



The Horace Albright Letters

Correspondence with Bertha Mather McPherson

We have found several letters from 1953-1986 from Horace Albright to Stephen Mather's daughter, Bertha. Horace Albright (1890-1987) was the first Assistant Director of the National Park Service under Stephen Mather and became Director following Stephen Mather's resignation in 1929.



The letters reveal not only Albright's life-long loyalty to Stephen Mather but his reluctance, if not opposition, to change in the National Park Service, and ultimately a growing acceptance of the propriety of change and the possibilities change holds.

A few excerpts from those letters...

January 16, 1955

"...Grace and I are thinking back 40 years to your famous father's debut in official life, for it was January 21, 1915, that he was sworn in as Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior. That day changed his life and mine, and Grace's and yours..."

June 8, 1977

"...you arrive home just in time to learn of the drastic upset in the National Park Service, through the dismissal of Director Gary Everhardt and his deputy, Bill Briggie, and the appointment of new men from the lowest category of national park areas, the Golden Gate and Gateway National Recreation Areas. Director Whalen, reported to be 34 years of age, and Ira Hutchinson, a black man I think also in his 30's." *(Fact: Whalen was 37 and Hutchinson was 50.)*

June 21, 1977

"...There was grave danger we thought for awhile that Mrs. Dietrich, head of Resources in Gov. Brown's cabinet out here would be selected as Director. It seemed for awhile that either a black or a woman would be made director!"

July 3, 1978

"...I'm much worried about the future of the Park Service. I don't think Whalen is the man for the directorship, not because of his youth as his lack of experience, and having few friends 'on the hill'..."

September 4, 1979

"...I think Bill Whalen is doing a very good job and is entitled to high praise...Whalen will be criticized for appointing a woman as regional director at Santa Fe, a woman with experience only as superintendent of some small monument and river areas – never a national park. Again, I think the appointment good, for some high places must go to women, and she seems fully qualified..."