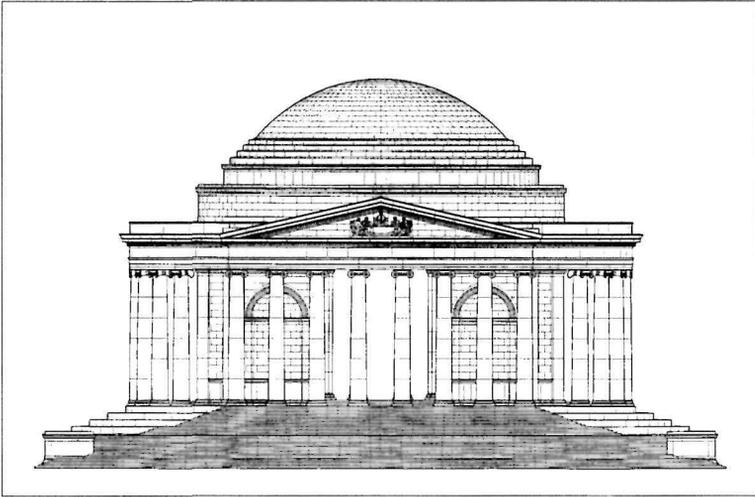


HUMANITIES
AND THE NATIONAL PARKS



ADAPTING TO CHANGE

Report by the Humanities Review Committee
of the National Park System Advisory Board

1996

Cover:

North Elevation

Jefferson Memorial (DC-4)

Historic American Buildings Survey

Drawn by: Robert R. Arzola, Amy L. Darling, Ellyn P. Goldkind, Lynne E. Holler,
Dana L. Lockett, Mark Schara



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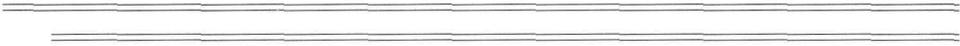
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Park History Program
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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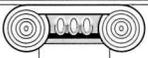
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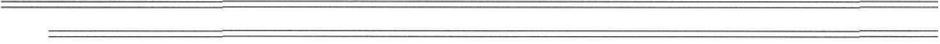
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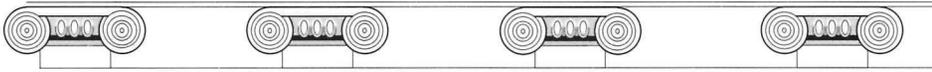


This report reflects the discussions of the National Park System Advisory Board's Humanities Review Committee, convened at the request of Director Roger G. Kennedy, and chaired by Dr. James O. Horton of The George Washington University and the National Park System Advisory Board.

The Committee's deliberations were guided by the strategic objectives articulated in the 1991 Vail Agenda, which assert a vision of the National Park Service as it moves toward the twenty-first century.

Committee members stressed the need to build partnerships among a variety of institutions and organizations. They also formulated these recommendations with a keen awareness of present federal budgetary constraints. Above all, the Committee's recommendations reflect its sincere commitment to sustaining and improving the educational experiences the National Park Service provides the American people.



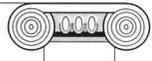
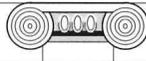
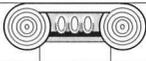
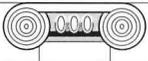


FORWARD

This report is intended to help the National Park Service do a better job for the American people. Our chartered responsibility is to preserve and protect the wondrous places in our charge and to teach about them, as well as in them. We preserve, and we teach. Both. We want to do both better. This report emphasizes the role of the National Park Service as an educational institution, educating about our national heritage, as exemplified in the shrines and historic places we administer, and about the relationship of our species to the other species with which we co-inhabit the Earth. We have, in effect, 369 campuses. We stand as professionals, proud of our mission, next to other professionals, who teach the same subjects in other institutions. This report helps us reach out to them, and to form partnerships in a grand undertaking to reinvigorate America's sense of its past and to make it more likely that an educated public will help us assure the continued preservation of the American landscape -- and not just that still preserved in the Parks. For the Parks are not just relics of a departed America. They are calls to action to sustain an American present for a better future. They are not remainders. They are reminders. Reminders of what has been lost, and also reminders of what may yet be preserved.

So this report helps us not only to be better professionals. It helps us be better citizens, using our professional skills in patriotic service. We thank those who worked on this report for their service not just to the National Park Service but also to our country.

