

A FILM BY KEN BURNS
THE NATIONAL PARKS
America's Best Idea

**UNTOLD STORIES FROM
AMERICA'S NATIONAL PARKS**

BY SUSAN SHUMAKER

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RESEARCH

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For more information, visit

www.pbs.org/nationalparks/untold-stories/

*With thanks to the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund
for its generous support of this project.*

UNTOLD STORIES IN THE NATIONAL PARKS

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FOREWORD

The story of our national parks is the story of America. It is the story of our never-ending struggle to live up to the democratic ideal that these parks belong to all of us. Most of all, it is the story of our determination to protect and preserve those places that define our history and nourish our collective soul.

Getting this story right—and showing how individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds have shaped the national parks over time—is essential to fostering a broader understanding among Americans of who we are.

This is why the trustees and staff of the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund were excited when we first heard that Ken Burns and Dayton Duncan were planning a major film about the national parks. Even though the Fund's support for the national parks is focused on projects in the San Francisco Bay Area, we saw this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to inspire tens of millions of people across the country. We had seen firsthand, through work on the transformation of Crissy Field in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, how people of varying interests and backgrounds will rally in support of the parks if given the chance. And we were reminded in that work, which transformed a former military base into a 100-acre urban park that attracts 1 million visitors each year, how important it is to create an understanding among all Americans that the national parks belong to everyone.

In our early conversations with Ken and Dayton, it immediately became clear to us that we shared common values. They understood that a more complete account would require extra effort and that the story would need to reflect how diverse groups of Americans have played a part in the expansion and preservation of the parks. And, they knew that the story would need to be presented in a way that would help people understand that the national parks are a resource for all Americans to enjoy, to nurture, and to protect.

Of course, it wasn't just the values that Ken and Dayton brought to this project that made us eager to support it. Together with their colleagues at Florentine Films, they are preeminent filmmakers and master storytellers with a unique ability to help so many of us find meaning in the past as we face the opportunities and challenges of today.

The Haas, Jr. Fund's support for the film, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, included an ambitious outreach effort designed to ensure that this story engages as broad and diverse an audience as possible. Thanks to Susan Shumaker's insightful work and research for this book, Americans can know the inspiring stories of people of color whose own histories are entwined with that of our national parks.

The Haas, Jr. Fund also wants to recognize the work of WETA and Anne Harrington in bringing this wide-ranging outreach project to fruition. Anne has a great gift for bringing people together to pursue a common vision and for providing audiences with multiple ways to engage with and learn from stories like that of our national parks.

Universal access to the parks, and engagement of diverse and underserved populations, are important goals in the evolution of our national parks. All of us at the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund wish to convey our deep appreciation to all who work in the national parks for your role in making the parks a resource for everyone. We hope the stories in this book provide inspiration for compiling your own community's stories about the parks where you work and about the people who make them what they are today.

The stories detailed in this book, and in the film as well, offer new and vital perspectives on the history of the national parks—and of America, too. By showing how the national parks have shaped the lives and histories of so many diverse people in this country, all of us can help Americans see a part of themselves in these special places. And we can build an even stronger base of support for our national parks as a vital resource for all.

IRA S. HIRSCHFIELD, PRESIDENT
Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund

INTRODUCTION

In January of 2004, during the early stages of making *The National Parks: America's Best Idea* for PBS, we were filming in Yellowstone National Park when two wonderful things occurred. One was capturing stunning footage of the world's first national park in the depths of winter—when the bison are covered with frost, every thermal feature seems even more alive in the sub-zero air, and, because of the cold and the snow and the paucity of tourists, we seemed to have this Wonderland pretty much to ourselves. The second was that we didn't have it entirely to ourselves. Over dinner one night at the Old Faithful Snow Lodge, we met Ira Hirschfield and struck up a conversation about our project. He and some friends decided to brave the arctic temperatures and join us the next morning for a dawn shoot at Yellowstone Lake. The following night, we shared dinner and conversation again.

From that chance encounter grew a remarkable partnership between Florentine Films and the Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund that has been one of the most satisfying in our quarter century of making documentary films for public television. Under Ira's leadership, not only did the Haas Jr. Fund become one of our film's underwriters, it challenged us to dig deeper in our research about the history of the national parks—and then offered the means to make it possible.

