to extinct?” Donmoyer said. “A 10-pound lizard with a taste for eggs isn’t gonna help.”

The Everglades ecosystem already faces plenty of adversity, notably from climate change and the resulting sea-level rise. Invasive plants, such as Australian pine and Brazilian pepper, outcompete endemic foliage and reduce valuable habitat. Burmese pythons, which also arrived via the exotic pet trade, have devastated several mammal populations in the Everglades.

Unlike pythons, tegus can be effectively trapped. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission runs

Lizards on the Lam

Florida’s latest invasive species is a 4-foot-long South American lizard with a taste for eggs that threatens the Everglades’ ground-nesting animals.

LAURA ROBERTS HAS always loved reptiles, so she didn’t need much convincing when her 10-year-old daughter said she wanted a pet tegu lizard. It was 2006, and Roberts and her family were breeding and selling bearded dragons from their home in Central Florida. One tegu led to another, and eventually to 35 breeding adults and half a dozen pets. The Roberts family was smitten by the lizards’ beauty and uncanny intelligence.

“One figured out how to use the cat door,” Roberts said. “Then the other one did. They’re very friendly, very curious, very good at solving puzzles. They’re very adaptive.”

Sixteen years later, that adaptability keeps Florida ecologists awake at night. Native to Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, these 4-foot-long omnivorous lizards somehow found themselves in the wilds of the Sunshine State, where they’ve thrived. No one can prove how it happened — possible

©GABRIEL ROJO/MINDEN PICTURES

trapping operations throughout the state. In the Everglades, University of Florida interns deploy 300 live traps baited with raw chicken eggs within and just outside the park, from February until October, at which point the lizards enter a state of dormancy called brumation. The traps are occasionally stolen (53 have disappeared this year) or moved by coyotes or alligators. But when a tegu is caught, it is placed inside two tied bags, and then in a hard-sided bin with two padlocks.

Back at the lab, the tegus are killed with a captive bolt gun, and scientists from the United States Geological Survey conduct necropsies to learn more about the lizards' diet, growth, parasites and reproduction. Last year, 844 tegus were trapped in and around the park, but the tegu population shows no sign of declining — and a tegu's lifespan can reach 20 years. "The reality is, with what we have now, we can slow them down," Donmoyer said, "but we can't stop them. They're here, and they're reproducing."

Donmoyer said he understands the appeal of tegus. He has a pet rosy boa and has admitted to his wife that if they ever move to a climate unsuitable to the lizards, he might like to own a pet tegu himself. "They're stunning," he said. "Their scales almost look like beadwork. When you look at them, they're not dead behind the eyes. They look back at you."

That appeal is the reason why a red tegu in San Diego named MacGyver has 190,000 followers on Instagram and his own Wikipedia page. It also explains why in a corner of the internet you can buy tegu-themed auto decals, bathroom mats and a T-shirt that reads: "I might look like I'm listening to you, but in my head I'm thinking about getting more tegus." Enthusiasts dress their tegus, sleep with them and walk them on a leash.

This devotion is why Rodney Irwin doesn't buy the notion that tegus came into the wild because pet owners released

"We can slow them down, but we can't stop them. They're here, and they're reproducing."

them. Irwin lives in Homestead, just outside Everglades National Park, and sells tegus online. He blames negligent reptile importers for releasing tegus with defects such as broken tails that make them harder to sell.

"Most of my customers would turn their kids loose before they'd get rid of their tegus," he said. "There's a real bond there."

Irwin's business model is to trap and sell wild tegus. This removes tegus from the South Florida ecosystem while sparing them from eradication efforts. Irwin said he's trapped more than 3,000 tegus since 2013. He ships them to buyers outside Florida who currently pay about \$150 per lizard. Irwin's relationship with the reptiles is mixed. He respects and admires them but deplors the damage they're doing to endemic species. "They're killing the crap out of our natives," he said.

Last year, Florida designated tegus a prohibited species, meaning they can't be purchased within the state and current owners must register and microchip their lizards. Until 2024, some breeders can continue breeding and selling tegus out of state, but they must securely house their tegus indoors.

Many breeders complain that the new regulations went too far, too fast. Roberts pointed out that house cats ravage songbirds, yet few cat owners would tolerate regulations on those pets. She also said that development in Florida is a bigger threat to ecosystems than lizards that most pet owners care for diligently and safely.

Loved or reviled, wild tegus aren't going away anytime soon. Amy Yackel Adams, a research ecologist with USGS who specializes in invasive reptiles, first became involved with tegus while

studying pythons in the Everglades in 2010. Over the years, she helped start the tegu trapping program there and conducted radio telemetry studies to learn how tegus move across the landscape.

When Yackel Adams and her colleagues used models to determine how much of the country is at risk for tegus, they found that the entire portion of the Southeastern U.S., from Florida to Texas, is suitable habitat. At least one tegu population has been discovered in Georgia, and sightings have been reported in Alabama, Louisiana, South Carolina and California. One study found that tegus were able to survive snowfall and prolonged cold in Alabama by lengthening their periods of brumation, and another study documented one tegu in Florida that didn't hibernate at all.

"That kind of plastic behavior can allow them to wreak more havoc for longer periods of time," Yackel Adams said.

Ecologists know the best chance to eradicate an invasive species is shortly after its introduction. Unfortunately, that's when it's hardest to find the money and the motivation to confront the issue. Yackel Adams said she's still hopeful the tegu problem can be solved if enough resources are directed toward the effort, but the extent of their impact on the Everglades won't be known until more studies are conducted.

"We don't realize how big of a problem it is until it's too late," Yackel Adams said. "If tegus continue to be released and spread unabated, then we're going to be looking at systems that are going to become greatly simplified. We will watch species drop out."

JACOB BAYNHAM is a freelance writer in Montana.



ILLUSTRATION BY DUNG HOANG

To Collect or Not to Collect

As higher visitation and climate change increasingly threaten artifacts, can the Park Service afford to leave them in place?

THE OLLA LAY in a hollow under a boulder on the right bank of the Colorado River for a very long time. Sheltered from monsoon rains, shaded from the desert sun and perched above the floods that scoured the Grand Canyon every spring until dams were built upstream, the ceramic jar sat as a silent reminder of the Ancestral Puebloan people's millennia-long relationship to this place.

National Park Service archaeologists first documented the pot in its niche in 1990. Though park staff sought to keep its location secret, word of the remarkable object started to spread. In 2008, rangers noted a faint trail up to the olla's perch from the riverbank. "The pot remains intact and in place, though it has clearly been removed and handled, perhaps

multiple times," read a monitoring report. In early 2012, staff noted that "the site is regularly visited with a well-defined social trail." In May of that year, rangers returned to find the nook empty and the pot sitting on the ground a short distance away. "It sure seemed like someone was getting ready to steal it, but then got cold feet," said Ellen Brennan, an archaeologist who's spent half of her long career at Grand Canyon National Park and recently wrote a paper about the olla.

