



## *First Steps toward a National Park Service 1915*

*On the morning of March 15, the Mather party entrained for the East. It consisted of Enos Mills, Robert Marshall, Mather, and me. At the last minute, Mark Daniels was added. He had heard nothing about participating in the trip until Mather called to tell him when the train would leave. He didn't even have time to shave, and later, in Chicago, he had to buy more clothes because Mather decided to take him on to Washington.*

*After a briefstop in Salt Lake City, we spent several days in Denver. Mather took every opportunity to publicize the parks. I began to notice an odd thing: that when he spoke, improvement of roads, concessions, and increased tourist travel were his primary concerns. A drive for a national park bureau either came in second or not at all. Most of our time was spent with individuals and business groups interested in Rocky Mountain National Park, which had been created on January 26, 1915, and questions Enos Mills brought up concerning it.*

Besides Enos Mills's persistent pushing for extensions to Rocky Mountain National Park, there were delegations urging Mather to promote other new parks in Colorado, particularly a Denver National Park (the Mount Evans region) and a Pikes Peak National Park. He flatly stated that he would not consider anything outside the jurisdiction of the present Rocky Mountain National Park, that he was not interested in "proliferating" new parks when the established ones required so much to bring them up to his standards. But he lavishly praised the areas being promoted and assured their backers that he would keep them in mind.

He did make one bad slip that was to haunt him in the future. Talking about his upcoming meeting with Governor George A. Carlson, he told the *Denver Post* that "there are many matters in which the Department of the Interior will need the cooperation of the state government. We expect to grant concessions for hotels within the park area and *for summer homes as well*" It was a real slip, for Mather did not approve of inholdings in parks and surely didn't want to add any new ones.

This was an example of how his oratory could carry him away. At the time I thought it would be drowned out in his enthusiastic pep talk on travel: "What we want to do is to get the people coming to this new park. It is not a local park. The people of Chicago are interested almost as keenly in having it created as are the people of Denver and Colorado. It is the nation's park, and what we will seek to do will be to bring as many as possible of the people of the nation here to enjoy its delights." He added that he had arranged for the National Geographic Society to publish an article by Enos Mills about the new park and would have national publicity when the park had its formal dedication in September 1915.

On the March 20, while Mather and I were in conferences, Mark Daniels made a tour of the Denver mountain parks with Frederick Steinhauer, the park engineer, and came back most impressed. He gave an interview to the *Denver Post* and discussed national park rangers for the first time, I believe:

I expect to be back here in May to begin the organization of your Rocky Mountain National Park as a national tourist and health resort. I will, first of all, have to select two men of Colorado for duty in the park as members of the national parks ranger service. That is a great body of men. It is a service that we are working on now to get it quite clear of all politics and of all political influence. We want to make it as great and as fine a service as the Canadian Northwest police; we want to make it as devoted to the public welfare and as proud of its work, even prouder. The men who get into the national park rangers service must be competent horsemen. They must be skilled in woodcraft. They must know about animals and birds and trees. They must be capable of caring for a lost baby or giving first aid to the wounded tourist. They must be sober men, absolutely healthy. They must be courteous and good tempered. The national park rangers service must be their ambition and their life. The national parks are the playgrounds of the people

of the United States, and the rangers must be men of the kind who can be depended upon and trusted and honored by everybody.

I cut that article out of the paper and saved it as one of the finest statements ever made about rangers.

Our visit to Denver concluded with a dinner in our honor given by the Colorado Mountain Club at the University Club. The president of the club, James Grafton Rogers, had been a fellow journalist on the *New York Sun* with Yard and Mather some years before. We had a lot of fun listening to the adventures of the three fellow journalists in the old days in New York.

As we were about to board the train for Chicago the next day, Mather delivered these soaring words to the assembled reporters: "Bring the whole world to Colorado to admire and wonder at your matchless mountain scenery, to enjoy your splendid climate and to make the best possible use of your new national playground, the Rocky Mountain National Park."

As soon as Mr. Mather was back in Washington, he directed all his attention to ways and means of getting the national parks more widely known. He felt he had to get people to use the parks before he could get legislation and appropriations. Too few people knew about them. He believed that Congress had the cart before the horse, that it wouldn't appropriate money until proof was furnished that the parks were being used. Yet with no roads, trails, or other facilities, the parks couldn't be used. The only way to get ahead was to show that people were actually using their parks. So Mather put Yard to work on a giant publicity campaign.

