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THE NATIONAL PARKS

Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks.—At the request of Hon. Stephen T. Mather, Director of the National Park Service, the landscape architect member of the commission, Ferruccio Vitale, in June and July, 1928, made an examination and report on various submissions respecting Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks. The professional staff of the parks took part in the consultations. As the report deals with principles applicable to park development, it is given here:

We arrived at Glacier Park station on the evening of June 24 and were met by the landscape architect, Mr. T. C. Vint. Early next morning we motored to the Many Glacier Hotel and held a conference in regard to the location of the bridge with the following gentlemen: T. C. Vint, landscape architect; J. R. Eakin, superintendent; F. A. Kittredge, chief engineer, National Park Service; E. A. Davidson, assistant landscape architect; J. A. Elliott, Bureau of Public Roads; C. E. Randals, resident engineer, National Park Service; Mr. Emory, project engineer, Babb-Many Glacier Road; Howard P. Hays, manager, transportation company; Fred Noble, assistant manager, transportation company; Howard A. Noble, president Glacier Park Hotel Co.

At the outlet of Lake McDermott is a small waterfall entering a gorge of great natural beauty. A second fall occurs 200 or 300 feet farther down and a dam has been constructed for a small power plant to serve the Many Glacier Hotel and its adjacent chalets.

In order to reach the hotel from the Babb Road one must cross this gorge by automobile, on horseback, or on foot. At present there are two ancient wooden bridges: One, at the top of the gorge at the first waterfall, is used for horses and for pedestrians, and the other, a short distance below, is used by automobiles. Both structures are bulky and unsightly and need replacement on account of their unsafe condition.

At present a very small portion of the gorge can be seen. Only a glimpse of it may be had from the highway. What is generally seen is a view of the upper falls from a chalet, which has been built as a painter's studio. This view is projected on the dark background of Mount Grinnell and makes a remarkable picture, which various artists are fond of painting. In such a picture the present horse and foot bridge is an ugly blot.

But this view is only a small portion of the real picture, which can at present be seen only with difficulty for the lack of a trail leading to the bottom of the gorge. If such a trail is built, then the full magnificence of the gorge and its background is revealed and the former becomes only a detail or incident. In the larger picture the automobile bridge is much more of a blot than the foot and horse bridge, and the two together actually destroy its beauty.



GLACIER NATIONAL PARK: PRESENT CONDITION

Somewhere between the top and the bottom of the gorge there must be at least one bridge. Topographic conditions and practical considerations restrict the possibilities to a location somewhere within 300 or 400 feet of the top, or at the top itself. Any structure therein is bound to injure the scenic beauty.

After protracted discussion with the gentlemen present, and after a careful examination of the bottom of the lake immediately above the first cascade, I suggested that the two present bridges be eliminated; that a single bridge be constructed for all traffic from 25 to 30 feet beyond the first cascade toward the lake; that this bridge be kept as low as high-water mark will allow; that the alignment of the lake shore be modified in order to make this possible; that the bridge be supported by abutments and piers made of the huge flat boulders which are available at the site; that the floor of the bridge be constructed of steel and covered with gravel, with a total thickness from 6 to 8 inches; that the section of the bridge be composed of an 18-foot automobile lane in the center, a 5-foot lane for horses on the lake side, and a 3-foot lane for pedestrians on the cascade side, substantial curbs separating the lanes; and that a simple iron rail be installed for protection, composed of pickets $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches square.

I feel confident that the superstructure of such a bridge, if painted dull black, or very dark green, on account of its background, could not be seen in the landscape even from the painter's studio. The piers and abutments can be so made as to be an integral part of the rock formations of the site. From the lower part of the gorge, once made available to the public by trails on both sides of the gorge, this bridge can not be seen and the full scenic beauty of the entire picture is preserved.

The above location of the bridge has also the great advantage of solving all the present traffic difficulties as it keeps separate and parallel all the way the three modes of transit and eliminates all dangerous blind curves in the road.

I also recommended that certain unsightly buildings now decidedly in the view be removed; that the concrete valve vault be hidden by large rocks; and the power plant be, in time, removed or rebuilt in a less conspicuous way.

All present concurred enthusiastically in the above recommendations and assured me that, if approved by the National Park Service Director, they would be carried out.

Mr. Kittredge saw no engineering difficulties in the project and promised to submit a design of the bridge for approval. The spirit shown by all concerned was one of helpfulness and of generosity in giving in on points which seemed to be well settled in the individual minds. All were imbued with the importance of the aesthetic problem and considered it paramount. That a solution was found which not only seemed to solve the aesthetic, but undoubtedly solved the practical difficulty was gratifying to all, but everyone seemed ready at all times to sacrifice his interest and his point of view in a loyal endeavor to accomplish the best result.

