

**National Park Service (NPS) History Collection**

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NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)  
Harpers Ferry Center's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Oral History Project



Wade Myers  
July 31, 2019

Interview conducted by Nancy Russell  
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The release form for this interview is on file at the NPS History Collection.

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## START OF RECORDING

- Nancy Russell: 00:00:02 This is Nancy Russell, archivist for the National Park Service History Collection. Today's date is July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019. I'm here with Wade Myers, Technical Information Specialist for Harpers Ferry Center and the manager for the Commissioned Art Collection. This is our third in a series of ongoing interviews with Wade. Wade, I'd like to circle back to some of what we were discussing last week regarding the Commissioned Art Collection, because I think we missed discussing how the program changed position within the organizational structure. Can you speak a little to the chronology of being in Pubs [Publications] and Facilities and Collections and Conservation?
- Wade Myers: 00:00:49 Sure. So, I started working with the Commissioned Art Collection specifically with the Division of Publications. Vince Gleason had hired me to specifically manage that portion of the collection within Publications. In about 1993, 1994, there was a task force that was put together to discuss how we could bring all of the Commissioned Art Collection into a central repository. So, the work that Waysides was doing and Audiovisual Arts and Publications and those various groups, into a central repository, find out what we really had. Did we need to keep buying the raccoon illustrations over and over and over again from the same artist.
- Wade Myers: 00:01:37 So the decision was made by Dave Wright, the manager for the Center at that time, that the work would come to the Willow Springs facility. It was a fairly new facility at that point, and there was space available, and we could put it into a temperature-controlled and humidity-controlled environment. So originally, it was a special project or a special program under the manager's office, or the director's office for the Center. And it remained that way for a number of years. It was considered a service-wide program, but it was a special program under the manager's office, and so we answered to the manager.
- Wade Myers: 00:02:20 Eventually, Dave Wright decided that all property, whether it was museum property or personal property or federally controlled property, would all come under the management of Facilities, Property, and Services. So that's how the collection migrated then eventually under Facilities and

Property. Eventually, the decision was made, and I don't remember which manager made the decision, that the Commissioned Art Collection would not come under--well, it would still remain under Facilities, but it would come under the umbrella of Conservation and Collections.

- Nancy Russell: 00:03:10 So by that you mean, the property issues were still part of Facilities, but your supervision would be under Conservation and Collections.
- Wade Myers: 00:03:18 Supervision would be under Conservation and Collections, and there would be a mid-level manager within Collections. But the material itself would stay within the Willow Springs facility. It would still be managed as controlled federal property, and I would answer to the Center's accountable property officer, whether that was the director of the Center, or whether they had designated someone with the organization that I would answer to. So for many years, the Center managers had delegated the accountable property authority to Mike Alvarez. He was the head of Facilities at that point, so I would answer to Mike. So anytime I was chairing an art advisory board, which worked similarly to a board of survey, those findings from that board would go up to Mike, and we would request either to transfer the material to a particular park, or we would request destruction of that property and go through that service or certificate of destruction that way.
- Nancy Russell: 00:04:33 And so then, when did you come under Collections? Was it Collections and Conservation at the time? Or just Collections?
- Wade Myers: 00:04:42 It was Collections and--so Conservation had a separate program, collections had a separate program, separate budgets. And they still have separate budgets. I believe when Jane Merritt physically left the building as the head of Conservation, and John Brucksch was brought over to--he was managing then both Collections and Conservation. Before John, there was Jane Gothier? who was managing the Collections part of the program. But then when she left, and Jane left, then John was brought over and managed both of the programs.
- Nancy Russell: 00:05:31 So you mentioned Jane Gothier. That's not a name I'm really familiar with. Was she a stopgap between Nathanson and Brucksch? Who was she, and what was her role?

- Wade Myers: 00:05:39 She was an administrator that was brought in briefly, yes, as a stopgap for the Collection. She was not involved in Conservation, but was involved in the Collections part of things. And then she moved on from that position from here.
- Nancy Russell: 00:06:01 So she wasn't here very long?
- Wade Myers: 00:06:02 She was not here for very long.
- Nancy Russell: 00:06:04 Okay.
- Wade Myers: 00:06:04 Not here in Willow Springs for very long. She had a place within the organization on the main campus for several years, but then came over here. But not for very long.
- Nancy Russell: 00:06:18 Okay. So then, John Brucksch as the initial head of both programs, then eventually he became just Collections.
- Wade Myers: 00:06:31 He just became Collections. When Linda Blaser was hired to oversee the Conservation program, then he stepped back from that acting role and came specifically under Collections and managed Collections.
- Nancy Russell: 00:06:43 Okay. So, when I started with the NPS History Collection a little over three years ago, you would refer to yourself as just the art guy.
- Wade Myers: 00:06:58 Yeah, I'm the art guy.
- Nancy Russell: 00:07:01 And of course, it only took me about two seconds to realize that you were much more than just the art guy and that you had a lot, a lot of knowledge about the NPS History Collection as well. Can you share some of your understanding of how the collection developed and where it was housed?
- Wade Myers: 00:07:19 Sure. It's my understanding that what we refer to as the core of the collection--and I'm talking now about the Historic Photograph Collection--was actually in the penthouse portion of the Main Interior Building in Washington, D.C. When they needed that space for office spaces and other needs, conference areas and such, the collection was moved to Springfield, Virginia and was managed out of Springfield, Virginia. There was a staff of

about three or four people in the Springfield office that managed that collection.

- Nancy Russell: 00:08:00 And do you know about when this was?
- Wade Myers: 00:08:02 I don't.
- Nancy Russell: 00:08:02 Okay.
- Wade Myers: 00:08:05 I don't. And I was looking in Ralph Lewis' book to see if maybe there was some mention of it there, but I couldn't find a date as to when that move occurred. As I mentioned, there was a staff of about three, four people. It was Marilyn Wandrus, Tom Durant, Doris Barber, and later Gloria Bennett as an administrative assistant there. They were also, at the same time that they were managing that collection, they were building a what we would know as the Interpretive Photograph Collection. So, when projects were coming up, planners and designers would ask for specific images for those projects. And so, Marilyn would go to the various sources, sometimes physically going to the Library of Congress or National Archives, locating the sources, putting requests in or orders in for that material, and then labeling that material, and then sending it out for the projects. When the projects were over, they were supposed to then come back to that central repository of material so that they could be repurposed for other projects.
- Wade Myers: 00:09:17 And so, they were creating subject headings or park headings for that material. So if an image was acquired for, say, a project that Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, then there would be a Harpers Ferry National Historical Park folder created, and that material would go into there. If it was specific, say, to John Brown's raid, then they created a subject file and would put that material into the subject file. So they were actually maintaining at least two different collections down there. They're still maintaining the NPS Historic Photograph Collection, and then maintaining what we refer to as a NPS Interpretive Photograph Collection.
- Nancy Russell: 00:10:00 And the Interpretive Photo Collection was maintained separately, essentially as a vertical file of materials we don't own.