For lack of a better name, we called it the “Untold Stories” project, not because the stories involved were entirely unknown, but because, for a variety of reasons, they had often been either overlooked in many retellings of park history or many of the details had never been fully fleshed out. An initial grant from the Fund allowed us to hire Susan Shumaker, a skilled researcher, to fill that void. This book represents the fruits of Susan's labors—and it is testament to her professionalism. It is intended to be presented to every national park for their use in telling a fuller story of the park idea and its contents will be made available to other educational organizations through other means.

The research also formed the basis for a number of stories that made their way into our six-episode, twelve-hour documentary series—which means those “untold stories” will be now be told, we hope, to millions of American viewers; and likewise to readers who pick up our companion book published by Alfred A. Knopf. But from this seed, something even bigger has grown.

The Haas Jr. Fund then presented us with a second grant for educational outreach unprecedented in its ambition for any of our film projects. With the second grant, we have produced a 45-minute film, *This Is America*, which tells the larger sweep of park history entirely through the lens of these stories. It, too, is being given to the National Park Service. In addition, a series of five “mini-documentaries,” directed and produced by our colleague Roger Sherman, were created for the park service's use. Our entire twelve-hour series has been translated into Spanish. And, in advance of our series' broadcast in September 2009, an array of PBS stations are partnering with their local national parks to hold events specifically targeting traditionally underserved audiences.

None of this would have been possible without the Haas Jr. Fund. We are profoundly grateful to the Fund for its generosity, to Jennie Lehua Watson for her steady guidance, and of course to Ira Hirschfield for his vision, first expressed one winter's night in Yellowstone many years ago. We also wish to thank Anne Harrington of WETA-TV for her hard work in overseeing all the elements of the grant.

As we say in our film, the story of the national parks, the story of a uniquely American idea, is much more than the story of the most stunning landscapes and sacred places in our country. At its heart, it is the story of people: people from every conceivable background—rich and poor; famous and unknown; soldiers and scientists; natives and newcomers; idealists, artists and entrepreneurs. It is the story of people who were willing to devote themselves to saving some precious portion of the land they loved—and in doing so, reminded their fellow citizens of the full meaning of democracy. This book introduces you to some of them.

KEN BURNS
DAYTON DUNCAN

OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

Background

Florentine Films began research on the Untold Stories project in February 2005. Our goal has been to discover stories highlighting underserved and underrepresented communities in our nation's national park system. We have succeeded in this endeavor beyond our expectations, finding and telling more than a dozen compelling stories that span the American experience—historically, geographically, and ethnically. Each of these stories is told in one of our films: *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, *This Is America*, or one of five “min-documentaries” exploring efforts to bring underserved populations into the parks today.

Methodology

In the initial months of the project, our primary goal was to build a working relationship between Florentine Films, WETA, and our partners in the parks: the National Park Service (NPS) and the National Park Foundation (NPF). In early February 2005, I traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with members of the NPF staff. The meeting focused on strategies for gathering information and establishing contacts with key Park Service informants.

In the months following, I consulted with Park Service personnel, posted information on Inside NPS, the Service's intranet forum, and—with former NPF staff member Gerrard Jolly—wrote articles about the project for *Heritage Matters*, the publication of the NPS National Center for Cultural Resources, and *Arrowhead*, the magazine of the NPS Employees and Alumni Association. At the 2005 George Wright Society Conference in Philadelphia, Gerrard and I hosted an informal open house, inviting conference participants to stop in with ideas and information.

These efforts were very successful, both in raising awareness of the project among Park Service personnel and in generating ideas for possible stories to include. From these, Dayton Duncan selected the final group of stories upon which my work would be focused.

I conducted our research using traditional and online methods, combined with extensive telephone interviewing and the occasional field visit. With the help of librarians and others in national parks and more than a dozen private and public archives, I unearthed hundreds of images to support the stories, scanning and archiving the best of these in high-resolution digital format. While on location, I interviewed key players in the stories—including Sue Kunitomi Embrey, Shelton Johnson, Gerard Baker, Kimi Kodani Hill (Chiura Obata's granddaughter), and Pamela Wright Lloyd (George Melendez Wright's daughter)—and local historians.

When all sources had been consulted and research gathered, I wrote a series of reports and sent them to Dayton for review. These reports, totaling more than 300 pages of finished text, have been reproduced here in their entirety, with very little modification. To amplify the findings, I included with each submission to Dayton a wealth of supporting materials—articles,

passages from books, photographs (digital and print), transcripts of interviews, bibliographies, and so on. And, in the summer of 2007, I began exploring a new batch of stories, focused on people and programs working to bring underserved populations into the parks today.

