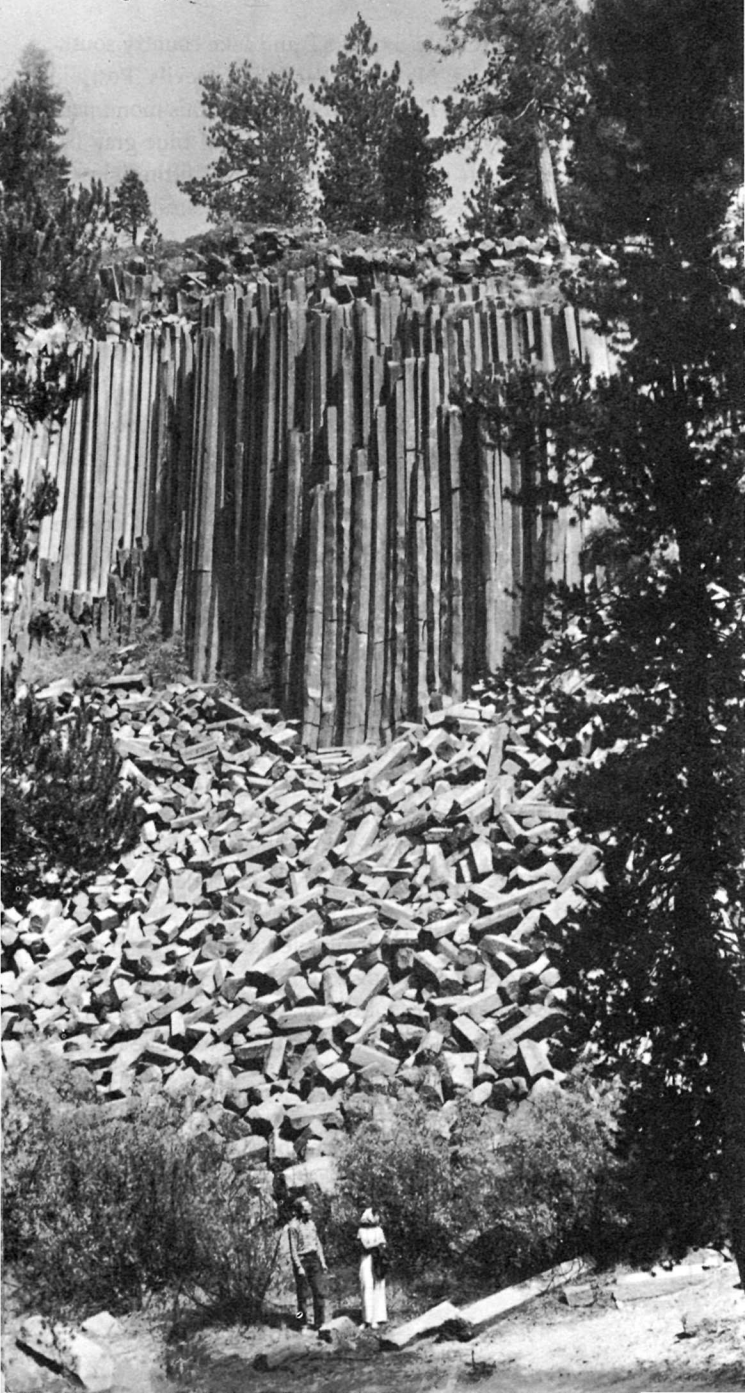


DEVILS

POSTPILE

NATIONAL MONUMENT

C A L I F O R N I A



DEVILS POSTPILE NATIONAL MONUMENT



A striking exhibit of hexagonal pillars of basalt towering high above the picturesque Middle Fork of the San Joaquin River

IN A MAGNIFICENT FOREST and lake country south-east of Yosemite National Park lies Devils Postpile National Monument. The central feature of this monument is an extraordinary formation of symmetrical blue-gray basaltic columns which rise as high as 60 feet, fitting closely together like the pipes of a great organ. Of similar formations found in other parts of the world, the Giants Causeway in Ireland is perhaps the best known.

How the Postpile Was Formed

The Devils Postpile is a remnant of a basaltic lava flow that originated in Mammoth Pass and extended down the canyon of the Middle Fork approximately 6 miles to a point just beyond Rainbow Fall. This outpouring took place during the interglacial epoch that preceded the last glaciation in the Sierra Nevada, presumably between 75,000 and 100,000 years ago.

When the Middle Fork glacier readvanced for the last time, it found this mass of basalt obstructing its path. Since the glacial ice was about 1,000 feet thick, it easily overrode the obstruction. The basalt, cracked into columns when it had contracted while cooling, was readily quarried away, column by column, by the glacier. During the thousands of years that the ice held sway, the bulk of this basaltic flow was removed, with only the more resistant parts left standing. Of these, the largest is the Devils Postpile, about 900 feet long and 200 feet high.

One side of the Postpile was quarried away by the glacier, leaving exposed a sheer wall of columns 40 to 60 feet high. Many of these columns have broken away from the face of the formation and lie in fragments in the talus slope below.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.

