

# The National Park Service and the New Deal, 1933-1940

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THE HISTORY of the National Park Service has long been a source of fascination for conservation buffs, national park enthusiasts, and former Park Service officials. Professional historians have only recently become interested. Concentrating generally on the first two decades of the National Park Service—the era of Stephen T. Mather and Horace M. Albright—they have largely ignored the period since 1933.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to probe

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<sup>1</sup> Literally dozens of books have appeared about the national parks, most of which include a brief history of the National Park Service. See, for example, Freeman Tilden, *The National Parks: What They Mean to You and Me* (New York, 1951). Jenks Cameron, *The National Park Service: Its History, Activities, and Organization*, Service Monographs of the U. S. Government, No. 11 (New York and London, 1922) was the first serious study of the Park Service. Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks* (New York, 1951) is a useful though undocumented biography of the first Director of the National Park Service. John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore, 1961) contains detailed information about legislation affecting the National Park Service. Donald C. Swain, *Federal Conservation Policy, 1921-1933* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1963) examines the Park Service in the context of the national conservation movement and federal resource policies in the 1920s. A recent book by the same author, *Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation* (Chicago, 1970) focuses on Albright's career in the National Park Service with emphasis on the years to 1933. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (New Haven, 1967) explains the changes in attitude and public values that underlay the wilderness preservation movement from which the National Park Service later became estranged. The best studies of the beginning of the organized conservation movement are Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959) and Elmo R. Richardson, *The Politics of Conservation: Crusades and Controversies, 1897-1913* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962).

the history of the National Park Service during the crisis years of the New Deal.

The National Park Service was established in 1916 and grew to bureaucratic maturity in the 1920s. Steve Mather, a Sierra Club member and former businessman, was its first director. Under his resourceful leadership, the agency gained a reputation for efficiency and political savvy that was the envy of many older bureaus. Mather was a master salesman, and he set out to sell the national parks to the public. His spirited promotional campaigns attracted thousands of visitors to the parks and won solid political support for the National Park Service. Annual appropriations for the management and protection of the parks increased steadily in the 1920s. Mather set high standards for his bureau. Recruiting first-rate men into its ranks, he established the administrative style and *esprit* that marked the organization for a quarter of a century. It was in the 1920s that the aesthetic conservationists, whose values were institutionalized in the Park Service, came of age in the American conservation movement. It was in the jazz age, also, that the nation began its love affair with the national parks.<sup>2</sup>

Horace M. Albright presided over the National Park Service during the Hoover administration. A self-confident and pragmatic administrator, he prided himself on his adaptability and capacity for creative accommodation. He had been Mather's chief assistant for fifteen years and had succeeded to the directorship in 1929 when Mather was forced to resign because of ill health. Albright continued most of Mather's policies and extended the "Mather tradition" of bureau leadership into the 1930s. He devoted considerable time to promoting and publicizing the parks. He completed the professionalization of the Park Service, bringing virtually all of the agency's permanent employees under civil service. He initiated the historic preservation program in the bureau and took the lead in expanding the major national parks.<sup>3</sup>

Affable and politically shrewd, Albright had a way of getting

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<sup>2</sup> The establishment of the National Park Service is recounted in Donald C. Swain, "The Passage of the National Park Service Act of 1916," *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, L (1966), 4-17; the bureau's activities are analyzed in Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 185-323, and Swain, *Federal Conservation Policy*, 123-143.

<sup>3</sup> Shankland, *Steve Mather*, 295-302, and Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 178-205.

along with Secretaries of the Interior. He had demonstrated this consistently in his relations with Franklin K. Lane, Albert B. Fall, and Hubert Work. He was particularly successful in his dealings with Ray Lyman Wilbur, Hoover's Secretary of the Interior, who gave the national parks enthusiastic support.<sup>4</sup> Harold L. Ickes, Franklin D. Roosevelt's choice to head the Department of the Interior, also responded positively to Albright's accommodating style. Ickes satisfied himself almost immediately that Albright could be trusted and turned to him for advice on a wide range of policy matters. During the Hundred Days, the National Park Service obtained jurisdiction over all of the Civil War battlefields, the national capital parks and buildings, and the national monuments, many of which had previously been administered by the Department of Agriculture or the War Department. Albright was mainly responsible for this consolidation. He also influenced Ickes' emerging conservation philosophy, moving the new Secretary in the direction of aesthetic values and away from an essentially utilitarian view of resource management. Albright's achievements during the Hundred Days were an administrative *tour de force*.<sup>5</sup> When he resigned unexpectedly in August 1933 to become manager of the United States Potash Company, the Park Service lost a remarkably effective administrator. The new director would be hard-pressed to match Albright's record.

In 1933, at the beginning of the New Deal, the National Park Service was expansive, confident, vigorous, and effective. Its career officers, imbued with the Mather tradition, were competent and hard-working. Because of Albright's deft work in the Hundred Days, the bureau was in an advantageous political position, both in Congress and in the Secretary's office. It was on the threshold of an unprecedented expansion of its jurisdiction and bureaucratic structure.

Arno B. Cammerer, who followed Albright as director, had

<sup>4</sup> Ray Lyman Wilbur, *The Memoirs of Ray Lyman Wilbur, 1875-1949*, edited by Edgar E. Robinson and Paul C. Edwards (Stanford, 1960), 431-440; see also Horace M. Albright, "Reminiscences," Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, pp. 301-308, and the correspondence between Wilbur and Albright in the Wilbur Collection at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library.

