

Competition Among Concessioners 1900–1914

The year 1900 began with an uneasy situation with major lessees in the park. One issue was the room and board of the different companies' employees. In the past, the Yellowstone Park Association had given discount rates to both Haynes's and Huntley and Child's transportation drivers and other employees; most of the employees stayed at the Cottage Hotel, now owned by the Yellowstone Park Association. The Association wanted to keep employees separate from visitors and disliked the drivers and other employees coming into the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel for billiards or other amusements. The Association's position on the issue was revealed in a letter from the company's park manager to headquarters in St. Paul:

While this class of people is very hard to please in the matter of meals, though they are served the same class of food that is served to the tourists, and their complaints are many and mostly unreasonable ones, and their deportment is often very insulting to hotel managers and employees, yet the Association had some compensation for all this in the price, 50 cents per meal.

While the Yellowstone Park Association liked the income derived from the meal charges, \$8,212.49 in 1899, they decided that if Silas Huntley of the transportation company declined the hotel services for his employees, then they would retaliate with higher rates



Mammoth Hotel front desk. ca. 1908.



Hotel Company waiters. n.d.

for Huntley's transportation office rental at the hotel, and they would begin charging for telegraph services.¹

F. Jay Haynes's Monida & Yellowstone Stage Company built accommodations for its employees at Norris, Fountain, Lake, and Canyon, but still needed boarding service from Yellowstone Park Association at Upper Geyser Basin, Thumb, and Mammoth. Their plan called for hiring a married stocktender whose wife would do the cooking. Haynes felt that his move was "simply one of economy" and if his expenses "got in the neighborhood of 50 cents per meal we would much prefer to have the Ass'n board our men and avoid the annoyance of running these stations."²

Two other issues between major lessees were the schedules and tourist routes. As early as 1901, Haynes began examining the possibility of better service for customers by using automobiles between Monida and Dwelle's. However, with the cost of cars at about \$3,000 each and the need for between 16 and 20 cars, it was not yet economically feasible.³ Tensions arose between the Monida & Yellowstone Stage Company and the Yellowstone Park Association over schedules and routes within the park for the Monida-arriving tourists. Haynes pointed out that the hotels were receiving Colorado- and Utah-bound tourists, who normally would not have gone to the park, via the Union Pacific and the Oregon Short Line. Thus, the Yellowstone Park Association was making money because of the Monida & Yellowstone Stage Company.⁴ In other areas, the two major lessees cooperated. For instance, the Monida & Yellowstone Stage Company signed an agreement with the president of the Yellow-

stone Park Association to pay \$150 per year for use of the intra-park telephone and telegraph service and for use of office space in the hotels.⁵

Other disputes arose between concessioners. One that would become an ongoing issue was the type of goods sold at the different establishments. In 1903, Haynes objected to items for sale in Mrs. Ash's store at Mammoth and in E. C. Waters's store at Lake; he considered those items an infringement of his privilege to sell park photographic views. He believed Mrs. Ash took advantage of the fact that she was allowed to sell the newly popular Kodak film supplies by stretching her sales to include other photographers views. Because Haynes's photographs were not copyrighted, they were being reproduced by many other firms and publishers. At that time, Haynes was providing both park companies with a 25 percent discount on his products, including his popular guidebook that sold about 4,500 copies a year.⁶

In June 1901, proposed hotel plans were sent from the Northern Pacific Railway's Chief Engineer E. H. McHenry to the Yellowstone Park Association General Manager of park hotels, J. Dean. One of the plans, drawn by architect A. W. Spalding, was for a proposed hotel at the Upper Geyser Basin; another plan, drawn by St. Paul, Minnesota, architectural firm, Witsie, Teltz, and Joy, was for the Norris Geyser Basin Hotel (to replace the hotel burned in 1892); and, a set of 1892 plans, with no architect listed, was for the Upper Geyser Basin Hotel.⁷ The question of hotel construction immediately became an issue after Harry Child gained one-third interest in the Yellowstone Park



Norris Hotel. 1904.



Old Faithful Inn. 1912.

