



THE YELLOWSTONE INTERPRETER

JULY 10, 1963

VOLUME I

NUMBER 1

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Issues will appear at random, depending upon availability of suitable material, and employees are urged to contribute articles.

The Park historian will serve as editor. Contributions or inquiries concerning published material should be addressed to him.

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A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Hiram Martin Chittenden was born at Yorkshire, in western New York State, on October 25, 1858. His boyhood was spent on a farm and was complete with the hard work, rustic pleasures and village schooling typical of the time and place. Entering the National Military Academy at West Point in 1880, he was graduated 3rd in his class. As was then customary for top-ranking graduates, he received an assignment to the Corps of Engineers as a Second Lieutenant, June 15, 1884.

Two years later, Chittenden was promoted to first lieutenant, and, in the spring of 1891, he was transferred from Missouri River improvement work to Yellowstone National Park; where he was placed in direct charge of construction, repair and maintenance of roads and bridges. His first tour of duty here covered two summer seasons and his notable achievement during that period was construction of a road between Old Faithful and West Thumb.

Following his return to river improvement work at Columbus, Ohio, Chittenden launched into his other career, as an historian, by writing The Yellowstone National Park (1895). Following his promotion to Captain in the fall of 1895, he spent two seasons on a survey of reservoir sites in Wyoming and Colorado, where he also collected information on the early fur trade during his spare time.

In 1898, Chittenden was assigned to construct the the Fort Washakie military road from the Wind River Valley to Jackson Lake. The following year, the scope of his assignment was broadened, bringing him to Yellowstone National Park for another tour of duty. It was during this second period -- 1899 to 1906, that his most notable engineering and literary works appeared. They included, in this area, a new road from Mammoth to the Golden Gate, (1899), the concrete viaduct at Golden Gate (1900), Fishing Bridge (1901), the arch at the North Entrance (1903), Chittenden Bridge (1903), Sylvan Pass road (1903), and the road from Canyon to Tower Fall, including the Mount Washburn loop (1905). He also supervised construction of the Sergeant Floyd monument at Sioux City, Iowa, during 1901-02, and wrote three important histories --

The American Fur Trade of the Far West (1902), A History of Early Steamboat Navigation on the Missouri River (1903), and, with Richardson, The Life, Letters and Travels of Father Pierre Jean de Smet (1905). In 1906, Major Chittenden was placed in charge of all activities of the Corps of Engineers in the Pacific Northwest. From his headquarters at Seattle, he directed stream-control and harbor improvement work -- including the construction of the Lake Washington ship canal, until his retirement for disability in 1910. (with the rank of brigadier-general).

Chittenden devoted the remaining seven years of his life, insofar as his failing health would allow, to work as a private consultant on flood control and in development of the Port-of-Seattle. But he had burned the candle at both ends during his strenuous career and died after a lingering illness, at the age of 59.

"Only as far as the masters of the world have called in nature to their aid, can they reach the height of magnificence. This is the meaning of their hanging gardens, villas, garden-houses, islands, parks and preserves, to back their faulty personality with these strong accessories."

Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Nature" (1844)

"Yellowstone's Role in Conservation"

by

Aubrey L. Haines

As members of the Yellowstone organization we are all aware of the contribution of this park to the development of a type of land use we call the "National Park idea". We should also be aware of that larger role our favorite area has played in the American conservation movement as a whole.

Let me begin by saying that Yellowstone National Park was conservation in America from 1872 until 1891. For nineteen years it was the pilot model for federal management of wild lands -- the laboratory for our first experiments in that direction, the first target for the anti-conservation forces, the first rallying ground for our friends and, finally, a gateway into a conservation future of incalculable benefit to us as a people.

Such a broad statement requires detailed examination. Our national policy with regard to the public domain (roughly 1,500,000,00 acres of land which came under our sovereignty prior to 1853) was one of "giveaway".^{1/} It was the will of Congress that the public lands be transferred to private ownership as rapidly as possible, and, though we may have reason to look upon that policy as a squandering of our national heritage, it did make us strong in a little more than one century. In a way, our public lands were the capital with which we built a nation, and a realization that we could hardly have done otherwise in the beginning, should temper our disapproval.

