Conservation, Preservation, and Wilderness Areas:

Ideas of how to conserve energy and natural resources lie at the forefront of the conservationist movement. Concerns with land-use and the concept behind preserving the landscape go hand-in-hand with the earlier conservation movements. It was the same conservationist movement during the Progressive Era that spurred now-famous individuals, such as John Muir, Pennsylvania’s Gifford Pinchot, and Myra Lloyd Dock, to lobby that certain “wilderness areas” of the United States be set aside in the interest of conservation and preservation. Today, these wilderness areas are state and national parks and forests. Men and women like Muir, Pinchot, and Dock believed that these actions helped to preserve portions of the country in order that the beauty of this scenery could be enjoyed by all.
“Untouched” Wilderness

The creation of the national parks took not only funding, legislation, and planning, but also specific measures regarding the removal of peoples from designated areas. In order to preserve the sanctity of these wilderness areas the federal government began to acquire and maintain ownership of private lands within the National Parks. A New York Times article, published in 1891, details this practice in an article called “New Yosemite Park”. The author praises a proposal that the United States Cavalry assume a protective position within Yosemite, one that Yellowstone had for quite some time. The author cites lumbermen and sheep herders claiming that, “...the felling of trees, the destruction of herbage, and fires in the woods had done great damage and threatened more.” With the successful removal of these “highly destructive” peoples and practices from the lands, the residents and travelers to Yosemite Park would now be able to enjoy a natural beauty untainted by human activity. However, lumbermen and sheep herders would now be banished from the lands, the herders and lumbermen would now have to find other means of support for themselves and their families. By bringing about an end to activities that were a way of life for some, others whom did not rely on such practices could now enjoy a landscape set aside for recreation.

Private to Public Land Use

The effects of conservation and preservation played a crucial role in determining which lands were suitable for recreational use, as well as measures taken to remove any possible threat or obstruction (most notably human). Native Americans and frontier whites were subject to removal from designated lands, in the interest of creating a meticulously maintained “natural area” to be used for recreation purposes by the United States government. While ongoing legal struggles continue between particular groups of Native Americans and the government, little compensation has been granted on the behalf of the Native Americans removed from select lands. Land removal also coincides with an increased sense of vigilance within the parks, and the introduction of the U.S. Cavalry to protect park lands signals this transformation from state and private lands to federal regulation. Yellowstone National Park has been documented well concerning the subjects of Indian removal and poaching, the same problems encountered during the formation of Yosemite National Park.
“The Effects of Conservation and Preservation within the National Parks System”

Conservation may be beginning to become a familiar concept within the United States of America. Ideas of how to conserve energy and natural resources lie at the forefront of the conservationist movement. While both issues, the conservation of energy and natural resources, are highly important in their own respects, this is not the first time that the citizens of America are facing the idea of conservationism. Concerns with land-use and the concept behind preserving the landscape seem to go hand-in-hand with the earlier conservation movements. It was this very same conservationist movement during the Progressive Era that spurred some now-famous individuals, such as John Muir, and Pennsylvania’s Gifford Pinchot and Myra Lloyd Dock, to lobby that certain “wilderness areas” of the United States be set aside in the interest of conservation and preservation. Such wilderness areas in question are state and national parks, as well as forests. These men and women believed that the actions being taken by themselves were helping to preserve portions of the country in order that the beauty of this scenery could be enjoyed by all. The United States of America’s National Parks are the culmination of not only different people’s ideals and dreams; the parks are also the culmination of various types of funding and legislation.

The creation of the national parks took not only funding, legislation, and planning, but also specific measures regarding removal of peoples from designated areas. Issues such as the
aforementioned are covered in the historiographical analysis on existing literature. While the usage of such material provides a strong basis for a select few national parks, Yosemite National Park by in large has not received the attention that has been granted to Yellowstone National Park. By utilizing and analyzing pieces of existing literature upon the travesties and problems encountered within the formation of national parks and conservation, I hope to reach a clearer understanding of the profound effect that conservation and preservation had upon the peoples and landscape of the United States of America.

