



# A SENSE OF PLACE

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR YOSEMITE VALLEY

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE



Yosemite Falls

Yosemite Village

Yosemite Lodge

Ahwahnee

Leidig Meadow

Stoneman Meadow

Curry Village

Native Cr.  
Hardy Isles

Gorge

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# A SENSE OF PLACE

DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR YOSEMITE VALLEY

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PREPARED BY  
THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK  
CALIFORNIA



**MAN-MADE STRUCTURES CAN SCARCELY ADD TO YOSEMITE'S MATCHLESS BEAUTY.**

**RATHER WE MUST STRIVE THAT THEY NEITHER INTRUDE  
UPON THIS SPLENDOR NOR SEEM TO RIVAL IT IN PERMANENCE.**

**HILMER OEHLMANN • GENERAL MANAGER OF THE CURRY COMPANY**

**AT DEDICATION OF YOSEMITE LODGE • JUNE 1956**



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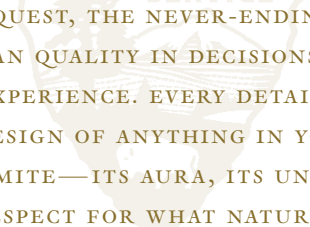


## FOREWORD

JOHN J. REYNOLDS • NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

I FIRST came to Yosemite in an official capacity in 1975. I was team captain for what was to become known as the “1980 Yosemite General Management Plan.” It was a time of great controversy about the park, so much so that 62,000 people participated in the planning process. I shall never forget the headline in *Rolling Stone* that blared “Why Are They Golfing in the Cathedral?”

*Rolling Stone* weighing in about a national park? Unbelievable! But it happened. The “cathedral” was (and is) Yosemite Valley. “Golfing” referred to the since removed 9-hole pitch-and-putt course then in place behind The Ahwahnee.



THE QUEST, THE NEVER-ENDING QUEST, IN YOSEMITE IS FOR AN ALMOST SPIRITUAL OR SUPER-HUMAN QUALITY IN DECISIONS ABOUT PRESERVING AND ENJOYING IT. IT IS LESS A PLACE THAN AN EXPERIENCE. EVERY DETAIL COUNTS—NOT JUST A LITTLE, BUT A LOT. THIS IS THE CHALLENGE OF DESIGN OF ANYTHING IN YOSEMITE, BE IT THE VALLEY OR ANY OTHER PLACE IN THE PARK. YOSEMITE—ITS AURA, ITS UNIQUE PLACE IN OUR MINDS AND SOULS—DEMANDS THE ULTIMATE IN RESPECT FOR WHAT NATURE MADE AND THE AWE IT IMPARTS.

The headline has stuck with me ever since as I have engaged in the great on-going intellectual and ethical adventure and struggle of what to do, and not to do, in Yosemite National Park.

“Cathedral” almost universally denotes extraordinary beauty and connection to a creating spirit. Yosemite evokes the same feelings of quality and connectivity to a greater life force, a greater reason for being. It is a sacred place, to many the most sacred symbol of sublimity and beauty anywhere in the world.

“Golfing” in such a place often connotes or symbolizes a level of separation dividing mankind from nature that could hardly be more stark unless it were industrial. The contradiction between golfing and cathedral

in my experience with Yosemite Valley defines more clearly than any other metaphor the roots of controversy and feeling that are the basis for discussion about everything that happens or is proposed to happen in Yosemite.

The quest, the never-ending quest, in Yosemite is for an almost spiritual or super-human quality in decisions about preserving and enjoying it. It is less a place than an experience. Every detail counts—not just a little, but a lot. This is the challenge of design of anything in Yosemite, be it the Valley or any other place in the park. Yosemite—its aura, its unique place in our minds and souls—demands the ultimate in respect for what nature made and the awe it imparts.

During the first 100 or so years of the existence of national parks, design professionals worked entire public service careers perfecting what was appropriate design in national parks. They learned by being immersed in the natural feel of the place. They came to know and respond to the rhythms and patterns nature imparts, unique to each place yet as related as trees and flowers, birds and bears, air and water are related one to another. These professionals dedicated their working lifetimes to creating the design ethics for which the National Park Service was and is known worldwide.

That cadre of public service professionals dedicated to studying and designing in response to the parks themselves no longer exists. Those who remain mostly manage the contracts and expectations of the private contractors hired from afar to do the work.

And so the need for this marvelous and essential book, *A Sense of Place: Design Guidelines for Yosemite Valley*. Its reason for being is to pass on at least the basics of the special and unique considerations that undergird excellence of design in Yosemite. It is a humbling undertaking, striving to convey to landscape architects, architects, and engineers the beginning basics they need to be sensitive to in Yosemite.

Very often in our culture as places develop, we lose our sense of place. We lose the sights, sounds, smells that most positively impressed us as children. The farsighted men who wrote and passed the act creating the National Park Service understood that Americans would need places that were touchstones of their existence as a culture, places where wildness and history are paramount. More and more the national parks are the symbols for our national history and natural identity. Reverence and excellence in the stewardship and development of national parks is part of America's heritage.

*A Sense of Place* raises the standards for the next generation of designers. These Design Guidelines require designers to absorb the essence of Yosemite and employ that understanding in their work. Only then will the resulting design become worthy of Yosemite.

In closing, I am compelled to make a personal comment. I was given the gift of working for the future of Yosemite in many ways off and on for nearly 30 years. My experience in striving to give equal to what I got from working in and on Yosemite has compelled me to constantly question what more I could do to protect national parks and open them to the hearts of visitors. I am deeply and emotionally indebted to the authors of these Guidelines and the leadership of Yosemite National Park for giving me the opportunity to write a Foreword for it. If those of you who use this book will open yourselves to the same opportunity for growth that Yosemite gave to me, then you will be worthy of attempting to design for this most wonderful of places. You must do so with the absolute humility that you have been afforded an opportunity that only a very few will have. You must “buy into” the idea that you are important to Yosemite only insofar as your work deeply and honestly reflects what Yosemite is itself. Your design will affect millions of visitors who come to experience Yosemite. If it detracts in any way, you will have golfed in the cathedral. If it is true to Yosemite, you will have joined the eternal chorus.



JOHN J. REYNOLDS

Retired, National Park Service

Fellow, American Society of Landscape Architects

February 2004

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*John J. Reynolds had a long and distinguished career in the National Park Service. During his 39 years of service, he served as Deputy Director of the National Park Service, Regional Director of the Pacific West and Mid-Atlantic Regions, Manager of the Denver Service Center, Superintendent of North Cascades National Park, and Assistant Superintendent of Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. In addition to these positions, he spent 15 years as a Landscape Architect/Planner, during which he was Team Captain for the studies leading to the establishment of Bering Land Bridge National Preserve and Kobuk Valley National Park in Alaska, and was Team Captain of the Yosemite General Management Plan. He led the United States Delegation to the World Heritage Committee for 3 years. As Manager of the Denver Service Center, Reynolds began the sustainability movement in the National Park Service, leading the effort to publish the book “Guiding Principles of Sustainable Design.”*



## INTRODUCTION

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YOSEMITE VALLEY is unlike any place in the world. Its breathtaking scenery has inspired many to describe this masterpiece of nature as “the Incomparable Valley.” This extraordinary setting exhibits a grand assemblage of natural wonders composed of immense sculptured rockforms, thundering waterfalls, and serene parklike setting. Cliffs climb to 4,000 feet high, while soaring granite monoliths and a multitude of domes rim the Valley. It features some of the tallest waterfalls in the world, including Yosemite Falls which appears to leap from the sky as it descends almost half a mile to the Valley floor. Millions from around the globe have made the pilgrimage to experience its wonders. Its sublime beauty has galvanized preservationists and inspired painters, poets, and photographers. Yosemite struck John Muir as the “sanctum sanctorum of the Sierra” and “the grandest of all the special temples of Nature.” John Muir felt that in Yosemite Valley, “Nature had gathered her choicest treasures” into this one mountain mansion. “No temple made with hands can compare with Yosemite,” he exalted.

For thousands of years, humans have dwelled within Yosemite with the last 150 years witnessing the influence by nonnatives upon this landscape. It was the first natural area set aside by the federal government for protection of outstanding scenery and has served as profound inspiration for preservation philosophy in American history. Managed as a park since 1864, Yosemite Valley is a landscape that displays many years of complex interplay in the environment between the natural and human made. As a place set apart, this singular setting continues to evoke reverence and awe by all who visit.

How do people build upon what many consider as sacred ground? This has been an ongoing challenge for all who have designed facilities in the Valley. Within this grand setting, people have over the years created a built environment to protect and to facilitate enjoyment by generations of visitors. Complementing the natural setting, hundreds of historic structures, several historic districts, and the overall cultural landscape have become part of the total Valley identity and visitor experience. The National Park Service recognizes that in order to uphold Yosemite Valley as a special place, development must be designed to be compatible and respectful of the park setting, both natural and human-made.

Today, as park managers continue to influence and build upon the environment of Yosemite Valley, there is the desire to “harmonize” with the landscape. These Design Guidelines have been developed to document, interpret, and understand what humans have already built within the Valley in order to provide careful direction for future designs compatible with the surroundings. The ultimate goal is to enhance the unique sense of place embodied by this extraordinary Valley.

## **PURPOSE**

These Design Guidelines are intended to provide a framework for deciding appropriateness of architectural and landscape character of new buildings, site work, and alterations. Based on the assumption that the most accomplished and creative practitioners will be tasked with the sensitive requirements of working within this setting, these guidelines go beyond basic universal principles of good design and focus on the “character” qualities that are reflected and contribute to the distinctiveness of Yosemite Valley.

When visitors come to see and experience the magnificent natural beauty of Yosemite, a large part of their stay and activities often occur within developed areas of the park. Their experiences are affected, adversely or positively, by the character and quality of the developed areas. What the guidelines endeavor to avoid is a haphazard, piecemeal approach to facility development which creates visual clutter or incoherence in the Valley. Inconsistent design and disregard for the existing context can detract from the visitor experience. Ultimately, Yosemite Valley architecture and landscapes have a significant impact on how visitors perceive, use, and remember the park. At its best, appropriate design provides a special human setting in which the values of the park are clarified and reinforced.

Developments in the Valley must complement the natural and historic setting, blending in as though a part of it, but at the same time they must be distinctive to emphasize the special nature of the place. New facilities should be designed in a way that establishes a continuity with the most successful design elements of the past; there should be a respectful consistency between old and new. The resulting built environments should enrich and become part of the evolving poetry of the Yosemite Valley landscape.



*Lower Yosemite Fall comfort station  
under construction (2004) RF*

In general, the goals of the Design Guidelines include:

- Retention of natural site character, including setting, materials, and ecological processes
- Design new buildings and facilities to blend with the natural environment, emphasizing non-intrusive design. They are sensitive to the environmental capacity of the site to absorb modifications. Facilities fit in with their sites rather than dominate them. Buildings are subordinate to the environment
- Compatibility of structures and facilities with the cultural context and character in which they are located and protection of cultural integrity
- Coordination and integration of the design of individual structures with those of the site plan as a whole
- Enhancement of unifying architectural and landscape themes and elements within defined areas and throughout Yosemite Valley
- Emphasis on simplicity and restraint in design and respect for past building character, traditions, and practices
- Recognition of the principles of rustic design used by previous designers, identification of those which retain validity today, and contemporary interpretation of those principles

The Design Guidelines should assist park staff and designers make informed and consistent decisions as facilities are planned, designed, constructed, modified, and maintained. They provide background information on the development and most important design characteristics of the built environment. The detailed guideline sections provide direction as to which design strategies and themes may be suitable for particular areas. These recommendations recognize that neither buildings nor the landscape setting can be treated separately. Both are closely interrelated and need to be viewed in an integrated fashion in order to attain a more complete solution.

Successful implementation of these Design Guidelines will contribute to the fulfillment of overall park goals of preservation and visitor enjoyment. The results should be buildings and landscapes that fit in with the natural surroundings and relate respectfully to the existing cultural landscape of Yosemite Valley. What is added to the setting should provide visual unity and further enrich the visitor experience. The resulting built environment, which becomes part of this magnificent setting, should ultimately enhance the remarkable sense of place within Yosemite Valley.



*Stone wall under construction at  
Lower Yosemite Fall area (2004) RF*

## HOW TO USE THE DESIGN GUIDELINES

These Design Guidelines are a reference to direct and shape the efforts of future architects, planners, landscape architects, concessioners, administrators, maintenance personnel, design review staff, and park management as they work to create contextually and environmentally appropriate structures and landscapes. The Design Guidelines will be utilized by park management, becoming part of a project review process that will define design character as design solutions for buildings and site work are proposed.

These guidelines are provided to insure that park facilities are designed to be compatible with the existing resources. The objective is to develop Valleywide themes which are interwoven into specific guidelines for each area of the Valley and in harmony with the existing resources. Park management can use this manual to reinforce broad visual concepts for the Valley. A designer can translate the broad Valley and area themes into decisions and details for planning and design. The guidelines also can provide a basis to guide design and maintenance decisions by park staff and designers which will be uniform over time.

The descriptions of the settings within Yosemite Valley and guidelines contained within this document are organized to convey the following topics:

- The natural and cultural environment of Yosemite Valley
- Overarching and unifying Valleywide design principles and architectural themes
- Significant development zones or areas in Yosemite Valley with associated different qualities, character, and function
- Significant or dominant characteristics and site-specific characteristics within each unique geographic area, including common elements and unique details and features
- Resource sensitivities, compatibility issues, contextual issues, historical patterns, unifying elements, and site-specific, distinctive architectural characteristics
- Guidelines to encourage compatible and unified development within the natural and cultural setting

This reference is not meant to provide direction in every facet of the visual image of the Valley. Nor is it meant to be a substitute for comprehensive design work by professionals or serve to provide for every decision by park management and maintenance personnel. It can serve, however, as a tool to tie the varying areas of the Valley together into a compatible visual whole.



IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF ROADS, TRAILS, BUILDINGS, AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS, PARTICULAR ATTENTION MUST BE DEVOTED ALWAYS TO THE HARMONIZING OF THESE IMPROVEMENTS WITH THE LANDSCAPE. 1918 NPS STATEMENT OF POLICY

While protecting recognized values, these Design Guidelines should allow sufficient flexibility to accommodate changing times, circumstances, and technologies. The guidelines should be aides to decision-making, rather than prescriptions or formulas. Except where mandated by specific park zoning prescriptions (i.e., *The Merced Wild and Scenic Comprehensive Management Plan*), it is not intended to be so rigid as to stifle creative expression and reinterpretation of existing design themes and detailing. The criteria provided avoid absolutes and are intended more as recommendations rather than requirements.

## AGENCY POLICIES + STANDARDS<sup>1</sup>

### Management Policies

Familiarity and understanding of existing National Park Service policies and standards will assist designers in the implementation of the Design Guidelines. Many of these policies articulate the philosophy of the National Park Service as to how the built environment will protect natural and cultural resources and enhance visitor enjoyment of these resources. The key document *Management Policies 2001* provides direction under *Park Facilities* which echoes the purposes and intent of the Design Guidelines.

*Facilities will be integrated into the park landscape and environs with sustainable designs and systems to minimize environmental impact. Development will not compete with or dominate park features, or interfere with natural processes...If a cohesive design theme is desired, recommended or required, the theme will reflect the purpose and character of the park, or, in a large park, of an individual developed area.* MANAGEMENT POLICIES 2001

Similar to the *National Park Service Statement of Policy* in 1918 by Stephen T. Mather, it elaborates further when it states,

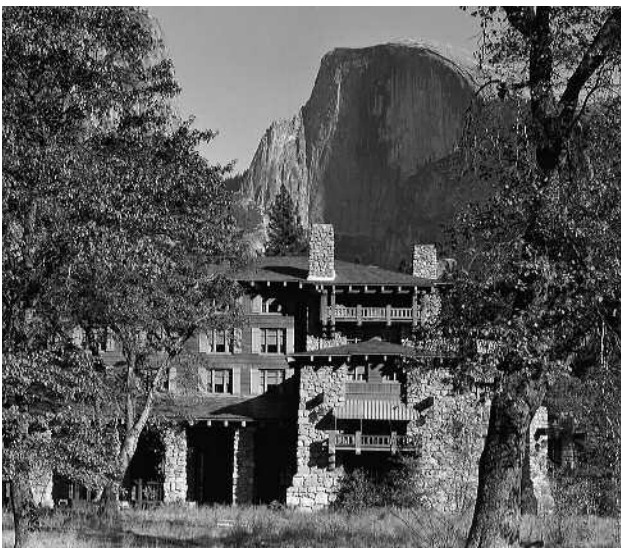
*Designs for park facilities, regardless of their origin (NPS, contractor, concessioner, or other), will be harmonious with and integrated into the park environment. They will also be subject, throughout all phases of design and construction, to the same code compliance; the same high standards of sustainable design, “universal design,” and functionality; and the same review and approval process.* MANAGEMENT POLICIES 2001

The most important statutory directive for the National Park Service is provided by interrelated provisions of the NPS Organic Act of 1916, and the NPS General Authorities Act of 1970. The key management-related provision of the Organic Act is:

*[The National Park Service] shall promote and regulate the use of the Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations hereinafter specified...by such means and measures as conform to the fundamental purpose of the said parks, monuments, and reservations, which purpose is 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.*

Accordingly, the Management Policies directs that “the impairment of park resources and values may not be allowed by the Service unless directly and specifically provided for by legislation or by the proclamation establishing the park.” It is important for the planner or designer in conjunction with park management to produce designs that would not harm the integrity of park resources or values, including the opportunities that otherwise would be present for the enjoyment of those resources or values.

All development must be accomplished in accordance with applicable codes and accepted standards. This is a federal area and so designers should consult with the National Park Service on which codes are most currently adopted by the agency.



The Ahwahnee and Half Dome (1941) YRL-RA

## Sustainability

Sustainability is an approach that recognizes that every design choice has an impact on the natural and cultural resources of not only the local environment, but also regional and global environments. As an agency whose central mission is the protection of both the natural and cultural resources entrusted to it, sustainability is an integral part of the National Park Service’s design and management philosophy. The agency has an obligation, as well as a unique opportunity, to demonstrate leadership in environmental stewardship. The National Park Service must lead by example for not only a local, but a worldwide audience.



Curry Village tent cabins  
(2004) RF

Sustainable design concepts should be incorporated in new construction and alterations to historic structures. This is design that seeks to minimize long-term impacts to the earth's environment through strategies such as adaptive reuse, recycling, reducing material and water consumption, energy efficiency, life cycle cost analysis, long-term operations, maintainability, and using vernacular or local methods, materials, products, and crafts.

Helpful resources would include the National Park Service publication *Guiding Principles of Sustainable Design*, federal and state energy conservation requirements, and the U.S. Green Building Council *Leadership in Environmental and Energy Design* program referred to as LEED. For larger projects, the National Park Service has used the LEED process to evaluate, rank and make decisions as part of the design process in order to optimize levels of sustainability.

### Historic Structures + Landscapes

Rehabilitation and maintenance of buildings currently listed or eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places are covered by existing NPS policy (*Director's Order #28*) and regulations of the National Historic Preservation Act which include the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

Most of Yosemite Valley, including all of the individually recognized historic districts and sites, is included within the boundaries of the larger Yosemite Valley Historic District. Many of the existing historic structures and site design features are contributing elements to the historic district which provides further recognition and protection for the cultural landscape. Planners and designers need to be cognizant of the significance of the contributing elements as they propose changes to the setting.

A cultural landscape is defined as a geographic area, including both cultural and natural elements, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. Yosemite Valley is a significant cultural landscape of national importance associated with the history of wilderness and scenic protection.

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* provides historic preservation guidance to anyone with responsibility for the management and protection of historic resources, including park managers, contractors and project reviewers, prior to and during the planning and implementation of all project work. Since Yosemite Valley is



Vernal Fall (2002) RF

eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the Secretary's Standards apply to all new construction, infill, add-ons, modifications, and replacement of all buildings, structures and other associated landscape features within the Valley.<sup>2</sup>

For new construction in historic areas, a key standard to be cognizant of is "New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment" (NPS 1995c). This requires a sensitive balance between new development that does not exactly mimic and yet is still compatible with the historic precedent. The average observer should be able to discern that the new construction is contemporary.

### Accessibility + Universal Design

The National Park Service is committed to providing access to facilities and programs to as wide an audience as possible. Its policies on accessibility are articulated in *Director's Order #42—Accessibility for Park Visitors* which states,

*The NPS will design, construct and operate all buildings and facilities so they are accessible to, and usable by, persons with disabilities to the greatest extent reasonable, in compliance with all applicable laws, regulations, and standards. This means that all new and altered buildings and facilities will be in conformance with appropriate design standards.*

One fundamental principle of this Director's Order is that the National Park Service will seek to provide the highest level of accessibility that is reasonable, and not simply provide the minimum level that is required by law. It encourages the implementation of "universal design" principles where everyone enjoys the same form of access instead of providing separate or special facilities or programs. While a higher level of accessibility is encouraged, *Management*



Vernal Fall Bridge  
(2002) RF

*Policies* does require a consideration of potential impairment to resources. For historic structures special consideration must be given to the historic integrity in accordance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The standards followed by the Department of the Interior are the new *Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Standard* (ABAAS). An important reference for site design is the *Access Board Outdoor Developed Area Guidelines*.

## PLANNING CONTEXT

Several existing plans provide broad direction for future development in the context of protecting resources and providing for the enjoyment of the park by visitors. In addition to establishing overall goals, the following plans describe parameters for development at specific locations within the park and Yosemite Valley.

### General Management Plan

In the mid-1970s, the National Park Service began the comprehensive planning process that was completed in 1980 with the approval of the *General Management Plan* and *Final Environmental Impact Statement*. This plan provides basic management direction for Yosemite National Park, based on the 1916 Organic Act (the law that established the National Park Service), the park's enabling legislation (the laws that established Yosemite National Park), and the 1958 act that established the El Portal Administrative Site. The 1980 *General Management Plan* established five broad goals to guide the management of Yosemite National Park and to perpetuate its natural splendor:

- Reclaim priceless natural beauty
- Allow natural processes to prevail
- Promote visitor understanding and enjoyment
- Markedly reduce traffic congestion
- Reduce crowding

In support of these goals, the *General Management Plan* includes several developed area plans, including the Yosemite Valley District, which proposes specific changes to the developed settings. These recommended changes include the removal or modification of roads, buildings, and landscapes and construction of some new facilities.

### The Merced Wild + Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan

In 1987, Congress designated the Merced River a Wild and Scenic River to protect the river's free-flowing condition and protect and enhance the river's unique values for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations. In 2000, the National Park Service signed the Record of Decision for the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan* (Merced River Plan). The Merced River Plan provides broad management direction for managing visitor use, land and facility development, and resource protection within the Merced River corridor. The goals of the Merced River Plan are consistent with both the *General Management Plan* goals and the requirements of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act:

- Protect and enhance river-related natural resources
- Protect and restore natural hydrological and geomorphic processes
- Protect and enhance river-related cultural resources
- Provide diverse river-related recreational and educational experiences
- Provide appropriate land uses

Outstandingly Remarkable Values are defined as those characteristics that make the river worthy of special protection. Within the Valley, these values include scenic, geologic processes, recreation, biological, cultural, and hydrologic processes. Since many developed areas are within the Merced River corridor, it is imperative that any proposed changes to facilities abide by the values and the prescriptions of the Merced River Plan.

### Yosemite Valley Plan

In addition to the five broad goals, the *General Management Plan* established a number of management objectives and proposed a host of specific actions. However, the *General Management Plan* recognized that new studies and analyses would be necessary to determine how best to accomplish its goals and objectives. Individual planning efforts, including plans for housing, restoration of areas to natural conditions, transportation, and visitor services, took on even greater urgency following the catastrophic flood of January 1997. The National Park Service consolidated four distinct planning projects together into one comprehensive planning effort for Yosemite Valley—the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. Approved in 2000, the *Yosemite Valley Plan/Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement* would implement many of the Yosemite Valley provisions found in the *General Management Plan's* proposed action. While the 1980 *General Management Plan* addresses parkwide issues, the *Yosemite Valley Plan* focuses primarily on issues in Yosemite Valley.



Wawona Tunnel View, Tom Killion, woodcut print, 1999

The specific purposes of the Yosemite Valley Plan within Yosemite Valley are to:

- Restore, protect, and enhance the resources of Yosemite Valley
- Provide opportunities for high-quality, resource-based visitor experiences
- Reduce traffic congestion
- Provide effective park operations, including employee housing, to meet the mission of the National Park Service

The Yosemite Valley Plan describes changes including adaptive reuse and the addition of new buildings to the historic setting. The Design Guidelines fulfill the intent of the Yosemite Valley Plan, which states,

*In general, changes to physical features and addition of new structures and facilities within the Valleywide cultural landscape would follow design guidelines consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation. In this manner, the potential for impacts resulting from addition of non-historic facilities would be reduced.*

<sup>1</sup> National Park Service policy and standards documents can be accessed at [www.nps.gov/yose/home.htm](http://www.nps.gov/yose/home.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Literature based on the Secretary's Standards has been developed to provide specific guidance related to the treatment of historic buildings and cultural landscapes and is available through the Government Printing Office.





## YOSEMITE VALLEY

THE YOSEMITE VALLEY landscape is the result of a long and complex history of interactions between natural systems and human influences. Today it is the landscape record of one of the most ambitious and historically significant experiments in the preservation of “natural” scenery ever attempted. The Valley floor landscape as a whole is nationally significant in the themes of outdoor recreation, tourism, and conservation. Since 1864, Yosemite has been an archetype for the preservation of scenic places through their development as public parks.

*The cultural processes of defining sacred space, of turning land into landscape, and of making a wild place into a public park, have made Yosemite Valley one of the most culturally significant natural places in America. The significance of the cultural landscape of Yosemite cannot be described or assessed apart from its significance as a natural landscape. The distinction between what is natural and what is artificial is rarely clear in Yosemite Valley. The Valley floor landscape is a unity that combines the pastoral and the awesome, the cultural and the natural, the indian and the european, the past and the present.* YOSEMITE VALLEY HISTORIC DISTRICT NOMINATION (NPS 2004D)

### SETTING

Yosemite Valley, the uniquely awesome and beautiful granite gorge in the Sierra Nevada range of California, is one of the most well known and iconic scenic places in the American West. It is perhaps the most famous glacially carved valley in the world. Within its modest seven square miles are what many consider to be the greatest concentration of natural wonders in the world. It boasts numerous waterfalls ranging from the windblown cascade of Bridalveil Fall to thundering Nevada and Vernal Falls as they drop over 900 feet total over two gigantic glacially carved granite steps. Yosemite Valley includes many of the highest waterfalls in the world (Medley 1994). Yosemite Falls, the highest falls on the continent, descends a total of 2,425 feet. The Valley is bounded by sheer cliffs, spires, domes, and imposing granite monoliths. These include Half Dome, a massive dome with seemingly one side completely sheered off; and standing guard at the entrance to the Valley is El Capitan, attracting rock climbers from all over as it features one of the largest exposed granite cliff faces in the world.

The unparalleled drama of these (and many other) features is set on a stage of serene and pastoral beauty. The dazzling juxtaposition of calm, park-like setting and nearly incomprehensible grandeur has made Yosemite one of the most visited, described, and depicted places in the world. Many have attested that descriptions and photographs are inadequate to fully convey the magnificence of the setting. “I sit in a kind of delicious dream, the scenery unconsciously mingling with my dream,” Joseph LeConte, University of California geology professor, rhapsodizes in his journal during his first trip in 1870. “I have heard and read much of this wonderful valley, but I can truly say I have never imagined the grandeur of the reality.”



Yosemite Falls from Yosemite Lodge

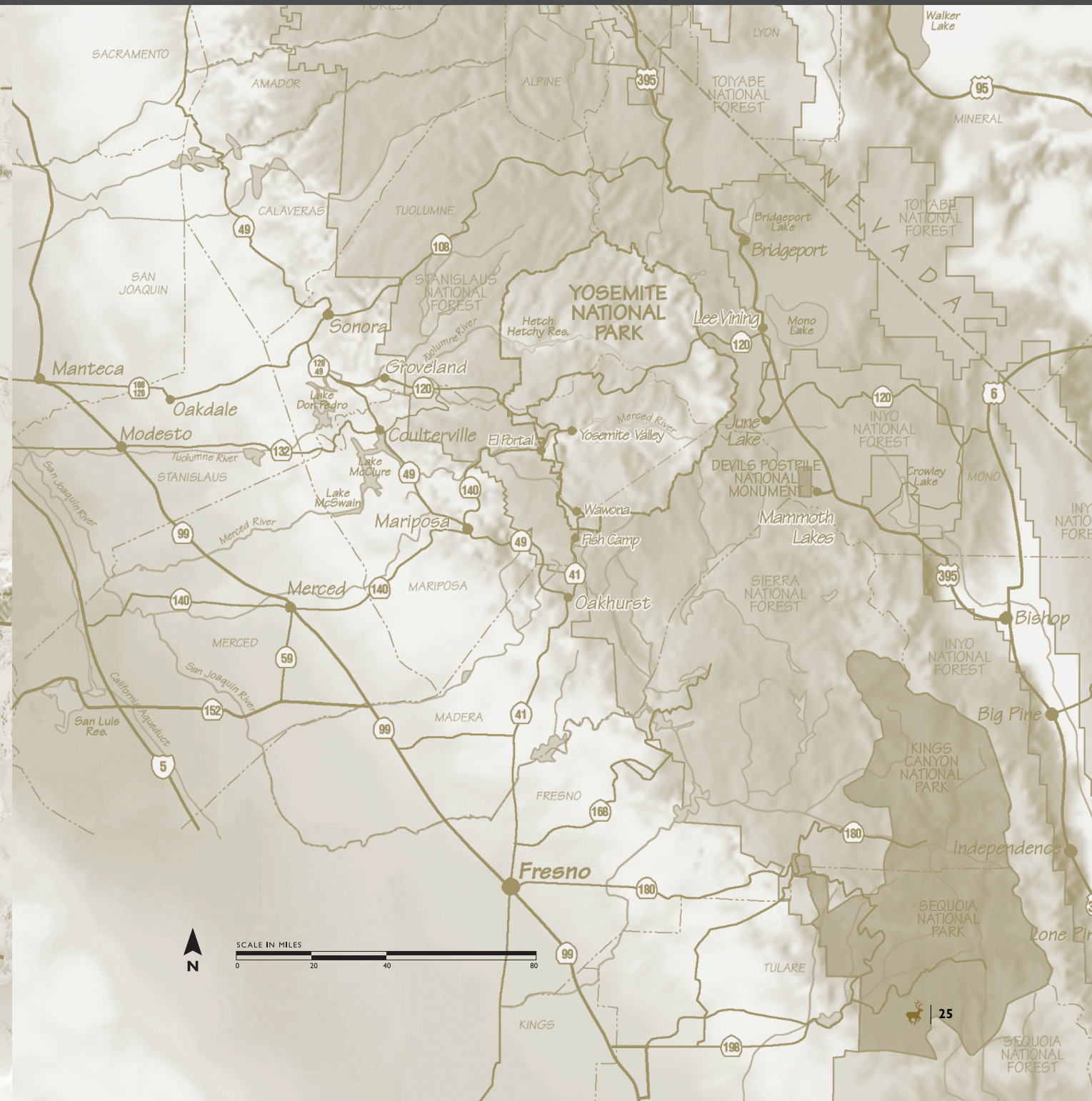
The Valley is set within the south central portion of Yosemite National Park located on the western slope of the central Sierra Nevada mountains, a great 400-mile-long granite escarpment along the eastern edge of California. Oriented in an east-west direction, the Valley is about seven miles long and one-half to one mile in width. Elevations along the Valley floor range between 3,800 and 4,200 feet above sea level. The exceptionally sheer and nearly vertical walls of Yosemite Valley rise 1,500 to 4,000 feet from the almost level Valley floor. The Valley floor itself is a relatively flat floodplain, through which the Merced River winds, flanked by open meadows and forests of oaks and pines.

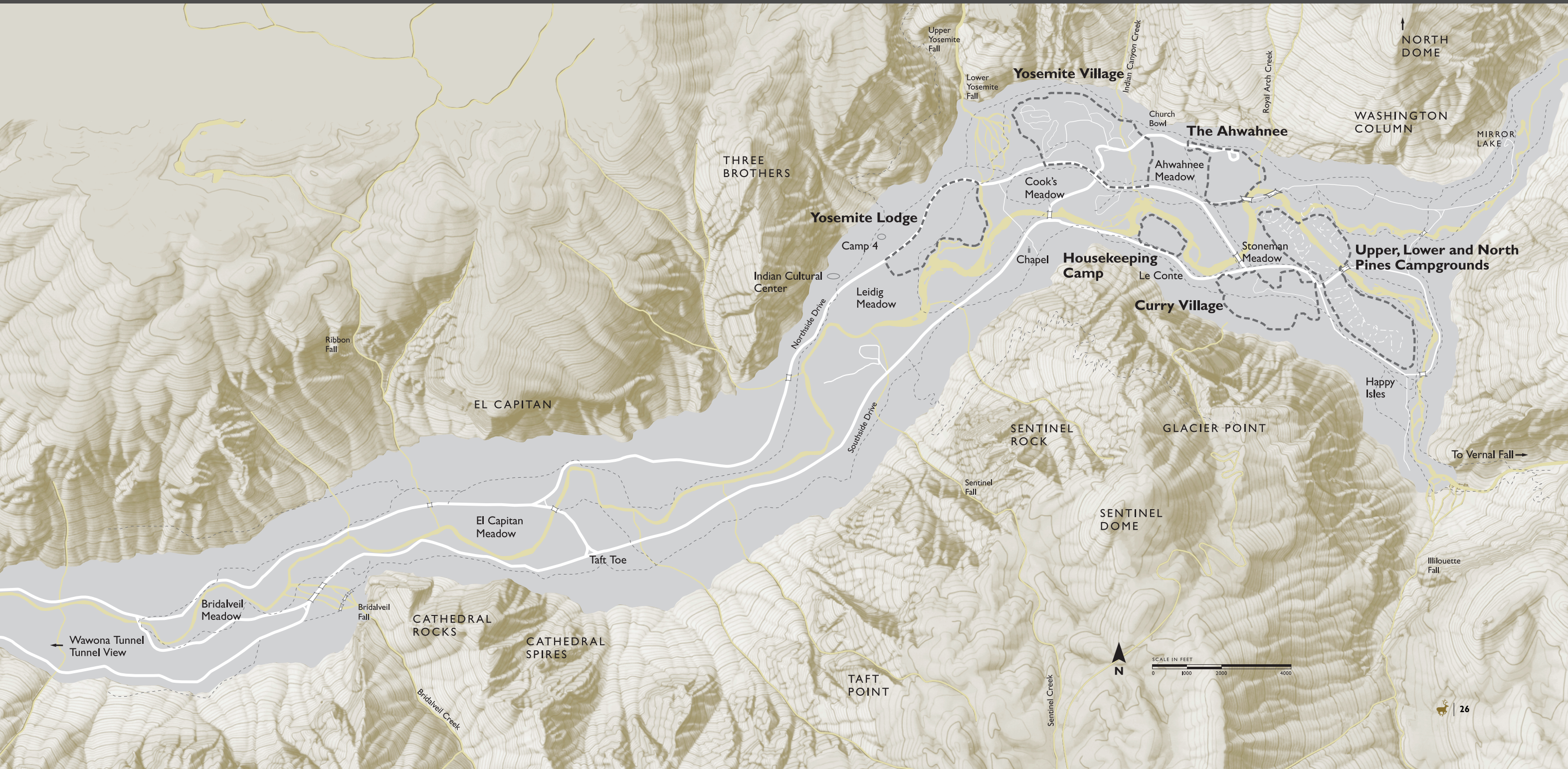
Yosemite Valley was formed over a period of millions of years, first by the waters of the ancient Merced River as the Sierra Nevada mountains were uplifted and then by several advances of glaciers which scraped and carved away the weaker portions of the walls of the upper Merced River canyon. When the climate warmed and the glaciers receded, they left behind a U-shaped Valley with almost vertical sculpted granite walls rising

# REGIONAL MAP



# VICINITY MAP





NORTH DOME

Yosemite Village

The Ahwahnee

WASHINGTON COLUMN

MIRROR LAKE

THREE BROTHERS

Yosemite Lodge

Housekeeping Camp

Upper, Lower and North Pines Campgrounds

Ribbon Fall

EL CAPITAN

Indian Cultural Center

Camp 4

Chapel

Stoneman Meadow

Curry Village

Happy Isles

SENTINEL ROCK

GLACIER POINT

To Vernal Fall

El Capitan Meadow

Taft Toe

SENTINEL DOME

Illioullette Fall

Bridalveil Meadow

Bridalveil Fall

CATHEDRAL ROCKS

CATHEDRAL SPIRES

TAFT POINT

Bridalveil Creek

Wawona Tunnel Tunnel View



SCALE IN FEET  
0 1000 2000 4000



*Post office at Yosemite Village against backdrop of Upper Yosemite Fall*

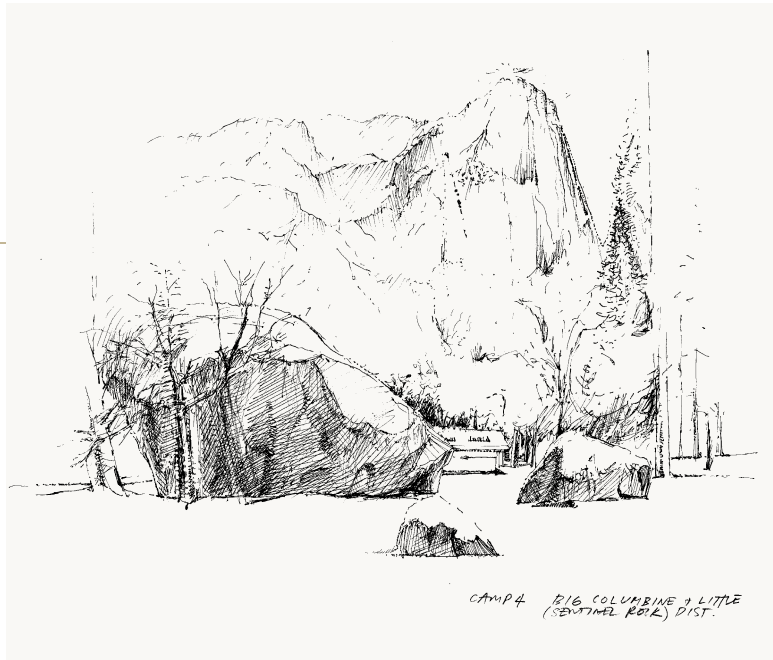
above a shallow Lake Yosemite. This ancient lake eventually filled with sediment to form the flat floodplain seen today.

### **DEVELOPED AREAS**

Due to its unique scenic beauty and attraction to tourists, most of the development within Yosemite National Park has occurred within Yosemite Valley, particularly at the eastern end. Six main areas present the highest density of development and range of visitor facilities. They include Yosemite Lodge, Yosemite Village, The Ahwahnee, Housekeeping Camp, Curry Village, and the campground areas.

Yosemite Village is the heart of visitor facilities in the Valley and is located at the northernmost edge of the developed valley, between Yosemite Lodge and The Ahwahnee. Northside Drive delineates the area boundary

to the south, and the canyon walls bound the area to the north. The Village area is edged by the Ahwahnee Meadow, and by the easternmost channel of Yosemite Creek. The concentrated development in Yosemite Village accommodates a constant throng of visitors. It contains the main visitor center of the park, a museum, a recreated Indian village and garden, a historic cemetery, a medical clinic, commercial enterprises, food services, employee housing, recreation facilities, park and concessioner administrative offices, maintenance facilities, and institutional facilities such as an elementary school, a child care center, a magistrate court, a public garage, and a post office. Much of the western portion of Yosemite Village has been designated as the Yosemite Village Historic District which includes a neighborhood of rustic predominately single-family units, the park Administration Building, Museum, the Rangers' Club, post office, and The Ansel Adams Gallery.



*Sentinel Rock from Camp 4 with Big Columbine and Little Columbine in the foreground*



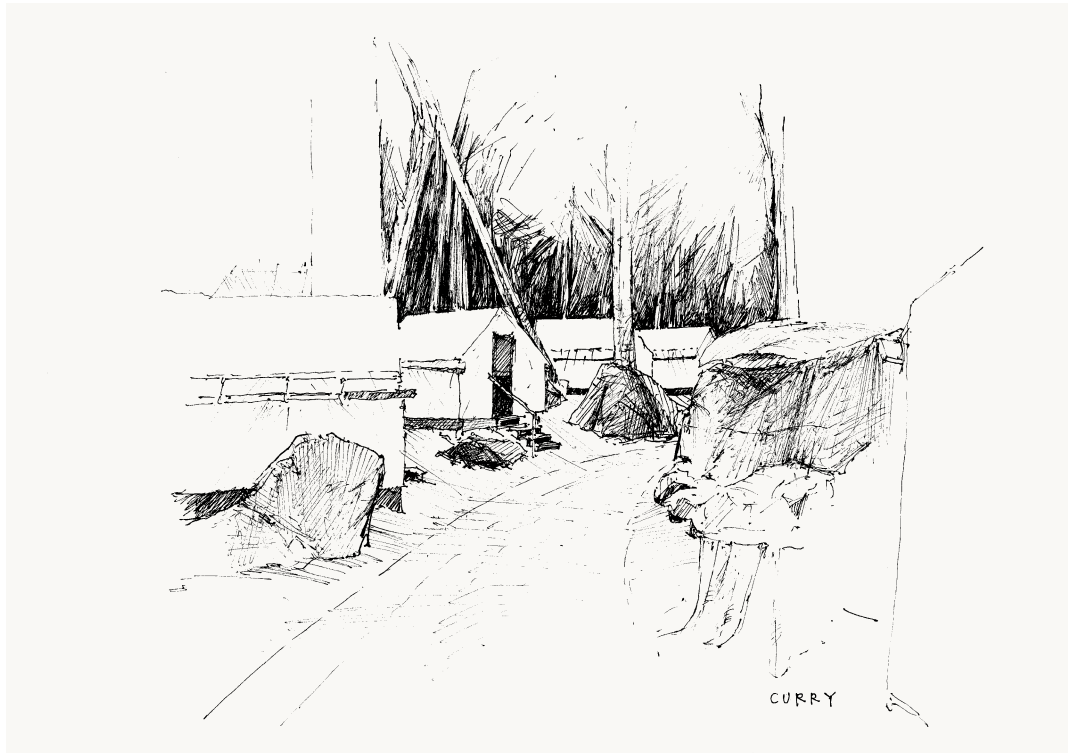
*Southeast elevation of The Ahwahnee*

To the west of Yosemite Village within view of Yosemite Falls is Yosemite Lodge, the most contemporary lodging facility, largely built during the Mission 66 period. The Camp 4 walk-in campground and the Lower Yosemite Fall area define much of the northern boundary. Yosemite Creek forms the eastern edge and to the south are fluctuating wetlands and floodplain. Developed over many years as a housing, lodging, and administrative center, Yosemite Lodge is comprised of a number of building clusters set in groves of trees and open meadow areas. These clusters include various lodging developments, a visitor-services and recreation complex containing both indoor and outdoor facilities, and a network of parking and circulation systems geared for pedestrians, vehicles, and bicycles.

Nearby, below the talus slopes of the cliffs to the north, is Camp 4, an informal, walk-in campground which was recently designated as a National Historic Site in recognition of its influence on the development of rock climbing. Just west of Camp 4 is the site of the future Indian Cultural Center located at the historic site of the last Indian village in the Valley.

The Ahwahnee is located in the northeastern section of Yosemite Valley, due east of Yosemite Village. This site is dominated by the 1920s-era hotel building, but also contains associated visitor bungalows, a dormitory building for personnel, recreation facilities, and parking and circulation networks related to the facility and adjacent grounds. The hotel is considered the prime example of a rustic grand lodge in a national park and has been designated as a National Historic Landmark.

South of the Merced River, Curry Village and the more seasonal facilities of Housekeeping Camp, Lower and Upper Pines Campgrounds, and Happy Isles are located. Curry Village, historically known as “Camp Curry,” is located in the southeastern portion of Yosemite Valley, with Southside Drive and Stoneman Meadow bounding it on the north and the steeply sloped base of cliffs and talus below Glacier Point forming the southern edge. Curry Village first provided lodging for park visitors in 1899. Today Curry Village is a densely developed visitor services and lodging facility that incorporates recreation, circulation, and parking; and includes various lodging types, commercial facilities, and services. The predominant feature of the site is a cluster of several hundred tent cabins and simple wood cabins that dot the wooded area at the base of the talus slope. A large visitor services and administrative center containing shops, restaurants, recreational facilities, and an information kiosk is located in the center of the complex. Much of Curry Village lies within a National Historic District which recognizes the significance of the camp area for its philosophy of providing lower cost lodging for Yosemite visitors, and the Rustic style of architecture used in building construction.



*Tent cabins at Curry Village*

Nearby developments are more seasonal and less dense in character. To the west of Curry Village along the south bank of the Merced River is the more contemporary Housekeeping Camp, which consists of a few core visitor services facilities and several open air structures with tilt-up walls, canvas roofs, and rustic screened patios. To the south of Housekeeping Camp is the stone LeConte Memorial Lodge, a National Historic Landmark. Originally built and operated by the Sierra Club, the Lodge serves as an interpretative and meeting center open to the general public.

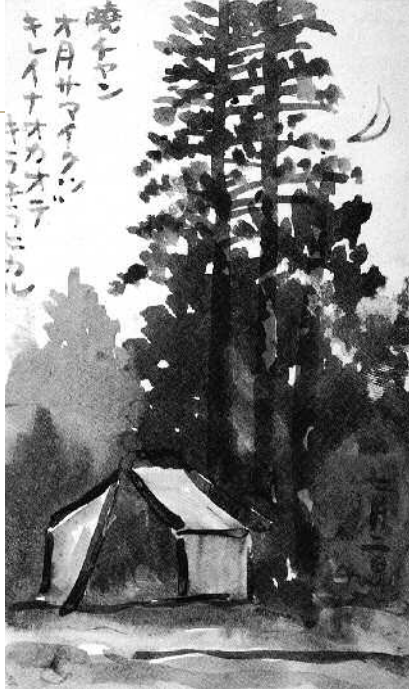
To the east of Curry Village, all the Valley drive-in campgrounds, which include Upper, Lower, and North Pines Campgrounds, are located. They are characterized by open sites under a forest canopy with an intermingling of comfort station and kiosk structures. Near the entrance to North Pines Campgrounds, the fenced enclosures and rustic structures of the Valley concessioner stable stand. And further east, where the Merced River tumbles down to the level Valley floor, is Happy Isles which is the major trailhead center in the Valley. Located at the start of the 211-mile John Muir Trail, structures in the area include a nature center, comfort station, and a system of pedestrian bridges providing access to islands set in the rushing river.



*Cabins at Housekeeping Camp*

Yosemite Valley's primary circulation system features two west-east roads parallel to the Merced River, one on the north and the other on the south, appropriately named Northside and Southside Drives, with branches and loops providing access to the various developed areas. The roads and pullouts were designed to provide a sequence of ever-changing views as visitors traveled through the Valley. The two roads are connected by a series of vehicular and pedestrian bridges spanning the Merced River from Pohono Bridge at the west to the Happy Isles Bridge at the east end of the Valley. Six of the bridges spanning the Merced River as well as those spanning Tenaya and Yosemite Creeks are of





*Tents at Camp Curry, Chiura Obata, Sumi on postcard, July 2, 1927*

Rustic design and have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Portions of the roads to the east have been converted to pedestrian or transit use only and in the future other portions will be realigned or transformed into multiuse pathways.

The cultural landscape of Yosemite Valley features nationally significant examples of architecture, including the Rangers' Club, The Ahwahnee, and the LeConte Memorial Lodge, all of which are National Historic Landmarks. Yosemite Village is a nationally significant example of early National Park Service "park village" planning. Curry Village is a rare example of a surviving tent cabin complex of the type that was once common in many parks. The bridges and other resources already listed in the National Register of Historic Places are significant examples of state and national park development dating from the late 19th century to World War II.

In addition to the individually recognized historic districts and properties, the entire cultural landscape is designated as the Yosemite Valley Historic District. The boundaries of the historic district extend from Valley wall to Valley wall, from Pohono Bridge to Mirror Lake and Nevada Fall. The nomination designates a "period of significance" from Indian Settlement to 1942. Period of significance is the length of time when a property was associated with important events, activities, or persons, or attained the characteristics which qualify it for National Register listing. The cultural landscape of Yosemite Valley, overall, has excellent integrity to the historic period. By 1942, the valley landscape had assumed the overall dimensions and character it possesses today; the basic footprint of development has remained relatively constant over the last 62 years. It is in Yosemite Valley that one can find the oldest, fullest, and purest expression of what scenic preservation and park development could achieve on the national scale.



## HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENT IN YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

FROM THE EARLIEST time of exploration and pioneer settlement, development at Yosemite National Park has occurred under differing influences and priorities. Sometimes decisions were made while balancing opposing goals—expectations of profit and development, versus preservation of aesthetic values and protection of the park. The present is a time of great change in Yosemite National Park and, in particular, in the redevelopment of facilities in Yosemite Valley. The following history of development is offered to planners, designers, and park management with a stipulation. The lessons of the past come with a high level of responsibility—respect for what has been accomplished in the past and acknowledgement of earlier building principles on behalf of the future.

### THE MIWOK PEOPLE

Yosemite National Park has had an estimated 8,000 years or more of occupation by American Indians who established an impressive archaeological record. Miwok-speaking people came from the north to occupy the Yosemite Valley and mingled with the existing Yosemite Indians around AD 1100 – 1400. The Southern Miwok called the Yosemite Valley *awabni* (“place like a gaping mouth”) and the Miwok people living there came to be known as the *awabnichii*. A separate group from the Southern Miwok, the Ahwahneechee (the Yosemite Miwok) developed rich cultural traditions, religion, and political and trade affiliations with the Paiutes to the east. They established trails and, because they understood the benefits of controlled burning of underbrush, may have developed the mosaics of oaks and grassland found by early Euro-Americans. In the latter 18th century, disease to which they had no resistance decimated the Ahwahneechee.

The Ahwahneechee, during their long occupation of the Yosemite Valley, built permanent villages in the Valley, and winter villages and camps for seasonal hunting, gathering, and fishing. Most homes in the Valley were “constructed of pine poles tied with grapevines and covered with overlapping layers of incense cedar bark... During the hot summer months, lean-tos covered with bark or brush were used as temporary shelters” (Bates and Lee 1990). The Ahwahneechee also built circular ceremonial houses whose earthen roofs were supported by oak posts, “forty to fifty feet in diameter, dug to a depth of three or four feet” (NPS 1987). They kept seed and nut crops like black oak acorns for winter use in *chukab*, storehouses, built of four or more cedar poles supporting a basket-like structure; and grinding houses built of bark slabs.

Information about the number of villages in Yosemite Valley is unreliable as it is limited to observations by Euro-Americans, starting with Stephen Powers in 1877, who noted nine villages along the Merced River. The count reached a high of thirty-seven according to Dr. C. Hart Merriam.<sup>3</sup> At least six of these were inhabited in 1898. The most important village in Yosemite Valley was just below Yosemite Falls and was known as Koomine.

During occupation by Euro-Americans, most of the Indian population lived in a village at the mouth of Indian Canyon, near the present Yosemite Medical Clinic. This village, *Yomatchke*, or the “Old Village,” was where the Mono Lake Paiute often camped and was occupied by the Yosemite Miwok and Paiute until the mid-1930s. When a part of the village was needed for construction of the Yosemite Medical Clinic, and because the National Park Service considered the village an eyesore, residents were relocated to the “New Village,” called *Wabboga*. Over time, cabins were torn down or moved as they became unoccupied and the village was later removed.

Within Yosemite Valley are hundreds of sites used by American Indians. Their villages and camps are also found throughout the park. Within the Valley, much has been damaged or destroyed by construction and landscaping. Evidence of American Indian culture is retained in bedrock mortars, hammer stones, manos and pestles, midden deposits, lithic scatters, rock shelters, and an extensive oral history. The Indians of Yosemite still have a strong presence in the park and surrounding communities, as well as vital cultural ties to the Yosemite landscape, traditional resources, and archeological sites.