While most of the columns are vertical, some are slanting, some are curved, and some radiate from a common center.

The top of the formation presents an unusual condition. Here the cross section of the 4-, 5-, and 6-sided columns has been worn smooth by the grinding action of the glacier, and the exposed surface has the appearance of a mosaic or a tile inlay. An easy trail leads to the top where the glacial polish may be seen.

Among the other interesting geologic features of the area is the pumice which is found in the northern part of the monument. This material, an exceedingly porous lava, is so light in weight that it will float in water. It is believed to have been deposited after the Ice Age by the now extinct Mammoth Mountain and other old volcanic craters in the region. Several bubbling hot springs, one of which is at Reds Meadows, are other evidences of recent volcanic activity. It is thought that most of their heat comes from contact with gases from molten lavas which are in the process of crystallization.

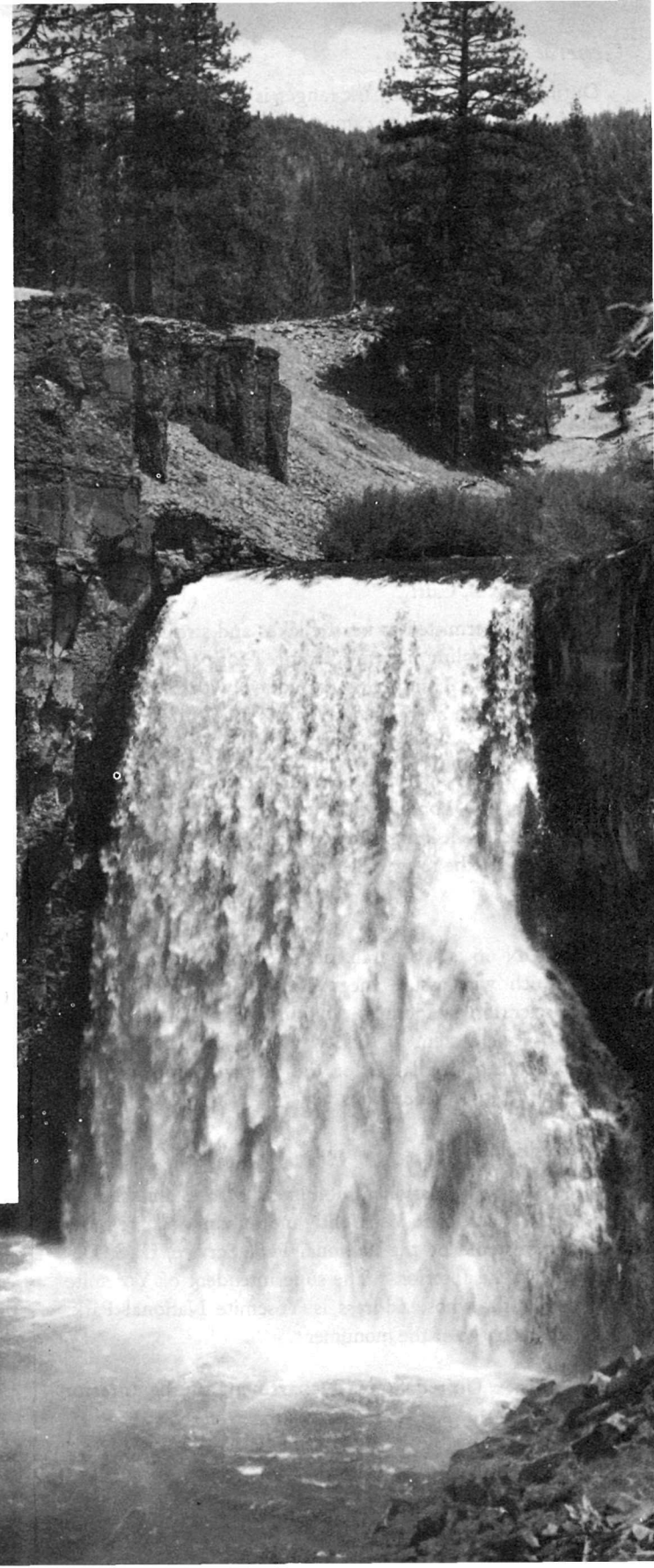
Rainbow Fall

Two miles down the river trail from the Postpile, the Middle Fork of the San Joaquin makes a sheer drop of 140 feet into a deep-green pool. The dark basaltic cliffs contrast strikingly with the white water, and during the middle of the day many rainbows add to the beauty of the scene. Care should be taken when watching the fall from the edge of the gorge, because pumice and flaky stone make the footing dangerous. A short, steep trail leads to the bottom of the waterfall where willows, alders, western white pines, and mountain hemlocks, as well as numerous flowers and grasses, form an enchanting garden. Cars may be driven within three-quarters of a mile of the fall via the road to Reds Meadows.

