

National Parks

THE MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

SUMMER 2019
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SHOULD DEVILS TOWER BE RENAMED?

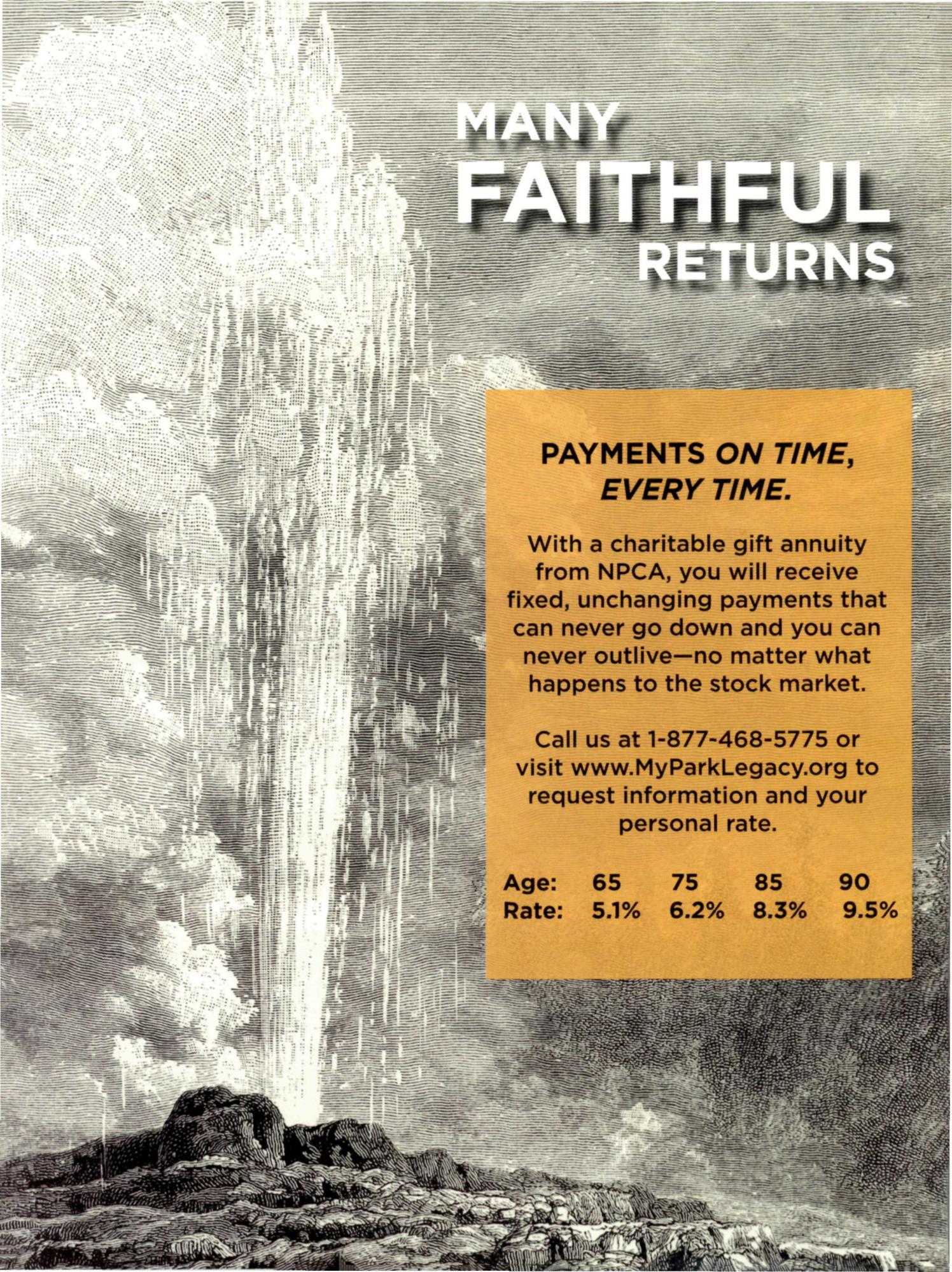
Debating the delicate question of how to handle place names that hurt, offend or simply befuddle.

A FATHER-SON
ROAD TRIP TO
GREAT BASIN

GOLDEN SPIKE'S
LOST HISTORY

A MOODY VIEW
OF THE GREAT
SMOKIES





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National Parks

SUMMER 2019 / Vol. 93 No. 3

FEATURES

28

NAMING MATTERS

Should Devils Tower be called Bear Lodge? Is Tacoma a better moniker than Mount Rainier? Around the country, activists are fighting to change place names they deem offensive, hurtful or arbitrary, and national parks are frequently the targets of these campaigns.

By Nicolas Brulliard

38

WATER, SMOKE, SPIRIT, FOREST, GHOST, LAND, SKY

A photographic essay on Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

By Matt Brass

48

OPEN ROADS & ENDLESS SKIES

At Great Basin National Park, a father and son gaze at stars, touch ancient trees, and reflect on space, time and the universe.

By Todd Christopher

48

DETAIL OF an ancient bristlecone pine in Great Basin National Park.

© GEORGE WARD/ALAMY STOCKPHOTO

COVER:
THE MILKY WAY
traces an arc over Devils Tower in Wyoming.

© DAVID LANE

CONTENTS

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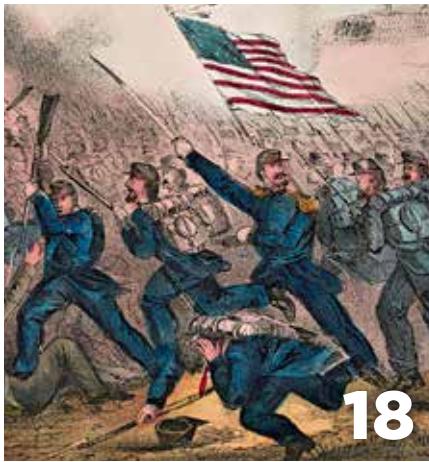


150 YEARS after the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, the stories of Chinese railroad laborers are finally coming to the fore.

12



26



18



64

DEPARTMENTS

SUMMER 2019 / Vol. 93 No. 3

3 President's Outlook

4 Editor's Note

6 Letters

8 Echoes

10 Trail Mix

More wolves for Isle Royale, correcting the record at Golden Spike, new parks on the block, a 10-mile-long puddle in the desert.

24 Denizens

Bison that contain cattle genes are destroying Grand Canyon National Park's fragile meadows, but removing the animals is no easy task.

By Nicolas Brulliard

26 Findings

Fish? Blueberries? Candy? New research in Voyageurs National Park shows wolves aren't exactly the diehard meat eaters of legend.

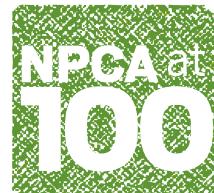
By Jacob Baynham

64 Backstory

Sixty-five years ago, park advocates joined a Supreme Court justice on an epic hike to save the landscape he loved.

By Todd Christopher

68 That Was Then



OUR BIRTHDAY

2019 is NPCA's centennial. Celebrate with us all year in National Parks magazine.



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President's Outlook



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Call of the Wild

"Mom, take the whistle out of your mouth. Put the bear ... spray ... down."

These were the instructions from my grown son as we lay awake in the tent. It was my first experience in Alaska's remote wilderness, and I guess it showed.

We were in Kobuk Valley National Park, 25 miles north of the Arctic Circle. Earlier that day in 2007, a small group of us — mostly NPCA staff — had been dropped off by plane onto a sand dune. We would spend the next few days camping, hiking and taking in the beautiful surroundings. We also met with local native Alaskans, who kindly shared their stories with us.

Just 847 people visited the park that year. I felt lucky to be among them, but I was clearly out of my element.

My parents didn't have the means to take us on cross-country vacations to Yellowstone or Yosemite when I was growing up. Instead, I visited our wonderful local parks, my first introduction to the outdoors. My favorite was Pennypack Park in Philadelphia, which felt like another world with its miles of trails to hike and waters to explore.

For family trips, we piled into the car to explore nearby sites such as Gettysburg National Military Park and Assateague Island National Seashore. I treasure those memories and credit my parents with helping me to develop a love for nature and history.

But it was that trip to Kobuk Valley that opened my eyes to what wilderness was. While we didn't see a bear, we did find wolf tracks outside our tent the next morning, and caribou tracks throughout the park. The endless dunes and vast mountains left me feeling small and utterly thrilled. If I didn't already know I'd be spending the rest of my life defending national parks, I knew it then.

Wherever your adventures take you this summer, whether a neighborhood haven or a faraway park, I hope you make lifelong memories. Don't forget your bear spray!

With gratitude,
Theresa Pierno



Editor's Note



© MATT BRASS

AN OPEN DOOR at the Alfred Reagan House on the Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail.

Beautiful Things

Matt Brass is an accomplished illustrator, designer, filmmaker and creative director, but he didn't have big artistic ambitions when he started photographing Great Smoky Mountains National Park about five years ago. He was simply taking photos of his children — he has seven of them — in a place they love. The family's ties to the park go back several generations, and they head out there at least once a month and often more frequently.

The thing is that Matt can get a bit compulsive about his side projects. ("Some people binge-watch Netflix," he said. "I draw pictures while I binge-watch or edit photos or make movies.") He was shooting hundreds, sometimes thousands, of photos on each of his trips, and he started making small photo books as mementos. Over time, he began to think that his collection could be a *book book*.

That project is in the works, but in the meantime, we are very pleased to present a selection of his images in a photo essay, beginning on p. 38. All too frequently, national parks photos are overly saturated, chipper and pretty, so it's always a delight to come across original work. Matt's photos are, by turns, mysterious, moody, evocative and sometimes gritty. They capture his kids, to an extent, but also the park's varied landscapes, relics and old structures. "As much as I love nature, the wild, the raw, there are few things more compelling than a human story," he said. "There's something about that human layer over the wild one that adds a level of intensity."

He hopes the photos make people say, "Yeah, this photo is how I feel when I'm here." Or that they just stir up feelings of some kind in viewers — commonality or nostalgia or recognition.

"To me, the most beautiful things are things that connect to something that's already in you," he said. "Maybe that's corny, but that's what I'd like to accomplish."

Rona Marech

NPMAG@NPACA.ORG

National Parks

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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 of 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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If you have any questions about your membership, call Member Services at 800.628.7275. On a selective basis, NPCA makes its membership list available to organizations that our members may find of interest. If you would like your name removed from this list, please call us at the number listed above.

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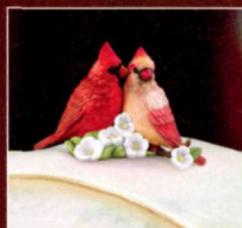
Showcasing renowned artist Joe Hautman's idyllic songbird pairs among soft springtime blossoms, this vintage-inspired delight is inspired by costly music boxes found in antique stores. Lavished with 22K gold, it features ornate scrolling edges and raised, decorative accents.

A pair of affectionate cardinals "nests" among blossoms on the lid, hand-sculpted and hand-painted in remarkable detail. Colorful songbirds and treetop blossoms grace all four sides and the lid. It plays "The Wind Beneath My Wings" and includes a heartfelt inspiration inside: *May all your days be filled with sunshine and song*.

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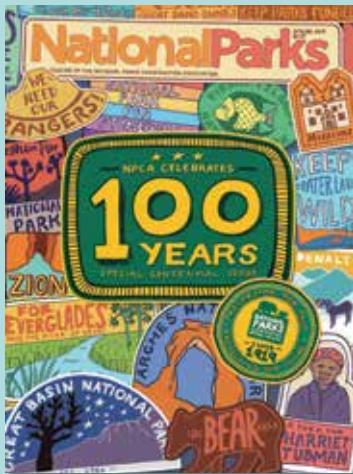
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Letters



HAPPY 100TH BIRTHDAY

I am thrilled to have received my first National Parks magazine, a 16th-birthday gift from my mother. As you celebrate your centennial anniversary, I see how generations of park rangers and supporters contribute to the future of our national parks. From Emmett Till and the civil rights struggle in Mississippi to the stories told in “The Ranger Project” [Winter 2019], I see idealism turned into actions time and again. Your ability to fight those who keep trying to exploit public lands shows how ordinary people can come together to confront and overcome extraordinary challenges.

Happy birthday to NPCA. May 2019 bring new inspirations, new goals and new achievements in your endeavors.

ANGELA ZHENG

Sunnyvale, CA

I just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed your centennial issue. I particularly liked the two-page spread “100 Years of Advocacy,” the gorgeous photos in “Victorious!”, the article “Fighting for the Grizzly” and the stories told in “The Path Ahead.” I read and loved all of those stories, but Barbara Takei’s essay has inspired me to look for some adult historical fiction and nonfiction books to read about the American incarceration camps where Japanese Americans were imprisoned during World War II. I am a retired public elementary school librarian and had read a number of children’s books on the topic but none at the adult level. Now I will! It is a story that has not received the attention it should.

Thank you for producing such a worthwhile publication. I wish I had visited more national parks in my lifetime. I will probably not visit many more in my old age, but I thoroughly enjoy each issue of your magazine where at least I can read about them. I also worry about the impact that our current administration has had and will have on our most valuable assets: our land and its wildlife and plant life. I want my young grandsons to be able to enjoy them as they grow older.

I cannot afford to contribute any more than I already do but am thankful for all you do to preserve our national parks.

SUSAN D. BELLOFF

Adams, NY

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

The Spring 2019 issue of National Parks was another example of superb writing, insights and photography. I was particularly moved by the reprint of Robert Sterling Yard’s 1920 essay. Yard’s essay correctly identified the threats to nature — including parks — from commercial interests, but he couldn’t have predicted how much they ended up multiplying and spreading. I blame my baby boomer generation for failing to deal effectively with these threats around the world when we should have.

CHARLES H. ELLIS III

Washington, DC

SHOWCASING STONEWALL

As longtime members of NPCA, we’re writing to express our pleasure in the way you have made a distinct effort to showcase the issues of the LGBTQ community by highlighting the Stonewall National Monument several times in the Spring issue of National Parks. We also want

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to congratulate you and the magazine staff for this great issue. It's extremely well done and does credit to the long and successful history of this organization in defending and promoting the National Park System.

**JAMES L. BOONE AND
JOSEPH J. BUCUZZO**

Portland, OR

A GETTYSBURG TALE

This is just a quick note to say how much I enjoyed reading the article by Alan Spears in the Spring issue about visiting parks as a child, playing with toy soldiers and now working for NPCA. It's great that the National Park Service is highlighting stories like the ones he tells about Gettysburg's African American history at parks around the country.

ROBERT A. LINSENMEIER
Evanston, IL

WASHING HISTORY'S STAIN

I read with great interest Kate Siber's article, "Mississippi Reckoning" [Winter 2019]. I commend both the Park Service and NPCA on their efforts to develop national park sites centered on the key sites and figures of the civil rights movement. One of my greatest regrets in life is that I didn't step away from my comfortable college life and join in the historic efforts to end discrimination against African Americans (and other minorities). Racism is still very much a part of American life, and these national park sites could do a lot to educate people and help wash away this stain.

