

## Chapter Six

### *Keeping the Faith: The Struggle to Sustain Momentum for Big Bend National Park, 1938*

For the youthful National Park Service (barely two decades old in the late 1930s), delays in securing land for Big Bend National Park were distressing indeed. Yet a mixture of determination and faith carried NPS planners and their local partners in Texas through what many park service officials recognized a daunting task: acquisition of the \$1 million-plus fund to purchase a tract of land in excess of 1,230 square miles. With Texas mired in the throes of the worst economic crisis in state history, and the rules of Congress clear on federal participation in matters of park land acquisition, no one would have been surprised if the NPS and west Texas interests conceded defeat in their dream to open the first national park in the Lone Star state. Yet the persistence of Everett Townsend, Horace Morelock, and their peers would join with the strategies of Herbert Maier and other NPS officials to convince Texas lawmakers that scarce tax revenues allocated to the Big Bend National Park idea were monies well-spent.

Whatever the status of negotiations with the Austin lawmakers, park sponsors in the early days of 1938 noted a gradual shift in local consciousness of the merits of the park in particular, and of the economic benefits to accrue to west Texas with the advent of publicly funded tourism. A key feature of this optimism for the future came in January when Joe M. Graham of Center, Texas, wrote to his old friend Everett Townsend in regards to the sale of his family's property to the park. Graham, his wife, and Ed Daniel of Del Rio had missed their payment on bank notes of \$4,500 for their property along the Rio Grande near Boquillas Canyon. In their desperation to resolve their chronic financial woes, Joe Graham told Townsend that he and his partners "will let the [state] park board have it at that price if they will take it at once." He then asked Townsend: "Please do me the favor to take it up with the park board, [as] they need it as it is a key to the situation there on the river." He felt no compulsion "to describe it to you any further," as the Graham-Daniels ranch had the best supply of water along the river (and would become one day the location of the park's Rio Grande Village campground).<sup>1</sup>

A similar plea came the following month from Mrs. Margaret Buttrill of Marathon, and Mrs. Louana Leary of San Antonio. Each had mailed to Townsend their deeds to 140-acre parcels in south Brewster County, prompting the former land surveyor to ask the state parks board for a ruling on such offers. Will Mann Richardson, the board's chief clerk, cautioned Townsend that "these deeds recite that the Grantee shall assume the unpaid balance of the purchase price." The board had "no idea how much money is due on this property, and it is possible that by accepting the land we might be held bound to pay this amount that is still due." Richardson speculated

that if “we do not accept the land and the parties merely allow the land to revert to the State, then we will acquire title under the Big Bend Act without any payment from this office.” Yet another clause in the Buttrill/Leary deeds stipulated that “the land must be conveyed to the U.S. Government as part of the National Park, or title will revert to the Grantor.” Richardson feared that “if we should assume the unpaid purchase price, and . . . something should happen and the National Government refused to accept the park as a National Park, then this provision would make the title revert to these Grantors, although we had paid the unpaid purchase price.” The state parks board had been in receipt of several other unsolicited deeds with similar caveats, and hoped that Townsend could enlighten the board on the best procedure to follow.<sup>2</sup>

Correspondence such as this with potential land donors made the NPS and local sponsors realize that the dream of a park in the Big Bend country rested upon their unceasing efforts at promotion and lobbying of state lawmakers. Thus the Alpine chamber of commerce eagerly agreed in January to join with other west Texas communities to organize the “Highway 51 Association.” In a letter from Glenn Burgess, president of the Littlefield chamber (and a future executive director of the Alpine chamber), Herbert Maier learned that this group planned a meeting at the abandoned CCC camp in the Chisos Mountains. There Burgess and representatives of some 18 Texas towns would discuss construction of a “direct north-south connection between the Big Bend and the Black Hills area of South Dakota.” Burgess asked Maier to send to this meeting Walter McDougall and Charles Gould of the NPS regional office in Santa Fe, as Burgess had been quite impressed with a presentation made by McDougall at the Gonzales Palmetto State Park. Everett Townsend echoed Burgess’s sentiments, informing Maier that the proposed highway would run south from “near the Canadian line” through eastern Colorado before “tapping our #3, a few miles East of Sanderson [approximately the routes of U.S. Highways 285 and 385].” Townsend noted that the Highway 51 Association had “made arrangements with Mr. [Lloyd] Wade to take care of the visitors and will provide a good barbecue and plenty of eats.” As the organizers expected “a good crowd and some of them from pretty far North,” Townsend asked Maier to send them “a good man,” as “we consider this meeting of much importance to our program.”<sup>3</sup>

The group of 150 highway promoters gathered in the Chisos Mountains agreed that an aggressive and bold strategy would be needed to energize the Big Bend park initiative. Thus the participants voted to change their name to the more-impressive “International Parks Highway Association,” with their goal a federally funded route from the “national parks of Canada” to the Rio Grande. As proof of their earnestness, the Lions Club of Odessa gave Horace Morelock a check for \$441.55 to purchase lands for the park. F.M. Gwin, highway association vice-president, carried a message from Texas highway commissioner Harry Hines conveying his support for the concept. “Between 80 and 85 percent of the route in other states,” said

the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, “already consists of improved roads.” Texas, with some 540 miles of the international corridor, “is lacking on 130 miles, although the rest is traversable, and 150 miles, between Brownfield and McCamey, is paved.” The Star-Telegram reported that “the route extends north through Oklahoma, Colorado, Nebraska, South and North Dakota.” Its planners hoped “eventually to connect Acapulco, Mexico, and the Canadian national parks in the Calgary section of the Dominion.” W.J. Rozary, president of the chamber in Hot Springs, South Dakota, came to speak for road sponsors in the Black Hills of his state, while severe weather prevented the Colorado and Nebraska delegations from attending. Texas civic officials at the Chisos gathering pledged “completing [of the] acquisition of rights of way in this State,” said the Fort Worth paper, while all attendees “left the hills ringing with their determination to make the proposed Big Bend National Park an early reality.”<sup>4</sup>

Simultaneous with the press coverage of the highway promotion came word in the Star Telegram that the U.S. House of Representatives had approved a measure “authorizing the Federal Government to acquire the balance of the land needed for the Great Smoky National Park in Tennessee and North Carolina and the growing success of the campaign for contributions to buy land for the Big Bend National Park in Texas.” The Fort Worth daily reported that Congressman Ewing Thomason “will offer a bill for a Federal contribution for Big Bend as soon as the Texas Legislature acts again upon the state appropriation.” The El Paso representative had noted that “the House showed by its vote Wednesday that it will pay for a part of the land for a national park if local interests and the States will first show their sincerity by supplying a part of the money.” The precedent established by Congress in the Great Smoky land-purchase program included “expenditure of \$743,265.29 for the acquisition of slightly more than 26,000 acres of land.” Through a mixture of private monies and state appropriations in Tennessee and North Carolina, park promoters had acquired 410,000 acres for the future NPS unit. “The people of Texas,” concluded Thomason, “are showing their good faith in the [Big Bend] project,” and he believed that “the Texas legislature will appropriate a part of the money needed to acquire the land for the park when it meets again.”<sup>5</sup>

Given that the Lone Star lawmakers would not reconvene in Austin for another ten months, Thomason’s promises meant little if park promoters could not sustain the publicity campaign begun more than three years earlier. Walter Prescott Webb, whose report on the history of the Big Bend country could do so much for the promotion of the park, disappointed NPS officials in early 1938 when he admitted that he did not have a narrative ready for publication. In an uncharacteristic display of contrition to Herbert Maier, the dean of Texas historians claimed that “the job assigned to me could not, under the best conditions, be completed in a satisfactory manner in sixty days.” Webb contended that “the country itself is a confused mass of geologic ruins and the historical writing about the Big Bend is more confused than the geology.” Instead he offered to

submit “a record of the work finished thus far, the material that I think will be of most use in promoting an interest in [Big Bend].” Webb would “continue the study on my own time until I can deliver to you a finished manuscript which will serve as an adequate guide to the proposed park.” Then Webb conceded that “I have no doubt that the delay in making this report has occasioned you some embarrassment; a circumstance in which the UT professor admitted: “I assure you that I am conscious of my own guilt and wish to take all the blame.” He preferred that Maier reproduce the photographs shot during the May 1937 canoe trip through Santa Elena Canyon and use them for publicity purposes. Webb further asked Maier to send a set of the pictures (which he called “a complete photographic record of the most remarkable and least known wonders of the Big Bend”) to his fellow travelers: Thomas Skaggs of McCamey; James W. Metcalfe (U.S. Border Patrol); Pete Crawford (Texas Ranger); and N.M. Nelson (commander of the El Paso unit of the U.S. Coast Guard). “The part that these men played in the trip,” declared Webb, “is made clear in my report and without their assistance the photographs could not be obtained.” He also wished Maier to acknowledge their work as public servants, with only Skaggs not associated with state or federal agencies.<sup>6</sup>

