

Changes Sweep the Park 1915–1918

After more than four decades, the Department of the Interior finally began focusing some attention on the parks, and there was a strong indication that a bureau of national parks would be created. While secretaries Walter Fisher and Richard Ballinger had taken some measures toward creating such a bureau, Franklin Lane took a giant step in that direction with his appointment of Stephen Mather as Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior in 1915. The 3rd National Park Conference, which convened in Berkeley, California, and coincided with the Panama-Pacific Exposition, outlined a progressive program that greatly affected concessioners.

One of the main topics of discussion at the Park Conference was how to get people to the parks. While this issue was nothing new for Yellowstone officials, it was new to have a Departmental appointee discussing it. Mark Daniels, General Superintendent and Landscape Engineer, stated that for the parks to be a success, “We are going to put them to the use for which they were set aside, in other words, if they are going to bring in dividends, not only in money, but in health, happiness, and increased intelligence, they must certainly be visited by the people.” Daniels believed the three key ingredients to success for parks were transportation facilities, publicity, and accommodations—



Loading of stage coaches at Mammoth Hotel (formerly National Hotel). Pre-1914.

the same three elements that the concessioners in Yellowstone and other parks had been investing in for years. Now, the Department of the Interior appeared ready to assume more responsibility in these areas, particularly in publicity. Daniels urged that a bureau of information be created, and he reported that Secretary Lane had begun a “campaign of publicity” by securing the services of a nationally known journalist to steer the effort.¹ A good friend of Stephen Mather, Robert Sterling Yard, had been hired as the national parks publicity chief. Yard had been the editor of *Century* and was currently the Sunday editor of the *New York Herald*.²

In order to promote accommodations and reach all classes of tourists, Daniels called for a three-tiered system of accommodations: (1) a hotel or chalet system for sleeping and dining, (2) a system of permanent camps where the traveler slept in tents but ate in dining rooms, and (3) facilities for individual campers who rented a tent and cooked their own food. Earlier Haynes had called for an additional type of accommodation—the second-class hotel, perhaps the antecedent of the lodge system.

Daniels pointed out that private camping parties would present problems that required new investments by the government. With hundreds or even thousands of private campers congregating in a park, municipal-type problems would arise. The park would need to provide water, electricity, telephones, and a system of ranger patrols for the campgrounds. Daniels suggested a “village” prototype and noted that trial examples were planned in Yosemite, Crater Lake, Mount Rainier, and Glacier. Daniels knew the success of this system was based on sufficient congressional appropriations, and the justification for increased appropriations was based on increased visitation.³

Fred Harvey, whose family was a concessioner in Grand Canyon, frowned on what he perceived as the prevailing attitude: “In our parks today the man who is operating the accommodation for the service of the public is regarded as if he was there simply to make as much money as he could out of it. He must be watched.”⁴ Pointing out that providing good service is no easy task in the remote national parks, Harvey believed that a regulated monopoly should protect the companies that had invested large sums of money in order to provide good accommodations and service. And he believed that all hotels in a park should be under one owner. Stephen Mather agreed and added that park concessioners should be of the very highest

character and “should have the interest on his investments thoroughly protected. He should have his operating expenses deducted, and then the profits should be divided, possibly 50 per cent to the Government and 50 per cent to the concessioner.” Mather, being very new to his position, also knew that what he proposed might not be practical, but thought it should be tried in some parks.⁵

For the concessioners of Yellowstone National Park, 1915 was also an important year as visitation more than doubled from 20,250 in 1914 to 51,895 and, late in the season, automobiles were allowed to travel throughout the park. The admission of automobiles would change the character of the visitor experience, the character of park development, and the investments of the concessioner. Because Yellowstone’s roads had been designed for wagons or stages, the immediate problem would be the mixing of the two different modes of transportation. The plan issued by Secretary Lane’s office called for the stages to leave 30 minutes after the automobiles had left on their one-way circuit around the Grand Loop Road.⁶ Quickly that year, Holm Transportation Company and the Wylie Permanent Camping Company applied for permits to allow transport of passengers in motor vehicles. They were denied on the grounds that the admission of automobiles was for “pleasure purposes only.”⁷

