

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL PARKS
AND THE EVICTION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL

This senior project will conduct a study on the establishment of national parks and the resulting displacement of indigenous inhabitants. The intent is to explore the dark aspects behind the development of the national park system that is often overlooked. As much as society has benefitted from the experiences presented by the beautiful parks, the native population suffered eviction from their homelands in order to preserve the area in its “pristine” state. Native Americans have experienced near cultural genocide at the benefit of United States’ expansion.

The research will be conducted mainly through the use of books and journal articles. If time permits, I hope to also visit Yosemite National Park and John Muir National Historic Site to speak to rangers and historians directly. However, if I am unable to directly converse with them, I plan to come into contact through e-mail or telephone in order to gain valuable knowledge that may not be included within one of my written sources. As often as possible, I plan to utilize mediums other than books and articles in order to gain a more thorough and varied understanding of all aspects of national parks and the indigenous expulsion.

Although public education curriculum discusses the removal of Indians from ancestral lands in the process of white man’s pursuit of manifest destiny, it is easy to lose sight of how much the rest of society has gained from the losses of the rightful population. As a lifelong admirer of the National Park System, the recent realization of the ironic displacement of Native Americans from the parks’ land with the intent of preservation has spurred an interest to further research in the early formation of the park system and the impacts upon the indigenous population.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barr D P (2006) *The Boundaries Between Us: Natives and Newcomers along the Frontiers of the Old Northwest Territory, 1750-1850*. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press

This book provides a useful overview of the relations and interactions between white men and Native Americans in the Northwest since the beginnings of European trade and colonialism. It recounts disputes and violent clashes stemming from Indian mistreatment and issues of land claim. The essays also discuss attempts of peace and the Indian Removal Act. Racism, resources and Manifest Destiny played major roles in the plight of the indigenous North Americans.

The various points of view presented in these essays on a wide range of topics concerning Native Americans will further my understanding of their history of interactions with Anglo-Saxons. With an improved knowledge of the past relations, it will enable me to better understand relations of a more modern time and the reasoning behind recent reconciliation efforts.

Burnham P (2000) *Indian Country, God's Country: Native Americans and the National Parks*.

Washington, D.C.: Island Press

Burnham writes about the displacement of Native Americans from five major national parks. He covers the general history of the establishment of parks and the manipulative methods used to remove Indians from their territory. The government did often not uphold deals made with Indians, and natives' rights were neglected in favor of satisfying public interest for the land. The roles of John Muir, his Sierra Club, and other

popular environmental organizations in the removal of natives are discussed and reveal the darker side to the seemingly well-intentioned people and groups. Burnham almost discusses the efforts made in modern times to reconcile with native groups and reincorporate their culture into the their tribal lands.

Although this book does not focus on all three of the first national parks that will be most relevant in my study, the information on the methods of coercing removal of natives from park land will be useful nonetheless. Also, Burnham reveals the role of John Muir quite opposite from the role discussed in *Henry Thoreau and John Muir Among the Indians*, which is useful for my investigation of Muir's role in creating the parks and their effect on natives. Lastly, the topic of modern relations of parks and Indians is important for understanding what efforts have been made to undo the damage done in previous decades.

Dowie M (2009) *Conservation Refugees: The Hundred-Year Conflict between Global Conservation and Native Peoples*. Cambridge: The MIT Press

Dowie reports on the beginnings of conservation refugees and how they have become worldwide victims of environmental conservation efforts. His focus is on the detrimental effects of environmental protection on the cultures of the indigenous inhabitants. Of most importance to this project, chapter one focuses on the native inhabitants of Yosemite and their removal by force of soldiers. Following expulsion, Dowie covers the establishment of Yosemite as the first Californian national park and discusses the major players involved in the process, such as John Muir. Muir's opinion of Indians was less than favorable and he was a big influence on their removal from their

lands. This was also the beginning of white man's claim that Indians were not rightful inhabitants of the land, but mere visitors who would not be drastically affected by displacement. Dowie also discusses the role Indians played within parks after the initial formal removal and the resistance of many to leave their land. The establishment of Yosemite created the "Yosemite model" for nature reserves around the world to follow as a basis for removing their indigenous peoples.

Although brief, chapter one provides an excellent amount of information relevant to my project. First-hand accounts of Indian removal from Yosemite and quotes depicting Muir's real thought of Indians will prove highly valuable to my project.

Fleck R F (1985) *Henry Thoreau and John Muir Among the Indians*. Hamden, Connecticut:

Archon Books

Fleck gives insight to the thoughts of Henry Thoreau and John Muir, two of the greatest nature writers throughout American history, on the matters of Native Americans. Both writers were greatly influenced by indigenous North Americans and believed strongly in the connection between humans and nature. They believed natives exemplified the necessity of respectful coexistence of man with nature. Because of Thoreau's and Muir's writings were key in the development of public opinion and policy towards nature.

The writings of Muir and Thoreau had a great influence in the writing of *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, which is a major resource I will use throughout my project. The main importance of this book is to explore Muir's perspective on Native

Americans and nature because he was a major player in the establishment of national parks, which negatively affected natives to a huge extent.

Jacoby K (2006) *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*. Berkeley: University of California Press

Jacoby explores the history of some of the first national parks and the ways in which the lifestyles of native inhabitants were destroyed in the process. By condemning traditional food gathering techniques, Indians were forced to move elsewhere to survive. Parks also used the United States Cavalry to further remove natives but did nothing to stop criminals such as poachers. Aside from Native Americans, the parklands were also sometimes home to rural white people who lived off the land and were ordered to leave, as well. By ending the relationship of natives and rural whites with the land, the parks then gave the public a chance to develop relationships of their own.

