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# Hippies in the Park: Yosemite and the Counterculture in the Sixties American West

Guy McClellan

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**HIPPIES IN THE PARK:**  
**Yosemite and the Counterculture in the Sixties**  
**American West**

by

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**BA, LEWIS AND CLARK COLLEGE, 2008**  
**MA, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2014**

THESIS

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## **HIPPIES IN THE PARK:**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

For many visitors, Yosemite's park boundaries symbolize a division between nature and civilization. On a busy day in Yosemite Valley, however, that divide seems nonexistent. Cars slither by, glinting in the sun. The valley echoes with camera clicks. Tourists stream into grocery stores and souvenir shops. The post office sorts mail and the dentist cleans teeth. In short, Yosemite Valley is little different than a small town. The American West is defined by wilderness but dominated by cities. Yosemite Valley, the park's population center, exemplifies the tension between the two.

My research examines this ideological conflict through the lens of youth counterculture. Like many other places, Yosemite experienced some form of turmoil during the late 1960s. Much of this was related to increased visitation. Expecting a refuge from urban life, visitors instead found traffic, noise, and air pollution. Worst of all, they found an influx of hippie visitors who irritated park rangers and visitors alike. That irritation boiled over on July 4, 1970, when hippies and park authorities clashed in Stoneman Meadow. As a result, the park began refusing entrance to youths, especially those with long hair or vans. In the words of the *Berkeley Tribe* weekly, Yosemite had become "an occupied zone."

The Stoneman riot carries larger implications for the study of the American West. National park tourism is often viewed as a distinctive part of American identity, promoting self-sufficiency, ruggedness, and family values. Yet places like Yosemite also offered an escape from these norms. Although federally owned, national parks symbolized escape from the moral authority of civilization. Campgrounds allowed hippies to form and reform communal living situations overnight. Tourism is a pliable construct, capable of accommodating disparate moral and political factions. My research explores the role of national parks in highlighting--and mediating--conflicting visions of nature, family, and nation in the late 1960s.

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## INTRODUCTION

Summer weekends in Yosemite National Park are busy. In Yosemite Valley, however, crowding occurs on a completely different level. Friday, July 3, 1970 was no different. A crowd of roughly three hundred youths gathered in Stoneman Meadow to socialize. Park rangers announced the superintendent's orders that the meadow was to be cleared by 7 p.m.. When it came time to enforce the curfew, no one left the meadow. National Park Service employees swept through the meadow, on foot and on horse, making sure everyone headed their separate ways. Campgrounds that night were quiet.<sup>1</sup>

The following night, July 4, was different. Again, Yosemite's administration decided to enforce a curfew, deeming the meadow's infestation an ecological issue. Not surprisingly, the assembled youths refused to heed the curfew. Rangers on horseback rushed the crowd, followed by twenty-one Park Service employees on foot, armed with mace and ropes. The crowd threw bottles and rocks in retaliation; a few individuals threw knives, and one threatened a ranger with an axe. By 7:40, all N.P.S. personnel were ordered to fall back. They set up roadblocks as they retreated, stopping all traffic to and from Stoneman Meadow. In turn, some rioters erected a roadblock of their own: a large bonfire. Many local police forces—Madera County, Merced County, Fresno County, and more—sent help. All told, they contributed 146 individuals to the containment effort. Between midnight and 8 a.m. on July 5, 138 people were arrested as rangers searched campgrounds for those involved in the riot. Despite the severity of the situation, the worst injuries suffered were lacerations requiring stitches. It was decided that U.S. Marshals, who had also responded to the

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1. Laura Avedisian, "The Yosemite Riot: Changes in Policy and Management in the National Park Service" (MA thesis, San Jose State University, 1998) 30-32.



*Figure 1: A mounted ranger swings a lariat in Stoneman Meadow.  
Berkeley Tribe, July 17-24, 1970.*

administration's cries for help, would remain in the park to keep order.<sup>2</sup>

The riot offers a small but significant window into Yosemite Valley during a time of national turbulence. Given the philosophical weight often shouldered by national parks—refuges from civilization, pillars of national identity—the events of July 4 seem to be outliers, deviations from the usual pristine atmosphere.<sup>3</sup> As I will show, however, Yosemite Valley was yet another arena in which the (mostly) metaphorical battles of the sixties were fought. The massive granite walls forced people of all ages, incomes, and beliefs into close geographic proximity, a phenomenon further exacerbated by the teeming campgrounds.

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2. Ibid, 36-43.

3. See Roderick Nash, Wilderness and the American Mind (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967) for a general discussion of park philosophy. Also see John Muir, My First Summer in the Sierra (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, 2004) for a description of Yosemite's early days.

Furthermore, the Valley's impressive level of development—roads, bridges, restaurants, upscale hotels, cocktail lounges—reminded many of the material world they had sought to escape. The spatially confined coexistence of hippies and straights recreated the nation's cultural conflicts on a smaller stage.

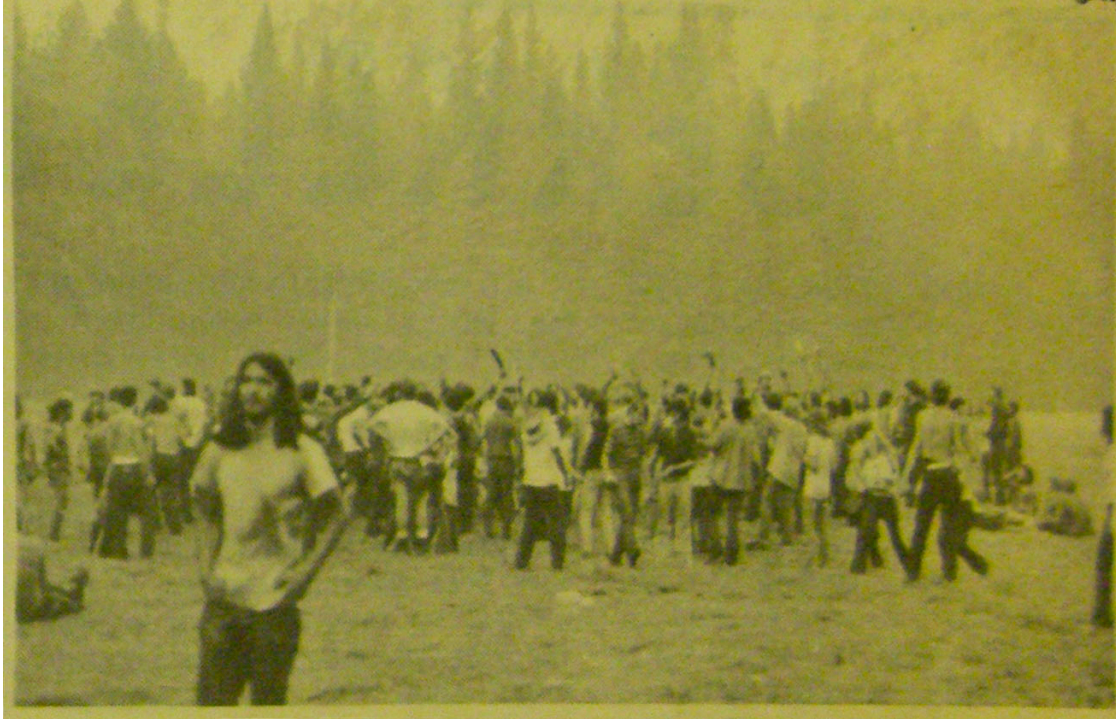
Conservationist Paul Pritchard has described national parks as natural laboratories, indicators of America's environmental health at large.<sup>4</sup> During the late 1960s and early 1970s, however, Yosemite was a sociocultural laboratory as well. It provided a contained atmosphere in which different populations could define their identities relative to dominant archetypes of the era. For park administrators, the hippie influx provided the impetus to experiment with new forms of spatial control, both inside the park and at its borders. Of course, the riot in Stoneman Meadow presents the most obvious instance of misunderstanding between the Park Service and the counterculture, but it was only a tipping point in a larger series of events. Even before the events of July 4, hippies enforced their own will on the geography of Yosemite Valley, claiming meadows, bridges, and campgrounds as their own.

It would be misleading to assume that the N.P.S. and its countercultural antagonists existed in a vacuum. Yosemite's cultural conflicts in the sixties coincided with a middle-class recreation boom that popularized camping as an affordable form of family bonding. Thus, inside the Valley's campgrounds, hippies confronted the work-a-day lifestyle they had so aggressively shunned. Despite countless conflicts, it became clear that each relied on the other for a sense of identity. In the years surrounding the Stoneman riot, Yosemite showcased the nation's fragmented national identity. The park became a space for cultural

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4. Quoted in Ronald A. Foresta, America's National Parks and Their Keepers (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, Inc., 1984) 97.

negotiation, a laboratory in which the era's cultural conflicts were overlaid onto a new geography.



*Figure 2: Hippies assembled in Stoneman Meadow. Berkeley Tribe, July 17-24, 1970.*

Yosemite Valley is indeed a unique laboratory. It is roughly seven miles long but barely a mile wide. The towering granite cliffs on either side exacerbate the feeling of confinement; in fact, at its deepest, Yosemite Valley is three thousand feet below the monoliths above it. Formerly accessible only by horse, and then by railroad, the park is now ruled by the automobile. Cars slither by, glinting in the sun. The air echoes with camera clicks. Tourists stream into grocery stores and souvenir shops. The post office sorts mail and the dentist cleans teeth. Yosemite Valley is, essentially, a city crammed into a canyon. If the Valley is a city, then its campgrounds constitute its residential neighborhoods. Demographics change nightly as new tourists arrive and others depart. Highways,



international airports, and nearby cities send a constant stream of new visitors, day in and day out. While Yosemite's natural grandeur remains unchanged, the physical reality of the place is much different. The pastoral meanings grafted onto the Valley fail to acknowledge the complexity of its quasi-urban systems.

Any attempt to understand the 1960s must effectively juxtapose the local with the large-scale narrative of the era. Yosemite's physical location ensured cross-pollination between the park's internal politics and the nation's cultural turmoil. Certain areas of the country, like the Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco, became synonymous with countercultural activity. Even before the 1970 riot, Yosemite Valley's hippie problem garnered enough attention to change the park's reputation. No longer did Yosemite exist solely within the constellation of great Western parks like Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, and Rocky Mountain. It became associated hippie meccas like the Haight-Ashbury and Telegraph Avenue, as well. This shift obviously had repercussions for the park itself, but it also reoriented the moral geography of the American West. No longer was Yosemite a sacred space, part of a tourist network that reinforced national identity.<sup>5</sup> It represented a place of loose morals, where traffic, smog, hippies, and lost children obscured a formerly wholesome family destination. Thus, Yosemite Valley underwent two processes of spatial reorganization during the sixties. Countercultural occupation and administrative decisions marked certain parts of the park as transgressive. The map of the American West itself also shifted, reflecting Yosemite's significance to the region's countercultural population.

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5. For a discussion of national park tourism and its pre-World War II significance, see Marguerite Shaffer, See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001).

## CHAPTER ONE: Yosemite in the Sixties

Yosemite National Park is, in essence, one great idea within a series of great ideas. It was not the first national park, nor is it the biggest or the most perfectly preserved. It is, however, an oft-told story in its own right. Luminaries like John Muir, Teddy Roosevelt, Frederick Olmsted, David Brower, and Stephen Mather figure prominently into the narrative. Events like the Civil War, the San Francisco earthquake of 1906, and the damming of Hetch Hetchy present easily defined ruptures that connect a glacially-scoured valley to the world around it. Despite these events of great local and national import, Yosemite is still perceived as a quarantined space. By treating national parks as part of the modern United States, rather than antidotes to it, we can gain a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between public lands and their surrounding sociopolitical circumstances.

As a major tourist attraction located near several international airports, major cities, and interstate highways, Yosemite itself could hardly be more accessible. And yet, much of the park's historiography ignores the world outside the park. Perhaps this oversight can be attributed to the National Park Service (N.P.S.) and its fundamentally contradictory ideals. The historiography of national parks is filled with arguments, or at least paradoxes. The National Park Service Act of 1916, essentially the agency's mission statement and origin story, states that the N.P.S. should endeavor to both preserve nature *and* offer recreational opportunities.<sup>1</sup> This conflict hearkened back to the late nineteenth century, when trained forester Gifford Pinchot and environmentalist John Muir disagreed over the fundamental meaning of natural preserves. Did national parks serve man, or did they serve nature? Often

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1. See Nash, 325 and Alfred Runte, National Parks: The American Experience (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997) 103-104.

framed as the *conservation versus preservation* debate, it attracts most, if not all, of the scholarly attention directed at Yosemite.<sup>2</sup>

Landscapes like Yosemite are also prone to the myth of timelessness. National parks are considered sanctuaries, refuges from the fast-paced, ever-changing world outside park boundaries. Early visitors to Yosemite envisioned “*a priori* wilderness, an empty, uninhabited, primordial landscape that has been preserved in the way God first intended it to be.”<sup>3</sup> This myth of unchanging landscape obscured the fact that pristine wilderness had to be created, usually via the systematic displacement of Native Americans. While postcolonial scholars have produced valuable critiques of this construction,<sup>4</sup> another aspect of the above quote needs unpacking. As “preserved” landscapes, national parks offer little opportunity for inquiry. Many consider them fixed variables, historic spaces that bolster America's claim to an ancient past. But, like the Park Service's founding words, national parks are also obliged to provide recreational opportunities. Thus, stasis is not, and has never been, possible for places like Yosemite. The balance between preservation and recreation sways back and forth, depending on the nation's sociopolitical climate.

The “long” sixties have been thoroughly analyzed. The decade's effect on national parks, however, has gone largely unrecognized. All too often, park histories remain confined to bureaucratic proceedings and popular wilderness thought. By examining parks during specific periods, historians can provide a richer context that also facilitates the interplay between local and national (and, perhaps, global). Yosemite in the 1960s presents a

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2. For the most recent iteration of this idea see Alfred Runte, Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993).

3. Mark David Spence, Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 131.

4. Mark Spence's work applies best to this topic, but geographers like William Denevan and Andrew Sluyter have expertly deconstructed the so-called “pristine myth” elsewhere.

fascinating symbiosis between park and period. The park had its own management plan, its own superintendent, and its own localized work force. And yet, as federally controlled land just east of the Bay Area's countercultural hotbeds, Yosemite was tugged outward in multiple directions. The decade and its aftershocks present a perfect opportunity to draw Yosemite out of its shell, allowing the park to join the ranks of places affected by countercultural activity, social unrest, and the generation gap.

Simply put, the historiography of Yosemite during the sixties does not exist. Some sources deal directly with the aforementioned thematic issues, but more often than not relationships must be inferred. Sources relating specifically to Yosemite tend to remain park-centric; on the contrary, sources about the 1960s rarely address the park's role in events of the era. Thus, there is a kind of dual blindness inherent in this project's sources. My goal, then, is to produce a meaningful synthesized conversation. Scholarly treatments of the N.P.S.'s history provide important bureaucratic links to the 1960s, especially the Mission 66 initiative and 1964's Wilderness Act. Of course, works on Bay Area hotspots like the Haight-Ashbury prove useful in identifying the source of Yosemite's hippie invasion. To add counterpoint to the counterculture, works on family vacations and outdoor recreation allow for a more balanced examination of the Valley's visitors. Analyses of the decade's environmental attitudes further elucidate the links between the era's urban populations and their outdoor escapes. The theoretical bases of the project are, again, split down the middle. Much has been written about the wilderness/civilization duality, but these debates are rarely applied to the sixties. On the other hand, a rich and recent historiography of the sixties' global impact offers insight into the era's local/global dichotomy. I can only hope that the combination of such diverse sources will prove cogent and not cacophonous.

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Most works addressing Yosemite Valley in the 1960s focus on its extraordinary level of development. Stanford DeMars' *The Tourist in Yosemite, 1855-1985* is as broad as its name implies. However, DeMars grounds the book's initial chapter in 1968, the year of his first visit to the park. He found that crowding created a predatory atmosphere, in which “newcomers waited like vultures to pounce upon newly-vacated campsites.”<sup>5</sup> Instead of a park, the Valley resembled *Yosemite City*, “complete with smog, crime, juvenile delinquency, parking problems, traffic snarls, rush hours, gang warfare, slums, and urban sprawl.”<sup>6</sup> This quasi-urbanization was not a new phenomenon. In fact, former park ranger William C. Tweed notes that Yosemite's development stemmed from a combination of public and private funding. The Park Service had a long and successful tradition of lobbying for tourist infrastructure, a process which was accelerated by the private concessioners eager to construct their own commercial outlets.<sup>7</sup> Popular periodicals of the post-World War II era told all with headlines like “National Parks: Tomorrow's Slums?” and “The Siege and Conquest of a National Park.”<sup>8</sup> In short, many sources—past and present—view Yosemite Valley as merely a corollary to, rather than an escape from, the modern American landscape of its time.<sup>9</sup> The theme of overdevelopment surfaces in almost any history of the Park Service, but it is especially relevant to the boom years of the 1950s and 60s.

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5. Stanford E. Demars, *The Tourist in Yosemite, 1855-1985* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991) 1.

6. Quoted in DeMars, 130.

7. William C. Tweed, *Uncertain Path: A Battle for the Future of National Parks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010) 18.

8. See Richard G. Lillard, “The Siege and Conquest of a National Park,” *The American West* 5 (1968): 28-32, 67-72; and Jerome B. Wood, “National Parks: Tomorrow's Slums?” *Travel* 101 (1954): 14-16.

9. See Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007) 47.

Climbing culture presents another important facet of the Valley's history. Steve Roper's excellent *Camp Four* provides bountiful anecdotes, many of which compare and contrast climbers and hippies. Roper was a constant presence in the Valley from the 1950s until the early 1970s, a period which saw not only the “Golden Age” of Yosemite climbing but also rapid changes in the park landscape. Roper notes that many climbers practiced a hippie lifestyle—unemployment, drug use, long hair, constant cursing. However, climbing gave them a sense of direction.<sup>10</sup> Joseph Taylor's *Pilgrims of the Vertical* offers another valuable, albeit more scholarly, perspective. Climbers usually congregated at Camp Four, now considered one of the birthplaces of American rock climbing. Although the campground holds significance for technological innovation and athletic excellence, it also served as a microcosm for Yosemite Valley in the Age of Aquarius. Alongside serious climbers, there were many derogatorily termed “campers,” high school- and college-aged youths that got stoned, played music, and generally emulated more established climbers.<sup>11</sup> These campers were generally unwelcome, due to crowding concerns but also because they reminded climbers that they “weren't doing anything unique any longer.”<sup>12</sup> Even before Yosemite's hippie invasion, climbers were *personas non gratas* in park law enforcement circles. In fact, they were temporarily evicted from Camp 4 in 1963; by 1966, park officials had imposed seven-day camping limit in an attempt to combat long-term “dirtbagging.”<sup>13</sup> Climbers were Yosemite's original misfits.

Taylor also deserves credit for introducing a class element into his study. He notes

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10. Steve Roper, Camp Four: Recollections of a Yosemite Rockclimber (Seattle: The Mountaineers Press, 1994) 217.

