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## Stephen t. mather

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Stephen Tyng Mather, the great-grandson of Deacon Joseph Mather who built the Mather Homestead in 1778, was born on July 4, 1867 in Berkeley, California. He was named after the prominent New York Episcopal Minister, Stephen Tyng, who married his parents, Joseph W. Mather and Bertha Walker Mather, three years earlier in New York.
Another son, Josie, was born in 1869. He passed at the age of 19 from spinal meningitis. Mather was educated at Boys' High School (now Lowell High School) in San Francisco, and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1887. While Mather grew up in California, he spent summers at the Mather Homestead in Darien, CT and
considered it his "true home." He loved the outdoors and spent much time both in California and Connecticut exploring. Mather was attracted to nature in part because he found it helpful in moderating the debilitating bouts of chronic depression from which he privately suffered, while presenting to the world as ever- charming, friendly and garrulous.
Mather worked as a journalist for the New York Sun for five years following his graduation from Berkeley in 1887. By family lore, he met Jane Thacker Floy of Elizabeth, New Jersey whose father did not think journalism was a suitable career for his daughter. Mather left journalism in 1893 and joined the Borax Company where his father worked. Jane
Thacker Floy was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey on February 7, 1868. She and Stephen Mather were married in October 12, 1893 in New York City. She gave birth to one daughter's family at the Mather Homestead until her death. She passed on August 19, 1944 and
is buried in the Mather Cemetery on Stephen Mather Road. After leaving the New York Sun in 1893, Mather joined to be a marketing genius
and is credited with creating the slogan "20 Mule Team Borax" which propelled Borax to become a household name throughout the country. In 1898, Mather helped his friend, Thomas Thorkildsen, start another borax company. After suffering a severe episode of bipolar disorder in 1903 and having his salary withheld during extended sick leave,
Mather resigned from Pacific Coast and joined Thorkildsen full-time in 1904. They named their firm the Thorkildsen-Mather Borax Company became prosperous, and they were millionaires by 1914. He then retired to pursue his interest - the National Parks. Mather's interest in national parks was influenced by a 1904 trip to Europe he
took with his wife, Jane. Climbing the Swiss Alps and seeing how accessible they were to visitors inspired Mather to bring this model to park management in the United States. On his return, he became a dedicated conservationist, a friend and admirer of the influential John Muir, joined the Sierra Club, and climbed Mount Rainier. Through his
activities in the Sierra Club, Mather made numerous allies who supported the creation of the National Park Service. In 1916, the Sierra Club made him an honorary vice-president. Note: vintage photo of the alps from "The Alps 1900. A Portrait in Color" published by Taschen. Mather traveled to Yosemite in 1914 and noticed the abysmal conditions of
the park which were then managed by the US Army: bumpy, dangerous roads, inadequate lodging, cattle and sheep grazing and destroying pristine meadows, plus logging, hunting, mining and more. Mather wrote a letter to Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane, also from the University of Berkeley, espousing the deplorable conditions in the
park. He received a letter back stating, "Dear Steve, If you don't like the way the parks are being run, come on down to Washington and became Assistant Secretary of the Interior in January 1915 and tirelessly made the case for the National Park Service. In his first 12 months as
special assistant for national park concerns to the Secretary of the Interior. Mather worked the corridors of Washington, D.C., traveled 30,000 miles and hosted one of the most spectacular lobbying sessions in American history. Nineteen politicians, businessmen, and scientists, along with the vice-president of the Southern Pacific Railroad, the editors
of National Geographic, the president of the American Museum of Natural History and a congressman, who later became the Speaker of the House, accepted Mather's invitation for a two-week camping trip in July of 1915 through the Sierra Nevada mountains. Known as the Mather Mountain Party, the purpose of the trip was to lobby this captive
audience to support the creation of the National Park Service. Mather paid for the entire trip, hiring touring cars, horses, mules, and providing everyone with the latest in camping comfort-an air mattress. He hired a cook to prepare gourmet meals served on white linen tablecloths with fine china in remote areas of the park. In addition to having a
memorable experience, the members of the Mountain Party saw the poor conditions of the campsites, the barely passable roads, the vulnerability of the ancient Sequoia groves to logging interests, and how grazing cattle were decimating meadows. At the end of the trip, Mather said to the group: "I think the time has come ... that I should confess why
