

Leaving a Cultural and Environmental Hoof Print: The Changing Place of the  
Horse in America and the Western National Parks during the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Centuries

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the place, meaning, and changing role of the horse in American history – both physically, including its impacts on the natural environment and its place in the history of transportation, and culturally in modern American memory. As the horse has declined in importance as a beast of burden, it has become increasingly relevant and important culturally, becoming a sort of American artifact central to the notions of American authenticity and the Western experience. The use of the horse as a leisure activity has caused damage to the environment that is specific to the biological makeup of the horse. Although this phenomenon can be examined through various lenses, emphasis here will be placed on the changing place of the horse in western national parks, where over the course of the past century it has undergone transformation from basic transport engine to a starring role in the modern mythology of an authentic western experience.

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## Introduction

The history of American culture and the history of the American environment are very different fields, but the horse can be analyzed for its impacts on both. “The United States has, by far, the most horses in the world — approximately 9.5 million.”<sup>1</sup> With a population that vast, there is bound to be an endless impact across the cultural and environmental spectrums. The horse has aided American society and allowed for continued advancements in transportation, agriculture, and leisure activities. Beyond its use as a means of production, it also stands nowadays as an important symbol of the American Old West and represents a significant aspect of American heritage. The Romantic approach to environmental history and transcendentalism allowed for the idea of the horse as a symbol to enhance American national identity and solidify the role of western expansion on the frontier. The equine has changed the way people experienced everyday life, but it has also left a lasting hoof print on the environmental landscape of America, too. This environmental impact can be seen clearly through the American national parks; and the presence of the horse can be easily witnessed in tandem with the progression of the national parks themselves. Yosemite National Park can be used as a clear lens through which to analyze the influence of the animal on American culture and the formation of the popular leisure activity of trail-riding as well as its overall environmental impact. In looking at the horse specifically, the environmental hoof print that is left behind is

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<sup>1</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horse Facts,” Equine Heritage Institute, 2013, <http://www.equineheritageinstitute.org/learning-center/horse-facts/>.

one that is becoming increasingly important to identify due to its detrimental impact.

This thesis examines the place, meaning, and changing role of the horse in American history – both physically, including its impacts on the natural environment and its place in the history of transportation, and culturally in modern American memory. In general, as the horse has declined in importance as a beast of burden, it has become increasingly relevant and important culturally, becoming in a sense a sort of American artifact central in particular to notions of American authenticity and the Western experience. Although this phenomenon can be examined through various lenses, in this thesis emphasis will be placed on the changing role of the horse in western national parks, where over the course of the past century or so it has undergone the full transformation from basic transport engine to a starring role in the modern mythology of an authentic western experience.

Its environmental impact has evolved along with this. The environmental impact of the horse, in some sense, peaked in the early twentieth century through their use as transportation, their care, and their waste which filled every city. The horse's progression in the evolution of transportation is significant. It is important to recognize how the animal has been used in earlier times as a necessary means of transportation. The biological makeup of the equine will also be an important focus point for its connections with the environmental damage done by the animal.

The formation of leisure activities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the idea of the horse through popular culture will also figure in this thesis. As demand for the horse as the main source of transportation diminished, its use in leisure activities developed, allowing for events such as trail riding to become popular in the twentieth century. The leadership in the National Park System, NPS, is crucial in understanding the main goal of the parks whether it be the protection of the environment, the expansion of consumer interests, or as a venue for the production and consumption of American national identity. An analysis of prominent NPS leaders and the changing mission statement of the parks helps explain the progression of impact that the horse has had on American culture as well as the environment within the national parks.

When it comes specifically to the national parks the debate is never-ending among those that believe their sole purpose is for the enjoyment of the public, those that believe they were created strictly for the preservation of the environment, and those that believe they were created to help define or reflect American national identity. Within the realm of this tourist industry leisure activities have been introduced such as horseback riding through the man-made trails in these parks. After the banning of the automobile from the parks, the environmental concern over detrimental transportation in these areas was thought to have been put to rest.<sup>2</sup>

The horse has had a significant effect on American culture, and this effect can still be seen today through the changing use of the animal in American

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<sup>2</sup>Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979).

memory and as a proud symbol of American heritage. The horse has also affected the American environment through its changing use as a means of necessary transportation, to a commonly accepted leisure activity. A thorough analysis of NPS leadership from 1916 until current day is necessary to understand how the parks' mission statements have changed throughout history leading to the shifting impact of the equine within its boundaries. The overall impact that the horse has had and will continue to have, on the designated trails within the national parks will be outlined. These matters are highlighted through three different lenses including their historical progression in the areas of transportation, formation of leisure activities, and influence of the horse through popular culture.

#### *Evaluation of Secondary Literature/Historiography*

The historiography of the horse itself has changed in its purpose and direction throughout the years. The animal was initially studied through its practical roles and contributions to American history, often through the lenses of physical mobility, agriculture, and geography. In recent decades historians have also emphasized its cultural associations, including its connection to American identity.

An early example of scholarship written on the horse in the 1890s explained the adaptation of the animal to the North American environment. Also explained was how the distinct landscape altered the disposition and biological makeup of the equine introduced to America. Theodore Ayrault Dodge, an American officer and military historian, was an early pioneer of this subject since



his work looked beyond the introduction of the horse to the American landscape, and analyzed its physical adaptations to the differing environments.<sup>3</sup> This article set the stage for future environmental and biological studies centered around the introduction of the horse to America in the wake of European contact. In 1909, J.C. Ewart, a zoologist, covered the ancestral patterns of different types of horses in America and Europe. Ewart also looked at the different environments that the equine lived in and followed its biological adjustments to each individual environment based on the adaptations needed to survive. Ewart explained the formation of the domesticated horse in depth, but its interaction with any sort of culture was not analyzed.<sup>4</sup>

The connection between the horse and Native American societies has long been prevalent in historiography. One example of this was Clark Wissler, an established American anthropologist. His article appeared in 1914 and traced the introduction of the horse from Europeans to its place among the Native Americans of the Plains. Wissler provided a useful outline of the scholarship on the subject that was available in the time period that the article was written, highlighting the gaps in information due to lack of sources.<sup>5</sup>

In 1927, James W. Gidley, an American paleontologist and museum curator, provided an article describing the different uses of the horse throughout American history. This work was done at a crucial turning point in the

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<sup>3</sup> Theodore Ayrault Dodge, "The Horse in America," *The North American Review* 155, no. 433 (1892): 667-83, <http://eps.cc.ysu.edu:2093/stable/25102491>.

<sup>4</sup> J. C. Ewart, "The Possible Ancestors of the Horses Living under Domestication," *Science* 30, no. 763 (1909): 219-23, <http://eps.cc.ysu.edu:2093/stable/1635194>.

<sup>5</sup> Clark Wissler, "The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture," *American Anthropologist* 16, no. 1 (1914): 1-25, <http://eps.cc.ysu.edu:2093/stable/659496>.

scholarship since the reliance on the animal was significantly diminished by the introduction of the automobile. Gidley analyzed this transformation in the purpose of the horse to society as it was taking place around him.<sup>6</sup> Gidley looked beyond the physical use of the equine in society to analyze how it would remain a part of American society after the automobile took its place. The beginning of the symbolism associated with the horse was seen in Gidley's work, creating a new field of research.

During the 1930s and 1940s, the scholarship of the horse was primarily based on the arrival of the animal in North America and continued to describe the connections of the horse to Native American societies. John R. Swanton, a specialist in American anthropology, discussed the process of the equine coming to North America through the interaction between Europeans and Native Americans. Swanton did not go into detail about the use of the horse and his focus was strictly on its introduction to North America.<sup>7</sup> In 1946, H.M. Painter used an oral history from his father discussing the role of the horse within the Native American society as a means of transportation for hunters.<sup>8</sup>

In the 1950s scholarship shifted towards the environmental consequences associated with wild horses, as can be seen, for example, in an article by Tom L. McKnight from 1959. Working as the assistant professor of geography at the University of California, McKnight focused his study of the animal on the issues

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<sup>6</sup> James W. Gidley, "American Wild Horses," *The Scientific Monthly* 25, no. 3 (1927): 265-66, <http://eps.cc.yzu.edu:2093/stable/7867>.

<sup>7</sup> John R. Swanton, "The Survival of Horses Brought to North America by De Soto," *American Anthropologist*, New Series, 41, no. 1 (1939): 170-71, <http://eps.cc.yzu.edu:2093/stable/661749>.

<sup>8</sup> H. M. Painter, "The Coming of the Horse," *The Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (1946): 155-57, <http://eps.cc.yzu.edu:2093/stable/40486749>.

of the wild horse and its implications on land use in America. McKnight covered the prior scholarship on the equine and broke it down into three different categories including the introduction of it to America, the placement of wild mustangs on the open range, and the interactions of the horse and Native Americans forming a “horse culture.”<sup>9</sup>

Using the horse beyond a means of production as a simple form of leisure activity can be seen through the work by Robert West Howard, a popular journalist. This book, published in 1965, covered the movement in using the horse for leisurely riding activity, which in turn caused an entire market of horse products, feed, and accessories to be created. Howard called this movement the “horse explosion” and covered both economic and social issues.<sup>10</sup> The 1960s proved to be an important turning point in the historiography of the equine due to its emphasis on the use of the animal outside of manual labor, or its association with Native American cultures and its introduction to America by Europeans. Howard took it a step further looking at the formation of activity that was created around the horse after its use as a means of production was replaced by modern technology. The idea of the horse as a means of leisure activity became a trend that provided a new direction in relevant scholarship.

Increases in public environmental awareness helped shape scholarship in the 1970s, including a greater emphasis on conservation. For example, Richard H. Gilluly, an environmentalist, focused on the iconic breed of Mustangs. As

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<sup>9</sup> Tom L. McKnight, “The Feral Horse in Anglo-America,” *Geographical Review* 49, no. 4 (1959): 506.

<sup>10</sup> Robert West Howard, *The Horse in America* (Chicago: Follett Publishing Company, 1965) 1-298.

well as deserving protection, these, he argued, also represented the American West and a way of life that had been long forgotten, but still held a prominent place in American minds. According to Gilluly, Mustangs represented, "...values such as freedom and the 'preservation of the American heritage.'"<sup>11</sup> Gilluly expanded the idea that the horse was significant for reasons other than its basic use or as means of production. Gilluly saw the equine as an embodiment of the American West.

This trend in scholarship followed through during the 1980s. The scholarship on the horse encompassed environmental concerns of the wild horse and burro on American soil. Michael L. Wolfe, wildlife specialist, described the issue of properly understanding and studying free roaming horses within the United States. Wolfe explained why the topic of the wild horse should be considered the most important environmental issue at the time the article was written. In this process, Wolfe described an in-depth history of the equine and its uses in agriculture, warfare, and everyday life.<sup>12</sup>

Randy J. Sparks, professor of history at Tulane University, explained the importance of the horse in American sports. Sparks said that, "...only recently have historians come to appreciate how sporting events and other forms of ritualized behavior can serve as a window into past societies and social relationships."<sup>13</sup> Sparks' article, published in 1992, served as a prime example of

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<sup>11</sup> Richard H. Gilluly, "The Mustang Controversy," *Science News* 99, no. 13 (1971): 219, <http://eps.cc.yzu.edu:2093/stable/3956041>.

<sup>12</sup> Michael L. Wolfe, "The Wild Horse and Burro Issue, 1982," *Environmental Review: ER* 7, no. 2 (1983): 179-80.

<sup>13</sup> Randy J. Sparks, "Gentleman's Sport: Horse Racing in Antebellum Charleston," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine* 93, no. 1 (1992): 15, <http://eps.cc.yzu.edu:2093/stable/27568264>.

how the importance of sports can be analyzed through the horse in American society. Sparks also explained the symbolism that the animal represented within American culture. “Horses had symbolic significance; an expensive thoroughbred, the Mercedes-Benz of the eighteenth century, was an emblem of wealth and status and a proud extension of his owner. To be mounted on such an animal set a gentleman apart from all but his social equals.”<sup>14</sup> Sparks expanded on the idea that the horse provided a new way to spend money on one’s leisure activity, while also elevating a person’s social status.

Starting in the twenty-first century, scholars have also begun to note cultural interactions between animals and humans. Sandra Swart, an environmental historian, discussed this change in her article, published in 2003, explaining, “The ‘animal turn’ explores the spaces which animals occupy in human society and the manner in which animal and human lives intersect, showing how diverse human factions construct a range of identities for themselves (and for others) in terms of animals.”<sup>15</sup> Swart analyzed the horse, including its impact on political, economic, and social factors. Similarly, in 2008, Dan Flores, an environmental historian of the American West, contributed an article explaining the economic impact of the equine on a more personal level to people in America who would capture and trade the animal as a source of income. Flores covered the horse trade of the West which had been previously ignored by

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>15</sup> Sandra Swart, “Riding High – Horses, Power and Settler Society, C.1654-1840,” *Kronos*, no. 29 (2003): 47-48, <http://eps.cc.yosu.edu:2093/stable/41056494>.

historians. Flores helped to fill in the gaps of the horse's impact on the market economy as well as its implications for culture, economics, and politics.<sup>16</sup>

Recent historiography also covers the animal's use in the field of medicine and science, and its influence on architecture. Anne Torn, Pirkko Siikamäki, and Anne Tolvanen, forest research specialists and ecologists, explained the impact of the horse on the environment leading to changes in plant species and eventual medical effects through the spread of its manure to areas where the certain species had never existed. In their article, published in 2010, the authors looked at a variety of horses used in trail riding in protected wildlife areas. The impact of the equine on the soil was also clearly identified in the article explaining the environmental impact of the animal in a way that had not been previously studied.<sup>17</sup> Chere Jiusto and Christine W. Brown, architectural historians, contributed an article covering the influence of the horse on different architectural barns throughout history. The authors explained, "These historic barns are an emblem of rural communities and family enterprise and an essential part of the cultural landscape."<sup>18</sup> The article, published in 2011, provided insight into both state and local histories by looking at population movements, the development of different technologies, and also the patterns left behind by different ethnic groups. "While workhorses, plows, and wagons have given way to new technologies,

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<sup>16</sup> Dan Flores, "Bringing Home All the Pretty Horses: The Horse Trade and the Early American West, 1775-1825," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 58, no. 2 (2008): 3-8, <http://eps.cc.yosu.edu:2093/stable/25485711>.