Brennan and her colleagues faced a tough choice: Should they pluck this invaluable object from its longtime home, severing its connection to this particular bend in the river and carrying it off to sit in a dark room miles away up on the canyon rim? Or should they leave it in place and risk coming back to find it shattered, or worse, gone?

The case of the wandering olla reflects both the promise and the peril of caring for America's heritage in the 21st century. In part to honor the wishes of Indigenous communities with ancestral ties to national parks, archaeologists now strive to leave artifacts where they're found. This is a significant change from the era of indiscriminately collecting Indigenous cultural objects. But with growing park visitation and the widespread use of social media and mapping apps, visitors are ever more likely to stumble upon or seek out objects that have long persisted by dint of their relative obscurity. Meanwhile, the effects of climate change are exposing and damaging artifacts that were once safely buried. All of that means that leaving irreplaceable objects in their original locations also raises the risk of theft or destruction and that Park Service archaeologists are increasingly facing difficult decisions about the cultural resources in their care.

"I'm sure you've heard all about the paradox of the parks, right?" asked Josh Torres, the Park Service's acting

chief archaeologist. “We desperately want people to come and enjoy the amazing resources that we’re entrusted to preserve and protect for the American people. But there are times when doing so is almost antithetical to conservation and protection.” Conflicts between the agency’s preservation mandate and its public access goal are nothing new, but it’s up to each new generation of park stewards to renegotiate those competing priorities as attitudes evolve and new threats and challenges arise.

Well into the 20th century, archaeologists in national parks tended to collect whatever artifacts they came across, often without regard for either scientific rigor or the rights of the people whose ancestors created these objects. A Finnish museum, for example, currently houses about 600 Ancestral Puebloan artifacts that an archaeologist removed in the 1890s from what would become Mesa Verde National Park. (In 2020, the museum repatriated the remains of 20 people and 28 funerary objects that had been part of its collection to the Hopi Tribe, the Pueblo of Acoma, the Pueblo of Zia and the Pueblo of Zuni.)

Yellowstone National Park’s museum holds over 35,000 archaeological objects collected within the park in the past 150 years. Brennan said the museum at Grand Canyon holds boxes of “random soils, pottery and wood” that archaeologists collected in the 1960s and ’70s but failed to process.

“I liken it to looters or pothunters, who knowingly are stealing archaeological materials that serve no greater purpose than to grace their mantels,” Brennan said. “It doesn’t do anyone any good to collect artifacts without identifying information so they can be studied further into the future and tied back to furthering an understanding of human use and behavior.”

For many Indigenous communities, when archaeological sites are disturbed — whether by archaeologists, bulldozers or looters — much more than scientific data is lost. “The Zunis have a very personal, psychological, emotional connection to these ancestral places, which non-Zunis call archaeological sites,” said Kurt Dongoske. He’s the Tribal historic preservation officer for the Pueblo of Zuni, one of the 11 federally

recognized Tribes with ancestral ties to Grand Canyon. “From a Zuni perspective, the ancestors that are residing in their eternal homes in these sites are still very much a live presence in spiritual form.” The removal of artifacts for archaeological research has severed vital connections to their ancestors, Dongoske said.

Preserving and restoring access to sacred sites and artifacts has been a priority for Indigenous activists and elders who’ve fought for Tribal sovereignty and self-determination since the American Indian Movement of the 1960s and ’70s. As a result, laws such as 1979’s Archaeological Resources Protection Act and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 require federal agencies to formally consult Tribal governments and other descendant groups before excavating a site.

As archaeologists established working relationships with Tribal leaders, they began to realize that many of the answers they were seeking had been there all along. This shift in perspective made it harder for archaeologists in national parks to justify collecting objects in the name of research. “Certain descendant groups say, ‘There’s literally no question you could ask about that artifact that I couldn’t just tell you the answer to, so just leave it alone,’” said Elizabeth Hora, an archaeologist at the Utah State Historic Preservation Office, which consults with the Park Service on archaeological research in the state’s national park sites.

“Going across the landscape and collecting materials is a thing of the past” for park archaeologists, Brennan said. Instead of relocating objects to controlled storage, park staff are now figuring out how to preserve artifacts where they’re found, but that’s not always possible.

“There are lots of instances where

Archaeology Rules

It goes without saying that you shouldn’t pocket artifacts, light a campfire in an archaeological site or scratch your name in a petroglyph panel. But is it OK to check out a secret spot you read about online? As smartphones have made it easier to collect and share information about sites off the beaten path, archaeologists say each visitor’s calculus matters more than ever. “If you see something on social media, and the park hasn’t built a trail to it, there’s probably a reason for that,” Josh Torres said. “It behooves all of us as stewards of our parks to not go out and try to find it.”

If you do stumble across an artifact, the Park Service implores you not to post about it online. And while relic hunting forums and Instagram influencers are obvious targets of archaeologists’ anxiety, they’re not counting out the risks of good old-fashioned word of mouth. “You might just share something with your small group of friends, and they’re all good people,” said Ian Wright, cultural site stewardship coordinator for the Utah State Historic Preservation Office. “Then each of them shares it with their small group of friends, and they’re all good people. Even if nobody’s doing anything bad, that’s still a lot of people tromping around out there.”

AFTER CONSULTING with Tribal partners, park staff at Wupatki National Monument in Arizona (below) decided to rebury several intact vessels unearthed by erosion.



©NATE LOPER/SHUTTERSTOCK

we do collect material if it looks like those resources will be lost or stolen,” said Torres. “We have an obligation to mitigate those adverse effects to those resources however we can.” These days, Park Service policy dictates that whenever park managers need to make a call about artifacts or sites that are at risk, they discuss options with the descendant communities of the people who created them. “In some instances, the management actions necessary to preserve or protect a particular site from destruction or a federal project may be counter to wishes of the Tribes,” Torres acknowledged. “But that’s the whole purpose of the consultation process: to try and work out amenable solutions.”

And as more material traces of the continent’s human past disappear under rising seas, wash away in freak storms, burn up in raging wildfires and melt out of waning ice patches, these sorts of decisions will only become more common. After unusually heavy rains in 2013, rangers at Arizona’s Wupatki National Monument noticed that a partially exposed structure built out of sandstone slabs on a hillside had started to erode. They spotted three clay vessels, exposed to the elements and teetering in

a newly formed gully. Park staff couldn’t figure how to stabilize the slope, so in concert with Tribes associated with the park and Arizona’s State Historic Preservation Office, they decided to excavate the whole structure. All told, they found seven intact pots dating to the 12th century.

It’s rare to find one intact pot in the field, let alone seven, said Gwenn Gallenstein, museum curator for the three national monuments near Flagstaff including Wupatki. “It caused quite a bit of excitement in the community.” Friends of Flagstaff National Monuments drummed up some funding for a new visitor center display, which would feature the vessels and other objects as part of a story about how climate change is accelerating threats to the park’s archaeological resources.

