



Sportsmen and the evolution of the conservation idea in Yellowstone : 1882-1894  
by Sarah Ellen Broadbent

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in History  
Montana State University

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Abstract:

This thesis examines the historic role of sportsmen in preserving Yellowstone National Park's wildlife and in establishing protective legislation and effective management of park resources. Although Yellowstone had initially been established in 1872 to protect the region's geologic features, over the decades of the 1880s and 1890s, sportsmen helped expand the goals of preservation to include wildlife, watersheds, and forests. Using primary source documents such as Forest and Stream magazine and archival records of Yellowstone National Park, this study demonstrates that sportsmen had a wider vision of conservation than generally given credit by historians and had a critical impact on changing management policies in Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding national forests.

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This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the historic role of sportsmen in preserving Yellowstone National Park's wildlife and in establishing protective legislation and effective management of park resources. Although Yellowstone had initially been established in 1872 to protect the region's geologic features, over the decades of the 1880s and 1890s, sportsmen helped expand the goals of preservation to include wildlife, watersheds, and forests. Using primary source documents such as *Forest and Stream* magazine and archival records of Yellowstone National Park, this study demonstrates that sportsmen had a wider vision of conservation than generally given credit by historians and had a critical impact on changing management policies in Yellowstone National Park and the surrounding national forests.

## CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

In 1991 the controversial issues of hunting and protecting wildlife in national parks came head to head on the borders of Yellowstone National Park. That year the State of Montana issued hunters permits to shoot bison as they migrated out of the park in search of food. The plight of the bison attracted national attention and animal rights groups rallied to stop the hunt. Wayne Pacelle, director of The Fund for Animals, lead the successful fight against hunting bison on the borders of Yellowstone. In the *Billings Gazette* he summarized his objectives, "We have turned public opinion against the Yellowstone hunt. There is a national disgust for what's going on. Now we must move against all hunting."<sup>1</sup> This story is reminiscent of one that happened approximately one hundred years ago, although at that time the group trying to save the animals was the hunters. After the park was formed in 1872, poaching of the few remaining bison in the nation was a problem in Yellowstone. Sportsmen took up the cause of saving the

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<sup>1</sup> "Animal Group Plans Assault on Hunting," *Billings Gazette*, October 1, 1991.

bison and other big game animals in the park. Their activities resulted in passage of the Lacey Act of 1894, which curtailed poaching in Yellowstone and ensured the preservation of the bison.

These stories hint at the complex relationship between Yellowstone National Park and sportsmen. Although sportsmen have been interested in the park throughout its history, their role in its early development and management are not clearly understood. This paper examines the long-standing yet often overlooked relationship between Yellowstone and sportsmen for the years 1882 to 1894. Specifically, I will focus on how a particular group of sportsmen, members of the elite sporting group called the Boone and Crockett Club, affected early management in Yellowstone National Park. The Boone and Crockett Club took a keen interest in America's first national park. Club members including Theodore Roosevelt, George Bird Grinnell, and other luminaries in the Progressive conservation movement, visited the park, hunted and fished in the Yellowstone region, frequently wrote about it in the pages of a leading sporting journal, *Forest and Stream*, and lobbied for legislation to protect Yellowstone's treasures and expand its boundaries. Why were the people that formed this hunting club so dedicated to a federal reserve that prohibited hunting? What was the role of sportsmen in the early development of Yellowstone? What was the relationship between the sporting movement (clubs and

magazines) and the conservation of Yellowstone? What values were associated with Yellowstone during those early years? How was the National Park defined? What role did Boone and Crockett Club members play in the creation of the first forest reserve on Yellowstone's borders, and what does that tell us about the early history of the national forests? What was the relationship between the efforts to protect and expand Yellowstone during the 1880s and the Progressive conservation movement around 1900? These are the questions I will seek to answer.

Yellowstone was created as the first national park in 1872 by the Organic Act. This act was vague giving no clear definition of how the park was to be managed or explaining its purpose. For the first decade after the park was set aside, tourism was low and park issues remained relatively quiet. In 1882 things began to change with the arrival of the railroad near the park borders, and with that came increasing interest in tourism. In the years following the railroad's arrival the debate over the purpose of the national park intensified. This thesis looks at a period of development between 1882 and 1894. The first chapter examines an early legislative struggle between Boone and Crockett Club antecedents and the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company over a proposed concessions lease. During this struggle a small group of sportsmen began to articulate a conservation agenda for the park. Out of this

debate grew a movement by sportsmen for legislation that would strengthen park management and extend the boundaries. Throughout the 1880s antecedents of the Boone and Crockett Club battled with the powerful railroad lobby over this legislation. It was during these struggles that sportsmen began to articulate a conservation agenda for Yellowstone; giving definition to the vague Organic Act by describing Yellowstone as a forest and watershed reserve, and as a place to preserve some of the big game animals of the West. Chapter 2 covers the legislative struggle and development of values associated with Yellowstone throughout the 1880s. In 1891 the first forest reserve was created on Yellowstone's boundary, and in 1894 the Lacey Act was passed, giving strength to park management. These were the goals that Boone and Crockett Club members struggled to accomplish for over a decade. Chapter 3 covers these events.

The events in Yellowstone during the 1880s and 1890s address conservation history in a few ways. Few histories extensively explore the role of sportsmen in the conservation movement. From today's standpoint, with the controversial debates about animal rights, eating meat, and hunting, focusing on self-proclaimed "hunting riflemen" to understand the first national park set aside to protect and preserve the natural environment may seem strange. The irony reveals both a change in attitudes about hunting in American culture, and an absence of an understanding of the

extent sportsmen affected the conservation movement. The current anger and hostility directed toward hunting does not typically consider sportsmens' role in the conservation movement that started toward the end of the nineteenth century. Many of the people involved with the start of the conservation movement, which saved the remaining big game species and set the foundation for the current environmental movement, were sportsmen. Because of the negative image of hunting in todays' culture, we may fail to see the significance of hunters' ideas and actions concerning wildlife in the past.

Not only is there a lack of connection between hunting and the conservation movement in contemporary thought, but also in the histories written about the development of the conservation movement. In the 1890s Americans began to redefine their relationship with the natural world. Because of changes in the way people were living, such as industrialization and urbanization, and an increasing awareness that the resources in the country were not unlimited, the conservation movement began.<sup>2</sup> A number of historians have been written about the developing conservation movement around the turn of the century, but the role of the sportsmen has quite often been limited or left out.