11. Joseph E. Taylor, Pilgrims of the Vertical: Yosemite Rock Climbers and Nature at Risk (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010) 198.

12. Steve Roper, quoted in Taylor, 198.

13. Ibid, 199.

that climbers were the prototypical dirtbags, tolerating substandard living conditions in order to pursue a passion to the highest degree. Some climbers slept in bathrooms and caves, while others shoplifted to support their climbing habit. Eric Beck, an “intermittent college student,” revised Thorstein Veblen's classic work *The Theory of the Leisure Class* in accordance with the dirtbag ethos. Yosemite's Golden Age, according to Beck, proved that there was a leisure class *at either end* of economic spectrum.<sup>14</sup> This postindustrial sentiment, utterly unconcerned with the connection between employment and social standing, echoes Dean MacCannell's seminal work *The Tourist*.<sup>15</sup> In the post-World War II years, national parks became places where Americans exercised new appetites for outdoor leisure. Despite the social fragmentation of the 1960s, vacation destinations like Yosemite actually demonstrated connections between drop-outs and family vacationers. This dissolution of class structure in the name of recreation provides a fascinating new perspective. Taylor's *Pilgrims*, though poor, were essential in forming the Valley's tradition of freeloading. Although they did not consider themselves hippies, climbers are useful lenses through which to view Yosemite's counterculture.

The aforementioned sources are valuable, but it was initially the riot on July 4, 1970 that drew me to this era in Yosemite's history. Far and away the most comprehensive source is Laura Avedisian's M.A. thesis, “The Yosemite Riot.” Other works mention the riot little, if at all; Avedisian provides well over fifty detailed pages of blow-by-blow coverage. Such tremendous detail is hard to parse, but other sources provide valuable analysis in short form. N.P.S. historian Richard Sellars argues that the most serious consequence of the riot was the reorientation of law enforcement funding. He argues that George Hartzog, Park Service

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14. Ibid, 197.

15. This work will be discussed later.

Director at the time, used newfound concerns about park safety to loosen Congressional pursestrings. Increases in funding established a law enforcement office in Washington, D.C.; somewhat paradoxically, they facilitated wider deployment U.S. Park Police, typically concentrated around the District of Columbia.<sup>16</sup> Alfred Runte's excellent survey *The National Parks* characterizes the events at Stoneman Meadow as “only the latest example of the conflicting demands imposed upon the national parks by an urban-based society.”<sup>17</sup> He hearkens back to the *preservation versus conservation* debate, asserting that tensions stemmed from new ideas of recreation clashing with those that wanted to see park landscapes remain static.<sup>18</sup>

Although it is arguable that concerns about Yosemite Valley's appearance culminated in a riot, they certainly contributed to the Park Service's many challenges in the 1960s. After World War II, national parks experienced a visitation boom. Sadly, their funding did not fluctuate accordingly, leaving many spectacular areas with inadequate parking, camping, interpretation, and sanitation facilities. Mission 66, a ten-year initiative launched in 1956, proposed an answer.<sup>19</sup> While the program aimed to improve visitor access and experience, it did so in an aggressively contemporary fashion. Architecturally, many of the Service's new buildings abandoned their rustic roots, opting instead for Modernist styling. Furthermore, Mission 66 popularized what we now call visitor centers, versatile buildings featuring employee offices, museums, souvenirs, information desks, and informational films. Carr argues that this new structure effectively mimicked shopping centers, both in its multifarious

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16. Richard West Sellars, Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 208.

17. Runte, 176.

18. Ibid.

19. Ten years from 1956 would be 1966, the Park Service's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This was not an accident.



uses and its accessible nature for automobiles.<sup>20</sup> In short, the 1960s saw the national park system undergo a radical modernization, both stylistically and functionally. While Carr argues that such a leap must be viewed in context of the national landscape's modernization,<sup>21</sup> many saw Mission 66 as yet another intrusion of urban America into the nation's sanctuaries.

Yosemite Valley's Mission 66 alterations were somewhat of an outlier. It did not receive a sleek new visitor center, nor did it expand its existing road system. However, the Yosemite Museum—which had long served as visitor center—was replaced with a visitor center featuring new exhibits, as well as an auditorium; there was even a wildflower garden for self-guided tours.<sup>22</sup> In addition, a new nature center was installed at Happy Isles, at the far eastern end of the Valley. There, urban visitors with little ability “to cope with the experiences of the out-of-doors” would learn what to expect in the park environment.<sup>23</sup> While many parks were constructing centralized visitor centers to enhance the spatial legibility of the visitor experience, Yosemite took the opportunity to relieve some crowding on the Valley floor. Using a ceiling of roughly 8,000 campers and 4,500 hotel and lodge guests, the N.P.S. planned to distribute visitor impact to other areas of the park.<sup>24</sup> Park officials removed a pavilion used for dances and movies, as well as began *unitization* of the Valley's campgrounds. Before the 1960s, camping in the park was fairly straightforward: find a spot and set up camp. Unitization, however, divided camping space into individualized sites, thereby reducing visitor capacity and enforcing camping only in

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20. Carr, 12-13.

21. Ibid, 47.

22. 1963 Master Plan, Chapter 2: Visitor Use Brief. RMR Series 3, Subseries 1, Box 1.

23. Ibid.

24. DeMars, 125.

designated areas.<sup>25</sup> In short, while many other parks received shiny new improvements, Yosemite focused on reducing the impact of visitation on the Valley floor. Many criticized Mission 66 for fundamentally changing the nation's heritage areas, but in Yosemite Valley the change ostensibly improved the visitor experience while reducing crowds. Like other parks, however, Yosemite's Mission 66 improvements recognized the need to adapt to an increasingly urban visitor profile.

Long before the postwar visitation boom, Yosemite had served great importance for its neighboring cities in the Bay Area. In his book *The New Urban Park*, the late Hal Rothman explains the longstanding connection between Central California's metropolis and its equally popular hinterlands. The Sierra Nevada, of which Yosemite constitutes the most accessible chunk, historically created “a sense of longing among wealthy urbanites who faced cultural transformation from which they benefited economically, but who felt spiritually and sometimes even morally impoverished.”<sup>26</sup> Rothman further argues that parks like Yosemite represented a key cog in the moral geography of Bay Area residents, especially before the 1972 christening of San Francisco's Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Open spaces protected from development represented sacred space, while the city and its capitalist milieu were roughly equivalent to the profane.<sup>27</sup> As we shall see, Yosemite and its neighboring cities interacted in increasingly complex ways as the 1960s wore on.

Yosemite is basically the Bay Area's backyard. However, the sixties also saw proprietary natural sentiment emerging elsewhere. Another of Rothman's works, *The Greening of a Nation?*, elucidates the national implications of American environmental

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25. Ibid, 131.

26. Hal Rothman, *The New Urban Park: Golden Gate National Recreation Area and Civic Environmentalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004) 3.

27. Ibid.

consciousness. In the early 1950s, the controversy over the Echo Park Dam on the Colorado River garnered national attention—potentially the most of any hydroelectric project since Hetch Hetchy in the early twentieth century. From the 1956 dismissal of the Echo Park plan to the 1964 Wilderness Act, Rothman argues that the environmental movement defined itself “in a manner than the increasingly affluent and expanding middle class could embrace.”<sup>28</sup> The Wilderness Act, which set aside millions of acres of federal land for special protection, defined wilderness as an “area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain.”<sup>29</sup> In his book *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, geographer Ronald Foresta posits that the Wilderness Act was directly inspired by Mission 66, which to some indicated the Park Service's tendency toward development instead of preservation.<sup>30</sup> Also in 1964, newly-minted N.P.S. Director George Hartzog established a tripartite classification system, meaning that parks would be classified as natural, recreational, or historic areas. This decision alone showed that the Park Service had heard the popular criticism of Mission 66.<sup>31</sup> Popular environmentalism—specifically, concerns over national parks—was thus vindicated by legislative victories at the federal level.

The nation's emerging environmental conscience cut across cultural lines. Although Rothman describes its middle-class appeal, environmentalism also incorporated groups that otherwise showed little interest in national trends. Roderick Nash explains that, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, wilderness enjoyed wild popularity. In fact, visitation to wilderness

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28. Hal Rothman, *The Greening of a Nation?: Environmentalism in the United States Since 1945* (Orlando: Harcourt Brace, 1998) 55.

29. Wilderness Act. Public Law 88-577 (16 U.S. C. 1131-1136), 88th Congress, Second Session. September 3, 1964. <<http://wilderness.nps.gov/document/WildernessAct.pdf>> Accessed February 11, 2014.

30. Foresta, 97.

31. *Ibid*, 107.

areas had doubled in a decade.<sup>32</sup> Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*, a seminal text for any era of American environmental thought, points out another instance of environmental irony. Although the nation was continuously heading outdoors in the 1960s, members of the counterculture also sought wilderness because it seemed “diametrically opposed to a civilization many had come to distrust and resent.”<sup>33</sup> Protectors of national parks worried about over-use, but the counterculture was presented with an even more daunting reality: national parks were potential refuges from capitalist society, but they were also more popular than ever before.

Jeff Sanders elaborates on this paradox in his useful article on environmentalism, located in *The Columbia Guide to American in the 1960s*. By idealizing nature and stressing antimodernism, hippies and other nonconformists were merely rehashing environmental themes present since the Progressive Era.<sup>34</sup> However, wilderness itself was only part of the reason for counterculture environmentalism. Nature was also a venue in which “young people, reared in utopian suburbs like Levittown, searched for the next ideal place.”<sup>35</sup> Young hippies seeking to refute their parents’ lifestyles turned to nature. The popularity of communal living attests to this rejection of suburban norms. Timothy Miller's *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* eloquently ties the end of the sixties into experiments in off-the-grid living in California and beyond. Consequently, Yosemite represented a sort of intermediary point in which hippies could experiment with a more natural lifestyle, albeit with an abundance of amenities. Thus, Yosemite Valley juxtaposed family vacationers with the groups they had warned their children about—even though they shared similar reasons

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32. Nash, 317.

33. Ibid, 251.

34. Jeff Sanders, “Environmentalism,” *The Columbia Guide to America in the 1960s*, eds. David Farber and Beth Bailey (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) 278.

35. Ibid, 279.

for being there. Nash and Rothman both detail the cross-cultural appeal of sixties environmentalism, showing that even the most disparate of sixties archetypes shared some common beliefs.

Hippies can be hard to pin down. They lacked a concrete founding document like the Port Huron Statement, leading scholars like Mark Hamilton Lytle to assert that their “cultural critique had to be inferred from their behavior.”<sup>36</sup> Absent of a defining manifesto, hippies’ cultural critiques were nonetheless widespread. Events like the Human Be-In and the Summer of Love served notice that youth culture could no longer be confused with American culture. Cultural documents, especially rock music, further explicated the widening of the generation gap. Many scholars find it useful to classify hippies using their relations to other subcultures. Some define them in opposition to the Beat Generation, who derisively dubbed their followers *hippies*—short for “junior grade hipsters.”<sup>37</sup> In the Beats’ view, hippies were only interested in hedonism; they lacked serious interests like jazz and poetry. Lytle further notes that sixties youth culture was multifaceted, borrowing certain traits from almost every negatively stereotyped group of the era. Their rejection of capitalism echoed Marxists. Their loud music, drug use, and casual sex identified them with the poor. Their long hair and strange clothing blurred gender lines.<sup>38</sup> Thus, almost any element of mainstream society could find *something* about hippies that bothered them. The youth counterculture expertly reflected every bias and fear of its era, almost like a prejudicial hall of mirrors.

David Farber’s *The Age of Great Dreams* is another useful source for characterizing the elusive hippie. While many considered them mere nuisances, Farber dubs hippies the

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36. Mark Hamilton Lytle, America’s Uncivil Wars: The Sixties Era from Elvis to the Fall of Richard Nixon (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) 200.

37. Charles Perry, The Haight-Ashbury: A History (New York: Wenner Books, 2005) 5.

38. Lytle, 199.

“shock troops” of America's cultural wars. Groups like Vietnam protesters and the Black Panthers also drew ire, but hippies represented the greatest threat to older generations and their way of life.<sup>39</sup> In explaining this threat, Farber flirts with a contagion metaphor. Hippies operated by taking up space, occupying certain areas and transforming it according to their worldview.<sup>40</sup> They spread their values to other youths via the drug trade, which Farber dubs “the single most important factor linking the small counterculture with the vast majority of going-to-school, living-at-home young people.”<sup>41</sup> This insight into hippie methodology lends itself perfectly to the spatial politics of Yosemite Valley. A narrow and crowded tourist destination, filled with children on family vacations, presents an ideal environment for examining the ways that hippies disseminated their worldview.

It would be a mistake to place hippies in Yosemite's historical context without examining their other habitats. San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, a mecca for runaways and truth-seekers, presents an opportunity to understand the counterculture's urban origins. Farber characterizes it as “both a literal and, far more often, a figurative destination” for young people looking to find their identities.<sup>42</sup> Unfortunately, it was a victim of its own success. Thousands of runaways flocked to the neighborhood, looking for places to crash; unsanitary living conditions abounded, as did drug abuse. It was no longer a safe place to experiment with communal living and free love.

Charles Perry's *The Haight Ashbury* is especially useful in examining the end of the neighborhood's heyday. An atmosphere of violence took hold, fostered in part by roving black gangs from the nearby Fillmore District that were displaced by new development.

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39. David Farber, *The Age of Great Dreams: America in the 1960s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1994) 168.

40. Ibid, 169.

41. Ibid, 173.

42. Ibid, 169.

Anyone with ill intentions simply took their pick of starry-eyed young victims. Formerly devoted to marijuana and psychedelics, the Haight-Ashbury also experienced an influx of heroin.<sup>43</sup> Perry connects the neighborhood's demise with other events that symbolize the end of the sixties: Altamont, Charles Manson, the deaths of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin, and John Lennon's *Rolling Stone* interview heralding the end of the era's promise.<sup>44</sup> This context offers valuable parallels between the Bay Area and Yosemite. The Haight-Ashbury, and its promises of truth and love, collapsed shortly before Yosemite's countercultural influx. Thus, tourists in the park may not have realized that their obnoxious neighbors were also fleeing civilization—albeit for very different reasons.

It was not solely the Haight-Ashbury that harbored the Bay Area's counterculture. Richard Rorabaugh's *Berkeley at War* explains the exodus from San Francisco to its outlying areas, namely Berkeley's South Campus neighborhood. It shared many of the Haight's amenities: cheap housing, easily accessible drugs, and convenient panhandling.<sup>45</sup> Conflict in 1969 over People's Park, an empty lot marked for University development, presents an interesting parallel with Yosemite's riots. Local members of the counterculture claimed the lot as their own, beautifying the area during community work days. Expecting to be questioned about the park during an upcoming Regents meeting, U.C. Berkeley's chancellor erected a fence and posted 'No Trespassing' signs. Those who had endeavored to create a community space revolted, burning the prohibitive signs and taking back the park. Demonstrators also rained concrete onto the university police officers from nearby

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43. Perry, 272.

44. Ibid, 277.

45. Richard Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War: The 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) 145-146.

rooftops.<sup>46</sup> Like Stoneman Meadow, members of the countercultural community envisioned People's Park as a place for concerts and other gatherings that offered a built-in social hub. The resulting clash demonstrated the importance of green space for the urban counterculture. It also set a precedent for militaristic action against bureaucratic evictions, a pattern that continued in Yosemite.

It is important to view hippies as more than just urban dropouts. If many of them sought the park as an escape from the Haight-Ashbury, then many originally sought San Francisco as an escape from something else. National runaway rates soared during the 1960s, as Christine Chapman notes in her book *America's Runaways*. Many of these delinquents were not simply fleeing terrible home situations; rather, they were escaping middle-class households in order to become nomads.<sup>47</sup> Chapman argues that the perception of the runaway life may have been more scandalous than its reality, noting that “the minds of newspaper readers” ran wild with assumptions of every manner of sexual deviancy.<sup>48</sup> These fears were heightened due to the gender disparity of runaways; in fact, by 1966, missing person reports for girls outnumbered those for boys.<sup>49</sup> Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo's *Daughters of Aquarius* offers an excellent analysis of gender within the counterculture. Her explication of female runaways is especially useful. She argues that perceptions of vulnerability, along with confusion as to why “girls would willingly leave their clean, comfortable middle-class families,” combined to create the impression that female runaways were psychologically damaged. In fact, professional psychiatrists in the 1970s considered

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46. Ibid, 157-162.

47. Christine Chapman, *America's Runaways* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1976) 29.

48. Ibid, 83.

49. Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009) 138.



running away a mental disorder.<sup>50</sup> Although the Haight-Ashbury was the stereotypical runaway destination, Yosemite also received a large volume of missing person reports for juveniles. Both places represented uncharted moral territory, landscapes that could swallow children whole.

While runaways represented a rogue element of youth culture, many family units visited Yosemite as well. The historiography of tourism in the American West is quite strong, but few works include the politics of family vacations. Susan Sessions Rugh carries Marguerite Shaffer's language of national identity into the post-World War II era with her book, *Are We There Yet?* Rugh argues that family vacations were akin to pilgrimages, popular journeys which placed the tourist amongst a larger national community.<sup>51</sup> The outdoors, once limited to men's hunting and fishing trips, increasingly represented wholesome family fun.<sup>52</sup> Underneath such connotations, however, the mere threat of teen sexual behavior simmered.<sup>53</sup> In 1960s Yosemite, then, the omnipresent youth culture—composed of peer-based spontaneous social groupings—represented the impetus of rebellion, sexual or otherwise. As Farber argues, the offer of drugs provided an easy connection between hippies and otherwise upstanding youths. Thus, the presence of the counterculture in Yosemite Valley constituted a threat to the social groupings inherent in family vacations.

For many families in sixties Yosemite Valley, camping was an affordable and enjoyable way to instill outdoor skills in children. There is a widespread perception that camping vacations allowed family members to escape from their identities. However, as Peter Boag argues, camping was less a rebellion than an affirmation. Fathers and mothers,

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50. Ibid.

51. Susan Sessions Rugh, *Are We There Yet?: The Golden Age of American Family Vacations* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2008) 42.

52. Ibid, 120.

53. Ibid, 178.

confined by their everyday duties, found the campsite more conducive to the family ideal of the consensus era.<sup>54</sup> Although the gendered division of labor remained intact, life at the campsite offered simple satisfactions that eluded many in their day-to-day lives. Overall, then, camping families in the sixties were offering “a profound critique of how their work-a-day lives did not provide that which they had come to expect.”<sup>55</sup> Boag’s analysis elucidates Yosemite Valley’s appeal as an escape. Rather than rebel completely, many tourists shaped their campsite in the physical and metaphorical image of their home. The Valley’s campgrounds were not an escape from reality, but miniature theaters in which to create the perfect family—if only for the duration of a vacation.

