



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Yosemite National Park
Media Relations Office

P.O. Box 577
Yosemite, CA 95389
www.nps.gov/yose/news
209 372-0529 phone



THE YOSEMITE FUND™
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Hundreds Celebrate Completion of Facelift to Yosemite's Dramatic Olmsted Point Overlook

Yosemite National Park, Yosemite, Calif. Sept. 13, 2006 – Hundreds of people gathered atop the polished granite of Olmsted Point overlook in Yosemite National Park Wednesday to celebrate the completion of major renovations to the vista famous for its picture postcard views of Half Dome, Tenaya Lake and Cloud's Rest.

“This project provides an incredible balance between protecting our natural areas and improving access to one of the most distinctive panoramas in the world,” said Yosemite National Park Superintendent Mike Tollefson. “The work here proves how effective public-private partnerships can be in providing for the park's future.”

Olmsted Point hugs Tioga Road about 30 miles west of Crane flat at 8,400 feet. Severe weather, time, and burrowing marmots caused erosion of rock footings under the parking area and surrounding trails.

“Olmsted Point is a feast of nature and scenery of immense proportion,” said Bob Hansen, president of the nonprofit Yosemite Fund.

\$1.6 million from the Fund, including more than \$400,000 in proceeds from the Yosemite license plate program, paid for new retaining walls, educational exhibits, and access for the disabled. Exhibits focus on The Olmsted family, wildlife, geology and avalanches in the high country. There are also seating and multiple viewing areas, one of which will connect to a short trail with stupendous canyon views. The makeover was done in partnership with the National Park Service.

At the ceremony, a special plaque was dedicated in memory of National Park Service Employees who lost their lives in the service of Yosemite National Park.

“Today we pay tribute to the passion of those employees who work tirelessly to preserve, protect and enhance Yosemite National Park,” said Tollefson. “It is fitting that this plaque honoring extraordinary people is located at perhaps the most remarkable view in the Park.”

Barry Hance, Jr., whose father was the former head of Roads and Trails in Yosemite and died in service to the park, said his “dad would be proud of work to restore this site and salute the commitment of the people working in difficult conditions faced in the Sierra.”

Olmsted Point is named after Frederick Law Olmsted and his son Frederick Jr. Grandson, Stephen Gill, recounted how they both had a “passion for preserving Yosemite.” The senior Olmsted, whom many called the father of American landscape architecture, is best known for his design of New York's Central Park, and was chair of the first commission to manage Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias.

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“The Olmsteds were pioneers in the protection of our National Park lands,” said Rusty Gregory, Yosemite Fund board member and Chairman and CEO of Mammoth Mountain Ski Area. “Even today, their work inspires thousands of individuals who love and contribute to Yosemite’s well-being.”

Olmsted’s son also worked in the field of landscape architecture, including efforts with the National Park Service and as a member of the Yosemite Advisory Board, a group of experts that helped park managers solve problems. He also contributed language in legislation to establish the National Park Service in 1916.

The Yosemite Fund has raised more than \$35 million for 200 wilderness, wildlife and cultural projects in the park. Last spring, the organization celebrated the completion of the \$13.5 million restoration of the Lower Yosemite Falls area. It has also funded projects like the “Spirit of Yosemite” visitor orientation film, Glacier Point amphitheatre, Happy Isles Nature Center exhibits, and 2,000 bear-proof food lockers.

For more information about The Yosemite Fund, see www.yosemitefund.org or call 1-800-4MYPARK.

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Contacts: Peter Bartelme, The Yosemite Fund, 415-664-1503
Scott Gediman, National Park Service, 209-372-0248