Ours is not the first generation to regret the profligate manner in which two-thirds of our public lands were disposed. As early as the eighteen-hundred forties some New England philosophers, led by Emerson and Thoreau, began to prick the American conscience. This one question

^{1/} James B. Trefethen, Crusade for Wildlife (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole Company, 1961), p. 6.

A.E. Parkins and J.R. Whitaker, Our Natural Resources and Their Conservation, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1939), p. 476.

asked by Thoreau in 1858 is typical of their thinking:

"The Kings of England formerly had their forests 'to hold the King's game', for sport or food, sometimes destroying villages to create or extend them; and I think that they were impelled by a true instinct. Why should not we, who have renounced the King's authority, have our national preserves, where no villages need be destroyed, in which the bear and panther, some even of the hunter race, may still exist, and not be 'civilized off the face of the earth', -- our forest, not to hold the King's game merely, but to hold and preserve the King himself also, the lord of creation, -- and not for idle sport or food, but for inspiration and our own true recreation?" ^{2/}

The New England philosophers were heard and understood, and the basis was established for conservation in America. However, the start was not impressive: a short-lived reservation of live oak forests on Santa Rosa Island, Florida, in 1828,^{3/} Central Park in New York City in 1853,^{4/} a grant of the Yosemite Valley to the State of California in 1864,^{5/} a closed season to protect the buffalo of Idaho Territory in the same year,^{6/} a Commission of Fisheries and Game for Massachusetts in 1865,^{7/} and a wildlife refuge in California in 1869-70.^{8/} It was but a faint beginning in the conservation of timber, recreational and wildlife resources, and any public concern for the waters, the soil and the minerals remained unexpressed.

A real breakthrough for conservation came on March 1, 1872, with establishment of Yellowstone National Park. Its origin is not a concern here; only the fact that 3,348 square miles of the public domain were placed under federal management for a specific purpose -- recreational use by the American people.

^{2/}Charles H. Callison, America's Natural Resources (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1957), p. 153.

^{3/}Anonymous. "The Dawn of Conservation", in American Forests, Vol. 41, No. 9 (September, 1935), p. 447.

^{4/}C. Frank Brockman, Recreational Use of Wild Lands (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1959), p. 50.

^{5/}Ibid., pp. 54-57.

^{6/}Trefethen, op.cit., p. 91.

^{7/}Ibid., p. 117

^{8/}Ira N. Gabrielson, Wildlife Refuges (New York: The McMillan Company, 1943), p.6.

The statement that "neither they nor their government had the remotest idea of what to do with it",^{9/} finds some support in the defects of the organic act. It called for "preservation, from injury or spoilation, of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders", and cautioned against "wanton destruction of the fish and game found within the park, and against their capture or destruction for the purposes of merchandise or profit",^{10/} yet those conservation aims were largely vitiated by failure to implement management of the area, particularly through the failure to provide funds, laws and personnel.

Thus, it was here we learned that a national park cannot be operated without federal money (we originally thought it could be), and it was here we found there is no substitute for a police force with laws to back it up. We even had to learn that it takes sincerity and understanding at the top -- that a Department with a "giveaway" complex does not make a good custodian of a national treasure. All that was learned the hard way, right here, and other federal areas were saved from similar trials.

Yellowstone's role was that of a pilot model. The first eighteen years of its existence was a tryout period, and during that time this was the only area of wild lands under federal management. Sterling Yard has called it a gestation period for the National Park System, stating: "Within those intervening years the ideas and ideals planted by Yellowstone developed . . . a creation which affects our intellectual and spiritual life today and has inspired similar ideas and systems in several other nations."^{11/}

That is true, but not the whole story. Had the combined bumbling of the early civilian superintendents and the Department of the Interior succeeded in destroying Yellowstone National Park in 1886 -- as it very nearly did, or had Senator George Graham Vest lost what has been aptly called "the first Yellowstone war",^{12/} there would have been no birth of a National Park System in 1890 with

^{9/}Trefethen, op.cit., p. 29.

^{10/}The Act of March 1, 1872. 42nd Cong., 2nd Sess., Chapter XXIV -- "An act to set apart a certain Tract of Land lying near the Head-waters of the Yellowstone River as a public Park."