Families further refined their roles using their hippie neighbors. Camping put families both literally and figuratively closer to hippies than ever before. Thus, the material symbolism of a tent takes on divergent meanings. Phoebe Young’s article “Sleeping Outside” points out that camping in the woods has always connoted “tranquility, freedom, adventure, pleasure, and health”; sleeping outside in the city, however, represents deviancy, filth, and potentially illegal activity.<sup>56</sup> Family camping was an immutably wholesome image. Hippie camping, however, merely perpetuated stereotypes of poor hygiene and material poverty. These dualistic notions existed side by side in Yosemite Valley’s campgrounds. Camping separated families and hippies from their stereotypical habitats—suburbs and “crash pads,” respectively—and placed them in unified material circumstances.

This recreational dissolution of class has a long history. In fact, Warren Belasco argues that auto tourism upended societal structure from its inception. In *Americans on the*

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54. Peter Boag, “Outward Bound: Family, Gender, Environmentalism, and the Postwar Camping Craze, 1945-1970,” *Idaho Yesterdays* 50 (2009): 7-10.

55. Ibid, 13.

56. Phoebe S. Kropp Young, “Sleeping Outside: The Political Natures of Urban Camping,” *Cities and Nature in the American West*, ed. Char Miller (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2010) 173.

*Road*, he explains that touring revealed “a profound desire to discover new perspectives, to experience unconventional intimacies with fellow Americans, and to break away from...urban-industrial civilization.”<sup>57</sup> Like Boag, he argues that tourists were “recreationists, not rebels,” enjoying temporary escapes from everyday life.<sup>58</sup> Belasco begins with “gypsying,” a freewheeling style in which families slept in orchards, by streams, or on the side of the road. This devil-may-care approach allowed Americans to shed their class identities, reveling in their ruggedness. Municipal campgrounds emerged in the 1920s, offering “social control” in the form of centralized camping grounds.<sup>59</sup> Over time, campsites evolved into cabins; cabins morphed into motor courts. This increasingly regulated industry fostered economic discrimination: proprietors wanted to attract the “right” kind of tourist, not just vagabonds. Belasco asserts that auto tourists’ independent streak was eventually overshadowed by their consumer sensibilities—they valued freedom, but they also wanted comfort and service.<sup>60</sup> *Americans on the Road* underscores the importance of automotive tourism, noting that physical mobility fostered socioeconomic fluidity as well.

More theoretical treatments of tourism are also useful in examining sixties Yosemite. In his groundbreaking work *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell explains the way that travel has changed modern society. In the industrial era, he argues, jobs were the primary means of self-identification. In the postindustrial era, however, experiences have supplanted employment as “the ultimate deposit of values.”<sup>61</sup> Thus, tourism represents a way to acquire more cultural cachet, a process that paradoxically elevates the individual through reliance

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57. Warren Belasco, *Americans on the Road: From Autocamp to Motel, 1910-1945* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1979) 3.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid, 4.

60. Ibid, 5.

61. Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) 28.

upon “connecting one's own marker to a sight already marked by others.”<sup>62</sup> Despite their differences, both hippies and families participated in the rituals described in *The Tourist*. MacCannell's analysis meshes especially well with the 1960s because of his focus on the recreationally avid middle-class that “systematically scavenges the earth for new experiences.”<sup>63</sup> Harkening back to Eric Beck's assertion of a leisure class at either end of the economic spectrum, MacCannell's work seems to actually *unite* hippies with Yosemite's family vacationers. Both groups eschewed traditional industrial modes of self-identification, opting instead to seek authenticity through new experiences.

Other theoretical avenues prove useful in untangling the city/park dichotomy inherent in sixties Yosemite. Perhaps most important is William Cronon's ubiquitous “The Trouble With Wilderness,” a subtle post-structural critique of the boundary between man and nature. Wilderness, he argues, is not apart from civilization—rather, it is a *product* of it.<sup>64</sup> When humans view nature, they are in fact projecting their own preconceptions onto it, thus perpetuating a feedback loop that inextricably melds wilderness and civilization.<sup>65</sup> In the case of Yosemite Valley, the terms *urban* and *rural* lose much of their meaning. By the 1960s, the Valley was more or less a city. And yet city-dwellers continued to flock there, despite the fact increasingly resembled their everyday lives. Thus, the perceived separation between Yosemite and its outlying urban areas slowly evaporated. This was only due partially to the urbanization of the Valley itself. National trends, like suburbanization and

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62. Ibid, 137.

63. Ibid, 13.

64. William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature, ed. William Cronon (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995) 69-70.

65. Two of the most successful applications of Cronon's thesis are David Louter, Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010) and Richard White, Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996).

white flight, painted cities as dangerous and dirty places. Hippies, too, were beginning to see cities in different lights, given the dystopian end of the Haight-Ashbury dream. The boundary between man and nature, fallacious since its inception, acquired new significance from national trends of the 1960s.

The perception Yosemite as an urban area changed the geography of the American West. Early in its life, the park's isolation and difficult access shaped its image as a stronghold of nature. With the rise of the automobile, however, Yosemite's borders became more permeable, its wild image more ambiguous. Thus, cars have historically blurred the lines between park space and civilization. In his book *Driven Wild*, historian Paul Sutter investigates "the causative importance of road building and the nascent American car culture to the emergence of modern wilderness advocacy."<sup>66</sup> He argues that wilderness, commonly perceived as an ethereal concept, has instead been shaped by "material and cultural context."<sup>67</sup> In other words, each era reworks natural ideals to fit its circumstances. Reactions to traffic in sixties Yosemite, then, were not simply products of a timeless wilderness paradigm. Instead, they were criticisms of the postwar boom in single-family housing, the rise in auto ownership, and the resulting impersonal landscapes. By bridging the gap between everyday life and outdoor escapes, cars opened new spatial connections across the American West.

It is inherently ironic to experience nature through a machine. In *Windshield Wilderness*, David Louter explains this contradiction as a consequence of modernity. Like Cronon, Louter dispels our self-perceived separation from the wilderness. Louter, however, uses cars to deconstruct the man/nature dichotomy.

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66. Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002) 10.

67. Ibid.

Automobiles and the highways they travel have shortened the distance and time it takes to reach national parks. They have brought the cities in which we live and the parks we visit closer together. In our minds as well as on our journeys out of town, the places we live and the natural places we visit merge. They have become part of the same mental as well as physical geography.<sup>68</sup>

In other words, cars have reorganized modern lives. Not only do they facilitate point-to-point travel, but they also offer an easy transition between work and leisure. Thus, automobile tourism actually erodes the boundary between wilderness and civilization, even as park boundaries strive to reinforce it. Historically, Yosemite has symbolized an escape from the world around it. In the sixties, however, the park landscape mirrored the world outside its gates. Copious traffic reinforced the material aspects of this resemblance. On a deeper level, automobiles also remapped Yosemite in relation to the spaces of everyday life.

Even without cars, people can create their own geographies. Mobility in the American West implies the presence of boundaries—some political, some environmental, others completely imaginary. As Virginia Scharff reminds us in her book *Twenty Thousand Roads*, gender constitutes an equally important set of demarcations. The West, she argues, was mapped “by, for, and about men.”<sup>69</sup> Of particular use to my study is Scharff’s chapter on Pamela Des Barres, renowned groupie and product of the sixties counterculture. Male heroes of the sixties have no doubt received their due. Women of the era, Scharff contends, must be liberated from the role of spectator and treated as actors in their own right. Des Barres continually transgressed boundaries in the name of meeting her musical icons. As a teenager, she hitchhiked from her parents’ home in Reseda to roam the Sunset Strip. Once, she snuck into a Bel Air subdivision where the Beatles were staying. Scharff asserts that Des

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68. Louter, 3-4.

69. Virginia Scharff, *Twenty Thousand Roads: Women, Movement, and the West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 4.

Barres' travel between music clubs, hotels, and her childhood home redrew the geography of Los Angeles County:

Military commanders name their battles for landmarks, for rivers or towns, churches or courthouses. Pamela met the beloved enemy not in forest and field, but in a dizzying, shifting array of hotel rooms and limousines, nightclubs and arenas, bungalows and apartments, passed through, left behind. She mapped her landscape not by sight or place, but by something much more memorable, pervasive, significant: sound.<sup>70</sup>

The sound, of course, refers to rock 'n' roll music, the driving force behind her constant exploration. Des Barres' personalized mapping belies much more than a passive spectator. By mapping her exploits and naming her conquests, Des Barres willed her own geography to life. Many women of the counterculture eschewed the template of appropriate female spaces, opting instead to create their own.

Mapping denotes a definitive two-dimensional representation of borders and boundaries, yet national or international trends can create quantum geographical links uniting vastly different landscapes. The historiography of the "global 1968" provides a useful framework for situating the smaller events inside larger cultural currents. In his study of East and West Germany, Timothy Brown argues that scholars must "imagine how local actors imagined themselves onto the world, creating alternative cognitive maps."<sup>71</sup> The idea of cognitive mapping facilitates the creation of alternate geographies, reflective of cultural linkages rather than spatial proximity.

Quinn Slobodian's *Foreign Front*, a history of the West German counterculture's interaction with the Third World, also succeeds in creating alternative maps. Not only does

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70. Ibid, 172.

71. Timothy S. Brown, "1968' East vs. West: Divided Germany as a Case Study in Transnational History," American Historical Review 114 (2009): 70.

he liberate the decade's historiography from its dependence on the United States, but he realigns his narrative according “alternate alliances” previously obscured by dominant 1960s narratives.<sup>72</sup> In mediating between local events and national—or even global—trends, there emerges two separate but intertwined significances for each event. Yosemite Valley's hippie struggles may not have been globally significant, but they occurred at a time in which small and isolation actions of protest were really not small or isolated at all. The cultural linkages to Washington, D.C., the Bay Area, and other national parks reorganized popular conceptions of the American West's geography, reflecting the influence of the counterculture in linking disparate spaces together. Thus, rethinking Yosemite's geography, both at the local and national levels, reveals new spatial threads that posit park visitors as self-conscious actors in America's most infamous decade.

Mapping can elucidate cultural connections, but it also carries moral significance. Amy DeRogatis' book *Moral Geography* offers a new perspective on the sixties counterculture and its occupation of space. Using the nineteenth-century settlement of western New York and Ohio, she shows that frontier spaces are often deemed morally ambiguous at best and sinful at worst. Yosemite Valley endured similar skepticism in the 1960s. DeRogatis argues that “mental maps, like drawn maps, inscribe landscape with human meaning and desires.”<sup>73</sup> Hippies were dirty, loud, uncouth, and threatening to order; as a result, the places they occupied adopted the same stigma. Thus, Yosemite Valley became unofficially reorganized according to the counterculture's chosen locales. Families and Park Service officials implicitly recognized that certain places were indefinitely off-

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72. Quinn Slobodian, *Foreign Front: Third World Politics in Sixties West Germany* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012) 7.

73. Amy DeRogatis, *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) 17.



limits.

It was not solely the Valley itself that adjusted spatially to the hippie presence. As David Sibley argues in *Geographies of Exclusion*, “there are enduring images of 'other' people and 'other' places which are combined in the construction of geographies of belonging and exclusion, from the global to the local.”<sup>74</sup> National parks had long been envisioned as a network of sacred places belonging to the American public—what Sibley would term “the pure.” Rather than stand aside its sister Western parks, like Yellowstone and Grand Canyon, sixties Yosemite became known as an integral stop in countercultural networks of travel; in essence, it became “defiled.” The park became an escape from authority, rather than an escape from society's ills. Yosemite's new reputation aligned it more with urban centers like San Francisco and Los Angeles instead of other Western parks. Thus, the emergence of a new moral geography rearranged some of the most popular tourist corridors in the nation.

Assessing Yosemite's connection to the sixties involves a delicate balance between regional and national. Furthermore, it demands a variety of tools. Historiographies of the park itself offer valuable background, but they generally fall short of acknowledging countercultural influence. Books on the Bay Area offer bountiful analysis of hippies and other subcultures, but very few make connections to Yosemite. Climbing-related sources offer insight through the lens of recreation. Histories of Mission 66 generally focus on architecture and infrastructure, though they also provide insight into park politics of the time. Of course, Yosemite must be viewed in the context of the environmental movement as well. Sources on hippies run the gamut from silly to scholarly. The historiography of tourism in the American West is valuable, and subfields like camping are just beginning to emerge in

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74. David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* (London: Routledge, 1995) 69.

their own right. Spatial theory is essential in parsing the cultural divisions of the sixties, both within the Valley and across the nation. When combined, these sources prove effective tools in uniting the park with the rest of the nation. Too long severed from the culture that reveres it, Yosemite deserves more attention as a microcosm of—and reaction to—the external circumstances that only serve to reinforce its importance.



*Figure 3: A political cartoon demonstrating the specter of the Stoneman riot.  
Publication unknown. Protection Division Riot Box.*

## **CHAPTER TWO: “An Occupied Zone”**

Memorializing a battle does not mark the end of conflict. Edward T. Linenthal has argued that fears of “spatial contamination” emerged after the Battle of Gettysburg: Union monuments were not allowed behind Confederate battle lines, and vice versa.<sup>1</sup> However, Linenthal's words also apply to sites lacking physical memorials. Although battle lines were never recreated at Stoneman Meadow, the riot itself prompted a war for space in Yosemite Valley. During Labor Day, the next major holiday weekend, park rangers utilized extreme measures to exclude hippies from the park. Yosemite abandoned this military ethos after the holiday went smoothly. In its place, however, a new form of social control arose in the guise

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1. Edward T. Linenthal, Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993) 106.

of accommodation. New evening programs emerged, tailored to the psychedelic desires of the counterculture. Park rangers, previously regarded as unhip, updated their images to mirror the park's young visitors. Although they appeared genuine, these accommodationist policies actually shared the same goal as Yosemite's Labor Day tactics. If hippies could not be excluded entirely, they would be segregated instead.

News of the July 4<sup>th</sup> riot spread rapidly. Public opinion vacillated from condemnation of the rangers' brutality to vexation regarding America's youth. The ensuing fallout cast the park in an unfavorable light, but nothing could slow the summer tourist season. N.P.S. officials had two months to prepare for Labor Day, another holiday that promised a hippie influx. The *Berkeley Tribe*, a popular counterculture publication, reacted rather predictably to the riot. In an article titled "A Blade of Grass," it stated that "[t]he Yosemite Liberation Front is currently having a membership drive aiming for a 10,000-freak army by Labor Day. Come prepared—bring dope, maps, music, marijuana seeds, bodies, equipment (technical and otherwise), food, imagination. See you in the park..."<sup>2</sup>

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Late in August of 1970, an Emergency Planning Council convened in Sacramento. U.S. Marshals, F.B.I. agents, U.S. Attorneys from California, superintendents and rangers from other parks, and the governor's own personnel all attended. Yosemite's Assistant Superintendent, Russ Olson, stated that rangers "were not expecting much in the way of a problem with the 'hippies' over Labor Day."<sup>3</sup> An assistant to the governor noted that was no "street talk"<sup>4</sup> about Yosemite, and that no pamphlets were circulating regarding a protest.

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2. "A Blade of Grass," *Berkeley Tribe*, July 17-24, 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

3. Emergency Planning Council Meeting (With State and Federal Agency Representatives). August 21, 1970. RMR, Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

4. Ibid.

Apparently, the hippie emphasis had shifted to the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles and San Francisco, as well as an American Legion convention in Portland.<sup>5</sup> The same planning council met a week later, noting that a camp-in for gay liberation on the Kern River and some dynamite stolen in the Modoc National Forest also presented reason for concern. With regards to Yosemite, intelligence noted that Sentinel Beach would be the most likely target for hippie action. If hippies were turned away at park gates, they would most likely head for the resort town of Bass Lake, near the southern entrance to Yosemite.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the conflicting reports, park officials knew they could not be caught off guard a second time. One of the hallmarks of the Stoneman riot was the need for reinforcements from other jurisdictions.<sup>7</sup> The plan for Labor Day was no different. Sixty-five park rangers from outlying parks were imported to beef up law enforcement presence, “all fresh from cram courses on law enforcement techniques and crowd control.”<sup>8</sup> United States Park Police, deployed after the Stoneman riot, stayed in the park to train park rangers in crowd dispersal.<sup>9</sup> Park Police represented an especially drastic change for Yosemite. Trained in crowded urban parks, the U.S.P.P. was accustomed to protest, dissent, and overall chaos. Furthermore, their primarily martial skillset contrasted sharply with the stereotype of Western park rangers as friends of the forest—biologists, botanists, storytellers, and hosts. The presence of imported park rangers, along with the Park Police, showed that Yosemite was preparing for the worst.

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5. Ibid.

6. Intelligence Meeting-Emergency Planning Council, August 28, 1970. RMR, Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

7. Avedisian, 40. Agencies that responded to the park included the sheriff's offices of Madera County, Merced County, and Fresno County; police departments of Fresno and Merced; and the U.S. Marshals. 146 individuals from those agencies were utilized.

8. “Rangers Ready for Trouble at Yosemite,” San Francisco Examiner, September 3, 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

9. Jack Hope, “Hassles in the Park,” Natural History 80 (1971): 84. Protection Division Riot Collection.

Despite these cooperative efforts, however, the park's most innovative policies came from within. All entrance stations were to stay open twenty-four hours a day. In addition to fee collectors, each gate was to be staffed by three to four rangers with shotguns visible in order to present a “strong show of force.”<sup>10</sup> More than just symbols of might, these rangers were integral to the park's most controversial policy: vehicle inspections. If a car was found to have any kind of defect—dim headlights, bald tires, broken horn—it was sent out of the park until the matter was corrected.<sup>11</sup> The associate director of the N.P.S. even admitted that he “sure as hell” was concerned about a hippie gathering, stating that long-haired youths would receive an “extra close look.”<sup>12</sup> In the same article, Yosemite's acting superintendent denied that these discriminatory statements represented the park's plans.<sup>13</sup> Park officials were torn. On one hand, they wanted to show that stronger measures were in place to protect public safety. On the other, however, many of these measures would surely anger the visitors they were meant to protect.

Park rangers were caught in the middle of Yosemite's countercultural woes. The riot, and the ensuing public reaction, changed the image of rangers virtually overnight. Traditionally, they represented a blend of hospitality worker, mountain man, and scholar that appealed equally to parents and children. They led hikes by day and gave campfire talks at night; if the need arose, they performed rescues, as well. Western park rangers, in particular, were stereotyped as foresters, botanists, and geologists—about as far from policemen as one could get.<sup>14</sup> Their role as “protector of park resources and host to park visitors” changed

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10. Major Criticisms of July 4 Operation: Recommendations for Future Operations. Protection Division Riot Collection.

11. Ibid.

12. “Rangers Ready for Trouble at Yosemite.”

13. Ibid.

14. “Inquiry Seeks to Dig Up Facts on Park Clash,” The National Observer, August 24, 1970.





Figure 4: The new image of Yosemite's park rangers. *Berkeley Tribe*, August 14-21, 1970. Protection Division Riot Box.

almost overnight.<sup>15</sup> Rangers had to forget their roles as “protectors of the flowers and trees and become policemen.”<sup>16</sup> They were caught between naturalist and enforcer. In short, the Stoneman riot prompted both Yosemite and its rangers to assume new roles.