This book is interesting in the sense that it brings to light the criminalization of indigenous and rural lifestyles, as well as the forced removal by the government. It discusses the permission of natives to remain on Yellowstone land with restricted lifestyles for years until the decision to clear them out completely.

Kaufman P W (2006) *National Parks and the Woman's Voice: A History*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press

This book is a documentation of the involvement of women throughout the history of national parks. It explores the influences women had on the establishment of the parks, their often-overlooked influence on the major naturalists of the time, and their

roles in the early days of the parks. It provides accounts of first-hand experiences of women in the lands and gives a woman's point of view throughout every stage of the parks' life. Lastly, Kaufman discusses the modern involvement of women within the park system and the conservation movement.

The most important aspect of this book will be the documented encounters of women with the Native Americans of the regions in the early years of national parks. I believe a woman's opinion of the situations will present more emotion and provide another side to the story of native displacement that may not have been documented in the writings of men.

Kline B (2007) *First Along the River: A Brief History of the U.S. Environmental Movement*.

Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Kline documents the general history and reasons leading to the environmental movement within the United States' throughout its existence as a nation. Beginning with an exploration of philosophies that encourage human exploitation and ownership of all natural resources, leading to the development of the Western frontier, and later leading to the last-ditch effort to preserve what was left of the wilderness. The book provides a comparison between the developments within society and the environmental movement. Also discussed is the development and transformation of American opinion towards nature and how this has influenced policy and social changes over the years.

This book will be helpful for my project because it provides a thorough history behind the environment movement, which was vital in the development of the national

park system. It improves my understanding of the reasoning behind American policies regarding nature and its methods of preservation.

Miles J C (1995) *Guardians of the Parks: A History of the National Parks and Conservation Association*. Washington, D.C.: Taylor & Francis

This book explains the origins and efforts of the National Parks and Conservation Association. Formed a few years after the National Park Service, this program's purpose was to provide well-maintained park infrastructure and to protect our nation's heritage. Much of the focus on the group was in the matter of preservation but the book goes further to explain the philosophical backing to their conservationist beliefs, such as providing a place for people to visit to find understanding of the human relationship with nature.

My interest in this book will be the efforts put forth to maintain the natural wonders of the parks compared to the lacking efforts to preserve the indigenous cultures of our beloved lands. The organization's philosophies on the preservation of nature are rather ironic after the harm done to Indians for the establishment of these nature reserves.

Nabokov P and Loendorf L (2004) *Restoring a Presence: American Indians and Yellowstone National Park*. Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press

This book focuses on America's first national park, Yellowstone, and how after some years of allowing native inhabitants to remain on the land, their removal was necessary to establish the park, as we know it today. The Indians were removed and nigh erased from the land's history. Nabokov and Loendorf provide individual accounts of each affected group of Native Americans removed from the vast area of Yellowstone.

They attempt to piece together the Native American history of the land that has been previously ignored for decades and set the record straight for the rest of time.

This is relevant to my project because it explains the process leading up to the natives' expulsion. It is interesting to compare the Yosemite model with the original strategy of continued, but limited, native use of park land until later acceptance of said model.

Spence M D (1999) *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

People appreciate national parks as glimpses of primitive nature and are deceived of the history of inhabitation by native groups. In order to establish the parks under the notion of the land being uninhabited and pristine, natives had to be displaced from their lands. Spence investigates the eviction of Native Americans from land now within Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Glacier National Parks. The American ideal of uninhabited wilderness resulted in policies to remove Native Americans and relocate them onto Indian reservations. Spence focuses on the correlation between the development of reservations at the same time as increased efforts in nature preservation. Issues between parks and Indians are recently working to be resolved after years of natives being denied land rights. This book will be helpful as a backbone resource for my entire project, seeing as it is almost a direct match for the basis of the thesis.

OUTLINE

I. Introduction

A. The establishment of the National Park System resulted in the displacement of inhabitants:

This senior project will conduct a study on the establishment of the National Parks System and the resulting displacement of indigenous inhabitants from parklands. The intent is to explore the dark aspects behind the development of the National Parks that is often overlooked. As much as society has benefitted from the experiences presented by the beautiful parks, the native population suffered eviction from their homelands in order to preserve the area in its “pristine” state. Native Americans have experienced near cultural genocide for the benefit of the United States’ expansion.

This research has been conducted mainly through the use of books and journal articles, as well as personal visits to Yosemite National Park and the John Muir National Historic Site to speak to rangers and historians directly.

Although public education curriculum discusses the removal of Indians from ancestral lands in the process of white man’s pursuit of manifest destiny, it is easy to lose sight of how much the rest of society has gained from the losses of the rightful population. As a lifelong admirer of the National Parks, the recent realization of the ironic displacement of Native Americans from parkland for the intended purpose of preservation has spurred

an interest to further research in the early formation of the park system and the impacts upon the indigenous population.

- a. Changing philosophies regarding nature preservation.
- b. Increased popularity of landscape paintings and the effect on the preservation movement.
- c. Expansion of the United States.
- d. Railroad interest in the development of tourist areas.

B. Native Americans were removed and relocated to reservation lands.

- a. A lot of racism towards Native Americans.
- b. Removed by armed forces and by
- c. New laws limiting their lifestyles.

C. Conclusion:

After the removal of natives from parklands, their existence was nearly erased from the local histories. By excluding the evidence of former inhabitation, parkland appeared completely untouched and entirely natural. In more recent decades, National Parks have made efforts to reincorporate Native American history and culture into the parks' environment. The nation as a whole has also made efforts to reconcile with Natives through payments for prior treatment but the damage has been done, and the cultures have nearly been exterminated.

