

LEGACY: The Way We Were



Horace Albright

This is an edited version of a 1926 letter from Horace Albright, Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, to seasonal applicants:

Dear Applicant:

The term of service of a temporary ranger is three months from June 15th, but the superintendent has authority to reduce the force at any time he believes it to be in the interest of the Government to do this. However, a ranger can be sure of 75 days employment.

The pay is \$100.00 per month. The successful applicant must pay his own traveling expenses to and from the Park, and must subsist himself in the Park. He must furnish his own clothes, including a uniform costing about \$45.00. He must bring his own bed. The Government pays each man \$100.00 per month and furnished quarters, light and fuel, also certain articles of furniture including bunk, tables, dishes, cooking utensils, etc.

The ranger usually must do his own cooking and always has to care for the station. In certain places rangers must board with road crews which are furnished very plain but wholesome food at \$1.00 per person per day.

Applicants for a ranger's position must be 21 years of age or must attain that age by June 15th. If you are not 21 or will not be by June 15th, don't apply. If you have the reputation of appearing unusually youthful or immature for a man of 21, don't apply. We want men who are mature in appearance. We prefer men of 25 to 30 years of age.

The ranger is primarily a policeman, therefore he should be big in frame, tall, and of average weight for his age and height. We always prefer big men to small men, other conditions being equal. If you are small of stature, better not apply.

The ranger must have a pleasing personality; he must be tactful, diplomatic and courteous; he must be patient. If you are not possessed of such characteristics, please don't apply.

The ranger must know how to cook ordinary foods and must have experience in kitchen police. If you cannot cook and care for a ranger station, don't apply. You would be an unpopular burden on your fellow rangers and the butt of all station jokes should you be selected without this essential qualification.

We want big men with fine personalities, and experience in the out-of-doors in riding, camping, woodcraft, fighting fires and similar activities.

Rangers must rise at 6:00 a.m., if not on night duty, and must retire not later than 11:00 p.m. They may attend dances or other entertainment not more than two evenings a week. They must obey every order of their station chief, who is a permanent ranger. Leave from the station will be granted only in emergencies and then only by the chief ranger. Semi-military discipline is in effect at all times. A ranger is on duty from the time he arises until he retires, and may even be called from his bed for emergency service. He is not subject to an 8-hour law and he is not paid for services rendered in excess of an 8-hour period.

Remember there is no vacation in the work, and mighty little money. If you want to come to pleasure you will be disappointed. If you want a summer in the Park as an experience in outdoor activity amid forests and a fine invigorating atmosphere, apply if you are qualified. Otherwise, please plan to visit the Yellowstone National Park as a tourist.

Do not apply unless you are positive you can report June 15th and remain until September 15th. If there is a chance of your not reporting, if accepted, we do not want your application.

If you have special qualifications which cannot be listed on the attached blank, write them on a separate sheet of paper. Send us a picture of yourself in outdoor costume if possible, otherwise a portrait will be acceptable. Pictures must be clear.

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Yellowstone National Park
Yellowstone Park, Wyoming

Office of the Superintendent

Dear Mr. _____:

We have received your letter indicating your desire to become a ranger in Yellowstone National Park for the season of 1926. Before giving it further consideration we ask you to read this circular letter very carefully and thoughtfully, and if you are still interested in the ranger position after completing your study of this communication, fill out the inclosed blank and return it to the Park headquarters with a picture of yourself.

In General

It has been our experience that young men often supply for a place on the park ranger force with the impression or understanding that the ranger is a sort of sinecure with nothing resembling hard work to perform, and that the beauties and wonders of Yellowstone Park, and very frequent trips about the park and innumerable dances and other diversions to occupy one's leisure hours.

Again, young men very often apply for ranger positions with the feeling that the duties of the place require no special training or experience and that any man with a reasonably good education can perform these duties regardless of whether he has a good or bad personality or whether he has or has not had experience in outdoor activities.

Also, many young men apply for ranger positions in the hope of making and saving considerable money to aid them in continuing their college work.

The conceptions of the duties of the ranger as just mentioned are just as untrue as it is possible for them to be, and unfortunately the pay is so small that boys earning their way through college, and who live at a distance from the Park cannot afford to become a ranger if tendered a place.

The Ranger Job

The term of service of a temporary ranger is three months from June 15th, but the superintendent has authority to reduce the force at any time he believes it to be in the interest of the Government to do this. However, a ranger can be sure of 75 days employment.

YELLOWSTONE
NATIONAL PARK
LIBRARY

The pay is \$100.00 per month. The successful applicant must pay his own traveling expenses to and from the Park, and must subsist himself in the Park. He must furnish his own clothes, including a uniform costing about \$45.00. He must bring his own bed. The Government pays each man \$100.00 per month and furnished quarters, light and fuel, also certain articles of furniture including bunk, tables, dishes, cooking utensils, etc.

The ranger usually must do his own cooking and always has to care for the station. In certain places rangers must board with road crews which are furnished very plain but wholesome food at \$1.00 per person per day.

