

conflict was only narrowly avoided on several occasions.⁷⁴ In a more peaceful but no less hostile manner, the Blackfeet officially restrengthened their old policy of noncooperation and refused to allow the construction of a livestock fence along the eastern boundary of the park. While they acknowledged that such a fence would keep domestic animals out of fragile grasslands, council members worried more that it might indicate tacit approval of park authority.⁷⁵ Eventually, continued disagreements with the Blackfeet would force the National Park Service to revisit issues it thought had been buried in the 1930s.⁷⁶

At the height of efforts to extend the park's eastern boundary, Horace Albright described the western portion of the Blackfeet reservation as a place that "is by topography, juxtaposition and character logically a part of Glacier National Park."⁷⁷ In many respects, he made a prescient argument for ecosystem preservation and management. Of course, the unstated logic was that Indians must be excluded for the ecosystem to operate "naturally." Although the proposal to enlarge the park at the further expense of the Blackfeet illustrates an audacity that has long characterized the park service's relationship with its Indian neighbors, it also marks a certain maturation of the American wilderness ideal. Albright's easy logic and the tenuous legal arguments that negated Blackfeet rights in Glacier demonstrate how completely linked preservation and Indian removal had become.

As the park service developed under Albright's forceful administration, the management of all parks became more regularized. Not surprisingly, Glacier provided an important model for policies of Indian removal at other national parks. Perhaps nowhere illustrates this better than Yosemite, where park officials began to view several decades of native habitation as a problem in need of a solution. Because of a number of unique historical conditions, Yosemite presented a remarkable exception to the general belief that parks and native communities could not coexist. The original park was established eight years before Yellowstone, yet native peoples became an integral part of Yosemite's early development. Like the Blackfeet at Glacier, Yosemite Indians were also important symbols of the national park in the 1910s—but this reflected decades of regular contact with tourists and long established residence within the valley. Nevertheless, Yosemite was an exception that would eventually prove a rule. Long after the mountain-dwelling Shoshone had been forced out of Yellowstone and just as the Blackfeet "problem" was becoming something of a moot point, park service officials began to implement a program to create a vision of pristine wilderness in the spectacular heart of the Sierra Nevada.

7

THE HEART OF THE SIERRAS,
1864–1916

The power of scenery to affect men is, in a large way, proportionate to the degree of their civilization and the degree in which their taste has been cultivated. Among a thousand savages there will be a much smaller number who will show the least sign of being so affected than among a thousand persons taken from a civilized community.

Frederick Law Olmsted, 1865¹

AS THE EXAMPLES OF YELLOWSTONE AND GLACIER clearly demonstrate, Americans are able to cherish their national parks today largely because native peoples either abandoned them involuntarily or were forcefully restricted to reservations. For well into the twentieth century, however, Yosemite Valley remained home to a permanent, relatively autonomous Indian village. Whether cutting a trail on a government crew, working for a concessionaire, selling crafts to eager tourists, or providing information to a young anthropologist, the residents of the local native community made themselves an integral part of the national park—long after the dusty old days of land grabs and Indian wars. While native residence in the valley stands in marked contrast to other early parks, it also presents an important comparison with the experiences of Indian peoples at Yellowstone and Glacier. Such differences shed important light on Yosemite's unique history and reveal the processes by which this park was eventually made to fit the standards of the national park ideal.

The World Rushes In

The Yosemite Indians' ability to remain in a national park resulted in large part from a long history of efforts to both resist and adapt to the American conquest

of their homeland. The first sustained contact between the Yosemite and whites took place in the midst of the Gold Rush, as thousands of Forty-niners invaded the central Sierra Nevada. In their feverish quest for some trace of the Mother Lode, miners brought epidemic diseases to native communities and destroyed carefully tended ecosystems. Moreover, the growth of mining camps and settlements also spawned a series of violent conflicts between whites and displaced peoples. Not surprisingly, the "discovery" of Yosemite Valley in 1851 occurred during a military campaign to subdue the peoples of the central Sierra Nevada and relocate them to the San Joaquin Valley. Efforts to remove the Yosemite Indians from the region ultimately failed, however, and they reestablished themselves in the valley after two years of sporadic encounters with miners and state militia battalions.²