<sup>5</sup> Swain, "Harold Ickes, Horace Albright, and the Hundred Days," *Pacific Historical Review*, XXXIV (1965), 455-465.

served a long apprenticeship in Washington. He had joined the National Park Service in 1919 as assistant director, after fifteen years as a functionary in the Treasury Department and as assistant secretary to the National Commission on Fine Arts. He had worked closely with Mather in the 1920s and had served as Albright's associate director during the Hoover administration. He had contributed to the success of both men and he seemed a logical choice to succeed Albright, although Ickes initially opposed his appointment on the theory that the Park Service needed an infusion of "outside blood." Ickes offered the appointment to Newton B. Drury of the Save-the-Redwoods League, but Drury refused the job.<sup>6</sup> Only then did Ickes acquiesce in Cammerer's appointment.

Cammerer was a tall, large-boned man, with a ruddy complexion and a ready smile. The son of an itinerant preacher, he began life in a sod house in Arapaho, Nebraska, in 1883. Educated in the public schools of Illinois and Wisconsin, he later studied law at Georgetown University, receiving his law degree in 1911.<sup>7</sup> He was genuinely devoted to the concept of preserving natural beauty, but his personal attachment to the western parks was probably never as strong as Mather's or Albright's. He had a knack for the day-to-day details of administration and for getting along with congressmen. His close associates called him "Cam" and held him in affectionate regard. His adversaries in the Interior Department viewed him as indecisive and vulnerable. His bland, unassertive administrative style made him an easy target for Ickes who regularly ridiculed him. Ickes detested the "pat on the back" approach that Cammerer often used in his efforts to ingratiate himself with other people.<sup>8</sup>

Ickes' distrust of Cammerer increased as the decade of the 1930s continued, and Cammerer's sense of personal insecurity grew. Inconsequential things about Cammerer nagged at Ickes as time passed. He fumed, for example, about Cammerer's habit of sitting "by my desk vigorously chewing gum in an openmouthed man-

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<sup>6</sup> Shankland, *Steve Mather*, 302; Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 354; interview with Horace M. Albright, Dec. 20, 1964.

<sup>7</sup> For biographical information, see "The National Gallery," *Washington Post*, clipping dated May 10, 1934, National Archives, Records of National Park Service (hereafter abbreviated NA, NPS), Admin., Director Cammerer; see also *Who's Who In America, 1940-1941* (Chicago, 1940), 505.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Donald E. Lee (Ickes' personal secretary in the 1930s), Aug. 25, 1964.

ner.”<sup>9</sup> It was ironic that the most dynamic period of expansion in the history of the National Park Service should occur under Cammerer, a relatively weak director whose relations with the Secretary of the Interior were not harmonious.

Fortunately, other members of the National Park Service hierarchy, especially Assistant Directors Arthur E. Demaray and Conrad L. Wirth, could compensate for Cammerer’s ineffectiveness with Ickes. Demaray, who had been in the Park Service since its birth in 1916, was an astute bureaucrat and politician. Ickes came to respect his shrewd assessments of congressional affairs and to admire his direct, simple style that never drifted into sycophancy. Wirth, whom Albright had recruited into the Park Service in 1931, won favor for his enthusiastic work as the Interior Department’s representative on the Civilian Conservation Corps council. The staff of the Washington Office carried the National Park Service through the New Deal years in spite of the friction between Ickes and Cammerer. After leaving the directorship in 1933, Albright maintained his contacts in the Department of the Interior and with Ickes, helping the Park Service overcome its difficulties with the Secretary.<sup>10</sup>

During the New Deal, the administrative value and priorities of the National Park Service remained essentially the same as in the Mather-Albright era. The leaders of the bureau devoted considerable attention to political fence-mending, cultivating senators and congressmen who could be counted on to support the national parks and keeping in touch with influential friends of the parks. Cammerer, whose slightly effusive personal style was better adapted to congressional cloakrooms than to the corridors of the Interior building, worked hard at this. When he could find time, he escorted politicians around the parks, letting the tranquility and beauty of the mountains lobby in behalf of the Park Service.<sup>11</sup> This had been

<sup>9</sup> Harold L. Ickes, *Secret Diary*, Vol. II, *The Inside Struggle, 1936–1939* (New York, 1954), 584; for further evidence of Ickes’ dislike of Cammerer, see *ibid.*, Vol. III, *The Lowering Clouds, 1939–1941* (New York, 1954), 9, 72, 103, and Albright, “Reminiscences,” 541–543.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Donald E. Lee, Aug. 25, 1964; Minutes of the Advisory Council, NA, Records of the CCC; Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 248–252.

<sup>11</sup> Cammerer’s correspondence with senators and congressmen is in NA, NPS Admin., Director Cammerer.

one of Mather's most effective tactics. Cammerer also stayed closely in touch with John D. Rockefeller, Jr., whom Albright had originally interested in supporting the parks. Rockefeller contributed millions of dollars to finance park projects in the 1930s, especially in the Jackson Hole region and Yosemite National Park.<sup>12</sup>

The publicity and promotional campaigns of the National Park Service during the New Deal resembled those spearheaded by Mather and Albright in the 1920s. National magazines often carried feature stories about the parks,<sup>13</sup> and Cammerer took pains to stay on friendly terms with eastern journalists and publishers who could provide news coverage and timely editorials about the parks.<sup>14</sup> The *New York Times* was among the staunchest supporters of the National Park Service in the 1930s.<sup>15</sup>