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<sup>2</sup> Clayton Koppes, "Efficiency/Equity/Esthetics: Towards a Reinterpretation of American Conservation," *Environmental Review* (1987): 127-145.

Ideas about Americans' relationship with the natural world have evolved over a long period of time dating back thousands of years to the time when agriculture began. Roderick Nash details these changing ideas in an extensive book called *Wilderness and the American Mind*.<sup>3</sup> He notes that ideas have evolved from a hostile fear of wild areas to a recent appreciation of them, and are reflective of how Americans define themselves as a nation. First, the mission of the pioneers was to conquer and develop the vast wildlands from coast to coast. Toward the end of the nineteenth century these ideas began to change. Changes in the country such as the settlement of the West, the railroads connecting the nation, immigration, and urbanization all affected how people viewed the natural world. Romantic ideas about nature arose. Urban people began to define nature as a place to be purified from the unnatural way of life in the cities.

It was during this period that the conservation movement began. Americans began to realize that there was no longer an abundance of unclaimed natural resources, that natural resources were exhaustible, and that the idea of immediate short-sighted use of the resources was not

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<sup>3</sup> Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

necessarily the best.<sup>4</sup> Increasingly Americans attempted to use natural resources more efficiently.

The beginnings of the conservation movement have been associated with the progressive political reform movement active in the early 1900s.<sup>5</sup> This movement advocated wise-use utilitarianism, reliance upon experts for guidance, and a need to correct the ills of American society. Progressives attempted to clean up some of the problems in society, such as poverty in the inner city and poor conditions in the factories. Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot were leaders in this utilitarian manner of thinking, and lead the nation in efforts to conserve resources. Progressive ideals were applied to conservation mainly through a reliance on professionals to manage the forests to produce maximum yield and preserve the resources for future generations. Historian Samuel Hays writes "Conservationists envisaged, even though they did not realize their aims, a political system guided by the ideal of efficiency and dominated by the technicians who could

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<sup>4</sup> Koppes, "Efficiency/Equity/Esthetics, 127-145.

<sup>5</sup> Samuel P. Hays is a historian that has written extensively on environmental history from the conservation movement through the environmental movement, see the following works: *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency: The Progressive Conservation Movement, 1890-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959); "From Conservation to Environment: Environmental Politics in the United State Since World War Two," *Environmental Review* 6, no. 2 (1982): 14-41; *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

best determine how to achieve it."<sup>6</sup> Hays effectively explains how Americans applied this "gospel of efficiency" to their relationship with the natural world.

While different studies cover the political and economic influences, and the evolving beliefs about the developing conservation movement, the active role of the sportsmen seems to be forgotten. One historian, John Reiger, has focused on the connection between hunters and the conservation movement.<sup>7</sup> Reiger argues that hunting groups spearheaded the conservation in the 1870s when numerous hunting groups and sporting magazines were being formed. This date for the origins of the conservation movement, is earlier than that given by other historians who tie the beginnings closer to the turn of the century when the Progressive movement was stronger. The sporting movement was interested in reforming hunting practices, mainly market hunting which was viewed as very destructive to the dwindling numbers of wild game. Sportsmen were opposed to killing game solely for money. Rather they promoted a special nonutilitarian relationship with nature. Hunting was more than killing an animal; the tracking and other skills needed developed an intimate relationship between hunters and the natural world.

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<sup>6</sup> Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, 3.

<sup>7</sup> John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (New York: Winchester Press, 1975).

As sportsmen worked to reform hunting practices, they formed a strong political movement that advocated protection for the nation's game and forests. Although game was their first love, sportsmen were also interested in the growing forestry protection movement, and the management and protection of national parks. Early on sportsmen became politically active in protecting game and forest resources. These activities were significant in the early development of the conservation movement.

The extent of the role of sportsmen in the formation of the conservation movement has been debated, most notably by Historian Thomas Dunlap who agrees with Reiger that hunters played a role, but not to the extent Reiger claims. Dunlap points out that Pinchot, a leader of progressive conservationists, pushed a program for the redistribution of power, wanting resource decisions to be made at the federal level by experts, taking the power from state and local authorities to gain maximum yield from the resources.<sup>8</sup> This is at the heart of the movement. Dunlap claims the hunting movement lacked experts or a concern for economic developments. He agrees that hunters did play a role in the conservation movement, and that outdoor magazines did influence the public ideas about wildlife, "but none of that makes hunting central to the conservation crusade or the

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<sup>8</sup> Thomas R. Dunlap, "Sport Hunting and Conservation, 1880-1920," *Environmental Review* 2, no. 1 (1988): 55.

movement's intellectual fountainhead."<sup>9</sup> Because of the absence of sportsmen in many historical accounts and the disagreement over the extent of their role, the association between sportsmen and the conservation movement remains an unresolved topic.

A number of histories on the park exist, but analysis of the role of sportsmen is missing.<sup>10</sup> These books tell the story of early exploration of the park, the first civilian management, and the coming of the army to save the park from destruction by outside interests. But besides Reiger, few

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<sup>9</sup> Dunlap, "Sport Hunting and Conservation," 56.

<sup>10</sup> Marie M. Augspurger, *Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive* (Middletown, Ohio: The Naegele-Auer Printing Co., 1948); Richard A. Bartlett, *Nature's Yellowstone: The Story of an American Wilderness That Became Yellowstone National Park in 1872* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974); idem, *Yellowstone: A Wilderness Besieged* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985); idem, "The Concessionaires of Yellowstone National Park: Genesis of a Policy, 1882-1892," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 74, no. 1 (1983): 2-10; Merrill D. Beal, *The Story of Man in Yellowstone*. Rev. ed. (Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming: The Yellowstone Library and Museum Association); Hiram M. Chittenden, *The Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive*. 5th ed. (Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Company, 1905); Aubrey L. Haines, *Yellowstone National Park: Its Exploration and Establishment* (Washington: USDI, NPS, 1974); idem, *The Yellowstone Story*, Vol. I. and 2 (Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming: Yellowstone Library and Museum Association, Colorado Associated University Press, 1977); Duane H. Hampton, *How the U.S. Cavalry Saved Our National Parks* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1971); idem, "Opposition to National Parks," *Journal of Forest History* January (1981): 37-45; Paul Schullery, *Yellowstone Ski Pioneers: Peril and Heroism on the Winter Trail* (Worland, Wyo.: High Plains Publishing Company, Inc., 1995).

historians extensively explore the role of sportsmen in the conservation movement and Yellowstone in particular.

