The Campaign to Establish Mount Rainier National Park, 1893-1899

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Left, Mount Rainier photographed by Asahel Curtis (Special Collections and Preservation Division, University of Washington Libraries, uw neg. 17576); below, gateway to the park. (Courtesy Mount Rainier National Park)

On March 2, 1899, President William McKinley signed the act to establish Mount Rainier National Park. The new park featured the highest, most massive and glaciated mountain in the Pacific Northwest. It also featured, around the mountain's base, some of the largest Douglas fir and cedar trees in the region. And, owing to the tremendous range of elevation from Rainier's base to its summit, the park exhibited a remarkable variety of flora and fauna. Alluding to that biological diversity when the national park bill was still under consideration by Congress, the park's proponents aptly described Mount Rainier as "an arctic island in a temperate sea."[1]

The arguments that were marshaled in support of the Rainier act helped shape the national park idea at a crucial time. By 1898, the nation had four national parks—Yellowstone, established in 1872, and Yosemite, Sequoia, and General Grant (Kings Canyon), all established in 1890—and 40 million acres of forest reserves (national forests), which had been set aside by presidential proclamation under the Forest Reserve Act of 1891.[2] These reservations were not made without controversy. The arguments in support of national parks and national forests were generally cast along two lines: why there was a need for each, and what kind of federal commitment was required for their proper administration. Proponents of a new national forest policy received their charter in the Organic Act of 1897, which declared that the purpose of national forests was to protect western watersheds and the national timber supply and which provided funds for the forests' administration. Though there was no equivalent act for the national parks until 1916, passage of the Mount Rainier National Park Act of 1899 affirmed that there was to be a national park system in addition to and distinct from the system of national forests. Mount Rainier was the nation's fifth national park; Crater Lake (1902), Wind Cave (1903), and Mesa Verde (1906) soon followed.

The campaign for Rainier was a collaborative effort by many groups and individuals. No single figure stood out as its leader, nor did any single organization coordinate it. More than a dozen scientists, many of whom had climbed the mountain, formed one component of the campaign. They were scattered across the nation, knew one another professionally, and used the opportunity of professional meetings to form committees and prepare memorials to Congress setting forth arguments for the national park. Meanwhile, a few dozen mountaineers, most of whom resided in the Puget Sound area, constituted another component. Their infectious enthusiasm for the mountain, which they communicated in public talks and letters to local newspapers, helped to persuade Washington's congressional delegation that the national park was a popular cause. Three young mountaineering organizations, the Sierra Club, the Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Washington Alpine Club, added their support. Finally, the Northern Pacific Railway had an important and surreptitious effect on park legislation in the late 1890s.

Bailey Willis, a geologist and mining engineer with the United States Geological Survey (USGS), started the campaign in 1893. More than a decade earlier, in 1880, Willis had prospected for coal deposits for the Northern Pacific Railroad near the northwest flank of Mount Rainier. He had cut a trail from the dense cedar forest on the upper Carbon River up to some gorgeous flower meadows now known as Spray Park, above which looms Rainier's immense cavitated north face, now known as Willis Wall in his memory. He returned to the mountain whenever the opportunity presented itself. In 1893, at the annual meeting of the Geological Society of America, Willis proposed to his fellow geologists that they initiate an effort to have the area preserved in a national park. The society formed a committee and appointed Willis chairman.

The campaign quickly gained support from many quarters. At a summer meeting the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) formed a similar committee. Two months later the National Geographic Society, meeting in Washington, D.C., appointed a committee on the Mount Rainier National Park proposal, and over the winter of 1893-94 both the Sierra Club and the Appalachian Mountain Club, meeting in San Francisco and Boston respectively, formed similar committees. These five committees combined their efforts in preparing a detailed memorial to Congress setting forth arguments for the national park.[3]

A striking feature of this movement was the strong showing of scientists, particularly geologists. The Geological Society of America committee consisted of three esteemed USGS geologists: Samuel F. Emmons, Bailey Willis, and Dr. David T. Day.[4] Emmons had climbed Rainier in 1870 with A. D. Wilson—the second successful ascent of the mountain—and had written a report on the volcanoes of the Pacific Coast. A protégé of the first director of the U.S. Geological Survey, Clarence King, Emmons was head of the Rocky Mountain Division from 1879 until his death in 1911. Day, a specialist in minerals, headed the Statistical Division and wrote the USGS annual reports on mineral resources of the United States. Willis knew the northwest side of Mount Rainier as well as any man, and he would soon make the first reconnaissance of the glacier system with Israel C. Russell and George Otis Smith in 1896. The American Association for the Advancement of Science, meanwhile, included two geologists on its committee: Russell, who had recently left the USGS to take a professorship at the University of Michigan, and Major John Wesley Powell, current director of the Geological Survey. USGS support of the national park proposal was crucial, for it gave credibility to the argument that the area around Mount Rainier contained no significant mineral wealth. Other scientists on the AAAS committee included Professor Joseph LeConte, a geologist; Bernhard E. Fernow, chief of the Forestry Bureau; and Clinton Hart Merriam, chief of the Biological Survey. The list of park advocates was a virtual roll call of the politically powerful scientists of the day.

The National Geographic Society committee took the lead role. The chairman, Gardiner G. Hubbard, was president of the society; other members included Senator Watson C. Squire of Washington, Mary F. Waite, John W. Thompson, and Eliza R. Scidmore. Squire introduced a park bill in the Senate on December 12, 1893. Hubbard hosted several of Squire's Senate colleagues at a National Geographic Society dinner at his home, where they were regaled with lantern slides and a lecture by the veteran Mount Rainier climber Ernest C. Smith.[5]

A second notable feature of this campaign is the partnership of the scientific organizations and the mountain clubs. Men and women who had been to the top of Mount Rainier enjoyed great stature in the park movement and provided much of its drive. The two mountain club committees included four individuals who had climbed Rainier. Philemon B. Van Trump of the Sierra Club had accompanied Hazard Stevens on the first successful ascent in 1870. George B. Bayley, another Sierra Club member, had climbed the mountain with Van Trump and James Longmire in 1883. John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club and chairman of the committee on Mount Rainier, had made the ascent with Edward S. Ingraham of Seattle in 1888. The Appalachian Mountain Club committee included Ernest C. Smith, a clergyman from Tacoma who had climbed the mountain with Ingraham in 1888 and two years later had led the party that included Fay Fuller, the first woman to make the ascent. All of these individuals campaigned for the park by writing articles and giving lectures. Their involvement underscores how much the Mount Rainier National Park idea was rooted in the physical and aesthetic experience of climbing the mountain. Aubrey L. Haines makes this point convincingly

in *Mountain Fever: Historic Conquests of Mount Rainier* (1962).

