

**A City, Asleep:
Revisiting and Reevaluating History and Interpretation at
Mesa Verde National Park**

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Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	i
ABSTRACT	ii
MAP	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
1 DISCOVERY AND REDISCOVERY IN MESA VERDE	8
2 PRESERVING THE WEST: THE NATIONAL PARK IDEA AND FEDERAL LEGISLATION	24
3 A NEW PARK	46
4 A POST WAR PARK	81
5 REVISITING AND REINTERPRETING	103
APPENDIX	137
BIBLIOGRAPHY	147

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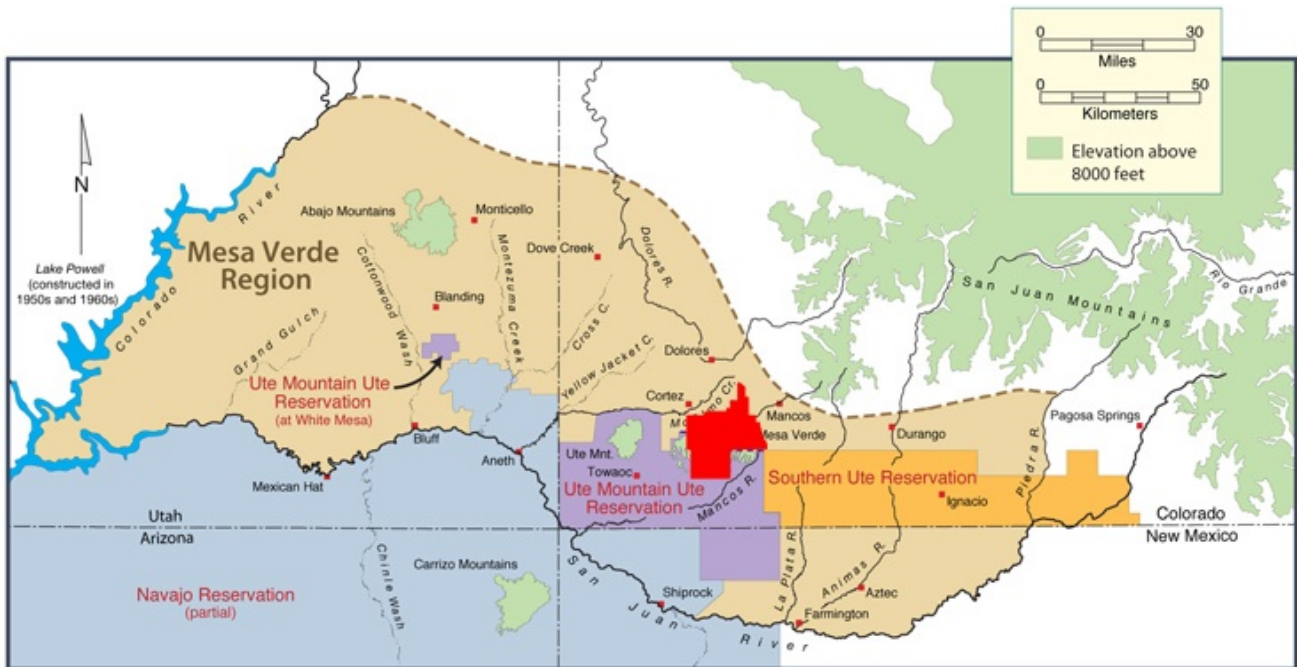
This thesis would not have been possible without the generosity and support of all these individuals. *Thank You.*

Abstract

This thesis investigates past and present preservation methodology, especially as it relates to interpretation, in order to illustrate the disciplines tendency to present carefully crafted, yet exclusive narratives at cultural sites. The problem with these subsequent stories, however, is that their positivist approach fails to acknowledge the multi-layered nature of history, which rarely is limited to one specific period or event. Using Mesa Verde National Park as my primary case study, I have taken a close look at those topics and concepts, like the National Park idea, nation building, federal legislation, tourism promotion, and Native American relations, which are seldom acknowledged in park interpretation.

To further illustrate the shortcomings of these efforts, I also detail roughly 100 years of Mesa Verde's own interpretive history. This comprehensive study demonstrates how Mesa Verde has been promoted and interpreted, by who, and what it can ultimately tell us about the evolution of preservation. What emerges is a clear picture of how interpretation has adapted over the years, and also how it has remained a relatively static and cursory tool. Thus, I argue that it is increasingly important for practitioners to revisit and reevaluate their work, as well as the work of others, in order to promote more comprehensive and inclusive understandings of our nation's cultural sites.

Mesa Verde National Park and Surrounding Reservations



Mesa Verde National Park (shown in red) and the surrounding Ute Indian reservations
Map by Neal Morris; courtesy of the Crow Canyon Archaeological Center; Mesa Verde overlay by author.

Introduction

*“Interpretation makes art manageable, conformable.”*¹

Susan Sontag

*“All human knowledge takes the form of interpretation.”*²

Walter Benjamin

I was first introduced to Mesa Verde National Park through a cultural resource management class I took during my senior year of undergraduate study. Though it had only been a brief project, it made me think about the National Parks in an entirely different way. What I had come to discover and realize, was that history is rarely problematized by preservationists and public historians. This, as I saw it, had led to the establishment of carefully selected narratives that were not necessarily accommodating of opposing perceptions.

A few years later, as a graduate student studying Historic Preservation, I began thinking more actively about history and how it is interpreted at cultural sites. I soon realized that preservationists have been guilty of operating themselves as arbiters of, what they see as factual, history. This belief, of course, fails to consider the rather transitory and ephemeral nature of history, one that is perpetually active and always subject to interpretation. In the process, the discipline has often become stigmatized as a static one, honoring history because, in a sense, it is so distant that it becomes sterile and safe. In order to address this, my thesis will explore the ways in which preservationists can look at their own history, learn from it, and make it apart of their practice moving forward.

¹ Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation, and Other Essays* (New York: Picador, 1966), 5.

² Walter Benjamin, *One-way Street and Other Writings* (Verso Books, 1979).

The Problem

“The human mind is a kind of sponge which absorbs ideas from many sources ... [it] is stimulated to some degree by everything heard, seen, or comprehended,” proclaims Robert LeFevre.³ Such a seemingly obvious remark, however, has come to guide and structure interpretation in the field of preservation. Having become a cornerstone of the discipline, interpretation seeks to promote an “empathetic understanding of the past” by encouraging the visitor to discover the resource for themselves.⁴ Thus, it has become the role of the practitioner to actively take part in promoting this understanding. This important accountability has subsequently intensified the preservationists’ role as storytellers. While interpretation exists as an undoubtedly subjective mechanism, the amount of care, research, and collaboration undertaken becomes of primary concern. Unfortunately, the past can show us that these considerations were not always regarded carefully enough. Consequently, many ongoing interpretations at cultural and historic sites represent the carefully selected and crafted stories dictated by a select few.

In order to adequately understand the importance of a site one must look beyond its physical manifestation and into its continuum as a multi layered historic resource, shaped by constantly evolving social, cultural, economic, and political forces. Unfortunately, it seems all too often that a place’s narrative becomes limited to a small and distant period within its own history. Using Mesa Verde National Park as a case study, I intend to document and analyze the changing management and interpretive strategies and the story that is created by these practices. With this in mind I will ask what have we done, and what can we do, as preservationists, to reinterpret our history in a sensitive and

³ Robert LeFevre, *The Philosophy of Ownership* (Rampart College Press, 1971), 64.

⁴ National Park Service, “What is Interpretation?” Department of the Interior <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/interp/int4.htm> (accessed April 1, 2012).

comprehensive way, while learning from these past representations and what they ultimately say about the history of the society that created them.

Interpretation: A Quick Introduction

The concept of interpretation is not a new one, having first been mentioned sometime in the 1870s by John Muir. Muir, a nineteenth century naturalist and wilderness preservation advocate poetically stated, “I’ll interpret the rocks, learn the language of flood, storm, and the avalanche. I’ll acquaint myself with the glaciers and wild gardens, and get as near the heart of the world as I can.”⁵ While Muir’s statement is fairly abstract, his early advocacy is regarded as an essential step in introducing the concept to a developing discipline.

Interpretation, as a mechanism of preservation, would mature slowly from Muir’s rather romantic revelation. Throughout the twentieth century, interpretation transformed into a type of voluntary education, heavily formulated and dictated by the National Park Service. Such efforts had begun, though isolated, by the late nineteenth century. The Wylie Camping Company, which provided tents for those visiting Yellowstone, were the first to provide educational activities by instituting lectures and campfire talks. Shortly thereafter, Enos Mills, a homesteader and naturalist, provided some of the first nature hikes around Rocky Mountain National Park.⁶ In subsequent years, interpretive strategies would expand to include small archaeological assemblages, signage detailing flora, fauna, and other natural feature, and general informational pamphlets. Largely, however,

⁵ Sierra Club, “The Jon Muir Exhibit,” http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/writings/favorite_quotations.aspx journal, undated fragment, c.1871 (accessed Feb 2, 2012).

⁶ Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (History Division, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington D.C., 1986), 2

these efforts were sparse and completed on an ad hoc basis, with little or no formal oversight. Early indifference in Washington, coupled with outspoken disapproval from park concessioners, had also stymied efforts to create a more organized system of interpretation.⁷

It would not be until the 1920s that National Park interpretation was institutionalized through the creation of the Park Service's Education Division, under the auspices of Stephen Mather, Director of the National Park Service. This new Education Division would work to set standards for hiring park naturalists as well as establishing a seven-week course to train hopeful college candidates. While educated individuals like Mills had provided tours in the past, the qualifications of other guides were often questionable. By training individuals in field observation and identification, the National Park Service hoped to boast a more competent workforce. Despite the new focus on training park staff, reports noted the continued "shallowness" of some naturalists' backgrounds.⁸

Nevertheless, interpretation continued to be regarded as a necessary component of any successful site. The Historic Sites Act of 1935 greatly expanded and refined the goals of American preservation and interpretation by including provisions for erecting and maintaining museums as well as signifying tablets.⁹ However, some areas still struggled to accommodate effective interpretation that was understood by the average visitor. At many sites professionally dictated interpretation became overly technical, discussing certain events in excessively complicated terms. To compound the problem, certain

⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁸ Ibid., 16.

⁹ *Historic Sites Act of 1935*, 49 Stat. 666; 16 U.S.C. 461-467 (August 21, 1935).

interpretations simply lacked the proper historical research to effectively back their claims.¹⁰

In order to address these and other issues, parks began implementing a wider range of tools that included museum exhibits, additional signage, videos, and even audio. Still, the park guide remained most valued, necessitating the expansion of training programs. While the National Park Service had published reference books for its employees by the 1950s, formal preparation lingered as a pressing issue. Finally, in 1963, permanent training facilities had been established at the Grand Canyon and Harpers Ferry, with the intention of providing advanced instruction to all park interpreters.¹¹ This inclusion, maybe not coincidentally, had come shortly after Freeman Tilden's *Interpreting Our Heritage* was published, where Tilden both commended and critiqued the current state of interpretation.¹² Tilden has continued to be a primary source of consultation, and has since been joined by other writers focusing on interpretation, including William J. Lewis, Larry Beck and Ted Cable.¹³

What was once considered an ancillary tool has since become directly supportive of the preservation mission.¹⁴ Through its commitment to preservation and education, the National Park Service has, in many respects, become an archetype for similar organizations around the world. Yet, a look into the current state of this institution shows us that, while interpretation has become highly regarded, it should not be considered omniscient.

¹⁰ Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective*, 32.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹² Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage* (University of North Carolina Press, 1977).

¹³ See also; William J. Lewis, *Interpreting for Park Visitors* (Eastern Acorn Press, 1981); Larry Beck and Ted Cable, *Interpretation for the 21st Century* (Sagamore Publishing, 1998)

¹⁴ Kevin Bacher et al., "Foundations of Interpretation Curriculum Content Narrative," (National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Interpretive Development Program: March 1, 2007), 1.

The Approach

Using Mesa Verde National Park in Southwest Colorado as my case study, I will explore preservation and interpretation in various contexts. To begin, the first chapter will take a look at Mesa Verde and the West as elements in a larger story of nation building. The nineteenth century, had in fact, encouraged the exploration and subsequent rediscovery of Mesa Verde's ruins, which subsequently became a catalyst for further exploration, research, vandalism and even profiteering. As public awareness towards America's newly discovered cultural resources grew, so did those who became interested in their use and protection.

Picking up where the first leaves off, the second chapter will discuss the emergence of advocacy efforts, exploring the individuals who fought to protect Mesa Verde, and also those who sought to create a broader impetus for preservation. This discussion will also serve to detail how both natural and cultural preservation, through the National Parks, had become a mechanism that further institutionalized state formation.

With this substantial background formed, the third and fourth chapters will look specifically at the history of Mesa Verde as a National Park. What I will discuss is the way in which the Park had come to manage and interpret itself since 1906, though I will also focus on the role of its many secondary stakeholders. At the same time, this chapter will naturally bring into focus the very complex and multi-layered history the site has continued to acquire.

Finally, to conclude the thesis, I will argue, with the help of the previous four chapters, that our current methods of interpretation must be constantly reassessed. As I will have made clear, Mesa Verde National Park is a site with an intricately layered

history. However, current practice encourages a history that “gets so lost in the midst of time that it seems it should simply be left alone.”¹⁵ To address this issue, I will consider both theoretical and practical strategies that look to rethink the way we manage and interpret such sites. Though largely centered around Mesa Verde National Park, I believe the product of this work will be applicable on a far larger scale.

¹⁵ Panayota Gounari, “Unlearning the Official History: Agencies and Pedagogies of Possibility,” in *Ideologies in Education: Unmasking the Trap of Teacher Neutrality* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), 110.

1

Discovery and Rediscovery at Mesa Verde

*“Far up above me, a thousand feet or so, set in a great cavern in a cliff, I saw a little city of stone, asleep.”*¹

Willa Cather, *The Professor's House*

*“Unfortunate, indeed, is he who views this ancient city and sees only the towering walls.”*²

Don Watson, Chief Archaeologist, Mesa Verde National Park

The increasing interest in America's cultural resources, which began during the nineteenth century, had been made possible by ongoing colonialism that sought to conquer the West. These resources, had however, presented a unique dilemma that contested government authority in many ways. On one hand, Native Americans threatened to limit federal ascendancy in the West, while at the same time vandalism and looting of cultural resources, supported by private explorers, homesteaders, and other parties, presented similar challenges.

Occupation & Abandonment

Sometime around 500 C.E., the first sedentary inhabitants of Mesa Verde arrived. Now commonly referred to as the Modified Basketmakers, these first peoples had actually belonged to a larger regional Native American culture, known as the Anasazi, or more appropriately Ancestral Puebloans.³

¹ Willa Cather, *The Professors House* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), 201.

² National Park Service, “a journey through time in the National Parks,” in *That the Past Shall Live*, 1959. http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/npsg/past_live/sec2.htm (accessed March 28, 2012).

³ The latter of these terms has largely replaced the former, which is a Navajo word roughly translating to “ancient ones” or “enemy ancestors,” depending on who you ask. By and large, most contemporary Native peoples have come to object to the term Anasazi. This paper will instead use the term Ancestral Puebloan to refer to Mesa Verde's early inhabitants.

These early residents built simplistic one-room pithouses in cliff alcoves and on the mesa tops. Their agriculture was minimal, consisting of corn, beans and squash, with ceramic technology having just recently been acquired. Within two hundred years, building techniques advanced and expanded into small villages consisting of rooms with wattle and daub walls. This progression had thus marked the beginning of the Pueblo I period.⁴ By the late ninth century, a then diverse assortment of cultural variations living on the mesa had begun to construct larger and more complex structures.⁵ Only a few decades later, the Pueblo II period began at Mesa Verde, persisting from around 900 to 1150 C.E. The architecture of these years was clearly influenced by the emerging Chaco culture south of Mesa Verde. More importantly, it is around this time that we begin to see great-house complexes emerging, which are now most typically associated with Mesa Verde National Park.⁶

The next 200 years (Pueblo III period) at Mesa Verde marked a period of great expansion and illustrates the most prolific architectural era for the area. Between 1150 and 1300 C.E., Ancestral Puebloans created some of the most magnificent multistory buildings and village complexes.⁷ These spaces were slowly and carefully crafted by shaping available sandstone into uniform blocks and setting them in locally made mortar, while using wood beams to support the floors and roofs. For example, Mesa Verde's largest single site, Cliff Palace, is estimated to have taken nearly eight decades to complete and contains an estimated 150 rooms and 23 ceremonial spaces, or kivas.⁸ This

⁴ David Noble, ed., *The Mesa Verde World: Explorations in Ancestral Pueblo Archaeology* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2006), 19-23.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

period unquestionably marks the pinnacle of Mesa Verde occupation and architecture, and has produced some of the most well preserved buildings and complexes to date.

The periods spanning between the Modified Basketmakers to Pueblo III mark an incredible evolution of technology, culture, architecture and subsistence. However, relatively soon after the last phase of construction at Cliff Palace, and nearly seven centuries of occupation, the Ancestral Puebloans appear to have picked up and moved on. While there is widespread speculation on what may have initiated this final migration, ranging from severe droughts to warfare, a sufficiently comprehensive theory has not yet been adopted.⁹ Nevertheless, evidence does suggest that in the 1270s, a great drought and drop in temperature had severe effects on the region, possibly influencing migration patterns.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the sudden abandonment has left ample room for fanciful theories and narratives about the people of Mesa Verde, which often overshadow the true story of innovation and culture.

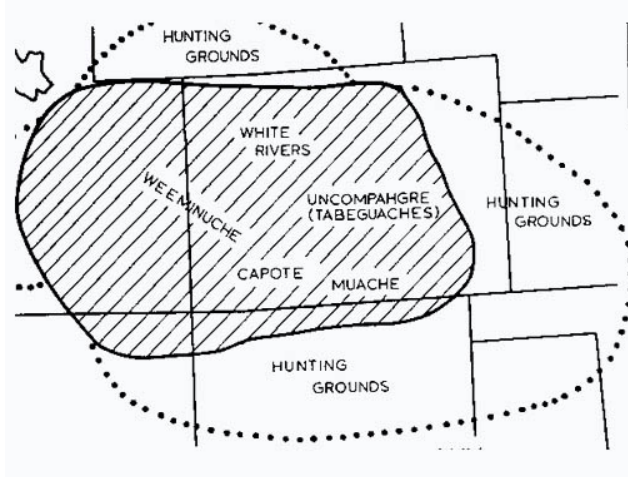
From Reoccupation to the Reservation

It is said that shortly after or even during the Ancestral Puebloans migration from Mesa Verde, ancestors of the modern day Ute Indians began moving into the area. By the early seventeenth century, however, it is unquestionable that other groups, primarily the Ute, had settled throughout the region. Increasing conflict, trade, and treaties between Native groups, such as the Navajos and Hopi Indians, as well as Spanish settlers, marks the next two centuries and are far too complex to discuss in adequate detail. Nevertheless, in 1868, after roughly four hundred years of occupation in and around the Mesa Verde

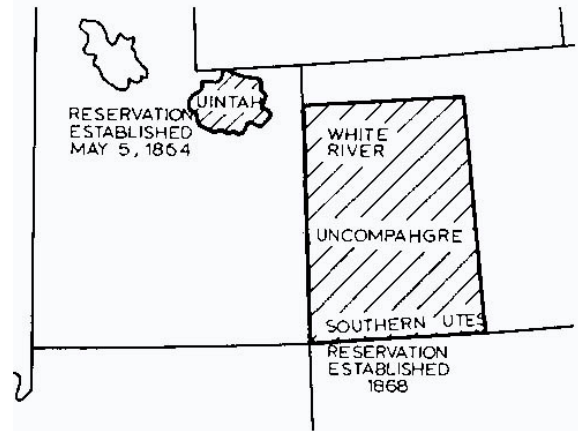
⁹ Brian Billman, Patricia Lambert, Banks Leonard, "Cannibalism, Warfare and Drought in the Mesa Verde Region during the Twelfth Century A.D." *American Antiquity*, Vol.65 No.1 (2000).

¹⁰ Noble, *The Mesa Verde World: Explorations in Ancestral Pueblo Archaeology*, 46.

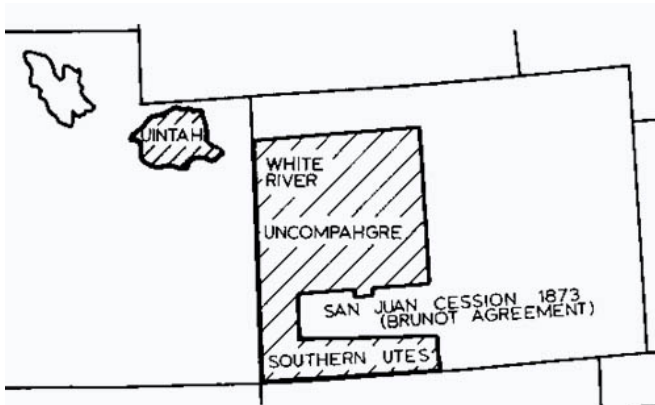
region, including all states in the four corners region, the federal government moved the Ute Indians into a newly designated reservation (Image 1).¹¹ The Consolidated Ute Reservation, as it was then called, was meant for all Utes in Colorado and New Mexico, and comprised almost one third of the state, or about 20 million acres, encompassing



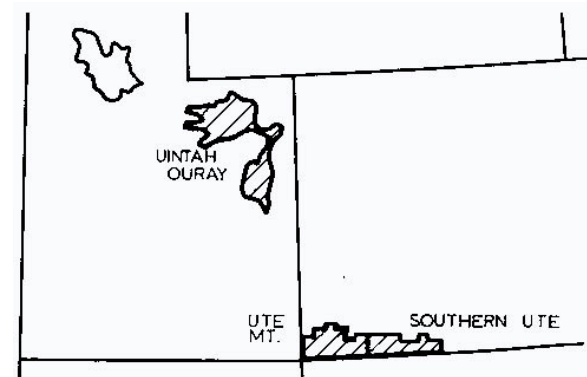
Original Territory



1868 Reservation



1873 Reservation



Current Reservation

Image 1: Stages of the Ute Indian Occupation and Reservation System
 Courtesy: Southern Ute Indian Tribe: <http://www.southern-ute.nsn.us/>

¹¹ United States, "Treaty with the Ute Indians," March 2nd, 1868, *United States Statutes at Large*.

the entirety of what now makes up Mesa Verde National Park.¹²

President Andrew Johnson demonstrated his pleasure with the agreement by offering each Ute delegate a silver medal, symbolic of those who were considered to be “good Indians.”¹³ Of course, the Ute Indians did not sign the treaty without including their own stipulations, one of which stated that all non-authorized individuals were prohibited from entering, settling on, or residing within the new reservation boundaries.¹⁴ As a sign of good faith, but more so assimilation, the government also resolved to construct schools throughout the reservation system.¹⁵ Nevertheless, unsatisfied with the treaty in general, many Ute vocalized their displeasure with the government and their delegates, and in certain cases, violence sometimes arose.¹⁶

In 1872, only one year after abolishing the process of treaty making between the government and Native American groups, Congress looked to initiate the purchase of reservation lands for mining purposes. This decision to end treaty making had largely been a political consideration, as some viewed them as hindering assimilation. Others also suggested that the act was a form of punishment for those tribes who had aligned themselves with the confederacy during the Civil War.¹⁷ Without this mechanism, the government was left to respond to the Ute insistence that illegal entries, which had been conducting mining operations, be evicted from their reservation.¹⁸ After months of deliberation and coercing, the Ute tribe finally agreed to cede the land for mining

¹² Virginia M. Simmons, *The Ute Indians of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico* (University Press of Colorado, 2000), 132.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 133

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 153

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 136

¹⁷ Montana Legislative Council, “Many Nations in One: A History of Federal Indian Policy,” September, 1993: 10.

¹⁸ Simmons, *The Ute Indians of Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico*, 149.

purposes. What some were unaware of, however, was that nearly a quarter of their original reservation was included in this agreement, much of it being the San Juan Mountains and sacred hot springs.¹⁹ Understandably, cooperation and trust between the Ute and government had begun to decline, and would continue to do so for decades. Though Washington constructed schools and paid fairly for reservation lands, the tribe could not help but feel they were being taken advantage of. Similar tensions would continue, quite routinely, throughout a good portion of Mesa Verde's history.

Exploring the West

While the Ute and other Native Americans had been confined their respective reservations, American exploration of the West was expanding to include organized geographical and geological surveys. For years, teams like King, Wheeler, Powell, and Hayden surveyed west of the 100th meridian to classify public lands, and examine its geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain.²⁰ Of the aforementioned parties, one would become particularly integral to the exploration of the Mesa Verde region. Thanks in large part to photographer William H. Jackson, the Hayden Geological Survey eventually became known worldwide for its exploration of the Wyoming and Colorado territories, which had documented the rediscovery of pre-Colonial ruins built by Native Americans.

After hearing persistent rumors of possible Aztec ruins in Southwestern Colorado, Jackson resolved to investigate further, though this had not been the teams' primary objective. After a 350 mile journey that circled the Mesa Verde plateau, Jackson returned

¹⁹ Ibid., 150.

²⁰ "Establishment of the U.S. Geological Survey." *United States Geological Survey, U.S. Dept. of the Interior* (July 1, 1879): <http://pubs.usgs.gov/circ/c1050/establish.htm>

with 40 negatives of various ruins, towers, and dwellings he had come across. During subsequent investigations of the Four Corners region in 1875 and 1876, geologist William Holmes, was given the task of documenting and examining any ruins in as much detail as time permitted. These reports would eventually become published, and are the earliest scientific records of the prehistoric built environment found around the Mesa Verde region. However, whether it was a factor of time or accessibility, the Hayden Survey never did stumble upon the expansive apartment-sized cliff dwellings that have since become synonymous with Mesa Verde National Park.

The initial job of these surveying teams, of course, was not to discover and document archaeological sites. And while careful attention was paid to describing, sketching, and sometimes photographing certain sites, others were often glanced over, either because there was little to document or simply not enough time. A testament to the latter of these possibilities, William H. Jackson's report states, "we found upon each hand very old and faint vestiges of the homes of a forgotten people, but could give them no more attention than merely noting their existence."²¹

Upon returning home from their investigations, Jackson and Holmes turned to other's research in attempt to better understand the ruins they had come to document. In one instance, Jackson specifically cites a *New York Tribune* article that purports to tell the story of the region and its subsequent abandonment. At one point, the article's author claims, "About a thousand years ago, however, they [Ancestral Puebloans] were visited by strangers from the North ... Then their troublesome neighbors – ancestors of the

²¹ William Jackson and William Holmes, *Hayden Survey 1874-1876: Mesa Verde and the Four Corners* (Ouray, CO: Bear Creek Publishing, 1981), 379.

present Utes – began to forage upon them, and, at last, to massacre them....”²² Of course, there was little evidence to substantiate this story, and can be considered more folklore than science. Similarly, William Holmes had speculated that, “The cliff houses could only have been used as places of refuge and defense.”²³ Clearly, such stories and observations began garnering attention for the area, while also reaffirming stereotypical views of Native American culture.

While the findings of their investigations were sometime complete conjecture, some accurate admissions had been made. For example, Holmes aptly concluded that the modern day Pueblos demonstrated a close continuation of the early Mesa Verde cultures. He stated, “The ancient peoples of the San Juan country were doubtless the ancestors of the present pueblo tribes ... a comparison of the ancient with the modern architecture ... lead very decidedly to this conclusion.”²⁴ Concluding his report, Holmes admitted the need for future research:

It should be remembered that up to this time no excavations whatever have been made among these ruins, and I feel as if more information should be obtained before attempting to draw other than very general conclusions. It seems to me probable that a rich reward awaits the fortunate archaeologist who shall be able to thoroughly investigate the historical records that lie buried in the masses of ruins, the unexplored caves, and the still mysterious burial-places of the Southwest.²⁵

Unbeknownst to Jackson and Holmes, the fortunate archaeologist, or in this case archaeologists, would settle on the Mesa before the turn of the century.

²² Ibid., 380.

²³ Ibid., 383.

²⁴ Ibid., 408.

²⁵ Ibid.

Discovering the Ruins

Government incentives, such as the Homestead Act of 1862, along with concepts like Manifest Destiny, had already begun to incentivize western settlement prior to the these surveys. The popularity of the Homestead Act allowed it to persist as a government program for 72 years. Over this period the government processed 1.6 million applications totaling 270 million acres, or about 10 percent of all land in the United States.²⁶ Moreover, the belief in Manifest Destiny -- that America was intended to continue colonizing the continent – was used to rationalize and encourage similar expansion. In many ways, Mesa Verde’s rediscovery, and subsequent preservation, became possible because of these ongoing efforts. Forming the nation-state, as it were, was not solely a government objective, but perpetuated by individuals as well.

In the case of Mesa Verde, one family would become particularly involved in raising the region into the national consciousness. In 1880, after reaching Mancos, Colorado, and temporarily living with a fellow settler, the Wetherill family saved enough money to claim their own homestead at the head of the Mancos Valley. Alamo Ranch, as it was called, was developed primarily by Richard and his brothers, as their father had become too unhealthy to work himself. After roughly a decade of development and ranching, the Alamo had become one of the most prosperous and highly developed homesteads in the valley.²⁷

The Wetherill family, surrounded by Indian country, was on good terms with the Ute Indians, who even allowed them to graze their animals on their reservation.²⁸

²⁶ Lee Ann Potter and Wynell Schamel, “The Homestead Act of 1862,” *Social Education* 61, 6 (Oct 1997): 360.

