

Culture as Nature: How Native American Cultural Antiquities Became Part of the Natural World

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Cultural Naturalization in the National Parks

In a now well-known passage from an 1832 letter, painter George Catlin, America's first visual ethnographer of note, likely also became the first to offer a prototype of what has come to be called "the national park idea":

And what a splendid contemplation too, when one (who has traveled these realms, and can duly appreciate them) imagines them as they *might* in future be seen, (by some great protecting policy of government) preserved in their pristine beauty and wildness, in a *magnificent park*, where the world could see for ages to come the native Indian in his classic attire, galloping his wild horse, with sinewy bow, and shield and lance, amid the fleeting herds of elks and buffaloes. What a beautiful and thrilling speci-

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men for America to preserve and hold up to the view of her refined citizens and the world, in future ages! A nation's Park, containing man and beast, in all the wildness and freshness of their nature's beauty!¹

At first blush it might seem by today's standards that Catlin's park idea, although vividly rendered, is simply naïve, romantic, and ethnocentric, and therefore irrelevant to contemporary concerns. It appears, for example, to relegate Native Americans to a status similar to that of wild animals by proposing to put both on display, side-by-side, for the viewing pleasure of white Americans. One might be tempted to conclude from this alone that Catlin's plan is not only a quaint anachronism, but one with a well-deserved place in the dustbin of history.

Looked at closely, however, Catlin's statement reveals itself to be in part (if not in essence) a plea to preserve the plains Indians' traditional hunting practices and their relationship to their ancestral hunting grounds. It is intended, in a word, to preserve their *culture*,² and to do so on what might be described today as a "cultural landscape,"³ or "traditional cultural property."⁴ This, along with his concern for preserving material artifacts of Indian culture ("sinewy bow, and shield and lance") hints at what is today known broadly as "cultural resources management" (CRM). At the very least, Catlin envisioned a park that did more than just preserve natural scenery. It would be premature, therefore, to dismiss his idea as an anachronism. In fact, some of its key elements may, after all, run through both federal preservation legislation and National Park Service (NPS) management practices.

Today, NPS has become this country's premier guardian and exhibitor of both natural and cultural antiquities. In its attempt to reconcile the manage-

1. George Catlin, *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians*, vol. 1 (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1841), 260–64. All subsequent unattributed Catlin quotations are from the same letter. According to historian Hans Huth, this passage was published in 1883 "in one of the letters Catlin sent from the Indian territory to the *Daily Commercial Advertiser*, a widely read New York newspaper." Hans Huth, *Nature and the American* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1957), 135. As a footnote to this footnote, a certain Lord Baltimore had, in 1650, ordered that 10,000 acres be set aside as a sort of proto-reservation for the Indians of Maryland, although there is no indication that his purpose was to preserve their way of life. See Roy Harvey Pearce, *The Savages of America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965), 16.

2. The National Park Service officially defines "culture" as referring to "'lifeways,' 'customs,' 'traditions,' 'social practices,' and 'folkways.'" See *Cultural Resources Management Guideline*, NPS-28 (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985).

3. See Melody Webb, "Cultural Landscapes in the National Park Service," *The Public Historian* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 78. Webb points out that "recognition of cultural landscapes discrete from natural landscapes did not appear until 1925," in the writings of Carl O. Sauer.

4. A "traditional cultural property" such as Catlin describes would qualify today for inclusion in the National Register by its "association with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that (a) are rooted in the community's history, and (b) are important in maintaining the continuing cultural identity of the community." See Patricia L. Parker and Thomas F. King, "Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties," *National Register Bulletin* 38 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service,

ment and exhibition of natural environments and cultural history (often seen as opposing forces), NPS faces the added dilemma of representing *two* separate cultural histories: white American and Native American. In practice, this amounts to a split between American history and something officially classified as *pre-history* (or, more accurately, *nonhistory*).⁵ Not surprisingly, there has been a sharp contrast between the management and presentation of places associated with historic Euro-America and those associated with indigenous people, who are officially neither historic nor American. Perhaps inevitably, then, in its approach to handling Native American cultural history, NPS has fallen back on what it does best: the management and exhibition of natural environments and the promotion of outdoor recreation.

The position of NPS vis-à-vis Native American cultural antiquities has been largely, if tacitly, determined by its adoption of the recommendations of the Leopold Report in 1963. Since this report, NPS has pursued as its “primary goal” the preservation of natural ecosystems in the parks, which has often meant restoring areas to their “original” and “natural” condition. But how far back in the past is the “original” condition of a place or thing? The Leopold committee took the position that the American landscape existed in a “natural” condition until European invaders arrived around the year 1500.⁶ The committee’s conclusions reflected the view that human beings (having transcended nature, and being no longer a part of it) had become an unnatural and disruptive presence on the land. Its failure, however, to extend the notion to include Native Americans, who were seen as an “‘original’ and therefore ‘natural’ presence in North America,”⁷ implied that they were also a *nonhuman* presence. Since NPS’s adoption of the Leopold Report, this contradiction has become embedded in Park Service policy, where it remains largely unresolved.

One can see the contradiction in several NPS locations where culture and nature are managed together. This is especially true in some of the parks and monuments of the Southwest, where one can follow a hiking trail into remote areas of natural solitude, photograph spectacular natural scenery,

Interagency Resource Division, 1990), 1. It has also been pointed out that Anglo-Americans’ use of terms like “cultural *property*” and “cultural *resource*” to describe such sites reflects a commodity orientation suitable to a market economy, perhaps, but much different from Indians’ own approach to “heritage preservation.” See Joseph C. Winter, “Indian Heritage Preservation and Archaeologists,” *American Antiquity* 45, no. 1 (January 1980): 121–31.

5. It can be argued that history on the North American continent began with the arrival of literacy, and since it is the literate (and the victors) who write history, there must be literacy for there to *be* history. Words like “history” and “historic,” and “prehistoric” therefore represent the point-of-view of white, Euro-American culture.

6. A. Starker Leopold, et al., *Wildlife Management in the National Parks: Report of the Advisory Board on Wildlife Management to Secretary of Interior Udall*, U.S. Department of Interior, Advisory Board on Wildlife Management (March 4, 1963), 2.

7. Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, 2d ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1987), 200.

brave whitewater rapids, encounter wild animals and rare plants—and, in addition, architectural ruins and ancient rock art.⁸ In other words, these areas are often managed and presented primarily as unspoiled natural landscapes and recreational sites as much as, and in some cases more than, cultural landscapes. Architectural construction, as well as pictographs, petroglyphs, and other Native American alterations to the landscape seem at times almost lost amidst the natural scenery.⁹ This raises a key question: is the scenery so spectacular as to overshadow culture *on its own*, or is this an effect of the way NPS presents and interprets the historico-cultural artifacts at these sites?¹⁰

In a place like the Grand Canyon, where nature appears as a spectacular immensity of unparalleled proportions, it is understandable that nature should overshadow culture as the primary interpretive theme.¹¹ At the Grand Canyon, however, nature remains the *only* theme, despite the fact that hundreds of archaeological sites have been found below the canyon's rim, 37 of them along the Colorado River where thousands of river-rafters now travel every year. There is even a prominent multi-chambered ruin at the river's confluence with Bright Angel Creek, along the well-traveled path used by hikers and rafters to visit Phantom Ranch. As such, it is impossible to miss. A color picture-postcard widely sold in the park displays this ruin site as its most prominent foreground feature. The description on the back, however, characteristically omits all mention of it: "View across the Colorado River near Phantom Ranch captures mule train, river runners, Kaibob Suspension Bridge, and beautiful spring flowers."¹² Likewise, the park's official visitor's guide and map makes no reference to any of the region's rich cultural and archaeological history. The extensive Tusayan ruin site, acces-

8. Examples of this include Natural Bridges and Navajo National Monuments. Both provide visitors with nature hikes, spectacular views of natural scenery, and Native American architectural ruins—all in one *seamless* experience.