The third significant feature of this campaign was its timing. Its impetus was the proclamation by President Benjamin Harrison on February 20, 1893, establishing the Pacific Forest Reserve. The reserve embraced an area approximately 42 miles long and 36 miles wide, centered on the crest of the Cascade Range. To the dismay of preservationists, these boundaries put Rainier at the extreme western edge of the reserve, its western glaciers extending outside the reserve. Moreover, some preservationists were skeptical that the forest reserve designation would afford the mountain adequate protection or bring government funding for road development. Publicity on the Pacific Forest Reserve's shortcomings fueled the campaign for a national park.[6]

Local newspapers and mountain clubs in Seattle and Tacoma brought this issue into focus. Mount Rainier enthusiasts in both cities were alert to these problems because they had been involved in an increasingly impassioned discourse for the past four to five years. Not only did the name of the mountain excite debate between the two cities, but other controversies raged in the newspapers and mountain clubs: complaints about the appropriateness of new place-names introduced on a map by Fred G. Plummer of Tacoma, dubious claims that Lieutenant August V. Kautz had attained the summit in 1857, and allegations that campers were vandalizing trees in Paradise Park, the popular alpine meadow on Rainier's south slope. The rivalry between the two cities even caused a schism in the Washington Alpine Club and led Tacomans to form their own Tacoma Alpine Club in 1893.[7] As parochial as these issues may have been, they helped set the stage for the national park campaign. Between 1890 and 1893, Van Trump, Plummer, and various other local enthusiasts proposed a national park, but their ideas got no farther than the local newspapers. With the proclamation of the Pacific Forest Reserve, the area finally achieved the national recognition that these local supporters coveted. Within a year of the proclamation, a national park bill was before Congress, and the faculties of the Universities of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Washington sent petitions to Congress in support of the bill.

In short, diverse interest groups successfully combined their efforts in the campaign. These groups included scientific organizations and mountain clubs, university faculties and chambers of commerce, people of national stature and local newspaper editors. Their statements of support for the park were idealistic and public spirited and gave no inkling that their interests might eventually conflict with one another. That the campaign finally succeeded was due not to any single compelling personality but to all the campaigners' collective efforts and forthrightness.

James Longmire was one of many local climbers whose advocacy strengthened the movement to win national park status for Rainier. (UW Libraries, A. C. Warner neg. 511x)

The loose nature of this coalition is important to recognize because it helps explain the campaign's contribution to the larger national park idea. According to its proponents, Mount Rainier National Park would serve inspirational, educational, and recreational purposes. It would be of value to science. It would preserve the environmental quality of several large watersheds. It would stimulate tourism. Campaigners argued all of these points, often in combination. Even at its genesis, Mount Rainier National Park represented different things to different people. There was no preeminent value at the core of the idea. The national park idea is more aptly viewed as a shifting constellation of values.

But the rhetoric of preservation suggested something precise. Preservationists traditionally held that a national park was the "highest use" to which land could be put, in contrast to the "wise use" of multiple resources (or "multiple use," as it later came to be known). These were terms of art, which reflected the preservationists' aesthetic appreciation of the sublime in nature, on the one hand, and, on the other, the conservationists' economic desire to make efficient use of scarce resources. The rhetoric of preservation tended to imply that the national park idea had an irreducible core, that preservationists had a common purpose.

Some national park historians have followed this lead. Joseph L. Sax, in his

stimulating book *Mountains without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks* (1980), suggests that the genesis of the national park idea can be found in the 19th-century writings of Frederick Law Olmsted. Sax interprets Olmsted's notion of the inspirational quality of scenic landscapes to mean that the central purpose of national parks is to promote "contemplative recreation."[8] For Sax, the idea that contemplative recreation improves the self is the credo of all preservationists. This shared belief is their defining characteristic. Alfred Runte, meanwhile, argues in *National Parks: The American Experience* (1987) that the kernel of the national park idea can be found in the American people's "cultural anxiety" in the 19th century—the sense of impoverishment they felt when they compared American cultural attainments with European architectural monuments and works of art. This anxiety gave rise to "scenic nationalism" and an effort to showcase the nation's natural wonders in national parks.[9] The parks provided an alternative expression of cultural richness. The problem with both of these interpretations is that they misrepresent preservationists as a homogeneous group with a unified philosophy. As we have seen, the Mount Rainier National Park campaign was a coalition of scientists and mountaineers, national figures and local interests—all with somewhat different ideas about what the park should be.

