

Swiftcurrent Auto Camp

A Cultural Landscape History of the Swiftcurrent Development Area, Glacier National Park

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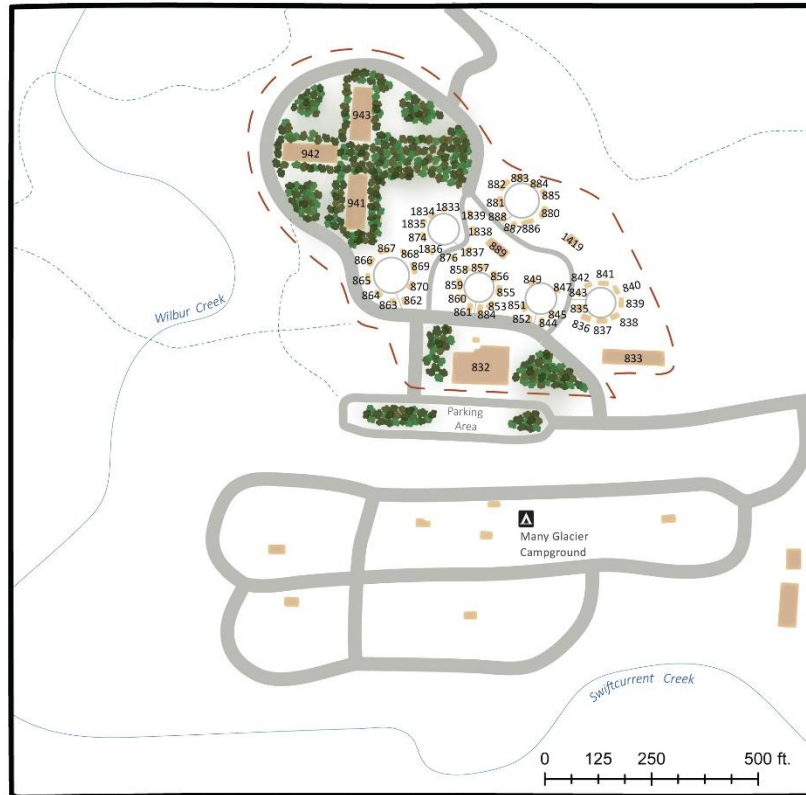
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Swiftcurrent Motor Camp Cultural Landscape



Key to Swiftcurrent Development Area Building Numbers

Building No.	Original purpose/current use		
832	Store, Café, and Registration/same but enlarged	889	Guest Showers/same
833	Employee Dormitory/Motel 4 (Pinetop Motel)	941	Motel 1/same
835-843	Guest Cabins (Circle A)/Employee Cabins	942	Motel 2/same
844-852	Guest Cabins (Circle B)/same	943	Motel 3/same
853-861	Guest Cabins (Circle C)/same	1419	Employee showers/same
862-870	Guest Cabins (Circle D)/same	1833-1839	Guest Cabins (Circle I, restored)/same
874	Guest Cabin in Circle I/same		
876	Guest Cabin in Circle I/same		
881-888	Guest Cabins in Circle E/Employee Cabins		

Statement of Significance

The Swiftcurrent Auto Camp Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. The historic district boundary as drawn in 1995 excluded additions to the development that were made during Mission 66 since they were not yet 50 years old. This report updates the 1995 nomination to include the later development, recommending enlargement of the historic district boundary to include those structures. It places the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp within the full sweep of park history from railroad era in the early twentieth century through the transition to automobile use of national parks in the interwar period, and on into the modern era with its concerns over visitor crowding, visitor impacts on the environment, and historic preservation.

The Swiftcurrent Auto Camp Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with national park history. The Swiftcurrent development area is one of a half dozen development areas in Glacier National Park designed to accommodate park visitors through a concession operation. It is in the northeast sector of the park in the Swiftcurrent Valley. Glacier Route 3 leads up the Swiftcurrent Valley from the Blackfeet Reservation. Near the end of the road three mountain valleys come together to form a place known as Many Glacier, so named for the panoramic views up each valley of rugged peaks, headwalls, and hanging glaciers ranged along the Continental Divide. The Many Glacier Hotel is the primary development in the area. Built in 1915 on the edge of Swiftcurrent Lake, the grand hotel has a commanding view across the lake to the mountains. The Swiftcurrent development area, situated a mile further up the valley at the end of the road, was added in 1930 to provide modest overnight accommodations as an alternative to the more upscale Many Glacier Hotel.

The history of the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp highlights a crucial change in the development of national parks. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the spread of automobile ownership among the middle class led to a surge in public use of national parks. An early stage of railroad-financed development of national parks was superseded by a second stage of development for automotive tourism. Perhaps nowhere else in the National Park System were the two stages of development so marked as they were in the Swiftcurrent Valley of Glacier National Park.

The Swiftcurrent Auto Camp is also eligible under Criterion C for its embodiment of National Park Service (NPS) landscape design concepts, its continuity with the park's first Master Plan of 1933, and its array of historic buildings that are characteristic of Park Service building types.

In most planning documents, the Swiftcurrent development area includes the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins (the current name of the concession operation) together with the Many Glacier Campground, a ranger station and administrative area, a picnic area, and trailheads and parking areas. This history of the Swiftcurrent development area focuses on the concession operation only, with the campground and other features being treated peripherally. The concession operation forms its own enclave opposite the campground, with the ranger

station/administrative area adjacent to the campground and the picnic area a quarter mile farther down the road toward the Many Glacier Hotel.

The period of significance for the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp extends from ca. 1930, when the development got started, until ca. 1968, when the employee dormitory was converted to guest accommodations while guest cabins in Circle A were converted to employee housing. Changes to the site since then have been modest. All subsequent master plans for Glacier National Park have supported continuing the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins operation as it is; later ones have even defined use of the facility as a “traditional use” of the park. Because of its association with Glacier National Park, one of the oldest and most renowned units in the National Park System, the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp Historic District has state-level significance.

The National Register areas of significance for the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp Historic District are (1) Conservation, (2) Architecture, and (3) Landscape Architecture.

Pertinent historic contexts listed in the NPS Cultural Landscapes Inventory *Professional Procedures Guide* (2009) are (1) Origin and Development of the National Park Service, (2) NPS Mission 66, (3) Tourism, and (4) Consumer Society of the Twentieth Century.

Significance under Criterion A

In December 1929, NPS called a national conference of national park concessioners and announced a plan to build auto camps – clusters of low-cost tourist cabins – as a new form of public accommodation in the national parks. Auto camps, relatively inexpensive to build, were to provide an intermediate priced option between upscale hotels and free public campgrounds, and they were to expand total capacity for overnight visitor accommodation in the park. The construction of auto camps in national parks was a physical manifestation of the deepening connection between national parks and the car culture.

Soon after the conference of national park concessioners was held, NPS prevailed on Glacier’s concessioner, the Glacier Park Hotel Company, to build the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp. Perhaps nowhere in the National Park System was the growing influence of the car culture more striking than it was in Glacier. That is because the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp appeared in juxtaposition to what Glacier already had, which was the most well-developed system of hotels and chalets of any national park. Glacier’s hotels and chalets were built by the Great Northern Railway for tourism in the railroad age. Grand as the system was, it did not serve the car culture well. NPS strove to reorient Glacier’s visitor facilities to meet the demands of tourism in the automobile age, with the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp being the lead in that redevelopment.

Glacier National Park was established in 1910. Over the ensuing half decade, while the government established a park headquarters and began roadbuilding on the west side of the park, the Great Northern Railway proceeded to build hotels and chalets on the east side of the park. Great Northern’s president, Louis W. Hill, was a keen promoter and investor. Under Hill’s personal direction, Great Northern and its subsidiary, the Glacier Park Hotel Company, developed a system of chalets and grand hotels designed to accommodate visitors who arrived at

Glacier by rail. Visitors could ride a bus to Many Glacier and sojourn in the company's magnificent Many Glacier Hotel, or they could take a guided horse trip through the park staying each night in a different backcountry location at one of the park's ten chalets. The Department of the Interior and the park administration practically gave Great Northern a free hand in developing the east side of the park because the railroad's capital investment in hotels and chalets was a boon for Glacier National Park and the state of Montana.

The National Park Service was established in 1916 at a point when the railroad company's system of hotels and chalets in Glacier was fully developed. Practically from its birth, NPS aimed to develop national parks for automotive tourism. NPS Director Stephen T. Mather recognized the significance of the rising car culture in making national parks a strong and enduring presence in the cultural life of the nation. He sought to improve public access to national parks through the development of good roads. By the early 1920s, Mather urged the development of campgrounds to accommodate visitors who arrived by automobile and came equipped to camp out. As car ownership spread among the middle class, the total number of people visiting national parks grew. As total visitation grew, people of middling income came to form a higher percentage of national park visitors. Grand hotels like Many Glacier Hotel became unaffordable for the typical park visitor.

The onset of the Great Depression brought the income disparity between hotel patrons and campground users into sharper relief. The Glacier Park Hotel Company balked at developing auto camps in Glacier but NPS insisted. In 1930, the company made only a token start at development. Two years later, as the depression worsened, an opinion piece appeared in a local paper that assailed the Glacier Park Hotel Company and the park administration for catering only to well-to-do tourists and failing to provide tourist cabins for the "forgotten man." The superintendent cited the criticism in urging the concessioner to go forward with the auto camp development. The following year, the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp was mostly completed and opened to the public.

During the decade of the Great Depression, Americans' expenditures on car travel rose while railroads' passenger revenue fell. The car culture flourished despite hard times. As historian John Belasco observed in his book *Americans on the Road*, the depression hurt the hotel industry much more than it hurt automotive tourism as car travelers economized on room and board to keep their vehicles gassed and running. Depression conditions made the cheap tourist cabin camps, or auto camps, more popular. New on the landscape in the 1920s, auto camps took off in the 1930s. The Swiftcurrent Auto Camp did a thriving business; it was the only one of the Glacier Park Hotel Company's six visitor facilities in the park that managed to turn a profit through the depression years.

Despite the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp's suitability for park visitors in the 1930s, the popularity of the housekeeping cabin type of accommodation soon passed. After World War II, as prosperity returned, the austere auto camp quickly gave way to the motel. Cars got bigger, people took more stuff with them on car trips, and they wanted more space in an overnight lodging facility than the tiny housekeeping cabins afforded. Other changes in American life, such as the new standard two-week paid vacation and the improvement of interstate highways, helped create conditions for the rise of the family car trip. Motels were designed to meet the changing

demand in automotive tourism. Whereas housekeeping cabins were tiny and spare, motel rooms were replete with such amenities as private bathrooms, central heat, and convenient parking. NPS came to favor the new type of motel development in Glacier in the 1950s. Not only did the motel satisfy popular taste, it had a smaller footprint on the landscape than a complex of housekeeping cabins did. The Glacier Park Hotel Company added three motel units to the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp in an area that was previously designated for some 40 to 50 more cabins. The expanded facility received the more modern name of Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins.

In some other national parks, when auto camps grew outmoded, they were completely dismantled, and the site was obliterated. The Swiftcurrent cabin circles hung on through the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Cabin roofs were replaced. Wood stoves were removed and replaced with electric heaters. Interiors and exteriors were repainted. Aerial wires through the area were undergrounded. A cabin complex that had become substandard and a little decrepit by the late 1960s gradually came to be appreciated as a historic relic. The Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins has not changed much since the 1970s. The cabins were recorded as cultural resources in 1988, and the cabin complex was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district in 1996. Today, the adjacent motels – which stand outside the historic district as it was defined in 1996 – have a relic quality too, being small and plain by contemporary standards and now more than 50 years old.

The Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins continues to reflect significant trends in national park history in its modern configuration. Four times in the past forty years, the Swiftcurrent development area has been in the crucible of public debate over wilderness values, ecosystem management, historic preservation, and traditional use. The Swiftcurrent Valley is an ecologically sensitive area, prime habitat for grizzly bears and other wildlife species. It is a hub for wilderness trails. Proposals to move overnight lodging out of the area have met with strong opposition from advocates of traditional use. Further complicating the picture, the Swiftcurrent development area contains nationally significant historic resources that require consideration under the National Historic Preservation Act, whether buildings are removed for environmental considerations or modified for human safety or other social factors. NPS must reconcile all these requirements. It works with the concessioner to provide visitors with an overnight lodging experience that is at once comfortable, economical, aesthetic, authentic, ecologically sound, and sustainable.

Significance under Criterion C

The layout of the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp features a parking plaza and general store and an area with six cabin circles behind the general store. An adjoining area originally planned for more cabin circles was used for the addition of three motel units in 1955. The parking plaza and general store tie the development to the Many Glacier Campground, which is located across the parking plaza. The layout was designed by NPS landscape architects. It strongly reflects the NPS tradition of park development according to a master plan. The close connection between the auto camp development and campground development shows NPS's commitment during the interwar

years to redevelop visitor facilities in national parks to meet the demands of the rising car culture.

The architecture of the cabins in the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp reflects a drastic scaling down and simplification of themes present in the older hotels and chalets built by Great Northern. They exhibit a continuity with Glacier's magnificent railroad-era architecture as well as a transition to streamlined forms that were more suited to the automobile age. Newer buildings at the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp – the motel units and employee dormitory – reflect the shift to modernism in architectural forms during the Mission 66 era.

The grand national park hotels of the railroad era have been described as “log palaces.” They imitated the rustic architecture of pioneer days in their use of native log and stone, yet they also displayed an opulence and ostentation befitting the railroad companies that built them. Great Northern began its development of visitor facilities with the construction of several chalets, some built in the rustic style of frontier buildings and others built in the style of Swiss chalets with large roof overhangs and ornate balconies.

Many Glacier Hotel, built in 1913-15, combined both these styles. Four stories high and comprised of several attached structures in a string, it was the largest hotel in Montana. By 1916, when NPS was established, Glacier National Park had ten chalet groups and three large hotels if one includes Glacier Park Lodge and Belton Chalets, each located just outside the park boundary on the east and west sides respectively. No other national park had such an array of railroad-era visitor facilities.

The fledgling NPS accepted the grand hotels of the railroad era while charting a new course for park development that saw to the interests of the broad middle class. As most park visitors after 1916 arrived in the park by automobile, the first order of business was road development, soon followed by campground development. NPS employed landscape architects, landscape engineers, architects, and planners to ensure that roads and other visitor facilities harmonized with the natural setting and did not impair the scenery. By the 1920s, NPS had developed an architectural style that would be called government rustic. It had formed an approach to development planning and programming that rested on the creation of a master plan for each park. These institutional developments provided the framework for NPS's decision in 1929 to develop auto camps as an alternative type of lodging to park hotels, and in Glacier, as a supplement to the existing complex of hotels and chalets.

The NPS Branch of Planning produced a book, *Park Structures and Facilities* (1935) that provided a digest of plans, photos, and commentary on NPS architecture. Concerning the auto camp and the small tourist cabin or housekeeping cabin as a building type, the authors noted that it was an echo of America's pioneer past but in a national park, where preserving natural conditions was a goal of park management, the tourist cabin had to be part of a colony or group unlike the solitary cabin of the old frontier. It was not practical to build tourist cabins in seclusion because it would spread the impact of development over a wide area. The authors stated that a cabin group should be arranged to evoke a sense of community rather than solitude.

The Swiftcurrent Auto Camp's cabin circles are its most distinctive feature. Each cabin circle contains nine cabins which are laid out according to a set pattern. Seven cabins are

arranged around the outside of the circle and face inward, while two cabins flank the entrance to the circle and are turned sideways to the others. Each cabin has a parking stall next to it, while each circle has an island of natural vegetation at the center.

Early plans show that NPS conceived of the cabin circles as being reminiscent of American Indian tepee villages. Early conceptual drawings of a proposed cabin type showed the cabins as eight-sided double units with cone-shaped roofs vaguely resembling tepees. Parking stalls faced the center of the circle and a pit for a “council fire” was at the very center, with the idea that cabin guests might congregate there and talk about their day’s experiences. The cabin circles as developed in 1933 and after still reflected an intent to bring people together.

NPS’s *Park Structures and Facilities* noted that tourist cabins had to be made with cheap materials to keep costs down, since overnight rental rates must be appropriate to the income level of the occupants. The cabins of the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp used sawn lumber for framing, plywood siding, and asphalt shingles on the roofs. Each one had tap-water and a sink with minimal space for cooking and eating. Toilets and showers were provided in a separate toilet, shower, and laundry facility.

NPS treated the auto camp development as a complement to the Many Glacier Campground. The parking plaza separated the two areas but also tied them together. Campers would be allowed to use the auto camp’s shower and laundry facilities as well as buy necessities at the store. Electrical power and underground water systems served both facilities. From the Mission 66 era onward, NPS plans generally treated the campground and the concession development as one single “developed area.”

The three motel units added in 1955 were designed by Great Northern’s architect and approved by the NPS Western Office of Design and Construction. The buildings were constructed in an area previously designated for additional cabin circles. The rectangular buildings were architecturally plain, low to the ground, and painted in earth tones to blend into the environment. The modern motel answered to changing public taste. The old-style housekeeping cabin was too spare; the grand hotel was too fancy. The public wanted motel rooms with private bath, free linens, central heat, and convenient parking, all at an affordable rate. The only way concessioners could meet the public’s desire was to build new accommodations in the modernist style of the plain, shoebox motel. NPS insured that the buildings were minimally intrusive on the scenery.

