

History of the National Park Service Ranger

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Story of the NPS ranger linked with the story of Yellowstone NP.

A. Ask “What does YNP mean to you?” (Go around group and ask each person. Nice camping? Lot’s of attractions? Animals? Fishing? Hiking? Any answer ok.)

B. Yellowstone National Park for me:

- YNP: 1872, first time in world history that a nation set aside a resource for the enjoyment of the common people, forever.
- For me, a very special place, a very special feeling; so linked with our nation’s history.
- The beginning of the conservation movement. A new concept of national land use.
- Argue: Hot Springs in AR (harvest of hot water) or Yosemite (1864 to CA) earlier. Yes, but.

1. History of ‘parks’ idea and nature.

A. Ancient times.

- Old idea. Only the world’s important people---conquerors---could make magnificent gardens.
- Hanging Gardens of Babylon built by Nebuchadnezzar.... But, for his wife.
- Persian royal gardens
- Greek & Roman world: courtyards painted to resemble gardens.

B. France and England.

- France:
 - Norman *parcs* of France. “Unruffled hunting estates” of feudal nobility, with the connotation of wild property.’ Source of our word “park”.... From France.
 - 1220 A.D. In France: *parc* = large enclosed woods where game is guarded for hunting by nobility.
- England:
 - Before William the Conqueror in 1066: ‘commons,’ less desirable lands or waste lands, villagers formalized “rights of common.”
 - Yet, “Tragedy of the Commons” = 1968 economic theory by Garrett Hardin saying that individuals act against their self interest....free grazing for animals in commons.... People will overuse the commons and destroy it.
 - After Norman Conquest: the common was “the lord’s waste”.... To do with as he pleased. Hence, many commons converted to deer parks for the lord’s use.
 - We would expect the British to merge the two concepts: game preserve and common holding of lands that would be the basis for true park development. Never happened. Ideas handed to another people in North America.

C. Colonial and young America.

(1.) 17th Century Nature.

- 1620, W. Bradford: nature = “a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts & men.”
- Yet, commons idea in most NE towns: drill grounds for militia, fair grounds at harvest time.
- Progress in PA: William Penn’s squares with trees dedicated for public use.
- But, game preserve idea made no progress in Colonial days because no leisure class to champion it.

(2.) 18th Century Nature.

- Romantic Movement philosophy, Romanticism.
 - Artistic, literary, intellectual movement, end of the 18th century.
 - Originated in Europe. Partly a reaction to the Industrial Revolution.
 - Transformed the American view of nature.
 - Only missing ingredient: sense of purpose.

(3.) 19th Century Nature.

- Philosophers saw what industrialism was doing to the NE landscape:
 - spinning mills, foundries, squalid factory towns. Only answer: return to nature.
- Thoreau’s essay on “Walking” started with “I wish to speak a word for Nature...”
- Americans view of nature began changing rapidly.
 - Hudson River School of painting & beautiful outdoor scenery.
 - Mid-19th century art movement, 20+ artists
 - Depicted Hudson River, Catskill Mtns., Adirondacks, White Mtns., Pastoral settlement.
 - Reflected 3 themes of 19th century:
 - Discovery, exploration, and settlement
 - Artists Thomas Cole, Frederick Edwin Church, Thomas Moran, Albert Bierstadt
 - Bierstadt’s “Among the Sierra Nevada Mountains, CA”, 1868
 - Painting is pure fiction. Made from his other sketches.
 - Romanticized nature; mythologized the Am. West.
 - Painted in Rome, displayed in Berlin and London.
 - A writer said: “What our scenery ought to be.”
- Stimulated the desire to visit scenic places.

(4.) Changing American view of nature and parks.

- 1st step: the commons... Militia drill area in the Colonies.
- 2nd step: Boston. Nation’s first scenic, garden cemetery at Mount Auburn in 1831.
 - Distinct break from Colonial burial grounds & church affiliated graveyards.

- 3rd step: the city park. William Cullen Bryant (journalist, romantic poet, editor of *The New York Evening Post*) proposed a city park for NYC in 1844. Then, in 1851 construction began on Central Park under Frederick Law Olmsted, considered the father of American landscape architecture.
- 4th step: the state park. 1864: Yosemite Valley given to CA “upon the conditions that it shall be help for public use, resort, and recreation; and shall be inalienable for all time”
 - novelty of Yosemite: reserved for strictly non-utilitarian purposes. Thus establishing a precedent.
- 5th step: US as a nation, now ready to consider creation of a ‘national’ park.
 - 1832: IDEA: George Catlin ascended the Missouri River & said the strip of country from Mexico to Canada should be turned into a huge reserve for buffalo and Indians. (Impossible, But.)