There was quite a problem with Yard. We had no bureau, no money separate from the individual parks, no one to help us unless we "borrowed" people from other Interior departments. Although Mather was paying Yard five thousand dollars a year (about double Mather's own salary), he was not a government employee and therefore not entitled to an office or secretary. Mather got him put on the Geological Survey payroll at one dollar a month so he would have franking privileges and could travel at government expense. He then had me find office space for him. Only rooms under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department could be obtained, so I looked around and dug up two in the Bureau of Mines, which was located in a different building, a block away on E Street. I "borrowed" a secretary from the Biological Survey for a while until Yard could hire one from the outside. Mather paid for the secretary too.

Mather and Yard turned all their attention to their publicity campaign. They whipped up support by waves of articles in newspapers and other publications across the country. Mather personally contacted writers he knew to pump out stories about the national parks and invitations to tourists to come to them.

At the same time, Yard began a dynamic publication, *The National Parks Portfolio*. It had two forms. One was a buckram folder in which were put pamphlets on the various parks. Grand Canyon was included although it had yet to be created a park and wasn't even under the jurisdiction of the Interior Department. The other edition was bound in a dark green hard cover. When the publications were sold to the public, the prices were thirty-five cents for the buckram, fifty-five cents for the hard cover. They came out in early 1916. They were written by Yard, with fine pictures donated by many sources—individuals, government, railroads, and others. Mather even prevailed on the Reclamation Service to detail its photographer to tour many of the parks and take both motion pictures and still views. He used many of the latter in the portfolio.

Mather himself put up more than five thousand dollars for the plates or cuts of the pictures, and he persuaded twenty-one western railroads to pay for the printing, about forty thousand dollars. The contract to publish the book was awarded to Scribner's, probably by the railroads. More than 350,000 portfolios were issued and mailed out to libraries, travel offices, editors, and others by the Interior Department from lists made up by the General Federation of Women's Clubs.

Later in 1916 a smaller edition was published, called *Glimpses of Our National Parks*, with an edition of 2.7 million copies, which were sold in the parks and in bookstores. This was a simple, all-in-one cheap paper-bound booklet, but the text was by Yard and contained a great many of the fine photographs found in the portfolio.

One of my jobs was to supervise the clerks handling this distribution. However, the publication and mailing didn't go smoothly. One day when Mather was out of town, I was called in by Secretary Lane. He said he'd just returned from a cabinet meeting at which Postmaster General Albert Sidney Burleson had informed him that publications were going into the mails not properly mailable under franking laws. He had demanded an immediate report.

Lane smiled wryly at me and said, "Horace, It looks like some of my associates are going to jail." I immediately contended that the book was government property and had been accepted as a gift from Mather just as

the Tioga Road had been. Lane passed this on to Burleson, who promptly rejected it. Lane called me back again and said, "You've got to think of something better. This fellow doesn't like me and doesn't like my department. And Wilson likes him a lot better than he does me."

Well, I decided to be like the Greeks and bear gifts, so I took one of our few leather-bound copies of the portfolio, had it wrapped at a gift store, and made an appointment with Burleson. I took the precaution of bringing along a number of our green hard-bound copies for his aides. Burleson was delighted with his gift, and we heard no more about the franking problem. Of course, when he was about to visit Yellowstone the next year, he called me up and gave it to me pretty straight that he expected somewhat of a free ride at hotels and other facilities. I told him politely that the army was in charge of Yellowstone, and I could do nothing.

The publicity radiated by Yard almost immediately produced results. Along with the public's heightened awareness of their "pleasuring grounds" came real progress for the parks in a general sense. As one example, a provision in the Civil Sundry Bill of March 3, 1915, authorized the secretary of the interior to accept land donated for park purposes. This made possible the donation of the Tioga Road and the Giant Forest in Sequoia to the government.

Mather delegated to me the everyday operation and problems in his office as they arose, as well as liaison with congressmen regarding the park service bill to be presented at the next session of Congress. He paid little attention to anything except public relations. He traveled constantly. He made an extended trip to the West Coast in May 1915. Part of it was on the Desmond hotel business in Yosemite, and another was a visit to Mount Rainier.

At the supervisors' conference in March, Mather had decided to let the matter of replacing worthless managers drift until he could find replacements. He had to make a change in Mount Rainier, however. When Lane became secretary of the interior, he fired the Rainier supervisor, Edward Hall, and replaced him with a real hack politician named John J. Sheehan. He was old and incompetent, and complaints to Mather said he was skimming off government money into his own pocket.

