

**Review: The Antiquities Act: A Century of American Archaeology,
Historic Preservation, and Nature Conservation**

By David Harmon, Francis P. McManamon, and Dwight T. Pitcaithley (Eds.)

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*The Antiquities Act: A Century of American Archaeology, Historic
Preservation, and Nature Conservation*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona
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8165-2560-7 (hardcover), US\$45.00.

The most important law for archaeological and historical preservation and nature conservation, the Antiquities Act, is little known. Yet the Act is unsurpassed in the preservation of our nation's cultural and natural resources. *The Antiquities Act* covers the first one hundred years of the Act but begins before that time with events leading up to its signing in 1906 by Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt wasted little time in making use of the Act, creating the first national monument, Devil's Tower in Wyoming, in September of 1906, and seventeen more during his presidency, including the Grand Canyon, one of many national monuments that went on to receive national park status.

The book details the Act's legal milestones established under the thirteen presidents (through the Clinton era) who utilized the legislation to preserve 123 landmarks covering nearly 80 million acres. Preserved sites range from very small, such as the President Lincoln and Soldier's Home in Washington DC, to very large, like the 10.9 million acre Wrangell-St. Elias area in Alaska. The Act "gives the president of the United States the power to unilaterally declare, independently of Congress, protected national monuments from tracts of existing federal public land..." (p. 2). The Act's name is an understatement, since it protects not only archaeological sites, but also sites of historic preservation and nature conservation.

The Antiquities Act describes the Act as "the first law to systematically enable the creation of large-scale nature reserves for scientific (rather than scenic or economic) reasons" (p. 6). Passage of the Act was dependent on three key figures, each described in a separate chapter: Edgar Lee Hewett, archaeologist and president of New Mexico Normal University; John Fletcher Lacey, lawyer and congressman; and Theodore Roosevelt, politician and conservationist. Lacey, who had a keen sense of the political process, steered the Act through Congress.

The Antiquities Act has had its share of criticism. It has prevented American Indians from having control of their past. It advances executive clout at the expense of local control, and fails to foster democratic participation. Yet where would the country be without the Antiquities Act? It has allowed for a more latitude, flexibility and efficiency in the preservation of historic and physical landmarks. Since the book's publication, George W. Bush used the Act in June 2006 to create the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands Marine National Monument; the world's largest marine protected area covering approximately 84 million acres.

The Antiquities Act is supplemented with numerous black and white photographs, an appendix of essential facts and figures on the National Monuments, a bibliography, and an index. The book is a fascinating story told by a mix of scholars and field managers. This would be a welcome addition to any library collection. Highly recommended.

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