²⁷ McNitt, *Richard Wetherill: Anasazi*, 16.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 18.

Moreover, during the winter months the Wetherill family was permitted to shelter their cattle in the Mancos Canyon and side canyons of Mesa Verde, also part of the Ute reservation. During these months the brothers along with Charlie Mason, husband to one of the Wetherill women, would take turns watching the cattle. Often times they would set out to explore the canyons, eventually leading them to their first important discovery, a ruin they named Sandal House. On these excursions, the men would often find and take relics, which they would bring back to the Alamo Ranch, sometimes being sold or gifted. However, unloading these new discoveries or even exhibiting them was not always easy. For some time, public and private opinion of Indian artifacts had been apathetic at best. Simply put, “The public didn’t particularly care about being educated.”²⁹ That was until the first mummy, discovered by the Wetherills at Mesa Verde, was put on public display in Denver.

This discovery proved to be invaluable, garnering the interest of not only the public but also the Denver Historical Society, who purchased one of the Wetherill collections in 1889 for \$3,000, or roughly \$70,000 in 2010. It was the Historical Society’s ultimate goal to have the collection of Mesa Verde artifacts stay within the state, where it eventually went on display at the Denver Chamber of Commerce, becoming one of the largest collections of its time, even eclipsing that of the National Museum in Washington.³⁰ Such exhibits soon became a main attraction for local Denver residents. Moreover, author Frank McNitt points out that these initial sales prompted subsequent collections and implored the Wetherills to approach such excavations with

²⁹ Ibid., 30.

³⁰ Ibid.

business in mind. Not surprisingly, much of the success and subsequent criticism of the Wetherill family owes itself to their indisputable role as glorified pothunters.

After a few of their initial discoveries, Richard Wetherill was approached by a friendly Ute named Acowitz. As the story goes, Acowitz told Richard of the many houses built by the “old people” that stood in the area, one being, “high, high in the rocks, bigger than all the others.” Acowitz forebodingly warned that, “Utes never go there. It is a sacred place ... when you disturb the spirits of the dead, then you die too.”³¹ Other Utes had similar reservations to the brothers’ excavations. In fact, most the ruins were located within the Ute reservation, leading to some brief confrontations. More than likely, however, superstitions had outweighed any greater hostilities, as the Utes were concerned with the spiritual ramifications of these investigations. One Ute had proclaimed, “White man dig up Moquis, make Ute sick.”³² The Wetherills had not concerned themselves with such stories, as they were determined to find this great ruined city. Sometime after speaking with Acowitz, while hunting tirelessly for stray cattle, Al Wetherill had decided to regroup with his party. On his way back down the canyon, he caught a glimpse of a ruin of immense scale:

I stood looking at the ruins in surprised awe. I had hoped to find some unexplored dwellings – but this discovery surpassed my wildest dreams. I gauged the steep walls of the canyon against my tired legs and the ebbing daylight and turned slowly away. They would wait – they had waited for hundreds of years for the moment of discovery.³³

³¹ Ibid., 22.

³² Duane Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 30. *The term Moqui, actually translates to ‘dead’, but also refers to a group of Native Americans.*

³³ McNitt, *Richard Wetherill: Anasazi*, 23.

Al Wetherill was right, the discovery would wait for another year. On December 18, 1888, brother Richard along with Charlie Mason, again hunting stray cattle, caught a glimpse of the largest set of dwellings they had ever seen. Creating a makeshift ladder Richard and Charlie lowered themselves down, over the canyon, and into the undisturbed city, which Richard would later name Cliff Palace.³⁴ After exploring the vast sprawl of forgotten architecture, the men came to a conclusion. They believed, whoever had once called these buildings home, hastily fled during a chaotic siege. They based these rather audacious claims on the lack of timber beams that would have once supported the dwellings' roofs. To them, this scant and rather inconclusive finding was evidence that attackers had attempted to destroy the buildings and village after the conflict. Whether or not Richard and Charlie's initial observations led to future ideas about Mesa Verde is unclear. Nevertheless, throughout much of the sites subsequent history, the idea that violence had driven out the Ancestral Puebloans remained central, and perpetuated the belief of inherent hostility among Native Americans.

Exploiting the Ruins

For years after the discovery of Cliff Palace, the brothers continued on with their excavations. Though they went about these excursions with a certain care and methodology, carefully documenting finds, sketching artifacts, and even taking some photographs, their excavations, by today's standards, are rather insufficient. This is not surprising, of course, as the Wetherill men were not archaeologists, but rather ranchers who had been inspired by the possibility of monetary gain and prestige. To corroborate

³⁴ Ibid., 24

this position one can turn to an advertisement published by Richard Wetherill in the *Mancos Times*, which stated: “*Mancos Canon & the Aztec Cliff Dwellings. Indian Curios, Aztec Relics, Photographs for Sale. Address: Richard Wetherill, Alamo Ranch, Mancos, Colo.*”³⁵ A further statement made by Charlie Mason admitted that their excavations had become “a business proposition,” ultimately leading to the conversion of a barn into a veritable showcase of artifacts for purchase. Of additional interest was Richard’s use of the term Aztec, which described an entirely separate people, but one that was more easily identified by the public. As McNitt explains, Richard used this as a conscious but strategic misnomer, even though he was well aware that Aztec’s had nothing to do with Mesa Verde.³⁶ This omission is a clear example of the dichotomous nature of the Wetherills intentions.

At the same time, however, the Wetherills did not hold exclusive rights over the exploration of the cliff dwellings. Shortly after their discovery of Cliff Palace, other individuals began to visit the mesa for various purposes. One of the first visitors, Frederick Chapin, an author and mountaineer, arrived to the Alamo Ranch sometime around 1889, spending two summers with Richard. After being guided through Mesa Verde for these two seasons, Chapin authored his book, *The Land of the Cliff Dwellers*, which was later published in 1892.³⁷ The book was of great importance, as it became one of the first such writings to popularize the ruins on a national scale. In fact, Chapin may have even been one of the first to conclude that drought had been of great consequence

³⁵ Ibid., 35

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Rose Houk and Faith Marcovecchio ed., *Mesa Verde National Park: The First 100 Years* (Mesa Verde Museum Association and Fulcrum Publishing, 2006), 16.

throughout the region.³⁸ Though he did not necessarily attribute this to having caused the abandonment of the cliff dwellings, his observations may have inspired ensuing investigations. It is also likely that Chapin's writings on the neighboring Ute Indians had formed one of the first widely accessible descriptions of them. Chapin had explained that certain bands of Utes had no interest in becoming civilized, and would often trespass outside of their reservation. He also stated that the decreasing number of Utes would be good "for the commercial interest of Durango and neighboring towns," but at the same time "remove one of the picturesque attractions of the locality..."³⁹ Chapin's writings likely had some influence in regarding the Utes as a novelty, though it would not be until the site was protected that such representations would become manifested. Chapin's decision to conclude his book with a fanciful thought is not entirely surprising. He surmised, "And may we not imagine them a race who loved peace rather than war, but who, hard pressed by a savage foe, fought stubbornly and long, and died rather than desert their romantic fortresses among the canon cliffs?"⁴⁰

Chapin would not be that last explorer to have some hand in romanticizing Mesa Verde. Just one year prior to Chapin's publication, a young Swede named Gustaf Nordenskiöld stumbled upon a Wetherill collection being displayed at the Denver Historical Society. Impressed by what he saw, he resolved to meet the Wetherills and have them show him the cliff dwellings. Nordenskiöld arrived at the Alamo Ranch in June of the same year, anticipating nothing more than a week of rugged exploration. However, at the advice of Richard Wetherill, Nordenskiöld eventually spent the entire summer excavating and collecting relics at various Mesa Verde locales. During one of his

³⁸ Frederick Chapin, *The Land of the Cliff Dwellers*. (Boston: W.B. Clarke & Company, 1892).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 182.

most expansive investigations, Nordenskiöld posited, “Though the inhabitants . . . were admirably prepared for defense, still there are indications to suggest they eventually succumbed to their enemies.”⁴¹ Like the Wetherills, Chapin, and others before him, Nordenskiöld believed the mysterious abandonment of Mesa Verde could be explained through warfare. Though not unique to Nordenskiöld’s excavations, such views would persist long after the Wetherills, eventually becoming used as a primary marketing tool of Mesa Verde. Nevertheless, Nordenskiöld methods had been purportedly more scientific and sensitive, and were illustrated through his book, *The Cliff Dwellers of Mesa Verde*. In fact, it is claimed that he first showed Richard Wetherill the value in working with a trowel over a standard shovel.⁴² After his summer’s work, Nordenskiöld planned to pack up the relics he had collected and take them back to Sweden. However, after word reached Durango, Nordenskiöld was served with a warrant and arrested, in fear that these great American relics would be lost to a foreign nation. Unfortunately, no laws existed at the time prohibiting this type of transport, and the artifacts eventually would find their way to the National Museum of Finland in Helsinki.⁴³

Though there are justifiable arguments for and against the work that the Wetherill family and Gustaf Nordenskiöld had carried out, they had, at least in some sense, provided a glimpse into the life of the cliff dwellers. Whether or not they had simply privatized this looting is another question entirely, but one worth further consideration. In the wake of their activity, archaeology and relic hunting soon became a burgeoning

⁴¹ McNitt, *Richard Wetherill: Anasazi*, 39.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴³ Houk and Marcovecchio, ed., *Mesa Verde National Park: The First 100 Years*, 16.

industry in the Southwest, extending far beyond Mesa Verde.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, quantifying these subsequent losses in antiquities is near impossible. Regardless, the rediscovery of Mesa Verde by the Wetherills created an important new phase in the region's history. Not only had the ruins been discovered, photographed, and excavated in the name of research and, often times, economic gain, but they had also been infiltrated by an unknown amount of vandals and looters, interested only in acquiring their own authentic Indian artifacts for personal collections or sale. The more Mesa Verde became publicized in newspapers and by word of mouth, the more susceptible it became to these nefarious endeavors. Uncontrolled pot hunting and vandalism had become so rampant by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that action became a necessity.⁴⁵

Having finally become interested in the prehistory of their country, or at least what it could mean for the country's developing sense of nationalism, certain residents and politicians became vocal about protecting Mesa Verde and other similar sites around the Southwest. Though it took some time, the government's eventual response to the nation's exponential loss of antiquities and archaeological sites would far eclipse recent accomplishments, like Mount Vernon in Virginia, creating the nation's first federal legislation dealing specifically with preservation.

⁴⁴ Richard Sellars, "A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation – The Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act." *Natural Resources Journal*, Vol. 47 (Spring 2007): 269.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

2 Preserving the West: The National Park Idea and Federal Legislation

*“The last time I was there I never took anything away from those houses. We always leave them alone.”*¹

Nathan Wig, *Ute*

*“Eastward I go only by force, but westward I go free.”*²

Henry David Thoreau, *Walking*

The sudden groundswell of support for national resources would not have been possible without larger social, cultural, political and artistic influences that had begun reshaping the way Americans thought about America, and the West in particular. This section chronicles both advocacy efforts and federal authority as they relate to the preservation movement. Building upon the previous chapter, I will discuss how the National Parks, and subsequent federal legislation, had become new mechanisms that allowed the government to exercise its power over the natural and built world. Moreover, this chapter details an important transitional period, when American cultural resources became regarded for their significance.

Taking Cultural Resources Seriously

As Western counterparts to the Eastern battlefields, pre-Colonial archaeological sites quickly became a centerpiece for a new American cultural and scientific frontier.

The West provided new and unique opportunities for researchers, especially

¹ Minutes of the Council at Navajo Springs, Colorado. F.H. Abbott, Commissioner of Bureau of Indian Affairs and Major James McLaughlin, Inspector of the Department of the Interior, May 5, 1911; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Relative Exchange of Lands Within Park Owned by the Ute Indians for Lands Outside of Park on Ute Mountain, Colorado, 1909-1911; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

² Henry David Thoreau, “Walking,” 1862.

archaeologists, that could not be found anywhere else. In fact, much of the scientific development that archaeology underwent during this time can be credited to these resources. However, few give adequate recognition to how deeply influential emerging Western ideology and philosophy had become in creating federally mandated preservation doctrine.

By the late nineteenth century, looting, vandalism and general relic hunting had become such a serious problem across the Southwest that neither the public nor the federal government could ignore it any longer. The remoteness of these archaeological sites coupled with non-existent legislation forbidding such destructive activities, made any type of satisfactory monitoring or enforcement near impossible. However, awareness began to rise as publicity surrounding sites like Mesa Verde, and its self appointed custodians, the Wetherills, reached citizens who were not always eager to laud the family's ambiguous efforts. Richard Sellers, a National Park Service historian, described the time as, "A kind of 'archaeological frontier' ... with unrestrained destructive extraction of thousands of valuable objects from age-old Indian sites..."³ And with the completion of the Rio Grande Southern Railroad, in 1891, the ease at which explorers and pothunters could reach these archaeological sites had greatly increased.

The expansion of the railroad also led to increased investment towards national promotion materials that could be obtained by an ever increasing demographic.⁴ Though the railroad was symbolic of a larger national movement in expansion, technology, and transportation and helped create and sustain new cities and destinations, it also increased

³ Richard Sellers, "A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation – The Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act," *Natural Resources Journal*, Vol. 47 (Spring 2007): 269.

⁴ Duane Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 41.

the rate of deterioration at many important archaeological sites. With Mesa Verde now more easily accessible, little stood in the way of weekend explorers who wanted their own authentic Indian souvenirs.

Yet, before we can understand how Southwestern archaeological sites came to be protected by federal legislation, we must first look back, before the Wetherills, Chapin, and Nordenskiöld had ever arrived at Mesa Verde. The preservation movement, in many ways, was rooted in the continuous effort of nation building, which had been promoted by imperialism, but also through a literary and artistic enlightenment. Sometime around 1830, Americans had slowly awakened to the gradual industrialization that slowly consumed Niagara Falls, one of the nation's most picturesque landscapes. A site once viewed as an essential and obligatory stop by both Americans and Europeans for its scenic beauty, had quickly transformed into an industrial landscape. Soon, Europeans began attacking what they saw as a failure by Americans to protect their own wonders. Such critique struck close to home for some Americans, who viewed such assessments as an attack on the nation itself.⁵

Unfortunately, by the time sufficient awareness of Niagara had been established, it was already too late. Industrialization in the east had become too important and too fast sweeping to oppose. This was not to be the immediate case for the entire country, however, and Americans soon began looking west for a fresh start. Along with the gradual realization that nature was at risk, the country had begun to develop its first truly unique art and literary movement. Soon enough, the West became an opportunity to keep

⁵ Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Maryland: Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), 6.

its "unimpaired" natural landscapes out of the hands of private interests, an idea unmistakably augmented by the recent failures at Niagara.

Considering the West

Authors, artists, and explorers like John C. Frémont, George Catlin, Henry David Thoreau, James Fenimore Cooper, and others, were among the first to consider what the West might mean for an emerging nation. These individuals did not simply view it as a land for growth, development and manifest destiny, but instead as a landscape that could provide insights into humanity. Moreover, Western discovery helped promote America as a country containing some of the most beautiful scenery in the world, a claim that was continuously debated in the ongoing international competition between the United States and Europe. Writing retrospectively in 1904, Reverend Henry Mason Baum, noted that, "Americans of wealth and leisure have ... spent their vacations abroad, and comparatively few of them are acquainted with the scenic beauty of our own country and its remains of prehistoric man," and that "the so-called 'New-World' is not after all so new."⁶ In the mid nineteenth century, however, these acknowledgements were still gaining traction and had yet to be thoroughly confirmed. Nevertheless, this new canvas granted tourism with a fresh attraction and provided scientists new materials in which to study.

During his many travels among the American Indians, that had begun in 1832, George Catlin wrote:

⁶ Rev Henry Mason Baum, "Pending Legislation for the Protection of Antiquities on the Public Domain," *Records of the Past*, Vol. III, Part. IV (April, 1904): 100.

Black and blue cloth and civilization are destined, not only to veil, but to obliterate the grace and beauty of Nature. Man, in the simplicity and loftiness of his nature, unrestrained and unfettered by the disguises of art, is surely the most beautiful model for the painter, -- and the country from which he hails is unquestionably the best study or school of the arts in the world: such, I am sure, from the models I have seen, is the wilderness of North America.⁷

Though the unadulterated landscape of Niagara may have been lost, the North American wilderness possessed an unparalleled and unprecedented repository of wonders, some of which “rival[ing] those of the Orient.”⁸ At the same time the West and its natural landscapes provided philosophical insights. Catlin went so far as to proclaim that the wilderness required a type of digression to fully comprehend and respect it:

but to reach this country, one is obliged to descend from the light and glow of civilized atmosphere, through the different grades of civilization, which gradually sink to the most deplorable condition along the extreme frontier; thence through the most pitiable misery and wretchedness of savage degradation; where the genius of natural liberty and independence have been blasted and destroyed by the contaminating vice and dissipation introduced by the immoral part of civilized society.⁹

Such an audacious claim, though striking at the time, would eventually become further popularized by Frederick Jackson Turner’s seminal work, “The Significance of the

⁷ George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians* (Philadelphia: J.W. Bradley, 1859), 19-20.

⁸ Baum, “Pending Legislation for the Protection of Antiquities on the Public Domain,” 100.

⁹ Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, 106.

Frontier in American History,” which he presented at the Chicago Worlds Fair in 1893. Catlin’s ultimate message, however, concerned the Indians he had spent much time studying. Though his writings were often inundated with the expected rhetoric concerning the simplicity of Native Americans and the need to introduce them into civility and Christianity, Catlin did seem to show some genuine concern with preserving their cultural and overall wellbeing.¹⁰ Catlin declared that, “our government should raise her strong arm to save the remainder of them from the pestilence which is rapidly advancing upon them. We have gotten from the territory enough....”¹¹ In the end, Catlin’s observations were insightful if not unique in their scope and message, subsequently ushering in a new understanding, or at least perspective, of the West and its inhabitants. Even if his overall message was subtly framed through common stereotypical beliefs, his trepidation over the possible loss of an entire group of people was authentic.

From Conserving to Preserving

Preserving natural resources, however, had for the most part been the major concern amongst Americans in the nineteenth century, as little if any attention was paid to the preservation of the built world. Specifically, in the 1860s, land in and around the Yosemite Valley had quickly become prime real estate for entrepreneurial settlers. The possible loss of portions of the Valley and its sequoias to private interests struck a cord with Californians, who did not wish to see its resources become the next Niagara Falls. In 1864, concerned citizens convinced junior U.S. Senator John Conness to recommend federal legislation to protect both the Valley and Mariposa Grove’s sequoias in perpetuity

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 107.

for “public use, resort, and recreation.”¹² Through public pressure and with the assistance of individuals as noteworthy as Frederick Law Olmsted, President Lincoln eventually signed the Yosemite Park Act into law on June 30, 1864. Writing on Yosemite, author Alfred Runte firmly states that, “Nationalism, not environmentalism, still explains the origins of the Yosemite Grant.”¹³ This claim seems sufficiently corroborated when we consider the events taking place during these years, most notably the American Civil War, and the country’s persistent quest to establish its own nationhood. And though in many respects Yosemite had become a great victory for Americans as a whole, the state of California, and not the federal government, was to become the park’s caretaker.

The Yosemite Act, however, did not end the art, literary, and scientific movement that had become a major influence in Western preservation, nor did it quell the desire to preserve large tracts of land for public use. Shortly after Catlin’s studies, a second generation of explorers made their way west. Possibly the most well known and enduring name of these years was John Muir, a Scottish-born immigrant turned preservationist. In 1868, Muir embarked on what would become a lifelong journey throughout the wilderness, beginning in California and eventually leading him to the Yosemite Valley, spending time there with such notable individuals as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Roosevelt.¹⁴ Muir, like those before him, became well versed in what the West had to offer in both scenery and opportunity. However, Muir seems to have had fairly unselfish convictions about places like Yosemite, citing the revitalizing beauty that they contained, which, as he saw it, was no longer obtainable in overcrowded industrialized

¹² Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁴ Sierra Club, “John Muir: A Brief Biography,” http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/muir_biography.aspx (accessed September 23, 2011).

cities. Muir was also one of the first to recognize and declare that humans had become the greatest threat to nature and the wilderness. “What Muir found reprehensible was not natural death, but a broad assault on nature, a senseless killing and destructiveness, through which man destroyed the very sources of life,” notes author Robert Hine.¹⁵ As a result, Muir would stand against conservationism, which had long been supported by the likes of his peer, Gifford Pinchot.¹⁶

Pinchot, a professional forester, had believed that the protection of the wilderness was important, but in the end admitted that forestry was tree farming, and that these areas could and should be used practically.¹⁷ On the other hand Muir’s ideas about the wilderness eventually took on a more “spiritual and transcendent” tone, as lecturer John M. Meyer notes.¹⁸ In opening his book, *Our National Parks*, Muir poetically states, “Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is a necessity....”¹⁹ Though Muir was not ignorant to the idea that park’s were a repository of usable resources, his spiritual and philosophical stance shifted his rhetoric away from Pinchot and conservationists. It is then, probably no coincidence, that in 1872 some 3,500 square miles of land would be set aside to create Yellowstone National Park, the nation’s first federally managed National Park.

Unlike Yosemite, Yellowstone was enormous, providing an almost infinite array of features within its boundaries. It had, undoubtedly, become a means to further promote

¹⁵ Robert V. Hine, *The American West: An Interpretive History*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973), 18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 187.

¹⁷ Gifford Pinchot, *Breaking New Ground* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & Co., 1947), 31 & 306.

¹⁸ John M. Meyer, “Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, and the Boundaries of Politics in American Thought,” *Polity* Vol. 30, No. 2 (Winter 1997), 276.

¹⁹ John Muir, *Our National Parks* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1901), 1

what had been accomplished in 1864, while expanding the role of the federal government in public parks. As Muir put it, the National Parks “are not only withdrawn from sale and entry like the forest reservations, but are efficiently managed and guarded by small troops of the United States Cavalry, directed by the Secretary of the Interior. Under this case the forests are flourishing, protected from both axe and fire ... The so-called curiosities, also, are preserved, and the furred and feathered tribes ... are now increasing in numbers.”²⁰

Officially, Yellowstone was,

under the exclusive control of the Secretary of the Interior, whose duty it shall be ... to make and publish such rules and regulations as he may deem necessary or proper for the care and management of the same. Such regulations shall provide for the *preservation* from injury or spoliation of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in the natural condition.²¹

While Yellowstone had become a great victory for American federal action, Alfred Runte notes that the park, “was becoming a ‘wonderland’” and that “no landscape provided greater assurance that European architecture had been eclipsed.”²² Through ongoing artistic renderings and literary works, Yellowstone penetrated American society, confirming the important place it had found amongst a growing country. Though Yellowstone can be regarded as a great success of both advocates and politicians, it would be naïve to regard it as a completely magnanimous accomplishment.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 40.

²¹ “*An Act to set apart a certain tract of land lying near the headwaters of the Yellowstone River as a public park,*” 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871 (March 1, 1872).

²² Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 30-4.

America's ongoing competition with Europe, coupled with its nation building efforts, doubtlessly became a major driving force for establishing the National Parks. It would also not be surprising if the American Civil War, still fresh in the minds of most Americans, played an important role in how parks were perceived and established. Yosemite and Yellowstone had begun to materially define the West in ways that previous paintings, books, and surveys never had fully accomplished. These places had not only given a certain tangible credibility to the West, but they had also instilled in Americans' a new sense of nationalistic pride that may have been largely absent in years prior. However, one factor that was almost entirely overlooked during early park creation was, not surprisingly, those indigenous populations who called the land home. This is not surprising, of course, as the idea of wilderness was premised on the belief in an unadulterated landscape. Naturally, then, Native Americans had no place in the parks.

Aside from Catlin's nostalgic plea to "preserve [Native Americans] in their primitive rudeness,"²³ indigenous populations, by and large, were intentionally excluded from park planning. In some cases, such as Yellowstone, entire populations were removed to accommodate peaceful tourism and development.²⁴ At Yosemite, however, officials realized the benefits of exploiting its indigenous populations, and even promoted "Field Days," which attempted to, "revive and maintain [the] interest of Indians in their own games and industries...."²⁵ Despite having appeared to have won favor with staff, the Yosemite Indians would inevitably be relocated outside park boundaries as well.²⁶ In

²³ Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, 260.

²⁴ Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*, 57-9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 117.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 123-9.

both cases, the artificial concept of the unimpaired wilderness had successfully replaced centuries of history.²⁷

Over the next 30 years, after Yellowstone's creation, six additional National Parks were added, continuing the tradition of preserving natural landscapes for public use. However, it was not until 1906 and after considerable debate, that the government included Mesa Verde as the first National Park to preserve the works of man. Effectively, Mesa Verde became a crucial turning point when citizens and politicians reconsidered what was worthy of saving. It also demanded a new approach towards Native Americans, who could no longer be easily dismissed as working against the wilderness idea, as archaeological sites represented habitation. What these rather unique issues present us with is a particularly clear, yet relatively unexplored look into the evolution of preservation and its role in curating and managing history.

The Fight for Mesa Verde

To better understand Mesa Verde, its establishment and relation to the National Park idea, we must begin in the late nineteenth century, when the looting of Southwestern archaeological sites ushered in a new interest in cultural resources.

As demonstrated by the Wetherills, relic hunting proved to be a sustainable industry for many families throughout the Southwest. Of course, even those who took a methodological approach towards excavation had often taken something that could never be returned or restudied. Preservation advocate, Reverend Henry Mason Baum, said of looting, "Many of the most promising ruins have been invaded and hundreds of them

²⁷ See also; Mark D. Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (Oxford University Press, 1999); Robert Keller and Michael Turek, *American Indians & National Parks* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1998).

have been despoiled by the commercial excavator and tourist. It must be remembered that every ruin thus disturbed has had the continuity of prehistoric life lived in it broken, and thus rendered useless for scientific value.”²⁸ To this day the debate still remains whether or not the Wetherills were simple ranchers trying to make a quick buck or if their vaguely scientific approach was a genuine attempt at a greater understanding. Either way, over roughly 50 years, an unquantifiable amount of artifacts had been taken from archaeological sites. T. Mitchell Prudden, a prominent University pathologist and amateur archaeologist, had also noted that pot hunting had gained such popularity by the late nineteenth century that “picnics” were organized on Sundays for the sole purpose of digging. He even went as far as to chastise the federal government for its blatant failure to protect any of Mesa Verde’s ruins, subsequently insisting that it become a National Park in 1896.²⁹

Surprisingly, tourists and weekend explorers were not the only ones taking part in these reprehensible activities. Even national cultural institutions, such as the Smithsonian, were guilty of removing valuable artifacts without any subsequent scientific investigation.³⁰ Eventually, the need to protect the ruins from further loss and deterioration was promoted by citizens, institutions, politicians, and even the Wetherills. Frederick Chapin, for example, had even contemplated the possible conversion of Cliff Palace into a museum, which would act as a repository for the area’s artifacts.³¹

²⁸ Baum, “Pending Legislation for the Protection of Antiquities on the Public Domain,” 102.

²⁹ T. Mitchell Prudden, “The Prehistoric Ruins of the San Juan Watershed in Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico,” *American Anthropologist* Vol.5, No. 2 (April-June, 1903): 263; Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 44.

³⁰ Baum, “Pending Legislation for the Protection of Antiquities on the Public Domain,” 102.

³¹ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 44.

One person, however, soon became the figurehead in an almost militant effort towards preserving the cliff dwellings. In 1882 and 1886 respectively, Virginia McClurg made two trips to Mesa Verde, which would inspire her passionate desire to see the ruins protected. By the 1890s, McClurg and her group of newly recruited preservation advocates would become soldiers in a battle to promote and protect the park. Having generated some fervor in Colorado and elsewhere, an 1894 petition was sent to Washington asking for the protection of the cliff dwellings from irreversible loss. Unfortunately, Washington did not share in the concern nor the excitement that McClurg and her cohorts possessed. Having not been completely discouraged, McClurg set out to request the help of the Colorado Federation of Women's Clubs, which she did successfully, even becoming the committee's chairman. After some discussion with local politicians, McClurg wrote President McKinley imploring him to make Mesa Verde the nation's most interesting park. Her letter went unanswered by the President, though his secretary suggested she tried the Department of the Interior. Taking this advice, McClurg wrote to the secretary of the interior, suggesting that before long the ruins and their relics would be lost forever. She further proposed that the Women's Club would act as custodians until a type of national organization could be thoroughly established, and even recommended that an Indian police force be hired to patrol the ruins. Many Coloradans opposed this idea, however. Author Duane Smith cites that Colorado residents, aware of the possibility of economic profiteering from Mesa Verde, would have been very much against the idea of a continued Ute occupation, as this would have only slowed the rate at which the park could be exploited.³² Instead, it was their idea to expel the Utes from this land, allowing it to become a veritable playground for American tourists. Regardless of

³² Ibid., 47.

public opinion, the Utes still owned much of the land that contained many of the best cliff dwellings, giving them some leverage in years to come.