By necessity, the Yosemite developed an accommodating relationship with nearby mining camps in the mid-1850s. Despite occasional flare-ups, Chief Tenaya endeavored to fulfill an 1852 promise to government officials that his people would avoid conflict with neighboring white communities. His efforts proved largely successful, and a number of Indians even started to work for individual argonauts or panned gold for themselves.³ Yosemite Valley lay outside the purview of most mining interests, however, and the Indian community there managed to preserve a degree of distance and autonomy from neighboring white society that few native groups in the gold country could ever hope for. Consequently, Yosemite became something of a cultural island and remained, as it had been for centuries, an important place for hunting, harvesting various food and medicinal plants, and holding religious celebrations.

Only a small number of individuals remained in the valley year-round at this time, but hundreds left their winter camps in the lower country to the west and returned to Yosemite each spring. In 1857, for instance, an early hotelier observed that an especially "large band of Indians" had come to the valley "on account of a bounteous acorn crop the preceding fall."⁴ A few weeks later, a Belgian gold miner familiar with the Yosemite region probably observed the same group of about one hundred when he noted that a large encampment he had encountered three years earlier had moved further up the Merced River into the valley.⁵ Yosemite Indians still lit purposeful fires in the valley in the early 1860s, and one traveler observed that they had started so many for the purpose of "clearing the ground, the more readily to obtain their winter supply of acorns and wild sweet potato root," that the glow of the fires could be seen from miles away.⁶

The California Gold Rush took a severe toll on the people of the central Sierra Nevada, but native inhabitants still greatly outnumbered European and American visitors to Yosemite Valley until the early 1860s. Between 1855, when the first pleasure-seeking tourists visited Yosemite, and 1863, only 406 visitors entered the valley. As Yosemite's fame grew and travel became less arduous, however, visitation increased exponentially. In 1864, the year that President Lincoln signed the Yosemite Park Act, the valley received 147 visitors, but this figure more than doubled the following year and soon rose above 1,100 with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869.⁷ Along with increasing numbers of visi-

tors, tourist facilities quickly expanded as early concessionaires built new hotels, planted orchards and vegetable gardens, plowed and fenced hay fields, blazed trails, and constructed roads.⁸ Between 1874, when Yosemite received 2,711 tourists, and 1875, the Big Oak Flat Road, the Coulterville Road, and the Wawona Road opened to wagon traffic for the first time, bringing loads of supplies and coaches full of tourists to the valley on a regular basis.⁹

Despite the dramatic increases in visitation, Indians in Yosemite Valley remained on fairly good terms with their new neighbors. For the most part, they found in the growing tourist industry a means by which they could both earn a livelihood within their rapidly changing world and remain in their ancestral home. A number of small communities in the Sierra foothills made similar adjustments to the changes wrought by growing white settlements, but these *nanberias* generally persisted only as very small clusters of a few families and related individuals. The native population of Yosemite actually grew as tourism increased, however, and a number of dislocated groups returned to the area to seek employment during the spring and summer tourist season.¹⁰

How one defines a Yosemite Indian has long proven difficult for anthropologists and park officials, but the people most closely associated with Yosemite Valley in the mid-nineteenth century were the Ahwahneechee. Part of a larger cultural and linguistic group called the Sierra Miwok, the Ahwahneechee had lived in the Yosemite area for at least six hundred years. Whether they had replaced earlier inhabitants about 1100 to 1400 C.E., as archaeological and linguistic evidence suggests, or descended from people who settled in the valley some three thousand years previously, the Ahwahneechee viewed their home as the place where Coyote had especially directed them to live after the creation of the world. As a number of late-nineteenth-century Ahwahneechee related their history to outsiders, they described Yosemite as a special place the Creator had filled with all they would need, including trout, sweet clover, potent medicinal plants, roots, acorns, pine nuts, fruits, and berries in abundance, as well as deer and other animals, "which gave meat for food and skins for clothing and beds."¹¹

