

Chapter 7: A Stronger Federal Presence: Depression, New Deal, and World War II

The stock market crash of October 1929 particularly devastated rural America. Throughout the 1920s, the prosperity enjoyed by much of the nation usually did not include farmers and ranchers. The structure of industrial capitalism, the failed promise of agricultural prosperity after World War I, the increase in credit and related upward pressure on the price of land, and the drought of the late 1920s all contributed to stasis and then decline in the agricultural economy and to poverty and misfortune among farmers. Even irrigation, often the salvation of agriculturalists, could not reverse the trends that demonstrated agriculture's lack of viability in an industrial economy.

The depression that followed the stock market crash exacerbated the problems of rural America. During the 1920s, farmers had produced increasing quantities of crops, driving the prices of staples down. Cotton prices peaked at the beginning of the decade, and as corn, wheat, and soybeans flooded the market their prices fell as well. With the onset of the Depression, the agricultural market collapsed entirely. Gross farm production decreased by 50 percent between 1929 and 1932, signaling that places dependent upon agriculture were in for hard times. With drought and depression came despair, and only President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal offered even a slim chance of reversing rural America's long-standing decline.

The New Deal emerged as one of the most revolutionary programs in American history involving the federal government. An unprecedented intervention into national economic and social affairs, it redefined the role of the state in American society. The Depression left as much as one-quarter of the workforce unemployed at any given time and precipitated a crisis in public confidence. American institutions seemed to have failed the people, and thousands simply gave up. Some starved, some begged, some rode the rails, and all felt that the promise of the nation had been tarnished. When Roosevelt ascended to the presidency, he brought an ebullience that his dour predecessor, Herbert Hoover, could not muster. Roosevelt's manner alone inspired hope, and the programs he espoused produced a tenuous optimism. The New Deal injected government money into the economy, creating jobs by the thousands, providing guarantees that became the basis of the American social "safety net" and building a range of projects that reshaped the national landscape.¹

¹ William Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940* (New York, Harper & Row, 1963), 1-26.

It also counteracted long-standing western resentment of the involvement of the federal government in what westerners considered local affairs. Since the settlement of the West, westerners often regarded the federal government as meddlers who deprived local people of the prerogatives of place. Westerners reacted against the General Land Office special agents who tried to administer western holdings, stood firmly against Reclamation Act of 1902, which benefitted the very western farmers who fought it, and let out a loud howl when Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed more than 7,000,00 million acres of national forest just before Congress curtailed his power to proclaim such lands in eleven western states. As long as western states had viable economies, they could protest federal efforts. During the Depression, many places that previously complained about federal intervention meekly waited their turn at the federal trough.²

In peripheries such as southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos, the impact of depression was as great as in the industrial cities, where gangs of the unemployed roamed the streets in search of work. Carlsbad and its environs depended on the industrial economy to buy its products, and with the establishment of the national park, to visit in growing numbers. During the 1920s, as many park visitors came from within the region — from west Texas and Colorado — as from the rest of the country. The depression crimped that relationship; even ranchers and subsistence farmers in far west Texas felt its impact and intra-regional travel declined. Increasingly reliant on tourist dollars — and despite the long tradition of independence in the region — people looked longingly for federal salvation once the Roosevelt administration made clear its national plans.

As a result, between 1929 and 1945 the federal role in southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos dramatically increased, and the policies of the Roosevelt administration raised the visibility and importance of Carlsbad Caverns National Park. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the demands of World War II brought new federal activities to the region, again increasing the government's presence and power. New Deal projects, Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camps, and regional military activities combined with the park to create a healthier but increasingly state-dependent economy in southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos.

The New Deal offered the possibility for a range of improvements; everywhere else in the destitute West, its programs built infrastructure. Federal programs designed to put people back to work first replaced and then supplanted private industry, accelerating the patterns that had begun when the Reclamation Service rescued irrigated agriculture along the Pecos.³ Like much of the West, southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos continued to look to outside benefactors to sustain regional life. The federal government, already regarded as a valuable and benevolent force in the Carlsbad area, became even more significant.

² Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959), 36-69; Harold K. Steen, *The United States Forest Service: A History* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1976), 98-100; Hal Rothman, *preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 68; Richard Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1984), 1-9.

³ Richard Lowitt, *The New Deal and the West* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1984), 1-15.

The extractive economy, the only major economic endeavor without direct ties to the government, also emerged and grew in importance during this period. Although the gradual demise of the guano industry slowed development, potash mining soon replaced it as the dominant local industry in Carlsbad. In the larger region, oil and gas development throughout west Texas and southeast New Mexico had begun before World War II and grew in significance during the war and in its aftermath. It became the leading industry east of the Pecos River and attracted thousands of new residents to the larger area. Tied closely to government needs, the oil and gas industry became crucial in national strategy beginning during World War II. Its products became essential to the war effort and to the rise of the use of petroleum and natural gas in the postwar world.

Extractive industries provided a third economic basis in the region, adding derricks and fires in a visible dimension that had a broader geographic impact than the park. In Carlsbad and along the Pecos River, a culture and economy that depended on federal support flourished. A subsistence regime persisted near the Guadalupe Mountains, only peripherally tied to the mainstream economy and generally spared the problems of this most difficult of decades. The people there remained poor, and because the prosperity of the 1920s largely passed over them, the norms of the 1930s did not feel like deprivation. Elsewhere in the region, along the Caprock and away from the Permian Reef, oil exploration took hold. With ranching and irrigated agriculture, extractive industries became one of the dominant facets of the nonfederal economy, pushing the region toward a role as a supplier of industrial America's raw materials.

The discovery of oil at Spindletop in east Texas in January 1901 kicked off a rush for the liquid gold throughout Texas and into New Mexico. By 1910, when oil was discovered in the trans-Pecos, wells had sprung up throughout east Texas, Indian Territory (which became the state of Oklahoma in 1912), eastern Kansas, and parts of Louisiana. Oilmen, many of whom experienced previous oil booms in Pennsylvania, Virginia, or Ohio, became common across the southwestern landscape. As these experienced wildcatters moved westward, they struck oil at greater depths and in greater quantities than anyone had ever imagined.⁴

The initial strike in the Permian Basin set the standard for future development in west Texas and eastern New Mexico. On the morning of May 28, 1923, the Santa Rita No. 1 well blew a gusher, smearing the quarter-acre north of the site on the Ollie Parker ranch eleven miles from Big Lake, Texas. Oilmen soon determined that the well would produce about two hundred barrels per day. Within a few days, as many as three hundred people had descended on the town, including representatives of Texas Company (later Texaco), and Gulf Oil.⁵ An oil rush in the Permian Basin had begun.

Although most oil exploration took place in west Texas, interest soon extended into southeastern New Mexico. Initial drilling took place near Dayton in Eddy County in 1909, but it produced only a "brown well," one that contained oil without commercial value. In 1924, oil was

⁴ Carl Coke Rister, *Oil! Titan of the Southwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1949), 25-218.

⁵ Rister, *Oil!*, 287-88; *Oil Weekly* 29, no. 10 (June 23, 1923), 25.

discovered fourteen miles south of Artesia. This area had been mapped by an independent geologist from Tulsa named V. H. McNutt, a scientist who became instrumental in developing mineral resources in the Permian Basin. Another nearby site, the Twin-Lakes well, began to produce about 250 barrels a day. With resources from the Picher Oil Company, a business formed by investors from Joplin, Missouri, and Picher, Oklahoma, the field became the first prominent New Mexico oil strike. In 1925, oil production in the state surpassed one million barrels for the first time; by 1926, the Picher Company's wells yielded more than two million barrels. In 1927, more than one million barrels were pumped from the Artesia fields alone.⁶ Even larger finds soon followed. In 1927, near Jal, just below the Caprock in Lea County, New Mexico, the Texas Production Company drilled into a natural gas field that produced ninety million cubic feet of gas each day.