Despite public concern, Virginia McClurg was eager to establish a rapport with the Ute Indians, ultimately hoping to lease Ute land that contained the cliff dwellings. In 1899, McClurg along with another supporter, Alice Bishop, traveled to Mancos to meet Ute leader Chief Ignacio and his successor Acowitz. Representing the Associated Women's Clubs of Colorado, the two women offered the Ute leader \$300 in cash, and an additional \$300 each year throughout a 30 year lease. The tribe would also retain their grazing rights and access to springs, would gain free pass on a newly constructed toll road, and even have the ability to assign their own paid police force to monitor the ruins. Though the offer appeared to be respectful and desirable, Ignacio was hesitant about what would become of these "sacred spots," stating, "the former homes and graves of our ancestors – are all that is left us, and must not be disturbed by the pale face." He would eventually request that all \$9,000 be paid up front, at which point negotiations halted. A *Mancos Times* newspaper article chronicling this meeting stated that it was McClurg's ultimate desire to see Mesa Verde become a state park, complete with a summer hotel and managed by the Women's Club. The article also brazenly stated that, "This will be a great resort for tourists, and hands of demolishing vandals will be paralyzed."³³ Nevertheless, McClurg's desire to keep Mesa Verde out of federal hands would continue to be a major point of contention.

³³ "The Cliff Dwelling Park" *The Mancos Times* (Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection, Oct. 28, 1899)

Politicians Step In

Having created the Colorado Cliff Dwellings Association in 1900 to further organize her cause, McClurg's efforts would inevitably still require a political backing.³⁴ Reaching a tentative agreement with the Ute Indians in 1899, a still hesitant Ignacio apprehensively stated, "You want to make a show of the cliff houses ... White man always want to make show of everything."³⁵ He was probably more correct than he knew, as in less than a decade Mesa Verde would become promoted as a major tourist destination. Though it is undeniable there were those who genuinely wished to see the cliff dwellings protected, there were also those who saw Mesa Verde's long-term potential. That potential, of course, was a National Park unlike any the country had ever known before, and one that could serve as the missing piece to the nation's cultural archive. If Yellowstone and Yosemite had proven that America's landscapes were as great if not greater than any around the world, Mesa Verde would show that the nation's prehistory was similarly profound.

Unfortunately for McClurg and the Association, the secretary of the interior had quickly denied this most recent treaty, citing that the group had no authority to make such agreements.³⁶ The federal government's total apathy towards preserving anything but landscapes had become glaringly apparent, yet the movement would not cease. The group continued promoting their cause, and even invited the press and scientists to come tour the ruins, which proved a successful lobbying effort.

³⁴ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 49.

³⁵ "To Save the Mesa Verde" *New York Times* (ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Aug. 25, 1901): 18.

³⁶ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 51

In 1901, Representative John Shafroth of Colorado initiated H.R. 14262, a bill wishing to establish the Colorado Cliff Dwellings National Park, to preserve and protect “the finest specimens of true cliff dwellings” that the country had to offer.³⁷ However, this along with two other propositions would ultimately fail. Subsequently, in 1905, another Colorado Representative, this time H.M. Hogg, introduced H.R. 5998 to create Mesa Verde National Park.³⁸ Unfortunately for McClurg, who had often advocated against the creation of a National Park, Hogg’s bill would have given sole management responsibility to the federal government. Fearing that she would lose her and her groups control over the site, McClurg quickly opposed the document.

At the same time, however, Lucy Peabody, who had become an increasingly important and influential member of the Cliff Dwellings Association, with numerous political ties in Washington, came to support the idea of a federally controlled National Park. The women and the Association quickly split on what they ultimately desired for Mesa Verde. While McClurg believed that the Cliff Dwellers Association should be Mesa Verde’s governing agency, Peabody and much of the country believed that no private organization should monopolize control over the Park.³⁹ Eventually, Peabody and her political adeptness would prevail, as the bill, along with some revisions, would establish Mesa Verde National Park on June 29, 1906.

³⁷ Message from the President of the United States to the Two Houses of Congress, *The Abridgment for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1904* Washington: Government Printing Office, Vol. 2: 1905

³⁸ Ronald Lee, “Creating Mesa Verde National Park and Chartering the Archeological Institute, 1906” *The Antiquities Act, NPS Archaeology Program*, http://www.nps.gov/archeology/pubs/lee/lee_ch7.htm (accessed Dec. 7, 2011).

³⁹ “Colorado Fed Struggles Eight Years for National Park,” *New York Tribune*. (ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Aug. 8, 1906): 5.

An Act Creating the Mesa Verde National Park had become the first to specifically provision for the protection of “ruins and other works and relics of prehistoric or primitive man,” and also included conditions regarding excavation and examination among professionals along with penalties for willful theft or destruction.⁴⁰ Following this victory, Peabody became a veritable national icon and was even considered “the mother of Mesa Verde National Park,” a clear slight to a recently defeated McClurg.⁴¹

Regardless, what the women had accomplished in less than a decade had become paramount and proved that advocacy could be implemented as an effective and successful tool. It also illustrated that the preservation of buildings, or in this case archaeological ruins, was of grave importance to the country not only scientifically, but also socially and culturally. Preservation had become something that Americans could rally around. At the same time, however, it also proved how important preservation could become economically, as tourism was quickly becoming a booming industry, especially in the West. Newspapers from Denver to New York quickly became enthralled with Mesa Verde and its mystique. However, such articles were often more concerned with painting fanciful stories of the site’s prior inhabitants than they had with providing any real scholarly information. Articles were ripe with conjecture about everything from building methods to which hostile tribes drove the builders into the cliffs in the first place. One such article even proclaimed, “The cliff dwellers live in such queer places, built so well,

⁴⁰ *An Act Creating the Mesa Verde National Park*, H.R. 5998, Public No. 353, June 29, 1906.

⁴¹ “National Park is Assured,” *Mancos Times – Tribune* (Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection, April 13th, 1906).

and have vanished so utterly that they are the most mysterious of our aborigines.”⁴²

Slowly but surely, Mesa Verde was evolving into a very different type of park.

Preserving a Nation

While McClurg and her Association had been struggling to cut a deal with the Ute Indians and the federal government, Iowa Congressman John F. Lacey had been crafting his own preservation bill. In fact, Lacey has often been overlooked as a central figure in preservation, but his contributions to the discipline are of fundamental importance. At the same time, however, Lacey was not the only one interested in establishing preservation law. In fact, from around 1899 to 1906, politicians, scientists, and institutions took great interest in drafting multiple preservation bills. The first of Lacey’s attempts, drafted in 1900, had envisioned the preservation of “places significant in both human and natural history,” that would be chosen “for their scenic beauty, natural wonders or curiosities, ancient ruins or relics, or other objects of scientific or historic interest...”⁴³ Lacey also made sure to include provisions that would help create a governing body, establish a research permit process, and create penalties for any unlawful or unpermitted excavations, destruction, or looting.⁴⁴ While McClurg’s desire was more concerned with establishing her own presence in Mesa Verde, Lacey’s ideas had been far more progressive and wide reaching.

⁴² “To Try to Preserve the Cliff Dwellings,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* (ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Jan. 26, 1902): 39.

⁴³ Richard Sellars, “A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation – The Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act,” *Natural Resources Journal* Vol.47 (Spring 2007): 281.

⁴⁴ Sellars, “A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation – The Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act,” 283.

Even with substantial support. Lacey's 1900 bill would eventually lose steam in Congress. Like McClurg, Lacey was unfazed by his recent failure. Two years later, archaeologist Edgar Hewett, who would also survey the ruins of Mesa Verde, invited Lacey to the Southwest to witness first hand the necessity of a comprehensive preservation law. Becoming further inspired on his trip, Lacey would redraft his proposal and submit it in 1904, becoming one of a several popular antiquities bills to be written that year.⁴⁵ Once again, any consensus on an antiquities bill would have to wait.

Finally, Edgar Hewett, who had recently received an appointment issued by the American Anthropological Association and the Archaeological Institute of America, simplified the somewhat complex antiquities bill to make it more appealing to Congress. In 1906, the bill was once again introduced by Lacey, gaining final approval on June 8, 1906 with the signature of President Roosevelt.⁴⁶ *An Act for the Preservation of American Antiquities*, more commonly referred to as the Antiquities Act, had finally established a specific law to protect and preserve its cultural resources. While prior National Park legislation had done little to specifically safeguard resources in a legally binding sense, the new 1906 Antiquities Act had created a federal mandate to apply to America's historic and prehistoric resources. Though a relatively short and simplistic document, the Act made preservation the responsibility of the federal government. It had, additionally, made it illegal to excavate, injure or destroy any historic or prehistoric ruin without prior authorization by the government; allowed the President to appropriate any

⁴⁵ See also; Bill S4127, *For the preservation of aboriginal monuments, ruins, and other antiquities* April 20, 1904 Senator Henry Cabot Lodge; H.R. 13349, *A Bill for the Preservation of historic and prehistoric ruins, monuments, archaeological objects, and their antiquities, and to protect their counterfeiting* March 2, 1904 Congressman Rodenberg; 58 H.R. 13478, *Preservation of Prehistoric Ruins on Public Lands*, John Lacey.

⁴⁶ Sellars, "A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation – The Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act," 292.

lands, structures, sites or object he deemed worthy of preservation; and mandated that research permits be issued by the Secretaries of the Interior, Agriculture, and War to qualified institutions wishing to pursue scholarly and scientific research.⁴⁷

A New Paradigm

Though the Antiquities Act had clearly defined that the value of historic or prehistoric sites and structures reside in their contribution to historical, scientific, and cultural knowledge, economics and tourism had played a similarly important role in the early preservation movement. The National Parks, and the guiding principles which had created them, must also be acknowledge as an apparatus of nation/state building. This is partially illustrated by the governments desire to exclusively manage the new parks, their fervent promotion of them, and their subsequent exploitation of many indigenous populations.

While not undocumented, this brief, yet often unrealized history of the National Parks has attempted to bring together pieces that are seldom discussed in tandem. Maybe most importantly, is how this outline has demonstrated that while the National Parks were one of the world's greatest preservation accomplishments, they often came at the expense of others. In this sense, we often see authors and historians tackling one issue or the other, while failing to discuss them together in any critical way. Thankfully, Mesa Verde as the first park to protect the works of man, presents us with an incredibly complete paradigm, useful in detailing the failures and successes of preservation. Up until Mesa Verde's creation, Americans, along with the federal government, were chiefly concerned

⁴⁷ *An Act Creating the Mesa Verde National Park*, H.R. 5998, Public No. 353, June 29, 1906.

with preserving the wilderness, and had little to no experience in undertaking a project this large and complex. Yet, in many ways, the Department of the Interior and park officials handled Mesa Verde in a similar fashion to Yellowstone and Yosemite, borrowing techniques and policies from each. Though Mesa Verde would not remove Native Americans in the same way that Yellowstone or Yosemite had, indigenous peoples were similarly ignored and excluded.

Though it is likely that the relatively new age of the National Park system, coupled with budgetary constraints, inexperienced management, and a general lapse in oversight, made it difficult to effectively and efficiently run parks as they had been intended to, Mesa Verde somewhat neglected to manage itself as a unique entity concerned with the preservation of built features. Nevertheless, Mesa Verde, like parks before and after it, was a product of its time, heavily influenced by socio-cultural and political assumptions that evolved along the way. Interestingly enough, it may be in these assumptions that parks become integral in telling a continuous story of time and place. Unfortunately, however, it seems all too common that historic resources have become trapped in a specific period within their own historic continuum. As a result, much of a place's important history goes uninterpreted for visitors.

Most importantly, the establishment of the National Parks, in general, should not be mistaken or assumed to be a philanthropic endeavor solely concerned with preserving American land or providing education to its citizens. To believe so would be naïve; yet in many ways, it is this belief that permeates history books and dominates the current narrative. Instead, unlike Wallace Stegner, who enthusiastically proclaimed that the “National Parks are the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely

democratic, they reflect us at our best rather than our worst,” we need to consider the cursory ideologies that were concerned with tourism, heritage, economics, and, of course, state formation, as equally relevant.⁴⁸

While it may be difficult if not impossible to pinpoint a single person or idea that triggered the creation of the National Parks, we can be sure that individuals, such as George Catlin and John Muir, generated a new type of interest in America’s landscapes and built fabric, and that nationalistic ideals stemming from a new competitive nation had a large hand in the birth of those sites. Nevertheless, it is exceedingly important that we take all these influences into consideration when we contemplate our nation’s parks and what they continue to represent. At the same time, it is imperative that we take a critical look at these influences, what they meant then and now, and what those involved have gained or lost in the process. Without a certain amount of skepticism, we risk not understanding the larger stories of these places.

⁴⁸ History E-Library, “Famous Quotes Concerning the National Parks” quoting Wallace Stegner. National Park Service <http://www.nps.gov/history/history/hisnps/NPSThinking/famousquotes.htm> (accessed Oct. 20, 2011).

3

A New Park

“The important dates in American history are 1492 and 1915 – the first when Columbus discovered America and the second – when Americans discovered America.”¹

Ellis Prentice Cole

“If the Cliff Palace or Spruce Tree House were situated in Europe, they would rank with the Greek Theatre at Taormina, the Temples of Paestum and the Acropolis at Athens among the unforgettable ruins of the old world.”²

Rio Grande Service Gazette, 1917

Over the course of the next two chapters I will critically explore how Mesa Verde arrived at its present state, by analyzing more than one 100 years of management and interpretation. These chapters will create a larger narrative, which will help in understanding the development of preservation methods and strategies employed at the park. In this effort, it will also be important to consider various secondary stakeholders, and what influence they had in shaping Mesa Verde.

Running a New Park

Historical resources are inherently difficult to read, and archaeological sites may suffer from this most of all. Thus, effective interpretation is of great importance, yet not an easily accomplished task. Moreover, having varying sources and media platforms come together to create a comprehensive and consistent story, is often a complicated mission. Nevertheless, interpretation has become a primary means through which

¹ Ellis Prentice Cole, “Mesa Verde Is A Marvelous Place” 1915, unknown newspaper; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Miscellaneous, 1914-1929; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

² Rio Grande Service Gazette, Issued by the Passenger Dept. of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, October, 1917, Vol. VII, No. 10; Box 103; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Publications and Circulars, 1912-1922; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

practitioners attempt to elicit a certain story or conjure a particular experience at a site. This being the case, it's significant that we carefully understand how parks have been managed throughout history, and how they have continued to adapt these approaches. Fortunately, Mesa Verde gives a rather complete insight into the evolving nature of preservation practice and management. Consequently, this chapter intends to weave two important goals together: The first is to detail some of Mesa Verde's more historically significant periods; the second is to describe how management and interpretation have adapted to reflect ongoing trends, knowledge, influence, and practice.

As the country's first National Park dedicated to preserving both cultural and natural resources, Mesa Verde quickly presented itself as a unique challenge to a discipline that had only recently developed. After all, unlike the preservation of natural resources, which had been the driving force behind scenic parks like Yellowstone and Yosemite, Mesa Verde had become a place to preserve built heritage. In many respects, Mesa Verde would become a place for the trial and error of preservation, a field still seeking more stringent boundaries. In fact, preservation was such a new area of study that no real experts yet existed in the early part of the twentieth century. Instead, the young movement was a collaborative effort, mainly between archaeologists and ethnologists, with a fair amount of politically backed appointments as well. At the same time, the system of National Parks had been suffering from a lack of concise management, having been sporadically supervised by three separate departments; War, Agriculture, and Interior.

Nevertheless, as parks before it, Mesa Verde would need to establish its own internal bureaucracy. The first thing the park required was an individual who would

manage and oversee it. In 1907, Congress appointed H.M. Randolph, a Major in the U.S. military, as the park's first Superintendent, along with Dr. J. Walter Fewkes, an ethnologist with the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution, as park archaeologist and preservationist. Probably because of the park's young age, as well as its small budget, Superintendent Randolph's position would become an amalgamation of duties that ranged from general administration to policing and security. Specifically, Randolph was expected to encourage the construction and maintenance of roads, trails, administrative buildings, new quarters for "travelers, students, and scientists," while also assuring the protection of the ruins from looting and vandalism.³ Dr. Fewkes, on the other hand, was responsible for directing all scientific and archaeological work at Mesa Verde, which came to include ruins like Spruce Tree House and Cliff Palace.

Unfortunately, little more than these appointments had been afforded to maintain the park in the first decade of the twentieth century. Witnessing first hand the park's less than favorable conditions, Randolph wrote to Secretary of the Interior, James Garfield, requesting the authority to hire two laborers to help clean up and maintain the Park after finding it "in a very disorderly condition – tin cans, paper, and all kinds of rubbish."⁴ At the same time, while commending Fewkes' ongoing efforts at Spruce Tree House and Cliff Palace, Randolph began to fear the potential loss of relics, as the park's massive size was difficult if not impossible to closely monitor with the current staff. To combat this, Randolph once again called upon the secretary of the interior, this time asking for the

³ "Ruins of Mesa Verde: First American Museum of Archaeology is in Colorado," *New York Evening Post*, reprinted by *The Sun*, Sept. 20, 1907 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): 11.

⁴ H.M. Randolph, Park Superintendent, to James Garfield, Secretary of Interior, 1907; Box 098; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Employment & Payment of Employees, 1907-1908; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

authority to hire additional park rangers that would help patrol and guard the cliff dwellings from any potential theft or destruction. Fortunately, his request was met favorably, and over the course of the year, two additional rangers were employed at Mesa Verde. Though three rangers could not guarantee protection for all the ruins, it did come as a small victory for the park.⁵

Manitou Threatens Mesa Verde

Around the same time, Mesa Verde had become increasingly intertwined with a coastal struggle to control archaeological sites. Essentially, Eastern institutions like the Smithsonian, along with universities like Columbia and Harvard, had threatened Western professionals control of their own archaeological sites. Not coincidentally, the economics of tourism had also influenced such a battle.⁶ To cash in on the growing industry, some Western towns began their own entrepreneurial endeavors. In one attempt, the citizens of Manitou Springs, Colorado entered into a collaborative effort with the Ashenhurst Amusement Company in an attempt to reconstruct their own set of cliff dwellings, similar to those found at Mesa Verde.⁷ Further backing this plan was William S. Crosby, a young Canadian who had already made a name for himself by establishing various curio shops in Colorado that marketed Native American crafts.⁸

⁵ Appropriations, Mesa Verde National Park, 1909; Box 098; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Employment & Payment of Employees, 1907-1908; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

⁶ Troy R. Lovata, "Archaeology as Built for the Tourists: The Anasazi Cliff Dwellings of Manitou Springs, Colorado," *International Journal of Archaeology* Vol. 15, Issue 2 (June 2011): 199.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁸ Katie Davis Gardner and Katherine Scott Sturdevant, "Vida Ellison & The Manitou Cliff Dwellings," in *Extraordinary Women of the Rocky Mountain West* (Pikes Peak Library District, 2010), 89.

Also more than happy to financially invest in the project was Virginia McClurg, who had fought tirelessly to protect Mesa Verde. The reconstructed cliff dwellings had been built from materials taken from an excavation on private lands, and were built to replicate ruins like Cliff Palace.⁹ Soon, the Manitou Dwellings were featured in newspapers and even began publishing their own pamphlets to draw in the tourist crowds (Fig. 1). The *Colorado Springs Gazette*, running a lengthy article in 1907 on the Manitou Ruins, described the site in the following words:

To resurrect all that can be resurrected of a lost race and give to the world a vivid picture of the life and works of one of the most famous primeval races of this continent is the grand aim of a newly incorporated company known as the Manitou Cliff Dwellers Ruins Co. To bring within the reach of the general public an exact replica of all the visible remains of possible the most wonderful of the American aboriginal tribes and to give the whole thing a natural setting which exactly duplicates the scenes among which the Cliff Dwellers lived and thrived is the object for which the company is striving and neither brains nor money are being spared in accomplishing this work ... The extinct Cliff Dwellers will be brought before the eyes of the world and transplanted from their obscure retreats into the limelight of publicity ... An excellent feature of the canon will be the Cliff Café which is to be situated in a cave blasted from the solid rock ... Here the purest of water will spring as it were by the power of nature ... and while the

⁹ Duane Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 72.

visitor may feast on the delicacies of the culinary art, he may also feast his eyes
on the most wonderful landscape view....¹⁰

Not surprisingly, such laudatory speech and promotion perturbed Mesa Verde, as the new faux-site posed a real threat to what Mesa Verde had worked so feverishly to establish. Unfortunately, these reconstructed cliff dwellings would not soon fade away, as their accessibility, hands-on experience, and even Native American dancers, proved popular attractions, especially when weighed against the difficult and sometimes treacherous terrain that had come to be identified with Mesa Verde.

As publicity surrounding the Manitou ruins expanded, so did the ardent disfavor held by many supporters of parks like Mesa Verde. By 1917, frustration over the dwellings near Colorado Springs had reached such heights that employees from the Denver and Rio Grande Railway Company, like Frank Wadleigh, labeled the dwellings as “nothing short of chicanery,” prompting him to elicit the help of Horace Albright, the acting Director of the National Park Service.¹¹ Other opponents included the Secretary of the Denver Tourist and Publicity Bureau, Harry Burhans, who had called the ancient Dwellings of Manitou “misleading in the extreme.” In many respects, Burhans’ apprehension had been rooted in rather progressive ideas, noting the perils of presenting a reproduction as something more authentic. Burhans stated that, “It is a very worthy thing to exhibit reproductions of Cliff Dwellings at Manitou, providing they are labeled and

¹⁰ “Ancient Cliff Dwellers’ Ruins to be Reproduced in Manitou,” *Colorado Springs Gazette*, 1907; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Miscellaneous, 1907-1909; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

¹¹ Frank Wadleigh, Passenger Traffic Manager of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad Company, to Horace Albright, acting Director of National Park Service, May 14, 1917; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Miscellaneous, 1914-1919; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

advertised as reproductions. It is only when they are used to deceive the people about one of their own national parks, that the whole thing becomes obnoxious.”¹²

Albright eventually responded that, “the government has no authority to interfere in the premises,” though he acknowledged it “was one of the most monstrous misrepresentations that one could conceive of, and it ought to be branded far and wide as an attraction that tourists should beware of.”¹³ Nevertheless, as Albright admitted, the government had no real move in the situation, leaving the Company to solicit their new attraction. Today, the ruins still exist, remaining as an ambiguously marketed tourist attraction. Currently, the Manitou website claims, “Our cliff dwellings are authentic Anasazi cliff dwellings dating 800 to 1000 years old,” leaving ample room for the interpretation of “authenticity”.¹⁴ At best, Manitou presented a more easily accessible, albeit confused glimpse into the regions architectural and cultural resources, at worst, it exhibited itself as authentic and unadulterated Indian ruins, baffling travelers and angering federal employees. It could be argued, however, that the reconstructed cliff dwellings in Manitou are no different from the reconstructed colonial villages found in Williamsburg, Virginia, making their existence more acceptable.

¹² Harry Burhans, Secretary of the Denver Tourist and Publicity Bureau, to Horace Albright, acting Director of National Park Service, May 4, 1917; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Miscellaneous, 1914-1919; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

¹³ Horace Albright, acting Director of National Park Service, May 11, 1917; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Miscellaneous, 1914-1919; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

¹⁴ Manitou Cliff Dwellings, Colorado, “History,” <http://www.cliffdwellingsmuseum.com/history> (accessed Feb. 20, 2012).

The Media Promotes the Park

Private enterprises weren't the only ones attempting to capitalize on the country's newest treasure in the early twentieth century, however. Newspaper articles of the same period, from sources like the *Chicago Tribune*, had begun painting Mesa Verde in an almost fantasy like setting. A 1903 article, titled "The First Flat Dwellers in America," had been written in a similar fashion to a newspaper apartment listing, comparing the ruins of Mesa Verde to Chicago flats (Fig. 2).¹⁵ As time progressed, articles became more graphical in nature, often filling their pages with uninformed speculation. Such is depicted in the *Atlanta Constitution*, which illustrated Indians being lowered over the canyons on ropes to attack the Cliff Dwellers (Fig. 3).¹⁶ What is apparent in a vast majority of these early articles, however, is their perpetuation of Mesa Verde as a place of mystery and warfare. One statement described a Mesa Verde ruin as, "the citadel of the Cliff Dwellers ... The Alamo in which the "first Americans" made their final stand against ... the Apaches and Navajos...."¹⁷ While others wrote, "These strange, mystic cliff houses are so ancient that archaeologists have not been able as yet to determine when they were occupied. Nor are they sure whether the people who made their nests ... were Indians or of some other race."¹⁸ Though to some degree pieces of Mesa Verde's prehistory had remained a mystery to scientists and archaeologists, many newspapers and magazines had taken great liberties in telling the purported story of the Cliff Dwellers.

¹⁵ "The First Flat Dwellers in America," *Chicago Tribune*, Sept. 20, 1903 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): 58.

¹⁶ "Reconstructing the Mysterious Past," *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 23, 1911 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): A8.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ "New Roads Will Open to Tourists Homes of Dwarf Cliff Dwellers of Mesa Verde," *New York Tribune*, Dec. 21, 1911 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): A4.

Since tourism to Mesa Verde had still been severely limited by economics and issues of general accessibility in the early twentieth century, such widely obtainable news publications almost certainly became a primary source of knowledge for many Americans. Thus, while Mesa Verde's mission had long been for protection and subsequently education, it's difficult to determine whether or not Americans unable to visit the park had learned anything more than what journalists had fictionalized. For those fortunate enough to reach the park, these commentaries would have undoubtedly shaped some of their preconceived notions about what it was they were visiting. Retrospectively, of course, the dangers in misrepresenting a site through media portrayals are obvious. Yet, these early forms of media had played an important role in publicizing Mesa Verde to the rest of the country, as it often had for other parks in the past.

Repair, Not Reconstruction

By the time Mesa Verde had caught the eye of the American public, Dr. Fewkes had already been working hard on excavating and stabilizing many of the park's most important ruins. Fewkes had spent much of his time at Mesa Verde laboring over Spruce Tree House and Cliff Palace, making each safe enough for interested parties to tour them (Fig. 4).¹⁹ By 1911, Fewkes had completed maybe his largest accomplishment in the park, the excavation and restoration of the "strange ruin" that was Cliff Palace. It is here, however, that the line between preservation and restoration become somewhat blurred and even contested.

As an archaeologist, Fewkes' preservation efforts would have been largely influenced by his previous educational and professional background. Surprisingly,

¹⁹ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 75.

Fewkes and the Smithsonian Institution had made it a point to rebuild only where structurally necessary, thus not restoring the ruins in a Manitou-esque fashion. Though this consideration is clearly of Ruskinian inspiration, it was never the less a concept not yet widely popularized amongst American practitioners. Unfortunately, some of Fewkes' laudatory efforts have become fairly difficult to define under our current preservation practices.

In his annual report to the secretary of the interior in 1908, Fewkes explains his approaches and views towards restoration and repair. Acknowledging the varying views amongst archaeologists, Fewkes explains, "The author [Fewkes] has sought to avoid any restoration which would involve him in any theoretical questions even when he has had good reasons to adopt an obvious interpretation. He has endeavored to preserve the picturesque character ... and has not to foist on the observer any theory of construction that was not clearly evident."²⁰ In other words, Fewkes understood that reconstruction could be acceptable, insofar as it did not make unsubstantiated assumptions about aesthetics, materials, or methods.

Yet, at the same time, it did not help that newspaper articles written about his work often times confused these concepts further. For example, the title of a 1911 *New York Times* article, "Home of the Prehistoric Americans Now Reconstructed," clearly suggests some type of large-scale intervention had taken place. However, if we explore the publication further, we read that, "The Wonderful Cliff Palace ... in a *complete state of repair* ... should not be "restored," but merely protected from further destruction by

²⁰ Jesse W. Fewkes, "Repair not Restoration," in *Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1908* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 491.

weather and by vandals.”²¹ Here, somewhat confusingly, reconstruction and mere stabilization appear to lack formal constructs.

Fewkes had not been the sole scientist conducting work at Mesa Verde during this time, however. Edgar Hewitt of the Archaeological Institute of America, who had been an early park proponent, had also been given the task of archaeological and preservation work. Hewitt’s most notable work at Balcony House, completed in 1911 with the assistance of a young Jesse Nusbaum, had been somewhat ironically funded with money raised by Virginia McClurg’s Colorado Cliff Dweller Association. Once again, however, work undertaken on the ruins becomes difficult to define and interpret. Hewitt and Nusbaum’s completed Balcony House had been described by the *Atlanta Constitution* as having appeared, “exactly as it must have been hundreds of years ago....”²² A more detailed account, written by Nusbaum himself, noted that walls had been anchored together with iron bars and that new cement was used to reset stone that had either fallen or was in danger of falling.²³

Unfortunately, many of these major repairs can easily be lost to the average visitor. What’s more is that it appears unlikely that signboards and labels, which had been implemented as early as 1908 at Spruce Tree House, gave any mention as to what had been repaired or restored. Instead, painted reference points, sometimes applied to the ruins themselves, primarily detailed room function, dimensions and overall size.²⁴ And

²¹ “Home of Prehistoric Americans Now Reconstructed,” *New York Times*, May 14, 1911 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): SM9.

²² “Reconstructing the Mysterious Past,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, April 23, 1911 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): A8.