JERRY W. VENTERS
Kansas City, MO

I have enjoyed the magazine for years, but it is the Winter 2019 issue that has prompted me to say, "Thank you!" for the first time. I was surprised to see the face of Emmett Till on the cover. The cor-

responding story as well as many of the articles in this issue affirm that national parks are for all Americans as well as visitors from around the world. NPCA is an organization I am proud to support.

DORIS MARTIN

Mount Solon, VA

Thanks for the article about Emmett Till and the Park Service plan to remember him ["Mississippi Reckoning," Winter 2019]. We must not forget incidents like young Emmett's death, and we must face the causes of violence and promote the healing this country needs. The new civil rights site in Mississippi is a good step in that direction. A call or letter to those who represent us in Congress to point out the importance of this proposed site will help us move forward to a better country for all.

WILLIE DICKERSON
Snohomish, WA

HAIL TO THE RANGERS

Thanks for the outstanding Winter issue of National Parks. I especially enjoyed the portraits of dedicated Park Service employees in "The Ranger Project." As I write this, the government is once again shut down, making things far more difficult for already overburdened Park Service employees. I have the greatest admiration for the people who devote their lives to the unique treasures of our country.

KATHY VEJTASA
Roseburg, OR

MEMORIES OF A YOUNG RANGER

Thank you for the article "Valley of Memories" in the Winter 2019 issue of National Parks. As one of two park rangers living in Cataloochee from 1985 to 1987, I was able to meet many former residents and descendants of both Big and Little Cataloochee. While some were still unhappy that their families were forced to move outside the park, the majority were

friendly, neighborly and even thankful that the national park had preserved their valley. I really enjoyed listening to their stories of growing up in this remote place — stories of adventures, hardships and colorful family members who have since passed on. Cataloochee is a special place, and your article brought back memories of a young ranger trying to do his best to achieve the Park Service's mission while also recognizing the viewpoints of those who had once called the valley their home.

SCOT MCELVEEN
Cortez, CO

CAT CARRIERS

The article "Saving the Panther" in the Winter 2019 issue was of special interest to me, as I grew up in Miami during the '60s and '70s. I recall reports of panther numbers hovering around 50 throughout that time, so I was thrilled to learn they've increased to over 100. I remember the controversial plan to introduce Texas panthers into the gene pool and am happy it revitalized the population, but I did not know NPCA helped make it happen! I'm grateful the organization stepped up and paid for transporting the Texas cats to Florida. It makes me proud to be a member!

GEORGANN MEADOWS
Ormond Beach, FL

CORRECTION

In the map featured on page 51 of the Spring 2019 issue, the labels for the Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems were inadvertently swapped. We regret the error.

CLARIFICATIONS

Two photographs in the Spring issue were not clearly labeled. The image that appeared on pages 36-37 shows Evergreen Cemetery, which is adjacent to Gettysburg National Military Park, and the picture in the right-hand corner of page 59 includes land both inside and outside Canyonlands National Park.



Echoes

If you look at the reasons the Navy listed for choosing this area, they all boil down to convenience. ...They can choose to train elsewhere. We can't move Olympic National Park.

NPCA's Julia Tesch quoted in *The Leader* talking about the Navy's jet training exercises in the skies over Olympic, which threaten the natural soundscape in the park. In May, NPCA filed a Freedom of Information Act complaint in federal court claiming the Navy has withheld important public information about the impact of the jet noise on the park.

It really scares us that wells could be drilled right next to a national park like Sequoia, which is already one of the most polluted parks in the country for air pollution.

NPCA's Mark Rose in the *Los Angeles Times* following the release of a report detailing the Trump administration's plan to open more than a million acres of California land to hydraulic fracturing, or fracking. Conservationists say fracking can pollute groundwater, degrade air quality and trigger earthquakes, among other concerns. National parks including Sequoia, Kings Canyon and Yosemite could be affected if the plan proceeds.

Today's ruling is a major victory for the preservation of historic Jamestown and all we continue to learn about this place.

Theresa Pierno, president of NPCA, quoted in the Courthouse News Service after a federal appeals court ruled that the Army Corps of Engineers failed to follow the law in permitting Dominion Energy to construct an electric power transmission line across the James River near historic Jamestown in Virginia.

PHOTO: HOH RAIN FOREST IN WASHINGTON'S OLYMPIC NATIONAL PARK IS CONSIDERED TO BE ONE OF THE QUIETEST PLACES IN THE LOWER 48.



© JAMIE PHAM/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



Restoring Wolves at Isle Royale

After years of research, the National Park Service has begun to bring more wolves to Isle Royale National Park, an island in Lake Superior. NPCA staff strongly support the plan, which they say will help keep the island's rapidly growing moose population in check and improve the overall health of the park's ecosystem. In fall of 2018, the first four wolves from Minnesota were released on the island; this winter, the Park Service partnered with Canada to bring an additional 11 wolves from nearby Ontario.

1. The Plan

The goal is to release 20 to 30 wolves over three years to address the population imbalance between predator and prey that existed when the plan was adopted in 2018.

2 vs 1,475



2. The Capture

Capture optimally takes place between late fall and early winter each year in areas near the park. Researchers use strict guidelines for selecting wolves.



MICHIGAN



MINNESOTA



ONTARIO



Challenging Weather

Lake Superior's sometimes severe weather can affect the ability to travel safely to and from the island.



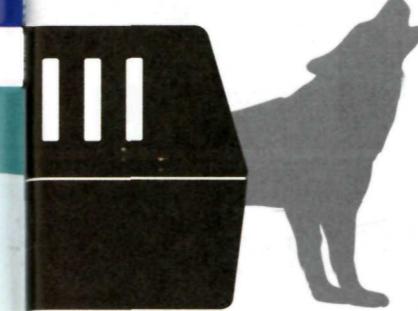
3. Transporting

It can be difficult to reach an island national park, and it requires many modes of transportation.



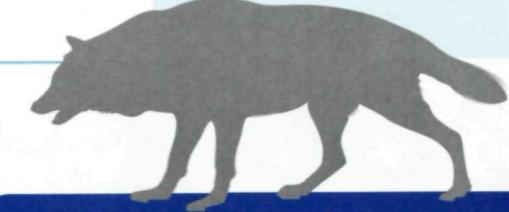
4. The Release

Wolves have already been introduced in the western part of the park. Park employees have not revealed precise release locations.



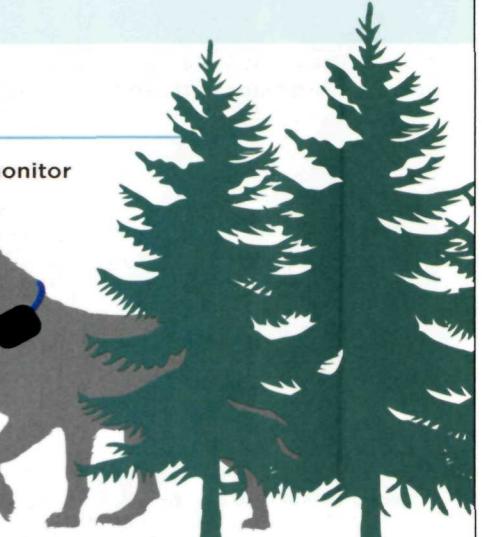
The Numbers

20-30
to be brought to the park over a period of
3 years



5. Monitoring

The Park Service will track the wolves and monitor progress to ensure a successful recovery.



6. The Latest

One of the wolves from Minnesota died of natural causes, and one left the island on an ice bridge during the polar vortex in January, so the total number of wolves on the island is now 15. The setbacks are not unexpected and reinforce the need to do a series of introductions over several years. The breeding season began in February, and Isle Royale may see new pups this year. The Park Service plans to bring more wolves from Michigan this fall.

A Growing Population

2 ORIGINAL WOLVES + 2 WOLVES FROM MINNESOTA + 11 WOLVES FROM CANADA



POPULATION
15



To learn more and follow along,
visit: [#wolfwatch](http://nepca.org/wolves)



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Golden Spike Redux

The role that Chinese immigrants played in building the Transcontinental Railroad has long been buried. 150 years after the completion of the tracks, that's finally changing.

In the celebratory photograph taken after the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad on May 10, 1869, two mighty locomotives from East and West meet at Promontory Summit, Utah, on May 10, 1869. Engineers shake hands and pop champagne, surrounded by a cheering crowd of railroad workers. But the photo tells an incomplete story: None of the 20,000 or so Chinese immigrants who had risked their lives to blast granite and break through the Sierra Nevada by hand seem to be included.

That omission has long bothered journalist Corky Lee, 71, who first saw

the famed photograph when he was in junior high. In 2002, and then every year since 2014, Lee and Leland Wong, the great-grandson of a railroad laborer, have hosted a flash mob of sorts to re-create the tableau at Golden Spike National Historical Park, which preserves a stretch of the railroad and the spot where the last spike was installed. Lee — the self-described “undisputed unofficial Asian American photographer laureate” — has taken pictures of Chinese workers’ descendants and other Asian American supporters in front of the locomotives and a natural formation now known as the Chinese Arch because of its location near a

GING CUI, WONG FOOK AND LEE SHAO (from left), three of eight Chinese workers who installed the final rail of the transcontinental railroad, pictured at the 50th anniversary celebration of the railroad’s completion.

former Chinese work camp. He describes these works as acts of “photographic justice.”

“Some people would say, we’re reclaiming Chinese American history,” Lee said. “In actuality, we’re reclaiming American history, and the Chinese contribution is part and parcel of that.”

On the 150th anniversary of the completion of the rail line, it’s no longer necessary to stage guerrilla actions to highlight the contributions of Chinese laborers. Thanks to decades of efforts by community leaders, activists and workers’ descendants, the stories of thousands of Chinese immigrants who helped build the railroad are beginning to come to the fore. With heightened public attention during the sesquicentennial, organizers and park officials have been working to correct the record with exhibits, performances and other activities — both at the historic site,

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where a three-day-long anniversary event took place in May, and around the state.

"I always say a picture may be worth a thousand words, but it doesn't tell the whole story. We are expanding the lens to see the workers who built the railroads, not just the industrialists," said Max Chang, a board member of Spike 150, the volunteer committee that partnered with the park to organize the celebration there and is also coordinating commemorative events elsewhere in Utah.

Michael Kwan's great-great-grandfather labored on the railroad, but his story, and even his name, have been lost to history. That kind of erasure is all too common and has contributed to the stereotype that Asian Americans are perpetual foreigners, say activists and academics. A couple years ago, Kwan, a judge in Utah, received an anonymous note telling him he should "get sent back to China."

"Even though society recognizes the significance of the railroad and what it means to America, it doesn't understand the role the Chinese played. We have bled, and we have died, building and sustaining America," said Kwan, 57, president of the Chinese Railroad Workers Descendants Association, which aims to give their forefathers their due.

Built between 1863 and 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad extended the existing eastern railway network, from outside Omaha, Nebraska, to Oakland, California. Western Pacific built the line from Oakland to Sacramento, Central Pacific from Sacramento to Utah, and Union Pacific from the eastern terminus to Utah.

Out of racial prejudice, Central



NONE OF THE 20,000 or so Chinese immigrants who worked on the Transcontinental Railroad seem to be included in the celebratory 1869 photo taken after the completion of the tracks.

Pacific leadership had initially wanted only whites in its workforce, according to Gordon Chang, a history professor at Stanford University. Though a few hundred responded to recruitment efforts, many soon walked off to chase after a new gold strike.

Central Pacific turned to Chinese immigrants, an interested and available workforce. About 12,000 to 15,000 Chinese — many of whom hailed from impoverished Guangdong province near Hong Kong — worked for the railroad company at any one time, but due to turnover and unclear records, the exact number is unknown.

Chang writes that these Chinese workers "helped solidify the western future of the United States" in "Ghosts of Gold Mountain: The Epic Story of the Chinese Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad," which was just published.

These immigrants played a crucial

role in finishing the railroad, performing hard, dangerous work for long hours at low wages that were one-half to two-thirds of what their white counterparts were earning. Afterward, some returned to China, but many found work in other trades or continued to work on railroad lines throughout the United States.

And yet, rather than being appreciated for their contributions, Chinese immigrants dealt with rising xenophobia in the years that followed the railroad's completion. Amid economic downturns, they became scapegoats. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act became the first federal law barring immigration based on race and class; it also prevented Chinese immigrants already here from becoming citizens. For more than half a century, only merchants, teachers, students and their servants were permitted to enter the U.S.,

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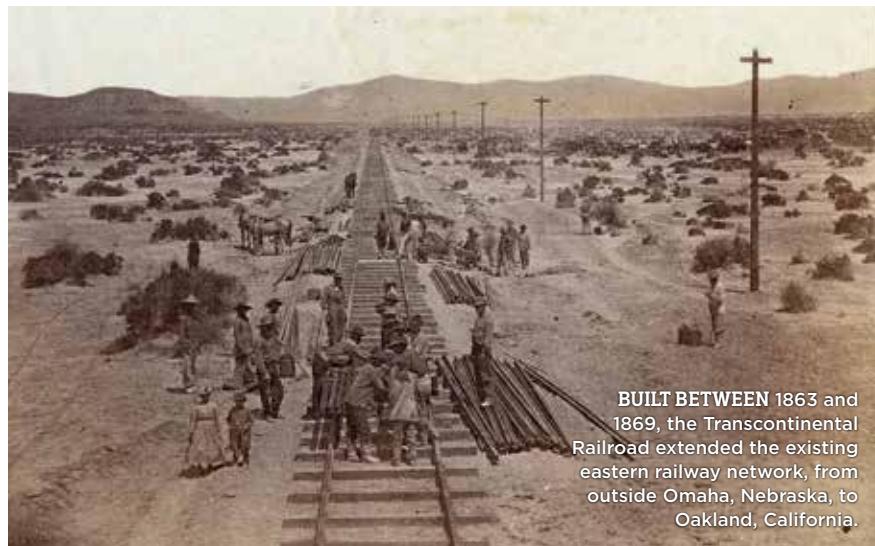
Connie Young Yu, a descendant of a railroad worker, has spent decades restoring the Chinese to the official record. Growing up in San Francisco, she never learned about early Chinese immigrants at school. Only the stories at home, passed down from generation to generation, kept the history of these pioneers alive.

The railroad gave her great-grandfather, Lee Wong Sang, a foothold in America, she said. As a foreman, he picked up building skills, practiced teamwork and learned English. According to family lore, he accumulated enough savings to acquire a \$20 gold piece, which he wore in a waist pouch until a fateful day, when the coin tumbled into the latrines. He mourned its loss for a month. Later, he became a merchant in San Francisco's Chinatown and sent away for his wife in China.