The use of photographs to heighten interest in the future park extended to Maier’s request to Townsend for pictures of wildlife and early ranching activities. Maier wanted to emphasize in publicity venues that the area, reiterated Townsend, “will rapidly return to a highly productive range for wild life when grazing is entirely removed.” Townsend also contended that “this certainty and the climatic conditions, will make it one of the greatest wildlife preserves in our country.” He then responded to Maier’s inquiry about a “hay mowing photograph” from the Big Bend. “I have seen hundreds upon hundreds of acres of good grass, suitable and plenty good for cutting hay,” wrote Townsend, “in those open flats south of the Chisos, and in like places near Persimmon Gap, along Santiago Draw.” He noted that “close around the base of the Chisos on the East, North, and West there has always been so much shrubbery and cacti, that it would have been difficult to cut hay.” Nonetheless, said Townsend, “I have seen grass growing luxuriantly among those plants.” He recalled “the first time I ever rode up Green Gulch (May 1895), the grass and sotol attracted my attention to such an extent that I borrowed a companion’s camera and photographed them for myself.” Unfortunately, Townsend had lost the picture, but noted: “At that time I was not much interested in photography and in the weeks of riding through the Big Bend that was the only scene of which I wanted a picture, so the grass and sotol must have been very good.”<sup>7</sup>

Maier’s need for images of the Big Bend corresponded with the coverage in the January 14 issue of the Fort Worth Star Telegram, in which the editors decried the “lack of concentrated energy behind it.” The Amon Carter-owned paper claimed that “daily, the subscription list is lengthened by a few names accompanied by the price of an acre or two of the proposed area.” The Star Telegram contended that “Texans generally have given the

idea a most enthusiastic indorsement.” Yet “the drive has not been manned and engined” to the satisfaction of the Fort Worth daily. One example of its frustration was the fact that “the school children of Texas could have purchased the entire tract in their own name by simply contributing a dime each for the nine months of the 1937-1938 school term.” The Star Telegram claimed that “everywhere the idea was introduced it was applauded - but no machinery has been constructed for collecting the dimes.” Further, “a large sum already has been collected from volunteer subscriptions and the civic groups of the State could have supplied the impetus for sending the collections over the top.” The paper’s editors suggested that “there could be nothing comparable as a monument to the school children of Texas who have it easily within their power to assure the Big Bend Park.” Instead, the Star Telegram argued, “the most individualistic of achievements is lagging for no other reason than collective procrastination.”<sup>8</sup>

In the game of park politics, the signal sent by Amon Carter’s editors forced the NPS to rethink its role of indirect support for the Big Bend fundraising campaign. Conrad Wirth, assistant NPS director, asked Herbert Maier “whether there is any danger that the present land acquisition program being carried out in the State is apt to dwindle down before it terminates to such a point that subscribers, especially those who were enthusiastic at the start, may become discouraged and disgruntled.” He then asked Maier: “Do you think it would be wise for the Texas Park Board to use what money is now on hand, then make a fresh start in the campaign as a means of reviving interest?” This, Wirth hoped, would “serve to dispel the present lethargy mentioned in the press release.” In his reply to the NPS director, Maier acknowledged that the use of funds for immediate land purchases “is what the State [of Texas] intends to do.” The Texas parks board, said Maier, “had contemplated starting spending the funds obtained long before this.” What the board lacked was enabling legislation from the state’s lawmakers to do so. In November 1937, the legislature had consented to this practice, yet “they [the parks board] have not started spending their money,” said Maier, “because they have been waiting for the Governor to name a committee of 150 outstanding men in the State to carry on the fund raising campaign.” The committee would have 100 representatives from the chambers of commerce of the Lone Star state (coming from each of five sectors), and Governor Allred would name the additional 50 members. Maier confided in Wirth that James Record of the Star Telegram “is himself holding up the completion of the naming of this committee for some reason which we have not been able to learn.” NPS officials in Santa Fe suspected that Record “does not want the committee rounded out unless certain individuals connected with large corporations, such as oil companies, are maneuvered on to the committee.” From this body would come a “small executive committee which will work with the Texas State Parks Board in taking up the land purchased.” The committee also would “buy such tracts of land first, as are offered at the cheapest price.” While this meant that “the land offered at the best bargains will be bought up first, regardless of location,” properties of “those who later hold out for more money can be

brought in by condemnation proceedings.” These conditions led Maier to counsel patience for NPS planners: “In other words, I do not think there is anything to be concerned about.”<sup>9</sup>

While this debate over land purchases persisted within the park service and the Texas state parks board, NPS publicists sustained their optimistic tone in the promotion of a visit to the Big Bend area by members of the National Geographic Society (as part of a larger NGS journey from El Paso to Brownsville). Herbert Maier asked Ross Maxwell, now posted to the NPS’s state headquarters in Austin, to accompany the society’s officers on a river trip through the canyons of the Big Bend. Maxwell noted that the only boats suitable for such an excursion were the canoes of the Webb party, which the park service had stored at the Chisos camp along with a large volume of surplus Army equipment. Maier asked Maxwell, who in February was on assignment at the CCC camp at Longhorn State Park in Burnet, to meet the National Geographic entourage at Del Rio. From there Maxwell was to take the group to Lajitas, where they would float downstream to Boquillas. “Most certainly,” said Maier, “the party should go up into the Chisos Mountains,” even though “we cannot pay for horse hire except for a horse that you would ride.” “Above everything else,” Maier emphasized, “I want you to see that the party gets to the South Rim!” The Region III official claimed that “too many official parties have gone into the Chisos for a day, only to find themselves shunted off down to Hot Springs just because someone at the camp was too lazy to round up a few horses.” From there Maxwell was to lead the society members “over onto the Mexican side and drive up to the Fresnos, and go up into the Fronteriza Mountains to the point where the official party went at the time Mr. [Roger] Toll was with us.” Even though he had no monies to sponsor the work of Everett Townsend, Maier hoped that the latter would help guide the society members because “a good article in the National Geographic, with some good photographs will do more toward the permanent establishment of the park than could any article published in any other American publication.” Townsend also could assist the party in gaining the permits necessary to travel and take photographs on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande, as well as arrange for a string of horses to carry them into the mountains.<sup>10</sup>

Once Maxwell had orchestrated the details of the National Geographic trip, Maier then warned him: “We should not stress the geology of the region to the exclusion of everything else.” Maier believed that “when withdrawn from grazing, and after a period of years when the range will have been able to rehabilitate itself, the wildlife values will be outstanding, looking toward the reintroduction of antelope and other fauna.” Maxwell should point out that “the openness of the country would make wildlife observation much more practical, from the standpoint of the visitor, than is the case of some of our heavily forested parks.” Maier also wanted Maxwell to stress that “the mountain ranges on the Mexican side run north and south,” making it “comparatively easy later on to run a road from the Mexican side southeast to join the Laredo-Mexico City Highway, so that this great international

highway might eventually become the outstanding tourist gateway between the two countries.”<sup>11</sup>

Maier’s detailed advice about the logistics of the National Geographic survey revealed the need for all the good publicity that Big Bend could get, and from the presence of Frederick Simpich, assistant editor of National Geographic Magazine. In its February 12 issue, *The Texas Weekly* reported that “Texas owes a debt of gratitude to Mr. Simpich, for he it was who came down to the Lone Star State some ten years ago and wrote an article called ‘So Big Texas.’” In that piece (June 1928) Simpich “set forth, interestingly and accurately, highlights in the story of Texas,” in the words of *The Texas Weekly*, “where ‘native Americans, starting only with hard hands, strong wills, and great energy, have built up a vast, rich, and powerful commonwealth.’” The weekly continued this strain of self-congratulatory prose, claiming that “the Big Bend, in a matter-of-fact world, in the streamlined twentieth century, is a romantic little empire of its own, containing the last vestiges of the primitive West.” Ross Maxwell also came in for praise from *The Texas Weekly* once it learned that he would guide the National Geographic party. Quoting Maxwell’s lush description of the sunset on the cliffs of the Sierra del Carmen, the magazine called this “an added bit of evidence that the beauty and grandeur of the Big Bend lure all visitors into using superlative adjectives.” Finally, the National Geographic excursion meant that “when the world starts coming, that will mean valuable additions to Texas’s tourist trade.” Good business prompted the call for creation of the Big Bend National Park, and the presence of so prominent a magazine in the area reminded *The Texas Weekly*: “Establishment of an international park in the Big Bend area would preserve a region which is probably the last in the United States where the intangible spirit of the Western frontier still reigns.”<sup>12</sup>

Once Simpich and his NGS colleagues arrived in the Big Bend area, the Alpine Avalanche praised their efforts to fulfill the dream of local park sponsors. “With the blue bonnets in bloom,” wrote the Avalanche, “and the cacti just budding out, no better time than now could have been found for an inspection of the southern part of Brewster County and the northern part of Coahuila and Chihuahua.” Yet Sul Ross’s president expressed some discontent when he realized that the Local Park Committee had been ignored in the haste to accommodate the magazine’s writers. Morelock reminded Maier that he had played a major role in the campaign to raise funds for the park, to the extent that he traveled to El Paso as the National Geographic Society party drifted down the Rio Grande. While in El Paso, Morelock met with Ewing Thomason about inclusion of Big Bend’s land purchases under the aegis of the “Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act.” Morelock also had worked to organize the statewide fundraising committee, and had discussed the park issue with citizens in every corner of the Lone Star state. Yet “no one was invited from the Governor’s office or any other State department in an official capacity to play a part in the expedition.” Morelock warned Maier that “if we are to work with a minimum of friction

on the Big Bend National Park, I personally believe that we should invite all agencies in Texas which are interested in the Park and which will play a part in the acquisition of the land.” As proof of his sincerity, Morelock enclosed in his correspondence a copy of the 1938 summer course bulletin for Sul Ross. This publication went to some 7,000 schoolteachers throughout Texas, and Morelock noted how Sul Ross had allocated three pages of “free space to the Big Bend National Park project.” He also informed Maier of the creation of the “West Texas Chamber of Commerce Resource and Museum Institute.” Based in Abilene, the organization included the state colleges in Canyon, Lubbock, El Paso, and Stephenville (as well as Alpine). Among the facility’s first exhibits, Morelock hoped, would be original scientific specimens loaned by the NPS from the museum at the abandoned Chisos CCC camp.<sup>13</sup>