²³ Jesse L. Nusbaum, “The Excavation and Repair of Balcony House, Mesa Verde National Park,” *Archaeological Journal of America* Vol. XV (1911): 75.

²⁴ Jesse W. Fewkes, “Signboards and Labels,” in *Reports of the Department of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1908* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), 503.

though Fewkes, Hewitt, and Nusbaum had the foresight to replicate, where necessary, with contemporary materials, years of wear have them appearing almost indistinguishable today. Though it's difficult to posit whether the few visitors in the opening years of the park had any concept or interest in what had been repaired, it is likely that such efforts may have actually misguided tourists into thinking the ruins were in their as-found state. Now more than 100 years later, it appears as if distinguishing repairs from the originals has become simply a footnote.

Upon completing my own tour of Cliff Palace in October of 2011, I inquired with the guide as to what, if anything, had been rebuilt at the site. I was notified that among other smaller repairs, one major corner of Square Tower House in Cliff Palace was rebuilt by Fewkes, but only because the structure would have completely failed otherwise (Fig. 5). The clearly knowledgeable park guide had made sure to explain the necessity of any repairs and even pointed out the difference in materials. This information, however, was not relayed during the tour itself nor was it presented at the site level, unless of course you were looking at a guidebook. While an image does appear in a sign overlooking the site, its relative proximity makes it difficult for a more careful examination.

Though the informed tourist may be able to pick out the repairs based on material evidence, it is likely that many believe what they are looking at is what had essentially been discovered more than a century earlier. Nevertheless, this early work may actually show us that the efforts at Mesa Verde may have been heavily influenced by a

broadening historic preservation movement, borrowing techniques and methods from large-scale restorative projects like those of Santa Fe.²⁵

The Utes, Again

While the preservation of Mesa Verde's ruins was in full swing, the park would have to simultaneously deal with its own Indian problem. Even before his scientific work at Balcony House began, Edgar Hewitt had become involved with Mesa Verde as its primary surveyor, helping carve out its new boundaries.²⁶ Unfortunately for the government, these initial surveys had left out many important ruins that stood within the Ute Indian's current reservation. For the Ute, this would mean that they would once again have to deal with a determined government. Attempting to quickly and peaceably rectify the situation, federal officials claimed that only a five-mile strip of land would be needed from the tribe. However, this time instead of buying the land outright, the government decided to simply trade with the tribe. John Spear, then Superintendent of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, writes, "I believe the exchange would be a good thing for the Indians and it is certainly desirable that the park authorities have exclusive control of the ruins...." Spears further warned that "this band is controlled by two chiefs who take delight in opposing anything proposed by the authorities...."²⁷ This new negotiation attempt made

²⁵ Chris Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), 232-3.

²⁶ Rose Houk and Faith Marcovecchio ed., *Mesa Verde National Park: The First 100 Years* (Mesa Verde Museum Association and Fulcrum Publishing, 2006), 27.

²⁷ John Spear, Superintendent of Bureau of Indian Affairs, to Commissioner of Indian Affairs. October 23, 1909; Box 100; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Relative Exchange of Lands Within Park Owned by the Ute Indians for Lands Outside of Park on Ute Mountain, Colorado, 1909-1911; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

Mesa Verde “a case of historic preservation by fiat,” as author Philip Burnham notes.²⁸

At the same time it demonstrated that the government believed that preservation should be an exclusive federal act, devoid of both ownership and stewardship issues tied with indigenous peoples.

Just two years after Spears championed for the negotiation, Ute delegates joined Frederick Abbott, Assistant Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Major James McLaughlin, an Inspector from the Department of the Interior, in Navajo Springs, Colorado, to discuss the possible land swap. Over the course of five days a back and forth and often counterproductive discourse persisted between the two groups. Abbott often spoke simply to the Utes, assuring them he was their friend, while explaining to them that their reservation would indeed become larger after the negotiations. Major McLaughlin had also tried early on to explain what was desired, reasoning that they were prepared to “vacate a portion of the present Mesa Verde Park and add it to your reservation, in exchange for the part of your reservation that contain some desirable ruins,” while later adding that they could also give up a portion Ute Mountain if that was more attractive. However, this proposition did not find favor with the Utes, as they had already considered the land on the mountain theirs. Essentially, the Utes believed that the government was attempting to negotiate using the Utes own land as collateral. Abbott and McLaughlin, however, would not admit as much.²⁹

²⁸ Philip Burnham, *Indian Country, God's Country: Native Americans and the National Parks*, (Island Press, 2000), 53.

²⁹ Minutes of the Council at Navajo Springs, Colorado. F.H. Abbott, Commissioner of Bureau of Indian Affairs and Major James McLaughlin, Inspector of the Department of the Interior, May 5, 1911; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Relative Exchange of Lands Within Park Owned by the Ute Indians for Lands Outside of Park on Ute Mountain, Colorado, 1909-1911; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

Whether it was ongoing distrust or simple misunderstands that fueled the Utes unwillingness to cooperate, one thing became clear. Ute representatives, as well as the tribe at large, could not fully comprehend the incentives that fueled government preservation efforts. One Ute spokesman, Nathan Wing, admitted that they knew little about the houses or the people who had once lived in them, confessing that he had often witnessed “white people” leaving with things they had found inside. The Utes however, “never took anything away from those houses...” as Wing proclaimed. McLaughlin saw this as a chance to assure the Utes that the governments’ actions had the ruins protection in mind, and ultimately sought to prevent any further looting. McLaughlin’s plea had again been rebutted, this time by Mariano, another Ute spokesman. Mariano skeptically asked both McLaughlin and Abbott, “Why do you want those old houses? Nobody is living there. The old men that owned the houses are dead, what are you going to do with them?”, stressing the fact that the Utes only heard from the government when something of theirs was desired. McLaughlin responded by explaining that they simply wanted to “preserve [the ruins] for their prehistoric value, for the people and the Indians, which you are apart,” assuring the Utes that no person would occupy the ruins. Ironically, it would later be suggested that contemporary peoples inhabit some of the ruins to act as a type of ongoing exhibition, though this is discussed later in the chapter. Once again, their reasoning had not found approval with the Indians, as a third spokesman, Tawa, proclaimed that the government wanted to rob and mine the ruins for gold.

Clearly, what McLaughlin and Abbott saw as practical reasoning with the tribe, the Utes saw as standard government obfuscation. McLaughlin, now on the defensive, declared that no profit would be made from the ruins, but would instead cost the

government a considerable amount of money to protect. Realizing the council was moving one step forward but two steps back, McLaughlin and Abbott convinced the Utes that a party be sent to Mesa Verde to survey the ruins in question, hoping that this trip might better explain to the delegates what was desired.³⁰

Unfortunately for the government, the trip only strengthened the Utes resolve not to trade the land. Both Nathan Wing and Mariano once again restated their oppositions and reiterated the fact that the houses should be left alone, as those who once lived there were dead and had no say in the matter. In a last effort, Abbott explained that, “The government is stronger than the Ute Indians, it is stronger than the white people. When the government finds old ruins on land that it wants to take for public purposes, it has the right to take it. When the government wants to take land that belongs to white people and it is for schools or roads or other public purposes, it takes it.” This quote has often been cut short by authors, making it appear more directly aggressive towards the Ute Indians. However, it should more appropriately be interpreted as a last bargaining tool of the government, hoping to inform the Ute that if they would not accept the trade, the land would simply be taken without any reciprocal benefit. Whether or not this was of direct consequence, Nathan Wing soon accepted the trade on behalf of the Ute Indians, though he still admitted that the land being traded to them was “not very good land . . . rough country.”³¹

What this council illustrates is a systemic distrust that was held by Native Americans towards the federal government, and also the federal government’s inexperience in making preservation an inclusive and discursive discipline. What’s more

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

is how this fairly new concept of preservation was being used as a mechanism to acquire land with little regard in creating a collaborative process. Often endorsed as a patriotic, scientific, and educational initiative, early preservation had rarely been interested or contingent upon living affiliates. Though the Ute Indians knew their ancestors had not built the cliff dwellings, they had lived amongst them for hundreds of years, establishing, whether consciously or not, a type of history and connection with the region worthy of recognition.

Preservation, like the former concept of “wilderness,” had been an entirely foreign concept to these peoples, making negotiations that much more difficult. Had it been up to the Utes, the cliff dwellings would have been left to return to the earth in which they had come, a notion completely at odds with this new discipline. Instead, preservation quickly proved itself to be a useful leveraging tool that sometimes abandoned its *raison d'être*. At any rate, preservation had proved successful in galvanizing support in the past, and may have been seen as a way to rationalize such actions. Nevertheless, these early arrangements illustrate many of the misunderstandings that still persist today in the field concerning ownership, stewardship, and best practice. It also speaks to the hierarchy of power that existed during this period, which primarily consisted of government officials and experts taking precedent over affiliated people and other interested parties.

Establishing the National Park Service

By the second decade of the twentieth century things began to change for Mesa Verde and the National Parks as a whole, as effective management became paramount.

Though the need for a centralized management entity concerned exclusively with the National Parks had been advocated almost as soon as the park idea was realized, no real work had yet commenced. However, by 1914, a millionaire and prominent Sierra Club member, Stephen Mather, penned an irate letter to Secretary of the Interior, Franklin Lane. In his letter, Mather expressed his disgust with private interests in the parks, and his belief that the Department of the Interior had neglected “its sacred trust to protect them.”³² The letter made such an impression on Lane that he convinced Mather to come to Washington in order to deal with the park issue himself. At this time the parks, as Lane explained, were orphans, split between three different federal departments; War, Agriculture, and Interior. Mather would have the opportunity to fix this issue by championing for an exclusive bureau overseeing the National Parks, which in Mather’s eyes had suffered precisely because of those entrusted to run them.³³ By incorporating all the parks into one cohesive unit, Mather would also “get Americans acquainted with their own scenic and historic sites instead of spending their time and money in foreign countries.”³⁴

For the next two years, Stephen Mather along with his loyal and equally enthusiastic assistant, Horace Albright, worked day and night to establish the National Park Service. Mather and Albright hurriedly took to the road setting up conferences, expositions and park tours to garner support for this new management bureau. During their travels, Mather soon realized that gaining an overall consensus on the creation of a new bureau would require proof that the parks were in fact popular and

³² Horace Albright and Marian Albright Schenck, *Creating the National Park Service: The Missing Years* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1999), 31.

³³ *Ibid.*, 41-42.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 35.

being used by tourists. To do this, Mather and Albright quickly resolved, in 1915, to begin an aggressive publicity campaign, convincing newspapers, magazines, and even twenty-one Western railroad outfits to begin promoting the parks. One of the more popular products of this operation was *Glimpses of Our National Parks*, which was printed 2.7 million times and sold in the parks and bookstores.³⁵

Interestingly enough, a separate National Park administration had long been favored, even before Mather and Albright began their work. President William Taft had recommended the “establishment of a Bureau of National Parks,” citing that such legislation was “essential to the proper management of those wondrous manifestations of nature....”³⁶ Unfortunately, prior bills, introduced in 1912 and 1913 had died in committee, as well as two individual bills that had been simultaneously presented in 1915. However, with a solid foundation set, Mather and Albright along with various politicians, and even Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., penned one last bill to establish a National Park Service. This newest bill had been well received in the summer of 1916, but required some generic alterations and editing.³⁷ After months of diligent work, publishing, travelling, and the countless initiatives, Mather and Albright’s vision was finally realized. At 9:00 P.M. on August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed *The National Park Service Organic Act*, effectively establishing the long sought after bureau that would single handedly manage the nation’s National Parks.³⁸

³⁵ Ibid., 60.

³⁶ Ibid., 124.

³⁷ Ibid., 145.

³⁸ Ibid., 148.

Mesa Verde, the Destination

By 1916 the park had received an estimated 1,385 visitors, a vast increase from 206, just five years earlier.³⁹ Such an improvement further encouraged various secondary stakeholders to take an interest in Mesa Verde's success. Maybe the most significant of these was the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad, who had made travel to the area more efficient and had invested their own capital in promotional materials. Their informational leaflets had been distributed widely amongst teachers, librarians, members of the National Education Association, archaeologists, and tourists alike. By 1916, 25,000 leaflets had been printed, promoting Mesa Verde as an attraction unlike any other, which should be visited as part of the newly founded "Around the Circle Tour." This promotional excursion was actually a series of stops at the "most scenic attractions of the Colorado Rockies." The short pamphlet also included information about everything from driving times to dining costs and included pictures of Spruce Tree House and Balcony House, along with a map of the circle tour stops (Fig. 6).⁴⁰

The exploitation of the park continued into the 1920s with increasing help from additional stakeholders. However, with virtually no regulation concerning the actual dissemination of information, publishers had the freedom to publish any story they wished. *The Mentor*, a magazine whose goal was to "enable people to acquire useful knowledge without effort, so that they may come easily and agreeably to know the world's great men and women, the great achievements, and the permanently interesting things

³⁹ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 227.

⁴⁰ Pamphlet, "The Prehistoric Cliff Dwellings: Mesa Verde National Park," Denver and Rio Grande Railroad; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Miscellaneous, 1914-1919; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

in art, literature, science, history, nature and travel,” featured the park in its June 1922 issue (Fig. 7).⁴¹ With its colorful cover, *The Mentor* introduced the original inhabitants of Mesa Verde, describing them as those “who comprised the higher levels of savage religion,” while warning that judging their architectural accomplishments alone may lead many to rate them “higher than they deserve.”⁴² Though it’s unclear the exact number of patrons to receive this publication, it’s evident that such initiatives played an influential role in early park endorsement and story formation.

In further attempts to increase the park’s attractiveness to visitors, Park Inspector M.L. Dorr suggested, against former claims made by General McLaughlin to the Ute Indians, that Balcony House be fully restored and reoccupied by Moqui families during the summer. Such a program, in his opinion, would result in “a novelty delightful if not instructive to all summer visitors to the park.”⁴³ Dorr believed that by allowing Moqui’s to continue conducting “their usual occupations,” now in a National Park setting, Mesa Verde could improve both its appeal and educational value. Of course, any educational benefit would have been contrived at best, as the habits of twentieth century Moqui Indians would have certainly appeared different from those of the Ancestral Puebloans living on the mesa millennia earlier. Nevertheless, presenting contemporary Native Americans as authentic representations of Mesa Verde history, sometimes with no claimed affiliation to the site at all, became a major strategy for the park. While this is not

⁴¹ Inherited Values, “The Mentor Magazine,” Jan 10, 2011 <http://www.inherited-values.com/2011/01/the-mentor-magazine/> (accessed Jan 15, 2012).

⁴² Ronne Shelse, “Mesa Verde Cliff Dwellers,” in *The Mentor*, June 1922; M082; Mesa Verde Printed Materials Collection, Ser. 2, Tourism Printed Materials Records, Box. 2, Folder 3; Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College.

⁴³ M.L. Dorr, Park Inspector, to Secretary of the Interior, October 23, 1913; Box 100; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Investigation of Conditions, 1911-1922; Record Group 79, Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

entirely unlike current practices of costumed actors, Native American culture was often homogenized and sterilized in the process.

While presenting “authenticity” or “authentic reproductions” has become a major consideration for many practitioners today, its implications in the early part of the twentieth century went entirely unquestioned. The preservation movement, though slowly progressing as a serious discipline, had continued to be primarily concerned with how to market resources to tourists. Thus, by presenting “authentic” peoples or customs to visitors, Mesa Verde made itself into a more interesting destination. Of course, this was done without consideration to what these types of interpretations were actually accomplishing.

Managing its Popularity

Annual increases in visitation called for a number of changes and improvements around Mesa Verde, including better roads and additional rangers. In 1907, just one year after Mesa Verde had been declared a National Park, only one ranger was under employment, with two additional rangers added a year later. Of course, monitoring and protecting a site with so few employees was less than ideal, even if visitation was rather low. Additionally, those park rangers had a somewhat different role in the early part of the twentieth century than they do today. According to R.B. Marshall, the Superintendent of the National Parks in 1916, “Rangers are employed by the department to do trail and road work when necessary, enforce the regulations for the government of the park, and aid and assist in its administration in every way, and to act as guides in the case of

pressing necessity.”⁴⁴ Simply put, park rangers fulfilled duties that are now taken care of by dozens of employees, if not more. Regardless, rangers had long been considered integral to the success of the National Parks, so much so that in a 1915 *Denver Post* article, Park Engineer Frederick Steinhauer said, “The national parks are the playgrounds of the people of the United States, and the rangers must be men of the kind who can be depended upon and trusted and honored by everybody.”⁴⁵

Unfortunately, by 1916 “pressing necessity” had become commonplace as Mesa Verde continued to attract visitors. At times the park had become so inundated with tourists that the Superintendent himself, Thomas Rickner, along with the wife of one of the park rangers, had been forced into giving tours of the ruins. In one instance, archaeologist Jesse Nusbaum noted that children of some employees had occasionally and unofficially, provided their own tours to those visiting the site by car, charging a small fee and providing an interpretive story that “was out of this world.”⁴⁶ Rickner, realizing the severity of this issue, wrote to the Secretary of the Interior, Franklin Lane, about his concerns. Though the park was in charge of permitting guides to conduct tours of the ruins, no formal education to train these individuals existed, and would not until 1963. Understanding that continuing to appoint unaffiliated guides, and possibly paid ones, could end up “ruin[ing] the tourist trade,” Rickner suggested the permanent use of park rangers for these purposes, who in his eyes were more than qualified to handle the task. He would also go on to warn that, “If the guiding is not done by regular officers of

⁴⁴ R.B. Marshall, Superintendent of National Parks, to Thomas Rickner, Superintendent of Mesa Verde, March 13, 1916; Box 099; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Employment & Payment of Employees, 1914-1925; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

⁴⁵ Albright and Schenck, *Creating the National Park Service: The Missing Years*, 58.

⁴⁶ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 98.

the park, the ruins will look soon like autograph albums, and all loose material will be carried away.”⁴⁷ Rickner’s foresight soon became an important step in centralizing preservation and interpretation efforts at Mesa Verde. His insistence of a more formal staff would eventually lead to better identification of those outside individuals, firms or corporations operating inside the park, by requiring them to wear a distinguishing metal badge.⁴⁸

As tourism continued to increase so did anxieties over vandalism, looting, park accessibility, concessions, and overall park amenities. Over the next few years, additional staff was added, electricity was installed, roads improved and cabins upgraded, all hoping to address these issues. Maybe most noteworthy was the addition, in 1918, of the Mesa Verde museum, the first of its kind in any National Park.⁴⁹ As author and historian Duane Smith poignantly notes, “The honor was a logical one – more than any of the other parks, Mesa Verde needed interpretation to facilitate understanding and appreciation of its uniqueness.”⁵⁰ The museum provided the first significant attempt in the park’s history to provide visitors with more than just a guided tour. Soon, park campfire talks, given by Jesse Fewkes, were also added to Mesa Verde’s interpretive inventory, an offering that appeared well past due after Fewkes was asked, “Why in the world did the cliff dwellers build their homes so far from the railroads?”⁵¹ Such misguided questions proved that

⁴⁷ Thomas Rickner, Superintendent of Mesa Verde, to Secretary of the Interior, March 27, 1916; Box 099; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Employment & Payment of Employees, 1914-1925; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

⁴⁸ Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “Rules and Regulations,” in *Rules and Regulations: Mesa Verde National Park, 1920*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920).

⁴⁹ Barry Mackintosh, *Interpretation in the National Park Service: A Historical Perspective* (Washington, D.C.: History Division, National Park Service, 1986), 7.

⁵⁰ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 95.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 96.

existing publications, short films, and other media created by outside agencies had done little to adequately educate or prepare park visitors. The emergence of Mesa Verde as a destination had quickly demonstrated the importance of effective management, and increasingly stressed the role of interpreters and interpretation. Yet striking a balance between tourism, preservation, and interpretation would continue to elude officials.

Employing the First Natives

Through much of the park's early years, images of living Native Americans were relatively absent from post cards, pamphlets, pictures, and general interpretation. Instead, the ruins stood alone, as they had for hundreds of years before their rediscovery. However, Mesa Verde wasn't as empty as the ruins, or park officials, may have lead visitors to believe. Nevertheless, the cliff dwellings had become symbolic of a long vanished people, due in large part to how they were being interpreted to the public. While this may have been true from an archaeological standpoint, Mesa Verde was still very much a part of Native American life, and had been for some time.

Effectively ushering in a new era for Mesa Verde National Park, the hiring of a Native American workforce in the 1920s became the beginning of "ethnic tourism," that exploited the "cultural exoticism of the local population and its culture."⁵² Though some attention was paid to Native American collaboration prior to the 1920s, no formal relationship had yet been established. One such example was the possibility of using Navajos as guides in and around the ruins, as their reservations relative proximity to Mesa Verde had made them desirable candidates. Unfortunately for the park, however, Navajos held strict superstitions regarding the ruins, severely limiting their willingness to

⁵² Wayne Martin Mellinger, "Toward a Critical Analysis of Tourism Representations," *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol. 21, No.4 (1994): 57.

partake in any such program. Alas, Native American inclusion, on any substantial level, would have to wait. Quite possibly the first official consideration was made by Park Superintendent Jesse Nussbaum, in April of 1922, through a letter sent to the Director of the National Park Service. In his note, Nusbaum explained the advantages of hiring a Native American at Mesa Verde:

In my long letter to you of recent date, regarding the future development of Spruce Tree Camp, reference was made to one Pueblo Indian, Zuni Beck by name and I think that he would make a most efficient camp care-taker, and at the same time add local color to the park environment. We can undoubtedly secure Beck's services for 40 or 45 per month, and if I can appoint him as such, will see that he maintains a small Indian Farm, in which he would closely follow the methods of his ancestors, who were represented on Mesa Verde, in its cultivation.

He is a most expert bead worker, and his methods in that kind of work, although he uses a steel drill in drilling, are the same as of the past. His presence here would greatly add to the educational value of the park....⁵³

Nusbaum's plea became a twofold effort that sought to increase the overall maintenance of the park, while providing a form of authenticity that would appeal to visitors. As sociologist Wayne Martin Mellinger explains, "A central aspect of the culture of modernity is the quest for authentic experience. Tourism ... is based in the belief that authentic experiences reside outside the realm of everyday life...."⁵⁴ Such a concept was

⁵³ Jesse Nusbaum, Park Superintendent, to Director of the National Park Service, April 21, 1922; Box 099; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Employment & Payment of Employees, 1914-1925; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

⁵⁴ Mellinger, "Toward a Critical Analysis of Tourism Representations," 757.

not outside Mesa Verde's purview and became a major factor in further legitimizing the site's significance. It seems likely that adding this new layer of "visual authenticity" superseded any educational value that Nusbaum may have been interested in. This is supported by the fact that little research seemed to have been involved in making sure future dances, rituals, crafts, etc. were of some relation to the Ancestral Puebloans, and thus related in some way to Mesa Verde. Native American culture, of course, was singular in nature, though the average visitor may have not known or cared one way or the other.

Nevertheless, the National Park Service energetically favored Nusbaum's request and made the necessary provisions to hire the park's first Native American employee. Subsequent hiring, primarily of day laborers, who worked on general grounds duties, continued for the next few years. By 1925, Mesa Verde claimed to have 150 people on the payroll, most of which were Navajos.⁵⁵ Native American employment was rather easily welcomed at Mesa Verde, as it became apparent the park could save a great deal of money hiring Navajos for menial jobs.⁵⁶ As visitation continued to grow throughout the 1920s, Mesa Verde's Navajo workforce began providing additional services, like the Yeibchai ceremony. As author Philip Burnham keenly points out, "[this] Navajo healing rite with some Pueblo influence ... made an incongruous fit. Culturally the Navajo had nothing in common with the Anasazi [Ancestral Puebloans] and little with their descendants, the Pueblos ... Doing the Navajo Yebachi ... was like dancing a fandango

⁵⁵ Jesse Nusbaum, Park Superintendent, to Director of the National Park Service, August 14, 1925; Box 099; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Employment & Payment of Employees, 1914-1925; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

⁵⁶ Burnham, *Indian Country, God's Country: Native Americans and the National Parks*, 65.

in a Celtic ruin.”⁵⁷ These ceremonies would soon be augmented by plays put on by the same performers, which had been inspired by Doctor Fewkes’ own observations of Hopi customs.⁵⁸

Not surprisingly, such colorful attractions were welcomed and enjoyed by park visitors. On one hand, tourists may have believed they were viewing authentic rituals and ceremonies that had occurred on the site centuries ago. On the other, they were probably just happy to see whimsical productions, regardless of who or what it actually represented. While Navajos had clearly won the favor of park officials, their use seemed to be somewhat happily restricted to grounds work and the occasional performance. In fact, Superintendent Jesse Nusbaum had even rejected a simple recommendation that called for the dedication of a flag, stating, “Our work is already dedicated to the preservation and protection of the ancient ruins ... the present day Navajo Indians constitute ninety percent of our working force, which seems to me sufficient recognition to the memory of the American Indian on the part of this park. I do not feel any good can come from a dedication of a flag ... nor is there any necessity or any good reason for it.”⁵⁹

At the same time, it’s important to keep in mind that the Ute Indians were completely excluded from participating at Mesa Verde. One possible circumstance, noted by Philip Burnham, was that the Navajo Indians posed no inherent risk to possible park

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁵⁸ Mesa Verde National Park, *Notes*, No. 1, Vol. 2 (July, 1931) http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/meve/notes/nn-intro.htm (accessed Feb. 7, 2012).

⁵⁹ Jesse Nusbaum, Park Superintendent, to Maimie Haffner, Daughters of Union Veterans, Department of Colorado and Wyoming, Aug 30, 1927; Box365; [Mesa Verde] Administrative Map of Park to Rules and Regulations, United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Mesa Verde History and Legislation, 1926-1932; Central Classified Files, 1907-1949, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

expansion, as their reservation was far outside current boundaries.⁶⁰ It was also believed that the Navajo were willing to do any kind of work to maintain their economic independence, making them perfect candidates.⁶¹ And as far as the Bureau of Indian Affairs was concerned, the Utes were a primitive and often confrontational people.⁶² This episode, while fitting within the larger Mesa Verde narrative, remains largely absent from public history and interpretation.

Changing Times for a Country, for Mesa Verde

While the park of the 1920s enjoyed increased visitation, heightened publicity, the excavation and stabilization of many ruins, and a new promising workforce, it would soon have to face a national economic crisis. Though Mesa Verde had come into its own in the previous decade, thanks in large part to Superintendent Jesse Nusbaum, the 1930s afforded little in the way of budget and the park suffered from an inevitable decrease in visitation. Doing what it could, the park pushed forward, incorporating new interpretive and marketing strategies into its operations, and utilized a more informed and professional ranger staff. Along with the creation of the not-for-profit Mesa Verde Museum Association, which assisted and supported, “various research activities, interpretive and educational programs, and visitor services” a newsletter entitled “Mesa Verde Notes,” began circulating in 1930.

Having already been instituted at parks like Yosemite and Yellowstone in the 1920s, under the name Nature Notes, Mesa Verde appropriately omitted the first half of

⁶⁰ Burnham, *Indian Country, God's Country: Native Americans and the National Parks*, 65.

⁶¹ Betty Franke, “Our Navaho Neighbors,” in *Mesa Verde Notes* Vol. VII, No. 1. (March, 1936) http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/meve/notes/nn-intro.htm (accessed February 10, 2012).

⁶² Burnham, *Indian Country, God's Country: Native Americans and the National Parks*, 65.

the title, a clear acknowledgement of the park's archaeological focus.⁶³ At no small feat of the National Park Service, many of these original newsletters have since been published in an online database. These publications were varied in their content and approach, containing everything from news on museum acquisitions to original short stories and poems, and even hand drawn sketches of skeletal deformities (Fig. 8). Of course, as had been the case with earlier park materials, there is an unmistakable notion that such articles had mixed fantasy with fact to inspire and entertain readers. By and large, however, the Mesa Verde Notes had begun to regard the Ancestral Puebloans as more than just an extinct race, which had been the dominant tone in the past. Now, instead of dismissing these peoples through terms like savage and primitive, scholars like E.B. Renaud began speaking of their "genius," while others like Park Naturalist, Paul Frank, championed for the idea that drought, not warfare as many had fantasized, had finally driven the original inhabitants away from the region.⁶⁴ Such a shift away from conjecture and speculation was important, though it could not be expected to completely solve the problem of a misinformed public, nor could it justify some park exhibits like museum mummies.

In one of the more colorful and interesting articles that became part of the Mesa Verde Notes series, author and Park Naturalist Don Watson detailed some of the remarkable questions park guides had been asked over the years. As Watson put it, the "best" question he could remember had been if the, "constant climbing over those cliffs

⁶³ Mesa Verde National Park, "Introduction," Mesa Verde Notes, Oct. 14, 2011 http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/meve/notes/nn-intro.htm (accessed February 10, 2012).

⁶⁴ "Mesa Verde Notes," Vol. IV, No.1 (July, 1933) http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/meve/notes/nn-intro.htm (accessed February 10, 2012).

might cause the cliff dwellers to develop suction cups on their hands and feet?" Other equally entertaining inquisitions included; what the cliff dwellers had used for water, if they had taken their corn to the local market, whether there had been enough water in Mesa Verde to allow for the use of boats, and even such existential questions like if the cliff dwellers were moral?⁶⁵ Though Watson admits that such questions were not asked on a daily basis, there was still a large demographic who seemed to have had no previous knowledge of the ruins or the cliff dwellers. Again, this can be at least partially attributed to the lack of material that had focused on the educational aspect prior to the 1930s. It should not be surprising, then, that these questions would have been posed by people whose only reference may have been a newspaper or magazine article.