In the wake of the 1906 earthquake, when Sang's American-born son ran into the shop to retrieve his birth certificate to prove his citizenship, soldiers bayoneted him. Only his padded jacket saved him, said Yu, who calls herself an "activist historian." She co-edited "Voices From the Railroad," a collection of stories by nine descendants of Chinese railroad workers, recently published by the Chinese Historical Society of America.

In 1969, at the centennial celebration of the Transcontinental Railroad, then-Secretary of Transportation John Volpe boasted, "Who else but Americans could drill tunnels in mountains 30 feet deep in the snow?" In fact, the Chinese laborers who were behind much of that monumental feat had been prohibited from becoming naturalized citizens at the time. Fifty years after Volpe made his pronouncement, government officials are telling a different story.

"We certainly want to honor the Chinese laborers and give recognition to their unfair treatment," said Leslie Crossland, Golden Spike's superintendent. "Clearly the Transcontinental Railroad would not have been completed without



BUILT BETWEEN 1863 and 1869, the Transcontinental Railroad extended the existing eastern railway network, from outside Omaha, Nebraska, to Oakland, California.

ALFRED A HART/STANFORD UNIVERSITY

their contributions."

The festivities in May included music performances, storytelling, speeches, historical re-enactments and steam train demonstrations. Spike 150 installed a temporary mural that depicts the storied champagne shot, with text asking visitors to consider the faces that are missing. Another temporary exhibit features photos of Chinese workers. Most are anonymous, as the exhibit explains, because the railroad company either didn't record their names or relied on nicknames. They weren't perceived as individuals, noted Aimee McConkie, director of Spike 150.

For years, on weekends from Memorial Day through Labor Day, a dedicated team of volunteers has performed a re-enactment of the last spike being driven into the last railroad tie. For the first time, at the 150th anniversary event, the volunteer actors re-created a moment before that moment, to portray the Chinese and Irish workers who laid down the final two rails.

"Today we take this opportunity at the 150 to reclaim a place in history," Yu said in a speech. "To honor the courage, fortitude and sacrifice of Chinese railroad workers and their legacy in America, which involves us all."

The park's focus on Chinese contributions isn't ending in 2019. Staff are committed to continuing to include that history in ranger programs, exhibits and educational materials. They are also in the process of translating brochures into Chinese and updating the visitor center exhibits to highlight the stories of Chinese laborers. "Pretty exciting, since the majority of our current exhibits are original to the building, so about 50 years old," Crossland said.

In addition, a fundraising drive is underway for a statue that would honor railroad workers by commemorating the "Ten Mile Day." On April 28, 1869, a couple weeks before the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad, a legion of Chinese workers and eight Irishmen laid a record length of track. A depiction of that remarkable achievement ideally will help spark discussions about pay inequity, interracial cooperation and working conditions, said Kwan, who is helping spearhead the initiative. The location of the statue is still to be determined.

"We hope the piece will capture people's attention and drive them to question the status quo," he said. "To gain insight and empathy for the new immigrants of today."

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PIONEERING civil rights activists Medgar and Myrlie Evers in an undated photo. The couple married on Christmas Eve, 1951.

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the land is transferred to the National Park Service.

“The Mill Springs designation puts the spotlight on exactly how important the battle was to American history, and how important it is for Kentucky and the nation,” Burkett said. He expects the site’s new status to give the area a substantive economic boost, and in fact, the number of visitors has increased since President Donald Trump signed the bipartisan bill, he said.

In Mississippi, the Evers monument will be the state’s first national park site related to the civil rights movement.

Medgar Evers served in World War II and went on to become a prominent civil rights activist. He organized voter registration drives and protests against segregation in the 1950s and ‘60s and investigated Emmett Till’s murder for the NAACP. He was serving as the NAACP’s first field secretary for Mississippi when a white supremacist shot and killed him in his driveway in 1963. Myrlie Evers-Williams, now 86, worked alongside her husband starting in the 1950s and continued to work as a civil rights activist for decades after his death. (She changed her name after

Our New Parks

A sweeping public lands law paves the way for the addition of Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument and Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument to the National Park System.

On January 19, 1862, more than 190 Union and Confederate soldiers died in the Battle of Mill Springs in Kentucky. Deadlier battles soon overshadowed what had happened that day, but it was the first decisive Union victory of the Civil War, and many history buffs consider it an important fight to study.

“It’s like a microcosm of the war,” said Bruce Burkett, the president of the board of the Mill Springs Battlefield Association, which currently manages the site. “Southerners fighting Southerners. Northerners fighting Southerners. Urban and rural. Brother against brother.”

Yet the battle isn’t well-known, and relatively few visitors travel to rural Kentucky to see the battlefield. That is about to change.

Earlier this year, Mill Springs Battlefield National Monument was

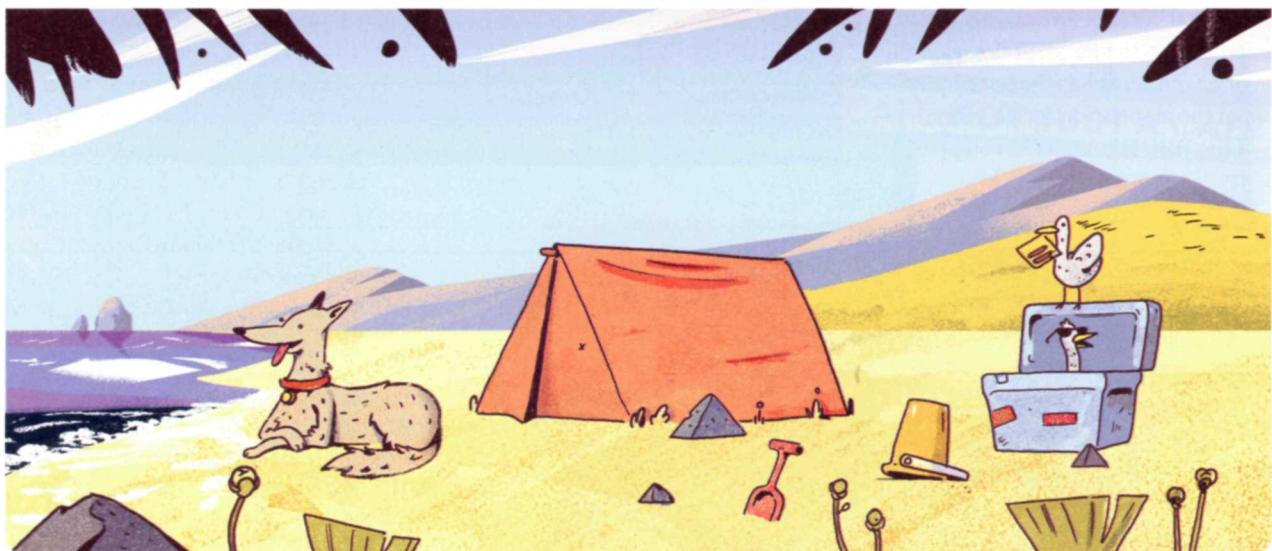
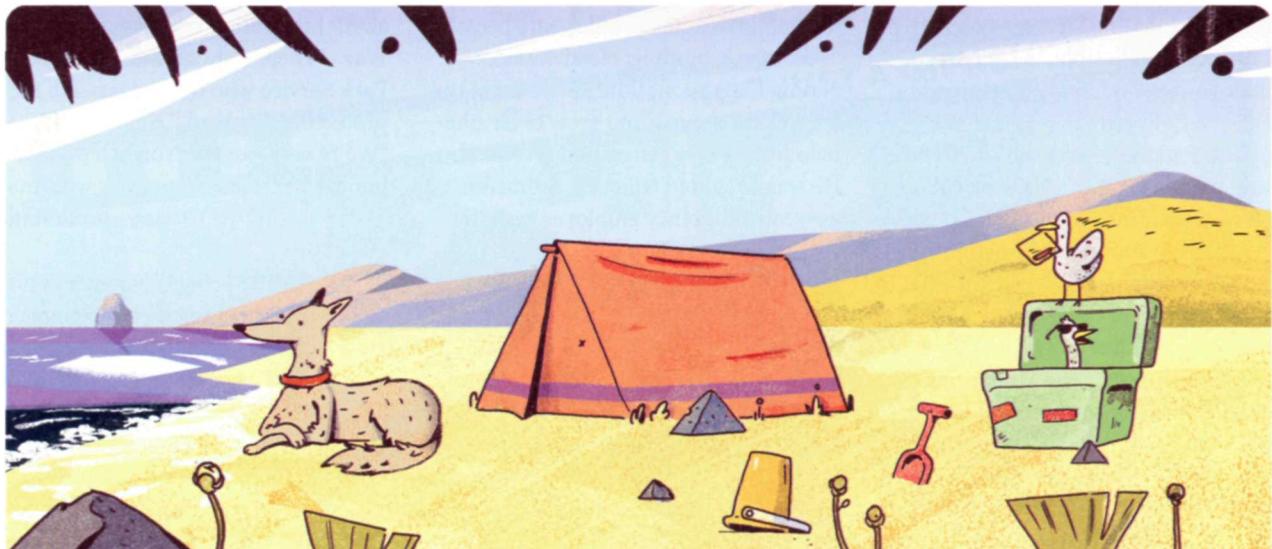
authorized in sweeping public lands legislation. The law also created Medgar and Myrlie Evers Home National Monument, which preserves the Mississippi house where the renowned civil rights activists lived with their children. Both sites will officially become part of the National Park System once

A GOOD DAY FOR CONSERVATIONISTS

The designation of the new park sites represents only a fraction of the good conservation news in the John D. Dingell, Jr. Conservation, Management, and Recreation Act, more than 100 bipartisan bills representing the biggest lands package in years. The act established two additional national monuments (which will be managed by other agencies), created six new national heritage areas, expanded national parks by over 42,000 acres, designated 1.3 million acres as wilderness, expanded the National Trails System by 2,600 miles, expanded the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System by 621 miles, and will prevent new mining operations on 370,000 acres near North Cascades and Yellowstone National Parks. To learn more, go to <https://www.npca.org/landspackage>.

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1. Cooler is now green 2. Bird has one hot dog 3. Distant rock is missing on the horizon 4. Gold on dogs collar 5. Bucket and shovel swapped
6. Dogs mouth closed 7. One mountaintop missing 8. Dog mount missing in foreground 9. Tent has a stripe 10. One plant flipped in front



Trail Mix

remarrying in 1976.)

Their former house, on a quiet street in Jackson, Mississippi, is open to visitors by appointment. It is owned by Tougaloo College.

"The Park Service can afford to take it and do things that the college couldn't necessarily afford," said Minnie Watson, the site's sole staff member, who met Evers when she was a college freshman and gives tours of the home.

The Evers home sits on less than an acre of property. The Mill Springs Battlefield, which has barely changed since the Civil War, covers a much larger area — around 1,500 acres — and is owned by several entities including Mill Springs Battlefield Association and the American Battlefield Trust. It could take several years before all the land is turned over to the Park Service, said Bill Neikirk, who served as the board president of the association for 20 years.

If the Park Service hadn't stepped in,

the battlefield might have had to close to the public within a couple years because of shrinking funding, Neikirk said, adding that as longtime members of the organization move and grow older, the help from a new generation is critical. He was delighted when an enthusiastic 34-year-old agency employee recently

stopped by the battlefield and spoke about his abiding interest in the Civil War. "There's always someone at the Park Service who has the passion for protecting this land," Neikirk said. "We're very excited. You can put a hundred exclamation marks with that."

—RONA MARECH



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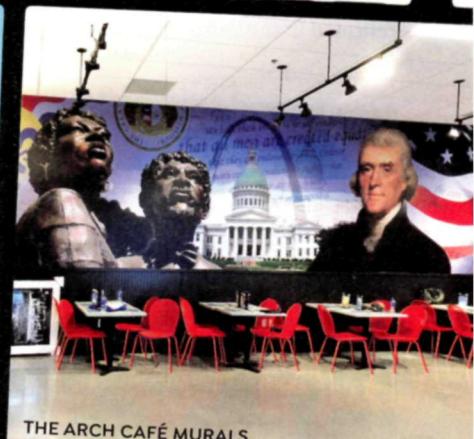
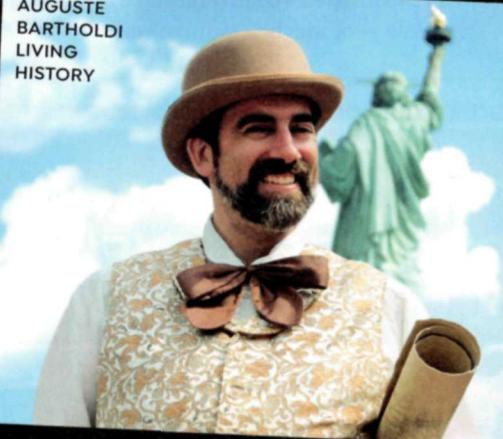


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"It was just such a lucky shot," said L.A.-based photographer Elliot McGucken. He was in Death Valley National Park in March, when he stumbled across a 10-mile-long body of water that materialized after around 0.84 inches of rain fell in a 24-hour span. When the wind died down, McGucken snapped the panoramic photo above, capturing the mountains reflected in the still water. "You forget all

the technical details and science when you're out there, and you just go for the ethereal quality," he said.

To McGucken's delight, his images ricocheted around social media, and numerous media outlets picked up the story. Not everyone was quite so impressed. Park spokeswoman Abby Wines dismissed #deathvalleylake as a puddle — or maybe a skim of water.

"There really isn't a word for what it is," she said. Plus, she pointed out, the event wasn't as rare as the stories breathlessly reported. Water had collected in the same spot earlier in the winter, and the rainfall didn't break any records. But lake or glorified puddle, even Wines had to admit the nameless body had its merits: "It *was* beautiful," she said.

—RONA MARECH

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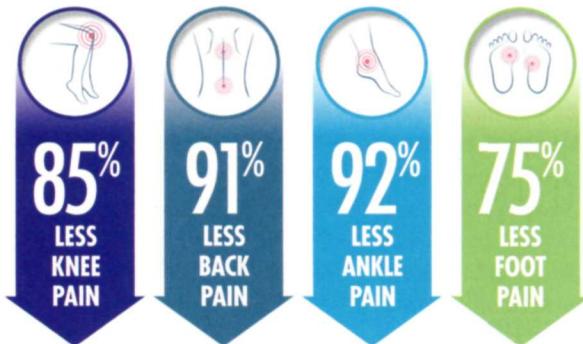
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THE DESCENDANTS of bison-cattle hybrids between bison and cattle have taken up residence on the Kaibab Plateau in Grand Canyon National Park.

Mexico. Some stories from tribes in northern Arizona mention bison, but there is no definitive evidence that the animals historically lived in the Grand Canyon.

The origin of today's herd is much clearer. In 1906, a frontiersman named Charles Jones assembled a herd of bison captured in places from Manitoba to Texas and attempted to breed them with Galloway cattle. This type of experimentation was common at the time, and these days, many bison contain some cattle DNA. Jones struggled to build a profitable enterprise, though, and he gave up after a few years. He sold some of the animals, but about 20 were pretty much left to their own devices in House Rock Valley near the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. By the time the state of Arizona purchased the herd in 1927, it had grown to 98 bison.