II. Chapter One

A. The Founding of the National Park System

- a. The influence of the arts:

- i. Thoreau
 - ii. Landscape painting/photography
 - 1. Catlin
 - 2. Audubon
- b. The influence of the naturalists:
 - i. John Muir
 - 1. Role in National Parks
 - 2. Opinion of natives
- c. The influence of the government:
 - i. Unite over common American characteristic
 - ii. Theodore Roosevelt

III. Chapter Two

- A. Acquisition of the land.
 - a. Purchasing
 - b. Designating
 - c. New laws of the land.
- B. Railroad industry's role and how they benefitted.

IV. Chapter Three

- A. Removal of inhabitants in order to preserve the land.
 - a. By force
 - b. By limiting their subsistence activities.
- B. Where the inhabitants were relocated.
- C. Resistance by Native Americans and Anglo-Saxon inhabitants.

D. How Native Americans maintained a presence within parklands.

V. Conclusion

A. The effects on the lands.

B. The effects on American culture.

C. The effects on Native American culture.

I. Chapter One - Introduction

This senior project investigates the establishment of United States' National Parks and the resulting displacement of indigenous inhabitants from parklands. The intent is to explore the dark aspects behind the development of the National Parks that is often overlooked. As much as society has benefitted from the experiences and opportunities presented by the beautiful parks, the native populations suffered eviction from their homelands in order to preserve the area in its 'pristine' state. Native Americans have experienced near cultural genocide for the benefit of the United States' expansion and recreation.

Although public education curriculum discusses the removal of Native Americans from ancestral lands in the process of white man's pursuit of manifest destiny, it is easy to lose sight of how much the rest of society has gained from the losses of the rightful population. As a lifelong admirer of the National Parks, the recent realization of the ironic displacement of Native Americans from parkland for the intended purpose of preservation and tourism has spurred an interest to further research the early formation of the park system and the impacts upon the indigenous population.

In March of 1872, when Yellowstone was established as the United States' first National Park, the displacement of Native Americans throughout the nation had already been occurring for years. The conservation movement of the late 19th century stimulated the protection of natural lands and resources, which meant any human inhabitation, particularly of the hunter and gatherer lifestyle, would be unacceptable in the protected areas (Nabokov and Leondorf 2004).

Also, within the late 19th century, landscape paintings and other art forms romanticizing the West increased in popularity. As painters pursued new and beautiful landscapes, the National Parks offered scenes for artists to paint, as well as locations for tourists to visit the location seen

in the artworks. In order to preserve lands as they are shown in the paintings, the areas must be preserved and ideally untouched by human interaction to prevent any visible changes (Avery, n.d., Timms, 2010).

As in a similar story throughout the United States, Native American land was valuable to whites and would not be prosperous until the natives were removed. With the nation expanding west, the lands were rich in resources and posed a major opportunity for investors to invest minimally to profit hugely. Relocation was also expected to be beneficial for the Indians, as it removed them from American expansion with the purpose of enabling them to continue their traditional lifestyles on reservations away from interruption for the time being, and then eventually to assimilate into the modern US culture at their own pace. The intruding white Anglo-Saxons manipulated native relocation and viewed reservation land as temporary until it could be useful in the commercial interests of the expanding United States (Spence, 1999)

While the first National Park was being formed in Wyoming, the United States government was distributing huge land grants to railroad companies and homesteaders to encourage development of the West. Creating the National Parks as a tourist attraction was a major economic, as well as conservation effort. Tourism would bring in a lot of money and prove highly profitable to develop parks as a tourist attraction with hotels, restaurants, and other amenities. The Northern Pacific Railroad Company capitalized off of the development of federal land into public parks by building their tracks near to the areas, because they greatly profited from the tourists flocking to see beauty of the lands (Spence, 1999).

The American public was gaining inspirational parks in which to seek solitude and splendor, but the native inhabitants of the area were losing all they had ever known. The park system was promoting the land as untouched and pristine, but in reality, Native Americans, and even some

white frontier families, had inhabited the lands for years. The lifestyles of Native Americans had been affected since the first arrival of Europeans, as they continued to push the Indians farther and farther west as America expanded.

While the motive of removal of inhabitants from parklands was in the interest of land preservation, it was accompanied by intense racism. Natives' rights were neglected in satisfying the public interest for the land. Even those who saw Native Americans as living symbiotically with the land, it was often accompanied by a popular belief that Indians were savage and drastically inferior to white people. Years of attempts to 'civilize,' educate, and convert natives had been taking a toll on native cultures and the tribes that had remained far from the frontier only managed to continue their traditional lifestyles a little while longer.

The establishment Yellowstone as preserved federal land at first allowed for continued inhabitation, but severely limited the activities of the people who continued to live on the lands. Native Americans originally subsisted by hunting and gathering and the laws of the parks strictly prohibited both strategies, therefore making it impossible for natives to survive on their native lands. They were eventually forced off the land completely and moved into reservation lands. The formation of other parks did not even offer the opportunity to stay on the lands, rather immediately drove the Native Americans out with threats of violence and use of armed forces. Yosemite, first established as a state reserve, and later a National Park, was evacuated through the use of the United States Cavalry. Their method of removal of the Yosemite tribes became the Yosemite Model, which served as a guide to other parks as to how to conduct the removal of native inhabitants. People viewed natives as visitors to the land; therefore, they did not expect them to be greatly affected by their relocation (Nabokov and Loendorf 2004).

After the removal of natives from parklands, their existence was nearly erased from the local histories. By excluding the evidence of former inhabitation, parkland appeared completely untouched and entirely natural. In more recent decades, National Parks have made efforts to reincorporate Native American history and culture into the parks' environment. The nation as a whole has also made efforts to reconcile with Natives through payments for prior treatment but the damage has been done, and the cultures have nearly been exterminated.

