The collected articles in *Long Exposures* represent participants’ findings from and experiences of the Public Lands History Center (PLHC) at Colorado State University’s annual field workshop, Parks as Portals to Learning (PPL), in which participants live and work alongside members of the National Park Service in Rocky Mountain National Park. Begun in 2013, the weeklong workshop challenges them to apply the historian’s skills and knowledge to provide recommendations that respond to the toughest resource management questions affecting the National Park Service today.

At PPL 2018, students applied repeat photography—the precise re-creation of historic images in the present—to investigate, assess, and explain the measures the park has taken over time to manage its large numbers of visitors, revealing that human visitation is not a trend confined to our own time, but has always been a defining feature of this remarkable piece of land. As the essays in this volume reveal, however, the ways people sought to access the land, manage it, and find its best uses have been historically contested, and have remained so.

This volume combines the perspectives of recent recipients of bachelor’s degrees in history, graduate students, a secondary school teacher, members of the PLHC staff, and a senior scholar. *Long Exposures* is generously supported by Colorado State University’s Center for Literary Publishing, Department of History, College of Liberal Arts, and Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President.
LONG EXPOSURES
LONG EXPOSURES
Repeat Photography & Parks as Portals to Learning

The Public Lands History Center
at Colorado State University

The Center for Literary Publishing
Colorado State University
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LONG EXPOSURES
This volume resulted from a happy confluence of circumstance. In summer 2018 the Public Lands History Center (PLHC) at Colorado State University moved into a new campus facility, sharing space with the English Department’s Center for Literary Publishing (CLP). Both the PLHC and the CLP had recently earned the university designation as Programs of Research and Scholarly Excellence. At the time, both were housed in a converted dormitory slated for demolition. In no small part due to their recognition as centers of excellence, the College of Liberal Arts moved the two centers into the historic Tiley House. Within weeks of settling in, casual conversations in the building’s common areas sparked a new idea: Both centers make books. The Public Lands History Center researches and writes them. The Center for Literary Publishing edits and produces them. The act of generating content for a book and the act of publishing it constitute two distinct steps, both requiring considerable training and expertise and both necessary before you have a book like the one you hold in your hands. We decided to collaborate on an interdisciplinary project that drew upon the strengths of both centers and that provided our students training in making a book and gave them the opportunity to showcase their work.

Coincidentally, the content for the project would soon be at hand. For the last six summers, the PLHC has organized a one-week intensive summer workshop called Parks as Portals to Learning (PPL). Aimed at graduate students and advanced undergrads, PPL simulates for students a week in the life of a National Park Service conservation professional. Participants explore Rocky Mountain National Park and meet with staff members on Monday and Tuesday. Over these first two days, they identify a management challenge and formulate research questions to investigate it. On Wednesday and Thursday, they conduct research, and on Friday, they present their findings to the park leadership. Although
every year the park and the students learn much from one another, arguably the most satisfying years are the ones that extend beyond the week itself. In 2016, for example, the park provided funding for two CSU history courses to build on the PPL week’s findings and create an ArcGIS story map for park use. What made that year special was the tangible, usable product the program produced.

Long Exposures represents yet another extension of PPL. The PLHC’s history students expanded their summer PPL research into chapter-length essays and extended the week’s inclusive, collaborative spirit by reviewing one another’s chapters during a series of writing workshops. The CLP’s English graduate student interns used their editing and publishing skills to turn those chapters into a book. Both groups of students got practice honing marketable career skills working on a real project with applications beyond the classroom. Authors and editors revised the work into something publishable for an interested audience. And PPL summer 2018 has produced another tangible product for the park service.

A Week in the Park

PPL 2018 officially kicked off early in the morning on Monday, August 6, as we clambered into two university vans and headed up to Rocky Mountain National Park. There were twelve of us in all. Four of us composed the leadership team; we were an eclectic bunch—a high school teacher seeking fresh ideas for his classroom, a history graduate student who had done PPL before, the Public Lands History Center’s lone permanent staff person (and thus jack-of-all-trades), and a faculty member in the history department. Following us (and soon to be leading us for the week) were eight history students of different academic levels. They included five second-year master’s students, one incoming graduate student, and two recent college graduates. Eleven of us have written chapters for this book.

After settling in and exploring the park a bit, we began listening to park staff tell us about visitation. Not surprisingly, those who were responsible for traffic flow, ecological health, and public relations found the more than 4 million visitors during the previous year a significant challenge. Those who worked in interpretation (the park’s word for telling stories to visitors), however, could not get enough of them; one told us of plans to actively recruit more, with the goal of ethnically and socioeconomically diversifying the
park’s crowds. These meetings sparked our historical curiosity. Where had this surge of visitors come from? How had the park managed them in the past? What impact did they have on the park? What impact did the park have on them? With the help of RMNP’s wonderful collections manager, Kelly Cahill, we combed through the park’s archives, looking for historic photographs that might help tell the story of visitation. Then we strapped on our cameras, loaded tripods into the vans, and headed out into the field to find some answers.

**Value of Repeat Photography**

If a picture is worth a thousand words, two pictures taken from the same spot at different times and then juxtaposed are worth a thousand times a thousand. That is because the pairing not only captures what there is to be seen in each moment but also evokes questions about what happened in between, each of which demands historical explanation. Concentrating on visitor centers—the places in the park our research subjects most often frequented—we examined our historic photos from the archives, found the exact spots from which the older photos were taken, and then reshot them to create comparisons between what the landscape looked like historically and what it looked like in 2018. Then we did some more research to understand what had changed, and we put a bunch of brains on the problem of explaining the changes and the continuities. We hope that subsequent photographers will retake our shots and thus contribute to the historical record of change over time in these spots.

It sounds deceptively easy. Sometimes it took twenty minutes or more just to line up a single shot, finding features that were still extant, making sure the angle was exactly right, zooming so that the objects took up the same proportions of the frame as they did in the original, and then, of course, arguing about whether the shot we took was good enough. We did this all week, snapping shots of Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, Moraine Park Discovery Center, and Alpine Visitor Center. This method of documenting change over time by retaking historic photographs and using them to tell stories about the past and present is called repeat photography, or rephotography. We use the two terms interchangeably throughout this volume. As the essays show, repeat photography is a powerful medium through which to investigate and convey history; it also turns out to have some other useful byproducts as well.
Space and Time in the Rockies

Photographs alone, however, are not enough to tell the park’s whole story. Before you plunge into the essays, it will be useful to know a little of the park’s geography and history. Rocky Mountain National Park is nestled in the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains, approximately sixty-five miles northwest of Denver by car. The Continental Divide splits the park into a wetter, more remote, less visited west side and a drier, more accessible, and more crowded east side. The eastern portion of the park is bisected by an automobile corridor that winds west from the town of Estes Park, at just over 7,500 feet in elevation, up to Fall River Pass, at nearly 12,000 feet. We spent most of the week along this corridor. RMNP’s headquarters compound sits at the eastern end of the corridor, just outside the park entrance station, and includes the research dorms, where most of us stayed; the archives and museum collections facility, where we conducted research; and the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, which we rephotographed extensively. Heading west and slightly uphill, you come to the turnoff for Moraine Park, another site of our repeat photography. Heading further west still (and a lot higher up), you will come to Fall River Pass, location of the Alpine Visitor Center, our third rephotography subject.

Above all, we attempted to trace the history of visitation in the park. Visitation consumes the park. We mean that both literally and figuratively. People who come to recreate in the park use up its natural and cultural resources by hiking its trails, driving its roads, breaking its silence, leaving their waste, and disrupting space and processes that would otherwise sustain plants and wildlife. Vacating in RMNP is an act of consumption just as surely as buying a new washing machine or driving a car to Disneyland. The consumption of the park by visitation is also metaphorical. Visitors consume a good portion of the energies and attention of park staff: Law enforcement rangers direct traffic. Ecologists study how to protect wildlife from the crowds. Visitor center staff try to serve and educate the throngs while moving them along efficiently. Administrative and public relations officers know that happy visitors translate into congressional support, which provides badly needed funding for the national parks. Visitors are on all park employees’ minds, all the time.

One of the key things we learned from PPL was that none of this was new. We waited in half-hour lines to get into RMNP, but
we also found photographs from the 1920s in which automobiles stretched down the road and out of sight. We heard park staff sigh as they described the impossibility of coping with the more than 4 million visitors who now visit the park annually. The veteran park staff among us, though, also recalled similar conversations a few years ago when the number was only 3 million and the task seemed just as insurmountable. To say that visitation challenges have a history should not in any way diminish the genuine difficulty of the current challenges RMNP faces, particularly in light of acute funding shortages of the last twenty years. On the contrary, if we could convey one message to park staff, it would be this: You have a good track record of managing this very thorny problem. Look in your own toolbox for how to continue succeeding. Look to your history.

The first human beings to come to the area that is now Rocky Mountain National Park did so as visitors. Few, if any, indigenous groups ever lived permanently within modern park boundaries, but they did integrate it into their seasonal rounds, staying for extended periods to hunt, fish, harvest useful plants, practice their religion, connect with other peoples, and carry out activities that wove the fabrics of their cultures. Undoubtedly, many called it home. For at least the last several centuries, these indigenous peoples have included the modern tribes widely known as the Utes and Arapahos. Even with the arrival of white hunters and trappers on their peripheries beginning in the eighteenth century, they persisted in their traditional use of the area for decades. They continue to hold it in reverence today. It will always be their home.

Recreational tourism in the region dates to the early 1860s, when a few of the newcomers discovered it was more lucrative to host and guide visitors than it was to hunt and plow. As the tourist industry grew, the area won a cadre of supporters who advocated that it be made into a national park, which Congress obliged in 1915. Right from the founding of the park, then, visitation was embedded in the very existence of the park. No tourists, no park. It was as simple as that. Founding legislation of the National Park Service the following year, known as the Organic Act, further integrated visitation even more deeply into the park’s history through the so-called dual mandate of preserving scenery and wildlife while ensuring enjoyment of current and future generations. Visitation to park units across the nation soared in the
years after World War II, and the park service launched Mission 66, a ten-year initiative to upgrade parks’ accessibility and accommodations by the agency’s fiftieth anniversary in 1966. Both the Beaver Meadows and Alpine visitor centers we photographed were constructed during this era. Since then, visitation has continued to climb steadily, outstripping Mission 66’s modernization efforts. RMNP, however, like many units, is limited in trails, roads, campgrounds, fishing holes, and parking spots, not to mention in the capacity of air, water, wildlife, and plant communities to absorb the impacts of the crowds. National cultural changes, such as the rise of ecological sensibilities and increasing appreciation for social diversity, make visitor management even more complex. Today, Rocky Mountain National Park serves many different purposes for many different people. They come in ever-greater numbers and for an ever-expanding variety of reasons.

What’s in This Volume?
The essays in *Long Exposures* aim to capture that story of visitation. Most use repeat photography not only to document the story of growing visitation, but also to apprehend its changing character and illustrate the different experiences of tourists over time, including the paradox of different people looking at the same things and drawing different meaning from them. The essays also suggest some ways to manage the difficulties that come with rising visitation through an understanding of the past enhanced by repeat photography.

Think of the chapters in this book as being arranged in pairs. We start with Carly Boerrigter’s essay on the long history of people who have come to the park—even before it was a park—and made meaning of the land. Today’s selfie-stick-wielding tourist is only the latest marcher in a twelve-thousand-year parade of human beings coming to the region. All comers have engaged with the park differently, according to their cultures and their social positions within them, but coming to the place and finding something of value has remained a constant. While Boerrigter explores how visitors have viewed the park, Daniel Gilbert considers in chapter 2 how the park has viewed its visitors. The outlooks of park personnel have changed over time, he argues, from seeing visitors as passive guests to seeking to educate them in the hope of turning them into active stewards.

The next pair of chapters identifies practical applications for
repeat photography. In chapter 3, Kylee Cole and Dillon Maxwell demonstrate that it is a flexible tool that can be deployed for architectural and landscape surveys, natural and cultural resource management, and interpretation. Alexandria Kearney then, in chapter 4, explores its use for interpretation in greater depth.

Chapters 5 and 6 reflect on the philosophy underlying the week’s activities. While providing an introduction to the technique of rephotography, Joseph Sarr also reflects on the sources of its power as well as on its limitations, examining not only what the method can reveal but also what it can hide. Next, Andrew Olson meditates on the avenues that convey visitors through the park. Following Robert Moor’s widely read On Trails: An Exploration, Olson differentiates between trails and paths. Trails imprint the land with a physical record of collective decision-making about how best to move through space, while paths reflect designers’ efforts to direct travelers along a desired route for a given purpose. Olson finds that two of Rocky Mountain National Park’s thoroughfares, Fall River Road and Trail Ridge Road, represent an intermediate stage between trails and paths and thus reveal the tensions between what visitors value and how park staff try to script their experiences.

In the final pair of chapters, Kurt Knierim, Kimberly Selinske, and Ariel Schnee showcase two of the serendipitous byproducts of repeat photography. An enthusiastic and effective member of the leadership team, social studies teacher Knierim also spent ppl with one eye on his classroom back at Rocky Mountain High School in Fort Collins. After watching the participants for a week, he went back and tried rephotography with a class of teenagers. His chapter reports on how that exercise went and also presents plans for integrating high schoolers into ppl in 2019. In chapter 8, Selinske and Schnee find that repeat photography inherently lends itself to teamwork. They highlight the many ways in which, in addition to learning about visitation, history, and photography, participants honed their acumen for collaboration as they worked together to overcome challenges and solve problems. These two essays fit appropriately at the end of the volume because they point outward by demonstrating the uses of repeat photography beyond ppl as a learning tool that can be applied effectively in a range of settings with a variety of benefits.

Ariel Schnee, the Public Lands History Center’s project manag-
er and a member of the leadership team, wraps up the book with a chapter that turns the lens on leadership. Her essay reflects on what we all learned from the week about many things—planning, adapting, learning, listening, cooperating, and, most of all, leading and learning to be led. The chapter also joins chapters 7 and 8 in pointing beyond PPL 2018 and suggests the ways in which the program is a model for collaborative learning in general. Student participants, the leadership team, and park personnel all garnered something from the week, but not all absorbed the same things. Nor was our learning confined to the lessons we expected. This is possible because PPL puts curious, open minds together for a week and asks them to solve problems using the distinct skills, methodologies, and ways of viewing the world that each brings to the experience.
As an only child growing up in Southern California with parents who valued a good old-fashioned weekend getaway, I found myself in the car on road trips a lot. Our many family vacations included driving to Telluride, Colorado, to go to an annual folk festival my parents still attend to this day. On the way, we drove to Four Corners Monument. I climbed out of the car just long enough to peruse the countless booths of Native American jewelry and have my parents snap a photo of me in four places at once.

I remember driving to the Grand Canyon and watching my mom slowly walk the perimeter, in awe of the beauty before her. I stood a few feet back from the railing, arms folded, ready to stop at the nearest gas station for a bag of Cheetos. As a child, visiting these distinctly American landscapes did not hold very much interest for me. I felt like an outsider, not seeing what my parents and all the other tourists saw at national landmarks. I saw trees and dirt, maybe some deep valleys, but not the majestic beauty that they all clearly did.

As I grew up, however, this began to change. I cannot pinpoint a specific national park or scenic location that made me realize what a privilege it was to witness nature in its purer forms, where plants were allowed to grow freely, animals allowed to wander, and I, as a human, was merely a spectator. Being a spectator was finally a privilege, not a bore as it had been when I was a child. I know my growing appreciation for nature took hold of me in an intense way because when I chose to go to graduate school, I chose to go to Colorado. This was a conscious decision. I wanted to live in an environment where I could be closer to nature and have national and state parks at my fingertips, and what a privilege it has been to spend my two years of graduate school here.

In the fall of my first semester of my master’s program, my partner and I visited Rocky Mountain National Park for a quick, late-October escape. We somehow managed to find a parking spot
at Bear Lake at ten on a Saturday morning. Although this particular region was packed with families, solo hikers, and others, the crowds could not distract us from the beauty of the mountainous terrain, the ice that was slowly forming along the lakes, and the greenery that surrounded us. Along our hike to Emerald Lake, we asked a fellow late-morning hiker to snap a quick photo of the two of us. This photo would become a screensaver and an Instagram post, and I would later frame it in my room.

After the hike, we made our way back into Estes Park, where three dozen elk brought all traffic to an abrupt stop as they crossed one of the major thoroughfares. I will never forget being utterly stunned as these big, antlered creatures leisurely sauntered by my vehicle, getting so close that I could feel their massive, hairy bodies ever so gently rubbing up alongside my car.

In many ways, we experienced Rocky Mountain National Park as the majority of visitors would and should. We used the resources in a way that we felt was the most environmentally responsible and in ways that we felt held the most cultural meaning to us. However, we are only one generation of visitors to RMNP. Thousands of years before we roamed these regions, Native Americans also encountered the same resources—trees, paths through woods, bodies of water, elk. They viewed these resources, however, in very different ways than modern visitors to the park do.

The resources in the park have always been there. What has changed is what each visitor group sees within the abundant park resources. For thousands of years, Native American groups saw subsistence within each and every morsel of the environment. Early homesteaders of the region that would become RMNP saw a new beginning, oftentimes after their dreams of mineral riches were not fully realized. With the establishment of the NPS in 1916 and the creation of RMNP the year prior, the resources within the park then became a symbol of pure American majesty. For thousands of years, the abundant resources of RMNP have remained, ebbing and flowing as each new visitor group ascribes their own meanings onto each of the park’s numerous attributes.

Making a House a Home in RMNP and Then Tearing That Home Down and Pretending It Never Existed: The Built Environment

From the earliest Native American seasonal dwellings to the visitor centers that stamp the landscape of the park to this day, the
built environment of RMNP has experienced dramatic change over the years. Historically, visitor groups have always used the plentiful trees, shrubs, and other greenery in the park to create their own versions of home.

Although archaeologists cannot be sure of the exact date when the first human beings stepped into the boundaries of what would become RMNP, they can be sure that Native Americans made use of the park’s resources long before Euro-Americans traipsed into the region. Thomas G. Andrews has written an extensive history of the Utes and their predecessors who populated the region in his *Coyote Valley: Deep History in the High Rockies*. I will rely on his scholarship for much of my discussion on early Native American resource use. Native peoples occupied the region for over twelve thousand years, fishing, hunting, and traveling to and from their various seasonal residences, leaving fairly little trace of their habitation methods.¹ Scholars continue to debate the precise subsistence methods these early regional inhabitants utilized; however, it is generally accepted that they lived on consistent kills of mammoth, giant bison, and other large mammals as well as the occasional fish, plants, and smaller animals.² The wildlife was another entity in the region whose identity would be made and remade with the entrance of each new visitor group. The area’s earliest inhabitants, Native Americans, viewed the animals as the embodiment of food, shelter, and subsistence.

The two main indigenous tribes with the deepest presence on this landscape prior to Euro-American arrival were the Ute and the Arapaho. Until the American dispossession of their land in the 1870s, the nomadic Ute peoples occupied the Coyote Valley region, which is situated only eight miles north of Grand Lake.³ In modern-day RMNP, Coyote Valley is located along the park’s most western perimeter.

In fact, the region’s modern name, Kawuneeche Valley, is a transliteration of the Arapaho word for “Coyote Creek.”⁴ Native Americans named much of their environment in relation to what resources existed there. As coyotes were a vital part of Native culture and were abundant in this region, the Arapaho named the valley in this animal’s honor. Studies of the Ute and Arapaho built environments indicate the creative and innovative use of both plants and animals in creating their delicately constructed shelters. From studying temporary Ute settlements, archaeologists found
that they created their shelters by binding willow saplings together to construct rounded dwellings called wickiups. After the willows were fastened together, the Utes covered the structures with animal hides, tree boughs, and brush. Woven rush pieces acted as effective entryways in the wickiups. Even in the construction of wickiups, the Utes let nothing go to waste. Everything around them had a specific and meaningful use.

In 2003, as a part of the Colorado Wickiup Project, the United States Forest Service and Domínguez Archaeological Research Group partnered with the Ute Indian Tribe of northeastern Utah to survey land across Colorado for these Ute cultural resources. Since the project’s inception, researchers have found hundreds of fallen timber mounds throughout the region surrounding RMNP. The large numbers of wickiups represent the importance of these structures to the Utes. Native Americans used the land’s resources for the necessities of daily life. For more information on cultural resources, their interpretation and management, see Kylee Cole and Dillon Maxwell’s chapter, “Cultural Resource Management and Repeat Photography.”

Native American access to the resources dramatically changed when the next wave of visitors arrived. Although half of the 100,000 gold-seekers tramping to gold fields in 1859 turned around and returned to the east where they came from, these new visitors brought with them diverse perspectives on land use. These miners had a somewhat more commercial and materialistic view of the region’s bounty, seeing the minerals beneath them as the land’s main value. The gold rush brought them to the region, but they stayed and carried out their visions for proper resource use for decades to come. En route to Colorado, miners crossed through seasonal Cheyenne and Arapaho migration areas and set up regional outposts that served food, drinks, and offered shelter to fellow emigrants. The mass influx of new types of people to the region brought new forms of infrastructure. Corporations built roads and ranches to supplement the small towns which began to sprout up around the gold booms. These practices brought the 160-acre mining camp of Lulu City to life in the 1880s.

Upon the creation of mining towns, new settlers, removed from their urban environments, were forced to find food wherever they could. Because living off the land was foreign to the majority of the Colorado mining towns’ new inhabitants, most looked to the
outside world for their food supply. They found Wisconsin wheat, Iowa pork, California salmon, and Chesapeake oysters, along with canned food, sacks, barrels, and bottles. Unlike Native Americans, who were primarily reliant on the wildlife in the region for their food as well as their shelter, these new inhabitants sourced food from a much larger geographic area that spanned the entire United States and sometimes beyond. While the Native Americans used the land fully and maintained a balance with the region’s wildlife, the miners were incapable of relying solely on their surrounding resources for their diets. They instead relegated wildlife to a new position in daily life. Once again, new viewpoints shaped the use of resources.

Miners used animals in a way that was entirely new to the region. Unlike Native Americans, who for the most part did not domesticate animals, miners pastured their livestock and allowed them to graze on the land they now claimed as their own. Miners needed ample meadows for grazing animals as well as a good timber supply to construct enclosures and mine props. Luckily for the miners, the abundance of trees in the area solved both of these issues. The trees offered the miners enclosures for their livestock and infrastructure in the mines. Soon, not only was mining a money-making endeavor in the region, but lumbering was as well. By the 1880s, the fourteen-mile stretch connecting Green Mountain Ranch, Gaskill, Coyote Valley, and Lulu City had four operating sawmills. Suddenly the resources in the park were not only utilized, but were manipulated in ways like never before. Unlike the Native Americans, who up until this point had used the resources primarily for their own use and a bit of trade, the new intruders saw the resources as embodiments of something more. The forests were to be cleared for open space for grazing. The cleared wood was to be used for building and heating homes, stores, boarding houses, hotels, saloons, and sheds. The gold, buried there in the earth, too, was awaiting its American exploitation.

In an 1870 letter, Colorado Territory governor and former Bureau of Indian Affairs officer Edward McCook described his dismay as to why the United States government set aside a portion of Colorado specifically for the Ute nation’s use. “The Ute reservation,” he wrote, “includes mines which will pay $100 per day to the man, grasses . . . luxuriant and inexhaustible, and . . . soil richer and more fruitful than any other in the country.” He con-
continued: “I believe that God gave to us the earth, and the fullness thereof, in order that we might utilize and enjoy His gifts. I do not believe in donating to these indolent savages the best portion of my Territory.” McCook’s mindset succinctly sums up the culture of miners and other Americans traveling the West at this time. This land was meant to be used in a particular manner. Its resources were abundant and its Native users were perceived as inadequate guests upon the land. The Native peoples sat on gold ore deposits, troves of trees, large game, and rich soil, and all they did was use the land for subsistence. This area had never been mined, chopped, or fenced for husbandry until the miners and the settlers of the late nineteenth-century trampled into the region. The aggressive American attitude toward resource utilization and manipulation tainted the land for years to come. In the late 1800s, though, the land still symbolized God’s gift to Americans.

As the Colorado Gold Rush ebbed and flowed with individuals striking it rich and striking out, the new visitors attracted yet another new settlement group—the homesteaders. Like the gold-seekers, they were eager to manipulate the resources for their own particular use. Similar to the miners, the homesteaders initially looked to the rest of the world for their food supply. As homesteaders were more permanent settlers on the land than miners had been, they slowly began to implement a more harmonious relationship with the resources of the area. They planted gardens and fished for trout in the nearby bodies of water. The homesteaders offer scholars a unique case of a Euro-American group of people who wished to live harmoniously with nature but were unable to do so to the extent of the Native Americans. Their desires to be tethered to the land were clouded by miners and the American culture of exploitation and profit.

Homesteaders, the residual side effects of the Colorado Gold Rush, filtered into the region in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and built homes using the same resources that the Ute and Arapaho used. Homesteaders such as Imogene Greene MacPherson built lodges and places of residence for travelers passing through the area. An 1898 visit to Sprague Ranch convinced Imogene Greene to homestead a 160-acre plot of land in Moraine Park, on the northern turnout of Bear Lake Road. Initially, she and her husband, lumber dealer William D. MacPherson, built a lodge as a private residence on the land. In 1905 they decided to trans-
form the land into a tourist retreat complete with a dining facility, a livery, and guest quarters. Moraine Lodge hosted guests from 1910 to the late 1920s. Like other homesteaders in the area, the MacPhersons used the abundant pines to construct log cabins and other money-making structures for the comfortable accommodation of those passing through. Further, these new groups of people, those just passing through the Rockies, symbolized a new type of guest on the land—the tourist.