While its promotional techniques were virtually the same as in the twenties, the bureau's motives for undertaking extensive publicity work in the 1930s were novel. In persuading thousands of Americans to visit the national parks, Mather and Albright were guided largely by political objectives. They had hoped to demonstrate to Congress that the voters were using and enjoying the parks and that the Park Service should receive larger appropriations for park protection and development. On the whole this strategy worked. After 1933, however, the purpose of the Park Service promotional campaigns was largely economic. The objective was to benefit local economies near the parks, assist the concessioners in the parks, a number of whom were suffering severe financial reversals because of the depression, and indirectly stimulate the national economy. FDR himself became one of the chief publicists of the national parks in the 1930s. He and his family, trailed by dozens of reporters, visited Hawaii National Park and Glacier Na-

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<sup>12</sup> Memorandum from Cammerer to Ickes, Aug. 1, 1935; John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to Cammerer, Dec. 5, 1935; and Cammerer to Kenneth Chorley, Dec. 10, 1935, *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> For example: "Expanding the National Park System," *Literary Digest*, CXIX (June 1, 1935), 36; A. Cameron, "One Night Stands in the Parks," *Saturday Evening Post*, CCVI (May 12, 1934), 37-38; "Western National Parks Invite America Out of Doors," *National Geographic*, LXVI (July 1934), 65-80; H. H. Smith, "Vacations in Our Country's Parks," *Woman's Home Companion*, LXV (July 1938), 9-10.

<sup>14</sup> For example, Nicholas Roosevelt to Cammerer, March 21, 1934, NA, NPS Admin., Director Cammerer.

<sup>15</sup> *New York Times*, May 12, 1938.

tional Park in the summer of 1934. At the conclusion of the trip, the President gave the parks an enthusiastic endorsement, announcing on a nationwide radio hook-up that the slogan, "1934—A National Park Year," should be changed to "Every Year a National Park Year." He expressed the hope that "each and every one of you who can possibly find the means . . . will visit our national parks and use them as they are intended to be used. They are not for the rich alone."<sup>16</sup> In 1937 and 1938 Roosevelt again attracted headlines by his visits to national parks.<sup>17</sup>

The organizational culmination of the promotional efforts of the National Park Service came in 1937. Using emergency funds, it established a "Tourist Bureau" in New York City to encourage tourism and provide information about the national parks to travel agencies and interested citizens. This was never a large operation, but it symbolized the determination of the National Park Service to increase the "usefulness" of the parks. Critics of the Park Service in the late 1930s pointed to the Tourist Bureau as evidence of the agency's misguided policies. When Congress authorized the establishment of an independent U.S. Travel Bureau in 1940, the Park Service bowed out of the business.<sup>18</sup>

The promotional and publicity campaigns of the 1930s had their effect. In 1933, a total of 3,481,590 tourists visited the national parks and monuments administered by the National Park Service. By 1940 the total had risen to 16,741,855.<sup>19</sup> This startling increase may be accounted for in part by the reorganization of 1933 that gave the Park Service a large number of national monuments and historic preserves it had not previously administered. Yet the soaring visitor totals revealed that the parks and monuments were being "used" as never before. The White House, as well as the National Park Service, was gratified. Increased travel to the national parks, Roosevelt announced in 1938, could be understood as "an accurate barometer of the [improved] economic condition of the country."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1934*, pp. 164–165, and *1935*, pp. 179–180; for the full text of FDR's speech, see Edgar B. Nixon, ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Conservation, 1911–1945* (2 vols., Hyde Park, 1957), I, 321–324.

<sup>17</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1937*, pp. 34–35, and *1938*, p. 1.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 1937, p. 36, 1938, p. 3, and 1940, p. 169.

<sup>19</sup> Figures compiled from *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1933*, pp. 194–195, and *1941*, p. 278.

<sup>20</sup> *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1938.

The bureaucratic controversies and interagency battles fought by the National Park Service in the 1930s were practically the same as in the 1920s. The rivalry between the United States Forest Service and the Park Service continued through the decade, becoming particularly heated in 1938 and 1939. There was protracted bickering between the two bureaus over the proposed enlargement of Grand Teton Park to include the Jackson Hole region, over the proposed extension of Sequoia Park to include the Kings Canyon area, and over the establishment of Olympic National Park in Washington. In each case, the proposed new park lands were to come largely from the national forests. The Forest Service refused to approve the necessary transfers, and the dispute dragged on.<sup>21</sup> Another source of friction was Ickes' attempt to remake the Department of the Interior into a Department of Conservation, an objective he pursued persistently and at times passionately during Roosevelt's second term. The proposal called for the Forest Service to be transferred to the Interior Department, an idea that appealed to the Park Service but seemed to portend disaster to the Forest Service. Countering Ickes, the defenders of the Forest Service suggested that the National Park Service should be moved to the Department of Agriculture which was the home of the Forest Service. This arrangement, its proponents argued, would effectively end the rivalry between the two bureaus. Rosalee Edge, an indefatigable park lobbyist, replied in behalf of the National Park Service:

We, also, deplore the hostility and jealousy that exists between the Forest Service and the National Park Service, and the resulting injury to the public and to the Parks. We must, however, point out that it is the same kind of mutual misunderstanding that exists between a wolf and a lamb.<sup>22</sup>

An enormous amount of bureaucratic energy went into this fight. Gifford Pinchot, Horace Albright, and other conservation war

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<sup>21</sup> Elmo R. Richardson, "Olympic National Park: 20 years of Controversy," *Forest History*, XII (April 1968), 6-15; Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 382-404; Douglas H. Strong, *Trees—or Timber? The Story of Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks* (Three Rivers, Calif., [1967?]), 47-48. On the Jackson Hole controversy, see Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 113-117, 155-157, 252-255, 261-269, 280-287.