For decades, the herd stayed in the valley, and the Arizona Game and Fish Department managed the population through roundups and controlled hunting. That changed in the late 1990s, when wildfires opened up a path to the Grand Canyon, and greater hunting pressure caused a few animals to leave. Others followed, and by 2009, the bison had stopped going back to House Rock Valley. Now they spend most of their time in the national park, where they're safe from hunters.

The bison have thrived in their new homes, but they've not been very considerate residents. The area has a high density of Native American archaeological sites, and park staff have documented broken artifacts and damage to prehistoric structures they attribute to the bison. They also suspect the animals are responsible for E. coli

Home on the Range?

Bison are destroying Grand Canyon's fragile meadows, but removing the animals is no easy task.

ON ANY GIVEN SUMMER DAY, visitors driving past the North Rim entrance to Grand Canyon National Park may spot bison grazing peacefully by the side of the road. The subalpine meadows and forests of quaking aspen, Engelmann spruce and Douglas fir on the Kaibab Plateau are more reminiscent of Yellowstone than the Grand Canyon's desert scrub, and the bison look perfectly at home.

Conservationists don't see it that way. They argue that the bison don't belong in the park, where the animals overgraze meadows, contaminate water sources and trample archaeological sites. Left alone, the herd of more than 600 — no one knows exactly how many — could more than double over the next decade.

"I'm concerned we don't have a handle on the impacts," said Roger Clark, a program director at Grand Canyon Trust, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the Grand Canyon and the Colorado Plateau. "It's a problem that's bad that's going to get worse."

Before bison were nearly hunted to extinction in the 19th century, they occupied a wide range of ecosystems from Canada to northern

“We said it was like crack, but the Game and Fish didn’t like that term, so we called it cake.”

bacteria they’ve detected in water, and the bison’s overgrazing has paved the way for exotic plants to take root and placed rare native plants at risk. Martha Hahn, the park’s former science and resource management division chief, said the endemic plants “didn’t evolve with that kind of grazing. You’re going to see some species blink out.”

Several years ago, park staff decided to take action and used food pellets containing molasses to round up a small number of bison. It worked so well, the animals started chasing the truck with the feed when they saw it coming. “We said it was like crack, but the Game and Fish didn’t like that term, so we called it cake,” Hahn said. The corralled bison were trucked back to House Rock Valley, but once the gate there was opened, they were back in the park within 24 hours, she said.

Exactly what to do with the animals some derisively call cattalo or beefalo hinges on what they actually are. The Park Service used to consider them non-native hybrids, but the agency has

since reversed its position. In 2014, the Department of the Interior charted a course for restoring bison on “appropriate landscapes” within their historical range, and in a 2016 report, the Park Service declared them native to the park. Critics of the report said it was based largely on circumstantial evidence and were not convinced by the report’s conclusion. “It’s an introduced hybrid species — and decidedly not native,” said NPCA’s Kevin Dahl, who supports removing every bison from the park. “They’re damaging an area where the introduction of even native bison would be a problem.”

The animal’s change in status meant that instead of eradicating undesirable intruders, the Park Service was charged with maintaining a viable bison population on the plateau. Park managers considered many options to reduce the size of the herd including fertility control, the reintroduction of wolves and the use of dogs to herd bison, but they rejected them as ineffective or inappropriate. Instead, they opted for a plan

to capture and transport bison to areas managed by tribes, state and federal agencies, and other willing recipients. They also decided to recruit volunteers and tribal members to cull the herd.

Arizona wildlife managers frown on the proposed use of volunteers rather than recreational hunters, but they support the idea of maintaining a herd in the area, in part because the animals that wander outside the park boundaries can be hunted. “These animals represent tremendous value to the citizens in Arizona in the form of hunting and wildlife viewing,” said Jim Zieler, chairman of the Arizona Game and Fish Commission.

Two years after the release of the plan, the removal effort has yet to start in earnest. A pilot corraling project scheduled for last fall was scuttled because early snow had caused the bison to move to less accessible areas. A change of park superintendent, chronic understaffing and a government shutdown over the winter have not helped. Now park staff are hoping to begin anew in September.

Jan Balsom, the park’s senior adviser on stewardship and tribal programs, said that if all goes well, bison will be captured and “driven to happy homes.” The overall goal is to reduce the herd to fewer than 200 animals, but how many bison are left in the park after the three-to-five-year removal efforts is anyone’s guess.

“We don’t have any illusions about our success,” Balsom said. “It will take a while to get to a point where they’re not damaging the resources.” **NP**

BISON BREAK

Every winter, hundreds of bison from Yellowstone National Park cross the park’s border in Montana to find food. It’s often a fatal move: Many of those animals end up getting captured and sent to a slaughterhouse. NPCA, Native American tribes and other allies have long objected to this, saying it’s not an appropriate way to manage wildlife. They have pushed instead for the animals slated for slaughter to be moved to suitable tribal and public lands, and this spring, their campaign finally advanced. Five Yellowstone bison were transferred to the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes of the Fort Peck Reservation, where they will be quarantined and, if declared disease-free, released to bolster existing herds or establish new ones. Activists hope this is one of many such moves. “That would allow Yellowstone bison to play a role in the conservation of the bison broadly,” said NPCA’s Stephanie Adams.

NICOLAS BRULLIARD is associate editor of National Parks magazine.



EACH YEAR, Tom Gable (pictured here) and his team equip a handful of wolves with GPS collars so they can track the animals' movements and gather information about their diet. This wolf's collar recorded more than 12,000 locations between February and October 2018.

wolves. He's finding that they kill a lot of beavers. At least one pack goes fishing. And in one study, Gable found wolves that spent five weeks subsisting on blueberries.

"Wolves eat whatever's around," said Dave Mech, a worldwide wolf authority and a member of Gable's Ph.D. committee at the University of Minnesota. "We're used to thinking of wolves preying on moose or deer, but whatever's available in good supply and is easy to get, wolves will take."

Minnesota is home to almost half of all gray wolves in the lower 48, and Voyageurs has one of the densest wolf concentrations in North America. Up to seven packs spend time in the park. It's a prime place to study wolves.

Gable's fieldwork begins here each spring when he and his team trap a handful of wolves, anesthetize them using a syringe attached to a broomstick and fit them with collars that transmit the wolves' locations every 20 minutes. This information is bounced off a satellite and onto a computer in Gable's Park Service cabin. And that's where Gable's mornings begin: with a cup full of coffee and a screen full of coordinates.

Gable wrote some computer code that enables him to pinpoint every location where a wolf has remained relatively stationary for 20 minutes or longer. These are places where the wolf may have made a kill. Gable emails these coordinates to his field crew. Then he takes six to 10 for himself, hops in his car or a Park Service boat, motors to a convenient starting point, and walks into the woods.

On any given day from April to October, Gable and his team members

Hunt and Gather

Fish? Blueberries? Candy? New research in Voyageurs National Park shows wolves aren't exactly the diehard meat eaters of legend.

EVERY MORNING OF the Minnesota summer, Tom Gable wakes up with the wolves. That is to say, he wakes up with the next best thing for a wolf researcher: a complete dataset of the recent GPS locations of half a dozen radio-collared wolves roaming through the vast, watery wilderness of Voyageurs National Park.

Gable, a 27-year-old Ph.D. student from Michigan, is trying to answer an elusive question: What exactly do these wolves eat in the summer? The carcasses of deer and moose that wolves kill in the winter are relatively easy to spot in the snow, even from the air. In summer, though, Northern Minnesota's dense, junglelike forests keep the wolves — and their eating habits — in the dark.

But thanks to the GPS collars and hundreds of hours of bushwhacking, Gable is making some startling discoveries about the summer diet of these

"The more you study wolves, the more you realize what it is you still don't know."

may spend 10 solitary hours in these woods, hiking up to 14 miles, wading through black spruce bogs, clawing through thick walls of hazel and alder, slapping at biting flies, and wiping sweat from their eyes.

"We have to go everywhere the wolves go," Gable said.

Remarkably, Gable and his crew almost never see the wolves, even though the GPS data sometimes shows that they were within a hundred meters of them. When Gable reaches a location, he approaches it like a crime scene. He scans the vegetation for any signs of disturbance. Then he gets down on his hands and knees and combs the undergrowth for evidence of a kill.

Most often, the site is just the spot where a wolf bedded down. But if Gable finds any hair, bone fragments or blood, he can almost always determine what the wolf killed and how. Gable and his team spend almost every day in the woods until the end of October, when the collars are programmed to fall off the wolves. Last year the team visited 4,900 locations in and around the park, about 3% of which were kill sites.

Usually the kills are deer fawns or beavers. Sometimes it's a snowshoe hare or a raccoon. But Gable has also set up remote cameras that documented wolves "fishing" for spawning white suckers. (Coastal wolves are known to eat salmon, but this is the first footage of wolves eating freshwater fish.) And during the fall bear-hunting season, Gable learned that Voyageurs' wolves eat gut piles left out by hunters near the park's boundaries.

But the wolves aren't always carnivorous. From mid-July to mid-August, many of the animals' GPS locations are

in dense blueberry patches. In a weekly study of wolf scat in 2015, Gable found that blueberries made up 83% of a pack's diet in late July. It's hard to imagine a carnivore sustaining itself on fruit, but the berries ripen when fawns are faster and harder to hunt, and they may help wolves endure lean times. Bear bait piles, which include almonds, peanuts, seeds and candy, accounted for a fifth of the wolves' diet at the end of August and may serve a similar purpose.

Beavers are another food source intriguing wolf biologists. Until now, no one knew how wolves hunted beavers. Wolves usually chase their prey, but that's an ineffective strategy for beavers, which are strong swimmers and never far from water. Gable has discovered that wolves switch hunting strategies when preying on beavers: They lie in wait and ambush beavers where they are vulnerable, on feeding trails near their lodges. This suggests that wolves have the

higher cognitive abilities of foresight and planning and that wolves are even more adaptable than biologists thought.

Gable's research is part of the Voyageurs Wolf Project, a partnership between the University of Minnesota and the National Park Service. Since the project began in 2012, Gable and others have studied pack size, reproduction rates, den location, territory and other questions central to monitoring the park's wolves.

"People have been studying the ecology of wolves in Minnesota going back to the 1930s," said Voyageurs wildlife biologist Steve Windels, who oversees the Park Service part of the project. "But the more you study wolves, the more you realize what it is you still don't know."

In pursuit of these unknowns, Gable is spending yet another summer in the woods. A few questions top his list. When wolves hunt beavers, do they kill fewer deer? Why do some wolves kill more prey than others? Do different wolves hunt beavers in different ways?

Gable has already followed wolves to all corners of the park. He rarely takes a day off. Last summer he trekked 800 miles, a distance matched almost exactly by individual collared wolves. Along the way he's identified the country's largest-known jack pine tree and set foot in places few people ever see. He's also cultivated a certain respect for the wolves he's studying.

"It's hard not to develop an appreciation for an animal going about a wild place, making a living, day after day," Gable said.



© VOYAGEURS WOLF PROJECT

WOLVES in and around Voyageurs National Park rely on diverse food sources during the warm season, including fish, beavers, blueberries, bear gut piles and candy.

JACOB BAYNHAM is a freelance writer based in Montana.

namingmatters

Should Devils Tower be called Bear Lodge? Is Tacoma a better moniker than Mount Rainier?

Around the country, activists are fighting to change place names they deem offensive, hurtful or arbitrary, and national parks are frequently the targets of these campaigns.

By Nicolas Brulliard

In 1855, a U.S. Army officer was conducting reconnaissance work in the Great Basin on the eastern edge of what would soon become the state of Nevada. Contemplating the area's most majestic peak, he decided to name it after his superior: Secretary of War Jefferson Davis.

Davis, as we now know, went on to serve as the president of the Confederacy for the duration of the Civil War, and only a decade after the peak was named in his honor, his side lost the war, and he was sitting in prison and awaiting trial for treason. Government mapmakers no longer saw Jeff Davis Peak as an appropriate moniker for

Nevada's second-highest mountain. They toyed with a few replacement options, including Union Peak and Lincoln Peak. Eventually, they settled on Wheeler Peak in honor of another officer who had surveyed the area, but they didn't discard the old name. Instead, they assigned it to a lesser summit nearby.

For more than a century, nobody seemed to give Jeff Davis Peak much thought. That changed in August 2017, when Anthony Oertel, a Bay Area resident, was inspired by the activists behind the effort to remove statues of Confederate generals in Charlottesville, Virginia. Oertel, who had never set foot in Great Basin National Park where the peak is located, filed a request with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to

“Some things are history, and some things are errors that need to be corrected.”

rename the mountain after Robert Smalls, an enslaved man from South Carolina who orchestrated a daring escape during the Civil War and later was elected to the House of Representatives.

It took an article in a Nevada paper for locals to notice, and notice they did. State newspapers ran opinion pieces about the controversy, a member of Nevada's legislature sponsored a resolution supporting changing the name, and representatives of the Nevada State Board on Geographic Names, who submit recommendations on local names to the national board for final approval, received a flurry of passionate letters.

“You have my vote to change the name of Jeff Peak and any other landmark named after Confederate traitors,” wrote one local. Others criticized what they saw as undue political correctness. “Please help stop the madness in this country and leave the name alone,” a Reno resident pleaded. A high school student suggested naming the peak after Heather Heyer, the woman who was killed while protesting a white nationalist rally in Charl-



tesville. Lonnie Feemster, the president of the local NAACP chapter, wrote that the peak should not honor a man who fought the Union, which Nevada joined during the Civil War.

“Some things are history, and some things are errors that need to be corrected,” Feemster said in an interview.

Should a natural feature in a national park honor someone who defended slavery and led secessionist states in a war that devastated the country? Is it appropriate for Mount Rainier to bear the name of a British officer who fought the United States? Why keep the Devils Tower name for Wyoming's famous monolith if it came from an erroneous translation that insults many tribes? Across the country, groups are raising these sorts of

JEFF DAVIS PEAK in Great Basin National Park (below), which was named after then-Secretary of War Jefferson Davis (left), could soon be renamed Doso Doyabi, which means “white mountain” in Shoshoni. Previous pages: Devils Tower in Wyoming.



© LINDSAY MEARES; INSET: MATHEW BRADY/NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION



BLACKFEET LEADERS Bird Rattler (far left), Curly Bear (second from left) and Wolf Plume (third from left) meet with Stephen Mather, soon-to-be Park Service director (sitting), and other officials to complain about the use of English-language names in Glacier National Park in 1915.

questions as they challenge names they deem offensive or inappropriate. These campaigns extend well beyond national parks: Schools, university halls, streets and other landmarks are being renamed to honor overlooked historical figures and remove the taint of unsavory characters. Those leading these efforts say that in the process of cleaning up maps, they're hoping to make the places themselves more inclusive.