<sup>17</sup> Anne Törn, Pirkko Siikamäki, and Anne Tolvanen, "Can Horse Riding Induce the Introduction and Establishment of Alien Plant Species through Endozoochory and Gap Creation?," *Plant Ecology* 208, no. 2 (2010): 235, <http://eps.cc.yosu.edu:2093/stable/40607004>.

<sup>18</sup> Chere Jiusto, Christine W. Brown, and Tom Ferris, "Montana's Barns: A Vanishing History," *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 61, no. 3 (2011): 38, <http://eps.cc.yosu.edu:2093/stable/23054758>.

barns are sturdy and resilient.”<sup>19</sup> The horse made way for a new form of scholarship covering the changes in its associated architecture branching out drastically from the previous scholarship written on the subject.

The present work studies the changing role of the horse by looking at its connections with western national parks in America, specifically Yosemite National Park. The parks show both the changing environmental impact of the equine as well as its prominent influence on American culture. For these reasons, it is pertinent to look at the changing historiographic trends of the national parks as well. In tandem with the historians’ increasing interest in the environment, serious scholarship of the national parks increased from the 1970s on, picking up particularly in the 1990s. Scholars have long debated the true purpose and initial creation of the state and national parks; hence the battle between “façade management,” environmental preservation, and national identity motives, but the influence of the horse within the parks has yet to be fully analyzed.

The scholarship on state and national parks primarily began in the 1970s with Freeman Tilden and Alfred Runte who held opposing views from one another. Tilden, respected author on the NPS, argued that the national parks primary importance was as places for the public to enjoy natural beauty and to engage in leisure activities.<sup>20</sup> Runte, an environmental historian, provided an opposing view. Emphasizing the importance of preserving wild spaces, he argued

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting our Heritage* (3d ed. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

that public recreational use frequently caused environmental damage which in turn negatively affected human society.<sup>21</sup>

Important writers on the NPS during the 1980s include Ann and Malcolm MacEwen, and George Hartzog Jr. The MacEwens, specialists in conservation studies, claimed that the main problem was the fact that policy makers looked only at the short term as opposed to the lasting effects that their decisions had on the environment.<sup>22</sup> Hartzog Jr., NPS director, provided a memoir of his experiences to give an inside look into the policy making and daily life of the organization.<sup>23</sup>

The serious influx of scholarship on national parks in terms of volume came during the 1990s. Scholars such as William Lowry and Bob R. O'Brien represented the more unified front with a more serious emphasis on environmental preservation. Lowry, author of multiple books on the conservation of public areas, continued the emphasis on environmental concerns showing the threats to the national parks, such as pollution, tourism, crime, and erosion.<sup>24</sup> O'Brien, a professional geographer, showed the struggle the NPS went through to balance the increasing number of visitors with conservation of the environment. O'Brien used his own experiences in the parks as well as case studies from six

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<sup>21</sup> Runte, *National Parks*.

<sup>22</sup> Ann MacEwen and Malcolm MacEwen., *National Parks, Conservation or Cosmetics?* (London; Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1982).

<sup>23</sup> George B. Hartzog Jr., *Battling for the National Parks* (New York: Moyer Bell, 1988).

<sup>24</sup> William R. Lowry, *The Capacity for Wonder: Preserving National Parks* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994).



different parks detailing the struggle and impact on park officials and the environment.<sup>25</sup>

Another historiographical strand worth considering in connection to the national parks involves the environmental impact of the horse. Historian Eric Beever emphasized the impact of the horse on the western environment. This article provided an important point of reference for this study. The article described the importance of researching the horse separately from all other free-roaming animals because of its difference in genetic makeup as well as its impact on the environment.<sup>26</sup> William Stolzenburg, a wildlife journalist, proved that the impact on the environment was not due to climate changes, but instead it was the elk, wolves, and wild horses that were damaging the foliage.<sup>27</sup> Both of these authors used the lens of animals to show the extent of environmental impact.

Representing the current historiography, Eric Chaline, a specialist in the fields of travel and health studies, showed the impact of the most prominent animals on human society. The biological approach to animals was combined with the social approach showing the depths of their impact.<sup>28</sup> George Black, executive editor on *OnEarth Magazine*, showed a different approach away from the focus on animals. Black went beyond the beautiful environment to show the truth behind the creation of the first national park, Yellowstone. This raw history

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<sup>25</sup> Bob R. O'Brien, *Our National Parks and the Search for Sustainability* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1999).

<sup>26</sup> Erik Beever, "Management Implications of the Ecology of Free-Roaming Horses in Semi-Arid Ecosystems of the Western United States," *Wildlife Society Bulletin (1973-2006)*, vol. 31, no. 3 (Autumn, 2003): 887-95, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3784615>.

<sup>27</sup> William Stolzenburg, *Where the Wild Things Were: Life, Death, and Ecological Wreckage in a Land of Vanishing Predators* (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2008).

<sup>28</sup> Eric Chaline, *Fifty Animals that Changed the Course of History* (Buffalo: Firefly Books Ltd, 2011).

removed the innocent connotation that seemed to coincide with the idea of national parks.<sup>29</sup>

Based on this historiographical tradition of both the horse and the national parks themselves, this thesis will argue that similar to automobiles, the horse has had an important impact on national parks that has transitioned from a form of transportation to a common leisure activity. In the formation of a leisure activity, the equine has also cemented a place within American memory and as a symbol of the Old West. The scholarship is in a perfect position to open up to these realities and understand the detrimental nature of the leisure activity that has become so accepted in national park society and American culture. By analyzing the transition of transportation, introduction of leisure activities, and occurrence of the horse in popular culture, the historical progression can be fully understood.

### *Methodology and Sources*

Using the lenses of both cultural and environmental history, I will incorporate case studies to show the actual impact of the horse on the national level in the realm of American society and implications for the environment. A thematic approach will be necessary with each theme being explained chronologically within each different section. The history of the horse as it has been written by scholars is important to show the significance of the animal to society. The memoirs of the major figures involved with the NPS will help to show a primary perspective of the parks and how ideals changed under different directors

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<sup>29</sup> George Black, *Empire of Shadows: The Epic Story of Yellowstone* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2012).

affecting the horse. The majority of my research comes from reviewing the literature already existing on the subject of transportation, leisure activities, the horse in popular culture, American environmental implications, and national parks. The up-and-coming area of animal studies would also fit within my methodology.<sup>30</sup> This field has yet to be fully established as a separate entity from environmental history, but my work goes beyond the environmental analysis to show the biological makeup of the horse itself as well as its behavioral tendencies and overreaching connections to the American culture. This topic also fits within the lens of cultural history to explain why people felt the need to bring a leisure activity such as trail riding, or visiting national parks in general into the realm of everyday life. American cultural identity was partly formed through the influence of the equine within society and this formation needs to be analyzed.

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<sup>30</sup> Amy Nelson, and Jane Costlow, eds., *Other Animals. Beyond the Human in Russian Culture and History* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010).

## **Chapter One: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century Horse Use in General Life and Biological Makeup**

The horse has been important in American history changing the way people went about their daily lives and also becoming a lasting symbol of American heritage. The Equine Heritage Institute said, “Most people think of history and civilization as being made and created by men, but often, history and the development of human societies and civilizations are drastically altered by the introduction of an influential catalyst. Some of those influential catalysts from our past are fire, the wheel, metal, agriculture, religion, and written language but one is missing in the typical history books and it comes in the form of an animal.”<sup>1</sup>

The history of human interaction with the horse can be broken down into eight periods based on the differing use of the animal in relation to society. Gloria Austin, the President of the Equine Heritage Institute, labeled these unique time periods. Austin made the convincing point that, “We have had 6,000 years of history with the horse and only 100 with the automobile.”<sup>2</sup> The equine has been a form of food, a way to enhance work, a method to boost social status, a tool for herding, a use in transportation, a use for the military, a tool for agriculture, and a form of leisure activity.<sup>3</sup> Putting it plainly, the horse has been an active contributor in forming societies across the globe and therefore the history of it is important in order to understand human history itself.

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<sup>1</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Shaping Civilizations: The Role of the Horse in Human Societies,” Equine Heritage Institute, 2013, <http://www.equineheritageinstitute.org/shaping-civilizations-the-role-of-the-horse-in-human-societies/>.

<sup>2</sup> Gloria Austin, “Shaping Civilizations: The Role of the Horse in Human Societies,” Equine Heritage Institute, 2013, <http://www.equineheritageinstitute.org/shaping-civilizations-the-role-of-the-horse-in-human-societies/>.

<sup>3</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Shaping Civilizations.”

During the earliest era of the horse, the “Era of Consumption” from 50,000 B.C.E. to present day, the animal was used for its nutritional values. People killed and consumed the horse because it had, “...50% more protein and 30% more iron than the leanest beef...” allowing the people who ate it to extract substantial nutrients.<sup>4</sup> During the second era of the horse, the “Era of Utilization and Status” from 4000 B.C.E. to 1900 C.E., the equine was used for its sheer power. “Man was walking at about a rate of 4 miles per hour. The horse walks at that speed but trots long distances at twice that rate (8 miles per hour) and gallops at up to 35 miles per hour for shorter distances. Properly, conditioned the horse can cover as much as 100 miles in a day.”<sup>5</sup> The equine allowed for an increase in mobility for any person able to ride the animal. The ownership of a horse also brought prestige to its master, possibly elevating his or her social status. The equine was a source of social mobility and displayed power and wealth.

The “Era of Herding” from 3500 B.C.E. to the present day saw the use of the domesticated horse as a way to assist humans. The fact that the equine was a herd animal allowed humans to assert dominance over the animal, forming a working relationship. The biological makeup of the horse as well as its tolerance and capable personality made it the perfect animal to aid people. During this era, the “Secondary Product Revolution” took place, meaning that the basic abilities the horse had to offer mankind through its muscular power allowed it to be used for purposes other than food consumption.<sup>6</sup> This era also proved that the animal was useful in hunting. According to David W. Anthony and Dorcas R. Brown,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

the ability for a person to ride a horse enabled them to cover around fifty miles in one day which doubled the amount of land able to be covered by someone walking.<sup>7</sup> “Nathaniel Wyeth, a fur trader in the northern American Plains, observed in 1851: ‘Men on foot cannot live, even in the best game countries, in the same camp with those who have horses. The latter reach the game, secure what they want and drive it beyond the reach of the former.’”<sup>8</sup> Riding horses made it easier for people to herd animals which in turn enabled larger amounts of animals to be herded by an individual. The increase in herd numbers allowed a greater profit to be made by the herder creating more disposable wealth. “Early riding probably had its first impact on mobility and herding economics, and through social competition between herders, on political power.”<sup>9</sup>

The “Era of the Chariot” from 1700 B.C.E. to 400 C.E. used the horse as a means of transportation by hooking up the animal to a chariot.<sup>10</sup> This allowed for multiple people to be transported by the animal at one time. This era also allowed for communication and interaction to increase significantly between different societies. Goods and products were also able to be moved that had previously been limited due to their sheer size and weight. Transportation of goods significantly increased, having huge effects on the economy.

From this point, the “Era of the Calvary” began from 700 B.C.E. to 1942.<sup>11</sup> During this time, the horse aided in warfare. “The American horse

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<sup>7</sup> David W. Anthony, and Dorcas R. Brown, “The Secondary Products Revolution, Horse-Riding, and Mounted Warfare,” *Journal of World Prehistory* 24, no. 2/3 (2011): 144, <http://eps.cc.yosu.edu:2093/stable/41289965>.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>10</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Shaping Civilizations.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

population peaked between 1919-1920, due to intensive breeding programs to supply horses for World War I.”<sup>12</sup> The horse was used as transportation for the soldiers, as a way to carry supplies and weapons, and at times as a weapon. The equine also moved information quickly between scouts and messengers. The horse was used in the medical field to pull medical wagons equipped to help injured soldiers or to carry them to safety. The horse in warfare was drastically minimized by the end of World War II where new technologies took the place of the animal in the form of tanks, trucks, and other military vehicles. “Even today, though, horses are still sometimes used by the military for purposes other than ceremonies. In modern day Afghanistan, for example, soldiers use horses to patrol the rugged countryside.”<sup>13</sup> In some cases, horses are able to move across rough terrain that machines would not be able to maneuver through.

From 900 to 1945 the “Era of Agriculture” took place, and in a few select societies the horse is still used for this purpose today.<sup>14</sup> The horse powered a plow to make growing crops easier for agricultural societies whether they be commercial or subsistence based. Instead of everything being done by hand, the equine maximized the efficiency of the time put into the work. The horse also transported crops to the market increasing the number of people that a farmer could potentially sell to, increasing his profit. “The horse and wheel gave a great boost to man’s ability to move goods from place to place. A man can carry about 50 pounds, a horse can pack 200 pounds, but a horse and a wheeled vehicle can

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<sup>12</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horse Facts.”

<sup>13</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horses in History,” Equine Heritage Institute, 2013, <http://www.equineheritageinstitute.org/horses-in-history/>.

<sup>14</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Shaping Civilizations.”

transport up to twice the horses own weight; consequently a 1,000 pound horse could move 2,000 pounds of cargo to penned animal or shops in the city.”<sup>15</sup>

Agriculture continued to use the horse to assist with the heavy work until around 1945. Once again changes in technology interfered with the use of the animal just as it did in warfare. “1945 marks the year that tractor power overtook horse power on American farms...A major factor in the change from the horse to the tractor was World War II, when farmers became more financially prosperous and equipment manufacturers were encouraged to increase tractor production as part of their patriotic duty to help support the rapid industrializing nation.”<sup>16</sup>

The “Era of the Carriage” from 1700 to 1920 expanded the horse’s use from chariots and wagons to carriages as well that primarily transported people.<sup>17</sup> This once again increased transportation for people, goods, the sick, and the elderly who were unable to be transported prior. During this era the equine was also used as a way to aide communications. One of these organizations that helped with the growth in communications was the Pony Express formed in 1860, where riders on horseback transported letters across the country stopping at routine relay stations to switch to fresh mounts to carry them the remainder of the way.<sup>18</sup> This era of the horse had lasting effects on society by interconnecting people across the continent and making it significantly easier to communicate between places.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horse Facts.”

<sup>17</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Shaping Civilizations.”

<sup>18</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horses in History.”