<sup>22</sup> "We Are Taken to Task," *Nature Magazine*, XXVII (March 1936), 177.

horses donned their armor to tilt with each other again. In the end, the Forest Service avoided the transfer.<sup>23</sup>

In 1939, after years of jousting, the leaders of the two bureaus made a serious attempt at reconciliation. They set up a joint Forest Service–Park Service committee to try and find compromise solutions to the bitter disagreements over proposed national park extensions. “The President, Congress, and all interested groups,” a Forest Service directive announced, “are increasingly and properly impatient with the frequent ‘battles’. . . . I know all agree that the interests of both Departments [Agriculture and Interior] and the cause of natural resource conservation can be greatly furthered by mutual understanding.” It was “indispensable,” the memorandum stated, that both agencies “refrain absolutely” from promoting either public support or opposition to pending plans for park extension.<sup>24</sup> The National Park Service reciprocated. “I expect every field officer,” Cammerer ordered, “to obey loyally” the spirit of this agreement.<sup>25</sup> This was the beginning of a major rapprochement between the National Park Service and the Forest Service, although they still clashed from time to time. In the years after World War II, the two agencies battled less frequently and accommodation began to replace rivalry. The urgent need, clearly perceived by both bureaus, to provide new camping and outdoor recreation facilities for millions of Americans in the postwar era served to minimize their competitiveness.

As in the 1920s, relations between the National Park Service and the Bureau of Reclamation were often tense and suspicious. The reclamation program was rooted in utilitarian assumptions that went back to John Wesley Powell, Frederick H. Newell, and Pinchot. The Park Service considered itself the citadel of aesthetic values in the federal bureaucracy and traced its heritage to Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Steve Mather. The viewpoints and interests of the two agencies collided periodically. Shortly after

<sup>23</sup> These battles have been studied by historians and do not require detailed treatment here. Richard Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government: The Controversy over Executive Reorganization, 1936–1939* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), 100–122; see also Richard Polenberg, “Conservation and Reorganization: The Forest Service Lobby, 1937–1938,” *Agricultural History*, XXXIX (1965), 230–239.

<sup>24</sup> Memorandum to Regional Foresters, enclosed with C. M. Granger to John R. White, March 24, 1939, NA, NPS, Boundaries, Forest Service.

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum for Regional Directors and Superintendents, March 27, 1939, *ibid.*

World War I, the national parks lobby had mobilized effectively to defeat the "Falls-Bechler irrigation plot," a proposal, tacitly supported by the Bureau of Reclamation, to construct a reservoir inside Yellowstone Park to provide irrigation water for Idaho farmers. It was a bruising fight in which park supporters invoked the memory of the "Hetch Hetchy Steal" of 1913.<sup>26</sup> In the 1930s, Idaho irrigationists made a bold attempt to divert the waters of Lake Yellowstone itself for reclamation use, mounting a drive in Congress to get the project authorized.<sup>27</sup> An ad hoc conservation group called the Emergency Conservation Committee (ECC), headed by Irving Brant and the irrepressible Rosalee Edge, led the defense of Yellowstone while also issuing broadsides and lobbying in favor of the establishment of Olympic National Park.

Elwood Mead, the Commissioner of Reclamation, tried to disavow the Yellowstone project as early as 1933, arguing that his bureau had no connection with it. But he revealed his irritation with the Emergency Conservation Committee, suggesting to Rosalee Edge that "a little more tolerance and understanding of the problems of the western pioneers striving to make homes on the land would avoid some of the ill feeling which is felt locally toward parks."<sup>28</sup> "The preservation of our National Parks today," Mrs. Edge retorted, "is not forwarded by sentimental references to bygone times but by squarely facing the hard facts of the present."<sup>29</sup> The metaphor of the frontier was one that the Bureau of Reclamation often used during the New Deal to defend its beleaguered programs. The eastern press inveighed against the irrigation scheme.<sup>30</sup> By 1937, it was clear that the Reclamation Bureau opposed the proposal and was somewhat embarrassed by the persistence of the Idaho irrigation interests. The Park Service accepted reassurances and informal apologies offered by the new Commissioner of Reclamation, John C. Page.<sup>31</sup> The proposed project attracted only lim-

<sup>26</sup> Swain, *Federal Conservation Policy*, 129.

<sup>27</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1938*, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Elwood Mead to Mrs. C. N. Edge, March 17, 1933, NA, Records of the Bureau of Reclamation (hereafter abbreviated NA, BR), Protests re Construction of Reclamation Works in National Parks.

<sup>29</sup> Rosalee Edge to Mead, March 20, 1933, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *New York Times*, May 12, 1938.

<sup>31</sup> A. E. Demaray to John C. Page, June 2, 1938, Page to Kenneth A. Reid, June 6, 1938, and Page to Cammerer, Nov. 5, 1938, NA, BR, Protests re Construction of Reclamation Works in National Parks.

ited support in Congress and was dead by the end of the decade.