Other problems were brought to my attention during my brief stay at Glacier Park and my opinion requested. The most important ones are the following:

First. The Babb-Many Glacier Road is being built under the supervision of the Bureau of Roads. * * * Everything that can be done to enhance the attractiveness of the road with the available funds is intelligently done. But there is need in a few places of opening interesting vistas through the adjacent woods to give the traveler a glimpse of the remarkable beauty beyond and with it an invitation to explore it. If an appropriation were provided for this work similar to the appropriation for clearing the slides of the road, I feel sure it would be wisely spent.



GLACIER NATIONAL PARK: SUGGESTED CHANGES

Second. Beyond the foot and on the south bank of the gorge is low, wet ground, where the corrals for the horses are now situated. The buildings and corrals are rather unsightly. The concessionaire seems willing to remove the group to a small plateau about 15 feet higher a short distance farther down the valley and build thereon a typical northwestern ranch.

In view of the fact that ranches will probably disappear in time, that they are exceedingly interesting to the visitors, and that, in any case, this necessary concession can not be hidden from view, it seems wise to urge the removal of the present unsatisfactory corrals and buildings to the other location and allow the concessionaire to carry out his project.

Third. The present capacity of the Many Glacier Hotel will soon be insufficient to take care of the visitors, who are constantly increasing in numbers. I was shown, as the location where an addition would some time be built, a small peninsula south of the hotel, where a sawmill and other buildings used for the construction of the present structures are now in disuse. (See photograph B).

The most beautiful panoramic view of the lake and its crowning mountains is toward the south, whereas the view to the north is utterly uninteresting. I therefore advised that, if new structures are needed, they be located on the northern shore of the lake, where there seems to be sufficient depth of reasonably level land for the purpose. In spite of the fact that such location entails greater difficulties for the hotel management, Mr. Noble agreed with this opinion and offered to comply with it, if so ordered, when necessary.

Fourth. There seems to be complete and intelligent accord among engineers, park superintendent, and landscape architect in regard to the location and alignment of the transmountain road. As a matter of general policy this road is designed so that it will not take the automobile tourist directly in view of the most striking features of the park, such as Trick Falls, Baring Falls, etc., nor along lake shores whenever it is physically possible to do so. It seems to me that this policy, which will compel appreciative and sincere tourists to take short walks in order to view these scenic treasures, will enhance their enjoyment of them by adding preciousness to features which, if completely and continuously exposed to view, must lose in value.

Such policy can not be too highly commended. The greatest charm to me of what I saw of Glacier Park was the unspoiled intimacy of the landscape, especially on the small lakes. This intimacy seemed to enhance the majestic scale of the surroundings and impart a sense of almost religious awe. To maintain it is evidently the aim of the men in the park service.

Together with Mr. Vint we left Glacier Park the evening of June 25 and arrived at Gardiner early in the morning of June 27. We drove directly to the Mammoth Hotel, where we met Doctor Bumpus and Doctor Oastler, representing the American Museum Association.

The Mammoth Hotel is part of a very extensive and exceedingly ugly group of buildings, once erected as an Army post. The general planning, the character of the buildings, and their heterogeneous design are such that a visitor derives a positive shock on arrival when such a medley of structures is seen in the very center of a region of remarkable beauty.

Doctor Bumpus explained to me in great detail the object of the proposed museum to be erected at Mammoth and stated that the most favorable location for it would be in the center of the old parade ground. If this situation were not thought possible, he would be satisfied with a site either to the east or to the west of the parade ground.

I frankly expressed my opinion, saying that so long as the group of buildings now existing on the plateau were retained, it made little difference where

another structure was located, but I urged him and his associates to join the National Park Service authorities present and myself to delay this scheme for the museum and exert their influence to obtain a new plan for the entire group of buildings, with a view to rebuild in time the entire concession and in such a plan locate permanently the site of the museum. If delay should be out of the question, I suggested that whatever is done now be frankly of a temporary nature, as I am convinced that sooner or later the necessity of replanning and rebuilding Mammoth will become imperative.

I can not too strongly feature in this report my opinion that a new plan by the best talent available should be made as soon as possible and that new concessions for buildings be given from now on for temporary purposes only. With such a plan the work of rebuilding could be done gradually as the periods of the present concessions expire and as funds become available.

Doctor Bumpus, Doctor Oastler, and Mr. Vint concurred fully in this opinion, and Doctor Bumpus assured me that he would do all he could to delay the construction of the museum or to erect a frankly temporary building.

