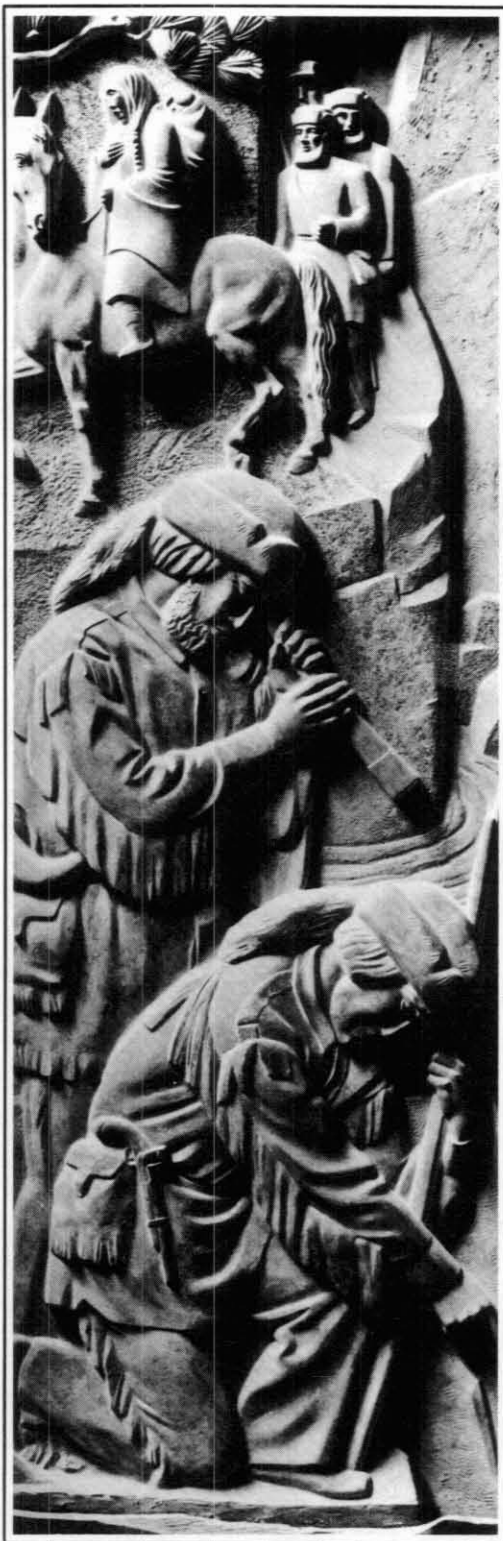




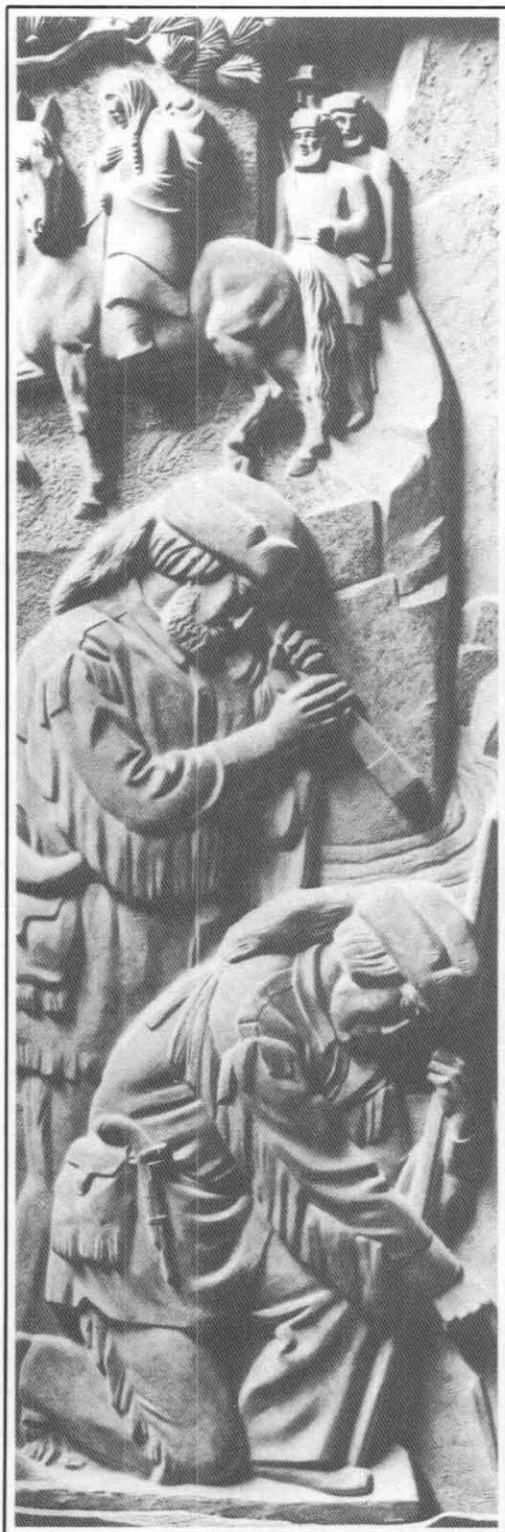
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THE DEPARTMENT OF EVERYTHING ELSE

Highlights of Interior History

1988



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Highlights of Interior History

by Robert M. Utley and
Barry Mackintosh

1988

COVER PHOTO:
Lewis and Clark Expedition:
Bas-relief by Heinz Warneke in
the Interior Auditorium, 1939.

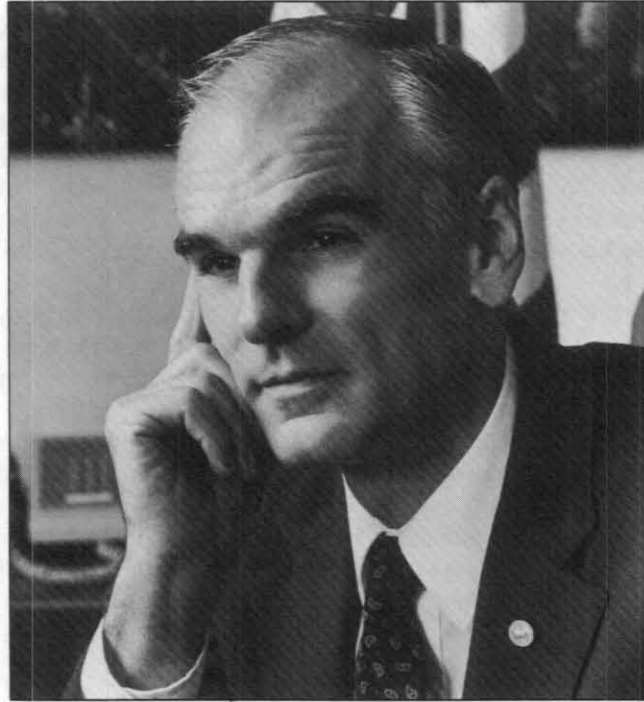
THE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
OF CANADA

MINISTER OF
INDUSTRY

OTTAWA

Contents

FOREWORD	v
ORIGINS	1
GETTING ORGANIZED	3
WESTERN EMPHASIS	7
NATIONWIDE CONCERNS	11
EARLY PROBLEMS AND PERSONALITIES	14
THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT	18
PARKS AND THE PARK SERVICE	22
INTERIOR'S LAND LABORATORY: THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY	25
MINING, GRAZING, AND MANAGING THE PUBLIC DOMAIN	27
FISH AND WILDLIFE	30
INDIANS AND THE BIA	32
TERRITORIAL AFFAIRS	34
TWENTIETH CENTURY HEADLINERS AND HIGHLIGHTS	36
AN IMPERFECT ANTHOLOGY	48
NOTES	50
APPENDIX	53



Foreword

Coming to work for an old-line agency like the Department of the Interior is a bit like arriving at the theater in the middle of a movie or beginning a book halfway through. It's hard to figure out the plot when you don't know what happened beforehand. And because most of our staff work for bureaus dealing with particular facets of Interior's business, they seldom get much idea of the department's overall story. The typical Fish and Wildlife Service employee may have heard of the Bureau of Mines, for example, but probably has little notion of what it does.

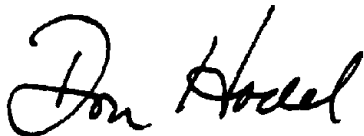
Back in 1971 one of my distinguished predecessors, Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton, proposed to ease the orientation of new arrivals and better acquaint all employees with their department. He called for a concise history relating Interior's origins and evolution. Robert M. Utley, then chief

historian of the National Park Service, received the assignment and made an excellent start. But Utley was advanced to other duties before he could finish the history, and the project languished.

Having served proudly (as Administrator of the Bonneville Power Administration) under Secretary Morton, I inherited his cabinet office in 1985 with fond memories of the man and a shared interest in the background and traditions of our department. Like him, I believed that both old hands and relative newcomers would be informed and inspired to a greater sense of mission by a compact account of how Interior came to be, what we've been about, and how we've matured to our present role and functions. So I asked that the Utley manuscript be retrieved from the files and completed.

This task fell to Barry Mackintosh, a former colleague of Utley and now bureau historian for the National Park Service. In carrying out his assignment, Mackintosh benefited especially from consultation with Utley, now pursuing an active historical career in retirement, and Jerry A. O'Callaghan, a former Bureau of Land Management official and historian of the public lands. Illustrations were assembled by Debra Berke, curator of our departmental museum.

Although intended primarily for Interior employees, this history will surely appeal to a wider audience. I commend it to all who are interested in and touched by our activities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Don Hodel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Don" and last name "Hodel" clearly distinguishable.

Donald Paul Hodel
Secretary of the Interior

Origins

In the decade of the 1840s the cry of Manifest Destiny expanded the vision of Americans to continental dimensions. In quick succession came the annexation of Texas in 1845, the resolution of the Oregon boundary dispute with Britain in 1846, and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo concluding the Mexican War in February 1848. In three years the United States enlarged its domain by more than a million square miles, reaching nearly its present size between Canada and Mexico. Widely applauded, this remarkable national aggrandizement also prompted sectional controversy over the extension of slavery.

Much of the contention centered on the organization of the new territories. On the last day of the Thirtieth Congress, March 3, 1849, the eve of Zachary Taylor's presidential inauguration, the Senate and the House of Representatives struggled to find a formula for giving California a civil government. As amendments flowed back and forth between them, senators found time to debate--also with some heat--another bill prompted by the enlargement of the national domain. This was legislation to create a cabinet agency known as the Home Department, or Department of the Interior.

The idea was almost as old as the nation. The First Congress in 1789 considered a department for domestic affairs but finally decided to combine domestic with foreign concerns in the Department of State. The Home Department proposal continued to inspire discussion for more than half a century and enjoyed the support of presidents from James Madison to James K. Polk.¹

The Mexican War, enormously enlarging the responsibilities of the federal government, gave the proposal new impetus. It found an articulate champion in President Polk's able Secretary of the Treasury, Robert J. Walker of Mississippi. The General Land Office, which oversaw and disposed of the public domain, had been placed in the Department of the Treasury because of the revenues generated from land sales. Secretary Walker foresaw hordes of lobbyists and speculators, drawn by the prospect of large profit in the new territories, swarming upon and corrupting the office.²

In his annual report for 1848 Walker pointed out that the duties of the Land Office had little to do with the other functions of his department. The Patent Office in the State Department, the Indian Affairs office in the War Department, and the pension offices in the War and Navy departments

were equally remote from the primary responsibilities of those departments, he added. All, he declared, should be brought together in a new "Department of the Interior."³ A bill to give effect to Walker's proposal passed the House of Representatives on February 15, 1849,⁴ and reached the Senate floor on that chaotic final day of the session.

The Senate debate swirled around sectional issues, with southern opponents voicing fears of expanding central government. Senators John C. Calhoun of South Carolina and James M. Mason of Virginia spoke out vigorously in opposition. "There is something ominous in the expression 'the Secretary of the Interior,'" declared Calhoun, eloquent champion of states' rights. "This is a monstrous bill. . . . It will turn over the whole interior affairs of the country to this department, and it is one of the greatest steps that has ever been made in my time to absorb all the remaining powers of the States."⁵

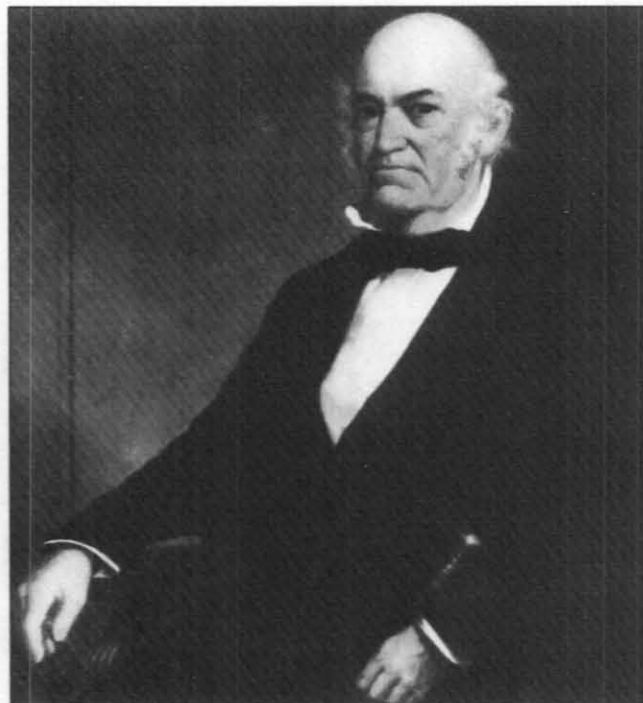
Although aligned with Calhoun on states' rights, Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi represented a state then as much western as southern in orientation and joined Senator Daniel Webster of Massachusetts in favoring the bill. Webster disclaimed any centralizing tendency in the proposed department: "I see nothing but a plain, practical question. There are duties respecting our foreign relations; and there are duties respecting our internal affairs." Far from posing a sinister threat to sectional interests, he argued, the bill contemplated no more than an administrative reform consolidating internal responsibilities: "That is the whole of it."⁶

