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BOATERS ANCHORED off Spectacle Island, one of nearly three dozen sites within Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area.

©JESSICA RINALDI

COVER:
STUDENTS posing in front of the Jefferson Jacob School in Prospect, Kentucky, circa 1920. Roughly one-third of all Black children in the South passed through Rosenwald classrooms during the time the schools were active. (This photo has been cropped from the original.)
CARRIDDER JONES PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION, FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: ©THOMAS MANGAN; ©SASHA MASLOV/THE NEW YORK TIMES/REDUX; USFWS; COURTESY OF HISTORY COLORADO

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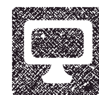

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Places That Move Us

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At heart, our national parks are places that inspire us. When you marvel at their natural wonders, from ancient canyons to towering sequoias, it's not hard to see why.

But the parks also inspire us with the stories they preserve — and many of those stories highlight the noblest human qualities. At Manzanar, we can learn from the perseverance of those who were unjustly incarcerated during a dark chapter of our history. At Thomas Edison's lab, we can see where the seeds of modernization were planted and appreciate the hard work and ingenuity that nurtured them. And at Flight 93 National Memorial, we can visit sacred ground and contemplate the unimaginable bravery and sacrifice of everyday Americans.

I believe that Julius Rosenwald's story — one marked by compassion and altruism — is similarly moving. The son of Jewish immigrants who fled persecution, Rosenwald, who never finished high school, went on to amass a fortune that he used to spearhead the construction of 5,000 schoolhouses for African American children across the rural South in the early 20th century. Stirred by the writings of his friend and partner Booker T. Washington, Rosenwald viewed education as a way to fight injustice, and his schools changed the lives of legions of people, including literary giant Maya Angelou and Civil Rights hero John Lewis.

Thanks to the campaign led by former NPCA Trustee Dorothy Canter — a campaign I'm proud to support as a board member — the effort to create a Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park is picking up steam (p. 26). The proposed park would not only preserve Rosenwald's legacy of philanthropy, but also it would be the first national park site honoring a Jewish American. There are currently more than 420 sites in the National Park System, and while big landscape parks such as Yellowstone and Yosemite might capture more headlines and imaginations, the majority of park sites are devoted to preserving places of historical and cultural significance. From Birmingham to Pullman to Stonewall, it is places like these that help to tell a more complete American story — one that carefully preserves our past so that we can build a better future together.

With gratitude,
Theresa Pierno

Editor's Note

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

A WOMAN in the Shenandoah area in 1935.

History Lessons

In 2011, NPCA's Pamela Goddard traveled to Shenandoah's Byrd Visitor Center, where she saw an exhibit about the creation of the national park. She was surprised but gratified to see that the account included details about how the commonwealth of Virginia had displaced families living in the Blue Ridge Mountains to make way for the park. "They have a picture of a grandmother in a rocking chair being removed from her home," she said. "They say this is what happened, it was terribly wrong, it should not have happened, and we must learn from this."

Being "America's storyteller," as the Park Service is sometimes called, is a noble but complicated job. How do you unflinchingly face tragic or brutal episodes of the country's past? How do you make room for stories about important Americans who previously were discounted because of their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation? How do you tell stories of Native Americans — including Tribes in Shenandoah's mountains — who were forcefully expelled from lands that later became national parks?

One takeaway from this issue is that national park stories are often better told when others participate in the telling. In Shenandoah, descendants of dispossessed families and their allies have been working to memorialize the mountain people ("A Monumental Effort," p. 46). In Colorado, Cheyenne and Arapaho relatives of victims and survivors of the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre were intimately involved in the establishment of a national historic site in 2007, and more recently, descendants worked closely with a Denver museum to create an exhibit about the deadly attack and its legacy ("Second Take," p. 61). And "Remembering Rosenwald" (p. 26) details how the idea for a park site that would commemorate Julius Rosenwald's extraordinary effort to build schools for Black children during the dark years of segregation has gained traction thanks to a coalition including advocates, Rosenwald's descendants and former Rosenwald school students.

These stories touch on painful subjects but also offer an uplifting message about how reflecting on the past honestly can lead to healing and connection. We hope they enlighten and move you the way they enlightened and moved us.

Rona Marech
NPMAG@NPCA.ORG

NationalParks

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

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

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

NPCA has been recognized as a USA Top Workplace.

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SPEECHLESS

Jacob W. Frank's photos of the aurora borealis ("Reaching for the Sky") are breathtaking beyond words! Wonderful and many thanks!

DESIREE RYE
Grand Rapids, MI

COMING OF AGE

Many great memories flooded back after reading "Yellowstone Family" by Nicolas Brulliard in the Spring 2023 issue. I spent the summer of 1978 working in the general store in Yellowstone's Canyon Village. What a nonstop adventure it was, starting with the 2,000-mile Greyhound bus trip to West Yellowstone, Montana. Having never been farther west than a lake in Ohio, crossing America amazed me. So did my first ever national park. Yellowstone's unique natural qualities are famous, and our mostly college-aged crew sampled as much as we could. In addition to producing instant friendships and fun, the summer instilled a lasting appreciation of national parks that much later inspired priceless hiking trips out West each fall with my adult son.

I was sad to read that fewer college students are able to take advantage of this kind of coming-of-age summer. We worked. We hiked. We laughed. We kissed. We grew up — all surrounded by nature at its finest.

ROBERT SZYPULSKI
Pittsburgh, PA

Thank you for the memories. I, too, am a Yellowstone alum. I worked at Roosevelt Lodge during the summer of 1974. It was the first summer that women were hired to work as wranglers, and I guided tourists on trail rides and got paid for it! Like the people in your story who went to work in Yellowstone not knowing what to expect, my time in the park changed me and my life forever. (I married a man I met working at Roosevelt, but that's another story.) There was a campfire song we sang that says it best. Here are the first two verses:

> On my 20th summer I wandered on my own
> To find a land that God had made and man had left alone.
> I found a land of beauty I never would have known
> Had not my 20th summer
> Brought me here, to Yellowstone.
> I left a worried city and all my cares behind

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

To travel toward Wyoming to see
what I might find.
I traveled over mountains and forests dark and green;
Oh, it would take a thousand days
Just to tell what I have seen.

DIANE SCHOLZ CATTRELL
Colora, MD

Several readers wrote to us with similar stories of their own summers spent working in Yellowstone. Thank you for sharing your memories.

MORE ACCESS, PLEASE

The article "Reservations Required" resonated with me because I have experienced huge delays getting through main gates during peak summer season at several parks. What the article did not address is access and parking for wheelchair users and other visitors with disabilities. For those individuals, advanced planning is essential, and there is limited information on the park websites.

LYNN ROSENBLATT
Atlanta, GA

A TASTE FOR SIGNS

I enjoyed reading the article "Comeback Bears" about the return of bears to Big Bend National Park. For many years, I visited Big Bend every Thanksgiving with the Dallas Sierra Club. In the 1980s, trail signs in the park were 1-inch-thick wood boards with letters carved into them. One fall, we were annoyed to find that some of the trail signs had been vandalized. It looked like someone had driven a nail into each sign and worked it back and forth until it split. The next year, all the signs lay in splinters under their posts. This time we asked a park ranger what was going on. He explained that bears had begun moving into the park and, for some unknown reason, liked to chew on the signs. The following year, all the signs were 1/4-inch-thick metal with letters burned into them. The bears did not bother these.

BILL GREER
Pueblo, CO

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PROJECT CHIMPS

Echoes

"It's hard to imagine a world where the benefits of such a project would outweigh the costs."

NPCA's Alex Johnson, speaking to Bloomberg about the impact a proposed 211-mile road and copper mining district would have on Gates of the Arctic. The project, which NPCA has opposed for nearly a decade, would fragment a vast, roadless landscape, cross through 20 miles of the preserve, and intersect more than 100 waterways, including the Kobuk Wild and Scenic River. It would also hamper Alaska Natives' subsistence way of life and disrupt the caribou's 2,700-mile journey, one of the longest land migrations on Earth.

"Avi Kwa Ame National Monument preserves some of the most visually stunning, biologically diverse, and culturally significant lands in the Mojave Desert."

NPCA's senior program director for the Pacific region Neal Desai, as quoted in Condé Nast Traveler, celebrating the March designation of the newest national monument. The nearly 507,000-acre Nevada park will be co-stewarded by the Department of the Interior and Tribal Nations.

"While the ghost orchid has always been rare, threats to its existence have become dire in recent years."

Melissa E. Abdo, NPCA's Sun Coast regional director, in an Associated Press story about the imperiled ghost orchid. The flowering plant, which is only found in Florida and Cuba, is threatened by habitat loss, climate change and poachers, as well as disturbances to its deep swamp habitat, such as oil and gas activities or off-road vehicle use in Big Cypress National Preserve.

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A Rodent Reappearance

The imperiled Allegheny woodrat has been rediscovered at Harpers Ferry.

COURTESY OF K. BLACK, RADFORD UNIVERSITY

EACH WOODRAT, an animal some of Mack Frantz's colleagues have dubbed "a furry Slinky with teeth," was weighed, measured, checked for parasites, tagged and poked for a blood sample before being released.

On a muggy morning last June in the highlands of Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, Mack Frantz slowly approached a wire cage — and the beady-eyed, long-whiskered inhabitant within. Frantz slipped on a mask to avoid the risk, however small, of passing COVID-19 to a vulnerable species. Then, as his team looked on, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources wildlife zoologist stooped, picked up the pint-sized creature and posed for a photo. And so it was that after 20 years without any documented park sightings, Harpers Ferry staff and state biologists had proof of the Allegheny woodrat's continued presence.

"We needed to see if any populations were still hanging on," Frantz said. "And, sure enough, we still have an actively breeding woodrat population." The successful capture of not one, but five native pack rats — including a female and two juveniles — is good news for a species that has disappeared from at least 35% of its historic range, roughly New York to Alabama. Tipping the scales at less than 1 pound, this diminutive critter plays an outsize role in its woodsy environs. Not only does the woodrat serve as prey for owls, snakes, coyotes and more, but it also disperses spores and seeds. "It's this really important part of the ecosystem that basically helps plant oak trees," said Nicole Keefner, who was the biological science technician at Harpers Ferry at the time of the 2022 monitoring project.

Threats to this rodent's persistence are many, from habitat loss and deforestation to disease, including raccoon roundworm. Add in the fact that spongy moths and chestnut blight have killed off the mast-producing trees that generate the bulk of the woodrat's diet, and "it's death by a thousand cuts," Frantz said. These unfavorable odds coupled with Harpers Ferry's exurban location make the woodrat rediscovery even more meaningful to Scott Bates, wildlife biologist for the Park Service's National Capital Region. "It's pretty nice that we have a rare species that can persist in the face of those kinds of threats," he said. —KD

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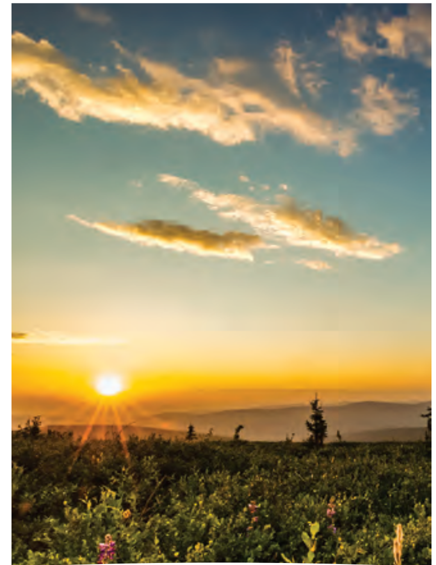
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'A Very, Very Long and Vast Rabbit Hole'

Fifty years ago, someone stole an antique pistol from the Springfield Armory Museum. This spring, the case finally came full circle.

On a summer day in 1971, a staff member at the Springfield Armory Museum in Western Massachusetts passed a display case and did a double take. The glass container had been jimmied open, and its contents — a rare brass, iron and wood single-shot pistol dating from the mid-19th century — had disappeared.

The armory, first established as a federal arsenal in 1777, stores some 7,000 weapons within its red brick walls, but this wasn't just any old gun, according to Alex MacKenzie, curator for the Springfield Armory National Historic Site, which has managed the museum's collection since 1978. For starters, it was never intended to be fired. The armory created just 12 of these pattern pistols in 1842 to serve as physical blueprints that the U.S. government supplied to manufacturers to reproduce. On top of that, the pistol's design, namely the novel use of interchangeable parts, represents a turning point in history. "It's kind of the birth of the industrial revolution in a way," MacKenzie said.

MacKenzie called the pistol's 1971 theft "brazen" before explaining that on the same June day, 30 miles down the road, a Colt Whitneyville Walker revolver was snatched from the Connecticut State Library. "This wasn't a random thing," he said. "It was the same person."

Unfortunately, there was no security footage to review. No fingerprints to be had. The event appears to have barely made the news at the time, receiving just a single sentence in the Springfield Union crime report. Museum staff documented the theft as best they could, and then resumed normal business. The case went cold.

Nearly four decades later, when the story seemed destined to remain a historical footnote, a gentleman walked into the Upper Merion Township Police Department in Pennsylvania, some 250 miles away, with a seemingly unrelated tip. That lead sparked a yearslong investigation into an art theft puzzle spanning several states and agencies and far more artifacts than just the Springfield pattern pistol and the Connecticut library revolver.

But enough foreshadowing. Let's return to 2009 when police officers Andrew Rathfon and Brendan Dougherty took a concerned citizen's statement. The man reported that he'd been to an antique gun show in a nearby town and believed one of the weapons he'd seen there had been stolen from the Valley Forge Historical Society in the 1970s. (The society's collection has since been absorbed by the Museum of the American Revolution.) "Obviously, the two of us weren't working in the '70s. We weren't born," said Rathfon. "We didn't know what the old guy was talking about, but we thanked him, and we started looking into it."

The clue wound up being a dead end; the gun in question hadn't been stolen. By that point, however, the detectives' curiosity was piqued, and they began thinking about the 75 or so weapons that *had* gone missing from the local historical society in the lead-up to America's bicentennial. "Wouldn't it be cool," Rathfon remembered asking, "if we could just get one of these back and bring it back to Valley Forge?" And so, in their free time at work, the two self-professed history lovers began to poke around.

