

The Development of Yellowstone: Myths, Realities, and Uneasy Prospects

by Paul Schullery

In October, 1953, *Harper's Magazine* ran an editorial by Bernard DeVoto, entitled "Let's Close the National Parks." DeVoto, a long-time park enthusiast and conservationist, described his previous summer's experience on a tour of 15 parks, concluding that even though Congressional parsimony was starving them out, the National Park Service's staff were performing heroically in trying to keep the parks running, and that their "success at improvising and patching up is just short of miraculous. But it stops there, just short of the necessary miracle. Congress did not provide money to rehabilitate the parks at the end of the war, it has not provided money to meet the enormously increased demand. So much of the priceless heritage which the Service must safeguard for the United States is beginning to go to hell."¹

Running through a long list of reduced staffs and funding, DeVoto came to Yellowstone: "In 1932, when 200,000 people visited it, its uniformed staff was large enough to perform just over 6,000 man-hours of work per week: last year, with one and one-

third million visitors, the shrunken staff performed just over 4,000 man-hours per week."²

Complaining about parks with "true slum districts" and "hot dog stand budgets," DeVoto concluded that only a massive infusion of Congressional funding would save the parks.³ But, he predicted, "no such sums will be appropriated. Therefore only one course seems possible. The national park system must be temporarily reduced to a size for which Congress is willing to pay. Let us, as a beginning, close Yellowstone, Yosemite, Rocky Mountain, and Grand Canyon National Parks — close and seal them, assign the Army to patrol them, and so hold them secure till they can be reopened."⁴

More parks could be closed, DeVoto proposed, if these were not enough. The result he hoped for, of course, was that "letters from constituents unable to visit Old Faithful, Half Dome, The Great White Throne, and Bright Angel Trail would bring a nationally disgraceful situation to the really serious attention of the Congress which is responsible for it."⁵

1. Bernard DeVoto, "The Easy Chair, Let's Close the National Parks," *Harper's Magazine*, October, 1953, p. 51.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

In Yellowstone's case, this all sounds more than vaguely familiar. Seventy years earlier, other conservation crusaders had tried successfully to ignite a public campaign on behalf of a gravely threatened Yellowstone.⁶ In some ways, in fact, the parallels between the early 1880s and the early 1950s are spooky, right down to the *deja-vu* of bringing in the army, which was done in 1886.

But in 1953, Yellowstone needed saving from something quite different than it had in its early days, when the cries to save the park were aimed at the ears of a largely uninterested and almost totally uninformed public. In the 1880s, Yellowstone's defenders saw it needing saving from railroad developers and other wishing to dismantle, reduce, or invade the place with a level of commercialism that few conservationists considered necessary. Now, those same cries to save the parks, including Yellowstone, were reaching a public that had itself become the thing from which the park most needed saving. Public affection for the parks, in such short supply in the 1880s, was overwhelming the parks by the 1950s.

DeVoto's voice was just one in a chorus, with even agency bureaucrats speaking quite openly despite DeVoto's sympathetic assertion that the typical park superintendent "is withheld from saying what would count, 'Build a fire under your Congressmen.'"⁷ In 1955, National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth helped build such a fire when he was quoted in *Reader's Digest*:

It is not possible to provide essential services. Visitor concentration points can't be kept in sanitary condition. Comfort stations can't be kept clean and serviced. Water, sewer and electrical systems are taxed to the utmost. Protective services to safeguard the public and preserve park values are far short of requirements. Physical facilities are deteriorating or inadequate to meet public needs.

Some of the camps are approaching rural slums. We actually get scared when we think of the bad health conditions.⁸

At the time that DeVoto wrote, Yellowstone's managers had been adjusting their policies in response to increasing numbers of visitors at least since the prohibition of public hunting in 1883, when it became clear that the park's resources simply couldn't be consumed in that way if they were to endure and be enjoyed the future. The individual vis-

itor's use of Yellowstone's features had become gradually less consumptive ever since. Fishing bag limits were repeatedly reduced (and would eventually vanish entirely in some drainages with native fish species in need of special protection). Hot spring and geyser formations were made unavailable for hatcheting off sou-

venirs, climbing, or bath-house and greenhouse plumbing. Flower-picking and specimen-collecting (rocks, antlers, driftwood, and so on) were outlawed except under a permit to do bona fide research. Camping and fires were ever more tightly regulated and contained. In these and many other ways a more gentle approach to the park experience was encouraged. There seems to have been very little serious objection to most of those restrictions. But DeVoto was right; the visitation explosion after the war abruptly outran managers' ability to adjust. It was no longer possible to fine-tune regulations to take up the slack, and in reality it probably hadn't been for quite a while.