A group of oil companies, including Texas, Prairie, Midwest, Ohio, Humble, Empire, Skelly, and Sinclair began drilling operations. So did independents such as the Maljamar Oil Company, which by 1927 had three producing wells, averaging 115 barrels per day, twenty-five miles east of the Artesia field. With the discovery of oil near Hobbs by the Midwest Company and its subsequent development by Midwest and Humble, the little town of Hobbs, New Mexico, turned into a boomtown. By 1931, oil fields in the region had produced more than seven million barrels.⁷

Southeast New Mexico went wild for oil throughout the rest of the 1920s and the 1930s. Besides Hobbs and Jal, oil fields began producing in Eunice and Monument, and the industry became so important that refinery construction began in Dayton. Other refineries followed, including one run by the Western Refining Company in Pecos, Texas. Tied to the development of oil in west Texas, the region boomed as another extractive industry arose to replace guano mining in the long history of efforts to create an independent economic structure.

Oil and gas exploration appealed to the culture of southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos. Wildcatters, who searched for underground reserves, leased land, and set up wells, mirrored cowboys riding the range. They, too, were independent, answering to no one and following their instincts. Often reserved and even taciturn in daily life, many became flamboyant after success. The wildcatters evinced individualism and seemed to promise a new way to put the region back on its feet without federal support.

Another ancillary industry grew to greater importance as the oil business boomed. Natural gas, often found with oil, was initially perceived as a waste byproduct. The ninety million cubic feet of gas at Jal initially did not appear to have significant economic value. Gas fires burning this seemingly useless byproduct dotted the southeastern New Mexico landscape as late as 1935. The El Paso Natural Gas

⁶ Rister, *Oil!*, 300-01; Rinehart Oil News Company, *West Texas-New Mexico Oil* (Tulsa: Rinehart Oil News Company, 1937), 28; Petroleum Division, A. I. M. E., *Petroleum Development and Technology in 1927* (NY: American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, 1928), 659-62.

⁷ Rister, *Oil!*, 301-02; Rinehart Oil News Company, *West Texas-New Mexico Oil* (Tulsa: Rinehart Oil News Company, 1937), 29; Petroleum Division, A. I. M. E., *Petroleum Development and Technology in 1927*, 618-21.

Company, formed around 1928, took the lead in harnessing the region's natural gas resources. By the mid-1930s, it had become the primary regional producer of natural gas.⁸

Despite the region-wide success of the oil and gas industry, the search for a consistent and widely available economic formula continued in Carlsbad. The wells and their development meant prosperity, but with the exception of landowners who leased property to the oil companies, much of the wealth from such endeavors drained out of the region. Some young men found employment in the oil fields, which paid well in an effort to compensate for the inherent danger involved in the work, but generally the fields enriched newcomers, and the governing apparatus, not longtime residents of the region. Despite the romantic image of the wildcatters and the oil-lease men, they reprised an all-too-common situation in the West. The prosperity their appearance promised typically arrived with the outsiders and departed with them, leaving most of the people in the region exactly where they had been before oil was discovered in the trans-Pecos.

The combination of oil and gas and ongoing guano operations suggested a future in mining for the region. Many sought some other mineral of value near Carlsbad; as Jim White pointed out when he described his impetus for searching for the Bat Cave, people in southeastern New Mexico always looked to the land for economic opportunities. Deserts and semiarid areas all over the world had begun to yield valuable minerals and fossil fuels and there were many reasons to believe that southeast New Mexico and far west Texas would do the same. Ongoing efforts to administer dams and irrigation had offered valuable geological characterizations of the region, beginning with Willis T. Lee's work from 1903 to 1905. In 1910, the federal government first eyed the salt beds east of Carlsbad as a possible source of oil; after 1920, the development of potash became a possibility.⁹ Like guano, potash possessed considerable value. Widely used as a fertilizer before the advent of synthesized chemical compounds, potash was buried in the Salado geological formation, sandwiched between two salt formations largely devoid of sylvite and other potassium and magnesium evaporite minerals. This layer, named the McNutt Potash Zone after the intrepid geologist V.H. McNutt, yielded minerals that could be processed into fertilizer.¹⁰

World War I forced the United States to develop its own sources of potash, which typically had been imported from Germany. As hostilities deepened and trade ceased between the two nations, German potash became unavailable in the United States. The shortage inspired hyperbole, with the mineral described as the "salt that nearly lost a war," an important indicator of its significance. The price of potash skyrocketed from a prewar average of \$35 per ton to \$500 per ton by the end of 1914. The

⁸ Doris Gregory, "Gas Flares Brightening Economy," *El Paso Times*, June 15, 1964.

⁹ "New Mexico Potash, Eddy, N. Mex.: *War Minerals Report 432*" (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1945); James S. Wroth, "Special Features of Core Drilling in the Salt Beds of Western Texas and New Mexico," Bureau of Mines Information Circular 6156 (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Mines, 1929).

¹⁰ Arnold L. Brokaw, C. L. Jones, M. E. Colley, and W. H. Hays, "Geology and Hydrology of the Carlsbad Potash Area, Eddy and Lea Counties, New Mexico," United States Geological Survey 4339-1, Open File Report 1972, (200) R290 no. 1793, United States Geological Survey Library, Denver, Colorado.

situation encouraged domestic exploration for the mineral, an endeavor supported by a pattern of funding that began with a congressional appropriation in 1911 to the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Soils to research potash. In 1912, John A. Udden of the University of Texas discovered potash salts in bailings from oil wells in Potter County, Texas, and his subsequent work in the Permian Basin revealed similar salts in its salines. The price of potash plummeted with the war's end, as did the domestic industry. Only the American Trona Company (later renamed the American Potash and Chemical Company) survived, due largely to its development of an inexpensive, efficient method of extracting potassium chloride and other chemicals from Lake Searles, California. The wartime scarcity inspired Congress to appropriate funds to support a domestic industry. In 1924, U.S. Senator Morris Shepherd of Texas introduced a bill authorizing the Bureau of Mines and the USGS to explore the salt strata of the Permian Basin for potash minerals. The bill passed in 1926, and in the resulting survey twenty-four test wells revealed massive beds of polyhalites as well as other potash minerals. The Bureau of Mines pioneered a process that allowed its extraction, and a domestic potash industry took shape.¹¹

The proximity of potash to oil deposits also spurred the development of potash mining. After Spindletop, oil booms throughout Texas and southeast New Mexico drove the regional economy, especially after the 1929 market crash. The wildcatters who searched for oil also sought other minerals; after 1925, they closely watched the debris from oil drilling for signs of potash. The demand for the fertilizer, the fear of another shortage resulting from an international political crisis, the close links between the two commodities, and the support of legislators such as Senator Shepard all but assured the development of a potash industry in southeastern New Mexico.¹²

Near Carlsbad, V. H. McNutt served as the catalyst for the development of the potash industry. In 1925, he found crystals of potassium in bailings from a Snowden & McSweeney Co. well. Test bores the following year revealed a thick layer of sylvinites, a combination of potassium chloride and common salt, about one thousand feet below the surface. Snowden and McSweeney company officials leased fifteen thousand acres of the public domain near Carlsbad and set up a separate company to mine and refine potash. This new company became the United States Potash Company (USPC).¹³ Acquiring the expertise and money to mine potash was a complicated process. Snowden and McSweeney drilled for oil, not minerals; the company lacked the expertise for a complicated mining

¹¹ "New Mexico Potash, Eddy, N. Mex.: *War Minerals Report 432* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, 1945); James S. Wroth, "Special Features of Core Drilling in the Salt Beds of Western Texas and New Mexico," Bureau of Mines Information Circular 6156 (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Mines, 1929); n.a., *A History of Potash, Presented in Pictures and Words* (Carlsbad, NM: Potash Company of America, 1945); Donald C. Swain, *Wilderness Defender: Horace M. Albright and Conservation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 233-35.

¹² Rister, *Oil!*, 266-350; Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 233-35.

