



Edwin M. Lee, Mayor
Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager

Date: June 1, 2017

To: Recreation and Park Commission

Through: Philip A. Ginsburg, General Manager
Lisa Bransten, Director of Partnerships

From: Daliah Khoury, Deputy Director of Development

Subject: Camp Mather – Stephen T. Mather Commemorative Plaque

Agenda Wording

Discussion and possible action to 1) approve the permanent installation of a 33” x 27” brass plaque commemorating Stephen T. Mather and a 8” x 10” bronze plaque acknowledging the Friends of Camp Mather who funded the installation, 2) approve wording of the plaques, and 3) approve placement of the plaques.

Background

Stephen T. Mather was born in San Francisco on July 4, 1867 and was an American industrialist and conservationist. With his friend and journalist Robert Sterling Yard, Mather led a publicity campaign to promote the creation of a unified federal agency to oversee the National Parks administration, which was established in 1916. In 1917, Mather was appointed as the first director of the National Park Service, the new agency created within the Department of the Interior. He served until 1929, during which time Mather created a professional civil service organization, increased the numbers of parks and national monuments, and established systematic criteria for adding new properties to the federal system.

Mather was a devoted friend of Yosemite National Park for much of his adult life and was outspoken in his devotion to Yosemite while head of the National Parks Service.

During his youth, Mather spent many summer vacations camping in the Sierra Nevada. In his mid-30s, he joined the Sierra Club and climbed Mt. Rainier. Later, he made pack trips into Yosemite and Sequoia Parks and into what is now Kings Canyon National Park.

In 1914, after one of these trips, Mather wrote a letter of complaint about conditions he had observed to his old friend of college days, Franklin K. Lane, then Secretary of the Interior. The Secretary answered, inviting him to come to Washington and run the national parks himself.



Mather accepted and entered on duty on January 21, 1915 as Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior. He had two objectives – 1) he wanted to do what he could to persuade Congress to establish a bureau of National Parks since there was no central organization to direct the affairs of the parks and monuments; and 2) he wanted to add certain new parks to the system and extend and enlarge some existing parks.

Mather undertook to provide Yosemite Valley with more facilities for the accommodation of visitors, since the 1915 expositions at San Francisco and San Diego were certain to attract an enormous volume of travel from every part of the United States and abroad. He succeeded in persuading groups of prominent businessmen in Los Angeles and San Francisco to finance and install lodge and camp facilities on a scale of magnitude theretofore undreamed of.

The largest building of the old Army camp, Fort Yosemite, was leased for a new Yosemite Lodge center, taking the place of two pioneer camps. Here were built many cabins and scores of tents. The new company also acquired leaseholds of the Sentinel Hotel, general store and other establishments. In 1925, the Yosemite Park and Curry Company was established and the Ahwahnee Hotel was built, its completion nearly coinciding with the completion of the All Year Highway (State Highway 140) from Merced to El Portal, a route that made Yosemite a year-round park.

Mather's dedication to parks throughout the nation is commemorated on a series of brass plaques that were posthumously cast in his honor by the National Parks Service. The commemorative plaque proposed for Camp Mather is a duplication of this plaque, made of brass and in its original dimensions of 33" x 27". Approval of this plaque will waive the 2' x 2' size limitation set forth in Commission Policy 0103-042.

The second smaller plaque will be placed under the commemorative plaque on the same boulder. It will be 8" x 10" inches in size, made of bronze and will acknowledge the Friends of Camp Mather, who funded the installation, and commemorate the date of its installation.

Wording of the Commemorative Plaque (See Attachment A)

STEPHEN TYNG MATHER
JULY.4.1867 JAN.22.1930

HE LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEFINING AND ESTABLISHING THE POLICIES UNDER WHICH ITS AREAS SHALL BE DEVELOPED AND CONSERVED, UNIMPAIRED FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS. THERE WILL NEVER COME AN END TO THE GOOD HE HAS DONE.

The plaque also includes an etching of Mather in profile before a scenic background.

Wording of the Recognition Plaque

Camp Mather's namesake, Stephen T. Mather, a native San Franciscan, was appointed the first director of the National Park Service in 1917. This plaque is dedicated in his honor on July 4, 2017, the 150th anniversary of his birth, by the San Francisco Recreation and Parks Department, and the Friends of Camp Mather.

Placement of Plaques

The commemorative plaque is to be installed on a flat boulder located in front of the Jack Spring Dining Hall at Camp Mather. The second smaller plaque is to be located under the commemorative plaque on the same boulder.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Commission: 1) approve the permanent installation of a 33" x 27" brass plaque commemorating Stephen T. Mather and a 8" x 10" bronze plaque acknowledging the Friends of Camp Mather who funded the installation, 2) approve wording of the plaques, and 3) approve placement of the plaques.

Supported By:

Friends of Camp Mather
Department Management and Staff

Opposed By:

None known at this time.

Attachment

Attachment A