"We probably spun our wheels for years trying to figure out what we were even looking for," Dougherty said. After all, high-value art crime was not their typical beat. But the officers persevered, compiling a directory of museum thefts involving stolen weapons, including the Springfield pistol. Some five years after that initial tip came in, they had a breakthrough. They realized that rather than looking for missing objects, they needed to be looking for the people capable of committing such a crime. That change in strategy, Dougherty said, "led us down a very, very long and vast rabbit hole." (To underscore his point, Dougherty nodded toward Rathfon's bald pate and said, "Andy had hair when we began this case.")

With their supervisors' approval, they embarked on long road trips, crossed state lines, ferreted out details from anonymous calls and letters, conducted countless interviews and eventually landed on a suspect, someone their contacts made them believe could be in possession of the weapons. (If the details here seem murky, that's intentional. The detectives are serious about protecting their sources.) The man in question, an antiques collector by the name of Michael Corbett, lived in Newark, Delaware, well outside their jurisdiction. So, Dougherty and Rathfon looped in the FBI Art Crime Team and the U.S. Attorney's Office, who helped secure a search warrant. In 2017, all parties descended on Corbett's house.

"We found a lot more than we were bargaining for," Rathfon said. All told, law enforcement personnel removed more than 100 objects — predominantly historic weapons but also pewter plates, lamps and even a powder horn dating from the French and Indian War — from Corbett's attic and a basement safe. Each item's provenance took time to determine. The FBI returned the artifacts Corbett legitimately owned; the rest they retained as evidence.

Last August, Corbett pled guilty to the possession of stolen goods that had been transported across state lines. In exchange for handing over an additional stash of treasures, Corbett was sentenced to one day in federal prison, a $65,000 fine and a stint of house arrest. (The statute of limitations prevented prosecutors from bringing charges related to the original thefts.) The firearms that launched the detectives' initial quest were not among the items confiscated, but the second haul — produced by Corbett the day after Labor Day — included a dozen guns stolen from the Valley Forge Historical Society, the Connecticut State Library's Colt Whitneyville Walker revolver (likely worth over $1 million), and Springfield Armory's pattern pistol. (Corbett could not be reached for comment, but his lawyer described him as "a self-taught expert" with an "eye" for the rare and valuable.)

This March, with the case's conclusion, a repatriation ceremony was held at the Museum of the American Revolution in Philadelphia, and 50 pilfered historic objects, including the armory's pistol, were returned to elated staff at 17 institutions from Mississippi to Massachusetts. Museum curators shared stories about their artifacts before each of the items was packaged up and taken back to its rightful home.

The tales of objects lost and found moved Dougherty and Rathfon, both of whom attended the celebratory affair. "We were shocked how meaningful some of these items were to the history of these places," Dougherty said. A cop for more than 20 years, he prides himself on maintaining a firewall between his work and private life but admitted that he couldn't shake this case. "This is the only case I've ever brought home," he said, adding that it was "an absolute privilege to work on."

Back at Springfield Armory, MacKenzie is in the process of preparing the recovered pistol for public viewing. This involves meticulously stripping away the corrosion that accumulated during its long spell in less-than-pristine holdings. But aside from the oxidation, "it's pretty much exactly as it appeared when it was first made in 1842," he said, marveling at what he called the "mint" condition of its internal workings.

Rathfon and Dougherty relish the idea of visiting Springfield Armory with their children once the pistol is back on display. They'll point to the antique, Rathfon said, and tell them, "'Your dad and his partner, we got that piece back so that everybody else can see it.'"

— KATHERINE DEGROFF

THIS RARE 1842 pattern pistol was stolen from what is now Springfield Armory National Historic Site in 1971.

NPS

Righting a Wrong

A massive new project will send fresh, clean water to Everglades National Park.

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ONCE THE RESERVOIR is completed, about 78 billion gallons of much-needed fresh water will flow down to the Everglades each year.

In February, after more than 20 years of debate and delays, the Army Corps of Engineers broke ground on the most expensive — and ambitious — Everglades restoration project to date: the Everglades Agricultural Area Reservoir. The reservoir, which the Miami Herald dubbed "Florida's largest above-ground pool," will span some 10,500 acres south of Lake Okeechobee. The goal of the massive undertaking is to help undo decades of environmental degradation. "For years we've done projects around the periphery," said Cara Capp, NPCA's Everglades restoration senior program manager. "This is the big piece we've been missing."

Ironically, the Corps itself radically changed the hydrology of South Florida when it expanded on dredging work carried out in the early 1900s. The resulting system of levees, canals and dams — intended to drain the region to make way for farms and houses — ultimately starved the Everglades of its lifeblood. The fraction of water that did make it into area rivers or farther to the park was heavily polluted, leading to algal blooms and massive fish and seagrass die-offs in Florida Bay. Once the problem became clear, NPCA and its allies began to rally to reverse the devastation and protect this biodiverse landscape.

Proponents see this new reservoir, slated for completion within 10 years, as a critical step toward remediation. The retaining pond, with its 37-foot walls, will hold spillover from Lake Okeechobee until it can be filtered by plants as it moves through a series of artificial marshes stretching across 6,500 acres. Once clean, the water will flow south — to the tune of 78 billion gallons a year — replenishing the area's underlying aquifer while restoring the flow of the River of Grass and improving the health of Florida Bay.

The project's footprint is only one-sixth the size of what was originally proposed, and much work remains to heal the Everglades. That said, Capp hails the reservoir, which is a priority for both President Joe Biden and Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, as a once-in-a-generation win for the park. "The science is telling us this project will be great for the Everglades," Capp said. "To send this volume of clean water to the park every year is going to change our droughts," she said. "It's going to change unseasonable wildfires. It's going to change the seagrass die-offs in Florida Bay. Everything will get better."**— KD**

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A Greenway for the People

How a 28-mile loop around Jamaica Bay is changing the face of Gateway National Recreation Area.

In April, my 11-year-old daughter, Mae, and I spent a glorious week in New York City. We caught up with friends and family, saw two musicals, visited a couple of museums, had Chinese hot pot in Sunset Park and brought sketchbooks to the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.

It was a delight — all of it — but the centerpiece and crowning achievement of the trip was a daylong bike ride through the Brooklyn and Queens section of Gateway National Recreation Area. A few basics for those not familiar with the park, which includes many New Yorkers, as I discovered: A 27,000-acre urban oasis established in 1972, Gateway straddles three boroughs of New York City and one county in New Jersey. The bike ride Mae and I had planned was along the Jamaica Bay Greenway, a 28-mile protected path for cyclists and pedestrians that encircles Jamaica Bay, a large estuary on the edge of the city.

The greenway has been a passion project of my NPCA colleague, Lauren Cosgrove, who has a view of the bay from her home and has been advocating for better transit to, from and around Gateway for a decade. The vision she shares with other activists, community groups and elected officials includes better bus and ferry service — and improved bicycle access. As Cosgrove explained to us, though work began on the greenway in the early 2000s, the full loop was only completed over the last five years. The current project phase includes safety improvements and the addition of on-ramps that link neighborhoods to the park.

"A greenway is only as good as the ability to get to it," said Robert Freudenberg, vice president for energy and environment at Regional Plan Association, a nonprofit long involved in planning the Jamaica Bay Greenway.

Between improved access and the pandemic bike boom, greenway usage is way up, as anecdotal evidence and early data suggest. That means everyone from mothers with strollers to long-distance bikers is using the path, and more people are getting into the nooks and crannies of Jamaica Bay, which historically has been hard to explore without a car. "A greenway and Jamaica Bay are like a match made in heaven," Freudenberg said.

Given the boosterism of enthusiasts and the enticing blue skies that greeted Mae and me on a chilly morning, I had high expectations for the day. We grabbed bagels and hopped on the subway for the hour-ish ride from the Upper West Side to Sheepshead Bay. The proprietor of Brooklyn Bikery outfitted us with bikes, locks and helmets —$80 for everything — and Cosgrove rolled up shortly after. We headed east, slipped onto a new two-way path and on-ramp, and we were off.

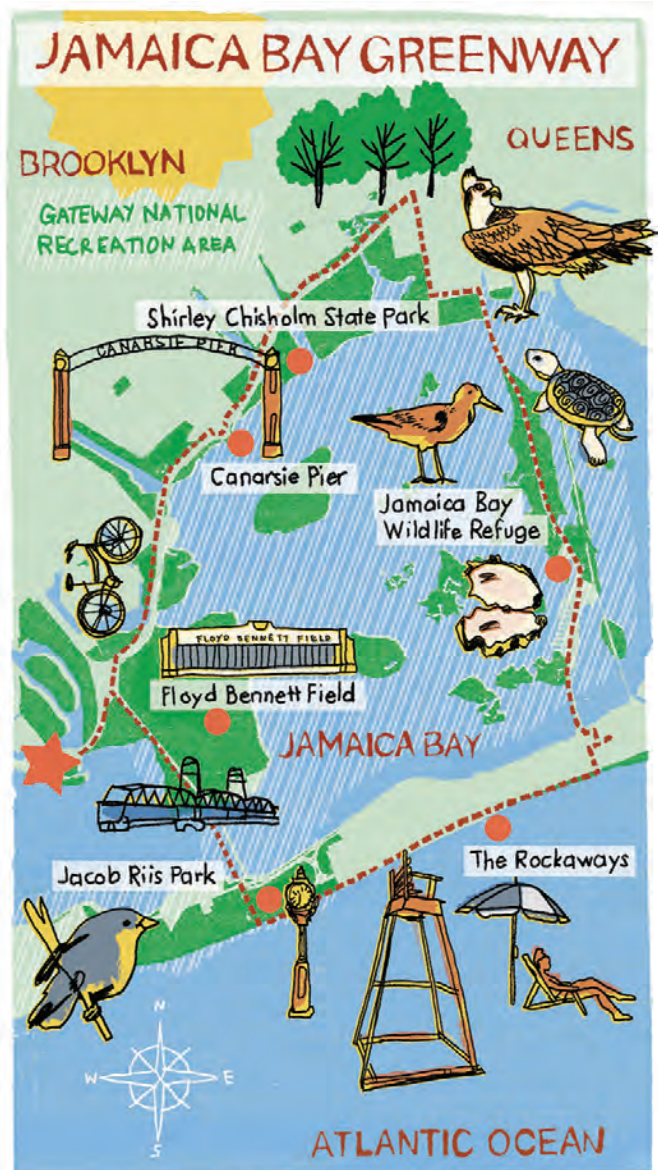

ILLUSTRATION BY KAVEL RAFFERTY

I could feel myself grinning as I breezed along, my eye on Mae's bouncing pink backpack. To our right, grasses and cattails bowed and bobbed, and the water glimmered; to our

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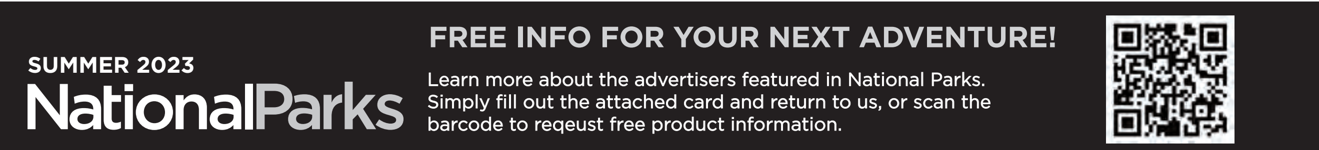

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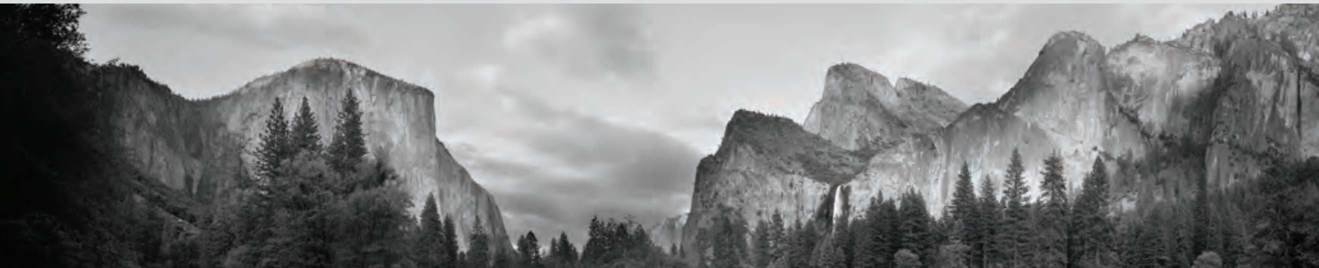

IN THE SUMMER, crowds flock to Jacob Riis Park, which boasts one of the biggest parking lots in New York City. The old bathhouse, in the background, is in the process of being rehabilitated.

© STEFAN FALKE/LAIF/REDUX

left, a steady thrum of traffic coursed by; beyond that, I could just make out the hazy city skyline. On one of the day's first bridges (there would be eight), we pulled over so Cosgrove could show us a few landmarks, including the observation tower at Kennedy Airport. As she pointed, a spandex-clad biker whizzed by angrily. "Nice place to take a photo, you f------ morons!" he shouted, a Brooklyn greeting I managed to capture on tape. We laughed, shrugged and hopped back on our bikes.

A few miles later, we stopped at the Canarsie Pier. Terri Carta, executive director of the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, later told me that she especially loves the greenway stretch leading to the pier. "All of the sudden you have this giant sky," she said. "And you see all of Jamaica Bay in front of you. It's hard to imagine the density of the city behind you when you're looking at the vastness of nature in front of you."

Some of the access issues that have long plagued Gateway originated decades ago during the tenure of Robert Moses, New York City's famous planning czar. Moses' legacy is complex, but suffice it to say that he is responsible for creating many of the public parklands we were riding through and that he also prioritized car travel to those places and cut off many residents' waterfront access.

One of several recent victories for previously landlocked areas was the 2019 opening of Shirley Chisholm State Park, which now connects the Spring Creek and East New York neighborhoods to the bay. Built on two former landfills, the 407-acre park features coastal meadows, wetlands, woodlands and 10 miles of trails.