Mammoth Hot Springs store concessioners, Anna Pryor and Elizabeth Trischman sought permission to sell gasoline and lubricating oils in addition to numerous items not included in the original lease to Ole Anderson for coating of specimens. The lease, which was approved for one year, allowed them to sell souvenirs, confectionery, fresh fruit, cigars, tobacco, tourist hats and veils, colored glasses, books, magazines, stationery, along with maintaining a complete soda fountain, coffee, tea, and non-alcohol beverages; but they could not sell automobile-related items or Indian or fur rugs.⁸

Haynes was in an awkward position in preparing for the expected record season of 1915. He only had a one-year permit for his stage company, and he was faced with purchasing new equipment to meet increased needs; at the same time, he knew that drastic changes would be taking place in the near future because of the probable admission of automobiles into the park. He requested a longer lease from the Department of the Interior and outlined his projected purchases: 100 new stage horses, 12 eight-passenger Concord coaches, 100 five-passenger surreys, addi-



Buses and touring cars. 1920s.

tional harnesses and other related equipment, 500 tons of hay and 500,000 pounds of oats, additional lodging, and horse sheds. Despite his presenting a good case, the Department of the Interior renewed his lease only for one year.⁹ At the end of 1915, his Yellowstone-Western Stage Company owned 472 horses and 228 passenger vehicles.¹⁰

The year 1916 was one of profound change for Yellowstone. The most important change was the creation of the National Park Service in August, with Stephen Mather selected as the Director. Among those who had lobbied for the creation of a bureau of national parks was a group of the leading landscape architects in the country. A committee was formed to support the Congressional legislation and included the Yellowstone concessioner, H. W. Child, as well as Frederick L. Olmstead, Enos Mills, Warren Manning, Percival Gallagher, and Harris Reynolds. They prepared a report about park issues, part of which addressed a question that is just as relevant at the end of the twentieth century as it was in 1915: the “advisability of establishing a populous village within the park for concessionaires and employees, or for visitors,” or whether such housing should be built outside the park, “where, of course, it would not be under the direction of the government.”¹¹

In the park itself, F. Jay Haynes transferred his concession business, Haynes Park Studio, to his son, Jack, in January 1916. (The lease arrangements with the Department of the Interior remained the same).¹² F. Jay Haynes was focusing his time and attention on the transition of his transportation business from horses

to motors. With additional advertising and promotion by the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad many people were expected to come into the park via the east entrance. In preparing for providing motor transport at the east entrance, Haynes and his attorney, J. Hickey, along with A. W. Miles of the Wylie Permanent Camping Company, Huntley Child, and representatives of the Shaw and Powell Camping company met in Helena to discuss the formation of the Cody-Sylvan Pass Motor Company.

Most of March was spent comparing different vehicles. A representative from the White Company met with the group, and, eventually, it received an order for two 10-passenger buses similar to the buses used in Glacier National Park. Haynes visited Pence Auto Company in Minneapolis and ordered five Buick seven-passenger cars.¹³ In June, the Cody-Sylvan Pass Motor Company became official and made up of all former transportation companies. Fifty shares of stock were issued: Haynes held 16.5 shares; Huntley Child, 1 share; William Nichols, Huntley Child’s brother-in-law, 14 shares; A. W. Miles, 10 shares; Leo Shaw, 6.5 shares; John Powell, 1 share; and Haynes’s attorney, James Hickey, 1 share. Haynes served as president of the company. Cooperation among the former competitors was high, including the loan of equipment and sharing of services, particularly at Tower Fall.¹⁴

