# BRYCE CANYON

Utah

YEAR: 2003

SCREENS: 7

With the success of Devils Tower, word slowly spread through the NPS of my mission to continue this series with contemporary prints in the WPA style. It wasn't long before Rob Danno, chief ranger at Bryce Canyon, requested a poster for his park.

The 2003 summer season was falling off, so it was the perfect time for a beautiful fall road trip. I brought my new digital camera to capture scenes to inspire the design. Bryce is a very interesting place to visit, with no two viewpoints the same. Rob suggested some hikes, and I got up one morning at sunrise for the early light and hiked down among the hoodoos. Three hours later, I walked up and down a short section of trail until I framed what I thought would be the perfect photo. Forest fire smoke, which had wafted up into the canyons, softened the scene.
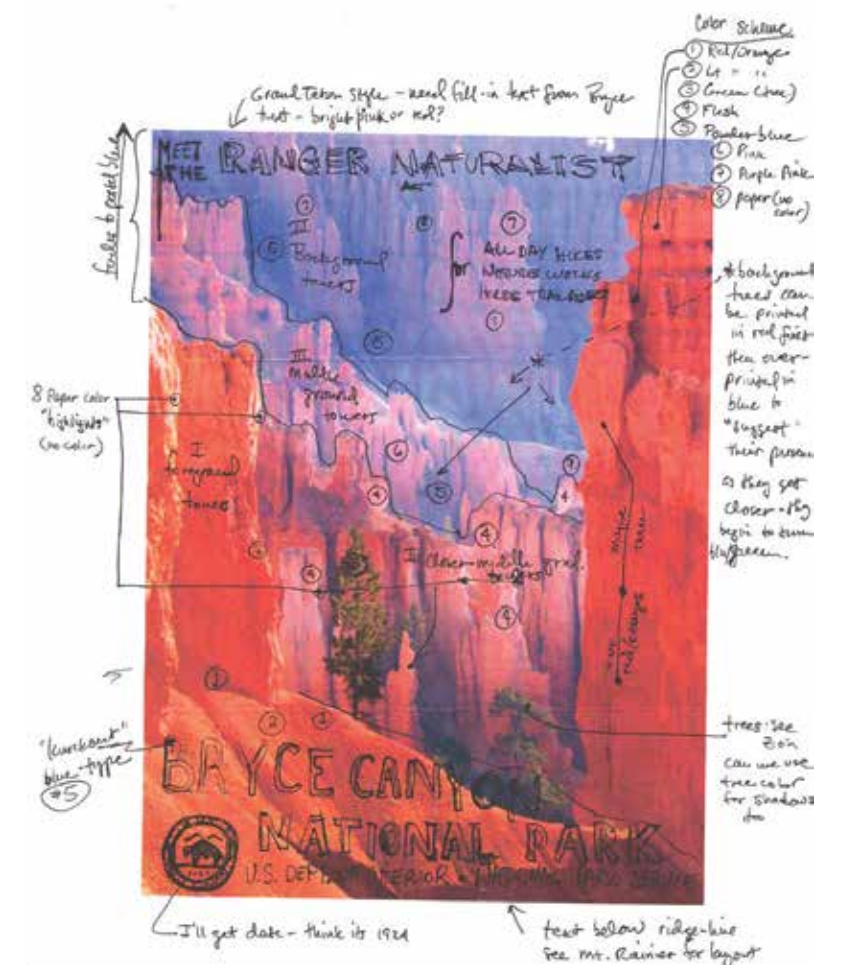
(left) Ranger Doug's photo; (center) Brian's initial sketch; and (right) Our final colorations
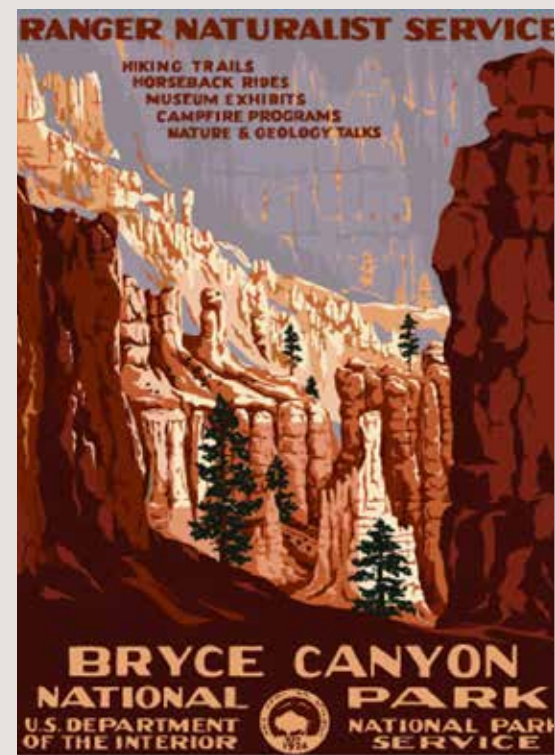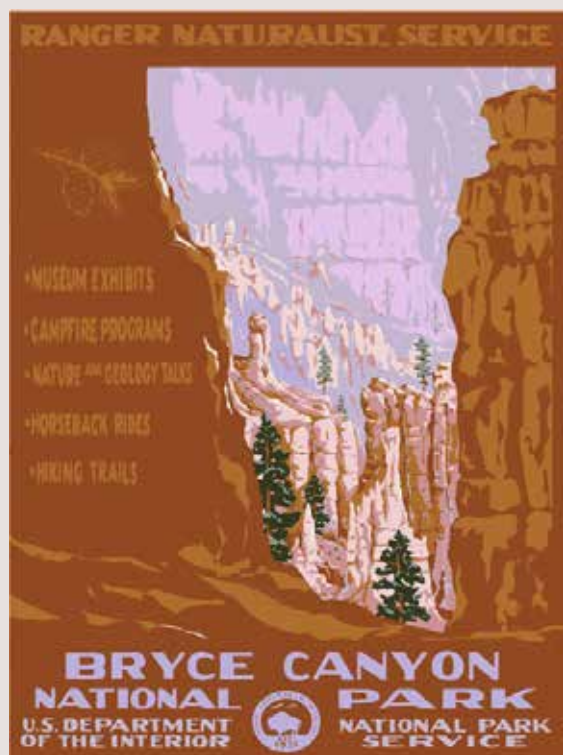
Two early sketches where we struggled with colors
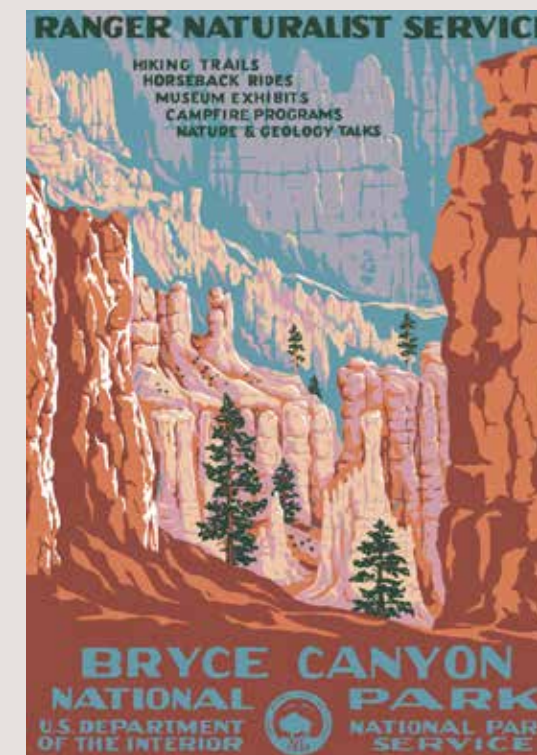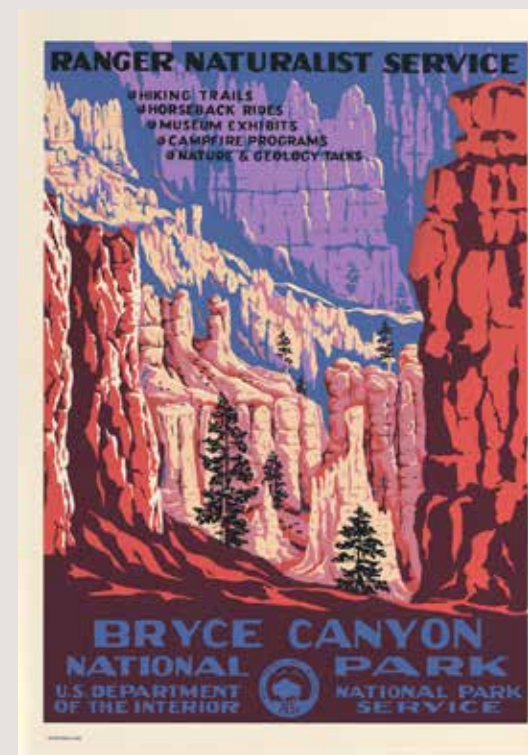
(left) The first edition colors, which were still a bit off; (right) The current colorations with a softer pastel palette

