

In Search of Inspiration:
Identifying and recording the histories of inspirational viewpoints as cultural landscapes

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Artist Henry Moore once said that the observation of nature feeds inspiration. It was on that principle that more than 50 so-called Inspiration Points were created throughout the United States in the 19th and 20th centuries. Inspiration points are historic promontories—most often associated with parks, scenic roadways or trails—that are open to the public and encourage artistic expression. As they stand today, many people are not aware of the existence of such viewpoints, much less their significance. These places are valued as cultural landscapes and deserve a place in public memory. This thesis examines historic inspiration points, their use and condition today, and how we, as preservationists, can interpret and protect these sites in a way that makes them valuable in today's society. By collectively identifying and evaluating these places, inspiration could once again be found at inspiration points.

Well, here it is... finally!
Let me know of any edits
for my book. Ha! I put the
appendices on a disk—they are
Indesign files and I don't have that
program anymore. The rest of
the doc is printed. Enjoy!
-Tarin



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Acknowledgements

Most people write about people they know in this section. They thank their editor for devoting countless hours to commas and periods and semicolons. They thank their parents for supporting their dreams and encouraging their graduate studies. They thank their professors for continual guidance, and in the case of Prof. Connie Pinkerton, her unending encouragement and excitement over topics no one else could possibly be excited about. And they thank their friends for providing much needed distractions along the way.

Well, I am not thanking those people here. I am eternally grateful to them for their dedication and support, but I'd like to acknowledge a different group of people here.

The reason I kept writing—my inspiration along the way—came from people I've never met. They were the artists, explorers, and pioneers in landscaping America. In reading about these places, these inspiration points, I became inspired myself. In their pictures, I could see it too—America at its finest: young, unadulterated, and awe-inspiring in every capacity.

During my research, I had the opportunity to visit the Catskills, in upper New York, where I believe the inspiration point movement began with the paintings of Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, Frederic Church, and others. I hiked where they hiked, stood where they stood, and breathed that same mountain air. I was transported to another time, a simpler time, and it captured me in a way I didn't expect. I wanted nothing more than to tell this story.

The process of writing a thesis is nothing you can prepare for. It tests your limits and brings you to the verge of insanity. But it also gives you the opportunity to stretch yourself and produce a document that adds to the field of preservation in a unique and interesting way. I hope this document does just that.

So while my family and friends were crucial in my attempts to finish this document, my acknowledgements go out to those I've never met, but inspired me just the same.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the day technology made it possible, pictures have spoken louder than words. So let us paint a picture that speaks pages, if not volumes about our country's history. Let us paint a picture of a young nation struggling to find its place in a changing world. Let us paint a picture of a place that at the very least, at its very depth, inspires us.

Then let us go further to don the clothes and bear the tools of a premier American landscape painter, and paint the picture that represents the beginning of a movement still in place today. German-American painter Albert Bierstadt was among the first to glimpse the glory and magnitude of the Yosemite Valley landscape in the mid-19th century. In 1855, while traveling with others in that vast wilderness, he came across a place that both lives up to and transcends its name: Inspiration Point. Perched on that point, Bierstadt's paintings, among others, represented more than the eye could see. Indeed, they were seeping with artistic metaphor.¹ In the towering cliffs, there was power. In the rich colors and vibrant sunsets, there was wealth. In the sprawling skies that reached beyond the canvas, there was freedom. To a country in the midst of unprecedented change, these paintings constituted a rebirth.

Man has always been inspired by nature. It is the reason that parks and greenways are popular, the reason that houses have backyards and acreage, and the reason that so many people participate in activities outdoors today. Nature is beautiful, wild, open and free. Inspiration, though, is hard to define. Officially, the word has two meanings: (1) the process of being mentally stimulated to do or feel something, especially something creative; and (2) the drawing in of breath, or inhalation. Both of these definitions apply

¹ Amy Scott, ed., *Yosemite: The Art of an American Icon*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 23.

to “inspiration point.” It is a place that sparks a desire within to be creative—such as to produce a piece of art, and to some it is life-affirming in the way that breathing is. Hence the term “inspiration point” is at once obvious and obscure. There are no written accounts that explicitly define an inspiration point as a viewpoint or promontory, but regardless, its name is derived from the awe-inspiring view from a specific location.

For the purposes of this research an “inspiration point” can be defined as:

A historic promontory, most often associated with a park, scenic roadway or trail, that is open to the public and encourages artistic expression.

Of course by this definition, many places may apply. For this paper though, only historic sites with the name “Inspiration Point” are documented. Other promontories such as Artists Points and Discovery Points may be just as awe-inspiring, but because they are not named as such they will not be the focus of this thesis.

Most people have probably heard the name “inspiration point” before or even visited some of these vantage points within national parks or on scenic highways across the country. But hearing about one of these places, and experiencing one, are two very different things. Either way, they deserve to be documented and recorded, and ultimately defined within the context of American history.

Preserving layers of history

To those in the profession of documenting and perpetuating history, inspirational viewpoints are invaluable resources. Viewing them as cultural landscapes, they become crucial elements in the country’s historic fabric. Cultural landscapes can be broadly

defined as geographic areas that have been influenced by humans in some capacity.²

This definition applies to many natural and built environments, including inspiration points. These places represent layers of time—pieces of a past that may or may not still exist today.

Inspiration points were created in the midst of many changes in the American culture, including the invention of the automobile, the improvement of roadways, the creation of recreational parks, and the overall desire of the American public to explore and enjoy the beauty of the natural world. These vistas were created during a time of modernity and progression, and have largely remained a part of our landscape until today. Certainly, there are those that have been forgotten and those that have evolved in function, but as a testament to the past, they remain.

Today, there are more than 50 inspirational viewpoints in the United States (see directory of all inspiration points in Appendix A). These points exist in all facets of nature, rural and urban: we see examples of them in national, state and city parks, along highways, trails and railroad routes, and at least once, in a housing development. Some are famous and some are little known. Some have structures associated with them—benches, tables, shelters—and some are nothing more than plots of land with incredible views. Regardless of the particulars, though, inspiration points represent an important part of the landscape fabric, a part that deserves to be remembered.

This paper, then, serves to create a public memory. Most people have no knowledge of these places, much less an understanding of their importance as cultural

² Charles Birnbaum, Preservation Brief 36, “Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes,” (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1994).

landscapes. Additionally, very few inspiration points are designated as historic sites or have any sort of protection against future development, putting them in danger of disappearing altogether. By collectively identifying and interpreting these places, inspiration may once again be found at Inspiration Point.

Methodology and purpose of this document

The primary goal of this project was to document the histories of individual inspiration points nationwide and create a body of research that could be used to represent the movement as a whole. Prior to this, not a single document existed that categorically defined or described inspiration points in this country. A few articles have been found that mention specific sites, but none mention their presence as a whole. Photographs show moments in history—famous moments—occurring at these sites, but still no one has compared them to each other. Of the hundreds of maps, postcards, photographs and written documents that exist as documentation of individual inspiration points, none of these sources mention any other site but their own. So it is left to the imagination of you, the reader, and me, the writer, to draw conclusions of our own.

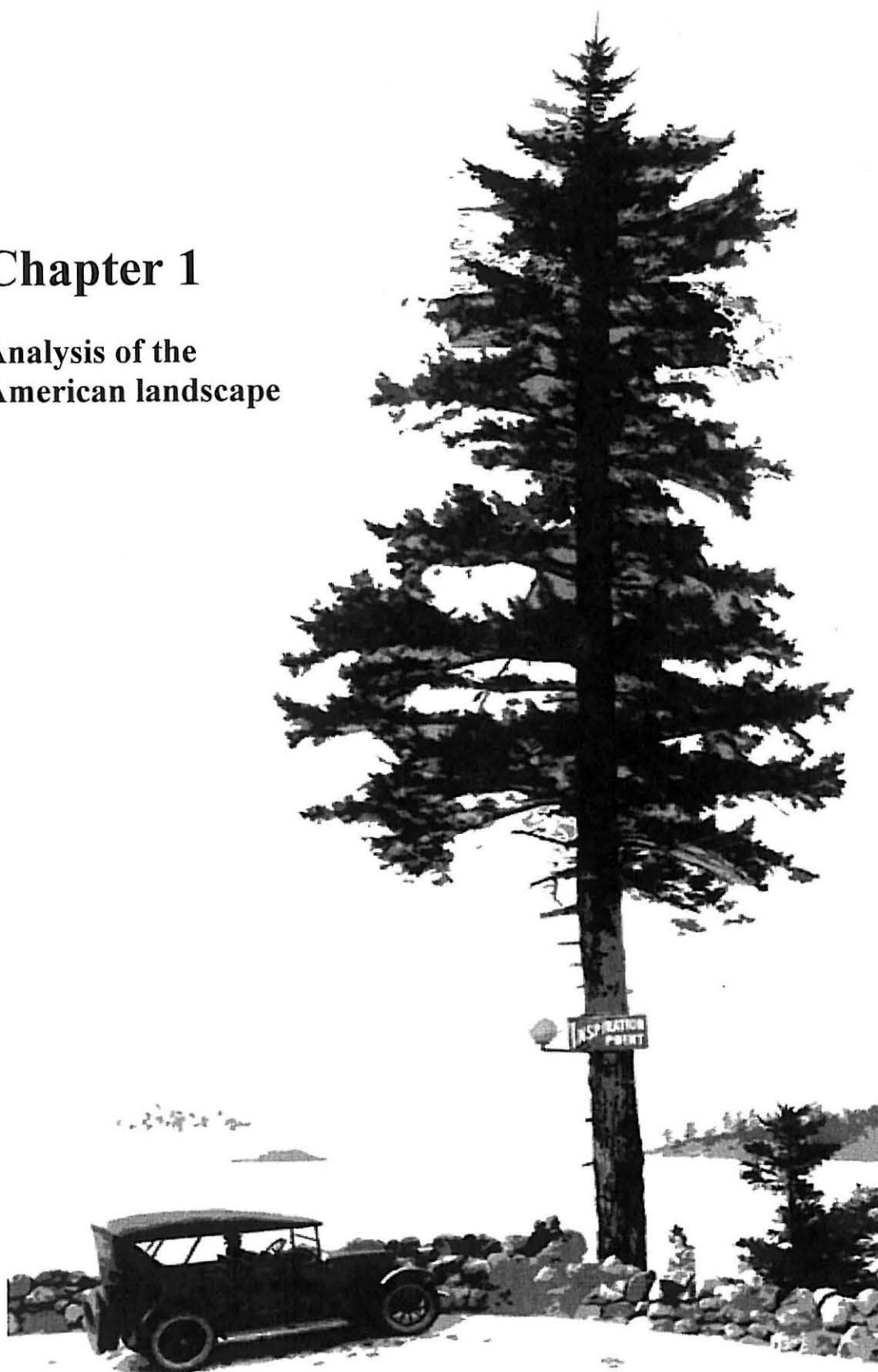
As it is today, few people understand the importance of these places as a whole. It was my goal to unearth the trail of inspiration that spread across the country in the early 19th and 20th centuries, and provide evidence of significance where I could. Emphasis was placed on defining inspiration points, locating them, discussing them in terms of the cultural landscapes, and identifying ways to preserve these sites.

I have identified 55 individual inspiration points in the United States that have been acknowledged by several different sources. If only one reference was found, the

point was not listed. It is likely that additional viewpoints exist, and that some of the points listed in the Inspiration Point (IP) Directory (see Appendix A) are not actually historic. However, due to time limitations and the general lack of information available about these sites, some of these questions must remain unanswered for now. This thesis provides ample information for continued study of the topic.

Chapter 1

Analysis of the American landscape



Like most memories, this one begins a long time ago. America was a young nation seeking an identity, and various artistic endeavors proved to be a means for that. Artists were drawn to the depth and variety of the American landscape. This obsession represents much more than colors on a palette or strokes on canvas, however—it is intertwined with ideas of nationalism and superiority. In fact, this focus on nature and wilderness was so popular and widespread that it is possible to trace the origins of many historic inspiration points throughout the country to the landscape painting movement in the early- to mid-1800s. As landscapes became valuable in the art world, painters looked for places that provided grand views of their subject. Inspiration points, among other named promontories such as Artist's Points and Discovery Points, became popular destinations for many artists on the East Coast.

The Hudson River School, which was the country's first landscape painting school to be composed largely of American artists, began in the 1820s. The date most prescribed to its formation was 1825, when artist Thomas Cole was discovered by three popular artists of the time: Asher Durand, William Dunlap and John Trumbull.¹ Cole, who is now considered the father of the Hudson River School, recognized the importance of nature and wilderness as an essential part of the American character. The fact that this school was made up of American artists and focused specifically on American subjects is significant because prior to this, artists were trained in England and largely followed the trends and styles of that country.² In the early 19th century America was still a young nation trying to survive so emulating the trends of its mother country was acceptable.

¹ John K. Howat, "The Hudson River School," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 30 (1972): 274.

² Bryson Burroughs, "The Hudson River School of Painters," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 12 (1917): 2.

But soon the people wanted more separation, more independence, and they sought ways to make this happen. Similarly at this time we see a shift from European architecture, home furnishings and decorations to items that were distinctly, proudly, “American-made.” These changes represent a major transformation in the American perspective, from relying on European traditions to establishing its own ideals as a nation. What became one of the most obvious ways to separate from England was a focus on something uniquely American: the land. No other country had landscapes that looked quite like theirs, and artists capitalized on the differences immediately. These artists not only praised the distinctiveness of the land, but also “had a strong belief in the superior beauty of the American landscape.”³ America was not only different; it was better.

Many parallels can be drawn from the art of this time period. Artists were among the first to explore new landscapes and make comparisons between what they saw in nature and what they knew about mankind.⁴ The concept of “the sublime,” which was prevalent in both Europe and America from the late 18th century on, set forth a new language for describing the aesthetic world and its associations with the physical world.⁵

Art Critic S.G.W. Benjamin wrote about this in the *Magazine of Art* in 1882:

Never before has there been a nobler opportunity afforded the artist to aid in the growth of his native land and to feel that, while ministering to his own love of the sublime and the beautiful, he was at the same time a teacher and a coworker with

³ Ibid., 3.

⁴ Peter H. Hassrick, *Drawn to Yellowstone: Artists in America's First National Park*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002), 13.

⁵ James G. Cantrill and Christine L. Oravec, eds., *The Symbolic Earth: Discourse and Our Creation of the Environment*, (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), <http://books.google.com/books?id=REp6XX1dBRcC&pg=PA58&lpg=PA58&dq=sublime+nature+oravec&source=web&ots=DEHtCzTE7V&sig=SZglIH8OVILSsmIY05o21pwN0&hl=en> (accessed May 2, 2008), 58.

the man of science, and the soldier, who cleared, surveyed and held this mighty continent.⁶

Holding his own mighty continent in high regard, Thomas Cole was among the earliest artists to focus on wilderness and encourage others to respect the vast lands that surrounded them.⁷ Paintings by Cole, Durand, Dunlap and Trumball, as well as those by Albert Beirstadt, Frederic Church, Thomas Moran and George Innis, exemplified the beauty of the Hudson River, the Catskills, Niagara Falls, and New York's Letchworth Park.⁸ Their paintings, altogether dramatic and inspiring, prompted many Americans to view firsthand the sights seen on canvas. This, in conjunction with transportation improvements in the 20th century, led to the popularity of American nature tourism. According to historian Raymond Beecher, vacationers thought the Catskill region provided an enjoyable summer experience.⁹

What began in the eastern part of the country soon spread to the West as transportation improved and people sought more of the nation's great wilderness. Raymond Wilson wrote about this trend in his article, "Painters of California's Silver Era," saying, "Indeed, by the end of the 1860s, the cherished hardwoods and forested hills of the Berkshires and Catskills, so often an essential part of the vocabulary of Eastern painters, were already yielding in popularity to scenes of the dramatic open

⁶ Hassrick, 13.

⁷ Robert A. Gildersleeve, *Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide: In the Footsteps of the Hudson River School*, (New York: Black Dome Press, 2005), 25.

⁸ Howat, 273-274.

⁹ Raymond Beecher, "When Nature Met Art: The Hudson River School," From *Kaaterskill: From the Catskill Mountain House to the Hudson River School*, edited by Mountain Top Historical Society, (New York: Black Dome Press, 1993), 25.



Fig 1. Robert Minick, *Woman at Inspiration Point, Yosemite National Park*, 1980. Example of Yosemite's efforts to promote tourism. (Scott, *Yosemite: The Art of an American Icon*, 117).

spaces of the Great Plains and the soaring ranges of the Rockies and the Sierra.”¹⁰

Western sites now proclaimed the nationalism and aestheticism that was popular out east.

Much is written about the landscape era of Yosemite Valley in relation to this idea of nationalism. In her book, *Yosemite: Art of an American Icon*, author Amy Scott expounds on the idea of Yosemite representing a larger nationalist trend:

¹⁰ Raymond Wilson, “Painters of California’s Silver Era,” *American Art Journal*, Vol. 16 (1984): 71.

To a nation that was both insecure about the brevity of its history and struggling to rebuild following a brutal civil war, Yosemite was worth its weight in artistic metaphors. If California was 'a second Canaan for the impoverished and oppressed,' then Yosemite Valley was the symbolic heart of the new Promised Land. As a natural symbol of Eden, the valley drew together several ideological interests: nationalist pride in the riches of the New World, local devotion to the region as a particularly blessed American paradise, and religious justification of the country's Manifest Destiny of westward expansion.¹¹

With so many people beginning to move west, these places began to take on new meaning. Landscape painting played a large role in defining Yosemite, among other sites, as American icons. Artists were the valley's first proponents, and with their paintings they promoted spiritual and cultural ideals to a waiting public.¹² Additionally, the writings of various journalists as well as environmentalist John Muir, whose interest in the Yosemite Valley lasted a lifetime, helped to communicate ideas of nature and the sublime to a waiting world.¹³ The tourism that abounded as a result of these communication efforts was impressive. In a way, art transformed these places into a consumable: "Tourists were a ready market for paintings, sketches, and prints of the valley's grand scenery, and tourism, by increasing the park's fame, enhanced its popularity as an artistic subject in the broader art market."¹⁴

In the case of Yosemite, painters ruthlessly promoted their work in the commercial realm, creating inexpensive prints and oil paintings.¹⁵ It was something tourists could purchase, consume, and therefore take with them. The experience became not only what they saw, but also what was created as a result. For the first time, people could take an experience with them to share with others. This was powerful marketing.

¹¹ Scott, 23.

¹² Ibid., 3.

¹³ John Muir, *The Yosemite*, (New York: The Century Co., 1912).

¹⁴ Scott, 24.

¹⁵ Ibid., 3.

These paintings and prints became popular collectibles and status symbols for those who could afford the originals. In those times, you were considered part of the elite class if you could afford to travel; purchasing a print for your personal collection served as proof of your social and economic status.

The commercial value of these sites seemingly had no end. When Beirstadt first entered the Yosemite Valley and stood on Inspiration Point, he knew he had found something the American public would want to see: “an unspeakable suffusion of glory created the phoenix-pile of the dying sun.”¹⁶ In Fitz Hugh Ludlow’s *The Heart of the Continent*, published in 1870, he states that Beirstadt “sought – and found – nature on a grand scale, a landscape that could further his growing reputation for paintings of spectacular scenery at a time when large paintings of dramatic vistas were especially valued by art patrons.”¹⁷

The Hudson River School, made famous for those large paintings of dramatic vistas, faded out in the 1870s and 1880s, but tourism in these areas remained strong. Today, the homes of Thomas Cole and Frederic Church are open as museum sites, and nearby trails lead visitors to the many vistas that once inspired these great painters.

How the automobile changed the landscape

An increased interest in the American landscape stressed the importance of reliable transportation. With the tourism industry growing, it was important to find newer and better ways to move people around the country. Places that were once unreachable were now popular tourist destinations and needed access points. Primitive

¹⁶ Ibid., 24.

¹⁷ Ibid.

roads and trails, if present at all, were not suitable for the numbers of people these places predicted. The creation of a better road system and the advent of the automobile laid the groundwork for the landscape painting movement that was sweeping the country.

The roadway, in isolation and conjunction with many other events and inventions, led to a new understanding of the American landscape. In the beginning wagons and buggies, carts and horses, wooden wheels and hand-placed spokes graced the roads of our countryside. With the advent of the automobile, roads took on new meaning. They became longer, wider, and traveled to more places.

Historic transportation routes provide an obvious reminder of where man made his mark on the land and offer a glimpse into the history of certain areas. Dirt paths, roads and canals laid the way in the 18th century, railroad tracks in the 19th century, and asphalt roads and superhighways in modern times.¹⁸ Although the methods of transportation may have changed over the years, the scars on civilization remain. For all the good that the automobile has done, it would be nothing if not for good roads to travel on. The road represented freedom, and the automobile was merely a vehicle (pun intended) to obtain that freedom.

“Roads” of early America consisted of bison paths to rivers or lakes and Indian trails, both of which followed the ways of least resistance, taking less steep routes over easy terrain when possible.¹⁹ Eventually these trails were widened to carry wagons. The first provisional highway in the United States was the Boston Post Road, which was used

¹⁸ Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life*, (New York and London: Viking Penguin, 1997), xii.

¹⁹ William Kaszynski, *The American Highway: The History and Culture of Roads in the United States*, (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2000), 12.