How to Reach the Monument

The monument, at an elevation of 7,600 feet above sea level, is reached by a 4½-mile drive on a paved road from U. S. 395 west toward Mammoth Lakes, thence 14 miles of hard-surfaced mountain road via Earthquake Fault and Minaret Summit.

*Rainbow
Fall*



General Information

During the summer, a park ranger is on duty to help you as well as to supervise the campground and protect the area against fire and vandalism. If you need information, or are in any difficulty, see the park ranger.

CAMPING. Near the ranger station in the northeast section of the monument, a free campground, with tables and benches, is maintained from about June 15 to October 15, depending upon the weather. Dead and down wood may be used for campfires, and water may be taken from the river for camp use. The soda water from the springs south of the campground at the edge of the meadow makes a refreshing drink when mixed with lemon juice and sugar.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICES. Outside monument boundaries, about 2 miles from the campground, are Reds Meadows Lodge and store, where gasoline and oil, groceries, meals, cabins, a telephone, mail service, and saddle and pack horses are available. Address mail in care of Reds Meadows, Mammoth Lakes, Calif.

FISHING is permitted in nearby lakes and streams; a State of California angling license is required for persons 16 years of age or over. Hunting is forbidden within monument boundaries, which are posted, as this is a wildlife sanctuary.

HIKING. Devils Postpile is one of the key points on the John Muir Trail which runs between Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks. Lone hikers should inform the ranger, or neighbors, before leaving camp. No lengthy trip should be made alone into the rugged Sierra.

MISSION 66

MISSION 66 is a program designed to be completed by 1966 which will assure the maximum protection of the scenic, scientific, wilderness, and historic resources of the National Park System in such ways and by such means as will make them available for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

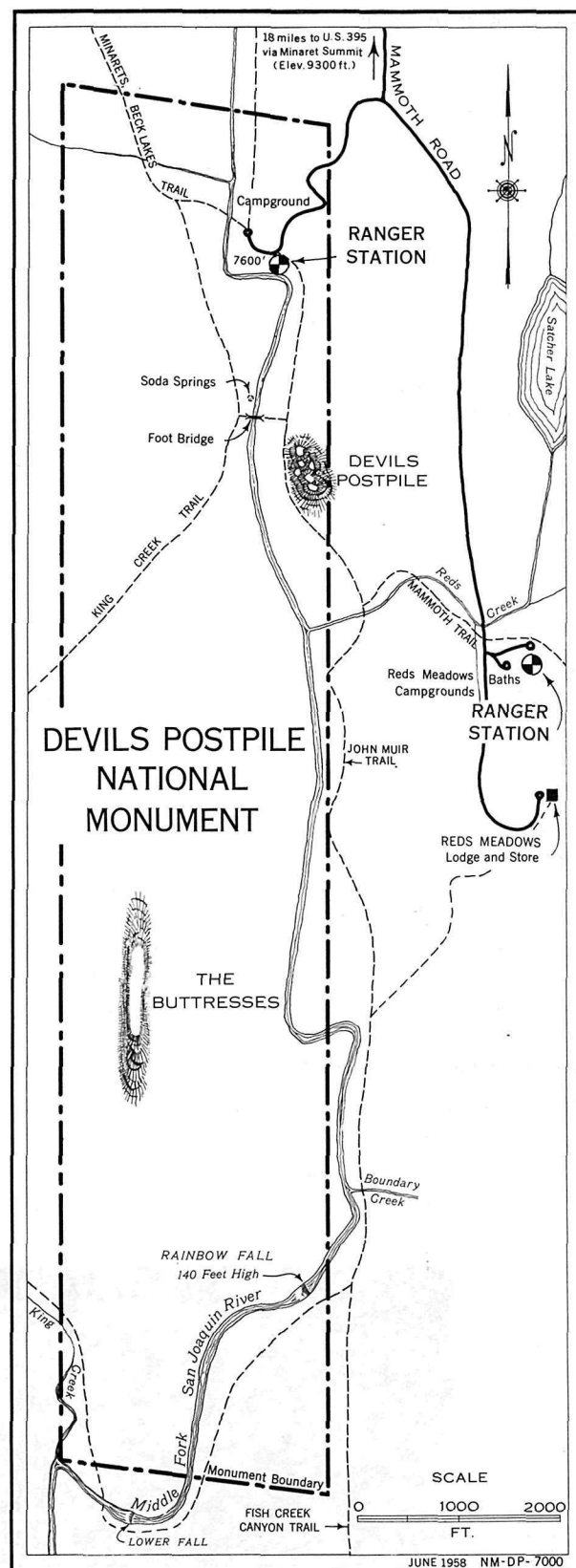
Administration

Devils Postpile National Monument was established on July 6, 1911, and contains slightly more than 1 square mile. It is administered by the National Park Service, U. S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent of Yosemite National Park, whose address is Yosemite National Park, Calif., is in charge of the monument.



United States Department of the Interior
Fred A. Seaton, Secretary

National Park Service
Conrad L. Wirth, Director



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