¹³ B. G. Messer and J. E. Tong, "Exploration, Development, and Production at Duval Sulphur and Potash Company's Potash Operation in Eddy County, New Mexico, *The Mines Magazine* 43 n. 3 (March 1953): 53-60; Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 236.

endeavor. After a number of attempts, the Pacific Coast Borax Company purchased half the common stock of U.S. Potash and prepared to sink a shaft near Carlsbad and to build a refinery. Pacific Coast Borax, a subsidiary of Borax Consolidated Limited of London, produced small amounts of potash during World War I, but left the industry when prices fell at the end of the war.¹⁴

Pacific Coast Borax had close ties to the National Park Service, also an important organization in southeast New Mexico. The company produced Twenty Mule Team Borax, the product NPS Director Stephen T. Mather promoted to make his fortune. Pacific Coast Borax's chief executive in North America was Christian Zabriskie. Like Mather and Horace M. Albright, Mather's right-hand and eventual successor, he was a graduate of the University of California, and the three men enjoyed close ties. Albright's father and Zabriskie had even been in the mortuary business together in the mining town of Candelaria, Nevada. An incapacitating stroke in November 1928 forced Mather to resign, and on January 12, 1929, Albright succeeded Mather as director of the Park Service. Within a year, Zabriskie asked Albright to take over U.S. Potash; the gregarious, driven, and uncompromising new NPS director was genuine executive material. Albright demurred for two years, but finally agreed after the rout of Herbert Hoover in the 1932 election. He left the Park Service to become vice-president and general manager of U.S. Potash.¹⁵ In Albright, the company secured an effective leader who already knew a great deal about southeastern New Mexico.

During the two years Albright pondered his career change, competition for potash accelerated. U.S. Potash sunk a shaft to reach potash in December 1929; when it completed the work in January 1931, it had the entire field to itself. Even though the company built its own refinery near the Pecos River about thirteen miles from the mine in 1932, its luxury of exclusivity did not last long. The Potash Company of America (PCA) had set up its own operation, sinking an initial shaft in 1931, that ultimately lacked commercial potential, and a second, successful one in 1933 that began the expansion of the business. By early 1934, the company had finished building a crushing mill and a twenty-mile railroad to Carlsbad, and its first carloads of manure salts were being shipped. Despite an almost 40 percent fall in the price of potash over the previous year, PCA shipped its first high grade muriate of potash in 1935, sank another shaft, and expanded its operation again. In 1936, a third competitor, the Union Potash and Chemical Company, opened for business. The three companies united in a campaign against foreign potash and by 1936 potash prices regained about half the earlier loss. The three Carlsbad-area companies, which produced almost half the nation's potash, again became profitable, continuing to grow despite an antitrust investigation of the industry in the late 1930s. By 1942, they were producing more than 1.2 million tons of potassium salts annually in the United States, almost entirely by the three New Mexico mines and the site at Searles Lake, California.¹⁶

¹⁴ Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 236.

¹⁵ Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 236-38; Horace M. Albright, as told to Robert Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1933* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers Press, 1986), 279-81; Robert Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, 3d ed. (New York, Knopf, 1970), 33-34.

¹⁶ "New Mexico Potash, Eddy, N. Mex.: War Minerals Report 432"; n.a., *A History of Potash*,

In Carlsbad, the impact of potash mining resembled that of guano extraction. Potash supported an ongoing, dependable, visibly productive industry that provided many jobs in the region. Even during the 1930s, observers noted that manpower was scarce in southeastern New Mexico, a problem worsened by World War II, and the demands it put on the civilian labor force.¹⁷ Men who labored in the potash mines held tools, loaded railcars full of the product, and came home dirty. They looked like men at work in a way that seemed real, as opposed to employees at Carlsbad Caverns National Park who gave tours and in, comparison, seemed somehow less impressive. By the 1930s, the local newspapers touted the park, but to most people in the region, the potash mines seemed far more important. They represented a traditional kind of labor that people understood.

At Carlsbad Cavern National Park, Thomas Boles faced the Depression with the same ebullience that he brought with him in 1927. Boles had never been a team player, as that concept was understood, in the National Park Service. His work, even more than that of Frank Pinkley, was at odds with the agency's demeanor under Mather and Albright. Although the leadership regularly lauded Boles for his promotional efforts, which were truly unparalleled among the national parks and monuments, he fell short — far short — as an administrator. In many ways, he exemplified the problems inherent in the Park Service's transition from its haphazard roots to its much-coveted status as a professional agency.

Deliciously idiosyncratic and selected largely for his promotional skills, Boles was the quintessential first-generation park manager, an energetic jack-of-all-trades who knew how to meet people and how to spark their interest in his park. He traveled constantly, making friends with business leaders, chambers of commerce, auto clubs, and anyone else who might send a few visitors his way. Boles thought of the park as a magnet for visitors. He designed park features to accommodate them and loved to give tours personally. Boles even escorted humorist Will Rogers and other celebrities, basking in the glow of their presence and in the publicity that inevitably followed. In photographs with celebrities, his critics often charged, Boles managed to have himself on the left, assuring that his name would come first in the caption. In February 1934 alone, he drove 2,783 miles in the park's car, attending conferences, speaking at high schools, and administering various park programs.

Presented in Pictures and Words; Swain, Wilderness Defender, 238-39.

¹⁷ "New Mexico Potash, Eddy, N. Mex.: War Minerals Report 432."

No one in the Park Service ever complained about his efforts or his ability to win friends, a fact repeatedly confirmed by the hordes of letters lauding him that descended upon the Washington headquarters of the agency.¹⁸ Boles possessed two enormous shortcomings that became increasingly apparent as the Park Service grew more professional: he was a poor administrator and he had great difficulty following the dictates of the agency. No national park superintendent received more reprimands for failing to file paperwork, respond to letters and telegrams, and keep the Washington office informed of his activities. A torrent of letters sanctioning Boles for his failures flowed from headquarters. “You have fulfilled the promises I made to myself concerning your public contact work in a large way,” Horace Albright wrote to Boles at the end of 1931. “It is a sad fact that in no other unit of the system have we had as much serious trouble in personnel and financial matters as at Carlsbad. In the summing up of your administrative abilities and achievements you have failed in returning to the Service that full measure of responsibility and trust that I must rely on for the proper administration of that park.”¹⁹ Nor could Boles be counted on to do things the Park Service way, with the quasi military spit and polish evident in the choice of uniform and Stetson originating in the World War I-era and the elite roots of the agency

Boles also failed to recognize a significant transition in which Albright played an enormous role: the efforts of the Park Service to explain — “interpret,” in agency parlance — the meaning of the national parks. As the 1920s ended, the agency invested heavily in creating an educational division. As some within the Park Service, especially the curmudgeonly Frank Pinkley of the Southwestern National Monuments group, pointed out, intellectualizing the emotional impact of national parks did little to further social objectives. Turning the vistas of the Grand Canyon into a taxonomic tour of plant life hardly persuaded first-time visitors of the special meaning of the national parks or the American experience, but the Park Service, tied to its roots in the Progressive era, persisted.²⁰

¹⁸ “Will Rogers and ‘Ma’ Visit Carlsbad and National Park,” *Carlsbad Daily Current-Argus*, May 11, 1931; Arno B. Cammerer to Thomas Boles, August 7, 1931; E. H. Simons to Horace M. Albright, September 24, 1931; Horace M. Albright to Thomas Boles, December 9, 1931; Superintendent’s Monthly Report, March 1934, 11, NA, RG 79, 7, Carlsbad Caverns; Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, 250, 313; Albright as told to Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service*, 326; Nymeyer and Halliday, *Carlsbad Caverns: The Early Years*, 115-17.

¹⁹ Albright to Boles, December 9, 1931; Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, 243-54.

²⁰ Hal Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts: The American National Monuments* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 172-78; Hal Rothman, “Forged By One Man’s Will: Frank Pinkley and the Administration of the Southwestern National Monuments, 1923-1932,” *The Public Historian*, 8 n. 2 (Spring 1986): 83-100.

The emphasis on education revealed an important division within the agency that further marginalized Boles. NPS leaders aspired to be part of and to attract the American elites, and the agency continued to offer the message of the turn of the century its 1920s audience, one increasingly enamored of the automobile. When the Park Service developed programming, it followed its leaders' personal sense of what was important. Park officials sought to "educate" people who simply wanted experience, who valued the automobile trip as much as the destination.