The basis for this historiography will start with Mark David Spence’s *Dispossessing the Wilderness*. Spence’s main focus is concerned with Indian (Native American) removal from the national parks, along with the creation of the national parks system. Through an analysis of three major national parks, Yellowstone, Glacier National Park Area, and Yosemite, Spence is able to cite three separate instances where the creation of a national park has ultimately led to the removal of Native Americans from that specific area.

Very early in the introduction, Spence examines the eventual success of creating the national parks, along with the trends that helped to propel this idea. “Preservationists efforts did not succeed until the latter half of the nineteenth century, however, when outdoor enthusiasts viewed wilderness as an uninhabited Eden that should be set aside for the benefit and pleasure of vacationing Americans.”¹ This idea, that wilderness is an uninhabited Eden, has been theorized and discussed by several different environmental historians, including William Cronon. Cronon states, “Nature as Eden encourages us to celebrate a particular landscape as the ultimate garden of the world.”² This particular mindset is highly evident in the early champions of conservation

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and preservation who set out to create the national parks system. The perspective that Spence is writing from involves the Native Americans and their own plight with the formation of national parks. The lands that Native Americans had inhabited far longer than the whites were suddenly subject to conflict. The search for an Eden ultimately coincided with the fact that in order for one group of people to fulfill their vision, another was going to be inconvenienced.

Spence is able to illustrate his ideas by constructing his work around three early national parks, Yellowstone, Glacier, and Yosemite, as mentioned previously. His aim is to juxtapose both the development of these parks along with the process of removing Native Americans to separate reservations. Again, in the pursuit of this self-proclaimed Eden for whites, conservation and preservation pitted the interests of a larger and more domineering group against a minority. At the conclusion of his book, Spence leaves us with “…a chapter that connects the histories of these three parks with current concerns about nature preserves and indigenous rights throughout the United States.”

Many Native American groups have banded together throughout the years in order to ask for government appeal for use of park lands. While some minor legislation has been passed, the struggle between the Blackfeet and Glacier National Park still continues into modern times. Spence informs readers that, “The Blackfeet have yet to gain recognition of the rights guaranteed them in 1895…” This disturbing statement is still a shocking reminder of what past legislation and policy has left on the history of the national parks and the Native Americans that inhabited the lands.

Karl Jacoby’s, *Crimes against Nature*, follows Spence’s work in similar fashion. The subtitle to Jacoby’s work is, “Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation.” From the outset, it seems that Jacoby’s goal is similar to Spence’s in that Jacoby

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3 Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 7.
4 Ibid., 139.
is trying to uncover the hidden agenda behind the formation of the national parks. While Jacoby gives some attention to Native Americans in a section on the Havasupai in the Grand Canyon, his is a more diverse analysis. Jacoby centers not only on the people involved with the hidden history of conservation, but also divides his book into three themes: Forest (using the Adirondacks), Mountain (Yellowstone), and Desert (The Grand Canyon). Jacoby’s aim is to show that in different aspects of nature different problems and circumstances had to be dealt with accordingly.

It is evident that in his selection of these particular themes that Jacoby is bound to spend some time analyzing the impact that Native Americans had upon park lands, but Jacoby is not as much concerned with the subsequent removal of the Native Americans from the lands. Jacoby centers his argument on the concept that, “Law and its antithesis—lawlessness—are therefore the twin axes around which the history of conservation revolves.” On one side of the issue, there are people who are extremely vigilant in their pursuit of a pristine landscape, and then there are the Native Americans and rural dwellers that are simply using these lands for a home and survival. The latter half of this comparison, Native Americans and frontier whites, fall into a category as a “villain” within the rules and regulations imposed by the National Parks Service. This issue is no doubt divisive among many critics and historians, and may be considered controversial to those that have studied and written upon the experience.