The general store was designed by Great Northern’s architect Thomas McMahon. It originally displayed characteristics of the rustic style of architecture such as log post and beam walls with vertical siding between posts, a shallow-pitch gable roof, a chimney made of stone, and a covered front porch with wood railing and decorative cross bracing beneath the eaves. In the late 1950s, a long addition was built that drastically changed the dimensions of the building and the whole structure was resided with horizontal siding. In its new configuration and look this building was more compatible in style with the motel units than the cabin circles. In 1961, a new sign was mounted on the building and the entire concession facility was given a new name: the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins. The buildings and grounds of the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins have undergone relatively little change since the 1960s.

Physical History

Swiftcurrent development area is one of a half dozen development areas in Glacier National Park designed to accommodate park visitors through a concession operation. It is in the northeast sector of the park in the Swiftcurrent Valley. A dead-end road leads up the Swiftcurrent Valley from the Blackfeet Reservation. Near the end of the road three mountain valleys come together to form a place known as Many Glacier, so named for the panoramic views up each valley of rugged peaks and hanging glaciers ranged along the Continental Divide. The Many Glacier Hotel is the primary development in the area. Built in 1915 on the edge of Swiftcurrent Lake, the grand hotel has a commanding view across the lake to the mountains. The Swiftcurrent development area, situated a mile further up the valley at the end of the road, was added in 1930 to provide modest overnight accommodations as an alternative to the more upscale Many Glacier Hotel.

The Swiftcurrent Valley is covered by alluvial soils underlain with glacial till. Vegetation on the valley floor is characterized by bunchgrass, shrubs, clumps of lodgepole pine, and groves of quaking aspen and black cottonwood. At nearly 5,000 feet above sea level, with surrounding peaks rising to nearly 10,000 feet above sea level, the area has a harsh climate of cold winters, dry summers, and strong winds. The Heavens Peak Fire burned the upper portion of the Swiftcurrent Valley in 1936, destroying some of the new development and affecting the forest composition in and around the development area.

Vegetation currently found within the development zone consists of islands and corridors of vegetation that blend with the natural vegetation of the area. This includes many mature trees standing close to cabins and motel units. NPS has long emphasized retention or restoration of natural vegetation in campgrounds and other development areas. NPS's vegetation management within the development zone aims to minimize the impact of development on natural conditions and to provide visual screening for aesthetics. For example, natural vegetation between individual campsites in the campground affords campers in each campsite a feeling of privacy and tends to limit campers' unwitting trampling of young plants and compacting of soil to the confined space within each campsite. Likewise, natural vegetation in the concession area gives guests a feeling of seclusion, dampens sound, and screens utilities from view. Original site drawings show the intent to retain natural vegetation in the concession area. Historic photographs show that cabin circles were planted with young trees when the cabins were built, and numerous trees have grown up around the cabins and motel units since. The earliest known statement in writing on vegetation management within the concession area is found in the Natural Resource Management Plan of 1983, which indicated that all park construction projects would include plans and costs for the rehabilitation of disturbed sites with native vegetation. The 1983 plan was referenced in the Rising Sun Development Concept Plan of 1985. The historical record suggests that vegetation screening was always integral to the landscape design in a general way, while allowing latitude for development changes over time.

In most planning documents, the Swiftcurrent development area includes the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins (the current commercial name of the concession operation) together with the Many Glacier Campground, a ranger station and administrative area, a picnic area, and

trailheads and parking areas. This history of the Swiftcurrent development area focuses on the concession operation only, with the campground and other features being treated peripherally. The concession operation forms its own enclave opposite the campground, with the ranger station/administrative area adjacent to the campground and the picnic area a quarter mile farther down the road toward the Many Glacier Hotel (Fig. 1).

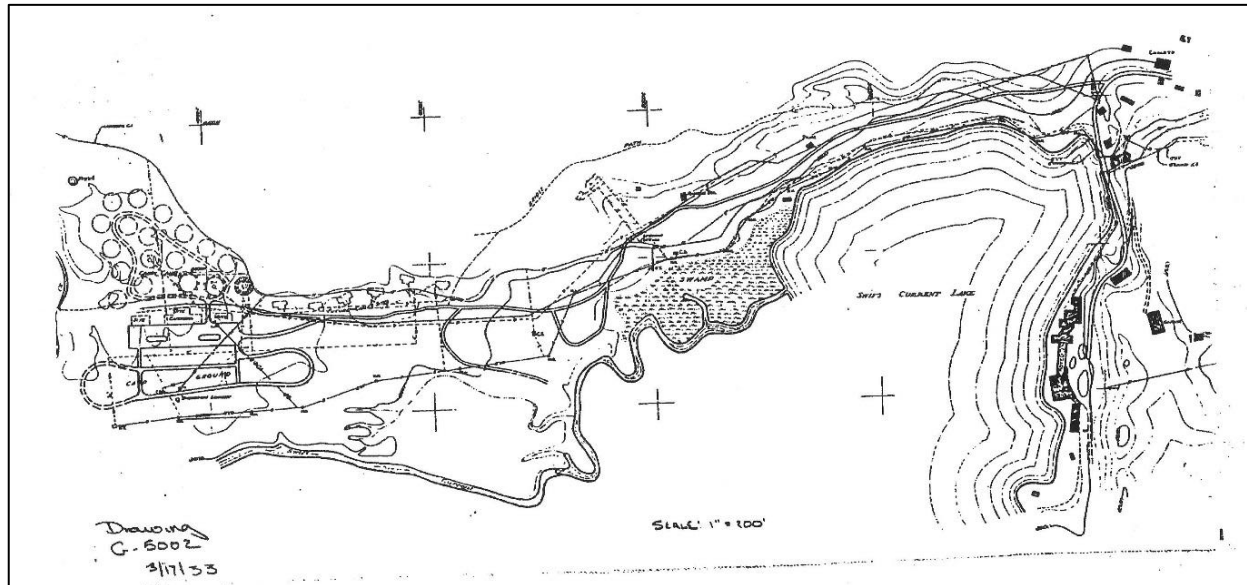


Fig. 1. In this detail of a topographic map of the Many Glacier area, the Swiftcurrent development is on the left and the Many Glacier Hotel complex is on the right. The one-mile separation provided a buffer between hotel patrons and car campers. (Technical Information Center drawing.)

The history of the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp (the original name of the concession operation) highlights a crucial change in the development of national parks. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the spread of automobile ownership among the middle class led to a surge in public use of national parks. An early stage of railroad-financed development of national parks was superseded by a second stage of development for automotive tourism. While the first stage centered on construction of stately hotels, the second stage featured roads and campgrounds. The auto camp was a blend of hotel- and campground-type facilities. Perhaps nowhere else in the National Park System was the transition from the first stage of development to the second so marked as it was in the Swiftcurrent Valley of Glacier National Park.

Pre-Park History of the Swiftcurrent Valley

In prehistoric times, the Swiftcurrent Valley was one of many travel routes used by American Indians to cross the mountains and access resources found on the other side. Tribes on the Pacific Slope of the Rocky Mountains regularly crossed over the divide to hunt bison on the prairie. Plains-dwelling tribes on the east side of the mountains trekked into the mountain valleys to harvest game, fish, berries, tree bark, medicinal herbs, and other resources. They maintained trails into valleys and over mountain passes. Some trails were wide enough for use by large parties on horseback with travois; other trails were more rugged and restricted to foot travel

(Thompson, 2015, 44-48). Resident peoples on either side of Glacier went into the mountains for ceremonial purposes. The Kutenai and Blackfeet tribes still locate many of their sacred sites in Glacier. The area's indigenous tribes also interacted with the ecosystem by frequently setting fires to increase the abundance of plants and animals and to clear the forest understory for ease of travel and hunting (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Blackfeet in Glacier, circa 1915, posing for the camera in this publicity photo by the Great Northern Railway. For Blackfeet and other American Indian peoples, the Swiftcurrent Valley was a valuable hunting ground, a place of spiritual power, and a route to the other side of the mountains. (GLAC 4410, HPF 4542.)

Historically the Blackfeet considered the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains, including the Swiftcurrent Valley, to be within the tribe's territory. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the Blackfeet, who were also known as the *Piikáni* (Piegan), were allied with two other tribes, the *Káínaa* (Blood), and *Siksikáwa* (Blackfoot) in forming the Blackfeet Confederacy. The three tribes spoke a common Algonquian language and were associated culturally and militarily. They were a nomadic game-hunting nation who thrived on their relationship to the plentiful bison. Grouped into small hunting bands through most of the year, they lived about half the year in winter camps located along sheltered stream valleys on the northern prairie and spent the warmer half of the year on the move accessing resources and gathering in larger numbers for ceremonies.

Long before the three tribes of the Blackfeet Confederacy came in direct contact with Europeans, they acquired Europeans' guns through trade with neighboring tribes to the northeast, the Cree and Assiniboine. Thus armed, and soon equipped with horses through trade with the

Shoshoni to the south, they became a dominant military power in the region in a period when the many Plains tribes jockeyed for territory and influence with the English and French in eastern North America. By the mid-eighteenth century the Blackfeet Confederacy controlled a large area extending from the Yellowstone River on the south to the North Saskatchewan River on the north and from the Rocky Mountains on the west to the Musselshell River and the Cypress Hills on the east. The Piegan occupied the southern half of this vast domain while the Blood and Blackfoot held the territory to the north. When European fur traders first came into the area, they found the Blackfeet nation hostile or resistant to the fur traders' incursions. After the Blackfeet Confederacy's homeland was divided between the United States and Canada, the Piegan were cut off from the Blood and Blackfoot. The Piegan allied with the A'aninin tribe, another Plains tribe located to the east, thereby maintaining its ascendancy until around the mid-nineteenth century.

Despite the Blackfeet domination in the area, other tribes made forays into the Swiftcurrent Valley from time to time. The Upper Kutenai lived in the Kootenay Valley west of Glacier and often hunted in the area now within the park. The Upper Kutenai knew Swiftcurrent Lake as Jealous Woman Lake. Sometimes the Upper Kutenai joined forces with the Kalispel and Flathead tribes in making an expedition into Blackfeet territory to hunt bison. The Nakoda or Stoney tribe, an offshoot of the Assiniboine, also ventured into the Glacier area to hunt big game animals in defiance of the Blackfeet. Though their movements are not well known, it is thought they may have lived at one time in the Belly River area. Stoney Indian Pass, a little north of the Swiftcurrent Valley, is named for them (Buchholtz, 1976, 6-8).

The late-nineteenth-century conservationist and friend of the Blackfeet, George Bird Grinnell, remarked on the "well-worn Indian trail" he followed into the Swiftcurrent Valley in 1891, and the many hunting camps that were in evidence. "Once these mountains abounded in sheep and goats," he wrote, "and everywhere about this park may be seen the sites of old Indian camps, with rotting lodge poles, old fireplaces and piles of bone and hair, showing where game has been cut up and hides dressed" (Thompson, 2015, 48).

Plausibly the first visit to the Swiftcurrent Valley by a non-Indian might have been made by Peter Fidler of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1792. Fidler passed a winter with the Piegan tribe and made notes on the area. Later, some of his information appeared on maps, including Chief Mountain (which he called King Mountain) and the Belly River. As a fur trader he would have been most interested in the streams coming out of the Rocky Mountains knowing that those valleys would be prime beaver habitat. There is a chance he entered the Swiftcurrent Valley on his reconnaissance of the area (Robinson, 1960, 7).

Since Glacier National Park sits at the crown of the continent, where the watersheds of the Atlantic, Pacific, and Arctic oceans all come to an apex, and since European nations in the eighteenth century used the boundaries of watersheds and major rivers to demarcate their claims of empire, the region was destined to be remote yet contested in the imperial struggle for North America. The royal charter given to the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670 gave that company a supposed monopoly on Indian trade to the farthest limits of the Hudson's Bay watershed. The Louisiana Purchase of 1803 gave the United States a vast territorial claim stretching to the edge of the Missouri River basin. When the Lewis and Clark expedition passed through present-day

Montana on its homeward journey in 1806, Meriwether Lewis made a side exploration up the Marias River, interested to determine the northern extent of the Missouri River basin as well as to establish contact with the Blackfeet. His turnaround point was on Cut Bank Creek about 20 miles east of the Rocky Mountains. A little to his north was the Hudson Bay Divide, beyond which all waters drain northeastward to Hudson Bay. The Swiftcurrent Valley falls within the Hudson Bay watershed and so it came within the Hudson Bay Company's 1670 charter and fell just outside the Louisiana Purchase. Lewis had good reason to suppose that the Hudson Bay Divide would become the permanent boundary between the United States and British North America. However, a convention between Britain and the United States in 1818 moved the boundary northward to the 49th parallel (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3. Swiftcurrent development area, circa 1957, showing the view east down the Swiftcurrent Valley with the Great Plains lying just over the horizon on left. Swiftcurrent Lake is barely visible in dead center of photo. (GLAC 10892.)

North West Company trader and explorer David Thompson established trading posts at Kullyspell House (near Kalispell) in 1809 and Salish House (near Thompson Falls) in 1810, and sent his employees on expeditions from those points eastward over the mountains, probably via Marias Pass, to initiate trade with the Blackfeet. The first such expedition, made by a Scotsman named Finian MacDonald in company with two French Canadians named Michel Bourdeaux and Baptiste Buché is reckoned to be the first recorded instance of non-Indians in present-day

Glacier (Buchholtz, 1976, 17-19). But this expedition went nowhere near the Swiftcurrent Valley. In truth, European and American fur traders remained fearful of the Blackfeet and may not have entered the Swiftcurrent Valley at all while the Rocky Mountain fur trade was in its heyday. By the late 1830s, Blackfeet power waned but so did the Rocky Mountain fur trade.

After the quest for beaver pelts died away, the next thing that drew non-Indians into Glacier's remote mountain valleys was the quest for a pass through the mountains suitable for a transcontinental railroad. Isaac Stevens, appointed first governor of Washington Territory in 1853, led the northern survey. From his expedition's camp in the Bitterroot Valley, he sent a subordinate A. W. Tinkham, to explore the mountain passes east of the Flathead Valley. Tinkham set out with his Flathead Indian guide in search of the well-traveled American Indian trail over Marias Pass, but they lost their way and went over Cut Bank Pass instead. After Tinkham made his report, Stevens sent another subordinate, John Doty, to search for the fabled pass from the eastern side. Doty hired Hugh Monroe, a former Hudson's Bay employee who lived with the Piegan, and traveled up the St. Mary Valley until he was satisfied it was not the route for a railroad. Doty then explored north and south along the front range, locating the eastern approach to Cut Bank Pass once again mistaking it for Marias Pass. Since Tinkham and Doty each recommended that the pass was unsuitable, Stevens turned to other passes further south. More than 30 years went by until John F. Stevens (no relation to Isaac Stevens), chief engineer for the Great Northern Railway, found Marias Pass with the help of another Flathead Indian guide, Coonsah (Buchholtz, 1976, 22-23, 32).

Gold seekers came to Montana Territory in the 1860s. The first wave of prospectors to travel through present-day Glacier may have been heading from Montana's gold fields northward to new gold strikes in British Columbia and along the Saskatchewan River in 1866. Captain James Fisk reportedly led eighty prospectors on an exploration of the Upper Marias River drainages that year. Another party under the leadership of Joseph Kipp explored the St. Mary Lakes region in 1869. But there is no clear evidence that anyone entered the Swiftcurrent Valley (Buchholtz, 1976, 28).

The Blackfeet opposed prospectors coming into their country just as they had checked fur traders' incursions earlier. Friction between the Blackfeet and Montana settlers led to the notorious "Baker Massacre" in 1870 in which 173 Blackfeet, including 53 women and children, were slain in an attack on their village by the U.S. military. Coinciding with a small pox epidemic, the defeat at the hands of the army broke the tribe's power to resist invasion. More prospecting parties entered what is now park domain after 1870, though the historical record of their movements is sketchy. A party led by one William Veach reportedly prospected in the St. Mary Lakes region in 1876. Duncan McDonald (for whom Lake McDonald may have been named) made numerous trips up the North Fork of the Flathead or over Marias Pass hauling freight to the mining camps. Discovery of copper and quartz veins together with an oil seep at Kintla Lake in 1892 created a flurry of excitement. That led to more mineral finds in the mountains in the mid-1890s, which in turn brought pressure on the Blackfeet tribe to cede the western side of the Blackfeet Reservation. The Blackfeet Reservation in 1895 was already much reduced from its original extent as established by treaty in 1855. The Blackfeet tribe was by this time destitute, deprived of its basic resource when the bison were wiped out, and tribal leaders sensed that the land would be taken from them with or without their consent. Reluctantly, they

agreed to a land cession for \$1,500,000, pushed by their friend and confidant George Bird Grinnell, who was thinking of the future national park as well as the interests of the tribe (Buchholtz, 1976, 28-34).

The ceded strip was formally opened to prospectors on April 15, 1898, and a mining rush ensued. Miners staked claims at locations in Swiftcurrent Valley, on Canyon Creek, at Cracker Lake, around Slide Lake, and at Rose Creek, among other places. A boom town of Altyn arose in the Swiftcurrent Valley near the confluence of Canyon Creek and Swiftcurrent Creek; today, the site of this short-lived mining camp lies beneath the upper end of Lake Sherburne. Around 1900, Altyn had a population of several hundred residents. Sawmills in the valley milled hundreds of thousands of board feet of lumber for construction of mills and town buildings. However, the mining excitement soon spent itself; by 1902, only a smattering of people remained (Buchholtz, 1976, 34-35).