Though Mesa Verde continued to put forth effort, national financial concerns could no longer be ignored. With nearly a third of the nation's workforce unemployed in the first half the 1930s, Mesa Verde visitation had eventually plateaued. Attempting to quell some concerns surrounding the state of the nation, and with the approval of Congress, President Franklin Roosevelt signed the *Emergency Conservation Work Act* in March of 1933. The act, formally establishing the Civilian Conservation Corps, would bring young men together and provide them with work, housing, meals, and education.

As a public program, the young men were sent to various areas of the country to work on public land, Mesa Verde included. Activities were varied and included tasks ranging from general road and trail maintenance to landscaping and camp development. All in all, from 1933 to 1942, when the C.C.C. ceased operation, a total of two billion trees had been planted, over thirteen thousand miles of trails were constructed, fifty two

⁶⁵ "Mesa Verde Notes" Vol. VI, No. 2 (Sept, 1935)
http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/meve/notes/nn-intro.htm (accessed February 10, 2012).

thousand acres of campground developed, almost ninety thousand miles of telephone line placed, and over three thousand fire lookout towers were built. At Mesa Verde specifically, boys were entrusted with improving the overall park, its facilities and accessibility, and maybe more importantly, continued to ensure that preservation would be ongoing through their work on interpretive displays and artifact collections.⁶⁶

Most critical to the preservation effort, the C.C.C. boys, as they were often referred to as, spent the spring and summer of 1934 cleaning thousands of potsherds held in the park's museum. Due to bad weather a year later, a select few of the C.C.C. crew were selected to work with Paul Franke on constructing the highly coveted Mesa Verde dioramas, which were labeled as being in "a class by themselves," as far as park exhibits were concerned (Fig. 9).⁶⁷ In hopes of further illustrating the lifeways of the cliff dwellers, the construction of dioramas became a highly prioritized project. Still present in the park's museum today, these five dioramas placed in chronological order, depict possible scenes of Mesa Verde's long history, hoping to create an exhibit that was easy for the public to understand.⁶⁸ Great effort and care had been taken during the research and construction of each diorama, as every object reproduced had "been found during excavation," in attempts to "picture faithfully the lives of these people."⁶⁹ Such physical depictions were important, as printed materials could demonstrate only so much before becoming overly loquacious and technical. Fully completed in 1939, the dioramas at Mesa Verde continue to be a favorite attraction of visitors, with fingerprints and smudged

⁶⁶ Ronald C. Brown and Duane Smith, *New Deal Days: The CCC at Mesa Verde* (The Durango Herald Small Press, 2006).

⁶⁷ "Mesa Verde Notes." Vol. VI, No. 2 (Sept, 1935).

⁶⁸ Brown and Smith, *New Deal Days: The CCC at Mesa Verde*, 60.

⁶⁹ Don Watson, quoted in Ronald C. Brown and Duane Smith, *New Deal Days: The CCC at Mesa Verde* (The Durango Herald Small Press, 2006), 61.

glass to prove it. Though a great success in changing visitors “perception of the park,” C.C.C. enrollment dropped drastically as a new war loomed over the nation.

Nevertheless, the corps is still viewed today as a great success, and accomplished much at Mesa Verde

From a Depression to a War

The great depression of the late 1920s and early 30s affected Mesa Verde and its operations, much as it had the rest of the country. In 1937, Ansel Hall who had formerly held appointments with the National Park Service, resolved to buy the recently bankrupt Mesa Verde Park Company, the park’s major concessioner owned and operated as a subsidiary of the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. Park concessions were not new, however, the first being established in 1911 as a device to manage the park’s facilities, grounds, and amenities. Unfortunately, due to a severe drop in rail travel, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad could no longer keep the company afloat, allowing Hall to step in.⁷⁰

As operator of Mesa Verde’s concession, Hall would soon publish a small pamphlet in 1938 entitled, “Mesa Verde a Brief Guide,” that had been “prepared for tourists who need the essential facts regarding Mesa Verde National Park” (Fig. 10). These facts included what to see and how to see it, along with a list of free daily tours guided by park naturalists and other useful information. Interestingly enough, Hall had also included a section dedicated to Mesa Verde’s Navajo workers, imploring visitors not to overlook their customs and crafts during their visit. Hall also declared that the daily

⁷⁰ Houk and Marcovecchi, eds., *Mesa Verde National Park: The First 100 Years*, 57-60.

dances provided by the Navajos were not “commercial,” but rather “authentic presentations under the auspices of the National Park Service.”⁷¹

With help from the newly purchased Mesa Verde Park Company, Mesa Verde soon began to see tourism increase in the latter half of the 1930s. Unfortunately, before long, war would once again break out in Europe. Though America had avoided entering the conflict for a number of years, pressures continued to mount. During the 1941 season, the park had tallied 42,000 visitors, the largest single season to date. This success was soon overshadowed by the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, which would force America to enter the war.

Only one year after boasting their busiest season, Mesa Verde’s visitation plummeted to 13,000 in 1942, about 4,500 in 1943, and only 5,500 hundred in 1944.⁷² Not since the early 1920s had the park experienced such remarkably slow seasons. The years of American involvement in World War II were, not surprisingly, slow and rather uneventful for Mesa Verde, as employment decreased, budgets were slashed, and projects derailed. By 1945, and with an end to the war now in sight, visitors once again began making their way back to their National Parks. As far as preservation was concerned, the war also marked a broad shift away from a methodology of restoration towards a more maintenance-centric ethic.⁷³ Such an idea is now one of the most prevailing principles guiding the discipline.

On a broader scale, preservation had slowly become a more holistically informed field, borrowing techniques and methods from a variety of professions. By and large,

⁷¹ Ansel Hall, “Mesa Verde a Brief Guide,” Mesa Verde Park Company, 1938; M082; Mesa Verde Printed Materials Collection, Ser. 2, Tourism Printed Materials Records, Box 2, Folder 11; Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College.

⁷² Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 227-8.

⁷³ Wilson, *The Myth of Santa Fe*, 232.

however, it still remained a dictation of the National Park Service, which had long been reluctant to include voices outside academia and other official capacities.

“It is so beautiful, so big, so broad, so open with something so distinctly American that it penetrates your inmost spirit with peculiar charm.”

“This is America, like nothing else in the world, sufficient unto itself and of worth because of its own intrinsic beauty.”¹

Mesa Verde Park Company pamphlet

The end of World War II signaled an unofficial shift in the National Park Service’s role and scope as custodians. The following pages will detail this transition, while illustrating the multitude of new interpretive programs that distinguish the park’s “golden age,” so to speak. Though the National Park Service existed as an organization by which other nations began modeling their own preservation endeavors after, by the second half of the twentieth century it had also become subjected to a certain amount of international attention. Such attention, which has only intensified in the last few decades, continues to monitor, question, and guide preservation.

A Booming Park

Though the 1930s and 40s posed some unique problems and hurdles for Mesa Verde to overcome, the years after the war had seen a steady increase in numbers, thanks to a booming economy and the NATO backed “Visit the U.S.A. Year,” which encouraged travel from abroad.² In the 10 years since the war had ended, the total amount

¹ Mesa Verde Park Company, “Mesa Verde: What Does it Mean”; Box 103; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Publicity Work, 1911-1925; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

² “More Europeans to Tour the U.S. in 1960,” *New York Times*, April 17, 1970 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): A4.

of visitors travelling to the park had increased from 40,000 a year to 180,000 a year.³ The surge was being felt around the Park System as well and required additional development to accommodate the swelling number of travelers. What started as a relatively simple initiative had eventually spun into something far more complex and ambitious.

Mission 66, as it was deemed, was a 10 year development plan, beginning in 1956, that set out to expand the carrying capacity of the National Park System, through the development and improvement of roads, campgrounds, utilities, accommodations, employee housing, and maybe most distinctively, 114 visitor centers.⁴ In its execution, Mission 66 had provided the next logical step for the ever-broadening preservation discipline, even if it had not done so intentionally.

The visitor centers, which had first gained notoriety through the development of Canyon Village at Yellowstone, would allow park staff to “interpret for visitors exactly what they were experiencing,” as noted by author and historian Mark Daniel Barringer.⁵ It is worth mentioning, however, that though visitor numbers increased during this period, the overall duration of park trips had decreased, probably as a result of increased automobile usage. No longer did Americans want to spend days visiting one park when they could just as easily jump in their vehicle and visit two or three in the same period of time. Even today, the average visitor only spends around four hours touring Mesa Verde,

³ Duane Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2002), 228.

⁴ Alfred Runte, *The National Parks: An American Experience* (Taylor Trade Publishing, 2010), 156.

⁵ Mark Daniel Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature*, (University of Kansas Press, 2002); Joseph Weixelman, “Interpreting the “Anasazi Myth” How the Pueblo Indians Disappear from the Story,” in *Preserving Western History* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005): 128.

a duration entirely insufficient for a park with so much to offer.⁶ Nevertheless, understanding that trips may be brief was an important consideration if a park wanted to adapt its approaches to make them as efficient and effective as possible.

Conceived through a collaboration between architects, landscape architects, and planners, the new visitor centers attempted to incorporate multiple park functions in one building. It was the belief that these centers could streamline the overall operation of the park by including interpretive programs, administrative offices, and visitor facilities all in once space. In the late 1950s, construction began on the earliest of these structures, which had abandoned the rustically themed aesthetics in favor of a more modernist flare.⁷

At Mesa Verde, the visitor center was designed as a spherically shaped, stone clad building, and was constructed on the park's main road leading to the museum and major cliff dwellings. With its undeniable modernist influence, and abstract representation of an Ancestral Puebloan kiva, the Far View Center is dramatically situated atop one of the mesa hillsides, with a background view unobstructed for miles (Fig. 11). Though the visitor center had been designed as a seemingly necessary approach towards keeping the Park open to visitors, it had simultaneously brought Mesa Verde into the present. The use of materials and form signified an ongoing commitment to keeping the park and its facilities up to date, while furthering what was available to the public.

Mission 66 did not end with the completion of Far View Visitor Center, however. By 1960, just four years after the programs commencement, Mesa Verde had also boasted the completion of the Far View Lodge, Morefield Campground, and Wetherill Mesa, a new area of the park now open to tourists that would also alleviate the current

⁶ Linda Martin, interview by author, Mesa Verde National Park, CO., Oct. 21, 2011.

⁷ Christine French, "What is Mission 66," in Mission 66: Modernist Architecture in the National Parks <http://www.mission66.com/index.html> (accessed Oct. 2, 2011).

congestion at other popular sites like Cliff Palace. Thanks in large part to the simultaneous effort of the Wetherill Mesa Archaeological Project, visitors were now able to split their time between two major areas.

Assisted by the National Geographic Society, the Wetherill Mesa Archaeological Project sought to survey, document, excavate and repair archaeological sites that had yet to receive proper care. Not since the park's opening had anything quite this extensive been undertaken by archaeologists. In fact, archaeological appropriations in the past had sometimes only been partially used, with the rest often being reallocated to things like road repair and development.⁸ Nevertheless, those years behind, the Wetherill Mesa Project promised to increase the park's interpretive resources by opening sites like Long House, Mug House, and Step House to visitors, while furthering the knowledge and understanding of the regions prehistoric peoples.

Consequently, the completion of these, and other excavations, had completed the "full sequence of Mesa Verde culture," as Duane Smith explains.⁹ Now, a park that had formerly been misconstrued as singularly occupied, could now be shown to include multiple periods of inhabitation with varying cultural trends. With Mesa Verde becoming increasingly popular and well researched, its story was beginning to be featured in more respected outlets like National Geographic (Fig. 12). Along with describing Mesa Verde with a heightened sense of detail and awareness, often absent from articles in the first half of the century, the feature in National Geographic had shown

⁸ Arno B. Cammerer acting Director of National Park Service, to Jesse Nusbaum, July 12, 1921; Box 097; Department of the Interior, Appropriations General, 1919-1922; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

⁹ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 168.

how archaeological and scientific processes had advanced during work at the park.¹⁰ If nothing else, this extensive archaeological investigation demonstrated that the National Park Service, along with other scientific establishments, had a truly vested interest in the Mesa Verde, its preservation, and interpretation.

Though the opening of additional ruins was met with favor, Mission 66 could not claim the same widespread success throughout the country. What began as a project to protect and ensure the longevity of park resources had just as quickly been met with criticism. Many had viewed the program as a waste of money, arguing that the same capital should be spent to expanded parklands, rather than increasing density with new building construction. Such concerns promoted some to label the agenda as “the prescription that may kill the patient,” citing that new development had actually compromised the goals of preservation.¹¹ While this may have been true with larger development at parks like Yellowstone, Mesa Verde appears to have constructed quite reasonably.

The two largest structures built during Mission 66, The Far View Visitor Center and Lodge, are actually miles away from the major cliff dwellings and quite sensitively scaled. By providing a pivot point to the rest of the park, through general interpretation and orientation services, the visitor center would ensure that overcrowding in other areas would be alleviated. In turn, the center would also encourage a more enjoyable experience for visitors, while helping to protect ruins and exhibits from the clambering feet of over zealous tourists. In fact, a 1968 *Interpretive Prospectus* noted that,

¹⁰ National Geographic, Vol. 125, No. 2., February, 1964; M082; Mesa Verde Printed Materials Collection, Ser. 2, Tourism Printed Materials Records, Box 2, Folder 22; Center of Southwest Studies Archives at Fort Lewis College.

¹¹ Barringer, *Selling Yellowstone: Capitalism and the Construction of Nature*, 151.

“Protection and preservation ... is the most important fact influencing interpretation at the park. The protection of the ruins dictates that we may not give free reign to visitors to move about and use the area as they wish.”¹²

Managing the Unmanageable

Despite public opinion towards the now terminated Mission 66, Mesa Verde’s popularity continued, and by the late 1960s, nearly half a million people were showing up every season to catch their own glimpse of America’s best-preserved ruins. Thanks in large part to the recent efforts of the Wetherill Mesa Archaeological Project, Mesa Verde had once again come to the forefront of archaeological practice. Though officials must have been enjoying the park’s success, keeping up with the demand, now a seven-day a week operation, was an entirely different story. With tour groups reaching record numbers, 62% of which were considered unmanageable, guides, who were now being educated at the new Stephen Mather Training Center, were forced to do their best in their interpretation.¹³

Things had gotten so out of control, that Superintendent Chester Thomas, had even proposed getting rid of guided group tours altogether, suggesting that interpretation be limited to “viewpoints,” where employees would be stationed at intervals providing a type of as-you-go tour system. This was a difficult recommendation, as Thomas had already understood that full similar self-guided tours were not affective as “few people will pay any attention to the numbered stations in the site or refer to their

¹² Jack Ruby, “Interpretive Prospectus: Mesa Verde National Park,” May 1, 1968; Box 177; Division of Interpretive Planning, Records of Public Input Documenting Interpretive Planning Activities, 1955-1999; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

¹³ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 169.

guidebooks....”¹⁴ Only a few years earlier however, some progress was made through the implementation of a two year long sign making campaign that sought to replace the currently unorganized system that. While this signage was not the first in the park, it had attempted to introduce a more standardized look that would be “more readily readable than former signs....”¹⁵ Despite taking these steps, the park was still being “loved to death,” a condition that was more than Mesa Verde’s founders could have ever imaged.

The difficult part, as former Director of the National Park Service, George Hartzog Jr. explained, was that they “knew exactly how many elk a park can handle ecologically, but not how many people.” Furthermore, congestion had been amplified with the American public’s desire for more “in depth” use of its natural and cultural resources. Though these issues, for all intents and purposes, confirmed the popularity and interest of the public, they also posed great risks to the protection of park resources. In hopes of controlling these issues, many parks set practical restrictions on hiker and camper numbers, while less favorable solutions like “access credits,” which would be issued to each citizen at birth and once used would restrict an individual from reentering the National Parks, were proposed by the National Park Service. Luckily, such recommendations were never realized and parks like Mesa Verde used what it could to quell these incessant pressures. By opening up the recently excavated sites on the Wetherill Mesa, the park hoped to redirect traffic that had once been confined to the Chapin Mesa area. While this seemed to help some, it actually promoted visitors to

¹⁴ Chester Thomas, quoted in Rose Houk and Faith Marcovecchi, eds., *Mesa Verde National Park: The First 100 Years* (Mesa Verde Museum Association, 2006), 27.

¹⁵ Memorandum, O.W. Carlson, Park Superintendent, to Director of National Park Service, Jan 25, 1956; Box 1508; Administrative Files, 1949-1971, K1819 – K1819; Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

extend their stay and visit both sites, proving the “fallacy” of solving park overcrowding through development and expansion.¹⁶

A Golden Era

Overcrowding, which had assuredly become a major concern for Mesa Verde, was not the only issue that would plague the system in the 1960s and 70s. As parks were battling against the deterioration of their resources, much distress was being raised about concessioners. It was believed by some, that concessioners posed an inherent risk for parks, as they essentially acted as highly influential monopolies. These realizations were not completely unfounded, of course. Preservationists’ worst fears had recently been confronted at Yosemite, where MCA inc’s proposal of a nightclub and modernized rustic cabins had been met with harsh criticism.¹⁷ Mesa Verde was not isolated from this issue either, though its own concessioner, the Mesa Verde Company, was not nearly as large or politically powerful as those operating at other parks. Despite the ongoing turmoil around the Park System, the Mesa Verde Company continued and even expanded its operations by opening of a tram service that would allow visitors easier access to the Wetherill Mesa and its ruins. The company also continued to produce promotional publications, now in full color, offering the reader clear and crisp pictures of many of the park’s most attractive ruins (Fig. 13). Ultimately, however, the amalgamation of economics, government policy, and external business considerations proved too much for the company to handle.

¹⁶ Michael Burns, “Park rangers ponder ways to cope with record crowds,” *The Sun*, January 12, 1975 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): H1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

In 1977, after operating in the park for nearly seventy years, the Mesa Verde Park Company was sold, allowing the Philadelphia based ARA to take over. Author Duane Smith notes that the end of the Mesa Verde Company also signaled the end of a very unique aspect of Mesa Verde.¹⁸ While many of the larger parks had already been inundated with a powerful corporate presence, Mesa Verde had avoided such influences, remaining in some sense, pure to its mission. Before long, the ARA had begun discontinuing once popular activities like horseback riding, labeling them more recreational than interpretative. Maybe most shockingly, however, was their decision to end the long running Navajo dances, which had been a major attraction since the 1920s. Though an unpopular decision, the ARA had quite sensibly noted that the dances were not an authentic representation of the Ancestral Puebloan culture.¹⁹ While some may critique the nature of the ARA's appointment at Mesa Verde as well as their decisions to end long-standing park traditions, their reasoning was exceptionally progressive. The company's seemingly acute attention to what park interpretation should seek to accomplish remains an ongoing discussion within the preservation discipline. Nevertheless, the ARA's influence in Mesa Verde also shows that by the 60s and 70s preservation had become much more than a fringe discipline, and could actually serve to benefit larger interests.

Despite the fact that the ARA was making efforts to further the "authenticity" of Mesa Verde's interpretive programs, national news outlets were still entrenched with the idea of Mesa Verde the 'Mystery'. All throughout its history, and now into the 1970s, newspapers continued to feature articles with titles like; "The Mysteries of Mesa Verde,"

¹⁸ Smith, *Mesa Verde National Park: Shadows of the Centuries*, 186.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

“Indian Mysteries at Mesa Verde Park,” and “The Mesa Verde Remains a Brooding Enigma.” Such titles, clearly aimed at grabbing the attention of the reader, may have once had some truth to them. However, by the 1970s most archaeologists agreed that the mass exodus of the Ancestral Puebloans was not as puzzling as once believed, and that Mesa Verde was not a lost city comparable to Atlantis.²⁰ Nevertheless, writers continued to use such sensationalist semantics, which may have even undermined the hard work of park interpreters at times. Even today, the park acknowledges the misguidance of words like mysterious and mystique, and have attempted to remove any such reference from their own materials.²¹

By about the same time, however, ideas within the park began to shift about what to interpret and where to interpret it. For instance, the Far View Visitor Center, which had displayed various Indian arts and crafts exhibits, was recommended to instead illustrate the park’s natural history, a plan that was not soon realized. In fact, by the 1980s, Mesa Verde officials had already acknowledged that the Far View Center was obsolete for interpretive programs. A new plan, however, recommended the construction of an interpretation and orientation facility at the park entrance. The new buildings function would be to “provide information and orientation services to Mesa Verde and regional visitors,” and would include “museum collection, storage and security.” These initiatives, along with ruin stabilization, road rehabilitation, and a new transportation system were drafted as part of a larger twenty-five year plan that would cost an estimated 12.5 million

²⁰ Jeff Frees, “Exploring ‘lost’ city of ancient Indians: Mesa Verde,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 1, 1979 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): M1.

²¹ Linda Martin.

dollars (1975 cost).²² Consequently, much like the adaptation of Far View Visitor Center, the proposed entrance center was not immediately constructed, and has since transformed into a visitor and research center set to open in 2012. Additionally, Mesa Verde had also drafted its General Management Plan in 1979, a requirement for all parks that attempted to set a long-term plan for operation, interpretation, and other important functions. Unfortunately, Mesa Verde's General Management Plan has not been updated since it was created, making it an antiquated and useless document moving forward.

This era also provided some good news, though long overdue, to the Ute Indians, who had lived harmoniously amongst the Mesa Verde ruins long before they were protected by the federal government. Beginning sometime around 1967, Ute Chief, Jack House, began championing for the tribes own cultural park, consisting of ruins located on Ute land. As author Jean Akens explains, "It was his desire to preserve the ruins for the future, and to share them with others. In doing so, some desperately needed income would be generated for his people."²³ Though Chief Jack's requests had been disputed by some who still held strong convictions upon entering the ruins, work would eventually commence in the summer of 1971. For the next three years, aided by archaeologists from the University of Colorado, Ute members worked to preserve, document, and clear the ruins of the newly proposed park. Though work continued slowly, due primarily to economic constraints, the first tours were provided, on a limited basis, in 1978. More than just providing tourists with another Mesa Verde like park, the Ute Mountain Tribal Park afforded new opportunities for a tribe that had long remained out of the public view.

²² "Environmental Review: Visitor Use and Interpretation Plan and General Development Plan, Mesa Verde National Park, Colorado," prepared by National Park Service, Department of the Interior, August 10, 1976.

²³ Jean Akens, *Ute Mountain Tribal Park: The Other Mesa Verde*, (Utah: Four Corners Publications, 1995), 15.

Most importantly, the park encouraged the Utes to interpret their own history, manifested through pictographs and oral stories, while also giving them a chance to preserve the history of the Ancestral Puebloans. Needless to say, this contrasts the preservation approach the National Park Service has regularly engaged in, which often leaves practitioners interpreting culture that is not necessarily their own.

This concept is an important one, even beginning to transform into more of an inclusive approach. Nevertheless, preservation of the 60s and 70s was still largely a reflection of professional “knowledge”, which often believed its interpretations were truths. At Yellowstone, for instance, literature had frequently claimed that the regional tribes were afraid of the park’s geysers, a sentiment that was simply not held by indigenous peoples. Similarly, professor Joseph Weixelman asserts that, “American Romanticism and inability of scholars to adequately convey their ideas” allowed the myth of a vanished people to take center stage at Mesa Verde for so long.²⁴ Though the past few decades of preservation had witnessed great improvements in the scope of interpretation methodology, Mesa Verde had continued to be promoted fancifully. What this also serves to demonstrate is that these long-standing misrepresentations had actually become the expectation of many visitors, greatly concealing the true cultural value that could be found within.

In many ways, those 30 years at Mesa Verde had become a “golden era” for the expansion of interpretation. UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention came into being in 1972, and by the summer of 1978, the International Council on Monuments and Sites provided its report on eligible inclusions into the newly established World Heritage List.

²⁴ Joseph Weixelman, “Interpreting the “Anasazi Myth” How the Pueblo Indians Disappear from the Story,” in *Preserving Western History* (University of New Mexico Press, 2005): 128.

The World Heritage Committee, a rotating body of member states who determines which properties are inscribed on this list, had been created only one year prior to recognize eligible properties, as well as endangered ones, and to assist member states in the conservation of their universally valuable resources. It was sites that could be determined to exhibit “Outstand Universal Value,” that were to be distinguished as World Heritage Sites.²⁵ Along with areas like the Urban and Architectural Center of Cracow, Auschwitz concentration camp, and the Rock Hewn Churches of Lalibela, Mesa Verde was included on UNESCO’s list.²⁶

The organization’s recommendation stated that Mesa Verde National Park was to be included as a cultural property under Criterion III, which designates a site that bears “a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.”²⁷ Though a decision later that year had been differed, Mesa Verde along with Yellowstone National Park were eventually accepted as the first American World Heritage Sites in 1978.²⁸ Even though becoming a World Heritage Site is a great honor, the National Park Service still remains as the governing body of our nation’s parks, despite some belief that the United Nations has taken over. Yet, having been brandished a World Heritage Site has had little effect on the experience of the every-day visitor. In fact, many American World Heritage Sites are apprehensive in promoting themselves as such, fearing visitors would become confused as to who is in

²⁵ UNESCO, “Operation Guidelines for the World Heritage Committee,” World Heritage Committee (First Session: Paris, June 27 – July 1, 1977).

²⁶ ICOMOS, “Advisory Body Evaluation,” United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, June 7, 1978 http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/027.pdf (accessed Feb 26, 2012).

²⁷ UNESCO, “The Criteria for Selection,” Updated May 14, 2008 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria> (accessed Jan. 6, 2012).

²⁸ ICOMOS, “Decision - 02COM VIII.38 - Review of Nominations to the World Heritage List,” United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1978.

charge.²⁹ And while the “resulting prestige often helps raise awareness among citizens and governments for heritage preservation,”³⁰ Linda Martin, a seasoned Mesa Verde employee, suggests that the designation has gone virtually unnoticed by many American visitors.³¹

Historically, American involvement in UNESCO has always been a tenuous one. Most recently, the U.S. pulled funding from the international body after Palestine gained approval for membership in 2011. Even without this political statement, which was not the first, American World Heritage Sites have been perpetually under promoted due to various concerns. The National Park Service has decided, in many cases, to preemptively avoid promoting their sites to avoid conflict that has arisen in the past by those believing their park’s sovereignty are in jeopardy. While this fringe constituency is just that, they have left an unmistakable mark on U.S. World Heritage Sites. International sites, on the other hand, do not have this problem, and often thrive under the designation. Nevertheless, the growing recognition of preservation by international bodies had become an important moment for the National Park Service, as their authority and autonomy was becoming increasingly challenged.

Increasingly International

As UNESCO provided neither Mesa Verde nor the National Park Service appropriations, updating and improving interpretation would continue, primarily as an

²⁹ Melinda Burns, “U.S. Revisits Its World Heritage Roots,” *Pacific Standard Magazine* (March 28, 2009) <http://www.psmag.com/culture-society/u-s-revisits-its-world-heritage-roots-3850/>

³⁰ UNESCO, “Frequently Asked Questions,” updated November 10, 2010 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/faq> (accessed Jan. 12, 2012).

³¹ Linda Martin

internal endeavor. One such agenda seeking to modernize National Park Service publications took nearly a decade to execute, and included readable handbooks, lavish illustrations, and engaging text. Long overdue in the eyes of the NPS, these new publications would provide a “unified graphic approach . . . making the publications more useful for park managers and users alike.”³² The Mesa Verde Museum Association had also begun publishing its own series around the same time, titled the *Mesa Verde Research Series*, which provided insight into archaeological excavations around the park. The park also continued its dedication towards excavating, stabilizing, and preserving ruins, including those in remote areas not accessible by tourists. To further promote the underutilized Wetherill Mesa, officials had also resolved to finally allow private motor travel to the site, a trip that had previously been limited to a tram service.

In addition to these rather habitual park operations, Mesa Verde also held a five-day conference on the world’s cultural parks in 1983. With the participation of nearly 140 individuals from various backgrounds, professions, and nations, a progressive idea began to emerge about how such parks may, in fact, work against preserving the indigenous culture of living peoples. Though Mesa Verde had been known to include its own “living histories” in the past, their authenticity was dubious. Russell Dickenson, Director of the National Park Service, began the conference by insisting the importance of living culture, and noted that, “Modernization often finds the resources of small native communities being absorbed by government agencies and private interest groups. In this process native people relinquish exclusive control over resources that support their life ways. . . .”³³ The

³² Wilma Dykeman, “Documenting National Parks,” *The New York Times*, April 14, 1985 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): 20.

³³ “Cultural Parks Drawing Criticism,” *New York Times*, September 24, 1984 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): B14.

same could be said for those groups included or excluded from the management and interpretation of Mesa Verde. While for a number of decades Navajo workers performed for tourists, Frederick White, a manager for the Navajo Tribal Parks, had explained that, “The majority of Navaho do resent tourists. We don’t want to preserve our culture for the tourists, but for ourselves.”³⁴ Unfortunately, as entertainers guided by tourist demand at Mesa Verde, Navajos had inevitably compromised the continuation of their own traditions and practices. At the very least, the conference brought to light the deep and often complex issues that existed within the National Parks, issues that had seldom been carefully considered or that were ignored entirely. It had also reaffirmed that Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service at large, had become gradually more accountable to international ideas, initiatives, and organizations.

