

JOSHUA TREE NATIONAL MONUMENT

A Brief History

Joshua Tree National Monument was established by Presidential Proclamation on August 10, 1936. President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Proclamation setting aside 825,340 acres to be protected.

The area includes 2 deserts, the Mojave and the Colorado. The elevations range from 5814 feet (Quail Mountain) in the high Mojave Desert to 1000 feet in Pinto Basin which is located in the Colorado Desert.

The earliest inhabitant of the area is known as Pinto Man. He dates back 6,000 to 10,000 years ago. More recent Indian populations include the Cahuilla, Chemehuevis and the Serrano. The Chemehuevis were in the area until the early 1900's.

In 1855 Col. Henry Washington, while doing a survey for the Land Office, stopped at the Oasis of Mara (29 Palms Oasis). His visit was the first recorded visit by European Man.

By the late 1800's the Oasis at 29 Palms became a stopping point for many of the miners of the area. Gold was the primary mineral being sought. Within the present boundaries of the Monument there are approximately 2000 mines and prospect holes. Some of the larger producing mines included the Lost Horse, the Desert Queen and the Eldorado. Estimates on the amount taken out vary from \$400,000 to \$40,000,000.

Cattlemen came into the area in search of winter ranges; there were as many as 300 to 400 head of cattle using the area. Some of the early cattlemen included the Barker and Shay Company and the Talmadge brothers. They used the area from the late 1800's up until the establishment of the Monument.

As the community of 29 Palms started developing in the early 1900's the residents began exploring the area now known as the Monument. Word reached the coastal areas and interest was aroused. Minerva H. Hoyt, a resident of Pasadena, became fond of the area and concerned about the removal of cacti and Joshua Trees. She decided something should be done to protect the desert. Largely through her efforts, President Roosevelt set aside the Monument by official Proclamation.

From its establishment in 1936 until 1940 Joshua Tree National Monument was administered by the superintendent of Yosemite National Park. In 1940 James E. Cole was appointed as the first local superintendent.

The historic Oasis of Mara, owned by the 29 Palms Corporation, was deeded to the National Park Service in 1950. Construction of the Headquarters complex soon began and was officially dedicated in 1954.

1950 also brought about changes to the boundary of the Monument. The size was then reduced by 260,000 which excluded some valuable mineral properties.

In 1976 Congress designated 430,000 acres within Joshua Tree National Monument as wilderness to be protected from any future development.

Throughout the Monument there is a system of 109 miles of paved roads and approximately 200 miles unpaved. There are 6 hiking trails and 9 interpretive trails. A stretch of thirty-five miles of the California Riding and Hiking trail passes through the area.

Present facilities at Joshua Tree National Monument include the headquarters at 29 Palms, 3 visitor centers and 2 contact stations. There are 8 family campgrounds and 3 group campgrounds.

As more people discover the fragile beauty of Joshua Tree, use and hopefully, appreciation, will increase.