During the New Deal the most serious confrontation between the utilitarian goals of the Bureau of Reclamation and the preservationist values of the National Park Service took place in Rocky Mountain National Park. The Colorado–Big Thompson reclamation project was the source of the trouble. An ambitious plan, it was designed to collect water at Grand Lake on the west side of the continental divide and transport it to the arid eastern slope, where most of the farmers lived, via a tunnel under Rocky Mountain National Park. The National Park Service adamantly opposed the plan when it was originally proposed and was aided by the National Parks Association and other conservation groups which lobbied vigorously against it.<sup>32</sup> With Ickes' blessing, the Park Service refused permission for the Bureau of Reclamation to begin preliminary surveys for the tunnel under Rocky Mountain Park. The Park Service felt "justified," the director's office informed the Secretary, in attempting to block the survey "which would seem an opening wedge in the hard-won wall of protection which surrounds our park system."<sup>33</sup>

The political pressures generated by Colorado's influential congressional delegation, especially Congressman Edward T. Taylor and Senator Alva B. Adams (who usually opposed preservationist legislation), were more than the national parks lobby could resist, although strenuous efforts were made to sustain the opposition. Ickes quietly stopped opposing the project, and it was authorized by Congress in 1937.<sup>34</sup> As a result, national park supporters were intensely suspicious of the Bureau of Reclamation as the 1930s ended. They worried that the Colorado–Big Thompson decision had established a dangerous precedent and took it for granted that there would be future attempts in the name of reclamation to violate the national park system. The foundations had now been laid for the explosive battle over Dinosaur National Monument in the 1950s.

<sup>32</sup> "The National Parks Association," *Science*, LXXXVI (July 16, 1937), 48–49; Horace M. Albright to the Editor, *New York Times*, July 11, 1937; Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 434.

<sup>33</sup> A. E. Demaray to Commissioner of Reclamation, March 22, 1935, NA, BR, Protests re Construction of Reclamation Works in National Parks.

<sup>34</sup> Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 435.

In spite of internal administrative difficulties and interbureau battles, the National Park Service expanded at an unprecedented rate in the period 1933–1940. In March 1933, as the New Deal began, the bureau administered 63 individual park units, including 22 national parks, 1 national historical park, and 40 national monuments. By July 1940, it had responsibility for 161 separate areas, including 26 national parks, 82 national monuments, 4 national historical parks, 11 national military parks, 7 national battlefield areas, 5 national historic sites, 1 national recreational area, 9 national memorials, 12 national cemeteries, 3 national parkways, and the national capital parks in the District of Columbia.<sup>35</sup> When the New Deal started, the agency had 2,027 permanent employees. In 1937, at the peak of the emergency conservation work financed by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Public Works Administration, and the Works Progress Administration, the Park Service had 13,900 employees, a total that included the men necessary to maintain and repair the federal buildings in Washington.<sup>36</sup> The task of administering the public buildings had been forced on the Park Service in the reorganization of 1933, along with the new name “Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations.” Congress restored the name National Park Service within a few months, but the bureau, which prided itself on its commitment to nature and aesthetic values, could not divest itself of the distracting and unwanted custodial duties until the end of the decade. By July 1940, the National Park Service, having ridded itself of the public buildings, had 7,341 employees.<sup>37</sup> This was an increase of 5,314 employees or 262 percent in seven years. In this respect, the National Park Service offers a case study in the expansion of the federal bureaucracy during the New Deal.

The difficulty of assimilating so many new people into the ranks of the bureau compounded Cammerer’s administrative problems. “Supervision of work under the emergency programs,” he reported to Ickes in 1935, “resulted in a heavy strain on all park supervisory personnel, both in the Washington Office and the field. . . .”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1940*, p. 185.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 1933, pp. 154–155, and 1940, p. 203.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 1935, p. 179.

Those who knew Cammerer well understood this as a personal lament. Albright wrote to his old friend in 1935 urging him to slow down. "You must conserve yourself, Cam," Albright advised. "Should you lose your health, they will take your job and that will be the end of the Mather group in National Park Service activity."<sup>39</sup>

Regular appropriations for the National Park Service increased modestly during the New Deal—from \$10,820,620 in 1933 to \$13,557,815 in 1940.<sup>40</sup> Skyrocketing emergency appropriations underwrote most of the bureau's expansion. From 1933 to 1937, for example, the PWA channeled \$40,242,691 into the national parks, and appropriations for CCC camps operated by the National Park Service totaled \$82,250,467. The WPA earmarked \$24,274,090 for park work in the years 1935–1937. By 1940, the Park Service had received about \$218 million for emergency conservation projects.<sup>41</sup> Not all of this money was used directly in the national parks and monuments. Some of it was devoted to experimental programs, such as the Recreational Demonstration Areas, which were developed for the states and local areas as examples of "out-of-door recreation accessible to congested populations."<sup>42</sup> The Skyline Drive and the Blue Ridge Parkway were built with PWA money. Their construction propelled the Park Service into still another new field in the 1930s, parkway administration.

The National Park Service also took the lead in the specialized area of national recreational planning. The bureau was forced in this direction by special emergency appropriations rather than by clear choice. Because of its experience and expertise in park planning, it often acted as consultant to emerging state park and recreation systems. As late as 1940, for instance, it advised the WPA on approximately \$100 million worth of park and recreation applications submitted by the states.<sup>43</sup> After 1940, as emergency funds

<sup>39</sup> Albright to Cammerer, July 14, 1935, NA, NPS, Admin., Director Albright.

<sup>40</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1940*, p. 208.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 1937, pp. 68–69; Shankand, *Steve Mather*, 303.