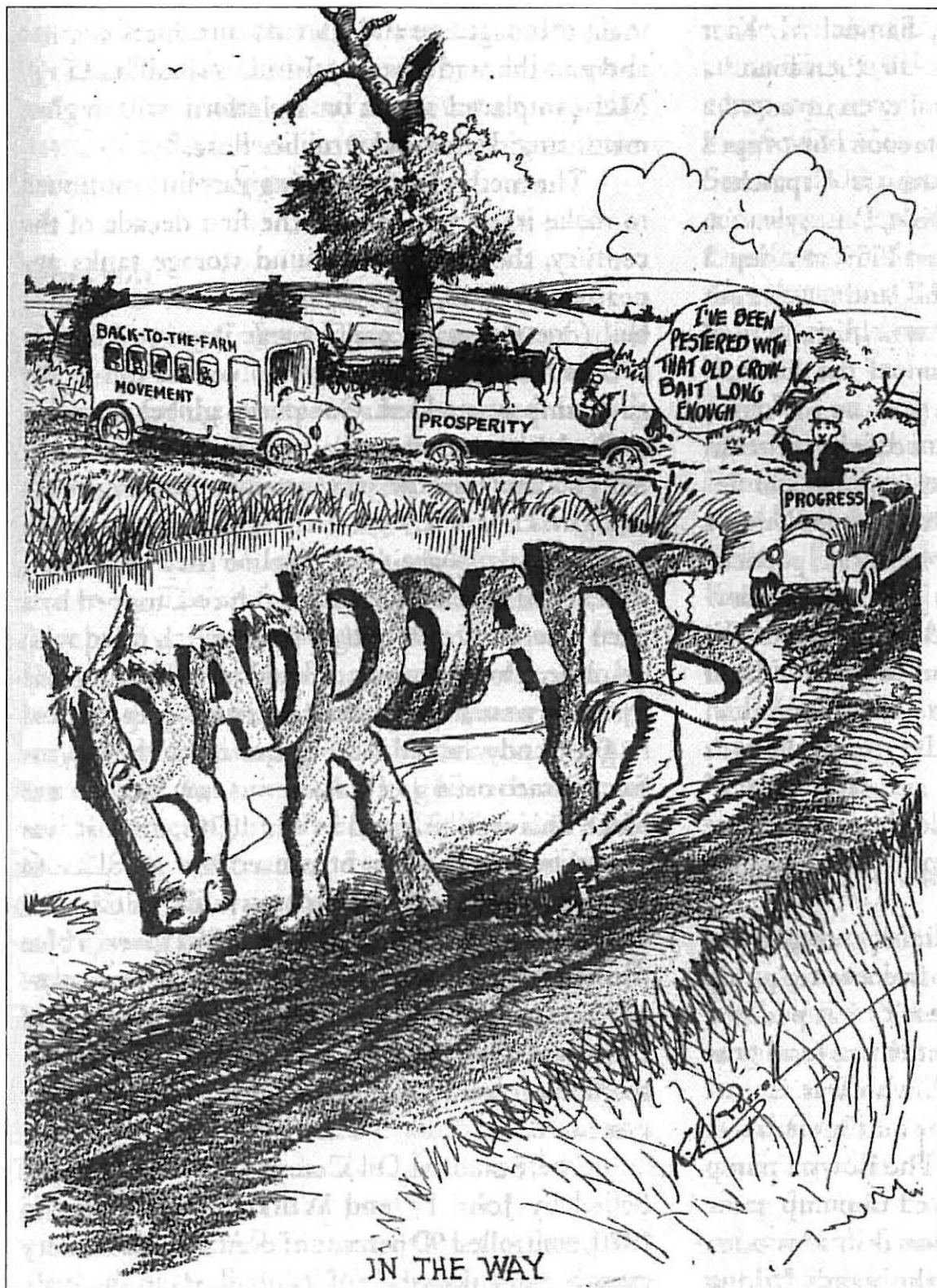


Fig. 2. *Bad Roads*, 1916. Many publications advocated for better roads in the early 1900s. This advertisement is from an issue of *Better Road and Streets*. (Kaszynski, *The American Highway: The History and Culture of Roads in the United States*, 54).

to transport mail, and this led to multiple highways connecting multiple cities.²⁰ Still, these roads were rough for traveling (see Fig. 2 on previous page). They were often muddy and wet, and if they were paved, it was with uneven logs that caused many problems themselves.²¹ Travel by water and by rail became much cheaper and required less hassle than the unpredictable roadways of this time, and so they went out of fashion rather quickly. After the Civil War, America continued its progress westward and rail lines sprang up left and right. Toward the end of the 1800s, Americans became obsessed with bicycles, which were earlier called velocipedes, and people were often seen riding through the countryside on them.²² The popularity of the bicycle convinced many states to start contributing to road funds, which ultimately led to the “Good Roads” movement where thousands of people sought “all-weather hard-surfaced streets and roads.”²³ This not only affected bicyclists, but also those who lived far from a rail line and anyone wanting to receive mail. The Agricultural Appropriations Act of 1894 was the response to many civilian requests, distributing funds and authorizing studies for improved roads.²⁴ General Roy Stone, the first special agent of The Office of Road Inquiry, said this about the ongoing roadway problems at that time:

The quagmires, ruts, and wrecked wagons that mark our common highways, the reckless waste of the old road system, the social and commercial isolation that is imposed upon our people, and especially our farmers, assuring a large part of winter and spring months must sooner or later convince us that bad roads cost more than good ones.²⁵

²⁰ Ibid., 12.

²¹ Ibid., 13.

²² Ibid., 19.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 20.

²⁵ Ibid., 20-21.

This sentiment, though focused mainly on farmers, epitomizes the problems of the early road system. While biking was a pastime and an even somewhat dependable mode of transportation in urban areas, rural areas were still deprived of this luxury. Without reliable transportation, the amount of time it took to move crops from one place to another was very slow and affected people's livelihood; the average horse and buggy traveled only 5 miles an hour on a good day.²⁶ So while much of America was busy riding their bikes and splashing up mud in the cities, a select few were fervently working with a new invention that would change the way everyone used the road: the internal combustion engine. With this engine and several other advancements, the modern automobile was introduced in America in 1893 when brothers Charles and Frank Duryea test-drove their invention in Springfield, Massachusetts.²⁷ It was noisy, unreliable and slow, with a top speed at less than 20 miles an hour, but to a country itching to get moving, it was perfection.

By the turn of the century, automobiles were gaining in popularity. Landscape writer John Brinckerhoff (J.B.) Jackson eloquently wrote of the alluring road in his book, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*: "The greatest appeal lay in the kind of lifestyle it promised: the dawning century was to see a new culture: emancipated, healthy, infinitely mobile and promising hitherto unknown pleasures and experiences—all because of the automobile."²⁸

Brinckerhoff could not have said it better: the automobile was indeed appealing. Automobiles were mostly used by the elite—America's most wealthy and notable

²⁶ Ibid., 21.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *A Sense of Place, a Sense of Time*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 173.

people—for touring, going to parades, and the like.²⁹ At this time, approximately 8,000 people owned automobiles. The majority of people still traveled long distances by rail, short distances by horse and carriage, or did not travel much at all. The wealthy were the only ones traveling quickly—by the standards of the time—by bike and eventually by car. In 1903, the first person to venture cross-country in his automobile traveled from California to New York in 63 days.³⁰ Advertisements of this period targeted the white, upper class—the only people that would have had the available money and time to be able to travel these new roads.³¹ The world was wide open to those that could afford to travel it.

Connie Chiang, assistant professor of history and environmental studies at Bowdoin College, outlines the difficult relationship between automobiles, roads and nature in an article about the famed “17-Mile Drive” in Pebble Beach, California. While vehicle ownership in the early 20th century was restricted to the wealthy, changes in the following decade led to an increase in ownership and the beginning of an ideological shift in the American public. Henry Ford’s Model T was built in 1908, and later improvements made the vehicle cheaper and more accessible for common people. By 1918, Ford was producing more than 500,000 vehicles a year, meaning more Americans were traveling the countryside.³² While once limited to views from primitive roads and railroad tracks, Americans now went “anywhere the combination of imagination, wheels

²⁹ Karl Raitz, “American Roads, Roadside America,” *Geographical Review*, Vol. 88 (1998): 372.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Connie Y. Chiang, “Mother Nature’s Drive-Thru,” *Environmental History*, Vol. 8 (2003): 671.

³² Raitz, 373.

and a dirt track might lead.”³³ People sought the out-of-doors for recreation and adventure, exemplifying, as Chiang says, their independence and individualism.

With vehicles changing and improving so rapidly, roads had to adapt as well. Longtime New York State Governor and public recreation advocate Alfred E. Smith once said: “The automobile has brought the country to the door of the city dweller.”³⁴ While this is true, it hasn’t come without hard work. The surge of car ownership and America’s longing for the countryside inevitably brought forth the need for better roads. Until then, the majority of roads in the country were unpaved, uneven and unreliable. Local agencies began experimenting with various road-surfacing materials to handle the need. A material called “macadam” was used in some areas, copying the European method of covering a stone or rock foundation with a layer of broken brick. Other areas were paved with Portland cement, which is a mixture of lime, clay and aggregate. Asphalt, a mixture of refined petroleum, sand and gravel, was first created at the turn of century, and became a popular road surfacing material as well. Whichever material was being used, engineers were continually improving their surfacing methods and covering more surfaces as time went on. In 1903, President Theodore Roosevelt addressed the National Good Roads Convention and advocated the continued expansion of roads westward. He said that good roads were a necessity for any great empire, and that the ability and process of road-building are a sign of permanent greatness.”³⁵

The struggle to get hard-surfaced roads in rural areas and into the West, though worthwhile, was trying. Automobile clubs such as the American Automobile Association

³³ Chiang, 672.

³⁴ Kathleen LaFrank, “Real and Ideal Landscapes along the Taconic State Parkway,” *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture*, Vol. 9 (2003): 247.

³⁵ Kaszynski, 30.

(AAA) began pushing for interstate routes, and before long the first east-west, coast-to-coast highway was proposed in 1913.³⁶ The Lincoln Highway, as it was known, is still today the longest highway in the country.³⁷ Highways such as this sparked interest across the country and many other auto clubs began pushing for highways. What followed was a rapid and continual improvement of the highway system. In 1918, the first federal highway was completed in California, as a result of the Federal-Aid Highway Act passed two years prior. In the early 1900s, traveling by rail was preferred, but by the onslaught of the first World War, automobile production was increasing quickly and more than a dozen railroads were in bankruptcy.³⁸

Many have written on the ways that automobiles have transformed the landscape, but it is also important to note how they transformed the way we interacted with those landscapes. Automobiles profoundly changed the way people interacted with nature. More than anything, leisure became a part of the American vocabulary. Picnicking, camping, and traveling the open road were popular pastimes, and Americans began spending more time in national parks and other recreational wilderness areas.³⁹ Park motor-camps or auto-camps, as seen on this page at Mount Rainier National Park in Washington State, provided vacationers with scenic tours of the parks (see Fig. 3 on next page). By 1917 more than 50,000 vehicles had traveled to a national park, and by 1926 that number reached 400,000.⁴⁰ Indeed, recreational travel was on the rise.

Because of this, it was now possible to commune with nature simply by driving

³⁶ Ibid., 40.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid., 45.

³⁹ Michael Bunce, *The Countryside Ideal: Anglo-American Images of Landscape*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 119.

⁴⁰ Ibid.



Fig. 3. *Caravan of auto stages filled with tourists waiting to depart from Paradise Inn to Tacoma and Seattle, Mount Rainier National Park, Washington, 1925. (University of Washington Libraries).*

through it. In his Ph.D. dissertation from the University of Washington, one scholar described this concept of roadways becoming a central feature of our parks by providing a “windshield wilderness.”⁴¹ From the windows of automobiles, tourists saw a scenic story unfold before them—views framed by car windows, headlamps highlighting places before them, man and nature combining forces for the benefit of the onlooker. Before long, the drive was the destination.

Destinations continued to increase, enticing tourists with new views and ways to see the world. In an article by Karl Raitz entitled “American Roads, Roadside America,”

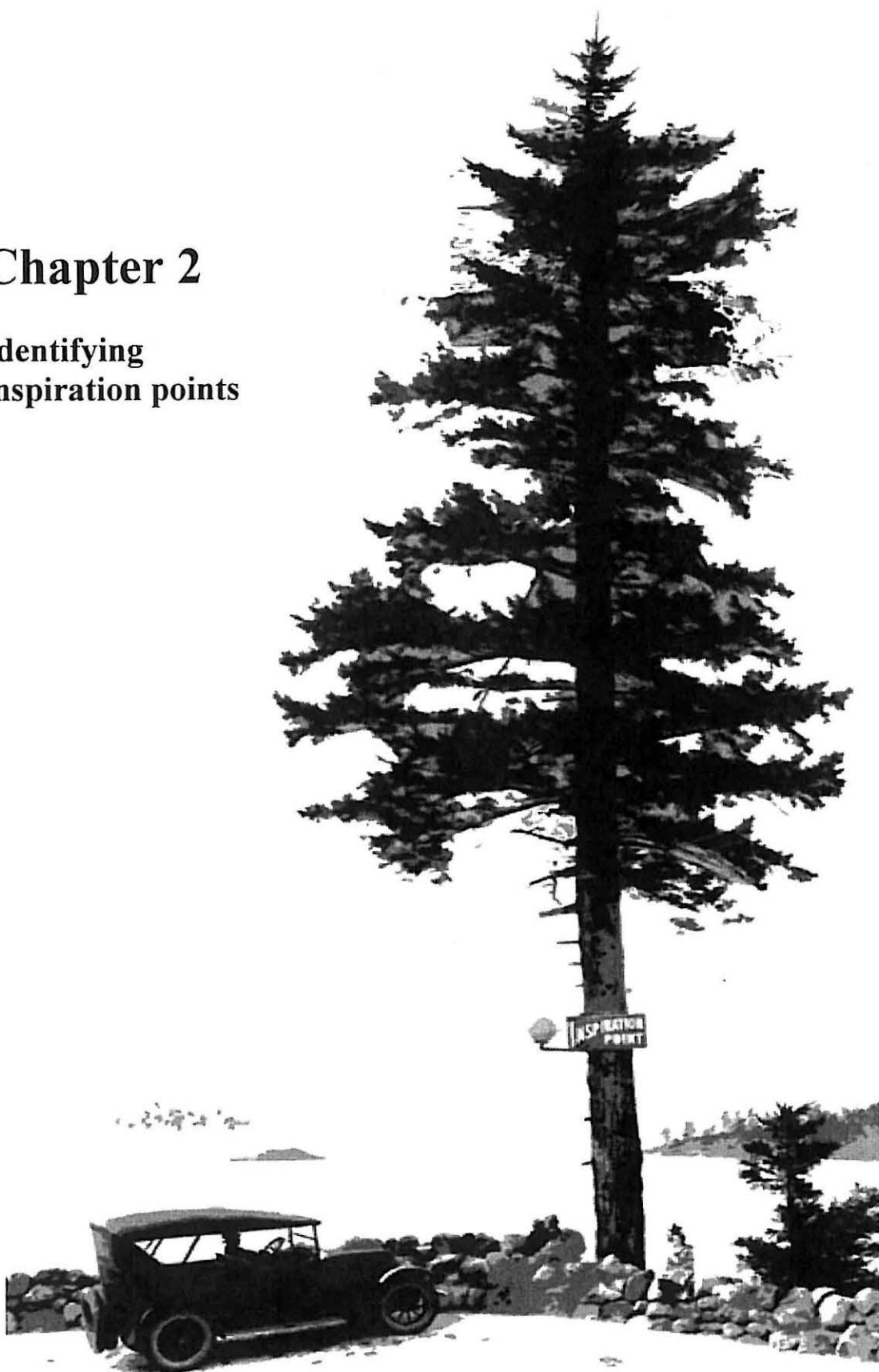
⁴¹ Chiang, 672.

he says, "The roadside is always created after the road itself."⁴² This, however, is not the case with many inspiration points. The view from the roadside was there long before any wheels hit the pavement. In some cases, yes, scenic vantage points were developed as an afterthought to a scenic roadway, creating a way for pleasure-drivers to pull over, gaze at the view and take a break from their afternoon drive. The presence of picnic tables and benches at many vantage points prove this much is true. But many inspiration points are natural features, outcroppings or ledges, that lend themselves to a view that would be just as spectacular with or without a highway running beside it. But however misleading Raitz' statement is, one thing is clear: the invention of the automobile and the improved roadways that came with it undeniably changed the way we view our landscape today.

⁴² Raitz, 364.

Chapter 2

Identifying inspiration points



Inspiration points, by definition, are scenic destinations for walkers and pleasure drivers. Inspiration points, by experience, are said to be much more. Their connection to the scenic highway movement, national park scene, and the advancement of the arts unequivocally earned them a spot in our nation's landscape history. In an irony only befitting of nature, these inspiration points of our past have become, over time, as much a part of the landscape as the views they are highlighting.

This chapter aims to collectively identify and record these places by grouping them in geographical areas and extracting patterns. Inspiration points across the country can be described in one of the following three capacities:

- (1) a vantage point within a park or national forest,
- (2) a pullout on a scenic highway or other roadway, or
- (3) a viewpoint along a trail or railway line.

Within these categories, it is easy to follow trends as they progress through time—namely the landscape painting era and its connection with national parks, the scenic highway movement, and the public's desire for recreation and travel. When documenting these viewpoints, it is supremely important to establish a chronology of when they were built or recognized by name. This, however, is much easier said than done. Many early histories of these viewpoints were not recorded, and if they were the records did not contain much detail. Granted, to a nation preoccupied with forging new roads and inventing the automobile, these details may have seemed trivial at that time. Where records do exist, though, they are written in the following pages, and where patterns emerge, they are documented.

The first recorded inspiration points were located in the West, but it is presumed that the movement started much earlier on the East Coast. Granted, even the NPS

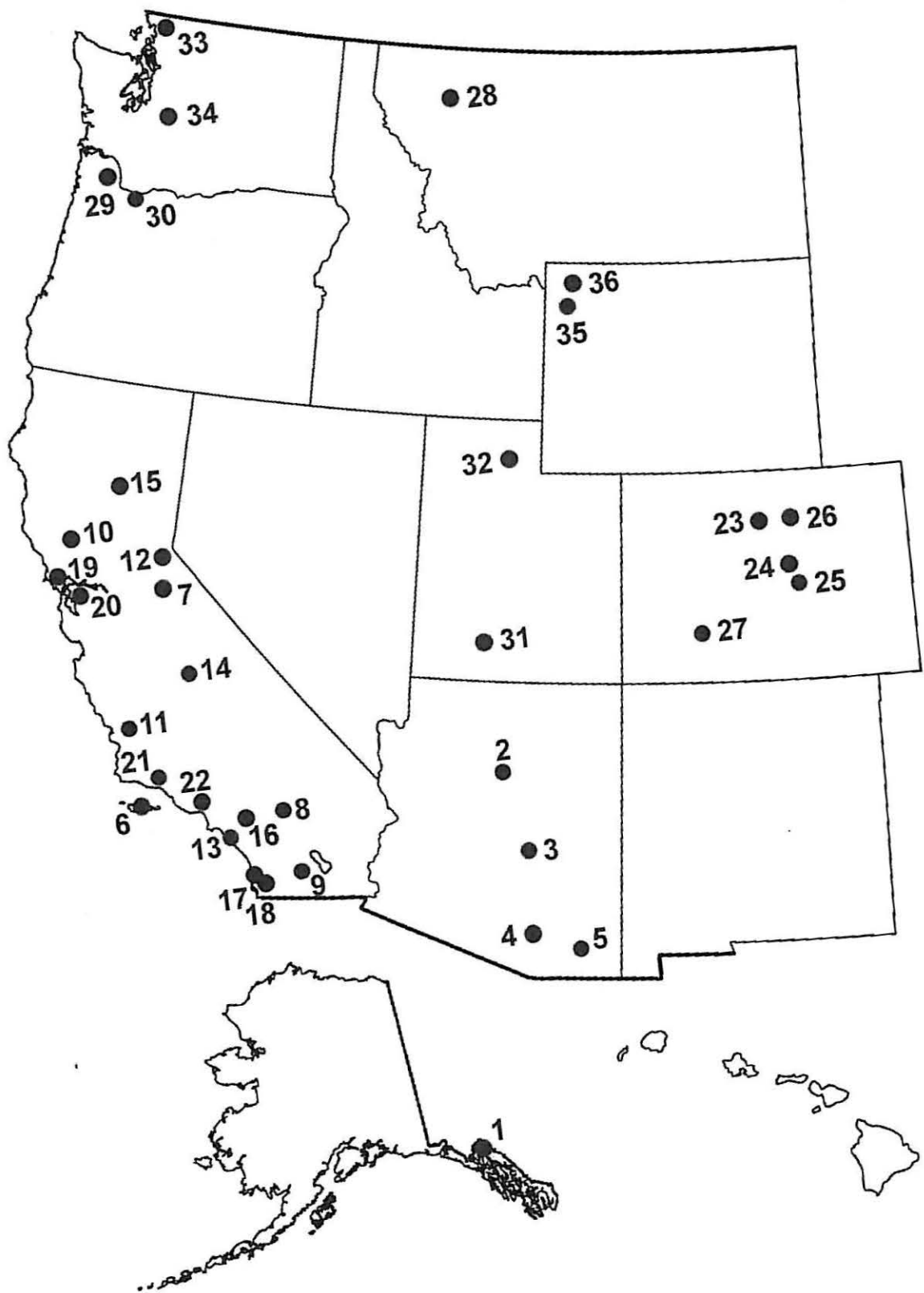
recognized that the first parks—Yosemite and Yellowstone—were influenced by the movement that began on the East Coast in the 19th century:

The first national parks were a response to the romanticism that restructured the American concept of wilderness in the nineteenth century. As seen in the artistry of John James Audubon, James Fenimore Cooper, Thomas Cole, George Catlin, William Cullen Bryant and others, the idea of wilderness developed during the course of the nineteenth century from an entity to be feared and conquered into a resource that should be preserved and treasured.¹

The following pages are divided into three sections to document specific inspirational viewpoints of the Eastern, Western and Central United States. By examining these vistas first in isolation we can determine their influences and how each one came about. These individual histories will then be followed by cumulative observations about the “inspiration point” movement in this country. It seems likely, when talking about inspiration points, that each one would have eventually inspired another, setting off a domino-effect that slowly and deeply changed the American landscape as we know it. This may not be possible to prove with the evidence that exists, but regardless these scenic viewpoints stand alone and together as a testament of time. The following pages tell the stories of the creation and construction of historic inspiration points in the West, in the East, and everywhere in between.

¹ Henry G. Law, Laura E. Soulliere, William C. Tweed, *The National Park Service Rustic Architecture: 1916 – 1942*, online book, National Park Service, Division of Cultural Resource Management, 1977, Chapter 1, http://www.nps.gov/history/history/online_books/rusticarch/part1.htm (accessed April 27, 2008).

WESTERN UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS



WESTERN UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS

No.	Name	Location	Page No.
1	White Pass and Yukon Railway	Skagway, AK	A1
2	Flagstaff Mountain	Flagstaff, AZ	A2
3	Apache Trail	Roosevelt, AZ	A3
4	Mount Lemmon	Tuscon, AZ	51, A4
5	Chiricahua National Monument	Wilcox, AZ	A5
6	Channel Islands National Park	Channel Islands, CA	A6
7	Yosemite National Park (4)	Groveland, CA	A7
	a. old "Old Inspiration Point"		31, A7
	b. "Old Inspiration Point"		33, A7
	c. "New Inspiration Point"		34, A7
	d. new "New Inspiration Point"		34, A7
8	Hemet Valley	Idyllwild, CA	A8
9	Anza Trail	Julian, CA	A9
10	Blue Ridge Trail	Los Angeles, CA	A10
11	Echo Mountain	Los Angeles, CA	110, A11
12	Emerald Bay	Lake Tahoe, CA	41, A12
13	Corona Del Mar	Newport Beach, CA	A13
14	Sequoia National Forest	Porterville, CA	A14
15	Lassen Volcanic National Park	Redding, CA	42, A15
16	Lake Elsinore	Roosevelt, CA	40, A16
17	The Presidio	San Diego, CA	36, A17
18	Balboa Park	San Diego, CA	37, A18
19	Mount Tamalpais	San Francisco, CA	A19
20	Tilden Regional Park	San Francisco, CA	A20
21	Jesusita Trail	Santa Barbara, CA	A21
22	Will Rogers State Park	Santa Monica, CA	A22
23	Clear Creek Canyon	Jefferson County, CO	46, A23
24	Pike's Peak	Colorado Springs, CO	49, A24
25	Seven Falls	Colorado Springs, CO	50, A25
26	Mountain Park	Denver, CO	47, A26
27	Rio Grande National Forest	Monte Vista, CO	A27
28	Napa Point Trail/Swan Peak	Bigfork, MT	A28
29	Columbia River Highway	Hood River, OR	44, A29
30	Mount Hood North	Hood River County, OR	44, A30
31	Bryce Canyon National Park	Garfield County, UT	A31
32	Willard Scenic Backway	Mantua, UT	A32
33	Woodstock Farm	Bellingham, WA	45, 107, A33
34	Paradise Road, Mount Rainier	Eagle Park, WA	45, A34
35	Grand Teton National Park	Teton County, WY	51, A35
36	Yellowstone National Park	Jackson Hole, WY	36, A36

How the West won

Yosemite National Park has the distinct honor of having the first recorded inspiration point in the United States. While this is an important discovery, it does not explicitly mean that this was the first inspiration point in the country; it is just the earliest one documented.

