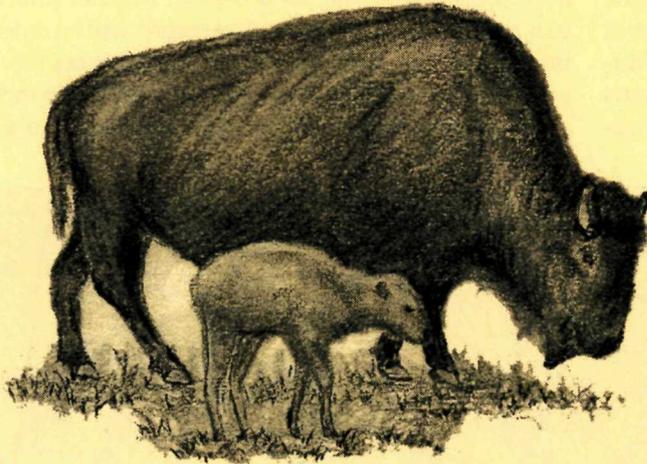


The Buffalo Chip

Resource Management Newsletter
Yellowstone National Park
2004:1 (Winter)



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MOVING DAY CLOSES IN!

by Colleen Curry

As many of you know, the museum collections and photograph archives have been closed to researchers since October 1, and the archives and library closed on December 18. What, you may ask, are we doing behind these closed doors, and why do we need to be closed for so long before the move to the new Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center (HRC)? Let me assure you, if we were able to continue accommodating everyone's research requests and needs, and also address all of the pre-move preparations (and still keep our sanity), we would gladly do it!

A move of this parameter (over 5 million archival and museum objects and a research library) has never been undertaken in the National Park Service (NPS), according to NPS collections move guru Alice Newton (also Registrar of Harpers Ferry Center's Division of Conservation). Alice has been involved with many NPS collections moves, including those at Booker T. Washington NM, Carl Sandburg Home NHS, Harpers

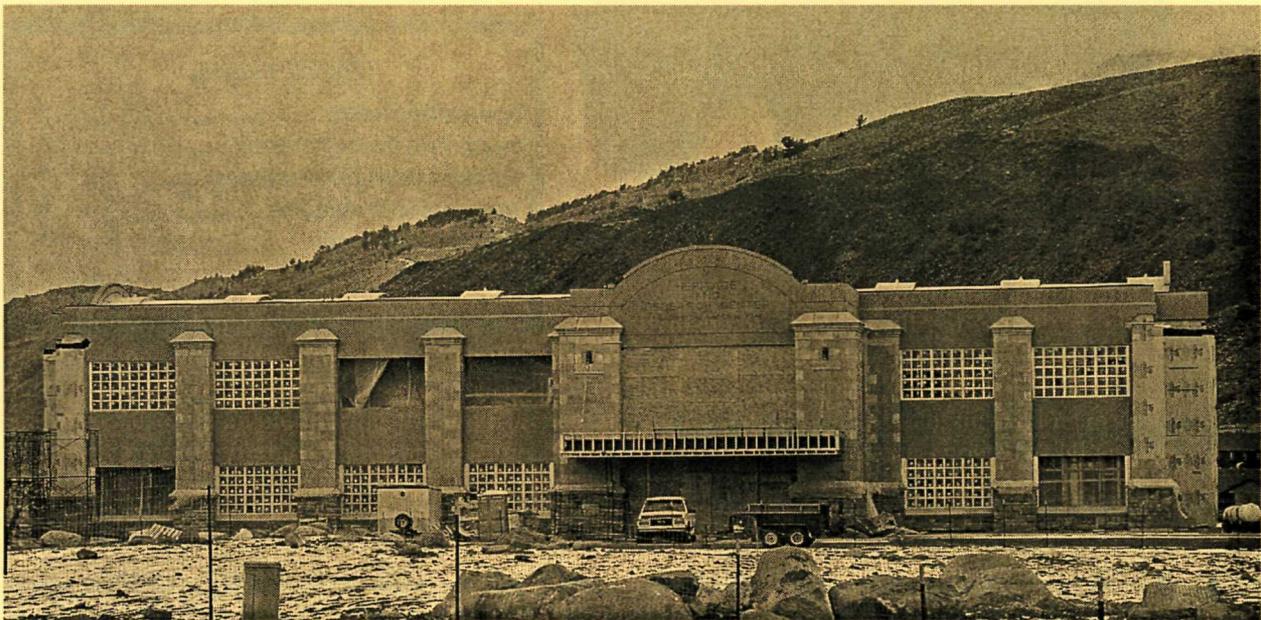
Ferry NHP, San Juan NHS, and Sitka NHP, to name a few. We brought her to Yellowstone in August to assess all of the collections areas and help us write a storage plan for the new building, as well as a preliminary move plan. Alice verified all of our fears—that given the amount of preparatory work needed for the move, we should have closed our doors to researchers over a year ago! But, we're an optimistic group here in the Albright VC basement, so we felt (and still feel) confident that we could and would accomplish our pre-move mission.