<sup>42</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1937*, p. 38.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 1940, p. 171; for examples of NPS interest in recreational planning, see U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *1937 Yearbook: Park and Recreation Progress* (Washington, 1938), and U. S. Department of the Interior, Na-

began to diminish, the Park Service moved to reduce its commitments to this planning function. In the late 1930s, however, a spirited fight had taken place within its ranks over the issue of how much emphasis should be placed on recreational planning and demonstration areas. Reduced appropriations during World War II finally settled the issue.

Probably the most popular emergency conservation program in the 1930s was the CCC, which was designed to put unemployed young men to work in the national forests. This was one of Roosevelt's pet projects, and it received top priority. The leaders of the National Park Service recognized almost immediately that the CCC was a potential bonanza for the national parks. Albright put considerable effort into getting the program started in the summer of 1933. From the beginning, it accomplished useful work in the parks because each unit in the park system had prepared a master plan for developmental and protective work; these plans were ready in 1933. Albright and his associates in the Washington office, including Cammerer, had anticipated that the national parks might be used for pump-priming public works projects. In fact, Congress had previously channeled extra road construction funds to the Park Service in an early effort to stimulate the economy.<sup>44</sup>

The CCC camps sprang up in great profusion. During the summer of 1933, the Park Service supervised 70 emergency camps in the national parks and monuments, and 105 camps on state park lands. The program, Cammerer announced in the fall, had "permitted the accomplishment of work that had been needed greatly for years, but which was impossible . . . of accomplishment under the ordinary appropriations available."<sup>45</sup> The CCC boys built fire breaks and lookouts, repaired roads, constructed trails and bridges, many of which are still in use, erected museums, enlarged campgrounds, and fought insects. Supervised by the National Park Service, they built new state park systems and improved dozens of individual state

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tional Park Service, *Park and Recreation Structures, Part I, Administration and Basic Service Facilities* (Washington, 1938).

<sup>44</sup> Horace M. Albright, "Reminiscences," 312-314; *Annual Report of the Director of the National Park Service, 1932*, p. 31.

<sup>45</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1933*, p. 157.

parks. "Immeasurable good" was thus achieved, according to Cammerer's repeated statements.<sup>46</sup> The National Park Service maintained its enthusiasm for the CCC throughout the 1930s and regretted the decision by Congress to discontinue the program in 1942.<sup>47</sup> It had provided a valuable source of manpower for the parks. During the middle years of the New Deal, the Park Service had operated up to 600 CCC camps. In 1940, it still had 310 camps under its supervision.<sup>48</sup>

The historic preservation program of the National Park Service grew rapidly during the New Deal. Initiated by Albright in 1930, it was dramatically enlarged by the Historic Sites and Buildings Act of 1935 which made it national policy to preserve historic places for the enjoyment of future generations of Americans.<sup>49</sup> The Historic American Buildings Survey, mandated by the act of 1935, was financed by the WPA and directed by the Park Service. It collected information about "all important examples of the builders' art erected in the United States and its possessions before the last quarter of the nineteenth century. . . ."<sup>50</sup> This project and the studies of the enlarged History Branch of the National Park Service laid the groundwork for an upsurge of historic preservation work by the federal government in the post-World War II era. Moreover, the act of 1935 established the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments which has continued to the present time and has become an important general advisory board. In its early stages, the board, made up of distinguished scientists and long-time park enthusiasts, gave every indication that it would take a broad view of its functions. In 1937, Ickes testily informed

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 1934, p. 165; for a case study of CCC development of a state park system, see Elmo R. Richardson, "The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Origins of the New Mexico Park System," *National Resources Journal*, VI (1966), 248-267.

<sup>47</sup> Wirth was one of the leaders in the effort to make the CCC a permanent agency. John A. Salmond, *The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942* (Durham, N. Carolina, 1967), 213.

<sup>48</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1940*, p. 201.

<sup>49</sup> For the background of the historic preservation movement, see Charles B. Hosmer, Jr., *Presence of the Past: A History of the Preservation Movement in the United States before Williamsburg* (New York, 1965); for Albright's early efforts, see Swain, *Wilderness Defender, 197-200*; for details of the act, see Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 357-358.

<sup>50</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1937*, pp. 56-57.

the board that he did not appreciate its efforts to expand its mandate.<sup>51</sup>

The Park Service, though somewhat overextended, had felt obliged to respond to the urgencies of Roosevelt's domestic program. Its CCC work, its collaboration with the WPA, and its public works construction gave the bureau the earmarks of a New Deal agency. In fact, the programs of the National Park Service became an integral part of the New Deal's fight against the depression. Almost all federal conservation activities after 1933, including those in the national parks and monuments, were designed in part as pump-priming operations that would indirectly stimulate the economy.

To some observers, especially those associated with the wilderness preservation movement, the National Park Service seemed to be going off in all directions in the 1930s. Criticism of the bureau's policies reached a high point late in the decade. The "purists," who viewed the national parks as great temples for the worship of nature, had originally accused Mather and Albright of excessive roadbuilding and pandering to the tourists in the 1920s. By 1937, they were in full cry against Cammerer. They noted disapprovingly the increased construction work in the parks, the establishment of the Tourist Bureau, the large increase in tourism, the new attention to recreational policy, and they perceived a relative decline in the bureau's interest in protecting the scenic western parks. The Sierra Club rebuked Cammerer's apparent unwillingness to leave his desk in Washington and implied that he was not well acquainted with the problems of the western parks.<sup>52</sup> The National Audubon Society, led by James A. Foote, accused the Park Service of having abandoned the "ideals" on which it was founded.<sup>53</sup> As the park system expanded, critics voiced their concern about a possible decline in "national park standards." The Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the National Parks Association, and the Audubon Society joined in an effort to establish a "National Primeval Park

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<sup>51</sup> Ickes to Herman C. Bumpus, Nov. 15, 1937, NA, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, NPS.