- Wade Myers: 00:10:10 Right. These were sources that were outside of the National Park Service. So, if the source was a National Park Service source, then it became or was shifted into the NPS Historic Photograph Collection. But otherwise, if it was coming from a source outside of the National Park Service, it was going into the Interpretive Photograph Collection. So this was primarily Interpretive Photograph Collection for Harpers Ferry Center. But if a park contacted the Springfield Office, they would often check both sources to see if there was anything appropriate for the park.
- Nancy Russell: 00:10:50 And so, that collection was presumably--the Interpretive Photo Collection was presumably heavily used for a while.
- Wade Myers: 00:10:58 Oh, yes. Yeah, even when it was down in the Springfield Office, it was heavily used by the Harpers Ferry Center staff. In some cases, the staff would physically go to Springfield, but more often than not, they would send either a message down or make a phone call down and request, "Can you send me anything you have on such and such a subject," or "We're working on this project. We're looking for images."
- Nancy Russell: 00:11:24 And so, presumably, we spent a lot of money putting that resource together.
- Wade Myers: 00:11:29 Oh, yeah. Yeah. And Marilyn was actually always looking ahead. So, if she came across something in her research for a particular project and knew that there was an affiliation with a park, but we might not be working on that particular park project at the time, she would still acquire that image for the Interpretive Photo Collection so that it was an image that we could consider for a future project.
- Nancy Russell: 00:11:56 Do you know, was that just a base-funded activity?
- Wade Myers: 00:11:59 As far as I know, it was a base-funded activity because at that time, most of the staffs and projects were base-funded. Occasionally, parks would put money up for certain portions of their projects, but more often than not, that was a base-funded project. We still had to pay for the prints or the negatives or whatever we were asking for. But we had an account with the Library of Congress and National Archives, so we would put money into that account, and then they would draw off of that account. And if more

money was needed later, then more money would be added to that account.

- Nancy Russell: 00:12:43 When I arrived three years ago, the Interpretive Photo Collection was here in Willow Springs, not being actively used.
- Wade Myers: 00:12:53 Right.
- Nancy Russell: 00:12:54 Do you have a sense of when and why that use tapered off?
- Wade Myers: 00:13:01 Sure. At a certain point, the Springfield Office was closed, and part of that was due to Marilyn Wandrus and Doris Barber retiring from their positions. The decision was made at that point to shift the collection up to Harpers Ferry Center. And for a while, both collections were split between the Bird-Brady Building and the bottom portion of the Lewis Anthony Building. And part of the reason for that split was because the weight of some of that material was such that the floors would in those historic structures would not hold the weight. When the Willow Springs building was finally completed, the building of this facility, the decision was made then to go ahead and move that collection to the Charles Town location, for Willow Springs.
- Wade Myers: 00:14:04 At that point, the six or seven miles away became a problem for the staff. It was easier for them to simply go out of the IDC facility, walk a few feet or yards, to either the Lewis Anthony Building at the library, or to the Bird-Brady Building to search or request what they needed. The six or seven miles distance became an issue. There was a point as well where the head of Conservation was not welcoming of people outside of this facility. If you didn't work in this facility, you weren't really welcome here, which included, unfortunately, other HFC staff. And I think that mindset then just settled in and it continued that they-- it was just an inconvenience to come--to request a government vehicle, come in the government vehicle, and then look at the material. And then of course, having an unwelcome atmosphere just kept people away from it.
- Nancy Russell: 00:15:20 And then presumably, as technology has improved, it was possible for them to find things other ways.

- Wade Myers: 00:15:27 Sure. And also, the way we shifted the way we worked with these IDIQ contracts that I mentioned earlier with going to the design build or the design fabrication, that research emphasis was placed on the contractor. It was no longer placed on the planner, the designer. Although the park staff still had a say in the kinds of things that they wanted to interpret, the message they wanted to put out, and if there were certain images they wanted to include in that, then certainly that was conveyed to the contractor. But the emphasis was placed on the contractor, then, to do the research and find the graphics and provide those graphics for the project.
- Nancy Russell: 00:16:11 And so that material has been relatively recently removed from Willow Springs and sent to--
- Wade Myers: 00:16:18 eTIC, up in Denver or Lakewood. So, the physical graphic material now has been physically moved from Harpers Ferry Center complex to the Denver Service Center.
- Nancy Russell: 00:16:34 So if seven miles was too much for you, how does 1,500 miles work?
- Wade Myers: 00:16:39 I'm not sure how 1,500 miles is going to work. They're supposed to provide, eventually, some sort of a guide or an aid as to what they have there, but I'm just not sure how that's going to work. It's my understanding that they'll make the high-res digital files available when the request comes to them. Whether they're going to actually put thumbnails up or low-res scans up of what they have, I don't know. But we're talking about thousands and thousands of graphic images that will have to be scanned by somebody and some sort of basic metadata put in there at least as to what the subject is or what the park affiliation is or something of that nature. I don't see that being used as a resource any time in the very near future.
- Nancy Russell: 00:17:30 Okay. There was a period of time where you were involved working with the NPS History Collection more directly.
- Wade Myers: 00:17:46 Sure.
- Nancy Russell: 00:17:48 Can you talk about that and what you were doing with the collection?



- Wade Myers: 00:17:52 Sure. I worked with both the Historic Photograph Collection as well as the Interpretive Photograph Collection from the time I started working in Publications. Part of what my duties were in Publications along with managing their Commissioned Art Collection was as a graphic researcher for their printing program, whether it be the handbooks or the visitor information brochures. So, I became familiar with the staff in Springfield early on and actually was working with the collection quite regularly. Of course, it was easier for me to work with it once it was moved up to Harpers Ferry Center, to the main campus.
- Wade Myers: 00:18:38 And then eventually, when it came over to Springfield and when I eventually relocated to the--I'm sorry, to the Willow Springs facility, then I became much more involved with the collection. But David Nathanson and Tom Durant retired within a month of each other in February and March of 2007, there was an immediate need to continue to have somebody in a role or function to keep the projects moving, and handle the outside requests and the park requests and such. So, Jane sent me an email indicating that I would be assuming that responsibility for the next three or four months. It was not an official detail. And when she didn't get her way with the personnel office in how she wanted to announce that position or positions, it became more of a permanent, unofficial detail for about nine and a half years until you stepped in. And then I could release my responsibilities to that.
- Nancy Russell: 00:20:00 So, we've talked primarily about the collection from the standpoint of the Historic Photograph Collection and--obviously there were external uses and things like that at the same time, but again, it was keyed largely towards keeping the projects going and that kind of stuff. What can you tell us about the development of other aspects of the collection, be they the objects or the uniform collection or--
- Wade Myers: 00:20:32 The uniform collection there apparently had--at some point early on in the history of the Harpers Ferry Center, David Nathanson was collecting objects or cultural material, whether it be uniforms or something of that nature, as part of this larger NPS History Collection. So the Historic Photograph Collection was just a portion of the larger NPS History Collection. So even though the photographs migrated to the Willow Springs facility, the uniforms and such did not. And when Bryce Workman started working

on his series of publications on the history of the National Park Service uniform, there was much more of a use of that part of the collection, and it's my understanding that at one point when David Nathanson went away on vacation, Bryce Workman and Tom Durant went over and actually physically took the material from the Lewis Anthony Building, here to the Willow Springs facility and that's how the uniform collection and the cultural material wound up over here.

