

Centre County Torch Meeting Minutes
September 11, 2025
Ramada Inn State College, PA

President Carolyn Wilhelm opened the meeting at 5:45 PM.

Annual dues are \$75 a year. Dinner is \$25.

This year's officers:

President: Carolyn Wilhelm

Vice President: Robert Igo

Recording Secretary: Charles Maxin

Treasurer: Peter Jurs

Correspondence Secretary and Torch International representative: Art Goldschmidt

Webmaster: John Golbeck

Stephen Seidman was inaugurated as a new member. Steve is a retired mathematician and dean.

Today's presentation is from Peter Jurs and the title is:

John Muir and The Camping Trip That Changed America

The presentation begins with a photo is of Glacier Point, May 1903, John Muir is on the right and Teddy Roosevelt is on the left. The photo was taken on an overhanging rock. From here there is a 3,200 foot drop to Yosemite Valley just two steps in any three directions. In the background is Upper Yosemite falls with a 1,433 foot drop.

The talk outline:

The Life of John Muir

The Harriman Expedition to Alaska

Roosevelt and Muir in Yosemite

Yosemite National Park Completed

The Antiquities Act

The National Monuments Created by Theodore Roosevelt

The Life of John Muir

John Muir was born in Scotland April 21, 1838. His family moved to Wisconsin in 1849. He endured a harsh childhood on the farm. His father was a strict Calvinist. He attended the University of Wisconsin from 1860 to 1863 but never got a university degree. He was a born tinker and worked on mechanical inventions. In 1867 an accident injured his right eye and changed his life. The left eye vision failed sympathetically. His vision recovered after many months. He took a 1,000 mile hike from Indianapolis to Florida because he wanted to see the United States and explore nature. He went to California in 1868, after the Civil War.

He lived and worked for 5 years in Yosemite from 1868 to 1873. He worked at a saw mill and herded sheep. At Yosemite, he found living glaciers and became a self-made expert on glaciers based on his Yosemite observations. His first published article was "Yosemite Glaciers" published in the New York Daily Tribune in September, 1871.

In 1860 Muir married Louise Strentzel and settled in Martinez, CA on a family fruit farm. Two daughters were born. He went into partnership with his father-in-law and for 10 years managed the farm successfully. In 1879, he travelled from Wrangell Island with four Tlingit crew from Wrangell in a 36 foot dugout canoe for a 800 mile paddle through the Inside Passage in terrible weather. They discovered Glacier Bay. "Muir was blessed with an adventurer's immunity to discomfort." He would visit Glacier Bay 7 times between 1879 and 1899.

In 1892 the Sierra Club was formed in San Francisco. Muir and a number of his supporters founded the Sierra Club to, in Muir's words, "do something for wildness and make the mountains glad." Muir served as the Club's president until his death in 1914. His wanderlust took him to Alaska many more times and to Australia, South America, Africa, Europe, China, Japan, and of course, again and again to his beloved Sierra Nevada. He linked up with Robert Underwood Johnson in 1889. Johnson published the Century a New York magazine with one million readers.

The Harriman Expedition to Alaska

He traveled with E. H. Harriman and prominent arctic experts, scientists, writers and photographers. Harriman rented the SS George W. Elder and outfitted it. Passengers included 3 arctic experts, 5 botanists, 11 biologists and zoologists, 5 geologists and geographers, 6 artists and photographers and 2 writers.

The route took the expedition to Glacier Bay, Sitka, Yakutat Bay, Prince William Sound, Kodiak Island, Schumagin Islands, Unalaska, Pribilof Islands, Port Clarence, Cape Fox and the Siberian Coast. A few of the famous men on the expedition:

William Healy Dall - dean of the Alaskan explorers and author of Alaska and Its Resources.

Grove Carl Gilbert - one of the greatest American geologists

Henry Gannett - a geographer and "the father of American mapmaking"

George Bird Grinnell - editor of Forest and Stream, founder of the Audubon Society and a highly respected outdoors man

Edward S. Curtis - lead photographer

John Burroughs - famous author, wrote the official history of the expedition

John Muir - famous for wilderness writings, had visited Alaska 6 times, top expert on glaciers and founder of the Sierra Club

It was a floating university. John Muir's quotes: "I do not think Harriman is very rich. He has not so much money as I have. I have all I want and Mr Harriman does not."