The area was included in the Lewis and Clark Forest Reserve, established by presidential proclamation on February 22, 1897. Even then, preservationists including John Muir were eyeing the area as a potential national park. The Lewis and Clark Forest Reserve was administered by the General Land Office primarily for protection of timber and watersheds. In 1905, all forest reserves were transferred to the Forest Service in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In 1907, the name changed from forest reserve to national forest. Forest administration in this period was limited to one or two rangers cutting trails, making patrols, putting out fires, and making arrests for poaching. With such a vast territory to cover, the ranger activity was almost token. The ranger activity was confined mostly to the valley of the North Fork of the Flathead.

Development of the Many Glacier Area, 1910-1930

A few wealthy sportsmen and adventurous tourists made excursions into the area of the future park in the 1890s and 1900s. In traveling to this remote section of Montana they were aided by the completion of the Great Northern Railway through Marias Pass in 1891. When Glacier National Park was established by act of Congress on May 11, 1910, some minimal tourist development existed on the park's west side around Lake McDonald and at Belton (now West Glacier) while none yet existed on the park's east side. Louis W. Hill was president of Great Northern Railway, the son of the famous railroad builder James J. Hill and heir to his railroad empire. Enamored with Glacier National Park from his own sport hunting trips to the area, he committed the railroad to developing the east side of Glacier National Park into a vacationland.

Starting in the summer of 1911, Great Northern began to promote Glacier tourism through its advertising department and to develop visitor accommodations and guided horse trips on the park's east side. Initially the railroad company built a network of chalets, then it filled out its development plan for Glacier tourism with the addition of high-class hotels, boat launches on St. Mary Lake, and bus service from the Midvale station to Saint Mary and Many Glacier. Louis Hill formed a subsidiary company, Glacier Park Hotel Company, to operate all the railroad's tourist facilities and services. All this development was completed in five years, 1911 to 1915.

This was still the railroad era of national park development; other national parks that were largely developed by a railroad included Yellowstone and Grand Canyon.

National park administration was rudimentary in this era. The National Park Service (NPS) was not yet established. Glacier National Park was only the tenth designation of its kind. The Secretary of the Interior administered the national parks from the nation's capital with the help of a chief clerk and a general superintendent of national parks. At the field level, the federal staff consisted of a park superintendent and a few rangers. Under these conditions, Louis Hill had practically a free hand in deciding how to develop the area. He personally selected the locations for each chalet group and hotel. It was only after everything was built or under construction that attorneys for the railroad and the Department of the Interior completed the formal grants for all these national park visitor facilities. In 1914, each chalet group or hotel was covered by a 20-year lease of the ground on which it was built. A survey plat accompanied each filing. The correspondence surrounding the filings show that at this early stage in park development it was Louis Hill and the railroad who got to decide where visitor facilities would be built and what they would look like (Mather, 1915; Carroll, 1916; Freund, 1914a; Freund, 1914b).

Hill picked the location for Many Glacier Hotel for its commanding view of mountains and glaciers and its proximity to trails leading to numerous alpine lakes and passes. The hotel would be a grand presence, placed in a dominating spot on the edge of Swiftcurrent Lake at the junction of three mountain valleys. It would be a destination resort for park visitors interested in venturing out on hiking trails deeper into the mountains or content to enjoy the views from the hotel (Fig. 4).

The Many Glacier development required extensive preparations. First, the primitive road to the site had to be improved. The railroad company took the initiative, constructing or improving more than 50 miles of road on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation from Midvale to St. Mary and from St. Mary around to Babb at the entrance to the Swiftcurrent Valley. Some of the work was built under contract with public funds and some of it was done at company expense. Within the park, the existing road up the Swiftcurrent Valley to the defunct Swift Current mining district had to be put back in service. This section was of interest to the U.S. Reclamation Service because it was preparing to build a dam on Swiftcurrent Creek just outside the park boundary. (The dam was completed in 1914 and the reservoir, Lake Sherburne, extended into the park almost as far as the hotel site.) In 1913 and 1914, the Reclamation Service completed the six miles of road from the park boundary to the hotel site. In 1914 and 1915, the section of



Fig. 4. Louis W. Hill selected the site of the Many Glacier Hotel to take advantage of views across Swiftcurrent Lake. This is the view west up Swiftcurrent Valley to Mount Wilbur, c. 1965. The Swiftcurrent development area, hidden from view by trees and distance, is at center. (GLAC 10907, HB 28560-H.)

road from St. Mary to Babb was mostly built, completing the road connection from the railroad station at Midvale to the Many Glacier hotel site (Bristol, 2017, 80-81; “Swift Current,” 1897, 86; SAR, 1913, 6; SAR, 1914, 4; SAR, 1915, 6).

The company acquired rights to timber and built a sawmill. It was emblematic of Hill’s imperial view of his park development program that he built the sawmill before he had a lease. Hill applied for the lease of the sawmill site on July 27, 1915, noting that a sawmill, dry kiln, shop building, and lumber shed already stood on the tract of land (Application for Sawmill Site, 1915). In approving the lease, the government acquiesced in Hill’s vision for his park development project. The company then initiated a rather extensive logging operation at Many Glacier with almost no government supervision (Ayers, 1915; Carroll, 1915).

Water power was another prerequisite for development of the site. A small dam and hydroelectric plant on Swiftcurrent Creek were needed to generate electrical power for the hotel operations. The government granted the company the right to build such a plant under supervision by the park superintendent. The government stipulated that the plant had to be placed on the creek where it would not change the level of the lake or destroy the beauty of the creek. An early plan to build a dam at the outlet of Swiftcurrent Lake was scotched in favor of a site 300 feet below the upper falls at the outlet (Contract with Glacier Park Hotel Co., 1916; Catton et al., 2011, 49).

Hill turned to architect Kirtland Cutter of Spokane to draw up plans for Many Glacier Hotel. Hill was not satisfied with the results, terminated his contract with Cutter, and took the unfinished drawings to his own Great Northern architect, T. D. McMahon, who had completed most of the design for Glacier Park Hotel at Midvale. When it was completed, Many Glacier Hotel was a blend of both architects’ designs. It was more Swiss-themed than Glacier Park Hotel, but its great hall was basically a half-size version of the other. With its sprawling, multi-section floor plan, Many Glacier Hotel was the biggest hotel in Montana (Diehl-Taylor, 1997, 30) (Fig. 5).

Built mainly between August 1914 and late 1915, Many Glacier Hotel consisted of five sections: a lobby, 120 feet by 60 feet and four stories high, with lobby and office on first floor

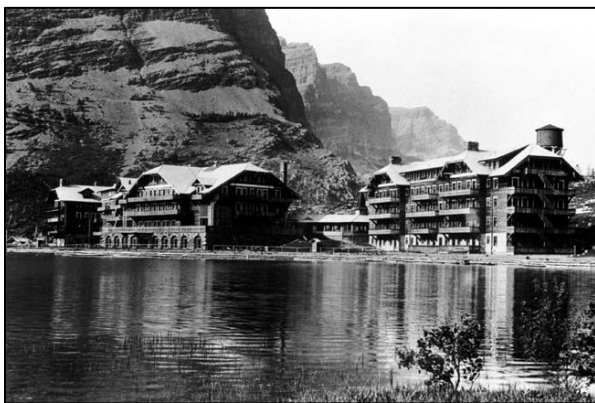


Fig. 5. Many Glacier Hotel, circa 1915. The architecture was grand, the siting of the hotel on the lakeshore was bold and dominating, and yet the massive structures still harmonize with the monumental scenery. (Glacier NP photo.)

and 30 bedrooms off of the interior facing balconies on the second, third, and fourth floors; a T-shaped dormitory, 160 feet by 40 feet and 102 feet by 45 feet and four stories high, containing 119 bedrooms; the bridge, 50 feet by 36 feet and two stories high, the first floor connecting the dormitory to the dining room and containing a lounge, and the second floor containing six bedrooms; the dining room, 100 feet by 50 feet and one story; and the kitchen, 108 feet by 36 feet, also one story. All five sections were wood frame structures and all except the kitchen had stone basements.

Besides the hotel complex itself, other facilities

included an employee dormitory, 100 feet by 34 feet and three stories high containing 42 bedrooms, an ice house, and a pump house. An annex with 80 bedrooms and a swimming pool was added in 1917 (Diehl-Taylor, 1997, 30; Application for Hotel Site, 1915).

Hill involved himself deeply in the hotel construction. He consulted with McMahon on design elements as specific as the type of flooring used in the basement below the main lobby, the layout of the kitchen, the placement of hot water pipes, and the appearance of the chimney and skylights in the dining room. He fretted over the mounting construction costs and called for a report on cost comparisons with those incurred by the Rainier National Park Company of Seattle in building the Paradise Inn at Mount Rainier (completed in 1916). The comparison was not very pertinent because Many Glacier Hotel site was far more remote and the structure was more luxurious, with all bedrooms and bathrooms wired for electric lighting and plumbed for steamed heat and hot and cold running water. The final cost of Many Glacier Hotel came to more than \$500,000, or around \$12 million in 2019 dollars (Diehl-Taylor, 1997, 38-39; Barnes, 1997, 54; Bristol, 2017, 82).

Together with Glacier Park Hotel at Midvale, Many Glacier Hotel was probably of a higher class than any other national park hotels in the United States. The two Glacier hotels were immense by national park standards; with completion of the second one, Hill was able to boast that Glacier had more beds in it than any other national park including Yellowstone. Hill did want to attract a wealthy clientele to Glacier, but he was not trying to create an exclusive resort for the upper class. To the contrary, he designed the whole complex of chalets and hotels with the aim of attracting a broad clientele inclusive of the middle class. Even the hotels were welcoming to middle class guests. Hill wanted to make Glacier National Park popular with the American middle class to generate maximum business for his railroad (Sheire, 1970, 197; U.S. Department of the Interior, 1915, 15-20).

With the creation of NPS in 1916, the federal government began to assert more control over park development. NPS Director Stephen T. Mather instituted a national park concessions policy based on the concept of regulated monopoly: an operator such as Glacier Park Hotel Company received an exclusive right to do business in the national park and in return for that protected status it had to follow NPS direction on planning and design of buildings. Hill's Glacier Park Hotel Company transitioned into that new subordinate role.

Around the same time, the spread of the automobile began to transform American patterns of leisure travel and national park visitation. Mather promoted the grand tour of western national parks by private automobile. The National Park-to-Park Highway was a 1,650-mile circuit of improved public roads such as the Yellowstone Trail that led the traveler to a dozen national parks from Glacier in the north to Grand Canyon in the south. Mather sought to develop each national park with carefully designed roads, providing better access to points of interest and inaugurating what would become a staple of the national park visitor experience, driving to view scenery. As more middle-class Americans acquired cars and the quality of interstate roads improved, the number of people going to national parks burgeoned. Mather recognized the growth of car culture as a central underpinning of his quest to make the National Park System a strong and enduring feature in the life of the nation (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. The National Park-to-Park Highway promoted auto travel around the West. NPS partnered with the National Park-to-Park Highway Association to increase public use of national parks. (Rocky Mountain National Park.com image.)

In Glacier National Park, the number of visitors who came by car steadily rose while the number of visitors arriving by rail slowly declined. The mode of travel was generally seen as a reflection of class, with car travel being the preferred mode for most middle-class visitors and rail travel being the usual mode of the well-to-do. This distinction had less to do with the cost of transportation than it did with the class of accommodation visitors sought once they got to the park: rail arrivals patronized the hotels and chalets; car arrivals were self-contained travelers who were apt to prefer free camping. Class labels were assigned to each type of park visitor: hotel sojourners were “dudes,” while car campers were “sagebrushers.” NPS welcomed the latter group and tended to view the rise of the automobile as a boon in making Glacier accessible to a broader public. Making the park accessible to all fulfilled the democratic promise contained in the national park idea (Fig. 7).

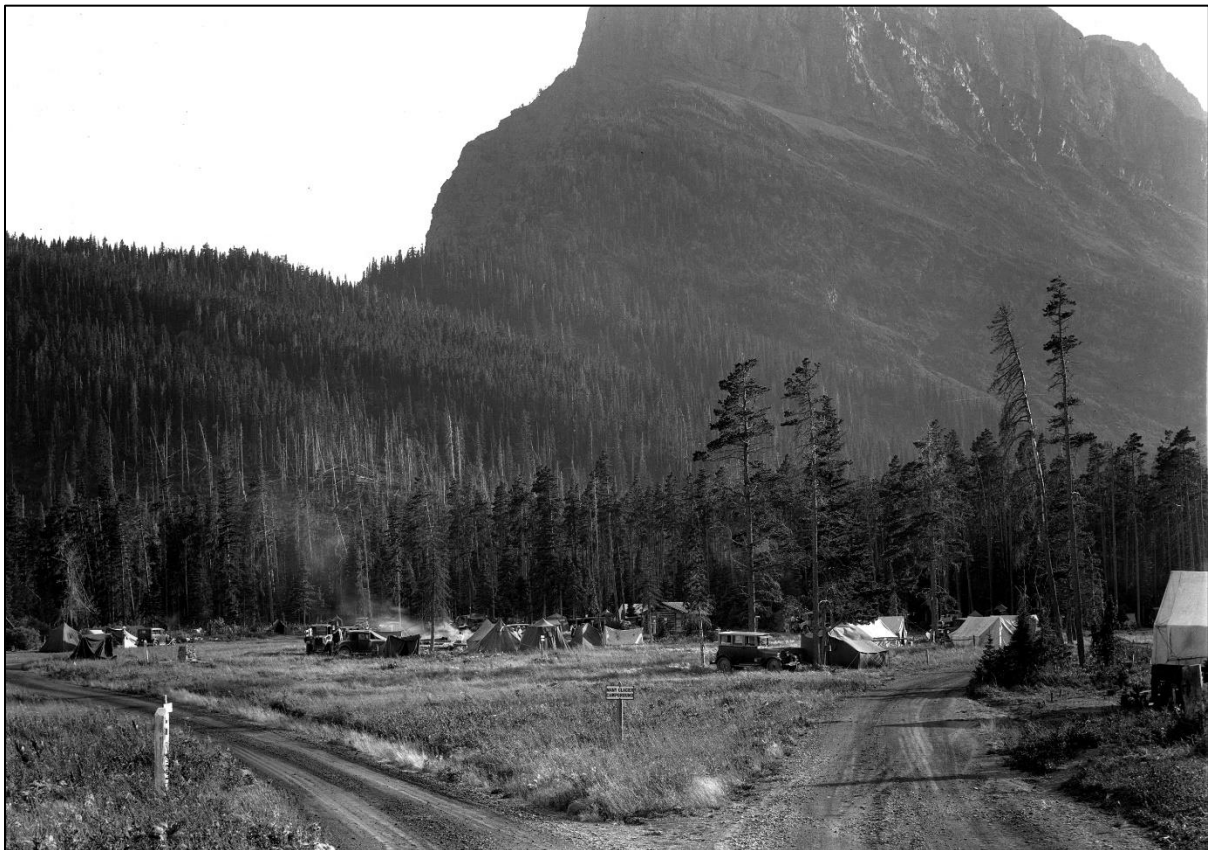


Fig..7. Many Glacier Campground, July 30, 1932. Until it was revamped with designated units, campers could camp anywhere, which meant that vegetation suffered while social trails and fire rings abounded. NPS modernized the campground around the same time it called for development of cabins and a camp store. (Glacier NP photo DI 11728. George A. Grant photographer.)

National park campgrounds might have developed as an extension of concession operations, with camping facilities being built and operated by the hotel company. However, at an early stage NPS took over the function of campground development in all national parks. NPS may have been influenced by the example of city governments, which established free municipal campgrounds for the traveling public in order to control sanitation and public order as this low-budget form of leisure travel burgeoned. Mather considered camping facilities to be part of the total infrastructure of visitor accommodations in national parks, which he called “public

utilities.” But he drew a line between government-run campgrounds and concession-operated hotels. He commented on the new campgrounds in 1920, “all public utilities of this kind should be owned and operated at a profit by the Government, and should include power plants, telephone systems, and water systems, as well as sewer systems.” National park campgrounds evolved through the 1920s. At first, NPS merely cleared some ground for car campers and installed water and sewer systems. Later, NPS put in water taps, flush toilets, and picnic tables. The crucial thing was that campgrounds provided an inexpensive alternative form of overnight accommodation to the older hotels. NPS assertively moved into this area of visitor service, managing campgrounds with park staff rather than folding the campground operation into the concession (Catton, 2006, 69-81).

By 1925, Glacier had four public campgrounds, two on the east side and two on the west side. On the east side, there were campgrounds of roughly equal size at Many Glacier and Two Medicine Lake. On the west side, there was one large campground at Avalanche Creek and one small one at Sprague Creek (SAR, 1925, 128). Many Glacier Campground was developed in a level area beside Swiftcurrent Creek about a mile up the valley from Many Glacier Hotel. At this early stage, the campground was just an open area without designated tent sites; campers pulled off the road and set up camp wherever they chose.

The 1920s have been called the “golden years” for Glacier Park Hotel Company. The hotels did a booming business. As the Going-to-the-Sun Road was not yet built, horse trips remained the preferred mode of travel for exploring the park. On the park’s east side, the Glacier Park Transportation Company operated a fleet of touring cars or buses that shuttled rail passenger visitors between the hotels and chalets and boat service on St. Mary Lake. In one year, 1925, the railroad put on 52 special trains that brought some 5,000 more visitors to the park than in the previous year, setting a record for total park visitation. Much of the increase in rail passenger traffic to Glacier that year was a byproduct of several big conventions held on the West Coast. The next year, Great Northern’s total passenger traffic fell back and so did the number of rail passenger visitors to Glacier. Another banner year was 1929, when the park counted over 80,000 visitors, 10,000 arriving by rail (Fraley, 1998, 47; Hufstetler, 1997, 7; Diehl-Taylor, 1997, 32-33; Robinson, 1960, 127).