Although they had once trusted to the remoteness of the valley to protect them from invading Americans, the Ahwahneechee were never an isolated people. They frequently traded and intermarried with other Miwok and with Mono-Paiute from the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada, a fact that may explain the present name of their home. In the Southern Sierra Miwok dialect, the Ahwahneechee are "the people of Ahwahnee," and Ahwahnee means "the place of the gaping mouth." Miwok people who lived west of the valley sometimes referred to the Ahwahneechee as *johemite*, which can be translated as "some of them are killers." Because most Sierra Miwok greatly distrusted the Paiute, this word probably refers to the presence of these people among the Ahwahneechee. The armed men who first entered the valley in 1851 must have learned of the Ahwahneechee village locations from these western neighbors, and so the present name of the valley dates back to this invasion.¹²

Besides the Mono-Paiute and other Sierra Miwok, Yokut from the Central Valley and some ex-mission Indians mixed in with the Ahwahneechee before the

1850s to create a complex Yosemite Indian society.¹³ Such cultural blending was common among all precontact groups and generally followed long-established patterns of trade and exchange. These processes became less self-directed and more pronounced in the midnineteenth century, however, when native peoples struggled to survive the impact of American settlements. Lafayette Bunnell, one of the first whites to see Yosemite Valley during the militia campaigns of 1851 and 1852, clearly recognized all of these processes at work when he referred to the "Yo-Semite Indians [as] a composite race, consisting of the disaffected of the various tribes from the Tuolumne to King's River."¹⁴ The processes of cultural blending, or ethnogenesis, did not cease with the end of the Gold Rush, and Yosemite Indian culture continued to evolve in the decades following the establishment of Yosemite Park. Borrowing items and practices from surrounding American and Mexican communities and combining the traditions of various Indian groups, the Yosemite constantly adapted to new conditions and managed to remain a distinct and viable community.¹⁵

Although they retained a fair amount of their older cultural practices, the Yosemite became further integrated into the tourist economy as more and more visitors arrived in the valley. Increasingly, the Indians' presence in the valley depended on their ability to gain employment from hoteliers and concessionaires. Men found work chopping wood and putting up hay, labored about the hotels, served as guides, drove sight-seeing wagons, and often provided large private parties with fish and game.¹⁶ The Yosemite succeeded especially well at supplying fish to tourist parties, who, as many sportsmen reported, almost never had any luck fishing. As one early visitor noted, "Trout are abundant in some of the streams, but they are very shy of the hook. The Indians catch them in traps, and frequently supply travelers at twenty-five cents per pound."¹⁷ Yosemite women often worked in the private homes of concessionaires as domestics, and in the hotels they found work as maids or laundresses.¹⁸ Women and children also picked the wild strawberries that grew in the valley meadows in late summer and sold them to the hotels, and even as late as 1913 private parties could still occasionally purchase chickens, fresh fish, and wild strawberries from Yosemite families.¹⁹

Native employment in Yosemite reflected patterns established throughout the Sierra Nevada in the years following the Gold Rush. The massive invasion of miners who poured over the mountains brutally displaced entire native communities, while the environmental destruction wrought by mining practices undermined seasonal hunting and gathering cycles. Severely weakened and suddenly homeless in their homelands, most of California's shrinking native population found the means for survival only in close accommodation with non-Indian society.²⁰ Many Miwok families and individuals moved to where they could eke out a living on the margins of white settlements. Though generally despised and frequently humiliated by whites, their presence was tolerated whenever native labor could not easily be replaced by Mexican or Chinese workers.

A similar situation developed in Yosemite, but there native people got along much better with their non-Indian neighbors. Although a Yosemite man named

Choko complained in the mid-1870s that "white man too much lie," at least the valley did not attract the same rough crowd that congregated in other parts of the Sierra Nevada.²¹ The remoteness of Yosemite also made native labor more prized, and because they posed no visible threat to tourists or concessionaires, they were left to live in relative peace and allowed to participate in non-Indian society to a degree rarely seen elsewhere in California. The Yosemite's ability to adapt to their new world also made them inconspicuous to state officials, who had taken over Indian policy in California after federal efforts to develop a reservation system in the Central Valley failed in the early 1860s.²²