- Nancy Russell: 00:21:50 Nathanson didn't want it to come over for some reason?
- Wade Myers: 00:21:53 Nathanson, for some reason, didn't want it to come over here. He wasn't actively using the collection. Bryce was actively using the collection and it became more of a pain for Bryce to have to keep running down the road six or seven miles to look at something or photograph something. And so, they simply brought it over here.
- Nancy Russell: 00:22:14 Were there any repercussions from that from Nathanson?
- Wade Myers: 00:22:17 As far as I know, there were no repercussions. I'm not sure that he even realized it was gone for a while. And then when he did, I think he realized it was probably in a better place, and--yeah. As far as I know, there were no repercussions.
- Nancy Russell: 00:22:33 And he still had the library at--
- Wade Myers: 00:22:36 He still had the circulation library over there. And within the circulation library were smaller, what we refer to as satellite libraries. So the design library, the NPS library. He still had the rare books and so forth and so on over there. And the archives at that time were still over there. The photos were here, but the paper records, the paper archives and the oral histories and such were still actually at the Lewis Anthony Building.
- Nancy Russell: 00:23:07 So did the uniform collection and stuff go into Room 122 with the photograph collection?
- Wade Myers: 00:23:14 Yes. It's my understanding it did, yeah.
- Nancy Russell: 00:23:16 Okay. And what was Bryce's role? What was his position?

- Wade Myers: 00:23:21 What was his position? I don't know if he had an official-- I'm sure he had an official title. I'm not sure what it was. But for a while, he was working as a graphics researcher. He was hired in as one of the replacements for Doris Barber and Marilyn Wandrus, but at a certain point, he got permission to start working on these special publications on the history of the National Park Service uniform. So his time was then diverted from project work to work on these publications.
- Nancy Russell: 00:24:01 Okay. So when you were doing this very long detail, you were--
- Wade Myers: 00:24:07 A long, unofficial detail. Yeah. I'm still managing the Commissioned Art Collection at the same time.
- Nancy Russell: 00:24:12 Correct. And you were largely focused on meeting the photographic needs, but other responsibilities like annual inventory and things like that. Did that fall to you as well?
- Wade Myers: 00:24:26 Yes. No. Sylvia Coleman--Sylvia Frye was in the office as well up until 2008. So for a while, I was assisting with the annual museum property inventories. It wasn't a main responsibility for me. It was one of those things where, "Can you help?" "Sure."
- Nancy Russell: 00:24:56 Right, because inventory takes two people.
- Wade Myers: 00:24:59 Right. And in the case of the controlled property inventories, you really want to have two people involved in that, and individuals had problems getting the gun safe open. So I had the combination, and I always seemed to be able to open the gun safe without any trouble. Then we'd go through that and take care of that part of the inventory.
- Wade Myers: 00:25:24 So yeah, but then eventually when Sylvia left, yeah. It sort of fell on me, but again, it was never an official thing. It was just, "We need to do these inventories, and you know where everything is or have a general idea of where things might be." And so, I would do the inventories. We would get students involved in that a lot of times, or get assistance from elsewhere to get the inventories completed and then I would just turn the results over to John and then let him do what he needed to do in order to get them submitted.

- Nancy Russell: 00:26:02 Okay. We mentioned Tom Durant a few times as the photo archivist that was here. Do you have any anecdotes or stories you want to share about working with Tom?
- Wade Myers: 00:26:18 Tom was like a walking encyclopedic computer. He knew that collection inside and out. If you had the most obscure subject that you were looking for, he could tell you pretty quickly if he was going to find something or not find something. So he was just absolutely incredible. You could spend--it's sort of like when you said, "Okay, I've looked here, here, and here. Do you have any idea where I could find this? Do we even have this?" And he'll say, "Have you checked such and such?" That was Tom.
- Nancy Russell: 00:26:51 Yes, because my response to that was always, "Why would you look there?" And you would just say "That's how Tom's mind worked."
- Wade Myers: 00:26:58 That's how it was filed. I should back up here. A lot of times when donations were coming in, the donations were coming in through David Nathanson. And Dave would then split that donation and keep some stuff there at the library, and then nine times out of 10, he would send the photos to Tom, sometimes in the Springfield Office. He wouldn't necessarily let Tom and Marilyn know that they were part of an accession. That's how some things got disassociated from the original accessions. Anyway, getting--so sometimes the subjects or the themes were artificially created, because there was always a demand for children in the parks, or African American employees working in the parks, or fire management, or something of that nature. So sometimes artificially created subjects were made certainly because it was easier than when the request came in to go straight to a single source and find everything that was in the collection.
- Wade Myers: 00:28:11 He also had a severe hearing loss as I did, so I knew, for instance, when was on the phone--he had an amplifier on his phone. But he would have to take his hearing aid out in order to use the telephone. So I knew when I walked in, if he was on the phone, he was wrapping up a conversation, not to start talking to him until he had an opportunity to put his hearing aid back in. But it was somewhat comical to see us walking down the hallway together, because we both had severe hearing losses, but in different ears. Inevitably--so Tom was completely deaf in one ear.

- Wade Myers: 00:28:58 He had an amplifier of some sort in that ear, which amplified what little bit of hearing he had left in his other ear. And in my case, I was deaf in both ears, but I had severe hearing loss in one ear more than the other. So, inevitably, I was usually the one walking backwards down the hallway to have a conversation with him, but a lot of times, we just realized we can't have a conversation in the hallway. The acoustics were so bad that we'd have to step into a room somewhere to have a conversation. It was really difficult for us to speak to each other or not to yell at each other in the hallway because we're not going to understand or hear what the other person is saying.
- Wade Myers: 00:29:36 But yeah, he was absolutely great to work with. I really enjoyed working with him and Marilyn and Doris, for that matter. They were just really great people. Marilyn would bend over backwards to find the image that somebody wanted. And in those days, Marilyn and I had what we referred to as stack passes. Stack passes allowed us to go into the stacks, particular in the Library of Congress. So where the general public was not permitted, we were allowed to go into the stacks and rummage through the books and that sort of thing. On several projects I was working on for Publications required me to spend a lot of time in the Library of Congress.
- Wade Myers: 00:30:26 Marilyn had an area that she would often go to when she was working down there in the Hispanic Reading Room. I had an area in the Rare Book section of the Library of Congress, because most of what I was dealing with was in the rare books. So I had to actually set up myself a little pseudo-office down there. She sometimes would work in the Hispanic Reading Room, I would be in the Rare Book Room. But the stack passes were nice. You couldn't just request a stack pass. Well, you could just request a stack pass, but you had to have some credentials, you had to have somebody vouch for you, that you weren't going to go in there and start cutting up the books or just walking out of the library with the books, that you were going to be taking some responsibility. But because of your government work, the need was such that you really should be granted a stack pass. And that was still at the discretion of the staff of the Library of Congress, whether you would get that stack pass or not.