Mather found Sheehan worse than reported and promptly fired him, replacing him with Dewitt Reaburn. This was Mather's first "field" change and first experienced supervisor, a former topographical engineer from the Geological Survey. Before Mather even got back to Washington,

however, the situation erupted, and I was summoned to Lane's office. He had received a tearful letter from Mrs. Sheehan, pleading with him to reinstate her husband. It seems that Lane had been in love with Mrs. Sheehan before either had married. Lane was very upset and asked me, as a lawyer for the department, what he could do. I in turn went to our department solicitor, who dug up a commissioner's job in Tacoma for Sheehan. Sheehan ended up with a better job at a higher salary.

Mather again returned to California the next month by way of Grand Canyon. Secretary Lane had directed him to see about a memorial to John Wesley Powell. A fund of ten thousand dollars had been appropriated for the Interior Department to erect a fitting memorial to the intrepid explorer of the Colorado River. He had been the first man to travel the length of the Colorado and go through the Grand Canyon by boat, in 1869 and 1872.

Mark Daniels had designed a bronze memorial plaque, and Mather seized on the opportunity to dedicate it by letting forth a stream of publicity to raise the interest in and awareness of the Grand Canyon. "Make this unbelievable wonder your next national park," he proclaimed to the press. But he found himself stymied about the plaque because a crafty Arizonan by the name of Ralph Cameron had filed mining claims on Sentinel Point, where the plaque was to rest. This just made Mather more angry and determined to safeguard this great chasm by creating it a national park, and he left the problem of placing the plaque to me when I was to come to California later in the summer.

In between cross-country trips, Mather raced around the East Coast cities, involved in publicity efforts. Sometimes he had me accompany him. I made my first trips to Boston and New York. In the latter we stayed at the Chemists Club, where Mather kept a permanent suite. One night we went to the Ziegfeld Follies, where Will Rogers performed his roping tricks. Another time Mather took me up to his ancestral home in Darien, Connecticut. Belonging to him now, it had been in the family since the 1600s, a beautiful white colonial home on a large wooded estate.

Sometimes I could slip away to enjoy the interesting events of our capital city. Around this time, there was to be a reenactment of the Grand Army of the Republic victory parade of May 23-24, 1865, to promote further "healing of the wounds." All Union and Confederate veterans were invited to participate. I was a member of the Interior Department's planning group and found ways to have two veterans I knew be brought to Washington to march in the parade: John W. Meldrum, U.S. commis-

sioner (judge) for Yellowstone Park, and R. A. Sneed, superintendent of Platt National Park. Coincidentally, although in opposing armies, they were both wounded at Fredericksburg. It was a memorable sight to see hundreds of these proud soldiers marching to the stirring band music of "Dixie" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" while their battle-scarred flags waved above them. Like thousands of others lining the avenue, I had tears in my eyes, realizing the horrors they had suffered in the war of brother fighting brother.

Because the tourist season of 1915 was almost on us, there was an urgency to ready the parks for the anticipated increase in travel. Mather appointed a committee to investigate whether automobiles should be allowed into Yellowstone. Colonel Brett, the superintendent of Yellowstone, was to be the chairman.

However, Mather was too impatient to wait for Colonel Brett's evaluation. He heard that the House Appropriations Committee was to tour western reclamation projects, so he got himself attached to it. He simply couldn't sit still in the office. He felt he had to run the parks out in the field. If he could get key men into the parks and they could sit on a rock and talk things out, they could settle problems in a hurry.

He was back on the Pacific coast in June, where he rented a large house at 2231 Piedmont Avenue in Berkeley and set his wife and daughter up there for the summer. He spent some time in Los Angeles with his partner, Thorkildsen, on their Sterling Borax Company business as well as continuing problems with the Tioga Road.

Mather caught up with the Appropriations Committee and steered them through Yosemite, where he arranged to bunk with the irascible chairman, John Fitzgerald. He trailed along with them to other parks. Wherever they went, Mather showed them the terrible conditions in the parks—roads, sanitary facilities, transportation, food and lodging. He also pointed out what they (and their appropriations) could do to rectify the problems. In Yosemite he outlined his "master plan" for roads, the "village," and new accommodations.

In Yellowstone Mather showed the committee the problem of these roads and the conflict between automobiles and stagecoaches and let them in on the decision to allow cars to enter on August 1, 1915. Almost one thousand tourists enthusiastically drove their autos around the Loop in Yellowstone in that one month before snows closed the park.