It is one of modern environmental journalism's favorite chestnuts that the national parks have always been managed to favor increasing development. It is, however, a flawed accusation when made against earlier generations, who are indicted retroactively for not having a full, late-Twentieth

"Public affection for the parks, in such short supply in the 1880s, was overwhelming the parks by the 1950s."

6. Paul Schullery, *Searching for Yellowstone: Ecology and Wonder in the Last Wilderness* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1997).

7. DeVoto, "Let's Close the National Parks," p. 49.

8. Conrad L. Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), p. 237.



Built in 1891, the Fountain Hotel was razed in 1927. (National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park)

Century ecologist's appreciation of the complexities of human impacts on modern ecosystems, and who were unencumbered by the host of environmental legislation that requires modern managers to care about the health of the park's resources to a previously unimagined extent.

Roads, bridges, and a system of comfortable accommodations were universally regarded as one of the great triumphs of early Yellowstone, and are still heartily admired and insisted upon by most modern visitors. The development of the great resort hotels of Yellowstone exemplifies precisely what the park's early supporters had in mind for the Yellowstone experience.⁹

The first of these grand structures was the National Hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs, more than 400 feet long and in some places four stories high,

9. The development of the hotels, and their ascendancy during the great resort era in Yellowstone is described in entertaining detail both Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, II, and Bartlett, *Yellowstone, A Wilderness Besieged*.

built in 1883 by the ill-fated Yellowstone Park Improvement Company. While other smaller hotels, lodges, and chalets would come and go over the years at numerous locations — Mammoth, Tower Junction, Norris, Canyon, Old Faithful, Sylvan Pass — the park became known for the biggest buildings: the National Hotel, the Fountain Hotel (1891), the Lake Hotel (1891), the Old Faithful Inn (1904), and the Canyon Hotel (1910). All of these were either extensively modified or replaced over time, but they each developed constituencies of their own, visitors who would return again and again to a favored spot, and who complained bitterly about the modification, much less the removal, of their beloved hotel. As recently as the 1970s, some park visitors still talked about the demolition of the structurally compromised Canyon Hotel in 1959 as if it was an assassination rather than a condemnation. Such huge buildings may seem jarring to the modern eye (Richard Bartlett, one of Yellowstone concessions' most thorough and thoughtful historians, has described the Lake Hotel as "beautiful but architecturally mis-

placed"¹⁰), but their devotees are as avid as those who focus their passion on the geysers or the wildlife.

The most famous Yellowstone hotel, of course, is the Old Faithful Inn. Architect Robert Reamer's original log structure was augmented by additional (and rather less attractive) wings in 1913 and 1928, and soon became a Yellowstone landmark almost on a par with Old Faithful itself. The cavernous lobby, the massive fireplace, and the rustic interior balconies and stairs still awe visitors today, and for most of us, even those with doubts about the appropriateness of the Old Faithful development, it is hard to imagine the Upper Geyser Basin without that gigantic gabled roofline.

Many of the smaller vintage structures, especially the stores and the older National Park Service museums, present the same homey yet primitive aspect — a beautifully cultivated, freely idealized image of human habitation in a wild place. Together with the hotels, this system of structures offered earlier visitors what most apparently considered just the right combination of comfort and exoticism to prepare them for their daily forays, by road and trail, into the Yellowstone "wilderness." But by the time of DeVoto's essay, perhaps earlier in some cases, they had done their job too well. They were wearing out just as their charms were getting better known by the year. It is a very short slide from rustic to tacky.

Against this background, we should reconsider the earlier-mentioned chestnut that the parks are increasingly developed. In the 1920s and 1930s, under the inspired leadership of Directors Stephen Mather and Horace Albright, the parks were popularized and entered the mainstream of American recreation. Mather and Albright believed that the only way to justify larger funding appropriations for the young National Park Service was to court a larger constituency and show larger visitation totals. They were very successful and made the parks many new friends. The 52,000 visitors of 1915 (an exceptionally high year) had risen to 80,000 by 1920, 154,000 in 1925, and 227,000 in 1930. In 1940, visitation broke half a million, and except during World War II it has

climbed ever since: a million in 1949 (not to mention two million in 1965, and three million in 1992).¹¹ The park had not grown larger, but still they came, more and more every year. Where once dozens might watch Old Faithful at once, now hundreds, even thousands, gathered on the boardwalk around the cone.