Today, it is known that Yosemite has had four separate Inspiration Points within its boundaries over time.² The oldest point (**No. 7a**) referenced stands at an elevation of 6,802 feet and overlooks Yosemite Valley. Journalist James Mason (J.M.) Hutchings, accompanied by artist Thomas Ayres, entered the valley in search of “scenes of wonder and curiosity” for his monthly magazine about California. His party stood on the rocky outcropping of Inspiration Point on June 27, 1855.³ Hutchings’ monthly magazine-inspired-book, *Scenes of Wonder and Curiosity in California*, contains his own account of this sight:

Almost before the gratifying fact is realized, you have reached ‘Inspiration Point,’ and are standing out upon a bold promontory of rock, and with feelings all your own, are looking over the precipice of nearly three thousand feet, into the deep abyss. This is the first view obtained of Yo-Semite Valley. Mr. Sydney Andrews, in his correspondence to the *Boston Advertiser*, thus writes of this glorious scene— ‘Suddenly as I rode along, I heard a shout. I knew the valley had revealed itself to those who were at the front of the line. I turned my head away—I couldn’t look until I tied my horse. Then I walked to the ledge and crawled out over the overhanging rocks. I believe some men walk out there—it’s a dull clod of a soul who can do that. In all my life, let it lead me where it may, I think I shall see nothing else so grand, so awful, so sublime, so beautiful—beautiful with a beauty not of this earth—as that Vision of the Valley. It was only yesterday evening—I cannot write of it yet.’⁴

² Hank Johnston, “Yosemite’s Four (almost five) Inspiration Points,” *Yosemite*, Vol. 59 (1997): 2.

³ Sharon Giacomazzi, “Romancing the Sierra: Yosemite’s Inspiration Point,” *Sierra Heritage*, Vol. 17 (1997): 54.

⁴ Johnston, 2.

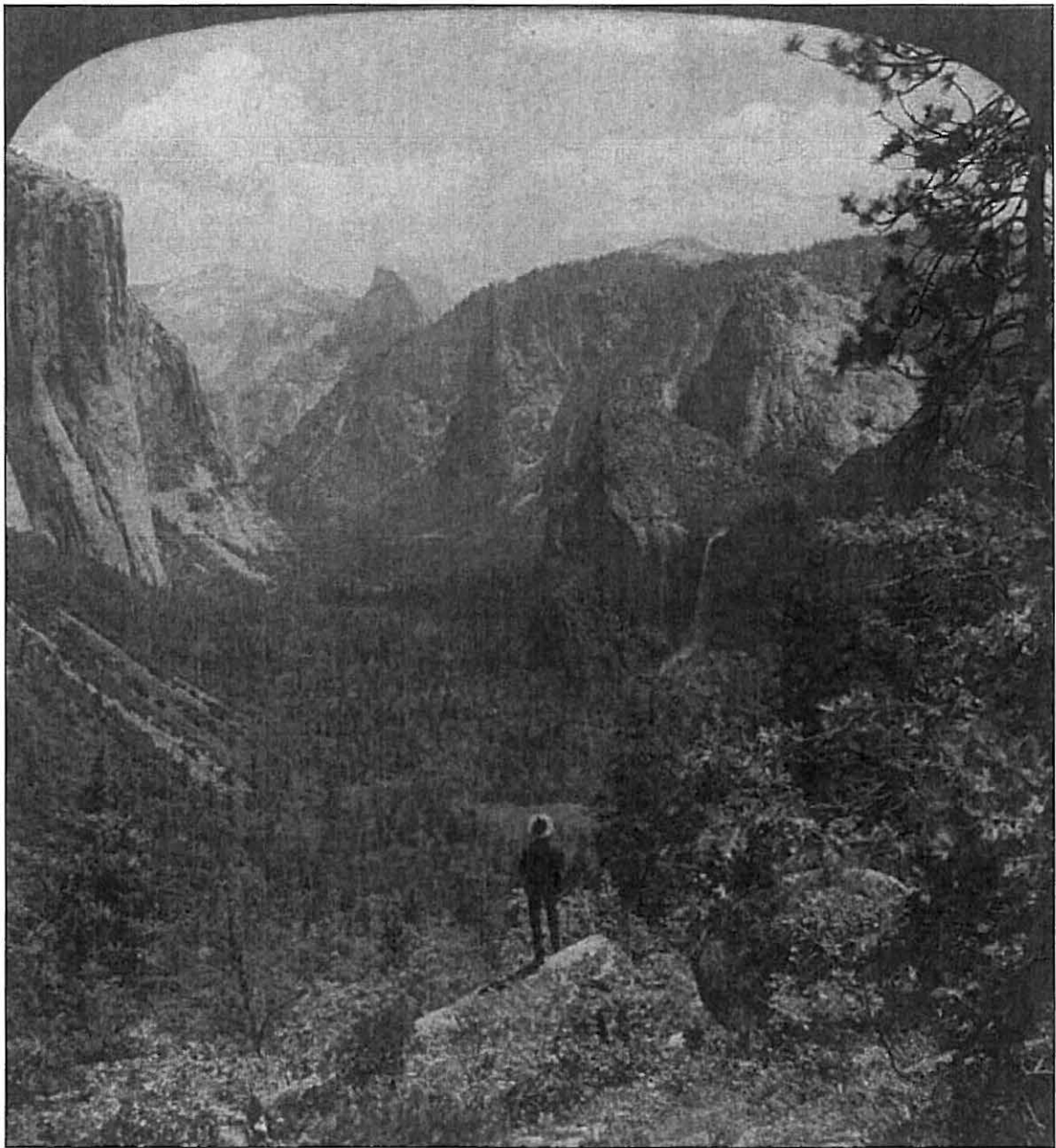


Fig. 4. *Yosemite Valley from Inspiration Point*, 1904. (Library of Congress, <http://hdl.loc.pnp/cph.3b04621>).

Hutchings and his party were not only the first people to record their accounts of Inspiration Point; they were the first tourist party ever to enter the Yosemite Valley.⁵ Upon his return, Hutchings printed his descriptions in the *Mariposa Gazette* and these

⁵ Giacomazzi, 55.

stories were soon reprinted throughout the city, state and country.⁶ It didn't take long for the nation to realize the importance of what these select few had seen. With the eventual discovery of three more vantage points in the park, the name of this site was changed to "Old Inspiration Point" until that name was taken by the IP discovered in 1856, described below. Because the other points provide better views and are more accessible by trail and roadway, most visitors today are not even aware that this old Old Inspiration Point exists.

One year after Hutchings and his party entered the valley, three brothers completed a 40-mile trail to Yosemite Valley and discovered a second point (**No. 7b**) that most refer to today as "Old Inspiration Point."⁷ More or less, they followed the route that Hutchings himself had taken until they reached a point about a half mile southwest of the first Inspiration Point. Here, the Mann brothers cleared their own trail to a rocky peninsula formerly known as "Mount Beatitude." Hutchings wrote about Mount Beatitude's location, saying that it provided a more comprehensive view of the distant Sierra Mountains, but compared to the first Inspiration Point, the view of the valley was not as great.⁸ As mentioned above, this viewpoint was easier to get to and provided a safer lookout for tourists, and thus eliminated the need for the older point. As years passed, Mount Beatitude became known as "Inspiration Point" and then what it is now, "Old Inspiration Point," following the discovery of yet a third vista in this vast land.

In 1875, a stage road was built along the southern bluffs at a much lower elevation, and the place that had the first full view of the valley was christened "New

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Johnston, 2.

⁸ Ibid.

Inspiration Point” (No. 7c). Author Susie Clark described her impressions from this point in 1890:

At our second change of horses about noon, we take the opportunity to run down the road ahead of the coach; for a restful change, we inspect the watering trough, the road, the trees, which allow such restricted range of view, when, speeding on lest the fresh gorses overtake us too soon, suddenly, as if the planet had dropped from beneath our feet, the trees disappeared on our right, the sky rolled itself backward like a scroll to give space to a vast army of peaks and domes and mountains and granite, a double row, the verdant gorge between, and we realized with a gasp that was almost pain, that we were looking upon the marvelous Valley. We stood on Inspiration Point... There are some moments, some experiences that come to us which are untranslatable in any human speech, and this was one... How long we might have stood there had not the coach arrived to pick us up, we cannot say.⁹

This Inspiration Point, Yosemite’s third in 20 years, remained a popular destination until the old stage road was replaced with the modern highway in 1933.¹⁰

As if three wasn’t enough, a fourth inspiration point (No. 7d), named intriguingly the same as the third (New Inspiration Point), appeared at the north entrance of the Valley in the early 1900s. This vista sat at the lowest elevation of them all but afforded stunning views of Bridalveil Falls.¹¹ Photographs from this time period show a metal sign with the words “New Inspiration Point” on the side of the road.¹² This IP is now known better as “Rainbow View” because of the rainbows that form when the sun hits the falls. It was debated that a fifth vantage point discovered in the 1930s be called Inspiration Point, but to ease confusion and keep a manageable number of these named vistas within the park,

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ The term “Bridalveil” or “Bridal Veil” Falls is a frequently used name for waterfalls that resemble a bride’s veil. Besides Yosemite’s Bridalveil Falls, this term is used for falls in Letchworth Park and Niagara Falls, and along the Columbia River Highway—sites mentioned in this paper, and other areas throughout the country.

¹² Johnston, 5.

the place was officially named "Discovery View" instead.¹³ For all intents and purposes, the views are still inspiring. Yosemite, which became a national park in 1890, had 42 visitors in 1855; today it receives more than 4 million each year.¹⁴

While Yosemite gained much national attention for its beauty, it also became subject to exploitation of its resources. Tourists, artists and entrepreneurs transformed the Valley and in many cases damaged it beyond repair. Conservationists appealed to the state and were granted "inalienable public trust," meaning that the government vowed to protect Yosemite's scenic lands and ensure they could be enjoyed by all people.¹⁵ Protection came in the form of a bill that was introduced by a California senator in March 1864; President Lincoln signed it in June.¹⁶

Journalist Samuel Bowles reiterated the importance of Yosemite as a national statement in his accounts from Inspiration Point, quoted his book "Our New West" in 1865:

No Swiss mountain view carries such majestic sweep of distance, such sublime combination of hight [sic] and breadth and depth; such uplifting into the presence of God; such dwarfing of the mortal sense, such welcome to the immortal though. It was not beauty, it was sublimity; it was not power, nor order, nor color, it was majesty; it was not a part, it was the whole; it was not man but God, that was about, before, in us.¹⁷

Because of the continued press from journalists like Bowles and the earlier J.M. Hutchings, Yosemite's conservation efforts continued to spark attention, eventually

¹³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴ Giacomazzi, 55.

¹⁵ "History & Culture," *Yosemite National Park*, National Park Service, 2007, <http://www.nps.gov/yose/historyculture/index.htm> (accessed December 21, 2007).

¹⁶ Bill Kovarik and Mark Neuzil, "The Mother of the Forest," *Mass Media & Environmental Conflict*, Chapter 3, <http://skyblu.wordpress.com/yellowstone/how-to-make-a-park-yosemite-vs-yellowstone/> (accessed April 20, 2008).

¹⁷ Hassrick, 9.

leading other state agencies to take action. In this way, Yosemite paved the way for the creation of Yellowstone National Park on March 1, 1872.

Yellowstone became America's first national park that year, and in this it became a magnification of the qualities seen in Yosemite. Historical and current maps place Inspiration Point (No. 36) just east of Canyon Village and north of

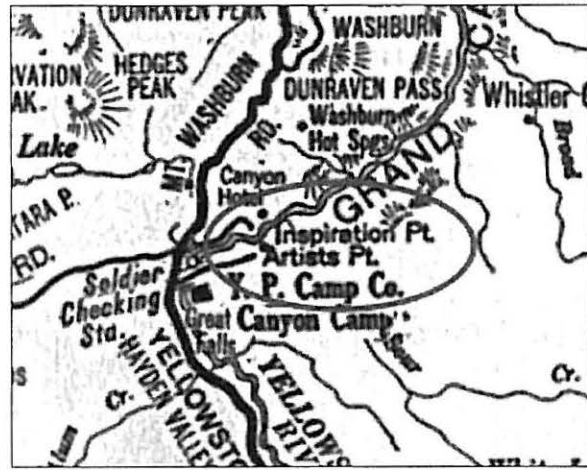


Fig. 5. *Yellowstone National Park, 1917*. Map shows placement of Inspiration Point within park. (University of Texas Libraries).

Artist's Point. See the 1917 historical map on this page for exact location (Fig.

5). In Mary Augspurger's book, *Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive*, she states that when establishing the park, legislation called for "a public park or pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" as well as regulations to preserve the park from "injury and spoliation" and any or all of its "natural curiosities, or wonders."¹⁸ Ultimately, the park was preserved as a source of future tourism.

Besides the inspiration points located within Yosemite and Yellowstone, California has 16 other confirmed geographical locations that bear that name. Providing a representative sampling, most of these places are highway lookouts, park and forest vantage points, or rest areas along trails or railroad lines.

San Diego has two different places referred to as Inspiration Point: one in Presidio Park near Mission Valley (No. 17), and one in Balboa Park. According to Joel Levanetz, assistant curator for the San Diego Historical Society, neither of these places has an

¹⁸ Ibid., 5.

actual structure associated with it, but rather they are both “open places with a commanding view of the horizon.”¹⁹ The vista in Balboa Park (**No. 18**) lies the furthest south of all the state’s viewpoints and has a particularly interesting history.

San Diego was the first city on the West Coast to designate land solely for the purpose of creating an urban park, setting aside approximately 1400 acres of the original Presidio European settlement land. Balboa Park, then known as “City Park,” was established on Feb. 4, 1870. A year prior, the *San Diego Union* published a story saying, “every considerable city in Europe and the United States... has its vast tract of land reserved and beautified as a park” as a means to improve health and morale problems in urban and industrial areas.²⁰ Between this time and 1881, few changes were made to the park. The land was covered with dense shrubbery and wildflowers bloomed with a drink of rain. As time wore on, though, modern encroachments did enter the park. Several homes already present on the land at the time of the park’s establishment were allowed to remain, public dump sites were created, the San Diego Water Company was allowed to drill a well in the area, and in 1881 the City allotted five acres for the building of a high school.²¹ All of these things proved well for the park, but also raised questions of park uses and ways that the City would preserve the original intent of the acreage. In the late 1880s and early 1890s, many efforts were made to beautify the park grounds, adding “plants, flowers and artistic decorations.”²² Even with this focus on beauty and landscape, though, Inspiration Point is not mentioned until years later. This does not

¹⁹ Joel Levanetz, email message to the author, January 22, 2008.

²⁰ Gregory E. Montes, “San Diego’s City Park, 1868-1902: an Early Debate on Environment and Profit,” *The Journal of San Diego History*, Vol. 23 (2008), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/77spring/balboapark.htm> (December 12, 2007).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

mean it did not exist at this time, only that it is not mentioned in publication until the early 1900s.

Two expositions were held at the Park over the years, the Panama-California Exposition in 1915-1916 and the California Pacific Exposition in 1935-1936. In 1910, John Charles Olmstead was hired as landscape architect for the first exposition, and then later resigned, but records indicate his plans included placing the main exposition buildings on the terraced slopes on Inspiration Point.²³ This establishes the point as a geographic place at that time. In 1917, the point is mentioned, rather poetically, in a story about marines enlisted in the National Guard and staying at Balboa Park. The story appeared in a September issue of the *Los Angeles Times*:

Tanned and tough-muscled, with their clothes fitting them in the way uniforms fit men who have become used to wearing them, the Los Angeles sea soldiers are camped with other marines on the beautiful point of land that runs deep into the ravine at the San Diego exposition site below the outdoor organ. There on "Inspiration Point," there rise neat rows of brown tents among the eucalyptus trees, five companies or more of them, and there on the most beautiful parade ground in the world, there work the "leathernecks," in the intensive training of the sea-soldier likely to see service soon. Drilling, the marines gaze over the tree-filled gulch and the lovely town beyond, to the blue waters of the bay and the ships lying at anchor.²⁴

In 1920, an interesting development occurred on this land. An article from the *San Diego Union* on June 3, 1920, says that millions of dollars would be spent in San Diego to build a "great naval base" on 17 acres of land located on Inspiration Point.²⁵ In

²³ Richard W. Amero, "Samuel Parsons Finds Xanadu in San Diego," *The Journal of San Diego History*, Vol. 44 (1998), <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/journal/98winter/parsons.htm> (accessed December 12, 2007).

²⁴ Edward C. Crossman, "Tanned, tough-muscled marines are training," *Los Angeles Times*, (Sept. 30, 1917), San Diego History web site, <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/amero/notes-1917.htm> (accessed March 10, 2008).

²⁵ Richard W. Amero "Balboa Park History," *San Diego History* web site, 1920, <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/amero/notes-1920.htm> (accessed December 12, 2007).

November of that same year, the publication ran a story saying construction would begin immediately, and that all of the Naval Hospital's buildings would face westward on the "brow" of Inspiration Point, forming an "imposing sight" when completed.²⁶ HABS records indicate that San Diego had a military history with Balboa Park, offering its exposition grounds as campgrounds for troops in World War I and marines awaiting a naval base site in the city in more recent years. While some argued the appropriateness of a naval hospital in a public park, its history led the way for the ultimate decision.



Fig. 6. Fountain at Inspiration Point, Balboa Park (The Library of Congress, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage>).

When naval officers visited the southern California area to pick a site for their hospital, they took a drive through Balboa Park and agreed on 17 acres on a southern promontory in the park that "affords a panoramic view of downtown San Diego and Coronado and so was named Inspiration Point."²⁷ According to

HABS records, a 1920 topographic map of the Naval Hospital shows an old concrete

foundation, which is most likely the remnants of a women's home that was built in 1887 and later burned to the ground, as well as a cottage and stable, and an unpaved road that led to the city below.²⁸ In 1981 an editorial appeared in the *San Diego Union* that indicated that the Navy would be trading its 39.8 acres occupied by the Balboa Naval

²⁶ Amero, "Balboa Park History."

²⁷ The Library of Congress, "U.S. Naval Hospital, Park Boulevard, Balboa Park, San Diego, San Diego County, CA." Survey and field notes. Available from Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, compiled after 1933, <http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage> (accessed February 25, 2008). 15.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

Hospital for roughly 35 acres it had condemned in Florida Canyon. According to Balboa Park's web site, the Florida Canyon is a native plant preserve that gives visitors a glimpse of the original landscape of the park. The editorial said that the Navy planned to demolish unwanted buildings to restore Inspiration Point to its former glory and pay \$300,000 to relocate the Balboa Park nursery.²⁹ However, an editorial that appeared several years later in the *San Diego Tribune* said that the City would instead be "mar[ring] the natural beauty of Inspiration Point by preserving a big, ugly hospital building."³⁰ The city actually voted to save four of the more than 40 buildings associated with the hospital. These hospital buildings and impressive landscaped grounds still exist and draw people to the area today, although many of the original functions of the buildings have changed.

Further north up the California coast, there are two lakeside inspiration points with histories just as rich. Near Los Angeles, in Riverside, California, one viewpoint overlooks Lake Elsinore and the Ortega grade. North of that and east of Sacramento lies the Emerald Bay point, on Lake Tahoe.

Ruth Atkins, president of the Lake Elsinore Historical Society, said that the Inspiration Point in Riverside (**No. 16**) is a result of a highway connecting Lake Elsinore Valley and the coast.³¹ In February 1934, the road, and the battles to get it built, were finally completed. According to Tom Hudson's book *Lake Elsinore Valley – its story – 1776-1977*, which Atkins refers to as the "Bible" of the history of that area, also

²⁹ Richard W. Amero "Balboa Park History," *San Diego History* web site, 1981, <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/amero/notes-1981.htm> (accessed December 12, 2007).

³⁰ Amero, "Balboa Park History," *San Diego History*. Notes from the Richard Amero collection, 1987, <http://www.sandiegohistory.org/amero/notes-1987.htm> (accessed December 12, 2007).

³¹ Ruth Atkins, email message to the author, February 28, 2008.

completed at that time was a large retaining wall for the parking area and viewpoint near the summit of the Ortega grade.³² Hudson's book states:

The area was given the name 'Jameson Point' in honor of Riverside County Supervisor T. C. Jameson in recognition of his efforts on behalf of the highway during the years 1929 through 1934. It is also fitting that the highway bear the name Ortega and the lookout point Jameson because Mrs. T. C. Jameson, the supervisor's wife, was a member of the Ortega family. Because the view from Jameson Point is so inspiring, it is now often called Inspiration Point. . . .³³

No other records provide any information on this point, but Atkins said that today few people would recognize the site as Jameson Point or Inspiration Point; most instead just call it "The Lookout."

High above Lake Tahoe, it was not so long ago that Inspiration Point (**No. 12**) was nothing but the view. According to Don Lane, supervisory recreation forester for the Lake Tahoe Basin Management Unit, 15 years ago the site was a dirt parking area with no special amenities, save the view.³⁴ Now, visitors find a paved parking lot that can accommodate 32 vehicles, a paved walkway, interpretive signage, and two vault restrooms.

Back in the 1920s, Lane said, this area was located adjacent to a new road that surrounded Emerald Bay. The road was built and paved in 1913, as the automobile craze was gearing up across the country, but the area that was beginning to be called Inspiration Point remained unpaved. Later in the decade, Lakeview Lodge, which later became Bay View Resort, was built across the street as a rustic resort for those traveling to Lake Tahoe. In its heyday, the 1920s and 1930s, Lane said, "it was to become locally famous

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Don Lane, email message to the author, January 28, 2008.

and perhaps infamous as a 'speakeasy.'³⁵ Prohibition produced many sites like this across the country – remote locations where people could order various concoctions (sold as non-alcoholic) containing significant concentrations of local moonshine. Because of this, it was widely popular in its day. In 1935, the site gained more attention when a local movie called "Rose Marie" was filmed at this location, co-starring James (Jimmy) Stewart, Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy. For this film, Inspiration Point and other resort sites were covered with movie prop totem poles for years until they finally rotted away.³⁶ Today, all that remains of that history are a few collector's postcards on eBay auction sites, but the view of Emerald Bay remains unaltered. According to Lane, the site still attracts approximately 50,000 visitors each summer.

Other sites in California range in age. In Lassen Volcanic National Park, Inspiration Point (**No. 15**) is said to have gotten its name sometime between 1914 and 1930.³⁷ The site is a natural setting with a short trail that leads to it, according to Park Guide Shanda Ochs. In 1914, Herman Wehrle, who owned the land that is now Inspiration Point, sold it for a mere \$10 to C.P. Snell, who then deeded it to his wife; C.P. Snell is believed to have named the site shortly thereafter.³⁸

Leaving the state and moving north, the traveler is welcomed to the beautiful sites in Oregon and Washington. The Pacific Northwest is esteemed for its rare beauty, and four inspiration viewpoints have taken advantage of that over the years. In Oregon, both of the state's sites are located along the Columbia River Highway near the Oregon-Washington border. The Columbia River and its highway have much to do

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Shanda Ochs, email message to the author, January 30, 2008

³⁸ Ibid.