Association in 1901. Apparently, prior commitments from the Yellowstone Park Association to its hotel needs as well as requests from the Department of the Interior were not clearly detailed prior to the transfer of stock. Because the hotels never made a real profit and while the passenger service directly related to the park had made a substantial profit since 1898 (about \$50,000 per year), Child sought some consideration in regard to freight rates on supplies and material and fares paid by Yellowstone Park Association employees from the railway division for which he received a favorable response.⁸

In January 1903, E. C. Waters, who several years earlier had proposed to buy the Yellowstone Park Association, questioned C. S. Mellen, president of the Northern Pacific Railway Company, on the 1901 change in ownership. Mellen explained, "Certain parties who were interested became impossible in connection with the management of the property, and it was necessary they should be removed, and in order to accomplish this we were obliged, temporarily, to become the purchaser of an interest in the Park Companies, which today only represents one third of the whole." Mellen went on to suggest, "It was not the intention of this Company to remain a stockholder in either the Transportation or the Hotel Company, and we shall undoubtedly dispose of our interest at an early opportunity."

In August 1903, Mellen and H. W. Child worked out a deal whereby Child received an equal amount of stock of the Northwest Improvement Company (a subsidiary company of the Northern Pacific Railroad) for the cost of \$82,179.88.⁹ During the same year, 1901,

that Child took over the Yellowstone Park Association, Silas Huntley, Child's partner in the transportation business, died. By a series of stock exchanges and purchases, Child now owned 50 percent of both the transportation and the hotel companies; by 1907, Child held all of the stock of the railroad's subsidiary, the Northwest Improvement Company. The Northern Pacific Railroad held Child's note.

In 1903, the Northern Pacific Railway Company completed its branch line to Gardiner and erected "a handsome and comfortable depot," designed by Robert Reamer. Tourists could now enter the park through the North Entrance Arch, which had been dedicated by President Theodore Roosevelt in April 1903, and know "they are within the bounds of the park."¹⁰

Construction started this same year on the hotel at the Upper Geyser Basin, the Old Faithful Inn, which was designed by Robert Reamer. Renovation work



Old Faithful Inn bedroom. 1917.



Old Faithful Inn bathroom. 1912.

was also under way on the Lake Hotel. Between the two projects, 90 men were still working in December, and the costs had come to \$72,416.77 for the Old Faithful Inn and \$55,296.02 for the Lake Hotel.¹¹ At the end of 1903, the Yellowstone Park Association had a total of 476 hotel rooms accommodating 1,288 guests with 677 beds and 78 cots; there were 120 tent rooms.¹²

In 1904, F. Jay Haynes suggested to Union Pacific Railroad's general passenger agent that if the Oregon Short Line built a line to the west entrance of the park, perhaps he (Haynes) should consider seeking a lease to build a hotel, "The Monida," near the west entrance. The hotel could be located on the east side of Christmas Tree Park, on the south bank of the Madison River allowing views of the Madison River and the Gallatin Mountains. Haynes, whose transportation company would benefit by having a hotel near the west entrance, believed that because the Northern Pacific was "making an effort to make the hotel at Mammoth a resort, there is no reason why a hotel at this point would not be fully as attractive."¹³ In January 1906, Haynes and Child met in Washington regarding Haynes's interest in securing a hotel lease for the Madison River site. Because the Department of the Interior preferred to have the Yellowstone Park Association operate all of the hotels, Child and Haynes came to an amicable agreement whereby Child would accommodate Haynes's needs. The evidence that a personal relationship was developing between the two

major concessioners can be seen in their correspondence. The two businessmen began to work together to fashion the development of modern concessions in the park.¹⁴

The 1905 visitation numbers (26,188) were double the previous year's figure. Nearly half of the visitors toured with licensed camping parties or were private campers. With the rising popularity of the camping experience, it wasn't long before discussions were held in the offices of the Northern Pacific Railroad and in Washington about buying out the Wylie Camping Company and extending Wylie's government lease for another 10 years.¹⁵ Before that could happen, Livingston businessman, A. W. Miles bought out W. W. Wylie in 1906. He continued to use Wylie's name, calling the company Wylie Permanent Camping Company.¹⁶

