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groups and individuals involved with the Park agree on the same general goals: protect natural and scenic resources and provide for their enjoyment, provide a quality visitor experience and support a profitable tourist trade.

That given, why can't we do better? Why isn't it feasible to expect a better tourist experience? Isn't it possible that tourism and resource protection are more alike than contradictory? Isn't it possible that commercial tourism and recreation managed by public agencies are more independent than interdependent?

John Muir said that everything in the universe is connected to everything else. What we really need, as we begin our second century, is a new paradigm that is holistic or systematic in the widest sense. Any proposed action in this tourist region should be considered in light of its effects on the whole system of which it is a part. Certainly, Native Americans, whose presence in Yosemite predates its "discovery," believed in a more global perspective of this place.

It would be wonderful to think that a hundred years from now, at Yosemite's bicentennial, this centennial year will be remembered as the year we broadened our field of vision of this place by looking at the macroscopic instead of the microscopic.

Using its guest list as a mailing list, the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., the sole concessionaire at the Park, is mailing 93,000 letters urging former guests to lobby the National Park Service to abandon its 1980 plan to ease congestion in the glacier-carved Valley.

—San Francisco Chronicle, December 5, 1989

Yosemite Needs You

Memories and emotions that last a lifetime are sparked by the unparalleled majesty of Yosemite Park—its waterfalls, sheer granite cliffs, alpine rivers and lakes, and valleys. The allure of vistas from Glacier Point, the sunset's glow at Tuolumne Meadows and the majesty of Yosemite Valley attract millions of visitors, even more admirers and, recently, people who are giving their time and money to help preserve and protect Yosemite's grandeur.

What motivates a person—whether a tourist, hiker, backpacker, or climber—to become an active supporter or advocate? Usually, a problem.

The transition from enjoyer to supporter may be subtle, the motivating force highly personal. My transformation was gradual. I have visited Yosemite several times a year throughout my life and hiked most of its trails. The joys of uncrowded trails, unique vistas and starlight camping spawned repeated visits.

But one day I was hiking in Matterhorn Canyon, a magnificent alpine area in the northeast corner of Yosemite when I encountered tree avalanches that blocked the trail for over a quarter mile. For me, this unmaintained trail was the last straw in a series of deteriorated trail conditions that I had experienced during the course of several summers. That evening I resolved to do something about it and became an advocate.

Yosemite has approximately 800 miles of trails, with about 100 distinctively identifiable trails. Through the mid-1960s, those trails were maintained annually by five crews. That financial commitment and work force diminished to only two back-country crews in 1987 and only one such crew in 1988 and 1989—and those were privately funded. As a result of Congressional and Presidential neglect over many years, the cost of restoring Yosemite's trail system is now estimated to be \$11,000 per mile.

Yosemite's budget (both operating and capital) for 1988-89 was \$10.7 million. According to the General Accounting Office,

Over the years, the Park Service has spent \$2.3 million to refurbish the Wawona [Hotel]. It leases it to the Curry Co. for \$19,000 a year. At that rate, it will take more than a century for the [NPS] to recoup its investment.

—San Francisco Chronicle, January 7, 1990

Volunteers assist in a

Park survey.

Courtesy of the Yosemite Fund.

Yosemite has a deferred capital and maintenance liability of \$74 million, including highway rehabilitation, water and sewage improvements, quarters repair and a hazardous waste program.

While Yosemite's allure has contributed to overcrowding, it also makes the Park a unique focus of concern for the American people. The Yosemite Fund was established in 1985 to raise money to help preserve the grandeur of Yosemite, as the Park Service was not provided the funds required to preserve the quality of the park. Since then, the Fund has raised more than \$3 million from approximately 5,000 donors. The chapter in Contra Costa County, California (of which I was the founding chairman) was the first community-based organization established by the Yosemite Fund. Our chapter is 100 percent volunteer with no professional staff or rental obligations.

Our chapter was established to help preserve Yosemite through support of specific, earmarked projects and to bring the Yosemite experience closer to the community. Supporting an earmarked project makes it clear that participation with the chapter benefits Yosemite, as opposed to an amorphous organization. In this way, progress can be monitored and donors take particular pride in identifying their contributions with an actual result.

Our chapter selected the restoration of the Happy Isles area in Yosemite Valley as the target for fund-raising. More than 12 years ago the National Park Service (NPS) sketched its design plans, for which federal funds have never been available, to restore Happy Isles at the beginning of the John Muir Trail.

Most people pass through Happy Isles on their way to Vernal Fall and the Mist Trail, approximately one mile east of the trailhead. Visited by more than a million people annually, Happy Isles has borne the brunt of human impact. Project goals include improving access for handicapped people, establishing two nature trails, creating new exhibits for the family-oriented nature center, restoring the Junior Ranger Program facility (the oldest environmental education program for children offered by the NPS), building a boardwalk across the fen and establishing paths to pre-

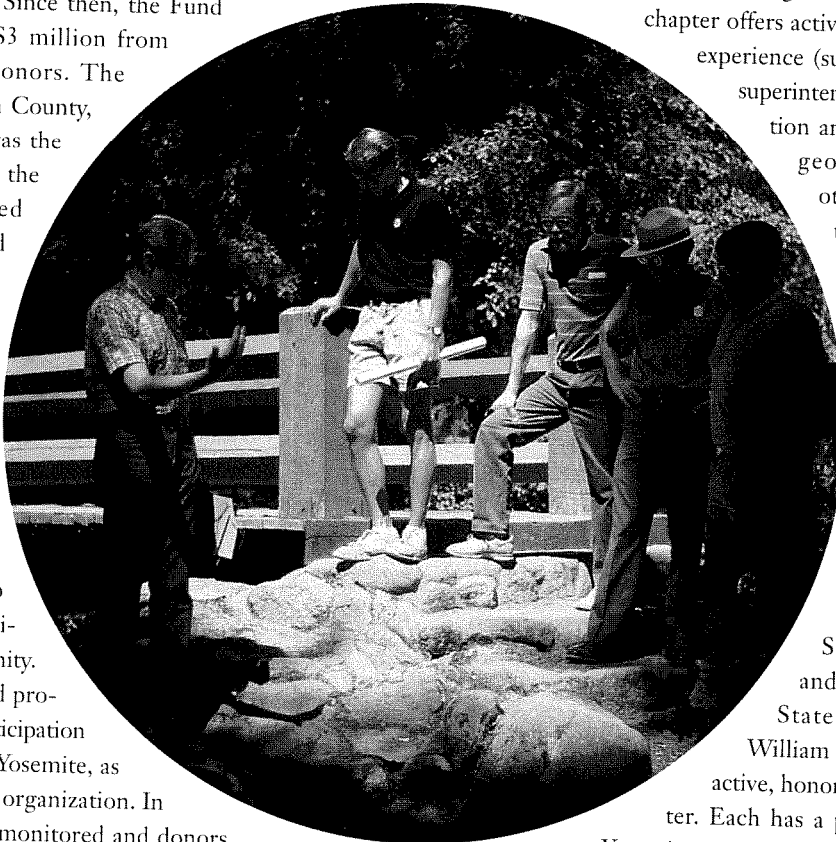
vent visitors from trampling the area and replanting native plants. More than \$80,000 has been raised toward a goal of \$336,000.

Funds for the project have been raised through events including an auction attended by more than 300 people, which raised \$47,000, and a high-profile weekend trip to Yosemite attended by two cabinet members. Recently, Safeway stores promoted the Happy Isles restoration project on grocery bags.

To further encourage community participation, our chapter offers activities fostering the Yosemite experience (such as lunch with the Park superintendent, the "take a hike" auction and a program on trails and geological conditions), and other events at the Park for the benefit of those who donate time or money to chapter activities.

Yosemite's constituency crosses economic, political and sociological lines. Evidencing the Park's bipartisan appeal, Democratic Congressman George Miller (chair of the Interior Subcommittee on Water and Power) and Republican State Assembly Member William Baker have served as very active, honorary co-chairs of the chapter. Each has a personal commitment to Yosemite, giving time and personal funds to the cause, and soliciting support from their own friends.

As Yosemite approaches its centennial celebration, we must remember that not only was its establishment and protection as a national park the result of private effort, but so too will be its preservation. With federal funding needed for so many necessary services, those who care about Yosemite and recognize the importance of environmental protection for future generations must maintain their vigilance. They must continue to monitor the politics of park funding and must be willing to support the Park by donating their time and money. Yosemite may be trapped by its own allure, yet it is that attraction that can insure its everlasting protection.



Who's Minding The Yosemite Region?

The beauty and ecological integrity of Yosemite are fragile. They are vulnerable not only to actions taken within the Park but also to those outside its borders. A couple of stories about trips across Yosemite will help make my point.

While in college, I worked in Yosemite Valley in the summers. About once a week I'd leave the Valley after work, heading for Tiolumne Meadows and fishing in the high country. At that time, the road was two lanes until about White Wolf, but from there on, the only way to get to Tiolumne Meadows was via the Tioga Mine Road: 21 miles of more or less single-lane asphalt with sharp curves, steep hills and switchbacks. The trick to getting there without the radiator boiling was to keep my '36 Ford at maximum speed in second gear, up hills and through curves come what may. Around any bend there could be a car stopped in the middle of the road, all doors open, with peasants (that's what we Curry Company employees called all tourists) photographing an unlucky deer.

The excitement of the trip was heightened by knowing that each evening, about the same time I started the climb up, the Standard Oil truck was leaving Tiolumne Meadows heading down, driven by another college kid who was about as reckless as I. Somewhere in the middle we would meet and I would have to pull the Ford behind the nearest boulder in a big hurry. The potential danger heightened awareness; I can still recall stretches of the old road: the terrain, the glacial polished granite, white caps on Tenaya Lake.

The old Mine Road was not only fun in itself, it served as a buffer between the easily accessible Valley floor and the more remote Tiolumne Meadows and fragile high country beyond.

Now, the Tioga Mine Road has been replaced by a well-engineered highway that makes the drive one of easy curves and sweeping vistas. That the highway is carefully designed to fit the landscape missed the point. It's the effect of the road that counts. Now, when you get to Tiolumne Meadows you meet the same crowd that you sought to escape from in the first place. Replacing the Mine Road was a big mistake in park planning, eroding the quality and variety of experience.

I've been flying a long time, but still marvel at how wooden wings and a fabric-covered fuselage wrapped around a high-performance engine can carry you high and fast over impassable terrain and give you a bigger picture than can be gotten on the ground. That's what I was thinking as we flew over the southwestern corner of Yosemite on our way to a conference on "The

State of the Sierra." From 11,000 feet, the topography appeared flattened and the grandeur of Wawona Dome greatly diminished.

Although we could see the full magnitude of the Park's protected area, we could also see how Yosemite National Park, large as it is, is only part of a larger ecological, social and economic environment. Along the Park's borders we could see dams, penstocks of hydropower plants, aqueducts, transmission lines, open-pit gold mines, new roads, clear-out logging, newly expanding gold rush towns, new subdivisions and isolated houses scattered amid the chaparral and timber.

I was flying with Rick Skinner, a state deputy attorney general who has worked hard to protect the Lake Tahoe Basin. We thought it ironic that the Tahoe region, with all its problems, is in some way better protected than the environment surrounding Yosemite. A single agency has jurisdiction over the Lake's entire watershed. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) has set regional environmental threshold carrying capacities and has the responsibility and power to enforce land use and environmental regulations, even over the objections of state and local government. The TRPA governing board has a representative appointed by the President to coordinate federal agencies responsible for land management and environmental controls.

The central Sierra Nevada has no such protection, in that responsibilities for planning and management are split among the several national parks, national forests and Bureau of Land Management districts as well as county governments, which are supposed to regulate development on private lands.

For the central Sierra, who's minding the store? Who's keeping track of the cumulative effects of road construction, logging, hydropower and suburbanization, all of which are closing in and cutting in? Who's modeling the long-range future of the region, looking at global climate change, regionally produced acid and nutrient rain and other impacts of the burgeoning Central Valley.

Somebody should be doing all these things. A regional agency, something like that at Lake Tahoe, should be responsible for monitoring and planning in the entire Central Sierra region.

Whether seen from the air or from the ground, Yosemite is beautiful, fragile and vulnerable. The designation of Yosemite as a National Park was a far-sighted, creative act. Perhaps now it is time to look to the future again, to protect not only the Park itself, but the broader environment around it.

Olmsted's Yosemite, A Vision Betrayed

From the moment American pioneers first saw Yosemite, it was obvious the Valley would be an object of intense and competing desires. Yosemite's history could be written as a succession of efforts by all who aspired to save it from the ruin they thought others would wreak upon it.

In 1864 Abraham Lincoln granted the federally owned Yosemite Valley to California to be held "for public use, resort and recreation." At the time, there was nothing of today's conflict between those favoring development and use and those favoring preservation. The threat was much starker: the occupation of the Valley by homesteaders and the clearing of its trees.

The park idea was a democratic one: Such wondrous places ought to belong to everyone rather than being the exclusive preserve of a privileged few. The stunning natural settings, thought more wondrous than anything that Europe had to offer, persuaded the Government that their primary value lay in their beauty, rather than in industrial or agricultural use. The key concepts were "public" rather than private, and "recreation" rather than resource exploitation.

National parks have certainly been saved for public recreation. With few exceptions, the battle against using parks for timber, dam sites and cattle grazing has been won. But many of the most cherished parks—and Yosemite preeminently—embody a striking paradox. The mind's image of a great natural park is of stunning scenery, great vistas and a primeval silence broken only by the singing of birds. But often, as in Yosemite Valley, the reality is different: a noisy, polluted and congested cityscape put down in a mountain paradise.

Is this bad? Many think it is not. The much maligned Valley, sometimes contemptuously called Yosemite City, or the home of industrial tourism, is enormously popular. For those who come year after year to camp among the crowds or to enjoy high-toned musicales or Christmas at the elegant Ahwahnee Hotel, to return the Valley to its primitive former self would be to take away a part of their personal geography. The Valley has been a highly developed recreation area for a long time, and it has generated a constituency whose stake in it as it is cannot be gainsaid.

Is this good? I do not think so. By permitting the most sought-after locations in our parks to become nodes of urban tourism we have lost the chance to offer to the average urban individual the rare opportunity of an engagement with a natural setting, a place where the eye is not drawn to a human-made structure, where we are not led along pre-set paths and drawn to

planned and organized sights and scenes.

Of course, there are abundant opportunities to find real natural settings. The vast acreage of most parks is mostly wilderness or near wilderness. But close as it is, most of us stick close to what we know best, a managed environment plunked down in the mountains. That is the pity of the parks today and of Yosemite Valley—the premier example of a lost opportunity.

What is the alternative we might still choose at some places? No one has painted the picture better than Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of Central Park, for a short time the chair of the commission that managed Yosemite and active in the mid-nineteenth century campaign to save Niagara Falls. It was in the latter capacity that he put forward a vision of a park that was accessible to the ordinary person and yet permitted a genuine opportunity to engage with nature.

Even a century ago, as many as 10,000 people a day visited Niagara, which had been taken over by commercial enterprises that led tourists around and built roads to accommodate ever more people in their hurried visit to all the scenic sites. Olmsted wanted to restore an older Niagara, where people could experience the place "in an absorbed and contemplative way," to go back to the setting when:

...a visit to the Falls was a series of expeditions, and in each expedition hours were occupied in wandering slowly among the trees, going from place to place, with many intervals of rest.... There was not only a much greater degree of enjoyment, there was a different kind of enjoyment.... People were then loath to leave the place; many lingered on ...revisiting ground they had gone over before, turning and returning.

This was just the sort of experience Olmsted envisioned for Yosemite in a report he wrote about the purpose of the park in 1865. He wanted the opportunity to invoke the contemplative faculty, to permit the natural scent to dominate and to permit the visitor to wander at length and at leisure, without anything to distract him from the natural setting.

Is this a visionary's dream, impractical in a world full of busy people whose pace of life allows for no such casual wanderings?

It was just for such people that Olmsted thought Niagara and Yosemite were most needed. Of course his vision asks a trade-off between quantity and quality of experience, and it demands some effort and some commitment of time by the visitor. It requires that park managers put aside the "turnstile" mentality that makes numbers served and concession revenues primary considerations.

It is probably much too late for Yosemite Valley. But such opportunities still exist elsewhere, at least in time. The secret is that for all the crush of summer, there are still great parks where winter remains a pristine time, where roads are not plowed and snowmobile trails do not yet dominate, where the skier or snowshoer is welcome to wander and see the park as it might have been a hundred years ago.

Perceptions of and Reflections on Yosemite Valley

Yosemite Valley is the symbol of Yosemite National Park, and images of the Valley, along with those of Yellowstone, serve as symbols of the national parks in general.

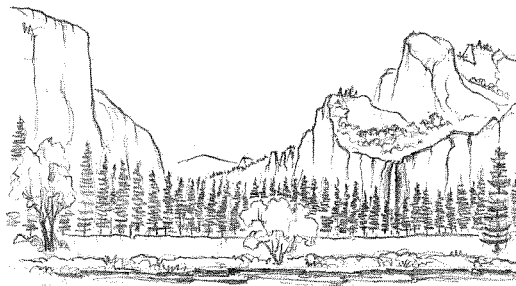
Yet Yosemite Valley is an anomaly; it is neither typical of the park that bears its name nor of the Sierra Nevada. Perhaps Hetch Hetchy Valley, in the northwestern reaches of the Park, shared something of Yosemite Valley's structure and scale before its conversion to a reservoir for San Francisco's water supply. But Hetch Hetchy lacked the concentrated richness in elements that distinguishes Yosemite. It is that very concentration of geologic, hydrologic, ecologic, scenic and recreational features that gives Yosemite a worldwide reputation and, at the same time, carries the seeds of its own destruction.

While the impact of too much development and too many people in too small an area poses serious design and management problems, the Valley remains an extraordinary creation. Painters of the Hudson River School pronounced the Valley landscape sublime, a product of divine intervention. This explanation of the Valley's aesthetic superiority is not likely to convince contemporary audiences, but an exploration of the Valley's visual structure,



Merced River
below Valley View

1

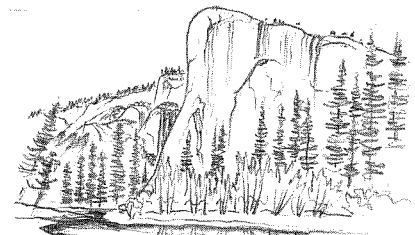


El Capitan

Valley View

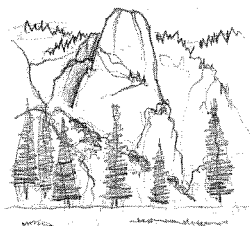
Bridalveil
Falls

2



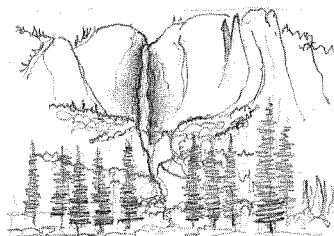
El Capitan from E, upstream

3



Sentinel Rocks

4



Yosemite Falls

500-5

5



Merced River, NE edge of Hetch Hetchy Reservoir

6

its perceptual qualities and the natural processes that occur there help explain why it is a distinctive place.

Measuring from Wall to Wall

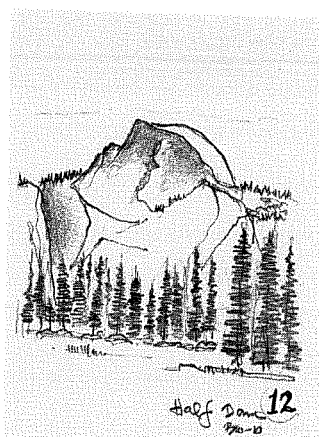
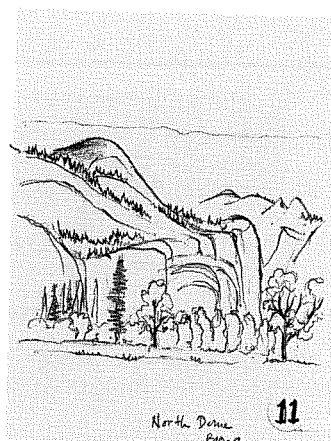
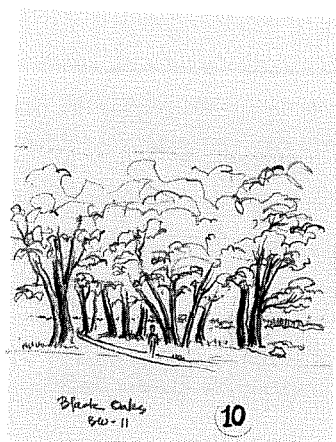
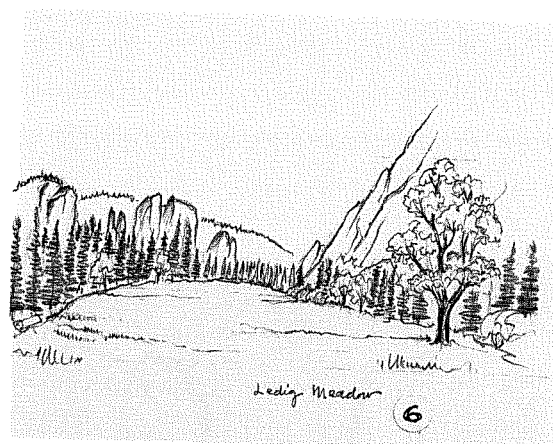
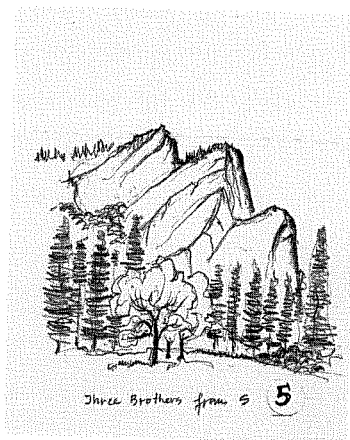
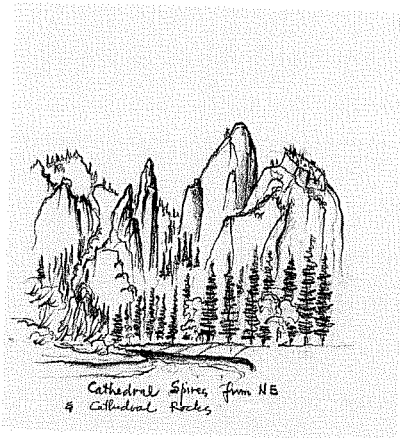
The visual sense of the Valley begins below Bridalveil Meadow, where the Valley space begins. From here, it is about seven and a half miles east to the closing of the space at Mirror Lake and at Happy Isles. The Valley floor, which is the area in between and which sits at approximately the 4,000-foot contour (where talus slides and cliff base inhibit ease of use and movement), covers about 2,200 acres—less than three-tenths of one percent of the Park's total area. Stores, lodgings, the visitor center and administrative offices are concentrated in the 1,000 acres of the Valley's east end; most visitors spend time in this tiny piece of the Park.

Cross sections of the Valley show the ratio of floor widths to cliff wall heights varies from 1:1 to 1.5:1, a condition that rarely occurs elsewhere. The sheer walls read as vertical and simultaneously incorporate a scale distinction in their rise from base to sky of two-thirds of a mile or more. When did you last stand close to a wall that shot up 3,500 feet?

Coordinated with the Valley's sectional enclosure is the longitudinal continuity of the space visitors experience by following the road or river. The ground plan of the Valley divides into three spatial compartments with accompanying dog-leg shifts of road and river alignments. These shifting paths of view or movement dictate what the observer sees and encounters as a sequence of visual experiences. Nothing happens all at once; there is a degree of mystery in what will be next. As one travels along, the diversity of the Valley—its stone monuments, subordinate spaces and internal elements—are revealed bit by bit.

The River and Meadows

The Merced River, as carving agent and one-time glacial pathway, follows the westward orientation typical of the drainage pattern responding to the Sierra Nevada uplift. On the one hand, the River and its envelope of space are another of the visual continuities of the Valley. On the other, there is ecological richness and contrast based upon diametrically opposed north and south wall exposures.



Visual unity of the Valley is created by its typical but varied cross sections, a unity with variety suggested in the accompanying sketches.

Sketches by R. Burton Litton, Jr.

High up on the north-facing slope (on top of which is Glacier Point), pockets and strings of bigleaf maple and other deciduous vegetation make seasonal displays, enlivening the color of the mosaic dominated by stone and conifers. The south-facing slope (from which El Capitan rises) is more somber and consistent year round with its gray granite and deep green mix of pine and live oak. Maple and dogwood are conspicuous at the north-facing (south side) cliff base, where moisture and coolness suit them; these are not present at the base of the opposite side, where black oak thrives in that hotter, drier environment.

Perceptually, the River and wet meadows serve as a central open space system from which the visitor can best see the Valley and the stone monuments. The water, meadows and riparian dominants of black cottonwood, alder and willow are all dynamic in their seasonal changes.

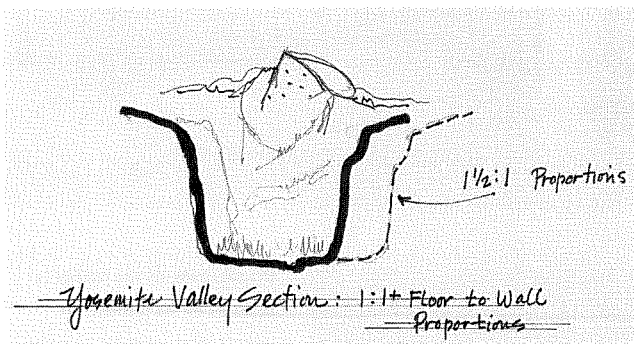
The meadows have a life of their own as subordinate small-scale spaces contained within the big-scale enclosure of the Valley. That life is not only in the way the meadow sedges, grasses and forbs change with the years' passage, but also with the congregation of visitors, both human and animal, for whom the meadows are a magnet.

If ecology is to have its way, the meadows will disappear, eventually to be engulfed by the mixed conifer forest. Maintaining the meadows as they are is critical to preserving the perceptual and aesthetic experiences visitors seek—and the visual quality of the Valley.

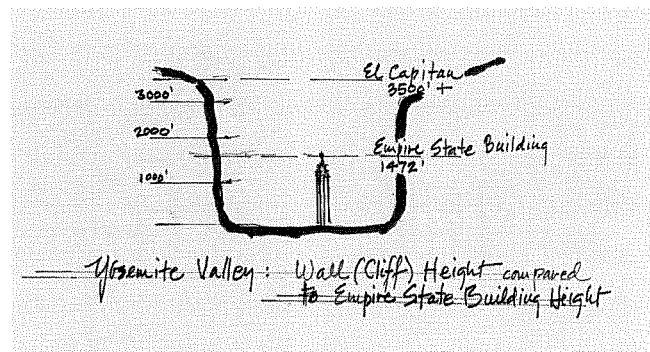
The Ephemeral Landscape

The Valley's landscape is ephemeral, perhaps its most intriguing quality. A myriad of transient factors—sun, shade, climate, weather, atmospheric conditions, seasonal changes and the presence of animals—affect the way the Valley looks in both subtle and obvious ways. Cataloguing and portraying the Valley's temporal appearances is a fruitless task, but a few examples are appropriate.

Sunlight and shade strike the Valley in response to the sun's orientation, the Valley's dog-leg structure and time of the year. Shade dominates the south side, sun the north. Because of the sinuous form of the Valley, south-facing Yosemite Falls are highlighted in the morning and shaded in the afternoon; the sequence at west-facing Bridalveil Falls is reversed.



The ratio of the Valley's floor widths to cliff heights ranges from 1:1 to 1.5:1, a condition that rarely occurs elsewhere.



Seasonal change contributes significantly to the Valley's visual richness. While Yosemite has a dry, Mediterranean summer, the Valley floor and crests are at a high enough altitude to receive rain and snow at other times. Autumn and winter snows dust the cliff caps, joints and ledges to display surface details inconspicuous in the summer. Water volume of the River, supplied not only by Yosemite's famous waterfalls but also by a dozen or more perennial and intermittent creeks, doubles in the length of the Valley. The thundering white column of Yosemite Falls in May trickles to nothing in September.

The micro-climate effects transitory moods. After a storm, breaking clouds and fog alternately veil and reveal stone monuments such as Half Dome, pleasing photographers and other observers. Air currents and wet meadows can conspire to create early morning mists. Swirling winds around the base of the falls can push the water stream in one direction for a moment and in the other direction the next.

Wildlife is not as abundant in Yosemite as it is in other national parks. Black bear have been encouraged to leave the Valley. But coyote, deer and birds such as stellar jays and some raptors provide evidence of the presence of animals. Deer are

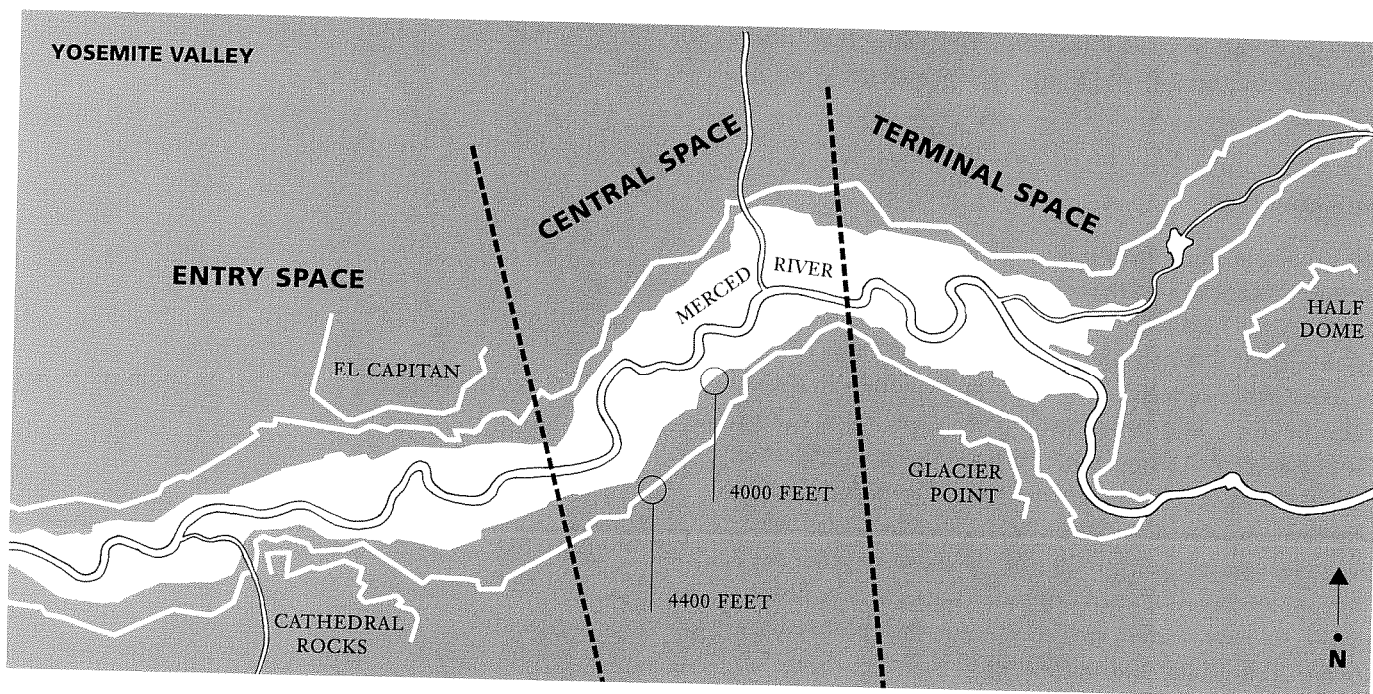
abundant, probably in excess numbers.

A final bit of ephemera—reflections on the river. When the surface velocity of the river drops to a half foot per second or less, normally during the late summer and fall, the reflected landscape joins the real one.

All these ephemeral things were at the heart of what the Hudson River School painters strived to show. The contemporary visitor is probably no less moved by them.

Conclusion

The powerful image of Yosemite Valley springs from the insistent unity of its enclosing space. The Valley is a remarkable place, both for its easily seen, unique spatial structure, and for the diversity of what happens to be packed into that space. Its perceptual assets are such that no visitor need leave unsatisfied if the view of its features from the Valley floor are maintained.



The three spatial compartments
of the Valley ground plan.

The 1980 General Management Plan

In 1980, the National Park Service issued the Yosemite General Management Plan, which guided Park policies for visitor use, park operations and development for the next decade. Following are excerpts:

There are two purposes for Yosemite National Park. The first is preservation of the resources that contribute to Yosemite's uniqueness and attractiveness . . . The second . . . is to make the varied resources of Yosemite available to people for their individual enjoyment, education and recreation . . .

Today, the Valley is congested with more than a thousand buildings...[and] bisected by approximately 30 miles of roads, which accommodate a million cars, trucks and buses a year. . .

The foremost responsibility of the National Park Service (NPS) is to perpetuate the natural splendor of Yosemite . . . The intent of the NPS is to remove all automobiles from Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove and to redirect development to the periphery of the Park and beyond. Similarly, the essence of wilderness, which so strongly complements the Valley, will be preserved. The result will be that visitors can step into Yosemite and find nature uncluttered by piecemeal stumbling blocks of commercialism, machines and fragments of suburbia . . .

Reclaim Priceless Natural Beauty

Outstanding natural areas that have been developed for uses such as staff housing, office space, warehousing, a

golf course and a beauty shop will be reclaimed. Facilities in the Valley that do not relate directly to enjoyment of the Park, including the headquarters of the NPS and the Yosemite Park and Curry Company, will be relocated outside the Park. Visitor facilities in Yosemite Valley, Tuolumne Meadows and Mariposa Grove that are intrusive or cause environmental damage will be removed or relocated to more resilient environments . . .

Markedly Reduce Traffic Congestion

Increasing automobile traffic is the single greatest threat to enjoyment of the natural and scenic qualities of Yosemite. In the near future, automobile congestion will be greatly reduced by restricting people's use of their cars and increasing public transportation.

The ultimate goal of the NPS is to remove all private vehicles from Yosemite Valley. The Valley must be freed from the noise, the smell, the glare and the environmental degradation caused by thousands of vehicles.

Allow Natural Processes to Prevail

The primary objective . . . will be to restore and perpetuate the natural processes of the Park's ecosystems. The Yosemite environment is not a static accumulation of geologic and biologic features but rather a dynamic system of interrelated and evolving forms. Therefore, if this environment is to be preserved, the natural processes that are occurring there must be understood and allowed to prevail.

In developed areas like the Valley, facilities will be removed from floodplaning and geologic hazard areas in deference to these natural phenomena, and the natural role of fire in vegetative communities will be simulated with

controlled burns or mechanical removal of vegetation. In areas that have been disturbed by man's activity, natural processes will be allowed to restore the scene.

Reduce Crowding

Opportunities to enjoy the Park will be reoriented to ensure that overcrowding does not interfere with visitor enjoyment or threaten park values. Appropriate visitor levels have been established . . . and facilities such as day parking and overnight accommodations will be based on these levels. As visitors approach and enter the Park, they will find information stations with reservation services to direct them to available facilities. Greater opportunities for year-round use will allow visitors to enjoy Yosemite at different times of the year.

Promote Visitor Understanding and Enjoyment

The amount and kinds of information and interpretive programs available to visitors will be greatly increased.

Information about Park programs and services will be broadcast through the news media and made available . . . in the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas and at information stations along roads leading to the Park . . .

Natural history and historical collections will be on display . . . Audio-visual programs will help visitors to understand the processes and events that shaped Yosemite's natural features and the relationship of our cultural values to preservation of the Park.

The intent of these expanded and improved visitor programs is to help ensure that a visit to Yosemite becomes a lifetime treasure . . .

Looking Beyond The 1980 Plan

Yosemite Valley is a symbol. It engraves powerful images upon our minds and evokes feelings of love, care and respect as well as a range of opinions on how it should be managed. People feel deeply about this place and express their feelings with passion—there are as many responses as visitors.

Yosemite is also a sacred place, a place for pilgrimage, for renewing the human spirit, for enriching human life. Native Americans have lived here for 4,000 years; those living here today still feel a reverence for this place and believe much of the Valley is sacred. Their stewardship, even today, is an example from which we could learn.

For me, Yosemite is a sanctuary, not a consecrated place but a place of refuge and protection for native plants and animals, scenery and natural processes, each evolving and changing at its own pace, generally uninterrupted.

Having lived in Yosemite for 15 years I am continually mesmerized by it, especially as the seasons overtake each other or when nature plays tricks—like when flowering dogwood bloom in October, or the ground trembles following frequent rock slides, or a lightning-caused fire burns itself out, or a waterfall mysteriously appears as the result of a thunder shower somewhere miles away at the head of the watershed, or the river rises before your eyes during spring runoff.

The natural environment, especially in Yosemite Valley, has changed as a result of centuries of human intervention in natural processes. The most consequential changes have occurred during the last 100 years, ironically, ever since Yosemite was established as a park.

For example, at the west end of Yosemite Valley, a terminal moraine was dynamited to lower the water table and eliminate ponds in which mosquitoes bred. Motel rooms were built in the prime Yosemite Falls viewshed. Quarries and borrow pits were established to supply road and building material. The side of a glacially-polished dome was blasted away for the placement of a road that, ironically, gives access to an observation point named after Olmsted. Lichen were burned away from the face of Glacier Point from the Fire Fall's burning embers. The banks of the Merced River were stabilized with rip-rap. And until 20 years ago all naturally-caused fires were extinguished.

Those changes, however, have occurred primarily in the 11 percent of the Park not designated wilderness. Most are reversible or can be mitigated, but there are exceptions: the dynamited moraine, the quarry and the scar at Olmsted Point.