^{11/}Robert Sterling Yard, Our Federal Lands (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1928), pp. 245-46.

^{12/}Ibid., p. 247.

the setting aside of Yosemite, Grant and Sequoia Parks. Nor is it likely Congress would have authorized the establishment of forest reserves in 1891 -- thereby laying the foundation for a system of national forests at a later date;^{13/} and it is even less likely that a federal system of wildlife refuges would have come into existence in 1903.^{14/} All those beginnings hinged upon the success of the Yellowstone experiment.

How much they hinged upon the outcome of certain happenings here can only be understood by taking a close look at those events. The first decade passed quietly enough, but, with the entry of the Northern Pacific Railway into Montana in 1882, the prospects for turning a profit in the Park were much increased. As a result, a combination of eastern interests, thinly disguised as the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company, moved in for a killing. Fortunately, the Park had an alert friend in General Phillip H. Sheridan and he took the matter up with Senator George Graham Vest.

The Senator saw immediately that the Park was threatened by more than monopoly; its lack of adequate laws, funds and personnel were correctly assessed as equally dangerous. Vest sponsored legislation to solve the Park's troubles but all he was able to accomplish at first was to curb the Improvement Company. Through a rider to the Sundry Appropriation Act of March 3, 1883,^{15/} he prevented the company from controlling a square mile of ground around each of seven important features, but they, in turn, blocked him from obtaining legislation for the Park.

As a part of the scheme for turning Yellowstone's features to private purposes, the Improvement Company and the Northern Pacific Railway proposed to build railroads through the Park. There, also, they were blocked by Senator Vest, who considered such a development destructive of Park values. So, the issue was switched from a forthright attempt to gain a right-of-way to a more subtle effort to detach a portion of the Park for the purpose. A long contest developed between "the railroad gang" and Vest, who had the support of a few conservation-minded colleagues and a little weekly magazine called Forest and Stream.

^{13/}

Trefethen, op.cit., pp. 48-49

Gabrielson, op.cit., pp. 8.

^{14/}Ibid.

^{15/}47th Cong., 2nd Sess. (22 STAT., 626).

While that struggle was going on, Senator Vest was unable to obtain much-needed legislation -- bills introduced to provide legal machinery for the Park were amended in committee by the railroaders who added provisions favorable to their interests. Vest then had to destroy his own bills to protect the integrity of the Park.

But the state of disorder developing in the Yellowstone region would not await an outcome; the civilian administration of the Park was brought down in disgrace, and the United States Army was called in to manage the area. The energy and honesty of the military administration restored order, gave reasonable protection to the wildlife and gradually re-established the confidence of Congress and the Public.^{16/}

It was evident early in the nineties that conservation was at last winning over exploitation. As Gabrielson indicates, the conservation movement developed new life and vigor even before a complete victory was gained through passage of the Lacey Act on May 7, 1894.^{17/} That legislation gave Yellowstone National Park the legal machinery it had lacked, and also vanquished its foes by depriving them of their leverage.

The struggle resolved a number of important issues: first, it was established quite early that this Park would be managed for the benefit of the people rather than for the aggrandizement of individuals or companies, and that has since become the guiding principle of federal management of many different types of areas; second, the very bitter struggle to keep railways out of the Park also killed the "segregation" issue, and the integrity of this and other federal areas has not been seriously challenged since, and third, it was here that the principle of absolute protection -- of features and of wildlife, was first expressed and then perfected. It remains a characteristic of National Park Service areas and federal wildlife refuges.

^{16/}Trefethen, op.cit., p. 34.

^{17/}Gabrielson, op.cit., pp.8 & 195.

53rd Cong., 2nd Sess. (28 STAT.,73), "An Act to protect the birds and animals in Yellowstone National Park, and to punish crimes in said park, and for other purposes."

Certain by-products of the Yellowstone experience have been equally important. Because a little-known New York weekly named Forest and Stream went crusading for us, it eventually sired an American conservation movement.^{18/} The fuss made by its editor, George Bird Grinnell, in support of Senator Vest and the Park drew the attention of a number of conservation-minded people, among them Theodore Roosevelt. In 1887, Roosevelt met with some friends in his living room at Sagamore Hill, and the result was formation of an organization called the Boone and Crockett Club. Its members made common cause with Forest and Stream in the interest of Yellowstone and conservation.