9. It can be argued that several National Parks, perhaps especially Mesa Verde and Canyon de Chelly, embody this combination of natural and cultural elements. In the 1920s, attempts to fashion a national park from the Indian ruin site at Bandelier National Monument were justified with the concept of "aggregate value," meaning that the area contained Native American cultural antiquities *and* excellent natural scenery. It was believed that this combination would result in an area of national significance and become the basis upon which more national parks would be founded. See Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 145–59.

10. Thomas King points to "pervasive biases" among NPS managers against preservation of historic and other *non-natural properties*. "Natural resources and recreation needs," he writes, "dominate the agenda." Thomas F. King, "Park Planning, Historic Resources, and the National Historic Preservation Act," in *Our Common Lands: Defending the National Parks*, ed. David J. Simon (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1988), 275–91.

11. During two river voyages through the canyon in 1869 and 1872, the breathtaking immensity of the scene caused John Wesley Powell and his men to pay "only scant attention to . . . the prehistoric ruins they found. Often, in fact, the party failed to mention them at all." See Don D. Fowler, Robert C. Euler, and Catherine S. Fowler, *John Wesley Powell and the Anthropology of the Canyon Country*. Geological Survey Professional Paper 670 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 1969), 8.

12. It should be emphasized that the postcard in question is not an official NPS publication.

sible by car along the South Rim, receives many visitors every year, but is mentioned in the literature only as one of several locations where they can go to pick up a copy of *The Guide*, a park publication.¹³

The Grand Canyon is only one of thirty-seven NPS units in the Southwest which, according to Lister and Lister,¹⁴ are significant repositories of Native American cultural antiquities. Indeed, it has been estimated that 98 percent of the more than 360 NPS units nationwide contain Native American cultural artifacts,¹⁵ although only about 9 percent of these sites are managed with Native American cultural history as their primary theme.¹⁶ One way of looking at how NPS interprets these properties is to look specifically at its illustrated informational literature (see Appendix). A review of the literature from each of the thirty-seven sites in the Southwest shows that the number of locations portrayed and promoted by NPS as *purely cultural* sites, where Native American culture is the primary theme, is roughly equal to the number promoted as *purely natural* sites, where nature is the primary theme. Indeed, the latter even outnumber the former by one, despite the fact that *all* thirty-seven are considered (by the Listers and by others) to be important sites of Native American historic or cultural presence. Many of the twenty or so remaining are promoted as sites where nature and native culture seem to complement one another, suggesting, at best, that they exist in an ideal symbiosis, and, at worst, that these are so closely related that distinctions cannot be drawn between them.¹⁷ The literature one receives at some of these sites often obscures their primary mission. At the very least, it levels distinctions between nature and culture. Thus, the attempt to manage natural environments and cultural history as a single entity by a single agency seems problematic both in conception and execution. In places it has had the net effect of naturalizing, masking, and undermining the validity of Native American cultural history.

Why has there been no significant objection to this masking? Empirical research on landscape preference (the visible elements that determine viewers' attractions to some types of landscapes over others) suggests one

13. Stephanie Toothman argues that the "failure to recognize the presence of cultural resources in the primary planning documents of these natural areas created a classic 'out of sight, out of mind' situation. When there was no official recognition of cultural resources, then the need to deal with them could go, and has gone, unrecognized." Stephanie Toothman, "Cultural Resource Management in Natural Areas of the National Park System," *The Public Historian* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 68.

14. Robert H. Lister and Florence C. Lister, *Those Who Came Before*, 2d ed. (Tucson: Southwest Parks & Monuments Association, 1993). This is considered by many to be the handbook on the subject, and is sold by the National Park Service at most if not all of the 37 locations.

15. Dierdre McNulty, "Discovery Among the Ruins," *National Parks* 58, nos. 9/10 (September/October, 1984): 17.

16. Todd Wilkinson, "Ancestral Lands," *National Parks* 67, nos. 7/8 (July/August, 1993): 33.

17. It is worth noting that in the original authorizing legislation for many National Parks which do contain Native American antiquities and other cultural resources, there is often no mention of them. The National Historic Preservation Act was intended to prevent such neglect in all post-1966 bills. See Toothman, "CRM in Natural Areas of the NPS," 67.

possible explanation. Studies show that visible signs associated with the historical presence of white America (roads, fences, frame buildings, etc.), however dilapidated, are primarily what determine the perception of an area as a cultural landscape rather than a natural one,¹⁸ whereas the signs associated with Native Americans' historical presence do not. That is to say, for members of the dominant culture, Native American antiquities often may not be clearly differentiated, conceptually, from their natural surroundings. In *gestalt* terms, one might say that the figure is not perceptibly differentiated from the ground (its surrounding context). Native American antiquities are so closely associated with their natural surroundings, in fact, that visitors often prefer and even expect to find them in a wilderness setting.¹⁹ Thus, a series of significant yet all but overlooked legal maneuvers has been aimed at applying the 1964 Wilderness Act to protect threatened Native American artifact sites around the Southwest and in California, despite the act's strict definition of wilderness as "an area of undeveloped land retaining its primeval character . . . which generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable."²⁰

Although many areas around the country have failed to qualify for official wilderness designation precisely because they contained visible evidence of past white settlement, areas exhibiting signs of past Indian settlement seem to have no trouble fitting the criteria for being labelled "undeveloped" and "primeval." If their cultural antiquities do not represent a significant human "imprint" upon the land, then these antiquities are not being managed in a way that invites proper respect for them as evidence of legitimate and significant cultures.

Perhaps another factor in the naturalization of Native American culture is that American Indians themselves have long claimed a special relationship to the natural world. However, when this equation is made by outsiders, it takes on a different set of meanings. In recent decades, for example, the Indian-Nature equation has become a key element in (non-Indian) environmental philosophy, giving rise to the argument that Native Americans had developed a philosophical prototype to Aldo Leopold's "land ethic," and that they were, therefore, natural-born environmentalists.²¹ Such retrospec-

18. See, for example, Rachel Kaplan, "Some Methods and Strategies in the Prediction of Preference," in *Landscape Assessment: Values, Perceptions, and Resources*, eds. E. H. Zube, R. O. Brush, & J. G. Fabos (Stroudsburg, Pa.: Dowden, Hutchinson, & Ross, 1975), 118–29. See also R. Ulrich, "Natural versus Urban Scenes: Some Psychological Effects," *Environment and Behavior* 13 (1981): 523–26.

19. John Daniel, "Stealing Time," *Wilderness* 53, no. 188 (Spring 1990): 36.

20. Public Law 88-577; 78 *U. S. Statutes at Large* 890–96.

21. Alston Chase offers a vituperative critique of environmentalists' view of Indians as "ecological sages," arguing that such ideas were "conceived as soon as the first white men set foot on this continent," and have persisted because "Indians' enemies did not want to believe that they might have been sufficiently civilized to improve upon their surroundings [while] the Indians' friends did not want to believe they could, like the rest of us, exploit nature." Alston

tive assertion of contemporary values has become commonplace, even among national leaders like Stewart Udall, who has characterized Native Americans as “pioneer ecologists.”