II. Chapter Two – The Founding of the National Parks

The founding of the first National Park began with Yellowstone in 1872. At the time, Native American presence within the region was not a huge issue, but the American viewpoint soon changed. Originally, the concept of wilderness was seen to include the Native Americans who had lived in harmony with the natural world for longer than anyone even knew at that time. As the idea of the preservation of land in such the state that whites first encountered it, the Natives' lifestyles of burning and hunting would no longer be acceptable.

During the mid-1800s, before the presence of modern mass media, forms of art and writing were highly influential methods of conveying the images of the rugged West to the general American public. The incredible popularity of the portrayals of the American frontier shaped the opinions of many that it was worth preserving and visiting.

George Catlin, a mid-nineteenth century wilderness enthusiast and landscape painter, was wildly influential in the environmental movement within the United States. He was also the first to propose the idea of National Parks. As quoted in Spence's Dispossessing the Wilderness, Catlin said, "some great protecting policy of government" [should] preserve a large expanse of land in all "its pristine beauty and wildness...where the world could see for ages to come, the

native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his horse...amid the fleeting herds of elks and buffaloes” (1999, p. 10). While Catlin saw value in the preservation of lands along with the native people inhabiting it, many of his followers within the environmental movement did not continue to hold the natives in

such high regard. The Romantic Idealism of the eighteenth century was a popular movement amongst Americans and the untamed wilderness and natives of the West appealed to the members of the movement as the ultimate example of the work



“Buffalo Hunt, Chase” by George Catlin, 1844. Provided by Encyclopedia Britannica Online.

of God. Writings and paintings of the West grew in popularity and the desire to preserve the land increased (Catlin, 2010, Spence, 1999).

The members of the Hudson River School were highly influential landscape painters since the eighteenth century. They presented images of the wilderness that was distinctly American, which became a major factor of national identity. Americans boasted of their country’s abundant nature in reaction to the distinct lack of natural history present in Europe. The lands of the West also served as a unifying object for the country because much of it had been recently won in the Mexican-American War of the 1846 to 1848 (Avery, n.d., Spence, 1999).

The novels and poems of the time were also important in shaping perceptions of the West. Writers often romanticized the Wild West and encounters with Native Americans. The topic of

the untamed Western frontier quickly took over the literary market and authors, such as James Fenimore Cooper and Washington Irving, rose to fame. Cooper sympathized with Native Americans and recognized their fate as the frontier progressed west (Merriman, 2007). Irving is known to have promoted the preservation of Native American presence in the exact wilderness that later became Yellowstone National Park (Spence, 1999).

Also playing a major role in shaping public opinion of preserving the natural wonders of the West was the photographic work of John James Audubon. His timeless images of the Western landscape continue to influence nature-lovers today. Although his photographs did not include Native Americans, he advocated for the preservation of wilderness and natives together and encouraged government involvement to protect the undisturbed nature of the West (Spence, 1999).

Author and philosopher Henry David Thoreau, with his hermit and back-to-basic lifestyle, wrote on the necessities of life and the relationship between all living creatures in nature. His writings were highly influential in many seemingly unrelated subjects, such as the creation of the National Park System. He believed the raw relationship with nature needed to be preserved. However, his opinion of Native Americans was conflicting. On one side, he saw the value in their simplistic lifestyles and their intimate connection with nature to the extent that he strove to learn from them and replicate their lifestyles in his own. He argued against exploitation of Indian land and believed lands needed to be preserved for the survival of the native culture (Fleck 1985). Even though he admired Native Americans, he saw them as race that preceded his own, almost as subhuman and “nearer of kin to the rocks and animals than we” (Spence, 1999, p. 21).

Similarly viewing the wilderness as the preservation of the world, John Muir worked tirelessly to establish governmental protection of Yosemite Valley and other areas of noteworthy

natural display. Muir wrote exposés petitioning for the preservation of Tuolumne Meadows that were published in *Century Magazine*. His writings “sparked a bill in U.S. Congress that proposed creating a new federally administered park surrounding the old Yosemite Grant” (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2010). His collaboration with fellow naturalist, and former President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, resulted in the establishment of the National Parks System in 1916 and earned Muir the informal title as the father of National Parks. Also similar to Thoreau, Muir respected the harmonious lifestyles of Native Americans and petitioned for their protection within the wilderness, but also found natives, such as the people of Yosemite, to be dirty (Fleck, 1985, Burnham, 2000).

Following the Civil War, the effort to rebuild a sense of national unity was of utmost importance to the government. The Western Frontier was also unique to the United States, seeing as no similar lands existed in Europe, and the glorification of the western wilderness resulted in the unification over a truly American characteristic. By developing the National Parks, it provided Americans locations to come together and celebrate the beauty unique to their great country (Spence, 1999). Seeing the value in founding National Parks to the benefit of national unity, as well as protecting the wilderness that members of the preservationist movement were pushing to retain, the U.S. government saw the funding of federal parks as a worthy cause.

Before the formal establishment of the National Parks System, signed into effect by President Woodrow Wilson in 1916, individual National Parks were run independently through the Department of the Interior. Yosemite, first set aside as a public trust by President Abraham Lincoln in 1864, was under the control of the State of California (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2010). Initially, parks were under the control of superintendents who proved to exercise minimal power or discipline over their parks. After a few years of being unable to enforce any

sort of regulations, the government saw the need to send in the United States Army to regulate the activities, such as the illegal access of resources that were technically protected under park jurisdiction. In Yosemite, soon after it became a National Park in 1890, the Army was in control from 1891 to 1913 (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2010). The U.S. government continually worked towards increased federal protections within the parks' boundaries and expansion of the parks system to include more National Parks.