Yosemite's Indian Wilderness

Despite the state's lack of concern, the presence of Indians in Yosemite proved a matter of considerable interest for many early visitors. The often patronizing affection that many tourists had for the Indians who lived in the valley, and the Yosemite's ability to reciprocate and even exploit these affections, went far toward ensuring they would remain in the area long after it became a national park. As Europeans and Americans had for the previous century and a half, early visitors continued to associate Indians with wilderness, and many were delighted to find them still living in Yosemite. A number of tourists happily recalled being entertained by their native and nonnative guides with accounts of Yosemite legends; still others commented excitedly about encounters with local Indians. The native settlement just outside the valley at Wawona became something of a tourist attraction in itself, and the "sweat house" there was an especially popular "object of curiosity."²³ Tourists would often visit the camp in the evenings to see how the inhabitants lived and at times dined with them in their dwellings.²⁴ In both Yosemite Valley and Wawona, the expertise of native hunters and fishers frequently received praise, and the daily chores associated with gathering, storing, and preparing acorns fascinated countless visitors.²⁵

The association of Indians with wilderness was especially strong for early tourists, and one visitor in the 1850s even suggested that Yosemite be left entirely to the native residents. Unlike rapacious Americans, he observed, they showed their "love for the spot the 'Great Spirit' has made so lovely, and hallowed as the hunting ground of [their] forefathers."²⁶ After the creation of Yosemite Park in 1864, another tourist expressed similar sentiments in even more patronizing and romantic language. Thrilled that Yosemite was still home to "Indians, the simple children as of old," he wrote excitedly of "their bows, and arrows with flint heads; their food mostly acorns pounded in a rock hollowed out perhaps centuries ago for the same purpose; their furniture willow baskets; cooking by heating stones, and throwing them when heated into water; their faces tattooed and painted, and their enjoyments nothing above those of the animal." The government act to set aside a place still inhabited by these "simple children" gave him hope that "the time will never come when Art is sent here to improve Nature."²⁷

The idea that Indians somehow complemented or completed a wilderness scene

was also evident in the works of Yosemite's early landscape painters. While images of modern tourists in Yosemite could detract from the sublimity of the landscape, "picturesque" Indians or Indian-built structures further "naturalized" the scene and provided a human scale by which to emphasize the grandeur of the valley's cliffs and waterfalls.²⁸ The artist and writer Constance Fletcher Gordon Cumming, for instance, found Yosemite Indian encampments to be "filthy" and uninviting, but she could not resist placing them in the foreground of some of her paintings since they brought a "naturalness" and "blessed" touch of color to her art.²⁹

James Hutchings, one of the valley's earliest and most avid promoters, clearly understood the tourist's fascination with Indians. In his many promotional writings about Yosemite in the 1870s and 1880s, he frequently called attention to the "Indian Camp, and its interesting people [as] . . . one of the many attractive features of Yosemite." For Hutchings, the native residents possessed "the principal customs, occupations, manner of living, habits of thought, traditions, legends, and systems of belief" not only of their own people and the surrounding tribes but also of "the California Indians generally." Consequently, the valley was an excellent place to see *real* Indians in their *natural* environment.³⁰ Though his comments reflected the romantic hyperbole of the time, in some respects Hutchings was right. The Yosemite probably constituted the largest native community in the central Sierra Nevada at this time, and their efforts to coexist with nonnative society actually preserved a high degree of cultural continuity and independence. Of course, they had adapted a number of their white neighbors' tools and customs, and the valley's roads, pastures, hotels, and campsites were anything but "natural," yet most early tourists simply applied a little imaginative effort to visually edit out such distractions.

Probably the most popular native occupations for early tourists was basketry, and many proclaimed Yosemite's basket weavers the finest in the world. The first recorded sale of a basket to a tourist in Yosemite occurred in 1869, but sales did not become commonplace until the 1890s. By that time, Miwok and Paiute women in and around Yosemite began manufacturing items expressly for sale to tourists. Their work soon became so famous that collectors and dealers regularly traveled thousands of miles to purchase baskets.³¹ As Craig Bates and Martha Lee have observed, the Yosemite baskets were especially popular with tourists because they "brought to mind western, romantic, and primitive connotations." More than collectible items of merchandise, they allowed the purchaser to "sustain memories of their wilderness experiences."³²

Baskets also represented an important means by which Yosemite Indian women could directly tap into the tourist trade and gain esteem in their own community. Basket making was a highly valued skill among the Yosemite, and though a woman could make more money as a laundress, the numbers and quality of baskets that a family possessed were a traditional sign of wealth and status within the community.³³ Consequently, a successful basket maker not only profited from the tourist trade but also utilized a skill that brought her respect from tourists, park officials, and other Indians. In doing so, she greatly enhanced her family's and her own standing within the larger Yosemite community.³⁴



Lena Brown and Mary, Yosemite Valley ca. 1886. The daughter and granddaughter of important Sierra Miwok leaders, these two women held central roles in the Yosemite Indian community through the first decades of the twentieth century. They are pictured here in front of a summer *amucha*, a typical open-front dwelling still in use at the time. (Courtesy of the Yosemite National Park Research Library.)