Yosemite had changed—no one could deny it. The *Berkeley Tribe* called the park “an

15. Secretary of Interior Hickel, letter to Mr. Sidney B. Gorchov, October 1, 1970. RMR, Series 1, Subseries 9, Box 15.

16. “Park Rangers Face New Task as Policemen,” *Fresno Bee*, July 19, 1970.

occupied zone,” an apt description of the park's pseudo-military atmosphere.<sup>17</sup> It also noted that Yosemite “may have started a trend by becoming the first National Park to effectively close its gates to freaks, longhairs, misfits.”<sup>18</sup> Although the park's gates weren't necessarily closed, a new system of vehicle inspections allowed rangers to control access as they pleased. The *Tribe* noted that if no irregularities were found rangers would “use their ace in the hole—a loud muffler—which always bothers their sensitive ears.”<sup>19</sup> Concerned citizens noticed this discrimination, even if they were not its victims. Older visitors wrote their Congressional representatives to protest the targeting of “young people, especially if they were in old cars or Volkswagons [sic] or were dressed suitably for hiking, camping, or climbing.”<sup>20</sup> Younger visitors complained that the mere presence of mountaineering gear aroused the suspicion of rangers.<sup>21</sup> Even the executive director of the ACLU wrote the Regional Director of the N.P.S., who denied any such prejudice.<sup>22</sup>

Increased security measures afforded rangers considerable independence with regard to park regulations. One ranger estimated that he denied entrance to forty percent of the vehicles he checked. Another complained that young visitors were parking down the road and entering with other groups; this prompted him to check “approximately 100%” of cars at his duty station.<sup>23</sup> Not surprisingly, those deemed “straights” or “family types” were not hassled.<sup>24</sup> Labor Day plans also stressed California Welfare and Institutions Code Section 601, which targeted youths deemed “in danger of leading an idle, dissolute, lewd, or immoral

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17. “A Blade of Grass.”

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Letter to Congressman B.F. Sisk, July 20, 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

21. Letter to Secretary of Interior Walter Hickel, July 19, 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

22. Ernest Besig, letter to Joseph Rumberg, Jr., July 24, 1970; response August 4, 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

23. Ibid.

24. Activity Log, C.O. Post (Labor Day Weekend, 1970). Protection Division Riot Collection



life.”<sup>25</sup> A 1971 decision that invoked Section 601 to authorize court jurisdiction over a juvenile was remanded in 1974, when federal judges deemed its standards “too vague to serve as a constitutionally permissible standard on which to base an arrest.”<sup>26</sup> In preparation for Labor Day, Yosemite's administration embraced potentially illegal procedures. Thus the park administration asserted ultimate control over public space; rangers determined who could enter, and who could not.

The vehicle search was the most conspicuous element in the park's new approach. Even visitors who were granted entrance sat in long lines, watching rangers turn around certain vehicles. Park officials also relied on more subversive tactics, some of which never made the final draft of the Labor Day plan. Rough drafts of the park's operating procedures provide insight into other proposed means of spatial control. In one draft of Yosemite's plan for Labor Day, it was recommended that “all persons requesting a campground assignment who appear to be potential law violators should be placed in Camp 11”,<sup>27</sup> this was excluded from the final draft, but it was echoed in an unofficial memo from the same period.<sup>28</sup> The final draft simply strove to avoid “the assignment of many adjacent sites to similarly interested groups.”<sup>29</sup> The command center also requested to be notified when the campgrounds received large groups from Berkeley, Hayward, or Fremont, nearby urban areas charged with major roles in the Stoneman fiasco.<sup>30</sup> Park officials utilized two methods of spatial control over Labor Day weekend. Not only did they restrict access to the park, but they created spaces of quarantine for undesirables who somehow eluded vehicle inspectors.

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25. Operational Plan—Labor Day Holiday Period, 1970.

26. National Criminal Justice Reference Service, “Jurisdiction: Status Offenses” (Washington, D.C.: U.S Department of Justice, 1977).

27. Operational Plan, Labor Day Weekend 1970--2<sup>nd</sup> Draft. Protection Division Riot Collection.

28. Undated pre-Labor Day meeting notes. Protection Division Riot Collection.

29. Operational Plan, Labor Day Weekend 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

30. Undated pre-Labor Day meeting notes. Protection Division Riot Collection.

Beyond the show of force and the controlled access lay a fear that, despite increased security, something would still happen. Incoming automobiles were being checked but there was always the chance that dissidents could find weapons within the park. A week before Labor Day, a security guard employed by the park concessionaire found 1,000 rocks stockpiled near the Park Police's housing—quite close to Stoneman Meadow.<sup>31</sup> A large supply of explosives was stolen from the California Division of Highways' powder magazine in Coulterville, roughly an hour and a half away from Yosemite Valley.<sup>32</sup> In turn, the park moved its dynamite cache from a central location in Yosemite Valley to its “outlying district caches” the week before Labor Day.<sup>33</sup> Although the park aimed to exclude any would-be miscreants, the fear of violence lurked around every corner. A militarized atmosphere hung over the park.

Increased media scrutiny only added to the tension. Still reeling from July 4<sup>th</sup>, the park was desperate for a quiet weekend. The Labor Day plan made it clear that “[t]he eyes and ears of the country will be focused on Yosemite during this period.”<sup>34</sup> Rangers kept an ongoing log throughout the weekend, a notepad filled with every phone call, observation, and suspicion regarding counterculture activity. An onslaught of media requests strained Yosemite's public relations machinery. News stations from Los Angeles and Sacramento taped interviews with management assistant Larry Quist. The Los Angeles Times and San Francisco Chronicle called continuously, hoping for new scoops.<sup>35</sup> Sadly for news outlets, nothing materialized during Labor Day: the park had a busy but successful holiday. On the

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31. Memo to rangers from Law Enforcement Specialist, August 27, 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

32. Memo to rangers from Law Enforcement Investigator, August 27, 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

33. Operational Plan, Labor Day Holiday Period, 1970. Protection Division Riot Collection.

34. Operational Plan, Labor Day Weekend 1970. RMR, Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

35. Activity Log, C.O. Post (Labor Day Weekend, 1970).

evening of Sunday, September 6<sup>th</sup>, a reporter called asking if the park had “won the battle”; the commanding officer replied, “[T]here wasn't one.”<sup>36</sup> After the dust settled, Yosemite's rangers and administrators had time to congratulate themselves. A law enforcement briefing commended the rangers for a “good clean crisp weekend,” stressing the advantage of being “‘combat ready' at all times.”<sup>37</sup>

Yosemite's newly militarized mindset marked a major image change. Although the park managed to keep order throughout the weekend, many noticed the increasingly tense mood inside Yosemite. Gone was the “friendly, pipe-smoking interpreter of the nation's wonderlands.”<sup>38</sup> In his place was an enforcer, trained with pistols, explosives, and chemical agents. As the public learned, these new emphases were largely the result of federal action—a special 40-man supervisory team, drawn from the U.S. Park Police and divided among the Park Service's six regions.<sup>39</sup> Helmets, sidearms, and handcuffs presented a public relations dilemma. In a memo to superintendents, the director of the Western Region stressed the importance of “soften[ing] the visual effect” so that park rangers did not appear “a threat, either physical or psychological.”<sup>40</sup> Yosemite's increased security expended more than social capital. One journalist estimated that the Stoneman incident and its resulting precautions had cost the N.P.S. roughly \$270,000.<sup>41</sup>

Yosemite's response to the Stoneman riot demonstrated that parks were national spaces, subject to authoritarian social controls. The vehicle checkpoints constituted a

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36. Ibid.

37. Briefing sheet, September 13, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

38. “Riot Echo: Smokey Dons His Police Helmet, Grabs Weapon,” Fresno Bee, Sunday, May 16, 1971. Protection Division Riot Collection.

39. Ibid.

40. Memo from Acting Director, Western Region, to Western Region Superintendents, November 23, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

41. Hope, 85-86.

forceful response to the events of July 4<sup>th</sup>, but inside the park attitudes took a different turn. Park officials were willing to experiment with spatial segregation in order to separate hippies from normal vacationers—*straights*, as they were called. Checkpoints were a temporary solution, more effective as symbols of power than anything else. Segregation, on the other hand, had the potential to create a lasting detente. Yosemite was well equipped to accommodate Boy Scouts, family camping vacations, and budding photographers—in other words, *normal* park visitors. Hippies, on the other hand, threatened these traditional users. Their wilderness ethics challenged Boy Scout codes, their morals disrupted family vacations, and their large gatherings sullied the park's landscape. By quarantining the counterculture, park officials could isolate their most problematic visitors without technically excluding them.

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Desperate for a quiet Labor Day weekend, Yosemite's administration utilized every tool at its disposal: vehicle checks, hippie quarantine, and even intelligence from outside sources. Park law enforcement cast a wide net in targeting potential troublemakers. Though hippies were the worst threat, any young person operating independently of adult authority was also considered suspicious. A draft of the park's Labor Day plan recommended a drastic policy revision:

No person under the age of 18 years may enter Yosemite National Park unless such a person is accompanied by their parent or lawfully appointed guardian, PROVIDED, however that this section shall not apply to persons under the age of 18 years seeking to enter the park as part of an organized educational or youth group under the supervision of an adequate number of responsible adults.<sup>42</sup>

Although this provision was excluded from the final draft, it made park priorities clear.

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42. Operational Plan, Labor Day Weekend 1970 (2<sup>nd</sup> draft). Protection Division Riot Collection.

Acceptable young visitors were those accompanied by adults. Unsupervised youths, on the other hand constituted a distinct threat to the park's moral environment. Even those with backpacking or climbing gear, and thus clear recreational intentions, were refused entrance. Thus, a line was drawn between desirable and undesirable visitors.

Before the events at Stoneman Meadow, the public was largely unaware of Yosemite's hippie problem. Afterward, however, journalists called attention to the park's culture war. A writer for the *New York Times* asserted that “younger campers feel shut out and separated from a park system that seems uncomfortable over their presence.”<sup>43</sup> Furthering the retirement home analogy, the article criticized Yosemite's focus on “a richer, older generation”: expensive bars and restaurants, formal dress codes in the Ahwahnee Hotel, and campfire talks that functioned as “an hour of mass babysitting.”<sup>44</sup> The counterculture publication *Berkeley Tribe* advised those seeking to “escape pigs and hassles of the city” against visiting the park, stating that non-traditional visitors would only find the same kind of repression that plagued them elsewhere.<sup>45</sup> Hippies had become Yosemite's underclass.

Park officials expressed this exclusionary sentiment without hesitation. Superintendent Lynn Thompson public voiced his displeasure with the “unwashed, unkempt and uncouth.”<sup>46</sup> The park's assistant superintendent during the riot, Russell Olsen, broke down youthful park visitors into four categories. Category #1 consisted of “young people of affluent circumstances” that “tend to be inconspicuous and rarely demonstrate.”<sup>47</sup> Category #2 shared the same economic background, but they tended to “feel the work of the world is

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43. Robert Jones, “National Parks: A Report on the Range War at Generation Gap,” *New York Times*, July 25, 1971.

44. Ibid.

45. “A Blade of Grass”

46. “The Fig Leaf,” October 25, 1972. RMR Series 11, Subseries 3-7, Box 2.

47. “A Park Administrator's View of Social Change.” Undated. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

done,” finding little to life “beyond surface hedonistic enjoyment”; this group brought “noise, vandalism and rioting.”<sup>48</sup> Category #3 was filled with youths that “work for everything—the essay contest winners, those who are determined, earnest, and motivated.”<sup>49</sup> Category #4 was “a sad collection of youngsters who lack ability to progress with society,” who “do not understand time or appointments.”<sup>50</sup> Not surprisingly, group #1 and group #3 constituted the park’s preferred visitors.

The exclusion of the anti-youth provision from official Labor Day plans symbolized a change of heart. Privately, park administrators fretted over the hippie invasion. Publicly, however, the N.P.S. attempted to update its image. In the years following the riot, the Secretary of the Interior announced plans “to give young people a better experience in the parks.”<sup>51</sup> His suggestions included adding younger rangers to park staffs, providing cheaper campsites, and offering “rock music, rap sessions, [and] ecology talks and walks.”<sup>52</sup> Yosemite internalized this agenda. The park’s *Pre-Plan* for the summer of 1971 showcased many of these changes. It suggested an additional handout titled “Rules are a Drag,” as well as “rap sessions” in campgrounds explaining the rationale behind park regulations.<sup>53</sup> The plan also recommended using the “ecology approach as the bait to get them in.”<sup>54</sup> Rather than sticking with traditional campfire programs that stressed park history, Yosemite began to offer new activities in an attempt to connect with its college-age visitors: evening presentations with music and light shows, floating excursions on the Merced River, concerts and poetry readings, bike rides, rock climbing classes, arts and crafts demonstrations, and

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48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Remarks at N.P.S. Centennial Banquet, 1972. RMR Series 11, Subseries 3-7, Box 2.

52. Ibid.

53. Yosemite Pre-Plan, Summer 1971. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

54. Ibid.

programs stressing Miwok Indian culture.<sup>55</sup>

Yosemite's new evening programs counteracted the notion that Yosemite catered to the elderly. These new forms of entertainment brought with them an updated image of the ranger, presumably to replace the N.P.S.'s valuable pre-riot stereotype:

I was heading over [to Camp 14] with a couple of guys I had just fallen in with, and we were tripping over picnic tables and we realized the camp was abandoned. But we heard Joni Mitchell singing in the distance, singing 'Pave paradise and put up parking lots,' and there was a screen full of mirror images of suburbia, roads, houses...and then Frank Zappa songs and Cat Stevens...and then after the slide show they invited us around the campfire to rap. And Bob Fry was there and he talked about yoga...he was a traditional park ranger type, but here he was talking about yoga and wilderness ethics...<sup>56</sup>

These slideshows often resembled parties, or at least easily-controllable alternatives.

Rangers began to look different, even growing mustaches in an attempt to blend in with the park's hippie clientele.<sup>57</sup> The Park Service sought employees that represented "the right mixture of 'a hip' and 'a ranger.'"<sup>58</sup> Freed to talk about matters dear to their own hearts, rangers embraced their new role as youth ambassadors:

We did a lot of things that were party-like. We played rock and roll music on a quadraphonic sound system, we had a huge screen with six or eight slide projectors, two movie projectors....It would start out with Pink Floyd...pictures of Yosemite...and we had volunteers who were musicians who would play guitar and sing....Some evenings we took people on moonlight walks up to Vernal Falls with one hundred people holding hands in the dark, no flashlights, walking up the mist trail. Just grooving, quote grooving, on nature.<sup>59</sup>

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55. Avedisian, 72-73.

56. Dean Shenk, interview by Laura Avedisian. Avedisian, 73.

57. Taylor, 200.

58. Law Enforcement Report, 3/25/72-4/2/72. RMR Series 11: Subseries 3-7, Box 2.

59. Bob Roney, interview with Laura Avedisian. Avedisian, 76.

These new forms of recreation were sanctioned, even as they were also attractive to younger visitors. Park employee Bob Roney recalled that the idea was to provide “the appearance of a party,” while also delivering the message that parks were more than “a place to come and escape authority.”<sup>60</sup> These evening programs also created concentrations of younger visitors, keeping potential troublemakers occupied. The new evening talks were not exactly lawless, but they were close. Visitors reported that the law enforcement practices at these evening shows involved a ranger extinguishing joints with a water pistol.<sup>61</sup>

The park's research on hippies suggested that tension resulted from “putting into close contact two groups who represent vastly different value structures.”<sup>62</sup> As a result, Yosemite's new policy made spatial segregation more palatable for the counterculture. Late in the summer of 1971, Yosemite introduced Yellow Pines campground, which directly catered to youthful visitors.<sup>63</sup> Yellow Pines was cheaper, and it offered an unusual payment option: if you picked up a bag of trash, you stayed free for one night. More importantly, it was more than a mile from other campgrounds, which helped the N.P.S. separate “noisy teenagers from Mom and Pop America.”<sup>64</sup> The evening youth programs often took place in a closed campground or another theater that would guarantee separation from other more traditional campers. Happy Isles, at the far eastern end of Yosemite Valley, offered a secluded amphitheater perfect for evening rap sessions. Camp 14 hosted these events prior during a brief closure for maintenance, but once it was reopened traditional campfire programs were resumed. The park's goal of hippie quarantine was achieved in the guise of accommodation.

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60. Roney interview. Ibid, 76.

61. Ibid, 77.

62. “Observations of Discussions with Young 'Hippie' Campers,” RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 4.

63. Yellow Pine was eventually renamed Muir Tree, probably due to the popular rhyme: “Smoke a little dope, drink a little wine, let's go down to Yellow Pine!” Avedisian, 75.

64. Shenk interview. Ibid, 75.



Yosemite's struggle with the counterculture mirrored that of the nation's metropolitan areas. For the first time, park rangers were confronted with the same duties as city police forces and the National Guard. The continued presence of the U.S. Park Police, experts at policing urban parks, further emphasized this connection. Yosemite faced the same issues as other law enforcement agencies in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but its situation remained unique. The park experimented with different ways of controlling hippie behavior: crowd dispersal, outright exclusion, and accommodation. Not surprisingly, the first two met with resistance from hippies and straights alike. Though it seemed an admission of defeat, the park's accommodationist strategy was actually a victory. The N.P.S. ceded parts of Yosemite Valley to the counterculture. In return, however, the Park Service gained a method of social control that hippies themselves had sanctioned. Bike rides, ecology walks, and campfire talks all marked instances of structural articulation. On one hand, they isolated hippies for hours at a time, thus reducing their impact on other visitors; on the other, they allowed youths to feel welcomed. Rather than violently controlling an invading population, the Park Service actually guided the invasion. This accommodation adapted the cultural tensions of the era within Yosemite Valley's unique geography.

## CHAPTER THREE: Moral Geography

In her work *Moral Geography: Maps, Missionaries, and the American Frontier*, Amy DeRogatis explores missionary activity in the Western Reserve during the nineteenth century. Mediating between the symbolic and physical meanings of landscape, she examines the processes by which humans “conflate the physical and the moral landscapes” around them.<sup>1</sup> Because they resided in the wilderness, settlers in sparsely populated areas of Western New York and Ohio were feared to practice immoral behavior like swearing, drinking, and cheating. Timothy Dwight, president of Yale and chairman of the Connecticut Missionary Society, pled with former residents of Connecticut who had relocated to the Western Reserve (optimistically known as New Connecticut) to maintain their former society's material and ethical traditions. In stressing proper town planning and material culture to these transplants, Dwight was attempting to “inscribe a particular moral meaning onto a contested frontier landscape.”<sup>2</sup> DeRogatis explicates the connection between Christianity and Christian habits, showing that morality was ensconced in day-to-day activities as well as ceremony. She effectively uses cognitive maps, “imaginary models [imposed] upon places and sometimes people,” to show that landscapes have moral meaning.<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not it was a frontier landscape, Yosemite Valley in the late 1960s was certainly contested. For many hippies, it represented a place to hide. It was a happy medium of sorts, a wild but also fairly civilized place to pursue communal living and other ideals. In turn, the places they chose to eat, sleep, and recreate became permanently associated with

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1. DeRogatis, 1.