Acorn granaries, Chukahs below Sentinel Rock (1901)  
YRL-HW

## EXPLORATION + PIONEER SETTLEMENT

The first sighting of Yosemite Valley by Euro-Americans was probably by members of the Joseph Walker Party in 1833. After the discovery of gold in the Sierra Nevada foothills in 1849, thousands of miners came to the Sierra to seek their fortune. Their penetration into the Miwok's territory resulted in conflict with the Sierra Indian tribes, including the Ahwahneechee, who fought to protect their homelands. Because of such interaction, the Mariposa Battalion was organized as a punitive expedition under the authority of the State of

California to bring an end to the “Mariposa Indian War.” The Battalion entered Yosemite Valley while searching for Indians on March 27, 1851. The Ahwahneechee, led by Chief Tenaya, fled from the Valley in the face of greater firepower. A second expedition in the same year ended in the tribe’s surrender and relocation to the Fresno River reservation. Chief Tenaya made repeated appeals to return to the Valley. In 1852, following an attack by the Ahwahneechee on Euro-American prospectors in the Yosemite Valley and the death of two prospectors, army troops entered the Valley and summarily executed five Indians on the south rim. Tenaya and his people escaped to live with the Paiutes until 1853 when they returned to their Valley home. Chief Tenaya’s death signaled the dispersion of the tribe—some lived with the Mono Lake Paiutes, a few joined other Miwok groups along the Tuolumne River and some may have moved to Tuolumne Meadows or Pate Valley.

Although not developed to the extent to which Yosemite Valley was developed for tourism, the rest of Yosemite National Park also underwent expansion by Euro-Americans in the 1850s. The popular assumption is that development outside the Valley and on its rims was stimulated by development in the Valley. However, there is evidence of early development in other areas that predates the growth of tourism in the Valley. Wilderness studies indicate very early use of park areas by Euro-Americans after the gold rush. Prior to and during the development of the tourist trade in the Valley, cattlemen, sheepherders and miners penetrated into the central and southern Sierra. In 1850, Euro-Americans entered Hetch Hetchy Valley, and soon thereafter, cattlemen and sheepherders explored the forests and meadows of the upland plateaus. In Mariposa, the gold rush brought in great numbers of miners, packers, businessmen, and camp followers. Following the gold rush, some miners settled in the area to become stockmen and hunters and were attracted to the high country south of the Valley. Finding their subsistence lifestyle and knowledge of Sierra routes and topography suited to sheepherding, some Indians became shepherds or took up hunting and guiding. Now the only evidence of the stockmen, hunters, miners and cavalry is blazes on trees, remnants of camps, trails, fences, and rockwork.<sup>4</sup>

In the 1850s, publicists, writers, artists, and photographers spread the fame of “the Incomparable Valley” both in California and on the east coast. This message led to congressional recognition of the value of the Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias (or “Big Trees”) as national treasures. As a result, a steadily increasing stream of visitors came on foot and

horseback. Realizing he could make money from tourism, James Hutchings became one of the first in a long line of Yosemite's entrepreneurs. Other business owners contributed to development in the Valley by constructing hotels and residences, bringing in livestock to graze in meadows and planting orchards.

Much pioneer architecture was vernacular in style and was expressed in utilitarian log cabins used by stockmen, miners, and loggers. Although vee-notched corners prevailed, saddle-notched corners were also used in pioneer architecture. Roofs were generally covered in split shakes. Because of their wide availability and ease of splitting, sugar pine shakes were widely used by pioneers on the western slope of the Sierra.<sup>5</sup> Used on both walls and roofs and split from bolts averaging 32 inches long, these shakes have a distinctive, long appearance. A regional variation of this shake roof occasionally appeared in which the vertical joints were aligned on all courses. Boards, if used, were often whipsawn from local trees although sawmills were built in the Yosemite Valley and surrounding area.

Because the arduous and dusty trip to Yosemite made day-visits impossible, early visitors clamored to the California state legislature for hotels with comforts and service similar to fashionable Atlantic coast seaside resorts. In the 1850s, hotels were among the earliest Euro-American structures in the Valley and were located near the Merced River for the extraordinary



Lamon's log cabin: the first house in the Yosemite Valley (date unknown) YRL-TH

views. Such accommodations were initially no more than large barns with stalls for rooms, having dirt floors and open windows. These eventually gave way to more modern two story framed wood structures constructed of lumber. An exception was J.C. Smith's Cosmopolitan House, which offered "a saloon, billiard hall, bathing rooms, barber shop, mirrors full-length, pyramids of elaborate glassware, costly service, the finest of cues and tables, reading-room handsomely furnished and supplied with the latest from Eastern cities and baths" (Demars 1991). However slowly, hotels did improve and were built within and around Yosemite.

## FROM A STATE PUBLIC TRUST TO A NATIONAL PARK

In 1864, the federal government ceded to the state of California “The Yosemite Grant” which included the Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias as a public trust.<sup>6</sup> Appointed as chairman (and one of eight commissioners) to manage the area, Frederick Law Olmsted set about defining the philosophy of how to manage the grant—an event with consequences for the future Yosemite National Park and other national and state parks. An important element in Olmsted’s report was his shaping, for the first time, the reason for parks to exist—that establishing “by government of great public grounds for the free enjoyment of the people... is thus justified and enforced as a political duty” (Olmsted 1865). The Yosemite Grant set a national precedent by being the first instance of a government preserving an area for scenic values and public enjoyment. Thus, the Yosemite Grant is recognized as the beginning of the national park movement in America, the start of the California state park system and of state parks in America.

Olmsted’s report included suggestions for camping grounds, trails, accommodations, a good road into the Valley and around the perimeter of the Valley floor with footpaths to scenic points, and a system for funding the park by contract and concession. At Mariposa Grove, he recommended a road to and around the grove as a fire barrier. His plan, however, was very expensive and impossible to implement within the constraints of slim government budgets of the day. The commissioners did rely on Olmsted’s report and continued to circulate it in manuscript form at least through the turn of the century. Although unsalaried political appointees, most commissioners took a strong interest in the management of Yosemite Valley. To the extent that there was funding and support, the commissioners planned and managed the resources and facilities of Yosemite Valley and, not infrequently, denied inappropriate permit requests.

During the 1888 summer season, over half of the 3,800 visitors to the Valley stayed at the Stoneman House (1886), a quarter stayed at the only other hotel, and the rest camped. In the decades that followed, the number of camping excursions increased and camping grew in popularity in the Valley. Camping was restricted to parts of lower Yosemite Valley because administrators divided up portions of the Valley among permit holders for grazing. Aaron Harris established the first campground in the area of the Lamon’s winter cabin, now the area of The Ahwahnee. Harris’ campground lasted until 1886 when the area was let to Coffman

and Kenney for their stables, later removed and rebuilt at the current concessioner location. While the commissioners tried to meet demands for campgrounds by clearing land and seeding with perennial grasses, they found that visitors left the campgrounds littered with trash, defaced prominent rocks with inscriptions, cut down or destroyed trees and shrubs, and were careless in the use of fire.

John Muir, a young Scotsman, arrived in San Francisco in 1868 and made his way to Yosemite where he explored, “studied the animals and weather...and formulated theories on glaciation and began molding his gospel of wilderness—the basic tenets of a philosophy of ecology and conservation that perceived wilderness as a necessity for the sustenance of human existence” (NPS 1987). As the years passed, he became well known for his theory about formation of Yosemite Valley by glaciation—as opposed to the popular theory of subsidence—and wrote extensively for national magazines on the origin, beauty and use of America’s wilderness. In 1889, Muir and the editor of “Century Magazine,” Robert Underwood Johnson, visited Yosemite Valley and were appalled to find the Valley “despoiled by commercialism and exploitation.” Both men felt that the commission’s management was inadequate and would ruin the Valley’s landscape.

In the 1860s, the commissioners had instituted a policy of leasing land for 10-year periods to hotel owners, road and trail developers, and others who charged visitors a fee to recover their costs. Muir and his supporters opposed the Yosemite Valley Commission and protested policies of fencing, developing pastures, and cutting trees to improve views. In the commissioners’ view, income from the leases helped offset other costs and removing young invasive trees from meadows was done to protect the meadows from fire and recreate the Valley’s open park-like settings. Most visitors were simply not aware of the day-to-day challenges of fire protection, maintenance, and clean-up activities and providing food, fuel, construction supplies, and forage in a remote location.

Eventually, sheepherders and the effect of their flocks grazing on the meadows provoked efforts by Muir and others to secure a forest reserve surrounding the Yosemite grant. Muir’s articles touched on the possibility of incorporating the high country into a national park and his articles sparked a national debate that continued for years. In 1890, Yosemite National Park was established, in great part due to Muir’s influence, and more than 900,000 acres was set





*John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt at Glacier Point  
(1903) YRL*

aside for preservation of timber, minerals, meadows, and other “natural curiosities.”<sup>7</sup> Not included were the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove, which remained a state grant until the 1906 recession to the federal government.

When the Valley was made a state grant, toll roads were built and, in the early 1870s, companies constructing toll roads from the communities of Coulterville, Mariposa, and Big Oak Flat raced to be the first to reach the Yosemite Valley. The Coulterville & Yosemite Turnpike won, opening in June, 1874. The Chinese Camp & Yosemite Turnpike reached the Valley from Big Oak Flat less than a month later. A year later, a road from Mariposa to Big Tree Station (Wawona) and on to Yosemite Valley was completed. Of the three toll roads, only the road to Wawona was profitable. Stagecoach service replaced horses as soon as passable roads into the Valley were completed. North of Yosemite Valley, the Great Sierra Consolidated Silver Mining Company built a wagon road to its mines on the Sierra Crest in 1882. The Great Sierra Wagon road, also called the Tioga Road, was completed in 1883 and, as no ore or equipment was hauled over the road after its construction, it was abandoned shortly thereafter.

With the completion of the Central Pacific Railroad into the San Joaquin Valley in 1869, Yosemite became more accessible to visitors. As early as 1871, developers wished for rail service to Yosemite both for tourism and to facilitate business enterprise. The Stockton & Copperopolis line transported travelers partway to Yosemite, from Stockton to Milton, where they transferred to stagecoaches for the rest of the trip. Taking advantage of the Southern Pacific Railroad, in 1876 the California Lumber Company founded Madera, “from which a stage road ultimately led via Coarse Gold, Fresno Flats (Oakhurst), and Fish Camp to Wawona” (NPS 1987).

## UNITED STATES ARMY

Following a congressional battle over civilian administration of Yellowstone National Park, the cavalry were sent to manage that park in 1886. Thus, the cavalry became a convenient park manager. They were well organized and equipped for long periods of field work and needed a substitute for maneuvers in a time of few military conflicts. In May of 1891, when the cavalry arrived in Wawona to administer the newly created park, their chief mission was controlling

access and preventing intrusions by miners, loggers, trappers and hunters, cattlemen and shepherders. Responsible for the entire park, except for the Valley and Mariposa Grove (still under state administration), the army was generally motivated by a policy of “patrol and control” (Farabee 2003). Initially, cavalry troops erected basic facilities for seasonal use and patrolled the park only in the summer months from May to October. Temporary summer quarters were established near Wawona, and in 1906, the army moved its headquarters operations to the Valley. There the army built a semi-permanent post on the site of the American Indian village of *Koomine*, near Lower Yosemite Fall. Much of the military’s development within the park consisted of knitting together ancient trails to form patrol routes and developing new circulation patterns, “with most of the main features of today’s system laid down by 1914” (NPS 1987). In addition to a system of patrol cabins, roads, trails, and bridges, the army also constructed campgrounds and administration buildings. Their buildings were designed and erected either from Quartermaster Corps standardized plans or as vernacular buildings using local materials.

In an attempt to manage the use of public campgrounds and prevent damage to the park’s natural resources, in 1897 and 1898, the state erected a number of tents for rent. This marked the beginning of tent camps like Curry Village, started by David A. Curry in 1899, that offered affordable tent accommodations to guests. After the recession in 1906, the army conducted a study of the water, roads, and sanitation needs of the Valley. Because sewage was dumped into the river below the Sentinel Hotel, campgrounds below the hotel were



U.S. Cavalry at Mariposa Grove of Big Trees (1899) YRL

closed in 1908. The campgrounds east of the Sentinel were very slowly developed with garbage pickup, drinking water, and sewer facilities. Eventually twenty numbered campgrounds (e.g., Camp 4, Camp 6, etc.) were located in the Valley; most of these have been replaced by development of other visitor facilities.

Outside the park, the Sierra Railway of California in 1900 ran from Oakdale to Tuolumne. The Yosemite Short Line Railroad was started in 1905 at Quartz Junction, near Jamestown, and “was intended to pass just north of Groveland on its way to Yosemite, tapping rich timber tracts...” (Wurm 2000). The Short Line

ceased to exist when the high cost of construction and operation overcame revenues. Incorporated in 1902, the Yosemite Valley Railroad (YVR) approached the park from Merced through the Merced River canyon and reached El Portal in 1907. The company also built a stage road from El Portal into the Valley and travelers from El Portal transferred to a stage line for the final leg of their trip. Most visitors took this shorter route causing the stage lines to decline. In 1906, California ceded control of the Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove to the federal government. In 1914, civilian park rangers took over from the cavalry.

### **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PLANNING**

Planning for the National Park Service began in late 1914 when Stephen Mather was informally offered the leadership of a yet-to-be formed national park service by Secretary of the Interior, Franklin Lane. After formation of the National Park Service in 1916, Mather took time to meet his superintendents, conduct a national publicity campaign to educate the public about national parks, buy the long abandoned Tioga Road as a gift to the federal government for Yosemite, and develop an organization. Under his leadership, the Rustic style of architecture was utilized by the NPS in the planning and development of park facilities from 1916 into the 1940s. It was “based on a canny combination of pioneer building skills and techniques, principles of the Arts and Crafts movement, and the premise of harmony with the landscape” (USFS 2001). The Rustic style relied on natural materials like native stone, timbers, shakes, and shingles. Buildings were designed to fit the topography of the land. Director Mather’s desire to make Yosemite the showplace of the NPS system and his pet project of relocating the Yosemite Village to a new site on the north side of the Valley precipitated a lengthy study on the design of new park structures. His goals included establishing a strong landscape architecture division to ensure structures would be in harmony with their surroundings.

Primary design features of the mature NPS Rustic architectural style in Yosemite involved heavy, hewn logs, carefully detailed river-washed cobble-and-boulder masonry work, heavy shake roofs, and natural colors. Picking up on the earlier pioneer theme, designers consistently used sugar pine shakes on roofs and side walls of administration buildings, utility buildings, and residences in the Valley and throughout the park. They used a palette of shakes, lap siding, and stone to create banding patterns on side walls. Sugar pine shakes were



*Park Service Superintendent W. B. Lewis, Curry Company Director A. B. C. Dohrman, a Park Service architect, Curry Company president Don Tresidder and Gilbert Stanley Underwood hold large rendering of the hotel. (1925) YRL*

used to create alternate bands of long and short lengths; alternating courses of sugar pine shakes and cedar shingles were also used on many residential structures in the Village (NPS 2004b). Other building features were often oversized to produce harmony with elements of Yosemite’s enormous cliffs and peaks. With dark

brown stained walls, foundation plantings, and vegetation screening, these buildings were unobtrusive and blended well with their surroundings. The “log cabin in the wilderness” look evolved into a mature style and was emulated nationwide in other parks.

Within Yosemite Village is “one of the largest and most significant collections of NPS Rustic style buildings in the national park system” (NPS 2004c). Buildings that exemplify the NPS Rustic style are the Administration Building (1924), the Museum (1926), post office (1924), NPS residential buildings, and a variety of utilitarian and small offices. The Rangers’ Club (1920) was a gift from Stephen Mather to the National Park Service and is an example of the Stick style, a variant within the NPS Rustic style.<sup>8</sup> Mather’s association with the building is significant in its own right and gains additional importance because the building represents his commitment to a national architectural style for park buildings.

Although protection of natural resources was a concern, development for visitor use was also an issue of tremendous importance. Mather recognized that attracting visitors to the parks meant building and developing facilities to accommodate everyone. He immediately understood that the National Park Service had to educate people about parks and that doing so would encourage them to fall in love with parks. His philosophy of providing visitors with the ability to view nature without hardships contributed to Yosemite Valley becoming the focus for most visitors. A promoter of Yosemite’s premier lodge in the Valley, The Ahwahnee and bungalows, Mather also supported continued development of Camp Curry (established in 1899) to offer tents and austere accommodations.

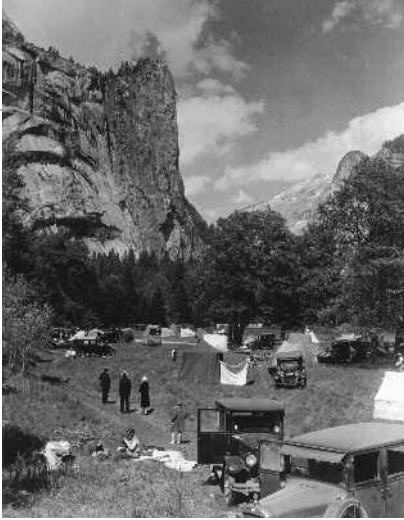
Until 1907, when the Yosemite Valley Railroad was completed, tourist operations were seasonal with few winter occupants.<sup>9</sup> Following World War I, the National Park Service encouraged the concessioner to develop and offer winter sports to sustain winter operations. Camp Curry offered an excellent location for such development. The winter shadow on that side of the Valley made it the best place for long-lasting ice skating, tobogganing, and ski-joring (being pulled on skis by horses). (Within the “winter shadow” there is daylight but no direct sunlight, providing a consistent and long-lasting cool climate.)

In 1916, the Desmond Park Service Company, later the Yosemite National Park Company, was granted a 20-year concession to operate camps, stores, and other services in the park. The company also began construction of mountain chalets, forerunners of the present High Sierra Camps. Until this time, visitors to the backcountry either carried their own gear or relied on pack trains. In 1924, in an attempt to lure visitors into the backcountry, the National Park Service began promoting the opening of the High Sierra Camps. Located within a day's walk from each other, the camps offered food and cheap lodging along a grand High Sierra loop that included Little Yosemite Valley (no longer used), Merced Lake, Boothe Lake, Tuolumne Meadows, Glen Aulin, and Tenaya Lake. Six camp locations survive today at Tuolumne Meadows, May Lake (replaced Tenaya Lake), Glen Aulin, Sunrise (established in 1961), Vogelsang (replaced Boothe Lake and now in a third location) and Merced Lake. White Wolf was not a High Sierra Camp although it was occasionally managed by the concessioner.

At the Mariposa Grove, the Big Trees Lodge was established in 1920. Other hotel facilities constructed in the park include the White Wolf Lodge on the Tioga Road, built in 1926 and operated privately by the John Meyer family until it was purchased for the park. The Wawona Hotel was acquired by the National Park Service and the furnishings and equipment by the concessioner in 1932. The Glacier Point Hotel overlooked the Valley and was later demolished by fire. At Hetch Hetchy, construction of the dam attracted visitors who stayed at the Hetch Hetchy Lodge. Operated at Mather for two years by the concessioner, the City of San Francisco bought the lodge and opened it as Camp Mather, part of a summer resort.

In 1932, the concessioner and the Sierra Club pushed the National Park Service to develop a winter hut and ski trails system, leading to development of Badger Pass and the Chinquapin area for skiers. Even the Ostrander Ski Hut, designed by Eldridge Spencer as a touring shelter and built in seven weeks by the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1940, became an integral part of winter recreation at Yosemite.

While the state of California had extended earlier trails on and around the Yosemite Valley rim and established overlooks, trails in the backcountry were built by the army for patrolling and by the National Park Service for visitor enjoyment. Gradually connected, at first to form a well-defined network of trails and later as part of a plan to make the park more attractive to visitors, trails were built during a time when their construction was considered an art. Using hand labor with few explosives or heavy equipment, these early trails were designed and planned to blend with the environment and to follow the topography. As auto



Auto camping on Stoneman Meadow (1927) YRL

traffic brought more visitors to the park in the 1920s, crews started to rely on machine tools to build both roads and trails. The resulting engineered trails resembled roads, cut into the landscape instead of following contours, making them susceptible to flood damage in later years (NPS 1995c).

Although the first automobiles entered Yosemite in 1900, autos were banned from the park in 1907 in response to increased road use and readmitted in 1913. By the 1920s, auto tourism created a demand for better and more direct roads into the Valley. In 1926, the state completed the All-Year Highway to El Portal and improved the Arch Rock entrance along the El Portal Road. In the 1930s, the federal government reconstructed the major park roads for automobile traffic. The Wawona Road was rebuilt and much of the Big Oak Flat Road was relocated and rebuilt for safety, heavier traffic, and higher speeds. Four tunnels were built to avoid scarring the Valley walls and overlooks were constructed for visitors to take in the scenery. Also in the early 1930s, the Tioga Road was partially realigned and a connector built between White Wolf and Crane Flat.

The army, to some extent, and the National Park Service in particular took care to build tunnels, bridges, and stone retaining walls to blend with the land. Significant for engineering and aesthetic reasons, the roads in Yosemite harmonize with their natural surroundings in the use of natural materials for road-related structures built in the Rustic style.

### CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's answer to the Great Depression was the initiation of New Deal programs in 1933. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), one of the relief programs to grow out of the New Deal, was responsible for much development in Yosemite National Park between 1933 and 1941. During the years the CCC program was in place, the park enjoyed a boom period of development and construction. The six CCC camps established in Yosemite were among the first organized in the west. Their projects included road cleanup, signs, borders, bridges, stream channel cleanup, erection of telephone lines, insect and erosion control, fire protection, and some trail building. All CCC work in natural areas of the National

Park System “was planned and overseen by landscape architects, park engineers, and foresters” (NPS 1983). Their activity was widespread and included all the park’s developed areas with particular attention given to the Valley where their work was characterized by careful craftsmanship and the utilization of natural materials in the Rustic style. CCC projects emphasized harmonious design using natural, local materials like wood and stone. Soon, structures of log and stone masonry outnumbered earlier ones, executed in the vernacular style. The labor-intensive CCC work focused on a beautification program in the Yosemite Village including removing deteriorated buildings, installing log curbing, extensive planting of native ferns, trees and shrubs around buildings and campgrounds, and maintaining trees. While the CCC was very active in flood recovery after the 1937 flood, one of their main jobs was cleaning up after logging by the Yosemite Lumber Company in the southwest part of the park, and the Yosemite Sugar Pine Lumber Company in the northwest. Forestry work led easily to insect work and eliminating species like the gooseberry to prevent blister rust in Yosemite forests.

Another New Deal program, the Public Works Administration (PWA), completed capital improvements, such as bridges, culverts, roads, and buildings, using skilled labor and National Park Service design standards. PWA projects were unique because all projects in national parks had a strong relationship to the landscape design of the park and were based on master plans initiated by Director Mather. In Yosemite, PWA projects were done in three



Cascades CCC Camp. Buildings are no longer extant (ca. 1930) YRL

main areas: park headquarters in Yosemite Valley, Glacier Point (overlooking the Valley) and Wawona, and Tuolumne Meadows. Enlarging and raising the O’Shaughnessy Dam at Hetch Hetchy by 85 ½ feet was another PWA project albeit administered by the City of San Francisco. PWA designers also devoted a great deal of attention to housing at Yosemite, building a number of residences, apartment houses and duplexes. Development extended to a campground at Tuolumne Meadows, cabins for the Indian Village, Chinquapin, and construction of fire lookouts at Henness Ridge and Crane Flat.

## MISSION 66

Little development occurred from the 1940s until 1956. From its origins in the early 20th century until the development of the Mission 66 initiative, the National Park Service had relied on residential-scale administration buildings or existing structures in nearby towns to provide information to visitors. Mather's goals included establishing a strong landscape architecture division to ensure structures would be in harmony with their surroundings. While some ranger stations were located at entrances, others were located in the backcountry and were inaccessible to visitors arriving by automobile. Employee housing was substandard in quality with inadequate living conditions. Most public facilities and services, including hotels, restaurants, and guided tours, were provided by concessioners. The sharp rise in park visitation by visitors freed from the constraints of World War II, quickly placed natural and cultural resources at risk from overuse and mistreatment. In 1945, 11.7 million people visited the parks, and by 1956, this number jumped fivefold to 61.6 million visitors (Wirth 1980).

In 1956, Congress authorized a 10-year program of planning and construction known as Mission 66. The broad-reaching program of park improvement was anticipated to be accomplished within 10 years and coincide with the golden anniversary of the National Park Service, giving rise to the program's name. The initiative, orchestrated by NPS Director Conrad Wirth, focused on a program of park development, infrastructure improvement and resource protection that would "overcome the inroads of neglect and ...restore to the American people a national park system adequate for their needs" (Wirth 1980).



Valley Visitor Center at Yosemite Village (2004) RF

The design philosophy of Mission 66 was a radical departure from the Rustic style heritage of the National Park Service; the new style was based on modern, progressive, architectural design and functionalism, employing the latest materials and technology. Mission 66 visitor centers used contemporary architectural forms and materials to fulfill the variety of functions, including providing spaces for interpretive talks, park administrative offices, and visitor services. Prominently sited at a major entry or other strategic points, the buildings became an instantly recognizable feature of



the parks. Like visitor centers, ranger stations were also sited for easy automobile access and were the initial point of visitor contact and orientation in developed areas. They were designed to provide visitors with information, services, and orientation. They also provided an official presence in isolated areas of development and often served as the first official point of contact within the park boundaries. By 1955, employee housing was well on the way to becoming an acute problem as a projected doubling of the park's workforce was anticipated and, in large western parks, the problem was compounded because available private-sector housing could be an hour or more away. Standardized designs were developed for new housing and, in the Pacific West Region, gave expression in most instances to low rectangular horizontal forms similar to low-cost housing found in suburban communities. Housing units had either a shallow gable or flat roof with deep overhangs to accentuate the building's horizontal character. Carports or garages were common elements; their form was dictated by the climate of the region where they were built.

In the Pacific West Region, the variety of property types represented in the Mission 66 program include visitor centers, residential units, ranger stations, campgrounds, picnic shelters, maintenance areas, comfort stations, circulation systems such as road networks, airstrips, and boat launches. The Mission 66 program at Yosemite created a new focal center in the Valley including the Valley Visitor Center and other visitor facilities and services. The program enlarged roads, parking areas, and campgrounds, and constructed many new motel units. At Yosemite, visitation to the park exceeded one million in 1954 and doubled by 1976. The post-war tourism boom continued unabated and impacts in the Yosemite Valley soon became apparent. In the early 1970s, the National Park Service established one-way road traffic patterns, eliminated cars in the far east end of the Valley, offered free shuttle bus transportation in the Valley, converted the parking lot in front of the Valley Visitor Center to a pedestrian mall, and generally encouraged visitors to enjoy the park by walking or using public transportation.

The last 21-mile stretch of the Tioga Road between White Wolf and Tuolumne Meadows was built in the late 1950s under Mission 66. It became the focus of opposition by the Sierra Club and other activists who disagreed with the design and construction of a road that required blasting and scarring the glacially polished granite surfaces at Tenaya Lake and Polly Dome. The final road was “carefully designed to display to the fullest the dramatic assets of the Sierra Nevada. [It was] ...well supplied with overlooks and interpretive signs” (NPS 1987).



High water, 1997 Merced  
River flood, YRL-ST

## CURRENT CHALLENGES

Started in 1975 and completed in 1980, Yosemite's *General Management Plan* articulated the need for parkwide visitor services, resources management, interpretation services, concessions management, and park operations. The *General Management Plan* established a plan that would eventually remove automobiles and additional development from Yosemite Valley. Implementation of the *General Management Plan* is ongoing, with the *Yosemite Valley Plan* providing actions to manage the park's natural and cultural resources, facilities, and visitor experiences. The *Yosemite Valley Plan* also responds to damage from the 1997 flood that destroyed much infrastructure and resulted in Congress appropriating \$200 million for flood recovery actions. The present offers opportunities and challenges, first, to bring about the changes outlined in the *General Management Plan* with the awareness that today's work will be critically judged by future generations. Designers can recognize the park's architectural heritage in a manner that acknowledges and honors the work of those who came before—while learning from the past and improving park facilities.

<sup>3</sup> Only six of the villages Merriam counted were inhabited in 1898. Two other villages were located near what is now the NPS maintenance yard and near Sentinel Rock.

<sup>4</sup> This information was taken from a series of Wilderness Historic Resources Surveys completed from 1988 through 1995 by Jim Snyder, Park Historian, Yosemite National Park. Surveys on file at Yosemite National Park Research Library.

<sup>5</sup> This area extended from present-day Sequoia to Lassen Volcanic national parks. Information about shakes and sugar pine by Craig Struble, Chief, Heritage Preservation Team, Yosemite National Park, personal communication, May 13, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> Early written accounts indicate that the Mariposa Grove, six miles southeast of Wawona, was discovered by Euro-Americans in 1849. Once served by a wagon road, the grove became a popular stopping place for visitors on the way into the Yosemite Valley to view 3,500 year-old trees.

<sup>7</sup> This area was reduced in later years when portions of the park were turned over to logging and mining interests.

<sup>8</sup> Subsets of the NPS Rustic style include (in addition to the Stick style) the Swiss Rustic and the Ethno-Historic style. Swiss Rustic was the earliest of these and was a response to the elaborate Victorian style with influences from the craftsman style. The Ethno-Historic style is found in the southwest and displays elements from southwest American Indian construction.

<sup>9</sup> The Yosemite Valley Railroad ceased operation in 1945 after lumber and mining operations along the route were closed down and their mail service contract was cancelled.



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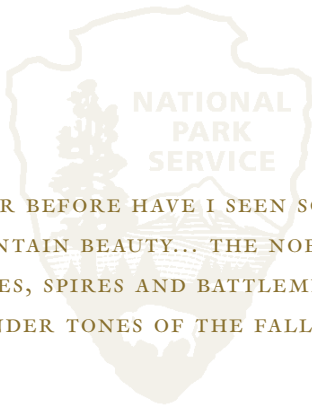
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## UNIFYING ELEMENTS + GUIDELINES FOR YOSEMITE VALLEY

THE PURPOSE of the Unifying Elements and Guidelines is to identify and describe design elements that exist throughout Yosemite Valley, and to recommend design guidelines based upon them. The Unifying Elements presented in this chapter describe elements found in Yosemite Valley—both natural and human-made—that thread through all the Valley areas and contribute to a unified sense of place. The guidelines that follow are recommendations for the design of new development that respects and builds upon the existing Unifying Elements.



NEVER BEFORE HAVE I SEEN SO GLORIOUS A LANDSCAPE, SO BOUNDLESS AN AFFLUENCE OF SUBLIME MOUNTAIN BEAUTY... THE NOBLE WALLS SCULPTURED INTO ENDLESS VARIETY OF DOMES AND GABLES, SPIRES AND BATTLEMENTS AND PLAIN MURAL PRECIPICES—ALL A-TREMBLE WITH THE THUNDER TONES OF THE FALLING WATER. **JOHN MUIR**

This chapter is divided into three sections: Setting, Landscape Uses and Structures, and Developed Areas. Setting contains discussions of natural systems and features, views, and vegetation. Landscape Uses and Structures includes land use and spatial organization, circulation, and individual elements in the human-made landscape, including smaller structures. Developed Areas covers siting and building orientation, architectural character and building appearance. In each section, specific topics are addressed, Unifying Elements are identified and described, and guidelines are recommended.

Following this chapter, there are chapters on each developed area in Yosemite Valley. The site-specific guidelines in those chapters flow from and are supported by the Unifying Elements. The Unifiers apply to Yosemite Valley as a whole, and also to each of the developed areas.

## DEVELOPMENT OF A DESIGN ETHIC

From the earliest years of the national parks, design efforts were based on philosophical premises about the nature of the national parks themselves. Parks were sacred landscapes, separate from the surrounding world, and visitors to the parks expected to experience a different environment. A second important premise was that each park had to have a distinct image that unified its various developments. Across any particular park, all the developments had to share enough elements to give them a recognizable unity (NPS 1989). Architectural and landscape design were to contribute to realizing these premises.

Those who were charged with overseeing both protection and visitor use of this valued Valley recognized early on that any influences by humankind required a different and measured approach. The first Yosemite Commission proposed farsighted guidelines for management of Yosemite and the Mariposa Grove in a Preliminary Report, dated 1865. Its chairman, Frederick Law Olmsted, regarded to be the father of American Landscape Architecture, wrote “The first point to be kept in mind then is the preservation and maintenance as exactly as is possible of the natural scenery; the restriction, that is to say, within the narrowest limits consistent with the necessary accommodation of visitors, of all artificial constructions and the prevention of all constructions markedly inharmonious with the scenery or which would unnecessarily obscure, distort or detract from the dignity of the scenery” (Olmsted 1865).

In a similar spirit during the early years of the agency, Stephen T. Mather, the first director of the National Park Service, wrote in a Statement of Policy in 1918, “This is a most important item in our programs of development and requires the employment of trained engineers who either possess a knowledge of landscape architecture or have a proper appreciation of the aesthetic value of park lands. All improvements will be carried

out in accordance with a preconceived plan developed in special reference to the preservation of the landscape.”

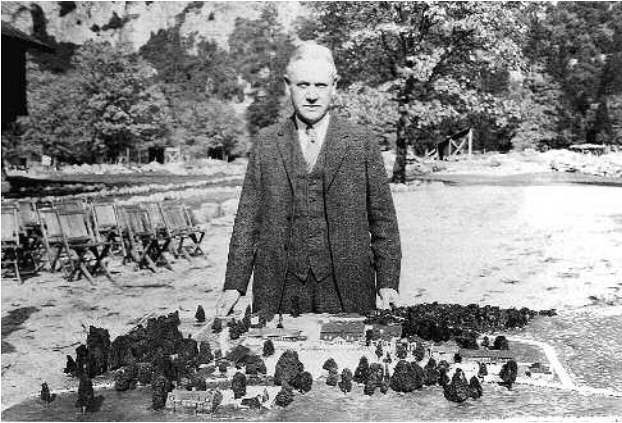
Mather was committed to developmental planning and believed in the importance of preserving the parks’ natural scenery as much as possible while opening them to visitor use. One of his first steps was to establish a landscape architecture division to ensure that park structures would be in harmony with their surroundings. By the mid-1920s, Mather had instituted a program whereby park superintendents integrated and controlled new developments by planning them over a five-year period.

Mather envisioned in Yosemite, his favorite park, a cohesive park building program for rustic structures including a grand lodge. He was concerned with the visual effects of the built environment on natural scenery. According to his vision for the Valley, buildings were not designed to be dominant elements in the landscape, but instead to blend with the natural environment.

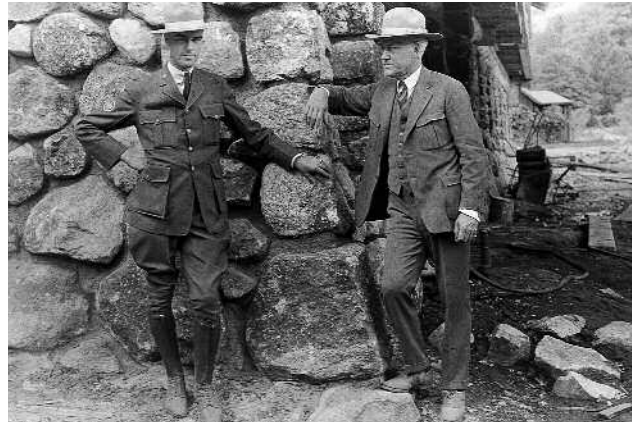
The first director agreed with preservationists that the Valley appeared overdeveloped and was filled with a hodgepodge of unsightly, unrelated structures. He ordered the relocation of administrative functions to a new Yosemite Village north of the Merced River away from the floodplain. There was strong desire by park planners to rebuild Yosemite’s facilities in an organized



Doctor's residence, Yosemite Village (2004) RF



*Stephen Mather, first director of the National Park Service, with a model of Yosemite Village (ca. 1925) YRL*



*Washington Lewis, first director of Yosemite National Park, and Stephen Mather, Director of the National Park Service, in New Yosemite Village (1924) YRL*

and aesthetic manner. Mather specified the use of rustic structures appropriate to the natural environment. These plans set the basic premises for park village planning throughout the National Park System. They included a unified vernacular architectural theme; strong visual relationships between public spaces and nearby natural features; zoning of residential, public, and commercial areas, and hierarchy of different street types (NPS 2004d).

The National Park Service was instrumental in creating an architectural vernacular of rustic design, often referred to as the “Rustic style” that flourished between 1916 and 1942. The style was an expression of the philosophy that buildings should be in harmony with the landscape and in harmony with each other. Virtually everyone involved in early national park management agreed that proposed architectural development should “blend” and “harmonize” with its surroundings.

Buildings that are associated with the Rustic style may display individuality but include several similar characteristics. They often included adherence to a comprehensive plan, deference to the natural environment and careful siting to develop strong visual ties with the surrounding setting, especially orienting to views. The physical characteristics of such architecture included natural materials and expression of texture such as natural wood siding, wood-shingled roofs, heavily rusticated or boulder masonry, and peeled log walls, columns, and trusses. In addition, rustic buildings often display hand craftsmanship, are small sized, and incorporate historical details. Within Yosemite Village, oversized stones and logs were used in construction to fit the mass of the buildings into the setting, horizontal lines were used to lower the profile of the structures, and vegetation was

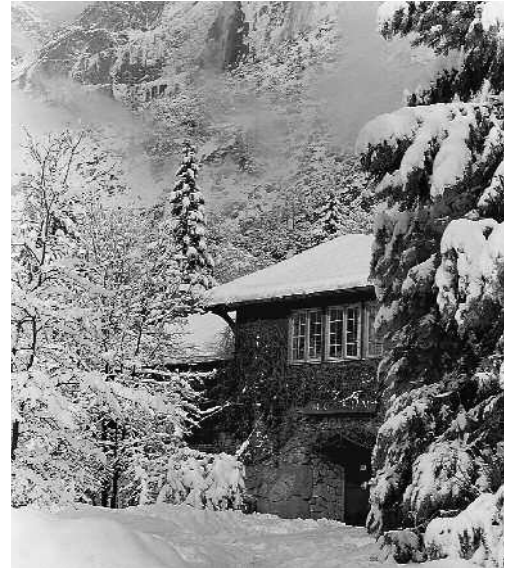
often massed along the foundations of structures to blend with the surrounding landscape.

The Rustic style grew out of and reinterpreted elements of several architectural movements including the American Arts and Crafts movement, the Shingle style, the Adirondack style, the Prairie style, and regional styles of design. Particularly in Yosemite Valley, influences included the Bay Area style and West Coast bungalows, including work by the architect brothers, Greene and Greene.

The distinctive style of architecture which emerged in the Bay Area around San Francisco in the first two decades of the 20th century had a lasting influence on the design of park buildings. One of the leaders of this style was Bernard Maybeck who was involved with the design of two National Historic Landmark structures in Yosemite: the LeConte and Parsons Memorial Lodges. This style used local materials and followed principles of siting, hand craftsmanship, harmonizing nature and structure, and presenting scenic views (McClelland 1998). Many of these same features are reflected in rustic architecture built in national park areas. By the 1920s, when National Park Service landscape engineers were working out a program of landscape design for national parks, there existed a well established philosophy for park design drawn from the practices and precedents in landscape architecture and architecture in the region. During the 1930s, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) crews within Yosemite followed those practices in new facility construction. The association and imagery of rustic appearing structures with forested mountain settings and, in particular with national park areas such as Yosemite, has become part of American culture.



*El Capitan with snow (1995) RF*



*Museum in snow, Yosemite Village (1952) YRL-RA*

The buildings in Yosemite Valley today represent almost every phase of American park architecture. Above all, buildings depicting the National Park Service Rustic style are well represented, and the Valley contains one of the largest and most significant collections of this style in the national park system. A range of expression in rustic design and building materials is represented by both concessioner and National Park Service operated buildings (NPS 2004d).

## UNIFYING THEMES

Several recurring general themes and elements in site planning and building design help to unify development within Yosemite Valley:

- Developments planned in a holistic and integrated fashion;
- The patchwork pattern of open meadow and woodlands along the Merced River corridor that define the overall park-like character of the landscape and provide a sequence of spaces and views to primary natural features;
- The general density of development in the eastern portion of the Valley, and the overall footprint of historic development in concentrated nodes throughout the Valley;
- The influence of natural systems on the type and degree of physical development and land use on the Valley floor (the cliff walls and river corridor in particular). The cultural landscape appears to have been organized in response to both the Valley's environmental constraints and opportunities. Most developed sites today occur in areas that are less environmentally sensitive, that are safest from flooding, and that provide convenient physical and visual access to major scenic natural features;
- Views are a major influence in the siting and orientation of structures, both to take advantage of scenic views and also not to intrude on views from other vantage points;
- Buildings in general have been sited to accommodate existing vegetation. They also have been sited on level topography to avoid grading of the land to the greatest extent possible;
- Buildings do not dominate the natural setting;
- The use of a Rustic style of architecture throughout the Valley and park is an intentional response to the natural surroundings.



## SETTING

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### NATURAL SYSTEMS + FEATURES

#### Climate

The distinct and abrupt topography of Yosemite Valley contributes to a unique local climate. Despite its elevation of 4,000 feet, the climate of the Valley is relatively mild. The months of April through October feature warm daytime temperatures and cool nights. In summer the average temperature is 96 degrees, with some days exceeding 100 degrees. Winter temperatures dip to the 30s at night and can be as high as 60 degrees on a sunny day. Precipitation averages 35 to 40 inches annually, with the greatest amount falling between December and March. Snowfall in the Valley averages 29 inches but rarely accumulates to a depth of over two feet. The nature of the weather systems in the Valley is such that most of the snow melts between winter storms and does not remain on the ground for long periods of time. Because of low winter sun and shadow cast by the cliffs on the south edge of the Valley, snow can linger until late spring. There is negligible precipitation during the summer months, and many of the Valley's waterfalls virtually dry up.

Visitors to the Valley can observe seasonal changes. Deciduous California black and valley oaks and riparian vegetation signal the seasonal transitions with flowers in spring, summer greenery, fall color, and leaf drop in winter. Such clear transitions are less apparent throughout much of California.

Within the Valley there are distinct micro-climates. Curry Village, located on the south side of the Valley, spends much of the year in the shadow of the cliffs. Although the winters at Curry Village are cold and damp, it is refreshingly cool there in the summer. Most of the developed areas are located on the more sunny, north side of the Valley. These include Yosemite Lodge, Yosemite Village, and The Ahwahnee. The warmth is welcome during the winter months, though it can be very hot at these locations in the summer.

More ephemeral qualities such as valley fog, winter sinks of freezing temperatures, especially along the south edge of the Valley, and the relative coolness in the shade of California black oak clusters, which favor the north edge of the Valley, are also distinct climate-derived qualities that contribute to this cultural landscape.

#### GUIDELINES

- New development—including building siting, orientation, and design—should respond to the micro-climatic differences found within the Valley. For example, buildings on the cool south side of the Valley should be oriented to maximize winter light. Buildings on the north side require shade in the summer.
- Architectural forms should clearly reflect climatic factors and consequences. For example, as more visitors come to the Valley in the wintertime, snow and ice should be recognized as important design considerations for buildings, structures, and landscape improvements.
- Initiation, continuation, or expansion of landscape design and maintenance programs should reflect the micro-climatic characteristics of the Valley.
- Announce seasonal change through the use of native deciduous and flowering plants in landscape design.
- Refer to the Vegetation in Unifying Elements for more guidelines on vegetation.

#### Natural Light + Sound

The combination of light-colored granite, an east-west orientation, and the proportion of the relatively narrow valley to towering peaks, creates unique phenomena in Yosemite Valley. Sunset reflecting off the granite can produce a colorful alpenglow on Clouds Rest and Half Dome, which has attracted artists, photographers, and visitors alike since the late 19th century.

There are opportunities in the Valley for visitors to hear the natural sounds of the meadow, woodland, and river—all increasingly rare for visitors. These relatively quiet environments contrast to such places as the foot of Lower Yosemite or Bridalveil Fall in early spring,

BUT NO TEMPLE MADE WITH HANDS CAN COMPARE WITH YOSEMITE. EVERY ROCK IN ITS WALLS SEEMS TO GLOW WITH LIFE. SOME LEAN BACK IN MAJESTIC REPOSE; OTHERS, ABSOLUTELY SHEER OR NEARLY SO FOR THOUSANDS OF FEET, ADVANCE BEYOND THEIR COMPANIONS IN THOUGHTFUL ATTITUDES, GIVE WELCOME TO STORMS AND CALMS ALIKE, SEEMINGLY UNAWARE, YET HEEDLESS, OF EVERYTHING GOING ON ABOUT THEM. JOHN MUIR • THE YOSEMITE • 1912

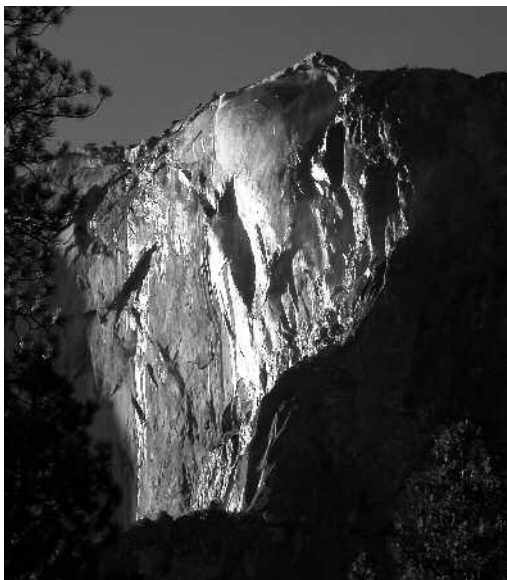
with their roaring waters. These phenomena are an important part of the modern-day visitor experience, well worth documenting and protecting.

#### GUIDELINES

- Special attention should be paid to the protection of areas of Yosemite Valley that are currently free from artificial light and human-generated sound.
- Refer to Siting and Building Orientation in the Unifying Elements for more guidelines on sound.

### The Valley Walls

Rising dramatically from the Valley floor are sheer walls of granite. Formed in a distinctive U-shape by three major glacial periods, these cliffs are visible from almost every point in the Valley. Perhaps the most dramatic spatial characteristic of this landscape as a whole is the narrowness of Yosemite Valley in relation to the height of the walls enclosing it. The approximately 1:3 to 2:3 vertical-horizontal ratio creates a highly unusual landscape that has historically influenced the location of development of the Valley.



Horsetail Falls (2003) GH

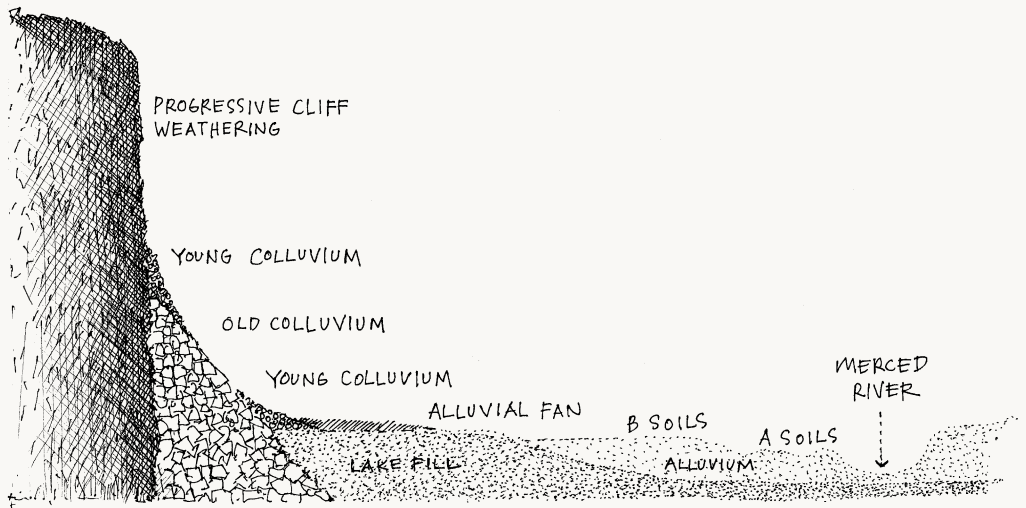
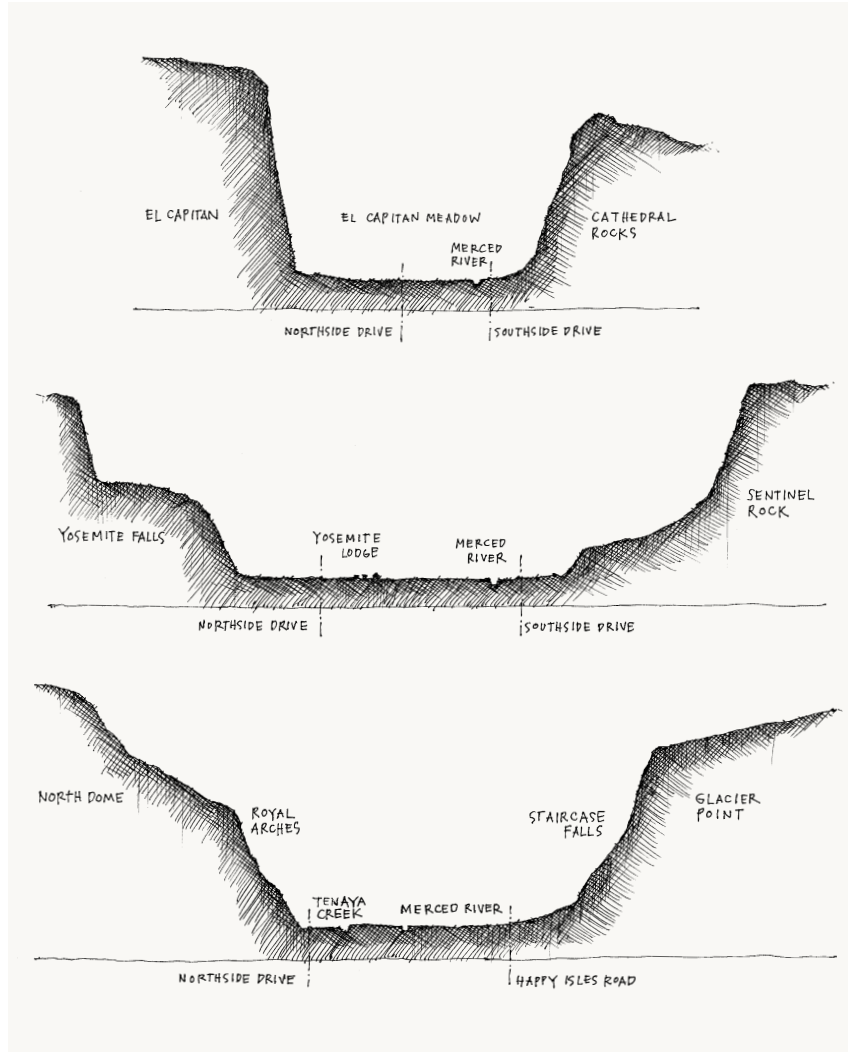
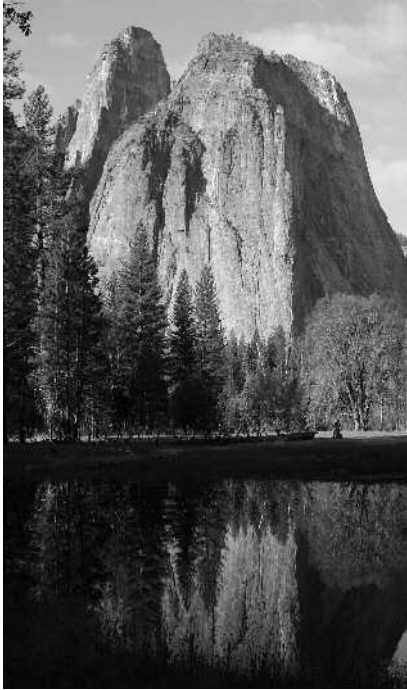
The often overwhelming visual impact of the flat Valley floor contrasted to the sheer cliffs (especially east-west views in the narrow section of the Valley) has drawn painters and photographers to capture these effects for over a century. This powerful combination imposes a dominant presence from almost any point in the Valley.

The Valley walls provide a powerful context and backdrop for buildings placed on the Valley floor. Many historic buildings, such as The Ahwahnee, were designed and sited with the cliffs as a backdrop. Curry Village, by virtue of its small buildings, does not compete with its awesome setting but celebrates the difference in scale.

Due to the geological forces which have shaped the Valley, the surrounding cliffs present the constant and unpredictable danger of rockfall. Periodic rockfall in Yosemite Valley is caused by freeze-thaw periods and earthquakes among other factors. Rockfall has created steep talus slopes on layers of colluvium in many locations along each side of the Valley (NPS 1978).

#### GUIDELINES

- New buildings in proximity to or within direct view line to cliffs in Yosemite Valley should incorporate these views as a part of the visual context of the building.
- New building in close proximity to the cliffs should address the issues of building scale and massing in the context of the steep and dramatic cliffs.
- Public gathering spaces, where possible and appropriate, should be oriented to views of the Valley walls as well as the landmark peaks and monolithic forms, such as Half Dome, Sentinel Rock, Royal Arches.
- Although there is historic precedent for development within the rockfall zone, new housing or lodging in proximity to the rockfall zone must be built in accordance with the *Yosemite Valley Plan* and as directed by National Park Service staff.