One of the most time-consuming pre-move projects we are working on (and will be working on right through winter and into spring) is a 100% inventory of all the collections (yes, that's 5 million objects!). This means that every single object must be accounted for, its location verified in the NPS Automated National Catalog System Plus (ANCS+) database, and its location updated if not current. Since October 1, we have been spending four hours every day performing the

inventory and then numerous other hours updating many incorrect locations. As we inventory, we are also checking each object's stability and making note of those items that will need special attention during packing and transport to the HRC. With the closure of the archives and library this month, we will also begin inventorying those areas. Thus, the areas that need to be inventoried include not only the Albright VC basement, but Building 2009 (storage for historic vehicles, archeology, geology and furniture), the Scout House, Nature Store, Herbarium, Norris Ranger Museum, and all visitor centers where collections items are exhibited, as well as all offices containing collec-

this, as well as determining the best way to account for all formats of the photograph archives. Staff is also taking care of an accessioning backlog to make sure that the proper documentation exists for all objects to be moved. Accessioning is the process of officially accepting items into museum collections by establishing legal ownership and documenting how the items were acquired. This will ensure that, at the very least, every object will have an accession number attached to it and its respective accession record will be entered into the ANCS+ database. This is the only way we will be able to account for all objects during the move.

Beginning in late winter, staff will begin to pack



The Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center is scheduled to open in April 2004. This photo taken December 12, 2003.

tions. Staff inventoried the Lake Hotel and Lodge, Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, and Old Faithful Inn and Lodge in October, as all of these contain many pieces of historic furniture that are part of the park's museum collections. By conducting a 100% inventory of the entire collection (instead of just those that will be moved to the HRC), we are creating baseline data for which objects cannot be accounted for as well as updating all locations in the database.

Aside from the inventory, staff is trying to chip away at the cataloging backlog of 4,888,431 items by cataloging as many objects as possible in order to try to reach the GPRA cataloging goals set for FY04 before the move occurs this summer. Cultural resources specialist Tasha Felton has been diligently working on

objects for transport to the HRC. Fragile items such as taxidermy mounts, travertine souvenirs, and unframed art will need to have specialized containers made for them. Some collections, such as the archeology and GIS soil sample collections, will need to be rehoused in order to improve their storage and lessen the impact of transport. Many leather-bound books will have their bindings stabilized, custom boxes will be made for some of the more fragile rare books and Army ledgers, and fragile oversized documents and maps will be encapsulated in Mylar to provide additional stability for the move and storage. Staff will need to erect storage shelving units and pallet racks for the new storage areas so that once the HRC is completed (hopefully, in April 2004), all hardware will be

ready to be placed inside. As the collections contain several sets of human remains and many culturally-sensitive objects, curator Colleen Curry will be working with park cultural anthropologist Rosemary Sucec to determine how various Native American tribes will want these items handled, transported and stored in the HRC.

The staff is also working on ways to provide limited access to some of the collections and other resources for staff and outside researchers who cannot wait until our doors re-open in the new HRC next fall. Museum technician Steve Tustanowski-Marsh is working with webmaster Tom Cawley to place over 2,500 historic images from the photograph archives on the park's Intranet and Internet sites. Librarian Tara Cross will be offering a workshop in January to show interested staff how to access articles and other Yellowstone resources via the Internet. Archivist Harold Housley worked with webmaster Tom last year to make a searchable version of the park's "Master Archival Inventory" available via the website.

Now, about this move.... If everything continues on schedule, the HRC should be completed in April 2004. This will then allow staff to install all new storage equipment and furniture in the new building and allow it and the carpeting and new fixtures to air out. Staff will also begin monitoring the environmental and pest conditions in the building at that time. Beginning in June, the archives and research library will be moved, followed by the museum collections (including archeology, ornithology, paleontology and herbarium) during July and August. Curatorial personnel

from other NPS sites and trained volunteers will be brought in to assist in order to insure the collections are moved in a safe and timely manner, with no breakage or loss. Park staff interested in participating will be very welcome and will receive the proper training beforehand. Another 100% inventory of the moved objects will be conducted once the move is complete to ensure that everything is accounted for and that all locations have been updated to the new building.