Like many first-generation park superintendents, Boles felt uncomfortable with the shift in emphasis. An entertainer who understood people and gave them what they wanted — typically theatrics, drama, and the occasional piece from the rock formations, as Director Horace Albright attested — he personally escorted visitors through the caverns against the wishes of his Washington superiors. Especially between 1929 and 1932, when the Depression strained agency resources and Park Service officials cast about for a viable mission in a time of diminishing funds, Boles found his approach to park management under siege.

The New Deal rescued the Park Service from the fate of offering anachronistic interpretation. The Depression challenged American institutions and values. In a 1932 summer train trip to see the parks, a custom of early NPS directors, Albright found himself astonished at the depth of the Hoover administration's resentment and the lack of respect for what he considered American values. After Albright's famous car ride with Franklin D. Roosevelt in the new administration's first days and the pivotal role of the Park Service in early New Deal programming, the agency focus on uplifting education melded with the needs of the Depression era. Parks, new and old, could be used to tell a story that gave Americans hope. The park system served as one of many forms in American life that subtly told the public that despite the crisis of economic collapse, American institutions remained strong.²¹

The Park Service found itself in flux during the early 1930s as a series of important changes in leadership and government forced a reassessment of agency policy and practice. Mather's retirement and Albright's departure for U.S. Potash left a serious void. When Arno B. Cammerer was confirmed as director, control of the agency passed from these visionary founders to bureaucrats who merely carried out the directives of the original leaders. Instead of aggressive, skilled, and well-connected direction, the agency endured paper-pushers and functionaries who doggedly followed existing policies without the innate flexibility and responsiveness of their predecessors. Against the backdrop of the New Deal and Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes' vituperative disdain for Cammerer, the change in leadership had a paralyzing effect.²²

²¹ Rothman *Preserving Different Pasts*, ; Albright, *The Birth of the National Park Service*, 278; John Ise, *Our National Park Policy: A Critical History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1961), 349-58 ; Ronald Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers* (Washington, D.C.: Resources for the Future, 1984), 40-46.

²² Hal Rothman, "'A Regular Ding-Dong Fight': Agency Culture and Evolution in the NPS-USFS Dispute, 1916-1937," *Western Historical Quarterly* 25 n. 2 (April 1989): 141-61.

These changes also illustrated the difference between mavericks like Boles and the increasingly formal and professional mainstream employees of the agency. The 1930s were notable in the Park Service for the increase in number of areas administered and the development of area management. In 1935, the agency divided its holdings into regions, and instead of dealing directly with the director's office in Washington, D.C., park superintendents communicated with a regional office that centralized field reports and distilled them for upper management.²³ For Boles, who relied on personality, charm, and face-to-face encounters to establish the rapport so central to his success, the division into regions diminished his effectiveness and his operation. He became just one among many instead of someone special, a superintendent besieged by requests for appropriate paperwork instead of appreciated for the friends he made for the agency and for the people who left Carlsbad with a warm feeling toward the park, the NPS, and the government.

New Deal money exacerbated Boles's dilemma. Franklin D. Roosevelt's programs to alleviate the problems of the Depression offered welcome new opportunities for the Park Service. A reorganization of the federal government in 1933 gave the Park Service administrative responsibility for national monuments and other areas previously administered by the Forest Service and War Department, including the sites of many of the most significant battles in American history — Gettysburg, Yorktown, Shiloh, Chickamauga, and Little Big Horn. The Park Service expanded its reach at the very moment that resources became available to entice the agency's desired constituency. As New Deal funding built everything from the Golden Gate Bridge across San Francisco Bay to the student union at the University of Illinois, federal programs to construct facilities in national parks played a major role in providing widespread employment for the legions in search of work. A range of projects, often administered through different federal agencies and programs, provided the vehicle for this massive employment and facilities development initiative.²⁴ It also required considerably greater administrative skill from park managers.

²³ Richard Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government: The Controversy Over Executive Reorganization, 1936-1939* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 1-27; Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 203-04; Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 35-40.

²⁴ Richard Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government: The Controversy over Executive Reorganization, 1936-1939* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1966), 15-41; Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, 162-86; Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*, 3-35; Horace M. Albright as told to Robert Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service: The Founding Years, 1913-1993* (Salt Lake City: Howe Brothers Press, 1986), 262-312.

In the national parks and monuments, the single most important channel of federal capital was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). During its nine-year existence, more than two million enrollees worked in 198 CCC camps in national park areas and 697 camps in state, county, and municipal parks. Under the various bureaus that administered CCC programs — the Emergency Conservation Work program (ECW), the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Works Progress Administration (WPA), and others — more than one thousand miles of park roads and 249 miles of parkways were built in national park areas. CCC workers were counted among the fortunate during the Depression. As they earned the income that primed the pump of dormant economies in innumerable communities around the nation — all but five dollars of their monthly earnings of one dollar per day were sent home to their families — they also constructed the first genuine infrastructure in many national parks. The CCC built buildings and roads, landscaped grounds, cut fire trails and hauled brush, and especially in newly established or remote park areas, created the first facilities that ever existed. During the first twenty-five years of the National Park Service, no single entity did more for the parks than the CCC.²⁵

Although the Depression significantly curtailed tourism, Carlsbad Caverns National Park enjoyed a place in the American mainstream that helped it retain a claim on federal money throughout the 1930s. In the decade since the beginning of serious efforts to attract visitors to the caverns, the efforts of White, Davis, and Boles had been so successful that Carlsbad Caverns had become part of the iconography of American society. To Americans, the caverns symbolized both the success of their society and the beauty of their land. This was a winning combination in every sense of the word. From window stickers to photographs, the image of the caverns appeared everywhere, and the importance of that image grew as Carlsbad became a colloquial “eighth wonder of the world,” a must-see for Americans who craved a distinct national identity that derived from the landscapes of the West.²⁶ This new importance, especially during the Depression, when all kinds of natural and cultural symbols were pressed into service to shore up American morale, made Carlsbad Caverns a likely candidate for New Deal development work.

The Civilian Conservation Corps’ impact on the town of Carlsbad and on Carlsbad Caverns National Park paralleled that of many communities around the West. Communities such as Carlsbad served as regional hubs, places through which regional life, economics, and culture flowed. People brought what they raised to warehouses and railroads, creating a funnel that took goods in and sent cash, markers, scrip, and loans out into smaller towns, farms, and ranches. In essence, towns such as Carlsbad became core areas within the subregion, more powerful than the little towns that depended on them, but still subordinate to the networks of transportation and the larger markets of the Midwest and

²⁵ Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 360-64; John C. Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942: An Administrative History* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1985).

²⁶ Marguerite S. Shaffer, “See America First,” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1994); Hal K. Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains: Tourism in the Twentieth-Century American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 1-28.

the East. The Depression affected these relationships, for it made these “nodes” along railroad lines poorer, unable to sustain their end of the bargain with the smaller towns and individual homesteads around them. The CCC reversed this negative trend, initiating economic activity in these small towns by creating work that transferred money back into the communities, enabling local merchants again to fill the intermediary role between periphery and core areas.²⁷

In places such as southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos, CCC camps functioned in concert with a range of federal development projects. Again, the federal presence in irrigation played an important part in facilitating further endeavors. The region already recognized the significance of federal help in creating infrastructure, and with that realization, residents more willingly accepted a wider federal presence than did other communities more completely engrossed in the nebulous ethic of frontier individualism. Along the Pecos River and its environs, the advantages of federal participation in all kinds of projects far outweighed any obvious disadvantages. Infrastructure projects that demanded attention and available labor abounded not only in the town of Carlsbad, but all along the Pecos River and around the Guadalupe Mountains. The reservoirs built two decades earlier needed constant attention as did area irrigation canals. Road construction was a priority, and trails needed to be widened and more clearly marked. With public works money available from a variety of sources, regional and park officials could create extended wish lists that had some chance of realization. Even the Emergency Conservation Work program, the rubric under which much government-funded development took place, assessed lands that belonged to individual agencies to see if ECW funds could be spent there.²⁸

The CCC established camps in southeastern New Mexico during the first year of the ECW program. In Carlsbad, the initial camp was on the northwestern edge of the town and operated for the CCC’s entire nine-year span. Another camp was also located in town, although contemporary accounts suggest it might have been an offshoot from the original camp. Men at the camp in town performed work in the Carlsbad Historic District. CCC camps sprouted elsewhere around the region. The Forest Service administered a camp near Queens, New Mexico, in the Lincoln National Forest: enrollees, as CCC camp men were called, built the road to the town that still carries traffic in the 1990s. The men also built numerous earthen tanks that ranchers relied upon to collect water.²⁹

²⁷ Eugene Moehring, “The Comstock Urban Network,” *Pacific Historical Review* Vol LVXI 3 (August 1997): 337-362; Rothman, *Devil’s Bargains*.