I wanted you to come along with me on this adventure-not only for your interesting company, but to hope you'd see the significance of these mountains in the whole picture of what we are trying to do. Hopefully you will take this message and spread it throughout the land in your own avenue and style." In the end, Mather's charisma coupled with the
amazing scenery of the Sierra Nevada mountains created a memorable trip that won everyone over. "If he was out to make a convert," one participant said of Mather, "the subject never knew what hit him." Back in Washington, D. C., the men from the Mather Mountain Party lobbied successfully to create the National Park Service. On August 25,
1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Organic Act, thereby creating the National Park Service. Mather was appointed its first director in May of 1917. During his tenure, and working closely with his assistant Horace Albright, Mather created a professional and highly respected organization to administer the parks, including a cadre of Park
Rangers to oversee the parks and educate visitors. He expanded the parks, nearly doubling the land in the system to include some of the nation's best-known natural wonders and landscapes such as Grand Canyon, Zion, Hawaii Volcanoes, Denali, Acadia, Hot Springs, and Shenandoah. Mather hired, with his own funds, Robert Sterling Yard, a former
co-worker at The New York Sun and friend, to publicize the parks and promote American tourism. He initiated the development of lodges and campsites, as well as railroad access and new roadways to make the park lands accessible. He even contributed generously to the parks from his personal fortune. Mather was firm in preventing private
development in the parks that would mar their natural beauty. He built public appreciation for preserving and publicized the nation's natural beauty and history. MORE about Stephen Mather and the history of the National Parks. In 1906, Mather became the sole owner of the house and 22 acres following the passing of his father, Joseph Wakeman
Mather, in 1905. He immediately made changes to the house, giving the house a more Colonial Revival appearance, building a barn, a cottage for a gardener, and in 1909, establishing a sunken garden designed by Walter Burleigh Griffin who went on to design Canberra, Australia's new capital city. In 1927, Mather nearly doubled the size of the house
using architect Thomas Harlan Elliott. He added a porch to the side of the house and a two-story addition to the rear included a modern kitchen with bedrooms upstairs, and the portico over the main entrance was renovated. The interior of the house retained its original character and finishes during these renovations except for the old kitchen
("keeping room"), which was converted into a living room. Stephen Mather suffered a heart attack in 1927, ten years after he became director of the NPS. A month later, he suffered a massive stroke that left him incapacitated, forcing him to retire.
He died on January 22, 1930 and is buried in the family cemetery on Stephen Mather Road in Darien. He left behind a huge legacy. Stephen Mather recognized the need for and met the challenge of creating a National Park system. He expanded the park lands and created the first parks in the East (Shenandoah and Acadia). He established
professionals to manage the parks - the National Park Rangers who are among the most respected professionals in our country. He prevented industries from destroying park resources for their own gain. Most importantly, he welcomed Americans to the parks and encouraged them to experience the natural wonders of their country. His life is well
summarized — on a series of bronze markers which were posthumously cast in his honor and distributed through many parks: "He laid the foundation of the National Park Service, defining and establishing the policies under which its areas shall be developed and conserved, unimpaired for future generations. There will never come an end to the good
he has done . . . " Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit,
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the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. 6.4KStephen Mather went to the wilderness to heal the brainsickness that plagued him throughout his life. Ironically, his work to save America's wilderness sent him into a depression that took him
two years to pull out of. Stephen Mather Mat
President Woodrow Wilson then appointed him director of the National Park Service But Mather's loyal 27-year-old assistant, Horace Albright Stephen
Mather Mather was born July 4, 1867, in San Francisco, but considered Connecticut home. He was part of an old, well-known New England family: the Mathers. A distant relative of Increase and Cotton Mather (as well as John Cotton), he eventually inherited a farmhouse in Darien that his great-grandfather, Deacon Joseph Moses Mather, built in