- Wade Myers: 00:31:31 But in my case, I was granted the stack pass that allowed me access into the non-public areas of the library, which was great. And I enjoyed working in the Rare Book collection too, because I could request a book from the Rare Book collection and it might be a 15th century volume of some obscure work, but there was an image in there that we were looking for. And I would go through the book, find the image, mark it for request, and to have it photographed, because I had already checked to find out that they didn't have an existing photograph of it. And off it went. But I would be sitting there going through this going, "Man, I can't believe I'm looking at the 15th century volume." And of course, it might be in Latin. A lot of times it was in Latin and I had no idea what I was reading, but it was still an interesting experience to have, to be able to just leaf through very leisurely these old volumes of literature and find photos I was looking for.
- Wade Myers: 00:32:32 I remember one occasion when I was in the Library of Congress, it was actually in the Manuscripts Room, and I was looking for a drawing, almost a doodle, that one of the Wright brothers had put into a correspondence and we wanted to use it in either the Wright brothers handbook or the First Flight or the visitor information brochure for Wright brothers. And I had only been told that it existed in this correspondence. Nobody had a photograph of it or anything like that, or an image of it, so I really didn't know what I was looking for. But as I was going through these letters, all of a sudden, there is--it was actually a design for a wing, for a glider. There it is. And it was. It was literally embedded in the middle of several paragraphs of information that one of the brothers was sending, and saying, "We're working on this glider design wing, or glider wing design." And it was like, "Wow, there it is. Okay." And they don't have a photograph of it here. So, put the request in.
- Wade Myers: 00:33:46 If the image did not already exist at the Library of Congress, the requester paid for the initial cost of having a negative made and then the prints made. Then that allowed the Library of Congress, when that request came again, to suddenly go to the negative, make another print. Sometimes they would make multiple images from that same negative. But you paid the initial cost to have that negative made if the image did not exist. Otherwise, you simply put the request in to have a print made. I also remember putting the

request in of the same project to have a large format print made of the capturing of the first flight at Kitty Hawk. They had the original glass plate negative there, and I said, "I want a such and such size print made from the original glass plate negative," and it was just an absolutely incredible image. It wasn't one of those multiple photographs that had been made over and over and over again from the same negative. It was actually from the glass plate negative. It was an incredible image. The detail was just absolutely incredible.

- Nancy Russell: 00:34:54 So maybe I'm getting or I'm thinking too--reading in too much to what you're saying, but it sounds like you guys as graphic researchers actually had a lot of time to find what you were looking for, to be able to go into the Library of Congress, to be able to do these kinds of things. Is that fair? What kind of time frames did you guys have?
- Wade Myers: 00:35:24 It depended. If there was a special event or a special celebration coming up, the hope was that we were working far enough ahead that we could get ahead of that. If something came up and it was a special thing for the Washington Office, not so much, very short time frame, because you have to understand that to get the product published or printed took some time. So depending on what it was, you had to get the--
- Wade Myers: 00:36:05 Let's say it's a visitor information brochure. You had a design concept, then you had to write the text and get the images. So it took a while. And then just getting it in the queue through GPO to get it printed and get it to the printer. So, in most cases, there was some time. A handbook, however, took years. It was years. Again, you had to have an idea what you wanted to say in that publication, of course you're always negotiating and discussing with the park what they want in the book. Then you have to decide what things you--you can't get everything in the book, so what are you going to leave out of the book? And then you've got to find the images, somebody has to write the manuscript. If it's in multiple parts, you might have somebody writing the manuscript for part one of the handbook, somebody else is writing the manuscript for part two of the handbook. Now your writer, editors are having to edit those manuscripts, send them back, more writing, more editing. So those took multiple

years, usually two or three years to get a handbook started and to publication.

- Wade Myers: 00:37:25 And probably, I'd say maybe a year for a publication. If it was a new visitor information brochure, probably a year. If was a reprint with corrections or a reprint--and sometimes those corrections might be "we want to substitute a different image or different photograph for that image, or we need to make some slight changes to the text." The Hawaiian parks, particularly Hawaii Volcanoes was always changing because the map was always changing because you had eruptions and suddenly the roads that were there last year were under two or three feet of lava flow, and were no longer accessible. So you were always making changes sometimes to the park brochures simply because of nature.
- Nancy Russell: 00:38:15 Do you know, are those timelines still the same today, or has that changed? Or you're not sure?
- Wade Myers: 00:38:22 Well, unfortunately, there's no longer a handbook program for the Division of Publications. It's strictly a visitor information brochure program. And I think those are still the same, unless there's a particular push to try to get something out earlier. I know that they, for instance, with the latest eruptions at the Hawaii Volcanoes, they were really pushing to get the new maps out if not in the park brochures, at least so the park could put them up on their website and the visitors could see what areas were accessible or no longer accessible. So the technologies in that case have changed, in the sense that with at least with the cartographic end of things, we can get those maps up to the parks sooner, and they don't have to necessarily wait for the entire brochure to come out to make that available to the public.
- Nancy Russell: 00:39:24 Okay. I would imagine another way that technology has changed for the Historic Photograph Collection is with our ability to do on-site scanning of images now. How were requests for images handled previously?
- Wade Myers: 00:39:43 You mean before scanners?
- Nancy Russell: 00:39:46 Mm-hmm (affirmative).



- Wade Myers: 00:39:50 It was a little bit more complicated. Going back to when I worked in Publications, we would actually use different vendors. Photo houses, we called them. And they would take that material, let's say it was an illustration, and they would photograph it for us, usually in a transparency form. With the Division of Publications especially, they were looking for large format transparencies. So these would be 8x10's, a minimum of 4x5. Rarely did we do 35 millimeters because the emulsions were such that you had--the larger the film size, the longer the emulsions lasted. So, if you had very little emulsion on a 35 millimeter, it was going to change color or go bad within a few years. So they tended to go with 8x10's because you had more film emulsions on the film. And as long as they were stored and kept out of daylight, they lasted much longer. It was a little bit more of a longer process because you had to write up a requisition or a request to the vendor and be very specific about what it was that you wanted, how you wanted them to do it, and what you expected as the final product.
- Wade Myers: 00:41:21 There were no credit cards in those days, charge cards. So the payment process was a little bit different too. So they would invoice, the invoice would go to Programs and Finance, and they would see to it then that the vendor was paid.
- Nancy Russell: 00:41:38 And so, when a researcher or somebody requested a copy of a photograph from the Historic Photograph Collection, those would also get sent out to a vendor for copy?
- Wade Myers: 00:41:48 Right. So the way it was supposed to work--and again, I'm going back to when I worked at Publications. If a third party made a request for a particular image, as long as that image had no restrictions, and we could copy it for them, we would provide that image to the vendor, and then the transaction was between the vendor and the third party. So the third party paid the vendor directly. We were simply providing the graphic to the vendor to facilitate the completion of that request. So we would basically give the contact information for the requester to the vendor. They would get in touch with each other, and then they would work out the particulars of what the requester wanted and the payment and all that. We would either go down and retrieve the material, or the material would be sent back to us.