Along with the cultural parks conference held in 1983, Mesa Verde continued to increase its interpretive selection. While it had been believed in the past that ranger guided tours were the most effective, by the late 80s and early 90s, ideas had shifted. It was simply no longer realistic to expect guided tours to remain efficient, especially with more than half a million people visiting Mesa Verde each year. With help from the Mesa Verde Museum Association, educational pamphlets were written and distributed as supplemental information regarding many major ruins. Such guidebooks were available to pick up around the site, recommending a 50-cent donation (Fig. 14). Laid out in a chronological order, the small books contained information, corresponding to different numbered signs that were to be found around each site. Along with general information, the pamphlets also engage the reader by asking questions about the site. While helpful in

³⁴ Ibid.

illustrating some of the major functions of the dwellings, many of these current publications are now twenty-five years old, naturally requiring updating and revision.

The 1990s and now the 2000s, have provided and continue to provide some reassessment throughout the park. While some of the more routine projects carry on, additional programs have also been implemented, such as the University of Pennsylvania's work in documenting, analyzing and stabilizing the architectural finishes throughout Mesa Verde. According to their website, the program takes a four step approach that includes: archival research into past and contemporary reports on finishes, technical analysis using various scientific approaches, detailed recording and monitoring of existing conditions, and in situ stabilization of surface finishes. Through such investigations, the University of Pennsylvania has been able to provide better insight and interpretation into many aspects of the early artistic practices of the Ancestral Puebloans.³⁵

Even with increasing international collaboration, and continued internal commitment, the National Trust for Historic Preservation listed Mesa Verde as one of its 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in 1998. With its more than 4,000 documented ruins and sites, Mesa Verde was unable to avoid the perils of underfunding and deteriorating conditions. Additionally, uncontrollable fires throughout the region had become a major concern for officials, as they threatened the integrity of many sites. The National Trust had noted that, "Some are in such poor condition that they could be lost within a few

³⁵ Conservation of Architectural Surfaces Program for Archaeological Resources, "Project History," Graduate School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania, http://www.design.upenn.edu/hspv/mesaverde/project_history.htm (accessed March 1, 2012).

years unless steps are taken to protect them.”³⁶ Moreover *New York Times* journalist, James Conaway, pointed out that the integrity of the nation’s parks had become threatened by “intrusive commercialism, legislative manipulation and institutional poverty.”³⁷ Essentially, the deleterious condition of many of the ruins had far exceeded the monetary capabilities of the National Park Service or Mesa Verde, while bureaucracy had done little to compensate.

In a book marking the park’s centennial, former Superintendent Chester Thomas asserts that, “Mesa Verde could serve as a poster child for why Congress absolutely must correct the \$5 billion maintenance backlog throughout America’s national park system,” pleading that “If America lets Mesa Verde’s pre-Columbian wonders crumble, it will have betrayed history and sinned against future generations.”³⁸ Things have not gotten much better for our nation’s National Parks in the past five years, unfortunately. As recently as 2011, the U.S. government threatened to shut down all non-essential operations, including all National Parks, if budgetary agreements could not be met. Though this did not come to terms, it demonstrated the ease at which the National Parks could cease to function.

Mesa Verde in the Twenty-First Century

The Mesa Verde of the twenty-first century has become a conglomeration of its own storied past. The Chapin Mesa Museum, which has long been the major center for

³⁶ National Trust for Historic Preservation, “11 Most Endangered Historic Places: Mesa Verde National Park,” 1998 <http://www.preservationnation.org/travel-and-sites/sites/mountains-plains-region/mesa-verde-national-park.html> (accessed March 2, 2012).

³⁷ James Conaway, “Still Our Best Idea,” *New York Times*, May 25, 1998 (ProQuest Historical Newspapers): A15.

³⁸ Chester Thomas, quoted in Rose Houk and Faith Marcovecchi, eds., *Mesa Verde National Park: The First 100 Years* (Mesa Verde Museum Association, 2006), 76.

interpretation at Mesa Verde, continues to be the major artery of the park. Visitors often receive their first look at Mesa Verde and its people through a variety of displays that cover everything from indigenous medicines and foods to architectural trends and important artifacts. Tourists entering the museum are also invited to watch an introductory film that begins with the region's first permanent habitation around 500 C.E., and advances through the various periods of Ancestral Puebloan occupation, providing an important introduction for those who know little to nothing about the park or its early peoples. An adjacent book and gift shop sells the usual allotment of National Park keepsakes, such as postcards, t-shirts, and water bottles, as well as more authentic handcrafted pottery from various tribes and local artists.

To enhance Mesa Verde's self-guided tours, visitors can enjoy a system of cohesive signage around the park that describes various aspects of indigenous life on the mesa (Fig. 15). These displays are effective in demonstrating the various periods of occupation and draw attention to more than just the cliff dwellings, by noting facts about ecology, crafts, and other cultural practices. By in large, however, signage is limited to the park's prehistory, with only brief mention of other the important historical events that have come to shape the area. On the other hand, guided tours provide a more detailed and engaging look into the Mesa Verde's various ruins like Cliff Palace and Spruce Tree House. This option, which varies according to the guide, is recommended and provides inquisitive tourists the ability to ask detailed questions pertaining to their own specific interests. The newest tour offering, known as Twilight Tours, have become a great attraction and success. Presented by the Mesa Verde Institute, an organization created in 2006 to provide additional interpretive programs, Twilight Tours are led by a

knowledgeable guide dressed as a historical figure, such as Jesse Nusbaum, Lucy Peabody, or a C.C.C. worker. These tours have been the first substantial attempt to provide a more historical look into Mesa Verde, though they are currently limited by carrying capacity and a very limited schedule.³⁹

In one of its more significant, though probably unnoticed changes, Mesa Verde has also expanded its acknowledgement of the park's indigenous populations. Though at one time the park refused to dedicate a single flag in their honor, Mesa Verde now acknowledges twenty-four individually associated tribes. This list, not surprisingly, includes the Navajo and Ute Indians, who have had the most complex history with the park. Additionally, other small references, like a plaque accompanying a current art installation within the museum, briefly describes the Utes history and promotes the work of contemporary artists exhibited in the museum. It also mentions a permanent display case that is located in the back corner of the gallery that exhibits some of the tribes' artifacts (Fig. 16). While these references and displays finally begin to include Utes into Mesa Verde's overall interpretation, they avoid problematizing their relationship in any critical way.

Such internal changes at the park have also been complemented and enhanced with the National Park Service's most recent document on management policies, updated in 2006. As the document with the highest level of guidance, *The Guide to Managing the National Park System*, has gone to great lengths to address tribal concerns and how the government should encourage collaboration wherever possible. In one section it is recommended that such tribal consultation should be included during the drafting of a

³⁹ The Mesa Verde Institute, "Twilight in Cliff Palace," <http://www.mesaverdeinstitute.org/index.cfm> (accessed March 5, 2012).

park's General Management Plan.⁴⁰ However, as it has already been mentioned, Mesa Verde's most recent management plan was completed in 1979 and is, by now, very antiquated. Any consultation contained in this original document would be similarly antiquated and in need of updating, as customs, beliefs, and practices change with time. It seems of primary importance that these types of vital documents are regarded as living, which required them to be continuously revisited, reassessed, and revised.

Most recently, Mesa Verde celebrated its 100th birthday in 2006, by publishing a variety of commemorative books, providing concerts and Native American dances, as well as other year-long activities such as tours of previously unopened ruins. A weekend celebration also occurred, beginning on June 29th and extending until July 2nd. The festivities included a presentation by the United State Post Office of a new stamp series that featured Cliff Palace, a parade including the twenty-four affiliated tribes, and even a drama based on the life of former Mesa Verde explorer Gustaf Nordenskiöld. The yearlong commemoration proved a great success and helped encourage ongoing interest in the site.

Moving Forward

Over the past 100 plus years, Mesa Verde has developed from a National Park that was popularized as a place of mystery and warfare, to a site that has become almost archetypical of cultural heritage. Yet, its current scope of interpretation leaves much to be desired from a critical and inclusive standpoint. Current interpretation heavily favors the roughly 800-year period that began and ended with the Ancestral Puebloans. No doubt

⁴⁰ National Park Service, "Management Policies 2006: The Guide to Managing the National Park System," (U.S. Government Printing Office, 2006).

this history is what had prompted preservation in the first place, but yet it neglects the fact that history rarely has a beginning or an end. To this end, cultural resource resources should be recognized for their temporality rather than a naïve belief in their stability.

These last two chapters have attempted as thoroughly and thoughtfully as possible, to tell the story of Mesa Verde in a way that documents and details some of the more important moments in its history as they relate to preservation and interpretation. While I do not claim to discuss all of the park's important stories, I have provided a look into some critical themes that have shaped the way preservation operates today. In many respects, Mesa Verde National Park came into being as a blank slate for preservationists. Thanks to this long history, we are able to take a first-hand look into the development of a discipline, but also the development of nation, through such things like imperialism, tourism, and scientific research. Not only is this important from a historical point of view, but it also acts as tool by which practitioners can actively advise their own decisions. At the same time, Mesa Verde can be used to serve a larger discussion that extends beyond the National Parks and into other cultural resources.

5

Revisiting and Reinterpreting

“We look to the history of time ... to the intervening history of interpretation. But the ultimate question must be, what do the words of the text mean in our time.”¹

Justice William J. Brennan, Jr.

“It is precisely facts that do not exist, only interpretations.”²

Friedrich Nietzsche

As one of the nation’s most significant archaeological parks, Mesa Verde has been studied and researched, written about and documented. However, there still lacks a substantial critical analysis pertaining to the history of its management and interpretation. Through such an undertaking, we will be able to better understand the shift in methodological practice, as well as why the park’s more recent history deserves careful attention.

The last three chapters have looked at such things, illustrating how the discipline of preservation was created and evolved as a response to shifting American ideologies and interests. To aid in its development, preservation relied on the collaboration of various fields, including archaeology, ethnography, and history. Soon, interpretation was established to concentrate on the increasing importance that was placed upon education. Like anything, however, interpretation was subjected to the influences of politics, economics, and scientific and historical knowledge and theory. As a result, the continuing

¹ William J. Brennan, “Constitutional Interpretation,” (lecture, Text and Teaching Symposium, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. October 12, 1985).

² Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Portable Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufman (Penguin Books, 1954), 458.

story of Mesa Verde, as well as other historic and prehistoric resources, can become problematic and often limited.

Naomi Mezey, a Professor at Georgetown University, writes, “Preservation, for all its importance, values stasis, and therefore is much better suited to dead cultures than to living ones.”³ While this is somewhat of an oversimplification, it is a statement that is at least worth considering. At Mesa Verde, specifically, there exists a clear delineation of this stasis, marked by the primary attention paid to the years of about 500 to 1300 C.E. While it is true that the cliff dwellings represent a certain moment in time, and one that the Mesa Verde was established to protect, more contemporary historical interpretation has suffered. However, if we look closely at this history, we see that Mesa Verde has had an important role in a larger national and international story. Such a narrative can provide us with important insights into topics and ideas like imperialism, advocacy and activism, nationalism, tourism and, of course, preservation. Yet, as seemingly integral as these periods would implicitly suggest, Mesa Verde has only recently begun to consider their viability as an interpretive method.

Similar to Mezey, anthropologist Lynn Meskell astutely points out that, “Preservation privileges the construct of historical respect rather than the needs of the present.”⁴ While revisiting the current themes and stories that interpretation has constructed is past due at many sites, it is also important to consider that historical and contemporary trends, methods, and messages are significant in representing a specific moment and time. Since preservation often aims to educate through firsthand experiences, it would be irresponsible to simply replace and forget what was

³ Naomi Mezey, “Paradoxes of Cultural Property,” *Columbia Law Review* Vol. 107 (2004): 2013.

⁴ Lynn Meskell, “Negative Heritage and Past Mastering in Archaeology,” *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 75, No. 3 (Summer, 2002): 571.

accomplished in the past. Unfortunately, many established narratives, which inevitably omit important pieces of history, can actually compromise this mission. Through the course of this final chapter, I will unravel and address such issues, hoping to further point out the necessity of such considerations and will make recommendations that will endeavor to build upon and add to the existing methods for critique, evaluation, and interpretation.

Becoming Less Dependent on Significance

The introduction to this thesis, along with the following chapters, have already distinguished some of the shifting ideas and methods that have dictated interpretation and preservation for more than 100 years. Currently, National Register Nominations require a “statement of significance” as an important piece of the qualification process. In fact, much of preservation and interpretation relies heavily upon the idea that we can argue or represent the value of a place by pinpointing particularly important moments or features. While in many respects such an approach is essential, an overreliance on significance may actually promote the development of a narrowly defined narrative.

It seems logical then, that this semi-reductionist process of defining significance must be carefully considered and reconsidered during the development and redevelopment of interpretive programs. Significance, of course, is rather subjective and is inevitably dictated by a particular stakeholder, working at a particular time, and using a set of particular ideals or knowledge. Because of this, significance should be a topic of constant evaluation and peer review. However, the few, if any, National Register nominations that have been amended since their completion, attest to the fact that this has

yet to begin. Perhaps most importantly, is that through identifying significance, we begin to delineate what we see as important from what we see as less important.

Another issue, then, is that these definitions have been almost exclusively managed by the “professionals” in the past, whom may have entirely different perceptions of what is important, from say, local communities or affiliated peoples. At the same time, significance dictated by any group will be subject to interpretation and disagreements, and is unavoidably selective. With this in mind, it may be appropriate to relinquish our reliance on significance, or at the very least regard it as ephemeral, evolving, and in need of constant reassessment.

Expanding the Narrative

The realization that the only approach towards effective interpretation is an ongoing one will allow us to recognize that history continues to write itself, thus naturally requiring its own interpretation. In his book *The Order of Things*, French philosopher and social scientist Michel Foucault perceptively noted that, “The task of commentary can never, by definition, be completed.”⁵ Historically, however, it is the commentary that is established and immortalized by the preservationist in an attempt to qualify a particular resource as important. Forming these types of static master narratives tend to ignore the layering quality that history can achieve. Mesa Verde, then, provides us with an important opportunity to endorse an initiative that expands the objects and events being interpreted at historic and prehistoric sites.

Mesa Verde’s indisputably rich history has given it a unique chance to reach far beyond its current scope of interpretation. Since 1888, when Cliff Palace was believed to

⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 41.

have been rediscovered, Mesa Verde has acquired an excitingly complex history that speaks beyond the Ancestral Puebloan habitation. While Mesa Verde and the diverse cultures that resided there have afforded us with an unprecedented look into the lifeways of the Ancestral Pueblos, the site also has become a resource by which we can interpret a uniquely American story. What this can and should end up including is a more comprehensive and exhaustive look into concepts and ideas like American nation-building efforts, art and literature, Native American relations, and the evolution of methods associated with archaeology, preservation, conservation and interpretation. While this by no means includes all that Mesa Verde can tell us, it does suggest many themes that have not been sufficiently addressed.

It should seem obvious, then, that we regard Mesa Verde and similar resources as evolving entities that continue to gain significance through internal and external forces. Yet, as the preceding chapters argue, a clear and cohesive interpretation of contemporary history, that is to say what has occurred since the abandonment by the Ancestral Pueblos, is still lacking at Mesa Verde. For the ongoing efficacy of the park's educational and interpretive goals, it is integral that officials and planners begin to dynamically expand Mesa Verde's story.

Such a recommendation might be easier said than done, as current budgetary constraints make such an expansion in interpretation difficult, if not impossible to accommodate. And while the National Park Service's budget comprises only one-thirteenth of one percent of the total annual federal budget, recent and future cuts to visitor services set a difficult precedent.⁶ Nevertheless, such monetary tools should not

⁶ Kurt Repanshek, "Congress Slashes \$101 Million from National Park Service Budget. More to Come?" *National Parks Traveler*, March 28, 2011.

and have not put a halt in interpretive planning. In some cases, Mesa Verde is able to supplement some of these losses with the help of non-profit groups, donations, and general sales. The Mesa Verde Museum Association, for one, provides merchandise that goes through a “meticulous review process” in order to ensure “the greatest educational and interpretive value,” including guidebooks available for 50-cents around Mesa Verde.⁷ A more recent organization to further the park’s goals is the Mesa Verde Institute, established in 2006 with the goal of expanding the visitor experience. The Institute also provides a variety of specialized workshops and programs, highlighted by the increasingly popular Twilight Tours. These tours, which have already been briefly mentioned, provide tourists with maybe their most in-depth look at Mesa Verde after the Ancestral Puebloan abandonment. The purpose of the tour is to introduce visitors to important characters in Mesa Verde’s more recent history, through the use of costumed guides. To better illustrate the programmatic goals of these tours, I have included the 2011 schedule:

<http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2011/03/congress-slashes-101-million-national-park-service-budget-more-come7858> (accessed March 15, 2012);

Kurt Repanshek, “Updated: President’s FY13 @2.6 Billion Budget Request for National Park Service carries \$1 Million Cut,” *National Park Traveler*, February 13, 2012

<http://www.nationalparkstraveler.com/2012/02/updated-presidents-fy13-26-billion-budget-request-national-park-service-carries-1-million-cut9460> (accessed March 15, 2012).

⁷ Mesa Verde Museum Association, <http://www.mesaverde.org/home> (accessed March 2, 2012).

Sunday: Willa Cather Pulitzer Prize winner & acclaimed American author Willa Cather returns to Mesa Verde this year (1933) to take a select group of people through Cliff Palace. She will share her experiences of Mesa Verde in 1915 and explain why the Cliff Dwellers are important to all of us.

Monday: Lucy Peabody: The “Mother of Mesa Verde”. Return to the year 1910 and tour Cliff Palace with Lucy Peabody, the “Mother of Mesa Verde.” Listen while she tells of the trials and tribulations, the heartbreaks and triumphs that went into saving Mesa Verde from total destruction.

Tuesday: Jean Pinkley teaches Mesa Verde Archaeology. Experience what it was like to be a new interpretive Ranger in 1966 at Mesa Verde. The Chief Park Archaeologist shares her knowledge of the ancient people, structures, and artifacts that they left behind.

Wednesday: Stories from a CCC Boy. Go on a journey back in time with a Civilian Conservation Corps boy and re-live his experiences.

Thursday: A Night with Nordenskiöld. Join an early scientist Gustav Nordenskiöld as he shares his findings at Cliff Palace.

Friday: Twilight with Jesse Nusbaum. Spend some time with “Mr. Mesa Verde,” Jesse Logan Nusbaum, the Park’s first scientifically trained superintendent.

Saturday: Arabella Templeton: an early visitor. Come hear about the experiences of early visitors (1890s); how they learned about the cliff dwellings; and the various means of travel necessary to visit Cliff Palace, and early theories about the cliffs.⁸

While this program has proved successful in at least addressing the possibility of expanding interpretation, it is still far too limited in both its scope and reachable audience – only 20 visitors are allowed in each group. Furthermore, Scott Magelssen, an Assistant Professor at Augustana College, insists that, “Visitors to US living history museums ... are not made aware that there were other possibilities open to the historic figures – that, indeed, what they are seeing is just one of many possible histories.”⁹ Moreover, living

⁸ Mesa Verde Institute, “Twilight in Cliff Palace,” 2011 <http://www.mesaverdeinstitute.org/> (accessed March 5, 2012).

⁹ Scott Magelssen, “Post-touristic Considerations for Living Historical Interpretation,” *Theatre Journal* Vol. 58, No. 2 (May, 2006): 291.

histories may be ill equipped to present intangible ideas, such as those carried through folklore or certain cultural practices and beliefs.

I should say, before I proceed, that I do not infer that a “big-picture” approach is an entirely unique idea, as sites like the Great Falls in Paterson, New Jersey or Colonial Williamsburg interpret themselves as areas of a larger American identity. For example, at the Great Falls, one gets a sense of how industrialization was connected to specific individuals like Alexander Hamilton, as well as the role it played in a developing nation. The numerous extant and ruinous textile mills are representative of more than their function as individual production facilities, as they have come to illustrate their cohesive utility in a larger narrative. Moreover, recent cultural resource surveys, along with ongoing reuse projects, have begun to acknowledge the importance of such buildings as historical elements with ongoing contemporary value.¹⁰

And as I have already mentioned, there are still those academics that quite unsympathetically believe that preservation has a tendency to promote this stasis. While we are not necessarily historians in a formal academic sense, our goals are often similar. Yet, historians would not think to cease their research or writing, nor would they surrender that history has become defined to a point of completion. Why then, should we as preservationists, who have a responsibility to present history to the public, cease our own interpretation of a site or resource? As anthropologist Lynn Meskell has emphasized, “It is no longer possible to take refuge in the past or in the comfort that the subjects of

¹⁰ See also, “Cultural Resource Investigation of the Allied Textile Printing Site: Paterson, NJ” prepared by Farewell Mills Gatsch Architects, LLC, 2011; “The Greater Spruce Tree Revitalization Initiative” prepared by Value Research Group LLC, August 2008; “Greater Spruce Tree Neighborhood Plan” prepared by Value Research Group LLC, January 2009.

our research are dead and buried.”¹¹ Similarly, we should not take comfort in treating historic and prehistoric resources as ones whose histories have become decisively defined. If professionals wish to have their resources represent a reliable continuum of information, it is their responsibility to accommodate and encourage such historical expansion. Our routine in approaching sites, which is often dictated by broad rather than site-specific criteria, can severely inhibit thinking this way. What this inevitably creates, are sites that present only small or very specific portions of their overall history. The following recommendations presented in this chapter will all, inevitably address, the creation of a larger, more inclusive narrative.

Reflexivity as a Preservation Method

Historical positivism, which views history in terms of “knowable” facts, has long played an important guiding role in preservation. Unfortunately, this approach discourages professionals from problematizing history or engaging in self-critique. To this end, a reflexive approach can and should play a significant role in the preservation process the same way it has begun to in the discipline of archaeology. Ian Hodder of Stanford University defines reflexivity as the, “recognition and incorporation of multiple stakeholder groups, and the self-critical awareness of one’s archaeological truth claims as historical and contingent.”¹² Therefore, a first step in refining interpretation is by addressing those groups that can prove helpful in providing advice and feedback during the planning process. At archaeological investigations, these groups might include

¹¹ Lynn Meskell, “Conflict heritage and expert failure,” in *Heritage and Globalisation*, ed. Sophia Lambadi and Colin Long (New York: Routledge, 2010), 192.

¹² Ian Hodder, “Archaeology, Reflexivity and the “Local” Voice,” *Anthropological Quarterly* Vol. 46, No.1 (Winter 2003): 55-69.

historians, objects conservators, photographers, affiliated peoples and other specialists. Similarly, preservationists would gain much from the ongoing inclusion of similar individuals and parties. In some instances, such collaboration has meagerly begun, through interpretive collaboration with Native Americans, as well as more formal, hands-on education.

As Hodder admits, though, formal training can in some respects compromise the intent of an individual by subjecting them to an “academy-centered” methodology not necessarily aligned with their own cultural practices or beliefs.¹³ In this case, parties would benefit from an open discourse that encourages the integration of cultural practices into established academic methodology. This would not only limit the possible abandonment of long held cultural beliefs, but it would also promote sensitively conducted projects by encouraging multiple and varied perspectives.

Self-awareness and self-critique have become an equally important piece to this reflexive approach. While not a widespread occurrence, the excavation and subsequent re-excavation of archaeological sites have taken place at historic sites like Williamsburg, Virginia.¹⁴ Consequently, each excavation can be argued to have become an individually significant moment in history, as well as a layered piece of the archaeological record. Moreover, it allows archaeologist to interpret past work, while assessing and critiquing those methods and results. Similarly, then, past interpretations can represent integral moments of a park’s history, creating the same layered effect. The fact that interpretation at Mesa Verde has spanned some 100 years becomes particularly useful in its ability to

¹³ Ibid., 60.

¹⁴ Marley R. Brown III and Andrew C. Edwards, “Re-Excavation, Reflexivity and Responsibility at Colonial Williamsburg,” in *Between Dirt and Discussion* (Springer, 2006).

portray many methodological trends. Therefore, we should expect to learn and expand our own knowledge of history through a reflexive approach.

An effective and practical method for employing this may be through new temporary or permanent exhibitions within Mesa Verde. To better illustrate this prospect, I have proposed a series of potential topics that could be thought provoking, evaluative, and informational:

- 1.) **Protecting Mesa Verde** – By taking a look at individuals from John Muir to Virginia McClurg, this installation would survey the range of ideals that began the initial push for preservation. Doing so would also demonstrate and explain the lasting impacts of Mesa Verde’s most important advocates, who also influenced preservation on a national level.
- 2.) **Tourism** - Another exhibit could specifically focus on how the tourism industry promoted, exploited, and influenced Mesa Verde. Currently, a vast assortment of printed, audio, and visual materials exist, though unseen, in archives around the country. These resources give unique perspectives into Mesa Verde, ones that were not necessarily dictated by the National Park Service. This history can also teach us about the influence of industry and economics in National Park promotion, interpretation, and popularity.
- 3.) **Mesa Verde, Conflicts, and International Recognition** - Because of Mesa Verde’s age as a National Park, we are afforded with a glance into how preservation reacted to specific moments in our nation’s history, such as war. As international clashes, the two World Wars influenced almost every facet of life, including the National Parks, requiring them to adapt their approaches and

methods. International influence, however, reached beyond armed conflict, as organizations like UNESCO and ICOMOS became increasingly influential. As one of the few American resources that is recognized as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, Mesa Verde presents a look into how these international groups became progressively more instrumental in American preservation efforts.

- 4.) The Ute Indians of Mesa Verde** – No reflexively engaging program would be complete without a look in the regions important Native American groups. And while Mesa Verde has already created exhibits that interpret Ute history to some extent, it is still in need of a more complete chronology. Such an exhibit should be heavily dictated by current Ute Indians and supplemented with comprehensive archival research. It would be helpful to organize the installation into a chronological order that begins with their movement into the region and continuing until the present day. Of course, such a program would require some willingness on the part of Mesa Verde in allowing the narration of a more contested history. At the same time, it would have to assume that current Ute Indians would even want to participate in such a project.

While these recommendations attempt to provide a more extensive look in Mesa Verde's history, their success is contingent upon their willingness to be critical. To do this, positivist approaches must be replaced by more constructivist methodology, which acknowledges that historical facts are largely social constructions

Acknowledging Difficult History

The ability to expand interpretation is naturally dependent upon our willingness to acknowledge that multiple histories exist. To do this, Lilia Bartolomé, professor of Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts, suggests that historical narratives be detached “from their safe and permanent character, and become a counter-memory, an unfinished ephemeral process that involves opposing views and ideas that are subject to critique and questioning.”¹⁵ Only when we become critical and inclusive, do we become independent of nostalgic positivist constructs. Part of this reassessment, then, becomes reliant on more difficult and contested histories.

Mesa Verde’s indigenous population, though not an entirely unique characteristic, has always been present within the park. Whether it was the Ancestral Puebloans who built the cliff dwellings, the Ute Indians that have occupied the area for hundreds of years, or the Navajos who comprised the park’s early workforce, Mesa Verde’s story is largely a Native American one. While “The first frontier had to meet its Indian question” as Frederick Jackson Turner noted, the National Park Service had its own Indian question to consider.¹⁶ Unfortunately, for a better part of its history, Mesa Verde has missed the opportunity for presenting an interpretive scheme that was both inclusionary and sensitive of its contemporary affiliates. While it is difficult to pinpoint when exactly living populations were first consulted concerning interpretation, at least 50 years can be marked by their relative silence. In recognizing the legitimacy of

¹⁵ Panayota Gounari, “Unlearning the Official History: Agency and Pedagogies of Possibility,” in *Ideologies in Education: Unmasking the Trap of Teacher Neutrality*, ed. Lilia Bartolome (Peter Lang Publishing, 2007): 110.

¹⁶ Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” (American Historical Association, World’s Columbian Expo, Chicago, IL, 1893).

contemporary Native interpretation, we should also be prepared to understand that not all of it can, will, or should be positive.

Regardless, an important first step in improving and expanding our interpretation is to acknowledge that history is not always easily written nor is it entirely made up of encouraging events. In these cases, events have sometimes become referred to as negative or difficult heritage/history.¹⁷ Though this terminology is often paired with events like the Holocaust, 9/11, or the destruction of the Babri Mosque in India, it may also extend to other episodes in our past. At Mesa Verde, exploring difficult history can help us to better recognize and discuss the tense relationships that had persisted between Native American groups and the National Park Service. In some ways, the reluctance to include and even admit that Native American's possessed a deep relationship to cultural resources, is similar to the treatment of slave life at southern plantations, where interpretation "is a result of socially constructed master narratives that selectively and seductively shape the past into embraceable and restorative national legacies."¹⁸

In many ways, our current perception of national history is often marked by a degree of inherited guilt. Unfortunately, this guilt ends up overshadowing critical interpretation, resulting instead, in overly bucolic experiences that only brush the surface of more complex issues. Such cursory recognition essentially undermines the severity these issues, presenting instead, a form of pseudo commemoration. Under similar

¹⁷ Lynn Meskell, "Negative Heritage and Past Mastering in Archaeology," in *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond*, Sharon MacDonald (New York: Routledge, 2009).