If all goes well, the HRC will open to park staff and researchers in October 2004. It will be well worth the wait, as the park will finally have a state-of-the-art archives and museum storage facility as well as research center. The library and archives will be located on the top floor, while the museum collections and herbarium will be on the main floor. The lower level will contain non-storage functions such as labs for archeology, geology, paleontology and natural history, a herbarium prep room, and "quarantine" room for incoming museum collections (this will allow staff to monitor such objects for mold and insects prior to them being placed upstairs in museum storage). There will also be a large conference room on this level that will be available to all park staff for meetings and training. Aside from all of the above, the lobbies on the main and upper floors will have exhibit space to allow staff to prepare rotating exhibits to showcase all aspects of the park's collections. The HRC will truly be an asset to the park, park staff and outside researchers alike. We look forward to being better able to serve all research needs and to make more of the collection accessible than is currently possible. 🐛

THE SPRUCE BUDWORM WAKES UP

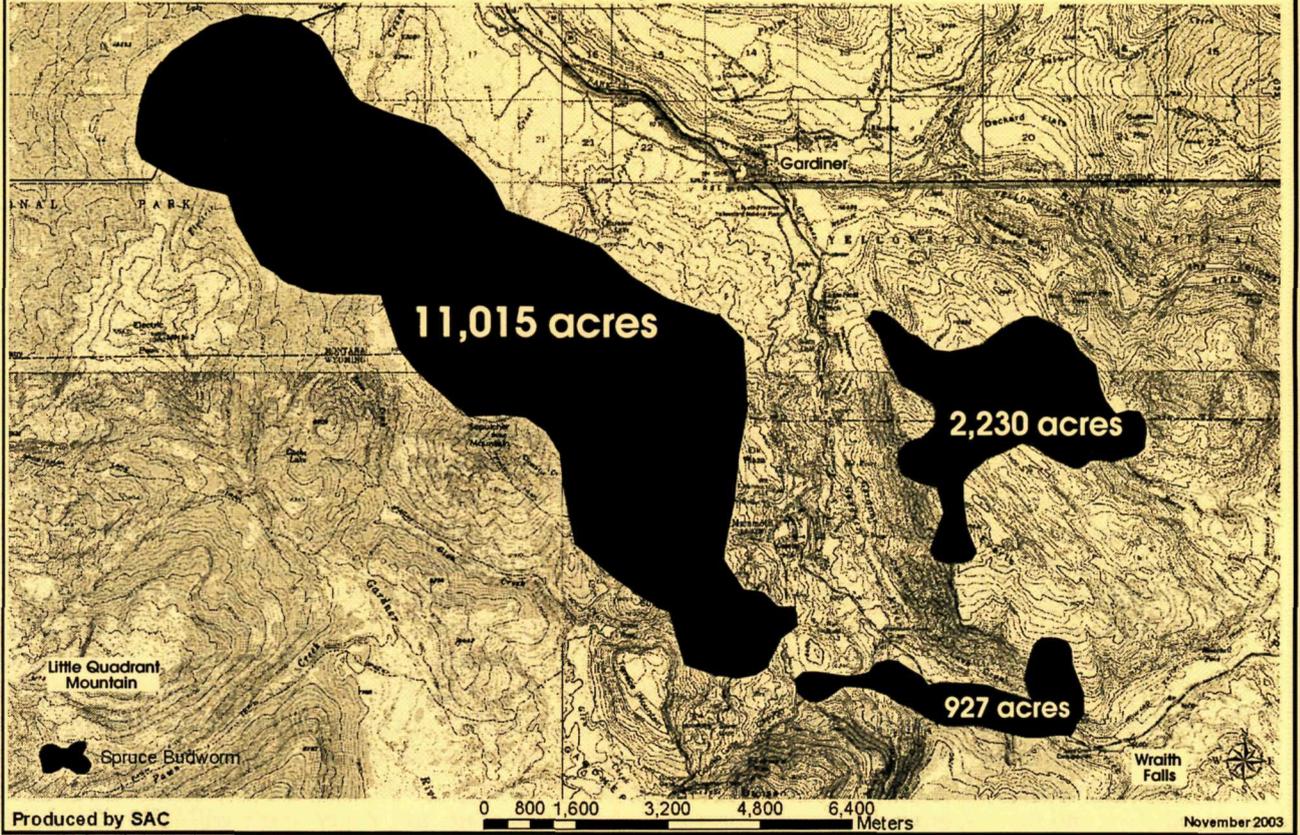
by Roy Renkin

Forest insect activity, especially that of bark beetles, has reportedly increased throughout the park over the previous 3-5 years in response to continued drought conditions. Another forest insect of economic and ecological significance—the western spruce budworm—experienced a population outbreak in the park in its preferred Douglas-fir host during 2003. Aerial observation and mapping has revealed that some 14,000 acres of Douglas-fir forests in the Mammoth-Gardiner area are experiencing defoliation caused by the budworm. Another 1,000-acre pocket of budworm activity was noted in the Soda Butte drainage (see attached maps). Furthermore, activity not evident from the air but verified on the ground was