2. Ibid, 3.

3. Ibid, 4.

countercultural values. David Farber has argued that the counterculture was dedicated to claiming space, “taking over a few city blocks or a few acres of countryside and trying to make a world out of it, a place where all the old rules were up for grabs.”<sup>4</sup> Their continued presence in certain areas of Yosemite Valley indeed reformed the *old rules*, especially when juxtaposed with the morals of other tourists. Stoneman Meadow became much more than a mountain meadow with a marvelous view. Instead, it was a social hub of young adult activity, a place where hippies, employees, and youths on vacation with parents could meet and form spontaneous social networks. Of course, it also transformed the rules of the park experience. Youths could drink, smoke marijuana, and stay out late. They could play music and dance. Separate from their family units, young hippies in Yosemite seized the opportunity to subvert parentally- and federally-prescribed norms. Stoneman Meadow, and other places like it, were essential to Yosemite Valley's moral geography.

This new spatial conception evolved using input from two opposing forces: park administration and hippies. Hippies simply chose certain meadows, bridges and parking areas as recreational sites, thus marking them for transgressive activities. The park's administration had the more difficult job: codifying the hippies' behavioral patterns and aberrations. Yosemite already had its own legal code, but the countercultural influx demanded some new interpretation. By studying these new specimens, park rangers knew what to expect and how to prosecute it. Rangers identified hippies by their deviations from conventional moral codes. Thus, nudity, drug use, and pets off leash became more than simple violations—they were essential parts of hippie morality. Once park rangers figured how to encapsulate the hippie lifestyle into a litany of punishable offenses, the hippies' moral deviancy was set in stone. The merger between the counterculture's chosen places and the

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4. Farber, *Age*, 169.

park's study of hippie behavior combined to create new conception of Yosemite.

The park's moral geography had been changing for some time. By the time of the riot, the counterculture was a constant presence in and around Yosemite Valley. The roots of this occupation popularization of *hippie* as a social category. As early as 1964, the park held training sessions regarding "how to handle young people who come to Yosemite, throw their weight around and get into trouble."<sup>5</sup> Between June 1963 and June 1964, the park had over 400 incidents of juvenile disorder that were serious enough to require ranger intervention, a statistic that placed Yosemite on par with many cities.<sup>6</sup> Even worse, the park's youth problems occurred almost entirely during the crowded summer season. Park officials equivocated, noting that any other community with such problems would have a staff as large as Yosemite's ranger force dedicated *entirely* to juvenile issues.<sup>7</sup>

In turn, the park attempted to steer youths toward sanctioned activities. Ranger walks and evening talks were more or less the extent of the activities offered by the N.P.S. However, the park concessionaire offered a much larger range of recreational options: horseback rides, ice skating, skiing, and even climbing lessons. As concessionaire, the Yosemite Park & Curry Company (Y.P.C.C.) held a monopoly over all Yosemite's visitor services: laundry, meals, showers, merchandise, and more. Historian Alfred Runte describes Camp Curry, the epicenter of the concessionaire's slick attractions, as a carnival.<sup>8</sup> Snack bars, a playground, a pool, and an ice rink ensured that the Curry Company would remain at the nexus of family enjoyment in the park. Thus, the concessionaire dominated the park economy, guaranteeing maximum contact with visiting youths—and the parents financing

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5. Report of Staff Meeting-June 12, 1964. RMR Series 1, Subseries 11, Box 40.

6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Runte, *Yosemite*, 190.

them. Their entertainment offerings determined the recreational norms for Yosemite's younger population.

The Y.P.C.C. provided a social framework where youths could enjoy appropriate activities among their peers. Supervised recreation became essential at all times of the year. During the winter season, the Curry Village Restaurant Dining Room fostered “an atmosphere attractive to younger skiers” through a supply of records aimed at encouraging dancing.<sup>9</sup> The Y.P.C.C. enforced similar activities at Yosemite Lodge, located near two hubs of unsupervised youths: Camp 4 and Swinging Bridge. At the Lodge Cafeteria, the Curry Company requested permission for “teenage record dances” in an attempt to attract younger visitors.<sup>10</sup> The Y.P.C.C. even served alcohol at a private dance sponsored by San Jose State University's Sigma Nu fraternity, but the concessionaire insisted on providing its own security force.<sup>11</sup> These sanctioned dances offered a chance for young people to socialize in easily controlled environments. The Curry Company sponsored employee dances, as well. Some lasted until well after midnight, fairly late by Yosemite standards. This represented a sort of reverse psychology, for park officials believed that longer dancing hours would discourage employees from heading to “the Flats”—presumably an unsupervised area used for necking and other less savory pursuits.<sup>12</sup> The Curry Company's many establishments offered sanctioned—and closely watched—youth activities throughout Yosemite Valley. Whether tourist or resident, youths participating in Y.P.C.C. functions were doing exactly

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9. Memo to superintendent John Davis from Cross-November 21, 1967. RMR Series 2, Subseries 1, Box 1.

10. Memo to park superintendent Hadley from Stuart Cross, president of Y.P.C.C.- December 12, 1968. RMR Series 2, Subseries 1, Box 1.

11. Memo to Superintendent Davis from Cross- November 22, 1967. RMR Series 1, Subseries 1, Box 1.

12. Memo from Helen H. White, president of Y.P.C.C. Employee Council-February 17, 1967. RMR Series 2, Subseries 1, Box 1. I have asked many past residents of Yosemite, but no one remembers the exact location of “the Flats.”

what they were supposed to be doing.

Despite the best efforts of the N.P.S. and the concessionaire, youths in Yosemite Valley strove to escape authority. Stoneman Bridge, abutting the meadow, was a popular gathering place after dark. In 1965, the bridge saw a “near riot” when “trouble arose between whites, Negroes and Mexican youths.”<sup>13</sup> A few years later, horse patrols were instituted to prevent loitering on the bridge, attracting “much less static” than regular foot patrols.<sup>14</sup> Youths also congregated in other areas, like the Swinging Bridge parking area that occasionally hosted “a dance complete with hi-fi and speakers.”<sup>15</sup> Beaches along the Merced River presented more gathering places away from traditional population centers, like campgrounds, restaurants, and evening programs. Even before Stoneman Meadow became synonymous with hippie activity, other locations throughout Yosemite Valley provided opportunities to escape authority.

Like anywhere else, the park experienced more youth problems at night. Many blamed the absence of the Firefall, a popular spectacle discontinued in 1968. The Firefall was simply a ball of embers pushed off of Glacier Point; this was repeated every night, immediately following the evening program at Camp Curry. Hordes of visitors gathered every night to watch the glowing orb fall to the Valley floor. Once the event was discontinued, there were few evening options for youths besides sharing the day's events or attending campfire talks about Yosemite “and its place in the American way of life.”<sup>16</sup> One visitor complained that the “younger generation[s], for lack of something better to do, flock

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13. Report of Staff Meeting-August 19, 1965. RMR Series 1, Subseries 11, Box 40.

14. Yosemite Valley Horse Patrol Operations, 1967. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 4.

15. Ibid.

16. 1963 Master Plan-Visitor Use Brief. RMR Series 3, Subseries 1, Box 1.

to the rivers edges for beach parties and trouble.”<sup>17</sup> This lack of proper entertainment, they argued, was making the park “an old folks home.”<sup>18</sup> Other visitors complained that canceling the Firefall left the park without one of its trademark images. One particularly sarcastic complaint suggested a new form of evening entertainment, “a hippie hanging by the hair from the top of Glacier Point-with a bottle of LSD in one hand and a switch-blade knife and a tire chain in the other.”<sup>19</sup>

Into this entertainment vacuum stepped Yosemite's new scapegoat: the hippie. It is difficult to tell when park concerns narrowed from youths to hippies in particular, but 1967's Summer of Love seems a logical starting point. Beginning that same summer, staff meetings began discussing the approximate count of hippies in the park over busy weekends.<sup>20</sup> Park administrators asked their superior, the Regional Solicitor, for guidance in handling this new demographic.<sup>21</sup> Law enforcement statistics also offer a window into the categorization of the counterculture. The annual statistics from 1968 and 1969 offer a particularly startling comparison. Narcotic arrests and citations rose from 45 to 97; liquor arrests and citations rose from 7 to 94; and disorderly conduct arrests and citations soared from 26 to 122.<sup>22</sup> The report notes the disorderly conduct charge was used quite liberally to address “the controlling of troublesome hippie types.”<sup>23</sup> Members of the horse patrol detailed the most common problems with hippies staying in park campgrounds:

possession of marijuana; possession of dangerous drugs;  
possession of stolen property; runaway juveniles; indecent

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17. Complaint letter to Superintendent Hadley-February 8, 1968. RMR Series 1, Subseries 9, Box 14.

18. Ibid.

19. Complaint letter to Superintendent Hadley- February 5, 1968. RMR Series 1, Subseries 9, Box 14.

20. Report of Staff Meeting-July 6, 1967. RMR Series 1, Subseries 11, Box 40.

21. Report of Staff Meeting-June 8, 1967. RMR Series 1, Subseries 11, Box 40.

22. Law enforcement report, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 3-7, Box 2.

23. Ibid.

exposure; underage possession of alcoholic beverages; and individuals wanted by other law enforcement agencies. Some of the less serious regulations violated included dirty campsites, more than the maximum number of individuals per campsite, overstaying the seven day limitation, pets in unauthorized campgrounds, out-of-bounds camps, and occasionally possession of firearms or other dangerous weapons.<sup>24</sup>

The term *hippie* was codified by park law enforcement according to the counterculture's most common misdeeds. Further park service exploration of the subculture created not just a psychological profile, but an altogether different moral species.

In an attempt to know their enemy, Yosemite's rangers also engaged in firsthand observation of hippies. In 1967, two rangers were detailed to the police departments of San Francisco, Berkeley, and Oakland in order to study “hippies' and juvenile matters” with police departments well-versed on the subject.<sup>25</sup> Much of the report is dedicated to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury neighborhood, ground zero for the Bay Area counterculture. The rangers noted that the hippies lived not with families but as tribes, where “intercourse is freely indulged in by all parties of either sex.”<sup>26</sup> They continually welcomed naïve “crashers” into these hedonistic social structures.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the hippie threat lay less in violence than in “evangelistic activities” that resulted in a flood of troubled youths “following a pied-piper into San Francisco.”<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, middle- and upper-class children with otherwise promising prospects seemed especially vulnerable to hippie proselytizing.<sup>29</sup> The report also

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24. Memo to chief ranger from horse patrol supervisor-January 16, 1969. RMR Series 11, Subseries 3-7, Box 2.

25. Report of Staff Meeting-July 6, 1967. RMR Series 1, Subseries 11, Box 40.

26. Report from rangers on Bay Area detail-undated, but most likely late summer 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 4.

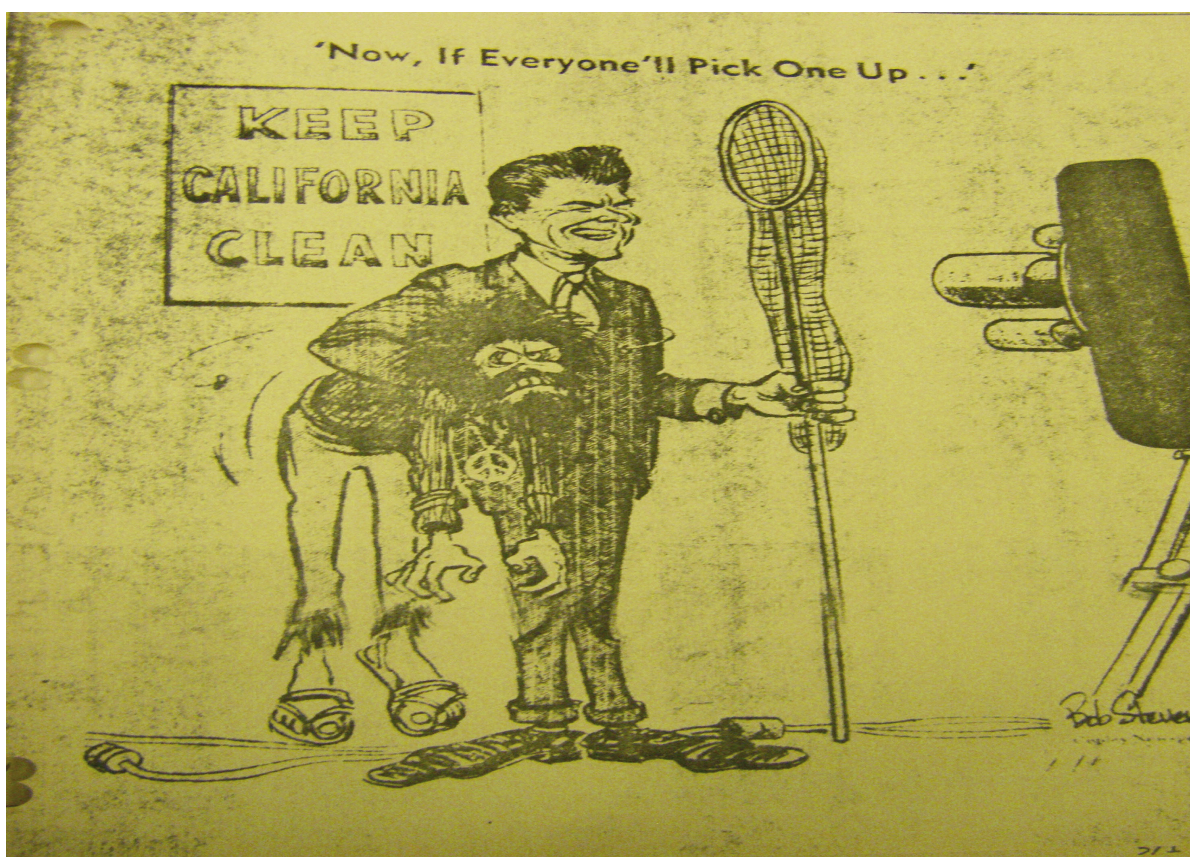
27. Ibid.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.



notes changes in Golden Gate Park, where homeless communities caused an uptick in petty crime.<sup>30</sup> Park rangers, removed from the urban climate of the 1960s, regarded hippies as a new species. Early N.P.S. observations resemble anthropological fieldwork, attempts to unravel different value systems and ways of life. The 1967 detail portrayed hippies as viral entities, capable of infecting otherwise promising youths.



*Figure 5: Ronald Reagan does his part to "Keep California Clean." Briefing sheet-May 27, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.*

Geographer David Sibley has explored the historic characterization of the poor as polluting, both morally and ethically.<sup>31</sup> This connection between hygiene and morality surfaced in notes from the Bay Area detail, but it fairly dominates another report used by Yosemite officials. J.M. Stubblebine, M.D., Program Chief of Community Mental Services

30. Ibid.

31. Sibley, 55.

for the San Francisco Department of Public Health, produced a 1968 report entitled “Health Hazards of the Hippies.”<sup>32</sup> According to him, hippies were attracted to *anything* filthy: language, appearance, grooming habits, and living quarters.<sup>33</sup> Dr. Stubbledine uses statistics to support these claims. In 1967 the Haight Ashbury, comprising 0.9% of San Francisco's total population, accounted for 7.6% of the cases of infectious hepatitis citywide.<sup>34</sup> Stubbledine also notes that one, and possibly two, of the buffalo in Golden Gate Park were killed for use in the “communal cooking pots” of the Haight Ashbury.<sup>35</sup>

Although “Health Hazards” contains the same fears of contagion as the Bay Area fieldwork, it also argues that a self-imposed quarantine exacerbated hippie maladjustment. Isolated from other age groups, members of the counterculture suffered disproportionately from “physical disease, psychological depression and general non-productivity.”<sup>36</sup> A generation gap separating teens and young adults from older people—in essence, their family structures—hindered their moral development. Thus, the counterculture was dangerous because it separated youths from their nuclear families. Not only were hippies dirty, but they lacked contact with the people who could help them most.

Park rangers and public health professionals detailed behavior with which Yosemite's visitors were becoming all too familiar. National parks have no need to advertise, for their revenue streams are more or less stable. However, in 1968, Yosemite's western entrance on Highway 140 experienced a profound decline in visitation; some blamed well-publicized

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32. It should be emphasized that this report was found in Yosemite's Resource Management Records. In and of itself, this points to the N.P.S.'s interest in learning about the mysterious *hippie*.

33. J.M. Stubbledine, “Health Hazards of the Hippies,” San Francisco Department of Public Health, May 16, 1968. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 4.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

crowding, but many acknowledged that the hippie influx played a major role.<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly, park visitation declined in the summer of 1970, as well.<sup>38</sup> One visitor claimed to have seen the decline as early as 1965, citing fairly common park concerns like parking violations, unleashed dogs, and failures to pay entrance fees. Accompanying these general nuisances were fairly hippie-specific behaviors like overcrowded campsites, loud music, and prolific drug use.<sup>39</sup> Like the 1967 Bay Area Detail and “Health Hazards of the Hippie,” the visitor's account focuses on filthy material conditions and the accompanying hygienic concerns. Other visitors scoffed at those “whose conduct would have put animals on a superior level.”<sup>40</sup> Many complaint letters devote more space to the hippies' lack of decency than to the riot. Such an event provided the impetus for many tourists to write letters in support of the N.P.S. actions at Stoneman Meadow, citing the necessity of maintaining decency in the face of deviancy.

While hippie hygiene put many visitors on edge, loosened sexual norms directly contradicted the spirit of many family vacations. A father complained that his small son noticed “an act of fellatio/cunnilingus” just off a popular trail.<sup>41</sup> An older visitor witnessed women bathing naked in the Merced River and sexual intercourse near Stoneman Meadow “within view of children.”<sup>42</sup> On the night of the riot, one man escorted “numerous sorely frightened young girls” back to their campsites “through throngs of foul mouthed, dirty, impertinent hippy types.”<sup>43</sup> Visitors were irked by these displays, but they were more

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37. “Traffic Drop Cuts Into Park Business,” Fresno Bee, July 20, 1968.

38. “Attendance at Yosemite is Down,” Merced Sun-Star, July 17, 1970.

39. Complaint letter to Secretary of Interior Walter Hickel-September 1, 1970. Protection Division Riot Box.

40. Complaint letter to George Hartzog, N.P.S. Director-August 12, 1970.

41. Complaint letter to Secretary of Interior Hickel-July 17, 1970. Protection Division Riot Box.

42. Complaint letter to Secretary of Interior Hickel-September 1, 1970. Protection Division Riot Box.

43. Ibid.

concerned about shielding their young from such public displays of immorality. David Farber notes that hippies, not Black Power groups or antiwar protesters, were most commonly perceived as threats to older Americans' families.<sup>44</sup>

Although hippies alienated many visitors, their presence connected Yosemite to places outside its gates. During the 1960s, the park itself was integrated into a larger network of moral geography, dominated by Bay Area cities like Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco, but also by centers of authority like Washington, D.C. The Bay Area was the test case from which Yosemite's administration gleaned its entire impression of the counterculture—its beliefs, tendencies, practices, and goals. Conversely, the park represented a safety valve for the city-weary hippies of its neighboring urban centers. Those interested in outdoor living and communal ideals found a self-selected pool of their peers within Yosemite's gates. Many sought refuge from the metropolis, but also from their families. The park's runaway activity increased throughout the 1960s, marking Yosemite as a place of escape. By the late sixties, it shared the same runaway problems as its neighboring cities, beset by hordes of unattached young searchers. Hippie activity in Yosemite reformed the Valley's moral geography, but it also remapped the American West.

