

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT
SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO

January 4, 1950

Superintendent Frank Pinkley

Southwestern National Monuments

Coolidge, Arizona

Dear Sir:

Reference is made to your letter of December 21, 1949 in regard to the construction of a fire lookout at Bandelier. I think the proposal an excellent one. The fact of the matter is that Ward and I discussed the matter at some length when I was in the regional office in December. I had in mind to write to you of such a proposal some time last fall and when Ward brought the matter up, I was glad that some one else had been thinking of it.

We informally sounded Mr. Ritchie out on the matter. His immediate reaction, of course was that it should be hidden or placed on the floor of canyon somewhere, but I think he can be reconciled to the construction, if we can work out something that will not be too objectionable from the standpoint of design.

Much as I would hate to see wildernesses ruined by man made improvements or spots of scenic beauty altered by addition of roads etc., I think a lookout station should be ~~wherever~~ where it will be most efficient - right out in front of God and every body. I should like to have it located close to the road, in sight of the road and at such a place as visitors would be encouraged to look at and visit it and look around the surrounding country from it. I think protection is one of the first considerations of Park Service Policy and is not a thing to make excuses for or do half-heartedly. I believe that one of our best opportunities for putting across the idea protecting our sacred areas would be to have a lookout in plain sight where people might go easily and see just what we are trying to do. I feel that if we could take a visitor to a look out, show him the country we are trying to guard, show him the precautions we are taking and let him know we are really more than a bunch of uniformed, hardboiled cops he would go away with a greater feeling of pride in the National Park Service and a greater feeling of his own responsibility in preventing fires, guarding against commercialism, sentiment against vandalism than all the lecturing, posters, signs, rules and regulations and penalties that we could possibly formulate.

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Understand, I am ~~handing over~~ ^{handing over} that ~~hideous~~ ^{hideous} mechanism on the canyon rim, build a road and a big parking lot so that the auto sight seer could drive to the rim, lool over the wheel while he puffed a fag and took a disinterested glance around over the country side. What I am trying to put across is that I want the lookout where it will be most useful, where the public can see it and use it, and let the branch of Plans and Design design its mechanical appearance so that it will be least objectionable and least inharmonious to the landscape. That is my perhaps warped idea of the function of the branch of plans; not to tell us what we can have and can't have in an administrative way but to help us fit those things into the scheme of things so as to least mar the natural settings of the area.

Excuse me, Boss, for letting off all the steam. Perhaps I had better have left it for the diary, but anyway I got it off my chest. I think a primary lookout at the point Ward has in mind, a foot path to it from the road and a small sign and turnout close to the road (not close to the lookout) would have many advantages and is certainly justified. I should like very much to have it built before the termination of the camp.

Respectfully,

Chester A. Thomas
Acting Custodian