Promotion of the Big Bend fundraising initiative included journals of lesser circulation than National Geographic Magazine. Maier wrote in February to Elmo Johnson of the growing number of requests for news stories and features about the Big Bend area. “To date we have confined ourselves primarily to rather technical information and general descriptions,” said Maier, but he recently had an inquiry about human history in the future park. Maier thought that “it would be a fine thing to describe one of the several visits which ‘Uncle Everett’ Townsend and I have made to the Johnson Ranch during the past few years.” Thus he asked Johnson to recount “the story you told us one evening of the visit which the bodyguard of [Pancho] Villa paid to you a year or two ago and his proposition regarding a trip over onto the Mexican side in order to excavate the bullion which he claimed Villa had buried.” Johnson then recalled how “just four days after the visit of the [bodyguard] a Department of Justice man was here to see me.” To the longtime Big Bend rancher, “this proved . . . that the man was being closely watched and to them the story was well known.” Johnson asked Maier not to use the person’s name, but instead “you could use any good Mexican name for the body guard.” He then closed his letter to Maier by reminding him: “We are one hundred percent for the Park.”<sup>14</sup>

Even more dramatic a promotional strategy than Johnson’s story of Pancho Villa’s gold was the attempt by Everett Townsend to enlist the aid of President Franklin Roosevelt. “Your foreign policy [the Good Neighbor Policy towards Latin America],” wrote Townsend, “meets with the approval of the greater number of thinking people in this part of the country.” Townsend and his friends believed that “we should be well prepared for trouble as it appears to be brewing in all parts of the world.” As to FDR’s critics, said Townsend: “They live in the past, in the days of our forefathers and gained no vision from our bitter experiences in trying to evade the [first] World War.” He then suggested that even nature had cast FDR in the role of peacemaker by sending the president a picture of a rock formation in the Dead Horse Mountains that Townsend claimed resembled Roosevelt. “It may not flatter you,” said Townsend, “but the likeness is less remote and not so repulsive as many cartoons carried in the newspapers.” The



formation, when viewed carefully at an angle, “indicates its international phase as the face is found in Mexico and the body in Texas.” The area that Townsend described was “one of the three canyons of the Rio Grande that are within the area of the proposed International Peace Park, the successful fruition of which, I believe, will prove a peace gesture of great importance to our hemisphere.” Townsend advised the president that many Texans “do not realize the importance of this friendship park between the nations, two nations which have not always been over [solicitous] about each other’s welfare, and we are not making much progress with the campaign.” Townsend recalled more than 50 years of personal interaction along the border, suggesting that it was his “firm belief that the successful issue of this project will be one of the longest steps we can take towards winning the esteem of our goodly neighbor.” The former customs officer called the Mexicans “truly marvelous people and to know them is to love them.” He wanted all Americans to “become better acquainted with them.” To that end, he told FDR: “A good word from you, Mr. President, will go far towards helping Texas put over this enterprise of incalculable value to our country.”<sup>15</sup>

Townsend’s suggestion of a presidential likeness, and the response of the park service, indicated the importance of his role in the campaign to secure private funding for Big Bend. Instead of dismissing his idea as specious, NPS director Cammerer wrote back to Townsend with the note from the FDR administration. “The special emphasis you have placed upon international aspects of the project seems especially worthwhile at this time.” Cammerer further noted: “Let me say that both the White House and this Department fully appreciate the splendid contributions you continue to make toward eventual establishment of an international park.” Then Cammerer bantered with Townsend about “the figure bearing some resemblance to the President which you have seen in the cliffs and ridges bordering the Rio Grande.” The park service director called this “curiously interesting,” and then informed Townsend: “To some of us here in Washington, the face also carries a slight suggestion of likeness to Vice-President [John Nance] Garner.” Cammerer then concluded: “You may rest assured that whenever an opportunity is found to further the land acquisition program now underway in Texas, we will not hesitate to act accordingly.”<sup>16</sup>

As spring approached in the year 1938, promoters of the park could take some satisfaction in the continued stream of positive news features about Big Bend, and of the organization of the statewide fundraising committee. On March 10, Morelock sent to James Record “two checks in the sum of \$100 each from Dr. J.E. Mowinkle and Mr. H.R. Smith, both of them oil men from San Antonio.” Mowinkle and Smith (the latter the brother of Sul Ross history professor G.P. Smith), “have traveled widely in the United States, in Mexico, in Canada, and in Europe,” said Morelock. H.R. Smith told the Sul Ross president that “we are interested in the Big Bend National Park to the extent that we should like to make at least two more

personal trips into this area, taking photographs and perhaps a movie of the park area both on the American side and the Mexican side.” Smith further claimed that “the climate of the Big Bend section alone justifies the establishment of a Big Bend National Park, and the picturesque grandeur of the scenery is not surpassed by the scenery of any other national park I have seen--and I have visited practically all of them.” Mowinkle expressed similar delight with Big Bend’s “geological possibilities,” which he called “unsurpassed by any other area in the United States.” Mowinkle believed that “the study of geologic formations in the Big Bend will be tremendously helpful in solving the geologic problems of other areas in Texas.” In more practical terms, said Mowinkle: “All of Texas will profit financially by virtue of a national park and the oil interests, as well as many other big business concerns, will be direct beneficiaries of additional revenues that will come to Texas because of a national park.”<sup>17</sup>

To Horace Morelock, the contributions of Smith and Mowinkle proved the merits of an aggressive statewide campaign to raise funds for Big Bend’s land-acquisition program. Thus he worked with Wendell Mayes, chairman of the state parks board, to select an executive committee for the park initiative. “Naturally,” Morelock informed Amon Carter, “we must have on this committee not only people with a vision for Texas and its future, but people whose standing in Texas will guarantee the success of the campaign.” For that reason, “it is the consensus of our opinion and the opinion of many other people that you should be chairman of the Executive Committee.” Morelock identified as reasons for Carter’s role the fact that “the Fort Worth Star-Telegram has done more for West Texas than any other newspaper, and has taken an unusual interest in the Big Bend National Park project as such.” This, plus Carter’s “standing in Texas and [his] ability to achieve worth while objectives,” Morelock contended, “will guarantee the success of the campaign.” The Sul Ross president asked Carter’s advice on the draft plan for the statewide committee, and surmised that “the Press of Texas should give wide publicity to the [Austin] meeting” to be called by Governor Allred. To Herbert Maier, Morelock reported that “things are moving along in rather good form, and I believe that by the middle of April the park engine will have full steam up.” The Alpine chamber would contribute to this committee’s work by printing a 36-page bulletin filled with illustrations of the future park area. “We are asking four well-known artists (Gutzum Borglum, Xavier Gonzalez, Audrey Dean Nickols, and Mr. Teel),” said Morelock, “to furnish us free of charge one of their autographed paintings of this section, the same to be reproduced in colors in the bulletin.” To make the point even more emphatic, Morelock asked Maier to verify the statement that Big Bend marked the first time that Congress made its pledge of support “in advance of deeding the land to the national government.” Finally, Morelock wondered if “the National Park Service could arrange with the government of Mexico for a representative who would appear on this program [in Austin], and who would indicate just what the Mexican government has done.” He believed that “this number [400,000 acres] would add a great deal to the program,” and asked Maier:

“Will you please see what can be done on this score?”<sup>18</sup>

This latter request reflected a flurry of activity on the Mexican side of the future Big Bend International Park, instigated when Morelock sought that nation’s endorsement of the private fundraising campaign. Daniel F. Galicia responded to a letter sent to him in late April regarding a road to be built from the city of Monterrey in the state of Coahuila northward to the Rio Grande. Galicia apologized for not answering Townsend for some two weeks, saying: “Please excuse the delay which was caused by an excess of work, which you well know that I have.” For his part, the chief of forestry for the Cardenas administration inquired of “the Secretary of Communications and Public Works for his cooperation in the opening of said roads in the lands which soon will be declared a National Park and called ‘Sierra del Carmen.’” This correspondence had followed the ten-day trip that Galicia had taken into the future international park with Texas oil men H.R. Smith and J.E. Mowinkle. Townsend had guided the party of NPS officials, Texans, and Galicia some 50 miles south of Boquillas, where they camped for several days at the “San Ysidro ranch” and inspected the Sierra del Carmen and the Fronteriza Mountains. The Dallas News reported on April 5 that the group had high hopes for a successful survey, given the rumor that Governor Allred might call a special session of the Texas legislature the following month to consider the Big Bend land-acquisition program. The News then spoke of the work of “an international park committee organized some time ago [that] has ironed out any difficulties that might arise over border situations.” Among these, said the Dallas paper, was “a tentative agreement” that “if the park becomes a reality to allow citizens of both countries into both sides of the park without the formality of passports.”<sup>19</sup>