"If history can be read in the names on the land, then it is very partial and very fragmented," said Lauret Savoy, the author of "Trace: Memory, History, Race, and the American Landscape" and a member of NPCA's board. "It would do us all well to see what's missing."

Changing the name of a mountain, lake or other geographical feature in a national park is a lengthy process, although the first step is easy: Anyone can send a request to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, which is the authority on the names of natural features — located on public or private land — that appear

on federal maps. The board, which is composed of members of various government agencies including the Park Service, conducts extensive research into both the existing and proposed new names, solicits input from various stakeholders including tribes, state bodies and federal agencies, and considers public comment before voting. It can take years to decide on controversial proposals, partly because however improper a name might be to some, locals and visitors often have an emotional attachment to it and resist a change. Opponents cite the cost of replacing signs, brochures and other promotional materials. The more popular the name, the broader the ramifications of a name change become. If Mount Rainier is dropped, what happens to the names of Rainier Beer, Rainier cherries and the Tacoma Rainiers minor league baseball team?

"With a name that has been around for quite some time, the likelihood of getting it changed is not that great," said Mark Monmonier, a geography professor at Syracuse University who wrote

“We never had that political power in those days when they were naming these places.”



SEVERAL CAMPAIGNS over the past century have attempted to change the name of Mount Rainier (above), which was named after Peter Rainier (below), a Royal Navy officer who fought the United States during the Revolutionary War.

a book about controversial place names.

Some of the people who oppose name changes view the controversies as part of a larger culture fight. For example, after Minnesota decided to remove “squaw,” a word widely viewed as an offensive reference to a Native American woman, from the state’s maps, reluctant officials in one county proposed replacing Squaw Creek and Squaw Bay with Politically Correct Creek and Politically Correct Bay. (It didn’t pass muster.) Jeff Cruess, a Nevada resident who wants to keep Jeff Davis’ name on the Nevada mountain, said names bestowed long ago shouldn’t be judged by today’s standards. “Washington state was named after George Wash-



ington,” he said. “You’re going to change the name of the state because he owned slaves? How far do you take that stuff?” Cruess, who stressed he opposes slavery, said changing the names of places honoring historical figures is equivalent to changing history itself. Others disagree. They note that the place names that are dropped from maps are maintained as variants in official geographical databases and argue that history is preserved in many other ways.

“A name on the map is not history,” Monmonier said. “It’s a name on the map.”

For millennia, tribal peoples living in what is now the United States used place names that were not recorded on paper. Begin-

ning in the era of the first European explorers, government mapmakers retained indigenous names in some form (more than half of U.S. state names originate from Native American languages), but many were eventually dropped and replaced with Western ones, and those that survived were often rife with peculiar transpositions and transcribing errors. Wyoming, for example, is rooted in a Native American word, but one that designated a valley in Pennsylvania. “It was such a dominant white society,” said Gerard Baker, a Mandan-Hidatza Indian who was the highest-ranking Native American in the Park Service when he retired in 2010. “We never had that political power in those days when they were naming these places.”

The names that appeared on the country’s earliest maps came from a variety of other sources. Some places, such as San Francisco Bay, were named after religious figures; others were meant to honor England’s monarchs (Maryland, the Carolinas). As they moved inland, European explorers and settlers often resorted to descriptive names such as Grand Canyon and Rocky Mountains. The naming of towns and cities was sometimes arbitrary. In “Names on the Land,” George R. Stewart, a midcentury authority on the history of place names, tells of the town of Barre in Vermont whose name was settled by a fistfight. The city of Portland, Oregon, reportedly acquired its name in a coin toss between two settlers — one from Boston and one from Portland, Maine (who evidently won).

By the end of the 19th century, many of the country’s geographical features had been named, but spelling variations were common, and rivers and mountains frequently had more than one name. To bring some order to the nation’s federal maps, President Benjamin Harrison created the U.S. Board on Geographic Names in 1890. The board established a few guiding principles, including the avoidance of possessive forms and a preference for names already used locally and names it considered “euphonious” — or pleasant-sounding.

The board also started handling requests for new names and name changes. There are various reasons to request a name change. Some applicants want to correct erroneous spelling or honor a local personality; other proposals revolve around names that someone has deemed offensive.

The board agreed to automatic changes for derogatory names just twice since its inception. In 1963, under public pressure, the Department of the Interior mandated that an offensive term referring to African Americans be replaced by the word “negro,” and in 1974, the board decided to replace the slur “Jap” with “Japanese.”

Most cases are not that clear-cut. The board has discussed adding “squaw” to its list of unacceptable names, for example,



© BRAD ORSTED

CHIEF STANLEY GRIER of the Piikani Nation hands over a letter to a Yellowstone National Park official in 2017. The letter, which was signed by leaders of several Native American tribes, asks that two landmarks in the park be renamed because they pay tribute to one man the tribes view as a war criminal and another they say was a proponent of genocide.

but has refrained from doing so because some tribes don’t consider it disparaging, said Lou Yost, the executive secretary of the board’s Domestic Names Committee. And some names viewed as appropriate replacements decades ago are now considered offensive themselves. A peak on the edge of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area in California was changed from a name containing the N-word to Negrohead Mountain in the 1960s; in 2009, it was changed again and became Ballard Mountain, in honor of an African American pioneer. Despite the present-day aversion to the term “negro,” such replacements are hardly automatic: Today, hundreds of place names containing the word remain on federal maps.

Native Americans have long taken issue with national park names. In 1915, for example, a delegation of Blackfeet leaders

“This was not an anti-Native American thing. This was just about trying to keep an iconic name in the park”

met in Washington, D.C., with soon-to-be Park Service Director Stephen Mather to protest the use of English names in Glacier National Park. But for decades, other issues took precedence. Many national parks were created on land that tribes were forced to vacate, and disputes continued for many decades after the parks' creation over land claims, hunting rights and proper representation of Native American history, among other issues. For a long time, changing place names was not high on the tribes' agenda.

That changed in recent decades, and Native American activists and their allies have celebrated several notable successes. Congress changed the name of Custer Battlefield National Monument to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in 1991. Mount McKinley National Park became Denali National Park in 1980. The mountain itself was also officially rechristened Denali, its Koyukon Athabascan name, but that wasn't until 2015, when the Department of the Interior issued a secretarial order.

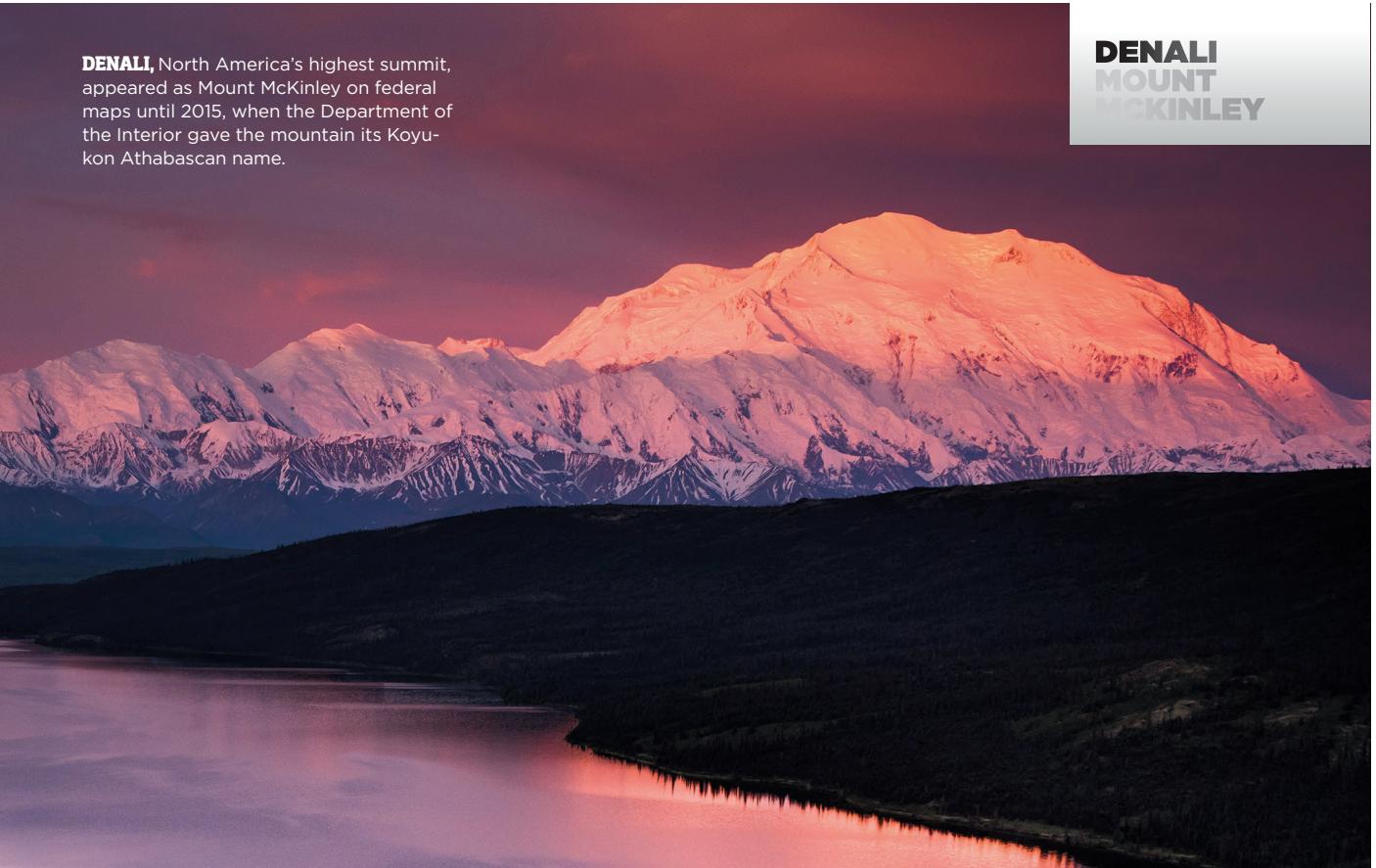
For more than two decades, several tribes have called for changing the name of Devils Tower, which many believe to have

originated from the mistranslation of a Native American word for “bear” into “bad god.” (The plural form is a separate issue: The apostrophe in “Devil's Tower” was erroneously omitted in the 1906 proclamation creating Devils Tower National Monument.) The latest effort is led by Arvol Looking Horse, a spiritual leader of the Lakota Nation, who filed a request to change the name of the butte to Bear Lodge in 2014. Many tribes consider the site sacred, and Looking Horse wrote that the Devils Tower name has provoked “anger and ongoing resentment” among tribal elders, leaders and members.

Starting in the late 1990s, Sen. Mike Enzi of Wyoming has been introducing bills to preserve the name Devils Tower, in part because of the role the site and its current name play in the state's tourism industry. “He understands the position of Native Americans who would prefer to see the name changed, but he believes much would be lost if the name was changed,” said Rachel Vliem, his spokeswoman, in an email. The Board on Geographic Names refrains from taking action on name proposals under consideration in Congress, so Enzi's bills effectively stop the process.

DENALI, North America's highest summit, appeared as Mount McKinley on federal maps until 2015, when the Department of the Interior gave the mountain its Koyukon Athabascan name.

**DENALI
MOUNT
MCKINLEY**



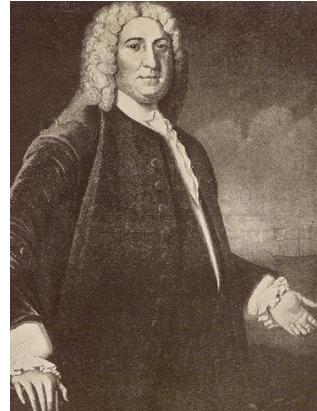
Park Service officials don't comment on pending name change requests.

In recent years, national park name campaigns have increasingly focused on renaming geographical features that honor figures with checkered pasts. Yost, the Domestic Names Committee's executive secretary, said the trend started about five years ago, with the effort to rename Harney Peak in South Dakota. The peak, named after an Army officer who oversaw a massacre of Lakota men, women and children in 1855, was rechristened Black Elk Peak in honor of an Oglala Lakota medicine man from the turn of the century.

Around the time of the Harney Peak controversy, several tribes decided to protest two place names in Yellowstone, and in September 2017, tribal leaders gathered at the park to deliver a letter to a Park Service official demanding that Hayden Valley and Mount Doane be renamed Buffalo Nations Valley and First People's Mountain, respectively. The tribes also sent a letter to the national board formally petitioning for the name changes.

In 1871, Ferdinand Vandevere Hayden led a survey of the Yellowstone region that was instrumental in paving the way for the park's creation the following year, but writing attributed to him extolled white supremacy and advocated for the extermination of nomadic Native Americans unless they settled and embraced the agricultural economy. Right before Gustavus Cheyney Doane participated in two expeditions to the Yellowstone area, he played a leading role in a raid on a camp of Piegan (related to today's Blackfeet and Piikani Nations) in the Montana Territory that resulted in the deaths of at least 170 people, mostly elderly men, women and children. The band's chief had been guaranteed protection by the U.S. government. That Doane boasted about his deed when applying for the position of Yellowstone superintendent two decades later (he didn't get the job) added insult to injury, said Paul Wylie, a Montana historian who wrote a book about the massacre.

Stanley Grier, chief of the Piikani Nation, said every year his people hold a ceremony to honor the massacre



COURTESY OF MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FANEUIL HALL, located in Boston National Historical Park, was named after Peter Faneuil (left), an 18th-century slaveowner and slave trader who funded the construction of the building. Activists campaigning to rename Faneuil Hall have floated several possible alternative names, including that of Elizabeth Freeman (right), an enslaved woman who won her freedom in a Massachusetts court in 1781.

victims. "These are relatives of ours," he said. "They've never been forgotten." He is stunned that Doane's name has remained on the mountain so long. "There is no honor in massacre," he said, "so why should we honor those who committed war crimes?"

Jake Fulkerson, the chairman of the Park County Commission, said the proposal caused a "huge uproar" in his Wyoming county, which overlaps with much of Yellowstone. Though he sympathizes with the request, he said he did not receive any calls supporting

the name change and that his duty is to respect the will of his constituents. The commission voted to oppose the name changes. "This was not an anti-Native American thing," he said. "This was just about trying to keep an iconic name in the park."

Tom Rodgers is undeterred by the opposition. A lobbyist working on behalf of the tribes and a member of the Blackfeet Nation, he vows to keep fighting to honor the memory of his ancestors. "Only after we expunge Capt. Doane's name can these souls have some peace," he said.

NPCA has supported several name changes in (and near) national parks over the years. Those have included the renaming of Montana's Custer Battlefield National Monument to Little Bighorn Battlefield

National Monument, North Cascades

National Park's Coon Lake and Coon

Creek to Howard Lake and Howard

Creek (after an African American

miner), and Negro Bar Channel, just outside Gateway National Recreation Area, to Joseph Sanford Jr. Channel (after an African American firefighter who died in the line of duty). In April, NPCA sent a letter to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names supporting the proposed name change for Jeff Davis Peak.