Although tourists began frequenting the area in the early 1860s, it was homesteaders like Imogene Greene MacPherson who opened up the region for large-scale tourism. Twentieth-century tourists yearned for the rugged landscapes that homesteaders created for them. Shelter was no longer a necessity, but instead a market. The aspen, pine, and willow groves held a promise of much more than shelter: one of commercial profit. Despite the tourist market they began to support, homesteaders took a less drastic toll on the environment than the miners who preceded them.

The lifestyles of early homesteaders affected the resources on the land. Because of this, the abundance of trees was seen as a benefit as well as a nuisance. The federal government required homesteaders to cultivate the land upon which they settled, forcing the first landowners in the area soon to be Rocky Mountain National Park to develop husbandry and gardening skills. The plentiful trees, however, made the construction of pastures and gardens difficult. Early homesteaders used wood to create barriers between themselves and their animals. Although early Native Americans in the region used the willow thickets to create their wickiups, the homesteaders saw this brush as a hindrance to their control of the land. They cleared many of these thickets to create hay meadows for their pastures. Similarly, homesteaders cleared lodgepole pine groves and replaced them with grassy plains for pasturing, as well. While the Native Americans worked alongside the tree growth in the park, homesteaders yearned to manipulate the trees to suit their needs.

When the federal government established the park in 1915, it set aside 231,000 acres of land previously owned by the United States Forest Service. With this undertaking, it also created a whole new perspective on the plentiful resources available in the region. This land now belonged to Americans, to be held in their national, natural treasures. The establishment of RMNP effectively
closed the North Fork to homesteading in hopes of preserving the natural water, timber, and animal resources there. With the National Park Service Act, the natural resources within the park territory were not to be recklessly exploited any longer, but were now to be preserved. This new mindset of the United States government caused a national divide, especially amongst those who banked on profiting from the exploitation of park resources.

Enos Mills, an early advocate of the park, led the charge to preserve the multitude of resources contained within the park. He felt that sections of land had lost their “wild charms” and in recent years, forests had been “misused and ruined.” This mentality harkened back to the Native American use of the land: the land was at its wildest and most gently used when it was in Native American hands. However, RMNP held a new promise to Americans, who were the self-mandated custodians and preservationists of the region. This seemingly benevolent change of cultural heart carried notes of manipulation with it.

In the early years of the NPS, much of the agency’s attention was focused on undoing the actions of previous land dwellers to restore the land to its perceived wilderness. Throughout the 1930s, the park acquired homesteaded property such as the previously mentioned Moraine Park Lodge. In acquiring these homesteads, the NPS hoped to “obliterate” them and remove all evidence of “development of private property.” In 1933, crews at Moraine Park Lodge began wrecking several large buildings on the property. The NPS aimed for the erasure of all human presence upon the land. The only remaining building of Moraine Park Lodge under NPS jurisdiction is the main building, now named the Moraine Park Discovery Center, which has operated as an assembly hall, a museum with varying degrees of exhibition space, a lecture hall, and its modern day existence as a museum, shop, and lobby. Figures 9 and 10 show the dramatic changes of Moraine Park over the last century.

One can see clear differences between the 1925 photo and the 2018 photo. These changes visually capture the distinct goals of the NPS, as they set to undo much of the hard work of its earliest American trailblazers by removing the majority of the dwellings that occupied the landscape. The only remaining remnant of the 1925 photo is the main building and tire tracks leading up to a cabin, called the Scottage, which is still privately owned to this
day.\textsuperscript{29} By the 1930s, the \textit{NPS} leaders no longer saw the historic mining, lumbering, and homesteading of the land as the epitome of the American spirit. Instead, they strove for the appearance of an untouched natural landscape. They allowed trees and other vegetation to fill the scenery. In essence, they allowed nature to take over what had once belonged to it. The \textit{NPS} hoped to instill the American appreciation of nature’s serenity, not its vulnerable tendency to succumb to human intervention and exploitation.

\textit{NPS} mandates did not allow all nature to grow back wild, however. During the 1933 Moraine Park Lodge property razing, the \textit{NPS} thinned out trees that obstructed the view of Horseshoe Park between Horseshoe Park and Trail Ridge Road. The \textit{NPS} called this type of landscaping “vista work.” By July of 1933, crews reported that they had created a “good view” of Horseshoe Park.\textsuperscript{30} The two diverse landscaping decisions at Moraine Park Lodge and Horseshoe Park exemplify the early \textit{NPS} initiatives. Sometimes, trees and shrubs were allowed to infill spaces that humans once ravaged. Other times, however, they were removed to allow for more scenic views of park landscapes. Park officials slowly curated an atmosphere within \textit{RMNP} to fit the needs of the new visitors.

The National Park Service was acutely aware of another aspect necessary to their curated atmosphere: the presence of wildlife. As early as 1909, Enos Mills pushed to protect birds and game in the region.\textsuperscript{31} By the park’s establishment in 1915, he had hopes for the wildlife in the park to remain wild and “become so fearless” that they would approach “within sight of the tourists.”\textsuperscript{32} I wonder what Mills would have thought of the elk that halted my car in Estes Park on my 2017 trip. They certainly were not afraid of me, my car, or the many other cars who stopped for them. Was that the epitome of animal and human interaction in the park? Either way, the ability for visitors to see animals in the wild boundaries of \textit{RMNP} became wrapped up in the park’s identity. Even in 1918, Superintendent L. Claude Way understood the correlation between game and visitor numbers.\textsuperscript{33} In \textit{RMNP}’s earliest years, the \textit{NPS} did not believe it was enough for visitors to simply view wildlife.

Because the establishment of the \textit{NPS} was based on the natural abundance of resources at the fingertips of American citizens, \textit{NPS} staff began to curate a fake subsistence environment for park visitors. In 1932, the \textit{NPS} stocked non-native trout species into the Colorado River for visitors to catch and eat.\textsuperscript{34} The \textit{NPS} continued
to keep their bodies of water stocked with fish for two decades following the opening of the park. Here, once again, the relationship between the land and the animals evolved. Visitors were surely tickled by the idea that they could visit RMNP, see wildlife within feet of them, and then fish for trout in the plentiful lakes and eat those trout for dinner. These new historically-rooted activities were the most distinctly American use of the land. Visitors had struck a balance with the resources in the only way they knew how. These visitor interactions with nature, however, were obviously superficial when compared to the true Native subsistence methods from thousands of years prior. However, the NPS created new protocol on proper land use as needed to fit the desires of the new wave of regional visitors.

With the preservation movement of the 1960s and 1970s ramping up, the NPS once again modified its outlook on park greenery. Although long since passed, utter wilderness became the ideal. NPS officials who operated the park following World War II hoped to paint the park as a landscape untouched by humans. They continued to buy out private land owners and sought to restore so-called natural conditions to their premises. These initiatives eventually led to the demise of dude ranches and other homesteading endeavors. Although false, this superficial wilderness—or what visitors perceived to be wilderness—became the ideal of RMNP.

The cyclical use of wood, shrubs, and other greenery in the park before and after American intervention tells a unique story. Each new group of visitors to the park—Native Americans, miners, homesteaders, and American tourists—interacted with the wooded environment of the park in diverse ways. The trees offered each group something different. To some, the trees were shelter, to others they were a means to obtain the ore beneath the landscape, and to the NPS and its visitors, they symbolized a route to return to the nature the past residents had forgotten.

**Over the River and Through the Woods, on Old Native American Trails We Go**

While the NPS worked to remove all past Euro-American interference on park land, the legacy of Native American tribes endures, primarily in the trail networks that run throughout the park today. Utes and their ancestors were the first to travel along the steep,
seasonal, and treacherous conduit that RMNP visitors now know as Trail Ridge Road. Crisscrossing back and forth along the Continental Divide, Trail Ridge Road intersects Ute trails at various elevations between 11,000 and 12,000 feet. The Arapahos knew today’s Trail Ridge Road as “Child’s Trail,” as those traveling up it had to put their children down to walk themselves. Fall River Road follows the Arapaho “Dog Trail” as the tribe often crossed it in the snowy wintertime with dogs carrying their belongings. All those who frequented RMNP prior to and following American arrival needed a method of transportation. Each group’s use of trails, horses, and roads indicated their understanding of and appreciation for their surroundings.

In 1914, Oliver Toll took a pack trip around the Grand Lake region of the soon to be RMNP. With him, he brought two Arapahos who lived in the area in their youth, Gun Griswold and Sherman Sage, and an interpreter, Tom Crispin. According to Toll, the purpose of the two-week-long trip was for him to learn the Arapaho names for the area. Many Arapaho place names were defined by body parts of game they hunted. For instance, “the Heart, the Stomach, and the Lungs” were all mountains whose color and shape resembled the insides of commonly hunted Arapaho game animals. Toll states rather confidently that “The Lungs” (now known as the Table Mountains) may have gotten their name from “the color resemblance of their jasper and agate stones to the lungs of animals when freshly dressed out.” The Arapaho used the natural environment around them to inform their decisions about all aspects of their lives. Future homesteaders and miners adopted some of these Native American names as their own place names. For instance, in Toll’s pronunciation guide, he specifies that the correct pronunciation for the region known at Coyote Creek was “kaahwoo–neechee,” an almost identical transliteration to the Kawuneeche Visitor Center, located in Coyote Valley in RMNP.

The trail networks held many uses for native tribes, and they evolved with the tribes in the Rocky Mountain region.

The establishment of trails was both a blessing and a curse to warring tribes living in the same regions of the Rocky Mountains. Warring tribes viewed these trails as methods of locating enemy borderlands and attacking one another. For example, travelers
and other explorers document seeing Arapaho tribes ambushing Utes on their trails. Trail networks were also closely intertwined with indigenous hunting locations and access to food sources.

Because the large game was a universal food source to all humans in the area, various tribes fought over these sought-after animals. Using their trail systems, the Arapahos often migrated to Estes Park, as larger game often frequented the region. This led to conflict with other tribes. Still, humans and animals maintained a generally balanced relationship. When droves of Euro-American settlers and traders began to make their way into the region, however, they would throw off this equilibrium for decades to come.

When miners and homesteaders began entering the area, they both adhered to and veered from Native American trails. Some road networks like the one linking the mining town Lulu City to Gaskill were brand-new, while other road networks were built directly upon old Native trails. New inhabitants to the Rocky Mountains made the most of the landscape before them. Their new vision of land manipulation forced them to alter their trails and roads more than any Native American tribe had ever needed to in the thousands of years they inhabited the landscape. Similar to the Native Americans before them, homesteaders relied on horses to gain access to remote areas of Estes Park. Their horses led them not to food sources or new settlement locations as they had for Native Americans, but instead to town centers and fellow homesteaders. Horses played a key role for the inhabitants of the region, but they served diverse ends. For Utes and Arapahos, they made a life centered around subsistence more manageable, but for homesteaders they were a livery business and a fun quirk of living in the wilderness.

The establishment of RMNP called for the mass overhaul of the basic regional infrastructure that existed in 1914. The National Park Service turned some of the historic Native and homesteader trails into major thoroughfares while they let vegetation take over others trails, whatever method happened to be necessary for that particular part of the park. The NPS saw a direct link between ease of transportation in the park and visitor enjoyment. After all, visitors would only come to the park if transportation around the park was manageable.

In October 1928, RMNP landscape architect Thomas Vint stated that the “roads [in the park] had to be naturalized.” If the NPS
was to adhere to the prioritization of their wilderness, the roads would have to be camouflaged into the lush nature they flowed into and out of. Vint led the charge to backfill the holes left when tree stumps had been removed.\textsuperscript{52} He did not want visitors to see that nature had suffered in the creation of the road system through the park. Visitors should feel like a road had always been there, ready and waiting for them to travel along it, whooshing by all the breathtaking views the park had to offer. Throughout the 1930s, the park spearheaded roadside cleanup initiatives to ensure these roads fit into the wilderness of the rest of the park. A 1931 \textit{Estes Park Trail} article recorded that with Trail Ridge Road’s completion “everything possible has been done to preserve the beauty of the terrain through which the road leads. After each blast of dynamite, workmen have cleaned up all the “country rock” thrown over the landscape so that there would be no unsightly white rock among the lichen-covered boulders that contribute to the scenery.”\textsuperscript{53} Once again, this mindset welcomed the road construction throughout the park but shunned any evidence of construction. It was the evidence of construction that ruined the landscape, not the roads themselves. The roads the NPS constructed were not unsightly. Instead, they somehow became a natural part of the park scenery.

The end of World War II marked an additional change in land use patterns in the park. As soldiers were returning home from war, America started a massive campaign for families to get out, go on vacation, and experience the grandeur that the United States had to offer. Actress Dinah Shore urged Americans to see the USA in a 1953 Chevrolet commercial. She sang, “The Rockies way out West are calling you / Drive your Chevrolet through the USA / Where fields of gold and wheat pass in review.”\textsuperscript{54} Although a car commercial, the jingle makes American values crystal clear. Unlike the homesteaders and miners of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these visitors of the park did not necessarily ever need to leave their cars to experience wilderness. National parks could be places where visitors could sit in their cars and leisurely take in the landscape. Again, with the passage of time, we see a new established way to experience American nature. The NPS strategies of this time reflect changing attitudes about how Americans should interact with their national parks. In order to plan for and accommodate the influx of American families that
were suddenly flooding into America’s national parks, the NPS, under the guidance of Conrad Wirth, set into motion the Mission 66 Era of the nation’s parks.

Throughout Mission 66’s ten-year undertaking from 1955 through 1965, Wirth reimagined the visitor experiences and behaviors within national parks. One of the main undertakings of Mission 66 was the construction of and repair of roads throughout the parks. Again, landscape architect Thomas Vint stepped in to help the NPS prepare for these visitor overloads. Mission 66 encouraged a few high use areas in the park, allowing for visitors to “have a truly significant and enjoyable visit in the space of one day.” Visitors no longer had to find hidden trails in the park and explore on their own in order to get an authentic experience in nature.

Conrad Wirth and Mission 66 allowed for one universal visitor experience. For a more in-depth analysis on the historic ways visitors have interacted with RMNP, see Daniel Gilbert’s chapter, “The Changing Roles of Visitors at Rocky Mountain National Park.”

Another key element in ensuring that visitors experienced the park in similar ways was the careful construction of visitor centers in America’s national parks. These new structures acted as bottlenecks, allowing visitors to stop inside, get maps to the park, and explore areas that the NPS had carefully crafted for them. In 1979, due to extremely high volumes of visitors, Bear Lake and Sprague Lake were “sacrifice[ed]” by the NPS staff at RMNP in hopes of lessening the burden on other areas of the park. By channeling visitors along certain entry points, the NPS allowed for the protection of resources elsewhere. Taliesin Associated Architects, the late Frank Lloyd Wright’s design firm, constructed Beaver Meadows Visitor Center as a quiet place for visitors to take respite from the harsh outdoors. Figures 7 and 8 show the evolution of the interior of Beaver Meadows Visitor Center. Although staged, note the couples’ clothing in figure 7, taken in 1967. Observe the ample seating the NPS allowed for visitors. Figure 8, which was taken by the 2018 PPL team shows that this seating has been removed and replaced with a gift shop. Now, there is almost no seating in the visitor center, and you would be hard-pressed to find a woman in heels and a man in dress shoes. These two photos perfectly capture how the NPS planned for future guest use of the park.

Visitor land use dictated and continues to dictate how the park
is managed. The construction of visitor centers in the 1950s and 1960s encouraged a certain type of visitor experience in the park, limited to sightseeing within a car. The surge of visitor volumes in cars, however, posed a conflict to the founding principles of the park to protect resources while still allowing for visitor access and enjoyment.

In light of the drastic measures the NPS was taking to ensure visitor access and enjoyment to America’s parks, conservationist groups began to voice concerns over land use. When the NPS announced their plans to reconstruct the decrepit Tioga Road and reroute it through the high country in Yosemite National Park, the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society began to wonder if this highway were to cut through such scenic area, what “quality of wilderness” would be left? The competition between Americans’ right to use and enjoy their resources was in direct competition with the future of those resources. Similarly, the construction of visitor centers also brought up similar concerns. For many national parks, conservationists were worried about visitor centers being constructed in “sacred” or “sensitive” areas. They could be encroaching on the natural landscape. Interestingly, architects did not worry about encroaching on natural landscapes when completing tree maintenance for an overlook. Views and vistas could be easily preserved; however, what damage was being done to the lesser noticed areas of the park? One visitor center at RMNP also maintains an interesting relationship with the Ute Native American tribe. The Ute tribe had created a trail running alongside what is now the Alpine Visitor Center. The NPS paved over this trail and encouraged visitors of the Alpine Visitor Center to walk to the highest point just northeast of the main tourist hub. Figure 5 shows a 1926 group of visitors near this trail and figure 6 shows the 2018 photo taken from the same location. The present-day photo shows visitors channeled along one clear path, instead of being allowed to roam as they would have been in the 1920s. Not only has the park effectively routed visitors along one path, protecting the surrounding tundra, but visitors are walking in the footsteps of the very first inhabitants of the landscape. For a deeper look at interpretation methodologies and applications at Alpine Visitor Center, consult Alexandria Kearney’s chapter, “Interpretation at Alpine Visitor Center.”

Native peoples walked and rode horses along mountainous
trails all over RMNP. Now, modern-day visitors can drive along Native footpaths, park at the visitor center, get out of their cars, and walk (not in heels) the final steps of the footpaths. Again, visitor use has changed. While concealed today, Native American trails form the blueprint for how modern-day visitors travel to the highest peak at Alpine Visitor Center as well as other scenic locations throughout the park. Humans have roamed these peaks and valleys for centuries, even millennia. As much as we, as Americans, think the park is a part of us, in many senses, we, as humans, are a merely part of it.

To Provide for the Enjoyment of Future Generations: Final Thoughts
Although the land that encompasses RMNP has seen all different types of people inhabit its landscape, each group sees different possibilities in their surroundings. The Native Americans maintained a mostly harmonious existence with their resources, using trees and shrubs to craft their shelters and hunting and utilizing their prey in the most economical ways possible. The Arapaho and Ute used the land for their own purposes, dictated by production. As the Euro-American groups trekked through the area in search of mineral riches, they ascribed their own values into the land. The mineral riches found beneath the trees and bodies of water overshadowed all other values of the land. Holistic subsistence through the land died out and consumption plagued the region for years to come. With the establishment of RMNP in 1915, Americans not only infused the land with new values once again, but they engraved these values into the land itself, constructing highways and formal trails, zigzagging across the mountains.

Once again, the land had a new life. We as humans are only a part of it, only guests on it. If we take care of it, it will continue to endure long after we are gone, just as it did before we even stepped foot on it.
When Stephen Mather spoke these words at the dedication ceremony for Rocky Mountain National Park, he did not know the ultimate success the National Park Service would achieve in this endeavor. In the 103 years since that day, Rocky Mountain National Park, along with the National Park Service, underwent dramatic transformations as the number of people seeking to take in the splendor of the national parks has consistently risen from year to year. The opening year of Rocky Mountain National Park saw 31,000; compared to the 4.4 million who visited the park in 2017, the sharp increase in visitors over the history of the park becomes quite clear.\(^1\) Centrally located, the accessibility of Rocky Mountain National Park has been one of the major factors leading to this ever-increasing number of visitors. Overall, sharp increases in visitors from year to year have been a constant factor throughout the history of Rocky Mountain National Park. Although dramatic in scope, the changes that the park has gone through may not be readily apparent to the untrained eye.

Visitors today are commonly frustrated with crowding at the park; however, they may not realize that this is not a new phenomenon. This lack of understanding among visitors is likely due to a lack of a tangible historical comparison. Rather than thinking of the history of the park as a real and changing thing, many park visitors—and many people in general—view history as an intangible and unchangeable set of facts and dates which are set in stone and which have little relation to themselves or today’s world; enter the historian to show that nothing could be further from the truth.

In August of 2018, I had the opportunity to take part in a rephotography project with the Parks as Portals to Learning Workshop, conducted by Colorado State University’s Public Lands History
Center. Our objective was to use rephotography to understand how visitation to the park has changed over the years. For more information on rephotography, see Joseph Sarr’s chapter, “Long Exposures: Repeat Photography as a Tool for Studying History,” on techniques, methods, and applications.

Spending a whirlwind week in the park, the workshop saw us conducting research in the park archives, interacting with staff and visitors, and conducting rephotography. Ultimately, this difficult task, when finally achieved, provided a wealth of contextual knowledge on the history of the park.

Insights provided by these rephotographs revealed countless changes—and some continuities—in how the park has been managed over the years, from the natural landscape to the historical resources and even the visitors themselves. When viewed through a historical lens, these changes and continuities around the park mirror shifts in the park staff’s changing ideas on the role of visitors and how they experience the park. Initially, visitors were seen solely as guests coming to view the park. Over time, however, attitudes have shifted to the current approach where the staff wants to educate visitors about—and inspire passion for—the park. In turn, this newfound inspiration should and does spur people to care for the park as stewards rather than solely as visitors.

With a focus on the changing role of visitors in the eyes of the National Park Service, the first section of this chapter will discuss the ever-increasing number of visitors to the park on an annual basis and how their preferred method of transportation—the automobile—shaped the NPS visitor management policies for RMNP. Showing how this dramatic increase in visitation has impacted the park, the second section will discuss the shift in NPS attitudes toward the role of visitors, changing from an emphasis on passive visitor experiences to more interactive and dynamic ones. Finally, the last section will show how the initial role of visitors has shifted to that of more responsible park stewards. Overall, repeat photography offered an excellent window to the past, providing a view of the differing methods and ideologies among park staff regarding visitors and how best to manage them.

Automobiles: The Driving Force of Change
Visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park today are commonly met with large crowds, long lines, and traffic jams. Frustrating as
this may be, visitors might be tempted to believe that crowding is a modern problem. This lack of understanding among visitors could be due to a lack of tangible historical comparisons; rephotography, however, shows that high levels of visitation have been endemic throughout the history of RMNP, creating an interesting dilemma for park managers in regard to visitor accessibility to the park. Although the ever-increasing number of visitors year after year could be seen by some as the success of RMNP—and the idea of national parks in general—others argue that the vast crowds of people diminish the wilderness value of the park. One clear example of this debate between accessibility and wilderness can be seen through how automobile use has been historically managed throughout the park.

A comparison of the 1925 and 2018 photos of the exterior of Moraine Park Lodge/Moraine Park Discovery Center shows that the landscape has been dramatically transformed. In fact, the changes that have occurred in this area were so dramatic that reproducing photographs at this visitor center proved to be quite challenging. The lack of similarities between what the landscape once looked like and its current state made finding familiar landmarks a difficult task. Ultimately, the few remaining buildings, including the Discovery Center and a solitary cabin which is closed to the public, leave little impression of the history of this area.

While there are many clear differences between the 1925 and 2018 exterior photos of the Moraine Park Lodge/Discovery Center, pictured in figures 9 and 10, respectively, the continuities—although less pronounced—are just as telling of the history of management styles in the National Park Service and Rocky Mountain National Park staff. One of the few similarities between these pictures—and a factor that has played a major role in shaping Rocky Mountain National Park—is that there are automobiles in both. The 1925 picture of Moraine Park Lodge highlights the early impacts of automobile-oriented infrastructure on the park; numerous roads crisscross the valley floor as an automobile in the center is parked on the grass. Comparatively, the 2018 picture highlights the result of the cultural shift in preference for modes of transportation and the shift in how the NPS has managed automobile use in the park. A large parking lot now encompasses the area where cabins once stood, providing ample parking space for the millions of annual visitors, almost all of whom arrive in cars. Fur-
thermore, while a car is parked in the grass in figure 9, in the 2018
counterpart cars are confined to remaining on roads or parking
lots, showing that park staff have since placed an emphasis on
the healthy recovery of the ecosystem over the enjoyment of the
visitors.

In the minds of many, the automobile has served as the perfect
means of conveying the masses of visitors from across the country
to view the splendor of the national parks. Stephen T. Mather,
the first NPS director, placed an emphasis on increasing the ac-
ceptibility of the national parks to bring more people to take in
their splendor. Critics, however, have argued that the increased
use of automobiles by park visitors has necessitated the building
of more roads—roads that have damaged the natural state of the
park and have brought it one step closer to losing the seclusion
and connection to nature that draws people there in the first place.
Furthermore, the increase in automobile use in the park, specifi-
cally on treacherous mountain roads that were poorly maintained,
meant an increased risk of accidents, necessitating safety initiatives
and increased park ranger presence. Ultimately, the cultural driv-
ing force that grew around the automobile all but guaranteed its
increased use in all aspects of life, including visiting the national
parks. As David Louter puts it in his book Windshield Wilderness,
“parks were not only reservoirs of wilderness, characterized by
an uninhabited, pristine nature, to which Americans retreated . . .
they were also landscapes in which people could engage wilderness
in a new way, in which automobiles and highways seemed to be
mutually beneficial.” That said, the increased accessibility of the
park has caused environmental damage from both the increased
amount of extant roads in the park and from the crowds of visitors
traveling along them.

Automobiles had an almost immediate impact on Rocky Moun-
tain National Park. Superintendent L. Claude Way wrote in his
report for 1917 that nearly 120,000 people visited the park travel-
ing in as many as 20,000 vehicles. It was at this time that the true
popularity of the parks was beginning to become clear. Similarly,
the lack of infrastructure and funding to support the ever-increas-
ing number of visitors was also apparent. As Way put it in his
report for that year: “the lack of hotel accommodations, together
with washout of roads between national park entrances and rail-
road terminals, prevented thousands of people from visiting this
region this season.” Rather than seeing this fact as a negative, Way was surprisingly enthusiastic that so many people could not visit the park, believing that it was “ample proof of the popularity of this national park.” Fortunately, that same year a change in NPS policies allowed for increased funding to the parks to be put toward the construction and maintenance of new facilities and infrastructure. For a more detailed discussion on infrastructure projects during this time period, see “Making Meaning with the Land: Visionary Land Use in Rocky Mountain National Park,” Carly Boerrigter’s chapter discussion on the Civilian Conservation Corps and the construction of Trail Ridge Road.