2. Birth of Yellowstone National Park.

A. Native Americans.

- First humans in YNP 11,000 years ago, Clovis and then Folsom people.
- Sheep Eater band of the Shoshones, only Indian residents of the YNP area.
 - Around 700 years ago.
 - Hunted big horn sheep.
 - Retained old way of living, before horses. Life style a holdover from the late prehistoric period. Sheep Eaters timid but not unfriendly.
 - US Gov. never recognized them as having a valid claim to the Y area.
 - Instead, an unratified treaty of 1868 used as justification to placing all Shoshones on small reservations. Sheep Eaters ended up on the Wind River Rez., 1871.
- Many tribes have a traditional connection to the YNP area.
- 1877, Nez Perce War. Flee from the US Army through Y, 13 days, 2 civilians killed.

B. Explorers, trappers, and expeditions.

- John Colter left the Lewis & Clark expedition on return trip. Was in Y area in 1807.
- Other trappers in 1820s & 1830s. Jim Bridger. Osborne Russell, 1835, 1839.
 - Soon, 1840s, the beaver hat went out of style.

Expeditions:

- 1860: Reynolds military expedition, deterred by late spring snow.
- 1869: Folsom-Cook-Peterson Expedition. Updated maps & refueled scientists’ excitement.
- 1870: Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition. Doane provided military escort.
- 1871: Hayden Expedition. SCIENCE IN Y BEGAN w/ botanists, zoologist, ornithologist, meteorologist, photographer, etc.
 - Visual proof: photographs of William Henry Jackson, sketches of Henry Elliott, and paintings of Thomas Moran

C. Creation of YNP: a hot-button issue in 1871-72.

- Transcontinental RR, UP & CP, join n. of SLC, 1869.
 - Montana cities want the Northern Pacific to come through.
- Northern Pacific RR agents initiate project to reserve Y as a park.
- N. Pacific RR goal: take RR into park.
- March 1, 1872: Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone NP Protection Act.
 - Text drawn from Yosemite Protection Act.
- NPRR plans collapse in the Panic of 1873.
 - But, soon form Yellowstone Park Improvement Company

D. YNP: The early years.

- 1872-1877: Nathaniel P. Langford appointed superintendent. Not paid. No budget. Only in park twice during his years in office. Earned living elsewhere.
- First ranger-like employees:
 - 1866, Galen Clark appointed “Guardian of Yosemite”
 - James McCartney: 1874- 1st to serve in a ranger-like capacity in YNP
 - Followed in 1880 by Harry Yount, hired as YNP “Game Keeper”
- 1877-1882: Philetus W. Norris. Congress authorized small appropriations “to protect, preserve, and improve the park.” Norris hired first gamekeeper/ranger, Harry Yount.
- Norris got some things done. Quite a character. Naming everything. Outfit. But....worked!
- Poaching, trapping, hunting, desecration of geysers.... Park being destroyed.

3. The US Army and Yellowstone.

A. First ‘modern day’ National Park Service rangers were US Army soldiers.

- 5 Yellowstone superintendents between 1872-1886.
 - Insufficient funding. Vandals, souvenir seekers chipped away at geyser cones, buffalo slaughtered, trapping, mining, etc.
- Sundry Civil Act of 1883: allowed Sec. of Interior to ask War Department for help.
- August 17, 1886, CPT Moses Harris, M Troop, 1st US Cavalry, from Ft. Custer, MT Ter. (Ft Custer was east of Billings, close to Hardin, MT)
 - entered Yellowstone with 2 LTs, 20 EM, 56 horses, 17 mules, 3 army wagons, and 1 ambulance.
- Cavalry created temporary Camp Sheridan, tents & interim frame buildings, at Mammoth.
- Fall 1886: erected six temporary ‘soldier stations’ throughout park. (Soda Butte, Canyon, **Norris**, Riverside, Lower Geyser Basin, Upper Geyser Basin).
 - Norris station, dedicated in 1991 as the Museum of the Natl. Park Ranger to “honor the tradition and contribution of all employees of the NPS.”
 - Bldg. renovated with \$ from several sources, incl. Conoco, NPS, Assn. of NPS Rangers, and others.
 - By 1916, 16 ‘soldier stations’

- Soldiers patrolled on skis in winter, on horse in summer, for violations of park rules.
 - FIRST real park rangers with organization and support. Soldier life demanding, rugged, and dangerous, very different from their previous work.
- Permanent Fort Yellowstone construction started 1891, at Mammoth Hot Springs.
 - by 1910, 310 soldiers served in YNP, plus families and civilian employees
 - Today, Fort Yellowstone is the home of the YNP Headquarters.
- Sequoia, Yosemite, and General Grant NPS est in 1890. Patrolled by cavalry.