1778. His family spent summers there. Stephen Tyng Mather home in DarienMather graduated from the University of California-Berkeley in 1887. He then worked for the Pacific Coast Borax Company. There he came up with the "20 Mule Team Borax" brand, still in use. In
1903, Stephen Mather collapsed from overwork and stress. He took a vacation in the South for five weeks, which seemed to help. But every time he returned to work, his malaise and depression returned. He spent four months at a Wisconsin sanitarium, then a few more months at the seashore. It didn't work. Finally his doctor told him to give up all
work, and he took an eight-month trip to Europe. When he returned to his old job, he discovered the company had fired him. He went off and started his own borax company with a partner in Chicago. They made a huge success of it and made a million dollars - a lot of money back then. Occasionally he showed signs of his old trouble, but he cured
himself by going to the western wilderness - in 1906, 1912 and 1914. The Dynamic DuoDuring that long trip to Europe, Stephen Mather renewed his interest in nature and the outdoors. He returned to the U.S. a dedicated conservationist. Mather joined the Sierra Club, met John Muir, climbed Mount Rainier. He made enough money in the borax
business to retire in 1914 and pursue his interest in conservation. At the summit of Mount Rainier, 1888. Left to right: D.W. Bass, P. B. Van Trump, John Muir, N.O. Booth, Edward Sturgis Ingraham. An apocryphal story has Stephen Mather writing a letter to Interior Secretary Franklin Lane. In it he complained about the exploitation of the national
parks and the theft of parkland. Lane replied, "Dear Steve, If you don't like the way the parks are being run, come on down to Washington and run them yourself." It never happened. Rather, a mutual friend of Lane and Mather suggested they meet in Chicago. They did, and Lane offered Mather the job of assistant secretary of the Interior. Mather
doubted he could do it. "This is all so very new to me. I have never been under restrictions or a lot of regulations. I'm just not temperamentally fitted for this type of work in Washington. I'll probably get in trouble before the job is an hour old." Lane said he'd give him Horace Albright — "a young fellow who knows the ropes and who'll handle the legal
and other troubles you'll run into. He's the man to keep you out of trouble, someone who knows the department, can handle the routine."They're So DifferentMather said he'd take the job if Albright served as his assistant. Albright, also a UC-Berkeley graduate, felt an instant affinity for Mather and agreed. Mather sweetened the deal by
supplementing Albright's salary out of his own pocket. As an old man, Albright recalled how he and Mather melded into an indivisible unit. They complemented each other — they're so different." Albright grew up poor in California and worked his way through college. He had a
to work on establishing an independent park service bureau. At the time, the national parks were a loose collection of properties run by the army or political hacks. The hotels, restaurants and sanitary facilities in the parks were
abysmal, and the parks themselves were bedraggled and inaccessible to most people. Yosemite National Park Mather passionately wanted to create a National Park Service despite his reluctance to take a government job. Full of plans and ideas, he spent his own fortune to make his dream come true. He didn't take a salary, and he hired a full-time
publicist out of his own pocket. He spent thousands of his own dollars to buy the Tioqa Road, which made Yosemite more accessible to the public. Once, in Glacier National Park, Mather got angry when he discovered the park headquarters were located three miles down a nearly impassable road from the railroad station. The supervisor said all the
land between the station and headquarters was owned privately. Mather said, "Well, if that's the only problem, I'll buy it myself." Glacier National ParkStephen Mather Sequoias National Park. Mather learned a large portion of the Giant
Forest, containing the best of the giant sequoias, remained in private hands. The owners planned to build a summer resort. Mather invited a number of wealthy Easterners to camp with him in the grove, explained the situation, and
Mather Mountain Party of 1915 Mather seated at head of table (left). Albright in front of cook (Ty Sing). Image was redistributed by National Geographic. Camping in ComfortMather brought along an accomplished cook, Ty Sing. He believed the parks would only attract tourists if they offered good food and comfortable accommodations, and Ty Sing
drove home the point. The mountain party, for example, enjoyed a white-tablecloth banquet under the redwoods in the Giant Forest. At the end of the party, Mather spoke to the group: To each of you, remember that God has given us these beautiful lands. Try to save them for, and share them with, future generations. Go out and spread
the gospel!Sunset at Mather Point, Grand CanyonMather believed in the power of publicity to realize his dream. He wanted to create and fund the National Park Service. His publicist, Robert Yard, poured out articles and pamphlets about the parks.