But in consultation for the exhibit with a group of Hopi elders, Gallenstein learned that the site had most likely been a shrine that could have been created to contain something harmful, like an illness. The elders explained that “its contents shouldn’t be utilized for any purpose, handled by any person or kept in storage for research,” Gallenstein recalled. It would have been better, the

elders told her, if park staff had left the pots to erode away, but federal regulations mandate that archaeological objects recovered from federal land be preserved, meaning Gallenstein couldn’t just return the pots to the gully where they’d soon be smashed to bits. So the Hopi elders and the park’s superintendent struck a compromise. A few weeks later, park archaeologists dug a pit in a stable area near the site and reburied the shrine’s contents.

Back at Grand Canyon, Brennan and her colleagues also sought a solution somewhere between accessioning the olla into the park’s permanent collection and leaving it in its increasingly perilous home. Tribal representatives had told Brennan that they wanted the pot to stay in the canyon — unless it seemed the object was in danger. “Once someone took it out of the site context, we knew at that point we had to remove it,” she said.

So with a go-ahead from the Tribes, park staff orchestrated a rescue mission involving cotton gloves, bubble wrap, a sturdy metal box and a 166-mile river journey through dozens of major rapids. (“Intact vessels are so fragile and so rare. You don’t want to be the one that breaks it,” Brennan said. “So yeah, it’s nerve-wracking.”) The olla arrived at the park’s museum undamaged. In the past, the park’s archaeologists might have proceeded to zap the pot with an X-ray machine, swab its surface for traces of ancient pollen or put it on display in the visitor center, but Brennan and her colleagues made a different plan. “It wasn’t just that I want to protect the object from theft,” she said. “I was also thinking about how the Tribes think about these sites as still-living entities.” So she hopes that someday the pot can be returned to its riverside home. “In the meantime, we haven’t done anything with it,” she said. “It’s just been sitting, waiting quietly for us to put it back.”

JULIA BUSIEK has worked at national parks in Colorado, Hawaii, Washington and California.

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Walking to the highest point in Guadalupe Mountains with a 5-year-old. Falling deeply for someone in Grand Canyon. Healing in Joshua Tree. Unfurling a pride flag in Badlands. Learning to love the wilderness in Yosemite.

These are your stories.

NPCA has been collecting national park tales since 2013, and to date, park enthusiasts have submitted nearly 1,500 entries. The “My Park Story” archive includes short pieces about love and discovery, recovery and growth, sadness and reflection, solitude and friendship, laughter and peace. Park fandom isn’t required to post — anyone can contribute — but of course, the theme running through almost every one of these is a profound appreciation for the National Park System.

You can binge on these stories, photographs and videos (and add your own) at npca.org/myparkstory, but you might want help cutting straight to some of the gems. That’s what we are here for. Every so often, the magazine staff feels the call to comb through this ever-expanding archive and hand-pick compelling entries to share with you. So without further ado, welcome to the second edition of the magazine’s curated collection. There are millions of ways to enjoy and love America’s national parks. Here are 18 of them.





↑ Badlands National Park, South Dakota

My wife, Jamie, and I love packing up our three pups and our girls and going camping. This photo is from our visit to Badlands. I was nervous about taking out our pride flag but did it anyway, and I am so happy I did. We want to show our girls our strength and that we can be ourselves wherever we are. —*Tamarah Abdullah-Malizio*

↓ Sequoia National Park, California

I love you most of all. —*Jay Glaser*



↑ Great Basin National Park, Nevada

When I told my husband I wanted to hike Wheeler Peak for my birthday, he was stunned. But, as always, he was there with me when we set off in the early morning light. The trail isn't easy. The ascent requires stamina, good footing, and lots of water and snacks. But I love that the peak never leaves your sight. It is a great motivator! Once at the top, I felt a true sense of accomplishment. When we got back to our camp that evening, I took a nice dose of ibuprofen and headed to bed. There will be other days to celebrate, I thought, but today, I hiked Wheeler Peak at age 65! —*Michele Sinagra*



↘ Shenandoah National Park, Virginia

My photo is from a day I spent fly fishing with a friend. We walked along the stream, happily casting where we had seen fish rising, and passing the time however we pleased. It was a great day because of the simplicity and ease of it. We were away from our bustling, noisy college campus, and our cellphones didn't have a signal. We had nothing to worry about and nowhere to be and only had to enjoy ourselves. —Ben

← Arches National Park, Utah

It was June 3, 2012. I laced up my hiking shoes and headed up the escarpment to Delicate Arch. About halfway up, three veterans who had just returned from the Middle East (all medics) started to pass me. They were half my age and twice as strong, but I thought to myself, "I'm going with them!" We chatted and shared stories, but then they picked up the pace and left this 65-year-old behind. Eventually, I caught up with them at the final, single-file portion of the trail. We walked around the last corner ... and there it was, Delicate Arch. I'll never forget the moment when one of them turned to me and asked, "You were in the service weren't you?" I answered that I was in Vietnam in 1970. Tears welled up in my eyes as we all hugged. Then I sat down for an hour to enjoy one of our nation's most prized possessions. Delicate Arch? No, our veterans! —Bill Hensel

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↑ Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

Nature has been an integral part of my life since childhood. It wasn't until my internship at Rocky Mountain, however, that I truly became aware of how a vast, wild space could influence a human being. I stared in awe at the jagged peaks of the Rockies, observed elk during the rut, and sat quietly by icy waterfalls, listening to their soothing noise. I learned about the ecosystems and the park's flora and fauna, from the tiny alpine pika to the beaver, a keystone species. From day one, I fell in love. Because of my experience there, I have become a field biologist, a backpacker and an environmental educator. National parks have shaped my entire adult life, and I strive to do my part to both protect these places and to ensure they stay accessible to the public, so others can have the opportunity to experience what I did. —*Hannah*

↗ Yellowstone National Park, Idaho, Montana & Wyoming

The joy, beauty and serenity of the natural world, readily accessible, are wonderful. We went to Yellowstone because I wanted my son to explore and to see the beauty of our parks. And I know that we protect what we love and appreciate. Thank you, national parks. —*Dexter*



↑ Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

Mick asked me to be her wife on June 4 at Sprague Lake, below the snowy caps of the breathtaking Rocky Mountains! Our best friends were there to cheer along as I said yes! —Katie Garber

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↗ Glacier National Park, Montana

Around 1962, when I was 14 years old, my family visited Glacier for the first time. My parents, sister and I were temporarily living near the park in Polson, and when my grandparents came for a visit, all of us piled into the car and headed north to Glacier.

The day was stifling hot, and we were crammed into a car with no air conditioning. Road crews were repairing Going-to-the-Sun Road, so we had to stop often. And yet, the scenery was more beautiful than anything any of us had ever seen.

By the end of the day, we were all very tired. As we

drove toward the park exit, we had to pull over because of deer on the road. We opened all the doors for the welcome breeze. Everyone, except my grandparents, got out of the car. While we were snapping pictures, a deer saw my grandfather sitting in the car, smoking a cigar. The deer walked over, stepped in with both front legs and grabbed that cigar from my grandfather's mouth! My grandfather complained about his cigar being stolen for many years after that.