The formation of the first National Park, Yellowstone, was during the presidency of Ulysses S. Grant, and the National Park System initially started during the time Woodrow Wilson was in office, but the foundations for the National Park System were built up most while Theodore Roosevelt was President. Roosevelt increased federal efforts to set aside lands to protect them from future effects by human inhabitation and manipulation. During the time he was in office, he “established the U.S. Forest Service, the nation’s first national wildlife refuges, 5 national parks and 18 national monuments” (Honoring Conservation Heroes, 2011). From there, President Wilson just had to establish the formal system, which unified all of the parks.

National unity and the preservation of nature were not the only driving forces behind the creation of federally protected public parkland. The idea of profit from tourism was also a major factor, particularly for the railroad industry. Railroad tycoon, Jay Cooke of North Pacific Railroad, funded expeditions into the lands that would eventually become Yellowstone National Park. On these exploration trips, they brought along people whom they knew would write, paint, or somehow market the beauty of the land, which would therefore increase public and government interest in creating protective laws. North Pacific Railroad saw the creation of a park as an opportunity to profit hugely by extending their lines to the borders of parkland and transporting visitors. The North Pacific Railroad also took the initiative in building nearby hotels

for the tourists, as to expand their profits outside the market of transportation. The methods of the North Pacific Railroad were wildly successful in creating and sustaining a new field of profit and other railroad companies followed suit. The urging of Southern Pacific Railroad helped in the creation of Yosemite National Park, and most other parks have come to be with the aid of tremendous support from the railroad industry, as well. The railroad companies' efforts were well-worth their initial investments seeing as the railroads were the main method of long-distance transportation up until the advent of and increased reliance upon automobiles (Jewel, 2008).

The fascination of the American population with the Western landscape during the 19th century was just the beginning of the formation of the National Park System. It inspired the arts and literature of the time, which further stimulated movements to preserve tracts of land as a reminder of the raw and natural beauty of 'God's country.' The government developed the National Park System as a means to protect regions of remarkable beauty, as well as providing a unifying and patriotic location for tourists to bask in the glory of their country. Along with the altruistic means of the preservationists, the prospect of a tourism industry perpetuated the support for a National Parks as new market from which to benefit. Behind the beauty of the American National Parks System lies the pursuit of riches and resulting manipulation and expulsion of indigenous inhabitants.

III. Chapter Three – Federal Acquisition of the Land and Native Removal

As Native American land became valuable and its inhabitation by natives would no longer be accepted, their rights and access to land and resources were restricted. First they were limited to particular areas of their former homelands then later evicted altogether as their

presence began to be seen as a threat to both the well being of the wilderness and the white people who settled or visited the areas. Also, The United States in the 1800s and 1900s was rife with political upheaval. With the continual flood of immigrants and the growth of urban areas, there was increased dissatisfaction amongst the white Anglo-Saxon Protestants. Issues between different ethnic and religious groups spurred “reform movements to purify American society” (Spence, 1999, p. 14) with the goal of creating a national unity. This directly affected the Native Americans because it would result in efforts to relocate and assimilate them into American society. If their assimilation proved to be unwelcomed, or unsuccessful, relocation to reservations was the only alternate option (Spence, 1999).

As it was, by the time National Parks began evicting Native Americans, the indigenous inhabitants of North America had already had a history of internal displacement at the hands of the white people. When Europeans first crossed the Atlantic Ocean and built settlements in the New World, Indian land had immediately been imposed upon. American settlements grew and expanded, further encroaching upon natives’ homelands and limiting their access to resources and areas they had developed a familiarity with over generations.

Whenever desirable resources were found on Indian land, such as gold in the Black Hills of South Dakota and the Sierra Nevada of California, white people would move in to exploit the land for a profit. They would then force displacement of indigenous inhabitants through the signing of treaties believing that “the benefits of the plan were twofold: the treaty was good for the Indians because it ‘moved them away from the mines and the whites’ to a place where they could engage in ‘a pastoral and half agricultural life’; for the United States, the treaty served as the best prescription for opening up large tracts of land for mining, agriculture, and settlement” (Spence, 1999, p. 26).

Throughout history, Native American expulsion is most remembered by the Indian Removal Act of 1830, pushed through Congress by President Andrew Jackson, which gave the government power to remove natives from eastern lands in exchange for land west of the Mississippi River. This was followed by much native remorse and resistance, particularly by the Cherokee tribe. Rather than accept the decisions of the government, they took the case to the Supreme Court on the basis that this new law violated previous laws protecting Indian land from white inhabitation. They won the case but President Jackson ignored the ruling and demanded their eviction from their land. They were granted two years to voluntarily relocate but a majority of the Cherokee remained after the allotted time. In 1838, the United States military was sent to force the natives' movement in what is remembered as the Trail of Tears (Darrenkamp, n.d.).

Manifest Destiny was also a reason behind the expansion of white settlements. Many believed that it was the duty of white men to expand the nation from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean. Believers in Manifest Destiny also thought themselves to be of a superior race with the responsibility to save or extinguish inferior races, particularly the native Indians (Garrison, 2007, Spence, 1999). By viewing the non-Christian 'savages' as lesser beings, partnered with their determination to conquer the continent, deceiving and stealing from the native occupants did not weigh heavily on the consciences of many 19th century Americans. They also believed their actions to be justified by an old international law, the Doctrine of Discovery, which claimed that "when European, Christian nations discovered new lands, the discovering country automatically gained sovereign and property rights in the lands of non-Christian, non-European peoples" (Garrison, 2007). Since white settlers viewed the land of the New World as belonging to the government since they first set foot on North America, they believed the land could be divided and distributed as they pleased. They also believed they could

rightfully determine whether native inhabitants would be allowed to stay on their lands or move them in the interest of 'progress' (Fulkerson, 2011).