Yosemite's proximity to San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other national parks made it part of countless vacation itineraries. During the sixties, however, Yosemite also enjoyed renown as a hippie destination:

The young start their migration in the spring, moving eastward from the coast. Erect or supine, eager or resigned, mostly shaggy, universally broke, they gather in such places as University Avenue in Berkeley and Oak Street in San Francisco, extending their thumbs and a sign marked 'Yosemite.'<sup>45</sup>

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44. Farber, *Age*, 168.

45. "Range War."







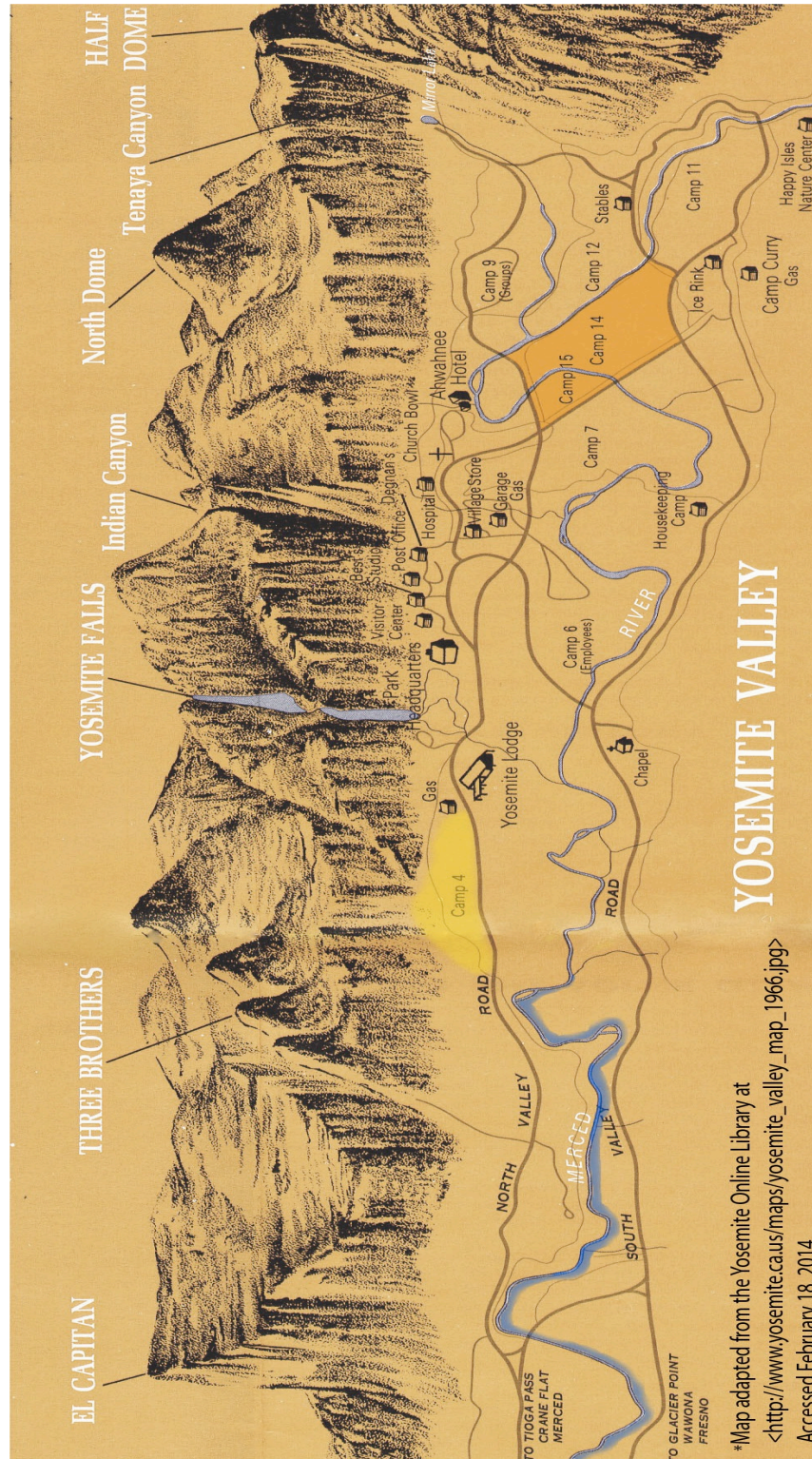


Figure 7: Another view of Yosemite Valley's late-sixties moral geography. Note the confining effect of the surrounding cliffs.

Adapted by Hanna Hedstrom.

In 1972, the park's superintendent voiced similar concerns in a speech to the Merced Rotary Club, stating that park rangers had their hands full regulating those who “have despoiled the Haight Ashbury, College Avenue, Big Sur, and now Yosemite.”<sup>46</sup> It was undeniable that hippie visitation linked the park to other countercultural centers. As a prelude to the Stoneman riot itself, a woman replaced the curfew notification with a sign reading 'People's Park,' echoing Berkeley's struggle between the counterculture and law enforcement.<sup>47</sup> Park officials also adapted their complaint form from the University of California-Davis, further emphasizing the parallels between Yosemite and other places of popular protest.<sup>48</sup> Intelligence gathered in the summer of 1970 suggested that San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Portland—and *not* Yosemite—would be the targets of hippie protests.<sup>49</sup> The fact that Yosemite would even be mentioned alongside such locales suggests a spatial realignment of the park relative to other cities in the West. Long considered an outpost of federal power, the park was inextricably linked to dissent. However, instead of following other public lands, Yosemite's administration looked to nearby urban areas for cues.

The park's issues with the counterculture annoyed visitors, but they presented a more direct threat to park employees. A law enforcement briefing from August 1970 includes a warning from the San Jose Police Department of a “plot by S.D.S. and Black Panthers to kill peace officers using a stalled vehicle as a decoy.”<sup>50</sup> Rangers were made aware that metropolitan police departments, especially those in the Bay Area, had encountered a specific

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46. “The Fig Leaf,” October 25, 1972. RMR Series 11, Subseries 3-7, Box 2.

47. Letter to President Nixon from Dr. John J. Fisher-August 3, 1970. Protection Division Riot Box.

48. 'We Welcome Your Complaint.' RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

49. Intelligence Meeting-Emergency Planning Council, August 28, 1970. RMR, Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

50. Briefing sheet-August 10, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

type of pipe bomb that exploded with *any* movement whatsoever.<sup>51</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 2, dynamite stolen from the Modoc National Forest—more than 300 miles north of Yosemite—caused additional panic in the days preceding Labor Day.<sup>52</sup> The park's newfound relation to centers of countercultural activity bore violent fruit, but it also encouraged extra-jurisdictional cooperation. During the Stoneman riot, for instance, Yosemite called upon the sheriff's offices of Madera, Merced, and Fresno Counties, as well as the city police from Fresno and Merced.<sup>53</sup> As a prime tourist attraction, Yosemite had a longstanding economic significance to these outlying communities. However, the violence of July 4 reinvented their relationship, crossing political boundaries and marking Yosemite as a place that needed help.

Most obviously, the counterculture provided a link between Yosemite and the Bay Area. Observations from the 1967 detail to San Francisco and Oakland reveal the origins of park conceptions of the hippie. More specifically, however, they reveal a fear of the interplay between hippies and park spaces.

The close proximity of Golden Gate Park to the Haight-Ashbury has caused the City of San Francisco many problems. Petty crimes have increased significantly. Hundreds and sometimes thousands of hippies and teenagers sleep in the park at night. A small hill near the tennis courts has been taken over by hippies, who congregate on the hill during the day time. The park police station puts pressure on the Hippies in the East end and this has forced them deeper into the park (into another district).<sup>54</sup>

The hippies' penchant for transforming parks into dens of iniquity worried park administrators. For one, it showed the counterculture's affinity for camping—no doubt an

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51. Briefing sheet-August 14, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

52. Emergency Planning Council- August 28, 1970. RMR, Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

53. Avedisian, 40.

54. Report from rangers on 1967 Bay Area detail. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 4.



ominous sign for Yosemite. In addition, it reaffirmed the notion that hippies used parks to evade authority. The detail observed that “the problems in [Golden Gate] park are common with the rest of the city.”<sup>55</sup> If hippies gravitated toward camping, then it seemed San Francisco and Yosemite might soon be sharing the same problems, as well.

San Francisco and Yosemite also shared the challenge of runaways. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw runaway activity increase dramatically nationwide. One author estimated that, by 1972, between 500,000 and one million children ran away from home each year; the majority were considered “middle class dropouts” fleeing comfortable homes.<sup>56</sup> Although many came from caring families, youths of the 1960s tended to see themselves as metaphorically orphaned. The deaths of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and Robert Kennedy made for a “crisis of legitimate authority” that fueled their alienation from traditional family structures.<sup>57</sup> Disappointed and confused, many youths struck out for a life on the road. King of all the runaway meccas was San Francisco's Haight Ashbury neighborhood, the “biggest and most photogenic” countercultural hotspot.<sup>58</sup> Behind the Haight's romantic appeal to young wanderers lay an unfortunate reality: such an urban ecology was not built to last. In the summer of 1967, the hippie mecca began its downward spiral:

Hippie living quarters overflowed, forcing young people into the street, where inadequate sanitation facilities and scarce food worsened matters....Underage runaways wanted by law-enforcement officials hid among the crowds, prompting police to make routine sweeps of the area. The number of undercover

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55. Ibid.

56. David Steigerwald, *The Sixties and the End of Modern America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) 250.

57. Peter Braunstein, “Forever Young: Insurgent Youth and the Sixties Culture of Rejuvenation,” *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s*, eds. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002) 267.

58. Farber, *Age*, 169.

narcotics agents working the district also increased. In the wake of the young innocents came drug addicts and pushers and a legion of thieves and psychopaths. Crime became endemic and rape a constant danger. Racial tension flared as black gangs from the nearby Filmore district, resentful of the largely white middle-class hippies pretending to be poor, rampaged through the Haight.<sup>59</sup>

Refugees from the Haight settled in many places. Some chose Mendocino County to the north, a fine place for off-the-grid living and marijuana cultivation. Others settled in Berkeley's South Campus neighborhood, drawn by panhandling potential and the liberal attitudes. An abandoned logging settlement in the Berkeley Hills, simply called Canyon, provided ramshackle housing and a rural setting.<sup>60</sup> As the Haight continued its collapse, it spread vagabond youths throughout the region. The collapse of a countercultural epicenter impacted the cultural geography of the region. Many urban hippies, tired of life in confined spaces, sought a natural antidote to society's ills.

It is likely that Yosemite inherited many of the Haight's refugees. The park's youth problems began in the early 1960s, but its problem with runaways was not voiced until a staff meeting in the summer of 1969.<sup>61</sup> Some went missing from school trips, others disappeared while on vacation with their parents. Even youths who worked, or had worked, for the park in some capacity were reported missing by their parents. Some were with companions believed to smoke "dope," while others were believed to be suicide risks.<sup>62</sup> To make matters worse, Yosemite's reported runaways were all between fourteen and twenty years of age.<sup>63</sup>

At the time, the American Psychiatric Association still classified running away as a

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59. Douglas T. Miller, *On Our Own: Americans in the Sixties* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1996) 286-287.

60. Rorabaugh, 144-145.

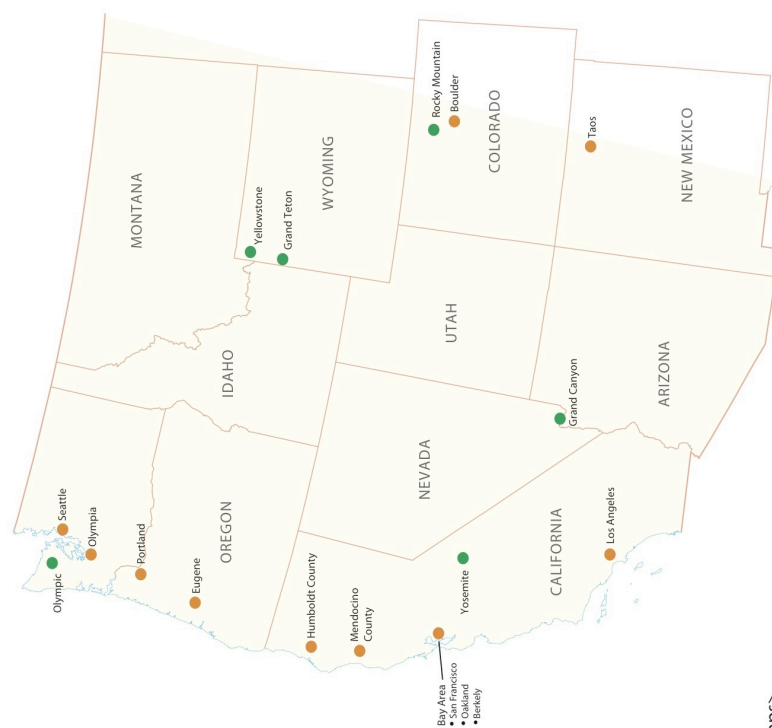
61. Report of Staff Meeting-July 24, 1969. RMR Series 1, Subseries 11, Box 40.

62. Law enforcement briefing sheets, May 1970-October 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

63. Law enforcement briefing sheets, May 1970-October 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

## National Parks and Countercultural Meccas of the American West in the Late Sixties

- National parks with annual visitation exceeding 2,000,000 in 1970
- Countercultural Meccas of the late 1960s



\*Map adapted from the National Park System Map. <<http://www.nps.gov/hfc/cfm/carto-detail.cfm?Alpha=nps>>  
Visitation statistics from <<https://irma.nps.gov/Stats/Reports/Park>> Both accessed February 12, 2014.

Figure 8: Pivotal points in the American West's moral geography. Note Yosemite's spatial alignment with key countercultural meccas of the late sixties. Adapted by Hanna Hedstrom.

psychological disorder, adding stigma to an already disgraceful act.<sup>64</sup> These cases represent a parents' worst fears. Not only were their children missing, but they had been swallowed up by a great green wilderness known to possess numerous undesirable inhabitants. Often thought of as a classic family destination, Yosemite began to acquire a more sinister connotation as a refuge for unaccompanied juveniles.

Not surprisingly, Yosemite looked to San Francisco for ways to handle its runaway problem. The 1967 detail noted that the San Francisco Police Department handled roughly 3,600 runaway juveniles per year, most of them claiming the Haight Ashbury neighborhood as their “home.”<sup>65</sup> City police enforced an 11 p.m. curfew, after which all wandering juveniles were taken to the San Francisco Youth Guidance Center where their parents were called. If they were found to be “in danger of leading an idle or dissolute life” as per Section 602 of the California Welfare and Institutions Code—the same legislation used to exclude hippies from Yosemite during 1970's Labor Day Weekend—then they were held indefinitely.<sup>66</sup> Unfortunately, the N.P.S.'s protocol was less clearly defined. Yosemite had no designated detention facility for runaway juveniles, but males could be held in the jail—provided there were no adults already incarcerated. However, if female runaways were booked, they had to be watched by matrons. They could not be held in the jail, so many female juveniles were held in Lewis Memorial Hospital (the Yosemite Valley Medical Clinic), shackled to their bed with a leg iron.<sup>67</sup>

This difference in treating male and female juveniles reveals a gendered fear regarding runaways. Female runaways were not only “sick,” but their gender implied even

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64. Lemke-Santangelo, 138.

65. Report from rangers on Bay Area detail-undated, but most likely August 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 4.

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid.

further weakness. The counterculture complicated these situations even further. Adults feared that female runaways were subjected to “sex, drugs, disease, filth, and antisocial, hedonistic values.”<sup>68</sup> Even though the decision to leave home was largely their own, young women were commonly dependent on older—primarily male—hippies for food, shelter, transportation, and protection. Although the counterculture may have had noble ideas, hippies were generally as sexist as most Americans of their time. The Diggers, practitioners of street theater and icons of San Francisco counterculture, questioned the widespread popularity of the hippie lifestyle among naïve young women. In a broadside entitled “Uncle Tim's”<sup>69</sup> Children,” they criticized the Haight's romantic appeal for starry-eyed young runaways:

Pretty little 16-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what it's all about & gets picked up by a 17-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed again & again, then feeds her 3000 mikes [of acid] and raffles off her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest Haight Street gang bang since the night before last. The politics & ethics of ecstasy....Tune in, turn on, drop dead? One wonders.<sup>70</sup>

The hippie movement's euphoric appeal belied its more difficult ideological problems. Women were simultaneously agents and objects, goddesses and bystanders. Female runaways could find peace and community; they could also stumble headlong into unsafe and abusive situations. Portrayed as deviants and as naïve victims, young women who ran away risked particular perils.

Already flummoxed by hippies, Yosemite's administration had to address the more

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68. Lemke-Santangelo, 138.

69. Timothy Leary, LSD enthusiast and countercultural icon.

70. David Farber, “The Intoxicated State/Illegal Nation,” Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s and '70s, eds. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002) 35.

delicate question of female runaways. Park rangers generally classified them as innocents, incapable of making their own decisions. Law enforcement briefings listed female delinquents with known associates, subtly enforcing the idea that these young women were going along with someone else's plan. Many accompanied classic 'bad boy' personas. One young female was last seen with a boy who played in a rock band called *Notorious*.<sup>71</sup> Another runaway was seen “with two hippy type male adults in an old model white stationwagon [sic], bearing sticker 'PEOPLE OF THE VALLEY.’”<sup>72</sup> A young woman visiting the park on Labor Day 1970 endured one of the popular automobile searches at an entrance station. When she discovered she had forgotten her identification, a park ranger called her parents “and asked them if they knew I was in the park with a 'young man.’”<sup>73</sup> After the riot, it was evident that Yosemite's reputation had changed. No longer was it a safe place for youths to congregate. Instead, it was a dark and morally ambiguous place, suitable for young women only if chaperoned appropriately. Although many ran away of their own volition, female delinquents were treated like those in the Haight Ashbury—as innocents corrupted by a “pied piper.”

Yosemite's runaway issues changed its image. Before the riot, the park suffered from youth misbehavior and later hippie mischief—nuisances, but not quite threats to life and property. However, as the 1960s came to a close the park struggled to accommodate disparate ideas of morals, community, and outdoor recreation. The incident on July 4 demonstrated that the counterculture had the power to claim a space and change its rules. This led to the N.P.S.'s convoluted experiments in exclusion, and later segregation, in the years immediately following the riot. Clearly, hippies were agents of spatial and social

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71. Briefing sheet-August 21, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

72. Briefing sheet-June 19, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

73. Hope, 21.

change in Yosemite Valley. Not only did they force the Park Service to accommodate their interests and habits, but they reorganized Yosemite Valley to fit their needs. Bridges were no longer solely for transportation, but for loitering; the Village Store, used for panhandling, became a crucial component of the hippie economy. Even open meadows transformed into bastions of nonconformity. The counterculture's adoption of these places, combined with park rangers' codification of hippie values into legal statutes, resulted in a moral geography that associated certain locations with transgression, hedonism, and immoral behavior. As I will demonstrate in the next chapter, Yosemite Valley's campgrounds embodied the collision of cultures inherent in the park landscape.