- Wade Myers: 00:42:47 In those days, some of the vendors had couriers, so we could hand-courier the material to the vendors without having to ourselves hand-courier the material down there. When it came to the paintings and artwork, I hand-couriered all of that. But if it was photographs or prints or something of that nature, transparencies, we usually had couriers with the vendors coming up and picking up.
- Nancy Russell: 00:43:12 So HFC never at any point had a photographic studio or anything like that, on staff?
- Wade Myers: 00:43:21 No. The closet thing we had to--well, there was a photo studio within the Audiovisual Arts department. There was a sound studio and a photo studio down there. There was a photo studio within Conservation. So, sometimes Publications would set up photo shoots with the photographer in Conservation. This was done sometimes if there was a display that Vince wanted to do, say a series of brochures or showing the old brochures and the new unigrid brochures comparison. He would work out to work with the conservation photographer to do these set up shots. But we were also using Conservation to find out what objects and things were coming through there, and they would sometimes send the list of "here are our objects that have come through for such and such park." In the case of Publications, if they were working on a visitor information brochure or a handbook for that park, then they could work out to have specific objects photographed for that brochure or handbook. And again, Publications was paying for that photographer's time. But when the object was in house, as it were, then it was being photographed for Publications.
- Nancy Russell: 00:44:49 With all the developing and reprinting and all that stuff was done off-site with contractors.
- Wade Myers: 00:44:53 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Right.
- Nancy Russell: 00:44:55 In the age before digital.
- Wade Myers: 00:44:57 Right. In the age before digital.
- Nancy Russell: 00:45:00 So we talked a little bit about how Dave Nathanson and Tom Durant both retired in 2007, and then about halfway through 2008 Sylvia Coleman Frye left as well. One of the things that also happened about that time was that the Office of the Inspector General issued an audit report in

2008 about the National Park Service History Collection, in particular some accountability concerns. Can you provide any background on that report and how the OIG came to do the report and what the issues were?

Wade Myers: 00:45:49 Yes. There was an incident that we refer to as the Danno incident. It was Rob Danno who was a commissioned law enforcement ranger, who was found to have government property in his possession and as a result of that investigation, he had what was referred to as a museum quality badge collection, Park Service badge collection. So, as part of that investigation, they were trying to determine which collections he'd had access to, and how he had actually acquired these badges. The result of that--it was found that he had had contact with the NPS History Collection here at Harpers Ferry Center and that some of those badges were directly related to the collection here. At least 14, we could positively identify as coming from our collection. So, if I'm remembering this correctly, the inspector general was contacted by an outside group of retired employees of the Center--not of the Center, I'm sorry, of the Park Service--who felt that because of this incident, the rest of the collection may be in jeopardy. So that's what actually initiated that inspection, that audit from the inspector general's office.

Wade Myers: 00:47:29 And as a result, they wrote up a report. The Harpers Ferry Center addressed some of those issues in the report. Some of those issues were dealt with rather quickly, such as adding security cameras and putting cipher locks on collection spaces, restricting access, and that sort of thing. And I believe also at that point, the decision was also made to move what remained of the collection from the Lewis Anthony Building to Willow Springs. So the archival material that was still over there and the library itself to move here, because at that point, there was nobody in the library. The Lewis Anthony Building was empty. So we would go over on occasion just to handle some general library needs from the staff, but otherwise, there was really nobody in the Lewis Anthony Building. So the decision was made then, by HFC management at that point, that the archives and the rest of what was the NPS History Collection would come over to the Willow Springs facility.

Nancy Russell: 00:48:52 So there was no apparent plan to rehire the librarian position?

- Wade Myers: 00:48:59 No. No. Nor was there an immediate plan to rehire the photo archivist position. No.
- Nancy Russell: 00:49:09 So by moving it here, they weren't necessarily gaining staff to manage it, but they were just securing it better.
- Wade Myers: 00:49:16 They were securing it better. There were issues with the Lewis Anthony Building, physical issues, similar to what we're having here, with this facility here at Willow Springs. And so, that came out in the report. So the thought was if we remove it from that environment and bring it to Willow Springs, then it's in a better environment and it is more secure. They went ahead and did the renovations to the Lewis Anthony Building, but there was apparently no plan to move the material back to--even though we could show that the staff were not using the resources while they were here, and the report had only indicated that the environment that the material was in needed to be corrected, not that they should permanently move the collection to another space. But that's ultimately what happened.
- Nancy Russell: 00:50:14 And then that space became offices and conference rooms and stuff?
- Wade Myers: 00:50:17 Yeah, the acquisition management or procurement staff moved into those office spaces and there was a conference space set up there as well, yeah.
- Nancy Russell: 00:50:28 So did you and John, then, have to move all that stuff? How did that move happen?
- Wade Myers: 00:50:34 That move happened through our Facilities, Property, and Services group. Because the material was HFC material, the move did not occur with our handlers, or what we would call our handlers. It was just basically an office moving company that Facilities hired to physically move the material. So entire portions of the collection were moved out that way. Now, they did make the decision to put some of the material into a freeze-thaw-freeze process. And that became problematic. It didn't come to us all at once. It was coming over in phases.
- Nancy Russell: 00:51:35 And just for the record, that freeze-thaw-freeze process is about pest management.

- Wade Myers: 00:51:39 Pest management, yes. Apparently, nobody bothered to give them specifics about how that should be done or how the material should be packed before you do that. And so, a lot of the material that was coming to us, the boxes and the material were wet because they had not done it properly. And not only that, but they were using--in between the boxes, the stacked boxes on the pallets, they were using plastic spacers, which became apparent pretty early on, were--how do I want to say this? They were used in the fishing industry. Because there were fish guts and fish blood all over this material, and you could smell it. So we--John and myself and others said, "Don't do this this way. Actually, don't do this at all." Because they'd also shrink-wrapped everything. So that also trapped all that moisture in the shrink wrap. We said, "Don't. Just don't."
- Wade Myers: 00:53:00 They finally did confess that they has reused fish pallets--or things that were used for fishing, to transport fish, as part of this process. So yeah. You may still find containers that have the little impressions in them, and if there's blood smears on there, it's fish blood, it's not human blood. That move did not go real well at all. We had to rehouse a lot of that material. We had to dry out a lot of that material. And that's when the conservators in the building stepped in and helped us get some of that material dried out and properly rehoused in dry containers.
- Nancy Russell: 00:53:50 Wasn't there some negative press even about that at the time? Am I mis-remembering?
- Wade Myers: 00:53:56 I think there were some individuals outside of the Center who were keeping things agitated, as it were. And some of them were these retired NPS individuals, and some of them were individuals who had left the Center, who were in contact with these people who were providing misinformation to these people, who were then providing that to either the OIG or officials in Washington, or to the press, and that's where things--once everything was settled in that move, then we invited those individuals here to look at the changes that had been made, the conditions that the material was in, and they were satisfied and that issue went away finally. But yeah, for a while it was contentious.
- Nancy Russell: 00:54:50 Okay. So did the movers unpack and set up the library? How was that done?