Muir and Harriman came to know each other. This friendship paid off for conservation later.

In 1899 Edward S. Curtis was running a Seattle based photography studio. He was 31 years old. He joined the Harriman Expedition as a photographer and took more than 5,000 photographs. These were glass negatives. Curtis devoted the rest of his life to studying American Indians. He took 40,000 photos of American Indian life. He published the "North American Indian" in 20 volumes between 1907 and 1930. Curtis photo samples included Black Man Arapaho, Canyon De Chelly, and Chief Joseph.

Roosevelt and Muir in Yosemite

"The Camping Trip That Changed America"

Theodore Roosevelt was on a monumental trip around the United States. He had written to Muir asking to see him. TR to Muir: "I do not want anyone with me but you and I want to drop politics absolutely for four days and just be out in the open with you."

In Yosemite, TR and Muir went camping for 4 days with just 2 rangers and 1 packer. Muir showed Roosevelt Yosemite and convinced him that it needed protection. No previous American president had been so well informed and so avid a wildlife lover as Roosevelt. High on the Roosevelt domestic agenda was vigorous commitment conservation of nature and natural resources.

They visited Yosemite Valley, the Grizzly Giant, Mariposa Grove, Half Dome, logging Giant Sequoias, and Glacially Polished Granite.

Yosemite National Park Completed.

In 1890 Yosemite was made a National Park but the Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove were not included. The California legislature controlled the valley and Mariposa Grove. The Southern Pacific railroad controlled the California legislature and had been against any change. Harriman bought the Southern Pacific and its opposition ended. Lobbying in Washington DC caused Congress to flip. In 1906 Yosemite Valley and Mariposa Grove was incorporated into the National Park.

The Antiquities Act

The act was passed by congress in June, 1906. This law gives the President of the United States the authority, by presidential proclamation, to create national monuments from federal lands to protect significant natural, cultural or scientific features. Intended for "the protection objects of historic and scientific interest." Roosevelt used the act 18 times while president. The Act has been used more than one hundred times since its passage. 23 of the 63 National Parks include the area originally designated National Monuments.

Theodore Roosevelt and conservation: TR established the U.S. Forest Service with Clifford Pinchot and created 150 National Forests. He also created 5 National Parks. The Antiquities Act of 1906 allowed TR to created 18 new National Monuments.

The Newlands Reclamation Act of 1902 established 51 bird preserves and 4 game preserves.

National Monuments Created by TR

18 National Monuments created by President Roosevelt:

Devils Tower, in Wyoming in 1906
El Morro, in New Mexico 1906
Montezuma Castle, in Arizona
Petrified Forest, in Arizona, 1906 now a national park
Chaco Canyon, in New Mexico 1907
Cinder Cone, in California 1907, now part of a national park
Lassen Peak, in California, now a national park
Gila Cliff Dwellings, in New Mexico 1907
Tonto, in New Mexico 1907
Muir Woods, in California 1907
Grand Canyon, in Arizona 1908, now a national park
Pinnacles, in California 1908, now a national park
Jewel Cave, in South Dakota 1908
Natural Bridges, in Utah
Lewis and Clark Caverns, in Montana, now a State Park
Tumacacori, in Arizona 1908
Wheeler in Colorado, 1908, now part of Rio Grande National Forest
Mount Olympus, in Washington 1909, now a national park
Muir Woods

Muir Woods in California is 285 acres of old growth coastal redwoods, *Sequoia sempervirens*. It is north of San Francisco. It was given by a private owner William Kent, a businessman and congressman. The area has not been logged due to inaccessibility.

The meeting concluded at 7:30 PM.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 8, 2025 and will feature Roy Hammerstedt and his talk is titled:

Baby Steps for Microgravity Bioscience: The NASA Funded PSU Center for Commercialization of Research (CCR) in the 1980's and 1990's.

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