Value structures were embedded in the Valley's physical landscape, but also in the park's newfound place in regional geography. Whereas the park had once been synonymous with family recreation, the riot publicized an entirely different image. Instead, the pristine wilderness had become a dirty, crowded, and violent place—one that swallowed up innocent children, turning them into hippies. In a region filled with counterculture meccas, Yosemite assumed the role of an arcadian escape, surrounded by wilderness, but with trappings of civilization. For those fleeing the Haight or other overexposed locales, it seemed like the ideal halfway house between nature and city life.

The park's efforts to develop an anthropological model of the hippie prototype further connected Yosemite to its surrounding urban areas. The law enforcement detail to the Bay Area in 1967 was just one instance of increasing communication between park rangers and their urban counterparts. References to Berkeley's conflict over People's Park, warnings about potential Hell's Angels events and S.D.S. tactics, bomb scares—all of these solidified Yosemite's place in the region's law enforcement struggle. Yosemite was essentially just

another city with a hippie problem. However, its natural setting added intimidation to the hippie threat. Yosemite was a blank spot on the map, a wilderness that threatened to swallow innocent youths. Its physical landscape was conflated with moral meaning. Yosemite Valley itself was reorganized, but its significance to the surrounding region also changed drastically.



## CHAPTER FOUR: Camping and Conflict

The early 1960s saw America at the confluence of confusion and consensus. The ideal family of the Cold War era consisted of a working husband, a stay-at-home mother, two kids, all white, with two cars and a single-family suburban home. As the sixties transitioned from a decade of affluence to one of dissidence, the dominant stereotypes shifted drastically. The counterculture represented a revolt against the nuclear family, a social realm defined by affinity and not by blood. Many hippies, products of suburbia themselves, actively shunned the values espoused by their parents' generation. They gathered in decaying urban neighborhoods or rural idyllic backwoods communes.

No doubt, these vastly different cultures enjoyed different ideas of leisure. However, as I will argue, it was leisure that brought them together. For both hippies and straights, camping revolved around social groupings. It helped many families reinforce their relationships, while it emphasized hippies' rejection of their family structures. Furthermore, Yosemite Valley's campgrounds united hippies and straights in the same material conditions. The shared affinity for tents and camping vans subverted the economic differences normally attributed to each group. Although Yosemite itself represented an escape, camping there recreated the class divisions and everyday roles of its participants. Hippies and straights found a theater in which they could fine-tune their roles while contrasting themselves with the supposed *other*. Although friction resulted in the shared camping areas, it only cemented the fact that hippies and straights went camping not to escape from their day-to-day lives but to find comfort in them.

As anyone who has vacationed with their parents knows, family tourism presents

ample opportunities for teaching. In *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*, Marguerite Shaffer argues that tourism was an integral part of pre-World War II nation-building. In addition to promoting travel, the tourist industry “invented and mapped an idealized American history and tradition across the American landscape, defining an organic nationalism that linked national identity to a shared territory and history.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, family vacations became teaching tools. Parents guided their children to meaningful landscapes that suggested grandeur, promise, and the virtue of America's open spaces. As a result, every family member became a better American.<sup>2</sup> This link between patriotism and tourism continued after World War II, as well. Susan Sessions Rugh asserts that, during the late 1940s and 1950s, family vacations reinforced loyalty to a nation for which many fathers had gone to war. Through “civic pilgrimage,” parents and children alike could reinforce their commitment to their nation and its sacred spaces.<sup>3</sup>

This post-World War II rediscovery of America's national parks proved too much of a good thing. During wartime, rationing of fuel, rubber, and other essential automotive components kept tourism to a minimum. When such restrictions were lifted, however, Americans returned to the outdoors with a vengeance. Unfortunately, the National Park Service enjoyed little of the postwar prosperity that led to such optimism nationwide. In 1955, there were over 56 million visits to the national park system, as opposed to seventeen million in 1940. Yet, the Korean War and the Cold War occupied much of the federal budget; as a result, the N.P.S.'s budget stayed at or below prewar levels, despite the postwar public's voracious recreational appetites.<sup>4</sup> Bernard DeVoto seriously suggested closing the

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1. Shaffer, 4.

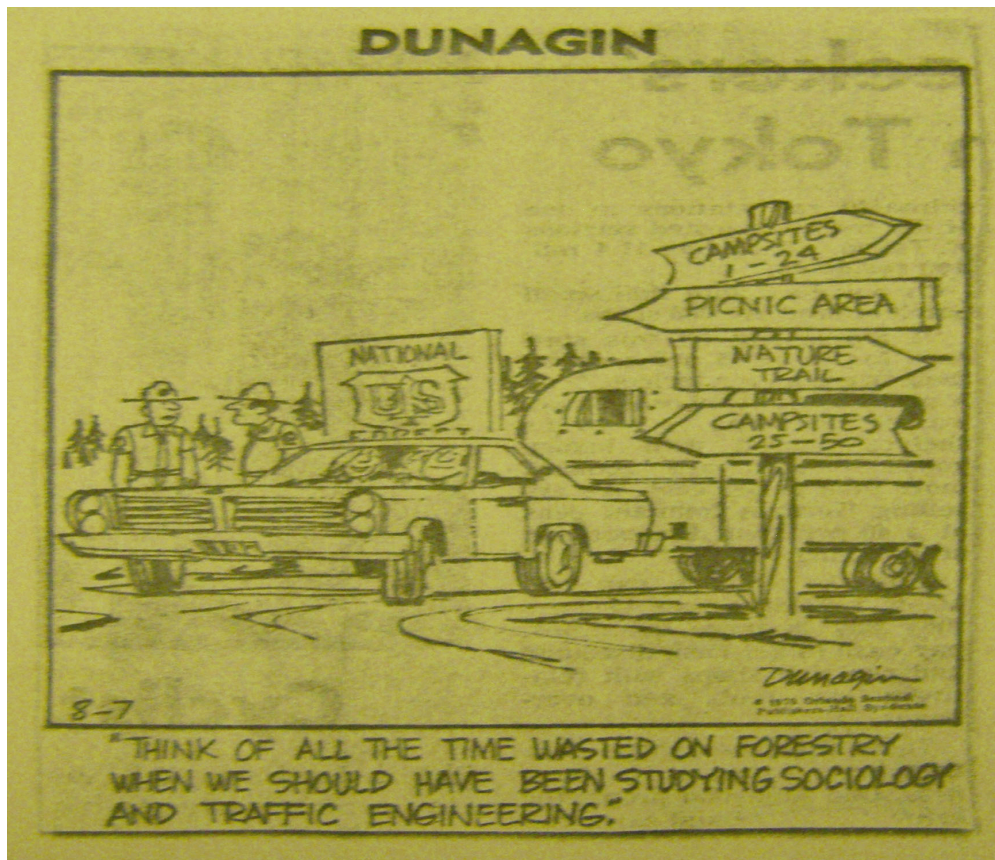
2. Ibid.

3. Rugh, 54.

4. Carr, 3-4.

national parks until they could be adequately funded.

In 1956, the N.P.S. responded with Mission 66, a decade-long initiative aimed at increasing visitor access and improving facilities nationwide. Much of the Mission 66 funding went to new roads, restrooms, parking lots, and campgrounds—all meant to



*Figure 9: Park rangers come to grips with their increasingly crowded workplaces. Publication unknown. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.*

facilitate visitor access. In addition, Mission 66 consciously incorporated modern urban forms into stereotypically anti-urban environs. The visitor center, similar to shopping centers and other auto-oriented commercial landscapes, represented this infusion of contemporary

planning ideals.<sup>5</sup> Traditionalists decried these new multipurpose facilities that incorporated visitor assistance, research libraries, staff offices, parking, restrooms, and even movie theaters into one sleek package. Mission 66 symbolized a drastic departure from the Park Service's rustic beginnings.<sup>6</sup> Its forms, though new to the nation's parks, were also quite familiar. As a response to the budget crisis, the built of environment of the nation's parks increasingly mimicked the world outside their gates.

Despite these shiny new amenities, many headed to the national parks for the rustic opportunities. Families flocked to camping in the decades following World War II. In 1958, Americans spent \$1 billion on camping; by 1972, that number had risen to \$105 billion.<sup>7</sup> In fact, in the year 1960 alone, five new family camping magazines were launched.<sup>8</sup> Even popular magazines like *Travel* and *Redbook* contributed to this outdoor renaissance. Some articles suggested that the trip reinforce a family hobby, like fishing or hiking.<sup>9</sup> Others touted camping as a way to escape the constraints of motor courts and hotels, like check-out times and crowded restaurants.<sup>10</sup> Echoing Rugh's idea of civic pilgrimage, *Recreation* published an article entitled "Fun and National Strength." Its author, Col. Adolph H. Humphreys, stated that parents were engaged in "an ideological war" for youthful minds. Outdoor activities like camping helped combat "televisionitis," thus teaching youths about the value of fitness in a relaxed atmosphere.<sup>11</sup> Whether emphasizing survival of the fittest or simply a shared family activity, popular publications of the postwar decades exposed camping to a wide audience. No longer was it simply the purview of wilderness fanatics or

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5. Carr, 12-13.

6. Ibid.

7. Boag, 6.

8. Reynold E. Carlson, "Changing Patterns in Camping," *Recreation* 54 (1961):115.

9. Ginny Ade, "A Redbook Guide to Family Camping Vacations," *Redbook* 134 (1969): 36.

10. Mary Pettit, "Guide to Family Camping," *Travel* 102 (1954): 22.

11. Adolph H. Humphreys, "Fun and National Strength," *Recreation* 54 (1961): 101.

the downtrodden—sleeping outside was acceptable, and fun, for everyone. As one magazine put it, “camping brings the family together in the clean, wholesome outdoors.”<sup>12</sup>

Those expecting a bucolic campsite in sixties Yosemite were likely disappointed. The park's 1963 Master Plan indeed noted that the Valley had become “almost urban in character.”<sup>13</sup> Yet despite its focus on providing new interpretive facilities and expanding the park beyond Yosemite Valley, the plan identified campgrounds as the locus of the true Yosemite experience. The demand for camping in the Valley was constant, especially on weekends when 20,000 or more campers descended upon the Valley facilities that were designed for half that capacity.<sup>14</sup> Evening activities were to center around “family-type” campfire circles, where small groups could discuss the day's events. As another part of Mission 66, the Valley's campgrounds underwent Meinickeization, a process that utilized strategically-placed vegetation to give each campsite a more private feel.<sup>15</sup> Despite intense crowding, the romantic appeal of outdoor activities remained strong.

While many campers were content with sleeping on the ground, some sought further comfort. Motor homes allowed for rustic recreation while simultaneously offering an interior sphere with most, if not all, the comforts of home. They became increasingly popular through the affluent and adventurous fifties, during which Department of the Interior officials debated including trailer courts in national parks.<sup>16</sup> In an article about Yosemite's campgrounds, the San Francisco Chronicle referred to trailer aficionados as “The New Campers.” This new breed of outdoor enthusiast usually originated in California, knew little

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12. Quoted in Rugh, 120.

13. 1963 Master Plan, Chapter 2: Visitor Use Brief. RMR Series 3, Subseries 1, Box 1.

14. Ibid.

15. “Oral History Interview with Newton Bishop Drury, N.P.S. Director, 1940-1951” (Berkeley: Bancroft Library Oral History Office). Accessed February 1, 2014.  
<<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/oralhist/druryn3.htm>> pp. 453-454.

16. Rugh, 137.

about the outdoors, and drove a large camping van.<sup>17</sup> Stereotypically, New Campers sprung from postwar suburbs, leading one ranger to posit that “they have to get out of Anaheim and break the monotony.”<sup>18</sup> Although they exemplified the camping craze, many New Campers also brought the city with them. Many critics thought they brought “the problems of the city” with them, as well: drugs, violence, theft, and traffic.<sup>19</sup> In fact, in the aftermath of the Stoneman riot, many blamed the New Campers for importing the nation's turbulence to a previously sacred space.

Urban riots throughout the 1960s scarred the image of cities. In turn, fears of Yosemite's urbanization also increased. Instead of focusing on violence, however, most complained about filth and noise. One writer suggested that the Valley closely resembled “an urban amusement park,” with hot rods, marijuana, and rock music assaulting the senses on a daily basis.<sup>20</sup> Other visitors complained about the air quality, noting that the Valley's smog rivaled that of Los Angeles.<sup>21</sup> Tents, normally seen as symbols of pastoral contentment, took on different connotations. A Texan bemoaned numerous campgrounds crowding visitors “as in a city in dwellings that would be condemned in any American City.”<sup>22</sup> The Valley floor became a “tent slum” and an “instant city.”<sup>23</sup> One incensed observer compared the scene to “one-story tenements, not unlike Arab refugee camps.”<sup>24</sup> In such numbers, tents became blights on the landscape. In their attempts to reconcile

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17. “‘Roughing It’ at Yosemite: The New Campers,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 8, 1970. Protection Division Riot Box.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. DeMars, 1.

21. Complaint letter to Secretary of Interior Stewart Udall. RMR Series 1, Subseries 9, Box 14.

22. Complaint letter to Senator Ralph Yarbrough. RMR Series 1, Subseries 9, Box 14.

23. Umberto Tosi, “Everybody Loves Yosemite,” Los Angeles Times WEST Magazine, September 20, 1970. Protection Division Riot Box.

24. Lillard, 71.

expectations to reality, many visitors unwittingly explained Yosemite's true plight. As Amy DeRogatis explains, humans constantly reconcile “their imaginary model [with] their experiential reality.”<sup>25</sup> In the crowded confines of Yosemite Valley, tourists' imaginary models were frequently disproven. In turn, they responded with the most popular contemporary images of blight: cityscapes. Nylon tents became concrete tenements, the thin valley roads major freeways. Camping in Yosemite was no longer a getaway.

The juxtaposition between urban and rural was a popular theme in criticisms of the Valley's crowds. It seems, however, that camping in the sixties enjoyed a predominantly suburban following. In 1964, the sociologist Peter Etzkorn produced a report entitled “Leisure and Camping: The Social Meaning of a Form of Public Recreation.” Drawn from research at a public campground 100 miles north of Los Angeles, Etzkorn's study argues that camping was not solely the purview of those fleeing cities. In fact, it was dominated by those from “semi-rural or suburban residential environments located in towns smaller than 100,000.”<sup>26</sup>

If one further considers the general lay-out of these California communities...one can observe that the majority of the campers do not need to escape the congestion of central cities for contact with nature.... [I]t seems that they tend to exchange their contacts with suburban crab-grass and backyard barbecue for grass and firepits...<sup>27</sup>

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25. DeRogatis, 17.

26. K. Peter Etzkorn, “Leisure and Camping: The Social Meaning of a Form of Public Recreation,” Sociology and Social Research 49 (1964): 80.

27. Ibid.





*Figure 10: Yosemite Valley at night. <<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/national-parks/classic-yosemite-photos/>> Accessed February 22, 2014*

For suburbanites, campgrounds offered recreational spaces analogous to, but separate from, their backyards. Thus, the fact that camping made “no unfamiliar demands on their ingenuity” was one its biggest strengths.<sup>28</sup> In many ways, Etzkorn subverts the popular narrative of frazzled urbanites seeking refuge. He identifies suburban families as the most avid campers, but he also suggests that camping was attractive as an analog to—and not a departure from—their everyday lives.

Popular magazines frequently reinforced the common narratives about wilderness and civilization. Camping was an escape from convention. It offered families a cheaper way to see the nation. It helped strengthen children against “televisionitis.” It liberated fathers from their jobs, albeit temporarily. It even freed mothers from their traditional roles, such as cook,

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28. Ibid, 85.



laundress, and chauffeur. However, Peter Boag has argued that camping was more than just an escape from the constraints of the Cold War era.

It would seem that Americans' escape from the suburban, domestic, consensus ideal through camping was a revolt against the expectations that straight-jacketed them in their daily routine. In fact, just the opposite was true. They strove in the out-of-doors for what had eluded them back home: the domestic ideal of the postwar American family and satisfaction with its prescribed gender roles.<sup>29</sup>

Instead of an escape, camping offered a venue in which family members could confront their roles. The post-World War II family was not a perfect construction. Many stay-at-home mothers found their role isolating and boring; many fathers felt trapped by the role of *provider*.<sup>30</sup> The baby-boom generation prized familial unity, but this proved more elusive than many had thought. Camping provided a shared activity, along with individualized structure that offered roles for each family member. Together at the campsite, families could “reinforce—maybe even create—the mythical consensus so long believed to be the signature of the era.”<sup>31</sup>

According to Boag, camping provided less opportunity for gender reversal than many might assume. Just as women cooked and cleaned around the campfire, men busied themselves gathering wood or catching—and hence, *providing*—dinner.<sup>32</sup> One male camper treasured the opportunity for such chores, stating that “[a] man is a man again when he lives outdoors.”<sup>33</sup> Boag attributes this increased satisfaction within domestic roles to the qualitative and quantitative differences in camp tasks. For example, outdoor food

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29. Boag, 7.

30. See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988).

31. Boag, 13.

32. *Ibid*, 7-8.

33. Quoted in Boag, 10.

preparation required different strategies and techniques, changing an everyday task just enough to retain its novelty. Previously isolated in kitchens, some women relished the opportunity to cook in the more social setting of a campsite.<sup>34</sup> Camping also recreated another hallmark of Cold War culture: spatial sex segregation. A 1965 study on Oregon parks noted that a campground resembled a “suburban development from 8:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., as it is largely peopled by women and children while the men are fishing.”<sup>35</sup> Thus, camping provided comfort in prescribed roles, rather than a departure from them. As Etzkorn argues, camping was enjoyable because it demanded little inventiveness.

Despite its similarities to every day life, camping promised a broader social unity than the typical suburban neighborhood. Etzkorn notes that “the social relationships of the camp provide suitable opportunities for the maximization of satisfactions from essentially 'like' social interests among the campers.”<sup>36</sup> Thus, the lack of privacy in campgrounds actually appealed to the generation that idealized the single-family home. One avid camper opined that people seemed “naturally inclined to be more congenial” in the outdoors.<sup>37</sup> While many found their day-to-day social lives socially unsatisfactory, camping guaranteed the presence of like-minded individuals. The smell of food, the sound of campfire songs, and the uninhibited visual contact no doubt promoted social interaction in a way that suburbia could not. Children provided an easy entry point to parental socialization, which—when done in camp—precluded the need for a babysitter. Overall, campgrounds provided parents with a new perspective on “their often burdensome and thankless lot.”<sup>38</sup>

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34. Ibid, 8.