UPPER LEFT *El Capitan (2004) GH* MIDDLE LEFT *Cathedral Rocks with Merced River (2004) GH* ABOVE *Cross sections of Yosemite Valley at various points*

## Waterfalls

Yosemite Valley contains a number of magnificent waterfalls which have through time been a major attraction. Each spring the falls and rapids draw throngs of visitors to Yosemite, Vernal, Nevada, and Bridalveil falls, as well as to smaller waterfalls throughout the Valley.

In Yosemite Valley, developments and buildings have been sited around views of Yosemite Falls. As early as the late 1800s, vegetation was cleared to preserve these views. The plaza in Yosemite Village is oriented toward a view of Upper Yosemite Fall. The Ahwahnee dining room and the Mountain Room at Yosemite Lodge both feature views of Yosemite Falls. Trails provide views of Upper and Lower Yosemite Falls and its Middle Cascades from many different vantage points.

### GUIDELINES

- Orient buildings, public open spaces, public roadways, pedestrian trails, and gathering places to provide views of waterfalls, when feasible and appropriate.
- Manage plant communities through prescribed burning, pruning, and removal to maintain views to waterfalls, including important views from main roads. Refer to the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, the *Vegetation Management Plan*, and vegetation studies for specific areas of Yosemite Valley for more information.
- Identify, plan, and manage vegetation for winter views of waterfalls when deciduous trees are leafless.
- Refer also to Vegetation and Scenic Views in the Unifying Elements.

## Merced River System

The Merced River, with its network of tributary streams (Yosemite Creek, Indian Canyon Creek, Royal Arch Creek, etc.) and unnamed annual drainages, provides a network that is central to the Valley's scenery and ecological processes.



*Evening Glow at Yosemite Falls, Chiura Obata, woodcut print, 1930*

The Merced is a Wild and Scenic River. A 150-foot buffer zone to either side of the river, the River Protection Overlay, provides protection for natural flood flows, channel formation, riparian vegetation, and wildlife habitat. Ecological restoration of natural conditions within these zones is a high priority. While protection from human impact is the general goal, facilities such as roadways are sometimes allowed within the 150-foot setback zone within the River Protection Overlay as long as they meet the requirements of the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*. (This plan restricts development based on location, site conditions, and plan criteria.)

The Merced River is subject to seasonal floods. There have been at least 5 severe floods in the last 100 years. Some early Euro-American developments and later campgrounds that were sited near the river were damaged or destroyed by flooding. In fact, much of the redevelopment planned for Yosemite Valley is in response to damage caused by the flood of 1997. The *Yosemite Valley Plan* defines the 100-year floodplain where flood damage is most likely to occur, and sets restrictions on most developments within the floodplain.

The natural processes of flooding and the slow migration of the Merced River channel across the Valley floor have resulted in a variety of associated landforms, such as low-lying wetlands and wet meadows. In some areas, bank erosion can temporarily damage or remove



*Merced River with spring runoff (1943) YRL-RA*

ENTERING THE VALLEY, GAZING OVERWHELMED WITH THE MULTITUDE OF GRAND OBJECTS AROUND US, PERHAPS THE FIRST TO FIX OUR ATTENTION WILL BE BRIDAL VEIL, A BEAUTIFUL WATERFALL ON OUR RIGHT. ITS BROW, WHERE IT FIRST LEAPS FREE FROM THE CLIFF, IS ABOUT 900 FEET ABOVE US; AND AS IT SWAYS AND SINGS IN THE WIND, CLAD IN GAUZY, SUN-SIFTED SPRAY, HALF FALLING, HALF FLOATING, IT SEEMS INFINITELY GENTLE AND FINE; BUT THE HYMNS IT SINGS TELL THE SOLEMN FATEFUL POWER HIDDEN BENEATH ITS SOFT CLOTHING. **JOHN MUIR • THE YOSEMITE • 1912**

riparian vegetation. Valuable riparian and wetland vegetation has also been removed by trampling and riprapping in many places along Yosemite, Indian Canyon, and Royal Arch creeks and many other unnamed seasonal drainages. Riparian vegetation is essential in retarding erosion and flooding. It also provides habitat for birds and other wildlife.



Erosion of river bank near Yosemite Lodge (1929) YRL

#### GUIDELINES

- New buildings should be located outside the 100-year floodplain wherever possible, and in accordance with the River Protection Overlay as designated by the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- New developments should be located with consideration of the potential migration of the Merced River and associated streams, based on information from park resources staff and as designated by the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- Creeks, seasonal streams, and drainages feeding the Merced River that are designated as wetlands or have otherwise supported riparian vegetation should be restored or protected in accordance with park resources staff guidelines and as designated by the

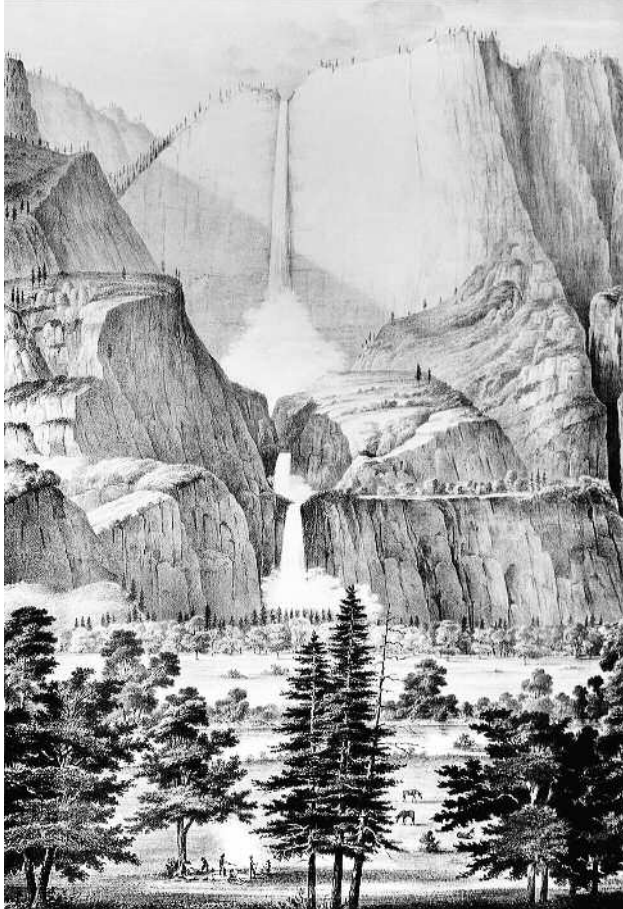
*Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*. New buildings, utilities, structures, boardwalks, and pavements should be sited at a sufficient distance to allow for such protection or restoration.

- New development should not alter the alignment of natural drainages or cause erosion by altering surface flow. Buildings and structures should be sited sufficiently away from existing drainages to allow the drainages to run in their natural alignment.
- Structures, utilities, foundations, boardwalks, paving, and subsurface base near the river and tributaries must be located and designed in such a way that they do not interrupt groundwater migration, recharge, or river channel migration.
- Trails should provide visitors with places to pause and observe the river and creeks, and to gain access to the water. This must be done with sensitivity to riparian vegetation and bank stability. Viewpoints and water access should be situated on the side of the river bank that is *not* eroding, and should be accessible to persons with disabilities.

#### SCENIC VIEWS

The importance of the Valley's outstanding scenery and the many associated viewpoints cannot be over-emphasized. Early attempts to describe the scenery may have helped to shape modern definitions of scenic beauty. The early romantic writings and paintings have evolved today into a sophisticated component of environmental analysis involving systematic documentation of scenic resources found in park planning and management.

Views of pastoral meadows, towering geologic features, and dramatic waterfalls have been recognized as some of the most valuable scenic resources of the Valley as long as humans have lived there. It is largely through the early writings, paintings, and photographs by nationally recognized artists and visitors that the beauty of the landscape came to the attention of the nation. These images played an important role in 19th-century



*The Yosemite Falls, Thomas A. Ayres, 1855. This is the first published image of Yosemite Valley. Courtesy of the California Historical Society*

Washington, D.C., where they helped make the case to Congress that Yosemite Valley was worthy of special protection, and later, national park designation.

In the spring of 1855, James M. Hutchings, having heard rumors of a waterfall a thousand feet high, organized the first tourist party to visit Yosemite, and upon his return, he engaged the pioneer lithographic firm of Britton & Rey to prepare a print of The Yo-Hamite Falls. Derived from a drawing by the artist Thomas A. Ayres, who had accompanied Hutchings into the mountains, it was the first image of the Valley published and helped to popularize the wonders of the Valley (CHS 2000).

From the earliest development of visitor facilities in Yosemite Valley, views have been a major influence in the siting and orientation of structures. For example the Lower Hotel, constructed in 1856, was sited to take

advantage of the view to Yosemite Falls. As one visitor put it, “comforts were at a minimum, but surrounding beauty so great that few lodgers complained.” In 1899, the site selected for Camp Curry was due in part to the views of Half Dome, Glacier Point, and other features. Likewise, the siting of The Ahwahnee in 1926 was greatly influenced by the spectacular views from its site; the main axis of the dining room was purposefully oriented toward the view of Yosemite Falls.

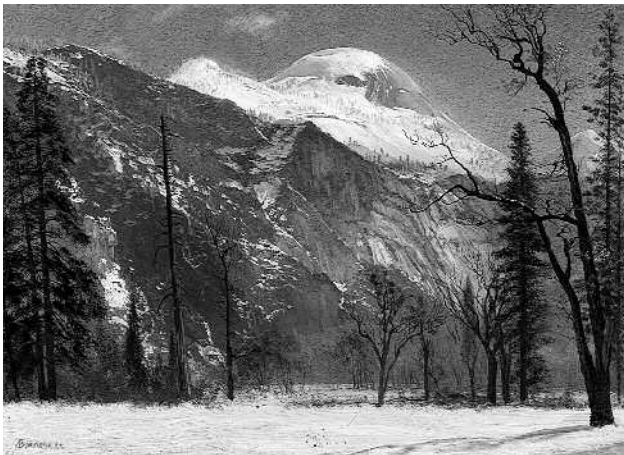
Over the years, as development in the Valley increased, management of vegetation to retain significant views became an issue. In 1880 and again in 1886, the commissioner’s report noted that dense underbrush in the Valley floor had begun to block the Valley’s magnificent views. In 1890, trees were felled around the Stoneman House to permit views to Yosemite Falls. That same year the commissioners announced a policy to clear the Valley of underbrush and restore the long vistas of the Valley’s 1851 park-like setting. This practice continues today.

During the preparation of the *General Management Plan*, the scenic resources of the Valley were analyzed to determine their historic and existing conditions. (Frissel et al. 1979) Lands within the Valley were classified according to three quality levels. The highest quality scenic vistas include Yosemite Falls, Half Dome, El Capitan, Bridalveil Fall, Three Brothers, Cathedral Rocks, Sentinel Rock, Glacier Point, North Dome, Washington Column, and Royal Arches. The *General Management Plan* identified twelve points in the Valley consistently selected by 19th-century photographers such as Carleton Watkins, Eadward Muybridge, George Fiske, and Charles Weed. In the *General Management Plan*, an attempt was made to reconcile the emotional response to these scenic resources and the need to objectively quantify scenery. The information gathered in this analysis was used to make recommendations about where to build, where not to build, and how to mitigate the built environment. According to an analysis of scenic resources, these historic views contribute to the character of the cultural landscape in Yosemite Valley. Although some views have been somewhat obscured by the growth

of vegetation, these views continued to inspire artists such as Ralph Anderson, Ansel Adams, Chiura Obata, and Tom Killion.

#### GUIDELINES

- Align roads and pedestrian walkways for views to prominent scenic features wherever possible. Views should be organizing elements for the site planning process.
- The design of buildings, the siting and arrangement of clusters of buildings, and the layout of public open spaces should be done in a manner that recognizes and maximizes scenic resources.
- Manage vegetation to preserve historically documented views from roads, trails, and vista points.
- Short range views of creeks, significant boulders, or vegetation such as California black oak clusters that have special interpretive value should be described, restored, or maintained, subject to environmental review.
- Plant, trim, or clear trees and shrubs, as appropriate, to frame, emphasize, or open up views as allowed under Valleywide resources management policies. Modify vegetation to take advantage of seasonal views (i.e., views through deciduous trees in the winter).



Winter in Yosemite Valley, Albert Bierstadt, oil on paper, 1872. Garzoli Gallery, San Rafael, CA

#### VEGETATION

Natural vegetation in Yosemite Valley can be grouped into four major communities: mixed conifer, oak woodland, riparian, and meadow. Mixed conifer communities border the Valley in higher and drier zones and cover almost half of the Valley floor. Oak woodlands are composed of California black oaks, covering less than 5% of the Valley floor, and live oaks, which occupy about 20%. California black oaks are typically located on the edge of meadows. Live oak communities are found on upland areas as well as drier parts of the talus slopes. Riparian and meadow communities each occupy about 10% of the Valley floor. Riparian vegetation along the Merced River includes willows, black cottonwood, and white alder. At the edge of the meadow, between meadow and forest, lies the ecotone, a zone of mixed height vegetation including low shrub and small trees. The vegetation in this area is dense and varied, and provides an important habitat for many forms of wildlife.

All vegetation communities in Yosemite Valley have been altered by human intervention. American Indian fire management, Euro-American fire suppression, and the introduction of non-native vegetation for forage and food production have contributed to the changing and often fragile state of vegetation in the Valley. Non-native vegetation was introduced in the 1800s by Euro-Americans planting orchards and farming. Non-native grasses, dominant in meadow areas, were probably introduced inadvertently in connection with livestock. Today the watering of non-native vegetation in residential areas affects many species of native plants. Oak trees are particularly sensitive to changes in ground moisture conditions.

Since World War II, revegetation has occurred in every developed area throughout the Valley, emphasizing the use of native plants. Oak woodland restoration and meadow preservation are recent strategies for enhancing the historic character and setting of Yosemite Valley. Some recent detailed studies, such as root rot surveys, relate to these efforts.

As long as humans have lived in Yosemite Valley, meadows have been managed in one form or another. American Indians burned the meadows to make it easier to flush out game and forage for seeds and acorns. Later, the meadows were used by settlers for agriculture and grazing. By 1888, the commissioners of Yosemite Valley issued a policy for management of the meadows that would restore the landscape to its 1851 appearance. Fire management was discontinued in the 1850s, which encouraged the encroachment of trees in to the meadows. Although they advocated keeping maintenance to a minimum, it was also evident that a relatively high level of landscape maintenance would be required to retain the open character of the meadows and oak woodlands, and to keep long sweeping views across the Valley floor. Through the early 1900s, pasturage was limited in the meadows to ensure that the grasses and flowers had time to seed. It is believed that the blasting of a glacial moraine in 1879 near El Capitan contributed to a drop in ground water level, causing meadows and wetland areas adjacent to the river to become drier. This had the effect of allowing the encroachment of conifers which in turn shaded out the black oaks. The result was a more fragile system easily damaged by trampling and excavation, especially during the dry months.

In the 1930s, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) altered vegetation throughout Yosemite Valley. With the goal of opening up vistas, screening buildings, and improving the appearance of developed areas, CCC crews transplanted, pruned, and removed vegetation. Close to building foundations, they planted a variety of native, non-native, and non-Valley species, including azalea, fern, spice bush, woodwardia, manzanita, chinquapin oak, lily, incense-cedar, aspen, lupine, maple, sugar maple, black locust, giant sequoia, and mountain mahogany. The CCC also maintained trees along road corridors, cutting dead limbs from oak trees and routinely grubbing up seedling trees in meadows.

During the 1970s, the National Park Service took a more passive stance toward vegetation in the Valley, particularly in the meadows. The result has been a



Civilian Conservation Corps at work  
(ca. 1930s) YRL

significant encroachment of plants—mostly conifers—into formerly open spaces. In some cases the plants have grown large enough to block important scenic views.

The meadows have been reduced by almost 50% since the 19th century. However, they remain an important landscape feature.

As part of the pattern of open space in Yosemite Valley, they provide crucial foreground for spectacular vistas of surrounding natural monuments. The open, sunlit carpets of grasses, wildflowers, and other perennials provide a sanctuary for rodents, animals, reptiles, birds, and insects. This is especially true at the edges where the mixed shrub height provides transition from forest trees to meadow grasses.

It is important to recognize that the plant communities and meadows of the Valley are constantly changing. The *Vegetation Management Plan* recognizes that vegetation is “dynamic in form and function,” and that the complexity of “plant communities, cultural landscapes, human impacts, development and management zoning” in the Valley must be taken into consideration. The changing pattern of plants on the Valley floor also reflects the fact that the Merced River has meandered across the width of the Valley for thousands of years. Recent floods and bank cutting suggest it is continuing to do so, and plant community boundaries will most likely continue to change.

The *Vegetation Management Plan* for Yosemite National Park sets out management strategies and techniques for the treatment of vegetation in the Valley. All actions related to the removal of plants, modification by trimming, structural removal of limbs, the addition of new plants, and irrigation and fertilization of plants must comply both with this plan and with the policies of park resources staff. National Park Service *Management Policies*, Chapter 4 (NPS 2001b) and relevant ongoing studies in





TOP LEFT *Meadow grasses (2004) TP* TOP RIGHT *Upper Yosemite Valley from Rocky Point (1946) YRL-RA* BOTTOM *Cluster of oak trees at forest edge (1945) YRL-RA*



California black oak

the Valley (e.g., root rot and wetland identification efforts) must also be consulted. (The Comprehensive Landscape and Revegetation Plan of March 1999 is one example.)

#### GUIDELINES

- Although there is historic precedent for building lodging and parking areas in meadows, this should no longer be allowed. The meadows in Yosemite Valley are unique, fragile, and have great scenic and historic value. Identified in the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan* as part of the Valley's biological Outstandingly Remarkable Value, meadows should be managed as wetlands and stabilized grasslands. They should be protected from any cross-circulation or development.
- With the exception of an occasional overlook or boardwalk, no structures should be placed in a meadow. Instead, preserve meadows for passive pedestrian activities such as viewing scenic features. Structures



Rangers' Club at edge of meadow

should be held wherever possible to the forest edge of the ecotone zone (see sketch at lower left).

- New development should minimize impact to the mosaic of woodland types consistent with the objectives of the park resources staff and the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- New development should be done in a manner that avoids or minimizes the removal of or damage to highly valued vegetation, such as deciduous oaks.
- Consider the age and health of plant communities when siting buildings and other structures. For example, consider locating new buildings in areas where diseased or hazard trees might be selected for removal by park resources staff. Avoid locating new buildings or structures where they will disrupt natural processes or accelerate disease of plant communities, thereby creating hazardous conditions. (See National Park Service hazard tree removal guidelines.)
- Plant, trim, or clear trees and shrubs as appropriate to frame, emphasize, or open up views, in accordance with park resources staff policies.
- When trees are planned in new developed areas, considerations should be given to the use of deciduous trees to enhance winter views and increase daylight and solar gain during the winter season.
- Consistent with National Park Service and resources management goals, protect and enhance existing special and valued plant communities such as oak woodlands, riparian vegetation, meadows, and ecotone areas. For example, mixed height shrub-tree zones adjacent to meadows can provide shelter and forage areas for birds, deer, and small animals. Create opportunities for wildlife viewing that are consistent with park resources staff guidelines and Valley interpretive goals. These can occur in conjunction with pedestrian pathways or in secluded landscapes.
- The corridors of riparian vegetation along the banks of creeks and drainages leading to the river should be protected and, where appropriate, restored, consistent with the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive*

*Management Plan* and park resources staff policies. Restoring riparian vegetation at the Merced River banks will also improve wildlife habitat.

- Views from the river of spectacular Valley features are part of the Scenic Outstandingly Remarkable Value for the Merced River. Restoration of the river banks should provide places to pause and observe the river—at the river’s edge, from its bridges, and from identified scenic viewpoints. For more guidelines, refer to the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- Use only native plants grown from material sourced in the Valley for designated landscape projects throughout Yosemite Valley. Where appropriate, use native deciduous and flowering plants that demonstrate seasonal change for the visiting public.
- The plant palette and use of vegetation for each developed area should be devised in consultation with park natural resource specialists to reflect appropriate native plant communities associations and anticipated natural succession.
- Selection and spacing of plant material for screening, ecological restoration, or other design objectives should be modeled after and integrated with the natural plant mosaic found where development is planned.
- Planting for screening or in connection with other design objectives in new developments should emphasize natural massing and spacing of plants.
- Selection and use of vegetation should assume sustainable maintenance practices. The need for irrigation or high maintenance should be minimized or avoided.
- New or refurbished planting in developed areas that requires irrigation should be limited to areas outside the dripline of native oaks and other sensitive drought tolerant native species.
- Healthy native vegetation to be removed for new development should be salvaged wherever feasible and used for revegetation purposes in consultation with park staff.



Valley oak in sunlight (2003) GH

- Do not plant species such as conifers that will crowd out or shade out newly planted or existing oaks.
- Planting projects should recognize the ultimate height and spread (among other characteristics) of the mature plants. When new trees are planted, care should be taken that they will not obscure views when they mature.
- Planting close to buildings is now recognized as a fire hazard. Consider using low fuel species in the vicinity of buildings, provided that they are native to Yosemite Valley. Choice of vegetation, location, and spacing must conform to the *Yosemite National Park Fire Management Plan* (NPS 2004c).
- To minimize building maintenance and prevent damage to building foundations, trees should be planted at a distance reflecting the mature size and growth characteristics as well as anticipated maintenance levels.
- Planted areas within the core of developed areas should be large enough to provide adequate soil, air, and water to support healthy vegetation. They should be separated from pedestrian areas by grade changes or low timber or boulder barriers. This will prevent trespassing and enhance overall maintenance efficiency. Refer to Barriers, Fences, and Benches in Unifying Elements for more guidelines on barriers.

## LANDSCAPE USES/STRUCTURES

### LAND USE + SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Human activity in Yosemite Valley has been constricted by the steep Valley walls, and further limited by the meandering course of the Merced River. The river flows generally east to west, defining the center of the Valley and creating an ecological zone that unifies and influences the mosaic of meadows and woodland areas. Above the palustrine zone,<sup>10</sup> the Valley floor typically steps up in elevation and forms a broad shelf to the toe of the talus slopes at the bases of the cliff walls (NPS 2004d).

A key spatial characteristic of the Valley is the pattern of open meadows alternating with stands of oaks and conifers. This pattern of open and canopied

spaces through the Valley defines the overall park-like character of the landscape. From this pattern emerges a series of long views and specific views to features such as Bridalveil Fall, El Capitan, Yosemite Falls, and the Merced River (NPS 2004d).

Developments in Yosemite Valley have historically occurred in concentrated nodes at its eastern end. The six major developed areas—The Ahwahnee, Curry Village, Yosemite Lodge, Housekeeping Camp, Yosemite Village, and the campgrounds—support the needs of visitors and National Park Service administration. Each of these areas provides guest accommodations, visitor services, and recreation opportunities. The overall pattern of concentrated developed areas in the Valley has remained in place over time. While changes within individual developed areas have taken place (such as the



CABINS CURRY VILLAGE

*Cabins set in the trees, Curry Village*



*Cascades cabins, 2003 (no longer extant)*

redevelopment of Yosemite Village and Yosemite Lodge), these changes have occurred within the historic footprint of development since 1942 (NPS 2004d).

In addition to these primary developed areas, there are day-use parking areas, campgrounds, picnic areas, interpretive wayside exhibits, trails, stables, multi-use paths, and other visitor resources in the Valley.

#### GUIDELINES

- Siting and scale of new structures and building clusters within developed areas should not physically or visually extend beyond designated development areas.
- Adequately sized buffer zones of open space or vegetative screening should be established and/or maintained between components in developed areas which are stylistically or historically distinct, consistent with park resources staff policies and goals, and detailed vegetation studies.

#### CIRCULATION

Northside and Southside drives, located on either side of the Merced River, create a framework for circulation in the Valley. This framework is enhanced by a series of turnouts oriented to views, interpretative wayside exhibits, and trails. Secondary roads provide access to major and minor developed areas. These roads often provide visitors with quintessential views of natural features while also orienting them to specific destination points. A mixture of concentrated parking areas and informal turnouts are located along the roads and developed areas. Parking lots are paved in asphalt or gravel and are generally placed in front of the pedestrian entry point or building of most developed areas.

In addition to the vehicular routes, a network of hiking, biking, equestrian, and pedestrian ways connect visitor attractions with lodging, employee housing, administrative offices, and visitor services. Although the distinctions are not always clear within developed areas,



*Ahwahnee Bridge with Half Dome (2004) GH*



*Trail to Lower Yosemite Fall (2004) RF*



*Snow on path, Yosemite Lodge (2004) GH*

circulation routes are typically hierarchical and include primary entries, pedestrian plazas and gathering areas, walkways, and footpaths. In less developed areas, pedestrian access is informal in nature typically along asphalt, packed decomposed granite, gravel, or dirt trails (some with no edge markers or curbs). In meadows or wetlands, boardwalks are used to protect sensitive resources.

#### GUIDELINES

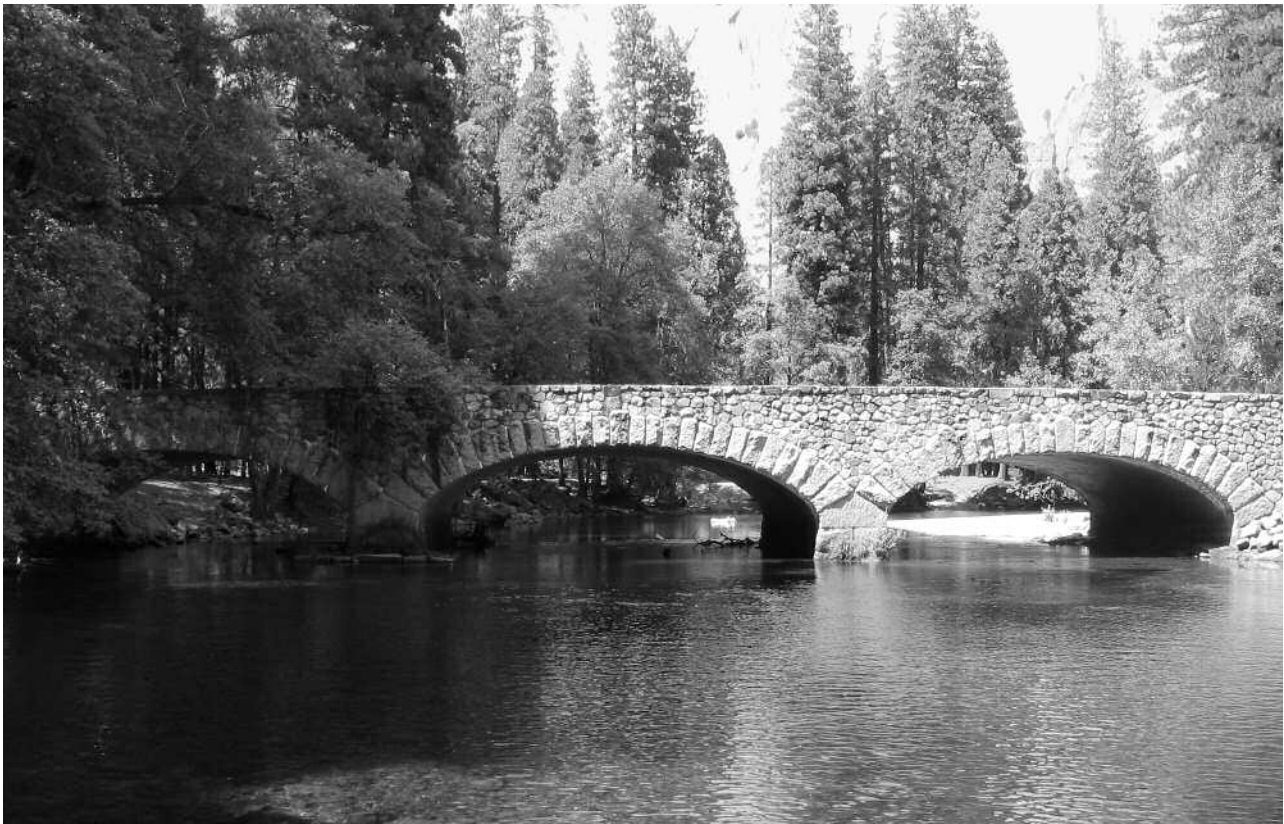
- The design and alignment of new roads should respond to natural conditions and features, such as topography, boulders, healthy trees, and drainages so as to remain subdominant to the landscape. Graceful curving alignments based on low speeds should be used to impart a sense of a rural road fitting naturally in the landscape, while conforming to applicable safety standards. Consideration should be given to the protection of natural quiet areas from motorized sounds.
- Roadway width and edge treatment should be designed to help the visitor distinguish a hierarchical circulation pattern and make wayfinding easy and logical with a minimum of directional signage.
- Whenever appropriate and in order to enhance interpretive opportunities, roadways and trails should remain on alignments of historic roads and trails.
- Primary and secondary roadways should be sited with an emphasis on the driver's visual experience. As a new road approaches a developed area, it should be aligned to provide a view of significant natural features where possible. Parking lots should not distract from this view opportunity.
- Within a developed area, align approach roads to the entry point or building. This view should be clear and obvious and not blocked by parked cars or buses.
- Facilities should be sited to encourage use of public transportation. Convenient access should be provided to park transit systems, bus stops, bikeways, walkways, and hiking trails.
- Visitors should be able to find their way easily on clearly delineated pedestrian and bicycle paths that by virtue of width, pavement type, and edge treatment are easily distinguishable as non-vehicular routes.
- New paths and walkways in developed areas should be compatible with existing materials, widths, and alignments where feasible.
- Trail and walkway alignments should be natural in character, following site contours and edges of vegetation, and incorporating rock formations, trees, and views of scenic features.

- The layout and design character of pedestrian walkways should provide for a relaxed pace and a sequence of positive visual experiences. In low pedestrian concentration areas, trails should have an informal meandering, slow-paced character, allowing visitors to come upon surprise views, wayside interpretive plaques, or places to pause and take in the scenery.
- Materials used for surfacing trails should be compatible with their surroundings. In developed areas, exposed aggregate, pigmented concrete, and surface-treated asphalt may be appropriate. In more isolated areas, decomposed granite, gravel, stabilized soil, and other hardened surfaces should be used, as appropriate. All-season, hard surface paths should be built with materials that are readily maintained, durable, and easily cleared of snow and ice.

## PARKING

The first automobile—a “Locomobile” driven by Oliver Lippincott—arrived in Yosemite Valley in June of 1900. That year Foley’s “The Yosemite Tourist” announced “the auto will soon become a prominent factor in Yosemite travel” (Johnston 1995). By the 1920s, automobiles filled the parking lot at Government Center (later Yosemite Village) (Sargent 1993). According to photographs of the period, visitors were allowed to drive into and park on open meadows.

Over the years, relatively small parking areas were added where they were deemed necessary. Where more parking was needed, the additions were placed adjacent or close to existing parking areas to avoid trees, wetlands, trails, etc. This has resulted in a more or less informal pattern of parking areas.



Ahwahnee Bridge (2004) RF

Today, with increasing visitation to Yosemite National Park, parking for private vehicles has become a major concern. Parking is potentially one of the most destructive of all human-caused intrusions into the natural environment, in terms of ecological, visual, auditory, and air and water quality impacts. Where parking is provided, it must be done sensitively, with minimal impact on the land. In addition, views of parked cars must be mitigated both from the ground and from elevated viewpoints such as Glacier Point. The larger the number of automobiles, the more difficult it is to mitigate the effects of such concentrations. Planning and siting for parking calls for careful site analysis, documentation of resources (such as wetlands, drainages, healthy trees and vegetation, wildlife habitats, etc.), and evaluation of short- and long-term, direct and indirect impacts.

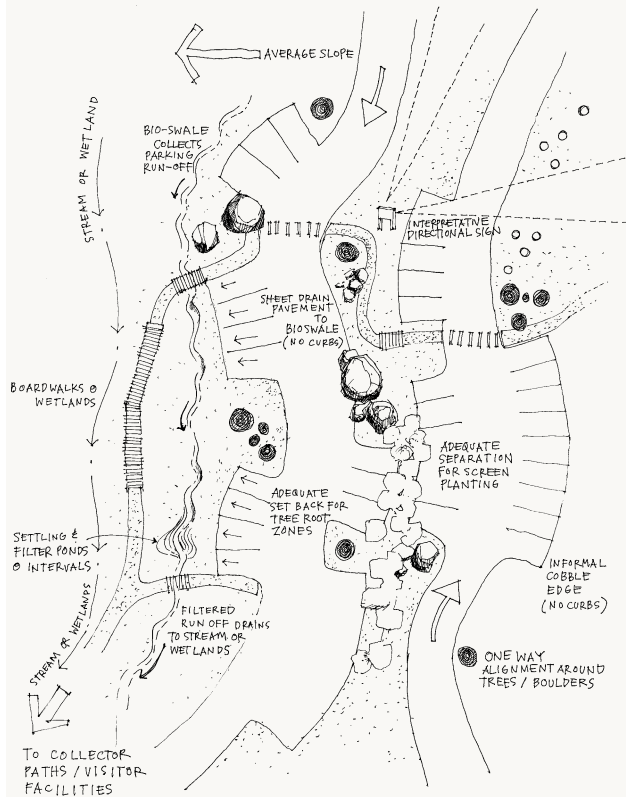
#### GUIDELINES

- Parking areas should not detract from the views of significant natural or historic features.
- Siting of parking should take into consideration the impacts of vehicle-generated noise such as idling buses, trucks, motorcycles, etc. on special auditory environments such as quiet meadows or forests, or areas of river sounds such as rapids.
- Turn-offs to parking areas should be clearly indicated with signage that blends with the surrounding natural features.
- Parking areas should be screened as much as possible from the main valley circulation and developed areas.
- Retain the traditional pattern of small partially separated clusters of parking areas.



Parked cars at New Yosemite Village (date unknown) YRL





Site sensitive parking layout

- Avoid placing parking in designated view corridors. If that is unavoidable, align parking at right angles to view line. This will allow for low vegetative screening of parked cars when seen from a through road or prominent public space. Low shrub planting of National Park Service-approved, Valley-sourced natives not exceeding 4 to 6 feet in height, or larger trees adequately spaced will mitigate the visual impact of automobiles while allowing for scenic views.
- Parking lanes and bay groupings should be spaced adequately to allow for corridors of vegetation and, where appropriate, pedestrian paths or boardwalks in wet soil areas. The width should be adequate to allow for healthy vegetation and the path to meander around trees and boulders. Refer to Circulation section of this chapter for more guidelines on pedestrian ways.
- Pedestrian ways within parking areas should be laid out to take advantage of natural features such as healthy trees, riparian vegetation, boulders, and scenic views.
- Paving for pedestrian ways in developed areas should be distinguished by material and edging from vehicular ways and should be continuous, clearly leading the pedestrian from the parking area to visitor services. Surface-treated AC paving as is used in the Lower Yosemite Fall trail area would be appropriate. Pedestrian ways should avoid removal or damage to trees, shrubs, and meadow vegetation.
- Integrate pedestrian ways in parking areas to maximize pedestrian safety and provide logical and convenient routes to vehicular free zones. (See also the Circulation section of this chapter.)
- Configure parking access lanes with irregular alignments and interrupt parking bays around irregularly spaced trees, either existing or planted, in order to avoid long straight rows of parked cars or buses.
- Where winter use of parking areas is not anticipated (where snow removal is not required) and where such areas are less than a 10% gradient, consider the use of porous paving materials such as park-sourced compacted gravel or decomposed granite.
- Parking and parking access roads should be sited in areas of dry or naturally well-drained soils and/or conifer groves and not in or in close proximity to black oak groves, wetlands, and riparian corridors tributary to the Merced River. Refer to zoning prescriptions outlined in the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- Parking and parking access roads should never be allowed in existing meadows or areas of potential meadow restoration.
- Natural features (e.g., healthy shrubs, boulders, trees, etc.) should be incorporated into parking areas, where feasible, to help break up the size of the parking areas and visually buffer them from developed and natural areas. Grading and paving should not extend within the drip line of trees to be saved.
- Design of parking-area roads should adjust to and protect natural conditions and features such as wetlands, healthy trees, boulder groupings.
- Align parking rows parallel to the contour. This will allow for plantable intervening grade changes wide enough to support planting to screen vehicles.

IT IS POSSIBLE FOR MARKERS AND RELATED DEVICES TO CAPTURE AND CONVEY IN GREATER DEGREE THAN MOST OTHER PARK STRUCTURES THE SPIRIT OF A PARTICULAR AREA. IT IS THEIR FUNCTION, AND BY NO MEANS A MINOR ONE, TO ACCENT, TO 'HIGHLIGHT,' WHATEVER MIGHT BE TERMED THE ESSENTIAL PERSONALITY OF A PARK. ALBERT H. GOOD • PARK AND RECREATION STRUCTURES • 1938

- Access roads or parking areas within the River Protection Overlay zone must comply with the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- Runoff and snowmelt from paved parking areas should be guided to mechanical or biological filters (such as bio-swales and filter ponds) to capture pollutants before reaching the Merced River or its tributaries.
- Based on parking area size, plan for and designate adequate snow storage areas which do not damage natural vegetation and in a manner which allows for filtering of pollutants from the snow melt.
- Provide interpretive displays and directional signage where appropriate along paths of concentrated pedestrian traffic leading from parking areas to pedestrian activity centers. Such displays and signage should conform to Valleywide standards and while easily discernable should be located and designed to blend with the natural surroundings.
- Refer to the Lighting section of this chapter for guidelines on lighting for parking areas.

## ENTRANCE MARKERS

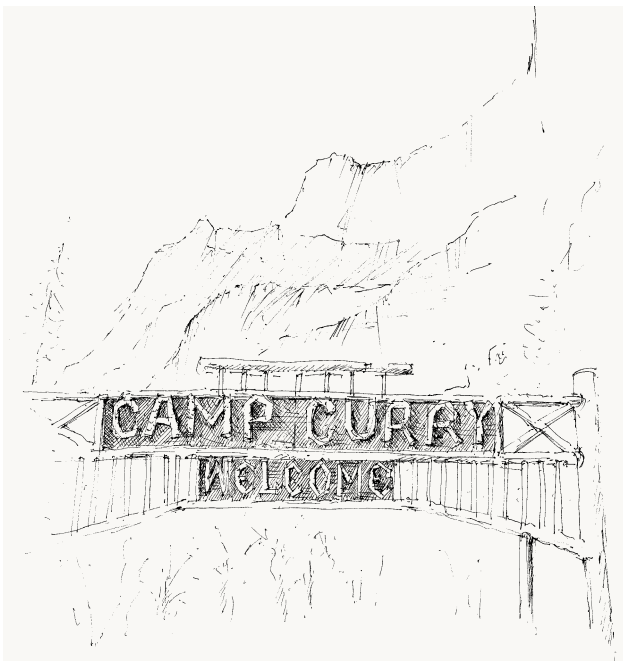
Entrances to some developed areas in Yosemite Valley are announced with a visually significant marker in a style that is appropriate to that development. The Ahwahnee has a masonry gate shelter set into a large granite block. Camp Curry has a lighted, unpeeled log welcome sign that acts as a gateway to the village commons.

### GUIDELINES

- Where an entrance marker is required it should be sited and designed to be compatible with surrounding natural setting and the architectural character of the associated complex.
- Design and detailing of entrance markers at gateways to different areas should use rustic Sierra materials (e.g., granite boulders, heavy timbers, unpeeled logs, etc.) representative of the area and the Valley. New entrance markers should be made of materials in common with their development, like the granite used at The Ahwahnee gatehouse or the logs used in the Camp Curry welcome sign.



The Ahwahnee Entrance Marker



Camp Curry entrance marker

- Graphics, color, lettering style, lighting, etc. of the entrance marker should be compatible with the spirit of the developed area.
- Roadside markers should be in conformance with National Park Service road standards for safety and visibility.

## SMALL BUILDINGS

Small buildings throughout the park accommodate visitor activities away from the main centers of developed areas. They include comfort stations, shower houses, kiosks, storage sheds, and miscellaneous shelters including cooking and picnic shelters. (Shuttle bus shelters are addressed in a separate chapter.) These buildings are often solitary structures in locations such as campgrounds or trails, and are also used as ancillary structures within a development where the character is defined by larger buildings. This building type should be designed to adapt to local site conditions.

Entrance kiosks, comfort stations, and shower houses provide public accommodations in campgrounds. In keeping with traditional National Park Service design principles, these buildings are typically designed with a consistent architectural character. In campgrounds, a comfort station may be the largest building, but it is seen as one of a set of landscape elements that includes

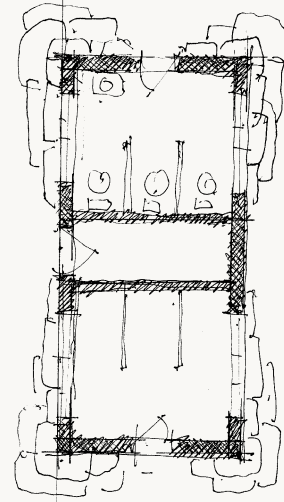
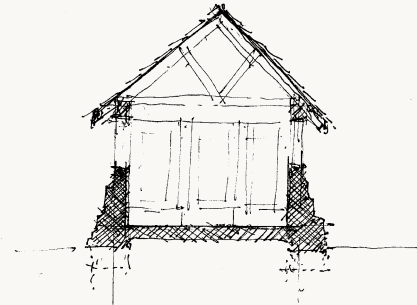
picnic tables, benches, barriers, and footbridges. Because all of these elements contribute to the character of the site, they typically share character-defining features such as color and materials.

During the 1920s and 1930s, the National Park Service recognized the importance of small buildings and related landscape elements. Standard designs were developed and included in portfolios that were circulated throughout the National Park Service as well as in state parks (McClelland 1998). In 1935, a compilation of illustrated examples from national and state parks was published in an influential book by Albert Good entitled *Park and Recreation Structures*. This publication continues to be a useful reference.

The standard design for comfort stations consists of simple, rustic, wood-frame buildings with gable roofs and shake roof covering. These were typically rectangular in plan with entrances at each end. This basic design was adapted to different sites using variations of rustic treatments including a stone base, exposed wood posts, infill wall panels of wood boards, exposed rafters, gable roofs, wood shingle or shake roof covering, and muted colors. Nine comfort stations were constructed in the Yosemite Valley campgrounds during the 1920s. The comfort stations in Yosemite Valley typically used a wood frame with exposed posts, exposed rafters, and no gutter or fascia. The comfort station built at Yosemite Falls in 2004 shares many features with the standard design of the 1920s, including entrances at both ends, a gable roof, muted colors, wood siding, and a stone base.

Shower houses and comfort stations have similar functional requirements, and they are typically designed as companion buildings. Designed with rustic character, their utilitarian purpose is expressed with compactness and simplicity.

Park entrances and entrance kiosks define the entrance and serve as a point of contact between the park service and the visitor. At less developed areas in the Valley, they function as entrance markers. A porch is an important element of the kiosk, providing for shelter



TOP LEFT *Comfort station at the stables (2004) GH* MIDDLE LEFT *Small building at the stables (2004) GH* TOP RIGHT *Small bathhouse plan and section*  
BOTTOM *Comfort station at Union Point (1932) YRL-RA*

and signage. Kiosks that are managed by park personnel are typically open and have a welcoming aspect. Kiosks also serve as information centers, and therefore function informally as gathering places for visitors. Day-use shelters provide basic accommodations for outdoor gatherings. They consist primarily of a roof, a supporting structural frame, and a paved floor. They sometimes include accessories such as fireplaces and furniture, and are often the focal point of an open recreational space.

#### GUIDELINES

- In undeveloped locations such as picnic areas and campgrounds, small buildings should minimize visual intrusion and blend with the natural setting. They can be easily sited around natural features such as trees and boulders in order to minimize their visual impact in the landscape.
- Comfort stations and shower houses should make use of the rustic elements of the classic National Park Service designs. These include a standard plan, a gable roof, the use of exposed wood framing and siding, and natural colors. They should consist of simple one story, rectangular shapes with a main gable roof. Entrances should be at the gable ends.
- Guest service aids should be clustered in small buildings or combined with comfort stations or similar small structures. Functional and convenience equipment such as telephone booths, vending machines, etc. should be integrated as essential design requirements, receding into alcoves, so as not to distract from the overall character of the building. They should be placed under shelter, in porches, and should not be freestanding.
- Where telephone booths must be freestanding they should be placed in shielded wooden enclosures with controlled lighting. See *Lighting in Unifying Elements* for more guidelines.
- Small buildings are unifying elements throughout the Valley by virtue of their modest scale, standard color, and consistent rustic design.
- Roof forms are typically gable, with a medium pitch of at least 5-in-12, with overhangs that shed snow and water. Roof framing should be slightly oversized with exposed rafters. Roofs should be clad with asphalt shingles in compliance with Class A fire requirements.
- Façades should be modest in character. They should have a protective base of masonry or board-formed concrete. The upper walls should have one material treatment. Board and batten is the recommended siding pattern, using full size 1x4 battens and 1x12 boards of resawn western red cedar, with tight knots.
- Doors and windows should be arranged in regular patterns. Metal-clad wood windows are recommended, with recessed jambs and a wood sill piece.
- An opaque stain should be used for all wood elements including siding and exposed framing members. Doors and window frames should be painted.
- Refer to *Building Exterior and Lighting in Unifying Elements* for more guidelines on appropriate color and exterior lighting.



*Cascades cabin, 2003 (no longer extant)*



FOOT BRIDGE



TOP Footbridge BOTTOM Culvert

### MASONRY, FOOTBRIDGES, CULVERT CROSSINGS, RETAINING WALLS + BOARDWALKS

There is little evidence describing the structure and character of footbridges in Yosemite Valley before the advent of the National Park Service Rustic style of the 1920s. The 2004 National Register Nomination for Yosemite Valley refers to the many footbridges that crossed the Merced River and its tributaries over the years, but notes that only the footbridge at Housekeeping Camp and Superintendent's Bridge contribute to the period of historic significance.

These Rustic-style stone and timber structures echo smaller footbridges of concrete and worked granite boulders scattered throughout the Valley. These bridges are detailed and scaled to convey a sense of being hand-made with locally sourced materials. The walkway of granite boulder bridges is usually flanked by low stone curb walls. Smaller modern timber bridges and boardwalks have a heavy plank walking surface with either raised timber curbs or handrails. Examples include the main bridge below Lower Yosemite Fall and other bridges crossing branches of Yosemite Creek downstream. Other examples can be seen at Happy Isles and several meadow viewpoints or crossings. The unique bench-bridge near The Ahwahnee is an exception.

Culvert headwalls are consistently built of dry laid or mortared natural stone. Both rough-worked and weathered boulders are used to armor the steep slopes flanking the open ends of culverts throughout the Valley. The walkway over the larger culverts may be flanked by low boulder curbs. At all of these crossings the boulder size appears to be such that one or two workers could lift them into place, reinforcing the hand-made quality. No false rock or plastic wood is used in these structures, allowing them to blend well with the surrounding landscape.

There are relatively few historic walls in the Valley designed to retain slopes, since most roads and buildings were built on flat terrain, and earth moving capacities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries were limited. Where retention of a slope for a road, building, or outdoor use area was necessary, low dry-laid walls of local stone (and in some cases large individual boulders) were used. These walls are mostly found in trail structures and roads leading out of the Valley. Historic photographs show small-scale gravity walls in the Valley with larger rocks at the base of the wall. The size of the rocks decreases with the height of the wall. Later walls were built of reinforced concrete, some with stone veneers.

#### GUIDELINES

##### **Masonry + Concrete Walls**

- Stone for masonry structures, whether gravity or mortared, should match the color and character of the nearest talus or scree slope. Wall design and finish should match or be complementary to adjacent elements such as exposed foundations of adjacent buildings in developed areas. Weathered granite should be used when available. As it is not permitted to gather granite from within the park, Sierra granite must come from quarries outside the park. However, small quantities of granite may be available as a result of other construction or maintenance projects within the park. Imitation materials should not be used.
- Larger stones and boulders are more in scale with the wilderness landscape in undeveloped areas. Round stones, such as river washed cobbles, do not have a structural appearance and therefore are not appropriate, in most cases.
- Gravity or stone veneer walls should reflect Rustic style hand construction. The largest boulders should be set at the base of the wall, partially below grade. Boulders should gradually diminish in size in the upper part of the wall.

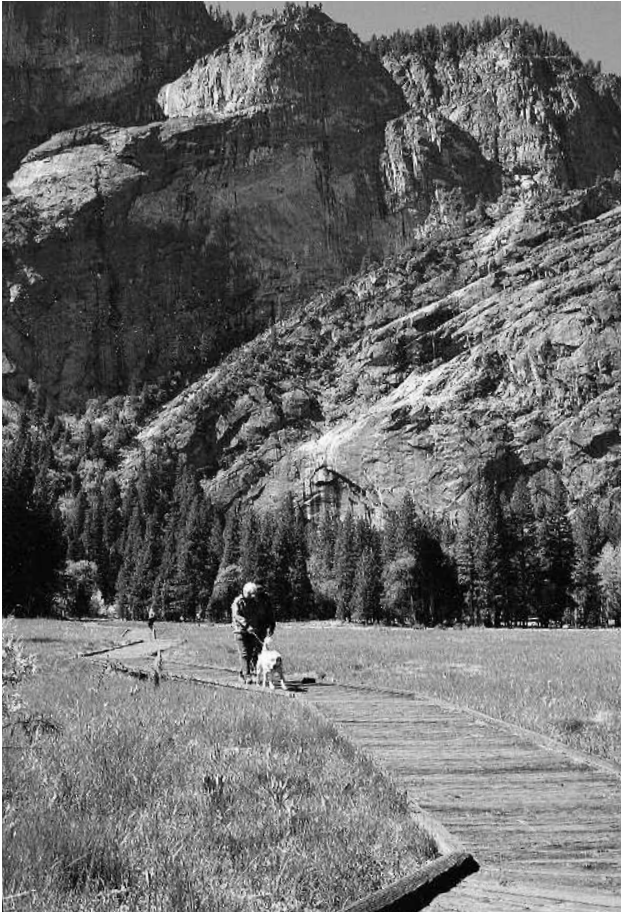


*Lower wall of Museum (2004) GH*

- Where mortared masonry is appropriate, finished jointing patterns should be random with deep-raked mortar joints, as found on historic structures in the Valley. Avoid obvious vertical and horizontal alignment of joints.
- Where concrete is exposed, it should have a rough-sawn, form board surface.

##### **Footbridges + Boardwalks**

- New bridges should not impede the flow of water. The hydrologic processes of rivers, streams, and tributaries should be protected during both low and high water periods.
- Footbridges should be located at crossings that are documented as historic or along historic trail routes.
- Footbridge abutments and superstructures should have a character of having been built by hand.
- Abutments for foot bridges should be constructed of dry stacked or deep raked mortared stone. Use stone veneer or form board surface for exposed concrete.
- Decking for free-span bridges should make use of heavy, rough-sawn planks. Log sub-structures should be used where feasible. Weathered steel or concrete girders may be used and should not be disguised.
- Guardrails for non-historic bridges should be constructed out of sanded timbers or peeled logs mounted on sturdy supports. The use of natural weathering steel for components of the structure is optional. The handrail and cap should be of wood. (Western red, Port Orford, or Alaska yellow cedars are appropriate choices for handrails as they do not splinter easily.)



Boardwalk in meadow, Yosemite Valley (2004) TP

- Bridge construction activities on the Merced River are subject to Section 7 determination, in keeping with the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan* and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.
- At path or trail crossings of meadows, wetlands, or other sensitive plant or soil conditions, simple NPS boardwalks should be employed. The standard design of heavy planks and edging helps define the appropriate route and discourages trampling of vegetation. The entire structure is held slightly above native soil level to prevent soil compaction. Regardless of the type of planking used, the finished product must meet accessibility guidelines regarding slip resistance, curbs, etc.

#### **Small Scale Culvert Crossings**

- Headwalls for small drainage culverts in public view should be constructed of dry-laid natural stone or mortared boulders where appropriate. A single large slab of granite may also be appropriate (see illustration page 76).

#### **Landscape Retaining Walls**

- Wherever possible, avoid grading that results in the need for artificial slope retention.
- Where retaining walls are needed, and are structurally appropriate, gravity-type walls constructed of large Sierra granite boulders or dry laid granite slabs should be used.
- Wall ends should return into the adjacent slope.

#### **GRADING + DRAINAGE**

Until the arrival of large mechanized earth moving equipment, modification of landform in the Valley was minimal. Early photographs indicate that most builders used stepped foundations to adapt buildings to the existing slope, rather than changing or flattening the slope.