Aside from basketry, native people found other means for profiting from the interest of early tourists. By the early 1870s, individuals would frequently entertain visitors outside their hotels and charge a penny for a brief dance or song. Larger "fandangos," as early Californians called them, might also have been held on occasion for the paid entertainment of tourists.³⁵ The growing popularity of Kodaks in the late 1880s made photographing Indians another important feature of the tourist experience. The Yosemite quickly recognized the marketability of their own "exotic naturalness," and several early tourists made special note of "a very cunning little papoose [who] smiled for a dime a smile."³⁶ Within a few decades, the price for a picture had risen considerably, and one popular basket weaver charged tourists a half dollar to photograph her with her wares.³⁷ In a 1904 book addressed to a growing interest in the Yosemite, Galen Clark admonished tourists not to expect the Indians "to pose for you for nothing [since] they are asked to do it hundreds of times every summer, and are entitled to payment for their trouble." He further advised his readers to "treat the Indians with courtesy and consideration, if you expect similar treatment from them."³⁸ By the turn of the century, native people had become an important part of the tourist experience, whether as laborers in the valley's growing service industry or as an authenticating aspect of the encounter with wilderness. Likewise, tourists had become an integral part of native people's lives; as one frequent visitor to the valley commented, a number of families were "in the habit of repairing yearly to . . .

Yosemite for the purpose of sharing in the double harvest—first of the tourists, later of the acorns.”³⁹

The presence of Indians in Yosemite during the last decades of the nineteenth century contrasts markedly with the policies of Indian removal implemented at Yellowstone in the 1880s. Established in 1872, only eight years after President Lincoln signed the Yosemite Park Act, Yellowstone is a near contemporary of Yosemite in the annals of wilderness preservation. The removal and exclusion of Indians from Yellowstone points up some significant differences in the evolution of these parks, however, and highlights the unique conditions that fostered the continuing development of Yosemite’s Indian community. Because Yellowstone was created in Wyoming Territory, the issue of Indian removal from the national park was originally a federal prerogative. Consequently, park administrators could coordinate their efforts to exclude Indians from Yellowstone with officials in the Department of Interior, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the War Department. Yosemite, by contrast, was established within a state, and California officials retained sole responsibility for the valley’s management until 1906. Like the state’s management of Indian affairs, however, Sacramento took almost no interest in the administration of Yosemite. Even if state officials decided to exclude native peoples from Yosemite, their removal from the park would have been complicated by the fact that, after the demise of California’s reservation system in the 1850s, there were no parcels of land to which they could be restricted. As a result, no policy ever developed regarding the removal or restriction of the Yosemite Indians, so long as the park remained under state control.

The different conditions surrounding the administration of each park certainly influenced the development or absence of a policy toward native residents, but the issue of their removal from park lands ultimately depended on the attitudes of park officials and tourists. Coming only a few years after George Armstrong Custer’s debacle at Little Big Horn, the early exclusion of Indians from Yellowstone reflected a concern that they might frighten potential visitors away from the park. Unlike the tribes of the Rocky Mountain region, however, California Indians rarely marshaled a threatening resistance to the invasion of their homelands. Consequently, the presence of Indians in Yosemite Valley never became a matter of fearful concern among administrators or visitors. As one tourist observed in 1872, the Yosemite were altogether “mild” and “harmless,” and wholly unlike the more dangerous tribes further east.⁴⁰

Preservation and “Moral Rights”