The vote, when it finally came on the night of March 3, divided less on sectional than party lines. Democrats, reluctant to award the patronage of a new department to the Whig administration entering office next day, voted nay. Whigs voted yea. When the gavel signaled adjournment at midnight, senators had failed to agree on a government for California; that would come as part of the Compromise of 1850. But they had decided, 31 to 25, to create a Department of the Interior.⁷

Getting Organized

For the first Secretary of the Interior, President Taylor turned to Thomas Ewing, a sturdy, colorful product of rural Ohio. Frontier lawyer, U.S. Senator, Secretary of the Treasury under Presidents William Henry Harrison and John Tyler, Ewing had long been a force in Ohio's Whig councils. Youthful labor in a salt works had endowed him with a powerful physique and the sobriquet of "Salt-Boiler." Impressive mental faculties earned him the compliment "Logician of the West." Ewing's foster son and future son-in-law, Lt. William Tecumseh Sherman, served with the U.S. Army in California.⁸

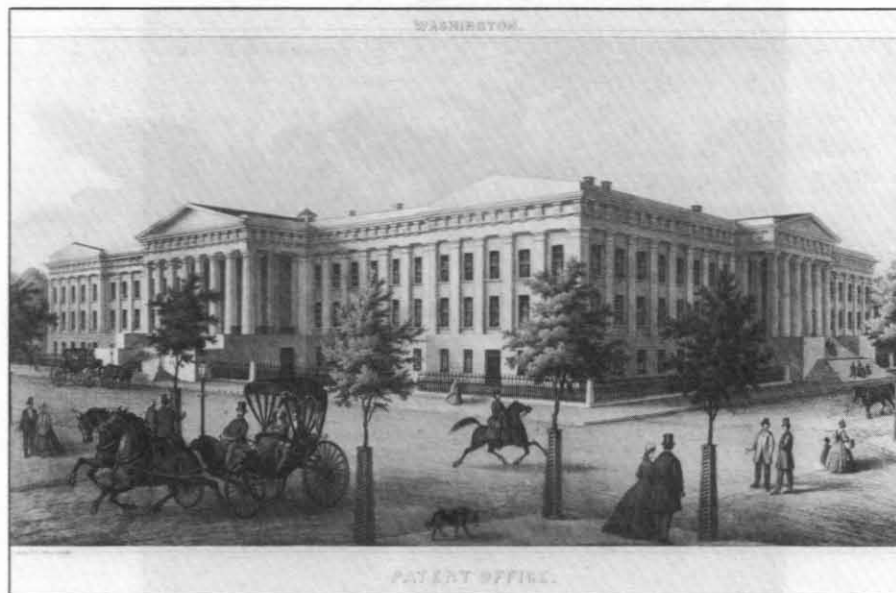
As one of his first tasks, the new Secretary pursued that perennial quest of Washington bureaucrats: adequate office space. The Secretary of the Treasury wanted the Land Office to vacate the top floor of the



Thomas Ewing, First Secretary of the Interior
(1849-1850)

Treasury Building, and the Secretary of War pressed for the rooms occupied by the Indian Bureau in his headquarters at 17th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue and by the Pension Office in the Winder Building across 17th Street. The splendid Greek Revival edifice being erected for the Patent Office on F Street between 7th and 9th offered hope for the future, but only its south wing had been finished (in 1840). While the big bureaus continued as unwanted tenants in their former departments, the Secretary and the smaller components of Interior rented space on the second floor of a brick office building owned by financier William Wilson Corcoran at 15th and F streets (site of the present Hotel Washington).

Completion of the east wing of the Patent Office building in 1852 finally provided the Secretary with suitable quarters, and the two remaining wings, finished in 1856 and 1867, housed additional components of his domain. Although personnel continued to work elsewhere in the city, from 1852 to 1917 the imposing Patent Office building, one of America's most distinguished architectural monuments, served as headquarters of the Department of the Interior.⁹ (Today the building houses the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery and National Museum of American Art.)



The First Interior Building, 1852-1917

Interior commanded a huge patronage reservoir, and Secretary Ewing launched such a wholesale replacement of officeholders in the bureaus he inherited that opposition newspapers branded him "Butcher Ewing." Heated controversies with congressional Democrats over his spoilsmanship prevented him from devoting much attention to organizing his department. The task of setting an administrative course for the fledgling cabinet agency fell to subsequent Secretaries.

Zachary Taylor's administration lasted scarcely 17 months. After sweltering through an Independence Day celebration on the Washington Monument grounds, the President overindulged in cherries and ice milk and, seized by *cholera morbus*, died on July 9, 1850. In the new cabinet formed by Millard Fillmore, Interior fell to Thomas McKennan of Pennsylvania. He served all of 11 days before discovering that his "peculiar nervous temperament" unfitted him for the pressures of the office. Fillmore then turned to Alexander H. H. Stuart, a youthful Virginian of education, culture, and probity. Remaining for two and a half years, Secretary Stuart gave order and direction to a department born in tempestuous partisanship. "The spirit of his administration was not so much that of reform as it was that of operation according to clear rules and standards," a student of Interior's early years has written. "Considering the administrative chaos common in government offices of that day, this achievement of Stuart deserves recognition."¹⁰

Stuart's successors during that antebellum decade--Robert McClelland of Michigan (1853-57) and Jacob Thompson of Mississippi (1857-61)--were conscientious and capable men who did little to change his course. Thompson's departure two months before the end of President James Buchanan's administration reflected the dissolution of the Union: after Mississippi seceded and the Secretary of War sent a relief expedition to Fort Sumter, Thompson went home to serve his state and the Confederacy.

"Everything upon the face of God's earth will go into the Home Department," John C. Calhoun had prophesied.¹¹ As Interior took shape under its early leaders and in response to congressional mandates, it came more and more to deserve the appellation of "Great Miscellany" often given it. Serious observers and satirists alike regularly decried an absence of unifying purpose in the seemingly disparate collection of offices assembled under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior. "A slop bucket for executive fragments," one editorialist labeled the department. A "hydra-headed monster," said another.¹²

Yet if Interior lacked the clear definition other departments enjoyed, it nevertheless played a role in national affairs larger than the sum of its parts. In one way or another, all the responsibilities entrusted to it had to

do with the internal development of the nation or the welfare of its people. On this common ground the large, permanent bureaus united with the smaller, transitory offices. The former gave the department strength and continuity, while the latter dramatized its versatility as a force in American government. For by offering a repository for functions that did not fit neatly elsewhere, Interior enabled Congress more easily to accept and discharge responsibilities for the internal needs of a rapidly growing nation. Some of the offices created for these functions were dismantled after completing their missions. Others, charged with missions of continuing relevance, endured. Still others matured and ultimately split off into full-blown cabinet departments.

A sampling of tasks assigned the Interior Department suggests the scope of its cares in the last half of the 19th century.¹³ These ranged from the conduct of the decennial census to the colonization of freed slaves in Haiti, from the exploration of western wilderness to oversight of the District of Columbia jail, from the regulation of territorial governments to construction of the national capital's water system, from management of hospitals and universities to maintenance of public parks. Such functions, together with basic responsibilities for Indians, public lands, patents, and pensions, gave Interior officials an extraordinary array of concerns.

Western Emphasis

Appropriately, because western problems stimulated the department's birth, the West was the scene of many of its activities. Two of its major bureaus, Indian Affairs and the General Land Office, operated chiefly in the West, and a galaxy of lesser offices performed duties vital to western interests. In the history of the opening of the West and the conquest of the frontier, the role of the Department of the Interior attains towering significance.

Native Americans were tragic victims of the westward movement. As the tribes fell one after another to military conquest, or simply to the effects of diminishing game and territory in which to pursue it, the Indian Affairs bureau stepped in. It employed 2,000 to 3,000 personnel by the 1880s, when the reservation program got into full swing, and managed the affairs of 260,000 people assigned to 138 reservations, mostly in the West.¹⁴ On these reservations agents and their staffs sought, first, to control the Indian and keep him away from the paths of westward expansion, and second, to "civilize" him, by which they meant transforming him into a Christian farmer embracing the values of 19th-century white America. As one Indian Commissioner expressed it with unconscious irony, the aim was "to make the Indian feel at home in America." Employing an elaborate system of rewards and penalties, agents, schoolteachers, "practical farmers," missionaries, Indian policemen, and sometimes soldiers labored to attain the two objectives of control and civilization.⁸

Although the government's Indian policies wreaked cultural havoc upon most tribes and later underwent fundamental revision, they arose from genuinely humanitarian impulses and reflected the most enlightened thought of the times. Far from aiming at extermination, as popular myth would have it, Indian policy reflected the intense desire of the generation that freed the slaves to present the Indian with what was viewed as the grandest gift at the nation's command--assimilation into the Euro-American mainstream. Unfortunately, the well-meaning authors of this policy failed to foresee its terrible cost in human suffering.

Indian policy evolved in a storm of continuing controversy, with reformers, humanitarians, politicians, and frontiersmen--to say nothing of the Indians themselves--prompted by diverse impulses and offering conflicting advice. Not least of the disputes was with the War Department, which had yielded the Indian Affairs office with bad grace in 1849 and fought bitterly and almost successfully for three decades to win it back. In 1860

Secretary Thompson, burdened by the problem of peacekeeping on the frontier, agreed to the transfer; but Congress failed to act. The Indian Bureau operated under constant and often well-founded criticism of corruption and inefficiency in its handling of the millions of dollars in supplies purchased each year for the reservations. More than any other responsibility, Indian affairs tried and troubled successive Secretaries of the Interior.

The extinguishment of Indian title to the land and the concentration of the tribes on reservations freed the public domain for other uses. Over this process presided the General Land Office. Dating from 1812, the Land Office played a major role in trans-Appalachian settlement under the Public Land Sales Act of 1820, which allowed tracts as small as 80 acres to be sold for \$1.25 an acre. It loomed especially large in the westward movement following enactment of a momentous trio of laws in 1862. Under the Pacific Railroad Act, land grants made possible the speedy construction of the Union Pacific, Central Pacific, Northern Pacific, Santa Fe, and Southern Pacific railroads. Under the Morrill Act, land grants financed the establishment of state universities and agricultural colleges. And under the famed Homestead Act, settlers obtained free 160-acre homesteads. Railroads received more than 94 million acres, while homesteaders ultimately claimed almost 290 million acres.¹⁵

Led by railroad promoters to expect a bountiful land that had "only to be tickled with a hoe to laugh with a harvest," sodbusters discovered rather that a homestead, as one Irish immigrant put it, was more often a wager between the government and the settler over whether the settler could make a living.¹⁶ But most stayed, and by 1890 they had spread so broadly over the plains and mountains that for the first time census statisticians could not trace a frontier line of settlement on the map of the West.

Large portions of the public lands passed into private ownership in ways that later generations have lamented. Fraud and corruption sometimes marked the process. Corporate interests and speculators reaped windfall profits while individual homesteaders struggled against frequently overwhelming obstacles. Although the Land Office shares in the criticism, it must be stressed that its successive commissioners could never persuade Congress that stewardship over almost a billion acres--half the United States--required a more ample staff than was ever allowed. Even at its peak in the 1880s the Land Office scarcely surpassed one thousand personnel, and nearly half of these were clerks who toiled in Washington over huge ledger books in which land transactions were recorded. As one historian has noted, the Land Office labored under the handicaps of "crowded quarters, inadequate personnel, overburdened officials, low pay, and rapid turnover of clerks."¹⁷

More important in its defense, the General Land Office administered laws made by Congress. Some, such as the Pacific Railroad Acts of 1862 and 1864, explicitly favored limited corporate interests. Others, such as the Timber Culture Act of 1873 and the Desert Land Act of 1877, were invitations to fraud and spoliation. Still others, including the Homestead Act, were based on faulty knowledge of western climate and geography and thus in some of their consequences caused great misfortune. The fault lay less with the administration of the law than with the absence of a body of law expressing a comprehensive policy for the equitable disposition of all classes of public lands.¹⁸

Interior played other important roles in westward expansion. Some ended when the need passed. Others endured and grew. Between 1850 and 1857, in cooperation with the Army, Interior's Mexican Boundary Commission ran the new international boundary agreed upon in the treaty ending the Mexican War and the 1853 Gadsden Purchase. In 1858-60 Interior commissioners fixed and marked the boundary between Texas and New Mexico. Between 1856 and 1873, under a series of laws aimed at easing and speeding the transcontinental journey, Interior's Pacific Wagon Road Office carried out a comprehensive program of improving the historic western emigrant routes. Beginning in 1862 Interior watched over the organization, construction, and operation of the Pacific railroads, handling land grants and looking after the government's interest in general. Finally, although the governors and other high officials of the western territories owed their appointments to the President, beginning in 1873 they reported to the Secretary of the Interior. As states were created from these territories, Interior served as a kind of midwife at their births.

In the years following the Civil War the Interior Department challenged the War Department's historic preeminence in the conduct of official explorations of the American West. Ferdinand V. Hayden's United States Geological Survey of the Territories, begun in 1869, produced beautifully illustrated books describing the rich resources of the West. Because of his preoccupation with utilitarian attractions, he has been termed "par excellence the businessman's geologist."¹⁹ One-armed Maj. John Wesley Powell, famed pioneer of the Colorado River, conducted the Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region, launched in 1874. Powell's work and ideas, emphasizing the need for scientific, rational treatment of the West and its resources, helped lay the base on which the next generation founded the conservation movement.

Together with the War Department surveys of Clarence King and Lt. George M. Wheeler, the Hayden and Powell surveys overburdened the West with explorers and caused rivalries that unsettled the scientific

community as well as official Washington. The solution, adopted in 1879, was consolidation of all the western surveys in the Interior Department and formation of the United States Geological Survey. Clarence King served briefly as the first director of the Geological Survey, to be followed, 1881-94, by John Wesley Powell.

