

1935

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MOUNT MCKINLEY NATIONAL PARK

Harry J. Liek, Superintendent, McKinley Park, Alaska

GENERAL

Mount McKinley National Park has enjoyed a very successful year from almost every viewpoint.

When the travel season closed our records showed an increase of 62 per cent over the year before. This increase would have been considerable more had it not been for the longshoremen's strike on the Pacific Coast which extended well into the month of July, causing many visitors to cancel their reservations. Considerable difficulty was experienced in receiving supplies and materials due to the strike.

Instead of following average conditions, the weather during the year seemed to tend toward extremes. The fall and early winter season last year was very mild. High winds prevailed from October until January causing considerable damage to the telephone line, storehouses, and camp buildings in the interior of the park.

The spring broke late and the ice did not move in the rivers until May 15. Many new glaciers were encountered on the highway, which caused some delay in opening the road. However, the road was open to Toklat River on June 9. The park road showed considerable improvement over former years, many curves were eliminated by making fills and several points were widened on the high-line giving visitors a feeling of security along this section.

Many visitors report having seen a fine display of wild life during their stay, although bears were not as numerous along the highway as in former years. Caribou, sheep and moose were seen throughout the season.

Prominent persons who visited the park during the summer were the Secretary of Commerce, Hon. Daniel C. Roper, Mrs. Roper and party; Mr. Jacob Baker, Asst. Administrator, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Washington D. C.; Mr. H. A. Scandrett, President of the Milwaukee Railroad, Mrs. Scandrett and party, Chicago, Illinois; Mr. Harry G. Watson, Secretary to the Governor of Alaska; Colonel O. F. Ohlson, General Manager of the Alaska Railroad, Anchorage, Alaska; Colonel George E. Kump, Head of the U. S. Signal Corps in Alaska, Seattle, Washington; Mr. Thomas B. Wilson, Vice President and General Manager of the Alaska Steamship Company, Seattle, Washington.

The first ascent of Mount Foraker, the second highest mountain within the park area, having a height of seventeen thousand feet, was made by Mr. Charles Houston, Mr. Thomas Graham Brown, and Mr. George C. Waterston. The ascent of the north peak, which is the highest, was made on August 6, and the south peak was climbed on August 10. The temperature on the north peak was four degrees below zero and zero on the south peak.

ADMINISTRATION

Appropriations - Appropriations for the fiscal year included \$22,420 for administration, protection, and maintenance; \$17,500 from Public Works and emergency reconstruction funds for building construction; or a total of \$39,920.

Under cooperative agreement the Alaska Road Commission handle all roads and trails construction in this park from funds appropriated to the National Park Service.

Revenues - Revenues for the fiscal year were \$83.70 from the public utility operators.

Personnel - The total personnel included a maximum of seven permanent employees, and a maximum of six per diem employees. Vacancies in the permanent personnel, a clerk and two rangers were filled by appointments.

WEATHER x x

Monthly mean temperature from July on alternated regularly above and below normal until June, 1935. July showed an average nearly normal with the exception of precipitation which totaled 3.35 inches. August was slightly above normal and had the greatest amount of precipitation for any one month with 5.26 inches. September, October, and November were above normal in temperature. December was colder than January and March was colder than February.

The year's highest temperature at headquarters was 80 degrees on August 4 and 5, the lowest minus thirty two degrees on December 29.

High winds prevailed for a period each month from September to February.

The total precipitation for the year amounted 21.25 inches.

TRAVEL

The number of visitors entering the park by all modes of travel during the year showed an increase of 62 per cent over the number visiting the park last year.

The total number of visitors entering the park from October 1, 1934 to June 30, 1935 was 202.

ROADS AND TRAILS

The road from mile 66 to mile 72 was graveled and opened to the public, from mile 72 to mile 84 the road was stripped, ditched and partly graded. This leaves a distance of five miles to the north boundary.

Large fills were made at miles 25, 26, and 52. These fills eliminated some very sharp turns and gave the road a nicer appearance. Two maintenance crews of five men each maintained the seventy two miles of highway. One crew was stationed at Toklat River and the other at Savage River. The road was kept in excellent condition throughout the season. All road work was suspended by the Alaska Road Commission on November 9.

On April 1, the Alaska Road Commission resumed operations at McKinley Park Station. Practically all of the month was spent in overhauling equipment.

Road maintenance work was started on May 1 with one crew of eight men removing snow and glaciers from the highway. Two crews of ten men each were also assigned to maintenance work on May 19. One crew was stationed at Savage River and the other at East Fork. One crew of twenty one men were employed between McKinley Park Station and Savage River stripping, grading, and making fills. However, little graveling was accomplished as the Alaska Road Commission had the misfortune to lose all the equipment purchased for this project. The consignment lost by the sinking of the Alaska Steamship freighter Denali, consisted of eleven dump trucks, one stone crushing plant, and two power graders.

This is a serious handicap as the seasons are short, and part of the new equipment will not arrive before July 15. The trail from Savage River Camp to the head of Savage River was not made passable as the high waters had done so much damage that we did not feel that the tourist travel would warrant the expenditure.

PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENTS

The largest building program in the history of the park took place the past year when two of the finest buildings in the interior of Alaska were constructed at park headquarters, consisting of an eight room rangers' quarters and a five room employee's residence, both of these buildings have full basements with hot air heating plants and are modern in every respect.

Many tourists have commented on the fine looking buildings we have here, and do not expect to find buildings of this type in an isolated place like Alaska.

One two room ranger's cabin was constructed on the north boundary at Moose Creek, and four dry earth toilets were erected on the highway, two at Igloo Creek and two at mile 46.

PUBLIC UTILITY OPERATORS

The Mount McKinley Tourist and Transportation Company continue their high standard of service. The social hall and fifteen tents were damaged by high winds at the Savage River Camp during the winter months, five of the tents had to be completely replaced and new canvas replaced on the other ten. In addition to these, ten new tents were constructed giving the camp a total of sixty tents available for tourists. A lunch station was erected at Camp Denali to accommodate the visitors who make the trip from Savage River Camp to this point and return the same day. Two new twenty passenger busses and two seven passenger sedans were purchased by the company during the year. The airplane field established by the park operators at Savage River Camp is maintained in first class condition.

WILD ANIMALS

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The airplane survey made on August 4 of mountain sheep and caribou was the most accurate ever made in the park. A count of 2,280 sheep and 15,000 caribou was made. The mild winter with an abundance of forage brought the sheep through the winter in better condition than they have been in previous years. It is gratifying to note that the lamb crop is larger this year than it has been for the past three years. We estimated the crop at 50 per cent, an increase of 10 per cent over last year.

Wild life is increasing in all sections of the park, moose are becoming numerous in the north east section, it was a rare thing to see a moose in this part of the park when I first came here.

Ptarmigan are here by the thousands, and rabbits are all along the north boundary.