We make no promises regarding transportation around the Park to see its wonders, and often rangers do not get a chance to see all of the Park unless they can be granted leave from their duties and make their own arrangements for the trip. Men who render excellent service and are retained until the close of the season are given an opportunity to tour the Park if facilities are available, otherwise not. If you apply, do not do so with the expectation that you will surely see more than the part of the Park you traverse in reaching your station.

Qualifications of a Ranger

Applicants for a ranger's position must be 21 years of age or must attain that age by June 15th. If you are not 21 or will not be by June 15th, don't apply. If you have the reputation of appearing unusually youthful or immature for a man of 21, don't apply. We want men who are mature in appearance. We prefer men of 25 to 30 years of age.

The ranger is primarily a policeman, therefore he should be big in frame, tall, and of average weight for his age and height. We always prefer big men to small men, other conditions being equal. If you are small of stature, better not apply.

The ranger comes more closely in contact with the visiting public than any other park officer, and he is the representative of the Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the National Park Service and the Superintendent of the Park in dealing with the public. Naturally, therefore, the ranger must have a pleasing personality; he must be tactful, diplomatic and courteous; he must be patient. If you are not possessed of such characteristics, please don't apply. Without them you would become, if selected, a failure from the beginning of your service.

The ranger is often called upon to guide large parties of tourists and to lecture to them on the features of the Park. He should

have a good strong voice and some experience in public speaking. Detail public speaking experience and training on the application form.

The ranger is charged with the protection of the natural features of the Park, especially the forests. Applicants should present evidence of their having had experience in camping out in the woods. Forestry students who have had training in forestry work and forest fire fighting are given preference to other applicants if they possess the qualifications as to age, size and personality.

The ranger must be qualified to ride and care for horses.

The ranger must know how to cook ordinary foods and must have experience in kitchen police. If you cannot cook and care for a ranger station, don't apply. You would be an unpopular burden on your fellow rangers and the butt of all station jokes should you be selected without this essential qualification.

We want big mature men with fine personalities, and experience in the out-of-doors in riding, camping, woodcraft, fighting fires and similar activities.

Duties of a Ranger

The ranger force is the park police force, and is on duty night and day in the protection of the park. Protection work primarily relates to the care of the forests, the fish and game, the geyser and hot spring formations and the camp grounds. Of equal importance is the detection of violations of the speed rules.

The ranger force is the information-supplying organization. The insurance of publications, answering of questions, lecturing, and guiding are all accomplished by rangers.

The ranger force is charged with care of all Government property, hence must watch the use of such property by other Government men as well as constantly care for the ranger stations and other property used by the ranger organization itself.

Routine of the Ranger Station:

Rangers must rise at 6:00 a.m. if not on night duty, and must retire not later than 11:00 p.m. They may attend dances or other entertainment not more than two evenings a week. They must obey every order of their station chief, who is a permanent ranger. Leave from the station will be granted only in emergencies and then only by the chief ranger. Semi-military discipline is in effect at all times. A

ranger is on duty from the time he arises until he retires, and may even be called from his bed for emergency service. He is not subject to an 8-hour law, and he is not paid for services rendered in excess of an 8-hour period.

In Conclusion

The ranger who renders satisfactory service is a very busy man all the time. There is no vacation about his work. The duties are exacting and require the utmost patience and tact at all times. A ranger's job is no place for a nervous, quick-tempered man, nor for the laggard, nor for one who is unaccustomed to hard work. If you cannot work hard ten or twelve hours a day, and always with patience and a smile on your face, don't fill out the attached blank.

Carefully reflect on what you have just read. You have perhaps believed Government jobs to be "soft" and "easy". Most of them are not, and certainly there are no such jobs in the National Park Service. The ranger's job is especially hard. There will not be more than 20 vacancies in next year's force of rangers, and there is really very little chance of your being considered unless you possess all of the qualifications mentioned herein. Please do not return the inclosed blank unless you believe you are fully qualified, and unless you mean business. Remember there is no vacation in the work, and mighty little money. If you want to come for pleasure you will be disappointed. If you want a summer in the Park as an experience in outdoor activity amid forests and a fine invigorating atmosphere, apply if you are qualified. Otherwise, please plan to visit the Yellowstone National Park as a tourist.

If you apply and are accepted, no promises will be made as to the station to which you will be assigned, nor will promises be made as to assignment to foot, horse or motorcycle patrol. You will be examined upon reporting for duty on June 15th, and will be assigned to the station having duties that we believe you can best perform.

Do not apply unless you are positive you can report June 15th and remain until September 15th. If there is a chance of your not reporting, if accepted, we do not want your application.

If you have special qualifications which cannot be listed on the attached blank, write them on a separate sheet of paper. Send us a picture of yourself in out-door costume if possible, otherwise a portrait will be acceptable. Pictures must be clear.

Cordially yours,

HORACE M. ALBRIGHT
Superintendent

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