In its efforts to protect Yellowstone National Park, the Boone and Crockett Club did some unusual things, but its grandest accomplishment -- lobbying the Forest Reserve legislation through Congress, was a gambit with far-reaching results.

As early as 1882, General P. H. Sheridan had appealed to eastern sportsmen to press for an extension of Yellowstone Park eastward to include the mountainous country nearly to Cody, Wyoming.^{19/} The idea was kept alive by Forest and Stream and was finally investigated by Edward H. Bowers, a special agent of the General Land Office, and Arnold Hague of the Geological Survey. They reported favorably to Secretary of the Interior John Noble, who asked for legislation to accomplish the reservation.^{20/} Certain Boone and Crockett Club members, who saw support for the Park in such an addition, were able to muster Congressional support. Even so, the job had to be done slyly, and legislation took the form of a rider to the Sundry Civil Service Appropriation Act of March 3, 1891. The President was thereby authorized to establish forest reserves from the public domain by executive order, and the man then in the White House -- Benjamin Harrison, took immediate advantage of that proviso by setting apart the Yellowstone National Park Timberland Reserve (now a part of the Shoshone National Forest).^{21/} That, and

^{18/}Trefethen, op.cit., p. 48. Yard, op.cit., p. 247.

^{19/}P.H. Sheridan, Jas. F. Gregory and W.H. Forwood, Report of an Exploration of Parts of Wyoming, Idaho and Montana, in August and September, 1882 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1882), pp.17-18.

^{20/}Trefethen, op.cit., p. 48.

^{21/}Ibid.

other reservations made despite Western opposition, became the national forests organized during the Presidency of that staunch Boone and Crockett clubman, Theodore Roosevelt.

The conservation movement which has accomplished so much for this nation became an effective force because a battle was fought over Yellowstone National Park -- and won for conservation. The time was right and a significant portion of our heritage of natural resources was saved, though it might not have been had we failed here.

June, 1963

"We hug the earth, -- how rarely we mount!
Methinks we might elevate ourselves a little more.
We might climb a tree, at least. I found my
account in climbing a tree once. It was a tall white
pine, on the top of a hill; and though I got well
pitched, I was well paid for it, for I discovered
new mountains in the horizon which I had never
seen before, -- so much more of earth and heaven."

David Henry Thoreau

"Walking", 1863

REVIEW OF CURRENT LITERATURE

Dr. Merrill D. Beal -- "Sam" to us, has produced what is the best work on the Nez Percé campaign to this date. His book, I Will Fight No More Forever (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), is based on a study made under contract to the National Park Service. It begins with a review of the background of the Nez Percé, follows that tribe through early contacts with the white man, into conflict with the miners and settlers and to the inevitable war with the United States. The treatment of the military campaign is notable for its fairness and for a careful avoidance of the "red Napoleon" myth. Throughout, Chief Joseph is presented in his proper role as a guardian of the tribe and a diplomat, rather than as a war chief -- which he certainly was not. The concluding chapters show the terrible aftermath of the conflict in a vindictive maltreatment of a brave people.

The recent issue of Montana magazine (Summer, 1963), carries an interesting article by John S. Gray. In "Last Rite for Lonesome Charley Reynolds", pp. 40-51, he describes an unusual Damon-and-Pythias friendship between Yellowstone's second Superintendent and the noted frontier scout. In the process, Mr. Gray contributes handsomely to our knowledge of that unusual man -- Philetus W. Norris. However, he seems constitutionally unable to spell either "Bottler" or "Baronett"; but then, spelling doesn't come easy after the way those names have been treated.

Those who remember George B. Schaller and his study of the Molly Island pelican rookery last summer will be interested to know he has produced a book on The Mountain Gorilla (University of Chicago Press, 1963). His \$10.00 opus is said to be "crammed with more information about the great beasts than any non-gorilla has ever gathered before". While the price is steep, there is a good summary in Time magazine (July 5 issue, p. 55).