While Interior's new Geological Survey concerned itself with the West's utilitarian treasures, the department assumed special responsibility for scenic treasures as well. In 1872 Congress established the world's first national park, Yellowstone, under Interior jurisdiction. Others, including Sequoia, Yosemite, and Mount Rainier, followed in the 1890s. After civilian management of Yellowstone proved ineffective, the Secretary of the Interior arranged for military contingents to protect several of the parks until Congress created a specialized bureau--the National Park Service--for this task in 1916.

Although the West claimed a major share of Interior's attention, only one 19th-century Secretary, Colorado's Henry M. Teller (1882-85), clearly represented western interests. The others so rarely understood western problems that as late as the turn of the century Mr. Dooley, Finley Peter Dunne's perceptive Irish commentator, remarked: "The Scretary iv th' Interior is an important man. If possible, he ought to come fr'm Maine or Florida. At any rate, he must be a resident iv an Atlantic seacoast town. . . . If he gets th' idee there are anny white people in Ann Arbor or Columbus, he loses his job."²⁰

Nationwide Concerns

Despite its western emphasis, the Interior Department from its outset conducted major programs of nationwide application. One such program, which built up to enormous magnitude and consequence in the 1880s, was the distribution of pensions to veterans of the Union armies and navy. In 1885 there were a million and a half such veterans, and they had discovered that their national organization, the Grand Army of the Republic, had uses beyond the purely fraternal. As Maj. Gen. Benjamin F. Butler phrased it, if the old soldiers acted in unison, they could "make politicians dance like peas on a hot shovel."²¹ Reflecting both the awesome political power of the G.A.R. and the enduring gratitude of the postwar generation toward the men in blue who had saved the Union, increasingly liberal pension legislation emerged from Congress. After one especially generous act a commentator marveled, "141,466 men who had not realized that they were disabled until the Government offered a premium of a thousand dollars or more for the discovery of aches and disabilities, made application."²²

Interior's Pension Bureau administered the pension laws. By 1890 it numbered more than 6,000 agents, medical examiners, and clerks. About one-third of these served in Washington, domiciled in a huge brick edifice on Judiciary Square designed and built by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs in 1882-85. ("It's too bad the damn thing is fireproof," Gen. William T. Sherman reputedly grumped of "Meigs' Old Red Barn."²³ Now much admired, it houses the National Building Museum.) Undermanned, buffeted by political winds, hounded by swarms of pension attorneys, tormented by fraudulent claimants, the bureau's staff nevertheless earned an overall reputation for honesty and faithful attention to duty.

The successive Commissioners of Pensions were usually disabled veterans, and some were highly political. The legless and voluble "Corporal" James Tanner was especially brazen in his efforts to increase pensions administratively, "though I may wring from the hearts of some the prayer, 'God help the surplus!'" A critic marveled at "the style in which he mounted the housetops and summoned the people of the United States to watch him while he made the wheels go round, or while he pulled a string and dangled the Secretary of the Interior at the other end."²⁴ Secretary John W. Noble (1889-93), himself a popular G.A.R. leader, dangled on the string no longer than it took to get rid of one of the most irrepressibly insubordinate figures in American political history.

Interior's fourth major bureau was the Patent Office. Reflecting the burgeoning technology of the industrial revolution, the protection of inventions by government patents assumed growing importance in the last half of the 19th century. By 1890 patent officials received more than 41,000 applications and issued more than 26,000 patents each year.²⁵

Like other bureau heads, the Commissioner of Patents, often a former member of Congress, occupied his office by reason of political qualifications. But he presided over a corps of some 500 patent examiners and clerks who owed their appointments and promotions to competitive examination. The Patent Office, in fact, led most government bureaus in succumbing to the civil service merit system, for the highly technical nature of the work demanded trained professionals rather than patronage-seekers. Rapid personnel turnover aggravated by low salaries and a staff too small to keep the backlog of applications at manageable proportions constituted the chief problems. Even so, proceeding methodically and unspectacularly according to clearly established law and policy, the Patent Office maintained a record of quiet competence and consistent accomplishment.

From its inception Interior adopted and nurtured activities that expanded to justify the creation of separate agencies, inspiring the sobriquet "Mother of Departments." The agricultural division of the Patent Office became the Department of Agriculture in 1862 and a full cabinet agency in 1889. The Bureau of Labor, established in Interior in 1884, became the Department of Labor in 1888. With other components, including Interior's Census Bureau, it won cabinet status in 1903 as the Department of Commerce and Labor (split into two cabinet departments in 1913). The Commerce Department inherited the Patent Office in 1925. The Interstate Commerce Commission reported to the Secretary of the Interior for the first two years of its life, 1887-89, before becoming an independent agency. The Bureau of Pensions went to the new Veterans Administration in 1930. Most recently, in 1977, several Interior functions helped form one of the newest cabinet agencies, the Department of Energy.

The forerunner of today's Department of Education had a long career in Interior. In 1867 Congress created an independent entity of the same name to collect and disseminate information on the progress of education. Two years later it was placed under Interior and designated the Bureau of Education. In 1929 it was demoted from a "bureau" to an "office" to counter any impression that it might have or seek direct responsibility for this primary concern of state and local government. The Secretary of the Interior's annual report that year took pains to note that the Office of Education was "primarily an establishment for educational research and promotion" with "no administrative functions except those connected with the expenditure of the funds appropriated by the Federal Government for

the assistance of colleges of agriculture and the mechanic arts in the several States and Territories, and those connected with the education, support, and medical relief of the natives of Alaska."²⁶ Soon afterward Alaskan native services moved to the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and in 1939 the Office of Education left Interior for what later became (in 1953) the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. This in turn spawned the Department of Education in 1979.

From its first days Interior bore a special relationship to the District of Columbia--one involving the department in activities that must have made some Secretaries feel like the "Lord High Everything Else" of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Mikado*. Among the Secretary's federal city responsibilities, at one time or another, were public buildings (1849-67 and 1933-39), parks (1849-67 and 1933 to date), police (1849-73), jail (1849-72), a street railway linking Washington and Georgetown (1862-1910), a railroad bridge across the Potomac (1863-67), and operation of the city's water supply (1859-67). He became involved in the capital's health, education, and welfare through oversight of the Columbia Institution for the Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb, now Gallaudet College (1857-1940); the Columbia Hospital for Women (1866-81); Freedmen's Hospital (1874-1940); the National Hospital for the Insane, or St. Elizabeths (1852-1940); and Howard University (1867-1940). The Architect of the Capitol, charged with construction and maintenance of the United States Capitol and related buildings and grounds, reported to the Secretary of the Interior in 1851-53, 1862-1902, and 1921-22.

Another early Interior function anticipated a major role of the Smithsonian Institution. The Patent Office had a commodious hall for displaying patent models, and in 1854 Congress authorized its custody and care of the natural specimens and artifacts from Charles Wilkes's South Seas expedition. This collection was supplemented by objects from other government-backed explorations and by such national treasures as the Declaration of Independence. A series of acts beginning in 1857 contemplated transfer of this incipient national museum to the Smithsonian (established in 1846), but the shift was not completed until 1879.

Early Problems and Personalities

With its wide-ranging and diverse responsibilities, the Department of the Interior suffered in extreme form the administrative deficiencies of all executive branch departments in the 19th century. The system, sluggishly responsive to Congress and even more sluggishly responsive to the President, denied the department head the machinery for controlling his bureaus and shaping policy. Too many people reported directly to him, and too many routine matters reached his desk. Each year, in his annual report, he dutifully called attention to the annual reports of his bureau chiefs--who often retained full legal authority for their programs--and reiterated their recommendations. Each bureau justified its financial needs in elaborate itemized detail directly to congressional appropriation committees, a process in which the department participated erratically at best. (The White House had even less involvement.) Overextended and burdened with bothersome detail, the Secretary influenced chiefly those matters in which he was personally or politically interested or which had come under public scrutiny. More than any of his cabinet colleagues, the Secretary of the Interior was a victim of this system.

Of the 22 Secretaries who held the "trouble portfolio" in the 19th century, the leading authority on federal administrative history has written that, with one exception, "they were men of character and high integrity, although not particularly successful executives. All were caught in the machine and none seemed able to surmount it."²⁷ Reflecting the postwar Republican ascendancy, thirteen were Republicans, eight Democrats, and one Whig. Fifteen came from the Middle West, four from the South, two from the East, and one from the West.

Caleb B. Smith of Indiana, appointed by Abraham Lincoln in reward for his campaign support, had little interest in the job, suffered from declining health, and gladly delegated most administrative duties to the Assistant Secretary of the Interior after that post was created in March 1862 and filled by fellow-Hoosier John Palmer Usher.²⁸ When Smith resigned that December to accept a judgeship in his home state, Lincoln promoted Usher to the vacancy.

Usher is remembered as a genial and courteous administrator, somewhat lacking in force, who paled beside such domineering cabinet contemporaries as Edwin M. Stanton, William H. Seward, and Salmon P. Chase but who stubbornly resisted partisan efforts to transform his department into a bastion of radical Republicanism. One editor described Usher as

"fair, florid, well-nourished and comfortable," and his biographers summed up his modest role: "Usher remained generally cautious and unobtrusive in the midst of those self-centered, truculent, and temperamental men who formed the Lincoln Cabinet."²⁹ Usher is also credited with discouraging a young acquaintance who wanted to enter public service with an Interior clerkship: "I advise you not to come to Washington until you can come in the right way"--i.e., by election. The petitioner took this advice, later came "the right way," and ultimately made his mark on history as "Uncle Joe" Cannon, the autocrat who ruled the House of Representatives as Speaker from 1903 to 1911.³⁰

Usher's successor, James Harlan of Iowa, arrived with the announced intention of cleaning house. Among the victims of his economy drive was Walt Whitman, who had received a sinecure clerkship in the Indian Bureau in reward for his wartime services to sick and wounded soldiers. Whitman's supporters charged that his dismissal was prompted by his controversial *Leaves of Grass*, stirring sympathy for the poet and a storm of criticism against the Secretary, whose 15-month tenure (1865-66) was otherwise undistinguished.³¹

Ulysses S. Grant was served by one of the best and the worst of the lot. The former, Jacob D. Cox, ranks among the Renaissance men in cabinet history. He achieved distinction as a lawyer and law professor, major general in the Civil War, governor of Ohio, businessman, scientist, and military historian. As Interior Secretary, Cox was an effective advocate of civil service reform and introduced the merit system for appointees during his 20 months in office (1869-70). He resigned when Grant failed to back him against party politicians seeking to undermine his reforms.³²

Cox's opposite, Columbus Delano of Ohio, lasted longer than any other 19th-century incumbent (1870-75); but consistent with the prevalent tone of the Grant administration, corruption in the Indian Service rose to new heights during his tenure. Press reaction to the scandal finally forced his departure. Commented *The Nation* of Delano: "He succeeded an honest and capable Secretary of the Interior, who resigned because he would not allow politicians to meddle with the affairs of the Department, and he in turn resigned long after it was evident that he was not capable, and at a time when his going, unlike Secretary Cox's, added strength to the Administration by removing a burden."³³ Grant's appointee to succeed Delano, former Senator and Republican Party boss Zachariah Chandler of Michigan, had fought Cox on political patronage and had no known reform tendencies; thus he surprised observers by moving vigorously to uncover fraud and dismiss malefactors during the remaining 16 months of Grant's second term (1875-77).

Carl Schurz--German revolutionary, American patriot, journalist, soldier, senator, orator, diplomat--was President Rutherford B. Hayes's choice to head Interior. The quintessential political reformer of his generation, Schurz is the department's most memorable 19th-century leader. During his four years as Secretary (1877-81) he crusaded to banish corruption, introduce "business principles," advance the civil service merit system, infuse Indian relations with honesty and justice, and lay the groundwork for the conservation of timber and other natural resources.

Schurz's lean physique, tonsorial embellishment, and thick spectacles invited a caricature that political cartoonists such as Thomas Nast were not slow to appreciate. His foreign origins made him all the more distinctive. "If I should live a hundred years, my enemies would still call me a Dutchman!" he complained. An "aggressive and undaunted controversialist," his biographer concluded, "to the end of his days he could not get over his astonishment that he should be opposed when he was so thoroughly sincere."³⁴ Schurz was an uncommon shaft of light in an era of murky political morality.



Carl Schurz (1877-1881)

President Grover Cleveland's appointment of a former Confederate diplomat and army officer to the Interior post in 1885 precipitated controversy but also acclaim, for as a senator from Mississippi Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar had earned wide admiration and respect for his efforts in behalf of national reunion. As part of the first Democratic administration in 24 years, this distinguished personification of the South's Bourbon leadership was besieged by that party's hungry seekers of offices and favors. "One day a gentleman who was not a caller for office was shown into Mr. Lamar's inner apartment," the *New York Times* later reported. "In the outer room were several prominent Democrats, including a high judicial officer, several Senators, and any number of members of the House. Mr. Lamar waved his visitor to a chair without saying a word.... By and by his visitor said that he would go away and return at some other time, as he feared that he was keeping the people outside. 'Pray sit still,' requested Mr. Lamar. 'You rest me. I can look at you, and you do not ask me for anything; and you keep those people out as long as you stay in.'"³⁵ As an economy move, Lamar reduced the department's fleet of carriages for its high officials and personally used only a small one-horse rockaway that he bought and maintained himself.³⁶ He served ably for nearly three years until Cleveland appointed him to the Supreme Court--the only Interior Secretary so honored.

The Conservation Movement

As the 20th century opened, the Department of the Interior became progressively concerned with a movement aimed at reorienting the nation's traditional practices of handling natural resources--land, timber, water, minerals, wildlife. Most 19th-century Americans held these resources to be inexhaustible and government regulation of their exploitation alien to democratic principles. Basically, Interior's mission was to dispose of them to private enterprise, individual and corporate. A few men of vision dissented from this philosophy. Secretary Carl Schurz fought to halt the devastation of forests in the public domain. John Wesley Powell preached a gospel of systematic and purposeful resource management. The Forest Reserve Act of 1891, promoted by President Benjamin Harrison's Interior Secretary, John W. Noble, and the creation of the first national parks marked a modest erosion of the traditional philosophy. But not until Theodore Roosevelt's administration (1901-09) did the doctrine of Schurz, Powell, and their sympathizers flower in a national crusade. The crusaders gave it a label that has endured: conservation.