By the end of the summer, park officials termed the first full season of automobile touring (3,445 automobiles carried 14,930 people for pleasure) a “tremendous success.” They made plans to withdraw all horse-drawn vehicles from the park roads by the open-

ing of the 1917 season.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the disposal of the horses and the horse-drawn vehicles and equipment of the Yellowstone-Western Stage Company kept Haynes busy. With World War I raging in Europe, Haynes's attorney, James Hickey, met with representatives of an English commission who were in this country purchasing horses for military use. The commission members were looking for heavy and strong horses and did not think that the stage-company horses would do. They were also very specific in what they would buy, only dark sorrels or dark bays. However, they suggested that the French commission might be interested, and they would represent the stage company to the French. But, after a German submarine sank five ships off the Atlantic coast, munitions transportation slowed down somewhat, and Haynes said, "I think this was the reason why horse buyers held back." In the spring, Howard Eaton, an outfitter and owner of the Eaton Ranch in Wolf, Wyoming, offered to buy some of the coaches, many of the horses, and all of the harness equipment.¹⁶

Also during the summer of 1916, Mather and his new assistant, Horace Albright, made a general inspection of all parks and found an overall lack of good sanitary systems. Armed with a special report written by a Department of the Interior special investigator, Mather planned to approach Congress for an appropriation to cover sanitation and water systems for all of the parks.¹⁷ The special investigator, J. A. Hill, wrote a scathing report on the camp operations, stating "The manner in which the camps are conducted would not be tolerated in any city large enough to have a Board of Health." The hotels received good marks for being well-managed and well-equipped. Overall, Hill made some rather profound recommendations for concession operations in the Yellowstone:

1. Have one motor vehicle transportation company.
2. Have one hotel company.
3. Have one camping company.
4. Make Wylie and Shaw & Powell consolidate.
5. Eliminate all horse-drawn vehicles.
6. Permit different companies to haul its own merchandise.¹⁸

In late November, the stockholders of the various transportation and camping companies met with Horace Albright in Chicago to plan for the complete reorganization of the park transportation system, a subject that had been discussed at an earlier meeting with Mather. By the end of the session, the different

concessioners could not reach a consensus so John Carroll, who represented the Northern Pacific Railroad, suggested that Director Mather "suggest the terms and propositions deemed by him just and proper in which the concessioners may participate in the motorization of the Yellowstone National Park." All concessioners voted "Aye."¹⁹

In a December meeting in Washington between the concessioners and Director Mather agreed upon the reorganization of the transportation business in Yellowstone:

1. The YP Hotel Company would maintain and operate hotels in Park.
2. The YP Transportation Company would be charged with the duty of motorizing the Park and conducting transportation through the Park; purchase the "good will" of the Yellowstone Western Stage Co. for a cash consideration; to purchase the "good will," so far as the transportation of tourists is concerned, of the Wylie Permanent Camping Co. and the Shaw and Powell Co., and to give in payment therefore $\frac{2}{3}$ of the capital stock of the Wylie Permanent Camping Co. owned by Haynes and Child, which stock the Transportation Company agree to acquire and transfer to Miles and Powell or one of them, in trust for a new camping company to be formed and known as the Yellowstone Park Camping Company at its par value which stock shall be fully paid and non-assessable, and issued to Miles and Powell.
3. F. Jay Haynes retires from [transportation] business in Park and the Yellowstone Park Transportation Co. having contracted for and completed purchase of his interest in the Wylie Permanent Camping Co. for purpose of transferring it to Miles and Powell.
4. Miles and stockholders of Shaw and Powell shall form corporation which will establish and maintain permanent camps in Park.
5. All concessioners are to co-operate and that the "convenience and pleasure of the public visiting the Yellowstone National Park may be best served at reasonable expense.
6. The Cody-Sylvan Pass Motor Company is dissolved.²⁰

Clearly, 1916 was a year of tremendous change for Yellowstone National Park. The creation of the National Park Service immediately brought the influence of Stephen Mather and Horace Albright to park is-

sues. The transformation of travel in the park from the horse-drawn era into the motor age changed forever who came to Yellowstone and how they saw the park. Added to this was the retirement of F. Jay Haynes, one of the park's most influential concessioners, and the consolidation of the concession companies very much along the lines that Department of the Interior Inspector Hill had recommended.

In 1917, the newly organized National Park Service offered a concerted, businesslike approach to the operation of the national park system. This was in sharp contrast to the past 44 years when the parks were managed with a miscellaneous group of reservations and institutions. For the first time, concessions policy would be examined on a systemwide basis, and conflicting policies on administering the different parks would be addressed.