#### **GUIDELINES**

- Buildings, roads, and structures should be sited in a manner that avoids landform modification to the greatest extent possible, thereby helping to preserve the Valley plain and side slopes.
- Minimize cut and fill operation of a development to protect the existing soil profile and ground water recharge functions.
- Except where unavoidable, do not allow any excavation or fill within the dripline of trees to be saved. See park resources staff policies and detailed vegetation management plans.
- Avoid the creation of subsurface barrier interfaces to ground water migration and recharge by layering different soil types (e.g., the placement of side slope colluvial soils on top of river valley alluvial soil).
- To minimize or avoid erosion and slope failure, design for on-site redistribution of runoff waters from impervious surfaces like paved roads, roofs, etc.
- Emulate existing surrounding landforms and natural drainage patterns. Avoid non-natural and artificial looking landforms when grading.



- Keep all grading back from the bank tops of streams and drainages that are tributaries to the Merced River. The distance will vary depending on site conditions, but for any drainageway that supports riparian vegetation or has the potential to do so, limit grading operations as directed by authorized National Park Service personnel. All grading operations within the Merced Wild and Scenic River Management Zones and near tributary drainages must comply with flood zone restrictions, park resources staff policies, and more detailed studies which may dictate differing setbacks. Any actions within the bed and banks of the Merced River are subject to a Section 7 determination according to the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- In order to enhance groundwater recharge where snow removal is not required and where deemed feasible based on soil characteristics and slope gradient, use porous paving material such as compacted decomposed granite, for pathways, service roads, multipurpose trails, etc.
- In accordance with Regional Water Quality Control Board and National Park Service standards and practices, storm water and snow melt runoff from parking areas should be channeled through mechanical or biological filters or filtering media before being allowed to run into drainages, creeks, or the river.



Log barrier at Crane Flat (2004) GH

## BARRIERS, FENCES + BENCHES

For purposes of discussion in this section, barriers are defined as any system of clustered boulders, wood post and cable rope fencing, etc. designed to control or direct the movement of people and protect natural features (such as planting) without blocking or obscuring views from one side of the barrier to the other. Screening, on the other hand, is defined as more or less solid fencing intended for privacy or to hide outdoor materials or areas from view. For yard fencing, trash screening, control of pets, etc., the National Park Service provides prescriptive guidelines for residential spaces.

Barriers are sometimes needed to keep visitors on designated pedestrian pathways and trails, as well as out of sensitive plant communities and habitats. Trampling of vegetation, compaction of soil, and bank erosion are common in Yosemite Valley, a result of the great number of visitors who come to the park each year. The barriers currently used throughout the Valley are inconsistent in design character. Boulder- or cobble-reinforced grade changes and a reduction in the number of fence types, both temporary and permanent will help unify the landscape.

Screen fencing is required for both private dwellings and visitor lodging. Park employees living in proximity to areas of visitation need to screen their outdoor storage areas from view. In addition, visitors staying in ground-level lodging units require screens for privacy and to conceal personal clutter. The result is a significant amount of screen fencing at Yosemite Lodge, Tecoya housing, and parts of Yosemite Village.

Benches, as they are seen in public spaces today, were scarce in the late 19th and 20th century photographs of Yosemite Valley. People either sat on indoor chairs that were brought outside, fallen logs, or upended log segments. Rustic one- and two-sided log benches were shaped by young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. These bench forms still exist in some locations and provide a landscape character link to the past. They represent a heavy rustic scale and often appear solidly anchored among towering trees and massive

boulders. Logs may be an impermanent material, but the importance of their rustic character to Yosemite Valley outweighs this disadvantage.<sup>11</sup>

#### GUIDELINES

##### Barriers

- Planting areas, on flat or sloping terrain, may be protected with raised grades (minimum 12 inches) reinforced with nested and partially submerged native cobbles and boulders. Flat topped boulders 16 inches to 20 inches high can also serve as seating.
- Where protection from trampling is needed in public areas and path-edge grade changes with boulders are not appropriate, three treatments are acceptable: Zigzag Fence, Pierced Post Fence, Cedar Post and Rope, or Cable Barricade. These emphasize hand crafted simplicity and the use of park-sourced materials. Use cedar wood components wherever possible, since vegetation management policies call for the selective removal of cedar trees in the foreseeable future.
- Where barriers are needed temporarily, a system that can be dismantled and relocated, such as the staggered zigzag type, should be used.



ZIGZAG FENCE - SAMUEL BUBB

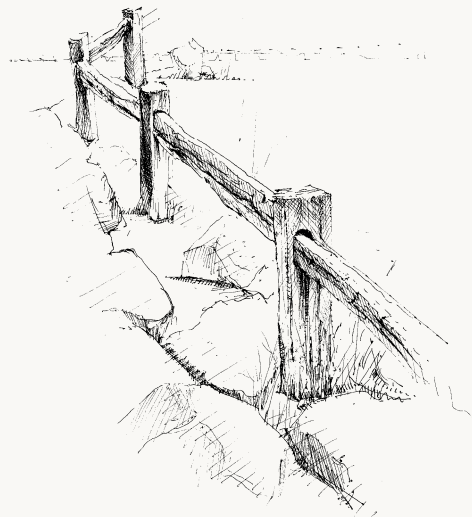
Zigzag fence

##### Zigzag Fence

Because it requires no posts, this design is highly adaptable to the flat Valley floor conditions. Being made up of split timbers, it also imparts a rustic rural hand-crafted character. Three approximately 12 foot-long, split cedar rails are stacked and secured at the joints by a reinforcing bar and laid out in a zigzag pattern for stability. The design should be used consistently in oak woodlands, other forest understory areas, riparian zones, and archaeological sites, but may be adaptable to some sloping areas.

##### Pierced Post Fence (sometimes called Hetch Hetchy)

This design uses 6" x 8" split and rough-squared cedar posts at normal and short heights spaced at approximately eight-foot centers. The post is secured in compacted back-filled holes. The rail openings in the posts and the 8 to 10 foot-long split cedar rails imply a degree of woodworking and installation skills. It may therefore be appropriate for developed areas as well as timbered areas and steep slopes. The short version would be appropriate at the edges of newly planted or plant restoration areas and near meadows.



Pierced post fence

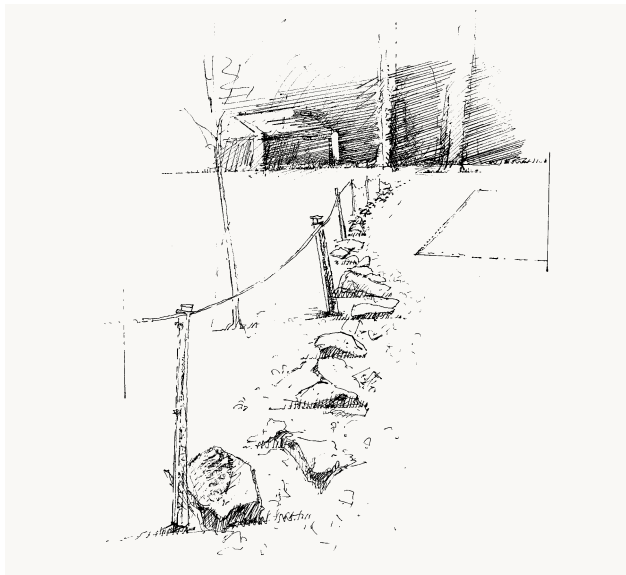
**Cedar Post + Rope or Cable Barricade**

Four foot long split cedar posts, spaced approximately 10 feet apart are buried 12 inches or more in compacted backfilled post holes. A 3/4" diameter hole near the top carries a semi-taut 1/2" diameter galvanized cable or hemp rope. This design should be used only temporarily where a barrier is needed such as to protect replanted or recovering vegetation. It should be removed when vegetation has grown sufficiently to act as a barrier. Do not use faux materials.

**GUIDELINES**

**Screen Fences**

- Site buildings with respect to one another, to existing vegetation, and to visibility from roads and trails so as to minimize or obviate the need for gates, screens, and fences wherever possible.
- Screen fencing should be designed, located, and treated so as to blend as thoroughly as possible into the natural landscape.
- Screen fencing should not appear as ad-hoc additions to buildings. Where fencing is required, it should be considered as a component of the design of the building.



Cedar post & rope barricade



Civilian Conservation Corps building benches (c. 1930) YRL

In some cases it may be appropriate to repeat building materials on the screen structure.

- Fence and screen layout should terminate in a right angle return of an appropriate length.
- TV dishes should be as hidden as possible from public view. They should be kept lower than the top of a fence, or placed with a building in the near background. The goal is to blend and avoid an industrial look. Refer also to National Park Service prescriptive guidelines for residential areas.

**Benches**

- Bench design is an important element of rustic style in Yosemite Valley. Benches should be constructed from park sourced timber, when possible, and Sierra granite.
- Benches in shuttle bus stops should be constructed from heavy, rough-milled lumber set on granite pads. These benches should have backs and may require armrests per accessibility requirements. Groups of several benches should be arranged in clusters where site conditions allow.
- In unsheltered settings benches can be formed from unpeeled logs. Although some logs will lose their bark over time, the bark contributes a strong Rustic character. Three types of log benches are recommended: a 3/4 round with a seat and back carved out, set on a granite base; a half round with no back set on a granite base; and a complete round log, partially buried with no base. Include weep holes to drain water and prolong the life of the bench.
- Individual seats can be made from bucked up logs, at least 24" in diameter, about 18" tall, set vertically.



Night sky in Yosemite Valley from Glacier Point (2003) NPS-DD

## LIGHTING

Preserving the night darkness is crucial to the overall pursuit of preserving nature and its enjoyment in the park. The nocturnal environment is an important part of the visitor's park experience. The natural darkness and quiet transform the park into a dramatic night scene, even near the park's most developed areas. However, over the last half of the 20th century, outdoor electric illumination has become widespread, growing rapidly as society makes ever-increasing use of the night for activities. At the park, organized night activities as well as the pressing concerns of safety and security have caused a proliferation of electric lighting and a corresponding increase in the ambient light level. These guidelines are intended to prevent further light pollution in the park and to reverse the process, without sacrificing essential lighting needed to ensure the safety of park visitors and staff.

### GUIDELINES

- Employ electric lighting only where needed. In general, provide lighting only where normal night use, safety, security, and/or accessibility are essential, such as building entrances/exits, steps or changes in elevation between buildings and parking lots or major trails, and parking lots adjacent to night activity centers. Outdoor work areas, such as service or storage yards, should be carefully evaluated for the need for illumination. In general, do not illuminate drives, roads, or streets, except for bus stops or intersections where cross traffic involving pedestrians is a significant safety concern. Avoid landscape lighting and architectural lighting such as building floodlighting, except for extremely important night activity areas. Do not provide lighting for backcountry locations unless absolutely necessary.
- Design lighting systems that produce an absolute minimum of intrusion on the night. Design to no greater than the absolute lowest standards. Use fully shielded lighting gear without exception. Avoid floodlights, lanterns, post top globes, and any other luminaire that emits light other than downward within a 60-degree cone. As a general rule, designs should prevent viewing the lamp or a bright lens or reflector within 2 mounting heights of the luminaire, and luminaires should not be mounted higher than 20 feet. Landscape lighting, when used, should be equipped with long "snoot" shields to prevent obtrusive light. Minimize light cast onto building walls, and light steps from directly above as much as possible.
- Uniform illumination is not required except in very specific areas such as stairs or building entrances. The use of pools of light is strongly encouraged along paths if illuminated at all.
- Design lighting systems to be attractive and consistent with the architecture, preferably innocuous. Use long-life, naturally-weathering materials or materials designed to minimize degradation, such as concrete bollards, non-ferrous metals like copper and brass,

supports of Cor-Ten steel, and treated wooden poles. Avoid strongly designed luminaires and seek timelessness in style and mounting.

- Locate lighting systems where they will suffer minimum damage. Avoid conventional “bollard” lights and similar systems easily damaged by humans and animals, especially cyclists. Consider snow and its removal in determining lighting designs and mounting heights.
- Use the lowest possible wattage, energy efficient luminaire for each application. Employ compact fluorescent and low wattage HID lamps with a minimum of other sources. Lamps should be less than 100 watts, and as often as possible 50 or less. Where HID lamps are needed, 3,000K metal halide lamps are strongly recommended in public activity areas, but high pressure sodium may be used in utility and service areas. Compact fluorescent lamps should be used as much as possible, using low temperature ballasts and amalgam lamps to ensure winter operation. Color temperatures of all light sources (except HPS ) should be 2,700–3,000K.
- Design interior lighting to prevent light from spilling outdoors. Use adaptation-compensating controls to reduce interior light levels at night, which minimizes exterior spill and permits lower exterior light levels. Aim lights away from windows and skylights.
- Mounting luminaires and feeder lines on trees is not permitted.



Lamp post in New Yosemite Village (1928) YRL

## DEVELOPED AREAS

### SITING + BUILDING ORIENTATION

Ideally, buildings in Yosemite Valley are sited to harmonize and blend with the landscape, placed in ways that respect major features, natural open spaces, drainages, trees, and boulders. In addition to visible features, buried archaeological sites—often found at the edges of meadows—must be taken into consideration when siting buildings.

Each major developed area in Yosemite Valley is organized around a central outdoor space with views of scenic features. Traditionally the important interior spaces of public buildings are also oriented toward views of these features. Smaller buildings, such as lodgings and residences, are found in informal groupings with generous open space around them, sited to capture views or winter sun exposure where possible.

Each developed area has a unique site layout that influences its architectural character. Curry Village is laid out in a narrow band along the base of a talus slope. The visitor service buildings are organized around a central public space, flanked by tents and cabins carefully integrated with the slopes, boulders, and trees. Yosemite Lodge has a campus layout, with lodging buildings dispersed around the visitor service complex. Yosemite Village began as a group of buildings around a rectangular open space. The open space was later extended into a linear pedestrian precinct to incorporate additional visitor services buildings. The Ahwahnee stands in splendid isolation from other developed areas in the Valley, set on the edge of a meadow against the backdrop of the Valley walls.

A unique example of sensitivity to setting is found in John Muir’s “small box-like home” or hang nest fastened beneath the gable of James Hutchings’ saw mill. He wrote, “The hole in the roof is to command a view of the glorious South [Half] Dome... There is a corresponding skylight on the side of the roof which commands a full view of the upper Yosemite Falls, and the window at the end has a view sweeping down the Valley among the pines and

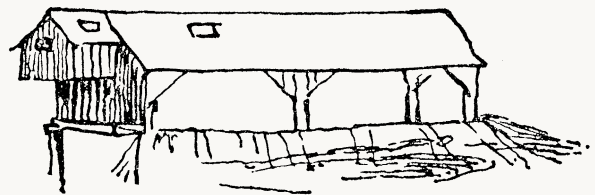
cedars and silver firs.” He recounted as well the “murmuring hush of the water beneath me,” and the window in the roof that allowed him to “look at the stars on calm nights” (Johnston 1971).

The siting and orientation of buildings in developed areas can take advantage of both silence and the sounds of nature. The sounds of waterfalls or wildlife are key aspects of the visitor’s experience. In spring and early summer, waterfalls can be heard throughout the Valley, and can be enjoyed from a private balcony or a dining terrace. With increased visitation and its attendant traffic, human-made noise has disrupted natural silence and sounds. This distraction also occurs indoors, between guest rooms in lodging areas.

Visual privacy depends on the relationships between indoor and outdoor spaces. Guests should have a degree of separation from people in the adjacent outdoor spaces, and passers-by should not feel that they intrude on guests enjoying the view from their rooms or balconies.

#### GUIDELINES

- Before building in an existing development, examine its spatial organization, identify the positive characteristics—for example the views from the plaza at Yosemite Village towards Yosemite Falls and Half Dome—and perpetuate the design principles that led to them.
- Evaluate the natural, cultural, and archeological resources of the site. Site analysis should be based on an objective assessment of the site as well as technical data provided by park staff. Where appropriate, natural



John Muir’s sketch of his hang nest at Hutchings’ Saw Mill (ca. 1871) from John Muir in Yosemite by Shirley Sargent



Rangers' Club at the edge of Cook's Meadow (2004) GH

- and cultural resources can be featured elements in site design.
- Introduction of roads or structures into previously unbuilt areas should be based on an assessment of significant impact to existing vegetation and habitat. Refer to Natural Park Service forest management policies and requirements.
- Overall site planning of building groups should recognize major views, solar orientation, and topography. Principal outdoor spaces in each developed area should orient to views and appropriate sun exposure. Buildings should be designed so that major public rooms, as well as guest lodgings, receive the benefit of important views. Refer to Scenic Views in Unifying Elements for more guidelines.
- Site planning must take into account natural features. The integration of boulders and trees, for example, is a high priority in siting buildings. Grading should be minimized and natural drainages patterns should be maintained.
- Site buildings to take advantage of natural sounds such as waterfalls, and minimize the adverse effects of human-made noise. Isolation and shielding of sound generation sources should be given a high priority during the early stages of the design process. For example, consider the location of idling tour buses, service area trucks, ventilation, and mechanical equipment.
- Buildings are not allowed in meadows. Buildings near meadows should be located near the edges to afford views of the meadows from the buildings. This must be done in accordance with various environmental factors and National Park Service policies on archeology and vegetation management, and the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*. In some cases partial screening of buildings will be appropriate.
- Provide an appropriate degree of visual and acoustical privacy for lodging rooms. Site design should provide separation between guests in lodgings and visitors in adjacent outdoor areas.

## ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The architectural character of the older developments in Yosemite Valley—such as Curry Village and Yosemite Village—established Rustic design in Yosemite Valley. Until about 1946, Rustic design was used to varying degrees in the Valley, depending on practical needs as well as site conditions. National Park Service Rustic buildings were designed to blend with their natural setting, using materials and colors found in the landscape. The early buildings and structures at Camp Curry, including the welcome sign, the Registration Building, Mother Curry Bungalow, and the Foster Curry Cabin, are distinguished by simple roof forms, wood shingle roofs, and unstripped logs. Many of the buildings in Yosemite Village make use of local materials found in the landscape and hand-crafted construction techniques. These buildings were heavily influenced by the work of contemporary California architects such as Bernard Maybeck and the brothers

Greene and Greene. The Ahwahnee combines Rustic design with contemporary technology. Its façades are composed of granite-clad piers that are joined by concrete infill walls stained and formed to simulate wood. Other rustic elements include low-slope hipped roofs, exposed concrete roof framing elements designed to simulate wood rafters, form board concrete simulating wood siding, wood windows arranged in regular patterns, and natural colors.

Later architecture in Yosemite Valley departed dramatically from the Rustic tradition. The buildings at Yosemite Lodge, completed in 1956, were built in the Mission 66 style. The registration building, lounge, cafeteria, restaurant, and souvenir shop buildings are distinguished by light steel-frame construction and large expanses of glass. Their goal was sturdy, low-maintenance, permanent structures that could serve the modern-day needs of the traveling public on a large scale (McClelland 1998).



MOTHER CURRY'S CABIN





The Ahwahnee with backdrop of cliff to north (2004) GH

#### GUIDELINES

- Design buildings to blend in with their natural setting. Employ the colors, texture, and materials found in the surrounding landscape. For example, the scale of the uncoursed rubble masonry of The Ahwahnee echoes its natural setting.
- Designers should seek inspiration from the rich examples of Rustic design that exist in the park, and develop contemporary expressions employing Rustic principles. Use of current building technology and materials will contribute to architectural character, but should be used with appropriateness and restraint.
- Designers should analyze the architectural character of a developed area and identify the unique response to the natural setting that guided the original development. When building in developed areas, continue the essence of the spatial order, massing, and character using compatible forms, materials, and color.
- Natural weathering of wood is a basic characteristic of Rustic architecture. Avoid imitation of natural materials, such as concrete made to look like stone, or plastic wood with simulated grain. If plastic lumber is used, it must be finished in such a way that allows weathering over time. Form board concrete has historical precedent in Yosemite Valley and is an appropriate treatment. Refer to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* for more guidelines.

#### BUILDING SHAPE + MASSING

Simple building forms are found throughout Yosemite Valley. These buildings are designed to blend with their natural surroundings, serving as backdrops for park activities. The historic approach to shape and massing for large buildings has been to limit the size of each building and accommodate program requirements in series of linked structures. Simple rectangular shapes and rustic details help to further reduce the scale of large buildings.

In general, within the developed areas, buildings have been designed with consistent shape and massing. Features vary within a restrained vocabulary of rustic forms. An example of this can be found in the three early buildings in the Yosemite Village administrative center—the National Park Service Administration Building, the Museum, and the post office.

#### GUIDELINES

- Building massing should be compatible with the setting, such as the background of cliffs and monumental forms of the Valley.
- Plan shapes should be rectangular with variations from the basic shape generated by the architectural program.
- Orientation of rooms or major spaces that depart from the overall organization of the plan give emphasis to the importance of the natural world beyond. For example, the axis of the dining room at The Ahwahnee was adjusted from the building's overall plan arrangement in order to take advantage of views of Upper Yosemite Fall.
- The size of a building should not overwhelm its immediate natural setting. It should reflect a balance between the functional requirements of the building and the capacity of the site. Where a program calls for an excessively large floor area, it should be broken down into logical elements that fit the site.

- Use of building elements that project or surround portions of a building such as verandahs, porches, and raised terraces serve to break down the mass of a large building.
- The height of new buildings should not be radically different from adjacent, existing structures. National Park Service review of building height is required.



TOP + BOTTOM *Cascades cabins, 2003 (no longer extant)*

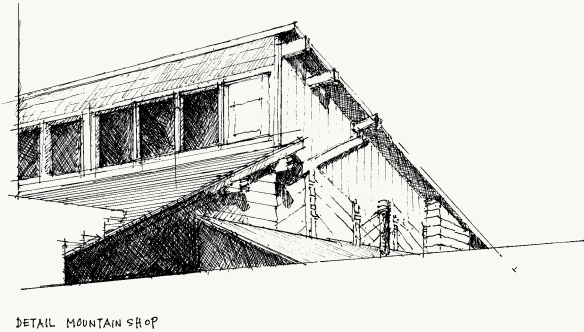
### ROOF FORM + MATERIALS

While a wide range of roof forms are found throughout Yosemite Valley, each developed area is unified by a predominant roof form, material, and detailing. The most common roof is a simple gable, usually of medium pitch, with moderate overhangs. Steeper roof pitches are sometimes combined with dormers. Less common are hipped roofs, found at The Ahwahnee and Curry Village, and jerkinhead roofs, formerly found at Yosemite Lodge and other areas.

Exposed roof sheathing and framing is seen consistently throughout the Valley. Rough-sawn framing members and decking weather well and contribute to a sense of unity throughout developed areas. The use of overscaled, wood framing elements is a design element that was used during the Rustic design era.

Historically, roofs in the Valley were clad with wood shingles or shakes with the exception of The Ahwahnee, which has a slate roof. On historic buildings with wood shingle roofs, wood replacement shingles are used. Asphalt shingles are commonly used to satisfy fire protection requirements of a Class A fire resistant roof.

Metal roofing has little precedent in Yosemite Valley and is not an appropriate replacement material for historic buildings. It has been used to a limited extent in Yosemite Village at the maintenance buildings and the dorms at Lower Tecoya. Metal roofs are found in the remote higher elevations, where heavy snowfall and fire are important issues. Metal is less appropriate in Valley locations because of its reflectivity when viewed from a distance, especially from the surrounding cliffs. Weathering metal and durable coatings can address this concern for excess reflectivity. Careful site review of these issues is required.



TOP LEFT Mountain Shop clerestory at Curry Village BOTTOM LEFT Museum, Yosemite Village (2004) GH RIGHT Small building with jerkinhead roof (2004) GH

**GUIDELINES**

- New roofs should be compatible with the character of existing structures. Gable and shed roof forms of medium pitch are recommended. Hipped roofs are only appropriate in areas where they are already in use.
- The roof form should consist of a simple geometry. Valleys and intersections should be kept to a minimum. Roof accessories and structures such as chimneys and mechanical equipment should be combined where possible and placed so as not to restrict or block snow movement. Recommended details include exposed framing elements with rough-sawn texture. Exposed structure that is oversized establishes a rustic character.
- In buildings with steeper roofs, the use of dormers can provide usable interior space without increasing the overall height of the building.

- The dormer form, either gable or shed, can be used to break down the scale of a large roof. However, gable and shed dormers have different snow shedding characteristics: the shed dormer allows snow to flow evenly past it right down the roof, while gable dormers divert snow off to the sides. In order to facilitate snow shedding, gable dormers must be spaced farther apart than shed dormers.
- Clerestory windows and skylights are useful for letting daylight penetrate interior spaces. Their location and detailing should recognize the hazards of snow and ice accumulation and resulting potential for moisture penetration.
- When replacing shingles on historic structures, use shingles of the same material (wood or slate) existing on the building.



*Superintendent's House (Residence I), Yosemite Village (1942) YRL-RA*

- Due to fire concerns, asphalt shingles are an appropriate roof material for new buildings. However, use asphalt shingles that are complementary to those on existing (and in many cases historic) buildings in terms of color, texture, and thickness of the edge.
- Metal roofing has little precedent in the Valley, and would be inconsistent with the character and scale of most developed areas. It can produce undesirable reflections when viewed from above. If circumstances require a metal roof, it should be a standing seam roof treated with a non-reflective coating in an approved color.
- Primary entrances to buildings must be protected from rain and snow. This issue must be addressed during the earliest studies of roof design.
- Ensure that roofs covering sidewalks do not deposit water onto walking surfaces. In winter conditions, this water can freeze, causing dangerous conditions for pedestrians.



Exterior wall of Administration Building, Yosemite Village (2004) GH

## BUILDING EXTERIOR

The use of natural weathering materials, such as wood and stone, on a building exterior establishes a visual connection between buildings and the natural setting. The major components of a building's exterior are the walls, base, windows, entrances, and porches.

### Walls

Wood used for wall siding, columns (either logs or sawn timbers), and exposed roof framing is consistent throughout the Valley. A variety of wood wall siding materials is used in the Valley, including sugar pine shakes, redwood and cedar shingles, vertical board and batten, and horizontal board patterns. Siding patterns often change between the first and second floors. Boards are typically rough sawn. Since the 1920s and 1930s, different protective finishes were used for wood siding, including clear oil, clear stains, and paint. While these finishes continue to be used today, pigmented coatings have become the most reliable long-term protection.

Granite masonry has often been used as foundation cladding or as a rusticated lower story wall. At The Ahwahnee, stone was used extensively to clad the massive piers that rise the full height of the building. These applications of native granite create a strong link to the cliffs and boulders that are its immediate background.

### Base

The protected base or weathering base is an important unifying element for buildings in Yosemite Valley. It is not only a character-defining feature, but also a functional element that extends the life of the lower wall cladding. A base of natural weathered rock similar to that found in the adjacent landscape visually anchors the building to the ground and protects the vulnerable upper walls from accumulated snow and wind-driven rain splash.

The protected base has historical precedent in Yosemite Village and Curry Village. A contemporary treatment has been used at Yosemite Lodge. A protected base visually anchors buildings to the ground and separates

wood walls from accumulated snow and rain splash. In Yosemite Village, stone masonry clads the entire ground floor of the Museum, the post office, and the Administration Building. This treatment helps to visually lower the overall height of the buildings. Concrete formed by rough sawn boards results in a strong textured surface. This has been used not only at The Ahwahnee but also at the extension of the Mountain Room Restaurant at Yosemite Lodge.

### Windows, Entrances + Porches

Window size and design will vary due to functional and architectural requirements. Lodging and recreational buildings require more modestly scaled windows than public buildings. Window scale and proportion should be more vertical than horizontal. Divided lights are not required and are discouraged.



Detail of Administration Building, Yosemite Village



Detail of Medical Clinic, Yosemite Village (2004) GH



Historic Residence, Yosemite Village

On major public buildings, entrances are often identified as important elements of the façade through the use of porches and verandahs. These elements give additional form to the façade, and indicate to visitors the location of the entrances, and afford visitors protection from the weather. Smaller buildings frequently incorporate modest porches or shed roofs over entrance doors.

The use of color to blend structures with their natural setting is an important principle. Historically, National Park Service buildings have been stained or painted a standard brown color, and their roofs have had unpainted wood shingles.

#### GUIDELINES

- Façade design should strive for compatibility with adjacent buildings as well as the natural setting.
- Buildings should have a protected base made from either granite or board-formed concrete, about 20 inches above grade.
- Granite used on new buildings should have the same composition, color, and texture as the granite in Yosemite Valley. As it is not permitted to gather granite from within the park, Sierra granite must come from quarries outside the park. However, small quantities of granite may be available as a result of other construction or maintenance projects within the park. When possible, use weathered granite.

- Many of the historical façade patterns that have been used in the Valley, including resawn boards, shingles or shakes, are appropriate for new buildings. Wood with resawn texture creates a rustic surface that blends checks and surface blemishes. The texture can vary from rough-sawn size found in the beginning stages of the milling process to a fine-sawn texture. An appropriate texture is recommended for wood wall cladding.
- Entrances to buildings should be clearly defined, easily accessible and should offer protection from the weather. An entrance located in a porch allows a more gracious transition to the outdoors.
- Continue the careful selection of color as a way to make buildings blend with and recede into the natural setting. In some developed areas, color has been used to establish an identity for each site. While more variety of color can be used, restraint should be exercised to achieve harmony with the natural setting.

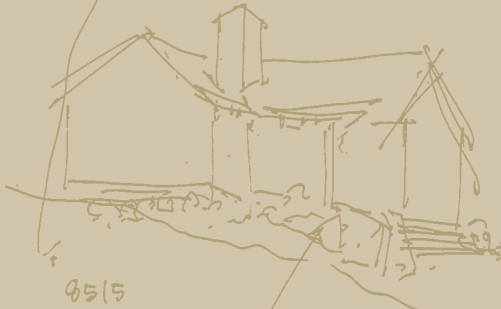
<sup>10</sup> Palustrine refers to marsh or wetland.

<sup>11</sup> While benches other than logs were uncommon at the turn of the century, two granite benches did exist. Clark's Bench was carved of granite in 1911 and set beside Northside Drive with a view of Yosemite Falls. A granite bench was built for the garden behind the Museum in 1932 and moved to the cemetery in 1936 (NPS 2003).



seems to hold more answers, suggestions  
of enduring attitudes  
blogs to help inspire sense of place  
OVER TIME

[KEY]



IMPORTANCE OF SITE  
SPECIFIC RESPONSE -  
ADAPTING VISIONS TO  
BUDGETS  
VARY SUBSTANTIALLY ACCORDING TO  
SITE.

← porch edges into rock

**YOSEMITE VILLAGE** *structures to the ground.*

**INTRODUCTION 95**

*protected base expands  
blends into rocks.*

**SETTING 98**

+ 9512 - porch

**Natural Systems + Features 98**

+ 9510 - stairs, porch & wall

**Scenic Views 98**

**Vegetation 99**

**LANDSCAPE USES + STRUCTURES 100**

**Land Use + Spatial Organization 100**

**Circulation 101**

**DEVELOPED AREAS 102**

**Central Village Administrative Area 103**

**Residential Areas 109**

**Maintenance, Service + Storage Areas 115**

*BACK TO DEVELOP AFT BUDGETS OR BUDGETS.*

stopped @ 8500 (1.25 hrs)



BALCONIES CARVED FROM  
OVER ALL MASS - NOT ADDED.  
PRESERVES INTEGRITY OF FORM

ATTN: ATTORNEY ROW HOMES.



consistent pitch

OVERLEAF Sentinel Rock and Rangers' Club after snowstorm (1935) YRL-RA

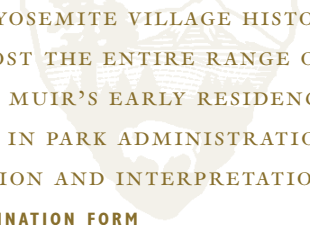
variations of a theme  
massing consistent  
materials vary  
break-up of facade consistent  
(where materials change)



## YOSEMITE VILLAGE

THE PRESENT-DAY Yosemite Village originated in the 1920s as a replacement for the outdated, 19th century Old Village. Increasing numbers of visitors put pressure on the National Park Service to improve and develop new facilities, such as museums, observation stations, checking stations, comfort stations, and administration buildings. The old Yosemite Village, prone to flooding, was moved away from the river and out of the open meadows. Its new site on the sunny north side of the Valley, under the trees and against the valley walls, was less conspicuous from popular viewpoints above the valley.

The plan for the new Yosemite Village was devised by Myron Hunt, Daniel Hull, and Thomas Vint, architects and landscape architects for the National Park Service. Drawing from the best of contemporary American and British town planning, three separate areas were created for administrative, residential, and maintenance uses. The plan called for the careful selection of building sites and an adherence to an architectural theme that harmonized construction with the natural environment.



THE YOSEMITE VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT, THROUGH BOTH SITES AND STRUCTURES, REPRESENTS ALMOST THE ENTIRE RANGE OF YOSEMITE HISTORY SINCE 1855, INCLUDING EARLY HOMESTEADING, JOHN MUIR'S EARLY RESIDENCE IN THE PARK, DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL PARK, THE ARMY'S ROLE IN PARK ADMINISTRATION, AND THE EVOLUTION OF EARLY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ADMINISTRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESOURCE OF YOSEMITE. **NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
• **NOMINATION FORM**

Buildings for the park's administration and concessioner services were to be placed around a central plaza that provided parking. By 1924, with the construction of a new administration building, the new village center was beginning to take shape. Myron Hunt's administration building was a modest Craftsman structure with a lower story and concrete foundation faced with boulders, an upper story of shingled walls, and a broad



*Museum with Yosemite Falls, Yosemite Village (1938) YRL*

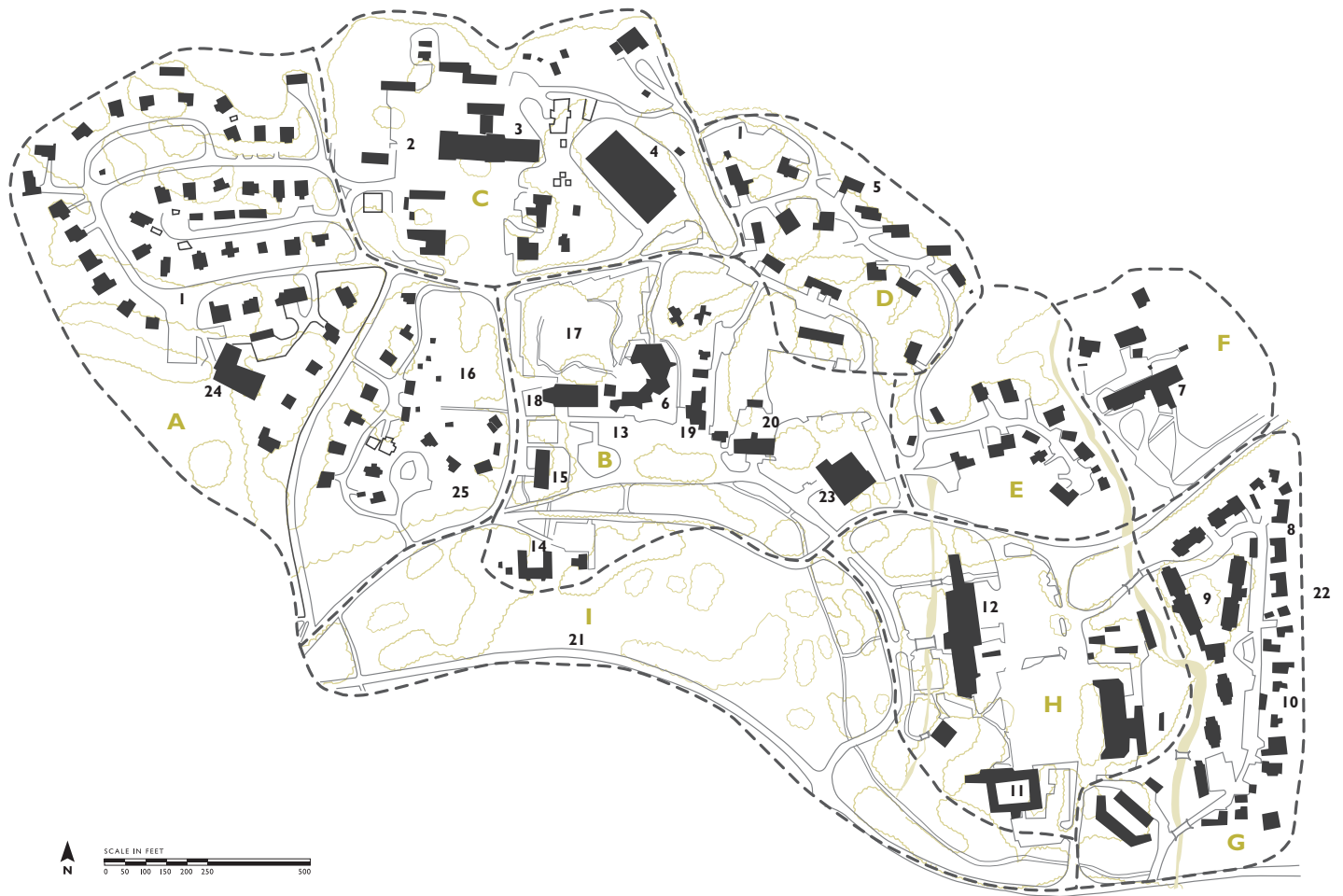
sloping roof supported on exposed log purlins. This building established the particular mode of harmonious Rustic design to which later buildings in the Village would conform. The construction of a post office and museum followed within two years. The three government buildings and the Rangers' Club of 1921 created the nucleus for the new civic center.

A separate residential subdivision was laid out adjacent to the civic area, with curvilinear streets and Arts & Crafts-style bungalows. A new maintenance area was also planned to the north of the central plaza. Each area of the Village was well separated by vegetation, topography, and design, to keep each land-use zone independent of the others (NPS 2004d).

By 1925, Yosemite National Park had more visitors and automobiles than any other park. To accommodate the greater visitation, Yosemite Village continued to grow. Later, during the Mission 66 period, the Village gained a new visitor center, store, restaurant, and other facilities. A few years later, the civic plaza was converted to a pedestrian precinct and cars were excluded from the center of the Village.



Historic residences, Yosemite Village (2004) GH



- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p>A Historic District Residential Area<br/>         B Visitor Services and Administrative Core<br/>         C Maintenance, Service, and Storage<br/>         D Upper Tecoya<br/>         E Middle Tecoya<br/>         F Medical Center<br/>         G Lower Tecoya<br/>         H Village Store and Garage<br/>         I Visitor Arrival/Meadow</p> | <p>1 Historic Residences, Garages, and Woodsheds<br/>         2 Utility Buildings—Barns, Sheds, Shops<br/>         3 Utility Building #527 (Fort Yosemite)<br/>         4 Concessioner Warehouse<br/>         5 Upper Tecoya Residences<br/>         6 Visitor Center<br/>         7 Yosemite Medical Clinic<br/>         8 Cottages and Garages in Tecoya<br/>         9 Tecoya Dormitories<br/>         10 Ahwahnee Row Houses and Garages<br/>         11 Concessioner's General Offices<br/>         12 Village Store</p> | <p>13 Area converted to Pedestrian Mall<br/>         14 Rangers' Club<br/>         15 Park Headquarters/Administrative Building<br/>         16 Pioneer Cemetery<br/>         17 Museum Garden<br/>         18 Museum<br/>         19 Ansel Adams Gallery<br/>         20 Post Office<br/>         21 Northside Drive<br/>         22 Ahwahnee Meadow<br/>         23 Degnan-Donohue Restaurant<br/>         24 Elementary School<br/>         25 Village Drive</p> |
|---|---|---|

## SETTING

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### NATURAL SYSTEMS + FEATURES

Yosemite Village is found on the warm, north side of Yosemite Valley, at the base of a gentle alluvial fan formed over the millennia by debris from Indian Canyon and Lehamite Creek. A year-round creek flows from north to south across the Village and may be a source of wet soils and pavement subsidence just west of the Village Store. Along much of the reach through the Village the creek bed is obscured and unavailable as an interpretive element. Today, the village site is above the floodplain of the Merced River, though it is within the floodplain of Indian Creek.

The other major natural system influencing and limiting development in the Village is the close proximity of the cliffs and talus slopes along the northern edge of the Village. This area continues to be subject to periodic rockfall which continues to influence land use and services.

### SCENIC VIEWS

Yosemite Village is set in its present location to partly take advantage of the spectacular view of Upper Yosemite Fall. The main civic plaza of the Village is oriented toward the waterfall, and it is visible from many areas of the central village. There are also impressive views to such scenic features as Lost Arrow Spire, Indian Canyon, Sentinel Rock, and Royal Arches, some of which are now obscured by the growth of conifers. Historic views to Yosemite Falls remain, although the growth of vegetation within the plaza areas has reduced the number of vantage points and open views that existed historically.

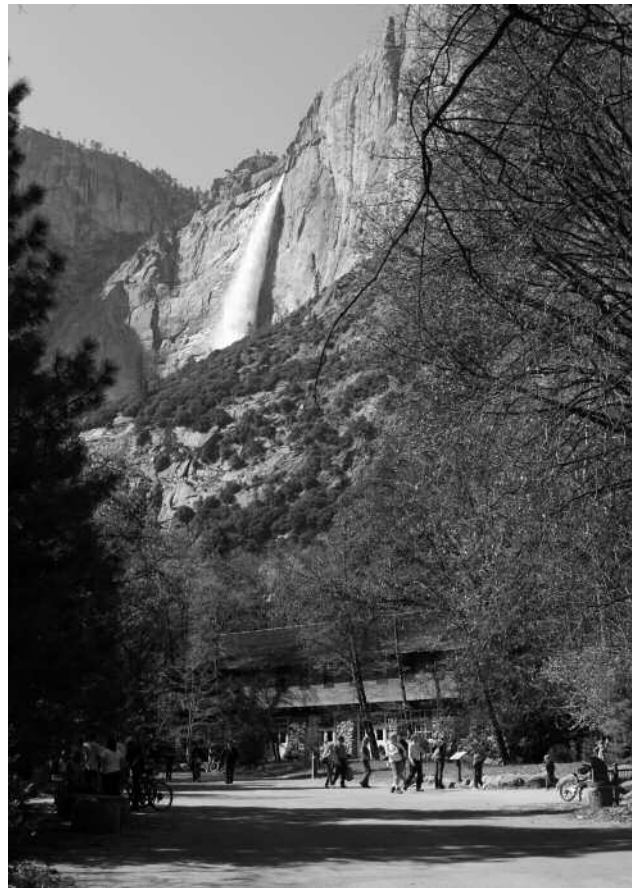
Key views from the Village include:

- Views from the plaza area up to Yosemite Point, Upper Yosemite Fall, Half Dome, and Sentinel Rock
- Views from the NPS residential area to Yosemite Falls and Yosemite Point

- Views from Lower Tecoya across Ahwahnee Meadow to North Dome, Half Dome, and Glacier Point (McClelland 1998)

### GUIDELINES

- Preserve and maintain the documented historic views from the public and residential areas of Yosemite Village through vegetation management and responsive siting of new structures.
- When siting new or expanded buildings, pathways, plazas, and related landscape features, orient to historic and potential scenic views.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on views.



Post office and Upper Yosemite Fall, Yosemite Village (2004) GH



Canyon live oak

## VEGETATION

The original vegetation in the Yosemite Village area was mostly oak woodland, interspersed with stands of mixed conifers, primarily ponderosa pines and incense-cedars. A primary goal in the original design and development of the Village was to use the site's natural vegetation to screen structures and delineate public spaces.

New planting between 1916 and World War II emphasized the use of native vegetation (collected and transplanted from nearby areas) arranged in artistic compositions (NPS 2004). Specimen trees such as sequoias were planted and identified near the Museum and the Rangers' Club for the benefit of visitors. The goal was to mirror natural plant communities by massing plants in groupings commonly found in nature. This approach to planting design became known as landscape naturalization and was employed in many other national parks during this period. By 1930 it included a specific prescription of non-native plants, for both scientific and aesthetic reasons. Foundation plantings around public buildings were designed to enhance the rustic façades, rather than obscure them behind a wall of vegetation.

In the residential area, vegetation was used somewhat differently. Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. recommended siting structures under the canopy of black oaks to screen the visual impacts of the development when viewed from Glacier Point and other elevated points. Houses were well set back on main streets, with significant numbers of black oaks dispersed over the lawn areas. This lent an aesthetic unity and overall character to the area. Vegetation, both natural and planted, was also used to emphasize the divisions between different zones within the Village, and to screen the utility areas from public view. Today, the condition of many individual oak trees in the residential area has been compromised by excess water, a result of maintaining lawns under trees that are accustomed to dry summers (NPS 2004).

Management of vegetation to preserve views from the Village was most likely an important concern in the early years, since the views from the plaza were influential in the selection of the Village site. Today however, much



Oak trees in Yosemite Village Historic District residential area (2004) TP

of the formerly open plaza has been revegetated. As these later plantings mature, they sometimes obscure historic views from the civic plaza area. Vegetation also obscures the early Rustic buildings on the plaza, reducing their ability to define the plaza and imbue it with the presence of the civic administration of the park. As in other parts of the Valley, pine and cedar are slowly crowding out stands of California black oak. Although some vegetation from the historic period survives in the Village (specifically the black oaks and some foundation plantings), much of the existing vegetation post-dates the period of historical significance (NPS 2004).

## GUIDELINES

- Analyze vegetation to distinguish plantings from the historic period from those post-dating the period of significance. Identify health and hazard conditions. The results should be used in site planning and vegetation management efforts such as clearing and trimming to preserve significant views, as directed by the park resources staff.
- Selectively clear conifers like incense-cedars encroaching around buildings. This would provide more light to the interiors of some buildings and would open up views to the outside.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on vegetation.



Oak Lane in Yosemite Village Historic District residential area (2004) RF

## LANDSCAPE USES / STRUCTURES

### LAND USE + SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

The plan of Yosemite Village was based on segregating land-use areas into administrative, residential, and maintenance zones. These zones were arranged to be conveniently near one another but discreetly defined and separated by circulation patterns, topography, vegetation, and cluster siting. Spatial organization within the Village was largely a response to existing topography and vegetation.

The central administrative zone of Yosemite Village has always accommodated visitor uses of many types. Although there are no overnight accommodations in the Village, there are several restaurants, shops, the main park visitor center, photography studios, the park museum, post office, and the park administration building. Central to the design of this area is the open civic plaza, defined by the façades of public buildings and reinforced by foundation plantings, as well as natural topography and vegetation (NPS 2004d). The Village plaza created a sense of arrival and a sense of place for the entire Yosemite Village. By design, the plaza was a civic zone in which the public administration of the park was symbolically expressed through the architectural façades of important government buildings. These included the Administration Building, the Museum, and the post

office, all important public service buildings. The plaza was used during the early years as the parking area for the Village center.

National Park Service and the concessioner utility areas each have residential zones associated with them, including Upper, Middle, and Lower Tecoya and the Historic District residential area. The residential areas are separated from the utility yards and the civic plaza, remaining conveniently within walking distance of both. While the open character of the plaza encourages views out towards landscape features, the residential areas feature curvilinear, tree-lined streets that encourage inward views. These more private, intimate spaces enhance the residential character of these zones.

The National Park Service maintenance area to the north of the civic plaza is located up into the rockfall zone at the base of the talus slope, at the north edge of the Village. The concessioner utility area to the east of the civic plaza was set apart from the central civic zone. This area has since become the main point of automobile arrival into the Village, dominated by a large parking lot east of the Village Store that is visible from Glacier Point. This significantly alters the historic design and intent of the Village by routing visitors to a utility area that was not meant to be a primary public space.

In terms of broad patterns and relationships, the overall spatial organization of the Village remains true to the original design. The compactness of the overall

plan allows the residential, public, and utility zones to be separate, but conveniently within walking distance. The originally designated land use areas remain the same. Conversion of the central civic plaza from a parking lot to a broad promenade and the modifications to the visitor arrival sequence are the most significant changes to the original concept.

The *Yosemite Valley Plan* calls for removal of the Village Store, the Art Activity Center, the Concessioner's general offices, and the garage. In their place will be a new visitor information and orientation facility, consisting of visitor service facilities, an information facility, and transit center. Commercial and regional transit bus stops would be a short walking distance east of the complex. This will be the place where day-use visitors will park in Yosemite Valley, and it will provide them with an introduction to the whole park. They will be encouraged to leave their private vehicles in a large day-use parking area (now at Camp 6), and take various forms of public transportation to destinations throughout the Valley.

#### GUIDELINES

- Preserve the original organization of land use zones.
- Recognize and reinforce the unique spatial organization in each zone or sub-area.
- Identify, define, and reinforce the edges of the original civic plaza so that it is maintained as an active and vital historic element.
- Redefine and extend the southern and eastern parts of the existing plaza to function as the major arrival space for visitors to the Valley.
- Provide for logical and easy wayfinding along paths enhanced with native plants and occasional rest and viewpoints leading from parking areas to the expanded Village center.
- Appropriately furnish outdoor places for visitors to gather and view the surrounding Valley.
- Locate and design new buildings to create a sense of arrival for visitors.

#### CIRCULATION

Circulation within Yosemite Village is characterized by a hierarchy of street and path types. Village Drive was a wide, generous road that historically gave onto the open, wide space of the civic plaza. Today a road separates the plaza area from the cemetery and residential subdivision to the west. This road leads directly to the NPS maintenance area, offering direct access for service vehicles, without passing through the public or residential areas of the village.

The approach to Yosemite Village was originally from the west, on what is now Village Drive. Arriving at the plaza area, visitors were presented with the façade of the Museum, flanked by the Administration Building to the left. Looking up, Yosemite Point and Upper Yosemite Fall were looming directly above.

Within the gently sloping plaza area, pedestrian zones transition from relatively narrow walkways to broad irregularly-shaped asphalt areas that obscure a clear circulation hierarchy. The area has retained the feel of a roadway for vehicles rather than a pedestrian precinct.

In the National Park Service historic residential area, narrow, curbsless streets typically follow a curvilinear grid that generally aligns along the topography. The fronts of houses face the streets, while the backs and garages face on to service alleys, which are narrower in width and are often cul-de-sacs. Some houses are sited on short cul-de-sacs, branching off main streets.



Roadway in Yosemite Village Historic District residential area (2004) GH



Historic residences, Yosemite Village (2004) GH

In the Lower Tecoya area, the concessioners' Ahwahnee Row houses face directly onto Ahwahnee Meadow. Between the houses and the meadow is a trail, formerly a narrow street. The houses have a wide alley behind them, which also services a group of larger, dormitory style residences to the west. Some of these houses are screened by dogwoods and shrubs.

In the National Park Service maintenance area, and to a degree in the concessioner utility area, the arrangement of larger buildings creates rectangular yards and broad, straight streets with no sidewalks. This pattern is essentially a formalization of the utilitarian nature of early roads and circulation through these areas.

Overall, there is a high degree of integrity related to circulation in Yosemite Village. The elaborate hierarchy of street types is still intact in the residential and utility areas. The change in the main entrance to the Village and the creation of the pedestrian plaza area are the greatest changes from the historic period (NPS 2004).

#### GUIDELINES

- Develop an arrival sequence for the transportation center with a clear circulation system and an appropriate landscape character. Elements including the entrance road, parking, walkways, paved open spaces (plazas or gathering areas), and public buildings should be linked naturally to the existing development.
- The arrival sequence and layout of approach roads should allow visitors to see the new visitor complex, or an intermediate marker, from their cars, before entering the day parking area.
- Reinforce the use of a clear hierarchy of street types, including wide main drives, narrower residential streets and alleys, and pedestrian paths.
- Retain the character of roads in the residential areas, using minimal road striping and curbless edge treatments. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on circulation.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for guidelines on parking.

## DEVELOPED AREAS

For these guidelines, Yosemite Village will be discussed in terms of its three distinct usage zones: the Central Village Administrative Area, the Residential Areas, and the Maintenance, Service, and Storage Areas. This section provides guidelines for these groups of developed areas that share common architectural and landscape features.

The Central Village Administrative Area incorporates NPS administration and visitor services buildings as well as commercial facilities for the public. It consists of the historic Village center, the Village Store, the concessioner garage facility, and the planned visitor information and orientation facility and parking area (formerly at Camp 6).

The Residential Areas consist of the Upper, Middle, and Lower Tecoya areas, as well as the Historic District residential area. The Medical Clinic is discussed in the context of Upper and Middle Tecoya because it has relatively consistent geographical conditions. The Lower Tecoya area consists of distinctly different soil and forest conditions.

The Maintenance, Service, and Storage Areas consist of the maintenance yard area north of the central plaza, and adjacent buildings.