To them conservation did not mean, as often alleged, that natural resources under federal control should be locked up and saved for the future. On the contrary, the conservationists advocated use--rational, planned, orderly use. Their goal was not an end to exploitation, not even private exploitation, but rather wise development and use guided by science, facilitated by technology, regulated by government, and benefiting society. Thus power and irrigation sites would be leased to private enterprise and developed according to government standards. Mineral deposits would be mined under a lease system. Forests would be logged and grasslands would be grazed under permits that guaranteed sustained yields of timber and grass.

Leader of the Roosevelt conservationists was Gifford Pinchot, the dynamic head of the Division of Forestry in the Department of Agriculture. Allied with Pinchot were William A. Richards, a former Wyoming governor who served as Commissioner of the General Land Office from 1905 to 1907; Frederick H. Newell, Chief Engineer of the Geological Survey's Reclamation Service; and W J McGee (he always dropped the periods), Secretary of the Inland Waterways Commission appointed by President Roosevelt in 1907 to design multiple-purpose development of river basins. Youthful, zealous in their cause, these men enjoyed direct access to Roosevelt but almost no rapport with Ethan Allen Hitchcock, the elderly

and conservative Secretary of the Interior held over from the McKinley administration. When Roosevelt replaced Hitchcock with James R. Garfield (son of the President) in 1907, the conservation coterie acquired another effective activist.³⁷

The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 authorized the President to set aside forest lands on the public domain. Lands thus reserved remained in the custody of Interior's General Land Office. Judging Interior's management of these forest reservations unscientific and unproductive, Pinchot and his allies campaigned for their transfer to Agriculture. Lumber, grazing, and power interests backed them, and in 1905 Congress enacted a transfer measure. The forest reserves, then comprising 63 million acres, formed the foundation of the national forest system. Pinchot's bureau was re-named the U.S. Forest Service, and he became the first U.S. Chief Forester.

While maneuvering to take charge of the forests, Pinchot gave strong support to a movement that launched reclamation as a major activity of the Department of the Interior. His interest was an outgrowth of John Wesley Powell's studies showing the connection between forests and water storage. Irrigation interests in turn championed Pinchot's forestry programs. The reclamation movement bore fruit through the Newlands Act of 1902, which provided for the construction of dams and aqueducts to water arid and semiarid lands in the West.

To carry out this ambitious program, the Reclamation Service was organized within the Geological Survey under Chief Engineer Frederick Newell. It became a separate Interior bureau under Newell's direction in 1907 and was retitled the Bureau of Reclamation in 1923. The Salt River Project with its Roosevelt Dam, the first major effort under the act, began in 1903 and ultimately made Phoenix, Arizona, an agricultural center of first importance. Later Bureau of Reclamation projects--including such world-famous works as the Hoover and Grand Coulee dams, the All-American Canal in California, and the Alva Adams Tunnel beneath the Continental Divide in Colorado--brought water, flood control, electric power, and recreational resources to vast areas formerly incapable of sustaining major settlement, crop production, and industrial development.

The conservationists, including Pinchot's allies in Interior, wanted to apply his principles of scientific planning and use to all public lands administered by the General Land Office. Part of their program was a lease system for livestock grazing within prescribed range capacities. Another, considerably more ambitious, was comprehensive planning and development of entire river basins. The main objective here--later achieved in large measure through the Bureau of Reclamation--was to further agriculture and industry through water resource development, the cost to be defrayed by

the sale of hydroelectric power. In 1907-08, however, both proposals met defeat in Congress. Controversy among cattle men, sheepmen, farmers, and watershed protectionists doomed the grazing program; while the Army Corps of Engineers, long charged with public works in navigable rivers, effectively opposed giving the Inland Waterways Commission a statutory mission of comprehensive river-basin planning.

In the closing years of the Roosevelt administration, conservationists came to see that further major gains were unlikely through legislative action. Comprehensive resource planning and development threatened local interests and alliances and so encountered insurmountable obstacles in Congress. Increasingly, therefore, they sought to advance their cause through executive action. Secretary Garfield, for example, withdrew from other disposition most of the good sites for waterpower development. And Roosevelt, forced to sign an Agriculture Department appropriations bill that prohibited further presidential creation of national forests in six western states, first reserved 16 million more acres of forests there. Roosevelt later gleefully recalled how opposing interests "turned handsprings in their wrath" over the setting aside of these "midnight reserves"--a stroke described by a Forest Service historian as "the last flamboyant act of the conservation movement."³⁸

President William Howard Taft's administration (1909-13) proved less receptive than its predecessor to the sweeping new policies and programs championed by the conservationists. It also proved uncongenial to the freewheeling methods and direct access to the White House of the coalition of career bureau officials that had given the conservation movement its drive. The prior and subsequent styles were personified by Pinchot and Richard A. Ballinger, Taft's first Interior Secretary (1909-11).

Ballinger, a successful lawyer and reform mayor of Seattle, had served effectively as Commissioner of the General Land Office under Secretary Garfield. But his appointment as Secretary disappointed conservationists: they had hoped Taft would retain Garfield, and Ballinger was less friendly to their cause. When a Land Office employee, Louis R. Glavis, charged that Ballinger was impeding an investigation of fraudulent coal claims in Alaska involving a former legal client, Taft backed Ballinger and authorized Glavis's dismissal. Conservation interests led by Pinchot sided with Glavis and forced a congressional investigation, their aim being to discredit and overturn Ballinger's policies.

The Ballinger-Pinchot controversy was widely portrayed as a struggle of public against corporate interest, of good against evil. Although he was surely innocent of Glavis's charge, Ballinger's exoneration by a partisan majority of the congressional committee did not quiet his critics. When the popular Pinchot had to resign as Forest Service chief for his insubordina-

tion to the President, the administration lost further support. Ballinger, well aware that he had become a political burden, left voluntarily after two hectic years. The affair redounded far beyond Interior: by fueling progressive disaffection from Taft, it stimulated the rift in the Republican Party that enabled Woodrow Wilson's election in 1912.

The conservation crusade of the early 20th century and the formation of other departments for other concerns tended toward a sharper focus in Interior on natural resources and a drift away from the "home department" concept. Interior became less and less a grab-bag of miscellany and more and more a natural resource agency. Pensions and patents (two of the department's original "big four"), education, hospitals, and other such activities gradually dropped out. Parks, mines, and reclamation, originally concerns of the General Land Office and Geological Survey, were elevated to separate bureau status within the agency; new responsibilities for fish and wildlife later arrived from the Commerce and Agriculture departments. The Bureau of Indian Affairs, focusing on human rather than natural resources, remained as the major exception to the trend.

Parks and the Park Service

Not all conservationists shared the movement's dominant utilitarian philosophy. Some, like John Muir, extolled the intrinsic values and aesthetic appeal of undeveloped places and resources. Viewing wilderness as something to be appreciated for its own sake, they championed the creation of national parks to preserve America's most spectacular and scenic natural treasures.

Park proponents had to contend not only with the old tradition of unregulated natural resource exploitation but also with the utilitarian conservationists, who also saw trees chiefly as lumber and rivers chiefly as power and irrigation sources. When San Francisco advanced plans to dam the Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park for its water supply after the turn of the century, the two conservation factions came to blows. Joined in sentiment by Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Robert Underwood Johnson of *Century Magazine*, J. Horace McFarland of the American Civic Association, and other park supporters, Muir decried the despoilation: "Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water tanks the people's cathedrals and churches; for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man."³⁹ The dam's advocates included Gifford Pinchot and Franklin K. Lane, who promoted the enterprise as San Francisco city attorney and as Woodrow Wilson's first Secretary of the Interior. After a long and bitter battle, Congress in 1913 approved what a park historian has called "the worst disaster ever to come to any national park."⁴⁰

The "Rape of Hetch Hetchy," as the losing side termed it, pointed up a major weakness of the park movement. Whereas utilitarian, multiple-use conservation had become well represented in government by such bureaus as the Forest and Reclamation services, no comparable entity spoke for aesthetic conservation. The defeat gave new momentum to a campaign for a national parks bureau. Notwithstanding his role in Hetch Hetchy, Secretary Lane was friendly to the park concept and in 1915 hired Stephen T. Mather to oversee and advance Interior's park concerns.

A self-made businessman and born promoter, the gregarious, well-connected Mather matched Pinchot in dynamism and charisma. Building on his inherited base of preservationists, he gathered additional support for a parks bureau among influential journalists, railroad companies likely to benefit from increased park tourism, and key members of Congress. The Forest Service opposed a new bureau: rightly foreseeing the creation of more national parks from its national forests, it argued instead for transfer

of the parks to its jurisdiction. But victory came to the park forces when on August 25, 1916, President Wilson signed legislation creating the National Park Service.

The act assigned to the new bureau the 14 national parks and 21 national monuments then under Interior and directed it "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations." The national monuments, generally smaller than the parks, included prehistoric Indian ruins, geologic features, and other sites of natural and cultural significance reserved by presidential proclamations under the Antiquities Act of 1906.

Appointed the first director of the Park Service, Mather vigorously promoted public use of the parks through better roads and visitor accommodations and extensive publicity. Their growing popularity moved Congress to authorize Shenandoah, Great Smoky Mountains, and Mammoth Cave national parks in 1926, expanding the National Park System east of the Mississippi. Horace M. Albright, Mather's successor in 1929, was even more successful in enlarging the Service's public and political constituency. Soon after Franklin D. Roosevelt took office in 1933, Albright persuaded him to transfer the parks and memorials of the nation's capital, the War Department's historic battlefields and forts, and the Forest Service's national monuments to his bureau. This stroke confirmed the nationwide role of the Park Service in historic as well as natural preservation.

During the 1930s the Service also became involved with recreation outside wilderness areas. In 1935 the Bureau of Reclamation completed Hoover Dam on the Colorado River between Arizona and Nevada. This highest dam in the Western Hemisphere was the centerpiece of the Boulder Canyon Project, the first great multipurpose water development. In addition to providing irrigation, electric power, and flood control, the project gave birth to Lake Mead National Recreation Area. The Park Service assumed responsibility for building and managing boating, swimming, and camping facilities on the 115-mile-long reservoir formed by the dam.

This cooperative relationship between Reclamation and the Park Service was repeated at several other major water impoundments. But the differing philosophies undergirding the two bureaus sometimes brought them and their constituencies to blows. Postwar plans to dam wilderness canyons in Dinosaur National Monument, a Park Service preserve in Utah and Colorado, stimulated a national conservation battle recalling Hetch Hetchy. Secretary of the Interior Oscar L. Chapman's support for

Reclamation's position contributed to Park Service Director Newton B. Drury's resignation in 1951, but this time the park forces prevailed. Dinosaur remains undammed.

Increasing automobility brought more and more people to the parks, placing heavy pressure on their resources and exacerbating the tension inherent in the Park Service's dual mission of preservation and public enjoyment. A major construction program to accommodate more visitors in the 1950s and 60s was followed by an era of heightened environmental concern and awareness of the tendency for greater public use and related facility development to jeopardize park values. New parks and recreation areas relieved some of the pressure, and wilderness preservation received an enormous boost with the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980. Placing some 47 million Alaskan acres in national parks, monuments, and preserves, the act more than doubled the extent of the National Park System.

In 1988 the system comprised 341 areas totaling nearly 80 million acres, containing features as diverse as the Grand Canyon and the Statue of Liberty. As the bureau responsible for such great American meccas and symbols, the National Park Service is probably more familiar to the man in the street than any other component of Interior--or the department itself.

Interior's Land Laboratory: The Geological Survey

The 1879 act of Congress establishing the U.S. Geological Survey charged it with responsibility for "classification of the public lands, and examination of the geological structure, mineral resources, and products of the national domain." Ever since, this Interior bureau has been the nation's principal source of scientific information about its land and the minerals and water therein.⁴¹

Mapping, surely the best-known aspect of the Survey's work, was integral to its mission from the beginning. Clarence King, the bureau's first director (1879-81), planned a series of maps to serve the needs of miners, farmers, timber producers, and engineers. Under his successor, John Wesley Powell (1881-94), topographic mapping became the largest part of the Survey's program. Powell was particularly interested in the arid western lands, having previously published his influential *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States*, and used the mapping surveys to identify irrigable land and reservoir sites there.

The full flowering of the utilitarian conservation movement during the tenure of Charles D. Walcott, the Survey's third director (1894-1907), greatly bolstered the scientific and practical work of the bureau. Congress made the first specific appropriation for its hydrologic studies in 1894 and thereafter increased support for this major Survey function. As previously noted, the Reclamation Service was born in the Survey in 1902 and spent the first five years of its life there before attaining separate bureau status. The discovery of oil at Spindletop, near Beaumont, Texas, in 1901 inaugurated a new era in the petroleum industry and quickly made oil a major concern of Survey geologists. Walcott's subsequent appointment as Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution was a measure of the standing attained by his bureau in the scientific community.

With the outbreak of World War I, the Survey focused on investigations related to military and industrial preparedness. Its geologists searched out new areas likely to contain oil and minerals needed in the war effort. Its topographic personnel collaborated with the Army's Corps of Engineers in mapmaking. The success of the intensified mineral explorations significantly benefited commercial mineral production in the postwar period. In 1925 the Survey gained responsibility for supervising oil and mining operations conducted under leases on the public lands--a task requiring the addition of a large force of mining and petroleum engineers.

The Second World War again directed the energies of the Survey to topographic mapping of strategic areas and identification of critical

minerals. Aerial photography and photogrammetry greatly expedited map-making, and a new method of airborne magnetic surveying aided the search for metals. In more than 15,000 special reports, the Survey supplied land and water data for the location of military bases, manufacturing plants, and other war-related facilities.