The international park survey team ventured into Mexico just as a late winter storm descended upon the Sierra del Carmen. The party, said the Alpine Avalanche, was “whipped by bitter winds, blinded by dust, half frozen by the cold of high mountains.” Nonetheless, they returned with what the Avalanche called “the first pictures of the scenic region taken specifically and exclusively for park promotion purposes.” The excursion had been a “‘gift’ of two San Antonio men to the park promotion cause [Smith and Mowinkle], . . . and it is known that this trip cost them into four figures [over \$1,000].” Along with Townsend, Galicia, and the oil men were Sul Ross’s G.P. Smith, Allen Smith (the nephew of the Smith brothers), John Ponder of San Antonio, John King and Earl Moore of the Dallas News staff (the latter the staff photographer), two students from Sul Ross (Horace Jones and John Dear), and Mexican customs official Jesus Guerrero. Townsend recalled that the weather deteriorated as the party rode on horseback above 8,000 feet in altitude. “We had not taken adequate bedding for such a cold spell,” Townsend admitted, “not anticipating such a drop in temperature.” They had “plenty of wood” with which to build fires, but “the winds blew terrifically,” he told the Alpine Avalanche, “shutting off views with dust clouds.” The weather

notwithstanding, Townsend and others took many excellent pictures. Then he recounted how “Senor Galicia expressed himself as delighted with the scenic region and eager to see an international park created.” Galicia further declared to Townsend “an intention of cooperating in every way.” The party emerged “out of the wilderness,” said the Avalanche, “in a mood of pleased satisfaction with what was accomplished in the way of pictures and knowledge gained.”<sup>20</sup>

Much of the success of the survey party could be attributed to the skills and diplomacy of Everett Townsend. Earl Moore wrote to Townsend upon his return to Dallas to thank him for his services as guide. “I consider meeting you and knowing you one of the greatest events of my life,” said Moore, as “you represent a type of man which I have always admired.” Townsend’s reply revealed the source of Moore’s adulation, as he said of the surveying party: “It was just about the finest lot of fellows I was ever out with.” Townsend, who had recently escorted the National Geographic crew into the Big Bend country, and who had guided Governor Allred the year before, said of the Smith-Mowinkle party: “Each was true grit to the bone.” Even John King and Earl Moore, whom Townsend characterized as “the two tenderfeet and ‘rears,’ the News-Boys,” emerged as “heroes.” While “neither had ever hubbed any real hardships or ridden more than a few miles,” said Townsend, “they came through like He-Men.” Townsend, who had seen many photographs of the Big Bend in his day, considered Moore’s shot of the Sierra del Carmen as “simply marvelous.” That plus the portrait of Townsend in the field would “occupy a page in that Jimmy Allred scrapbook” kept by Townsend.<sup>21</sup>

While Townsend and the Smith-Mowinkle party planned their work on behalf of the international park, the acting director of NPS Region III (Herbert Maier) delivered an address on March 22 to the Texas State Planning Conference. Maier told the state’s planning officials that “a major project of this sort [Big Bend], designed to benefit a people at large can usually only be consummated after a lengthy, and sometimes exhaustive, educational campaign.” Thus Maier wished to identify the key features of the Big Bend fundraising initiative, doing so by placing the endeavor in the larger context of NPS park development elsewhere. By 1938, said Maier, the NPS had but four park sites awaiting congressional approval: “Mount Olympus in the State of Washington, the King’s River Canyon in California, the Everglades in Florida, and the Big Bend area of Southwest Texas.” Maier surmised that “if, and when, these four areas have been acquired, there may not be any more additional National Parks added to the system because the Lord did not create any others.” Big Bend also benefited from the ironic demand of an urbanizing nation for escape from “the congestion of cities and intensified farming areas.” Maier considered it “the duty of society, functioning through the Federal and State governments to provide such playgrounds” as Big Bend might become. He then outlined for his audience the vastness of Big Bend; dimensions that he saw fitting for the “nation’s largest state.” Among its charms was the fact that Big Bend offered

“the outstanding example of U.S-Mexican border scenery.” In addition, “the wildlife capacity of the range when reestablished through National Park Service protection methods,” said Maier, “will probably be greater per acre than that of the Yellowstone with its heavy lodgepole forests.” Maier also suggested that “few regions in the United States afford such an opportunity for demonstration of reversion to proper land usage;” a reference to the disastrous practices of grazing in the Big Bend country after the turn of the century.<sup>22</sup>

For Maier, “the feature of most spectacular interest after the Chisos Range is the Rio Grande itself.” Beyond its natural beauty, the river provided the only permanent body of water in the entire area. “Sufficient and potable water for serving the public,” Maier told the Texas planners, “if this is to become a major recreational area, may be obtained in ample quantities by surface drainage at points where utility and public service units may be established.” He noted that officials of the United States and Mexico had recommended that “a strip of land five miles in depth would also skirt the Rio Grande opposite the American side to the West and for its full length so that both sides of the three canyons would be included” in an international park. In addition, “investigation has shown that it should not be too difficult a task to later build a road from the Mexican area to join with the Main Mexico City Highway at Monterrey.” This brought to Maier’s mind the fact that “general plans for the development of each area have at the request of the Mexican Government been considered as a single problem.” NPS planners had recommended “that the main approach road from the North terminate at a tourist center to be located in the lower Chisos Mountains with a system of horse-trails affording the only connection between this and the principal points of interest in the higher country.” One route could lead southwest to Santa Elena Canyon, with another angling southeast to Boquillas. “From thence,” said Maier, “the road could skirt the base of the Del Carmen and Fronteriza ranges in the Mexican area to Canyon del Fresnos up through which access would be had to a principal tourist development.” Maier also envisioned that “from the international bridge at Boquillas a road is proposed skirting the Rio Grande westward on the Mexican side and affording spectacular views down into the Mariscal and Santa Helena Canyons.” On the American side, “little more than a service road is planned . . . so that no artificial barrier will discourage a free flow of wildlife to and across the River.” To Maier this meant: “In other words, it is not planned to encircle the Chisos Mountains with a road system.”<sup>23</sup>

When determining the “atmosphere in the region,” Maier defined this as “decidedly one of manana.” Thus park planners believed that “everything must be done in developing the area to preserve for the tourist seeking rest and recreation the Spanish-Mexican atmosphere.” He called for “an architecture for government and operators buildings [that] might well be based on Spanish-Mexican lines.” Maier foresaw the “hacienda” as “a prototype for a main tourist lodge while perhaps a few of the already

existing native adobes along the river might be retained as minor tourist stopping places.” He recounted the declaration of NPS director Cammerer that “the international project [was] ‘a gesture toward international good will that might set an example to other nations.’” Maier stated that “undoubtedly such a major project would go far toward bringing the two races together.” He then added on the American side the concept of a working longhorn ranch. “It is felt by some,” said Maier, “that it is as important to reestablish here a herd of longhorns under their original conditions as it has been to preserve the buffalo that roamed the plains before them in the Yellowstone.” Adding to the aesthetic value provided by the longhorn ranch would be its “historic value.” “The old spring and fall round-up and branding party,” Maier noted, “would afford the keenest interest and value to many who visit this park.”<sup>24</sup>

Should Texas’s planners support the Big Bend park, Maier claimed that the Lone Star state would accrue “pronounced financial benefit.” “Virtually every state in the union,” said the acting Region III director, “and most foreign countries are bidding for tourist patronage.” Maier presciently portrayed tourism as “a comparatively new industry, brought into being by the facilities for travel by paved highways, and the automobile, and by the new life of shorter working hours and more abundant leisure which has been forced upon us.” Maier conceded that “there were tourists before the automobile.” Yet these were “comparatively few and mostly of the wealthy class.” With the advent of the car culture, “today’s tourist ranges from the bottom to the top of the social scale with a large bulk composed of the great middle class.” Texas made its first foray into the tourism business with the 1936 centennial, but in the words of Maier, “this objective is passed.” “The ideal thing,” he advised his audience, “would be to have a permanent major objective” for travelers; a situation resolved by inclusion of Big Bend into the NPS system. Then, too, Maier reiterated predictions made by his listeners, the Texas State Planning Commission, that “the population of Texas will increase by a million and a half in the next 20 years.” Between tourism and population growth, Maier claimed, “the American public spends tens of billions of dollars annually for recreation in all of its forms and this sum filters into almost every variety of business.” The Lone Star state would be remiss, Maier concluded, if it did not embrace this plan for “proper land use” with such good fortune at its doorstep.<sup>25</sup>