Visitors in civic plaza in Yosemite Village with the Ansel Adams Gallery on right (2004) RF



## CENTRAL VILLAGE ADMINISTRATIVE AREA

### Setting

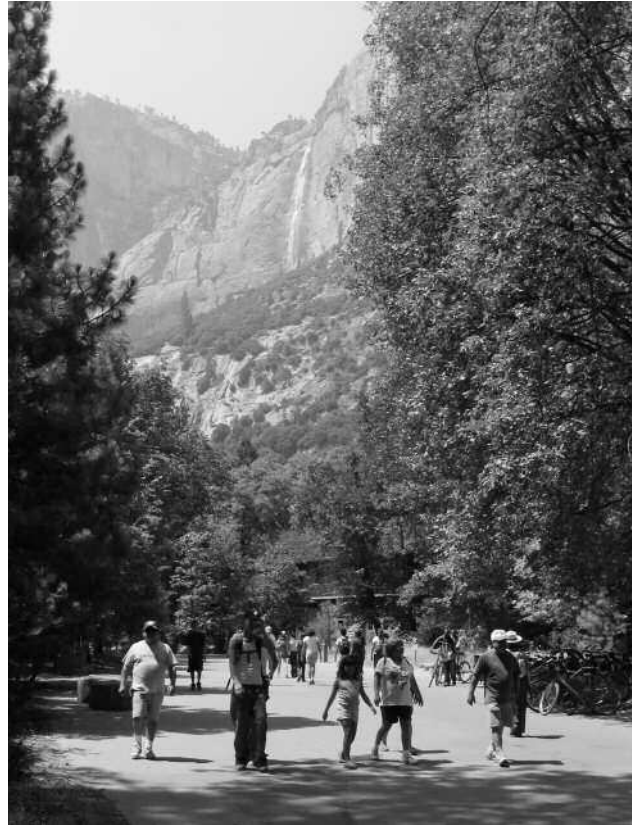
At the heart of the Central Village Administrative Area is the civic plaza, with its historic buildings and contemporary visitor facilities. These buildings are oriented along a pedestrian promenade that widens into gathering spaces at the entrances to buildings. Except for some graceful black oaks and tall conifers, the landscape of the area lacks a distinct character (Land and Community Associates 1994).

The area just southeast of the civic plaza and extending over the Camp 6 area will become, per the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, the major transportation hub for the entire Valley. Early preliminary plans for the area include new visitor service and orientation buildings, a transit center, a large day-visitor parking area, and tour and Valley shuttle bus parking. Southside Drive will be realigned to lead visitors right into the main day-use parking lot.

In the Camp 6 area, the topography is generally uniform, with consistent vegetation patterns reflecting area-wide soil and ground water conditions. The visitor information and service facilities to the northeast would be on the slightly higher gently sloping Indian Creek alluvial fan.

Soil differences probably account for the prominence of large mature black oak toward the western end of this area. Upslope toward the Indian Creek depositional fan the oaks are smaller. Conifers are dominant as one approaches the area around the Degnan's complex. Further to the east, toward The Ansel Adams Gallery and the Degnan's complex, the base of the talus line (as designated by the *Yosemite Valley Plan*) angles from the northwest to the southeast. Remnants of a riparian vegetation corridor can be seen along Indian Creek.

Ground and surface runoff could affect this area in terms of vegetation, flooding, and pollution, since the proposed large parking area will be upslope from the Merced River, and partially within the 100-year flood-plain. A wet ground zone just west of the Village Store



Civic plaza, Yosemite Village, looking towards Upper Yosemite Fall (2004) RF

has caused pavement settlement, suggesting a zone of ground water migrating from the Indian Creek alluvial fan through Camp 6 toward the Merced River. Given the existing topography, soils, and vegetation, much of the southern portion of the area, under undeveloped conditions, probably provides a sponge function, absorbing flows in times of flooding. There is potential for flooding in parts of the Yosemite Village main parking area. Even in non-flood conditions, pollutants from the proposed day-use parking area could reach the nearby Merced River through runoff and snowmelt.

### GUIDELINES

- The flood retarding function of alluvial soils in the area should be restored and/or protected to the greatest extent possible from being covered over by impervious paving.
- Layout and design of the future arrival complex should take into account the possibility of periodic flooding especially north and south of existing Northside Drive, in the vicinity of the lower reaches of Indian Creek, the drainage swale west of the Village Store, and the Merced River flood plain. The layout



*Rangers' Club, Yosemite Village*

should avoid placing structures in or covering over these two smaller drainages. Both should be restored hydrologically and in terms of riparian vegetation.

- For the design of the new day-use parking area, where wet soil, high ground water or potential flooding areas exist, the roads and bays should be aligned roughly parallel to contour allowing for continuous unpaved “green” swales protecting existing vegetation (especially oak trees and riparian vegetation) and allowing for ground water recharge. Raised pedestrian boardwalks, incorporating wetland interpretive displays, could provide for pedestrian traffic in these unpaved swales.
- For maintenance, structural stability, and vegetation management purposes, locate buildings and roads in the most stable and lowest maintenance areas.
- Refer to Parking in Unifying Elements for more guidelines on parking.

### **Siting + Building Orientation for the Central Village Administrative Area**

In the center of Yosemite Village, the 1920s-era public buildings—the Administration Building, the post office, the Rangers’ Club, and the Museum— form two sides of an open civic plaza, with generous open space between them. The Museum, the Visitor Center, The Ansel Adams Gallery, the Wilderness Center, and the post office define the north edge of the plaza, roughly parallel with the canyon walls. The Administration Building is oriented north-south, closing the west end of the plaza. Later buildings such as the Degan’s complex and the Village Store are sited at the eastern end of the plaza. The original plaza continues as a promenade to the Village Store, functioning today as the central spine of the Village center. Canyon walls to the north form the backdrop for buildings on the plaza. The central open space captures expansive views of the north canyon walls and Upper Yosemite Fall.

As called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, it is anticipated that Yosemite Village will become the main arrival point for visitors to the Yosemite Valley. This will generate additional development at Yosemite Village, including a transportation center, a new visitor orientation and information center, and a substantial new parking area. Its significance as the point of arrival for most park visitors will have a major impact on the integrity of Yosemite Village.

#### GUIDELINES

- Planning and design of the new visitor complex should take into account significant elements of the historic civic plaza, such as views of Upper Yosemite Fall. The existing spatial organization should be extended. The edges of major outdoor spaces should be defined by buildings, major vegetation, and views.
- New outdoor spaces should be inspired by the overall setting of the village and should be appropriate to the buildings they relate to.
- Preserve and link the scale and spatial organization of the historic civic plaza area with new buildings that are compatible with the historic architectural elements.
- Redefine the historic civic plaza bounded by the Administration Building, the Museum, the Visitor Center, and the Wilderness Center and relate it to the new development. This space should be used for non-commercial, social, educational, and interpretive activities.



Entrance to Museum, Yosemite Village (2004) GH

#### Architectural Character in the Central Village Administrative Area

Yosemite Village is one of the largest and most significant collections of National Park Service Rustic style buildings in the National Park System. The basic principle of Rustic architecture—predominant in the national parks between 1916 and 1942—was that buildings should blend with the landscape. Structures should emphasize a horizontal aspect. Vegetation enhanced the natural appearance of the building and united it with the landscape. Oversized masonry and timbers were used to assure that the image of the building fit and matched its natural setting.

The visual effects of natural materials and colors were fully exploited by these early Rustic buildings. The upper walls were clad in shingles stained dark brown with special coursing patterns. The rough granite boulders and river-run stones used on walls, foundations, chimneys, steps, and porches harmonized with the towering granite cliffs surrounding the Valley. They varied in size and were laid in a rubble bond, weathered side exposed, with a raked mortar joint that emphasized the natural size and shape of individual stones. The use of timber in various forms—thick logs, rough-milled lumber, shingles, and shakes—much of it stained dark brown—harmonized with the bark of ponderosa pines and other conifers of the Yosemite forests. From a distance, the effect is nearly one of camouflage. While it does not eliminate the intrusion of buildings on the natural scene, it measurably reduces the intrusion, which was the intent (NPS 2004).

Examples of Rustic style buildings in Yosemite Village include the Rangers' Club, the Administration Building, the Museum, the post office, National Park Service residential buildings, and a variety of utilitarian buildings and small offices (NPS 2004). The Rangers'



Cornerstone of Museum, Yosemite Village (2004) GH

Club is a two-and-one-half story wood frame structure with granite rubble foundation. Exterior walls are mainly finished with shingles. The building was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987. Although The Ansel Adams Gallery (formerly Best's Studio) is not architecturally significant, it has an entrance porch with a large masonry chimney and seating overlooking the promenade. Other developments in the Village center depart from the historical precedent and make little contribution to the continuity of character in the central space.

#### GUIDELINES

- The early historic buildings are the formal elements of the administrative center. New additions to the complex will be more interactive and less formal for visitors. The architectural character of these new buildings should provide ease, function, and delight, and yet acknowledge the architectural character of the historic buildings located nearby on the civic plaza.
- New development, in recognition of the historic context, should not replicate earlier buildings, but in its overall character endeavor to carry forward their spirit. New development should be compatible with buildings in the historic district in massing and overall character, yet be recognizable as contemporary additions to the Village complex.
- Exterior finishes should include the palette of materials found on the adjacent buildings in the historic center. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on architectural character.

#### Building Shape + Massing for the Central Village Administrative Area

The present-day Village center is a collection of buildings that are not consistent in shape and massing. However, the three original public buildings at the west end of the civic plaza have consistent shape and massing, and create a strong unified presence. The rectangular plan, two-story massing, horizontal emphasis, and robust scale of these buildings are essential features. The Museum has an interesting variation at the west end where the building's mass steps down and is bolstered by a sculptural masonry chimney that flares out to the ground. This flaring motif was employed in early rustic buildings to make a strong connection to the ground.

Non-historic buildings of a later period, such as the Visitor Center, the Degnan's complex and the Village Store, have little in common with the early rustic buildings or with each other.

#### GUIDELINES

- The early historic buildings are a reference for future work at the central Village administrative area.
- The height of new buildings should be limited to two and one half stories, compatible with the historic structures.
- Use porches and secondary massing elements to reduce the apparent height of a building, and to make a strong connection to the ground.
- When programs lead to large buildings that exceed and are not compatible with the reference historic structures, reorganize the program so that the building can be broken down into smaller components.
- Connect structures by covered walkways that link functional relationships and emphasize horizontality. This will help subordinate the complex to its setting.
- Refer to the Unifying Elements for more guidelines on building shape and massing.



MUSEUM · YOSEMITE VILLAGE



POST OFFICE · YOSEMITE VILLAGE

TOP Western end of Museum, Yosemite Village    BOTTOM Plaza elevation of post office, Yosemite Village



Clerestory of Yosemite Lodge gift shop, oriented toward Yosemite Falls (2004) GH

### Roof Form + Material for the Central Village Administrative Area

The simple gable roof of the Administration Building, the Museum, and the post office is a key element of their character. The Administration Building has a large entry porch with a gable roof carried on stone piers. The steep roof pitch of the Rangers' Club is a treatment that was not continued in later buildings, but was used earlier at the unique LeConte Memorial Lodge. Later, non-contributing buildings depart from the historic precedent, resulting in a lack of consistent roof forms, throughout the Village center.

#### GUIDELINES

- Use such historical precedents as the Administration Building, the Museum, and the post office as the reference for roof form.
- Clerestories and skylights such as those used in the Mountain Shop at Curry Village and the Yosemite Lodge Store, are useful in allowing natural light to enter large interior volumes. They can also capture views upward of surrounding landmarks. Refer to Unifying Elements, Roof Form and Materials for more guidelines on clerestories and skylights.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on roof form and materials.



Post office, Yosemite Village (1935) YRL

### Building Exterior for the Central Village Administrative Area

A variety of exterior treatments are used in the Village center including exposed wood structural elements, wood siding with natural brown colors and rough textures, and a stone base or rusticated lower wall.

#### GUIDELINES

- Use such precedents as the Administration Building, the Museum, the post office, and historic residential housing as the inspiration for façade design and use of materials.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on building exterior.

### Site Furnishings for the Central Village Administrative Area

The central Village administrative area will become the central gathering point for all visitors to the park. The design of site furnishings, therefore, should be consistent with Rustic style and



Informal seating, log rounds (2004) TP

must reinforce the historic importance of this area. Today, one finds benches without backs aligned in rows around the civic plaza. These benches consist of painted wood members on low granite pedestals. Signs and educational plaques vary in style and color. These, and pedestrian bollard lights are unrelated to the Rustic style and distract from the setting.

**GUIDELINES**

- Select materials and components appropriate to the importance of this historic place.
- While conforming to Valley standards, seating, barriers, wayside exhibits, etc., can also emphasize the importance of this area by using natural materials that are found on surrounding historic buildings. These could include generously sized granite boulders, slabs, and cedar logs.
- Bench design is especially important, conveying rustic character in the vicinity of the Visitor Information and Orientation Center. Backrests add comfort and should be included in the design of benches. Accessibility standards require the addition of armrests in some benches in each area.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on fences, screens, barriers, benches, grading and drainage, and lighting.

**RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

There are four residential areas for employees in Yosemite Village: Upper Tecoya, Middle Tecoya, Lower Tecoya, and the Historic District residential area.

**Upper, Middle + Lower Tecoya**

This area stretches from the eastern edge of the maintenance area to the Medical Clinic, forming an arc along the contours, across the depositional fan of Indian Creek. Indian Creek divides Middle Tecoya from the Medical Clinic. All three of these areas are upslope from the talus line designated by the *Yosemite Valley Plan* and are therefore within the rockfall zone.

Forest vegetation in the Upper and Middle Tecoya areas consists primarily of black oak, although considerable conifer encroachment is evident. The trees here are more stunted than those on the Valley bottom, presumably due to thin, rocky soils of the young colluvium formation. According to the *Yosemite Valley Plan*,



Ahwahnee Row Houses

this area is of minor scenic quality. Conditions in the Lower Tecoya neighborhood are quite different.

The Lower Tecoya area is almost totally dominated by tall pine and cedar groves. The southerly portions of this area on the nearly flat valley floor could be subject to flooding from the Merced River and the lower reaches of Indian Creek.

*Upper Tecoya*

Upper Tecoya is a housing complex located north and northeast of the administrative center. It contains small, one- or one-and-one-half story detached, single-family, wood-frame residences; wood dormitory buildings; storage facilities for heavy transportation equipment; and a small parking lot. In addition, an area along the northern boundary of Yosemite Village contains a cluster of single-family and duplex units arranged along a curvilinear roadway. The houses, which were built in the 1960s,



TOP LEFT Covered entrance to dorm at Lower Tecoya, Yosemite Village (2004) JM  
 BOTTOM LEFT Roof with shed dormers on dorm at Lower Tecoya (2004) RF

TOP RIGHT Stepped down massing on dorm at Lower Tecoya (2004) RF  
 BOTTOM RIGHT Medical Clinic, Yosemite Village (2004) RF



have vertical wood siding painted gray and composition shingle roofs. Most have attached garages (Land and Community Associates 1994).

### *Middle Tecoya*

Middle Tecoya, located between the medical complex and a large parking lot, was constructed during the 1970s. Most of the residences are one- or one-and-one-half story wood-frame buildings, painted a tan color. They are smaller than other housing types, are more closely spaced, and are sited well with the existing topography. This area has an architectural character that is more contemporary, and less rustic, than the earlier residential developments in the Village. It reflects many features of Bay Area residential design from the post World War II period, such as rectangular forms, flat roofs, large single-pane wood windows, and various patterns of wood siding combined in one building. The houses are virtually concealed from public view by skillful siting on the forest slope, which creates a feeling of a separate neighborhood. Ten residences and their garages contribute to the historical significance of Yosemite Village (Land and Community Associates 1994).

### *Lower Tecoya*

Most of the buildings in Lower Tecoya date from the period of historical significance and include the dorms, apartments and related laundry room, the Ahwahnee Row Houses, cottages, and converted cabins. A series of curvilinear roads connects the housing units (Land and Community Associates 1994).

The Ahwahnee Row Houses are a group of structures built in the 1920s on the east side of Lower Tecoya. Many of these one- and two-story residences have enclosed patios and freestanding wood garages. Screen fencing is visually prominent because of the close spacing of the buildings and the narrowness of the street corridor. The Row Houses form a boundary between a densely developed and coniferous Lower Tecoya area and the open Ahwahnee meadow. The area is described in the 2000 *Yosemite Valley Plan* as one of moderate scenic value.



*Dentist's Residence, Yosemite Village  
(1932) YRL*

To the west of the row houses are four three-story dormitory-type wood buildings and an adjacent kitchen facility. These are more massive than the nearby Ahwahnee

Row Houses. Half of the dormitories in Lower Tecoya were constructed in the late 1920s and significantly altered in the 1930s, while the other half were constructed in the 1930s and remain unchanged (Land and Community Associates 1994).

The Lower Tecoya dorms are long, rectangular, three-story volumes with medium-pitch roofs and small shed dormers that articulate the top story. These relatively large buildings are reduced in scale by their roof form and varied siding patterns. The main roof is a simple gable, with the ridge continuing over projecting bays at the ends of the buildings. Main entrances are placed under gables at the ends of the buildings. The use of a corrugated metal roof is a unique element in the Village. The slate green board and batten exterior walls are a departure from standard National Park Service brown. These features help to unify the group while they differentiate the housing area from the maintenance and commercial facilities that are in close proximity.

The area includes two vehicular and two pedestrian bridges over Indian Creek.

### *The Medical Clinic*

At the east end of Yosemite Village is a medical and dental clinic with related support buildings. The original clinic building was constructed in 1930 as the Lewis Memorial Hospital in the Rustic style. A dental facility was added in 1954. The complex contains the medical facility, a parking lot, a dormitory with a two-story garage beneath, and two large, wood-frame residences (Land and Community Associates 1994).

The dormitory and the residences were constructed at the same time as the clinic, in the same Rustic style.

The original dentist's residence is one of the finest examples in the Valley of a single-family dwelling designed with rustic features and details. It is sited to take advantage of its topography and setting at the foot of the talus slope (Land and Community Associates 1994).

The medical clinic, the dormitory, and the residences are historically significant (Land and Community Associates 1994).

#### GUIDELINES

##### **The Upper, Middle + Lower Tecoya Areas**

- For new construction in the Lower Tecoya area, consider flood potential along the lower reaches of Indian Creek.
- Study forest conditions with respect to aging, diseased and/or hazard trees. The study (similar to the Bitterroot Study for Yosemite Lodge) should be the basis for planting decisions (including conifer removals and oak replacements), riparian vegetation restoration, and yard planting particularly along Ahwahnee Row. The study should consider the relation of vegetation in Lower Tecoya to succession in Ahwahnee Meadow.
- The character of small homes sited among trees and talus blocks on a sloping plane should be retained in the Upper and Middle Tecoya areas.
- To the greatest extent possible, residential yards and fencing in Middle and Upper Tecoya should be placed behind houses and garages and in locations hidden from public view. See also NPS Residential Yard Care Policy (NPS 2001d).
- Shrubs, herbaceous plants, and trees should be limited to species indigenous to Yosemite Valley and appropriate to the Indian Creek depositional fan. They should be allowed to grow taking natural shapes. See also NPS Residential Yard Care Policy. (NPS 2001d)
- Landscape facilities such as bear-proof dumpsters and other trash storage, self storage units, and the like, should be clustered and screened behind structures that harmonize with the surrounding architectural

character. See the March 2002 Cultural Landscape Treatment Recommendations, Yosemite Village Historic District Housing Area (NPS 2002a) as a model for treatment of such items in historic residential districts. Seasonal vegetation changes, winter conditions, and possible hazards should be taken into account.

- Recognize and reinforce the distinguishing scale and character of the buildings in each residential area by making new development compatible with the existing.
- Employ the architectural features discussed in Unifying Elements and Guidelines for Yosemite Valley to achieve compatibility between new development and historically significant residential areas.
- Tree mounted lighting is non-conforming and should be replaced to meet the standards described in the Unifying Elements Lighting section of this document.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on pedestrian bridges, fences, and lighting.

##### **Historic District Residential Area**

The oldest housing development in Yosemite Village is the Historic District residential area, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Located northwest of the Village center, it has a neighborhood character and is comprised mainly of single-family dwelling units arranged along a series of curvilinear roads (Land and Community Associates 1994). Historically significant elements in the Historic District include many of the residences, as well as structures, clusters of buildings, and circulation routes (Land and Community Associates 1994).

Lying just east of the Lower Yosemite Fall area, this development sits on the level plane of the Valley floor, outside the *Yosemite Valley Plan* talus zone. Located on the warmer north side of the Valley and away from flood and rockfall zones this site was optimal for residential use. Large, overarching California black oaks dominate the landscape in this area, presumably taking advantage of deep soils. The trees impart a gracious manicured



TOP LEFT Village Apartment in Yosemite Village Historic District residential area TOP RIGHT End view of Village Apartment  
BOTTOM Houses in Yosemite Village Historic District residential area



*Village Apartment detail, Yosemite Village Historic District residential area*

park-like feeling. Other vegetation in this area consists of understory native trees and shrubs, meadows, manicured lawns, ornamental trees planted in beds, shrubs, and ground covers.

All buildings and structures date from the period of historical significance for Yosemite Valley (1851 to 1945), with the exception of seven residences and the elementary school which were built in the 1950s. Most of the residences, apartments, dormitories, garages, and woodsheds that contribute to the historic district were constructed during the 1920s and 1930s and have undergone few, if any, exterior alterations. The houses built between 1927 and 1940 reflect the development of Rustic architecture by the San Francisco Field Office of the National Park Service. Three Army residences, built in 1911 and 1912, were relocated from Yosemite Lodge to this area in 1929. Their character is typical of rural houses of the period that predates the National Park Service Rustic era, but they are also historically significant (Land and Community Associates 1994).

The Rustic residences are one- and two-story wood-frame buildings clad with wood siding materials

such as coursed shakes, shingles, or lapped boards. Many of the houses from the Rustic period have stone chimneys and stone masonry cladding at the foundations and porches. Roofs were originally wood shingles, but some are now composition shingle. Most of the one-story residences have simple, rectangular plans and low-pitch gable roofs. Some two-story residences have steeper roofs with dormers. Typical rustic details include wood double-hung windows, wood panel doors, exposed roof rafters at eaves, decorative wood brackets, and porches and exterior stairs with wood railings. There are also two apartment buildings that share similar rustic features and details. They feature open porches in the center that incorporate recessed stairs (Land and Community Associates 1994).

While development in this historic district is not foreseen, minor improvements may be necessary to adapt structures to contemporary uses, as well as to make landscape areas accommodate National Park Service residents' daily activities.

**GUIDELINES**

- The open park-like setting of historic residences under large spreading mature black oaks must be preserved when considering new, restored, or enlarged buildings and maintenance operations.
- Reforestation of black oak in this area should be based on detailed review of overall forest health including the potentials for aging and hazard conditions.
- Control garden and lawn irrigation within drip lines of black oaks. Refer to Residential Yard Care Policy (NPS 2001d) and Cultural Landscape Treatment Recommendations, Yosemite Village Historic District Housing Area (NPS 2002a).
- Revegetation of foundation plantings at the perimeter of residences must be based on the pattern established in the period of significance but should not affect the health of adjacent black oaks.
- Proposed landscape elements such as fences, screens, retaining walls, etc. visible to public streets and pedestrian ways should be carefully reviewed to preserve the open park-like character of the neighborhood. See also the Residential Yard Care Policy (NPS 2001d) for more detailed guidelines regarding:

*Trash storage*

*Shrubs and herbaceous plants*

*Side and back yards*

*Self storage units*

*Fencing at the schoolhouse*

*Northern drainage ditch*

- Historic buildings are the primary elements of the cultural landscape in the historic residential district. Their original exterior design elements should be preserved to the fullest extent feasible. More latitude may be taken with the buildings' interiors in order to adapt them to changing, contemporary uses.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on vegetation and management of oak woodlands in relation to conifer encroachment.

**MAINTENANCE, SERVICE + STORAGE AREAS**

The maintenance, service, and storage areas are found in a talus zone directly below Castle Cliffs, well within the rockfall zone. While oaks still dominate the thin soils at the base of the cliffs, they are stunted and smaller than those on the deeper soils in the Historic District residential area. The Scenic Analysis of the *Yosemite Valley Plan* describes this as an area of moderate scenic value.

The park maintenance and concessioner facilities consist of a cluster of buildings with a north-south orientation. Development extends north to the base of the talus slope. More than half the buildings in the area date from the 1920s and are historically significant. Stable facilities and day corrals are nearby in the southwest corner of this area (Land and Community Associates 1994).

The focal point of the complex is the two-story utility building referred to as NPS Operations Building (Fort Yosemite), constructed of patterned concrete with large garage bays on the first floor. The building also has a central tower adjacent to the entrance, industrial windows, and a composition shingle roof. The largest structure in the complex is the concessioner warehouse, a



Historic house porch, Yosemite Village Historic District residential area

modern concrete building with a standing-seam metal roof. The main concessioner shop is also an important building, reminiscent of an Arts & Crafts era barn (NPS 2004d). Smaller buildings surround the maintenance building, including a stable, a barn, warehouses, offices, and a garage. Located on the eastern edge of the complex is a magistrate courthouse.

#### GUIDELINES

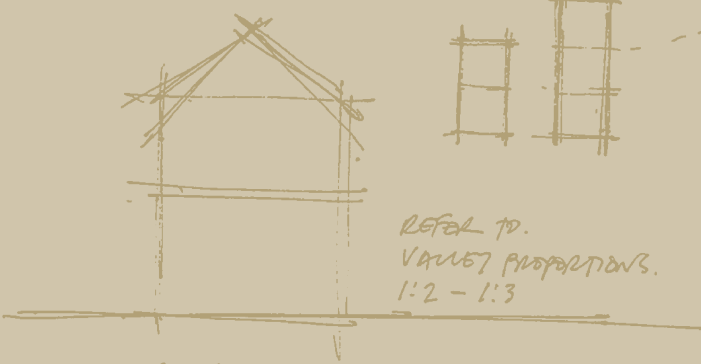
- Within these areas, trees provide visual relief and shade. As trees die or are removed, new trees should be planted.
- Consider planting oak trees to screen or visually soften utilitarian buildings and structures from access roads, adjacent residential areas, and surrounding high country vista points.
- Recognize the scale and character of the buildings in each area and make new development compatible.
- For new projects, architectural character in the maintenance area may reflect a more utilitarian design approach by making use of building materials and details that are suitable for industrial buildings.
- Metal roofing is an appropriate material in the maintenance area if it has a muted gray color and a non-reflective finish. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on roof form and material.
- Service and utility lighting may be excessively visible from public roads and vista points on surrounding cliffs. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on lighting.



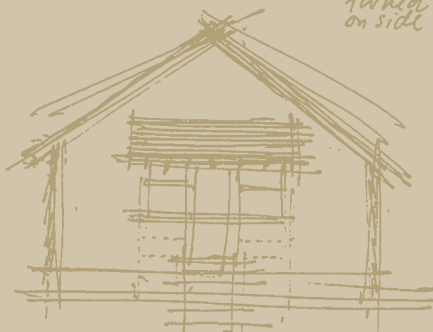
NPS Operations Building (Fort Yosemite), Yosemite Village



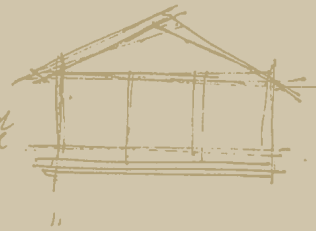
PLANS SECTIONS ELEVATIONS.



REFER TO.  
VARIABLE PROPORTIONS.  
1:2 - 1:3



turned  
on side



Yosemite Notes:  
January 30 2003

DSCN 8605

# CURRY VILLAGE

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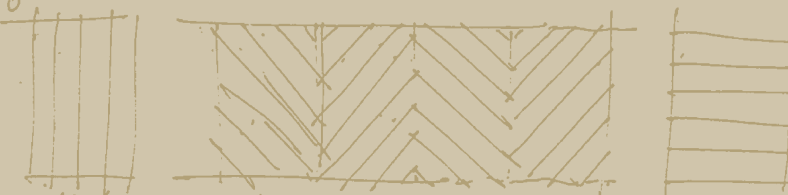
things that seem important:  
overall bldg proportions - massing  
roof pitch  
continuity of mass - simple extensions  
fewer interruptions

ARTICULATING MOTIFS.

CURRY COLLEARS

CURRY PUBLIC BLOCKS

8598



all types of siding to use for overall proportion  
differentiation 8597.

BATES SIMILAR  
IN THAT THERE IS  
NO CORNER BOARD

ARTICULATED  
OVERHANGS  
+ DETAILS - STRATEGIC.

PAIRED COLUMNS IN  
CANTILEVERED PORCHES.

8377

BELOW DOORS,

exposed rafter tails  
no fascia boards

8567

OVERLEAF Curry Village tent cabins (1947) YRL-RA

superintendent's house

VILLAGE.



## CURRY VILLAGE

CAMP CURRY was established in 1899 by David and Jennie Curry. With its tent cabins and communal dining hall, Camp Curry offered a more affordable lodging experience than other accommodations in Yosemite Valley. As its popularity grew, Camp Curry quickly expanded from a dozen tent cabins to hundreds in a matter of years. By 1905, roads connected Camp Curry to the Old Village to the west, and the Currys had constructed dozens of tent cabin platforms, permanent dining and registration buildings, bathrooms, and tennis and croquet facilities. In 1922 a group of 48 wooden bungalows were completed to the west of the core facility area, providing another level of accommodations separated from the main body of tents. By that time, Camp Curry had telephones, evening movies, a pool hall and dance

...GOOD BEDS, GOOD MEALS AND COURTEOUS TREATMENT...MY CAMPS ARE DESIGNED FOR THOSE WHO, WHETHER FROM NECESSITY OR INCLINATION, WISH TO MAKE THEIR MONEY GO AS FAR AS IT WILL.

CAMP CURRY PROMOTIONAL BROCHURE • CA. 1900



pavilion, a gas station and garage, a soda fountain, and numerous cottages and other residences for employees. The need for increased parking was met in 1927 by parking between the rows of apple trees in the nearby orchard. After a slow period during the Depression and World War II, visitation to Curry Village increased dramatically. By 1959, the camp operated almost 500 tents and 200 bungalow and cabin rooms. Various other changes occurred in the postwar period. The old dance hall was converted to the Stoneman Lodge and used for lodging. The central dining facility, dating from 1929, burned down to its foundations and was rebuilt in the same location. A new pool and bathhouse and a new skating rink were also built.

With few exceptions, Curry Village retains its overall integrity to its period of significance, which ended in 1942. Since its inception there has been a consistent use of Rustic design, which helps the buildings blend with the natural environment and preserves the primitive character of the National Park System. Today Curry Village is the last significant example of its kind. Because of these attributes, Curry Village was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 (NPS 1976b).

## SETTING

### NATURAL SYSTEMS + FEATURES

Curry Village is located south of the Merced River, at the east end of Yosemite Valley. It is in a cool, shaded portion of the Valley, in the shadow of Glacier Point and the adjacent 4,000-foot cliffs. While the shady climate is a relief from summer heat, Curry Village gets little winter sun and is subject to freezing temperatures and fog in that season. Snow stays on the ground longer there, compared to the north side of the Valley. This is a significant issue in view of plans to increase winter visitation.

The center of Curry Village was established on the flat Valley floor at the toe of a talus slope. Over time the camp has expanded to the east and west, along the base of the talus slope, with some structures quite close to the base of the cliffs. Dozens of tent cabins and wood cabins are scattered among massive talus blocks and smaller boulders in an area now designated a hazardous rockfall zone (NPS 200b). Today the hazard of rockfall precludes any new construction within the delineated rockfall zone.

A significant drainage runs through the center of Curry Village. Runoff flows in a northerly direction from the cliffs and talus slope, through the village's central space, across the meadow to the Merced River. The water deposits large quantities of rock, gravel and sand in the village center which has historically created



*Camp Curry campfire (ca. 1903) YRL*

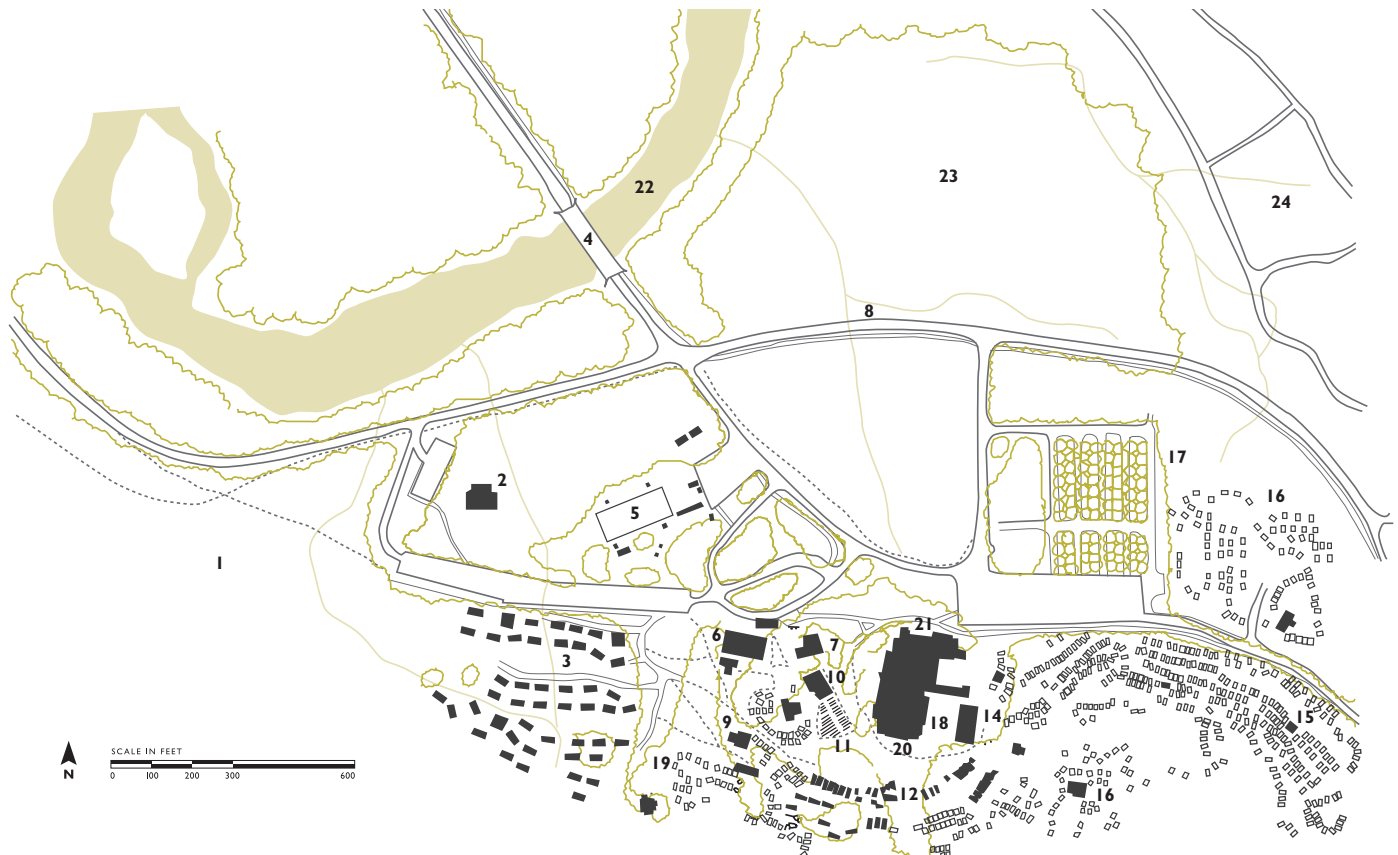
a variety of problems. Several seasonal tributary creeks and drainages also flow from south to north through developed areas of Curry Village to the Merced River.

The Merced River is too far removed to have a strong relationship to most of Curry Village. Views of the river are prevented by distance, vegetation, and Curry Village's low elevation. However, the proposed employee housing area will be within 500 feet of the river and directly adjacent to the River Protection Overlay.

The encroachment of trees makes it difficult to see waterfalls across the Valley toward the north and northwest when viewed from the central core area of Curry Village. Staircase Falls is seasonally visible to the west, descending from high up on the cliffs.

### GUIDELINES

- Vegetation management should focus on the removal of conifers where appropriate in order to increase the level of daylight during the winter.
- Employee housing units should be clustered in groups around the edges of open spaces to take advantage of natural light and views.
- Careful consideration should be given to the problem of icy walkways in winter, both in the selection of paving type and decisions on gradient.
- The drainage that runs through the central open space of Curry Village should be treated as an amenity, and possibly interpreted, with and without water flow. For example, consider restoration of low riparian vegetation and interpretative stations indicating the hydrological phenomena from Staircase Falls to the Merced River.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on climate and the Merced River.



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 Toboggan Run                                 | 14 Bathhouse   |
| 2 Huff House                                   | 15 Tent Cabins   |
| 3 48 Wood Bungalows                            | 16 Employee Tent Cabins                                |
| 4 Stoneman Bridge                              | 17 South Lamon Orchard                                 |
| 5 Ice Skating Rink                             | 18 Swimming Pool                                       |
| 6 Stoneman Lodge                               | 19 LeConte Memorial Lodge<br>(fountains, walls, steps) |
| 7 Registration Office/Post Office              | 20 Dining/Retail Building                              |
| 8 Southside Drive                              | 21 Mountain Shop                                       |
| 9 Mother Curry Bungalow                        | 22 Merced River  |
| 10 Lounge (Historic Registration Office)       | 23 Stoneman Meadow                                     |
| 11 Amphitheater                                | 24 Lower Pines Campground                              |
| 12 Wood Cabins                                 |  |
| 13 Foster Curry Cabin<br>(Tresidder Residence) |  |

### SCENIC VIEWS

Views of surrounding Yosemite Valley landmarks inspired the original siting of Camp Curry, and helped determine the internal layout of the developed area. Views from the village center of Half Dome, Glacier Point, Royal Arches, Washington Column, and North Dome are impressive and define the character of Curry Village to a significant degree (NPS 2004d).

Today, the encroachment of trees makes it difficult to see Yosemite Falls from the village center. Views of

almost all surrounding features may soon be blocked out by conifers, which will profoundly affect the character of Curry Village.

### GUIDELINES

- New buildings or clusters of buildings should be sited to take advantage of views to surrounding natural features, including the steep talus slope to the south.
- Walkways and gathering areas should be oriented to optimize views of Half Dome, Glacier Point, Royal Arches, Washington Column, and North Dome.



NORTH DOME &  
WASHINGTON COLUMN



CURRY TOBOGGAN SLIDE



TOP LEFT North Dome and Washington Column from Camp Curry TOP RIGHT Early toboggan slide structure at Camp Curry (no longer extant)  
BOTTOM Curry Village entrance marker (1927) YRL

- Clusters of buildings should not block views to the forest and talus slopes to the south. Look for opportunities to frame these views. Restore historic views, including winter views. For example, the historic setting of the ice rink had a view of Half Dome. Half Dome was also the backdrop for the historic, though no longer extant, toboggan run.
- Prune or remove coniferous trees to regain views to Yosemite Falls.
- The turnoff road should be aligned for a direct or prominent view of the historic Camp Curry welcome sign. This view should not be interrupted or flanked by parked cars or buses.
- Parking for guest arrival should not obscure the view corridors to the north from the central village.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on views.

## VEGETATION

Vegetation at Curry Village is dominated by mature conifers, especially ponderosa pine and incense-cedars. The understory vegetation is big leaf maple, California black oak, and dogwood typical of the shady, moist south side of Yosemite Valley. There have been historic trends at Curry—as in other areas of the Valley—of increased coniferous forest cover and the incremental destruction of riparian vegetation along annual drainages and creeks.

In the early years, the Curry family hired professional landscape architects to design and manage naturalistic planting arrangements. Over the years, these professionals removed trees and other vegetation they felt blocked important views, while preserving trees they felt were significant. They also planted shrubs and other vegetation around buildings. Since the 1970s, revegetation of formerly open areas of Curry Village has confused the historic spatial organization. Many of the plants in this area are immature enough to be transplanted.

Stoneman Meadow lies on the flat river plain north of the center of Curry Village. Portions of the meadow lie in the 100-year floodplain of the Merced River. Lamson Orchard, originally part of the meadow, was laid out by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. and planted with non-native fruit trees. It was later paved over for roads and parking areas.

### GUIDELINES

- Vegetation management should be based on detailed studies of plant community and species conditions, including health and hazard potential. An emphasis should be placed on enhancing and restoring oak woodlands where appropriate.
- Consider thinning conifer stands to allow more light into lodging areas.
- New plantings at the employee housing area should replicate the transition of vegetation found in Curry Village, from the forested talus zone at the south to the meadow vegetation at the edge of Stoneman Meadow to the north. The object is a stabilized vegetation zone with emphasis on removal of conifers, favoring protection and restoration of California black oak.
- Stoneman Meadow should be restored to the maximum extent feasible by removal of pavements, compacted soils, culverts, and engineered drainage channels.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on vegetation.



Western dogwood

## LANDSCAPE USES/STRUCTURES

### LAND USE + SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

The overall layout of Curry Village is linear, with buildings arranged on sloping ground along the base of the cliffs. The village center contains public gathering, dining, and recreational functions. Guest quarters—in the form of tent cabins and wood cabins—lie to the east and west of the village center. The cabins are arranged in tiers up to the talus zone at the base of Glacier Point, with tent cabins and wood cabins located in separate clusters.

The village center is defined by public buildings and structures surrounding a central open space, establishing the arrival and public gathering areas for the Village. The south edge of the central space is defined by a strong line of cabins with Glacier Point looming dramatically overhead.

The area to the east of the village center includes hundreds of one-room tent cabins. The small scale of the individual tents, set close together in irregular rows, creates a unique spatial character. The sense of enclosure in this area has a marked contrast to the grandeur experienced in other areas of Yosemite Valley (NPS 1976b).

Wood cabins with and without baths are grouped together west of the village center. These cabins are larger than the tent cabins, set with more space between them and laid out in rows that are straighter and more regular (NPS 1976b).

#### GUIDELINES

- Retain and strengthen the spatial organization of the village center, with the existing public buildings defining spaces for outdoor activities, socializing, and programs.
- New construction in the vicinity of the wood cabins should be compatible with the existing spatial organization found there.
- Historic landscape elements like the Toboggan Run should be recognized.
- Where possible, site new buildings in areas designated for diseased or hazard tree removal, rather than siting them where healthy trees are growing. Refer to existing or ongoing National Park Service studies of plant community conditions for further guidance.
- Screen planting in the central plaza area should be removed or reduced and transplanted to re-establish the spatial layout of the historic Curry Village for arriving guests.
- There should be a partial screen consisting of understory trees and shrubs (reinforcing existing natural conditions) between new employee housing area and the adjacent historic area. This should be informal and based on black oak forest plant communities, as directed by park resources staff.



*Cabins at Camp Curry*

## CIRCULATION + PARKING

Camp Curry was historically approached by two roads: one from the Old Yosemite Village to the west, and the other from Stoneman Bridge to the northwest. Today vehicular access is limited mainly to the northwestern approach. The western approach has been converted to parking and a foot trail.

Within the developed area circulation is primarily pedestrian and characterized by relatively unstructured movement on packed earth trails. In heavier use areas, paths of asphalt pavement have been used to confine pedestrian circulation.

In the early days, there was apparently little structure to where vehicles parked at Camp Curry. One parking area existed outside the main gate in approximately the same location as the parking lot today. By 1927, as more visitors were arriving by car, the nearby Lamon apple orchard was converted into a parking area (NPS 2004d).

### GUIDELINES

- The arrival road into Curry Village should be flanked by broad swaths of meadow vegetation or California black oak woodland and open understory vegetation.
- Preserve the packed earth paths that define the historic circulation system throughout Curry Village.
- Align pedestrian ways to take advantage of scenic or prominent natural features outside of and surrounding the employee housing area.
- Pedestrian pathways in the new employee housing area should relate to the simple primitive nature of pathways serving the wood cabins in Curry Village. The width should reflect path hierarchy in cluster and common open space areas.
- Refer to Entrance Markers in Unifying Elements and Guidelines for a discussion of the Camp Curry welcome sign and gateway.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on circulation and parking.

## SMALL BUILDINGS + STRUCTURES

Comfort stations, laundry facilities, and more recent non-historic buildings are placed along primary pedestrian routes serving the tent and wooden cabins. Guest service aids, including newspaper racks, bear-proof trash and recycling bins, bicycle racks, and food storage and linen lockers are scattered throughout the core area and to a lesser extent into the cabin areas. Except for the bicycle racks, most of these are painted various shades of brown. Illuminated telephone booths can be found either free standing or incorporated into small buildings or verandahs.

### GUIDELINES

*For guidelines on small buildings, masonry, foot bridges, boardwalks, culvert crossings, retaining walls, and fences/benches, refer to Unifying Elements.*

## GRADING + DRAINAGE

Nestled up against the cliffs, Curry Village lies on a sloping site, with an approximate five-foot drop from north to south across the area. The creek from Staircase Falls is the source of the only significant year-round drainage, running from south to north through the village center. It crosses several major pedestrian routes and the sloping central open space, depositing sand and gravel wash.

Several smaller drainages impact the area as well. Although they are seasonal, carrying snow melt and rainfall runoff from Moran and Glacier Points, they have been substantial enough to require stone clad culvert crossings. They can carry considerable loads in heavy winter storms and produce accumulations of sand and gravel wash, especially at the base of cabins south of the village center. Additional studies are ongoing to determine the distribution, impact, and future morphological dynamics of these drainages.

**GUIDELINES**

- Planning for the central open space at the village center should take into account the slope from south to north across the area. The design must meet the accessibility standards on both level and sloping ground.
- Drainages that are currently culverted across the housing area to Stoneman Meadow and the Lamon Orchard area should be opened, ecologically restored if necessary, and interpreted for visitors.
- Refer to the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan* regarding zoning within the Merced River corridor River Protection Overlay.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on grading and drainage.

**BARRIERS, FENCES + BENCHES**

Much of the fencing and structural screens in Curry Village are associated with historic buildings or occur in the historic districts. Nevertheless fencing in this shaded side of the Valley shows the wearing effects of longer winters and deeper snow fields.

Many planted areas and areas of natural vegetation are separated from walkways and are edged with barriers of small diameter logs (and finished lumber in some areas) as well as post and rope barriers. Some appear permanent, and others provide temporary protection of planted area.

Seating in the village center varies, from horizontal half-round logs and shaped stumps used as benches to the recycled plastic furniture on the Meadow Deck.

**GUIDELINES**

- As much of Curry Village lodging area is within the talus zone, nested flat top boulders may be considered for seating, in addition to the forms recommended in the Unifying Elements and Guidelines.

- Low boulder-reinforced grade changes, with planting, should be used where barriers are desired, parallel to contours on sloping areas.
- Continue to use wood branches or cedar posts and rope to protect vegetated areas. This is unique to Curry Village and is a distinctive and visually appropriate system for the central village area.
- Refer to Unifying Elements and Guidelines for more guidelines on benches, fences, gates, structural screens, enclosures, and barriers.

**LIGHTING**

Lighting of pedestrian ways and public gathering spaces at Curry Village is provided by a limited number of pedestrian standards and soffit lights mounted on cabins and other buildings. Sparse lighting is particularly appropriate in the tent cabin area where, because of the presence of large talus blocks and numerous trees, a primitive quality dominates.

The canvas tent cabins themselves become a source of light. At night, when lit from the interior, they glow, creating an almost magical environment in that area.

**GUIDELINES**

- Because of the primitive nature of the tent cabin area, lighting of pedestrian walks should be particularly subtle and limited without compromising reasonable safety standards.
- For more guidance on lighting refer to the Exterior Lighting Guidelines Final Draft Report, Yosemite National Park (NPS 1997a).
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on lighting.



## DEVELOPED AREAS

### VILLAGE CENTER

#### The Entrance Marker

The Camp Curry gateway stands as the historic entry into the village center. Characterized by its use of native materials in their natural state, it acts as a wayfinding marker and announces the special, rustic character of the place. The use of unpeeled logs has a thematic link to the early buildings in Camp Curry (NPS 1980a). Both the character of the entrance gateway and its original function as the gateway to Camp Curry are historically significant features.

#### GUIDELINES

- The historical significance of the entrance gateway as the gateway to Curry Village should be restored and identified as the major pedestrian entry point. This can be accomplished through improvements to the arrival and circulation patterns at the village center.

#### Siting + Building Orientation

The village center is defined by freestanding buildings surrounding a central open space. The lounge and registration buildings lie to the west of the central open space, and visitor service buildings like the store and cafeteria lie to the east. These buildings, and the spaces between them, provided Curry Village with outdoor gathering points for both organized and informal functions.

Today the buildings on the east side of the village center—including the dining hall and the Mountain Shop—have been joined into one linear complex.

The buildings on the west side of the center—the lounge and the registration building—are still freestanding. The outdoor amphitheater is connected to the south side of the lounge building by a small platform stage. Enclosing the village center to the south is a strong line of wood cabins, backed by the massive walls of Glacier Point.

#### GUIDELINES

- New work at the village center should recognize and be compatible with the established siting and building orientation.
- The village center, currently defined by buildings and trees, should neither be weakened by the removal of buildings nor obscured by new structures or landscaping.
- The sense of the village center as a place for gathering should be strengthened by simplification of planting and pedestrian circulation and the incorporation of interpretive stations.
- Service access to the dining and service facilities, because of its location adjacent to sleeping quarters, requires visual screening and acoustical control.



Curry Village Entrance, Lounge, and Registration buildings

### Architectural Character

The founders of Camp Curry established a rustic camp with a distinct atmosphere and primitive style of accommodation. The historically significant elements in this area are the Camp Curry entrance gateway, the lounge, and the registration building. The entrance gateway, with its unpeeled logs and old-fashioned filament light bulbs, is emblematic of Rustic design. Especially when lit up at night, the gateway announces that Camp Curry is a special place. The lounge is a one-story wood-frame structure with a rectangular plan and a hipped roof. The roof was originally covered with wood shingles that have been changed to asphalt sheet. Skylights allow natural light into the interior. An intimately scaled verandah along the front of the building at one time engaged a large ponderosa pine. The tree was in sharp contrast in scale to the simple structure. The stump has been preserved as a seat.

The Mountain Shop has been altered since its construction in 1927, although some of its character-defining features still remain. The use of a generous clerestory that allows views of Glacier Point gives the space a lively character and brings in natural light. The interesting bay window to the east side had a view of Half Dome that is now obscured by trees.

Although the existing dining pavilion lacks the spirit of the original Ted Spencer building it replaced, it establishes a compatible character. The decorative approach to detailing and the breaking down of the large façade with a patterning of wall treatments help link it to the older rustic buildings at Curry Village. Arbors and pergolas used on the historic building were discontinued.



*Camp Curry Dining Hall (1929) YRL*

The heavily remodeled buildings on the east side of the village center, including the new food service facility and the cafeteria, are without noteworthy character and do not contribute to the historic setting. Although the original buildings of each period had a unique architectural character, the significant elements have been obscured by later remodeling, resulting in lackluster character.

#### GUIDELINES

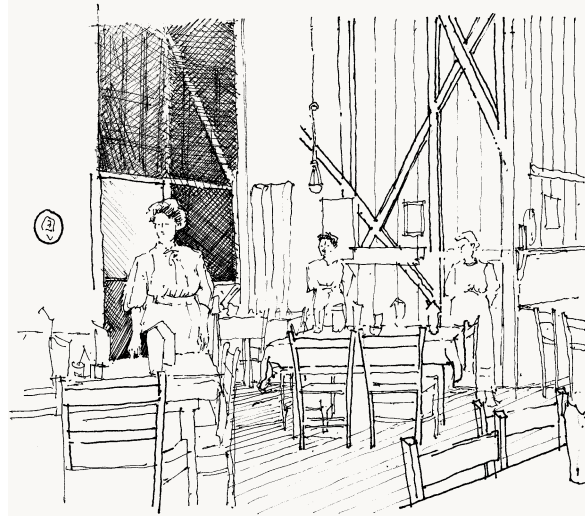
- New buildings should be compatible with the historically significant buildings yet be distinctly contemporary. New work should be inspired by, but should not imitate, existing historic structures. Occasional use of historic references can be appropriate to make new buildings compatible with the spirit of Curry Village, consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.
- New work on the east side of the village center should be inspired by the character defined by the Mountain Shop and the dining pavilion.
- New work on the west side of the village center should retain the character-defining elements of the lounge and the registration building.