With Child's purchase of the Northern Pacific Railroad's stock in 1907 and Congress passing a law allowing leases not to exceed 20 years, the Yellowstone Park Association seemed set for a rather stable period. Visitation was down in 1906–07 from the record year of 1905 (from 26,188 in 1905 to 17,102 in 1906 to 16,414 in 1907), but the Yellowstone Park Association and the Northern Pacific Railway made major efforts to advertise the park through publications such as *Land of Geysers* and by sponsoring a lecture series in conjunction with the Department of the Interior.¹⁷

Haynes became upset with Child after the Yellowstone Park Association raised the rates at its hotels from \$4.00 to \$5.50, and the Wylie Permanent Camping Company followed suit by raising its rates. (While upset, Haynes did not think it strange that the camping company had raised its rates as he had heard that Yellowstone Park Association had controlling interest in the Wylie Permanent Camping Company.) Haynes wanted to avoid putting in another class of hotels for those who could not afford the \$5.50 per night. While good relations between Haynes and Child resumed, Haynes remained concerned about the high costs of staying in the park.

All three companies were competing for stage service into and through the park. Haynes tried to put a stop to the rumor that Child was also interested in his stage company: "It has been intimated that Mr. Child was interested in our Company. For your information I will say that Mr. Child never held one dollar's worth of interest in our Company, and it has been my intention not to combine in any way to the detriment of the traveling public. Socially, we are on good terms, but as far as any business matters are concerned we are absolutely separate."¹⁸

Haynes made plans in 1907 to secure office space and a business counter in the lobby of the proposed depot of the Oregon Short Line Railroad at the west entrance. In addition to planning his space, he reviewed plans for a depot design. Haynes needed an additional building for an office, three bedrooms, and a bathroom near the depot, and he requested of the Union Pacific that the "...style of building should be in harmony with the depot building. We would be willing, if it is agreeable to your company, to stand the expense of a stone building, gotten up in artistic shape, but not large."¹⁹

Haynes, who had earlier looked at the possibilities of using automobiles between Monida and the west entrance, sought permission from the Department of the Interior to conduct a night time experimental ride in an automobile through the park with Child and the park superintendent. Haynes believed that it would not be too many years before automobiles would be allowed into the park; hence he thought a test ride would be informative to the automobile manufacturer about vehicle performance at the different altitudes and atmospheric conditions. Department of the Interior official W. B. Acker suggested that he should wait for a few weeks and approach the new incoming Secretary with his idea as it was rumored that a reorgani-

zation was in store for the Department.²⁰ However, another eight years would elapse before automobiles were allowed into the park.

In 1908, Haynes received permission from the Department of the Interior to construct a telegraph line between the newly opened depot at the west entrance and the Fountain Hotel where it would connect with the Yellowstone Park Association line that ran between developed areas in the park.²¹ He also constructed numerous buildings around the park in anticipation of large numbers of tourists coming in 1909. This increase was expected because of the Alaska-Yukon Exposition in Seattle and the accompanying increased advertising of the park conducted by several railroads. Probably looking to 1909, Haynes ordered additional passenger coaches and surreys and planned to purchase between 50 and 100 new horses. At the west entrance, he built a coach house that held 64 vehicles and a paint shop, and he made some additions to his other buildings, painting them all mineral red.²²

By 1909, the Department of the Interior was responsible for 12 national parks, many of which also had extensive concession operations. After visiting both Yellowstone and Yosemite, Secretary of the Interior R. A. Ballinger announced that the "parks have ceased to be experimental as to the operation of transportation lines, hotels, and other concessions, because of the steady stream of travel frequenting them, and the large profits in most cases should require the devotion of a reasonable share thereof to the maintenance of the parks." Thus, for the first time, a use tax that was based upon gross earnings was imposed on the concessioners to enlarge the maintenance fund. Also for the first time, when new leases were written the rental and franchise charges were proportionate to the privileges enjoyed. The Secretary planned to create an accounting and inspection system for concessions.²³