In the beginning of their interactions, whites and natives co-existed relatively peacefully but as whites began to feel the continued nearby presence of Native Americans to be infringing upon the white settlements' well being and productivity, the federal government took action. As previously mentioned, President Andrew Jackson signed the Indian Removal Act, which relocated Native Americans from the eastern regions of the country onto lands west of the Mississippi. This act is the most important example of the legal removal of indigenous Americans to the advantage of Anglo-Saxon settlers. It opened southeastern U.S. land for expansion of settlements, as well as slavery, which was a highly profitable industry of the time. The government was conveniently displacing Indians onto lands of no value to white settlers – yet (Fulkerson, 2011).

Natives recognized the possibility of American expansion as a threat to their traditional locations of residence; therefore many tribes went to the federal government to formally define their territories. In regards to the Yellowstone region, tribal leaders and government officials established the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 to outline Indian lands as long as they were willing to permit overland migration by settlers (Spence, 1999). Later, in 1862, the U.S. government passed the Homestead Act, which directly encouraged white migration west of the Mississippi by granting land plots to people willing to develop them. This was in complete disrespect of previous agreements that granted much of the western lands specifically for Native Americans' use.

Many times throughout history, white settlers have been drawn west by the appeal of cheap land and the abundance of valuable resources, each time intruding farther into Indian

Territory. As timber, mining, and ranching industries drove the frontier westward, the government began the process of protecting certain lands from private development on the reasoning that it was useless for anything other than its visual splendor. Government officials also reasoned that such lands had always been uninhabitable, even for Native Americans. When the resource wealth of the Sierra Nevada mountain range was 'discovered,' the Miwok and Paiute tribes, consisting of multiple subgroups, were undeniably present within the Yosemite region. The influx of white people following the Gold Rush had begun a competition between natives and white people for resources.

The government saw the Native Americans of the Yosemite region as disruptive to the pursuit of the white settlers and demanded their removal from the area. After the near annihilation of native people by the unintentional spread of foreign disease that had been occurring since Europeans first arrived, the Indian War began to relocate the surviving tribes. The purpose of the 'war' was to peacefully convince tribes to give up their lands to relocate onto reservations elsewhere, but the resistance of some tribes was creating physical conflict between Indians and settlers. In 1851, in their pursuit of forcefully removing the reluctant Awahneechee tribes with the threat of violence and death, the soldiers of the Mariposa Battalion were the first white people to ever enter the actual Valley of Yosemite. Upon their arrival, the Battalion found the Indian settlements, but the Indians had fled. The soldiers burned the entire village and their storages of food to discourage the natives' return. A later excursion by the Mariposa Battalion found the Awahneechee tribe camped out around a mountain lake and in weak condition. The tribe willingly surrendered and relocated from the Yosemite Valley onto reservation lands in the Central Valley of California (Brown, 2009, Hull, 2009, Spence, 1999).

The native removal from Yosemite was never formally validated, so within two years, the Natives were able to reestablish their presence in the Yosemite Valley after agreeing to live in accommodation to settlers. Upon their return to the Valley, many Native Americans began incorporating themselves into the economic ventures of the white people. Assimilation was the cost of remaining on their lands, and eventually proved useful to their survival when the land was established as a state reserve. The Yosemite Park Act of 1864, the predecessor to the establishment of Yosemite as a National Park, brought an influx of tourists into the area. Rather than being expelled from their lands again, the natives were able to become tour guides, flaunt their cultural traditions, sell their crafts, and work for the park in many other ways. This symbiotic relationship provided natives with a means of survival and was beneficial to the tourists, as well (Spence, 1999).

Many tourists gawked at the cultural displays of the Native Americans, who had proved themselves to be cooperative, and when the land transitioned from state control to become a federally controlled National Park in 1890, they were permitted to stay. However, many other tribes had still been using parkland for hunting and gathering and were now forbidden by the park's preservation laws, which would be enforced by the U.S. Army until the creation of the National Park System in 1916 (Spence, 1999).



Susie McGowan, of the Paiute tribe, with daughter Sadie in cradleboard. Taken by J T Boysen in Yosemite Valley, 1901.

From the ‘discovery’ of Yellowstone, white explorers ignored the evidence of Native American inhabitation because they wanted to believe that they had discovered untouched, pristine wilderness. However, “it was a landscape that had been shaped by thousands of years of human use and habitation. The earliest archaeological evidence in the park area dates to the end of the last Ice Age, when Paleo-Indian groups moved into the region in the wake of retreating ice floes” (Spence, 1999, p. 43). The removal of the blatantly present inhabitants was necessary to sustain the image of perfect nature of the park. The indigenous uses of the land as a source of sustenance also posed a threat to the pure natural balance of the park setting, therefore, hunting, gathering, and purposeful fires would not be tolerated. This concept has been a major factor in the removal of Native Americans in other federally owned parkland, as well. Combined with the feelings of society towards the proximity of natives to white settlements and tourist destinations - even John Muir believed Yosemite would be better off without the Native Americans - they were left without many options other than to give up their culture to assimilate, or leave (Fleck, 1985).

When Yellowstone became the first official National Park in 1872, it was soon clear that the Shoshone were not going to be tolerated as the Yosemite tribes had been. They were seen as



Native Americans in traditional dress at Yellowstone National Park. Photograph provided by the National Park Service.

troublesome to the whites looking to develop the parklands and “in 1879, the tribe was removed from the park area by dint of a never-ratified treaty from 1868; some were taken in by Chief Washakie and the Eastern Shoshone at the Wind

River Reservation, others removed to

Idaho” (Burnham, 2000, p. 22). The 1868 treaty had previously been an agreement with the government for the Crow and Shoshone to give up their rights to large portions of land, which are now a major part of Yellowstone National Park, but was not formally put into effect at the time. In 1870, the Indian Appropriation Act passed; taking away government recognition of native tribes as independent political communities that had existed for almost a century (Nabokov and Loendorf, 2004).