In a similar vein, Justice William O. Douglas once argued that although the Indians “took their living from the wilderness, they left that wilderness virtually intact.”²² His observation typifies a generalized image of Native Americans based on the nomadic plains tribes. More important, he apparently discounts the many prominent mound constructions, cliff dwellings, pueblo complexes, irrigation canals, and even road systems constructed over the centuries by Native Americans. These do not signify an intact, unsettled wilderness as much as a *built environment*, and many of these constructions have proven to be extremely durable. Through construction, cultivation, controlled burning, and other means, Native Americans effectively transformed much of the North American continent into an indigenous cultural landscape long before it was pronounced a wilderness by European immigrants.²³ Many today, however, who acknowledge the changes wrought by systematic burning in particular, often conclude that the practice is so ancient that over time it became integral to the normal functioning of natural ecosystems, and that the people who practiced it thus became part of the natural world.²⁴

Ultimately, the naturalization of Native American cultures results from a failure in the United States to internalize the historic experience of Native Americans as a part of what has been called “the American Experience.” Although the term “Native Americans” is widely accepted, both federal legislation and cultural resource management practices reinforce the notion of American Indians as exotic others rather than as Americans and as valued members of multicultural society.

Chase, *Playing God in Yellowstone: The Destruction of America's First National Park* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 110. See also Runte, *National Parks*, 199–200, 238–39.

22. Udall and Douglas are quoted in Stephen Fox's *John Muir and His Legacy: The American Conservation Movement* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1981), 350. Both statements are also discussed in Chase's *Playing God in Yellowstone*, 112. It is worth noting in relation to Douglas's remark that the shift from nomadism to sedentism among the Indians of the American Southwest, which led to the construction of pueblos, irrigation canals, and other changes to the land, is thought to have occurred well over 2,000 years ago (between 300 and 100 B.C.).

23. See, for example, Karl W. Butzer, “The Indian Legacy in the American Landscape,” in *The Making of the American Landscape*, ed. Michael P. Conzen (Boston and London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), 27–50; William M. Denevan, “The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3 (September, 1992), 369–85.

24. See Richard White and William Cronon, “Ecological Change and Indian-White Relations,” in *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 4 (“History of Indian-White Relations”), ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1988), 417–29. See also Runte, *National Parks*, 238–39, and Chase, *Playing God in Yellowstone*, 92–97, 110–15. Ironically, taken on its own terms, the argument that Indians have been part of the natural world might meet with few objections from modern Native Americans.

Parks, Painters, and Primitivists

Nearly forty years passed between the time Catlin put forth his idealized national park model and that fabled campfire conversation when reportedly the members of the Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition discussed the possibility that the Yellowstone region they had just explored might “be set aside as a great National Park.”²⁵ Although Catlin’s idea reflects the romanticism of its time, it is still visionary in many ways. Even its provision for the protection of wild animals, which might have seemed eccentric in its day, was eventually institutionalized (with passage of the Lacey Act in 1894 and the National Park Service Organic Act in 1916), and is today a key ingredient in the management of nearly all American national parks.²⁶ Ironically, Catlin died the very year the Yellowstone Act was passed by Congress, creating the world’s first official national park, but as historian Alfred Runte points out,

With establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872, Catlin’s revolutionary point of view was rejected in favor of the strict protection of monumental scenery. By preservation was meant to protect landscapes, not to preserve the historical relationships between landscapes and people.²⁷

In 1906 the Antiquities Act seemed at last to provide specifically for the preservation of Native American cultural artifacts, in sites to be designated “National Monuments” (although many have been created around monumental *natural* features). These officially became part of the system of National Parks with passage of the Park Service Organic Act in 1916, and Executive Order 6166 in 1933. In 1931 Canyon de Chelly was made a national monument, and is today managed jointly by the Park Service and the Navajo Nation. The Navajos still live, farm, and tend sheep there. Although they hardly fit Catlin’s vision of a people who gallop on horseback in “classic attire . . . with sinewy bow, and shield and lance,” NPS could at last

25. The campfire story was reported by Nathaniel Langford, and in recent years has assumed the dimensions of a *founding myth* explaining the origins of the national park idea. The reliability of Langford’s account of it is analyzed in detail in Runte’s *National Parks*, 41–42. Its status as legend is discussed by Barry Mackintosh in “The National Park Service Moves into Historical Interpretation,” *Public Historian* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987), 60.

26. The so-called “Lacey Act” was formally known as the National Park Protection Act (“An Act to Protect the Birds and Animals in the Yellowstone National Park,” 28 U.S. Statutes at Large 73), but acquired its common name from its congressional sponsor John F. Lacey of Iowa, the same Lacey who subsequently introduced the Antiquities Act in the House. Later, the National Park Service Organic Act explicitly stated that the national parks would “conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects *and the wild life therein*” (Public Law 64: 235, August 25th, 1916; 39 U.S. Statutes at Large 535–536; 16 U.S.C. § 1—emphasis added). Runte, however, cites the 1934 authorization of Everglades National Park (which, of course, could boast no spectacular scenery, but was unparalleled as a home to waterfowl) as the first *practical* acknowledgment by the National Park Service that wildlife is as worthy of preservation as scenery. See Runte, *National Parks*, 26.

27. Runte, *National Parks*, 238.

boast a unit that did, in fact, have a population of living Indians on it.²⁸ Canyon de Chelly, however, had been popularized largely by the photographs of Timothy O'Sullivan in the nineteenth century and Ansel Adams in the twentieth, both of whom were known primarily as landscape photographers. Despite the presence of Navajo land users, the popularity of these photographs brought the area firmly into the orbit of landscape imagery, thereby reinforcing its associations with spectacular natural scenery and de-emphasizing its association with living traditions.

Perhaps the single most important aspect of Catlin's legacy was his unresolved ambivalence toward Native Americans. This ambivalence would eventually be institutionalized in the modern system of national parks. Catlin, much like the modern Park Service, viewed natives as intelligent people with fascinating rituals and traditions; at the same time he cast them as extensions and embodiments of the natural world, almost at one with their surroundings, and thus not fully emerged into human cultures. His paintings depict the rituals and ceremonies that made up the visible surface of native cultures, whereas his writings suggest that he saw in indigenous people an *essence* that inextricably linked them to and grounded them in nature. Catlin's primitivist outlook made it difficult for him to apply accepted definitions of "culture" to the Indians.²⁹ "I love a people," he wrote, "who are honest without laws . . . who have never raised a hand against me, or stolen my property, where there was no law to punish either."³⁰ Catlin thus looked at a complex social contract, a system of internalized restraints and prohibitions, and, in the absence of written documents, saw no laws or rules at work. Unable to apprehend the underlying principles of this foreign social organization, he concluded there were none. He looked at Indian societies and saw no society as such. The rituals, ceremonies, social conventions, and taboos that fascinated him fell beyond what was then thought of as society and culture—which he therefore judged to be lacking.³¹

A hundred years before Catlin, the naturalist Comte de Buffon had argued similarly of the Indians that "no union, no republic, no social state,

28. It is important to note that Canyon de Chelly National Monument was not designated to preserve or celebrate the culture of the Navajos who live there, but rather to preserve the ruins left behind by the *earlier* pueblo people who had departed the area several hundreds years before the Navajo arrived in the mid-1700s. The same is true, ironically, of the misnamed Navajo National Monument. For a discussion of NPS efforts to "manage people as residents" on its lands, see Melody Webb, "Cultural Landscapes in the National Park Service," 77–89.