breathtaking scenery. He extolled the beautiful alpine lakes of Glacier; the unbelievable blue of Crater Lake; Yellowstone's wonderland of geysers, mountains and rivers on top of a supervolcano. The Grand Canyon wasn't a national park yet, but Yard promoted it as well. Geyser at Yellowstone National ParkBreakdownOn Aug. 25, 1916, President
 Wilson signed the bill creating the national park service into law. Shortly afterward, Albright noticed Stephen Mather began to act erratically. His moods suddenly changed. In one meeting, he poured forth wildly extravagant ideas. He ordered Albright to drop everything in Washington and meet him in Chicago. When Albright arrived, Mather asked
him, "What are you doing in Chicago?"Then, during a national conference on the park service that lasted several days, Mather went missing times. He was supposed to be running the conference on the park service that lasted several days, Mather went missing times. He was supposed to be running the conference on the park service that lasted several days, Mather went missing times. He was supposed to be running the conference on the park service that lasted several days, Mather went missing times. He was supposed to be running the conference on the park service that lasted several days, Mather went missing times. He was supposed to be running the conference on the park service that lasted several days, Mather went missing times.
the park service and then grew silent. His friends continued to talk, trying to cheer him up. But suddenly he put his head down on the table and began crying. The Cosmos Club todayAlbright got a call at 10:00 p.m. A friend of Mather's, E.O. McCormick, was at the Cosmos Club, where Mather stayed while in Washington, D.C.Albright wasn't prepared
for what he saw at the club. His friends had taken Mather into a small reception room and closed the door against curious onlookers. Though loosely held by McCormick, he was incoherent. His movements became more
agitated while his voice rose. I feared he might hurt himself. As I was younger and stronger, I replace McCormick, holding him with both arms. Several us talked quietly to him, trying to soothe his wild mood, but to no avail. Suddenly he broke out of my hold, rushed for the door, and with an anguished cry, proclaimed he couldn't live any longer
feeling as he did.They grabbed hold of him again, hustled him into a room and called for a doctor, who administered a sedative. Albright then called Jane Mather, his wife, who told him to take him to Dr. T.H. Weisenberg in Philadelphia.The 1915 dedication of Rocky Mountain National Park; (I to r): Stephen Mather, Robert Yard, acting superintendent
Trowbridge, NPS photographer Herford T. Cowling and Horace M. Albright as acting director of the National Park Service, a placeholder until Mather could return. If he returned. In 1917, treatment for mental illness involved isolation from the outside
world, exercise, a healthy diet and exercise. No excitement, no problems. Mather's doctor planned to slowly introduce him to the only two pictures on the wall, of
Yosemite National Park. Someone had removed the glass from the frames so Mather wouldn't try suicide with it. Albright found him better, but still fragile. Back in Washington, Albright laid the foundation for the National Park Service. He hired qualified personnel and set policy on grazing and digging for artifacts. Albright laid the foundation for the National Park Service.