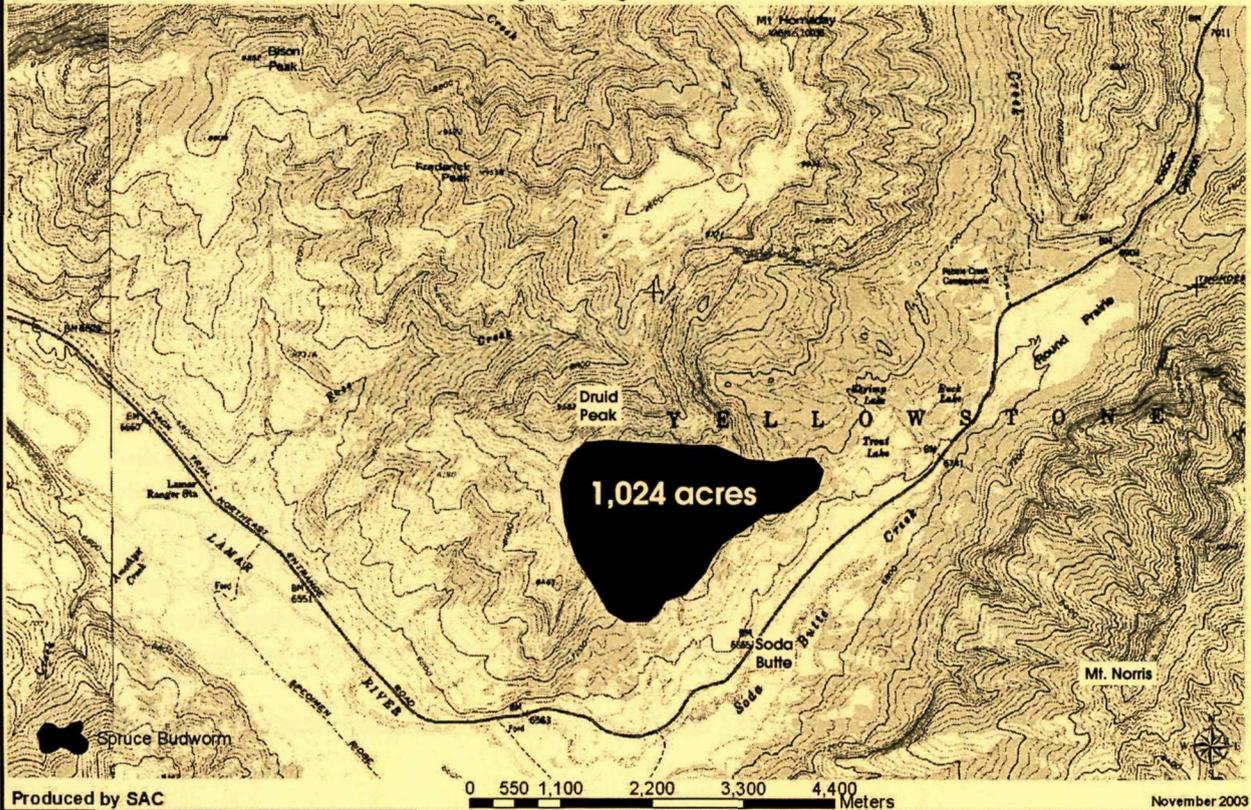
observed in the Buffalo Mountain/Crevise area, and again in the Mol Heron and Cinnabar drainages.

The spruce budworm was initially noticed this summer along the North Entrance road between the high bridge and Undine Falls, and again on the Grand Loop road in the vicinity of the Mammoth snowmobile hut (both places still show the noticeable consequences of budworm activity). In both places, pupae were observed along with webbed, partially-eaten needles in the outer portions of the tree crowns in early July. By mid-July, adult moths were readily apparent in the tree crowns. By mid-August, the only remaining tell-tale signs were the dead-and-dying needles at the ends of the branches and in the tree tops, as well as pockets

Spruce Budworm Activity, July 2003



Spruce Budworm Activity, July 2003



Locations of spruce budworm activity in the Mammoth-Gardiner (above) and Northeast (below) sections of the park.

of dead and defoliated seedlings and saplings.

As a defoliator, the larvae, rather than the adult moths feed on tree needles. The preferred host is Douglas-fir, but the budworm will occasionally attack Engelmann spruce and subalpine fir. Larvae emerge from an overwintering shelter beneath the tree bark in late April, with both an attitude and an appetite. They move out to the tips of the branches and mine the buds, feed on the old needles, and then construct a silken nest of webbed and chewed needles among the emerging new growth. This is the stage where the larvae do the greatest majority of damage to the tree. Mature larvae have brown heads and bodies, are about one inch long, and have two very prominent pairs of ivory-colored dots on each body segment. About the end of June, the larvae pupate in or near the silken nest, and can be readily seen dangling from the tips of the branches. The mottled, rusty-brown adults, with a one-inch wingspan emerge in about 7 to 10 days, and can be observed fluttering about the tree branches. After mating, the female lays egg masses (with about 25 to 40 eggs per mass) on the underside of the needles, and the eggs hatch in about 10 days. The young larvae do not feed, but instead migrate to bark crevices on the tree where they remain dormant until the following spring. Only one generation per year is produced.