But, thanks in part to the sentiments of DeVoto and others concerned about overcrowding, a gradual reversal of Mather's promotional policies took hold firmly in the National Park Service. Nobody knew better than park managers themselves the truth of DeVoto's claims about the collapse of the parks, and by the 1970s, much of the old National Park Service promotional rhetoric was gone and what remained (such as the "parks are for the people" and "Yellowstone: A World Apart," slogans that were a part of the jargon of both the National Park Service and the concessioners) was increasingly unconvincing to park service staff who dealt with the public. National Park Service staff have put progressively less time into encouraging more visitation to Yellowstone in the past 20 years, and have spent a great deal of time trying to find polite ways to explain to the public what a crisis overcrowding has become. Yellowstone is still ardently promoted today, but the promotion is carried out by park concessioners and the regional travel industry.

Promotion, however, is not the same as development. The idea that Yellowstone is overrun with development, more all the time, seems firmly embedded in the folklore of conservationists, who will be surprised to hear that development of the Yellowstone landscape, in terms of acreage of land under human use, peaked before 1920 and has been declining ever since. A quick run around the Grand Loop Road reveals some of these reductions in developed acreage in the park. This is not to suggest that all of the following developments were in place

10. Bartlett, *Yellowstone, A Wilderness Besieged*, opposite p. 177.

11. Visitation statistics are from Yellowstone National Park records, annually updated by the public affairs office.

at any one time; only that there were always more of them in the early 1900s than there are now.¹²

Starting at park headquarters and travelling clockwise around the park's "grand loop" road, the Mammoth Lodge and associated developments (cabins, swimming pool, service roads, and so on) that sprawled just opposite the hot springs is gone and most of the ground has been at least partly reclaimed. The Lava Creek Campground is gone. The Wylie Permanent Camp at Tower Junction is gone. The Wylie and the Shaw and Powell Camps at Canyon are gone, and the huge Canyon Hotel and the smaller hotel and store at the Upper Falls, along with almost all of their related facilities, have been replaced by one (albeit less attractive) "Canyon Village." The marina at Fishing Bridge is gone. The Wylie Camp at Lake is gone. The Shaw and Powell Camp at Bridge Bay is gone. At Old Faithful, the Wylie and the Shaw and Powell Camps are gone, as is the National Park Service campground. Just north of the Lower Geyser Basin, the Fountain Hotel (capacity 350) is gone. The Norris Hotel and Lunch Station are gone. So are the Shaw and Powell Camp at Willow Park and the Wylie Camp at Swan Lake. Just the removal of the many permanent camps run by Wylie or Shaw and Powell, with their hundreds of tent-cabins and support facilities, is a remarkable gain in ground; at most of these sites, only archeologists and a few knowledgeable locals even notice evidence of what was once a big, active village.

On the other hand, there have been losses of unoccupied landscape too, the most notorious being the Grant Village development, with its accommodations, campground, marina, and associated facilities,

so roundly vilified by environmental groups. But in all there has been a substantial net gain in the park in the past 60 years, in acreage covered by major developments; most of the "new buildings" that make headlines in the regional papers are actually on sites where old buildings used to be.

But the overall reduction in the acreage of major developments may not be where the most significant gains have been made. Scattered here and there, both out of sight of the public and right along the park's roads, large and small maintenance camps, woodcutter's cabins, lunch stands, dairy operations, horse pastures, random junk piles left near construction sites, slaughterhouses, dumpsites (both for garbage from hotels and camps, and for other kinds of refuse), sawmills, and other intrusions almost beyond counting proliferated in the park in its first 50 years. In the weeks following the end of the 1988 fire season, it seemed that anywhere one left the road and walked back 50 yards, it was easy to find freshly exposed and badly charred refuse heaps — artifacts of the sage-brusher era, when anyone could pull their wagon off into the woods, string a clothes line between two trees, and set up housekeeping for a week or so.