Fig. 7. *Inspiration Point on the Columbia River Highway, Oregon, 1916.* (Historic Columbia River Highway, <http://www.columbiariverhighway.com>).

with the exploration and development of the Pacific Northwest. The Historic Columbia River Highway (HCRH), significant because of its modern engineering techniques and sensitivity to the landscape, is the oldest scenic highway in the country.³⁹ It is known as the “king of roads” and represents an early method of cliff-face road building and innovative surfacing technology.⁴⁰ Local “good roads” advocates at the time convinced county, state and federal sources to fund the project; work began on the road in 1913 and was completed in 1922. Western Highways Builder Phil Townsend Hanna said this about the highway upon its completion: “The hardy and honest people of Oregon have built the greatest highway in the world . . . no matter from what angle you consider it, as

³⁹ “Historic Overview: The Historic Columbia River Gorge,” *Cultural Landscape Currents* National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/hli/currents/columbia/historic.htm> (accessed April 20, 2008).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

a transportation artery, as a scenic boulevard, or as an engineering feat."⁴¹ Indeed, the highway was great. Photographers quickly capitalized on the opportunity and began selling promotional postcards and prints of the famed scenic drive. Two notable photographers, Albert B. Cross and Edward L. Dimmitt, became partners in 1916 and sold postcards from their Model T Ford at one junction on the drive. One of these prints, taken at Inspiration Point (**No. 29**) in 1916, can be seen on the previous page (Fig. 7).

It is assumed that this Inspiration Point, located between Mosier and Hood River on the HCRH, was named sometime between 1913, when the highway was first being built and 1916, when the first postcard was printed of the vista.⁴² According to Tim Lyman, historian and publisher of the "Historic Columbia River Highway" web site, many of the features along the Columbia River were named by steamboat owners in the 1860s and 1870s or by the highway's builders in the 1910s to promote tourism.⁴³ It is unlikely that the point would have been named before the highway was built because "it would have been rather inaccessible and, therefore, not very prone to inspiring anyone," Lyman said. Today the point sits on a section of the highway that was abandoned in 1953 but has been restored to a pedestrian/bike trail.⁴⁴

According to Lyman, there is also another inspiration point (**No. 30**) near Hood River on the side of Mount Hood. No records exist for this point, but it is located on the

⁴¹ Tim Lyman, Historic Columbia River Highway, <http://www.columbiariverhighway.com/> (accessed January 10, 12, 13).

⁴² Tim Lyman, email message to the author, February 3-4, 2008.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

road to Cloud Cap Inn, a historic structure built in 1889. The inspiration point is on the “new” road, which dates to around 1915, but when the point was named is unclear.⁴⁵

Washington State has two Inspiration Points as well—one in Mount Rainier National Park and one on Chuckanut Drive, in the northernmost county in the state. (The point on Chuckanut Drive (**No. 33**) will be discussed later in this paper as an example of restoration of a cultural landscape.) Mount Rainier National Park was established on March 2, 1899, making it the fifth national park in the country. In the years following its formation, park guides led tours from Paradise Valley to the summit by foot, but the completion of a highway in 1915 increased the number of people accessing the park.⁴⁶ The earliest reference of the Inspiration Point (**No. 34**) was from a proposed roads map dating from 1916. It was most likely created as part of the scenic highway to boost tourism with automobile tours (see Fig. 3 on page 24). Marcy Partridge, curator assistant for the Mount Rainier National Park, said, “We found no documentation as to why it is called Inspiration Point but Park Staff believe it is because of the view.”⁴⁷

In 1917, The Rainier National Park Company was founded, leading to more formal tours of the mountainside. The company also built and operated the Paradise Inn, and thousands of people came from all over the country to tour the park’s scenic roadways in “auto stages.”⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Rebekah Dalby, “Historical Note,” *Guide to the Rainier National Park Mountain-Glacier Wonderland Photograph Album*, Finding Aid, 2002, <http://nwda-db.wsulibs.wsu.edu/findaid/ark:/80444/xv09584>, (accessed December 19, 2007).

⁴⁷ Marcy Partridge, email message to the author, February 4, 2008.

⁴⁸ Dalby.

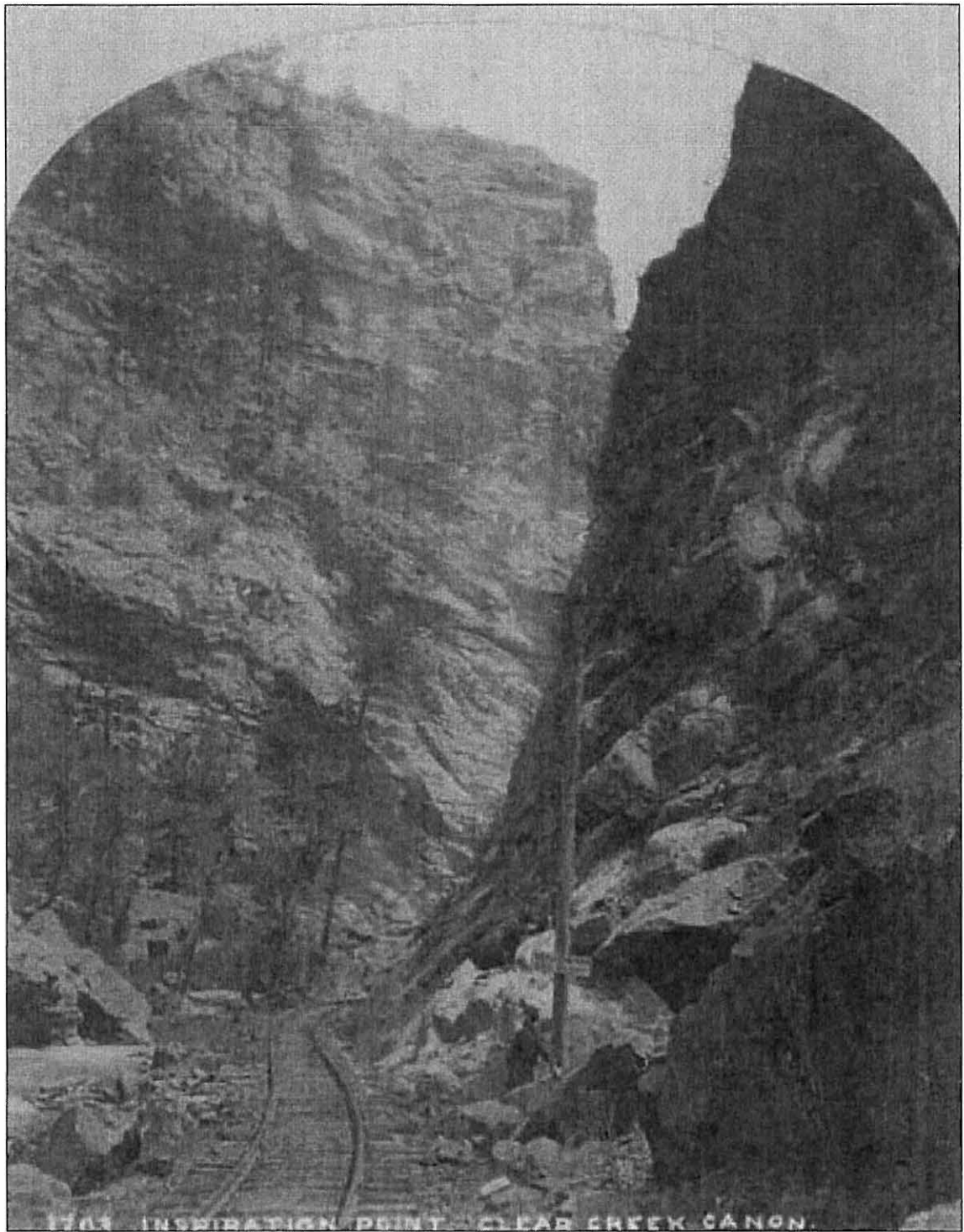


Fig. 8. William Henry Jackson, *Inspiration Point, Clear Creek Canyon*, 1880. (Brigham Young University, <http://contentdm.lib.byu.edu/>).

An inspiration point (No. 23) near Denver, Colorado, rivals the age of many early vistas. This scenic point is located along the original railroad route in Clear Creek

Canyon. The trains that would have passed by this point were part of the Colorado Central Railroad, which later became the Colorado and Southern. An 1880 photograph taken by William Henry Jackson shows a man standing in front of an “Inspiration Point” sign, indicating this was its official name at this point. While earlier photographs of this place exist, this is the first one that clearly identifies it as “Inspiration Point” (see Fig. 8).

Also in Denver is the city’s Inspiration Point Park (**No. 26**), formerly Lookout Point, which is located within Denver’s Mountain Parks system. The point, designed by Henry C. Wright and Frederick W. Ameter in 1910, is located at Sheridan Boulevard and 50th Avenue near one of the city’s golf courses. The park became a designated Historic Landmark in 1986, noting its significance in community planning and development as well as landscape architecture.⁴⁹ The view from the point differs little from the time of its construction: it still captures nearly 200 miles of the front range of the Rocky Mountains, Clear Creek Valley below, and the City of Denver to the east. The roadway to Inspiration Point was completed and a retaining wall built in 1910. Wooden pointers were built by Ameter in 1913 to highlight specific mountain ranges and notable views from the vista. While these pointers do not remain today, many historic photographs and postcards prove their existence (see Fig. 9 on page 49). At the summit, a stone-walled picnic court remains intact and popular as a tourist destination. The concrete wall stretches 700 feet and was originally installed to mark the boundaries of the site without imposing on the view and to protect vehicles and pedestrians from falling off the bluff.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ “Inspiration Point Park,” Northwest Denver Parks district, *Denver: The Mile High City*, http://www.denvergov.org/Northwest_Denver_Parks/InspirationPointPark/tabid/391411/Default.aspx (accessed February 20, 2008).

⁵⁰ Ibid.

Cars can no longer drive to this promenade; instead visitors are required to park in the designated area and walk to this point.

In 1912, Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., who was instrumental in the development of the Denver Parks System, wrote a letter of suggested improvement to the City's Board of Park Commissioners. In that letter, he addressed Inspiration Point and the importance of preserving that view. In summary, he said that the one indispensable improvement needed to be the continual protection of the view, which included planting native trees and grasses upon the ridge for shade and background while keeping the terrace in its natural condition, and eventually building a shelter for visitors to the site.⁵¹ Stressing the importance of a comprehensive planning for Inspiration Point, he said, "It is so magnificent a thing for any city to possess that every least element in its treatment and in the treatment of its immediate surroundings should be made to play its part in promoting the deep and noble impression that is carried away from this spot from the visitor."⁵²

In line with Olmstead's wishes, the landscape today is minimal but intentional, giving a nod to the prairie setting that surrounded Inspiration Point in its early days. Formal beds of flowers greet visitors as they first enter the park, but plantings near the stone wall consist of linden, silver maple, hackberry and honey locust; the bluffs descend into evergreens, native grasses and other drought-resistant plants.⁵³

In 1941, the Colorado Historical Society installed a plaque that commemorates the early history of this region. On June 22, 1850, gold was discovered in Ralston Creek,

⁵¹ Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr., memorandum to Denver Board of Park Commissioners, July 17, 1912, PDF file, <http://www.mountainparkshistory.org/Articles/index.html> (accessed December 6, 2007).

⁵² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁵³ "Inspiration Point Park."

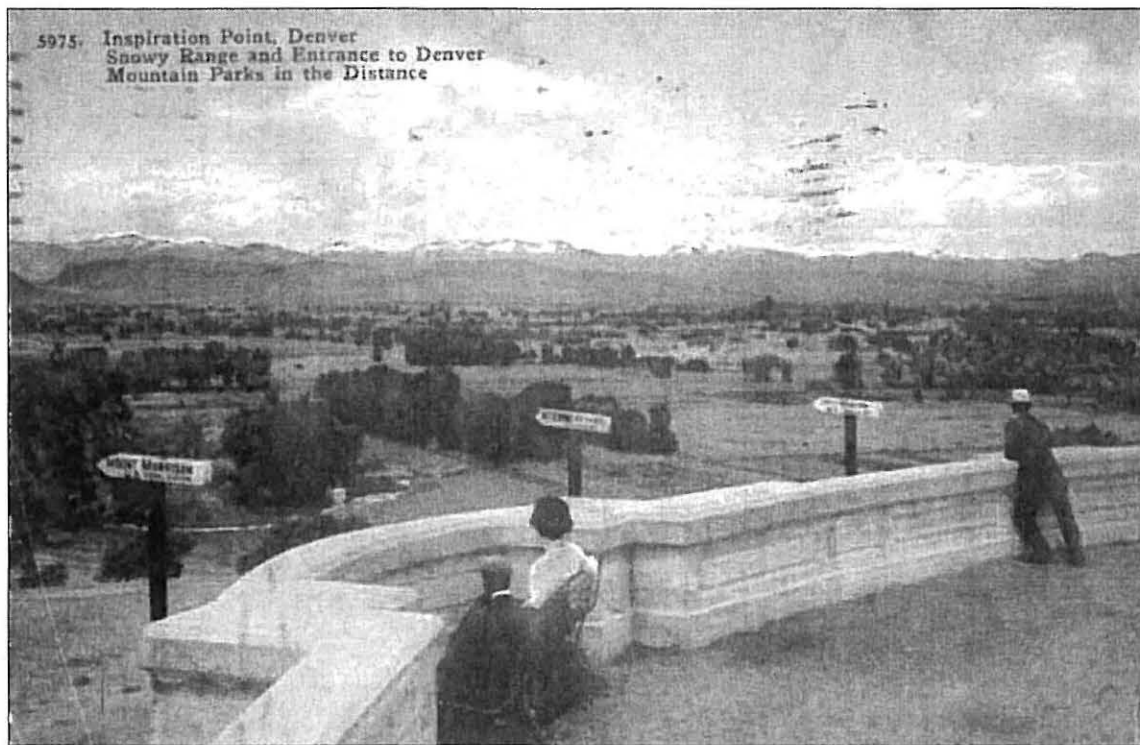


Fig. 9. *Inspiration Point, Denver, Snowy Range and Entrance to Denver Mountain Parks in the Distance, (Author's personal collection).*

which is one mile from Inspiration Point. Reports of this brought many prospectors to the area and led to the eventual creation of the permanent settlement of Colorado.

Inspiration Point Park, then, commands a paradoxical view, where one can stand in the present and still look out upon the past.

Elsewhere in Colorado, high above the town of Colorado Springs, sits another inspiration point (**No. 24**). It is located on Crystal Park Auto Road, along the old cog railway on Pike's Peak Mountain. Historically, Pike's Peak has had two main routes up the mountain: one by road, and one by rail. Both end up at the summit, but they use different routes. The inspiration point on the mountain is located along the rail route, which officially opened in June 1891. While some sources say that Katharine Lee Bates penned "America the Beautiful" from this Inspiration Point, Dick Bratton, chairman of Ute Pass Trails Committee, the area's historical society, says this is not true. Bates may

have been “inspired” by the views she witnessed at the vista, but she made her notes later in her room at Colorado College. It is also known that Bates took the road route to reach the summit. A history recorded on Pike’s Peak Cog Railway web site outlines the particulars: horses carried the party to the halfway point and a team of mules completed the journey to the 14,110-foot summit. Their time there was short, but the experience was enough to inspire Bates. Later she wrote, “An erect, decorous group, we stood at last on that Gate-of-Heaven summit...and gazed in wordless rapture over the far expanse of mountain ranges and sea like sweep of plain. Then and there the opening lines of 'America the Beautiful' sprang into being. ... I wrote the entire song on my return that evening to Colorado Springs.”⁵⁴

Regardless of where she made her notes, it is clear from these findings that people were in fact exploring this region at the time. By carriage or by cog, tourists were reaching the summit, and it is more than probable that the Pike’s Peak Inspiration Point existed at this early date.

Below Pike’s Peak, in Colorado Springs, another inspiration point (**No. 25**) is located in the Seven Falls trail area. The Falls’ “Inspiration Trail” ends, appropriately, at Inspiration Point. Opening in 1883, this is said to be the exact spot where writer Helen Hunt Jackson wrote many of her poems and novels. The viewpoint was so beloved by her that upon her death in 1885 she asked to be buried on this bluff that inspired so many of her stories.⁵⁵ In an effort to protect the site from the hordes of people that visited every year to pay homage, her remains were later moved to the family’s burial plot in

⁵⁴ “About Pike’s Peak,” *Manitou & Pike's Peak Cog Railway*, <http://www.cograilway.com/aboutpikespeak.htm> (accessed April 2, 2008).

⁵⁵ Marius R. Campbell, “Guidebook Of The Western United States Part E: The Denver & Rio Grande Western Route,” *Geological Survey*, (1922).

Colorado Springs. A plaque remains at the viewpoint marking her original grave.

Jackson is noted as saying this about the Inspiration Point that gave life and meaning to the words she wrote:

Beautiful cradle of peace! There are some spots on earth which seem to have a strong personality about them—a charm and a spell far beyond anything which mere material nature, however lovely, can exert; a charm which charms like the beauty of a human face; and a spell which lasts like the bond of a human relation. In such spots we can live alone without being lonely. We go away from them with the same sort of sorrow with which we part from friends, and we recall their looks with the yearning tenderness with which we look on the photographs of beloved absent faces.⁵⁶

Other inspiration points in the West cannot boast such ancient histories.

Coronado National Forest's scenic vista did not make an appearance until a much later date. Located near Mount Lemmon in the Santa Catalina Mountains, it is better known locally as "Inspiration Rock" (**No. 4**). William Gillespie, archeologist for the forest, said that it has been known as Inspiration Rock since at least the 1940s.⁵⁷ A 1943 version of a Recreation Plan for the Mount Lemmon Area notes that it's a popular pull-out place and that picnic tables and facilities should be added. It now has only a couple of picnic tables for day use, Gillespie said. Interestingly enough, it is not included in any of the compilations of place names in the Santa Catalina Mountains historically or currently.⁵⁸

In Wyoming, Inspiration Point (**No. 35**) is an overlook on the west side of Jenny Lake in Grand Teton National Park. It sits approximately 400 feet above the lake. The view from IP looks across the lake into the valley and rests upon the surrounding high peaks of the Teton Mountain Range.⁵⁹ The outcropping is a natural feature, but the rocky

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ William Gillespie, email message to the author, January 14, 2008.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Grand Teton National Park, email message to author, Jan. 22, 2008.

trail to the overlook is man-made, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s.⁶⁰ It is assumed that it was named at that time. Today, the vista is a very popular hiking destination.

It is important to note that the CCC was not only active in the construction of Grand Teton's Inspiration Point, but designed many scenic overlooks in national parks during the 1930s.⁶¹ While these vistas were not specifically named "inspiration points," they were built for similar reasons: to highlight the views seen from various points within a park. Many overlooks contain parking areas, trails, and stone walls or steps in addition to the natural features they highlight.⁶² Because these were built in the 1930s, they are all considered historic today and might be worthy of a study of their own.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Linda Flint McClelland, *Building the National Parks: Historic Landscape Design and Construction*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 359.

⁶² Ibid., 361.

CENTRAL UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS



CENTRAL UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS

No.	Name	Location	Page No.
37	Eureka Springs	Eureka Springs, AR	56, A37
38	Shawnee National Forest	Harrisburg, IL	A38
39	Glen Lake	Glen Arbor, MI	A39
40	Lanesboro Overlook	Lanesboro, MN	57, A40
41	Shepherd of the Hills	Branson, MO	55, A41
42	Mineral Wells	Mineral Wells, TX	57, A42
43	Riverdale	Riverdale, IN	59, A43

The center of everything

Artists of all kinds were traveling to see the awe-inspiring landscapes of America in the late 19th century. One inspiration point in the Ozarks of Southern Missouri (No. 41) was just such a place, but the artist that made this site famous painted with words instead of brushes. Author Harold Bell Wright first arrived in “Shepherd of the Hills” country, as it has become known, in 1889 under direct orders from his doctors. He had contracted “consumption,” or tuberculosis, and the most commonly prescribed treatment at that time was moving to a better climate.⁶² Better climate, in his case, meant the hills of the Ozarks in Branson, Missouri, where his uncle lived. After some time there Wright left, but returned again in 1896 when his most momentous journey in these hills began. After encountering severe weather problems, Wright was forced to take up shelter with a family in the hills. Upon hearing about his illness and how he had come upon this place, the family told Wright about a “beautiful spot in his cornfield where Wright could camp if he liked.”⁶³ Wright set up a tent at this spot, which became known as Inspiration Point; he said it was “medicine for his soul.”⁶⁴ It was here that Wright wrote his book, *The Shepherd of the Hills*. His book was published in 1907, and was deeply inspired by the landscape and people of those hills. This book remains one of the most widely published works in history.

To mark the 100th anniversary of Wright’s first visit to the land, the popular Inspiration Tower was built in 1989. According the *Shepherd of the Hills* web site, the structure cost \$1.5 million to build and provides panoramic views from two observation

⁶² Diana Foreman and Carla Roberts, “From Hills to Hotels: Old photographs by George E. Hall, courtesy of Lillian Hall Tyre.” *Bittersweet*, Vol. IV (1977): 46.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

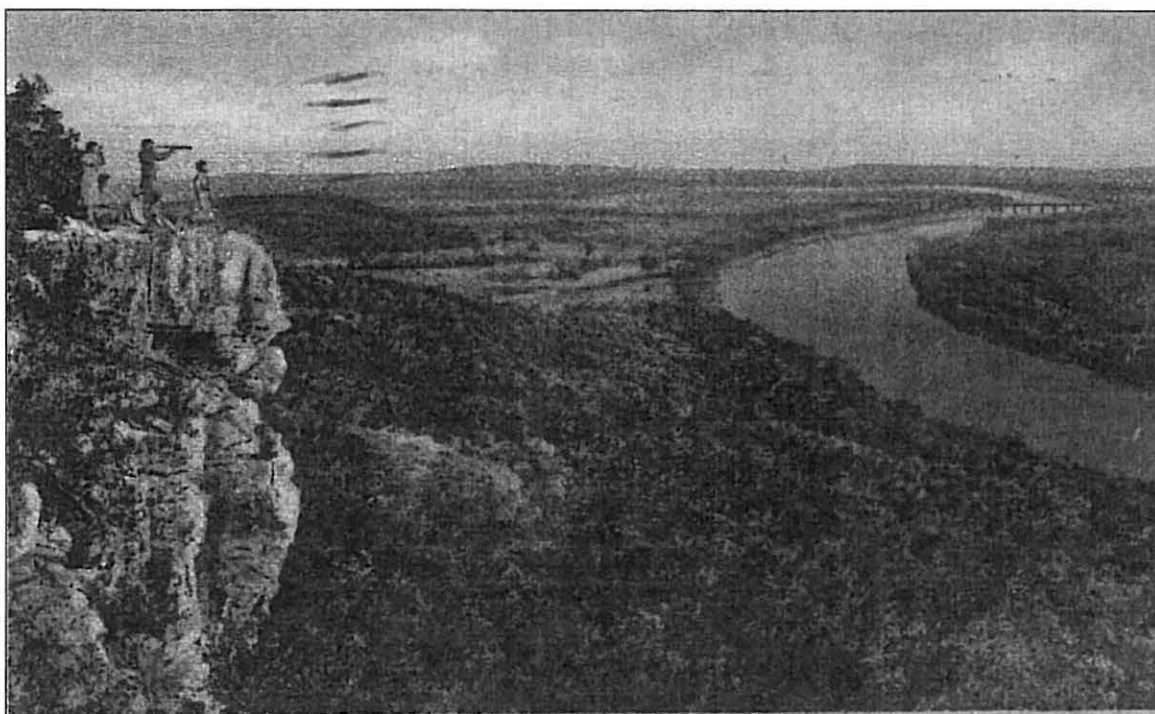


Fig. 10. *Inspiration Point, Overlooking the Brazos River, Mineral Wells, Texas*, postmarked 1949 (Author's personal collection).

decks. While this tower may offer more expansive views and an elegance the original site lacked, it also imposes on the landscape and disrupts the simplicity of the site with its concrete, rebar and glass.