Of course, cigars are not good for deer (or my grandfather), but it sure made for a memorable day at the park. —Cassandra Martin



← Yosemite National Park, California

Here are few things about me — or perhaps, things that I used to believe were true about me:

- I like sitting outdoors — if I'm in a lounge chair and a pool is nearby.
- I like spiders and ants — if they are dead or so far away that I can't see them.
- I like hiking — for 10 minutes until I reach my local ice cream shop.

Given this background, I thought going deep into Yosemite's wilderness would be a total nightmare. I was wrong. Recently, I spent nine days backpacking in the park with eight other girls and two educators. Together, we waded in the crystal-clear lakes. We tripped from the weight of our backpacks — and hoisted each other back up again. We huddled together for warmth, told bad muffin jokes along the trails, and watched the mesmerizing night skies for shooting stars. Through it all, I found beauty and happiness in the simplest of things.

As we hiked from May Lake to Sunrise Lakes and then to Glen Aulin, the rolling rivers and towering mountains never failed to take my breath away. In the wilderness, I discovered a new level of self-confidence and self-acceptance. As more and more dirt piled onto my face, I felt more confident about my appearance than ever before. I also realized that I took many things for granted. Being a teenager in the 21st century, I thought the first thing I would miss was my phone. Instead, I missed things like music, my family, my bed and my mother's cooking. Hiking in Yosemite was eye-opening and life-changing. There, in the backcountry, I found my new happy place. Never again will I doubt what wilderness can offer me. —Jennifer



↑ Yellowstone National Park, Idaho, Montana & Wyoming

My wife and I met in 1972 at Montana State University. We had both worked summers at national parks: She was a naturalist at Grand Teton, and I was in a maintenance shop in Yellowstone. We were married the next year and played hooky from MSU to spend our first anniversary in Yellowstone's Lamar Valley. We had a picnic with the bison. Absolutely amazing. That day, I promised my lovely lady that we would return for our 25th anniversary, but life and kids have a way of changing plans. This year — 2022 — we hope to spend our 49th anniversary in Lamar Valley with the buffalo ... and maybe some wolves. Wouldn't that be wonderful? —Michael Schmotzer

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← Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

My husband was 35 when he died of cancer, and I was 32. A month after his passing, I found solace in a national park road trip with our dog. We visited eight parks in all. The beauty of creation saved me, as it can for anyone who takes the time to dwell in nature with an open heart. I forever will be a grateful supporter of our national parks.

—Victoria Windsor

→ Joshua Tree National Park, California

When I first arrived in the town of Joshua Tree, I was reeling from a bitter divorce, vitamin D deficient and chilled to the bone from 13-plus years of living under the “gray ceiling” of the Pacific Northwest. I had been to Joshua Tree once before. That experience had stayed with me. In fact, whenever I visited any desert, the open space, the silence, the night sky, the warmth ... it all lingered in my soul. I kept my desert memories tucked away for days when I needed them most. And eventually, a day came when the memories were not enough. I needed to be there. I needed to touch the desert. I needed to sit with myself in the stillness. I needed to cry out loud in the open. I needed to heal. Joshua Tree National Park seemed to be the perfect place for this. Even the Joshua trees themselves seemed to be beckoning to me with their open, arm-like branches. The park was the open door I needed to walk through to get back to me. It was my laboratory, my playground, my refuge, my sanctuary. There, I went face to face with my fears and my scars. I sat with my journal and let the pain flow out onto the paper. I tested my physical abilities, too; climbing boulders is one of my favorite things to do in the park. The park helped me feel like a kid again. I often caught myself laughing out loud while hiking. Just sitting with my back against the granite was comforting — little compares to being held by several million years of geologic history. This place helped me see that national parks can be whatever we need them to be. They are ours. They are here for us. For those of us who do a deeper dive, these places can become part of our fabric. They have the potential to build us back up. They can help make us whole again. —Shane Farnor





↑ Yosemite National Park, California

On top of (half) the world! This group of misfit city slickers trusted me to cheerlead them up Half Dome, one of the most demanding and incredible national park hikes, in a single day. It was grueling, rewarding and inspiring, and now we all have timeless memories together — and they have a story to tell their friends and families. Thanks, Yosemite, for being one of the coolest places on earth for individuals of all types. —*Josh Morris*



↑ Crater Lake National Park, Oregon

In 2019, we completed a trip touring many beautiful national forests in Oregon as well as Crater Lake National Park. My 15-year-old son was thrilled to be able to jump off a cliff into America's deepest lake. He convinced his mother to jump as well!

—*Susan Lehrer*



← Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

The first park we ever visited together was Grand Canyon. We had only been dating a few months, but it had always been at the top of my bucket list, so Roberto surprised me with a trip. Not only did we fall in love with the park, but we fell in love with each other. Later, we made it our goal to visit every national park in the country and since 2017, we have visited 62 of the 63 parks. In April, we got married in Joshua Tree. The National Park System has forever changed our outlook on life and nature, and we'll be forever grateful to this place for bringing us together. —Andrew Ross



↓ Appalachian National Scenic Trail, Georgia to Maine

Hiked the Appalachian Trail and liked it!! Onward to the Pacific Crest Trail! —Thomas


↑ Guadalupe Mountains National Park, Texas

What does it mean to be standing at the highest point in Texas? To a 5-year-old, it is a HUGE deal. This was my son's toughest hike to date, but a challenge he greeted with great excitement: The Adventure Boys were back in action.

At 3:30 a.m., he awoke with ease at the mere mention of our hike. He had been waiting for this day for weeks. On our drive from El Paso, the monsoon dumped a year's worth of precipitation on us, but we hit the trailhead ready for a great day. We hiked and made up silly songs and talked about the important things like Hot Wheels, corn dogs and farts. I worried about how long his energy would last, but to my delight, he was committed to going all the way to the top of Texas. We hiked through rain and fog and fought the slippery trail, but eventually we made it. We were rewarded with an amazing view of a beautiful sunny day above the cloud line.


The entire hike took nearly six-and-a-half hours. I am proud of him for his eagerness to explore. And our father-son bond is strengthened on each outing. There are no better teaching moments than the ones that nature provides. This is why we go on adventures. —Jason Brewer





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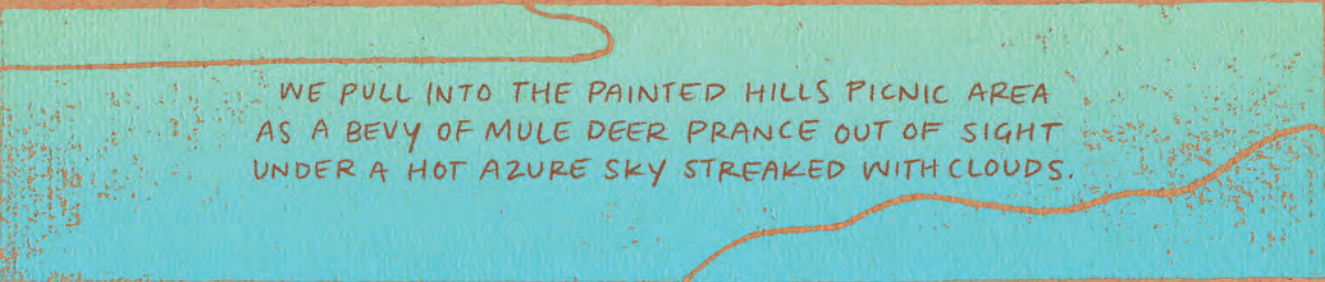
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AT THE TOP, WE TURN
AROUND AND FIX OUR
EYES ON THOSE
GREAT BANDED
BADLANDS
IN AWE.