By the 1890s, park officials at both Yosemite and Yellowstone began to share similar concerns about the presence of Indians within a nature preserve. In Yellowstone, Bannock hunting parties still frequented the park, and their presence was a matter of great consternation for park officials. Because the conflicts of the 1870s had already become a dim memory and the Bannock moved through only the most remote portions of the park, officials no longer worried that the presence

of Indians might frighten visitors. Instead, their concerns reflected new ideas about Indians as both harmful to wilderness and potentially assimilable into American society. Yellowstone Superintendent Captain Moses Harris underscored this point when he argued not only that “marauding savages” threatened the wild flora and fauna in the park but also that Indians could never become “civilized” so long as they continued to frequent their former “wilderness haunts.”⁴¹

Such ideas informed policies at Yosemite as well, and the establishment of Yosemite National Park in 1890, which then consisted of a large area surrounding the state-managed valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove, brought new restrictions to the native community. The active enforcement of trespassing and hunting regulations, for instance, adversely affected those Indians who still hunted large and small game or gathered plants in the Yosemite high country. Unlike Yellowstone, however, native people still made up a significant portion of the park’s labor force, and the idea that they somehow harmed wilderness did not lead to their outright exclusion from the more heavily developed valley. Furthermore, as Superintendent A. E. Wood noted in 1892, their long, unthreatening presence gave the Indians a “moral right” to remain in the state park. Wood also implied that removal would never really be necessary because the Yosemite were a “vanishing” tribe that would soon die out or assimilate into white society.⁴²

Although Yosemite tourists and park officials generally had a more favorable attitude toward native peoples than did their counterparts in Yellowstone, a number of important early visitors complained about the presence of Indians in the park. In part because they did not match the “handsome and noble” Indians of popular fiction and art, the famous Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King visited Yosemite in 1860 and found the “lazy, good for nothing, Digger Indians” to be wholly incongruous with his notions of “pristine” nature. The fact that they gathered acorns from woodpecker stores only proved that Indians degraded the wilderness. Starr King felt that “many a Californian, if the question were up between the Diggers and the woodpeckers, would not hesitate in deciding the point of the ‘moral value’ in favor of the plundered birds” and seek to remove the Indians from Yosemite.⁴³

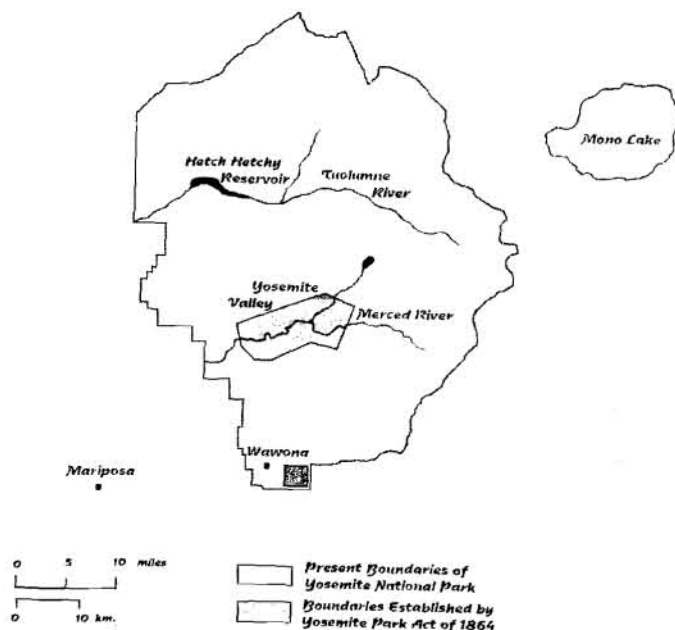
Self-appointed “Friends of the Indian” such as Helen Hunt Jackson shared this disdain for the Yosemite. But for Jackson, wilderness also represented the depraved condition from which savages needed uplifting. Such “uplifting,” incidentally, benefited the wilderness and, as Jackson noted during a trip to Yosemite in the 1870s, the presence of “filthy” Indians only detracted from the sublimity of the scenery. Furthermore, the inability of their “uncouth” minds to appreciate the beauty that surrounded them was an affront to the Creator and his works.⁴⁴ Like Jackson, John Muir found the Indians of the Yosemite region to be “mostly ugly, and some of them altogether hideous.” Indeed, it “seemed [they had] no right place in the landscape,” and Muir could not feel the “solemn calm” of wilderness when he was in their presence.⁴⁵ Starr King, Jackson, and Muir did not speak for most early visitors, but the longer the Yosemite persisted in the park and refused to vanish, the more such attitudes would drive park policy and eclipse any concerns about “moral rights.”