<sup>52</sup> Francis P. Farquhar to Cammerer, April 19, 1934, NA, NPS, Admin., Director Cammerer.

<sup>53</sup> Ickes to James A. Foote, Jan. 4, 1938, NA, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, NPS.

System” that would be set apart from both the national monuments and the new historical and recreational areas.<sup>54</sup> Other disgruntled critics charged that “practical idealists”—a term of derision—headed the Park Service. The “practical idealists,” according to this argument, would “fight for ideals” only as long as it was “safe and expedient” to do so; the “practical idealists,” it was charged, were “proudest of the statistics showing the number of miles of paved road, of highway engineering masterpieces, of first class trails, and, most of all, of the figures showing the increasing horde of visitors.”<sup>55</sup>

At about the same time, objections from exactly the opposite point of view came from Richard L. Neuberger, a nationally known Oregon journalist, who accused the National Park Service of needlessly locking up natural resources and of practicing conservation for the sake of conservation. “As far as the national parks are concerned,” he wrote, “conservation has developed into an end in itself rather than a means to protect scenic phenomena. Citizens in the timbered Pacific Northwest . . . gloomily predict this fencing off of raw materials may extend to every forest vista in the region.”<sup>56</sup>

The Park Service was sensitive about the complaints of the “purists” and took steps to counter them whenever possible. Secretary Ickes signed many letters, drafted by the National Park Service, in answer to these charges.<sup>57</sup> The leaders of the bureau were also aware of the inconsistency and paradoxical character of their basic policies which called for the parks to be preserved in “absolutely unimpaired form” and yet be made available for the “use, observation, health and pleasure of the people.”<sup>58</sup> “The conflict between preservation and wise use is always present,” Cammerer admitted in his annual report of 1938, “and to solve the problem . . . requires an unusual degree of sound judgment, administrative ability, and technical skill.”<sup>59</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Ickes to William E. Colby, Feb. 8, 1937, *ibid.*; James A. Foote to Editor, *New York Times*, Oct. 26, 1938; see also William P. Wharton to FDR, Feb. 17, 1937, in Nixon, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Conservation*, Vol. II, 1937–1945 (Hyde Park, 1957), 23.

<sup>55</sup> “Practical Idealism and Our Parks,” *Nature Magazine*, XXXII (Feb. 1939), 97.

<sup>56</sup> Richard L. Neuberger, “How Much Conservation?” *Saturday Evening Post*, CCXII (June 15, 1940), 12.

<sup>57</sup> These letters appear in NA, Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Interior, NPS.

<sup>58</sup> Franklin K. Lane to Stephen T. Mather, May 13, 1918, NA, NPS, Gen., Misc.

<sup>59</sup> *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1938*, p. 37.

As the decade of the 1930s came to an end, the Park Service found itself on the defensive. It made an attempt to placate some of the "purists" by doing away with the bear shows in Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Sequoia parks, where the animals had been encouraged to feast in the garbage pits every evening for the enjoyment of the tourists. Wildlife policies changed considerably in the national parks in the 1930s as scientific research demonstrated the need for balance between predators and non-predators and directed, among other things, that black bears and grizzlies be removed from the garbage dumps.<sup>60</sup>

By 1940, the National Park Service had begun reassessing its new programs. Emergency funds, which had previously arrived in a seemingly endless stream, dwindled with the advent of war in Europe. This trend accelerated as the national economy, stimulated by war orders from abroad, started coming back to life. After a period of frantic expansion, the leaders of the Park Service showed signs of being ready to retrench and get back to their traditional focus on the national parks.

Meanwhile, Ickes was more and more disgruntled over Cammerer's administrative indecisiveness and with the boosterism that often seemed to pervade the National Park Service. "I am thoroughly persuaded," he noted in his diary in September 1939, "that I cannot go along much longer with Cammerer."<sup>61</sup> The Secretary began casting about for a man from outside the federal establishment to put into the directorship. His first choice was Robert Moses, the hard-driving City Park Commissioner of New York and the dominant member of the Triborough Bridge Authority. Roosevelt vetoed this suggestion with the comment that Moses "would run over anybody or any law" in his zeal to get his job done.<sup>62</sup> Ickes maintained stubbornly that the National Park Service needed "new blood and a strong man." He argued that he was willing to run the risk of appointing Moses.<sup>63</sup> This would have been riskier than Ickes

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<sup>60</sup> New guidelines for wildlife policy in the national parks appeared in George M. Wright, Joseph S. Dixon, and Ben H. Thompson, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States*, Fauna Series No. 1, National Park Service (Washington, 1933), 83–84, 147–148; see also V. E. Shelford, "Conservation Versus Preservation," *Science*, LXXVII (June 2, 1933), 535; and *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior, 1938*, p. 14.