After the Shoshone were removed, the few tribe members who remained within the Yellowstone vicinity were confined to a reservation outside of park borders; therefore, they no longer posed a threat to the tourists and developers. Also, Crow, Bannock, Blackfeet, and Nez Perce tribes had all lived off the lands of Yellowstone either seasonally or permanently for generations. The removal of these other tribes was a more gradual process. The park laws first limited their official territory but allowed continual hunting rights, then their hunting rights were revoked, and eventually their access to park lands were cut off entirely. While the Blackfeet were unwelcomed in the tourist atmosphere of Yellowstone, they relocated to Glacier National Park. There they were welcomed as décor and were able to sustain themselves off of their participation in the tourism industry while living on the reservation within the heart of the park. Their new situation was not ideal, as their culture became a thing of entertainment and their survival depended on exploiting their traditions, but they were allowed to stay on their beloved lands. Other tribes were not as willing, or given the opportunity, to incorporate themselves into the tourism industry of the National Parks and were simply removed (Burnham, 2000).

As the American frontier expanded, there was less and less appealing open western land to which the natives could relocate themselves that would be able to sustain them and was also undesirable for white settlement. With no place for Indians to go, the outcome was the

governmental establishment of reservations. The allotted lands for tribes to move onto were meant to be away from white settlements and prevented Native Americans from interrupting national expansion. In the words of Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1858, Charles E. Mix believed “the reservations were the best method for ‘controlling the Indians’ and teaching them ‘civilized occupations and pursuits’” (Spence, 1999, p. 43). Rather than allowing Native Americans to continue to reside in the wilderness, members of the American society began to believe reservations to be the rightful location for Indians. Some, like Mix argued that they needed to be civilized and assimilated into modern American society, while others, like Phillip Sheridan, went so far to say “the only good Indian is a dead Indian” (Hutton, 1985). The Friends of the Indians group had harsh methods of forced assimilation, such as boarding schools and the forbidding of practicing tribal cultures on reservations (Spence, 1999). One of the purposes of reservations was to allow Native Americans to civilize at their own pace rather than the sudden transition from living traditionally, to living within white settlements without the process of acculturation in between.

Reservations were also formed with the intention of promoting the adoption of an agriculturalist lifestyle, which was thought to be to their advantage. Much to the government’s dismay, reservation lands became areas of destitution as Native Americans did not take to advanced agriculture well enough to sustain themselves, especially because of the poor quality land. Tribes became dependent on government supplies, which were insufficient and oftentimes rotten. In response to their deteriorating situation and their inability to participate in the national economy, many tribes were driven to the point of selling their precious remaining lands as means to survive (Burnham, 2000). The 1887 Dawes Allotment Act had divided reservations into individual plots of 160-acres and granted to tribe members for them to do as they please

(Fulkerson 2011). By selling their lands and assimilating into American society, they were giving up all they had left of their culture's former glory.

Natives displaced from the Yellowstone Plateau were mainly sent to two reservations: Wind River and Fort Hall. Wind River Reservation, as briefly mentioned previously, was a major Shoshone reservation in west-central Wyoming. Although the reservation was large (2,268,008 acres), the land was not suitable for inhabitation and game was sparse. Many of the other tribes of Yellowstone were sent to the Fort Hall Reservation, a 544,000-acre land allotment in Idaho (Nabokov and Loendorf, 2004).

Native frustrations with the government's neglect for their treaties and general well being had been building for years and the Nez Perce are remembered for making a stand. Tensions had especially been mounting after the establishment of Yellowstone National Park and the limitations of natives' rights to continue to hunt within park borders. Seeing as boundaries were impossible to distinguish and the temptation of abundant game on parkland, the park was like a trap for hungry tribe members constantly tempted to break park laws. The Nez Perce were briefly caught in a rebellious dispute with the U.S. Army which involved attacks on tourists before being driven off of the Yellowstone Plateau. The Nez Perce War of 1877 was just one of a many armed reactions to governmental limitation of Native American rights and territories throughout history. However, the Nez Perce, were not only acting out of their frustrations regarding limited hunting right, but also in response to a treaty recently signed against the desires of the tribe which forfeited much of their lands in exchange for a 5,000 acre reservation in Idaho. On top of that, they were angered over the diminishing number of accessible buffalo, which was the basis of their traditional ways of survival (Burnham, 2000).

By 1880, all Native American tribes had been officially banished from Yellowstone, although some sly hunting and gathering continued against the laws set by park officials to preserve all plants and animals within the park boundaries. The U.S. Army enforced these laws to protect the park from poachers, squatters, and Native Americans alike (Burnham, 2000, Jacoby, 2006).

Since the beginning of frontier expansion and native displacement, along with the establishment of reservations, the government also called for the building of military outposts throughout the West, beginning decades before National Parks existed. Their presence was aimed to protect settlers and travelers from the ‘savage Indians,’ and also to intimidate natives from acting out against their subjugation and relocation. When National Parks formed, and more Indians were evicted from their homelands and the U.S. Army was there to enforce the removal, prevent infringement upon park laws, as well as run the reservations (Spence, 1999).

When Ulysses S. Grant began his presidency in 1872, he ended the policy of warring with natives and instead implemented peaceful assimilation by replacing military officers on reservations with religious representatives. Through the destruction of traditional tribal cultures and the acceptance of modern American lifestyles, the people of the United States would be unified and cordial.