A closer look at Glacier Park Hotel Company’s financial performance during the 1920s presents another picture, however. Historian Christiane Diehl-Taylor finds that even in its heyday the company was unable to turn a profit. “Including taxes, interest, and depreciation, which is the traditional view of profit and loss, the hotel company showed a loss every year from 1914 to 1929,” she writes. Losses were heaviest during the years 1914-1917, when the company poured money into hotel construction, and in 1918, when World War I impacted railroad operations. Losses were lighter through the 1920s and almost shrank to the break-even point in 1925, the year of the West Coast conventions. Even by the method of accounting used by Great Northern, which wiped away the 6 percent interest on capital investment, Glacier Park Hotel Company only managed to turn a slight profit in 1923 and 1925. Over the whole decade, Great Northern showed a loss of \$1.2 million on a total investment of nearly double that amount (Diehl-Taylor, 1997, 34).

Great Northern officials justified the investment in Glacier based on it generating more passenger traffic for the railroad. Yet even by that measure, the investment did not bear fruit. With the rise of the automobile, Great Northern faced a precipitous decline in its total passenger traffic: from over 9 million passengers in 1914 to less than 3 million passengers in 1929. During these years, the railroad's passenger traffic to Glacier held steady at around 10,000 to 15,000 passengers per year, and therefore the Glacier traffic rose as a percentage of the railroad's overall passenger traffic. Yet, as Diehl-Taylor points out, the numbers were not large enough to matter much: the number of passengers bound for Glacier rose from a tenth of a percent of all passengers in 1914 to seven-tenths of a percent in 1929. The park never became the goose that laid the golden eggs that railroad investors wished for. At best, all the tickets sold to Glacier-bound passengers might have produced a revenue stream barely big enough to offset the railroad company's losses in the park (Diehl-Taylor, 1997, 33).

The growth of car travel to Glacier National Park in the 1920s might have been viewed as unhelpful to the interests of Great Northern Railway Company. Glacier Park Hotel Company, as a subsidiary of Great Northern, clearly preferred to see park visitors travel to Glacier by railroad. Yet Glacier Park Hotel Company and Great Northern executives took a more benign view of the rising car culture than one might expect. While it was true that practically all rail passenger visitors to Glacier patronized Glacier Park Hotel Company's lodging facilities and only a fraction of auto passenger visitors did so, nonetheless the growth of car travel to Glacier did bring more business to the company's hotels and restaurants. Car travel did not compete with rail travel so much as it complemented it, adding to total visitor numbers. Furthermore, the two classes of visitors in the park – the dudes and the sagebrushers – mutually supported the park's array of visitor facilities and services. Hotel patrons enjoyed the enhanced road system when they traveled on the company's buses, while car campers could avail themselves of the concession's restaurants and camp stores whenever they fancied.

The Many Glacier Hotel and the Many Glacier Campground were physically separated by about one mile. At Two Medicine Lake, meanwhile, the chalet group and the campground were closer together, and the concession opened a camp store that mostly served campers. This arrangement worked well. As the 1920s ended, NPS called on the Glacier Park Hotel Company to build a new visitor facility adjacent to the Many Glacier Campground that it called an auto camp. A step up from car camping, the auto camp would provide the visitor with a small cabin, bedding, and a camp store. A step down from the existing chalets (and more affordable for the middle-class visitor), the auto camp would not include dining room and catered meals.

Development of the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp, 1930-1960

In 1929, NPS requested that the Glacier Park Hotel Company prepare a five-year development plan to address needs of middle-class visitors coming to the park by car. The new direction in Glacier was part of an initiative by NPS leadership to expand visitor facilities in national parks throughout the National Park System. NPS officials prodded the company to plan for auto camps as they appeared to be the wave of the future in outdoor recreation.

As auto touring grew in popularity it changed in character. While the so-called sagebrushers of the 1920s carried their own camping equipment, by the end of the decade many auto tourists relied on cheap roadside accommodations, particularly the new *tourist cabin*, in lieu of setting up camp each night. This simple dwelling unit could be small, just big enough to contain a bed, table, and chair (Fig. 8). The tourist cabin was generally part of a group of cabins with a shared bathhouse and toilets. Generally, the complex was called a *tourist cabin camp*. NPS adopted the term *auto camp* instead of *tourist cabin camp*. This was consistent with its strict

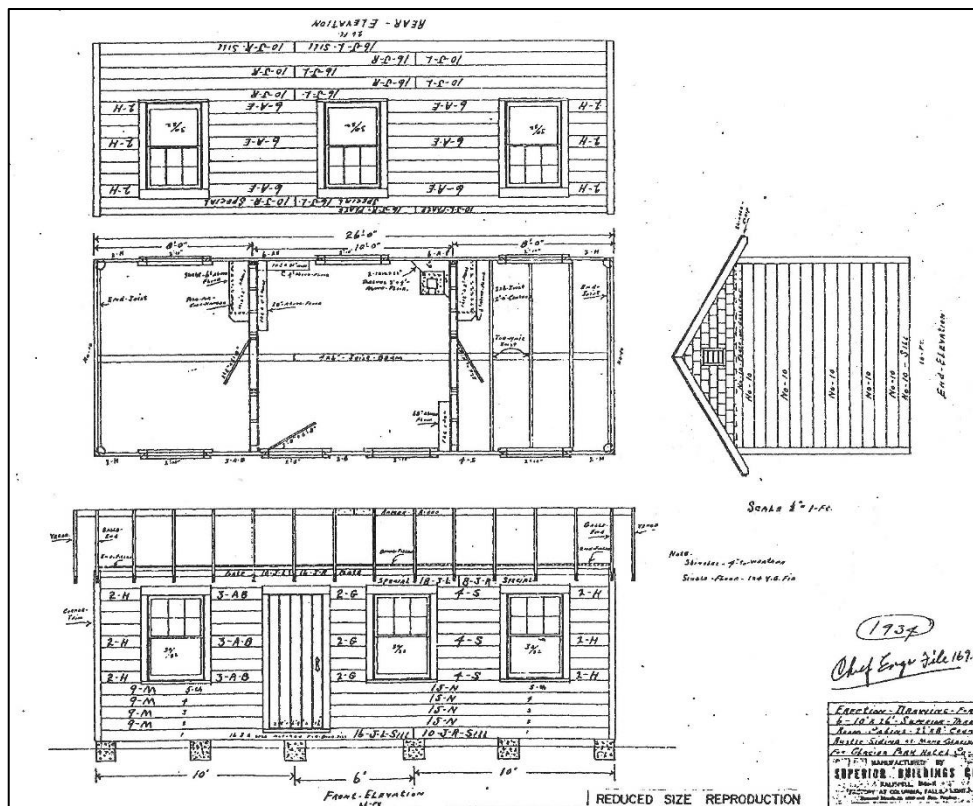


Fig. 8. Plans for housekeeping cabins prepared by Superior Buildings Co. for Glacier Park Hotel Co. (Technical Information Center drawing.)

adherence to the term *visitor* instead of *tourist*. NPS used the term *housekeeping cabin* instead of *tourist cabin*. Housekeeping in this context meant simply that the facility provided basic amenities for sleeping, preparing meals, and washing up. Historian Warren James Belasco explains the aesthetics and economics behind the car travelers' new preference for the tourist or housekeeping cabin in the 1930s:

The cabin seemed a happy compromise [between tenting out and renting a hotel room]. There was still enough roughing it to reinvigorate family life. Beds and other domestic arrangements were cruder than home. Everyone lived in the same small space and huddled around a common old-fashioned stove. Since camps were generally located in the country, children could still play outdoors, and everyone could breathe healthy fresh air....

Cabin comfort was not necessarily more expensive. For a dollar a night – just fifty cents more than the tent fee – a family saved one hundred dollars or more by not buying a good tent and camp furniture. By bringing their own bedding, food, and utensils, they still saved a good deal over hotels. Some camps also offered inexpensive meals, thus sparing road-weary mothers the evening chores. Tourists still saved money by eating breakfast in the cabin and picnicking on the road at noon. (Belasco, 1979, 132-33).

NPS observed these changes in the auto touring industry and sought to expand visitor accommodations in national parks to meet changing demand. NPS policy held that national park lodging should be minimal and basic, no more than was necessary to satisfy the public need. As the public need evolved, NPS intended to expand, diversify, or upgrade national park lodging accordingly.

NPS appealed to the Glacier Park Hotel Company to develop auto camps when it convened the first National Park Operators Conference in December 1929. NPS pushed for this new type of development in many national parks besides Glacier, and its architects and landscape architects were busy preparing design concepts for the new type of development. A few weeks after the conference, NPS sent sketches and layouts for proposed auto camps at Many Glacier and Roes Creek to Glacier Park Hotel Company. The park administration was more eager to meet the changing demand than was the concessioner, who insisted on waiting one more year to determine the location of auto camps (Binder, 1930; Eakin, 1930).

NPS and the Glacier Park Hotel Company finally settled on the development of two auto camps, one adjacent to the Many Glacier Campground and the other next to the newly developed Roes Creek (Rising Sun) Campground. As indicated by the park's master plan, the housekeeping cabins were placed close to public campgrounds so that the two types of accommodations could share utilities and other facilities. The two development areas were conceived as full-service auto camps with campsites and cabins forming two complementary types of accommodation that were co-located in a shared space. Both development areas were to include a camp store and a cafeteria – facilities that served campground users as well as cabin guests.

At first the Glacier Park Hotel Company was a reluctant partner in this new development. After the Stock Market Crash and the onset of the Great Depression, the concession's parent company Great Northern wanted to postpone making further capital investment in the park. The Glacier Park Hotel Company manager, A. J. Binder, informed NPS Director Horace Albright by letter dated April 29, 1930, that the company would not submit a five-year plan for development as requested at the conference, nor would it construct housekeeping cabins in the coming year as proposed by the park superintendent, J. R. Eakin. Albright found the company's noncooperation out of line with NPS concession management and told Eakin in June 1930 that he saw a "showdown" coming. If NPS determined there was a need for housekeeping cabins in Glacier and the Glacier Park Hotel Company refused to build them, then NPS would have to find another concessioner who would (Ober, 1976, 100-01).

Michael J. Ober, in his master's thesis on NPS-concessioner relations in Glacier National Park, pinpoints the June 1930 message from Albright to Eakin as the moment when NPS started

“to eclipse the position of leadership that the Great Northern had held in Glacier for twenty years.” Both sides avoided a showdown, however. The next year, in June 1931, Albright sent his chief landscape architect, Thomas C. Vint, to Glacier to meet with company and park managers and discuss the proposed development in more detail. By then, NPS had surveyed an area about a mile from Many Glacier Hotel where it intended to expand and modernize the existing Many Glacier Campground and locate the auto camp. The company then built something token on the site – enough to satisfy NPS that it had made a start at building the auto camp – and there the matter rested as the company endured two more years of business losses (SAR, 1931, 4; SAR, 1932, 20, Ober, 1976, 101).

In October 1932, an opinion piece appeared in the *Kalispell Times* that assailed the Glacier Park Hotel Company and the park administration for catering only to well-to-do tourists and failing to provide tourist cabins for people of more modest means.

Large, fine hotels are too classy as well as too large for the average American traveler seeking only outing recreation. In Glacier Park particularly, there should be erected at once, at every camp, good, substantial, permanent buildings of one, two, three, and four rooms for just the “forgotten man” which he may occupy with his family or party.... There should also be constructed at each camp a building for a restaurant or cafeteria where meals at a reasonable price may be obtained. Do this and let the Great Northern have its wild animals, its conventional meals and its millionaires (Ober, 1976, 106-07).

Such criticisms hit the mark. The plea for the “forgotten man” resonated. Superintendent E. T. Scoyen wrote in his annual report for 1932: “There is urgent need in this park for facilities designed to accommodate this class of visitors and the main problem of the development in the park in the next few years will be to provide adequate camp ground facilities and housekeeping units to take care of these people” (SAR, 1932, 20).

While in the state’s capital city Helena in March 1933, Superintendent Scoyen discussed Glacier’s visitor accommodations with the chair of the Montana Highway Commission, O. S. Warden. Warden was publisher of the *Great Falls Tribune* and a prominent Montana Democrat who took an interest in economic development throughout the state. A highway commissioner since 1924, he was well informed about the auto touring industry. Warden thought NPS should insist that the Glacier Park Hotel Company build housekeeping cabins before the coming travel season, and if it refused then NPS should give the right to another concessioner (Scoyen, 1933).

Scoyen finally prevailed on the Glacier Park Hotel Company to move ahead with the auto camp, informing Binder that he wanted “to see not less than twenty cabins ready at Many Glacier by the opening of the Park season.” The company obliged, constructing a total of 27 cabins in three circles. The Swiftcurrent Auto Camp opened for its first season in 1933. The cabins soon filled with guests even though no store or cafeteria was provided, with guests having to go to Many Glacier Hotel or Babb if they wanted to dine out. The auto camp would slowly take shape through the rest of the decade with the addition of more cabin circles, a store built in 1935, and a coffee shop, lobby, and registration desk in an addition to the store built in 1940 (Ober, 1976, 105; Architectural Research Consultants, Inc., 2002, 21).

The layout of the camp and design of buildings was a joint process between the Glacier Park Hotel Company and the NPS Branch of Plans and Design. NPS pushed the idea of cabin circles with the thought that the arrangement called to mind a Plains Indian village or the “tepee villages” that the Glacier Park Hotel Company once had in the park’s early days. Along with the layout plan for each cabin circle NPS provided a prototype sketch of an eight-sided “tepee type cabin.” (The sketch appeared on a sheet labeled “Development Plan Roes Creek Campground,” but the April 1930 date of this plan indicates that it was under consideration around the time of the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp development.) The floor plan for the tepee type cabin showed the interior space divided into a living room in the front half and two equal-size bedrooms in the back half and a wood stove in the center. The steeply pitched roof with stove pipe emerging from the top vaguely resembled the conical lines of a tepee (Fig. 9). The cabin circle complex was tentatively called a “council unit,” and the plan even included a fireplace for a “council fire” at the center of the cabin circle. Stranger still, the plan included parking stalls radiating out from the

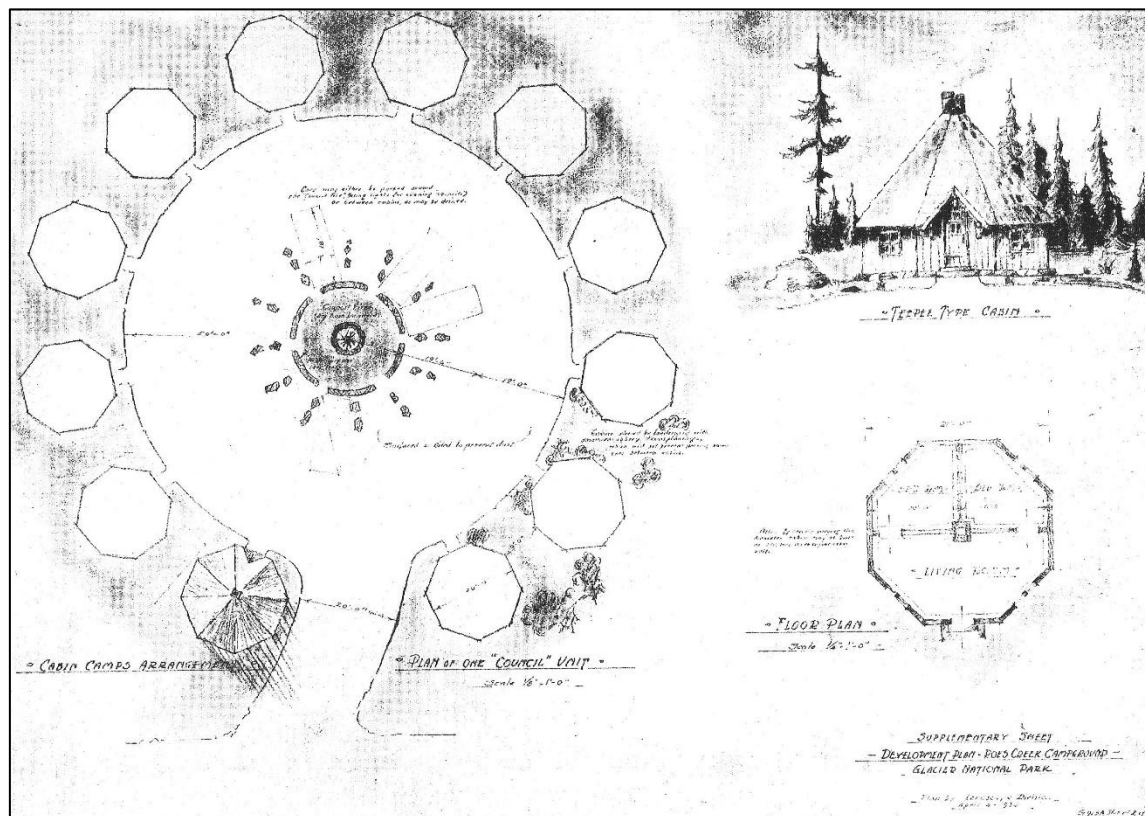


Fig. 9. This 1930 plan illustrates concepts for a “tepee village” style of auto camp, with conical-shaped cabins around the edge and guest parking around a “council fire” in the center of each cabin circle. (Technical Information Center drawing.)

council fire with an annotation that the arrangement might foster evening “summits” among guests (National Park Service, 1930).