It was anticipated that rules and regulations would be published for the parks. In the Director's annual report for 1917, very positive words described the purpose of the parks:

What benefits for the people of our time and for posterity in the direction of safeguarding health and providing recreational facilities are promised. What splendid recognition is given to the economic and educational value of our wonderful playgrounds. The statement breathes hope and encouragement and inspiration to all who study, enjoy, and love the wild places and the sublime works of nature.²¹

Just after the beginning of the New Year, another national parks conference was held in Washington, D.C. An entire session was devoted to motor travel to the parks, and it addressed many of the new and challenging issues facing the National Park Service and the concessioners—publicity, good roads, good accommodations, reasonably priced gasoline in the parks, and the designation of a park-to-park highway.²²

America's entry into World War I caused some uncertainties about expected visitation and a general unrest in financial markets. Tighter money prevented the Northern Pacific Railway Company from loaning the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company additional money to purchase the needed automobile fleet. However, Huntley Child did secure a loan from the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad and the Union Pacific Railroad that enabled the company to buy 222 vehicles and other needed equipment. The



Yellowstone-Western Stage Company bunkhouse. 1917.

Northwest Improvement Company also advanced the Yellowstone Park Hotel Company and the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company an additional \$150,000 on their 1914 loan so that the two companies were in good financial shape to begin the season of 1917.²³

Haynes had turned down an offer to be a partner in the transportation business, stating:

I had an opportunity of joining the company and have a minority holding in the stock, but I did not feel like obligating myself for \$250,000 without control in the enterprise, especially one I did not know much about. Considering the fact that the Government expect to participate in the profits to quite an extent and the jitney business that will develop in competition, I thought it better to withdraw than to commence life over again, as I did not feel like beginning all over and start to make a fortune on borrowed capital.²⁴

By October, Haynes had sold 406 horses for \$32,490 which left him with a few horses at his ranch in Lakeview, Montana. Although the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company assumed it had a right to the former Yellowstone-Western Stage Company buildings throughout the park, Haynes still had a year remaining on his transportation lease, and he thus used the buildings for the storage of his wagons and equipment.

Late in 1917, Jack Haynes requested permission to use the buildings on the one-acre tract near Tower Fall that had formerly been used by the Yellowstone-

Western Stage Company for a picture shop and “information station.” (Haynes had received temporary permission to run a shop at that location during the latter part of 1917 as an experiment.) Acting Superintendent Chester Lindsley supported the request because he found motorists who had come over Dunraven Pass were anxious to have a place to stop for water and to allow their smoking brakes a chance to cool off after the six-mile descent. Lindsley considered the Dunraven descent the “worst grade for automobiles in the park.” Haynes planned to specialize here in the sale of photographs and postcards of the Buffalo Farm, Tower Fall, Grand Canyon, Mount Washburn, and the Petrified Trees.²⁵

The sale of merchandise and meals was an issue in 1917. Anna Pryor and Elizabeth Trischman were now allowed to sell Indian rugs and postcards (as agents for Haynes), but they were denied the privilege of selling inexpensive meals—a service that would be handled by the new Mammoth Hot Springs permanent camp, which was moving in from Willow Park and Swan Lake Flats as a consolidation of the Willow Park and Swan Lake camps.²⁶

In March 1917, George Whittaker and C. A. Hamilton were authorized to operate general stores in the Upper Geyser Basin and at Mammoth Hot Springs.²⁷ Hamilton also rented the old E.C. Waters store at Lake during the 1917 season. In November, W. M. Nichols, president of the Yellowstone Park Boat Company, suggested that C. A. Hamilton buy the store and dwelling from the boat company, move the buildings at least 100 feet back from Yellowstone Lake to improve the lake view from the hotel, and make alterations to the store to improve its appearance.²⁸



Yellowstone Park Boat Company. 1917.