Before the 1909 season began, Haynes pressured the Yellowstone Park Association to house his expected passengers for the season. Besides the Alaska-Yukon Exposition in Seattle, a Christian Endeavor group was meeting in Denver, and the Grand Army of the Republic was meeting in Salt Lake City. Haynes believed many of these people would book an extension to the park.²⁴ However, the Yellowstone Park Association did not anticipate that the 1909 season would set a visitation record, and the tension between Haynes and "Lord Harry" (as Haynes sometimes called Harry Child) mounted. When he did not get a positive commitment from the Yellowstone Park Association that

they would take care of his passengers, Haynes appealed to the Department of the Interior for a permit to operate a system of tent camps or, preferably, log cabin camps. In addition to covering his immediate needs, Haynes believed this type of accommodation would offer a system of “second-class accommodations” to complement the Yellowstone Park Association system of hotels. (Haynes also knew that a Salt Lake City firm had made such an application for camping and transportation privileges.) In a letter to Secretary Ballinger, Haynes noted that during the summer of the 1905 Portland Exposition more than 26,000 people visited the park, but 15,000 people were refused the cheaper tours because of the lack of a second-class type of accommodation. Haynes believed that 60 percent of the park visitors were of moderate means.²⁵

Previously, Haynes had objected to Ballinger’s limiting words in his lease, “Continuance hereafter to be dependent upon manner in which service conducted and necessity thereof.” Haynes believed that this put him at the mercy of “Lord Harry” and “Slick Tom” (Senator Thomas Carter of Montana), both of whom had better Washington connections. In April, however, “Lord Harry” approached Haynes about the camping business. Because Child had recently returned from Washington, he probably discerned the likelihood of Haynes getting a permit. Haynes commented that Child “seems quite anxious that I join in with him and work in harmony.” One month later, Haynes and Child signed an agreement for Haynes to buy one-third interest in the Wylie Permanent Camping Company for a total of \$60,000. It was approved by Secretary Ballinger. This now allowed Haynes to get into the camping business without having to submit an independent application.²⁶ Park visitation for 1909 did set a record: 32,545 visitors.

In April 1910, the Department assessed Haynes use-tax amounts of \$940 and \$470, respectively, for his photographic privileges at Mammoth and Upper Geyser Basin. Because he did not have an exclusive privilege for the sale of photographs and pictorial souvenirs, he believed that the Department’s use-tax assessment was excessive. Haynes defended the higher costs of having his postcards done in Germany because, he said, the well-traveled tourists demanded higher quality. The current park Superintendent, Major Benson, also thought the amount assessed Haynes was high compared to the other companies.²⁷ In May 1910, the Department of the Interior gave Haynes permission to make additions to his studio located on

Avenue A in Mammoth and to his studio at the Upper Geyser Basin.²⁸

In 1910, the Yellowstone Park Association began planning an extensive construction program for a new hotel at Canyon and, later, for a new hotel at Mammoth. In need of cash, Child wrote the Northwest Improvement Company for a loan to finance the new projects. Despite the Northwest Improvement Company’s lean financial position, Elliot agreed to loan him \$100,000 in both 1910 and 1911 (total of \$200,000) with terms of five percent for five years toward the construction of the Canyon Hotel. Elliot also strongly indicated that money would be forthcoming for the Mammoth hotel when that project began.²⁹

During 1910, Child decided to upgrade some of the services at the hotels in order to justify a rate increase for some rooms. The regular charge of \$5 a day still applied, but an approved increase for special accommodations went into effect on July 15, 1910. An ordinary room with bath would be \$6; a special room without bath, one that was large with good location and specially furnished, including special table assignments and service in the dining room, would be \$6; and a special room with bath would be \$7. Haynes disapproved of the new rates (except for the added charge for a private bath) in a letter to Major Benson, “I think there should be a uniform charge in the hotels for rooms, and front rooms should be assigned to ladies and married couples; gentlemen traveling alone are not as particular. The expense of maintaining a front room is not more than that of a back room.”³⁰

Despite Haynes’s opposition to the increased rates, he decided to assist Child in his efforts to raise capital for the Canyon Hotel construction by paying his \$15,000 note (due to Child on June 1, 1911) in advance.³¹

At the end of 1910, the Yellowstone Park Association had eight hotels that included lunch stations, three dwellings, two commissaries, five root houses, six ice houses, three laundry and engine rooms, two storehouses, one bath house, and one water tank and windmill. The company also operated 116 miles of telegraph and telephone lines.³² Haynes reported at the end of 1910 that his stage company had 18 buildings at Yellowstone, Montana (now known as West Yellowstone); four buildings at Fountain; five buildings at Upper Basin; two buildings at Thumb; three buildings at Lake; four buildings at Canyon; three buildings at Norris; and four buildings at Mammoth. He owned 325 horses, 122 passenger vehicles, and 20