Glacier Park Hotel Company accepted the idea of cabin circles but in place of the octagonal-shaped cabins it offered plans for three types of cabins prepared by Great Northern’s architect, Thomas McMahon. The three types were a single cabin with bathroom, a duplex cabin with two bathrooms, and a three-room cabin with shared living room in the middle, bedroom on

either side, and no bathroom. The plans called for rustic siding and eaves covered in wood shingles. The plans were based on housekeeping cabins newly installed at Mount Rainier National Park. NPS approved them and they were transmitted to the construction contractor, Superior Building Company of Columbia Falls, Montana. The first 27 cabins were built at a cost of \$12,297.21 (Djuff and Morrison, 2001, 95).

As built, the cabins presented a basic yet pleasing design and appearance: economical, unpretentious, and tidy (Fig. 10). In 1935, the NPS Branch of Planning produced a book, *Park Structures and Facilities*, that provided a digest of plans, photos, and commentary on the “rustic” architecture that was then finding expression in the national parks. The book covered a wide array of structures from foot trails and guardrails to comfort stations and picnic shelters. At the end of the book the authors discussed the tourist cabin as a type of park structure. The authors noted that the cabin was an echo of America’s pioneer past but in the park setting it had to be part of a colony or group of cabins, unlike the solitary cabin of the old frontier. It was not practical to build cabins in seclusion because it would spread the impact of the visitor facility over a wide area. Placed close together, the tourist cabin should evoke a sense of community rather than solitude. Furthermore, tourist cabins had to be made with cheap materials to keep costs down, since overnight rental rates must be appropriate to the income level of the occupants (National Park Service, Branch of Planning, 1935, 215-17).



Fig. 10. Newly built Cabin Circle A. The cabin at right is at the opening of the horseshoe-shaped circle. The newly redesigned Many Glacier Campground is visible in the background. The picture was probably taken in 1933, certainly before construction of the general store in 1935 and the Heavens Peak Fire in 1936. (Glacier NP photo GLAC 15546.)

NPS provided a layout plan to the company that indicated where the cabin circles would be built. Each cabin circle was indicated by a plain circle on a plat map. The company arranged the cabins in the first three circles around the *inside* of each circle circumference, only to discover afterwards that NPS had desired the cabins to be arranged around the *outside* of the

circle circumference. As the width of each cabin was ten feet, Circles “A” and “B” measured about 80 feet across the interior of the cabin circle and 100 feet across the exterior. Circle “C” was slightly bigger because the company construed the circle on the plat map as being slightly bigger, 108 feet instead of 100 feet (Aszmann, 1934).

When the company prepared to add more cabin circles in 1934, it asked NPS whether it should enlarge those cabin circles in line with NPS’s original intent or make them consistent with the first three cabin circles. It proposed to have them match the slightly bigger Circle “C.” NPS insisted that they be enlarged so that the interior space in each circle was 100 feet across. The company followed NPS direction. As a result, Circles “D,” “E,” and “I” were made larger than Circles “A,” “B,” and “C” and remain so today (Aszmann, 1934, Fig. 11).

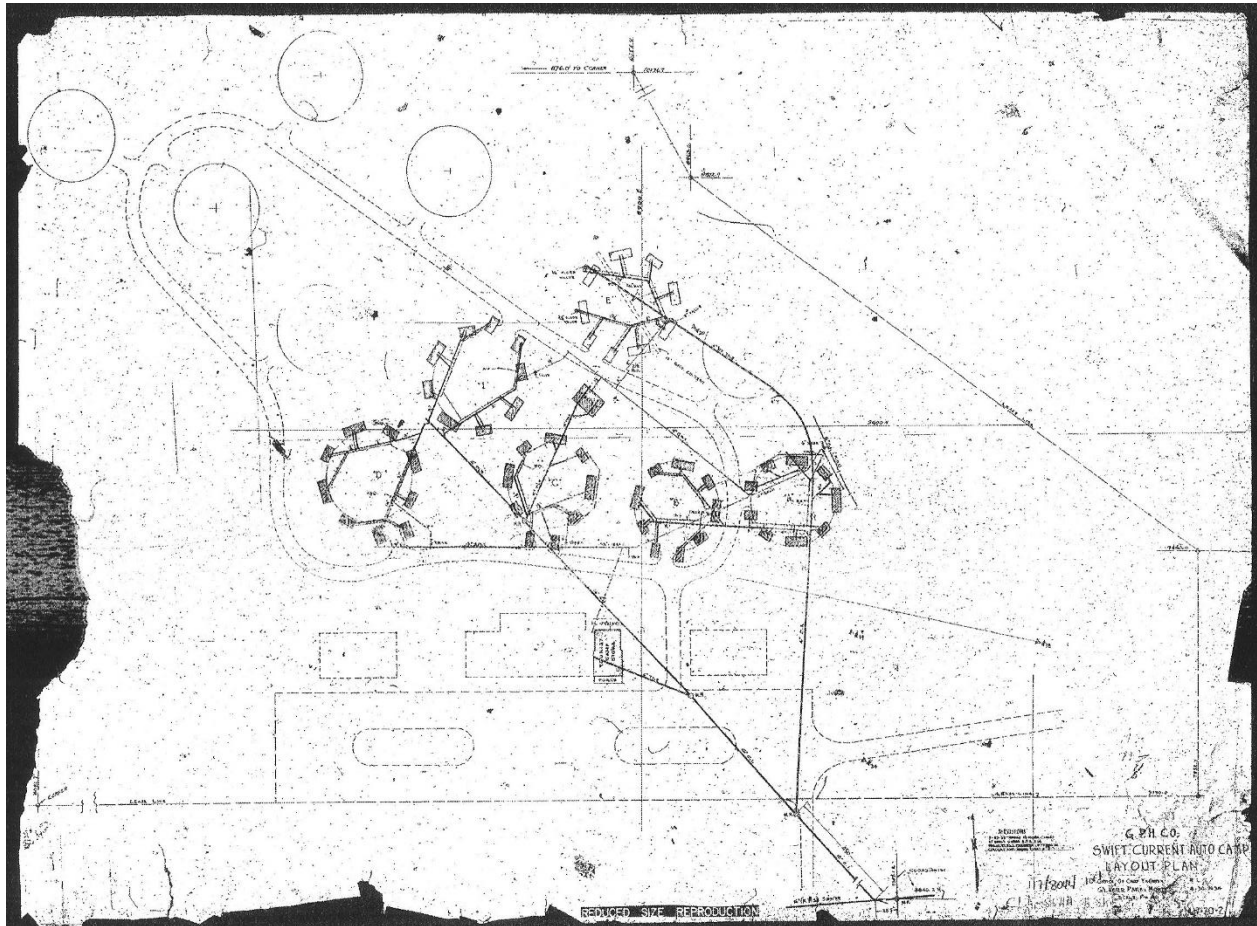


Fig. 11. Layout plan for Swiftcurrent Auto Camp. The area for expansion in upper left would eventually be taken up by the three motel units built in 1955. (Technical Information Center drawing.)

The architectural plan for the 1935 general store was prepared by Great Northern’s architect Thomas McMahon and approved by NPS (Fig. 12). The rectangular floor plan had a store occupying the front half of the building with soda fountain to the rear, and a storage room and small bedroom behind the store/soda fountain. The rustic design featured exposed log post and beam walls with vertical siding between posts, a shallow-pitch gable roof, a chimney made of stone, and a covered front porch with wood railing and decorative cross bracing beneath the eaves (Glacier Park Hotel Company, 1935).

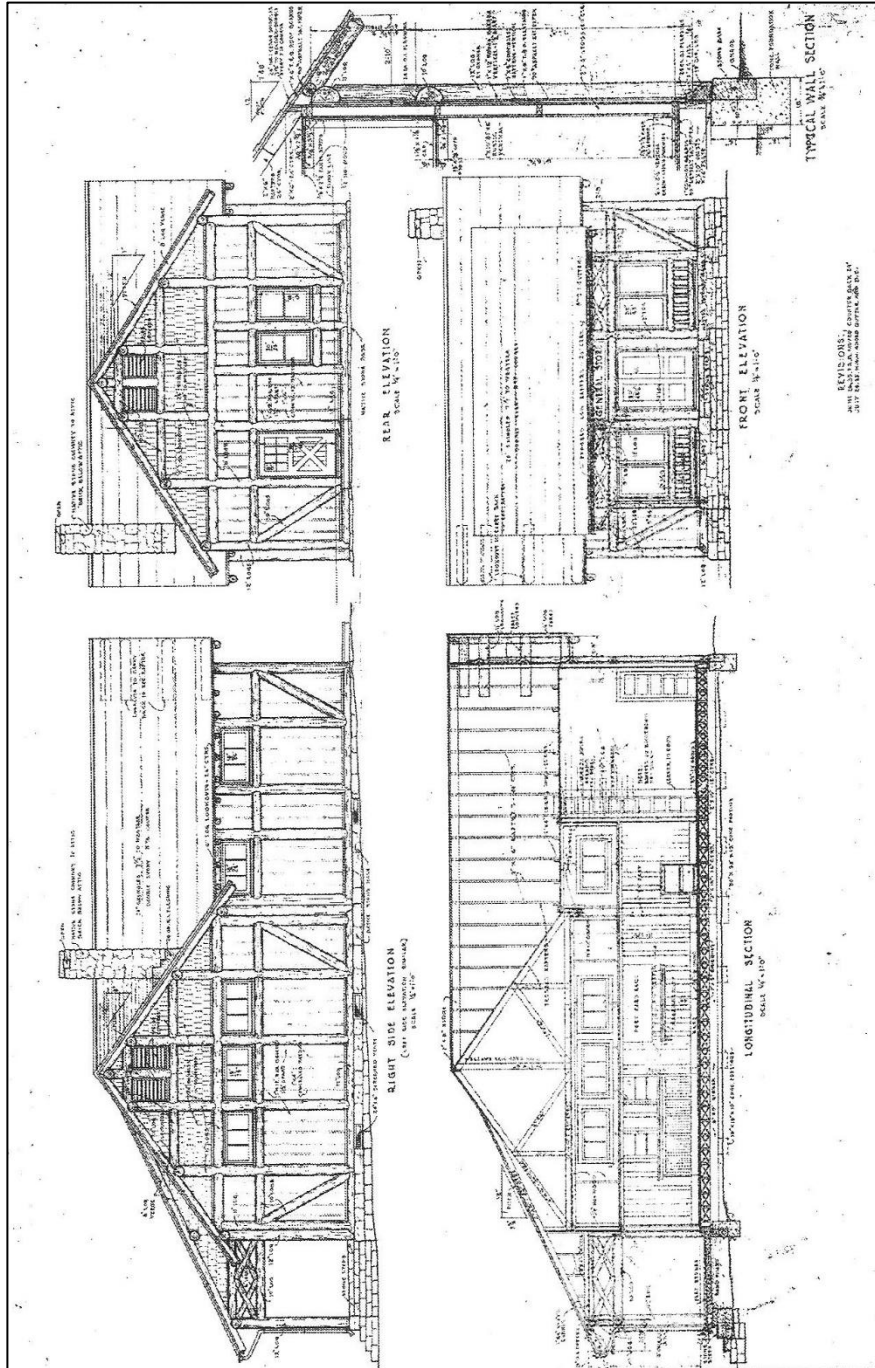


Fig. 12. The 1935 architectural drawings for the general store were prepared by Great Northern architect Thomas McMahon. Its original craftsman-style look was obscured after an addition was built and the whole structure was covered with lapboard siding in the 1950s. (Technical Information Center drawing.)

The development of the auto camp accompanied the expansion and modernization of the Many Glacier Campground. The redesigned campground featured a single loop road about 1,240 feet long with a camp tender's cabin and a comfort station built inside the loop and a second comfort station built at the end of the loop (Godfrey, 2016). Designated campsites were strung around the insides and outsides of the loop road. The layout followed the principles developed by the eminent plant pathologist E. P. Meinecke, a consultant to NPS, who noted the effects of soil compaction on vegetation where the early style of campground permitted campers to pitch camp wherever they pleased and trample the ground indiscriminately. Meinecke's prescription for campground design included individual campsites carefully laid out so each camper had a contained impact. All campsites had equivalent amounts of sunlight and shade, tent space, and privacy from neighboring sites. All were equipped with a vehicle parking stall, picnic table, and campfire grate in fixed position. The object was to limit trampling and contain soil compaction to a small portion of each campsite to protect forest health in the campground area (McClelland, 1998, 276-85).

Just three years after it opened the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp was mostly destroyed in the Heavens Peak Fire (Fig. 13). The lightning-caused fire started on August 18, 1936 on a spur of Heavens Peak. It smoldered for several days and then spread to the Garden Wall on the west side of Swiftcurrent Pass. For several more days it smoldered on the steep slopes above the Going-to-the-Sun Road. Then, on August 31, around mid-morning, strong winds brought it out of the crevices in the cliff and drove it over the ridge and down the Swiftcurrent Valley in a matter of hours. Superintendent Scoyen said the wind in the Swiftcurrent Valley later that morning was of hurricane strength, causing the blaze to race down the valley to Boulder Ridge, east of Many Glacier Hotel, in just two hours. Besides ravaging the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp, the Heavens Peak Fire scorched much of the new Many Glacier Campground, destroyed nearly all the government buildings in the administrative area, and took out some of the chalets across the road from Many Glacier Hotel. Many Glacier Hotel and other concession buildings belonging to the Swanson Boat Company, the Glacier Park Transport Company, and the Park Saddle Horse Company were saved from the conflagration due mainly to protective action taken by the employees (Scoyen 1936; Scoyen, 1938).



Fig. 13. View of the Swiftcurrent development area following the Heavens Peak Fire. Cabin Circles A and I escaped while others burned. The cabins appear to be in Circle I as viewed from the parking plaza. (Library of Congress photo.)

The Heavens Peak Fire was much smaller than the devastating Halfmoon Fire of 1929. The Heavens Peak Fire burned an area of about 9,000 acres while the Halfmoon Fire burned about 47,000 acres in the park and about 100,000 acres altogether. But the Heavens Peak Fire

was dramatic in the swath of destruction it made through the popular Many Glacier area. Scoyen wrote to the director: "I have never seen as complete a burn-out as occurred in Swiftcurrent Valley." Scoyen wired the director on September 2: "The Swiftcurrent Valley was absolutely denuded of all trees and practically all other vegetation however two thirds of the timber at public auto camp escaped damage" (Scoyen, 1936). Within the Swiftcurrent development area the timber that did not burn in the 1936 fire still survives nearly a century later as a mature stand of fir trees, while the area that did burn in 1936 is now populated by smaller aspen trees.

Most of the housekeeping cabins in the auto camp were destroyed or damaged so badly that they had to be replaced. The general store escaped destruction. Based on a "Master Plan" dated 1937, it is thought that thirty-two cabins were lost and twenty-two were spared. All the cabins in Circle "B" were destroyed as were all but five cabins in Circles "C," "D," and "E." All the cabins in Circle "A" survived as did all but one cabin in Circle "I." The camp's shower facility also survived. The cabins that were lost were rebuilt in the same style and same exact locations as before (Hubber, 1995).

In the fall of 1940, the company built an addition to the general store that turned it into a store and lunch room (Vint, 1940; SAR, 1941, 2). The addition more than doubled the size of the building while preserving its rustic style of architecture. Great Northern's Thomas McMahon, the architect for the original building, prepared the architectural drawings for the addition as well. With the addition of a dining room and kitchen, the building now featured two more stone chimneys and a longer front porch. This addition should not be confused with a later expansion and remodel in the 1950s that once again doubled the size of the building and covered up most of its rustic features with horizontal wood siding, giving the building its present look. No photograph of the building in the 1940s has been found but a drawing in 1955 shows it to have been an attractive rustic-style building (Fig. 14).

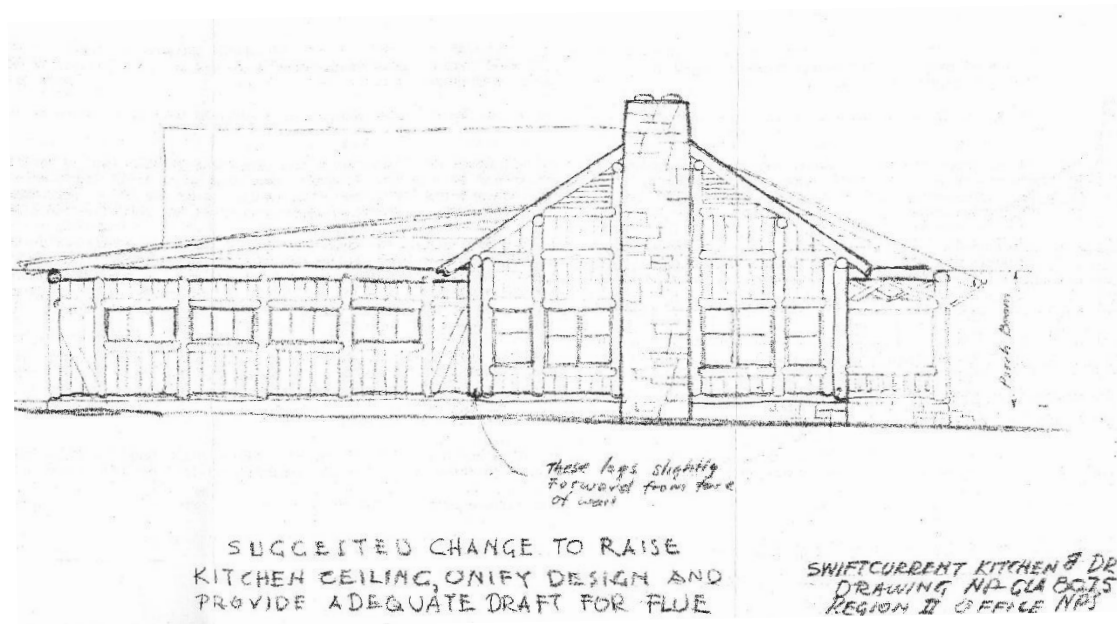


Fig. 14. This sketch of the general store was enclosed with a letter from the regional director to the superintendent dated February 23, 1955. (Folder 1, File Unit 040, Subseries 02.02, Historic Records, GNPA.)

