



A century of excellence

Google celebrates centennial of parks

The best idea we ever had," started with one of the best presidents we ever had. In 1864, President Abraham Lincoln deeded the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove to the state of California. It was the beginning of a series of government moves to provide protection for special lands.

Six years later, President Grant signed a law setting aside 2.2 million acres as "a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." The world's first national park was born at Yellowstone. In the following years, Yosemite, Rock Creek and several Civil War battlefields, including Gettysburg, became national parks.

Writer and historian Wallace Stegner called national parks "the best idea we ever had." As the number of national parks and monuments grew, it became apparent that an agency to oversee and maintain them was necessary. In 1916, Congress created the National Park Service. It celebrates its centennial this year.

Another good idea

As far as "best ideas" go, national parks are definitely up there. Another good idea that has transformed America — and the entire world — is Google. It seems only fitting that one great idea would

honor another. The Google Cultural Institute (google.com/culturalinstitute), an online repository of art, history and other wonders of the world, has created a website to celebrate the National Park Service's 100 years at google.com/culturalinstitute/project-national-park-service?hl=en.

The site is a collection of images, maps, videos and information from the collections of many national parks around the country. The home page features a sideways scrolling slide show of images from the featured collections. As you scroll from one image to the next, a large map of the country on the left side of the page reorients itself to show you where the park is located.

Clicking on an image brings you to the entire online collection. The collections are also displayed in a side-scrolling manner. Clicking on an item in the collection brings up a larger photo along with a written description and history. Navigation arrows on either side of the image allow you to browse back and forth through the collection.

There are several other ways to browse the site's offerings. A Collections button at the top of the page opens up a vertically scrolling, alphabetical display of the collections. The name of each park is on the left and a series of thumbnail images of exhibit pieces fills out the page to the right. You can re-sort the list to be reverse alphabetical or from newest to oldest. You can also replace the images of the exhibit items with an interac-

tive map of the country with pins marking the parks.

Back on the home page there are a couple of other ways to search the content. The Explore Everything button opens a page with numerous options for organizing the content.

You can scroll vertically through images of all of the exhibits or items. You can play a slide show that takes you through the items automatically. Images can be sorted by date, collection, creator, medium, event, place, person and media type. The grid can be changed to a side scrolling presentation with larger images. And of course there's a search field where you can look for specific items.

Brings history to life

The national parks are more than just splendid examples of Mother Nature at its finest. They also feature many important historical sites. As you browse through the collections you'll learn about life at Alcatraz, the assassination of President Lincoln, Thomas Edison's laboratory, the Civil War, the everyday lives of Native Americans and more.

Many of the images depicted are beautiful paintings and photographs of amazing locations. But some of the more interesting pictures are of tools, clothing and household items that tell the story of ordinary life in extraordinary places and times.

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