

Amphitheater at Curry Village

April 2014

The first American park rangers were armed soldiers, but over time their role has evolved and expanded to include preservation, interpretation, education, entertainment, and first responder.

“If a trail is to be blazed, it is ‘send a ranger.’
If an animal is floundering in the snow, a
ranger is sent to pull him out; if a bear is
in the hotel, if a fire threatens a forest, if
someone is to be saved, it is ‘send a ranger.’”
– Stephen T. Mather, first Director of the
National Park Service

Flag Raising at the Wawona Hotel

June 2014

In 2016, the National Park Service changed several historic names associated with features of the park — The Ahwahnee Hotel became The Majestic Yosemite Hotel, the Wawona Hotel became Big Trees Lodge, and Curry Village became Half Dome Village. The decision to change the names was a strategic move in a complicated legal feud with the Park's former concessionaire, which exposed the big business side of the nation's most popular park. The sides have recently settled the lawsuit and the historic names have been restored, but most Yosemite people went right on calling them what they had always called them anyway, settled or not.

View from Cables Ascent 1

October 2014

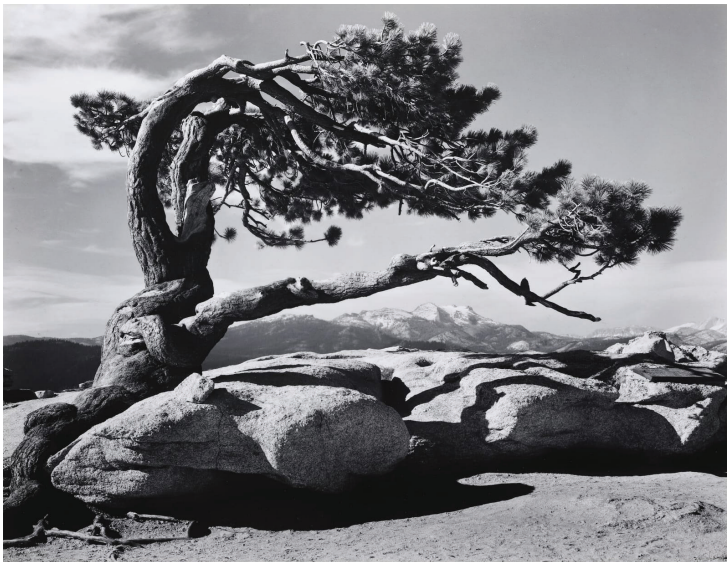
“There was a sense of unity, a shared purpose. It felt like everyone wanted everyone else to succeed. I saw people of all ages: a fourteen-year-old girl and folks who were likely in their early seventies. I also came across people of all shapes and sizes. I was surprised to see some people who seemed grossly out of shape, yet here they were. They had already hiked to the base of Half Dome and they were hell bent and focused like lasers... Such was the hike: seeing the same people, passing them, resting, being passed by them. Sometimes you chat; sometimes you don't.”

– Jonas Kulikauskas on hiking Half Dome

Jeffrey Pine, Sentinel Dome

October 2014

Made famous by an iconic Ansel Adams photograph (below), the Jeffrey pine at the top of Sentinel Dome was probably one of the most photographed trees in the world. Severe drought caused the 400-year-old tree's death in 1977, and it finally fell in 2003. Now when people take pictures there, they're standing in front of a lifeless log.



Jeffrey Pine, Sentinel Dome, Yosemite, 1940 by Ansel Adams

Hetch Hetchy

June 2014

In 1913, Congress permitted the construction of a dam that would flood the Hetch Hetchy, a valley in the northwestern corner of present day Yosemite National Park. The act would provide a reliable water source and hydroelectric power for the growing San Francisco metropolitan area. The decision sparked an outcry from environmental and parkland advocates, who likened Hetch Hetchy's natural wonders to that of its world famous neighbor and claimed the Bay Area had other viable options for water storage outside protected lands.

Over 100 years later, the reservoir still accounts for 80% of San Francisco's water and nearly 20% of San Francisco's energy. Environmental groups continue to hotly advocate for removal of the dam and Hetch Hetchy's full restoration.

Valley Floor Nature Walk with Ranger Phil Johnson

May 2014

“There were people here...long before the Gold Rush had ever occurred. There were people here long before the Yosemite Grant was ever put into action. There were people here long before Yosemite became a National Park in 1890, and the descendants of the original inhabitants are still in the local area today, still carrying on customs and traditions.” – Phil Johnson, Interpretive Park Ranger, Southern Sierra Miwok

Indian Cultural Demonstrator and Interpretive Ranger Phil Johnson retired in 2019. Calling Yosemite his home and birthplace, Phil shared the stories of Native peoples of Yosemite with thousands of visitors throughout his long career.

Curry Village Amphitheater

July 2014

“I remember the beauty of the Firefall each evening as seen from the deck of the Indian Room of the Ahwahnee...”

– Kevin Starr, Historian and California State Librarian Emeritus

Here, a park employee dramatizes Yosemite’s legendary “Firefall.” Beginning in 1872, hot embers were spilled each night from the top of Glacier Point into the valley below, giving viewers the impression of a glowing waterfall. As the sun set, visitors would camp out like tailgaters in the meadow below and begin the chant, “Let the Fire Fall!” The spectacle was discontinued in 1968 in an attempt to return the trampled meadows to a more natural state.