"Tip Top" is the notation the photographer A. C. Warner gave this triumphant scene at the summit of Rainier in 1888; mountaineers' exploits generated popular support for the national park idea. (UW Libraries, neg. 712e)

Rainier enthusiasts liked to trace the roots of their national park movement all the way back to Theodore Winthrop's *Canoe and the Saddle* (1862). This book, a recollection of an 1853 trip from Puget Sound over the Cascades to the Columbia River by Washington Territory's original sightseer, contains some remarkable passages about Mount Rainier. Campaigners for the park found in Winthrop's aesthetic response to the mountain a worthy, if old-fashioned, expression of their own nature appreciation. "Studying the light and the majesty of Tacoma [Rainier]," Winthrop had written, "there passed from it and entered into my being, to dwell there evermore by the side of many such, a thought and an image of solemn beauty, which I could thenceforth evoke whenever in the world I must have peace or die."[10] Winthrop, like his contemporary Frederick Law Olmsted, was suggesting that scenic appreciation cultivated the mind and improved the soul. Although Winthrop stopped short of advocating a national park—the idea had scarcely been conceived at the time—he did intimate that the mountain possessed public value. "Up to Tacoma, or into some such solitude of nature, imaginative men must go, as Moses went up to Sinai, that the divine afflatus may stir within them," he wrote.[11] Although Winthrop was no doubt atypical of Puget Sound settlers in the 1850s in his response to the mountain, his book gave the national park movement a historical footing.[12]

The romantic notion that such a grand peak presented an irresistible attraction to "imaginative men" also appealed to Philemon B. Van Trump, the veteran climber, who was advocating that Rainier be made into a national park as early as 1891. He referred to the "contagion of mountain-climbing." Rainier had an infectious power that, in his mind, enriched humanity. According to Van Trump, mountaineers possessed the same heroic qualities as explorers: an indifference to danger or physical pain and an indomitable will to conquer the unknown. Meditating on the continuing ill effects of the frostbite he suffered many years earlier during a night on the summit of Rainier, the pioneer climber declared that the "true mountaineer" could no more regret his experience than any of the "zealous navigators" of the northern seas.[13] Like Winthrop, Van Trump admired most what Mount Rainier did to the men and women who tried to scale it. It made them better human beings.

Others in the campaign emphasized the area's inspirational value not only for mountaineers but also for the large numbers of tourists who would be drawn to the lower slopes. The geologist Israel C. Russell asserted in an article for *Scribner's Magazine* that to visit the mountain and its surrounding terrain was to breath free air, renew one's health, and cultivate "the aesthetic sense that is awakened in every

heart by an intimate acquaintance with nature in her finer moods."[14] Similarly, Carl Snyder wrote in the *Review of Reviews* that all those who visited the mountain would "gain a new pleasure, a larger artistic sense, and a higher inspiration from the contemplation of the grandeur and beauty" of Mount Rainier.[15] The nature experience would, like a good education, make a positive and lasting impression on each individual. "Its educational advantages would be of unspeakable value," claimed Watson Squire on the floor of the Senate.[16] It would be good public policy to preserve the mountain's inspirational character in a national park.

The 1888 ascent party, resting here at Camp of the Clouds on August 13, included Indian Henry, John Muir, H. Loomis, P. B. Van Trump, E. S. Ingraham, William Keith, and N. O. Booth. (UW Libraries, Warner neg. 712b)

The most important early statement of Mount Rainier National Park's worth, aside from the park's establishing act, was the memorial to Congress that Bailey Willis crafted on behalf of the five committees. The area, the memorial declared, contained "many features of unique interest and wonderful grandeur, which fit it peculiarly to be a national park, forever set aside for the pleasure and instruction of the people."[17] Here was a coupling of scenic and scientific values, of recreational and educational purposes. As might be expected, however, this document emphasized points of scientific interest. It described Rainier's volcanic origins, vast glacier system, and unique assemblage of wildlife and plants. It introduced the arresting image of "an arctic island in a temperate sea" that would become the essence of the park's interpretive story. Willis explained:

> In a bygone age an arctic climate prevailed over the Northwest and glaciers covered the Cascade Range. Arctic animals and arctic plants then lived throughout the region. As the climate became milder and glaciers melted, the creatures of the cold climate were limited in their geographic range to the districts of the shrinking glaciers. On the great peak the glaciers linger still. They give to it its greatest beauty. They are themselves magnificent, and with them survives a colony of arctic animals and plants which can not exist in the temperate climate of the less lofty mountains. These arctic forms are as effectually isolated as shipwrecked sailors on an island in mid-ocean. There is no refuge for them beyond their haunts on ice-bound cliffs. But even there the birds and animals are no longer safe from the keen sportsman, and the few survivors must soon be exterminated unless protected by the Government in a national park.[18]

Israel Russell, describing his traverse of the summit with Willis in 1896 in his article for *Scribner's Magazine,* attested to the mountain's geologic significance as a laboratory for the student of volcanology or glaciology.[19] The idea was that a national park would not only protect natural features for scientific study; it would also ennoble the scientists. The national park was both a laboratory for and a monument to American science.

The campaign for Mount Rainier National Park also marshaled evidence that the area's scenic and scientific features were superlative examples of their kind. Enthusiasts felt compelled to answer the question, why this mountain and not some other? There were inevitable comparisons with the Alps. All of Switzerland's glaciers, some said, could not match the quantity of ice on Rainier. Nor could Mont Blanc or any of the Alps match the impressiveness of this solitary mountain. How much this rhetoric stemmed from what Runte calls scenic nationalism and how much it owed simply to most educated Americans' familiarity with the glaciers and scenery of Europe are open to debate. In the 19th century, preservationists were struggling to develop a language of scenic appreciation that could be used to describe for the benefit of Congress and the American people land values that were not easily quantifiable or comparable with other land values. It was this effort that inspired the phrase "highest use." We should not assume that every comparison between American landforms and the most famous landforms in the world was a reflection of cultural anxiety or scenic nationalism. Until the turn of the century, Rainier was thought to be taller than any peak in the Rockies or the Sierra Nevada; the summit cone was named Columbia Crest in the belief that it was the highest point in the United States. Rainier was also compared to Mount St. Elias in Alaska, and its glaciers were compared to Alaska's famous Muir Glacier.[20] The main purpose of such comparisons was not to build up pride in American scenery but to place Mount Rainier on a scale with the world's other scenic wonders. It was a part of the great reconnaissance of the American West.