The most significant challenge for the foreseeable future is for the National Park Service (NPS) to determine the appropriate number, range, type and scope of visitor activities, services and experiences based on the ability of the Park resources to support them. Then the NPS must establish appropriate visitor use levels. It is important that people be able to experience this wonderful place all year long, at night as well as during the day. But not at the expense of the natural and scenic resources.

The 1980 General Management Plan, which involved as many as 60,000 individuals in an exhaustive participatory planning process, was aimed at returning the Park—particularly the Valley—to a more natural state and increasing the emphasis on visitors' experience of the Park's natural and scenic resources.

Since then, numerous buildings have been removed and the sites have been restored to a natural condition; abandoned roads, trails and fences have been removed and those areas restored to natural conditions; meadows have been revegetated and a band of bighorn sheep have been relocated to the east side of the Park—all at minor cost.

The number of visitors has increased by two percent every year during the last decade—last year more 3.6 million people visited Yosemite. In 1980, most visitors were repeat visitors from California. Since then there has been a significant increase in the number of visitors from foreign countries.

What visitors do in the Park has changed, too. Backpacking has declined; rock-climbing has mushroomed. Rafting, cross-country skiing and mountain-bike riding have increased measurably. More visitors arrive in recreational vehicles. There is an increase in the number of overflights. And last year there were more than 350 weddings.

Yosemite is also big business. A Fresno *Bee* article estimated that overnight visitors spend as much as \$100 a day in the Park, and that tourism in Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon national parks (both to the south of Yosemite) generates \$322 million a year and sustains 7,000 jobs in Fresno County alone. Communities at the Park's borders are growing in size and ever increasing the number of tourist facilities. Undoubtedly, this will result in both primary and secondary impacts on park resources.

We need to step back and look at the Park in its regional context, from a resource, transportation, economic and tourism perspective. We need to set aside jurisdictional concerns and develop a plan that, at a minimum, involves the surrounding four counties, four National Forests (administered by the Department of Agriculture) and the Park Service. We must think of this area as one large tourist region.

There are a range of possibilities—doing nothing, using natural resources wisely, providing minimum facilities, developing alternative destinations—and all should be evaluated in context with the Park's natural and scenic resources. Even the various

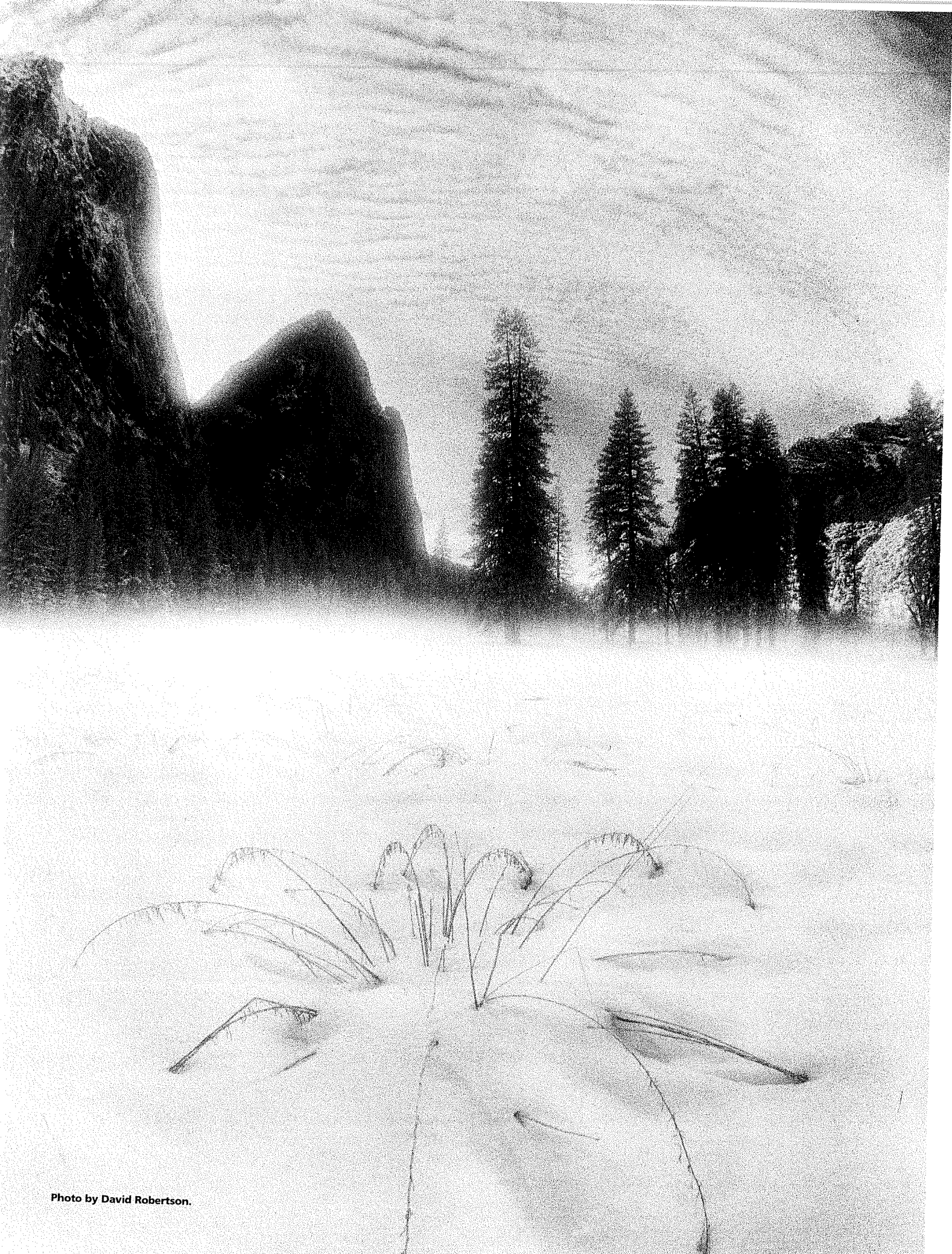


Photo by David Robertson.

groups and individuals involved with the Park agree on the same general goals: protect natural and scenic resources and provide for their enjoyment, provide a quality visitor experience and support a profitable tourist trade.

That given, why can't we do better? Why isn't it feasible to expect a better tourist experience? Isn't it possible that tourism and resource protection are more alike than contradictory? Isn't it possible that commercial tourism and recreation managed by public agencies are more independent than interdependent?

John Muir said that everything in the universe is connected to everything else. What we really need, as we begin our second century, is a new paradigm that is holistic or systematic in the widest sense. Any proposed action in this tourist region should be considered in light of its effects on the whole system of which it is a part. Certainly, Native Americans, whose presence in Yosemite predates its "discovery," believed in a more global perspective of this place.

It would be wonderful to think that a hundred years from now, at Yosemite's bicentennial, this centennial year will be remembered as the year we broadened our field of vision of this place by looking at the macroscopic instead of the microscopic.

Using its guest list as a mailing list, the Yosemite Park and Curry Co., the sole concessionaire at the Park, is mailing 93,000 letters urging former guests to lobby the National Park Service to abandon its 1980 plan to ease congestion in the glacier-carved Valley.

—San Francisco Chronicle, December 5, 1989

Yosemite Needs You

Memories and emotions that last a lifetime are sparked by the unparalleled majesty of Yosemite Park—its waterfalls, sheer granite cliffs, alpine rivers and lakes, and valleys. The allure of vistas from Glacier Point, the sunset's glow at Tuolumne Meadows and the majesty of Yosemite Valley attract millions of visitors, even more admirers and, recently, people who are giving their time and money to help preserve and protect Yosemite's grandeur.

What motivates a person—whether a tourist, hiker, backpacker, or climber—to become an active supporter or advocate? Usually, a problem.

The transition from enjoyer to supporter may be subtle, the motivating force highly personal. My transformation was gradual. I have visited Yosemite several times a year throughout my life and hiked most of its trails. The joys of uncrowded trails, unique vistas and starlight camping spawned repeated visits.

But one day I was hiking in Matterhorn Canyon, a magnificent alpine area in the northeast corner of Yosemite when I encountered tree avalanches that blocked the trail for over a quarter mile. For me, this unmaintained trail was the last straw in a series of deteriorated trail conditions that I had experienced during the course of several summers. That evening I resolved to do something about it and became an advocate.

Yosemite has approximately 800 miles of trails, with about 100 distinctively identifiable trails. Through the mid-1960s, those trails were maintained annually by five crews. That financial commitment and work force diminished to only two back-country crews in 1987 and only one such crew in 1988 and 1989—and those were privately funded. As a result of Congressional and Presidential neglect over many years, the cost of restoring Yosemite's trail system is now estimated to be \$11,000 per mile.

Yosemite's budget (both operating and capital) for 1988-89 was \$10.7 million. According to the General Accounting Office,

Over the years, the Park Service has spent \$2.3 million to refurbish the Wawona [Hotel]. It leases it to the Curry Co. for \$19,000 a year. At that rate, it will take more than a century for the [NPS] to recoup its investment.

—San Francisco Chronicle, January 7, 1990

Yosemite as a Mythical Place

Yosemite is a mythical place. At least it is for me and the countless others who have been there only in imagination. For us it is a part of modern folklore, a symbol of some wild quality of nature that reminds us of our status in a larger order of things.

Known without visiting it, how does Yosemite enter one's consciousness? Surreptitiously, I suspect, for I cannot recollect a time when I was not aware of it as one of the beautiful natural places of the world. The very name is sonorous, and once heard is not easily forgotten. It conjures images of cascading waterfalls, towering forests, a place free from the relentless demands of twentieth-century civilization.

These are, of course, all illusions, because modern civilization long ago invaded Yosemite with the damming of Hetch Hetchy. Yet even that involved a confrontation between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot over preservation or development, a confrontation that took on the dimensions of an epic--almost eschatological--struggle not inappropriate to a mythical place.

So I have never visited Yosemite. Nevertheless my knowledge of it is not entirely vicarious. A few years ago the pilot of a transcontinental flight on which I was flying announced that Yosemite could be seen below. From 30,000 feet that part of America all looks like a great geological brain of wrinkled gray rock with dark clefts, and no remarkable features stood out. But pilots have to be trusted, and I took an obligatory photo in a sort of ritual attempt to capture the image of somewhere I felt I already knew.

The surface appearance of brains reveals little about the character of the consciousness within them, so even with my photo I am none the wiser about Yosemite, though now I occasionally wonder whether some places might possess a geological form of consciousness revealed only in an intense *genius loci* which sustains their mythical status.

In Yosemite this may not endure. I read in a California newspaper of traffic jams, crowded camp grounds and the complaints of a couple from San Jose that the Park stores did not sell their favorite type of coffee beans. Yosemite, it seems, is now filled with people searching for a dream of wilderness yet unwilling to relinquish material comforts. It is a victim of its own popularity.

The trouble with real mythical places is they can be loved to death. I could visit Yosemite one day, but that would merely contribute to its demise. To help preserve the myth I will stay away.



Towards an Architecture of the Valley

Architecture in wilderness is a contradiction in terms. The moment construction commences, unspoiled nature vanishes. The process of building replaces air with artifact.

While the built environment is subject to the decay of natural forces, in nature it remains an intervention. It may provide a vantage point, but it modifies experience. And because architecture is so rooted in cultural memory, its structures not only change physical fact, they are redolent of other times and places. Architecture in Yosemite therefore plays an uneasy role, part of an awkward balance between primal experience and public access.

Nature's realm is a constantly evolving phenomenon in which only change is constant. For the Valley to appear the same each season it must continually regenerate itself. When contemplating Yosemite the constancy of the natural world is revealed as an illusion sustained by our relatively brief lifespan.

In a setting such as Yosemite, the "permanence" of architecture becomes as ephemeral as a camper's tent, and architecture's response to evolving cultural values is revealed. Even though Yosemite's buildings appear constant, the quickly changing habits of our society cause them to register differently.

Evaluating the success of an architectural project depends upon clear knowledge of its intent. Since Yosemite is meant to be a public park, not a wilderness preserve, a great variety of accommodations and facilities is called for. Some appeal to the romantic aspects of nature, others to the rational or scientific. No single architectural response could be correct for all visitors; a rustic cabin may be ideal for informal socializing, but it is a poor substitute for the Ahwahnee dining room's pageantry and grandeur.

Yosemite's eclectic group of hotel structures offers a splendid range of choice about shelter and documents a wide range of enclosure. It represents a panoply of architectural ideas from the grand halls and mock rustic grandeur of the Ahwahnee Hotel to the more familiar motel-like precincts of the Lodge or the disposition of a compound of tents. It offers as many ways to interact with the Valley's spectacular natural setting as the National Park Service and Yosemite Park and Curry Company can devise.

For instance, the stone-laden expanses of the Ahwahnee attempt to become part of the landscape by using its very rocks and trees to form an indigenous profiled pile. Inside, the great dining room windows frame views of the landscape in order to present towering sylvan vistas in scale with the enormity of nature beyond.

But for the most part the Ahwahnee's public spaces turn inwards, cut off from the outside by sloping eaves and small windows. The hotel is a series of well appointed caves, not a Falling Water where nature is theatrically thrust into indoor experience.

The Lodge stems from a different tradition, one that approaches architecture as a more rational act. Here columns and beams are only for support. Unlike Ahwahnee's, they bear no patternings from the imagined rituals of Indians.

In these simple structures of steel, wood and glass each element is independent of the other. Together they form a diagram of enclosure that may seek an integration of outdoors and indoors, but the modest scale of these buildings robs interior experience of the grandeur of this place, giving their rooms the familiarity of a motel by the highway.

The present hotels of Yosemite are each the result of their author's sense of a common social setting, not an attempt to integrate the need for lodging with the spectacular nature of this Valley. Dinner at the Ahwahnee is in jacket and tie, an extension of domestic rituals that were natural to its creators. Their dining room offers great forest vistas to diners whose clothing precludes any active participation with wilderness. By contrast, the Lodge's cafeteria suits family life with a knockabout informality common to suburbia. Diners are ready to stride into the forest, even though it remains invisible behind the steam tables and coffee urns. Thus the great game of architecture lies in a resolution of our inherently different responses to outside and inside.

A more basic difference between the two hotels lies in their acceptance of the automobile. Guests at the Ahwahnee pass between stone gates, advance down a woodland road and arrive beneath a massive *porte cochere* made of giant logs and boulders. Journey's end is all drama. A long, wooden walkway, open only on one side to the forest, heightens anticipation before guests come indoors to the main, two-story lobby. Here tall windows, stencilled columns and beams, together with framed textiles, announce this as a place associated with Native Americans, something out of the ordinary.

By contrast, the Lodge accepts automobiles without restriction. Reception is in one building, lodging elsewhere, both reached by car. The convenience of driving to one's room is offset by the banality of being in a motel parking lot. The buildings are two-story extrusions of the classic motel plan and therefore comparatively innocuous. As a result the paraphernalia of the highway dominates the architecture.



**The Ahwahnee Hotel
dining room.**

**Courtesy Yosemite Park
and Curry Co.**

A small compound of buildings behind the Lodge's reception structure suggests what a plan organized by pedestrian movement might be like. Here is a pattern of covered, wooden walkways without cars and an informal amphitheatre of benches that suggest nature can be part of architecture. But the focus of this courtyard is diffused and lacks conviction.

The automobile was banned in Yosemite until 1913. James Bryce, a British ambassador and social critic who addressed the American Civic Association in 1912 to plead that cars had no place in the Park, argued: "The whole feeling of spontaneity and freshness of primitive nature would be marred by the modern invention, with its din and whir and odious smell....If you want to enjoy the beauties of such landscapes as Yosemite presents, you must see them slowly."

But America's preoccupation with wheeled access has dominated the once wild Valley with redundancy of roads, turnouts, turnabouts, parking lots, bus stops and drop-offs: all paved, all alien. Cars, buses, recreational vehicles, vans, motorcycles, panel and pick-up trucks of every conceivable sort are everywhere.

Although the convenience of this paved road network is undeniable, its compacted extent raises questions about the Valley's ability to regenerate itself. Existing vegetation appears healthy enough, but will its replacement find room to grow among the



The Ahwahnee Hotel.

Photo by Hugh Hardy.

detritus of automobiles and campsites? Will we give a valley of natural wonders to succeeding generations or just a series of parking lots?

A direct encounter with nature is the justification for all the roads, utilities, trails, signposts and buildings, but what is happening to nature under this onslaught? What remains wild? How can wilderness coexist with the paraphernalia of contemporary society? What is the experience that Yosemite now offers contemporary preservation of an internationally acclaimed place?

The vastness and power of this Western landscape is tied to the very identity of America. We find an excitement and munificence in the contemplation of this vastness. It forms a psychic part of what America is. The Valley should not suffer the trivialization and indifference with which we treat so many of our other natural wonders.

It is time to ready Yosemite for a new century and a new generation of tourists. We should begin now to reestablish the idea of an unspoiled natural beauty, which first brought the public here. Assuming that rededication to this ideal could temper the rapaciousness with which America has attacked so many other landscapes, a new architecture in the Valley could offer a spirit of adventure and discovery, not complacent familiarity.

Since the Valley is a finite place and our population is increasing, there is pressure to increase access and accommodations. But in fact, the opposite logic should rule. In order to preserve what Frederick Law Olmsted called a "museum of natural science," access to so special a place should be restricted as the population increases. The preciousness of Yosemite becomes all the greater as the rest of the country is overrun.

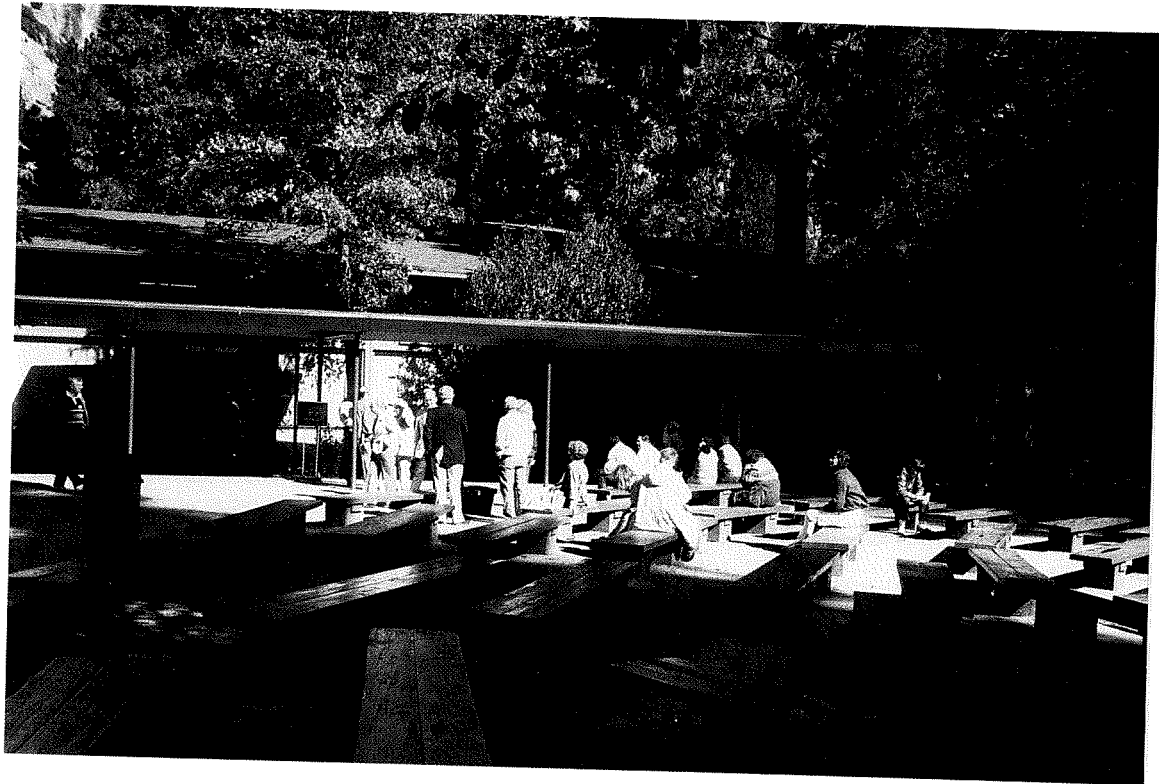
If Olmsted was right and Yosemite should be treated like a museum, then the artifacts of contemporary civilization should be kept to a minimum on the Valley floor. Although contemporary museums have discovered the value of commerce and handily dispense reproductions, books, posters and T-shirts with entrepreneurial skill, few mix these artifacts with their collections.

Why cannot Yosemite do the same? Yosemite Village offers amenities that could be better located outside the Park. The idea of convenience shopping and T-shirts would be more appropriate to the Park entrances than the Valley. Even the Visitor Center with its informative displays could more logically provide an introduction to the Park rather than encumber its very heart.

Suppose, however fanciful it may seem, automobile access were restricted. Biking paths to the scenic wonders of the Valley would make them all the more magical, being somewhat difficult to get to. Overnight lodging would still be possible in the Valley, but it would be restricted in number to those with time to arrive and depart by secondary transportation, not the family car.

**Amphitheater at the
Yosemite Lodge.**

Photo by Hugh Hardy.



Think how Yosemite might then develop an architecture special and exhilarating enough to stamp it as worthy of the added effort required to reach the Valley. If each journey were more of an exploration, the architecture could be more varied and imaginative—the product of an effort to site and design buildings that specifically respond to nature rather than to convention or convenience.

For instance, it is startling that in a place where the drama of the surrounding landscape calls out for looking up, almost all of Yosemite's hotel interiors prevent this. Instead of an architecture that celebrates the drama of this giant granite sluice, the hotel rooms offer the reassuring familiarity and convenience of roadside America.

The great Valley itself is the most architectural of natural places, with a distinct floor, unmistakable walls and a heavenly ceiling. Imagine an architecture whose forms and materials would complement this forested reach. Its buildings could be sufficiently varied to enhance ritual or convenience, or the experiences of casual observers or committed students of nature. The siting and organization of its roads and the services offered would not be controlled by the logic of the marketplace but by the quality of experience visitors receive.

It would take a great leap of faith to propel such a program through the complex public/private ownership that now controls the Valley. Despite the many vested interests, the time for a

change may well have come. We are poised before a new millennium. We have a new awareness of environmental issues. It is now possible to think of our stewardship of Yosemite in larger terms, to look at its current exploitation and to contemplate with renewed understanding what a special resource this is.

Guided by such a spirit it is possible to imagine a redevelopment of the Valley that would decrease the density of human habitation and build an architecture whose intervention in the wilderness would be more part of the Valley, not an imposition on it. This could be an architecture responsive to the variety and changes of nature: Its vantage points would enhance discovery, its structures would be in sympathy with the site, and its materials would complement those of the Valley itself. Such an achievement would become a worthy addition, a fitting response to the wonder of this place.

POST-EARTHQUAKE PLACEMAKING IN DOWNTOWN SANTA CRUZ

James E. Pepper

Shortly after last October's earthquake, the Pacific Garden Mall (left) re-emerged as the Phoenix Pavilions project (right).

Santa Cruz—Dramatic images of the October 17 Loma Prieta earthquake, which brought widespread devastation to the California's central coast, are etched in our minds: stunned victims, collapsed structures, heroic rescues. In Santa Cruz the town's primary commercial street, the Pacific Garden Mall, lay in ruin, more than a third of its 75 buildings damaged beyond repair. Historic landmarks, two department stores and three major bookstores were lost. There were gaping holes in the urban fabric as a majority of the buildings along several block frontages were reduced to rubble.

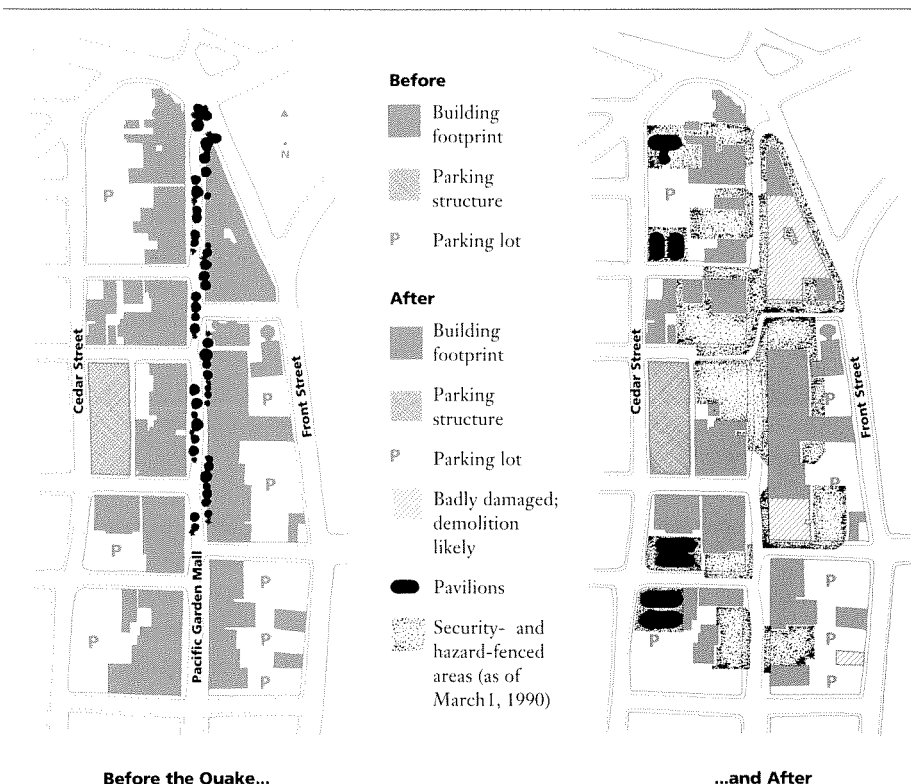
A tree-lined street of turn-of-the-century buildings, the Mall was a central symbol of the city. Motor vehicle traffic had been reduced to a single one-way lane; extensive plantings of trees and shrubs, coupled with large flower beds and numerous seating areas, created a garden-like atmosphere. Following its completion 20 years ago, the Mall had spurred eco-

nomie and social regeneration downtown, turning a declining commercial street into a lively and attractive public place. The businesses and social life reflected the diversity of Santa Cruz: cafes, bookstores, a Greenpeace office and the state headquarters of the Certified Organic Growers were located within a traditional commercial matrix of hardware, jewelry, sundry and home furnishing stores. More than 200 elderly lived in two SRO hotels.

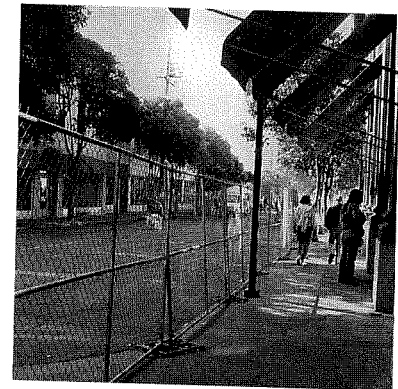
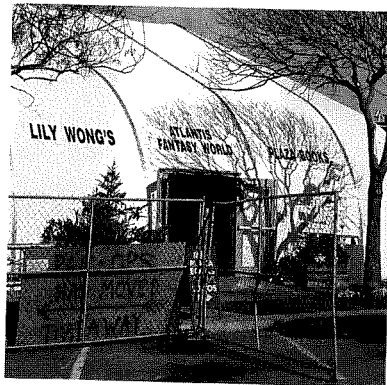
Despite the shock and tremendous losses, a plan for rebuilding emerged within days. The City began a search for temporary structures to house displaced businesses. Mobile trailers used in downtown Whittier (in Southern California) after an earthquake there lacked the size and distinctiveness deemed necessary for creating a socially viable public and commercial place. The search settled on tents, whose form, volume and character could create a carnival or festival atmosphere.

Four weeks after the earthquake, a seven-tent, 34,000-square-foot complex was in place. Dubbed the "Phoenix Pavilions" after the mythological Egyptian bird that rose from the ashes of destruction, the tents were set up on parking lots one block west of the Mall. The site of a building demolished after the earthquake is now used for replacement parking, and a free downtown shuttle was put in service to reduce traffic and parking problems. A local business group provided exterior improvements: outdoor seating, landscaping, signs and holiday decorations. Lights were strung along the exterior of the Pavilions, giving the entire setting a Tivoli Garden quality.

An eager community thronged to the tents downtown. Many businesses reported the best day-after-Thanksgiving sales in their history. But the pavilions are more than utilitarian: They are a center of public life.



The Phoenix Pavilions (left and center) have assumed the civic and commercial role formerly held by the devastated Pacific Garden Mall (right).



Within the re-organized Mall, places for outdoor eating, merchandising and socializing have been maintained—sometimes by contrivance, sometimes by accident. Even street musicians, in the past a familiar fixture on the Mall, have reappeared. Residents are being loyal not only to their downtown but also to the kind of place with which they had formed a strong association over the past two decades.

Inside the pavilions, a sense of community pervades. In contrast to pre-earthquake operations, merchants agreed to maintain common hours and have clung to them tenaciously despite chilly weather and a lack of heating. As a result, shoppers do not experience the decreased social vitality that results from a mix of open and closed stores.

Moreover, customers find shopping is a more interesting social experience because of the variety of retail shops in each pavilion and the diversity of people drawn to them. Among the tenants of one pavilion are a hat shop, a nutrition center, an antique shop and two clothing stores. Another pavilion includes a luggage store, an artisans cooperative and a Western shop. The variety of cuisine in the 3,000-square-foot food section of one pavilion includes a sushi bar, espresso cafe, gelato shop, pizza shop, Chinese noodle shop and two delis.

The pavilions modify the pattern found in typical commercial malls and

that of the predecessor street mall: Although merchants share a common interior space, separate businesses are not physically partitioned into “secure” individual space. Rather, each pavilion more closely resembles a department store in which separate tenants each constitute a “department.” Internal circulation carries shoppers through rather than past individual shops, thus creating a setting not unlike that of European outdoor markets.

The “market” atmosphere is heightened by the severe space constraints of the pavilions. The generous aisles and display areas characteristic of pre-quake merchandising have been replaced with compact, space-efficient arrangements. Common indoor and outdoor seating arrangements for food service tenants create a “street cafe” atmosphere of considerable diversity and vitality.

In spite of its incongruous appearance, the extensive system of chain link fencing has had unforeseen uses and consequences. The fences afford an opportunity for improvising and have become personalized with ribbons, yarn and flowers. They also serve as community billboards. At the same time, the clusters of “street people” increasingly present on the Mall prior to the earthquake are not evident in the Pavilion area, possibly because public and private space have become more differentiated by the fences.

Merchants claim that their customers feel more secure than they did on the Mall.

Tents, chain link fences, sawhorses, dumpsters, portable toilets, temporary plywood electrical panels and hand-printed directional signs are hardly the stuff of an established downtown. Despite the elegant appearance of the pavilions and the professionally prepared business signs, the environment is clearly improvised. Tenants have customized and personalized their individual spaces, creating a wonderful indoor market setting. The Phoenix project bristles with people, reflecting the human energy of place-making.

Resilience and adaptability are the hallmarks of successful places. The Phoenix Pavilions have clearly underscored the community’s determination to maintain a strong sense of place in downtown Santa Cruz. They have become a symbol of both continuity and recovery of place. Their character reflects that of the community, and in a time of great need they have afforded the opportunity to re-establish a public environment in a devastated area. They are an important expression of where we belong and have entered our lives in a fundamental way; they serve to remind us that we must survive as a community, and that we all have a stake in shaping the quality of its future places.

Yosemite's grip on our hearts and our minds is profound. Perhaps the most consistent reaction it evokes is a desire to attach some meaning to such a place and to come to an understanding of our connection to it.

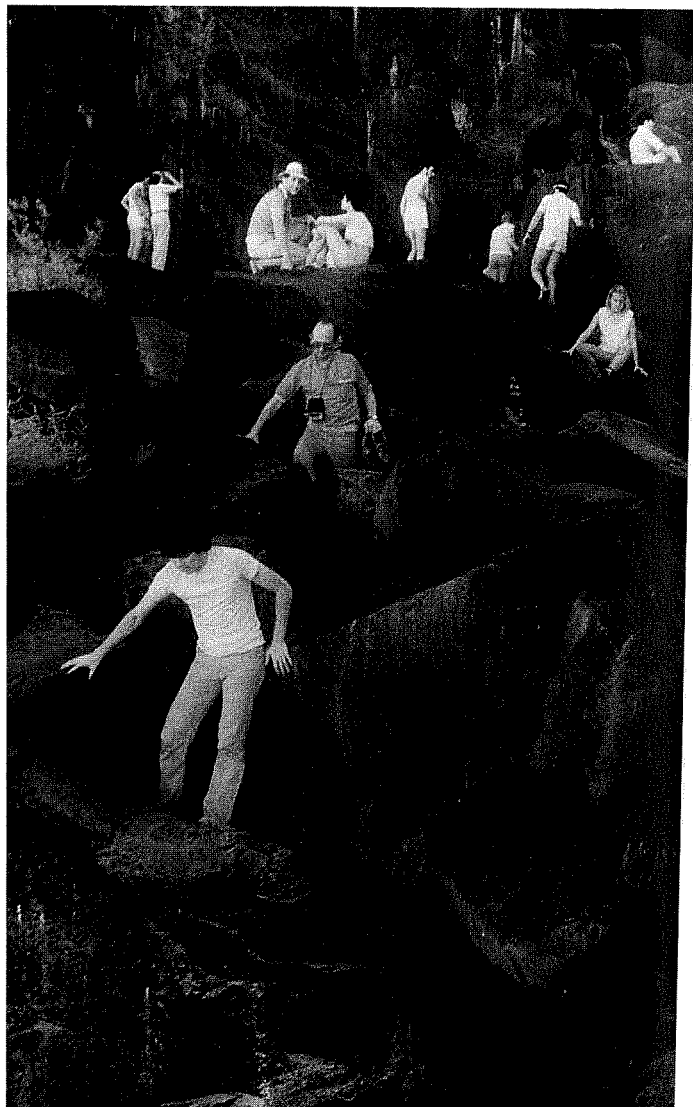
Several of the following essays attempt to rationalize Yosemite, to dissect it into a framework of components and processes that help us understand the sway the Park holds over us. Others search for Yosemite's significance in the meanings human cultures ascribe to it; several report on how Yosemite serves as an inspiration for human creation. One argues we should shift focus, that our attention to places of extraordinary beauty blinds us to the beauty of everyday places.

There is a despondence emerging, a suggestion that the actual experience of Yosemite leaves much to be desired. Several authors note that a visit to

PERCEPTIONS... Yosemite increasingly resembles a visit to a theme park, and they counsel that we would be better off approaching the Park as a pilgrimage.

One need not visit the Park to be touched by it, two of the essays argue; the issues that touch the Park touch parks and wilderness everywhere. Yosemite's reputation has been communicated worldwide via verbal and pictorial images; an environmental preservation ethic spurred by John Muir's passion for Yosemite has resulted in the creation of national parks and wilderness areas throughout the world.

Each of the essays reveals a facet of the challenges Yosemite poses to the human spirit, which ordinarily refuses to be dominated and more often than not triumphs against its adversaries. One author argues the deck is stacked against Yosemite. Nevertheless, because neither Yosemite nor humans are given to humility, it is likely that Yosemite will continue to be a source of powerful, raw inspiration.



Yosemite of the Spirit

I backed my Nissan King-Cab pickup, full of gear and groceries for a week, out of the driveway of my home in the Sacramento suburbs at 11:30 a.m. I arrived at Bridalveil Fall in Yosemite National Park at 3:15 sharp, ready to photograph the sublime, although I had never been able to define it. Maybe that very inability was part of my mission: to picture what I could not say.

I gathered my equipment: a 35mm camera with three lenses and a tripod for long exposures; a (Techni-kardan) 4x5 camera, another tripod and three lenses for it; two kinds of film, infrared for the 35mm as well as infrared and Polaroid for the 4x5. I will not mention all the accessories.

David, I said to myself as I walked up the asphalt path leading

to the bottom of the fall, you are off on a great artistic (and spiritual) adventure.

At the end of the paved path I hopped out on to the rocks slicked by years of roaring current. It was late August and water over the Fall was low enough for me to venture a near approach. No more than three rocks later the tripod I carried on my pack fell out and crashed around. I slipped and slid.

Maybe I had better get off slippery rock, I thought, and I headed into a narrow stream bed, only to have the tripod, which I now had attached more securely to the pack, cling to the grape vines that hung from the limbs above me. Able neither to go forward or backward, I took the pack off and carried the equipment up piece by piece to the staging area, a large flat rock from which the majestic Fall was clearly visible.

Now for the photograph. I wanted to use the 4x5 first to get a large negative, which would permit a even bigger enlargement without much evidence of grain. Out came the Polaroid film. The sun was just right and the wind blew the water into a gentle curve. I snapped the shutter only to discover that I had failed to pull the dark slide.

I tried again, but this time when I pulled the exposed film, it came apart and developer squirted out all over. I breathed deeply and cleaned up the mess with the only thing I could find, a nice white handkerchief. Meanwhile the sun was sinking, emblematic of my spirits. I tried again, with exactly the same results.