Jacoby’s brilliant description of the transformation of what were once considered to be actions of daily life for the residents of these lands, into illegal acts through laws of conservation, is truly remarkable. “…hunting or fishing redefined as poaching, foraging as trespassing, the

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setting of fires as arson, and the cutting of trees as timber theft.”

Thus, Jacoby’s title, *Crimes against Nature*, aptly fits the transformation of what once was a way of life for some peoples, into despicable acts and crimes, under the doctrine of conservation. Jacoby sums this argument best by proclaiming, “…Americans have often pursued environmental quality at the expense of social justice.”

Not only have the Americans treated Native Americans poorly in the conquest to provide a pristine wilderness for recreation and enjoyment, but at various times and locations, Americans have turned against themselves. This obsession with pristine and uninhabited wilderness provided numerous misconstrued ideas and facts that led to sometimes brutal conflicts between those with the interest of conservation and preservation, and those who were simply trying to provide a decent existence for themselves and their families.

Finally, in a slight diversion from the human displacement and land appropriation element in conservation, Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks*, offers insight into how the National Parks Service maintained a pristine image in the national parks. Sellars was a historian with the Park service for over twenty years. The credibility of Sellars’ offerings provides a useful tool for analysis; also Sellars’ firsthand accounts of the history and preservation of the Parks Service should certainly provide an interesting narrative on the formation and preservation of the national parks.

By providing a brief history of the national parks, Sellars delves into management behind the national parks from the beginning. He highlights the National Park Service Act of 1916, stating, “The act established a fundamental dogma for the Park Service—the chief basis for its

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7 Ibid., 198.
philosophy, policies, and decisionmaking." His subsequent chapters focus on Stephen T. Mather, director of the National Parks Service, as well as various acts passed within and concerning the interests of preservation and conservation within the national parks. With the analysis of these particular acts and measures concerning national parks and preservation, more light is shed on to the practices and doctrines adopted by the National Parks Service and the maintenance of the national parks.

What separates Sellars’ accounts from many is the fact that Sellars himself was directly involved with the National Parks Service for a considerable amount of time. The accounts and testimonials delivered by Sellars provides an “insider’s look” into the development of a highly revered system established within the United States. This disposition serves Sellars very well, as he is able to show us the progression of management, or in some cases mismanagement, of wildlife and resources within the National Parks. While Sellars does focus upon several individuals, a greater sense of a part of the untold story, particularly the experience flora and fauna within the parks, comes alive. The understanding gained from examining Sellars’ work of the experience endured by nature is incredible. Sellars highly champions and provides the basis that the National Parks Service must take a more scientifically approach in their methods of preservation in the parks.

For a global comparative context, David Blackbourn’s *The Conquest of Nature; Water, Landscape, and the making of Modern Germany*, provides a decent comparison that focuses on some of the aforementioned topics, most notably conservation. As the Germans began their foray into the realm that is conservation and landscaping, the people and government agencies begin to become quite fond of dams. Dams are seen as a way to restructure the landscape to suit needs, and can further expansion as well as trade and other economic means.

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dams become lavish ceremonies, with songs and decorations upon the dam. While it is debatable that songs were written specifically about the national parks, these types of ceremonies hearken back to the creation of the earlier national parks.

With land reclamation gaining hold in the interest of German colonization, we can see that land reclamation is indeed a universal concept. However, in German context, land reclamation was halted due to the concept that if Germany kept draining and damming the land, eventually desertification would begin to take place. The Americans did not experience such phenomena as Germany did in the quest for more lands or to dispossess lands from Native Americans, perhaps if this had been different then Native Americans would not still be locked in bitter disputes with the United States government over land ownership status. The intention of German conservation had great intentions, but unfortunately was too clouded with military agenda and in the end still allowed for exclusion and prejudice for certain types of people. This observation is not far off from the American experience examined, although no particular group involved (Native Americans, frontier whites) were subject to genocide. Some comparisons to the rise of environmentalism in Germany and the United States can be found, but no direct relation can be discerned.