These materials—the research, reports, taped interviews and photographs—represent a body of work that has been used extensively in myriad ways: for the film, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*; in WETA's associated outreach efforts; and by our partners, the National Park Foundation and the National Park Service. They also serve as the backbone for the five mini-documentaries and for *This Is America*.

UNTOLD STORIES

The following are brief outlines of the research undertaken as part of the Untold Stories project. More complete reports follow.

Segregation in the National Parks / 1870s–1964

*Hot Springs National Park, George Washington Birthplace National Monument,
Shenandoah National Park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park*



Sign at Lewis Mountain, Shenandoah National Park;
Harpers Ferry Center, Historic Photo Collection

In 1939, Lewis Mountain Negro Area opened for visitors to Shenandoah National Park. It was the first fully segregated and fully realized “colored” facility in the NPS system, boasting a lodge, dining room, cabins, campground, and all the amenities. Lewis Mountain was in operation throughout the early 1940s, when African American music was as popular among whites as blacks, and the lodge quickly earned a reputation as “the place to be,” with a hot band playing Boogie Woogie hits every Friday night and reportedly the best food in the park. The joint, as they say, was jumpin’ and, at night, the lodge became the first *unofficially* desegregated facility in the park. After World War II, under the official direction of Secretary of Interior Harold Ickes, park staff began quietly integrating Shenandoah, a move that placed the National Park Service in the vanguard of federal desegregation policy.

“Segregation in the National Parks” traces the Park Service’s attitude toward Jim Crow laws in the southern parks from the 1870s through the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964. In particular, the report looks at four specific sites in the system—Hot Springs National Park, George Washington Birthplace National Monument, Shenandoah National Park, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park—and how segregation and desegregation were handled in each.

Adina De Zavala / 1889-1955

San Antonio Missions National Historical Park

In the spring of 1902, a young Tejana schoolteacher walked through the streets of San Antonio with a horse and cart, gathering donations of building materials for the restoration of San José church. With this small collection of supplies, a handful of women, and enough money to pay workers for fifty-four days, Adina De Zavala and her group, the De Zavala Daughters, began the preservation of San Antonio’s Spanish Colonial missions.

“Miss Adina” never shied away from a challenge. When she learned that Mission San Antonio de Valero—better known as the Alamo—was to be demolished, she barricaded herself within, daring the wrecking crew to tear it down around her. She believed that the preservation of historical structures was critical to our future. “If people—especially children—can actually see the door through which some noble man or woman passed,” she said, “they’ll be impressed, they’ll remember, they’ll be inspired to read everything they can find. Inevitably, they’ll be filled with high ideals, the desire to emulate.”

Today, four of the city’s missions—Concepción, San José, San Juan, and Espada—make up San Antonio National Historical Park. They have grown into thriving centers for San Antonio’s Latino community, hosting Spanish and English language masses throughout the week, celebrating traditional Hispanic festivals year-round, and educating 50,000 school students annually. The report highlights how the work of one woman, at a time when historical preservation was focused exclusively on European/white history, brought attention to the multiple ethnic heritages of our nation and, ultimately, saved a community and religious center for generations of Americans.



Adina De Zavala on the steps of the Alamo with some of her “Alamo Defenders;” *Adina De Zavala Papers*, The Center for American History, University of Texas at Austin, CNo8640



Israel "Parson" Jones
Historical Museum of Southern Florida

*Israel "Parson" Jones
and Sir Lancelot Jones / 1892–1997
Biscayne National Park*

"This," wrote historian Vincent Gilpin, "is the story of one of the most remarkable men I ever met—a negro laborer, without education or help, who by sheer force of character achieved home, family, friends, fortune, and leadership."

That man was Israel Lafayette Jones, born in 1858 in Raleigh, NC, most likely into slavery. Known as "the Parson," Israel traveled to southern Florida in the late 1800s bringing with him vast intelligence, an upbeat, jovial personality, and ambition as wide open as the bay. Expanding upon his skills as a boat handler and agriculturalist, he purchased land and effectively launched and operated a pineapple- and lime-growing business. He accumulated significant landholdings, including three verdant islands in the midst of sparkling Biscayne Bay.