On a high knoll overlooking the Mammoth group, as shown on the map, it is the intention of the museum authorities to erect a low, small structure for lecturing purposes to students and visitors on the geologic features of the region. This structure would be inconspicuous, and I see no reason why permission should not be granted for its erection.

From Mammoth we went in the afternoon to Old Faithful, where the construction of another museum is contemplated. At present buildings are constructed within a radius of one-eighth of a mile from Old Faithful and a restriction to this effect is in force.

Last year a ranger station was built, which is nearer than the prescribed one-eighth of a mile by several feet. This establishes a dangerous precedent, and the museum authorities thought that on that account they could erect their building much closer to Old Faithful than the restriction allows. A brief discussion, however, was sufficient to persuade Doctor Bumpus and Doctor Oastler of the undesirability of such procedure.

A site was tentatively agreed upon as shown on the accompanying plan of the upper-geyser basin, and it was also proposed that the new ranger station be removed from its present site and incorporated in the museum building, a procedure which Doctor Bumpus thought quite possible.

I take this opportunity to express my regret that concessions in this upper-geyser basin be allowed at such close distance from Old Faithful as one-eighth of a mile. This region is visited by very large crowds, especially by motor, and no effective restrictions of parking seem to be in force or enforceable. I counted 75 cars parked within 50 to 75 feet of Old Faithful. The proximity of the buildings and of the cars destroys, in my opinion, the beauty of site and the effectiveness of this remarkable geyser. I was told that there is a constant pressure brought to bear upon the park authorities for enlargement of buildings and new concessions, and that it is only a matter of a short period of time when Old Faithful will be completely encircled by buildings and swarming with crowds.

It may be that it is a good policy to concentrate these crowds upon this outstanding feature of the park, thereby relieving the others and making possible better policing conditions, but it seems to me regrettable that the site of Old Faithful should be devoted to such an enormous and encroaching area of buildings. A site for this purpose could be chosen at a safe distance, while the public, through having to walk to see the geyser, would be repaid by a more serene and majestic picture of it.

To have the geyser in constant view from the porches of the hotel, the lodge, and other buildings; to have artificial light thrown upon it at night; and to have it crowded out of the picture by parking automobiles, cheapens the effect of Old Faithful and reduces it to the level of an amusement park stunt.

I fully realize the pressure that must be brought to bear on the park authorities by these huge crowds and by their political representatives in order to make easily accessible to the lazy, jitney tourists the wonders of our parks, but I also sincerely believe that the rising standard of taste in this country and the constant education of the masses going on will in time justify a policy which would make these features more precious and less blatant.

Plans and policies for the distant future should be provided now, in my opinion, in order gradually to withdraw all obstructions and concessions from the beauty spots of the parks to locations within walking distance of them, compelling the masses to realize by a slight effort the privilege accorded to them in the contemplation of unspoiled, sheer beauty.

We proceeded the next day to the summit of Mount Washburn, where Doctor Bumpus explained the necessity of a small structure for exhibits and for lecturing purposes on the rim of one of the most colossal and majestic crater formations of the world. I can not see any possible objection to this. As a matter of fact, I believe Doctor Bumpus is so convinced that the organization which he represents should be the very one to give a fine example of how not to interfere with the beauty of the landscape, that it is safe to leave to him and to the architect employed by the Museum Association, whom I had the pleasure of meeting, the selection of materials and style and site for the several structures that in time they contemplate erecting.

The best safeguard of all, however, is in the extraordinarily sensitive and able landscape architect in the service of the national parks, Mr. Thomas C. Vint. For several days I was constantly associated with this young man, who impressed me very favorably throughout.

I never saw better teamwork or any finer group of men than at Glacier Park and at Yellowstone. The only consideration that was paramount in the minds of everybody in our discussion was the preservation for all time of the natural beauties of the parks, even at the expense of practical matters and of expediency.

Over and over again in our discussions the thought was brought out that certain areas of the parks should, in the long-range policy of their administration, be considered as sacred areas, not to be invaded, but to be approached by the people in a spirit of appreciation and reverence. These sacred areas vary from exceedingly large territories to individual features.

A study of them should be made now and a policy for their preservation and utilization in the eternal life of the parks established as soon as possible.

Acadia National Park, Me.—In October, 1926, Mr. Arno B. Cammerer, Associate Director of the National Park Service, presented alternative plans for the proposed bridge to be constructed within the Acadia National Park, Mount Desert, Me. Mr. John D. Rockefeller, jr., was planning to build this bridge.

The commission reported that the designs submitted by the architect were not as satisfactory for the location in this national park as was the design of the National Park Landscape Architectural Department; that the latter had character and fitted into the landscape.