29. It is worth noting that the word "culture" continued to be understood in the singular form and to be used interchangeably with "civilization" until well into the twentieth century. In the wake of Franz Boas, anthropologists began to speak in the plural of different "cultures" after WWI, but the trend was slow to catch on.

30. Catlin wrote these words in his *Last Rambles Amongst the Indians of the Rocky Mountains and the Andes* (1868), quoted in Harold McCracken's *George Catlin and the Old Frontier* (New York: Dial Press, 1959), 14.

31. In *Of the Canibales* (1580) Montaigne pointed to a similar distinction between what he called "civil" and "uncivil" governments. The people of the latter were seen as "lacking in culture." See Ray Allen Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1981), 4.

can take place among the morality of their manners.”³² Well after Catlin’s time, Indians’ customs, beliefs, and social systems continued to be seen as “solely a product of their natural environment.”³³ Such so-called “environmental” theories, which had gained prominence in the late eighteenth century, explained Indian customs as resulting from the effects of physical environment and the laws of nature. The laws of nature, however, were generally seen as immutable expressions of a tightly ordered universe. Applied to the Indians, such laws appeared to decree that their nature was fixed and unchanging, and that they were therefore unlikely to adapt to white civilization.³⁴ Catlin, along with many of his contemporaries,³⁵ viewed the Indians therefore in essentialist terms, and remarked often on cultural traits which he attributed to their unique nature. It was in their nature, for example, a part of their very essence, to be wild, uncivilized, and unchanging. As such, they stood across a wide gulf of *otherness* from Catlin’s own kind, whom he termed variously, as “cultivating man,” “enlightened man,” “civilized man,” and America’s “refined citizens,” who inhabited a world of cultural change and so-called progress.

The implication that the Indians were *uncultivated*, *unenlightened*, *uncivilized*, and *unrefined* implied no condemnation. On the contrary, this view was in keeping with the tradition of romanticism which had always been sympathetic to so-called primitive peoples around the world. To be uncivilized was to be, in Catlin’s words, “uncorrupted by the vices of civilized acquaintance.”³⁶ This meant being free of the taint of inhumane institutions and bureaucracies that were then seen by some as plaguing Euro-American society. The Indians therefore represented what has been described as “a wonderful paradox: their conduct was ultimately more

32. Quoted in Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., *The White Man’s Indian* (New York: Knopf, 1978), 43. A hundred years before that, Richard Johnson’s *Nova Britannia* (1609) typified the view of his time that the Indians had “no law but nature.” Quoted in Billington, *Land of Savagery*, 7; and in Pearce, *The Savages of America*, 2.

33. William H. Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed: A Study of Catlin’s Indian Gallery* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1979), 70–71. It has been argued that “environmental” thinking of this sort remained popular among scholars until relatively recently. “American anthropologists,” observed one historian at mid-century, “have given less and less attention to environmental factors. In part this represents a healthy reaction against the older naive view that culture could be ‘explained’ or derived from the environment.” A. L. Kroeber, *Cultural and Natural Areas of Native North America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), 3. The older view to which he refers may be that of Albert Gallatin. It is discussed in Robert Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), 16–54. “Environmentalism” is also discussed by Robert Berkhofer Jr. in “White Conceptions of Indians,” in the *Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 4 (“The History of Indian-White Relations”), ed. Wilcomb E. Washburn (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian, 1988), 522–47 (see especially pp. 540–41).

34. The deeply rooted stereotype of Native Americans as “inherently unprogressive,” with a culture that was “inherently static,” is addressed specifically in relation to archaeology by Bruce Trigger in “Archaeology and the Image of the American Indian” *American Antiquity* 45, no. 4 (October 1980): 662–76. See also Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*.

35. See James Fenimore Cooper, *The Leatherstocking Tales* (New York: Viking Press, 1985).

36. Quoted in McCracken, *George Catlin and the Old Frontier*, 66.

civilized than the white men's because they were uncorrupted by civilization."³⁷ Yet the inevitable conclusion of seeing Native Americans as primal innocents, untouched by the corrupting vices of decadent white society, was that they became conceptually situated not only outside of culture, but also outside of history. To many minds, excluding the Indians from human history left them in the realm of natural history. As the eighteenth century began, Robert Beverly maintained in his *History of the Present State of Virginia* (1705) that Indians still existed in a "simple State of Nature,"³⁸ and in the ensuing hundred years leading up to the time of Catlin, attitudes changed little. The doctrine of Primitivism had emerged in opposition to certain tenets of Rationalism (which glorified civilization over nature),³⁹ but, ironically, made it just as difficult to see the Indians apart from Nature.⁴⁰ Thus, Catlin too saw them as being "intirely [sic] in a state of nature,"⁴¹ and, moreover, as sharing a single history (if not an evolutionary pre-history) with the buffalo. Both were "joint and original tenants of the soil, and fugitives together from the approach of civilized man." They would even share a common future when, inevitably, he lamented, "their bones will bleach together."

This portrayal of the Indians would persist in American painting for decades after Catlin. At mid-century Albert Bierstadt painted a number of majestic works depicting a primeval American landscape in which, according to art historian Barbara Novak, "Man has not yet entered eden." There is, however, one type of figure who can be introduced into this landscape without disrupting it:

the Indian, who, as a function of nature, symbolizes its unexplored state. The Indians in Bierstadt's landscapes represent nature, not culture. Like the forests, the Indian exists in a state of nature, before he is cut down. His tenancy as a natural citizen is premised on his inseparability from nature.⁴²

Time and again in mid-nineteenth-century paintings of Western landscapes, Indians appear as tokens of the wild, unspoiled nature of the scene.

37. Truettner, *The Natural Man Observed*, 70. Compare Pearce, whom Truettner is apparently paraphrasing: "The image of the Indian as the paradoxical man who was civilized because he was uncorrupted by civilization" (*The Savages of America*, 138).

38. Quoted in Pearce, *The Savages of America*, 43.

39. Billington, *Land of Savagery*, 13.

40. "Primitivism" can be roughly understood as a belief that civilization, with its impersonal social machinery, actually decreases humans' happiness. Thus, peoples who are free of "civilized" manners, customs, laws, and institutions are thought to enjoy simpler, happier lives filled with something like the innocent joys of youth. This has led, historically, to an idealized image of the "natural man" who is uncorrupted by civilization's vices, and whose life in a "state of nature" is not only more pure but closer to god. Clearly, Primitivism is Utopian in orientation, as well as a mode of social criticism aimed at European and American societies. Its opposite number was the doctrine of *Savagism* (see Pearce, *The Savages of America*).

41. Catlin, *Letters and Notes* 1:23. Reprinted in Marjorie Catlin Roehm, *The Letters of George Catlin and His Family: A Chronicle of the American West* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 62.

42. Barbara Novak, *Nature as Culture: American Landscape Painting 1825–1875* (New York: Oxford, 1980), 189.

Typically, as in the works of Albert Bierstadt such as *The Rocky Mountains* (1863), *Merced River, Yosemite Valley* (1866), and *Giant Redwood Trees of California* (1874), diminutive Indians stand near the bottom of the frame, not disrupting the immense natural scene, but instead existing in perfect harmony with it. As such, they are often read as symbolic guarantors that the landscape depicted is still unsettled, still virgin—in a word, that it is still a wilderness not only despite their presence, but, indeed, because of it. As inhabitants as well as embodiments of “pure” nature, they represent (from the standpoint of white, Euro-Americans) the absence or even the negation of culture, in a place where history has not yet begun.

