
Monuments in Sandstone: The Story of Utah's National Parks

OSHER 298-001

Dates: Wednesdays, 1/23/13 – 2/27/13

Times: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM

Location: Annex, see bldg. doors for room #

Instructor: Frederick Swanson

Fbswan32@msn.com

Course Overview

Explore how the red-rock landscapes of southern Utah were transformed in the public's mind from a barren wasteland to a world-class tourist destination. Using historical journals and other contemporary accounts, we will delve into the lives of key individuals who publicized and protected the Colorado Plateau's stunning park lands. Expect lively discussion about current park management issues and come prepared to share your own stories of adventure in places like Zion, Bryce, Arches and Canyonlands!

Lecture and discussion format; no required text. A supplemental reading list will be available from instructor, but for starters you might try C. Gregory Crampton's *Standing Up Country* (Peregrine Smith Books 1983 / Rio Nuevo 2000 / ISBN-13: 978-1887896153).

Fred Swanson is a freelance writer specializing in western and environmental history. He is the author of *Dave Rust: A Life in the Canyons* (University of Utah Press, 2007) and other books. He and his family have spent more than thirty years exploring southern Utah's national parks.

Course Outline:

Week 1: Bridges of Stone

Theme: See America's Wonders First!

Using accounts of the early-day exploration of the Colorado Plateau, including the 1904 National Geographic expedition to Natural Bridges and the 1909 Wetherill expedition to Rainbow Bridge, we'll learn how "monumentalism" and national pride gave impetus for national park creation. We'll meet "Zeke" Johnson (1869-1957)—the first custodian of Natural Bridges and its most enthusiastic tourism promoter.



Discussion: What constitutes the ideal national park experience? Should park rangers try to get visitors beyond the fenced viewpoints?

Week 2: The Hidden Canyon of the Mukuntuweap

Theme: Parks for the People

The first Anglo explorers of Zion Canyon termed it a scenic wonder to compare with California's Yosemite. We'll see how a school superintendent named William Wylie and the Union Pacific Railroad turned this great valley into a major tourist destination, complete with colorful tent cabins and elegant touring cars. The National Park Service wanted to boost visitation in order to cement its role in the federal bureaucracy, but before long it was dealing with the problem of crowd management.

Discussion: How should we handle crowding in the national parks? Did the Park Service create problems by seeking to boost park visitation?

Week 3: The Wayne Wonderland: Capitol Reef and the New Deal

Theme: National Parks –the 1930's Economic Stimulus Package

Businessmen and boosters in Wayne County wanted to get in on the tourist boom at Zion and Bryce Canyon with a park of their own. We'll learn how they got the federal government interested in Capitol Reef, and how Depression-era relief efforts helped spur creation of this national monument. We'll meet Ephraim Pectol, who collected and stored priceless Native American artifacts in back of his Torrey grocery, and Charles Kelley, an eccentric, cigar-chomping desert rat who helped put Capitol Reef on the map.

Discussion: Should parks be designated to promote local economies or to protect natural areas?

Week 4: There Oughta Be A Park Here: Canyonlands, Mission 66 and the New Frontier

Theme: If We Develop it, They Will Come

Arches National Monument was always the orphan child of Utah's park system—until a visionary superintendent named Bates Wilson got the world interested in its stunning sandstone topography. But Wilson didn't stop there—in the 1960s he enlisted Interior Secretary Stewart Udall in the creation of a great national park at the confluence of the Green and Colorado rivers. We'll also see how an obscure writer named Edward Abbey started a movement against "industrial tourism" in the southwestern parks.

Discussion: Should there be paved roads and destination facilities in the national parks?

Week 5: Glen Canyon: The Place the Sierra Club Didn't Know

Theme: Symbol of Wilderness Lost

From Major Powell in 1869 to the Boy Scout troops of the 1950s, Glen Canyon on the Colorado River has awed and delighted river runners. So why did this "wonder canyon" become a lake that today attracts nearly as many visitors as Zion National Park? And why did the Sierra Club's David Brower proclaim Glen Canyon "The Place No One Knew," when hundreds of people were already taking guided trips down it?

Discussion: Should Glen Canyon be brought back?

Week 6: The Escalante Canyons and the Future of Utah's Park Lands

Theme: The Park That Almost Was

As late as 1949 *National Geographic Magazine* was touting the Escalante Canyons as an undiscovered wilderness. Why did this scenic canyon system elude popularity for so long, and why was it featured in President Clinton's controversial 1995 national monument designation? We'll look at the little-known saga of the *first* Escalante National Monument in the 1930s and what came of the lands that were to be included in it.

Discussion: Should Utah's national parks and monuments be expanded?