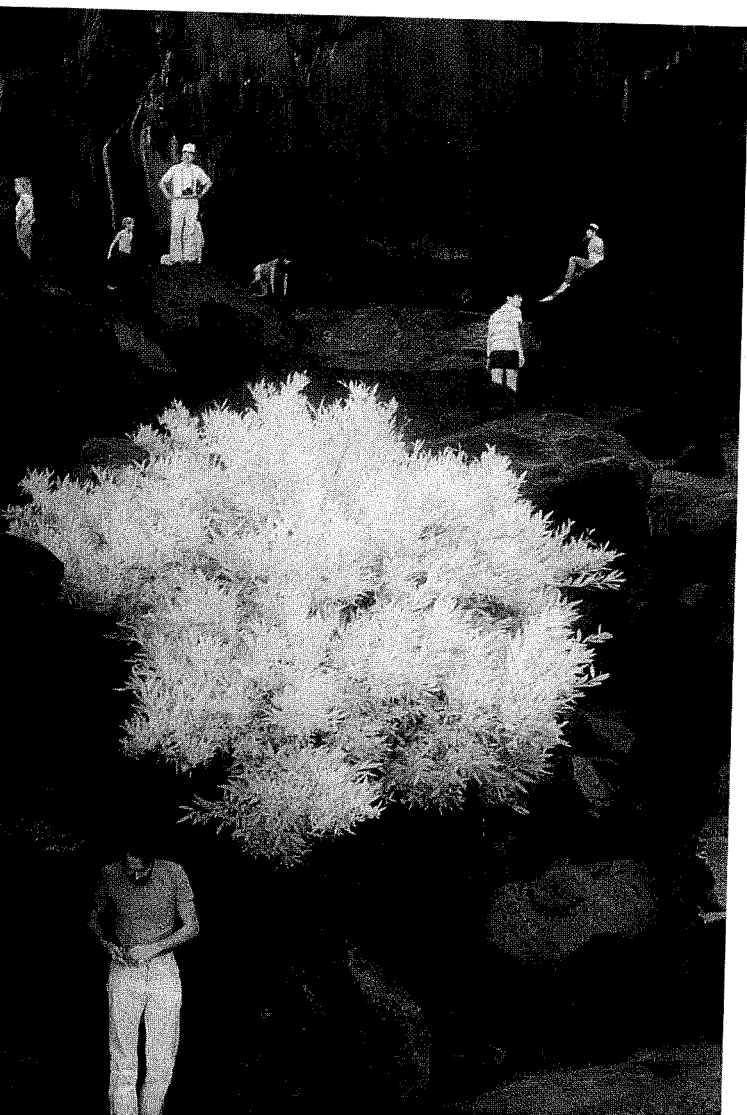
Now I was mad. I fumed and fussed. I cursed myself. Why hadn't I learned how to use this apparatus before I got out in the field, in the midst of this incomparably beautiful scenery? More than two hours had gone by since I left the truck; the sun was all too quickly dropping behind the cliffs to the west. I would have to hurry to get the picture I wanted.

At that point a shutter inside me clicked. Through the opening I saw that hurry had characterized my every move since I left home: driving, parking, loading, climbing, getting set. I put the film aside and sat myself down on the rock. I rested my head on my arms and my arms on my knees. Like a flash it came to me: You fool, Moses, as he tended the flocks of his father in law, did not look up at Mt. Sinai and say, "There is a sublime mountain, I think I will go up it and have a profound religious experience."

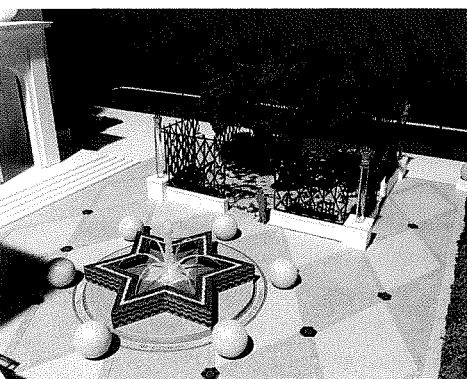
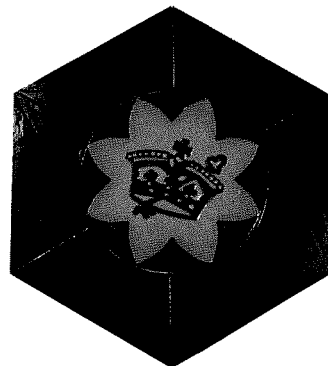
I went to Yosemite, the nation's outdoor cathedral, in the same spirit of conquest that took Americans across the continent more than a century ago. I came to grab a spiritual insight. I came with a fast film to capture quickly the spirit of a place.

But I learned that landscape does not reveal itself to those in a hurry. It is patient and discloses itself, if at all, to those who are like minded. I had thought, as do so many visitors to national parks, that beauty guarantees instant revelation.

Now I can offer some practical advice: Go slow, carry slow film, use long exposures.



*Andrew Leicester
Thomas R. Oslund*



Our design solution is inspired by the City Beautiful plan created by Bennett and Parsons for Pasadena's Civic Center in 1923. Pasadena's execution of the plan has garnered it the well-regarded reputation as the "Garden City" with its abundant and fastidiously maintained civic garden courtyards. The new Police Building and jail, along with a cross axial courtyard, now becomes the major organizing element of this complex.

It is our intention to make a space that continues an early tradition in Pasadena; namely, the use of the arts and crafts to commemorate this important public civic amenity. We would like our courtyard design to be seen as a reawakening of this dormant tradition, established by such notable artisans as Greene and Greene and the artist colony on the Arroyo Seco.

We have striven to incorporate ceramic, decorative metal, masonry and woodcraft at every opportunity. This arts and crafts tradition permeates the design, bringing to the courtyard elements a tactility and an intimately detailed environment characteristic of this movement.

Top right: Tile with city seal.

Top left: Courtyard fountain.

Bottom: Courtyard model,
eye-level view.

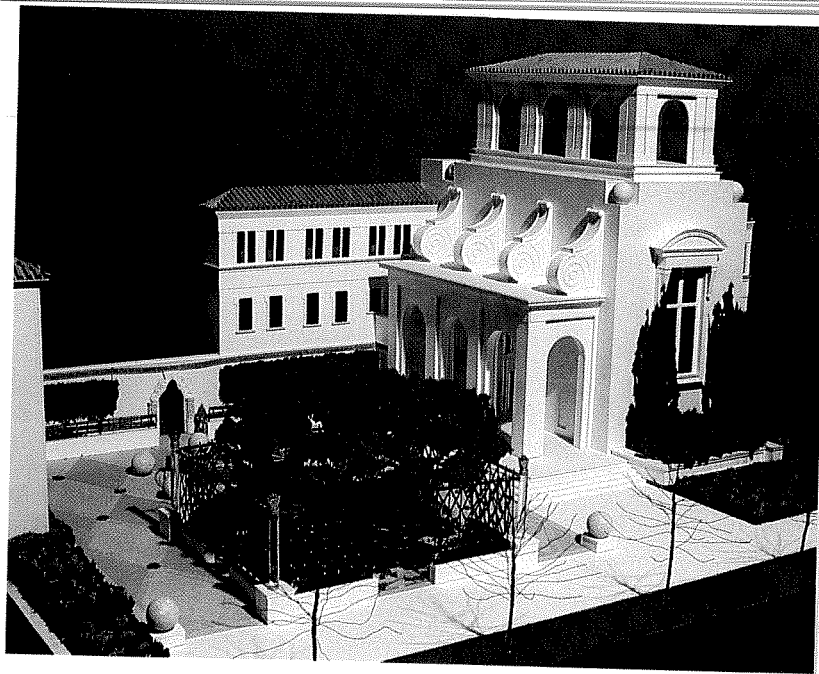
What lessons did we learn in this experience about the process of collaboration?

Leicester: I think collaboration requires and depends on a number of factors. Obviously, the first is the people involved. You have to spend a lot of time together, so time is a very important thing. You need access to one another; you also have to spend different types of time together. I think you have to develop an understanding of the person with whom you are working.

Oslund: The whole collaborative process is one of developing a rapport with an ideology. Your thinking as an individual has a process; the team interaction has a process. How those processes emerge and connect is what the collaboration is all about.

It does take time. We spent a lot of time just talking about this project before we formulated an approach. That in my mind was the success and the most enjoyable part of the entire process. We were trying to understand where each other's philosophies and interests lay and how you put those together to produce a design or strategize about a solution to the problem.

Leicester: From a pragmatic point of view, it's a very personal thing. A lot of people don't like to work in a collabo-



Photos courtesy of Thomas R. Oslund.

rative process. Currently, people are geographically dispersed and it is very difficult and expensive to force them constantly into that kind of contact. The country is resplendent with bad examples of so-called collaborations where people spent maybe 45 minutes together in actual contact. Maybe there's some telephone communications, but, essentially, what they do is they carve up their areas of the site, go their own separate ways and do their own thing.

Oslund: It makes the process much more enjoyable if there is a connectiveness or a spark that happens between the players, and it's important for that to happen. Like you say, it does take time.

Leicester: I read a quotation recently that said that "collaboration is one person listening to the other."

Oslund: That's very good. I guess that is how it worked with us.

What did collaboration teach us about the project? How did it inform the product?

Oslund: There is a general agreement that there are lots of problems with public spaces in this country and that

public art has consistently failed to solve those problems. As urban designers and landscape architects consistently fail to solve the real problems, you get people like William H. Whyte, who has shown that public spaces have to be more chaotic (in the good sense); they have to be less logistically planned around a single statement, a single idea, and they have to be more complex so they will serve the needs of different people.

Leicester: The jury picked the three finalists out of a large number of applicants and at that point they surely must have felt comfortable that all three would have come up with some reasonable solution. They should at that point have allowed the public and the users of the site to make the decision themselves. There was no participation on the part of the people using that site as far as I could see and I think that was a very short-sighted approach, one that is generally regarded now with disfavor with more enlightened public art committees.

Oslund: It gets back to the very basic question, what is public art in a public space or what is a public space? You look at Pasadena, as we did, in the urban context as this incredibly tactile place, the "garden city."

Leicester: Those tactile qualities ultimately come from the craftsman. They translate the feeling of "the garden" into built form through the use of small incremental decisions.

How do you involve the public, non-professionals who, in actuality, have a better intuitive understanding of the locale where the artwork is going because they use it all the time? I really think much of what is troubling about public spaces is traceable to the "see-the-whole-complex-from-a-distance school of design" syndrome, as stated by Laurence Houston in his article on PPG's unpopulated plaza in the December *Architecture*.

Oslund: I think it's interesting because our proposal for the courtyard came from such an indigenous response that to me it worked. The criticism of our proposal being complex and complicated was perhaps unfounded because if it were executed in its full form, I don't think it would seem that complicated. The courtyard would just seem rich, like looking at the City Hall building, which is dripping with detail.

Opposite:
From Pasadena Civic Center
Master Plan, prepared by
Lyndon/Buchanan Associates
with Community Development
by Design, Allan Jacobs and
Frances Halsband.



Model of the Pasadena
Police Building. Courtyard is
to the left.
Courtesy of Robert A. M. Stern.

Nature, Inc.



Photo by Hugh Hardy.

Nature in Yosemite seems almost to have achieved intentionality or “self-consciousness.” The walls of the Valley are vertical, the floor is flat, the entry is dramatically indicated. Yosemite is not just a place of exquisite beauty; it is a natural place that by virtue of its highly bounded form makes an insulting reference to the built environment.

There are lesser yosemites everywhere in capitalist culture, from the “canyons” of Manhattan to the gift box that has had its top torn off in eager anticipation. Coventry Cathedral, accidentally improved by the Nazi attempt to destroy it, is now open to the sky and aspires to insert itself into nature and become a yosemite. But none of these express themselves with the power and intensity of the original.

Social lines are arbitrary and the design practice that follows them promotes status and other shallow distinctions. By contrast, in Yosemite the oppositions in nature, such as the line that separates the rock from the sky, do not serve to separate one human being from another. The edge of Mirror Lake, where the water touches wildwoods and boulders, traces itself directly on the soul as a sensual contrast of rough and smooth, of male and female principles, of every gentle touch of opposites that unite humankind and make life sweet. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan has remarked that a mountain reflected in a lake is the perfect image of a consciousness without ego.

My childhood impression of Yosemite was affected by a great deal of camping in parks “designed” by my paternal grandfather, Earle Edgerly MacCannell, who was Washington State Parks



Courtesy National Park Service.

architect during the Depression. He made the Indian Museum at Vantage, at the confluence of the Snake and Columbia rivers, and several other large projects, but mainly his parks consisted of a dirt road, a unisex latrine, a central well with a hand pump, a sign and sometimes fireplaces. I do not recall ever having seen a ranger in a Washington State park in the 1950s.

My family enjoyed our week in Yosemite, the farthest away from home I had ever been, but we maintained suspicious distance from the Yosemite Park and Curry Company (YP&CC) facilities. A park with a gift shop, cafeteria and laundry suggested some kind of corruption. The "Presidential" Ahwahnee Lodge, arrogantly named for the Indians whose humble lodges it displaced, was something simply to be feared like the evil cartoon castles of Dr. Frankenstein or Snow White's stepmother.

I attended the nature-interpretation campfire at which the ranger explained the tradition of the Firefall. Everyone maintained silence, as requested, waiting to hear the shout from the Valley floor, "Let the fire fall!" and we witnessed the burning embers (an "entire tree," the ranger said) shoveled off Glacier Point, cascading into the Valley. It was amusing, but I couldn't figure out what it had to do with anything "natural."

Great parks, even great urban parks such as Golden Gate in San Francisco or Central in New York, and especially national parks, are symptomatic of the guilt that accompanies the human impulse to destroy nature. We destroy on an unprecedented scale, then in response create parks that replay the nature-society opposition on a stage entirely framed by society.

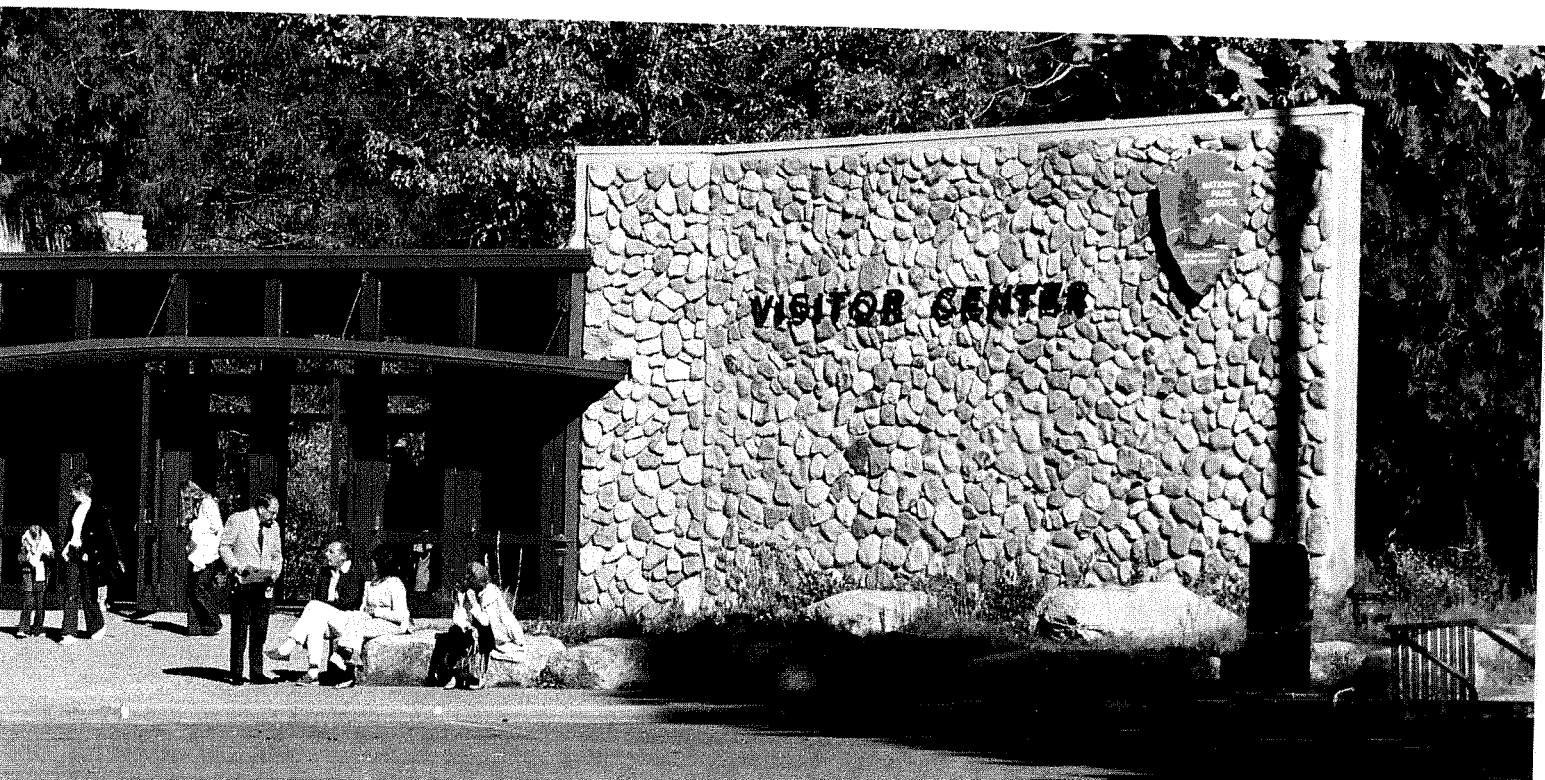
The great parks are not nature in any original sense. They are marked-off, interpreted, museumized nature—reminders of what nature would be like if nature still existed.

As a celebration of nature, these parks are the "good deed" of industrial civilization. They also quietly affirm the power of industrial civilization to stage, situate, limit and control nature. By restricting "authentic" or "historic" nature to parks, we assert our right to destroy everything not protected by the Park Act.

This contradiction is buried in human consciousness under the ideology of recreational nature, the notion that we are supposed to forget the sense of limits society imposes on us, and on nature, as we enter these parks. We are admitted on the moral conditions that we enter only with our essential humanity and that we leave our social needs, desires and statuses behind. We are forbidden to demand that parks satisfy these desires. After all, parks were established out of guilt that we already went far enough in forcing nature to satisfy social needs, perhaps too far.

None of this applies to Yosemite Valley. We want to project upon Yosemite a certain narcissism. It did not bother to wait for an act of Congress or Presidential decree to be a special place. It seems to have marked itself off from its surroundings. It is so beautiful that it just might be immune to the ravages of civilization. It challenges the worst in us, the part which wants to compete with nature and eventually to win.

If great cities have parks, then this greatest of parks must have a city. The YP&CC concessions have been purchased by MCA Incorporated, an entertainment conglomerate. Yosemite City is



a capitalist ideal, a "company town." El Capitan looks down upon 2.6 million paying customers annually, their arrivals now scheduled by Ticketron. There are hydro-electric power and sewage disposal plants, a Federal court, jail, hospital, clinic and dentist offices, a morgue, kennel, stables, ice rink, shopping mall, golf course, tennis courts, swimming pools, snack bars, art galleries, photo studios, cafeteria and restaurants, beauty parlor, barber shop, United States Post Office, commercial bank, supermarket, churches, paved parking for more than 2,000 cars, shuttle buses, several bars (some with big-screen television), a mountaineering school, cross-country and down-hill skiing facilities, an Indian Cultural Center and, of course, the National Park Service.

Social values are raised to "ideals" in Yosemite City. The entire range of social statuses has been reconstructed in the accommodations, from the "homeless" sleeping on the ground (\$4/night) to presidents and kings sleeping at the Ahwahnee (\$187/night) with its rule of "jacket and tie" in the dining hall.

Yosemite City is even developing a moral sense: rock climbing on El Capitan and hang-gliding are acceptable, but parachute jumping off Glacier Point and snowmobiles are specifically prohibited. There had been a horse race track but it was decommissioned.

Conventions and other group meetings are permitted during the off-peak season only. The Firefall is gone because it created traffic jams.

Yosemite City is not just any city but one that promotes specific values: monopoly capitalism, material comforts, status distinctions, and especially the right to be entertained.



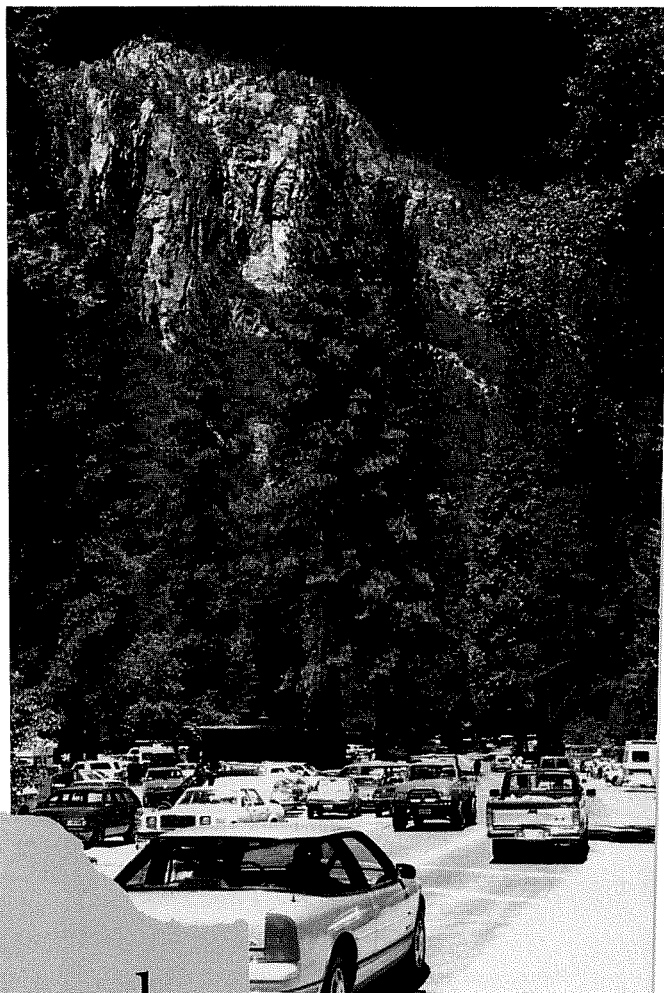
Courtesy National Park Service.

YP&CC and MCA are successfully transforming Yosemite into a "Nature Theme Park."

It is tempting to look upon Yosemite as the final battle ground of "nature" versus "society": two of the worthiest adversaries head-to-head; the most beautiful natural place on earth against an entire postmodern city owned by a major corporation, attempting to take the place from within.

But this is a pseudo-battle. Its outcome is rigged. It is not nature versus society, but "framed" nature versus corporate society. Society has already won. The "battle" is only another entertainment. Unless, of course, we decide to change society.

Excerpted from Dean MacCannell, The Tourist Papers, to be published next year by Routledge publishers in London.



Yosemite Valley.

Photo by Todd W. Bressi.

Warm your soul.

Crystal forests sparkle. The wind whispers "sssh." A lone coyote returns your gaze. And heaven silently drops a fresh blanket of white snow. Capture

the warmth that is Yosemite only in winter. Call (209) 454-2000.



Yosemite Park and Curry Co., an MCA Company, is authorized by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, to serve the public in the Park. © 1989 Yosemite Park and Curry Co.

*Michael Van Valkenburgh
Martin Puryear*

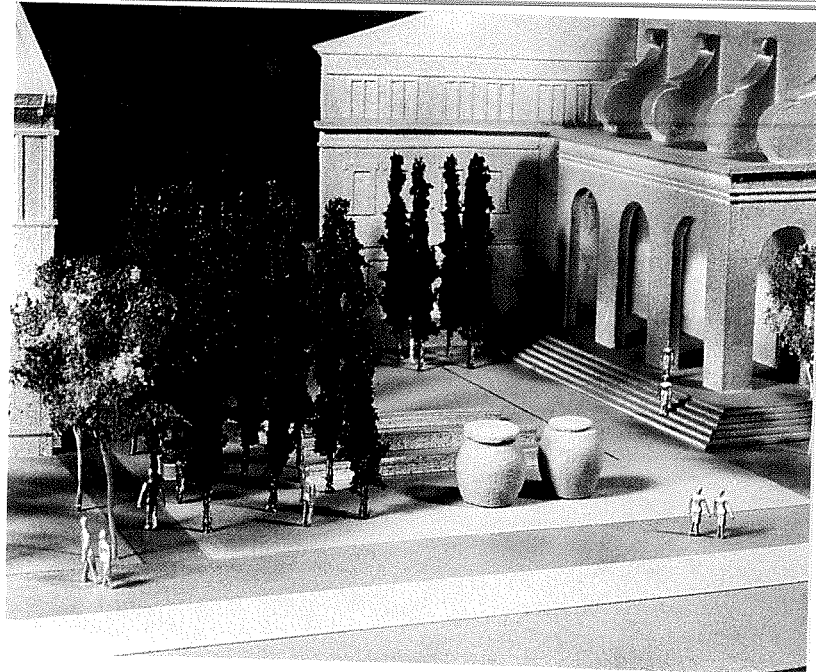


Photo by Hadrian Millon. Courtesy of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.

Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates and Martin Puryear's collaborative design for the courtyard attempts to reinterpret this type of small civic space by using artistic references to water conservation in combination with actual conservation techniques.

The design focus draws from the spareness of early twentieth-century courtyard gardens of Pasadena with their raked earth and simple plantings of drought-tolerant species. But the visual symmetry of earlier Beaux Arts courtyards has been reconfigured here to allow for the increased usage of today's public spaces—such as this courtyard, which incorporates the main entrance to a new police station.

The idea of water conservation as a symbol in the courtyard is expressed by the placement of two large (eight-foot-tall) water carrying vessels at the street edge. Three troughs of water raised 18 inches to also provide seating are incorporated on the east side of the courtyard parallel to the sidewalk. As a series, these troughs recall the tradition of irrigation in the agricultural fields of early Pasadena. The water is visibly and audibly transported by a rill in the pavement surface to an underground storage tank. Both the rill and the tank are covered by open grating. The form of the troughs and the rill

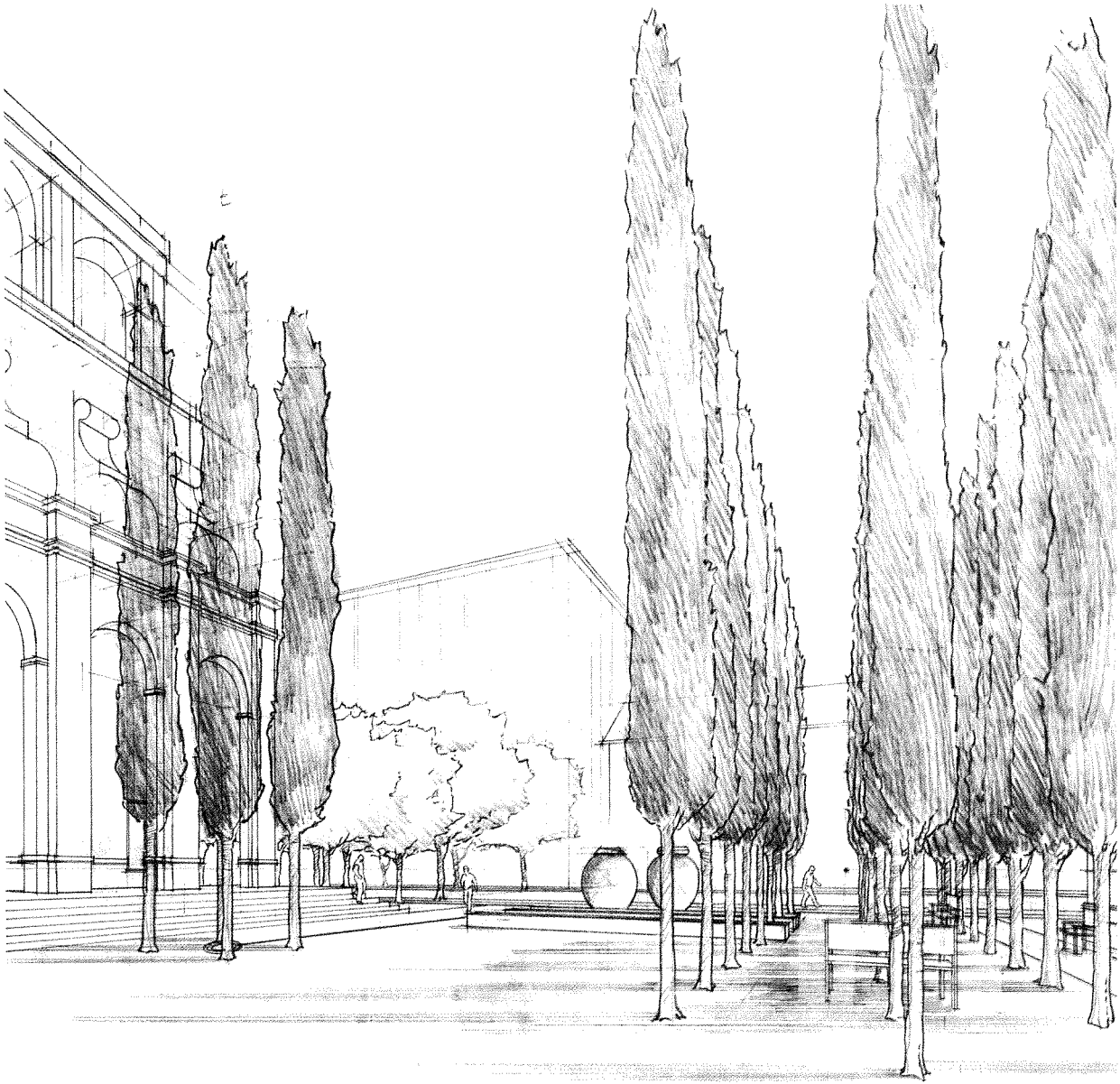
minimizes direct evaporation with a reduced water surface while allowing the sound of flowing water to resonate within the courtyard and the loggia of the police station. The location of the water storage tank is marked symbolically by the presence of four cypress trees at the inner corner of the site.

Further concern for water conservation guided the choice of a decomposed granite ground surface, which allows rain to seep into the ground.

The existing grass panels that currently flank the sidewalk would be eliminated because of their high water-consumption requirements. The cooler south wall of the courtyard—formed by the facade of the Pacific Gas Building—shadows the courtyard which is planted here with a widely spaced grove of cypress trees that would a cool respite in contrast to the courtyard's warmer central area.

On the east side of the courtyard, bordering the Garfield Avenue sidewalk—a shady *allée* of drought-tolerant golden rain trees parallels a row of existing carob trees at curbside. The carob trees and the golden rain trees, once established, do not require additional water during the hot, dry months of summer.

—Michael Van Valkenburgh
Carol Van Valkenburgh



View from courtyard.

The design team for the Puryear/Van Valkenburgh entry included Tim Barner, design; Matthew Urbanski, design and model; Tim Barner, perspectives.

For me, the Pasadena project took the form of a swinging pendulum. I hadn't responded initially to the invitation to submit because I didn't think I had the time. Also, although a police station shaped like an Italianate villa is probably a wonderfully humanizing gesture, I couldn't imagine what my work as a sculptor could add to it.

Then I got a note from Michael Van Valkenburgh inviting me to collaborate on a submission. I agreed because I respect Van Valkenburgh's work and he had an office that could develop the proposal. Suddenly the pendulum had swung. The project began to seem as if it could be an interesting challenge.

We had one day of actual collaboration in Michael's office in Cambridge. It was a brief, satisfying session. I felt strongly that against the background of that police station we'd best drop to the ground and keep our plans horizontal—aim for a strongly articulated floor. Dry desert gardens, Islamic garden carpets, sunken water runnels all came to mind. I also felt that we should let any vertical elements move out toward the street, away from the building—that way we might gain a bit of stylistic independence. Our plan thus ended up reversing the architects' original scheme,

which had a kind of open fountain close up to the building.

Michael seemed to like this idea so we developed it further to include a water feature right next to the sidewalk, but on the opposite side of a tall, probably pierced, wall. The idea of hearing and seeing water just behind the wall as you walked by on the sidewalk seemed attractive.

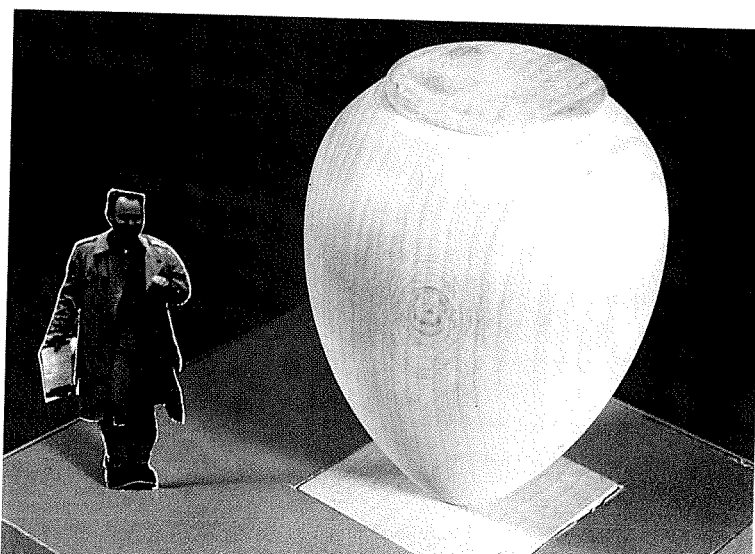
I wish we could have worked together further but I had to get back to my studio in Chicago. We planned to communicate via fax and overnight delivery services.

The pendulum swung again and difficulties began. Sending ideas back and forth was unwieldy and imprecise. The deadline was right around the corner, and I needed more time. Also, the budget seemed to eliminate most of the detailing I felt would be crucial.

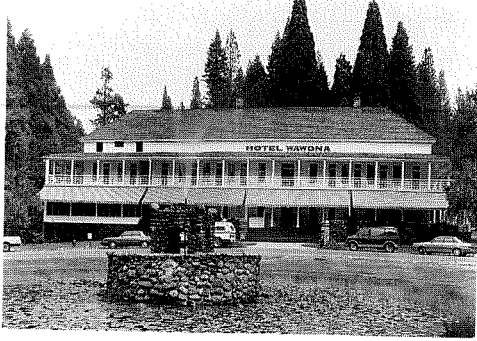
Michael's experience and pragmatism pulled everything together in time, and he made the final presentation in Pasadena.

I think to make meaningful art that is truly public in the sense of being open to and appreciable by the majority of the people who will eventually live with the work, seems to me next to impossible today. This is probably why the attempt is so difficult to resist.

—*Martin Puryear*



Eight-foot tall water vessels embody a concern for water conservation.

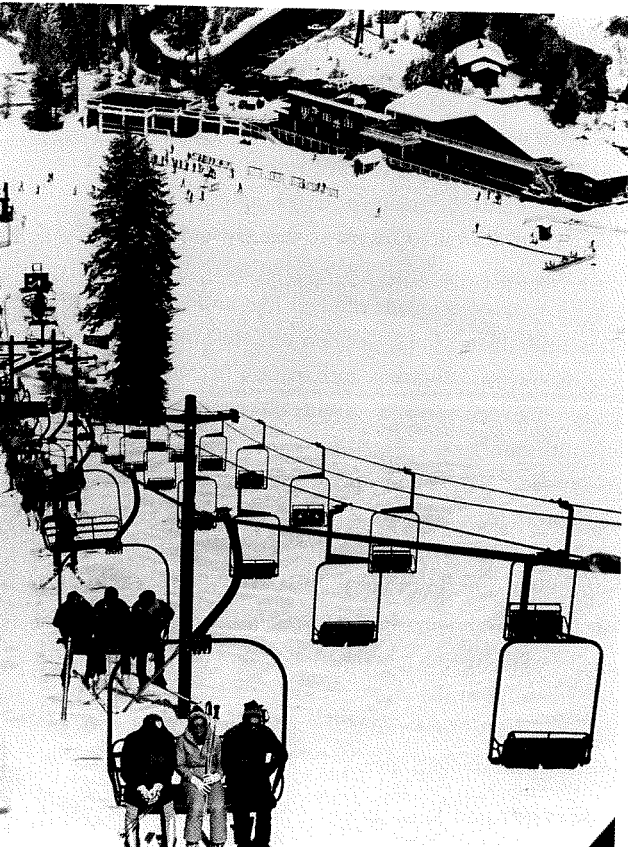


Courtesy Yosemite Park and
Curry Co.

"Experience all the beauty and majesty of America's greatest national parks—Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and Yellowstone. Each video is a personal tour complete with sights, sounds and spectacular moments....Superb photography, tightly narrative, and specially scored stereo music. \$69.95, the set."

—Advertisement for "Reader's
Digest Great National Parks
Video Collection" in National
Public Radio catalog, 1989.

Badger Pass Ski Area.
Courtesy Yosemite Park and
Curry Co.



David Scofield Wilson

One Yosemite, Two Yosemite, Three Yosemite, Four

In discussing Yosemite, I often fall back upon words that belong in quotation marks, words like "sacred" and "presence." Once, a friend countered, "Do you really think it's a sacred place? When we were in high school, it was the place we went to get laid."

This was a Yosemite I had never known, since I grew up in Minnesota, but the geography of license to which he confessed is familiar to our culture. This staple of American masculine fantasy stretches as far back as the seventeenth-century, when one Pilgrim erected a Maypole and frolicked around it with Indian "lasses" until Miles Standish cut it down and sent him packing.

There is a dark side to the Yosemite dream, which the hospital, police dispatchers, enforcement rangers and federal court personnel know but keep largely hidden from the law-abiding public. "We experience the same rapes, robberies and assaults," I was told by a ranger, "as any city of 30,000 in California."

David Brower is fond of claiming that escape from civilization in Yosemite increases as the square of the distance from the road. He means to urge people to explore beyond their cars and paths. But many women feel their vulnerability increases in a similar ratio and is doubled at night. I have felt aggression from campers and day trippers who take over space, either literally by sprawling across walkways and clogging up bridges or figuratively by playing car radios loudly or by drinking and carousing next door.