Budworm activity results in brown discoloration and death of the partially-eaten needles, particularly evident in the tree tops and outer portions of the tree crown. Twigs, branches, and the entire tops of trees can be completely defoliated. Smaller seedlings and saplings can also be killed within the first year of attack. Overstory trees can be killed following successive attacks usually over 3–5 years or more. Non-lethal defoliation can often place additional stress on individual trees, predisposing them to subsequent attack by Douglas-fir beetles or other bark beetles.

Historic spruce budworm outbreaks in the park may shed some light on expectations regarding current activity. Recall that the spruce budworm was first reported in the Blacktail Deer creek drainage in 1922, where it was incorrectly identified as the eastern spruce budworm—a different species with a completely different life history (entomologists recognized the western spruce budworm as a distinct species by about 1926, as they learned more about its life habits). That outbreak in the Blacktail, Yellowstone, and Hell-roaring drainages faded out in the late 1920s, but saw

a resurgence in Douglas-fir over on the east side near Pahaska Tepee in the early 1930s. By 1935, all spruce budworm activity abruptly ended, and the native insect remained at endemic levels until the early 1950s. In 1953, about 2,000 acres were observed (and treated) in the Lava Creek drainage—probably the same area where activity was first noted in 2003. By 1957, the outbreak had spread throughout the Douglas-fir zone

It appears that western spruce budworm outbreaks occur every 15 to 20 years, persist through the better part of a decade, can cover extensive areas of a few hundred thousand acres, and experience sudden population crashes back to endemic levels.

in the Upper Yellowstone drainage from upper Slough Creek downstream to Mill Creek (near Livingston). Attempts to control the budworm activity throughout the 1950s with aerial application of DDT resulted in about 62 tons of the powdery insecticide (mixed with about 125,000 gallons of diesel fuel) being applied to the upper Yellowstone River drainage. By 1960, the recent budworm outbreak subsided until the late 1970s. The last known outbreak occurred in the park from about 1978 until its abrupt end in 1985. Thus, it appears that western spruce budworm outbreaks occur every 15 to 20 years, persist through the better part of a decade, can cover extensive areas of a few hundred thousand acres, and experience sudden population crashes back to endemic levels. Activity observed and reported for 2003 might just be the tip of the iceberg.

This recent budworm activity provides the opportunity to learn more about the ecology of the insect as well as host-insect relationships. As a disturbance agent, the frequency, rate and direction of spread, extent, and duration of outbreak may shed light on the effectiveness of control or suppression efforts where attempted in other areas that are managed for different values. One identified need in the ecological community at large is the temporal and spatial relationships between insect outbreaks and the frequency, intensity, and extent of forest fires. Similarly, but on a smaller scale, host vigor and susceptibility, the effectiveness of ant, bird, and other insect predators, tree physiological response to attack, and climatic controls on brood success are all areas where more information is desired. In the meantime, check out the local areas that experienced budworm activity in 2003 and stay tuned for the next chapter in 2004. 🐛

...AND THAT AIN'T NO FISH STORY

On September 29, Fisheries personnel working for the park's gillnetting operation pulled a 527-mm (21-inch), female lake trout out of Yellowstone Lake. It is estimated that the fish, shown here, was carrying around 15,000 eggs at the time it was netted. Considering that adult lake trout can consume between 40–60 cutthroat trout annually, the offspring of this single lake trout could have resulted in the loss of around 150,000 cutthroat trout annually if just 20% of the eggs had lived to become viable adults. 🐟



Yellowstone National Park's gillnetting program is part of the park's Yellowstone cutthroat trout conservation strategy; exotic lake trout, which prey on native cutthroat trout, a keystone species, pose a serious threat to the health of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

SMOKE FUNNEL OBSERVED DURING THE EAST FIRE

by Paul Schullery

This past summer's East Fire put on some spectacular displays of smoke and flame. Through dumb luck I was standing in the right spot with a camera in my hands when the fire demonstrated the power of the convection currents it generated.

On the evening of Friday, August 15, at about 7:50 p.m., quite a few people—visitors and staff—were sitting on the porch of the Lake Lodge, or standing nearby, watching the fire's progress along the north and west shores of the lake. I suppose we were five or six miles from the base of the smoke column. From what I was told later by people who know, I would reckon that the column as shown in Figure 1 is probably five or more miles tall.