We briefly dipped into Shirley Chisholm park before heading onward to Howard Beach, where quiet streets are lined by tidy homes — and more than a few McMansions. The next bit, Joseph P. Addabbo Memorial Bridge, was the only scary part of the ride. The bikeway here runs adjacent to a loud stream of fast-moving cars, and I had some heartburn when Mae, whose energy was flagging, stopped smack in the middle of the bridge. Fortunately, a plan is in motion to move existing barriers to separate bikes and cars, a project backed by NPCA staff, who successfully pushed for federal funding.

We had one more stop before lunch: the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. A 12,600-acre space with saltmarshes, ponds and woods, the refuge is one of the most significant bird sanctuaries in the Northeast, according to NYC Audubon. As we dismounted, a big, friendly Brooklynite passed by. "Welcome to Broad Channel," he boomed, his arms spread wide.

I hadn't realized we were on Broad Channel, the only remaining inhabited island on the bay. After leaving the refuge, we biked through the little village, where houses stand on stilts and a shop called Vape Bait & Tackle is open daily. One long bridge later, we finally reached Bungalow Bar, a restaurant on the water that Cosgrove frequents. "Never disappoints," she said, as reggae music played on the deck and we tucked into crabcakes.

With a flat section ahead and most of the ride behind us, Cosgrove assured us that the rest of the route would be easier, and it was. Soon, we were riding along on the beachside boardwalk in the Rockaways as seagulls, which had provided the soundtrack all day, swooped around us. Rebuilt in the wake of Hurricane Sandy, the boardwalk is wide and inviting, as is the long sandy beach, which was practically empty on a windy April afternoon. It was pleasantly jarring to be suddenly meandering along the ocean here, a surfing hotspot come summer. I felt like we were biking through movie sets, as we crossed from one neighborhood and ecosystem to the next.

Our final seaside stop was Jacob Riis Park, the beloved "People's Beach," which sometimes gets so packed that strangers find their towels touching. The enormous, long-shuttered former bathhouse here is being restored and will boast restaurants, a hotel and a pool when it reopens — perhaps as soon as next summer.

We were almost done. We crossed the Marine Parkway-Gil Hodges Memorial Bridge, a Tinkertoy-like metal structure that had been our North Star

for much of the day, and entered Floyd Bennett Field, the city's first municipal airport, now home to a (currently closed) campground and a collection of historic aircraft. Several neglected hangars sit vacant, but plans to restore them using Great American Outdoors Act funds are taking shape.

Meanwhile, work on the greenway, which is funded and overseen by a mix of public and private partners, carries on. In addition to safety and accessibility fine-tuning, the plan is to fully connect the greenway to a larger network of citywide trails. "As we live in more of a climate-threatened future, greenways can be not just a nice recreational amenity, but a central part of everyday life," Carta said.

Outside the Ryan Visitor Center at Floyd Bennett, Cosgrove picked up the theme of the future of the greenway and park, which she likes to describe as "a diamond in the rough." She was waxing poetic about how Gateway has potential to be as grand as Yosemite when Mae politely piped up. "Are you ready to keep going?" she asked.

We were. We reached the bike shop around 5 p.m., tired but exhilarated. Mae was very proud.

The owner offered us a ride to the subway, which we happily accepted, and we were back at the station in a flash. I had plenty of time on the Q train to think about Cosgrove's bald enthusiasm. Yosemite may have waterfalls and mountains, but Gateway had served up different thrills: ospreys and gulls, waves and wetlands, startling viewsheds and the kindness of strangers (the "moron" guy notwithstanding). In short, it had been a dreamy park day and one of the coolest bike rides I've been on. I stared contentedly out the window as we hurtled toward Manhattan, my daughter resting on my shoulder and the lowering sun washing us in light.

—RONA MARECH

Bike Lanes Rising

One simple way to create a bike path in a national park site is to repurpose a road. The Park Service did just that during the pandemic, when it kept cars off Upper Beach Drive, which runs through part of Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Park. Not all car commuters welcomed the closure, but it was a hit with visitors, local walkers and cyclists — and NPCA. In November, after the public weighed in on the future of Beach Drive, the Park Service made its call: For now, the road will remain closed to vehicles.

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Bird's Best Friend

Turning to the very goodest dog in the race to save Hawaii's endangered seabirds.

Biologists at Hawaiʻi Volcanoes National Park had long wondered about ʻakēʻakē. They knew these wide-ranging, robin-sized seabirds made at least occasional visits to the sere, spiky lava fields high up on the shoulder of Mauna Loa. Researchers occasionally heard their calls late at night, and every so often, they'd come across a carcass. But no scientist had ever reported a live ʻakēʻakē, nor evidence of their nests, in the park.

The ʻakēʻakē "is one of the most elusive seabird species," said Charlotte Forbes Perry, a biologist with the Pacific Cooperative Studies Unit of the University of Hawaii who's based at Hawaiʻi Volcanoes. For one thing, the ʻakēʻakē's habits make them hard for humans to find: The birds spend most of their lives on the wing, far out at sea. They lay eggs and raise their chicks in tiny burrows on steep cliffs or in the crevasses of remote, forbidding lava fields and only emerge from their burrows at night. And unlike other seabird species that share their habitat, ʻakēʻakē don't leave any traces of their presence, such as feathers or poop outside their burrows, to point researchers in the right direction.

ʻAkēʻakē are also hard to find because there don't seem to be many left to find. "It's known from the historical and archaeological records that the species was once widespread throughout the Hawaiian Islands," said Brad Keitt, director of the oceans and islands division at the American Bird Conservancy. "They were common enough that they were likely even a food source for Native Hawaiians." But after hundreds of years of habitat loss and predation from introduced species such as cats, rats and mongooses, it's estimated that perhaps 240 pairs of ʻakēʻakē remain statewide, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the birds as endangered

COURTESY OF ANNIE B. DOUGLAS/CASCADIA RESEARCH

ʻAKĒʻAKĒ are a distinct population of band-rumped storm petrels, which roam both the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans.

in 2016. (The ʻakēʻakē are a distinct population of band-rumped storm petrels, which nest and roam widely throughout the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, and number perhaps 150,000 worldwide.)

With so little known about their distribution, needs and behaviors, park staff and conservationists throughout Hawaii have struggled to intervene effectively on the birds' behalf. "For years, we were all like, 'We've got to find one of these birds,'" Forbes Perry said. "But we started to realize we couldn't do it on our own." What they needed was a specialized technology that could quickly but methodically scan vast acres of rugged terrain, searching for some kind of subtle seabird signal that exists beyond the limits of human perception. In other words, said Forbes Perry, "we needed a dog."

"I have been monitoring seabirds on Mauna Loa for 16 years, and this was the first live, healthy, young seabird I have seen."

Enter Slater, a 2-year-old McNab collie with reddish-brown fur, big, perky ears and a singular drive to sniff out endangered Hawaiian seabird burrows. "So many good things happen for Slater when he smells that odor: He gets a party thrown for him, he gets to jump up all over people, and everyone tells him how great he is," said Michelle Reynolds. She's a wildlife biologist who adopted Slater as a puppy from a local ranch and trained him to detect the odors of ʻakēʻakē and another species of endangered seabird, the ʻuaʻu — or Hawaiian petrel. "Slater works for 100% all-natural beef hot dogs, but he's not actually that food motivated," she said. "He's in it for the attention and the party." Forbes Perry knew that a trained detector dog had located the first known ʻakēʻakē burrow on the Big Island in 2015, at an Army base called the Pōhakuloa Training Area. And in 2019, Hawaiʻi Volcanoes staff picked up ʻakēʻakē nesting calls on audio recorders they'd set out in a petrel colony 8,700 feet up on a remote flank of Mauna Loa, which helped narrow down the likeliest terrain. So in September 2022, Forbes Perry, Reynolds and Slater hitched helicopter rides to the edge of the colony and began the search in earnest.

Forbes Perry is part of a team of researchers monitoring ʻuaʻu on the mountain since the early 1990s. For humans anyway, the hunt for petrel burrows is grueling: It involves spending long days under direct, high-elevation sun, traversing sharp lava rock, crouching down to peer into cracks and keeping a close eye out for signs of activity at the burrows' mouths. Sometimes Forbes Perry finds evidence of successful ʻuaʻu breeding, such as a chick's downy feathers or fresh streaks of fishy-smelling bird poop outside a burrow, indicating that the parents have recently visited to drop off food. But over the years, she's also come across more distressing signs: abandoned burrows, partially eaten eggs, even petrel carcasses. To stanch the loss of seabirds to introduced predators at

Do Fence Me In

Predator-proof fences are one of the best tools conservationists have to stem the tide of extinctions, said Brad Keitt with the American Bird Conservancy (short of eradicating predators from an entire island, which so far has been attempted only on islands with few or no humans, such as Lehua, a seabird sanctuary off the Hawaiian island of Niʻihau). "The birds that are susceptible to those invasive species respond dramatically when predators are removed from their environment," Keitt said.

The practice is particularly common in New Zealand, which has at least 52 predator fences enclosing nearly 25,000 acres. Hawaii's first predator-proof fence was completed in 2011 at Kaʻena Point Natural Area Reserve on Oahu. Since then, fences have been planned or built on every major island.

At more than 5 miles, the fence on Mauna Loa is one of the longest cat-proof fences in the world. It's 6 feet tall and strung with coated chicken wire that cats and mongooses can't fit through, with a floppy, outward-sloping top that they can't climb over. The petrel colony occupies a remote shoulder of the volcano, far from any roads or trails, so the crews, their camping gear, and all their tools and equipment could only reach the site via helicopter. The fence took five years to build, in part because crews mostly worked between December and March to avoid disturbing petrels during breeding season. "So they were out there all winter, crushing lava rock with sledge hammers in the rain, up at 9,000 feet of elevation," Forbes Perry said.

All that hard work seems to have paid off: Since park staff finished the cat-proof fence at Hawaiʻi Volcanoes in 2016, researchers have found 29 newly established ʻuaʻu nests within its border, and zero evidence of predators. Now Forbes Perry is working with park staff on a plan to expand fencing to other areas where petrels are known to nest, and where predators are still taking a toll. "When I monitor colonies outside the fence, I still find quite a bit of predation," Forbes Perry said. "So I'm a big fan of this fence."

TWO-YEAR-OLD SLATER with biologist Michelle Reynolds, who adopted him when he was a puppy.

HAWAII VOLCANOES NATIONAL PARK

Hawai‘i Volcanoes, park staff enclosed this 644-acre petrel colony in a cat-proof fence in 2016.

On the first day of their search, Reynolds and Forbes Perry hustled to keep up with Slater as he pinged across the treacherous terrain, nose alternatively up in the air and to the ground. “We work on-leash, so that means I have to go as fast as he goes,” Reynolds said. “He can’t search if I keep him at a heel — he needs to be able to pick up the wind and explore in order to catch the odor, so we just have to keep up.”

Early on the second day, Slater suddenly froze, his nose pointed down at a tiny hole in the rock. “That’s his signal for, ‘Here, I found it,’” Reynolds said. Forbes Perry dropped her pack, got down on her hands and knees and shined a flashlight into this little hole. She saw a mass of gray fluff and then realized the fluff was breathing: It was a plump, healthy ‘akē‘akē chick.

“I was ecstatic,” Forbes Perry said. (As, presumably, was Slater, who got his love fest after his find.) “I have been monitoring seabirds on Mauna Loa for 16 years, and this was the first live, healthy, young seabird I have seen.” A few weeks later, she returned to the burrow and installed a motion-activated camera, which captured the timing and frequency of the adults’ visits and the chick’s early forays from its burrow. With data like this, and with a plan to spend more time out on the mountain trying to keep up with Slater during the 2023 breeding season, the park could soon have the information it needs to help the ‘akē‘akē recover. Rats wriggle into petrel burrows and steal eggs, and cats have been caught on video attacking ‘ua‘u adults as they come and go from the burrows, so finding more burrows will help biologists figure out where to build more fences to keep predators out of petrel breeding territory.

Meanwhile, Reynolds said locating hidden seabird burrows is just one of the many ways conservation biologists could benefit from a closer partnership with dogs like Slater. Detector dogs can sniff out predators inside protected habitat, as well as invasive species or outbreaks of diseases that threaten native plants and animals at the early stages of spread — before signs are obvious to human observers, but when it may be easier to intervene. These skills could come in handy for conservationists everywhere, but the need is particularly acute in Hawaii, where native species haven’t evolved defenses against introduced predators, competitors or diseases. “I’m encouraging more conservation biologists to work with dogs, especially those that are frustrated with the scope and scale of the problems, and of the resources we need to protect,” Reynolds said. “Because, boy, dogs could save us all a lot of heartache, time and effort.”

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

©THOMAS MANGAN

LAKE HAIYAHA in Rocky Mountain National Park. E. coli was detected in three-quarters of the water samples collected in the park for a recent study.

Pristine No More

Researchers are detecting traces of human waste in some of the national parks' most remote lakes and streams.

AS AN AVID OUTDOORSWOMAN who is passionate about environmental health, Laura Scott found the perfect kind of fieldwork for her doctorate. For much of a summer, she would load up her insulated backpack with empty bottles and head up one of Rocky Mountain National Park's numerous trails. Some of the hikes were arduous and long, and on more than one occasion, conditions turned dicey. "I would hear thunder in the distance and think like, 'Oh, I can outrun the storm,' and then find myself in a situation where I shouldn't be," she said. At both some of the most popular and some of the least-visited spots in the park, Scott would fill her bottles with water, then rush back with a pack dozens of pounds heavier and quickly refrigerate her samples before analyzing their contents.

What was Scott looking for in the water of these postcard-worthy lakes and streams? Human fecal contaminants — in other words, visitors' poop.

Millions of people visit national parks each year, and managing the resulting human waste is a tricky endeavor for the National Park Service, especially in the backcountry. Some remote park outhouses require regular emptying by helicopters, and rangers too often perform the thankless job of picking up the output on the side of a trail, along with bits of toilet paper and the occasional soiled unmentionables. Recent studies show, though, that the contamination extends well beyond those visible deposits and that traces of human excrement can be found far and wide in national park waters.

Concentrations varied, but all 56 surface water samples Scott collected in the summer of 2019 contained fecal indicator bacteria, and in many cases fecal coliform colonies were "too numerous to count," according to a recent paper based on her doctoral work. E. coli was detected in more than three-quarters of the samples, but since the bacterium can be found in the intestines of both people and animals, it's not a definitive indicator of human waste. So Scott also looked for antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Scott notes that many bacteria would have developed antibiotic resistance even without any human involvement, but Scott and her colleagues did find a correlation between how busy a campsite was and the relative abundance of bacteria resistant to antibiotics such as levofloxacin and vancomycin, which are used to treat bacterial infections.