Whose freedom does this landscape of liberty most empower? Another's liberty may function as my risk, and by promising a kind of licence to all, Yosemite equally facilitates a threat to all.

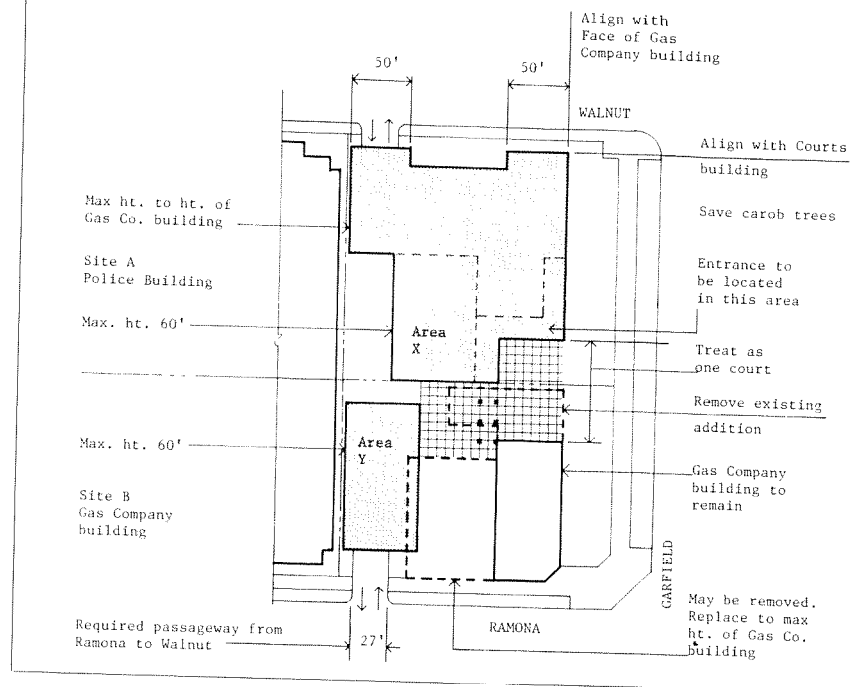
There are many Yosemites. Some people come for the traditional, exclusive Christmas feast and masque. Others inhabit the canvas-roofed, cement-block-walled "housekeeping cabins," which have electricity and stoves, and bring TVs, bikes, rafts and lawn chairs. Still others are more sedentary, wearing white loafers and polyester leisure suits and frequenting Yosemite Lodge. To many young families, Yosemite is an inexpensive, safe and entertaining vacation, with hikes, lectures and campfires.

Yosemite is an arena in which alternative visions of liberty and justice, of nature and culture, of sacred and profane are contested. This Yosemite is not objective nor subjective so much as dialogic and semiotic, more an occasion than a place. Yosemite is the sort of cultural and natural edifice and occasion the anthropologist Victor Turner saw as "multivocal, multivalent and polysemous."

Yosemite speaks to different people in different voices, it matters to diverse populations in divergent ways and it signifies contrasting, competing values and beliefs held by different groups.



Donlyn Lyndon



The recently completed national design competition for a courtyard at the new Police Building in Pasadena is a conclusive step in the evolution of ideas that have been embodied in the site, have been articulated and given form by a succession of designers and have engaged the attention of several public commissions. It will soon become part of the public realm.

The Evolution and Transformation of an Idea

The court will be adjacent to a new Police Building nearing completion in Pasadena's Civic Center, a grand City Beautiful complex of axially arranged buildings first conceived in 1923 by Bennett and Parsons of Chicago.

City Hall was the first building of the complex to be constructed, in 1925. Its architects, Brown and Bakewell, bettered the initial plan by imagining City Hall as a great mission courtyard surrounded by open arcades and passages leading to city offices and focused around a vigorously bizarre fountain of baroque inspiration.

The Main Library followed in 1926. Its architect, Myron Hunt, also substituted a walled and fountained courtyard entry for the ponderous Roman temple front that had been visualized in the original master plan. Both buildings resulted from design

competitions; both are better, more enjoyable places than the urban design plan imagined.

The courtyards conceived for the Police Building thus take their place in a Civic Center that is already well informed by tradition. Succeeding generations have not, however, cared so well for the character of the Civic Center, so when the new Police Building and several other projects were proposed for the area the city commissioned consultants to update the Civic Center Master Plan.

Their work, which began at the same time that Robert A.M. Stern and Ehrenkrantz/Eckstut were commissioned to design the Police Building, led immediately to the preparation of design guidelines for the entire area and for the specific site. The general guidelines require, among other things, that "every building should have some visible penetration of the building volume for porches, loggias, or courtyard entries," and the specific guidelines for the block designate the location for a courtyard linking the new Police Building and the existing Southern California Gas Company Building designed in 1929 and recently acquired by the City.

Stern, working imaginatively with the Master Plan guidelines, established the courtyard as the major entry point for the Police Building, which faces

the court with a large porch and an upper loggia that serves as an identifying tower for the building.

The newly formed Pasadena Arts Courtyard as its first major collaborative public art project. The competition they conducted was open, in the first stage, to all Pasadena residents and to an invited list of approximately 35 artists and landscape architects recognized nationally for their work in public spaces. Each team submitting qualifications was required to include a landscape architect and an artist. Three finalist teams, selected by a jury, were each then commissioned to prepare a scheme for the project within strict budgetary limits.

The scheme prepared by Robert Irwin and Campbell and Campbell was selected by the competition jury, then approved by the Arts Commission and the City's Board of Directors and will be constructed this spring.

The three projects illustrate the opportunities for continuing imaginative investment that are still possible within the final stages of a project—even (and perhaps especially) when traditions and design guidelines set the stage.

● HODGDON MEADOW

- Back up site for 30 employee homes.
- Construct NPS office building.
- ▲ Increase camp sites from 110 to 200.

● MATHER STATION

- ▲ Build new 30-site campground.

● TAMARACK FLAT

- ▲ Increase camp sites from 50 to 100.

● CRANE FLAT

- ▲ Increase camp sites from 164 to 200.
- Build 200-car Valley satellite parking lot.

● SMOKEY JACK

- ▲ Remove 25-site campground.

● WHITE WOLF

- ▲ Increase camp sites from 86 to 150.
- Increase cabins from 13 to 25.

● YOSEMITE CREEK

- ▲ Increase camp sites from 30 to 125.

● PORCUPINE FLAT

- ▲ Increase camp sites from 50 to 75.

● BADGER PASS

- ❄ Keep ski facility.

● WAWONA

- Keep lodge, historical interpretation center, gas station, stores.
- Back-up site for 130 employee homes.
- ▲ Build new 200-site campground.

● MARIPOSA GROVE

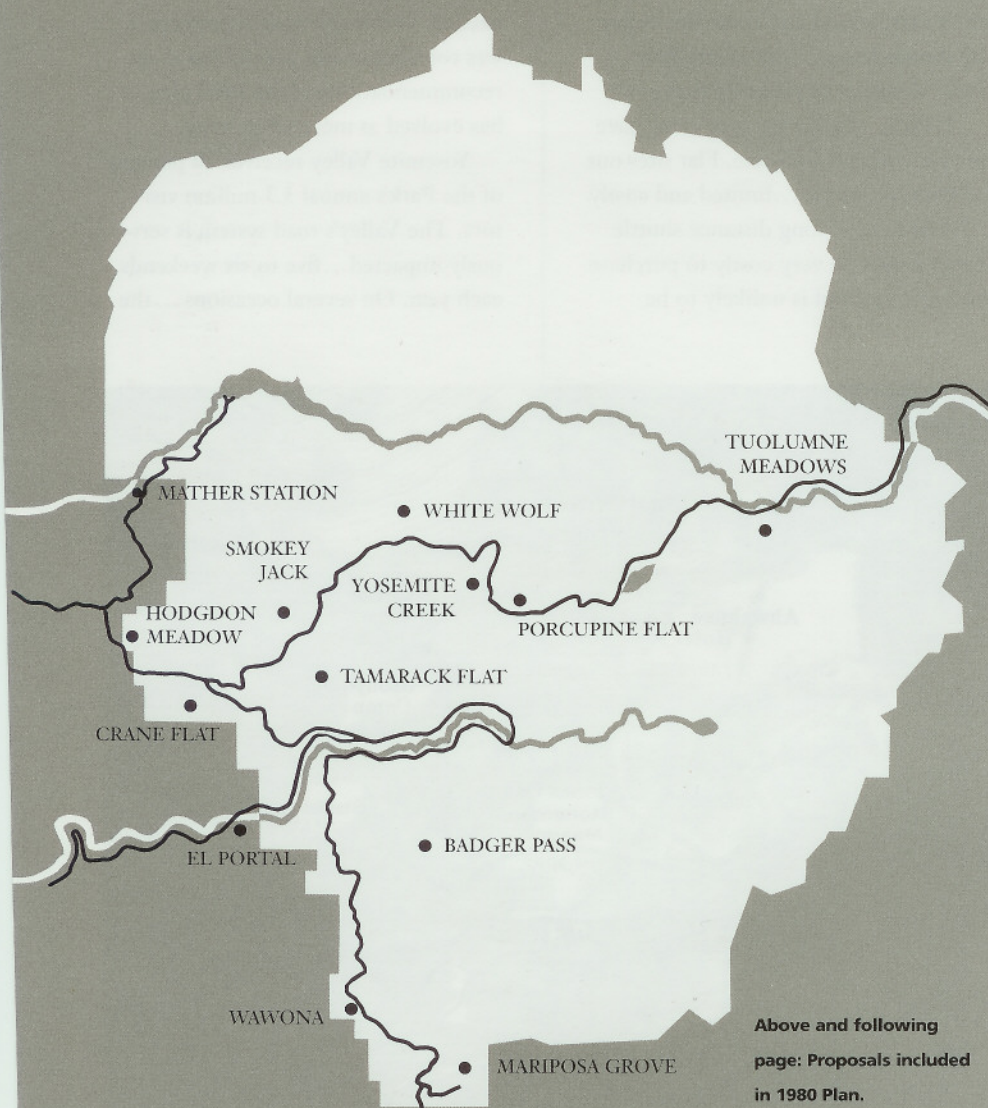
- Relocate 200-car parking lot to main road.
- Convert Grove road into a trail, extend trams.
- Remove gift shop, lodge.

● TUOLUMNE MEADOWS

- Remove roads and trails from meadows, ranger station.
- Retain lodge, gas station, employee tent cabins, stores, restaurant.

● EL PORTAL

- Build NPS and YP&CC administrative, maintenance and warehousing facilities.
- Build 530 employee homes.
- Build 150-car Valley satellite parking lot.
- Build shops, services, utilities for residents and visitors.



Above and following page: Proposals included in 1980 Plan.

Revisiting the Park Prescriptions

The 1980 GMP set a blueprint for Yosemite through 1990. The NPS is evaluating the success of the GMP in order to set goals for the future. The following excerpts are from last year's Draft Yosemite GMP Examination Report.

The National Park Service (NPS) constantly seeks to balance making parks accessible to visitors with protection of the natural and cultural resources which the park was established to protect....At Yosemite, the balance had been shifted in favor of the resource....

We want to allow visitors...to experience the natural wonder of Yosemite....We reach the Valley's carrying capacity on peak summer weekends [and] have limited additional capacity at most other times. We will...hold the line on existing levels by not increasing the number of overnight accommodations, parking spaces, or operational structures....We will close the Valley to additional cars whenever the visitation exceeds these carrying capacity limits.

Despite an increase in [the number of visitors] from 2,583,000 in 1980 to 3,334,000 in 1988, Yosemite Valley today is...an improved resource offering a better visitor experience.

While the NPS has come a long way on the Yosemite Valley portion of the 1980 General Management Plan (GMP) recommended actions, we still have some tough choices to work out.

One thing is obvious—the Park prescriptions are interconnected....

● YOSEMITE VILLAGE

- Remove NPS and YP&CC headquarters, service station, car rental, restaurant, deli, gift shop, bank, barber, beauty parlor, maintenance and warehousing facilities and most employee homes.
- Create "museum of history" and "museum of man" in vacated buildings.

● YOSEMITE LODGE

- Remove 101 cabin, cottage and lodge units, keep 364.
- Remove 48 employee homes, keep 200.

● CURRY VILLAGE

- ◆ Remove ice rink.
- Remove 68 tents and cabins, keep 775.

● AHWAHNEE HOTEL

- ◆ Remove golf course and tennis courts.

● YOSEMITE VALLEY SUMMARY

- Remove 268 visitor units, keep 1,260.
- Remove 1,242 parking spaces, keep 1,271.
- ▲ Remove 116 campsites, keep 824.
- Remove 1,030 employee homes, keep 480.
- Ban cars from Happy Isles loop road.
- Improve operation of Valley shuttle and provide 16-mile-long bike trail.
- Build Native American cultural center.

The GMP called for a reduction of both traffic and operations in Yosemite Valley in order to restore more sites to natural conditions. As operations and their accompanying structures are moved out of Yosemite Valley, traffic back and forth between housing and work sites is increased, resulting in more congestion. In some cases a choice must be made between the "lesser of two evils"....

Reduce Traffic Congestion in Yosemite Valley

The 1980 GMP envisioned satellite parking lots where visitors would leave their cars behind and enter the Valley by shuttle buses.... there are four basic obstacles to realizing that goal:

Nearby satellite parking areas have proven difficult to locate. Flat sites out of flood plains are...limited and costly.

The fleet of long distance shuttle buses would be very costly to purchase and operate, and is unlikely to be

funded under near-term budget realities....To accommodate existing visitation, buses would be required to leave once a minute from destination and satellite sites.

Highway 140 into Yosemite Valley ...is almost at capacity for two-way bus, automobile and limited commercial traffic....Buses, especially the newer, wider sizes, can barely be accommodated by the existing narrow traffic lanes....

Most people prefer the convenience and scheduling flexibility offered by a private automobile, especially in an... outdoor environment where a variety of recreation gear and clothing are needed. While this visitor preference was considered and overridden in the recommendations of the 1980 plan, it has evolved as more of an issue....

Yosemite Valley receives 70 percent of the Park's annual 3.3 million visitors. The Valley's road system is seriously impacted...five to six weekends each year. On several occasions...the



United States Geological Survey.

Park has had to turn away visitors to the Valley for brief periods on peak days. Visitors who value the uncrowded... experience avoid the Valley or the Park on the predictably busy peak holiday weekends....

The major cause of traffic congestion in the Valley is the day-use visitor. Clearly, the need is to get the day-use visitor parked as quickly as possible and on the alternative transportation.

Reduce Overnight Accommodations

Part of the vision for a less crowded Park...called for a ten percent reduction in overnight visitor lodging park-wide and a 17 percent reduction in Yosemite Valley. To compensate for the more severe reduction in the Valley, the Plan recommended that additional accommodations be developed at Wawona and White Wolf.

...

Overnight lodging has been maintained essentially at status quo.... Addition of lodging units at Wawona Hotel is stymied primarily by the lack of an adequate water supply and complicated by the designation of the... [Hotel] complex as a historic district.

...

With the graying of America comes the graying of the Park visitor [and a] preference for more private lodging with a bath available in all four seasons. Given these considerations, there are a large number of people who object to reducing the status quo in numbers of overnight lodging units.

Relocate Non-Essential Operational Structures Out of Yosemite Valley

Primary constraints slowing the relocation of both NPS and Yosemite Park and Curry Co. (YPCC) operational facilities out of the Valley are:

The definition of which operational functions are essential to stay in the Valley or which should be removed...has not been fully resolved. Continued changes in visitor use patterns and upgrading of support systems require an ongoing re-evaluation of essential services.

The shortfall of funding has severely limited new construction and relocation of facilities. Safety- and health-related improvements have consumed most...available funds...

Some operational functions are housed in historic buildings which should be retained by law and therefore pose a conflict with...recommendations for removal of these buildings....

Park headquarters and additional administrative functions are still slated for relocation to El Portal. The primary limitation is getting the needed appropriations to build new facilities.

Relocate Non-Essential Employee Housing Out of Yosemite Valley

Depending on funding, it could be at least 1994 before it will be possible to vacate Park housing in the Valley....

El Portal has...severe limitations on how many new structures can be accommodated there. Steep slopes, limited water supply, the presence of toxic tailings from barium mines, high levels of radon gas emission and a presence of archaeological sites in the flatter portions of the area, all pose constraints....

Many employees, especially seasonals, earn low wages or work split shifts. It would be economically difficult for them to cover commute costs and living costs in outlying communities....

Capital Funding Priorities Beyond the Year 2000

It is difficult to make realistic prioritization...beyond 10 years due to all the budgetary and other uncertainties involved. The NPS continues to be dedicated to the vision and prescriptions of the GMP. [The plan] will be accomplished in incremental improvements over a longer time frame.

Public interest and desire to visit the Valley and other Park places... continues to grow. While there are limits as to how many people can enjoy these experiences without damaging the Park's natural resources, the NPS continues to seek...an acceptable balance. As a bottom line, Park visits will be limited to a manageable threshold consistent with protection of Park resources.

Yosemite Valley in the future will have less traffic and fewer structures. More original scenic vistas and habitats will be restored. The number of visitors year-round will be controlled.

Future technologies may help us reach a more sweeping solution of the private automobile dilemma. Perhaps a light rail system...could make it physically and economically feasible to move larger volumes of people more quickly and quietly into and out of Yosemite Valley. Transportation from [farther] away and from remote parking complexes, or lodging outside the Park, may become more manageable.

The NPS and concessioner will relocate more non-essential facilities and housing to El Portal and other locations further out of the Valley as quickly as budgets and technological improvements allow. Visitor accommodations will be upgraded and consolidated to take up less square footage. A regional visitor information, accommodations, and transportation network will be established and coordinated to make the best use of accommodations outside the Valley.

Conceiving a Courtyard

The three proposals for the Pasadena Police Building Public Art Project represent a range of individual approaches to the integration of landscape architecture and public art, and they provide insight into several current directions in the creation of public art.

The competition sponsor, The Pasadena Arts Commission, required that each submission be prepared collaboratively by teams composed of artists and landscape architects. Prior to the extreme specialization of the modern age such professional distinctions would have been rare. One individual might embody the skills and insights now divided among a number of disciplines, and “fine arts” and “design arts” were not regarded as independent activities.

Including the perspective of artists in the process of designing specific projects and in creating design plans is a relatively recent practice. Only during the last decade has public art begun to emerge as a coherent and distinct discipline within a family that includes the fine arts; sculpture and its dependent, environmental or site-specific art; architecture; landscape architecture; and city planning.

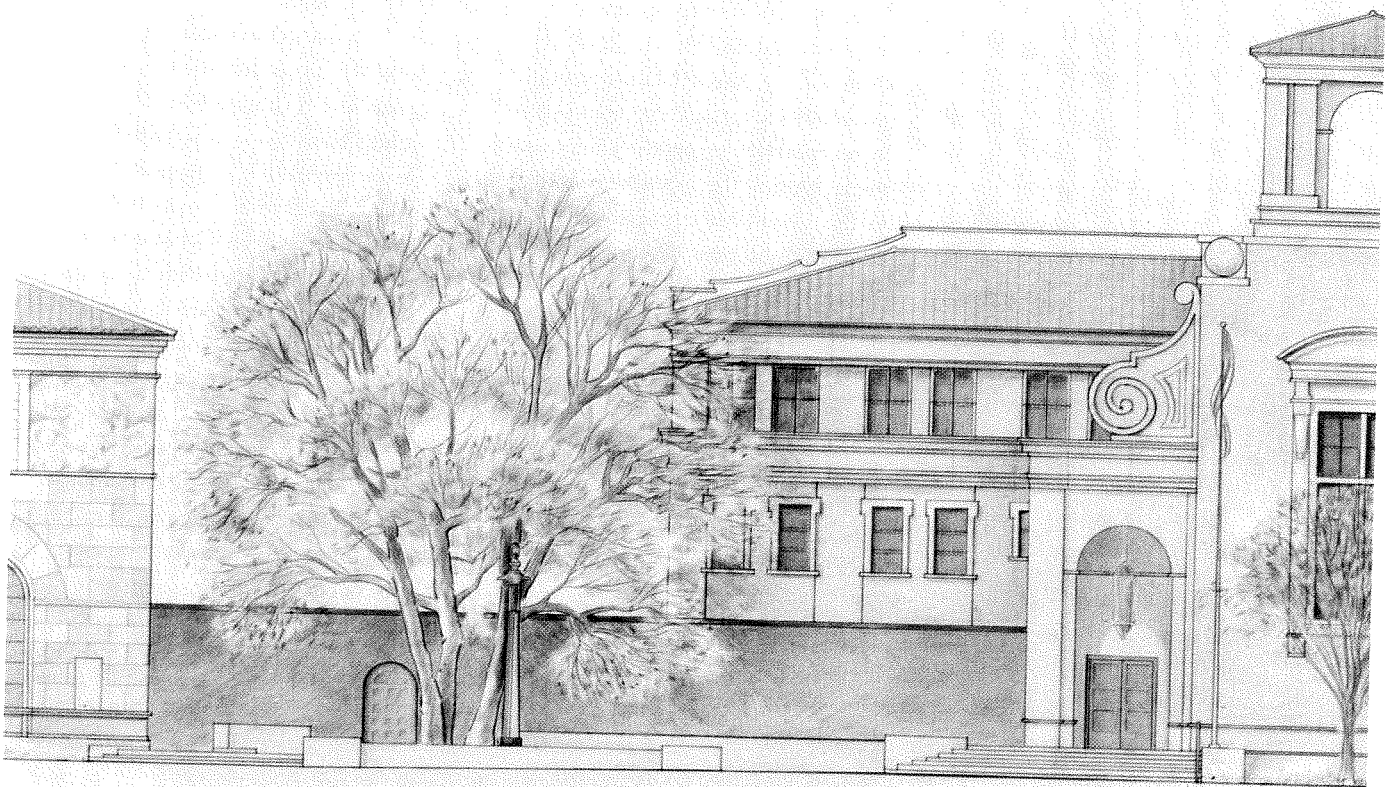
There are numerous levels of collaboration. In some instances, the roles of the individual design team members are clearly revealed; in others, the working process is so collaborative and integrated that it is virtually impossible to assign specific elements or ideas to specific team members. Proposals for the Police Building courtyard were more representative of the latter mode and thus are particularly worth discussing.

Despite its geographic location in the Los Angeles region, Pasadena is an independent city with an independent mind set. While the region is generally characterized as future-obsessed, Pasadena respects its traditions, historical buildings and civic designs. The three proposals respond to the city’s history, climate and topography; some are more direct than others, but each acknowledges the courtyard as one in a series of many courtyards that have provided resting and restful places within the history of Pasadena.

It is possible to see three generic forms among the proposals. Douglas and Regula Campbell and Robert Irwin (the competition winners) pursued an approach dependent on color and a few key elements emphasizing mood and a composition flirting with nat-

The Pasadena Police Building Public Art Project was a competition staged last year by the Pasadena Arts Commission. Places invited the three finalist teams—each consisting of a landscape architect and an artist—to comment on how collaboration influenced their proposals. The winners were Douglas Campbell, Regula Campbell and Robert Irwin. The other finalists were Martin Puryear and Michael Van Valkenburgh, and Andrew Leicester and Thomas R. Oslund. Places also asked jurors Donlyn Lyndon and Marc Pally to comment on the competition.

The competition was organized by Joyce Chambers Selber, then the City’s executive director for the arts.



**Douglas and Regula Campbell
and Robert Irwin's winning
proposal, with a multi-colored
wall to the rear.**

**Courtesy of Campbell and
Campbell.**

uralism. Andrew Leicester and Thomas R. Oslund's proposal directly articulates historical information from Pasadena and operates in a narrative/historical fashion. Michael Van Valkenburgh and Martin Puryear placed historical and associative referents into a formal orientation.

Discerning an Artist's Imprint

Robert Irwin's career as an artist has long been associated with the integration of perceptual psychology and aesthetic form. His sculpture and environmental installations from the 1960s and 1970s emphasized atmosphere over substance and could be characterized as dematerializing the art object. During the 1980s he moved into the public arena, completing projects in Washington, D.C., Seattle, San Diego and Los Angeles.

This work continues Irwin's commitment to expanding the possibilities for his artmaking to the realm of situations in which the alteration of a total spatial experience is emphasized over the presence of an object or series of objects. Irwin would just as soon one not know what constitutes art, what part of any situation is art.

A common denominator of many Irwin projects is the play of light, the

passage of time and, by extension, the rhythm of nature. One could, however, ground much of this rhetoric in the traditional art of landscape painting. These very issues in fact constitute the concerns of such painters as Claude Lorrain in the seventeenth century and the Impressionists of the late nineteenth century. The Police Building courtyard proposal uses an extensive color palette in the blue light sentinel, the ground cover, the two main trees (California sycamore and the Western rosebud) and most importantly the multi-colored rear wall.

It is rather hard and perhaps unnecessary to pinpoint the derivation of ideas in a collaboration such as this, where the artist is determined not to leave a signature. Perhaps in such cases true collaboration is most possible. Ironically Douglas Campbell, a landscape architect, and Regula Campbell, an architect, have used sculptural elements as part of their work: a fine dragon, for instance, on the Santa Monica Pier project. With the artist refusing to interject specific elements into a scheme, team members must find a model to replace the traditional role of the artist/artisan supplying ornamentation and refinement to an already determined form or plan.

In the proposal from Puryear and

**Proposal by Martin Puryear
and Michael Van Valkenburgh.
Courtesy of Michael Van
Valkenburgh.**



Van Valkenburgh, the participation of the artist has left a distinct imprint. As with many artists active in creating public art, Puryear has long been identified as a sculptor. His career has advanced the reductive attitudes of minimalism into a body of work that resonates with associations yet maintains a formal purity. His public pieces have proceeded in a linear manner from his exhibition pieces; that is, they exist as objects in space.

Yet there is a good deal of affinity between Puryear's and Van Valkenburgh's work, particularly in their insistence that form reflect character and meaning beyond itself. They both strive for significance and evocation through visually formal systems.

The over-scaled vessels for the courtyard are sculptural elements, but their placement on the edge of the courtyard and sidewalk and their functional association lends them more a ceremonial air than an artistic one. The actual shaping of space in this proposal and the choreographing of elements seems very much in the tradition of Van Valkenburgh, who uses formal orders and symmetries to organize and give both meaning and function to space.

Andrew Leicester has consistently tackled the issue of content in a direct

manner, bringing into a contemporary idiom the notions of commemoration and collective memory that were an intrinsic part of public artworks from earlier times. His projects typically include extensive research, interviews and interaction with the community.

The proposal from Leicester and Oslund includes numerous elements that provide the viewer with information both in direct written form (for example, the police credo encircles the fountain and quotations from police publications occupy a frieze on the rear wall) and formal association (for example, the star-shaped fountain). These elements, together with others like the paving materials and patterns, terra-cotta medallions, masonry globes and light standard, are associated with the body of work Leicester has established since his first significant commission, "Prospect V-III," in 1982.

Leicester's contribution to the Police Building courtyard is evident in the thematic approach and its various manifestations. Oslund's expertise in planning and plant materials give the proposal form and relevancy.

The Art of Association

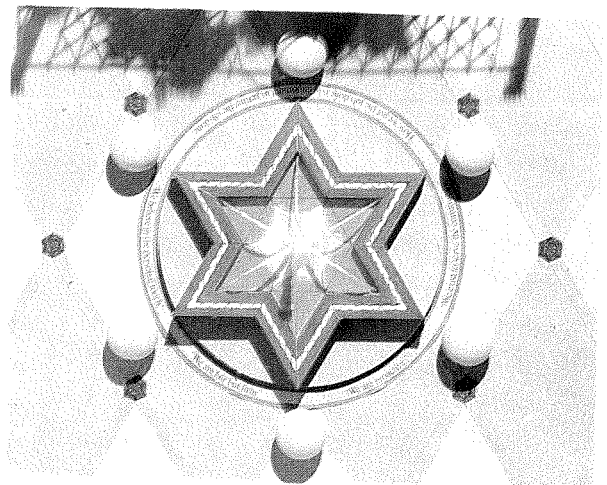
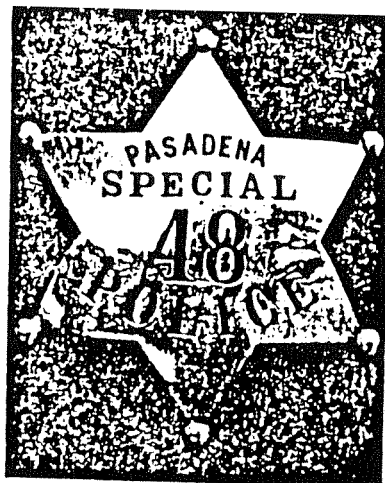
What is apparent in these proposals is the evolving nature of how we think

not only about our cities and our public spaces but also about the disciplines that usually design them. It seems particularly appropriate that two of the three artists (Irwin and Puryear) can be associated with extending the vocabulary of minimalism and the stripped down, hyper-specialized aesthetic that movement represents. For just as artists are discovering a more visually complex and evocative language, we are also becoming aware of the limits of overly specialized thinking about the design of public spaces. The cooperation and/or collaboration of many disciplines is now generally accepted.

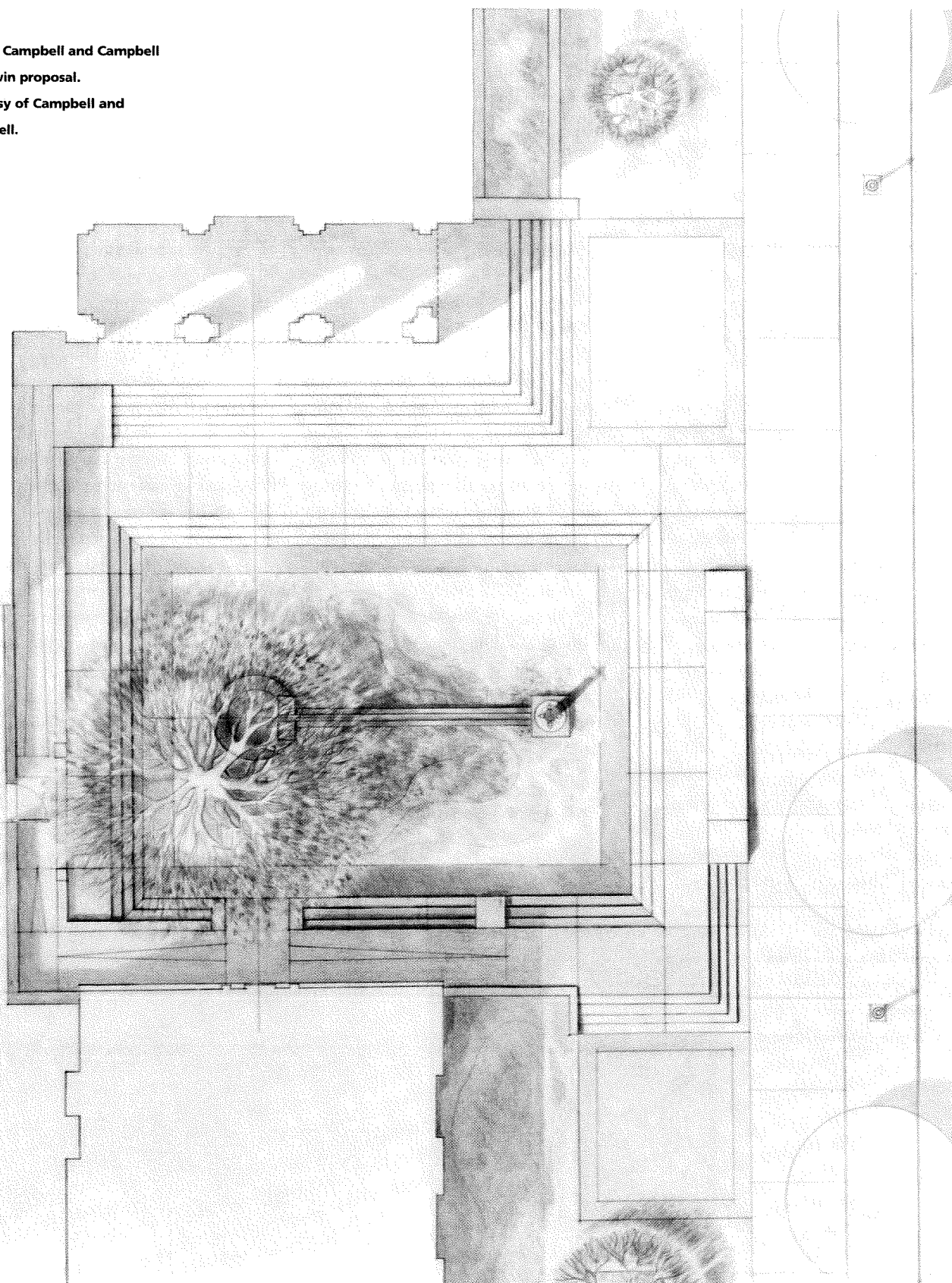
The role of the artist in the development of our cities and public spaces can be more active and civic minded, hence the great interest in public art. Artists who are generally accustomed to a hands-on and tactile relationship with their work are now finding themselves in group decision making, community review boards and client-oriented work.

While it may be worthwhile to pinpoint the specific contributions of artists or designers to collaborative projects, the larger task is to refine our understanding of related disciplines to work toward a synthesis that is capable of better responding to the needs of our communities.

**Andrew Leicester and
Thomas R. Oslund translated
historical references into
contemporary form.
Courtesy of Thomas R. Oslund.**



Plan of Campbell and Campbell
and Irwin proposal.
Courtesy of Campbell and
Campbell.



Beacons of Beauty

Many of the concerns about Yosemite National Park carry with them an anomalous implication: The park is actually too beautiful, too beautiful for its own good.

It is the park's beauty, after all, that attracts so many visitors, who bring with them the crowding, traffic, smog and litter that wear down the ecosystem, clutter the landscape and obscure the experience that makes the park such a desirable place to visit.

Yosemite may be too beautiful for our good, as well.

Think for a minute why we visit Yosemite. Most likely it is to see beauty in its most spectacular, stupendous, awesome incarnation—landscapes that are nothing short of national (or planetary) treasures, certainly nothing like we can find near home.

When we visit, if we are lucky, we will be infused with the inspiration countless artists and the founders of this country's environmental movement found in this remarkable place, or perhaps be driven to a new height of personal dialogue with nature.

Let me suggest another reason why we visit Yosemite, particularly the Valley: because we can. A century ago, our government, deeming it worthy to protect both the landscape and public access to it, designated Yosemite a national park. Since then, as hoped, humans have hardly changed the landscape (compared to how they've change the landscape elsewhere).

On the other hand, Yosemite has changed more than wilderness areas, which have even more protection than parks. Highways have been built through it and to its most spectacular attractions, signs and travel guides chart the route to it from hundreds of miles distant, and the park itself is assigned a special color on our maps in order to stand out.

Lodgings, restaurants, gas stations and wilderness outfitters are creeping towards the park's boundaries and are strategically stationed throughout the park. Traveling to and through Yosemite is nowhere near as daunting as it was before Yosemite was designated park land, nor as difficult as exploring other parts of the Sierra Mountains.

Consequently, Yosemite is not only a place where beauty is preserved but also a beacon in the midst of undifferentiated wilderness, a beacon that coaxes us to witness its spectacle. You might call it a beacon of beauty.

One night a moth escaped from the dark sky through a window into my study and became trapped, circling madly around and around and around the light affixed to my ceiling. It was blinded by the brightness, and did not realize that if it were to fly away from the light it would find what it really wanted, a return passage to its nocturnal world.

Just as moths are attracted to lights and seemingly blinded to their surroundings, we are drawn to beacons of beauty while tending to ignore beauty elsewhere. I learned this on my first trip to Yosemite, during which I ignored the Valley's beacon and passed through the Park, across Tioga Pass and into Inyo National Forest, on the Sierra's eastern slope. One day I hiked at Mono Lake, where one can climb to the top of a dormant volcano and sit. It was the most quiet, solitary place I had ever been. I meditated on the silence, overlaid with the persistent high desert wind. I reveled at Mono Lake's ever changing color: Depending on one's position, the angle of the sun and the cloudiness of the sky (or, perhaps, Mono's temperament), the lake can aspire to any color from black to emerald green to deep blue.

Other places, not necessarily beacons of beauty, have moved me just the same. The virgin stands of Gifford Pinchot National Forest in Washington State are being logged vigorously. The clear cutting, at first glance an act of violence, intrigued me because of the abstract, visual impact of logging on the landscape. The removal of trees reveals striking landscapes: Denuded mountains crouch in their raw form, exposing silhouettes and surface textures I had never imagined before. The policy of cutting small stands of trees in any one place at any one time, then replanting, has created a living laboratory of ecological succession.

The lines we draw around national parks are valuable defenses against unwieldy human interference in the course of natural events. In our society, it is essential to make parks accessible to everybody. (Whether this must be by automobile is another matter.) We should all have an opportunity to witness Yosemite's grandeur and to make what we can of our place in nature.

Yet, as national park borders have been drawn around some of our most spectacular landscapes, those landscapes have become magnets to which people flock. They have come to define what we expect from our encounters with nature and to be the yardstick by which we evaluate our impressions of natural beauty.

We cannot become confused; spectacle alone is not beauty. We must not follow Yosemite's beacon to find beauty but seek it everywhere we can; if we look hard enough, we might find it in places all around us. If we could teach ourselves to do that, our souls would be energized more than they ever would by making pilgrimages, even a thousand times over, to beacons of beauty.



John Sexton,
Fern and Log.
© 1977.