Canyon Hotel. 1914.

miles of telegraph line with 30 miles of leased line from West Yellowstone to Mammoth.³³

In 1911, almost 40 years after Yellowstone had been established, serious discussions about park issues began when a distinguished group of men representing concessions, park officials, well-known landscape architects, railroad officials, and others interested in the betterment of the national parks met in Yellowstone for the first National Park Conference. The new Secretary of the Interior, Walter Fisher, described the past administration of the parks as “unsystematic, unscientific, and uneconomic.”³⁴ This was not news to Yellowstone concessioners who by this time had invested millions in the park while the government had made only minimal contributions. Thomas Cooper, Assistant to the President of the Northern Pacific Railroad, responded to Fisher’s comments by noting that his criticisms were not with the administration but, with Congress who he claimed had been “parsimonious in its treatment of national parks to a degree that largely defeats the very purpose of their creation.” He cited as an example the fact that the concessioners had been somewhat successful in getting visitors to the parks, but because of a lack of coordination and funding from the government, nearly one third of the travel season would pass before sufficient sprinkling of the roads would allow comfortable road conditions for travelers.³⁵

Secretary Fisher discussed visitation and complimented the railroads for taking the lead in ad-

vertising the parks and in facilitating the ease with which visitors could now travel. Louis Hill, president of the Great Northern Railway, which had interests in the newly created Glacier National Park, discussed their “See America First” campaign and how they hoped to reach Yellowstone visitation figures in a few years.³⁶ Haynes called upon Secretary Fisher to consider turning the use tax over to individual parks for improvements. There was much discussion of the benefits of regulated monopolies as opposed to a more competitive system.³⁷

In July 1912, Haynes signed an agreement with the Department of the Interior for a new relay station, lunch stop, and stable near Tower Fall. With completion of the Mount Washburn road, this facility would serve visitors traveling between Canyon and Mammoth.³⁸ An independent operator, Tex Holm of Cody, used Haynes’s buildings at the Tower Fall location.³⁹ The previous year, Tex Holm had sought a permit to build permanent log camp buildings in the park, and in April 1912, he was given permission to build at Sylvan Lake, Grand Canyon, Norris, Upper Geyser Basin, and Yellowstone Lake.⁴⁰

Shortly after the close of the 1912 season, the second National Park Conference was held at Yosemite National Park with the same issues raised as the year before when the officials met in Yellowstone. There were discussions on automobiles in the parks, lack of government investment in the parks, the need for a bureau of national parks, and ideas on how to attract

more visitors. Mr. Child was praised by Senator Flint of California in his remarks:

the country will [should] adopt plans of encouraging people of the United States to remain at home and see wonders that we have here that are just as grand and beautiful as in any other part of the world, ...two men who have done great work in bringing to us in this country our American tourists, keeping them at home. One is Mr. Child, with the magnificent service that he has given to the people in the Yellowstone Park—and the other would be Mr. Harvey...for the service we have at the Grand Canyon.⁴¹

Haynes had high expectations for the 1913 season due to numerous advanced bookings from people attending the Knights Templar Conclave in Denver, the National Education Association in Salt Lake City, and the Christian Endeavor conference in Los Angeles. However, much of his time in 1913 was occupied with defending the stage company from charges of violating a clause in his lease; he then faced the cancellation of his stage contract by Secretary of the Interior Lane. Secretary Lane and his assistant Adolph Miller suggested that Haynes distance himself from the Monida & Yellowstone Stage Company, reorganize, and seek a new permit, all of which Haynes did.⁴²

In 1914, Haynes began operating as the Yellowstone-Western Stage Company. Competition from Child had been strong before, and Haynes felt that Child and his former partner, W. Humphrey, were be-

hind the 1913 cancellation of his Monida & Yellowstone Stage Company permit. Nevertheless, while he was trying to reorganize, he sent his wife a positive telegram from Washington, “Matters are proceeding entirely satisfactory [*sic*]...have had three calls and one lunch from Lord Harry. Quite like old times indications are he will get on the band wagon and join the popular theme of reduction that I suggested. Don’t worry.”⁴³