The Yosemite, for their part, were not always happy with their non-Indian neighbors and the changes that had been wrought in the valley. In the late 1880s, a large group of Yosemite leaders sent a "Petition to the Senators and Representatives of the Congress," in which they complained of being "poorly-clad paupers and unwelcome guests, silently the objects of curiosity or contemptuous pity to the throngs of strangers who yearly gather in this our own land and heritage." They further noted that cattle and horses in the valley destroyed "all of the tender roots, berries and the few nuts that formed the[ir] sustenance." "The destruction of every means of support for ourselves and our families by the rapacious acts of whites," they continued, "will shortly result in the total exclusion of the remaining remnants of our tribes from this our beloved valley." In compensation for these damages to their homes and their way of life, they requested \$1 million from the federal government "for the future support of ourselves and our descendants." In exchange, they promised to relinquish their "natural right and title to Yosemite Valley and our surrounding claims."⁴⁶

None of the fifty-two men and women who placed their marks at the end of the document could have written it. Most likely, the author was the artist Charles D. Robinson because much of the wording is similar to complaints he brought before the California State Assembly during its investigation of the Yosemite Park Commission.⁴⁷ In the late 1880s, the commission had come under increasing criticism for its management of the park, and in response to these complaints the Assembly launched an investigation in February 1889. During public hearings, Robinson and others had criticized the commission's promotion of commercial development in the valley and its neglect of what they perceived to be its primary responsibility, the protection and preservation of Yosemite's natural environment.⁴⁸ These concerns were also included in the petition to Congress, but few if any of the Indian leaders would have troubled themselves with these political matters. Nevertheless, all of those who placed their marks at the bottom of the petition assented to its contents and certainly supported the author's intentions.

No one advanced the Indians' concerns at the state hearings, nor did they receive an answer from Washington in response to their petition. The hearings did much to damage the commission's reputation, however. In the aftermath, preservationists successfully petitioned the federal government not only to take over the management of Yosemite but also to considerably extend the park's boundaries. As noted before, the creation of Yosemite National Park in 1890 incorporated the high country surrounding the valley, thus protecting the area's flora and fauna as well as the streams that supplied Yosemite's magnificent waterfalls. The State of California held on to both Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove for several more years, but these areas reverted back to the federal government and became part of the much larger national park in 1906.⁴⁹

Federal administration of the areas surrounding the valley quickly became an active and proscriptive force in native peoples' lives. Management of the park by the U.S. Cavalry, which had taken over the care of Yellowstone as well, subjected them to all federal laws and park regulations. Before 1890, for instance, the Yosemite hunted deer throughout the Merced and Tuolumne River watersheds,



Yosemite National Park and surrounding area. Adapted from Alfred Runte, *Yosemite: The Embattled Wilderness* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); and Craig D. Bates and Martha J. Lee, *Tradition and Innovation: A Basket History of the Indians of the Yosemite-Mono Lake Area* (Yosemite, Calif.: Yosemite Association, 1991).

but the cavalry severely restricted such activities within the boundaries of the new national park.⁵⁰ Hunting was absolutely prohibited, whether by Indians or by whites, and early superintendents aggressively sought to enforce the ban. In 1897, distressed that native hunters had killed a large number of deer the preceding fall, Acting Superintendent Alexander Rodgers insisted that "the interior department . . . take steps to prevent a recurrence of this conduct on the part of the Indians." Rodgers's recommendation was apparently heeded because later reports regularly noted that hunting within park boundaries no longer posed a problem.⁵¹

These new regulations reflect the zeal of military administration in the national parks, but they also demonstrate that late-nineteenth-century ideas about wilderness as uninhabited and pristine and about Indians as both vanishing and assimilable had begun to take hold in Yosemite. In many respects, the new restrictions placed on Yosemite Indian life mirrored the same mind-set that inspired the creation of Glacier National Park. As at Glacier, turn-of-the-century romanticism for the frontier inspired a sentimental interest in the Yosemite Indians that seemed to grow only stronger as native lifestyles "vanished" further into the past and as older, more "authentic" Indians died. As one tourist noted in 1913, the Yosemite lacked all "the picturesqueness which is so noticeable a feature of the

red men in their native estate. . . . Nevertheless[,] the reason for their being in the Valley at all at this day, lends a certain romantic interest to their presence."⁵²