Maintaining the Yosemite Experience

Yosemite is where the national park idea began. President Lincoln's signature made Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees the first landscape deemed worthy of protection by the federal government. The idea became one of our culture's best exports—and perhaps our own best institution for the future. Yellowstone was an afterthought.

Yosemite is my second home, operated and maintained, happily, at federal expense. I have visited Yosemite as often as pos-

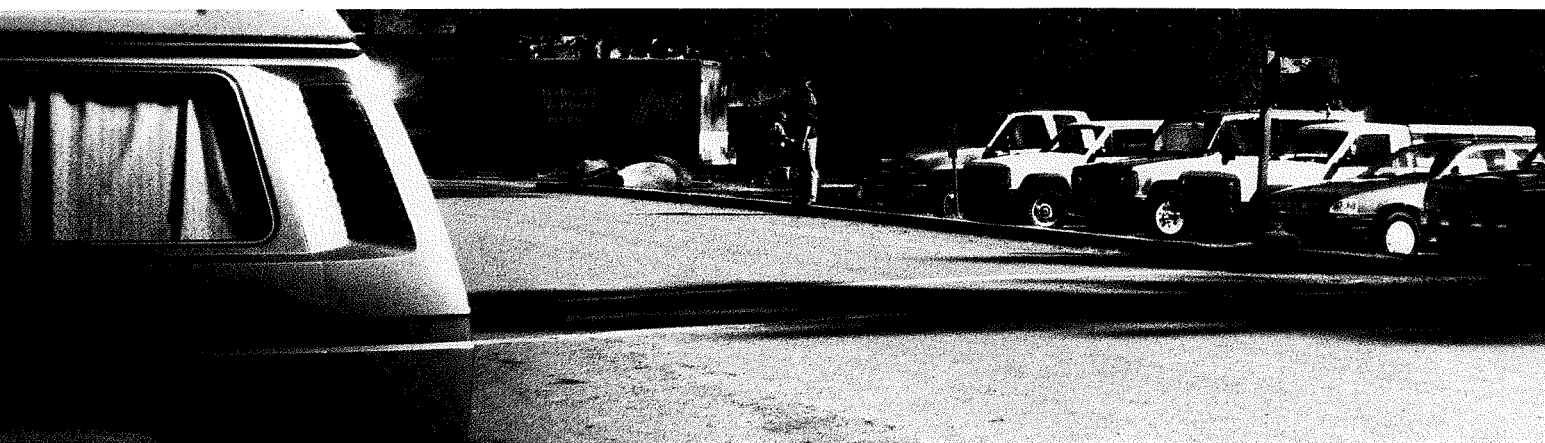


Photo by Hugh Hardy.

sible since 1918, lived in the Valley from 1935 to 1938, traveled many of its trails, made 17 first ascents on the Valley's walls and four first winter ascents of Yosemite's peaks, have read almost everything written about it, seen a lot of it through the mind and eyes of Ansel Adams and have exposed my wife and children to it at every opportunity.

When asked to assess the natural environment of Yosemite, I can only say that I wholly approve of it and defy any part of the earth to surpass it. I admire the design and management decisions that created Yosemite, decisions in which human beings had no role at all.

The principal design and management decisions are still carried on by the Creator. Nature should be designed exactly as it is. Neither I nor anyone else needs to second-guess God. At the earliest opportunity we should cease trying to.

The built environment created to support visitors in the Valley is exemplary, with special credit due the work of the late Eldridge T. Spencer in the design of Yosemite Lodge. Certain logistics in the management of visitation have altered Yosemite to let more people experience the grand design, and I think they have been initiated and carried out in a way that is exemplary.

The visitor count is now six times what it was when I lived in the Valley, and, thanks principally to the shuttle buses, the impact has been diminished—except for the chalk and bolt holes on the cliffs, which are probably less damaging than my pitons were. (No more placing of bolts from rappels. Let climbers earn the tough faces, not mechanize them.)

What should we do to protect this place? Yosemite should be surrounded by a Yosemite Biosphere Reserve, it and the present

will be fewer people per acre for at least part of the year.

I would like to see the clock turned back and mature thought given to realigning the Tioga Road. Restore the old road in Lee Vining Canyon and let rock slides obliterate the over-engineered grade in the lower stretch, where a road should never have been built in the first place. At Tenaya Lake build two one-way roads over the Snow Flat route and require former NPS Director Connie Wirth (or his heirs) and the NPS Denver office to put every single piece of shattered granite back where it was before they vandalized that beautiful glaciated slope. Since clocks don't turn back, I would simply hope we never repeat these mistakes.

Even so, there should be a more fundamental re-evaluation of the role of private automobiles in the park. Our human relationship to nature at Yosemite is limited, far more than it need be, by



park constituting a Greater Yosemite National Park. The reserve would extend from ancient Mono Lake's farthestmost shore to where the Merced River disappears in the McClure Reservoir, with buffers north and south to protect the biosphere from incompatible uses. Existing ownership and management would be maintained and the integrity preserved with performance standards to be agreed upon.

Overnight experience in the Valley should be retained, even though not everyone can partake of it. Pillow count should not govern design and management decisions. Accommodate more people only if that can be accomplished with no more visitor impact (or conceivably with less).

Nor should the National Park Service (NPS) hard-sell off-peak times in autumn or early spring. Let people discover on their own the beauty of Yosemite in those seasons; that way there

the wheel, the internal combustion engine and the excessive pavement they require. The prospect of a Yosemite Valley minus private transportation should be the world's goal.

There should be more opportunity for, and encouragement of, foot travel, minus pavement. At the earliest opportunity, as much as possible of Yosemite Valley pavement should be removed and what is left should serve only for service vehicles, shuttle buses and bicycles. The Yosemite Valley Rail Road should be restored, its use subsidized and private automobiles parked in the vicinity of Merced.

Do not make access by private automobile any easier. Let it become more difficult, adding to the experience the value that comes along with things that are earned, not just given away. We remember where we have walked, we forget where we have driven. Yosemite should not be a forgettable experience.

Frederick Law Olmsted, Yosemite Pioneer

Twenty-five years before Yosemite National Park was established, Frederick Law Olmsted, camping in the Valley, read to the first Yosemite Commission an extraordinary report he had written on the nature of the place and principles that should guide its use.

Olmsted moved to California to manage a gold-mining operation shortly before Congress deeded the Valley and the Mariposa Grove to the state. Appointed head of the Commission, which administered the grant, he explored Yosemite thoroughly. His description of it remains one of the best we have.

He believed no individual feature lent Yosemite its distinctive charm. Instead, he thought the profound effect of Yosemite arose from its union of two types of landscape, where "cliffs of awful height and rocks of vast magnitude" were "banked and fringed and draped and shadowed by the tender foliage of noble and lovely trees and bushes, reflected from the most placid pools and associated with the most tranquil meadows, the most playful streams and every variety of soft and peaceful pastoral beauty." This combination of what he called the sublime and the beautiful made Yosemite "the greatest glory of nature."

Olmsted's scheme of management was based on the fundamental question that he was pondering during his years in California: How is civilization to be fostered in a democracy?

He set forth a rationale explaining why democratic government has a duty to save its most special scenic areas for the use

of all people. He believed the enjoyment of natural scenery relaxes and enlivens the mind, providing "refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system." Aristocrats could restore themselves with visits to private parks, but Yosemite was to be for all people. Therefore it was important for government to save the site from exclusive use and preserve it for future generations.

To accommodate visitors he called for five small cabins and roads around the base of the Valley, but he cautioned against artificial construction that would "unnecessarily obscure, distort, or detract from the dignity of the scenery."

Olmsted believed the ability to appreciate natural scenery was a measure of civilization and could be learned. To promote the proper appreciation of Yosemite, he enlisted the help of people who had carefully studied its natural and scenic features. Four of the eight Yosemite commissioners, he recommended, should be "students of Natural Science or Landscape Artists."

Finally, Yosemite could not serve the mass of the people unless it were accessible to them. Olmsted proposed the majority of the Commission's budget be spent on carriage roads leading to the Grove and Valley and ordered a surveyor to lay out scenic routes. He proposed so large an appropriation for roads that three Yosemite commissioners, meeting informally after he returned to New York, decided it was "inexpedient" to submit the report to the legislature, effectively suppressing it.

But Olmsted's ideas did not go unheeded. A party of public officials and journalists who had traveled across the country were camping in the Valley with the Yosemite Commission on the day Olmsted read his report and subsequently returned home to publicize the Yosemite Grant and the Commission's work.



Frederick Law Olmsted
(front row, second from left)
and members of the first
Yosemite Commission in the
Valley with U.S. Speaker of the
House Schuyler Colfax and a
party of journalists.
Photo by Carleton Watkins.
Courtesy the Bancroft Library,
University of California,
Berkeley

Yosemite's Meadows: Nature Versus Nostalgia

Yosemite embodies a microcosm of the problems that face ecologists who are charged with managing natural systems in places that also are used for recreation. Basic to this problem is the conflict between the dynamic nature of vegetation and our nostalgia for earlier landscapes.

This nostalgia seems to be inherent in human psychology. People often consider their early childhood outdoor environments as “best” environments. Many of us treasure our recollections of our first visits to places like Yosemite and compare subsequent visits to that experience.

Our nostalgia is also stimulated by nature writers, paintings and films. Wilderness advocates have reinforced it by convincing the American public to love the wilderness even if the public cannot experience it. The word “wilderness” itself conveys a sense of earliest times, not changing times.

Yosemite Valley is the premier laboratory in which the conflict between vegetation change and our nostalgia for early landscapes must be worked out. The flat, expansive meadows provide vistas with unobstructed views of the massive granite walls and wonderful waterfalls from great distances. Many visitors treasure their memories of camping, picnicking and hiking in the meadows. The meadows are the place both to see and to experience Yosemite.

The meadows are prone to invasion by ponderosa pine trees. For 4,000 years, before President Lincoln set aside Yosemite Valley as a park in 1864, the Miwok Indians living there burned the meadows and adjacent forest stands every year. They did this in order to improve the efficiency of acorn collection, to make it easier to collect certain bulb plants and to prevent saplings from taking root in the adjacent forest understory (thereby minimizing the risk of surprise attacks from Shoshoni raiders).

With the removal of the Native Americans and the institution of a policy of fire prevention and suppression, ponderosa pine finally established a foothold in many of the original meadows. Dense populations of seedlings, which would have succumbed to burning, survived to produce forests.

Succession from meadow to forest was also enhanced by the lowering of the Merced River's bed in 1879. The granite bed and rocks in the river channel at Bridalveil Fall were blasted away with dynamite, effectively lowering the water table in several wet meadows and allowing further invasion of ponderosa pine. Consequently, more than half the meadows that existed in 1867—some 411 acres—have been lost.

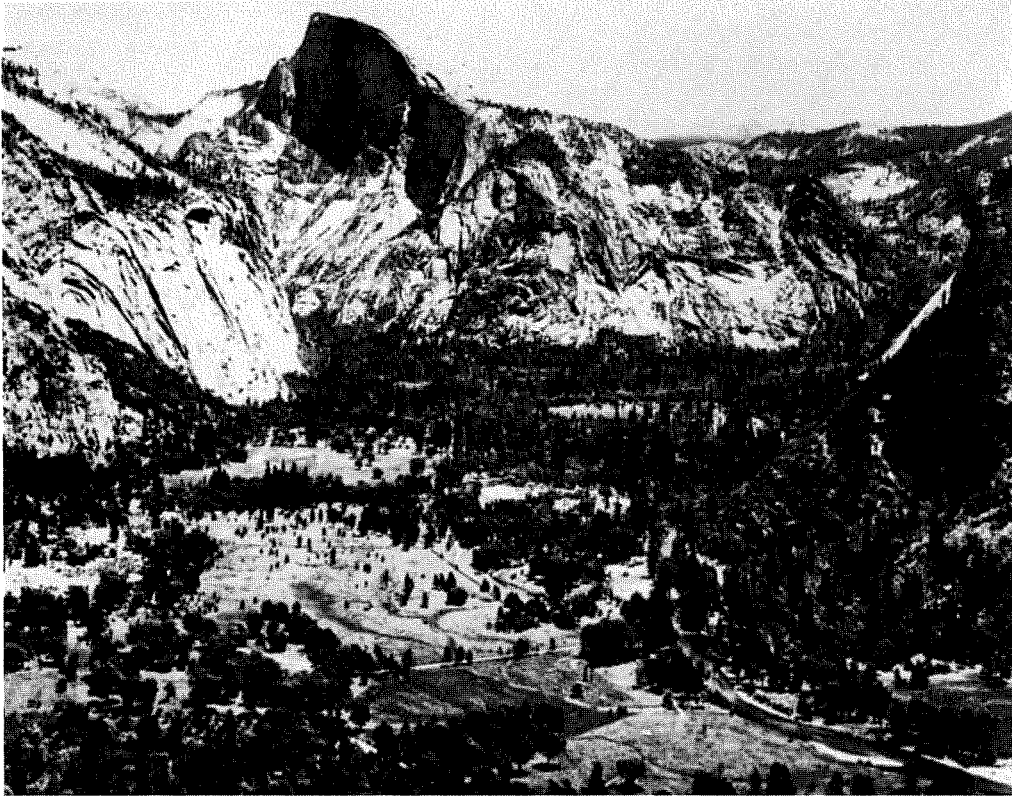


View from Black Springs, 1866.
Photo by Carleton E. Watkins.



View from identical spot, 1943.
Courtesy National Park Service.

From the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, half of Yosemite Valley's meadows were lost to the invasion of ponderosa pine, as these two pairs of photographs show.



View from identical spot, 1961.

Photo by R. P. Gibbens.



View of upper end of
Yosemite Valley from Columbia
Point, 1899.

Photo by H. G. Peabody.

By the mid-1960s, the National Park Service (NPS) embraced the notion that national parks should be managed to maintain “vignettes” of the wilderness as it was first observed by European or American explorers. As a result, the NPS began periodically burning Yosemite Valley meadows to prevent further succession to forests. The Valley was insured against the disappearance of a nostalgic view of the early American landscape.

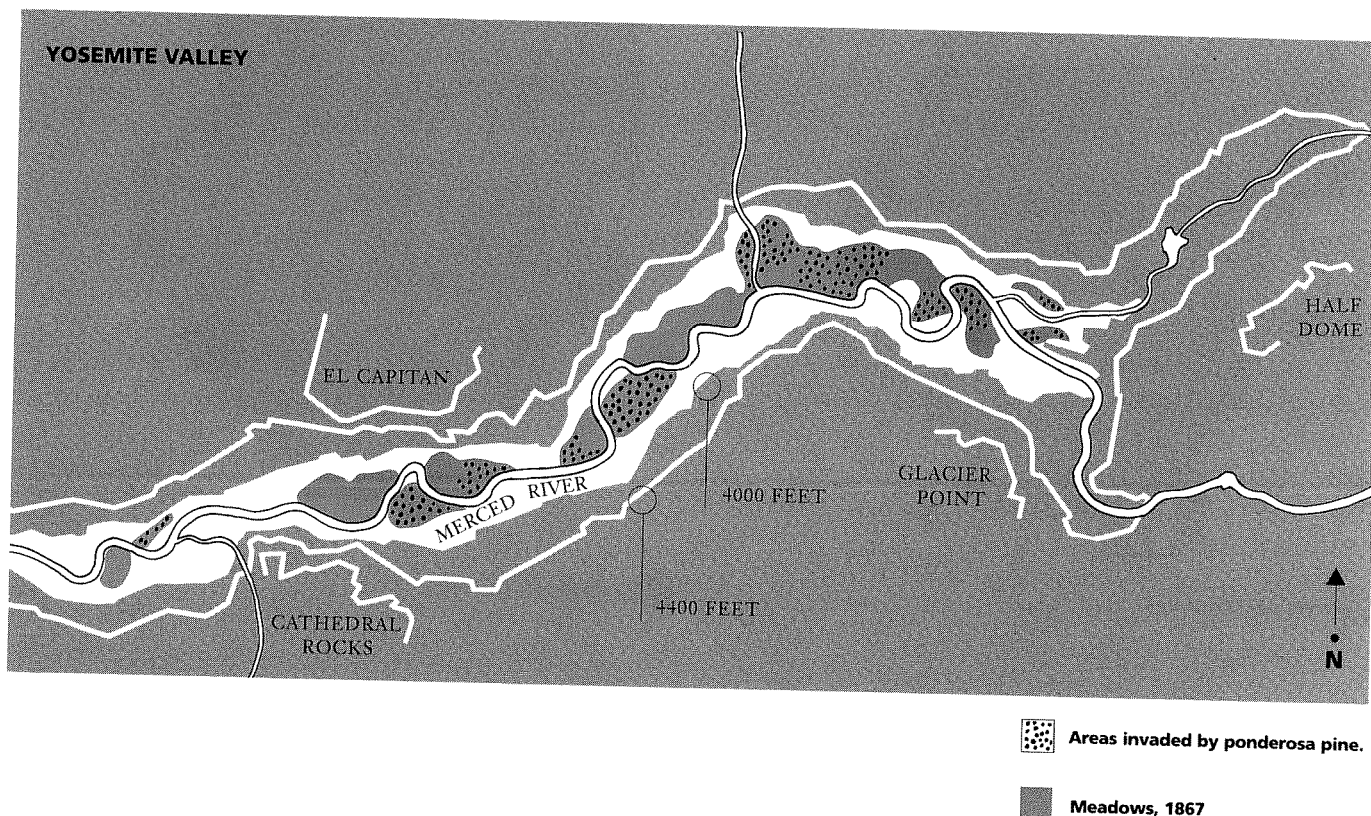
In the 1970s a new generation of ecologists re-examined this policy and suggested any attempt to manage the landscape to protect specific patterns of vegetation (or even specific individual plants, such as the giant sequoia trees near Wawona) was misguided and doomed to failure. They contended that natural processes should not be impeded and a vegetative mosaic should be allowed to emerge. They assumed that these processes would restore and maintain wilderness ecosystems in national parks.

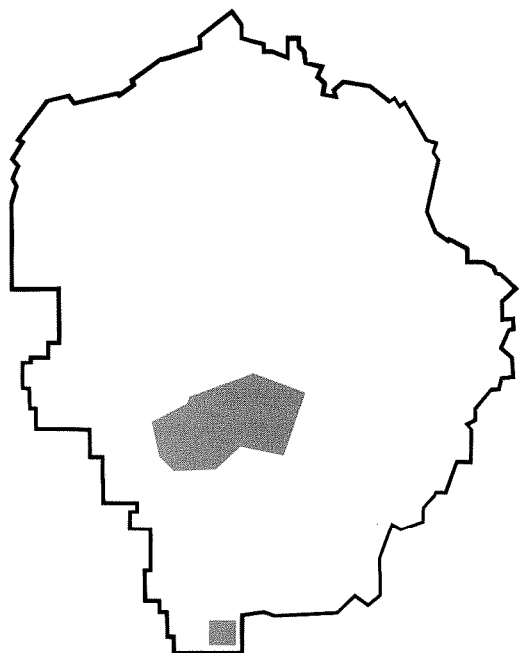
Since then the meadows have burned only when lightning strikes or when NPS managers, using a timetable based on the frequency of lightning-caused fires, determine a fire should be set. Similar practices govern burns in other parts of Yosemite and in other national parks.

This “let-burn” policy is currently being reconsidered. In the summer of 1988, a series of human- and nature-caused fires burned much of Yellowstone National Park. Public outcry over the loss of vistas traditionally associated with the Park caused the NPS to wonder again whether even naturally caused fires should be suppressed.

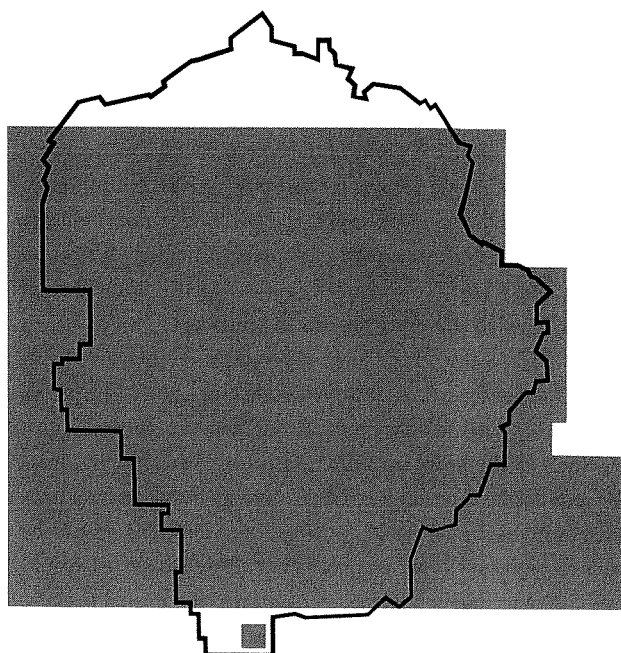
The conflict between a program that uses periodic burning to simulate Native American management and restore nostalgic “vignettes,” and a program that resorts to natural processes and lets succession take its course has yet to be resolved. Debate over the fire management program in Yellowstone is but one example of this conflict in approaches.

As a student of ecology and NPS policy, I look forward to watching the evolution of the debate and its impact on the meadows in Yosemite Valley. The NPS should see the value of the Native American practice of burning meadows in the Valley. That burning, and the periodic burns of the 1960s, halted the invasion of ponderosa pine and prevented further loss of the landscape the Park was established to preserve.

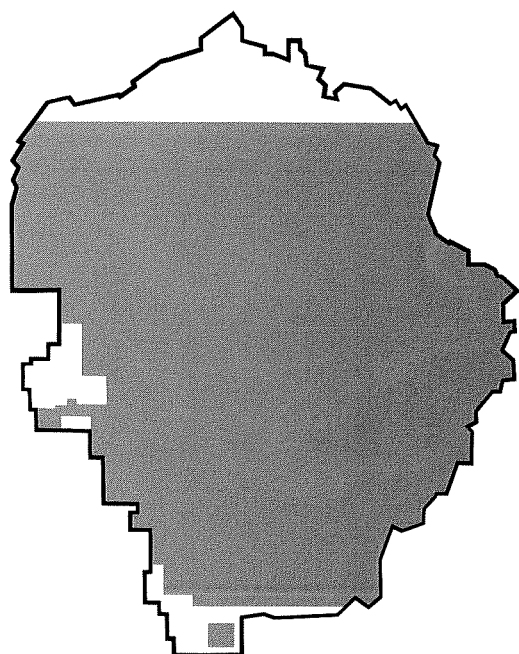




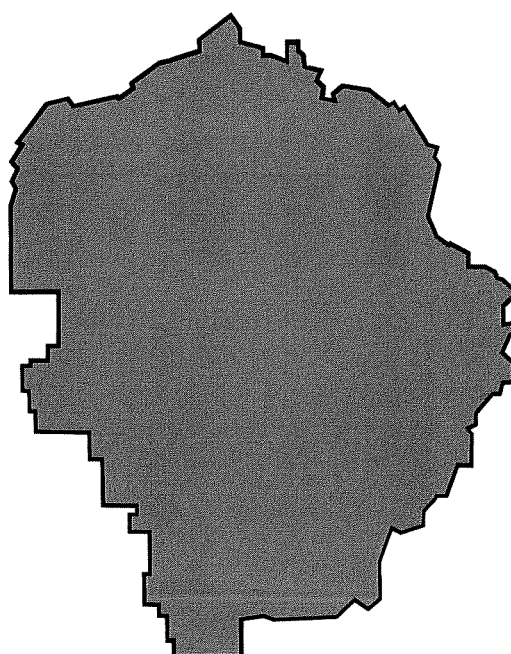
1864 grant.



1890 park boundaries.



1905 park boundaries.



Current park boundary.

Yosemite National Park's boundaries have been revised many times, a reminder that many of the issues facing the Park do not stop at its borders.

*Douglas & Regula Campbell
Robert Irwin*

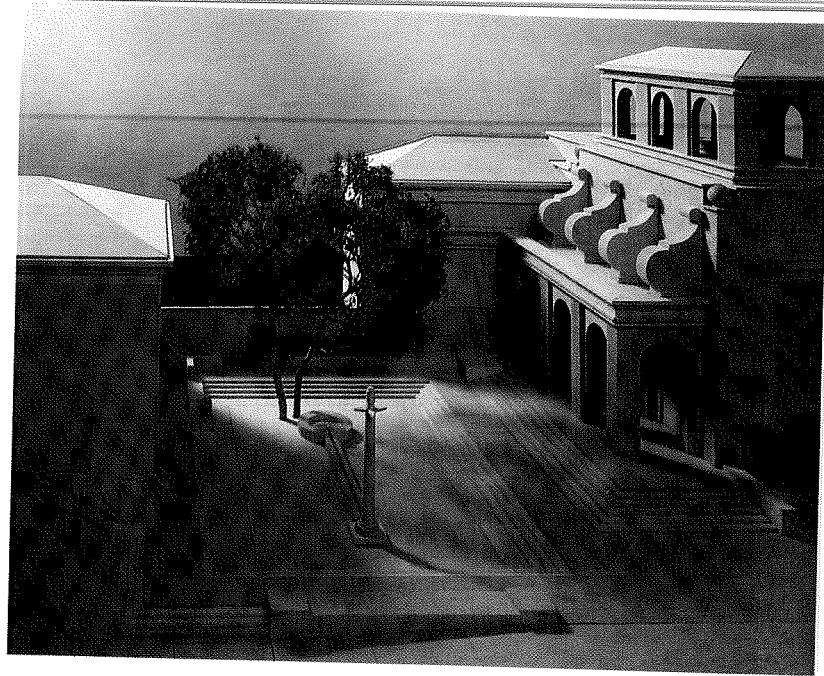


Photo courtesy of Campbell and Campbell.

The City's aspirations for the project—the creation of a place expressive of certain community and civic values, a place that reveals and repairs relationships with its surroundings—attracted our attention first.

Our work has been concerned primarily with such public expressions of place. Further, we viewed the elements explicitly required to be included in the project—a tree, a fountain and a gated wall—as powerful entities that could be made to speak compellingly as collective expressions of renewed connections with the natural world.

Often in such a project the teams are chosen by the sponsor. But in this case we were asked to seek out an artist, so we were able to reflect on the dimensions the collaboration might take. Obviously, there was a potential for a strong narrative line and content. At the same time, the right response seemed to require a kind of direct, “artless” straightforwardness.

We approached Robert Irwin with this in mind. While we had a general familiarity and enthusiasm for the subtlety and directness of his work, it was our initial conversation and agreement that led us to work together.

It was very satisfying that our different points of departure led to the same basic conclusions about the framework of the piece. The courtyard volume needed to be defined by a sim-

ple powerful, yet welcoming presence: a great tree set in a simple, serene landscape. We worked on this idea in the manner of successive waves of colonists rebuilding on ancient foundations, layering our individual concepts one atop the other, adding or subtracting, adjusting or altering ideas and elements to produce an ever more carefully attuned and refined work, which still was based on the primitive, viscerally inspired original. We ourselves have had very different visualizations of things, but it seems to come back to these basic agreements about what the place is.

Our work is primarily concerned with connecting people and the natural world through the design of specific public places. Thus, we began with thoughts of the natural landscapes of Pasadena. There are essentially two: the broad, relatively flat mesa, which supports drifts of oak woodlands and which gradually slopes from the dramatic San Gabriel Mountains to the Los Angeles basin and eventually to the Pacific Ocean; and the water-carved canyons of the Arroyo Seco, whose curving path is lined with an abundance of fragrant vegetation.

Since water is so symbolically and sensually beneficial, especially in this dry climate, we felt that this sheltered, sheltering courtyard should evoke the Arroyo Seco while the more public

setback surroundings should be designed as an abstraction of the more open, dry mesa. The grand tree became, of course, a huge California sycamore. Throughout coastal California's semi-arid landscape, this plant signals the presence of fresh water. This twisted, multi-stemmed species is naturally dramatic, with white bark, mottled gray and brown; it provides a deciduous canopy that seasonally changes from bright green to tawny gold and issues a pungent, watery fragrance.

In the manner of the Arroyo the courtyard is set apart from its adjacent surroundings by a drop in grade level. Wide, concrete stairs and gently sloped walks provide easy access for all from the sidewalk and Police and Hale buildings. (To avoid the “cattle chute” effect of handrails, gradually sloping walks are provided instead of access ramps.) In order to describe an appropriately proportioned and aligned spatial volume and to provide a gracious entry along its public edge, the courtyard moves forward into the setback along Garfield Avenue. Wide low walls provide casual seating.

A lapping fountain of cut sandstone and Arroyo granite springs from the roots of the sycamore. From a welling source, water glides in shimmering waves down a narrow channel to slide over the black granite base of the

Sentinel and disappear into a gravel border. Drifts of rich green streamside plants gather at the fountain edges.

The Sentinel, a column rising to an eagle head capital carrying a blue light, recognizes the role of the police department as guardians of the City. The back wall of the court is painted with a mottled green wainscot rising and blending to layered violet and capped with a red band.

Massed plantings in the flanking setback along Garfield Avenue recall the mesa: Engelmann oak (native to only a narrow band of southern California mesas), lemonade berry, live-for-ever, coffeeberry, toyon and others. Oaks are planted in straight rows to respond formally and symbolically to the original Beaux Arts Civic Center master plan and to add its collection of significant California trees.

—*Douglas Campbell*
Regula Campbell

Generally, I find the rush to collaboration not too wisely thought out. The difficulty of making such a marriage is not recognized. In the prospectuses of these kinds of proposals hardly any time is given for the process of getting two separate personalities together, especially if the people are operating with two different aesthetics or in two different disciplines. Most project sponsors hardly leave enough time for a creative process. They take six months to a year to put the prospectus together and then want the collaborative-creative process to take two weeks. It's bass-ackwards; in the end everyone is shortchanged.

For a collaboration to work, three basic things are necessary. First, the project must be of sufficient scope and of equal interest that separate parties need and want to collaborate in it. If I wanted to go to the moon and you wanted to go to the moon, we would have the first basic tenet for collaboration: shared desire.

Second, the project must be of sufficient scale that there is room for both people to work. That way, I know I need other people's expertise: I can't do it alone. When I find someone, we already have a clear reason why we are getting together and know what our roles are. Mutual need is the second tenet for successful collaboration. If you don't have mutual need, the experience can be similar to that of being thrown into a snake pit: one or two people could do the project themselves and are used to working by themselves.

Finally, must have respect for each other. If I know a person is the best at what they do and I have respect for that person, that is the best of all possible worlds.

Collaboration worked reasonably well for us on the Pasadena project. We're not finished and there are some difficulties. But we agreed on one

thing up front, that the courtyard needed a large tree, and it was on this ground we decided we probably could work together. We were able to take a basically simple idea and refine it, elaborate on it by bouncing it back and forth between us. Up to a point that has improved it.

The proposal looks more like a landscape project than an art project. If an artist and a landscape architect create a public space together, it often ends up looking more like the landscape architect did it. That could be because the landscape architect dominated the process, or because the only appropriate solution was a landscape solution, or because the artist abdicated. In this case a landscape approach really was best; the project simply did not call for an elaborate art solution.

The first thing you must have in a case such as this is an artist who believes that is an appropriate approach. If I had been determined to produce an art object, then the collaboration would not have worked.

Still, most everyone connected with the project wants to identify me with the column at the front of the courtyard ("sculpture") and the wall at the rear, which we intend to stain bright colors ("painting"). I don't see it that way. It's the whole to which these are parts that may be art.

There are few artists who would agree that art is something other than sculpture or painting. But I take that position comfortably. It's an aspect or an extension of a dialogue about modern art that I am personally pursuing and to which I am trying to give some legitimacy.

*Robert Irwin was interviewed
by Todd W. Bressi.*

Yosemite of Ice, Yosemite of Fire: A Mythology of Forms

There is an awesome quality about Yosemite Valley, a breathless scale that has been the basis for enduring attraction: the sheer granite cliffs rising so abruptly, the sudden height bursting from a serene floor, the hidden secret of a great space, the sliced shape of the domes.

All these visual, visceral, vital features appear in our minds and pull us into Yosemite for a first timid visit, then again for yet another view of its awesome space. This majestic scale, the specter of nature in grandeur unknown elsewhere in our experience, has given the Valley its magical power.

Not surprisingly, we openly question how this Valley was created. El Capitan and Half Dome beg the imagination of human logic to divine their sharp, vertical, perpendicular, sheer, immense granite forms. The rock itself seems to hold the story of its own creation and speaks to an inner voice of the human spirit. How could such a rock be so pure, so straight, so large, so high and still be of this common earth? How did Yosemite come to be so sheer, so abrupt, so sudden, so sliced? How did such a Valley come to be in place, or out of place, with our natural world? It baffles the mind.

Yosemite of Ice

We are told in official folders, if we ask, in colored brochures, if we read, that the glaciers created Yosemite—great ice flows scraping down from the high Sierra peaks, carving out the Valley below in some distant geologic age of heroic erosion.

The Great Glaciers, hypothesized by John Muir in his sojourn of 1867, were first given as the natural force behind Yosemite's creation. Now we are told the glaciers of John Muir are not the glaciers that carved the Valley. It was during some other ice age, before John Muir's, before the Pleistocene, before the earliest ice age yet known, that glaciers created the great Valley of Yosemite. Of course, only faint traces of these glaciers remain, we are told, and a careful eye on the high plateau might see this great natural force evident.

We are told, as well, that before the great glaciers carved their "U's" Yosemite was a valley "V," a normal valley like others in the Sierra, like Hetch Hetchy or Kings, deep "V" valleys carved by fast flowing streams down from the mountains. As the mountains were rising up, the streams dug deeper into the granite, carving their valley "V's."

And before these young valleys there was the molten rock, the

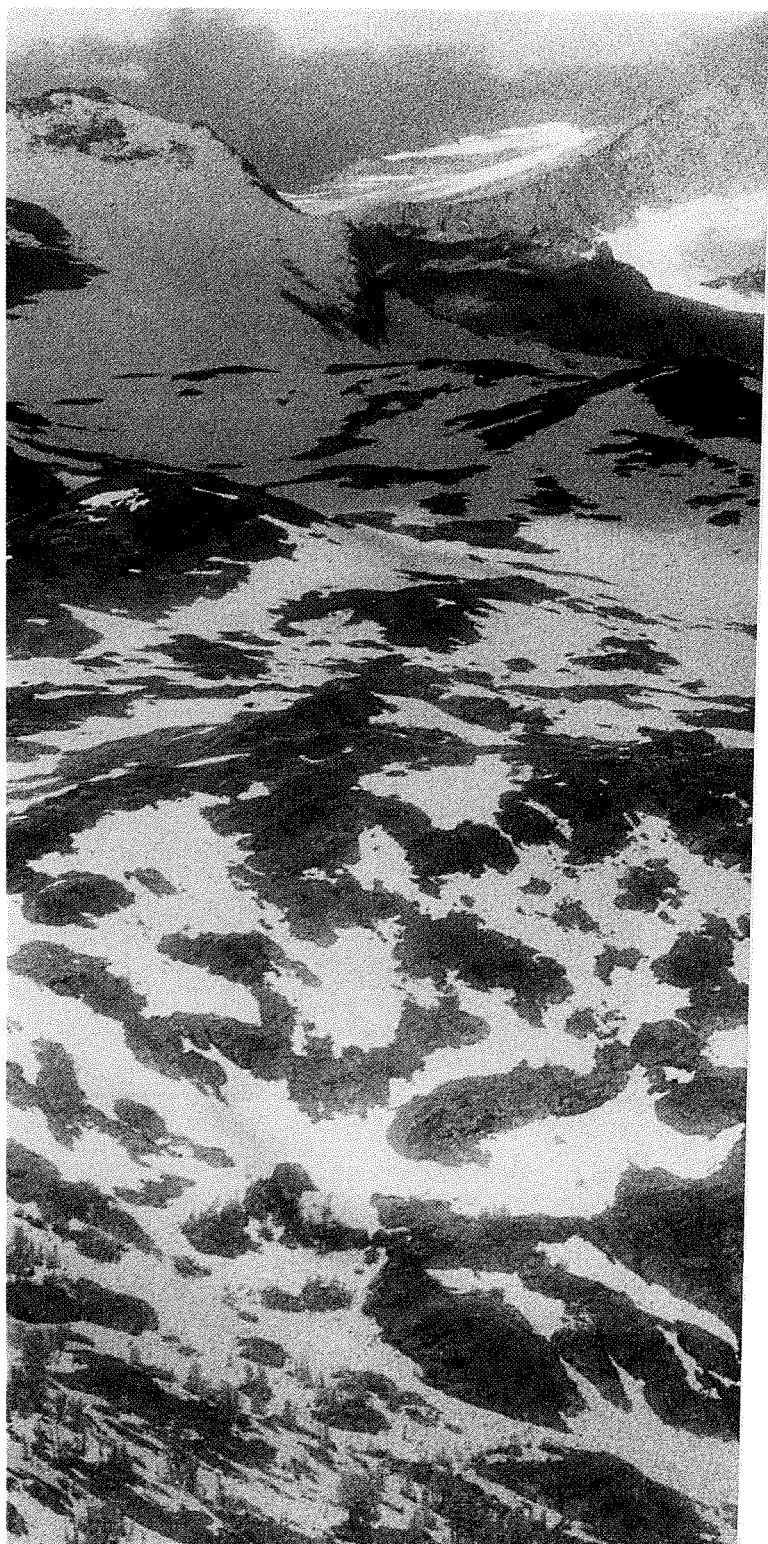


Photo by David Robertson.



pluton of the Sierra Nevada, the magma of the batholith injected below the earth to create the granite domes. Erosion exposed the granite domes; some, like Half Dome, rose above the flow of the great glaciers, beyond the reach of the ice carving.

