

# EDITOR'S NOTE

by James G. Lewis

In 2016, it was hard to escape the news that the National Park Service was celebrating its centennial. It seemed to be the only positive news during a divisive presidential election year, and visiting a national park offered respite from the increasingly nasty campaign. I took a month-long cross-country driving trip in the weeks surrounding Election Day and escaped the campaign in part by taking walks or bike rides in the woods whenever I could. Although at the start of the year I was dismissive of the Japanese practice of “forest bathing,” by December I had become a true believer in *shinrin-yoku*. Time spent in the woods certainly reduced my stress levels in November and after.

Enticement to do so was everywhere. Advertisements and stories touting the national parks and the centennial blanketed the country. Print ads and roadside billboards (I wonder, what would Lady Bird Johnson think of the latter?) presented alluring images—of not just iconic landscapes like Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the Grand Canyon but also battlefields and monuments to historic figures and events—that reminded (or perhaps informed) the public of what can be found on Park Service lands. The marketing firm Grey, New York, which developed the “Find Your Park” campaign, deserves an award. How ingenious, melding one of Yosemite’s rock formations with the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, as if the statue had been carved from it à la Mount Rushmore. This was just one of many eye-catching ads the firm developed. The campaign worked on me: I visited two national seashores, three presidents’ homes, and several national parks and national monuments on my literal “History on the Road” trip. In addition, seemingly every publication with the most tangential connections to national parks took advantage of the heightened interest. Even the National Baseball Hall of Fame’s membership magazine devoted an issue to baseball’s connections to national parks.

Given all that interest and excitement surrounding the centennial, who were we at the Forest History Society not to jump on the bandwagon? The Society’s connection to the National Park Service and its history is a natural one. For starters, most of the early national parks—which include several Civil War battlefields—protected forested landscapes, though that may not be explicitly why they were created. I won’t list the many other tie-ins, but you can expect more articles about the national park system and the Park Service in upcoming issues.

This special issue is a result of our growing relationship with the Park Service, a relationship that has blossomed in part because of the diligence of Don Stevens, chief of the Park Service’s History and National Register Program for the Midwest Region. To prepare

this issue, Don and I had several conversations about what topics and authors to consider. Thinking broadly about the park system, we agreed to include topics not explicitly about forests. Including young scholars was a conscious choice on my part, made easy because I found their topics fascinating. It’s merely coincidental that the two articles not about forests per se are by them. And that’s why you’ll find Kevin Brown’s work on a tiny fish in the middle of the Nevada desert (“The ‘National Playground Service’ and the Devils Hole Pupfish”) and Jackie M. M. Gonzales’s piece about the establishment of national seashores (“The National Park Service Goes to the Beach”). Fairly soon you’ll be able to read these scholars’ book-length treatments of their topics.

Of the other contributors, three are new to these pages and three ought to be familiar names. Did you know there was a riot in Yosemite National Park in 1970? I didn’t, not until I read Michael Childers’s “Stoneman Meadow and Law Enforcement in Yosemite National Park.” Ohio’s Cuyahoga Valley saw no riots in the mid-1800s, but according to William Hunter, in “Forests and Fields: Reconsidering the Rural Landscape in Cuyahoga Valley National Park,” the criminal activity of one farmer’s brother and father led him to initiate sustainable agricultural practices, which included how he managed his woodlot. Perhaps not as exciting as a story that begins with counterfeiting and corruption, but nonetheless of great relevance to our future, is how the media write about climate change in the United States and Peru, a topic Mark Carey examines in “The Trouble with Climate Change and National Parks.”

I’m sure you’ll recognize the names of the three authors who have graced our pages before. Rolf Diamant discusses how the Park Service perhaps fumbled away an opportunity to set the historical record straight during the centennial celebration in “Public Lands and the Fault Lines of a Democracy: Reflections on a Second Century for National Parks.” Stephen J. Pyne revisits a turning point in the history of the Park Service in “Vignettes of Primitive America: The Leopold Report and Wildland Fire.” America’s park system is always expanding and not exclusively carved from existing federal land, as Char Miller reminds us in “The Maine Chance: Conservation Management and the Katahdin Woods and Waters National Monument.” My thanks to all three for their wise counsel on this issue.

As always, many thanks to Sally Atwater for her outstanding editorial work and Kathy Hart of Zubigraphics for her artwork and vision. I can always count on them to help make my job enjoyable and to make the magazine look great. □

