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## Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks, by Mark David Spence

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*Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks.* By Mark David Spence (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. 190. \$14.95 paper)

The issue of Native American rights and public lands is gaining recognition through scholarly work, National Park policy, and federal legislation such as the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (1990). Mark Spence's *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* provides a thorough investigation into the social processes and policies that simultaneously created our modern image of national parks and disenfranchised Native Americans from their ancestral homes. Spence's work will become seminal to the field. In specific reference to Yosemite National Park, Mark Spence summarizes the most important point of his work, "What [Ansel] Adam's photographs and what tourists, government officials, and environmentalists fail to remember is that uninhabited landscapes had to be created" (p.131). The wilderness and national park ideal of the twenty-first century rarely includes humans either living on or using these public lands.

The book is well organized and the author does an excellent job of supporting his claim that the American conservation movement of the late 1800s and early 1900s slowly evolved to marginalize Native Americans until they were effectively erased from their homes and sources of livelihood. Spence builds from the mid-1800 concept of wilderness (or wildness) as expansive natural areas that necessarily included Indians. He references early white travelers such as George Catlin, Charles Lanman, and Washington Irving as well as the artist Thomas Cole to depict the romanticized place of Indians in their homes—the place European Americans called wilderness. In Chapter 2, Spence develops the idea of an emerging system of "separate islands" for wilderness and Indians. After the Civil War, the renewed Indian wars of the 1860s and 1870s enabled policy makers and the general public to accept the idea that the best thing for the Indians are reservations separate from the rest of society. A natural progression led to policies to remove, and then exclude, Indians from park lands.

In the next five chapters, Spence uses case studies to first describe the historic dependency of several Indian nations on these areas and then the insidious process of removing these nations from America's "pristine" wonderlands. Most Americans are not aware that Yellowstone National Park was once inhabited by the Crow, Shoshone, Bannock, and Tukudeka; Glacier National Park by the Blackfoot Federation; and Yosemite National Park by the Yosemite (the last member of the tribe to live in Yosemite left in 1996). The spectacular lands that comprise these parks were pantries for the Indians and were (and still are) deeply spiritual areas with roots that can be traced back to the origins of the people. The reader may be surprised

at the extent of land management practices employed by Native Americans to encourage and maintain useful plant and animal species. Burning, selective harvesting, planting, and seasonal migration all served to sustain the ecosystem and the nation that depended upon that ecosystem. Nonetheless, these areas appeared relatively wild compared to the deforested, overgrazed, and plowed lands of Euro-America. The eventual perception was that the land needed preservation from humans, all humans.

Spence takes the reader through the predictable legal and administrative strategies that squeezed and forced Indian nations off the land. Early efforts to resist were generally futile, with the courts and bureaucracy siding with the dominant culture. The author makes it clear that most rulings and policies of expansion and exclusion were unjust. Despite the predictability of one broken treaty after another, Spence has written a text that is clear and engaging. The text is especially appropriate as the National Park Service evolves to accommodate traditional use by Native Americans of the very resources the Service is charged to protect. Spence's final chapter provides exceptions to the policy of "dispossession" in Alaska and the Badlands, exceptions that imply a slow shift in "Indian policy." Ultimately the book raises the fundamental question of "What is natural; what is wild?" and How do we incorporate these concepts into legislation that regulates wilderness and national parks?

Any shortfalls to the text are minor. One criticism (or compliment) is that the book is too short; readers may want to delve further into a few areas. For instance, Spence could have included a clearer distinction between national parks and congressionally designated wilderness areas, thus broadening the conclusions to the United States Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. In addition, Spence could have elaborated on the global implications of other nations following the "depopulation model" of Yellowstone National Park and /or any exceptions to that policy. On the other hand, the length may work as an advantage because most instructors seek texts that work in conjunction with several other texts or specific case studies.

The comparative analysis between three case studies, the use of historic and contemporary Native American voices, the thorough documentation, and the timeliness of the subject matter make this an excellent source of information that will be useful to a wide range of readers and disciplines.

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