How deep was the Valley eroded from the pure granite pluton? Seismic radio waves tell us it is 2,000 feet through glacial debris to the rock floor buried below. El Capitan really rises 3,000 feet above our eyes and 2,000 more below, a mile of sheer granite wall!

The Great Glaciers in the upper plateau gave Yosemite to the American people by enticing John Muir to study them, to seek the origins of the Valley in the high basin. So it is the Ice Spirit that blessed the granite walls and helped put bounds around this great chasm of natural wonder. We should be thankful to the Spirit of Ice for such picturesque preservation of scenic beauty.

Yosemite of Fire

But how could such awesome height be carved by ice with hardly a trace? All these glaciers and granite seem uncertain in company, in creation, in logic. Yet this is the mythology that scientists say today formed the Valley.

How would we understand the meaning of Yosemite if, instead, the Great Glaciers were only a secondary force in its awesome creation?

Listen to the Miwok Indians, who lived in the Valley for a thousand years and more. Their stories tell of the Great Spirit who split Half Dome asunder with a terrible noise and awful sound, who rumbled the earth and gave fire from the mountains, a natural force from underground causing sudden events to rift the land. Instinctively, the Miwoks knew the Valley had been created by a quick action of nature, which they explained as the bickering of a feuding couple, To-touch-anula and Tis-sa-ack.

Perhaps this is too remote a mythology for our rational age. Then listen to the voices of the Americans who first saw Yosemite in the Gold Rush years, to William Abrams who saw the "stupendous cliffs" rising 3,000 feet and thought the Valley had been "sliced with a knife." J.M. Hutchings echoed their reactions: The "perpendicular mountain cliffs, deep gorges and awful chasms" of Yo-Semite "took away [his] power of thinking" when he first saw them.

Speak to the climbers on El Capitan who tie themselves to the big wall cliff-face as a challenge of life and endurance. Speak to the campers with strained necks who bend backwards to find the top of Half Dome. Watch tourists struggle to speak words as they see the scale of the Valley first from El Portal. The great granite rocks awe the eyes, stop speech, pull daring souls to danger. They all are under the spell of the Fire Spirit, who created Yosemite from his wrath of human anguish.

A Mythology of Forms

Today geologists tell us the granite of Yosemite was injected in a rapid event, in a series of sequences creating the Sierra Nevada pluton some hundred million years ago. As it cooled, as it coalesced, as it congealed, the granite fractured, cracked and fragmented in joints that created the geometry of its character.

From that point on, in a series of primal events, the form of Yosemite emerged: a crack, a chasm, a gorge, an abyss, split into the great granite batholith. A simple, sudden, sheer slicing along the lines of least resistance. It seems simple, it seems obvious, it seems logical, it seems practical to understand Yosemite in this direct granite origin.

Perhaps this too is granite mythology. Perhaps this is too childish for reasonable thought, and it is easier to say the glacial god carved Yosemite for our eyes. But what does it matter to the traffic hordes to know anything of how the Valley came to be? The gridlocked roads and overbooked cabins will still be filled beyond capacity in any case.

Knowing granite is to seek the primary force in the Valley, the source of wonder and awe that draws us near, and to respect the great cliffs on their own terms as self-made faces that deserve our humble protection.

There are other meadows in mountain valley streams, other plateaus of high tundra moss, but nowhere else on earth yet known are there such great granite forms so sheer and immense of scale to dwarf human thought. Perhaps on the distant planets, perhaps during some future space probe, we might find such an awesome chasm. But here on earth, it is Yosemite that is the Incomparable Valley of granite walls and we should understand its unique spirits of Ice and Fire for our own preservation.

Tourists in the Mariposa Grove.

Photo by Todd W. Bressi.

Musings on the Trans-Atlantic Vista

The ideal of wilderness that animated Yosemite's designation as a national park is quintessentially American. Yosemite's founders and promoters deliberately intended it as a sanctuary for wilderness, explicitly distinguishing Yosemite from Yellowstone, its only national forerunner. John Muir's carefully spelled-out manifestos, which were the driving force behind the creation of the Park and shaped the public's conception of its role, made that emphasis on wilderness crystal clear.

As a symbol of the New World wilderness ideal, Yosemite is justly renowned. But in the Old World Yosemite is better known for its failings than its inspirational ideals and is notorious for its legendary disparity between expectation and reality.

Most people in Britain who have any notion of Yosemite temper its supposed scenic splendors with a jaundiced impression of touristic horrors perhaps more characteristic of the past than the present. In the words of the highly regarded British travel writer James Morris, "there can be few places of comparable grandeur so ghastly to visit as Yosemite Valley on a holiday." Owing to the press of visitors "the magic of the scene is totally destroyed.... The congestion is terrible, the constant unrelenting movement of the tourists wearisome in the extreme, and the predominant atmosphere sticky, jaded but determined." Almost a generation later, that stereotype remains embedded in the public imagination.

But the vast majority of Britons have never heard of Yosemite at all. And those who have tend to conflate it with Yellowstone's geysers and hot springs, to locate it in the Canadian Rockies, or to link it in their mind's eye with log cabins, spaghetti Westerns, or Yogi Bear. Wilderness comes in at best as an occasional afterthought; John Muir is now a completely unknown figure. During the 1913 congressional debate over Hetch Hetchy Valley, Senator James A. Reed of Missouri noted opposition to the dam intensified with distance from Yosemite. But if concern for the threatened wilderness peaked in New England, it never reached Old England; the cult of Yosemite remains American.

In Britain the name itself is characteristically mispronounced,

Yo Semite, as though the place had some aboriginal connection with ancient Israelites — a fanciful view of American Indian tribal origins not uncommon in the nineteenth century. Indeed, the effusions of Thomas Starr King and other early visitors might be construed as corroborating such a linkage, albeit unintentionally; King likened the Sierras to a New Jerusalem, and his 1860 Yosemite sojourn made him feel akin to "the Israelites...amid the passes of Sinai when the Divine glory was on the mount."

Lost tribes, lost childhood. John Muir's love of wilderness owed something to his early years amid magnificent if desolate Scottish scenes. But the American crusade to preserve Yosemite that Muir so successfully launched conveys little if any meaning to his fellow Britons. As Americans we regard the values Muir

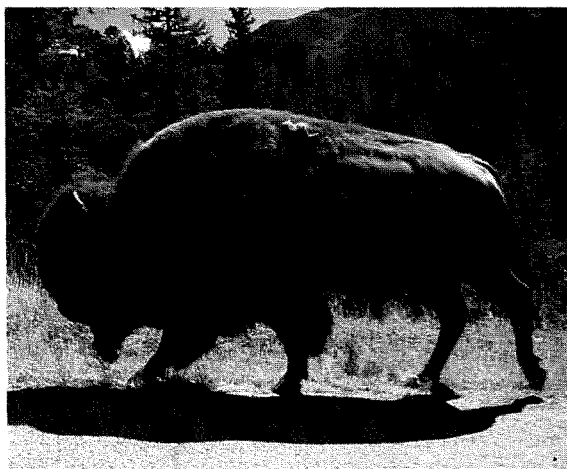
attached to wilderness, largely filtered through his Yosemite experience, as indubitable and universal. But in fact their roots were and are intensely regional. It is emblematic of that regional focus that the Sierra Club, of which Muir was the first president, is still rightly considered to be the supreme champion of the wilderness ethos.

Our own enthusiasm may lead us to forget that wilderness, like rare vintage wine, does not travel well. Indeed, eastern American lovers of nature long viewed it askance. The

transcendentalist sage Ralph Waldo Emerson was deeply impressed on his visit to Yosemite in 1871. But Muir sought in vain to persuade Emerson to linger there longer. And when he returned to Massachusetts, Emerson urged Muir to give up his obsessive devotion to Yosemite; wilderness solitude, in Emerson's view, made "a sublime mistress, but an intolerable wife."

If wilderness is eternal, as its advocates devoutly hope, the motives for preserving it tend to be transitory. Many Americans would no doubt still approve of President Theodore Roosevelt's ecstatic response in 1903, that camping out with Muir in Yosemite was "the grandest day of my life." But few today would follow Roosevelt in praising that wilderness, like hunting, as a macho moral equivalent of war.

Yosemite's meaning is bound to change for each new generation. The Park may now lack the unmediated impact it had on earlier generations. But memories of those previous associations can augment the enrichment such places offer us. One of the pleasures I anticipate for my own first visit there will be the chance to view it through the amazed eyes of the articulate generations that have preceded me.



Yellowstone or Yosemite?

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In Formation

Information constructs change. “In formation” may not be etymologically equivalent, but it yields an image of action, an orientation towards making use of what we know. A geological formation, for instance, is a grouping that can be named, a heaving of the earth that we can imagine.

On the football field formations set the general course of the action. They establish much of what is likely to happen, since the position of various players on the field conditions what they can do. But even the uninitiated can quickly see that from any formation numbers of plays are possible; they may be conditioned, but they are not determined. And even the slightest further observation reveals the importance of talent—the energy, skill and will required to translate opportunity into accomplishment.

The destiny of places, too, is played out through the interaction of talents within established formations. The groupings of people who form alliances, the physical patterns that are familiar to a place and the game plans that prevailing economists imagine all contribute to the evolution of our surroundings. Knowledge, placed in formation, structures how citizens consider their cities and open spaces. What they presume to be possible and how they imagine their lives gives substance to the aspi-

rations of a community. Individuals who muster the will to create new visions or, even better, to seize undiscovered opportunities within the existing fabric of the place, become the agents of distinction or of dissolution. In this issue we observe the interplay of talents in the creation of a civic court, and consider a role for information in the retention of regional character.

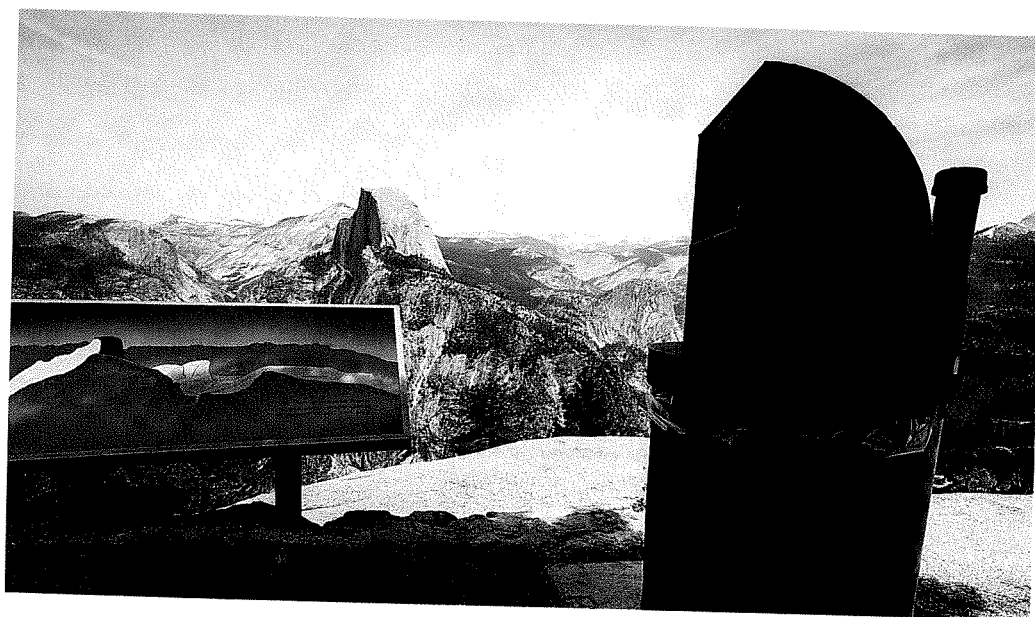
We have also expanded "Speaking of Places" into a Debate. The Yosemite Valley has long occupied a hallowed place in our national geography, lodged there by heroic figures like John Muir, Frederick Law Olmsted and Theodore Roosevelt and embedded in the mind's eye by innumerable paintings, etchings and photographs, many of them profoundly moving. As Walter

Creese has observed in his epic work *The Crowning of the American Landscape*, Yosemite Valley is only a third larger than New York's Central Park, yet "its remoteness, fixity, solidity and evident derivation from colossal forces, when contrasted with the silver light of waterfalls, the gray stones, and a peculiarly soft blue haze in the void, provided more than enough wonder for all. Its quality as an integrated space made it unique. Yosemite stood apart, but grew into a scenic lodestar without parallel because so many artists and intellectuals wanted to enter into dialogue over it."

That dialogue continues in new formations today as the future of Yosemite as a great sanctuary appears threatened by the trappings of voracious tourism.

—Donlyn Lyndon

Ted Orland,
One-and-a-Half-Domes,
© 1975.



Putting Parking in Its Place

Susan Haviland

Old Suburban Parking: garage in the rear. Palo Alto.
Photos and graphics courtesy Susan Haviland.



A classic science fiction story tells of the discovery of a planet on which an admirable but somewhat primitive life form has evolved.

Industrious and intelligent, protected by strong glossy carapaces, these beings spend most of their time moving about on well defined paths. At night many rest in handsome, elaborate domiciles. They vary tremendously in size, color, shape and mode of locomotion, but without exception all share the same affliction: They are infested by small, soft parasites that swarm nauseatingly about whenever the noble creatures come to rest.

The explorers who discover the planet have a policy of not intervening in other creatures' affairs, but these parasites are so pervasive and awful an exception seems justified. They concoct a spray that kills the parasites but not the hosts. But as the parasites dies the great creatures become inert.

This planet, of course, is not some sphere way out deep in space. It is Earth. The splendid life form is the automobile and the parasite is none other than ourselves.

The point is that automobiles are so ubiquitous and have had such a profound effect on our cities and landscape that an intelligent alien being might well assume they are the dominant inhabitants of the planet.

It's not just a matter of the roads we have built. It's not just a matter of constant traffic. Most automobiles spend most of their time at rest, parked somewhere. Outside of dense, urban areas, parking is the single most salient landscape feature wherever groups of people congregate.

Parking, like any important facet of our life, has long been standardized, and in several ways.

There are pragmatic parking standards, which belong to the world of the traffic engineer and parking con-

sultant. These involve someone's interpretation of the physical capabilities of cars and drivers. They have to do with the widths of parking spaces and aisles in parking lots, maximum slopes on ramps and the radii of turns. They tend to be perpetually out of date as cars become smaller and more agile.

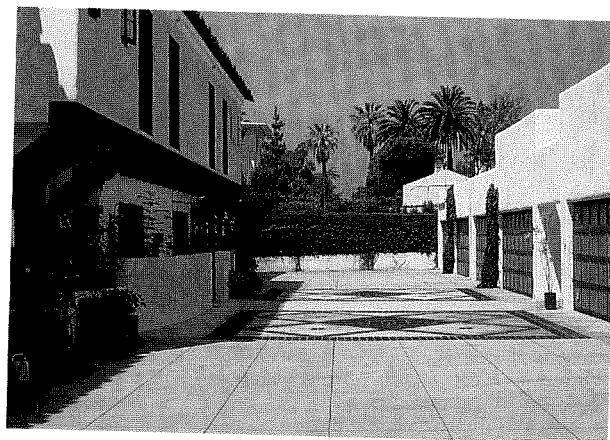
There are political parking standards, which are driven by local attitudes toward growth, traffic congestion and availability or desirability of on-street parking. They concern the ratio of parking to project size, who can park where and the visual appearance of parking areas.

There are economic parking standards, which are rules of thumb based on the cost of land versus the cost of structures. When land values reach a certain point, surface parking is more expensive than structure parking. When land values reach another point, crazy mechanized solutions such as structures with vertically moving slots become cost effective. These standards are not codified, not mandated by any code or group. They're just what you do if you read the bottom line.

Finally, there are market standards, which are based on the innocent sounding premise of giving people what they want. Sadly, like wishes granted by a genie, they produce environments nobody wants. Market standards are neither official nor codified, but they are an integral part of developers' and marketing consultants' lore and they are believed in very deeply. In contemporary residential developments—from large, expensive, detached houses to humble two-bedroom starter condominiums—the following standards are typical:

Drive-to-the-Kitchen. The very best thing is to be able to unload your groceries and your family inside the house, at the most relevant room.

Old suburban parking: garage
in the rear. Palo Alto.



Old suburban parking:
mews in Pasadena.

Contiguity. Even if you can't drive to the kitchen, at the very least parking should be immediately adjacent to it. You should be able to go from your car to your house without going outside and getting rained on, or worse.

Security. Even if parking is not contiguous to your unit, once your car is parked, you must be in a locked secure area with secure access to your domicile. This standard tends to reinforce the other two and gives them a more serious, less indulgent aspect.

Number. Two garage spaces sell better than one. Three sell better than two. The automobile is an icon. The more you have, the more rich and powerful you are. The bigger your

garage, the more rich and powerful you appear.

This is all very well for your own house. But this emphasis on private convenience has produced streets that are nothing more than service drives and streetscapes whose most prominent feature is garage doors. Entrances for people are secondary, minimal, uncelebrated and often undetectable.

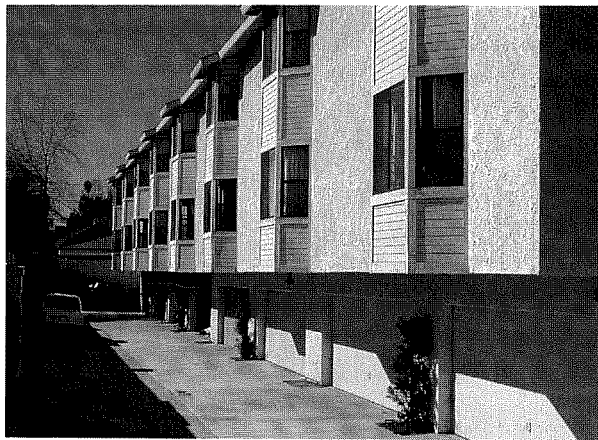
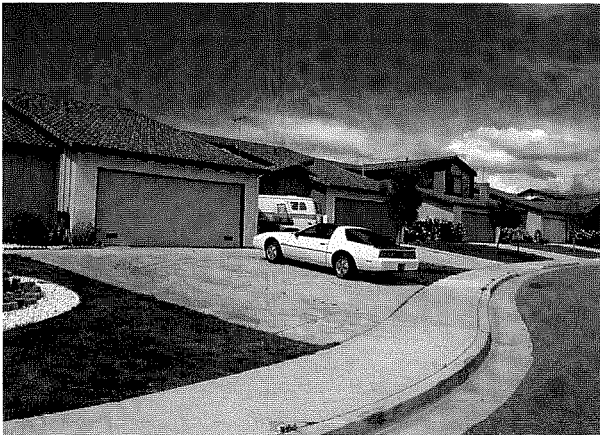
The standards that produced and preserve this situation evolved slowly out of other standards connected to earlier forms of conveyance. When something new, like the automobile, is introduced, it tends to offer new functionality within old forms. Standards that are applied to it tend to be those that were applied to its predecessors.

Keeping a carriage, the automobile's predecessor, was costly and complicated. One needed stables, a carriage house and special staff. Stables were malodorous and tended to be located close enough for convenience but far enough away that smells did not reach the house.

When cars first appeared, they were garaged, naturally enough, in carriage houses, barns, or stables. As they became more popular and less of a rich man's toy, ordinary houses were adapted to accommodate them. This usually meant clearing out the shed in the back or constructing a free-standing garage. These structures had some of the properties of stables and carriage houses. Charming they might be, but they were definitely secondary to the house and usually located as far away from it as possible.

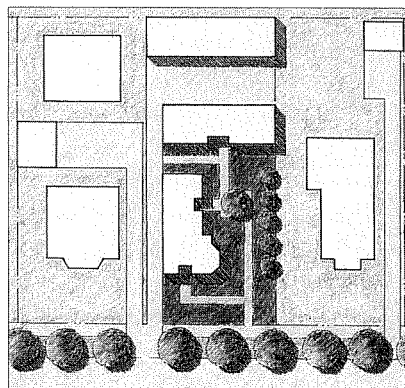
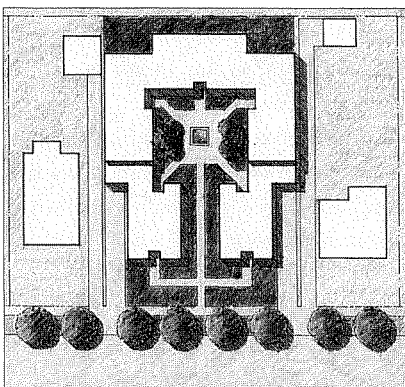
The pattern of the free-standing garage in a rear corner of the lot was wonderful and long lived. It produced the kind of suburb that I and most people of my generation think of as archetypal. Rows of big trees meet overhead to form a tunnel. Front lawns are broad and carefully land-

**New suburban parking:
the street as service drive.**



**New suburban parking:
A Pasadena "six pack."**

**In Pasadena, all parking
must be built on the rear
40 percent of the lot or
underground. Facades and
gardens face the street.**



scaped. Porches and gracious entries face the street, even on the humblest houses, and driveways slip unobtrusively up the side of the lot. In this world, pedestrians feel comfortable.

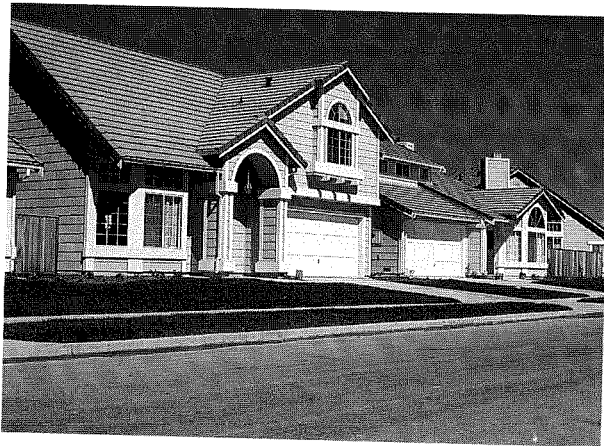
But cars are not carriages. Unlike horses, they don't require daily care, don't smell (that much) and aren't unsanitary to have in the house. They do emit poisonous gasses but that, in and of itself, is no reason to isolate them in the farthest corner of the lot.

Furthermore, it is cheaper to build a garage as part of a house than to build it free-standing. Putting it directly on the street saves paving costs and makes the back yard bigger, which is important when rising land costs dictate smaller lots. Besides, with an automatic garage door opener and a door directly into the house, you hardly have to go outside at all. The full possibilities of automotive convenience are at last being realized. The only thing lost is the quality of the street.

There are solutions. Sadly enough for this over-regulated world, they involve more standards. But the standards can really be quite simple. Our office has written zoning ordinances and design guidelines for areas where new construction threatens to ruin established neighborhoods and for areas which are all new Planned Unit Developments. The approach to each is necessarily different.

In traditional neighborhoods, prevailing parking patterns can be analyzed and rules written so that new construction is consistent with traditional norms. In Pasadena, where we worked with Christopher Alexander and Phoebe Wall to write a new zoning ordinance, parking at the rear of the lot in mews-like garage structures was the standard pattern for multi-family dwellings. This pattern allowed landscaped interior courtyards and dignified street elevations.

Living space is projected,
garages are recessed.



traditional pattern) or completely underground (more and more cost effective as land prices escalate).

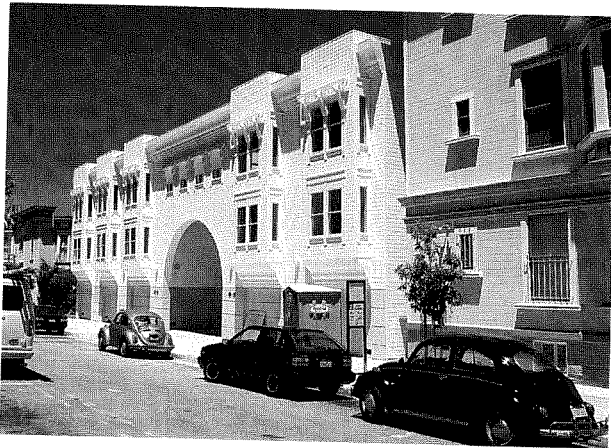
In new PUD's, lots tend to be shallow even in low-density developments. Parking in the rear is not a viable option. Parking in the front, however, does not mean that the garage doors must necessarily be the most prominent feature of a residence.

One factor is simple placement relative to the street. If garage doors are the closest thing to the street, they will dominate it. If a living space or some element, such as an entrance, is the closest thing to the street, garage doors cease to dominate, or at least their dominance is somewhat more benign. Our design guidelines for San Jose contain specific rules based on this principle. Now that the guidelines have been in place for several years, new development seems to be able to meet market-driven standards and to produce streets that speak of people as well as cars.

A word of caution: Standards are tricky things. I dislike them and would like to see them kept to a minimum. They can discriminate against the poor, and they can discriminate against creative and innovative design.

The solutions I have described so far are aimed at reducing the visual impact of parking. In our own work in San Francisco, some of our most successful parking solutions do the opposite: Cars are parked from exaggerated and overscaled entrances into mid-block open space.

True, these openings also accommodate people. True, they provide an amenity to the public in the glimpses they afford of interior gardens. True, one can argue the parking entrance has been turned into Something Else. However, it is still true that parking dominates these facades. I'd hate to see these designs ruled out.



Cars enter through the
portal and park in a courtyard.

Citizens, however, were concerned that a new pattern, known as the six pack, threatened to change the nature of these multi-family neighborhoods. The six pack has many flaws. One is how it parks its cars—behind a row of double garage doors (usually six, hence the six pack) along a 24-foot-wide asphalt drive sunk five feet below grade and running the depth of the lot. The units are above the garages. Since the units face the side property lines, street facades are often blank.

Six packs can no longer be built in Pasadena, largely because of some simple new parking rules. All parking in new construction must be either in the rear 40 percent of the lot (based on the

Growth and the Loss of Regional Character

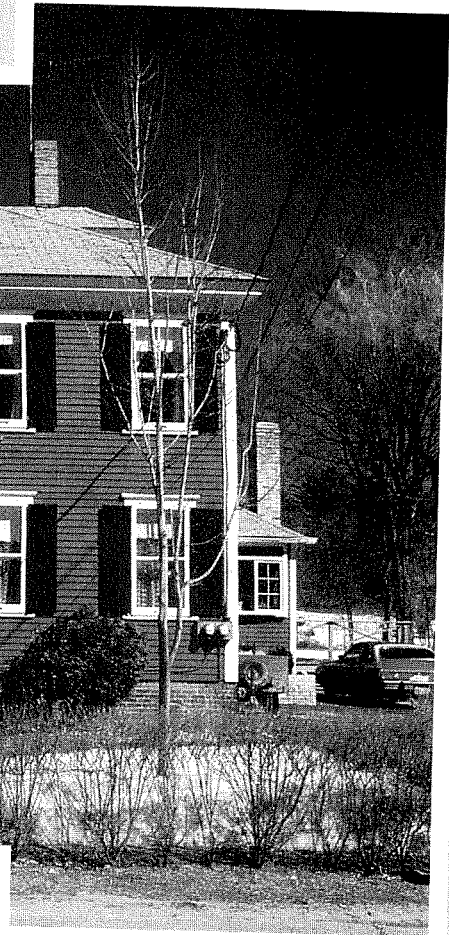
In the debate concerning growth and development it is not uncommon to hear the claim that growth will mean the loss of local and regional character. It is easy for an outsider to assume that the “loss of local and regional character” argument is, at best, a rhetorical tool used to forestall change and, at worst, a smokescreen for other, more questionable attitudes toward social exclusion. Yet, many older towns have a rich architectural, environmental and community heritage that is valued not only by those who are fortunate enough already to live there, but also by those who come to the community as visitors, tourists, workers, shoppers and commuters passing through, as well as by those who would like to move there.

Many New England towns have experienced unprecedented growth pressure as a result of changes in the regional economy. The rise of the high-tech sector with its particular emphasis on white-collar employment, aided by the building of Boston’s regional belt highways—Route 128 (now Interstate 95) and later Interstate 495—has created a great demand for land for commercial and residential development in previously suburban and rural communities.

But whatever form regional growth takes, these towns have found themselves poorly equipped to manage that growth or to shape its effects. There is very little public-sector infrastructure in place to deal with this kind of pressure: Volunteer town committees are stretched beyond their capacity and expertise, and the public-sector interventions with which these towns are familiar are better suited to a time when the community was much more closely knit and change was measured over decades, if not longer.

The strong images of single-family suburban houses spreading slowly across fields that were formerly farmland, of disintegrating village centers and of increasingly congested secondary roads have become powerful rallying points for citizen concern and debate. In those New England towns where the town meeting is still the primary form of government, multi-unit development proposals more often than not are defeated.

"I like being on top of a hill or near the top of a hill...with distant views of other hills and valleys. And from here to the southeast I can see all the way to Boston, and to the west there are seven layers of blue at a certain time in the afternoon for different distances between here and Mount Wachusett.... And with all that exposure, we're still very private, and so I have a kind of contact with the land that is very special...."—Arthur Blackman, Selectman, long-term resident, Groton, Massachusetts



"We grow. We change. We have to grow. And people who don't want to grow have got to keep moving farther back. You see, people come here...because they like 'the country.' And they start immediately, within a year or less, sitting on the boards wanting to do things the way they were done (where they came from), and they get upset and they leave. In the meantime the town has gone the wrong way another three inches, so to speak." —Jack Andrews, retired, long-term resident, Groton, Massachusetts

A Primer for New England Towns



A typical community building.

To what extent, and in what ways, is regional character threatened by growth? Is it possible to have growth without threatening that character?

In the Environmental Design Group at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology we became intrigued by these questions. If one could identify key elements of local and regional character one might be able to understand better just what was being lost. If this proved possible, then it might also be possible to propose ways in which New England towns could allow (if not welcome) growth while shaping it. With these questions as a point of departure and with support from the Design Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, we developed *Housing and Regional Character: A Primer for New England Towns*.¹

On its face, the *Primer* is a pattern book in which we identify key elements of local character for a regional grouping of relatively similar towns facing growth pressure and suggest possibilities for development and growth that would be in keeping with, and possibly even re-establish and enhance, local character. Our main emphasis is on housing because that is where growth pressure has been the greatest. In this sense, our approach is a direct descendant of the *Essex Design Guide* in Great Britain.²

But less obviously, the *Primer* is a manifestation of an information strategy that can be particularly effective in resolving the perceived conflict

between regional growth and the preservation of local and regional character. In particular, it argues that it is far preferable for a community to develop a commonly shared view of its development future and to clearly and widely communicate that view prior to establishing the regulatory policy envelope within which development will take place.

The document is intended to be used as:

- a discussion document around which towns can begin to discuss their vision of what form future development should take;
- a tool to communicate to developers the types of development that the town prefers;
- a negotiation tool that can serve as a touchstone providing images and ideas around which town boards and developers might focus agreements;
- a source of ideas for developers.

This list will undoubtedly appear odd to towns accustomed to using subdivision regulations and zoning as their primary forms of intervention into the realm of environmental design. If the legal clout of zoning has not succeeded in ameliorating the effects of growth, how can a strategy based more on the provision and sharing of information than on the establishment of rules hope to succeed?

But one could argue that zoning is the mechanism towns use because it is the mechanism with which they are most familiar; one changes what one

White picket fences and community mailboxes.



knows how to change. Two-acre (or more) as-of-right zoning is primarily responsible for the single-family housing development that these towns now find so objectionable. With no other articulated models of intervention, these towns fall back on zoning to generate the least worst of the perceived known alternatives. An information strategy offers another path.

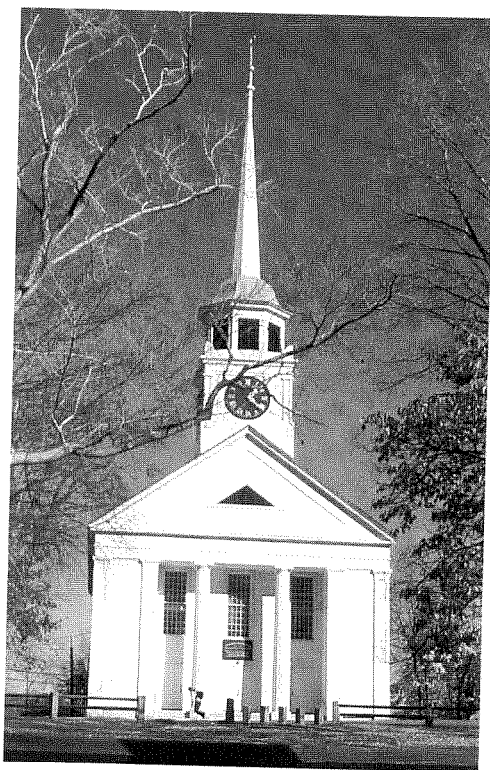
Research Approach

The focus of our research was the region to the northwest of Boston surrounding the circumferential highways Interstate 95 (Route 128) and Interstate 495. We chose the towns of Acton and Groton as specific case examples. Acton is closer to Boston and has experienced more development and growth than has Groton, which is still quite rural in character. Acton has a developing commercial strip and has been the site of a number of multifamily housing developments, while Groton awaits these developments with foreboding. The residents of Groton fear that Acton is what they might become in a generation or so. Yet, both contain many wonderful examples of the diverse and surprisingly unfamiliar aspects of local and regional character that contribute to the overall essence of New England.

While the *Primer* draws specific examples from Acton and Groton, as well as from adjoining towns, the lessons are applicable on a regional scale. Neither Acton nor Groton were our “clients.” It was our intent to develop a primer that would serve as a generally applicable example; any town developing its own primer would want to highlight other characteristic elements of its town.

The development of the *Primer* included a number of research steps. We began with a detailed historical

analysis of the development of the two towns. Then we undertook a lengthy field analysis including site surveys, mapping, and photography. We completed a detailed analysis of the existing land use policies in each town. This step turned out to be particularly important because a number of the development possibilities that we suggest are simply not possible within the current policy envelope. Put more



A church in a village center.

strongly, we came to the conclusion that a number of the current policies act perversely to dilute and undermine local and regional character and that others are simply ineffective.

All of these steps were ways of applying our professional knowledge to the problem of identifying local and regional character. But as we proceeded with our research we were continually reminded that our ways of looking at the world were not necessarily the ways that local residents viewed their own towns.

As an integral part of our research we conducted detailed interviews with residents of both towns. We developed an interview protocol that asked residents to talk about what they liked and disliked about their towns and about their hopes and fears for growth and development. Using constrained-choice questions, we asked our interviewees to contrast and compare various types of development and discuss their preferences: "Assuming that single-family housing/multifamily housing/office/retail/open space development will occur, which type would you prefer?" The questions used boards of numbered photographs of each development type in order to focus the discussion of each type.³

In each town we interviewed 25 to 30 individuals. No attempt was made to assure that we had a random sample; rather, we used "snowball sampling" in which one contact would recommend several more and so on. We asked to be introduced to individuals who lived in various parts of town, to newcomers and longtime residents, to growth proponents and opponents, to renters and owners, to younger and older people, to developers and town planning officials. We were uniformly greeted with enthusiasm, and we often found ourselves talking longer than the promised hour.

We were moved by the stories we were told of people's relationships to their environment, and we came away with a new appreciation of the complexity and diversity of local knowledge. The views and preferences expressed were by no means monolithic or consistent. Many individuals, for example, are torn by their inability to envision a way to steer between the strongly held view that individual property owners should be allowed to exercise fully their property rights in disposing of and developing their land

and the equally strongly held view that misguided growth and development are gradually eroding their communities. Our thoughts concerning regional character have been profoundly affected by these individuals who opened their homes and their thoughts to us, though it is impossible to trace that effect in any statistical sense.

Regional Typologies

When we synthesized our research information, we discovered that local and regional character could not be summarized in a unitary town-wide milieu. Rather, it was manifested in a series of different settings, each of which is evident in the New England landscape. In the *Primer* we identify five primary settings: the Village Center, the Mill Center, Farm Settlements, Woodlands (originally settled as summer communities around small lakes) and the Commercial Strip. In other New England towns there are undoubtedly other important regional settings such as the Seaport, but the five on which we focus in the *Primer* are pervasive.

The substantive design argument we make in the *Primer* is that wherever a developer proposes to develop in one of these towns, almost without exception it will be in the context of one of these settings, and an understanding of which setting is to be host to the development is the critical first step in preserving and enhancing local and regional character.

In the *Primer* we consider the historic evolution of each of the settings. The Commercial Strip, for example, can be traced back to the eighteenth century, and remnants of each period in its development can still be found along it. We document the views of local residents concerning each setting, including potential development. And

Proposals for Village Centers

New England village centers are the result of a long history of physical, social and economic change. When first settled by Europeans in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the village center was sited on the slope or top of a ridge or hill, overlooking a river or wetlands area. Its role as the political and religious center of the town was embodied in the construction of the first meetinghouse. The village center was built around an elongated web pattern of roads, radiating from the center to outlying farms. Although the first town inhabitants lived in the center, by the end of the sixteenth century, outlying farms surrounding thinly populated centers were the norm.

The village center assumed the form one thinks of as "traditional New England" in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. During this period of growing trade and manufactured goods, the village center became the commercial hub of the surrounding town. The village center became denser as the earlier pattern of buildings was filled in. New roads were added to the web pattern, straight turnpikes were connected to the center and one street became the commercial "main street." Greens, churches, town halls and other symbolic elements of the center were formalized.

The village center today is still built on the web pattern of streets. An open space—commons, green, or square—and monumental buildings, such as churches or town halls, are located at important intersections. Views are "led" by irregular streets and are "layered," with buildings and trees overlapping.

The perceived density of the center is high, with houses close together. Side streets have smaller houses set closer together than the main street. Houses are always oriented to the street and present a "public face."



Traditional large village house.

