

REPORT

OF THE

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT

OF THE

Sequoia and General Grant National Parks, California,

TO THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

FOR

THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1897.



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REPORT
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ACTING SUPERINTENDENT OF SEQUOIA AND
GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL PARKS.

OFFICE OF ACTING SUPERINTENDENT
SEQUOIA AND GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL PARKS,
Camp at Weishar's Mill, Cal., August 31, 1897.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith my annual report of duty performed in these parks during the current year.

The park guard, consisting of Troop "C," Fourth Cavalry, arrived at Three Rivers, Cal., on June 10, establishing a temporary camp at Red Hill, which it occupied until July 1, when the headquarters were removed to the present camp. Camps of outlying detachments were established as follows: At General Grant National Park, one noncommissioned officer and two privates, on June 23; at Halstead Meadows, one noncommissioned officer and seven privates, on July 2, and at Hockett Meadow, one noncommissioned officer and four privates, on July 16. In addition, a small detachment has been kept at Red Hill for purposes of transmitting the mail and guarding stores. These detachments have been visited by various patrols from the main camp, and have kept up a daily patrol of both parks, two small patrols leaving each camp daily.

From the date of rendering my report last year until the guard was removed, about November 1, no trespass occurred within the limits of the parks. The guards were withdrawn from the higher altitudes about October 25, the season being perhaps peculiarly favorable for such a long stay. A heavy fall of snow two or three days after prevented the further grazing of sheep within the park limits, and the fact that sheep had been withdrawn from the immediate vicinity of the park boundaries had been already ascertained before the withdrawal of the outlying detachments.

One forest fire of considerable magnitude occurred between the East and Middle forks of the Kaweah about the middle of September. This fire originated in the forest reserve, and was carried by a westerly wind within the park limits. It was gotten under control by a detachment sent out for the purpose, after several days' hard labor, but required about a week's watching to prevent further spreading. This fire, occurring at a season when there are few thunderstorms, was probably caused by the carelessness of sheep men or hunters. Several hundred acres were burned over but, in my judgment, no serious damage was done.

With one exception, the parks showed no signs of having been visited during the absence of the troops upon my arrival this spring. The exception noted is that of certain parties who cut up two fallen redwood trees in the tract just north of the Atwell estate. A full report of the circumstances of this case has been rendered, and the whole matter still rests *in statu quo* pending the action of the Secretary.

I have positive knowledge of one case of trapping within the park limits during the absence of the troops, and have no doubt that it is not the only one. Hunting and trapping can not be prevented by a temporary guard, as the most favorable time for their pursuit is during the winter months, while the troops are absent. The small size of the parks is also a hindrance to their prevention while the troops are present, as it is impossible to guard the entire lines except by visiting patrols, and it is quite simple to slip in and do a few hours' hunting while the patrols are absent.

During the present season I have but few cases of trespass to report. A small, scattered band of sheep without a herder made its way across the southern boundary and was driven out; also a few hunters have been discovered and ejected. The majority of visitors are perfectly willing to abide by regulations, but there are exceptions, and it is difficult to persuade those who are innocent of trespass to give information against those who are not. It is needless to repeat the recommendation, made so frequently in previous reports, that efficient laws be enacted for the punishment of trespass in these lands.

PARK BOUNDARIES.

The boundaries of the Sequoia Park should be thoroughly and properly marked. The character of the country is such that it is with the utmost labor that the present blazes or monuments can be found, even when furnished with the field notes of the original survey, the country being always precipitous and, if not composed of bare rock, covered with snow-brush, and fallen timber.

✓ If the General Grant Park is retained in its present size and status, the recommendations heretofore made regarding the construction of a fence around it should receive proper consideration. This tract of land, only two miles square, is constantly overrun by small bands of stray stock. The small size of the park precludes the possibility of driving these animals far enough way to insure their not returning, and the patrols have no other way of disposing of them.

