

National Parks Service Rebrand

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Simplification was the driving force behind the National Parks Service Rebrand project. By reimagining the current brand expression through a modern perspective, this theme was further reinforced. The project was inspired by the notion that the current brand expression did not graphically represent the importance of the parks. From the logo to the entrance ticket, each asset was created through the same lens of stripping down each piece of design and rebuilding it to fit a new brand identity.

The rebranding process began with the logo and typefaces. The current logo depicts a single bison standing at the foot of a mountain all enclosed in an Indigenous American arrowhead. This overly expressive logo has many moving parts, which is common for older logos made in the early twentieth century. During the research phase of this project, I referenced articles and works that stressed the importance of simplifying a logo. After much exploration I decided to construct the logo using only circles. The circle is the simplest and purest form possible and represents the life cycle of all the life forms that inhabit the parks. The two bottom forms of the logo are made from the interior of two overlapping circles. The top right portion is a quarter circle and the top left quadrant is a small circle. Each shape within the logo has its own color that is

repeated throughout the entire brand expression. Also, when placed on a dark color the logo can become solid beige. All of the elements come together to form an abstract symbol that can be read as valleys, mountains, and the rising sun. The logo is purposely ambiguous so that people can find their own meaning in it, and so it can be seen as a symbol rather than an illustration.

In addition to the main logo, a custom script logo was also created. The script is intended for special occasions and national parks merchandise. This script serves as a token of nostalgia for those who have enjoyed visiting and exploring the parks for many years. Script logos have a tendency to feel retro, which is a perfect fit for an organization that was established over a hundred years ago. When constructing the script I kept in mind the national forest script, which has a thicker stroke and is not decorative whatsoever. This translated over to the newly formed script by way of its low contrast and clarity. Lastly, I added an arch to give it a more balanced and classic feel.

As far as typefaces are concerned, the brand expression is confined to three faces: GT Walsheim, GT America Mono, and Nimbus Sans. GT Walsheim was chosen because it is a clean sans-serif but has personality and a degree of approachability; it's not as sterile a typeface as Helvetica or Univers are. GT

Walsheim is used for the logo face, the names of the parks, and large headlines/titles. When the logotype is placed within the logo itself, "National Parks Service" is left aligned to the center of the logo. This creates the margin for whatever document is to be setup. GT American Mono was selected as a supporting typeface for its technical and manual-like feel. Personally, this typeface evokes thoughts of wilderness survival guides. It is primarily used for smaller titles and short bodies of text. Nimbus Sans was chosen for its legibility and is used for long body copy. The typeface used in the existing brand expression is Adobe Frutiger which highly legible, but does not have much personality. It looks extremely default, which is the opposite of how GT Walsheim is perceived.

Since the logo is made of circles, the rest of the brand system uses patterns made from the pieces of the logo. This pattern is used as a texture to easily identify the brand, and as a way to connect the logo with the overall look of the design. It is utilized on the back of the ticket, pamphlet, and postcard to unify each asset. Every pattern is unique but has similar rhythm, scale, and color. Inside the shapes, a texture can be placed to add another dimension to the pattern. These textures are lines that represent elements found in nature; for

example, within some of the shapes are wavy lines that can be interpreted as the ripples in water.

The first tangible asset created was the ticket. I wanted to start with something small to really establish the brand expression before I made the larger pamphlet. I wanted the ticket to be more of an introduction into the design language of the National Parks rather than just a receipt of payment. It should be a memento that a visitor can hold onto and possibly even keep after they leave the park. An article referenced in my proposal, "The Power of Branding", stated that creating a memorable experience for the user is a key way to differentiate a brand. On the front side of the ticket I wanted the main focus to be the name of the park boldly displayed in GT Walsheim. I added a focus on Utah, the state that Bryce Canyon resides, due to how drastically different parks look depending on what state and region they are in. Also for some states, National Parks are a huge attraction and a point of pride. On the backside of the ticket, a pattern appears along with an illustration of a bison head. This is a nod to the old logo in order to not completely alienate people who visit the national parks regularly. The style of illustration matches the look of the typeface and composition of the ticket. The bison head is heavily simplified, but not to the point where it feels

mechanical or abstract. There is still some differentiation between the waves in its hair, which add a livelier feel to the bison head. The bison should feel light and friendly to promote the feeling that the parks are a place where one can enjoy themselves.

After completing the ticket, I then moved onto the pamphlet, which was an exercise in brand expression and practicality. Thinking about the grand scale of the of the national parks system, I decided to place a large image on the front cover. It made the pamphlet more editorial and specific to Bryce Canyon. On the back cover a pattern is used with the phrase, "Step outside for some fresh air". This phrase is meant to give some insight into what the national parks stand for: escaping the reality of everyday life, which can be monotonous and tedious, and exploring some of the world's most incredible scenery. On the inside of the pamphlet I wanted to make things as accessible and legible as possible. For this reason I divided the information into four sections. All the expressions set up in the ticket are expanded upon in the front side of the pamphlet, and the typographic styles and illustrations are consistent with the logo and ticket.

On the back of the pamphlet a more modern representation of a map is established. This simplified version of the map will be mostly useful to casual

hikers that attend national parks, despite still being fully functional. With this map a new icon system is created as well as numbered trails for easier readability.

Along with the postcards, the signage was the last asset created. The signage was designed to be somewhat subtle in order to not distract from the park scenery. The main entrance of Bryce Canyon would feature a wooden slat frame, a concrete base, and brick pillar to the right. The words "National Park" at the top would be three-dimensional letters constructed from iron. The front panel consisting of the name of the park and the logo would also be constructed from iron. The National Parks Service logo would be cut out of the iron, revealing the wooden slats behind, and the name of the park would be slightly set back into the metal. The same treatment would be applied to the deconstructed identity system on the right. The sign will have elements from the overall brand system but will be flexible enough to fit all of the different names of the parks. The trail markers would be constructed of the same iron material that the main entrance sign features. Each letter and form would be set into the metal and painted a light beige color. The trailhead also features the same trail route that is

on the pamphlet. The trail marker was intended to be minimal, in order to not distract from the park.

Overall the project was informed by the research that was conducted this summer. I took what I learned from "A River Runs Through It: New Logo and Identity For Wilderness Society By Alter" and kept the logo abstract. I then took the pieces of the logo to build out the overall system. This article also directed my choice of photos; I wanted the focus to be on the landscape rather than to promote a lifestyle. "Branding our Parks System" by Hans Klein-Hewett, provided me with a jumping off point and helped me to put into context the audience for the parks. The national parks attract people from all over the world and from every age group, although, more active and adventurous people do tend to populate the parks more often. For this reason, I chose to keep the direction of my design somewhat neutral, but I also wanted it to feel fresh and new in order to better attract the 18 to 35 crowd.

After completing each asset, I feel that I have approved upon the National Park Service's brand. I stayed true to the overarching idea of simplifying the brand assets while also giving them an inviting personality. I hope to continue to build on this project and place it in my portfolio to attract potential employers.

Works Cited

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