But even the removal of all of these developments may not have opened up as much acreage as did changes in the roads themselves. In the 1930s, there were often two or even three different routes by which one could reach one major development from another. The alternative roads and "cutoffs" do not usually show up on the tourist brochures of that time, but they were there, and they were open to the public. Known locally as "Model-T roads," because the old cars were better able to handle their rutted, high-centered grades, they were older sections of park highway that had been replaced by better engineered routes, but they were still open to anyone willing to try them (and equally willing to get themselves out if they got stuck).¹³ Today's three million visitors have significantly less road mileage available to them than did the 317,000 visitors of 1935. So do park managers, who used to maintain more administrative roads than they do now.

12. The establishment of the various structures and facilities described in this essay has been well documented in Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, II. Park Historian Lee Whittlesey, in an undated note to the author in August, 1996, said that the peak of building in the park occurred at the very beginning of the century. As one of the foremost historians of development and construction in the park, he speaks with authority when he says "I feel very safe in saying that there are far fewer buildings in Yellowstone today than anytime since at least 1915 and probably since 1905. The number today may be as little as *half* as many as in the past. While many older buildings were razed in the 1920s and 1930s, many new ones went up during those decades as well. It staggers me to imagine the numbers of buildings that were here in, say, 1930." For more on the modern dilemma of balancing cultural and natural resource management needs in national parks and other protected areas, see a special issue of the George Wright Forum, 1996, 13(1).

13. Yellowstone Park Research Library, "Transcript of Aubrey L. Haines' Forty-Hour Tour of Yellowstone National Park, August 9-13, 1993." Computer file and transcript in the Yellowstone Park Research Library manuscript files.



Yellowstone Park Transportation Company garage at Mammoth. It was destroyed by fire in 1925. (National Park Service, Yellowstone Station Park)

This historical context is important in modern dialogues over the park's future management, but it does not by any means suggest that today's park somehow has the "right" amount of development. Some people believe the park to be overdeveloped, others wish it had even more development, but it appears that the extent of current development — the acreage occupied by human structures and therefore more or less divorced from the ecological setting — may not be the real problem. It appears that the resources of the park, especially those most thought of as most vulnerable to competition for space, such as the grizzly bear, can handle the current level of disturbed landscape. What they are less able to handle is the number of people who, using those developments as bases of operation, spread out through the rest of the park in spatial and temporal patterns that cause all manner of complications. It appears, in fact, that the people raising alarms about overcrowding in the 1950s, were more than right; they were only faintly aware of what the crowding could do.

In 1955, the National Park Service launched a broad, ambitious program called Mission 66, to upgrade facilities, improve the roads and trails, and in other ways solve the problems of overcrowding by the year 1966. In Yellowstone, the agency aimed to achieve not only these goals but also "effective presentation, interpretation, and protection of the resources in Yellowstone by a management staff."¹⁴ Mission 66 has left a complex legacy in Yellowstone. It did, indeed, upgrade many roads, bridges, and facilities, and no doubt visitors were better served, but the program is now routinely criticized for simply accommodating more traffic rather than trying to control or limit it. Thus, the biggest monuments of Mission 66, Canyon Village and Grant Village, are unpopular with environmentalists, but most visitors using these facilities seem more than satisfied with services they provide.

Canyon Village suggests the breadth of management challenges of development in Yellowstone, and

14. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story*, II, p. 373.

how often those challenges have nothing to do with ecology. "Canyon" consists of a large, rectangular parking lot surrounded on three sides by stores, dining facilities, and a National Park Service visitor center. A campground stretches out to the north and northeast of this rectangle, and cabins and larger accommodation structures likewise spread out to the east and south. The entire affair sits well back from the rim of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, correcting one objection to earlier facilities, that they were too close.

But by the 1980s, Canyon Village was already out of fashion among many who toil in the troubled fields of national park aesthetics: it was regarded as too suburban in style, and therefore architecturally inappropriate in a national park. But the same changes in taste that caused Canyon Village to fall out of fashion also led to an ironic twist in its fate. By the 1990s, there was already talk among cultural resource specialists in the National Park Service Regional Office in Denver of recognizing that Canyon Village, like the Old Faithful Inn before it, should be preserved because it was now representative of a certain era in Yellowstone's history. Almost as quickly as Canyon Village became regarded as something of an eyesore in a national park, it also became a kind of cultural milestone. Mission 66 became History very fast.

Mission 66 developments thus reveal a difficult and comparatively new element of the mission of National Park Service. The agency is required by law to protect natural and cultural resources; these responsibilities are defined in a raft of legislation and policy. The effect of these responsibilities, in the long haul, is a tendency to promote the steady accumulation of more and more cultural sites that must be protected.