Still in the Ozarks, located about 50 miles northeast of Branson, there is another inspiration point near Eureka Springs, Arkansas. This vista (**No. 37**), located on Scenic U.S. Highway 62 overlooking the White River Valley, is different because it never really existed as a public tourism site. Over time, though, it has attracted much attention in its own right. In 1928, Charles Mower, an architectural engineer, purchased the land and began building a castle.⁶⁵ Four years later, for reasons unknown, the unfinished structure

⁶⁵ "About Us—A History of Opera in the Ozarks at Inspiration Point," Opera in the Ozarks, Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony, web site, 2006, <http://www.opera.org/aboutus/history.html> (accessed Jan. 12, 2008).

and land were purchased by a Christian missionary, the Rev. Charles Reign Scoville.⁶⁶ He finished the castle and named it Inspiration Point, a place poetically described as “not too many miles from heaven.”⁶⁷ Upon Scoville’s death, the property was donated to Phillips University in Enid, Oklahoma. In 1950, Dr. Henry Hobart, formerly the dean of Phillips’ Fine Arts department, started a summer music camp at the site.⁶⁸ The camp became known as Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony, and it still exists today.

An inspiration point (**No. 42**) in Mineral Wells, Texas, is now only accessible by special permission.⁶⁹ Mineral wells was once famous for the restorative powers of its water, which supposedly helped those with mental disorders.⁷⁰ When people were not using the city’s medicinal baths, they would hike to Inspiration Point and enjoy the view.⁷¹ The site, located high above the Brazos River, now lies on private property. See a photo postcard of this site, postmarked September 21, 1949, on page 52 (Fig 10). The earliest reference for this Inspiration Point was found on postcard dated 1924.⁷² People in the area remember this point as one of two local “parking” places for teenagers in Mineral Wells in the 1950s.

Of all the sites in the Central United States, the overlook in Lanesboro, Minnesota (**No. 40**), has received the most in-depth study in recent years. Recognizing the

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ The Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas Libraries, <http://texashistory.unt.edu/data/IMLSTHDI/BDPL/negatives/meta-pt-16252.tkl> (accessed December 29, 2007).

⁷⁰ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*, (New Haven and London: Yale University, 1997), 148.

⁷¹ Janet Valenza, *Taking the Waters in Texas: Springs, Spas, and Fountains of Youth*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 52.

⁷² Ibid.

importance of its highways and the roadside developments that surrounded them, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) hired historic consultants to conduct a study of these historic resources in 1996.⁷³

The study, which was eventually published in the document, *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways*, included a comprehensive list of roadside facilities such as parking areas, historical markers and wayside rests.⁷⁴ One of these wayside rests is the Inspiration Point located along Trunk Highway (T.H.) 16. Because so little information was available about wayside rests and other roadside developments, this project required extensive research and fieldwork.⁷⁵ The history and current conditions of the overlook were extensively documented in Lanesboro's "Historic Roadside Development Structures Inventory," which can be found in Appendix C.

According to the inventory, the Lanesboro Overlook was built in 1934 as a roadside parking area associated with the construction of a three-mile paving project near this location; the project was allocated \$4,200 for completion.⁷⁶ Plans show the site consisting of an overlook wall, stone picnic table, fireplaces and stone curbing.⁷⁷ A historical marker was erected in 1998 by the Mn/DOT as well. The nine-acre site was listed as being intact and only slightly altered since its inception in the 1930s. It was most likely built by the Federal or State Emergency Relief Associations to take advantage

⁷³ "From the MHD to Mn/DOT," *Cultural Landscape Currents*, National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/hps/hli/currents/newdeal/introduction.htm> (accessed April 25, 2008).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ "Identifying Significant Themes," *Cultural Landscape Currents*, National Park Service, http://www.nps.gov/hps/hli/currents/newdeal/hist_page1.htm (accessed April 25, 2008).

⁷⁶ "Inspiration Point Wayside Rest," *Mn/DOT Historic Roadside Development Structures Inventory*, 1998, www.dot.state.mn.us/roadsides/historic/files/iforms/FL-CRL-011.pdf, 5.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

of views of the Root River Valley and the town of Lanesboro.⁷⁸ Because of this, the inventory indicates its significance as a potential National Register site:

Inspiration Point is among the 68 Depression-era properties in the inventory that represent the [Minnesota Highway Department's (MHD)] first large-scale effort to construct roadside development facilities in the state. It is important as an example of the work of the MHD in partnership with federal relief labor. Together, the MHD and various New Deal agencies built a number of distinctive and well-constructed public facilities that met the objectives of roadside development while providing essential work and job training to the nation's unemployed.⁷⁹

Records have been found showing original construction plans for this site, but none have been located to indicate a planting scheme. As it stands today, much of the site is covered in grass with a scattering of oak trees and junipers located throughout.⁸⁰ Original plans indicate the stone walls should have been dry stacked, but today these have been mortared and repaired poorly in many areas.⁸¹ Additionally, a concrete cap was poured for the top of each wall sometime during the 1950s or '60s.⁸² Other elements are missing or have been replaced with modern equivalents (i.e., gravel roadway has been paved with asphalt). Regardless, the site remains in good condition and has retained much of the "feeling" it had in the 1930s.⁸³

While Minnesota is making strides in the preservation and stewardship of its inspiration point, another city in this region represents the opposite end of the spectrum. The Inspiration Point in Rivervale, Indiana (**No. 43**), has all but disappeared today. The only existing documentation is a postcard marking its existence in 1941.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 6.

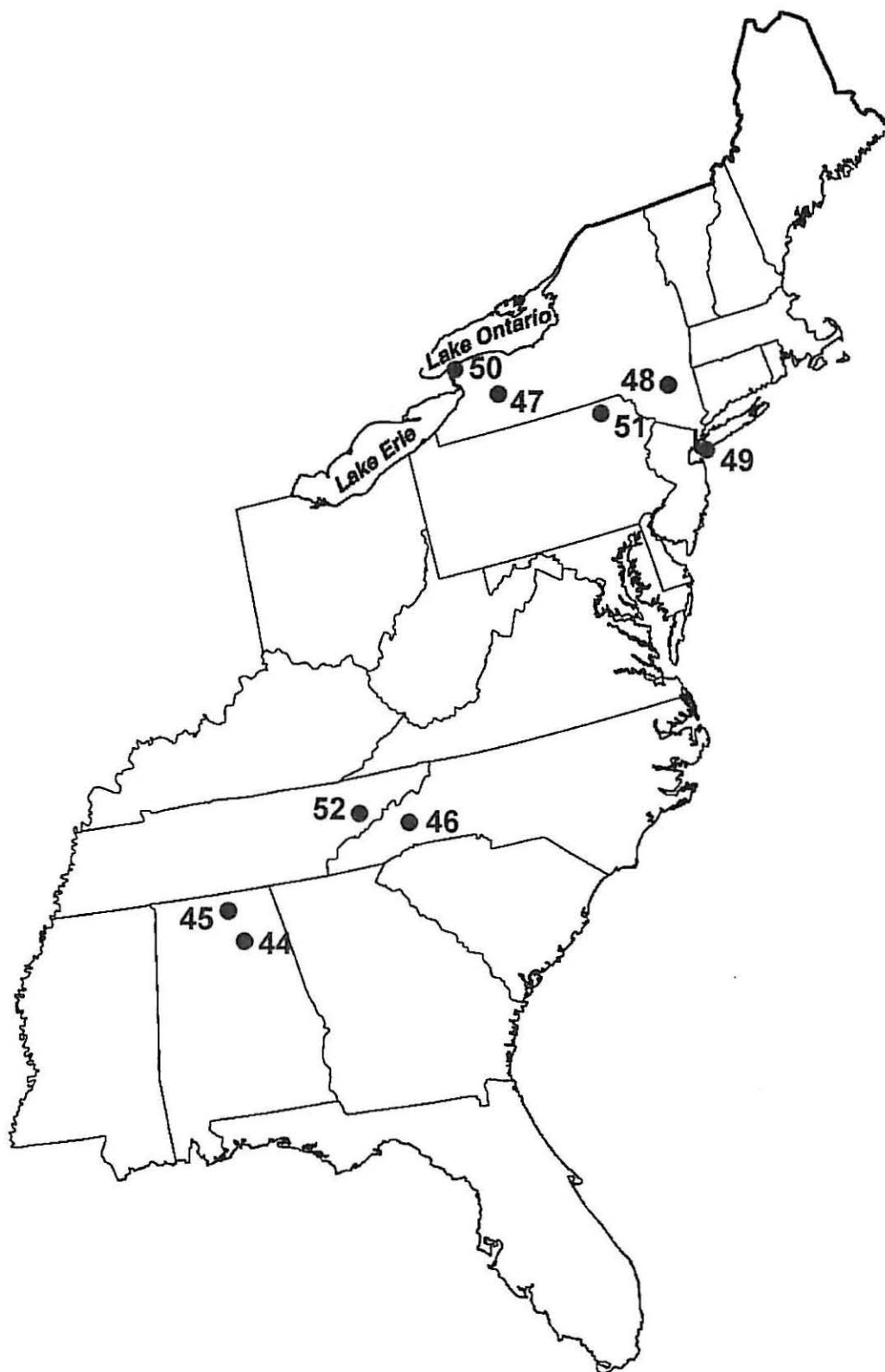
⁸⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁸¹ Ibid., 4.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

EASTERN UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS



EASTERN UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS

No.	Name	Location	Page No.
44	Palisades Park	Oneonta, AL	A44
45	Monte Sano Mountain	Huntsville, AL	71, A45
46	Chimney Rock State Park	Asheville, NC	69, A46
47	Letchworth Park (Portage Falls)	Castile, NY	66, A47
48	Catskills Mountains	Kaaterskill, NY	64, A48
49	Henry Hudson Parkway	New York, NY	104, A49
50	Niagara Falls	Niagara Falls, NY	67, A50
51	DuBois Drive/Mt. Manotonome	Hallstead, PA	71, A51
52	Mount LeConte	Gatlinburg, TN	70, A52

Inspiration in the Eastern United States

While it is presumed that some of New York's inspiration points—it has four—were in use long before those of the West, written documents do not exist to prove this is true. For that reason, Yosemite remains the first documented IP, and the rest fall in line with earliest known recordings. New York's inspiration points, located along the Henry Hudson Parkway in New York City, at Niagara Falls, in the Catskills Mountains, and at Letchworth Park in Rochester, represent an early and active landscape history in that region and a school of thought that led to the creation of many other scenic viewpoints in the country.

“I have traveled the woods for many years,” said Leather-Stocking, “...and I can say that I have met but one place that was more to my liking; and that was only to eyesight, and not for hunting or fishing.”

“And where was that?” asked Edwards.

“Where! why, up on the Catskills...the place I mean is next to the river, where one of the ridges juts out a little from the rest, and where the rocks fall for the best part of a thousand feet so much up and down that a man standing on their edges is fool enough to think he can jump from top to bottom.”

“What see you when you get there?” asked Edwards.

“Creation!” said Natty,...“all creation, lad.”⁸⁴

These famous words, written in 1853 by James Fenimore Cooper in *The Pioneers*, illustrate the majestic nature of the Catskills that captured artists of all kinds in the early 19th century. The creation of the Hudson River School in 1825 started a movement much bigger than anyone at the time ever realized. Much like many of these early landscape sites, images depicting their beauty were often reproduced as prints and postcards to promote tourism. The paintings created by the school's artists focused mainly on the Catskills and the mighty Hudson River's tributaries that weaved through those

⁸⁴ Mountain Top Historical Society, *Kaaterskill: From the Catskill Mountain House to the Hudson River School*, (New York: Black Dome Press, 1993), 11.

mountains. During the 19th century, three popular mountain house resorts were built on the highest hills of the Catskills Mountains, and their guest lists read as a veritable “who’s who” of 19th-century America. According to Raymond Beecher of the Mountain Top Historical Society, the touring public—fueled by a growing economy and better travel conditions—considered the Catskills a “delightful summering experience.”⁸⁵ As Cooper pointed out, creation could readily be found there, and people came in droves to experience this for themselves. The Catskill Mountain House opened in 1823, and was the only hotel of its kind on the mountain until 1881 when the Hotel Kaaterskill was built to spite the Mountain House’s owner. The Laurel House, which had rented out rooms in a log cabin inn since 1824, opened an affordable boarding house in 1850 at the top of Kaaterskill Falls, but was never much competition for the two bigger hotels at the top of the mountain. All three sites were popular destinations for the creative class at this time though. Many paintings still exist that were painted from the Catskills’ numerous viewpoints; popular vistas in the 19th century—as well as today—include Inspiration Point, Sunset Rock, Boulder Rock, Eagle Rock and Palenville Overlook, to name a few. Inspiration Point and Sunset Rock, two of the most popular hiking destinations today, are located along the Escarpment Trail, maintained by New York State. The trail has officially been in use since 1891, when it was mentioned in Walton Van Loan’s *Catskill Mountain Guide*, but it is known that paintings were created at these locations at least 20 years earlier.⁸⁶ Prior to the construction of this trail, people used the “direct path” to

⁸⁵ Beecher, 25.

⁸⁶ Gildersleeve, 44.

Hotel Kaaterskill or the circuit of South Mountain, which circled the Catskill Mountain House before arriving at the escarpment.⁸⁷

The Catskills' Inspiration Point (No. 48), which is sometimes called Inspiration Rock, is located near the former sites of Hotel Kaaterskill and the Catskill Mountain House.⁸⁸ The site is a natural ledge with a view to the east through the ravine, or "clove," as it is known locally. Inspiration Point has often been confused with Sunset Rock, as the two are located approximately one tenth of a mile apart. Unfortunately, a few poorly labeled postcards of the Catskills in the early 20th century caused confusion as to the location of Inspiration Point, according to Bob Gildersleeve, author of *Catskill Mountain House Trail Guide: In the Footsteps of the Hudson River School*.⁸⁹ The postcards labeled the nearby ledge "Sunset Rock" as Inspiration Point, and the two locations have forever been mistaken. Located on the Escarpment Trail, the spot that is labeled "Sunset Rock" is in fact just a nameless vista, and the next ledge along the trail is the historically accurate location for Sunset Rock. It is clear from examining photographs, sketches and postcards of that time period that the actual vista called "Inspiration Point" is located further east and at a lower elevation.

Gildersleeve said the name "Inspiration Point" appears in trail descriptions from the 1870s and was perhaps used even earlier than that.⁹⁰ He said the trails in the area were developed as early as the 1820s and are known to be some of the earliest recreational mountain trails in the country.⁹¹ Inspiration Point appears on an 1883 map of

⁸⁷ Ibid., 216.

⁸⁸ Bob Gildersleeve, email message to the author, January 23, 2008.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

the area, but does not appear on earlier editions in 1856 or 1879. We know that this area was accessed before 1883 though (Thomas Cole and others were exploring the region since the advent of the Hudson River School), so the discrepancy in dates may be explained by the fact that Hotel Kaaterskill was not built until 1881 and that area was not actively surveyed or advertised prior to that. The historically correct locations of Inspiration Point and Sunset Rock are still confused today.

Despite name changes and confusion surrounding the actual locations of many of the Catskills' promontories, one thing has remained constant: the captivating nature of these sites. They have all inspired, and continue to inspire, artists and recreationists across America. For any and all who have had the privilege to travel through the Catskills, there is no question why paintings of this region influenced a country desperate for change.

With the advent of the automobile, the mountain resorts began to decline. Rail lines to the houses became too expensive to operate for the number of people that used them and operating costs continued to rise.⁹² Additionally, costs for motorcars decreased, and individualized vacations grew in popularity as a result.⁹³ According the Mountain Top Historical Society, summer vacationers at this time opted for shorter trips or camping ventures instead of long stays in single resorts.⁹⁴ All three mountaintop resorts eventually went out of business and today all that remains are stone foundations and the occasional signature found carved on a ledge. This trend was echoed at many other inspiration point

⁹² William F. Helmer, "Rails to the Peaks," *Kaaterskill: From the Catskill Mountain House to the Hudson River School*, (Hensonville, NY: Mountain Top Historical Society, 1993), 35.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.



Fig. 11. *The Gorge from Inspiration Point, Portage, N.Y., Letchworth Park, postmarked 1909* (Author's personal collection).

sites throughout the country—as the automobile increased the public's traveling options, leisurely walking, hiking, and eventually even pleasure-driving became a thing of the past.

The Inspiration Point (**No. 47**) at Letchworth State Park has connections with the Hudson River School as well. This site was first captured on canvas by Thomas Cole in 1839. The original title of this painting, however, was “Portage Falls” and no reference is made to any other name at this time. A postcard, stamped September 6, 1909, shows Portage Falls on this page (see Fig. 11). According to Historian Thomas Cook, William Pryor Letchworth, who owned the land that became the park, knew the area as “Cole's Cliff” in reference to the painting Cole did in 1839.⁹⁵ Today, Cook said Cole's Cliff and Inspiration Point are considered two different areas—the former being about fifty or

⁹⁵ Thomas Cook, email message to the author, January 21, 2008.

seventy-five yards upriver from the latter. It is likely that in Letchworth's time, all of this area was known as Cole's Cliff. Cole's painting now hangs in the former home of William H. Seward, Governor of New York.⁹⁶

William Pryor Letchworth donated the land to the State of New York in 1907, and the term first appears in a poem by Sarah Evans Letchworth on June 8, 1909.⁹⁷ The following excerpt is from that poem:

*Ah, Nature! Never hast thou thrilled me so,
As when I gazed from that great point, and saw
The wondrous valley wild, that thy sure law
Of beauty had made perfect by the flow
Of water, falling, flashing in the flow
Like scintillate sunshine. O'er the gorge the awe
Of elemental space hung; not one raw
Sign of mankind's mistaken zeal did show.
Where, free at home, the woodland bird did flit
Thou wert supreme in august majesty –
All, all was thine as far as eye could see –
God wrought for us this scene beyond compare,
But one man's loving hand protected it
And gave it to his fellow-men to share.⁹⁸*

Today, a large boulder sits to the edge of the path leading to Inspiration Point. A plaque with an excerpt of this poem is attached to the boulder providing a memory for those that visit the site today.

Supporting the claim that New York was one of the first states to use inspiration points, Niagara Falls' Inspiration Point (**No. 50**) dates back as far as 1860 (see Fig. 12).

⁹⁶ "View The Hudson River School of Art Abound Throughout New York State," *Study in New York*, Student Recruitment Media, <http://www.studyinnewyork.com/articles-index/new-york-hudson-river-school-art.htm> (accessed January 29, 2008).

⁹⁷ Cook.

⁹⁸ Sherman Peer, "A Sketch of William Pryor Letchworth and Glen Iris," *Glimpses of the Past: People, Places, and Things In Letchworth Park History*, www.letchworthparkhistory (accessed October 20, 2007).



Fig. 12. *American Falls from Inspiration Point, Niagara*, circa early 1900s (Author's personal collection).

A photograph entitled, "Rambler's Rest at Inspiration Point Queen Victoria Park," was taken in this year, and now resides in the Niagara Falls Public Library in Ontario, Canada.⁹⁹ It is clear from examining historic photographs that Rambler's Rest was the name of a structure built on Inspiration Point. Inspiration Point had another structure associated with it at one time, but it has since been demolished.

This area became popular with the introduction of the Canadian Southern Railway in 1871, which made brief stops so people could enjoy the falls' view.¹⁰⁰ Later, the Michigan Central Railroad took over this operation and built a railway station with

⁹⁹ "Rambler's Rest at Inspiration Point Queen Victoria Park," Photograph, Niagara Falls Public Library, Ontario, <http://www.nfplibrary.ca/nfplindex/show.asp?id=252043&b=1> (accessed April 16, 2008).

¹⁰⁰ Rick Berketa, "Niagara Falls: A Railroad History," *Niagara Falls Thunder Alley*, web site, 2008, <http://www.niagarafrontier.com/railroadhistory.html> (accessed February 20, 2008).

panoramic views of the falls.¹⁰¹ This Falls View Station, which was referred to as Inspiration Point on all timetables, was a popular destination from the 1870s to the 1920s.¹⁰² The Queen Victoria Park at Niagara Falls was established in 1888.¹⁰³ The first washroom was built near Inspiration Point at this time. It was a wooden structure that drained into the gorge, and was subsequently replaced with a larger structure in the early 1900s.¹⁰⁴

In 1907, the structures at Inspiration Point and nearby Rambler's Rest were rebuilt with masonry.¹⁰⁵ The Falls View Station was demolished by 1926, but the landscape was maintained by the railroad company until the 1930s. Public works highway projects of the 1930s destroyed what was left of the station's landscape. The Rambler's Rest structure remains today.

Chimney Rock State Park, located south of Asheville, North Carolina, owes its history to a man named Lucius B. Morse, who was captivated by the beauty of aptly named "Chimney Rock" more than a hundred years ago.¹⁰⁶ The park's inspiration point (No. 46) is a natural overlook with nothing but a guardrail installed at the edge. Mary Standish, marketing assistant at Chimney Rock Park, confirmed that the park's Inspiration Point was christened by Dr. Lucius Morse in 1902 when he purchased the 63 acres of land in the Hickory Nut Gorge that included Chimney Rock and the rudimentary

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Rick Berketa, "Niagara Parks: A History and Pictorial," *Niagara Falls Thunder Alley*, web site, 2008, <http://www.iaw.com/~falls/parks.html> (accessed February 20, 2008).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Mary Standish, email message to the author, January 14, 2008.

trails out to the waterfall (Hickory Nut Falls).¹⁰⁷ According to Standish, it is one of the most beautiful views in the park, with bystanders being able to see the Gorge valley all the way to Little Pisgah Mountain in the distance. "Lots of visitors tell us that it was one of their favorite places in the Park, and that the tranquility and peace of the vista truly inspired them in some way. Thus it lives up to its name. On occasion we have even had folks choose that particular venue as the site of their wedding vows because they 'fell in love' with the peace and beauty of the scenery there," she said.¹⁰⁸

Inspiration points are not only found in national and state parks; they are prevalent in forests and mountain ranges across the country as well. In Gatlinburg, Tennessee, an inspiration point (**No. 52**) stands high above the city on Mount Le Conte. Mount Le Conte is esteemed as the "crown jewel of the Great Smoky Mountains."¹⁰⁹ The mountain is known mainly because of its six principal trails, one of which being the Alum Cave Trail, which is the only ascent on the south face of the mountain.¹¹⁰ Just before hikers reach the two-mile mark, the trail makes an abrupt right turn and lands at the small, rocky spur of Inspiration Point.¹¹¹ According to *A Natural History of Mount Le Conte*, the rocky spur makes "a fine spot to rest, have a snack or lunch, and, if the weather permits, survey the rugged upper reaches of the Sugarland Valley."¹¹² The Sugarland Valley is not only rich in beauty but also in history. The road leading to the trailhead follows the course of an ancient Indian trail over the mountain. During the Civil

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ronald H. Peterson and Kenneth Wise, *Natural History of Mount Le Conte*, (Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), xv.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., xxv.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 13.