¹⁸ C.N. Buzinde and C.A. Santos, "Representations of Slavery," *Annals of Tourism Research* Vol. 35, No. 2 (2008): 470

See also; G. Dann and A. Seaton, "Slavery, Contested Heritage, and Thanatourism," in *Slavery, Contested Heritage, and Thanatourism* (Binghamton, Haworth Hospitality Press, 2011); Bethany Jay, "The Representation of Slavery at Historic House Museums: 1853-2000" (doctoral dissertation, Boston College, Dept. of Art History, May 2009).

circumstances, Mesa Verde's effort to interpret difficult history is lacking. This however, does not mean that Mesa Verde officials, or the National Park Service itself, have not discussed such issues.

In a 1968 Park Interpretive Prospectus, author Jack Ruby brought up the perpetually tumultuous relationship between the federal government and the Ute Indians. In preparing the document, Ruby noted that various members of the Mesa Verde staff believed that, "relationships could be improved if the park in some way or another gave recognition of the Utes in the interpretive program."¹⁹ In agreement, Ruby suggested that an exhibit be created for the Utes at the Navajo Hill Visitor Center, now known as the Far View Visitor Center. Ruby's suggestion was just that, however, as any interpretive program would have almost certainly been limited to a typical display of artifacts and pottery. Moreover, it was later suggested that the Far View Center hold no interpretive function, as people visited the site for the cliff dwellings, often overlooking the midway building.²⁰ So even if an installation was created at Far View for the Ute Indians, it is unclear how many people it would have reached, and how openly pedagogical it would have been.

While the Utes, along with 24 other indigenous groups, have now been recognized at Mesa Verde, a large gap still remains in their story. Contemporary art and archaeological exhibits pertaining to the Utes are helpful in illustrating some aspects of their culture, but do little to establish their historical association with Mesa Verde or their

¹⁹ Jack Ruby, Interpretive Prospectus: Mesa Verde National Park, May 1, 1968; Box 103; Mesa Verde [Privileges, Spruce Tree Lodge] to Mesa Verde [Publicity Work]; General Records, Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

²⁰ Interpretive Prospectus: Mesa Verde National Park, 1980; Box 178; Division of Interpretive Planning Records of Public Input Documenting Interpretive Planning Activities, 1955-1999; General Records, Central Files, 1907-1939, Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79.

exclusion from it. Instead, Native American history, by and large, has been crafted into a bucolic account that is finalized through static interpretation. Of course, the integration cultural histories do not come without their own challenges. As with any form of interpretive narration, it inevitably assumes a certain amount of knowledge and engages in a certain amount of selection. What this means, is that history, whether interpreted by professionals or affiliated peoples, will always be just that, an interpretation. But this realization is important, as preservation has seldom acknowledged that its interpretation has been carefully selected and open for debate.

With economics and politics having heavily influenced past interpretations to include limited and romanticized narratives, it seems practical that we begin by first recognizing that difficult cultural history is an essential part of any resource. Though our nation's parklands have come to represent the achievements of a progressive country, they also have the dual responsibility of teaching us about our failures. Preservationists Liz Sevckenko aptly points out, "Many heritage practitioners profess an obligation to avoid being 'political' and therefore to avoid raising contemporary questions."²¹ This is an issue that Ian Hodder also advocates against, stressing the importance of "a critique of one's own taken-for-granted assumptions ... as an historical enquiry into the foundations of one's claims to knowledge."²² Thus, ignoring past conflict does not erase it from memory or history, but only temporarily obscures it. Interpreting it, then, is as important as interpreting any other aspect of history. However, it is a pressing necessity that we begin to allow affiliated peoples, groups, and populations to have a major role in interpreting history that they have a personal connection with. While this in some way

²¹ Sevckenko, "Sites of Conscience: new approaches to conflicted memory," 24.

²² Hodder, "Archaeology Reflexivity and the "Local" Voice," 58.

has been addressed at the Utes own adjacent park, it does not necessarily deal with any additional communities.

Achieving Authenticity and what the Charters Say

Internationally adopted charters may hold some answers in directing a more multi-faceted reflexive based approach towards preservation and now even interpretation. In the early 1930s, the first concerted effort took place that attempted to set international guidelines that could provide recommendations for the preservation and conservation of ancient monuments. The seven-point document, titled the *Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments*, was adopted at the First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments in 1931, and had international ramifications.²³ This new document was a first step in establishing measures by which to preserve, conserve and assess historic resources.

The *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites*, or *Venice Charter* for short, was later adopted in 1964, building upon the 1931 document. The treaty further defined and expanded the concept of the historic monument and insisted that conservation and restoration be a product of all the sciences. Moreover, the *Venice Charter* recognized that the premise of conservation was rooted in the desire to make resources socially useful, but that restoration should cease where conjecture begins. In many respects, the *Venice Charter* had taken seriously the principle of authenticity.²⁴ While both the *Athens* and *Venice* charters had become internationally

²³ First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, *The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments* (Athens, 1931).

²⁴ International Council on Monuments and Sites, Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Buildings, *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites* (Venice, 1964).

accepted documents guiding a still evolving discipline, they did little to address the interpretation of sites, save from insisting that contemporary work be distinguishable from the historic resource.

In the United States, however, authenticity remains a perpetually elusive concept even with these international guidelines, making it an increasingly difficult idea to approach and evaluate. Nevertheless, with strict definitions aside, it may be useful to regard how “progressive authenticity” might apply to sites like Mesa Verde. Progressive authenticity has been defined as the “recognition of layered authenticity, evoking successful adaptations of historic places over time.”²⁵ It would be constructive to consider extending this concept beyond mere physical adaptations to include developments that are more intangible in nature. If we do, Mesa Verde becomes “progressively authentic” in the layering of its concepts, techniques, interpretations, and cultural histories, which have developed throughout the course of its history. In acknowledging such, we would be recognizing the transitory nature of a resource, and the need to continuously consult the ideas, practices, and methods that fall outside our nationally defined scope.

Nevertheless, discussions about authenticity have made their way onto the international stage. In 1994, the *Nara Document on Authenticity* was drafted by a group of experts meeting in Japan. The document was admittedly conceived in response to the World Heritage Committee’s directive to better define authenticity, as applied to the World Heritage Convention’s Operational Guidelines. The *Nara*’s preamble states:

²⁵ Pamela Jerome, “An Introduction to Authenticity in Preservation,” *APT Bulletin* 39: 2-3 (2008): 4.

In a world that is increasingly subject to the forces of globalization and homogenization, and in a world in which the search for cultural identity is sometimes pursued through aggressive nationalism and the suppression of the cultures of minorities, the essential contribution made by the consideration of authenticity in conservation practice is to clarify and illuminate the collective memory of humanity.²⁶

The *Nara Document* also posits that, “All cultures and societies are rooted in the particular forms and means of tangible and intangible expression which constitute their heritage, and these should be respected.”²⁷ With 24 groups now acknowledged for their affiliation with Mesa Verde, the opportunity to preserve and display these forms has been greatly expanded. At the same time, it should be understood that “authentic” representations of past cultures, even those willingly portrayed by Native Americans in the present, have been subjected to change over the years. And though cultural practices may pass on generation-to-generation, they are not isolated from forces that reshape them to meet contemporary needs. If these types of offerings were to continue in Mesa Verde, it is of primary importance that they are first thoroughly explained to audiences. To do this, it would be necessary to differentiate those practices that are “traditional” from those that are contemporary, as the former can appear misleading if context is not first provided.

Interpretation management and planning can also benefit from a close study of the 2008 *Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites*. This more recent ICOMOS charter, also called the *Ename Charter*, defines seven cardinal principles to guide interpretation and management at culturally significant sites. Similar

²⁶ ICOMOS, *The Nara Document on Authenticity* (Japan, 1994).

²⁷ Ibid.

to recommendations I have already made, the *Ename Charter* stresses the importance of inclusiveness in the planning process, through facilitating the collaboration between stakeholder groups. It also suggests that the direction of interpretation should be guided not only by scientific and historical studies, but also through living cultural traditions.²⁸ Such principles within the *Ename Charter* may be further supplemented by the *Burra Charter*, updated in 1999, and originally established to address Australian aboriginal sites.

Among other recommendations, the *Burra Charter* states, “Conservation of a place should identify and take into consideration all aspects of cultural and natural significance without unwarranted emphasis on any one value at the expense of others.” It continues, “Conservation, interpretation and management ... should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has special associations and meanings, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place.” To help accomplish these goals, it is suggested that co-existing cultural beliefs, concepts, and perceptions, especially where conflicting, need be recognized, respected and encouraged.²⁹

These charters, especially the more recent ones, have gradually formed a more universally applicable set of guidelines that help guide interpretation. Such documents, then, become important, if not essential tools of the National Park Service, preservationists, and affiliated communities alike. After all, as archaeologist Kimball Banks notes, “managers no longer have the luxury of operating in a vacuum, of

²⁸ General Assembly, ICOMOS, *Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Heritage Sites* (Quebec 2008).

²⁹ ICOMOS, *The Australian ICOMOS Charter for Place of Cultural Significance* (Burra 1999).

answering only to themselves, the professional community, and their bosses.”³⁰ Maybe, then, these charters become most useful in empowering native or affiliated communities still struggling to dictate their own history through interpretation.

To do this, the National Park Service would first need to more actively consult documents like the *Burra* and *Ename* charters. While they need not replace current NPS standards or operational guidelines, their integration would greatly strengthen the efficacy of park management and planning. Even if strict adoption is not undertaken at an organizational level, officials have the opportunity to consult and implement these recommendations, methods, and ideas at a park level.

Subsequently introducing these charters to other stakeholders, through various open forums, workshops, educational programs, and planning consultations, is of equal importance. Having options that fall outside the usual realm of American preservation could prove a great resource to many affiliated groups, communities and interested parties. It will also encourage a dynamic planning process, by introducing new ideas about things like authenticity and intangible culture, to prevent the common pitfall of stagnant interpretation. Placing more flexible decision-making options in the hands of all groups will also promote a more inclusive collaboration process. At most, the preservation professional or park official should act as a facilitator, by supporting ongoing partnerships, varied perspectives, and multiple interpretations, not by dictating them.

³⁰ Kimball M. Banks, “Native Americans and Historic Preservation: An Introduction,” *Plains Anthropologist* Vol. 44, No. 170 (1999): 1.

Reinterpreting Without Erasing

Part of the overall process of interpretation, in essence, is a process of reinterpretation. As materials and exhibits are adjusted, edited, and updated to reflect the progression of knowledge and the evolution of methodology and media, they are essentially undergoing a type of reinterpretation. However, I believe that the “start-a-new” approach can often become a destructive and erasive method. While it is important to meet the demand of current societal needs, it is also necessary to regard what is being replaced as a piece of history in and of itself. Ian Hodder perceptively mentions that documenting documentation is an obligatory process in establishing wider scrutiny of past methods, techniques, and knowledge.³¹ In effect, the amalgamation of interpretation at Mesa Verde becomes a perfect starting point for the type of documentation Hodder suggests. Moreover, preservation and interpretation can be compared to archaeological investigations, which some view as a “transformative process,” establishing an “on-going record of physical effects at a site.”³²

It would be unjust simply to replace or erase what has already been written, recorded, filmed, and displayed. In the case of Mesa Verde, interpretation has been an ongoing project that represents decades of research, practice, and most importantly, methodology. This alone, is an extremely important resource in our mission to continuously make better and more enlightened decisions about what history we present and how we present it. Reinterpreting this former media, then, becomes an indispensable tool for preservationists seeking to address and expand the scope and understanding of a place. Of course, our investigation into the history of interpretation will inevitably lead to

³¹ Hodder, “Archaeology, Reflexivity and the “Local” Voice,” 61.

³² Lucas, *Critical Approaches to Fieldwork: Contemporary and Historical Archaeological Practice*, 202.

the further realization that history, at times, can be difficult. Preservationist, Liz Sevchenko, further emphasizes that, “For heritage sites to become effective resources in addressing conflict, they must continually mine their histories for perspectives on new problems, inviting dialogue on new issues as they arise.”³³ A process of reinterpretation would begin to investigate these histories and perspectives in an attempt to open up contemporary dialogues. It is important, however, that reinterpretation not be confined to a simple discursive method, and instead become a more physically obtainable project.

The process itself can be difficult, unfortunately, as on-site reinterpretation theoretically requires a great deal of physical space. Therefore, it may be unrealistic to attempt to establish sub-commentary for pre-existing programs and exhibits. That goes to say that reinterpretation should seek to critique and analyze media that are already in place, to inform visitors that facts are often subjective. To do so would presumably require additional space near a sign or in a museum, and probably create a sense of clutter and confusion. It may be equally unrealistic to continue to accumulate media for the sake of commenting on their historical and pedagogical value. In many cases, then, it may be best advisable to simply document and archive those things that are in absolute need of replacement.

Thankfully, we are now at a point where technology and the Internet have become tools that can be manipulated to do almost anything we need them to do, and contain a virtually infinite amount of space. So, where displays, artifacts, pictures, and videos are to be permanently replaced, it would be helpful to establish an online or virtual directory, where visitors can browse through past interpretive exhibits, videos and programs, while

³³ Liz Sevchenko, “Sites of Conscience: new approaches to conflicted memory,” *Museum International* Vol. 62, No. 1-2 (2010): 22.

learning about when they were created, what they represented, what was wrong or right about the information they conveyed, and why they were ultimately replaced. Not only would this create a permanent record of them, but it would also allow the public to more actively engage in the reinterpretation process. This would also be incredibly helpful to scholars and researchers who may not have the luxury of spending the time needed to sufficiently document a site.

Currently, the National Park Service has a very developed and expansive network of websites that address many important facets of the organization and its parks. However, during my own research, I gradually became aware that although each individual park has its own website, and that other types of online resources also exist, they tend to become muddled and difficult to navigate between. For instance, many early guidebooks, published by the National Park Service, are currently available for reference online. However, the guidebooks are either not linked to their corresponding park's websites, or are quite confusing to find. While this may be nitpicking, many people may not be aware that such historical information is now published online in different areas, instead only having been familiarized with what is presented on the specific park website. By streamlining and consolidating the current online network, the National Park Service would be encouraging easier access to a far larger cache of current and historical information.

The Internet's ability to serve as a limitless space for archiving has begun to provide us with a repository for any and all information we wish to save. Moreover, whether we like it or not, every facet of life has become increasingly digitized and reliant upon this type of technology. It would not be surprising, if National Parks and other

historical sites suffer in the amount of physical interaction they see due to the ease at which people can now access information from anywhere and at any time. So while interpretation may become increasingly hands-off, our ability to curate past, present and future material online is particularly practical. Perhaps, then, developing a well-organized and progressively interactive experience through the Internet will prove one of the most important attempts moving forward, especially in our ability to study and critique a multitude of historic and contemporary information.

Practical Approaches

Built Space

I have shown that expanding narratives, addressing difficult cultural history, referencing charters, and reinterpreting park interpretation are all important components in improving the current approach of the preservation discipline. In some cases, theoretical arguments have outweighed the subsequent practical recommendations. This last section, then, will provide further suggestions that should be beneficial moving forward.

There are currently a few major projects and dates in Mesa Verde's near future that provide a starting point for making promising recommendations. The most immediate will be the completion of the new Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center, located at the park's entrance. More than a decade in the making, the new 24,000 sq ft building will dedicate roughly one-third of that space to ticket sales, exhibits, visitor information and a bookstore. The remaining 16,000 sq ft will provide permanent and secure housing for the Mesa Verde's extensive network of research materials and

artifact.³⁴ While I have made a few suggestions regarding possible themes in a previous section, these new spaces offer a great opportunity to establish a permanent and comprehensive display of Mesa Verde National Park. This exhibit should include a rather complete timeline, beginning with the initial habitation and continuing into the present. With the enormous amount of photographs, letters, tourism brochures, guidebooks, and artifacts that are currently archived, this exhibit has the opportunity to become highly visual and highly representative of a very long chronology.

Not only would this serve to expand the narrative in a broad historical sense, its placement at the entrance to the park will provide maximum exposure, even to those who do not wish to venture deeper into Mesa Verde. Dually, for those who do proceed on, the exhibit would create an informational transition point, that gives park goers a necessary introduction into Mesa Verde's multi faceted history. Furthermore, this fairly comprehensive look at Mesa Verde's more tangible history will contextualize the ruins as an accomplishment of the Ancestral Puebloans and as the accomplishment of an American cultural movement.

Interestingly, the completion of the new Mesa Verde Visitor and Research Center will allow the National Park to devote its mid-century Far View Center to the interpretation of the culture and history associated with the areas 24 affiliated tribes, including the Ancestral Puebloans.³⁵ While dedicating the Far View Visitor Center to those culturally affiliated groups is a significant initiative, its future success and efficacy will need ongoing evaluation. As I have already mentioned, interpretation at the Far View Visitor Center was once believed to be an underutilized resource, and the center

³⁴ Carol Sperling, Mesa Verde National Park, email to author, Feb 24, 2012.

³⁵ Mesa Verde Foundation, "Mesa Verde Tribal Cultures Center," <http://www.mesaverdefoundation.org/index.php?show=TribalCenter> (accessed March 25, 2012).

eventually became all but useless for interpretation. With current visitors spending somewhere between four to six hours in the park, it will remain to be seen whether or not the Far View Center can become a useful space in interpreting Native Americans. Nevertheless, the building's space could be further utilized as an area dedicated to encourage ongoing stakeholder collaboration, information gathering, and general counsel. It might also serve as a mediating space during future planning endeavors between multiple constituents. The dedication of a specific space within the park will show that Mesa Verde is committed to progressive preservation and is actively engaging the voices that have often been ignored in the past.

One Hundred Years of the National Park Service

In just four years, a major anniversary marking 100 years of the National Park Service will take place. This important event will present a great opportunity for park officials to implement yearlong programs that can interpret the history of the National Park Service and its relation to Mesa Verde. As the archetype for preservation organizations around the globe, the National Park Service has played an integral role in American history. Understanding this history, both thoughtfully and critically, will be an essential step away from positivist narratives.

One method of presenting the chronicle of the National Park service would be through the use of temporary installations. A common and cohesive system of signage could be placed at various wayside points, illustrating specific moments, projects, and important people that have not yet received adequate attention. At the visitor centers and museums, additional exhibits could be developed to display the chronology of National

Park Service work at Mesa Verde, including an abundance of its written informational material, personal audio memoirs and even videos. To engage visitors even further, it could be interesting and beneficial to identify important members of the National Park Service, who had close personal relationships with Mesa Verde, and build specific programs around their life, work, and achievements. Visitors would then be encouraged to follow one or many of these individuals to learn more about as they make their way around the park. This could be successfully implemented through audio enabled tours, temporary installations, and individualized pamphlets. Such a program could extended beyond the 2016 anniversary to also include those who were not part of the National Park Service, like Virginia McClurg, the Wetherill brothers, and even Ute Indians, like Acowitz or Jack House. This proposal would also move away from the use of costumed actors, which can sometimes be seen as either a novelty or overly theatrical. In doing so, visitors would have the convenience of choosing their own path through the park, learning about specific moments or individuals that interest them.

Oral History

Mesa Verde should also continue to engage in collecting oral histories, a program that has been ongoing since 1979. Again, the completion of the new visitor and research center could provide the facilities necessary for these oral histories to become easily accessible to visitors. Oral history is, in fact, an invaluable tool of preservation that should be thoroughly employed. If it is our goal to provoke a connection between places and people, there may be no better way than through the varied voices of those who already have those connections. It is also important because it essentially allows for an

infinite array of interpretations that cannot possibly be displayed through signage, books, or artifacts alone. Following a model, such as the one currently in use at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC, could help in further disseminating these oral histories. Currently within the memorial, a section of small booths have been outfitted with earpieces and television screens, which offer users the choice to listen and view a variety of stories. I would recommend Mesa Verde explore a similar program, where they can integrate current oral history recordings with appropriate short films or slideshows. This, of course, would not have to be limited to oral histories and could also be expanded to include other narrated short films.

Phone applications are also becoming increasingly useful teaching aides. Programs like “StoryCorps” have been created to help inspire people to record, share, and preserve family histories, anecdotes, and other personal stories. Being able to gather these types of memories and reactions from today’s visitors will help provide an ongoing archive of firsthand experiences, which do not exist from any other period. Having an idea about what people expected, encountered, and took away from their visit, can undoubtedly aide in long and short term planning efforts concerning management and interpretive strategies.

Signage

As a small, but useful change, I would also suggest that current and future signage implement a standard dating system. When such displays have been created and installed over long periods of time, their age will inevitably have some relation to the knowledge they convey. Unfortunately, without having a sense as to when a sign was installed, the

information becomes somewhat problematic. Was the sign created recently? Is the information up to date? Has new information been discovered? As professionals, we have the obligation to pose such questions, even if the average visitor does not.

For important and often dominant media like site signage, it would be extremely helpful to note when such information had been researched, written, and completed. This way, visitors understand that these forms of interpretation must be considered in relation to the time they were created. And as I have shown, scientific knowledge has long played a large role in story creation at Mesa Verde. In the early twentieth century, when little was known about the Ancestral Puebloans, publications had often opted to promote romanticized stories that had little to do with verifiable facts. While this, by and large, is no longer the case, what we see and learn from interpretation is still largely a construction of a particular time and the prevailing influences of that time, be it political, scientific, or social. While only a simple addition to current interpretation, a system of dating could, nevertheless, prove incredibly beneficial and practical.

Expanding the current historical delineation on Mesa Verde's signage could also be an advantageous venture. Currently, Mesa Verde has a small timeline located on the bottom of its signs that illustrate the multiple periods of early occupation (Fig. 15). However, this unintentionally creates the sense that after 1300, where the timeline ends, history ceased at Mesa Verde. In this case, it would be instructive to include an additional and broader timeline. Such periods could include, but are not limited to, occupation, abandonment, Ute settlement, rediscovery, looting, vandalism and activism, the establishment of preservation, and the National Park Service era. Of course, these periods would need to be developed in a thoughtful way that would provide the most educational

and interpretive benefit. While it does not have to be overly detailed, it would at least show the average visitor that Mesa Verde's period of significance did not end in the year 1300, as current interpretation might suggest.

Park Planning

As for a more long-term focus, a primary concern must be streamlining how interpretive planning is conducted in the first place. Through my research, it became increasingly clear that the possibilities presented through Park Prospectuses, General Management Plans, Comprehensive Interpretive Planning (CIP), and others can actually serve as a burden in the planning process. Determining which of these holds principal is hard enough, but to then attempt to have any two or more of these documents work cohesively becomes an increasingly difficult and confusing task. While the CIP has attempted to consolidate such efforts, parks still rely on additional documentation, such as their General Management Plans. The problem here, however, is that General Management Plans are rarely updated sooner than 20 years after they were completed. In the case of Mesa Verde, the plan has not been revisited since 1979. As you can imagine, the ideas presented some 30 years ago may have no continuing correlation with the ongoing projects and proposals of the park. Yet, the General Management Plan, as dictated by the National Park Service, is intended to play an important role in park management.

To better understand the CIP's role, it is necessary to briefly describe its multiple parts and function. The CIP is currently split into two different major components. The first of these is the Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP), which "defines the overall

vision and long-term (five to ten years) interpretive goals of the park.” Essentially, this portion attempts to provide a plan for the future through the collaboration between park staff, partners, and the community. The smaller of these components is the Annual Implementation Plan (AIP), which seeks to establish achievable goals on a yearly basis. To support each of these mechanisms, an Interpretive Database (ID) was also included to store media inventories, strategic plans, legislation, surveys, reports, and other helpful information. In order for the CIP to be as effective as possible, the National Park Service suggests that updates should be drafted as “circumstances require,” and that park staff should keep their interpretive plans up to date.³⁶

Why then, should this process of updating be restricted to the CIP? If other plans are also to be weighted and referenced in the decision making process, then they too must be regularly revisited. Such evaluations and subsequent alterations, then, must also be applied to the National Park Service’s coveted nomination documents, which also suffer in their antiquity. Helping guide these revisions should be the many progressive international charters that concern various facets of preservation, many of which, like intangible heritage, that have not yet received adequate attention.

To further consider the needs and requests of affiliated groups, the park could also implement a series of planning documents that are created specifically by and for those parties. As Sam Burns, Research Director at Fort Lewis College notes, “Cultural resource management ... from an Indian perspective, is comprehensive or more integrated than assessing a single site, which is the typical heritage protection approach of public land

³⁶ National Park Service, “Comprehensive Interpretive Planning,” Department of the Interior (Fall 2000): 4.

management.”³⁷ Establishing an ongoing rapport with these groups through such planning reports is an important goal that should not be viewed on a short-term or isolated project basis. Educating and informing these parties, especially the youth who will have a future role in park interpretation, will only serve to create a better park atmosphere in the long term, and will provided a level of commitment and trust across all groups.

Of course, no strategy is perfect or absolute, confirming the necessity of establishing an ongoing and open discourse that will continuously evaluate efficacy and relevance of interpretive programming.

Conclusion

The National Parks, along with other historic places throughout the country, have become an essential part of the American experience. While these places often embody a certain amount of intrinsic, or universal value, they frequently need help in conveying their larger stories. So, for more than 100 years, we have employed interpretation in hopes that a greater understanding of cultural resources might develop.

To do this, however, practitioners have taken a positivist historical approach, which has not sufficiently harbored varying perspectives, multiple interpretations, or alternate cultural histories. This, in turn, has encouraged carefully crafted master narratives that avoid problematizing history in any critically pedagogical way. As a result, our cultural resources often become static representations that fail to meet the needs of a progressive discipline.

³⁷ Sam Burns, “The Ute Relationship to the lands of West Central Colorado: an ethnographic overview,” prepared by the Office of Community Services, Fort Lewis College (Aug. 2004): 8.

It might be argued, then, that our complacency and comfort in current interpretation can become a great disservice to the public and practitioner alike. The interpretation of history, whether it is in a National Park, a house museum, or an archaeological site, should not, as Panayota Gounari points out, be a commemorative practice seeking closure.³⁸ Instead, history should be open, evolving, and unsettling.

³⁸ Gounari, “Unlearning the Official History: Agency and Pedagogies of Possibility,” 111.

APPENDIX

"THE MYSTERY OF AMERICA"

Ancient Cliff Dwellings Manitou



175 ft. Frontage—100 Rooms.


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Cliff Canon

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Ancient Cliff Dwellings
MANITOU, COLO.

"The Mystery of America"



JUAN CRUZ, the Noted Chief of the Pueblo Indians, in Phantom Cliff Canon, ANCIENT CLIFF DWELLINGS, Manitou

Figure 1: Promotional Materials for the Manitou Cliff Dwellings, 1919
Courtesy: Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Miscellaneous, 1907-1909.