This should be no surprise, because Yellowstone's mission has been broadening since the 1880s, when it ceased to be just a huge storage facility for geysers and hot springs and also became a wildlife reserve. The things now recognized as needing protection in Yellowstone, but not envisioned as part of the park's mission by its founders, include ecological processes, biological diversity, several endangered species, the old-west tourist experience, the institution of the ranger, and hundreds of archeological sites and historic structures. The National Park Service is now

charged with far broader responsibilities than the founders of Yellowstone ever would have imagined. As the system of unique nationally significant sites managed by the agency grew, there accumulated many priceless cultural sites, from the Betsy Ross House to the Anasazi ruins at Hovenweep. This is a system of sites that will continue to grow, in response to our continuing actions as a nation and our changing perceptions of ourselves. It is also a source of national pride; what began as an effort to save one extraordinary place has become an effort to celebrate a multiregional, multicultural nation's heritage.

But this enriching of the mission of the national parks has interesting and perplexing side effects. As places like Yellowstone continue to memorialize structures no longer common elsewhere — from winding, low-speed "auto trails" to romanticized rustic architecture — they add yet another significant, costly, and complicated element to their missions: they become in effect museums for really big objects. This new emphasis promises to occupy a growing percentage of the time and budgets of managers, and can lead to fascinating complications. For example, for many fire ecologists, the fires of 1988 were a spectacularly important event in the park's complex biological biography, a wholesome jolt given by nature to the ecosystem. But for archeologists, the fires were a threat not only to hundreds of historic structures, but also to very important archeological sites whose surface features were easily damaged by them. Nature and culture now share the stage in Yellowstone, and there is potential for disagreement over which should have the leading role.

Further complicating culture's share of the stage is that in many parks including Yellowstone, two often quite distinct cultural stories have emerged. One is the story of whatever human culture occupied the park area prior to its creation, whether Native American or Euro-american. The other is the park's own administrative history, whether the record is revealed in actual buildings — early bridge, hotel, ranger station, or other — or in the ideas, philosophies, and folklore of previous generation of park employees. One of the most intriguing parts of the aging process all parks undergo is the way the culture of their caretakers becomes embedded in the landscape, through the naming of lakes after chief rangers, the formalization of trail systems and memorialization of their designers, the occupation of

ground by beloved old hotels, and other actions. Many parks are now old enough that there is good reason to interpret the history of their management as well as the original reasons for their creation. As parks grow older and their administrative history lengthens, it can gradually occupy a greater proportion of the park's image as presented to the public by interpretive programs. This should not automatically be regarded as wrong—indeed, it often is essential—but as the decades roll by, managers will have to be alert to somehow keeping the proportions right.

A popular arguing point among historic preservationists in recent years has been that Yellowstone National Park really *is* just a very large cultural site; proponents of this view usually pronounce it with smugness, even defiance, as if they would like nothing better than to fight about it. According to this argument, because we humans decided that Yellowstone was valuable to our culture, we would set it aside; we would establish human boundaries on it, and we would manage it for our benefit and enjoyment. There is a sound principle here, that park landscapes are always human landscapes. Only recently, for example, have ecologists and park managers known enough to recognize the extent to which North American landscapes were affected by humans prior to 1492. But this argument represents a crossroads in the evolving role of Yellowstone in American society. While many hold that even the architectural and engineering legacy of the National Park Service itself must be preserved and protected in the parks, others worry that we risk making too much of Yellowstone into a stockpiling site for grand old buildings, bridges, and other human constructions that were only created in the first place to enable our benefit and enjoyment of other resources here. The buildings in Yellowstone are both interesting and historic, but they were a side effect of the park's initial purpose and have now become a purpose themselves. One of the great challenges facing future managers will be coming to terms with this new purpose.

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Though this challenge may not be of great intellectual interest to the average Yellowstone visitor, those very visitors have long held diverging views on what to do about it. The extent to which Yellowstone should be developed is not merely a matter of argument among people with professional stakes in the matter, such as ecologists, historic preservationists, park managers, or the travel industry. In the spring and summer of 1968, only 15 years after DeVoto's polemic against cheap treatment of the parks was published, journalist Robert Cahn published a 15-part series of articles in the *Christian Science Monitor*, entitled "Will Success Spoil The National Parks?"¹⁵ A probing study based on Cahn's

20,000-mile tour of the parks, it showed great sympathy for park resources, the people who manage and use them, and the many concerned people who depend upon them for a living. It also earned Cahn a Pulitzer Prize and still is instructive reading today.