In analyzing the literature for this paper, notable strengths and weaknesses are observed. While the plights, trials, and tribulations of Native Americans and other peoples inconvenienced are covered well, the lack of verifiable documentation from some rural areas may have hindered some preliminary research. Spence’s work with the Native American removal from Yellowstone, Yosemite, and Glacier National Park Area provides excellent example of land misappropriation. Jacoby’s work with several different thematic landscapes enable a more

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diverse analysis that is perhaps more captivating than a single social group, in the case of Native Americans and the struggle with park lands. Sellars’ work contributes an entirely different aspect to this historiographical analysis that of park management, rather than particular peoples subject to removal from the lands inhabited.

While it appears that adequate conclusions and inferences are reached concerning the persons affected by National Parks Service policy as well as any experiences involved with removal from park lands, evidence from the actual settlers themselves may have bolstered, or possibly destroyed, many author’s claims. Due to limitations in procuring such resources, it is understandable that suitable conclusions were drawn by the authors, but any firsthand accounts from the various social groups analyzed might have supplied a more captivating effect on the existing research. The inclusion of a resource mainly dealing with more of the biological aspects that the conservationist movement affected was also key in understanding the true formative history behind our nation’s national parks. Without the inclusion, justice may not have been properly given to the land itself and the experiences endured from the creation of the parks and management practices.

Even though most attention given to the matters studied in this set of literature is concerned with the national parks, one must not forget the measures and efforts endured by state governments to create parks and wilderness areas. An analytical approach to state parks may require far greater and even exhaustive research, but perhaps familiar issues of Native American and white settlers dwelling upon selected state lands may surface. John Muir was no doubt an instrumental national figure in the movements of conservation and preservation, but Pennsylvania’s own Gifford Pinchot and Myra Lloyd Dock proved to be just as influential within
the state and local arena of Pennsylvania and the creation of its own state parks and wilderness areas.

The literary works analyzed in the historiography focused on a range of themes comprised of some of the nation’s first national parks, most notably Yellowstone and Yosemite, located in the West. Certain elements, poaching and trespass were briefly discussed in Karl Jacoby’s work on squatters, poachers, and thieves, within the context of the Adirondacks, the Grand Canyon, and Yellowstone National Park. However, primary source research has led to the discovery of evidence that the same sorts of poaching and trespass experienced in Yellowstone also occurred at Yosemite. In a case study examining Yosemite in the latter half of the 19th Century, the common themes of land misuse and intervention coincide within the confines of the park. The following analysis of newspaper articles, photographs and a complaint filed against the superintendent of Yosemite National Park exhibit similarities akin to the evidence presented by Jacoby, and provide the basis for a case study analysis of Yosemite National Park in the 1870s to 1890s.

Poaching is a practice commonly associated with illegal sportsmanship activities, and often occurs within state and national park lands. The act of poaching involves the slaughter of one or more animals upon lands that are considered private; therefore the person committing this crime is trespassing. It is inevitable, then, that poaching has occurred since the formation of the national parks, and while Karl Jacoby highlighted poaching and other illegal practices occurring at Yellowstone National Park, I have chosen to examine several reports that indicate poaching was a problem at Yosemite National Park as well.

A New York Times publication concerning the affairs of the interior acknowledges the evidence of poaching, stating that “The Yosemite National Park…is fairly well protected by
detachments of federal soldiers, but there has been much evidence of poaching.”¹¹ The suggestion is also made that the government assume full control of all private lands within the parks, as per the Secretary.¹² The year of this publication is 1896, coincidentally the very same year that a major poaching episode is reported at Yosemite. Perhaps the government reached the conclusion that seizure of private lands could potentially bring an end to poaching within park confines. While protecting the park with federal troop detachments may act as a deterrent to some potential poachers, it is highly unlikely that all poaching would have ceased, based upon the particular types of persons engaging in said activity.¹³