Austin's final era of the horse is the "Era of Leisure," starting in 1900 up to present day.<sup>19</sup> Leisure activities were created around the equine forming a variety of sports and events dealing with the art of horseback riding, showmanship of the animal, and driving of the animal for show or pleasure. People began to own horses simply for the enjoyment of trail riding. Sports such as eventing, roping, team penning, show jumping, barrel racing, pole bending, polo, western pleasure, and English equitation were started as ways for owners of the animals to showcase their riding abilities. County fairs, pony clubs, and riding associations like the American Quarter Horse Association (AQHA), focusing on a specific breed of horse, were formed as clubs and organizations for these events. Horses today are also used in a variety of different therapeutic programs for people with disabilities such as the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association. These programs strive to help those with, "...physical, mental, emotional and social disabilities with the therapeutic benefits unique to the horse and human connection."<sup>20</sup> At this point in time the equine was finally realized for its use other than a means to increase work productivity, and was instead seen as a way to cater to the emotional needs of a person.

American culture is directly related to the horse and its presence in society, and would be drastically different if the animal had not been a factor. According to the American Horse Council, "...the horse industry has a direct impact of \$39 billion on the U. S. economy and an overall impact of \$102 billion when factoring in indirect and induced spending. Recreational horse use is the

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<sup>19</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, "Shaping Civilizations."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

largest segment of the horse industry, with 3.9 million horses. The industry supports 1.4 million full-time jobs.”<sup>21</sup> This industry is still going strong and thriving which makes a positive influence on the American economy. Even those not directly associated with the horse industry would benefit from understanding its history. “By encouraging development in so many aspects of life, the horse effectively put himself out of work. The cities that the horse helped to create are now populated with children and young adults, many of whom have never even seen a live horse, let alone understand the effect it has had their lives. Sadly, much of the history of the horse is at risk to be lost forever.”<sup>22</sup> It is incredibly important to understand one’s history in order to better understand the future of one’s society. Although the horse is no longer used as a mainstream staple of society, its environmental impact can still be clearly seen across the globe as well as its formation as a lasting leisure activity in American society and a symbol of the Old West.

### *Biological Makeup of the Horse*

As the horse found a prominent place within the American culture, there were also changing environmental factors attributed to the increasing use of the animal. In order to fully understand the impact that the horse can have on the environment it is necessary to look at its biological makeup. The importance of separating its biological makeup from that of other stock animals is pertinent to understanding the full impact the horse can ultimately have on the environment, including that

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<sup>21</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horse Facts.”

<sup>22</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horses in History.”

within the national parks. Beever, a postdoctoral ecologist with the United States Geological Survey-Biological Resources Division's Forest and Rangeland Ecosystem Science Center, provided an important contribution to the historiography of the environmental impact of the wild horse in his article. The author wrote this article as a direct response to the assumption that the equine impacted the environment in the same way that cattle did which Beever claimed was not true. This article described the importance of researching the equine separately from all other free roaming animals due to their differences in genetic makeup as well as impacts on the environment. In previous studies the environmental impact of the horse on society had been closely related to that of cattle, but Beever successfully proved why this comparison was not sufficient and should be reconsidered.<sup>23</sup> Beever's article helps contextualize the impact that horses can have on national parks and the environment.

The article was written as an almost direct comparison between the horse and cattle to prove why the two animals cannot be grouped together in analyzing their effects on the environment. Through the explanation of the background on the animal Beever explained the genetic makeup of the horse which proved important in describing its eating habits and movements. Beever explained how its body size allowed it to be dominant in its environment having lasting effects on the other wildlife inhabiting the same areas. Although cattle may be of similar size, their lack of speed did not allow them the same ability to dominate the other animals. This body size also allowed the horse to move in a more agile manner

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<sup>23</sup> Beever, "Management Implications of the Ecology of Free-Roaming Horses in Semi-Arid Ecosystems of the Western United States," 887-95.

causing additional damage to the environment. The genetic makeup was important in the fact that the horse has upper front incisors that allow the animal to eat grass closer to the ground that a cow would not be able to reach. This led to more vegetation being eaten which could potentially cause a slower recovery of the plants in the horse's environment. The wild horse generally used the same trails throughout the landscape causing a wearing down of the foliage, while cattle used different pathways every time.<sup>24</sup>

McKnight also discussed the effects of the wild horse on the natural landscape. The many issues that the horse caused within the environment included the increase in competition for food and water that it posed for other animals, overgrazing, trampling of the foliage, and attracting tame horses into the wild environment. Other problems that occurred were, "...destroying range improvements (such as watering troughs and pipes); tearing down fences; excluding or molesting livestock at watering places; trampling, rolling, and muddying water holes; breaking into cropland and grazing it; and being abusive to livestock, sometimes killing or crippling them."<sup>25</sup> McKnight would support Beever's claim that the horse affected the natural environment differently than other animals due to its biological makeup and differing abilities.

The rules and regulations put in place by each national park are also important in recognizing the amount of damage that is possible to the environment. When looking specifically at the domesticated horse within the national park environment, Beever's study could still hold true. The horse will

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> McKnight, "The Feral Horse in Anglo-America," 522.

ultimately cause damage while trail riding simply due to its biological makeup and its ability to maneuver differently than other stock animals. The parks ask that the only horses brought into the designated areas are fully trained and relatively calm, but there is no way for the parks to ensure that each equine is of this demeanor before the rider begins his or her trip. Because each horse has a mind of its own, its disposition is impossible to foresee and at any time an incident could occur. The ability for the horse to eat foliage that is closer to the ground than other animals, for instance cows, means that any horse allowed to graze while within the national parks will eliminate more foliage and cause more environmental damage.

Currently in Yosemite National Park, trail riding of stock is permitted in designated areas with strict restrictions that try to limit the detrimental impact to the environment. The activity of trail riding is permitted anywhere within the park trails unless they are marked otherwise, but is limited to twenty-five people within a trail riding party at any one time. There is no cross country riding allowed or any off trail use permitted. The riders within the party are asked to be single file at all times whenever possible. When camping within the parks, stock is not allowed to be tied to the trees or close enough to the trees to do any damage to their bark or foliage. The animals must be put on picket lines at least one hundred feet away from any body of water. This is to ensure that the discharge from the animal does not seep into the bodies of water that may be present within the parks. The manure and extra hay or straw that is not used must be cleaned up daily within the camp sites and placed in the appropriate dumpsters for disposal.

<sup>26</sup> These regulations exist to try to limit the negative environmental impact that the horse may have on the park, but there is no way for it to be completely eliminated or completely implemented.

Examining the presence of the horse in the national parks, one notes a strong connection between it and American culture, as well as how this has affected the environment within the parks. Since the equine has a biological makeup that sets it apart from any other animal, it has the ability to help enhance American culture, and at the same time consequently has a negative effect on the environment that can cause long term issues. The behavioral tendencies, the individual mindset, the physical characteristics, and the overall trainability of the animal make it both a valuable asset to American culture, in the sense of enjoyable leisure activities, and a detrimental factor on the environment itself. The horse is a controversial figure for the western national parks due to its positive and negative implications on the culture and the environment.

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<sup>26</sup> “Horseback Riding & Stock Use,” National Park Service, last modified January 28, 2016, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/yose/planyourvisit/stock.htm>.

## Chapter Two: Introducing the Western National Parks, Specifically Yosemite

As previously discussed, the national parks provide a useful context within which to identify the impact that the horse has had both on American culture and also on the natural environment. An important question that needs to be addressed is the role of the parks in the first place. What were the parks originally designed for? An explanation of “façade management” versus environmental preservation is necessary to understand the original intent of the national parks. The “façade management” approach as coined by Richard West Sellars, a prominent historian of the NPS, places the emphasis on organizing the parks to support the tourist industry. It can be contrasted with more preservationist approaches that seek continued protection of the wild and natural aspects of the national parks.<sup>1</sup> The “façade management” for national parks has been known to draw in a wide variety and number of people providing a solid base of funding to continue the park establishments. Although this financial support is beneficial and goes toward the parks themselves, the preservation of the environment becomes less of a priority to make room for more leisure activities and easier access for the public. If the preservation of the environment is not put first as a primary concern, then the long term continuation of the national parks may be jeopardized. The environment will eventually become so deteriorated that future generations will not be able to enjoy the simplicity of nature, but instead will find themselves left enjoying a man-made replica of what nature once was. Using the approach that

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<sup>1</sup> Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 4-5.

state and national parks are strictly for the preservation of the environment, they should remain untouched by human interference. This would include trail riding done by equestrians. Up until this point, horseback riding in parks has not been viewed as an issue, but it is indeed one worth analyzing.

It is important to understand what national parks consist of and how they were perceived by society in the time that they were created as well as in today's society in order to fully understand the horse within the national parks. Ronald A. Foresta explained, "The image of the Park Service is that of the ranger on horseback-part naturalist, part policeman, part resource manager, and even part educator. The images of the Park System are of remote places and past times. They are tied up with American memory and mythology...The reality beneath the image is that neither the national parks nor their keepers stand apart from our times; they are very much subject to the problems and dilemmas of modern American life."<sup>2</sup> National parks have been an enjoyable part of American society since their creation offering places for the public to appreciate nature and historic areas first-hand. Sellars explained, "The Park Service defines national parks- one category among many within the system- as large and diverse areas with enough land or water to protect the resources adequately."<sup>3</sup> Sellars then went on to explain the sheer diversity that the NPS was able to encompass through its preservation programs. "For example, Yellowstone National Park is a very large natural area, Mesa Verde National Park is a large cultural area, and Hot Springs

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<sup>2</sup> Ronald A. Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keeper* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, Inc., 1984), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Richard W. Sellars, "The National Parks: A Forum on the 'Worthless Lands' Thesis National Parks: Worthless Lands or Competing Land Values?" *Journal of Forest History* 27, no. 3 (1983): 131.



National Park is a smaller, essentially urban recreational area.”<sup>4</sup> There are areas such as the Federal Hall National Memorial which only covers 0.45 acres, and is located across from the New York Stock Exchange. This location is not what typically comes to mind when people think of the national parks and monuments. Along the same lines is the Castle Clinton National Monument located on the lower tip of Manhattan. This military fort as well as the Federal Hall National Memorial happen to take up some of the most expensive locations in America when it comes to placing a value on real estate, but are far from the typical understanding of NPS lands.<sup>5</sup> In order to gain a full comprehension of the NPS, the system must be approached with an open mind and one must look beyond the stereotypical concept of the NPS to analyze the full impact of the horse within the national parks.

The national parks also represent American national identity. “The national parks, it may be argued, are one of this country’s greatest contributions to the culture of western society. They mark the recognition that areas of great natural, scenic, and historic value should be set aside for protection and use by the citizenry of this democratic society. The parks mark, in one sense, an urge to democratize the American landscape.”<sup>6</sup> According to the Conservation Foundation, “The first national parks were established for the prime purpose of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Z. Melnick’s Review of, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916-1942* by Linda Flint McClelland, found in *The Public Historian* 17, no. 4 (1995): 103.

preserving for future generations values deemed critical by leaders of the times.”<sup>7</sup> Congress established the first national park, Yellowstone National Park, on March 1, 1872 covering parts of Montana and Wyoming. “In 1872, few men had vision enough to foresee that newly established Yellowstone National Park embodied not the end, but only the beginning of the *national park idea*. Few could have foretold that in 1972 the nations of the world would proudly count more than 1,200 national parks or equivalent reserves, all set aside in accordance with the idea conceived at Yellowstone for the benefit of present and future generations.”<sup>8</sup> This park was placed under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior and caused a worldwide national park movement. Sellars explained, “Much of Yellowstone...remains essentially unchanged since the park’s establishment more than a century ago, and its establishment and ongoing preservation have achieved international importance historically and symbolically.”<sup>9</sup>

Following Yellowstone, the Department of the Interior created many other national parks and monuments. The War Department and the Forest Service of the Department of Agriculture created other historic areas, monuments, and natural preserves. A need for a management system to oversee all of these areas was called for instead of having multiple agencies dealing with the same type of locations. On August 25, 1916 President Woodrow Wilson signed the act to create the NPS allowing for a unified government body to look over the national

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<sup>7</sup> The Conservation Foundation, *National Parks for the Future: An Appraisal of the National Parks as they begin their Second Century in a Changing America* (Washington, D.C.: The Conservation Foundation, 1972), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Sir Hugh Elliott, Bt., *Second World Conference on National Parks* (Morges, Switzerland: International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, 1974), 15.

<sup>9</sup> Sellars, “The National Parks,” 134.

parks and monuments. At this time there were thirty-five national parks and monuments put under the control of the NPS. This number grew significantly over time. The NPS said, “This ‘Organic Act’ states that the Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments and reservations...by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks...which purpose is to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”<sup>10</sup>

Although the horse within the national parks allowed for enjoyment by the public, the negative environmental impact that the animal would eventually cause did not follow the original intentions of the NPS.

In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an Executive Order to take fifty-six national monuments as well as military sites from the control of the Forest Service and the War Department and assign them to the NPS. “Congress declared in the General Authorities Act of 1970 that the National Park System, which began with the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, has since grown to include superlative natural, historic, and recreation areas in every region...and that it is the purpose of this Act to include all such areas in the System...”<sup>11</sup> The current NPS covers over 400 separate areas making up around 84,000,000 acres of land in fifty different states. There are over 20,000 people employed by the NPS to help protect these areas and also to help inform the

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<sup>10</sup> “History,” National Park Service, last modified January 27, 2016, accessed August 31, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/aboutus/history.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

public about their importance and purpose.<sup>12</sup> According to the NPS, “Our goal is to offer a window into the historical richness of the National Park System and the opportunities it presents for understanding who we are, where we have been, and how we as a society, might approach the future. This collection of special places also allows us to examine our past—the contested along with the comfortable, the complex along with the simple, the controversial along with the inspirational.”<sup>13</sup> The NPS strives to do more than simply preserve important environmental areas across the map. The conservation of artifacts, cultures, and societies is also a goal that the NPS accomplishes through its work. Preserving this vast history helps secure America’s future, too. The NPS can also be used as a source to help define a sense of the American cultural experience and the horse aids in this definition.