parks and add new ones, including Zion, Grand Canyon and Acadia. He organized the park rangers and had uniforms designed for them. He made campground rules. All the while, Albright worked to keep commercial interests out of the parks. United States - California - Sequoia National ParkReappearanceMather suddenly reappeared in Washington
in November 1917, nearly a year after his breakdown. He announced he'd resume his old duties as National Parks director. His staff went along with him — sort of. They screened his calls, his mail, his visitors. The doctor told Albright to let him play at being director. "Keep all the problems away from him while you do all the work," the doctor
ordered. Fortunately, Mather got interested in saving the redwoods and stayed out west. Then in 1918 Mather inspected Mount Rainier. He spent the summer of 1918 in California, far away from the stress of Washington in
January 1918. Albright had then taken a vacation to visit family in California when he got a telegram from the Interior Secretary. "You must return at once," wrote Lane. "Matters here make it imperative." When Albright reached Washington, Lane told him Mather had gone into a check-writing frenzy. "I've got a wild man on my hands," Lane said
"You're the only one who can handle him. Get him out of Washington." Albright found Mather in a state of frenzied euphoria and extreme aggression. Mather's wife, back in Chicago, told Albright he'd been writing checks to political campaigns for thousands of dollars. Albright suggested they leave for Chicago so they could make plans in the
heartland.Mather agreed. Albright took him back to Chicago by train that night — a harrowing journey as Mather had produced a handful of razors from his luggage. Albright took him back to Washington for months. Friends and doctors found
distractions for the troubled parks director. AfterwardBy 1919, Mather had recovered enough to go back to his job as National Parks director. Albright, exhausted from overwork and with a wife and new baby in California, resigned as assistant. He took a job as superintendent of Yellowstone National Park. Horace Albright with a friend in
YellowstoneMather continued as park director for a decade, calling on Albright to troubleshoot from time to time. He resigned in 1929 due to his health. and Horace Albright returned to Washington as the second National Park Service in 1929 due to his health.
Albright Schenck.Images: Yellowstone National Park Ken Lunnd via Flickr, CC by-SA 2.0; Yosemite by Koshy via Flickr, CC by 2.0. Mount Rainier By Walter Siegmund (talk) - Own work, CC BY-SA 3.0, . Sequoia By World Wide Gifts - Flickr: United States - California
Sequoia National Park, CC BY-SA 2.0, . Zion CanyonBy Diliff, - taken by Diliff, CC BY-SA 3.0, . Grand Canyon by Grand Canyon by Grand Canyon by Grand Canyon National Park via Flickr, .CC By 2.0. This story was updated in 2024. His vigorous efforts to build public and political support for the parks helped persuade Congress to create the National Park Service in 1916. Appointed the
first NPS director in May 1917, he continued to promote park access, development, and use and contributed generously to the parks from his personal fortune. During his tenure the service's domain expanded eastward with the addition of Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and Mammoth Cave national parks. Periodically disabled by manic-
depression, Mather left office in January 1929 after suffering a stroke and died a year later. Stephen Tyng Mather led a full active life of 63 years, from 1867 to 1930. The years spanning the turn of the century saw vast changes in the country's demographics, as well as the development of modern forms of transportation and communication, and
increased leisure time. Mather was able to capitalize on these trends in his marketing efforts at the Thorkildsen-Mather Borax Company, which made him a millionaire, and in his public life as the first director of the National Park Service. During his life, Mather was an active member of numerous organizations, including his college fraternity Sigman for the National Park Service.
Chi, the Sun Alumni Association, the Chicago City Club and Municipal Voter's League, and the Sierra Club. He was always a strong supporter of the University of California at Berkeley. Mather was physically active, pursuing hiking and mountaineering, often squeezed into a frenzied travel schedule related to his business and the parks. His work,
travel, and tremendous physical energy exacted a heavy toll and contributed to his untimely death. Mather recognized magnificent scenery as the primary criterion for establishment of national parks. He was very careful to evaluate choices for parks, wishing the parks to stand as a collection of unique monuments. He felt those areas which were
duplicates might best be managed by others. Within the framework of "scenery," his preservation of the natural scene. Mather always wished to have the parks supported by avid users, who would then communicate their support
to their elected representatives. His grasp of a grassroots support system encouraged the rise of "nature study" and modern interpretation, as well as other park services, and was followed by increases in NPS appropriations. Mather was the first park professional to clearly articulate the policy which allowed the establishment of park concessioners to
provide basic visitor comforts and services in the then undeveloped parks. His provision of creature comforts connected with park developments encouraged a curious and supportive public to visit the national parks. His provision of creature comforts connected with park developments encouraged a curious and supportive public to visit the national parks. His provision of creature comforts connected with park developments encouraged a curious and supportive public to visit the national parks. His provision of creature comforts and supportive public to visit the national parks.