Concerns with management of Yosemite had risen quite high that by 1890, the park had begun the transformation into a National Park. Efforts by the federal government to maintain ownership of private lands within the park were enacted, and were duly praised by the public. A New York Times article, published in 1891, details this “New Yosemite Park”. The author praises the proposal that the United States Cavalry assume a protective position within Yosemite that Yellowstone has had for quite some time. The author cites lumbermen and sheep herders claiming that, “…the felling of trees, the destruction of herbage, and fires in the woods had done great damage and threatened more.”¹⁴ With the successful removal of these “highly destructive” peoples and practices from the lands, the residents and travelers to Yosemite Park would now be able to enjoy a natural beauty untainted by human activity. A major problem lies within this instance, while lumbermen and sheep herders would now be banished from the lands, the herders and lumbermen would now have to find other means of support for themselves and their

¹¹ New York Times, Affairs Of The Interior; Points From The Report Of Secretary Francis. 1896.
¹² Ibid.
¹³ Also of note within the publication is a section calling for “Actual Settlers”. The government has issued a call to those wishing to settle within a majority of “waste acres”. This is probably in reference to some Native American populations, as well as any whites wishing to settle further west. The Secretary also is urging for reclamation of arid lands, believing that some 100,000 acres from 500,000 may be salvaged with water conservation. In closing, the Secretary also stresses the importance of preserving public forests.
families. By bringing about an end to activities that were a way of life for some, others whom did not rely on such practices of sheep herding and lumbering, could now enjoy a landscape set aside for recreation. This issue not only speaks of social injustices, but evidence of class differences is apparent. By allowing the interests of those in a wealthier position to dictate the usage of lands, those whom use the lands for survival are severely inconvenienced.

In an examination into theme of poaching upon park lands, the document examined is a complaint of John L. Howard against Colonel S. B. M. Young, Superintendent of Yosemite National Park, California. The report was filed in the Department of the Interior on November 30, 1896. This event occurred close to the turn of the century, but not long after Yosemite was established as a national park. John L. Howard wrote a letter to Colonel Young on August 17, 1896, asking for permission for himself and three others to carry firearms within the limits of Yosemite National Park. While Colonel Young declined Howard’s request, he offered to send an escort party to accompany Howard and his men on their journey through the park. Later, on September 4, Colonel Young received notice from Sergeant George F. Goodrich that Howard and his party had chartered a guide, E. L. Ellwell, and had entered the park through the Lake Eleanor trail, with the intent to avoid patrols. Colonel Young then ordered Corporal James F. Keilty and three men to find this hunting party with the intent of disarming and bringing the party back to Young’s camp near Wawona. Young cites Paragraph 5 of the Rules and Regulations of Yosemite National Park which states, “no one shall carry into or have in the Park any fire-arms, traps, nets, tackle, or appliances, or fish or hunt therein without a license in

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15 Department of The Interior/Samuel B. M. Young. “Complaint of John L. Howard Against Colonel S. B. M. Young Superintendent.” 30 November 1896, 1. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid., 2.
18 Ibid.
writing signed by the Secretary or Superintendent of the Park.”

Since Howard and his men were indeed conducting an illegal excursion through the park, and were found with fishing tackle and firearms without license, then the removal of Howard and his party from the park was justly warranted. Young reinforces this point by citing Paragraph 8 of the Rules and Regulations that state, “The Superintendent…is hereby authorized and directed to remove all trespassers from the Park and enforce these rules and regulations…” The first portion of the document is simply Young’s synopsis of the situation, along with a brief statement upon his interpretation of the facts.

