

Society Named For First NPS Scientist



George M. Wright - 1904 - 1936

George Wright, was in effect the first "chief scientist" of the National Park Service, and he felt so strongly about the need for acquiring knowledge in order to manage intelligently the System's resources that he personally funded the NPS Wildlife Division's first year of operation. In his name, and with the energetic participation of a number of NPS scientists and historians, both currently employed and alumni, the Society got off the ground in the spring with a charter meeting at the Grosvenor Center in Maryland, hosted by Gordon Fredine and Dan Beard of the Renewable Natural Resources Foundation. Vernon C. (Tommy) Gilbert was

elected president. Wright's daughter, Pamela Wright Lloyd, was made a member of the board of directors.

This new society (the George Wright Society) is dedicated to the protection, preservation and management of cultural and natural parks and reserves through research and education. Membership of \$25 includes subscription to the *George Wright Forum*, published by Robert M. Linn, former NPS Chief Scientist and secretary of the Society, P.O. Box 65, Hancock, MI 49930.

Wright, whose early single-handed efforts to bring science into the park management picture were strongly supported by then Director Horace Albright, was killed in an automobile accident, together with Yellowstone Supt. Roger Toll, as they headed home from a research assignment part of a U.S.-Mexican Border Commission. Conrad Wirth, then Assistant Director of the Park Service, also was a member of that Commission.

Together with Ben Thompson and Joseph Dixon, Wright authored the precedent-setting report, *Fauna of the National Parks of the United States*, the first of a series that continues today under the title "scientific monographs." In that report, the authors stated: "The realization is coming that perhaps our greatest natural heritage, rather than just scenic features is nature itself, with all its complexity and its abundance of life." They suggested that Americans might soon find that "awesome scenery" can be sterile indeed without "the intimate details of living things, the plants, the animals that live on them, and the animals that live on those animals."

It is the present intent of the Society to pick up sponsorship of the "science in the parks" conferences heretofore sponsored biennially by the National Park Service, expanding their focus to include natural and cultural parks and reserves from the local to the international level. Gilbert stressed synthesis as a primary goal of the Society - to bring together all relevant disciplines from all the interlocking levels of impact and management, the better to coordinate information exchange, research efforts, and educational dissemination of results.



This 1936 photo was taken during the Mexican border trip of the Commission to formulate plans and policies for forest reserves and wildlife refuges. George Wright is at far left, next to a Dr. Bell of the Biological Survey (later the Fish and Wildlife Service). Connie Wirth is in the center, next to Roger Toll, third from right. Does anyone know the names of the other three men in the picture?