"I was surprised by the amount

of pharmaceuticals and the types of pharmaceuticals that were found in some of these backcountry lakes — ibuprofen, estrogen, you know, things that definitely are not coming from natural sources," said Scott M. Esser, director of Rocky Mountain's Continental Divide Research Learning Center and a co-author of Scott's paper.

Scott also looked specifically at the efficacy of a urine-diverting toilet that was just installed at Longs Peak Boulderfield near several primitive campsites. The toilet diverts liquids into an alpine creek while solids are directed to a holding pit by way of a conveyer belt. This new kind of pit toilet is potentially appealing from a logistical standpoint because it requires less frequent emptying by staff, but using genetic markers and other fecal metrics, Scott found that the system did not prevent feces from contaminating downstream waters.

Scott's results in Rocky Mountain were not completely unexpected as they follow recent research by her and others in several national parks. Over the past decade, David Clow, a research hydrologist at the U.S. Geological Survey, and his colleagues published studies of the impact of backpackers and pack animals at Sequoia, Kings Canyon and Yosemite national parks and found that concentrations of fecal contaminants there were relatively low but spiked during storms when runoff carried organic matter into streams. "Storms are really where the action is," he said.

The goals of Scott's research in Rocky Mountain were to figure out exactly where backcountry visitors "go" — in two senses of the word — to help park staff better manage these remote areas and also to provide insight into potential public health concerns. So how dangerous is the contamination? Concentrations of fecal coliforms at many alpine lakes did exceed thresholds set by the Environmental Protection Agency, but visitors' exposure remains minimal as long as they treat the water before drinking it (which park staff advise) and don't swim for extended periods of time.

"There does become a tipping point where maybe people start to say, 'I need to be part of this solution.'"

Still, Rocky Mountain is known as a headwaters park — the Colorado River has its source there, and the park's streams provide water to Front Range towns including Estes Park — so monitoring and protecting water quality are paramount. In theory, more backcountry toilets could help, but those have their own impact on wilderness, and staff digging up new pits regularly encounter others decommissioned years ago. "Since we're a park that's been here a long time, those wilderness crews are running out of spaces in our popular areas," said Kyle Patterson, a management specialist at the park.

Figuring out exactly where to site new privies is also problematic because visitors' urges can strike anywhere. Over the past three years, teams of volunteers documenting human waste and social trails often found toilet paper and "deposits" at the end of these unsanctioned trails, Esser said. "That's where we started to be like, 'Oh, my gosh, this is kind of everywhere,'" he said. When park staff placed triangles on a map to indicate the location of human waste along the trail to Sky Pond, triangles covered almost the length of the trail but also strayed some distance on either side of it. "For the more relatable public presentations, we change those to the classic poop emojis that look like swirled ice cream," Esser said. "You can imagine the effect that we get from that visual."

An understanding of the cumulative impact is what park staff want visitors to take away from the outreach. They also hope for a behavior change. So-called wag bags — puncture-resistant dog bags for humans — are available at some of the park's trailheads, and they're now offered to backcountry campers when park employees hand them their wilderness permits. Picking up after themselves still makes some people squeamish, but Patterson takes comfort in the fact that not long ago, dog owners were just as reluctant to bag the droppings of their pooches (which are not allowed on the park's trails).

"There does become a tipping point where maybe people start to say, 'I need to be part of this solution,'" Patterson said.

Meanwhile, Scott said her work at Rocky Mountain can be cheaply scaled up to be done at a lot of parks. She and her colleagues are working on a method to run one water sample through several tests at once, which would speed up the analysis considerably. Now a USGS geneticist, she's in talks with national parks in Alaska and beyond to try out that approach. She said the hardest part of the monitoring is the sampling, but it's not technically challenging and could easily be conducted by citizen scientists. What's more, participating in this work would help volunteers grasp the extent of the problem, Scott said, which will likely worsen as the number of people venturing into parks' wilderness continues to grow.

"This contamination is very unseen, but it has very measurable effects," Scott said. "And so, because it's hard to see and it's intangible, a lot of people look over it, but it will become more and more important in the coming years."

NICOLAS BRULLIARD is senior editor of National Parks magazine.

TRAILBLAZERS Julius Rosenwald (left) and Booker T. Washington walk the grounds of the Tuskegee Institute in 1915.

HANNA HOLBORN GRAY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS RESEARCH CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARY

With Booker T. Washington's help, Julius Rosenwald built 5,000 schools for Black students across 15 Southern states. Why do so few people know his name?

Remembering Rosenwald

Mostly, what Newell Quinton knew about his boyhood school was that he loved it.

The Sharptown Colored School community was an extended family to Quinton and his seven siblings. All of their teachers lived nearby in San Domingo, a Black enclave outside of Sharptown on Maryland's Eastern Shore. On cold days, a potbellied stove heated the rooms. On warm ones, two ancient oaks offered shade in the front yard. In the back, a softball field provided a rare place in segregated Maryland for young Black boys and girls to slide into home plate. Light flowed in from two walls of windows, while large, rectangular chalkboards hung on the interior walls. The pine floors often glistened from recent coats of linseed oil.

Quinton's parents had attended the school, too, and his grandparents had helped build it. So, after he retired from a career at the Department of Veterans Affairs in Baltimore and returned to his father's farm in San Domingo to raise pigs and goats, he began to think about restoring the weathered building and turning it into a community center — a tribute to a place where Black children had thrived.

That's when Quinton, 79, learned his beloved alma mater was a historic Rosenwald school, one of almost 5,000 built between 1912 and 1932 across 15 Southern states. The undertaking was a partnership between Black scholar Booker T. Washington, head of Alabama's Tuskegee Institute, and businessman Julius Rosenwald, the president and eventually chairman of Sears, Roebuck and Co. in Chicago. About one-third of all the Black children in the South were educated in these schools during the time they were active. Many graduates, including Quinton and his siblings, would go on to join the Civil Rights Movement.

"I had no idea," Quinton said of Rosenwald's name and legacy. "I was just amazed and grateful. Had it not been for these two people, with their unselfish approach to life, who said, 'What can we do?' then I have no idea what would have happened."

Now, a group of preservationists, advocates, photographers, historians and civil rights activists are endeavoring to make sure the whole country knows about Rosenwald. They are planning a national park site, based in Chicago, that would tell the story of Rosenwald's life and philan-

By Rona Kobell • Photos by André Chung

SINGLETON C. ANDERSON teaches a class of young men in a Rosenwald school in North Carolina. Opposite page: Newell Quinton and his grandson Zana Kone in the San Domingo School in Maryland, which Quinton, his siblings and his parents attended.

HANNA HOLBORN GRAY SPECIAL COLLECTIONS RESEARCH CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LIBRARY

thropy; in addition, several restored schoolhouses in the South would become part of the park to highlight the schools and what they meant to Black communities desperate for education. Only about 500 Rosenwald schools are still standing, and of those, fewer than half have been restored so far. Historical trusts in many Southern states have inventoried the remaining properties and encouraged their preservation; many supporters believe that a national park designation will help with that effort. Down the road, the National Park Service could consider adding newly restored schools to the proposed park, or those buildings could possibly become complementary state sites.

If a Rosenwald historical park is ultimately designated, it will become the first national park site honoring a Jewish American. And it would introduce many Americans, including former Rosenwald school students, to a man whose name they had not known.

"He was a modest man. He didn't want his name on the buildings," said longtime NPCA volunteer and former board member Dorothy Canter, who first proposed the park seven years ago and is now president of the campaign to establish a Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park. "But he embodied social justice. He just wanted to give back. And he did. It's a great American story."

Separate and Unequal

In many ways, Washington and Rosenwald were opposites: an enslaved man turned scholar who believed education was a path out of poverty, and a fastidious son of the garment trade who became fabulously wealthy despite never finishing high school. But for both, their religious faith propelled their interest in social change. Washington believed Christ wanted to lift his people up. Rosenwald believed in tzedakah, or the moral obligation to do what is just, and thought that Jewish citizens, themselves persecuted in Europe, should help their Black brethren who suffered under the yoke of segregation. He was passionate about the Jewish value of tikkun olam, meaning "repair the world." The day in 1911 that Washington and Rosenwald met was, according to Robert Moton, Washington's Tuskegee successor, "a fortunate day for black people." Many scholars agree.

"This idea of these two men from different backgrounds coming together was an early form of social innovation in philanthropy and education," said Brent Leggs, a Rosenwald scholar and the executive director of the African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund. "The Rosenwald schools stand as a physical manifestation of a social movement in response to a crisis in Black education."

During slavery, many Southern states had laws on the books prohibiting Black children from attending school or even learning to read, with penalties ranging from fines, flogging or imprisonment for white teachers and, typically, physical punishment for enslaved people. After the Civil War, though, these states began allowing Black schools and even supporting them through collected taxes. Many white residents complained; they saw no need for Black people to have an education, and they didn't think their tax money should subsidize the schools.

"Education would spoil a good plow hand," an Alabama state legislator, J.L.M. Curry, declared in a speech to the General Assembly in 1889. Three years later, the state passed legislation that essentially starved Black public schools of funds. Other Southern states struggled with the push-pull between a need to support Black schools (along with other institutions) just enough to keep their labor force from heading north but not so much that Black citizens began demanding more rights. Clarity arrived in 1896 when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld segregation in Plessy v. Ferguson, ruling that "separate but equal" accommodations were to be the law of the land. The case was about railcars, but the precedent soon applied to all aspects of Southern life, including public schools. School segregation became systemic in the South, a part of life seldom questioned, according to Douglas A. Blackmon, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of "Slavery by Another Name," which details the convict slavery system — and other forms of forced labor — that emerged after Reconstruction.

"White people totally accepted the logic that there was no need for Black schools to be the equivalent of white schools," Blackmon said. "The idea that there was any kind of legal, moral or practical need to provide equal educational opportunities had never crossed the minds of the vast majority of white Southerners before the 1950s."

Meeting of the Minds

Washington had fought to attend school in the tiny West Virginia salt-furnace and coal town where his mother moved after the Civil War. He eventually was accepted at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, a prestigious Black boarding school in Virginia. Later, Hampton's trustees helped him found the Tuskegee Institute, one of the nation's first Black colleges. While traveling through the South to raise money for Tuskegee, Washington noticed the deplorable condition of Black schools, which were deteriorating even further in the wake of Plessy v. Ferguson. He wanted schools in rural areas to not just teach writing and reading, but also farming, gardening and life skills. He sought to prepare students to thrive under a segregated system by being dedicated to work and excelling at it. (Even at the time, other Black scholars and activists bristled at Washington's accommodationist approach and willingness to work within the system, however unfair it was. In particular, the prominent scholar, W.E.B. Du Bois, while a supporter of Rosenwald schools, pushed for more. He wanted Black people to be as welcome in the opera houses as they were in the factories — and favored confronting and dismantling the system.)

Rosenwald, meanwhile, had outgrown his modest Midwestern roots, and his life transformed further when he took an ownership stake in Sears, Roebuck and Co. and turned that company into a mail-order powerhouse that offered satisfaction

or money back. He began spreading his wealth around Chicago, giving to his synagogue, Jewish causes and YMCAs.

Rosenwald read Washington's autobiography, "Up From Slavery," after the investment banker, Paul J. Sachs, sent him a copy in 1910. Impressed, Rosenwald hosted a luncheon the following year when Washington traveled to Chicago to speak. Soon after, Rosenwald agreed to serve on Tuskegee's board.

Rosenwald's sojourns to Alabama for meetings proved transformative. He saw the way Black children lived in the rural South and found the segregation shocking and appalling. He became more keenly aware of a type of racism that he knew existed but had not witnessed in Chicago. Rosenwald recoiled at such hatred, thinking of his own people's persecution in the pogroms of Europe. He wanted to be part of uplifting the Black community.

When Washington suggested a partnership to build schools, Rosenwald agreed, provided that the communities and the school boards become partners in the endeavor. He'd donate seed money, but the community needed to supply labor, land and materials, as well as some funds, and the boards of education would have to cover teacher salaries and other essential costs. The matching funds approach would become a new way of giving money away that reinvented philanthropy and is still popular today.

They began with six schools in Alabama. Tuskegee staff members designed the first ones, with touches that would make the schools recognizable architectural gems decades later. The buildings had walls of windows that let in natural light and could be opened in warm weather, and large cloakrooms where children could hang coats they wore on long walks to school. Retractable walls let the schools double as meeting spaces for community groups that often lacked places to gather. Many had kitchens in the back for cooks to prepare food and stoves like the one Quinton remembered for heat.

The two men were not far into their plans when Washington died in 1915, but Rosenwald forged ahead on his own. He continued to work with Tuskegee graduates and Robert Robinson Taylor, the first Black graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who had designed many of Tuskegee's buildings. Fletcher Bascom Dresslar at the George Peabody College of Teachers in Nashville subsequently updated the designs.

Thanks to clean and well-lit spaces for learning, devoted teachers, involved parents and strong, supportive communities, the Rosenwald school students thrived. Families contributed resources, manpower and capital; elders frequently showed up at fundraisers with bags of pennies. That commitment and investment helped incubate leaders, and many Rosenwald students ended up at the vanguard of social justice movements. The late Congressman John Lewis, the revered civil rights leader, attended a Rosenwald school, as did Maya Angelou, Medgar Evers and Carlotta Walls LaNier, one of the Little Rock Nine who integrated Central High School in 1957. "My father would pray all the time that his kids had a better life than he did," Quinton recalled. "And my mom would say, 'You're as good as anybody else.'"

RUDOLPH AND SYLVIA STANLEY, accompanied by members of their family, stand in front of the San Domingo School. The couple, who have been married for 51 years, attended the school as children (left). Opposite page top: David Deutsch, at his home in Washington, D.C., holds a picture of his great-grandfather, Julius Rosenwald. "You Need A Schoolhouse," a book his wife, Stephanie Deutsch, wrote about the partnership between Rosenwald and Washington, helped connect him to his family's history. Opposite page bottom: Longtime NPCA volunteer Dorothy Canter has been the driving force behind the campaign to create a national park to recognize Rosenwald and the Rosenwald schools.