His son—whom he named for the Arthurian Sir Lancelot—was born on a small fishing boat in the middle of the bay. Lance would call its shallow waters home for more than ninety years. He farmed, fished, and guided the nation's elite through its backwaters, teeming with aquatic life.

Despite tremendous pressure to sell his family's islands to developers, Lance instead made a deal with the U.S. Government, for a fraction of the potential profit, and his family's three keys formed the backbone of what is now Biscayne National Park.

"Some people would have liked to make this place the No. 2 Miami Beach," Lance said, "but I think it's good for people to have somewhere that they can go to leave the hustle and bustle behind and get out into the quietude of nature. I like the name 'monument.' It means that things here are going to stay pretty much as they are today."



Sir Lancelot Jones *The Miami Herald*

*Federico Sisneros / 1899–1988**Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument*

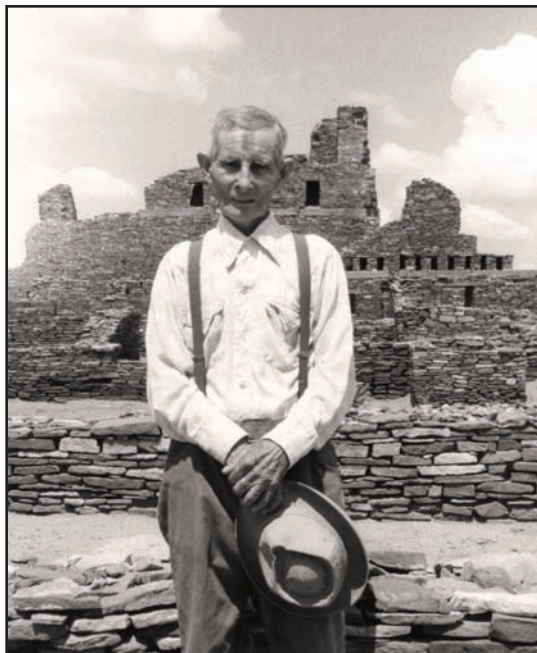
Federico Sisneros was born in 1894, the fourth of seven children. The Sisneros family home sat in a small grove of poplar trees about a quarter of a mile down the road from the ruins of San Gregorio de Abó, a colonial Spanish mission built between 1629 and 1659, and the more ancient Tompiro pueblo, first constructed around 1100 AD.

When Federico was just five years old, his father gave him a big responsibility, placing the ruins of San Gregorio and Tompiro pueblo in the young boy's care. Federico's job was to keep the family's sheep from licking the old stones for salt, an activity that would eventually destroy the ancient walls. San Gregorio, his father told him, was holy ground. "This has always been considered a holy place to my family," Sisneros told reporters. "That is the reason my daddy told me to take care of the church. It is a place of prayer, a blessed place."

For nearly nine decades, Federico cared for the ruins at Abó. When the property was transferred to the National Park Service in 1980, Federico—or Fred, as he was known to NPS employees—stayed on as a ranger, living next to the mission ruins, as always. "I belong here," Fred explained. "It would be nice, of course, to be buried here, too. This is my place. My retirement is going to be when I go to the other world." True to his word, Fred worked until the day he died, March 12, 1988, just four days shy of his 94th birthday. He was buried in the shade of a juniper tree, overlooking the ruins to which he had devoted his life.

*Charles Young / 1903**Sequoia & General Grant National Parks*

On August 31, 1889, Charles Young graduated 49th out of 49, two months after the rest of his class at West Point Military Academy. He had had a tough time at West Point; racism was endemic to the school, but Young was a fighter.

Federico Sisneros *Harpers Ferry Center, Historic Photo Collection*Charles Young *Harpers Ferry Center, Historic Photo Collection*

He was also a poet and a musician and on that day became the third African American cadet ever to graduate from the academy. With the entrenchment of Jim Crow, he would also be the last—until 1936, nearly half a century later.

In late 1902, after commanding the legendary all-black “buffalo soldier” troops of the Ninth Cavalry in the Philippines, Young led his men home to San Francisco’s Presidio for some much needed r-and-r. There, the men were given their next assignment: Guard duty in Sequoia and General Grant National Parks.