This case study of the influence of sportsmen in the development of Yellowstone advances this debate. The heart of the issue is the extent of sportsmens' involvement in the conservation movement. I have looked closely at how sportsmen influenced park management and worked to expand park boundaries. This focus helps clarify sportsmen's ideas and actions in one park, instead of broadly examining the development of the whole conservation movement. The findings can be used to test Reiger's and Dunlap's views to see which is more accurate in the Yellowstone situation.

A better understanding of the relationship between Yellowstone and sportsmen can be achieved by considering broader issues of why national parks and national forests were created. At the heart of the relationship between Yellowstone and sportsmen are ideas about how one group valued the park, and how those values influenced park development and management. The values they promoted helped to shape how Americans viewed Yellowstone and the first national forest.

Congress created Yellowstone in 1872, 44 years before the creation of the National Park Service. The reasons why people valued the park and wanted it set aside were different from todays'. The cultural motivations for the protection of Yellowstone are not well understood. Alfred

Runte in *National Parks: The American Experience* connects the creation of national parks to what they symbolized to American culture. People created national parks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century because of what he describes as scenic monumentalism. They saw the parks as a way to differentiate themselves from the Europeans. Runte also argues that concern for wildlife motivated park creation only after the 1930s. But in parks with large wildlife populations, such as Yellowstone, wildlife was a valued aspect much earlier. The attitudes about wildlife changed rapidly between the 1870s and the 1920s. Sportsmen's involvement and concern over Yellowstone wildlife and forest and watershed reserves reveals additional values, beyond scenic monumentalism, that were influential in the development of Yellowstone.

The origin of the national forest system is also addressed during this period of Yellowstone history. Beginning in the 1870s numerous pieces of legislation to create forest reserves were introduced in Congress, but they all failed. It was not until 1891 that legislation that allowed the President to set aside forest reserves was passed. At that time the land southeast of Yellowstone, which had been proposed as an extension of the park in the 1880s, became the nation's first forest reserve.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> For papers discussing the early history of forest reserves see Harold Steen, ed., "The Origins of the National Forests: A Centennial Symposium (Durham: Forest History

Historian Mary Culpin has written of the efforts to extend park boundaries started by General Sheridan and continued most notably by Arnold Hague, along with William H. Phillips and George Bird Grinnell. Related to this crusade were attempts at protective legislation and opposition to the railroad lobby. John Reiger has also examined the significant influences of Boone and Crockett Club members, particularly George Bird Grinnell, in the creation of the reserve. For years Grinnell wrote of the need for forestry protection in *Forest and Stream*. He linked this need with the Yellowstone protection crusade. This case study connects and expands upon these works.

Yellowstone has long been a place where ideas of conserving the nation's wildlife and natural resources has been debated. This focused look at Yellowstone during the 1880s and 1890s reveals an early stage in the conservation debate, and exposes a developing group, sportsmen, as key players. Today the National Park Service, state agencies, and environmental groups struggle to control the expanding bison population. Understanding how sportsmen saved the few remaining bison more than a century ago reveals how ideas of

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Society, 1992). Note works by Mary Culpin, "Yellowstone and its Borders: a Significant Influence Toward the Creation of the First Forest Reserve, 276-282; John Reiger, *Wildlife, Conservation, and the First Forest Reserve*," 106-121; and Ron Arnold, *Congressman William Holman of Indiana: Unknown Founder of National Forests*," 301-313.

conservation, Yellowstone, national forests, and sportsmen  
have evolved.

## CHAPTER 2

## FROM TOURIST RESORT TO GAME REFUGE:

## SPORTSMEN AND THE LEASING CONTROVERSY, 1872-1882

Last year nearly three million people visited Yellowstone National Park. Many came to see Old Faithful Geyser, some viewed the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and Yellowstone Lake; nearly all watched for wildlife on their travels among the park's scenic features. Seeing a bear dig for roots in Hayden Valley, watching the herds of bison and elk roam through the Lamar Valley, or catching a glimpse of the occasional moose wade through the swampy meadows are a major part of the experience visitors have come to expect in Yellowstone. Yet as historians have noted, the intent behind the creation of Yellowstone had little to do with the region's wildlife. Rather the purpose was to preserve Yellowstone's unusual thermal features and make them part of a growing commercial tourism industry.

Management principles and values were not further developed until nearly ten years after the park was created. By that time two groups had a strong interest in Yellowstone: the Northern Pacific Railroad Company and sportsmen. The first was behind the creation of the park

and had an interest in developing tourism, while the latter had hunted in the region and were interested in protecting park game. In the early 1880s these two groups found themselves involved in an extended struggle over a lease for concessions operations. Sportsmen, drawn to the park because of an interest in game, soon found themselves addressing the broader issues of park management and values. It was during this leasing debate that sportsmen began to articulate a conservation agenda for the park. They worked as early conservationists to expand the purpose of Yellowstone beyond tourism to include providing a safe refuge for game animals. Their activities proved to be very influential in the evolution of the park idea.

To understand sportsmen's activities in Yellowstone, one must understand Yellowstone in the 1870s. When Yellowstone was created as the first national park in 1872 the financial and legal means to manage the park were not provided or even adequately defined. The legislation creating the park placed the park under the control of the Department of the Interior but was vague about how the park was to be financed and managed. In order to ensure that the Act pass the Forty-second Congress, the park's boosters claimed that the park would require little management or money.<sup>1</sup> Congress did create the Yellowstone National Park, and it survived for nearly ten years in this condition.

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<sup>1</sup> Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 1, 179.

In 1872, Americans, similar to the legislators in Washington, D.C., had few ideas of what a national park was all about. Yellowstone was the first national park, and at that time it was a new experiment. Historian Alfred Runte has analyzed why national parks were created in *National Parks: The American Experience*. He connects the creation of national parks to what they symbolized to American culture. According to Runte, people created national parks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century because of what he describes as scenic monumentalism. People saw the parks as a way to differentiate themselves from the Europeans, But in 1872 the national park concept was in its formative state.