During the 1970s space and satellite technology enabled another quantum jump in the Survey's capability. Remote sensing from the Earth Resources Technology Satellite (ERTS-1) launched in July 1972 yielded much new information on the earth and its resources. In mid-1976 two Viking spacecraft landed on Mars at a site chosen by Survey scientists to return maximum data on the geology of that planet. By then the bureau had produced more than 100 maps of the moon, Mars, Venus, and Mercury in support of America's space program.

The Geological Survey incurred the envy of its sister bureaus for another achievement during that decade. In 1973 it occupied a splendid new headquarters of its own in the Washington, D.C., suburb of Reston, Virginia--the only Interior bureau to be so favored. Designed by the architectural firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill, the building is named for John Wesley Powell. It is a fitting tribute to the man whose legacy of practical science lives on in the Survey.



The Geological Survey's John Wesley Powell Building, completed 1973

Mining, Grazing, and Managing the Public Domain

Nothing more dramatically stimulated the westward movement than discoveries of gold, silver, and other valuable minerals on the public lands. The thousands who rushed to California in 1849 were followed by other waves to Oregon, Nevada, Idaho, Montana, and Colorado in the 1850s and 1860s as strikes were publicized there.

Responding to a call for legal mining rights on government lands, Congress passed the Mining Act of 1872. Under this law, prospectors could protect their interests by marking out the boundaries of their claims, filing notice with the county clerk, and doing annual assessment work. Because there were no requirements to seek patents for ownership or to prove mineral production within any reasonable time, thousands of acres became encumbered with claims of no public or private benefit.

The Minerals Leasing Act of 1920 was an important advance in this regard. Under its terms, the General Land Office leased lands bearing oil, gas, coal, and certain other critical minerals to private producers. The government received rental payments and royalties on production. This regulated private exploitation of lands remaining in public ownership and federal trusteeship was another significant achievement of the utilitarian conservationists' program.

In 1910 the public interest in mining was recognized through the creation of another Interior bureau. After a series of coal mine disasters--which in 1907 took more than 3,000 lives--Congress established the Bureau of Mines to promote minerals technology and mine safety. Joseph A. Holmes, formerly concerned with these matters in the Geological Survey, became its first director. The bureau opened an experimental coal mine near Pittsburgh, where it conducted tests with coal dust and ultimately prompted rescue stations and first aid training for miners. Following passage of the 1920 Leasing Act it acquired the job of supervising mining operations on the public lands.

The latter responsibility lasted only until 1925, when the Bureau of Mines was shifted to the Department of Commerce. To keep the technical inspection of mineral lease operations within the Interior Department, that function was moved to the Geological Survey, where it remained even after the Bureau of Mines returned to Interior in 1934. In 1941 Congress gave the bureau power to inspect private mines, but not until the late 1960s did it gain authority to enforce health and safety standards. Since 1977 the Bureau of Mines has been primarily a research and fact-finding

agency for nonfuel minerals, fossil fuels technology having gone to the Department of Energy and mine health and safety concerns to the Department of Labor.

Interior's two newest bureaus, at this writing, also deal with mining. The Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement was established by the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. It regulates and oversees state regulation of strip coal mining to minimize and repair the kind of environmental damage that long tarnished this activity. The Minerals Management Service, established by secretarial order in 1982, handles the department's oil and gas leasing responsibilities on the Outer Continental Shelf and collects all lease and royalty revenues from both onshore and offshore mining. These receipts, constituting one of the largest categories of federal income from nontax sources, are distributed to the general fund of the Treasury, to the states, and to Indian tribes and allottees.

Livestock grazing was the last major unregulated economic use of the public lands. As 20th-century homesteaders pushed stockmen into the semi-arid Rocky Mountain Plateau, competition for the waning grasslands intensified. Overgrazing turned range to desert. By 1934 the need for what conservationists had unsuccessfully urged three decades before was widely apparent, and Congress passed the Taylor Grazing Act.

The Taylor Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to place 80 million acres of the public domain in grazing districts (the limit was later increased, then dropped) and set rules and fees for grazing permits. Twenty-five percent of the fee receipts could go for range improvements. Secretary Harold L. Ickes placed Farrington R. Carpenter in charge of a new Grazing Division, which became the Grazing Service in 1939. Carpenter, a freewheeling Colorado rancher-lawyer educated at Princeton and Harvard, relied heavily on local citizen participation in organizing the grazing districts and approving permit applications.

Implementation of the Taylor Act virtually ended the homesteading era outside Alaska. Public land dispositions in the 48 states were henceforth contingent on the Secretary of the Interior's judgment that the lands in question were more suited for uses other than grazing. Little remained to so classify. A historian of public land policy has called the act "a great watershed in American life. . . . After its passage, all land use and land use adjustments were subject to political and administrative processes in some form: local zoning and planning acts, state ownership and administration, or various forms of federal ownership and management."⁴²

On July 16, 1946, the General Land Office, one of the oldest federal bureaus, and the Grazing Service, one of the newest, were merged to form the Bureau of Land Management. As inheritor of the original Interior

component most concerned with lands and natural resources, BLM may be considered the core of the modern department.

Drawing on expertise from more specialized bureaus as well as its own, BLM conducts a broader range of resource management functions than any other Interior unit. Its concerns encompass timber, oil and gas, hard rock minerals, geothermal energy, wildlife habitat, endangered plant and animal species, archeological and other cultural sites, wild and scenic rivers, designated conservation and wilderness areas, and recreation. It is responsible for the total management of 342 million acres of public lands, primarily in the Far West and Alaska, and for the subsurface resources of an additional 370 million acres where the federal government holds mineral rights.

A last-minute amendment to the Taylor Act mentioning "final disposal" of the public lands kept alive the prospect of their future transfer or sale. Continued controversies surrounding their management and disposition led in 1964 to establishment of the Public Land Law Review Commission, composed of members of Congress and citizens appointed by the President. The commission's recommendation of a general charter for the public lands bore fruit in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The act hinged further land disposition on a planning process designed to identify tracts whose potential would best be achieved in nonfederal ownership. To govern the great majority of land that would remain to constitute the public domain, BLM received a comprehensive mission statement emphasizing multiple use, sustained yield, and environmental protection.

Fish and Wildlife

Fish and wildlife outside national parks are relatively recent Interior concerns. An independent Bureau of Fisheries was established in 1871 and later assigned to the Commerce Department, while a Bureau of Biological Survey was established in the Agriculture Department in 1885. Not until 1939 were these bureaus and their functions transferred to Interior, where they were consolidated a year later as the Fish and Wildlife Service. With these transfers the department inherited a system of federal wildlife refuges dating from 1903, when Theodore Roosevelt signed an executive order creating the Pelican Island Reservation on Florida's east coast to protect a pelican colony. Congress lent support to the refuge concept with the Migratory Bird Conservation Act of 1929, authorizing "acquisition by purchase, gift, or lease of areas of land and water to furnish in perpetuity refuges for the adequate protection of migratory waterfowl." This act, which furthered the purpose of international treaties with Canada and Mexico, responded to growing concern about the progressive loss of wildlife habitat as millions of acres of marshland were drained for agriculture and filled for urban development. But it provided no money to purchase and maintain the refuges.

Jay N. "Ding" Darling, prominent political cartoonist for the *Des Moines Register* and a hunting and wildlife enthusiast, advanced the concept of a federal "duck stamp" to raise the needed funds. His idea came to fruition with the Migratory Bird Hunting Stamp Act of 1934, which required every waterfowl hunter over 15 to purchase an annual revenue stamp. Darling, then chief of the Bureau of Biological Survey, designed the first stamp, depicting a pair of mallards over a marsh pond. Since 1949 the design has been selected in a popular national competition. The program proved highly successful: as of 1987 it had generated more than \$313 million to acquire and preserve some 3.7 million acres of refuge wetlands.

In 1936 the Bureau of Fisheries hired a talented and literate young biologist who rose to become editor-in-chief of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Resigning in 1952 to pursue an independent writing career, she produced one of the most influential books of the mid-20th century. *Silent Spring*, published in 1962, eloquently publicized the devastating effects of DDT and other prevalent pesticides on wildlife. Her message stimulated the banning of DDT in particular and increased sensitivity to human impacts on the environment in general. Few have done more for the modern environmental movement than Rachel Carson.

The Fish and Wildlife Service was reorganized by Congress in 1956 to comprise two entities, the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Commercial Fisheries was absorbed by the Commerce Department's new National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in 1970, and in 1974 the remaining Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife became today's United States Fish and Wildlife Service. This Interior bureau is charged by law with responsibility for migratory birds, endangered species, certain marine mammals, inland sport fisheries, and specific fishery and wildlife research functions. By 1987 it operated 434 national wildlife refuges and 150 waterfowl production areas containing more than 90 million acres, 12 major fish and wildlife laboratories and centers, 36 cooperative research units at universities, 73 national fish hatcheries, and a nationwide network of wildlife law enforcement agents.

The Fish and Wildlife Service permits a broad array of activities on its vast acreage--second only to BLM's in Interior. Although each refuge has a primary purpose in keeping with the bureau's primary mission, such recreational and commercial pursuits as hunting, fishing, timbering, farming, grazing, and oil and gas extraction are compatibly accommodated in many.

Indians and the BIA

The publication in 1881 of Helen Hunt Jackson's *A Century of Dishonor*, which portrayed federal violations of Indian treaties, and a government investigation of the reservation system stimulated sentiment for Indian policy reform during the 1880s. The progressive notion that Indians should be placed on an equal footing with other Americans found expression in the Dawes Act or General Allotment Act of 1887. Under it, heads of Indian families would receive 160-acre allotments, with the Secretary of the Interior holding the titles in trust for 25 years. As Indians became individual landowners and farmers, tribal affiliations would wither and the need for reservations would evaporate.

But few Indians were prepared to make the great cultural leap from communalism to individual enterprise. Instead of going to allotments, much Indian land was purchased by the Secretary and sold to the general public under another provision of the law, with the proceeds held in trust for the tribes. The result was that Indian holdings declined from 155,632,312 acres in 1881 to 77,865,373 acres in 1900. In the first decade of the 20th century most restrictions on the alienation of Indian allotments were removed, enabling the direct transfer of lands to white settlers.⁴³

By the 1920s not only was the failure of the allotment policy evident, but the assimilationist impulse behind it was seriously questioned. The new thinking was exemplified by John Collier, executive secretary of the Indian Defense Association and editor of the magazine *American Indian Life*. Collier became Commissioner of Indian Affairs under Secretary Harold L. Ickes in 1933 and remained until 1945--an unprecedented tenure in that challenging post.

Collier immediately moved to employ more Indians in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and to encourage traditional Indian religion and culture. He is most remembered for his efforts to enact and implement the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. This reversal of the Dawes Act abolished the allotment system and attempted to reinvigorate communal patterns through the formation of tribal governments. It also affirmed the Secretary of the Interior's responsibility for conservation and economic development on the Indian lands. During the 1930s the reservations benefited much from new dwellings, schools, hospitals, roads, and other improvements under the various New Deal programs.

But the Indian Reorganization Act did not achieve the success its proponents sought. The concept of formal tribal governments with

constitutions was an idea whose time had not come for many Indians, and the BIA failed to promote it effectively. Some critics saw the effort to build tribalism as alien to the American tradition if not communistic.

After military service in World War II aided the integration of Indians into mainstream society, the pendulum swung back toward assimilation. The goal became to terminate the special supervision exercised by the federal government through BIA and to provide needed services to Indians through the same agencies that served other citizens. As Assistant Secretary William E. Warne put it in 1948, BIA sought "to work itself out of a job."⁴⁴ A step in this direction occurred in 1955 when the U.S. Public Health Service assumed BIA's health program.

Soon, however, talk of "termination" cooled as Indians came to fear the loss of their special relationship with the government. Speaking in 1960, Secretary Fred A. Seaton interpreted the evolving policy. BIA, he said, had "one overriding objective":

. . . to provide our Indian citizens with adequate opportunities for personal development and growth so they can ultimately take whatever place they choose in the larger fabric of our national life. It is not to try to mold Indian people into some abstract image of what we think they ought to be. Neither is it to terminate special Federal protection and services for any tribe or group of Indians until they themselves are ready, prepared, and willing to take on the full responsibilities of managing their own affairs.

Encouraging as our progress has been of late years, I must warn that much more must be done before we can completely bridge the gap still separating so many Indian people from full participation in the benefits of modern America.⁴⁵

In 1967 the idea of transferring BIA to the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare was floated among Indian leaders. They opposed it, fearing a tendency to termination and doubting HEW's capacity to handle land problems and insure fulfillment of treaty rights. "Self-determination" became the federal policy under President Richard M. Nixon and was reconfirmed by President Ronald Reagan, under whom Interior sought to give tribes more control without terminating the government's historic trust responsibilities.

Territorial Affairs

During most of America's nationhood, a major portion of the land under United States jurisdiction was in territories rather than states. In 1873, when Congress transferred territorial oversight from the Secretary of State to the Secretary of the Interior, the governance of some 1,629,000 square miles became a department responsibility. By then the United States had reached its present continental dimensions encompassing nearly 3,611,000 square miles, so that the territories covered about 45 percent of the national domain. From them were formed the states of Colorado in 1876; Montana, Washington, and North and South Dakota in 1889; Wyoming and Idaho in 1890; Utah in 1896; Oklahoma in 1907; Arizona and New Mexico in 1912; and Alaska in 1959.

In 1898 the United States acquired its first insular possessions, annexing the Hawaiian Islands and obtaining Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines from Spain following the Spanish-American War. America's Pacific presence was extended a year later with the addition of several of the Samoan Islands. Only Hawaii came under Interior at the outset; the State Department took primary responsibility for Puerto Rico, the War Department supervised the Philippines, and the Navy Department oversaw Guam and American Samoa. When the United States purchased the Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917, the Navy also took charge of that Caribbean possession.