Following the 1916 reorganization of Yellowstone concessions operations, boat company officials had re-examined the company in light of recent changes in its finances and how the visitors traveled around the park. They found that the company, which had always had marginal financing, lacked sufficient funds to pay the interest on the note; more people were taking their automobiles from West Thumb to Lake Hotel, bypassing the boat ride; and, most of the boating revenue came from row boats, excursions, and fishing trips. Nichols proposed that the steamer, *E. C. Waters* be cut up, transported out of the park and sold to a railroad company that operated on Coeur D’Alene Lake. The 600-passenger capacity steamer was “in good shape, her timbers are sound, and her machinery and boilers, insofar as we have been able to discover, are just as good as new. The boat was run only 10 days after being built.” Nichols also suggested selling the 150-passenger capacity gas boat, *Jean D.* He felt the machinery and boilers of the old *Zillah* might be used, but the hull was “too far gone to be of any use.”²⁹

In 1917, with the administration of the park changing from the military to the National Park Service, several concessioners wanted to use the stone “Bachelor’s Quarters” (today’s Albright Visitor Center) in Mammoth. Anna Pryor and Elizabeth Trischman wanted to convert it into a winter hotel as the hotel company had been told that a hotel needed to be open during the winter season “for the accommodation of tourists who visit the park for the purpose of seeing the wild animals and enjoying winter sports.” Pryor and Trischman also wanted to lease one of the stone troop stables for garage purposes. Huntley Child wanted to use the Bachelor’s Quarters for concession-employee quarters and a mess house as well as for additional hotel rooms for tourists who arrived prior to the official opening of the season. Both of these requests were denied.³⁰

After the country’s 1917 entry into World War I, rumors began to circulate about the park’s possible closure. Although the park hotels closed early because of a railroad strike, the camping companies continued to be open. In December, Mr. Mather wrote to A. W. Miles, president of the Yellowstone Park Camping Company, denying rumors that the park would be closed in 1918. He went on to urge Miles to proceed with improvements as early in the spring as possible in order to be ready for the season opening. Mather wrote, “We expect to operate the entire national park

system during the period of the war because we realize the fact that the people of the country must have rest and recreation in war times as in time of peace.”³¹

The park also experienced changes in social mores. During 1917, a friend of Secretary Franklin Lane from Washington, D.C., visited the park with a party that included “a colored maid.” The hotel company’s policy had been to serve the maids in “their room without any extra charge.” In a letter from Huntley Child to Secretary Lane, Child asked the Secretary if that procedure was agreeable to him. He noted that in the past “about one colored maid comes to the Park every three years.” Horace Albright suggested a response that indicated that Child should take up the matter in person with the Secretary on his next visit to Washington, but the new chief clerk, Frank Griffith, wanted to sidestep the issue and not go on record with a response to Child’s letter. Assistant Superintendent Cotter wanted to file the Child’s letter without a reply.³² No reply was given.

The Secretary of the Interior planned to open all of the parks in 1918, with all hotels, camps, and transportation companies operating as usual.³³ However, by the first of June, Huntley Child and his father, H. W. Child, convinced Mr. Mather that the lack of sufficient hotel staff, the general unrest in the country, changes in rail service, and an increase in rail ticket prices all indicated that it would be a dismal season for the hotels. After much negotiating, Huntley Child announced that the hotels would not open. Citing fixed costs of \$125,000, Child suggested that someone else run the hotels for the season; however, that did not transpire and the hotels remained closed. At the end of the season, the hotel and transportation companies could not meet their interest payments. The hotel company lost \$74,640.47, and the transportation company lost \$33,955.57.³⁴

The question of coal mining by the hotel company arose again when the company sought permission to obtain coal from the McMinn mine, which the Army Corps of Engineers had recently reopened in the park. (The mine had been closed for about 30 years.) While Director Mather denied use of that particular mine because the deposits were limited, he did allow the hotel company “to open up any other deposits of coal in the park” under the authorization and supervision of the National Park Service as allowed under their concession permit.³⁵