As the NPS grew, the struggle between the advancing human world and preservation of natural environment intensified. Private development in the national parks was a major problem, detracting from the focus which the NPS set out to primarily protect: the natural environment. According to R.G. Ironside, there are four main reasons as to why the problem between private development and environmental protection cannot be easily dealt with. The first reason revolves around the fact that, “The legacy of private land holdings, including complete settlements, which were located within the national parks when their boundaries were originally delimited, presents a major obstacle.”<sup>14</sup> The NPS took

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “National Park Service History,” National Park Service, last modified April 27, 2016, accessed September 1, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/hisnps/index.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> R.G. Ironside, “Private Development in National Parks: Residential and Commercial Facilities in the National Parks of North America,” *The Town Planning Review* 41, no. 4 (1970): 305, <http://eps.cc.yosu.edu:2093/stable/40102878>.

control of some areas that already had preexisting societies built within them. These societies, in some cases private owners, kept the NPS from having complete control over all the areas. This meant that the NPS was forced to work around the people that were already settled on the properties, potentially hindering the ability of the NPS to properly protect the environment within the parks.

The second issue was, “The large size of some national parks which make it impossible to see them in a day’s visit. The distance between accommodation outside the park and scenic areas of the park would be prohibitive.”<sup>15</sup> Tourists’ experiences in the national parks would be enhanced by providing lodging within the parks for them. They could then more easily experience the natural environment. These improvements in infrastructure became popular within the national parks to increase the parks appeal to tourists. “Even the physical setting becomes a commodity to be consumed in all its beauty, grandeur, or peace via the purchase of a particular recreational good or service.”<sup>16</sup> The NPS employees also needed housing close to or within the parks boundaries in order to properly maintain upkeep of the areas.

The third reason as to why eliminating private development posed a problem was, “The distance of some national parks from major centres where accommodation and other services are available make it impossible to return to such centres at night.”<sup>17</sup> Just as with the second issue suggested by Ironside, the third issue revolved around the vast amount of space that the NPS controlled

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Richard Butsch, ed., *For Fun and Profit: The Transformation of Leisure into Consumption* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 152.

<sup>17</sup> Ironside, “Private Development in National Parks,” 305.

making it difficult – if not impossible – to cover the entire area without a place for accommodations being located within the NPS property. The final issue involved the, “adopted policy of the U.S. and Canadian National Park Services to license private operators to provide accommodation, food, service stations and other facilities for visitors and resident population of the Parks.”<sup>18</sup> This accepted policy is not one that could be easily altered in the preexisting parks. Without the involvement of the private operators, the parks would not be able to function properly and the tourists would not be able to experience their full range.

As Ironside explained, the only way to get around these four concerns was to create parks from new areas. One example of this uninterrupted park is the Great Smoky Mountains National Park located in Tennessee. Unfortunately, as the tourist population increased in the parks and NPS directed areas, the response of the private operators was to expand and meet the increasing needs of the people. This in turn took away more NPS protected land. “This conflicts with the original philosophy underlying the national park concept, of the preservation of areas in a condition which is as natural as possible except for access trails and other unobtrusive evidence of man’s presence.”<sup>19</sup> The majority of people involved with NPS decision-making agree that the private operators are necessary for park continuation and success. Although this is the overall consensus, there are still select individuals that strive to uphold the true purpose of the NPS in the protection of the environment and therefore support the idea of placing settlements and accommodations outside of park boundaries. One such individual

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 305-06.

is Anthony Wayne Smith of the NPS who suggests, “Private automobile traffic would be excluded or limited, most park visitors touring the parks by bus or other public transportation media, on foot and perhaps even by horse.”<sup>20</sup> What Smith did not take into consideration was the negative environmental impacts that coincided with the horse as well.

In order to help minimize the conflict between those that supported private development versus those that did not, there were multiple changes made to the original NPS policy. One of these changes was known as the Concessions Policy Act of 1965 which revised the previous concession policy. This policy created a universal classification of accounts related to the private development concessions to help in reporting the finances of the establishments.<sup>21</sup> By being willing to negotiate factors that made it easier for the private developments to function, the NPS ensured the continued support of the private developments which was necessary for the continuation of the parks. Ironside explained, “The Government has, therefore, by these innovations in policy, made a substantial effort to improve the confidence of entrepreneurs in national park concessions and their future in the parks.”<sup>22</sup> Another way for the NPS to increase its control over private developments was through the use of “Scenic Easement.” This allowed the NPS to work out a deal with the owner of the private development whereby the NPS paid the owner a sufficient amount of money for an agreed amount of time to allow the NPS the right to control the land within the guidelines outlined in the NPS rules and regulations. This agreement allowed the private development to

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 308.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

remain in its original location, but the NPS was able to gain temporary control over the land holding to ensure that the NPS values were upheld and not compromised by the private development.

In looking at western national parks, Yosemite is one of the more popular locations for environmental preservation and tourist activity. Yosemite was initially protected in 1864 and offers a variety of environmental features including waterfalls, valleys, forests, mountains, glacial formations, and meadows.<sup>23</sup> The park includes around twelve hundred square miles and is also home to many of the giant Sequoia trees. The Native American tribe called the Ahwahneechee considered Yosemite home for many years before the arrival of the Europeans in the mid-1800s. Even once the Europeans entered Yosemite, their numbers were limited due to the fact that getting to the area involved being able to conquer extremely rugged terrain. Transportation was limited to foot travel or travel on horseback which made it difficult for people to travel through Yosemite. In 1907 this all changed with the construction of the Yosemite Valley Railroad, allowing more people to gain access to the area and therefore ending Yosemite's near isolation from the rest of the world. With the conclusion of its near isolation, Yosemite was also introduced to the environmental destruction that human interaction caused as well as the destruction from the horse.

The Native American tribes that lived in Yosemite prior to outside human contact quickly had their way of life destroyed. "In 1850, a vigilante group had formed to eliminate the Indians who had been raiding the mining camps and

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<sup>23</sup> "Yosemite," National Park Service, last modified April 27, 2016, accessed September 7, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/yose/index.htm>.



Savage's Stores in Mariposa County."<sup>24</sup> In 1851 a conflict erupted causing the Mariposa Battalion to remove the Ahwahneechee from the Yosemite Valley entirely.<sup>25</sup> The Native Americans that remained in the area were not safe from outside interaction. As time went on in Yosemite, the advancements in infrastructure and construction created a need for more land. Park representatives slowly took over land that the Native Americans called home. Although the initial idea to move the Native American settlements was suggested many years previous, it was in 1931 that they moved from their homes to a location that the park officials felt would be more appropriate. Pavlik explained, "The displaced Indians were finally moved to a less visible, more isolated location, segregated from the rest of the park and concession employees at the far western end of the developed area on the north side of the valley."<sup>26</sup> This process was done with no care or concern taken for the well-being or basic needs of the Native Americans. The move was made simply to help the park expand its tourist possibilities. "The Indian village's removal from a prominent location on the road to the Ahwahnee Hotel and its subsequent placement at the remote end of the valley suggests a contradiction between the Park Service's desire to capitalize in its interpretation programs on the romantic image of the pre-contact Native Americans, while relegating their actual descendants to isolated and substandard living conditions."<sup>27</sup> The removal of the Native Americans from their rightful homes

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<sup>24</sup> Leroy Randanovich, *Images of America: Yosemite Valley* (Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2004), 7.

<sup>25</sup> "History and Culture," National Park Service, last modified April 27, 2016, accessed September 7, 2016, <https://www.nps.gov/yose/index.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> Robert C. Pavlik, "In Harmony with the Landscape: Yosemite's Built Environment, 1913-1940," *California History* 69, no. 2 (1990): 190.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

was similar to the effect that outside human involvement had on the environment. Nothing was safe from human interference.

As more and more people started to travel to Yosemite, the increase in the number of artists, photographers, writers, and people who could appreciate the beautiful environment grew rapidly. With the surge in people came the rise in damage to the beautiful environment which caused conservationists to jump into action. In 1864 President Abraham Lincoln signed a bill making Yosemite Valley the property of California.<sup>28</sup> Later, John Muir became an extremely influential figure in the national parks. “It was Muir’s interest in the natural environment that led him to form the ideas that helped to drive the modern environmental movement. His formation of the Sierra Club and active promotion of the creation of Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks in 1890 garnered Muir much respect for his leadership.”<sup>29</sup> From this point on, Yosemite served as a place where people were able to come into contact first hand with the breathtaking natural environment. Muir believed it was necessary, “...to preserve the valley as an aesthetic and spiritual resource for the American public.”<sup>30</sup>

Also influential in this process was President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was well known for his conservationist interests, and his trips to the western national parks portrayed his enthusiasm in the environment. Douglas Brinkley explained in detail the efforts put forth by Roosevelt. In regards to Roosevelt’s “Great Loup Tour,” the longest cross-country trip taken by a

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<sup>28</sup> “History and Culture,” National Park Service.

<sup>29</sup> Randanovich, *Images of America: Yosemite Valley*, 37.

<sup>30</sup> Neil M. Maher, *Nature’s New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4.

president in history, Brinkley said, “Emphasizing America’s natural wonders, the adventure crystallized Roosevelt’s already potent belief that the Far West, in all its wildness and rawness, was the least exhausted part of the country.”<sup>31</sup> The relationship between Roosevelt and Muir led to major advancements in the national parks. “Muir’s meeting with President Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 was the beginning of the process that eventually returned Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees to the federal park. By 1906, the park was completely under federal control and became known as Yosemite National Park.”<sup>32</sup>

Muir set the precedent for preservation of Yosemite, but unfortunately died before the full effect of his efforts could be seen. Following in his footsteps, Joseph Grinnell carried out Muir’s work. Grinnell, director of the Museum of Vertebrate Zoology at the University of California at Berkeley, was one of the most successful American conservationists, although his legacy was not well known to the public.<sup>33</sup> Grinnell was able to see Yosemite for its importance in preserving a variety of wildlife, which peaked his interest with his background in the study of animals. Grinnell was primarily successful due to the fact that he realized conservation would only be continued if it was supported by not only the scholars dedicated to that specific field, but also the general public who had even the slightest interest in the outdoors. Runte explained Grinnell’s views, “If conservation in particular were to have a stronger base, concerned scientists must

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<sup>31</sup> Douglas Brinkley, *The Wilderness Warrior: Theodore Roosevelt and the Crusade for America* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 502.

<sup>32</sup> Randanovich, *Images of America: Yosemite Valley*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> Alfred Runte, “Joseph Grinnell and Yosemite: Rediscovering the Legacy of a California Conservationist,” *California History* 69, no. 2 (1990): 170.

do more than talk only among themselves.”<sup>34</sup> Grinnell was the “biological conscience of the National Park System,” although he never took credit for his actions and remained out of the lime light.<sup>35</sup> Grinnell’s work in the national parks significantly shaped the modern principles of environmental conservation. With his help and people like him, the parks’ ecological diversity became an important factor limiting the influx of tourist accommodations.<sup>36</sup> Galen Clark, guardian of the Yosemite Grant said, “I have seen persons of emotional temperament stand with tearful eyes, spellbound and dumb with awe, as they got their first view of the Valley from Inspiration Point, overwhelmed in the sudden presence of the unspeakable, stupendous grandeur.”<sup>37</sup> This pull that the parks had on the American public made the parks a site for the construction and performance of American identity through transcendentalism and the horse has played a central role in that identity.

When the NPS was created in 1916, the first director, Stephen Mather, appointed Washington B. Lewis to be in charge of Yosemite National Park. Lewis shared many of the same views as Mather including the understanding that sacrifices would have to be made in regards to the environment in order to be prepared for the amount of tourist activity the park was going to receive in the near future.<sup>38</sup> Allowing for this type of development meant an increase in the overall built environment of Yosemite. Not all development was considered

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 178.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Frederic J. Athearn review of, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* by Alfred Runte, *The Western Historical Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1991): 372.

<sup>37</sup> “History and Culture,” National Park Service.

<sup>38</sup> Pavlik, “In Harmony with the Landscape,” 184.

completely detrimental. Ansel Hall, a well-known park naturalist, built the first official museum of any national park in Yosemite in May of 1925.<sup>39</sup> According to Robert Pavlik, “In 1913, three important events shaped the evolution of Yosemite’s cultural and natural landscape: the shift from Army administration to civilian control; the admission of automobiles into Yosemite Valley; and the passage of the Raker act, authorizing the city of San Francisco to dam the Hetch Hetchy Valley for a municipal water supply.”<sup>40</sup> Improvements to the built environment continued as the popularity of Yosemite grew. During the time known as the “Mission 66 Era,” from 1956-1966, efforts were made to meet the increasing demands for accommodations and concessions at any costs necessary including those that were harmful to the environment.<sup>41</sup>

Yosemite’s natural wonders attract large numbers of visitors annually. Through the efforts of conservationists, the national park has been protected to a certain extent, while still allowing for the tourist industry to be an active part of the establishment. Although the park environment has been altered to meet the needs of the growing tourism industry, Yosemite still stands as a working attempt at preservation. People are not the only threat to the natural environment. The influx of automobiles has taken its toll on Yosemite, and is a primary issue being addressed today. Even more prevalent than the impact of the automobile within Yosemite’s boundaries — and with a much older history — is the horse. It has grown in tandem with Yosemite and while it has aided in many ways with the

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 185.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 195.

development and expansion of the park, the horse has also had its negative impact on Yosemite's environment. A not so well known issue is the effect that horses continue to have within the national park. As the cultural role of the equine changed within the park, its use was modified into one strictly based on leisure activity as opposed to a transportation-based use. To meet the demands of tourists, trail riding on horseback is permitted in the national parks as a leisure activity. Even though the horse is vastly different from an automobile, it still has damaging effects on the natural environment that need to be taken into consideration when evaluating conservation efforts.

### Chapter Three: Changing Views on National Park Management

Different NPS directors and various external impacts have shaped changing views on national park management over the decades. Sellars explained, “It is abundantly clear...that with the very establishment of the national parks came ‘industrial tourism,’ generated by public interest in these great institutionalized western landscapes.”<sup>1</sup> The façade management for national parks, as supported by Gerardo Budowski, specialist in conservation studies, has been known to draw in a wide variety and number of people providing a solid base of funding to continue the park establishments. Although this financial support is beneficial and goes toward the parks themselves, the preservation of the environment is overlooked to make room for more leisure activities and easier access for the public. As Muir said, “Nothing dollarable is safe, however guarded.”<sup>2</sup> Since the national parks have the ability to produce a substantial amount of income, their environmental importance will never truly be safe from exploitation. Having said this, there are specific instances where the continued protection of the environment won out over the expansion of potential economic gains. Echo Park, Marble Canyon, and the Grand Canyon Dam proposals, for example, demonstrated the strength of conservation interests over commercial exploitation. Sellars said, “Nevertheless, the economic potential of these park lands (and some adjacent nonpark lands) as reservoir sites was sacrificed to preserve the great scenic and scientific values of the parks.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sellars, “The National Parks,” 133.