This diffusion of territorial responsibility began to be reversed in the 1930s. In 1931 President Herbert Hoover moved the Virgin Islands to Interior. In 1934 President Franklin D. Roosevelt created a new Interior unit, the Division of Territories and Island Possessions, to coordinate oversight of Alaska, Hawaii, the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico. The division dealt with the Philippines from 1939 until those islands attained independence in 1946, a period during which they were largely self-governing but then came under Japanese wartime occupation.

In the 1950s Interior gained some small territorial responsibilities but lost some big ones. The department assumed jurisdiction over Guam, American Samoa, and the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands in 1950 and 1951. The latter contained the Caroline and Northern Mariana Islands, former Japanese possessions that the United Nations assigned to United States trusteeship in 1947. It lost responsibility for Puerto Rico after 1952, when a new commonwealth constitution granting that island full internal self-government took effect. Most notable, of course, were the graduations of Alaska and Hawaii to statehood in 1959.

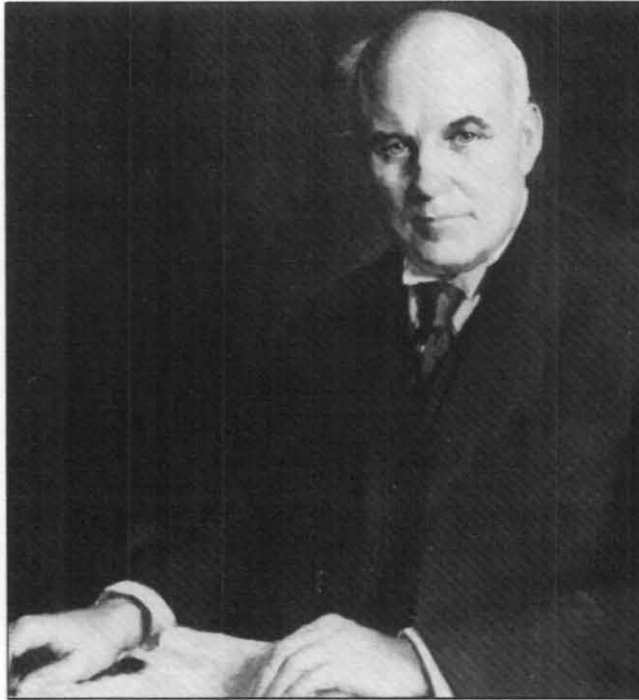
The Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa remain Interior concerns, as are two modern entities fashioned from the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands: the Republic of Palau, comprising eight inhabited and some 200 other islands in the Carolines, established in 1980; and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, of which Saipan is the seat of government and commerce, established in 1986. While their legal relationships with the United States vary, all have their own elected legislatures and executives and enjoy substantial autonomy in domestic affairs.

The Division of Territories and Island Possessions went through several reorganizations and name changes before 1980, when its duties devolved to the present Assistant Secretary for Territorial and International Affairs. The Assistant Secretary's office seeks to promote the economic, social, and political development of the territories, with self-government the announced goal. It serves as a channel of communication with the territorial governments, making their needs known to other federal agencies; studies territorial problems and poses solutions; and provides budgetary and other administrative services.

Twentieth Century Headliners and Highlights

For most of its life, Interior has suffered or enjoyed (depending on one's perspective) relative anonymity among cabinet departments. Its very name, conveying only the vaguest impression of its functions, has contributed to its indistinct image. Occasionally during the present century, however, forceful or colorful Interior secretaries have brought unaccustomed publicity and prominence to the department.

Franklin K. Lane, who served from 1913 to 1920 under Woodrow Wilson, was such a leader. Previously a member of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the government's first regulatory body, Lane came to Interior with an activist outlook. Conservationists applauded his appointment, yet he was receptive to business interests and led some to fear that he would "give away everything in sight" in support of the war effort. ⁴⁶



Franklin K. Lane (1913-1920)

Lane took unusual interest in the internal welfare of his department. In his first year he organized the Home Club to promote fellowship and teamwork among Interior employees. Its quarters, the old Daniel Sickles house on Lafayette Square, was outfitted with a billiard room, card rooms, and "a suite of rooms set aside for the ladies." Movies, lectures, dances, and musicales were regular attractions. Within a year about 1700 employees had become members at 50 cents a month. Lane wrote of the club, "In this way I meet many of those who work with me whom I never would see otherwise and from the amount of work that the department is doing, which is increasing I am quite satisfied that it has helped to make the department more efficient."⁴⁷

The department's efficiency may have been improved further by its move to a new headquarters. In 1917 it left the Patent Office building for the first structure built specifically to house Interior, filling the block bounded by 18th, 19th, E, and F streets northwest. Like the previous headquarters, the new building was not large enough for all Interior bureaus, so some, including the Patent Office and Pension Bureau, remained where they were. More functional than aesthetic, the structure lacks the classical grandeur of its predecessor and has never ranked among Washington's architectural attractions.

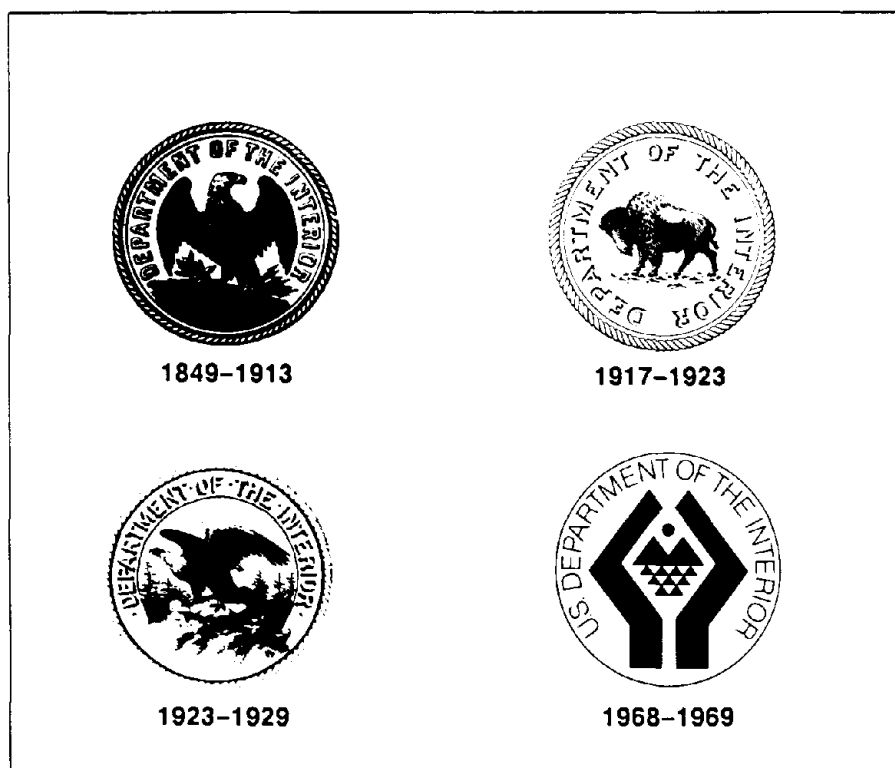
Interior also acquired a bit of heraldry in 1917. As the National Geographic Society readied a magazine feature on the flags of the federal departments, it discovered that Interior lacked one. Dr. Gilbert H.



The Second Interior Building, 1917-1936

Grosvenor, president of the society, collaborated with Secretary Lane to remedy this deficiency.⁴⁸ The resulting flag design featured a bison, or buffalo. This distinctive symbol of the department's western focus was also adopted for the Interior seal, formerly depicting a routine federal eagle. The buffalo was twice replaced by other insignia: from 1923 to 1929 the eagle resumed its perch on the flag and seal, and in 1968-69 a stylized pair of hands framing symbols of the sun, mountains, and water was adopted to represent the department's diverse responsibilities. But the eagle was trite, and the modern abstraction (by a New York design firm) assaulted sentiment and tradition. Unrepresentative and anachronistic as it may be, there has been no more talk of killing the buffalo.

Albert B. Fall, President Warren G. Harding's Interior Secretary from 1921 to 1923, left a less appealing legacy. A bombastic New Mexican who affected a black, broad-brimmed Stetson and was reputed to carry a pistol, Fall owed his cabinet post to his poker-playing friendship with Harding



Some former Interior seals

during their prior service together in the Senate.⁴⁹ Soon after taking office he got the Secretary of the Navy to transfer the Navy's oil reserve lands to Interior custody. Then he secretly leased the Teapot Dome Reserve in Wyoming to Harry F. Sinclair and the Elk Hills Reserve in California to Edward L. Doheny, later receiving from the two oilmen more than \$400,000 and some blooded livestock for his ranch.

After Fall's resignation (for unrelated reasons), a Senate investigation exposed the leases and the payments. Fall was ultimately convicted of accepting bribes, and in 1931 he began serving a one-year sentence, making him the only cabinet officer to be convicted and imprisoned for a felony committed in office. During the lengthy congressional and court proceedings the name "Teapot Dome" caught the public fancy and became synonymous with corruption in high places.

Hubert Work, Fall's successor, had an unusual background for a cabinet officer. After receiving a medical degree from the University of Pennsylvania, he built a successful practice in Colorado, served as an Army Medical Corps colonel during World War I, and became president of the American Medical Association in 1921. Simultaneously he became so active in Republican Party affairs that he was rewarded by appointment as Postmaster General in 1922.

Named Interior Secretary the following year, Work labored effectively to restore Interior's reputation and the morale of its employees as Teapot Dome came to light. He reorganized much of the department for efficiency and economy, adopting principles then being applied in business. He paid particular attention to reclamation and oil policies, while his professional expertise led him to increase the health activities of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Dr. Work attended President Harding upon his death in office in August 1923, then stayed on under Calvin Coolidge. Having become particularly close to Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, he resigned in 1928 to run Hoover's successful presidential campaign that year.⁵⁰

As President, Hoover picked another physician to head Interior. Ray Lyman Wilbur had attended Stanford University with the future President before advancing to medical school and subsequent prominence in his profession. At the age of 40 he became president of Stanford, where he compiled an admirable record punctuated by frequent calls to public service. Like Work he was in attendance at President Harding's death, which came during Wilbur's presidency of the American Medical Association.

Preferring to remain at Stanford, Wilbur accepted his old friend's call to Interior reluctantly but entered the cabinet post with characteristic vigor. Eschewing grandeur, he chose a small office--"The Secretary's Cubby-hole," he called it. He declared war on bureaucratic indecision: "If you're



President Franklin D. Roosevelt speaking at
dedication of present Interior Building, April 16, 1936



Harold L. Ickes (1933-1946) and President Roosevelt
at dedication ceremony

80 percent sure--act," he told an assistant. During his four years on the job Wilbur effectively advanced Hoover's personal conservation agenda, symbolized most dramatically by what became Hoover Dam.⁵¹

Interior's tarnished image from Fall and Teapot Dome was keenly felt by Harold L. Ickes, a crusading Chicago lawyer who became Franklin D. Roosevelt's Interior Secretary in 1933 and stayed nearly 13 years--far longer than any other. One historian has aptly termed him "a remarkably complex and profoundly suspicious man who thrived on rancorous debate and unending controversy" and "an administrator who often got what he wanted by calculated intimidation and vituperation."⁵² Mistrusting his inherited staff, Ickes had an investigator (Louis R. Glavis, Ballinger's accuser) tap the telephones of suspected employees and personally patrolled the corridors of the Interior Building in search of slackers. But "Honest Harold's" integrity was unquestioned, and no further scandal sullied the department's reputation during an era of greatly expanded responsibilities. One of his bureau chiefs later called him both "the meanest man who ever sat in a Cabinet office in Washington" and "the best Secretary of the Interior we ever had."⁵³

Interior under Ickes participated actively in Depression relief efforts. All its land-managing bureaus sponsored Civilian Conservation Corps camps and planned projects for that innovative public service employment program between 1933 and 1942. The department was also directly affected by the other hat Ickes wore during this period as Administrator of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, popularly known as the Public Works Administration or PWA. Not coincidentally, one of the first projects funded by this major construction agency was another new Interior Building.

The new and current Interior headquarters was begun in August 1935 and rushed to completion by the end of 1936. Designed by Waddy B. Wood, the massive seven-story limestone structure occupies two full blocks between C and E streets northwest, directly south of its predecessor. Ickes involved himself closely in its planning, design, and construction, approving such innovative features as central air conditioning, escalators, and a gymnasium. Its three miles of corridors are punctuated by colorful murals and bas reliefs depicting departmental themes, commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture. A tunnel connects with the former Interior building, which became headquarters for the General Services Administration but continued to house some Interior functions until the mid-1970s.

The quintessential empire builder, Ickes maneuvered mightily to aggrandize Interior at the expense of his cabinet counterparts, notably Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace. The U.S. Forest Service was key to

his envisioned "Department of Conservation," along with the civil functions of the Army's Corps of Engineers and other resource-oriented bureaus. The Forest Service and its allies had resisted similar transfer proposals since the early 1920s, and Wallace countered with a request for the national parks, public domain, and other of Interior's "organic resources." After negotiations with Wallace broke down in 1935, Ickes asked Congress to change the name of his department. Agriculture and the Forest Service, well aware of his ultimate objective, fought his "Department of Conservation" bill. Reacting with typical rancor, Ickes maligned their motives at a congressional hearing: "Now it may be that they do not want us to change from the Department of the Interior so they can still throw Secretary Fall in our face. . . . No one is going to tie that dead cat on my neck and get away with it."⁵⁴

Ickes took renewed hope from the report of the President's Committee on Administrative Management, chaired by Louis Brownlow, in 1937. Its wide-ranging plan for executive branch reorganization assigned natural resource functions to Interior. By implication this included the Forest Service. President Roosevelt sent the plan to Congress with his endorsement. But the Forest Service lobbied against it behind the scenes and enlisted vigorous opposition from Gifford Pinchot, the Society of American Foresters, timber companies, and conservation organizations. To Ickes' bitter disappointment, the pragmatic Roosevelt was unwilling to jeopardize less controversial aspects of the reorganization by insisting on the transfer. The Secretary was forced to settle for Agriculture's Bureau of Biological Survey and wildlife refuges and the Commerce Department's Bureau of Fisheries.