Visitation and federal funding to Rocky Mountain National Park slumped during World War II due to gasoline rations and other wartime economic measures. This was not long lived, however, as the end of the war saw the popularity of visiting national parks skyrocket. The increased mobility of the individual American family and rising incomes meant many families were looking to travel to the national parks for their family vacations. In 1945, visitation topped out at around 357,000; the next year doubled this number with more than 800,000 people visiting the park. Although visitors flocked back to RMNP in droves in the years after World War II, a lack of federal funding to the park made accommodating so many people and maintaining the park a daunting task for managers.

By 1950, dilapidated park facilities were beginning to show the strain of supporting millions of annual visitors: campgrounds were overcrowded and needed to be larger; roads were becoming overused and rutted, requiring increased maintenance and road expansion; the park was severely understaffed; and museums had become outdated. Rocky Mountain National Park was not alone in this struggle to keep up with the surging number of visitors, however, as parks across the country began to see rapid upticks in visitation. In response to the growing calls for increased funding, in 1956 the National Park Service implemented what was called the Mission 66 program. With over $1 billion dollars in congressional allocations to parks nationwide, Rocky Mountain National Park received more than $9 million for much needed improvements to the park. With the massive increase in funding, park officials wanted to turn Rocky Mountain National Park into “an outdoor museum with unsurpassed accessibility.”

Extant roads
Long Exposures

were improved and new roads were constructed; the entrances to the park got a desperately needed upgrade; new campgrounds were set up and old ones expanded and improved; trails were built and staff were increased.

Ultimately, this yearly increase in visitors has become a driving force for the park and has led to some of the most pronounced changes physically as well as managerially. Although these changes were vast, the tangibility of the changes can easily be lost. Without a historical comparison, it is easy for visitors to believe that the problem of crowding at the park is a recent issue. Rephotography, however, shows that crowding and a lack of funding have been defining factors in the management of visitors throughout the history of Rocky Mountain National Park.

An Interactive Approach

In the 103-year history of RMNP, ever-increasing visitation has caused park staff to change the way that they interact with visitors. Initially taking a passive approach with little interaction between park staff and visitors, management approaches have shifted to a much more involved and interactive dynamic. This shift in visitor management can be seen through the changes to the layout of visitor center interiors. Rephotography provided a great opportunity to compare how guests interacted with the visitor centers and staff working in them throughout the past and how they do so now.

This was easier said than done, however. If we thought it was difficult rephotographing the exterior of Moraine Park Discovery Center, we were in for a real surprise when we went inside. The interior proved to be an extremely difficult location to conduct rephotography. During our first photo visit, we spent the better part of an hour simply trying to determine the location where the old photo was taken. The interior was so dramatically different from the old photos that our first several attempts at rephotographing them ended in complete failure. What we thought was the correct placement of the camera, upon archival research, was finally determined to be nowhere close to being correct. After much trial and error, we were able to reproduce some of the photos of the building’s interior, which showed that the changes inside were in many ways more dramatic than the changes to the outside of the building. Confirming our suspicions, archival research showed that the original Moraine Park Lodge had been gutted and remodeled at
least twice in the past by the National Park Service (see figures 11 and 12).

When the NPS acquired the lodge in 1931, the sole building left standing was converted into a museum. The building was eventually remodeled again in 1978 when the museum was moved to the upper floor. Visitors who enter the Moraine Park Discovery Center today are greeted by a Rocky Mountain Conservancy Store and restrooms while the museum on the second floor has become rarely visited; in fact, many visitors may not even realize there is a museum up there as it is not obvious to the casual visitor stopping for a bathroom break. Although these visitors may miss out on the information provided by the museum, the current layout of the Moraine Park Discovery Center highlights a critical relationship that has developed between the park and the local community, increasing visitor understanding of the park in more ways than a museum ever could.

Rather than being greeted by museum exhibits with text, upon entering the Moraine Park Discovery Center guests today are greeted by the warm and friendly staff of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Store. As well as providing a face-to-face interaction and a store for weary visitors to refresh themselves, the Conservancy is dedicated to education about the park. The Rocky Mountain Conservancy, formerly known as the Rocky Mountain Nature Association, was established on July 8, 1931, to provide educational programs about the park to the public in order to create better park stewards. By selling merchandise and collecting donations, the Rocky Mountain Conservancy is able to organize and support research projects and provide educational opportunities and classes to the public in a wide variety of areas including historic preservation and land protection. Furthermore, this additional revenue is no doubt helpful to RMNP, which, like many National Parks, receives less federal funding than it needs to maintain the park. Similar to the changes in the Moraine Park Discovery Center, the changes made to the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center also highlight the shift in management emphasis from passive visitor experiences to more interactive ones.

Welcoming those entering from the east, the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center was opened in 1967. Designed by the apprentices of Frank Lloyd Wright at Taliesien Associated Architects, Ltd., the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center showcased a stylistically modern
design mixed with naturalistic elements to blend the building into the landscape. Described in the building’s National Historic Landmark Nomination as “a unique example of Wrightian design in a national park setting,” iconic pink sandstone slabs were encased within concrete panels to construct the building which was framed in and capped by a welded steel structure in a “zigzag pattern inspired by motifs from Native American art.” The grandiosity of the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, typical of the Mission 66 era, seemed to place a large amount of emphasis on making the visitor center itself a point of interest in conjunction with the natural setting of the park. The building does hold some historical and cultural significance; the park service today, however, is less interested in emphasizing the beauty of a building so much as the beauty of the park itself.

At first glance, the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center appears to have been altered very little since its dedication in 1967—at least on the outside. When comparing the photo of the 1967 dedication ceremony, shown in figure 3, to the 2018 photo in figure 4, one might notice few structural differences. Aside from adding wheelchair accessibility in order to conform to ADA regulations, the exterior of the building looks much the same today as it did on the day of its dedication. One notable difference between the photos seems to be the importance placed on the rear part of the building. Originally, the design of the building led to a natural flow of traffic through the front and out the back where a stunning vista of the mountains was waiting to greet them. Most of the building being below ground level in the front, the two-story rear of the building showcases the contrast between natural materials and modern styles used in the construction process; this contrast is less pronounced when viewing the front of the building. The fact that the dedication ceremony was held in this lower back lot was surely not by chance, publicizing the grandiose nature of the new visitor center and the intended design of blending architecture with nature. On the other hand, the 2018 photo is starkly different as this back lower parking lot is very infrequently used by visitors today. Now replaced with an upper parking lot closer to the main road, the route to get behind the building and into this original parking lot is easily missed.

Moving to the interior of Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, pictured in figures 7 and 8, the shift from passive visitors to more
interactive ones becomes more pronounced. Figure 7, taken in 1967, shows that the upper level was mainly empty, containing a small sitting area, an interactive topographical map, and an informational desk. At the time, many of the visitor services including bathrooms, informational exhibits, and a grand, two-story auditorium for presenting informational programs to visitors were located on the lower level. Guests stopping at the visitor center were naturally directed by the design of the building to travel in through the lower level, up the stairs and then out and around the outside via the balconies circumnavigating the building. The 2018 photo in figure 8 shows that there has been a major shift in the park staff’s view of visitors and how they experience the park. Today, almost all of the visitor services are easily accessible, being located on the upper floor, and the ranger information desk has been expanded, providing increased accessibility to information for the ever-increasing number of guests. By providing quick and easily accessible information to visitors, people spend more time taking in the natural beauty of the park rather than that of the building itself.

The 2018 photo of the Beaver Meadows Visitor Center highlights the critical partnership previously discussed between the park and the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. Rather than a sitting area with a surprisingly small number of seats—as seen in the 1967 photo—the area just inside the visitor center entrance has been converted into a space for the Rocky Mountain Conservancy Store. Similar to Moraine Park Discovery Center, the placement of the Conservancy store as the first thing a visitor encounters when walking into a visitor center further shows the importance of the relationship between the Rocky Mountain Conservancy and the park both educationally and financially. Instead of simply wanting to draw people to visit the park as visitors, the park staff today are trying to foster the idea of caring for the park by increasing the accessibility of information for visitors. The partnership between the park and the conservancy is a great example of simple yet highly effective ways of interacting with and educating the visitors to the park while also providing a commercial space to increase revenue for the park.

**Transforming Visitors into Stewards**

Similar to making the visitor experience more interactive and dynamic, park managers have shifted their thinking in regard to how
they view visitors. While visitors were initially seen solely as guests coming to view the beauty of the park, over time attitudes have shifted to the current approach where the staff wants to educate visitors about—and inspire passion for—the park. In turn, this newfound inspiration should and does spur people to care for the park as good stewards rather than solely visitors. This shift can be seen in how the park managers have chosen to manage the landscape of the park. Emphasizing the beauty of the park, early park managers largely overlooked the health of the ecosystem, instead focusing on giving visitors a beautiful park to experience. This attitude has since been replaced with an emphasis on the ecological health of the park and creating stewards who want to care for the landscape. Rephotography, which shows this change, could help the park managers at RMNP achieve this endeavor; staff could easily implement repeat photography into various aspects of their interpretation of the park, which could help to foster a better understanding of the park among the visitors, thereby creating better park stewards.

Native Americans inhabited the area for thousands of years. By the late 1800s, the first settlers of European descent were drawn to the RMNP area by the thought of striking it rich with a mining or timber claim. When the prospects largely yielded no results, however, many of those who remained saw economic potential in the area’s natural beauty for the burgeoning tourist industry. The breathtaking vistas offered by the region that would later become Rocky Mountain National Park and its surrounding towns drew recreational visitors as early as the 1870s wishing to camp, hunt, fish, hike, ski, or simply commune with nature. As the years progressed, the number of visitors dramatically increased, and in turn the landscape of Moraine Park has been shaped and reshaped several times by both private interests as well as NPS staff. Although the land and the number of visitors may have gone through some startling transformations, many of these visitors are still coming to Rocky Mountain National Park for the same recreational reasons. Despite massive cultural changes in the last one hundred years, this continuity shows that Americans still care for the National Parks and value what they represent—the ability to connect with nature and history in a secluded and serene landscape. By comparing past photographs of Moraine Park Lodge/Museum/Discovery Center to current photos, the changes as well as the continuities become quite apparent.
The Moraine Lodge was built and opened to the public in 1923 by Imogene Green MacPherson, who settled the land originally in 1905. The picture of the exterior of the lodge was taken roughly two years after the opening of the lodge in 1925. When compared to the 2018 counterpart taken during our week at the park, these photos show just how dramatically the park and its management techniques have changed. The most obvious change is how much of the land has been returned to nature. The 1925 photo shows a fairly developed piece of land containing several buildings including the lodge, surrounding cabins, and smaller outbuildings as well as numerous roads, paths, and trails with stone walls lining many of them. This photo from 1925 contrasts with the mostly natural landscape seen in the 2018 photo; most of the buildings have been removed, trees have sprouted up or been planted, and a parking lot is nestled in the background where the cabins once stood.

Put succinctly, the stark contrast between the pictures reveals several changes in management styles of the NPS from the first decade of its existence to today. During the incipient stages of the National Park system the concept of preservation, while important, was seemingly overshadowed by the motivation of NPS officials to promote the beauty of the parks to the American public. In the 1930s, in response to the growing wilderness movement, the NPS heavily emphasized the idea of re-naturing the natural landscape. In other words, park managers made concerted efforts to remove physical structures and restore a “natural landscape” with little to no regard for the actual health of the ecosystem. Conversely, park managers today have come to the sound realization that an ecologically healthy park is also a beautiful park. That said, this shift did not come without some major contention, some of which remains to this day.

Much of the contention centered on the fact that a sizeable percentage of land within the park was privately owned, being settled before the park was created. Reluctant to take orders from a Federal agency, many landowners felt that regulations in the national parks infringed on their personal freedoms and, as such, they ignored the few regulations already in place. In the 1930s Moraine Park had numerous settled homesteads, ranches, resorts, and even a nine-hole golf course, much to the chagrin of park officials who wanted to return the area to a natural setting. The main lodge shown in figure 9, which would later become the Moraine Park
Discovery Center, continued operating as a private business until 1931, when the National Park Service undertook a massive land acquisition endeavor. It was during this time that the National Park Service began to heavily push conservationist ideas, placing their attention on preserving the “wildness” or natural state of the National Parks. Focusing solely on the natural preservation aspect of the NPS mission statement, in their bid to restore the landscape to its natural state, the NPS purchased and dismantled almost all of the cabins, ranches, resorts, and other buildings in Moraine Park. While this oversight may have led to the destruction of possibly important cultural resources, the importance of the lodge as a historical structure was eventually recognized and the sole remaining building was added to the National Register of Historic Landmarks in 1975.

Ultimately, while wilderness is still important, managers today emphasize the health of the ecosystem and the visitor’s role in maintaining it, using designated trails throughout the park and consistent signage to remind visitors that they should stay on the trail. Furthermore, informational exhibits and educational programs emphasize the importance of maintaining the ecological health of the park. These efforts to create better park stewards are not in vain. This was evidenced by several occasions throughout the week where we witnessed park visitors—not park staff—reprimand those who went off of the designated trails. By emphasizing the health of the ecosystem and the role that visitors play in maintaining it, the staff at Rocky Mountain National Park have successfully transformed many visitors into park stewards.

Conclusion
In the 103 years of its existence, Rocky Mountain National Park has been transformed several times. Changes in management policies have regularly occurred, and disputes on best management practices have regularly arisen. One nearly constant factor throughout the history of the park has been the dramatic increase in visitors from year to year. Ultimately, this yearly increase has become a driving force for change throughout the park. Over time, changing park ideals on how to manage the increasing number of visitors have led to some of the most pronounced changes physically as well as managerially within RMNP. Although these changes were vast, the tangibility can easily be lost without a vis-
ible historical comparison. Without this comparison, it is easy for visitors to believe that the problem of crowding at the park is a recent issue. Rephotography shows, however, that crowding and a lack of funding have been defining factors in the history of Rocky Mountain National Park. It also shows the changes in how park staff have historically managed these vast numbers of visitors. Perhaps with increased opportunities to compare what the park once was and what it is today, visitors might be able to understand that although the numbers of visitors to RMNP are higher than they have ever been, the strain of heavy visitation on the park’s facilities has been a constant factor throughout the park’s history. Instead of simply being upset about the crowds at the park, perhaps a historical understanding of how the visitor experience in the park has been defined by crowds may lead contemporary visitors to ask how they can be part of the solution to this longstanding management challenge.
Introduction
We pulled up to Alpine Visitor Center at six thirty in the morning. The cold mountain air filled our lungs as the first light of day illuminated the tundra, and views of the continental divide stretched states away. We discussed the plan of action for a long day in a beautiful place. The goal was to take repeat photographs of the Alpine Visitor Center to see the changes in visitor usage over time. Throughout the process and into the final product, ideas began to pop into our heads about where repeat photography could fit into cultural resource management (CRM) practices.

Cultural resource managers need to wear many hats, acting as historic preservationists, archaeologists, and more. The array of disciplines and tasks calls for tools that can benefit all aspects of the diverse work cultural resource managers are trusted with. Repeat photography is a multipurpose tool that benefits cultural resource managers because it integrates primary sources with fieldwork, providing a holistic view of the past and realistic management solutions for the future.

This chapter looks at the application of repeat photography in cultural resource management settings. It first explores how repeat photography can be used in architectural and cultural landscape surveys. This includes identifying nonextant resources, alterations to buildings, and overall changes to a place or building over time. The next section deals with management of resources and how repeat photography can be used to monitor and make decisions on how to best maintain resources. This discussion transitions beyond a purely cultural resource application into interdisciplinary approaches that can benefit both cultural and natural resource managers. We finally discuss how repeat photography can go beyond a tool and into a product that other park management can use in interpretive and educational settings, as Daniel Gilbert and Alexandria Kearney consider in other chapters.
Our findings draw upon several sets of photographs from our field study at Rocky Mountain National Park. One set is from the Alpine Visitor Center and the other is from the Moraine Park Discovery Center. Each set of photos reveals different applications of repeat photography for cultural resource management. Though these are the photographs being used, we will also reference other cultural resource projects we have conducted in the past where repeat photography would have been a useful tool.

**Application to Cultural Landscape and Architectural Surveys**

For both cultural landscape and architecture forms, repeat photography can be a great way to solve common problems CRM professionals encounter during surveying. Repeat photography can help cultural resource managers find nonextant buildings, determine construction history and additions, and evaluate integrity. It is applicable to both architectural surveys and to cultural landscape surveys.

In this section we will use photo sets from the Alpine Visitor Center and the Moraine Park Discovery Center as examples of the applications of repeat photography in surveys. We will refer to these photos in relation to the Colorado 1403 Architectural Inventory Form and the Colorado 1404 Historic Cultural Landscapes Form. The goal of both forms is to document attributes of cultural resources, tell their narrative history, and determine if they are significant and eligible for inclusion on a local, state, or national register of historic places.

Though they share this common goal, each form differs in a variety of ways. Colorado 1403 Architectural Inventory Form generally focuses on a singular property like a house—or, in the case of a national park, a visitor center—to determine its level of integrity and historic significance. The forms ask for architectural descriptions, identification of architectural styles, dates and types of additions and alterations, and types of materials used. This information can be carefully analyzed to determine if the property retains its physical integrity that links it to the period that is most important for understanding its history. Documenting historic properties also involves carefully reviewing the historic record to determine the historic significance of a property. To analyze the historic significance of a property, cultural resource managers or preservationists consider the historic context that the property existed within. Ac-
cording to the National Park Service’s *National Register Bulletin* 15, the leading management document that guides historic property evaluation for the National Register of Historic Places, “historic contexts are those patterns or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (and ultimately its significance) within history or prehistory is made clear.” The integrity and historic significance can be used together to determine eligibility for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places or other state and local registers. For the National Park Service and other federal agencies, the documentation of this information is vital in the process to preserve, protect, and make management decisions about buildings that are more than fifty years old, on federal property, or in projects where federal funds or permits are involved.

Colorado 1404 Historic Cultural Landscapes Form is more expansive than its 1403 counterpart. Carl Sauer, whom many consider to be the godfather of the cultural landscape, defines it in a simple equation. In a 1925 work, Sauer stated that “culture is the agent, nature is the medium, cultural landscape is the result.” In other words, humans and nature work together to create cultural landscapes. From Sauer’s definition to today, cultural landscapes have taken on a variety of subtypes like ethnographic landscapes, vernacular landscapes, historic sites, and designed landscapes. With a varying degree of what a cultural landscape has and can be, a 1404 form includes many components. The form asks for the topography, ecology, geology, climate, viewsheds, circulation networks (a fancy way of saying roads, trails, and other pathways), waterways, buildings and structures (along with their descriptions), and other objects like graves, markers, signs and so forth. It also asks for a narrative history of the site and a determination of eligibility like the 1403 form.

Now that you have had a crash course in just two of the many types of survey forms, we can move into a discussion of how repeat photography can be helpful in conducting cultural resource surveys. To see ways that repeat photography can be used in architectural survey work, we can turn to photo sets of the Alpine Visitor Center from 1956 and 2018 in figures 13 and 14.

Many things stand out upon looking at the two sets of repeat photos. The most notable is the expansion of the built environment. What was once a singular building on the right-hand side of
the 1956 image has grown to encompass most of the right-hand third of the 2018 photo. Fences and walkways now indicate how people should use this space. In the left-hand side of the photo, a fire hydrant and what appears to be a privy disappeared. Some of the less obvious changes include things like the trail work done in the background and the addition of ADA accessible ramps near the parking lots.

The changes spotted from the set of repeat photographs become useful when filling out the construction history and narrative portions of Colorado 1403 Architectural Inventory Form. When investigating changes to the built environment, it can be difficult to understand what changes occurred and when. With most state and federal agencies there is usually a substantial record of alterations, additions, and demolitions. In some cases, however, this information is held by multiple departments or is not well organized, and it is difficult or impossible to access in a timely manner. In these cases, repeat photography can offer you a well-documented record of when changes occurred.

The changes over time illuminated by repeat photography aid in the evaluation of integrity. Alterations to the historic built environment impact the historic integrity or historic identity of a property. Historic integrity is “a composite of seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.”4 Overlooking the dramatic loss of historic materials and design with the alteration of the ranger station in the 1956 image, there are other qualities of integrity that can be addressed. The photos of the Alpine Visitor Center show changes in the built environment that translate to differences in feeling and setting. What was once an area with minimal infrastructure has been changed to accommodate more visitors. From the trail, however, we can see that patterns of visitor use continued over time. Although the increase in infrastructure has changed the ways people use this space, visitors continue to flock to Alpine Visitor Center to experience dramatic natural landscapes.

Among these changes, other things have stayed the same—mainly, the visitors. There is a full parking lot in both pictures. Noting this helps in discussing the importance of expanding the visitor center and implementing things like ADA ramps and additional bathrooms. It tells a story of national parks always being special, highly visited places. From this story, we can look both backward
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and forward as cultural resource managers when dealing with places like Alpine Visitor Center. We can look to the past, and the photos from it, to see how the buildings originally appeared and were constructed and what significance they might hold. We can then look to the future to see what can be altered, or in some cases demolished, to continue part of the park’s mission of making sure visitor safety and experience is a priority.

Another photo set shows how repeat photography can be used to fill out the Colorado 1404 Historic Cultural Landscapes Form. For the cultural landscape survey, we draw upon a set of photos from Moraine Park in figures 9 and 10. These photos show many changes in vegetation, circulation networks, objects, and the built environment. Some of these features appear only in the 1925 photo. This leads to a problem with looking at historic cultural landscapes that have seen many alterations. Sometimes it becomes tricky to find nonextant buildings while surveying. By using repeat photography, we can locate those buildings and then determine what they were used for.

Repeat photography can also be used when putting together site sketches of cultural landscapes. Site sketches are an important part of cultural landscape surveying. It becomes the bird’s-eye view of the area. The more detailed the site sketch the better. It really unpacks the way that humans and nature work together to produce these places. Mapping the roads, buildings, signposts, streams, gulches, and vegetation stands brings to light the spatial relationship between features in a cultural landscape. Taking the Moraine Park photo, we can place features like the two-track road, the covered bridge feature, and the cabin footprints in the background to a site sketch to overlay it on a present-day map of the site. From this we can locate where the past overlaps with the present.

Finding those overlaps becomes important from a management point of view. For example, in the historic photo we can see a small bridge, several nonextant buildings, and a small road. If the park management wanted to cut a trail through the area, we could use repeat photography to see where it would pass through nonextant features. From there we would survey the area for any possible historic archaeological impacts or finds and then determine if it is okay to build the trail.

Using repeat photography is a useful tool in filling out survey forms, in both architectural and landscape instances. In a more fun
way, it allows cultural resource managers to take primary sources (hopefully not the originals) out into the field. You feel like a detective in a way: searching around a place, looking for clues and small details that all point to finding the spot the original shot was taken. Trudging around a site with camera, compass, map, and historic photo in hand, you become more familiar with the place, too. You experience its sounds, smells, and feeling, and you notice how others, if there are any, interact with the site. It’s not only the tangible historic qualities you gain from doing repeat photography; it’s also those intangibles. And if you cannot grasp and appreciate both, what’s the point of managing the resource?

**Monitoring and Applications to Interdisciplinary Work with CRM and NR**

Repeat photography as a tool for cultural resource management is not restricted to surveys. It has high potential in monitoring and managing the integrity of cultural resources. By using repeat photography year after year, managers can see where degradation of resources occurs and use that to make management decisions. This practice becomes interdisciplinary as the natural resources surrounding cultural resources experience changes, too.

Repeat photography is helpful in monitoring the use of structures and cultural landscapes. For this example, we can turn to figures 1 and 2 of Alpine Visitor Center. By taking repeat photographs of the historic building, cultural resource managers can monitor where the highest amount of degradation occurred on the exteriors of the building and point to possible causes. In this case, we could look at the roofs of the exteriors to spot damage from heavy snows or at the facades of the buildings to pinpoint impacts of visitor use. Based on that, management can make choices to repair or limit access to certain areas going forward.

This exercise goes beyond cultural resources and into a more interdisciplinary approach that considers natural resource change over time. This approach urges interdisciplinary teams to go into the field and use repeat photography to see places where both natural and cultural changes are happening and to figure out how to best manage both. The photos in figures 1 and 2 are prime examples of how repeat photography can work as a natural resource and visitor safety management tool. We can look at the impacts on the tundra in each photo and then continue to monitor it by taking subsequent photos each year. From a visitor safety standpoint, the
use of the trail can be monitored to see where convenience and social trails are forming and adversely impacting the tundra and marmots. If there are impacts, managers can then come up with solutions.

This documentation can serve as a tool for planning and evidence to evaluate the extent to which management plans are successfully mitigating resource degradation. For example, say there is an area in the tundra that is showing great signs of disturbance from human activity. With primary sources available in the archive, resource managers can attempt to find historic photos of sites and then compare them to the conditions today. This process only works if there is already a photo log of specific sites, but there are many possibilities for resource managers moving forward. A database of repeat photography can be started at any time to create a historic record of both natural and cultural resources that will document and preserve information for future resource managers.