parks:"He laid the foundation of the National Park Service, defining and establishing the policies under which its areas shall be developed and conserved, unimpaired for future generations. There will never come an end to the good he has done . . . "Proposed "Sand Dunes National Park Stephen Tyng Mather left Chicago in 1915 to serve as an
assistant to his friend, Franklin K. Lane, President Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of the Interior. Mather, a wealthy Chicago borax manufacturer imbued with a deep appreciation of the environment, went to Washington to manage the neglected national parks. On August 25, 1916, President Wilson signed the National Park Service Act, and Lane later
appointed Mather the first director of the new bureau. As a member of two organizations promoting a Sand Dunes National Park (including the Prairie Club of Chicago and the Midwest. Within two weeks of the National Park Service Act, Mather met
with Senator Taggart to draft a resolution authorizing an investigation of the "advisability of the securing, by purchase or otherwise, all that portion of the Counties of Lake, Laporte, and Porter, in the State of Indiana, bordering upon Lake Michigan, and commonly known as the 'Sand dunes,' with a view that such lands be created a national park."
While Congress made no appropriation for the study, local preservation groups assumed Mather's expenses, including a one-week trip to the dunes, Chicago, and Michigan City. Mather held hearings on October 30 to gauge local sentiment on the proposed national park. Meeting in a courtroom in the Chicago Federal Building, 400 people attended and
forty-two spoke in favor of the park to "save the dunes." There were no opponents. Individuals testifying were Henry C. Cowles, University of Chicago Historical Society president; Lorado Taft, sculptor (and future father-in-law of U.S.
Senator Paul H. Douglas); T. C. Chamberlain, University of Chicago geologist; and Julius Rosenwald, founder of Sears, Roebuck, and Company. Some other organizations represented were the Prairie Club, Indiana Academy of Science, Chicago Association of Commerce, and the Illinois Audubon Society. The most convincing testimony was that of Henry
Cowles. The botanist had dedicated twenty years of his life to the Indiana Dunes and still took his students there for intensive academic study. The dunes were known throughout the world for their ecological importance. Cowles related the story of a group of European scientists with only two months in the United States who compiled a list of places
to spend their time: the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone, and the dunelands of southern Lake Michigan. Mather's assistant, Horace M. Albright, accompanied him to the dunes and compiled the National Park Service's report to Congress, which was submitted to Secretary Lane on December 20. The document represented a potential turning
point for Federal land acquisition policy for the Park Service director proposed the government purchase the land for a national park from private interests, a practice hitherto verboten by Congress. He cited the example of the $50,000 appropriation to buy a tract in Sequoia National Park which was insufficient to meet the $70,000 price tag, the
deficit amount coming from the National Geographic Society. Mather identified a strip of lakeshore twenty-five miles long and one mile wide for acquisition. This represented 9,000 to 13,000 acres at a price of $1.8 to $2.6 million. The park should be "contiguous and dignified," with no isolated tracts outstanding, Mather believed. Image
caption: Members of the Prairie Club of Chicago engage in a popular weekend activity in the nearly dunelands of Indiana. This particular "dunes walk" took place in 1913 in the vicinity of Mount Baldy. (Photographer A.E. Ormes, July 4, 1913, Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore) Federal developments in the Sand Dunes National
Park would be scant. Four or five roads connecting the lakeshore with the state highway would take motorists to the lake. A road along the shore itself was also a possibility, but development was not pressing because of the convenient rail lines traversing the dunes. As for Park Service administration, a superintendent and two permanent rangers
were all the personnel needed for visitor protection and interpretation with additional seasonal help during the summer. Estimated cost for the manpower would not exceed $15,000 a year. Mather declared that the Indiana Dunes were unmatched anywhere in the United States, if not the world. The area was convenient to five million people in the