The second portion of the document is Young’s personal reply to the complaint lodged by Howard. It appears that this issue garnered quite a bit of local attention, and led Senator George C. Perkins of California; to call Young’s actions “hasty, ill-considered, and very reprehensible.” Young presents not only himself, but his rebuttal in a very calm and honest manner. It is easy to gauge Colonel Young’s character by his eloquent choice of words, and his just manner toward the situation in question. Apparently Ellwell, the guide, had lived near the park for quite some time and had become very familiar with not only the land itself, but also legal proceedings regarding violation of rules within the park. When the party was eventually found and arrested, eight men and sixteen animals comprised said party. The men that comprised the party were found to be “…severally members of various social and luncheon clubs as stated, and that they are, respectively, members, officers, agents and employes [sic] of the several firms, corporations and professions indicated…” Young’s tolerance for special

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19 Department of the Interior/Samuel B. M. Young, 2.
20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid., 8.
23 Ibid., 3-4.
24 Ibid., 5.
25 Ibid., 4.
treatment seems thin, “…and admitting further that their social, commercial, and financial
standing is as high as their respective descriptive lists seem to imitate, I am unable to see that the
facts so stated and admitted are in any way or in any degree relevant to the subject matter of their
complaint.” Young offers to provide a list of the clubs and organizations he is affiliated with,
if the case calls for, in a slightly condescending manner.

This entire ordeal brings to mind some of the themes that Jacoby integrates into his novel,
*Crimes against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American
Conservation*. While Jacoby chose not to examine Yosemite, his focus integrated Yellowstone
National Park. Stated previously in the historiography and Jacoby’s text, “…hunting or fishing
redefined as poaching…” was the basis for an argument that acts once considered a way of life
for settlers quickly turned into villainous acts with the assumption of lands by the federal
government. But the usage of this particular document demonstrates the complete opposite. It
appears that the United States Cavalry and Colonel Young were indeed within legal limits in the
arrest and subsequent removal of John L. Howard and his hunting party from Yosemite National
Park. Howard’s clear attempt to deceive Superintendent Young, as well as other park staff, is a
clear case of mistreatment, abuse, and mistrust in national parks institutions. Furthermore, this
document also suggests the usage of politicking for personal gain on the behalf of the accused
members of the hunting party. Colonel Young’s blunt and honest attitude of the entire matter
suggests a certain type of justice and sense of the law that is mainly fantasized in today’s era.

The Colonel Samuel B.M. Young file not only holds the complaint lodged against him
from John L. Howard, but also contains some photographs from roughly the same time period

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26 Department of the Interior/Samuel B. M. Young, 4.
27 Ibid.
that the complaint was lodged. The first photograph examined portrays a gathering of a decently-sized group of men.²⁹ Perhaps this photograph may have been a tour, or possibly a group of licensed hunters, trappers, or fishermen that were congregating in the park to share some stories and hunt some game. This photograph conveys a sense that these well-dressed men were enjoying lands set aside for their enjoyment, and could not possibly be accused of such unlawful acts of poaching. While this inference may be a bit far-reaching, the class differences noted earlier within the case study could provide plausible explanation to this claim. The photograph definitely portrays the growing popularity of Yosemite, and usage of lands by larger groups of people.

The second photograph analyzed was a camp made at Yosemite.³⁰ The tents used in this situation suggest that a number of people, possibly the cavalry, made camp at Yosemite during this time. This very well may have been the beginning of the usage of national parks as destinations for campers and outdoor enthusiasts, as this photograph may prove. There are a few gentlemen visible, but it is too difficult to discern if they are soldiers. The evidence of tents upon park lands also suggests the persons making use of such facilities only intended on a brief stay, and were not simply residing upon park lands as squatters.

Finally, there is a photograph of dogs in Yosemite.³¹ These were most likely dogs used in camp at Yosemite, and maybe belonged to this particular group of men that were making camp at Yosemite. More than likely, these pictures are of an early group of either outdoor enthusiasts or hunters. The inclusion of dogs suggests the latter, but the former is just as possible as well. Perhaps the dogs may have also been utilized by park staff, in an effort to discourage

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²⁹ Samuel B. M. Young, Folder RG4885. 64, 1894.
³⁰ Ibid., .78.
³¹ Ibid., .80.
trespass. Although the breed of dog is not identified, there is possibility that such dogs may have been used to track down poachers and trespassers, and possibly squatters within park confines.