Written at the close of the Mission 66 era, when visitor services were much improved, it devoted less attention to facilities and more to the bigger problem

of the crowds. It contained what may have been the first idealized fictional portrayal of how the parks might be better run in the future, imagining a 1984 visit to Yellowstone. Cahn's visitors, the Norton family from New Jersey, began their trip with a visit to a regional visitor center in Philadelphia, where they learned about making advance reservations at campgrounds or motels. You can almost hear the romance in his voice as he wrote that they could do this "by computer" and could also rent "home-play television tapes describing several parks".¹⁶ As they approached the park, they tuned in to a "special

15. Robert Cahn, *Will Success Spoil the National Parks?* (Boston: The Christian Science Publishing Company, 1968), a combined reprint of the 15-part series of articles that originally appeared in *The Christian Science Monitor*, May 1 to August 7, 1968, 56 pp.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

wave length" on their car radio, to hear a voice describing their surroundings and what the park held in store for them.¹⁷ Having chosen not to make reservations in the park, they could not take their car in, so they rode in an "electric-powered minibus," walking "the final quarter mile to Old Faithful Geyser because all roads and parking areas were moved away from the fringes of the geyser back in 1971."¹⁸ (This last part actually happened, but the effect is probably not as delightful as Cahn imagined.)

Some of the most intriguing passages in this series of articles weren't written by Cahn, but by his readers. At the conclusion of the series, *The Christian Science Monitor* published a survey, entitled "How Would You Run the National Parks?" More than 2,000 readers filled out the form and returned it. When asked about overcrowding, 402 people agreed that the National Park Service should "build more campgrounds, lodges, and roads to take care of more people," but 950 said the agency should "limit the stay in a campground to the number of days it takes to see the major attractions, with a maximum of three days" and 801 support establishing "a limit for entrance to each park, much as you would for a theater. When a certain capacity is reached, a park would be closed and reopened only to fill vacancies."¹⁹ An amazing 759 — almost twice as many as wanted more campgrounds — agreed that all campgrounds should be taken out of the park in favor of developments elsewhere. The public willingness to tolerate limitations on visitation to Yellowstone may have a longer and stronger history than most of us imagine. It does seem that modern objections to placing limits on visitation and related development in national parks come primarily from commercial interests rather than from the public at large.

Today's conservationists may look back on the promotional efforts of early National Park Service administrators, and of the planners who launched Mission 66, with a mixture of condescension and annoyance; that they could be so naive as not to realize the eventual consequence of inviting so many people into these fragile places seems retroactively unforgivable. Was it really worth it, we

wonder, just to make sure that the new National Park Service and its small collection of landholdings had enough friends?

Yet today's parks, for all the press of humanity lined up to get in, still seem short of friends, or at least lacking in just the right combination of friends to ensure them adequate budgets and reasonable protection. It could even be argued that the fiscal plight of modern parks, including Yellowstone, is worse than it was when Stephen Mather and Horace Albright were welcoming the motorists and transforming parks into great outdoor hospitality centers. Current complaints about Yellowstone's collapsing infrastructure — wretched roads, overtaxed sewage systems, and so on — are valid, but even if all those things are fixed, the park will still not grow larger, even as the crowds do.

Yellowstone is like the Shangri-La of *Lost Horizon*, James Hilton's classic novel of a secret Himalayan paradise. Its residents and visitors knew that Shangri-La was precious, and they knew it protected important treasures, especially in the lessons it held for the rest of the world. But they also knew that it alone was not able to serve the world's many needs. As the ancient High Lama of Shangri-La explained to the story's adventurer-hero, "We are a single lifeboat riding the seas in a gale; we can take a few chance survivors, but if all the shipwrecked were to reach us and clamber aboard we should go down ourselves."²⁰ Yellowstone, and to an even greater extent the much larger area known as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, is such a lifeboat. For all the increased awareness of the vulnerability of this particular lifeboat, we do not seem yet to have figured out how to prevent it from going down. That it may go down sooner according to some definitions than others, indeed that it may already have gone down according to some definitions, seems only to demonstrate further our unwillingness to come to terms with the reality that the longer we wait, the harder it will become to prevent it from finally taking the last of its friends down with it. Everybody loves it, but nobody loves it enough to leave it.