**NPCA
AT 100**

HAYDEN VALLEY BUFFALO NATIONS VALLEY



© JONATHAN EDEN/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO

HAYDEN VALLEY in Yellowstone National Park could be renamed Buffalo Nations Valley if a proposal by several Native American tribes is approved by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names.

"We're facing an awakening and a reckoning in this country when it comes to issues that overlap with racism and historical awareness," he said. "I totally believe that this is a teachable moment."

In Boston, Kevin Peterson and his allies have embarked on a similar campaign to change the name of Faneuil Hall, a 277-year-old building that is owned by the city of Boston and is part of Boston National Historical Park. Also known as "the Cradle of Liberty," the building was funded by Peter Faneuil, a merchant who traded African slaves. The Park Service tells the story of Faneuil's connections to slavery through tours and the park's website, but Peterson said that most visitors and Boston residents still ignore Faneuil's ties to slavery and that many African Americans who are aware of them "feel absolutely humiliated that the name of a slaver adorns a public building."

Peterson has asked for the city to hold a hearing on the renaming of the building, but so far, the City Council has ignored his request. "If we were to change the name of Faneuil Hall today, 30 years from now, no one would know why we did it," Mayor Martin J. Walsh said in a statement. "What we should do instead, is figure out a way to acknowledge the history so people understand it."

Peterson disagrees. He sees the name change debate as a way to get Bostonians to pay attention to the larger problem of racial inequity in Boston, where economic disparity between whites

and nonwhites is one of the most pronounced in the nation. "If we can address the issue of slavery in this city, then we can move to having conversations about racial repair," he said.

Meanwhile, another battle is brewing in the Pacific Northwest. In 1792, explorer George Vancouver named a volcanic peak after his friend Peter Rainier, a Royal Navy officer who had fought the United States in the Revolutionary War. Attempts to change Mount Rainier's name have come up repeatedly over more than a century.

The name Rainier is not outright offensive, but it feels inadequate and random to Brandon Reynon, a tribal archaeologist for the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. "The guy never saw the peak," he said. "It would be like me going to Australia, seeing a cool mountain and naming it for my buddy." The Puyallup and other tribes in the area have a strong connection to the mountain, and Reynon thinks they should oversee the selection of a new name. "In our creation story, she's our mother," he said. "She's where we came from."

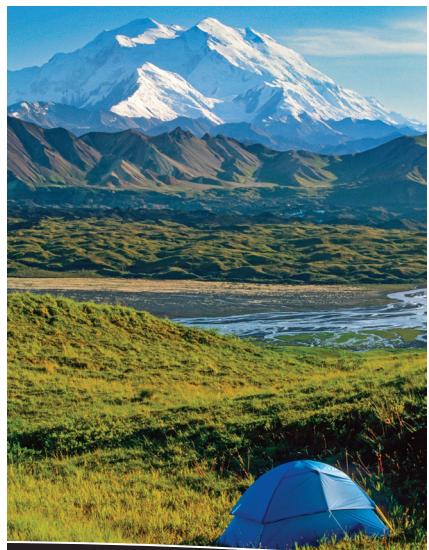
Reynon favors Tacoma (or alternate spellings such as Tahoma and Tacoba), which he said means "place of frozen water" in his language, as the name for the peak in Mount Rainier National Park, but he plans to meet with representatives of other tribes to reach a consensus on a single alternate name to propose. He is confident he can garner the support he needs. "It's definitely doable," he said.

Mary Schaff, a member of the Washington State Committee on Geographic Names, is among those who aren't so sure. She thinks Washingtonians would have a hard time letting go of a name that's been around for more than 200 years. "It would set up a firestorm," she said.

Many of these proposed changes will take years to resolve, but in the meantime the effort to rename Jeff Davis Peak has picked up speed. After the initial brouhaha, the Nevada board decided to reach out to local tribes and seek their input. When Warren Graham of the Duckwater Shoshone Tribe received the board's letter, he decided to consult the tribe's historian, who directed him to two elderly sisters, members of the Ely Shoshone Tribe of Nevada. The women told Graham their late mother knew the Shoshone name of Jeff Davis Peak — it was called Doso Doyabi, or "white mountain" in Shoshoni. Graham reported back to his tribe's elders. After discussing the matter, they wrote to the Nevada board, which in January voted unanimously to support renaming Jeff Davis Peak to Doso Doyabi — a decision that still needs to be approved by the national board.

Graham did not initiate the renaming process, but once he got involved, he realized how important it was for his tribe to weigh in. He heard the rationale of those opposing the name change, but he said his effort is not so much about wiping out Davis' name as it is about restoring a part of his tribe's heritage. "These places had names before the names they have today," he said. "What they did to my people was erasing the history that was there before."

NICOLAS BRUILLIARD is associate editor of National Parks magazine.



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WATER SMOKE SPIRIT, FOREST, GHOST, LAND, SKY

*A photographic essay on Great Smoky
Mountains National Park.*

BY MATT BRASS



On my mother's side of the family, connections to East Tennessee go back for generations to when the first pioneers put down roots in this part of Appalachia. In more recent history, my mom and dad spent their first date in Cades Cove, a verdant valley in the mountains, after which my father immediately declared to a friend that he would marry her. I grew up in Michigan, Washington and Texas, but Great Smoky Mountains National Park is where we'd go when we were visiting family. This is where we'd drive down narrow roads, following creeks, skirting rocks and, sometimes, pressing through new-fallen snow. This is where we would bring picnics, sit in quiet churches and walk along trails lined with may-apples, jonquils and honeysuckle.

And this is where I bring my own family now — to spots including Tremont, Alum Cave, Cataloochee, Metcalf Bottoms, Roaring Fork, the Chimneys, Rainbow Falls, Fontana Lake and Elkmont — to hike or swim or kayak or camp or just stay still for a little while in sacred, familiar places. The park remains a constant even as I move from house to house, my children grow up, and life goes by with its unpredictable ebb and flow.

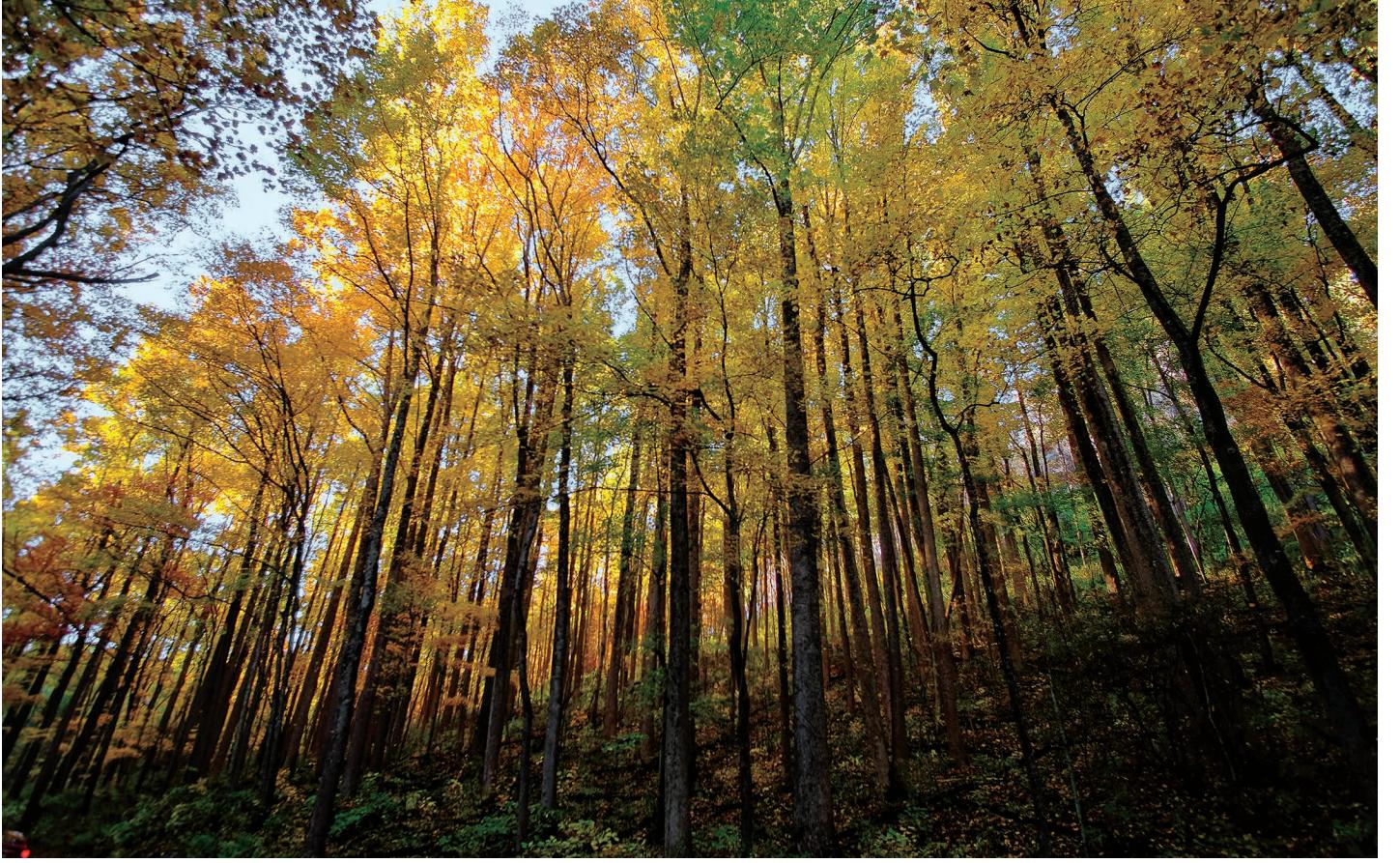
Of course, the landscape changes, too, though. Seasons, fires, storms and people make their marks and take their toll. But whether scarred by tornado and flame, flaming with autumn color or speckled with spring wildflowers, the land feels like it's ours. Always ours.

I've traveled all over the country, drawn by natural wonders. I've lived in the shadow of the Rockies, made annual pilgrimages to the Badlands, stood breathless on rugged coasts in Washington, and spent days paddling through rich and murky swampland. But we always return to the Great Smokies. And we exhale. Some days, we see bears or watch wisps of cloud move swiftly through green-clad peaks after a summer rain, and we are reminded how lucky we are that this place is part of our past, present and future. That it's home.

MATT BRASS resides in Knoxville, Tennessee, with his wife, Larisa, and their seven children. He works as a creative director for an ad agency specializing in sustainability and the environment. A photographer and freelance illustrator, he has created multiple series of artworks featuring America's national parks. To learn more about his Great Smoky Mountains photo project, go to mattbrass.com.



BRASS' SON, LIAM, exiting Little Greenbrier Schoolhouse (left). Above: A panoramic view of the park from Max Patch Mountain. Previous pages: Brass' son, Levi, ascending the Alum Cave Trail toward the summit of Mount Le Conte, the park's third-highest peak.



CADES COVE METHODIST CHURCH, constructed in 1902 (opposite, top). Opposite, bottom: Fall foliage along Newfound Gap Road. Top: Brass' son, John, sitting in the Primitive Baptist Church in Cades Cove. Bottom right: Brass' sons, Andrew (left), Liam (center) and Judah (right), at an overlook on the Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail. Bottom left: Levi entering Primitive Baptist Church.



JOHN (LEFT) AND LEVI (RIGHT) at Ephraim Bales
Place on the Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail.



VIEW FROM the John Oliver Cabin in Cades Cove (left). Top right: The tunnel on Laurel Creek Road after a rainstorm. Bottom right: A buck in Cades Cove.



At Great Basin National Park, a father and son gaze at stars, touch ancient trees, and reflect on space, time and the universe. By Todd Christopher

OPEN ROADS & ENDLESS SKIES

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Comet Swift-Tuttle, a mass of rock and ice some 16 miles across, hurtles obliquely through the solar system, passing by Earth every 133 years. There's no cause for alarm anytime soon, but in 4479 the comet will come quite close to us, astronomically speaking; at some point in the future, its orbit might even put it on a collision course with our small blue planet.

In the meantime, we have this occasional passerby to thank for the annual celestial display we know as the Perseid meteor shower. Every August, as Earth moves through Swift-Tuttle's trail of debris, grains of rock and dust enter the atmosphere at dizzying speeds and burn up — sometimes spectacularly — becoming shooting stars that streak across the sky. Where there are clear dark skies, as many as 100 per hour can be seen on the night of the meteor shower's peak. It's a wonderful sight.

Catching the Perseids always was a highlight of my childhood summers, but it had been quite a while since I'd seen them. Rain, moonlight and even a new parent's desperate need for sleep all have conspired against

TIME WAS FLYING, AND IF WE DIDN'T STEAL A LITTLE FOR A FATHER-SON OUTING NOW, WHO KNOWS WHEN WE'D NEXT HAVE THE CHANCE?

me over the years. But with the peak of this past year's shower falling over a moonless weekend, I resolved to be somewhere known for dark skies and decided to venture to Nevada's Great Basin National Park.

In truth, I had another motive. I invited my son, Elijah, to join me, knowing he wouldn't be able to resist an adventure in a park we hadn't yet been to,

especially one where starry nights and ancient bristlecone pines beckoned. And this spirited boy — a nature-loving kid who as a toddler would gently pet the bumblebees drawn to our flower beds — was somehow just weeks away from his senior year of high school. Time was flying, and if we didn't steal a little for a father-son outing now, who knows when we'd next have the chance?

So it was that we found ourselves among the 250 visitors gathered on blankets and camp chairs in front of the Lehman Caves Visitor Center on the evening of the Perseids' peak. As twilight set in, Mars and a scattering of stars shone brightly, peeking through the gaps in the gathering clouds. Hopeful rangers set up a row of telescopes for viewing planets and deep-sky objects. We were

in for a terrific evening — so long as the weather held.

Great Basin owes its famously dark night skies to its isolation, elevation and high-desert climate. With little humidity and almost no light pollution to contend with, visitors are treated to some of the country's clearest night skies, and in 2016, the International Dark-Sky Association officially recognized Great Basin with an International Dark Sky Park designation. Tyler Nordgren, the astronomer and night sky ambassador who coined the slogan "half the park is after dark," recommended Great Basin for dark-sky status, citing its views of the Milky Way, which he described as the finest he had experienced anywhere in the National Park System.

"The parks, as they protect the scenic wonders of our country, have almost as an accident preserved our



PERSEID METEORS streak through the night sky at Great Basin. The annual meteor shower reaches its peak in early August, but the light of a nearly full moon will obscure fainter meteors this year. Previous page: Traveling to Great Basin through the Nevada desert.