When Maier returned to his Santa Fe office, he wrote back to Horace Morelock with a more detailed description of his remarks to the Texas planning conference, and his sense of the merits of private fundraising for land acquisition (the only activity underway regarding Big Bend throughout 1938). Maier noted the discussions with the Fort Worth Star Telegram, the Texas State Parks Board, and the NPS to convene the statewide fundraising committee. The parks board director, William Lawson, had told Maier that “the delay was the result of Amon Carter’s conjecture that the money can be raised from some private source.” Maier disagreed, confiding in Morelock: “I doubt very much that Mr. Carter will succeed in this,

but of course it is well worth trying.” The NPS official could not think otherwise, as “in any campaign of this sort a long delay means stagnation.” Maier also had to clarify a point raised by the Sul Ross president about the uniqueness of the Big Bend fundraising initiative. Where Morelock believed that Big Bend broke precedent as the “first case in history where such [congressional authorization] was made prior to the acquisition of the land by the State,” Maier suggested that “this is the usual procedure.” Until “the interested groups have an advance guarantee” of a land base for a park, “Congressional authority simply amounts to the guarantee that the Secretary of the Interior will accept the area as a national park if and when the land has been deeded to the federal government.”<sup>26</sup>

Once Maier had corrected Morelock’s impression of Big Bend’s land program, he then addressed the Sul Ross president’s plans for the meeting in Austin of the fundraising group. Morelock wanted someone from the Cardenas administration in Mexico to speak before the Texas officials. Maier suggested Daniel Galicia, who “spends a great deal of time at El Paso and Laredo--usually the latter.” Maier claimed to “know Senor Galicia well,” and believed that he would accept an invitation to the Austin gathering. “You will recall,” said Maier, “that [Galicia] gave a brief talk at Congressman [Ewing] Thomason’s luncheon at Alpine in October [1937].” Maier did caution Morelock, however: “He is not given to speaking in English but he does pronounce his words well and I guess he would be willing to say just about anything we coached him on.”<sup>27</sup>

Yet another issue on the minds of Maier and Morelock in the spring of 1938 was the impact on the future park of the National Geographic Society boat trip through its canyons. When Maier returned to Santa Fe, he met with Fredrick Simpich to gauge his sentiments on the Big Bend, and on the potential for a major story in National Geographic Magazine. Maier realized that the NPS had erred in not including Morelock and other local sponsors of the park movement in Simpich’s visit. “You can understand,” said the regional official, “that one of the problems of a party like this is to be able to go where they want to, or where they have previously planned to go, and hence to avoid the general limelight.” Maier also noted that “the National Geographic party was not ours but was their own undertaking.” The NPS representative, Ross Maxwell, joined the group “solely by invitation,” and Maier had offered the services of Everett Townsend “so that proper local arrangements along the River could be effected.” Despite these restrictions, Maier expressed satisfaction at Simpich’s assessment of the trip. The latter was “most happy over his experiences in the Big Bend,” said Maier, “and he feels that this is by all means the high light of his entire Rio Grande trip.” Simpich then told Maier “that he is thinking seriously of handling the Big Bend episode as a separate feature story.” Such good publicity would aid the land-acquisition program immensely, but Maier cautioned Morelock: “I do not think . . . that [Simpich] would want to be quoted on this statement at this time.”<sup>28</sup>

To accelerate formation of the statewide committee, and perhaps to

guide its work, the Star Telegram and other Texas newspapers printed stories about the Big Bend country throughout the spring and summer of 1938. The Wichita Falls Times carried news of the state convention of the Daughters of the American Revolution (in the 1930s a powerful women's organization nationwide). Held in Fort Worth, the DAR gathering called for support of the Big Bend fundraising, along with its more-typical initiatives in scholarships and promotion of patriotism and citizenship in the public schools. The Star Telegram itself continued to identify donors to the land-acquisition fund, with the April 10 issue praising the "Sul Ross Concho Valley Club" of San Angelo for its contribution of five dollars. The Fort Worth paper also ran a feature by Alpheus Harral, a high school student in Fort Stockton, entitled "Terlingua, Largest City in Big Bend Park, Busy Place." Harral had visited the mining town of some 600 people, whom he described as "mostly Mexicans," to learn more about the area to become Texas's first national park. "Terlingua has one of the largest mines in the country," said Harral, "and most of the people in and around the town work in the mine." Harral happened to be in Terlingua on a Sunday, where he witnessed not a surge of miners headed to work, but instead a parade of "Mexicans and a few Americans [leaving] their little, flat topped adobe houses, dressed in their Sunday best, including shoes, to get to the town church." The Fort Stockton youth then noticed that "a Catholic priest preaches to them for two hours." Upon leaving the service, community members went home for lunch, followed by a ritual where "the older people stay home the rest of the day, but the young lovers will take a ride in a Model 'T' or go walking." Visitors curious about life in the Big Bend country, said Harral, found most intriguing the local gas station, which the Fort Stockton youth described as "a combination of a mining headquarters, postoffice and general store, and it is about the only filling station in the Big Bend." Tourists contributed to the bustling scene witnessed by Harral, joining with miners and their families to patronize the local merchants. At sunset the visitors departed, and Harral described Terlingua returning to the quiet that marked its existence most of the week: "The light man replaces the gas lamps, cleaned and ready to light the dark streets. Then the sun disappears over a range of mountains, and a busy Sunday has ended."<sup>29</sup>

Where Alpheus Harral spoke as a wide-eyed youth about the distinctive cultural dimensions of the future national park, Dean Carpenter, manager of the Hotel Paso del Norte in the city of El Paso, provided the tourism industry with a glimpse of the potential for visitation to the Big Bend country when he led a party of prominent west Texas businessmen on a raft trip through the Rio Grande canyons. Carpenter, interviewed in the May 1938 issue of the Texas Hotel Review, spoke of the "exploitation of the wealth of possibilities for state tourist travel increase offered by the federal park project in the Big Bend Country." Lured by rumors that the park service would "spend \$6,000,000 developing this great scenic region," Carpenter took a group that included Dick Cochran of the White Motor Company of Denver; Dr. Benjamin F. Berkeley of Alpine; Dale Resler, a tour bus operator from Carlsbad, New Mexico; L.A. Wilson of the El Paso



chamber of commerce; C.M. Harvey, president of the El Paso National Bank; and H.F. Greggerson, Sr., chief of the El Paso County farm bureau. Carpenter's group had spent their first night at the Chisos CCC camp, which he described as "the proposed location for the central hotel and resort planned to be similar to the hotels in Yellowstone and other familiar projects." The party also noted that "seven miles south of this camp there is easily accessible by a one-day horseback ride a point from which the Rio Grande River can be seen meandering for seventy-five miles." Echoing the sense of wonder of Walter Prescott Webb, Carpenter told the hotel trade journal: "It is impossible to give an intelligent description of this area." Yet "as it becomes more familiar to the public," said the El Paso hotelier, "it will be known as a wonder of nature rivaling Yellowstone, Yosemite or the Grand Canyon."<sup>30</sup>

The burst of promotional literature and feature stories on Big Bend coincided with Governor Allred's formation of the fundraising committee, which met on May 23 in the Texas state capital. NPS director Arno Cammerer sent Herbert Maier to represent the interests of the park service, and the latter reported that the organization took seriously Allred's charge to collect up to \$1 million dollars as quickly as possible. "The general meeting," said Maier, "started with the Governor's statement that the Secretary [of the Interior] has advised him on several occasions that this project is very close to his heart." Then Amon Carter, "who is regarded as the outstanding citizen of Texas, and who is widely traveled, followed with a talk in which he discussed the value of the tourist industry to the state." Maier himself addressed the 100-plus member committee "with an outline of the history and policies of the National Park Service." Then the group nominated Allred as "honorary president," Carter as its chairman, and Morelock as vice chairman. Other luminaries among the 26 members of the executive committee were Star Telegram editor James Record, Jesse Jones of Houston (director in the 1930s of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation [RFC], and in World War II the director of the RFC's Defense Plant Corporation [DPC]), Wendell Mayes of the state parks board, Mrs. Richard Turrentine of Denton (president of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs), James Casner of Alpine, and Houston Harte of San Angelo (editor of that community's newspaper, the Standard, and a future landowner in south Brewster County whose donation of land in 1980 triggered much debate over expansion of the park boundaries).<sup>31</sup>

Moving quickly on Allred's request, committee members pledged \$25,000 of their own money for "publicity and motion pictures." The group then decided to establish a goal of \$1.5 million, with two-thirds of that "public subscription to buy the private holdings," and "the half-million to be secured by a state legislative act to reimburse the Permanent School Fund for its holdings." Among the suggestions of high-profile donations were "to have each school child in the State contribute a dime for eight consecutive weeks." Maier informed Cammerer that "the plans advanced seem, for the most part, practical." He believed that "when a really substantial sum is at

hand it is felt no difficulty will then be experienced in putting through the legislative act authorizing the State to reimburse the School Fund . . . as this will largely amount to a transfer on the books.” Unfortunately, cautioned Maier, “the stumbling block . . . is still the matter of the mineral rights held by the School Fund.” Carter’s committee realized that NPS policy prohibited land donations without cession of mineral rights. Yet “they feel,” said Maier, “that the fundraising campaign should not be complicated and the enthusiasm dampened by emphasizing this controversial question too much at this time.” Their solution, then, “would leave with the School Fund the right to its royalties, but would place in the [Interior] Secretary’s hands the decision as to whether mineral deposits, were they later found to exist, would be developed.” Maier noted also that “it could be further agreed that such development could only take place in time of a national crisis.”<sup>32</sup>

