REPORT

OF THE

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT

OF THE

SEQUOIA AND GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL PARKS,

CALIFORNIA,

TO THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

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SEQUOIA AND GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL PARKS,
OFFICE OF ACTING SUPERINTENDENT,
Camp at Weishar's Mill, Cal., August 31, 1896.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith my annual report of operations in these parks for the current year.

The guard has consisted of two troops, C and I of the Fourth Cavalry, the former stationed in the south half of the Sequoia Park and the latter encamped in General Grant Park. Troop C reached its temporary camp near Three Rivers on May 25, remaining there until July 1, when it was removed to its permanent camp at Weishar's Mill. This camp is about three miles below Mineral King. Troop I established its camp at General Grant Park on May 31. By direction of the commanding general, Department of California, the duties assigned to the two troops have been as follows:

Troop C to establish camp in the vicinity of Mineral King, with an outpost at Hockett Meadows, with instructions to patrol and guard the portion of the Sequoia Park south of the Middle Fork of the Kaweah, and Troop I, with its main camp at General Grant Park and a detachment at Halstead Meadows, to police all that portion of the two parks north of that stream. These instructions have been complied with, and constant patrols have been kept up since the melting of the snows made it practicable to subsist the stock in the higher portions of the park.

But two cases of trespass have been discovered in the southern portion of the Sequoia Park. The first was, without doubt, done unwittingly, as the shepherd himself guided my patrol to his flock, in a place entirely unsuspected, and immediately removed it when told that he was on the park reserve. In the other case a flock was discovered just within the southern border of the park, but the herders succeeded in concealing themselves and evading the patrol. These sheep were scattered by the patrol, and a visit to the place on the following day showed that they had been driven out.

Reports from the commanding officer of Troop I to include July 16, since which date no reports have been received, contain no reference to actual trespass north of the Middle Fork. The annual report of this officer has not yet reached me, but will be forwarded, as an appendix to this report, immediately upon its arrival.

There has been but one forest fire in the park during the season. This was on the north slope of Homer's Nose, about the 1st of July, and, I am informed, was caused by lightning. A party was sent to extinguish it, but it had already been done by heavy rain before they were able to reach it.

In addition to the patrol duties performed by the troops, the men have also been employed in clearing out the old trails and in building some new ones. In the southern portion of the Sequoia Park the trail from Mineral King, through Farewell Gap, Hocketts Meadow, and Cahoun Meadow, to Three Rivers, via the Salt Creek Trail, a distance of about forty miles, has been thoroughly cleared and repaired, beside similar work done by patrols on shorter portions of existing trails. A new trail, known as the Tar Gap Trail, has been opened from near Mineral King to Hocketts Meadow, saving a distance of about ten miles between the two points. This trail will be much used during the month of September, and will be left in first-class order. Numerous signboards have also been placed at the intersections of trails for the convenience of new troops and tourists, and as far as practicable all the principal forks of trails will be similarly marked with direction boards before the troops are withdrawn in the fall. Similar work has been done by Troop I in the northern portion of the park.

Permits to cross and camp in the Sequoia Park have been freely granted during the summer, and it is not believed that they have been abused. They have invariably been written on a copy of the regulations of the park, so that there could be no plea of ignorance in the case of infraction of the rules. In the majority of cases they have been desired merely for the privilege of passing from Farewell Gap across the eastern line of the park to the Mount Whitney country. There is abundant game in these mountains. I have seen several deer, who did not appear in the least disturbed until near approached; fresh bear sign on the public road between Three Rivers and Mineral King, and a great quantity of grouse and mountain quail. In fact, I have caught young quail within the limits of my camp. The birds have deserted the immediate vicinity of camp, probably on account of the disturbance caused by the horses being daily turned out. The trout in some of the streams are inexhaustible.

Although trespass within the park limits has been effectively prevented during the present season, there has been an immense amount of it within the Sierra Forest Reserve, which enfolds each of these parks on all sides except the west. Thus these lands present the curious anomaly of parks with guards, but no law to punish, and a forest reserve, land under practically the same conditions as the parks, with ample law to punish, but no guard to enforce. I would therefore respectfully suggest that in future a civil officer of the Government, with authority to make arrests and to punish offenders, be stationed with troops guarding these parks, and that a law be enacted providing for the punishment of trespassers in the national parks. This is only a repetition of my recommendation as acting superintendent of the Yosemite National Park in 1894.

The forest reserve, especially in the vicinity of Mount Whitney and the Kern River, is the resort of hundreds of tourists during the summer, and they and all the law-abiding citizens of the country are up in arms at the lawless way in which the sheep raisers use the land. It is useless to attempt to describe this country after it has been grazed by sheep; one can only realize it after he has seen it, and it does not seem that the intent of the law governing the forest reserve is being carried out while these men are allowed to disregard it with impunity.

I have refrained from entering any formal complaints against trespassers upon the forest reserve on account of the difficulty, in the first place, of identifying the offender, even presuming that he could and would be arrested after complaint was made. If there was anyone in or with the command competent to make an arrest the matter of conviction would be very simple. I have, however, had every trespasser on the forest reserve who has come to my knowledge warned that he was transgressing the laws, and am sorry to say that the warning has produced little good effect. I am aware that in making these recommendations I am trespassing on another's prerogatives, but the fact that there is no regard for the law outside of the parks, and that the park regulations are enforced, causes a dissatisfaction which I think is well grounded.