Roger G. Kennedy
Director, National Park Service





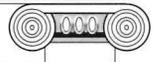
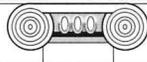
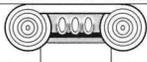
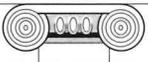
INTRODUCTION

Frederick Law Olmsted, Sr., argued in the mid-1860s that Yosemite Valley should be protected because “the occasional contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character,” would be “favorable to the health and vigor,” particularly the intellectual health, of the growing number of America’s working men and women. Over succeeding generations, the recognized value of the national parks has dramatically expanded.

Today, national parks are classrooms and laboratories where visitors encounter tangible evidence of the past. Parks connect generations and communities, bring Americans of many origins together, and provide opportunities for them to explore their shared heritage. Important for environmental preservation, recreation, and tourism, the nation’s park system also offers citizens a broad array of concrete insights into the lives and aspirations of their forbears.

The National Park Service’s 1916 authorizing legislation and the Historic Sites Act of 1935 charge the Service with preserving cultural and natural resources through appropriate programs of research, treatment, protection, and interpretation. The 1935 act, in particular, calls on the National Park Service (NPS) to develop educational programs to inform the public about history and archeology within and beyond park boundaries.

Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) strengthens and broadens the NPS preservation mandate by requiring all federal agencies to inventory, evaluate, and protect the historic, archeological, and other cultural places in their care. As the leader of the federal preservation program and steward of many of the nation’s most significant cultural resources, the NPS has a special obligation to maintain an exemplary cultural resource management program, one that meets the highest professional standards.



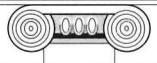
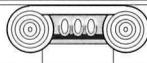
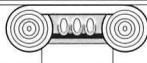
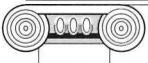
The central responsibility of the National Park Service, then, is threefold: preservation, research, and education. The NPS must educate the public, nourish scholarly research, and preserve the integrity of historic, archeological, and other cultural properties so they may continue to inform future generations.

Director Roger G. Kennedy has asked the committee to consider ways to improve the intellectual and educational environment for the humanities throughout the National Park Service. He has requested advice on facilitating exchanges between the National Park Service and outside scholars, broadening opportunities for the intellectual enrichment of NPS personnel, and ensuring that interpretive programs throughout the Service reflect current professional methods, techniques, and interpretations in innovative and challenging ways.

Our response is shaped by the conviction that the National Park System today presents extraordinary opportunities in American education. It offers a fertile field for interdisciplinary cooperation in the humanities and between the humanities and the natural sciences. To realize this research and educational potential, the NPS must embrace developments in several areas.

First, in recent years, historians, anthropologists, and archeologists have opened new areas of research and incorporated a wide array of experiences into the national narrative. They have generated a rich and exciting literature that has energized students and scholars throughout the country. This literature provides an expanded cultural and social context for understanding the ecology of every site. Parks can tap this new scholarship to enhance preservation and interpretive programs.

Second, the National Park Service is undertaking organizational changes. To meet its traditional preservation and educational responsibilities, the NPS must re-evaluate its structure and reinvest in its people.



Third, these developments and the availability of new technologies will allow the National Park Service to deliver its programs to a far wider and more varied audience. To serve today's public, the NPS must develop an array of educational presentations that reflect the many voices, needs, and traditions of America's diverse population.

Thus, the following recommendations are designed to further the preservation of our national heritage and enrich the educational experience that parks and historic preservation programs offer all Americans. They will raise the quality of research and scholarship in the parks, encourage the professional development of Park Service personnel, and reach a national audience more effectively. Together they will enhance the Service's management of the nation's cultural resources to ensure that they continue to serve as authentic documents illuminating the American past.



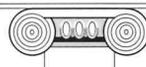
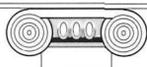
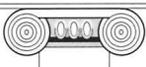
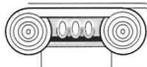
PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

To enhance its abilities to carry out its mission of research, preservation, and education, the National Park Service should increase its interaction with colleges, universities, museums, research libraries, and other educational and cultural institutions. It should build cooperative programs for sharing personnel, resources, and knowledge for mutual benefit. These efforts will increase the opportunities for public education, enhance its quality, and broaden its scope.