Although the village center remains the political, religious and symbolic center of town, population dilution and commercial competition have often left it a sleepy backwater. Setback requirements and the introduction of strip-style architecture and siting have helped break the traditional tight building pattern and street enclosure.

Once a destination for foot and horse traffic, the village center is now an obstacle to through automobile traffic. This has affected safety and diminished the enjoyment of the village center by pedestrians. It has necessitated traffic improvements that often damage the traditional village street pattern.

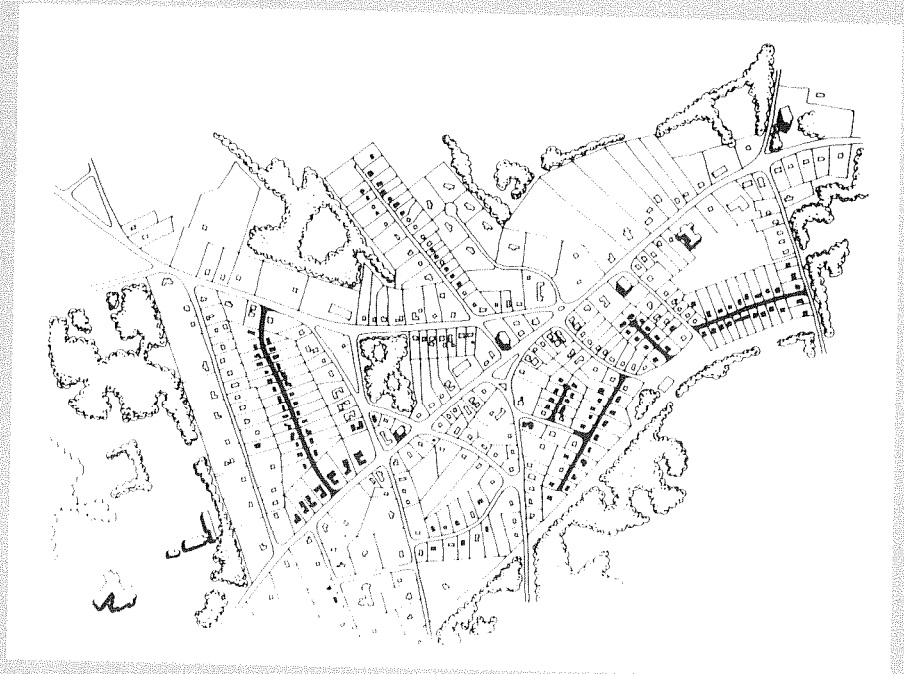
Conservation

Infilling of existing undeveloped or abandoned plots of land could be encouraged. New houses should follow the built form and siting principles of neighbors. Every unbuilt village space or backland should not be infilled, but selective infilling could be instrumental in strengthening the village center and in providing a window for much needed affordable housing.

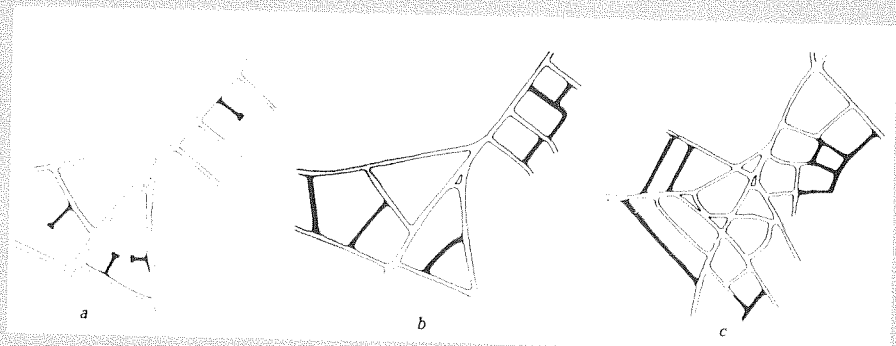
The "web" pattern of existing streets can be filled in, adding new housing that follows the traditional siting and built form of existing housing. Where a grid pattern exists it can be filled in as well.

Culs-de-sac can be created when through streets are impractical. This will offer the opportunity to open up vacant land in the center of webs and grids. Minimum frontage and setbacks would promote efficient development.

The existing web and grid patterns could be expanded to ensure incremental development is in keeping with the traditional local pattern.



Summary of measures to re-establish village centers.



Three strategies for filling in the street pattern.

Text and illustrations excerpted from *Housing Design and Regional Character: A Primer for New England Towns*, by J. Mark Davidson Schuster, Roger Simmonds, Dennis Frenchman, Kathryn Ludwig, William D. Tuttle III and K. C. Ip.



Traditional large village house: model for the design of multifamily housing in the village center.



Successful eighth-acre lot development.



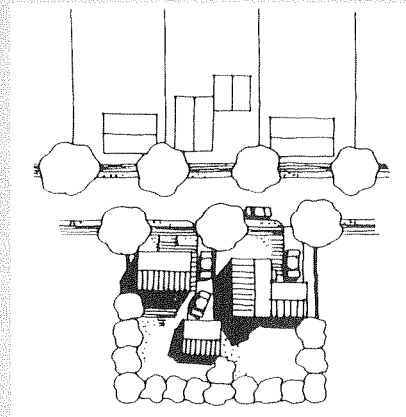
Successful quarter-acre lot development.

Housing

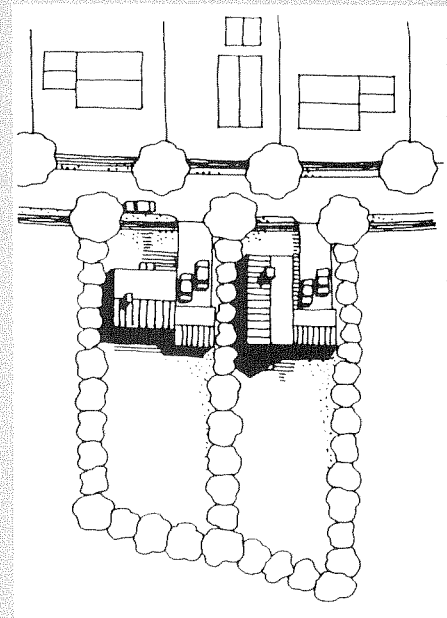
To encourage the development of housing that is in keeping with the local character of traditional village centers, minimum lot sizes should be lowered to lot sizes of one-fourth to one-eighth of an acre, the traditional size of historical house lots. This will encourage sympathetic development, substantially reduce the crippling land costs of larger lots and free up small, derelict, undeveloped lots for development. The danger is that these small plots will be developed with the excessively large subdivision houses that are so much in evidence in today's market. Towns need to control this process, perhaps through tight building-plot ratios.

By making minimum lot sizes smaller, towns can re-create the opportunity for the small traditional single-family house (600 square foot ground floor). These should be located on side streets. Again, it will be necessary to control the size of unit to be built on these plots, so that the buildings will be both appropriate to their context and more affordable.

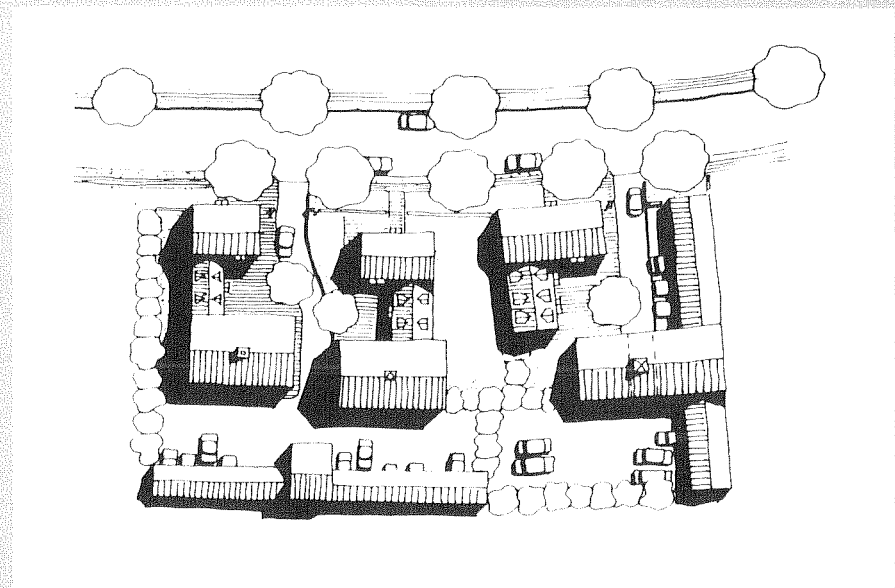
Multifamily housing could be permitted if it were based on traditional buildings in the village center. The housing might follow existing large single-family house forms, particularly the extended house with coach house or barn to the side or rear. Several such house forms might be combined in one development with perhaps 25 housing units designed around the principle of three large village houses with barns or coach houses to the rear.



Proposed eighth-acre lot development on side streets.



Proposed quarter-acre lot development on main street.



Possible layout for 25 housing units based on the "big house/little house/coach house or barn" model.

Streetscape Preservation

Buildings should be set back according to traditional patterns. They should never be set back more than the width of the street pavement and often considerably less. This will maintain the familiar street corridor of the main street and side streets.

Parking should not be provided in front of residential or commercial buildings, and parking on the side of multifamily units or commercial buildings should be screened by planting.

Tree planting is essential on main streets and, where possible, on side streets. New side streets should always have a planting strip between the street and sidewalk.

Traffic Improvements

Traffic speed can be controlled by providing frequent breaks in traffic flow. This would allow pedestrians to cross, obviate the need for street widening, discourage through travelers and create a better retail atmosphere.

A secondary road network could be created in some centers behind Main Street to provide alternatives for local residents and to take traffic pressure off Main Street. These alternative routes should not be straight; rather they should be in the form of a linked network of streets requiring several turns to pass through the network. Such a network would be an integral part of the infill policy discussed above.

we address the problems that are prompted by growth pressure on each setting and analyze the current pattern of the built environment, particularly with respect to housing, in that setting.

Of particular importance is an analysis of the tacit principles involved in suburban housing development. Housing is currently being developed in these towns according to well-established principles about grouping, siting, unit design and exterior design, but principles of which developers, residents and town officials are largely unconscious. Housing development is more habit than considered process, and, like most habits, it is hard for developers and residents to recognize them or to break them.

Consider the single-family subdivision. The implicit rules that embody the paradoxical elements in its design include:

- Housing units in subdivisions must be self-evidently a good investment. The new suburban owner is more likely to be mobile in his or her job and wants to be sure the resale price will be protected. This leads to architectural conservatism. There is pressure on individuals not to “personalize” their houses too much lest they devalue them and those of their neighbors.

- The view of other houses from within each house should be minimized and the view of the landscape maximized. Thus, the front of one house should never face directly toward the face of another. But the homeowner wants to be seen from the street, as do the neighbors across the street, so that landscaping and siting have to be ingeniously managed to satisfy these conflicting demands.

- To give the sense of a rural environment, only cul-de-sacs and loop roads must be used, and they must be curved to ensure that only a few buildings will be seen from the road at one

time, minimizing the sense of density, even though the curves must be sharper than the country lanes that they attempt to evoke because of the limited space available in the subdivision.

Once implicit rules such as these are made explicit, there is a greater possibility that residents and developers will be able to identify key leverage points to change the typical forms of development with which these communities are so displeased and which are destructive of regional character.

Finally, we suggest development principles and design concepts that offer possibilities for enhancing the local and regional character of each setting. These include suggestions for grouping, siting, appropriate plot size, massing and design of housing as well as for the development of road and pedestrian linkages and the identification and preservation of open spaces and vistas. But what is most innovative in our work is the choice to put vision before policy and the suggestion that a new mode of intervention is called for.

Modes of Intervention

Whatever a government does with respect to design can be mapped onto a set of five modes of intervention: standards and regulation, incentives and disincentives, ownership and operation, the establishment, proportionment and enforcement of legal rights, and information. To fully understand government intervention in any field it is critical to understand this menu of five different modes of intervention.

Standards and regulation control the ways in which design decisions will be carried out as well as aspects of the final built form of the design. Through the use of standards and regulation the public sector is saying, “You must do X.”

Incentives and disincentives provide rewards or penalties to individuals who take an action the public sector wishes to influence. The essential message communicated by the public sector is, “If you do X, then we will do Y.”

When the public sector is not willing to vest the decisionmaking power in individuals, it can choose *ownership and operation* to affect the quality of urban design by designing and building itself. The essential message is, “The public sector will do X.”

Perhaps less obviously, a government can also affect the quality of urban design through the creation and *enforcement of legal rights and through the apportionment of those rights* across individuals. “You have the right to do X, and the public sector will enforce that right if you choose to assert it.”

And finally, a widely used, though underappreciated, mode of intervention is the use of *information* to affect people’s behavior. An information strategy by itself is non-coercive: “You ought to do X.”

To be sure, governments often use several of these interventions together in one program to accomplish particular design goals, attempting to offset the disadvantages of one type of intervention with the advantages of another. New and creative public-sector approaches to environmental design have not come from conjuring up new modes of intervention; they have come from innovative recombinations of the existing ones.

These modes of intervention operate along a number of critical dimensions. Two of them are particularly helpful in locating our *Primer* within the universe of possible interventions. The first has to do with the goal of the intervention: Interventions can be used to achieve good design, avoid bad design, or mitigate the effects of bad design. While the ultimate goal of

government is to foster good design, one can argue that most government design programs have been content with avoiding or mitigating bad design because that is easier for a government to accomplish with its awkward regulatory and incentive mechanisms.

The second important dimension has to do with the leverage point at which the intervention is targeted. In a sense, every government intervention with respect to design has as its goal affecting the output of the design process, the natural and built form that we actually experience. But the public sector may also choose to try to accomplish this indirectly by targeting the inputs to, or the process of, design. Building codes that require that certain materials be used, the provision of professional design training in public universities, and regulations that stipulate that only work by certified architects and engineers is acceptable are ways of controlling the quality of inputs to the design process. Design review boards, design competitions, Environmental Impact Statements and public hearing requirements are all intended, in part, to assure that the process of design is an open one incorporating a wide variety of views and approaches with the hope that “better” design will result.

Within this three-dimensional matrix describing ways the public-sector intervenes in design, our *Primer* inhabits cells that are not normally occupied. It is primarily an information strategy, is oriented toward getting good design and accomplishes this by targeting both process and output. The *Primer* is a sourcebook of ideas that can serve as the basis for articulating a local vision of preferred development alternatives. It provides design suggestions and possibilities that can serve as a base of conversation between developers and local communities.

Many of our ideas and suggestions would require changes in the local regulatory envelope in order to make them possible, but we chose not to focus on zoning and other forms of regulation in the first instance because we feel that necessary prior steps are the creation of a local vision of preferred development alternatives and the establishment of a dialogue between communities and the developers wishing to develop there around substantive design issues. A community that rushes into regulation will be ill served if it has not first reflected on its vision of the future.

But we turned to an intervention that relies heavily on information for another, more fundamental reason. An information strategy is particularly suited to balancing the qualities of “coherence” and “complexity” in an environment while recognizing the rights of individuals to develop their property.⁴ It points the way to the development of a coordinated and coherent whole, while allowing for the richness that comes from the variety inherent in the multiplicity of individual decisions.

Three Propositions

The success of an information strategy lies in the quality, persuasiveness, timeliness and applicability of the information and in the wide dissemination of that information to those individuals whose decisions are to be informed. Nothing complicates the relationship between developers and communities more than uncertainty. In our experience, developers are more than willing to craft their development proposals to correspond to locally articulated visions if it is demonstrated that proposals of certain types are in fact more acceptable to the communi-

ty, reducing the likelihood of having a proposal held up indefinitely.

We recognize that many communities will not feel comfortable placing their development future entirely in the hands of what might appear to be a loosely guided information process and will attempt to create many of the same results through changes to their zoning or other regulatory mechanisms. But those changes should follow both in time and in spirit the articulation of a development future.

In conclusion, our work suggests three propositions:

PROPOSITION 1: To formulate the problem as growth versus local and regional character is to create a false dilemma. Growth and character, even if they are not completely orthogonal to one another, are two different dimensions that can be used to describe and analyze environments. It is possible to manage and shape growth so that it will reinforce and perhaps even reestablish local character. Indeed, in many New England communities it was tremendous economic growth (as measured on the comparative scale of its own historical era) that created the regional character that today we are working to preserve. Lowell, Massachusetts, is an example.

PROPOSITION 2: Community residents often have an implicit consensus about what would constitute more desirable development and what would constitute less desirable development. They are often not inherently anti-development or anti-growth. The problem is that opportunities for articulating a vision of desirable development are limited, and without that vision any specific development proposal is subjected to a variety of criticisms that together defeats it.

PROPOSITION 3: The key to resolving development disputes lies in the reduction of uncertainty for resi-

dents and developers alike. An information strategy can be an important component in reducing uncertainty because it is through the sharing of information that the hopes and desires of a community can be internalized into the decisionmaking of developers. The certainty of a strict regulatory envelope is not enough to assure that attention will be paid to local and regional character.

Notes

1. Copies of the *Primer* are available for \$20 from Environmental Design Group, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 10-485, Cambridge, MA, 02139.
2. Essex County Council, *A Design Guide for Residential Areas* (Great Britain: Essex County Council, 1983). Also known as the *Essex Design Guide*.
3. In designing our survey instrument, we benefitted greatly from the literature on perceived environmental quality indices. See, for example, Terry C. Daniel, "Criteria for Development and Application of Perceived Environmental Quality Indices," in Kenneth H. Craik and Ervin H. Zube (eds.), *Perceiving Environmental Quality* (New York: Plenum Press, 1976); and Ervin H. Zube, *Environmental Evaluation: Perception and Public Policy* (Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 1980).
4. Michael O'Hare, "Environmental Management," in Winthrop Knowlton and Richard Zeckhauser (eds.), *American Society: Public and Private Responsibilities* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1986).
5. See, for example, Michael Wheeler, A *Handbook: Building Consensus for Affordable Housing, Working Paper #7* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Center for Real Estate Development, 1987).

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designs for indoor and outdoor public places. His work can be found in the atrium of Washington D.C.'s Old Post Office building, on the Wellesley College campus and outside the Public Safety Building in Seattle. He lives in San Diego.

Arthur Krim

is Chair of the geography department at Salve Regina College in Newport, R.I. He has published works on Native American landscapes and on popular highway culture. He is noted for his poetry of the Massachusetts Turnpike and his work on the suburban imagery of Los Angeles.

Andrew Leicester

is an artist whose recent works include The Minnesota History Center Courtyard, the Penn Central Restoration in New York and the Philadelphia River Walk Project. He seeks to create art that is temporally, spatially and socially responsive to its particular environment.

R. Burton Litton, Jr.

is a Professor Emeritus in landscape architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, and a pioneer in visual assessment of natural landscapes. His *Forest Landscape Description and Inventories* and *Water and Landscape: An Aesthetic Overview of the Role of Water in the Landscape* (with Robert Tetlow, Jens Sorensen and Russell Beatty) set methods and standards currently used by the national parks.

David Lowenthal

is Emeritus Professor of geography at University College, London. His recent books are *The Past Is a Foreign Country*, *Landscape Meanings and Value* and *The Politics of the Past*.

Dean MacCannell

is a Professor of Community Development and Sociology at University of California, Davis, and co-executive editor of *The American Journal of Semiotics*. His research on social policy reflects on small communities, the mythology of modern culture and technology and the unconscious.

Joe R. McBride

is a Professor in the Departments of Landscape Architecture and Forestry and Resource Management at the University of

California, Berkeley. He teaches courses on ecology and his research is focused on the influence of humans on forest succession.

Thomas R. Oslund

is director of landscape architecture at Hammel, Green and Abrahamson, Inc., and visiting design critic at Harvard. Recent projects include the Minnesota Zoological Garden amphitheater, the winning entry in the Minnesota History Center competition and honorable mention in the New York waterfront competition.

Marc Pally

is an artist and arts professional and teaches at the Art Center College of Design in Pasadena. He was formerly the director of LACE, the Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibition, and planner for the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency Art in Public Places Program.

James E. Pepper

is an Associate Professor of Environmental Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He is a board member of Vision Santa Cruz, a public-private, non-profit corporation directing the City's planning and redevelopment in the wake of last October's earthquake.

Martin Puryear

is a Chicago-based artist whose sculpture appears in museums throughout the country. Last year he was awarded a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship and was named best artist at the Sao Paulo Bienal.

Victoria Post Ranney

is editor of the forthcoming *The California Frontier: Volume Five of the Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted*.

Ted Relph

teaches geography at the Scarborough campus of the University of Toronto and is the author of *Place and Placelessness*, *The Modern Urban Landscape* and the forthcoming *Toronto Guide*.

David Robertson

is an Associate Professor of English at the University of California, Davis, author of the forthcoming *Yosemite As We Saw it: A Centennial Collection Of Early Writings and Art* and a board member of the Yosemite Association. His photographs have been exhibited at the Park's visitor center and the Ansel Adams Gallery.

Joseph L. Sax

is a Professor of Law at the University of California, Berkeley, where he teaches management of the public lands and environmental, land use and water law. He is author of *Mountains Without Handrails*, a book on recreational policy for the national parks.

Keith Schiller

is an attorney specializing in taxation law and the founding chair of the Contra Costa/East Bay Chapter of the Yosemite Fund. He received a law degree from the University of California, Berkeley and an M.B.A. from Golden Gate University.

J. Mark Davidson Schuster

is an Associate Professor of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His research has focused on government intervention in design, government arts and culture policies, and quantitative reasoning and its role in planning practice.

Robert H. Twiss, Jr.

is a Professor of Environmental Planning in the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. While in college he spent summers in Yosemite, working at the old Village Store

and at Glen Aulin High Sierra Camp and driving a grocery truck around campgrounds in the Valley.

Michael Van Valkenburgh

is a Professor of Landscape Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and was a 1988 Fellow of the American Academy in Rome. His firm's recent work includes the expansion of a sculpture garden at the Walker Art Center.

David Scofield Wilson

is an Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of California, Davis. He earned his graduate degree in American Studies at the University of Minnesota. The author of *In the Presence of Nature*, he teaches courses on nature and culture in America.

I found *Places* 6:2 interesting and constructive. I like the observations you make and especially the article by De Carlo, which was thoughtful and respected the reality of cars. The pictures of quarries were marvelous.

What has prompted me to comment was the drawing on page 50, "Downtown Boston 2088": elaborate, well done, but utter nonsense. I thought, are we going to have that much more of the same old thing? (I say "we," all of us now must say "they" when we refer to the citizens of the year 2088.) To be sure there are more 1920-like town masses, a few Pei pyramids, axial gardens and courts; these are only momentary fixations and will fall aside.

But for anyone to think they could imagine 2088 just appalls me. Does anyone think the architects, city designers, such as they were, in 1888 could imagine, let alone comprehend, the cities of 1988? Could they imagine motor cars several thousandfold, electricity, radio, TV, unlimited (it seems) heights of buildings, high speeds, pollution, manufactured materials we know, computer computations? Air traffic, top-heavy financial structure, sometimes impotent government and political organizations, printing excesses, photography and reproduction—advertising!!!

One could ask me, "What would you put down if you were to make a projection?" Answer: I wouldn't. It's absurd and a complete waste of time and energy and, what's more, a missed opportunity to put time and energy toward things that could be analyzed and done (including much that the rest of this issue of *Places* recommends).

People (architects especially?) seem to forget that the logical approach to a problem is to write the right program, which means looking at what is really needed and almost always seeing what is wrong with what we have or what we don't have.

It seems to me that students should be led into looking around them to see even the small problems that haven't been solved, and bigger ones too. For instance: Has anyone really solved the problem of how the motor car is introduced into a building? Must one always step from the comfort of a car to pass through dark underground garages, not always clean, into transitional lobbies to small elevators or stairs? Does anyone know how to make elevators in tall building safe from being such bottlenecks that a single terrorist with Mr. Bush's automatic weapons could make hostages of 40 floors of people?

Does anyone know how to control the amount or number of vehicles that should be allowed into a city? (I know some places are working on this mostly by reducing the number of parking places by thousands.) Does anyone have acceptable separations of pedestrians and cars in the city, except overhead, as in Min-

neapolis? (Are those skyways acceptable?) Has anyone solved the luggage problems, not only safety, but also convenience, in air traffic and trains? De Carlo looks at some of these problems, along roads.

To me, the interesting thing about the "revolutions" in Eastern Europe and Russia is that they are first looking at what is not working before trying to imagine grand schemes to be sold to the public. So it is with the pollution and waste. We are at last admitting there is a problem, and that must precede solving it.

—Maynard Lyndon

Antonio DiMambro responds:

It is not "absurd and a complete waste of time and energy" to make projections about the future of a city. While I recognize that it is indeed difficult for architects and city designers to capture in their visions of a future city the long term and unforeseen transformations of our society in terms of technology, economy and culture, I also believe that generating visions is an important and useful design task.

Visions allow us more successfully to discuss options for the future. They permit citizens and policy makers to visualize the implications of competing choices. Visions are also useful as a means to anticipate and hopefully to avoid the enormous problems that have been generated by the piecemeal planning and building process of the past few decades.

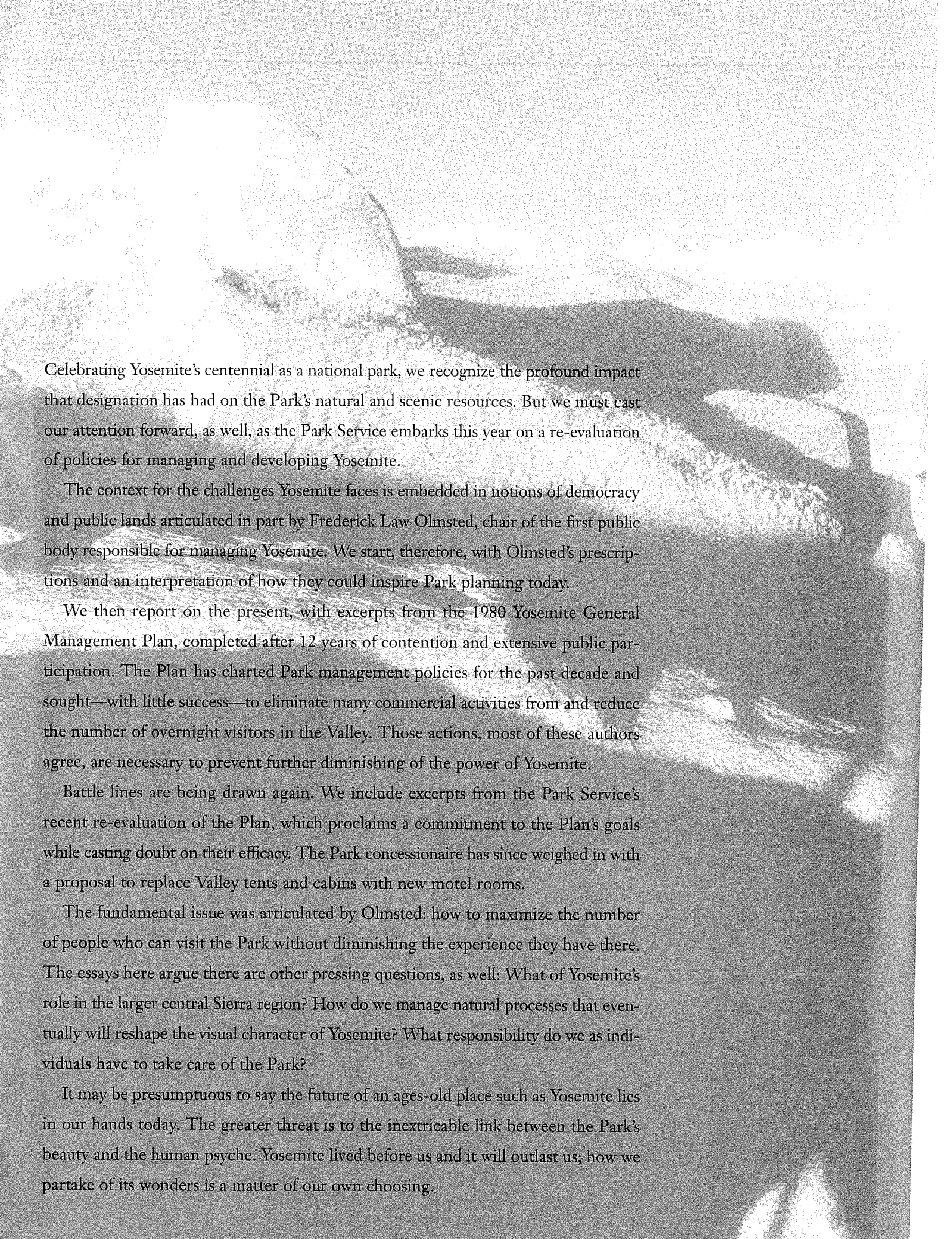
While Mr. Lyndon is entitled to dismiss Boston 2088 as "utter nonsense" he should be aware that the ideas embodied in that vision have captured the imagination of many communities, interest groups and public agencies in Boston. The competition has raised the consciousness of the critical issues that the city must tackle in the near future, particularly in the areas of airport facilities, water transportation and rapid transit expansion.

As stated in my article, visionary designs have always influenced Boston's development and have shaped the form of the city in undeniable ways.

Editor's Note:

Photographs in "Surrealist Paris" in *Places* 6:2 were by Janet Irwin. In "The Waste of Place," the photograph of children on a railroad track was by Michael Southworth. The photograph of a crane demolishing a building was by Kevin Lynch.

Places encourages comments and critiques from readers. Please send letters to: Doreen Lyndon, Editor, Places, c/o Center for Environmental Design Research, 390 Wurster Hall, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA 94720. Please limit letters to 500 words.



Celebrating Yosemite's centennial as a national park, we recognize the profound impact that designation has had on the Park's natural and scenic resources. But we must cast our attention forward, as well, as the Park Service embarks this year on a re-evaluation of policies for managing and developing Yosemite.

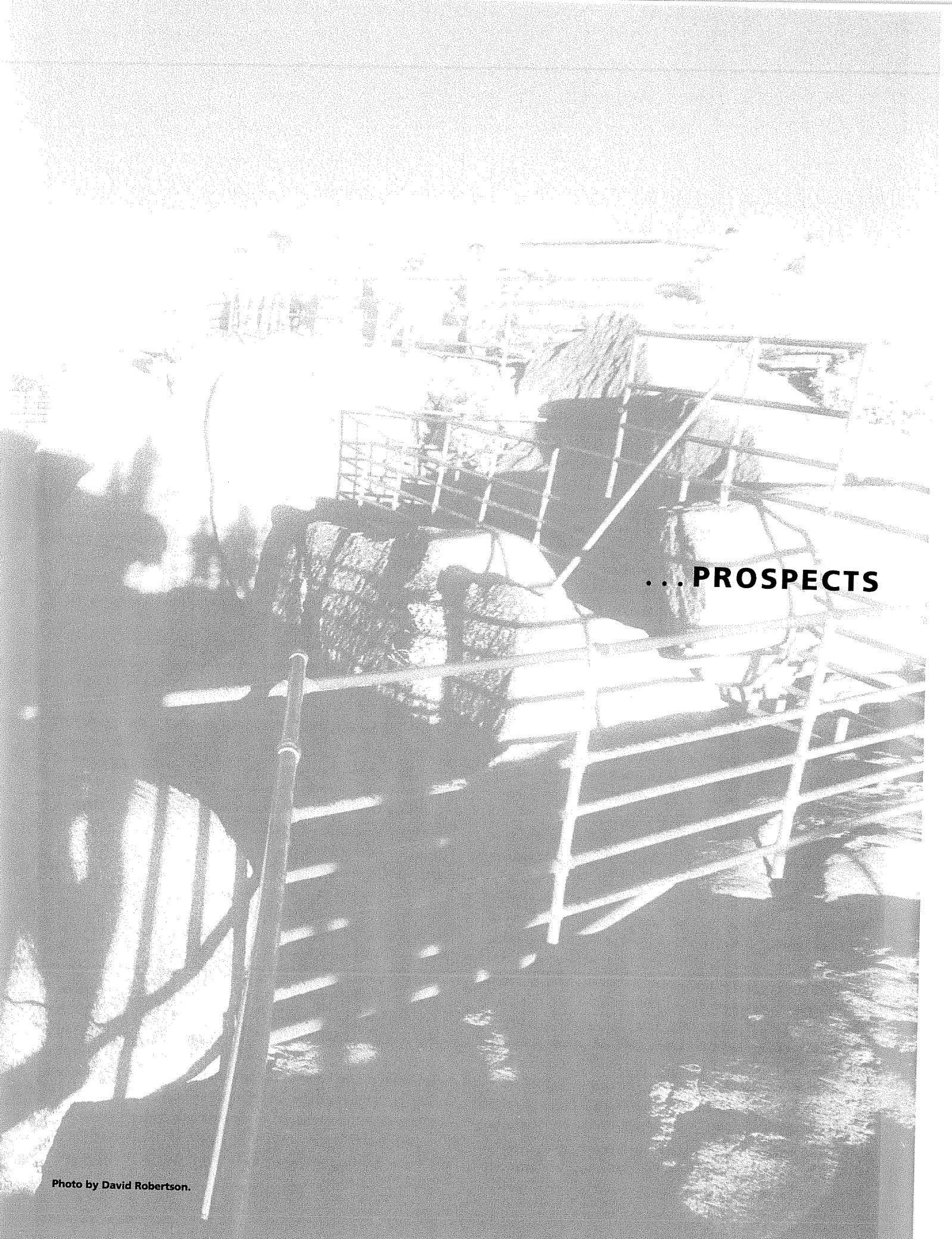
The context for the challenges Yosemite faces is embedded in notions of democracy and public lands articulated in part by Frederick Law Olmsted, chair of the first public body responsible for managing Yosemite. We start, therefore, with Olmsted's prescriptions and an interpretation of how they could inspire Park planning today.

We then report on the present, with excerpts from the 1980 Yosemite General Management Plan, completed after 12 years of contention and extensive public participation. The Plan has charted Park management policies for the past decade and sought—with little success—to eliminate many commercial activities from and reduce the number of overnight visitors in the Valley. Those actions, most of these authors agree, are necessary to prevent further diminishing of the power of Yosemite.

Battle lines are being drawn again. We include excerpts from the Park Service's recent re-evaluation of the Plan, which proclaims a commitment to the Plan's goals while casting doubt on their efficacy. The Park concessionaire has since weighed in with a proposal to replace Valley tents and cabins with new motel rooms.

The fundamental issue was articulated by Olmsted: how to maximize the number of people who can visit the Park without diminishing the experience they have there. The essays here argue there are other pressing questions, as well: What of Yosemite's role in the larger central Sierra region? How do we manage natural processes that eventually will reshape the visual character of Yosemite? What responsibility do we as individuals have to take care of the Park?

It may be presumptuous to say the future of an ages-old place such as Yosemite lies in our hands today. The greater threat is to the inextricable link between the Park's beauty and the human psyche. Yosemite lived before us and it will outlast us; how we partake of its wonders is a matter of our own choosing.



... PROSPECTS

Y O S E

Perhaps nothing symbolizes the American landscape as clearly and concisely as the valley called Yosemite.

Consider its place in our present society: It is simultaneously a sacred icon for the environmental movement and a “must see” for more than three million visitors each year. Yet, as one of nature’s most splendid creations, it is etched in the American mind as unending wilderness. It is considered the gem of the national park system.

Yosemite also represents everything banal about human use of the earth. To many observers, it is overcrowded. Its parking lots, golf greens, supermarkets and automatic teller machines co-mingle in uneasy confusion with its shimmering falls and gleaming walls. Last year, Yosemite made the Wilderness Society’s list of the Top Ten Most Threatened National Parks.

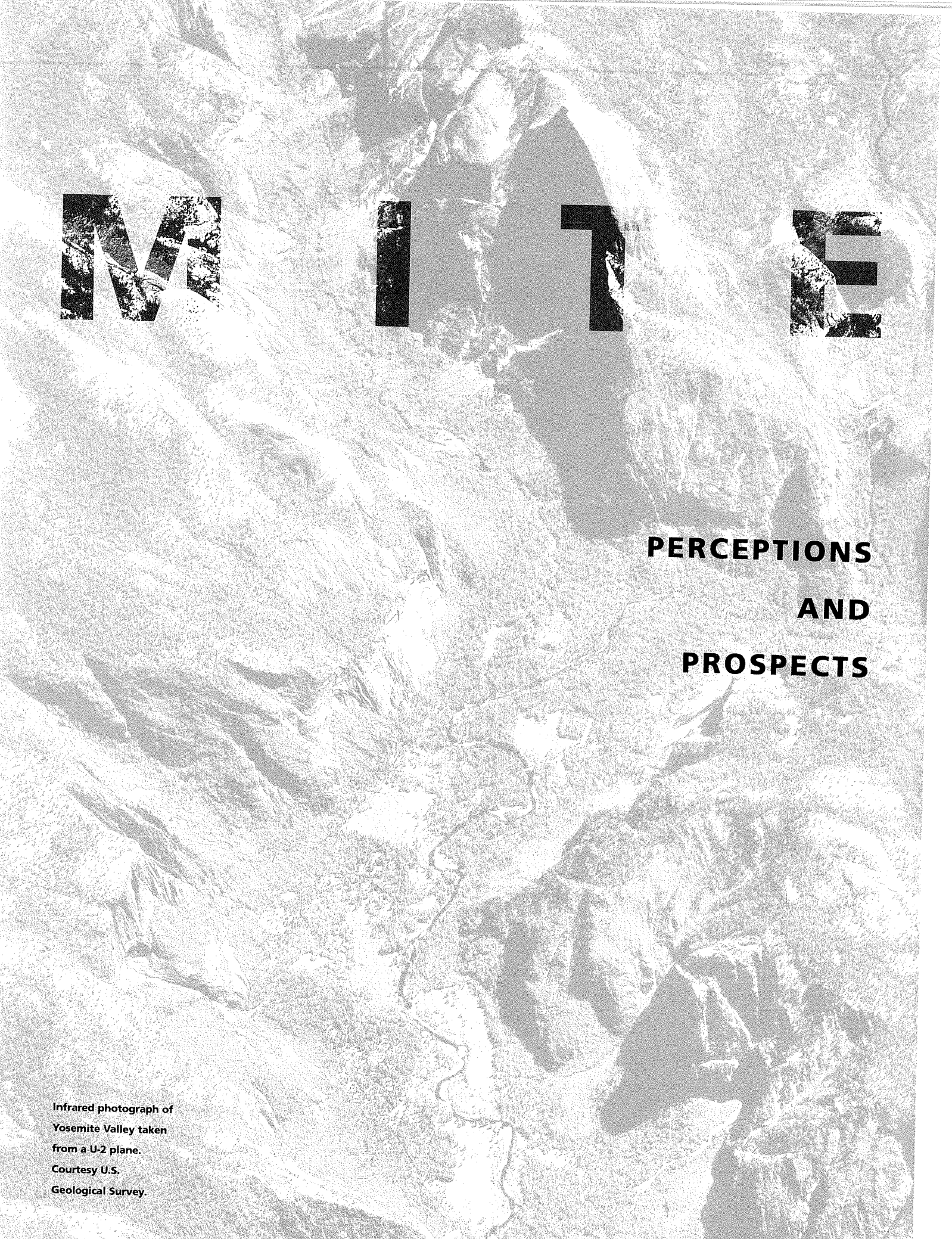
It is fair to say there is no other place like it in the world.