A Legacy Almost Lost

Rosenwald wasn't the only Northern philanthropist building schools for Black children in the rural South, but no one would match his drive, his efficiency or his ability to do so much so quickly, Blackmon said. "He had enough wealth to do things on an unprecedented scale."

When Rosenwald died in 1932 at 69, Jewish and Black communities mourned the loss along with political leaders. "The death of Julius Rosenwald, which occurred in Chicago today, deprives the country of an outstanding citizen," said then-President Herbert Hoover. In an interview in The New York Times several days after Rosenwald's death, social worker and philanthropist Jacob Billikopf said, "One shudders to think what would have been the present state of race relations had not these 5,000 beacons of light shone through the years."

In Judaism, a high form of tzedakah is to give anonymously. Rosenwald's gifts were not exactly anonymous, but he was not like his contemporaries — Carnegie, Frick and Ford — who affixed their names to museums and libraries as conditions of their gifts. Most Rosenwald schools, such as the Sharptown Colored School, later known as San Domingo School, had names the community gave them. Rosenwald arranged for his eponymous foundation, which funded various projects including the schools and fellowships for Black artists and scholars, to shut down within 25 years of his death. In 1948, it closed as planned, having given away the equivalent of around $800 million in today's dollars.

"More good can be accomplished by expending funds as trustees find opportunities for constructive work than by storing large sums of money for long periods of time," Rosenwald wrote in an article published in 1929. "Coming generations can be relied upon to provide for their own needs as they arise." Eventually, progress would put the Rosenwald schools out of business. After Brown v. Board of Education in 1954, the American education system began its slow march to integration. In rural areas, that meant Black children often took buses to formerly white-only schools. By the late 1970s, most of the Rosenwald schoolhouses were no longer in use as schools. And though Rosenwald had required the schools to be built on high

S.C. DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES & HISTORY, COLUMBIA

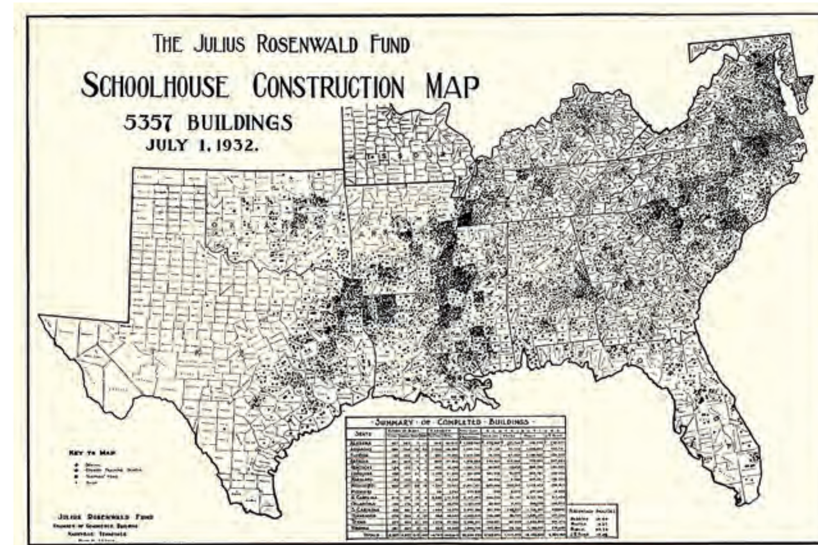
STUDENTS GATHER in front of the Pee Dee Rosenwald Colored School (as it was then called) in South Carolina (above). Below: A Rosenwald school in Alabama shows signs of neglect. Only about 500 Rosenwald schools are still standing, and of those, fewer than half have been restored so far.

COURTESY OF DAVID BULIT/ABANDONED ATLAS FOUNDATION

ground, climate change and sea-level rise had shifted the topography. Some ended up in marshland and were unsuitable to be rehabilitated. Others were repurposed, neglected or misused. One in the Shenandoah Valley became a county dump.

The decline continued until 2002, when the National Trust for Historic Preservation included all the Rosenwald schools on its list of endangered places. That spurred several states to take a closer look. Leggs, then a graduate student at the University of Kentucky, took on a project chronicling the condition of the schools in his state. Through research, he learned that both his parents went to a Rosenwald school. And he was devastated to subsequently find out that the school was gone, no more than an empty field. The discovery crushed and haunted him, and inspired him to change his career path to focus on the preservation of Black history.

"When we lose the Rosenwald schools, we are losing part of the American story," Leggs said. "We are losing these physical testimonies that can inspire contemporary social movements. We are losing our tangible connection to the past that is related to our individual and shared identity. We are losing memories of children walking to school and toward their ambition and potential. And we are losing it because the traditional preservation movement did not prioritize this piece of American history."



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A 1932 MAP shows the locations of the nearly 5,000 schools that Rosenwald helped build throughout the South. (Note: The larger 5,357 figure includes teachers' houses and other buildings that were constructed during this time to support the schools.)

Several of Rosenwald's descendants followed in his footsteps, becoming activists and philanthropists, and Rosenwald's grandson, Peter Ascoli, wrote the definitive biography of his grandfather. But the link to Rosenwald and his emphasis on tikkun olam faded with time. With the flexibility that their generational wealth provided, and the distance from pogroms and anti-Semitism, many Rosenwald heirs turned to secular pursuits. Some grandchildren married out of the Jewish faith, left Chicago and assimilated. Their children had an even more attenuated connection to their Jewish roots, their altruistic ancestor and his civil rights legacy.

"I grew up knowing nothing about Julius Rosenwald. Absolutely nothing," recalled David Deutsch, a retired TV director who is Rosenwald's great-grandson. "I didn't even know I was Jewish until I was probably 11."

His father, Richard Deutsch, married a nominally Episcopalian woman from the South, and they raised their family in Greenwich, Connecticut. David Deutsch knew the cousins on his mother's side, but not on his father's. But by the time his wife, Stephanie Deutsch, wrote, "You Need A Schoolhouse," a book about the partnership between Rosenwald and Washington, David had begun connecting with his cousins, and the book changed his relationship to his family's history.

"Just because you have money doesn't mean you have a propensity for philanthropy," said David Deutsch, who lives in Washington, D.C. "To give your money away because you think you are making a better world ... to have that as an anchor, that's unique. And it's really been this wonderful, unexpected feeling, learning about all this, and meeting people who are so dedicated to their schools."

A Chance Encounter at the Movies

One day in 2015, Dorothy Canter went to the movies with her husband. By chance, the Aviva Kempner documentary, "Rosenwald," was showing on the big screen. It told the story of Rosenwald, his relationship to Washington and the schools they built together. Canter was "blown away" by Rosenwald's work and surprised by the fact that she'd never heard of him. She immediately thought of an idea to honor him.

"I knew nothing about Julius Rosenwald, but I knew a lot about national parks," she said. "I knew that there is not one national park unit that commemorates the life and legacy of a Jewish American."

Canter convened a meeting with Leggs, Tom Cassidy from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and Alan Spears,

FISK UNIVERSITY, JOHN HOPE AND AURELIA E. FRANKLIN LIBRARY AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS/THE CIESLA FOUNDATION

STUDENTS POSE WITH Rosenwald at the Tuskegee Institute.

NPCA's senior director of cultural resources. They set up an advisory board (including Stephanie Deutsch, whom Canter met through a friend), crafted a plan and launched a campaign to establish a national park. The group asked each state to recommend schools to be considered for inclusion in the park. Fourteen states submitted 55 Rosenwald schools and one teacher's house. The Julius Rosenwald and the Rosenwald Schools Act of 2020, which could pave the way for a national park, authorized the Department of the Interior to study sites associated with Rosenwald; it lists 10 schools, including Quinton's in Sharptown.

The idea for a Julius Rosenwald and Rosenwald Schools National Historical Park enjoys bipartisan backing and has a list of nearly 200 supporting organizations, including synagogues, churches, Black heritage museums, foundations and Rosenwald schools support groups.

"This is not about glorifying Julius Rosenwald. This is about celebrating the work he did in conjunction with Black communities," Stephanie Deutsch said. "It reinforces this feeling that this is a story we all share."

San Domingo's Legacy

Quinton's parents only went to school through the fourth grade. After that, they had to work. His mother canned tomatoes; his father worked as a custodian. They pushed for a better life for their children, and the children's teachers reinforced that push for excellence. Every day had a rhythm. Enter the school, take seats, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and devotions, and sing a song. In some classrooms, they had to stand for cleanliness inspections. Ears, underarms, hands. Fail, and it would be embarrassing. Lunch was a packed bag from home, with fresh milk from the milkman. Teachers only allowed outdoor recess if children had finished their work. Outside, softball and dodgeball were the most popular games, but too much misbehavior resulted in a cloakroom paddling.

"It was not just teaching us our ABCs," Quinton said. "It was teaching us how to survive in a segregated society. We just felt that they did everything they could do for us in order to ensure we were successful. The teachers I experienced, it was not just their occupation, it was their life."

That dedication paid off, as many graduates from the school went into education, medicine and ministry. Seven of the eight Quinton children attended Morgan State University in Baltimore, a historically Black university, coming home in summers to pick vegetables for 10 hours a day, starting at 75 cents an hour, until some found better jobs on campus.

While at Morgan State, Quinton and his sisters Alma Catherine Quinton Hackett and Barbara A. Quinton joined protesters at Northwood Theatre, where managers refused to let in Black patrons. Baltimore police arrested Quinton's sisters and took them to jail. The judge demanded a high bail, and neither the young women nor the NAACP could pay it. Some of their white friends at Goucher College, then all women, heard about the arrests and conspired to get arrested, too. The Goucher women reasoned their parents wouldn't stand for them getting locked in jail, and the warden would have to let out the Morgan State students too. The plan worked, Hackett recalled with a laugh.

When Quinton began researching the school and told his siblings and cousins about Rosenwald, they'd never heard of him, either. But they were delighted that Quinton, whom they fondly call the family drill sergeant, took up the restoration cause.

"My life started here," said Rudolph Stanley, 74, a cousin, as he admired the light coming through the windows on a recent visit to San Domingo School. He was there with his wife of 51 years, Sylvia, also an alumna.

"It's a sense of pride," added Hackett. "Here I am 80 years old, and I can sit in this classroom where I got my foundation and just reflect."

As they spoke, Quinton strode around the room, finally folding his lanky frame into a chair to reminisce. His freckled face lighting up as he joked with his siblings and told stories, Quinton stressed the values the school instilled. Respect. Remember whose son you are. For him, the resurrected school honors not just Rosenwald and Washington, but also those elders — the fathers and grandfathers who cut the timber for the building and the mothers and grandmothers who sold baked goods, hot meals and hand-sewn clothes to help raise the money.

"It represents so much of the sacrifice made by people that I just heard about through my parents," Quinton said. "I'm always in awe of how they were able to do so much with so little."

RONA KOBELL, a frequent National Parks magazine contributor, is the co-founder of the Environmental Justice Journalism Initiative. She is also a professor of journalism and has written about the Chesapeake Bay for 20 years. Reach her at rona@ejji.org.

ANDRÉ CHUNG is an award-winning photojournalist and portrait and commercial photographer based in the Washington and Baltimore region.

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OFFSHORE ESCAPE

The Boston Harbor Islands are a world apart from the city — but just a ferry ride away.

BY DORIAN FOX | PHOTOS BY JESSICA RINALDI

YOUSSEF ELHABBAK stands at the bow of a ferry on his way to Peddocks Island, one of 34 islands and peninsulas that make up Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area.

WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES from boating and fishing to swimming in the frigid bay (demonstrated by Lucas Hoffman) are a primary attraction for the thousands of visitors who flock to Boston Harbor Islands every year.

"Folks, if you're on the top deck, cover your ears," the captain advised over the intercom. I was indeed on the top deck, and I did as I was told. The boat's horn blasted through Boston's Inner Harbor, and the engine churned. Although the ferry crowd was sparse at 10 o'clock on a Thursday morning, Long Wharf already bustled. I'd made it to the pier just in time, beelining from a garage near the New England Aquarium through herds of pedestrians, then flashing the ticket on my phone to the attendant before clanking over the gangplank, my daypack slung on my shoulder.

Now settled in my blue plastic chair under an overcast, mid-August sky, catching scents of brine and diesel, I felt ready for a little adventure, all within miles of my apartment. I was headed to Georges Island, one of the most visited sites in Boston Harbor Islands National Recreation Area, which includes 34 islands and peninsulas scattered throughout the harbors and bays of Boston and its outlying coastal towns.

Georges was the first of three islands I'd visit over three days. Peddocks Island, next on my itinerary, had been closed for part of the pandemic, but its campsites were open to visitors again, and my wife, Maggie, and I had signed up for a Friday overnight excursion with a stargazing group. Then, on Saturday, we'd hop another ferry to Spectacle Island for an evening beer garden event, part of a series of programs celebrating the islands' twin anniversaries: 50 years as a state park, and 25 years as a national park.

Owned by the commonwealth of Massachusetts and a patchwork of other entities, the parkland (ranging from 1,500 to 3,050 acres depending on the tides) and 35 miles of shoreline are overseen by a partnership of 11 agencies including the National Park Service, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, and the nonprofit group Boston Harbor Now. Four of the islands are easily accessible by ferry, including Thompson Island, which is managed by an Outward Bound school and hosts outdoor education programs. Others are closed to visitors or closed seasonally to protect breeding birds, or they can be accessed only by private boat.

I'd known of this urban archipelago for years but had only recently learned the word "drumlins" — mounds of glacial till deposited around 12,000 years ago. Over time, receding glaciers flooded the region, but the islands were left exposed, rising from the sea like whalebacks. Most of the harbor islands are drumlins, including Georges Island, which is actually two drumlins that were re-sculpted and connected in the mid-1800s during the construction of Fort Warren, a Civil War-era structure and former prison camp.

I sent a check-in text to Maggie, who was stuck at work but would join me the next day. The summer had been full of job obligations and lingering pandemic unease, and we were eager for some fun. In recent years, staying in Boston had become less certain for us. Rents kept climbing, and though we liked our cozy corner of the city's Brighton neighborhood, visits to Maggie's childhood home in New Hampshire always stirred longings for more space, more trees and less of that famously tangled Boston traffic. Every year, it came up: Should we move? But after spending most of our adult lives in New England's largest metropolis, could we give up our favorite sushi spots? Or the pubs where we'd had our first dates? Beneath the day-to-day concerns was a harder-to-answer question: Did we really belong in this city or just live here? What makes a place home?