Later photographers inherited these conventions of representation. We need think only of the familiar techniques of photographer and pioneering documentary filmmaker Edward S. Curtis, who routinely removed his Indian subjects from history, placing them instead in what anthropologists call the ethnographic present, even retouching photographs to remove signs of modernity.⁴³ Other images, like his *Canyon de Chelly, Navajos* (1904), echo Bierstadt’s compositions in the placement of tiny Indian figures overshadowed by towering natural features in a majestic landscape. Never mind that Canyon de Chelly had for centuries been home to a stable population of non-nomadic Navajos. Curtis resorted to the stereotype of the wandering plains Indian here, just as in so many of his portraits of individual Indians they appear in anachronistic “classic attire.”

Archaeology, Art, and Architecture

As George Kubler once observed,

the study of Old World antiquity was from its beginnings in the Italian Renaissance a branch of humanistic learning, while the study of New World antiquity, which has been systematically pursued only since about 1850, soon took a scientific turn, relating it more closely to anthropology than to humanistic studies.⁴⁴

The study and interpretation of Native Americans’ cultural past has thus been taken up by scholars in the fields of archaeology and anthropology rather than those in art history or American studies. At the turn of the century, these social scientists “took the lead in creating a climate in which the government would favor the preservation of antiquities,”⁴⁵ and they

43. For an example of Curtis’s before-and-after retouching, see the photos on pp. 106–107 of Christopher Lyman’s *The Vanishing American and Other Illusions: Photographs of Indians by Edward S. Curtis* (New York: Pantheon, 1982).

44. George Kubler, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient America* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1962), 7. Admittedly, the field of art history has taken more interest in Native American art since Kubler wrote these words over thirty years ago.

45. Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 35.

largely set the agenda for antiquities management that survives today. During the Depression, federal make-work programs, along with the National Park Service's move into historic preservation, are said to have resulted in further and "unprecedented embedding of archaeologists" in the federal system of antiquities preservation.⁴⁶

So aggressively have archaeologists staked their claim to Indian antiquities—even gravesites and bodily remains—that they have clashed repeatedly with Native Americans themselves over whether their dead ancestors are suitable objects for scientific study and display. The Native American Heritage Commission of California stated in 1979 that federal management of gravesites and other ritual locations placed too much emphasis "on the interests of science in general and archaeologists in particular over the inherent rights of the Indian people with respect to the cultural remains of their ancestors." That same year, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act officially placed Indian human remains in the domain of archaeologists, categorizing them along with ancient baskets, potsherds, arrowheads, and the like. This made them vulnerable to official plunder by anyone with a federal permit, which would be issued so long as "the activity is undertaken for the purpose of furthering archaeological knowledge in the public interest," and the object itself is "preserved by a suitable university, museum, or other scientific or educational institution."⁴⁷

According to American Indian Movement (AIM) leader Dennis Banks, archaeologists often justify their appropriation of bodily remains by arguing that Native Americans cannot claim with scientific certainty that the dead bodies are for sure those of their relatives. The reason typically given is that the remains are "pre-historic," which, as Banks points out, means "pre-white."⁴⁸ One archaeologist admitted that until recently his colleagues often rationalized their plunder of burial sites with the collective view that "Indians were *sub-human*."⁴⁹ As such, the inevitable conclusion would seem to be that indigenous Americans could not have produced genuine art, and were likewise incapable of having had legitimate cultures of any complexity or significance.

In Europe, the study and interpretation of pre-historic peoples and their cultures have not been as closely identified with science as in the United States. In January of 1995, the French government announced the discovery of some 300 Ice Age paintings on the walls of a cave near Avignon. Jean Clottes of the Ministry of Culture quickly proclaimed them works of "great

46. Thomas F. King, Patricia Parker Hickman, and Gary Berg, *Anthropology in Historic Preservation: Caring for Culture's Clutter* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 22.

47. *Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979*, 16 U.S.C. 470bb(1) (1982).

48. Banks is quoted by Harvey Arden in "Who Owns Our Past?" *National Geographic* 175, no. 3 (March 1989): 376–92. See also Winter, "Indian Heritage Preservation and Archaeologists," 122.

49. Geoffrey Cowley, "The Plunder of the Past," *Newsweek*, June 26, 1989, pp. 58–60, emphasis added.

art.”⁵⁰ Given that the images were made by Cro-Magnons during the Paleolithic era some 20,000 years ago, it is impossible to know whether the creators of these images intended them to be decorative, functional, or expressive, whether they were painted for public display or as part of some secret ritual. For that matter, some might ask if they are the products of human beings like ourselves, or of primitives living entirely *in a state of nature*. And now, are they properly the province of art historians, or of archaeologists? Clottes, however, as an advisor on matters of French culture, welcomed them without hesitation (and virtually by official decree) into the annals of French cultural history, commending them to art and cultural historians—not archaeologists—for evaluation and interpretation.

Ancient Native American pictographs, by contrast, have not been given the same enthusiastic treatment in their own country, either by academic art historians or by government. This remains true even though they are of much more recent origin, and often have far clearer and more demonstrable historical connections to present-day Americans than the cave paintings of Avignon, Altamira, or Lascaux have to present-day citizens of France.⁵¹ In 1965, therefore, European approaches to preservation were studied by a Special Committee on Historic Preservation sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Mayors. It recommended a “new preservation” in America that would “be concerned with the *total heritage* of the nation.”⁵² But just as Native Americans’ past has not been assimilated as part of the national experience, thirty years after the Special Committee’s report, their ancient pictographs, petroglyphs, and architecture are still not accepted as part of the national artistic and cultural heritage to the extent that European antiquities are.

In spite of official language regarding management of “cultural resources,” the federal government has continued to classify Native American artworks as “archaeological resources.” As officially defined in 1979, this indiscriminately lumps artistic petroglyphs and pictographs together with such items as “bottles, weapons, weapon projectiles, tools, structures or portions of structures, pit houses . . . graves, [and] human skeletal remains.”⁵³ Unfortunately, few archaeologists are equipped to assess the meaning or value of works of rock art, which, like all other visual images, are

50. Clottes is quoted by Robert Hughes in “Behold the Stone Age,” *Time*, February 15, 1995, p. 52.

51. It has been argued that when archaeological sites are found within a tribal group’s traditional homeland, they “likely relate to that tribal group.” See Barry Holt, “Archaeological Preservation on Indian Lands: Conflicts and Dilemmas in Applying the National Historic Preservation Act,” *Environmental Law* 15, no. 2 (Winter, 1985): 418. Elsewhere Holt argues more forcefully that although the Anasazi seem to have disappeared from the Southwest, many Navajo today “view certain Anasazi ruins as crucially important to their personal history, and as the burial places of their ancestors.” Barry Holt, “A Cultural Resource Management Dilemma: Anasazi Ruins and the Navajo,” *American Antiquity* 48, no. 3 (July 1983): 596.

52. A. Rains, et al., *With Heritage So Rich* (New York: Random House, 1966), 207–208, emphasis added.

53. 16 U.S.C. 470bb(1) (1982).

open to widely varying interpretations, and must be viewed in their aesthetic and cultural, not just physical, context.