²⁸ Francis Hastings Gott, “Reconnaissance Report on the Recreational Possibilities of the Carlsbad Irrigation Project, Eddy County, New Mexico,” NA, RG 79, 0-32, Carlsbad 207.

²⁹ Jim McGrath, “A History of the CCC at Carlsbad Caverns and Rattlesnake Springs,” (unpublished MS., Carlsbad Caverns National Park Library, ca. 1990); David Hutson, “A Brief History of the Civilian Conservation Corps and Their Local Impact,” (unpublished MS, Carlsbad Caverns National Park Library, 1992).

A third camp opened in July 1938 at Rattlesnake Springs in Carlsbad Caverns National Park. Like most camps in national parks, this one concentrated on projects that affected the quality of the facilities and of the visitor experience. Enrollees built the ranger's cabin, laid a pavement surface in the main lunchroom in the caverns, and started work on several of the park's staff houses. Built in one of the dominant architectural styles of the time, the New Mexico Territorial Revival style, these triplexes blended the low forms of southwestern style with the rolling contours of the southeastern New Mexico landscape. The camp within the park operated until 1942, when federal legislation and the demands of World War II terminated the program.³⁰

The New Deal accentuated the significance of the federal presence in southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos. The advantages of federal designation seemed immense in the 1930s, when extensive government programs guaranteed that federal support was directly proportional to the amount of federal land in an area. In a part of the world where people believed in their rugged individualism, but where more than a generation of roller-coaster swings between prosperity and marginality tempered perceptions, relying on the government seemed less a threat to regional identity and more a common sense decision. If the government was going to give money away, people in the region asked, why not take it?

As a result, efforts to expand federal holdings during the 1930s met with little of the local resistance common at other times and other parks in the West. The people of Carlsbad found that the federal presence helped restore prosperity; regional newspapers noted the growth of the town during the Depression decade. "Unusual gains are made by Thriving City" read a headline in the *El Paso Times* in 1938; the combination of "Mines, Cattle, Farms, and Caverns," as a 1941 *El Paso Times* headline described Carlsbad's economy, helped the community prosper as other places in the nation simply endured.³¹ The federal presence was an integral and warmly received component.

In this context, Carlsbad Caverns National Park seemed a likely candidate for expansion. During the decade, the first initiative to add the Guadalupe Mountains to the park system gathered momentum. Efforts to define the Permian Uplift as a park began with the most basic of western necessities: the need for paved roads that could serve as arteries between communities. During the 1920s, travelers from El Paso who wanted to reach Carlsbad first headed to Alamogordo, then through the Sacramento Mountains to Artesia, and finally south to Carlsbad. This roundabout journey offered beautiful scenery but poor opportunities for those who thought that better road connections could help stimulate a commercial relationship between Carlsbad and its Texas neighbors. By 1927, the commercial community in El Paso favored a road to link the towns. Some El Pasoans, such as Haymon Krupp and Frank Pickerell, flush with success in the oil boom, regarded all of southeastern New

³⁰ McGrath, "A History of the CCC at Carlsbad Caverns and Rattlesnake Springs"; Hutson, "A Brief History of the Civilian Conservation Corps and Their Local Impact."

³¹ "Carlsbad Continues Remarkable Recovery: Unusual gains are made by Thriving City," *El Paso Times*, November 6, 1938; "Carlsbad Developed Within 50 Years," *El Paso Times*, November 10, 1940; "Mines, Cattle, Farms, and Caverns," *El Paso Times*, November 16, 1941.

Mexico as El Paso's "trade territory" and pressed for a road as a way to secure economic preeminence in the region. The El Pasoans found support among some trans-Pecos Texans who planned a park in McKittrick Canyon in the Guadalupe Mountains as a way to encourage support for a road. J. C. Hunter of Van Horn, Texas, a judge for Culberson County and an oilman with considerable wealth by the standards of the time and place, led this group.³²

The interest in Carlsbad Caverns following Lee's expedition created another context for the road. El Pasoans and others wanted to see the caves and the town stood to benefit if it could capitalize on the interest in Carlsbad in some fashion, particularly if visitors traveled through El Paso. Commercial interests in Carlsbad recognized the same opportunity; in the effort to create a national park from the existing national monument, they sought to include some of the features of the Guadalupe Mountains, especially Guadalupe Peak and El Capitan. Although this initial park idea went no further, the combination of these interests led to the construction of two roads that linked El Paso and Carlsbad — the "short line" — which later became U.S. 62, opened in 1929, and U.S. 80, which linked El Paso and Van Horn.³³ Roads became an important conduit for travelers as well as a means to develop interest in the Guadalupe Mountains.

Besides acquiring park areas managed by other federal agencies and receiving the resources to build facilities in them, the Park Service also embarked on aggressive land acquisition projects throughout the 1930s. Already favored because of its ability to employ thousands in public works projects, the Park Service met with little local resistance to the land withdrawals necessary for park area establishment because of economic imperatives dictated by the Depression and the success of New Deal programs. While some residents — often goaded by competing federal agencies such as the Forest Service — fought efforts to create national parks, most Western communities warmly received Park Service representatives. A national park seemed to guarantee economic survival in an era when most economic activity in the rural West stemmed from federal programs.³⁴

³² Judith K. Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Park: An Administrative History* (Santa Fe: National Park Service, 1988) Southwest Cultural Resources Center professional papers No. 19, 16-17; Floyd S. Fierman, *Roots and Boots: From Crypto-Jew in New Spain to Community Leader in the American Southwest* (Hoboken: KTAV Publishing House, 1987), 117-24.,

³³ Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Park*, 17-19; "El Paso Sees the Cavern Road Coming," *Carlsbad Current-Argus*, March 11, 1927; "El Paso's Short (Cut?): Paso-Carlsbad Road in Summer: El Paso to Carlsbad Short Line Road May be Used by Late Summer with 35 Mile Link Unfinished," *Carlsbad Current-Argus*, February 1, 1929.

³⁴ Hal Rothman, "Shaping the Nature of a Controversy: The Park Service, the Forest Service and the Cedar Breaks National Monument," *Utah Historical Quarterly*, Summer 1987; Foresta, *America's National Parks and Their Keepers*.

Carlsbad proved especially fertile territory for the Park Service. The community enjoyed a long history with the federal government, and the establishment of the park was as much a local triumph as an agency victory. Efforts to expand the park seemed only to bode well for the town of Carlsbad and the entire trans-Pecos region. A larger park meant more people, more money, and more jobs, all desirable during the 1930s. The existence of vast tracts of public domain land near the existing boundaries offered an easy opportunity to expand; little of the grappling with the Forest Service that so typified the 1920s was necessary.³⁵

The establishment of the national park in 1930 included provisions that permitted expansion. In 1924, 1928, and 1929, the Department of the Interior had withdrawn public domain land around Carlsbad Cave National Monument in anticipation of expanding the park; with permission to expand already granted by the authorizing legislation, land acquisition only required the recommendation of the secretary of the interior and the signature of the president. On February 21, 1933, President Herbert Hoover signed an executive order that added 9,239 acres to the park, an addition that gave the park space on which to construct a suitable approach road to accommodate the vastly increased amount of visitor traffic.³⁶

The addition of land in 1933 signaled that the nature of Carlsbad Caverns National Park had begun to change. The monument had been established to preserve a wonder, a curiosity at which the public could gaze, mystified at the awesome works of nature. The proclamation of the national park followed the same intellectual trajectory, but clauses in the legislation hinted at new dimensions. The discovery of new caves beneath the ground did not genuinely require expansion except to assure that private interests would not succeed in claiming these so obviously public interest lands. The permanent approach road required land, and that acquisition initiated the reconceptualization of the park as more than its underground caves.