¹¹² Ibid., 14.

War, this trail was converted into a wagon road for transporting goods and ammunition, and following the war, it was used by local farms and tradesmen.¹¹³ Eventually, the road was graded and converted into a highway that generally followed the same route through the Sugarlands. For years, one of the last stops in the Sugarland Valley was the Indian Gap Hotel, which often rented rooms to traveling artists, among others.¹¹⁴

In Alabama, an inspiration point (**No. 45**) is situated near Monte Sano Park in the northern part of the state, but not inside of it. Located just outside the city of Huntsville, the park and viewpoint offer “spectacular views” of the city.¹¹⁵ This Inspiration Point is unlike others in that it is now located on private property, along Inspiration Lane in a development called “Inspiration Development at Green Mountain.” Capitalizing on the views that many have experienced at this place, the development’s web site boasts:

On the Eastern bluff line within Inspiration is one of Huntsville’s oldest and most romantic landmarks... Inspiration Point. The Point has for years been Huntsville’s most popular and famous Lover’s Lane. This cherished landmark for decades has captivated the hearts of its viewers and now, as a part of the Inspiration landscape, the exceptional panoramic views will continue to be shared from an observation pavilion integrated with the community.”¹¹⁶

In Hallstead, Pennsylvania, Inspiration Point (**No. 51**) has been even farther removed from the public sphere. Today, the only records that exist of this scenic vista along DuBois Drive are postcards dating from 1908 and 1909 that once advertised its view. The viewpoint was constructed by the Hon. James T. DuBois, a descendent of an early pioneer in the area, near his home atop self-named Mount Manotonome, or “Man

¹¹³ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Alan C. Wright, *Huntsville in Vintage Postcards*, (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 112.

¹¹⁶ “Inspiration Point.” *Inspiration on Green Mountain*, “Amenities at Inspiration” page, http://www.inspirationgreenmountain.com/amenities_ip.html (accessed February 10, 2008).



Fig. 13. *Inspiration Point, DuBois Drive, Hallstead, Pa., circa early 1900s* (Author's personal collection).

Ought to Know Me.”¹¹⁷ DuBois spent several summers building the mountaintop vista, which included a macadam road leading up the mountain, a park of several acres, and a one-mile speedway that encircled acreage. According to one newspaper article, several thousand visitors traveled to the property to take in the view during the summer of 1904. The article stated, “Mr. DuBois has given a general invitation to the public to visit the mountain and enjoy the grandeur.”¹¹⁸ A castle-like structure—known simply as “the house by the side of the road”—was built on the property by artist Douglas Arthur Teed in the early 20th century; the castle walls are imbedded with stones from all over the

¹¹⁷ Dawn Augenti, email message to the author, March 5, 2008.

¹¹⁸ “Mount Manotonome,” *Montrose Democratic*, Nov. 3, 1904, Susquehanna County Historical Society.

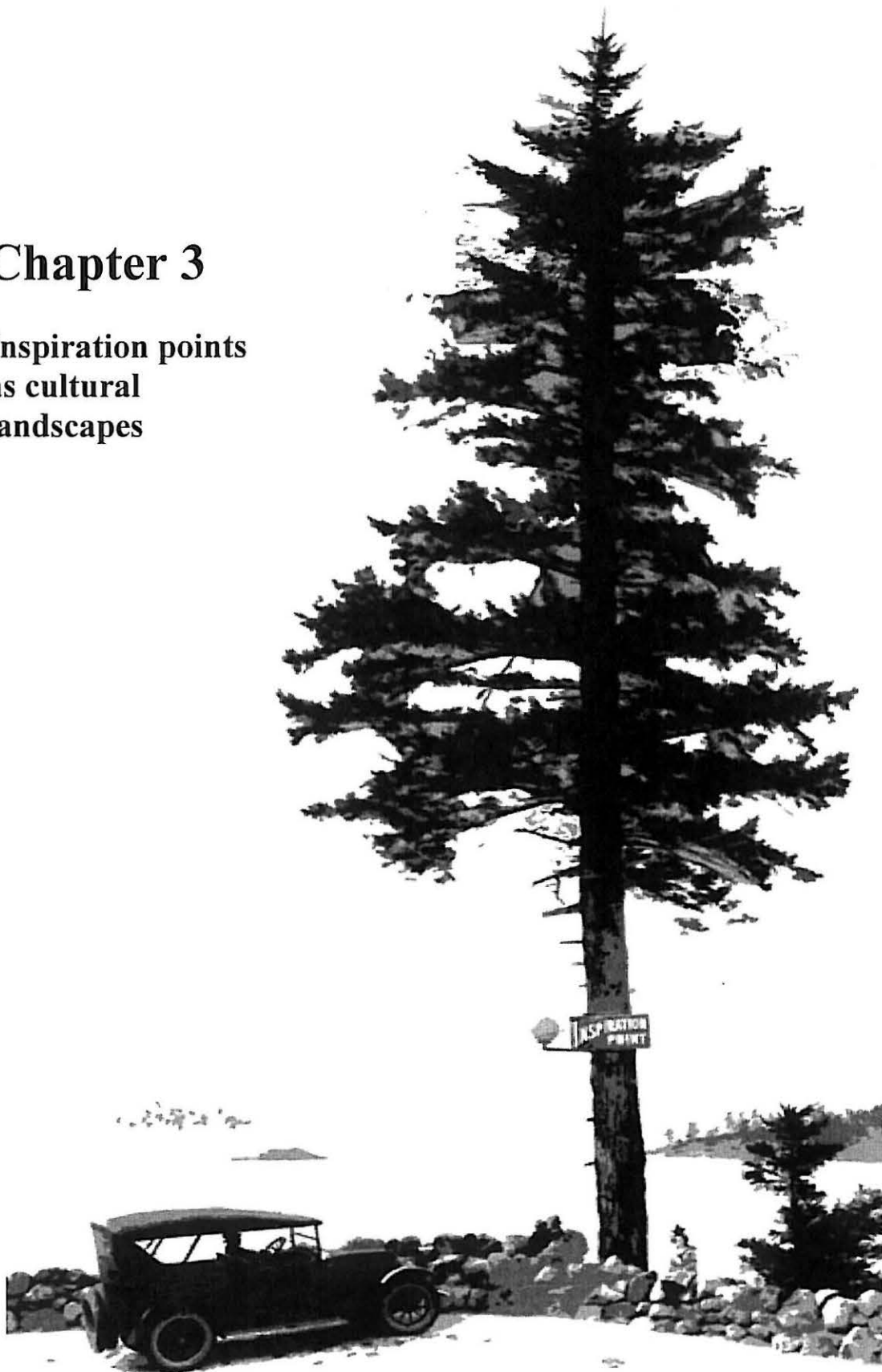
world.¹¹⁹ DuBois eventually relocated to a more tropical climate and sold the Mount Manotonome property to a Chicago photo company.¹²⁰ The site is no longer open to the public and the castle has since been removed from the property.

¹¹⁹ "The art exhibit of Artist Douglas Arthur Teed," *Independent Republican*, Dec. 5, 1913, Susquehanna County Historical Society.

¹²⁰ "DuBois Property Purchase," *Independent Republican*, Feb. 28, 1919, Susquehanna County Historical Society.

Chapter 3

Inspiration points
as cultural
landscapes



This chapter illustrates the importance of inspiration points as cultural landscapes. Cultural landscapes are important because they represent varied layers of change over time. At once, they represent the past, present and future. They are constantly changing, growing and adapting to the world around them, and yet at the same time they significantly impact that world around them. The Cultural Landscapes Foundation defines cultural landscapes in this way: “[They] give us a sense of place. They reveal our relationship with the land over time. They are part of our national heritage, and part of each of our lives.”¹

At its most basic definition, a cultural landscape exists anywhere that humans have affected the land.² The mind conjures up images of parks, battlefields, scenic roadways, cemeteries, and now inspiration points. These landscapes can be urban or rural, popular tourist destinations or known only to a select few. They often include water features such as rivers and waterfalls, transportation features such as roads and trails, and built features such as shelters, walls, benches and artificial lighting.³ Almost all landscapes can be considered “cultural” in some capacity because they have been, or currently are, associated with human actions. Very few places can be considered natural, unadulterated landscapes, never to have been touched by human hands. With so many geographic areas to consider, the treatment of these places varies significantly.

¹ “Cultural Landscapes Defined,” *The Cultural Landscape Foundation*, 2007, <http://www.tclf.org/whatis.htm> (accessed February 23, 2008).

² Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, eds., *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000), 3.

³ Birnbaum.

The NPS and National Register of Historic Places both use the definition published in the 1996 *Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes*, defining a cultural landscape as:

A geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals therein, associated with a historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values.

By that definition, inspiration points nationwide can be considered cultural landscapes. The NPS recognizes the existence of landscape elements called inspiration points, but states that this is often an informal term used within the parks.⁴ While the Park Service does not individually recognize these sites as cultural landscapes, they are typically included in park cultural landscape reports or cultural landscape inventories, usually in sections on historic viewsheds.⁵ According to NPS Historian Jonathan W. Pliska, the Park's management includes the "preservation and maintenance of historic views, vistas, and scenic overlooks - which may be termed inspiration points in certain parks."⁶

Inspiration points are most often natural features altered by humans in some way, and they are a combination of natural and cultural resources. Many inspiration points are man-made outlooks (such as the one in Bellingham, Washington, discussed in Chapter 5) or contain the addition of a constructed element (such as the Rambler's Rest at Niagara Falls, discussed in Chapter 2 and seen in Fig. 14 on the next page), but the views they highlight are undeniably natural and exhibit an abundance of aesthetic values. These places are considered inspirational because at some point in history humans have stood

⁴ Jonathan W. Pliska, email message to author, January 17.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

there and been inspired by the landscape. More than any other type of scenic landscape, inspiration points are a catalyst for artistic expression, encouraging many to paint, draw, photograph and ultimately experience the sublime. This makes them valuable not only for their physical attributes but for their intrinsic ones as well.



Fig. 14. George A. Grant, *View of Bryce Canyon, north from Bryce Point, Inspiration and Lookout at left with Wall of Windows below*, 1929, Records of the National Park Service, The National Archives. (Grant, http://arcweb.archives.gov/arc/basic_search.jsp).

The preservation of landscapes has not always been as important as it is today, however. Buildings associated with famous people and events were recognized for preservation purposes as early as the 1850s, but it wasn't until a hundred years later that landscapes saw the same recognition.⁷ If landscapes were preserved at this early date, it was most often in association with a historic house or structure, such as the gardens that surrounded Mount Vernon. Furthermore, these early efforts did not aim to retain authenticity or historical integrity of the land.⁸ Laws and regulations ensured that certain standards were met when preserving buildings, but these same standards were not expected of landscapes. As a result, the treatment of historic landscapes was sporadic and isolated. Although small nonprofit and community organizations had been spearheading landscape preservation efforts since the 1890s, a collective set of rules or regulations had never been established as they had for

⁷ Hugh C. Miller, "The Family Tree: Looking at the Roots of Historic Landscape Preservation," *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Managing Cultural Landscapes, (2000), JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1504677>, 54.

⁸ Ibid.

historic buildings.⁹ Even with these smaller entities evaluating and caring for their historic landscapes, the preservation community did not become involved on a large scale until the 1980s.¹⁰ As evidence to this, in 1979 the Association for Preservation Technology International (APT) published an article entitled, “The Landscape: An Emerging Historic Preservation Resource.” The article states that the field was, at that time, beginning to recognize that “an important component for much of the very character of the historic environment is the landscape itself.”¹¹

The fact that the landscape itself was just emerging in the preservation field at such a late date is an important observation. It means that today’s philosophy, methodology and “best practices” of historic landscape preservation have not yet reached what preservationists would even consider “historic” status.¹² In a field where current treatments and methods are based on those used in the past, brevity does not work to its advantage. The landscape movement’s short history does not discredit any of its efforts in the last 30 to 40 years, but it does allow for the possibility that there may be better ways to approach these sites and care for them. This is true especially for inspiration points, which have been largely unrecognized as important cultural resources until now. Because this is a relatively new field, at least when compared to the preservation of historic buildings, there is still a need in many areas to transition from the landscape as an accessory to the main focus. While historic landscapes have gained much support since

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 56.

¹¹ William H. Tishler, “The Landscape: An Emerging Historic Preservation Resource,” *Bulletin of the Association for Preservation Technology*, Vol. 11, No. 4, (1979), JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1493848>, 9.

¹² “Historic” in this context is equal to or greater than 50 years of age.

the 1980s, the practicality of preserving these places is often formidable at best.¹³

Indeed, the very idea of preserving something that is not stable or stationary is daunting to many people, preservationists included.¹⁴

The NPS, among other organizations, recognizes that treatment for preserving cultural landscapes is difficult and often unsuccessful because of the transitional nature of the landscape. Landscapes are dynamic—constantly changing, growing, living and dying. Because they are both natural and cultural entities, they are also in constant battle with human forces. While this human interaction is what makes an inspiration point valuable as a cultural landscape, it is important to recognize these intrusions and plan for them accordingly. In 1935, national parks champion Arno B. Cammerer, quoted in Albert Good's *Park Structures and Facilities* manual, said this:

In any area in which the preservation of the beauty of nature is a primary purpose, every modification of the natural landscape, whether it be by construction of a road or erection of a shelter, is an intrusion. A basic objective of those who are entrusted with the development of such areas for the human uses for which they are established, is, as it seems to me, to hold these intrusions to a minimum and so to design them that, besides being attractive to look upon, they appear to belong to and be a part of their settings.

Out of this sentiment, the “Rustic Style” of architecture was born in national parks and forests throughout the country. This style, which received its definition from Good, was intended to blend in with its natural surroundings in an effort to minimize such intrusions, and can be seen at many inspiration points today. The style is characterized by use of natural materials, similar building methods to those used by craftsmen in the early days, and the complete departure from the formality of right angles and straight

¹³ Alanen and Melnick, 2-3.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.

lines.¹⁵ Although the intent of these designs was simplicity, they were actually complicated to execute and for that reason many WPA and CCC workers did not participate in early rustic architecture projects.¹⁶ As time went on, however, federal work parties did complete a majority of this work. According to Pliska, the style flourished in the West during the 1930s-1950s, and is still the archetypal park image today.¹⁷ Examples of rustic architecture include log-hewn structures (as seen at Bryce Canyon's gazebo structure), dry-stacked stone walls (as seen at Minnesota's Lanesboro overlook) and log-and-stone guardrails seen along many scenic highways throughout the country.

Categorizing cultural landscapes

The NPS divides cultural landscapes into four categories: historic sites, historic designed landscapes, historic vernacular landscapes, and ethnographic landscapes.¹⁸ A site can be one or all of these things at the same time, as with many scenic overlooks.

When evaluating inspiration points nationwide, most can be considered *historic vernacular landscapes*. Historic vernacular landscapes have "evolved through use by the people whose activities or occupancy shaped that landscape."¹⁹ In fact, most of the landscapes in the United States have developed without the vision of an architect or designer, contrary to what most people believe.²⁰ These are the ordinary landscapes, the places that cannot claim association with any famous architect or designer, but are

¹⁵ McClelland, 434.

¹⁶ Law, Soulliere, and Tweed.

¹⁷ Pliska.

¹⁸ Birnbaum.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Alanen and Melnick, 5.



Fig. 15. *President Roosevelt and party [at] Inspiration Point, Yosemite Valley, California, 1903,* (Library of Congress, hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3a41310).

spectacular in their own right. These are the landscapes seen in the Catskills, in the Yosemite Valley, and at The Presidio. They were not intentionally designed to attract people, but their natural beauty earned them a spot in American scenic memory. In their book, *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, authors Arnold Alanen and Robert Melnick point out that “these ordinary, or vernacular, landscapes, which generally evolve unintentionally and represent multiple layers of time and cultural activity, are fundamental to our very existence.”²¹ In this way, the landscapes discussed in this paper reflect the attitudes and behaviors of life in a time of tremendous importance in our country’s development. Inspiration points were products of a time when scenic exploration, by way of the automobile and leisure traveling, was at its peak. As exploring the West became more popular, people were naturally drawn to areas that highlighted

²¹ Ibid.

expansive views. The automobile increased the popularity and use of scenic highways and created a need for more scenic pullouts, leading to the creation of many designed landscapes.

Historic designed landscapes are “consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition.”²² To apply this definition to inspiration points requires a shift in perception, from identifying “Inspiration Point” as the *view* from a certain point, to focusing on the actual viewpoint—*where you stand to take in that view*. This debate, which can become problematic when determining treatments for these viewpoints, will be discussed in Chapter 4. Viewpoints developed in the mid-19th to- 20th century were promoted and advertised to draw tourists. The vista on the Columbia River Highway is just such a location, promoted by photographers Cross and Dimmitt in the early 1900s. The highway was designed to highlight the Columbia River and surrounding landscape, and viewpoints such as Inspiration Point provided places to enjoy those views. The postcards that Cross and Dimmitt sold from their Model T truck on the side of the road became powerful advertising tools for the highway and its viewpoints. However, tourists were not the only ones paying attention. It is likely that the visionaries behind other parks and scenic highways at the time saw these same advertisements and decided to build promontories of their own. After all, it was working; people were coming in droves to see their local inspiration point. The trends of the times and successful tourist attractions encouraged many people to imitate the methods of the East and the West in the late 19th century.

²² Birnbaum.

Several inspiration points can also be classified as *historic sites* for the purposes of cultural landscape identification. A historic site is a landscape that is “significant for its association with a historic event, activity, or person.”²³ Examples include the Pike’s Peak area, where “America the Beautiful” was penned in 1893, and the hills of the Ozarks, where author Harold E. Bell wrote *Shepherd of the Hills*, one of the most widely published books in American history. The Yosemite Valley is a site that can be considered several different types of landscapes. While this is considered a vernacular landscape by most definitions, it was later made famous by artists such as Albert Beirstadt and writers such as J.M. Hutchings, and these associations drew many people to the site in subsequent years (see Fig. 15). Now it is difficult to say if the site is more famous for its view or for those that promoted its view.

Inspiration points generally do not fall under the fourth category of *ethnographic landscapes*. According to the National Park Service, ethnographic landscapes contain “a variety of natural and cultural resources that associated people define as heritage resources.”²⁴ Some examples of these kinds of sites include religious or sacred sites, burial grounds, ruins of Indian villages, or ceremonial grounds. Inspiration points owe their significance to their use over time by many people and cultures rather than by one associated group. While they are significant cultural icons, they do not represent a specific people’s heritage in any way.

Inspiration points were created during a time of great significance in our country—a time of invention and exploration—but now that that time has passed, we are left with the task of interpreting these sites in the present, to people today. These places

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

can never hold the meaning they once held because our values as a nation have shifted. They will never inspire people the way they did because we look at the world differently. The Inspiration Point in the Catskills still sits on the edge of a cliff overlooking a valley filled with trees, waterfalls, and a meandering road. It still provides a sweeping view of the valley and a distant glimpse of nearby towns. But its trails no longer lead to the Catskill Mountain House or Hotel Kaaterskill, as they once did. Famous artists no longer travel there and stay for weeks at a time. Paintings are rarely produced from that point, and if they are, they hold no value as advertisements or promotional pieces. Today, people still hike to the site, as the author did in March 2008, but it is not the same as Thomas Cole saw it in the early 1800s. That said, all of these changes are not necessarily negative. Inspiration points are valuable because they continue to adapt and change with the world around them. At once, they are historical and modern, providing multiple layers of interpretation. Catherine Howett, landscape architect and author of many publications on cultural landscapes, expanded on this idea: "Historic landscapes, unlike works of art, have to function as contemporary environments—we have literally to enter and become involved with them."²⁵ As such, inspiration points are no longer just places of the past, but of the present.

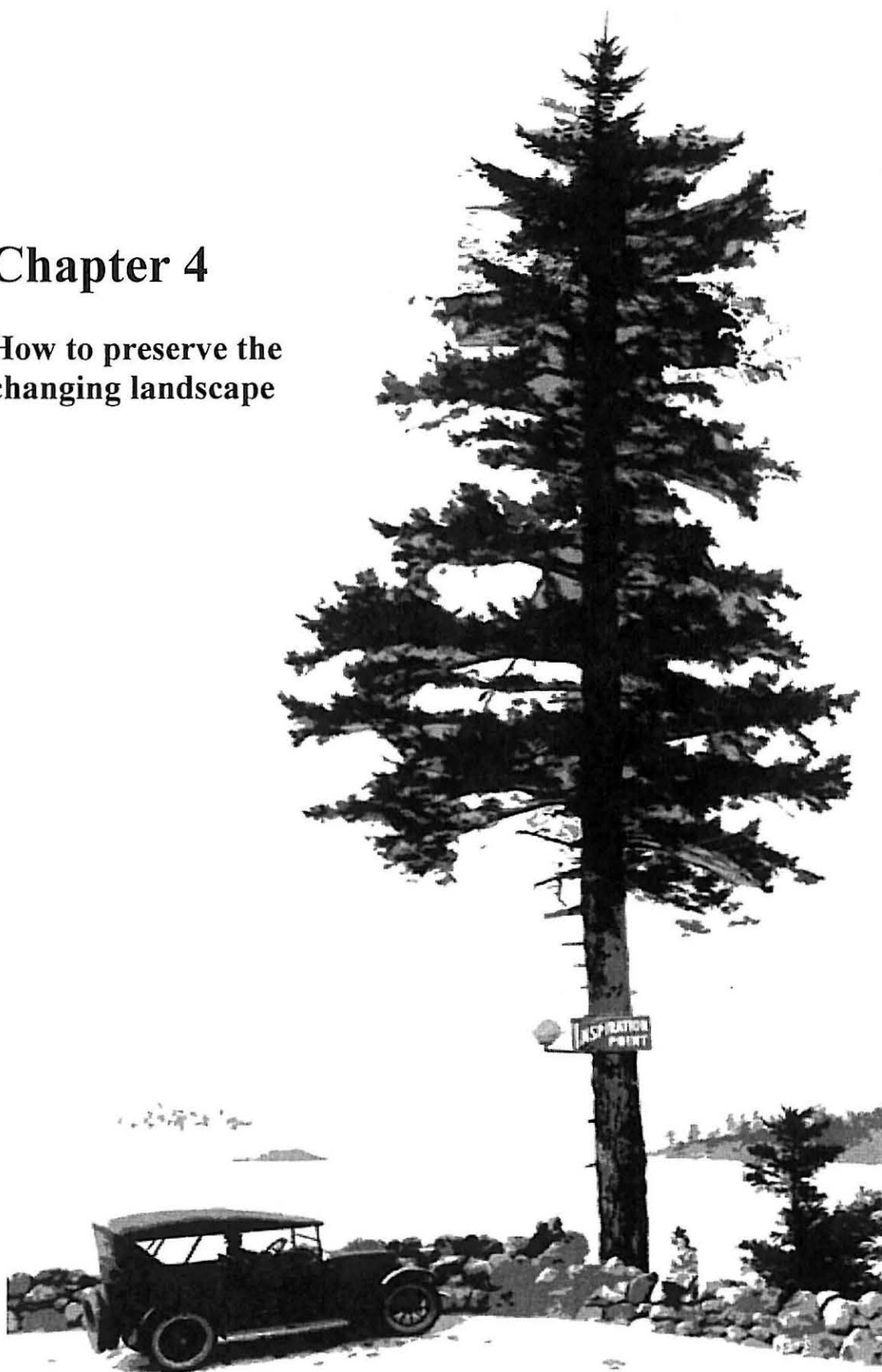
Ultimately, these sites speak to how we have defined ourselves throughout history. In a time of novelty and invention in the country, they represented the freedom that so many people longed for. With the introduction of the automobile, they provided access to the scenery and beauty of a most beloved nation. They epitomized a time when

²⁵ Alice E. Ingerson, "What are cultural landscapes?" *Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies of the Arnold Arboretum*, The President and Fellows of Harvard College, www.icls.harvard.edu/language/whatare.html (accessed May 4, 2008).

the world was not only being explored, but when the common man could explore it. People no longer waited for paintings of waterfalls, gorges or mountains; they traveled and saw these places firsthand. Later, as the automobile flourished and roads widened to accommodate larger vehicles and faster speeds, the values of the country began to shift. Travelers became more focused on the destination than the journey. Leisure driving and scenic touring began its decline as people began living life in the fast lane. How we have used these sites throughout time says a lot about our society and also gives us clues as to how we can make them viable again. For that reason, it is supremely important that we, as stewards of these sites, find a way to interpret them and give them meaning today.