Still, scenic nationalism clearly did play a role in such comparisons. Descriptions of natural wonders and scenic landscapes were often chauvinistic. Directed at tourists, they often amounted to boosterism on a national scale. Years before the western railroads came up with the slogan "See America First," the idea had become a common theme in American travel literature. Vermont's Senator George Edmunds, who traveled to Rainier on the Northern Pacific in 1883, wrote in the Portland *Oregonian:*

> I can not help saying that I am thoroughly convinced that no resort in the United States will be so much sought after as this when once people come to know that what men cross the Atlantic to see can be seen in equal splendor, if not surpassed, at home.
>
> I have been through the Swiss mountains, and I am compelled to own that incredible as the assertion may appear, there is absolutely no comparison between the finest effects that are exhibited there and what is seen in approaching this grand isolated mountain.[21]

Edward S. Ingraham of Seattle was even more blunt: "It is un-American to visit other shores when our own country contains so many places of interest."[22]

Still another argument for establishing a national park around Mount Rainier was to protect the public's access to it. Park advocates wanted to make sure that the popular high country meadows such as Paradise Park were not "captured by private interest."[23] They also wanted to make sure that private interests did not gain control of the approaches. "If the gateways to Mount Rainier and the beautiful natural parks on its sides pass into the ownership of individuals or syndicates," Russell warned, "toll may be charged for breathing the free air."[24] Toll roads and inholdings would detract immeasurably from the feeling of freedom that nature bestowed on the Mount Rainier visitor.

One of the most pressing concerns of

The mountaineer P. B. Van Trump, a veteran of the 1870 first ascent of Rainier, was a Sierra Club member and campaigner for Washington National Park. (UW Libraries, Warner neg. 512x)

the park advocates was vandalism. As the number of recreationists taking the trail up to Paradise Park increased in the early 1890s, so too did attacks on animal and plant life. There were reports that hunters were wantonly killing mountain goats and bears. Even more disturbing were the accounts of forest fire damage.[25] The actual extent of the damage was disputed; one person stated that two-thirds of Paradise Park was recently burned over, another found fire-killed trees in only two small areas, plus some green trees that had been felled by campers to construct shelters.[26] Regardless, the outlook was not bright as long as there was no supervision of the area. The federal government showed no intention of providing anything more than paper protection for the Pacific Forest Reserve. The problem of vandalism demonstrated as clearly as any other issue why the proclamation of the forest reserve around Mount Rainier failed to satisfy preservationists.

The issue of vandalism was also significant because the few score enthusiasts from Seattle and Tacoma who journeyed to Paradise Park in the early 1890s were gaining the remarkable insight that they themselves were the cause of the area's degradation. This revelation did not come without a struggle. There was finger pointing back and forth between the Seattle and Tacoma mountain clubs. And the fact that they defined the problem as vandalism showed that they wanted to hold certain aberrant individuals responsible. But these distractions notwithstanding, it was the consensus of the local recreationists that unrestricted public use of the high mountain meadows would lead to their ruin. There had to be a public authority present to protect the area from the pleasure-seekers themselves. This was their primary motivation in calling for the creation of a national park.[27]

The kind of public authority they sought was rudimentary. E. S. Ingraham wanted the Pacific Forest Reserve placed under regulations similar to those for Yellowstone National Park.[28] Van Trump proposed that the federal government post guards in the most heavily used areas during the summer season. These guards could also man high-altitude weather stations and note annual changes in the fauna and flora.[29] The editor of the Tacoma *Daily Ledger* suggested that a few soldiers from Fort Vancouver stationed in the Nisqually Valley or patrolling the trail to Paradise Park would discourage vandalism.[30] As modest as these proposals were, they prove that the very people who were frequenting Mount Rainier already saw the need to regulate public use.

This emphasis on recreational use and public order indicated that the local perspective on Mount Rainier Na-

tional Park was essentially an urban perspective—in contrast, for example, with that on Yellowstone, where ranching interests exercised a great deal of influence. To the people of Seattle and Tacoma, Rainier was a part of the cities' recreational domain. One Tacoma citizen referred to the mountain as "our joint inheritance."[31] Seattle's superintendent of parks, Edward O. Schwagerl, asserted, "It is not foreign to the mission of the city's park commission to be informed of some of the facts relative to the United States reservation created and designated as the 'Pacific Coast Park Reserve.'" Schwagerl urged the park commission to petition the secretary of the interior to take steps to protect the area from vandalism.[32] The fact that local support was urban and preservationist certainly helped the national park campaign succeed. It is no coincidence that the nation's fifth national park was located so near to one of the West's leading urban areas.

The Rainier campaign included a cluster of arguments that addressed the relationship of the national park to economic development. These arguments involved the likely growth of tourism, the conservation of the water supply for irrigation, and the minimal adverse impact that the park would have on grazing and mining interests. Though economic considerations were not the preservationists' main concern, neither were they ignored. Indeed, the close alliance between local preservationists like Van Trump and Ingraham and national figures like John Muir, the National Geographic Society's Gardiner G. Hubbard, and the federal bureau chiefs John Wesley Powell, Clinton Hart Merriam, and Bernhard Fernow would not have been possible had these men thought that the national park would hinder regional economic development.