The Glacier Park Transport Company, operated by Howard Hays, installed a gas pump in front of the Swiftcurrent General Store in 1940. It was located near the right front corner of the building. A photograph (HFC 1866) that purports to date from 1940 clearly shows the gas pump. A solitary parked vehicle in the photo is a 1940 Plymouth Coupe.

NPS plans for the Swiftcurrent development area included room for expansion. In 1941, NPS indicated its desire for the Glacier Park Hotel Company to add 40 more cabins in five more cabin circles. World War II intervened before the plan was implemented. The restrictions on travel during the war years and the continuing trend away from rail travel in the immediate postwar years put the Glacier Park Hotel Company in a difficult position, so the plan was set aside for almost a decade. But as Glacier visitation climbed higher in the late 1940s, NPS renewed its request for the concession to build more visitor accommodations. In January 1950, Regional Director Lawrence C. Merriam recommended increasing the total capacity of overnight lodging inside the park from an existing pillow count of 872 to 1,884, including an expansion at Swiftcurrent from 125 to 300 (Merriam, 1950). In February 1950, NPS Director Newton B. Drury wrote to Great Northern's president, F. J. Gavin informing him of NPS's overall plans for visitor accommodations in Glacier and requesting a meeting. Drury stated that the need for additional facilities, last broached in 1941, was now "many times more acute" (Drury, 1950a).

In the ensuing correspondence between Gavin and Drury, the railroad executive reviewed the concession's financial troubles through the years and the formidable cost of rehabilitating and modernizing facilities not just at Swiftcurrent but throughout the park, and he conveyed the heavy news that Great Northern, after forty years of service to NPS, would probably pull out of Glacier at the expiration of Glacier Park Company's twenty-year contract, on December 31, 1951, less than two years hence. Gavin reminded Drury that Great Northern built the Glacier hotels and chalets to attract business to its railroad, and since the advent of the automobile the whole picture had changed. In 1950, a paltry 1½ percent of park visitors traveled to Glacier by rail. The company calculated that it would take a whopping \$9 million to rehabilitate and expand its park facilities. Considering the other demands on its capital investment, Great Northern had to shed its Glacier hotel operations (Gavin, 1950).

In the month of April 1950, the railroad president delivered a fifteen-page memo to Drury explaining his company's assumptions and conclusions. The salient points were first, that NPS wanted new development to focus on more auto camps, which was far from Great Northern's original purpose of investing money in park accommodations to stimulate rail travel; second, that through the years the Glacier hotel operations had been unprofitable and they would likely remain so; and third, that a new twenty-year contract would likely be on terms that the company would find unfavorable, such as a forty-hour workweek for concession employees. This memo disclosed interesting financial data, such as the development cost, depreciated cost, and net income for each one of the company's seven facilities in Glacier (Many Glacier Hotel, Lake McDonald Hotel, Swiftcurrent Auto Camp, Rising Sun Auto Camp, Sperry Chalets, Granite Park Chalets, and Two Medicine Chalets) plus its two facilities outside of the park (Glacier Park Hotel and Prince of Wales Hotel). It claimed a total capital investment in facilities of \$4,080,801, and a net book investment on the property after depreciation of \$482,135. Giving revenue figures for the seven facilities in Glacier for the last season only, it revealed that the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp was the only one to earn income; the Rising Sun Auto Camp, Lake McDonald Hotel, and

Two Medicine Chalets virtually broke even, while all other facilities operated at a considerable loss (Great Northern, 1950).

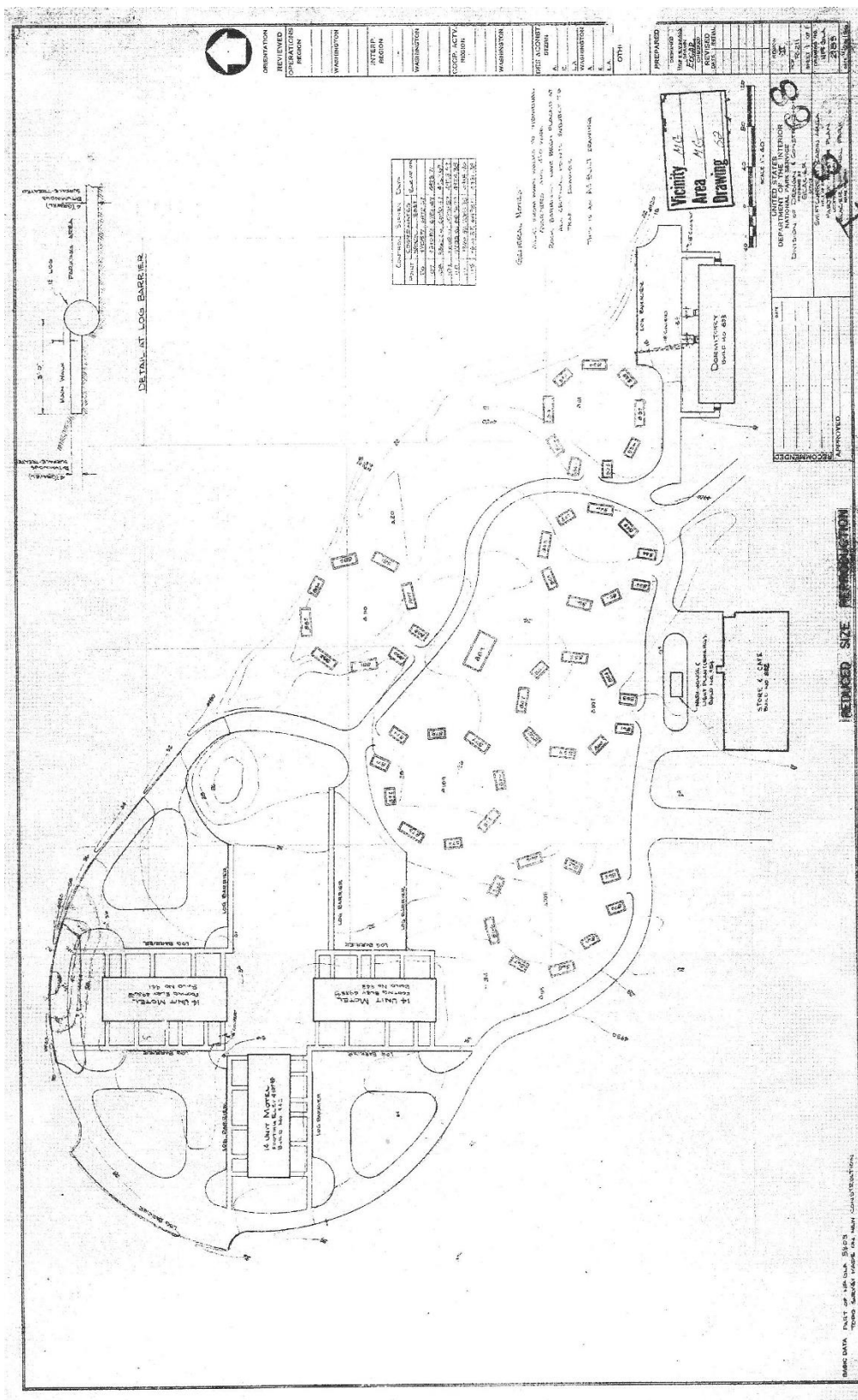
NPS responded with a counterproposal for a development program that would accommodate more people at less cost than what Great Northern envisioned. The plan focused on facilities other than the Swiftcurrent auto camp; for instance, the plan nixed rehabilitation of the Lake McDonald Hotel in favor of an entirely new auto camp at Apgar. Drury wrote to Gavin that the NPS proposal would accommodate 2,838 visitors parkwide compared with 2,332 under Great Northern's plan and would cost an estimated \$7,960,000 as opposed to an estimated \$9,325,000 under Great Northern's plan. But NPS did not attempt to counter all the other reasons that Great Northern gave for jettisoning its Glacier hotel operations (Drury, 1950b).

Great Northern held to its position that it would soon relinquish its operations in Glacier. However, NPS obtained assurances from the railroad that the railroad subsidiary would continue to operate the hotels on a year-to-year contract while NPS searched for a new concessioner. Year-to-year contracts came to govern the strained partnership for four years until Great Northern entered another long-term contract in November 1954 with the understanding that NPS would find a competent party to take over the concession and compensate the railroad for its possessory interest in its Glacier facilities. Once the long-term contract was secured, plans to expand visitor facilities including the Swiftcurrent development were at last put into play again (Price, 1952; Allen, 1952; Budd, 1953a; Budd, 1953b; Matthias, 1954; Budd, 1955).

The joint program of capital investment adopted at the end of 1954 focused on new facilities and improvements at Lake McDonald, Swiftcurrent, and Rising Sun. The concession improvements planned for Swiftcurrent were as follows: additions to store and dining room, remodel of cabin office, installation of toilets in 33 cabins, installation of kitchenettes in 20 cabins, construction of a 20-room employee dormitory, and construction of a 14-room motel. The total estimated cost for the concession improvements at Swiftcurrent was \$358,000. Concurrent with the concession improvements, NPS was to put in water, sewer, and power extensions and new roads and parking areas at an estimated cost of \$162,900 (Wirth, 1954; Budd, 1954).

For the new motel units, Great Northern furnished architectural plans to NPS, then the Western Office of Design and Construction (WODC) made recommendations, and then the concession modified the plans and resubmitted them (Fig. 15). NPS did not get every modification it wanted. For example, the WODC twice raised concerns that the motel unit at Swiftcurrent should have double windows rather than single windows to bring more light into the rooms but the company insisted on single windows. As for the locations of buildings, the WODC provided a landscape plan, which the concession followed. It placed four motel units in an X pattern northwest of the existing cabin circles in the area formerly intended for five more cabin circles (Fig. 16). While Great Northern had committed to build just the first one of the planned motel units, it built three in the spring of 1955 (Sutton, 1955a; Emmert, 1955a; Hill, 1955; Sutton, 1955b; Emmert, 1955b; Baker, 1955; Emmert, 1955c; Joseph, 1955; SAR, 1955).

Fig. 15. NPS Western Office of Design and Construction prepared this plan for the motel units but Great Northern ultimately used its own plan. (Technical Information Center drawing.)



These improvements were made on the cusp of Mission 66, NPS's ten-year plan to modernize national park facilities and prepare the national parks for an estimated 80 million visitors by 1966. While the motel units exhibited an unaffected design, they nonetheless announced the NPS's adoption of modernist architecture in place of the exaggerated craftsman or "government rustic" style that had prevailed in national park architectural design since 1916. Critics of Mission 66 assailed the NPS for overdeveloping national parks and abandoning the longstanding policy of designing buildings to harmonize with the environment. The new motel units at Swiftcurrent did not draw the ire of Mission 66 critics, but they were at the leading edge of the wave of modernist architecture that the Mission 66 era brought to Glacier and other national parks. Ethan Carr, author of *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, observes that the criticism of NPS modernist architecture confused harmony with something else, an aesthetic preference for the pseudo vernacular form of government rustic. While it was true that a hallmark of the government rustic style was to incorporate native materials and to use colors and lines that made buildings blend into their natural settings, Carr notes that modernist architecture could and did aim for the same thing, using low profiles and horizontal massing as well as natural materials, rough textures, and color schemes (Carr, 2007, 133-36).

The motel units at Swiftcurrent exhibited all the traits identified by Carr (Fig. 17). Eventually, with forest growth, the three new motel units would hide among the trees almost as effectively as the smaller, older cabin circles did. What really bothered Mission 66 critics was that the modernist design in the national park context seemed urban, common, and not distinctive to national parks. The new motel units at Swiftcurrent, while architecturally plain compared with the Many Glacier Hotel, certainly succeeded better than the hotel did in blending into the landscape. The motel units were hardly visible to anyone but motel patrons. That was in sharp contrast with Many Glacier Hotel, standing picturesquely and grandly on the shore of Swiftcurrent Lake.



Fig. 17. Built on the cusp of Mission 66, the motel units displayed a modernist architectural style that departed from the NPS tradition of government-rustic craftsman. (Glacier NP photo HFP 6950. D. H. Robinson photo.)

NPS had no choice but to adopt modernist architecture. To expand visitor accommodations in Glacier by constructing more grand structures like Many Glacier Hotel was not economically feasible nor desirable. Modernist architecture met NPS requirements in ensuring that new construction was cost efficient and practical. As Carr points out, "New postwar building technologies made construction more rapid, economical, and efficient. No builder could afford to ignore labor-saving techniques such as the prefabrication of structural elements, innovative uses of steel and concrete, curtain wall construction, and extensive applications of glass" (Carr, 2007, 137).

When it came to visitor accommodations, Mission 66 had to respond to changing public demand. The vacationing American family wanted motel rooms with private bath, free linens and towels, central heat, and convenient parking all at an affordable rate. The old-style housekeeping cabin was too primitive; the grand park hotel was too fancy. The only way concessioners could provide what the public wanted was to build new accommodations in the modernist style of the plain, shoebox motel.

The employee dormitory was built in the same plain, modernist style as the motel units. The large addition to the general store drastically altered the appearance of that building as it turned the building into a long, low structure. Initially, the addition was designed to match the architectural features of the existing building with its exposed log structure, board and batten siding, and single pane fixed windows and stone porch floor and steps. Between 1955 and 1960, the exposed log structure was covered by lapped siding, the stone porch was removed and replaced with concrete, and the log porch baluster, columns, and frieze were replaced with dimensional lumber. With these changes the building lost its craftsman-style look from the interwar period and acquired the more modern look of the Mission 66 period (Architectural Research Consultants, 2002, 22).

Plans to install toilets in 33 cabins were set aside. At some point, toilets and showers were installed in three cabins in Circle A and two in Circle C. For all other cabins, separate toilet and shower facilities continued in use (Merritt, 1981; Hubber, 1995; Architectural Research Consultants, Inc., 2002, 22). A statement in the superintendent's annual report for 1963 that toilets and showers were installed in 45 cabins appears to have been in error (perhaps the project was cancelled) because many of the cabins still do not have toilets and showers to this day.

Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins, 1960 to the present

Reflecting the national trend in the leisure travel industry from auto camp to motel, Swiftcurrent Auto Camp was renamed the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn. The new name graced the roof of the general store after 1959 (Architectural Research Consultants, 2002, 22). NPS officials continued to refer to the development as an auto camp through the 1960s, however (Fig. 18).

The concession contract with Glacier Park Company was terminated in 1960 and a new 25-year contract was made with Don Hummel's Glacier Park, Inc., effective January 1, 1961. Hummel bought out Great Northern's possessory interest in park facilities, including the Swiftcurrent development. Great Northern's departure marked the end of an era for Glacier. No

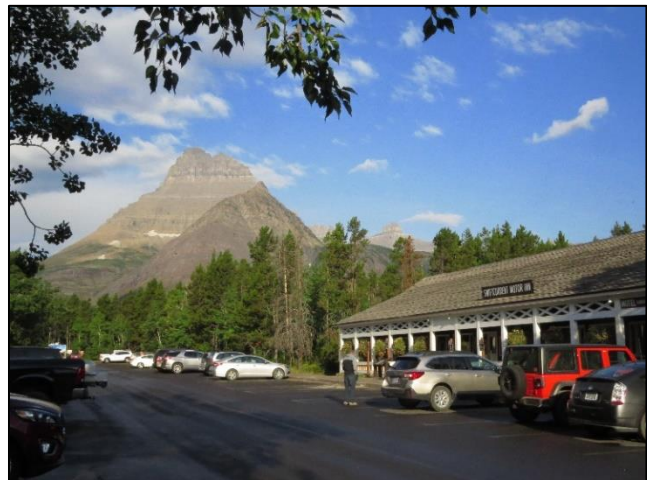


Fig. 18. The Swiftcurrent Store in 2018. With the addition in 1955, its new, long dimension gave it a different appearance. (Author photo.)

other park contains such a strong architectural legacy from the railroad era of national park development. There would be two more changes in Glacier's prime concessioner from 1960 to the present: a subsidiary of Greyhound Corporation took over from Hummel in 1981 (keeping the name Glacier Park, Inc.) and Xanterra Parks & Resorts, Inc. succeeded Greyhound in 2013.