OH, THE TALES THEY TELL, THE STRATA
A STORY OF RAIN AND DROUGHT.

IRON OXIDE
FOR DRENCHED,
SWELTERING
STRETCHES,

AND SWATHS OF
OCHRE FOR COOLER,
MORE ARID ERAS.



ON THE PAINTED COVE TRAIL, WE'RE SWALLOWED WHOLE IN RICH, VELVETY FOLDS OF SLOWLY RUSTING SCARLET SOIL,



POURING RAIN USHERS IN DAY TWO. WE'RE BOUND FOR SHEEP ROCK UNIT, ANCESTRAL LAND TO MANY, INCLUDING THE NORTHERN PAIUTE PEOPLE.

THE VIBRANT LEGACY OF A DELUGE OF VOLCANIC ASH 33 MILLION YEARS IN THE PAST.

IN THE THOMAS CONDON PALEONTOLOGY CENTER, WE PORE OVER GLASS CASES OF DAWN REDWOOD FOSSILS AND OREODONT SKULLS AND BEAR-DOG TEETH.

CONDON'S 1860'S FINDS ROCKED SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY AND THRUST THIS LANDSCAPE—

A PERFECT LAYER CAKE OF THE CENOZOIC ERA—

INTO THE LIMELIGHT.

RAINCOATS ZIPPED TIGHT, WE FORGE AHEAD INTO THE SUBLIME EMBRACE OF BLUE BASIN. THIS CELADONITE DREAMSCAPE UNFOLDS IN EXPANSIVES OF SEAFOAM-COLORED CLAYSTONE AND JUTTING CLAVICLES OF VOLCANIC TUFF.

THE RAIN AMPLIFIES EVERY JEWELLED HUE, CLINGING IN DROPS TO LARKSPUR AND WAVY-LEAVED PAINTBRUSH, AND GENTLY COLLECTS IN MINTY POOLS AT OUR FEET.



"THIS IS MY
FAVORITE HIKE
EVER,"

I SAY OVER
AND OVER.



IN THE EVENING, WE SET OFF FOR THE PAINTED HILLS
TO CATCH A NEW PERSPECTIVE IN THE CHANGING LIGHT.

WE PERCH AT
THE OVERLOOK
TRAILHEAD
SIPPING CHAI
LONG AFTER



THE
OTHER
VISITORS
HAVE GONE.

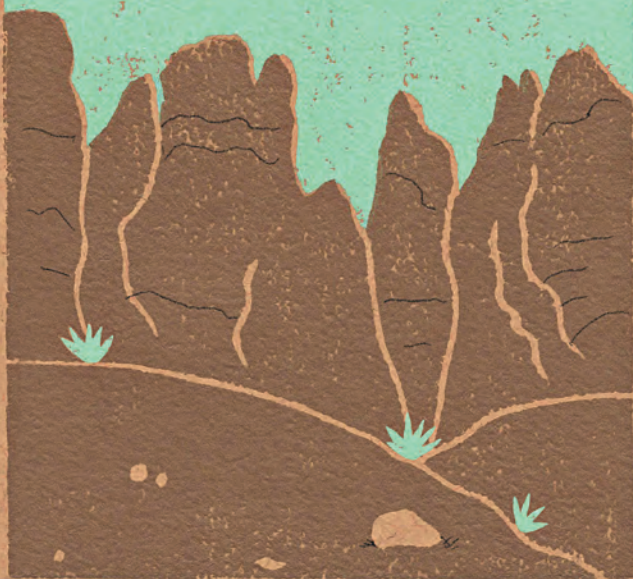
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REMEMBER
US LIKE THIS
ALWAYS:

EYES OPEN,
CURIOSITY
INTACT.



LUSH AND BARREN TIMES LAYERED
TOGETHER, A LANDSCAPE EVER MORE
ENDURING THAN THE SUM OF OUR STRATA.

IN THE MORNING, WE
TAKE ON CLARNO UNIT,
ITS PALISADES ADORNED
WITH FOSSILIZED FLORA—



44 MILLION-YEAR-OLD
RAINFOREST RELICS
PRESSED TIGHT INTO THIS
SCRAPBOOK OF STONE.

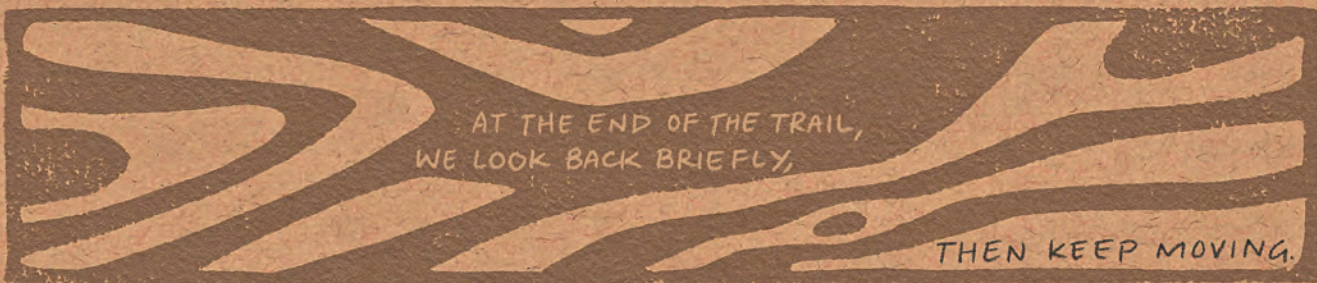


DO WE FEEL IT—
LIKE A PHANTOM LIMB—
THE PARTS OF NATURE
THAT ONCE WERE,
AND ARE NO LONGER?



AT THE END OF THE TRAIL,
WE LOOK BACK BRIEFLY,

THEN KEEP MOVING.





Once one of the largest slave markets in the South, Forks of the Road is now part of the National Park System.

Is Natchez ready to excavate its troubled past?

SHACKLES cemented into the ground at Forks of the Road.

‘First, TELL THE Truth’

IN A SECTION OF NATCHEZ, Mississippi, troubled by crumbling streets and abandoned buildings, sits a grassy plot of land less than an acre in size. This piece of Forks of the Road is so small that it’s easy to miss, squeezed between two main thoroughfares that run downtown. One of these, historically called Washington Road, used to connect to the final stretch of the Natchez Trace, a traveling path first used by American Indians and then by European settlers, soldiers and traders — and maintained today by the National Park Service as a scenic parkway and (in spots) as a national scenic trail.