### Building Shape + Massing

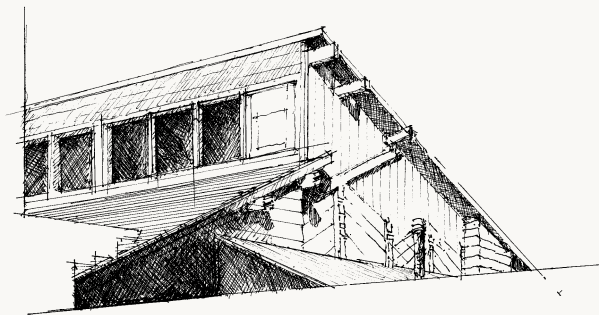
Buildings in the village center are one story in height. Those on the east side are contained in a stepped plan arrangement that turns the corner to the east. This conceals the kitchen and service areas from the dining room. The buildings on the west side are freestanding and have simple plan forms and low profiles.

#### GUIDELINES

- Use compatible forms for the overall shape of new buildings. Recognize the scale of existing buildings, especially the lounge.
- New additions to the existing buildings on the east side of the village center should be articulated to reduce the apparent size of the complex.



CAMP CURRY from JT BOYSEN



DETAIL MOUNTAIN SHOP

TOP Historic view of dining hall at Camp Curry from photo by J. T. Boyston  
 BOTTOM Clerestory of Mountain Shop, Curry Village

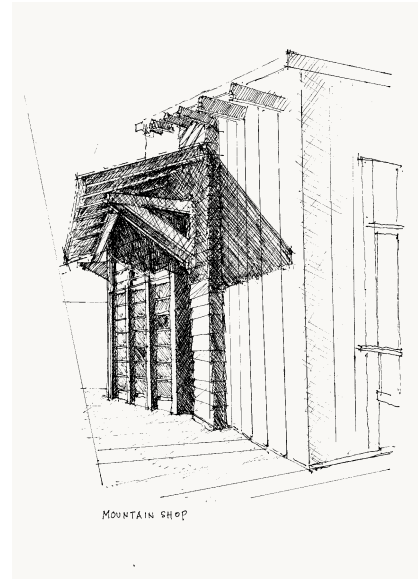
### Roof Form + Materials

The buildings in the village center have medium-pitched roofs with either gable or hip forms. The dining pavilion has a concentric hip roof. The Mountain Shop has a gable roof with a clerestory that provides views of Glacier Point. (Ted Spencer, the architect of the original cafeteria, employed a similar clerestory in the Yosemite Lodge Store.) Skylights are also found in the lounge.

In recent years, asphalt shingles have replaced wood shingles on most buildings in the village center.

#### GUIDELINES

- Use medium pitched roofs, either gable or hipped.
- Use dormers, shed or gable, as well as skylights to bring light into interior spaces.



TOP LEFT Mountain Shop window detail TOP RIGHT Mountain Shop bay window BOTTOM Early view of Camp Curry cafeteria (now the Mountain Shop). The building was notched to accommodate the large conifers. Conifers have since been replaced with a deck. (date unknown) YRL

### Building Exterior

The lounge is a significant example of the historic rustic character found at Curry Village. The exterior walls consist of an applied frame of unpeeled log posts and sawn beams. Strips of cedar bark are used as infill siding in a herringbone pattern. The porch roof is supported on unpeeled log columns. The typical wood casement window is divided into six lights (NPS 1976b).

The Mountain Shop is an example of a transitional rustic design. This building features horizontal wood siding, glazed wood doors with a predominant horizontal muntin pattern, and decorative details at rafter ends and wall corners.

#### GUIDELINES

- New buildings should have a protected base of board formed concrete, as called for in the Unifying Elements and Guidelines.
- Continue the use of the historic brown color, both as a unifying treatment and to comply with historic preservation requirements. Lighter hues may be appropriate at porch ceilings to create a cheerful ambience.
- Wood siding with resawn surfaces should be compatible with the adjacent buildings. However, the use of details such as twigs, bark, logs, etc. is not recommended.
- Generous porches or verandahs that wrap around the public sides of buildings are recommended. Capture the scale of existing porches for new work. If seating is desired, it is recommended to use built-in elements in order to avoid clutter. Porches and verandahs should be scaled for seating as well as circulation. Wood plank floors typical of the early buildings are recommended.
- Railings, wood decks, ramps, and benches should be sized and detailed to endure exposure to rain and snow. Select wood species for their ability to withstand the elements yet be friendly and soft to the touch. Port Orford cedar is appropriate for handrails as it does not produce splinters as it weathers.
- Arrangements of doors and windows should follow regular patterns and also respond to interior requirements. Window proportions and sizes should be more generous than those of guest quarter buildings. Wood windows and glazed wood doors with generous lights are recommended.
- Exposed framing such as rafters should be sized more generously than for conventionally framed buildings.
- Consider use of arbors and pergolas at entrances and terraces of the food service buildings to define outdoor spaces and pleasant transitions between indoors and outdoors.
- Refer to the character of existing historic buildings for the use of trim details, roof overhangs, and porches.



Stoneman Lodge, Camp Curry (2004) RF



CABINS CURRY VILLAGE

## CABINS

The guest quarters at Curry Village consist of groups of tent cabins and wood cabins that have a primitive, spare quality. Visitor service buildings such as comfort stations and showerhouses are intermingled with the cabins.

### Siting + Building Orientation

Located east of the village center, the white canvas, gable-form tent cabins are one of the most distinctive elements of Curry Village, recalling the original Camp Curry. Although they are arranged in rows, the placement of each individual unit responds to the immediate topography and natural features such as trees and boulders. The wood platforms allow the existing grade to continue around and under the tent cabins without undue grading.



TOP Wood cabins without baths (WOBs), Curry Village BOTTOM Tent cabins, Curry Village (2004) JM

West of the village center, there are 48 wood cabins with baths. They are slightly larger than the tent cabins, and laid out in straighter, more regular rows, with their long sides parallel to pathways. The orientation of individual cabins within this arrangement has been adjusted to accommodate trees and boulders. However, cabin locations were not as sensitive to natural drainage patterns.

The newer wood cabins without baths (known as WOBs) were built between the late 1920s and early 1930s. Due in part to later modernization, these cabins lack the expressive detail and character of the earlier wood cabins (NPS 2004d). They are also grouped more densely and sometimes rotate their long sides perpendicular to the pathways

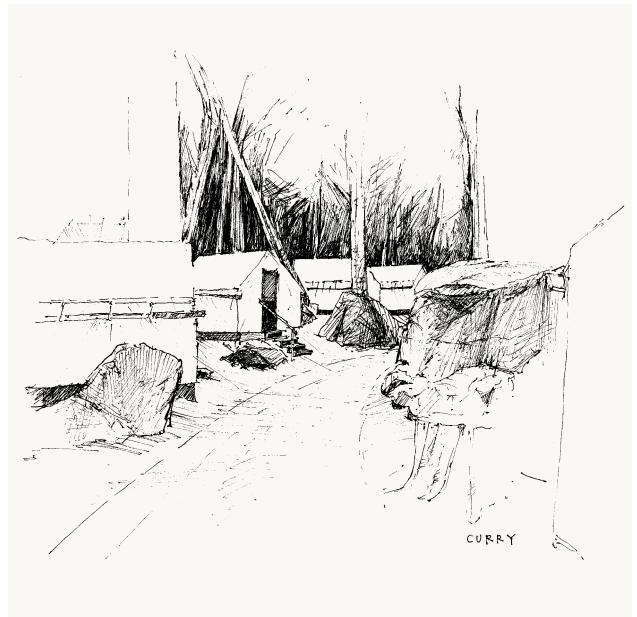
#### GUIDELINES

- New cabins should continue the siting and character of the historic cabins, including the integration with natural features like trees and boulders. The layout of pathways adjacent to new cabins should conform to existing patterns.

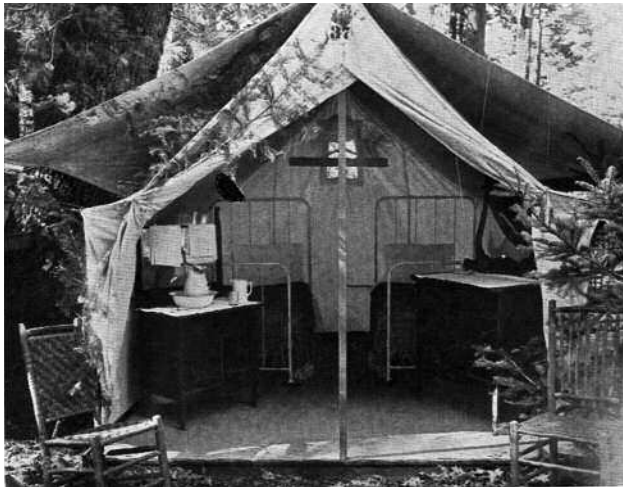
#### Architectural Character

The tent cabins exemplify the primitive character of Curry Village. They are built on wood platforms, and made of white canvas stretched over a wood frame. Their geometry is simple, with a gable roof and wooden steps leading from the grade to the door. The screened door has a canvas roll blind, as do the windows.

The original wood cabins, nestled within the forest setting, define the character of the western area of Curry Village. Built between 1918 and 1922, the cabins have a rustic character derived from the use of simple gable forms, wood shingle roofs, applied half-log framing, tongue and groove diagonal wood siding between the frame elements, wood casement windows, and wood paneled doors. Some of the cabins have river-run stone masonry foundations and chimneys. Their dark brown color blends with the forest setting.



TOP Wood cabin with boulder (2004) RF BOTTOM Trail leading to tent cabins and boulders, Curry Village



Tent interior, Curry Village (ca. 1917). Courtesy of the Huntington Library

The inspiration for the wood cabins were two historic residences constructed by the Currys: the Foster Curry Cabin (1916) and Mother Curry Bungalow (1917). These buildings exemplify early efforts to establish a rustic theme for Curry Village. They are characterized by unpeeled log pilasters that simulate a structural frame and wall panels of unpeeled cedar bark (NPS 1976b).

#### GUIDELINES

- New cabins constructed outside of the historic district should reflect the original character of Curry Village.
- The architectural character of new cabins should be compatible with the historic wood cabins without imitating them. New work should be recognizably contemporary.
- Provision for winter occupancy will influence character of new buildings. This may cause them to differ from the historic buildings.

#### Building Shape + Massing

Building shape and massing are important character-defining elements of the original wood cabins. These small buildings are one story, low in profile, and have no projecting bays. They have a rectangular plan and a gable roof. Porches without roofs are either flush with the grade or elevated, depending on the slope of the ground.

#### GUIDELINES

- In order to achieve compatibility, the shape and mass of new cabins should not depart significantly from those of the historic wood cabins.

#### Roof Form + Materials

The original wood cabins have gable roofs with medium pitch in the range of 5 in 12. Their overhangs are well proportioned for the mass of the buildings. Asphalt shingles have replaced wood shingles due to concern for fire.

#### GUIDELINES

- New cabins should have gable roof form with medium pitch to be compatible with the historic wood cabins.
- Increased winter use and the need for snow management may influence design of roofs at entrances. The addition of small gables over some entrance doors has altered the original character of many cabins. The introduction of this functional element detracts from the building's overall form. Entrances on the eave side of the building require protection from rain and snow. Projections from the roof should have structural elements that allow the shelter to stand and define the entrance. Alternatively, consider locating entrances on the gable side of the structure.





TOP Camp Curry bungalow (1926) YRL BOTTOM LEFT Mother Curry Bungalow



BOTTOM RIGHT Foster Curry Cabin

### Building Exterior

The exterior walls of the original wood cabins consist of simulated half-log frames with infill sheathing of diagonal 1-by-4, tongue-and-groove wood siding in a herringbone pattern. Other components include split-log gable ends, foundations of river-run stone, wood porches, paneled doors, and casement windows. Wood sash windows with true muntins are a key element of the building exterior. The cabins are unified by their brown color.

### GUIDELINES

- New cabins should have a base of form-board concrete. Cobbles may be considered as an alternative but they must be of compatible color and size to those found on historic wood cabins.
- For one-story buildings, limit wall siding to one material and one pattern.

- With the cabins in use year-round, the need for snow management may require a protected cabin entrance. Entrances should be placed on the gable ends of buildings or under porches with column support as required. Refer to Building Shape and Massing guidelines for Curry Village cabins.
- Railings on porches are optional unless required by code.
- Flush, painted, solid-core doors are recommended. Panel doors, if used, should use a compatible, simple design with a paint finish.
- Use of divided lights in new cabins is not recommended.
- Exposed roof framing of rough-sawn elements is recommended.
- Attic vents of wood are recommended.
- Continue the use of the established color for the historic cabins.
- A subtle variation of the established color is recommended as a way to distinguish new cabins from historic ones.



Wood Cabin with porch and rustic base, Curry Village (2004) RF

## EMPLOYEE HOUSING

New employee housing will be built outside the Curry Village Historic District. This development should be of a character that is compatible with the historic district, yet express its own identity as a contemporary addition to Curry Village.

### Siting + Building Orientation

The relationship between buildings and the landscape is one of the most distinctive characteristics of Curry Village.

#### GUIDELINES

- Cluster buildings around existing natural features.
- Site buildings on the edges of open spaces and into the trees, and use the open spaces for natural light and views. It is important to preserve and enhance open spaces for gathering areas, since Curry Village is predominantly in the shade. Pedestrian access from parking areas to buildings should weave through these open spaces.
- Recognize the historic Toboggan Run by retaining a visual corridor over its original alignment.
- A transition zone of vegetation, boulders, and trees between the existing buildings at Curry Village and new buildings is important. New buildings must not intrude upon the integrity of the Curry Village Historic District.
- New development must respect the boundary of the rockfall zone as established by the *Yosemite Valley Plan*.

### Architectural Character

A major issue for new buildings outside the historic district is their compatibility with the existing historic buildings. Curry Village has a distinct architectural character defined by a consistent use of Rustic design principles. The employee housing area will become a new zone within the overall development of Curry Village. It is important that Rustic design principles be observed to achieve harmony with the historic district.

**GUIDELINES**

- New development outside of the historic district should have an overall sense of belonging in Curry Village by sharing characteristics that are inspired and connected to Rustic design principles.
- The character and detail of the new buildings should not replicate historic buildings. New buildings should incorporate the shape, mass, and gable roof forms of the historic buildings. Other features and details should be used to distinguish the new buildings as contemporary, consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

**Building Shape + Massing**

The consistent use of rectangular shape and simple mass as employed in the adjacent historic district will help achieve unity between the employee housing and the Camp Curry Historic District. While Curry Village consists entirely of one-story buildings, two-story buildings may be necessary for the new employee housing. Space is needed between the new and historic developments to provide a reasonable transition.

**GUIDELINES**

- Examine the scale and mass of the existing housing to make new development compatible with the historic district.
- Establish a transition zone between the historic district and new development areas in which building scale and mass gradually increase. Sudden change in scale, shape or mass should be avoided.
- Limit building height to two stories.
- Use rectilinear forms for the overall mass, with projections as appropriate.
- Locate stairs and porches within the main building volume in order to protect them from the weather.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on Building Shape and Massing.



Exterior wall detail from historic wood cabin, Curry Village (2004) RF

**Roof Form + Materials**

The gable is the dominant roof form throughout the cabin areas. Asphalt shingles have replaced the historic wood shingles due to fire concerns.

**GUIDELINES**

- The roof form of new employee housing buildings should be a gable with the ridge parallel to the long side of the building.

## Building Exterior

A particular set of exterior features was used consistently in the historic cabins to achieve a rustic character. Key features include a protected base, applied pilasters to articulate facades, exposed roof framing details, wood sash windows, and a consistent color treatment. Many of these features remain relevant to the design of new buildings, as their use is not limited to a historic time period.

With the advent of year-round use, new entrances and porches will have to accommodate snow control.

### GUIDELINES

- Use board-formed concrete to form a protected base, consistent with recommendations in the Unifying Elements and Guidelines.
- For one-story buildings, limit wall siding to one pattern. For two-story buildings, use of one siding pattern is preferred, but no more than two patterns should be used. The historic wood cabins serve as reference for use of wall materials.
- Board and batten siding is recommended for its superior weathering properties and because it would be recognizably different from historic treatments. Other types of wood siding or shingles of various patterns may also be used.
- Entrances should be placed on the gable ends or under porches for protection from the weather. Use of timber columns and beams at entrances and porches may be appropriate to announce the entrance. Service doors should be protected from snow with small roof extensions or porches.
- Arrange windows in orderly and uniform manner reflecting the interior furniture layouts. Exterior doors should be sash or solid core. Windows should be metal-clad. Use windows without divided lights to distinguish new buildings from the historic ones.
- Wood trim elements should be oversized in width and thickness in order to give character to openings.
- Outlookers are recommended as a detail for supporting roof overhangs at the gable ends.
- The material and texture of exposed framing at eaves should be the same as the exterior siding.
- Use subtle accent colors derived from the natural landscape to give relief to a monotone palette. Relate these to the historic brown color.



Back side of entrance marker, Curry Village



+ residences

- MAINTAIN EXISTING CHARACTER w/ OUT SLAMISH Imitation
- ZONES BET NEW + OLD - TRANSITIONS + EDGES
- HIERARCHY OF STRUCTURES
- COMMON ELEMENTS TO EXPRESS COLLECTIVE CHARACTER + QUALITY

EL CA  
+

THE AHWAHNEE

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HELEN HUNT JACKSON IN 1872: OF OLD HUTCHINS HOUSE



"THERE ARE NO SUCH ROOMS IN THE AHWAHNEE AS THE ROOMS ON THE RIVER SIDE OF THIS LITTLE HOUSE. THIS IS THE BACK SIDE; AND THOSE WHO WISH TO SEE THE COMING + GOING OF PEOPLE, THE SETTING-OFF OF SADDLE-TRAINS, THE DRIVING UP AND DOWN OF THE LAUNDRY WAGON, WOULD BETTER TAKE ROOMS ON THE FRONT, BUT HE WHO WOULD LIKE TO OPEN HIS EYES EVERY MORNING ON THE FULL SHINING OF THE GREAT YOSEMITE FALL; TO LIE IN BED, ~~AND~~ FROM HIS VERY PILLOW WATCH IT SWAY TO THE RIGHT + LEFT UNDER MOONLIGHT BEAMS, WHICH SEEM LIKE WANDS ADDRESSING OR HASTENING THE MOTION; TO LOOK DOWN INTO THE AMBER + GREEN MERCEDES, WHICH CARESSES HIS VERY DOOR SILL; TO LISTEN AT ALL HOURS TO THE GRAND VIOLINCELLO TONES OF THE MYSTERIOUS WATERS, -- LET HIM ASK, AS WE DID, FOR BACK ROOMS IN THE COTTAGE BY THE RIVER.

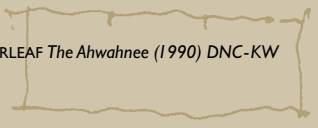


OLD HUTCHINS HOUSE \*

1859

\* [UPPER HOTEL]

1866  
 large combo kitchen/sitting room  
 w/ 175' CEDAR TREE ∴ "BIG TREE ROOM"



OVERLEAF The Ahwahnee (1990) DNC-KW

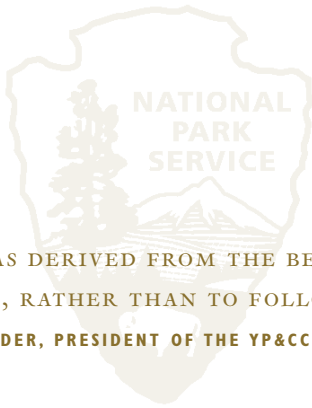
20 x 60  
2 LARGE ROOMS

BUT IF HE IS DISCONCERNED BY THE FACT THAT HIS BEDROOM FLOOR IS OF ROUGH PINE BOARDS, + HIS BEDROOM WALLS OF THIN LATH, COVERED W/ UNBLEACHED COTTON; THAT HE HAS NEITHER CHAIR, NOR TABLE, NOR PITCHER; THAT HIS WASHBOWL IS A SHALLOW TIN PAN, + THAT ALL THE WATER HE WANTS HE MUST DIP IN A TIN PINT FROM A BARREL OUT IN THE HALL; THAT HIS BED IS A SACK STUFFED W/ FEANS, HIS ONE WINDOW HAS NO CURTAIN + HIS DOOR NO KEY? -- LET HIM LEAVE AHWAHNEE THE NEXT DAY. "

## THE AHWAHNEE

DESIGNED by Gilbert Stanley Underwood, The Ahwahnee is one of the most elaborate lodges ever built in the national parks. In its discussion of the specific significance of The Ahwahnee, the 1977 National Register nomination calls the hotel “among the most significant park hotels in the country,” in the company of the Old Faithful Inn in Yellowstone, the El Tovar at the Grand Canyon.

In spite of the difficulties encountered during the planning and construction of The Ahwahnee, most would agree that Underwood turned this challenging assignment into one of his greatest successes. Skillfully adopting a previously developed architectural vocabulary to a site where



IT WAS DERIVED FROM THE BEGINNING TO MAKE THE AHWAHNEE ENVIRONMENTAL IN ITS ARCHITECTURE, RATHER THAN TO FOLLOW ANY DEFINITE PERIOD. FROM A LETTER WRITTEN IN 1927 BY DONALD TRESSIDER, PRESIDENT OF THE YP&CC, TO FREDERICK LAW OLMSTED, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

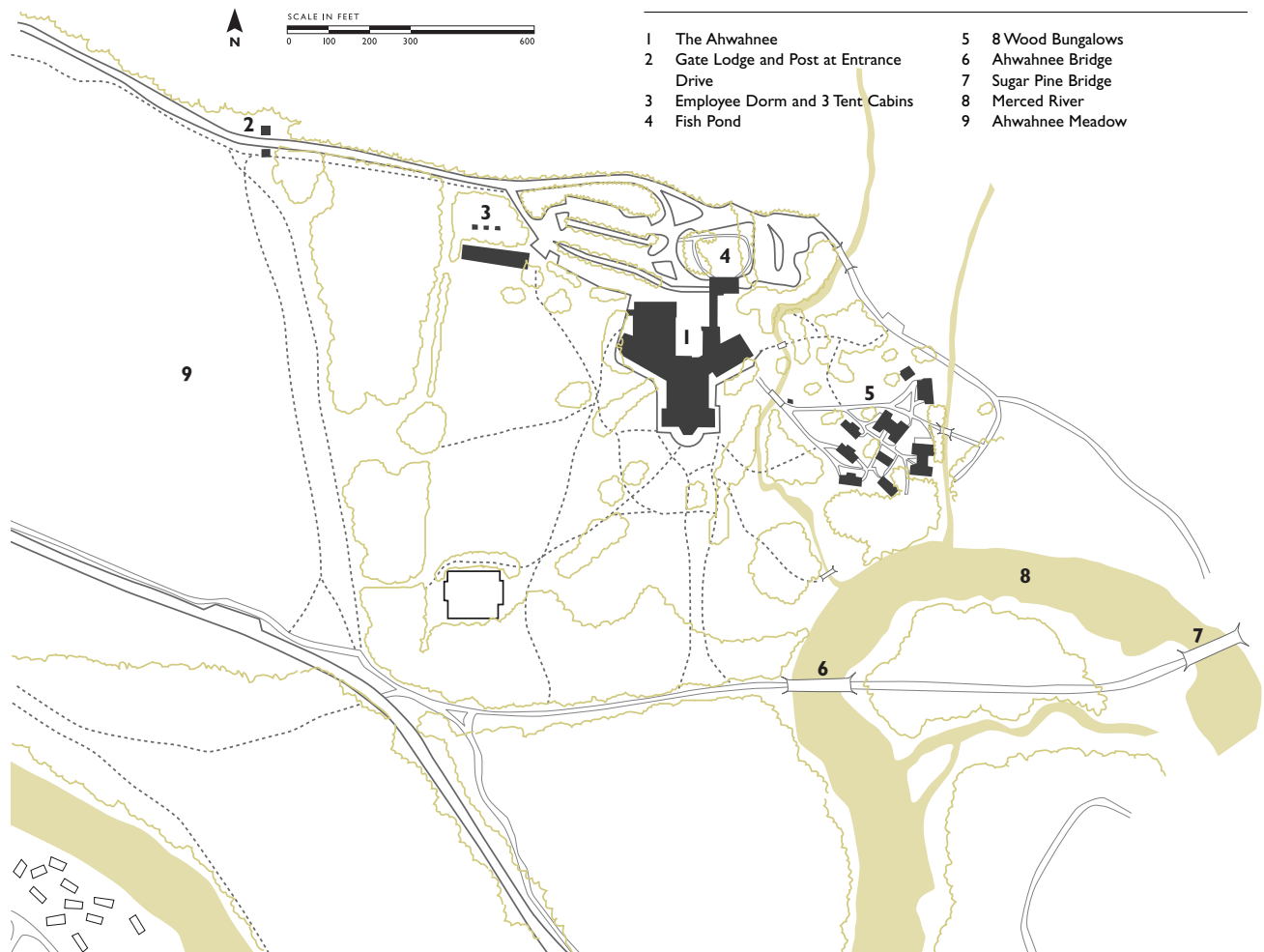
proportions had to be carefully considered, he succeeded in creating a new interpretation of Rustic architecture. By echoing the Valley’s massive boulders, craggy cliffs, and towering forest, he forged new paths “different from anything previously built in the parks,” according to publicity bulletins periodically issued by the Yosemite Park & Curry Company during construction. The company called its style “environmental” to stress its departure from established forms of design (Zaitlin 1989).

A few naturalists, who believed that any building in the park should be secondary to the landscape, were critical of the hotel’s lavishness. Among them was Ansel Adams, who wrote that “the architect had tried to compete with the environment. He lost.” But for those who understand the structure’s compatibility with the scale of its surroundings, the hotel is a unique and successful blend of Rustic with Art Deco elements. Its design represents a highly individualized interpretation of Rustic architecture (Zaitlin 1989).

Completed in 1927, The Ahwahnee has continued in operation to this day. The one exception is during World War II, when it was converted to a naval hospital. Despite this use, The Ahwahnee retains excellent integrity to the period of historical significance ending in 1942. The Ahwahnee was listed in the National Register in 1977, and was designated a National Historic Landmark for its significant architecture in 1987.

## SETTING

The Ahwahnee has an optimal location in Yosemite Valley, with stunning views, river access, and a mild local climate. The milder climate is due in part to the hotel's elevated location, giving it access to a higher angle of sunlight from the southwest. Attesting to the site's popularity, previous uses include an American Indian village, the Kenneyville Stables, J.C. Lamon's Homestead, and the Aaron Harris public camping facility.





Sitting as it does, at the northeastern edge of the relatively secluded Ahwahnee Meadow, The Ahwahnee has impressive views of Glacier Point, Royal Arch Cascade, Royal Arches, Yosemite Falls, and Half Dome. It is within an “A” type scenic zone (the highest of three categories) and was a popular site for early photographers and artists (NPS 200b).

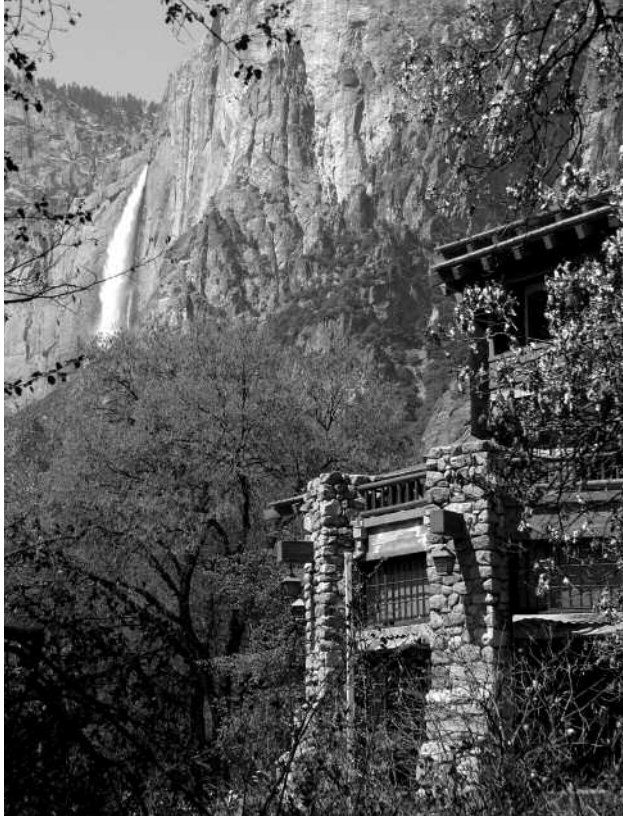
The Merced River winds in a distinctive oxbow bend on the southern edge of the hotel site, creating an effective buffer between the hotel and Curry Village and the maze of public campgrounds that occupy the eastern end of the Valley. Elevated above the floodplain, The Ahwahnee was spared during the 1997 flood. While outside the talus zone as defined by the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, the hotel is within the “shadow line,” defined as the probable furthest extent of individual rocks beyond the talus line.

Management of vegetation at The Ahwahnee has historically focused on attempts to present a natural meadow landscape and native woodlands, as well as to reinforce certain spatial sequences and impressions. To an impressive degree, the original landscape and overall site plan of the area have been maintained. Despite the encroachment of pines and cedars into black oak forests and meadows, vegetation management has successfully preserved views—both from the building to natural landmarks, and of the building in its meadow setting—while still maintaining the area’s sense of splendid isolation. These efforts were often based on intuition rather than the in-depth horticultural or forestry knowledge, as is evident in the close planting of sequoias to screen buildings and tennis courts. In the 1920s, Olmsted added more vegetation to discourage deer and create a more varied and lush appearance. He also designed the pond in front of The Ahwahnee, landscaped with plantings representative of the various ecological zones in the park (Olmsted 1930). Much of this disappeared during World War II due to lack of maintenance.

The Ahwahnee is accessed by a two-lane entrance road from Village Drive. The road provides access to the



TOP Pair of lanterns at The Ahwahnee BOTTOM Porte-cochere, The Ahwahnee (2004) RF



TOP *The Ahwahnee with Upper Yosemite Fall* (2003) GH  
 BOTTOM *Ahwahnee bungalow* (2004) RF

parking lot on the north side of the hotel, the porte cochere, and the service entrance to the hotel.

From the parking lot, the hotel is screened by a porte-cochere generous enough to accommodate 4–6 automobiles. Shrubs and trees (including sequoias) planted in the 1920s provide additional screening. The porte-cochere connects to a covered walkway, which in turn leads into the reception lobby of the hotel. From this point, access continues to shops, the dining room, the main lounge, and outdoor spaces on the south side of the hotel. The entrance is on the service side of the

building, although the service areas and loading docks are completely hidden from view by a heavy board fence.

The entrance, as originally conceived by Underwood, was to have been on the end of the northeast wing. A portico was built to cover the entrance, but there was a concern that vehicles and arriving guests might create too much noise for the occupants of the guest rooms just above. The present port cochere and 120-foot covered walkway were hastily built and the original portico closed up. Today it functions as the Ahwahnee Bar, located just off the entrance lobby (Zaitlin 1989).

This modification of the entry creates a different type of arrival from the one originally planned. Underwood's own watercolor rendering of the hotel before its completion shows that it was his original idea to provide more formal access to the building. A covered walkway made of logs and rough wood made arriving at the entrance lobby a more rustic experience (Zaitlin 1989).

From the south, The Ahwahnee makes very different and surprising impressions. Hardly visible from the north side, it emerges as a massive, granite-clad structure that seems to both stand up to its surroundings and acquiesce to them. The building is set in an open meadow with background views of the Royal Arches, Glacier Point, Yosemite Point, and other major formations of the Valley walls. The massive, stone covered piers and projecting wings of the hotel give it a sculptural quality. The absence of an entrance and the associated traffic enhance this sculptural quality when viewed from the south, east, and west.

The Ahwahnee bungalow group, separated from the hotel by Royal Arch Creek, was designed by architect Ted Spencer in 1928. A unique wooden bridge with built-in craftsman-style benches leads visitors across the creek to the small clapboard and shake buildings. The exclusion of vehicles from this heavily wooded area gives it an intimate, semi-private feeling distinct from that of the hotel. The bungalows are relatively close to one another but dense vegetation and the meandering slate pathways prevent the feeling of crowding.



Log seat with chevron pattern at  
The Ahwahnee (2004) RF

## DEVELOPED AREA

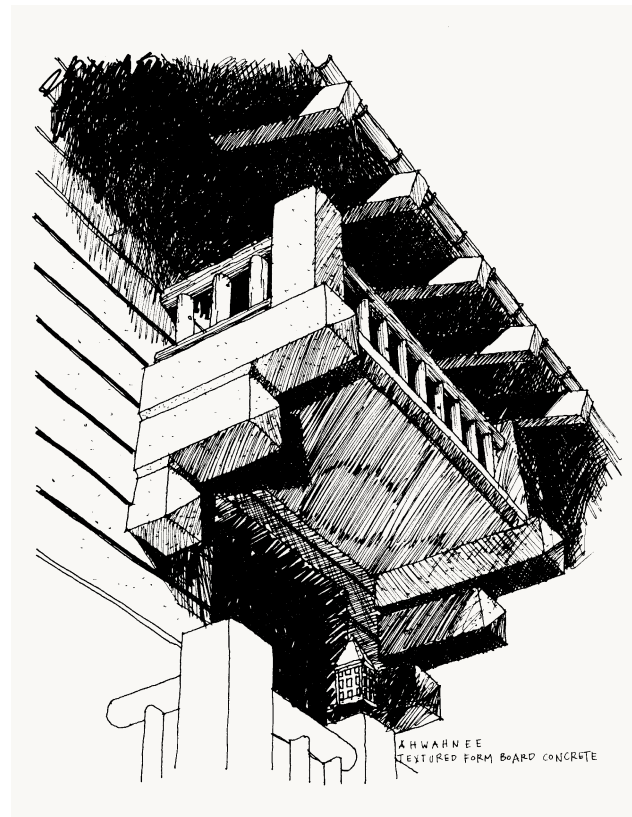
The Ahwahnee is a significant example of the final development of Rustic architecture in Yosemite Valley. A response to the natural setting informs almost every aspect of the building's design. While the oversized proportions of the building's important elements seek to achieve a scale that relates to the Valley walls, the backdrop of massive granite walls of the Valley seems to diminish the building's massive scale.

The architect, Gilbert Stanley Underwood, created a building that combined contemporary building technology with the use of native materials. The six-story, steel frame and reinforced concrete structure is clad with stained, textured concrete designed to look like wood, a veneer of weathered granite boulders, and real logs at the porte cochere. While most of the building materials were far from rustic, their specific treatment and the forms into which they were molded resulted in a Rustic style building, regardless of its rational construction, massive scale, and modern techniques. Americans have come to expect rough hewn logs and rocks in park buildings (Page & Turnbull 1997).

Understanding this sensitive expectation, Underwood created a building that is seemingly just that—logs and rocks. That it is successful is remarkable, given the utilization of relatively spare amounts of actual rustic materials. The Rustic architecture is overlain by the interior design, which is not rustic but a skillful blending of the then current Art Deco style, with American Indian decorative motifs. While Underwood was apparently the generator of the Art Deco theme, it was the design team of Ackerman and Pope—with the assistance of interior designer Jeanette Spencer—who succeeded in integrating the Art Deco and American Indian decorative arts into the hotel. It is in fact this form of decoration, present in all aspects of the interior, from the furnishings to the fixtures and fabrics, that is regaled today (Page & Turnbull 1997).

The building's massing is broken up, creating the sense of a rambling, organic structure that belies the sheer size of the facility. Large wings contain a massive lounge and a dining room, both of which are extraordinary spaces. The lounge has an ornate, concrete framed ceiling and the dining room features high, exposed timber trusses.

Curry company president Don Tresidder and the board of the Yosemite Park & Curry Company instructed Underwood to design the 100 guest room structure (along with consideration for space for the later cottages) to convey the impression of a large home rather than a hotel. He was told to place the essential commercial elements such as the cashier, telephone booths, etc., in an unobtrusive place, preferably in a separate wing. Upon entering the building, guests might take notice of



Roof overhang and balcony of concrete, made to simulate wood

these facilities, but once past them, they would feel they were in a “quiet, luxurious country home” (Zaitlin 1989).

The concept of a large hotel changed many times before the final drawings were completed. As late as January of 1926, the plans for the hotel provided for a building no higher than three stories with stone construction on the first floor and wood frame above. Eventually it was decided to build a larger structure providing 100 guest rooms, and several very spacious public areas. The dining room, originally planned for 1,000, was scaled down to accommodate only 350 diners.

Other significant buildings in The Ahwahnee developed area include eight Ahwahnee Bungalows and a storage building in the bungalow area. The Ahwahnee dormitory, built as barracks during World War II and converted later to employee housing, is non-contributing.

Eleven significant structures in The Ahwahnee developed area include: The Ahwahnee Entrance Road (from gateway to parking lot), Ahwahnee Gateway Piers, Ahwahnee Main Parking Lot (West), Fish Pond, Bungalow Paths, Footbridge to Bungalow Area, Footbridge near Merced River, Bridletrail Ford, drainageways, Tennis Courts, and the Flagstone Terrace (NPS 2004d).

#### GUIDELINES

- Base any removal or replacement of vegetation on a thorough inventory of existing conditions, including the problem of pines, cedars, and sequoias crowding out dogwoods and oaks, encroaching into the meadow, and blocking historic views from the hotel. Removal and replacement of vegetation must not compromise the area’s sense of relative isolation.
- The Ahwahnee Landscape Maintenance Plan (NPS 1996a) indicates how best to manage the dense forested bungalow area while addressing fire hazard, clearing of dying and hazardous trees, and maintenance of an uneven aged plant community.
- Pathways should continue to be paved with random angular slate which matches the existing paths.
- Materials, color, and scale of The Ahwahnee should be the reference for any new work. For example, new concrete work should be form board and stained, in the same character as The Ahwahnee. See *The Ahwahnee Historic Structure Report* (Page & Turnbull 1997).
- New bungalows should continue the scale, character, and detail of the existing bungalow structures.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on architecture and small landscape features.



Large scale glazed opening between porch and lounge at The Ahwahnee





**YOSEMITE LODGE**

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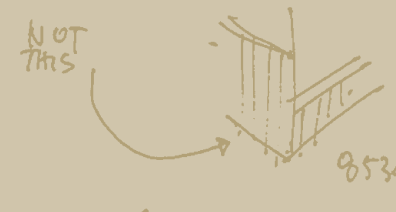
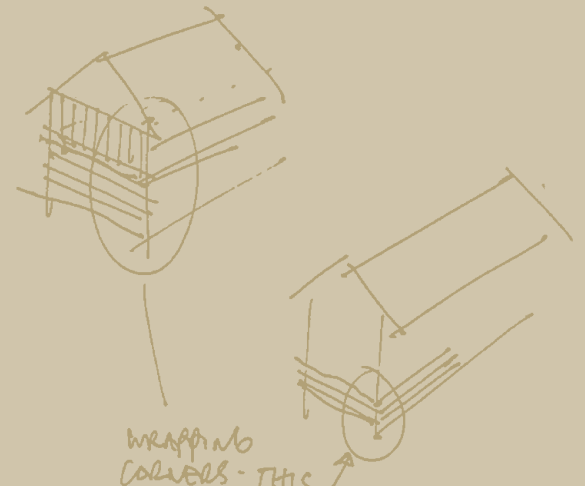
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A direct comparison of 8533 and 8532



although these appear glaring differences

seems worthwhile to articulate why one of these works better. "Blending" and establishing an appropriate character



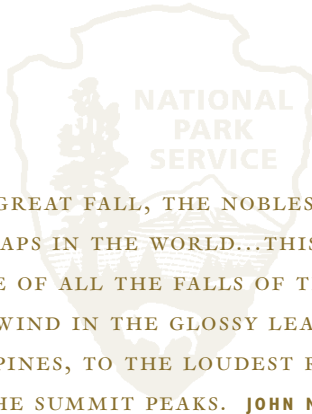
balanced but not symmetrical

BY THE TENT CASINS. HAVE A CRISP PROPORTION



## YOSEMITE LODGE

YOSEMITE LODGE is a 1950s motel complex, characterized by modern structural forms and modern materials like glass, concrete, and steel. It is located along the base of the north Valley wall, southwest of Yosemite Village, north of the Merced River, and immediately west of Yosemite Creek. The original Yosemite Lodge building was constructed in 1915, in response to the advice of Stephen Mather and Franklin Lane. Both believed that there would be a influx of visitors to the park after the completion of the Panama Canal. Increased visitation to Yosemite did occur,



THE GREAT FALL, THE NOBLEST DISPLAY OF FALLING WATER TO BE FOUND IN THE VALLEY, OR PERHAPS IN THE WORLD...THIS NOBLE FALL HAS FAR THE RICHEST, AS WELL AS THE MOST POWERFUL, VOICE OF ALL THE FALLS OF THE VALLEY, ITS TONES VARYING FROM THE SHARP HISS AND RUSTLE OF THE WIND IN THE GLOSSY LEAVES OF THE LIVE-OAKS AND THE SOFT, SIFTING, HUSHING TONES OF THE PINES, TO THE LOUDEST RUSH AND ROAR OF STORM WINDS AND THUNDER AMONG THE CRAGS OF THE SUMMIT PEAKS. **JOHN MUIR • THE YOSEMITE**

but not until after World War II, making it necessary to rebuild the facility. Beginning in 1956, the motel and associated development was replaced with several new buildings. Yosemite Lodge today includes the main lodge (registration building), mid-scale motel units, two restaurants, a cafeteria, bar, gift and general merchandise store, specialty gift shop, bike rental shop, post office, and swimming pool. All guest lodging consists of multi-unit style building construction (NPS 2004d).

In 1996, the public facilities at the Lodge were renovated with the rehabilitation and extension of the Mountain Room Restaurant, a new Garden Court restaurant, an enlarged and renovated gift shop, and rest rooms.

The *Yosemite Valley Plan* calls for revising the character of Yosemite Lodge by changing from a motel character to one more connected to a national park lodge experience in Yosemite Valley. It also calls for the removal of facilities from the River Protection Overlay and the floodplain.

Although Yosemite Lodge is within the Yosemite Valley Historic District, the buildings are non-contributing.

## SETTING

### NATURAL SYSTEMS + FEATURES

The Yosemite Lodge complex is located on the north side of Yosemite Valley between towering granite cliffs and the Merced River. Yosemite Lodge's location on the edge of Leidig Meadow, just north of the Merced River, and close to Yosemite Falls gives the complex a dramatic setting. The most prominent natural feature at the Lodge is Yosemite Falls to the northeast. Further up the Valley to the east is Half Dome. The Lodge lies within a high scenic value area as identified by the *Yosemite Valley Plan*.

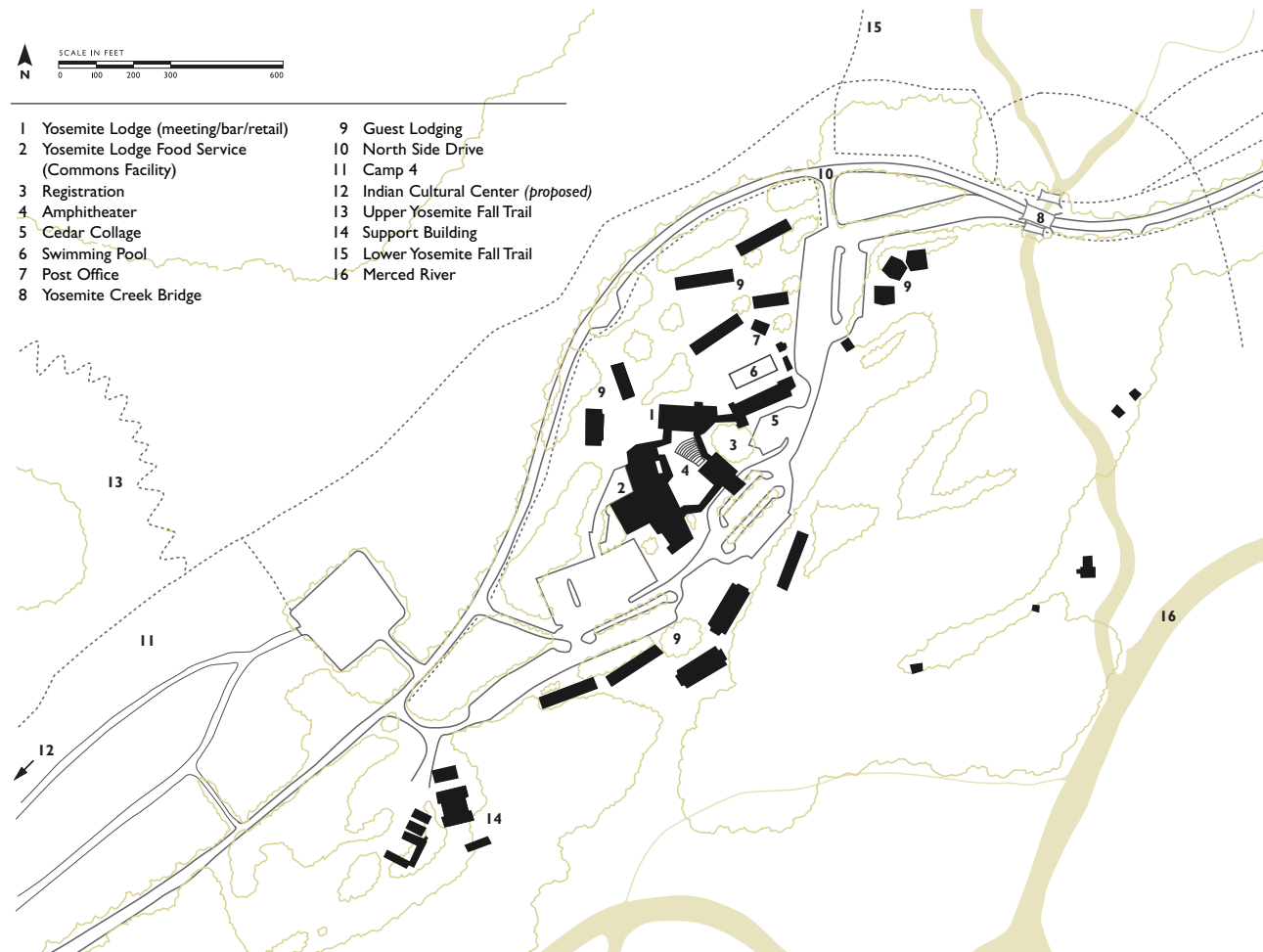
### Climate

The Yosemite Lodge complex is set on the sunny, warmer side of the Valley. In the winter, the Lodge gets low angle direct sunshine resulting in strong solar radiation that penetrates into areas normally shaded from the summer sun. This effect is more pronounced in areas of deciduous black oaks.

Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on climate.

### Yosemite Falls

The most dramatic natural feature at Yosemite Lodge is the remarkable tree-framed view of Yosemite Falls to





the north. Each year, however, views of the Upper and Lower Falls from the Lodge are incrementally narrowed or obscured by these tall coniferous trees.

#### GUIDELINES

- Plant, trim, or clear trees and shrubs as appropriate to frame, emphasize, or open up historic views, as allowed under Valley-wide park resources forestry policies and the Comprehensive Landscape and Revegetation Plan (Bitterroot 1999).

#### Merced River

The setting of the Lodge complex is directly affected by the proximity of the Merced River and its floodplain. The redevelopment as called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan* is partly in response to the damage caused by the flood of 1997.

#### GUIDELINES

- With the removal of flood damaged buildings south of Northside Drive, consider more direct pedestrian linkages, including pathways and interpretive waysides, from the center of the Lodge complex to the river's edge. Use boardwalks over wetland zones.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on the Merced River.

#### SCENIC VIEWS

Yosemite Lodge is situated in one of the most spectacular scenic areas of the park. From Yosemite Lodge one can see a great variety of significant natural features, including Sentinel Rock, Union Point, Half Dome, Washington Column, Lost Arrow Spire, and Yosemite Falls. There are also important views to talus slopes and rock walls at the base of Columbia Rock, Eagle Tower, and Eagle Peak. Views which are obscured by spring growth become apparent when leaves are shed in the fall. Distant views can at times compete with close-up subjects such as trees, talus, and bases of cliffs.



TOP Yosemite Falls from Yosemite Lodge BOTTOM Auto arrival at Yosemite Lodge (ca. 1960) YRL

The Lodge will have a stronger visual orientation to Leidig Meadow when buildings within the floodplain are removed. The visual relationship will also be substantially strengthened with clearance of encroaching tree species.

**GUIDELINES**

- Plant, trim, or clear trees and shrubs as appropriate to frame, emphasize or open up views, as allowed under Valleywide park resources forestry policies.
- Walkways, gathering areas, balconies, and public building windows should be oriented to optimize views of Yosemite Falls, Lost Arrow Spire, Half Dome, and Sentinel Rock.
- The road leading to Yosemite Lodge should be aligned for a direct or prominent view of the registration building. This view should not be interrupted by parked cars or buses and should be flanked by broad swaths of meadow vegetation.
- Leidig Meadow and the adjacent river corridor ecological restoration zone are close enough for strong view relationships. The path to the Swinging Bridge passes through this meadow area. Consider additional more direct path connections from the center of the complex to the river.



VIEW FROM LODGE

Meadow with Washington Column and Half Dome, near Yosemite Lodge

- Consideration should be given to creating view opportunities toward Columbia Rock, Eagle Tower, and Eagle Peak.
- Identify and incorporate view alignments for each group of buildings.
- Orient public open space and views from cabins toward the meadow.
- Orient rooms to capture views of important natural features.

**VEGETATION**

The vegetation at the Yosemite Lodge site exists over three distinct zones: the talus slope, the developed area of the Lodge, and the riparian meadow. The talus and developed areas are dominated by a scattered pattern of pines and cedars, with some black oak. Leidig Meadow, which lies to the south of the Lodge, is one of the major meadows in the Valley. The meadow and its extension to the west underlay much of the Merced River floodplain. There has been significant encroachment by conifers into some areas of the meadow.

**GUIDELINES**

- The vegetation layout throughout these three zones at Yosemite Lodge should be naturalistic and subtle.
- Mixed height shrub and tree zones adjacent to meadows can provide shelter and forage areas for birds, deer, small mammals, and other wildlife. Consistent with park resources goals, protect and enhance existing mixed vegetation zones, where appropriate, and plant to attract wildlife.
- The selection of vegetation types, their layout, seed collection, planting, initial maintenance procedures, and long term vegetation management must conform to the Comprehensive Landscape and Revegetation Plan (March 1999).



Leidig Meadow (1938) YRL

- Planted areas within the core of the developed area, near public buildings, should be large and separated from pedestrian areas by grade changes, or low timber, or boulder barriers. This will prevent trespassing and will enhance overall maintenance efficiency. Avoid paving patterns that result in planting areas that are too small to support large shrubs and trees, or that encourage pedestrians to wander off the paths and into planted areas.
- While there has been significant encroachment by conifers in some of Leidig meadow, ecological restoration to full wetland vegetation will greatly enhance its scenic value. (See also the *Yosemite Valley Plan* and park resources policies for meadow restoration.)

## LANDSCAPE USES/STRUCTURES

### LAND USE + SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Yosemite Lodge consists of multiple building clusters set in groves of trees and open meadow areas. The clusters are organized by function and are connected by a network of roads, trails, and parking lots. Visitor services and recreational facilities are clustered in the central core of the Lodge complex and are flanked by large parking lots. The three primary visitor service buildings in the public core are connected by covered walkways and form an inner courtyard that includes an amphitheater and casual seating. These buildings house the registration office, two restaurants, a food court, bar, a conference space, and shops. A secondary cluster adjacent to the central core



Porch of Mountain Room Restaurant, Yosemite Lodge (2004) GH



Food court dining terrace, Yosemite Lodge (2004) SA

focuses around a swimming pool. Clusters of guest lodging buildings are dispersed around the perimeter of the site and consist of one-and two-story mid-scale motel units.

#### GUIDELINES

- Use former building sites for new work. Alternatively, restore these sites to the ecological conditions appropriate to surrounding native vegetation and other environmental conditions.

### CIRCULATION + PARKING

There are several types of circulation at Yosemite Lodge serving pedestrian, vehicle, and bicycle traffic. Vehicular traffic is concentrated in the paved central core. A central paved road runs through the development. Secondary roads connect the central road to parking and service areas. Several large, paved parking lots are located in the vicinity of the registration office and some of the lodging clusters. Less formal hard-packed earth roads and small asphalt service roads provide vehicular access to the more remote Lodge facilities.

Concrete and asphalt walkways provide pedestrian circulation in the vicinity of the central core. Hard-packed earth paths connect the central core to the more remote parts of the Lodge complex (Land & Community Associates 1994). Access from parking areas to lodging units is via paved walkways.

According to the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, Yosemite Lodge will be one terminus of the new Valley-wide circulation system.

#### GUIDELINES

- Vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle pathways should be separated and clearly delineated.
- Northside Drive, when realigned south of the Lodge, should have minimal visual impact. It should convey the feeling of a rural road, designed for low speeds with safe, marked pedestrian crossings. Design should minimize it as a visual and pedestrian barrier between the Lodge and the river.
- Curves and alignments of roads should recognize straight-ahead views. The turnoff road to the Lodge arrival area should preserve the view of Upper Yosemite Fall and cliffs.
- Turnoffs to bus or auto parking areas (both short and long term) should be clearly marked. However, if possible, parked vehicles should not be visible during the arrival sequence.
- Cars and parking areas should be out of view from guest rooms and walkways if possible.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on circulation.