This type of visual historic record created from repeat photography may have been beneficial for previous cultural resource management projects we have been a part of. In one project, we were tasked with documenting a historic root cellar at a state agency. This root cellar was one of very few extant resources in the midst of a highly developed recreational park. Due to a turbulent history of poor resource documentation and rapid development, little was known about this structure despite being in the ownership of the agency for over thirty years. It was difficult to determine the historic layout of the site and the relation of the structure to other nonextant buildings. As such, it was difficult to produce a narrative history of the structure and its relationship to the agency and activities that occurred there over the past thirty years. Had the agency carefully documented the structure and the property throughout years of development, it would have been much easier to tell the story of the structure's past and its historic significance.

A photographic record of resources can be started at any time. Even if historic images do not exist, we can still begin documenting and recording resources at any point in time to the benefit of future resource managers. These databases can create a baseline record of resource condition, use, and setting that can be used for comparative analysis and management decisions in the future.

Repeat photography is a great way to monitor resources and find solutions to management problems. This applies to a vari-
ety of issues that the National Park Service encounters, including cultural and natural resource management challenges and visitor safety concerns. Repeat photography doesn’t have to be necessarily formal, but it does require the agency to carefully archive photographs, or the resource manager needs to do some major sleuthing to find images that might benefit their resource surveys. Outside of the behind-the-scenes applications within the park, repeat photography can be used in a more forward-facing manner.

**Application to Interpretation and Education**

Repeat photography does not have to remain a methodology; it can also be a product. Sets of repeat photographs can be useful as interpretive and educational tools that can get visitors to care for their public lands, not just care about them. When visitors care for these places, they become stewards of the places they visit and hold dear.

Inside visitor centers, repeat photographs can be displayed as interpretation. They are not only visually appealing to visitors; they also tell a story of an array of changes inside Rocky Mountain National Park. The Moraine Park photo as a display tells the story of land use change from the area as a rustic mountain resort to an area for visitor education, park interpretation, and vegetation regrowth. The interpretation can tell the history as well as urge visitors to view the landscape differently. These are not landscapes stuck in time but rather places of dynamic change.

The educational opportunities of repeat photography get visitors directly involved, prompting their own questions and conclusions about the park. A guided repeat photography hike would be a way to get visitors out into the park and viewing landscapes differently. Rangers could lead hikes to both places that have cultural and natural value and work repeat photography into their tours to connect visitors to the past of the park.

We can look to the Alpine Visitor Center photo sets we used for this example. By taking a group to the parking lot of Alpine Visitor Center and repeating the 1956 photograph, visitors can see that visitation in high numbers has been a fixture of the park since the 1950s. It also gets the visitors interested in how the built and natural environment has changed over time. In the process of learning the park’s history and doing a fun activity, they also become aware of the challenges, both historic and present, with visitation...
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in the park. The end goal is for them to become conscious of their impacts on the park and find ways to visit these places with stewardship in mind. Visual representation of history through repeat photography can help park staff interpret the park itself and move beyond providing information about park history to provoke visitors to serve as stewards of their national park.

Conclusion
From working in Rocky Mountain National Park with repeat photography, we found many ways to work the method into cultural resource management. These range from behind-the-scenes management work like surveying and monitoring resources to visitor-centered work like interpretation and education. These tools can be deployed at any time to increase success of survey, documentation, and subsequent resource management plans. Repeat photography can help tell stories about the past and simultaneously inform decisions about resource management in the future. The bottom line is that repeat photography is a useful tool for national parks and other resource management agencies writ large. It is a useful and fun, engaging way to combine archival material with fieldwork for the benefit of park staff and visitors alike.
Since its founding in the Organic Act of 1916, the mission of the National Park Service (NPS) has been to preserve America’s natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of future generations.¹ As a testament to their mission, the NPS has experienced record-breaking visitation with more than 1.5 billion visitors in the last five years.² As national parks are drawing millions of visitors each year, some fear the parks are in danger of being loved to death. Throughout the country, the combination of an aging infrastructure and increased visitation has affected park roads, bridges, buildings, campgrounds, water systems, bathrooms, and other facilities.³ Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) has been no exception, as visitation reached 4.4 million in 2017 alone, making it the fourth most visited national park.⁴ Although the data indicates that national park visitation is at an all-time high, looking into historical records can reveal that increasing visitation among national parks is not a new phenomenon.

In August of 2018, I joined the Parks as Portals to Learning program (PPL) with Colorado State University’s Public Lands History Center (PLHC) to research visitation trends, and learn about the park’s mission to both preserve the land and accommodate the public. PPL has been a successful partnership between university faculty and park staff because the program provides students experiential learning opportunities while the research conducted benefits RMNP. During our research we began to interrogate the idea of our national parks as a “portal to learning.” I saw park staff as the main source of education for both me and visitors. As our work continued, I further appreciated the park as an opportunity for visitors to create their own portal to learning. Our research revealed that national parks and other public lands are places where people come to learn how to interpret the environment and educate themselves about how to be stewards of the larger park system. My experiences of historic research and peer

IV. Interpretation at Alpine Visitor Center
Alexandria Kearney
mentorship in the PPL program demonstrated that interpretation can be a portal to visitor education.

My role in the PPL tiered-mentorship program was as a recent graduate researcher. I attended Colorado State University (CSU) from 2014 through 2018 and obtained a dual degree in history and political science. After much exploration into the concentrations associated with my history major, I became passionate about working in the field of public history and educating the public. At the start of my final semester at CSU, I spoke with the director of PLHC, Jared Orsi, to see if I could get more hands-on experience in public history. After expressing my interest to pursue a career in the public history field, I was offered an internship. This internship exposed me to many opportunities in the professional fields of education, public history, and government work. One opportunity that arose from these experiences would be my time working as a park interpreter for Boyd Lake State Park in Loveland, Colorado. During my time working at the PLHC, I learned of the PPL program that would take place the following fall after my seasonal position as a park interpreter would be coming to an end. I decided to pursue the program as it aligned with my professional goals of working in public history, and I am grateful I did.

Before beginning the program, I spent the summer working full time at Boyd Lake State Park as a park interpreter. This opportunity gave me a unique and holistic perspective of the National Park Service from both the state and national levels. Since I worked at an urban state park, my job as a park interpreter focused on public recreation activities and education regarding best and safe practices for public enjoyment. This focus was a stark difference in comparison to a national park’s mission, where the staff would focus more on land interpretation, history of the park, and environmental education. Some similarities between the state and national park included a great staff of park stewards who showed care for the environment, animals, and the public. Although in different ways, both the national and state parks focused on educating the public and the next generation as park stewards. Working as both a park interpreter and a researcher gave me an opportunity to share knowledge about the environment and was an effective way to get younger audiences involved in becoming active stewards. The research I conducted during the program in conjunction with my work experience at Boyd Lake State Park led me to gain a bet-
ter understanding of park interpretation at both the national and state levels.

**Repeat Photography as Interpretation**

For our research in **PPL**, we utilized the interpretation method of rephotography to illustrate the historic challenges and successes of visitor management at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, Moraine Park Discovery Center, and Alpine Visitor Center. The process of rephotography itself is defined as the art and science of using a camera to re-take a photo of the past and showcase the changes (or lack of changes) that have occurred in the photograph over time.\(^5\) Rephotography acted as a tangible tool for us to visually showcase Rocky Mountain National Park’s historic tensions regarding its mission to both preserve the land and accommodate the public. The combination of archival research and fieldwork helped us create a holistic view of visitation at **RMNP** that was easy to interpret for the public. We found that rephotography illustrated the National Park Service’s successes and found possibilities for other applications of rephotography—especially at the park’s visitor centers.

Rephotography is an accessible way for the interpretation of parks to be understood by the public. Public land interpretation attempts to tell the stories of these places in various forms—roadside signs, visitor centers, park brochures, ranger-led nature walks, material objects, and even human remains.\(^6\) In many cases, visitors see physical objects, either geological or historical, and expect some sort of interpretation so they can educate themselves. Our research proved that repeat photography can act as a portal to learning for park visitors. Repeat photography can also be utilized by researchers and the Park Service as a tool that provides a powerful visual representation of historical park visitation trends. Researching the **RMNP** archives for rephotography opportunities was the best example of change over time by providing historic data and visual aids of past visitor behaviors in the park versus the conditions we saw there during our research. The process of rephotography really allowed us to take an in-depth look at multiple lenses seen by different stakeholders within the park that are facing issues with increased visitation. Although the park rangers were dealing with very different issues than park ecologists or park volunteers, they were all working simultaneously to reach a holis-
tic goal of public enjoyment and park preservation. For instance, the park rangers located at the Alpine Visitor Center were working on concerns with visitor safety at high altitude, whereas the park ecologists were researching increased visitation impacts on the alpine tundra and permafrost changes over time.

Our research provided us with a clear visual of both past and present issues within the park, as well as new solutions and opportunities for change. Throughout our time researching at RMNP, we discovered multiple lenses the National Park Service had to navigate to successfully balance both visitors and its resources. Our compiled research that included rephotography of various locations throughout RMNP and interviews with park staff and volunteers revealed that visitors can help lessen the negative impacts associated with increased visitation. This can be accomplished through interpretation and education that inspires visitor stewardship. Using interpretation as a tool to encourage park stewardship increases the visitors’ awareness regarding the environment.

The goal of interpretation is to showcase the park’s natural and cultural resources in order to get visitors to not just care about the park, but to also care for it. Rocky Mountain National Park’s Foundation Document states that “interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit.”

After speaking with Chelsea Hernandez, park interpreter and Junior Ranger program manager, we learned about the traction interpretive programming has already gained in RMNP’s Junior Ranger program. This program was designed to encourage the next generation of park stewardship through experiential learning and educational park programming. Our case studies of rephotography including Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, Moraine Park Discovery Center, and Alpine Visitor Center all illuminated interpretation opportunities that amplified the existing programming, signage, and exhibits.

**Case Study: Alpine Visitor Center**
My research team focused heavily on the Alpine Visitor Center at RMNP. This unique visitor center is situated at 11,796 feet and features a bookstore, a gift shop, and a snack bar (the only restaurant
in the park), as well as views of the alpine tundra and Fall River Cirque. The alpine tundra is one of the most fragile ecosystems in Colorado, growing at elevations of 11,000 to 11,500 feet (depending on exposure). The alpine tundra faces extreme weather conditions such as strong, frequent winds and colder temperatures, all of which shape the area’s ecology and limit what is able to grow there. After talking with park rangers about the care they give to the fragile ecosystem, we learned that repeated footsteps of visitors can often destroy tundra plants and allow the exposed soil to blow away. After interviewing experienced park interpreters, we learned that recovery for this ecosystem may take hundreds of years. Many historical photos from the RMNP archive show the alpine tundra with visitors stepping all over the fragile ecosystem because of the lack of direction or set trails to educate visitors about their environmental impact. The old photographs revealed many social trails that visitors created themselves before formal trails were established by park staff. This historic example demonstrated the parallels between a lack of interpretation and a lack of visitor stewardship.

History of Alpine: Lack of Interpretation
For our research project, we chose to rephotograph a black and white photo, figure 5, from the Rocky Mountain National Park archives. In the photo, you can see several park visitors bunched together tightly instead of being spread out along the alpine tundra, maximizing their environmental impact on the area. This photo suggests that visitors had no regard for their impact on the ecosystem. In the distance of the photograph, you can see the first structure that was built on Trail Ridge Road. This structure was the Alpine ranger station, which was built in 1922 as the only structure on the alpine tundra. This station was designed for visitor safety but did not include interpretation of the ecosystem or education for visitors. In the 1930s, the park staff added on a small convenience store and information center as visitation in the park progressively increased. This addition was in response to the public’s growing interest in visiting national parks, but there was still no signage or interpretation of the land.

In 1956, the director of the National Park Service, Conrad Wirth, launched the Mission 66 program, with the goal of making
the parks better able to accommodate large crowds. The Mission 66 program altered the visitor experience in national parks forever by creating a new normal in relation to the modern park visitor center. Earlier models of park interpretation and education had relied on public interactions between rangers and visitors, but the new model required the park to interpret itself for the masses. It is best described in the *Colorado Encyclopedia*: “The park visitor center solved this problem in the years after World War II by combining interpretive exhibits, restrooms, shops, and food in one centralized location, usually near park entrances. Mission 66 focused on adding new visitor centers that could handle a heavy influx of automobiles and tourists.” By the 1960s, the area had become a booming tourist attraction because of its unique landscape and accessibility to the public. The Alpine Visitor Center as we know it today was built to accommodate visitor experience and enjoyment.

Since there was no effective controlling of visitor movement, the lack of awareness negatively impacted the fragile ecosystem, visitor understanding, and overall visitor experience. The park staff realized that the issues surrounding increased visitation needed to be addressed without eliminating the opportunity to experience a unique environment. Building the Alpine Visitor Center by itself was not enough to effectively direct and educate the masses, and the park staff recognized this. An increase in educational signage, interpretive information, and paved trails at the Alpine Visitor Center provided the public with opportunities to educate themselves about this fragile ecosystem (see figure 6). Both the inside and outside of the Alpine Visitor Center showcase the natural landscape and the uniqueness of the environment the visitor is experiencing. Walking into the visitor center, you can see informational exhibits regarding the Native American Ute tribe that was located in the area, information on the alpine tundra itself, and a giant glass wall that encases a beautiful view of the tundra. Even on the inside of the visitor center, one is constantly surrounded by nature and reminded of the unique natural environment. On the outside of the visitor center, there are multiple hiking opportunities including the quarter-mile round-trip Alpine Ridge Trail and the eight-mile round-trip Ute Trail to Milner Pass, both leaving you breathless due to the beautiful views and the high altitude.
Talking with the park staff at the Alpine Visitor Center solidified the importance of interpretive learning and public education within the park. They observed that the more visitors could learn and interpret their place in the environment, the more they wanted to help preserve it and become stewards of the park.

After examining the two images of the Alpine Visitor Center from the years 1926 and 2018, many could note that not much has changed. The photograph and the rephotography of the area reflect a substantial number of similarities with one another. In both images, the area’s consistent popularity among visitors in the park is apparent. These two images showcase crowds of people, indicating the obvious need for park staff to accommodate the crowds. The park rangers we interviewed explained the difficulty of their job in having to ensure both concerns about visitor safety and environmental preservation. A closer look comparing these two photos exemplifies some of the major changes that have evolved in the park over time. As visitation has steadily increased through the decades, so have the park’s efforts to maintain its mission through interpretive education.

Alpine Today: How Interpretation Creates Stewards

In figure 6 there is a clear path located on the right side of the visitor center that is successfully directing the flow of pedestrian traffic. Park visitors are staying off of the tundra with the help of educational information within the visitor center, a clearly indicated path, and signage that includes directional information regarding the alpine tundra. Although the paved trails and signage required some of the tundra to be sacrificed as a designated zone where the ecosystem could not properly flourish, the new visitor accommodations made it easier for the public to understand why they were not allowed on the tundra. As a result, park visitors were more likely to comply with park regulations. If given the proper tools and information, we have seen that park visitors want to be park stewards. Repeat photography has showcased the public’s ability to be cautious and aware of the environment as long as they are given the information to interpret their impact on the land.

The Alpine Visitor Center is a prime example of the staff at Rocky Mountain National Park successfully carrying out the National Park Service’s paradoxical mission. RMNP’s efforts to pre-
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serve America’s natural and cultural resources for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations have continuously evolved with the increasing shifts in park visitation. After comparing the same landscapes at Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, Moraine Park Discovery Center, and Alpine Visitor Center, our research showed that rephotography was an exceptional tool to make park history and interpretation tangible for both visitors and park staff. After observing visitation trends over time, we found that utilizing current resources to encourage the park to interpret itself has helped visitors of Rocky Mountain National Park become increasingly educated on the latest park information and regulations. The park staff at RMNP have successfully utilized an interdisciplinary approach to interpretation and could further benefit both the park and future visitors by using rephotography to showcase the park and its history.

Conclusion
During this program, I got the chance to experience firsthand how mentorship and experiential learning can create innovative, project-based learning. The Parks as Portals to Learning program at CSU has continued to be a successful partnership between CSU students, faculty, and RMNP staff. Through this program I was able to help foster the connections between interpretative education and visitor stewardship within the National Park Service. This connection can continue to be encouraged through existing educational programming and exhibits that could potentially help relieve some of the tensions that have resulted from increased visitation. RMNP has the opportunity to enhance its interpretive efforts in visitor centers by showcasing examples of rephotography. One idea would be to utilize the old photographs from the RMNP archive and showcase them in a timeline exhibit in the visitor centers. This would allow visitors to experience hands-on learning through the evidence of historic changes in the park over the years. Many of the visitors we interacted with were very interested in viewing the photographs from the archive to see how the landscape has changed over time. In this example, the park can educate the public by interpreting the environment through an interactive exhibit that utilizes the resources it already has. My experiences in the PPL program have allowed me to expand my knowledge of the park
system by giving me the opportunity to research visitation trends alongside park staff in RMNP. After a week of research, we found that providing innovative and interpretive learning opportunities for students, visitors, and park staff can foster a culture of learning and stewardship within the park that can help solve the issues of increasing visitation.
Photography, Time, and History

As a medium, photography has always had a deep association with time. Unlike a sketch or a painting, a snapshot has special connotations as a moment captured and isolated from the regular flow of time. The hyperrealistic characteristics of its imagery only bolster the illusion that a photograph is an unfettered window into a frozen moment in the past. These traits have graced the medium with undeniable power since its inception in 1839. Although nineteenth-century photo technology imposed serious limitations on image production, one can easily interpret archaic pictures as portals into another era. The "reality" depicted in photos (old and new alike) is far more complicated than might be readily apparent, but the medium’s intimate connection to time grants it inestimable value to historians. In one regard, photographs contain historic information much like any other form of visual imagery, like portraits or maps. Although historians traditionally rely on textual documents for the bulk of our research, pictures can also provide us with fruitful supplements and alternatives to written records. The notable ability to observe time’s passage, however, gives photography unique potency as a tool for historical research, particularly in terms of measuring change and continuity and in rendering long-term intangibilities suddenly legible. When coupled with historians’ specialized skills to study and place these observations within an analytical framework, the medium becomes the centerpiece of a larger and more powerful historical methodology. As a history graduate student with an extensive academic background in photography, I feel that these disciplines hold great potential for future scholarship. I personally witnessed their compatibility while participating in the Public Lands History Center’s 2018 Parks as Portals to Learning (PPL) workshop in Rocky Mountain National Park. Using repeat photos obtained during that week as case studies, I will demonstrate the methodological advantages of
photography as a scholarly tool and elaborate upon several critical limitations the medium poses for historians.

Before I delve into my work with PPI, a brief overview of the relationship between time and photography will provide useful context for later discussions on the latter’s contributions to historical study. Time is a somewhat difficult phenomenon to adequately assess, being at once a vital component of human life yet also an abstraction by its nature. We can count seconds as they go by and often dramatically speak of experiencing the ravages of time, but the concept itself is intangible and not something physical that we can view in the moment. While photographers have developed several methods by which they can render time’s passing somewhat visible and thus accessible for study, not all these strategies are equally practical for historians.

One of the most common techniques for capturing time in picture form (usually employed by artists and photo enthusiasts) is open-shutter, or long-exposure photography. Most cameras make images by rapidly opening and closing their shutters and exposing film or digital sensors to a split second of light. Long-exposure photographers leave their shutters open for much lengthier periods, often for a few seconds or minutes but occasionally for hours or even days. While basic in concept, the practice requires patience and skill (even a slight nudge to the camera can ruin a shot). If successful, however, the resulting image contains layers of information within a single frame. For example, the long exposure of car traffic in figure A illustrates photography’s ability to condense several seconds of constant motion and activity into a single contained image. This method produces perhaps the most simple and direct representations of the passage of time, but rarely provides adequate material for in-depth historical analyses regarding change and causality. Open-shutter photos are visually captivating, but their dense, often abstract aesthetics typically inhibit efforts to pinpoint the occurrence of specific historical events. Such analytical difficulties only grow as the amount of time captured by the camera increases.

Rather than encapsulate an entire duration of time within a single picture, historians may find greater practicality in the field of comparative photography. Multiple pictures of the same subject at different periods may lack the simplicity and unity offered by open-shutter methods, but they do allow observers to identify
instances of change more easily. Comparative photography has several related but distinct forms of practice, with the most prominent being before-and-after series. Art historians Kate Palmer Albers and Jordan Bear discuss this technique and its alternatives at length in the introductory essay of their comprehensive anthology collection *Before-and-After Photography: Histories and Contexts*. Standard before-and-after photography simply compares a set of two sequential pictures in order to highlight the presence of a change in the temporal gap between them, thereby “inscrib[ing] and interrogat[ing] the conventions of cause and effect, development and degeneration, and referent and representation.” The differences between the two photos should, in principle, render the temporal occurrence of some action or alteration visually perceptible (albeit in a less direct manner than with open-shutter photography).

Although fascinating in their general observations on causality, ordinary before-and-after pictures do not necessarily guarantee particularly deep analyses of history. The related field of repeat
imagery offers a much richer set of possibilities. Put simply, repeat photography (or rephotography) “monitors change via two or more images taken in the same spot over time,” typically through visible alterations in the natural landscape.\(^3\) Although very similar to before-and-after techniques, rephotography usually operates with a somewhat looser methodological framework. Focusing on *multiple* changes over a less strictly defined (and often open-ended) amount of time, repeat photo collections frequently end up comprising far more than just the standard single pair of images. Rephotography holds a favorable position in scientific fields, particularly for its usefulness in climatological and glacial studies, but it has an inherent historic element as well. As Albers and Bear clarify, this technique examines landscapes with a specific interest in monitoring human developments and draws upon old or archival photos to use as source images. Such reliance on historically-produced imagery suggests that “[r]ephotography is not typically an intention from the outset, but rather becomes one in looking back to examine a subject that has, for one reason or another, gained historical or cultural interest.”\(^4\)

Viewing numerous images of the same space over a long time exposes the effects of change but also illuminates continuities. Historical narratives hinge on this dynamic between constancy and flux. The link becomes more evident and finely tuned as one continually gathers repeat photographs of a particular area, allowing observers to analyze subtle details in the unfolding story of cause and effect.\(^5\) Such qualities proliferate even within more unorthodox variants of repeat photography. For example, the digital map program Google Earth enables users to view archives of historic satellite imagery by using an adjustable time slider feature.\(^6\) The extremely wide geographic and temporal scope of Google Earth can produce uniquely powerful narratives, especially when analyzing locations which have experienced increased human settlement or urban development. For example, a simple comparison between repeat satellite images of Rocky Mountain National Park’s Beaver Meadows Visitor Center (figures B and C) reveals several possible narratives concerning the expansion of park infrastructure.\(^7\) While Google Earth photos exhibit the basic potential of rephotography for historical study (and also offer the general public a free, easy way to experiment with the method), they generally lack the compositional versatility, fine
visual detail, and creative control offered by the more traditional on-the-ground techniques employed during PPL.

**Using Repeat Photography to Practice History in Rocky Mountain National Park**

Throughout the week of August 6, 2018, the Public Lands History Center held its annual Parks as Portals to Learning workshop in Rocky Mountain National Park. A small group of graduate students, recent undergraduates, history teachers, and professors convened to assist the park in addressing its seemingly paradoxical mission statement. Issued in conjunction with the creation of the National Park Service in the Organic Act of 1916, the statement called for national parks “to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the
The contradictory obligation to provide access and comfort to growing numbers of visitors while simultaneously preserving delicate natural and cultural resources has troubled Rocky Mountain National Park since opening day and continues to confound park administration. Using the park’s multiple historic visitor centers as focal points, the PPL team employed repeat photography (in conjunction with archival research) to assess the extent to which long-term preservation policies succeeded in balancing resource protection with visitor accommodation. After studying their results, the team was able to provide park staff with additional observations and recommendations on how to use repeat photography to address future challenges and educate the public.
Each of the visitor centers examined during PPL proved ideal as a site for studying the historical implementations of the park’s mission. They all served as gathering points and rest stops for guests, yet also exhibited different aspects of various preservation plans. Comparisons between historic photographs from Rocky Mountain National Park’s distant past and our modern-day repeat images rendered the effects of the park’s long-term strategies suddenly visible and highlighted the complex ways in which the mission statement was pursued over time. Each of PPL’s sets of repeat photographs unveiled hidden narratives of change and continuity in the landscape, though they also possessed certain ambiguities which required careful analysis. The PPL historians ultimately studied three of Rocky Mountain National Park’s five visitor centers during the week: Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, Alpine Visitor Center, and the Moraine Park Discovery Center. I will examine repeat photographs from the latter two sites to demonstrate the strengths (and limitations) of this medium as a tool for historical practice.

**Moraine Park Discovery Center (Figures 9 and 10)**

The Moraine Park Discovery Center is the oldest of Rocky Mountain National Park’s visitor centers, though the building did not always serve that purpose. Completed in 1923 and operated by Imogene MacPherson, Moraine Lodge functioned as a popular, independently owned resort for visitors until the park purchased the property in 1931. The lodge reopened as a museum in the late 1930s and continues to serve as a hub for visitors today. The surrounding Moraine Park region provides many opportunities to study the applications and impacts of the NPS mission statement. The valley has long enjoyed a reputation as one of the most popular destinations in Rocky Mountain National Park, and the Discovery Center and its environs have witnessed the implementations of numerous policies geared toward ensuring pleasant visitor experiences and restoring the surrounding wetland ecosystem.