Changes to the Swiftcurrent development area over the past 60 years have been minor. Two opposing impulses shaped the physical history of the site throughout this modern era. One impulse was to modernize the site with improvements such as installation of private bathrooms, better separation of employee and guest areas, and revamping of visitor circulation. Four times, NPS posed alternatives that would have made significant changes to the area when it prepared a new master plan for Glacier in the 1970s, a development concept plan for the Swiftcurrent development area in the 1980s, a general management plan for the park in the 1990s, and finally a commercial services plan in the early 2000s. The opposing impulse was to keep the area basically the same. This impulse rested on two principles. One principle was NPS's commitment to historic preservation: the Swiftcurrent cabin circles and camp store were deemed historically significant for the role that the auto camp played in Glacier's transition to automotive tourism in the 1930s and 40s and for the historic architecture of the buildings and layout. Another principle was NPS's commitment to public input in its planning process, which, in each of the four planning exercises that occurred through the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and early 2000s, exposed a strong public desire to "keep Glacier the way it is." NPS inferred from the public response that it had a responsibility to maintain the existing mix of motel and cabin accommodations at present levels of use as a "traditional use" (Fig 19).

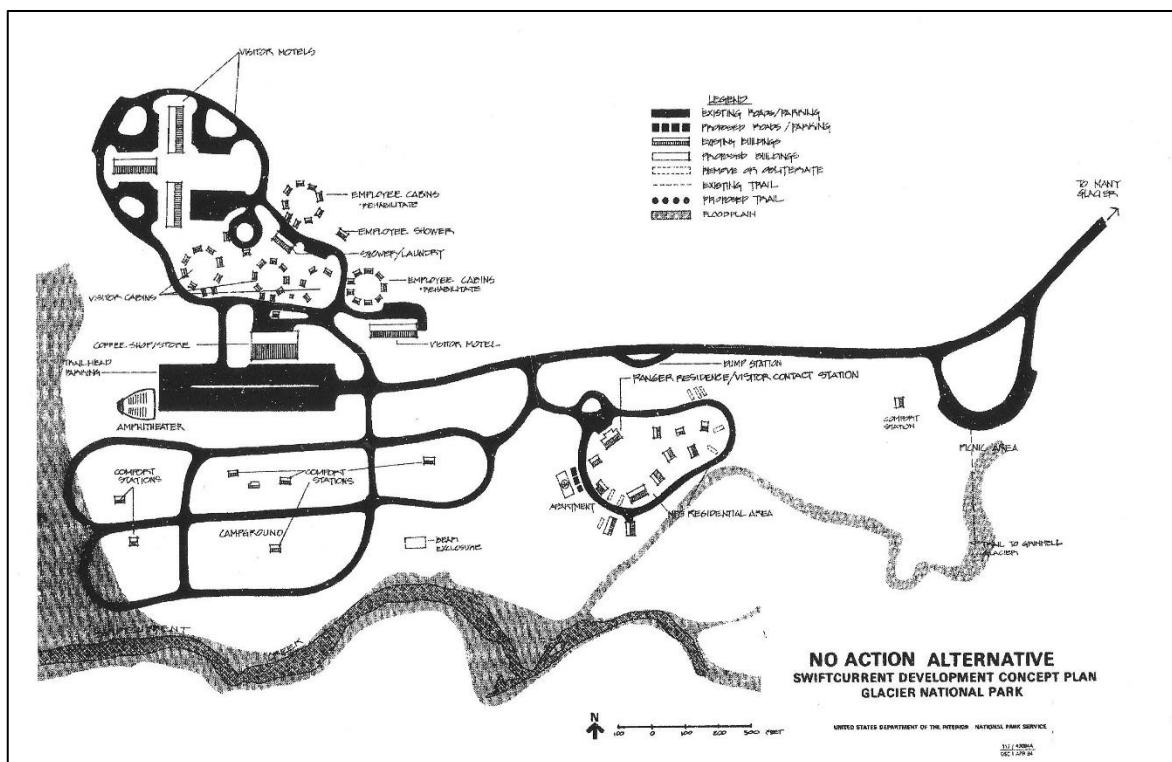


Fig. 12. Swiftcurrent development area: existing conditions in 1984. (Technical Information Center drawing.)

There were six cabin circles in the original layout and each cabin circle had nine cabins, making a full complement of 54 cabins. The cabins were assigned NPS building numbers 835 through 888. When Hummel prepared an opening balance sheet for NPS in 1963, he stated the number of cabins as 50, but it was probably given as a round number since he gave the same number for Rising Sun (Hummel, 1963).

In the 1960s, the cabins were not yet viewed as cultural resources. They had been slated for removal in the 1950s and survived through the 1950s and 60s more from neglect than from any sense of historic preservation. Around 1968, ten cabins were removed from Circles B and I and transported to Lake McDonald Lodge where they were converted into an employee dormitory. About the same time, all cabins in Circles A and E were converted to employee housing for the employees of the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn. The former employee dormitory was converted to guest rooms and named the Pine Top Motel (Merritt, 1981). These changes reduced the number of structures in the cabin circles from 54 to 44, of which just 26 still served their original function for guests.

Around 1969, woodburning stoves in all cabins were replaced with electric heaters. Stovepipe holes remained in evidence long after the wood stoves were removed. Woodsheds distributed through the development area were left standing for several years, too. In the 1970s several things were done to clean up the area: the woodsheds were removed, overhead wires were undergrounded, cabins were reroofed, exteriors repainted, interior wood floors and wood trim were painted, and cabins received new furnishings. The Pine Top Motel rooms, formerly called “half-baths” because they had toilets and sinks but no showers or bathtubs, were each equipped with a shower stall. The Pine Top Motel rooms were carpeted (Merritt, 1981; Munro, 1977; Hummel, 1978).

Some building plans indicated placement of boilers for heating systems, but there were no specifications that make clear what type of heating fuel would be used or any other details about tank specifications. Early plans show diesel-fueled heat systems and generators, but no specifications or details. The plans for the Mission 66-era motels suggest a change was made from an oil-burning hot water plant to electric hot water heaters but the record is unclear. Another record indicates that a 2,000-gallon heating oil tank was removed at Swiftcurrent in 1989. The gas pump was removed but the date of its removal is not known. Gas pumps located in the vicinity of Many Glacier Hotel and Sherburne Dam were also removed.

The public scoping for the *Glacier National Park, Montana, Final Master Plan* of 1977 broached the potential conflict between wilderness values and the existing level of development in the Swiftcurrent Valley. The Many Glacier area was described as “the hub of the park’s wilderness trails.” Moreover, it was an ecologically sensitive area where vegetation had a fragile purchase and wildlife including grizzly bear and bighorn sheep faced pressure from increasing levels of human activity. Nonetheless, public input on the planning process convinced NPS that removing visitor services at Swiftcurrent was not an option. The plan stated, “while facilities may be upgraded or replaced, their type, amount, and general location will remain the same” (National Park Service, 1977).

NPS made another try at modernizing the Swiftcurrent development area with preparation of development concept plans for three areas in Glacier: Many Glacier/Swiftcurrent, the Lake McDonald Lodge vicinity, and the Sun Point/Rising Sun/St. Mary area. Once again, the public scoping offered alternatives such as removing the motel units, removing the cabins, or removing the Many Glacier Campground, none of which found support with the general public (National Park Service, 1982). The final plan proposed to convert the Pine Top Motel back to employee housing, convert the cabins in Circles A and E back to guest use, and add a second shower/laundry facility that would serve campground users as well as cabin guests. It also proposed to move the Iceberg Lake trailhead away from the motel area and make other changes aimed at sorting out motel and trailhead parking and creating better separation between hiker, guest, and concession employee areas (National Park Service, 1986). Even these relatively modest changes failed to get public support or congressional support. The Pine Top Motel continued to serve guests and the cabins in Circles A and E continued to house employees. However, a second shower facility was added between Circles A and E.

Growing recognition of Glacier's historic structures tamped down further discussion of removing or greatly modifying visitor facilities at Swiftcurrent. Many Glacier Hotel was designated a national historic landmark in the mid 1970s. As NPS expanded the effort to inventory and record national park historic properties in the 1970s and 80s, architectural historian Mark Hufstetler prepared a draft narrative description of the Swiftcurrent development. He characterized the Swiftcurrent cabin circles as the "core of the Swiftcurrent concession area" and a "milestone in the history of Glacier's visitor services" reflecting the park's historic reorientation from the railroad age to the automobile age. Significantly, when Hufstetler made his study in 1988 the auto camp was just over 50 years old, the minimum age for considering a property "historic" under the National Register of Historic Places criteria. The Swiftcurrent motel units, dating from the Mission 66 era, were just 30 years old at that time (Hufstetler, 1988).

In 1993, Cabin A-7 in Circle A (Building No. 841) burned to the ground. The NPS promptly rebuilt it using in-kind modern materials following the general design in the original building plans. The reconstruction was cleared under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act with a finding of no adverse effect (Lusk, 1993).

Historic preservation efforts continued with the nomination of the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination was prepared under contract with Historical Research Associates, Inc. and was approved in 1995 (Hubber, 1995). The historic district boundary included the cabin circles and the general store but not the three motel units or the original employee dormitory (now the Pine Top Motel) because they were not yet 50 years old (Fig. 20).

Preparation of a general management plan for Glacier in the 1990s once again raised the matter of providing greater protection of wilderness values and ecologically sensitive areas in the park, which in turn put a spotlight on overnight visitor accommodations in places like Swiftcurrent Valley. Could such services be moved to lower elevations or replaced by services located outside the park? Once again, the public rejected those alternatives. The message that the planning team drew from the public response was "keep the park the way it is now." The

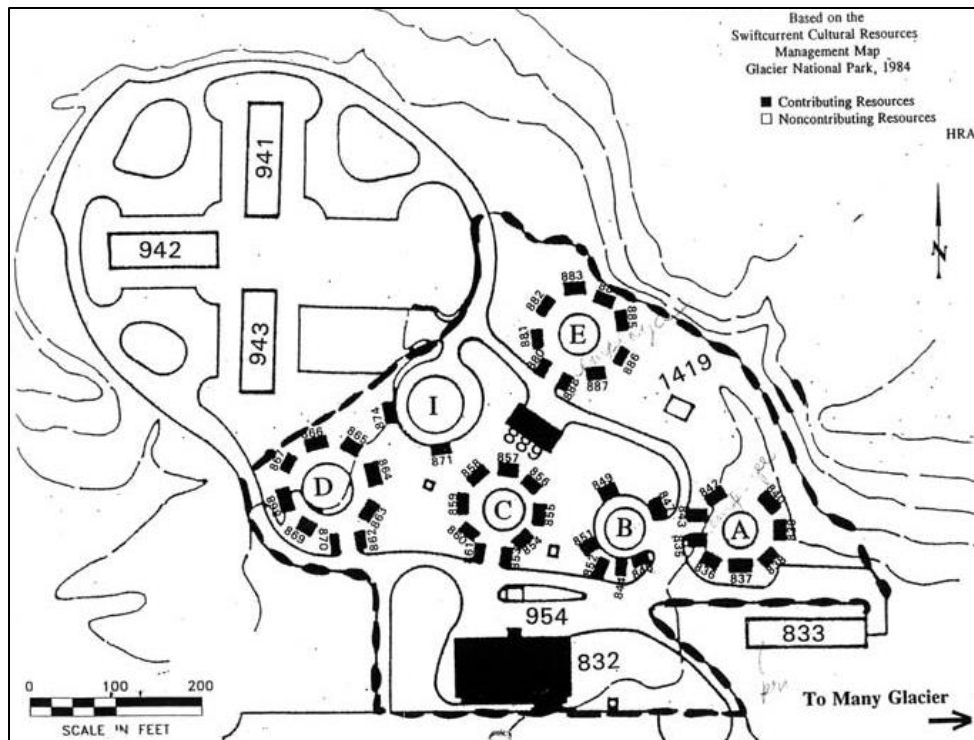


Fig. 20. This map accompanied the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp Historic District nomination form and shows the historic district boundary as recommended in 1995.

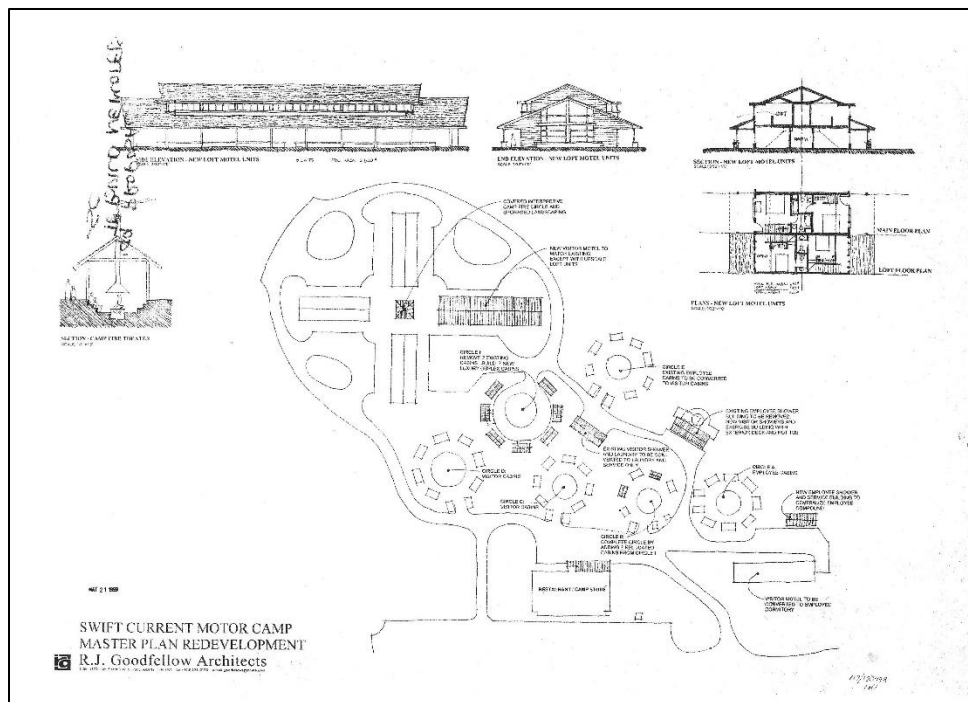


Fig. 21. One of many alternatives proposed and rejected, this one included a new motel unit and consolidation of employee housing. (Technical Information Center drawing.)

planning team developed a new set of alternatives that emphasized repair of existing park infrastructure. The final *General Management Plan* (1999) affirmed that the Swiftcurrent development would continue at current levels of use, noting that an asbestos hazard in the cabins would have to be removed (Fig. 21).

The planning behind the park's *Commercial Services Plan*, which followed on the heels of the *General Management Plan*, continued in the same vein. The park received more than 700 public comments and the planning team concluded that most people wanted to "keep glacier the way it is." In line with the earlier plan, the *Commercial Services Plan* affirmed that all existing overnight lodging facilities were necessary and appropriate for visitor enjoyment and would be preserved in the park as traditional visitor service facilities (National Park Service, 2005, pp. ES1-3, ES18-30).

As the twenty-first century unfolded, NPS and the concession stayed the course in blending modernization of the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and cabins with historic preservation and perpetuation of traditional visitor service. Modernization included installation of ramps and other amenities for better wheelchair access and new outdoor light fixtures to reduce light pollution (Fig. 22). Modernization involved such imperatives as bringing old buildings up to fire safety code with the addition of sprinkler systems, and it entailed catering to modern visitor expectations by equipping each guest room with hair dryers, irons and ironing boards, and coffee makers (Glacier National Park, 2013a).



Fig. 22. Modern updates include this ramp and hand rails providing access according to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines. (Author photo.)



Fig. 23. Cabin Circle C in 2018. (Author photo.)

In the fall of 2013, seven new cabins were constructed in Circle I, completing the circle of nine where only two historic cabins remained. Also, missing cabins in Circle B were replaced. The new cabins, designed by Architects Design Group PC, were in three styles each equipped with toilet and shower, yet compatible with the existing cabins. Meanwhile, the historic cabins were preserved, and visitors continued to have the opportunity to stay in old 1930s-style housekeeping cabins as such cabins became more and more rare across the nation (Figs. 23-24).

Archeological testing was performed in August and October 2013 in conjunction with the new cabin construction. The archeological work primarily involved monitoring ground disturbance as considerable ground area was excavated. Only modern artifacts (a paint can, an oil can) were recovered during the excavation. The cultural items were presumed to be associated with trenching activity performed for sewer and electrical line installation in the 1960s. In general, the excavations in 2013 revealed that the sewer system was shallow, aging, and not well documented, and that underground utility lines now present in the area are a “tangled mess” (Glacier National Park, 2013b and c).

Following the 2013 construction work, the grounds were revegetated with native seedlings and plants that were grown in-house. Original development plans in the 1930s did not specify vegetation treatments; however, they did show a general intent to retain natural vegetation within the development area.



Fig. 13 Swiftcurrent cabins in 2018. The cabins nestle among mature trees that have grown up since the Heavens Peak Fire. (Author photo.)

Existing Conditions

These building descriptions are adapted from the National Register registration form (1995) and are updated based on field visits in 2018. Building exteriors are described here. For description of building interiors, see the 1995 registration form.

General Store (Building 832)

The general store is a single-story wood- and log-frame building faced with lapped horizontal wood siding. The building consists of the general store, constructed in 1935 and now forming the east end of the building, and large additions forming the central lobby space and the coffee shop at the west end of the building, together with saltbox and shed roof additions on the rear of the building for added kitchen and laundry space. The building rests on a concrete foundation and has a partial concrete basement. A wood- and log-framed side-gable roof covers the whole front of the building. All prominent roof surfaces are covered with wood shingles painted green and doubled every fifth course (as per the original design). Built-up roofing covers the shed roof of the 1955 addition as well as the “hidden” rear gable slopes of the historic components. Roof features include boxed-in eaves, an interior stone chimney (offset within the rear gable slope of the 1935 component) and an interior brick chimney located within the rear (north) gable slope of the 1940s addition.