In May, the Secretary published and distributed a “Statement of National Park Policy” in which he

outlined the first guidelines for running the parks. These guidelines were based upon the principles that the parks were “to be maintained in absolutely unimpaired form for the use of future generations,” that “they are set apart for the use, observation, health, and pleasure of the people,” and, finally, that “the national interest must dictate all decisions affecting public or private enterprise in the parks.” In addressing concessions, the Secretary stated that concessions would be under “strict Government control” and “confined to tracts no larger than absolutely necessary for the purposes of their business.” The policy statement called for “low-priced camps operated by concessioners should be maintained, as well as comfortable and even luxurious hotels wherever the volume of travel warrants the establishment of these classes of accommodations.” He mentioned that as funds allowed, free camping areas would be built in the parks. In regard to fees and rates, the Secretary recognized that the concessioners (for the most part) had invested great sums of money and “...as the obligation to render service satisfactory to the department at carefully regulated rates is imposed, these enterprises must be given a large measure of protection, and generally speaking, competitive business should not be authorized where a concession is meeting our requirements.”³⁶

One of the most important elements in the Statement of Policy that affected concession development as well as park development was the attention given to architecture and landscape architecture. The Department called for hiring trained people familiar with landscape architecture who would operate under the philosophy of harmonizing new development with the landscape using a “preconceived plan.”³⁷ While the concessioners had used prominent architects in the past and plans for construction had been presented to the Department for approval, this new policy meant that trained people would be reviewing development in a more highly organized manner. These employees would also make periodic visits to the parks in order to make recommendations for improvements or new construction.

The first report on Yellowstone improvements was prepared by Charles Punchard, Jr., a National Park Service landscape engineer, in September 1918. Punchard’s thorough report on the permanent camps in the park presented general recommendations for all camps as follows:

1. Topographic map of each camp.



H. W. Child residence, built in 1908. 1917.



“Chinaman’s” house in Gardner Canyon. 1917.

2. General plan for development of each camp.
3. Competent architect employed by camp company.
4. Installation of proper sanitary facilities.
5. Gravel walks and drives.
6. Policing of camps to ensure cleanliness.
7. Central laundry for all camps.
8. Hot and cold baths, plus private bath in few tents.
9. Permanent adequate water system.
10. Color of paint to be used on permanent parts of bldgs.
11. Shingled roofs painted sage green at Mammoth and dark brown at other camps.
12. Guest tents of a more permanent material and good design.
13. All buildings to conform to exterior architecture of main building.
14. All buildings and locations need approval by National Park Service.
15. Submit list of contemplated work for following season at the end of season.³⁸

Punchard did not believe that the same color needed to be used consistently, but that each camp should be studied for the selection of an appropriate color. He recommended “the soft gray” used on the Child’s house for the Mammoth camp to blend with the terraces and a “soft warm brown stain” for the Old Faithful, Canyon, and Lake camps. He strongly suggested not using the brown and yellow paint scheme currently used. Punchard found that often “A spirit of ‘good enough’ prevailed” as the concessioners tried to meet their immediate needs, which in most cases did not meet the newly established principle of har-

monizing with nature.³⁹

Another example of the new National Park Service adopting a more businesslike approach in managing of the parks was that the United States Bureau of Animal Industry was brought in to Yellowstone by Acting Superintendent Chester Lindsley to inspect the hotel company’s herd of milk cows from Idaho. Lindsley had heard that Idaho was not strict with the enforcement of laws governing diseases of livestock.⁴⁰

Due to the lack of material and labor during 1918, new construction was discouraged, but small projects did occur. Visitation dropped from 35,400 in 1917 to 21,275 in 1918. Only the Upper Geyser Basin, Mammoth, and Canyon camps were opened. George Whittaker, who kept the post office at Mammoth opened all year and his store at Canyon opened during the summer season, took over the hotel company’s garden located at the head of Gardner Canyon at the request of Director Mather. He sold produce to the road camps at cost. Hamilton ran his Upper Geyser Basin and Lake stores. Pryor and Trischman remained open during the season.⁴¹

During these few short years, some of the most dramatic and far-reaching changes occurred in Yellowstone and the other parks. Times were changing, and the parks were keeping a pace with the changes. The transition from horse to motor vehicles, major changes in concession companies, transfer of Park administration from military to civilian rule, the beginning of a National Park Service management policy, and changes in concession activities from to the impacts of world events on the park all made for a different Yellowstone in the next decades.