The smoke column changed as we watched. It had an almost doughy solidity of appearance, and the quickness with which it twisted and churned its big braids and rolls of smoke in upon themselves seemed improbable, like some overdone special effect in a science fiction movie.

After a few minutes of gawking at this spectacle, I noticed what appeared to be a funnel cloud, suspended from an overhanging "ceiling" of smoke on the right (south) side. This is visible, if small, in Figure 1.

At first I was reluctant to believe I was seeing a real funnel, and tried to imagine that it was just a stray suspended fragment of cloud. But while I watched through the all-too-modest telephoto lens I was using, the funnel

suddenly retracted itself to about half its former length. Along the coast of Florida, I've seen a number of water funnels that looked like this, reaching down from a cloud ceiling and then abruptly drawing back. After this smoke tendril also behaved that way, I was sure it was a funnel. See Figure 2 for a somewhat closer and clearer look at the funnel itself.



Figure 1. Plume of the East Fire as seen by the author on August 15, with arrow showing the location of funnel.

I later talked to some of the fire folks, and showed them my pictures. An informal estimate emerged that the funnel was probably 300 to 500 feet long, and probably at about the 15,000-foot level. These are rough guesses, of course, but seeing a funnel, and knowing from previous experience how a big one looks, and then seeing it dwarfed almost to triviality in the greater setting of the huge smoke column, provided me with a sense of scale I'd never before enjoyed when looking at such things.

I only had about 10 minutes to watch, and I only had the funnel in sight for a minute or so before it dissipated. For all I know, it had been there for some minutes before I noticed it.

We've all heard about fires "making their own weather," and performing other Olympian feats. Andy Mitchell, of the park's Fire Cache, tells me that in flying over fires he has seen "fire whirls," literally funnels of flame, rising a hundred feet or more from the forest floor. Somehow these specific phenomena,

perhaps because they occur at a scale we find more imaginable, heighten our appreciation of the bigger picture. That the tortured atmosphere in one of these immense smoke columns can produce a big funnel cloud like this, as a mere side effect of what's going on inside, is a powerful testament to the forces involved.



Figure 2. Close-up of the funnel shown in Figure 1.

GREETINGS FROM CAMP SHERIDAN

by Lee Whittlesey

The National Archives has recently begun furnishing Yellowstone's library and archives with microfilm copies of the original Fort Yellowstone records, which the park has not heretofore had. The Army kept two sets of records in Yellowstone: park records and fort records. We have all of the park records in the Yellowstone archives, but until now we have never had the fort records. The Army administered Yellowstone from 1886-1918. What was known in the beginning as Camp Sheridan, Wyoming, became Fort Yellowstone in 1891. What follows are some interesting and entertaining tidbits taken from those newly-acquired records.

"Orders No. 37," June 2, 1887, was the second-earliest order (the first one seems not to exist) ever issued by the U.S. Army that instructed the soldiers in Yellowstone as to what they were to do in their new assignment.

Orders No. 37, Camp Sheridan, Wyoming, June 2, 1887.

1. Order No. 5, dated Camp Sheridan, Wyo., August 21st, 1886, is hereby revoked [and replaced with the following order].

2. The enlisted men of this command when on duty within the limits of Yellowstone National Park are charged with its protection and will under all circumstances enforce a strict compliance with the established Rules and Regulations.

The soldiers occupying the detached stations for protection of the Park will not only enforce the Rules and Regulations, but will exert themselves to discover and prevent the spreading of forest fires, to protect visitors to the Park from any abuse or extortion by stage-drivers or other persons, and generally to preserve respect for law and order.

In the enforcement of the Regulations of the Park and the foregoing instructions, soldiers will conduct themselves in a courteous and polite, but firm and decided[,] manner. They will not hesitate to make arrests when necessary[,] reporting without delay to the Commanding Officer by telephone or otherwise.

By order of Captain [Moses] Harris

[signed] George W. Goode, 2nd Lieut., 1st Cavalry, Post Adjutant

On January 25, 1889, Captain Moses Harris issued what appears to be the first detailed order pertaining to structural fire in Yellowstone. It is reproduced below. This would effectively mark the first known time that the park had a formal structural fire policy.

Camp Sheridan, Wyo.
January 25, 1889
Order No. 3

1) If at any time a fire shall break out within the limits of the Garrison, in addition to the ordinary fire alarm, the Sargeant [sic] of the Guard will immediately cause the Field Piece [cannon] on the parade ground to be fired.

2) The guard will [illegible word: parade?] and the Sargeant [sic] of the Guard will at once report to the Officer of the Day for orders.

3) All officers and enlisted men of the Garrison, except as otherwise ordered, will proceed as quickly as possible to the scene of the fire.

4) For fire purposes Troop "M[.]" 1st Cavalry will be divided into three nearly equal Divisions with a due proportion of Non Commissioned Officers in each.