In an analysis of the formation and creation of the National Parks institution, the topics of conservationism and preservation were examined. The effects of conservation and preservation played a crucial role in determining which lands were suitable for recreational use, as well as measures taken to remove any possible threat or obstruction (most notably human). Native Americans and frontier whites were subject to removal from designated lands, in the interest of creating a meticulously maintained “natural area” to be used for recreation purposes by the United States government. While ongoing legal struggles continue between particular groups of Native Americans and the government, little compensation has been granted on the behalf of the Native Americans removed from select lands. Land removal also coincided with an increased sense of vigilance within the parks, and the introduction of the U.S. Cavalry to protect park lands signaled this transformation from state and private lands to federal regulation. Numerous accounts of poaching and other illegal activities within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park, but have been overlooked by some historians. Yellowstone National Park has been documented well concerning the subjects of Indian removal and poaching, but with the inclusion of newspaper articles and a complaint, the case study has also shown that such problems were encountered and dealt with during the formation of Yosemite National Park.
Annotated Bibliography

Primary Sources
Young, Samuel B. M. and the Department of the Interior. *Complaint of John L. Howard Against Colonel S. B. M. Young Superintendent*. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle PA, 1896.

A summary of a complaint lodged against the Superintendent of the Yosemite National Park. Provides a great basis of primary source analysis for the case study and activity with the U.S. Cavalry within Yosemite National Park.

Samuel B. M. Young, Records. RG4885. Army Heritage and Education Center, Carlisle, PA.

A collection of photographs from Yosemite National Park. Useful in identifying certain types of uses and the persons that used Yosemite in the park’s early days.


Archived editions and stories from the New York Times is available through PROQUEST and Google News, the New York Times is a daily publication and covers national, as well as some worldwide events. I located several articles from the 1890s that dealt with Yosemite Park, and its poaching problem.

Secondary Sources

Blackbourn’s environmental history of Germany. Became useful for the global comparative element within my historiography, and helped to correlate some of the topics I covered in my historiography and subsequent research.


Provides insight into the concept of “Nature as Eden”. I used this notion in conjunction with my analysis of Mark David Spence’s *Dispossessing the Wilderness*.

Provides insight into the “other side” of the history of the National Parks. Jacoby was able to provide examples in which many people, not just Native Americans were removed from Park lands, and the sorts of activities that warranted their removal.


Deals with how the formation of the National Parks changed the attitude and practices of conservation within the National Parks system. This source was used to identify the creation of the Parks, and also highlighted key individuals behind the creation of the Parks.


Discusses Indian Removal and the creation of the National Parks. Provided an excellent example of how the Black Feet have yet to gain rights promised to them in the instance of Glacier National Park.
The years I have spent at Shippensburg as an undergraduate History major have produced a multitude of skills. From reading historical literature such as primary-source type documents, different historical books spanning broad subjects and continents, and publishing historical writing of my own, I have grown quite considerably since I entered Shippensburg University. I have since learned how different historians in specific areas and field of history craft their work, and also gained firsthand knowledge of how to conduct research in historical archives. I feel that I am better prepared for a career in either a historical-oriented field, or whichever field I choose to enter upon graduation, and that Shippensburg University has prepared me with the necessary sets of skills to excel.