IV. Chapter Four – The Outcomes of Expulsion

The displacement of Native Americans from their rightful lands within United States’ National Parks has had dramatic and lasting effects on global society. The United States’ methods of indigenous removal in the pursuit of preservation and resources has since served as a model worldwide (Spence, 1999). While all parties involved in the developments and

displacements in the West were affected in some way, none so much as the Native Americans themselves.

Firstly, the populations of Native Americans took a major hit upon the immediate arrival of Europeans on North American soil because they had no immunities for the foreign diseases brought from the Old World. As white settlements grew and continued to infiltrate natives' land, "populations failed to recover when regular contact with non-Indians and increased competition for resources with other tribes brought hunger, war, and more sickness" (Spence, 1999, p. 49). Just with their presence, Europeans were destroying the formerly flourishing Native American population.

To make matters worse, they forced Native Americans into the situation of being removed from all they had ever known and forcing a new way of life upon them. It was not common for tribes to be able to maintain a continual presence on their original lands, as the Blackfeet in Glacier National Park and the Yosemite tribes of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Those who were allowed to remain generally presented a some sort of benefit or supplement to the local industries, such as cheap labor and entertainment with traditional culture displays and crafts sold as souvenirs. More commonly, Indians were uprooted from their homelands because of discontinued ability to practice their traditional methods of subsistence or forced removal at the demand of federal government officials.

Even for the lucky few who remained on their native lands, assimilation was inevitable for all tribes. Native Americans were required to sacrifice their traditional lifestyles either by reservation programs meant to 'civilize' them or out of necessity to incorporate into American society for basic survival. The result has been the severe destruction and near disappearance of the cultures indigenous to North America (Nabokov and Loendorf 2004).

Neglect and oppression over the decades has taken a toll on the spirits of Native Americans,



Modern day Wind River Reservation. Image provided by Frances Hunter.

many of which currently face numerous social and economic issues, such as alcoholism and extreme poverty.

The truthful stories of Native Americans' struggles and oppression remain overlooked and misunderstood. The initial

denial of indigenous inhabitation of precious lands to boost the image of ideal wilderness

has created a misled society with an altered understanding of their own nation's history.

American culture has greatly benefitted from the establishment of National Parks, both recreationally and economically. The markets built up by the tourism industry have been very successful and America has developed a deep love for their natural monuments. Yet, the general population remains fooled by the seemingly altruistic efforts for preservation that created the parks. The idea of the 'vanishing Indian,' dying off simply as a result of being dominated by a superior race, along with the belief that these sacred wildernesses had always been unwanted and uninhabitable, even by Native Americans, offsets the blame of the plight of Native Americans influenced by the National Park System. With these delusions accepted as truth, the efforts to preserve the land as it was seen in a still-shot of an Audubon photograph or as the timeless terrain of a Catlin painting was thought to be the best option for humanity. America had formed its cultural roots in the beautiful landscapes of the National Parks and saw it necessary to protect them from all change (Nabokov and Loendorf 2004).

With the natives evicted and the law on their side, the park service was aiming for an unachievable ideal of preventing alterations in the wilderness over which they presided. The reason for removing Native Americans is that their lifestyle of living off the land was changing the environment from its natural existence. Park officials were adamant to acknowledge the natural process of constant change (Timms, 2010) and did not understand the symbiotic relationship formed between the natives and the ecosystem that had developed throughout the thousands of years of native inhabitation. The balance had been well established and upon the limitation of indigenous hunting and gathering, issues of population booms arose. Park rangers were also working towards predator removal in order to protect species, such as elk, deer, and mountain goats, which tourists wished to view. While the species increases were at first welcomed but the flora and fauna eventually changed in ways unnatural to the areas. By the 1920s, parks were implementing a game control program to manage the populations of species they had previously worked to increase (Spencer, 1999).

V. Chapter Five – Concluding Remarks

America the Beautiful has an ugly, selfish history. This country would not be the same today had it not been for the sacrifices and suffering of its only original inhabitants.

Americans remain in ignorant bliss at the thought of National Parks, for the grandeur of the scenery far overshadows the cultural history of the land.

The original denial of Native American presence within parklands has since been acknowledged and is now featured in park histories. Many parks have made the effort to reincorporate native cultures with events and presentations specifically about the former inhabitants, but much has been in the interest of enriching the tourist experience. Yosemite still

does not rightfully acknowledge the presence of the Mono Paiute Yosemite Indians. Much of their historical information provided by the Park Service on signs throughout the park either claims or insinuates the natives to have solely been from the Miwok tribe and ignores the history of the Paiutes and other tribes.

At the cost of Native American lives and lifestyles, the creation of National Parks by the United States government successfully prevented picturesque environments from being destroyed by the development for private interests (Spence, 1999). If it were not for formal laws and monitoring by the U.S. Army and Park Services, the lands were likely to have been “devastated by lumberman and sheepmen, and so of course made unfit for use as a pleasure ground” (Gillis, 2011).

Native Americans have continually been exploited in one way or another in America’s pursuit of idealism. Not much has been done to undo the damage experienced by the tribes and toll upon their cultures. However, some tribes within the United States receive a monetary gift to reconcile the governmental actions on their ancestors, but the damage has been done and the cultures have been forever changed. At this time, the most appropriate resolution may be as simple as improved education of and for the original inhabitants of the Land of the Free. Education will empower the impoverished Native Americans still living on the reservations and education of the American society will increase interest and awareness of the Native American history and current standing. Improvements of ethnographic archives, public boards within parks, as well as the curriculum for the history of Native Americans are important for correcting the misleading histories of the United States and it’s cultural history. Most importantly, revealing the negative affects of government actions in the past, such as with National Parks and the resulting

indigenous removal, will spur an increase in questioning what the masses are told. Ignorance and National Parks may be bliss, but the truths deserve to be known.

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