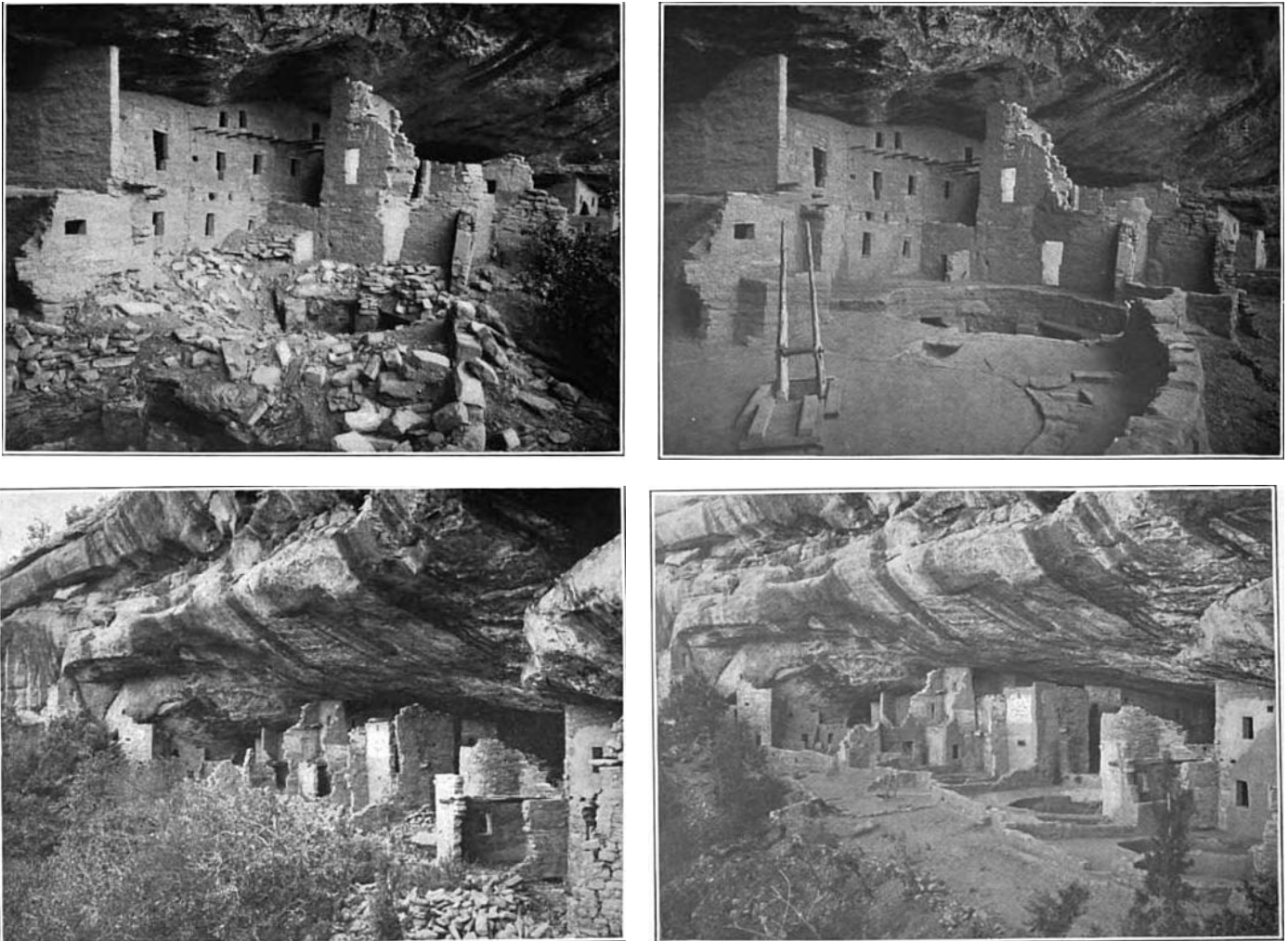


Figure 4: Spruce Tree House, before & after excavation and repair
Courtesy: Annual Report to the Secretary of the Interior, 1908. Washington: Government Printing Office

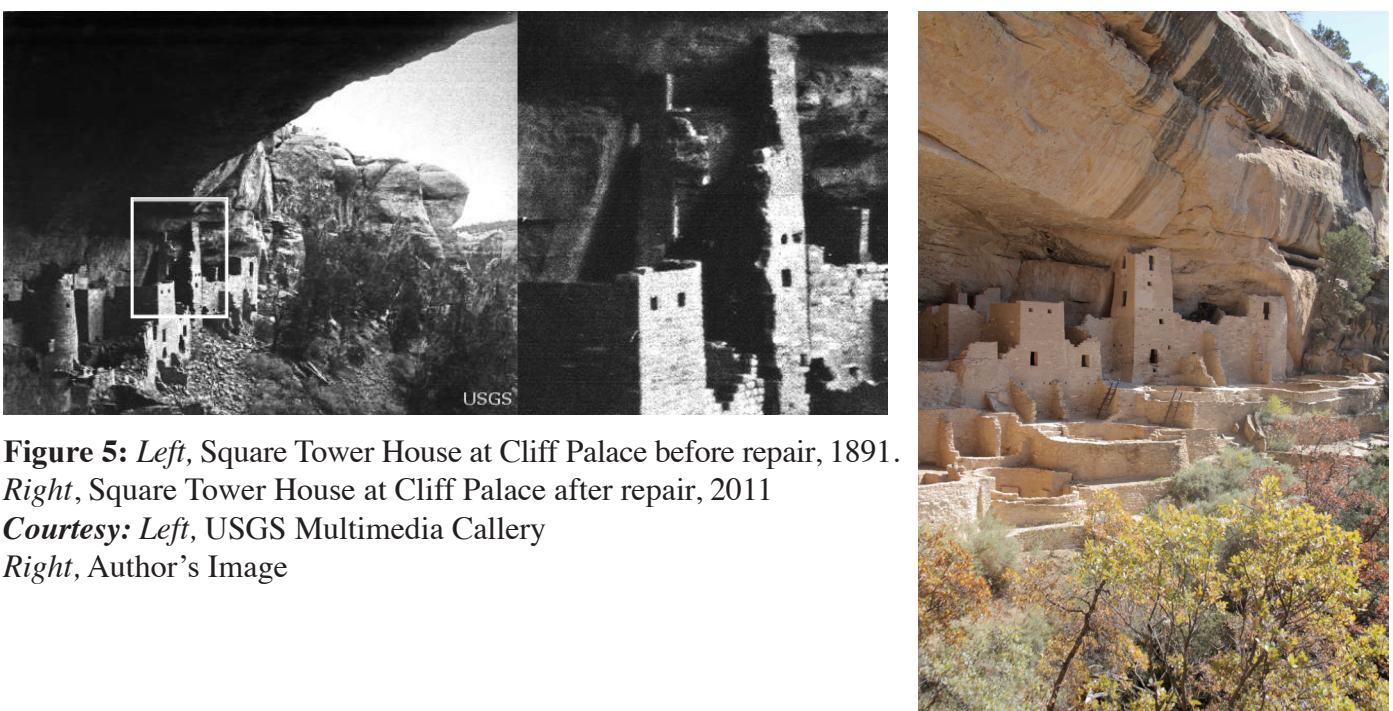


Figure 5: *Left,* Square Tower House at Cliff Palace before repair, 1891.
Right, Square Tower House at Cliff Palace after repair, 2011
Courtesy: *Left,* USGS Multimedia Gallery
Right, Author's Image

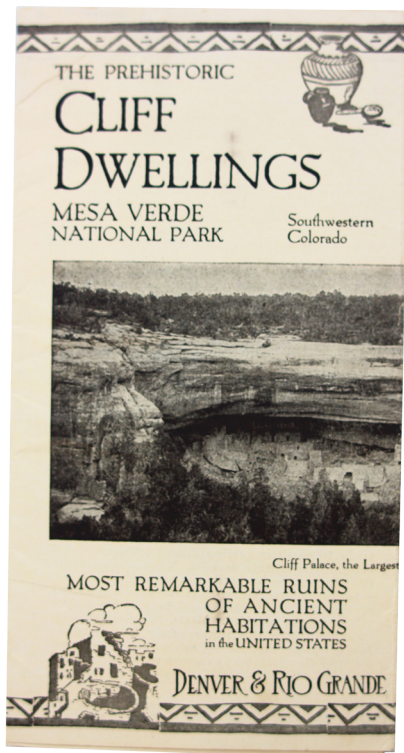


Figure 6: Mesa Verde promotional pamphlet published by the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, 1916
Courtesy: Records of the National Park Service, Record Group 79; Box 101; Parks, Reservations & Antiquities, Mesa Verde National Park, Miscellaneous, 1907-1909.

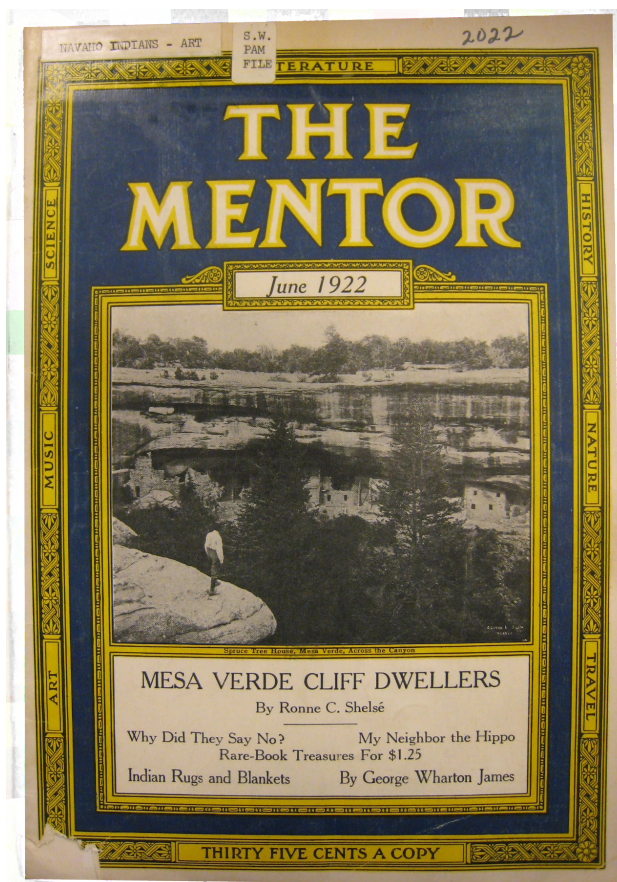


Figure 7: *The Mentor Magazine*, 1922
Courtesy: Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College; M082; Mesa Verde Printed Materials Collection, Ser. 2, Tourism Printed Materials Records, Box 2, Folder 3.

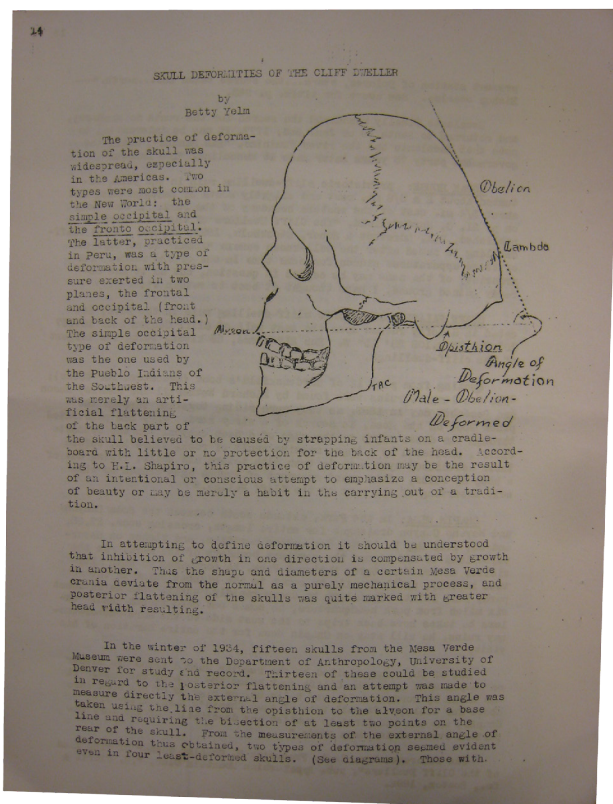
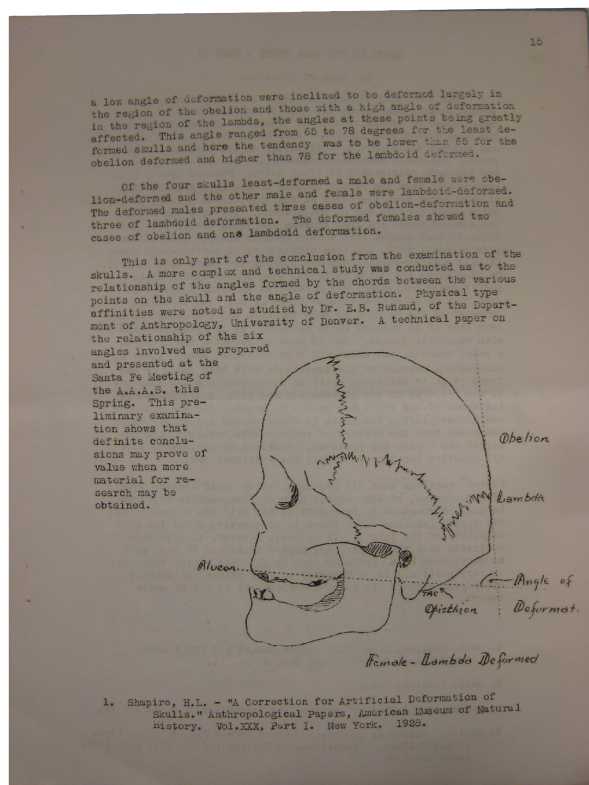


Figure 8: Excerpts from Mesa Verde Notes, 1935

Courtesy: Center of Southwest Studies, Fort Lewis College; M082; Mesa Verde Printed Materials Collection, Ser. 2. Tourism Printed Materials Records, Box 2, Folder 9.

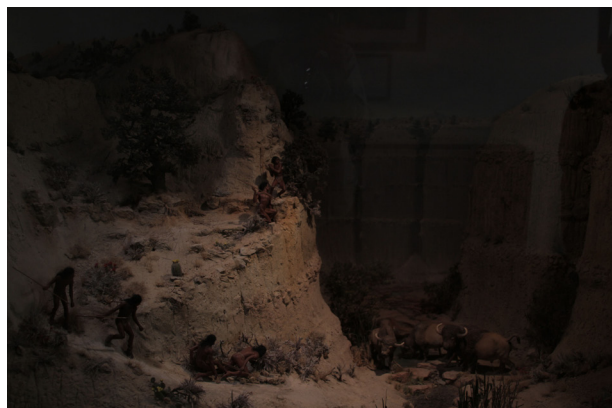


Figure 9: Mesa Verde Dioramas at the Chapin Mesa Museum, 2011

Courtesy: Author's Image

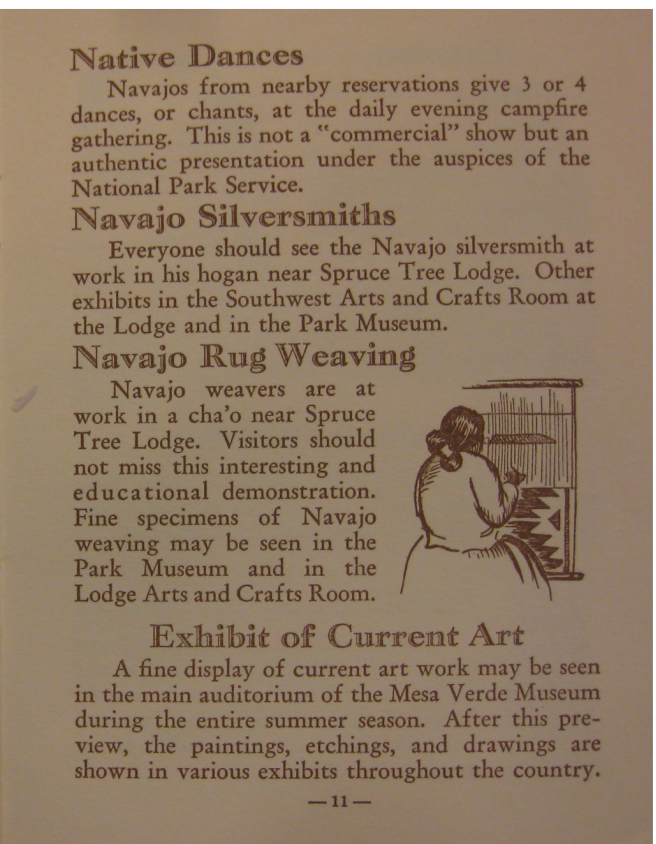
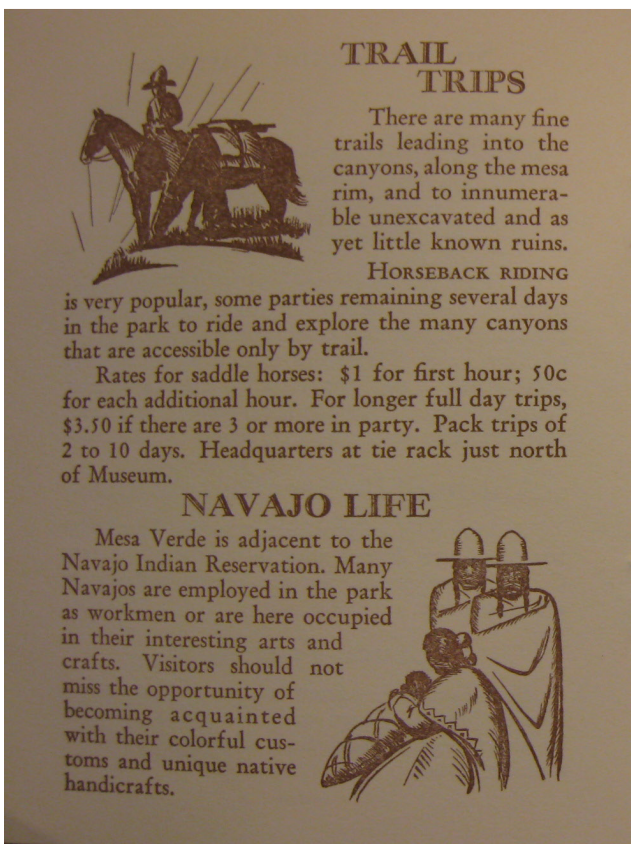
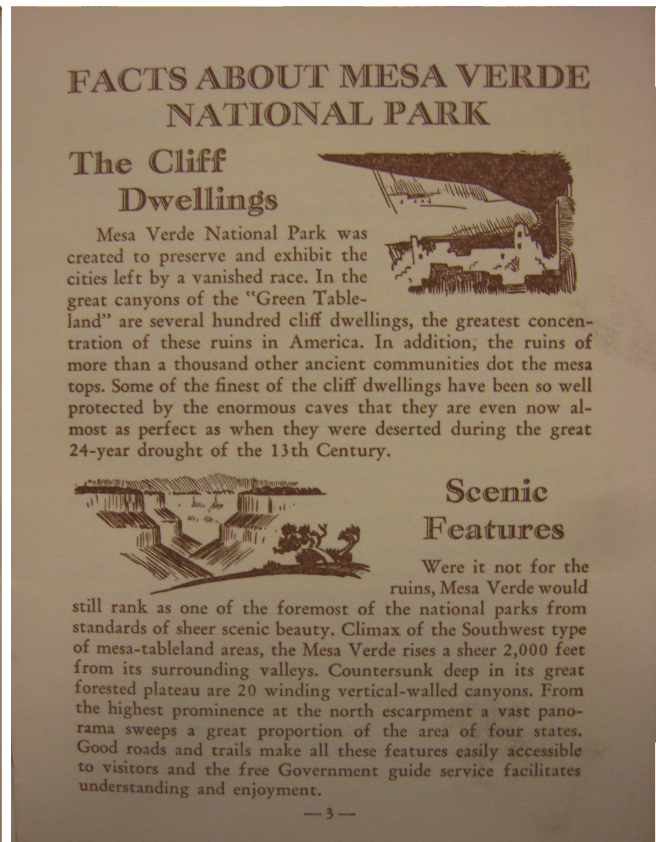
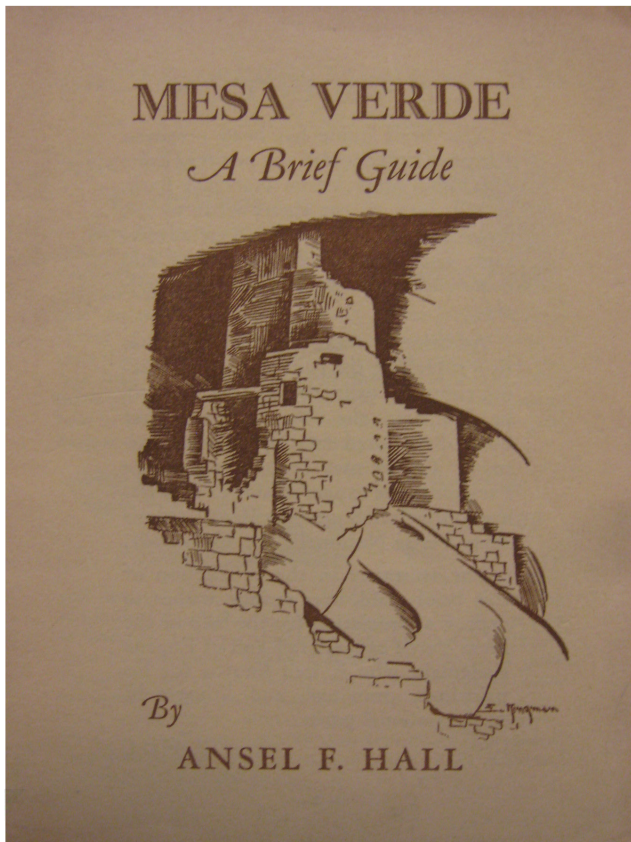


Figure 10: Mesa Verde Park Company publication, 1938

Courtesy: Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College; M082; Mesa Verde Printed Materials Collection, Ser. 2, Tourism Printed Materials Records, Box 2, Folder 11.



Figure 11: Far View Visitor Center at Mesa Verde National Park, 2011
Courtesy: Author's Image

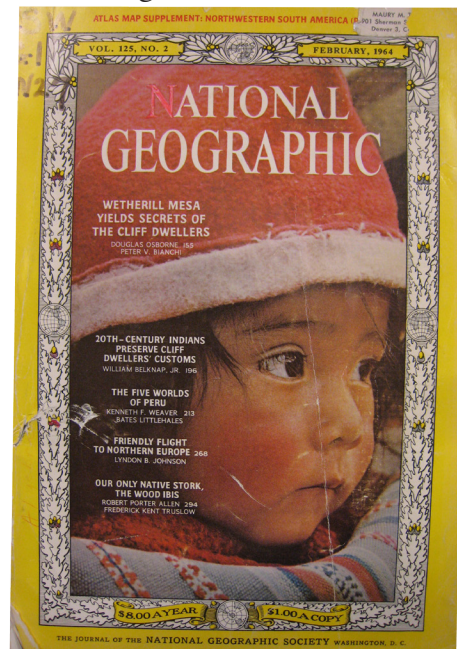


Figure 12: National Geographic Magazine, 1964
Courtesy: Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College; M082; Mesa Verde Printed Materials Collection, Ser. 2, Tourism Printed Materials Records, Box 2, Folder 22.

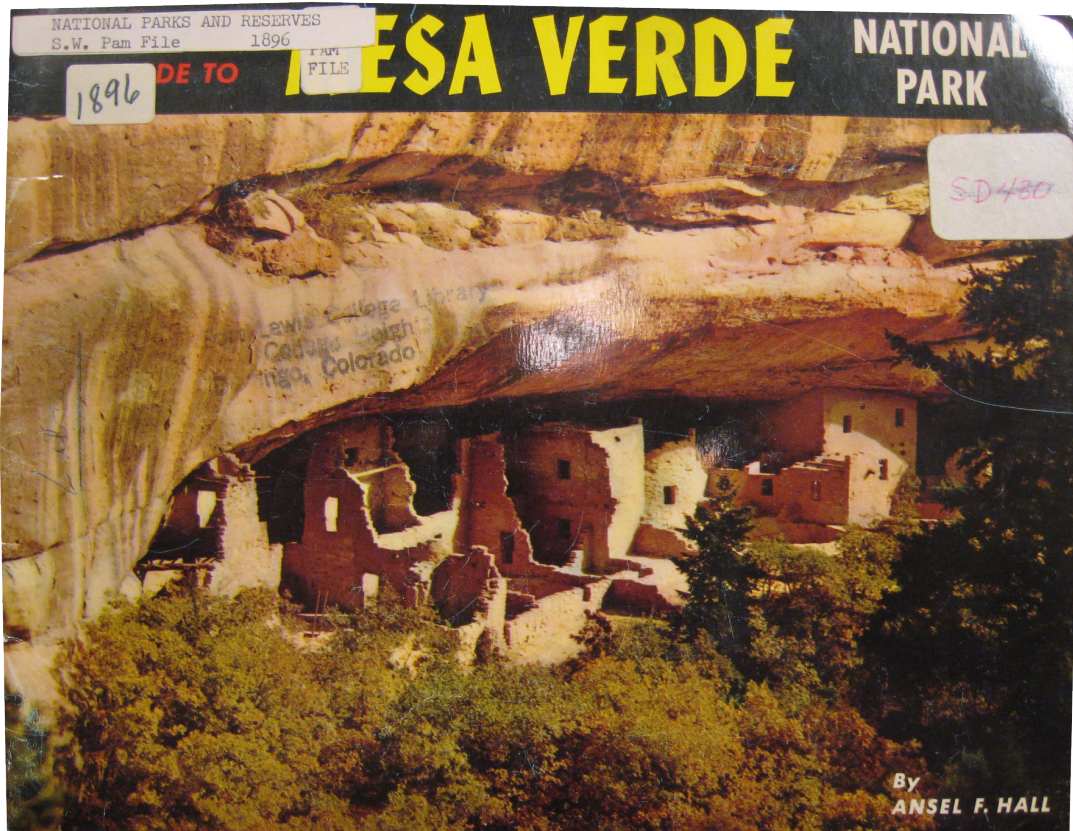


Figure 13: Mesa Verde Park Company picture guidebook, ca. 1970

Courtesy: Center of Southwest Studies at Fort Lewis College; M082; Mesa Verde Printed Materials Collection, Ser. 2, Tourism Printed Materials Records, Box 2, Folder 25.



Figure 14: Current guidebooks, 2011

Courtesy: Author's Image

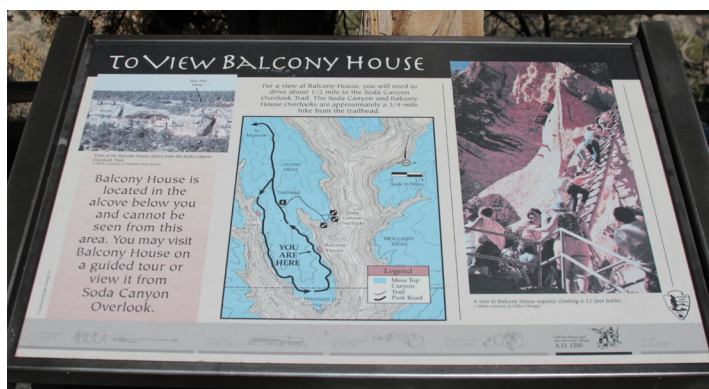
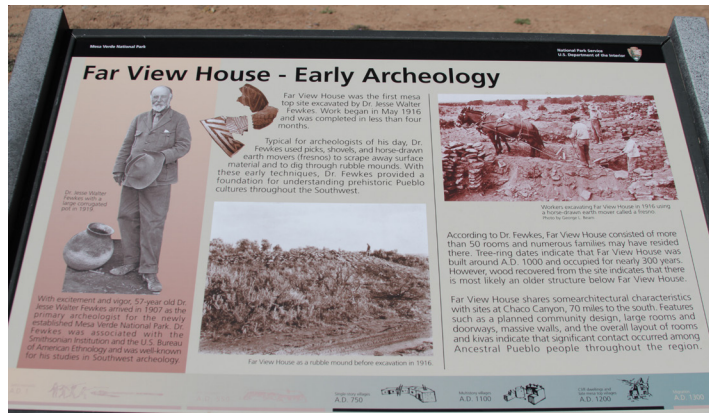
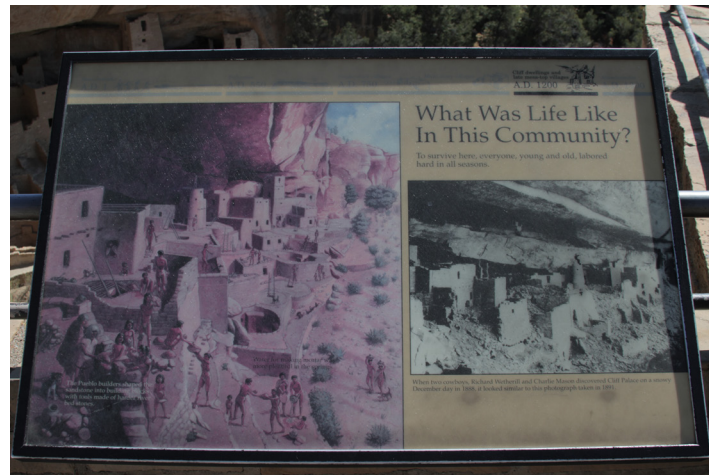


Figure 15: Examples of current signage at Mesa Verde, 2011
Courtesy: Author's Images

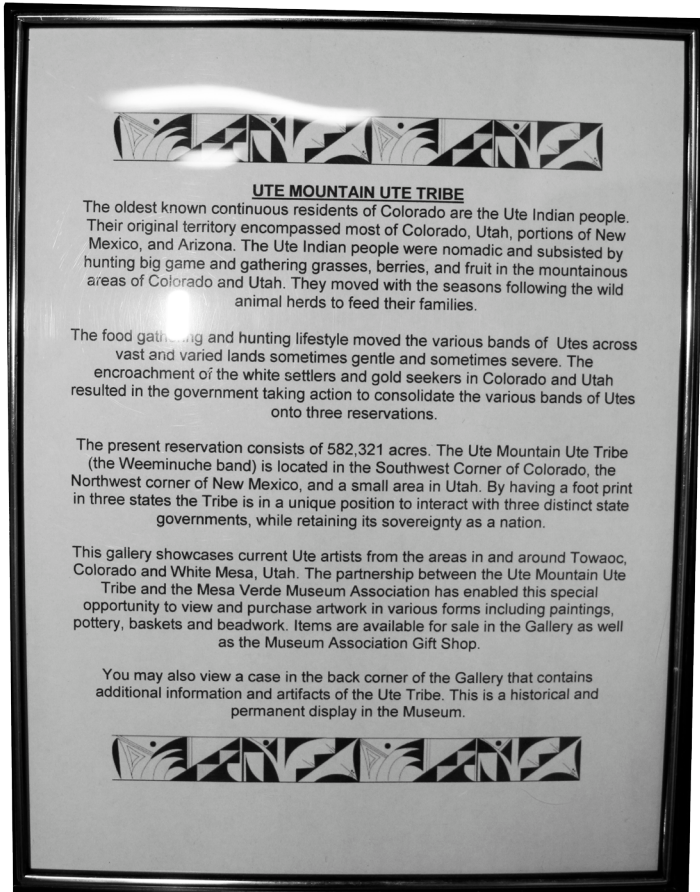


Figure 16: A few current mentions of the Ute Tribe in the Chapin Mesa Museum, 2011
 Courtesy: Author's Images

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