A large front porch runs nearly the length of the building. The shed roof that protects the porch is initiated high in the gable slope and is the dominant design element of the front elevation. The porch is wood-framed with numerous six-inch square columns (creating the

appearance of sixteen bays), two-inch square railings, and decorative cross-bracing beneath the eaves. The floor and access steps are constructed of concrete and handicapped access ramp is constructed of dimensional lumber and plywood. The three front-elevation doors are wood with large single-light windows. Front-elevation fenestration is dominated by large, single-light windows flanked by a pair of smaller, two-light windows. These window groupings are symmetrically placed in line with the “bays” created by the porch columns. The east elevation of the original (1935) component contains four three-light hopper windows. The rear elevation is now dominated by the 1955 addition. The 1955 portion of the rear elevation features several asymmetrically placed windows of divergent sizes and a modern glazed and paneled door. The 1940 portion of the rear elevation features two three-light windows and three modern service doors. All fenestration is wood framed. The building is painted brown with yellow and white trim and is in generally good condition.

This building underwent a substantial architectural metamorphosis in the 1955 remodel, changing from a small, log-framed general store to a substantial, lumber-sided building incorporating mercantile, lounge, and dining facilities. The dominant changes occurred, however, during the historical period. The current building retains much of its 1955 appearance and continues to contribute to our understanding of a major shift in NPS concession development made in response to changes in the leisure patterns of the American public. The building is a contributing component of the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp Historic District.

Two-Room Cabins

The two-room cabins are one story with a rectangular floor plan. Rough cut eight-inch lapped siding covers the exterior walls; green-painted cedar shingles cover the gable ends; there are also louvered window attic vents in the gable ends. Green modern metal panels cover the side gable roofs. The buildings rest on concrete pier foundations, many of which show signs of spalling. The single-entry doors, centered within the front elevation, are constructed of vertical boards and are paired with wooden screen doors. Circle A’s fenestration is unique within the Swiftcurrent complex: windows are six-by-six light sliding windows, while all other cabins (including those constructed concurrently with Circle A) have six-over-one double-hung windows. Front-elevation windows flank the entry. The two rear-elevation windows are symmetrically placed, one at either end of the elevation. There are no windows in the side elevations. All windows are paired with wood-framed window screens and with four-inch casings. The cabins are painted dark brown with yellow trim and are in generally good condition.

Three-room Cabins

The three-room cabins within the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp differ from the two-room cabins only in size, fenestration, and interior configuration. Rough cut eight-inch lapped siding covers the exterior walls; green-painted cedar shingles cover the gable ends; there are also louvered wood attic vents in the gable ends. Green modern metal panels cover the side gable roofs. The buildings rest on concrete-pier foundations, some of which show signs of spalling. The single-entry doors, offset within the front elevation, are constructed of vertical boards and are paired with wooden screen doors. Windows are six-over-one double-hung with four-inch exterior casing: two are located on the right of the entry, one is located to the left of the entry, and three line the rear elevation. The windows are paired with wood-framed window screens. The cabins are painted dark brown with yellow trim and are in generally good condition.

New Circle I Cabins (Buildings 1833-1839)

The new Circle I Cabins built in 2013 are noncontributing features. They are in three styles, A, B, and C. All styles are compatible with the older cabins and differ from them principally in the addition of exterior porches and handrails and, in the case of the style C, wheelchair ramps. Roofs are covered with shingles. Paint schemes are brown with yellow trim, with green-painted cedar shingles covering the gable ends.

Laundry and Showers (Building 889)

The laundry/shower building contains an original section on the southeast end (the showers/restrooms) dating to 1937, and an addition on the northwest end (laundry and eye-wash station/linen room), dating to 1957. A small storage room originally located between these two sections was converted in 1993 to a handicap-accessible shower/restroom.

The exterior walls of this one-story building are sided with eight-inch lapped horizontal wood siding with a wood-framed, side-gable roof. A break in the siding and eave line identifies the large addition constructed on the northwest end. The building has a concrete foundation, which extends on the southeast end to form an uncovered porch with dimensional lumber railing. Two windows within the south end of the addition have been boarded over. The west and east windows of the shower rooms have also been filled in. Doors to the restrooms and storage are constructed of board and batten. A pair of two-light doors provide access to the linen room. Windows are wood-framed, and largely eight-light hinged. The front (northeast) elevation, from east to west, contains two windows, two pedestrian doors, a set of double doors leading to the linen room and a window; five windows, symmetrically spaced, line the rear (southwest) elevation; features in the southeast elevation are limited to the entries to the men's and women's restrooms. Both entries are accessed by the foundation extension described above; there are no features in the northwest elevation. A wooden cupola on the roof provides ventilation in the shower area. Metal and pvc flues in both slopes provide additional ventilation. The building is painted dark brown with yellow trim. It is in fair condition; substantial settling and cracking have occurred.

Employee Shower (Building No. 1419)

This building was most likely built in the 1960s and is noncontributing. The building is surrounded by coniferous trees and grasses and is located northeast of the road access. The one-story wood-frame rectangular building rests on a concrete-slab foundation. Modern metal panels form the exterior wall surfaces and cover the gable roof. Windows are limited to one one-by-one sliding sash window on the north and south elevations. Metal two-light doors, one at both the north and south elevations, provide access to the separate men's and women's facilities. Vents in the gable ends and metal flues in the gable slopes provide ventilation. The building is painted brown with yellow trim.

Pine Top Motel (Building No. 833)

The Pine Top Motel was originally built in 1955 or soon thereafter to serve as an employee dormitory. It was renovated on the interior around 1968 to make it into a motel annex. The building is a long rectangular single-story wood-frame building faced with lapped horizontal wood siding. A wood-framed side-gable roof covers the building. All prominent roof surfaces are covered with wood shingles. The building rests on a concrete foundation.

At the west end of the building there is an extension of the foundation forming a walkway to the covered entrance, which is a booth-shaped extension with gable roof and open doorway. The door to the building inside the covered entrance is a two-light door. There is a louvered wood attic vent over the gabled entranceway and under the eaves of the upper gable.

The east end of the building has the same arrangement of an extension of the foundation forming a walkway (and steps) and an entrance door but without the gabled entranceway. This rear entrance door has a small single-light window.

Identical north and south elevations have seven symmetrically spaced six-over-one double-hung windows with four-inch exterior casing. The windows are paired with wood-framed window screens.

The building is painted brown with yellow trim on windows, doors and eave facings. It is closely surrounded by trees and brush on the long north and south sides. The building is in generally good condition.

Motel Units 1, 2, and 3 (Building Nos. 941-943)

The three original motel units were built in 1955 and are all of the same design. Plans originally called for four rectangular units to be arranged in the form of an X, but only three units were built on the north, south, and west axes of the X, while the east axis became a parking area for red buses.

Each building is single-story wood-frame building faced with lapped horizontal wood siding. Each one sits on a concrete foundation with porch extensions on the long sides of the rectangle. A wood-framed side-gable roof covers each building. All gables extend out two feet at the peak and angle back to a six-inch overhang at the corners. The roofs have a shallow pitch and overhang the porches. The roof overhang is supported by six-inch square columns spaced along the porch. Roofs are covered with wood shingles.

The floor plan for each unit features a double row of seven guest units facing the long exterior walls with private bathrooms in the back of each guest unit. Each motel unit also contains a service area located near the center of the building between the third and fourth guest units.

Each long elevation features eight two-light doors and seven two-over-two double-hung windows.. Each end elevation features two of the same style two-over-two double-hung windows. All windows are paired with wood-framed window screens with four-inch casings.

One of the three motel units is equipped with wheelchair access ramps and wood railings.

The buildings are painted brown with yellow trim on windows and doors and eave facings. Parking bays in front of each row of guest units are curbed with logs. Vegetation islands are distributed between the parking bays and the circumference access road, and natural vegetation including mature trees encroaches nearly to the building foundations in numerous places. The buildings are in generally good condition.

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Appendix 1. Historic Contexts, Primary Historic Function, Primary Current Use

The following are selected from pick lists in the *National Park Service Cultural Landscapes Inventory Professional Procedures Guide* (January 2009) and can be inserted in the CLI template.

Historic Contexts

The Historic Context Themes, Subthemes, and Facets for the Glacier National Park Swiftcurrent Development Area are:

VII. Transforming the Environment

C. Conservation of Natural Resources

- Origin and Development of the National Park Service
- Origins of the National Parks Movement
- The Conservation Movement Matures 1908-1941
- Scenic Preservation
- The Great Depression and Conservation

And

III. Expressing Cultural Values

L. Architecture

- Craftsman (1890-1915)
- Rustic Architecture
- NPS Mission 66

M. Landscape Architecture

- Protection of Natural and Cultural Resources
- The 1930's: Era of Public Works
- NPS Mission 66

Primary Historic Function

The Primary Historic Function (Major Category, Category, and specific descriptor) is:

02. Commerce/Trade

02A. Business

- Concession

Primary Current Use

The Primary Current Use (Major Category, Category, and specific descriptor) is:

02. Commerce/Trade

02A. Business

- Concession

Appendix 2. Chronology

Start Year of Major Event AD/BC	End Year of Major Event AD/BC	Major Event	Major Event Description
8000 BC	1891 AD	exploited	The Swiftcurrent Valley was used by American Indians as a travel corridor through the mountains and for subsistence and spiritual activities.
1792	1793	mapped	Peter Fidler of the Hudson's Bay Company wintered with the Piegan and explored the area. Chief Mountain appeared on an early map based on his notes. (Robinson, 1960, 7)
1818	1818	claimed	The Swiftcurrent Valley became part of the territory of the United States when the Convention of 1818 established the international border on the 49th parallel.
1855	1855	reserved	The Swiftcurrent Valley was included in the Blackfeet Reservation as established by the Treaty of Fort Laramie.
ca. 1853	1895	exploited	The Swiftcurrent Valley was occasionally visited by non-Indian trappers and prospectors in spite of tribal opposition. (Buchholtz, 1976, 37)
1891	1891	built	The Great Northern Railway completed its line through Marias Pass.
1895	1895	ceded	The Swiftcurrent Valley was included in an area ceded by the Blackfeet Tribe.
ca. 1898	ca. 1902	prospected	The Swiftcurrent Valley was prospected intensively, mines were opened, and a boom town of Altyn formed. (Buchholtz, 1976, 34-36.)
ca. 1885	1910	exploited	The Swiftcurrent Valley was occasionally visited by wealthy sportsmen.
1910	1910	reserved	The Swiftcurrent Valley was included in Glacier National Park, established May 11, 1910.

1911	1913	built	The Great Northern built Swiss-style chalets at Two Medicine, Cut Bank, Gunsight Lake, Sperry, Granite Park, Swiftcurrent Lake, and three locations on St. Mary Lake.
1912	1913	built	The Great Northern built its first grand hotel at Midvale.
1913	1914	improved	The Great Northern improved the wagon road from Midvale north to the Swiftcurrent Valley, which became known as the Blackfeet Highway, and it improved the mining road up the Swiftcurrent Valley to the area it called Many Glaciers.
1914	1914	established	The Great Northern formed a subsidiary, the Glacier Park Hotel Company, which operated all visitor facilities in the park developed by the railway.
1913	1915	built	The Great Northern built the Many Glacier Hotel as well as a chalet group first known as McDermott Chalets, later Many Glacier Chalets.
1910	1916	administered	Glacier National Park was administered by the Secretary of the Interior and a rudimentary park administration, which focused on the west side of the park while the Great Northern focused on the east side of the park.
1916	1933	administered	The National Park Service (NPS) administered Glacier National Park, and led by Stephen T. Mather and Horace M. Albright it developed a concession policy and took a more forceful role in managing the Glacier Park Hotel Company's park operations.

1916	1933	developed	The Mather-Albright years of national parks administration was a time of transition from the railroad era of national park development to the next stage of automobile-centered development and use; NPS developed Glacier and other national parks with roads and campgrounds.
1924	1925	developed	By 1925 Glacier had four public campgrounds, two on each side of the park, with one at Many Glacier.
1929	1930	planned	NPS communicated to the concessioner its desire to expand Glacier's visitor facilities to include auto camps to accommodate the growing numbers of middle-class park visitors coming by automobile.
1930	1930	planned	NPS development plan for Swiftcurrent included cabin circles and general store in the concession area and an improved public campground.
1930	1930	built	The Glacier Park Hotel Company, reluctant to invest in facilities at the onset of the depression, built a token structure to show it was making a start on the planned auto camp development.
1930	1931	developed	The Many Glacier Campground was developed in its present location with loop road, individual campsites, and toilet facilities.
1932	1932	planned	NPS pushed its development plan citing an urgent need for modestly priced accommodations.
1933	1933	built	The Glacier Park Hotel Company built the Swiftcurrent Auto Camp, the first of its kind in Glacier, starting with 27 cabins (Building Nos. 835-861) in three circles (Circles A, B, C).
1933	1933	built	The Going-to-the-Sun Road was completed.
1934	1934	built	The Glacier Park Hotel Company built three more circles (D, E, I), buildings 862-888.
1935	1935	built	The concessioner built the general store (Building 832).

1936	1936	destroyed	The Heavens Peak Fire burned most of the cabins and campground facilities. Cabin circles A and I and the store survived.
1936	1937	built	The laundry/shower facility (Building 889) was built.
1937	1937	built	The cabins that burned were all replaced.
1940	1940	built	An addition with kitchen and dining room was built on the store.
1941	1941	considered	NPS wanted the concessioner to expand the auto camp by adding 40 more cabins in five new circles, but World War II intervened before the project materialized.
1942	1945	closed	All visitor facilities in Glacier except for the Roes Creek (Rising Sun) Auto Camp were closed during World War II because of travel restrictions.
1950	1950	planned	NPS Director Newton B. Drury informed the Glacier Hotel Company of its desire to increase the total pillow count in Glacier from 872 to 1,884, including an increase from 125 to 300 at Swiftcurrent.
1950	1954	delayed	Expansion at Swiftcurrent was delayed while NPS negotiated a new long-term contract with Great Northern executives and the Glacier Hotel Company.
1952	1952	planned	While plans were in development, the Glacier Park Hotel Company determined that it would build motel units rather than more housekeeping cabins.
1954	1955	planned	The concessioner agreed to invest around \$1 million in expanded visitor facilities at Swiftcurrent, Rising Sun, and Lake McDonald, starting with Swiftcurrent in 1955 and Rising Sun the next year.
1955	1955	built	After NPS approved its architectural plans, the Glacier Park Company built three motels (Buildings 941-943).
ca. 1955	ca. 1960	built	The concessioner built an employee dormitory (Building 833) and put a long addition on the store/restaurant building.

1960	1960	renamed	The Swiftcurrent Auto Camp was renamed the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn and Cabins.
1960	1961	transferred	The Great Northern sold its possessory interest to Don Hummel, and Hummel's Glacier Park, Inc. entered a 25-year contract with NPS as the new prime concession, beginning Jan. 1, 1961.
1963	1963	added	According to the Superintendent's annual report for 1963, toilets and showers were added to 45 cabins but this statement was probably in error since many cabins do not have toilets and showers to this day.
ca. 1968	ca. 1968	moved	Ten cabins were removed from Circles B and I and transported to Lake McDonald Lodge where they were converted into an employee dormitory.
ca. 1968	ca. 1968	modified	All cabins in Circles A and E were converted to employee housing for the employees of the Swiftcurrent Motor Inn.
ca. 1968	ca. 1968	modified	The former employee dormitory was converted to guest rooms and named the Pine Top Motel.
ca. 1969	ca. 1969	modified	Woodstoves were removed from each cabin and replaced by electric heat.
1977	1977	considered	Scoping for the Master Plan of 1977 considered phasing out visitor services, but the final Master Plan affirmed that the location and capacity of visitor facilities would remain the same.
1981	1981	transferred	Hummel sold his possessory interest to Greyhound, which formed a subsidiary (taking name as Hummel's company, Glacier Park, Inc.) that entered a 25-year contract beginning Jan. 1, 1981.

1985	1985	considered	A development concept plan for Swiftcurrent proposed to convert the Pine Top Motel back to employee housing, to convert the cabins in Circles A and E back to guest use, and to add a second shower and laundry facility that would serve campground users as well as cabin guests.
1988	1988	recorded	Historic buildings (all those more than 50 years old in 1988) were recorded by Mark Hufstetler for cultural resource management.
1993	1993	destroyed and rebuilt	Cabin A-7 (Building 841) burned to the ground and was rebuilt using in-kind materials and original plans.
1995	1996	registered	The Swiftcurrent Auto Camp was recorded on a registration form by Ann Hubber and entered on the National Register of Historic Places.
1996	1999	considered	Scoping for the General Management Plan (GMP) of 1999 considered relocating visitor facilities, but the GMP reaffirmed that Swiftcurrent and other development areas would remain.
2000	2004	considered	Scoping for the Commercial Services Plan revisited alternatives in the GMP, while the final plan reaffirmed that Swiftcurrent and all other visitor lodging in the park would be preserved and maintained for traditional use.
2013	2013	built	The concessioner built seven cabins in Circle I to replace those long missing since the 1960s.
2018	2020	established	A Cultural Landscape Inventory was completed for the Rising Sun concession development area.