Similarly, Native American pueblo structures and cliff dwellings are also treated as being outside the discourse of art and architecture. The very term “architecture” has tended to refer to a process that begins with a master plan conceived by an individual and drawn up on paper. If it is executed, the resulting structure is praised as the successful realization of its creator’s intention. This tradition is epitomized, of course, by such Renaissance and Baroque masters as Brunelleschi, Alberti, Palladio, Inigo Jones, and Christopher Wren, whose designs are still studied. It is in this spirit that the Library of Congress preserves tens of thousands of measured drawings from buildings included in the Historical American Buildings Survey (HABS), and which, significantly, it originally housed in its Division of Fine Arts.⁵⁴

In the Anasazi, Hohokam, and Mogollon structures in the southwestern United States, however, such an exacting (and exclusive) definition of architecture seems difficult to apply. It has been said of the cliff dwellings at Mesa Verde that there seems to be “no visible plan to the development of these sprawling cells of dwelling units; they seem, to the contrary, to have grown out of necessity.”⁵⁵ Likewise, the interior of the massive Pueblo Bonito complex in Chaco Canyon also appears upon inspection to have been built on something of an *ad hoc* basis, with rooms and kivas apparently added or changed over the decades as different needs arose. Although the overall “D” shape of the complex’s exterior has caused some to conclude that it must have been “designed by a single architect or master builder and constructed . . . under a firm directing hand,”⁵⁶ it is not known who, if anyone, was responsible for the original design. If the existence and identity of a master builder could be established, however, there is little doubt that ruins such as these could be more easily inserted into conventional, individual-based critical frameworks of the sort embraced by the dominant culture in the West, and that qualify buildings as architecture.

Indian art has tended to be categorized as folk art, craft, applied art, or at best as among the minor arts. Although widely admired in this context, it is clearly not to be confused with high art and high culture—or, in a word, with culture. To some extent, this stems from biases against certain types of materials. For Native Americans of the past, the value of a painting may have

54. See Charles E. Peterson, “Thirty Years of HABS,” *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 40 (Nov., 1963): 83–85.

55. Jamake Highwater, *Arts of the Indian Americans* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), 267. Highwater’s reliability in other areas has been questioned; he is cited here only as one who has publicly made the observation that a lack of formal planning can be inferred from the appearance of these structures.

56. Gardner’s *Art Through the Ages*, 7th ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1980), 430. Interestingly, the text continues: “Modern terraced pueblos, like Taos in New Mexico, though impressive, reflect neither such unified design nor such a massive, well-organized building effort.” Still, the fact that this college art history text includes a section on Native American ruins at all makes it somewhat exceptional.

resided more in the image than in the material from which it was made, since the same images have been found repeated on a variety of surfaces.⁵⁷ The medium, it seems, was not important. In Western culture the choice of medium has, until recently, been of paramount importance; not just any material was considered acceptable or appropriate for genuine art. Painting on canvas, paper, or in fresco, yes; painting on rocks, trees, cave walls, subway cars, and the sides of buildings, no. Sculptures done in stone, marble and bronze were quick to gain acceptance as art, whereas ceramic sculpture, made from the clay used in common pottery, had a harder time gaining respect. Still unlikely to gain acceptance as art are ice sculptures and sandcastles, where even the most creative and skillful execution has not seemed to overcome institutionalized prejudices against materials that are ephemeral or not transportable to museums, galleries, and other recognized exhibition sites. Thus, the exacting and centuries-old practice of Native American sand painting is also virtually unrecognized by the art historical and critical establishment.

A similar prejudice might underlie assessments of architectural structures made from adobe—a material which the Western artworld has generally not embraced. In areas of considerable rainfall, such material might well prove inadequate to the task of standing as one age's enduring cultural legacy to the future. In the dry Southwest, however, structures made from adobe have endured at least as long as the Gothic cathedrals of Europe; some even longer.⁵⁸ But it may be the *organic* quality of the materials, combined with their aesthetic of integration with the surrounding environment, that accounts for Native American architectural sites being seen by some as extensions of nature, rather than expressions of culture. Thus architecture critic and historian Vincent Scully has written that Native American architecture, which typifies the pre-Columbian style in that it “imitates the shapes of nature,” and Western architecture, which has inherited the traditions of the Greek style and is designed “to contrast with nature.”⁵⁹ It is generally agreed that ancient Native American art and architecture developed in isolation from the Eastern Hemisphere, whereas Europe, the Middle East, Northern Africa, and Asia all enjoyed a degree of cross-fertilization of ideas and influences over the centuries. As Kelemen points out, in the Americas “even the three main periods of anthropology—Stone, Bronze, and Iron ages—find no application.”⁶⁰ Thus not only do Native American architectures look and feel like nature, owing to their

57. David Gebhard, “Rock Art,” in *American Indian Art: Form and Tradition* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1972), 29.

58. As a reminder of the co-occurrence of Native American cultural development with the European Middle Ages, Pál Kelemen titled his respected study of Indian art *Medieval American Art* (New York: Macmillan, 1944).

59. Vincent Scully, “Architecture: The Natural and the Manmade,” in *Denatured Visions: Landscape and Culture in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Stuart Wrede and William H. Adams (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 7.

60. Kelemen, *Medieval American Art*, 6–7.

organic materials, but they also stand wholly outside of the historical development of European artistic conventions and traditions—once again, outside of history itself. This leads Scully to a fascinating conclusion in relation to American Indian dwellings: “Looking like natural rock outcrops on the crowns of their mesas, Hopi towns are not exactly engaged in ‘fitting in’ with nature, as so many Western romantic buildings have tried to do. *They are nature*, pure and simple.”⁶¹

Federal Management: The Early Years

These historical and cultural factors determining what is accepted as art, as culture, or as nature, run throughout the legislation and policy that have shaped federal management of Native American cultural antiquities. One of the earliest official acts by the U.S. government (which appears in retrospect to be indicative of the pattern) came in 1849 when the Bureau of Indian Affairs was subsumed into the Department of Interior. Whereas this wrested control over Indian affairs away from the Department of War, it also located the B.I.A. under the same managerial umbrella that would later include the National Park Service and that would be concerned primarily with land management and scenic display.

The Antiquities Act of 1906 perhaps played the greatest part in making Native American cultural antiquities part of the natural world. Despite intentions to the contrary, its ultimate failure to codify firm distinctions between cultural and natural antiquities helped institutionalize the notion that both could be managed as a single category. Drafted by Edgar L. Hewitt and introduced in the House by Iowa’s John F. Lacey, chairman of the Public Lands Committee, the act was intended to “preserve these old objects of special interest and the Indian remains of the pueblos of the Southwest.”⁶² Specifically, it provided protection for “objects of historic or scientific interest that are situated upon the lands owned or controlled by the Government of the United States,” and made it a federal offense to “appropriate, excavate, injure, or destroy any historic or prehistoric ruin or monument, or any object of antiquity” on federal lands.⁶³ The bill was thus distinguished from national parks legislation by its emphasis on preserving cultural, not natural antiquities. Even a cursory glance at the text reveals this emphasis, and terms like “pre-historic ruin” and “archaeological site” make it fairly clear whose culture is at issue (even though the words “Indian” and “Native American” do not appear).

Still, white Americans were far from united in being willing to accept Indian ruins, however magnificent, as part of their own cultural heritage.

61. Vincent Scully, “Men and Nature in Pueblo Architecture,” in *American Indian Art: Form and Tradition* (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1972), 36. The emphasis is mine.

62. Lacey is quoted by Rothman in *Preserving Different Pasts*, 47.

63. “An Act of the Preservation of American Antiquities,” 34 *U.S. Statutes at Large* 225.

