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State Archives Releases New Digital Exhibit Featuring California's Yosemite National Park

SACRAMENTO, CA – The California State Archives has released a new online exhibit, titled [“Yosemite: California’s First State Park,”](#) which features details into the history of California’s first state park, founded in 1864. The land that makes up Yosemite remained in state custody for more than 40 years, even as surrounding lands came under federal protection. This is the State Archives’ [24th online exhibit to be hosted by Google Arts & Culture.](#) Secretary Padilla has made digitizing the treasures of the State Archives a priority.

“The founding of Yosemite State Park marked a milestone for the Golden State,” said Secretary of State Alex Padilla. “In the history of the United States, this was one of the first pieces of land to be preserved for public use, setting the stage for California to become a leader in environmental conservation. The State Archives has compiled maps, photographs, and correspondence that tell the story of the movement to protect the Yosemite Valley. This exhibit provides a glimpse into the process of creating this ecological preserve, including the introduction of early American settlers, the sacrifices of the indigenous Ahwahneechees, and the push to increased awareness of Yosemite while protecting the natural landscape from further development. This story highlights the importance of conserving our natural wonders for future generations.”

"The origin of the protection of Yosemite and the landmark role the State of California played in its management is both fascinating and largely unknown to the general public", stated Scott Gediman, Chief of the Public Affairs Office in Yosemite National Park. "We are grateful to Secretary of State Alex Padilla and the California State Archives for producing such a wonderful and fascinating exhibit."

Since March, Yosemite National Park has been closed to visitors due to health and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, June 11, the National Parks Service has begun their phased reopening of Yosemite National Park.

[Click here to view “Yosemite: California’s First State Park”](#)

This exhibit can also be viewed in Spanish, if the user’s browser is set to Spanish.

In 1849, friends William Penn Abrams and U. N. Reamer, visitors at a local trading post, stumbled upon Yosemite Valley while hunting a grizzly bear. Abrams wrote that they came upon a “trail that led past a valley enclosed by stupendous cliffs rising perhaps 3,000 feet from their base and which gave us cause for wonder.” It is likely that they were viewing the valley from Old Inspiration Point. The exhibit also details how and why Yosemite became famous, thanks to a prominent San Francisco magazine publisher James M. Hutchings in 1855.

This exhibit focuses on the period during which Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove were under the stewardship of the state of California. Included are original maps, correspondences, photographs, and other documents preserved at the California State Archives, which tell the story of the early management of Yosemite.

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