When the PPL team shot repeat photographs of the Moraine Park Discovery Center, the resulting pictures revealed several underlying narratives of change imbued across the landscape. Team members used these findings as evidence to gauge how Rocky Mountain National Park historically attempted to fulfill its mission, and ultimately concluded that the site was an effective exam-
ple of successful natural resource preservation (particularly regarding the park’s efforts to combat elk overgrazing). These qualities, however, also obscured the significance of the area’s cultural resources. While our photographs did show some evidence of the park’s efforts to improve visitor accessibility, renewed attention to the Moraine Park area’s fascinating cultural history could potentially bolster the overall guest experience. Rephotography helped the team achieve its goal of identifying certain strengths and weaknesses in Rocky Mountain National Park’s mission pursuits, but a close and critical look at the images themselves elucidates their specific value to the historian’s practice.

Moraine Park Discovery Center appeared in numerous historic photographs over the years, but the picture that the PPL team chose to use as its base possessed more research potential than most of the other available options due to its age and compositional complexity. Figure 9 was shot in 1925 and was the oldest image used in this entire project. How did the passage of ninety-three years affect the Moraine Park region, and what changes and continuities would repeat photography bring to the forefront? The original image depicts the lodge when MacPherson still operated it as a visitor getaway. During this time the Moraine Valley underwent extensive commercial development and contained multiple ranches, hotels, and even a golf course. Several indications of this type of cultivation appear throughout the photo, such as the cabins and outbuildings in the background and the extensive roadwork and street infrastructure sprawling across the landscape.

Figure 10, the 2018 re-creation of the earlier photo, reveals a scene radically different from the one in 1925. Although a modern parking lot is dimly visible in the background, nature appears to have reasserted itself across the location. In the 1930s, Rocky Mountain National Park gradually purchased all the land around Moraine Lodge and demolished the existing structures in an effort to “safeguard the general public interest in the protection for all time of the landscape of this wonderfully beautiful park approach,” but the specific legacies of that plan became most immediately evident in the photographic comparison. For example, the replacement of the original photo’s built-up street intersection and the adjacent horse grazing area with a conspicuous line of tall and mature trees prompts historical inquiries into the extent and chronology of deliberate reforestation in those areas. The few
continuities between the images, such as the road in the extreme foreground and the lodge itself, hint at existing counternarratives to the park’s long-running campaign to “re-naturalize” Moraine Park. All these observations compel historians to gather additional resources in order to flesh out the historical context, but the direction of this subsequent research always rests upon the foundations initially provided by repeat photography.

Photographic media contain certain qualities that give them great powers of credibility. The immediacy of a visual image provides an apparent clarity that seems to completely bypass the interpretive ambiguities of written texts. This transparency is key to helping repeat sequences concretize previously intangible phenomena, like the long-term reforestation narratives of Moraine Park. While the revelations and questions sparked by these repeat images offer great potential for further historical analysis, scholars still ought to remain skeptical of photography’s supposed authority on truth and interrogate photos as rigorously as they would any other type of source. The complex chemical (or digital) processes involved in creating photographs often tend to confer a veneer of scientific legitimacy upon them, a perception compounded by the realistic visual approximations of the resulting pictures. By contrast, nonphotographic images frequently garner skepticism since, as philosopher Scott Walden explained in his 2012 article “Photography and Knowledge,” painters can “easily fail to notice visible features in the scene that they are depicting [and] ... can easily add features to their pictures that have no analogues in the depicted scene” in ways that photography does not readily permit.¹¹ From the most impressionistic compositions to the most lifelike landscape paintings, all the information that ends up on the canvas does so because the painter chose to reveal it (if he or she noticed it at all).

Although photographs often appear more objectively “real” than other forms of visual media, they likewise possess certain epistemic challenges regarding what information the viewer can access. The medium obviously must provide a significantly accurate reconstruction of the outer world, or it would lose much of its analytical integrity, but its potential for misdirection warrants serious attention. Despite their visual realism, photographs are not direct and absolute correlates of the external world in the fullest possible sense. For instance, the very act of composing a shot auto-
matically excludes the viewer from any environmental content located just beyond the camera’s eye. In the 1925 photo of Moraine Park, the off-screen areas to the left of the frame once contained the bulk of the valley’s commercial properties. Although figure 9 depicts a portion of that site by showing a few cabins and outbuildings, the viewer never sees the full extent of human development in the valley. That same exclusion can also distort interpretations of change in the modern reshoot. The 2018 repeat photo implies that the landscape largely returned to a state of “wilderness” in the intervening years (if one ignores the presence of the parking lot, of course). The areas outside the frame, however, hide critical details that complicate this narrative. A functional cabin (contemporaneous with Moraine Lodge) sits immediately behind the photo shoot location, and the wetlands to the left of the frame contain large fenced zones, indicating intentionality and human involvement in restoration efforts.

The necessity to frame a shot invariably imposes certain limitations on one’s ability to accurately analyze an image. Some photographers, understanding the uncritical authority commonly given to their craft, use the finite space of the camera eye to intentionally mislead their audiences. In his study on nature conservation in the national parks of East Africa’s Great Rift Valley, historian Chris Conte observed that National Geographic photographers often selectively composed their shots of the local landscapes in ways that pushed a narrative of threats to park wildlife. These decisions also deliberately downplayed the region’s long history of human habitation, since “people producing a living in [the] parks [did] not fit the iconic imagery, so farmers and fishermen [were] removed from the frame [emphasis mine].” These intentional photographic misrepresentations did not just fuel ongoing social tensions within the parks of the Great Rift Valley; they also pose obvious challenges to historians who wish to use the pictures as source materials. Those of us in PPL had little reason to suspect the original creators of our base photos had framed their images for explicitly duplicitous purposes (nor did we try to similarly mislead viewers with our own reproductions), but scholars ought to stay mindful of photography’s potential for willful misdirection.

The confined and partial view of the landscape imposed in figures 9 and 10 may obscure critical information regarding the full extent and variety of historical change running through Moraine
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Park, but it presents only one of several challenges for historians. Like most of the PPL team’s source pictures, numerous important contextual details regarding the 1925 image are unknown. The National Register of Historic Places only provides a rough shooting date for the photo and a vague description of some of the background buildings.\textsuperscript{13} The quality of the film grain, the style of the automobile in the midground, and the conformity of the landscape to descriptions given in the historical record all justify beliefs that the picture is correctly dated, but we remain unsure on many facts regarding the rest of the image’s contents. The photographer’s intentions, the reasons for the various activities on display, and even the myriad visual details obscured by the picture’s low resolution remain ambiguous. Such uncertainties are frustratingly common in rephotography. Repeat photos like those of the Moraine Park Discovery Center only provide a constrained window into the past and can thus easily mislead uninformed researchers into making false assumptions. But the medium’s powers to reveal previously unnoticed patterns and narratives nonetheless offer considerable value to historians. By maintaining a careful awareness of what repeat images subtly conceal, one can mitigate some of the pitfalls that snare wayward interpreters.

**Alpine Visitor Center Tundra/Fall River Pass (figures 5 and 6)**

The Alpine Visitor Center served as a very practical location for examining the paradoxes of the national park dilemma. The building occupies the historic Fall River Pass and enjoys a reputation as the highest visitor center in the National Park Service, sitting at a lofty elevation of 11,796 feet above sea level. Situated along Trail Ridge Road and the terminus of Old Fall River Road, visitors flock to the site in droves throughout the summer months. Perennial overcrowding places extreme strain on the region’s delicate alpine tundra, and Rocky Mountain National Park has continually pursued different strategies to minimize ecological decay while ensuring increased visitor access. The Alpine Visitor Center itself represents the most extensive effort to maintain this balance. Guests trekked to the remote Fall River Pass for decades before the park began construction on the building in 1963. The Alpine Visitor Center ultimately represented the ideals of Mission 66, the National Park Service’s decade-long modernization program, and was intended to enrich visitor experiences in the Pass’s cold and
rough environment through the construction of “a large parking lot, a viewing plaza and walkways, toilets, a water and sewer system, and [a] power plant and shelter.” Subsequent modifications to the site, such as the additions of a small medical center and a restaurant, continued to demonstrate the park’s concerns for visitor safety and comfort.

When the PPL team visited Fall River Pass, the resulting photographs revealed a slew of ways in which the park historically succeeded in managing visitation alongside preservation, especially concerning its strategies for controlling guest travel. Like the other Mission 66 visitor centers at Beaver Meadows and the Kawuneeche Valley, the Alpine Visitor Center was intended to serve as a congregation point that would dissuade guests from wandering haphazardly across the tundra. Repeat photography of the area shows how park planners gradually channeled visitor traffic to specific zones without overly restricting general movement or degrading the region’s aesthetic beauty. Comparative analyses also emphasized a few lingering obstacles to Rocky Mountain National Park’s ongoing policies, such as limited parking availability, minimal staff coverage, and a lack of multilingual information signs to inform foreign patrons. Alexandria Kearney expands upon the Alpine Visitor Center’s various guest management efforts in richer detail in chapter 4. In general, however, rephotography of the Alpine Visitor Center and its surrounding environs illuminated the nuanced successes of Rocky Mountain National Park in honoring its obligations to its core mission.

Several of the methodological advantages observed in the repeat photographs of the Moraine Park Discovery Center also apply to the sets generated by the PPL team at the Alpine Visitor Center. Pictures of Fall River Pass’s historic crowds allowed for intriguing cultural observations when compared with modern recreations. The PPL teams reshot multiple archival photographs at and around the Alpine Visitor Center, but a 1926 image of visitors exploring the local tundra proved especially powerful in illuminating narratives of change over time. Figure 5 appears to indicate the early popularity of Fall River Pass before the Alpine Visitor Center’s construction and shows a large group of tourists huddling together on the frozen alpine plain to enjoy the views. Although comparisons with the present-day repeat picture in figure 6 heavily emphasize the region’s drastic ecological alterations, narratives
regarding changes in visitor behavior (especially in terms of relationships between guests and the physical terrain) rise to the fore.

Crowds of people fill the landscape in both images, yet their positions throughout the space appear to indicate differing values towards conservation and the fragility of the alpine environment. Unlike the guests in the 1926 image, who clearly had to trample across the steppe in order to line up along the snowfield and its delicate ice sheets (or stand upon them, in several cases), visitors in 2018 commonly accumulated around the Alpine Visitor Center itself and closely adhered to the single defined pathway emanating outwards from it. The Alpine Ridge Trail, which skirts the edge of the hill in the midground of figure 6, sees hundreds of guests daily but is largely unmonitored by park staff and has few fences. As implied by the repeat photo, present-day guests rarely deviated from this pathway (and some even personally reprimanded us for shooting pictures on the tundra—these concerns ceased once we clarified our intentions). This reluctance to set foot on the alpine terrain seems rather unremarkable when viewed in isolation, but a photographic comparison with the same scene from over ninety years prior underscores the significance of this change in attitude and prompts questions regarding its history. In rendering these dilemmas legible, the photographs open room for discussion on the legitimate long-term cultural and behavioral influences of the park’s various preservation plans.

As with the case of the Moraine Park Discovery Center, repeat images used to study the Alpine Visitor Center also demonstrate the hurdles that ambiguity and contextual silence pose to historical interpretation. Again, little concrete data exists about the original photo other than its approximate date, and the confines of the camera eye likewise frustrate attempts at wide-scale analysis. While shooting a repeat photo onsite can provide some helpful knowledge regarding the environmental elements excluded from the framing of the original shot, it does little to answer more qualitative questions of historical context. Figure 5’s lack of definitive background information presents a major obstacle for scholars hoping to trace the cultural narratives mentioned above and leaves open the possibility that the event it depicts was not indicative of normal conditions at Fall River Pass. Barring more information, we cannot easily know if historic crowds commonly stood upon the tundra or if this was simply a special occasion. The very
presence of human beings at all raises certain concerns for scholars using photographs to analyze real-world events (would our historical interpretations change if we discovered that the 1926 photograph was a deliberately staged event instead of a candid snapshot?). The creators of archival pictures had their own agendas and reasons for shooting, reasons which rarely (if ever) synced with the aims and intentions of rephotographers. Such a paucity of contextual data could potentially distort comparative interpretations of repeat photos depicting modern-day crowds. Therefore, scholars must remain cognizant of the potential biases and misleading factors inherent in rephotography as they would with any other historical source.

While comparisons between figures 5 and 6 deftly illuminate historical narratives regarding shifts in visitor behavior and movement, the massive alterations to the tundra’s ice sheets offer an additional cautionary point for historians to keep in mind when working with this medium. The temporal gap between images gives rephotography its power to render change over time more legible, but it also highlights some of the technique’s unavoidable shortcomings. Generally speaking, the alterations indicated in a repeat photo comparison do not necessarily account for every instance of historical change in a given location, only the ones which have remained visible to the current day. In theory, many events could have occurred and vanished without a trace in the time between the creation of an original picture and its repeat. Historians typically (and ideally) compensate for these unfortunate information gaps by gathering the missing contextual data from archival sources.

While repeat photographs of Fall River Pass indicate an obvious reduction in the size of the tundra’s snowfield over the previous ninety-two years, they do not hint at some of the more complex climate change processes which affected local ice coverage during that time. When shooting at the Alpine Visitor Center, we discussed the problem of snowmelt with Cynthia Langguth, an interpretive ranger at the site. According to Langguth, the once-permanent snowfield had completely melted in 2003, though it returned (in a diminished state) over the following years. This example does not just demonstrate the benefits of conducting research on-site; it also shows why historians should always try to supplement photographic findings with other forms of historical evidence. Our
repeat photos did not indicate how the Fall River Pass snowfield fluctuated and disappeared over time and could potentially mislead an interpreter to oversimplify historical analyses of the ice melt.

When employing repeat photography as one device in conjunction with other research tools, historians lessen the probability that they will unintentionally distort the narratives they draw from the images. That said, the great rhetorical power of the medium does lie open to abuse and can pose legitimate threats to academic integrity if misused. In their essay “Beyond Images of Melting Ice,” environmental repeat photographer Rodney Garrard and history professor Mark Carey warn of how rephotography can present a deliberately oversimplified or misconstrued historical narrative. Using sequential series of glacier photographs as their example, they argue that manipulation of shocking images of rapid glacial decay can lead viewers to ignore or misunderstand other concurrent narratives, like the complicated social impacts of ice melt and ecological change on local mountain communities. The emotional potency of such imagery can easily allow for interpreters to emphasize a thoroughly declensionist narrative centered “solely on loss and apocalyptic perspectives [to] mislead the public about the roots of glacier- and climate-related hazards.” The same qualities which enable repeat photography to render processes of change so apparent to scholars can also potentially misguide less well-informed public audiences, much like Chris Conte’s example of selective framing. As historians, we must understand the ways in which our photographic sources can deceive us and remember to treat them with proper scrutiny. At the same time, we also have an obligation to interpret and share these sources responsibly.

Repeat Photography as a Historical Tool
The images captured during *ppl* demonstrate the great potential of photography (specifically repeat photography) as a tool in the historian’s arsenal. The power of this intensely visual medium to render the effects of time immediately legible and add dimensions of tangibility to otherwise impalpable concepts can lead historians to ask new questions and pursue narratives which had previously gone unnoticed. This craft comes with several caveats, but a combination of disciplined awareness regarding the medium’s epistemic limitations with historians’ specialized skills in analysis...
and archival research can enable one to avoid these hurdles and employ repeat photography to its full historical potential. If used properly, it can also significantly sharpen one’s methodology for studying history in a broader sense. These scholarly benefits do not limit themselves to the university level; Kurt Knierim’s fascinating pedagogical analysis of rephotography in chapter 7 indicates the medium’s capacity for teaching relatively inexperienced high school students how to effectively conduct history.

As an aside, a historian does not necessarily need to participate in the literal act of creating repeat pictures in order to incorporate them into his or her standard scholarly practice. One can effectively compare old and new photos to study a location’s history without ever having personally visited that place. Regardless, the act of physically immersing oneself in the actual onsite environment does ultimately allow for a more intimate and thorough understanding of the terrain’s spatial layout. Furthermore, the challenge of perfectly replicating a historic image often forces one to study the surrounding areas more closely than would be necessary (or possible) when merely comparing photographs in isolation. Original photographers rarely intended for others to replicate their work, and thus left few hints regarding the specific details of their shooting locations (and much less about their camera settings). As such, in order to obtain a significantly similar shot, repeat photographers (and historians) must deeply familiarize themselves with landscapes, noting their idiosyncrasies and accounting for alterations in their terrains. Although painstaking, this process results in a much richer awareness of the environmental nuances both inside and outside the frame of the camera. By attempting to step into the shoes of the historic photographer, historians also often end up engaging in comparative analysis long before they sit down to study the changes and continuities in their printed shots.

Taking part in the shooting process also confers a degree of experiential knowledge upon the participating historian that compliments one’s archival research. Personal observations and direct onsite experiences can provide a scholar with critical information that might not be easily obtained elsewhere. As I trekked across the mountains and tundra around the Alpine Visitor Center in search of shooting spots, I made several observations that I would have likely overlooked had I never visited the site. Movements of alpine wildlife, unsolicited visitor commentaries, and the constant
impact of Fall River Pass’s harsh environmental conditions on the body influenced my search for narratives of change and continuity. Although information on such nuanced details might also exist in the park’s archives, my onsite presence enabled me to directly acquire that knowledge and immediately apply it to photographic analyses.

While the physical act of repeat photography may encourage historians to stop cloistering themselves away and go conduct crucial onsite research, the medium allows us to expand and enrich our applications of the historical method itself. Seeking and explaining the meanings behind change (or the lack thereof) is the special purview of historians. As we explore the past through documents and texts, we constantly look for evidence of how different forces have set history into motion. While surface-level transitions (i.e., immediate alterations: the fencing off of an area, the planting of a tree, etc.) are easily noticed without much effort, understanding the meanings inherent in deep structural changes (the long-term, multivariate consequences of those surface alterations and any subsequent developments related to them) requires much greater analytical skill. Repeat photography’s ability to immediately expose the physical changes wrought by certain actions through comparisons between the past and present gives the methodology an obvious historical appeal. The medium’s capacity for legibility, however, extends to more intangible realms. Repeat images of a natural area which had been placed under a long-term preservation plan can give visual life to this otherwise abstract concept, making the management strategy and its consequent impacts at once visible and measurable.17

Although rephotography has traditionally catered to scientific scholars seeking to observe changes in the natural world, historians can find considerable value in its ability to highlight shifts and trends in the cultural landscape as well. As Kylee Cole and Dillon Maxwell expertly point out in chapter 3, the medium has powerful interdisciplinary applications for cultural resource management and the monitoring of historic structures, but it also offers key insights into more personal interactions. The common association of repeat photographs with natural phenomena like glaciers and sea levels often obscures their potential for highlighting changes within human beings. If a historic photograph contains people interacting with each other or with the surrounding terrain, a side-
by-side comparison with a repeated image from a later date can allow for nuanced commentary on possible changes or consistencies in behaviors, fashions, values, customs, and more. As the results from PPL demonstrate, the ability of repeat photography to help one view the passage and effects of time does not necessarily mean that it will also render the *significance* of such changes equally apparent. Historians must still place their findings within an accompanying historical framework. As powerful as it is, rephotography functions best as a component in a larger analytical methodology; one should never mistake it for the historical methodology itself.
Trails point backward. Journalist and thru-hiker Robert Moor, author of *On Trails: An Exploration*, argues that trails are a result of people’s attempts over time to find a sufficient way of navigating the physical landscape. While the words “trail” and “path” are often used interchangeably, there is a subtle difference between the two. Moor describes this difference best when he says, “[T]he importance of this distinction becomes paramount when you consider the prospect of lying down in the path of a charging elephant versus lying down in its trail.” I will explore the difference between a trail and a path to address concerns of visitation in the park. Following trails backward reveals how those who came before us shaped our world.

For me, visiting Rocky Mountain National Park is a spiritual experience. During my first encounter with it, I was an Iowa kid on family vacation. Feeling a tad claustrophobic in our old Chevy Tahoe as it wound up the Big Thompson Canyon, I clutched my teal Game Boy Color to reduce that feeling of unease. Then my mom and dad said, “Look,” and through the bug-covered windshield, I saw Longs Peak glistening in the sky. Though I had not yet heard John Muir’s famous quote, that day I came to understand the meaning behind the words “The mountains are calling and I must go.”

As the CSU van pattered up the Big Thompson Canyon on the first day of PPL in August 2018, I again found myself nervous. This time it was not the vertical canyon walls that unsettled me, but rather the work to take place in the week to come. PPL served as my first foray into graduate school. As the incoming PRSE (Programs of Research and Scholarly Excellence) research fellow for the Public Lands History Center, I had the opportunity to join a formidable group of second-year graduate students and recent CSU graduates. I came into the week unsure of what I was about to
experience. Ultimately, I was able to put my past experience to use and learn what it means to be a historian and a team player, and of course I also learned a little about myself.

My “trail eyes” came alive when we did fieldwork at the Alpine Visitor Center on the third day of PPL. To use “trail eyes” means to identify the subtle nuances of a trail, such as its insufficient width and the impact of erosion and—most importantly—hikers on its tread. At the top of the world, we attempted to re-create some shots of Alpine Visitor Center from above and interacted with park staff and visitors. One of the first things that caught my eye at Alpine Visitor Center was the trail—or, better put, the path that leads from the Alpine Visitor Center parking lot to the point of highest elevation nearby. Its gorgeous stone steps are the straightest way to the top. In the photo we re-created in figures 5 and 6, visitors can be seen on or near this path. This should be unsurprising; humans, and animals in general, are adept at creating the path of least resistance. The photos show this event at two places in time. What photos cannot show is this process in time.

It is my opinion that the alpine trail we photographed is transitioning from a trail to a path. Indeed, such a transition is happening on a broader scale in the way staff and visitors move throughout the entire physical landscape of Rocky Mountain National Park. As noted earlier, the difference between a trail and a path is one of direction: trails point backward, and paths point forward. A road is a path; it tells you where to go and how to go about it. The dead patch of grass on the campus lawn, flattened by college students walking across it, is a trail. The movement of people tells the trail where to go. The difference between the two is subtle. If the point of a trail is to find the easiest route, then it makes sense to transform a trail into a path, which typically improves the speed and safety of moving throughout the landscape.

The tension between trails and paths can be seen all around Rocky Mountain National Park. On Trail Ridge Road, visitors have created their own pullouts, making trails, and park staff have blocked them, reinforcing existing paths. Backcountry hikers who cut around a muddy section of a path create a trail in the process, but the trail crew who install dead logs to keep hikers on the tread the next season make and maintain a path. Both of these examples,
at least to me, mark a victory for the path and the National Park Service: Visitors still experience the natural splendor of the park, and the staff uphold the mission to protect its natural resources. Recent massive increases in visitation, however, reveal the limitations of Rocky Mountain National Park’s paths. National park budget restrictions, combined with the reality that only so much of a park’s landscape can be sacrificed for visitation needs, mean there can be no further development of paths for motor traffic, the most utilized avenue of exploring Rocky Mountain National Park.

Although our repeat photography efforts were not focused on the roads of Rocky Mountain National Park, I believe the park’s two main roads, Trail Ridge Road and Old Fall River Road, best illustrate the difference—and transition—between its trails and paths. They also demonstrate pitfalls in path building.

**Old Fall River Road: Trail Building**

The initial road and trail infrastructure in what would become, in 1915, Rocky Mountain National Park was rough. The trails and roads that did exist were built primarily for protecting the forests from fires rather than for visitor travel and recreation. Calls for a new road led to the construction of Fall River Road (now called Old Fall River Road), whose total route would not be decided until much later in its construction. The route chosen for the first several miles followed a hunting trail trappers originally thought was a game trail; it was in fact a Native American trail, which the Arapaho called “Dog Trail.” The utilization of old Native American trails is especially common on federal lands. Prior to Fall River Road beginning construction, the Forest Service changed the old Arapaho trail to more western uses of trapping, hunting, and fire prevention.

Fall River Road began construction in 1913 with the help of convict labor funded by the state—funding the state threatened to cut if Larimer County refused to send the men up to Estes Park from the Poudre Canyon. The workers began construction late that summer and worked into December with “[f]ive men being used to keep the roads open and the others . . . blasting rock and building a wall of the broken granite.” While steam shovels may have been used, the majority of the work was completed with horses and mules. But the true workhorses in carving out the road were
men with shovels. Workers labored to scrape dirt and rock little by little, bending their backs monotonously to move the material and enduring the pokes and stabs of pick-mattocks; they strained their shoulders with augers that could pop a labrum out of place with each grinding twist into granite and dirt. Work continued slowly over the next couple of years, but spending restrictions related to the United States’ involvement in World War I stalled the construction of the road until 1918, when work resumed. Pressure in 1918 and 1919 to finish the road led to increased funding and manpower, with two gangs of laborers working on either end of the road. No workers were convicts at this point, possibly because construction companies and their workers earned decent salaries working on such a project. Although the road was not officially completed until 1920, visitors were still able to travel up it (to the location of the present-day Alpine Visitor Center) during construction.

Reading about the building of Fall River Road reminds me of my own experience as a trail builder, though of course I wasn’t a member of a *Cool Hand Luke*–style chain gang. Whether building a trail or path, the goal is for the work to remain unseen. The Rocky Mountain National Park website comments, “Although most visitors use the park’s trail system, few notice the trails themselves. This would no doubt please the generations of Rocky’s trail builders. Their goal was for trails to disappear into the sublime landscape.”