Under Acting Superintendent Young’s leadership, the buffalo soldiers were enormously successful. They not only kept the park free from poachers and ranchers (whose grazing sheep destroyed the parks’ natural habitats), but they completed the first wagon road into the Giant Forest of Sequoia, a feat no superintendent before Young had been able to accomplish. Young celebrated with a feast for his men, nearby residents, and California state dignitaries, held inside the Forest itself. Company clerk Sergeant Nicholas described the festivities:

Large logs served as tables covered with bleached cotton tablecloths. Small Fruit Baskets, filled with Fried Chicken, Ham and Cheese Sandwiches, and assorted Fresh Fruits of the season, were [served] on Picks, Shovels, and Spades, and passed along to the guests to help themselves. Beer (pint bottles) [and] Hot Coffee was served with the food.

Captain Young composed a little Poem on Cards pasted in Redwood Bark as a holder with the following Words:

After the Forest Road was made,
We sat beneath the Redwood Shade,
And Feasted from Boxes laid,
On well-worked Shovel, Pick, and Spade.”



George Masa North Carolina Collection,
Pack Memorial Public Library, Asheville, NC

George Masa / 1918–1933
Great Smoky Mountains National Park

Born in Osaka, Japan, Masahara Iizuka immigrated to America in the early 1900s. When he finally settled in the mountain town of Asheville, North Carolina, he took a new American name, George Masa, to go along with his new life. “This is a mountainous area,” Masa wrote in his journal. “It will be cool enough to require a blanket in the autumn. No mosquitoes! An excellent place to live; nothing can be better. Now if only I make a lot of money!”

Masa never got rich—in fact, he died a pauper—but he did find his life’s passion:

The Great Smoky Mountains. Through his breathtaking photography of the region, Masa played a critical role in the creation of the national park, matching wordless images of the mountains' beauty with promotional text written by his friend, Horace Kephart. Together, these two men—outsiders who had come to the mountains seeking a refuge from society—published piece after piece in praise of the Smokies, and the beauty and solitude found on its wooded slopes.

Marian Anderson and Martin Luther King, Jr.:
The Lincoln Memorial as Civil Rights Stage / 1920–1968
Lincoln Memorial

Marian Anderson's 1939 performance on the Washington Mall—after the Daughters of the American Revolution denied her the right to perform in Constitution Hall—and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech remain two of the most galvanizing and inspirational events in twentieth century American history. Both took place on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, with the colossal visage of our nation's 14th president brooding over the performers' shoulders.

This report traces the evolution of the Lincoln Memorial as a staging ground for African American civil rights demonstrations. Built in the first decades of the 20th century, the Memorial was envisioned as a symbol of Union solidarity and Lincoln's role as emancipator was downplayed, both in the building's carvings and during its dedication on May 30, 1922. African American journalists of the time were outraged by the omission, including the editor of a black newspaper, the *Chicago Defender*. He urged a boycott of the Memorial, writing, "With song, prayer, bold and truthful speech, with faith in God and country, later on let us dedicate the temple thus far only opened." Seventeen years later, Miss



MLK and Park Service Ranger Ed Footmon
Harpers Ferry Center, Historic Photo Collection

Anderson's soaring contralto and Interior Secretary Harold Icke's opening remarks achieved that end and marked the beginning of the Memorial's use as a civil rights stage.

The Matsushitas and the Seattle Camera Club / 1924–1944
Mount Rainier National Park

In late 1924, a time when Asians faced prejudice—and sometimes open hostility—on the West Coast, a group of Japanese Americans gathered in Seattle to establish the city's first photography club. The 39 charter members were all of Japanese birth. One of their favorite photographic subjects was nearby Mount Rainier.



The Matsushitas skiing on Mount Rainier
*University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections,
Matsushita Photograph Collection PH Coll. 162*

Iwao Matsushita, a club founder, had immigrated to Seattle in 1919. He worked his way up to top management in a Japanese-owned business. His only day off each week was Sunday and that was the day he devoted to his “holy mountain.”

As part of the Untold Stories research, parts of Iwao’s journal were translated. “When the weekend comes around I get restless,” he wrote. “At night I bring maps of Mt. Rainier [into bed with me] and fall asleep looking at them. Even when it’s time to depart for a trip, I cannot stay in bed any longer and get up before anyone else, preparing for the departure. Sunday is a day people sleep in, but in our house we always get up early. I can’t wait to go hiking again!”