- Wade Myers: 00:54:59 No. I think that was done by us. We got the shelving. We had contractors who put the shelving together. But yeah, most of that was unpacked and put into place by us. We didn't get movers involved in that collection again until we had to move the collection down to Room 122 because of the floor issues, and then again, they only brought in what I would refer to as office movers to do that. And that went a little better than the initial move of the material out of the Lewis Anthony Building.
- Nancy Russell: 00:55:36 Can you talk about why the--and when we talk about Room 122, we're talking about the main object storage, photograph storage, that kind of stuff here at Willow Springs. What precipitated that move?
- Wade Myers: 00:55:50 We were having issues in different parts of the Willow Springs facility. We were having issues with the floors. There was moisture coming up through the seams of the floor tiles, there was discoloration of the floor tiles, there was a crustiness on the floor tiles. When we took a black light into say 118, the floor fluorescence was showing that we had mold. And it wasn't just around the seams. It was mold on the surface of the tiles. In my opinion, actually, the floors in Room 118, which is where the registrar's office objects are maintained--this is the material that comes to us from the parks for conservation treatment as well as the space where we're all managing the Commissioned Art Collection--those floors were in much worse shape than 122. 122 was selected to have the floors redone and entirely moved because that material belonged to the Center. It wasn't someone else's property that we had to be mindful of.
- Wade Myers: 00:57:13 So, that room had to be--everything had to be completely moved out. All the furnishings, all the materials in those rooms had to be moved. Nothing could be on the floor. And when everything was finally removed from there, they took that opportunity to go ahead and patch and paint the walls and then proceed to remove the tile floor and resurface the floor, re-coat the floor. And then everything came back into the space. We had the opportunity then to kind of rearrange if we wanted to, but most of it came back in the way that it went out.
- Nancy Russell: 00:57:59 But those collections were moved by Collection and Conservation staff?

- Wade Myers: 00:58:03 The Collection and Conservation staff packed the, what I call the loose materials, the material that was loose on the shelves and such, was packed by the Conservation staff and the Collections staff. The furniture of that material, and in this case, the photo collection, is in the vertical filing cabinets. So none of that material was unloaded from those vertical filing cabinets. The movers literally moved those vertical filing cabinets with the material inside the cabinets. And I honestly don't remember now how we handled the uniforms, whether that material was taken out or whether it was left in the cabinets, but the cabinets were all moved. So we had at least two, if not three, places that we were moving the material. Some material moved directly across the hall into an empty space across the hallway. Some moved down into Room 131, which was a much longer distance to move stuff, but we managed to get everything moved out of 122B and 122 for them to work on those floors. It was quite an undertaking.
- Nancy Russell: 00:59:29 All the--
- Wade Myers: 00:59:29 A lot of the work was done at night. A lot of the moves went late into the night, and some of the floor work was actually done at night so there was less impact on the staff here.
- Nancy Russell: 00:59:43 But all the materials stayed within the building. It was an internal--
- Wade Myers: 00:59:46 Yeah. All the materials stayed within the building. Nothing went off-site, and nothing went out into a storage pod in the parking lot or anything like that. Everything stayed within the building, yes. We couldn't get to everything. So in other words, project work is still going on while everything is in a state of move or flux, and in some cases, even though we'd asked to have access to the photo files, because that was the biggest demand of the collection, it still was difficult to actually get in and access some of that material to continue project work until we could get the stuff moved back into the larger room. And even then, the Interpretive Photo Collection at least, did not move back into 122. It stayed in the room across the hallway until it went to eTIC-

Nancy Russell: 01:00:37 Not just the Interpretive Photo Collection, but the prints and the negative cabinets, because they were still here when I got here.

Wade Myers: 01:00:45 Right. Right.

Nancy Russell: 01:00:45 And then we were able to rehouse the negatives and get them into cold storage—

Wade Myers: 01:00:51 And get them into cold storage, right.

Nancy Russell: 01:00:52 --and then consolidate so that we could get the cabinets back into 122. And then the Photo Interpretive Collection--

Wade Myers: 01:00:59 Went away.

Nancy Russell: 01:00:59 Eventually, like another year and a half later, eventually went to TIC.

Wade Myers: 01:01:02 Right. Right. And a lot of that had to do with the fact that they had planned after the floor was redone to put shelving in where the vertical cabinets had been. But there was no plan to rehouse the photo material into folders into boxes to put on the shelves. So you had all this shelving where we normally would have the vertical cabinets, and so the vertical cabinets and the negatives as you said stayed across the hall because there was no plan to rehouse.

Nancy Russell: 01:01:42 Well, there was no staff.

Wade Myers: 01:01:43 There was no staff, yeah. Because for a while, it was just John and myself. We had an occasional student intern, but yeah, for a while there it literally came down to just John and myself as the staff in Collections.

Nancy Russell: 01:02:00 And John had come over from the IDC as a historic furnishings curator?

Wade Myers: 01:02:06 Yeah. He was a supervisory staff curator with Historic Furnishings before he came over here, yeah.

Nancy Russell: 01:02:12 And he came over as a result of a reorg?

Wade Myers: 01:02:16 He came over as a result of a reorg, yeah. As I mentioned earlier, when Jane physically left the building here, he came in as the acting head for Conservation and



Collections--was the head of Collections but the acting for Conservation.

Nancy Russell: 01:02:35

So was this at the same time that they were reorganizing the teams of the IDC by region, or was that a different time?

Wade Myers: 01:02:41

That was going on simultaneously, yes. So they were reorganizing the Harpers Ferry Center staff into regional teams or regional pods, and so there was no longer a--with the exception of Publications. All the other work groups, divisions, other than, say, procurement and programs and budget, IT and facilities, the interpretive media groups split up into these different regional teams. So there was no longer a Historic Furnishings work group. There was no longer a Wayside Exhibits work group, and there was no longer an Audiovisual Arts work group or an Exhibits. These individuals split into these regional teams.

Nancy Russell: 01:03:39

Do you know why management made the decision to do that split?

Wade Myers: 01:03:44

Why they chose to do it as a regional team thing? I don't know because when this idea first came out in a series of all employee meetings to talk about reorganizing the Harpers Ferry Center staff, everybody--I should say not everybody. Most everybody, most of the staff, disagreed with that management decision to do that because we knew that a number of the regions one, there wasn't a lot of project work coming from those regions at that time, and there was concern that if you're going to do that, you can't rely on projects from those regions, and two, you weren't going to have a representative of every existing work group in those regions. So, if you only had three historic furnishings staff, but you had seven regions, a number of those regions weren't going to have a historic furnishings staff individual. A number of those regions weren't going to have an AV-tech individual. So those were the concerns that were raised by the staff. Nonetheless, management went ahead and went in that direction.

Wade Myers: 01:05:03

They were also then, at that same time, shifting from base-funded or salaried employees at the Center to project-funded and project staffed. And so, by shifting those individuals into these regional teams, they were then paid per project and not salary. There was still a certain

percentage of their salary that was overhead that they could charge for all employee meetings, or training, or something of that nature. But otherwise, their source for funding came from the individual projects. The comptroller at the time was advising not to go in that direction, and HFC management went exactly in that direction. I don't have an explanation as to why.

- Nancy Russell: 01:06:00 Who was the manager at the time?
- Wade Myers: 01:06:03 Oh, my goodness. I'm trying to think. I believe it was Gary Cummins. I believe it was Gary Cummins, and he'd come to us from the Grand Canyon. He was, I believe, the deputy superintendent of Grand Canyon at the time.
- Nancy Russell: 01:06:25 Okay.
- Wade Myers: 01:06:25 Again, I don't know whether this was being pushed or facilitated by the Washington Office, or whether this was something that the Harpers Ferry Center leadership management team felt the direction--should be the direction that the Center goes in. And the Washington Office, rubber stamped it or agreed, and then go ahead and do it that way. Not clear on that.
- Nancy Russell: 01:06:51 Okay. I know for a long time the Historic Photograph Collection was not considered a museum collection. It was that active graphics research collection. At what point did it become part of the museum collection, and what factored into those decisions?
- Wade Myers: 01:07:13 Sure. For the longest time, the collection was considered to be federal records. A lot of the material within that collection were survey photographs, a lot of them taken by George Grant, the first chief photographer for the Park Service. So when there as a proposal or an idea that an area might come into the National Park system, a survey was done of that area. So a lot of that material was considered to be survey photographs, and so they were treated as federal records. As federal records, after a certain amount of time, they're supposed to be turned over to the National Archives. So National Archives was making an effort to try to get that material turned over to them as part of Record Group 79 for the National Park Service.