© KELLY CARROLL



© KAREN MINOT

travel ESSENTIALS

Great Basin's remote location rewards visitors with solitude and dark night skies — but getting there takes a bit of doing. Salt Lake City, the closest city with a major airport, is a 240-mile, four-hour drive from the Lehman Caves Visitor Center. Driving from Las Vegas' McCarran International Airport, more than 300 miles away, can take nearly five hours. Both routes include long, lonely stretches of road, so travelers should prepare accordingly.

The historic railroad town of Ely, Nevada, lies 66 miles away from the visitor center and offers travelers a choice of hotels, restaurants and other amenities. The tiny town of Baker, Nevada, is much closer — just 5 miles from the park — but the lodging and dining options there are limited. Great Basin has five rustic campgrounds, most of which are seasonal (open from May to October) and available on a first-come, first-served basis. Visitors are sometimes surprised to find roads are under snow and not drivable — be sure to check the website for current road conditions and closures beforehand.

"views of the sky overhead at night," he told me in an email. "The Milky Way is a scenic splendor that almost everyone everywhere used to share, but now almost no one sees anymore."

The certification is not just for Great Basin's natural darkness, but for the park's efforts to preserve and promote it as well. At the visitor center, staff have fitted light fixtures with dim red bulbs that won't interfere with an observer's night vision. The park is also home to the first research-grade observatory in the park system, with a



PANORAMIC VIEWS await hikers who reach the summit of Wheeler Peak, the second-highest point in Nevada.

remotely operated, 28-inch telescope used by university students and faculty conducting research on planets outside the solar system. And Great Basin hosts a rich slate of educational programs, including an annual three-day astronomy festival, monthly full-moon hikes and special events such as the Perseid viewing party.

"In the last 10 years or so, the interest in astronomy among the general public has really gone through the roof," said Becky Gillette, a seasonal ranger at the park. "I regularly interact with visitors who say that's why they came — they want to see the stars, they want to see the Milky Way, they want to start learning a little bit more about the universe."

Though Great Basin remains one of the least-visited national parks, its annual visitation has roughly doubled over the past decade — surpassing 150,000 for the first time in 2017 — thanks in part to its nightlife. The park's astronomy programs now welcome nearly 10,000 visitors a year.

"We even had 70 people show up here for an astronomy program during an active rainstorm," Gillette said. "Like, it's raining — not just overcast. That says a lot."

While it wasn't raining for Elijah and me, it increasingly looked like our luck was running out. By the time the skies had fully darkened, the remaining patches of clear sky had all but disappeared, and the forecast was not promising.

"Sorry, folks," Gillette said over a compact PA system. "We put in a call for clear skies, but it looks like the clouds have other plans."

The crowd dispersed. Blankets were gathered, camp chairs folded, telescopes packed away. We all were reminded that even where the skies are darkest, visibility isn't guaranteed.

I was disappointed, but the night skies were only part of what drew me to Great Basin. The more pressing reason to go was the promise of being together with Elijah in the middle of nowhere for a while. Besides the usual pressures of work and school, of parenting and being a teenager, we were on the verge of a hectic and uncertain time — his college applications lay just around the corner — and the idea of reconnecting in a place of peace and beauty, even

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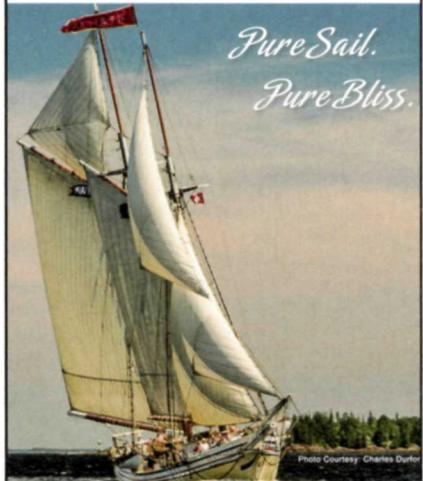
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I LAUGHED OUT LOUD BUT WASN'T SURPRISED. BAPTISM BY FIRE — OR ICY WATER — WAS NOTHING NEW TO ELIJAH.

briefly, was appealing. If getting there meant long drives on open roads under endless skies, all the better.

Perhaps fittingly, our trip began under a bit of a cloud — first figuratively in D.C., where catching our early-morning flight was made more challenging by our differing interpretations of Elijah's curfew the night before, then literally in Salt Lake City, where we landed amid thick haze from wildfires ravaging California. We stocked up on food and water and headed west in the rental car; I drove while Elijah dozed. We gradually gained elevation the whole way, and as we did, the haze lifted. By our first stop to refuel and rehydrate — at Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats, a vast salt pan swarming with hot rods and happy gearheads there for the famed speedway — the sun shone bright, and the temperature hovered around 100 degrees.



THE AUTHOR and his son on the Wheeler Peak Trail (above). Top: Elijah wades into the cold, clear water of Stella Lake.

© TODD CHRISTOPHER (2)

We drove on for two more hours through the lonely, undulating heart of the Northern Basin and Range Province, along unbroken stretches of road where we saw more wild horses than other cars. Beautiful landscapes soften hard feelings, and we put the shaky start behind us; we talked, laughed and listened to music, lulled by the rhythm of the road and the steady presence of the low ranges to either side. We were hungry and tired when we finally reached our lodging in the historic railroad town of Ely, Nevada, the self-described gateway to Great Basin National Park, some 66 miles away. There were closer options — Baker, Nevada (population 68) as well as the park's first-come, first-served rustic campgrounds — but those places have far fewer amenities, and what's one more hour on roads like these?

We headed out the next morning in mixed sun and clouds, eager to explore. Stretching across 77,180 acres, the park comprises elevations ranging from 5,000 feet to more than 13,000 feet and preserves a remarkably diverse high-desert landscape, from sagebrush steppe to limestone caves to alpine peaks and meadows. While we were excited by the prospect of dark skies and meteors later that evening, our aim for the day was to see some earthbound wonders: Great Basin's bristlecone pines.

We rolled along the long, rising entrance road — stopping to admire the rusted frame of an antique car standing like an art installation in the brush — and after grabbing a park map at the Lehman Caves Visitor Center, we headed to the trailhead. I guided the car up the winding 4,000-foot climb that is Wheeler Peak Scenic Drive, navigating its 12 miles of hairpins and switchbacks while Elijah took in the stunning views of peaks above and Snake Valley below. By the time we parked at 10,000 feet, sagebrush had given way to pine, fir and aspen, and it felt as if we'd entered an entirely different park altogether.

I had barely shouldered my pack before Elijah bounded down the trail, but I was quite used to trying to keep pace with him. As soon as he could stand, he could run, and he hasn't slowed down much since. As a hyperactive toddler, being outdoors and in motion could always calm him — and even now, nature is his balm.

The air was crisp and sweetly scented, and before long, the trail carried us through a thick grove of quaking aspen. We wandered across a sloping sub-alpine meadow buzzing with the electric sounds of grasshoppers before coming upon one of Great Basin's star attractions, Stella Lake. Wreathed by conifers, the lake is a glacial tarn lying in the shadow of Wheeler Peak, the park's highest point at 13,063 feet. We'd had the trail mostly to ourselves until then, but a few other visitors were enjoying the view here, too — some skipping stones across the still, blue-green water.

A mile and a half later, after passing Teresa Lake and following the rising trail through a stand of limber pine, we finally found ourselves just below the tree line among

The fantastic netherworld of Lehman

Caves was first protected by the establishment of Lehman Caves National Monument in 1922, but the park's creation took much longer. Great Basin National Park was finally designated more than six decades later, thanks in large part to NPCA's persistent advocacy over a 30-year span.

While exploring the area near Wheeler Peak in the summer of 1955, NPCA trustee Weldon Heald was inspired by the sight of a glacier below its north face. The

following year, he published an article and met with local advocates to advance the idea of a national park in the Great Basin Range. When Darwin Lambert — a writer, natural historian and Great Basin native — joined NPCA's board of trustees in 1958, the organization gained a steadfast champion for the park and officially endorsed a proposal for its creation, citing the locale's exceptional natural resources and scenic value.

Unfortunately, local opposition defeated that proposal — and the many

others that would follow. Time after time, mining and grazing interests outweighed those of conservation and tourism until the economic and political winds finally shifted in the early 1980s. Sensing an opportunity to make another push for the park's creation, NPCA convened an exploratory meeting at Lehman Caves National Monument in 1983. Staff member Laura Loomis, now in her 43rd year with NPCA, was there. "Knowing that we might never again have the opportunity to preserve one of the most important and iconic of American landscapes made it both an exciting and sobering task," she said.

Over the next few years, NPCA built congressional support and promoted a series of park bills that sought to protect an area ranging from 44,000 to 129,000 acres. In the end, a compromise bill proposing a 76,000-acre Great Basin National Park, protecting not only Lehman Caves but also the bristlecone pine groves and alpine peaks and lakes of the Snake Range, was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan on Oct. 27, 1986.

some of the oldest living things on the planet — dozens of ancient bristlecone pines growing amid the quartzite boulders and glacial debris beneath Wheeler Peak. It is near this grove that a tree dubbed Prometheus was accidentally felled in 1964 — the accounts vary, but all end tragically — and revealed to be some 4,900 years of age, making it the oldest known single organism at the time. It's impossible to know for sure, but we were likely standing among at least one tree that took root as the Pyramid of Cheops was being built.

IN 2016, the International Dark-Sky Association officially recognized Great Basin with an International Dark Sky Park designation. The park hosts a rich slate of educational programs, including monthly full-moon hikes and an annual three-day astronomy festival.



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Metal signs along the short interpretive trail explained the bristlecones' ability to endure the isolation and harsh conditions of their high-elevation habitat. That capacity is the result of slow growth that yields a dense, durable wood. It is, in fact, the trees that withstand the most unforgiving conditions that live epically long lives and take on the wild, fantastic shapes the species is known for. One sign mentioned the bristlecones' "grotesque" beauty, a word now barely visible, scratched away by visitors making an understandable if forbidden editorial statement. Elijah was drawn to one tree in particular and stood for a long moment with his hand pressed against its weathered trunk, as if feeling the weight of the centuries — maybe the millennia — it had seen.

It was a strangely comforting place to be. We lingered for a while in silence before finally turning back.

Clouds darkened as we climbed back down, but as we reached Stella Lake again, the sun broke through for what would be the last time that day. This time, we had the lake all to ourselves. I rummaged through my pack for a granola bar and was startled by the sound of splashing. I looked up to find that Elijah had waded out into the snowmelt for a brief but invigorating dip in the cold, clear water.

I laughed out loud but wasn't surprised. Baptism by fire — or icy water — was nothing new to Elijah. He had always plunged headfirst, if not headlong, into life and surely always will. At times, his spirit has caused me a bit of worry, but his joy has always been more than worth it, and at that moment, he was having a blast. If he had a care in the world since we'd arrived, I certainly hadn't noticed.

We doubled back in the late-day light and drove to the visitor center, heading straight to a true oasis in the desert: the cafe serving diner-style breakfast, lunch and soft serve ice cream in a space with a view that stretched all the way to Utah's Confusion Range. We arrived just before closing, in time for pretzel-bread sandwiches, salads and fries capped by root beer floats, and afterward — surprised to find that we had cell service — made an Instagram post or two.

We enjoyed the cafe so much that we had both breakfast and dinner there the following day. Overcast skies and periods of rain dampened the landscape, but, unfazed, we returned to the trails of the Wheeler Peak area for a few hours. There, the aspen groves teemed with hundreds of watchful "eyes" — the distinctive black scars left behind when the trees drop their lower branches — that seemed to follow us as we walked. We briefly considered tackling Wheeler Peak itself, but the exposed ridgeline is no place to be when the weather is threatening, and we'd already heard the occasional rumbling of thunder. By the time we headed back to the visitor center, the day was threatening to be a washout.

Luckily, we had picked the right day for a one-hour tour of Lehman Caves, a quarter-mile-long cavern that was first protected as Lehman Caves National Monument in 1922. Led by a ranger through the labyrinth of subterranean chambers, we marveled at the limestone formations and were struck by the capacity of some broken stalactites to reform — to say slowly would be an understatement — from narrow growths called soda straws. When our guide switched off the lights, we experienced the sensation of

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standing in complete, disorienting blackness, hearing only the sound of muffled breaths.

The gray skies brought an early twilight, but we left the park in good cheer. The weather hadn't completely cooperated, but we'd had two days full of wonders great and small. Elijah, who has joined me on many trails from Shenandoah to Death Valley, decided the previous day's hike might have been his all-time favorite. "Time and space feel different here," he said.

How could I disagree? In this ancient place, time felt abundant. And, amid the vastness, contemplating the inevitable spaces that will grow between us as Elijah comes into his own somehow seemed less daunting. That is to say: It felt like it would all be OK.

I'd had the same feeling the previous night, after the ill-fated viewing party, when we'd driven off in the darkness toward Baker and the 60-mile stretch of two-lane highway that would take us back to Ely. Along the way, Elijah kept one hopeful eye on the skies through the moonroof and played songs from his iPhone on the car stereo, picking one of my old favorites (David Bowie, Supertramp) for each new one of his (Rex Orange County, Tame Impala). And then, somewhere in the nameless gap between the Snake and Schell Creek Ranges — and when we'd all but given up hope — the clouds gave way, just a bit, to an inky night sky.

Spotting a dirt road, we turned off, parked and hopped out of the car. Overhead, banks of cloud sailed by, but an opening had appeared between them and was widening, granting us a view of perhaps a quarter of the sky. It was enough. We scrambled onto the trunk of the car, reclining with our backs against the glass, and looked up into the night. As our eyes adjusted to the darkness, we could see not only the stars of summer constellations but also — faintly at first, then unmistakably — the gossamer band of the Milky Way. It had been a long time since either of us had seen it.

It wasn't the best view of the firmament, but that didn't matter. For some time — 20 minutes? 30? An hour? — we lay there together in the middle of nowhere until one lonely Perseid meteor streaked across the sky, reassuring us that the cosmos, at least for now, was unfolding according to plan.

TODD CHRISTOPHER is the senior director of digital and editorial strategy at NPCA and author of "The Green Hour: A Daily Dose of Nature for Happier, Healthier, Smarter Kids."