Because of the lack of management in the park, hide hunters were able to slaughter park wildlife in alarming numbers during the 1870s. Elk, bison, and deer were killed for their hides, and the meat was usually left to rot. Although the Organic Act that established the park outlawed against the "wanton destruction of the fish and game found within said Park, and against their capture or destruction for the purposes of merchandise or profit," it did not provide a means to enforce this rule.<sup>2</sup> Because the park lacked adequate staff and legislation to stop the hide hunters, the intentions of those who created the park in 1872 were not carried out.

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<sup>2</sup> Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 2, 55.

In the 1870s a number of small expeditions visited the Yellowstone region and reported the destruction of game and geologic features. Captain William Ludlow led an expedition in 1875 and recommended that the park be placed in the hands of the War Department until a civilian superintendent and staff could be hired to protect park features.<sup>3</sup> The Belknap party also visited the park in 1875. A member of this party, William E. Strong, wrote how the act creating the park was not enforced and how game would disappear if the destructive practices continued.<sup>4</sup> The reports from these early trips helped to document the need for better park protection.

Philetus Walter Norris, who also visited the park in 1875, attempted to rectify this problem. He became the second superintendent of Yellowstone in 1877 and in his first annual report recommended that the northeast corner of the park be turned into a game refuge, protected by game keepers. In 1880 Superintendent Norris was able to hire Harry Yount who was stationed in the Lamar Valley to protect the animals from poaching in the winter. This job was far too large for just one game keeper.

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<sup>3</sup> Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 1, 204.

<sup>4</sup> William E. Strong, "A Trip to the Yellowstone National Park in July, August, and September, 1875" (Washington, D.C., 1876) 80 (also in Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 1, 207).

This was the scene when the Northern Pacific Railroad surveyed for possible tracks to the park in the summer of 1882. The building of the Northern Pacific was a part of the great expansion of railroads that followed the Civil War. The Northern Pacific, Great Northern, Union Pacific, Central Pacific, Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe, and the Southern Pacific blazed trails across the western United States to the Pacific Coast. In 1883 tracks of the Northern Pacific were completed to the Cinnabar Terminus just north of the park. Both Yellowstone National Park and the West were affected as the rails connected the East and West coasts.

The entry of the railroads into the West resulted in far-reaching changes. The majority of the railroad companies received government subsidies. Land grants were a common way for the government to assist the railroads in completing tracks. Through this process railroad companies became very powerful land owners. They changed the population of the West by attracting increasing numbers of settlers to the region. Better transportation and the sale of railroad-owned land drew new emigrants from Europe. The railroads were also influential middlemen, providing transportation between the markets of the East and the natural resources of the West.

Since the creation of the park, the Northern Pacific wanted Yellowstone developed into a summer tourist resort.

Aubrey Haines writes of the strong influences of the railroad in Yellowstone exploration, creation, and keeping the park free from potential concessions during the 1870s.<sup>5</sup> It was expected that the railroad would reach the park shortly after it was created in 1872, but it was delayed during the 1870s due to financial difficulties. Ferdinand V. Hayden explained the situation in his report describing the bill that created the park to Washington, D.C., dated February 21, 1878, "At the time of the passage of the bill it was supposed that the Northern Pacific Railroad would be extended to Montana within a year or two. This road would have passed within about forty miles of the northern boundary of the park. The officers and friends of that road gave assurance that a narrow-gauge branch would at once be extended to the park for the accommodation of visitors. The failure of this road retarded the development of the park for years."<sup>6</sup> Hayden went on to explain that as the railroad failed to make progress, interest died and the park "remained to this time in its natural condition." By 1883 the railroad completed tracks off its main line to the

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<sup>5</sup> Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 2, 31.

<sup>6</sup> House Committee on the Public Lands, *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior in regard to the Better Protection of the National Park from Injury*, 45th Cong., 2d sess., 1878, Ex. doc. No. 75 (also in Edmund B. Rogers, comp., "History of Legislation Relating to the National Park System Through the 82d Congress," vol. 7, part 2 [Yellowstone National Park Research Library and Museum, Mammoth, Wyo., 1958] 3-4).

Cinnabar terminus just north of park boundaries. At that time it had developed extensive plans to complete lines to a few attractions inside Yellowstone.

Yellowstone had one major problem that hindered the railroad's plans for turning the park into a summer resort. The park did not have adequate hotels, restaurants, or transportation to accommodate the increased amount of tourists that would arrive on the rails. To solve this problem the Northern Pacific quietly backed a company that would develop those services.

This company was called the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company. On September 1, 1882, it was granted an agreement for monopoly privileges of the operation of hotels, stages, and telegraph within the park. Acting Secretary of the Interior Merritt L. Josslyn made this agreement with Carroll T. Hobart, a division superintendent of the railroad, and Henry T. Douglass, a post trader in Fort Yates, Dakota Territory, who had strong Washington political connections.<sup>7</sup> Rufus Hatch, a businessman who provided financial backing for the company, soon became involved with the agreement.

The Yellowstone Park Improvement Company quickly began construction in the park in the fall of 1882 and their

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<sup>7</sup> Senate, *Letter from the Secretary of the Interior*, (11 Dec. 1882), 47th Cong. 2d sess., Ex. Doc. No. 10, 2-7 (also in Rogers, comp., "History of Legislation," vol. 7, part 2, 2-7).

operations soon came under criticism. Their practices of cutting park timber to build facilities and killing park game to feed employees came under attack. Their interest in Yellowstone was making a profit. This powerful interest quickly came into conflict with the preservation of park features.

The excessive amount of power granted in the agreement was also criticized. Understanding the controversial nature of this deal, the Secretary of the Interior Henry M. Teller deliberately stayed away from the office when the negotiations were made.<sup>8</sup> Although the park needed facilities for visitors, the agreement was viewed by some as one-sided in favor of the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company. Shortly after the agreement was made the excess of the privileges granted were hotly debated.

This debate was just one element of the politics of the period. The time following the Civil War is often referred to as the Gilded Age. It was a time of government corruption and excessive business power, with corrupt deals between the two. The agreement between the railroad-backed company and the Department of the Interior was viewed by some in the 1880s as one of those scandalous affairs.

Due to the controversial nature of the deal with the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company, the need for better park management and a clearer definition of what the park

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<sup>8</sup> Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 2, 32.

was for intensified in the early 1880s. The increased commercial interest in Yellowstone posed new dangers to the preservation of the park in its natural state. Also, the controversial nature of the agreement needed to be investigated. The time was at hand for those with an interest in the Yellowstone to step forward and present an alternative route from the destructive course the park was on in the early 1880s.

Three men, General Philip Sheridan, George Bird Grinnell, and George Graham Vest did step forward into the battle against the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company agreement. These men had all travelled to the park and developed a concern for it. Their concern grew into a crusade to protect Yellowstone and its wildlife. Each acted in his own powerful ways, as an army general, a magazine editor, and as a United States Senator to help implement their similar visions of the national park.

One characteristic these men had in common was that they were associated with the sporting movement. Sporting clubs were forming during the 1880s, but many were not completely organized. One of these clubs was the Boone and Crockett Club. It's records indicate these men were all members.<sup>9</sup> The Boone and Crockett Club was a sporting club formed in 1887 by George Bird Grinnell and Theodore

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<sup>9</sup> Boone and Crockett Club. Officers, Constitution and List of Members for the Year 1903, Boone and Crockett Club, Papers, Boone and Crockett Club, Missoula, Montana.

Roosevelt; General Sheridan was a regular member while Senator Vest was listed as an associate member. Senator Vest was also a member of the Woodmont Rod and Gun Club of western Maryland, while Grinnell was editor of the leading sporting periodical.<sup>10</sup> Understanding the association between these men and the sporting movement helps add to the understanding of the actions of these men, and connects the sporting movement with the activities in Yellowstone in 1882. These men helped to connect the reform activities of the sporting movement with the problem of market hunting in the park.

The separation of hunting into two opposing elements, sport and market hunting, heightened in the early nineteenth century. Historian John Trefethen explains that as people, such as southern planters, began to gain both wealth and leisure time, hunting as a sport became more popular in America. The first known hunting club, Carroll's Island Club, was formed in 1832 near Baltimore by Col. William Slater. In 1844 the New York Sportsmen's Club formed, becoming one of the first groups that fought for the protection and preservation of game. Sport hunters were against game sales, spring shooting, and lax game laws.

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<sup>10</sup> Reiger, *American Sportsman*, 103.

These groups formed in the east to protect the water fowl from total destruction by commercial hunters.<sup>11</sup>

In the years before the Civil War, sport hunters began to further define themselves by developing a code of proper sportsmanship. Definition of the sporting movement accelerated after the Civil War. Historian John Reiger explains how this code outlined the values and proper methods associated with sport hunting. This code further separated the sport hunter from the market hunter, for it was not sporting to hunt game for a profit. The ideas and values associated with this code were expressed in the sporting magazines, such as *American Sportsman*, *Forest and Stream*, and *Field and Stream*, that were launched during the 1870s.<sup>12</sup> Reiger explains that these magazines taught readers about sport hunting, including the changing situation of wildlife. The magazines campaigned for the preservation and management of wildlife, and focused on the destructive situation in Yellowstone. To help the public better understand the significance of game laws, *Forest and Stream*, the leading outdoor periodical, published and distributed free a book of game laws once a year. The

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<sup>11</sup> James Trefethen, *An American Crusade for Wildlife* (New York: Winchester Press, 1975), 72-73.

<sup>12</sup> Reiger, *American Sportsmen*, 21.

magazines explained to the public why the game laws were important.<sup>13</sup>

Sport-hunting clubs also continued to be defined and organized after the Civil War. The magazines and clubs helped to facilitate communication and organize sport hunters into active lobbying groups for the cause of wildlife preservation. The Boone and Crockett Club is one example of the powerful associations made in the sporting clubs. Its members included many important figures of the early conservation movement such as Theodore Roosevelt, George Bird Grinnell, Gifford Pinchot, Philip Sheridan, Charles Sheldon, John F. Lacey, William Hornaday, Horace Albright, Stephen Mather, and Aldo Leopold. This sporting club brought together powerful individuals concerned with preserving wildlife. Both the magazines and clubs helped sport hunters develop ideas about wildlife and implement ways to support their ideas of game management.

Yellowstone had long been a place where people came to hunt. Native Americans, trappers, market hunters, and sportsmen were all drawn to the abundant supply of game in the region. But during the 1870s the destruction of game caused by market hunting in Yellowstone and across the nation caused alarm in the sporting movement. Increasingly sporting groups and magazines spoke out against that type of hunting. Drawn to Yellowstone to help preserve the

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<sup>13</sup> Reiger, *American Sportsmen*, 60.

remaining game by reforming market hunting, sportsmen entered a larger debate over park management and values.

The response of Sheridan, Grinnell, and Vest to the problems Yellowstone was facing in the early 1880s provides an excellent example of sportsmen's influences on early park ideas about management and values. In Yellowstone their efforts were not limited to game; they fought for better park management and they taught the American people about their national park. They began to broaden the purpose of Yellowstone beyond tourism to include a wider conservation agenda. In doing so they began to refine and clarify the vague Organic Act.

General Sheridan had been associated with the Yellowstone region since 1869. He had emerged at the young age of thirty-four as a hero of the Civil War. His military career then moved to the West in 1869 when he became the commander of the Division of the Missouri. This region included the area east of Chicago to the western boundaries of Montana, Wyoming, and New Mexico, reaching as far north as Canada and as far south as the Rio Grande. Yellowstone was a part of this vast region but the general did not have time to visit the area until 1881. Grand stories of Yellowstone inspired the general to send out expeditions in the 1870s. These included the Hayden, Barlow, and Ludlow expeditions. On the Barlow expedition, Mount Sheridan, west of Heart Lake, was named in his honor.

In the summer of 1881 General Sheridan visited the Yellowstone region. He summarized his travels in a report that made recommendations for improving park management. At the time of his visit the park received an annual appropriation of \$15,000 to pay the salary of the superintendent and the game keeper, and other minor expenses. Sheridan recommended that the appropriations be increased, an engineer be hired to help improve the roads and trails, and members of the cavalry be seasonally stationed in the park to protect the geysers and prevent forest fires.<sup>14</sup>

During the summer of 1882, Sheridan again travelled through the park and reported his findings. He was disturbed by the activities associated with the nearing of the railroad. Sheridan reported that with the arrival of the railroad, the park had been rented out to private parties for the purposes of making money. He disagreed with this use of the park, stating that "The improvements in the park should be national, the control of it in the hands of an officer of the government..."<sup>15</sup> Sheridan expressed

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<sup>14</sup> Philip Sheridan, *Report of Lieut. General P.H. Sheridan, Dated September 20, 1881, of His Expedition Through the Big Horn Mountains, Yellowstone National Park, Etc.*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882) 9.

<sup>15</sup> Sheridan, *Report of an Exploration of Parts of Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana, in August and September, 1882*, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1882) 17.

concern that the nation could lose control of the park to the commercial interest.

A second concern was the continued slaughter of game. One winter as many as 4,000 elk were killed in and around the park. Animals such as elk, mountain sheep, antelope, and deer were slaughtered in great numbers.<sup>16</sup> Decimation of these animals by hide hunters endangered the survival of some species in the West. Sheridan was alarmed by this and sought to change the situation in Yellowstone.

To help solve park management problems he recommended converting Yellowstone into a refuge for game, extending the park boundaries, and protecting this area with the army. This was similar to a plan for park management that was suggested by Captain William Ludlow in 1875.<sup>17</sup> These ideas would help to remedy mismanagement that had occurred since its creation and would also help preserve the remaining game species.

General Sheridan worked to implement this plan by inspiring fellow sportsmen.<sup>18</sup> "I respectfully make an appeal to all sportsmen of this country, and to the

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<sup>16</sup> Philip Sheridan, *Report of an Exploration in August and September, 1882*, 17.

<sup>17</sup> William Ludlow, *Report of a Reconnaissance from Carroll, Montana Territory, on the Upper Missouri, to the Yellowstone National Park, and Return, Made in the Summer of 1875* (Washington, D.C., 1876), 61.

<sup>18</sup> Paul A. Hutton, "Sheridan's crusade for Yellowstone," *American History Illustrated*, 19 no. 10(1985): 12-13.

different sportsmen's clubs, to assist in getting Congress to make the extension I describe, thus securing a refuge for our wild game. If authorized to do so, I will engage to keep out skin hunters and all other hunters, by use of troops from Forts Washakie on the south, Custer on the east, and Ellis on the north, and, if necessary, I can keep sufficient troops in the Park to accomplish this object, and give a place of refuge and safety for our noble game. If any of the game which will naturally drift to this place of safety, break out again, let it be killed, but let its life be made safe while in the National Park: it will then soon learn to stay where it will be unmolested."<sup>19</sup> This soon developed into the idea of the park as a game "reservoir" that could perpetually restock surrounding hunting areas.

This appeal to sportsmen was reprinted by magazine editor George Bird Grinnell in *Forest and Stream* and in a senate report on the conditions in Yellowstone by Senator George Graham Vest.<sup>20</sup> In the winter of 1882, these two eastern associates responded to Sheridan's request. Grinnell, who was acquainted with Sheridan through his explorations of the West in the 1870s, publicized park

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<sup>19</sup> Sheridan, *Report of an Exploration in August and September, 1882*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Senate Committee on Territories, *Report to Accompany Bill S. 2317*, (5 Jan. 1883) 47 Cong. 2d sess., S. Rept. 911 (also in Rogers, "History of Legislation," vol. 7, part 2, 5); "Their last refuge," *Forest and Stream* 19(14 Dec. 1882): 382.

events in his magazine *Forest and Stream*. Senator Vest, who had travelled through the park with the general in 1882, was easily convinced of the need for protective legislation and took up the cause in Washington, D.C.<sup>21</sup> Both Grinnell and Vest soon became strong advocates of improving Yellowstone management. Their actions reflected the desires of General Sheridan.

Grinnell's main contribution in the leasing battle was publicizing the events and conditions in Yellowstone in the pages of *Forest and Stream*. He used his position as the editor of *Forest and Stream* to alert his readers of the leasing controversy and the people involved. He taught his readers about the poor situation of Yellowstone wildlife, Yellowstone management, and attempted to instill a sense of public ownership of the park. He also worked to inspire his readers to support legislation that would remedy the Yellowstone situation. In doing so Grinnell helped to nationalize his concern for wildlife and the Yellowstone situation.

Grinnell's concern for wildlife began at an early age. Since his youth in the East, Grinnell had been exposed to wild game. He often visited his uncle's home, which contained a large collection of mounted birds and mammals. The widow of the great naturalist John James Audubon was his

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<sup>21</sup> Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, vol. 1, 268, vol. 2, 209; Hutton, *Sheridan's Crusade*, 13.

school teacher. These early influences helped develop an interest in wildlife that continued through his college years at Yale. In 1880 he received his Ph.D. by passing exams in Osteology and Vertebrate Paleontology.

It was during his time at Yale that Grinnell was exposed to the West. He began a working relationship with paleontologist Othniel C. Marsh. Marsh introduced Grinnell to the West by accepting him as a volunteer on a six-month scientific exploration in June of 1870. Grinnell would return to the West on many occasions, including a trip with Major Frank North in 1872, an exploration of the Dakotas under George Armstrong Custer in 1874, and an exploration through Yellowstone with Captain William Ludlow in 1875. On these early trips, Grinnell acted as a scientist and collected specimens for museums in the East. He was introduced to great explorers and hunters such as Major North, "Lonesome" Charley Reynolds, and General Philip Sheridan. He also saw first-hand the plight of wildlife in the West. Conserving the remaining wild species and places became a passion for the young Grinnell.

*Forest and Stream* was established by Charles Hallock in 1873. It was taken over by George Bird Grinnell soon thereafter, and became a leading forum for sportsmen, naturalists, and others interested in the protection of natural resources. The owner and editor position of *Forest and Stream* seemed like a natural place for the young George

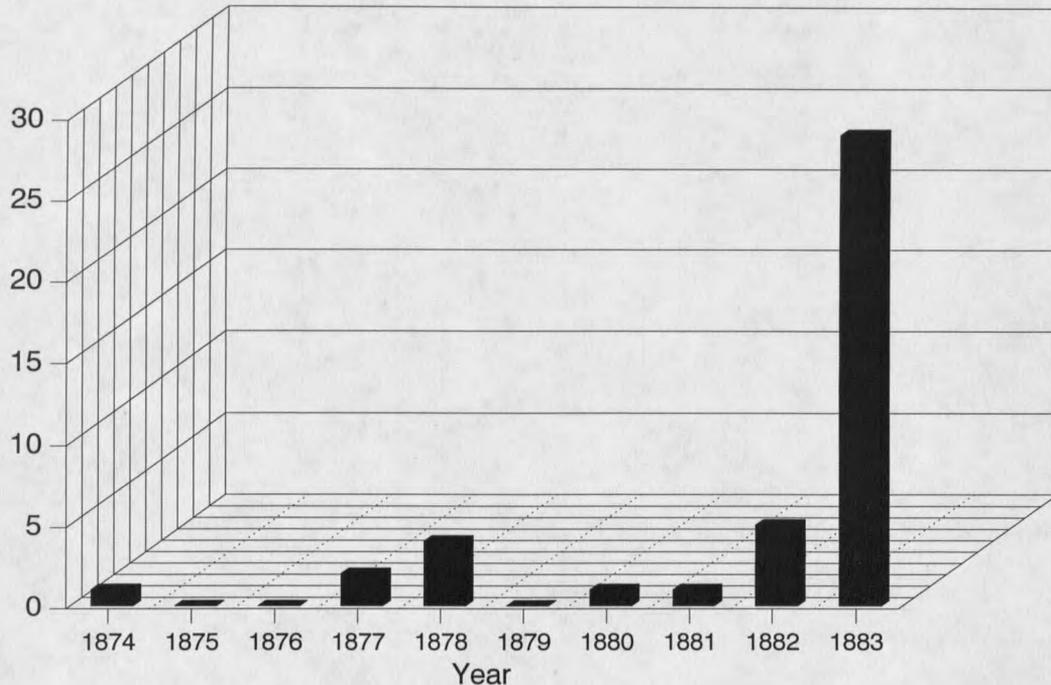
Bird Grinnell. In this position he was able to publicize his concerns for wildlife and the national park.

The Yellowstone leasing debate was the first major park story *Forest and Stream* covered extensively. Since the magazine's creation it had published periodic stories about Yellowstone, they were mainly descriptive of the park and had yet to focus intensely on one issue. During the period from December of 1882 to March of 1883 the magazine's coverage of Yellowstone more than doubled that of the previous 9 years. At least 26 articles were written concerning the leasing event.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> The following articles appeared in *Forest and Stream*: "Their Last Refuge," 19(14 Dec. 1882): 382-83; "Leasing the National Park," 19(21 Dec 1882): 401; Min-ta, "One Opinion of the Grab," 19(21 Dec 1882): 410; "The Park Grab," 19(4 Jan. 1883): [441]; "The Park Monopolists Checked," 19(11 Jan. 1883): 461-463; Ichthus, "Game and Forests in the Park," 21( 17 Jan. 1884): 494; "An Important Park Order," 19( 18 Jan. 1883): 481; "The People's Park," 19(18 Jan. 1883): 481; "What the People Think," 19(18 Jan. 1883): 486; "What the Press Thinks 19(25 Jan. 1883): 506; "The Park Saved," 19(25 Jan. 1883): 501; E. S. Holmes, "The Yellowstone Park," 20(1 Feb. 1883): 11; Nessmuk, "Grab and Greed," 20(1 Feb. 1883): 6; Occident. [Letter], 20(1 Feb. 1883): 11; Editorial. [Vest bill] 20(1 Feb. 1883): 11; [Park Concessions], 20(1 Feb. 1883): 11; "Friends of the Park," 20(8 Feb. 1883): 22; P. "The Yellowstone Region," 20(15 Feb. 1883): 42-43; "Park Protection," 20(15 Feb. 1883): 41; Angler, "The Big Game and the Park," 20(22 Feb. 1883): 68; Harry Oelrichs, [Untitled Letter], 20(22 Feb. 1883): 68; "The Park and the Senate," 20(22 Feb. 1883): 61; "The Park Grab," 20(1 Mar. 1883): 81; "Mr. Vest's Victory," 20(8 Mar. 1883): 101; "Senatorial Opinions on the Park," 20(8 Mar. 1883): 107; "The Park Leases," 20(15 Mar. 1883): 121; "The National Park," 20( 22 Mar. 1883): 141.

## Yellowstone-Related Articles



Grinnell provided extensive coverage of the agreement between the Acting Secretary of the Interior and the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company. In a December 21, 1882, article entitled "Leasing the National Park," Grinnell explained the details of the agreement.<sup>23</sup> Starting with the first story Grinnell characterized it as a scheme by the Northern Pacific to make money in the national park at the expense of the public. He was proud of *Forest and Stream's*

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<sup>23</sup> "Leasing the National Park," *Forest and Stream*, 19(21 Dec. 1882): 401.

role in uncovering this scheme. "That the *Forest and Stream* was the first newspaper in the land to see the enormity of this job, and to raise its voice against this cool and farefaced attempt to appropriate the people's property, is naturally a source of satisfaction to us...It is the duty of this journal to do all in its power to protect the interest of the people, to guard against any invasion of their rights, and to sound the note of warning and alarm when these rights are threatened...."<sup>24</sup>

Grinnell also provided descriptions of the people involved with the leasing controversy. He supported the efforts Senator Vest and Congress made to investigate Yellowstone affairs and produce legislation to resolve the problems. Editorials and letters to the editor that were full of praise and support for the senator's actions were printed. On the other hand, men associated with the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company were portrayed as corrupt swindlers, and their ill intentions for the park were exposed. He characterized the leasing controversy as the "park grab," and Hobart, Douglas, Hatch, and others associated with the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company as corrupt men attempting to make a profit at public expense. The deal made with Acting Secretary Jocelyn was portrayed as an underhanded scheme by monopolists. The company's cutting

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<sup>24</sup> "The People's Park," *Forest and Stream*, 19(18 Jan. 1883): 481.

of timber, killing of game, and ambitions to use Yellowstone as a large cattle ranch were all covered. Grinnell was extremely strident in his descriptions of good and evil in the park leasing controversy.

Grinnell also explained why these activities mattered to his readers. A story entitled "Their last refuge," described the dire situation of wildlife in the country and the sporting movement's desire to shape Yellowstone into a refuge for big game. The article mentioned two major threats to wildlife. First, with the arrival of the rails and the increasing numbers of settlers moving into the West, wildlife was losing habitat. Second, hide hunters' destructive practices were destroying wildlife populations at an alarming rate. The original act creating the park, Captain Ludlow's 1875 report, and General Sheridan's 1882 report were all reprinted in this article. Grinnell, like General Sheridan and Captain Ludlow before him, saw Yellowstone as a game refuge and wanted to shape its management in that direction. "The region offers no inducement to the farmer, for it is rugged and mountainous, nor to the stock raiser, for the altitude of a large portion of it is so great, that cattle cannot be grazed there in winter. It was hoped and believed that here was a reservation which would be protected from the inroads of the skin hunter, where game might be free from molestation, and so add to the attractions of the Park. The language of the

statute [Revised Statutes of the United States, sections 2474 and 2475, Act approved March 1, 1872] quoted above warranted such a belief."<sup>25</sup>

In the *Forest and Stream* coverage of the leasing debate Grinnell lobbied readers to include game as an additional valued feature of the park. When the park was created, game was of some interest in Yellowstone, but it seemed of lesser importance than the geysers, canyon, and other geologic wonders. As described earlier, Yellowstone was created as the first national park with vague legislation that did not provide a clear definition of the purpose of the national park. It seems Grinnell attempted to help his readers define a more clear concept of the national park. This attempt was focused on the plight of wildlife. He viewed Yellowstone not as money-making tourist trap, but as a place where game could survive and multiply. In Grinnell's writings, the national park was portrayed as one solution to the problem of game destruction.

Just as Grinnell's articles attempted to persuade readers about the value of game in the national park, he also attempted to instill ideas of the people's ownership of the park. Repeatedly he referred to Yellowstone as the "people's park." Yellowstone was a place where people would visit, not a pristine wilderness removed from people. For

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<sup>25</sup> "Their Last Refuge," *Forest and Stream*, 19(14 Dec. 1882): 382.

this reason he argued for development that would benefit the people rather than the developer's pocket books.

By the winter of 1882 Grinnell had developed a fear of excessive commercial power in the park. He viewed Yellowstone as a place for all to have free and equal access and the agreement with the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company threatened this idea. The major problem with the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company agreement was the amount of control it was granted. For example, the agreement allowed the company to prohibit camping near the major attractions in the park, but it allowed the company to build hotels in those special areas. Grinnell was concerned that the natural wonders would become money-making shows for the tourists. Repeatedly, Grinnell warned against Yellowstone becoming a second Niagara Falls. He asked "How would our readers like to see it become a second Niagara—a place where one goes only to be fleeced, where patent medicine advertisements stare one in the face, and the beauties of nature have all been defiled by the greed of man?"<sup>26</sup> Concerns that the public maintain access, development not overshadow the major features, and the public be properly reimbursed for leasing their national park were voiced.

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<sup>26</sup> "Mr. Vest's Victory, *Forest and Stream* 20 (8 Mar. 1883): 101.

While Grinnell worked on influencing attitudes, he also presented legislative solutions to the problems. To implement his ideas about park management he took on a strong political focus in his coverage. Details of all the legislative events in Washington were covered. He worked to inspire readers to take action to support protective legislation and he lobbied Congress and park officials to take the proper action.

In addition to editorials informing readers about the Yellowstone situation, Grinnell printed letters telling what his readers and other newspapers thought. These articles revealed how Grinnell's efforts for Yellowstone were supported by his readers across the country and by other major newspapers. In an article entitled "What the People Think," the supporting attitudes of four individuals from Bozeman, Montana Territory; Chicago, Illinois; Cleveland Ohio; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania were printed.<sup>27</sup> These articles told of personal Yellowstone experiences, praised the activities of *Forest and Stream*, and condemned the leasing scheme. The location of these individuals show that *Forest and Stream* reached and inspired an audience across the country. It provided a forum for teaching and communicating between outdoorsmen interested in the park.

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<sup>27</sup> "What the People Think," *Forest and Stream* 19(18 Jan. 1883): 486.

In an article entitled "What the Press Thinks," it was reported that "different newspapers are waking up" to the scheme in Yellowstone.<sup>28</sup> Grinnell reprinted articles from the New York Commercial Advertiser, the Distiller and Brewer (St. Louis), the New York Herald, the New York Times, Harper's Weekly, and the Knickerbocker to support this contention. Grinnell proudly reported that coverage of the leasing scheme spread from *Forest and Stream* to major newspapers.

The articles in *Forest and Stream* provide an excellent example of how the leading sporting magazine was used to help shape ideas about Yellowstone. The activities of sporting groups are more difficult to trace in the leasing scheme, but are found in the *Forest and Stream* reporting and in the Edmond Rogers "History of Legislation Relating to The National Park System Through the 82d Congress."<sup>29</sup> First, in the legislative history of Yellowstone, a few sporting groups are mentioned. The Sportsman Association of Western Pennsylvania submitted a resolution to Congress concerning Yellowstone and the Kent County Sporting Club of Grand Rapids, Michigan, created a petition and sent it to Congress. *Forest and Stream* printed a copy of this petition that asked Congress to create legislation that would support

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<sup>28</sup> "What the Press Thinks," *Forest and Stream* 19(25 Jan. 1883): 506.

<sup>29</sup> Rogers, "History of Legislation," vol. 1, part 1, 10-11.

General Sheridan's requests.<sup>30</sup> Grinnell also reported that important game protective associations, such as the Cuvier Club and the Michigan State Association, substantially endorsed Vest's bill.<sup>31</sup> These activities show that Yellowstone was of interest in the growing sporting movement, and sportsmen's associations were lobbying for good management of the park.

While Grinnell campaigned for Yellowstone in the pages of *Forest and Stream*, Senator George Graham Vest of Missouri led the crusade in Washington. Vest was a career politician born in Kentucky in 1830. He served as a judge advocate in General Price's Confederate Congress in 1862, and then in the House of Representatives of the Confederate Congress from 1862 to 1865, and then in the Confederate Senate. In 1879 he was elected to the United States Senate and served until 1903.

The Senator was a member of the Sheridan party that visited the park in 1882, and he returned to the park the following summer with President Arthur and General Sheridan. Those trips into the Yellowstone region seemed to have a great effect on the fifty-two year old Senator, for until 1903 when he left public office, he championed the Yellowstone cause in Washington, D.C. His legislative

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<sup>30</sup> E.S. Holmes, "The Yellowstone Park," *Forest and Stream*, 20(1 Feb. 1883): 11.

<sup>31</sup> "The People's Park," *Forest and Stream*, 19(18 Jan. 1883): 481.

































































































































































