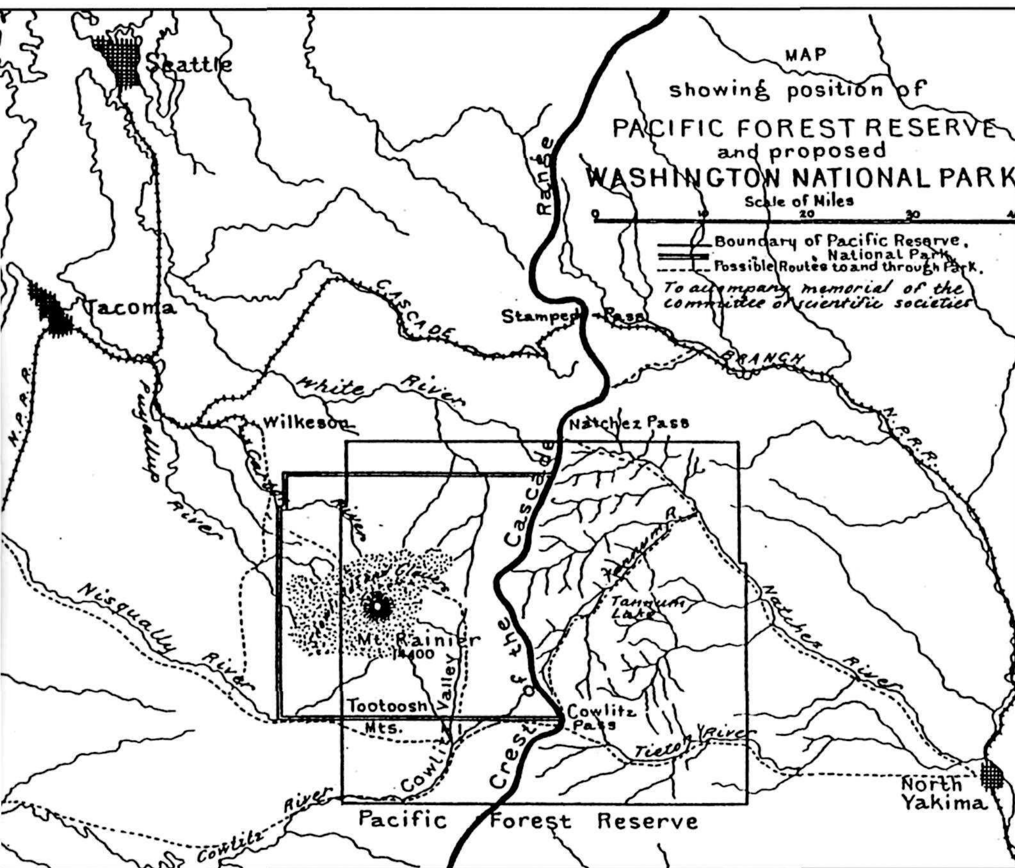
The campaigners assumed that the national park would be a magnet for tourists. Whether it was primarily the task of the federal government, the western railroads, or local entrepreneurs to develop tourist accommodations in such a park remained under debate, but preservationists agreed that the purpose of a national park was to preserve the scenery for the enjoyment of the people. This was the sharpest distinction between a national park and a national forest. For this reason, preservationists regarded the proclamation of the Pacific Forest Reserve as merely a first step in making Mount Rainier a national park. "The park is without hotels, without roads, almost without trails," wrote one preservationist. "Once in the government's care and made accessible to the traveler . . . its fame will widen with the years."[33]

Senator Squire even suggested that tourist business would eventually cover the cost of administering the park. "The outlay of money required for the establishment of the park is very small," he told a skeptical Congress. "Concessions can be leased for hotels, stage routes, and stopping places; the proceeds of which will provide for maintenance of the park."[34] Though they were fairly vague about how it would be accomplished, preservationists made clear that a national park entailed both protection and development.

Squire also contended that Mount Rainier National Park was needed to preserve the mountain forests, which slowed spring runoff and thereby reduced flooding and summer drought in the lower portions of the watersheds. This was precisely the argument advanced in support of forest reserves. Since the government had already proclaimed the Pacific Forest Reserve, Squire's argument might have been redundant but for the fact that the reserve's boundary failed to take in Rainier's western slope. The proposed national park would correct this problem and protect the upper watersheds of the Puyallup, White, and Nisqually rivers. "This view of the case strongly affects the farming interests of my State," Squire said. "The high mountain and glacial lands are totally unfit for cultivation. The Government alone can protect the rich lower lands from ruin if it acts promptly."[35]

Finally, preservationists argued that the establishment of a national park around Mount Rainier was good economic policy because the land showed little potential for agriculture, stock raising, or mining. The historian Alfred Runte has demonstrated that preservationists resorted to this negative strategy again and again in campaigning for national parks. Indeed, as the worthless lands argument became a litmus test for national parks in Congress, preservationists allowed the worthless lands rhetoric to control the size, shape, and permitted uses of national parks at their inception. The result, Runte contends, was that preservationists drew national park boundaries narrowly around the features of principal interest.[36] Certainly this was true in the case of Rainier, as the initial memorial to Congress makes clear: "The boundaries of the proposed national park have been so drawn as to exclude from its area all lands upon which coal, gold, or other valuable minerals are supposed to occur, and they conform to the purpose that the park shall include all features of peculiar scenic beauty without encroaching on the interests of miners or settlers."[37] Because mineral and water development took precedence over scenic preservation in the eastern half of the forest reserve, the crest of the Cascades was left outside the park. When one examines the origins of Mount Rainier National Park, it is difficult to criticize Runte's worthless lands thesis except to point out that Runte focused primarily on Congress and the legislative process, where the dubious worthless lands rhetoric reached its finest expression.

Between 1893 and 1898, Washington



This map clearly show how much of Rainier's western flank was outside the boundaries of the Pacific Forest Reserve. (National Park Service)

senators and congressmen introduced measures in six consecutive sessions of Congress in attempts to establish "Washington National Park." The long and bumpy road that this legislation traveled in Congress reveals the apathy and skepticism that confronted preservationists prior to the turn of the century. There was little organized opposition to such a park on the part of grazing or mining interests. Rather, the effort languished for five years primarily because Congress could not be persuaded that it was the responsibility of the federal government to create a national park like Yellowstone in the state of Washington.

The delay in moving through Congress was significant for another reason. Generally speaking, the longer Congress deliberates on a national park bill, the more exceptions and qualifications are apt to be attached to it. The Mount Rainier National Park Act exemplifies this pattern. In most ways, the bill that Congress passed in 1899 was weaker than the original bill introduced in 1893. To follow the legislation's permutations through six sessions of Congress is to highlight the growing strength of opposition to the park. This is important in explaining what might be termed, from a partisan standpoint, the national park's "birth defects."