I hoped the islands might prove Boston could still surprise us. We'd never visited them before, and an offshore escape with skyline views sounded perfect. At the very least, we'd get glimpses of a unique ecosystem — the watery fringe of a nearly 400-year-old city that, despite our occasional doubts and restlessness, we'd become part of.

After a 45-minute ride to Georges, passengers spilled onto the dock. Fort Warren is the island's main event, a pentagon-shaped configuration of bastions and batteries. But I was first drawn to the trails along the shoreline. I wandered to the rocky beach, then up an embankment built to absorb cannon fire from enemy ships. The fort took two decades to finish, and by the time it was dedicated in 1847, weaponry had advanced, making its defensive design obsolete. With trees now rooted in the ramparts, the site has a reclaimed-by-nature feel. Above the fort's granite walls, hundreds of swallows swirled and chattered.

Then, a pleasant surprise. On the ferry ride over, I kept hearing a distinct, charmingly goofy laugh that reminded me of my days at Boston University, the school that brought me to the city two decades ago. Now, I realized my ears weren't playing tricks. Tramping down a set of stone steps was Mike, an old college roommate I hadn't seen in about 10 years.

"Whoa, this is weird," he said, and I heard that laugh again. We stood on the grass, catching up. A software engineer, he was on a team-building outing that he'd organized for his co-workers. We soon parted ways, but on an island with only 39 exposed acres at high tide, I figured we'd cross paths again.

During the Civil War, Fort Warren housed around 2,300 inmates, mostly Confederate soldiers, along with some political prisoners and Union deserters. Around the corner from the fort's entrance, a sign marks a narrow musketry "loophole" where in 1863, a skinny prisoner squeezed through after chipping away the edges. He plunged into the channel and swam for it but was eventually caught. Despite several such escape attempts by inmates, the camp was known for relatively humane treatment; prisoners were given newspapers, free time and bread from an on-site bakery.

Around noon, the island's atmosphere went from hushed to rambunctious as packs of kids from camps arrived. They roamed and conversed excitedly on the open-air parade ground inside the fort walls. Craving a bit of solitude, I found a quiet bench facing the ocean and watched the pulses of Boston Light, about 2 miles away on Little Brewster Island. The light station is the oldest continually operating in the U.S. and is one of the last to have a keeper. Lulled by lapping surf and the far-off dinging of buoys, I wondered what it was like to spend your days surrounded by water.

I decided to catch the 3 p.m. ferry back, and sure enough, Mike and his co-workers had the same idea. As he and I reminisced about old friends, I felt a strange loop-de-loop of time. I'd

A COUPLE take their first tentative steps into the bay off Peddocks Island.

come looking for a new slice of Boston, and here I was, immersed in my earliest memories of the city.

The next morning, Maggie and I had an early wake-up. Our amateur astronomy group wouldn't arrive until evening, but we wanted a full day on Peddocks. After grabbing lunch provisions at a neighborhood deli, we drove about 45 minutes to the town of Hingham on the South Shore, and soon we were boarding a small ferry with around 10 others.

The sky was pure blue as we cruised through the sun-drenched bay, weaving around Grape and Bumpkin islands. "This is a special place," I said, a little surprised at my own earnestness. "What, Boston?" Maggie asked. I knew what she was thinking: You mean this place we're always talking about leaving? But she was smiling, too, and I could already see her shoulders relaxing.

As we docked at Peddocks, we saw the red brick, slate-roofed barracks of Fort Andrews surrounded by sloping hills and deep stands of trees. Due to its secluded, windswept look, the island served as a backdrop for the movie "Shutter Island," Martin Scorsese's 2010 thriller. Long before that, the fort was active for two wars; during World War II, it functioned as a POW camp for around 1,800 captured Italian soldiers.

At the visitor center, a ranger kindly let us stash our stuff and schooled us on the island's resident deer — "They'll stare you down," he said. Outside, we wandered to a white clapboard church, built in 1941. It was closed to visitors, but we lingered over a bed of lavender swarmed with butterflies and bees. Bees, it turns out, are abundant on the islands — over 170 species have been cataloged in the park. And not just bees. Starting in 2005 scientists worked with the Park Service to launch a biodiversity inventory, enlisting a citizen army of experts, amateur biologists and school kids to collect and label insect specimens.

Brian D. Farrell, a professor of organismic and evolutionary biology and curator of entomology at the Harvard Museum of Comparative Zoology, pitched the inventory idea after touring the islands with his colleague, the late biologist and author E.O. Wilson, who coined the term "microwilderness" to describe the vast but often overlooked world of invertebrates.

The project's volunteers gathered approximately 160,000 arthropods and gastropods from 19 islands and peninsulas over six years. As they delved into the painstaking work of identifying specimens, even Wilson was surprised at the breadth of what was discovered. "Ed had offered some guesses as to how many ants we'd find," Farrell said. "He thought we'd have like 20 species out there, and it was three or four times that."

Peddocks is shaped like a curved spoon, and Maggie and I set off from East Head — the bowl of the spoon — along a paved path toward Middle Head, where we explored a marsh, spotting ravens and scattering grasshoppers. Then, after a quick lunch, we changed into our swimsuits and ducked through trees to a cobble beach. It was nearly 80 degrees, but we knew the Atlantic would be cold. And oh, it was. We cringed and laughed as we eased into the water. Once we adjusted, though, it was a thrill floating in the bay with boats speeding by in the near distance.

After drying off, we strolled a ways down the beach, and noticed a wooden ladder. At the top, a manicured yard led toward a path into the woods. We both hesitated. "Let's check it out," I said. We were soon ensconced by thick trees. Wild raspberries dangled at the path's edge.

When we emerged, we saw more tidy yards and several modest houses — shingled or clapboard, some with brick chimneys. One was bright pink, with solar panels and blue water barrels outside. We passed a wooden display board decorated with an assortment of flip-flops and a hand-painted sign reading "Island of Lost Soles." We'd stumbled into the Peddocks Island cottage community. In the 1880s the city began expanding a hospital on Long Island — the largest of the harbor islands — and Portuguese fishing families living on the island were displaced. Many of the families somehow found their way to Peddocks, and the relocation began: Some brought their houses over in pieces by boat, others reportedly used empty barrels to float whole structures across the channel. Over time, most cottages became vacation homes. When Massachusetts acquired the island in 1970, the cottagers began paying rent to the state.

Cathy Stanton, a cultural anthropologist, studied the cottagers' deep, multigenerational connections to Peddocks in an ethnographic study the Park Service hired her to do a decade ago. "It's an escape that feels like your true home," she said. "That's the magic of those summer places."

On our way back to the beach, we met Jon Hale, whose great-grandfather was part of a wave of Italian Americans who began

FOUR OF the Boston Harbor Islands (Georges, Spectacle, Peddocks and Thompson) have seasonal ferry access from Boston or Hingham. Other islands are reachable by private boat, and the peninsulas that are part of the recreation area — including Deer Island and World's End — are accessible from the mainland. For now, camping is limited to Peddocks. The more popular islands have plumbed or composting restrooms, but conditions are rustic overall; bring snacks, plenty of water and sunscreen, and count on packing out your trash. Check www.BostonHarborIslands.org for ferry schedules and costs.

FRIENDS RELAX in hammocks during one of Spectacle Island's summer evening events (above). Left: Setting up camp on Peddocks Island.

visiting Peddocks in the early 1900s. Hale's cottage has been in his family since 1949. "I was born in May, and I was here in June," he said. Now 58, Hale makes the trip from his home in Vermont every other weekend from Memorial Day to early October. The cottages are off the grid, but Hale has propane appliances, solar chargers and a well with non-potable water, one of 30 or so on the island. He lamented that a dozen of the roughly 40 cottages had been torn down, referring to a policy change in 1993: The park extended leases only to current owners, so the cottages can't be passed on. Over the years, site managers have floated several proposals for what to do with the cottages that range from preserving some for their historic value to razing them all to create recreational space. Hale plans to steward his family getaway as long as possible. "They'll have to remove me," he joked.

Soon we joined our fellow campers, who arrived wheeling carts full of supplies. Then setup commenced: out came tents of all sizes, camping chairs, portable grills. The group of around 60 hailed from all over the Boston area and beyond, and many were first-time campers.

After Maggie and I pitched our tent, I chatted with some of our neighbors. Mayur Bhat, an astral photography enthusiast, had come with his partner, Niharika Sane, and several friends they'd met as graduate students at Northeastern University. Demall Taylor and Aja Pickett said it was their first visit to Peddocks, but as native Bostonians, they'd been to Georges Island many times on school trips.

Before dusk set in, a ranger led us on a sunset walk on East Head's trails. She said coyotes had been spotted near a thicket over yonder. Coyotes? It was the best kind of trick. With our eyes drawn to the bushes, we were completely blindsided when the path opened up to a lookout point with a perfect view of the distant skyline. We all packed together, phones and cameras raised, as the sky flared orange above Long Island, with miniature buildings beyond. "All those hundreds of thousands of people out there," a man beside me mused, pinching the city between his fingers, "and it's like this big."

Back at the beach, it was campfire time. As the sky darkened, ingredients for s'mores appeared, and kids twirled glow sticks. A few small potbellied telescopes were set out, but the skies had clouded over, putting a damper on the stargazing. Eventually, however, some stars peeked out, and the moon emerged, throwing a column of light over the waves.

While campers toasted marshmallows, I talked with Paul Castro, a wiry, affable guy who was diligently tending the fire. Each of the islands I visited, it turned out, has a full-time groundskeeper, and Castro is the live-in caretaker on Peddocks. A former Marine, he'd grown up in Hull, just across the water. As we spoke, we could see the lights of the high school stadium where he used to play football. Castro works with a small crew through the winter, when the weather is harsh but the island is at its quietest. "That's my favorite time, hands down," he said.

In the morning, Maggie and I woke to the soothing churn of waves. She fired up the camp stove for coffee. On a short walk to the sea, I saw wild turkeys grazing on a gravelly path and an osprey flapping out over the water.

Soon Maggie and I departed for Hingham, where we changed into slightly nicer duds for the evening event on Spectacle Island before hightailing it back to the city. We had just enough time for lobster rolls and a couple of beers at James Hook & Co., and then it was on to the Long Wharf dock and a packed, triple-decker ferry.

"It was once a big pile of trash," the captain said, referring to our destination, "Don't make it a big pile of trash again." It is true: Spectacle Island was used for waste processing and as a city dump from 1902 to 1959, during which time it grew by more than 35 acres and leaked toxins into the harbor. As Boston's "Big Dig" project dragged on through the 1990s, crews unloaded millions of cubic yards of dirt at the site to create a graded, habitable island, with prime views of the city. The park opened to the public in 2006.

Once we'd disembarked, we climbed a spiraling path to the top of the north drumlin, the highest point on any of the islands at some 160 feet. The day had a lazy summer vibe, and by the time the music started and the band's lead singer — in a Grateful Dead shirt and heart-shaped sunglasses — began a cover of "Isn't She Lovely," hazy silhouettes were filing out of another big ferry. Within minutes, lines for beer and food were snaking around the visitor center.

Indigenous Peoples of the Bay

For time immemorial, the Massachusett Tribe and other Indigenous people inhabited the Shawmut Peninsula — where Boston now sits — and used the islands off the coast for seasonal farming, hunting and ceremonies. After the Puritans laid claim to the region in 1630, they quickly began to encroach on the islands as well.

Tensions between colonists and Native Americans in the Massachusetts Bay Colony reached a peak in 1675 during King Philip's War, when Metacom, a Pokanoket sachem (who had adopted the name Philip), led attacks on English settlements to win back lost territories. By then, many Native people in southern New England had been compelled to move to Christian "praying towns." In October of 1675, fearing others would join Metacom's rebellion, colonists forcibly relocated hundreds of Native people from these towns to Deer and Long islands, which became incarceration camps. During the harsh winter, with little food or water, hundreds starved or died of exposure or disease.

Lance Young-Ribeiro, a member of the Nemasket Nation and a chief sachem of the Walmsley Wolf Clan who has written about the island internments, said that while the harbor islands provided life-sustaining abundance, "they also represent a dark time in the history of the colonization of the Americas. Their preservation serves as a powerful reminder of the essential need to learn from our past mistakes while we all work toward building a more inclusive future."

Today, the preserved Native American sites on the harbor islands — which include burial grounds — increasingly are at risk. In 2021, the Boston Harbor Islands were listed among the 11 most endangered historic places by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, due to rapid erosion from climate change. That same year, the city announced an archaeological climate action initiative, which will involve collaborations between researchers, the Park Service, Tribal leaders and others to survey the islands and create plans to protect important archaeological and cultural sites.

ISLAND EVENINGS offer opportunities to watch sunsets (left) and roast marshmallows (bottom left). Below: The nondenominational Peddocks Island Chapel, which was built in 1941, was fully restored about a decade ago.

After a while, Maggie and I stole away to walk the beach, where we seemed to spot sea glass in every color, one perk of exploring a former landfill. Before the event wrapped up around dusk, we were treated to another stunning sunset photo op. Under a purple net of clouds, the skyline was backlit dramatically, turning wild orange first, then rosy pink. A jet dipped slowly through the scene, disappearing and reappearing in the glare. It was the city we knew — but unlike we'd ever seen it.

Squinting a little, I thought I could make out the blocky walls of City Hall, where we were married. Boston had become the backdrop of our story. This trip was yet another bright spot. Sure, we'd stay open to change, but we'd carved out a niche where, for now, we still seemed to fit.

Waiting in line for the return ferry, I spotted Castro, who had island-hopped to help out with the event. I asked him who was following who, and he laughed, and said he's always around. "These islands are my life," he said.

On the ferry ride back, the boat buzzed with camaraderie. The skyline still glowed faintly, then blue and yellow lights began blinking on in the dark. As we pulled into the wharf, a wedding was underway in the aquarium's event space, and the band at the window turned around, midsong, and raised their brass to us in salute. We all cheered. Maggie and I made our way back to the car over brick sidewalks, exhausted, salt still in our hair. Granted, we'd just gotten off a boat, but I couldn't deny it: The ground felt more solid under my feet.