Ickes was not the last to attempt redefinition and enlargement of Interior's focus. In 1949 a task force of the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government (the Hoover Commission) recommended a Department of Natural Resources--a reconstitution of Interior including the Forest Service. But the commission declined to adopt the recommendation. In 1973 Secretary Rogers C. B. Morton proposed a Department of Energy and Natural Resources, incorporating Interior and such additional agencies as the Atomic Energy Commission. Instead, Congress established a separate Energy Research and Development Administration en route to creating a new cabinet department for that national preoccupation of the 1970s. The Department of Energy, established in 1977, took from Interior the Alaska, Bonneville, Southeastern, and Southwestern Power administrations and certain functions of the Mines and Reclamation bureaus.

Secretary Oscar L. Chapman was practically an Interior career man. Although a few other Secretaries have had prior service in the department, none has approached his 20 years there. He came aboard as an Assistant Secretary in 1933 and displayed his fortitude as one of the few top administrators to survive the entire tenure of Harold Ickes. When President Harry S. Truman replaced Ickes with Julius A. Krug in 1946, Chapman advanced to Under Secretary. In 1950 Truman rewarded him with the top job, which he filled for the last three years of that Democratic administration. Unlike Ickes, who had thoroughly dominated the department, Chapman favored decentralized authority and was willing to let his bureau chiefs make key decisions affecting their programs.

During the Eisenhower years, New Deal governmental activism gave way to a greater emphasis on private enterprise. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's secretaries of the Interior, Douglas McKay (1953-56) and Fred A. Seaton (1956-61), reflected this emphasis in policies aimed at bringing private power companies into partnership with the federal power administrations established under Secretary Ickes. But the Republican restoration brought no radical reversal of Interior programs. The greatest divestiture of the department's responsibilities in this period came when Alaska and Hawaii advanced from territorial status to statehood in 1959.

As a congressman and delegate to the 1960 Democratic Convention from Arizona, Stewart L. Udall helped deliver his state to John F. Kennedy and was rewarded by the Interior cabinet post. Secretary Udall, whose youth and vigor fit the Kennedy image, translated the early stirrings of the modern environmental movement into a departmental mission.

Udall's 1963 book *The Quiet Crisis* (published a year after *Silent Spring*) traced the history of American land use and exploitation. "America today stands poised on a pinnacle of wealth and power, yet we live in a land of vanishing beauty, of increasing ugliness, of shrinking open space, and of an overall environment that is diminished daily by pollution and noise and blight," he wrote. "This, in brief, is the quiet conservation crisis of the 1960's." He went on to advocate increased government planning and land use controls to meet the crisis: "We must act decisively--and soon--if we are to assert the people's right to clean air and water, to open space, to well-designed urban areas, to mental and physical health."⁵⁵

During his eight years in office, spanning the Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson administrations (1961-69), Udall pressed successfully for much environmental legislation, including the Federal Clean Air Act of 1963, the Wilderness Act of 1964, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, and amendments strengthening the Federal Water Pollution Control Act of 1956. Establishment of four national seashores



**Stewart L. Udall (1961-1969) with Lady Bird Johnson
on Snake River trip, 1964**

along the Atlantic coast, major pollution abatement efforts on Lake Erie and the Hudson, Delaware, and Potomac rivers, and a highly publicized National Capital beautification campaign sponsored by Lady Bird Johnson were among several Udall initiatives expanding Interior's role and influence beyond its traditional western focus.

When President-elect Richard Nixon named Gov. Walter J. Hickel of Alaska to succeed Udall, conservationists raised an outcry. There was nothing in Hickel's pro-development record to recommend him as a defender of the environment. As Secretary, however, Hickel proved receptive to their concerns. On January 28, 1969, four days after he took office, an oil well drilled under an Interior lease in the Santa Barbara Channel blew out and created a huge slick covering the beachfront and thousands of sea birds. Hickel immediately ordered a drilling shutdown and suspended all Outer Continental Shelf leasing while the department prepared stricter drilling regulations. The disaster rallied support for the National Environmental Policy Act, passed at year's end, requiring all federal agencies to analyze the environmental effects of their actions.

After revealing sympathy for youthful Vietnam War protesters in a manner suggesting disloyalty to the administration, Hickel lost his job in November 1970. President Nixon replaced him with Rep. Rogers C. B.

Morton of Maryland, to date this century's only Interior Secretary from the Atlantic seaboard. Somewhat ironically, Morton found his predecessor's distant state one of the major concerns of his four-year, three-month tenure.

Alaska statehood ended Interior's oversight of Alaska's government, but the vast majority of the state was still federal land, most under Interior jurisdiction. The management and disposition of this land became subject to great controversy among the state government, Alaska native groups, economic development interests, and conservationists--especially after the discovery of oil at Prudhoe Bay in 1968. The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of December 18, 1971, primarily a legislative solution to the native claims, also sought to satisfy conservationists by providing for major additions to the national park, forest, wildlife refuge, and wild and scenic rivers systems. Two years later, as the act specified, Secretary Morton temporarily withdrew and proposed to Congress more than 83 million acres for the four conservation systems.

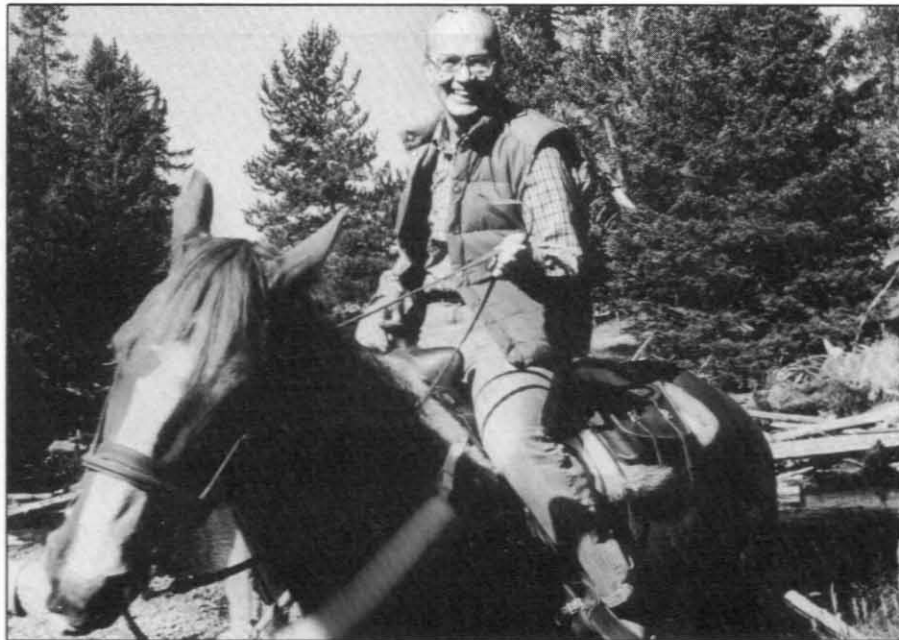
Beset by competing interests, Congress failed to agree upon these or alternate proposals before expiration of the withdrawals in December 1978.



Rogers C.B. Morton (1971-1975)

To hold the lands until the next Congress could act, President Jimmy Carter's Interior Secretary, former Idaho governor Cecil D. Andrus, prevailed upon Carter to reserve many of them as national monuments under authority of the 1906 Antiquities Act. This bold stroke enraged many Alaskans but served its intended purpose. Further prodded by the election in November 1980 of a President and Congress less inclined to remove so much land from economic development, the outgoing Congress and President compromised on the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of December 2, 1980. One of the most important conservation enactments of the 20th century, "ANILCA" added more than 47 million acres to Interior's National Park System and nearly 54 million acres to its National Wildlife Refuge System.

During most of Interior's history the name of the Secretary has ranked low in public recognition. The tenure of Harold Ickes, whose outspokenness seldom escaped the press, was one exception to this general anonymity. The much shorter tenure of James G. Watt, who served President Ronald Reagan from the beginning of his administration in 1981 to November 1983, was another.



James G. Watt (1981-1983) at Yellowstone National Park, 1981

Like Ickes, Secretary Watt was a strong administrator of unquestioned integrity who did not shrink from controversy in pressing his program. There the similarity ended. Ickes was a New Deal expansionist, while Watt represented the Reagan philosophy of less government regulation. This bent inevitably pitted him against those wanting increased intervention for environmental protection. Pursuing his agenda in high-profile fashion, he became the administration's best-known cabinet officer and a lightning rod for its liberal critics. Surely less abrasive than Ickes, Watt had the misfortune to serve at a time when undiplomatic remarks were less readily forgiven. A penchant for such remarks--which invariably attracted heavy publicity and sparked considerable controversy--finally triggered his resignation.

Watt was succeeded for a year by William P. Clark, a California confidante of President Reagan who had most recently been his Assistant for National Security Affairs. Then came Donald Paul Hodel, an Oregonian who had learned his way around Interior as head of the Bonneville Power Administration and as Under Secretary before a stint as Secretary of Energy. Clark and Hodel continued to pursue Reagan's agenda for Interior with greater finesse in meeting opposing interests. Hodel was criticized by environmentalists for pursuing offshore oil leasing and recommending oil leasing in the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, but he won their praise for his "Take Pride in America" campaign and an imaginative proposal to restore Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley.

An Imperfect Anthology

As the foregoing account suggests, the history of the Department of the Interior is less like a novel than an anthology--a collection of works by different authors assembled under one cover. A proper anthology lacks the unity of a novel, but its separate components nevertheless cohere through some common theme.

At first, Congress--editor of the Interior anthology--had little theme in mind for the new agency. Its lumping of lands, patents, pensions, Indians, public buildings, and the census under the vaguest of departmental titles was a consolidation of administrative miscellany. What Congress was doing, in effect, was streamlining and sharpening the definitions of the pre-existing departments (State, Treasury, War, Navy) by removing functions peripheral to their explicit purposes. It created Interior largely as an umbrella for these displaced fragments, not to pursue any central mission of its own.

In the present century, as we have seen, a dominant theme materialized. Various of Interior's ingredients left for new or expanding departments and agencies addressing such topics as commerce, veterans' affairs, education, and energy. Most of those components it retained, gave birth to, and acquired from elsewhere dealt with the land and its resources. The anthology was revised to the extent that "Department of Conservation" and "Department of Natural Resources" were proposed as titles.

Interior gained neither of these more descriptive names, mainly because it failed to gain exclusive possession of the natural resource conservation theme. The anthology will remain incomplete as long as the U.S. Forest Service--overseeing federal acreage second only to that of the Bureau of Land Management--remains under the Department of Agriculture. Interior's largest element in terms of budget and full-time personnel, moreover, is the Bureau of Indian Affairs--a human services provider as well as a natural resource manager. The presence and absence of other functions constitute lesser anomalies and missing ingredients.

At this writing there is no prospect of perfecting or retitling the Interior anthology. The once-vigorous campaign to capture the Forest Service has long been dormant, and there has been no serious suggestion of removing BIA. Although far more cohesive than in its early years, Interior seems unlikely to fully comprehend and concentrate upon a single theme. Perhaps this is just as well. While the mundane titles of most of its cabinet agency counterparts--Defense, Commerce, Transportation, and the

like--preclude speculation about their functions, there is an appealing aura of mystery and intrigue about "Interior." Admitting of many possibilities, the name connotes a department unconfined to a single purpose and perhaps a bit fuzzy around the edges. So it is, and so it is likely to remain.



The present Interior Building, completed 1936 (previous building at rear)

Notes

1. For this background see Henry B. Learned, "The Establishment of the Secretaryship of the Interior," *American Historical Review* 16 (1911): 751-53.
2. Norman O. Forness, "The Origins and Early History of the United States Department of the Interior" (Ph.D. dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 1964), p. 25.
3. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury for 1848*, House Ex. Docs., 30th Cong., 2d sess. (1848-49), Vol 2, No. 7, pp. 35-37.
4. *Cong. Globe*, 30th Cong., 2d sess., p. 543.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 673 (March 3, 1849).
6. *Ibid.*, p. 677.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 680.
8. *Dictionary of American Biography* 6: 237-38; Forness, chap. 3; Eugene Trani, "The Secretaries and Under Secretaries of the Department of the Interior" (typescript, Department of the Interior Library, 1966), pp. 10-16.
9. Edna M. Colman, "History of the Interior Department and the Buildings It Has Occupied" (typescript, Department of the Interior Library, 1937); W. B. Acker, *Memorandum History of the Department of the Interior* (Washington, 1912), pp. 10-14.
10. Trani, pp. 17-22; Forness, pp. 122-31; quotation in Forness, p. 130.
11. Quoted in Learned, p. 768.
12. Quoted in Horace S. Merrill, *William Freeman Vilas, Doctrinaire Democrat* (Madison, Wisc., 1954), pp. 134, 139.
13. All functions and organizations of the department from its inception are described in "Secretary of the Interior: Activities and Duties, 1849-1949," in the Department of the Interior Library. This consists of three loose-leaf binders containing the same data differently arranged: Vol. I chronologically, Vol. II by subject classification, and Vol. III alphabetically by original designation. The call number is J84/A44.
14. 1885 figures from *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for 1885*, pp. 314-34, 354.
15. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, *Public Land Statistics, 1970* (Washington, 1970), p. 6.
16. Quoted in Roy M. Robbins, "The Public Domain in the Era of Exploitation, 1862-1901," *Agricultural History* 13 (1939): 100. The standard history of the public domain is Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain, 1776-1936* (Lincoln, Neb., 1962).