Chicago metropolitan area as well as millions of other Americans in the center of the nation. The principal segment of the proposed national park stretched from Miller to Michigan City, the northeast corner of Lake County to Porter County. Mather wrote: The beauty of the trees and other plant life in their autumn garb, as I saw them recently, was
beyond description. Here is a stretch of unoccupied beach 25 miles in length, a broad, clean, safe beach, which in the summer months would furnish splendid bathing facilities for thousands of people at the same instant. Fishing in Lake Michigan directly north of the dunes is said to be exceptionally good. There are hundreds of good camp sites on the
beach and back in the dunes. Mather discounted the value of land near Gary for the park either because the dunes were less spectacular or the land was too near industrial areas. Mather discounted the value of land near Gary for the park either because the dunes were less spectacular or the land was too near industrial areas. Mather discounted the value of land near Gary for the park either because the dunes were less spectacular or the land was too near industrial areas.
time pending) merited national park status. The Sand Dunes of Indiana, Mather believed, deserved the same designation: The sand dunes are admittedly wonderful, and they are inherently distinctive because they best illustrate the action of the wind on the sand accumulated from a great body of water. No national park or other Federal reservation
offers this phenomenon for the pleasure and edification of the people, and no national park is as accessible. Furthermore, the dunes of this region were
mediocre and of little scenic or scientific interest, they would have no national character and could not be regarded as more than a State or municipal park possibility. My judgment is clear, however, that their characteristics entitle the major portion of their area to consideration as a national park project. Image caption: National Park Service Director
Stephen T. Mather (far left foreground) is accompanied by Col. Richard Lieber on an October 31, 1916, inspection tour—the day following a Department of the group in the background are Associate Director Horace Albright and his wife, Grace. (Photographer
Unknown, October 31, 1916, Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore) Because opponents were not present at the Mather hearing does not mean there was no serious opposition to the park proposal. The center of this opposition was in Porter County, Indiana. Led by the press, business and political leaders, and the Valparaiso
Chamber of Commerce, the critics attacked the immense area under consideration and charged it would undermine the tax base of the region and permanently close the lakeshore to industry. Many believed U.S. Steel Corporation was the power behind the park movement because it wished to keep its competitors out. "First Save the Country, Then
Save the Dunes," 1917-1919On December 20, 1916, Mather submitted his report to Secretary Lane who approved the report and forwarded it to Congress in early 1917. To help promote the park cause, Stephen Mather used his own money to publish and distribute the report. Thereafter, the outlook appeared bleak. Senator Taggart, the champion of
the dunes in Congress, left office following his electoral defeat. Another vocal champion, Stephen T. Mather, was silenced when he suffered a nervous breakdown in the spring of 1917 and could not lobby for the park. The crippling blow came on April 6 when national priorities inexorably changed as the United States entered World War I. With
revenues targeted for the national defense, any Congressional expenditure for the establishment of a Sand Dunes Park Association (NDPA) and other preservation groups were determined to
continue the save the dunes campaign. Supporters took the Prairie Club's annual outdoor festival concept and expanded it into a historical pageant would tie the area to American history while portraying the beauty of the duneland through dance, music, and poetry. The Dunes Pageant
Association, incorporated in Chicago in February 1917, commissioned Thomas Wood Stevens, president of the American Pageant Association, to compose a pageant similar to his other successful shows in Newark and St. Louis. Memorial Day 1917 was the first performance at the Waverly Beach blowout—a natural amphitheatre amidst the sand dunestication.