Despite wide praise and the attraction of a large host of new visitors to Rocky Mountain National Park and its neighboring communities of Grand Lake and Estes Park, park staff and interested parties immediately looked to add another road similar to Fall River. Fall River Road “suffered from a variety of shortcomings,” comments historian Jerry Frank. “The road was not designed with the same sensitivities to vistas . . . its engineers built many sections too steep, and several of its switchback corners required maneuvering.” Indeed, the new road had dangers in the form of gravel, narrow corridors, and steep drop-offs to certain death. In 1918, while the road was under construction, a family of four and their minister friend ventured up the path. Suddenly, a rock appeared from nowhere in the middle of the road, causing the driver to swerve off the edge. The car smashed into several lodgepole pines, killing the driver’s two sons, wife, and friend.
He survived because he was ejected upon impact.\textsuperscript{10} Preventing accidents such as this is one benefit of solidifying trails into paths.

**Trail Ridge Road: Path Building**

Following our field day at Alpine Visitor Center, where we took our repeat photographs, we jumped back into the squeaky van and headed down Trail Ridge Road. Although I was both sleep-deprived and oxygen-deprived at this point, I began to think about the relationship between the changes in our repeat photographs taken at Alpine Visitor Center and Trail Ridge Road. Did Trail Ridge Road begin like the trail at Alpine Visitor Center, as a “social trail” that was turned into a path to keep people from stepping on the fragile ecosystem? Or was it surveyed, designed, and built from scratch by park staff?

Trail Ridge Road is a trail that has become something of a path. Its first goal is to provide visitors of Rocky Mountain National Park a view of splendid peaks and fragile alpine tundra. The second goal is to move visitors through the park more efficiently, from one end to the other. Both of these goals make it a path. The first goal makes the road itself a destination and experience. It also changed the purpose of Alpine Visitor Center: what was once a destination that represented the epitome of natural wonder is now primarily a turnstile. While still beautiful, it caters to visitors’ other travel desires and needs by providing bathrooms, food, medical staff, and interpretation. On Trail Ridge Road, visitors move forward: forward to Rainbow Curve, forward to the alpine tundra, forward to Alpine Visitor Center, and forward to the next stop when Alpine Visitor Center’s parking lot is inevitably full. In other words, Trail Ridge Road is such a good trail that it has become a path; it takes visitors where they want to go relatively quickly. But what is lost in Trail Ridge Road’s efficiency and utility is the contemplation a trail brings, along with the ability to change when needed.

Trail Ridge Road began like a trail would. It responded to what both builders and travelers wanted: to safely reach the beauty offered by the highest elevations of Rocky Mountain National Park. Collective knowledge of Fall River Road’s navigational challenges—it was hard to maintain and hard to travel quickly, let alone safely—and longing for more vibrant vistas of Rocky Mountain National Park led to the construction of Trail Ridge Road. This new and improved trail began at Deer Ridge and ascended to the
Continental Divide, which provided stunning views on both sides of the road. In addition to its aesthetic value, Trail Ridge Road would also climb no grades steeper than 5 percent and negotiate no dangerous hairpin turns, all the while being easily wide enough for two-way traffic. It also provided a smoother surface.

Despite these “shortcomings,” many park officials were pleased with Fall River Road while still wanting a new avenue. On a visit to Rocky Mountain National Park in the summer of 1921, Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall found himself “greatly pleased” with Fall River Road but supported the new proposed route, which was to be named Trail Ridge Road. “The value of Trail Ridge Road,” he said, “aside from its scenic value, lies in the fact that the cost of construction will only be a fraction of that of the Fall River Road and it will run along the top of the watershed, thus being easy to keep open and the upkeep will be very slight since it will not be subjected to such volumes of water due to rains above the melting snow.”

It took crews only a little over two years to reach this goal, and visitors to the park could “pass thru [sic] primeval territory where man has never yet traversed. Peaks from 12,000 to 14,000 feet high are in constant view. Iceberg Lake, where ice is caked all summer long, will be in view. . . . The new road will be of very easy grade used by the Ute Indians before the coming of the White Men.” Finishing the route from where Trail Ridge and Fall River met up proved a more challenging and longer process, mostly due to the massive switchback required on the north side of the pass. Trail Ridge Road completed construction in 1938, linking Estes Park with Grand Lake via a stunning road that featured breathtaking views and a smooth surface without steep grades and hairpin turns.

In a bit of irony, the National Park Service proclaimed the building of Fall River and Trail Ridge roads as enabling vacationers to go “where man has not yet traversed,” while also acknowledging that the new roads followed Native American routes that were centuries old. This demonstrates how the National Park Service relegated Native American history to an advertisement opportunity for the national park and associated tourist businesses. This neglect of Native Americans’ impact on the landscape is not specific to Rocky Mountain National Park. In his study on Navajo trails in Canyon de Chelly in Arizona, historian Stephen C. Jett states,
“Trails were fundamental to premodern transport and remain so in many parts of the world, including in the Navajo Country. Yet, they seem so simple and obvious that little attention has been paid to the specifics of their landscape expression.”

This rejection of the contributions of Native American groups, who called Rocky Mountain National Park home long before Euro-Americans arrived in Estes Park, is a contributing factor to the path mentality. Luckily, three Arapahos were able to return to the area and record their wisdom concerning the trails.

“Old Indian Warriors Show Pale Faces”

The three Arapahos ventured to Estes Park in 1914 at the request of locals to index their place names upon the land. Gun Griswold, seventy-three, and Sherman Sage, sixty-three, were to provide the knowledge while Tom Crispin, a much younger man, served as the group’s translator. Much of the group’s movement throughout the park took place on foot and by mules so they could move quickly and see as much of the land as possible. The most obvious indicators of the Native American trails were “monuments,” piles of stones to mark the route. Oliver Toll, who recorded the expedition, writes that “in following a trail, the Arapahos passed to the same side of all the monuments on the trail. As they passed, it was customary for everyone to put a rock on the monument, and if there were children in the party they would say, ‘May this child live as long as this rock lasts.’”

The opening line of the section “Indian Trails” in *Arapaho Names and Trails* states, “The whole country was covered with Indian trails.” It would be better to say that the whole country is covered with Native American trails. *Was* signifies an end; it suggests that the Native American trails offered no aid in the construction of the current and new trails and roads in the area. Both Trail Ridge and Fall River roads owe a great deal of their former and current routes to native knowledge. “Child’s Trail,” or “Where the Children Walked,” was the Arapaho name for Trail Ridge, so called because the route’s steep grade forced children to abandon their horses or mules and walk. Unlike Toll, who placed the Native Americans’ contribution to Rocky Mountain National Park’s trails in the past, the Arapahos’ monument tradition illustrates their commitment to acknowledging what others contributed to the trail before them as well as understanding their role in a continuous process.
No mention in Oliver Toll’s *Arapaho Names and Trails* includes the work being done on Fall River Road. What did the Native American elders think about the construction of the road? Had they seen the work being done firsthand? Would they have lamented the fact that the same Stanley Steamer cars that brought them into town would soon ascend the steep grades of “Dog Trail”? Or were they perhaps more interested in the prisoners toiling in the July sun?

**Rocky’s Path Today and a Return to the Alpine Trail**

Listening to park staff, I felt uneasy about the future of the park, particularly the massive rise in visitation over the past several years. When does visitation hit a critical mass? Fall River and Trail Ridge Roads cater to a visitation pattern that has been effective for many years. If you view Trail Ridge Road as the pinnacle of movement through Rocky Mountain National Park, then the future is bleak indeed.

Returning to the top of the world and the trail (or should I say path?) that takes you to the top, I find peace. Because if I look down—not at the parking lot, or the traffic jam on Trail Ridge Road, or the line at the bathroom, but down at the path itself, natural yet man-made—I can see a trail forming once again. At the end of the day, the only difference between a trail and a path is imagination and a willingness to try something new, even if it’s an old idea. The balancing act between preservation and visitation, as discussed earlier, is exemplified in Trail Ridge and Fall River roads. The park service has acquiesced to visitors’ wants for better and easier access. The trail-building solution to Rocky Mountain National Park’s visitation issues is to look for new ideas in a return to an older understanding of trails.
“Teachers are the best thieves,” I tell the young secondary-level social studies teachers I mentor as they are inundated day after day with empty lesson books staring back at them their first few years in the classroom. “Take inspiration from those things around you.” It was with great enthusiasm that I took a bit of my own advice during the summer of 2018. I was asked to attend the Parks as Portals to Learning (PPL) week at Rocky Mountain National Park with professors, graduate students, and recent undergraduates from Colorado State University. During this remarkable time I was able to abscond with a wealth of lesson ideas for my high school United States history classroom at Rocky Mountain High School in Fort Collins, Colorado. Not only did I come away with some wonderful lesson ideas, but I was able to aid in the development of a plan to blend high school students directly into the PPL program moving forward.

This chapter will focus on two extensions from the 2018 PPL week: primarily, how I infused the rephotography project into my high school United States history classes in order to introduce students to the skills of the historian, and more briefly how the Public Lands History Center at Colorado State University will begin to fulfill the original vision of the Parks as Portals to Learning program by incorporating high school students in a tiered mentoring program during the summer of 2019.

As I headed into the Parks as Portals to Learning week in August of 2018, I was not at all certain what my role with the project would entail. I knew the administrative staff from the university but had not met the student participants or the park personnel who would work with us during the week. I knew that my charge was to observe and assess the feasibility of incorporating high school students into the project. Beyond that was a *tabula rasa*. This flexibility gave me the opportunity to get to know the participants, and, as a result, I was better able to see how they worked.
I was drawn to the ways in which the participants went about their evaluative tasks during the week and what sorts of outcomes would ensue. I was interested to see what sort of roadblocks these participants would face and how they would work to resolve these challenges in unique ways. As the week progressed, I began asking more questions in order to get a sense of how participants were using historical skills to interpret what they were finding with the rephotography project.¹ I had two goals heading into the week. I wanted to get to know the participants as well as see how high school students might be able to participate in future years. One result I had not expected was to be so inspired by the work the PPL participants were involved in that I began to look for ways to replicate this sort of project in my own classes.

As the PPL week began to take shape, I was interested to see how the participants would draw historical meaning using the medium of repeat photography. What I noticed immediately were the ways in which the work of the student researchers revolved around the historical analysis tools of context and change over time. This interested me because these are two of the skills I endeavor to introduce to the high school students I teach in my United States history course. Both in their time taking pictures in the field and in their research in the archive at Rocky Mountain National Park, participants kept an eye on how they could use the skills of the historian and translate them into something useful for the park moving forward.

Another aspect integral to the PPL week was the research conducted at the on-site archives curated by longtime NPS staff member Kelly Cahill. This collection, although not housed exclusively at the park, “currently consist[s] of 33,465 cultural objects, 294 works of art, 10,495 biological specimens, and 455 geological specimens.”² It was this archive where the two PPL teams walked through the doors and crunched over the adhesive floor mats to conduct their research. This was essential work in making historical meaning of the repeat photos. The researchers found such vital contextual information as when and why a structure was built or renovated when digging through these collections.

In addition to the wonderful research and discussions around history taking place during the PPL week, I noticed that this rather diverse group of student researchers was getting to know one another as they had to work closely together from the outset. It
interested me to see how quickly participants went from being overly polite as to avoid conflict with one another to more honestly expressing their opinions. This was not without minor disagreement at times, but all these interactions led to the groups getting to know one another much better at the end of just five days together. I also noticed that there began to be a natural division of labor as participants began to get to know each other.

There was one instance where I was accompanying a group taking pictures at the Moraine Lodge. The group was working to set up the camera to do some rephotography on a dirt road, just south of the lodge, that led up to one of the few private cabins still in the park. As the group was taking pictures, a couple who was vacationing at the private residence came walking up the road. There was a friendly exchange of greetings and, once the couple had passed, the group seemed all at once to tell one of the more outgoing participants to run up and speak further with the couple. This impressed me, as even though the group had not been working together very long, they already knew the skill sets of individuals within the group well enough that it was clear to everyone who should break from the group and engage further with the vacationing couple. This conversation proved immensely valuable to the student research team by providing both context as well as research leads in their analysis of the repeat photography project.

This combination of rapid relationship building and focus toward drawing meaning from rephotography using the skills of the historian began to merge as the week drew to a close. Perhaps the most challenging part of the week for the participants seemed to be when the fieldwork was completed and the meaning-making phase began. There was much, sometimes intense, discussion over what the groups could learn from the work they had completed. Further, there needed to be some tangible “deliverable” that the participants could present to Rocky Mountain National Park staff at the conclusion of the week. After much discussion among and between PPL groups, an interpretive vision emerged. This took the form of a holistic blending of preservation and conservation, a tension that the National Park Service has had to manage since its inception. I was intrigued by seeing all these components of historical thinking as well as relationship building come together for an eventual presentation that Rocky Mountain National Park could use to set goals and policy moving forward. Seeing these
merging dynamics gave me an idea for how to incorporate many of these same elements into my high school United States history curriculum.

One challenge that I face as a high school history teacher is how to motivate students toward a working knowledge of the analytical skills of the historian. These tools are the foundation upon which the entirety of the course rests. This presents a challenge as United States history is a required course, so not every student is eager to pick up and use the tools of history. For this introduction to the craft of historical analysis, I typically incorporate the Five Cs model of historical thinking. This model comes in part out of a Teaching American History grant through Jefferson County School District. Out of that project came an indispensable article by two historians involved in the project, Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke. The article, “What Does It Mean to Think Historically?,” outlines the basics of historical context, change over time, contingency, causality and complexity. My challenge is always to package these academic skills in a way that makes sense to and will engage sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds.

I am by no means the first teacher to face the dilemma of relevance in the classroom. In his book “Why Won’t You Just Tell Us the Answer?: Teaching Historical Thinking in Grades 7–12 Bruce Lesh outlines a similar quandary. Lesh notes that “knowledge that is not used, and used frequently, is lost.” He argues that the most effective way for students to retain information is to engage with it in interesting ways. The constant tension of thoughtful teachers is how to deliver meaningful content in thoughtful ways so that students draw meaning from it and develop a working knowledge of that content over time.

Lesh asserts that the first key to making meaning from history is to learn to ask questions. This is an increasingly daunting task as students in Colorado and around the nation have, since 2002 and to a lesser degree in 2015, been conditioned to think that regurgitation of facts through standardized tests is true learning. As this is the case, I am always in search of activities that create an atmosphere where students want to ask questions of the material presented. Proponents of standardized testing models argue that there can be no questioning without some sort of knowledge base of facts first. Charles Sellers, as well as scores of other historical-thinking proponents, takes exception to this view. Sellers
argues that “[t]he notion that students must be given facts and at some distant time in the future that they will ‘think about them’ is both a cover-up and a perversion of pedagogy.” The opposite of the “facts first” model of teaching is actually the case. I find if students can ask questions and then look for historical answers to those questions, they are actually doing history instead of just learning about it. It is when students ask questions that engaging historical inquiry begins.

Lesh points out that the next step in authentic teaching is taking those questions and testing them using historic evidence. This is where the use of Andrews and Burke’s Five Cs model and content begin to work in tandem. If students have tools of historical analysis, they can begin to use those tools to dissect primary sources and derive meaning from the material they are engaging. This is also the point where students begin to take control of their own learning. Once this barrier has been crossed, students are able to move beyond rote memorization and into more complex historical analysis. Sam Wineburg, a pioneer of cognitive theory and historical thinking, argues that providing high school students with these types of historical thinking skills allows for them to acquire an “interpretive acumen” that “go[es] well beyond the curricular borders of history.” Once students are comfortable using these tools of historical analysis, the world is opened up to them and they are able to move toward a thoughtful analysis of historical sources as well as navigating the barrage of information coming at them every day.

It is with these thoughts in mind that I began to ponder the work I had witnessed and been a part of during August of 2018 at the Parks as Portals to Learning week at Rocky Mountain National Park. During that week I witnessed so many of the skills I endeavor to impart to my high school students that I began to contemplate how I could use this sort of PPL style project to teach the skills I saw employed so vividly throughout the week in my classes. As I began to compile my notes from PPL, a project lesson idea began to emerge.

What if I could take the work of the PPL week and adapt it for the high school United States history curriculum? Where would I begin? There were so many components to what the participants in the PPL week achieved that I hardly knew where to start. To aid in taking this monumental task of adapting a rephotography project
for high school, I began by looking at what I wanted students to be able to do at the end of the process. My thinking about process here was informed by the Understanding by Design framework developed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. This framework suggests that the most effective teaching units are those which begin with the desired outcomes and work backward to develop lessons that support those eventual aims.\textsuperscript{11}

My goals with this high school project adaptation were twofold. As it was the beginning of the school year, I wanted students to get to know one another by working together. My hope was that if they got to know one another better at the outset of the course, there would be more class cohesion throughout the course and students would feel more comfortable asking questions and sharing ideas later on. I find that the more students ask questions about the material with which they are working, the more they get out of that information. The more comfortable students are with one another, the more likely they are to ask questions in class and of each other. The research bears this out. The work of Educational Psychologists Jantine Spilt, Helma Koomen, and Jochem Thijs is a case in point. These researchers applied attachment theory to student relationships in the classroom. What they found was that students who had strong relationships with their instructors as well as with their classmates had a greater sense of self-efficacy when it came to learning.\textsuperscript{12} A repeat photography project in which students get to know each other through a shared task would help to foster this capacity for learning and confidence in the classroom. I was intrigued to try this project just for the relationship building aspect of it alone, but the more I began to flesh out these ideas, the more potential this project held.

Historical thinking skills—what Thomas Andrews and Flannery Burke termed the Five Cs—are the foundation of all the history courses I teach. They are also the most challenging to teach because they require students to make meaning of what they are learning, not simply identify terms. A rephotography project is a wonderful conduit to draw students into this sort of thinking in a way that is interesting and with which they can identify. The starting point for this type of historical skill building was the historical analysis concept of change over time. If students can see change over time in the pictures with which they are working, they are more likely to identify and use it when they encounter it through
the course. Once students see change over time, they will ideally want to answer the question “Why the change?” just as the Colorado State University student researchers did at Rocky Mountain National Park.

Answering the “why” question leads to greater analysis using other historical thinking skills. The next logical step would be to add the concept of context to better explain the reasons for the changes. Sam Wineburg asserts that context provides answers to why things happen and allows for complexities and apparent contradictions to begin to be understood. Finding sources for context requires some real digging on the part of students to find relevant material for their observations. My challenge in putting together this PPL adaptation was to find readily available sources where students could glean this sort of meaningful context. Once students see change over time and have some context behind those changes, they can begin to address other historical thinking skills as well.

The remaining historical thinking skills—causality, contingency, and complexity—should begin to show themselves after change over time and context have been established. These skills all deal with the interconnectedness of multiple factors in making something happen. These are skills that, as I began to develop the project, I decided to lessen in focus. I did not make this decision because these historical analysis skills are not important, but rather I wanted the scope of the project to remain achievable. I reasoned that if I could establish a strong foundation of change over time and context, the other skills would come more easily later in the course. With the twin goals of relationship building and introducing a historical thinking skill set, I was ready to begin building the lesson.

In putting together a rephotography project for my high school students, I wanted to use sources that were both relevant and accessible to students at Rocky Mountain High School. I also knew that I had to work within the parameters of a complete United States history survey in the confines of a ninety-minute block-class five days a week that is only a semester in length. This being the case, I had to make efficient use of time in order not to cut too severely into the content of the remainder of the course. I began by perusing the archives at Rocky Mountain High School (not much more than a closet, really) and found old yearbooks as well as bound volumes of past editions of the school newspaper (the Canis Lupus). I chose to use these sources for the project as the
yearbooks contained plenty of pictures of the school building and surroundings with students in them. I chose the student newspapers because they could provide valuable context for why students are doing what they are in photographs.

I then decided to limit which yearbooks and newspapers students would be using. My parameters were based on the remodeling of the school that happened in 1995. This remodel changed the existing footprint of the school as well as added to the size of the building. I recalled that one of the challenges that the PPL participants faced at the Moraine Lodge site was that there had been an interior remodel some years previous. It was good to get to see the student researchers struggle through finding where original photos were taken and research why the changes had happened. I was interested to see how high school students would react in a similar situation. The final resource I decided to have students use—outside of the cell phones they would use to take pictures—was their school-issued laptops. I wanted them to use these to access information to fill in any gaps in context that might emerge from the limited sources of yearbooks and newspapers. With these resources in mind, I was ready to begin crafting the tasks for my new classes set to begin just a couple weeks from when I returned from my time with PPL.

The class that I piloted this project with was a United States history class. This is a required class that has a broad spectrum of students including some who have been labeled “gifted and talented” as well as students with Individual Learning Plans. It was the first period of the day, which was pretty early for many of these students who were used to a summer schedule. My first task was to sell the class on the project their first day back. I knew I could not do this alone, so I enlisted one of the PPL participants, a graduate student named Carly Boerrigter, who graciously volunteered her time to come give an overview of the PPL week at Rocky Mountain National Park. This was a fruitful way to kick off the project, as Carly came in with great enthusiasm and succinctly shared with the class a synopsis of what the PPL participants had done throughout their week at Rocky Mountain National Park.

With the presentation by Carly, students seemed interested in trying this project. My first challenge after I had the buy-in of the class was how to sort students into groups. This is always a challenge, particularly as I did not yet know the students in order to
determine who might work well in a group together. Since I was at a disadvantage, I turned to data to aid me. I had access to my students’ grades in previous courses. I decided that a heterogeneous group both in academic achievement and gender would be appropriate as my first overarching goal was to help students get to know one another. In addition to the populations within groups for the project, I also needed to decide how many students in each group would be optimum. For a guide, I went back to my observations at the PPL week. I noticed that the groups of about four participants during the week gave everyone in the group a substantive role with a minimal amount of down time for any single participant. It is for this reason as well as my not knowing exactly how many absences and no-shows I might encounter on my new roster that I too decided that four would be an optimal number. Even if one of the students in the group was not present, the group could still function smoothly and complete all the tasks I gave them in a timely fashion.

The next issue that I needed to iron out before students could begin the project was how to organize the instructions for the project so that students would understand where I wanted to take them. I began with the title Repeat Photography: History as a Story. The dual title was to give students the expectation of what they were going to be doing as well as how I wanted them to view the task that they were to accomplish. After a short introduction, I outlined the tasks students were to perform throughout the project. I had students address the following questions during their rephotography journey:

1. Get into your groups
2. Choose 3 to 4 old yearbooks from RMHS
3. Page through each yearbook together and choose two pictures that would be suitable for repeat photography
4. Once you have chosen your pictures, answer the following questions:
   a. Describe each picture you chose in detail.
   b. Explain why you chose the pictures you did.
   c. Write down as much metadata as you can find for each picture.
   d. What year were your original photos taken?
   e. What was going on in the world, US, Colorado, Fort Collins, and Rocky during this time? (old Canis Lupus newspapers can help with this).
f. Describe the process of taking your picture. What challenges did you face?

g. Why do you think that the students on yearbook staff chose to include the photos you are using?

h. What changes do you see between the original photo and today?

i. What remained the same? Why?

j. What do these changes or continuities say about Rocky Mountain High School?

k. How does this activity relate to the study of history?

In putting together these questions, I drew from my experiences observing the participants during the PPL week. As I listened in on their legion conversations, I was struck by the wide range of questions that they addressed. I wanted my high school students to see this breadth, and I crafted questions that I hoped would steer these student groups in a variety of directions. I included questions that not only had students reflect on the process of taking pictures, but to the processes and biases of the original photographs. In addition, I incorporated questions that moved students toward the beginnings of historical thinking skills.

I was generally pleased with the answers students provided for these questions. I found that some students were still getting into the routine of school after a decidedly non-academic summer break, but most gave it a good try. Many student responses for change over time and their related pictures dealt with the changes in the physical environment. The following riposte was typical of these sorts of responses:

What remained the same? Why?

In the lunchroom almost everything remained the same except the tables are different now and the trophy case is much larger, as well as there is a [TV] in there now. At the front of the school almost nothing remained the same except for the general location of the name of the school and the doors leading into the lunchroom.

What do these changes or continuities say about Rocky?

It says that Rocky is growing and expanding and the trophy case is bigger so we’re doing something right. It also shows how technology has advanced and how we now have [TVs] in the school.

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Although these sorts of responses were fairly straightforward and did not include a whole lot of analysis, they provided fodder for conversations around why these changes and continuities were significant. The excerpt above is also typical of many responses that noted the changes in technology between the original photos and today. Here is another response that noted something similar:
The library changed as there are more tables and the ceiling is higher. The newer photo has way more advanced technology with newer computers and a smart board. The walls aren’t as bland either as there are paintings decorating the wall. More students use the computers than they did back then.

Beyond these initial, rather superficial observations, I was fascinated and pleased by the student responses regarding the more interpretive aspect of the project. Specifically, I was interested in the answers provided to two questions listed above: “What do these changes or continuities say about Rocky Mountain High School?” and “How does this activity relate to the study of history?” For the former, I was surprised to see so many student observations regarding school culture. This student response is typical of the sort of school culture responses:

The piece behind the band in the picture is a taxidermied wolf in a glass case with red velvet inside and a beautiful wooden frame. Above there is a sign hanging made from the same wood, with red colored fancy letters that reads “Through these halls walk the world’s finest students, faculty, and staff.” This hasn’t changed because it remains true. Students and staff alike treat people around them with kindness and push themselves to be as best as they can. The legacy Rocky carries is revered and upheld well.

Another group had this to say:

The rotation of the wolf made us think that the doors where the wolf used to face were the front doors. The fact that Rocky still has the wolf in the same spot below the same sign . . . talks about how Rocky hold(s) the finest faculty and students shows Rocky’s dedication to the lobo spirit.

I was pleased to see that students perceive Rocky Mountain High School as a place of learning that has traditionally been a caring place. I did not expect this sort of loyalty to the school, especially on the first week back from summer recess. In terms of historical interpretation, I used these observations when I led discussions regarding how historians use material culture to make inferences about social norms. This was a fruitful discussion that allowed...
Figure c. 1991. “Two Guys Sitting at Table in the Library.”