17. Harold Dunham, "Some Crucial Years of the General Land Office, 1875-1890," *Agricultural History* 11 (1937): 123. Staffing statistics for all Interior bureaus, so far as the records reveal, are given year by year in Jeannette G. Wright, comp., "Numbers of Employees in the Department of the Interior, 1849-1949" (typescript, Department of the Interior Library, c. 1949); call number JK861/W95.
18. A. B. Hart, "The Disposition of Our Public Lands," *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 1 (1887): 183.
19. William H. Goetzmann, *Exploration and Empire: The Explorer and the Scientist in the Winning of the American West* (New York, 1966), p. 498.
20. Quoted in Elmo R. Richardson, *The Politics of Conservation: Crusades and Controversies, 1897-1913* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962), p. 5.
21. Quoted in Donald L. McMurry, "The Political Significance of the Pension Question, 1885-1896," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 9 (1922-23): 23.
22. Quoted in Leonard D. White, *The Republican Era, 1869-1901: A Study in Administrative History* (New York, 1963), p. 209.
23. U.S. General Services Administration, *Historical Study No. 1: Pension Building* (Washington, 1964).
24. Quoted in Donald L. McMurry, "The Bureau of Pensions in the Administration of President Harrison," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 13 (1926): 349.
25. White, p. 222.
26. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1929* (Washington, 1929), p. 42.
27. White, p. 180.
28. Trani, pp. 35-36.
29. Elmo R. Richardson and Alan W. Farley, *John Palmer Usher, Lincoln's Secretary of the Interior* (Lawrence, Kans., 1960), pp. 65, 71.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
31. Johnson Brigham, *James Harlan* (Iowa City, 1913), pp. 206, 208-10; *Dictionary of American Biography* 22: 149.
32. Trani, pp. 56-59.
33. Sept. 30, 1875, quoted in Trani, p. 63.
34. Claude M. Fuess, *Carl Schurz, Reformer (1829-1906)* (New York, 1932), pp. 237, 246.
35. Jan. 25, 1893.
36. Edward Mayes, *Lucius Q. C. Lamar: His Life, Times, and Speeches* (Nashville, 1896), p. 475.

37. The literature of the conservation movement is voluminous, but basic are Elmo R. Richardson, *The Politics of Conservation: Crusades and Controversies, 1897-1913* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1962); and Samuel P. Hayes, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1959). See also Pinchot's autobiography, *Breaking New Ground* (New York, 1947).
38. Harold K. Steen, *The U.S. Forest Service: A History* (Seattle and London, 1976), p. 100.
39. Quoted in John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore, 1961), p. 88.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
41. Mary C. Rabbitt, *A Brief History of the U.S. Geological Survey* (Washington, 1986), p. 2. Rabbitt is the principle source for this section.
42. Jerry O'Callaghan, "The Question of the Grazing Lands" (typescript, 1980), p. 3.
43. S. Lyman Tyler, *A History of Indian Policy* (Washington, 1973), p. 97.
44. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
46. J. Leonard Bates, "Fulfilling American Democracy: The Conservation Movement, 1907-1921," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 44 (1957-58): 49.
47. Anne W. Lane and Louise H. Wall, eds., *The Letters of Franklin K. Lane, Personal and Political* (Boston, 1922), pp. 148-51.
48. Jeanette G. Wright, "Seals and Flags of the Department of the Interior" (typescript, Department of the Interior Library, 1950), p. 2; call number JC346/A2/1950.
49. David H. Stratton, ed., *The Memoirs of Albert B. Fall* (El Paso, 1966), pp. 5-7.
50. Trani, pp. 177-81.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-93.
52. Donald C. Swain, *Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation* (Chicago, 1970), p. 218.
53. *Ibid.*, pp. 218, 250. Horace M. Albright is quoted.
54. Richard Polenberg, "The Great Conservation Contest," *Forest History* 10, no. 4 (January 1967): 18.
55. Pp. viii, 172.

APPENDIX

Pertinent excerpts from the act approved March 3, 1849, establishing the Department of the Interior:

An Act to establish the Home Department....

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That, from and after the passage of this act, there shall be created a new executive department of the government of the United States, to be called the Department of the Interior; the head of which department shall be called the Secretary of the Interior, who shall be appointed by the President of the United States, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate, and who shall hold his office by the same tenure, and receive the same salary, as the Secretaries of the other executive departments, and who shall perform all the duties assigned to him by this act.

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted, That the Secretary of the Interior shall exercise and perform all the acts of supervision and appeal in regard to the office of Commissioner of Patents, now exercised by the Secretary of State; and the said Secretary of the Interior shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out of the treasury on estimates or accounts, subject to the same adjustment or control now exercised on similar estimates or accounts by the First or Fifth Auditor and First Comptroller of the Treasury.*

SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted, That the Secretary of the Interior shall perform all the duties in relation to the General Land Office, of supervision and appeal, now discharged by the Secretary of the Treasury; and the said Secretary of the Interior shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out the the treasury, on estimates or accounts, approved or certified by the Commissioner of the General Land Office, subject to the same control now exercised by the First Comptroller of the Treasury.*

SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted, That the supervisory power now exercised by the Secretary of the Treasury over the accounts of the marshals, clerks, and other officers of all the courts of the United States, shall be exercised by the Secretary of the Interior, who shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out of the treasury, on*

estimates or accounts, subject to the same control now exercised on like estimates or accounts by the First Auditor and First Comptroller of the Treasury.

SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted,* That the Secretary of the Interior shall exercise the supervisory and appellate powers now exercised by the Secretary of the War Department, in relation to all the acts of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs; and shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out of the treasury, on estimates or accounts, subject to the same adjustment or control now exercised on similar estimates or accounts by the Second Auditor and Second Comptroller of the Treasury.

SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted,* That the Secretary of the Interior shall exercise the supervisory and appellate powers now exercised by the Secretaries of the War and Navy Departments, in relation to all the acts of the Commissioner of Pensions; and shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out of the treasury, on estimates or accounts, subject to the same adjustment or control now exercised on similar estimates or accounts by the Third or Fourth Auditors and Second Comptroller of the Treasury.

SEC. 7. *And be it further enacted,* That the Secretary of the Interior shall exercise all the supervisory and appellate powers now exercised by the Secretary of State, in relation to all acts of marshals and others in taking and returning the census of the United States; and shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out of the treasury, on estimates or accounts, subject to the same adjustment or control now exercised over similar estimates and accounts by the Fifth Auditor and First Comptroller of the Treasury.

SEC. 8. *And be it further enacted,* That the supervisory and appellate powers now exercised by the Secretary of the Treasury over the lead and other mines of the United States, and over the accounts of the agents thereof, shall be exercised by the Secretary of the Interior; who shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out of the treasury, on estimates or accounts, subject to the same adjustment or control now exercised on similar estimates or accounts by the Second Auditor and Second Comptroller of the Treasury.

SEC. 9. *And be it further enacted,* That the supervisory and appellate powers now exercised by the President of the United States over the Commissioner of Public Buildings, shall be exercised by the Secretary of the Interior; who shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out of the treasury, on estimates or accounts, subject to the same adjustment or control now exercised on similar estimates or accounts by the First Auditor and First Comptroller of the Treasury; *Provided,* That

nothing in this section contained shall be construed to take from the presiding officers of the two Houses of Congress the power now possessed by them to make and enforce rules and regulations for the care, preservation, orderly keeping, and police of the Capitol, and its appurtenances.

SEC. 10. *And be it further enacted,* That the Secretary of the Interior shall have and exercise a supervisory power and control over the Board of Inspectors and warden of the Penitentiary of the District of Columbia; and shall sign all requisitions for the advance or payment of money out of the treasury on estimates or accounts, subject to the same adjustment or control now exercised on similar estimates or accounts by the First Auditor and First Comptroller of the Treasury.

SEC. 11. *And be it further enacted,* That the Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized to appoint a chief clerk of his department, who shall receive a salary of two thousand dollars per annum; and that the President of the United States, on the recommendation of the said Secretary of the Interior, may transfer from the Treasury Department proper, to the Department of the Interior, such clerks in the office of the Secretary of the Treasury as perform the duties over which the supervision and control are given by this act to the Secretary of the Interior; which said clerks shall be hereafter subject to the appointing and removing power of the Secretary of the Interior, as also the clerks in the several bureaus heretofore appointed or removable by the heads of departments, which bureaus are transferred by this act to the Department of the Interior.

The Secretaries of the Interior

Name	State from which appointed	President(s) served	Dates in office
1. Thomas Ewing	Ohio	Zachary Taylor	Mar. 8, 1849 - July 22, 1850
2. Thomas M. T. McKennan ...	Pennsylvania	Millard Fillmore	Aug. 15, 1850 - Aug. 26, 1850
3. Alexander H. H. Stuart	Virginia	Millard Fillmore	Sept. 12, 1850 - Mar. 7, 1853
4. Robert McClelland	Michigan	Franklin Pierce	Mar. 8, 1853 - Mar. 9, 1857
5. Jacob Thompson	Mississippi	James Buchanan	Mar. 10, 1857 - Jan. 8, 1861
6. Caleb B. Smith	Indiana	Abraham Lincoln	Mar. 5, 1861 - Dec. 31, 1862
7. John P. Usher	Indiana	Abraham Lincoln	Jan. 1, 1863 - May 15, 1865
		Andrew Johnson	
8. James Harlan	Iowa	Andrew Johnson	May 16, 1865 - Aug. 31, 1866
9. Orville H. Browning	Illinois	Andrew Johnson	Sept. 1, 1866 - Mar. 4, 1869
10. Jacob D. Cox	Ohio	Ulysses S. Grant	Mar. 5, 1869 - Oct. 31, 1870
11. Columbus Delano	Ohio	Ulysses S. Grant	Nov. 1, 1870 - Sept. 30, 1875
12. Zachariah Chandler	Michigan	Ulysses S. Grant	Oct. 19, 1875 - Mar. 11, 1877
13. Carl Schurz	Missouri	Rutherford B. Hayes	Mar. 12, 1877 - Mar. 7, 1881
14. Samuel J. Kirkwood	Iowa	James A. Garfield	Mar. 8, 1881 - Apr. 17, 1882
		Chester A. Arthur	
15. Henry M. Teller	Colorado	Chester A. Arthur	Apr. 18, 1882 - Mar. 3, 1885
16. Lucius Q. C. Lamar	Mississippi	Grover Cleveland	Mar. 6, 1885 - Jan. 10, 1888
17. William F. Vilas	Wisconsin	Grover Cleveland	Jan. 16, 1888 - Mar. 6, 1889
18. John W. Noble	Missouri	Benjamin Harrison	Mar. 7, 1889 - Mar. 6, 1893
19. Michael Hoke Smith	Georgia	Grover Cleveland	Mar. 6, 1893 - Sept. 1, 1896
20. David R. Francis	Missouri	Grover Cleveland	Sept. 3, 1896 - Mar. 5, 1897
21. Cornelius N. Bliss	New York	William McKinley	Mar. 6, 1897 - Feb. 19, 1899
22. Ethan Allen Hitchcock	Missouri	William McKinley	Feb. 20, 1899 - Mar. 4, 1907
		Theodore Roosevelt	

23. James R. Garfield	Ohio	Theodore Roosevelt	Mar. 5, 1907 - Mar. 5, 1909
24. Richard A. Ballinger	Washington	William H. Taft	Mar. 6, 1909 - Mar. 12, 1911
25. Walter L. Fisher	Illinois	William H. Taft	Mar. 13, 1911 - Mar. 5, 1913
26. Franklin K. Lane	California	Woodrow Wilson	Mar. 6, 1913 - Feb. 29, 1920
27. John Barton Payne	Illinois	Woodrow Wilson	Mar. 15, 1920 - Mar. 4, 1921
28. Albert B. Fall	New Mexico	Warren G. Harding	Mar. 5, 1921 - Mar. 4, 1923
29. Hubert Work	Colorado	Warren G. Harding	Mar. 5, 1923 - July 24, 1928
		Calvin Coolidge	
30. Roy O. West	Illinois	Calvin Coolidge	July 25, 1928 - Mar. 4, 1929
31. Ray Lyman Wilbur	California	Herbert C. Hoover	Mar. 5, 1929 - Mar. 4, 1933
32. Harold L. Ickes	Illinois	Franklin D. Roosevelt	Mar. 4, 1933 - Feb. 15, 1946
		Harry S Truman	
33. Julius A. Krug	Wisconsin	Harry S Truman	Mar. 18, 1946 - Dec. 1, 1949
34. Oscar L. Chapman	Colorado	Harry S Truman	Dec. 1, 1949 - Jan. 20, 1953
35. James Douglas McKay	Oregon	Dwight D. Eisenhower ...	Jan. 21, 1953 - Apr. 15, 1956
36. Fred A. Seaton	Nebraska	Dwight D. Eisenhower ...	June 8, 1956 - Jan. 20, 1961
37. Stewart L. Udall	Arizona	John F. Kennedy	Jan. 21, 1961 - Jan. 20, 1969
		Lyndon B. Johnson	
38. Walter J. Hickel	Alaska	Richard M. Nixon	Jan. 24, 1969 - Nov. 25, 1970
39. Rogers C. B. Morton	Maryland	Richard M. Nixon	Jan. 29, 1971 - Apr. 30, 1975
		Gerald R. Ford	
40. Stanley K. Hathaway	Wyoming	Gerald R. Ford	June 12, 1975 - Oct. 9, 1975
41. Thomas S. Kleppe	North Dakota	Gerald R. Ford	Oct. 17, 1975 - Jan. 20, 1977
42. Cecil D. Andrus	Idaho	Jimmy Carter	Jan. 23, 1977 - Jan. 20, 1981
43. James G. Watt	Colorado	Ronald Reagan	Jan. 23, 1981 - Nov. 8, 1983
44. William P. Clark	California	Ronald Reagan	Nov. 18, 1983 - Feb. 7, 1985
45. Donald Paul Hodel	Oregon	Ronald Reagan	Feb. 8, 1985 -