During the 1930s, a number of attempts to expand the park ensued, all of which spoke to different conceptions of Carlsbad Caverns National Park and of the national value of the Guadalupe Mountains region. As a result of the lack of infrastructure in far west Texas, the region lagged behind the rest of the state. Nor did Texas offer the range of governmental services that industrial states had begun to see as their obligation. State parks provided one example.

³⁵ Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts* ; Rothman, *On Rims and Ridges: The Los Alamos Area Since 1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992, ; Rothman, "A Regular Ding-Dong Fight."

³⁶ Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 33-31; Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Park*, 21.

Although the Texas State Parks Board had been established during the 1920s, by 1930 it still lacked resources to develop a state park system. The Depression further retarded park development, and despite strong promotional efforts in the early part of the decade, a bill to create a state park in the Guadalupe Mountains and another in the Davis Mountains languished in the Texas legislature. For the Park Service, still in an aggressive mode with Horace M. Albright at the helm, the beleaguered state parks board appeared as an ally in the quest for new acquisitions. Although NPS officials recognized the board's lack of power, they also recognized the potential that could be realized with the help of the Park Service and the support of the Guadalupe Mountains Park Association, at the time an adjunct of the El Paso Chamber of Commerce. In November 1931, Roger W. Toll, the superintendent of Yellowstone National Park and a rising star in the agency hierarchy, traveled to the trans-Pecos to see what opportunities awaited the Park Service there.³⁷

Toll was part of the original NPS cadre, already a man of considerable ability and experience when, on Horace Albright's recommendation, Mather met him and recruited him for the agency in 1921. Hailing from Denver, Toll had been a charter member of the Colorado Mountain Club, earned an engineering degree at Columbia University, traveled the world, worked for the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, and served as a major in World War I. His family had avidly supported the establishment of Rocky Mountain National Park, and Mather came away so impressed with Toll that he offered the young man the vacant superintendent's position at Mount Rainier National Park. Toll's experience as a civil engineer, his military service, family connections, and general bearing had persuaded the director. A lifelong relationship followed that only ended with Toll's tragic death in the same automobile accident near Deming, New Mexico, in 1936 that killed biologist George M. Wright, the thirty-two-year-old head of the Wildlife Division of the Park Service.³⁸

By the time he arrived in southeastern New Mexico, Toll's responsibilities included the assessment of potential park areas. As superintendent of Yellowstone — the last step prior to assignment in the Washington, D.C., office as assistant director's post in the era before the Park Service subdivided into regions — Toll had attained the most important field post in the agency. He was widely regarded as the best judge of difficult situations in the agency. As his correspondence and reports from the Carlsbad area showed, the area presented no special problems for acquiring land and expanding park boundaries, but Park Service goals proved more ambiguous: what did the agency want from Carlsbad Caverns National Park and the trans-Pecos region?

³⁷ Roger W. Toll, Report to the Director, January 20, 1932, NA, RG 79, O-35, Carlsbad Caverns; Rothman, *Preserving Different Pasts*, ; Swain, *Wilderness Defender*, 183-205; Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Park*, 18-20; Thomas R. Cox, *The Park Builders: A History of State Parks in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989).

³⁸ Shankland, *Steve Mather of the National Parks*, 247-48, 274-75; Albright, as told to Cahn, *The Birth of the National Park Service*, 93, 242-43.

A number of objectives characterized almost every action taken by the Park Service during Albright's tenure as director. First and foremost was expansion of the agency's domain, a goal inherited from the Mather regime. Next, the Park Service sought to broaden its constituency; under Albright, this meant that the definition of what could be included in the park system was more malleable than it had been under Mather. Garnering support from powerful political leaders ranked high in agency priorities, as did gaining an advantage against agency adversaries. This loose formula dictated when the Park Service acted and when it was silent, when it expended hard-won capital and when it watched from the sidelines.³⁹

The initial move in southeastern New Mexico included a characteristic NPS maneuver at the expense of its chief rival, the U.S. Forest Service. The NPS and the USFS had been locked in a struggle since the founding of the Park Service in 1916; by 1925, the Park Service had reached parity, and just before the New Deal, it clearly possessed the upper hand. Toll's insistence in 1932 that fifty-five square miles of the Lincoln National Forest were essential for any park smacked of an Albright-like effort to gain ground and keep adversaries on the defensive. Two separate proposals for parks in the Guadalupe Mountains region did not, in Toll's estimation, stand on their own. The Forest Service land between them could be used to link these scenic additions to Carlsbad Caverns National Park, achieving myriad NPS objectives. This perspective relied on a certain amount of sophistry; throughout the system, national parks contained an array of noncontiguous units and one more would not have increased the difficulty of managing the park system. The proposal reflected the most acquisitive tendencies of the Park Service, a posture that usually riled the Forest Service and local commercial economic interests. Grazing interests opposed the withdrawal of the Forest Service land, and in 1932, with the Hoover administration's parsimonious policy of public spending, the project collapsed.⁴⁰

With New Deal public works resources available in the 1930s and federal policy dictating that the Park Service spend money, an entirely new context arose, changing not only the NPS approach, but also the feelings of potential park opponents. Federal dollars found a warm reception everywhere; no other money seemed available. When Roger Toll returned to the Guadalupe Mountains in 1934 and toured the area with J. C. Hunter, he found a situation that seemed ripe for some kind of park expansion.⁴¹

³⁹ Rothman, "'A Regular Ding-Dong Fight,'" 141-51.

⁴⁰ Toll, Report to the Director, January 20, 1932; Roger Toll to the Director, February 21, 1934, NA, RG 79, O-35, Proposed Guadalupe Mountains National Park; Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Park*, 20-21.

⁴¹ Ben H. Thompson to the Director, April 19, 1934; George M. Wright to the Director, March 28, 1934, NA, RG 79, Roger Toll Files, Proposed Guadalupe Mountains National Park or Carlsbad Extension.

The real question involved the cost of private land. Hunter's Grisham-Hunter Corporation owned 43,200 acres, for which Hunter wanted \$237,600. Another private citizen, J. C. Williams, owned El Capitan, an essential feature of the park, and J. T. Smith owned 200 acres around the Frijole Post Office, which he valued at \$10,000. Hunter's assertion that his corporation would sell the land to people in search of summer home sites was the sort of veiled threat that the Park Service had often encountered. It provided an impetus to pursue the funding to buy land, an anomaly during the New Deal, but again, the project did not come to fruition.⁴² During the 1930s, the Park Service could have all the federal land it wanted, but in economic hard times, the government would not buy land with money it needed to put people to work. Even under the most favorable conditions the Park Service had ever experienced, it failed to include the Guadalupe Mountains in the national park system.