The flourishing condition of the vegetation within the parks, contrasted with that of the forest reserve round about them, adds emphasis to the recommendations heretofore made—either to enlarge the parks or to place the forest reserve under park rules.

The direction boards placed last year at intersections of trails, etc., being somewhat temporary in character, are in process of being replaced by others, neatly painted and uniform in size and lettering, intended to be more permanent. About fifty have already been placed in the southern portion of the Sequoia Park, giving full information as to the trails at each fork. Others are being prepared, and it is hoped that the northern portion and the General Grant Park will be fully supplied before the troop is withdrawn. Large and neatly made name plates for the General Grant and the General Sherman, the most important trees in the two groves, have been prepared to replace those now on the trees, which are hardly in keeping with the dignity of the trees and of the names they bear.

TRAILS AND ROADS.

No systematic work for the improvement of old trails or building of new ones has been done this year. This labor can not be done under the present system unless the guard is increased in strength, as a single troop of cavalry is fully occupied by its patrol duties. A wagon road should be constructed from the Mineral King road to Hockett Meadow, thus opening up all the beautiful southern portion of the Sequoia Park to summer visitors. This can be built over the line of the Tar Gap trail at trifling expense. The title of the Colony Mill road, it having been abandoned by its builders for so many years, and being for the most part on Government land, should be acquired by the Government, and the road repaired and extended to the Giant Forest. This would be an expensive matter, but not too much so when the beauty of the country and the magnificence of the Giant Forest are taken into consideration. This grove, generally conceded to be the finest in the world, and the exclusive property of the Government, is practically inaccessible to visitors. It is the most valuable portion of the park, and by judicious selection might perhaps be partially cleared to its own betterment at sufficient profit to pay for this expenditure. At all events there should be sufficient pride in its ownership to warrant the expense of its exhibition.

GAME AND FISH.

The game within the Sequoia Park appears to be more abundant than last year. Attention is invited to a previous paragraph in this report relative to the prevention of hunting, and also to the following remarks of the acting superintendent in his report for 1893, under the heading of "Extension of the park," to wit:

I learn from the report of the superintendent of the Yellowstone National Park that on the 14th of April, 1891, the limits of that park were enlarged by order of the President by adding thereto a portion of a timber reserve previously set apart by the President under the timber-culture laws. There is no doubt that this can advantageously be done in the case of the Sequoia National Park, and that the limits can thus be enlarged without materially interfering with the interests of any class of citizens, save sheepmen and cattlemen, who are making use of Government lands. The present park is too small to well perform the functions of a game reserve, since the cold weather forces the deer from the high altitudes within the park to the low foothills outside the park, where they are hunted assiduously. Besides, it is too small, an area 24 miles by 9 being scarcely sufficient for the purpose. By taking in a portion of the forest reserve east of the Sequoia and General Grant national parks there would be included a country devoid of inhabitants or settlements, without roads, but naturally suited for a game reserve. It would include and preserve the sources of the Kern River, a stream which is much depended on for irrigation. It would reclaim from the sheepmen an area now almost impassable to the traveler, to such an extent is every living thing eaten off the face of the earth and trampled under foot by the hundreds of thousands of sheep which every year roam over that territory. (I am told that this year the ravages of the sheep have been extraordinary, and people visiting the Kern River to fish have to depart hurriedly to prevent their horses from dying of hunger.) This extension of the park would include what is perhaps the finest fishing ground of America, or of the world—the Kern lakes and the upper waters of the Kern River. It would include some very picturesque country, notably about Mount Whitney, and much country in which, by reason of its comparatively low altitude, deer can winter.

By making this extension, the Sequoia Park will become about equal in area to the Yosemite. I inclose a blue print showing the proposed enlargement. Beginning at the northwest corner of Grant Park, I would propose that the line run due east to the eastern boundary of the forest reserve; thence south along the boundary of the forest reserve to the point where the southern line of the park prolonged intersects that boundary; thence due west along the southern line of the park prolonged to the southwest corner of the park; thence northwest along the western boundary of the forest reserve to the southwest corner of Grant Park; thence north along the west lines of Grant Park to the point of starting.