35. Quoted in Boag, 9.

36. Etzkorn, 86.

37. “Holiday in the Sierra—Farewell to John Muir,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 7, 1970. Protection Division Riot Box.

38. Boag, 10.



*Figure 11: A family gathering in the Yosemite Valley campgrounds.*  
 <<http://travel.nationalgeographic.com/travel/national-parks/classic-yosemite-photos/>> Accessed February 22, 2014.

Camping resituated everyday social relations in new landscapes. Etzkorn describes campgrounds as “familiar ground both in the physical sense and in the sense of returning to established social relationships.”<sup>39</sup> Unfortunately for many in Yosemite Valley, the “familiar ground” also included a familiar pest: hippies. Yosemite Valley is a fairly confining space. Massive granite walls frame a strip of sky seven miles long but barely half a mile wide. Its campgrounds were constantly full, given their rustic appeal as well as their relative economy. Most visitors lacked the funds to stay in Yosemite's luxurious Ahwahnee Hotel, which meant that visitors of varying ages, opinions, and schedules were constantly being pushed together. As one journalist noted, this exacerbated tensions between hippies and their neighbors.

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39. Etzkorn, 80.

When 55,000 people are crowded into a place as small as Yosemite Valley, there is no room to lubricate the friction between cultures. People who have brought their hates and fears with them from New York or San Francisco metropolitan areas are shoved together in ways they have managed to avoid even in the city, no less the suburbs.<sup>40</sup>

Hippies took this extreme crowding to new levels. In an effort to save money, they often crammed between twenty-five and sixty people in one site.<sup>41</sup> Youths cited for disturbing the peace in 1970, described as “a @\$#&#% of a group to handle,” listed 'Yosemite campgrounds' as their permanent address.<sup>42</sup> Many miscreants lived in the Valley indefinitely, cyclically joining with different groups in order to find a space to sleep; park officials simply dubbed them “long-term residents.”<sup>43</sup> Campgrounds were difficult places to police, and the frequent turnover and Meinickeized foliage allowed many undesirables to hide indefinitely.

In fits and starts, the Park Service worked to assert control over Yosemite's campgrounds. In the spring of 1968 the superintendent remarked that

[t]here is nothing more important or more pressing than to get campgrounds under positive control and management. There is implicit in this all of the thing that bear on the publicity the parks has had with respect to hippies, drunkenness (sic), violence to persons and property, smoke and smog, noise and confusion. I believe campground management, properly applied, will tend to eliminate a lot of things that have worked against us in the past.<sup>44</sup>

Park officials knew that the majority of overnight visitors stayed in the campgrounds. If they had a happy stay, then they would perpetuate the park's positive reputation. Thus, a renewed

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40. “Range War.”

41. Avedisian, 19-20.

42. Briefing Sheet-May 27, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

43. General Meeting with Concessioners-May 14, 1970. RMR Series 2, Subseries 2-5, Box 3.

44. Report of Staff Meeting-March 15, 1968. RMR Series 1, Subseries 11, Box 40.

emphasis on campground administration seemed a likely way to reassert law and order throughout Yosemite. In the summer of 1970, park officials began charging camping fees: \$3 a night for a spot in the Valley. Since it was so hard to regulate the six person/one car limit for each campsite, campgrounds also issued camping permits. Vehicles could not enter campgrounds without one, thwarting cheapskates looking to “double up.”<sup>45</sup> Predictably, hippies found a way to circumvent this rule. Freeloaders would simply leave when they saw rangers approach, wait until the coast was clear, and simply resume their day. Others used more direct tactics, like a visitor who said “I ain't gonna pay this ripoff” and summarily threw the citation into the fire.<sup>46</sup>

Although many campers were law-abiding citizens, some of Yosemite Valley's campgrounds were synonymous with misbehavior. If Stoneman Meadow represented occupied territory, then the surrounding campgrounds were at least contested. Camps 7 and 11 were quieter, and thus attracted more families. Camps 14 and 15, however, bordered Stoneman Meadow on two sides.<sup>47</sup> Even before the N.P.S.'s overt attempts at segregation, self-selected generational apartheid existed on the Valley floor. Camp 14 was the most notorious as a place of friction between hippies and straights: food and camping gear were stolen, campsites were jam-packed, and “drunkenness was the order of the day.”<sup>48</sup> Visitors were woken at all times of night by parties, motorcycles, and—in the case of July 4, 1970—violence. In other words, it was a place of transgression.

The events surrounding the Stoneman riot emphasized Camp 14's importance to the Valley's moral geography. On Memorial Day, 1970, rangers attempting to roust youths from

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45. General Meeting with Concessioners-June 18, 1970. RMR Series 2, Subseries 2-5, Box 3.

46. Law Enforcement Report, 3/25/72-4/2/72. RMR Series 11, Subseries 3-7, Box 2

47. “Range War.”

48. Avedisian, 19-20.

Stoneman Meadow essentially pushed the party back into the campground, subjecting other visitors to the hippies' whims.<sup>49</sup> Later that night, hoping to catch troublemakers unaware, rangers snuck in the back of the campground only to find “people...playing bongo drums, being disorderly and causing destruction to various property, including some of their own.”<sup>50</sup> Two months later, the park's decision to enforce the curfew at Stoneman Meadow on July 4<sup>th</sup> had a similar effect. Hippies were prohibited from doing “their thing” unless they did it in the campground, which naturally caused conflict with other visitors.<sup>51</sup> When administrators eventually ceded certain areas to the counterculture, they were attempting to restore the primacy of “normal” visitors elsewhere.

Despite evident conflict, camping provided a bridge between family vacationers and the counterculture. Phoebe Young has argued that, “[i]f bemoaning the pressures of industrial civilization was a key cultural narrative, then sleeping outside represented a vehicle for this grievance.”<sup>52</sup> Camping allowed middle-class families to find comfort in their work-a-day roles, but it permitted hippies a similar opportunity. Camping formed spontaneous countercultural communities, thereby resisting traditional family social structures.<sup>53</sup> Places like Stoneman Meadow were key sources of peer-based interaction, which often led to sharing a campsite, a ride, or even an entire vacation. As runaways, many of Yosemite's hippie campers had already cast aside family, education, and career concerns—as one scholar put it, “exchang[ing] their middle-class status for that of the

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49. Avedisian, 24.

50. Quoted in Avedisian, 26

51. Quoted in Avedisian, 29.

52. Young, 177.

53. Observations of Discussions with Young 'Hippie' Campers in Yosemite National Park, undated. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 4.

wanderer.”<sup>54</sup> Thus, camping could provide the same liberation as urban communal living, but in a more idyllic environment. As the sixties drew to a close, the Valley's campsites increasingly juxtaposed visitors fleeing family structures with those reinforcing such bonds.

In bucking their allotted identities, Yosemite's dueling campers expressed a singularity of purpose. As tourists, hippie and straights both sought satisfaction in the realm of experience, rather than through work. It was a permanent choice for hippies and a temporary one for middle-class parents, but both exemplified Dean MacCannell's theory of postindustrialism. In *The Tourist*, he argues that an individual's role in production—their job—has ceased to matter. In its place is the pursuit of authentic experiences through leisure.<sup>55</sup> Etzkorn comments that those with unsatisfying jobs might therefore be drawn to camping as a way to gain “recognition for their contribution to the physical comfort of the family.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, camping in Yosemite Valley allowed heads of household to disengage from their economic roles and seek a different cultural currency. Hippies, too, reveled in the opportunity to reject their roles in industrial society. For them, however, such an exercise constituted less a vacation and more a way of life. As hippies searched for “the next ideal place,” they implicitly expressed their critique with capitalism, homeownership, property—in short, the world of their parents' generation.<sup>57</sup> Although camping did not alter prescribed roles for straights or hippies, it provided yet another venue for expressing dissatisfaction with their societal labels.

Camping also offered hippies a recreational expression of their environmental philosophy. When asked why he came to Yosemite, a hippie replied, “I guess we're like

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54. Chapman, 29.

55. MacCannell, 159-160.

56. Etzkorn, 87.

57. Sanders, 279.

everybody else. We're lovers of nature, too.”<sup>58</sup> Indeed, the natural ideals implicit in camping proved another cross-cultural bridge. In search of a more authentic way to live and think, hippies followed the environmentalist tradition of antimodernism that had existed since the Progressive Era.<sup>59</sup> In particular, hippies reared in bucolic suburbs found solace in the idealized natural world.<sup>60</sup> Northern California communes like Olompali and Black Bear provided communities for those escaping industrial society. Table Mountain Ranch, in Mendocino County, was actually conceived as a safety valve for the inherently unsustainable Haight-Ashbury scene.<sup>61</sup> Camping in Yosemite, however, offered a much less committing alternative to living off the grid. The Valley had ample places to panhandle, enough fellow hippies for company, and even streams where one might catch dinner. Furthermore, it had restrooms and roads, making it a fairly comfortable venue for experiments in living naturally. The Valley was an ideal place to experiment with wilderness.

Likewise, as Peter Boag argues, camping fostered broader environmental awareness in families. By adopting a relatively primitive form of recreation, parents could indoctrinate their children into the outdoors at a young age.<sup>62</sup> One writer deemed the campsite “an ideal setting for conservation education—for practicing good land use and for helping young people develop understanding and sound attitudes toward our natural resources.”<sup>63</sup> As Shaffer and Rugh argue, family vacations provided ideal teaching opportunities. Camping trips showed a different side of the national identity stressed by so many scholars of tourism;

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58. Ed Meagher, “Hippies Mar the Scenery in Yosemite National Park,” Milwaukee Journal, July 17, 1968.

59. Sanders, 278.

60. Ibid, 279.

61. Timothy Miller, The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999) 71-74.

62. Boag, 11-12.

63. Quoted in Boag, 12.



instead of inculcating patriotism, more environmentally-inclined parents focused on the natural world. Camping in Yosemite met tourists on their own terms. For hippies, it represented a controlled environment in which to experience nature while maintaining a support network of stores, restrooms, and peer groups. For families, the Valley campgrounds offered exposure to a more pastoral way of life. Camping confirmed many hippies' antimodern sentiments, while exposing many family campers to a world beyond the suburban tract.

The irony of the Yosemite experience lay in its expectations of escape. Although the park's mystique suggested a departure from civilization, the atmosphere in Yosemite Valley closely resembled the world outside it. Both hippies and New Campers alike brought “artifacts and expectations of...day-to-day existence” into the park, revealing material parallels between the two groups.<sup>64</sup> One writer noted that “[t]he longhair's loud and showy motorcycle...may be no more than a modest takeoff on the ostentatious 350-horsepower sedan driven by the established family man.”<sup>65</sup> The musical instruments, stereos, and drugs favored by the hippies were analogous to the average American's card games, televisions, and martini fixings.<sup>66</sup> Conflict in the campgrounds and beyond obscured the similarities between Yosemite's major user groups. Both groups brought cherished material possessions in hopes of recreating favorite spaces and activities outside the park.

One piece of camping equipment attracted hippies and family vacationers alike. Motor homes, which rose to popularity in the mid-1950s, soon enjoyed vast popularity across the nation. Many vehicles were used for recreation, but few divulged so much about their owner's preferences. Motor homes represented leisure, but also class affiliation; however,

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64. Hope, 82.

65. Ibid.

66. Ibid.

they enjoyed different symbolism when possessed by different groups:

To affluent suburbanites, a manufactured motor home was a symbol of their purchasing power and material success, contentment with modern, well-furnished homes, increased leisure time, and unprecedented mobility. To rebellious hippies, a homemade bus camper was exactly the opposite: a means of expressing their disdain for middle-class culture and the work-earn-spend ethic by detaching themselves from society.<sup>67</sup>

For middle-class families, motor homes were basically synecdochical: a single object from which an entire body of knowledge could be extrapolated. They stood for a large house, a safe neighborhood, a nuclear family, and a chunk of disposable income. For hippies, however, motor homes represented the negation of that same identity. The homemade aspect was paramount, stressing an improvisational relationship to the material world. The implied destination was important, as well. Although the van did use fossil fuel and travel on federally financed highways, it held the promise of back roads, secluded campsites, and self-sufficiency.<sup>68</sup> Van culture was also a component of hippie culture appropriated by straight youths. Like marijuana use, rock music, and sexual liberation, motor homes caught on with those attempting to separate from their parents' generation.<sup>69</sup> The shared symbol of vans held vastly different significance on either side of the generation gap.

Although they dominated Yosemite Valley in the late sixties, both hippies and middle-class families were excluded from many parts of the park experience. The elaborate Ahwahnee Hotel, described as an “enclosed bastion of elitism,” was actually surrounded by a

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67. Roger B. White, Home on the Road: The Motor Home in America (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000) 163.

68. Ibid, 171.

69. Ibid, 176.

barbed-wire fence.<sup>70</sup> The reenactment of postwar prosperity was omnipresent in the Valley: shiny cars, young children, and giant motor homes. A journalist described the scene as a “Walt Disney version” of real life in which “everyone is 40, married, has two children and one Buick.”<sup>71</sup> A young long-haired visitor, furious that he had been searched at a park entrance, requested that people like him should be admitted “as well as Mr. MiddleAmerika with his five kids, and 1970 Station Wagon complete with bolted license plate.”<sup>72</sup> Thus, even on publicly owned land, a Stepford atmosphere negated other visions of park usage. For hippies, such opulence simply re-created the society they had forsaken. For many straights, however, the Disney atmosphere connoted an unattainable ideal.

Camping in Yosemite during the 1960s represented more than an uncomplicated escape—it was a conversation with the outside world. As Etzkorn argues, camping was not about escaping or reinventing society. Gender roles remained fixed, if not slightly varied due to the new material circumstances. Material comforts like motor homes ensured that the campsite would represent a logical extension of the household. Attitudes toward the counterculture generally persisted, as well. Middle-class families and hippies alike treated the Valley floor like a dollhouse, a civilization in miniature that they could pose to their liking. Fathers and mothers could be ideal parents, defined less by their jobs and more by domestic satisfaction. Hippies could live close to the earth, experimenting with wilderness in a safe space. Thus, both sides of the generation gap were engaged in a sort of parallel play, interested in the neighboring “other” only to aid in their own self-definition. The conflicts that emerged were mostly spatial in nature. Unused to sharing space with their perceived opposites, families and hippies reacted predictably.

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70. DeMars, 1.

71. “Range War.”

72. Complaint to N.P.S.-September 10, 1970. RMR Series 11, Subseries 7, Box 3.

## CONCLUSION

Riots are not isolated events. Such disturbances are corollaries to much larger sociopolitical dynamics. However, each riot has its own build-up and denouement. Such vivid bursts of conflict deserve their own contextualizations. To define the events of July 4, 1970 as mere continuations of established trends misses a crucial component of Stoneman Meadow, and Yosemite at large: its unique spatial features. Civil unrest, and the ensuing measures used to gain control, depend largely on environment.<sup>1</sup> The most notorious American riots of the sixties—Watts, Newark, Detroit—occurred in cities, lending a sinister connotation to the nation's rapidly-emptying urban cores. 1960s Yosemite Valley can also be considered a city, albeit one with entirely different rules. Its demographics changed nightly. Its law enforcement personnel also led nature walks. Its road system was a glorified loop. It was also surrounded by federally-designated wilderness. These factors had a profound impact on the park's administrators, as well as its visitors. Thus, while landscape of Yosemite Valley felt the reverberations of national unrest, its spatial peculiarities showcased these tensions in new forms.

In their quest to attain a more desirable environment inside park gates, Yosemite officials resorted to tactics that were potentially illegal but undeniably innovative. Simply put, the events of July 4 represented a failure for the Park Service. Suffering through a public relations debacle, administrators decided on a brash show of force. Entrance stations became armed checkpoints. Rangers searched cars indiscriminately. A sense of paranoia pervaded the park. Horse units from the U.S. Park Police remained, ready to offer their skill

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1. See Elaine Carey, *Plaza of Sacrifices: Gender, Power, and Terror in 1968 Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005) for an excellent analysis of protest and urban space in 1968 Mexico City.

in crowded situations. And then, the park's militarization ended as quickly as it began. In its place was a less overt form of spatial control, utilizing the park's nooks and crannies instead of its borders. A new attitude, hip and relatable, emerged among the ranger corps as well. Rather than simply fortify the park's defenses, Yosemite's administrators employed a form of cultural quarantine that relied upon incentive rather than force. Isolated or temporarily closed campgrounds provided sanctioned spaces for nightly youth gatherings; park rules were relaxed, as were the younger rangers chosen as hosts. These revamped campfire talks created an amiable, if sometimes uneasy, detente between hippies, rangers, and administrators that would continue through the 1970s. The park took a new form, one that codified difference based on spatial and cultural segregation.

Hippies were also actors in this process. Although they allowed officials to sweep them under the rug, the changes in park policy reflected a major victory for youth culture. Instead of listening to rangers expound upon Yosemite and its place in American life, young visitors could learn about yoga, ecology, and Indian crafts. The park was important to the counterculture. It provided an accessible and scenic venue in which to enact their social and environmental ideals. Separated from their own families, young hippies formed spontaneous communities based on popular gathering places throughout the Valley. Many youths, upset by the prospect of sharing space with straights, aggressively claimed space as their own. However, in crowded campground settings, this was easier said than done. The confinement of the Valley forced hippies into close proximity with the very society they had shunned. Thus, they were forced to exaggerate their eccentricities in order to prove that their presence in the park did not signify their re-entry into capitalist society.

As many scholars have argued, the dichotomy between nature and capitalism is

indeed false. The recreation boom of the 1960s proved that wilderness was indeed “in,” even for middle-class suburbanites. Camping provided an affordable and enjoyable way for families to be together, thus emphasizing the wholesome and healthful qualities of the outdoor life. Yosemite's campgrounds, however, proved to be a different story. Beset on all sides by drugs, filth, and overt sexuality, parents worried what would become of their peaceful getaway. Families defined themselves in opposition to these deviant morals, strengthening their own self-image in the process. Camping is often perceived as an escape from everyday life. Yosemite Valley, however, was actually *more* urbanized than the suburbs where many of its visitors claimed residence. Furthermore, instead of shedding their traditional roles at the park entrance, mothers and fathers found that camping heightened their satisfaction with their respective gender norms. Like hippies, middle-class vacationers used Yosemite's campgrounds as microcosms of their day-to-day existences. The presence of an antagonistic population within the same small space only increased families' identification with Cold War domestic ideals, even if they normally found them restrictive.

It is often remarked that Yosemite is like no other place in the world. While this may be true of the park's physical landscape, such an appraisal misses the mark considerably. Just as the divide between wilderness and civilization is inherently false, so too is the binary opposition between national parks and their surrounding communities. Yosemite's borders are political boundaries, mandated by law yet unreflective of cultural dynamics. When visitors compared the park to its surrounding cities, they were not merely complaining. Their cognitive maps of everyday life and leisure had been completely transformed. This new conception of the park destabilized existing dichotomies of work and play, urban and rural,

and hippie and straight. Yosemite's internal geography was contested, but this conflict spilled onto larger maps of the sixties American West.

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