- Wade Myers: 01:08:05 We would always come back and say, "But we're using them in our project work, and so they're not inactive." But periodically, we would have to keep justifying to the National Archives why we were not automatically turning this material over to them. As a service center, we were at a disadvantage too in that we weren't able to get funding for the collection. So we weren't getting funding to be able to scan the collection, rehouse the collection, and that sort of thing.
- Wade Myers: 01:08:46 And because it was also federal records, not museum property, we also couldn't get funding that way either. So the decision was made that if we classified the material as management records, then as management records, they could be accessioned and cataloged as museum property. They couldn't be cataloged and accessioned as federal records as museum property, but they could as management records. So without consulting National Archives, the decision was made by the Center management staff and by the Washington Office that we would now refer to this material as management records, and then begin the process of accessioning and cataloging that also allowed us to be eligible for some funding, again, as a service center, we didn't have access to all the funding available. But we were at least a little bit closer if we could then get the material in as museum property and get it accessioned and cataloged. Then we could start requesting from the Washington Office additional funds. And so that's how that occurred.
- Nancy Russell: 01:10:01 Okay. And we've talked a lot about the Historic Photograph Collection and certainly one of the highlights of that collection are those photographs from the designated official NPS photographers. And within the collection, there's a term to describe some of the photographers represented in the collection as an NPS eminent photographer. Can you talk about that designation and how it came about?
- Wade Myers: 01:10:36 I don't know where that designation came from. I don't know whether that's a designation that David Nathanson came up with, or if that's a designation that Tom Durant came up with, but as far as I can tell, those photographers who are identified as NPS eminent photographers had long careers as photographers for the National Park Service. So you've got people like George A. Grant, Jack Boucher, and

photographers such as them, Cecil Stoughton, who had very, very long careers with the National Park Service and had a tremendous body of work to show for it. So I believe that's where that distinction comes from. But who came up with that term? Who decided which ones were going to be named as NPS eminent photographers? I don't know.

- Nancy Russell: 01:11:43 And that's only within our collection.
- Wade Myers: 01:11:45 That's only within our collection. I'm not familiar with that term being used elsewhere in the Park Service.
- Nancy Russell: 01:11:54 Okay. Are there stories about the chief photographers that you want to share? I know you assisted on a large project about George Grant?
- Wade Myers: 01:12:07 Yes, with Ren and Helen Davis, yes. They did a book called *Landscapes for the People*, which talks about George Alexander Grant's work with the Park Service and the body of work that he did. Grant was the first chief photographer of the National Park Service, and he was in that position from 1929 until his retirement in 1954. The Park Service actually designated a chief photographer position as early as 1927, but they didn't fund that position until 1929. So up until that point, the National Park Service was borrowing photographers from other bureaus. Bureau of Reclamation and others. Cowling, I think, worked for the Bureau of Reclamation, so Stephen Mather would often ask him to come and photograph certain events or certain areas. Again, that might be proposed to come into the system.
- Wade Myers: 01:13:21 So Grant actually started as a seasonal ranger at Yellowstone in 1922. The famous photograph showing Horace Albright as the superintendent sitting at a table with two bear cubs eating pancakes with them. That photograph was taken by George Grant. And so Albright actually referred to Grant as the photographer and gave some background information on him at one point. But he also encouraged Grant to leave the Park Service and take a photographer position--I forget now where he went. Somewhere in Pennsylvania. They stayed in touch and corresponded back and forth. Grant letting Albright know that he wanted to come back to the Park Service and should a photographer position come up, to please consider him for it.

- Wade Myers: 01:14:30 So when Albright became the Director and the position was established, he contacted Grant to let him know that the position had been established, but it hadn't been funded yet. So don't leave your job just yet. Wait until--so when it was funded in '29, of course, Albright brings Grant on board as the first chief photographer. Grant stayed out in the field for weeks if not months at a time photographing various parks, and he had a vehicle that we refer to as the hearse. He had a name for it. The Black something. I can't remember, but it was basically what would often be used as a hearse. And so he would develop the film there on-site a lot of times. He would often have to go to a nearby town to get more film sometimes. He would try to figure out how much film he would need before he would go out, but sometimes he would run out.
- Wade Myers: 01:15:35 I do know that he would often go in the back country on horseback. So he would carry the camera with him along with the tripod on horseback, and on one occasion actually broke the leg of a horse that he was riding and had to submit an invoice for the replacement of that horse. But he gave an oral history to, I believe it was Evison, in 1964, lamenting then in '64 that the Park Service really wasn't utilizing his body of work. And he feared what would happen to it. A lot of times, it was being used but he wasn't being credited. It was not unusual at that time for the photographers not to be credited for their work. Those that worked for the government or the National Park Service. But I think he just felt that it wasn't being tapped into or used. That obviously is not the case now. It's being used and reused over and over again.
- Wade Myers: 01:16:42 Another photographer of note would be Cecil Stoughton, who I believe is also listed an NPS eminent photographer. He was a personal photographer for John Kennedy. He would often go to the White House to photograph various events at the request of the Kennedy administration, and was actually with President Kennedy in Dallas in '63 during the assassination. It's Cecil Stoughton's photograph of Lyndon Johnson taking the oath of office on Air Force One, the iconic image that his--Cecil Stoughton's image of that event. And it's my understanding that Cecil Stoughton was the only photographer permitted on board at that point to take that photograph. He would go on to photograph during Johnson's administration and others. Would be fired days after Nixon's inauguration because Cecil Stoughton

didn't hide the fact that he did not like Nixon. And he knew he would be on the platform there during Nixon's inauguration to take photographs and purposely wore the most hideous plaid jacket you can think of.

- Wade Myers: 01:18:09 So as all the gentlemen are either in gray overcoats or black overcoats, Cecil Stoughton is very prominently there in a plaid wool jacket. And there's not a photograph of Nixon's inaugural--unless it's a closeup that you don't see Cecil Stoughton in that plaid jacket. And so, when Nixon sees the papers the next day and sees Stoughton in that jacket, he calls the Secretary of the Interior and has him fired. That was fine with Cecil. He would go on to retire in Florida. Saw him on the Antiques Roadshow.
- Nancy Russell: 01:18:52 Did you?
- Wade Myers: 01:18:53 Yes. He had two autographed prints--photographs that he had taken. One was in the Oval Office of John Kennedy with John John, John Jr., coming through the doorway to the desk.
- Nancy Russell: 01:19:08 Another famous photo.
- Wade Myers: 01:19:11 Another famous photo. And then the photo of LBJ taking the oath of office on Air Force One. And so he was getting those appraised for their value, or whatever. And then, shortly after that aired, I saw an obituary notice where he had passed away. There have been--Jack Boucher had a long career with the Park Service after working in the Washington Office as the chief photographer for the National Park Service. He would go on then to work for HABS/HAER and do a lot of photography work for HABS/HAER, which was also under the National Park Service. And he would wind up working some 50 years before retiring.
- Nancy Russell: 01:20:01 Just a quick question that occurs to me about George Grant. We have a body of Grant's records here that came to us from the Interior Building, but there are escapees of that material, if you will, in that there are Grant negatives and images in some park collections. I believe WACC has some scrapbooks. Do you know how that material ended up being dispersed?