DORIAN FOX is a writer and freelance editor whose essays and articles have appeared in various literary journals and other publications. He lives in Boston and teaches creative writing courses through GrubStreet and Pioneer Valley Writers' Workshop. Find more about his work at dorianfox.com.

JESSICA RINALDI is a staff photographer for The Boston Globe. In 2016, she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in feature photography. Prior to joining the Globe, she spent 10 years as a contract photographer for Reuters based in Boston, Dallas and New York City.

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A MONUMENTAL EFFORT

Almost a century after Virginia pushed out mountain people to make way for Shenandoah National Park, monuments to honor their memory are helping their descendants heal.

This past March on a cold wet morning, 72-year-old Bill Henry stood next to a small lawn backed against a forested hillside. Along with wire-rimmed John Lennon glasses and a tiny diamond earring, the bearded and ponytailed retired high school teacher wore a practical fleece vest and jeans. His big boots could cover a lot of ground and, in many ways, they had. A journey that began 30 years earlier during Henry's hikes in Shenandoah National Park was now nearing an end here in Augusta County at the park's southern tip.

"Eleven years ago, I had an idea," Henry told the couple of dozen people assembled at Grand Caverns Regional Park, just outside the national park. His idea was to honor the stories of the mountain people who once lived in Shenandoah. Despite having no experience in organizing or activism, Henry had pitched his concept to community meetings and civic groups and built a network of allies among local officials and park staff. He'd reached out to descendants after devoting years to getting to know them and their history. Along

By Kristin Henderson • Photos by Eric Lee

COURTESY OF BILL HENRY

WITH HELP from members of the Civilian Conservation Corps, Raymond Seal and his family relocated to a homestead community outside what would become Shenandoah National Park. The park ended up overlaying about 1,000 small tracts of land, but no one knows exactly how many people had to move to make way for the park. Previous pages: View of Corbin Hollow and a mountain cabin in 1935. The area became part of Shenandoah when the park was dedicated the following year.

the way, the group created the Blue Ridge Heritage Project and settled on a plan to build eight monuments, each located in a county that had given up land for the park.

Every year, 1.5 million people visit Shenandoah, hiking its forested trails or taking in Skyline Drive's majestic vistas, but the story of the park's creation, like those of many others across the National Park System, is a painful one. The Native American people who called these mountains home for thousands of years were decimated or forced out by disease, warfare and broken treaties. And in the 1930s before the 200,000-acre park was created, the commonwealth of Virginia displaced perhaps thousands who had settled in the Blue Ridge Mountains — a move that still causes a lot of hurt today.

That day in March brought the groundbreaking for the eighth and final monument. One of the people by Henry's side was Carrie Eheart, whose great-grandparents had lost the mountain community they'd depended on — a community she herself had only recently discovered.

"We don't want those stories to be lost," Henry said.

THE PUSH FOR A SCENIC PARK that would protect the region's ecosystems began in the early 1900s. Virginia businessmen, seeing an opportunity to boost the local economy, pitched the mountains overlooking the Shenandoah Valley. They described their proposed park as "pristine and uninhabited."

It wasn't. As park promoters well knew, large swaths had been cleared and farmed for generations: Roads crisscrossed the mountains, connecting homes, mills, churches and schools nestled in the hollows. "They wanted to see Virginia establish tourism as an industry instead of resource extraction," said Claire Comer, an interpretive specialist at Shenandoah. As one park planner said at the time, "Scenery will be Virginia's next cash crop."

When Congress authorized Shenandoah (along with another national park in the Great Smoky Mountains) in 1926, some major challenges lay ahead. Shenandoah park promoters and state planners now had to acquire the land and donate it to the federal government — without any humans living on it. At last, it dawned on them this would not be easy.

The proposed park overlaid roughly 1,000 small tracts, and many landowners and renters were in the way. By 1928, the Virginia General Assembly resorted to passing the Public Park Condemnation Act to speed things along. Landowners were compensated, but the law allowed officials to take control of all reluctant sellers' properties by eminent domain using blanket condemnation.

"She just said, 'If you do this, Lisa, you're going to hurt a lot of people. You're going to open up old wounds.'"

It was still slow going. Disorganization and confusion at the official level led to the spread of conflicting information about whether the mountain people would have to leave. Eviction notices ultimately arrived in 1934. The new park was dedicated two years later.

BILL HENRY in his home in Stanardsville, Virginia. Henry is not related to the people who were displaced, but he took up the cause of memorializing them as his own. "Bill is now an honorary descendant of the mountain people," said Lisa Custalow, who has worked closely with Henry on the effort to build the monuments.

Many of the mountain people had no political or economic power. Most went quietly. Empty houses were dismantled or sometimes burned, only the chimneys left standing.

As the decades passed, the forests grew back, hiding even the lonely stone chimneys from view.

AUTUMN-TIME IN THE 1950S AND '60S, the Henry family would pile in the car to go leaf peeping in Shenandoah. They'd drive from Northern Virginia a couple of hours down to Skyline Drive, pull over for a picnic and take in the sweeping views across the valley.

In the '70s after college at Virginia Tech, Bill Henry knew two things: He loved hiking in the mountains, and he did not want to go back to Washington's increasingly crowded suburbs. Once he got his teaching certificate, he took out a map of Virginia, looked at all the mountain counties and started applying for teaching positions.

He ended up in the Charlottesville area, where on a clear day he could see the mountains up in the national park. He kept moving closer until 1985 when he found the house in Greene County where he still lives, so close to Shenandoah that on one of his hikes in the park his route took him down the mountain and into his own backyard.

On another hike, Henry made a life-altering discovery. "One day, I was following an old roadbed, not anywhere near a trail," he recalled. "And I came across a chimney, a stone chimney that was standing back in the forest. And it was like, wow. All these questions came to my mind. Like, what happened to these people that lived here?"

THE MEMORIAL in Elkton, Rockingham County. Each monument is designed to look like a stone chimney, often the only remaining piece of the mountain people's original cabins (near right.) Clockwise from far right: Carrie Eheart only discovered her family's mountain past a few years ago. Lisa Custalow is still conflicted about the park's creation. "My heart breaks for what the families have had to go through," she said. "And yet the views up there — it's a beautiful park, and it's for everybody, and it has benefited so many people." Darryl G. Merchant near the Warren County monument in Front Royal.

"I began to realize part of the healing process would have to include enabling the descendants to tell their own stories."

AS A LITTLE GIRL IN CHARLOTTESVILLE, Lisa Berry Custalow knew her family came from the mountains. She could tell it was a painful topic because whenever she asked about it, her mother would get teary-eyed, even though she'd been just a baby when her family left the mountains. Sensing so much sadness, Custalow would change the subject.

In 1994, Custalow was in her mid-20s and still curious. She went up to Shenandoah's Byrd Visitor Center one day where she peered at the old display and watched a video describing the park as Virginia's gift to America. The families who hadn't willingly gifted their mountain homes were not part of the story the park told. Custalow felt like her family's experience had simply been x-ed out.

Back home, she furiously described to her mother what she'd seen. She insisted it needed to be discussed. In public. Her mother was a woman of few words. "She just said, 'If you do this, Lisa, you're going to hurt a lot of people. You're going to open up old wounds,'" Custalow recalled.

She did it anyway. Looking back, she said, "One of the challenges that I still have to deal with is, you can't change the past or what happened. But you can be honest about what happened and channel that anger into positive action to move forward."

Custalow posted flyers announcing public meetings for a group she called the Children of Shenandoah. Attendance soared after she added speakers, including Carolyn and Jack Reeder, who'd written several books about the park's history.

"It was the first time for people to talk about what happened to their families in a public venue," Custalow said. Older people spoke about looking back and seeing their houses burn from a distance. They and their descendants described being slandered with negative "hillbilly" stereotypes in the media and in person even though public records contained heart-wrenching letters these supposedly illiterate people had written to government officials, pleading to remain on their land. "There was so much pent-up emotion. Even today some people are just now discovering they're descendants because their families never talked about it. So those were extremely angry sessions."

Henry was among the attendees almost from the beginning. Just curious about the park's history, he felt like an intrusive outsider at first because he was one of the few without a family connection to the park. "Back then we felt like it was us versus the world," Custalow said. But over time, they came to accept the man they called "the hiker," and Henry tried to listen through the emotion of their voices to understand why they were so upset.

"I felt a slow empathy coming on," Henry said. "In time you think, 'Well, how would I feel if they came and took my house and farm and then disregarded me?'"

As the '90s wore on, the Children of Shenandoah shifted from sharing their stories with each other to telling the wider world. They met with park officials, who by then were a receptive audience. A cultural resource specialist had begun conducting new research and collecting more oral histories, and one of the park's own employees, Comer, was intimately familiar with their story.

THEY WERE HERE FIRST

Eleven thousand years ago, human beings began making their mark on the area now occupied by Shenandoah National Park. Settlements first appeared in the lower elevations as the last ice age receded. From then on, the mountains were used continually by Indigenous communities, said Carole Nash, professor at James Madison University and director of the environmental archaeology program.

Large groups used the upper elevations on a seasonal basis, managing Big Meadows and the forest with fire to increase the chestnut harvest. Ancestors of the Monacans raised crops and hunted in the park's southern areas, while the Manahoac people lived farther north. Many other Native groups moved through the Blue Ridge Mountains. The Monacans, for example, traded with the Tsenacomoco (Powhatan chiefdom) to the east and the Patawomecks to the north.

"We tend to think of mountains as a barrier, but that was not the case for Indigenous people," said Nash.

With the arrival of Europeans came devastating diseases. Over the next century, many Indigenous communities moved away from English colonists, reeling from the effects of waves of epidemics, according to Monacan Tribal history.

In the 1700s, colonists pushed the Iroquois west of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Small Native groups remained in remote areas. Today, the Monacan Indian Nation near Lynchburg is the only federally recognized Tribe remaining in its ancestral Shenandoah homeland.

Comer's family lived in the valley but owned land south of Big Meadows for summer grazing. A house up there was home to a tenant farmer. When Virginia took the land for the park, Comer's family was compensated, but the tenant farmer was not.

"Ownership has nothing to do with your sense of place, your heritage and your love of the land," Comer said. "It isn't that these people felt the land belonged to them and was taken from them. It's that they felt *they* belonged to the land."

Comer wound up helping develop an exhibit that would properly tell the story of the park's creation. Custalow was pleased with the result. "They did a great job telling the story the way it really was," she said. "That was all we wanted." Still, Comer felt something was missing. "I began to realize part of the healing process would have to include enabling the descendants to tell their own stories."

HENRY RETIRED IN 2009, and his days were suddenly wide open. He started volunteering on the local tourism council. The director there told Henry about meeting an elderly woman who'd been displaced by the park, the sadness still welling up in her eyes, and he wondered what he could do. Henry wondered that, too.

At a meeting with the park superintendent a few years later, people began throwing out ideas about how to keep expanding Shenandoah's relationship with surrounding communities. "My hand went up," Henry said. "And there I was, sharing my idea for a monument. I'd never talked about it publicly before."

Soon, a few people joined him, and they incorporated the Blue Ridge Heritage Project as a nonprofit. Consensus came quickly on what the monument would look like: a stone chimney, with a plaque listing the names of the families who'd been displaced. Interpretive panels would tell their stories in words and photographs. Where to put the monument required more discussion. Inside the park might have seemed the obvious place. But Comer pointed out that if the monument was outside the park, the mountain people's stories could be told from their perspective without interference. "It can't be the National Park Service's monument," she said.

Eventually, the group settled on building not one but eight memorials — one in each of the counties where people lost land and homes to the park. Madison County was first: Descendants planned and erected the monument in the tiny crossroad of Criglersville. At the dedication in November 2015, so many people turned out that a sheriff's deputy had to direct traffic. A man pointed out his family's name on the plaque to his little girl. Older people who'd been children when they were displaced cried on the bench in front of the chimney.

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JOHN NICHOLSON peeling apples. For a time, there was conflicting information about whether mountain people would have to leave. Their fate became clearer when eviction notices arrived in 1934.

"You could see the healing that was starting to happen," said Custalow.

Darryl G. Merchant, a land surveyor, was at the Madison dedication as well. Tall and stocky with a white goatee and an easy smile, he's descended from both landowners and residents. "It was a cross between a funeral and a picnic," he recalled. "The chimney is like a tombstone for the families."

The Albemarle and Greene county monuments were dedicated in 2016 and 2017. Then in 2018, the Warren County memorial was completed, built in part from stones Merchant gathered from hollows in the area.

"I just wanted to do something for my grandparents," said Merchant, who spent years tracking down the surnames of the 68 families that were inscribed on the monument's plaque. His grandmother Goldie Nicholson never forgave the government for taking away her family's way of life, a resentment she passed on to Merchant in his youth. His grandfather Doley Nicholson, on the other hand, helped build the stone walls along Skyline Drive during his time with the Civilian Conservation Corps. He saw opportunity in his family's eviction and went on to work as a Navy contractor for 40 years.

"The more I research it, I am becoming more like my grandfather," Merchant said. "I'm grateful for Shenandoah National Park. Skyline Drive is a monument to our people."

By 2018, seven of the eight monuments had been built. The final county, Augusta, was the least populated when the park was created. Augusta was the last to form a committee and the last to get a descendant on board. Carrie Eheart was that descendant, but she didn't know she was one until 2016 when she was in her fifties. "My grandmother grew up in Sugar Hollow, but she never spoke of it," Eheart said.

Tan and fit-looking, Eheart has an energetic voice that carries and an outdoorswoman's wardrobe. She'd met Henry through a hiker friend. Coincidentally, around that time she and her brothers uncovered their family's mountain past with help from a local historian. The pandemic slowed the Augusta County committee's progress, but later this year, artisan Clyde Jenkins will begin laying stone for a 22-foot monument modeled on the chimney in his own home, a log cabin his grandfather built.

In the other counties, the monuments are already serving as touchstones for displaced families and offering teachable moments for visitors, while schoolteachers bring children for lessons in local history. The chimneys are also inspiring gatherings to celebrate mountain culture, including music, folk dance and artisanal crafts. "We're moving forward," said Custalow. "Having the family name on the chimney, it's like a badge of honor now. That heritage isn't something to be ashamed of anymore."