On December 12, 1893, Watson C. Squire introduced Senate bill 1250 to establish Washington National Park. The bill essentially sought to redesignate the Pacific Forest Reserve as a national park. The boundaries described in Squire's bill were no different from the boundaries of the reserve. Like many park advocates in his home state, including members of Seattle's chamber of commerce, whose memorial he submitted together with the bill, the senator believed that President Benjamin Harrison had proclaimed the Pacific Forest Reserve the previous February with a view to its subsequent conversion to a national park.[38] Squire's bill was referred to the Senate Committee on Public Lands. Three weeks later, on January 4, 1894, Congressman William Doolittle introduced an identical bill in the House (H.R. 4989), which was referred to the House Committee on Public Lands.[39]

Most of the language in Squire's bill came practically verbatim from the Yellowstone Park Act of 1872. Section 1 described boundaries and declared that the area would be "dedicated and set apart as a public park, to be known and designated as the Washington National Park, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." Section 2 stated that the park would be administered by the secretary of the interior, who would be charged with the "preservation from injury or spoliation of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition." The secretary could, at his discretion, lease small parcels of land as sites for buildings to accommodate visitors. He would also "provide against the wanton destruction of the fish and game found within said park, and against their capture or destruction for the purposes of merchandise or profit."[40] Significantly, Squire's bill did not deviate from the Yellowstone Park Act on the matter of enforcement, providing only that persons who violated park regulations would be removed for trespass, even though there had been several attempts to amend the Yellowstone law to impose fines for the killing of wildlife in that park. (Congress finally passed such legislation for Yellowstone in 1894, but the people who framed the Mount Rainier bill failed to heed the Yellowstone experience.)[41]

On July 10, 1894, seven months after

submitting his first bill, Squire introduced a second, S. 2204, which differed from the earlier bill only in its boundary description. The new boundaries followed exactly the recommendations of the joint committee of the Geological Society of America, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Geographic Society, the Sierra Club, and the Appalachian Mountain Club. The new boundaries included the western flank of Mount Rainier but excluded the remainder of the reserve east of the Cascade crest and south of the Tatoosh Range, together with a narrow strip on the north. The reason for the addition was obvious; the deletions, Squire explained, were designed to exclude from the park presumed coal, gold, and mineral deposits. It was at this time that Squire made his one significant speech to the Senate on the Washington National Park. The speech mostly drew upon the joint committee's memorial and elicited no debate.[42]

Neither Squire's bills nor Doolittle's bill was reported back from committee. Doolittle failed to introduce a revised version of his bill, and the discrepancy between the House and Senate versions no doubt hurt the legislation's chances. For some reason, Squire and Doolittle did not resolve this discrepancy before each of them introduced a new park bill early in the first session of the 54th Congress, in December 1895. These two bills (S. 164 and H.R. 327) also died in committee. It is unclear whether the lack of coordination between the two Washington lawmakers was due to oversight or disagreement. In any case, after Doolittle heard from the Committee on Public Lands that his bill would not be approved, he introduced another, H.R. 4058, which drew the boundaries inward on all sides and reduced the size of the park from approximately 24 miles by 26 miles to approximately 18 miles square.[43]

Doolittle's proposal deserves a close look, because it became the blueprint for the eventual Mount Rainier National Park Act. It described the final boundaries, and it included two new provisions. Sections 3 and 4 provided that the Northern Pacific give up lands within the national park; in exchange, the railroad could select other sections in any state that the railroad served. These solicitous terms strongly suggest that the railroad company influenced the legislation by one means or another, though NP officials vigorously denied involvement for years afterward.[44]

To the preservationists' disappointment, the new boundaries cut some 300 square miles of forest land out of the park.[45] What angered many more citizens, however, was the fact that the legislation exchanged the Northern Pacific's land inside the park for public domain timberlands elsewhere (mostly in Oregon, as it turned out, much to the ire of the people of that state). This was too good a deal to have been achieved without bribery, contemporary observers assumed.[46] Certain proponents of the bill were roundly criticized for the provisions covering the Northern Pacific land grant, including Senator John L. Wilson and Congressman James Hamilton Lewis of Washington, who shepherded the legislation through the next four sessions of Congress, then failed in their reelection bids.[47] Whatever the railroad's precise role may have been in seeing the measure through Congress, the effect was to cast a pall over the final act. The lesson of the Mount Rainier National Park Act appeared to be that in any "pragmatic alliance" between western railroads and preservationists the railroads would exact considerable tribute for their political support.[48]

On May 11, 1896, H.R. 4058 was reported back from committee with the recommendation that it be passed, with three significant amendments. In Section 2, the maximum term of lease of lands on which to erect visitor accommodations was increased from 10 to 25 years. Rights of way could be granted for the construction of railways or tramways through the forest reserve and into the park. And most important, a new Section 5 allowed mining in the forest reserve and in the park.[49] These concessions answered, in part, objections that the commissioner of the General Land Office and the secretary of the interior had made to earlier versions of the Washington National Park bill.

These three concessions to development pointed up the fact that national park supporters were now competing with support for the new national forests and that the Cleveland administration was definitely more inclined toward the latter type of land management regime. In hindsight, the creation of three new national parks in California in 1890 followed by the passage of the Forest Reserve Act of 1891 appears to mark, as the National Park Service historian Barry Mackintosh has written, "the fork in the road beyond which national parks and national forests proceed separately."[50] Each new park entailed an act of Congress; each new forest required only a stroke of the president's pen. To contemporaries, however, it was yet unclear how, if at all, national parks and national forests would differ. John Muir, for one, hoped that the forests would be managed in much the same way as the parks.[51] The well-known forester Gifford Pinchot, meanwhile, argued that by placing the new national forests under scientific forestry management the federal government would obviate the need for national parks. In this context, park proponents considered the concession to mining a small price to pay. It was vital to secure the federal government's recognition of Mount Rainier's extraordinary scenic and scientific interest so that, like Yellowstone, the area would receive a greater degree of protection than a forest reserve.[52]