Maier then speculated that “if a really considerable sum is raised by next fall, it is expected that Governor Allred will bring up the bill to reimburse the School Fund for its land at a call session, since such a session appears likely in any case.” Given the time needed to collect the million dollars (“three years at best,” said Maier), the committee wanted “purchase [to] start immediately and not await collection of the entire fund,” with “such owners as make the best offers” being the first contacted. These actions, concluded Maier, represented the most hopeful sign of success that the NPS official had seen in several years. “Considering the circumstances under which the meeting was called,” he told Cammerer, “the strength of the personnel comprising the new Executive Committee and the enthusiasm displayed, I feel we can assume that the project is now very definitely on its feet.”<sup>33</sup>

No sooner had word reached Alpine of the fundraising committee’s plans than did local sponsors initiate their own aggressive publicity campaign, to the chagrin of Herbert Maier. As with the announcement in 1935 of congressional authorization, the NPS had to remain officially neutral on park promotion efforts. Yet Maier wrote to Leo McClatchy one week after the Austin meeting: “I know that the Alpine group is not cognizant of the fact that so much of the fine publicity on the Big Bend, which is getting into the Texas newspapers and eastern newspapers actually comes directly, or indirectly from this office [Santa Fe].” Maier recalled how, “at the meeting in Austin the other day, Gov. Allred held up a big spread from one of the New York papers that I know had its origin in this office.” He then told McClatchy: “It seems to me that we should let the Alpine people know what we are doing, and since we want to send our clippings to the Washington office that it may be well for you to keep track of all articles that appear to come directly or indirectly from us.” Then McClatchy could “send a letter to Dr. Morelock at the end of each month simply listing the dates and newspapers in which the articles appeared.” Maier also cautioned that “of course we do not want to make a mistake in any case where the dope has originated from Alpine.” He was motivated by the sense that the local sponsors “naturally assume that they have been the fountainhead of

this publicity.” Yet Maier also realized that “it may be that we should let the matter rest as it is but if you can think of some method, please let me know.”<sup>34</sup>

By mid-summer, the fundraising campaign had spread across Texas, energizing local champions of the park like Everett Townsend. Writing to Maier on July 3, he noted that Brewster County envisioned a new road from Alpine to the park site; a sure sign that the planning stages had already begun. Townsend also wrote that Amon Carter’s committee had received their state charter, to operate for five years “with no capital stock, but with an estimated \$25,000 in assets.” Then Townsend spoke of efforts by Carter and the committee to solicit funds from the John D. Rockefeller Foundation, better known for their support of educational and health programs in impoverished communities in the South (and a critical donor to the private fundraising for Great Smoky Mountain National Park). “Something may be had there after we ‘do our do,’” said Townsend, “but in my opinion Rockefeller will expect us to ride our horse about as far as he will go before he comes to the rescue with a fresh mount.” Maier acknowledged Townsend’s advice, and held a meeting in Washington with Representative Thomason and NPS director Cammerer regarding the school-lands controversy. These federal officials agreed that “the best way to handle the matter of the [Interior] Department’s position on the Big Bend school lands and mineral rights would be for the [Carter] Committee to draft the bill to be submitted to the State Legislature and to send a copy to the Secretary.” Maier then informed Townsend that Thomason “felt very strongly that the bill should not be presented in a called session but should be introduced in the regular session next January [1939].” Both Thomason and Maier believed that “this will give the Committee an opportunity to raise a substantial sum in the meantime by private subscription and which will have its effect on the [Texas] legislature.” Cammerer concurred in the thinking of Maier and Thomason, expressing most concern about the school-lands issue. Since “surveys by Federal, State and private geologists have at present discounted the presence of any paying quantities of minerals in the area,” said Cammerer, “it might be possible for us to consider such a provision [waiving mineral rights to the school lands].” The NPS director recalled that “experience has shown that after ten or fifteen years the need for such provision would not be pressed as of further importance.” Then “the Texans who are not as yet educated to the full meaning of a national park,” said Cammerer, “would be the last at that time to desire exploitation of that park.”<sup>35</sup>

Within 30 days of the Washington meeting of Maier, Cammerer and Thomason, events in Texas changed the future of Big Bend National Park in ways that even the most optimistic park sponsor could barely ascertain. Voters in the Lone Star state went to the polls that August to cast their ballots for the Republican and Democratic candidates for governor, with W. Lee “Pappy” O’Daniel winning the latter primary. As Texas remained a “one-party” state (no Republican had won the general election for

governor in the twentieth century), O'Daniel would become the new target for promoters of Big Bend to cultivate. Within one week of his primary victory, O'Daniel announced his intention to support state funding for Big Bend National Park. "You may well imagine my pleasure in seeing this," Townsend wrote to the future Texas chief executive, "because I have for years given much of my time and as liberally as possible of my means to this project which means so much to our beloved State and perhaps more to the American Continent at large if we succeed in making it an International feature as many of us hope to do." Townsend recounted for O'Daniel how "for 44 years I have lived in or adjacent to the Park region." While in the 43rd legislature, Townsend "fathered the first bills to make of it a State Park, and immediately began a campaign to bring it to the attention of the National Park Service." Townsend also "assisted in writing the first report made by the National Park Service to the Secretary of the Interior, which recommended and set out its importance as a National and International project." This report in turn "brought about the Congressional action authorizing its creation as a National Park." Townsend let O'Daniel know that "I am thoroughly familiar with the whole region, and have accompanied the National and International Park Commissions on all trips of inspection through the area on both sides of the Rio Grande."<sup>36</sup>

Beyond his work in west Texas to make Big Bend National Park a reality, Townsend reminded the next Lone Star governor that "I was in Austin during the whole of the last regular session [1937] of the Legislature, much of the time on my own expense." While there, Townsend "did [his] bit toward the passage of the appropriation for the purchase of the lands which my good friend Governor Allred afterward vetoed." Townsend also wanted O'Daniel to know that "I have made a thorough study of the records of all lands and have checked the ownership of every tract involved." From this Townsend concluded: "I believe that I am fully familiar with every technical question that may arise when the time comes for the writing of the legislation to transfer the lands to the National Government." In order for O'Daniel to acquaint himself with Townsend, and with Big Bend, the former county sheriff asked: "Can you not find the time to visit the Park region sometime this fall?" Townsend could assure O'Daniel that "the citizens of Alpine and Brewster County would be most happy to see you." He listed the many state and NPS officials who had expressed to Townsend their support for the park project, among them James Allred, Walter Woodull, Coke Stevenson, and Herbert Maier, and promised "my support for the success of your coming administration."<sup>37</sup>

As the 1939 legislative session neared, and Governor O'Daniel considered measures to fulfill his promise on Big Bend, the NPS and the Interior department heightened public curiosity and encouraged potential donations. Harold Ickes took the occasion of a dedication ceremony for the Dr. Edmund A. Babler State Memorial Park near St. Louis, Missouri, to call for a similar federal park unit at Big Bend. "Establishment of the proposed Big Bend National Park," said Ickes, "will remove the thought

in the minds of many that the Mid-Continent has nothing worth while to offer in scenery.” The Fort Worth Star Telegram reported that the audience in St. Louis, which was joined by a “national radio hookup,” learned that land for the 1,600-acre Babler state park came from the family, as well as an endowment of \$1.5 million for its maintenance. Seeing a trend of private support for public parks, Ickes called upon his audience to sponsor park creation initiatives for Big Bend, the Florida Everglades, the California Redwoods, and “the Alaskan Bear Sanctuary.” “If [Big Bend] national park becomes a reality,” said Ickes, “we will stop the ruinous erosion now going on due to overgrazing by sheep and goats that are trying to live where cattle and horses starved.” In so doing, “we will turn the mountainsides and the badlands and the grassless plains back to the antelope and the deer and the bears and the panthers and foxes that lived and thrived there before the white man brought what he calls civilization.” Ickes characterized the Big Bend as “a wilderness now, a poverty-stricken wilderness, but nature will restore its richness if given a chance.” He then intimated that the noble efforts to raise funds for Big Bend stood in jeopardy. “Private individuals must come forward,” said the Interior secretary, “unless the Governor [James Allred] relents, for no federal funds can be used for land acquisition.” Yet Ickes had faith that Big Bend, along with the other endangered park sites, could be protected for the enjoyment of the American people.<sup>38</sup>

Harold Ickes’ nationally broadcast plea for Big Bend gave park sponsors a new angle of promotion, one that the Fort Worth Star Telegram, and Amon Carter’s fundraising committee were quick to exploit. Carter’s newspaper told its readers on October 17 that “Texans are appreciative of the nationwide publicity which Secretary Ickes gave to the proposed Big Bend National Park.” The Star Telegram, ever conscious of the economic boon such a facility would mean to the Lone Star state, declared that “it is logical to assume that many tourists will as a result [of the speech] be attracted to Texas.” Yet the most important audience for Ickes’s words, said the paper, were “Texans who on vacation think they can find enjoyment only by going to Colorado, Yellowstone National Park and other distant places to see majestic mountains, deep canyons and other beauties of nature extravagantly expressed.” “Too many Texas people,” argued the Star Telegram, “are unaware of the rich potential asset which they have in the Big Bend territory and therefore are indifferent to the development of a national park there.” The Fort Worth paper warned its readers that “after all, the success of the project depends upon the number of converts to it in the State who become salesmen and contributors to the Big Bend fund.” Ickes’s words, the Star Telegram concluded, “should spur Texas people on to carry out their part of the project.”<sup>39</sup>