This extension would include Grant Park and the Mount Whitney military reservation, a reservation which I believe has not yet been thrown open to occupancy by settlers. A few years of exclusion of sheep and cattle would make this a grand natural fishing and hunting resort, the source of health and pleasure to great numbers of citizens.

The extension therein suggested would act as a better game law than that of the State of California.

✓ The trout streams within the park are excellent and well stocked in the southern portion. The northern part is still practically devoid of fish. Some golden trout were planted in the Marble Fork last year, with what success is not yet known, and I expect, later in the season, to cooperate with Mr. S. L. N. Ellis, of Visalia, an active member of the Visalia Sportsman's Club, in the furtherance of this matter. The difficulty of transporting partly or fully grown fish is great, and little time or transportation has been available for the purpose.

FIRES.

There has been no forest fire within park limits up to the present. I have, however, had the satisfaction of seeing a fire within an hour after it was started, undoubtedly by lightning. This occurred within the week, a few miles south of my camp, and inclines me to believe that the much-abused sheep herder is not perhaps as black as he is painted. I am satisfied, however, that the majority of fires in the Sierras are the result of carelessness or intent.

CAMPS.

The camp in the foothills this year was, as last, on private land. The troop occupied it for three weeks, although it was unnecessary except for the consideration of its supplies—a matter which was not my fault and could and should have been avoided. It may be necessary to camp in the vicinity of Three Rivers for a week or two in the spring. This camp must be on private land, and the Interior Department should furnish the funds for hiring such a camp. This is also necessary in the fall for an equally brief space of time. The War Department seldom furnishes the wherewithal to pay for camping grounds, for cavalry especially, the fiction being, apparently, that the purchase of forage pays for the camp. Forage supplied at Three Rivers cannot be produced there and is supplied by contract. It therefore follows that the troop commander who camps there does so purely by courtesy, and is forced to beg his way. This is undignified in the Government and humiliating to its representative, and I earnestly recommend that the acting superintendent of these parks be allowed \$100 annually, to be expended as may be necessary for the hiring of a camping place at or near Three Rivers.

The permanent camp, as above, is on the ground occupied last year. It is amply sufficient, and, as far as my experience goes, can be occupied from June 1, or before, until November 1. It is supposed to be on private land, but the alleged owner is not positive as to that fact. A rough measurement made last year convinces me that it is on Government land within the forest reserve. This matter can only be settled by a competent surveyor with proper instruments, as I am informed by the surveyor-general of California that the questionable boundary has never been officially surveyed. If this camp is occupied in future—and it is the best available—the lines should be officially surveyed and this

matter determined. In any case, a proper abiding place should be provided for the troops who perform the duty of guarding these parks, and enough funds should be put at the disposal of the responsible officer, whether he belong to the Interior or to the War Department, to put his men in a condition of comfort independent of private parties, and, if they are enlisted soldiers, in excess of the insufficient allowance of camp equipage prescribed by the regulations of the Army. The permanent station of the park guard during the summer should include comfortable and roomy cabins, a sufficient stable, and a kitchen provided with proper range facilities and mess room.

I therefore recommend that a general appropriation of \$2,500 be granted under the title of "National parks" for the providing of a suitable summer station of the guard of the Sequoia National Park and its outlying detachments, the fund to be available as the Secretary of the Interior may direct.

MAP.

I forward herewith blue-print copies of that portion of Lieutenant Davis's map, made last year, which shows both parks and their immediate surroundings. This is probably the most correct map of this portion of the Sierras available for the use of troops.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

GEO. H. G. GALE,

Captain Fourth Cavalry, Acting Superintendent.

THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.



SKETCH OF THE
SEQUOIA AND GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL PARKS
and the
SIERRA FOREST RESERVE
In their Immediate Vicinity
Surveyed and drawn by
2^d Lieut. M.F. Davis 4th Cav. A.E.O.
1896