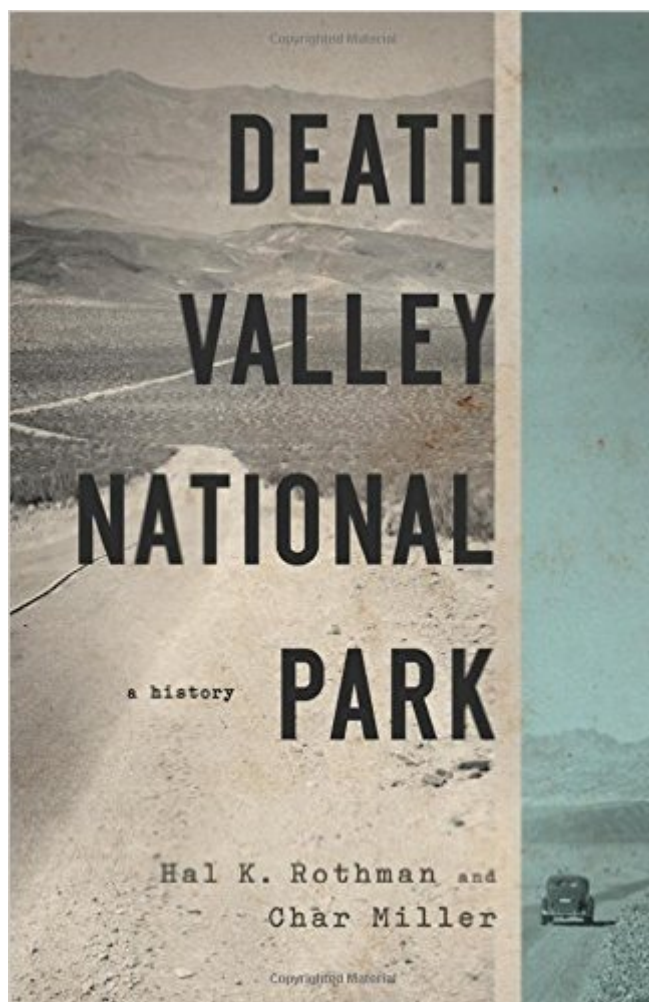


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Death Valley National Park: A History



Synopsis

The first comprehensive study of the park, past and present, Death Valley National Park probes the environmental and human history of this most astonishing desert. Established as a national monument in 1933, Death Valley was an anomaly within the national park system. Though many who knew this landscape were convinced that its stark beauty should be preserved, to do so required a reconceptualization of what a park consists of, grassroots and national support for its creation, and a long and difficult political struggle to secure congressional sanction. This history begins with a discussion of the physical setting, its geography and geology, and descriptions of the Timbisha, the first peoples to inhabit this tough and dangerous landscape. In the 19th-century and early 20th century, new arrivals came to exploit the mineral resources in the region and develop permanent agricultural and resort settlements. Although Death Valley was established as a National Monument in 1933, fear of the harsh desert precluded widespread acceptance by both the visiting public and its own administrative agency. As a result, Death Valley lacked both support and resources. This volume details the many debates over the park's size, conflicts between miners, farmers, the military, and wilderness advocates, the treatment of the Timbisha, and the impact of tourists on its cultural and natural resources. In time, Death Valley came to be seen as one of the great natural wonders of the United States, and was elevated to full national park status in 1994. The history of Death Valley National Park embodies the many tensions confronting American environmentalism. Â

Book Information

Paperback: 216 pages

Publisher: University of Nevada Press; 1 edition (September 3, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0874179254

ISBN-13: 978-0874179255

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (4 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,187,802 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #63 inÂ Books > Science & Math > Nature & Ecology > Ecosystems > Deserts #2807 inÂ Books > Travel > United States > West > Pacific #23859 inÂ Books > History > Americas > United States > State & Local

Customer Reviews

This is a fine contribution to the rapidly growing field of scholarly histories of national parks. It includes lots of history you won't find anywhere else. Authors Rothman and Miller, both highly respected environmental historians, show how Death Valley faced many unique challenges. To begin with, in the late 19th century, when the idea of national parks was new and affixing itself to places with Alpine-like mountains with forests and waterfalls, deserts were considered ugly wastelands, undesirable as national parks or monuments. Attitudes evolved, but mining companies opposed Death Valley becoming a national monument, so they were granted the right to continue mining inside the monument. This compromise left many in the National Park Service feeling that Death Valley was not legitimate as a national monument, so Death Valley was left starved for respect, funds, and resources. This book is centered on decades of evolving National Park Service values, and policy decisions and disputes, but along the way it offers a good history of Death Valley, including Native American culture, American exploration and mining, and personal dramas such as Charles Manson living and being apprehended there. It covers issues such as private inholdings within the park, wild burros, jeep impacts, water disputes, and the shabby treatment given the Timbisha Shoshone. Rothman spent his career "just down the road" at UNLV, so he knows his material well.

A great and detailed book on the human, environmental, political, and administrative history of the Death Valley territory and Death Valley National Park. A must-read for all Death Valley fans!

A fascinating history that makes for excellent reading. The authors told it the way they saw it and pointed out mistakes made by the National Park Service while also describing the struggles the park staff had in getting resources. This is the most interesting and well documented administrative history that I have read and for me I had to keep reading it. The discussion on the detached Devils Hole unit in Nevada was well researched and included the history of the larger Ash Meadows area. Char Miller did a fine job in taking the late Hal Rothman's manuscript and producing such a good work. This should be required reading for all National Park Service managers and even Forest Service, BLM and state agency land managers who can get a lot of history and practical lessons out of it.

great

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