By the mid-1930s, Iwao and his wife Hanaye had visited Mount Rainier more than a hundred times, learning to ski in order to enjoy the park in all seasons. In August of 1940, Iwao was offered a transfer to the home office of his company in Japan. Rather than accept, he submitted his resignation, citing his love of the mountain

and his friendship with many Americans. “I have visited Mt. Rainier, my lover, more than 190 times,” Iwao concluded. “I cannot leave Seattle when I think of the beautiful views of Mount Rainier.” With the outbreak of World War II the following year, he and Hanaye were sent to separate internment camps. Their memories of the mountain they called “Mother” sustained them during their incarceration.



Wright in Yosemite *Pamela Wright Lloyd*

George Melendez Wright / 1927–1936

National Park Service System

The son of a sea captain and an El Salvadoran mother, George Wright was instrumental in pushing the Park Service to pay more attention to preserving the flora and fauna of the parks, not just their scenery. “The thrill of being in the same meadow with an elk, no fence or bar between, reaches everyone, young or old,” Wright said.

“Without the scurry and scratch of a chipmunk along the bark or the call of a jay and the flash of its blue, the high mountain and the deep gorge would be cold, dead indeed. The visitor would not linger long after his first comprehensive gaze at awesome scenery if the vista did not include the intimate details of those living things, the plants, the animals that live on them, and the animals that live on those animals.”

In May of 1930, a youthful Wright and two graduate student colleagues set out in a Buick Roadster, outfitted for prolonged periods of fieldwork, to begin the first wildlife survey of the national parks. What followed was an intensive period of activity in which Wright published his findings and launched, using his own money, a service-wide program to protect and study wildlife in the parks.

Wright was killed in an automobile accident on February 25, 1936, at the age of 31. His public career had lasted less than ten years. Wright's death devastated the Park Service's fledgling Wildlife Division, but the movement he had started did not die, resurfacing decades later to become an important part of the national park idea. "If we destroy nature blindly, it is a boomerang which will be our undoing," he wrote. "Consecration to the task of adjusting ourselves to [the] natural environment so that we secure the best values from nature without destroying it is not useless idealism; it is good hygiene for civilization. In this lies the true portent of this national parks effort."

Today, the George Wright Society, established in 1980, is dedicated to the preservation and protection of national parks and their equivalents worldwide. The Society has become a major influence in efforts to establish and maintain ecologically focused national park management practices.

Chiura Obata / 1927–1971

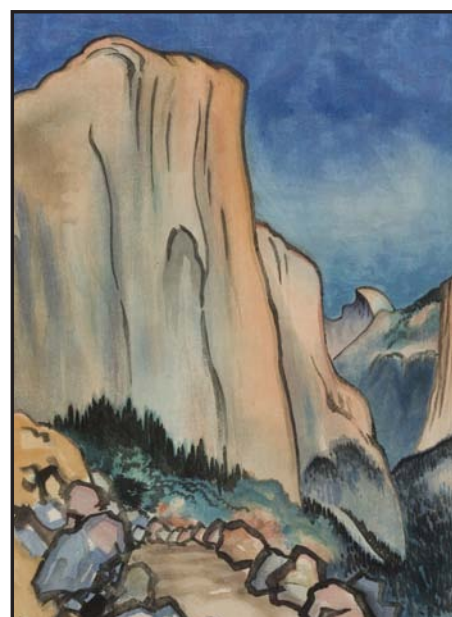
Yosemite National Park

Chiura Obata was a Japanese immigrant to the United States, a skilled artist working in the traditional media of *sumi-e* ink painting. In 1927, when Obata was 42 years old and at the height of his maturity as an artist, he accepted an invitation from Worth Ryder, an inveterate hiker and newly appointed professor of art at UC Berkeley, to travel through the High Sierra.

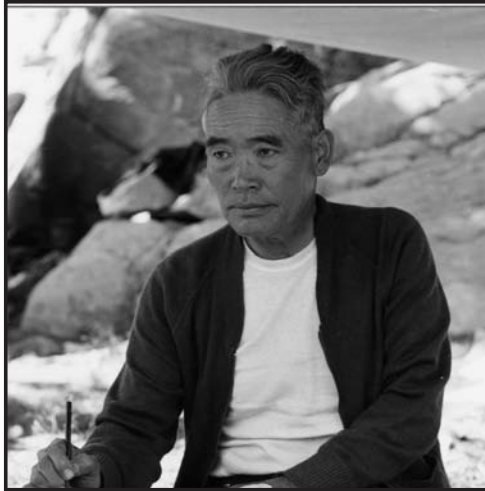
The 1927 Yosemite trip would prove to be the defining event of Obata's professional life. With the watercolors and sketches he produced there—and the later woodblock prints upon which they were based—he came into his own as an artist. His paintings of the park represent a significant break from previous Yosemite artworks and breathed new life into what had become