I can see no objection to leasing the lands in these parks, except such as are needed for Government purposes, for the grazing of horses and cattle, but on no account should this privilege be accorded to raisers of sheep. Should this be done a small income would accrue, which might be expended in the hire of civil officials of the Government to police the grounds so leased and see that the terms of the contract were honestly carried out, and the balance, if any, employed, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, in the improvement of the trails and the parks generally.

It is highly desirable that the private lands within the limits of these parks be acquired by the Government. This is an oft-repeated recommendation.

Heretofore there has been but one troop of cavalry on duty in these parks, and it is understood this will be the rule in the future. Under these circumstances the headquarters will necessarily be in this vicinity, and the Government should take proper steps to provide it with a good camping place. The present location is superior to that previously occupied near Mineral King, but it is camped on merely by courtesy of the owner, who may withdraw his permission at any time. There is a location on Government land which I have had under observation all summer, and will be able to report upon after the fall rains begin. Up to the present time the water supply there has been ample, but in a more than ordinary season it might fail. The best place of all for a permanent camp is at Atwell's Mill, which, if acquired by the Government, would afford excellent facilities in every way for a camp, which might be occupied continuously while the troop is on duty in the parks. This land contains a small grove of Sequoias, which, being in a public road, should be preserved.

The camp in the foothills has always been on private land, and, although it has never been a detriment to the landholder, it has afforded cause for complaint that the Government was making use of private property without compensation. The necessity for a semipermanent camp below should be avoided.

Should a permanent camping place be selected on public land, a small appropriation should be allowed from the Interior Department for improving it. These improvements should include a small reservoir, to be left empty when the camp is evacuated for the winter; a few hundred feet of 2-inch pipe, with connections and bibbs, and material for horse troughs.

The land would afford ample material for log huts and stables, and the labor would be cheerfully furnished by the men, who, as a rule, take great interest in a matter of this kind. A little sawed lumber, nails, and window frames should be furnished. I think an allowance of $1,000

would be ample for a troop of cavalry to put itself in a very comfortable condition for its summer station. Log huts and a rough shelter for horses should also be erected at the outlying camps.

The lines of the parks should be accurately surveyed and permanently marked. A new map of the parks and the adjacent country is in course of preparation by Lieut. M. F. Davis, acting engineer officer of the squadron, which I will be able to forward after the return of the troops to their winter station. It is hoped that this will be of use to those who will have to perform patrol duties here in the future.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. H. G. GALE,
Captain Fourth Cavalry, Acting Superintendent Sequoia and General Grant National Parks.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

REPORT OF CAPT. J. LOCKETT, TROOP I, FOURTH CAVALRY.

CAMP AT GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL PARK, CAL.,
August 30, 1896.

The Acting Superintendent of Sequoia and General Grant National Parks:

SIR: In compliance with your letter dated August 10, 1896, I have the honor to submit the following report of service performed by Troop I, Fourth Cavalry, in Sequoia and General Grant National Parks, this year:

Pursuant to instructions the troop left its camp at Pogues Ranch at 1.30 p. m., May 23, 1896, and reached Sequoia Lake, at the foot of Stevens Grade, on the 25th. The grade is about 2 miles from the point selected for permanent camp in General Grant Park, and was found so badly washed out by the spring rains that extensive repairs had to be made before it could be used. Much work had to be done also in repairing bridges on the road from the top of the grade to camp.

On the 27th Lieutenant Davis, with a detail, was sent to patrol the northern portion of the Sequoia Park and to ascertain if the conditions were such as to warrant the sending of a permanent detail to Halstead Meadows. A detachment was also sent to occupy the permanent camp. On the 31st the troop occupied its permanent camp. Lieutenant Davis returned the same day, and, from his report, it was not deemed advisable to occupy Halstead Meadows, so patrols were kept out from the main camp.

On the 8th of June Lieutenant Nolan was sent with most of the noncommissioned officers to point out to them the boundary lines of the main park and such other features of the country as would be of use in patrolling and guarding the park. On his return a strong detail was sent to occupy Cabin Meadows, a point near the northern boundary, from which an efficient and active patrol could be kept up, covering the exposed portions of the main park.

This detail, relieved every ten or fifteen days in order to equalize the duty imposed, and also to give equal opportunity for drill and instruction, occupied the various meadows near the northern line until August 1, when it took station at Halstead Meadows.

During July the trail from the main camp to Stony Point was put in good repair. On August 1 the repairs were continued from that point through Halstead Meadows to Grant Forest.

On July 4 Lieutenant Davis was detached from his troop and since that time has not done duty with it.

Toward the latter part of July I made a tour of inspection, covering the major portion of the park placed under my control. A few cattle and horses have been found within the park limits, which have been promptly expelled at remote points. Though somewhat hampered by the lack of sufficient pack mules, we have kept the park free from sheep.

The troop has been engaged since the 2d instant in its annual target practice. The month of September will be devoted to carbine firing.

It will be necessary some time during the month to spend about ten days at Eshom Valley, as no place nearer camp can be found for skirmish firing.

The reports of noncommissioned officers in charge of patrolling parties are herewith inclosed.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. LOCKETT,
Captain, Fourth Cavalry.