B. Story of the U.S. Army and bison at YNP. See Hampton Chapters 2 and 9, and note 3, p 238.

C. Bottom line. US Army saved our first national parks. Stayed in YNP 1886-1918, 32 years. All of the Army superintendents excellent. Ten different cavalry units served during the 32 years of Army care of the park.

4. The National Park Ranger.

A. Early history of the ranger.

- Concept of ranger as guardian 5,000 yrs old, Mesopotamian drawings on temple/palace walls
- 4,000 yrs ago desert ‘rangers’ patrolled s. frontier of what is now Egypt
- 3,000 yrs ago “Preserve men” protected hunting grounds, sacred groves from commoners in China, Persia, and later Greece and Rome.
- 500 AD – 1400 AD: rangers were foresters who served German, Norman, & English aristocrats

B. Modern history.

- Word “Ranger”: evolved from German “ring” or “range” in early 1300s
 - “Ranger” appeared as a title in English Royal Rolls of mid-14th century.
 - Military use of term “rangers”:
 - 1682: rangers in Colonial VA protected settlements along rivers
 - In Colonial SC and FL, rangers used against the Spanish in 1720s
 - Rogers Rangers served with the British Army during French and Indian War
 - Ranger units up through WWII and today.
- State Rangers: Texas, Arizona, and CA.
 - Earliest use of term “park ranger”: 1901 in Sequoia NP
 - Forest rangers in NPs called “park rangers” (before NPS established in 1916)
 - 1905: “Park Ranger” became official in NPs in CA.
 - NPS created in 1916. 1918: WW I, soldiers desiring to remain in YNP & other parks could leave the Army and join the new NPS as park rangers.

5. Two stories about early YNP.

1. **The robbery of Judge Lacey.** Poaching, stage coach robberies, theft, squatting, shooting buffalo, trapping, mining, etc., major problems in early park years. No laws & punishment. Army could only throw the violators out of the park. Evening of July 4, 1887, the six-horse stagecoach 'Bighorn' was held up by two masked men about one mile inside the northern park boundary. Judge John F. Lacey of Oskaloosa, Iowa, one of the passengers. Lacey had a valuable 1811 Napoleonic coin. The coin eventually tripped up the robbers and they were caught. Lacey returned to Iowa and was later elected to Congress from the state of Iowa.

2. **Buffalo poacher Ed Howell.** Howell was an infamous poacher in late 1880s and early 1890s. Buffalo 'scalps' or heads would sell for up to \$300 each. Howell lived up in Cooke City & poached all year long. In February 1891, the new superintendent Captain George Anderson got wind of some buffalo heads being mounted by EE Van Dyck, a Cooke City resident and main hunter for the town. CPT Anderson dispatched three patrols on cross-country skis and they tracked down Van Dyck on the Lamar River. No law to bring him to trial, held in guardhouse for a month, property confiscated. Released.

Other poachers caught and thrown out of the park. Early in the winter of 1893-94, Howell and a partner moved their supplies and equipment from Cooke City into the Park and set up a camp for their poaching with packhorse ready to take out buffalo heads. Partners quarreled. Howell drove other guy out. In February 1894 routine scouting patrols in NE corner of the Park came across a new trail going toward Cooke City. This tied nicely with earlier reports of Howell's whereabouts inside the park. Anderson dispatched a patrol of two soldiers into the area. Found six bison scalps. Knew Howell was close by. Luckily, captured Howell and escorted him to Fort Yellowstone.

Enroute to Fort Yellowstone they met another party that was reporting on Yellowstone wildlife sponsored by the magazine *Forest and Stream*. Party included correspondent Emerson Hough and photographer Frank J. Haynes. George Bird Grinnel, editor of the magazine, not only published Hough's story of Howell's capture and Haynes photos of buffalo scalps, but got influential friends involved in the lack of laws in the Park.

Representative Lacey, remembering getting robbed in the Park, introduced the first legislation to provide for enforcement of laws in parks, the Lacey Act, May 7, 1894. This law enabled prosecution of violators of park regulations.

(see next page for Bibliography)

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