Instead, they had for some time turned to natural antiquities as the foundation of their cultural identity, boasting the world's tallest trees and greatest canyons to compete with the castles, cathedrals, and temples of Europe.⁶⁴ Conveniently, language in the Antiquities Act referred to the preservation of objects of "historic or scientific interest . . . or any object of antiquity."⁶⁵ Such ambiguities in the language of the act, combined with its authorization of the president to designate national monuments by public proclamation, allowed Theodore Roosevelt to apply the bill to *both kinds* of antiquities — cultural and natural. According to Alfred Runte, Roosevelt shrewdly interpreted the word "scientific" to include "areas noted for their geologic (hence scenic) as well as man-made significance."⁶⁶ Thus, in addition to protecting Indian antiquities, the act in effect gave the president an exclusive means of preserving natural objects or sites that were either too small or too dependent on a single feature to be full-blown national parks. As a result, on September 24, 1906, the first official national monument named under the Antiquities Act was Devil's Tower, an 867-foot-high volcanic monolith in northeastern Wyoming, rather than an object produced by a Native American hand.

In December, Roosevelt named three more sites, the best known of which was Petrified Forest in Arizona. At 94,189 acres, or more than 147 square miles, Petrified Forest was more a place or an area than a site or object (like Devil's Tower). What is more, Petrified Forest contained a great many Native American archaeological sites (over 300 in the southern half alone),⁶⁷ but was nevertheless selected as a *natural* antiquity solely on the basis of its petrified geologic formations, which qualified it under the act as a scientific phenomenon. Also named that month was El Morro, New Mexico, a petroglyph and ruin site also known as Inscription Rock. It had earlier been described by an executive from the Smithsonian as "a beautiful and imposing bit of *scenery*,"⁶⁸ suggesting a blurring between cultural artifacts and their natural setting. Finally, the cliff dwelling in Arizona known as Montezuma Castle was also named. Lacking spectacular natural scenery, it qualified for protection under the act as a prehistoric structure. The year 1906 thus ended with four national monuments: two selected for their cultural antiquities and two for their natural antiquities.⁶⁹ The even split between culture and nature indicated that the Caltinesque ambiva-

64. See Novak, *Nature and Culture*, and Runte, *National Parks* for thorough and informed discussions of the construction of American cultural identity from nature.

65. 34 Stat. 225. The emphasis on the passage quoted is my addition.

66. Runte, *National Parks*, 72.

67. Yvonne G. Stewart, *An Archaeological Overview of Petrified Forest National Park* (National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior, 1980), vii.

68. Quoted by Rothman, in *Preserving Different Pasts*, 57.

69. The precision of the definition of "antiquities" in the Antiquities Act came under fire in 1974 when the Ninth Circuit Court found it to be unconstitutionally vague in a case involving five-year old religious masks. It was held by the Tenth Circuit Court in 1979, however, *not* to be unconstitutionally vague in a case involving a 700-year old archaeological site. See Barry Holt, "Archaeological Preservation on Indian Land," 414.

lence of seventy years earlier had not been resolved with the arrival of the twentieth century, but in fact was becoming further institutionalized.

Roosevelt's subsequent selections further solidified public perceptions of national monuments as primarily natural features. Although several more Indian-related sites were added, his 1908 decision to declare a national monument of some 800,000 acres surrounding the Grand Canyon, and his 1909 designation of 600,000 acres surrounding Mt. Olympus, Washington, received more attention. "In neither case," notes Runte, "had President Roosevelt adhered to the guidelines of the Antiquities Act to preserve only man-made wonders or scientific curiosities."⁷⁰ Instead, Roosevelt succeeded not only in shaping the way the act would be interpreted and applied by later presidents, but also helped to institutionalize the very ambivalence that has blurred distinctions between nature and Native American cultures. By 1916 there were thirty-six national monuments, but only about a quarter of them reflected the original intentions of the framers of the Antiquities Act to preserve *cultural* antiquities.

On August 25th, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the "Organic Act," creating the National Park Service and placing all national monuments located on land owned by the Interior Department under its control. Under the directorship of Stephen T. Mather, the parks were aggressively promoted as scenic tourist attractions, giving the Park Service a high profile as the nation's premier repository of spectacular national scenery. The national monuments were now an official if somewhat anomalous part of this collection of wonders, but Mather had little interest in sites with anything other than natural and scenic value.⁷¹

Although the Park Service Organic Act had specifically placed historic objects within the NPS's purview, only after Mather's retirement did the Park Service begin to address the preservation of such sites and objects. The new director, Horace M. Albright, expanded historic preservation to encompass sites like the George Washington Birthplace National Monument and the Colonial National Monument. These had nothing whatever to do with Native Americans, whose past had been officially categorized as "pre-historic" in documents such as the Antiquities Act. Since these monument sites remained a separate part of the park system, it seemed doubtful that the NPS's historic preservation energies would include the Native American past.

70. Runte, *National Parks*, 73.

71. Thus, during his tenure, several of the largest and most scenic of the monuments became parks, including the Grand Canyon, Zion, and Bryce. On the surface it appears this might have helped reinforce distinctions between natural and cultural antiquities, except that it really did nothing to disambiguate the definition of national monuments. Moreover, they were neither funded nor promoted on anywhere near the scale of the parks, and became, to use Rothman's term, "second-class sites" with no clear definition or purpose like that of the parks. Still at best a mix of nature and culture, it became impossible, notes Rothman, "to speak of the national monuments as a cohesive category." Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 92. See also his discussion of Frank Pinkley (pp. 120–39, 153–55), who did attempt during the 1920s to apply a more exacting set of defining criteria to the National Monuments.

In 1933, Executive Order 6166, a New Deal government streamlining measure, brought under Park Service control all national monuments it had not acquired in 1916 (owing to their location on lands belonging to the Forest Service and the War Department). Although the measure resulted in greater administrative unity, the addition of a widely varying assortment of new sites also contributed to the further unraveling of *thematic unity* among Park Service holdings. Because many of the new acquisitions were historical, the move into historic preservation was accelerated, but at the expense, of course, of those whose past was officially not considered historic.

At this same time, the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), administered through the NPS and guided by the American Institute of Architects, began to identify, inventory, and document the nation's pre-1875 buildings. Although it was not empowered to preserve them physically, its purpose was to document them (on the model of salvage anthropology), through photographs, measured drawings, and other means. HABS founder Charles E. Peterson described its mission as compiling "a complete résumé of the builder's art," including "any . . . kind of structure of which there are good specimens extant."⁷² The survey would thus represent "a general canvass of structures erected between *the earliest times* and 1860." Despite its inclusion of a wide variety of vernacular architecture, the HABS inventory did not include Native American structures, which were officially prehistoric and archaeological. Overall, the Park Service had begun to focus its interpretative efforts on the story of the American republic—a story in which Native Americans appeared not so much as essential elements, but perhaps more as footnotes. Tourists who enjoyed visiting archaeological sites like Chaco Canyon might not maintain the kind of interest, according to historian Hal Rothman, "that the patriotic themes of places such as Gettysburg inspired."⁷³

Still, the Park Service was at last officially and actively involved in historic preservation on several fronts. This involvement led to passage of the Historic Sites Act in 1935, which did extend recognition and protection to Native American antiquities. The act empowered the Secretary of the Interior to "make a survey of historic and archaeologic sites, buildings, and objects," and then to take measures to protect and preserve them. It was, then, an attempt to institute a broad policy, a piece of "sweeping legislation" announcing a "new cultural Nationalism" that would apparently include Native American cultural antiquities.⁷⁴ The act added yet another layer of official codification to the long-standing distinction between historic and archeological sites and artifacts. This distinction is articulated no fewer than eleven times in the document's roughly two pages—thirteen if one counts

72. Peterson, "Thirty Years of HABS," 83.

73. Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 189.