<sup>61</sup> Ickes, *Secret Diary*, III, 9.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 103.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 72.

apparently realized, for Moses held developmental attitudes that would have offended the critics of the National Park Service. Ickes also thought briefly about Gerard Swope, the recently resigned president of General Electric, or Kenneth Chorley, one of Rockefeller's trusted advisers. He considered and rejected the idea of promoting Arthur E. Demaray from within the ranks of the Park Service. After long deliberation he selected Newton B. Drury, a leading California conservationist and executive secretary of the Save-the-Redwoods League, to whom he had offered the position in 1933.<sup>64</sup>

Ickes had moved consistently toward the preservationist position during the 1930s. He often groused about overcrowding in the parks and cautioned the members of the Park Service against becoming "congenial butlers" in their eagerness to make the tourists comfortable.<sup>65</sup> He railed against automobiles. "If I had my way about national parks," he blurted in 1933, "I would create one without a road in it. I would have it impenetrable forever to automobiles, a place where man would not try to improve upon God."<sup>66</sup> In 1938, he explained to a wilderness enthusiast: "Ever since I came to Washington I have been trying to impress the National Park Service with the fact that not only do we not want any more roads but that we have too many as it is. The fewer the better, so far as I am concerned. . . ."<sup>67</sup> Ickes rebelled at the prospect of developing "Coney Islands," as he called them, in the parks and stated that "the parks are for those who will appreciate them and not merely for the hordes of tourists who dash through them at break neck speed. . . ."<sup>68</sup> He favored congressional action to set aside wilderness areas in the existing national parks, and in his efforts to establish new national parks—especially Olympic, Kings Canyon, the Everglades, and Isle Royale—he concentrated on primitive areas, pledging that they would remain primitive and practically roadless.<sup>69</sup> Drury's selection came as no surprise to those who were well in-

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 72, 142, 213.

<sup>65</sup> "Excerpts from Secretary Ickes' talk to the Superintendents' Conference," Nov. 20, 1934, NA, NPS, Policy, Admin. and Personnel; see also Ickes to Jens Jensen, March 18, 1938, in the same file.

<sup>66</sup> *New York Times*, May 14, 1933.

<sup>67</sup> Ickes to Jens Jensen, March 18, 1938, NA, NPS, Policy, Admin. and Personnel.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> "National Parks," *Science*, LXXXIX (Feb. 24, 1939), 171.

formed about Ickes' full blown conservation philosophy.

Cammerer suffered a heart attack in the summer of 1939 and though he returned to work in the autumn it was clear that he could not carry on much longer as director. Ickes decided to ease him out. In June 1940 a press release from the Secretary's office announced that for reasons of health Cammerer had asked to be relieved of the "extremely heavy executive burdens" he had been carrying and that Drury would replace him as director.<sup>70</sup> In July 1940 Cammerer was named head of the regional office of the National Park Service in Richmond, Virginia. Less than a year later, he was dead.<sup>71</sup>

Cammerer's departure from the Washington office marked a turning point in the history of the National Park Service. He was the last of the "Mather men" who for twenty-five years had perpetuated the administrative style and values of the founder of the Park Service. A new administrative style—generally cautious and less inclined toward promotional schemes—would emerge under Drury's leadership. More important, Drury's organizational affiliations and conservation philosophy marked him as a wilderness preservationist and something of a "purist" about the national parks. He was an honorary life member of the Sierra Club and one of the architects of the California state park system. He had joined in the criticism of the National Park Service in 1937, expressing his concern about the "possible dilution of the standards of the National Parks."<sup>72</sup> He believed that the scenic western parks had been neglected in the rush of expansion since 1933. He refused to view his job as an opportunity to aggrandize his position or expand his bureau. A political conservative, the style of retrenchment was congenial to him.<sup>73</sup> To Ickes, Drury held out the hope of new vigor in the Park Service bureaucracy and he symbolized the importance of wilderness preservation. In appointing Drury, Ickes intended to

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<sup>70</sup> Press Release, Department of the Interior, June 19, 1940, NA, NPS, Admin., Director Cammerer.

<sup>71</sup> Press Release, Department of the Interior, July 10, 1940, and telegram, Newton B. Drury to Regional Director, San Francisco, April 30, 1941, *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Drury to Cammerer, April 23, 1937, *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Interview with Jackson Price, Aug. 25, 1964; interview with Newton B. Drury, Sept. 21, 1965; Amelia Roberts Fry, "Comments on Conservation, 1900 to 1960" (Interviews with Horace M. Albright and Newton B. Drury, March 21 and 23, 1961, Oral History Office, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley).

disarm the critics in the Wilderness Society, the Sierra Club, the National Parks Association, and other conservation groups. In this he largely succeeded.

As the decade of the 1930s ended, the National Park Service was poised to move away from the "Mather tradition," which had reached its culmination under Cammerer. The bureau had expanded rapidly during the New Deal, taking on large new functions in recreational planning and development, historic preservation, and public works. It had worked hard to publicize the parks and increase tourism. It had assumed jurisdiction over vast new scenic and historic preserves. When its interests were threatened, it had clashed with the Forest Service and the Bureau of Reclamation. It had doubled its staff and increased the range of its competence. Drawing on emergency appropriations, it had become a full fledged New Deal agency, participating enthusiastically in federal programs to provide jobs for the unemployed and to stimulate national economic recovery. These activities constituted a continuation and logical extension of the values and policies of Mather and Albright. In spite of strained relations with Secretary Ickes and considerable criticism from the wilderness preservationists, the National Park Service had increased its institutional strength and broadened its conservation program, capitalizing on the unique opportunities afforded by the crisis of the 1930s. Hard times for the Park Service would come in the 1940s, after the depression had ended.