This year, some celebrate Yosemite’s 100th anniversary as a national park. Others point out that it is millions, not 100 years old. Yosemite’s age may be the least of the disagreements. Yosemite evokes passionate arguments because it calls up powerful contradictions: urbanized wilderness, abused jewel, paradise commercialized, unnatural nature.

The importance of these contradictions, both to Yosemite and to the American landscape as a whole, make Yosemite an appropriate subject for debate. This “information debate,” as Donlyn Lyndon describes it, is timely given the political battle unfolding over the 1980 General Management Plan and Yosemite’s future.

The opinions offered here are organized around two topics—cultural and visual perceptions of the Park, and how the Park is to be preserved and managed. Hopefully, the following debate will actively inform the battle, and help us to see the brute but delicate presence of Yosemite more clearly, to understand its complex democratic meaning and to take actions that will allow Yosemite to retain its sheer, awful power.

—*Randolph T. Hester, Jr., Guest Editor*

An infrared photograph of Yosemite Valley, showing a high-contrast, black and white image of the rugged mountain landscape. The image captures the intricate textures of the rock formations, the winding paths of the rivers, and the deep shadows of the valleys. The overall effect is one of stark, dramatic beauty, highlighting the geological features of the area.

Yosemite

PERCEPTIONS AND PROSPECTS

Infrared photograph of
Yosemite Valley taken
from a U-2 plane.
Courtesy U.S.
Geological Survey.

Yosemite's grip on our hearts and our minds is profound. Perhaps the most consistent reaction it evokes is a desire to attach some meaning to such a place and to come to an understanding of our connection to it.

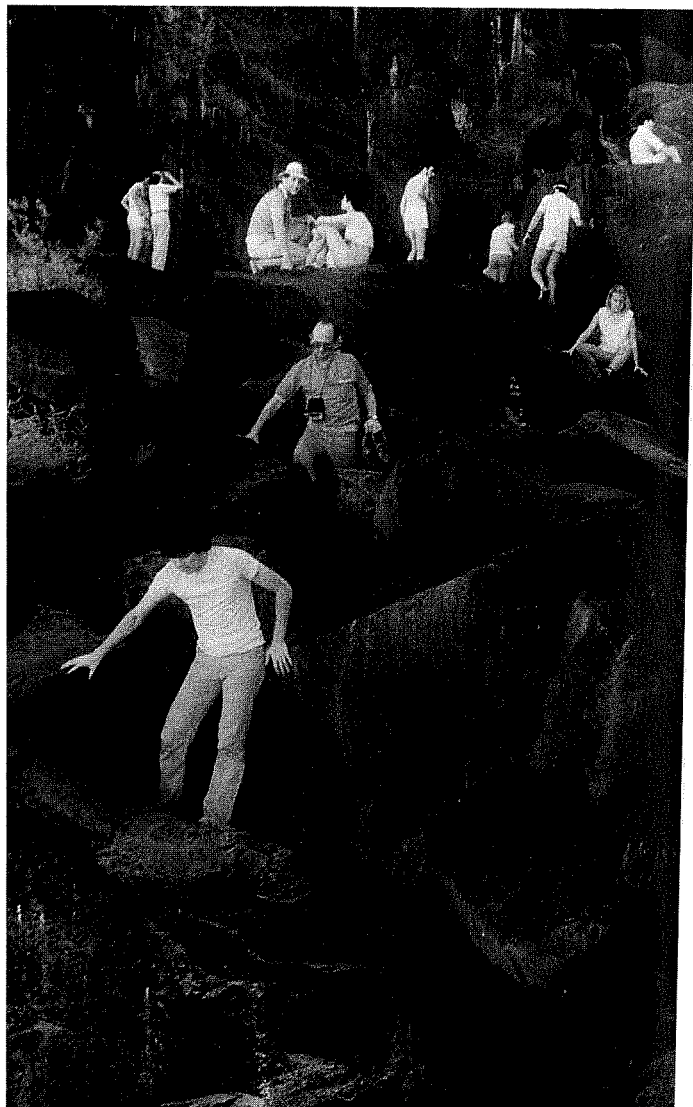
Several of the following essays attempt to rationalize Yosemite, to dissect it into a framework of components and processes that help us understand the sway the Park holds over us. Others search for Yosemite's significance in the meanings human cultures ascribe to it; several report on how Yosemite serves as an inspiration for human creation. One argues we should shift focus, that our attention to places of extraordinary beauty blinds us to the beauty of everyday places.

There is a despondence emerging, a suggestion that the actual experience of Yosemite leaves much to be desired. Several authors note that a visit to

PERCEPTIONS... Yosemite increasingly resembles a visit to a theme park, and they counsel that we would be better off approaching the Park as a pilgrimage.

One need not visit the Park to be touched by it, two of the essays argue; the issues that touch the Park touch parks and wilderness everywhere. Yosemite's reputation has been communicated worldwide via verbal and pictorial images; an environmental preservation ethic spurred by John Muir's passion for Yosemite has resulted in the creation of national parks and wilderness areas throughout the world.

Each of the essays reveals a facet of the challenges Yosemite poses to the human spirit, which ordinarily refuses to be dominated and more often than not triumphs against its adversaries. One author argues the deck is stacked against Yosemite. Nevertheless, because neither Yosemite nor humans are given to humility, it is likely that Yosemite will continue to be a source of powerful, raw inspiration.



Mary Street Alinder

PICTURING YOSEMITE



Carleton E. Watkins,
Piwyac, Vernal Fall, 300 Ft.
Courtesy of the Fraenkel
Gallery, San Francisco.

Perhaps an artist's biggest challenge is to picture a place of overpowering beauty.

At Yosemite's panoramic Inspiration Point, one's outstretched arms seemingly can embrace the entire Valley. Measuring one mile wide, one mile deep and seven miles long, the Valley is buttressed on one side by El Capitan, adorned on the other by Bridalveil Fall, threaded down the middle by the Merced River and capped on the end by the magnificence of Half Dome. Yet, given these familiar landmarks and understandable dimensions, Yosemite Valley has consistently dominated its artists.

Nevertheless, photography has proven the most important creative medium to Yosemite, both in its preservation as well as its interpretation.

Bringing Yosemite to the Rest of the World

Nineteenth-century armchair travelers were a large and lucrative audience for photographers. Everyone wanted to see what America really looked like. Each new discovery added to the excitement and the belief that America, with such splendid natural wonders, was surely the future of the world.

No greater glory was revealed than the Valley. Dr. Lafayette Bunnell, a

member of a 1851 exploration party, wrote:

"None but those who have visited this most wonderful Valley, can even imagine the feelings with which I looked upon the view that was there presented. The grandeur of the scene was but softened by the haze that hung over the Valley—light as gossamer—and by the clouds which partially dimmed the higher cliffs and mountains. This obscurity of vision but increased the awe with which I beheld it, and, as I looked a peculiarly exalted sensation seemed to fill my whole being."¹

Writers such as Bunnell weren't speechless, yet they told us little of Yosemite. Clearly, a great religious experience awaited the visitor, an event that could not be described. Words could only relate the gut reaction of exultation.

With serendipitous coincidence, exploration of the American West began at the same time photographers were discovering the great possibilities of the medium. Photographs poured back east and to Europe. New settlers made their way to California, no longer with the nightmare of the unknown, but with visions of real places.

Carleton Watkins, who arrived in 1861, was Yosemite's first visual poet. Not only was he aesthetically able for the severe challenge of Yosemite, but

he had great technical courage. His equipment included a mammoth plate camera, 30 inches square and a yard deep, that produced negatives (and therefore prints) as large as 18 by 22 inches. With these grand photographs the monumental character of Yosemite was displayed with the impressive dignity and size formerly the province of painters.

Photographers' expeditions to remote sites such as Yosemite were gambles because they made negatives on very breakable glass and had to travel over rough trails, ascending and descending boulders and cliffs to obtain the transcendent view.

Watkins was not afraid to let light describe the scene. Anonymous mountains that melt one into another in the work of a lesser artist acquire distinct personalities, separated by light and shadow.

His photographs speak of the object cleanly seen and then embellished with richly embroidered detail. Everything within the frame has been considered: the sharp silhouettes of trees, the reflections on the Merced River, the scoop of the Valley floor, the sharp tilt of ridgelines. He purposefully layers his compositions with contrasting textures: pine needles massed before smooth rock, hard granite cliffs against the smoky-hued



George Fiske,
*Jack Frost's Visit to
Yosemite*, c. 1885.
Courtesy of the
Center for Creative
Photography,
University of Arizona.

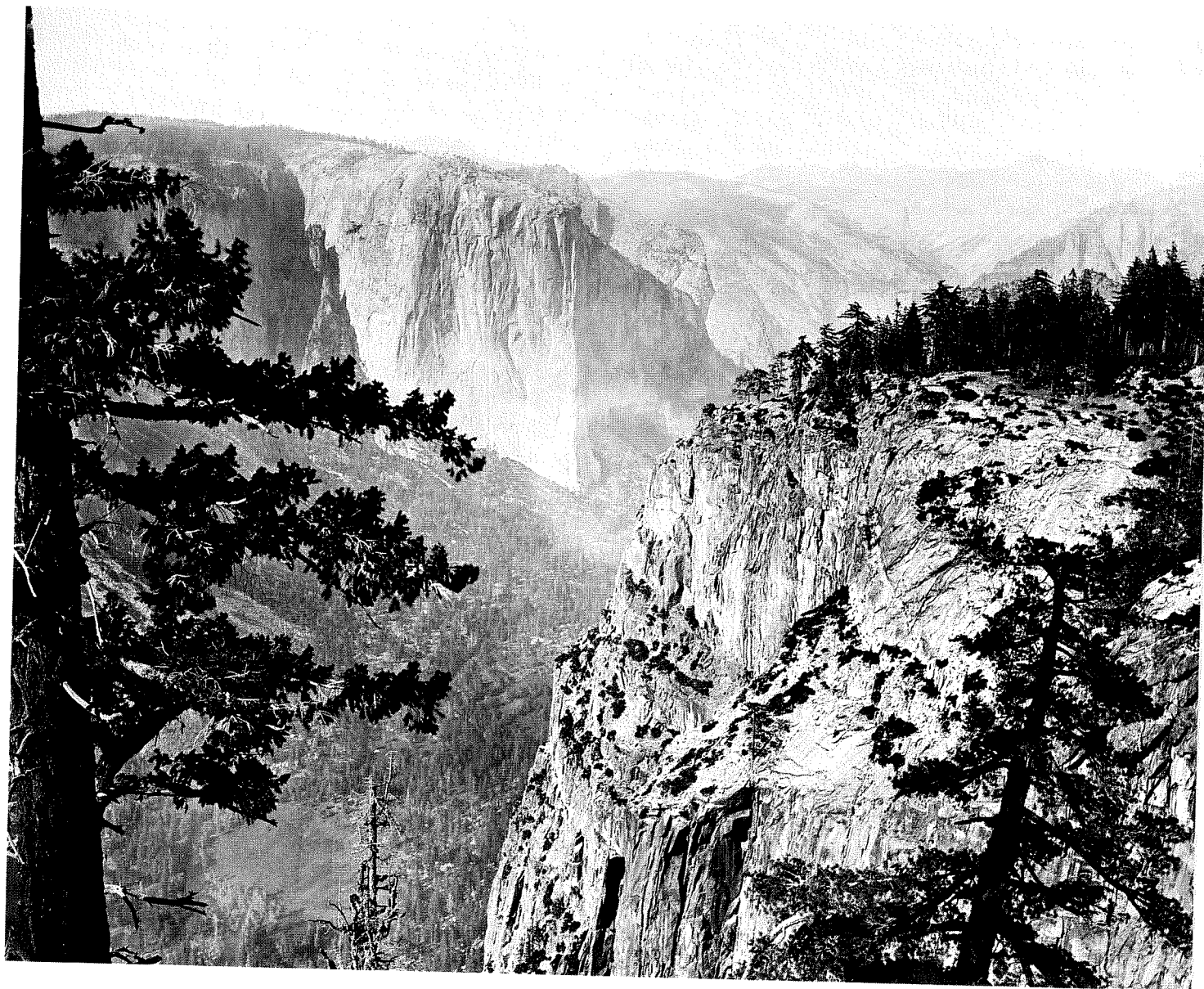
Eadweard Muybridge,
*Valley of the Yosemite from
Mosquito Camp, No. 22, 1872.*
Courtesy of the Department
of Special Collections,
University Research Library,
University of California,
Los Angeles.

Valley floor, topped by a
featureless, pale sky. On
rare occasions, Watkins
could be lushly romantic,
as shown in "Piwyac,
Vernal Falls, 300 ft."

A selection of Watkins' photographs was used to convince Congress of Yosemite's importance.² In a landmark 1864 decision, President Lincoln signed the Yosemite Act, granting

the Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Big Trees to the California "to be held for public use, resort and recreation."

Eadweard Muybridge arrived in the Valley in 1867, worked hard, and returned to his San Francisco studio with 260 glass plates.³ Many were stereographs, which are nearly twin photographs



mounted on a card and observed through a viewer to create a three-dimensional effect.

Most photographers of the day, including Watkins, made at least two exposures of each scene, one by large view camera and one with a stereo camera. The stereograph, not the fine photograph, was the photographer's bread and butter. Even today, stereographs by Muybridge or Watkins are still inexpensive while their mammoth plate prints are worth many thousands of dollars.

Muybridge, also using the mammoth plates, exhibited his work in San Francisco and became the next Yosemite sensation. He was a perfectionist, notorious for cutting down trees if they cluttered his proposed image. His Yosemite was always a thing of beauty, ornamented with detail. He did not take the scene whole and capture it on his glass plate; rather, he distilled an essential mood or object.

Just 20 years later, George Fiske photographed a familiar Yosemite, burgeoning with people and business. In 1880 he became the first photographer to live there year-round.

Perhaps because he was not as young as Watkins or Muybridge when they first encountered the Valley, Fiske rested his tripod on flat ground. He produced

pictures on the same trails where tourists hiked, and sold them what they had seen. Watkins and Muybridge had scrambled like mountain goats, obtaining views most mortals could never personally experience. Fiske made the first extensive study of Yosemite in winter, including lovely images of snow-laden branches ("Jack Frost's Visit to Yosemite").

Painters were slow to arrive in Yosemite; surely this was the first time photographers had co-opted such a great, new subject. Albert Bierstadt, Thomas Hill, William Keith and Thomas Moran, the last of the great American romantic landscapists, painted Yosemite with vigor. But theirs was a dying vision: The new way of seeing was sharp, real and true. They painted sharply, but ignored the latter qualities.

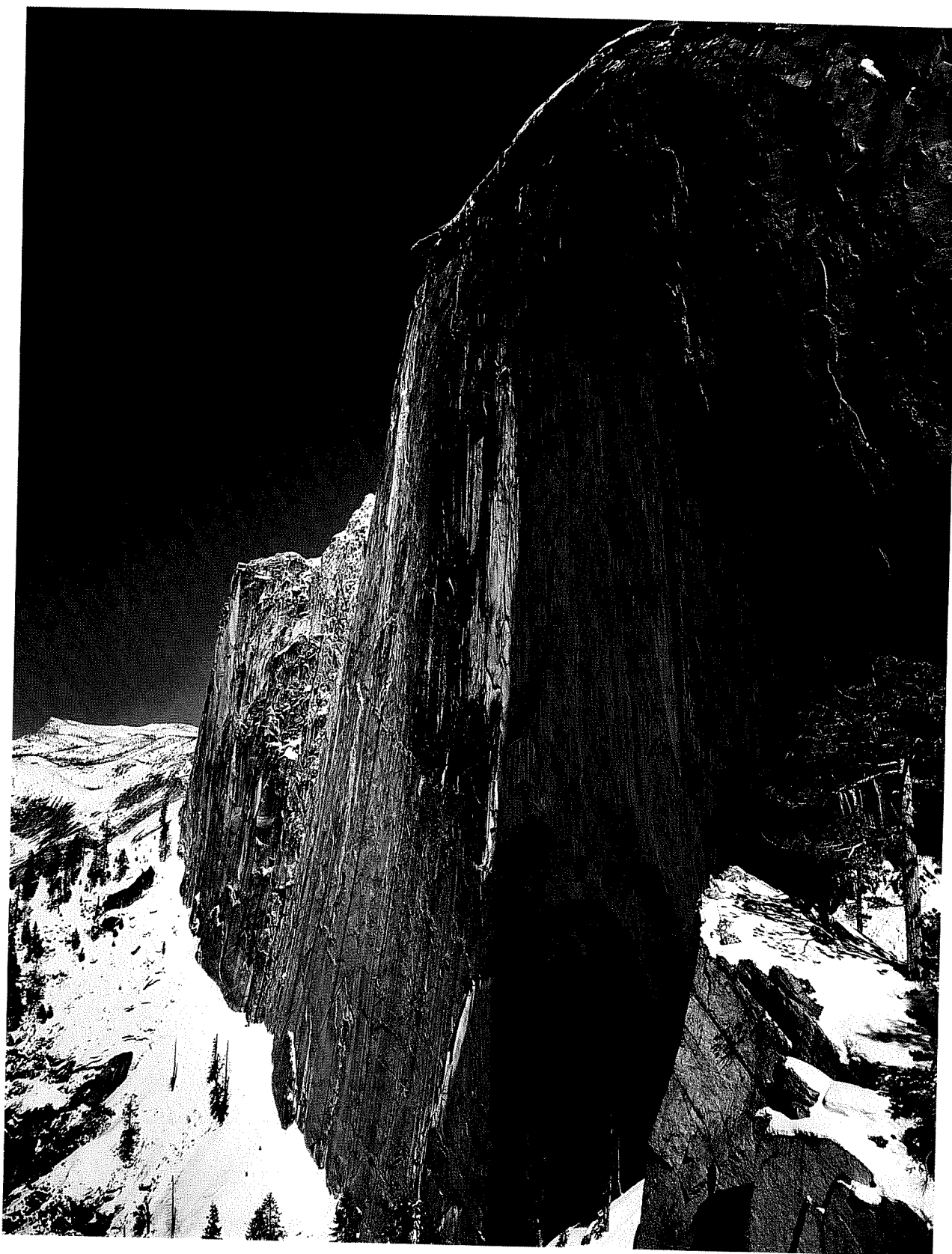
All who have followed have paled next to those early, energetic, though largely unsuccessful efforts. When Georgia O'Keeffe visited Yosemite in 1938, she refused to paint or even sketch.⁴

Ansel Adams: Seeing through the Soul

Ansel Adams is known as the consummate artist who gave Yosemite full expression. Baptized by voluntary immersion in the natural scene, Adams matured at the knee of Half Dome. Upon arrival in Yosemite with his parents for a vacation in 1916, he was a high-strung and sickly 14 year old. Within the Valley and its surrounding Sierra, he found mental and physical health.

To record their vacation, his parents gave him his first camera, a simple Kodak Box Brownie. The rapport between Adams, camera and Yosemite was immediate. He returned to Yosemite every summer, soon spending as much of the year there as in his hometown, San Francisco. Photography and Yosemite, always together and never apart, evolved from hobby to job to becoming the point upon which he centered. Photography made sense of life.

Over many years of dedicated work, Adams learned as complete a technical mastery of the medium as possible. Combining superb technique with a natural eye for composition and a soul devoted to beauty and the American landscape, on April 17, 1927, Adams took that one huge step from craftsman to artist. On that day he made "Monolith, the Face of Half Dome."



Ansel Adams,
*Monolith, The Face of
Half Dome*, 1927.

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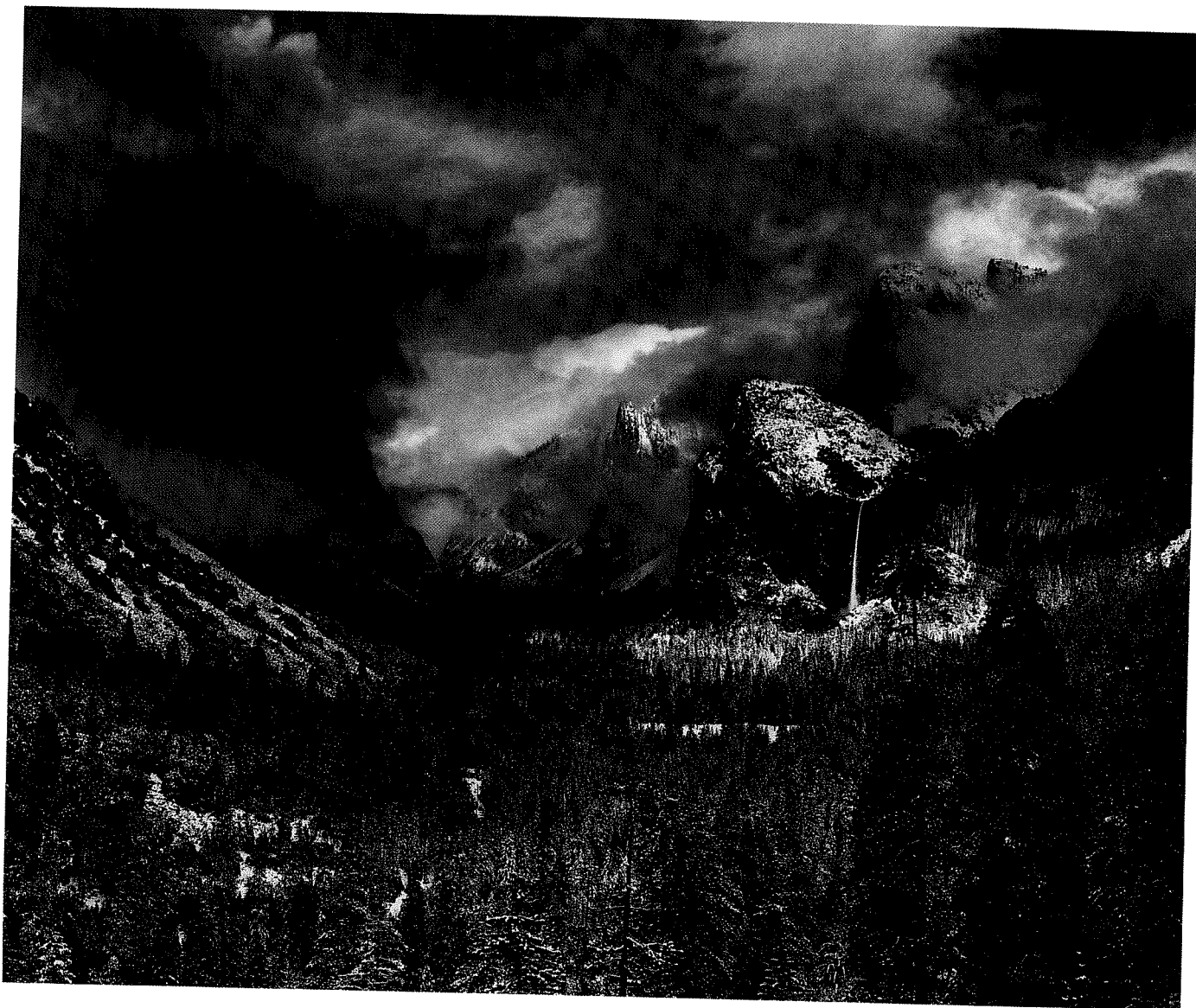
With “Monolith,” Adams stepped beyond traditional photographic boundaries, for his finished print is a lie. Just as those who first gazed on Yosemite were at a loss to truly describe it, so was Adams. His early efforts yielded photographs straightly seen and predictably composed. But he knew these fell far short of the great feelings he had for this landscape.

So, instead of the authentic Half Dome, he creates for us his equivalent emotional response. This could only be achieved by manipulating the negative itself; in this case by the use of a red filter. The sky was no longer light and bright but a black-velvet background for the smooth outline of the shattered, flat-planed face of Half Dome, rising with great energy from the snowy shoulders of its surroundings. “Visualization” is the term Adams used to describe the act of determining how the final print will look before the exposure is made. Now we see not with our eyes, but with his soul.

Adams’ vision of Yosemite expanded. He first photographed objects—a mountain, a waterfall—then became increasingly interested in the larger landscape. With technical mastery, his images were abundantly detailed, urging the viewer to draw closer,

look into shadows and study the sun’s revelations across granite and water. Though he preferred “cropping” images in the camera, it was often necessary to trim the edges of prints to achieve the clean borders that he demanded.

Adams traveled to the East and to Europe, but he photographed best in the land he knew intimately. He never betrayed the beauty and love he found in Yosemite.



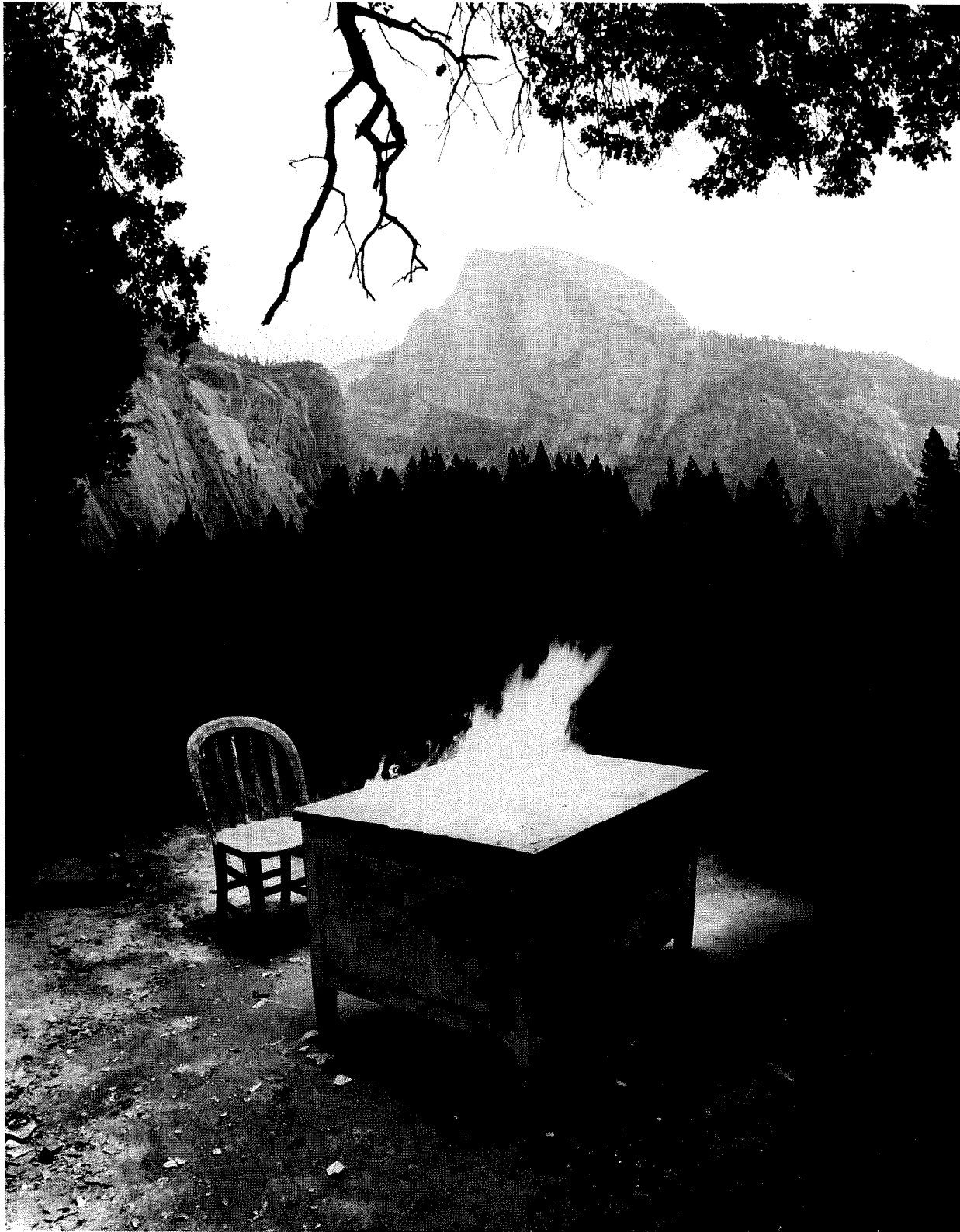
Ansel Adams,
Clearing Winter Storm,
Yosemite National Park,
c. 1937.

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Jerry N. Uelsmann,

Untitled.

© 1989.



The Search for New Forms and Emphasis

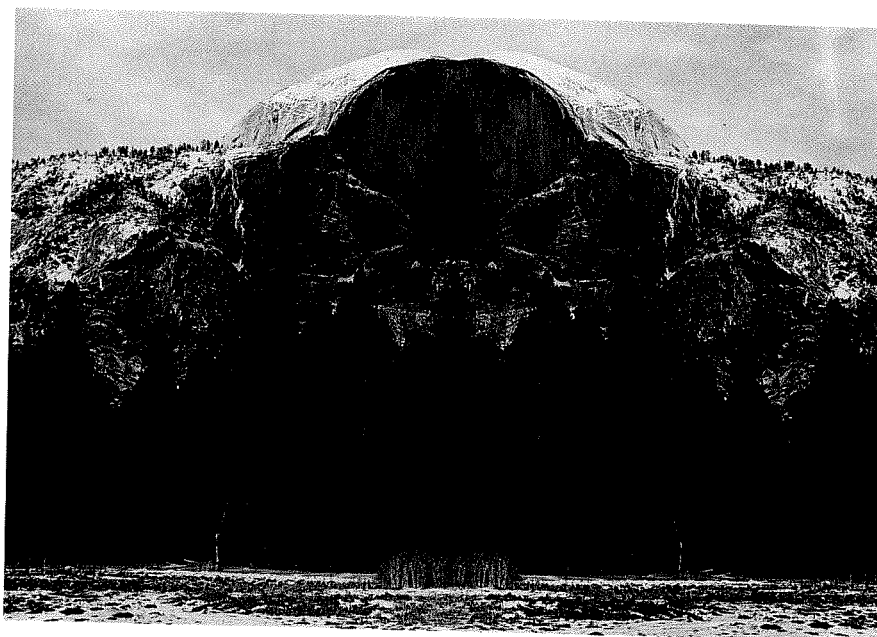
Today, Adams' vision continues to dominate Yosemite photography. "New" work is often made in Adams' tripod holes. While many noted photographers have worked in Yosemite, most minds are overwhelmed with a rerun of famous images, paralyzing a new way of seeing. The best of Yosemite's contemporary photographers acknowledge the challenges of Adams' work, yet find the subject matter of such compelling interest they can't leave it alone.

The following selected photographers, though they represent a visual diversity, have much in common: Most studied or worked with Adams, all share a commitment to fine print quality, and each has worked over many years in Yosemite, though it is only one aspect of their work. While this group works in black-and-white, color is the current choice of many other photographers, although color brings with it difficulties. Yosemite is only quietly colorful; it looks best in black and white and shades of gray.

Several of these photographers show us a Yosemite quite different from Adams' version. Jerry Uelsmann's photographs are fantasies fabricated from reality, the product of his quirky and humorous mind. He is well known for his photographic con-

structions printed seamlessly from a number of negatives. With "Full Dome" he gives us what nature took away thousands of years ago.

Uelsmann's playfulness continues with his image of the ultimate ivory tower, "Untitled." A chair and desk are framed by the archetypical Yosemite



Jerry N. Uelsmann,
Full Dome.
© 1973.

scene: an underexposed Half Dome and trees. In contrast, the central scene of desk and chair glow with light from above. The chair is empty and pushed back from the desk, as if someone has just departed. Mystical vapors float upward from the desk's empty surface. This is a place of high energy, the source of which may be nature, itself, as portrayed by the lightning-shaped branch above the desk. What a place to work!

Bruce Davidson, in “Yosemite,” lowers our gaze from the broad cliffs and waterfalls to the Valley floor, more specifically, the campgrounds of Yosemite. We focus upon man coming to dwell with nature unnaturally. The scene is littered with folding chairs, boxes, campers, cars and odd people—odd, because they appear tired and bored. The only hint that this could be a place of beauty are the trunks of

trees, cut off at the top by the photographer and spoiled at the bottom by the subjects and their stuff.

Ted Orland is not interested in pursuing the literal landscape. His “Campground Shadows,” a scene of tents shadowed in a leafy bower, is glowing and tranquil. This camp is of another world than the campers in Davidson’s “Yosemite.” Here, peace can still be found.

Orland has fun with Yosemite. He brings to our attention the crazy juxtapositions we often miss, such as “One and a Half Domes” (page 3). A bear-proof garbage can becomes a manmade foil to nature’s great Half Dome, suggesting the redundancy of one. We see what humans hath wrought. Orland hand-colors with garish hues the panoramic map in the foreground, teasing, “Can this be real?”

Bruce Davidson,
Yosemite, 1966.
© Magnum Photos, Inc.





Ted Orland,
Campground Shadows.
© 1978.

Tom Millea,
Yosemite.
© 1989.



Tom Millea's work is intentionally precious. He uses an eight-by-ten-inch view camera, making only contact-size, platinum prints. Using a matte-surfaced, textured printing paper, Millea discards the importance of detail, instead emphasizing form and light.

Devil's Elbow is the popular swimming hole along the Merced River in Yosemite. In "Yosemite" a swimmer's head is radiantly centered in the purest of beams, body floating weightless, engulfed in the natural world. From Muybridge to Millea (and before and beyond), it is our dream to merge with light.

Many contemporary artists photograph Yosemite in a more conservative landscape tradition. Deep in the heart of Yosemite, near Mt. Ansel Adams, Jeff Nixon photographs where the water is still pure and the air is still crisp, just as when Adams first arrived

there in 1921. "Trees, Reflections, Lyell Fork of the Merced" is a hidden place of amazing tranquility, undisturbed by man or wind. Light and its many forms are masters of this scene: reflection, revelation, highlight and shadow.

Jeff Nixon,
Trees, Reflections, Lyell
Fork of the Merced.
© 1985.



John Sexton's Yosemite is serene, solitary, frozen at the moment of first or last light. He photographs before sunrise and after sunset, times most others ignore, calling these moments "the quiet light."⁵

Sexton's prints are exquisitely subtle. He is a master of Adams' zone system, but while Adams employed the full range of zones (from white to black and many grays in between), Sexton concen-

trates on the middle zones. His prints sing in the key of silver, with countless octaves of gray. Maximum visual disclosure is the result of Sexton's choice of low light and very long exposures.

In his photographs, Yosemite is a private retreat, a place of growth and renewal ("Pine Forest Detail"), a place where there is beauty in a simple, directly seen fern ("Fern and Log," page 23).

Alan Ross, one of the few undeterred in the post-Adams' era, responds to the grand landscape. His exultant photograph of sunrise in the Valley reveals a Yosemite finally dominated by outside forces—a magnificent cloudscape, as patterned and detailed as any granite rock face or cascading waterfall. But this is Yosemite, so perhaps this sky can only occur there in celebration with the land.

John Sexton,
Pine Forest Detail.
© 1980.



Alan Ross,
Light Storm.
© 1975.



Yosemite National Park's deepest meaning is as representative of all wilderness: the earth in its natural state, constant before and after humans. Yosemite reminds us that the world is beyond time as humans experience it, and that to be part of the infinite, even in some small way, is most reassuring.

Great works of art can serve as an archive of what was and bridge the space between each of us and the eternal. Artists visualize the essential qualities of this life and the world, leaving signposts for the way forward.

Notes

1. J. M. Hutchings, *In the Heart of the Sierras*. (Boston: W. H. Thompson and Co., 1887).

2. Shirley Sargent, *Yosemite: The First One Hundred Years, 1890-1990*. (Yosemite National Park: Yosemite Park and Curry Co., 1988).

3. Ted Orland, *Man and Yosemite*. (Santa Cruz: The Image Continuum Press).

4. Ansel Adams with Mary Street Alinder, *Ansel Adams: An Autobiography*. (Boston: New York Graphic Society).

5. John Sexton, *Quiet Light*. (Boston: Bulfinch Press, 1990).