74. Unrau and Willis, "To Preserve the Nation's Past," 34.

two additional references to historic vs. pre-historic sites (the latter seeming to be used interchangeably with “archaeological”).⁷⁵

This distinction continued as recently as 1966, when the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) was passed, leading to the establishment of the National Register.⁷⁶ The original 1966 act includes two references to archaeology, but makes no reference either to Indians or Native Americans.⁷⁷ It thus made clear, if only by what it did not say, that terms like “history” and “historical” were still not intended to apply to Indians. Any specific mention of Indians is limited to a few sections of the 1980 amendments.⁷⁸ Still, the NHPA is a powerful tool and represented the culmination of decades of legislative preservation efforts. It is also the product of a long history of classifying Native Americans and their history, architecture, and art as always just outside the bounds of formally defined history and culture.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Clearly, the problems evident in the management, exhibition, and interpretation of Native American cultural antiquities by the federal government, and by NPS in particular, have deep roots in Euro-American intellectual and cultural traditions. The patterns of cultural naturalization and historical denial make up part of the code by which white America has come to understand the existence of the Indian population in North America. Even if these patterns cannot be immediately changed (bureaucratic change is always slow), this marginalization should be confronted.

The problem can be addressed on four levels. First, NPS interpretive and informational literature can be re-thought. Often the literature one receives at a park or monument betrays these longstanding ambivalences toward the site itself, its purpose, and toward the Native American cultural artifacts located there. Information on hiking and other recreations often equals or exceeds information on cultural artifacts, at times blurring the lines between them. In addition, different graphic design approaches might clearly distinguish between cultural and natural sites. Clearly marked separate classifications might actually help restore some needed thematic logic to both the park and monument categories. NPS might also avoid the automatic use of such terms as pre-historic, archaeological, or craft, in place of more inclusive

75. “Historic Sites, Buildings and Antiquities Act” (Public Law 292, c. 593, August 21, 1935) 49 *Statutes at Large* 666.

76. Technically, the NHPA did not *establish* the National Register; as Jerry Rogers points out, it “authorized the Secretary of the Interior to ‘expand and maintain’ a National Register.” See Jerry Rogers, “The National Register of Historic Places: A Personal Perspective on the First Twenty Years,” *Public Historian* 9, no. 2 (Spring 1987): 92.

77. Public Law 89-665 (October 15, 1966); 80 U.S. *Statutes at Large* 915; 16 U.S.C. 470.

78. Holt, “Archaeological Preservation on Indian Lands.”

notions of history and culture. By making connections in the interpretive literature to larger currents in art history, NPS can help increase cultural respect for Native American antiquities as deserving a place in *world* art history.

Second, the problems of on-site management and exhibition need to be confronted. Although recreation and scenery may still be the bread and butter of the tourist industry, promotion of hiking, backpacking, watersports, and scenic display often overshadows Native American cultural artifacts even at NPS sites where Native American culture is the primary feature. The management of national parks and monuments as huge outdoor museums has often come under attack for its implicit notion that nature and culture can be preserved in a frozen, timeless state. Nevertheless, NPS managers might still look to museums for examples of how to manage spaces where touching, climbing, picnicking, and overnight camping by visitors are not allowed, and where signs and turnouts do not prescribe where visitors must stand to view the preserved objects.

Third, change in federal institutional structures may be most difficult to bring about. If the system, as Barry Mackintosh has observed, "is better equipped to tell some aspects of the American story than others,"⁷⁹ nevertheless both interpretative efforts and existing legislation need to be carefully reviewed by public historians and preservationists to purge them of anachronist and unfairly exclusive notions of what is a building, or what is historic.

Lastly, we need to confront the long-standing existence of two distinct categories of national monuments, provided for by the same language in a single legislative act. Theodore Roosevelt's ambiguous uses of the Antiquities Act signal its weaknesses, rather than its flexibility. Some sort of thematic unity should be restored to both the park and monument categories. Congress might remove more of the *natural* national monuments to the national park category (as was done in the past with the Grand Canyon, Zion, and Bryce), or it might re-classify many of the cultural/historical national monuments as either historic sites (e.g. Chaco) or historic parks (e.g. Pecos). The use of the word "historic," is crucial to reclaiming native histories from the realm of timeless nature.

Continued use of the terms like "prehistoric" to designate Native Americans' cultural past perpetuates the tradition of excluding an entire group of Americans from *American* history, from what Verne Chatelain once described as "the color, the pageantry, and the dignity of our national past."⁸⁰ Certainly the federal government, perhaps especially the National Park Service, should take the lead in formally acknowledging Native American histories as an integral part of American history.

79. Barry Mackintosh, "The NPS Moves into Historical Interpretation," 62. It should be noted, however, that Mackintosh seems to feel that the system does a better job of presenting Native American antiquities in the Southwest than it does in the eastern states.

80. Quoted in Unrau and Williss, "To Preserve the Nation's Past," 22.

Appendix

This categorization was produced by an informal survey of the interpretive literature handed out or mailed from the 37 National Park Service locations in the Southwest considered by Lister and Lister to be significant repositories of Native American cultural antiquities. Primary literature includes official NPS full-color brochures (which usually include official maps); secondary literature includes other information sheets, newsletters, and so on. Note that the number of those promoted by the Park Service as purely cultural sites (a) and those promoted as purely natural sites (e) are roughly equal (the latter outnumber the former by one).

a. Sites devoted exclusively to Indian cultural antiquities (architectural ruins, rock art, or other artifacts), with virtually *no mention in either primary or secondary literature* of scenery, wildlife, hiking, etc.:

1. Aztec Ruins National Monument
2. Casa Grande National Monument
3. Chaco Culture National Historic Site
4. El Morro National Monument
5. Hovenweep National Monument
6. Pecos National Historic Park
7. Petroglyph National Monument
8. Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument
9. Walnut Canyon National Monument

b. Sites devoted to Native American cultural antiquities, with mention *in secondary literature* of natural scenery, wildlife, and/or hiking:

1. Montezuma Castle National Monument
2. Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument (listed also under *a*, above)
3. Tonto National Monument
4. Tuzigoot National Monument
5. Wupatki National Monument

c. Sites devoted to Native American cultural antiquities, but for which *primary literature* also calls attention to recreational hiking, wildlife viewing, natural scenery, etc.:

1. Bandelier National Monument
2. Canyon de Chelly National Monument
3. Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument
4. Mesa Verde National Park
5. Navajo National Monument

d. Sites known primarily for scenery and/or outdoor recreation, but whose *primary literature* mentions Native American cultural artifacts:

1. Bryce National Park
2. Canyonlands National Park
3. Capitol Reef National Park (*brief* mention in primary lit., + separate information sheet)
4. El Malpais National Monument
5. Glen Canyon National Recreational Area
6. Natural Bridges National Monument
7. Petrified Forest National Park
8. Zion National Park

e. Sites known primarily for scenery and/or outdoor recreation, and primary literature *makes no mention* of Native American cultural artifacts (note that six out of ten are National Monuments, a category originally intended to preserve Native American cultural antiquities):

1. Arches National Park
2. Capulin Volcano National Monument
3. Capitol Reef National Park (listed also under *d*, above)
4. Carlsbad Caverns National Park
5. Colorado National Monument
6. Grand Canyon National Park
7. Great Sand Dune National Monument
8. Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument
9. Saguaro National Monument
10. Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument