



The evolving national park idea : Yellowstone National Park, 1872-1890
by Langdon Smith, Jr

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in
Earth Sciences

Montana State University

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Abstract:

The creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 is considered by many the birthplace of the national park idea, which spawned hundreds of parks around the world. However, this significance was not apparent during Yellowstone's first few years, when the Park was virtually ignored by the government. During a key period from 1872 to 1890, when the national park idea began to spread, Americans defined the character of Yellowstone and the national park idea. This thesis reconstructs the process Yellowstone and the national park idea went through to evolve from a vague idea to an established national icon. It relies on local newspaper and national magazine coverage, reports and correspondence from the park's early superintendents, documents from the Interior Department and U.S. Congress, Yellowstone guidebooks and published and unpublished accounts by visitors.

This thesis demonstrates that local residents living near Yellowstone played an important role discovering the major attractions within the Park, and establishing a pattern of human use that remains almost unchanged today. Yellowstone's custodians, civilian and military superintendents, fought off monopolistic economic interests, found a balance between development and preservation, and defined a management system that became the National Park Service. National visitors field tested the national park idea, by learning what to do and how to behave in Yellowstone. The increasing visitor numbers were also a litmus test for Yellowstone, proving it had become truly a "national" park. This study should help us to better understand our relationship with Yellowstone, and add to our understanding of the origins of the national park idea. It should also contribute to the discussion about American's fascination with the western landscape.

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MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
Bozeman, Montana

April 1999

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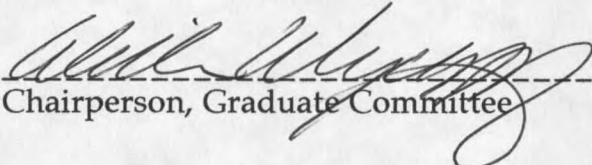
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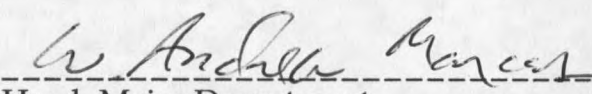


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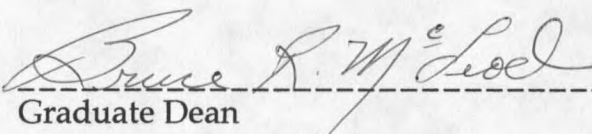


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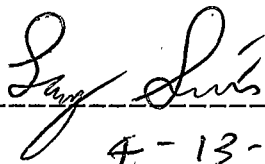
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to thank the members of his committee – Dr. William Wyckoff (Committee Chairman), Dr. Kathy Hansen and Dr. Joseph Ashley. I thank Dr. Wyckoff for his close attention to my progress, his tireless enthusiasm, and his mentorship as I began a new career as a geographer. I thank Dr. Hansen for her strong interest in this project and for pointing me in the direction of historical geography. I thank Dr. Ashley for his contributions to this thesis, and his incredible knowledge of this region. I would also like to thank the very supportive and professional staff members of the Archives and Photo Archives of Yellowstone National Park. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Laura, and sons, Kelly and Conner, for their patience while I spent long hours at the computer or buried in the archives of Yellowstone.

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ABSTRACT

The creation of Yellowstone National Park in 1872 is considered by many the birthplace of the national park idea, which spawned hundreds of parks around the world. However, this significance was not apparent during Yellowstone's first few years, when the Park was virtually ignored by the government. During a key period from 1872 to 1890, when the national park idea began to spread, Americans defined the character of Yellowstone and the national park idea. This thesis reconstructs the process Yellowstone and the national park idea went through to evolve from a vague idea to an established national icon. It relies on local newspaper and national magazine coverage, reports and correspondence from the park's early superintendents, documents from the Interior Department and U.S. Congress, Yellowstone guidebooks and published and unpublished accounts by visitors.

This thesis demonstrates that local residents living near Yellowstone played an important role discovering the major attractions within the Park, and establishing a pattern of human use that remains almost unchanged today. Yellowstone's custodians, civilian and military superintendents, fought off monopolistic economic interests, found a balance between development and preservation, and defined a management system that became the National Park Service. National visitors field tested the national park idea, by learning what to do and how to behave in Yellowstone. The increasing visitor numbers were also a litmus test for Yellowstone, proving it had become truly a "national" park. This study should help us to better understand our relationship with Yellowstone, and add to our understanding of the origins of the national park idea. It should also contribute to the discussion about American's fascination with the western landscape.

INTRODUCTION

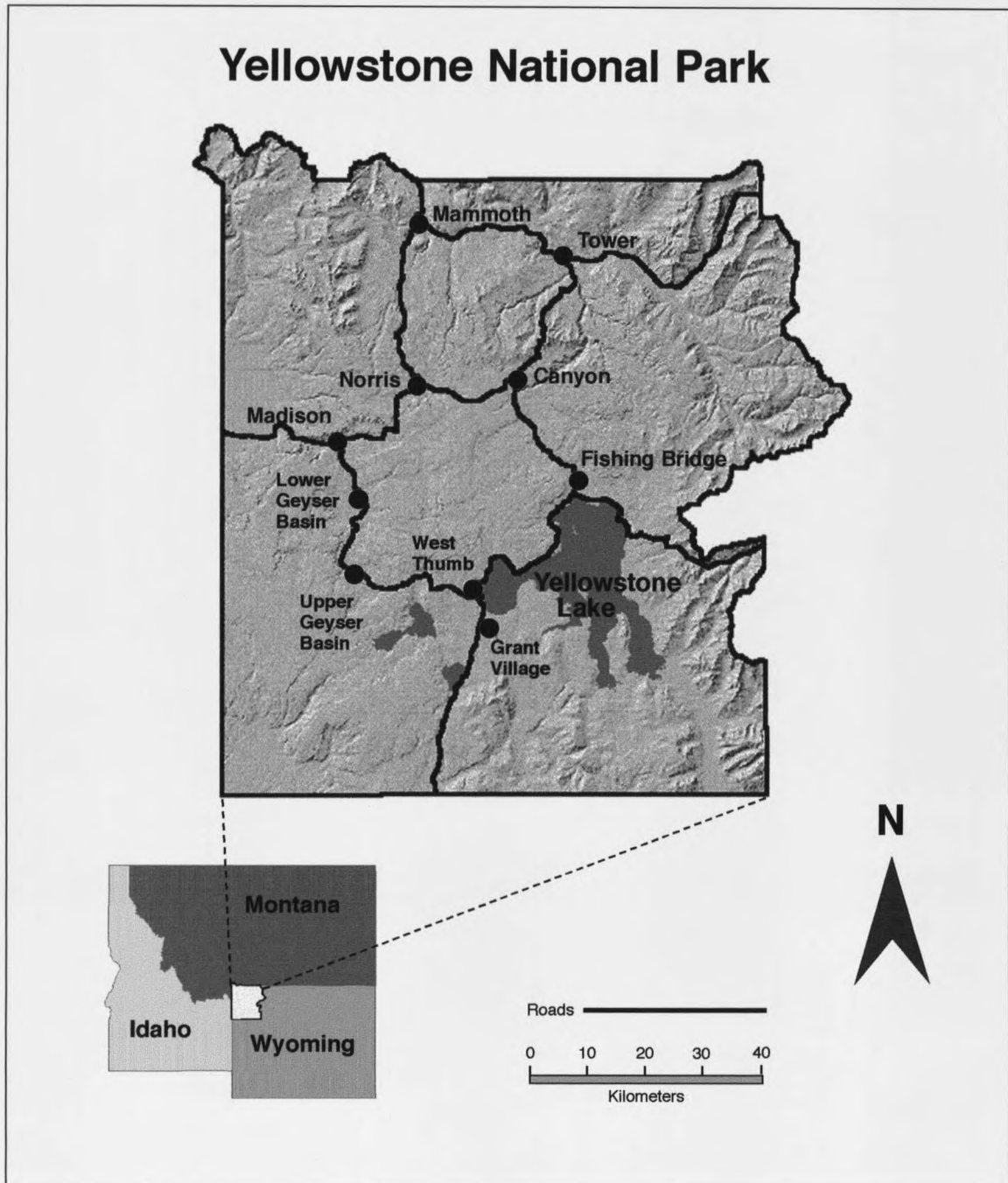
Yellowstone required us to stretch our awareness in many ways, for the legislation creating the park did not tell people how to act. At every step along the way, the public, the park managers, and the resource itself would have to resolve what was and was not appropriate. The creation of the Park in 1872 launched the American public, indeed the world public, on a search for Yellowstone in the grandest sense: not just to learn what was there and enjoy it, but to make sense of it in the context of their times.

– Paul Schullery, 1997

In 1872 the creation of Yellowstone National Park marked the U.S. government's first attempt to protect and manage a vast tract of wildlands. Setting aside an area the size of Delaware and Rhode Island combined for its aesthetic and geologic significance had never before been carried out by such a young country in recorded history. It was the Magna Charta of national cultural behavior (Tilden 1968, 99). By setting aside Yellowstone (Figure 1), Congress was legislating an experiment, and flying in the face of the human habit of spoilation more than two thousand years old (Bartlett 1985, xi). Yellowstone remained the world's only national park (Mackinac Island in Michigan became a national park, but then returned to state management) until 1890, when Yosemite went from state to federal control as a national park and Sequoia and General Grant National Parks were established in California (Foresta 1984, 10; Mackintosh 1991, 11-12).

Figure 1. Yellowstone National Park

Yellowstone was the world's first national park, established in 1872. It encompasses 3,472 square miles (8,987 square km) and is larger than Rhode Island and Delaware combined.



Yellowstone Park is considered by many to be the birthplace of the national park idea, which spawned hundreds of national parks around the globe. The country's first national forest reserves came from efforts to expand Yellowstone Park, and if the conservation movement was not born in Yellowstone, it at the very least cut its teeth there. Yet the Yellowstone icon did not just appear on the western landscape in the form it is today, or even in the stage of development it reached by 1890. While the idea to establish the Park was noble and far-reaching, it was also so vague as to leave the future of Yellowstone in jeopardy during its first decade. With little or no guidance from Congress or the Interior Department, Yellowstone's future could have followed several different paths than the one we see today, including being opened to settlement or auctioned off to the highest bidder.

This study focuses on the 18-year period from 1872-1890 when Yellowstone's future was defined, and the national park idea took its first shaky steps. I analyze several key sources to assess the early evolution of the national park idea, and compare three different viewpoints of Yellowstone and how they changed through time. These sources include published discovery reports by the members of three exploration and survey parties into Yellowstone, reports and correspondence from the park's early superintendents and assistants, local and national newspaper and magazine accounts, published and unpublished accounts by Yellowstone's first visitors,

early guidebooks, Interior Department reports, and debate in the U.S. Congress.

From these sources I reconstruct the experiences and perceptions of three different groups of people who were key to the development of the national park idea. They are: 1. the locals experiencing Yellowstone, acting as explorers, tourists and entrepreneurs; 2. the custodians of Yellowstone – park superintendents and their assistants; and 3. the national public and distant federal caretakers, including Congress, the Interior Department, Park advocates and American tourists. By assessing the different experiences and perceptions of the three viewpoints, and how they changed over time, I then reconstruct the process that occurred during those 18 years that allowed Yellowstone to go from vague idea to an established national icon.

Rationale

There have been several studies of the historical events surrounding the establishment and early management of the Park (Haines 1977, Chittenden 1920, Hampton 1971, Bartlett 1985), yet none focus specifically on people's perceptions of this new national park concept and the processes that led to its evolution within this early window of Yellowstone's history. While historians have looked broadly at the people and events that came together though time, historical *geographers* ask questions about the meanings of the

Yellowstone *landscape* and the national park idea. What values were being protected in this first national park? What were people supposed to do in a national park? What was an acceptable level of development? Were roads adequate to transport tourists to hotels, or should a railroad have been built to all the points of interest? Should mining and logging be allowed within a national park? What level of protection should Yellowstone's wildlife be allowed to have? What type of management was necessary to protect the park and cater to tourists?

This research will help us with the continuing search to understand our evolving relationship with Yellowstone. As park historian Paul Schullery notes, "We did not create Yellowstone National Park one day early in 1872. Instead, on that day, we embarked upon an ongoing process that is based upon our changing attitudes about our relationship with nature" (Schullery 1997). This thesis should also contribute to our understanding of western landscapes and perceptions that have had an important impact on American culture. The vast spaces, wilderness and unique geological features of Yellowstone and the West represented the potential and originality Americans associated with their young country in the late nineteenth century. When asked today what natural treasures they value most, Americans invariably include the scenery of the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, Yosemite and other western landscapes. This wild western landscape "clearly

plays an important role in the maintenance of a national culture" (Hyde 1990, 6).

Finally, this research helps us to understand the national park idea in a broader sense, looking at the process that had to occur for the idea to work. Few today would argue the importance of our national parks, however the debate over how they should be managed continues to be heated. Recent examples include a Canadian company's proposed gold mine on the borders of Yellowstone, the continuing debate over wolf reintroduction, the killing of the Park's bison when they leave Yellowstone each winter, and the controversy over snowmobile use. My research is valuable to this debate because we can't fully understand our national parks unless we go to the origins of the idea – the intellectual roots and field testing of the national park idea.

Conceptual Framework

At the heart of this thesis is the study of landscapes, and more precisely, analyzing past perceptions of the Yellowstone landscape and the national park idea by using content analysis. Before beginning a study of the evolving Yellowstone landscape, we must first consider how the locals, caretakers and national public might have reacted differently to what they experienced in the Park. Donald Meinig has described some of the different values we place on

the landscape (Meinig 1976). People viewing a landscape are not capable of seeing the same thing, Meinig suggests, because of one central problem: "... any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes, but what lies within our heads." The locals, caretakers and national public had no choice but to view Yellowstone within the framework of their own individual experiences and beliefs.

Meinig (1976) lists 10 different landscape categories people might identify with, and several fit well within this study. Meinig's "Landscape as Nature" category suggests how explorers and tourists described their first encounter with the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone – the power of the moving water of the falls and the deafening roar and vibrant colors made humans appear minuscule and ephemeral. This theme is an old and deeply rooted view that separates humans from nature. Several of Yellowstone's superintendents also embraced Meinig's "Landscape as Habitat" theme, where through guided development of the Park, humans could produce the "harmony of man and nature." Many supporters of Yellowstone viewed the "Landscape as Problem," believing that through our scientific ability and proper management of a national park, the unique geothermal features and region's diminishing wildlife could be saved from unwise human activities. Both local and national entrepreneurs clearly saw Yellowstone in the framework of "Landscape as Wealth," assigning a future value to themselves from much of what they saw. And finally, for Yellowstone to make the leap

from obscurity to national icon, the American public had to view it as a "Landscape of Ideology," where the landscape becomes a symbol of the values, the governing ideas and underlying philosophies of their culture.

Yi-Fu Tuan also writes about cultural prejudices and perceptions in *Topophilia* (1974), and compares the different viewpoints of native (local) versus visitor. The visitor's viewpoint is simply stated, while the native's viewpoint can be expressed only with difficulty and "indirectly, through behavior, local tradition, lore and myth" (Tuan 1974, 63). While the visitor's evaluation is essentially aesthetic, judging by appearance, the native has a complex attitude derived from his immersion in the totality of his environment. The visitor's judgment is often valid because it is a fresh perspective and often perceives merits and defects in an environment no longer visible to the resident (Tuan 1974, 65).

Studying popular publications, such as magazines and newspapers, can provide important clues about assessing a region's identity. James Shortridge (1989) effectively used perceptions recorded in articles and editorials in popular magazines to define the Middle West cultural region and assess its meaning in American culture. To the careful reader, Shortridge suggests, the tone and words of popular writings can reveal established and new ideas, as well as differences between majority and minority views, and the tensions that separate regional cultures (Shortridge 1989, 6). Many traditional regional studies measure the presence or absence of religious or other cultural

elements, yet these studies cannot adequately measure all the essences and moods that make up a region's character.

Content analysis is a particularly important tool for the historical geographer, providing evidence of how persons in the past perceived reality. Ralph Brown (Brown 1968) was one of the first geographers to effectively focus on the "geography of the past," reconstructing the character of regions and landscapes from original documents. Brown emphasized the need to see geographical areas in the past as contemporaries saw them, for "men at all times have been influenced quite as much by beliefs as by facts" (Meinig 1978, 1187).

Magazines and newspapers played an important role portraying the character of Yellowstone to a large national audience who had not visited the Park. Americans in the late 1800s were fascinated by the still-unfolding frontier of the American West. The fantastic features and potential for adventure in Yellowstone made it an attractive topic for the national magazines. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* printed dozens of articles about the West during this time period and boasted a monthly circulation of between 100,000 and 200,000 readers. As Wyckoff and Nash (1994) noted in their study of western images published in *Harper's*, the images provide a "unique look at how a rapidly changing landscape was being portrayed to a generation of armchair travelers hungry to know more about the region." They discovered that images before 1870 emphasized the extraordinary

scenery without human intervention. After 1870 and the arrival of the Transcontinental railway, the imagery focused explicitly upon the experience of the western tourist (Wyckoff and Nash 1994, 14).

In her study of the western landscape from 1820 to 1920, Anne Hyde also noted the heightened interest the country had for the Far West during the late 1800s. She noted that "Because of the publicity the tourists received and the reams of material they published, and because of the heightened attention given the West in this period, the impressions profoundly affected national ideas about the region" (Hyde 1990, 9). Hyde also argues that the battle over the development and meaning of national parks, which is at the heart of this thesis, exemplified the significance that the Far West had taken on, both economically and culturally (Hyde 1990, 297).

Geographer Judith Meyer (1996) recently studied the cultural evolution of Yellowstone by studying 121 years of literature written about the Park, with a heavy focus on the discovery accounts. Meyer identified six themes that appeared consistently and prominently in the literature: (1) The beauty or aesthetic qualities of the landscape; (2) the uniqueness of the place; (3) tourism and recreation; (4) the park as wilderness; (5) the democratic nature of the park experience; and (6) the park as a place for education (Meyer 1996, 10). Meyer argues that Yellowstone's sense of place grew from the specific words, metaphors and meanings attached to the Park by the discovery accounts and

the first generations of visitors (Meyer 1996, 9, 31). These themes were all well represented in my sources.

Meyer also notes six locations or features within Yellowstone that stand out in the literature: Mammoth Hot Springs, Tower Falls, Old Faithful and other geothermal features, the Grand Canyon and Upper and Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River, and Yellowstone Lake (Meyer 1996, 53). Meyer argues that the explorers' descriptions of these features published in the discovery accounts, and then copied in numerous guidebooks, was significant in establishing them as major points of interest. However my research of the local resident's role cutting trails and experiencing Yellowstone's major features, suggests that perhaps Meyer overestimated the influences of the discovery accounts. The discovery accounts and guidebooks no doubt influenced thousands of national visitors arriving on Northern Pacific trains after 1883, but by then locals had already established the Grand Rounds to all the major attractions. Locals probably read the discovery accounts, but were much better informed about Yellowstone by reading their local newspapers.

My conclusions about the growing importance of Yellowstone as a refuge for the region's disappearing wildlife also diverges from Meyer's work. She states "... concern for the park's wildlife does not appear in historical accounts during the park's first few decades, probably since wildlife was still considered a culinary treat as much as a visual one, and because wildlife was plentiful throughout the western states" (Meyer 1996, 20). However, my

research clearly shows the increasing importance placed on wildlife, from the viewpoint of locals, custodians and the national public. By 1879 wildlife was disappearing at an alarming rate in the region, especially the bison, and by 1887 both Wyoming and Montana had laws prohibiting the year-round hunting of game.

My research also offers insights into the significance of early Yellowstone marketing efforts. A recent popular topic with historians has focused on the commercialization of the Yellowstone experience in Northern Pacific marketing ventures, and in the photography and artwork of William Henry Jackson and Thomas Moran. Chris Magoc, in his dissertation *The Selling of Wonderland*, takes a very critical view of Yellowstone as a "packaged, consumable product" (Magoc 1992, 4). Joan Zenzen, in her dissertation, *Promoting National Parks: Images of the West in the American Imagination*, also takes a critical look at how the Northern Pacific Railroad, the federal government and the promoters of Yellowstone "sold" Yellowstone to a consumer-oriented society (Zenzen 1997).

Yellowstone historian Paul Schullery responded to some of these claims in *Searching for Yellowstone* (Schullery 1997), and my research supports his conclusions. Responding to Magoc, Schullery argues that while it is evident that the railroad shaped the Yellowstone experience, and that tourism was the product of highly effective marketing, there is a great deal of question about what the packaging meant to the average visitor (Schullery

1997, 99). Critics of the marketing of Yellowstone have never produced another alternative to educating visitors about the Park's features, or to getting large groups of tourists through the Park without damaging the resources. Visitors during the Park's first decade hunted to feed themselves, cut firewood, camped wherever they wanted and broke off samples of fragile geothermal features. This behavior demonstrated that Yellowstone's resources could not afford this "highly individual approach to its enjoyment" (Schullery 1997, 101).

My research shows that Magoc's arguments are overstated. By looking at the local's experience in Yellowstone (Chapter 2), we know that the pattern of human use in the Park had already been established by local tourists before Northern Pacific marketing began. Locals describing and creating the first images of Yellowstone were not influenced by the Northern Pacific or by government marketing attempts. By studying the local tourist's experience and that of the national visitor, we also know that each person experienced the Park differently. Visitors came to the Park with their own perceptions of the landscape, and to assume Northern Pacific brochures radically altered their experience is to sell human nature short. This assumption also sells Yellowstone short. As we see with the steadily climbing national tourist numbers, claims made by the Northern Pacific would not have held up if Yellowstone was not equal to its reputation.

Zenzen argues that artists, photographers, corporations and the national government promoted the national parks to "encourage middle-and upper-class Americans to hold a special and long-lasting attachment to these natural landscapes" (Zenzen 1997, 1). She calls this campaign of nationalism the "national park myth." However, my research reveals several flaws in her argument. Zenzen used the example of Jackson's photograph of the Hayden Expedition on horseback along the shore of Yellowstone Lake. "Jackson removes any suggestion of the presence of Native American guides who might have aided Hayden in finding an accessible entrance to Yellowstone, thereby emphasizing the ideas of conquest and appropriation," Zenzen states (Zenzen 1997, 119). My research indicates that Native Americans were not present during the survey, and played no role in guiding any of the expeditions into Yellowstone. Jackson photographed the survey party as it existed, and it is unlikely his larger goal was to promote continued conquest of the West.

In another example, Zenzen takes Thomas Moran to task for his watercolor painting of the Upper Falls of the Yellowstone, because he painted the figure of a white explorer at the base of the falls. She argues "Instead of depicting a Native American, who would have frequented this region, Moran includes a White, supposedly of American heritage, to represent appropriation of this landscape by the United States" (Zenzen 1997, 136). Again, Zenzen overstated the role of Indians in Yellowstone. My research

shows that with the exception of the Nez Perce run through the Park in 1877, the expedition parties and first tourists and custodians had virtually no contact with Indians. While armed conflict with Indians was common in the surrounding states of Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, the government did not push Indian inhabitants out of Yellowstone when the Park was established, and there was very little conflict within the Park. Several native tribes used Yellowstone on occasion, but there is growing evidence that Yellowstone was seen by most or all of the region's tribes as neutral ground (Schullery 1997, 29). Moran was probably trying to capture the incredible image of the Upper Falls, using one of the expedition members for scale. Zenzen falls short of convincing that Moran had a hidden agenda of promoting American's conquest of Indian lands in the West.

John Sears is also critical of the marketing of Yellowstone, although the idea plays a minor role in his study of American tourist attractions in the nineteenth century (Sears 1989). Sears calls the Yellowstone experience in the 1880s "curiously artificial" because of the Wild West theatrics of marketing (Sears 1989, 181). As with Magoc's argument, my research shows this claim sells human nature and Yellowstone short. However, other aspects of Sears' research of Yellowstone tourism parallels my own findings. Sears argues that part of the "sacredness" of places such as Yellowstone is rooted in the belief that they have special health-giving powers (Sears 1989, 176). My work also shows strong ties between early visitors and the restorative qualities

connected with Yellowstone's hot springs. In addition, Sears noted the changing value of Yellowstone's wildlife, which has not been noted by many scholars. My research supports this, showing clearly that Yellowstone's role as a wildlife refuge became a dominant issue as the region's wildlife came under increasing threat.

The Historical Context

Before exploring what Yellowstone came to mean to the American people, we first have to "understand the audience for which such promotion was intended" (Demars 1991, 11). We must look at how the nation first perceived the western landscape unfolding yearly before their eyes, and the country's evolving perceptions of wilderness.

In the late 1700s and early 1800s the still-young United States had proved it could stand against a world power during the American Revolution and the War of 1812, but Americans were still living in the cultural shadow of Europe with its rich history and ruins. The country had few examples of literature, art, music or historic tradition. American travelers to Europe loved the sense of human past where everything was old (Hyde 1990, 15). As Americans began expanding westward, they discovered that some of their cultural shortcomings might be solved with nature, thus creating antiquity through landscape (Runte 1997, 41). Writers such as Edmund Burke (Burke

1958) described the sublimity of nature, where a landscape could inspire great size, power, solitude, noise and silence. Wild, jagged and strange landscapes began to have aesthetic values, and the American West boasted huge mountains and trees, vast rivers and waterfalls and ancient geologic features – all of the elements that thrilled romantic writers and travelers (Hyde 1990, 18).

For the first explorers entering the “Far West” from the more subdued environments of the East, the landscape was overpowering in every respect (Runte 1997, 5). The writers and imagemakers were not prepared to describe this new landscape with terms and aesthetic values born in Europe and the East. But by the end of the 19th Century, As Anne Hyde notes, Americans had learned to describe the varied scenery, and the language and imagery they created “forever altered American aesthetic values” (Hyde 1990, 9). The process of grappling with a language suitable for western landscape helped to “forge a particularly American culture” (Hyde 1990, 9). The specific words, metaphors and meanings they attached to the region – provided the seeds from which Yellowstone’s sense of place grew (Meyer 1996, 31).

Wilderness to American settlers of the early colonial period was viewed as a threat, “a place to be reclaimed and redeemed from the predations of Indians and demons” (Tuan 1974, 63). But the same wilderness that had terrified Americans for nearly three centuries no longer seemed to be a threat by the mid 1800s. “The wilderness, no longer seen as an enemy threatening to

engulf a fragile civilization, suddenly attained new status. Historians, philosophers and politicians gave the wilderness of the continent credit for providing the nation with character, strength and inventiveness" (Hyde 1990, 215).

The West emerging in the last three decades of the 19th Century was a place of "wonders and curiosities in which fact and fiction, history and theater, actual and staged events blurred together" (Sears 1989, 157). It was expressed in wild west shows, dime novels, the paintings of Alfred Bierstadt and Thomas Moran and the fiction of Mark Twain and Bret Harte. No place came to embody the strange, exotic and even grotesque qualities of the West better than Yellowstone.

Yellowstone and its surrounding wildlands were some of the last areas discovered and mapped in the lower 48 states and would not be fully known until more than 60 years after Lewis and Clark stood at the headwaters of the Missouri River near present-day Three Forks, Montana (Chittenden 1920, 97). While John Colter was thought to be the first white man to set foot in Yellowstone, it was not until 1869 that the Folsom-Cook-Peterson Expedition made the first tentative exploration of the Park (Early 1984, 77).

Yellowstone's harsh climate played a role in keeping the region hidden from the world. In 1860 Capt. William F. Raynolds of the U.S. Corps of Topographical Engineers was given the mission of finding a route from the Wind River Mountains of Wyoming into the Yellowstone country. If heavy

snow in the mountains had not blocked his path, Raynolds would have substantiated the Yellowstone rumors nine years earlier. If Yellowstone had been "officially" discovered in 1860, before Yosemite was established, and with a Congress embroiled in civil war, Yellowstone's future could have been very different.

With Jim Bridger as his guide, Raynolds led his party up Wind River to its head, where on June 7 they realized there could be no possible crossing of the Continental Divide into Yellowstone because of snow. Not to be turned so easily from their task, the explorers found a pass to the west (they named Union Pass) and then dropped into a drainage of the Gros Ventre River. It was here that the party lost a precious week to snow drifts, and with the seasoned advice of Bridger, gave up their hopes of reaching Yellowstone. Raynolds wrote about his decision to turn back:

It did not require long to decide that further progress was impracticable. From the southward we had already passed over ten or fifteen miles of snow . . . nothing was in sight but pines and snow . . . a venture into that country would result in the certain loss of our animals, if not the whole party. (Haines 1977, 1:87)

If Raynolds had mapped Yellowstone and described the incredible geothermal features in 1860, Yellowstone could have seen a much different future. Historian Hiram Chittenden (1920) argued that the federal government, soon to be embroiled in the Civil War, was not yet ready to contemplate protection of natural resources for aesthetic values. Raynolds'

report would have prompted more exploration and the region could have been settled before any protection was put in place, creating a "deplorable" future for the Park (Chittenden 1920, 100). The lack of any detailed information about Yellowstone's interior was also responsible for the large size of its protected boundaries. U.S. Geological Survey leader Ferdinand Hayden, who led the first "official" expedition into Yellowstone 11 years after Reynolds, pushed Congress to protect such a huge area believing that more geothermal features probably existed in the unexplored western sections of the park (Magoc 1992, 41). Hayden was wrong about additional geothermal features, but today we enjoy the benefits of the larger boundaries.

Trappers were aware of Yellowstone in the early 1800s, but trapping was marginal because of the heavy snow, and the mountains were only passable from June through September. Competitiveness also kept trappers quiet about where they were working (Chittenden 1920, 98). The lure of gold brought miners to the Yellowstone region in the late 1850s and early 1860s, and their stories helped to fill in more details about the region (Schullery 1997, 39), however the stories were not widely known or published.

Much of the reason behind Yellowstone's late discovery and isolation is due to its unbelievable features. Jim Bridger returned from Yellowstone telling stories of exploding geysers and mud volcanoes, but the stories were discounted because of the tall tales Bridger was known to tell (Hampton 1971, 22). Claims made by members of the first organized expedition, the Folsom

Expedition in 1869, were not immediately believed. Folsom and Cook's account was rejected by the *New York Tribune*, *Scribner's* and *Harpers Monthly* as unreliable. Nathaniel Langford, who wrote about his expedition of 1870, was branded by one reviewer the "champion liar of the Northwest" (Hampton 1971, 21; Tilden 1968, 92). It was the credibility of U.S. Geological Survey leader Ferdinand Hayden and his expedition in 1871 (Figure 2) that finally substantiated the rumors. In October of 1871 the *New York Times* wrote "... official narrative of the Hayden expedition must be deemed needful before we can altogether accept the stories of wonder hardly short of fairy tales in the astounding phenomena they describe," (Hales 1988, 106).

Hayden's official report of his expedition, combined with William Henry Jackson's photographs of the region and Thomas Moran's paintings, convinced Congress to protect Yellowstone (Runte 1997, 14; Hyde 1990, 197), yet the national park idea did not begin with Yellowstone's establishment. Several scholars have researched the origins of parks, going back to French Norman parks, and the emergence of the first parks and cemeteries in North America in Boston in the 1830s (Haines 1977, 1:157-58). Noted artist George Catlin suggested a "nation's park" to prevent the extinction of American Indians and bison in 1832 and Ralph Waldo Emerson recommended "the interminable forests should become graceful parks, for use and delight" of the people (Hampton 1971, 7-8).

Figure 2. Hayden's Geological Survey

A member of Ferdinand Hayden's pack train from the 1871 Geological Survey of Yellowstone measures distances within the Park with an odometer. Photograph by William Henry Jackson, 1871. National Park Service.



In 1832 Congress authorized the governor of the Territory of Arkansas to lease four acres surrounding a salt springs to be "reserved for the future disposal of the United States," yet what is today Hot Springs National Park was typical of parks of that time period – a highly commercialized urban plot set aside for weary city dwellers (Hampton 1971, 11). The commercialization of Niagara Falls in New York, also played a role in the later protection of areas like Yosemite in California and Yellowstone. Niagara was widely recognized in the early 1800s as America's most significant natural feature, but by the 1830s hucksters and private developers had acquired the best overlooks of the falls and created a carnival-like atmosphere. European visitors condemned the commercialization of Niagara, and it eventually became a national embarrassment. "In the fate of Niagara Falls, Americans found a compelling reason to give preservation more than a passing thought" (Runte 1997, 5).

The Niagara experience led to the preservation of Yosemite in 1864, granting California two tracts of land for "retention of the park for public use, resort and recreation." A debate among historians for many years has attempted to settle the question of which was the world's first national park. Runte makes the point that Yosemite was the first national park in everything but name (Runte 1997, 34). As California was a state, Congress left management of its resources with state government, so technically it was not a national park. With Wyoming and Montana still territories in 1872, the national government was left with Yellowstone's administration. While

Yosemite was not established as a "national" park in 1864, it clearly did set a precedent for reserving land strictly for non-utilitarian purposes. (Hampton 1971, 10).

It is also important to touch briefly on some of the literature written about how Yellowstone came to be set aside as a park. Until refuted by historians, for many years the National Park Service promoted the idea that Nathaniel Langford and a few of his expedition members cooked up the idea of a national park while sitting around the campfire in Yellowstone without any outside influences (Zenzen 1997, 35). This campfire myth, as Zenzen describes it, began to fall apart after historians discovered that Langford was on the payroll of the Northern Pacific during and after his Yellowstone expedition and had obvious economic interests. The railroad had much to gain with a protected tourist attraction near the future route of its rail lines.

Runte has made the "worthless lands" argument, suggesting the only reason Yellowstone was set aside is because of its apparent lack of valuable resources. As evidence he used language in the Congressional debate when sponsors of the Yellowstone legislation assured their peers that there was nothing to lose in the bill's passage because the region was worthless for resource extraction or settlement (Runte 1997, 50). Yet he overstates the argument, not recognizing that sometimes it is better strategy to argue what something is not, rather than lobby for its positive points.

The worthless lands argument was merely a political construct to rally support for the bill. "It was not the general public's attitude toward the park, nor was it the public's justification for removing Yellowstone from settlement," argues Judith Meyer (Meyer 1996, 49-50). "To the majority of the park's public, Yellowstone was not worthless; it was prized beyond measure." In her recent dissertation, Joan Zenzen (1997) is also critical of Runte's worthless lands theory. She argued that it fails to adequately take into account the connection between America's late 19th Century "explosive industrialization and its concomitant growth in consumption and tourism" (Zenzen 1997).

Despite the arguments over which national park was first, why it happened and who should get credit for the idea, it is important to note that there was no single system of values associated with the national park idea. In his treatment of early tourism in Yosemite, Stanford Demars makes the point that "the ways people have reacted toward, utilized, and sought to modify the environments in which they have lived have been largely a function of cultural prejudices and value systems" (Demars 1991, 5).

We must also look at the role of tourists in the evolving national park idea. Visitors and the tourist industry have always had a symbiotic relationship with the national parks and tourists played a critical role in the early development of both Yosemite and Yellowstone. Once they had a roof over their heads, the priority for managers of both parks was cutting trails and

roads, and building accommodations for visitors. The supporters of Yellowstone did not envision a park where wilderness could be preserved untouched and roadless – an idea popular today. Early managers saw protecting the natural resources and building networks of roads and visitor lodges as compatible.

John Sears argues that successful tourism demands a population with money and leisure, adequate transportation and conditions of “reasonable safety and comfort.” The eastern transportation revolution in the 1830s had encouraged the growth of a prosperous middle class, creating a body of tourists (Sears 1989, 1,4). By the 1850s tourism in the U.S. was well established both as a cultural activity and as an industry (Demars 1991, 11; Sears 1989, 123) and by 1860 the American economy ranked third in riches after Britain and France (Early 1990, 172). When Yellowstone entered the picture in 1872, it had a body of wealthy tourists to attract, but was not yet “reasonably safe,” and “comfortable transportation” had to wait 11 years until the Northern Pacific Railroad reached the park.

For Yellowstone and Yosemite there was also an evolution of both the type of tourist and the visitor experience. The most noticeable changes followed the tracks of the Transcontinental railroad breaching the country in 1869, and the Northern Pacific reaching an area just north of Yellowstone in 1883. The railroads “opened the floodgates” of tourists (Hyde 1990, 154). Initially, only the very wealthy could afford to travel to the Far West on a

train, with a package deal costing roughly \$1,200 from a major city in the East (Hyde 1990, 108). But as railroad fares fell, and American's urban areas grew, "clerks, bureaucrats and others of modest means were able to go on excursions," and as a result, by 1885 tourism became more commercial (Sears 1989, 10).

Another of Sears' requirements for tourism is a "body of images and descriptions – a mythology of unusual things to see – to excite people's imaginations and induce them to travel" (Sears 1989, 1). Yellowstone's imagemakers, primarily Thomas Moran (Figure 3) and William Henry Jackson, offered important visual proof of a region that since the 1830s had been the stuff of rumors. Yet their work went far beyond that, actually redefining the way Americans viewed the region. Moran scholar Joni Kinsey describes the transformation that occurred during the lobbying for Yellowstone legislation in 1872 after Moran and Jackson's pictures were made available:

Within just a few months the region was transformed from a kind of hell on Earth to a spectacular wonderland. Tones of reverence and awe replaced the earlier satanic references. What had been perceived as distant, sinister and hellish places before 1870, through his (Moran) portrayals, became places of magnificence and wonder that could stand as important symbols of America's uniqueness. (Kinsey 1990, 34)

Despite the initial wave of public interest and the eventual success of the Yellowstone experiment, this significance was far from apparent during the Park's first few years. In fact, Yellowstone was virtually ignored by

Figure 3. Thomas Moran's Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone

Thomas Moran's paintings, combined with the discovery accounts of three exploration parties, convinced Congress to set aside Yellowstone as the world's first national park. 1872. National Park Service.



Congress for the first six years of its existence. The Act setting aside Yellowstone was vague and provided no structure or funding for its administration. The Interior Secretary was made responsible for protecting the park from "injury or despoilment," yet there were no specific laws for governing the region, no specified punishment for enforcing rules established by the Secretary, and no appropriations to carry out enforcement, road building or even pay the salary of the park's first superintendent (Hampton 1971, 32). Nathaniel Langford, Yellowstone's first volunteer superintendent, would only visit the park twice in almost five years. It was six years after the Park's establishment, in June of 1878, that Congress set aside \$10,000 to "protect, preserve and improve" the Park.

This lack of attention from Washington, D.C., implied ignorance of this remote wildland resource. Some in Congress believed lease money from concessions would pay for administration and needed improvements. They didn't realize the nearest railroad was still more than 500 miles from Yellowstone, that much of the Park was nearly impassable wilderness, and that roads and bridges would have to be built before tourists could reach "Wonderland" (Chittenden 1920, 107). Also delaying Yellowstone's debut to the public en masse was the national financial crash of 1873, which halted all railroad building for six years (Tilden 1968, 76).

While the locals may not have fully understood the potential of a national park in its first few years, they did see an opportunity to make

money, and were quick to fill the void created by an inattentive government, building toll roads and flimsy hotels. Locals were also quick to petition the Interior Department with a number of economic schemes, including a steamboat service on Yellowstone Lake, which was eventually built and failed miserably (Chittenden 1920, 117). Suggestions for what Yellowstone should become included a national observatory, forest institute, national swimming school, race grounds, national rowing club, botanical gardens, zoological gardens, veteran's home and health "clinique."

Clearly, few federal decision makers or members of the public knew exactly what Yellowstone Park was initially. But during this key period from 1872 until 1890 the national park idea was field tested in Yellowstone. Early park managers and personnel were literally experimenting as they went along, but eventually found a system that worked and would later evolve to become the National Park Service. It was during these critical early years that Park managers first fought off monopolistic economic interests (the Northern Pacific Railroad), and grappled with finding the balance of development versus preservation – a topic that still inspires heated debate (Runte 1997; Bartlett 1985; Hampton 1971). Through their experiences visiting the Park, the American public would also help define the "character" of Yellowstone and the national park concept itself.

Sources

The Yellowstone perspective of the local resident is studied primarily through two local newspapers, the *Bozeman Avant Courier* and the *Livingston Enterprise*. The Bozeman newspaper is useful because it was published during the entire 18-year study period. The Livingston newspaper began publishing in 1883, but was very thorough in its coverage of Yellowstone, which the new community saw as its train ticket to fame and fortune.

The newspapers offer a variety of different viewpoints from within and outside of their respective communities. Editorials offered the editor's views on a number of issues affecting Yellowstone, as well as suggesting what their readers were learning about the Park. Letters to the editor provided locals with a forum for critiquing the management of Yellowstone, or a colorful description of a recent adventure in Wonderland. Advertisements by local merchants demonstrated the economic ties between Yellowstone and its gateway communities.

The discovery accounts, the first widely published descriptions of Yellowstone appearing in national newspapers and magazines from 1869 to 1872, played a large role in determining the public's early perceptions of the

Park (Meyer 1996, 31). Descriptions of Yellowstone written by members of the Folsom-Cook-Peterson expedition, Washburn-Doane expeditions and Hayden survey were copied by authors of early guidebooks and then rapidly disseminated to a much broader audience (Meyer 1996, 42).

For reconstructing the perceptions of Yellowstone's custodians, the archives of Yellowstone Park's library contain the letters of early superintendents to the Interior Secretary, describing the conditions, goals and accomplishments of their mission in Yellowstone. These seldom-used records are rich in detail of the personal experiences and opinions of these early managers. Published superintendent's reports, although more formal, also paint a descriptive picture of the field testing that went on and often include brief reports of the Park's gamekeeper and other assistants.

Sources for the section on Yellowstone's national visitors include books published by some of the more literary early visitors. Some are better known, such as the Earl of Dunraven's *The Great Divide: Travels in the Upper Yellowstone in the Summer of 1874*, and others are more obscure, such as Edwin Stanley's *Rambles in Yellowstone*. The accounts of national visitors also appeared in the pages of local newspapers, national magazines, such as *Forest and Stream*, and national newspapers, such as the *New York Times*. Unpublished accounts, usually found in journals, diaries or letters to relatives, often give unguarded opinions about the early Park experience and offer the unedited views of early Yellowstone visitors.

A large variety of guidebooks showed tourists how to get to Yellowstone, and what to do when they got there. Immediately following Yellowstone's establishment in 1872 publishers hurried to produce guidebooks. The Northern Pacific began publishing its *Wonderland* series of guide books in 1883, which initially focused only on Yellowstone, but came to describe travels to the entire Northwest served by the railroad. While other guidebooks were descriptive of Yellowstone, the *Wonderland* series were sales brochures and very self-promotional.

The primary sources for determining the perception of Congress are debates published in the *Congressional Record* and the *Globe*, which preceded it, and federal agency documents indexed in *Poore's Table and Index*, the *Checklist of United States Public Documents*, *Ames Comprehensive Index of the United States Government* and the *U.S. Serial Set Index*. The Interior Department annual reports demonstrate Yellowstone's evolution from minor mention to national icon. National publications, such as the *New York Times*, *Scribner's*, *Harper's Monthly*, *Forest and Stream*, *Nature*, *American Naturalist*, the *American Journal of Science*, *Overland Monthly* and *Lippincotts Magazine* are also useful because they influenced Congress and the Interior Department. *Forest and Stream*, a key player in pushing for protective legislation for Yellowstone, published 315 articles about the Park during its first 18 years.

THE LOCAL'S EXPERIENCE WITH YELLOWSTONE

Yellowstone's neighbors in 1872, primarily Montanans because access from Wyoming was extremely difficult, were a diverse group and highly literate. They came from many different parts of the country – Southerners who had fled the Civil War or Reconstruction, Yankees from New England, and Midwesterners looking for opportunities in business or farming and ranching (Bartlett 1985, 11). The locals witnessed the evolving role of Yellowstone from a mysterious and sometimes dangerous region to a functioning national park and tourist attraction. Locals were also key participants in an exploratory phase of Yellowstone, ground truthing rumors of the spectacular geothermal features in three different expeditions. Then in the role of tourist, locals vied for many firsts within the park before roads and railroads made "Wonderland" available to the masses. Locals were challenged by Yellowstone's mountain terrain and fear of armed conflict with Native Americans, but cut trails that later established the "grand rounds" through the Park, reaching all the "points of interest."

The promise of the tourist trade was like the lure of gold for many local entrepreneurs who quickly established businesses and schemes, and when Congress refused to fund the Park, they raised money to build park roads and

accommodations. When a railroad was proposed through the wildlife-rich but geyser-poor Lamar Valley, locals wrestled with the question of development versus preservation, giving us insight into what values they thought were being protected in a national park. When threats to Yellowstone surfaced – the slaughter of game or vandalism – the locals became vocal critics, helping to win needed protection from Congress.

The Yellowstone perspective of the local resident is studied primarily through two local newspapers, the *Bozeman Avant Courier* and the *Livingston Enterprise*. I searched 18 years of the *Avant Courier* to find 183 articles or editorials about Yellowstone. The *Enterprise* began publishing in 1883, and was very thorough in its coverage of Yellowstone. I found 129 articles or editorials about Yellowstone published in the *Enterprise* between 1883 and 1890. I also read 20 articles published in the *Helena Herald* between 1870 and 1872, and searched three years of the *Cheyenne Daily Leader* (Wyoming), from 1872 to 1874, but found virtually no Yellowstone articles.

News coverage of Yellowstone was similar in the *Enterprise* and *Avant Courier*. Both newspapers covered Yellowstone well, informing locals about day-to-day events taking place in the Park, visits by dignitaries, and publishing travel accounts of local and national visitors. The newspapers often made predictions, usually wrong, about the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad, or the huge number of tourists that would soon be arriving. There was an overriding economic flavor to much of the coverage, and many

of the stories described how famous Yellowstone would become once roads and hotels were built, and what that meant financially for the young communities.

Studying these early newspapers gives valuable insight into what the locals were doing in Yellowstone, what they thought about the Park, and what they were reading about the Park. During this time period the local newspaper was the only source of news within a community, and because of this the editor carried considerable local political power. Newspapers during the late 1800s had strong political ties, and were shameless boosters of their community and development. The careful reader has to be aware of this when assessing the coverage.

I also read 40 different unpublished travel accounts recommended by historians at Montana State University's Special Collections and Yellowstone National Park's Archives. I chose two of the unpublished accounts as examples in this section. The diaries of Mrs. T.H. Vincent (Vincent 1882), and N.A. Switzer (Switzer 1876) helped to illustrate how the local resident's trip to Yellowstone was different than that of the national visitor.

As I read more than 300 newspaper articles about Yellowstone and the unpublished travel accounts, I evaluated them using a checklist of questions and terms to reconstruct the locals' involvement with Yellowstone, and to discover their perceptions of a national park. I chose articles that helped answer the following questions: What was the locals' actual involvement in

Yellowstone, as an explorer, tourist, entrepreneur or critic? Where were they traveling and experiencing Yellowstone? Did they value the Park for its economic benefits, its restorative qualities, its landscape and scenery, or for its wildlife? How did the locals describe Yellowstone? What did they see for the future of Yellowstone?

Locals as Explorers

Montana residents were major participants in three important early discovery expeditions into the Yellowstone country: the Folsom-Cook-Peterson Expedition of 1869, Gen. Henry D. Washburn's expedition in 1870, and Ferdinand Hayden's expedition in 1871. These early explorations settled the rumors of explosive geysers and gurgling mud volcanoes, although it was difficult to convince a skeptical Eastern audience.

The first organized party to explore Yellowstone was the Folsom Expedition of 1869, which got off to a rocky start when Indian conflict created a shortage of troops at Ft. Ellis near Bozeman, Montana. Upon learning there would be no military escort, all but three of the party refused to go. The remaining amateur explorers were David E. Folsom, Charles W. Cook and William Peterson of Helena, Montana.

Although packing extremely light by necessity and lacking modern surveying and mapping equipment, the amateur members of the Folsom

expedition were careful observers during their journey, creating a map of their route through the park and even measuring the upper and lower falls of the Grand Canyon with a bail of twine and stick. Their estimate of the upper falls (115 feet) came remarkably close to the accepted measurement of 109 feet for that drop (Haines 1977, 1:98).

After returning to Helena, Folsom began telling friends about his journey. He was invited to speak to a group of Helena residents about his expedition, but so many people arrived at the meeting that Folsom was unwilling to tell the entire story. Folsom said "he did not wish to be regarded as a liar by those who were unacquainted with his reputation" (Langford 1905, xi). Folsom's reasoning may have been sound, as his written report of the trip was not immediately believed. Folsom and Cook's account was rejected by the *New York Tribune*, *Scribner's* and *Harpers Monthly* as unreliable. One magazine, the *Western Monthly Magazine* of Chicago, finally published their account in July of 1870. Although their story was not widely distributed or believed, the Folsom party was successful in creating the first relatively accurate map of Yellowstone, and Folsom passed on an idea to Henry D. Washburn that much of Yellowstone should be made public in some way and protected from settlement.

Washburn, newly appointed surveyor general of Montana Territory, led the next expedition the following year with Nathaniel Langford, who had been acting governor of Montana Territory. Despite their credentials in

Montana and a much better organized and equipped expedition, the explorers initially fared poorly with the eastern press. Langford wrote about the expedition but was branded by one reviewer the "champion liar of the Northwest" (Hampton 1971, 21; Tilden 1968, 92).

It was the exploits of Truman Everts, a Helena man who became lost during the expedition, that broke the ice with the eastern press. *Scribner's Monthly*, a popular and widely distributed magazine, devoted 17 pages to Everts' personal account called "Thirty-Seven Days of Peril" (Everts 1871). The eastern headlines, together with Langford's Northern Pacific-sponsored speaking engagements around the country, helped build support for legislation to have Yellowstone set aside as a national park.

Everts became separated from the expedition and lost his horse, leaving him with only the clothes on his back, two knives and a small opera glass. During his arduous 37-day walk out of Yellowstone he survived by eating thistle roots, and making fires using his opera glass and the sun. He was treed by a mountain lion, burned by hot springs and scalded by forest fires. When Everts was finally discovered by rescuers he was described as weighing only 50 pounds and was suffering from hallucinations from weakness and exhaustion:

By some process which I was too weak to solve, my arms, legs and stomach were transformed into so many traveling companions. Often for hours I would plod along conversing with these imaginary friends. Each had his peculiar wants which he expected me to supply. The stomach was importunate in his demand for a change of diet – complained incessantly of the

roots I fed him . . . I would try to silence him with promises, beg of him to wait a few days, and when this failed of the quiet I desired, as a sure result of negligence, our inability to reach home alive. The legs implored me for rest, and the arms complained that I gave them too much to do. Troublesome as they were, it was a pleasure to realize their presence. (Everts 1871, 13)

Everts ends his adventure story with an account of his rescue and recovery, and then makes a final plea for bringing civilization to Yellowstone's wonders and making them more available to the public:

In the course of events the time is not far distant when the wonders of the Yellowstone will be made accessible to all lovers of sublimity, grandeur and novelty in natural scenery, and its majestic waters become the abode of civilization and refinement; and when that arrives, I hope, in happier mood and under more auspicious circumstances, I hope to revisit scenes fraught for me with such thrilling interest . . . (Everts 1871, 17)

Everts became an instant folk hero who added more to the public awareness of Yellowstone than the expedition's official report. As Magoc (1992, 17-19) notes in his study of Yellowstone, "Everts' agony in Yellowstone is the ultimate Christian pilgrimage, complete with an evocation . . . and an initiation into the mysteries of what was destined to become a sacred place in American culture."

The combined efforts of local explorers and the credibility of U.S. Geological Survey leader Ferdinand Hayden and his expedition in 1871 finally substantiated the rumors. Together, the reports and descriptions brought back by locals from the three expeditions were often copied directly into early

guidebooks and were rapidly disseminated to a broad audience, serving as a template for the "evolution of the public's perception of place" in Yellowstone (Meyer 1996, 51).

Locals as Tourists

With all the publicity surrounding the expeditions and establishment of the Park, locals were fairly familiar with the incredible features of Yellowstone. Yet almost any trip to the park in the first few years was worthy of newspaper attention, especially if the writer claimed a first. "Mrs. Stone of Bozeman was the first lady that ever saw the geysers. Rah for Bozeman! She is the pioneer lady of the Upper Yellowstone," H.R.H wrote to the editor, published in the *Avant Courier* on Sept. 5, 1872. The author went on to say he intended to make an extended tour through the Park with a companion where they would "explore regions where white men have never traveled."

A year later the *Avant Courier* would defend the honors of first woman in the Park when the *Helena Herald* reported a Virginia City, Montana, woman was the first to enter Yellowstone. The *Avant Courier* called the Virginia City woman "a year too late to carry off the honors" and recounted Mrs. Stone's month-long trip "interviewing the curiosities of the Wonderland . . ." (*Avant Courier* 1873a). Others later made claims of being

the first to get a wagon to various places within the interior of the Park (*Avant Courier* 1884a).

When locals described Yellowstone, the preferred term was Wonderland, which carried through the entire 18-year period. The phrase was coined by the *Helena Daily Herald* in 1872, and inspired by *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, published in 1865, suggesting an unpredictable place where events occur illogically and sometimes alarmingly (Sears 1989, 165). A 21-year resident of Montana summed up an 1885 trip through Yellowstone in the typical language of the day:

In beauty, grandeur and unequalled curiosity, it so far surpasses general expectations as to almost paralyze every descriptive writer, every pen-portraiture, who attempts to describe these grandest and most gorgeous works of nature. For years we had read vividly descriptive accounts of interest to oral portraitures of the wonderful sights and freaks of nature daily displayed in the Yellowstone National Park, but we were utterly unprepared to realize the indescribable phenomenal results of this wonderful Wonderland. (*Avant Courier* 1885a)

Although Runte argued that the setting aside of Yellowstone was because of the country's need to compare majestic natural scenery to Europe's grand history of building castles and cathedrals, that seemed not the case with Yellowstone's locals. They preferred to compare Yellowstone to anything in the natural world.

A typical trip by locals to Yellowstone in the early 1870s meant weeks by horseback, with the inherent risks of wilderness travel in mountainous terrain. Between Bozeman and the northern boundary of Yellowstone, the

only human inhabitants were the Bottler brothers, who built a ranch (Figure 4) in 1868 near Emigrant Gulch north of present-day Gardiner, Montana.

Many of the early travel accounts involved being thrown from horses, being stranded afoot, caught in storms and other adventures of roughing it:

Major Manginnis, being *horse du combat*, the animal having bucked the Major off while going through the Grand Canyon, and the last seen of him (the horse) he was bucking over the range trying to free himself from the saddle. Two days search had failed to discover him. (*Avant Courier* 1874b)

Travel remained risky even after the construction of the first wagon roads.

Wagon accidents were often reported in the newspaper, including an incident when five Bozeman women overturned their wagon on the way to Yellowstone. "The ladies were considerably scratched and bruised and not a little frightened, but after taking care of the situation, indulged in a hearty laugh and concluded to proceed in their Journey" (*Avant Courier* 1880a).

Although risky, an early trip to Yellowstone was also an adventure to be savored. Camping out under the stars in Yellowstone was a way to escape from the city and the conventions of society, to "hie away to some sequestered spot in the mountains, where separated from the busy world and your wife and mother-in-law, you put in a week or so shooting at marks and fighting mosquitoes . . . and admiring nature unadorned, in the shape of rugged peaks, rotten pine trees and gurgling streams" (*Avant Courier* 1884b).

One difference in the way locals experienced Yellowstone, compared to the national visitors that arrived by train and then road coaches, was the

Figure 4. The Bottler Ranch

The earliest Yellowstone visitors usually spent the first night at the Bottler Ranch, founded in 1868 near Emigrant Gulch in the Yellowstone Valley north of present-day Gardiner, Montana. The Bottler brothers were the first settlers between Bozeman, Montana, and the present Yellowstone Park. Photograph by William Henry Jackson, 1871. National Park Service.



practice of hunting in the Park. Usually arriving by wagon or on horseback and camping the entire way, locals often caught fish and hunted grouse and big game for their meals. "At the creek we saw three deer and two antelope. Charlie and Alex McAllister, with their guns, started after them but failed to kill anything," wrote Mrs. T.H. Vincent of her Yellowstone camping trip (Vincent 1882). For some local visitors, hunting game in the Park was a big part of their trip as reflected in their diaries or journals. Unable or not willing to stop long enough to preserve the meat, some tourists kept only the hind quarters or choicest part of the big game animal, leaving the rest on the ground (Switzer 1876).

It is clear from the early descriptions and accounts of Yellowstone by locals that the geysers and hot springs were a key element attracting visitors (Figure 5). The wild country surrounding Yellowstone's geyser basins was familiar to the locals, who had no shortage of wilderness, but the geysers were unique to those who could not afford to travel to Iceland or New Zealand. The Park contains roughly 60 percent of the world's geysers, and the upper geyser basin has the greatest concentration of geysers in the world (Byran 1991).

The first trails and roads built in Yellowstone connected the various geyser basins, where locals would sometimes camp for weeks enjoying the bathing opportunities or waiting for stubborn geysers to erupt. While the most common term for Yellowstone was Wonderland, local visitors also

Figure 5. Fishing Cone

Two women tourists take a closer look at Fishing Cone along Yellowstone Lake in the West Thumb Geyser Basin in 1895. Photograph by E.V. Steadman. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



referred to the Park as Geyserland. "After breakfast we visited Old Faithful, which gave us lively entertainment," N.A. Switzer wrote in his diary (Switzer 1876). "We find the names of perhaps one hundred written on the krust [sic] and on pebbles. A great many of persons we knew."

The hot springs had the reputation of being restorative to health, which attracted many local visitors in 1872. A letter writer to the *Avant Courier* described finding a large group of visitors camped at Mammoth Hot Springs. The campers praised the health-giving qualities of the waters and contemplated remaining for several more weeks. The writer agreed. "I have become thoroughly acquainted with this place of wonders, and knowing to the almost miraculous cures effected by these waters, I cannot but admit that too much praise can be bestowed" (*Avant Courier* 1872a).

A month later the *Avant Courier* reported that Mrs. W. H. Randall of Bozeman had been in "delicate health" for some time and it was hoped that the "remarkable curative powers of the springs will restore her health." The article concluded by poking fun at Mrs. Randall's guide, J.P. Waddell: "We confidently trust that the gray hair and bald spots on the cranium of our handsome young friend Waddell, whose early piety is cropping out rather early, will be replenished by a full suit of natural auburn" (*Avant Courier* 1872b).

By the mid 1880s the medicinal values of the hot springs were receiving more scientific attention. In July of 1885 *Popular Science Monthly*

published an article by Edward Frankland, M.D., "setting forth the special advantages of the Yellowstone Park as the best winter resort on the American Continent, or in the world, for consumptives, dyspeptics, rheumatics and for the cutaneous complaints, diseases of the kidney and of the genital organs" (*Livingston Enterprise* 1886a). The *Popular Science* article, reprinted in the *Enterprise*, recounted the successful healing of several Montana residents who visited Yellowstone's hot springs. Bathing in the hot springs, drinking the mineral water and breathing the vapors was credited with "permanently curing" miner's poisoning (exposure to arsenic), consumption, vertigo, insomnia, loss of appetite and "general prostration."

Without the walkways and protective railings and fences of modern Yellowstone, the geysers and hot springs were dangerous for the Park's first tourists. Four Butte men thought they had lost one of their party to a geyser in 1882, only to have him flushed out and restored alive (*Avant Courier* 1882). Walter Watson volunteered to descend a short way into the mouth of the large geyser to obtain a few mementoes, when the crust gave way, tossing him into the "seemingly yawning abyss." His three companions, who shrieked when they saw him fall, lowered a light into the geyser, but could see nothing of Watson. Eventually giving up hope, the dejected party returned to their camp, thinking Watson dead. The next morning a group of

newcomers walked into camp, with a shaken Watson in hand, who told the following story:

After what seemed to me ages, the shouts ceased and I realized that my friends had given me up for lost . . . I suppose it was nearly five o'clock when I heard what sounded like distant thunder. the noise grew more and more distinct and the water surrounding me began to be troubled. I then realized that I was in the crater of an active geyser. Suddenly I discovered that the water was rising. This gave me hope that I might be able to keep afloat until the surface was reached. The water continued to rise more rapidly, and I at last found myself at the point from which I had fallen. This reached, I managed to crawl some distance away from the mouth of the water, when I lost consciousness. When I recovered I was being cared for by the strangers, the men who conducted me to my comrades. (*Avant Courier* 1882)

The risk of armed conflict with Indians was also a reality for tourists during the 1870s and warfare dominated much of the front page stories in local newspapers. Many of the Montana conflicts reported in local papers involved the surveying parties of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and attempts to settle the fertile Yellowstone Valley between Livingston and present-day Billings. "The number of visitors to the [hot] springs this season has not been as large as was expected, which may be attributed to the Indian excitements" (*Avant Courier* 1874a). A year later the *Avant Courier* tried to discount the threat of Indian conflict after learning that several parties of tourists booked trips with local businesses only to cancel after hearing about armed conflict with Indians:

They abandoned the idea when they learned of our Indian trouble of last year and made their pleasure trips to other points, simply because they were ignorant of the particular region of the

country infested by the Indians. Now, we will say to all who propose visiting the Park that there is no danger to be apprehended from the Indians while on the Park road. We know parties who have resided on the Upper Yellowstone for years, and they state emphatically that no hostile Indians has (sic) ever been seen in that section. (*Avant Courier* 1875a)

The prediction of safe passage may have been accurate at the time and good for the business of tourism, but it proved to be highly inaccurate, as Yellowstone found itself under siege for two weeks during the summer of 1877. "TOURISTS KILLED. SEVEN IN ONE PARTY AND NINE IN ANOTHER," screamed the headlines in the *Avant Courier* on August 30, 1877. The headlines continued for several weeks as wounded tourists, many already reported killed, reached settled areas and found help:

"WONDERLAND? SCENES OF BLOODSHED. TWO NARROW ESCAPES FROM THE CLUTCHES OF THE RED DEVILS."

The warfare in Yellowstone was a small chapter of the Nez Perce War, which began two months earlier when non-treaty bands fighting whites who had settled on ancestral lands led to pitched battles with regular troops and Idaho volunteers (Haines 1977, 219). Seeking refuge with Crow Indians to the east of Yellowstone, a band of 600 Nez Perce traveled directly across the Yellowstone plateau, where they crossed the paths of several small groups of tourists. General Sheridan, who was himself playing the role of tourist in the Park immediately before the Nez Perce entered Yellowstone, had the mistaken idea that Indians would not enter the geyser basins because of

superstitious fear. By the time they had left Yellowstone, the Nez Perce had captured and released several tourists, and killed two.

Although insignificant in the larger picture of warfare with Native Americans in the region, the conflict did make a strong impression on Philetus Norris, who had been named the second superintendent of Yellowstone only six months earlier. The Nez Perce conflict shaped decisions he made in the Park for several years. When he arrived to begin building improvements the following summer Norris decided to forego plans to build a headquarters building at Mammoth Hot Springs, in favor of building a strategic wagon road. The new road connected Mammoth to the geyser basins and military road along the Madison River, and provided a quicker response if troops were needed to reinforce Mammoth from Idaho. With an armed work crew of 20, Norris completed the 60 miles of roads within a month, and then returned to Mammoth, where a gattling gun battery had been established with troops sent from Ft. Ellis near Bozeman (Haines 1977, 1:238).

As the first tourists, locals had the distinction of laying out the first travel routes to the points of interests within Yellowstone, which became a template that has changed little through time. Tourists followed and improved some existing Indian trails through the Park, which were strongly influenced by natural factors such as river valleys. However, the Indians had a different travel agenda than the tourists, so their patterns related to tourist travel patterns only by coincidence of travel destinations (O'Brien 1965, 34).

Within a very short period the "Grand Rounds" of Yellowstone were established, which led tourists to "all points of interest." The first reference of the Grand Rounds came in 1874, in a letter by Mr. Hyde of Deer Lodge (*Avant Courier* 1874b). In 1875 the Grand Rounds were described as entering the Park along the Madison River, following the Firehole River south through the geyser basins, crossing Craig Pass to reach Yellowstone Lake, following the Yellowstone River to the Grand Canyon, and then following the Gardner River to Mammoth Hot Springs (*Avant Courier* 1875b). Later, a road was built from Canyon over Dunraven Pass to Tower Junction, joining a road from Tower to Mammoth, and creating a figure-eight shaped system now called the Grand Loop Road.

Locals as Entrepreneurs

When Yellowstone was set aside as a national pleasuring ground, its supporters promised not to ask for funding for several years from the post-war, budget-conscious Congress. Yellowstone historian Aubrey Haines (1977) calls the first six years when Yellowstone was virtually ignored by the federal government a period of "marking time," when very little was accomplished. While the description was true of federal officials, the locals enthusiastically tried to fill the vacuum with their own attempts at "improving" the Park, attracting investors and marketing the many wonders. Montanans were still

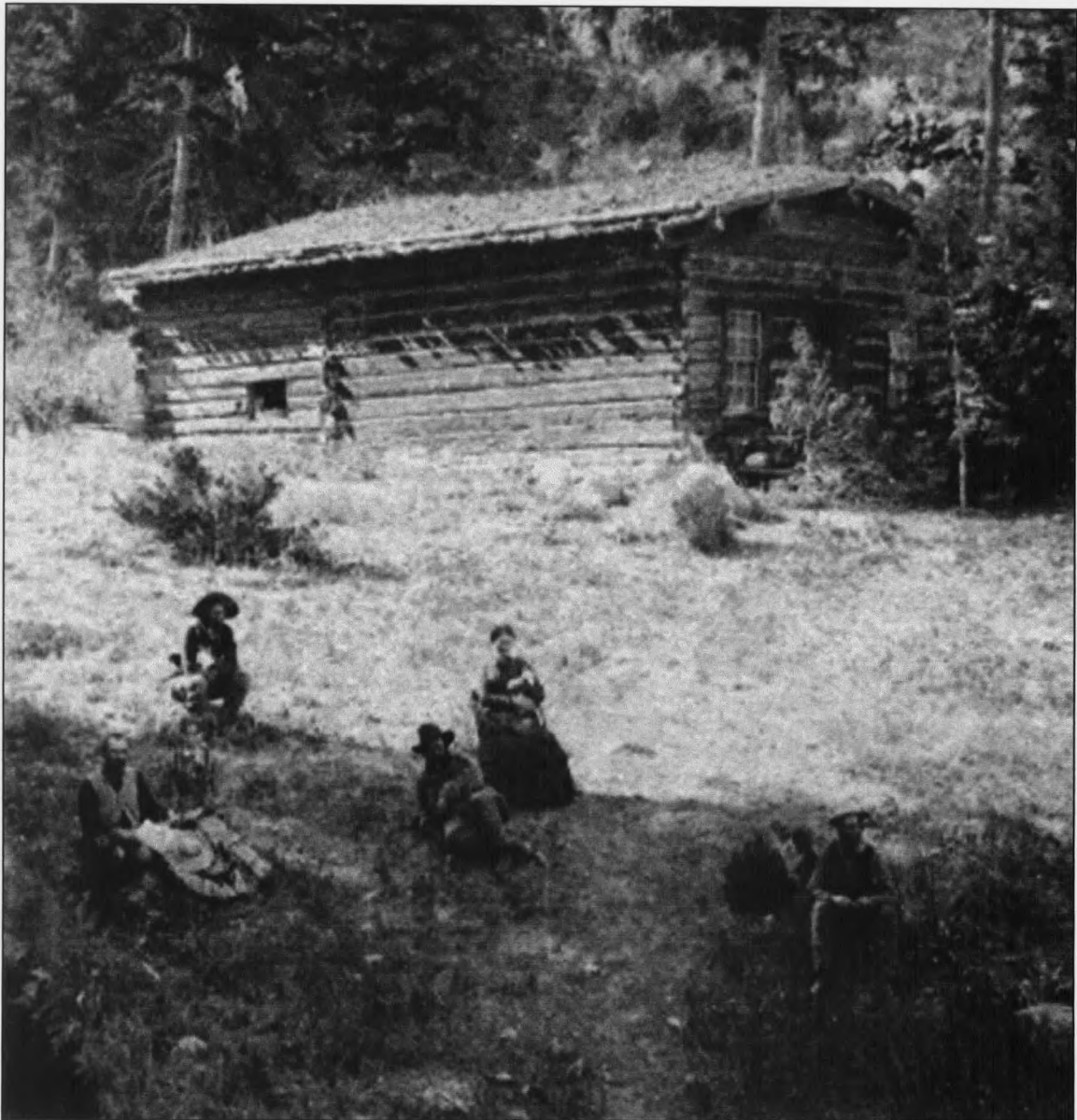
trying to tame the wild country around Yellowstone and build the territory into something substantial. They wanted statehood, and they wanted their communities to thrive with many of the riches of cities back east. When the Park was established, Bozeman had a population of roughly 700, and the Montana towns of Livingston and Gardiner were non-existent. Montana Territory boasted about 20,000 residents.

Montanans were quick to come up with schemes to make money from Yellowstone tourists. When Hayden arrived in Yellowstone with his party in the summer of 1871, two men were cutting poles to fence off the geyser basins along the Firehole River (Runte 1997, 44). Also that summer, Harry Horr and James McCartney built the first overnight accommodations (the term hotel is not quite appropriate) at Mammoth Hot Springs (Figure 6). The small one-story log building with an earth-covered slab roof was variously known as Horr and McCartney's Hotel, Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, or the National Park Hotel (Haines 1977, 196). The Earl of Dunraven (Thomas Windham) called the hotel the last outpost of civilization – that being the last place where whiskey is sold (Windham 1876 207). He described the small hotel at Mammoth in 1874 as an "inverse ratio to the gorgeous description contained in the advertisements."

The local entrepreneur's passion for improving and developing Yellowstone is well illustrated in the following description of the huge

Figure 6. Horr and McCartney's Hotel

Horr and McCartney's Hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs was the only place to stay within Yellowstone during the first several years. Adventurer Thomas Windham, the Earl of Dunraven, called the log building the last outpost of civilization – that being the last place where whiskey was sold. Photograph by F.J. Haynes. Circa 1885. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



National Hotel, which would replace the quaint lodgings of Horr and McCartney:

A picture that cannot fail to impress the visitor is the first view of the National Hotel and its surroundings as they are approached from Gardiner. For several miles nothing has been seen but nature in her most rugged aspects when suddenly at the top of a high, steep hill, the great hotel and its picturesque architecture and its busy appearance of active life is seen far below . . . (*Livingston Enterprise* 1884a)

The National Hotel was financed by the Yellowstone Improvement Company, and financier Rufus Hatch, but was built by local laborers and contractors, who obviously took pride in the huge hotel.

Bozeman entrepreneurs also pounced on the opportunity of guiding visitors to the Park. "Ho! Ho! Ho! For the Mammoth Hot Springs," read an advertisement by John Werks of Bozeman during the first official tourist season. "I am now prepared to carry INVALIDS and PLEASURE PARTIES from Bozeman to the celebrated Hot Springs of Horr & McCartney" (*Avant Courier* 1872c). In 1883 Bozeman residents George W. Wakefield and Charles W. Hoffman began hauling passengers in their stage coach company through the Park charging 12 cents per mile. They carried mail, and after visitor numbers increased, had five stagecoaches operating in different areas of Yellowstone. Wakefield and Hoffman were also given permission to cut wild hay within the Park to feed their horses (Haines 1977, 1:277).

Local entrepreneurs also put sailboats for hire on Yellowstone Lake. In 1874 Eugene S. Topping and Frank Williams received permission to operate

boats on Yellowstone Lake and took early horseback visitors on rides during the summers of 1874, 1875 and for a few weeks in 1876 (Figure 7). Commander Topping advertised that the first woman to come to the lake would have the privilege of naming his boat. It became the *Sallie* (Yellowstone Foundation 1997, 77). In 1880 another pair of boat builders advertised "that we have at considerable time and expense, just built, and launched a strong and safe sail-boat on the Yellowstone lake. A competent man is in charge, who will, at all proper times, be ready to accommodate all who desire to take pleasure excursions on this far-famed and beautiful sheet of water" (*Avant Courier* 1880a).

Practically no idea was too far fetched if it might lead to further attention and development of the Park. A Montana newspaper correspondent came up with the idea of building a soldier's home in Yellowstone, where the government has "everything of its own – the finest medical springs in the world, grounds to any extent required – and all under government control." The veterans were to be used as park rangers, thus freeing them from the bane of old soldiers – liquor" (*Livingston Enterprise* 1886b).

Montanans believed that if Yellowstone could be made accessible, safe and comfortable, tourists would come by the thousands. Visitors writing about their recent trip through Yellowstone often predicted many more would follow in their footsteps. "The world will journey to this spot more

Figure 7. The Sallie

Local entrepreneurs Eugene S. Topping and Frank Williams built the sailboat the *Sallie* to give tourists boat rides on Yellowstone Lake during the summers of 1874 and 1875. The business was unprofitable and abandoned in 1876. Photograph by Joshua Crissman. 1874. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



and more," one writer predicted. "The mighty pilgrimage has but just begun" (*Livingston Enterprise* 1880).

By the mid-1880s, local business owners were also aware that tourists could provide substantial income. "No class of people leave so much money in a country as tourists," the *Avant Courier* proclaimed (1886c). "There are towns and cities in Switzerland that owe nearly their entire existence to tourists . . . And the day is not far off when it will become a substantial source of revenue to Montanians [sic] living in its immediate neighborhood." U.S. Senator Graham Vest reported that Americans would spend \$150 million visiting Europe in 1887 (*Livingston Enterprise* 1887b), when "we have within our territory scenery that excels anything that can be seen abroad."

While locals mistakenly expected the Northern Pacific Railroad to reach the park by 1874 (nine years premature), a major hurdle to overcome was building safe wagon roads into the park and to all the points of interest. As a result, Montanans pushed for more active federal involvement. "The government has set aside a large tract of country, as large as an average Eastern state, for the purpose of a national pleasuring ground and it should not only make liberal appropriations to render it approachable, but should also encourage private enterprise in building houses of entertainment," wrote one Bozeman resident (*Avant Courier* 1873b).

With Congress refusing to cooperate with funding, that burden was left to private interests, which completed roads to the Park from the north and

west in 1872-73. "The wagon road up the Madison is now passable as far as Sawtelle's and by the 15th of August will be completed to the lower Geyser Basin if our business men will come promptly to its aid," wrote another Bozeman resident. "Eastern people who desire to visit the park first inquire as to the means of getting there and when told they can go in wagons from Virginia [City] or Bozeman, will not hesitate to undergo the travel" (*Avant Courier* 1873c).

Many local entrepreneurs had no problem with the idea of extracting natural resources from within a national park. Often in the same letter or article, a local business owner would fret over the slaughter of wildlife or damage being done to geothermal features, but then predict huge profits when areas within the Park were opened to coal mining or some other form of resource extraction. "The Park is too large – larger than any cause whatever demands," the *Avant Courier* reported (1881a). "It includes mineral districts which should be segregated, and as additional tracts valuable for mineral may be discovered, the act of establishing the park should be so amended that they may be legally occupied by settlers." The article then went on to chastise the government for damage occurring to the Park's natural resources and to demand the establishment of a police force to protect the geyser basins from vandalism. After mentioning all the interesting volcanic features a future survey would be likely to unearth in Yellowstone, another writer goes on to say that the survey report would be published soon "to put its results before

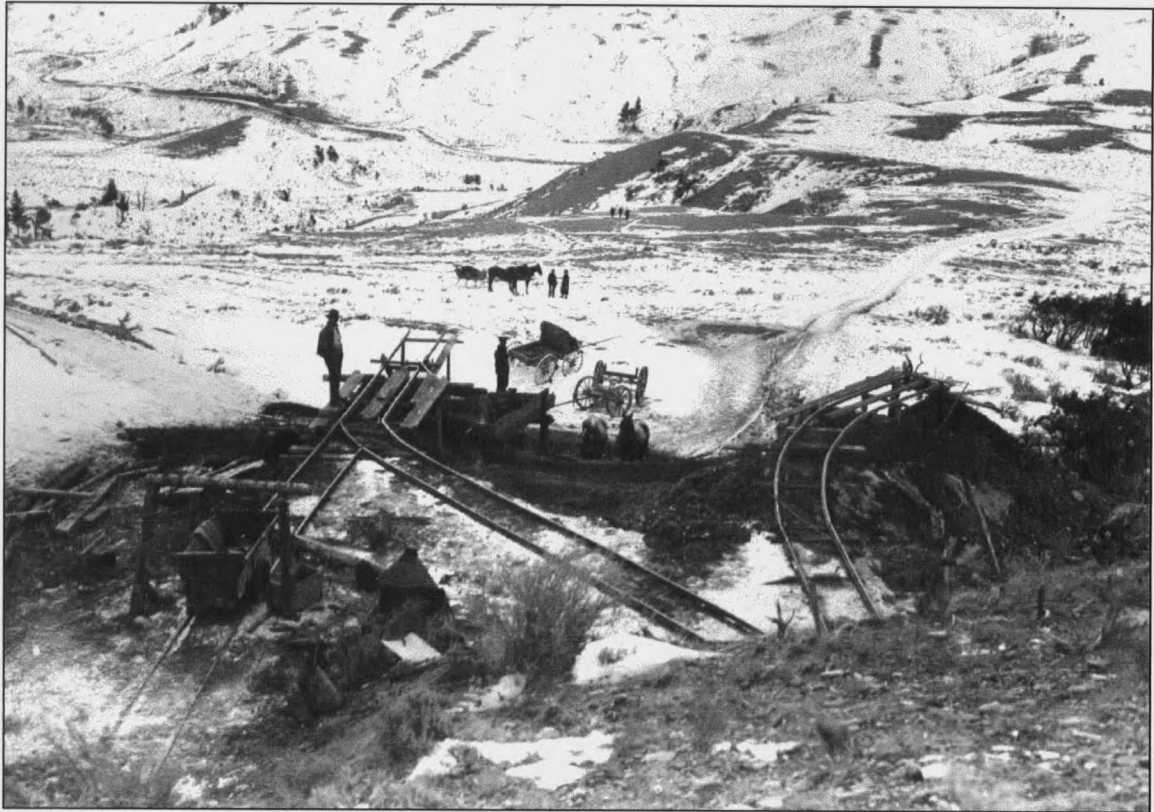
the people as soon as they can be properly digested and published, believing that thereby the maximum of economic benefit can be derived from them" (*Avant Courier* 1878).

Some coal mining was sanctioned by the government within Yellowstone (Figure 8), although only for consumption within the Park (*Livingston Enterprise* 1885a). Silas McMinn began digging coal out of the north end of Mt. Everts near Mammoth in 1885, selling it to the hotel company. The mine was never very successful, but was reopened in 1918 and 467 tons of coal were used at government offices at Mammoth for fuel. The site was restored to its original condition in 1993 (Yellowstone Foundation 1997, 52). Despite the failure of McMinn's coal mine, one Livingston resident predicted Gardiner would become one of the "largest and best towns in the territory" once the coal lands within the Park were thrown open to development (*Livingston Enterprise* 1887a).

Logging was also allowed in the Park to build various accommodations. In 1883 the Yellowstone Improvement Company reported cutting 1.6 million board feet to build the National Hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs. The hotel was 414 feet long and 54 feet wide, reaching four stories in height at some places. In a letter to Interior Secretary H.M. Teller,

Figure 8. A Yellowstone Coal Mine

In 1885 Silas McMinn began mining coal out of the north end of Mt. Everts and selling it to the hotel company at Mammoth Hot Springs. The site was restored to its natural condition by the National Park Service in 1993. Photograph by F.J. Haynes. Circa 1885 to 1890. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



Improvement Co. President Rufus Hatch described the construction:

There has never before been a building of the magnitude of this one constructed in such a wilderness, so far from railroad facilities or a base of supplies and where nearly all the material, the workmen and supplies had to be hauled by wagons, sometimes more than 100 miles over the roughest of Rocky Mountain roads amid alternating snow and mud or blinding dust. (Hatch 1883)

The *Avant Courier* also reported 100,000 board feet of timber were cut by December of 1886 and hauled to a saw mill near Canyon (*Avant Courier* 1886a).

Of all the early Yellowstone issues, the proposed railroad through the Park's northeast corner had the potential for the largest impact to the Park. The proposal also demonstrated how local entrepreneurs viewed Yellowstone and what values they thought the national park legislation should protect. For a decade local entrepreneurs lobbied Congress to allow the Northern Pacific to build a spur line from the railroad's terminus north of Gardiner through a small slice of Yellowstone to reach the gold mining community of Cooke City. The language and descriptions the entrepreneurs used to convince local readers gives insight into what they thought a national park should protect.

Cooke City railroad supporters made the argument that areas outside the geyser basins and the heavily traveled Grand Loop were not worthy of protection. The Bozeman newspaper editor argued the rail line's course would not be within miles of any of the hot springs, geysers or wonders of

the Park (*Avant Courier* 1886b). Montana mining inspector Professor G.C. Swallow wrote that "All well know there is not a single natural feature north of the Yellowstone and Soda Butte creek that is mentioned in the guide book as worthy of the tourists' attention." (*Livingston Enterprise* 1890) A coalition of business owners published a letter addressed to Montana Congressman Martin Maginnis (*Avant Courier* 1884c), asking "Is there an inscrutable, mysterious, spirituous something about the National Park that a railroad would desecrate? Is there a hole in the ground which gurgles and sputters hot water, so sacred that commerce and civilization should not pass that way?"

Both the *Avant Courier* and *Livingston Enterprise* argued relentlessly for building the railroad line to Cooke City, which the miners had named after Northern Pacific owner Jay Cooke in the hope that he would soon tie their community to the commerce made available by rail. Both newspapers wanted the economic benefits of the mining town they thought would develop if the railroad were extended. Many thought the ore body would surpass anything in the world, including Butte, where more than half a million dollars per month was paid to miners. They also feared that if a railroad did not enter the Park through Gardiner and Livingston, it would enter through Wyoming or Idaho, robbing them of the gold mining spoils.

General James S. Brisbin, who owned a ranch north of Gardiner in the Paradise Valley, predicted that a new mining town would "benefit not merely

the mining interests in the immediate district that it would reach . . . but would enhance the value of every acre of agricultural land in this vicinity and add to the wealth of every husbandman." Criticizing a congressman who opposed the railroad, Brisbin said the development of Montana was more important than the "inviolate maintenance of a mere show wilderness, uninvaded by the signs and accompaniments of civilization. If gold or silver were found in the Park, a way would be devised to obtain it" (*Livingston Enterprise* 1885b).

While Montana's business community appeared to wholly support the railway through the Park, one newspaper writer demonstrated the issue did not have the unanimous support of the community:

It is true the titled foreigner and the codfish aristocracy of America . . . would prefer to ride to and through the Park in a palace car, to gaze at the geysers, canons, waterfalls and any and all the beauties of the region, without the trouble of traveling at a speed less than that attainable by steam. But to one who has visited the Park, traveling by private conveyance, through a country where wild game roams undisturbed, and where the natural formations are not brought into direct contrast with a railroad grade, passenger stations or the changes consequent upon building a line through the Park, the idea is not only preposterous but excites a feeling not well to be defined. To build a railroad there means to foster a corporation soul-less and exacting: to pay tribute for viewing the wonders which by right should ever remain free as the air we breathe . . . There should remain in America at least one spot free from the despoiling hand of the grasper after wealth; a locality where the natural formations will not suffer from direct contrast with artificial constructions. (*Avant Courier* 1883a)

The above editorial was the only item found in local newspapers showing local opposition to the Cooke City railroad proposal. However, it was short-lived. About three weeks after it was published, the *Avant Courier's* owner returned from a trip and reversed the newspaper's stand:

The idea that a narrow gauge road would necessarily mar the beauties, or in any serious degree destroy the natural attractions of that section of country, in this age of progress and rapid transit, is hardly worthy of serious consideration. The construction of a railroad through the Yellowstone would cut as much of a figure on its superficial area as a thread of silk through a map of the United States, and no more . . . It is true that in many instances parties visiting the Park are attracted thither as much by the idea of traveling by slow stages and "camping out" and the consequent recuperation and healthfulness attending such a trip, as anything else, but it should be borne in mind that thousands are desirous of making a trip through the Nation's Wonderland who cannot afford the time, expense, or fatigue of a round trip in wagons or on horseback, and they are certainly entitled to respectful consideration. (*Avant Courier* 1883b)

In 1883 General P.H. Sheridan suggested expanding the Park by 3,344 square miles to create an additional preserve for wildlife. Sheridan's plan would have nearly doubled Yellowstone, expanding the boundaries 40 miles to the east and 10 miles to the south (Culpin 1976, 277) The local entrepreneur's opinions about efforts to expand Yellowstone give another indication of the focused view they had of what was worthy of protection within the Park.

The federal government's failure to properly "improve" Yellowstone after 10 or 11 years riled newspaper editors. "As the Park is already too large an elephant for the United States to take care of and properly protect, the

wisdom of the proposed addition is not very apparent to ordinary mortals . . . The Park is already too huge a joke for them to comprehend," wrote the *Avant Courier* (1883c). "We have enough National Park, especially if an extension is to cover any of the ground from which energetic miners and enterprising capitalists are trying to extract additions to the country's wealth of gold and silver," wrote the *Livingston Enterprise* (1884b).

Locals as Critics

Although much of the locals' involvement with Yellowstone revolved around lining their pockets, they did help call attention to serious problems in the Park. When hunters threatened to drive Yellowstone's wildlife to extinction, vandals threatened Park resources, and poor management combined with poor funding created an atmosphere of self destruction, locals pushed for regulations to protect wildlife and other resources, and for needed funding and professional personnel.

After the first summer of visitors into the national park in 1873, locals circulated a petition asking Congress to visit the Park, and then set aside funds to pay a superintendent and assistants, as well as funds for road building. The *Avant Courier* (1873d) predicted that once members of Congress saw both the marvels of Yellowstone, and what was happening to them by vandals and hunters, they would "do all that was necessary to make it

creditable to the nation and preserve it from desecration." The petition stated "We are urged to this request by the vandalism that is rapidly denuding the Park of its curiosities and killing its game, and rendering it a disappointment to all those who desire to see this grand domain left in a state of nature."

Locals continued to loudly denounce vandalism and the slaughter of game until regulations were adopted by Congress. Describing geyser craters marred by hatchets and hammers, the *Avant Courier* (1881b) correctly reported that the superintendent appeared to be powerless to prevent the vandalism. "... the government almost seems indifferent in regard to the importance of preserving for future generations this grandest of all natural pleasure resorts in the world."

The slaughter of game animals in the Park led to the most heated criticism of the federal government by locals, who during the deep snow of the winter of 1883 witnessed hunters killing snowbound wildlife in the Park with axes:

Probably a few years after the wild game shall have become extinct our national law makers will have become impressed with the idea that some additional enactment other than the Park "Rules and Regulations" was necessary to preserve and prevent a wanton destruction. (*Avant Courier* 1883d)

When Rufus Hatch's Yellowstone Improvement Co. was accused of awarding contracts with local hunters to supply meat for its customers from

wildlife within the Park, the *Avant Courier* published the following tirade against the "Despoliation" Company:

What a glorious place for a slaughter house! Here we [the Improvement Co.] can secure all the meat necessary to feed the men in our employ, without the difficulty attendant upon taking care for cattle or the expense consequent upon a purchase from a butcher. Such doings are infamous. Let it be known that there is a no law to protect game, and no one will argue that it will not become extinct. (*Avant Courier* 1883e)

Summary

The locals' experience with Yellowstone was important in shaping the national park idea, because of their early dominance when the Park was being ignored by the government. Local entrepreneurs built roads and the first primitive hotels, and began guiding people into Yellowstone and offering them recreational opportunities. This tells us that locals quickly perceived Yellowstone as a recreational destination point that would some day attract thousands of visitors from around the world. They realized that the Park would need adequate roads, transportation and lodging, and that once that infrastructure was in place, Yellowstone would be an economic boost for their communities. While the government let Yellowstone languish, the local entrepreneurs had a plan for what a national park should be, and immediately began working to make it happen. When the government did become more involved, it followed the lead of the local entrepreneurs.

In the role of tourist, locals also played a key role discovering where to go in Yellowstone, and what to do once they got there. The first tourists literally cut the trails to the Park's major attractions, creating the "Grand Rounds" of Yellowstone. By discovering which areas had the most interesting features, the local tourists established a pattern of human use within Yellowstone that remains virtually identical today. From their travels we also know that they valued the geysers and other geothermal features above all else, and believed the hot springs could cure illnesses. Locals described Wonderland as the most incredible landscape in the world, and did not feel the need to compare it with European landscapes.

The early dominance of the local in Yellowstone fits well with geographer Wilbur Zelinsky's "doctrine of first effective settlement." Zelinsky (1992) argues that "whenever an empty territory undergoes settlement . . . the specific characteristics of the first group able to affect a viable, self-perpetuating society are of crucial significance for the later social and cultural geography of the area, no matter how tiny the initial band of settlers may have been" (Zelinsky 1992, 13). Although the locals were not settlers who created a self-perpetuating society, they did leave their distinctive mark on the landscape with roads and trails, and the pattern of human use they established.

By studying how the locals responded to debates over the management of Yellowstone, we learn what they valued about Yellowstone and what they

thought deserved protection. Initially locals were only concerned about the areas surrounding the major attractions, including the geyser basins, the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone Lake. They believed the proposed Cooke City Railroad would not harm anything of value to tourists if it went through the northeast corner of the Park, far from any of the major attractions. Locals also believed extracting a limited amount of coal and timber from the Park was acceptable.

As the region's wildlife came under increasing pressure from profit hunters and settlers, locals fought to protect Yellowstone's wildlife. Areas outside the major attractions, important for wildlife protection, began to be valued. In the role of critic, locals were an important voice, pushing for needed legislation and proper funding and management. From this we realize they felt they had some ownership in the national park in their backyard.

Perhaps the best reason the local perspective is important to study, is that they knew Yellowstone better than anyone else. Locals were the first to explore Yellowstone in an organized way, the first to travel there and enjoy it as a tourist, and the first to plan its future. Some historians have been critical of the commercialization and marketing of Yellowstone, creating a "Wild West" or carnival-like atmosphere (Magoc 1992, Sears, 1989). However, Yellowstone's locals were not targeted by Northern Pacific marketing efforts, and were probably not influenced by the Wild West image. Living near

Yellowstone they were at home with the reality of life in the West. When locals went to Yellowstone, they probably carried fewer preconceptions than any other visitor. Their view is an important one to study.

THE CUSTODIAL EXPERIENCE IN YELLOWSTONE

The custodians of early Yellowstone – the first superintendents, and later U.S. Cavalry officers and their assistants, had the job of field testing the national park idea. At first the task was more akin to the job of settler, as the first superintendents had to cut trails, build shelter and avoid conflicts with Bannock and Nez Perce Indians. As funding began to trickle in from Congress, tourist numbers increased and they began to understand what the public demanded in a national park. The custodians began building a road network and “ranger” stations throughout Yellowstone, and supervising the location of hotels sprouting at the points of interest within the park.

The early managers brought with them to the job their own ideas of what values were being protected in Yellowstone, and what the role of a park manager should be. These values are revealed in their correspondence, and annual reports to the Interior Department, as well as correspondence with other groups. As the number of assistant superintendents grew, and civilians were eventually replaced by soldiers, the protective mission of Yellowstone evolved from a focus on the geysers and other geothermal features to the region’s diminishing wildlife. By 1890, the end of the 18-year study period, the Park’s managers, namely U.S. Cavalry officers, operated the Park

professionally and defined a management system for Yellowstone that evolved to become the National Park Service of today.

The primary sources for reconstructing the role of Yellowstone's custodians are the annual reports the superintendents filed with the Interior Department. The annual reports were published each year, with the exception of 1873 through 1876, when Nathaniel Langford was a volunteer superintendent. The annual reports were written in a very personal style, valuable for illustrating the opinions of Yellowstone's first custodians. For example, the annual reports of Philetus Norris, the second superintendent, read like his personal travel journal, as he explored various areas of the Park. The annual reports included descriptions of new discoveries, the Park's overall condition, perceived threats, climate and other scientific data, such as geyser eruption times and durations, budgetary needs, and usually an appeal for more funding. By assessing all of the annual reports, I reconstructed how the role of the custodians changed as the challenges of managing Yellowstone and the needs of tourists evolved during this 18-year period.

I also reviewed more than 1,000 letters sent to the Interior Department about Yellowstone, and letters and documents kept by the U.S. Cavalry about Yellowstone, available in the Yellowstone National Park Archives. From those I found 75 that were relevant to this study. I also found 50 relevant letters written to Yellowstone superintendents available in the Archives. Many of the letters were requests to open businesses in Yellowstone, ranging

from practical hotels to far-fetched schemes to build huge steamships on Yellowstone Lake. A request from an entrepreneur was usually followed by a letter of recommendation from the person's Congressman. Many of the letters also involved complaints or charges of negligence between superintendents and officials of the Yellowstone Improvement Company, the Park's first concessionaire. Although they do not appear in numerous places in this thesis, the letters were valuable to the author in confirming events published in the annual reports and local newspapers, and also to give character to the issues and pressures facing the Park's early superintendents.

I chose examples from these sources that helped reconstruct the experience of Yellowstone's custodians, and to determine their perceptions of what a national park should be, and how it should be managed. I looked for examples that answered the following questions: What was the experience like of managing this new national park concept? Should a national park protect only the main attractions, such as the geothermal features, the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone Lake, or should it also protect wildlife and watersheds? Should Park managers modify or improve natural features, or leave them in a natural state? How much development should be allowed within Yellowstone, from the government or private interests? What was an acceptable level of resource extraction? What activities should tourists be allowed to do, and not do, within the Park, and what other recreational opportunities should be provided? How many people would it take to

properly manage a national park, and what type of management system would be needed?

Custodians as Settlers

The first two superintendents, Nathaniel Langford, who served from 1872 to 1877, and Philetus Norris, who served from 1877 to 1882, had very different experiences in the Park than those who followed them. With no roads initially, little or no funding and no clear direction from Congress as to what a national park was or how it should be managed, they were more like settlers than park managers.

Langford was appointed as a volunteer superintendent, with no salary provided by Congress. Supporters of the legislation establishing the Park had promised not to return to Congress with funding requests for several years, and the federal government was under the mistaken idea that leases by hotel owners in Yellowstone would make the Park self-sufficient. In the letter appointing Langford as superintendent (Langford 1873), the acting Interior Secretary told him "You are at liberty to apply any money, which may be received from leases to carrying out the object of the act of Congress, keeping account of the same, and making report thereof to the Department." Yet how could private investors build hotels when a journey to the Park required weeks of travel and could be reached only by horseback?

Langford was an outspoken supporter of Yellowstone and helped win passage of the legislation establishing the Park, however he may have had his own economic interests in mind. When he joined the Washburn Expedition of 1870 he was on the payroll of the Northern Pacific Railroad, and so it was in his interest to have a national park near the future route of the Northern Pacific. Historian Aubrey Haines' research revealed that Langford was a tireless and unethical self-promoter who left a legacy of shifty dealings and unethical business associates (Schullery 1997, 57). Langford may have envisioned a much more commercial national park than we see today, but he visited the Park only twice as superintendent and had little opportunity to shape Yellowstone's future.

With no assistants to begin working on trails and roads, Langford was left with the mission of further exploring Yellowstone, which he did as a guest of Ferdinand Hayden's Geological Survey, returning to the Park for another season's work (Haines 1977, 1:181). Hayden's party spent a successful summer reconnaissance mapping 9,000 square miles of previously unknown territory. Langford acknowledged that much of Yellowstone remained unexplored:

I regard the explorations of this region as but just commenced. New wonders are continually presenting themselves. Jets of steam as yet unvisited are seen in all directions while passing through the park, many of which indicate the location of very extensive groups of springs. (Langford 1873)

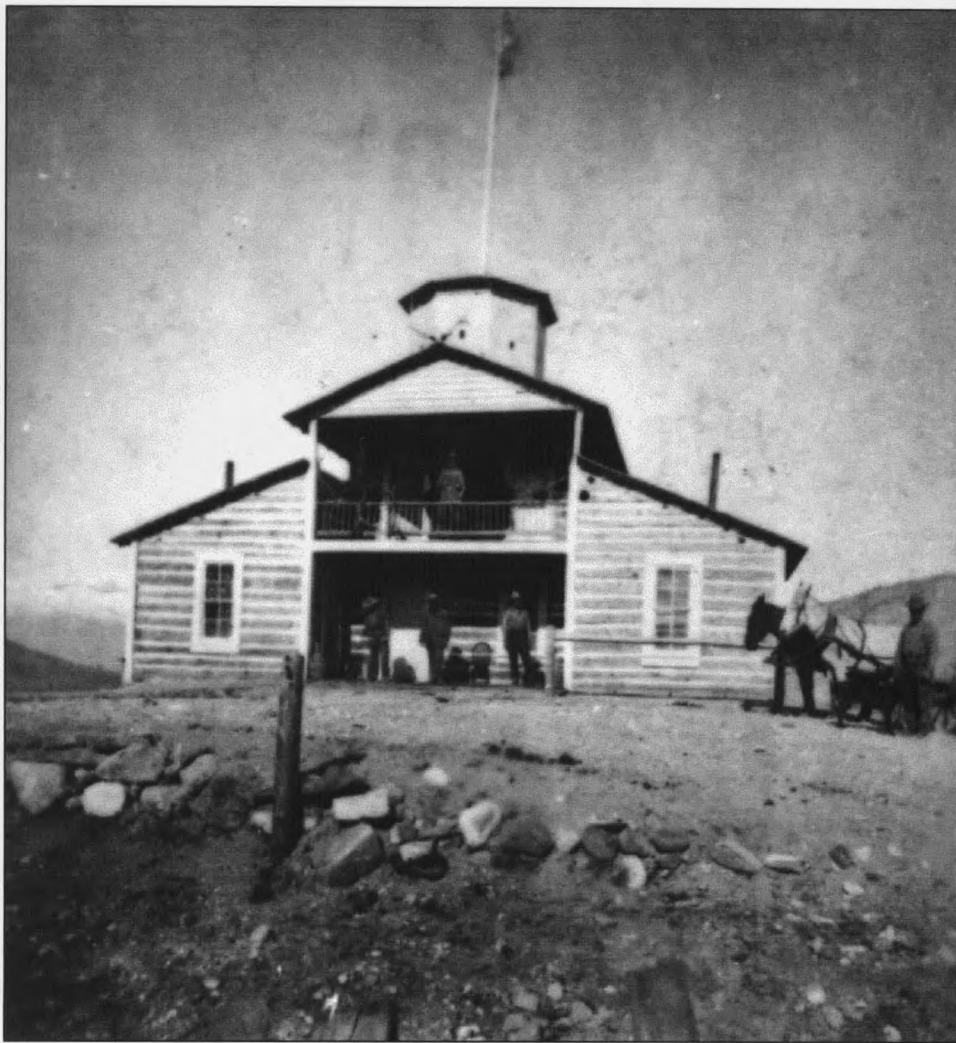
Complaints about vandalism to the unattended Yellowstone prompted the Interior Department to replace Langford with a more energetic superintendent. The appointment of Philetus Norris as superintendent in 1877 marked the beginning of much more active involvement in managing the Park, although still hampered by a lack of funding from Congress. Norris, a self-described explorer and pioneer, spent the entire travel season exploring Yellowstone, naming many of his discoveries (sometimes after himself), and quickly beginning to build a road system around much of the Park.

When Norris arrived during the summer of 1878 to begin building improvements, his worries about the previous summer's Nez Perce raid and the possibilities of the Bannock Indians repeating a run through the Park, led him to forego plans to build a headquarters building at Mammoth Hot Springs. Instead, he built a strategic wagon road to connect Mammoth to the geyser basins and the military road built by General Howard's troops the previous summer along the Madison River.

Reports of Indian threats were common in Norris' annual reports, and when he did build his headquarters building during the 1879 season, it was more like a fort (Figure 9) than a national park headquarters as we might envision today. Norris noted, "I selected as the site for our block-house headquarters, where it fully commands the entire mound, valley and terrace,

Figure 9. Fort Yellowstone

Philetus Norris, Yellowstone's second superintendent, was worried about armed conflict with Nez Perce and Bannock Indians, so he built this blockhouse fort as his administration building on Capital Hill at Mammoth Hot Springs in 1879. The two-story log building features an octagonal gun turret, loopholed for rifles. Photograph by H.B. Calfee. Circa 1890. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



within range of rifle or field artillery, and a fair view of the entire balance of the valley and its approaches"(Norris 1880, 4). The two-story log building featured an octagonal gun turret, loopholed for rifles.

Norris and his assistants were more settlers than managers, and their descriptions of life in Yellowstone were much like the reports of pioneers. They hunted game to feed themselves, built corrals for their horses and other stock and experimented with a half-acre vegetable garden near the Mammoth headquarters (Norris 1880, 4). In 1880 Norris suggested a plan to pipe hot water from the hot springs into his log fort:

If Bunsen's theory be true, as now appears to be probable, that the [mineral] deposits are only made by evaporation, and that pipes will not seriously coat nor fill internally, then a vast field is opened for the most unique, inimitably grand, beautiful and permanent ornamentation of headquarters and surroundings of the Park that can be imagined by the most visionary dreamer of the beautiful and marvelous. (Norris 1881, 25)

With their headquarters established, Norris and company then began building smaller cabins throughout the Park for shelter during their explorations and road building excursions. The first was a small cabin in a grove of trees between Castle and Beehive geysers in the Upper Fire Hole Basin, and then a cabin for Harry Yount, the Park's first gamekeeper at the mouth of Soda Butte Creek in the northeast corner of Yellowstone. Yount was the first Park employee to spend the winter (1880-81) in Yellowstone and described the experience in the 1881 Superintendent's Report (Norris 1881). "I there remained . . . during the entire winter, the early part of which was so

severe that there were no mountain hunters. The snowfall was unusually great, and remained very deep high in the mountains . . ." Although his thermometer broke and he could not record daily temperatures, Yount reported snow falling on 66 of 90 days.

Custodians as Scientists

Another benefit of getting beyond the settler stage of managing the Park was having the time to make more thorough explorations of Yellowstone. Langford, with the exception of his initial trips into Yellowstone, was not in the Park enough as its superintendent to do much study. Norris, however, was very active in exploring unmapped areas of Yellowstone, searching for artifacts of earlier inhabitants, and trying to determine the geologic forces behind geyser eruptions and other natural phenomena. With so much of Yellowstone unexplored, Norris chafed at having to spend so much time and money on roads and other improvements:

. . . I have pushed improvements, devoting less time and funds to exploration than desirable to myself, or, I fear, ultimately the most beneficial to the park. Still, our carefully kept records of weather, long observance of storms, earthquake shocks . . . changing terraces and other phenomena, rapidly accumulates valuable information of the local climate and peculiarities . . .
(Norris 1880, 9)

Norris' fascination with finding artifacts and discovering the geologic forces behind the geysers and hot springs was probably due in part to his efforts to make a name for himself as an explorer. He enjoyed discovering new features in Yellowstone and often named them after himself. However, his interest in the scientific aspects of the Park also suggests that he looked beyond Yellowstone's role as simply a pleasuring ground for tourists. Norris was probably the first to recognize the value of Yellowstone as a natural laboratory, where such artifacts would not be overrun by settlement.

In his annual reports Norris gave very detailed accounts of his travels and explorations, sometimes giving exact mileage between points of interest on trails or newly-built roads. During the summer of 1879 Norris collected specimens from the various geysers and other hot spring formations, petrified trees, arrowheads and other artifacts to be shipped east to the Smithsonian Institution and the Anthropological Society of Washington. Unfortunately, the specimens were shipped in a small Mackinaw boat that was wrecked at the Buffalo Rapids, and all the specimens were lost (Norris 1880, 7).

Norris began recording weather conditions at Mammoth in 1878. His annual report for 1878 reported only average monthly temperatures for sunrise, midday and sunset. By the following year Norris was reporting daily temperature readings including remarks about wind direction and cloud cover at Mammoth, with additional readings taken during their explorations.

He summarized his climate records in 1879 with the following:

The above records strengthen my previous impressions that the park is for its elevation less a severely cold than a moist and stormy portion of those mountain regions save during a short, but beautiful summer. But with the hoped-for instruments and assistance from the signal service, we may safely rely upon a greater knowledge and more satisfactory showing of the climate of the park in the next annual report. (Norris 1880, 27)

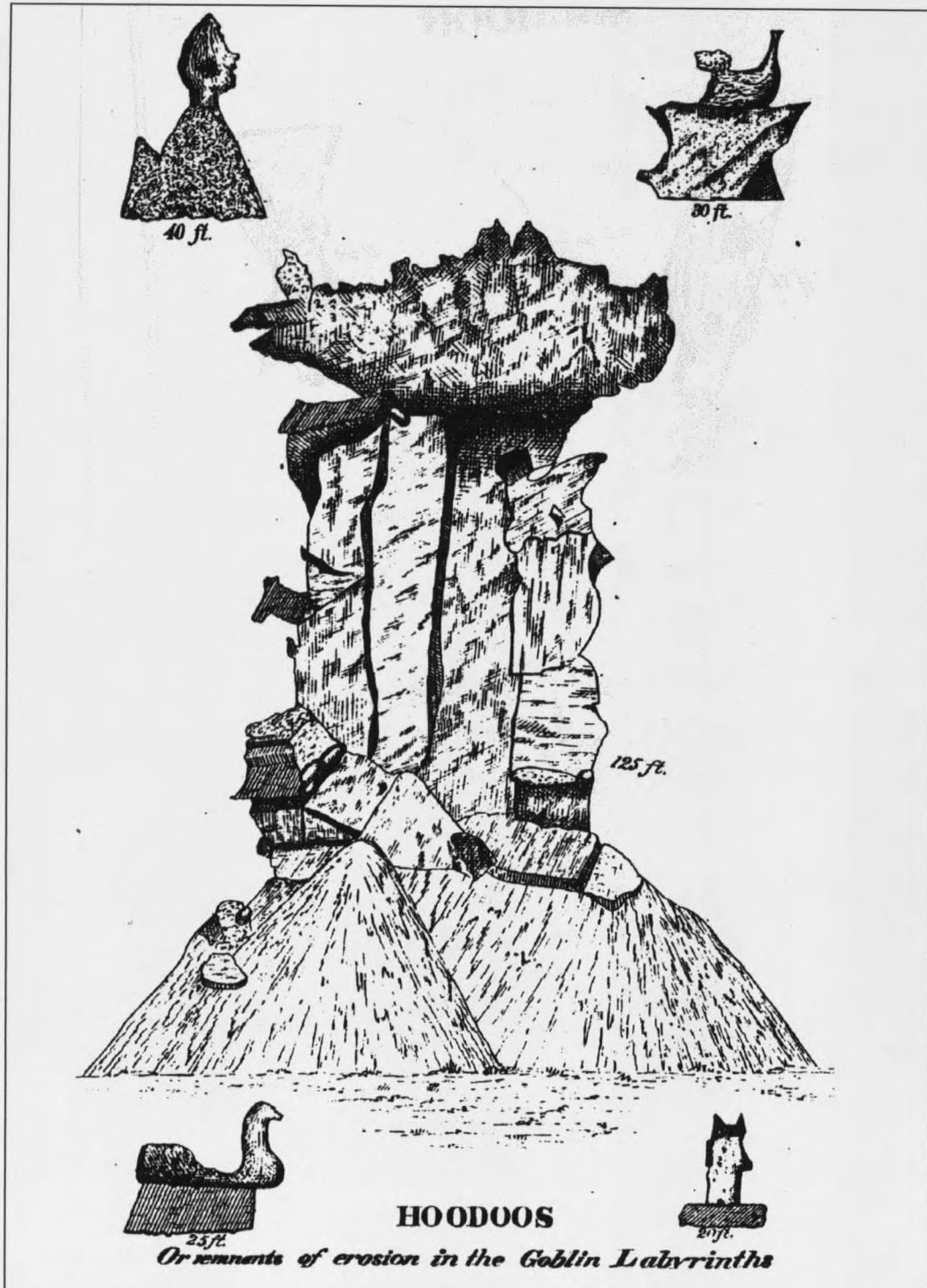
With each following year, Norris increased his knowledge of Yellowstone, and filled his annual reports with detailed descriptions of wildlife and the landscape, sometimes including vivid field drawings. During the summer of 1880 Norris explored the Hoodoo region of Yellowstone, and included several pages of field drawings (Figure 10) of different formations. Norris also used detailed sketches to illustrate what he believed to be prehistoric artifacts he had discovered, including stone vessels, arrowheads, spear tips and other artifacts.

During the summer of 1881 Norris sent C.H. Wyman to the Lower, Upper and Midway geyser basins to record eruptions. Wyman spent several days at various geysers, and recorded the times, durations and height of water being erupted. Wyman reported observing the following behavior at Excelsior Geyser on October 3, 1880:

Countless rocks of many pounds weight, hurled like a rocket high above the column of water, some of which fell in and across the river, which is here 100 yards wide, and during much of the day was a foaming flood of hot water. (Norris 1881, 56)

Figure 10. The Hoodoos

Superintendent Philetus Norris' 1880 annual report included field drawings of rock formations in the Hoodoo Region of Yellowstone, also called then the Goblin Labyrinths.



Scientific exploration of Yellowstone during this early period would continue after Norris (Figure 11), but never with as much enthusiasm. By the late 1880s while the Park was managed by the U.S. Cavalry, research shifted from enthusiastic superintendents to professional government scientists, such as Professor Arnold Hague of the U.S. Geological Survey. After completing the first accurate surveys and maps of the Yellowstone, in 1887 Hague began mapping the different geyser basins and hot springs "localities" throughout the Park. "The importance of this work cannot be overestimated," wrote Capt. Moses Harris about the new mapping work (Harris 1887, 14). "It will serve to fix and render permanent the established and authorized names of the different objects of interest, and check the tendency which has prevailed of attaching personal, fanciful, or absurd names to nature's most grand and wonderful objects."

Harris' frustration with fanciful names given to some of Yellowstone's features illustrates the difficulty Eastern pioneers and explorers had describing the new rugged western landscape. As geographer William Wyckoff notes, "... artists and writers as well as settlers struggled with what they saw when they ventured west, and much of the visible scene they encountered – the region's vast plains, towering alpine topography, and steeply incised canyons – demanded a new aesthetic vocabulary that blended European Romanticism and American exceptionalism into a fresh response to the natural world" (Wyckoff 1999, 8). The process of developing a new vocabulary may have been

Figure 11. Sketch Artist

A sketch artist named Bosse works at Norris Geyser Basin during the Park's first winter expedition in 1887. Photograph by F. Jay Haynes. Haynes Foundation Collection, Montana Historical Society.



frustrating, but it helped define the character of the West and had broader implications for the national culture. As Anne Hyde argues "The process of grappling with a language suitable to the realities of the far western landscape helped to forge a particularly American culture" (Hyde 1990, 9).

Hague's Geological Survey of Yellowstone, as well as Ferdinand Hayden's earlier surveys in Yellowstone and southwestern Colorado, illustrated a shift in the way Americans perceived wilderness and a shift in the priorities of the federal government. By the late 1800s wilderness was no longer seen as an enemy or obstacle to a fragile civilization. Historians, philosophers and politicians gave the wilderness credit for providing the nation with character, strength and inventiveness. As additional railroad lines stretched from East to West, increasing the sense of connection between regions, the American public and the federal government looked to the West for the materials to build a national culture. (Hyde 1990, 215).

Improving Nature and Exploiting Resources

Yellowstone's caretakers came to the job filled with their own perceptions of which natural resources deserved protection, and which did not, such as predators. They also had strong opinions about "improving nature" in the Park, and how much development could be allowed while still fulfilling the mission of protecting the natural resources of Yellowstone. Once

they had shelter over their heads, and a few assistants to put to work, the early park managers put their ideas to the test.

The plans for improving nature in Yellowstone are important indicators of the values early managers saw as important in the Park, and how involved the government should be in its management. Wanting to improve nature was not unusual behavior for the 1870s. Managers of Mammoth Caves in Kentucky had manipulated nature by damming the stream at the top of Kaaterskill Falls and then releasing it for tourists to witness how the falls looked during spring thaw (Sears 1989, 47). Another example of improving nature was the killing of predators, which were considered "bad" animals, to protect the deer, elk and bison, which were considered "good animals" (Limerick 1987, 311).

Norris, who received heavy criticism from the press for wanting to turn Yellowstone into his private ranch, probably led the pack for suggesting improvements to nature. In several of his annual reports Norris suggested domesticating Yellowstone's wildlife – the "popular and useful" wildlife, such as bison, elk, deer and moose. Norris called for two to three "spirited" herdsmen to capture young wildlife.

These, by practical rearing and by sale of the young to zoologists throughout the world, and by judicious slaughter and sale of their flesh, pelts, and furs, and also those still wild, might render them permanently attractive and profitable to the park and to the nation in its management. (Norris 1877, 843)

During his first year in Yellowstone in 1877, Norris predicted that America's bison and other large wild animals would be extinct or extremely rare and thought domesticating them in the Park would save them.

...and if our people are ever to preserve living specimens of our most beautiful, interesting, and valuable animals, here, in their native forests and glens of this lofty cliff and snow encircled "wonderland," is the *place* and *now* the *time* to do it. (Norris 1877, 843)

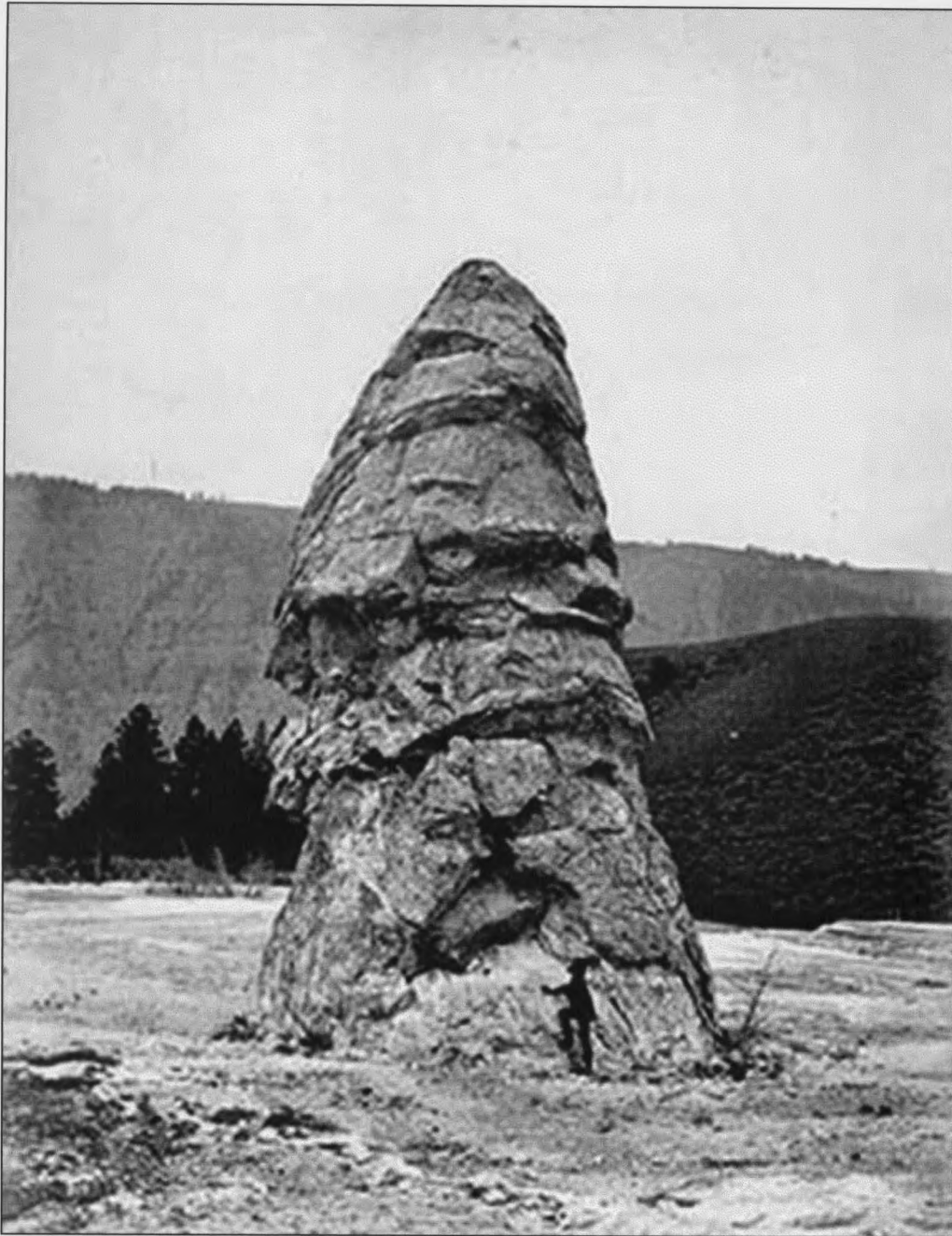
Another pet project of Norris was Liberty Cap at Mammoth (Figure 12), which he feared would topple without his help. For several years he struggled with methods to support Liberty Cap, including building a wooden scaffolding around it in 1878. Terrace deposits destroyed the wooden scaffolding, but two years later Norris came up with a scheme of piping hot springs water into the "ancient supply-pipe of the cone," or close enough to recoat the cone with a jet of terrace water.

So strong is my conviction of the perfect feasibility of this plan, that nothing but absolute necessity for the use of all available funds for buildings and opening roads and bridle-paths has prevented my expending a moderate sum upon the experiment. (Norris 1881, 20)

The following year Norris would get permission to try his experiment, and would have mixed success. Using the double barrels of a shotgun, he discovered the mineral water would clog the barrels within a week, which stopped the plan for finding Liberty Cap's supply pipe. Yet he was able to build troughs from nearby Devil's Thumb to transport the mineral water, and

Figure 12. Liberty Cap

Philetus Norris feared Liberty Cap would topple without his help and struggled for years with methods to support the structure, including wooden scaffoldings. Liberty Cap remains standing today at Mammoth Hot Springs. Photograph by William Henry Jackson, 1871. National Park Service.



Liberty's cone was "... covered and enlarged by a coating of beautiful white geyserite" (Norris 1881, 26).

F.A. Boutelle, a captain with the U.S. First Cavalry, served as Yellowstone's acting superintendent from June 1889 to February 1891. One of his first suggestions was to improve the fishing within the Park. He asked the U.S. Fish Commission to begin stocking fish in Yellowstone's streams and lakes. Boutelle said that stocking fish in Yellowstone would improve fisheries in the Missouri and Snake rivers to "add immeasurably " to the food supply obtained from those waters (Boutelle 1889, 23). He also hoped to "see all these waters so stocked that the pleasure-seeker in the park can enjoy fine fishing within a few rods of any hotel or camp."

The fish stocking was carried out the following year. Seven thousand young trout were planted in the west and middle forks of the Gardner River above the falls, the Gibbon River above Virginia Cascade, and in the Firehole River above Keppler's Cascade. Another 150,000 fish were on order (Boutelle 1890, 7-8). In his annual report he wrote:

It may not appear to all that the stocking of these waters is a matter of great importance, but, being an enthusiastic angler, it appears to me very desirable that all water of this pleasuring ground for the people be so filled with fish that all who come may enjoy the sport.

Arriving in Yellowstone during a period that he described as the "most dry known in the history of Montana and Wyoming," Boutelle also suggested creating a water storage system to irrigate "dry" areas of the Park to prevent

forest fires (Boutelle 1890, 6). Fire was one aspect of nature that was fought equally enthusiastically by all of Yellowstone's superintendents. "Forest fires raged uncontrolled on every side of the park and destroyed millions of acres of valuable timber," Boutelle reported in 1890. "... The troops in my command were employed almost constantly and at times worked harder than I ever saw men work, except perhaps for some disaster. Many times they were required to ride all night and fight fire all the following day."

Believing that the majority of the forest fires within Yellowstone could be traced to careless campers, Boutelle received permission in 1890 to establish designated campgrounds. He reported campers were not willfully careless, but many had no experience in camping, and left their camps believing all precautions to prevent fire had been taken (Boutelle 1890, 5).

Several of Yellowstone's early managers believed extracting resources from the Park complimented their mission to protect it. Langford, although visionary about the need to protect wildlife within the Park in 1872, recommended sawmills be allowed to mill timber for both projects within Yellowstone and the surrounding communities (Langford 1873, 3). "A large portion of the park is covered with a heavy growth of pine timber, fit only for manufacture into lumber," he wrote.

Norris, who took a strong stand against private interests mining minerals within the Park (Norris 1878, 841), suggested that Yellowstone's deposits of sulphur and other minerals in the geyser basins might be

profitable for the government for pharmaceutical purposes. He also suggested an added benefit to holding a hotel lease in the Park would be the sale of trinkets coated with water from the terraces (Norris 1881, 24-25).

The Growing Importance of Wildlife

Yellowstone's wildlife experienced a changing role during the study period, from that of the commonplace to that of a threatened resource. The uniqueness of geysers was responsible for the setting aside of the Park, and their protection drove many of the initial management and funding decisions. Yet once there were enough "rangers" to adequately prevent tourists and scientists from carrying home large pieces of the geothermal features, protection of the disappearing wildlife became the dominant issue with early park superintendents.

By 1879 large game animals were disappearing at an alarming rate in the region, especially the bison. The Interior Department was under increasing pressure to respond to reports of the widespread slaughter of wildlife within Yellowstone. In 1880 Interior provided the funds to hire the Park's first gamekeeper, Harry Yount. However, one gamekeeper could not possibly stop the slaughter of Yellowstone's wildlife, and he resigned the following year, saying only a police force could deal with the problem (Haines 1977, 2:58). When the U.S. Cavalry began managing the Park in 1886 one of its

first achievements was arresting poachers and stopping the slaughter of wildlife within the Park. The police force had finally arrived.

From very early on it was obvious to superintendents that the Park's wildlife needed protection. In 1872 Langford tried to prevent hunting game in the park for profit, an activity which was rapidly denuding the surrounding landscape of wildlife. He suggested that hunting and fishing only be allowed for necessity – to feed tourists and residents of Yellowstone (Langford 1873, 4). Norris followed suit, predicting the extinction of large game animals in the West, and reporting that 2,000 elk, nearly as many "big-horn deer" and antelope, and "scores if not hundreds" of moose and bison were killed in the Park during the spring of 1875:

As comparatively few of them were slain for food, but mostly for their pelts and tongues, often run down on snow-shoes and tomahawked when their carcasses were least valuable, and merely strychnine-poisoned for wolf or wolverine bait, the amount of most wholesome, nutritious and delicious food thus wantonly destroyed is simply incalculable. (Norris 1877, 842)

In 1879 the Montana Territorial Legislature passed a law to prevent the killing of bison, and Norris urged the Interior Department to adopt similar regulations within Yellowstone (Norris 1880, 22). He argued that the nation's pleasure park was the perfect place to "perpetuate these [bison] and other most beautiful, interesting, and valuable indigenous animals when elsewhere found only in the natural histories of extinct species."

By 1887 both Wyoming and Montana had laws prohibiting the year-round hunting of game, and U.S. Cavalry officers managing the Park had enough men on the ground to send out scouting parties to both protect and study Yellowstone's wildlife. Moses Harris, who served as acting superintendent from August 1886 to May 1889, was aware of the annual winter migrations of the elk and other large mammals (Figure 13). He reported sending scouting parties to prevent hunting within the Park, but said professional hunters were camped along the Yellowstone River just outside of the Park's boundaries, waiting for the game to be driven out of the mountains by deep snow (Harris 1887, 1) The same pattern continues today with bison and elk wandering out of the Park along the Yellowstone River.

Harris said thousands of elk could be seen wintering in the Lamar Valley, which were becoming less afraid of humans, although he reported bison numbers had plummeted. "My impression is that they have been heretofore somewhat overestimated, and that at the present time they do not exceed one hundred in number," he wrote in his superintendent's report of 1887.

Boutelle, who replaced Harris, also took a strong interest in the Park's wildlife, sending winter scouting parties out on snowshoes to count bison. Boutelle also warned Interior about schemes to remove the northeast corner of Yellowstone from protection (Boutelle 1889, 23). "If the preservation of the game in the Park is worthy of consideration this should be strongly opposed,

Figure 13. Snowbound Elk

Deep snow made Yellowstone's elk particularly vulnerable to poachers, who could ski very close to the trapped animals. 1894. Photograph by F. Jay Haynes. Haynes Foundation Collection, Montana Historical Society.



as some of the principal winter ranges of elk and buffalo are in the part proposed to be cut off," he wrote. This was the first time the northeast corner of the Park had been cited as being worthy of any protection.

After guiding Wyoming Governor Francis E. Warren through the Park in 1889, Boutelle penned a letter to Warren urging protection of bison straying into Wyoming. Boutelle informed the governor about Montana's ban on killing bison and urged Warren to enact the same: "Unless everything possible is done this last remnant of our greatest American game will certainly be obliterated." Warren took Boutelle's advice and the Wyoming Legislature adopted a law protecting bison at its next session (Boutelle 1890, 7).

Balancing Development and Preservation

The correspondence and reports of Yellowstone's first custodians also illustrate how much lodging and tourism development was thought to be appropriate within the Park. Yellowstone's early managers all welcomed the development of lodges and recreational activities within the Park, however there were limitations to what was acceptable.

With the example of the highly commercialized Niagara Falls, Americans had some idea of what was too much development. Niagara was widely recognized in the early 1800s as America's most significant natural feature, but by the 1830s hucksters and private developers had acquired the

best overlooks of the falls and created a carnival-like atmosphere by hawking cheap trinkets. European visitors condemned the commercialization of Niagara, and it eventually became a national embarrassment (Runte 1997, 5).

It was evident very early that Yellowstone should be adorned with numerous hotels near all the points of interest, and that these hotels would be comfortable and compare well with the hotels of Europe. But the great distances, bad roads into the Park and the lack of private investment prevented such a favorable comparison for many years. In 1888 Harris reported Yellowstone's hotels were "temporary in character, of cheap and poor construction and a shame and discredit to the National Park." Harris was the recipient of many complaints from tourists "who, while paying first-class hotel rates, are crowded into cold, leaky buildings, totally devoid of all appliances of comfort" (Harris 1888, 11).

Boutelle also reported on the overcrowding and poor conditions of Yellowstone's hotels. He gave the following example of problems in the poorly-constructed hotel with walls so thin that conversations easily carried into several nearby rooms:

As an instance of this agreeable lodging, a few nights ago, two ladies occupied one of these rooms. Two gentlemen occupied an adjoining room, and amused each other all night with bawdy stories until midnight . . . the manager knew nothing of it until morning, or he would have ejected the loafers from the building. (Boutelle 1890, 10)

Safety was also a consideration for superintendents because of the poor planning and construction. Boutelle reported no adequate fire escapes at the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel and none at all at the Canyon Hotel. The hotel at Norris burned to the ground in 1887, and Boutelle predicted a similar occurrence at either Mammoth or Canyon would lead to fatalities.

Providing tourists with recreational opportunities in the nation's pleasuring ground was a goal of Norris, who for several years championed the idea of putting a steamer or sailing boat on Yellowstone Lake. In his second report to Interior he predicted that with another season's improvements of roads and bridle paths, and adequate protection from Indians, an investor could be found to build a hotel at Yellowstone Lake, equipped with a small steamer or yacht (Norris 1878). By 1880 Norris had fully explored the boundaries of the lake and again predicted a steamer could provide service within the lake and down the Yellowstone River, possibly all the way to the "Great Falls."

While just about any reasonable hotel or recreational proposal probably would have been approved in Yellowstone if the investor had the financial backing to get the job done, Boutelle stopped short of approving an elevator to assist tourists at the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. D.B. May of Billings had somehow slipped through the cracks and was granted a lease to build an elevator at the lower falls of the Grand Canyon. But after more careful

consideration, Boutelle urged Interior to cancel or at least radically alter the lease.

... It was a mistake to approve any elevator to reach the bottom of the canon [sic] without its coming into full sight and destroying the view from the head of the great falls. This is one of the grandest views on earth and doubly grand that the hand of man is nowhere visible. (Boutelle 1890, 11)

Historian Duane Hampton suggests that Boutelle's stubborn stand against the elevator helped set a national park policy against commercialization. Boutelle also opposed granting a railroad right-of-way into the Park, and when a proposal was made in Congress to extend the southern boundary of Yellowstone, Boutelle informed the Interior Department it would be more appropriate to expand further to the south, to include Jackson Lake and the peaks of the Tetons (Hampton 1971, 99).

Building the Road and Trail Network

The road network established by Yellowstone's early custodians has changed very little to this day, thus leaving an indelible mark on the landscape. As roads improved, tourists could see more of Yellowstone's wonders in less time, and as freight prices dropped, private investors were encouraged to build lavish hotels. Following the paths of the explorers and first local tourists as they made the grand rounds, the park's early road builders reinforced patterns of human use within Yellowstone. And by

omission, the road builders determined which areas of the Park would remain virtually wilderness. The vast areas surrounding the original road network remain mostly roadless today, and see only a small percentage of the human use within Yellowstone.

The custodians' focus on road building demonstrates the pressure that tourists and local entrepreneurs were applying to the Park superintendents and the Interior Department to make the Park accessible. After the first six years with no federal road building, Norris and following superintendents were immediately playing catch-up. The frantic road building pace also demonstrates how superintendents envisioned Yellowstone's role as a destination point for tourists. Each superintendent during this 18-year period supported the development of good roads and hotels at all the main attractions.

It was obvious immediately that development and use of Yellowstone would require speedier and more comfortable access. After Langford's first visit to Yellowstone as its superintendent in 1872, he immediately asked for funding to build roads, which would ensure "the early erection of large and commodious public houses. . ." He said he had received several requests to improve the trails within the Park by private business, but argued that the government should avoid toll roads, and build its own roads, so access would be free to all (Norris 1872, 3).

Despite Norris's wish, business owners in Bozeman and Virginia City, Montana, raised money to build the first roads to the Park. By 1873 the Bozeman Toll Road was built from Bozeman to Mammoth Hot Springs. Later that same year, Virginia City entrepreneurs raised \$2,000 for Gilman Sawtell, who owned a hotel at Henry's Lake in Idaho, to build a road from Virginia City to the Lower Geyser Basin via Henry's Lake and the Madison River (O'Brien 1965, 50; Haines 1977, 1:195).

When they finally received funding from Congress, Yellowstone's custodians began a flurry of road, bridge and trail building to get tourists to the many destinations within the Park, and to lure investors to build hotels. Norris was the first to receive actual funding for road building, and he quickly put it to use hiring a well-armed labor crew for road work. In less than a month, without adequate exploration of the route, Norris and his crew built 60 miles of rough road during the summer of 1878, stretching from Mammoth to the Lower Geyser Basin near Nez Perce Creek (Haines 1977, 1:237).

Throughout his term as superintendent, Norris was of great importance in determining the location of the Yellowstone road system. When he arrived only the two privately built roads existed in the Park. When he left five years later, more than two-thirds of the grand loop had been completed in generally the same location as today. He built approximately 104 miles of roads in the vicinity of today's grand loop, which

is 140 miles long. With little training and less funding and equipment, Norris followed a policy of building the most roads with the least amount of money (O'Brien 1965). Norris' road building style led to heavy criticism by tourists and federal officials suffering the jarring wagon rides and prompted the Army Engineers to get involved with Yellowstone's roads. "The roads are outrageous," a writer told the *Avant Courier* (1880c). "A man cannot ride his horse up some of them. There is not a mule-driver or bull-whacker who could and would [not] make better roads over the mountains and through the Park than our old fossiliferous friend Norris has made."

In 1883 Lieutenant Dan Kingman of the Army Engineers was assigned to Yellowstone to build roads with an initial annual budget of \$23,570. This amount gradually increased until reaching \$75,000 in 1890. Kingman, who was highly praised by each superintendent he worked with, brought professional standards to road building, and reversed Norris' policy of quantity over quality (O'Brien 1965, 87). Kingman had a long-term plan of building a double-track wagon road entirely around Yellowstone from Mammoth to Norris, through the geyser basins, then to Yellowstone Lake and on to the Grand Canyon, and then back to Norris where it would tie into the road from Mammoth. Indeed, Kingman envisioned almost the entire modern figure-eight road system we have today in the Park.

While Kingman's grand plan was not completed under his term of service, his accomplishments had a notable impact. Improvements to the

road from Gardiner through the Lower Geyser Basin reduced the cost of freight hauled into Yellowstone's interior by fifty cents per hundred weight. The improvements also cut 30 miles and one day's travel from the time it took tourists to tour the park (Haines 1977, 2:215). Road building continued in Yellowstone after 1890, finally reaching the south entrance in 1895, the east entrance in 1903 and the northeast entrance in 1935 (O'Brien 1965, 46).

Developing a Management System

The management of Yellowstone evolved from virtually non-existent caretakers in the first few years to a functioning system of professionals by 1890. Cavalry officers managing the Park during the late 1880s recognized that their management efforts were far from adequate, yet they seemed to grasp what was needed to protect Yellowstone's natural resources, while providing a quality experience for visitors. Although probably not apparent to them at the time, Yellowstone's custodians were field testing the national park idea and setting many of the policies that remain in effect today.

Three challenges were dominant for caretakers during this 18-year period that had to be solved before Yellowstone could function smoothly as a national park. Lack of adequate funding was a recurring theme for all of Yellowstone's superintendents and supporters. There was a constant shortage of personnel on the ground to police a 3,400-square-mile area, and laws and

regulations were wholly inadequate. The solution to all three challenges were at least discovered, if not resolved completely by 1890.

Although backers of the legislation to establish Yellowstone promised not to return to Congress seeking funding for several years, Langford made a plea for funding in his first annual report. "It should be sustained," he wrote in 1872. "Our Government, having adopted it, should foster it and render it accessible to the people of all lands, who in future time will come in crowds to visit it." Norris also took up the cause in his first annual report:

Whether this national heritage of the unique, the beautiful, and the marvelous, somewhat aided by art and judicial management, is to thus become and ever remain the chosen resort of the student, the scientist, and the weary and worn pilgrims for health and pleasure of our own and other lands, or be given up, as heretofore, to the ruthless vandalism by all comers, depends upon the tendering or withholding of the fostering hand of the guardians of our nation's wealth and weal without delay. (Norris 1877)

The lack of funding was an obvious frustration for Yellowstone's custodians. Their letters and reports often began enthusiastically as they arrived in the Park to begin their mission, only to fade into frustration after learning first hand the impossibility of accomplishing the mission without money. Within a year Norris' tone about funding had become more direct:

... the wisdom of Congress in promptly dedicating the National Park has never been seriously questioned ... Hence, it is not what Congress has done, but what it so long neglected to do ... But rather the failure to make moderate appropriations for its protection and improvement until leases could be made to assist in rendering it self-sustaining ... (Norris 1878)

Without money to pay for assistants, Norris' mission to protect the natural resources of the Park, including its wildlife, was nearly impossible. Harry Yount, appointed Yellowstone's lone gamekeeper in 1880, expressed the difficulties of his job patrolling a vast wilderness. "... This cannot be done by any one man, and I would respectfully urge for the purpose the appointment of a small, active, reliable police force..." (Norris 1881, 50). Defending himself against charges he allowed vandalism to take place in the Park, superintendent P.H. Conger, who served in the position for only two years from 1882 to 1884, argued that he had only eight men to patrol more than 3,000 square miles. Prophetically, he stated that only an army could protect the Park (*Livingston Enterprise* 1884c).

Funds from Congress began trickling into Yellowstone, and appropriations for road building in 1883 helped tremendously. But the funding problem worsened in 1886, when Congress failed to make any appropriations for a superintendent and assistants. This led the Secretary of the Interior to request troops to protect Yellowstone, and Capt. Harris arrived with the 50 men of Troop M, First Cavalry. With 50 men, whose salary was paid by the War Department, Harris had more resources to work with than any previous superintendent.

With the Army Engineers paying for road construction and the War Department paying for a superintendent and troop of assistants, much of the funding problems were solved, yet with tourist numbers climbing rapidly,

even a troop of cavalry proved to be inadequate. By 1887 Harris had stationed his men at six different sites within Yellowstone (Figure 14), each responsible for patrolling their respective areas. Yet Harris said two additional scouts and an additional company of infantry would be needed to adequately protect the park during the tourist season.

When soldiers first arrived to protect Yellowstone they almost immediately put a stop to vandalism and much of the poaching taking place, yet a lack of adequate laws and regulations tied their hands in some cases, and in others, made them appear to be overly strict. D. W. Wear, who was superintendent for a brief period before Harris would arrive with troops in 1886, made the following report:

In fact, so far as the enforcement of the laws of the Park proper, there is no system available by which it can be done. The protection that I have been able to give the Park has been through the Territorial laws of Wyoming, which the legislature repealed last winter. (Wear 1886, 4)

Harris discovered that his only recourse for lawbreakers was to expel them from the Park and confiscate their equipment. Jas Deay, a frustrated assistant superintendent, wrote to Conger about his trouble enforcing regulations (Deay 1883). "I have warned the offenders time and time again that the law would be strictly enforced, but they laughed at the idea of confiscating their outfits, which consisted of their wearing apparel." The lack of laws with any teeth attracted stage robbers, gamblers and adventurers who preyed upon unwary tourists (Harris 1889). Boutelle called the lack of effective

Figure 14. Mud Volcano Cabin

The Mud Volcano cabin was one of the primitive "ranger stations" in early Yellowstone. Note the length of the skis. 1894. Photograph by F. Jay Haynes. Haynes Foundation Collection, Montana Historical Society.



laws the most embarrassing feature of Park administration. "So far as the superintendent is concerned he can make no distinction between the offense of breaking a small piece off a formation or breaking a tourist's head, carrying away a bit of incrustation or carrying away a tourist's trunk" (Harris 1889, 23).

If serious lawbreakers were getting off with light punishment because of the lack of laws within Yellowstone, some tourists were thrown out of the park for minor infractions, such as not properly extinguishing a camp fire. While locals living near the Park had asked for better protection of Yellowstone, some were not happy with the sometimes severe consequences of minor transgressions. The *Avant Courier* (1885b) reprinted the following sarcastic account from the *Livingston Enterprise* :

Frank Henry got back from his tour of the Park yesterday. He says he escaped being arrested, but took big chances – killed a rattlesnake and two horse flies, drank out of a geyser, and smoked his pipe several times.

Another tourist wrote to the *Livingston Enterprise* (1887c) complaining that a travel companion had been ejected from the Park after first trying to write his name on one of the terraces, and then trying to bribe the arresting soldier. "This is only one side of the story, but . . . It furnishes evidence that men are molested, arrested and ejected from the Park without being heard in their own defense and for trivial causes," the traveler argued. Harris agreed with the sentiment and had the same concerns about the inadequate laws. "Instead of a pleasuring ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people,

it [the Park] seemed likely to become a place where visitors would be subject to arbitrary arrest and serious annoyances for the most ordinary and innocent actions," Harris reported in 1889.

When Harris reported for duty in Yellowstone, he believed military rule of Yellowstone would be only a temporary cure for the Park's problems, and in his first annual report he suggested appropriations for returning the civilian government the following year. Yet soldiers patrolled the Park for the next 32 years – not because of any thought-out strategy, but because Congress would not appropriate funds (Hampton 1971, 85).

In his final report as superintendent, Harris urged Interior to permanently settle the question of governing Yellowstone, suggesting that if not the military, then an organized police force would be needed to protect the Park and serve visitors. In a final note, he added:

In my experience in connection with this National Park I have been very forcibly impressed with the danger to which it is subjected by the greed of private enterprise. All local influence centers in schemes whereby the Park can be used for pecuniary advantage. In the unsurpassed grandeur of its natural condition it is the pride and glory of the nation; but if under guise of improvement selfish interests are permitted to make merchandising of its wonders and beauties it will inevitably become a by-word and a reproach. (Harris 1889, 12)

Summary

By the time Harris and Boutelle left their commands in Yellowstone, the Park's custodians had learned valuable lessons about managing a national

park. Increasing numbers of tourists illustrated the need for a large police force, and adequate roads and housing within the Park. Years of struggling with inadequate laws and regulations made it clear that Yellowstone must have more authority from Congress to keep the peace and protect the natural resources of the Park. Scheming private interests convinced custodians to be wary of commercialization of Yellowstone for profit. And custodians also discovered that, although not anticipated originally, one critical role of Yellowstone would be as a sanctuary for America's disappearing wildlife.

Studying the custodian's viewpoint is critical to understanding the national park idea because they were responsible for field testing the idea on the ground in Yellowstone. Their task was to take a vague concept of a national "pleasuring ground," and with very little funding or guidance from Congress or the government, make it work. The early custodians did make it work, and by studying their experiences we can see how the idea took shape and evolved during this 18-year period to become a template for our modern national park system.

As Yellowstone's custodians evolved from the role of settler and explorer, they experimented with improving nature, as Norris did when he attempted to "help" Liberty Cap. Boutelle decided to stock fish in Yellowstone to improve fishing for tourists. This experimentation was part of the process that needed to occur as Yellowstone's custodians learned how to manage a national park. As noted earlier, the behavior of improving nature was

somewhat typical of resource management of the 1870s. Other examples were the damming of a stream at Mammoth Caves in Kentucky, and the killing of predators throughout the West (Limerick 1987, 311). The practice of improving nature in the 1870s did not illustrate that humans were superior to nature, but that people and nature could coexist. Improving the landscape by making the resources more accessible to tourists was a way to acknowledge and applaud the park's wonders (Meyer 1996, 92).

Another important milestone for the Park's managers was establishing an initial balance between development and preservation. The custodians welcomed the development of lodges, wagon roads and other recreational opportunities for tourists. However they refused to approve an intrusive elevator proposed to carry tourists to the lower falls of the Grand Canyon. They also fought to prevent the proposed Cooke City Railroad from entering the northeast corner of the Park. These decisions helped establish a national park policy against commercialization (Hampton 1971).

Following in the footsteps of the local tourists cutting trails to the main attractions of Yellowstone, the Park's custodians built a road and trail network that has changed very little to this day. This work was necessary to open Yellowstone to more visitors and allow access to build hotels throughout the Park. But more importantly, the road network reinforced patterns of human use within Yellowstone. And by omission, the road builders determined which areas of the Park would remain virtual wilderness.

Yellowstone's custodians also developed a management system that by 1890 had created a functioning national park. With the arrival of the U.S. Cavalry in 1886, Yellowstone finally had enough funding and personnel to establish effective management of the Park. Through trial and error the government learned that operating a national park was expensive and required a small army of assistants to protect Yellowstone's resources and keep up with the growing demand of tourists. Not all of the management problems were solved by 1890, but the Cavalry officers knew what was needed in the way of laws and regulations, as well as funding and staffing to successfully operate a national park.

THE NATIONAL VIEWPOINT

Americans living outside of the Yellowstone region, primarily in the larger population centers on the East Coast, played an important role in the evolution of the national park idea. National newspaper and magazine writers and editors first promoted the Park's establishment, then pushed for Yellowstone's protection as it became threatened by vandalism, commercial monopoly or lack of laws and regulations. Congress and federal caretakers, such as the Interior Department, had the authority or political clout to greatly impact the shape of how Yellowstone would be managed.

National visitors, which made up the majority of Yellowstone's tourists after 1883, helped to define the national park idea, by passing the word about Yellowstone, and by discovering how to behave in and experience a national park. The growing visitor numbers were also a test of Yellowstone's staying power – whether a visit lived up to its reputation, or if Yellowstone would fade to the role of a regional attraction. There were a number of guide books available to tourists planning a trip to Yellowstone. Some provided simple objective facts and costs for the trip, while others, such as the Northern Pacific Railroad brochures, were blatantly self-promoting and told visitors how to feel about Yellowstone. Published travel accounts in

magazines and books, as well as unpublished accounts found in diaries, journals and letters, help us reconstruct how these early visitors experienced the Park, and their opinions about what a national park should be.

Publications Influencing Congress and Federal Agencies

National magazines and national newspapers both influenced and mirrored the opinions of Congress and federal officials. While locals living near Yellowstone, and Park superintendents, were the most knowledgeable about issues, they lacked the political clout to accomplish much in Congress or with the Interior Department, and Yellowstone's isolation made communication to the East Coast difficult. National publications filled this void, informing hundreds of thousands of readers, as well as members of Congress, about Yellowstone, and sometimes fighting for its protection and better management.

It is important to study the articles that influenced the federal government, because they illustrate which values writers and editors thought must be protected in Yellowstone. When editors fought efforts to build a railroad through a section of the Park, they cited protection of the region's forests and watersheds. When editors spoke out against generous corporate leases in Yellowstone, they were reminding the public that the Park was set aside for the entire nation, not just private corporations. The arguments offer

valuable insights into what Americans were being told a national park was for.

To reconstruct the role of the national publications during Yellowstone's first 18 years, the author began with a search of Poole's Index, which indicated only 30 magazine articles published about Yellowstone during that time period. I was able to locate and assess 20 of the articles, published in *Scribner's Monthly*, *The American Naturalist*, *The Nation*, *American Journal of Science and Arts*, *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, *Outing*, *The Graphic*, *The Contributor*, *Popular Science Monthly*, *Lippincott's Magazine*, and *The Overland Monthly*. *Scribner's Monthly* was useful because it printed excerpts from the discovery accounts of Yellowstone's explorers, including Truman Everts' "Thirty-seven Days of Peril." The *American Naturalist* was also valuable because it printed two articles by Theo. B. Comstock discussing the scientific values of Yellowstone and future uses for the Park. Typically, articles in the remaining general interest magazines were travel accounts or scientific descriptions of the geothermal and other geologic features of Yellowstone.

Poole's Index did not list articles published in *Forest and Stream*, a leading weekly forum for sportsmen and naturalists. *Forest and Stream* was prolific, publishing 315 articles or editorials about Yellowstone. I reviewed the 315 articles available in Yellowstone National Park's Archives, and chose 100 to assess that were relevant to this study. Editor George Bird Grinnell, a

powerful figure in the emerging conservation movement, used the pages of his magazine to nationalize his concerns about Yellowstone's wildlife and management, and to instill in his readers a sense of public ownership in the Park (Broadbent 1997, 31). *Forest and Stream* published many articles about hunting and fishing accounts in Yellowstone. However, the majority of articles described threats to the Park or opportunities through legislation in Congress to better protect Yellowstone or expand its boundaries.

I also used the *New York Times* index to locate and assess 121 articles written about Yellowstone during this time period. The *New York Times* did a good job covering the early explorations of Yellowstone, and continued to publish travel accounts throughout the Park's first 18 years. Most of the articles covered threats to the Park, from vandalism, monopolistic leases, and the proposed Cooke City Railroad. The newspaper also kept track of legislation in Congress affecting Yellowstone, including bills to expand the Park, and provide adequate laws and regulations.

As I assessed all of the national articles, I ran the material past a checklist of questions to reconstruct the national publications' role in the evolving national park idea: What was the purpose of a national park? What values should be protected in a national park? What were the perceived threats to Yellowstone? What image of Yellowstone was being portrayed to their national readership?

The first contributions of the national press were the public accounts of the first expeditions into Yellowstone. Published in *Scribner's Monthly* and distributed to every member of Congress, the rich descriptions of the Hayden Expedition and stunning visual elements of Thomas Moran convinced lawmakers to create the world's first national park (Hyde 1990, 197). The original descriptions and images of Yellowstone published in *Scribner's* and other magazines molded America's first impression of the region and served as a template for further evolution of the public's perception of place (Meyer 1996, 51; Runte 1997, 35).

After the initial explorers' accounts, national magazines and newspapers published sporadic travel accounts and news accounts until about 1882, when the Northern Pacific Railroad was nearing Yellowstone's doorstep. This event produced a flurry of articles in both local and national publications. Like many of the railroad companies in the late 1800s, the Northern Pacific had a strong political lobby. The railroads were critical in the government's plan to populate the Great Plains and Rockies, and were awarded huge land tracts as an incentive to build the costly roads across the country. The Northern Pacific was using its political clout to influence the Interior Department and Congress to grant the railroad very profitable leases for hotels and transportation within Yellowstone. The leasing issue galvanized Grinnell and *Forest and Stream*, which published at least 26 articles about the "land grab" from December of 1882 to March of 1883.

In an article titled "The Park Grab," Grinnell reported that the plot to monopolize the "people's Pleasuring Ground" was flourishing. A few voices were raised against the Northern Pacific, "but with a powerful lobby to back them, and no opposition from the Interior Department, the grabbers have little to fear." Under a pending lease agreement with the acting Interior Secretary, the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company, which included New York financier Rufus Hatch, with ties to the Northern Pacific Railroad, would pay only \$2 an acre for 640-acre sections at each of the Park's most desirable sites. The lessees were also to have the right to cut timber for building hotels and for fuel, and farm some areas of the Park. They also were to have received exclusive rights to putting steamers and other boats on Yellowstone Lake (*Forest and Stream* 1883a).

When the Improvement Company began actual construction of its first hotel in Yellowstone before a lease was finalized, an obviously incensed Grinnell wrote the following editorial:

With a boldness that is astonishing, they have absolutely gone on and begun to build their hotels thus virtually taking possession of a government reservation, using timber which is not theirs, and killing the government game and fish to feed their employees. They have seized a portion of the public territory and declare that the revenue to be derived from it shall flow into their own pockets. (*Forest and Stream* 1883b)

The Yellowstone lease proposal also attracted the ire of the public. Gifford F. Parker wrote a passionate letter criticizing the leases to the editor of the *New York Times* in December of 1882. Parker called the Improvement

Company's proposal a scam to give away the national park and urged public meetings to discuss the issue (*New York Times* 1883a). "Let the people see all the articles of this lease," he wrote. "Let them scan it closely, and they will then cry 'Shame on the dominant party that passes this deed of greed! Shame on the Administration that permits it! Shame on the men who accept it!'"

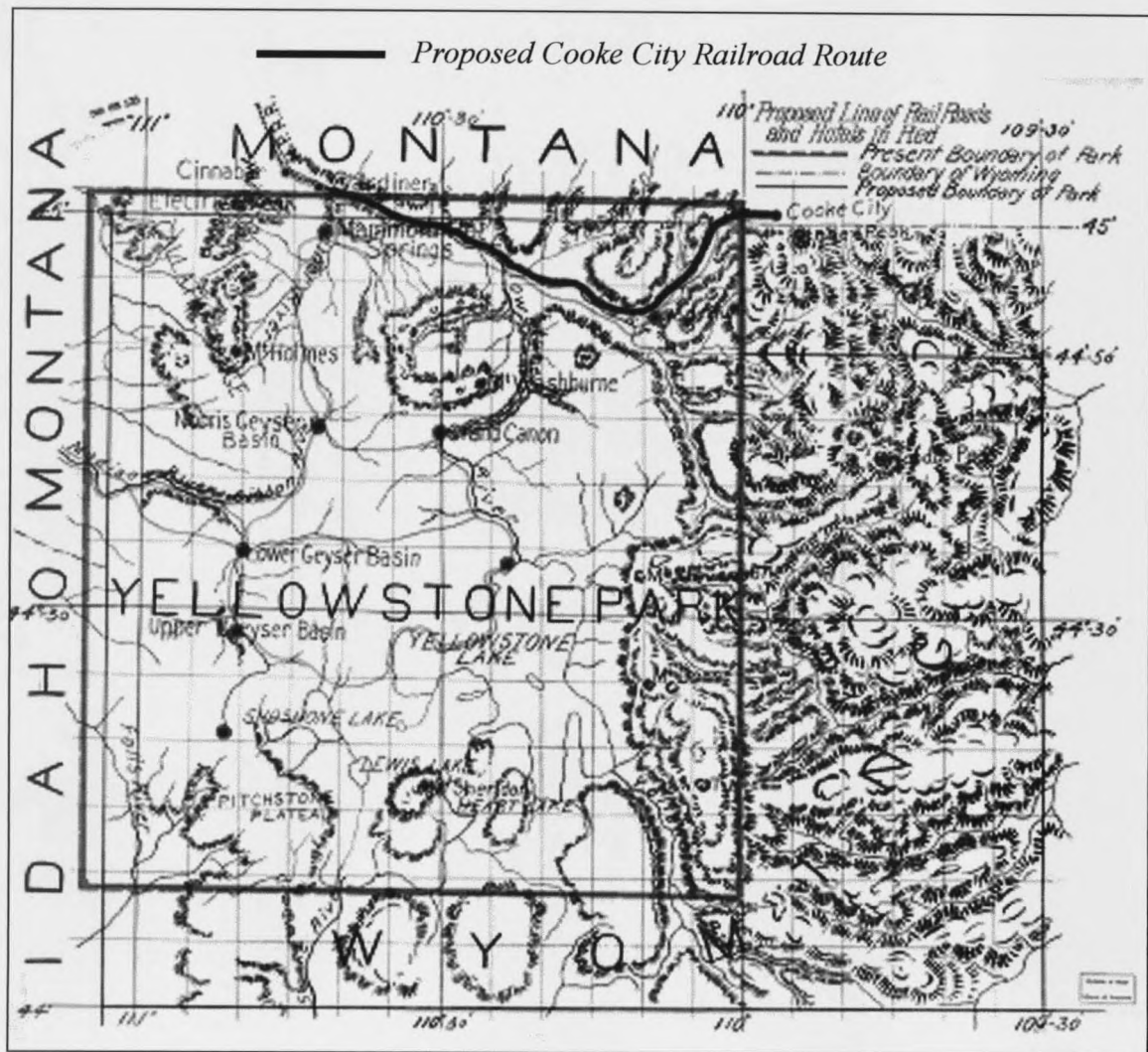
New York Times editors joined the fray, reporting that some sort of "hugger-mugger" was being practiced with the Park leasing. They accused the federal government of turning Yellowstone over to speculators because it could not take proper care of the Park itself (*New York Times* 1883b):

It is a shame that a great and rich Government like ours should seem to be incompetent to defend and preserve a reservation made for public enjoyment. It would be a humiliating confession of weakness, if, unable to defend the park, Congress should decide to let the Interior Department lease the domain to sharpers, speculators, and land-grabbers.

Another perceived threat to Yellowstone was the proposed railroad through the northeast corner of the Park to the mining community of Cooke City (Figure 15). While the battle over leases was fought over the general threat of the over-commercialization of Yellowstone by private enterprise, the railroad debate illustrated the kinds of values the national press thought was worth protecting in the Park. Writers and editors argued that a railroad

Figure 15. Cooke City Railroad Route

The proposed Northern Pacific Railroad route from Gardiner to Cooke City is shown in the northeast corner of Yellowstone. Note that Yellowstone's first boundaries were square. Circa 1900. National Park Service. Library of Congress Geography and Map Division, Washington, D.C.



through the Park endangered the forests, watersheds and wildlife of Yellowstone, while opening the door to more railroads within the Park:

The inestimable economic importance of the forests about the headwaters of the Yellowstone and Snake rivers, the popular and scientific interest in the preservation of the various species of wild animals and the of the natural curiosities of the region . . . furnish the strongest possible reasons against the building of a railroad in the Park. (*Forest and Stream* 1886a)

Opponents of the Cooke City railroad believed fires sparked by locomotive engines, a common occurrence, might devastate Yellowstone's forests, thus damaging important watersheds and denying the arid West a critical resource. Grinnell argued that while the government planned to spend millions of dollars to build reservoirs downriver of Yellowstone, it was about to destroy the source of the water flowing into those reservoirs. Some of the consequences of the railroad were obviously exaggerated. Grinnell predicted that all the rivers and springs of Yellowstone would run dry once the forests were destroyed by fire if a railroad was allowed to enter the Park (*Forest and Stream* 1890). Opponents also feared the wail and noise of locomotives, as well as the concomitant development along the railroad corridor, would drive away Yellowstone's wildlife.

A more serious threat to the Park's wildlife came years earlier in Yellowstone's history, when poachers and commercialized sport hunting threatened the existence of deer, elk, bison and other large game. A New York newspaper published an illustration on its front page of a shooter on

horseback surrounded by 27 or more dead elk at the base of the Yellowstone Falls. Titled "The Nimrod of the Yellowstone," the illustration's caption reported thousands of the Park's elk slaughtered and left to rot on the ground (*Daily Graphic* 1878). The ignorance of Eastern newspaper editors about Yellowstone's wildlife was apparent in the moose horns drawn on the heads of the dead elk.

Other newspapers were publishing accounts of thousands of bison hides being shipped out of Yellowstone, while some bison were shot for pleasure and left with hides intact. The *Sioux City Journal* reported that 100,000 bison hides were shipped out of the Yellowstone "country" in 1881. "Nothing like it has ever been known in the history of the fur trade" (*Forest and Stream* 1881). Grinnell had accompanied Gen. P.H. Sheridan on a trip through Yellowstone, and had become convinced that America's last herd of wild bison would be exterminated if conditions did not improve. He began a campaign designed to elevate public awareness of the abuses in Yellowstone and to adopt federal legislation to protect the Park. Grinnell's first attempt was to expose the Yellowstone Valley Hunting Club, a group that guaranteed Eastern tourists a chance to kill trophy animals in Yellowstone.

A large stock of game might . . . be corralled in substantial enclosures, where the timid tourist could pump away with his repeating rifle . . . or the animals might be roped and tied to a post and then slaughtered by proxy." (Reiger 1975, 100-101)

Grinnell and Sheridan's answer to Yellowstone's problems was pushing for legislation in Congress, including an attempt to expand the Park. Sheridan suggested expanding the Park by 3,344 square miles to create an additional preserve for the "large game of the West, now so rapidly decreasing" (*New York Times* 1882). Sheridan claimed the additional land would not be "taking away anything from the people," because its high altitude made cultivation or winter grazing impossible. Sheridan's plan would have nearly doubled Yellowstone, expanding the boundaries 40 miles to the east and 10 miles to the south (Culpin 1976, 277). Grinnell pushed for Sheridan's expansion for several years:

The Park should undoubtedly be extended as advised by him [Sheridan], and this should be done at once before any settlers' claims are taken up within the proposed new boundaries. The people of the United States would then have a public preserve and pleasure ground which for extent, for beauty of scenery, for natural wonders, and for the variety and interest attaching to the indigenous life within its boundaries, would be unequalled by anything in the world. (*Forest and Stream* 1882)

While educating its readers about the problems in Yellowstone and offering solutions, Grinnell also attacked Congress for its repeated inaction to both fund and pass legislation to protect and manage the national park. As time went on, his editorials became more heated as he became frustrated with Yellowstone's lack of any priority in Washington. The failure of Congress to appropriate an adequate sum of money for the protection of Yellowstone was "one of the most outstandingly foolish and short-sighted acts of the present

incompetent and neglectful House of Representatives," Grinnell wrote (*Forest and Stream* 1886b).

The editor of the *New York Times* agreed with Grinnell. After a bill to provide funding and management for Yellowstone was killed three times because riders were attached to allow the Northern Pacific Railroad to enter the Park to reach the mining town of Cooke City, the editor wrote:

The House Committee is willing to sacrifice the rights and the privileges of the whole people of the United States to a petty local interest. That is the wrong point of view. The people of the South and of the East have equal rights in the Park with the people of Montana, and Congress should protect them in their enjoyment. (*New York Times* 1890)

The *New York Times* editorial brought up an argument that remains active today – the rights of the national public to enjoy and preserve the Park versus the rights of locals or commercial interests proposing development in or on the boundaries of Yellowstone.

The national publications are an important source to study the evolving national park idea because they gave a voice to Yellowstone and its problems. Local residents and Yellowstone's custodians appealed for help from Congress and the Interior Department, but lacked the political strength to be effective. National publications were read in Washington, and had the ability to make changes.

The magazines and newspapers also played the important role of portraying the character of Yellowstone to a large national audience who

could not yet visit the Park. Americans in the late 1800s were fascinated by the still-unfolding frontier of the American West. The fantastic features and potential for adventure in Yellowstone made it an attractive topic for the national magazines. *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* printed dozens of articles about the West during this time period and boasted a monthly circulation of between 100,000 and 200,000 readers. As Wyckoff and Nash noted in their study of western images published in *Harper's*, the images provide a "unique look at how a rapidly changing landscape was being portrayed to a generation of armchair travelers hungry to know more about the region" (Wyckoff and Nash 1994).

The continuous, thorough coverage of Park issues in *Forest and Stream* and the *New York Times* demonstrates that Yellowstone went beyond a regional attraction to become "national" in scope. To devote so much space to the Park in these publications, the editors must have recognized the reader demand for stories about Yellowstone. This tells us that the national public was both aware of Yellowstone issues, and concerned about threats and the overall condition of the Park.

The U.S. Congress

The U.S. Congress was ultimately responsible for the fate of the Yellowstone national park experiment. Through the attention or more often

inattention of Congress, policy would be made on the ground in Yellowstone. The wisdom of setting aside Yellowstone and reversing the pattern of selling off the government's holdings throughout the West is astounding given the attitudes about wilderness at the time. Historian F. Tilden noted the discord between the government's past handling of wilderness and the decision to preserve Yellowstone:

This was a wonderful thing, that a hustling, restless, dollar-chasing young nation, with much of its population swarming like locusts over the virgin land, should have been able to pause long enough to look into the future with such spiritual prudence; it had not happened before. (Tilden 1968, 99)

As incredible as Congress' decision to establish Yellowstone as the world's first wildlands national park, it was more incredible that Congress virtually abandoned Yellowstone for appropriations or protection for almost all of its first 18 years. The Organic Act (U.S. Statutes at Large) that established Yellowstone, a mere one and a half pages in length, was vague and provided no structure or funding for its administration. The Act was all the guidance the Interior Department and its first superintendents had to carry out their mission of protecting Yellowstone. The Interior Secretary was made responsible for protecting the park from "injury or despoilment," yet there were no specific laws for governing the region, no specified punishment for enforcing rules established by the Secretary, and no appropriations to carry out enforcement, road building or even pay the salary of the park's first superintendent.

The primary sources for determining the role of Congress in the evolving national park idea are debates and reports published in the *Congressional Record* and the *Globe*, which preceded it, and federal agency documents indexed in *Poore's Table and Index*, the *Checklist of United States Public Documents*, *Ames Comprehensive Index of the United States Government* and the *U.S. Serial Set Index*. The author found 38 Congressional documents about Yellowstone relevant to this study, and several attempts to set aside additional national parks, that died in the Committee on Public Lands.

The debate in Congress when the Organic Act was passed is a valuable source to study. The discussion illustrates both the reasons supporters wanted to set aside Yellowstone, and the concerns opponents had for establishing a national park. Legislation to allow the Cooke City Railroad to enter the park, leasing requests and efforts to expand the park also demonstrated the values members of Congress thought were important to protect within Yellowstone.

As I assessed the Congressional documents, I chose examples used in the following section by running the material through another checklist of questions to discover how members of Congress perceived Yellowstone: Did the government have a responsibility to preserve lands for aesthetic or recreational values? Were they well informed about Yellowstone and its issues? What did they see as the long-term goal for Yellowstone? What resources did they think should be protected within a national park?

However ineffective Congress was in following up on its national experiment, the debates and language of the original Organic Act setting aside Yellowstone, illustrate some of the values being protected in Yellowstone, as well as hints to the future uses of a national park. The language of the act suggests what Congress had in mind for its first national park. By authorizing the Interior Secretary to grant leases to entrepreneurs to build hotels, Congress clearly envisioned at least a limited role for private industry. However, in calling for the "preservation, from injury or spoilation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders" of Yellowstone, the act does imply limits to commercialization, requiring the features to be retained in "their natural condition." Yellowstone's role as a "public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" also clearly indicated the recreational use that has become a hallmark of America's national parks.

The protection of wildlife is also directed, requiring the Interior Secretary to prevent the "wanton destruction of fish and game found within said Park, and against their capture or destruction for purposes of merchandise or profit." This section of the act was debated in Congress, when two Senators didn't believe the language strong enough to protect the Park's wildlife. Sen. Henry B. Anthony of Rhode Island suggested prohibiting all killing of game for sport within Yellowstone: "If people are encamped there, and desire to catch fish and kill game for their own sustenance while they

remain there, there can be no objection to that; but I do not think it ought to be used as a preserve for sporting." Sen. Thomas W. Tipton of Nebraska said he believed all the game in Yellowstone would be destroyed if there were no restrictions: "... There should be a prohibition against their destruction for any purpose, for if the door is once opened I fear there will ultimately be an entire destruction of all the game in that park" (U.S. Congress 1872, 697).

By looking at the Congressional debate when the Organic Act was passed, Historian Alfred Runte has made the "worthless lands" argument, suggesting that the only reason Yellowstone was set aside is because of its apparent lack of valuable resources. As evidence he describes language used by the sponsors of the Yellowstone legislation to assure their peers that there was nothing to lose in the bill's passage because the region was worthless for resource extraction or settlement (Runte 1997, 50).

Supporters of Sen. Samuel Clarke Pomeroy's Yellowstone bill in the Senate mentioned the lack of value for settlement, but then spoke eloquently about the values of Yellowstone's unique features as a national park. "It is so far elevated above the sea that it cannot be used for private occupation at all, but it is probably one of the most wonderful regions in that space of territory which the globe exhibits anywhere..." said Sen. George F. Edmunds of Vermont. Sen. Lyman Trumbull of Illinois said the following on the Senate floor:

Here is a region of country away up in the Rocky mountains, where there are the most wonderful geysers on the face of the

earth; a country that is not likely ever to be inhabited for the purposes of agriculture; but it is possible that some person may go in there and plant himself across the only path that leads to these wonders, and charge every man that passes along between the gorges of these mountains a fee of a dollar or five dollars. He may place an obstruction there, and toll may be gathered from every person who goes to see these wonders of creation. (U.S. Congress. 1872, 697)

Surprisingly, opposition to the Yellowstone Senate bill came from California Senator Cornelius Cole, whose home state boasted Yosemite, from which the Yellowstone Organic Act was closely copied. Sen. Cole argued that the "geysers will remain, no matter where the ownership of the land may be." He also said there was an abundance of "public park ground" in the Rocky Mountains that would never be occupied. Other Yellowstone values and purposes came out of the Congressional debate as the Park's supporters tried year after year to pass legislation to protect the Park, or tried to kill legislation that would have allowed the Cooke City Railroad to enter Yellowstone.

During debate over a bill that would have placed Yellowstone under the legal jurisdiction of Montana, and allowed the Interior Secretary to request troops from the War Department to prevent the slaughter of game, Senators George C. Vest of Missouri and Ingalls from Kansas sparred about the future of Yellowstone. Ingalls said he had problems with both the high cost of operating a national park, and the idea of governing with troops, suggested returning Yellowstone to the stewardship of private citizens.

I should be glad, as I said before, if this whole project would be abandoned. There are other natural objects of interest in this

country, the canons of the Colorado, and inaccessible mountain summits, and cataracts, and caverns in the earth, and other objects . . . I think the original segregation of this territory from the public domain was a mistake, a mistake that is becoming more apparent as time goes on . . . (U.S. Congress 1884a, 1611)

Senator Vest, an avid supporter of Yellowstone, predicted there would be a homesteader cabin at Old Faithful before nightfall if Yellowstone was opened to settlement, which would have been an "outrage upon the American people." He compared privatizing Yellowstone to using Niagara as a mill, or turning the Mammoth Cave in Kentucky into an underground railroad (U.S. Congress 1884a, 1612). "I believe the people of the United States are entitled, on account of the magnitude and grandeur of their possessions, to have just such a place as was intended should be set apart by the original act . . ."

When legislation allowing the Cooke City Railroad to enter Yellowstone was introduced in February of 1884, the Senate Committee on Railroads reported in favor of the bill, citing a familiar argument by Henry Gannett of the U.S. Geological Survey. Gannett's letter (U.S. Congress 1884b) stated the railroad could not "injure the park as a pleasure resort," because it "traverses a region in which there are no objects of interest, with the exception of the third canon [sic] of the Yellowstone and of the Shoshone Mountains, which differ in no essential particular from similar scenery elsewhere."

But Vest and others were successful in killing the railroad bill. Senator John A. Logan from Illinois made an impassioned speech on the Senate floor warning of the dangers of commercial interests in the Park:

The Congress of the United States seems to be a mere football to be used according to the desires of men who wish to see everything in this Government for their own personal gain. There is not a government on earth, I believe, except our own that if it owned this beautiful park would allow it to be invaded or interfered with or used for any purpose except that which it was contemplated by the bill that was first passed reserving it . . . (U.S. Congress 1884c, 4549)

Senator Daniel W. Voorhees from Indiana also made a strong plea to vote down the bill allowing a railroad to enter the Park. "If this is to be done, then it is just as well to throw open this reservation that we have set aside and be done with it and let each person go in for a grab" (U.S. Congress 1884c, 4550).

By 1888 there was a greater awareness of the value of timbered watersheds and Yellowstone was beginning to get attention as important headwaters of the Snake River, which flows west to the Pacific Ocean, and the Yellowstone River, which flows north and eventually joins the Mississippi River. Members of Congress used this argument to try to expand the Park to the East and South, which would have almost doubled Yellowstone's size. "A closer examination of this water supply shows its preservation to be a question of vast economic interest," reported the Senate Committee on Territories. "No region in the northern Rocky Mountains possesses the same favorable conditions for receiving and distributing a magnificent water supply. For the preservation of this water in this natural

reservoir the dense timber which covers the region is of immense value" (U.S. Congress 1888).

Yellowstone's supporters were also touting the needs of wildlife as an excuse for expanding the Park. "The present limits of the Park are far too small for a satisfactory game preserve it is intended to make the place one where large game will naturally roam, particularly when driven in from outside for protection," the Senate Committee on Territories reported (U.S. Congress 1890). The committee promised that with the extension of Yellowstone's boundaries, and rigid enforcement of game laws, wildlife within the Park would become so numerous that a surplus would "run outside the park limits, affording abundant sport for the true hunter."

While not successful in expanding the Park, or winning legislation to protect its game during the first 18 years, the work of Grinnell and a coalition of sportsmen did pay off within the next few years. Defeated twice with bills in Congress, sympathetic lawmakers tried a back-door approach – attaching a rider, Section 24, to the Sundry Civil Service Appropriations Act of March 3, 1891. The Forest Reserve Act, as the rider came to be known, was added in committee with little public scrutiny, and gave the President authority to set aside forest lands as "public reservations" by executive order (Lynch 1976, 202). Within a month President Benjamin Harrison set aside almost as much land as Sheridan had suggested along Yellowstone's eastern boundary, which would become the nation's first national forest reserve (now the Shoshone National Forest). Six years later President

Grover Cleveland would use Section 24 again, adding an additional 21 million acres to the southern edge of Yellowstone that would be called the Teton Forest Reserve. Much of this land would later become part of Grand Teton National Park (Haines 1977, 2:97).

Protection would also come later for Yellowstone's game animals. U.S. Rep. Lacey of Iowa introduced legislation to protect the wildlife of Yellowstone and punish crimes committed in the Park. On March 26, 1894, the Lacey Act passed the House and Senate and was signed into law on May 7. The Lacey Act prohibited "all hunting, or the killing or wounding, or capturing at any time of any bird or wild animal, except dangerous animals, when it is necessary to prevent them from destroying human life or inflicting an injury."

Yellowstone wasn't the only national park proposed in Congress. Several other national parks were proposed between 1872 and 1890, but usually died in the Public Lands Committee. In Colorado, national parks were proposed at Royal Arch, Pagosa Springs and Garden of the Gods in 1877 and 1888. In Oregon, Crater Lake was proposed as a national park in 1886 and 1887, but would not reach national park status until 1902. In 1886 a national park was proposed at the headwaters of the Pecos River in New Mexico, and in 1882 a national park was proposed along the Colorado River in Arizona. In 1884 and 1886 there were attempts to expand the California's Yosemite and Mariposa Big Tree Grove grants, but those also died in committee. The one

exception was Mackinac Island in Michigan, which gained national park status in 1875, but survived only 20 years and then was returned to Michigan as a state park.

By 1890, the closing year of this study, the success of Yellowstone had led to the national acceptance of the national park idea and Congress began voting favorably on additional national park proposals. The large scenic national parks, Sequoia, General Grant and Yosemite, all in California, gained approval in 1890. The language of the national park bills demonstrates that Yellowstone became a template for future national parks. The 1875 act making Mackinac Island a national park was modeled closely after Yellowstone's Organic Act. The Sequoia legislation was also modeled after Yellowstone, establishing a "public park, or pleasure ground, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" (Mackintosh 1991, 12).

The role of Congress in the evolving national park idea is important to study because Congress was ultimately responsible for what many have called the best idea America ever had. Despite leaving Yellowstone without funding or adequate laws for several years, Congress eventually took responsibility for the Park, and then established several more national parks.

The Organic Act establishing Yellowstone was for many years the only guidance the Interior Department and early Park custodians had for guiding Yellowstone's future. By studying the Act, we know Congress clearly envisioned at least a limited role for private industry. However, the Act also

sets limits to commercialization by requiring the "preservation, from injury or spoilation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders" of Yellowstone. The Act also indicates the recreational use that has become a hallmark of America's national parks, and requires the protection of Yellowstone's wildlife.

By studying the debate in Congress over the establishment of Yellowstone, we can learn more about which resources were being protected within the Park. By carefully reading the debate we can also see that Alfred Runte's "worthless lands" argument focuses too narrowly on a political strategy, ignoring many positive arguments for Yellowstone's aesthetic values. The debates over the proposed Cooke City Railroad and efforts to expand Yellowstone demonstrated the growing awareness of the value of timbered watersheds, and the importance of the Park as a refuge for wildlife.

The Interior Department

The Interior Secretary was given responsibility for Yellowstone in the Organic Act of 1872, and remained responsible for the Park during its military rule until the National Park Service was created in 1916. The Interior Department appeared uninformed about many details of the isolated Park's management during its early years. As tourist numbers increased rapidly after the Northern Pacific's arrival at Yellowstone in 1883, and the Park's national

recognition grew, Interior began to take a more active role in the Park.

The primary source for this section are the Interior Department's annual reports published about Yellowstone. The annual reports were sparse compared to the detailed superintendent's reports, however, they are valuable during the later years for giving insight into the values and purposes of a national park. The evolution of the annual reports, from brief mentions of only one or two paragraphs in 1873 and 1874 to more significant documents in the late 1880s, corresponds with the Yellowstone's emerging role with the American public. The author also reviewed more than 1,000 letters sent to the Interior Department about Yellowstone. Many of the letters were requesting leasing privileges in the park, however letters written by investigator W. Hallet Phillips, and Wyoming Governor Francis E. Warren were very useful for this study.

As with previous sections, the author chose to use examples from the 18 years of annual reports and the letters sent to the Interior Department that would help answer a checklist of questions: How did the Interior Department view its responsibilities for protecting Yellowstone? What natural resources should be protected within a national park? How much development should be allowed within a national park? What type of development should be available for tourists within a national park? How did the Interior Department's role with Yellowstone evolve during this 18-year period?

Interior reports until the mid 1880s were very brief and hit a few highlights of reports the Department received from Yellowstone's superintendents. Occasionally the Interior Secretary would remind the public that without money or staff, the Department could not be blamed if Yellowstone is damaged by vandalism (U.S. Department of the Interior 1873). The proposed Cooke City Railroad did engage Interior's full attention in 1883, and the Secretary published a report by Railroad Commissioner W.M. H. Armstrong in favor of not only the Cooke City Railroad, but additional railroads within the Park. Armstrong reported that the Park "cannot be developed and rendered at all easy of reasonable access" without a railroad to all the points of interest within Yellowstone (U.S. Department of the Interior 1883).

However, when Interior Secretary L.Q.C. LaMar replaced Secretary H. M. Teller, the Department flip-flopped its position on railroads. Teller said a railroad within the Park was not consistent with the purposes for which Yellowstone was set aside. These purposes included "the preservation of the wilderness of forests, geysers, mountains, and the game common to that region in as nearly the condition of nature as possible." Teller said Yellowstone should preserve the "original wild West that shall stand as the rest of the world moves, affording the student of nature and the pleasure tourist a restful contrast" to the busy and progressive world surrounding the Park (U.S. Department of the Interior 1886, 77).

In the final annual report of this study period, Secretary John W. Noble made the following plea against allowing a railroad into the Park, which demonstrates his opinions of what was an acceptable level of development within Yellowstone:

So long as this tract of country shall remain a national preserve for science, curiosity, and pleasure, it will of course be an object of cupidity to the covetous, who will see or imagine in countless ways in which its exhaustless wonders and resources can be turned into private advantage . . . if it is not to be thus frittered away, deprived of its most attractive features, and measurably lost to science and wonder, if not to pleasure, the best and surest way to protect it is to permit no trimming down, no incursions, and not privileges except such as may be deemed absolutely necessary for its protection and regulation, and for the proper accommodation and comfort of visitors. (U.S. Department of the Interior 1890)

With large increases in visitors because of the arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883, Yellowstone was beginning to assume the role of a "national" park and the annual reports and other Interior documents reflected this change. In 1885 Secretary LaMar received a letter from Wyoming Governor Francis E. Warren, who urged the Secretary to resolve the question of laws and jurisdiction of the Park. "The park has now assumed a national importance and it would seem to be essential, that Congress should provide some system of justice by which it can be managed," Warren wrote (Warren 1885).

In his 1886 annual report, Secretary LaMar echoed the theme of Yellowstone's emerging national role. "This enormous travel shows that the

Park has become in every sense a national one, and that it has taken a firm hold upon the affections of the people," wrote Secretary LaMar. "... and not to preserve it for the purpose for which it was originally intended would in my judgment be an error, regretted and condemned throughout the civilized world" (U.S. Department of the Interior 1886, 74).

Special agent W. Hallet Phillips, commissioned by the Interior Department to investigate Yellowstone's management and reports of vandalism and the slaughter of game, reached a similar conclusion about the Park's emergence as a national icon. Phillips argued that the increasing visitor numbers proved that Congress' wisdom of setting aside the Park was justified. "The Park has now assumed such national importance as to imperatively call upon Congress to provide some system of justice by which the Park and the public visiting it can be protected" (Phillips 1885).

Phillips also summarized what he thought were the most important responsibilities for Yellowstone's caretakers – preserving wildlife, "preserving the Park as much as possible in a state of nature," and the preservation of "the natural forests in a region where so many great rivers of the continent find their source." Although he focused more attention on the natural resources of the Park, Phillips also said Yellowstone should have both adequate transportation (but not a railroad) and accommodations for visitors.

The Interior Department's involvement in Yellowstone was slight compared to the hands-on experience of the Park's custodians, yet Interior

was ultimately responsible for policy, and hiring and firing superintendents. For this reason, it is important to study Interior's role in the evolving national park idea.

The obvious increase in involvement by Interior reinforces other sources, demonstrating Yellowstone's evolution from a vague landscape to a national icon. As the public and national media devoted more attention to Yellowstone, Interior was forced to increase its involvement, so not to look foolish in the eyes of the public. The best example of this was when Interior appointed Phillips to investigate claims of vandalism, the slaughter of game and poor management in Yellowstone. Phillips' report (Phillips 1885) provides an insightful picture of Yellowstone's status in 1885, and his opinions on the future role of the Park. The report suggested that Yellowstone had achieved such a high level of national importance, that Congress must provide adequate funding and regulations. Phillips also summarized the most important responsibilities for Yellowstone's caretakers. They must preserve wildlife and the forests of Yellowstone, and preserve the Park "as much as possible in a state of nature."

The National Visitors

National visitors were the majority of tourists in the Park after the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Yellowstone in 1883. These national

visitors were a litmus test for Yellowstone, as they tested the waters of the new national park idea. Like all new ideas, if Yellowstone had not been worthy of all the praise, and the lengthy and expensive journeys, it would have faded into the role of a regional attraction on the scale of New York's Catskills or the Wisconsin Dells (Schullery 1997. 105).

Yellowstone did live up to its reputation and visitor numbers climbed with each stage of transportation improvements. When wagon roads made the journey through the Park an easier adventure in 1877, annual tourist numbers doubled, from 500 to 1,000. When the Northern Pacific arrived in 1883, annual visitor numbers increased five-fold, from 1,000 to 5,000. Visitor numbers remained at about 5,000 for the next five years, then slowly climbed to 7,808 by 1890. When automobiles were allowed to enter the Park in 1915 (Bartlett 1985), visitor numbers doubled again from 20,250 in 1914, to 51,895 in 1915 (Haines 1977, 2:479). With the exception of a decrease in tourists during World War II, annual visitor numbers continued to grow, reaching 1 million in 1948, and 2 million in 1965. (Haines 1977, 2:478). Today, more than 3 million people a year visit Yellowstone.

The arrival of the Northern Pacific in 1883 (Figure 16) not only opened the floodgates of tourists, but also changed both the type of tourist and the nature of the visitor experience. In her study of the early western landscape, Anne Hyde found that the most noticeable changes in tourism followed the tracks of the Transcontinental railroad breaching the country in 1869. Initially,

Figure 16. The Northern Pacific Arrives

The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 opened the floodgates of tourists. With speedier train travel to a point just north of Yellowstone, tourist numbers increased five-fold, from 1,000 to 5,000 in just one year. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



only the very wealthy could afford to travel to the Far West on a train, with a package deal costing roughly \$1,200 from a major city in the East (Hyde 1990, 108). But as railroad fares fell, and American's urban areas grew, "clerks, bureaucrats and others of modest means" were able to go on excursions (Sears 1989, 10).

With the arrival of a railroad to Yellowstone came the construction of hotels at the places of interest, and comfortable coach travel in between, changing the visitor experience forever. Travel accounts written before and after 1883 paint quite different pictures of what a visit to the Park meant. A pre-coach trip could mean adventure on horseback and roughing it along the trail. It gave the opportunity for tourists to be pioneers without having to face the hardships of actual settlement, to follow in the footsteps of the hunter and trapper by stepping into the "half-fictional world of the Wild West." (Sears 1989, 158) In stark contrast, a coach trip could mean sightseeing with a guide and a stop each night for a hot bath and a meal at a comfortable hotel.

The sources for reconstructing the national visitor's experience in Yellowstone include travel accounts published in the Bozeman *Avant Courier* and *Livingston Enterprise*. I also read published travel accounts by English adventurer Thomas Windham, the Earl of Dunraven (Windham 1876), George Wingate, who took his family through Yellowstone on horseback in 1886 (Wingate 1886), and General W. E. Strong, who traveled through Yellowstone in 1875 with a group of Eastern V.I.Ps (Strong 1968). As

noted earlier, the author also read 40 different unpublished travel accounts recommended by historians at Montana State University's Special Collections and at Yellowstone National Park's Archives. I chose two of the unpublished accounts as examples in this section. Eliza Gillette, sister to Warren Gillette of the Washburn Expedition, wrote a very detailed account of her trip through Yellowstone in a letter to a friend that was never mailed (Gillette 1887). The Gillette letter recently surfaced and has not been used by scholars. M.A. Cruikshank's journal of her trip through Yellowstone was also very detailed and useful to this study (Cruikshank 1883).

To reconstruct the national visitor's experience in Yellowstone, I chose examples that were descriptive of what tourists were doing in the Park. Many of the travel accounts were almost identical, using the same descriptions and the same routes taken by all the visitors as if by formula. However, some stood out for the rich details they offered, or the quality or duration of the experience. I also searched for examples that offered insight into the following checklist of questions: What was it like to travel through Yellowstone in the early years? How did that experience change as coach travel and hotels became available? How did the experience vary between the sagebrushers (campers), the couponers (staying in tent hotels), and those staying in hotels? Were the national visitors attracted by the geothermal features, other main attractions, such as the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone Lake, or by Yellowstone's wildlife?

Identified only as Emerald, by the *Omaha Republican* newspaper, a woman's trip through Yellowstone on horseback in October of 1879 provided Bozeman readers with an adventure story (*Avant Courier* 1881c). Emerald and her companions began their trip entering the Park from the west along the Madison River with horses and a camping outfit. "We followed the same old Indian trail that [Gen.] Howard and his troops did two years ago, and although there has not been a dollar spent on the road, it is the only respectable trail in the whole Park," she wrote. Traveling south along the Firehole River their party was joined by Superintendent Philetus Norris, who became their self-appointed guide.

Emerald's party traveled through the upper and lower geyser basins, before crossing Craig Pass for their first view of Yellowstone Lake to the east. At Yellowstone Lake she described numerous hot springs along the shores, where "one can stand, and, without taking it from the hook, he can throw his line into a boiling spring and cook his fish at once." Whether she actually accomplished this feat or was simply passing on one of Yellowstone's popular myths, is impossible to tell. However, she does warn her readers that they should fish only for sport, as the fish were full of "vermin and unfit to eat," which was another common travel account during this time period in Yellowstone.

Although she said there was no hope of "doing the subject justice," she gave a vivid description of the view at Yellowstone Lake:

Between the fingers are heavily timbered mountains, that on the west slope run down to the extreme edge of the water, while on the east slope the trees are broken and do not reach the water by several yards, which seems as evidence of strong west winds. Numerous swans, geese, pelicans, ducks, and sea gulls were seen floating on the placid bosom of the lake, and flying all around us, while tracks of wild animals were almost too many for comfort. (*Avant Courier* 1881c)

Her party then followed the western shore of the lake north to reach the Grand Canyon, but by Sulphur Mountain, about seven miles south of present-day Canyon village, a storm hit, and they were peppered with hail until the horses became frantic and the riders were forced to dismount.

Norris picked a camping spot, but with steady rainfall and hail, "everything betokened a dismal night." The beds were covered with canvas to keep them dry and large fire provided warmth. "I longed for something good to be brought out of the mess chest, but it was the same old bread and bacon; but a ride of 35 miles made me accept it."

With morning came several inches of snow, and no horses, which had run away during the night. The horses were eventually captured and despite the snow storm, the party was determined to see the falls of the Yellowstone. "Moran has been chided for his high coloring of the this canon, but one glimpse of its rare, rich colors would convince the most skeptical that

exaggeration is impossible," she wrote. The party then made a hurried ride of to reach the Firehole Basin and exit the Park:

Our forty mile ride was ended at 7 o'clock, but it took three men to get me off my horse. We had made seventy-five miles in two days and I had been obliged to ride a man's saddle; but I am all right now after a day's rest. As a lasting memento of our travels in Wonderland I have an elk head and antlers with seven prongs, the result of a hunt by Mr. Marshall and party since our return. (*Avant Courier* 1881c)

Six years after Emerald's adventure in Yellowstone, the *Avant Courier* would publish "Wonderland, as seen by a Yankee Girl," a letter about a woman's trip through the Park in a coach during the summer of 1885, written to a friend back East (*Avant Courier* 1885c). The Yankee girl's account was the life of luxury compared to Emerald's marathon journey on horseback eating bread and bacon. Beginning their journey at the new Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel (Figure 17), she spent a week taking guided day hikes from the coach, visiting all the attractions. "We rode for miles and miles up and down mountains, mostly up, until we stopped for dinner, and I tell you my dear, we were very hungry by that time, and I did full justice to a dish of delicious baked beans, which made all observers understand that I am a true Yankee," she wrote.

The coach (Figure 18) stopped so riders could hike around the geyser basins. "We next stopped at the Middle Geyser Basin, although the much more appropriate name of 'Hell's Half-Acre' has been given the place. The most interesting object next to meet our view was the 'Morning glory,' a pool

Figure 17. The National Hotel

The National Hotel, built in 1883, was the first luxurious hotel in Yellowstone. Built in Queen Anne style, the hotel was 414 feet long and 54 feet wide, four stories high, with several wings behind it. Photograph by F.J. Haynes. 1884. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



Figure 18. A Yellowstone Coach

A coach full of tourists and their luggage arrives at the National Hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs. Coach travel offered tourists a quick trip through Yellowstone, with hot meals and hotels in between. Photograph by F.J. Haynes. 1904. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



of beautiful, clear violet and white water, shaped just like its lovely namesake." After a day of hiking the next stop was the hotel at Old Faithful, where she enjoyed a "very refreshing bath and a delicious dinner."

The Yankee's trip followed the usual route up to the Grand Canyon, where she compared it with places more familiar to her:

You cannot imagine how grand it is, accustomed, as we are, to the somber tints of nature. Up from the river, which seems hardly more than a thread of silver, rise the cliffs twelve hundred feet high! Over four times as high as the Bunker Hill Monument and over six times as high as the tallest spire in Pittsfield. (*Avant Courier* 1885c)

Her trip through Yellowstone, with the benefit of speedier transportation and comfortable lodgings, had been shrunk from several weeks to just one week. "We left about noon and traveled homeward as fast as possible, and reached Bozeman yesterday afternoon, thoroughly tired, but perfectly delighted with wonderful Wonderland." The quick or "flying" tour of Yellowstone became popular. "A trip through the Yellowstone National park is now accomplished in an incredibly short time," the *Avant Courier* reported (1885d). As evidence the newspaper described a trip of Gen. L.S. Willson and his wife and friends seeing nearly every point of interest, eating regular hot meals, and lodging in comfortable hotels, in only four days.

For those traveling to Yellowstone from the East Coast, the trip after 1883 took an incredibly short time compared to earlier journeys by boat, wagon and horseback. After 1883 a family traveling from New York could

reach Yellowstone in about the same time as it would take to drive that distance today (Schullery 1997, 101). This speedy travel was addictive and by 1887 some visitors were arguing that while travel through the Park on horse or by coach was agreeable for many, "these methods take too long, cost too much and absolutely debar the infirm or decrepid, who would be so greatly benefitted by a visit by rail." (*Livingston Enterprise* 1887d). Capt. J.H. Mills of the *New Northwest* suggested a government railroad built to all the points of interest, "letting all who desire" to connect at its boundaries:

They could all [points of interest] be visited in one or two days at an expense of \$12 or \$15, as against five days and \$40 as at present. Time and money are objects to many.

However, many reacted against the railroads and their plush Pullman cars, the day-to-day grind of urban Victorian society and the philosophy that time is money. These Yellowstone's visitors avoided the guided coach travel and up-scale hotels. The idea that camping (Figure 19) or roughing it could improve your health grew steadily more popular after the Civil War, particularly in the American West (Sears 1989, 176). The health benefits of roughing it, combined with the belief that Yellowstone's hot springs held therapeutic benefits, made the Park an ideal camping destination for many visitors. George Wingate took his family through Yellowstone on horseback during the summer of 1886 for the benefit of his daughter, who suffered from lung disease. In 26 days they rode for more than 400 miles until they were all

Figure 19. Camping Out in Yellowstone

Tourists camping in the Upper Geyser Basin enjoy a "Dinner in the Park" in about 1880. Their provisions and tools were carefully displayed for the camera. Photograph by H.B. Calfee. Courtesy of Yellowstone National Park.



"as brown as Indians and able to spend eight hours a day in the saddle."

Wingate recommended the experience for everyone:

... Mount a spirited horse and gallop at full speed over a rolling prairie, in the high altitudes of the Rocky mountains, where the pure air and rapid motion stirs the blood like a trumpet.
(Wingate 1886, 10, 137)

Adventurer Thomas Windham, known as the Earl of Dunraven, traveled through Yellowstone by horseback during the summer of 1874 and compared camping with the "jam of a London summer, where you spend nights "struggling on a staircase, inhaling your fellow-creatures, absorbing fat dowagers, and breathing men and women!" Windham wrote the following about a night camped near the borders of Yellowstone:

Oh! The comfort of lying flat on your back on the grass, gazing up at the blue sky and the flickering green leaves of the trees . . . That is luxury Indeed! You are not trespassing and nobody can warn you off. There is plenty of fish in the river, some whisky left in the bottle, lots of bread in the buggy; and you run no risk of being disturbed, for there is not another human being within miles. . . (Windham 1876, 53-54)

Many of Yellowstone's campers were called "sagebrushers" for their habit of setting up camp in the sagebrush along the road, and usually made their own way to the Park from the nearby states of Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. Eliza Gillette, sister to Warren Gillette of the Washburn expedition, wrote about her experiences as a sagebrusher in a letter to a friend that was never mailed (Gillette 1887). Gillette, who camped through the park with a party of 18, loved the large group for its camaraderie around the

campfire at night where they would sing and tell stories. Although thrown from her horse during the trip, she was not seriously injured, and preferred this mode of travel so that she could leave the road whenever she liked.

Like other Yellowstone visitors of the time, many in her party became sick after drinking water from the hot springs, and they tried to break off geothermal specimens with the heels of their riding boots when the soldiers were not looking. "No accidents occurred in our party, but a lady of another party broke through the crust, and was so badly scalded that she was detained at the hotel a week," Gillette wrote. Her trip was a leisurely one compared to the hurried schedule of a coach tour, and her party spent several days at the different points of interest, including Yellowstone Lake.

Another class of camper was the "couponer," who purchased a package trip and received a book of coupons at the beginning of the trip. Unlike the upper and middle-class travelers who stayed in the Park's hotels during their visit, the couponers stayed in tent hotels. They took their meals together in a dining tent, then spent the night in floored tents equipped with wood stoves (Byrand 1995, 42).

By the time M.A. Cruikshank toured Yellowstone in August 1883 as a couponer, she wished there was a railroad to take her to all the attractions (Cruikshank 1883). On the steepest road grades the passengers were asked get out and walk along the dusty roads. "The miles given are surveyor's measure, but never were miles so absurdly understated," she said of Yellowstone's

roads. "Be sure of this, that a park mile according to the book, is worth any two, if not five, elsewhere." She had the misfortune of traveling through Yellowstone while President Arthur was in the park with his caravan, sometimes taking up all the available tent spots.

At the Norris camp 70 people had arrived to stay in a half-dozen tents, and anyone with camping gear headed for the nearby woods. Cruikshank befriended an English woman who had been camping in Yellowstone for several weeks and spent the night curled up on the floor of the woman's dining tent. Her luck improved on the second night and Cruikshank and her traveling companion had a tent to themselves with "rough hewn wooden door fastened by a button inside . . . It had a bright striped hemp carpet tacked all around to the lowest bar of its frame and a good mattress bed on the floor with a white honeycomb quilt." The tent was equipped with plenty of "soft geyser water," towels and a candle.

Old Faithful was the hit of her camping party, putting on regular shows for the tourists, while she was "disappointed in the capricious conduct of his kinfolk," which refused to erupt when the tourists wanted. While at Old Faithful another traveler told Cruikshank that the soldiers traveling with President Arthur had heard geysers would wash clothes so made the attempt at Old Faithful. "So the clothes were pitched into his throat for their final boiling while the owners watched patiently for the next explosion. When it came, up went drawers and shirts of all colors, and filled out with

steam to superhuman proportions." While the clothes did come back out, the problem was the poor condition of the ejected clothes, causing soldiers to search for the missing sleeves and trouser legs (Cruikshank 1883).

National visitors played a pivotal role in the evolution of the national park idea by shaping how people experienced a national park, and simply by arriving in large numbers, which established the Park as a national icon. As park historian Paul Schullery correctly notes (Schullery 1997), the national park idea was as undefined for Yellowstone's visitors as it was for Congress and the public in general. Visitors were needed to test the idea, and they discovered the best ways to experience the park by trial and error. Some of their activities, such as breaking off geothermal specimens, leaving campfires going or throwing laundry and soap into the geysers, were harmful to the Park, yet this was a needed period of experimentation. For example, through this behavior Yellowstone's custodians developed rules for tourists, and learned the need to designate campgrounds to prevent fires.

National visitors also followed the lead of the first local tourists, making the grand rounds to the main attractions that remain the high points of a trip to the Park today. Through this behavior they reinforced the patterns of human use within the park, concentrating a large majority of activity within the grand rounds, and leaving the remainder of Yellowstone mostly untouched. As the Northern Pacific Railroad reached the Park and good roads allowed coach travel to the major attractions, the type of visitor and their

experience changed. Only the wealthy could experience the Park initially, but with speedier and cheaper transportation, the newly emerging American middle class could then afford to visit Yellowstone. Speedier transportation also reduced the amount of time it took to tour Yellowstone, from a minimum of ten days to only four.

The steadily climbing national visitor numbers were also a litmus test for Yellowstone. If the Park had not been worthy of its tremendous reputation it would have faded into the role of a regional attraction and probably lost its national park status as Mackinac Island did. Yellowstone did live up to its reputation and visitor numbers continued to climb, with jumps for every stage of transportation improvements. These high visitor numbers, and the media attention they encouraged, could not be ignored by the Interior Department, or eventually Congress. As Interior Secretary L.Q.C. LaMar noted, "This enormous travel shows that the Park has become in every sense a national one" (U.S. Department of Interior 1886). By 1890 it was the high number of national visitors experiencing Yellowstone that sealed the fate of the national park idea.

Guiding the way in Yellowstone

Tourists preparing for a trip to Yellowstone had a variety of sources to learn about Wonderland, and to find out where to go and how to get there.

Guidebooks had been around since the late seventeenth century, and with the increase in the tourism industry in the early nineteenth century, had become big business. Before the first transcontinental train opened the west to tourists in 1869, entrepreneur George A. Crofutt published his *Transcontinental Tourist Guide* and sold nearly 350,000 copies during the 1870s (Hyde 1990, 120). Guidebook publishers were equally eager to take advantage of the Northern Pacific's line to the north, with a new spur line to the Yellowstone National Park. Guidebooks could be bought in every railroad station and major hotel and salesmen sometimes roamed the aisles of trains hawking their guides.

Early guidebooks to Yellowstone are valuable to study because they can tell us what early visitors were reading about Yellowstone and expecting to see once they got there. Several scholars have studied the Yellowstone guidebooks (Meyer 1996, Zenzen 1997, Byrand 1996). I used this previous work to identify a sample of guidebooks and personal travel accounts that functioned as guidebooks, that were available in Montana State University's Special Collections, or Yellowstone National Park's Archives. I reviewed 15 guidebooks and travel accounts, including *Rambles in Wonderland* (Stanley 1883), *Appleton's' General Guide to the United States and Canada* (D. Appleton and Co. 1890), the *Official Guide to the Yellowstone National Park* (Hyde 1886), *Crofutt's Overland Tours* (Crofutt 1889), *Yellowstone Park Views* (Stulz Brothers 1888), *Practical Guide to Yellowstone* (Guptill 1890), *Through*

the Yellowstone Park on Horseback (Wingate 1886), *Wonders of the Yellowstone Region* (Richardson 1874), *Yellowstone National Park* (Wylie 1882), *Picturesque America* (Bryant 1872), *The Yellowstone National Park: A Complete Guide* (Haupt 1883), *The Handbook of Wyoming and Guide to the Black Hills and Big Horn Regions* (Strahorn 1877), *Our Western Empire* (Brockett 1882), *The Great Divide* (Windham 1876), *Wonderland Illustrated* (Norton 1873), and *The National Park from the Hurricane Deck of a Cayuse* (Dudley 1886).

Many of the guidebooks were much the same, giving descriptions, many borrowed from the discovery accounts and other published travel accounts, distances within the Park, and railroad and hotel rates. I used examples from these more general guidebooks in this section to summarize the variety of sources available to tourists. However, I focused more critical attention on the eight guidebooks published by the Northern Pacific Railroad between 1883 and 1890. There has been much scholarly interest in the role of the Northern Pacific in shaping the tourist's experience in Yellowstone, and these "Wonderland" series of guidebooks are useful to judge the railroad's impact.

As I assessed the Northern Pacific's guidebooks I again ran the material through a checklist of questions to determine the railroad's impact on the tourist experience: What type of activities were being suggested? What was the overall image of Yellowstone being pushed in the brochures? How much

space was devoted to selling the railroad's services? How was a typical Yellowstone visit being described by the railroad?

Immediately following Yellowstone's establishment in 1872, publishers hurried to produce guidebooks, but authors had not actually visited Yellowstone, so many merely copied passages from the discovery accounts and other sources. One of the first to be published was the series *Wonders of the Yellowstone Region*, which first came out in 1872 written entirely from passages from the discovery accounts. The series included maps, a history of the region, a chapter describing how geysers work, and a reprint of Truman Everts' *37 Days of Peril* (Richardson 1874). Written in 1882, *Yellowstone National Park* focused on tent camping in the Park, and featured photographs by H.B. Coffee instead of relying on illustrations from the Moran and others (Wylie 1882). Other guidebooks with Yellowstone information included: *Picturesque America* (Bryant 1872), *The Yellowstone National Park: A Complete Guide* (Haupt 1883), *The Handbook of Wyoming and Guide to the Black Hills and Big Horn Regions* (Strahorn 1877), and *Our Western Empire* (Brockett 1882).

A problem with writing a guidebook about Yellowstone without actually going there was the likelihood of mistakes being made, especially when authors embellished their tales. In his guide *The Enchanted Land*, Strahorn told his readers he found "stone snakes, toads and fishes" along with other petrified items on Yellowstone's Specimen Ridge. Had Strahorn

actually been there he would have discovered the absurdity of the story (Meyer 1996). It was the erroneous material published in guidebooks that led George Wingate to publish his family's travel account of Yellowstone (Wingate 1886). "If I had been going to Africa instead of to the Yellowstone, I could scarcely have had more trouble in obtaining reliable information in regard to the journey," Wingate wrote.

Publishing a personal travel account was popular during Yellowstone's early years and several independent authors' published accounts became a source for both tourists and other guidebook companies. The most noteworthy was probably *The Great Divide*, written by the Earl of Dunraven, describing his trip to through the Park in 1874 (Windham 1876). The English adventurer's book was very popular with European travelers (Meyer 1996). Other travel accounts that served as guidebooks included: Edwin Stanley's *Rambles in Wonderland* (Stanley 1883), a 179-page book describing a jaunt through Yellowstone in 1873; Harry Norton's *Wonderland Illustrated* (Norton 1873), which included maps, prices and information about the Montana Territory, and W.H. Dudley's *The National Park from the Hurricane Deck of a Cayuse* (Dudley 1886).

The Northern Pacific began publishing its *Wonderland* series of guide books in 1883, which initially focused only on Yellowstone, but came to describe travels to the entire Northwest served by the railroad. While other guidebooks were descriptive of Yellowstone and offered much useful

information, the *Wonderland* series were definitely sales brochures and very self-promotional. The first few *Wonderland* guidebooks stressed the Northern Pacific's reasonable rates (NPRR 1883) and reminded readers that there is practically "but one route" to the Park – the Northern Pacific's line to Cinnabar north of Mammoth – "there being over 198 miles of staging required by any other line" (NPRR 1884).

Common themes of the first two guidebooks were an attempt to define Yellowstone as the "Pleasure Garden of America," a term that apparently never caught on, and an attempt to tie Yellowstone to references of God. "This marvelous creation, of the Supreme Builder's own design and completion, 'finished yet renewed forever,' is destined to become the favorite pleasure ground of America" (NPRR 1884, 24). The same guidebook also used testimonials of religious figures and other "creditable" sources who had traveled in the Park. The Northern Pacific attributed the following statement to a "distinguished member" of the royal household of Denmark:

The first large geyser I saw in action was Old Faithful; and as its stately column rose to a height of 150 feet, this deep impression thrilled me: 'Great and marvelous are thy works, O Lord God Almighty!' . . . Majestically beautiful are thou, Old Faithful! Thou shalt ever keep thy place in the picture gallery of my memory beside Jungfrau, Lake George and the Milan Cathedral. (NPRR 1884, 33)

In 1885 the *Wonderland* series shifted to the adventure theme, designing the entire brochure as a fictional letter to a friend back home, called *Alice's Adventures In The New Wonderland*. Playing off the popular *Alice in*

Wonderland story, the young woman has high adventures in Yellowstone and along the Northern Pacific route. The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone was especially dangerous:

Nothing more awful have I ever seen than the yawning of that chasm. The water dashing there, as in a kind of agony, against those rocks, you cannot hear. The mighty distance lays the finger of its silence on its white lips. You are oppressed with a sense of danger. It is as though the vastness would soon force you from the rock to which you cling. (NPRR 1885)

In 1883, and then again in 1884, the Northern Pacific encouraged tourists to collect specimens from Yellowstone, which must have been frustrating to Park managers trying to stop the practice. Describing the area around West Bay on Yellowstone Lake as a "museum of all the varieties of hot springs," the Northern Pacific then writes: "If one carefully collects specimens at this place of the different kinds which are visible, he will secure a perfect exhibit of every formation . . ." (NPRR 1883, 24).

While the text of the Northern Pacific guidebooks was suggestive of what to do in the Park, the illustrations left no doubt that Yellowstone was a place to enjoy yourself. Visitors ran full speed away from the cone of Old Faithful, or even galloped their horse from within a short distance from the geyser's cone. If a body of water or river was pictured, a tourist would be dipping a line into the water for fish. And Yellowstone was bountiful to the sportsman. A drawing titled "One Day's Sporting" two campers, guns in hand, looking at one day's efforts – about nine birds and more than 20 fish

(NPRR 1883, 13). Many of the images of tourists leaping from an erupting geyser remained the same in successive years. However, wildlife images began to appear in 1886, corresponding with wildlife's increasing value as a resource.

Some historians have been critical of the marketing aspect of the Northern Pacific guide books, arguing they transformed the Yellowstone wilderness into a packaged consumer product (Magoc 1992) that not only told visitors what to do and where to go, but also what to feel. John Sears called Yellowstone of the 1880s "curiously artificial" because of the Wild West mentality of the marketing. While not critical of the Northern Pacific marketing, Judith Meyer noted that tourists were so influenced by the guidebooks, that when they described their trip to Yellowstone in a diary or letter, they would sometimes repeat mistakes published in the guidebook, even some that were preposterous, rather than admit having missed a park experience (Meyer 1996, 48).

Such blatant marketing of nature, and the experience of traveling an established single route with predictable stops is frowned at by many today. However, Yellowstone historian Paul Schullery argues that to assume that many of the visitors responded precisely as the guidebooks directed is to sell human nature short. The homogenization of the visitor experience could just have easily been viewed as an important educational process: "The trivialization of a spectacular natural area's real beauty and power through

the standardization or 'packaging' of the visit is always regrettable, but it is hard to imagine how else the public use of Yellowstone may have proceeded" (Schullery 1997, 100).

To assume that railroad marketing played such a critical role in how tourists experienced the Park is also selling Yellowstone short. As we saw with the steadily climbing national tourist numbers in the previous section, claims made by the Northern Pacific would not have held up if Yellowstone was not equal to its reputation.

AFTER 18 YEARS – A FUNCTIONING NATIONAL PARK

Summary

The first 18 years of the Yellowstone experience saw a transformation from a vague, ill-defined idea to a functioning national park that became a template that would repeat itself across America and many parts of the world. The startling images and adventures of Yellowstone's exploration parties galvanized a budget-conscious, post-war Congress and ensured passage of the Organic Act establishing the first national park. The explorations also sparked the imagination of the American public, which began making pilgrimages to Yellowstone. These first visitors discovered how tourists would behave and experience a national park. By the end of this period of field testing, Park managers and visitors defined which natural resources within the Park needed protection. Yellowstone's custodians, through trial and error, established a form of management that met the needs of the public, while preserving the Park in an acceptable state of nature. This management system set an initial standard for finding a balance between development and preservation, a debate that has dogged park managers and the public ever since.

The three exploration parties (Folsom-Cook in 1869, Washburn in 1870 and Hayden in 1871) into Yellowstone were critical for the Park's future. The images brought back by Thomas Moran and William Henry Jackson transformed the region from a kind of "hell on Earth to a spectacular wonderland" that could stand as an important symbol of America's uniqueness (Kinsey 1990). The images also provided a "mythology of unusual things to see," which was required to excite people's desire to visit Yellowstone (Sears 1989).

The rich stories and descriptions brought back by the exploring parties, especially the tale of Truman Everts and his "Thirty-Seven Days of Peril," defined Yellowstone as a place of high adventure – an image that would not fade. The stories had a long life, being copied into the first guide books and brochures about Yellowstone. Everts became an instant folk hero who added more to the public awareness than the expedition's official report. His agony in Yellowstone was the ultimate Christian pilgrimage and initiation into the mysteries of what was destined to become a sacred place in American culture (Majoc 1992, 17-19).

Despite its vagueness and lack of structure, the Organic Act establishing Yellowstone laid out a framework for a national park that for many years remained the only guidance early park managers had. By authorizing the Interior Secretary to grant leases, it envisioned at the very least a limited role for private industry. However, in calling for the preservation of all timber,

mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders of Yellowstone, the Act does imply limits to commercialization, requiring features to be retained in "their natural condition." Yellowstone's role as a "public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people" also clearly illustrated the recreational use that has become a hallmark of America's national parks. The protection of wildlife was also directed, preventing "wanton destruction of fish and game" and "their capture or destruction for purposes of merchandise or profit."

The locals of Yellowstone, primarily Montanans, were the first tourists to try out a national park, venturing into Wonderland before the Organic Act was even passed. It was also Montanans who filled the exploration parties, so the locals were familiar with the Yellowstone country. Local entrepreneurs were the first to build roads to the border of Yellowstone and to erect crude hotels. As the first tourists, the locals were responsible for finding and blazing trails to the various points of interest within the Park, establishing a pattern of human use within Yellowstone that remains virtually identical today.

The type of tourist visiting Yellowstone changed radically during the first 18 years. Initially only locals and a few wealthy adventurers entered Yellowstone, because of the difficulty, risks and expense of reaching the Park. This remained the case until 1883 when the Northern Pacific Railroad reached its terminus just north of Gardiner, Montana on the northern border of Yellowstone. Visitor numbers increased five-fold that year, from 1,000 to

5,000 and have continued to climb after that. A trip by rail from the East Coast was still expensive in 1883, but as ticket prices dropped and Americans' salaries and leisure time increased, "clerks, bureaucrats and other of modest means" were able to travel west (Hyde 1990; Sears 1989).

The visitor experience also changed dramatically. Early locals and adventurers faced weeks and sometimes months on horseback experiencing the inherent risks of wilderness travel in a mountain climate. While not a constant risk, early travelers had to be wary of conflict with Bannack and Nez Perce Indians. A skirmish between U.S. Cavalry soldiers and Idaho volunteers and the Nez Perce during the summer of 1877 left Yellowstone in a state of siege for two weeks and cost two tourists their lives. The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 also pushed the development of improved roads, hotels at the major points of interest and coach service in between. Many Eastern visitors chose to travel this way, and a quick tour of the park became popular, cutting the trip from a minimum of 10 days to only four. Others, perhaps searching for the restorative benefits of roughing it, took advantage of the improved wagon roads, but chose to camp out and often spent days at each of Yellowstone's attractions. Falling between the last two categories were the "couponers," who chose a budget trip, which included rail tickets, and coupons for meals and spending the night in tent hotels scattered throughout Yellowstone.

Visitors were important to the process of field testing the national park idea because they learned what to do within a national park. Yellowstone and the national park idea were as undefined for visitors as they were for Congress and the public in general. Some of their behavior is looked at harshly today, such as breaking off specimens, leaving campfires burning and soaping geysers to make them erupt, yet these actions were perhaps required before park managers could establish what was acceptable. The growing visitor numbers were also a litmus test for Yellowstone. If Yellowstone had not been worthy of all the praise, and the lengthy and expensive journeys, it would have faded into the role of a regional attraction (Schullery 1997).

The type of natural resources being protected inside the boundaries of a national park also evolved during this 18-year period. Yellowstone's unique geysers and hot springs clearly inspired the Park's protection. Once Park managers could effectively guard the geothermal features from vandalism, however, protection of disappearing wildlife became more important. By 1879 large game animals, especially the bison, were disappearing at an alarming rate in the region. Yellowstone's custodians and conservationists realized Yellowstone could provide a safe haven for the threatened wildlife. By the 1880s officials also increasingly valued Yellowstone as a headwaters region and saw the need for protecting its timbered watersheds that drained into both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

Yellowstone's management also evolved during its first 18 years. The Park's first superintendents, with little or no funding available, and very few assistants, were more akin to explorers and settlers, challenged with building shelter for themselves and the beginnings of a road and trail network. The early custodians experimented as they went along, and gained valuable experience and greater knowledge about Yellowstone with each passing year. Yet without adequate funding and personnel, Park managers were left with the almost impossible task of trying to protect Yellowstone's resources while keeping up with the demand of increasing tourists. This continued until 1886, when Congress left Yellowstone without any funding.

The snub from Congress actually turned out positively for Yellowstone, as the Interior Secretary requested troops from the War Department to watch over the nation's park. Although untrained in managing anything like a national park, the professional soldiers were a good match for Yellowstone. The U.S. Cavalry officers came with their own funding through the War Department, and with a troop of roughly 50 men, had more resources at their disposal than any previous civilian superintendent.

Perhaps the most important concept developed by early Yellowstone managers was establishing an initial balance between development and preservation – allowing enough amenities for tourists, while not jeopardizing the same resources that tourists came to see and experience. The

debate over this balance continues today, and will probably challenge managers far into the future, however a balance was established during the first 18 years, creating a template for the future.

Yellowstone's early managers welcomed the development of lodges, wagon roads and recreational opportunities within the Park. However, there were limitations to what was acceptable. Fearing the Niagara Falls example, where commercialization had created a national embarrassment, Yellowstone's custodians wanted "tasteful" and luxurious hotels that compared well with the lodges of Europe. The Park hotels also had to be a sensible distance from the natural points of interest, and had to be priced fairly to keep Wonderland a people's park, and not just for the elite.

A good example of what was acceptable development came with a proposal to build an elevator to carry tourists to the lower falls of the Grand Canyon. The project had received tentative approval, but was stopped at the insistence of Capt. F.A. Boutelle, who said it would destroy the view. As Boutelle noted, "This is one of the grandest views on earth and doubly grand that the hand of man is nowhere visible" (Boutelle 1890, 11). Boutelle's stubborn stand against the elevator helped cost him his job as Yellowstone's superintendent, but also helped establish a national park policy against commercialization (Hampton 1971).

The proposal to build a railroad from Gardiner through the northeast corner of Yellowstone to the mining community of Cooke City posed the

greatest threat to the Park and its wildlands character. Local entrepreneurs welcomed the railroad for the perceived economic benefits, however, Yellowstone's custodians, the Interior Department and much of the national press, opposed any railroad within the Park's boundaries. The Northern Pacific Railroad pushed the project in Congress for more than a decade, and the debate illustrated the values both sides placed on Yellowstone. Proponents claimed only the geyser basins, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone Lake and other sites along the Grand Tour were valuable for protection. Opponents argued the railroad would destroy the forested watersheds of Yellowstone, threatening water quality from coast to coast, and would drive away big game protected in the wildlife-rich northeast corner of the Park.

In the end, Congress, influenced by the national press, the growing conservation movement and Americans who had traveled to Yellowstone and were protective of the national park, did not allow a railroad to breach the Park's borders. With civilization slowly surrounding the Yellowstone region, some of the West's wildlife approaching extinction, and the 1890 Census proclaiming the frontier period dead, Americans wanted Yellowstone left in its natural state as much as possible. By 1890 both local residents and the national public recognized that Yellowstone had achieved a truly "national" significance. The national park idea had been established. Americans in other parts of the country, such as California, Washington and

Oregon, were successful in repeating the national park experiment in their states, and more national parks soon followed.

Conclusion and Future Implications

This study of the national park idea during Yellowstone's first 18 years illuminates several areas of scholarly interest today. First, the methods used in this study may help other scholars working with a variety of archival sources to better define their methodology. My methodology for this research evolved as I began to assess the different source materials. Initially I hoped to assess all the articles, documents and reports through the use of a single checklist of concepts related to the national park idea, landscape studies, visitor experiences, management problems and different perceptions of Yellowstone. This method worked well with the local newspapers, and the *New York Times* and *Forest and Stream*, because these publications covered Yellowstone consistently for many years. The checklist was valuable to better quantify which issues were important, which natural resources were highly valued and to help reconstruct past perceptions of the Park.

The checklist was not as useful for other national magazines, which were inconsistent in overall coverage of Yellowstone, and published scattered topics over the 18-year period. The annual reports of Yellowstone's superintendents were also too narrowly focused on management issues to

use a static checklist. However, the checklist was useful in reminding me of the central questions of this study as I assessed these key sources. Instead of using the checklist, I grouped many of the magazine articles and other documents into key themes I determined by assessing the local and national newspapers. Some of the themes included wildlife, resource extraction, perceived threats, management, national and local visitors, entrepreneurs, geothermal features, railroad proposals and watersheds.

Finally, after I assessed the source material, using either the checklist, or grouping the documents into logical themes, I chose sources to use within the thesis that met two requirements. The material was chosen if it was richly descriptive of how people within the three viewpoints experienced or interacted with Yellowstone, or if it illustrated past perceptions of the Park that were central to this study. As noted in the introduction, some of these perceptions included: What values were being protected in this first national park? What were people supposed to do in a national park? What was an acceptable level of development? What type of management was necessary to protect the park and cater to tourists?

More generally, this research also helps us with the continuing search to understand our relationship with Yellowstone. As Paul Schullery (1997) notes, "We did not create Yellowstone National Park one day early in 1872. Instead, on that day, we embarked upon an ongoing process that is based upon our always growing knowledge of the park and upon our changing

attitudes about our relationship with nature." Second, it helps us understand the national park idea in a broader sense, looking at the process that had to occur for the national park idea to work. Third, it helps us understand our attachment to western landscapes and how some have become national icons.

While Yellowstone is widely considered a critical part of conservation history, as well as simply an exciting place to recreate, the question of how it should be managed is far from settled. As was also true in its first 18 years, most people look at the Yellowstone landscape with their own personal perspective. Many business owners in Yellowstone's gateway communities look at the Park with an eye to profit from motel rooms, meals or the rental of snowmobiles and other equipment. Some ranchers living near Yellowstone's borders see the Park as a problem, because wildlife stray from its boundaries eating their hay, damaging fences and sometimes carrying disease. Other locals think of the Park as their own personal playground. Conservation groups look at Yellowstone as the heart of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, which needs protection from the steadily encroaching development of ski areas and summer homes. National visitors continue to make the Yellowstone pilgrimage, and have their own unique perceptions of the Yellowstone experience.

Many of these different viewpoints of the landscape either compete with one another or absolutely contradict each other and Yellowstone's managers must balance those viewpoints, while fulfilling their mission to

protect the Park's resources. By looking at Yellowstone's first 18 years, and the past perceptions of the locals, custodians and federal caretakers, we can put some of these landscape contradictions into better perspective, recognizing that many of them are recurring themes.

Unlike national parks that would follow, such as Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana, Yellowstone did not push residents out of the way when it was established. With the exception of a few speculators who raced in to fence off the geyser basins, or build a hotel near Mammoth, the federal government was one of the original "settlers" when it established Yellowstone. When natural resource and development issues are debated today, a person who is native to the region sometimes claims to have a bigger stake in the argument. The same thought applies to water rights – whoever arrives first, and settles upstream, has superior rights to streamflow (Reisner 1993, 43). In regard to both, few regional descendants today can say they are more native or claim more rights to resources than the federal government and its mission to protect the natural resources of Yellowstone.

The seasonal migration of Yellowstone's wildlife in and out of its boundaries has created controversy in recent years when the wildlife get in conflict with ranches surrounding the Park. However, it is important to note that Yellowstone was established and the protection of the region's wildlife became an important part of Yellowstone's mission many years before any conflicting settlement occurred near the Park. Protection of wildlife was

written into the Organic Act establishing Yellowstone, and the issue was debated immediately to ensure wildlife were protected (U.S. Congress 1872). Nathaniel Langford pushed for added protection during his first year as superintendent (Langford 1873), and the importance of protecting wildlife escalated as the region's game came under increasing pressure from commercial hunters.

The concern for wildlife peaked in the early 1890s when efforts to expand Yellowstone for protection of wildlife and key watersheds led to the establishment of the nation's first forest reserves on the western and southern boundaries of Yellowstone (Lynch 1976; Haines 1977). The Lacey Act in 1894 finally provided solid laws to protect wildlife within the Park. Wildlife protection and the knowledge that wildlife range in and out of the Park's boundaries has clearly been a key aspect of Yellowstone and the region's history, predating the conflicts with wildlife migrations we see today.

In January 1999 a petition filed with the National Park Service by the Bluewater Network asked that snowmobiles be banned from national parks, and cited Yellowstone as an example. The group argued that the pollution from snowmobiles was destructive to both wildlife and park rangers, and that the noise destroyed the peace and solitude of other Yellowstone winter visitors (*Bozeman Daily Chronicle* 1999). More than 100 years ago opponents of the Cooke City railroad were making similar arguments. While Yellowstone's early managers encouraged the quick development of wagon

roads and accommodations for tourists, they drew the line at the intrusiveness of a railroad to the Cooke City mines or to other points of interest within Yellowstone, choosing to protect the resources instead of bowing to commercial pressure or visitor comfort.

Snowmobile sales have doubled since 1992 to more than 160,000 units a year, and park managers probably could not have envisioned the vast numbers of snowmobiles when they were first allowed to enter national parks. About 120,000 snowmobiles go into Yellowstone each winter, and the air around the Park's west entrance is sometimes thick with blue smoke (*Bozeman Daily Chronicle* 1999). If the impact on Yellowstone's resources from snowmobiles continues to increase, managers may decide to pull back to the balance of development the Park's managers established in the 1880s. They may discover that 120,000 snowmobiles during the winter months are as intrusive and destructive as a railroad might have been.

Protecting Yellowstone's resources rather than bowing to commercial pressures is a recurring theme in Yellowstone's history. The issue of the Cooke City mines, which forced the railroad issue to be resolved in the 1880s and 1890s, resurfaced 100 years later when a Canadian company wanted to re-open the abandoned gold mines using new technology. While some local interests supported the mine proposal for economic reasons, other locals worried about pollution from the mine damaging Yellowstone or the fragile high elevation area surrounding the mine site. After a high-publicity

campaign by the public, the U.S. Government placed the resources of Yellowstone higher than the risk presented by the mine and in 1996 bought the Cooke City mine lands from the Canadian company to prevent the project. U.S. President Bill Clinton went to Yellowstone during the summer of 1996 to announce the buyout, and said the project "proves that everyone can agree that Yellowstone is more precious than gold" (Ekey 1996).

Many of the ways we experience Yellowstone have changed little since the Park's first 18 years. Then and today, while some tourists explore the backcountry and savor the Yellowstone experience, others make such a rapid tour of the Park that they seldom leave their coach, or automobile. Tourists complained about the high price of a Yellowstone trip and the abundance of regulations 100 years ago and still may today. A trip to Yellowstone has been commercialized, packaged and marketed practically from its establishment and continues today.

There are also other obvious differences in the way we experience Yellowstone. Park managers and society as a whole are more aware of the role of predators, and the role of Yellowstone within a larger ecosystem. With more scientific knowledge of the resources, managers can better determine impacts on Yellowstone. By sheer numbers alone, tourists also are increasing the pressures on Yellowstone within the Park, while development outside its borders is affecting the wildlife that migrate in and out of Yellowstone. Our role with Yellowstone is never stagnant, but constantly evolving.

The opinions of early park managers and the standards they set for managing Yellowstone cannot be deemed more appropriate than opinions and policies today. However, modern park managers would be well advised to look at the valuable lessons learned during Yellowstone's early years. We can't fully understand the issues in Yellowstone today unless we go back to the origins – the intellectual roots and field testing of the national park idea.

An early look at Yellowstone also provides insight into the broader national park idea. Called by some the best idea Americans ever had, the national park idea did not arrive in 1872 with any kind of structure. It went through a shaping process during Yellowstone's first 18 years, developing several components that all had to be in place before a national park could meet the demands of tourists while not damaging the resources. This included discovering what tourists wanted to do in a national park, and what they should be *allowed* to do. Tourists wanted to experience Yellowstone the way members of the exploration parties did, with adventure and perhaps a sense of danger, and then a hot bath and good meal in a lodge or tent hotel. They also wanted to carry home specimens and build campfires anywhere they happened to camp. However, those habits were curbed by park managers, who were discovering that ever-increasing tourist numbers were beginning to impact the Park's resources.

Yellowstone's custodians and supporters also saw how the Park could function as a natural laboratory. Beginning with Philetus Norris, and

continuing as federal scientists such as Arnold Hague began to study Yellowstone, they realized the value of doing research in a large wildlands setting that remained mostly unmodified by humans. The *American Naturalist* magazine summed up Yellowstone's scientific values two years after the Park was established: "Momentous questions are now agitating the scientific world, calling for experiment and observation which are daily becoming less possible, owing in a great measure to the obliterating influences of modern civilization" (Comstock, 1874). The author marvelled at the possibilities in studying the hot springs, but could not have imagined what lay ahead. In 120 years, juries would be convicting criminals based on a strand of hair or drop of saliva because of DNA testing methods developed by research in Yellowstone's hot springs (Schullery 1997, 1).

Yellowstone continues to be a natural laboratory for scientists.

Thermus aquaticus, the microscopic bacterium found in the hot springs that began the whole field of DNA fingerprinting, is just the beginning of what could be discovered in Yellowstone's hot springs. The scientific consensus is that less than one percent of the organisms in Yellowstone's 10,000 geothermal features have even been identified, much less studied or put to work. Researchers hope that other discoveries in the hot springs may bring them closer to an explanation of the origins of life (Schullery 1997, 1).

The commitment from Congress for adequate funding, professional managers and laws to protect the Park is sometimes taken for granted today.

But Park supporters fought hard for funding during Yellowstone's infancy. Operating a national park is expensive and requires commitment on the part of government, which was not part of the agreement when Yellowstone was first established. It took years of the public and key people, such as George Grinnell, pressuring and sometimes shaming Congress, before early managers had even the minimum resources to protect the Park and meet the demands of tourists. But once established, this commitment from the government set an example for national parks in the future, and led to the formation of the National Park Service.

The evolution of Yellowstone from a mysterious landscape of geysers to a national icon can also help us to understand Americans' attachment to the wild western landscape. The vast spaces, wilderness and unique geological features of Yellowstone and the West represented the potential and originality Americans associated with their young country in the late Nineteenth Century. Today the western landscape clearly plays an important role in the maintenance of a national culture (Hyde 1990). As with the developing national park idea, Yellowstone did not become an icon with its establishment. It also went through a process during the first 18 years that allowed it to reach icon status.

There is no question that Yellowstone imagemakers Thomas Moran and William Henry Jackson, accompanying exploration parties, were key to transforming the public perception of Yellowstone from a hellish and almost

sinister place to a spectacular wonderland (Kinsey 1990). Yet Yellowstone was not a national icon in 1871 with its discovery or even with its establishment as a national park in 1872, any more than the moon became a national icon after astronauts transmitted stunning images of the lunar landing and explorations. The process required many people experiencing Yellowstone firsthand.

Almost immediately Yellowstone inspired national pride. A year after its establishment, a Bozeman newspaper predicted that once Congress saw the marvels of Yellowstone, they would make it "creditable to the nation" (*Avant Courier* 1873d). While it was in local entrepreneurs' best economic interests to protect the Park, they also displayed a sense of national pride in Yellowstone and often chided the government for not doing enough for the "nation's Wonderland." Others also argued on Yellowstone's behalf in nationalistic terms. "There is not a government on earth, I believe, except our own that if it owned this beautiful park would allow it to be invaded or interfered with . . ." Sen. George Vest told the Senate, chiding his peers for considering a bill to allow a railroad in the Park.

Five hundred or even 1,000 (mostly local) tourists a year were not enough to elevate Yellowstone to icon status, judging from the low priority it held with Congress. It took thousands of Americans setting foot in and experiencing Yellowstone before it could arguably be called a national icon. The needed jump in tourists came in 1883 with the Northern Pacific Railroad

and by 1890 more than 7,000 Americans a year were making a pilgrimage to the Park. The change in status was apparent to Wyoming Governor Francis Warren, who declared in 1885 that the park has "assumed a national importance" (Warren 1885). A year later Interior Secretary L.Q.C. LaMar repeated the claim: "This enormous travel show that the Park has become in every sense a national one" (U.S. Department of Interior 1886).

By 1890 the American public was both aware of and supportive of Yellowstone and the national park idea. The concept required more field testing, but soon had more examples in the West. In 1890 Americans saw Yosemite fall under national management and the establishment of Sequoia and General Grant national parks. Mount Rainier National Park followed in 1899 and Crater Lake National Park was established in 1902. Yellowstone may have been created through Northern Pacific Railroad lobbying, and marketed and packaged by the railroad and local entrepreneurs, but by 1890 it was visitors experiencing the Park that sealed the fate of the national park idea – Yellowstone had passed its litmus test with the American people.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ORGANIC ACT

The Organic Act

(U.S. Statutes at Large, vol. 17, chap. 24, pp. 32-33)

CHAP. XXIV. – An Act to set apart a certain Tract of Land lying near the Head-waters of the Yellowstone River as a public Park.

– An Act to set apart a certain Tract of Land lying near the Head-waters of the Yellowstone River as a public Park.

Be it enacted by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the tract of land in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming, lying near the head-waters of the Yellowstone River, and described as follows, to wit, commencing at the junction of Gardiner's river with the Yellowstone river, and running east to the meridian passing ten miles to the eastward of the most eastern point of Yellowstone Lake; thence south along said meridian to the parallel of latitude passing ten miles south of the most southern point of Yellowstone Lake; thence west along said parallel to the meridian passing fifteen miles west of the most western point of Madison lake; thence north along said meridian to the latitude of the junction of the Yellowstone and Gardiner's rivers; thence east to the place of beginning, is hereby reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale under the laws of the United States, and dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people; and all persons who shall locate or settle upon or occupy the same, or any part thereof, except as hereinafter provided, shall be considered trespassers and removed therefrom.

SEC. 2. That said public park shall be under the exclusive control of the Secretary of Interior, whose duty it shall be, as soon as practicable, to make publish such rules and regulations as he may deem necessary or proper for the care and management of the same. Such regulations shall provide for the preservation, from injury or spoilation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition. The Secretary may in his discretion, grant leases for building purposes for terms not exceeding ten years, of small parcels of

ground, at such places in said park as shall require the erection of buildings for the accommodation of visitors; all of the proceeds of such leases, and all other revenues that may be derived from any source connected with said park, to be expended under his direction in the management of the same, and the construction of roads and bridle-paths therein. He shall provide against the wanton destruction of fish and game found within said Park, and against their capture or destruction for purposes of merchandise or profit. He shall also cause all persons trespassing upon the same after the passage of this act to be removed therefrom, and generally shall be authorized to take all such measures as shall be necessary or proper to fully carry out the objects and purposes of this act.

Approved, March 1, 1872

Signed by:

James C. Blaine, Speaker of the House

Schuyler Colfax, Vice-President of the United States
and President of the Senate

Ulysses S. Grant, President of the United States

APPENDIX B: VISITOR NUMBERS

Yellowstone Visitor Numbers: 1872 – 1890*

Year	Annual	Cumulative
1872	300	300
1873	500	800
1874	500	1,300
1875	500	1,800
1876	500	2,300
1877	1,000	3,300
1878	1,000	4,300
1879	1,030	5,330
1880	1,000	6,330
1881	1,000	7,330
1882	1,000	8,330
1883	5,000	13,330
1884	5,000	18,330
1885	5,000	23,330
1886	5,000	28,330
1887	5,000	33,330
1888	6,000	39,330
1889	6,000	45,330
1890	7,808	53,138

Source: Haines, Aubrey L. 1977. *The Yellowstone Story: A History of our First National Park*. 2:478.

*These visitor numbers were estimates by Haines based on a number of sources, including superintendent's reports.

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