- Wade Myers: 01:20:34 Up there? Yeah. Some of the scrapbooks like you mentioned at WACC, were actually put together by Grant for those parks or for those regions, either as part of the work he was asked to do, or as duplicates to what he was providing for the Washington Office. I believe he retired from region three, which would've been out in the Rockies when he retired. So he wasn't connected to the Washington Office when he retired. So some of that body of work that he was doing was specific for that region, and therefore, that's probably why some of that material remained in those regions because he was not doing general photography work for the Washington Office.
- Wade Myers: 01:21:25 And then sometimes the material is duplicated, so the park might want duplicates of Grant's material or someone else's material, and so, that material would be duplicated for the park.
- Nancy Russell: 01:21:39 Because I know, like at Dry Tortugas I had original negatives and prints from Grant's 1935 visit to the park. There was no record of how we acquired them.
- Wade Myers: 01:21:52 How you got it.
- Nancy Russell: 01:22:02 Yeah.
- Wade Myers: 01:22:02 Right. It's hard to say. It could be that--it's hard to say.
- Nancy Russell: 01:22:03 When the Davises did their research, were they just looking at the photos that we had here, or were they going out to specific park collections and WACC and stuff like that?
- Wade Myers: 01:22:13 They were going out to specific park collections so that they could identify other sources where Grant's work might be, such as WACC, that's where they were going. They were following Grant's trail. I know they reached out to Dry Tortugas to try to look at that material. But they were looking definitely at other sources besides Harpers Ferry Center. There was an occasion of where I was able to bring--after Tom retired, I was able to arrange for a day when he was able to come in and talk to the Davises and answer some of their questions. And also, I think he provided them with some additional places that they could look for his work. They came across his work originally--I'm talking about Grant's work--when they were working on a publication on the CCC. They kept coming across

Grant's work, so they kept thinking that what they were looking at was an Ansel Adams photograph, and they would flip it over and it was then identified as George Grant.

- Wade Myers: 01:23:16 So in the back of their minds, they thought this might make a good subject for a book in the future. So when they were ready to do that book, Tom had already retired, so I got the call. We had a discussion about whether they felt there was going to be somebody to help them with this project and enough work to make it feasible for them to move forward with it. And so, after having another conversation, they decided to go ahead and move forward with doing the book. They reached out to the family. Grant still had some nieces in the area, and so they reached out to them and got some more personal stuff.
- Wade Myers: 01:24:06 Grant also kept journals. He kept a daily journal for the entire time he worked for the National Park Service. Which would've been great for us to have those now, because there is some evidence that his paths crossed with Ansel Adams and vice versa. There's thoughts that they were actually standing pretty much in the same location, probably next to each other. We believe they were also doing photography instruction. But we can't confirm that, and it would've been nice to have those journals, because I'm sure there's mention of that in the daily journals.
- Nancy Russell: 01:24:51 What happened to the journals?
- Wade Myers: 01:24:52 The family threw them away. They discarded them, I believe, because after--Grant only lived a year or two after he gave the oral history. I don't know whether the family had a copy of the oral history, but I'm sure Grant also mentioned to the family his concerns about his material and how the Park Service was managing it or handling it, or not using it. And I suspect that the family felt that the Park Service had no interest in his journals, that they had no interest in his photographs, and they discarded all but, I think, the last two years. He continued to keep a journal even after he retired at the Park Service. And I think they kept the last two years, but the bulk of his journals that would've encompassed his Park Service years, they were discarded.



- Nancy Russell: 01:25:51 Ansel Adams, since you mentioned him. Can you give us a little background on the photographs that he did for DOI?
- Wade Myers: 01:25:59 Sure. He was hired or contracted by Secretary Harold Ickes to document the use of the national parks during World War II. So a number of the parks were being used to train soldiers in different elements, and some of the large lodges and hotels were being used as hospitals or as R&R, rest and recuperation areas. So he wanted that documented. So Ansel Adams was hired to document that for Secretary Ickes. He was also hired by Ickes to do what would later become known as the mural project. So he went out and photographed various park units for this mural project. And then the Division of Publications contracted with him separately in 1967 or 1968 to provide a series of photographs that would become posters. So six were selected of Ansel Adams' images for these black and white posters.
- Wade Myers: 01:27:25 It turns out that, as far as I can tell, with those posters, he didn't photograph any new work. He went back and looked at some of his older work, some of it which was done for the mural project, and selected some images out that focused on these six that were selected as the final images. Yeah, unfortunately, he had a falling out with Secretary Ickes, so he wound up taking the negatives for both what we refer to as the military photos, and more specifically the mural project, and even though there is a binding contract that says the negatives would belong to the government, the negatives themselves now are actually with the Ansel Adams trust.
- Wade Myers: 01:28:23 Research shows that the contract does exist, and the negatives are actually property of the government. The government just hasn't gone after them, and probably won't. I would think they will just leave well enough alone. I think there might be an agreement that if the government comes back and requests copies of the material, that we don't have to pay for them, shouldn't have to pay for them. I think the thought is that as long as we have the prints, we're not going to really go after the negatives.
- Nancy Russell: 01:29:02 Okay. Well, we're coming up on about another hour and a half.
- Wade Myers: 01:29:07 Oh, wow.

- Nancy Russell: 01:29:07 And we're going to continue these conversations, but is there anything else you wanted to talk about today?
- Wade Myers: 01:29:21 We mentioned eminent photographers, we should not forget Fred Mang, Jr. who--one project he photographed which I think is really fascinating is that at one time, the artist Georgia O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch almost came into the Park Service. And so, they send Fred out to photograph the ranch, the studio, and Mrs. O'Keeffe. That's really interesting that we have that body of work. Unfortunately, the Ghost Ranch did not come into the park system. It came really, really close. The legislation was all the way through, had been agreed upon and everything was done except for the signature of the President, and Mrs. O'Keeffe had a change of heart when she found out that busloads of visitors would be coming out to her ranch. She would be permitted to stay there, and often that's an agreement that certain sites, individuals are permitted to stay there.
- Wade Myers: 01:30:35 She would be allowed to stay there at the ranch and do her work, but the thought of busloads of visitors coming out to her and interrupting her work--it was too much, and she made some phone calls and it was scrapped. It didn't come into being. But we still have the photographs that Fred took of the ranch and of her.
- Nancy Russell: 01:30:57 Did Fred work for the Washington Office?
- Wade Myers: 01:30:59 Fred worked for the Washington Office, yeah. Yeah. That's it for now.
- Nancy Russell: 01:31:07 Okay, thank you.
- Wade Myers: 01:31:08 Uh-huh (affirmative).

END OF RECORDING