One final effort to create a national monument from the Guadalupe Mountains took shape in 1934, when Judge Hunter purchased the lands in the Guadalupe Mountains from the Grisham-Hunter Corporation, and continued to agitate for a park. He offered a 1,000-acre section of McKittrick Canyon, perhaps the most beautiful land in the Guadalupe, to the Texas State Parks Board. The board's status had been enhanced by the brilliant decision of Lyndon B. Johnson, the state director of the National Youth Administration, to build roadside parks throughout Texas, one of the few amenities that unskilled workers could build anywhere. Johnson's roadside parks made state parks a viable option, in essence including them under the public works rubric, and the previously marginalized state board, became part of a resurgence. With the help of E. H. Simons of El Paso, always involved in park efforts in the Guadalupe Mountains, Hunter secured a visit from the state parks board and Herbert Maier of the National Park Service. Simons also recruited the El Paso press in his quest. The Sunday *El Paso Times* featured a full page of photographs of McKittrick Canyon twice in the weeks following the visit.⁴³

Support for the project continued to grow. Texas Highway Commission officials visited the area, assuring reporters that they intended to fix any problems with the road that slowed development. Even Texas Governor-elect W. Lee "Pass the Biscuits Pappy" O'Daniel, a radio personality who won the 1938 gubernatorial election with a traveling tent show, visited the region, and promised to support a park. Park Service officials were gratified, but they recognized that the 1,000-acre donation posed real management problems. The acreage was too small to be effectively administered, according to NPS landscape architects, leading to questions about acquiring sufficient land for a park in the Guadalupe Mountains, as well as the potential for including the obviously worthy McKittrick Canyon in any kind of park.⁴⁴

⁴² Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Parks*, 22-23.

⁴³ Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson, Volume 1: The Path to Power* (NY: Random House, 1981), 346-49; Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Park*, 23-25.

⁴⁴ Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Park*, 24-25; Robert A. Caro, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson Volume II: Means of Ascent* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 165, 188-90, offers a glimpse of "Pass the Biscuits, Pappy" O'Daniel.

An expansion of Carlsbad Caverns National Park again increased the likelihood of adding some portion of the Guadalupe Mountains to the park system. On February 3, 1939, Franklin D. Roosevelt added 39,488 acres to Carlsbad Caverns National Park, extending the boundaries of the park nearly all the way to the Guadalupe Mountains. This led to greater NPS interest in the project, but the agency's state partner lagged behind. Under O'Daniel, Texas did little other than make promises, neither accepting the 1,000-acre donation nor purchasing the remaining 43,000 acres of the ranch.

The lack of state support was not necessarily a disadvantage. In other circumstances, the Park Service used such reluctance as a way to improve its position. In the Guadalupe Mountains, the agency attempted to use this opening to acquire McKittrick Canyon and possibly more. The scenery was clearly national caliber and each Park Service inspector found it worthy. Wildlife abounded, adding another value that NPS officials could trumpet. The private land still remained a major hurdle, but NPS officials sought to circumvent it by providing language for a bill allowing the sizable revenues generated at Carlsbad Caverns National Park to be used for the purchase of the private land in Texas. At that time, all excess revenues generated by the park system returned to the general operating accounts of the U.S. Treasury. Even this provision failed to bring the plan to fruition. A draft bill proclaiming the addition of the area was drawn up and presented to the secretary of the interior for transmission to the president. It never left the secretary's desk; a copy today remains in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., testimony to an idea whose time had not yet come.⁴⁵

The failure to acquire additional land in the trans-Pecos at the moment of so many other Park Service successes suggested that from the agency's perspective, Carlsbad Caverns National Park remained in a different category than other national parks. Dinosaur National Monument grew by 203,885 acres from its original eighty in 1936, creating a park with outdoor recreation values from a paleontological excavation site.⁴⁶ A parallel transformation should have been easy in New Mexico, but the circumstances that helped nearly everything else in the park system only impeded efforts in the trans-Pecos. The state seemed poised to take the lead, but as the Park Service waited, state efforts never progressed beyond conceptualization. NPS officials had more important issues to address, and Carlsbad Caverns' status as a one-of-a-kind curiosity dampened enthusiasm for adding scenic land and wildlife to a park already inundated with visitation. The moment passed, and it belonged to a later generation to preserve the Guadalupe Mountains.

Unlike the Park Service, the Bureau of Reclamation found the Depression and the New Deal hard going in southeastern New Mexico. Instead of creating an opportunity to expand the agency's primacy, the New Deal reduced it to a secondary role, but one that bureau officials relished after two contentious decades in the area. Since the Reclamation Service (the Bureau of Reclamation after 1923), arrived to bail out private irrigation, relations had become frosty. The Carlsbad Project needed

⁴⁵ Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 331-32; Fabry, *Guadalupe Mountains National Park*, 25-26. The actual document is located at NA, RG 79, O-35 Proposed National Parks, Guadalupe Mountains.

⁴⁶ Ise, *Our National Park Policy*, 41; Mark W. T. Harvey, *A Symbol of Wilderness: Echo Park and the American Conservation Movement* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

expansion and modernization, but infighting, territoriality, and a lack of organization prevented improvement and fostered a climate in which everyone pointed fingers at supposed culprits instead of seeking solutions. In particular, the inability of users and the Bureau of Reclamation to agree upon a funding strategy to increase the water supply doomed the project. Bureau of Reclamation policy was designed to turn water projects over to local irrigation districts; at Carlsbad, the headaches associated with management led the agency to rush this transfer. After 1938, the plans to transfer the Carlsbad projects to a local irrigation district were in place; the initial date of transference, which specified a period of five years beginning on January 1, 1938, passed without any action, and another decade passed before federal officials abruptly transferred the administration of the dams to the Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District, effective January 1, 1949.⁴⁷

Local reticence during the 1930s stemmed from obvious sources. The Depression and the New Deal increased federal power, and local entities had to cast about for the financial resources to survive. The added burden of initiating an irrigation district seemed too great. While the farmers in the Carlsbad area chafed under the federal regime, they also recognized that the government controlled most of the resources and that independence could be quite expensive. Coupled with a decrease in water fees in the initial contract between the bureau and the irrigation district, advocates of local control could see as many reasons to stand pat as to actively move toward genuine local administration.⁴⁸

The New Deal offered the nascent Carlsbad Irrigation District even greater advantages than it did the National Park Service. Dams required considerable maintenance, almost all of it labor intensive and the dams in the vicinity of Carlsbad needed even more than average care. After the establishment of a CCC camp, called BR No. 3, north of Carlsbad in August 1934, an extended program of maintenance, improvement, and modernization began on the Carlsbad Project.⁴⁹ The project involved the two primary dams, Avalon and McMillan. Each had a long history of problems, including seepage for which no one seemed able to account. In 1934 and 1935, CCC crews constructed a 2,000-foot extension to the east embankment at Lake McMillan in an effort to exclude the most porous parts of the reservoir. Workers placed more than 43,000 cubic yards of dirt fill and more than 9,400 cubic yards of rock by hand. After McMillan, CCC workers turned their attention to Avalon Dam, which they raised by six feet to eliminate the chance of an upstream dam-break breaching the lower dam. They also

⁴⁷ "Carlsbad Soil and Water Conservation District, Long Range Plan, Revised 1985," Carlsbad Public Library, 4-7; Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 135-37, 140; Norris Hundley, *The Great Thirst: Californians and Water, 1770-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) is the best general history of the Bureau of Reclamation; see also Donald J. Pisani, *From Family Farm to AgriBusiness: The Irrigation Crusade in California and the West, 1850-1931* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984). Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (NY: Pantheon Books, 1985) and Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water* (NY: Penguin Books, 1993) offer different perspectives.

⁴⁸ Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 136.

⁴⁹ Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 137.

widened and strengthened a spillway.⁵⁰

A near breach of McMillan Dam during flooding along the Pecos River in May and June of 1937 refocused CCC attention. After the flooding, which terrified the region, Bureau of Reclamation engineers decided that the dam required immediate reconstruction. Work began in November 1937, and by the following spring the CCC had widened the dam's crest from sixteen to twenty-five feet, added three feet of rock to the top, poured a concrete apron and cleared a channel below the headgates, and generally improved the physical structure of the dam. After 1938, the first CCC camp and a newer one, BR No.82, concentrated on improvements to the Carlsbad project.⁵¹ By the time the second camp closed in May 1942, almost six months after the Japanese attack on Peal Harbor, CCC labor had thoroughly modernized the infrastructure of the Carlsbad Irrigation District.