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Runte, “The National Parks in Idealism and Reality,” *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 38, no. 3 (1988): 76, <http://eps.cc.ysu.edu:2093/stable/4519156>.

<sup>3</sup> Sellars, “The National Parks,” 133-34.

Yet another idea behind the true intentions of the NPS was introduced by Runte. He claimed, “Contrary to what many environmentalists would like to believe, America’s original incentive for establishing national parks lay not in reversing ecological damage...but rather in the search for national identity...”<sup>4</sup> Throwing aside the belief that national parks were created to help preserve the environment or that they were created to make money off the tourist industry, Runte suggested that the parks were simply created to make up for the shortcomings of American culture on a global perspective. Runte stated, “For early nationalists, nothing in American art, architecture, or literature seemed equal to the cultural legacy of Europe. To compensate for these deficiencies, many nineteenth century writers and intellectuals heralded the distinctiveness of natural landscapes as proof that the United States was predestined for a grand and glorious future apart from the cradle of Western Civilization.”<sup>5</sup> According to David Barna, National Park Service Chief of Public Affairs, “Americans developed a national pride of the natural wonders in this nation and they believed that they rivaled the great castles and cathedrals of Europe.”<sup>6</sup> The national parks served as building blocks that set America apart, since Europe did not have any wildlife areas that could compare to that of the American national parks. “American scenery became a source of national pride, a means of countering European claims of cultural superiority.”<sup>7</sup> Although America may not have

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<sup>4</sup> Runte, “The National Parks in Idealism and Reality,” 75.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> “U.S. National Parks- In the Beginning,” National Geographic, accessed September 8, 2016, <http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/national-parks/early-history/>.

<sup>7</sup> Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 157.



Europe's art, architecture, and literature, the environment was a true representative of American beauty and importance, giving a strong sense of national identity recognizable on the global scale. In visiting the national parks, Stephen Merritt concluded that his trip was, "...a kind of voyage of American discovery, implicitly and explicitly linking his experience with the larger search for cultural and national identity. His narrative suggests a broader connection between tourism and nationalism, implying a more complicated link between the emergence of the United States as a modern urban-industrial nation-state and the search for American identity."<sup>8</sup>

The concept of the parks has changed over time and this progress is a reflection of the different directors in charge of the NPS. It is important to realize the history of the NPS and its formation. Throughout the years, the NPS has done much to help kick start the growth and success of the nation's parks. NPS leaders contributed to the success of the parks, remaining dedicated to the overall vision. The creation of the organization occurred in 1916 as a way to take care of national parks as well as preserving the history of local areas. In looking at the leaders of the early years of the NPS they, "...were remarkably successful in their desire to make it seem as though the buildings, campgrounds, roads, trails, and other facilities exist merely to 'present nature' to the viewer, the public, the 'visitor' to the American landscape."<sup>9</sup> The idea was to make the natural environment the center of undivided attention, and have people respect their small stature in comparison to the importance and beauty of nature. Taking the focus away from

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<sup>8</sup> Marquerite S. Shaffer, *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 2.

<sup>9</sup> Melnick's Review of, *Presenting Nature*, 103.

people as the center of attention was an accomplishment reserved for the breathtaking nature of the environment.

The present day NPS describes its mission in the following terms: “The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout this country and the world.”<sup>10</sup> The NPS is a bureau of the United States Department of the Interior that is ultimately run by a director who is nominated by the President of the United States and then subsequently approved by the United States Senate. In 1916, when the NPS was first created, the initial goal was to conserve and protect the parks leaving them unimpaired so that future generations could enjoy their beauty. During the 1930s, the government proposed including military parks and national monuments within the scope of responsibility of the NPS. With this extension of its responsibilities, the NPS doubled in size. The NPS explained, “We are honored to be invited into America’s communities to help build trails and playgrounds, return historic buildings to productive use, revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing, protect watersheds, recognize and promote local history, and introduce the next generation to stewardship opportunities and responsibilities.”<sup>11</sup> This slow addition of responsibilities has changed the initial emphasis on environmental

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<sup>10</sup> “What We Do,” National Park Service, last modified January 27, 2016, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/aboutus/index.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> “Evolution of an Idea,” National Park Service, last modified September 17, 2009, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/americanbestidea/templates/timeline.html>.

preservation to a more balanced emphasis on environmental preservation and attention to the public. Even though the intention of the NPS may not have been directly to stray from strict environmental preservation, the use of its resources to aid the general public would ultimately take away resources from environmental preservation changing their overall mission, even if unintentional.

A brief explanation of the NPS directors and how their visions may have changed over the years is necessary in order to see the true motives of the NPS. The NPS got its start with Stephen T. Mather, who was director of the NPS from May 16, 1917 to January 8, 1929.<sup>12</sup> Mather's interest in the parks was sparked when he visited Sequoia and Yosemite National Parks in 1914 where he saw the poor condition of the parks. This encouraged him to take action. Mather was able to use his relationship with Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane, along with his personal wealth and business status, to influence Congress to create the NPS. In a letter to Lane, Mather voiced his concerns for the parks insisting that something must be done. William C. Everhart explained, "Mather's angry letter of protest to the Secretary of the Interior drew a quick and historic reply: 'Dear Steve-If you don't like the way the national parks are being run, come on down to Washington and run them yourself.' It took considerable persuasion, but Mather finally agreed at least to go to Washington and talk the matter over with Lane."<sup>13</sup> Under his control, the NPS was primarily concerned with increasing park access and overall development. The parks were also important to Mather for another reason. The time that he was able to spend in nature helped him to deal with his

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<sup>12</sup> "Directors of the National Park Service," National Park Service, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/hisnps/NPSHistory/directors.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> William C. Everhart, *The National Park Service* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), 4.

depression. At times, during his tenure as director, the depression that Mather faced became so bad that it was necessary for him to be hospitalized. During these occasions, Horace M. Albright, Mather's assistant, took over, directing the NPS without making public the reasons for Mather's abrupt absence.<sup>14</sup>

Following Mather, Albright became the NPS director from January 12, 1929 to August 9, 1933.<sup>15</sup> Albright is considered one of the founding fathers of the NPS, even though he did not originally start the organization, for his dedication and commitment to the program. Even after his term as director was over, Albright remained closely involved with the NPS until his death in 1987. Despite his old age, Albright proved his dedication to the national parks far outweighed that of the younger contributors.

At the Second World Conference on National Parks in 1972, Robert Cahn witnessed the immense respect that was centered around the legendary Albright. Cahn said, "Then eighty-two, Albright was more avidly interested in parks than many conference participants a third his age."<sup>16</sup> Following the legacy that Mather left behind, Albright believed in undisturbed natural beauty, but also realized the importance of roads and the development of infrastructure and tourism. Albright initiated the inclusion of historic monuments and places in the NPS, aside from simply the designated national parks.<sup>17</sup> This slight change in Albright's focus contributed to the slow movement away from the organization's original mission

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<sup>14</sup> "Stephen Mather (1867–1930)," National Park Service, accessed January 27, 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/people/nps/mather/>.

<sup>15</sup> "Directors of the National Park Service," National Park Service.

<sup>16</sup> Horace M. Albright, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-33*, As told to Robert Cahn (Chicago: Institute of the America West Books, 1985), viii.

<sup>17</sup> Horace M. Albright and Marian Albright Schenck, *Creating the National Park Service: The Missing Years* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1999).

to protect the environment. The interest in infrastructure and tourism eventually caused a problematic debate between spending time and resources on strictly environmental preservation versus spending them on the tourist aspects.

As the years progressed, the NPS had a variety of directors each coming into office with their own personal interests. Newton B. Drury, 1940 to 1951, led with a strong emphasis on conservation protecting the parks during World War II from their exploitation of resources.<sup>18</sup> The debate over resource use in the national parks was a highly controversial topic. In general, "...parks are threatened because their resources are not being used and therefore valued."<sup>19</sup> Drury was instrumental in protecting the resources that the national parks had to offer. George B. Hartzog, Jr., director from 1964 to 1973, was dedicated to increasing the land under the NPS's control, which he successfully did by adding 41 million acres. Hartzog, Jr. was also involved with placing camping restrictions at Yosemite in order to protect the environment, and creating park programs for inner city children.<sup>20</sup> William Penn Mott, Jr., director from 1985-1989, created his twelve-point plan to better protect the parks and their resources, as well as to better serve the public. He emphasized once again on park expansion since the previous years had gotten away from that ideal.<sup>21</sup> James M. Ridenour, director from 1989 to 1993, stressed the importance of profit generated by concessions in the national parks. This changed the point of focus from environmental concerns

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<sup>18</sup> "Directors of the National Park Service," National Park Service.

<sup>19</sup> Katrina Brandon, Kent. H. Redford, and Steven E. Sanderson, eds, *Parks in Peril: People, Politics, and Protected Areas* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>20</sup> Hartzog Jr., *Battling for the National Parks*.

<sup>21</sup> "Directors of the National Park Service," National Park Service.

to financial gain.<sup>22</sup> With each director came a slight change in the focus of NPS resources, but the initial mission of protecting the natural environments remained at the center of the directors' agendas.

The NPS has upheld its mission of protecting and preserving the environment from its inception in 1916. Through the differing ideas of various directors, the incorporation of outside factors such as infrastructure, concessions, and tourism became increasingly important, taking away the focus from simply being the concern for the environment. With the increasing popularity of leisure activities, the idea of trail riding horses in the national parks presented itself. This too would prove to cause environmental damage taking away from the original intention of the parks to preserve the environment. As the goals of the NPS directors changed, the use of the horse within the parks as well as its role in regards to the tourists also changed causing further issues for the natural landscape.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter Four: Emergence of Popular Culture and Leisure Activity, Horses and the Old West**

The role of the horse within society has changed drastically over time from a necessary tool for transportation and work to a treasured pet beloved by its owners as well as an important symbol showing a sense of the past American cultural experience. Before the nineteenth century, the animal was primarily understood simply as a way to enhance the work process, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the horse gained a new place in American society and memory. Just as important as its use as a tool to enhance production is its impression on American society symbolically. Today, the equine holds a central place in American popular culture that has lasted far beyond the popular eras of the horse itself. It represented mobility and a way for people to travel to faraway places and experience a whole new way of life not known to them before. The horse meant opportunity, a great increase in communication, and also meant greater productivity at work. It made daily life easier aiding in plowing once the true power of the animal was recognized. “Horse power” became the accepted way to measure the power of a variety of things such as tractors and automobiles themselves. The basis for the amount of work a machine was able to do was defined by the efforts of the horse, making its impression on society monumental. The true impact of the animal did not stop there, and its importance as a figure within American popular culture and American memory is clear.

The transition of the horse from a tool to a use in leisure activity began initially with the rise of the middle-class during the nineteenth century. As the

middle class grew, this meant an increase in the amount of free time that people had as well as an excess of disposable income. The idea of recreational activities became popular among this middle-class population. Foster Rhea Dulles defined recreation as, "...in its popular sense-the leisure-time activities that the American people have pursued over three centuries for their own pleasure."<sup>1</sup> Once it began to be replaced as an engine by cars, tractors, and trains, the horse was not a necessity for the middle class population, and this determined its place among middle-class society as a form of leisure activity. A person's ability to engage in leisure activities altered an entire way of life. According to Melanie Archer and Judith R. Blau, prominent social historians, the emergence of the middle class in America can be analyzed through looking at new social history as well as cultural history. The authors said, "The development of the middle class is rooted in the transformation of class and occupational structure that accompanied the growth of industrial-capitalism, rapid urbanization, immigration, and geographic mobility."<sup>2</sup> The middle class was formed primarily through a change in the structure of work including a shift to nonmanual labor and a rapid growth in entrepreneurship.<sup>3</sup> Job security was also common among the middle class as well as the increased movement that people were able to experience.

Archer and Blau explained that the emergence of the middle class must be looked at differently depending on which part of the nineteenth century is being

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<sup>1</sup> Foster Rhea Dulles, *A History of Recreation: America Learns to Play*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (New York: Meredith Publishing Company, 1965), vii.

<sup>2</sup> Melanie Archer and Judith R. Blau, "Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: The Case of the Middle Class," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (1993): 18, <http://eps.cc.yasu.edu:2093/stable/2083379>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



discussed. For example, in the beginning of the nineteenth century, artisans comprised most of the middle class. In the early industrial period, the mid-nineteenth century, small capitalists comprised the middle class. “For the latter decades of the nineteenth century, with the emphasis on industrialization and large firms, it is white-collar employees who are defined as comprising the middle class.”<sup>4</sup> The formation of the middle-class identity, “...involved a convergence in socioeconomic status, living patterns, the culture of work, and social perceptions and self-identity of nonmanual workers. The historical transformation of ‘middling sorts’ into a middle class involved a decline of skilled craft workers and master artisans as a sector of the urban labor force, and a concomitant decrease in their social and economic status in relation to an expanding nonmanual sector.”<sup>5</sup> The middle class experienced a drastic increase in the amount of people considered within that level of social standing, but this increase did not fully take place until later nineteenth century.

Middle-class identity was primarily about social and cultural status. The cultural aspect was then separated further from a person’s social status. “Middle-class identity was formed through related processes of institution building, the development of an increasingly homogeneous middle-class culture, and the wide diffusion of middle-class lifestyles and cultural codes in cities.”<sup>6</sup> Although the middle class was not defined specifically by ethnicity, the mobility that came about within the middle class allowed for a diversity in ethnical interactions that was not available before the emergence of the middle class. There was also an

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 25.

increased diversity in occupational relationships due to this increased mobility. The prominent defining factor in creating the middle class was the distinction between manual and nonmanual jobs. Salaries and profits as opposed to wages were the accepted compensation for the nonmanual jobs in the nineteenth century. Archer and Blau explained, "...that by mid-century a middle class dominated by entrepreneurs and salaried nonmanual workers had emerged, distinct from both urban elites and labor in economic circumstances and social experience and perceptions."<sup>7</sup> This emerging middle class also had an increased standard of living which in turn increased the expectations of the middle class, as well as the available opportunities.<sup>8</sup> The ease with which the middle class way of life spread throughout society was due to, "...the distrust of elite traditions, which accompanied a pervasive repudiation of the past."<sup>9</sup> People were able to gain entry into the middle class, not only by their occupational paths, but also by their "codes of civility."<sup>10</sup> These included accepted emotions, manners, and behaviors that were deemed worthy of a middle-class lifestyle.