Even these concessions were not enough for some members of Congress, who objected to the national park primarily on the basis of expense. Congressman John F. Lacey of Iowa, chairman of the Committee on Public Lands, suggested that the national park designation was redundant because the area had already been withdrawn as a forest reserve. When Doolittle suggested that the people of his state would "make the necessary improvements, for the benefit of all the people of the country" and only wanted assistance from the secretary of the interior in protecting the area from vandals, Congressman Joseph Bailey of Texas reminded legislators of the cost of administering Yellowstone and sarcastically noted, "The difficulty I have is that I have not learned how it is possible to maintain a park by any government without expense." He then obtained Doolittle's assurance that the Washington congressman would not "ask a dollar from the Government in the way of an appropriation." With that, Bailey withdrew his objection, and the bill passed.[53]

The local perspective on the issue of creating a national park was essential urban—people in nearby cities considered Mount Rainier part of their recreational domain, as this 1894 view from Tacoma suggests. (UW Libraries, A. H. Waite neg. 227-12)

With the three amendments duly approved by the House, H.R. 4058 came very close to the final form of the Mount Rainier National Park Act. But the bill's subsequent progress was slow. On June 10, 1896, the Senate referred the bill to the Committee on Forest Reservations and Protection of Game.[54] Eight months later, on February 17, 1897, the bill was reported back with the recommendation that it be passed without amendment. In March it passed the Senate only to be stopped by pocket veto as President Grover Cleveland left office. Senator John L. Wilson introduced an identical bill (S. 349) in the next session of Congress, but apparently because no companion bill was introduced in the House, it never returned from committee. On December 7, 1897, Wilson introduced the same bill in the next session of Congress (S. 2552), and one week later Congressman Wesley Jones introduced a Washington National Park bill in the House (H.R. 5024). As this bill became stalled in the Committee on Public Lands, Congressman Lewis introduced the same bill again (H.R. 9146) on March 14, 1898.[55] Finally, near passage, the bill hit one last snag.

The story of the bill's final hurdle comes from the Seattle businessman John P. Hartman, who later claimed to have been closely involved in drafting the legislation. This seems unlikely, since Hartman's account begins not with Doolittle but with Wilson and Lewis in 1897. In any case, Wilson and Lewis summoned Hartman to Washington, D.C., to help them overcome the objection of the powerful Speaker of the House, "Uncle Joe" Cannon.

> I reached the National Capitol early in February, and very shortly was ushered into the presence of Mr. Cannon, piloted by Colonel Lewis. As usual, Mr. Cannon was smoking his big, black cigar, ensconsed in a swivel chair, with his feet on the jamb above the little fireplace where coal was burning cheerily in the grate. After preliminaries Mr. Cannon said, addressing me, "I have a notion to kill your Bill, and I have the power to do it." Of course, I wanted to know the reasons and he said, "It is all right to set these places aside but for the fact that in a year or so you will be coming back here seeking money from the Treasury to improve the place, and make it possible for visitors to go there, which things we do not need, and we haven't the money therefor, and I think I will kill it." I said to Mr. Cannon, "I promise you, Sir, that if this Bill is passed I will not be here asking for money from the Federal Treasury to operate the place so long as you shall remain in Congress." With that statement, he said, "I will take you at your word and let the measure go through, if otherwise it can travel the thorny road."[56]

Shortly after this meeting the bill was reported back, and the House passed one minor amendment recommended by Lewis, which gave settlers in the national park the same right as the railroad to claim other public lands in lieu of their lands in the park. In a final amendment, the House dispensed with the politically sensitive but dull "Washington National Park" and named the new national park after the mountain. (Ironically, it was mis-

spelled Mount Ranier National Park.) The bill passed both houses of Congress on March 1 and was signed by President McKinley on March 2, 1899.[57]

Despite its flaws, the Mount Rainier National Park Act was an important triumph in the greater national park campaign. Like Yellowstone, Rainier was established to preserve the area's scenic and scientific values. Forests and wildlife were to be preserved in their natural condition. Most of the parklands were carved from a designated national forest, affirming the idea that national parks and national forests were to be placed on separate administrative footing. As the first national park established after the Forest Reserve Act of 1891 and the Organic Act of 1897, the nation's fifth national park resolved any doubt that the United States government would develop both a national forest system and a national park system, each under a separate body of statutes.

Of the many individuals and organizations who came together in the campaign to establish Mount Rainier National Park, none took any part in the early administration or development of the park. The coalition dissolved as easily as it had formed, leaving for others the task of determining how the national park was to take shape in the new century.