Chapter 4

How to preserve the
changing landscape



As discussed in the previous chapter, landscape preservation is still an emerging field in many respects. Because of this, our approaches and the ways in which we interpret these spaces vary drastically from one site to another. One goal of this project is to begin to recognize the creation and significance of inspiration points within a larger landscape context. They have meaning as cultural landscapes, but they are also set apart from other landscapes because of their connection with the sublime. Scenic overlooks as a whole may call upon nature and highlight an incredible view, but inspiration points gain additional significance in their association with landscape painting and national pioneering efforts, and thus represent, equally, great opportunity and challenge in their preservation.

An earlier mention of cultural landscapes referred to them as layers of history. This appropriately summarizes inspiration points: while created at a specific date and time, they are known throughout history for a variety of reasons, none less meaningful than another. It is the cumulative story of these sites and the interactions that people have with them that make them so valuable. Unfortunately, this also makes them difficult to interpret, preserve and protect. It is crucial to have public involvement, activity and support, but the same people that are involved with these spaces also often damage them. Common landscape concerns include plant damage, trail disruption, daily wear-and-tear, infiltration of invasive species and weeds, human trash and graffiti. These issues, along with many naturally occurring ones such as flooding, fire, and natural disasters, should be addressed with a responsible preservation plan. By developing and following a preservation plan, site administrators can minimize disturbances and take a proactive approach to caring for the landscape.

Before determining how to approach these sites, we must first discuss some of the challenges pertaining to them. Specifically, this chapter will analyze how inspiration points have changed through time, how semantics play a role in preservation, and how to preserve a landscape that is always changing.

Wherever we go, whatever the nature of our work, we adorn the face of the earth with a living design which changes and is eventually replaced by that of a future generation. How can one tire of looking at this variety, or of marveling at the forces within man and nature that brought it about? The city is an essential part of this shifting and growing design, but only a part of it. Beyond the last street light, out where the familiar asphalt ends, a whole country waits to be discovered: villages, farmsteads and highways, half-hidden valleys of irrigated gardens, and wide landscapes reaching to the horizon. A rich and beautiful book is always open before us. We have but to learn to read it.¹

These famous first words were spoken by writer J.B. Jackson as he began publishing his magazine, entitled *Landscape*, in the 1950s. Jackson's magazine covered topics of architecture, history, planning, cultural geography, anthropology and preservation, among other things.² His idea of reading the landscape is one that carries through to today. Like flipping through the pages of time, a landscape can be read cover to cover. This requires extensive historical research as well as firsthand observations to gain a feel for the site. Such research may involve comparing historic photographs of an inspiration point to contemporary ones and noting the differences; researching historic town plat maps; or talking with people who have visited the site and associate some meaning with it. By devoting time to this process, researchers can gain an understanding of the landscape at different times and on many different levels.³

To look at how these sites have changed through time, we must start the story

¹ Paul Groth and Chris Wilson, editors, *Everyday America: Cultural Landscape Studies after J.B. Jackson*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 9.

² Ibid.

³ Birnbaum.

from the beginning. Inspiration points were first documented as promontories for artists. Painters traveled by foot or rail to sites in New York State and then to national parks in the West, and spent weeks trying to capture on canvas the beauty before them. As they became successful, their paintings made their way to the American public, and the public soon sought the inspiring locations themselves. The advent of the automobile and the creation of park auto-tours made recreational and leisurely travel accessible to a large number of people. As time progressed, tourism waned and people began spending less money on recreational activities. Many of these places transformed from tourist stops to local hangouts. Viewpoints became, instead of destinations for the masses, places for a few to escape from the rest of the world. In this context, we see a shift in function from historical resources or tourist draws, to social retreats. These places provided a place to be, somewhere to go, and a space to gather people. They were communal—open to anyone who knew their location, and private—valued by each person for a different reason. They provided locations for family outings, picnics, dates and quiet reflections at the same time. Today, many people even remember these inspiration points on a much more, shall we say, intimate level. To them, the term brings back memories of *Happy Days*’ Fonzie recounting his latest romantic rendezvous at the town’s inspiration point. One person remembers the inspiration point in Mineral Wells, Texas, as a popular “parking spot” for many local teens.⁴ Clearly, the view provided a reason for the place to exist, but the viewpoint itself is what most people associate with “Inspiration Point” today. Inspiration points, and what they represent, have become symbolic of a bygone

⁴ “Chasing Our Tales, Willow Pond Cemetery and the Glovers,” Personal web site, <http://www.rafandsioux.com/ChasingOurTales/willowpond.glover.html> (accessed January 29, 2008).

era. To illustrate that, one compact disc has been produced to “take you back to those Saturday nights when you could share a chocolate malt for a dime, listen to the jukebox, then sneak away to Inspiration Point for romance.”⁵ This interpretation of inspiration points is entwined with other ideals of the past.

Analyzing these sites reveals an interesting semantic debate. There has been a shift in value to the viewpoint as a *place* instead of a *view*, which adds a new dimension to preserving them. What began as a location to view the natural world transformed into a place to meet people, contemplate the day’s decisions and enjoy a meal. The inspiring view—what these places were historically known for—became secondary to the activities participated in there. This leaves preservationists and site stewards with a difficult decision: Do you preserve the actual viewpoint, where you stand, or the view from that point—or both?

These questions are not likely to be answered anytime soon. Depending on the site, interpretations can vary greatly. When analyzing historic photographs and postcards, all of them show one of two perspectives: the view from Inspiration Point, or the viewpoint itself. In fact, many of the historians consulted for this project could not distinguish whether the term “Inspiration Point” referred to the view or the viewpoint of any specific location.

When given these two options, it is much easier to develop a preservation plan for the viewpoint. Most inspiration points include some sort of built structure, whether it is a wall, fireplace, picnic table or building. Given these parameters, it is easy to determine a treatment. If the metal is bent, repair it. If the wood is rotten, replace it. If an element is

⁵ Steve Wingfield, arranger, *Inspiration Point: Love Songs of the '50s*, Compact Disc, (Toronto, ON: Avalon Music, 2000), back cover text.

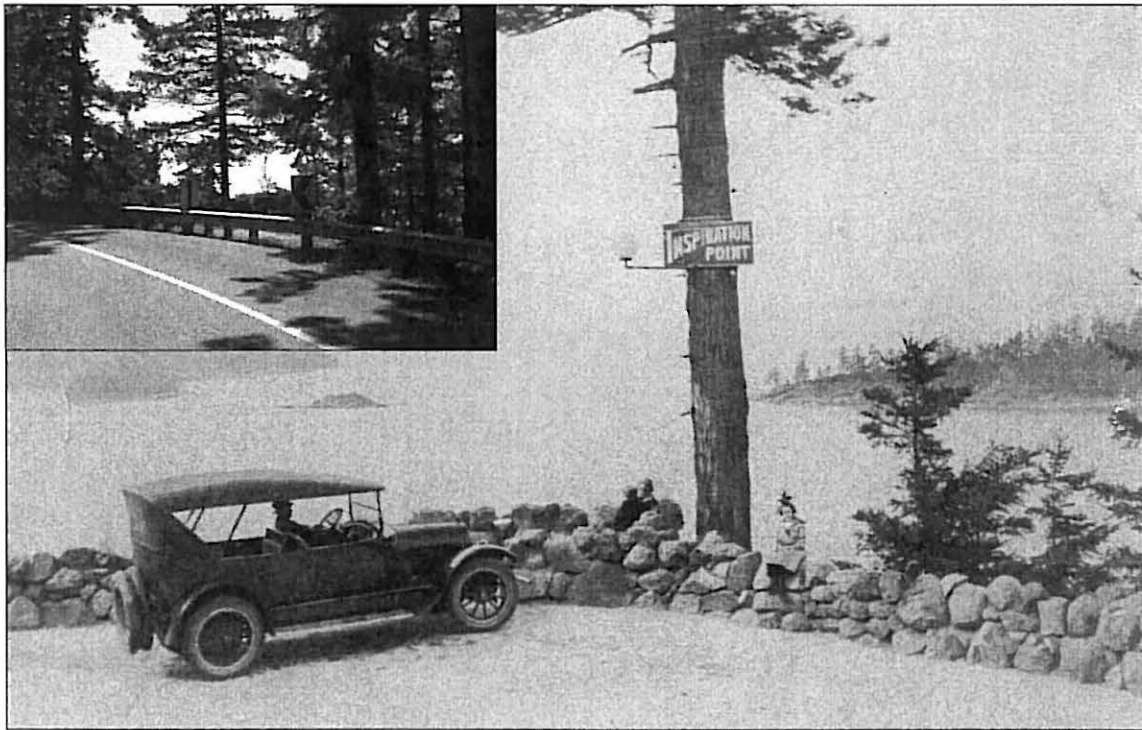


Fig. 16. Bellingham's Inspiration Point as it appeared in 1910, and (inset) in 2007, (1910: Bellingham Parks and Recreation, 2007: personal collection).

missing, reconstruct it. These are situations that preservationists have been dealing with for decades. They are trained and ready to address these issues. However, preserving the view itself presents some complications and represents the larger ambiguity that surrounds landscape preservation. Because these places are valued for their sequential history, the changing landscape becomes a part of that. Therefore, technically, any subsequent growth or change should be left alone and interpreted as part of the dynamic landscape. But many caretakers choose to interpret these places for their significance at a specific point in time. For example, in Bellingham, Washington, city officials are now debating whether or not hundred-year-old trees should be removed between Inspiration Point and Bellingham Bay. As the site stands right now, the bay is barely visible through the trees. Photographs and postcards from the early 1900s show unobstructed views of the water and very few trees in sight (see Fig. 16). In order for the city to complete its

restoration of the point, these trees will need to be removed. (A detailed history of Bellingham's Inspiration Point will be discussed in the next chapter.) As with all historic resources, each site will need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to determine its appropriate treatment.

Cultural landscapes, as defined in Chapter 3, give us a "sense of place." In this paper, more than 50 inspirational places throughout the country have been documented. They are significant for a variety of reasons and to a multitude of people. Of the inspiration points identified in this document, several are completely devoid of documentation. They may be referenced on a web site, spoken about in a travel or hiking blog, or appear in an old photo postcard, but no historical documents exist. Others are documented within the context of their parental association, such as Yosemite National Park or the Historic Columbia River Highway. Very few were actually documented as a valuable resource on their own. Of the viewpoints that contain documentation, though, 24 are located within parks or national forests, eight along scenic highways or other roadways, and 15 along trails or railway lines. It is important to note the context of each site in this way, because developing a preservation treatment plan is dependent on the region and context of each place. Certainly, inspiration points within national parks will be managed differently than those on scenic highways or near a popular hiking trail.

Regardless of the type of landscape, one obvious question remains: How do you preserve something that is continually changing? This question is not a new one for those involved with designing and preserving landscapes. Change is constant, and it is necessary to address this with comprehensive planning and responsible preservation

practices.⁶ More than anything, there is a need to recognize that these sites will not be the same as they once were. Society has changed, transportation has changed, and people's ideas of leisure and travel have changed, so we cannot expect our management of these sites to remain the same.

The National Park Service recognizes a specific course of action when it comes to preservation planning for valuable cultural landscapes such as inspiration points. These are explained in detail in Preservation Brief No. 36, and include: historical research, taking inventory of existing structures, performing site analysis, determining the appropriate treatment approach, developing management plan and philosophy, creating a strategy for ongoing maintenance, and documenting actions and recommendations.⁷ All of these steps are crucial in the ongoing care of any cultural landscape and can be applied to any inspiration point site. To view the complete text of Preservation Brief 36, *Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes*, see Appendix B. Additionally, there are two other steps in developing a comprehensive strategy for the protection of cultural landscapes that must be addressed. These include the interpretation of the landscape to tourists and visitors, and the building of collaborations and teams of volunteers.⁸ Both of these are necessary to promote the site and encourage appropriate use of its resources.

Historic sites, landscapes included, are not of much value unless we find a way to make them appeal to the masses. It is important to find the elements of each site that make them unique and appealing to the public, and promote those in an effective way.

⁶ Alanen and Melnick, 3, 75.

⁷ Birnbaum.

⁸ Alanen and Melnick, 76.

With inspiration points, there is the opportunity to draw on methods used by the very artists that promoted these sites more than a hundred years ago. By painting landscape scenes and selling postcard images of these vistas, artists lured tourists near and far to the Catskills, to Yosemite, to Yellowstone, and beyond. Americans wanted to be a part of one of the most widespread art movements to ever grace the states. They wanted to say they had been to the sites that made America great. In a nation today that longs for solidarity and greatness, we can appeal to that same group. Scenic traveling and leisure driving have both declined in recent years, but increasingly sites are being preserved and saved for future generations, meaning they will be around longer for more people to see.

Today, public involvement can determine if these important cultural landscapes thrive or not. Often it is the participation of the community that impacts these places the most. According to Charles Birnbaum, who was quoted in an article for the Institute for Cultural Landscapes, the public gains much meaning from this interaction as well:

In landscapes ... more than any other type of historic resource, communities rightly presume a sense of stewardship. It is often this grass roots commitment that has been a catalyst for current research and planning. ... Wise stewardship protects the character or spirit of a place by recognizing history as change over time. Often, this also involves our own respectful changes. ... Landscapes ... help us understand ourselves as individuals, communities and as a nation. Their ongoing preservation can yield ... above all, a sense of place or identity for future generations.⁹

The importance of establishing a “sense of place” for these sites is echoed by many in the field. In fact, much of the discourse surrounding cultural landscapes stresses

⁹ Alice E. Ingerson, “Changing Approaches to Cultural Landscapes,” *Institute for Cultural Landscape Studies of the Arnold Arboretum*, <http://www.icls.harvard.edu/language/hist1.html> (accessed May 4, 2008).

the importance of preserving them as historic or special places.¹⁰ But it is important to note here that the values that society puts on objects and places often change with time.¹¹ Something that holds much value in a certain region, culture, or time period can be altogether worthless in another region, culture or time period.¹² For example, thriving downtown business districts once provided essential residential, commercial and cultural opportunities. By the mid-20th century, shifting housing markets, zoning changes, and an overall desire for more space drove people into the suburbs, and downtowns began to decline. Today, many of these areas are gaining value again and being restored, rehabilitated and altogether reformed. These shifting values affect landscapes as well. A landscape that was once very popular among tourists, travelers, and settlers may have no meaning today, or it may hold new meaning. Inspiration points in Riverdale, Indiana, and Hallstead, Pennsylvania, were valued as tourist locations at one point in time, but today many would struggle to find them on a map. Similarly, landscapes can adapt to fit modern times as did the Inspiration Point in Shepherd of the Hills country. In 1989 the site erected its Inspiration Tower, standing more than 200 feet tall, near the original site of the viewpoint to provide more expansive views of the countryside that inspired Harold Bell Wright. This offers a way for more people to access the view while retaining the integrity of the original site.

Why these places lose value, or why we, as observers, fail to be inspired by them is unclear. Inspiration points were created when the nation was still seeking an identity, so inspiration was easy to come by. Today, we look at the world differently. We have

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

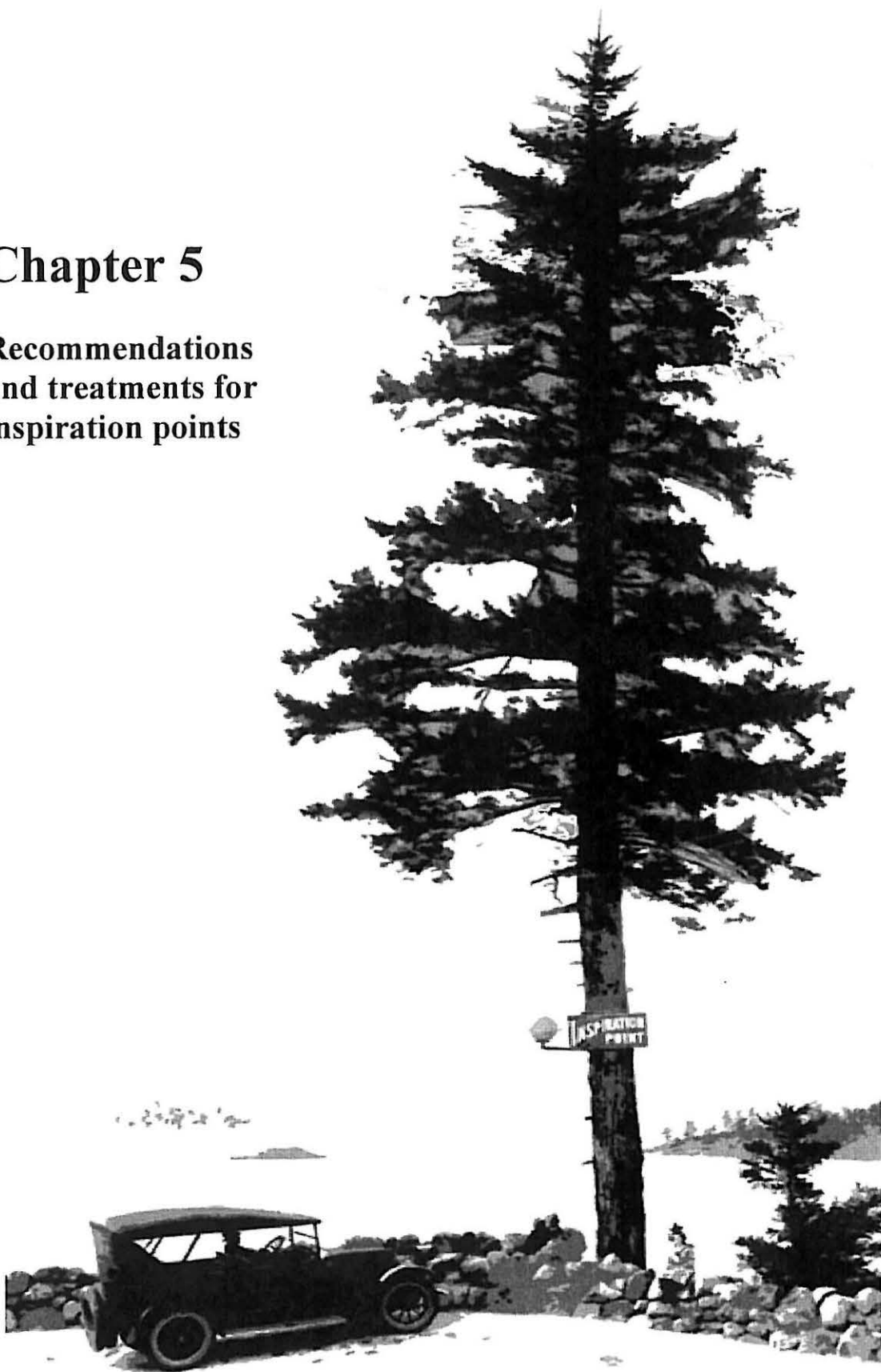
¹² Ibid.

established a national identity and instead of searching endlessly for ways to distinguish ourselves artistically or aesthetically, we have shifted focus to establishing ourselves economically, politically, and militarily. Exploration is no longer as valuable because virtually every inch of the country has been explored. Is the same true for inspiration? If we are not inspired by places created specifically to capture inspiration, what are we inspired by? What do we value if not the solitude, scenery and respite these places provide? While these are all valid questions, they cannot be fully answered within the context of this paper. However, they are essential to the collective story of inspiration points and thus should be explored with future research. Suffice it to say that these shifting values make the ever-changing field of landscape preservation even more difficult.

As we have seen in this chapter, there are many challenges surrounding the preservation of landscapes. Nature is a living organism, constantly changing and evolving over time. This is proven in the wealth of information we have available in historic documents. As a whole, photographs from a hundred years ago show fewer trees than in contemporary photographs. Places “grow up,” seeds are transplanted, roads are built, weeds intrude, and people move in. Preserving a landscape means stalling its progress or change—essentially freezing it in time—which is clearly a contradiction of nature itself. As preservationists, then, do we restore the site and view to what it was historically, or do we consider the changing landscape part of its history and interpret the site with those changes intact? This is a question that will be discussed in Chapter 5, and even more, something that will be debated for years to come.

Chapter 5

Recommendations
and treatments for
inspiration points



This chapter provides an in-depth discussion of recommendations and treatments for inspiration points as cultural landscapes. Additionally, it includes descriptions of the four preservation treatment options for these landscapes—preservation, restoration, rehabilitation and reconstruction—and provides case study examples of inspiration points that have received each one. By determining the appropriate method for approaching each historic landscape, we have the opportunity to prolong its life and use, and provide ways for the community to interact with such significant landscapes.

The first step in developing a treatment plan is to properly identify and inventory these landscapes. This process has been started in Chapter 2 of this document, and will need to be continued to gain more information. By chronicling the history and creating a dialogue about these places, we can begin to see the significance of inspiration points as a movement.

Minnesota leading the way

The State of Minnesota, which was detailed earlier in this document, is one of the few states taking action to collectively document and preserve its historic landscapes. Most importantly, the Mn/DOT created an inventory of all structures and features associated with the development of its roads and highways, including its only Inspiration Point in Lanesboro, Minnesota. The study, which culminated in the 1998 report, *Historic Roadside Development Structures on Minnesota Trunk Highways*, included a comprehensive list of roadside facilities such as parking areas, historical markers and wayside rests.¹ Prior to this, no study of this magnitude had been done to document these

¹ “From the MHD to Mn/DOT.”

resources. Mn/DOT historian Jackie Sluss said that the study provided needed information to determine if a roadside property was significant or in danger of being affected by a roadway improvement project.² State agencies, which previously had no knowledge of the valuable resources existing in support of the state's roadways, could then use the information to properly care for these resources. "Since we will now receive an 'early warning', there is a better chance of avoiding the site," she said.³

For each property, the Mn/DOT completed an inventory sheet documenting the site's significance, history and changes. In fact, the inventory form created to document the sites in this paper is a simplified version of the one used by Mn/DOT (see Fig. 17). While Minnesota's efforts documented all roadside developments and not just scenic overlooks, it set an important precedent for future study in the field of landscape preservation. Foremost, it stressed the importance of documenting these sites not just as individual places but also as a collection, which is an ultimate goal of this inspiration point project as well. While these sites are significant in their own right, they gain greater meaning when interpreted as a larger movement that spans the nation. Additionally, the Mn/DOT used the information obtained to determine site eligibility for placement on the National Register or other local designations. This is important for the future care and stewardship of these sites. While several inspiration points have been recognized by such designations, the majority of them have not and would benefit greatly from this sort of protection.