A marker at one end of the patch of land denotes the historic city limits of Natchez; a row of evergreen trees screens the lot from a Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses next door. At garages across the street, workers busily tint car windows and repair mufflers. Traffic is constant.

The junction seems ordinary, but in fact, it hides a devastating chapter in U.S. history: This land and the surrounding 17 acres were once a busy market where slaveholders bought and sold people starting in the 1830s and lasting until 1863, when federal troops enforced President Abraham Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation. Tens of thousands of enslaved people passed through, making it the second-largest domestic slave market in the Lower South during the antebellum era. On a recent visit, I found myself looking over the lot and imagining the horror — the coffles, the chains,

the dust, the haggling. I could feel sorrow hovering over the place, even generations later, even in the noonday sun.

At the moment, little remains at Forks of the Road to tell its awful story; the only nods to the past are a few interpretive plaques and shackles cemented into the ground. That the site and its story commanded so little attention for most of the last 150 years is hardly surprising: Facing the history of slavery is not exactly a strong suit of the city, which as recently as the 1990s employed the slogan “Come to Natchez, where the Old South still lives.” Tourism has long revolved around the city’s stunning, impeccably restored antebellum homes. Since 1930, thousands of (mostly white) people have taken part in an annual celebration called “Pilgrimage” — guided Garden Club tours of historic

BY JANISSE RAY • PHOTOS BY RORY DOYLE



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AN 1861 ENGRAVING, based on a sketch by Theodore R. Davis, depicts a slave auction in the South (above). Right: The Mississippi River, that mighty transporter of goods, and people, runs past Natchez's downtown.



homes, where a “Gone With The Wind” ethos has prevailed. The fact that those structures and most of the city were once constructed and maintained by enslaved people was a detail many residents preferred to keep quiet about.

“In Natchez tourism, it was as if whites had done everything,” said Ser Seshsh Ab Heter-C.M. Boxley, a civil rights activist and native son of the city who has been working to rewrite that narrative for decades.

But the commitment to historical whitewashing is slowly fading in this majority-Black city, and Forks of the Road is emblematic of that evolution. In June of 2021, the city of Natchez transferred a piece of the tract where the slave market once thrived to the Park Service. The land became part of Natchez National Historical Park, and plans are underway to commemorate the tragic history of the site, which will eventually extend over 18 acres, as authorized by a federal law passed in 2017.

Kathleen Bond, the superintendent of the historical park,

describes Forks of the Road as “a site of conscience.” “This is a major corrective to our historic record — to remind us that human trafficking was a part of our history,” said Bond, who will oversee the development of the site. “I think part of what Forks of the Road has to do is be an agent of healing. That means, first, tell the truth.”

What is the truth of Forks of the Road?

The story starts in the 1700s. By the middle of the 18th century, the last of the Natchez Indians, the region’s native inhabitants, had been driven out. In 1798, the federal government organized the Mississippi Territory, and by the early 1800s, planters were setting up large plantations with cotton as a cash crop. A few events set the stage for this new enterprise. First, as tobacco growing wore out soils in the Upper South, new markets for cotton opened in Europe. Eli Whitney had invented the cotton gin in 1793, and by the early 1800s, steam-powered shipping was

Between 1790 and 1860, more than 1 million enslaved people were transported from the Upper South to the Lower South.



coming online. Cotton growing looked profitable, and planters were eager to claim available land. In 1800, the white population of the Mississippi Territory was about 9,000, according to census records, and by 1810 it had grown to over 40,000.

Growing cotton required a huge labor force, and plantation owners were willing to enslave, exploit and terrorize people for personal gain. Effective Jan. 1, 1808, however, the U.S. had banned the importation of people in captivity. It had *not* banned slavery itself. Therefore, until passage of the 13th Amendment in 1865, enslaved people continued to be trafficked domestically.

“Between 1790 and 1860, Americans transported from the Upper South to the Lower South more than 1 million African American slaves,” wrote Steven Deyle in “Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life.” Although some who were “sold down the river” would become domestic workers, captive craftsmen or the unpaid bondsmen of merchants in the region’s growing towns, enslaved people usually ended up on

“King Cotton” and “Queen Sugar” plantations. “Most adult slaves from the Upper South considered sale into the Deep South a fate worse than death,” Deyle wrote, “with the region’s frontier conditions, subtropical climate, rampant diseases and extreme working conditions.”

Natchez was a major hub of America’s domestic slave trade. Some enslaved men, women and children arrived after being force-shipped by steam-powered brig down the Atlantic Seaboard and across the Gulf of Mexico to New Orleans and then up the Mississippi River to Natchez. Others were shipped down the Ohio River and then the Mississippi. The majority, however, were marched down Old Natchez Trace in coffles guarded by overseers with whips and guns: the Slave Trail of Tears. This roughly three-month journey sometimes covered more than 1,000 miles; enslaved people walked 20 miles a day, slept on hard ground, and were fed hard tack and salt pork purchased along the way. So many people arrived by this route that Old Natchez Trace can

be called the second middle passage, the Rev. Tracy Collins, who guides history tours in the area, told me. People chained together, sometimes by the arm and even by the neck, would have turned off the Trace and entered Natchez via Old Washington Road, crossing Spanish Bayou on a bridge and continuing toward the Grid, as locals call Natchez's downtown, where traders sold enslaved people at small markets or on street corners.

Because of its convenient location at the convergence of many roads, Forks of the Road operated largely as a market for horses, mules and wagons during the early 1800s. This changed suddenly in 1833. Fearing a cholera outbreak, Natchez officials banned slave trading, and slave traders moved immediately outside city limits to Forks of the Road, which became the region's commercial center for buying and selling human beings. Maps of the era denote the slave pens as "negro marts."

Writer Joseph Holt Ingraham visited Forks of the Road around 1834 and described the market as "a cluster of rough wooden buildings, in the angle of two roads." He entered through "a wide gate into a narrow courtyard, partially enclosed by low buildings" and found a semicircle of about 40 enslaved people being examined by potential buyers.

Newspapers from the time advertised new arrivals at the market. In February 1851, for example, trader R.H. Elam posted an advertisement in *The Woodville Republican*, a local newspaper. The ad's typos are intact: "I have for sale at the forks of the Road near Natchez, a lot of LIKELY YOUNG NEGNOES. Among them may be found a very superior Blacksmith, Seamstress, &c, &c."

In 1864, a member of the 12th Wisconsin Infantry repeated what he'd heard about the market from formerly enslaved men in a letter published in the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*. He wrote about "the cruelty of traders, of sad partings of husband and wife, of inhuman fathers selling their own children, and a thousand other incidents illustrating the detestable state of society at the South."

The economic impact of trafficking at Forks of the Road is stunning. As Collins, the local guide, pointed out, in addition to cotton and sugar, the area produced a third commodity important to world economics: slaves. By the 1840s, Natchez had become one of the wealthiest places in the country.