A key essential feature of the middle class evolved around the idea of acquiring commodities – and engaging in activities – other than the necessities. "Consumerism became a means of status competition and a therapeutic quest for self-fulfillment and gratification."<sup>11</sup> This resulted in a drastic change within society from a person's basic moral worth to judging him based on his material possessions to define social status. Maris A. Vinovskis, prominent historian of

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 30-31.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

American class studies, explained, “Although members of the working class and middle class seemingly still lived in close proximity to each other, they were separated from each other not only at the workplace but also in their recreation after work, in the stores they patronized, and in the voluntary organizations they joined.”<sup>12</sup> An entire culture developed to meet the growing needs of material possessions and middle-class experiences. “These included the department store, vaudeville, public theaters, newspapers, new forms of city transit, city parks, spectator sports, city festivals, traveling exhibits, and, later, the cinema.”<sup>13</sup>

It was in this cultural dimension that the horse once again found a different place within society. The emergence of the need for material possessions as well as these appropriate middle-class experiences created the opportunity for the equine, once used only for its productive attributes in labor, to be used as a socially accepted leisure activity, suitable for the growing middle-class population. The horse had all the necessary qualities that were fitting for a middle-class person to want to have in their developing lifestyle. The animal elevated a person’s social status by setting him apart from those that were not able to afford to own one, or simply experience one, as well as those that did not have the available time to spend on an activity other than going to work. The horse was the ultimate consumer product because its necessary care required a constant flow of money in order to maintain its adequate upkeep. Other material possessions were purchased initially showing elevated social status, but then this

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<sup>12</sup> Maris A. Vinovskis, “Stalking the Elusive Middle Class in Nineteenth-Century America. A Review Article,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33, no. 3 (1991): 583, <http://eps.cc.yzu.edu:2093/stable/179053>.

<sup>13</sup> Archer and Blau, “Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America,” 33.

worth depreciated over time, whereas the equine continued to demand funding which served as a long-lasting consumer commitment. Even the ability for people to partake in horseback riding showed their removal from the workplace and available time for leisure activities.

According to Claude S. Fischer, in his analysis of social positioning, the emergence of leisure activity, at times, was seen as a negative influence on society. Fischer explained, "...new forms of 'vicarious experience,' mass-spectator sports being a key example, 'began to erode direct physical experience of the world.'"<sup>14</sup> People were spending more time indoors or at organized events and not experiencing the raw beauty of the natural world. Visiting a movie theater, for example, served as a popular form of entertainment, but while proving pleasurable to the audience, the experience was taking away from the importance of more natural experiences. "Others suggest that people, having lost something due to modernization, say access to nature, turn to new leisure forms as compensation for their loss, another model of replacement."<sup>15</sup> These concerns were not applicable to the leisure activities associated with the horse in American society. The mere act of riding a horse for pleasure directly placed the participant into the natural environment, allowing him to experience places that he may not have been able to access previously on foot. The equine provided a close and personal experience that the rider could enjoy in nature while forming a bond with the animal. The horse in the national parks further extended this natural experience placing the participant directly into the natural wonders of the

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<sup>14</sup> Claude S. Fischer, "Changes in Leisure Activities, 1890-1940," *Journal of Social History* 27, no. 3 (1994): 453, <http://eps.cc.ysu.edu:2093/stable/3788982>.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 455.

American west. Although many leisure activities did in fact prove damaging to the relationship that a person had with the outside world, the horse was an exception to this, and instead helped to enhance the interaction with the environment.

The importance of the environment including the plants and animals within it, as well as the human connection to it gained a voice through the Romantic ideological perspective of thinkers such as Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, and John Muir. This historical perspective of the environment looked at all living things making up one organic being through a perspective called the “Arcadian” method, developed by Thoreau. Thoreau (1817 to 1862) showed a deep respect for the environment which was seen clearly through this perspective giving a voice to the wilderness. Thoreau believed that in being true to oneself, a person must live in harmony with nature and never stop looking to nature for the ultimate truth. The Romantic perspective believed, in a sense, that to kill an animal was in turn to commit suicide since all living things were connected. Nature was believed to be alive with spirit leading to the eventual creation of the Holistic approach. This thought process was also closely connected to the idea of transcendentalism, created by Immanuel Kant in 1836. This ideology said that in order to understand the nature of reality one must first examine and analyze the reasoning process that governs the nature of experience. Transcendentalism suggested that people had access to knowledge that went beyond the basic senses of sight, sound, taste, smell, and touch, which is discovered through intuition and imagination. People were encouraged to think

for themselves in order to know what was right.<sup>16</sup> The Romantic perspective of environmental history as well as the transcendentalism approach created the ability for the horse to be seen for more than simply its economic contributions to work.

Branching off from the Romantic ideology, the West as a geographic boundary encompassing the rugged terrain and untouched wilderness, was an idea in itself, having a significant impact on American culture. Although the earlier Romantic thinkers did not believe in specific geographic boundaries, the West as an important environmental and cultural aspect of the American past does fit within the realm of Romantic perspective and transcendentalism. “Even though some Western landscapes practice a trickster’s habit of presenting themselves to newcomers as if they were fresh, untouched, vacant spaces, nonetheless stories have become quite literally something in the Western soil. As well as rock, soil, plants, animals, water, and air, the American West is composed of layers and layers of accumulated human activity and thought.”<sup>17</sup> Henry Nash Smith covered the ideologic meanings behind the western environment that are so often found within the American memory.<sup>18</sup> Smith explained that previous historians were too quick to look for the “actual” historical environment, as opposed to exploring further the “imaginary” environment that encompassed aspects such as symbolism, ideologies, myths, and faith. The West was influential for its political

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<sup>16</sup> Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 59-76.

<sup>17</sup> Patricia Nelson Limerick, *Something in the Soil: Legacies and Reckonings in the New West* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), 13-14.

<sup>18</sup> Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950).

advancements and economic attributes, but even more so for the basic dreams and aspirations of the people that made up its formation.<sup>19</sup> The West stood as a representation of the expansion of the frontier, serving as a proud moment in American heritage. The rugged terrain that had to be overcome and the unexpected encounters with Native Americans and the animals unique to the wilderness proved to be a major accomplishment in American history. Popular figures such as the American cowboy became prevalent due to their role in the expansion of the West.

It was in this “imaginary” environment that the symbolism of the horse found its lasting importance. It also went beyond the tool of measurement for its sheer power in the field to appeal to the nostalgic parts of a person’s memories or fantasies. The importance of the horse in the Old West lived on far beyond its time period through its role in popular culture and the media. The presence of popular culture in society had clear effects on people. “It is because popular culture has this two way relationship with our lives-both affecting the values we construct for ourselves and reflecting values we have already constructed-that popular culture taken as a whole is the most common part of our cultural heritage and our day to day present living environment.”<sup>20</sup> McKnight explained that some looked upon the horse, “. . .as a living symbol of the Old West.”<sup>21</sup> This role was emphasized through the use of popular culture. Although the horse is not always at the center of attention, their contributions to the Western are numerous.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Jack Nachbar, Deborah Weiser, and John L. Wright, eds, *The Popular Culture Reader* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1978), 4.

<sup>21</sup> McKnight, “The Feral Horse in Anglo-America,” 522.

“Besides doing all the work in a literal sense, getting the characters from place to place, pulling wagons, plowing fields, and such, they do double, triple, quadruple work in a symbolic sense. The more you look at them, the more indispensable they seem.”<sup>22</sup> The equine allowed for the expansion into the western frontier through its ability to overcome rough terrain that would have been too difficult for the average person to conquer by foot. The horse also pulled the wagon across the unknown territory allowing the first travelers to establish life in a place with new opportunities and expanded horizons, no longer confined by the city limits. In turn, the animal helped to create the idea of the American dream and make that dream a reality through its contributions to mobility in the formation of America. The idea of the cowboy who rode his trusty steed and took care of the outlaws, or the Native Americans who had a close connection to their horses was popular among the younger generations. This allowed the image of the horse and its majestic place in society to live on in the fantasies of children. As these children grew up, they looked for leisure activities that gave way to those childhood fantasies they had grown to love. The importance of the equine to American popular culture can be explained through the importance of popular culture in general to American society. Russel B. Nye explained this important relationship between society and popular culture. Nye said, “The study of popular literature and the popular arts helped us all...to add an extra dimension to our understanding of *all* literature and the arts; exploring popular culture helped to

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<sup>22</sup> Jane Tompkins, *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 90.



give depth to our comprehension of our total society and its broad, multi-levelled culture.”<sup>23</sup>

The idea of the Old West also gained a popular place in Hollywood through the television shows, radio programs, and films created around the frontier that were prevalent from the early 1900s to the 1960s. “Popular Westerns depict a moment in our national American past when the American choice was made and when we decided who we were and where we were headed.”<sup>24</sup> The cowboy served as an American hero who conquered the untouched wilderness and stood up to the outlaws and bandits.<sup>25</sup> This figure provided hours of entertainment for American families both young and old. It mattered not that the audience may have had no real experience or connection with the western frontier; all that mattered was that they found enjoyment out of watching a true American hero, the cowboy, overcome his enemies and take his rightful place as the protector of the American West. The idea of good overcoming evil and the right always prevailing became the underlying story in the Westerns. The cowboy was always seen with his rifle or revolver, and was dressed appropriately in his ten gallon hat, bandanna, cowboy boots, and spurs. The hero always had his trusty steed, the horse, that covered the ground and served as his transportation to go after the outlaws.<sup>26</sup> These programs were also centered on the frontier deserts, mountains, saloons, railroads, ranches, jail houses, and towns. Some

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<sup>23</sup> Russel B. Nye, ed., *New Dimensions in Popular Culture* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972), iii.

<sup>24</sup> Ray B. Browne, and Marshall Fishwick, eds, *Icons of America* (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1978), 290.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 284.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

popular Western films included *Dodge City* (1939), *Stagecoach* (1939), *The Big Trail* (1930), and *Union Pacific* (1939).<sup>27</sup> *The Tales of the Texas Ranger* (1950-1952) was a popular radio series that had all the necessary qualities of a Western. Television shows about Westerns included *Gunsmoke* (1955-1975), *Bonanza* (1959-1973), *Rawhide* (1959-1965), and *Wagon Train* (1957-1965).<sup>28</sup> Well-known figures in the Westerns such as Jesse James, Annie Oakley, Buffalo Bill, Roy Rogers, and the Lone Ranger were characters identifiable by the American public for their captivating roles in the films, radio programs, and television shows. The horses that appeared in popular Westerns – such as Silver ridden by the Lone Ranger, Trigger ridden by Roy Rogers, and Duke ridden by John Wayne – also gained fame and held lasting impressions in the minds of the fascinated audience.<sup>29</sup> “The Western hero-messiah’s horse is no less an extension of his persona, for the horse is his link to the landscape, to the wilderness from which he draws his strength and to which he owes his instruction. The particular horse is more often than not part of the wilderness, a mustang, for example, who is durable and can be counted on.”<sup>30</sup> The horse was given an American identity through its role in the Westerns that highlighted its specific importance to American society. “It is only in the film Western, though, that the horse can assume its fullest iconic power. For like the landscape, the horse is visual and therein lies its most important iconic significance in advancing the story.”<sup>31</sup> This use of the equine set it apart from all other societies. “As an icon, the horse is

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 285-91.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 287-88.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 288.

representative of the force of nature, mute evidence of the hero's mastery over nature, of his ability to command respect from nature's forces."<sup>32</sup> The Westerns gained their rapid popularity in America due to their portrayal of the accomplishments Americans were able to make through westward expansion.

The rising fame of the equine through its appearance in the Western films, radio programs, and television shows caused a resurgence in interactions between the American public and the horse. The animal then presented itself again as a way for people to spend their leisure time through vacations and getaways. People travelled to dude ranches that imitated the life of the cowboy in the old western movies and television shows to ride horses and work the cattle in the open landscape. The county fairs incorporated pony rides for children that became extremely popular and can still be seen at fairs across the United States in today's society. The ability of a young child to ride a horse in a controlled environment without having the nuisance of having to care for the animal long-term and provide adequate shelter and funding to feed a horse was wildly popular. The horse also found a place in the circus which was extremely popular in America. The ease with which it could be trained for certain acts and stunts allowed it to become a featured event in many circus acts.

Leisure activity expanded beyond dude ranches and pony rides to having a personal horse in the family to use for trail riding or competitive riding. As leisure time became more and more popular, so did activities that were created to fill the void in time. The horse became an outlet for people to spend this time. People could enjoy trail riding around their personal property or travel to nearby

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

locations to delight in the environment. The equine also became a way for people to showcase their training and riding abilities in local and national competitions. An extremely difficult and demanding sport grew out of the leisurely act of riding a horse. These events brought people with similar interests together and expanded the equestrian community as a whole. Local clubs such as 4-H and national organizations such as the AQHA were formed around the sport of horseback riding. An entire industry formed to keep up with the growing demand of showing horses. Owning a personal horse went from a nonchalant way of spending one's down time to a complete way of life. The horse took on a new role in American society filling the growing demand for sporting events and competitive activities.

Although this use of the horse is still popular in today's society, there is a large amount of the population that does not get to experience it due to their lifestyle or financial limitations. Owning a horse can be extremely expensive since it requires constant care and attention. This factor limits the horse's popularity to mostly middle-to upper-class. The equine can be seen as a representation of social status in a society because if someone has enough money to properly care for the animal, then he must be of a higher social ranking. Many people also do not have the luxury of surplus time to dedicate to owning a horse since their schedules can prove extremely busy. To that group of people, the horse is still seen as a representation of a part of American history that they have experienced only through television and the media, but have not yet and may never get the opportunity to experience first-hand. The equine is just a symbol to

this group of people, a symbol of the Old West and the cowboy figure that set out to conquer the frontier. The horse, however, is a symbol with immense importance to American national identity which sets it apart from all other societies. It allowed the formation of the American dream and gave the American population something to take pride in through its conquering of the frontier.