In the trans-Pecos, as in the rest of the nation, CCC programs served their purpose. They put legions of young men back to work, kept them off the streets, imbued them with a sense of belonging, and not incidentally accomplished valuable projects that could contribute to a promising future. When the order came to terminate the CCC by July 1, 1942, the nation was consumed by World War II, and even Franklin D. Roosevelt's plea to save the CCC as a program for pre-draft age youth was rejected by Congress. The war changed national priorities, and the CCC, perhaps the most socially valuable of New Deal programs, became obsolete.⁵²

The corps' facilities in Carlsbad were refitted to serve the war effort. The original site on West Pierce Street served as a prisoner-of-war camp. Beginning late in 1944, as many as three hundred German prisoners were held there, transferred in to be used as labor in the cotton fields of Eddy County. Most of the Germans had been captured in North Africa in 1943, and were familiar with southeastern New Mexico's climate. Farmers were not impressed with their work, but the camp continued until early in 1946, when the prisoners were returned to Germany. The Rattlesnake Springs site became a recreational camp for the military, with the swimming pool having particular appeal.⁵³

Southeastern New Mexico made three specific contributions to the American war effort. Men from Eddy County served in the 200th Coastal Artillery Regiment (Anti-Aircraft), a National Guard unit that was inducted into active service in January 1941. The unit, sent to reinforce General Douglas MacArthur's command in September, was assigned to help defend Clark Air Field. When the Japanese attacked the Philippines on December 8 (across the International Date Line from Pearl Harbor), the Eddy County men became among the first units under fire in World War II, and participated in the withdrawal to Corregidor and the Bataan Death March. As part of the war buildup, the army built a

⁵⁰ Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 137-38.

⁵¹ Hufstetler and Johnson, *Watering the Land*, 139.

⁵² Paige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Park Service, 1933-1942*, 32-37.

⁵³ Jim O'Hearn, "POW Camp: 16 Months in Our Own Backyard," *Carlsbad Current-Argus*, September 18, 1988; "CCC Helped Make Today's Caverns," *Carlsbad Current-Argus*, October 9, 1987.

training base for bombardiers and navigators southwest of the town of Carlsbad in 1942.⁵⁴

An auxiliary field at the Carlsbad air base was the site of one of the war's stranger experiments. A secret government project envisioned cooling captured bats into a sleep-like state, dropping them from an airplane over Japan and relying on their tendency to roost in dark spaces to deliver incendiary bombs to the wooden structures that made up most of Japan's homes and offices. In a 1943 test, Army officers collected bats from Carlsbad Caverns. As researchers photographed the sleeping bats before dropping them from an airplane, the warm New Mexico sun revived the animals, who then flew off carrying their weapons and a fifteen-minute fuse. The bats performed splendidly, roosting in the base air control tower, hangars, offices and barracks buildings. Base personnel, kicked off their field by the project's secret classification, watched in horror from behind locked gates as most of their facilities went up in flames. Despite the apparent lethal effectiveness of the bat bombs, the project was canceled: it eventually proved impossible for the military to trust bomb delivery to the cave-dwelling fliers.⁵⁵

A resurgence in mining in the trans-Pecos accompanied the outbreak of hostilities in December 1941. Engaged in a massive effort in the Pacific, Europe, and North Africa, the nation needed resources and infrastructure that could move both east and west. Throughout the West, plants opened, roads were constructed, and mines were dug. In some cases, these were older endeavors given new life as a result of the crisis; in others, they were new operations that provided essential material for the war effort or for civilian needs.⁵⁶

The oil and gas industries acquired even greater significance than they had before the war. Fuels were essential for the war effort and Japanese expansion in the Far East and German conquest in Europe strained the resources of American allies. When the war began, the United States produced two-thirds of the world's oil supply, making it more than the arsenal of democracy — the nation was also the supply depot for the free world. In the Southwest, oil production took on new urgency; during World War II, nearly 70 percent of American oil came from Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, New Mexico, Louisiana, and Arkansas. With his assistant, Ralph K. Davies of the Standard Oil Company, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes led the effort to educate the nation on the significance of oil, as well to the drive to increase levels of production. "This is an *oil war*," Ickes told a meeting of Midwestern oilmen in 1943, emphasizing the importance of places such as southeastern New Mexico and far west Texas. Oil production rose by more than 25 percent between January 1942, and the end of the war,

⁵⁴ Marcus Griffin, *Heroes of Bataan* (Carlsbad, NM: Marcus Griffin, 1946); Louis Morton, *The War in the Pacific: The Fall of the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1953): 32-33, 45; Donald A. Young, *The Battle of Bataan* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1992): 334-335.

⁵⁵ Jack Couffer, *Bat Bomb: World War II's Other Secret Weapon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992): 113-122.

⁵⁶ Gerald Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 1990).

much of it from southwestern states.⁵⁷

Other minerals contributed to the war effort both in direct and indirect ways. American potash again replaced German potash during the conflict; memories of World War I shortages remained vivid. In west Texas, fluorspar deposits in the Eagle Mountains excited geologists, who recognized the value of the material for manufacturing steel, aluminum, and high-octane gasoline. The Spar Valley, accessible by unimproved ranch roads, offered the most promise. The Texas deposits provided as a new source for the valuable mineral at a time when demand exceeded production capacity at existing mines in Illinois and Kentucky. Mica from an area of Culberson and Hudspeth counties, about sixteen miles south of Van Horn, also attracted federal attention.⁵⁸

The war continued a pattern of ongoing change in southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos that had begun with the end of the Hagerman era. Since the arrival of federally funded irrigation early in the century, growing federal involvement had characterized the region. A federal program or project, it seemed, matched each new private endeavor. The economic collapse of the 1920s only accelerated trends that had begun two decades earlier. The development of potash, oil, and other extractive industries seemed to reverse growing federal involvement, but with the arrival of World War II, even these industries were drawn into the federal web.

Like many other regions in the West, the Carlsbad-Guadalupe Mountains area was “rescued” by the New Deal and its associated federal presence. When little private economic activity existed, federal programs and the jobs they provided seemed like a godsend. That rescue continued with wartime federal programs in the region, enhancing the tendency toward dependence on the national government that had been an integral part of the history of the region and the larger West. Southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos followed the dominant pattern, linking in partnership with federal agencies at the same time they pronounced their independence. If a difference existed, it could be found in the Carlsbad area, where despite potash mining and other activities, people seemed to more clearly recognize the significance of the federal presence. Their history with government involvement exceeded that of other parts of the region, also giving people the opportunity to integrate federal participation in the economy into their conception of self, and as a result, discount the federal contributions by inventing as their own endeavor. This created a complicated relationship with the federal government. As elsewhere in the West, people in southeastern New Mexico both needed and resented it, making its presence simultaneously the best and worst thing about their lives.

New Deal and wartime efforts logically expanded the previous federal role in the area. The tourist industry had become an important shadow industry, a critical but largely unacknowledged part of

⁵⁷ Daniel Yeargin, *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil, Money, and Power* (NY: Simon and Schuster, 1991), 366, 389-92; Rister, *Oil!*, 344-49.

⁵⁸ U.S. Department of the Interior, War Minerals, Report, “Texas Mica and Feldspar Co., Culberson and Hudspeth Counties, Tex.,” W.M.R. 129, (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Mines, 1943); Glen L. Evans, “Fluorspar Deposits in the Eagle Mountains of Hudspeth County, Texas,” (Austin: The University of Texas Bureau of Economic Geology, 1943), Mineral Resource Circular No. 26.

the regional economy, before the New Deal, and the CCC and the improvements in reclamation facilities enhanced the dependence on federal dollars. Carlsbad Caverns National Park became more important, as indicated by the growing number of resources invested there and the attempts to add the Guadalupe Mountains attested. The military reinforced the importance of federal money during the war years, and by 1945, the entire region enjoyed a healthy economy driven by federal dollars.

By 1945, the widely held sense of independence in southeastern New Mexico and the trans-Pecos had been superseded by federal endeavors. Beginning with the creation of the federal water district and Carlsbad Cave National Monument, and continuing through the proclamation of the national park, the arrival of the CCC and other New Deal projects, and the military, the Carlsbad Caverns-Guadalupe Mountains region became as dependent on federal support, albeit from a range of agencies, as any locality in the West. As its importance grew, people of the region denied its centrality to their life. That complicated — even paradoxical — relationship opened the way for the conflicts of the postwar era.