Figure d. 2018. “Student Sitting in Library at Computer Station.”
students to reflect at greater length about why they said the things they did in the interpretive piece.

I was equally pleased with the student responses to the final question relating to how the rephotography project connected to historical interpretation. I was curious to see if students would simply view this project as something they had to do or if they were able to derive meaning from the project. The latter seemed to be the case. The student response below was typical of the types of responses submitted:

"This activity was basically exactly what historians do. Use what they know, what they see, what they can find, and whatever else around them to piece together a story and a meaning from something in the past that correlates to and affects us in the present."

This sort of response and the follow-up discussion is what I would like to see high school students glean from a course in United States history. I would like for them to be able to take the material and make relevant meaning from it. The true mark of the success of this project, however, has come from how students have approached the course in the months since the project.

In the interim between when the project launched and the end of the semester, I saw a noticeable uptick in the types and depth of
questions students have had over the subsequent material. I attribute this greater depth to the rephotography project. I know that when students feel comfortable in a class setting, they are more likely to participate actively. The time spent at the beginning of the course in groups, having students work and learn together from the start of the course, factors heavily into this. The other factor of equal import is the historical thinking that began to be developed as part of the project. The only downside I have experienced since the project is that it put me behind in terms of content delivery. This disadvantage is a small price to pay, however, in comparison to the positive benefits that the project afforded. One way to mitigate this loss of time would be to invite students to participate in the Parks as Portals to Learning program during the summer week so it does not cut into class time.

When Dr. Mark Fiege, in conjunction with National Park Service personnel Scott Esser, Ben Bobowski, and Ben Baldwin, began the PPL program in 2013, the intent was to incorporate high school students in the process. Looking ahead to 2019, this original vision will become a reality. The following is an outline of what this structure could entail.

The model developed for the incorporation of high school students into the Parks as Portals to Learning program is one we call a tiered mentoring program. This will incorporate graduate and undergraduate students from Colorado State University, and high school students from Rocky Mountain High School in Fort Collins, Colorado, as well as Berthoud High School. The intent is to give all students the opportunity to learn and perform substantive research while learning from each other. The resulting products will be presented to the staff at Rocky Mountain National Park in hopes that they will benefit from them in some way.

The structure of the tiered mentorship concept is to have each tier of student (graduate, undergraduate, and high school) learn from the tier above them, rising toward that next level by the completion of the project. Graduate students have skills in historical interpretation and historical writing that undergraduates lack. Thus, it would be conceivable that graduate students would work with undergraduates on these skills both when conducting field research as well as in the on-site archive. Similarly, undergraduates would mentor high school students in the basics of the craft of the
historian. In addition, the hope here is that at least some of the undergraduate participants would be from the social studies teaching cohort in the History Department at CSU and would be able to put into practice some of the teaching pedagogies that they have been learning in addition to historical methodologies. All students, regardless of age, will be involved in the same field and archive research. My hope is that this will facilitate the kinds of ad hoc mentoring throughout the course of the PPL week that is already happening between undergraduate and graduate students.

Another aspect of the tiered mentoring concept involves various products that will be produced for Rocky Mountain National Park. The product that a graduate student would produce would necessarily differ from that of high school student. The thinking here is that all participants will conduct similar research, but that the end products would differ based on the skill level and experience of participants. For example, graduate level research might facilitate a product that is deep in its research and contains a level of complexity that Rocky Mountain National Park can use to improve its service to the public. Less complex, but no less helpful to the park, the undergraduates and high school students might produce a series of lesson plans for teens that reflect the research they have been conducting throughout the week. Both products would have value to the park, but the products would reflect the various skill levels of the participants.

The Parks as Portals to Learning program is an invaluable part of the litany of programs offered by the Public Lands History Center at Colorado State University. It has proved itself as worthwhile to both students at CSU as well as Rocky Mountain National Park. Although not without potential challenges, I am excited about the ways in which the program is expanding beyond the walls of the university to the high school level. Both in modeling projects and lessons after the work done at RMNP and in the eventual blending of high school students directly into research, these new directions will serve to add even greater value to an already robust and enduring project.
Many outside of history as a professional discipline would assume that the historian’s work is solitary. The historian, usually imagined as bearded and tweed-jacketed, researches alone, writes alone, and stands alone at the front of a classroom. That image, however, doesn’t reflect the working environment of most historians—not in the academy and certainly not outside of it. The reality is that much of the history that is done out in the world is accomplished in teams. At Parks as Portals to Learning (PPL), participants worked as a team to accomplish our project goals for the week using repeat photography. Repeat photography provides a variety of learning opportunities for all education levels, but it also offers additional lessons for historians that have little to do with history. As a method of historic inquiry, repeat photography demanded that we collaborate with others in order to use our time at the park efficiently. Although none of us were new to group work, we were new to teamwork at the level of intensity PPL required of us. This experience challenged us to think deeply and carefully about the kind of team we wanted to build and the type of team that would be best able to withstand the program’s challenges and meet its expectations.

We found that working as a team was most productive when everyone felt empowered to contribute to the project. We learned that creating a team culture that encouraged inclusive group discussion, goal-setting, and reflection at regular intervals not only allowed us to make meaning of our time at PPL, but also helped us create balanced teams, prioritize and divide tasks, and bolster one another’s confidence. Although this project was undeniably student-led, the leadership team (comprised of Dr. Jared Orsi, Ariel Schnee, and Dillon Maxwell, along with Kurt Knierim, a faculty observer from Rocky Mountain High School) was instrumental in subtly modeling positive group norms. Though it was never the stated purpose of the week, team building and teamwork became
a central piece of the PPL experience, and all of us learned important lessons about how to build an effective and successful research team.

None of the participants joined PPL expecting to learn how to build, manage, and work on a research team. Participants considered PPL primarily as an opportunity to learn repeat photography and glimpse the reality of working for the National Park Service (NPS). Especially for the recently graduated history students, the experience of doing historical work in a national park was a rare opportunity. Besides the knowledge that past students had positive experiences with PPL, we had no idea what an entire week of working with people on a professional research project required.

Once we had been selected for PPL, the leadership team organized an orientation during which they laid out the workshop’s goals and project for 2018. Most participants found this meeting useful—though stressful—as we started to grasp the project’s ambitious scope and tight timeline. Daniel Gilbert, a recently graduated history student, recalled that the meeting increased his anxiety about working with the other participants because it was immediately clear that some people were coming into the project with more experience with the NPS than he had. At the meeting we also got to know one another, introduced ourselves, and got a feel for why everyone had applied to PPL.

From the first meeting it was clear that the leadership team hoped that the graduate students on PPL would mentor the younger students and ensure they felt included and valued as team members. They also explained that this year’s project would have special implications for how future sessions of PPL were run. Understanding how students at various levels of education worked together was a test run for inviting high school students to participate in PPL in future years.

The need to build a team and figure out how to make it successful was never expressed as a goal, outcome, or priority of PPL, and the fact that we would have to work as a research team raised several concerns. Some participants worried that PPL would be like their experience of teamwork in their academic classes, where some students barely contributed while one or two others carried the whole team. The graduate students also had concerns over potential disparities between their skill levels and those of the recently graduated students, although we quickly learned that the
gap was not as large as we assumed. In addition to working as a team, we would also be in charge of organizing the project work ourselves. The leadership team made it clear that they expected us, the participants, to not only take the intellectual lead on the project, but also to manage it, while they provided us with support. Some students grappled with nervousness over the leadership team’s hands-off approach.

Our work for the week was deceptively straightforward. We needed to select and research sites in the park to rephotograph and then create a historical argument based on the evidence. We would use our argument to craft a management brief with recommendations that the park could act upon. We would present our findings to the park’s staff at the end of the week. The rest—what to photograph and what our recommendations would be—was up to us. Some of the students were hesitant, as academic work did not prepare us to reach goals without externally set benchmarks. This week, we would have to set those benchmarks ourselves, and it was daunting.

Within the first hour we were going full-throttle. We organized groups, intentionally creating the most balanced teams possible. Our group of eight needed to split into teams of four. To create the teams, we factored in education level and background knowledge, ensuring that each team had an even distribution of skills. Some participants had archival research experience, while others were stronger in historic interpretation, writing, or photography. Constructing teams with diverse skill sets allowed people to share their specialized knowledge with the group. This created opportunities for us to learn from one another rather than relying on a single authority figure. Ongoing discussions with the leadership team provided oversight to our team-building process. Throughout the week, we received their feedback and made adjustments to how we managed our teams.

The leadership team was instrumental in setting the tone for the week and demonstrated how to set group norms. As they observed us working, they periodically gave us their perspectives on what they had noticed in the field. Then, participants communicated these observations to the rest of their teams. This process allowed us to get an outside perspective on our work, alerted us to any oversights we were making in the management of our teams, and kept the student-led structure of the program intact. Rather than
issuing directives about how to resolve an issue, they gave us in-
formation and empowered us to autonomously determine how we
wanted to act on their feedback.

Once we got into the field, the need for efficient teamwork be-
came even clearer. Early in the week, we had gotten a repeat pho-
tography crash course that covered the method’s basics. Although
we knew the process in theory, repeat photography is a method
that is best learned through hands-on practice in the field. To refine
our technique, we shared knowledge and observations to get the
best shots possible. On my four-person team, Joseph Sarr had the
most photography experience. Joseph taught the rest of us how to
work the camera and delegated shots to other team members to
ensure that we all got a chance to practice. Joseph revealed that
he was “slightly nervous about how [delegating] would impact
the quality of the final product,” but he found that the group had
taken quality photographs. He recalled that while he was lining
up a particularly difficult shot, other members of the team were
working on setting up the next one, and that he could trust them
to find the right angles and locations.

Precision is vital in repeat photography. The more precisely
photographers can replicate a historic image, the more useful and
striking the end result. Unfortunately, that attention to detail takes
time. My team’s fieldwork location was the Alpine Visitor Center
at the top of Trail Ridge Road. The visitor center takes a long
time to reach and is often crowded. The weather at high elevations
can change drastically in an instant. With just a week to complete
our work, the stakes were high, and we needed to be able to trust
that our team members could work autonomously. Dividing a long
task list made our work more efficient, but that division wouldn’t
have worked if we couldn’t trust each other to work to the same
standard, or if we had lacked the confidence to make some deci-
sions autonomously, without constant check-ins with the rest of
the team.

While the leadership team was there to support and guide us,
the project was fraught with apprehension about the strength of
our team. One of the major questions was whether we could stay
motivated, even though there wasn’t a grade at stake. The only
mark of success would be whether the park found our research
compelling and useful. Across the board, this held more weight
for us than any grade. In the absence of a final grade, participants
generated their own goals and standards for success that motivated them throughout the project. Each morning, our team members shared one goal. This helped each person set out what they wanted to accomplish for the day and helped us prioritize our tasks. Everyone could find something that they wanted to strive for, and saying our goals out loud made us accountable for carrying them out. During midday, meal times allowed us to decompress and talk through what we had accomplished and what was left to do. In the evenings, we brought the team together and shared our high and low points for the day. This structured time for group reflection helped us track what we had done well, as well as the places where we needed to refocus or alter our approach.

We all stayed motivated throughout the week, but we began to feel overwhelmed as the deadline drew closer. The leadership team stepped in to remind the group of their core ideas and the purpose of the project, but it was up to the group to reach consensus about what the project’s historical insights were. It became clear that our group conversations were a little lopsided: some people were speaking up, but not everyone felt qualified to voice their thoughts. We were missing some insights and contributions, which was making our discussions less productive.

We felt responsible for developing group norms that encouraged autonomy, collaboration, and what Harvard Business School Professor Amy Edmondson termed “psychological safety.” Psychological safety is the recognition that the team wouldn’t punish or embarrass someone for speaking their mind or for exploring partially-formed ideas with the group.3 As sociological and psychological research on team building has shown, the influence of group norms—whether explicit or implicit—is often profound.4 At ppl, we tried to cultivate a respectful atmosphere that made everyone comfortable voicing their thoughts. We helped one another build confidence by specifically asking for input from people who were reluctant to join in on group discussions.

After paying attention to who was speaking during group discussions, Joseph Sarr and I approached those who were reluctant to share, validated their ideas, and encouraged them to contribute to our group discussions. Findings from Project Aristotle, a Google research program on team building, showed that one of the trademarks of a successful team is when all team members contribute in roughly the same proportion. When this happens it raises
the group’s collective intelligence and enables them to be more successful at almost any task.5 Our experience supported this finding. Additionally, we found that encouraging equal participation had a positive impact on individual experience.

As Alexandria Kearney reflected on her experience at PPL, she recalled, “I got to learn so much from the graduate students—not only about higher level academics but also about [their] personal experiences. I think the mentorship [at PPL] challenged me intellectually and gave me confidence.”6 Alexandria’s growth in confidence speaks to the importance of establishing and reinforcing inclusive group norms. At PPL, these group norms made our teamwork more effective and helped us accomplish our research tasks. The time we spent fostering those norms did not just make the team more pleasant to work on (although having a positive and supportive atmosphere was important in and of itself), but it also made our final product better. By the end of the week, participants who were quiet for much of the first discussions were among the first to speak up to answer questions during the presentation to the park staff.

Our group norms also influenced how we interacted with park visitors. When teams were conducting rephotography, they also autonomously performed community outreach and collaboration. Visitors and staff at Rocky Mountain National Park do not frequently see a gaggle of students huddled together around bulky photography equipment, so our teams attracted attention. This gave us opportunities to engage with the people around us, talk about repeat photography, and explain what we were doing. At Moraine Park, Kylee Cole stepped away from the camera to talk with a visiting couple while her team continued to line up the shot. She taught the visitors about the area’s larger history, while they taught her about the history of a privately owned cabin nearby. The team’s interactions with the people around them had other benefits as well. While speaking with a member of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy, the team discovered that the member’s father designed the building they were researching and photographing.

Both teams had the same experience of working with visitors in unexpected ways. When lining up a photo at Alpine Visitor Center, my team was positioned on a busy trail. As one family made their way down the trail, they asked about what the team was doing. Alexandria and I showed the family what could be learned from
repeat photography. We showed the family the historic photo we were working on and told them about the changes and continuities we saw. After studying the photo some more, the kids bounded down the pathway, trying to spot more differences. Both research teams had developed the confidence and autonomy to effectively work with the public and represent our discipline while also completing our fieldwork. Taking the time to speak to the public advanced the team’s knowledge about Rocky Mountain National Park and our rephotography subjects, rather than being a distraction. Had individual team members not taken initiative, or had we been overly focused on simply getting our shots and moving on, we would have denied the people around us a chance to learn about our work and would have limited our own knowledge as well.

One of our most consistent challenges over the course of PPL was our struggle to develop a cohesive argument that unified both teams’ findings. By working as two small, generally separate teams, we developed different arguments and different bodies of evidence. Our research lacked focus and unity, and it was difficult to reconcile the teams’ different work products—especially as time went on. While the two teams did their initial work separately, we later recognized that creating our final product required communicating. To foster communication, each team sent a representative to the other group to observe their work. Then, we pulled the entire group back together to debrief. Ultimately, this helped us find commonalities.

While we had discussed the project’s thesis with everyone at various points throughout PPL, the entire group could not be involved in crafting its final language. A small group of people ended up developing the final argument for everyone to approve, while some team members finalized the presentation and others wrote our management brief. Ideally, the final argument would have reflected the input of the entire group, but under PPL’s time constraints, this was not possible. This left some participants feeling a little defeated and like the project was not truly theirs.

Much of the significance of our experiences emerged after PPL ended. In retrospect, our team-building efforts were based on a combination of participants’ own instincts, our balance of personalities, and the guidance and input of the leadership team. We had general conversations about working as a team during PPL,
and we all knew when things were really clicking, but none of us had the vocabulary to talk about why our tactics worked, or why they didn’t, until we were able to consult the research other scholars had done on group work. On future PPLs, each new group of students will face the challenge of learning to work and learn together in a short time while responding to their own group’s culture and norms.

Next year’s addition of high school students to PPL has been long awaited. It also sets forth new challenges for fostering effective teamwork among the program’s participants. Younger students may not be as able to think about setting positive group norms while also trying to learn new skills and complete a historical research project outside of a traditional classroom setting. It may not be reasonable to assume that a small group of graduate students can effectively mentor additional students while also taking on the tasks of intellectual leadership, project development, project management, and being members of the research team themselves.

Future PPL planners can help to mitigate these new challenges by making teamwork and mentorship a more explicit part of PPL and by actively supporting group norms that encourage teamwork. The tiered mentorship Kurt Knierim explores in his chapter is a viable concept, but graduate and undergraduate students will need to be supported and instructed about the emotional and interpersonal tools they will need in order to mentor high school students. Openly talking about and intentionally creating a culture of effective teamwork at PPL will become more and more important as the average age and experience of PPL participants decreases. Participants need a vocabulary that helps them define their experiences and talk about learning to conduct teamwork as its own project that is carried out concurrently with PPL’s research. PPL planners should consider providing readings about team building and teamwork or using training activities that help prepare participants for the intense experience of building and working with teams.

Teamwork requires a variety of skills and sensitivities that often do not come naturally. The traits that make for effective teams can even be counterintuitive—research shows that a team that spends some time chatting and interacting with one another may appear off-task to a casual observer, but that team is usually more
productive than a team with members that do not interact with one another on anything other than the immediate task at hand.\textsuperscript{7} Paradoxically, in both academia and in professional life, few people (outside of the rarified worlds of Harvard and Google) have a chance to think systematically about working in groups and understand what makes for effective teamwork, despite working in teams—effective and ineffective—much of the time. At PPL, we were able to experiment with building and managing a research team in an intense, though moderately controlled, setting. In reflecting on the week, we found that learning to work as a team, developing a group culture, and creating relationships defined our PPL experience.
Epilogue:
Turning the Lens on Leadership:
Planning, Leading, and Learning
from PPL 2018
Ariel M. Schnee

As the new project manager for the Public Lands History Center (PLHC), I came into the planning process for Parks as Portals to Learning (PPL) on the late side. Before I had even been hired, the PLHC’s Director, Dr. Jared Orsi and the Center’s Program for Research and Scholarly Excellence (PRSE) Fellow, Dillon Maxwell, had already been hard at work for months, envisioning what PPL week might look like and identifying a project. PPL is an ambitious program with lofty goals, and it demands a great deal of investment from everyone involved, planners and participants alike. That investment, however, pays significant dividends. As part of the leadership team, I experienced the week in a way that was distinct from the participants; I had the often anxiety-ridden, but ultimately very satisfying, experience of seeing the participants take control of their own learning and apply their skills and knowledge to the challenges of resource management at RMNP.

By the time I began to work on planning PPL (and mastering all those acronyms that just so happen to start with “P”), Orsi and Maxwell had a concept for PPL 2018 that built on the method and structure of the workshop of the year before, when students had engaged in repeat photography to identify changes in the park’s vegetation at sites around Moraine Park. For PPL 2018, the participants would conduct repeat photography of the historic visitor centers at RMNP. PPL 2018 differed from previous years in that we had external funding to run the field workshop. In the past, the PLHC has usually received some financial support from CSU’s Department of History, and RMNP houses students at the park for free, but students have typically been responsible for covering the cost of food and a portion of the transportation cost, or they use personal vehicles to get to the park.

This year, we were able to offer the field workshop free of charge to the students for the first time. My first task as project manager was to execute the PLHC’s tenth anniversary celebration and work
with CSU’s development office to run a crowdfunding campaign dedicated to funding PPL. We ended up exceeding our original fundraising goal, and the funding itself was a combination of large and small donations, some as large as $1,000 and others as small as $20. All came from the PLHC’s circle of supporters and friends. While the final amount was small potatoes by research university standards, for the PLHC it represented a major gift, and was a strong statement from our donors that they believe in the work the PLHC does, and that they thought providing this experience for the students was valuable.

That funding allowed us to dream a little bigger and to begin to imagine what further potential PPL might have beyond its traditional focus on graduate students and the occasional advanced undergraduate. When Kurt Knierim from Rocky Mountain High School approached us about getting involved with the Center and with PPL that spring, we welcomed him on board. He would be there to observe and learn about PPL, and his involvement brought us a little closer to achieving some goals that had been part of PPL from its inception, that of extending PPL beyond CSU, and of eventually making the workshop open to high school students. The full details of what he learned and the innovative ways he applied the work we did at PPL can be found in his contribution to this volume.

A second difference was that the park had fewer resources with which to support us in our planning process for PPL 2018. Instead of relying on the park to set up staff interactions and intensively manage and participate in our time at RMNP, I worked closely with the incomparable Carissa Turner, exchanging dozens of emails establishing who we wanted to talk to at the park, who was available, and figuring out who would be able to meet us where. Planning our “asks” was a lengthy and delicate process, one that had to take into account both the park’s internal hierarchy as well as the nature of working in the NPS, which roughly equates to the Yiddish proverb “Man Plans, and God Laughs.”

Within the NPS, staff members can be detailed to other parks (one of our liaisons was the acting superintendent of another park while she was helping us plan PPL, as well as fulfilling her normal role as the head of the Continental Divide Research Learning Center all at the same time). We also had to be aware that some of the people we had scheduled to talk to the group might be suddenly
called away if more pressing issues cropped up during our time in the park. These could range from a dozen elk wandering into the wrong place, to a traffic accident, to a lost hiker. Park staff, particularly at RMNP, and particularly during the peak season in summer, are incredibly busy people. We were lucky, however, that CSU’s excellent relationship with RMNP, and the PLHC’s own good relationship with the park, put us in the position to be able to request that park staff working in a variety of roles, even up to the park’s superintendent, Darla Sidles, take time to interact with PPL participants. Despite being busy, everyone who agreed to participate in PPL was very gracious and enthusiastic about interacting with our group.

Beyond setting up the basic structure for the week, the three of us also had a lot to learn, and we all navigated some unique challenges. Dr. Orsi had attended parts of past PPLs, but, as the faculty leader for PPL 2018, he had a much more intensive role this year, and would spend the entire week in the park for the first time. I knew about PPL through friends who had participated in the workshop during their own time in the master’s program, but I had never been a part of PPL myself, and I was very much learning the details of the workshop, and how it had functioned in past years, on the job. Maxwell had been a participant in PPL 2017, and had to figure out how he would inhabit his new role for 2018 as a planner and leader. As part of the leadership team, he had the task of assigning work and leading meetings for participants who were also his classmates, and he also taught us, his supervisors, a thing or two as well.

As the only person on the leadership team with any prior experience in conducting repeat photography, he developed an afternoon crash course for Dr. Orsi and me, where he taught us how to frame, shoot, and record metadata for several rephotographs of historic images of CSU’s campus. This was my first encounter with the method, and when we returned to the office, uploaded our photographs, and compared them with the historic images, I was surprised at the wealth of information we were able to draw out of them, even without the advantage of primary sources to help us establish their historic context. During an informal brainstorm, we identified a variety of changes over time from some fairly innocuous-seeming images, ranging from the creation of ADA-compliant infrastructure, to the evolution of CSU’s institutional brand and
campus culture. We agreed that the course had been successful, and the images and tutorial formed the basis for the training session Maxwell later ran for the participants during their first day in the park. This departure from the traditional, hierarchical flow of knowledge from teacher to student to a more egalitarian model for sharing and developing knowledge was something of a theme that we would see throughout PPL.

As PPL drew closer, we put out calls for applications for the field workshop. Participants submitted a letter of interest and a professional resume, and we received applications from eight students—two recent BA graduates and six graduate students from CSU’s History Department. As the team sat together and discussed the applications we’d received, we mulled over the possibilities, thinking about the students’ backgrounds, their training, and the pros and cons of bringing together diverse personalities to pull off an ambitious project in just five days of work. Despite all the information we had in the applications, there were still so many variables to think about. What if the participants couldn’t get along? What if the work just didn’t get done?

Reviewing the applications was an exercise in “walking the walk” when it came to implementing our Center’s values and mission. Part of the PLHC’s ethic is that, by and large, we want to work with everyone who wants to work with us, not exclusively those with perfect GPAs and drool-worthy resumes. Student success is the core of what we do at the PLHC, and when we work with students, we help them to build and apply the skills of a historian in professional settings. Our commitment to these values structured our conversation, and, in the end, we considered our candidates not just on the basis of their grades, experience, or skills, but also on the basis of what we thought they might stand to gain by participating in the workshop. After much deliberation, we decided to admit everyone who applied, and each participant brought their own unique talents to the workshop as a member of the team.

One of the interesting things about PPL is that because the project and work product are student-led, the students’ skills shape the project in significant ways. Within the History Department’s Master’s program at CSU, students select one of several tracks. The bulk of our second-year graduate student participants came from the Museum Studies track, rather than from Cultural Resource Management or Historic Preservation. The focus of PPL
2018 on visitor centers rather than on a more traditional environmental history topic, therefore, complemented the students’ existing skills and interests in interpretation, promoting learning in informal environments, and on making history interesting and tangible to people outside the academy. The students’ individual backgrounds also informed what they thought about the possibilities for applying the project’s method and findings, communicated in the chapters by Daniel Gilbert, Kylee Cole and Dillon Maxwell, and Alexandria Kearney in this volume.

Since the workshop is only five days long, this intersection of project focus and student skill sets was absolutely necessary. The leadership team could do its best to plan well and set the students up for a successful week, but it’s just not possible to teach them everything they need to know during the workshop. At the end of the spring semester, students attend an orientation and are assigned PPL-specific readings that prepare them for the work we expect them to do in the park. The leadership team, however, relies on the participants to come prepared to use and apply the historical skills they already have. This includes the ability to research, interpret, analyze, and to think and problem-solve creatively (and to be able to do it all very quickly).