## ENTRANCE MARKER

### GUIDELINES

- The entrance marker at Yosemite Lodge should display the Lodge graphic symbol with low level lighting to announce the entrance to the complex. (See Unifying Elements for more guidelines on entrance markers.)

## LIGHTING

The Lodge represents one of the larger concentrations of exterior nighttime lighting and fugitive light from buildings in the Valley. Many pedestrian areas and parking areas are lit by unshielded sources on building walls and poles.

*For guidelines on small buildings, masonry, foot bridges, boardwalks, culvert crossings, retaining walls, fences/benches, and lighting, refer to Unifying Elements.*



Courtyard, Yosemite Lodge (2004) GH

## DEVELOPED AREAS

### PUBLIC BUILDINGS

#### Siting + Building Orientation

Guests arrive at Yosemite Lodge by way of Northside Drive, passing through or by the porte-cochere in front of the 1956 registration building. Guests park their vehicles in one of several small parking lots and walk back to the registration building.

The existing visitor service buildings are organized around an informal courtyard and are linked by covered walkways. This is the only complex in the Valley where covered walkways connect visitor service buildings. In the center of the courtyard is an amphitheater with views to Yosemite Falls and Sentinel Rock. The registration building faces south. The swimming pool is adjacent to this central area to the east.

### GUIDELINES

- Developing views and orientation to nearby natural features should be given high priority when planning any new work.
- New public buildings at the Lodge should be sited to take advantage of important views and should have outdoor areas that provide interpretive opportunities. Visitors should be guided towards views of Yosemite Falls or the vistas across the meadow. (At The Ahwahnee, for example, guests proceed from the entrance gate through a series of spaces out onto a grand porch with its magnificent views of Half Dome and Glacier Point.)
- New public facilities should not interfere with existing court concept, but fit into and preserve the amenity of the courtyard. New buildings should enhance the visitors experience of the area around Yosemite Lodge (e.g., taking advantage of views) while meeting the needs of the concessioner.



TOP Lounge from Mountain Room Restaurant, Yosemite Lodge (2004) SA  
 BOTTOM Mountain Room Restaurant, Yosemite Lodge (2004) SA

- New visitor service buildings should be placed in and among trees at the edges of meadows, and in areas that have been previously developed or disturbed.
- Guests should have access to outdoor spaces adjacent to buildings where they can pause, linger, and enjoy natural surroundings.
- The outdoor spaces adjacent to the registration building should be a setting for scenic views to nearby features. These can also be the beginning of the walk to the nearby Yosemite Falls.

### Architectural Character

The architectural character of Yosemite Lodge's 1956-era buildings is the product of the Mission 66 movement, a dramatic departure from earlier NPS Rustic traditions. The one-story buildings employ a modern architectural vocabulary of exposed steel frames, large expanses of glass, and low-pitch roofs. Within Yosemite Valley, traditional rustic buildings are designed to make strong connections to the natural landscape through their use of natural materials. Although Yosemite Lodge lacks the rustic character of Curry Village and The Ahwahnee, the openness and transparency of the lounge buildings allows visitors to make a good connection with the natural setting.

The 1996 rehabilitation and extension of the Mountain Room Restaurant employed elements of traditional Rustic design—rough-sawn timbers, cedar paneling left in their natural state—combined with modern elements such as large expanses of glass. This project provides continuity between the Mission 66 style and the more traditional Rustic park architecture.

### GUIDELINES

- The scale and character of major public buildings in the Lodge facility should be inspired by its magnificent setting.
- New construction at Yosemite Lodge should continue the transition begun with the restaurant rehabilitation project that recognizes the openness of the existing architecture and incorporates the spirit of rustic themes.
- The scale and massing of public buildings should express the important spaces within and impart a sense of shelter.
- Use natural materials with subdued colors that are inspired by the natural setting.

### Building Shape + Massing

The existing public buildings are one-story structures with low-pitched gable roofs that do not compete with the natural setting. Each space within the complex



Porch entry to Mountain Room Restaurant linking cafeterias and restrooms (2004) GH

provides generous interior spaces appropriate to their function. Within their low profile, these structures use roof forms that direct attention upwards towards the surrounding landmarks. At the gift shop, this takes the form of a generous clerestory; at the restaurant, there are skylights; at the Mountain Room, the roof extends in shed elements creating tall windows facing Yosemite Falls.

#### GUIDELINES

- New public buildings should be based on simple building forms that harmonize with the natural setting as well as the human-made environment. They should not detract from the grandeur of the cliffs and the waterfalls that are the prime backdrop for the Lodge.
- New public buildings at the Lodge should continue the pattern of spacious, one-story structures with generous glazed exterior walls, and exposed structural framing. Variation of building height is recommended to create important interior spaces that make strong connections to the surrounding landscape elements.
- Future planning and design should employ such methods which will enhance and foster a sense of unity for the entire complex.



YOSEMITE FALLS FROM MOUNTAIN ROOM

View of Yosemite Falls from Mountain Room Restaurant

#### Roof Form + Materials

The existing public buildings at Yosemite Lodge have a roof pitch that is considerably lower than many structures in the Valley. This profile gives the buildings a horizontal aspect that does not compete with the landscape. Asphalt cap sheet and asphalt shingles are used as roof coverings throughout the Lodge complex.

#### GUIDELINES

- Continue the use of existing roof forms to make new buildings compatible with existing public buildings at the Lodge.
- While new work should recognize the existing roofscape, it is not constrained to continue the same low pitch. Depending on the program, dramatic height for interior spaces may be desirable, though new roof pitch should not be as steep as that of Cedar Cottage.
- Provide eaves that shed snow and water away from the walls. Prevent snow and rain from dropping and accumulating on pedestrian walkways, as this is hazardous in freezing conditions.



Mountain Room roof detail from courtyard, Yosemite Lodge

- Use slightly oversized structural members to recall rustic character for important rooms.
- Roof coverings should be non-reflective and dark colored to harmonize with the natural surroundings. This will minimize visual impact when viewed from the trails above the Valley floor. The recommended roof covering is asphalt shingles.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on roof form and materials.

### Building Exterior

The exterior treatments at Yosemite Lodge include wood siding, natural colors, large window walls, over-scaled wood structural elements, covered walkways and porches, and a protected base.

The original public buildings are clad in wood siding that is stained brown. Steel columns and windows are painted the same color. The exterior walls of the Mountain Room addition are resawn cedar boards finished with a clear stain. This treatment recalls early rustic buildings in the Valley that typically had redwood siding with a clear oil finish.

Generous window walls on the original steel-framed buildings allow a strong connection between indoors and outdoors. Glazed doors reinforce this indoor-outdoor connection.

The existing exposed steel columns and beams recall the earlier tradition of exposed structural elements. Recent additions at the Lodge re-introduced the use of overscaled, resawn timbers for the interior and exterior framing.

A concrete base was incorporated in the design of the Mountain Room addition to create a weathering lower wall treatment. The use of a stone base may recognize the importance of new buildings.

#### GUIDELINES

- Wood siding with a resawn surface is recommended as the predominant cladding material.
- Appropriate finishes for wood siding include paints or opaque stains in colors compatible and semi-transparent stains or natural weathering sealers. Natural finish requires a higher wood grading standard for appearance.
- Porches and eaves should be of a scale suitable for public assembly. The south loggia at The Ahwahnee is a fine example.
- Moderately overscaled, re-sawn timbers are recommended for the main structural elements. Logs are not recommended. For reasons of sustainability, glue-laminated members are preferred. However, log framing members may be appropriate in some areas for their special visual or interpretive value. The use of log framing in Yosemite Valley has declined since its earlier use at Curry Village and The Ahwahnee.
- Exposed timber framing connectors should not be visually distracting. The color of the painted metal connector plates and brackets should be harmonious with the wood framing members.



View from Lounge into courtyard, Yosemite Lodge (2004) GH



- Wood detail elements such as trim boards should be sized to have a sturdy character.
- New public buildings should have a defined base that resists deterioration and visually connects the building to the ground. The base should be made of concrete formed with rough-sawn boards. It may be appropriate to use a weathered granite base for important new structures. In this case, the granite should be used for adjacent landscape walls so as to connect the building to the land in the Rustic tradition.

## GUEST LODGING

### Siting + Building Orientation

Traditionally, the setting for guest quarters is quiet and restful, providing guests the opportunity to experience and appreciate the natural surroundings. Guest quarters at Yosemite Lodge are located in clusters at some distance from the public buildings. Approached by pathways from the central public core, the buildings are sited in and among the trees and near the edges of meadows.

Many of the guest quarter buildings are one and two stories in height, long and rectangular in shape, and arranged in an irregular layout, with a general tendency to align parallel with the Valley walls. This east-west orientation allows views of the Valley walls to the north and south.

These buildings have defined front and rear sides, stairs, access balconies, and entrance doors on the front, and patios and decks on the rear.

After removal of Lodge units affected by the 1997 flood almost all the remaining and new units will be sited between the new alignment of Northside Drive and Northside Drive's original alignment, which will become a multi-purpose trail and emergency vehicle route.

#### GUIDELINES

- New lodging units should, wherever possible, be placed among healthy trees or in areas where conifers are slated for removal.



Porch entry to the Mountain Room Restaurant (2004) RF

- Guest lodgings should be sited to take advantage of natural light and views.
- Orientation of buildings for solar access may in some instances be adjusted for important views.
- Continue the use of rectangular buildings with an east-west orientation as a unifying characteristic for site organization.
- The clustering of smaller guest quarters has greater flexibility in adapting to landscape elements such as trees and boulders. Informal groupings allow the buildings to fit more naturally into the landscape. It is important to determine the capacity of the site so as not to tax the natural setting. See also National Park Service site carrying capacity studies by Frissell et al., 1979.
- Refer to Unifying Elements, Siting and Building Orientation for more guidelines on building orientation and sound.

## Architectural Character

The overall architectural character of the guest quarters at Yosemite Lodge reflects the Bay Area style of the 1940s to 1960s. This regional design was widely used during the period of their construction. Like Mission 66 public buildings, the guest quarters departed from the traditional Rustic style. The features that link these buildings to other developments in Yosemite Valley include the use of simple rectangular plan forms with gable roofs, wood siding in simple patterns, and paint and stain colors of dark umber.

New development presents the opportunity to reinterpret Rustic design principles and yet express and use contemporary materials and techniques.

### GUIDELINES

- The architectural character of the guest quarters should be modest, restful, and welcoming to the visitor. The expression of shelter should be enhanced by generous roof overhangs, porches, verandahs, and private outdoor spaces.
- New development should create a sense of identity for the guest quarter buildings by using design themes that interpret the unique history and physical setting of the site.



*Cedar Cottage, built 1955, with Upper Yosemite Fall (2004) RF*

- Use of natural materials can contribute rustic character to the guest quarter buildings and promote visitor appreciation of appropriate park architecture.

## Building Shape + Massing

Guest quarters at Yosemite Lodge are simple one- and two-story buildings that maintain a consistent scale throughout the development. Most of the buildings have rectangular plans with gable roofs. Each guest room at the Lodge provides access to the outdoors by way of a balcony or patio.

Balconies and patios require the proper degree of privacy to make guests comfortable. The Sentinel and Wawona Hotels provide historic examples of generous two-story balconies providing access to guest rooms, a place to enjoy the outdoors, and a buffer between public and private spaces. Wide enough to accommodate sitting and socializing, the balcony's proportions and details created a dignified character. (Although the Sentinel Hotel is no longer extant, it is a relevant reference for new Yosemite Lodge buildings.)

The roof can control the massing of the building by extending beyond the plan, encompassing bays. For instance, the main roof of the Tecoya dorms buildings extends over the projecting bays at the gable ends, and thus maintains the overall building form. A simple massing can also be preserved when stairs and elevators are recessed into the main volume and/or covered by the main roof.

The historic Cascades Cabins (now removed) are another reference for new guest quarter buildings. They had a refined simplicity of shape and massing. Gable roofs defined main volumes, and the roof slope was kept intact as it descended over the projecting bays.

### GUIDELINES

- Small cabins should have the simplest possible form.
- Larger, two-story buildings should use plan forms that generate simple building mass. Use extensions of the main roof to add extensions to the main rectangular



Early Yosemite Lodge bungalows with jerkinhead roofs (1926) YRL

plan form—sheds on the long sides and gabled bays at the ends.

- Stairs and elevators should be recessed within the mass of the building to provide weather protection and to maintain the simple overall building mass.
- Guest rooms should have outdoor seating areas such as covered porches, patios, or balconies.
- Balcony design should be inspired by historical examples such as the Sentinel and Wawona Hotels. Where balconies are also used for access to guest rooms, they should be wide enough to accommodate seating as well.
- Edge treatments of patios and balconies should establish visual privacy for both guests in their rooms and the passersby. Low walls, built-in benches, and balcony railings should be used to screen furniture and guest clutter. Tall screens should be avoided except where they can help reinforce desirable definition of open space. Refer to Unifying Guidelines for more guidelines on fences and benches.

### Roof Form Materials

The guest quarter buildings have gable roofs of very low to medium pitch, similar to the roofs of the public buildings in the visitor service core. The roof pitch of Cedar Cottage, however, is steeper and more consistent with the character of other buildings in the Valley of similar size.

Roof forms at entrances protect visitors from inclement weather. The gable is a traditional form that indicates the entrance to the building, while affording protection.

Exposed roof framing is typical at the Lodge and throughout the Valley. Roof covering of existing guest quarter buildings is typically asphalt shingles.

### GUIDELINES

- Use simple gables as the dominant element with the ridge parallel to the long axis of the plan.
- Continue use of medium roof pitches in the range of 5 in 12.
- Gable roof porches over entrances are recommended.
- Shed dormers are recommended rather than gable dormers because they minimize snow accumulation on their sidewalls.
- To maintain the plane of a dominant roof, there should be at least four horizontal feet between the edge of the dormer and the edge of the roof.
- Roofs should use relatively dark and non-reflective, colored coverings in order to harmonize with the surroundings, both when viewed from the adjacent ground and from trails above the Valley floor.
- Asphalt shingle is the recommended roof covering material.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on roof form and materials, in particular generous roof overhangs, exposed roof framing and sheathing, and modestly overscaled elements.

### Building Exterior

Guest quarter buildings are generally more modest than public buildings, serving as quiet backdrops for guests' enjoyment of the park. At the Lodge, guest quarters are clad with wood siding with varied patterns and rough textures. The color is predominately dark brown, consistent with colors used throughout the Valley. Cedar Cottage, adjacent to the public center, is an example of recommended treatment for new guest quarter exteriors. It has a simple combination of horizontal and vertical wood siding and is painted a dark raw umber.

Doors and windows are arranged in regular patterns on existing guest quarter buildings. Porches and balconies complement the façade when they are designed using the same materials and details. Partial screening is advised in order to screen visual clutter sometimes caused by patio furniture and personal effects.

#### GUIDELINES

- Façades of new buildings should be restrained in character, blending with the background and not competing with the natural surroundings.
- Make use of Valleywide Unifying Elements such as protected base, wood siding, and windows arranged in simple patterns, overscaled details, and use of color.
- Windows should be generous enough to provide enjoyment of views, let adequate natural light to the interior, and allow natural ventilation. Recessed, metal-clad wood windows are recommended.
- For one-story buildings, a single siding material is recommended. However, varying patterns may be used at gable ends for textural or visual interest.
- For two-story buildings, walls may be designed with different complementary siding patterns at each story. Where materials change, provide a slight offset or a water table trim.
- Colors and textures should be appropriate to the natural setting. In a large complex of dispersed buildings, color may be used to unify the development and provide a sense of identity. Groups of buildings may be given slight variations from a primary theme. The color scheme of new guest lodging should relate to other buildings in the complex, both new and existing. The raw umber color of Cedar Cottage is recommended for new guest quarters. Slight variation of the same hue may give identity to housing clusters within the complex. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on color.



Early view of Yosemite Lodge Lounge and Meeting Room (ca. 1960) YRL



dispense or cleanup parking?  
 shuttle stop for employees -

2 option

(2 story)  
 each cluster  
 commons bladder  
 kitchen / laundry  
 addtl units

PEREBLIND 6

wellness.

1 option

main access road.

**CAMP AREAS**

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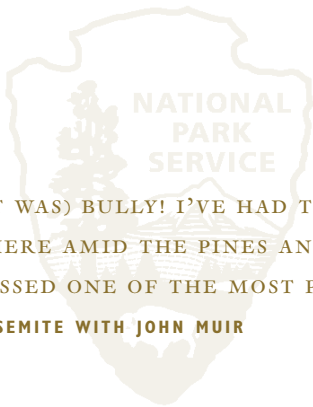
UNIVERS CENTER'S RELATIONSHIP TO MAIN RD?  
 RELATIONSHIP OF COMMON BUBBLES TO UNITS? TO EACH OTHER?



existing existing flow

## CAMP AREAS

CAMPGROUNDS and Housekeeping Camp provide overnight visitors to Yosemite Valley opportunities for a more rustic outdoor experience. These relatively less expensive accommodations are generally located in quiet forested settings in close proximity to the banks and beaches of the Merced River. Their locations provide convenient access to scenic landmarks and are linked by shuttle bus and walkways to day-use destinations and visitor services. Campsites in the Valley are among the most popular in the National Park System, with reservations for sites during peak season filling up months in advance. Many families return year after year to the same campground or Housekeeping Camp, perpetuating a cherished tradition. Camp 4, also known as Sunnyside Camp, is closely associated with the boulders and talus slopes below the cliffs of the Valley’s north wall and is most popular with rock climbers.



(IT WAS) BULLY! I’VE HAD THE TIME OF MY LIFE...JUST THINK OF WHERE I WAS LAST NIGHT. UP THERE AMID THE PINES AND SILVER FIRS, IN THE SIERRAN SOLITUDE, AND WITHOUT A TENT, I PASSED ONE OF THE MOST PLEASANT NIGHTS OF MY LIFE. **THEODORE ROOSEVELT ON HIS EXPERIENCE IN YOSEMITE WITH JOHN MUIR**

Recognizing that the overnight camping experience could be enhanced with improved facilities, plans are underway to rehabilitate the campgrounds and provide additional campsites, primarily walk-in sites. Existing campgrounds will also be reconfigured to offer different campsite types to a range of visitors—from those arriving with two-person tents to those driving state-of-the-art recreational vehicles with utility hookups. New communal comfort stations and individual site furnishings (including picnic table, fire ring, bear proof food locker, and tent pad) are proposed. To preserve and protect the fragile banks of the Merced River and respect the floodplain, the campsites at the campgrounds and Housekeeping Camp will be moved further away from the river edge.

**CAMPGROUNDS**

Campgrounds in Yosemite Valley provide the basic level of overnight accommodations for visitors. The sites include Lower Pines, Upper Pines, North Pines, and the future walk-in camp east of Curry Village. Camp 4 is treated separately within this chapter.

Several building types support visitor functions in campgrounds. These include entrance kiosks, comfort stations, showerhouses, and sheds for storage, lockers, vending, and other uses. Site elements include a vehicle

access road, parking areas, pathways, individual campsites, and equipment such as bench-tables, food lockers, fire pits, grills, and trash receptacles.

For more information about Camp 4, Upper Pines, Lower Pines, and North Pines Campgrounds consult the National Register Nomination for the Yosemite Valley Historic District and Cultural Landscape Report for Yosemite Valley. As a requirement of the Yosemite Valley Plan, a new walk-in campground will be part of the improvements at Curry Village.



*Lower Pines Campground (2004) RF*



## SETTING

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The Upper, Lower, and North Pines campgrounds all lie on the flat, forested Valley floor north of Curry Village and Glacier Point. The forest around the Upper Pines and the proposed walk-in campgrounds are somewhat open providing scenic views. While Lower and North Pines campgrounds are adjacent to areas of historically high scenic value, they are dominated by pines and cedars which obstruct views from the campgrounds.

Portions of Lower and North Pines and Housekeeping Camp lie within the River Protection Overlay, with the latter two largely within the 100-year flood zone. Local views to the Merced River from sections of Housekeeping Camp, Lower and North Pines campgrounds are very attractive, drawing significant numbers of campers to the water's edge. This has resulted in damage to or elimination of substantial reaches of riparian vegetation. Portions of Upper and Lower Pines and the proposed walk-in campgrounds were inundated by flood waters in 1997.

New trails and two new bridges over a creek tributary to the Merced River will be required to access the proposed walk-in campgrounds. While there are views of some surrounding walls and peaks from Upper Pines (e.g., to Half Dome), those from remaining campgrounds (many of them documented in the past by artists and photographers) may be limited or obscured by forest vegetation.

According to the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, a campground at Tenaya Creek will be partially within the talus shadow line, the probable furthest extent of individual rocks beyond the talus line. This area was flooded in 1997. Much of this campground is considered a highly valued scenic resource and was chosen by eminent early photographers and painters for its scenic views. It is served by an important existing multi-use paved trail, connecting The Ahwahnee, Mirror Lake, and Tenaya Canyon.

The proposed group campground, to be known as South Camp, directly adjacent to Happy Isles Loop Road, is one of the shadier and cooler sites in the Valley.



Lower Pines Campground (2004) RF

Like Curry Village, it is sited at the base and slightly to the east of Glacier Point, largely out of the talus and rockfall zones. (South Camp may be cooler than Curry Village, due to the north-east orientation of portions of the base of Glacier Point.) It is served by the Happy Isles Loop Road and is adjacent to a highly valued resource area, according to the *Yosemite Valley Plan*.

## DEVELOPED AREAS

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Small buildings and support structures collectively define the architectural character of a campground. Entrance kiosks, comfort stations, shelters, and other structures can share a set of typical features and details, so that a consistent character is present throughout the campground. They are traditionally designed to blend with their surroundings and embody a rustic character.

The entrance kiosk is the first building seen upon entering a campground. It serves as a symbolic marker, welcoming the visitor. The kiosk also serves as a contact point for guests by providing camping and park information.

Nine comfort stations were constructed in the public campgrounds during the 1920s. These were simple rustic wood-frame buildings with shake-covered, gable roofs.

Albert Good's *Park and Recreation Structures* provides relevant historical examples of small buildings such as shelters as well as landscape structures such as picnic tables that may serve as references for campground design (Good 1938). It is recommended that new development



Registration kiosk, Camp 4  
(2003) GH

have a contemporary character that makes use of traditional rustic design principles.

The relationship of the elements of the campground to the natural setting is a primary factor in establishing a sense of place. Special care must be taken when organizing the various elements: entrance road, entrance kiosk, parking, access roads, campsites, pathways, and common facilities. Small buildings, such as entrance kiosks, comfort stations, showerhouses, shelters, vending machine and storage shelters should be rustic in character. Individual campsites should be arranged to provide for both privacy and views where possible.

#### GUIDELINES

The guidelines for small buildings and landscape elements in Unifying Elements and Guidelines address issues that pertain to campgrounds. The following guidelines provide additional recommendations that are specific to campgrounds.

#### Siting + Building Orientation

- Where the site offers the opportunity, locate and orient buildings, gathering spaces, and interpretive points to benefit from views of the Valley's natural features.
- Group support structures and equipment, such as storage and trash bins, and telephone booths, in screened areas adjacent to other structures or in small buildings such as shower houses and comfort stations. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on small buildings.
- At walk-in campgrounds, screen parking areas by location and, where appropriate, with screen planting in accordance with Valleywide goals and the *Comprehensive Landscape and Revegetation Plan for Yosemite Lodge*.

#### Entrance Kiosks

- Kiosks should be placed at the entrance to serve as the point of contact between the National Park Service and the visitor.

#### Comfort Stations

- See Albert Good *Park and Recreation Structures* for character and design references.
- For new comfort stations, use the new Yosemite Falls comfort station as a reference for its rusticated base and side walls of board and batten. Other references include proposed comfort station designs for Camp 4 and Upper Pines campgrounds. Roof covering for new comfort stations can be shakes or incombustible roofing depending on review by the fire marshal. Maintenance concepts for comfort stations, such as the use of a plumbing corridor and space for storage of equipment and supplies, should be employed. The design of these buildings requires close coordination with maintenance staff. Refer to the Unifying Elements for more guidelines on lighting.

#### Cooking Shelters

- Cooking shelters should be open, rectangular, timber structures. The recommended structural system uses log columns, roof framing members of saw-sized lumber, and low masonry walls.
- The fireplace is an opportunity for masonry construction. Grill and sink areas should have concrete countertops with masonry sidewalls. The shelter floor should be of concrete with a warm color admixture to avoid contrast with the natural surroundings.
- If the shelter is electrified, light fixtures should be shielded with a sharp cut-off in order to confine the light within the structure. Electrical conduit should be concealed in the roof assembly to the extent possible. Refer to the Unifying Elements for more guidelines on lighting.

#### Bench-tables

- Use stoutly constructed timber bench-tables in keeping with classic National Park Service Rustic design. Some wheelchair-accessible units will be required.

**CAMP 4**

Camp 4, also known as Sunnyside Campground, is listed in the National Register of Historic Places for its significant association with the growth of rock climbing in Yosemite Valley during the golden years of pioneer mountaineering, from 1947 to 1970. The area served as a place for training, ascent planning, and information and equipment exchange (NPS 1977a). Campgrounds and base camps at important climbing locations provide more than just the provision of overnight accommodations. Camp 4 provides a place where the comradeship and

esprit-de-corps that defined the early days and history of the movement carries on into the present (NPS 2001a).

**SETTING**

Camp 4 is located at the base of a talus slope on the sunny north side of Yosemite Valley near El Capitan. Located at the base of Eagle Peak, the site lies on young colluvium between the vertical cliffs to the north and Northside Drive to the south.



CAMP 4 BIG COLUMBINE & LITTLE  
(SENTINEL ROCK) DIST.

Sentinel Rock from Camp 4 with Big Columbine and Little Columbine in the foreground

Because of thin soils, the influence of vegetation on the sloping site is minimal and many trees are stunted compared to those on the Valley floor. To the south, one looks out toward a sparse cover of scattered pines and cedars with some black oak. Prominent natural features on site include large talus blocks and significant seasonal drainages currently denuded of riparian vegetation. Views across the Valley to Sentinel Rock provide connection to the majesty of the Valley walls.

## DEVELOPED AREA

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As a walk-in campground, Camp 4 is different from drive-to sites. The Camp 4 campsites have an austere natural setting, and the parking area has more visual impact. The campground is at the base of the cliffs, providing ready access for climbers.

Within and at the north edge of Camp 4, large scattered talus blocks and boulders are evidence of the rockfall hazard. Some of these blocks are associated with



Camp 4 with Big Columbine Rock in background (2004) RF

the historic significance of the site since they were named and used for practice climbs during the growth of the sport of “Big Wall Climbing” in the United States. Even though the designation of Camp 4 as a historic site does not identify specific physical features as historically significant, these features have an integral relationship with the site and with the historic climbing community.

New development at Camp 4 is called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan* and is currently part of the Yosemite Lodge redevelopment area. New buildings in Camp 4 will include an entrance kiosk, comfort stations, and a cooking shelter. The entrance kiosk will be an adaptively reused pre-flood cabin from Yosemite Lodge.

#### GUIDELINES

##### Site Design

- Development in the Camp 4 area must occur in relation to the line of the rockfall zone as prescribed in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*.
- Orient buildings, gathering spaces, and interpretive sites to views of the adjacent climbing walls, as well as to the more distant natural features in the Valley.
- Arrange campsites around central open spaces or natural features in a way that fosters the camaraderie that the climbers associate with the campground.
- Locate and design gathering spaces and interpretive elements in appropriate relationships to landmarks like Columbia, Pratt, Kor, and Wine boulders. Interpretation should recognize the historic importance of these boulders.
- Locate the cooking shelter so it does not intrude upon the historic character of the boulder field (NPS 2001a).

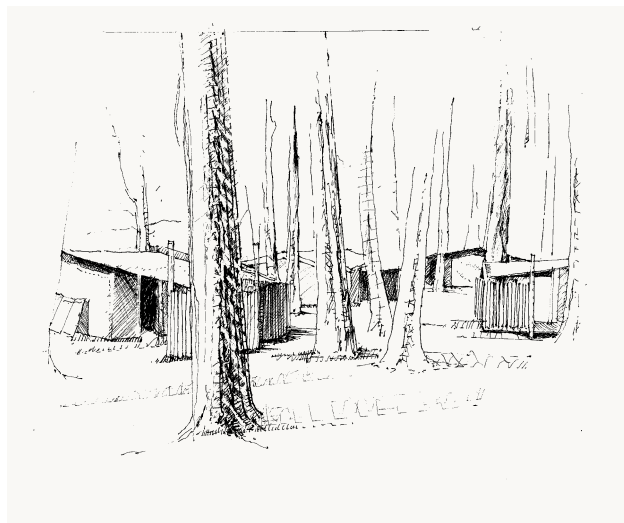
##### Circulation + Parking

- Paved paths should be limited to those necessary for high intensity pedestrian use, accessibility, and emergency purposes.
- Informal unpaved paths of compacted Sierra decomposed granite should link campsites with high-use facilities such as comfort stations and the cooking



Building proposed for adaptive reuse as Camp 4 Registration Station (2004) RF

- shelter. Paths in close proximity to high pedestrian use facilities, such as restrooms and shower buildings, may be hard paved in a manner that blends with the surrounding soil. Surface-treated asphalt is an option.
- Trail connections to the Valley Loop and Upper Yosemite Fall trails should follow historic alignments.
- The access road in Camp 4 should be designed for very low speeds, allowing for safe pedestrian crossings. The character of the road should be rural, flush with surrounding grade, and curve gently around trees, boulders, or subtle grade changes, consistent with safety standards.
- Parked vehicles should not be prominently visible from the central Camp 4 gathering space. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on parking.
- Refer to Unifying Elements, Circulation for more guidelines on pedestrian paths and trails.
- Refer to Unifying Elements, Grading and Drainage for more guidelines on paving materials in relation to minimization of runoff impacts.



Cabins at Housekeeping Camp

### Landscape Elements

- Avoid any grading that could adversely affect the natural slope of the Camp 4 site. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on grading and drainage.
- Cluster minor structures and equipment such as storage bins, telephone booths, etc. in screened areas or roofed structures at locations in conformance with the historic designation. Screening can be accomplished with planting and/or boulder-clusters following the patterns of existing ground form and existing vegetation (Land and Community Associates 1994).
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on views, lighting, and benches.

### Buildings

- New buildings in Camp 4 should be compatible with the character of the buildings at the proposed Indian Cultural Center and Yosemite Lodge, given their proximity and similar setting.
- The adaptive reuse of the pre-flood cabin should retain the jerkinhead roof feature. There should be a protected porch for announcements and a half door to facilitate registration transactions.
- Color for all structures should follow the recommendations for small buildings in the Unifying Elements and Guidelines.

### HOUSEKEEPING CAMP

Housekeeping Camp was originally established as an automobile camp around 1920. It subsequently became Curry Housekeeping Camp and was reserved for housekeeping facilities and equipment rental for those who wished to have a camping experience without all of the required gear. It was substantially damaged by a flood in 1937 (Land and Community Associates 1994). The present housekeeping units were designed by Spencer, Lee, and Busse and were built in the early 1960s. Over the years this facility has become a popular visitor facility. Groups return on a yearly basis, vying for riverfront campsites.

Although Housekeeping Camp is within the Yosemite Valley Historic District, it is not contributing.

### SETTING

Housekeeping Camp is the only remaining settlement in Yosemite Valley located on the river's edge, thus offering a unique experience for campers. It lies adjacent to a reverse bend in the Merced River, within the 100 year floodplain and the River Protection Overlay. The break-away channels through the second bend in the river suggest that the course of the river will continue to change, and will potentially affect the campsite.

According to the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*, the portion of the river at Housekeeping Camp is within a segment that exhibits Outstanding Remarkable Values including scientific, scenic, geological, recreational, biological, cultural, and hydrologic. These, per the 1968 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, must be protected and enhanced. Because of the potential for further bank cutting and National Park Service re-establishment of riparian vegetation, some camp structures are planned for removal according to the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. These changes will alter the visual and physical relationship of visitors to the river.

A new ecological restoration area will be created along the river's edge to protect and enhance the sensitive riparian community.

While there are dramatic views from riverbanks and the footbridge, there is dense tree cover in the campground. As in much of the Valley, incense-cedar and pine are crowding and shading out the remaining California black oaks and blocking long views. Riparian vegetation along the river's banks has been severely damaged and in some areas eliminated by trampling of

campers. Dramatic views from the river's banks are an attraction as are views from Housekeeping Bridge.

According to the *Yosemite Valley Plan*, Housekeeping Camp also lies between the base of the talus line and the shadowline, the furthest extent of individual rocks beyond the talus line.

Southside Drive is adjacent to Housekeeping Camp and serves as the only vehicle access. LeConte Memorial Lodge is nearby across Southside Drive to the south.



Cabin on the river, Housekeeping Camp (2004) GH

## DEVELOPED AREA

The public buildings in Housekeeping Camp are clustered at the entrance and accessed by asphalt walkways. They include the general store, the laundry, the shower facility, and comfort stations. These buildings are all simple forms, varying in size, and finished in a muted brown color, making them relatively inconspicuous. Within the campground, the comfort stations are similar in character.

Cars arriving from Southside Drive park outside the camping area, next to the general store. Circulation within Housekeeping Camp is informally defined by crushed granite walkways. The main pedestrian path passes through a small central outdoor space between the general store and the laundry. Housekeeping Bridge provides access to the opposite side of the river, now a restored natural area on the site of the former Lower River Campground.

Housekeeping Camp has a consistent character unified by a single type of structure for the campsites, which provide a unique form of accommodation. Neither tent nor cabin, the structures consist of duplex units built back-to-back. The dividing walls and side walls are tilt-up concrete slabs with an interesting texture—the

result of burlap fabric that lined the concrete formwork. The ceiling, front walls, and side walls are made of canvas. Each unit has a sleeping area furnished with beds, chest of drawers, mirror, electric outlet, and light. The patio-kitchen is furnished with a permanently fixed round table, chairs, stove, cooler, cupboards, and work bench. Protected by a nylon fly ceiling and a sapling wall, the kitchen is out-of-doors but private. These innovative units were designed to provide more comfort, convenience, and privacy for guests than found in tents or tent cabins. They are also simpler to erect, dismantle, and maintain.

### GUIDELINES

- Siting of units and facilities at Housekeeping Camp must be in accordance with the River Protection Overlay as prescribed by the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- New development within Housekeeping Camp should continue the original, innovative design intent.
- Design of new public buildings should acknowledge the existing architectural character of Housekeeping Camp. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on the architectural character of public buildings.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on vegetation, circulation, land use, views, bridges, culverts, boardwalks, grading and drainage, benches, fences, screens, barriers, and lighting.



Cabin with sapling screen, Housekeeping Camp (2004) GH





**DAY-USE + TRANSIT AREAS**

**INTRODUCTION 177**

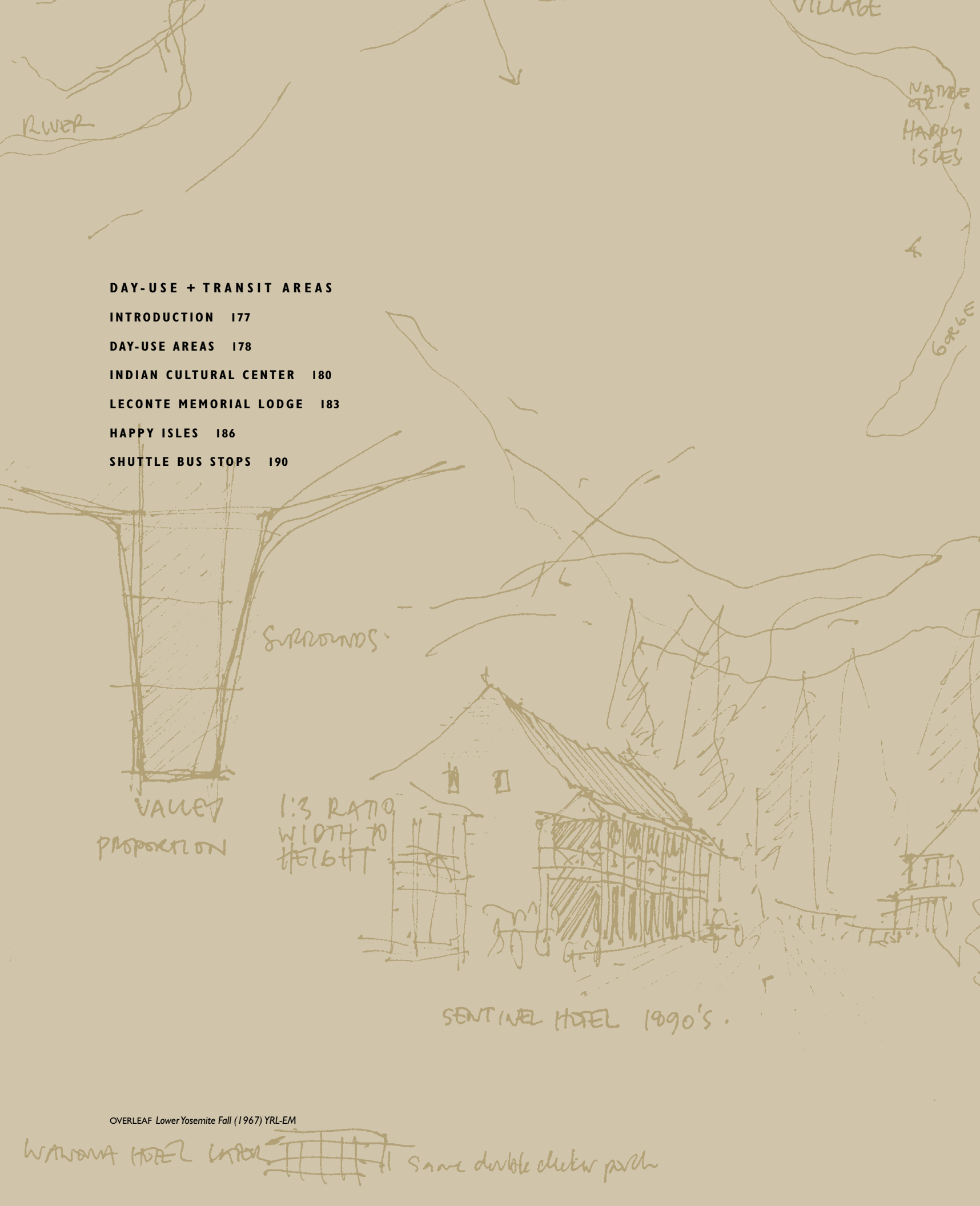
**DAY-USE AREAS 178**

**INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER 180**

**LECONTE MEMORIAL LODGE 183**

**HAPPY ISLES 186**

**SHUTTLE BUS STOPS 190**



SURROUNDS

1:3 RATIO  
WIDTH TO  
HEIGHT

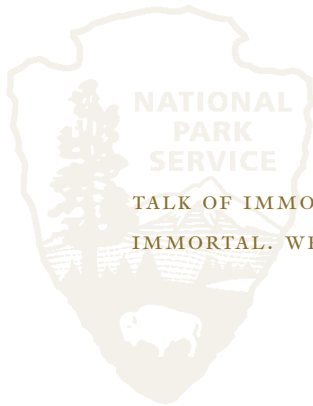
SENTINEL HOTEL 1990's

WAWONA HOTEL 1890's Same double decker porch

## DAY-USE + TRANSIT AREAS

DAY-USE and transit areas serve the largest single group of visitors to Yosemite Valley. During the peak visitation season approximately two-thirds of the visitors are day users, compared to the approximately one-third of visitors staying overnight. And large numbers of these visitors make their way to several popular day-use destinations by way of the Valley shuttle bus system, one of the busiest transit systems in the nation in terms of bus ridership. Both day-use and transit areas are characterized by transitory visitor use. Visitors are at the shuttle bus stops only long enough to board and disembark buses and read any nearby orientation maps or exhibits.

Improvements are currently underway at several of these areas with the goal of establishing consistent design character and quality for future work. The majority of shuttle bus stops are being redesigned to integrate sitework into their surroundings. Details include a consistent system of



site furnishings such as benches, fencing, information signage, and lighting. Rustic gabled shuttle bus shelters are constructed of wood timbers and logs. (The detailing of several of these shelters relates stylistically to nearby structures.)

An example is the recently completed improvement project at the Lower Yosemite Fall, the most highly visited natural feature in the entire park and the first major visitor facility improvement project to be implemented after approval of the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. Lower Yosemite Fall visitor area serves as a contemporary model of sensitive Rustic design, featuring a consistency of detailing and character throughout the site including extensive use of granite and wood, a scale appropriate to the setting, and bridges and buildings that reference historic antecedents.

**DAY-USE AREAS**

Day-use areas consist of a variety of spaces, such as scenic viewpoints, interpretive waysides, picnic areas, beaches, and trailheads. These areas support short-term or occasional visitor use with small buildings and landscape structures like picnic tables or interpretive panels. In some cases historic structures constitute day-use areas, such as the Yosemite Valley Chapel.

Day-use areas in Yosemite Valley include but are not limited to:

<i>Bridalveil Fall</i>	<i>Swinging Bridge Picnic Area</i>
<i>Yosemite Falls</i>	<i>Sentinel Beach Picnic Area</i>
<i>Yosemite Valley Chapel</i>	<i>Cathedral Beach Picnic Area</i>
<i>Fern Spring</i>	<i>El Capitan Meadow</i>
<i>Roadside viewing points</i>	<i>Mirror Lake</i>

**SETTING / DEVELOPED AREAS**

Many day-use areas—including picnic areas at Sentinel and Cathedral beaches—lie on the flat Valley floor, well within the 100-year floodplain. Often dominated by unevenly spaced conifers, these sites are close to meadows that provide views of the Valley walls and waterfalls. Other areas—including the base of Lower Yosemite Fall or trailheads leading to the high country—sit at the edges of the Valley floor, at the toe of rockslides or stream depositions. Many of these are within the talus and shadow lines. Large boulders, talus blocks, and adjacent Valley walls provide evidence of the dynamic geologic processes at work in Yosemite Valley. The vegetation mosaic is more patchy in these areas.



Yosemite Valley Chapel

Day-use areas are typically located in a natural setting such as a meadow or riverbank, where visitors are tempted to explore the immediate surroundings. This can have an impact on vegetation and other natural elements where pathways are not provided. In many locations, some form of barrier is needed to define or limit the extent of the pathways and activity spaces within the day-use area.

Because day-use areas are often at the edge of undeveloped areas, it is particularly important that human-made structures blend with the landscape. This can be achieved by minimizing interventions to the landscape and arranging site developments in a sensitive manner. Overall consistency of character is also desirable.

Many day-use areas provide parking. These parking areas are adjacent to main roads and therefore highly visible. In some cases, the parking area is immediately adjacent to the point of interest, creating a distraction with its expanse of pavement and road noise. In others, a pathway connects to a more remote location. Pathways are therefore important elements that establish character for the site.

Facilities such as picnic areas offer visitors an opportunity to enjoy scenic vistas. The specific character of the day-use site, and the accommodations provided, affect the visitor's choice to stop and use the site. Some visitors seek conveniently located restrooms and picnic tables, while others prefer a quiet retreat in natural surroundings.

At the Lower Yosemite Fall day-use area, great care was taken to design a positive visitor experience around natural features such as the waterfall, large boulders, trees, and drainages. The area was designed to separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic, disperse visitors throughout the site, and provide enough space at popular viewing areas. Special attention was paid to wayfinding, interpretive displays, and seating areas.

#### GUIDELINES

- The natural setting of day-use areas should be preserved to the fullest extent possible. The extent of impact by visitors should be controlled by barriers when required.
- Reduce the number of different types of benches, barriers, fences, etc. in day-use areas so as to lessen human-made visual complexity. This will also unify the character of day-use areas throughout the Valley.
- Replace aging, variously designed and sourced landscape elements with simple rustic-style elements of a consistent style throughout the Valley to lessen the visual imposition of human impacts, past and present.
- When considering the design of new areas or renovations to existing areas, examine the layout of vehicular circulation, parking, and related pedestrian routes, as well as the placement and design of small buildings and landscape elements (benches, signs, barriers, trash and recycling containers, etc.). This can provide useful information and background to guide the location and design of new work.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for guidelines on vegetation, circulation, parking, views, entrance markers, small buildings, bridges, culvert crossings, boardwalks, retaining walls, grading and drainage, benches, fences and screens, barriers, pathways, and lighting.

## INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER

An Indian Cultural Center will be established by the American Indian Council of Mariposa County, Inc. (Southern Sierra Miwuk) at the site of the last-occupied Indian village in Yosemite Valley, west of Camp 4. This center will provide a location for culturally associated Indian people to conduct traditional ceremonies, and to practice and teach techniques of traditional lifeways. While the center will be open to the public, access may be limited during special ceremonies. Some public interpretation will occur, but this cultural center would not replace the primary educational function of the current Indian Village of the Ahwahnee at Yosemite Village.

Concurrent with this plan for the Indian Cultural Center, planning for redevelopment of Yosemite Lodge and Camp 4 is in progress. This parallel planning allows the parts to be planned so that they work together as a whole (Royston et al. 2002).



*Umachas, Indian Cultural Center*

## SETTING

The Indian Cultural Center sits at the base of a talus slope below Middle Brother peak on the north side of Yosemite Valley. Leidig Meadow is nearby to the south across Northside Drive. Part of the area is within the rockfall zone and several of the Center's important components (round house, sweat lodge, and bark houses) will be sited in relation to massive boulders. Some of these are pounding rocks (Royston et al. 2002).

The gently sloping site supports an open forest of relatively even-aged pines and cedars which appear to be shading out the few remaining California black oak trees. Even though undergrowth is very limited, there are no views to prominent scenic features. A significant swale at the east edge of the area, separating it from the cluster of search and rescue tent cabins in Camp 4, suggests significant seasonal drainage. The cluster of search and rescue tent cabins in Camp 4 will be relocated further east to provide a wider buffer zone.

## DEVELOPED AREA

Facilities at the Indian Cultural Center are clustered into two groups: traditional village structures and modern facilities. The traditional structures, which will be built by tribal members, include a large, partly subterranean ceremonial roundhouse, a smaller sweat lodge, and approximately 15 cedar bark umachas (conical shelters). Plants important for food, basketry, and medicinal uses may be grown in the vicinity of the traditional structures. Existing archeological features, such as mortar rocks, would remain in place and be incorporated into the village design.

New modern facilities include the Wilson Cabin, a Community Center, and three shade structures. The Wilson Cabin, formerly the home of Westly and Alice

Wilson, is the last extant structure from the original Indian village. It is currently being used as a National Park Service office in Yosemite Village and will be moved back to the village and adaptively reused. The Community Center is a new structure with a large meeting room for community events. A kitchen provides a large working area for food preparation and scullery functions. Extensive bathrooms and dressing rooms serve both for ceremonial functions and for the public. A manager's office and storage complete the building program. Utilities including water, sewer, propane, unimproved road access, and electrical service will be provided to the site. Screening will be established where necessary to visually separate the cultural center and Northside Drive, Yosemite Lodge, Camp 4, and the Valley Loop Trail. The Valley Loop Trail may be relocated to a route south of the cultural center to minimize intrusions. Only limited parking will be available at this location, complying with the accessibility standards and allowing for deliveries.

#### GUIDELINES

##### Site Design

- Locate new structures on the relatively flat site away from the drainage swale. This will minimize the amount of grading and ground disturbance. The health and remaining lifespan of oaks in the area should be assessed when making siting decisions.
- Utility structures such as trash enclosures and propane tanks, while accessible by service vehicles, should be screened from the arrival sequence and public gathering areas.
- The approach drive should take into consideration the eventual conversion of the adjacent segment of Northside Drive to a multi-use paved trail, also called for in the *Yosemite Valley Plan*. The approach drive should meander, relating to topography, trees, and boulders, while also accommodating the requirements of emergency vehicles.



TOP Lucy Telles with Basket (1933) YRL BOTTOM Wilson Cabin, proposed for adaptive use at Indian Cultural Center

- The automobile arrival route and parking area should be sited in a manner that does not dominate the entry open space.
- The Valley Loop Trail should continue from west of the Indian Cultural Center area across the arrival road. The parking and the trash/propane storage area should be screened from the trail.
- The relocated Valley Loop Trail should relate to small landscape features such as boulders, tree clusters, and drainages. Where appropriate the trail should align to take advantage of significant scenic views to Sentinel Rock and Leidig Meadow. The trail should meander and provide resting spots at important small-scale viewpoints as well.

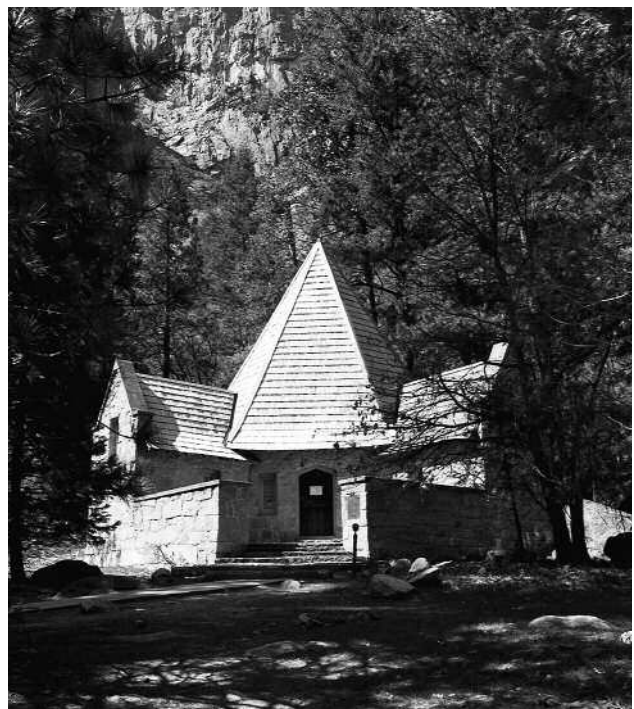
#### **Landscape Elements**

- Based on site observations there may be distinct winter/spring drainage swales through the Indian Cultural Center leading to Leidig Meadow. Ecological restoration of these swales may provide an opportunity to revive riparian vegetation on swale banks and provide interpretive opportunities, such as American Indian uses of fresh water and riparian plants.
- Subject to vegetation management and policies of park resources, consider removal of enough coniferous forest at the south edge of the area to create an open view to Leidig Meadow. The restored meadow could be planted with grasses and herbs with collectable edible seeds, in keeping with traditional practices of American Indian people. Revegetation should take advantage of natural drainage swale(s) also appropriate for riparian vegetation.
- Since Northside Drive will eventually be converted to a multi-use trail, the proposed buffer zone along Northside Drive should be laid out to allow for new meadow views.
- Use evergreen oaks for year-round screening of roads and for visual separation of the Indian Cultural Center from Camp 4.

- Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on vegetation, views, and grading and drainage.

#### **Buildings**

- Due to the close proximity of the Wilson Cabin and the new community center, the Wilson cabin should establish exterior materials, doors, windows, and overall façade character for the new community building.
- The Wilson Cabin and the new community center should employ the same roof materials.
- The new community center should have a rustic base. Refer to Unifying Elements, Building Exterior for more guidelines on the rustic base.
- Color for the structures should relate to the natural palette of the traditional Indian structures. Door and window colors should be restrained.
- Exterior lighting should be minimal and shielded. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on lighting.