## **Chapter Five: Transportation Evolution in Parks**

A defining aspect in achieving the American dream was the ability to move about freely and not be limited by transportation. The horse played a major role in attaining this mobility throughout history leading to expansion and more frequent travel for all levels of society. The physical use of the animal in the national parks has progressed greatly from its original function as a means of transportation for park rangers to its current use as a leisure activity for tourists. The evolving role of the horse is important in recognizing its true impact on society both culturally and environmentally, and is clearly seen through the lens of the western national parks. This iconic animal was initially a way of transportation and a beast of burden, one that allowed movement by either riding it or using it to pull a wagon. The rugged terrain of the national parks made navigation difficult, allowing for the horse to show its true importance in being able to overcome this rough terrain. As the need for this form of transportation disappeared in the 1920s with the introduction of the automobile, people found other ways to maintain the equine's prominence in society. This progression went from a necessary form of transportation to a form of simple pleasure as a leisure activity. This leisure activity found a lasting place within the national parks where people utilized the horse to experience nature firsthand through trail riding. It was not a necessary form of transportation, but instead provided a way for people to relax and submerge oneself in the natural environment, while simultaneously immersing themselves – as riders – in an exercise in American

cultural reproduction. This close connection to nature was what eventually made the national parks a popular destination for tourists.

The evolution of transportation has been a long process of advancements. In order to understand the horse in the western national parks, the preliminary forms of transportation in society must also be understood. The first form of transportation in society was simply walking from destination to destination. This was extremely tiring and the duration of one's trip was greatly drawn out. A person was limited in the distance in which someone could ultimately travel due to the amount of effort exerted in walking from one location to another. Traveling long distances was practically impossible which meant that societies stayed within the boundaries of their neighborhoods, limiting the interconnectedness of communities. This also limited the communication between societies. Walking did allow a person to be as one with the environment and the traveler got to experience the countryside first-hand. In this sense, the transformation of walking was similar to that of the horse in that it went from a necessary means of travel to an enjoyable activity. "Once walking was no longer a necessity, it became a luxury, a privilege for persons who had the time and interest to appreciate in detail the people and buildings, vegetation and wildlife, sights, sounds, and smells of a large-scale landscape."<sup>1</sup> As society modernized and industrialized, the environment changed drastically to no longer accommodate walking, just as it had the same effects on the use of horse riding within society. "The scale of the modern built environment has impinged most

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<sup>1</sup> William R. Siddall, 1987, "Transportation and the Experience of Travel," *Geographical Review* 77 (3) [American Geographical Society, Wiley]: 310.

seriously on the joys of foot travel; it is an environment constructed for space-consuming, rapidly moving motor vehicles.”<sup>2</sup> The same joys of foot travel can be said for “hoof” travel, which generated the necessity for trails in the national parks. Since the urban environment was no longer conducive to walking or hiking, or trail riding for that matter, the need for people to enjoy an untouched natural environment was on the rise. The act of walking or trail riding found a place once again in the national park environment.

Horseback riding was initially used as a way to get from one destination to another, and this method of transport proved to be much quicker than simply walking. Riding a horse required much less personal exertion, in turn allowing the rider to go for much longer distances. This eventually enabled people to travel further, connecting communities and increasing the amount of communication between different societies. The experiences a person had with his environment were expanded through the horse as a means of transportation. “Traveling on horseback is another good way to see the countryside, and in the days before modern transportation it was often less uncomfortable than jouncing over badly maintained roads in a stagecoach.”<sup>3</sup> The equine became the cornerstone of transportation. The animal was initially the, “...dominant mode of transportation for thousands of years. Horses were absolutely essential for the functioning of the nineteenth century city—for personal transportation, freight haulage, and even mechanical power.”<sup>4</sup> The horse was also used as a source of

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Morris, “From Horse Power to Horsepower,” *Access No. 30*, Spring 2007, 2, <http://www.uctc.net/access/30/Access%2030%20-%202002%20-%20Horse%20Power.pdf>.



fertilizer for crops, and its corpse became products which could be used by society.<sup>5</sup> As more people began to move into the cities the reliance on the equine became even more crucial.

The raw experience of riding a horse as a form of transportation then moved into the animal pulling a wagon or stagecoach to allow for one to travel without actually being on the back of the horse. “The stagecoach traveler was separated from his surroundings to a greater degree than was either the pedestrian or the equestrian.”<sup>6</sup> The use of the stagecoach allowed for increased transportation by the general public. “Prior to the 1869 completion of the transcontinental railroad, which linked the east and west coasts of America, travelers went cross country via stagecoaches. Passengers often traveled two days by train from New York City or other east coast cities to St. Louis, Missouri. In St. Louis, they boarded the stagecoach for the 25 day trip to San Francisco. The coach, which traveled up to 125 miles per day, was pulled by teams of four to six horses who were changed out every 10 miles.”<sup>7</sup> This type of transportation is what allowed people to begin to enjoy traveling more, in turn leading to the creation of the vacation destination. Instead of simply using travel as a way to get from one place to another since it took so much effort to either walk or ride a horse, the animal pulled a wagon or stagecoach allowed for families to travel together to destinations that were not necessarily essential, but were forms of enjoyment. The horse was a way to achieve leisure time. Being used as a form of

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<sup>5</sup>Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, “The Centrality of the Horse in the Nineteenth-Century American City,” from *The Making of Urban America*, ed. Raymond A. Mohl, (Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997), 106.

<sup>6</sup> Siddall, 1987, “Transportation and the Experience of Travel,” 310.

<sup>7</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horses in History.”

transportation necessary to leave the restrictions of a person's home, the horse found a role early on in modern society. When the idea of finding an escape from the everyday reality became common, it was then used as a way to transport families to their destinations. The ease of transportation using a horse allowed the family to experience a vacation or leisurely escape. The national parks found a new niche – catering to family vacation destinations, and families used their new found transportation to travel to these places. In 1883 a family visited Yellowstone National Park, "...in the ranch daughtery wagon accompanied by a four-horse provision wagon."<sup>8</sup> The horse acted as a necessary means of transportation so that the family could enjoy a much needed break from everyday life. By the 1920s, the automobile replaced the animal, allowing the families to escape from their realities without the ownership of the animal even being necessary.<sup>9</sup>

The horse can be clearly identified through its place in the cities of America, aside from its use in agriculture. It became a huge part of everyday life for busy city dwellers by the late 1800s. The use of the equine for transportation proved extremely beneficial to busy city life. "By 1890 New Yorkers took 297 horsecar rides per capita per year."<sup>10</sup> The horse helped to greatly increase productivity of those in the city by decreasing the amount of time it took people to travel to their destinations. The use of the animal outside of the city was diminished by the introduction of the automobile due to the drastic difference of

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<sup>8</sup> Rodd L. Wheaton, "Rustic Connotations: Furnishing National Park Hostelries," found in *Victorian Resorts and Hotels: Essays from a Victorian Society Autumn Symposium* (Philadelphia: The Victorian Society in America, 1982), 119.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>10</sup> Morris, "From Horse Power to Horsepower," 4.

time in which it took each to travel, but the place of the horse in the city was not so quickly replaced since the equine and the automobile traveled at nearly the same rate on the crowded streets. “In New York City in 1890 a horse drawn cab traveled at 6 miles per hour. In New York City in 1990 an automobile cab traveled at 6 miles per hour.”<sup>11</sup> The immediate advancements of the automobile were not as quick to define city life, therefore prolonging the horse’s use. At times these horsecar rides proved to be very dangerous because the cities were not appropriately set up for the horse-drawn carts. “In New York in 1900, 200 persons were killed by horses and horse-drawn vehicles. This contrasts with 344 auto-related fatalities in New York in 2003; given the modern city’s greater population, this means the fatality rate per capita in the horse era was roughly 75 percent higher than today. Data from Chicago show that in 1916 there were 16.9 horse-related fatalities for each 10,000 horse-drawn vehicles; this is nearly seven times the city’s fatality rate per auto in 1997.”<sup>12</sup> The immense danger from the animal in the 1900s was attributed to the fact that it had a mind of its own and could be easily spooked.<sup>13</sup> This applied to all horse-related situations including leisurely trail riding in the national parks.

The horse also affected the cities in the amount of maintenance required for its upkeep. If a person took into consideration the amount of food necessary to adequately feed the animal in the cities, the issue of horse nourishment arose. For example, “...each horse consumed the product of five acres of land, a footprint which could have produced enough to feed six to eight people. Probably

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<sup>11</sup> Equine Heritage Institute, “Horse Facts.”

<sup>12</sup> Morris, “From Horse Power to Horsepower,” 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

fifteen million acres were needed to feed the urban horse population...feeding the horse meant placing new land under cultivation, clearing it of its natural animal life and vegetation, and sometimes diverting water to irrigate it, with considerable negative effects on the natural ecosystem.”<sup>14</sup> Aside from the dangerous accidents that the equine caused, their proper nutrition was becoming an issue as well. This can be seen in both the urban and suburban landscapes, but showed itself more prominently in the cities. The benefits of using the horse as an accepted means of transportation also had negative effects that were seen early on in society.

Another of these major problems was what to do with all of the horse manure. “Experts of the day estimated that each horse produced between fifteen and thirty pounds of manure per day. For New York and Brooklyn, which had a combined horse population of between 150,000 and 175,000 in 1880...this meant that between three and four million pounds of manure were deposited on city streets and in city stables every day. Each horse also produced about a quart of urine daily, which added up to around 40,000 gallons per day for New York and Brooklyn.”<sup>15</sup> The issue of providing enough food for the equine was not the only problem with using it as a means of transportation. The animal produced a large amount of waste that the cities were not adequately equipped to deal with. This caused more environmental concerns and in turn health issues for city residents. The presence of manure also presents a problem in today’s society. The manure that the horse emits can have damaging effects on the national park environment and poses a problem to its use in an accepted leisure activity.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

The increased use of the animal also meant that people took advantage of the animal and potentially abused it. Animal cruelty became a pressing issue during this time period. “Due to the costs of feeding the animals and stabling them on expensive urban land, it made financial sense to rapidly work a small number of horses to death rather than care for a larger group and work them more humanely...In 1880, New York carted away nearly 15,000 dead equines from its streets, a rate of 41 per day.”<sup>16</sup> Animal abuse was not a new phenomenon and the increased presence of the horse within society created an outlet for those prone to abusing animals to take out their tendencies on it. The horse was a tool for travel and transportation meaning there was often times no emotional connection to the animal. This was not true in all cases, but for some the horse was simply a tool to increase productivity. The lack of emotional concern for the animal caused many horses to be overworked or malnourished.

Although the horse did serve as a way for people to enjoy free time, the majority of the population did not partake in this leisure activity until the introduction of the canal and later the railroads. One example of the introduction of the canal to America was in 1825 with the building of the Erie Canal. “The comfort, if not overdone, enabled a passenger to devote much of his attention to the passing scene. Most traveling prior to the canal and the railroad had been born of necessity; now it could be undertaken for pleasure...”<sup>17</sup> Theodore Dwight, nephew of the president of Yale University said, “...our canals often introduce us to the hearts of forests...the retreats of wild animals are almost

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>17</sup> Siddall, 1987, “Transportation and the Experience of Travel,” 310-11.

exposed to our view.”<sup>18</sup> The canal acted as yet another way to bring a person closer to nature in ways they would not have been able to experience prior to its introduction.

The introduction of the railroad expanded the emphasis on enjoying the scenery and environment, but in a new way. The railroad moved very fast and mostly over flat lands allowing the passengers to see glimpses of new areas that had not previously been seen by the mass public. The passengers were not able to get a full sense of these places since their glimpses were cut so short by the train’s speed. Thoreau said, “The cars never pause to look at it; yet I fancy that the engineers and firemen and brakemen, and those passengers who have a season ticket and see it often, are better men for the sight. The engineer does not forget...that he has beheld this vision of serenity once at least during the day.”<sup>19</sup> Railroads were also used to meet the increasing demands of growing cities and the urban population. “Living standards were skyrocketing—from 1800 to 1900, US per capita GDP rose from \$1,148 to \$4,676 (in 2000 dollars).”<sup>20</sup> This in turn meant that the number of goods being traded grew, increasing the need for the equine to transport those goods. Railroads lessened the need for the horse and in turn decreased its population within the cities. The incorporation of railroads proved to be an inadequate solution because every product shipped by the railroad required distribution by the equine on either end of the delivery. During the nineteenth century, the railroads usually owned the most horses within the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 312-13.

<sup>20</sup> Morris, “From Horse Power to Horsepower,” 3.

growing cities.<sup>21</sup> The railroad did not solve the problem that the horse posed within the cities since its required nutrition was still seen as a problem and the manure put off by it was still cluttering the streets.

When looking specifically at the transformation of the horse in national parks, the process is similar to that discussed above, but at a much slower rate than in the rest of society. Within the national parks themselves, the animal was used by the rangers to navigate the parks and keep up with the necessary maintenance. The rangers in the national parks used the horse as their main form of transportation. Stephen Mather required that all park rangers had to have a wide range of attributes such as a good character, being physically fit, being able to build trails, fight forest fires, have adequate survival experience, handle a firearm, and be able to ride a horse.<sup>22</sup> The horse was a necessity for maneuvering through the rough national park terrain and maintaining the upkeep. As well, the rangers could better complete their jobs as expected. Jobs were created within the parks in order to meet the demand for horses to assist in transportation. People like George Kinney and William F. Coffman saw the need for the horse within the national parks and used this calling as a way to make their living. “George Kinney and William F. Coffman owned and operated the stables and warehouse that kept Yosemite supplied with wagons, riding horses, and supplies. Prior to 1876, all travel to Yosemite was by horseback, but after the opening of the three

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>22</sup> “The Ranger System,” Public Broadcasting Service, last modified 2009, accessed February 3, 2016, <http://www.pbs.org/nationalparks/history/ep4/2/>.

roads, the stagecoach provided transit...Many men from ranching families near Yosemite served as guides, wranglers, and stage drivers.”<sup>23</sup>

Just as the transformation of the horse in society outside of the national parks occurred the use of it changed from being a necessary transportation tool to that of a relaxing leisure activity used by those of high enough economic standing that could afford one. The horse was used for trail riding by those who favored the hobby. The scenic trails within the national parks were altered to accommodate the act of riding a horse in order to better enjoy the environment and natural wonders. The rising popularity in trail riding as a leisure activity encompassed the natural beauty of the wilderness that the parks had to offer. “Parks provide a greater dividend because of their unique value in ‘ministering to the human mind and spirit.’ In these perplexing times when more and more Americans seek to find in the parks leisure time alternatives to their everyday world...this purpose and value is ever more significant.”<sup>24</sup> The formation of the leisure activity coincided with the up and coming prevalence of the automobile to be used as a person’s main source of transportation.