Wright (l) and Jim Thompson;
Pamela Wright Lloyd



El Capitan, 1930 The Obata Family



Obata sketching in Yosemite *The Obata Family*

with a sketch, the cards often featured a haiku written by Obata. On a postcard depicting his Yosemite camp—a simple canvas tent at the foot of two massive pines, under a crescent moon—Obata wrote to his young son:

Gyo-chan—
How old is the moon?
It shines
With a beautiful face.



Juan Lujan *Juan Lujan*

an old and tiresome subject, avoiding sweeping vistas of the valley and focusing instead on unassuming views and intimate details—a cluster of pine cones, a still mountain lake, wildflowers in a dry ravine. His works were informed by his Buddhist/Shinto background and reverence for nature. “My aim is to create a bowl full of joy,” Obata wrote. “Clear as the sky, pure as falling cherry petals, without worry, without doubt; then comes full energy, endless power, and the road to art.”

In all, Obata created nearly 150 pieces that summer. He continued to return to Yosemite throughout his life, bringing his family along. Alone on that first trip, Obata sent a series of hand-painted Yosemite postcards home to family members. Along

with a sketch, the cards often featured a haiku written by Obata. On a postcard depicting his Yosemite camp—a simple canvas tent at the foot of two massive pines, under a crescent moon—

Obata wrote to his young son:

Juan Lujan and the Civilian Conservation Corps / 1930s

Big Bend National Park

Juan Lujan graduated from a Marfa, Texas, high school in 1940, the end of the Great Depression. With few jobs in town, Juan had little prospect for work so, like thousands of young men around the country, he enrolled in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

Juan was sent to camp number “NPIT”—National Park No. 1 for Texas—in the Chisos Mountains, soon to become Big Bend National Park. He worked as a straw boss on a construction site and later as a guide in the small on-site museum. In November 1940, after working in the museum for only a few months, Juan learned of an opportunity that would change his life forever. “There was a memo out of

Fort Bliss that there was an opportunity for attending college,” he said years later. “If anybody who was a high school graduate was interested in a transfer, they were accepting applications. I submitted an application. I was accepted.”

Juan eventually received a Masters and Ph.D. and had a career in the Texas educational system, affecting, in turn, the lives of many students. He credits his stint in the Civilian Conservation Corps as the beginning of a meaningful life and feels passionately about the program’s impact on our nation, both historically and sociologically.

“The CCC was one of the best things to happen to the country,” Juan said. “There have been many times, in very recent times, when something like that has been needed, needed badly. To me—it kept my family eating, got me started in my education, prepared me for Army life. . . . I’ve always wondered why something this good has not been repeated.”

Sue Kunitomi Embrey / 1969–1997

Manzanar National Historic Site

In late 1969, a student driving Sue Kunitomi Embrey home from class at UCLA’s Asian American Studies Center invited her to join a group on a pilgrimage to Manzanar, the internment camp where she had been incarcerated nearly 27 years before. The invitation came in the midst of anti-Vietnam war demonstrations and the Free Speech movement, and Sue—although she was an activist on campus—had never confronted her own painful memories of being unjustly imprisoned. In December 1969, on the coldest day of the year in Inyo county, she began what would become a lifelong journey to understand what happened at Manzanar and to bring public attention and recognition to the site.

“It was important for me that Manzanar be recognized by the U.S. government because I’m an American citizen and I’m a minority American citizen,” Sue said. “It’s very important that every one of us not be deprived of our rights. That’s what our country’s all about. You’ve got to protect everybody’s rights, not just your own. Otherwise, your rights aren’t worth anything.”

Manzanar National Historic Site was dedicated on April 25, 1992. Sue had fought to make the camp part of the National Park Service so that the injustices suffered by Americans there would not be forgotten. “I wanted people fifty years from now to remember what was there,” she said. “Although it was a negative place, we wanted to turn it around to be positive, so that people will always remember that America is a democracy. We want to shout to the world that we are a great nation, willing to say that we’re sorry about what we did; that we are willing to change. And not only that we are a democracy, but that we *work* at it, for all of us, for everybody who lives here.