So that Ickes’s mandate could be achieved, the fundraising committee met in early October to plan its activities. Herbert Maier attended the session at which the members voted to employ Adrian Wychgel of New York City as manager of the campaign. “Mr. Wychgel, I understand,” Maier told

Cammerer, “is connected with the firm that handled the raising of funds for the Shenandoah National Park.” The Big Bend committee wanted Wychgel “to raise \$50,000 to finance the campaign proper from which sum must also come his fee.” Maier did note that “Mr. Wychgel is working closely with a Mr. Sculley of Austin who has done considerable fund-raising in Texas in the past.” Both individuals, according to Maier, “are attempting to raise the first \$50,000 through subscriptions from wealthy men and firms, such as large oil companies, in Houston, San Antonio and other large Texas cities.” Unfortunately, said Maier: “To date they have had only limited results.” Amon Carter, however, told the committee that “if Mr. Wychgel is successful in raising the first \$50,000 to finance the campaign, he will then undertake the job of raising the whole fund.” Horace Morelock and the Alpine boosters, said Maier, “are watching the thing closely.” Should Wychgel fail, “it has been suggested that they [the west Texas sponsors] attempt to obtain the initial \$50,000 appropriation at the next session of the Legislature, which should not be difficult.” Maier did caution Cammerer: “On account of the above uncertainties and the coming state election, it has not yet been determined what other legislation the [fundraising] Committee will introduce for clearing up the land situation.” The Santa Fe official recalled that “some \$25,000 to \$50,000 was earlier raised by popular subscription but this money can only be used for the purchase of land.” Thus Maier concluded somberly: “At present I believe there is nothing we can do but await the results of Mr. Wychgel’s efforts to raise the first \$50,000.”<sup>40</sup>

Once the Wychgel contract became public, Horace Morelock followed up on Everett Townsend’s invitation to W. Lee O’Daniel to visit Big Bend. The odds-on favorite in the Texas governor’s race had planned a tour of west Texas in the last days of October, and Morelock hoped that he could devote time to seeing the wonders of Big Bend and Brewster County. Carr P. Collins, an official with the Fidelity Union Life Insurance Company of Dallas, and the organizer of O’Daniel’s west Texas itinerary, offered Morelock an apology for not including Sul Ross and the dedication of U.S. Highway 90 while in the area. Big Bend sponsors had learned that O’Daniel planned a quick stop on his way east from El Paso to see McKittrick Canyon, a part of the future Guadalupe Mountains National Park adjoining New Mexico’s Carlsbad Caverns National Park. “Personally,” said Collins, “I think the entire time [one day] devoted to an inspection of the Big Bend Park site is of more importance.” Collins knew that “when a prominent man visits a certain section of the country, the people want him to see everything that is there to be seen.” Yet if the O’Daniel party tried “to visit your College, it will take so much time out that we could not inspect the Big Bend Park site.” Instead, Collins advised Morelock: “We are counting on you to meet us in El Paso and make the trip back to Alpine that night, via McKittrick Canyon.”<sup>41</sup>

Soon after the “official” gubernatorial election of O’Daniel in November 1938 to succeed James Allred, Morelock and the west Texas park

promoters took heart from word that the fundraising campaign neared its commencement. The Sul Ross president told James Record that Colonel William Tuttle of San Antonio had raised some \$3,000, while Colonel J.F. Josey of Houston believed that his hometown's share could be raised, and Austin committee members "might get \$1,000 . . . if we would go at it right." Yet Morelock also had disturbing news to relay to the editor of the Fort Worth Star Telegram. "I am advised," wrote Morelock, "that considerable trouble has arisen in the past relative to contracts with promoters, which grew out of the fact that the contract did not specifically state that the commission was to be based only upon the cash actually collected and not upon pledges." The Sul Ross president believed that "Mr. Carter is too good a business man to overlook things like this, but I thought it might be well to bring to your attention some experiences along this line which have caused considerable trouble in the past." Morelock, however, did not want to dwell on this issue, as his speech in Austin in October had generated much enthusiasm for Big Bend. "A number of women inquired as to where they might get information on the park campaign," said Morelock, "in order that every Federated [Women's] Club in Texas might give a program on this subject." He hoped that Record could supply him with a bulletin and a movie promoting the park, especially the upcoming address that Morelock and G.P. Smith of Sul Ross would give in Dallas to the Texas State Teachers Association.<sup>42</sup>

Following Morelock's appeal to the Star Telegram for assistance in his round of public appearances on behalf of Big Bend, governor-elect O'Daniel decided to return to the Big Bend country to devote more attention to the future park site. Morelock joined the gathering in the Chisos CCC camp on November 15, where he heard Herbert Maier outline the NPS's plans. "I do not know what your reaction was to the Governor's thinking relative to a national park," Morelock told Maier, "but I am feeling happy over what he, the lieutenant governor, and the speaker of the house, etc., had to say on this subject." Morelock himself discussed with O'Daniel "the three-volume edition on the national and state parks which was recently issued by your department." He then recommended that Maier send copies to O'Daniel, Coke Stevenson, and Emmett Morris of Houston. Morelock had seen a copy of the multi-volume NPS study when he had met with Amon Carter, which led him to think that "the leading newspapers of Texas should also have a copy, in order that they may boost the park campaign, once it is well under way."<sup>43</sup>

Another long-time champion of Big Bend, Everett Townsend, could not accompany the O'Daniel party in the Chisos that week, as his wife's deteriorating health had required her to seek treatment at Eureka Hot Springs, Arkansas. Yet Townsend was flattered to receive Maier's invitation, and his kind words about the role that Townsend had played in keeping the Big Bend project alive. Then Townsend advised Maier of problems developing in the park area among landowners displeased with their new neighbor. "As already intimated in other letters," said Townsend, "I have

been somewhat disgusted at the capers of some of my friends and largely because of my other troubles, may have been somewhat discouraged with the progress made by our State Committee.” Yet he declared himself “still in the ring and ready to go as far as anyone in putting over our Project.” Townsend also had entered into discussions with state parks board director William Lawson about “creating a job for me to look after the care of the geological and other valuable areas in the Big Bend to the end of protecting them from American vandals.” Townsend believed that “we can have the co-operation of all the large non-resident land holders for that purpose, as well as the local ranchmen.” Lawson and he had pursued this option because “for the State to do it there would have to be a special law passed and an appropriation provided;” a circumstance that could be avoided if the park service would fund the caretaker position that Townsend envisioned for the Chisos property.<sup>44</sup>

Herbert Maier then weighed in with his assessment of the status of Big Bend’s future, as filtered through his conversations with governor-elect O’Daniel and his party. Among the issues discussed between Maier and O’Daniel was the fundraising campaign. “The Executive Committee,” Maier wrote to Cammerer, “has now pledged itself to raise \$25,000 for initial publicity work, and \$15,500.00 has been paid in . . . cash with the remainder definitely pledged.” Once this money was available, the committee would hire its fundraiser and rent space in Austin for the work. “It is estimated the campaign is to last two weeks,” said Maier, “although this seems very brief to me.” The committee would pay \$10,000 to the fundraising firm, and “a representative of Adrian Wychgel and Associates of New York City has been out here and has returned to New York.” Maier cautioned that “I do not know definitely to what extent he was impressed with the chances of raising the money” when the initiative began in the spring. Maier also did not have a good sense of what lengths Governor O’Daniel would go on behalf of a Big Bend appropriation. “He is in for some pretty tough sailing,” Maier informed the NPS director, “what with his pledge on Old Age Pensions, etc.” Yet Maier took comfort in the fact that the governor’s “personal aid is State Senator Coke Stevenson, who has always been the principal leader in Big Bend legislation.” Stevenson had been elected lieutenant governor that month, and Maier concluded that there “need be no fear from the new Governor.”<sup>45</sup>

What Maier had learned about the upcoming legislative session was that “the fund-raising committee will have nothing to do with legislation.” This instead would be the “province of the West Texas group.” They “tentatively planned to ask the legislature for \$750,000.00 (which is the amount it passed two years ago) with the condition that the private subscriptions match this dollar for dollar, or something to that effect.” An alternative idea, said Maier, was that “the campaign will be put on first, and a bill introduced for any unraised portion.” As to “the problem of school lands, mineral rights, etc,” Maier reported that these “should not be brought up until after the money is at hand.” What he called “these difficult matters” would



“more readily solve themselves with the aid of public opinion, although it is likely they will force their way into any bill proposed for an appropriation.” Then Maier expressed some caution about the reputation of the fundraising body itself. “While Chairman Amon Carter is one of the most influential men in the State,” said the acting director of Region III, “there are those on his committee who are holding back because they feel he is an opportunist, and will reap all the credit in the end.” Maier also had heard “other rumblings -- but this is normal to a large promotion of this sort.” He believed that the park initiative “is now in ‘big’ hands in the State and we can expect definite action next Spring,” even though Maier had to concede to Cammerer: “Since Governor O’Daniel has not yet taken office, things will probably continue in a nebulous state until after the first of the year.”<sup>46</sup>