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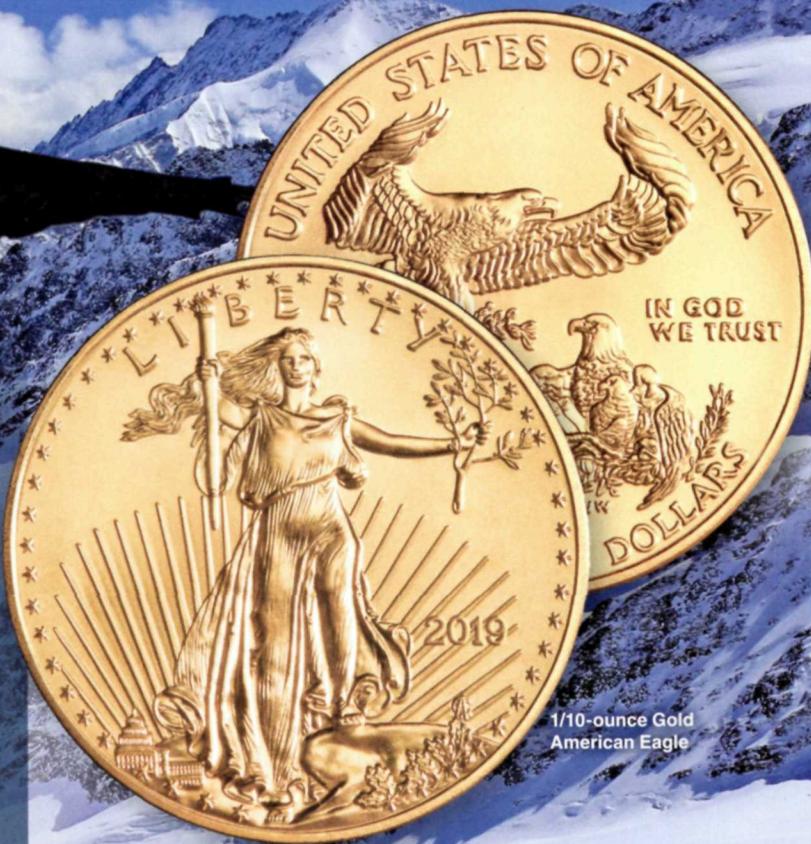
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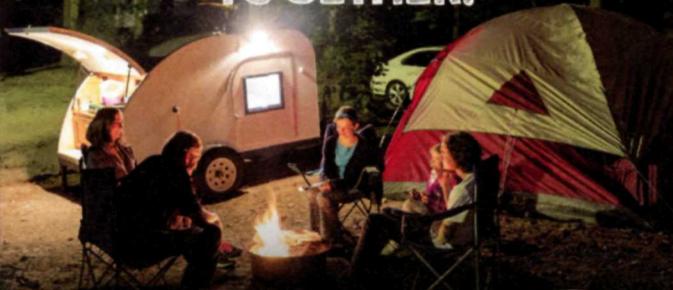


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DOUGLAS MCKAY, the secretary of the interior, hails Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and his fellow hikers toward the end of their walk along the C&O Canal.

Jan. 3, 1954, edition of The Washington Post, an editorial in support of a proposal to pave over the canal — “no longer a commercial or scenic asset,” the paper claimed — and turn it into a parkway.

“The basic advantage of the parkway is that it would enable more people to enjoy beauties now seen by very few,” wrote Merlo Pusey, an editorial writer.

Douglas, however, was of the opinion that zooming by those beauties at 60 miles per hour was pointless. The wonders of the canal’s landscape were to be enjoyed slowly and intimately, he believed, and he penned his own letter, which ran on Jan. 19, 1954, in response.

“It is a refuge, a place of retreat, a long stretch of quiet and peace at the Capitol’s back door — a wilderness where man can be alone with his thoughts, a sanctuary where he can commune with God and with nature, a place not yet marred by the roar of wheels and the sound of horns,” he wrote.

He also challenged Pusey to walk the entire length of the canal with him to see firsthand why it was worthy of protection. If he did, Douglas wrote, “he would return a new man and use the power of your great editorial page to keep this sanctuary untouched.”

Stretching nearly 185 miles along the Potomac River from Cumberland, Maryland, to Washington, D.C., the C&O Canal bustled with commercial activity for much of the 19th century. Mule-drawn boats carried coal, food and building supplies between the nation’s capital and developing regions

Walking the Walk

Sixty-five years ago, park advocates joined a Supreme Court justice on an epic hike to save the landscape he loved.

WHENEVER HE NEEDED to think deeply about a case before the Supreme Court, Associate Justice William O. Douglas would take a long walk on the towpath of the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal.

For Douglas, the C&O was a haven from the trappings of life in Washington, D.C., and a place to uplift his spirit amid the forests and falls of the Potomac River. To maintain his health, which had been poor during his childhood, he was accustomed to walking 15 or 20 miles on the towpath on a Sunday afternoon. So he was incensed to read, in the



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here, one day drifts lazily into the next.



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“They understood that once paradise was paved, something ineffably precious would be lost forever.”

to the west. But by the 1920s, the last of the boats had been unloaded, and in 1938, the abandoned canal and its towpath were acquired by the federal government.

Various plans for the canal fell by the wayside during the Second World War, but postwar prosperity and a national wave of road-building led to a National Park Service proposal, approved by Congress, to pave the C&O — the project supported by the Post.

The National Parks Conservation Association — still known as the National Parks Association at the time — analyzed the proposal and opposed it, recommending instead that the historic waterway and adjacent land be preserved and protected from development, a position shared by The Wilderness Society. Their efforts to

safeguard the canal would soon be swept up and amplified by a media sensation.

Pusey — and Robert H. Estabrook, editorial page editor for The Post — accepted Douglas' challenge, agreeing to accompany him and hike the full length of the canal. On the morning of March 20, 1954, just after steady overnight rains had abated, a group gathered in Cumberland and hit the trail. Thirty-seven walkers began the trek — including NPA President Sigurd Olson, NPA trustee and Wilderness Society President Olaus Murie, and Anthony Wayne Smith, an NPA trustee who would lead the organization from 1959 to 1980 — and the number soon grew to 58. A cadre of cameramen and journalists followed the group, including Aubrey

Graves, who chronicled each day's progress in dispatches for the Post, even documenting with good humor the abrasions and sore feet sustained by his colleagues at the paper.

There was good reason for the blisters. The 55-year-old Douglas set a brisk pace, leading the party 22 miles on the first day — and never slowing down. Over the eight-day hike, the group averaged more than 23 miles per day, through weather fair and foul. As the walk progressed, national interest continued to rise, and stories appeared everywhere from Time magazine to movie theater newsreels.

But it wasn't just a walk in the park. The number of walkers steadily dwindled as fatigue and discomfort mounted, and even the experienced Douglas developed a case of poison ivy rash. To keep spirits high, Olson led the wayfarers in song at their camp each night, adding several verses about the day's events to the singalong he was composing. By the eighth day, "The Canal Song" included more than 30 verses.

Excitement grew as the weary party neared Washington. At Fletcher's Cove, less than 3 miles from the journey's end, Interior Secretary Douglas McKay doffed his hat and greeted Douglas. In Washington's historic Georgetown neighborhood, at the terminus of the canal, a throng of supporters awaited the hikers and welcomed them with cheers.

TODD CHRISTOPHER is the senior director of digital and editorial strategy at NPCA.



NPS/Flickr

THE HIKERS who completed the 185-mile walk were known as the "Immortal Nine." Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas is fourth from right, and Olaus Murie, a board trustee of what was then the National Parks Association, is second from left.



In the end, only Douglas and eight companions completed the entire hike — the so-called “Immortal Nine” including NPA’s Murie. And just as Douglas had predicted, Pusey and Estabrook were moved by what they had experienced and reversed their positions in a subsequent editorial. The Park Service proposal was dropped in 1956.

The Douglas hike galvanized national support for the preservation of the C&O Canal, but many years of advocacy followed before its protection was secured. In 1961, President Dwight Eisenhower used his power under the Antiquities Act to designate the stretch of canal from Cumberland to Seneca, Maryland, a national monument, but it wasn’t until 1971, after a series of contentious proposals and bills had come and gone, that an act of Congress created Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park, protecting the entire length of the canal and surrounding lands.

In 1977, the park was officially dedicated to Douglas, making it the only national park site dedicated to the memory of one person. To this day, a bust of Douglas stands near Lock 3 of the C&O Canal in Georgetown, and the park now welcomes between 4 million and 5 million visitors annually, thanks in no small measure to Douglas and his companions.

“They understood that once paradise was paved, something ineffably precious would be lost forever,” said Robin Zanotti, president of the nonprofit C&O Canal Trust. “We who have come after them owe them an enormous debt of gratitude. Because they literally ‘walked the walk,’ we can escape our hurried and mechanized world and enjoy nature in ‘slow time’ — on foot, on horseback or on a bike.”

TODD CHRISTOPHER is the senior director of digital and editorial strategy at NPCA.

YESTERDAY ON THE C&O CANAL

By Robert B. Keiter

Little did I know as a youngster that my “backyard” was soon to become a national park. I grew up in Glen Echo, a small Maryland town on the outskirts of Washington nestled on a hillside next to the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal and the Potomac River. During the country’s postwar years, a rapidly growing population was expanding into suburban enclaves encircling our major cities. My parents, following their wartime military service, had settled in the Washington area rather than return to the moribund Pennsylvania coalfields of their youth.

Though only 6 years old at the time, I still vividly recall our initial family outings to the canal, a remarkable natural setting only a few hundred feet downhill from our house. The experience hooked me on the canal and all that it offered. This being the 1950s, my parents placed few restraints on me, so after school and during the summer, my friends and I regularly headed to the canal and river to fish, camp and explore. It was an early childhood filled with the wonders of nature and the freedom of the outdoors. And I assumed it would last forever.

One day, though, I overheard my parents talking with neighbors about a proposed highway, which I soon understood could threaten the canal, towpath and homes in our town. Just as I was establishing a love for the natural world outside my back door, the battle to preserve the C&O Canal began.

My childhood memories of the controversy, which extended over the next 15 years, are fragmentary. I remember seeing the front-page photo in The Washington Post of Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and hearing about his monumental effort to protect the canal and river. Eventually, I learned about the plan to build a parkway to the city, an idea originally conceived in 1901. Sixty years later, President Eisenhower invoked the Antiquities Act to protect the canal between Seneca and Cumberland as a national monument, but he left out the lower stretch of the canal beside Glen Echo.

As a young teenager, I sadly bore daily witness to construction of the George Washington Memorial Parkway, later renamed the Clara Barton Parkway. Neighbors within a stone’s throw of our house, following eminent domain proceedings, were forced from their homes to open a passageway for the parkway on the steep hillside leading down to the canal. Giant bulldozers followed, carving a roadbed that separated our home from the canal.

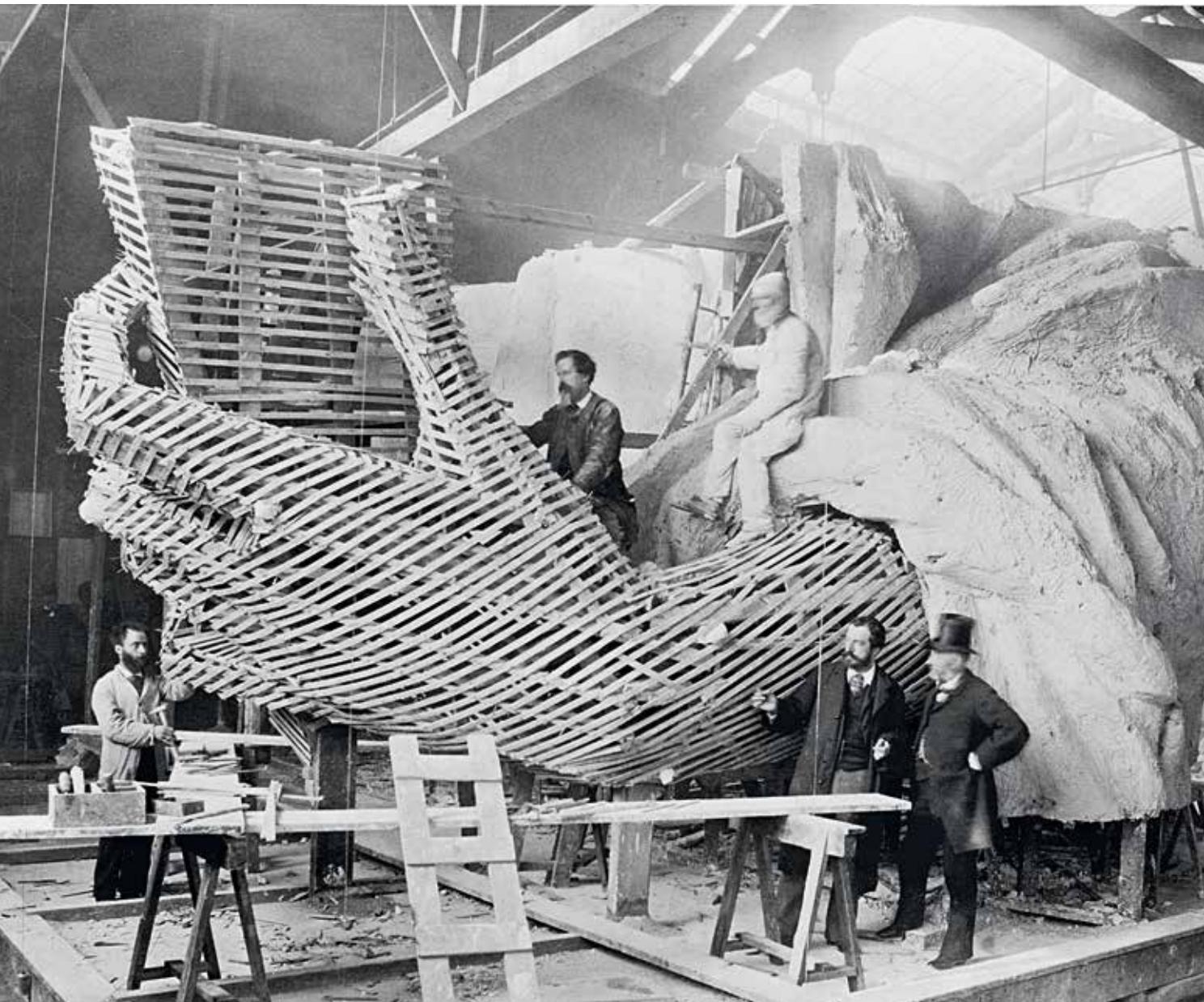
Finally, Congress adopted legislation establishing the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal National Historical Park in 1971. By then, the parkway was completed, leaving a permanent scar along stretches of the canal. Today, the road accommodates a steady rush of cars that shatter the stillness of the canal I knew as a youngster. Yet the creation of the park was a major conservation victory: It protected the entire length of the canal, ensuring that my childhood sanctuary would not be further disturbed and that others would have the opportunity, as I did, to experience this special landscape just a few miles from the nation’s capital.

This formative childhood experience instilled in me a lifelong appreciation for the natural world and an understanding of how fragile these places are in the face of progress. Perhaps not surprisingly, much of my professional life has involved protecting our national parks and related nature conservation efforts. My “backyard” is bigger these days, but the pull of the canal is still strong, and I regularly visit the area when in town from my home in Utah. These occasions always evoke a flood of memories, and it gives me great pleasure to see so many people out strolling the towpath or biking or navigating their kayaks through the river’s roiling waters.

BOB KEITER serves on the NPCA board of trustees; he is the Wallace Stegner Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of Utah and author of *To Conserve Unimpaired: The Evolution of the National Park Idea.*



That Was Then



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