² "Additional Planning and Research," *Cultural Landscape Currents*, National Park Service, http://www.nps.gov/hps/hli/currents/newdeal/impmanage_page1.htm (accessed April 25, 2008).

³ Ibid.

No. 7

NAME: Yosemite National Park

CITY/STATE (COUNTY): Groveland,
California

YEAR: a)1855, b)1856, c)1875, d)early 1900s

ASSOCIATION:
☒ PARK / FOREST
☐ ROAD / HIGHWAY
☐ TRAIL / RAILWAY

DESCRIPTION OF LOCATION:
Four different Inspiration Points exist in Yosemite, each one at a slightly different
elevation and offering a different view of the valley.

DESIGNER/BUILDER: Natural features

ELEVATION / UTM COORDINATES: a)6,802 ft, b)6,603 ft., c)5,391 ft., d)4,943 ft.

HISTORY / CONTEXT: The first IP was discovered in 1855 by artists and journalists exploring the land. As time went on, better (and more accessible) views were found, and three more Inspiration Points were named. While Yosemite gained much national attention for its beauty, it also became subject to exploitation of its resources. Tourists, artists and entrepreneurs transformed the Valley and in many cases damaged it beyond repair. Conservationists appealed to the state and were granted "inalienable public trust," meaning that the government vowed to protect Yosemite's scenic lands and ensure they could be enjoyed by all people. Protection came in the form of a bill that was introduced by a California senator in March 1864; President Lincoln signed it in June. Because of the continued press from journalists and environmentalists, Yosemite's conservation efforts continued to spark attention, eventually leading other state agencies to take action.

SOURCES:

- Peter H. Hassrick, *Drawn to Yellowstone: Artists in America's First National Park*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002).
- Hank Johnston, "Yosemite's Four (almost five) Inspiration Points," *Yosemite*, Vol. 59 (1997).
- Sharon Giacomazzi, "Romancing the Sierra: Yosemite's Inspiration Point," *Sierra Heritage*, Vol. 17 (1997).
- "History & Culture," Yosemite National Park, National Park Service, 2007, <http://www.nps.gov/yose/historyculture/index.htm>
- Amy Scott, ed., *Yosemite: The Art of an American Icon*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).



PHOTO SOURCE:

Stereograph, author's personal collection

Fig. 17. Example of inspiration point inventory form. For a complete directory of the inspiration points documented in this paper, see Appendix A.

One of the drawbacks of the Mn/DOT study was that it only focused on stabilization, preservation and restoration of the state's landscapes, and did not consider rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is perhaps the most popular treatment method for historic resources because it allows for continued use with modifications. Because cultural landscapes are constantly changing with the world around them, this treatment makes the most sense for many sites. The State of Minnesota is now in the process of using the information from this inventory and developing preservation plans for the areas.

Choosing the appropriate treatment

In the documentation of historic inspiration points, it is recommended that all four preservation approaches be considered and used. Because the care of cultural landscapes is complex and often requires an interdisciplinary approach, it is necessary to determine which of the treatments makes the most sense for each site and act accordingly.

Preservation is the least invasive treatment, and involves maintaining existing features, respecting changes in structures and views, thus interpreting the changes as a part of its rich history. *Rehabilitation* involves repairing deteriorated historical features and developing a new use for the viewpoint. *Restoration* includes restoring the view or associated structure to its appearance at the time of its creation. *Reconstruction*, requiring the most severe change, involves recreating demolished viewpoints with use of historic photos and plans. Each of these options has its value and can be justified as a valid treatment for a site.

In the document, "Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes," the NPS

outlines the standards and guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, restoring and reconstructing cultural landscapes in depth. A discussion of each of these treatments and how they are applied to inspiration points follows.

Preservation

*Preservation: the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property.*⁴

Preservation, as defined by the National Park Service, involves the least amount of intervention possible. This treatment is chosen when a site is essentially intact, when depiction of a specific time period is not required for interpretation, or when its use does not require much alteration or repair work.⁵

Often this form of treatment involves stabilization of a structure or feature, such as stopping erosion on a hillside below an overlook or reinforcing a retaining wall. Stabilization efforts should blend in with the natural environment as much as possible. This is especially important for those landscapes associated with the rustic style of architecture. Blending in with nature is the ultimate goal. After stabilization has occurred, the focus shifts to maintenance. Maintenance of preservation sites includes applying protective coats to woodwork, removing potentially damaging invasive species, repointing masonry, removing rust from metalwork, etc. All of these actions aim to preserve the life of the site and minimize any harmful effects that may be caused by nature or man. The goal is always to retain maximum integrity of the site.⁶

⁴ Birnbaum and Peters, 19.

⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁶ Alanen and Melnick, 75.

Examples of preservation sites include many of the still-famous inspiration points in various parks nationwide. Yosemite, Yellowstone and Bryce Canyon national parks all contain inspiration point sites that have required very little alteration over the years. The sites are promoted as a piece of the park's history, and are preserved in their present condition. There is no effort to make the views from these particular inspiration points match their historic views, so trees are allowed to grow up and brush is only minimally maintained so tourists can access these points. The changing landscapes are considered part of the parks' rich histories, and these "layers" are evident to tourists.

Rehabilitation

*Rehabilitation: the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.*⁷

Rehabilitation is perhaps the most popular treatment approach in the field of preservation because it allows for the most variation in uses. This treatment is chosen when it is necessary to repair or replace deteriorated features, when depiction of a specific time period is not required for interpretation, or when alterations or additions are planned.⁸

Similar to preservation, all character-defining features of the landscape are maintained with this approach. However, because more historic fabric has usually been damaged with these sites, rehabilitation efforts are more invasive than preservation. Those in charge of the project may opt to replace certain elements of a landscape with ones deemed "better." For example, a susceptible grass may be replaced with a more

⁷ Birnbaum and Peters, 48.

⁸ Ibid., 47.

hardy one, or new and compatible trees may be planted to provide shade and ambience to an existing site. These features are not historically accurate, but they are crucial in the continued use of the site as a public place. In this way, it is also acceptable with this treatment to remove non-significant features that may detract from the existing landscape.⁹ Additions or alterations can also be added to the landscape or structures associated with it to accommodate new uses.

One inspiration point (No. 49) that has been rehabilitated in recent years is located in Fort Washington Park in New York City. Realizing that this place, among others in the park, deserved attention and care, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation set out to make that happen. The roadside shelter at Inspiration Point, located on the Henry Hudson Parkway at 190th Street, was built in 1925 and quickly became a “destination point for promenaders and pleasure drivers.”¹⁰ It measured 106 feet in length, 26 feet wide, and 16 feet high, and before it was constructed *The New York Times* said it would be the “longest, largest and most attractive” structure on Riverside Drive, which is the roadway that paralleled the Hudson River.¹¹ The neoclassical structure with Doric columns was built by architect Gustave Steinacher in 1924, and opened a year later with a parade of 10,000 Fort Washington children.¹² The space was intended to draw people in, to make them want to stop and stay a while. It was the last turn-off before the end of the highway and commanded sweeping views to the north and south. In 1924, this

⁹ Ibid., 59.

¹⁰ Christopher Gray, “The Inspiration Point Shelter; Restoration for an All-but-Ruined Hudson Temple,” *The New York Times*, Streetscapes, Feb. 26, 1989, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=950DE5D91139F935A15751C0A96F948260#> (accessed October 26, 2007).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

turn-off was touted by *The New York Times* as “long a popular resort for those who appreciate Hudson River scenery,” suggesting that the site was named and in use years before the structure was commissioned in 1924.¹³ What year the inspiration point itself was created is still unknown.

As highways replaced slower roads and hectic workers replaced pleasure drivers, this roadside haven along the Hudson River slowly waned in popularity. Eventually, the structure itself sat in ruins and the land surrounding it was a wasteland. Signs of disrepair were rampant: the walkway was overgrown, sections of the balustrade had been knocked over, the roof was caving in, etc. Finally, in the early 1990s, the Parks department started work on the structure in hopes of bringing people back to the spot. The failing roof was replaced with an open trellis for easy maintenance, the concrete elements repaired, and the promenade made presentable to the public. By rehabilitating the pavilion and taking it from a fully-enclosed building to an open-air structure, it allowed a different use for the site, but still made it available to the public which was most important to the Parks Department. According to Parks Department representative Bob Raymond, people still stop by occasionally.

This is an example of a successful rehabilitation project. Rehabilitation of this site allows it to continue being viable in the community through new use or alteration. Although preservation is the preferred treatment when possible, it is often not appropriate. If it were always the chosen method of treatment, we would have hundreds of perfectly preserved buildings sitting empty all across the United States. Not every valuable resource can remain as it was historically. A site or structure can be beautifully

¹³ Ibid.

preserved down to every last detail, but if it does not have a viable use in society today, then it is as good as useless. This is a difficult reality, but one that is supremely important when dealing with historic resources. A site's ability to function in modern times and remain viable in its community will ultimately determine its future.

Rehabilitation allows for that adaptation to modern times. It is much more important that a place remains an active and participating agent in a community than for it to be a museum of the past. In the case of the Hudson Parkway Inspiration Point, strict preservation was not an option because of various financial and managerial restraints. However, by making the structure less complicated and easier to maintain, it can remain in use. Compared to the alternative of being left to decay and eventually demolished, rehabilitation provided a way to keep this site, and the memory it contained, alive.

Jackson echoed this idea of the importance of the layered history of landscapes in an article in *Landscape Architecture* magazine:

We must save what is worth saving and worth using. But to keep them alive means to give them a living function; the power which an ancient environment possesses to command our affection and respect derives from its having been part of the world, not from having been isolated and protected, but having known various functions.¹⁴

Rehabilitation allows inspiration points to continue, as they have in the past, to know various functions over time.

Restoration

Restoration: the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of

¹⁴ John Brinckerhoff Jackson, "'Sterile' Restorations Cannot Replace a Sense of the Stream of Time," *Landscape Architecture*, Vol. 66, No. 3 (May 1976), 194.

*the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.*¹⁵

The restoration approach is different than the previous two in that instead of aiming for preservation and maintenance of the landscape, it attempts to return the landscape to the way it appeared at a particular time in the past. This treatment approach is chosen when a landscape is deemed significant (either for its design, architecture, or history) because of a specific time period, when there is substantial evidence to support the claim, and when alterations or additions are not planned.¹⁶

If elements or features exist from a time period of non-significance, then those features must be removed. Also, missing elements from the highlighted time period can and should be reproduced.

In Washington State, one city is working to restore its inspiration point so that people may once again stand on the promontory. Located in the northwest corner of the state, Bellingham's inspiration point (**No. 33**) sits all but forgotten on the edge of town. To those who once visited the site, it is still visible—behind the jersey barricade and flashing lights warning passersby of a sharp curve in the road—but to everyone else, it is as well as gone. The old, dilapidated concrete structure still exists, but it is structurally unsound and unable to handle the stress of continual tourists. The City is currently developing plans to restore the site to its former glory.

Bellingham's Inspiration Point has been dated to 1905 or 1906 through use of historic postcards. It is known that entrepreneur Cyrus Gates purchased the land for Woodstock Farm, his estate at the southern edge of town, in 1899, and had built his

¹⁵ Birnbaum and Peters, 90.

¹⁶ Ibid., 89.

craftsman home there by 1905.¹⁷ Gates was, among other things, an avid landscaper. His legacy can be seen in the designs of Bellingham's Chuckanut, Larabee and Aroyo parks, as well as the Samish flower bulb farm, which encouraged the growth and cultivation of successful bulb farming in the nearby Samish Valley that is still evident today.¹⁸

In recent years, the City of Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department acquired the land and made efforts to make it available to the public.¹⁹ Improvements included making accessible hiking trails and opening the site to volunteer conservation crews and school groups. More recently, the city has focused on restoring the Inspiration Point that sits above the site's Upper Bluff Trail. Plans include the restoration of the existing dilapidated overlook on Chuckanut Drive, creation of a path connecting a van pull-off area to the overlook, view enhancement, highway barrier replacement and landscaping of the entire site. The City received money from the Federal Highway Administration, Washington Interagency Committee for Outdoor Recreation, and Beyond Greenways funds to bring this project to fruition.²⁰ They are currently in contract negotiations with design consultants.

When completed, this project will not only restore a promontory and a view, but also a pastime that many in the area participated in prior to its decay. The City hopes

¹⁷ Tim Wahl, "The Legacy of Cyrus Gates & His Associates," Woodstock Farm historic map, PDF, 2005.

¹⁸ Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department, "Woodstock Farm," <http://www.cob.org/services/recreation/parks-trails/woodstock-farm.aspx> (accessed January 2, 2008).

¹⁹ Tim Wahl, email message to author, November 12, 2007.

²⁰ Bellingham Parks and Recreation Department.

these efforts will increase the number of visitors to its corridor of parks and trails along Chuckanut Drive.²¹

Reconstruction

*Reconstruction: the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.*²²

Similar to restoration projects, reconstructions are intended to make a landscape appear as it did at a particular date in time. Reconstructions, however, are much more difficult to approach because of the lack of physical evidence remaining in most cases. For this reason, many reconstructions are nothing more than a “best guess” and this is not looked upon favorably in the preservation field. There should always be ample archeological and historical evidence to support a restoration or reconstruction, and problems ensue where there is not.

This treatment approach is chosen when a landscape is deemed significant (either through design, architecture, or historical accounts) because of a specific time period, when there is substantial evidence to support the claim, and when alterations or additions are not planned.²³

Because of the difficulty of this approach, it is supremely important for those involved in the project to determine if the reconstruction is essential to the public’s understanding of the site.²⁴ Any surviving features should be preserved if possible, and

²¹ Wahl, email message.

²² Birnbaum and Peters, 128.

²³ Ibid., 127.

²⁴ Ibid., 131.

those that are missing should be replaced to “re-create the landscape for interpretive purposes.”²⁵ This means that the original materials (if known and available) are always preferred, but a replacement material is acceptable if it will communicate the same message. The purpose of this treatment is to gain as accurate of a depiction of the landscape as possible.

In regards to historic inspiration points, preservationists have to distinguish which part of the landscape they will reconstruct: the view, or the place one stands to observe the view.

An inspiration point in Southern California (**No. 11**) provides an example of such reconstructive work. The Pacific Electric Railway built an open-air shelter on Mt. Lowe in 1924-25, complete with locating tubes that showed various points of interest (ranging from nearby sites to Catalina Island) to those visiting the site (see Fig. 18). After sustaining extensive wind and fire damage over the years, all that remained of the structure was the stone foundation.²⁶ In the mid 1990s, a group of volunteers in the San Gabriel Mountains took on the task of rebuilding the mountain’s Inspiration Point pavilion and picnic shelter. It was the goal of the Scenic Mt. Lowe Railways Historical Commission, a group associated with the Mt. Lowe Historical Society, to reconstruct the site using historic drawings and photographs.²⁷ The historically accurate project was completed in 1996 (see Fig. 19). At that time, the Forest Service acknowledged that the pavilion reconstruction was the largest structure in any national forest that was built

²⁵ Ibid., 131

²⁶ Ron Jasinski, “Rebuilding the Pavilion: Inspiration Point,” *The Scenic Mt. Lowe Railway Historical Committee*. <http://www.mtlowe.net/pavillion.htm> (accessed November 11, 2007).

²⁷ Ibid.



Fig. 18. Mount Lowe's Inspiration Point pavilion in 1920 when it was at the peak of its use. (Jasinski, <http://www.mtlowe.net/pavillion.htm>).



Fig. 19. Mount Lowe's Inspiration Point pavilion in 1996, following reconstruction by a group of volunteers, (Jasinski, <http://www.mtlowe.net/pavillion.htm>).

solely by volunteers.²⁸ Volunteer Paul Ayers had this to say at the site's dedication: "This is Southern California history, and it's not to be thrown away like a paper cup. What (park founder) Thaddeus Lowe did here was beautiful by just bringing people up and showing them the nature that existed here."²⁹ Thanks to the volunteers that spent more than a year documenting, planning and rebuilding the structure, Lowe's vision can once again be seen in the San Gabriels.

As this chapter has shown, determining which preservation treatment approach is used with a historic landscape will depend on many factors. What works for one landscape may not necessarily be appropriate for another. For this reason, it is imperative that preservationists or governing authorities involved in the project take ample time to research and investigate the current condition of the landscape, how it is being used, and the future potential for the site before any work is undertaken.

Regardless of which treatment is chosen, the point is that some action needs to be taken. It is irresponsible of us, as stewards of such valuable landscapes, to let these places decay or become lost in the midst of change.

For this reason, it is supremely important that this study is continued. Identifying and documenting the individual inspiration points was the first step in the process. Analyzing decades of American history to determine their pattern of development and significance within the context of national developments was the next. Classifying inspiration points as cultural landscapes established a basis for their preservation. Finally, explaining the various treatment options for these landscapes provided precedent

²⁸ Jasinski.

²⁹ Jack Chang, "Inspiration Point: Mountain Inspires Labor of Love," *Pasadena Star News*, July 1996, *The Mount Lowe Scenic Railway Historical Commission*, http://www.mtlowe.net/inspiration_pt_article.htm (accessed November 11, 2007).

for preserving, rehabilitating, restoring, and reconstructing inspiration points. The only thing left to do is take action.

CONCLUSION

I began this paper by defining an inspiration point as a historic promontory, most often associated with a park, scenic roadway or trail, which is open to the public and encourages artistic expression. Throughout these pages, I have discussed the histories of many inspiration points nationwide, their importance as cultural landscapes and the ways in which we can go about saving these sites. The purpose of this paper was twofold: to document and record the histories of various inspirational viewpoints across the country, and to show examples of preservation approaches at these sites.

My goal was to document these sites as a whole—as a movement that inspired a nation—and to produce a volume of work that categorized these places and made the general public aware of their existence. If nothing else, I hope this work begins a dialogue in the academic field and encourages future study of the topic.

There is value in the historic. There is value in places that don't exist anymore or in places that have significantly changed since their inception. People are fascinated by the ways we used to live. Inspiration points represent those times that no longer exist, and their preservation can keep their memory alive. Because so many of these landscapes were associated with historic parks, scenic roads, railways and trails, they encapsulate a myriad of topics, ranging from the introduction of landscape painting in America, to the invention of the automobile, to the popularity of leisure driving and scenic vacations, to the eventual decline of all of these things. Inspiration points were inspirational because they were new and encouraged the appreciation of the country's modern marvels. As cultural landscapes, they are worthy of preservation.

So as I finish this paper, I wonder: Where do we get our inspiration from today? Is it from the sites and spaces that represent our past, or is it from the meaning we obtain by visiting these places in the present? Inspiration Point can only continue to inspire the country if we give it value, significance, and a story that resonates in its people.

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WESTERN UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Earliest recording</u>	<u>Association</u>
1	White Pass and Yukon Railway	Skagway	AK	1905 (postcard)	Trail/Rail
2	Flagstaff Mountain	Flagstaff	AZ	1920-1939	Trail/Rail
3	Apache Trail	Roosevelt	AZ		Trail/Rail
4	Mount Lemmon (Coronado National Forest)	Tucson	AZ	1943	Park/Forest
5	Chiricahua National Monument	Wilcox	AZ		Park/Forest
6	Channel Islands National Park	Channel Islands	CA		Park/Forest
7a	Yosemite's old "Old Inspiration Point"	Groveland	CA	1855	Park/Forest
7b	Yosemite's "Old Inspiration Point"	Groveland	CA	1856	Park/Forest
7c	Yosemite's "New Inspiration Point"	Groveland	CA	1875	Park/Forest
7d	Yosemite's new "New Inspiration Point"	Groveland	CA	early 1900s	Park/Forest
8	Hemet Valley	Idyllwild	CA		Other
9	Anza Trail	Julian	CA		Trail/Rail
10	Blue Ridge Trail	Los Angeles	CA		Trail/Rail
11	Mount Lowe	Los Angeles	CA	1925	Trail/Rail
12	Emerald Bay	Lake Tahoe	CA	1913	Other
13	Corona Del Mar	Newport Beach	CA		Park/Forest
14	Sequoia National Forest	Porterville	CA		Park/Forest
15	Lassen Volcanic National Park	Redding	CA	1914-1930	Park/Forest
16	Lake Elsinore	Roosevelt	CA	1934	Road/Highway
17	The Presidio	San Diego	CA	1965	Park/Forest
18	Balboa Park	San Diego	CA		Park/Forest
19	Mount Tamalpais	San Francisco	CA		Park/Forest
20	Tilden Regional Park	San Francisco	CA		Park/Forest
21	Jesusita Trail	Santa Barbara	CA		Trail/Rail
22	Will Rogers State Park	Santa Monica	CA		Park/Forest
23	Clear Creek Canyon	Jefferson County	CO	1880 (photograph)	Trail/Rail
24	Pike's Peak	Colorado Springs	CO	1891 (Pike's Peak Cog Railway)	Trail/Rail
25	Seven Falls	Colorado Springs	CO	1883	Trail/Rail

26 Inspiration Point (Lookout) Park

Denver

CO 1910

Park/Forest

No. Name

City

State Earliest recording

Association

27 Rio Grande National Forest

Monte Vista

CO

Trail/Rail

28 Napa Point Trail/Swan Peak

Bigfork

MT

Trail/Rail

29 Columbia River Highway

Hood River

OR 1913-16

Road/Highway

30 Mount Hood North

Hood River

OR After 1915

Road/Highway

31 Bryce Canyon National Park

Garfield County

UT 1929 (photos)

Park/Forest

32 Willard Scenic Backway

Mantua

UT

Trail/Rail

33 Woodstock Farm

Bellingham

WA 1905/06

Road/Highway

34 Paradise Road, Mount Rainier

Eagle Park

WA 1916

Road/Highway

35 Grand Teton National Park

Teton County

WY

Park/Forest

36 Yellowstone National Park

Jackson Hole

WY 1869-78 (Hayden Survey)

Park/Forest

CENTRAL UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Earliest recording</u>	<u>Association</u>
37	Eureka Springs	Eureka Springs	AR	1932 (approximately)	Other
38	Shawnee National Forest	Harrisburg	IL		Park/Forest
39	Glen Lake	Glen Arbor	MI		Other
40	Lanesboro Overlook	Lanesboro	MN	1934	Road/Highway
41	Shepherd of the Hills	Branson	MO	1889	Other
42	Mineral Wells	Mineral Wells	TX	1949	Other
43	Riverdale/Rivervale	Riverdale	IN	1941 (postcard)	Other - unknown

EASTERN UNITED STATES INSPIRATION POINTS

<u>No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>City</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Earliest recording</u>	<u>Association</u>
44	Palisades Park	Oneonta	AL		Park/Forest
45	Monte Sano Mountain	Huntsville	AL		Park/Forest
46	Chimney Rock State Park	Asheville	NC	1902	Park/Forest
47	Letchworth Park (Portage Falls)	Castile	NY	1909	Park/Forest
48	Catskills Mountains	Kaaterskill	NY	1883 (map)	Trail/Rail
49	Henry Hudson Parkway	New York	NY	1925	Road/Highway
50	Niagara Falls	Niagara Falls	NY	1860	Other
51	DuBois Drive/Mt. Manotonome	Hallstead	PA	1904	Road/Highway
52	Mount LeConte	Gatlinburg	TN		Trail/Rail