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1. *Memorial from the Geological Society of America Favoring the Establishment of a National Park in the State of Washington*, 53d Cong., 2d Sess., 1894, S.Misc.D. 247, p. 2 (hereafter *Memorial*).
2. *Forest reserve* was the official designation until 1905, when the administration of the forests was transferred from the General Land Office to the forest service and these areas were redesignated *national forests*. But the latter term was already in use in the 1890s, and it is used here to avoid confusion.
3. *Memorial*.
4. Biographical sketches are in Charles Coulston Gillispie, ed., *Dictionary of Scientific Biography* (New York, 1970–).
5. Aubrey L. Haines, *Mountain Fever: Historic Conquest of Mount Rainier* (Portland, Oreg., 1962), 198-99.
6. On the inadequacy of the reserve designation as protection for Mount Rainier, see Carl Snyder, "Our New National Wonderland," *Review of Reviews*, Vol. 9 (February 1894), 163-72; and E. S. Ingraham, "It Rises Above All," Seattle *Post-Intelligencer*, Aug. 12, 1894 (hereafter *P-I* with date).
7. Haines, 149-53, 157.
8. Joseph L. Sax, *Mountains without Handrails: Reflections on the National Parks* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1980).
9. Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 2d ed., rev. (Lincoln, Nebr., 1987).
10. Theodore Winthrop, *The Canoe and the Saddle* (Portland, 1862), 80.
11. Ibid., 82.
12. See, for example, the respectful reference to Winthrop in John P. Hartman, "Creation of Mount Rainier National Park," address delivered at the 37th Annual Convention of the Washington Good Roads Association, Sept. 27-28, 1935, n. pag., Special Collections and Preservation Division, University of Washington Libraries, Seattle.
13. P. B. Van Trump, "Mount Tahoma," *Sierra Club Bulletin*, Vol.1 (May 1894), 121.
14. Israel C. Russell, "Impressions of Mount Rainier," *Scribner's Magazine*, Vol. 22 (August 1897), 176.
15. Snyder, 171.
16. *Congressional Record*, 53d Cong., 2d Sess., 1894, p. 7878 (hereafter cited as Squire speech).
17. *Memorial*, 2.
18. Ibid., 3.
19. Russell, 174.
20. Van Trump, 111; Snyder, 166.
21. Quoted in Squire speech, 7878.
22. Edward S. Ingraham, *The Pacific Forest Reserve and Mt. Rainier: A Souvenir* (Seattle, 1895), 4.
23. Snyder, 171.
24. Russell, 176.
25. Tacoma *Daily Ledger*, Sept. 8, 1893.
26. Ibid., Sept. 14, 1893. Years later, John P. Hartman provided an eyewitness account of an incident of vandalism in Paradise Park in 1895: "A considerable party, probably fifty, were encamped on the ground about where the hotel stands, while a party of four young men had taken up their site to the east of Alta Vista, and on the west bank of Paradise River. On the third evening we observed that these men had a considerable camp fire under one of the tall pines, probably 125 feet high, making a perfect cone, with the lower limbs coming to within about ten feet of the ground. We watched the fire and became alarmed. We could see the men throwing on more and more dry wood. Finally the object of the vandal was accomplished, because the rather oily, dry needles ignited and in a short time the whole wonderful tree was ablaze, making a fiery pillar that ascended probably 150 feet above the tree. Of course, this was awe-inspiring and seemed greatly to please the vandals, but the rest of us, looking on, thought it was an unmitigated wrong that ought to be punished." Hartman address.
27. The two best statements of the problem are E. S. Ingraham, "It Rises Above All," *P-I*, Aug. 12, 1894, and P. B. Van Trump, "Mount Tacoma Vandals," *Daily Ledger*, Sept. 14, 1893.
28. *P-I*, Aug. 12, 1894.
29. *Daily Ledger*, Sept. 14, 1893.
30. Ibid., Sept. 8, 1893.
31. Ibid., Sept. 9, 1893.
32. Ibid., Sept. 3, 1893.
33. Snyder, 171.
34. Squire speech, 7878.
35. Ibid.
36. Runte, 48-49.
37. *Memorial*, 4.
38. *Congressional Record*, 53d Cong., 2d Sess., 1893, p. 154; Snyder, 164.
39. Ibid., 1894, p. 498.
40. Senate bill 1250, "A Bill to set apart certain lands, now known as Pacific forest reserve, as a public park, to be known as the Washington National Park," National Park Service files.
41. John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore, 1961), 45.
42. Squire speech, 7877-78.
43. Robert McIntyre, "A Short History of Mount Rainier National Park" (mimeograph, 1954), 87, Mount Rainier National Park. The eastern boundary left the Cascade crest entirely outside the park.
44. "Elliot Denies Humphrey Charge," June 4, 1913, unidentified newspaper clipping in President Series, President's Subject Files, File 60 (1), Northern Pacific Railroad Company Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul; Charles Donnelly, *The Facts About the Northern Pacific Land Grant* (St. Paul, Minn., 1924), 12.

45. John Muir commented on the reduced boundaries, "Unless the reserve is guarded the flower bloom will soon be killed, and nothing of the forests will be left but black stump monuments." Quoted in Runte, 66.
46. Lute Pease, "The Way of the Land Transgression," *Pacific Monthly*, Vol.18 (October 1907), 488; Stephen Puter, *Looters of the Public Domain* (Portland, 1908), 371. Contemporary charges of corruption were completely unsubstantiated. There is a whiff of bribery in Northern Pacific records on this matter. Beginning in 1896, company officials took a keen interest in the legislation. The company's land commissioner, W. H. Phipps, advised the NP president, Edwin W. Winter, that it was "very desirable that the bill as reported to the House, be passed," and in another letter remarked, "I do not think the Northern Pacific ought to be prominent in advocating the passage of the bill, but the company has friends." While Phipps met with Doolittle in Tacoma, Winter placed the bill in the right channel in Washington, D.C., probably with a sympathetic member of the Committee on Public Lands. When Congress eventually passed the bill, one company official stated, "The company thought it achieved a great success in securing the passage of the act in question, which gives it property of large value in place of something of no value." Though this evidence is fragmentary, it seems indisputable that the Northern Pacific was involved in the legislative process contrary to what it always maintained afterward. Edwin W. Winter to W. H. Phipps, Oct. 12, 1896, Phipps to Winter, Nov. 7, 1896, and C. W. Bunn to W. J. Curtis, June 7, 1899, President's Subject Files, File 60 (1), Northern Pacific Papers.
47. Hartman address.
48. Alfred Runte, "Pragmatic Alliance: Western Railroads and the National Parks," *National Parks Magazine*, Vol. 48 (April 1974), 15-21.
49. *Washington National Park*, 54th Cong., 1st Sess., 1896, H.D. 1699.
50. Barry Mackintosh, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington, D.C., 1985), 11.
51. John Muir, "The National Parks and Forest Reservations," *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. 41 (June 5, 1897), 563-67; *idem.*, "The Wild Parks and Forest Reservations of the West," *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 81 (January 1898), 15-28.
52. Hartman address.
53. Ibid.
54. *Congressional Record*, 54th Cong., 1st Sess., 1896, p. 6445.
55. Ibid., 54th Cong., 2d Sess., 1897, pp. 1918, 2717; 55th Cong., 1st Sess., 1897, p. 41; 55th Cong., 2d Sess., 1897-98, pp. 21, 192, 2792, 5346, 5633, 5696.
56. Hartman address.
57. *Congressional Record*, 55th Cong, 3d Sess., 1899, pp. 2354, 2663, 2667, 2631, 2697, 2770, 2787.