The Mountain Museum opened in a clapboard building next to Madison County's monument in Criglersville. And the counties' tourism directors are collaborating on a driving tour app that will direct visitors to places that formed the foundations of the mountain people's lives. It will also include Merchant's map of all eight county monuments. "Bill Henry has been really good at bringing the separate parties together," Merchant said. "He was very patient with us. We never had a systematic way of looking at our situation before and documenting our history." With a laugh, he said, "Bill Henry's a damn Yankee, but he's our damn Yankee."

At the groundbreaking in Grand Caverns park, Eheart laid out a gallery of her brother's drawings of the old family homeplace and shared the stories she'd learned about her great-grandfather Joe Wood, a storyteller nicknamed the Mayor of Sugar Hollow, who organized social gatherings and work parties to butcher hogs and haul chestnut planks. "It was a hard life but a good life," Eheart told the assembled group.

When all the history-sharing and speechifying was done, Eheart and her fellow committee members picked up shovels alongside Henry and the local tourism director. Together they turned over the first spadefuls of dirt.

KRISTIN HENDERSON writes for nonprofits and is the author of several books, including "While They're at War." She lives in the Virginia woods with her husband and two rescue dogs, and has hiked and camped in national parks across the country.

ERIC LEE is a freelance photojournalist based in Washington, D.C., who photographs stories about identity, community and resilience. His work has been featured in The Atlantic, Bloomberg, National Geographic and others.

HISTORIC TRAVEL **DESTINATIONS**

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Courtesy Jeremy Hess

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Courtesy Visit Montgomery

MARYLAND'S C&O CANAL EXPERIENCE

Stretching 184.5 miles from Georgetown to Cumberland, MD, the C&O Canal National Historical Park, which was once a marvel of 19th-century engineering, is now a welcoming Maryland destination full of history and adventure. Explore unique opportunities to learn about the history of the canal with its 74 unique locks, seven of which are available for overnight rentals. Embark on outdoor adventure with white-water kayaking at Mather Gorge, just downriver of Great Falls; paddle or tube float the Potomac River with River & Trail Outfitters; or extend your trail experience all the way to Pittsburgh along the Great Allegheny Passage, which connects to the Canal's towpath in Cumberland. Visit the historic postcard-perfect Point of Rocks Train Station, which actively serves MARC and Amtrak trains, or explore the area's rich Civil War history with a detour to Antietam National Battlefield. Experience family fun with a scenic train ride through the mountains on the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad or visit the enchanting Crystal Grottoes Caverns in Boonsboro Appreciate the artistic side of Maryland with a trip to Glenstone, a 300-acre modern and contemporary art museum featuring stunning architecture and nature. And when it's time to relax at the end of a day of adventure, delight in the food and culture in 10 designated canal towns along the way, including the C&O Canal Libations Trail, which features over a dozen breweries, wineries, and distilleries. So what are you waiting for? Explore four Maryland counties, including Montgomery, Frederick, Washington, and Allegany, with a vacation along the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

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Eastern Region

There is a lot to explore in the eastern region of the canal, which begins in urban Georgetown (mile marker 0.0) and runs through Montgomery County – home to Maryland's Great Falls Overlook and Billy Goat Trail. As you move farther west towards Frederick County, the area surrounding the park becomes more rural. It ends in Brunswick, MD (mile marker 55.0).

Central Region

The central section of the C&O Canal National Historical Park begins in Brunswick in Frederick County and runs through the beautiful Piedmont portion of Maryland to Washington County's Hancock (mile marker 124.0). This area is rich in Civil War history, features several towns that were built around the canal, and offers countless scenic vistas.

Western Region

The western section of the C&O Canal National Historical Park begins in Hancock, MD, and travels through the mountains of Maryland in Washington and Allegany counties to Cumberland, MD (mile marker 184.5). This section of the park is very rural, with beautiful vistas and woody retreats. The C&O Canal ends in Cumberland, but joins the Great Allegheny Passage, which travels to Pittsburgh.

Maryland
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Montgomery County

With three national parks, outdoor activities are abundant in Montgomery County (situated next door to Washington, DC). Explore the C&O Canal National Historical Park, the Clara Barton National Historic Site, and Glen Echo Park, then connect with local farm breweries and vineyards along the Tastemakers Trail. The county's rural side comes alive in the 93,000-acre Agricultural Reserve, where you'll find plenty of pick-your-own farms and agricultural heritage sites.

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Frederick County

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Hagerstown - Washington County

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Courtesy Kentucky Department of Tourism

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Courtesy Ed Westcott

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The Secret City, Oak Ridge, was built to end World War II with a top-secret project, known as the Manhattan Project. In 2015, the Manhattan Project National Historical Park was established to educate and interpret the creation of the atomic bomb and the Nuclear Age which is "the most significant event of the 20th century."

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Courtesy Visit Springfield

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Take part in the 14th Season of History Comes Alive, a 10-week, interactive history program throughout sites in historic downtown Springfield. If you are a foodie, don't miss the History Cooks series on Friday afternoon at the Lincoln Home National Historic Site. Music lovers will be entertained by the ever popular Troubadours again this year. Tuesday evenings will feature the amazing flag lowering ceremony at the Lincoln Tomb with the 114th Regiment Illinois Volunteer Infantry Reactivated and one lucky attendee will receive the flag that evening. This and so much more makes Springfield the ideal and affordable place to venture this summer.

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COURTESY OF HISTORY COLORADO

ELK HIDE PAINTING of the Sand Creek massacre by Eugene J. Ridgely Sr.

Second Take

A decade ago, a flawed exhibit about the Sand Creek massacre of Cheyenne and Arapaho angered the Tribes. This time, the museum took pains to get the story right.

FOR DECADES, Gail Ridgely has worked tirelessly to make sure one of the worst atrocities ever committed on U.S. soil was never forgotten.

In the 1990s, Ridgely, his father and other Tribal members joined historians and archaeologists on the plains of southeastern Colorado in a quest to identify the exact location where, in 1864, U.S. Army troops slaughtered more than 230 Cheyenne and Arapaho people — most of them women, children and elders. Even after the site was found and Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site was established in 2007, Ridgely, a former teacher, school principal and Tribal college president, has continued to educate county governments, universities and other institutions on the story of Sand Creek and his Northern Arapaho Tribe. “It’s not necessarily a mission,” Ridgely said. “It’s something that has to be done.”

In the process, Ridgely has logged many miles traveling to Colorado from his home in the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. This past November, he hit the road again to celebrate another major milestone: the opening of an exhibit about Sand Creek shaped by the very people who, like Ridgely, are the descendants of the victims and the survivors of the massacre. “Healing happens, and healing today right now has happened, and I feel good about it,” Ridgely said. “I think about that on those long drives.”

The birth of the History Colorado Center’s “The Sand Creek Massacre: The Betrayal that Changed Cheyenne and Arapaho People Forever” was not an easy one. The museum, which is run by History Colorado (a state agency and charitable organization that collaborates routinely with the national park site), unveiled a different version of the Sand Creek exhibit in 2012 but did so without meaningful consultation with Cheyenne and Arapaho people. The Tribes were incensed. They said the display downplayed the massacre as a collision of cultures, and they decried errors and omissions. Shannon Voirol, the director of exhibit planning at the center and one of the developers of the new exhibit, said staff were working on too many exhibits for the museum’s inauguration of a new building and relied on older scholarship for the earlier Sand Creek show. “There’s a long tradition of us working in that consultation, and there was one important big mistake, where we didn’t,” she said. “Before and after, we did.”

Tribal representatives asked for the

COURTESY OF HISTORY COLORADO

TOM HELLAUER/COURTESY OF DENVER GAZETTE

GAIL RIDGELY (left) and Fred Mosqueda (right) helped shape History Colorado Center's new exhibit about Sand Creek. The massacre caused generational trauma among descendants of the survivors, Ridgely said.

exhibit to be taken down. The museum obliged, and it was shuttered in 2013, just one year into what was supposed to be a multiyear run.

The Tribes' reaction to the exhibit and the museum's willingness to listen are indicative of a larger conversation among museums, schools, news organizations and others about whose stories are appropriate to tell and who should do the telling, and the cursor in that debate is moving relatively rapidly. Alexa Roberts, the former superintendent of the national historic site and now the interim chair of the Sand Creek Massacre Foundation's board of directors, said that public discourse about the story of the massacre was much more divided not long ago. "Some segments of the public continued to defend the U.S. Army's actions at Sand Creek as being appropriate and necessary at that period of time, while other segments of the public felt strongly that telling the true story of the atrocity and its consequences was way overdue," Roberts said. "History Colorado, as a state institution, was trying to thread a fine line through these polarized public perceptions and expectations."

As the new exhibit tells the Sand Creek story, gold seekers and others moved to the Territory of Colorado in ever-increasing numbers in the years leading up to the massacre. In the area of today's Boulder, Arapaho people let the newcomers spend the winter, but they overstayed their welcome. "They never left," said Fred Mosqueda, a Southern Arapaho culture and language coordinator who worked on the new exhibit. "Instead, we were forced to leave." Treaties were signed and broken, and Tribes found themselves starving on a small fraction of their former homelands. Meanwhile, John Evans, the governor of the Colorado Territory, made no secret of his animosity toward Native Americans when he issued in August 1864 a proclamation authorizing citizens of Colorado "to kill and destroy" any "hostile Indians" and plunder their property. Despite Evans' proclamation, Cheyenne Chief Black Kettle held out hope that peace could still be achieved, and hundreds of Cheyenne and Arapaho people settled by Big Sandy Creek near Fort Lyon after receiving assurance from Evans that they'd be safe.

When Col. John Chivington and his troops arrived on that cold morning of November 29, Black Kettle pointed to the white and U.S. flags raised over the camp, but the soldiers ignored the peace gesture and brutally murdered as many people as they could. Witnesses told of soldiers bashing in children's skulls and cutting unborn babies out of their mothers' wombs. The slaughter continued for hours, and when it was done, the perpetrators cut scalps and other body parts from their victims and displayed them in a victory parade on the streets of downtown Denver — near where the History Colorado Center now stands.

Federal inquiries found Chivington and Evans responsible, but they suffered little hardship as a result. Chivington became the head of Colorado's Methodist Church, and Evans, who did resign from his governorship, served as chairman of the board of trustees of the University of Denver, which he had founded. Meanwhile, Capt. Silas Soule, one of the soldiers who refused to participate in the massacre, was killed on the streets of Denver a couple of months after giving his testimony. For some survivors of Sand Creek, history repeated itself when on November 27, 1868, Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer led a surprise attack on their camp by the Washita River in what is now Oklahoma. Custer's men killed up to 60 Cheyenne, captured women and children, and burned lodges, food and clothing. Black Kettle was among those killed that day.

Former Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell, who led the effort in Congress to establish Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site, said there were over 100 massacres of Native American

people during the country's history. "A lot of them are not recorded, but Indian people know about them," he said.

Against a historical backdrop that also included forced cultural assimilation, discrimination and restricted access to resources and services — not to mention the blunder of the first Sand Creek exhibit, mistrust ran high when museum staff reached out to the Tribes. "When you first come to work with some institutions, it's always been like, 'Well, we want to see what you say, but we already know what we're going to do,'" Mosqueda said. But the museum staff, at the instigation of then-Gov. John Hickenlooper, set out to regain their Tribal partners' trust. They also wanted to enlist their help for what would become the current Sand Creek exhibit. "For many reasons, we decided to keep at it with the Sand Creek story," Voirol said. "One of the largest ones is that it's a huge part of how Colorado became Colorado." Many phone conversations, Zoom calls and in-person meetings — in Colorado, Wyoming, Oklahoma and Montana — followed. It worked. "It was simple because everyone was in a positive mood to move on," Ridgely said.

Every detail was discussed and ultimately approved by Tribal representatives, Voirol said. "All those words were really workshopped and thought about and tried on," she said. "Words matter. Whether you say settlers or invaders, there is a big difference."

The new exhibit is twice as big as the first one. It opens with photographs of the annual 173-mile healing run from the massacre site to Denver. The introduction makes it clear whose voices are telling the story: "They wanted to wipe us out, but they failed," it reads. "We are survivors, and we remember what happened to our loved ones."

The exhibit, which includes audio translations in Cheyenne and Arapaho as well as in Spanish, features three parts: one about the Tribes' history and culture before Sand Creek, one about the massacre told on black panels, and one about the Tribes' lives today. That last section is important, said Mosqueda, who remembers encountering someone at an Indigenous Peoples Day celebration in Boulder who told him he was the first Arapaho she'd ever met. "It struck me, because this is, this was our homeland, and yet we're not here and people don't even know who we are," he said. "They don't know we're still alive, so this allows us to tell them a little bit about where we are, what happened to us and how we got there."

The day before the exhibit opened to the public, the museum was closed so that Ridgely, Mosqueda and many of their relatives, friends and fellow Tribal members could have "the place to themselves to say and do what they needed to do," Voirol said. Some listened to the voices of their late relatives recorded in oral history interviews. Others couldn't hold back tears. "It really, really struck home that, you know, our story was finally being told honestly," Mosqueda said.

In recent years, Cheyenne and Arapaho welcomed other signs of progress: Hickenlooper issued a formal apology for the massacre on Colorado's behalf in 2014, and two years ago Gov. Jared Polis finally rescinded Evans' 1864 proclamation.

Other efforts to tell a fuller Sand Creek story are underway: Roberts' foundation is gathering documents and other materials related to Sand Creek from institutions across the country and will make them available to descendants, scholars and visitors at a research center near the park. An effort to rename Mount Evans is in the works, and Mosqueda and others are pushing for the name of Washita Battlefield National Historic Site to reflect what he says was not a battle but a massacre.

"The thing you have to realize is that, yes, it's been over 150 years," Mosqueda said. "But how long has it been since we were allowed to start to work on these things? Not very long."

NICOLAS BRULLIARD is senior editor of National Parks magazine.

IN 2007, Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site was established in southeastern Colorado after former Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell advocated for it in Congress. "The reason I did it was to try to make other people aware of what happened but also to record the Indian side of the story," he said.

COURTESY OF HISTORY COLORADO

That Was Then

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AN AMUSEMENT PARK WATER RIDE, Glen Echo Park, Maryland, in 1924.

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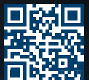

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