To fill that vacuum in Austin, the NPS and Horace Morelock redoubled their efforts in the last weeks of 1938 to saturate the news media with stories about the Big Bend fundraising venue. Herbert Maier spoke in Fort Worth just before Thanksgiving on the future park, and of the gift that Texans could give themselves by purchasing the lands in Brewster County needed for its inclusion in the NPS system. The Star Telegram quoted Maier as suggesting that Big Bend would be one of the last parks created by Congress, the other two being the Everglades and the Kings River Canyon in California’s Sierra Nevada. “The three areas now desired,” reported the Star Telegram, “will complete the national system as now planned, [Maier said], expressing the hope that Texas would not pass up its opportunity to be included in that system.” The international dimensions of Big Bend also received praise from the acting Region III director: “I believe it is a social opportunity that will be copied all over the world.” The Star Telegram cited Maier’s many visits to the future park, calling him “probably . . . more familiar with the Big Bend area than any other man in the country.” Maier promised that federal funds would flow immediately upon Texas’s purchase of the park lands, bringing to west Texas “lodges and other facilities to accommodate every income class, and highways and trails to the various points of interest.” “Texas can get all the federal money needed for development of the park,” Maier told the Star Telegram, which quoted the NPS official as “mentioning the size of the State’s membership in Congress” as proof of the wisdom of the private fundraising initiative.<sup>47</sup>

Maier’s assertion that the nation would soon have no more areas worthy of NPS preservation struck a nerve among his superiors in Washington, in that they worried about negative public reaction (which in turn could affect fundraising for Big Bend). Thus Conrad Wirth inquired of Maier: “I doubt that the newspaper quoted you correctly, since, as you know, there are a number of national park projects on which the Service is now working and there will undoubtedly be more.” Wirth advised Maier to “clarify the record” on Big Bend, which the acting director of Region III did by contacting Robert Hicks of the Star Telegram. Hicks had returned to Fort Worth in early December after a visit to Big Bend, and his series of stories prompted Maier to praise “how you could absorb so much of the technical

knowledge concerning the project as thoroughly as you did.” Maier considered “the articles you wrote” to be “a great help to the campaign for consummating this project as a great international park.” His only concern was Hicks’s reiteration of Maier’s statement that “the two or three outstanding areas which I named are the only areas in which the National Park Service is still interested.” Maier apologized to Hicks for the error, stating that “there are several other wilderness areas of national park calibre throughout the country, in Alaska and our Island possessions, which . . . are quite likely to qualify for national park status.” Hicks also had gained the impression that Big Bend would be the NPS’s only all-year park; an understandable belief since the majority of the park service’s 23 units were located at high altitude. “Most of our major national parks,” wrote Maier to Hicks, “are closed during the winter period but such parks in the South as Grand Canyon and Carlsbad Caverns, and we hope later the Big Bend, are all-year-round parks.”<sup>48</sup>

Repercussions from Maier’s lapse in judgment did not cease with an apology to a Fort Worth reporter. NPS director Cammerer asked the acting Region III director to reveal the source of his information about Big Bend as one of the last desirable places for a national park. “It is unfortunate,” said Maier, “that I was misquoted and I felt very chagrined when I read the article a few days after I had given the talk.” The Star Telegram’s Robert Hicks, said Maier, “is a friend of mine, and I have corrected him on the facts so that if he has occasion to write again on the subject of the Big Bend he will not repeat the statements.” Maier acknowledged correspondence with Governor-elect O’Daniel “as to what other areas the government is attempting to acquire at this time.” Maier “named some of these but did not state that they were the only remaining areas desired.” He then was “further misquoted by the same reporter as saying that no mineral deposits are ever found in igneous formations and that the Big Bend will be the only National Park that will be open the year round.” All Maier could surmise was that “Hicks, apparently, wanted to make a good story.”<sup>49</sup>

While Maier emphasized the imperative of Big Bend for Texas donors large and small, Horace Morelock asked Amon Carter for advice on publicizing the May 1939 meeting of the West Texas Chamber of Commerce meeting (the group most involved in subsidizing park promotion). That organization hoped that Carter could prevail upon Harold Ickes to deliver their keynote address. Herbert Maier in turn solicited Morelock for “any information regarding any legislation which it is planned to introduce for the coming session in connection with the Big Bend.” James Record had advised Maier that “as regards asking the State for funds it may depend somewhat on the amount that can be collected in the campaign.” A gap between the spring fundraising effort, and the winter session of the state legislature, threatened any such legislation for the 1939 session. Maier also needed to know Morelock’s sense of “any bill that may be introduced reimbursing the State School Fund for its land holdings or its mineral rights.” Then Maier confided that the park service faced a dilemma regarding the Guadalupe

Mountain area known as McKittrick Canyon. Governor-elect O'Daniel had included this area in his post-election tour of west Texas because Culberson County Judge J.C. Hunter had offered the Texas State Parks Board between two and three thousand acres for a state park. Maier himself had surveyed the entire Guadalupe Mountain area in April 1938 on behalf of the park service. Judith K. Fabry contended in *Guadalupe Mountains National Park: An Administrative History* (1988), that Maier's report found that "except for the southern extremity of the range, the mountains provided little in the way of scenic or wildlife values." Now Maier contemplated Judge Hunter's offer, which the acting Region III director preferred go to the state parks board "for summer cabin sites and thereby a permanent summer population would be at hand to make use of this State Park which otherwise would be quite severely isolated." If the NPS followed his suggestion, said Maier, "this would be far better than to attempt to raise \$246,000 from the State for purchase of the entire [McKittrick] canyon area." Maier had discussed this with Wendell Mayes of the state parks board, and "apparently the State Board's policy will be to accept the donation of the smaller area from Judge Hunter and to not favor a bill for purchase of the entire area which bill would interfere with a Big Bend bill."<sup>50</sup>

The NPS office in Washington, cognizant of the need for a partnership with the new Texas governor in any land-acquisition initiatives, made sure to compliment O'Daniel on his victory, and promise cooperation in his tenure as Texas's chief executive. Acting NPS director Albert E. Demaray told O'Daniel that "the Big Bend country is, of course, one of our truly unspoiled areas, ideally suited for national park purposes." Thus "it devolves on the State and Nation," said Demaray, "as I see it, to carry the project through as expeditiously as possible." The NPS saw Big Bend as "a socially and economically sound park proposition, which will pay for itself over and over again under the land use policies followed by this Service." Demaray thanked O'Daniel for "your interest in the project as reported to me by Mr. Maier," and he spoke of "looking forward with a great deal of pleasure to making your acquaintance when next it is my good fortune to be in Texas."<sup>51</sup>

By year's end, park service officials and private interests championing Big Bend National Park cast their gaze upon the Texas state capital in Austin. Key legislators received letters like that of Amon Carter to state senator H.L. Winfield of Fort Stockton. Carter informed Winfield: "It was the opinion of the [fundraising] Committee at its organization meeting in Austin that we should not seek a legislative appropriation for the Park at this time." Instead the group believed that "we should take our plans before the people of Texas and of other states, perhaps, to get the necessary funds." Carter made clear the committee's determination to obtain private monies wherever possible by declaring: "In fact, any effort to secure a legislative appropriation will interfere with our plans." What the fundraisers needed from Winfield and his colleagues was "a land bill covering the two points-namely, school lands and mineral rights - and that before same is offered,

the National Park Service see the bill.” Carter believed that “such a course will mean that this time we won’t have to get any remedial amendments or make any changes before the final transfer of the land is made.” To aid Winfield in his deliberations, Carter included a chart on the “Land Status” at Big Bend. As of the end of 1938, the state parks board could claim ownership of the surface and mineral rights of 13,460 acres (or a mere two percent of the 788,682 acres defined by Congress in the 1935 legislation authorizing creation of Big Bend National Park). The state school fund held 475,461 acres, with some 132,107 of those acres deeded to the parks board (but with the mineral rights still accruing to the school fund). When Carter added the 299,761 acres of privately owned and patented lands, the scale of property acquisition for Texas’s first national park became quite clear to Senator Winfield and his fellow legislators.<sup>52</sup>

The year 1938 had tested the park service and the west Texas sponsors of Big Bend in a myriad of ways. Much time and energy went into plans for a statewide fundraising campaign, the likes of which the Lone Star state had never seen. Yet Everett Townsend, Horace Morelock, Herbert Maier, and other federal and local officials rarely tired of the challenge to bring Big Bend into the national park system. Its beauty and grandeur, coupled with the desperate straits in which most landowners found themselves (even five years into the New Deal), suggested that a new political administration in Austin might adopt Big Bend as the Lone Star state’s first effort to preserve nature’s beneficence in partnership with the NPS. When that moment came, the dark days of 1938 would be instructive, as few public officials came to the Big Bend to dream of a national park, and fewer visitors could imagine how the landscape would appear once protected by the policies and regulations of the National Park Service.