(Westchester Township History Museum) The pageant enjoyed widespread publicity thanks to area women's clubs. Newsreels spread the event throughout the country. Petitions proliferated. Each member of Congress received a copy of the pageant brochure. One author contends the pageant spawned a civil religion and a formidable political
constituency for saving the dunes by creating a "community united by mutual sympathy." As United States involvement in the war deepened, NDPA members acknowledged their inability to halt the despoiling of the dunes during the conflict. They vowed to renew the fight "the minute the war is over." They kept the issue before the public, however, as
witnessed by what one Chicago columnist wrote in 1918:Unless the State of Indiana or the United States takes the matter in hand, commercial plants will crowd the entire lake frontage. The matter resolves itself into a decision of humanity. Shall the million[s] of mill workers be condemned to the slavery of labor without recreation in the big plants on
the lake shore, or shall they be given the privilege of open-air spaces and pure air in which to renew strength and courage in their brief hours away from the mills? While the war ended in late 1918, the Sand Dunes National Park initiative floundered badly in 1919, faced by the post-war prosperity and the mounting opposition of politicians and
business interests. Evidence of this fatal NDPA pessimism can be seen in the May 15, 1919, meeting of the Chicago committee. The group conceded that a prolonged educational campaign was needed to convince Congress to "purchase" the national park. After that arduous process, there would be no dunes left to save. The group admitted the NDPA
should drop the national park struggle and pursue administration of the Indiana Dunes by the State of Indiana Dunes State Park System began in 1916, when an Indianapolis business leader and municipal reformer recommended the State establish its own park system. A
member of the Indiana Historical Commission (IHC—overseer of the State centennial), Richard Lieber found himself chairman of the IHC's State Park Memorial Committee. By the end of the year, Lieber succeeded in raising private funds to purchase McCormick's Creek Canyon and Turkey Run which became Indiana's first state parks. Lieber also
called for the acquisition of a portion of the Indiana Dunes for a state park. In 1919, the Indiana Legislature approved the formation of the Department of Conservation and Republican Governor James P. Goodrich appointed Lieber its first director. By late 1920 or early 1921, National Park Service Director Stephen Mather and Assistant Director.
Horace Albright were convinced the fight for establishment of the Sand Dunes National Park was fruitless. Combined with scant political support in Indiana, the new Federal administration of Warren G. Harding ushered in a new era of Republican conservatism which nixed the plan. No dunes park bill was introduced before Congress. More
importantly, Mather and Albright no longer believed in the cause. With industry's relentless push on each end of the lakeshore, Indiana Dunes was "unacceptable for National Park status." Albright recalled, "Mr. Mather was just too busy to get back to the Dunes project and he gradually came to the conclusion that the only hope for them lay in the
state park movement. "Mather abdicated saving the dunes to his friend Richard Lieber. Both men organized the first national meeting of state park employees in 1921. Two years later, they reassembled at Turkey Run State Park where the National Conference on State Parks formed with Mather the first president and Gary's Bess Sheehan (NDPA).
officer) its secretary. Indiana's park system was the model in the United States and its leader redoubled his efforts to add the Indiana Dunes to its fold. Image caption: The National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes to its fold. Image caption: The National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes to its fold. Image caption: The National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection to the proposed Sand Dunes National Park Service inspection tour of the proposed San
Chandler Cowles; Mrs. Bess Sheehan; unknown; National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore) Lieber and Sheehan would find success, establishing Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albright. (Photographic Archives, Indiana Dunes National Park Service Director Stephen T. Mather (partially obscured); Col. Richard Lieber; unknown; and Horace M. Albrigh
State Park in 1925 and ultimately protecting 2,500 acres of unspoiled Duneland. The second push for securing a national park in the Indiana Dunes would not begin for another quarter century under the lead of Dorothy Buell, Senator Paul H. Douglas, and the Save the Dunes Council. Learn More Explore more conservation history of Indiana Dunes
Lakeshore, Indiana, National Park Service, 1988. Mackintosh, Barry; National Park Service: The First 75 Years, National Park Service, 1991. Tags indiana dunes national park
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