SER SESHSH AB HETER-C.M. BOXLEY, pictured at Forks of the Road, spent more than two decades advocating for a national park designation for the site (top). Above: Natchez Mayor Dan M. Gibson has been in office two years. He believes a new identity for the town is possible.



HISTORY IS big business in Natchez. The Rev. Tracy Collins offers three tours a day to area visitors (top). Above: Kathleen Bond, superintendent of Natchez National Historical Park, said the development of the Forks of the Road site is a priority for her.

When the war broke out, Natchez, a Unionist town, voted not to secede. As Bond explained to me, when the Emancipation Proclamation was enforced in Adams County, Mississippi, in 1863, so many Black people joined the Union Army that additional housing was suddenly needed. For a time, Forks of the Road was used as a recruiting station and barracks for the Union Army and a refugee camp, with soldiers and others sleeping in what had been slave pens.

Then the Army ordered Forks of the Road to be torn down so the materials could be used to build barracks at Fort McPherson, on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi. The job fell to the 6th Regiment of Mississippi Infantry (African Descent), a group of recruits that included African American men who had been sold at the market. “The site was demolished in one night,” Bond said. Nothing remained.

After the Civil War ended, a brief period of Reconstruction in Mississippi quickly gave way to Jim Crow’s lynchings, segregation and violence. For generations, Natchez effectively ignored its history of enslavement. “There was a historical amnesia and a mythicizing of the past,” said Jack E. Davis, historian and author of “Race Against Time: Culture and Separation in Natchez Since 1930.” “Those who controlled society controlled history. And whites controlled society. It was a moonlight-on-magnolias version of the past.”

“To some extent this was intentional and to some extent it was indifference to other people’s history,” said Davis. “What was the Black perspective? What would a Black citizen of Natchez say about it? It’s important to know the full past.”

That full story — or at least critical parts of it — might have been lost forever were it not for Ser Seshsh Ab Heter-C.M. Boxley, whom I arranged to meet at Forks of the Road. When I arrived, Ser Boxley, born Clifford M. Boxley, was sitting on a granite bench under a row of young crepe myrtles, looking across the spindly grass. Now in his early 80s, he wore an African tunic and black pants with white pinstripes running vertically. Around his neck hung a small leather bag. “Here, people were marketed like cattle and resold into chattel slavery, which benefited Natchez, Mississippi, and all of America,” he said to me in a deep, booming voice. In his left hand, he held a wooden staff. “Who was telling their story?”



DUNLEITH HISTORIC INN, one of Natchez's many antebellum mansions (top left). Above: An unmarked grave at the Mount Locust Slave Cemetery, which is part of the Natchez Trace Parkway. Left: A Natchez foundation plans to restore these slave quarters, another sign of local investment in bringing the history of slavery to light.

“Knowing that human beings were bought and sold as though they were no better or little better than animals ... I can’t see how anyone would not feel something standing at Forks of the Road.”

Who would stand up for them? Who would speak for them?”

Ser Boxley left Natchez in 1960 for California, where he studied urban and regional planning and became active in the civil rights movement. About 35 years later, after several trips to Africa, he felt called to go back permanently to Mississippi and uncover the truth about his enslaved ancestors. Ser Boxley began lobbying to create a memorial and Park Service site at Forks of the Road, an effort that would end up consuming him for more than 20 years. He created a Friends group and arranged countless ceremonies at the site, including its first Juneteenth celebration in 1995. In 2001, Ser Boxley succeeded in getting the Park Service to list Forks of the Road in its National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, a program that highlights the history of resistance to enslavement (and that NPCA has championed and successfully pushed to fund).

During the time that Ser Boxley was tirelessly campaigning, the Park Service was undergoing dramatic changes in the way it recognized and preserved history, said Barbara Tagger, a Park Service veteran of 40 years who helped usher in that evolution. In the early days, “We were telling stories that excluded a number of groups, especially when it came to the African American experience and especially slavery,” she said. All too many stories were told from the point of view of white sympathizers or white abolitionists, and the perspective of enslaved people was frequently omitted.

To progress, Tagger said, the Park Service had to revise the way it defined history. Previously, rules required sites to be at least 50 years old, and their importance demonstrable with a tangible, well-documented history. But not every site of significance was over 50 years old, and in some places, little physical history remained, or the written record was limited. The document provision proved especially onerous at sites connected to slavery, given that enslaved people were not legally permitted to read or write. “So we had to look at oral traditions too,” Tagger said, when considering designating places without any extant structures.

Forks of the Road benefited from this shift and also from a greater willingness in places like Natchez to look at the past — and the slave trade, in particular — in a clear-eyed way. “There were some terrible things that happened,” said Natchez Mayor Dan M. Gibson. “It’s a story that has not been told for so long. And it must be told.”

Deborah Fountain is among those who believe that Natchez is ready and willing to change. Fountain, who was raised in Kansas City but has maintained a connection to her ancestral home in Mississippi, serves as a leader of the Natchez U.S. Colored Troops Monument Committee, which is in the process of erecting

a memorial honoring those African American servicemen. “It is high time that those who had been nameless, faceless people are given credit for their service,” she said.

A genealogist for more than 30 years, Fountain has uncovered nine ancestors who served in the Colored Troops in Natchez. One of them, her great-great-grandfather Claiborne Thompson, was enslaved on Kinnison Plantation in the Natchez District. U.S. Census files list his mother as Mary Thompson, who was born “on the ocean” and sold into the Lower South. Fountain is not (yet) sure how her family history intersects with Forks of the



A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW of the Forks of the Road site, which is squeezed between two main thoroughfares that run downtown.

Road, but she is a strong supporter of the plan to develop the site. “For me,” Fountain said, “knowing the sheer volume of slave trading that took place in that location, knowing that human beings were bought and

sold as though they were no better or little better than animals, that crimes against humanity occurred, I can’t see how anyone would not feel something standing at Forks of the Road.”

Bond expects the site will eventually include a visitor center, a memorial and a place for contemplation. She hopes that one day, visitors will be able to walk the route many enslaved people walked, traveling south along the Natchez Trace, crossing a bridge over Spanish Bayou and marching uphill to the old market. “It’s critical to provide visitors the opportunity to walk that road because that experience, horrific as it is, is a part of the American experience,” she said. In addition, Bond would like to establish a genealogy research facility to help descendants of

STUDENTS FROM Alcorn State University's Upward Bound program arrive to explore the newest addition to Natchez National Historical Park.

enslaved people locate ancestors who were trafficked at Forks of the Road. "Enslaved people at multiple points in their lineage were stripped of identity and shipped to a different place," she said. She believes that genealogical research can repair some of the damage of these dislocations.

A limited 2007 archaeological dig that the city requested — and the Park Service funded — failed to uncover artifacts from the era of slavery. That, Bond believes, is due to massive ground disturbance that happened decades after the closure of the slave market, for road building and other construction. Bond plans to conduct a more comprehensive archaeological dig.