The working at it is the important part.”



Sue Kunitomi Embrey *The Embrey Family*

Gerard Baker / 1976–Present
Mount Rushmore National Memorial

A Mandan-Hidatsa Indian, Gerard grew up on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota. His youth was spent breaking horses, running cows, and doing chores on his family’s ranch. At night, he and his family would listen to stories told by tribal elders—stories of warfare, great hunts, tricksters, and survival. From these stories, Gerard learned about his people and about who he was and who he wanted to be.

When he joined the National Park Service, Gerard held fast to his native identity, learning more about his people’s history and traditions in every place he was stationed—Knife River Indian Villages, Fort Union Trading Post, and Theodore Roosevelt National Park’s North Unit. He read and conducted research, talked to elders and collected their oral histories, constructed teepees, earth lodges, and sweat lodges, skinned animals and tanned their hides.

Gerard brought all he had learned with him to Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument in his first job as a Park Service Superintendent. He ushered in a sea change in the park’s



Gerard Baker (r) and his elder brother, Dr. Paige Baker, Superintendent of Badlands National Park *Susan Shumaker*

interpretive program, bringing Native peoples back into the park and Native perspectives back into the story told there.

As the first superintendent of Lewis and Clark National Trail, Gerard oversaw the creation and deployment of “Corps of Discovery II”—a three-year, nationwide exhibit that brought the story of the explorers and the Indians they met to crowds around the country. Corps II featured demonstrations, lectures, and cultural presentations presented by the Native groups themselves.

Today, as superintendent of Mount Rushmore, Gerard continues to act as an agent for change. He has again brought an Indian perspective into the park’s interpretive program, telling a more complex—and complete—story of the site. At Rushmore, Gerard has expanded his vision to embrace the vast diversity of cultural traditions and stories that make up our national heritage. “It’s not just a teepee here,” Gerard says. “We’re promoting all cultures of America. That’s what this place is. This is Mount Rushmore! It’s America! Everybody’s something different here; we’re all different. And just maybe that gets us talking again as human beings, as Americans.”

Shelton Johnson / 1987–Present

Yosemite National Park

Shelton Johnson dreamed of mountains as a boy, living in inner city Detroit. He had never been to a mountain range in the United States and his only experiences with nature and wildlife came through television and movie screens.

Enrolled in an MFA program at the University of Michigan, Shelton applied—on a whim—to be a seasonal worker at Yellowstone, thinking the park would provide a quiet place to work on his writing. “I got off a bus in Gardiner, Montana,” Shelton remembers, “right outside the north entrance. . . . And as I was stepping down onto the ground, there was a bison—a 2,000-pound animal—walking by. There was no one else around and the bison was just strolling by! I looked up at the driver and I said, ‘Does this happen all the time?’ And he looked at me and said, ‘All the time.’ And I said to myself, ‘I have arrived.’”

Shelton has been working in national parks ever since, spending time in Yellowstone, Great Basin, and as an interpreter at Fort Dupont Park in the Anacostia section of Washington, DC. There, he met students like himself and his friends who had grown up in Detroit—tough inner city black kids whose understanding of nature was about as distant as Mars. “That’s when I first made the resolution that I had to figure out how to connect these kids with nature, to get them to have a nature experience.”

Shelton found his key for connecting with audiences after being transferred to Yosemite. Deep in the archives of the park, he stumbled across a faded photo of buffalo soldiers who had patrolled Yosemite at the turn of the 20th century. Since 1998, Shelton has told the story of the buffalo soldiers in the national parks—in print, on camera, and in person. He has traveled to public schools and spoken with kids throughout America. He has tracked down descendents of the soldiers, authored an award-winning website, and been lauded by civic groups and governments for his work. During evening programs and daytime ranger walks in Yosemite, he tells the story through the dramatic portrayal of a character he’s developed: Sergeant Elizy Boman.

All the while, Shelton has remained true to the reason he started this work. “I can’t forget that little black kid in Detroit,” he says. “And I can’t not think of the other kids, just like me—in Detroit, Oakland, Watts, Anacostia—today. How do I get them here? How do I let them know about the buffalo soldier history, to let them know that we, too, have a place here? How do I make that bridge, and make it shorter and stronger? Every time I go to work and put the uniform on, I think about them.”



Shelton portraying Sgt. Elizy Bowmun in Yosemite

Susan Shumaker