

1899: *A New National Park*

Long valued for its glorious views, glacier-born streams, and knee-deep wildflowers, Mount Rainier National Park also preserves human stories of great inspirational value.

Mount Rainier National Park was established in 1899 after enthusiastic and persistent advocacy on the part of American citizens, European dignitaries, and national and local scientific and business groups. The story of the park's establishment and protection, begun over 100 years ago, demonstrates the power of people committed to an idea of national significance.

Today, the issues are more complex, but the strength of stewardship still comes from the power of commitment.



Mount Rainier National Park Celebrates 100 Years: 1899-1999

“dedicated...for the benefit and enjoyment of the people, and...for the preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition.”

□ *from the enabling legislation for Mount Rainier National Park, March 2, 1899*

“WE ARE HERE! WE ARE HERE! RIGHT ON TOP OF MOUNT RAINIER!” (*refrain of an 1894 climbing party*)

Some of the strongest advocates for national park status for Mount Rainier were early climbers. Influential men from important families, Hazard Stevens, Philemon B. Van Trump, and geologists Samuel F. Emmons and A.D. Wilson summited in two separate attempts in 1870. By 1900 perhaps 100 people had climbed Mount Rainier, including John Muir and Fay Fuller, the daughter of a Yelm newspaperman.

“The one contribution I feel I made...was the newspaper articles I published continuously for many years and which interested Congressman Frank Cushman and others to work for the establishment of the Rainier National Park.” Fay Fuller, later writing to the park superintendent.



Fay Fuller, in her “immodest” climbing attire.

THE “PLACE ISN’T WORTH IT, AND WE DON’T WANT TO THROW OUR MONEY AWAY.”

(*Congressman “Uncle Joe” Cannon, 1899*)

Opposition to the national park idea came from many quarters, notably timbering, grazing, and mining interests, and supporters of the Northern Pacific Railroad, which had been granted title to land close to the mountain. Mining claims nearby gradually proved unprofitable, grazers recognized better grasslands further from the mountain, and the railroad lands were exchanged. However, the greatest challenge to establishing Mount Rainier National Park came from Congress, ever concerned about the cost of operating a park in an area most had never seen. Too, many felt that the ‘forest reserve’ designation offered adequate protection.

“The difficulty I have is that I have not learned how it is possible to maintain a park by any government without expense.” Congressman Bailey, 1896

At the same time, interest was growing in the area’s value as a natural preserve. Scientific and conservation groups began to call for protection of the timber lands and watersheds around the mountain, as well as its icy slopes. In 1893, President Benjamin Harrison established the Pacific Forest Reserve, soon renamed the Mount Rainier Forest Reserve.

“I WOULD BE WILLING TO GO 500 MILES AGAIN TO SEE THAT SCENE. THIS CONTINENT IS YET IN IGNORANCE...OF WHAT WILL BE ONE OF THE GRANDEST SHOW PLACES, AS WELL AS A SANITARIUM.”

(*Senator George F. Edmonds, 1883*) Between 1893 and 1895 seven ‘memorials,’ or petitions, were sent to Congress by five different universities, the Seattle Chamber Commerce, the National Geographic Society, the Sierra Club, the Geologic Society, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the Appalachian Club. The interests of all save the Seattle Chamber of Commerce were



In 1911 the massive, cedar-log Nisqually entrance gate was erected.

largely scientific, rather than economic. In 1899, after a six year battle in Congress, Mount Rainier National Park became the first national park to be carved out of an existing forest reserve, based on its outstanding scenic and scientific merits.

“WHERE DO I SIGN UP?” (*park visitor, summer 1998*)

As in the past, Mount Rainier National Park is blessed with strong supporters and advocacy groups, among them the Mount Rainier, North Cascades, & Olympic Fund, and the Northwest Interpretive Association, which funded this brochure. But most valuable are those who, perhaps like you, enjoy the park’s resources wholeheartedly while sharing our commitment to protect them forever.

“Of all the fire-mountains, which, like beacons, once blazed along the Pacific Coast, Mount Rainier is the noblest in form...Its massive white dome rises out of its forest...the loveliest flowers...so closely planted and luxuriant that it seems as if Nature, glad to make an open space between woods so dense and ice so deep, were economizing the precious ground, and trying to see how many of her darlings she can get together in one mountain wreath.” --John Muir