It will be the duty of the first Division at the first alarm of fire to seize the Fire Buckets which are to be kept at a convenient place in the Troop Quarters to fill them as quickly as possible and repair to the scene of the fire, and await orders. When hose [pipes?] shall have been provided it will be the duty of this Division to man the same.

The second Division will man the Ladders and Axes, and also proceed without delay to the scene of the fire and await orders.

The third Division will proceed as quickly as possible to the scene of the fire, for the purpose of saving property[,] and await orders.

It will be the duty of the ranking Non Commissioned Officer in each Division to see that the implements pertaining to his Division are at all times in proper order and that they are kept in the places designated.

In case of fire the several Divisions will be conducted to the scene of action by the ranking Non Commissioned Officer present, with celerity and perfect order, with no unnecessary noise, and [the Divisions] will keep their ranks until orders are received from proper authority.

5) The officer, or Non Commissioned Officer highest in authority on the ground will give such orders as in his judgement will best serve to extinguish or to prevent the spread of the fire, and to prevent the destruction of property.

To further the accomplishment of this result it is enjoined that all confusion and unnecessary talking be avoided to the end that such orders as may be given can be understood and intelligently [sic] obeyed.

6) The Hospital Corps and sick will remain at the hospital unless otherwise ordered.

7) The Commissary Sargeant [sic] and Post QM Sargeant [sic], or the Non Commissioned Officer acting as such, will repair to, and remain at their respective Store Houses.

8) The Non Commissioned Officer in charge of the Troop Stables will repair to and remain at the Troop Stables, and at once unlock the Stable Doors.

9) The citizen scout will report without delay to the Commanding Officer. All other civilian employees will report without delay to the Post Quarter Master.

By order of Captain [Moses] Harris
(signed) William Cannon Rivers
2nd Lieut. 1st Cavalry
Post Adjutant

In the daily life of the post, some things were unimportant. And then there were those that were EXTREMELY important...

Camp Sheridan, Wyoming
October 23d, 1890
Orders No. 73

I. Hereafter a game of Billiards will be considered to consist of 34 points, and the charge therefor[e] will be five cents.

II. Parties playing on the table will either pay cash at the above rate or charge on the list of games played against themselves, one game for every string of thirty-four points made by the winner.

III. Any failure to pay for or charge games as above indicated will debar the offender from entrance to or any of the privileges of the Canteen.

By order of Captain [F.A.] Boutelle
George L. Byram
2d Lieutenant 1st Cavalry
Post Adjutant

In 1911, Acting Superintendent Lloyd Brett placed construction of quarters for the post plumber on high priority. He noted:

The Plumber is now quartered...a half mile distant from the post proper, and is not within hearing [range] of bugle calls in case of fire at night...[T]he immediate presence of the plumber, who is acquainted with the water supply system is most imperative, and therefore he should be provided with quarters in close proximity to the post proper. (L.M. Brett to Adjutant General, March 14, 1911, RG 393, box 15, file 655 "Estimates--New Buildings.")

New quarters were not forthcoming from the War Department, whose officials were aware by this time of the likely changeover to civilian administration within a few years. 🐼

DIGITAL PHOTO LIBRARY IN THE WORKS

by Virginia Warner

In collaboration with staff from CSS and Interpretation, YCR staff members are developing a digital photo library to catalog images produced in the field. The goal is to create a searchable photo database that will serve employees throughout the park, and to archive these images for posterity.

After extensive research into the plethora of photo management applications available on the market, we chose a program that came highly recommended by staff in Rocky Mountain, Shenandoah, and Denali national parks. This software will allow the administrator to catalog images, and users, or "clients," to access the catalog from computers throughout the park.

Clients will also be able to organize galleries and select images for use in PowerPoint presentations. For instance, if you need to find the perfect image for an educational program on geysers, but you're stationed at Norris and can't get to Mammoth to search Jim Peaco's slides in person, you will be able to access the catalog from a computer in your office. Using the client software, you could conduct a keyword search for "Norris Geysers" and bring up all images with those keywords attached. Then you'll be able to view a "gallery" of your own creation, and make your selection on the spot.

The original electronic files will be stored on a centrally located server. The catalog software will generate thumbnails with preview enlargements attached. Since the thumbnail merely references the original scanned image, the process of opening and searching

the catalog will not slow down or create memory burdens for client computers. If you need the image in a different format, or at a higher resolution, you will be able to request it through YCR Publications.

Eventually, we hope to connect certain types of digital photographs with up-to-date data from the field. For example, images of individual thermal features from the thermal inventory created by GIS staff may be linked to GPS coordinates—the technical aspects of which are yet to be determined. In addition, park biologists will be able to catalog and access the unique images gathered in the course of their fieldwork.

