



## Introduction

The National Park System of the United States is the largest and most diverse park system in the world, consisting (in 1990) of 355 national park units in forty-seven states. The System embraces the great scenic and natural landscapes of America in which much national pride is vested—the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, the Everglades—as well as those places which speak to the nation’s memory, whether a Revolutionary War battlefield (as at Saratoga), and shrine to both sides in the great conflict of the Civil War (as at Gettysburg), or a small historic site that commemorates the Westward Movement through the exploration of Lewis and Clark (as at Fort Clatsop, on the Oregon coast). These 355 units of our nation’s system of national parks reveal much about our sense of pride, in the preservation of exemplary landscapes, in the protection of those places in which we may, with historical integrity, most satisfactorily commemorate broad themes in the nation’s past, and in the interpretation of that past to future generations.

These 355 park units may properly be viewed as branch campuses to the largest university in the world. Each unit has been set aside to commemorate and to protect a unique aspect of our national heritage. Each provides a unique insight into a past landscape form, into an historic development, into a national activity. Together with the National Historic Landmarks program (and to a lesser extent, the National Natural Landmarks program, with which these units do not deal), these parks represent an extensive inventory of a vast range of subjects on which Americans must be informed. Viewing, each park unit as the equivalent of an educational institution, one can quickly see the relevance of the parks to the nation’s schools.

The units that follow seek to show how national parks may be used to illustrate a number of themes that are routinely developed in school curricula, particularly in earth science, biology, literature, history, archaeology and anthropology, and of course environmental science. Each Fellow in the seminar was encouraged to develop a unit that would best reach out to their age group of students, and the units printed here are designed to appeal to nearly all grade levels. Some are based on the assumption that a field trip to one or more park units will be possible—the Fellows visited four units in Massachusetts (Longfellow National Historic Site, Boston African American National Historic Site, Saugus Ironworks National Historic Site, and Salem Maritime National Historic Site) and one proposed unit in Connecticut—while others draw solely on classroom experience or a visit to a local public park.

Too often teachers who are concerned for the environment do not place specific concerns within a sufficiently broad context. Historians tend to worry about the protection of a favored historic site, while naturalists give greater attention to a threatened forest or wild and scenic river. One purpose of this seminar was to show how important it is to have regard for the totality of the environment. A threat to an historic site is a threat as well to a wild river, for the forces that would compromise a significant national resource take advantage of the

divisions within the community of those who would protect our national parks. A threat to one park is a threat to all, and these units help illustrate this point.

No school is far from a unit of the national park system. Because the public tends to focus on the fifty great natural national parks, unmindful of National Monuments or National Historic Sites as units of the same protective and interpretive educational system, many teachers (and their students as well) are unaware that there may be a national park unit virtually in their backyard. There are, for example, three units of the national park system in Indiana, five in New Jersey, and three in Nebraska, though these are states often not thought of in the context of national parks. Such parks offer exceptional educational opportunities, even if they cannot be visited, for the themes they represent, the superb educational materials generally available on them for classroom use, or even simply as opportunities to learn map-reading skills. Each of the units that follow will open doors for adaptive classroom use throughout the country, even in Afro-American or music courses, as two units show.

In addition to the formal units of the National Park System, there are many hundreds of National Historic Landmarks. These are properties, usually still in private hands, which have been judged by the National Park Service to be worthy of preservation at the national level. Frequently there are such Landmarks in a community and school children could visit them. New Haven, Connecticut, for example, is home to nine National Historic Landmarks, around which interpretive programs might be developed and to which field trips generally are possible. (A list of them is printed as an Appendix following the introduction unit.) The National Park Service maintains a list and description of all such Landmarks, and interested teachers can obtain information on Landmarks in their area by writing to the History Division, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C.

In 1991 the National Park Service will celebrate its 75th anniversary. No more fitting form of celebration could be found than to open the classrooms of the nation to greater learning about our national parks, and in doing so, about ourselves and our environment.

Robin W. Winks

### **NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS IN NEW HAVEN (city only)**

Russell Henry Chittenden House

83 Trumbull Street Chittenden was the father of American biochemistry and Director of Yale's Sheffield Scientific School

Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

123 Huntington Street The first agricultural experimental station in the nation, it established the principles of scientific agriculture

Connecticut Hall

Yale Old Campus Only pre-Revolutionary building on campus, lone survivor of Brick Row, contains room of Eli Whitney and memorial to Nathan Hale

James Dwight Dana House

24 Hillhouse Avenue Home of the scholar who broadened geology into the sub-discipline of historical geology worldwide

Othniel C. Marsh House

360 Prospect Street Home of the originator of the science of paleontology in America, creator of the fossil-hunting Western searches

Lafayette B. Mendel House

Home of  
the  
scientist  
who  
identified  
vitamins  
and  
completed  
the  
pioneering  
research  
on  
proteins  
and  
nutrition

18  
Trumbull  
Street

New Haven Green

Chapel, College, Fullest surviving colonial green, the  
Elm and Church setting of three remarkable churches viewed

Streets as one of the outstanding “urban ensembles” of the 19th century, built 1812-16 in the midst  
of war

Yale Bowl

Chapel Street and Oldest active college stadium in the nation,

Yale Avenue the largest when constructed, commemorates Yale’s pervasive influence on the  
development of intercollegiate sports

Yale University

Various locations Various structures taken collectively to represent the third oldest institution of higher  
education in the nation and the most extensive example of Collegiate Gothic

**The Books We Read**

Richard White, *American Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field*  
National Park Service, *The National Parks: Shaping the System: The National Parks Index 1987*  
David Harmon, ed., *Mirror of America*  
Robert Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*  
Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*  
Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*  
National Park Service, *Custer Battlefield and Salem Maritime Park*  
Joseph L. Sax, *Mountains Without Handrails*  
Paul Schullery, *Mountain Time*  
John Muir, *The Yosemite*

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