The greatest evolution of the horse in society as well as in the western national park occurred with the introduction of the automobile which significantly decreased the need for the equine within society and therefore allowed it to be used in completely different ways than originally intended. Automobiles became the accepted means of transportation allowing for a wide range of movement not previously available with horses, canals, or even railroads. At this point leisure

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<sup>23</sup> Randanovich, *Images of America: Yosemite Valley*, 28.

<sup>24</sup> Tilden, *Interpreting our Heritage*, xi.



activity increased once again due to the ease in which people could travel to new places. The first automobiles allowed the travelers to experience the environment they were driving through since the transport was open. “The driver, unlike the railroad passenger, could stop anytime to investigate some particularly appealing site and could change his route as interest dictated. In short, he was free to explore.”<sup>25</sup> This new-found freedom made traveling more accessible to a wider range of people in turn increasing the amount of the population that could experience a vacation. In the national parks specifically, the introduction of the automobile was rapidly accepted and thus flourished. “The number of cars entering national parks, for example, increased from 15,000 in 1916 to nearly 900,000 in 1931.”<sup>26</sup>

The first automobile to enter Yosemite National Park was in 1900. It was owned by Oliver Lippincott who was accompanied by his personal mechanic, Edward E. Russell.<sup>27</sup> The two conquered the rough terrain in a vehicle called a Locomobile, created by the Locomobile Company in Bridgeport, Connecticut. As the car was the very first to enter into the Yosemite Valley, people were weary of its presence in the park. In addition to the surprised residents of the valley, the animals in the park were also caught off guard by the presence of the automobile. Johnston quoted Lippincott saying, “At night the mere sight of the Locomobile’s headlights and the sound of its shrill electric bell were sufficient to secure its right of way of every other vehicle for horses were willing to jump over the bank or

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<sup>25</sup> Siddall, 1987, “Transportation and the Experience of Travel,” 314.

<sup>26</sup> Fischer, “Changes in Leisure Activities, 1890-1940,” 455.

<sup>27</sup> Hank Johnston, *Yosemite’s Yesterdays* (Yosemite, California: Flying Spur Press, 2014), 7.

climb a tree to make way for us.”<sup>28</sup> The introduction of the automobile changed many factors relating to the national parks including who could visit them, how quickly a person could get to their destination, and how frequently people could travel. In discussing the use of the automobile in the parks, Johnston again quoted Lippincott saying, “The unassuming little machine will probably inaugurate a new era in the mode of conveyance into the Yosemite...Cleanliness and comfort will be better subserved by swifter modes of travel. But whatever the new style of conveyance, it cannot detract from the sublimity of the great Valley or lessen the majesty of the eternal hills.”<sup>29</sup>

The debate over accepting automobiles in Yosemite National Park was eventually put to rest although people remained reluctant and extremely cautious of the vehicles. In October of 1912, there was a National Parks Conference held in Yosemite to discuss the future of automobiles in the parks. Johnston explained, “When John Muir was called upon for his opinion as to whether automobiles should be allowed in Yosemite, Muir, with the same foresight he had shown in his environmental views, answered that he believed the era of the automobile had arrived.”<sup>30</sup> Muir was reluctant to accept the incorporation of the automobile into the national parks, but he realized the innovations and advancements the vehicles would offer. Muir explained, “All signs indicate automobile victory and doubtless, under certain precautionary restrictions, these useful, progressive, blunt-nosed mechanical beetles will hereafter be allowed to puff their way into all the parks and mingle their gas-breath with the breath of pines and waterfalls, and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 15.

from the mountaineer's standpoint, with but little harm or good..."<sup>31</sup> The acceptance of automobiles into the parks increased the amount of travelers. In 1907 there were 127 automobiles that made their way into Yosemite. "Auto visitation increased to 739 cars in 1914, 2,270 in 1915, and 4,043 in 1916."<sup>32</sup> As the years progressed, the number of vehicles into Yosemite quickly rose, "...from 49,229 cars in 1925 to 137,296 in 1927. Today, more than a million motor vehicles enter the Park every year, around the calendar, with no letup in sight."<sup>33</sup>

The introduction of the automobile created a need for updated roads and accessibility to the national parks. "In the 1890s improvements in the internal combustion engine, legal and political developments which severely restricted the power of cities to regulate the types of traffic on their streets (won by bicycle advocates), the aforementioned invention of traffic rules, and smooth new asphalt street surfaces paved the way for the private automobile."<sup>34</sup> Yosemite National Park legally admitted vehicles to its location in 1913. According to Pavlik, "A stunning ninety percent increase in travel to the national park in 1915, occasioned by the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in nearby San Francisco, provided the immediate impetus to improve roads built originally for horse-drawn wagons."<sup>35</sup> This road work was very slow and drawn out, causing automobile users to have to travel on many unpaved and dusty roads making the trip unenjoyable. It was not until 1923 when Superintendent W.B. Lewis called for

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>34</sup> Morris, "From Horse Power to Horsepower," 8.

<sup>35</sup> Pavlik, "In Harmony with the Landscape," 186.

the road system as a whole to be reconstructed that this unpleasant journey into and through Yosemite improved.<sup>36</sup>

Pavlik explained, “In 1925 the federal Bureau of Public Roads and the National Park Service approved an interagency agreement providing for the engineering and construction of new roads within all national parks, a function that the Department of Transportation continues to this day.”<sup>37</sup> These improvements were done in such a way that the roads would cause as little harm and alter the environment in as little a manner as possible. “In Yosemite, the resident park superintendent, engineer, and landscape architect had final say over the location of such roads, and they took great interest in the placement, design, and construction for minimal impact on the landscape.”<sup>38</sup> Of course as careful as the planners were in their road placement and design, they were unable to foresee the true impact that automobiles would have on the national parks. With automobiles came an increase in pollution and sanitation issues that plagued the national parks, specifically Yosemite.

On June 23, 1940, a ceremony was held to celebrate the opening of the Big Oak Flat Road which connected Yosemite Valley with Tioga Road. It was considered a major step in enhancing automobile transportation in the park. “An entertaining and unusual ‘ribbon cutting’ took the form of a log-sawing contest between two teams of Civilian Conservation Corps enrollees, who wielded cross-cut saws as two camps raced side by side to cut the large log symbolically blocking the roadway...As the log was severed, so was one of the last obstacles to

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

free and complete automobile access to the park.”<sup>39</sup> It was ironic that the very thing standing in the way of advancement for automobile access was nature. The park officials had been so clear that they were constructing the roads in order to protect the environment the best they could, and yet massive trees were destroyed as a form of celebration to help the automobile gain access to the parks and in turn destroy the natural environment even further. “Upon its inception, the National Park Service, under the leadership of Stephen T. Mather and Horace M. Albright, immediately recognized the importance of this newly mobile middle class to the success of the national parks...Mather and Albright, along with Yosemite’s first two superintendents, W.B. Lewis and C.G. Thomson, knew that the public would follow any road into the ‘wilderness,’ as long as it was paved and there were facilities enroute and at their destination.”<sup>40</sup> Runte sums up the inclusion of the automobile in his conclusion, “The roadways leading to America’s national parks may be paved with great expectations, but those same highways are an ugly and revealing kaleidoscope of how little the United States respects what it does not put behind a fence.”<sup>41</sup>

The automobile proved to have a lasting place in American society, with both positive and negative implications for the public and the environment. “In 1900, 4,192 cars were sold in the US; by 1912 that number had risen to 356,000. In 1912, traffic counts in New York showed more cars than horses for the first time. The equine was not replaced all at once, but function by function. Freight haulage was the last bastion of horse-drawn transportation; the motorized truck

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 194.

<sup>41</sup> Runte, "The National Parks in Idealism and Reality," 76.

finally supplanted the horse cart in the 1920s.”<sup>42</sup> This increase in automobiles decreased the use and prevalence of the animal in society causing a need to repurpose the equine. The acceptance of the horse within society evolved over centuries. The automobile quickly replaced the equine in a much shorter amount of time.

The horse, aside from its place in the history of transportation, served as an important symbol in relation to the national parks as well. It was a symbol of the Old West and in encompassing the genuine aspects of the western environment, it served to place people closer to nature. The horse allowed for, “...voyages of self-discovery, rites of passage in which he escaped mainstream America.”<sup>43</sup> People wanted a real wilderness experience, similar to the one they grew to love in the old western movies and television shows, leading to the camping trips in the national parks. The idea of camping put the equine in yet another position within the society. With the onset of tourists camping within the national parks, trail riding became a leisure activity. “Horseback riding, either in the valley or along the trails leading to the High Sierra, was led by wranglers...As young men, Billy Wilson and Fred Wass gathered groups of riders in front of Yosemite Falls for a day trip to Little Yosemite or some other point.”<sup>44</sup> People could ride the horse throughout the parks as a way to see nature up close and personal. NPS historian David Louter said, “Americans in the twentieth century would encounter parks primarily through autos; they would interpret the park

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<sup>42</sup> Morris, “From Horse Power to Horsepower,” 8.

<sup>43</sup> Shaffer, *See America First*, 3.

<sup>44</sup> Randanovich, *Images of America: Yosemite Valley*, 68.

landscape from a road and through the windshield.”<sup>45</sup> Trail riding the horse allowed people to view nature through a different lens. The equine could expand the experiences of camping vacationers at the national parks beyond being seen as simply, “...places of windshield wilderness.”<sup>46</sup> The horse proved its interconnectedness with nature from its transformation as a primary means of production and use of transportation to its use as a leisure activity. The impact on American culture as well as the American environment was monumental and lasting.

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<sup>45</sup> Susan Sessions Rugh, *Are We There Yet?: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations* (Kansas: The University Press of Kansas, 2008), 135.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

## Conclusion

American culture as well as the American environment has been distinctively influenced by the presence of the horse in society. “Horses are something people have close physical contact with, something they touch, press against with their bodies. Something that is alive, first of all, something big, powerful, and fast-moving. Something not human but not beyond human control, dangerous, even potentially lethal, but ductile to the human will.”<sup>1</sup> The place, meaning, and changing role of the horse in American history can be seen physically through its impact on the natural environment and its place in the history of transportation. The horse can also be analyzed culturally in terms of its changing role in modern American memory. It may have declined in importance as a means of production or a beast of burden, but it has become increasingly relevant and important culturally, becoming in a sense a sort of American artifact central to notions of American authenticity and the Western experience. “It is the fact that the body of the horse stands beneath the body of the rider, between the human being and earth. Horses express a need for connection to nature, to the wild.”<sup>2</sup>

As the field of environmental history incorporated the Romantic ideology as well as the transcendentalist approach, viewing animals as important topics of study became prevalent. These lenses through which to study history gave the horse new importance. Prominent thinkers such as Thoreau and Muir showed the importance of respecting the environment instead of trying to dominate nature, and seeing plants and animals on an equal level with humanity. For too long

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<sup>1</sup> Tompkins, *West of Everything*, 93.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



people had believed, "...the notion that the bountiful resources of nature are won, not given."<sup>3</sup> Thoreau and Muir believed that nature deserved more admiration. Reaching a deeper sense of self and allowing a person to go beyond all the senses to understand nature created the notion of the horse to mean more than simply its contribution to society through work. It became an embodiment of the emotions and actions of conquering of the frontier, giving a sense of pride and helping to boost American national identity. The horse helped to create the American dream through an increase in mobility, in turn creating new opportunities and expanding horizons. Popular culture, the Western films, radio programs, and television shows created a perception of the equine for American society that left a lasting impression in its memory. These programs used the horse as a means to attain justice, as a way to conquer the wilderness, and as a faithful companion to the American cowboy.

The horse in western national parks over the course of the past century or so has undergone the full transformation from basic transport engine to an important component of the modern mythology of an authentic western experience, but at a much slower rate than with the rest of American society. Through this process, the environmental impact of the animal has also transformed through the years. This impression can be clearly seen through the western national parks, specifically Yosemite National Park and its changing use of the horse within its boundaries. The equine has altered the environment within the national parks. The impact is not to the same degree as the use of automobiles

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<sup>3</sup> Robert W. Righter, *The Battle Over Hetch Hetchy: America's Most Controversial Damn and the Birth of Modern Environmentalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.

and machinery, but none the less it is an impact worth noting and trying to minimize. Through the use of the animal on popular trails as a leisure activity and a way for tourists to spend their vacation time, it has damaged different trails and the foliage in those specific locations within the parks. The repetitive riding of the animal down the same paths causes damage to the ground as well as prevents foliage that would naturally grow in that area from being able to flourish. The waste from the horse can pollute water sources. The biological makeup of it sets it apart from all other animals with its increased mobility and agility as well as its ability to eat foliage that is closer to the ground than other animals. Although other animals, both wild and domestic, have lasting impacts on the national park environment, the horse provides an interesting perspective due to its connection with the American culture.

As Runte has noted, “The national park *idea* may be alive and well. It is in managing the parks and translating their idealism into our daily lives that we as Americans are still coming up short.”<sup>4</sup> The horse has left its hoof print on the national parks in a variety of ways throughout history. As it changed from being a necessary means of transportation to a leisure activity for those lucky enough to experience it, the horse within the national parks changed as well. Whether it was used as a way for the rangers to navigate the vast landscape of the parks, a way for people to get to their vacation destinations, or a way for tourists to bring themselves closer to nature by enjoying a trail ride, the detrimental impact that the horse has been causing in these national parks can be clearly seen and needs to be taken into consideration. Just as the equine proved damaging within the cities

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<sup>4</sup> Runte, “The National Parks in Idealism and Reality,” 76.

before the transition to the automobile, the biological makeup of the horse has left its mark on the natural environment. In admitting to the environmental damage that the animal is capable of, appropriate measures can be put into place to help limit the actual destruction that is done on our national parks, preserving their beauty for generations to come.

No other animal has had such a significant impact on American culture and environment. The horse was a catalyst for work in its abilities to enhance a person's production in agriculture and deliveries. It was influential in transportation for its drastic impact on the way in which people traveled and the diverse terrains a person could overcome. It was significant in the perception of American national identity through its embodiment of westward expansion, the conquest of the wild frontier, and even through its use in the national parks. The horse contributed significantly to shaping the leisure activities of the growing middle class. It was a defining factor in American society itself in so many different ways that go hand in hand with the development of American civilization. Whether the effects be cultural or environmental, it is undisputable that the horse has left an indelible hoof print in the American experience.

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