Establish agreements at national, regional, and local levels through which academic and professional organizations will:

- Provide scholarly peer review of research and interpretive activities
- Evaluate, inform, and collaborate in the development of exhibits, films, publications, and other public media
- Participate in the development of park educational curricula and interpretive programs and assist in the development of strategies for offering multiple points of view and new insights on controversial topics
- Encourage scholarly research in the parks and on associated park topics
- Promote and coordinate internships for college and university students
- Provide opportunities for the exchange of humanities personnel between the NPS and universities, museums, and libraries (including Intergovernmental Personnel Act and Cooperative Park Study Unit assignments)

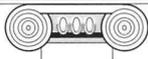
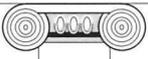
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- Encourage national and regional organizations, such as the American Studies Association, Organization of American Historians, Society for American Archaeology, American Anthropological Association, Society for Historical Archeology, National Council on Public History, American Historical Association, Western History Association, Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History, and the National Council for Social Studies, to establish national, organization-based committees that will facilitate and institutionalize collaboration between academic historians, archeologists, anthropologists, and the National Park Service. Each committee should include National Park Service representatives who are qualified in the appropriate disciplines
 - Encourage more parks to establish cooperative agreements for training and consultation with local colleges, universities, museums, research libraries, historical societies, and other educational and cultural institutions
 - Encourage partnerships and cooperative agreements with American Indians, Native Hawaiians, and other groups to involve them actively as valuable sources of historical perspectives on their ancient homelands and on the creation of national park areas
 - Develop an agreement with the National Endowment for the Humanities to promote conferences, seminars, and institutes for educators and park personnel
 - Explore the possibility of establishing repositories for cultural resource information at regional university libraries
 - Support and participate in the new National History Education Network



ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

The National Park Service needs to refocus its organizational structure on preservation and interpretive issues while further developing the skills and expertise of NPS managers, interpreters, and cultural resource specialists.

- Urge passage of a legislative mandate that calls for research of the highest quality to support National Park Service preservation and educational programs, and for the preservation of original materials to receive the highest priority in the treatment of historic and prehistoric sites, structures, and objects
- Ensure that anthropologists, archeologists, and historians are involved in the development of the ecosystem management concept within the NPS and the Department of the Interior
- Require that comprehensive archeological and historical research, as mandated by Section 110 of the NHPA, take place prior to the initiation of general management planning processes
- Place resource management and interpretive functions under the same associate director in the Washington office; integrate them, as appropriate, in the regions and parks
- Analyze the staffing and technical service needs for cultural resource specialists in parks and offices that serve parks
- Adopt, disseminate, and implement the recently developed and Congressionally-mandated revision of the NPS thematic framework
- Revise the NPS interpretive training curriculum, using the NPS thematic framework, to foster public programs of greater sophistication, breadth, and depth that address the broad



historical and cultural context of parks

- Establish mandatory training requirements in cultural resource management for park managers
- Design and provide interpretive training to cultural resource specialists to enhance their ability to deliver research products that can be used more effectively by interpreters in public education programs.
- Participate with the Office of Personnel Management in revising the qualification standards for cultural resource specialists
- Explore the potential for expanding the use of the Research Grade Evaluation process for historians, anthropologists, and archeologists
- Require regional cultural resource specialists to participate in the scoping process for park Resources Management Plans (RMPs)



OUTREACH

The valuable resources of our national park system must become a significant part of America's general education process and be extended to the public outside the parks. Using available technology and innovative programming, the National Park Service can reach out to new audiences and to new generations--especially underserved constituencies and those whose opportunities to visit parks have been limited.

- Use current and emerging technology to bring the educational resources of the national parks to the attention of the American public. These efforts should include using the media for public service announcements and new educational programs, and broadcasting currently available or new NPS interpretive films by, for example, the Black Entertainment Television Network and public television, including The American Experience, The History Channel, The Discovery Channel, and The Learning Channel
- Develop, in partnership with other public agencies and professional organizations, a range of outreach products (such as pamphlets and videos) to promote public awareness of preservation concerns and opportunities and extend the educational role of the parks to schools, colleges, and universities
- Encourage publication of research and public outreach efforts by NPS personnel by advertising available awards and establishing other incentives
- Establish a monetary award presented in a public ceremony for the best dissertation, and another prize for the best scholarly book, related to history or prehistory in the National Park System
- Seek private sector support for supplemental educational and interpretive programs and materials