The strained competitive relationships in Yellowstone were not limited to those of Child and Haynes. George Whittaker and Mrs. George Pryor were both vying for the postmaster position at Mammoth. John Meldrum, the United States Commissioner, believed that someone from Harry Child’s operation was backing Whittaker’s purchase of the Lyall and Henderson store at Mammoth in order that Whittaker could slip into the postmaster’s job. Mrs. Pryor had the support of the superintendent, Colonel Brett, and most of the Army officers. Judge Meldrum wrote to Haynes seeking his support, “Now, I know that you are a little prejudiced against women wearing the trousers, but you know that this State, Wyoming, was the pioneer proclaimer of ‘Equal Rights’ to the fair sex; and you also know that Mrs. Pryor is a bright and exceedingly capable woman.”⁴⁴

Child announced the transfer of the lease from Lyall and Henderson to George Whittaker on March 3, 1913, and Child immediately organized a petition on behalf of Whittaker for the position of postmaster. In Mrs. Anna Pryor’s letter to Haynes seeking his support for her appointment, she wrote, “Now here is a



Lyall and Henderson Store—Mammoth Hot Springs. ca. 1914.



Rear of Lyall and Henderson Store—Mammoth Hot Springs. ca. 1914.



J. E. Haynes residence and studio. 1917.

secret far as I know, [and] it may help you if you do not know it. Huntley Child bought Park post cards to sell in the hotels this season and said they would not handle yours.”⁴⁵

Obviously the debate over who handled what merchandise in the different establishments was continuing. In May, Huntley Child complained to Colonel Brett that Haynes was selling “souvenir jewelry and leather sofa pillows at his stands in the park” which Child felt interfered with his license. This drew a response from Colonel Brett who quoted the Department’s decision:

The complaint of Mrs. Ash and Mr. Klamer in this case is not well founded. Mr. Haynes having the right, under the schedule of rates in question, to dispose of in the Park all souvenirs [of] embellished park views.⁴⁶

Brett pointed out to Child that his permit of May 1912 for the Canyon store, which was “revocable at the will of the Secretary of the Interior” was for “such articles, knickknacks and tourist supplies as present conditions at this point require, in order to make proper provisions for the demands of the traveling public.”⁴⁷

In 1913, the Shaw and Powell Camping Company was given a permit to establish permanent camp-

ing facilities in the park. The move upset the Northern Pacific Railroad’s Vice President, J. M. Hannaford, who wrote to Child:

It seems to me that the Park authorities allowing construction of buildings of this character cannot but work to the material disadvantage of the Hotel Company, and that lobbies, dining rooms, etc. will soon be followed by sleeping quarters, and that you are going to find your expensive hotels running in competition with a very smaller investment, and in that way the value of the securities you have out are going to be considerably lessened.⁴⁸

Haynes’s son, Jack, was now taking a more active role in the business. He visited Salt Lake City to examine the competition’s advertising methods and to explore the possibility of opening an office there. The Wylie company and the Shaw and Powell company both maintained a presence there.⁴⁹

In August, Haynes, who had decided that he needed better lodging for his employees at Canyon, submitted plans for a new bunkhouse to replace the 1898 building, which he felt was too near his barn. With this project Haynes was introduced to the newly organized system of project review within the Depart-

ment of the Interior. Secretary Franklin Lane had appointed Mark Daniels as the General Superintendent and Landscape Engineer of National Parks. He would, among other duties, review and approve the design for buildings erected in the parks. Daniels approved Haynes's design, but recommended that the building be set up high enough to allow for some stone foundation and that the pitch of the roof be less than 45 degrees. Having had many years of experience with Yellowstone winters, Haynes objected to flattening the roof, citing the snow-load problems. Daniels eventually agreed with Haynes, but only after Haynes dis-

puted Daniels's comparison with buildings in Switzerland.⁵⁰

World War I broke out in Europe before the 1914 season was over, but no one knew if it would cause impacts to the park. With the Army still in control of park administration, it was unclear unknown if a shift in the Army's priorities would impact the management of the park. However, the hiring of Mark Daniels in the Department of the Interior brought the appearance of a more organized approach to park management and was encouraging to the concessioners.