Native people who did not look appropriately "Indian" presented a unique problem for park officials. On the one hand, they bolstered easy assumptions about vanishing or assimilating peoples, but on the other hand they disappointed tourists who wanted to see picturesque communities. Native people who attempted to practice older traditions, however, were somehow out of place because they had also adapted to new conditions and no longer seemed appropriately aboriginal. This apparent cultural disjunction had troubled tourists for some time, as well as the Army superintendents of the national park, but it apparently never concerned the men who managed the valley and Mariposa Big Tree Grove for the State of California. With the incorporation of these two areas into the national park in 1906, however, these concerns became the cornerstone of federal park policy toward the Yosemite Indians for decades to come.

As they took a more active interest in the valley's native community, national park officials also redoubled their efforts to restrict native use of the backcountry. The sentimental interests of tourists and the acknowledged "moral rights" of the Yosemite still precluded any efforts toward Indian outright removal, however. Instead, they inspired a series of administrative plans to incorporate the native community into official park promotions. In the summer of 1914, Acting Superintendent William Littebrandt urged the secretary of the Interior to bring the Bureau of Indian Affairs into a plan that would make the Indian village into "one of the features of the Valley, by attempting to reproduce a village or camp such as the Indians originally built."⁵³ The notion of constructing an "authentic" village for tourism was opposed by C. H. Asbury, a special agent for Indian affairs in the region, who strongly recommended against "establishing an Indian camp in the Valley, for exhibition purposes." As he noted in a letter to the commissioner of Indian Affairs, "The Indians . . . are there for the purpose of making their living at honest labor . . . and should be encouraged to make their own living, rather than become members of an aboriginal show."⁵⁴

Park officials disagreed with Asbury's conclusions and continued to press their case. In an internal memorandum to park employees that was later forwarded to the commissioner of Indian Affairs, Littebrandt argued that a redesigned native village, if viewed with a "liberal" mind, "would not be detrimental to the interests of the Indians merely because it would [support] the interests of the park; the interests of both might be identical." "In other words," he continued, "an Indian is just as much a part of the scheme of things if he becomes a picturesque part of the landscape, as when engaged in some ugly and dirty employment; in both cases he is being used in the 'interest' of other parties, since few people employ them for benevolent purposes in any line."⁵⁵ Although this line of reasoning clearly advances one form of acknowledged exploitation over another, Littebrandt's tortured logic also reveals the close links between tourism and the presentation of past-tense Indian culture. Because his proposal coincided with plans to develop new park facilities near the site of the "old Indian camp," Littebrandt's argument also suggests that management of the park landscape would necessarily in-

volve an effort to relocate the valley's native community to a more "appropriate" setting.⁵⁶

Littebrandt had pitched his earlier appeal for a new village in terms of improving the housing conditions of the valley's native inhabitants. Calling attention to the community's general poverty, he "hope[d] that they may receive such assistance as the Government in fulfillment of its generous Indian policy may feel disposed to bestow upon them."⁵⁷ In a peculiar extension of the superintendent's own reasoning skills, the Indian Service declined to assist the Yosemite, who were "in no more need of aid, than [a] thousand others through the foot hills of California."⁵⁸ More particularly, the Yosemite Indians had never signed a treaty with the United States and thus had no official relationship with the federal government.⁵⁹ Consequently, Asbury had the same response for park officials that he gave an important Yosemite Indian leader named Francisco Georgely: if native residents wanted an improvement in their living conditions, as Georgely had petitioned the Indian Service, or park officials hoped to create a more "picturesque Indian camp," Asbury concluded they should both do so "at their expense."⁶⁰ The commissioner of Indian Affairs apparently agreed, and neither Littebrandt nor Georgely received any further response to their petitions. As later superintendents would soon learn, the Yosemite Indians were the exclusive "problem" of the newly established National Park Service, and one they would have to resolve on their own.