Our reliance on the students at PPL is a gamble, one in which we bet they’ll succeed. This bet is made and remade on a new and different group of students every year. The stakes of PPL are not earth-shatteringly high, but they’re not exactly low, either. In many ways, PPL acts as a referendum on our confidence in the strength of our history program and in ourselves—have we prepared our students well enough to go out into the world and do the work of a historian? The students have a stake in the workshop’s success as well. PPL can open doors for students, giving them access to opportunities for networking, presenting at the park’s research conference, and to internships, research fellowships, and job openings. Additionally, whether or not future students will get to participate in PPL depends on the performance of the students in the previous year. While it’s helpful that the workshop and the students both have a strong track record, the little anxious voice saying, “I really hope this works,” stubbornly stuck around in the back of my mind as our trip to the park drew closer.

With a week to go before PPL, I left. I headed back east and spent the time camping in northern Michigan, a place where you
have to go “to town” to get anything resembling cell service or Wi-Fi. We had sent all the emails we were going to send, the schedule had been finalized, the vans were rented, and the giant spreadsheet that documented what groceries we’d need to buy had been set for weeks. The only thing left to do was take a swim, listen to the wind ruffle the lake by my tent, and watch the resident blue heron soar over the water. That is, of course, until I came back.

The first morning of PPL started early, and our group assembled in the parking lot outside the PLHC’s offices, duffel bags in hand. It was time to go to the park. The students made short work of loading our gear and food into the vans, the only casualties a smashed jar of spaghetti sauce and a few gallons of ice cream that, tragically, melted on the drive. Driving down US 287 and then along the twists and turns of US 34, ascending through the canyon to the park, I sipped coffee and listened to the happy buzz of the grad students as they caught up on a summer spent interning at museums, doing historic preservation, and working in archives. For the BAS, the summer had been one of transition, an abrupt jerk away from the steady rhythms of academia and out into the “real” world.

Unlike the experience of the participants, the first day at the park was the most labor-intensive for the leadership team. Room keys had to be distributed, research dorm rules covered, the schedule and project gone over, and teams assigned for meal prep and clean up for the week. Park personnel had to be introduced, and last-minute housing issues resolved. The students also got their first look at the visitor centers where they’d be working.

The park tour was also when students began to understand some of the challenges that they’d have as they did their research within a national park during peak visitation season. Beaver Meadows Visitor Center lies outside the gates of the park, so accessing that visitor center would be relatively simple. They would need to get inside the park’s grounds, however, to get to their other two sites: Moraine Park Discovery Center and Alpine Visitor Center. This meant passing through the park’s front entrance. Wait times to get into the park were extremely changeable. At certain hours, we could drive through the entrance without seeing another soul. But, around peak times, the wait could stretch into a half an hour or more, prompting jokes about how we were observing our “management challenge” while sitting in traffic. True to its name, Al-
pine Visitor Center lies at the very top of Trail Ridge Road. Wildlife sightings or traffic could make travel times vary as well, but it would always be at least fifty minutes’ drive from our housing. During the day we took our tour, cars waiting to get into the Alpine Visitor Center parking lot stacked up on the road. There were so many cars that park rangers eventually closed down the line, and we had to head back down without seeing the center in order to stick to our schedule.

That evening, the participants had to make their first major decision. They needed to divvy up the labor of working on the visitor centers. They could all work together on one site at a time, or they could divide into teams to work on multiple sites at the same time. They went with the approach that would let them look at as many sites as possible. Originally, the participants had asked the leadership team to make the decisions about who would be on which team, but shortly after we had begun to get to work, they decided to take on the task themselves. The participants spoke among themselves and devised a system that took into account everyone’s preferred work site and grouped themselves into balanced teams that gave each group a diversity of skill sets, as well as one history BA member each. Even on the first day of the workshop, the care and pragmatism with which the participants selected their teams was impressive. Their process recognized that the project’s need for balanced, well-functioning teams had to be placed above the ease of working with people they already knew. The participants also decided on a “plan of attack.” The group assigned to Alpine Visitor Center would spend the next morning in the archives, and the Beaver Meadows/Moraine Park group would spend it in the field.

The next day, my goal was to stay out of the way and understand how my team (the one assigned to Beaver Meadows and Moraine Park), worked together. After introducing themselves to the rangers on duty, the team set about carefully shooting interior and exterior shots of Beaver Meadows, all the while conversing about how to replicate the angles of the historic photographs, and what pieces of the building and of the landscape they could use as points of reference. Visitors began to stream in, giving the team puzzled looks as they tried to edge out of their shots. A few hours later at Moraine Park, the team had become visibly more comfortable with rephotography and with one another. They pointed out
useful landscape and architectural features more confidently, and had gotten into a rhythm. They managed the process of setting up equipment, framing a shot, taking GPS data, and transcribing metadata faster. They engaged more easily with park staff, getting advice and a (totally unplanned) mini history lesson about the Moraine Park Discovery Center, formerly the Moraine Lodge, from a member of the Rocky Mountain Conservancy. The team’s interactions with visitors also became more relaxed. Memorably, while the team was shooting from a parking lot near the discovery center, one of the history bas encouraged some visitors to stay in the shot, calling to them, “It’s okay, we’re studying you!”

After a demanding day in the field and interacting with park staff, the two teams regrouped and discussed the challenges and successes of the day. Interestingly, when asked about the better approach to repeat photography, each team had different understandings of the benefits of their own approach. For the team that spent the day in the archives, they had found information that guided them towards selecting certain photographs that they wanted to repeat, rather than others. They had also developed their own process for dividing the labor of research: one person identified potentially useful research materials, another sifted through the boxes, and then passed useful items on to others to digitize the items they wanted to save for future reference. On the other hand, the team that had spent the day in the field saw that their completed sets of photographs had generated specific questions that would help focus their archival research the next day.

By the third day of the field workshop, the leadership team agreed that we all had begun to feel a little irrelevant to the project, but that was, undeniably, a good thing. The participants had really taken over. They knew their schedule, they knew what they had to do, and they determinedly went after it as a team. They displayed real dedication to the process. That day, the team conducting rephotography of Alpine Visitor Center started working before sunrise. The team spent over eight hours at altitude getting the perfect shot, and learning about the area’s unique management challenges from park staff. Looking at the team work from the bottom of the trail, one of the faculty observers from CSU remarked on the team’s incredible motivation, focus, and patience.

When the teams reconvened that evening, however, the participants struggled to develop what they had seen and learned into a
single argument or message. The teams had done so much work, and had spent so much time apart, that they had developed very different understandings of their sites, and struggled to reconcile their findings and fit them into a cohesive historical argument.

As they continued to speak to park staff throughout the week, it became more and more clear that the park’s own understanding of its visitors was not uniform, which made developing useful recommendations even more challenging. High-level park staff saw heavy visitation at the macro level, and viewed visitors in terms of their large-scale impacts in the forms of traffic, air quality, and other adverse effects on the park’s resources. Members of the interpretation staff, however, had a more micro-level, and, possibly because of the more personal nature of their interactions with visitors, a more positive perspective. For them, visitors were the point of the NPS, and they saw that the people who came to the park were genuinely excited to learn about it and care for it. But, overwhelmingly, students received the message that there were too many people coming to the park to effectively manage without raising fees or implementing a reservation system, and that visitors were causing the park’s resources to deteriorate.

What students encountered at the park was a real-world example of “the declensionist narrative.” In simple terms, a declensionist narrative is one that occupies itself with stories of decline, usually ecological. The most famous example of this is Rachel Carson’s 1962 work, Silent Spring, about the disastrous ecological effects of the chemical DDT. In the early environmental movement in the 1970s, doom-and-gloom portrayals of ruined landscapes and extinct animal species were meant to motivate individuals to take action on environmental issues before it was too late.

The declensionist narrative also found its way into the then-fledgling field of environmental history. For example, historian Donald Worster’s venerable 1979 classic, Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s, opens with an incredibly bleak quote from Karl Marx about capitalist agriculture as the art of systematically robbing both the laborer and the soil, and the book doesn’t get any cheerier from there. But Dust Bowl’s bleakness isn’t just due to its subject matter. When read in its historical context, that of the environmental catastrophes of the late 1960s and 1970s, Worster’s pessimistic outlook was warranted, and he likely saw clear parallels between the environmental degradation that had occurred in
the 1930s and the degradation that was still ongoing in his own time. Environmental historians had little cause for optimism in their analyses of a past that had resulted in a pretty terrible present, environmentally speaking.

Whether or not some people found these narratives effective or compelling, this approach came with some significant downsides, for both the environmental movement as well as for environmental historians. Skeptics of environmentalism saw the absence of total environmental meltdown as evidence that these narratives were overly dramatic, manipulative, or simply dishonest. Where climate change was concerned, politically conservative scientists in the employ of businesses with a stake in preserving the energy status quo intentionally amplified skepticism of the extent, or the very existence, of human impact on the environment. At the same time, even those sympathetic to environmental issues probably found a steady diet of declensionist narratives thoroughly depressing, at best. For historians, purely declensionist narratives were problematic in that they could be overly simplistic and didn’t lend themselves to deep critical analysis. This was the issue with which the participants struggled when they tried to reconcile the information they heard from park staff with their research results.

For most people outside of the historic discipline, historiography (the extremely meta exercise of thinking and writing about the history of writing history) is probably the least practically applicable thing they could imagine. As I watched over the fourth and fifth days of the workshop, however, the participants were applying an implicit understanding of the ways that environmental history is written and understood now, and used it to craft findings based on historical evidence that acknowledged, but also departed from, the narrative they had received about visitors and the park’s ability to manage them.

It is to the participants’ credit that they saw that their evidence did not support a narrative of wholesale decline at the park. In many cases, particularly at Alpine Visitor Center, improvements had been made that successfully balanced the National Park Service’s mission of providing access, as well as preserving the park’s resources for future generations. The rephotographs showed marked differences in both the landscape and visitor behavior in the park. As other essays in this volume discuss in greater detail, the park’s construction of paved roads, trails, and parking lots,
improved waste management facilities, interpretation signage, and more numerous educational displays, all represented ways in which the park made alterations over time that had simultaneously improved accessibility and preserved important resources. The declensionist narrative alone could not adequately capture what PPL participants had observed at the park.

This is what other historians have found as well. Since the 1970s, environmental historians have generally moved past straightforward declensionist narratives in favor of more nuanced understandings of the complex relationships between people and resources. In fact, in the afterword of the twenty-fifth-anniversary edition of *Dust Bowl*, Worster himself commented that there had been some recent successes in rehabilitating the southern plains; he also acknowledged that plenty of challenges to the plains’ environmental viability remain. Modifying approaches to environmental history has allowed historians to better identify and explain both how people have successfully worked within environmental constraints, where attempts have made to transgress or expand them, and where there is ambiguity.

For senior land managers, many of whom are the educational products of the 1970s and 1980s, the declensionist narrative persists. In many cases, academics have not actively linked the people most heavily involved in the practical work of preservation and resource management to academic discussions of that work, creating a gap between academic thinking and resource management. Meanwhile, students and academics who are active in scholarly discourse have been the direct beneficiaries of (and contributors to) these and other advances in environmental history, as the PPL participants demonstrated in their recommendations to park staff. While their brief didn’t revolutionize the practice of resource management at the park, it represented a way in which these much-needed conversations between resource managers and academics can take place, and showed the benefits of including the perspectives of historians in those conversations.

As the week drew to a close, the participants reflected on their experience at the park, and the leadership team gathered their feedback both verbally and in writing so that we could continue to tweak and make improvements for PPL 2019. Across the board, students reported that they appreciated the autonomy, independence, and self-direction they experienced during their work at
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PPL. They also found the experience of combining fieldwork and archival research challenging and educational, and appreciated the efficient, collaborative atmosphere that they created in their research teams. What I did not expect in the feedback was that most of the students also remarked in some capacity on the emotional experience of the workshop: the stress of the project’s tight deadline, the frustration of needing to stop working on the project in order to spend time on other parts of the program, but also the experience of bonding, being part of a team working towards a common goal, the empowering sense of being treated as colleagues and professionals, and the accomplishment and satisfaction of a job well done.

Despite overwhelmingly positive feedback, what was initially more difficult to come to grips with was discovering that their critiques of the program—at least, the critique that didn’t have to do with the need to bring more snack food—were focused on the leadership team and our organization of the program. For example, by the time the participants got to engage with one visiting senior faculty member, they felt a great deal of ownership over the project and were resistant to changing a concept into which they had already invested thought, work, and time. One participant noticed that the group tended to have better conversations when the leadership team wasn’t in the room. Another mentioned that the group felt uncomfortable with faculty members popping into the program for a day and then disappearing without really engaging with them. Others chafed at the need to spend an entire evening conducting the traditional PPL oral history with a senior member of the NPS staff and having dinner at McGraw Ranch, when they felt they should have been focused on their final presentation.

These were all valid critiques, and they are going to factor into some of the changes that we’ll make in PPL next year. Reading the feedback also accentuated some of the differences between the perceived benefits and purpose of PPL from an organizer’s perspective and that of a participant’s. Having continued, positive interactions with park staff in a small group setting is an important way that the PLHC strengthens its relationship with RMNP, which is also our most consistent source of the funded projects we run during the rest of the year. The fact that some of the participants felt that staff interactions took away from the more important (from their perspective) task of working on the final project is problematic,
and an indication that the leadership team has not adequately conveyed the greater value of meeting these people and connecting with them as sources of projects, career advice, and professional expertise. This is an important insight that will be one of the key things we need to address for next year.

As I write about the experiences and observations of last summer, snow is falling outside my window. PPL 2018 ended a little over five months ago, and planning for PPL 2019 is already well under way. True to form, next year’s workshop continues to evolve and will look very different from the year before. Thanks in great part to Knierim’s participation, we are looking forward to welcoming students from Rocky Mountain High School onto the PPL team next summer. We’ve also gotten word from another local teacher, Kayla Steele, that we can expect students from Berthoud High School to apply as well. It’s anyone’s guess how these students will make PPL their own, what insights they’ll glean, or how the experience might shape their future plans for education and career. But, like last year, my confidence (admittedly, still with a little bit of anxiety floating on top of it) in future PPL participants is bolstered by the successes and accomplishments of its past participants, particularly those with whom I had the opportunity to work with last year.

The PLHC has been running Parks as Portals to Learning since 2013, and, heading into its seventh year, the field workshop has run under the supervision and stewardship of many different people, all of whom have shaped its different iterations and then handed it on to the next group of leaders. The PLHC’s new research fellow, and a new faculty council member, will join me on next year’s leadership team. Together, we will share the responsibility of continuing this unique and innovative program, navigating its challenges, and telling new histories of one of America’s most complex and beautiful places.
LONG EXPOSURES

Figure 1. Alpine Visitor Center, 1999. Photo courtesy Karl Snyder.

Figure 3. Beaver Meadows Visitor Center dedication ceremony, June 24, 1967. Photo courtesy rmnp.
Photographs

Figure 2. Alpine Visitor Center, 2018. Photo courtesy PLHC.

Figure 4. Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, 2018. Photo courtesy PLHC.
Figure 5. Alpine tundra above Fall River Pass, 1926. Photo courtesy RMNP.

Figure 7. Interior of Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, 1967. Photo courtesy NPS.
Photographs

Figure 6. Tundra above Alpine Visitor Center, 2018. Photo courtesy PLHC.

Figure 8. Interior of Beaver Meadows Visitor Center, 2018. Photo courtesy PLHC.
Figure 9. Moraine Park Lodge (Now Moraine Park Discovery Center), 1925. Photo courtesy NPS.

Figure 11. Interior of Moraine Park Discovery Center, 1978. Photo courtesy NPS.
Photographs

Figure 10. Moraine Park Discovery Center, 2018. Photo courtesy PLHC.

Figure 12. Interior of Moraine Park Discovery Center, 2018. Photo courtesy PLHC.
Figure 13. Parking lot at Fall River Pass (where Alpine Visitor Center is now), 1956. Photo courtesy the *Denver Post*. 
Photographs

Figure 14. Alpine Visitor Center parking lot, 2018. Photo courtesy PLHC.
Acknowledgments

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Notes

Chapter 1

Notes

27. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 39.
30. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 38.
32. Andrews, Coyote Valley, 147.
34. Andrews, Coyote Valley, 170.
35. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 155.
41. Toll, Arapaho Names and Trails, 29.
42. Toll, Arapaho Names and Trails, 2.
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47. Andrews, Coyote Valley, 51.
50. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 81.
51. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 34.
52. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 34.
53. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 35.
55. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 43.
56. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 43.
57. Frank, Making Rocky Mountain National Park, 53.
Chapter 2


17. “Moraine Park Museum and Amphitheater.”

**Chapter 3**

3. For a more in-depth look at cultural landscape and different ways they can take form, see *Cultural Landscapes: Balancing Nature and Heritage in Preservation Practice* edited by Richard Longstreth or visit the Cultural Landscape Foundation’s website at tclf.org.

**Chapter 4**

3. Patterson, “Rocky Mountain National Park Changes Entrance Fee.”
4. Patterson, “Rocky Mountain National Park Changes Entrance Fee.”


11. Dates from notes in archives

12. Dates from notes in archives

13. Dates from notes in archives


15. “Rocky Mountain National Park Administration Building.”

16. “Rocky Mountain National Park Administration Building.”

**Chapter 5**


5. Time-lapse photography is essentially this concept taken to a much greater extent, often using hundreds to thousands of repeated pictures to illustrate change over time in intense detail. The high volume of images generated with time lapse techniques typically lends well to animation, thus adding an additional dimension of storytelling power to the existing narrative.

6. Historic satellite images are only currently available for viewing on downloadable desktop applications of Google Earth. Internet browser and mobile versions do not yet accommodate them.
Notes


14. Maren Thompson Bzdek and Janet Ore, The Mission 66 Program at Rocky Mountain National Park: 1947–1973 (Colorado State University: Public Lands History Center, 2010), 33. A gift shop and a small stone ranger outpost also occupy the site. Although these buildings predated the Alpine Visitor Center, they historically lacked many of the critical amenities found in the latter.


Chapter 6


4. “Road Builders Will Go To Fall River Or Out of County,” *Weekly Courier*, Fort Collins, CO, July 4, 1913, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection, 6.


12. “Secretary Fall Greatly Pleased with Fall River Road,” *Estes Park Trail*, Estes Park, CO, September 30, 1921, Colorado Historic Newspapers Collection, 1.


Chapter 7

1. For more on an overview of the week and how it was organized, see

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the introduction where Dr. Jared Orsi provides a synopsis of the 2018 program.


3. The NPS describes the relationship between conservation and preservation as follows: “Conservation and preservation are closely linked and may indeed seem to mean the same thing. Both terms involve a degree of protection, but how that protection is carried out is the key difference. Conservation is generally associated with the protection of natural resources, while preservation is associated with the protection of buildings, objects, and landscapes. Put simply, conservation seeks the proper use of nature, while preservation seeks protection of nature from use.” (https://www.nps.gov/klgo/learn/education/classrooms/conservation-vs-preservation.htm). For more on how participants dealt with the tensions between conservation and preservation as well as other challenges, see chapter IX where Selinske and Schnee discuss applied leadership that resulted from program.

4. The Teaching American History Grant program was a federally funded collaborative which paired k–12 school districts and universities to deliver rich content to participants and create best-practice lessons. I was involved in this particular project as part of the evaluation team during the 2007–2008 academic year.


7. Standardized testing became the norm with President George W. Bush’s signing of the 2002 No Child Left Behind Law and the subsequent Every Child Succeeds Act in 2015. Although the latter pares back some of the more stringent federal testing mandates, high school students today as well as in the foreseeable future will be subject to this kind of testing and learning.


11. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, The Understanding by Design


15. The label “Gifted and Talented” refers to students who have been assessed to have interest and abilities in academics beyond that of the ordinary student. An Individual Educational Plan is the tool used by educators and mandated by the federal government to assure that students with significant learning challenges receive the accommodations they need in order to have the least restrictive learning environment possible.

16. For insight from her time with ppl, see Carly Boerrigter’s chapter where she provides a thoughtful discussion of the built environment at Rocky Mountain National Park.

17. For more on how rephotography is used as a historical tool, see Joseph Sarr’s chapter where he discusses how rephotography is a useful tool for historical analysis.

18. I have included student responses directly from their assignments as turned in. Full assignment answers are not included with this article, but are available upon request.


20. For more on the background of the Parks as Portals to Learning project and their extensions moving forward, see both the introduction by Dr. Jared Orsi as well as the epilogue by Ariel M. Schnee.

21. The students participating in the Parks as Portals to Learning program from Rocky Mountain High School will be under the direction of social studies teacher Kurt R. Knierim, while the Berthoud High School students will be supervised by social studies teacher Kayla Steele.

Chapter 8

1. Daniel Gilbert, interview by Kimberly Selinske, date not recorded.
2. Joseph Sarr, interview by Kimberly Selinske, date not recorded.
Notes

6. Alexandria Kearney, interview by Kimberly Selinske, date not recorded.

Epilogue

1. These methods of controlling visitation have been implemented at other parks and are extremely controversial. Many argue that efforts to control access run counter to the NPS’s mission of providing Americans access to iconic pieces of public land. The originally proposed fee hike for Rocky Mountain National Park that sought to raise fees to $70.00 per car was met with a firestorm of public critique. The Department of the Interior under Secretary Ryan Zinke ultimately raised fees at Rocky from $30.00 to $35.00. Matthew Daly, “Rocky Mountain, other popular national parks to raise fees to $35, not $70,” The Associated Press, denverpost.com, published April 12, 2018, accessed December 4, 2018.
6. Donald Worster, Dust Bowl, 248.
7. It is precisely this idea that brought about PPL in the first place. This gap was seen as a problematic but solvable issue that could be resolved through forming tighter relationships between the park and land-grant universities like CSU.
Contributors

Carly Boerrigter is a second-year graduate student at Colorado State University studying public history. She previously researched and curated an online exhibition on the construction and furnishings of Beaver Meadows Visitor Center at Rocky Mountain National Park. Her research interests include interpretation in public-facing institutions and American slavery and its representation. Following her May 2019 graduation, she hopes to continue her research as a museum staff member.

Kylee Cole is a second-year graduate student studying public history with a focus on cultural resource management. Her past projects with the Public Lands History Center include work with Colorado Parks and Wildlife and Yellowstone National Park. She has also interned with the City of Fort Collins’s Historic Preservation Division. Her research interests include environmental history, architectural history, public land management, and the American West. She will graduate in May 2019.

Daniel Gilbert earned his BA in history and political science from Colorado State University. He has written for the Public Lands History Center, producing a blog post about the variety of uses for public lands along the US-Mexico border. Daniel also holds a volunteer position with History Colorado, where he has been helping with a photo-linking archival project. He hopes to attend graduate school in the field of public history.

Alexandria Kearney graduated from Colorado State University in 2018 as a first-generation student with a BA in history and political science. Currently an admissions counselor at the University of Colorado Denver, she is also pursuing an MA in administrative policy and leadership. She previously worked as
an interpreter at Boyd Lake State Park. In her free time, she loves to read, travel, ski, hike, and practice her photography skills.

A social studies teacher at Rocky Mountain High School in Fort Collins since 1992, Kurt R. Knierim earned both BA and MA degrees in history from Colorado State University. He also earned an MA in education from Lesley University. In addition to his duties at RMHS, Knierim holds an adjunct position in the History Department at the University of Colorado Denver and is a senior fellow with the James Madison Memorial Fellowship Foundation. Outside of teaching, he enjoys spending time with his family, mentoring early-career educators, and exploring the mountains.

Dillon Maxwell is a second-year graduate student at Colorado State University. Graduating in May 2019 with an MA in public history with an emphasis in cultural resource management, he has worked on historic preservation and cultural resource projects with the US Forest Service, Colorado Parks and Wildlife, and the City of Fort Collins. His research interests include the history of the American Southwest, environmental history, the history of public lands, and cultural landscapes.

Andrew D. Olson is a first-year graduate student at Colorado State University studying public history. He is also the Public Lands History Center’s 2018–19 research fellow. His research interests include environmental history, local history, and architectural history. Following his graduation in 2020, he hopes to work as a cultural resource manager for a state or federal agency that manages public lands.

Jared Orsi is a professor of history and the director of the Public Lands History Center at Colorado State University. A specialist in environmental and borderlands history, he is the author of Hazardous Metropolis: Flooding and Urban Ecology in Los Angeles and Citizen Explorer: The Life of Zebulon Pike and co-editor of National Parks beyond the Nation: Global Perspectives on “America’s Best Idea.” He is the winner of numerous teaching prizes, most recently the CSU College of Liberal Arts Ann Gill Excellence in Teaching Award.
Joseph Sarr studied history and photography at the University of Colorado before pursuing an MA in history at Colorado State University. A lifelong patron of national parks, he interned with Rocky Mountain National Park during the summer of 2018 before participating in the Parks as Portals to Learning workshop. He firmly believes in the power of nonacademic institutions such as parks and museums to educate the public about history in new and creative ways.

Ariel M. Schnee has a BA in history and English from Kalamazoo College and received an MA in public history from Colorado State University. Currently the Public Lands History Center’s project manager, her research interests include American history, African American history, the history of leisure and recreation, historic preservation, and the history of public lands. Her previous projects with the PLHC include a technical report on the history of Scotts Bluff National Monument (scbl), a visitors’ history and ArcGIS Story Map of scbl, and a historical report on segregation and public lands at Shenandoah National Park.

Kimberly Selinske is a second-year graduate student at Colorado State University studying public history. Her interests include determining how to effectively educate the public in museums and historic sites. PPL was foundational in her education and prepared her for a collaborative career in museums and public history.
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