THE BRYCE DESIGN AND OUR DIVE INTO THE DIGITAL AGE

This time there would be no painting and tracing. Computers were getting good enough to make digital designs, and I don't mean by clicking the "posterize" button. With artist Brian Maebius and his superb and specialized art and computer skills now on board, I felt confident that between the two of us, we could come up with a simple solution. We were wrong; it was a tortuous path, but one that would serve as a template for the thirty-five designs to follow.

After my trip, I sent the chosen photo to Brian and he took it from there. We set an eight-screen limit, so we needed to figure out which colors and what shapes should be grouped together on which screen and in what order—not an easy task.

1. LAYERS and COLORS

The layering didn't always allow changes that we needed. If we needed to lighten a shadow or tint the hoodoos, everything else on that screen also shifted, which sometimes worked against the overall design. The whole layer was a fixed color so we had to pick carefully. Also, when one color was changed, the remaining seven sometimes didn't harmonize. This effort alone took Brian and me a good three months of moving colors around. We finally settled on the image on top of the facing page, far right—what I nicknamed "a 1940s candy-cane palette."

2. FONTS

We needed to type, stretch, and color fonts. Hand drawing them was too laborious, which would become obvious as we progressed into the Olympic design (next). This issue was solved with a font program. Brian entered the WPA font into a font program, keeping the hand-traced lines, which allowed us to manipulate fonts, stretching them to fit and easily changing colors. It wasn't long before NPS1935 appeared in Microsoft's Word program. (The WPA font below is our font.)

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

3. MOUSE or STYLUS

Brian used 59,312 points between mouse clicks and vector drawing tools to create the shapes for the eight screens! We needed a more efficient method to generate all these points, and by creating the WPA font and switching to a stylus and tablet for drawing all the shapes, we found the answer. After solving these problems, we had a good poster for Bryce Canyon, as well as a road-map for future designs. This was a huge leap for us into the digital age.
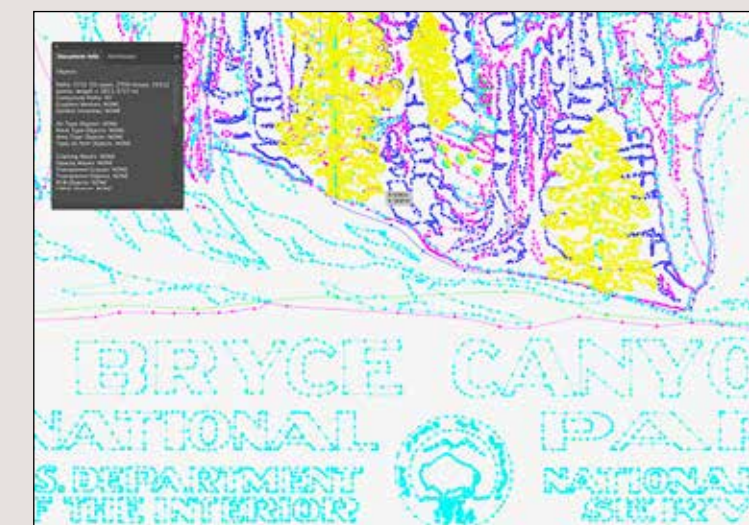
Each vector shape is composed of connected dots.