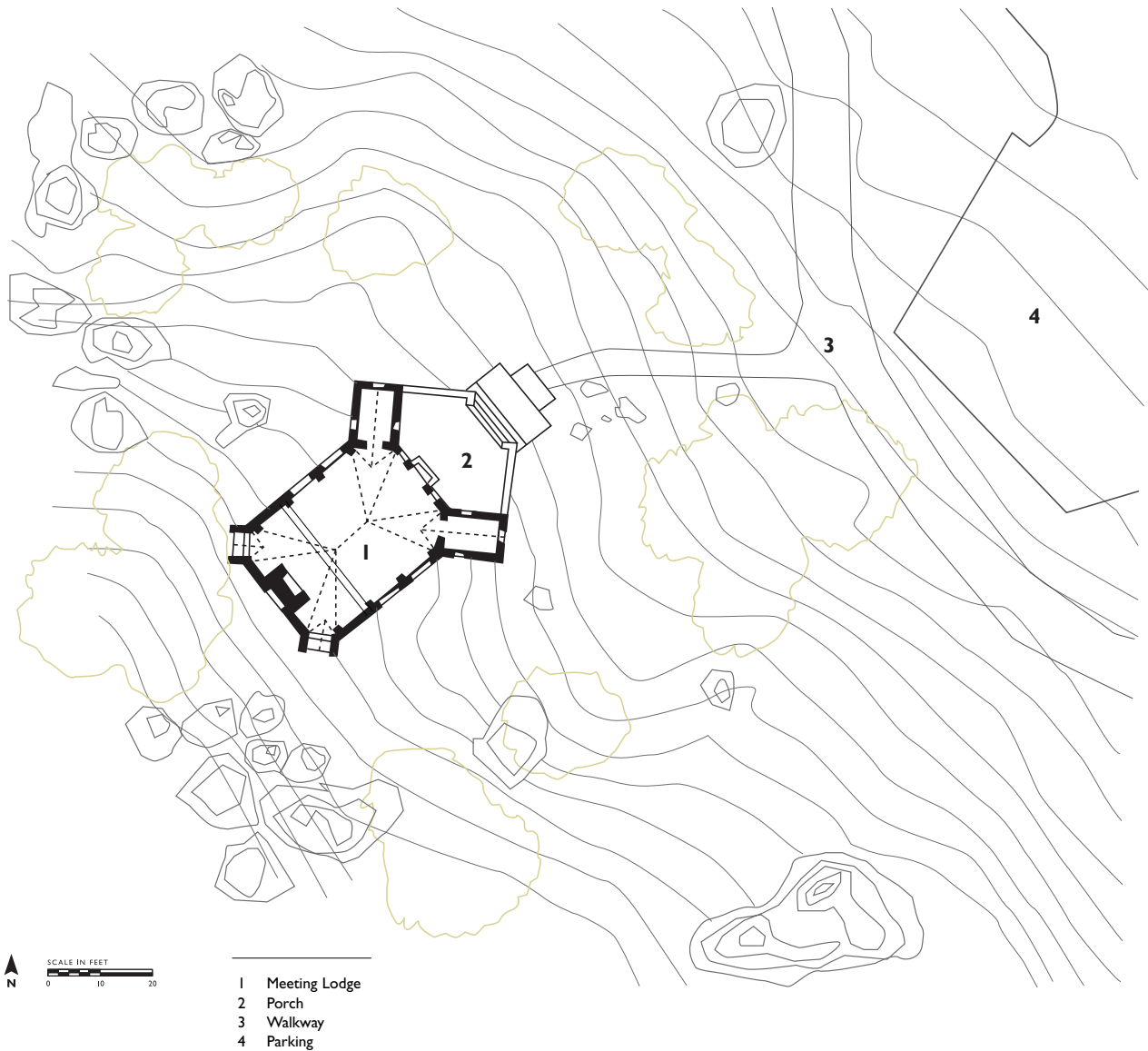
Entrance to LeConte Memorial Lodge (2004) GH



### LECONTE MEMORIAL LODGE

LeConte Memorial Lodge was built in 1903 in memory of Joseph LeConte, an early director of the Sierra Club, an original member of the University of California faculty, and a noted geologist. It also served as a historical and scientific museum. Today LeConte Memorial Lodge, the oldest of the Sierra Club lodges, is open to the general

public. In its quiet atmosphere, visitors find a small mountaineering library, historic and educational collections of pictures, and a source of general information on conservation, the national parks, and the High Sierra (Gill 1967). At one point in time, LeConte Lodge was the northern terminus of the John Muir Trail (Sierra Club 1967).





*Easterly view of LeConte Memorial Lodge (2004) GH*

The Sierra Club constructed the building at the base of Glacier Point, adjacent to Camp Curry. About fifteen years later, Mary Curry moved the structure at her own expense to expand her camp operation. Gutleben Brothers Construction Company, hired to move the building, dismantled the roof structure and as much of the original stonework as they could. Their German stonemason and a few other workers rebuilt the Lodge according to the original plans on a new site a short distance west of its original location. The building was reopened in 1919. In 1987, the Lodge was designated a National Historic Landmark (NPS 2004d). The LeConte Memorial Lodge “is a unique building for a national park. It is a transitional structure of strong European roots combined with the revolutionary way that Bay Area environmental designers used building materials” (NPS 1985).

## SETTING

LeConte Memorial Lodge is located on the cooler forested side of Yosemite Valley, within the shadowline of the steep southern cliffs. The Lodge is directly south of Housekeeping Camp, across the Southside Drive. At the southern edge of the talus line and surrounded by large dispersed boulders, the stone building fits well into the sloping terrain. The scale and spacing of trees, allowing for dappled sunlight, and the lack of substantial understory give the setting the sense of a managed park-like estate. The building’s generous distance from Southside Drive and the multi-use path also contribute to the serene setting of this memorial structure.



*LeConte Memorial Lodge (2004) GH*

## DEVELOPED AREA

LeConte Memorial Lodge is an example of the Tudor revival style of architecture that has been slightly modified to make it appear more rustic and thereby appropriate to its Valley setting (Land and Community Associates 1994). Built of granite masonry with a high timber roof, the building is attributed to John White, brother-in-law of architect Bernard Maybeck.

The timber roof, revealed in the interior, is a structural expression that was characteristic of many San Francisco Bay Area buildings of its period. Extreme verticality and multiple members create a rich layering of structure that gives the interior space a mood of lofty serenity. The tall fireplace, set on the main axis and kept well within the central area, dominates the space allowing the chimney to be an important element for the interior.

The Sierra Club currently operates LeConte Memorial Lodge as a visitor center, a reference library for conservation affairs, and a site for interpretive programs. The Lodge provides a space that can be used for quiet research or the exchange of ideas in a setting evocative of rustic character. Ansel Adams in his early years in Yosemite spent time as a reference intern and custodial staff person during visitor seasons.

### GUIDELINES

- Changes to the setting should not alter any historically significant features of the building or site.
- It is likely that increasing forest cover of ponderosa pine and incense-cedar will continue to crowd out the black oak. Vegetation should be managed in accordance with park resources guidelines to maintain the current feeling of a controlled forest.
- Because the LeConte Memorial Lodge is a freestanding building on a relatively undeveloped site, any new development will have a significant impact on the setting. New buildings or structures should be a sufficient



*LeConte Memorial Lodge with North Dome (2004) GH*

distance away from the Lodge so that the historical relationship between the Lodge and the landscape is preserved.

- Because of the complexity of levels, both exterior and interior, and its historical significance, any modification to bring the Lodge into compliance with accessibility standards will require sensitive and diverse alternative proposals before action is taken.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for guidelines on the Shuttle Bus Stop at this site.

## HAPPY ISLES

Happy Isles is located southeast of Curry Village on a braided and dynamic portion of the Merced River in an ecologically diverse community. The Nature Center at Happy Isles is a family-oriented facility that features natural history exhibits with an emphasis on wildlife, interactive displays, and a bookstore geared to nature-exploring families. Nearby are short trails focusing on the area's four different environments: forest, river, talus, and fen. There is also substantial evidence of the July 10, 1996 rockfall from the Glacier Point cliff far above the Nature Center. The catastrophic rockfall caused a great air blast that leveled hundreds of trees and damaged buildings.

Happy Isles was originally the site of a fish hatchery, installed by the California Fish and Game Commission in 1919. A permanent hatchery building and two residences were subsequently built in 1928. The new hatchery made an important connection with the educational work carried out by the National Park Service. At that time the park instituted nature guide services at Happy Isles.

The hatchery building, built of local rock and heavy timber, contained 52 troughs for hatching and rearing trout. A smaller room held four 250-gallon aquariums. The structure also held displays explaining the fishery program in Yosemite.



Merced River at Happy Isles (2004) GH

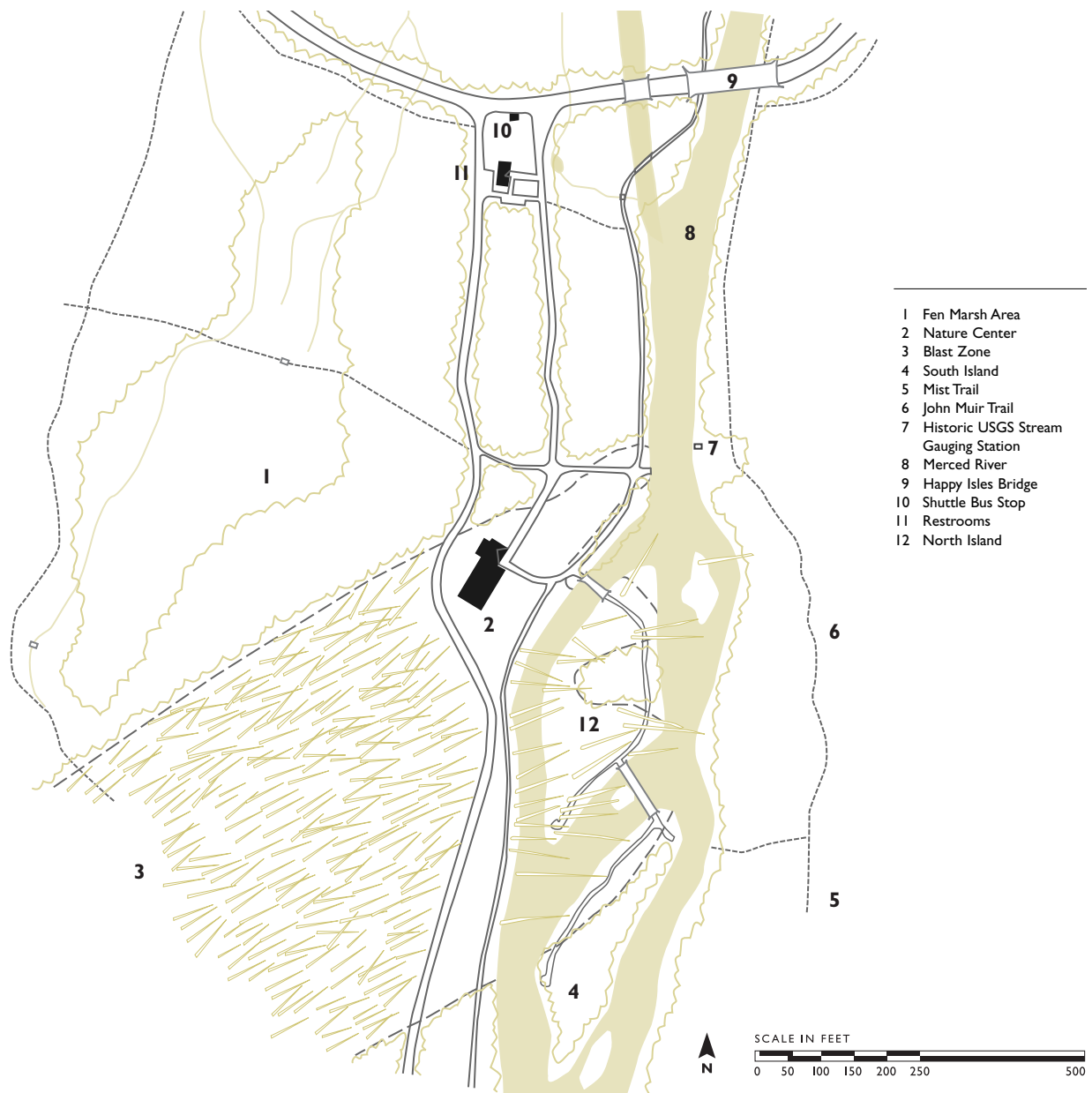
In 1956, the state abandoned the hatchery and ceded the facilities to the National Park Service. The fish hatchery was converted to the Nature Center at Happy Isles in 1957. While the building's use changed substantially, its appearance did not (Land and Community Associates 1994). Renovations to the structure primarily occurred to the interior. The National Foundation for Junior Museums prepared and donated several exhibits for the new Nature Center. The state Department of Fish and Game also donated funds for exhibits on Yosemite fish rearing and stocking activities. The new center became the meeting place of the Yosemite Junior Ranger Program.

The Nature Center at Happy Isles is a contributing building to the Yosemite Valley Historic District (NPS 2004d).

## SETTING

Distinct from the Valley floor, Happy Isles is sited in a narrow, geologically and hydrologically active area. Here the turbulent Merced River, joined by waters from Illilouette Creek, enters the flat Valley floor. It descends noisily and rapidly on a sloping plane from the south bringing rock and sand debris, and creating deposition areas such as the south and north islands—the Happy Isles.

Happy Isles provides one of the best opportunities to observe the dynamic geology of Yosemite Valley. Stream deposition and debris from a catastrophic 1996 rockfall provide evidence of recent flash floods and rockslides. At the southern portion of the area, a concession stand near the gauging station was hit by a falling tree immediately following the 1996 rockfall. The concrete footbridge was damaged by the same flood and was subsequently removed. The air blast from the 1996 rockfall flattened 11 acres of forest in its path. Much of the area lies within the rockfall shadow line (according to the *Yosemite Valley Plan*). The damaged forest, the light-colored



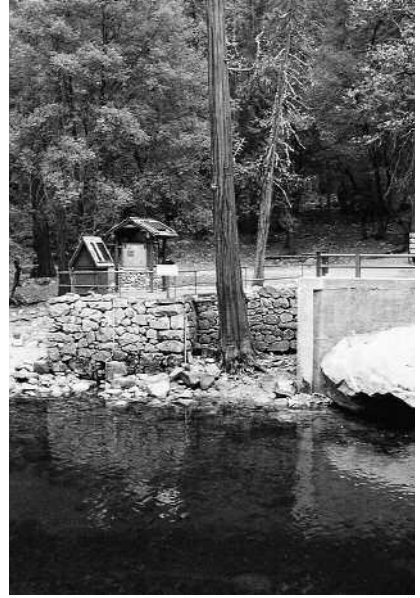
scar on the nearby granite wall, and the scree cone at its base present significant interpretive opportunities

The fen, a unique wetland just west of the Nature Center, probably fed by high groundwater from the river, is another interpretive opportunity. Pines and cedar dominate the forest area not damaged by the rockslide. Some riparian communities survive along the braided channels of the river.

Views north across the Valley to Washington Column and North Dome have been blocked by encroaching conifers. However, due in part to damage caused by the rockfall, significant views to the looming walls of Glacier and Sierra Points have opened up and can be seen from the Nature Center.

There are three pedestrian routes from the shuttle bus stop to the Nature Center: a service road, the primary trail, and a paved but deteriorating asphalt trail parallel to the river. A variety of paving treatments are used, including asphalt, packed decomposed granite, and a boardwalk through the fen. The Happy Isles Bridge is a Valleywide contributing feature according to the Cultural Landscape Report for Yosemite Valley.

Happy Isles is the major trailhead in Yosemite Valley. The famous 211-mile John Muir Trail, departs the Valley at this point. Visitors depart from here for both short day hikes to Vernal and Nevada falls and longer treks into the backcountry.



VERNAL FALLS

TOP LEFT Happy Isles Nature Center (2004) GH TOP RIGHT Historic stream gauging station and former bridge abutment, Happy Isles (2004) JM  
BOTTOM LEFT Evidence of 1996 rockslide at Happy Isles (2004) GH BOTTOM RIGHT Vernal Fall

I HAVE NAMED THEM HAPPY ISLES FOR NO ONE CAN VISIT THEM WITHOUT FOR A WHILE FORGETTING THE GRINDING STRIFE OF HIS WORLD AND BEING HAPPY.

WALTER DENNISON • GUARDIAN OF YOSEMITE • OCTOBER 1885

## DEVELOPED AREA

The natural landscape is the primary character-defining element at this site. Structures are disbursed around the site and include the Nature Center, a comfort station, a small snack stand, a new shuttle bus stop shelter, and a system of pedestrian bridges providing access to islands set in the rushing river. A historic stream flow gauging station sits on the opposite side of the river from the Nature Center. It is the oldest continuously operating U.S. Geological Survey station in the western United States.

Trails and walkways run parallel to the river from the shuttle bus stop to the Nature Center. At the end of a pathway lies the Nature Center, close to the riverbank and set against the backdrop of a narrowing canyon.

The Nature Center has a gable roof form. Its rectangular plan runs parallel to the river and the local canyon (an abrupt spur off the Valley) and is oriented south towards Illilouette Gorge. The entrance to the building is on the gable end to the north. The roof is of steep pitch ( $12/12$ ) and is covered with wood shingles. The walls are constructed of masonry.

### GUIDELINES

- The siting of new structures or facilities must be in accordance with management zoning prescriptions in the *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan*.
- Layout and design of all structures (buildings, bridges, kiosks, pedestrian routes, etc.) must respect the locational and structural implications of building in this narrow, geologically active, flood-prone canyon.
- Given the dynamics of plant communities in the area (e.g., riparian vegetation along the still actively braiding river and stream channels; pine forest recovery from the recent rockslide) and the potential for view recovery to the north through pine and cedar removal, a special landscape revegetation plan (similar to the 1999 Bitterroot study) should be prepared to guide ecological restoration and interpretation.
- Plant community management efforts should consider possible forest clearances to afford views to the north to Washington Column, North Dome, and to peaks immediately surrounding Happy Isles.
- The network of trails and walkways should be sufficiently spread out, screened, and aligned to enhance a greater sense of isolation and connection to the landscape.
- Pathway paving should reflect the strong wilderness character of this area, making use of compacted stabilized decomposed granite-type paving where feasible and surface-treated asphalt paving where necessary. Continue to use boardwalks through the fen.
- Develop the pathway system to clarify the link between the shuttle bus stop/comfort station area and the Nature Center. There should be an accessible primary pedestrian pathway between the shuttle bus stop, the comfort station, and the Nature Center.
- Because of the strong wilderness character of this day-use area, lighting should be limited to the few locations necessary, including the bus stop and the comfort station.
- Trail design and signs should make visitors aware of the John Muir Trail, and access to it.
- Preserve the sense of wilderness and isolation at Happy Isles by limiting site work and the number and location of new buildings.
- New development should use the Nature Center as the reference for architectural character.
- The scale and mass of any new development should not compete with the Nature Center.
- New development should be located to the north of the Nature Center, and not compromise the existing setting to the south.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for guidelines regarding vegetation, entrance markers, small buildings, bridges, culvert crossings, boardwalks, retaining walls, grading and drainage, benches, fences and screens, barriers, and lighting.

## SHUTTLE BUS STOPS

Shuttle bus stops by their very nature can be highly visible, human-made intrusions into the fabric and landscape of the Valley. They must be easily recognizable yet also recede and blend as much as possible into the landscape. To preserve the visual tranquility of the setting, extra care must be given to the design of these structures.

The key design elements of shuttle bus stops include the shelter structure design, the waiting area, transitions to existing landscape elements such as pathways, the treatment of existing vegetation, benches, barriers, lighting, and signage.

Historic sites such as The Ahwahnee, Curry Village, Yosemite Village, and LeConte Memorial Lodge may incorporate design themes reflecting the character of the adjacent structures.

## SETTING

The setting for each new shuttle bus stop in Yosemite Valley is different. Some will be at the edges of open meadows, some will be in the forest, and those planned for developed areas such as at Yosemite Lodge and Curry Village will be next to buildings. Some stops will have



Yosemite Falls shuttle bus stop (2004) RF

shelters and others will not. The new shuttle bus stop at Yosemite Falls incorporates ease of maintenance and flexibility of access. The existing bus stop at Curry Village, while it embodies the visual spirit of the original complex, cannot satisfy current requirements for shuttle bus stops. The shuttle bus stop at Sentinel Bridge, because of its simple, non-intrusive structure, will be adapted to new functional requirements.

## GUIDELINES

### Site Design

- Shuttle bus stops should be designed to make convenient connections with adjacent circulation pathways. Multiple entry points will provide easy access and allow approaches from different directions. The new Yosemite Falls stop is an example of a shuttle bus stop with multiple entry points.
- Pedestrian zones associated with each shuttle bus stop waiting area must be integrated with surrounding pedestrian trails or gathering areas. They must also relate to adjacent bike trails, providing for appropriate separation, caution indicators, and bike racks. For example, incorporate adjacent trails or sidewalks into the shuttle bus stop pavement instead of separating them with narrow planting areas.
- Allow generous space for the free flow of pedestrian circulation and multiple entry points in areas of high pedestrian traffic.
- Avoid rigid geometric shapes. Use curvilinear forms to define the edges of paved waiting areas. Allow boulder and cobble clusters, tree drip lines, and grade changes to define the edges of pavements. This allows for informal transitions to adjacent planted or natural landscapes.
- Lay out leading edge curbs or warning strips in transitional curves ensuring that safety for pedestrians and functional requirements for buses are not compromised.
- With either a raised or a flush waiting area, the use of a granite edge element is recommended. If there is a curb, the granite should be split-face with a flame





Shuttle bus stop at Valley Visitor Center (2004) RF

finish. If there is no curb, the edge of the waiting area should be defined by a flush granite paver strip with flame finish.

- Shuttle bus shelters and their surroundings should incorporate a set of standard elements throughout the Valley. The roof shape proportions, and ridge and eave height for example, should be the same, as should curb/warning strip treatment, benches, timber barriers, and signage. Where appropriate, incorporate some elements that are unique to the specific site.
- In addition to sizing the platform for passenger load, the width and length of the shelter should be sized to provide proper protection from the weather.
- Several smaller shelters, with space between them, are preferable to one long shelter. Smaller shelters have a modest scale and allow the layout to be easily adapted to local site conditions.

#### Landscape Elements

- Concrete is recommended for the platform and the braking pad areas. The concrete should include a color admixture in order to reduce the contrast with the roadway. The platform paving should have a light exposed aggregate finished surface. The braking pad should have a shuddered surface texture. Shape the concrete brake pad to conform to the zone required by buses to pull off of the adjacent roadway—in most cases a rectangle with tapered ends. Refer to the Yosemite Falls bus stop as an example.
- Extend the concrete in the braking pads to the tapered ends where the bus stop is a pullout adjacent to the road. Refer to the Yosemite Falls bus stop as an example.

- Where feasible, where curbs are appropriate, and where there is no need for crosswalks, place accessible ramps at the ends of the loading platform parallel to the alignment of the curb. Where feasible, use straight ramps instead of truncated ramps typical in urban settings.
- Where macadam pedestrian pathways in the general area are being renewed or replaced, finish with surface-treated asphalt. See the Yosemite Falls shuttle bus stop.
- Use barriers sparingly and where necessary for safety reasons or to prevent trespass onto planted areas. Around planted areas, use the pierced post system. Refer to Unifying Elements for more guidelines on barriers.
- Use barriers to separate pedestrian and bicycle traffic. The shuttle bus stop at Yosemite Falls uses a series of low stone walls which can also be used for seating.
- Trash and recycling cans should be enclosed with the appropriate material and clustered at key points on the platform to maximize usage. Where the back edge of the platform abuts natural or planted areas, partial enclosures made of low granite walls or large boulders (backed with plantable mounded soil) may be appropriate.
- Signs for wayfinding and transit information should comply with the park's system wide sign system and the park's editorial style guide.
- Refer to Unifying Elements for guidelines on barriers and benches.

#### Structures

- The roof of the shelter should be framed using saw-sized lumber with resawn surfaces.
- For the standard design, roofing material should be either wood shingle or asphalt shingle, depending on local context and approval of the fire marshal.



Old style wood sign for John Muir Trailhead, Happy Isles (2004) RF

- The bus shelter roof must divert rain and snow melt from the loading area, where passengers interface with the bus. Since the typical roof is a gable running parallel to the curb, gutters and leaders are required to conduct rainwater and snowmelt away from the loading area and sidewalk. This will help prevent ice from forming on the loading area in winter.
- In more developed areas, columns should be saw-sized timbers, supported on concrete bases with concealed connectors. Log columns may be more appropriate in forested areas, or in historic districts with buildings of a strong rustic character. When logs are used for columns they should not appear too finished—tight knots are desirable, similar to lodgepole pine with bark peeled.
- Columns should have a generous plinth to separate the wood column from water that might collect on the pavement. Board-formed concrete is recommended for typical structures. Granite masonry is also recommended where it is compatible with the architectural context.
- Wood elements should have a protective stain in a color that blends with the surrounding landscape.
- Lighting:
  - Surface-mounted ceiling fixtures are recommended for the shelter area. Electrical conduit should be concealed in the roof assembly.
  - Area lighting for the platforms should have fixtures shielded with sharp cutoffs.
  - A pole-mounted area light is required for the waiting areas without shelters.
  - Signs should incorporate lighting as required, primarily in developed areas.
  - Refer to *Unifying Elements* for more guidelines on lighting.

### Special Locations

#### The Ahwahnee

- To make the shelter compatible with the historic context, the design should consist of a log structure with granite bases. Logs should relate to the porte-cochere.

#### LeConte Memorial Lodge and Housekeeping Camp

- Locate the shelter east of the site, out of the primary view corridor of the LeConte Memorial Lodge.

#### Curry Village Registration

- To make the shelter compatible with the historic context, the design should consist of a log structure. The logs should be the same species, with bark, as found on the lounge building and the Camp Curry Welcome sign.

#### Happy Isles

- The shuttle bus shelter should be set back from the roadway, in the landscape area, among the trees.
- Provide a generous walkway that allows visitors to walk to the trailhead of the John Muir Trail.
- The architectural character of new structures should be compatible with the character of the Nature Center.

#### Mirror Lake

- The shuttle bus shelter should have log column supports.



Mirror Lake (2002) RF



SUBJECT: AFTERNOON 2:00 - 4:00 (along, hot)

DON MULLIN / JENNIFER / BOB NELSON / WARRY STUMB / BURTON / HENRY SLOAN

[SERIAL STRAND]

INDIAN CULTURAL CENTER - WATT HOGA

OUR CONCERN MOSTLY W/ COMMUNITY BUBB, LIGHTING, SITE DETAILS ETC.

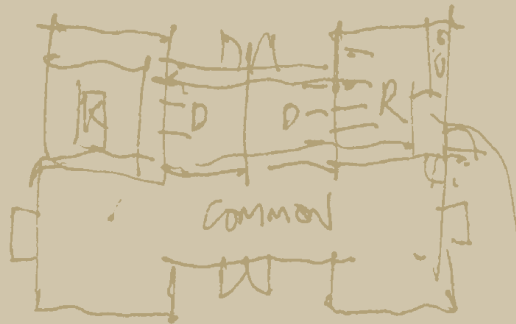
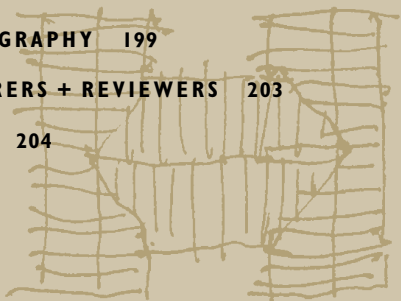
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REALLY A BUBBLE DIAGRAM.

external public access to restrooms (encourage NPS partner)

IN REFERENCE TO HOUSE THEY ARE MOVING! NOT THIS

GH - "LOOKS A BUBB IN NORTH BARKLEY"

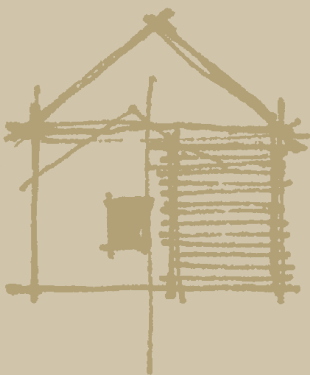


RIGHT DIRECTION.....

THE NEW BUBB SHOULD MAKE REF. ...

THAT CABIN USED TO BE ON THAT SITE. SEVERAL STUDIOS APPLIED TREATED AS "HISTORIC" EVEN THOUGH NOT.

USED AS ADMIN + MAY BE ADAPTIVELY REUSED.



## GLOSSARY

**100-year floodplain** The land adjacent to a river corridor that would be covered by water during a 100-year flood event. A 100-year flood event has a 1% probability of occurring during any given year.

**Abutment** A structure that supports the ends of a bridge or dam.

**Adaptive reuse** A new use for a structure or landscape other than the historic use, normally entailing some modification of the structure or landscape. Also see Rehabilitation (cultural resources).

**Alluvial** Processes by which sediment is deposited by running water.

**Alluvium** Sediment deposited by a stream or other body of running water.

**Alpenglow** A reddish glow on mountain peaks at sunset or sunrise, caused by reflected weak sunlight.

**Ambient noise** The existing sounds at a given location coming from all sources, both near and far.

**Background noise** The all-encompassing sound associated with a given environment at a specified time, usually a composite of sound from many sources and directions. Background noise remains in a given location in a given situation when all uniquely identifiable, discrete sound sources are eliminated, rendered insignificant, or otherwise not included.

**Bank** The slope of land adjoining a body of water, especially a river, stream, lake, or channel.

**Base of talus** See Talus slope zone.

**Biodiversity** Or biological diversity, includes genetic diversity within species, species diversity within a community, and diversity in a full range of biological communities. An area is considered biologically diverse when it includes rich and stable populations of native species that are naturally distributed across the landscape.

**Biological community** An association of plants and animals in a region dominated by one or more prominent species or by a physical characteristic (e.g., California black oak community).

**Braided stream system** A stream pattern that is characterized by the division of water flow into more than one channel. A basic characteristic of this pattern is the diversion of a single trunk channel into a network of interconnected branches and the formation of interspersed islands.

**California black oak woodland** A vegetation community dominated by California black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*). Other species that may be present include canyon live oak, California buckeye, Douglas-fir, incense-cedar, and ponderosa pine. The canopy can be continuous, intermittent, or savanna-like. Shrubs may or may not be common. Ground layer vegetation is sparse or grassy (Sawyer 1995).

**Cabin (cultural resource)** A small, rustic residential structure usually occupied seasonally.

**Cabin (lodging)** A structure containing one to four lodging units, as defined in the 1992 *Concession Services Plan/EIS*.

**Chukah** A Miwok storehouse.

**Colluvial soils** Loose earth material (such as rock fragments, sand, etc.) that accumulates on steep slopes or at the base of talus slopes through the action of gravity.

**Community** When used in a social or political context, refers to the group of people living in a particular area. When used in a biological context, any group of interacting organisms belonging to a number of different species that occur in the same habitat. Also see Biological community.

**Concessioner** A private commercial entity that conducts business under contract with the National Park Service in Yosemite National Park to provide food, lodging, retail, recreation, and other services to park visitors.

**Conifer invasion** The progressive growth of coniferous trees, such as pines and incense-cedars, into areas that formerly did not support these species. Over the last 150 years human-caused changes (such as alteration of soil moisture and suppression of a natural fire regime) have encouraged unnatural rates of conifer spread, reducing the size and continuity of meadows in Yosemite Valley.

**Cor-Ten steel** A type of steel which oxidizes naturally over time, giving it an orange-brown color and a rough texture. It has a very high tensile strength, and in spite of its rusted appearance it is actually more resistant to damaging corrosion than standard forms of carbon steel.

**Cottage** A lodging structure containing five to eighteen lodging rooms, as defined in the 1992 *Concession Services Plan/EIS*.

**Cultural landscape** A geographic area, including both cultural and natural elements, associated with a historic event, activity, or person, or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic values. There are two primary types of cultural landscapes in Yosemite Valley: historic designed landscapes, such as The Ahwahnee and the Yosemite Village Historic District; and ethnographic landscapes, such as the entirety of Yosemite Valley.

**Cultural resources** Properties such as landscapes or districts, sites, buildings, structures, objects, or cultural practices that are usually greater than 50 years of age and possess architectural, historic, scientific, or other technical value. By their nature, cultural resources are non-renewable.

**Day visitor** All visitors who do not spend the night in the park.



**Debris flow** Soil, rock, and other materials that are rapidly transported by water and gravity. Debris flows occur in a variety of environments throughout Yosemite, ranging from steep ephemeral and perennial stream channels below cliffs to nearly flat alluvial fans adjacent to the Merced River floodplain.

**Degradation (natural resources)** Refers to negative impact(s) to natural resources or natural processes. The impact may be singular or cumulative; the extent may be local or ecosystem-wide. The term degradation is used broadly and may refer to: reduction in habitat size, reduction in extent of plant populations, declining species vigor exhibited as reduced population numbers, reduced reproductive success, increased mortality rates, and/or decreased percent of available habitat utilized.

**Ecological restoration** See Restoration (natural).

**Ecosystem** A system that involves the interaction of organisms with their physical environment.

**Ecotone** A vegetation transition zone between different habitat types, such as the area between meadows and California black oak woodlands.

**Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)** A detailed statement required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) when an agency proposes a major action that significantly affects the quality of the human environment. This document describes and analyzes the activities that might affect the human environment (Bass and Herson 1993).

**Exotic species** See Non-native species.

**Facilities** Refers to buildings, houses, campgrounds, picnic areas, visitor-use areas, operational areas, and associated supporting infrastructure such as roads, trails, and utilities.

**Fen** A unique wetland type, possessing a water source that originates from alkaline ground water. Typically fens possess unique wetland vegetation adapted to saturated alkaline growing conditions.

**Fire return interval** The typical period of time between naturally occurring fires. Fire return intervals vary by vegetation type and location.

**Floodplain** Land on either side of a stream or river that is submerged during floods.



**Footprint** The land area covered or occupied by a function or structure.

**Free-flowing river** A body of water existing or flowing under natural conditions without impoundments, diversions, straightening, riprapping, or other modification of the waterway (as defined in the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act—16 USC 1286 [b]). Also see Riprap.

**Geographic information system (GIS)**

A unique assemblage of hardware, software, and personnel that integrates digital databases, spatial technologies, and analytical methods in order to capture, store, edit, analyze, and display geographic data.

**Geologic hazards** Natural geologic processes (i.e., rockfall) that occur or could potentially occur in locations that present a threat to humans or developed areas.

**Geomorphic** Refers to the shape of the earth, or the shape of features on the earth's surface.

**Glaciation** A collective term for geologic processes of glacial activity, including erosion, deposition, and the resulting effects of such action on the earth's surface.

**Groundwater** All water found below the surface of the ground. Also see Surface water.

**Hazard trees** "...any tree...either alive or dead, which due to outwardly visible defects could fall down (in part or in entirety) and strike a person or property within any designated portion of a development zone."

**Hazardous waste** Hazardous materials that no longer have practical use, such as substances that have been discarded, spilled, or contaminated, or that are being temporarily stored prior to proper disposal.

**Headwaters** The point or area of origin for a river or stream.

**Herbaceous** Refers to plants that lack a woody structure.

**Highly valued resources** A set of natural and cultural resources that are the park's highest priority for protection and restoration. Highly valued resources in Yosemite Valley are those that make up the Merced River ecosystem (Merced River, wetlands, riparian, and meadow communities), California black oak woodlands, sensitive wildlife habitats, rich soil areas, National Historic Landmarks, and important archeological sites. Highly valued resources are graphically portrayed in Vol. 1c, plate C of the Yosemite Valley Plan.

**Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)/ Historic American Engineering Record (HAER)** An architectural and engineering documentation program that produces a thorough archival record of buildings, engineered structures, and cultural landscapes significant in American history and the growth and development of the built environment.

**Historic character** The sum of all visual aspects, features, materials, and spaces associated with the historic nature of a site, structure, or landscape.

**Historic district** A geographically definable urban or rural area, possessing a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, landscapes, structures, or objects united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical developments. A district may also be composed of individual elements separated geographically but linked by association or history.

**Historic topography** The physical features and contours of a place or region as they existed during historic time.

**Hotel** A structure containing more than eighteen lodging rooms, as defined in the 1992 *Concession Services Plan/EIS*.

**Housekeeping unit** A type of rustic accommodation found within Housekeeping Camp in Yosemite Valley. The unit is composed of a concrete three-walled structure with canvas roof and door, a small patio, and a common bathroom.

**Housing support facilities** Amenities required by a typical residential community (i.e., post office, food preparation and service, recreational facilities, barber shop, child care, etc.).

**Hydrologic response** The response of a watershed to precipitation, often the resulting streamflow from a precipitation event or snowmelt.

**Hydrology** The science dealing with the properties, distribution, and circulation of water on the surface of the land, in the soil and underlying rocks, and in the atmosphere.

**Infrastructure** The various systems and facilities needed to support park operations and visitor services (e.g., sewer and water systems, electric systems, communication lines, roads and trails, and various support buildings).

**Jerkinhead roof** A gable roof that ends with a clipped ridge in the form of a small hip.

**Life zone** Bands of characteristic vegetation occurring along elevation gradients.

**Liquefaction** A process by which water-saturated soils lose strength and liquefy during ground shaking events.

**Lithic** Of or relating to stone or stone tools.

**Lodging unit/room** Concessioner-operated facilities for overnight visitors. A lodging unit may be a single structure, such as a tent cabin, or a series of rooms grouped into larger motels or hotels. Lodging rooms in Yosemite are available at a range of prices that correspond to the type of structure as well as the amenities provided.

**Mechanical treatment** The alteration of the landscape using hand implements, power tools, and heavy equipment.

**Microclimate** The distinct yet uniform, localized climate of a small site or habitat.

**Mission 66 style (architecture)** Refers to buildings developed in national parks between 1956 and 1966, during a period of experimentation with new structural forms, modern materials, and machine-driven methods of construction. The intent was to provide low maintenance, economical, permanent structures.

**Mitigation** An activity designed to avoid, minimize, rectify, eliminate, or compensate for impacts of a proposed project. A mitigation measure should be a solution to an identified environmental problem.

**Mixed conifer zone** Plant communities consisting of a mix of conifers such as pine, fir, incense-cedar, and Douglas-fir. The zone includes lower montane, montane, and upper montane coniferous forests. California black oak and other hardwoods are common associates.

**Moraine** An accumulation of mineral material, such as boulders, stones, and sediment that is transported and deposited by a glacier.

**Mosaic** A descriptive term for vegetation where the mix of species types and ages creates a diverse assemblage of vegetation or vegetation communities. This term can also be used to describe diversity in habitat types.

**Multi-use paved trail** A trail that is intended for pedestrian and bicycle use. Occasionally, short segments of multi-use trails may also be used for horses, maintenance, and emergency access by motor vehicles.

**Museum collection** Objects, works of art, historic documents, and natural history specimens collected according to a rational scheme and maintained so they can be preserved, studied, and interpreted for public benefit.

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**

The federal act that requires the development of an environmental impact statement (EIS) for federal actions that might have substantial environmental, social, or other impacts.

**National Historic Landmark** A district, site, building, structure, landscape, or object of national historical significance designated by the Secretary of the Interior under authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and entered in the National Register of Historic Places.

**National Register of Historic Places** The comprehensive list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of national, regional, state, and local significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. This list is maintained by the National Park Service under authority of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

**Natural process** A collective term for processes, including hydrologic, geologic, biologic, and ecosystemic, that are not the result of human manipulation.

**Natural quiet** The absence of human-caused sounds.

**Natural resources** Features and values that include plants and animals, water, air, soils, topographic features, geologic features, paleontologic resources, natural quiet, and clear night skies.

**Natural topography** The natural shape or contour of the land.



**Non-native species** Species of plants or animals that do not naturally occur in a particular area and often interfere with natural biological systems. Also known as alien, introduced, or exotic species.

**Off-season** Refers to a period of year when Yosemite visitation is lowest, usually from late autumn to early spring.

**Ordinary high water** That line on the shore established by the fluctuations of water and indicated by physical characteristics such as a clear, natural line impressed on the bank, shelving, changes in the character of the soil, destruction of terrestrial vegetation, the presence of litter and debris, or other appropriate means that consider the characteristics of the surrounding areas.

**Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORVs)**

The exceptional values of a river that warranted its inclusion in the national Wild and Scenic Rivers System. ORVs are the "scenic, recreational, geologic, fish and wildlife, historic, cultural, or other similar values...that shall be protected for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations."

**Overnight visitor** Refers to visitors who spend the night in Yosemite Valley. This includes those that stay in lodging, campgrounds, and wilderness areas.

**Oxbow** A bend in a meandering river channel that is abandoned as the river shifts its course over time. Oxbows can remain saturated with surface water or groundwater for some time, providing diverse wetland habitats for vegetation and wildlife.

**Palustrine** A term relating to vegetated wetlands (e.g., marsh, swamp, fen, bogs) and small, shallow ponds.

**Pedestrian/stock trail** Mostly unpaved trails intended to accommodate both pedestrians and stock users. (Use of bicycles on unpaved trails is prohibited.)

**Point bars** Areas along the inside bends of a meandering river where material is deposited.

**Pool-riffle** The relationship, usually expressed as a ratio, between the surface area of pools and that of small rapids (riffles) in a given portion of a stream or river.

**Post-flood conditions** Describes the environment in Yosemite Valley following the January 1997 flood. Post-flood conditions include any subsequent clean-up activities, such as the removal of flood-damaged facilities at Yosemite Lodge and the closure of Upper and Lower River campgrounds.

**Prescribed fire** Fires that are intentionally ignited under controlled conditions to meet management goals for natural resources and processes, wildland fire protection, and cultural resource preservation.

**Preservation (cultural resource)** The act or process of applying measures to sustain the existing form, integrity, and material of a historic structure, landscape, or object. Work may include preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, but generally focuses on the ongoing preservation, maintenance, and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new work.

**Preservation (natural resource)** The act or process of preventing, eliminating, or reducing impacts to natural resources and natural processes.

**Protected species** See Threatened and endangered species.

**Radiating impacts** Human activity and associated foot traffic that originates in visitor focal points, such as parking lots, and spreads into adjacent areas.

**Reconstruction** The act or process of depicting, by means of new work, the form, features, and detailing of a nonsurviving historic structure or landscape for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific time and in its historic location. (The term also refers to the resulting structure or landscape.)

**Redevelop** A term that applies to areas that are currently developed, where all or part of the existing development is removed and replaced, modified, or adaptively reused.



**Rehabilitation (cultural resources)** The act or process of making possible an efficient, compatible use for a historic structure or landscape through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving the portions or features which convey the historical, cultural, and architectural values. Also see Adaptive use.

**Rehabilitation (natural resources)** All activities conducted to improve the quality or biologic function of an impacted natural resource. The term rehabilitation connotes a less extensive process than restoration. Site impacts may preclude a full restoration, but project work is undertaken to enhance the extent or function of natural processes.

**Restoration (cultural)** The act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of an existing historic structure, landscape, or object as it appeared at a particular period of time, by removing modern additions and replacing lost portions of historic fabric, paint, or other elements.

**Restoration (natural)** Work conducted to remove impacts to natural resources and restore natural processes, and to return a site to natural conditions.

**Revegetation** Replacement or augmentation of native plants in an area largely or entirely denuded of vegetation.

**Riparian areas** Areas that are on or adjacent to rivers and streams; these areas are typically rich in biological diversity (flora and fauna).

**Riprap** Any hardening of a shoreline (with rocks or cement) to stabilize river banks for the protection of facilities on or near the bank.

**River Protection Overlay (RPO)** A buffer area intended to protect the Merced River within the park boundary and the El Portal Administrative site, as prescribed by the 2000 *Merced Wild and Scenic River Comprehensive Management Plan/ Environmental Impact Statement*. The River Protection Overlay includes the river channel and extends outward 150 feet from the ordinary high water line above 3,800 feet elevation (including Yosemite Valley and Wawona), and 100 feet from the ordinary high water line below 3,800 feet (including El Portal).

**Rockfall** Associated forms of mass movement such as rock avalanches, rockslides, debris slides, and debris flows (Wieczorek, et al. 1998).

**Rockfall shadow zone** A distance calculated to determine outlying boulder locations beyond the extent of talus. The SL is determined by a procedure based on the apex of the talus and a minimum shadow angle of 22 degrees (Wieczorek et al. 1998). It is graphically depicted in Vol. 1c, plate D of the Yosemite Valley Plan.

**Rockfall talus zone** See Talus slope zone.

**Root rot (Armillaria root rot)** A native plant disease primarily affecting oaks, but other tree species as well; sometimes exacerbated by management activities. It can also result in tree hazards.

**Rustic style (architecture)** Refers to a building style developed in the 1920s and 1930s in national parks. The Rustic style emphasized the use of natural materials and textures, and thoughtful integration with the natural landscape.

**Sediment** A particle of soil or rock dislodged, transported, and deposited by surface runoff or a stream. The particle can range in size from microscopic to cobble stones.

**Sense of arrival** An emotional and mental state that accompanies the end of a visitor's travels and the beginning of their park experience. For many visitors, arriving in Yosemite Valley marks the end of a considerable journey involving both lengthy planning and travel. For some, a sense of arrival is created by the clear opportunity to park their car, learn about and plan activities in the park, and begin their exploration of the park with the assistance of exhibits, signs, guidebooks, trails, shuttle buses, etc. For others, this sense of arrival begins with the first sight of Yosemite icons (e.g., Tunnel View, El Capitan, Half Dome). For returning visitors, this sense of arrival may occur as they check into their campsite, cabin, or lodging room.

**Stewardship** The responsibility of caring for the park. This often grows from an understanding of and respect for the principles of the National Park System and the needs of the park's natural, social, and cultural environment.

**Stock** This term generally refers to horses and mules used for riding or carrying packed supplies on established trails.

**Succession** The process by which vegetation is either re-established following a disturbance or by which it initially develops in an unvegetated site. This term also refers to the entire process from initial colonization to the development of vegetation typical of that geographic area.

**Surface-treated asphalt paving** A method of modifying the finish of freshly-laid asphaltic concrete to accelerate blending with the surrounding ground by broadcasting and brooming the surface with fine soil from installation site. This was used at the Lower Yosemite Fall Trail.

**Surface water** Water that naturally flows or settles on top of natural landforms and vegetation, often as rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and other bodies of water.

**Sustainable design** Sustainable Design is a concept that recognizes that human civilization is an integral part of the natural world and that nature must be preserved and perpetuated if the human community itself is to survive. Sustainable design articulates this idea through developments that exemplify the principles of conservation, particularly of nonrenewable resources, and encourages the application of those principles in our daily lives. Sustainable design results in development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; they do not permanently reduce the natural resources available to humanity.

**Talus** An accumulated mass of rock fragments (broken rock formed by falling, rolling, or sliding) of various sizes derived from and lying at the base of a steep slope (Wieczorek, et al. 1998).

**Talus slope zone (TS)** The area where the majority of accumulated rock debris is deposited at the base of a steep slope following a mass movement event (i.e., rockfall) (Wieczorek et al. 1998). It is graphically depicted in Vol. 1c, plate D of the Yosemite Valley Plan.

**Threatened and endangered species** Species of plants and animals that receive special protection under state and federal laws. Also referred to as listed, endangered, or protected species.

**Traffic check station** A location where vehicle access is regulated; typically requires buildings, multiple traffic lanes, and staffing.

**Transit bus** A mode of transportation that operates on a schedule along routes with established stops. Transit buses do not require daytime parking in Yosemite Valley, as they continuously pick up and drop off passengers along their established routes.

**Umacha** A Miwok structure made of cedar bark and used for shelter.

**Understory** An underlying layer of vegetation, specifically the vegetative layer, and especially the trees and shrubs, between the forest canopy and the ground cover.

**Upland community** The vegetation found where soil conditions are average to dry and where soils are only infrequently flooded or saturated. In Yosemite Valley, mixed conifer, California black oak, and live oak communities dominate uplands.

**Visitor experience** The perceptions, feelings, and interaction a park visitor has in relationship with the environment. The visitor experience is influenced by general access, facilities, visitor services, interpretation and orientation, and recreational opportunities. Other elements also contribute to the quality of the visitor experience, such as the condition of natural and cultural resources, air quality, transportation, and noise.

**Walk-in campground** A campground with consolidated parking areas separated from the individual campsites. Campers walk a short distance from the parking area to their campsites (e.g., Camp 4 [Sunnyside Campground]).

**Walk-to campground** A campground with no parking at the campsite, and no designated parking place associated with the campground. These campgrounds would be available for campers arriving in Yosemite Valley without a private vehicle (i.e., by bus, on foot, by bicycle).

**Wetland** Areas that are inundated by surface or groundwater with a frequency sufficient to support, under normal circumstances, vegetation or aquatic life that requires saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction.

**Wilderness** Areas protected by provisions of the Wilderness Act of 1964. These areas are characterized by a lack of human interference in natural processes; generally, there are no roads, structures, installations, and the use of motorized equipment is not allowed.





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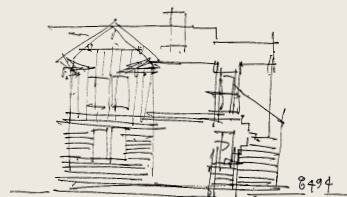
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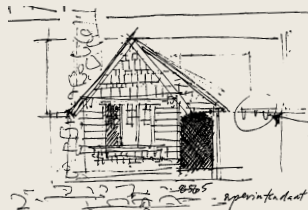
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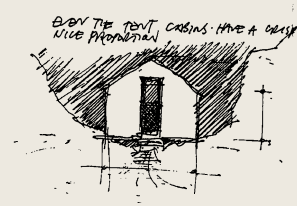
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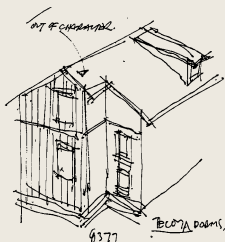
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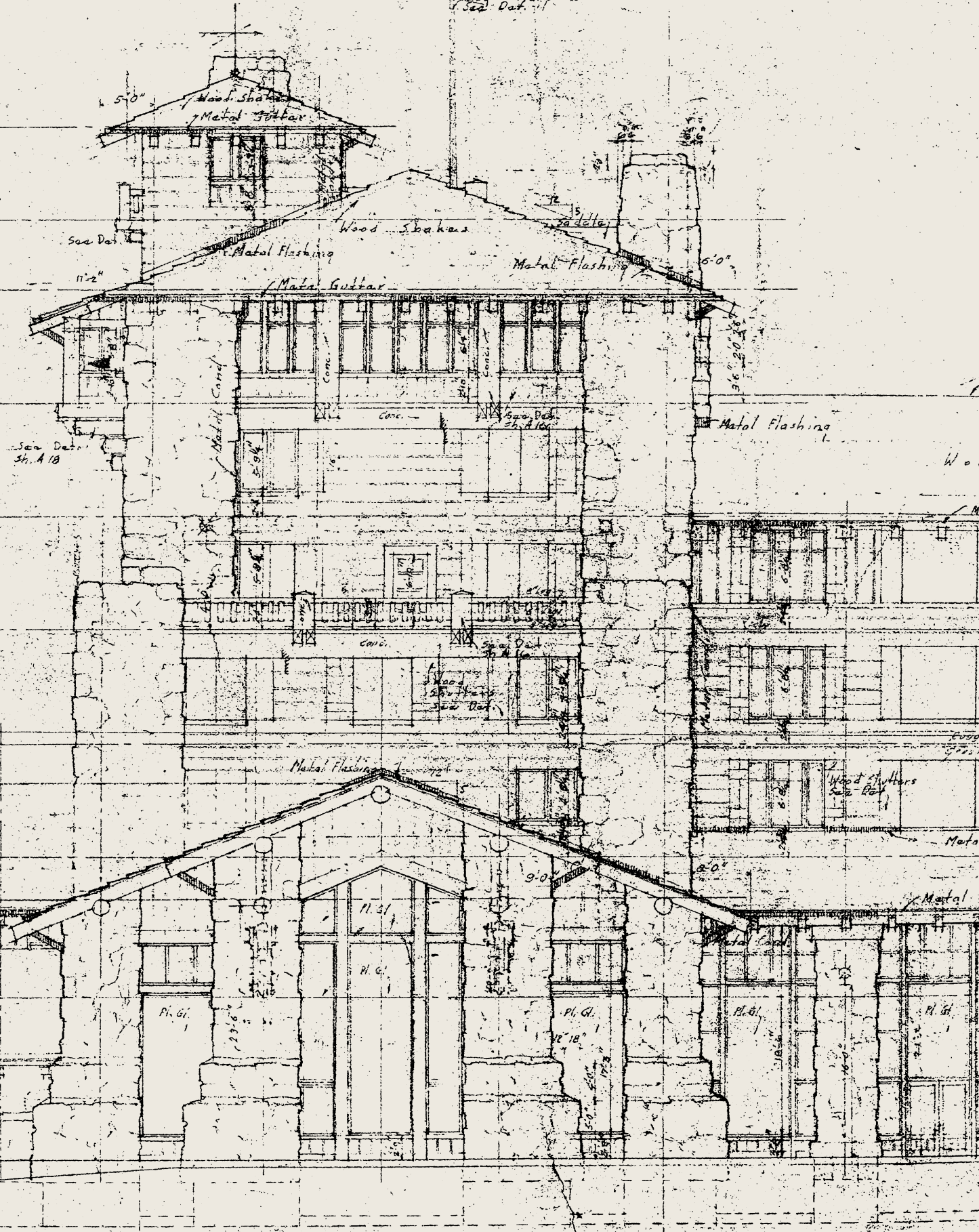
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Log Flapole  
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FRONT COVER PHOTO *Bird walk group along Merced  
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BACK COVER PHOTO *Ahwahnee bungalow, chimney  
detail (2004)* RF

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noted otherwise

OPPOSITE *Original architectural drawing of  
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