In the Theory and Practice of History course, the semester-long project dealt with research of one of Shippensburg’s black Civil War soldiers. The soldier I studied and researched, Washington Robinson is buried in the Locust Grove Cemetery located on Queen Street. During the course, we were supplied with the soldier’s pension file from the National Archives Records Administration. The primary focus of this project was an introduction into historical research, as well as historical writing. The course consisted of required readings and short analysis papers, as well as focus upon the Civil War soldier project. This was my first experience working extensively with primary source documents. It was very interesting to be one of only a small number of people to view the personal information of a soldier from that particular era. One of the minor frustrations I encountered was deciphering handwriting on some of the documents, such as various affidavits on Washington Robinson’s behalf. The course was also the first experience I had with using the Chicago Manual of Style (Turabian) format when
writing papers. Learning how to properly cite sources and use footnotes in papers is a skill that has helped me in history courses I have had since Theory and Practice. The culmination of research produced a paper on Washington Robinson, and a walking tour of the Locust Grove Cemetery was also included during finals week.

The second assignment I will analyze is a paper I had written for my History of Tsarist Russia class. This paper also dealt with a primary source, Anton Chekhov’s play, *The Cherry Orchard*. There was a slight comparative element to the paper as I used Chekhov’s work to examine some of the social issues of Russia at the time, specifically the Emancipation and class differences. I provided a short synopsis of the play, and then used two secondary sources based on the particular time period to compare the work of Chekhov with actual happenings in Russia. This was also the first time I had done any sort of comparative history work. While the comparative element was not of a global scale, it nevertheless was a valuable experience in that I was able to make broader comparisons within a historical context and also compliment both primary and secondary sources. The process of fusing both types of sources is crucial to any historical body of work, and the experience I gained in this course also helped to prepare me for later history courses.

Finally, the crowning achievement of my historical work at Shippensburg was my senior capstone research project. This was truly a demanding project, as well as a highly demanding course in general, but provided the opportunity to apply what different history courses had taught me thus far. I was faced with creating a research paper that contained a global comparative element, as well as a historiography and case study. Both the historiography and case study components were very challenging, as I had to learn exactly what comprised each. Once I was given a basic overview of the components, I compiled a historiographical analysis of literature
that pertained to my selected area of interest. This was this first time in a history course that I was faced with procuring my own research materials. I selected a range of books to use for my historiography, analyzed each and every book, and wrote a historiography that reviewed as well as offered slight criticism. The case study component of the research project really provided the foundation to my career as a historian. I had worked with primary sources and archival sources before, but now I was charged with the task of actually visiting the archives and conducting my own original research on my National Parks topic. I was able to visit the United States Army Heritage and Education Center in Carlisle, Pa, and it was there that I gained firsthand knowledge of how archives function, and was even gracious enough to have a research consult with an archivist. Bringing both aspects of the paper together, the historiography and the case study, was no easy task. Once the paper had undergone many revisions and received several preliminary grades, my research project was complete. I invested many hours of research and work into my final research project, and was extremely pleased with how everything turned out. This course was the culmination of my historical education at Shippensburg, and the skills I had learned, as well as new ones, were used in full to complete the final research project.

In conclusion, the skills and knowledge I have gained through my coursework at Shippensburg University have better prepared me for a career in any historically-related field. I learned how to interpret, analyze, and use primary sources to further my own research, as well as the long process behind procuring those particular resources. My firsthand experience at historical archives was also very valuable, and it was there that I learned preliminary research before visiting any sort of archives is required. I have progressed as a student that once knew little about the time and efforts involved with historical research, to a student that has the ability to conduct my own historical research. The experiences I received at all levels throughout my
history career at Shippensburg have helped me in ways that are highly applicable to any course, not exclusively history courses. My writing has since improved, and I find myself taking more of a formulaic and analytical approach when I am faced with writing papers. The Senior Seminar in History course was not only beneficial in the respect that I fully learned and demonstrated a mastery of a particular skill set, but I was also introduced to a relatively new field of history—Environmental History. The authors and literature that was studied during the course was fascinating, and truly challenged my own perceptions of “nature”. The philosophical nature of the course gave way to excellent discussion, and encouraged students to voice their own opinions and feelings regarding the material being studied. The education I have received at Shippensburg will have definitely prepared me for a career in any particular field, and I hope that field is History.