Gibson, the mayor, said that at one time, when slavery flourished, Natchez could have been described as "first in hate," but he thinks it's possible for the city to embody a new identity and become "first in love." Indeed, Natchez has an opportunity to become a model, Bond said, and to demonstrate how other places and their denizens can honestly face the past, even when it's deplorable or tragic. "If we can do it in Natchez," she said, "we can do it anywhere."



JANISSE RAY'S collection of essays, "Wild Spectacle: Seeking Wonder in a World Beyond Humans," came out in 2021. She is at work on a book tracing the movement to honor the Muscogee (Creek) homeland in central Georgia with a national park.

RORY DOYLE is a Mississippi-based photographer. To see more of his work, visit rorydoylephoto.com.

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"MODERN EVE" shakes hands with naturalist Enos Mills.

She'd have to wait for solitude a little longer, however. Outside the lodge that Sunday in August 1917, Lowe was greeted by Rocky Mountain luminaries, throngs of photographers and nearly 2,000 other people. "The immense crowd — the equal of which never has been seen in this resort — cheered her wildly and shouted all manner of wishes for the success of her strange adventure," wrote A.G. Birch, a journalist and publicist for *The Denver Post*.

Enos Mills, the inn's owner whose campaign for the creation of the park had succeeded two years earlier, accompanied Lowe into the woods for a bit before sending her off toward Thunder Lake in the remote southeastern part of the park, where she would attempt to survive for a week on her own. Lowe had brought no food, weapons, matches or tools of any kind with her, and she became known as "modern Eve" in the *Post*'s coverage. Lowe's stated goal was to "escape for a time from the shams and artificialities of modern city life" — still somewhat of a novel idea in the early 20th century — and Birch chronicled her every move in sensational stories that were picked up by newspapers across the country.

Lowe's August escapade was her second attempt at sticking it out in the sticks. In late July, she had thrown in the towel after enduring two days of thunderstorms and cold temperatures in the park. "Nothing less than a short and ugly word could describe the sensation!" she wrote after her ordeal. Still, she was determined to have another go. "Everyone is taunting me with 'I told you so' and other choice remarks. I won't stand it!" she said. "I'm going to make good this time."

Inclement conditions threatened to derail her new effort, too. A couple of days into it, Lowe used a piece of charcoal to write a couple of worrying

Paradise Found?

A century ago, a college student in "cavewoman" attire reportedly braved bears, freezing temperatures and a bearskin-clad suitor in the wilds of Rocky Mountain National Park. Did any of it actually happen?

AFTER A NIGHT at an inn in the shadow of Longs Peak, Agnes Lowe, a 20-year-old college student from Michigan, prepared to spend a week alone in the backcountry of Colorado's Rocky Mountain National Park. It didn't take her long. She donned a leopard-skin tunic and headed out toward the wilderness.

COURTESY OF LULIE AND JACK MELTON

messages (“nearly froze last night” and “tempted to give up but didn’t”) on slabs of bark that she left on a trail for rangers to pick up. But several groups of tourists, perhaps eager to meet “Eve” in the flesh, reported that she seemed to be adjusting to her environment and spotted her drinking from a mountain stream, picking blackberries and “carrying a good-sized string of mountain trout, which she said she had caught without a rod or line.”

Around the same time, Lowe told some other visitors about an encounter she had had with a brown bear. That would be one of two brushes with grizzlies, which have since been hunted to extinction in Colorado. In the second one, she said she came across a sow and two cubs while harvesting huckleberries. Lowe improvised and started to sing a tune that the female bear seemed to appreciate, as she refrained from attacking Lowe. “No debuting prima donna ever watched her audience more searchingly for the first sign of inattention,” she later wrote of her performance. “And none was ever so ready to fly to a haven behind the scenes.”

Even in nature’s midst, it was a fellow human who caused Lowe her biggest scare. A resident of Greeley, Colorado, named George Desouris wrote in a poorly spelled letter to the Post that a vision compelled him to join “this fare young Eve.” Desouris, who called himself “Adam the Apostle” and wore a “moth-eaten bear hide,” might have thought he was a good match for Lowe, but L. C. Way, the park’s superintendent, disagreed and warned that Desouris would be expelled from the park if he showed up. “Adam won’t think he’s in the Garden of Eden if he comes up here,” he said.

Desouris did turn up at the park and soon located Lowe, who screamed when

“Adam won’t think he’s in the Garden of Eden if he comes up here.”

she spotted him and then spent much of a day and a night running — and swimming — away from him. He was eventually captured by two rangers after “a strenuous fight” and handed over to police, who forced him “to don a long overcoat loaned by a kindly tourist” and escorted “Adam” out of the area.

The rest of Lowe’s expedition proved less stressful. She even met up with Mills and Way, offering them a luncheon of pine bark soup, trout, mushrooms, “chipmunk peas,” wild honey and chokecherries. The discovery of a trail of blood near Thunder Lake raised fears about Lowe’s well-being the day before her expected return, but she arrived back at the inn the following day as planned. She was healthy and had gained, not lost, weight over the course of the week. Awaiting her was a crowd as large as that on the first day, as well as a mail sack containing no fewer than 64 marriage proposals.

Lowe also inspired a man reportedly named Perry Adams, who was wandering on a Denver street, wearing only cabbage leaves and declaring his intention to live in the wilds of Rocky Mountain. The historical record does not confirm whether he followed through. Mills’ takeaway from Lowe’s weeklong outing was arguably a feminist one: “The feminine body will always, I believe, resist the exigencies of nature with more endurance than that of the male,” he wrote. Lowe gave some talks in Denver about her experience and penned her own account in the Post in which she bemoaned having to return to civilization. Then she disappeared from the public eye.

Her odyssey continued to

reverberate through the halls of the National Park Service, though. Hearing of what he deemed poor-taste publicity, Horace Albright, the agency’s assistant director, asked Way to explain himself. Way confessed that during Lowe’s week in the wilderness one of his rangers met her at regular intervals, handed her street clothes and took her to a cabin to relax for a couple of days.

Way “wasn’t the least bit regretful or sorry about that,” said author Phyllis J. Perry, who included Lowe’s story in her collection of tales from the park, “It Happened in Rocky Mountain National Park.” “He set out to get attention, and he did.”

So how much of Lowe’s story was true? Probably not much. Some sources say that Lowe’s actual name was Hazel Eighmy and that she was a receptionist at a Denver photography studio. Curt Buchholtz, who researched the park’s history extensively for his 1983 book, “Rocky Mountain National Park: A History,” said the only logical conclusion is that it was staged and designed to promote the new park. “It was a stunt, basically,” he said.

Visitation to Rocky Mountain did more than double in 1917, but how much of that increase can be attributed to “modern Eve” is unclear. And no one knows what became of the young woman named Lowe or Eighmy. While researching his book, Buchholtz tried to locate her or some of her relatives but was not successful.

“I like to think she married one of these Adams,” he said.

NICOLAS BRULLIARD is senior editor of National Parks magazine.



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