20. James Hilton, *Lost Horizon* (New York: Pocket Books, 1939), p. 196.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 43.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

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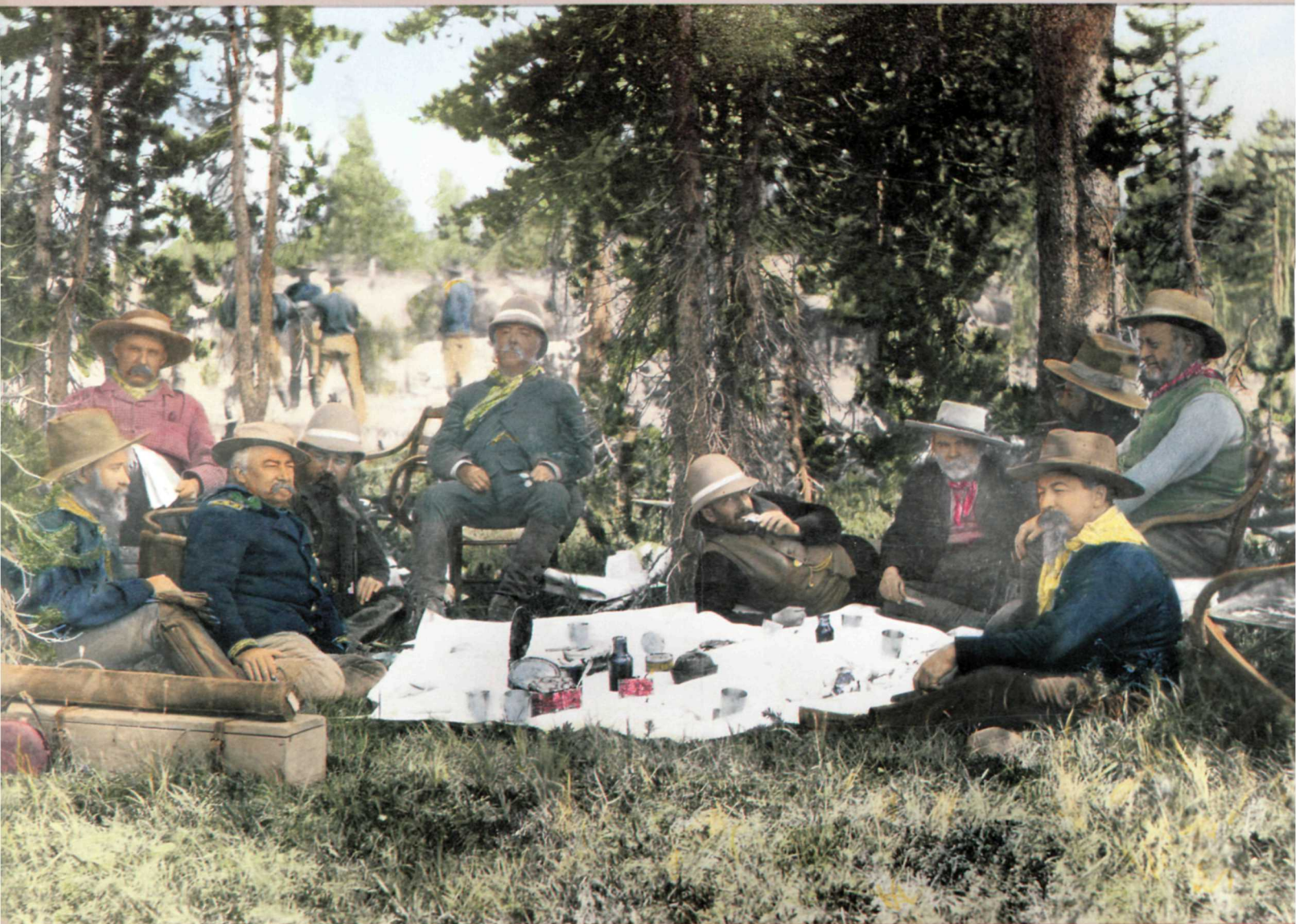
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Annals of WYOMING

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SPECIAL ISSUE COMMEMORATING THE
125TH ANNIVERSARY OF YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

On the cover:

The summer of 1883 in Yellowstone was noteworthy for the opening of the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company's facilities, the completion of the Northern Pacific Railroad's branch line to the park, and the first visit by a United States president. President Chester Arthur traveled to Wyoming on the Union Pacific Railroad, and then from Green River to Fort Washakie by wagon. From there he rode horseback, accompanied by a troop of cavalry soldiers and 150 pack mules (with the requisite wranglers and packers) to tote the tents, beds, furniture, linens, china, silver, crystal and gourmet provisions that were needed to make his expedition comfortable. His party included General Phil Sheridan, Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln, Senator George Vest of Missouri, Governor John S. Crosby of Montana Territory, and other dignitaries. In the cover photograph the president and his fellow travelers are shown picnicking in a grove of pines. President Arthur is seated in the chair at the center. (Photograph from the collection of the Riverton Museum)

On the back cover is a photograph showing some of the first cars to enter Yellowstone National Park after the August 1, 1915 opening of the park to motorized vehicles. (Photograph from the collection of the Pioneer Museum in Lander)

Grateful acknowledgement is made of the assistance provided by Tamsen L. Hert in the preparation of this issue of *Annals of Wyoming*. Ms. Hert was instrumental in the solicitation of appropriate articles and the acquisition of illustrations.

The editor of *Annals of Wyoming: The Wyoming History Journal* welcomes manuscripts and photographs on every aspect of the history of Wyoming and the West. Appropriate for submission are unpublished, research-based articles which provide new information or which offer new interpretations of historical events. First-person accounts based on personal experience or recollections of events will be considered for use in the "Wyoming Memories" section. Articles are reviewed by members of the journal's Editorial Advisory Board and others. Decisions regarding publication are made by the editor. Manuscripts (along with suggestions for illustrations or photographs) should be submitted on computer diskettes in a format created by one of the widely-used word processing programs along with two printed copies. Submissions, queries, and requests for detailed authors' guidelines should be addressed to Editor, *Annals of Wyoming*, P.O. Box 4256 University Station, Laramie, WY 82071.

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The Wyoming State Historical Society

The Wyoming State Historical Society is a confederation of more than 20 local chapters located in every area of the state. Members enjoy the frequent gatherings of their local groups and participate in programs and activities that preserve and interpret their communities' history. Several times each year, members from all across Wyoming come together for major events where they celebrate common historical interests.

Membership in the society is open to everyone. Member benefits include a subscription to *Annals of Wyoming: The Wyoming History Journal*, a quarterly journal devoted to broader public understanding of all aspects of Wyoming history; and *Wyoming History News*, the society's newsletter, which is published ten times each year. Membership dues also provide support for a comprehensive awards program that recognizes people who are doing something to preserve and interpret local and state history; for Wyoming History Day, which allows thousands of Wyoming school children to participate in history projects and to compete at district, state and national history day events; for research grants that support the study and publication of Wyoming history; and for a variety of special projects which help preserve and interpret the state's rich history.

If you are already a member of the Wyoming State Historical Society we solicit your continued interest, involvement and support. If you are not a member, or if you know of other non-members who share an interest in Wyoming history, we urge you (and them) to join. Contact a member of your local historical society, or write to the Wyoming State Historical Society at 1740H184 Dell Range Blvd, Cheyenne, WY 82009.

Membership dues are: \$20 (single), \$30 (joint), \$15 (student, under 21 years of age), \$40 (institutions). For those who wish to support the society in a more substantial way, participation at one of the following levels is appreciated: contributing member (\$100-\$249), sustaining member (\$250-\$499), patron (\$500-\$999), donor (\$1,000 and over). In addition to all benefits of regular membership, participants at these levels are recognized in *Wyoming History News*.



The northwest corner of what is today the state of Wyoming attracted special attention from visitors long before it was set aside as the nation's first national park.

And while the natural features that make Yellowstone National Park so spectacular remain basically the same, the experience of a park visit has changed dramatically with new modes of transportation, improvements in accommodations, and the values of visitors. This special issue examines the history of some of those changes while acknowledging the 125th anniversary of the founding of Yellowstone — in 1872.

Particular attention is given to the years between 1910 and 1920, when the automobile came of age. That focus is significant because it was the automobile that brought an end to a Yellowstone era that had been dominated by a moneyed class of visitors who could afford to travel to the park via the railroads, pay for the luxurious accommodations offered in Yellowstone's hotels, and enjoy the scenery while being driven about in the park's stagecoaches.

The opening of the park to automobiles on August 1, 1915 not only made the park more accessible to a much larger group of visitors, it also changed the nature of park accommodations. Ultimately, that change led to the kind of Yellowstone experience that we know today.