We are still in the early stages of implementation. Interpretive Media & Planning staff have been furiously scanning for many months. Sometime after January 1, 2004, Jim Peaco's extensive slide file will be available online at www.nps.gov/yell/slidefile. This collection will then be transferred to the image server sometime in spring 2004. Virginia Warner will serve as the catalog's primary administrator, managing the master keyword list, and setting up and maintaining data protocol and operating procedures. Thanks to Carol Koepcke, our network administrator, the server is up and running. Soon we'll begin the next phase of installation: downloading the client software onto individual computers.

Please stay tuned for further updates, and feel free to call the YCR Publications Office with questions at (307) 344-2230. 🐾

...NEWS BRIEFS...

ANN RODMAN WINS SERVICEWIDE AWARD

At the recent Annual NPS GIS Awards, YCR Supervisory GIS Specialist Ann Rodman received the Excellence in Application Award, the NPS's highest honor in GIS. The Excellence in Application award represents the ultimate recognition by one's NPS peers and colleagues in the field of GIS, and is awarded only on occasions when the nominating committee wishes to acknowledge the accomplishments of someone truly outstanding, whose contributions to the field extend beyond their park, region, and agency. Ann was specifically recognized for her work on Yellowstone's *geothermal inventory*, which includes GPS location, digital photographs, and measurements of the pH, conductivity, and temperature of 65% of the park's geothermal resources (thus far); *thermophile inventory*, which organizes existing data about microbial diversity in thermal features and combines it with geochemical and geographical information into a spatial inventory of thermophilic microorganism habitats in the park; *historic buildings and roads inventory*, in which historic photographs, architectural drawings, and other sources were used to reconstruct the built footprint of facilities in the Mammoth Historic District in 1900, 1930, and 1998; and *integrations of water and wastewater utility facilities with GIS*, in which field mapping was used to create new water and wastewater facility GIS layers for the park in order to create more up-to-date maps and assist in management and planning for future projects. Congratulations, Ann!

WONDRAK BIEL WINS BLEGEN AWARD

The Forest History Society recently awarded YCR's Alice Wondrak Biel its Theodore C. Blegen Prize for best article on conservation history nationwide. Her article, "Wrestling with Horace Albright: Edmund Rogers, Visitors, and Bears in Yellowstone National Park," was published in the Autumn and Winter 2002 issues of *Montana the Magazine of Western History*. The Forest History Society is housed at Duke University and is a sister organization to the American Society for Environmental History.

U.S. DISTRICT COURT ISSUES ORDER ON WINTER USE

On December 16, 2003, Judge Emmet Sullivan of the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C., issued an order to set aside the recent National Park Service (NPS) winter use plan and rule that allowed for limited snowmobile use in Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway. Instead, the November 18, 2002, regulation is in effect. That rule phases out snowmobile use in the three parks in favor of multi-passenger snowcoaches.

The decision to phase out snowmobile use was signed in a November 2000 Record of Decision (ROD), with the rule to implement that decision signed in January 2001. The rule called for the gradual phase out of all recreational snowmobile use by the winter season of 2003–2004 in favor of NPS-managed mass transit snowcoaches. The November 18, 2002, rule delayed the implementation of this decision for one year to allow the NPS to complete the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement and plan for the transition to mass-transit snowcoaches.

As scheduled, the parks opened for the winter season at 7:00 a.m. on December 17, 2003. Park visitor centers and warming huts are open, and park concessioners will provide lodging, food services, and other services to the public. In Yellowstone, visitors will be able to access the park through existing commercial snowmobile or snowcoach operators. A list of businesses permitted to provide specialized winter services is available on Yellowstone's web site at www.nps.gov/yell/planvisit/services/wintbusn.htm.

This winter season, under the November 18, 2002, regulation, daily snowmobile use will be set at levels that are expected to lead to an approximately 50 percent reduction from historic use levels—to 493 for Yellowstone; 50 for Grand Teton and the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway. All snowmobiles that enter Yellowstone will be required to be accompanied by an NPS-permitted guide and travel in groups of no more than eleven, including the guide. Snowmobile use will be prohibited within Grand Teton National Park except on the Continental Divide Snowmobile Trail and on access routes leading to private lands and adjacent national forest lands. There will be no best available technology requirements for snowmobiles. All oversnow motorized travel is prohibited from 9:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. except by authorization.

Effective the winter of 2004–2005, oversnow motorized recreation access to the three parks will be by NPS-managed snowcoach only, with limited exceptions for continued snowmobile access to other public and private lands adjacent to or within Grand Teton National Park. Current information on winter use is available by calling (307) 344-2580, and on the park's web site at www.nps.gov/yell. 

The Buffalo Chip is the resource management newsletter of Yellowstone National Park.
It is published periodically by the Yellowstone Center for Resources.
We welcome submissions of articles or drawings relating to natural and cultural resource
management and research in the park. They can be sent to:

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