While on the trip out west, Mather saw what effect this person-to-person approach had produced. He had gained enormous influence and

personal friendship through firsthand experiences. So why not get a group of influential people from various fields of expertise together, take them out in a national park, and gain their enthusiastic support for Congress to pass a bill creating a park service? Why not dramatize the parks by getting editors, congressmen, publishers, and businessmen to go? After all, they couldn't write or drum up interest in the parks unless they knew about them firsthand.

Mather excitedly laid the plan out to me, and I was just as enthusiastic. "There's no time like the present," he said. "We'll make the trip this summer."

He chose Sequoia as the park to visit, for he felt the Sierra Nevada was the most spectacular scenic area we had in the system. Also, he was deeply interested in the enlargement of Sequoia with the addition of the spectacular Kings and Kern River canyons. By letting his party experience this area, he hoped to emphasize the need to add it to the existing park.

Out of his own pocket Mather would pay for everything for everybody—transportation to and from California, the latest camping equipment, all expenses of the pack trip including food and cooks. The trip would be for several weeks and would include twenty or thirty people. It was a grandiose scheme, but by now I knew him well enough to realize that the expedition would be a once-in-a-lifetime experience and exactly in his style. After Secretary Lane had given his wholehearted approval, we went to work on it immediately.

Mather drew up a long list of prospects, and I contacted them either by letter or in person. The original selection of thirty-one was pared down to twenty, as many had previous commitments. Robert Marshall of the Geological Survey was put in charge of the "Mather Mountain Party," as it was quickly dubbed. He had spent many years in the Sierra, had explored every part of it, and was eager to help, for he loved the parks and had an ambition to head a park service once it was created. He went to California immediately and began to organize the expedition.

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As mentioned before, Ralph Cameron of Arizona had made a great deal of trouble for Mather because of his mining claims in Grand Canyon. (He made a great deal more trouble when elected United States senator in 1920.) This had resulted in Mather's inability to get the John Wesley Powell plaque situated. Mather directed me to go to the Grand Canyon on my way from Washington to California. He wrote from the park when

he was there in June: "You will find the Powell bronze panel reposing on the front porch of the hotel. I got it out of the box myself yesterday and put it up there. Thanks to Mr. Cameron, we are held up in the location of the monument, owing to the fact that he has plastered a claim all over Sentinel Point."

My stay at Grand Canyon was brief, as I could do nothing about the Powell plaque except find a better place to store it than on the porch of El Tovar Hotel. As a matter of fact, it wasn't permanently placed and dedicated until some seven or eight years later.

From Grand Canyon I hurried on to Visalia, California, to join the other Mather Mountain Party members, who gathered on the night of July 14, 1915.

Now let me get back to the Tioga problem. Earlier I related that Mather had put down one thousand dollars of his own money and had gotten commitments of almost another fourteen thousand from others for the toll rights to the Tioga Road. Many had reneged on their promises, however, and other problems arose to prevent getting this abandoned road into condition for tourist use in the summer of 1915.

Mather had a one-track mind about Tioga. It was going to be opened for entrance to Yosemite from the east while the San Francisco and San Diego expositions were drawing the tourists. So he kept pouring in his own money. I don't know how much. Finally he decided he'd get others to chip in to pay him back.

I never did know how he arrived at the exact amount he said the parties could "subscribe" for the Tioga Road, but I do know that he ordered me to try to collect. I wasn't the only one, for I know Thorkildsen, Dohrmann, and several other San Franciscans had lists of "subscribers" too. Mather said I was to get a subscription of five thousand dollars from the Inyo Good Road Club, an organization based in my hometown of Bishop. For a long time Bishop had been pushing for a trans-Sierra highway, so I guess Mather felt they would be ripe to ante up for the Tioga project.

There was only one stumbling block. No one in the Inyo Good Road Club had the faintest idea about who had "subscribed" for them and how on earth their poor little organization could ever dig up five thousand dollars. I questioned Mather, but he just brusquely told me, "Get the money."

I immediately wrote an old friend of the family, Will Chalfant, who was the editor of the Bishop newspaper. He replied, "We cannot learn

that anyone on behalf of Inyo has ever pledged this county for such an amount; in fact, we are informed that the suggestion was made by a representative of the Southern California Automobile Club, while his own organization promised nothing."

When I relayed the gist of the letter to Mather in California, he was furious, saying that Inyo and Mono Counties should be grateful for all the publicity and tourist travel they would receive because of the Tioga Road. And he let me understand in no uncertain terms that he held me responsible for delivering the money. It didn't matter how.

I was simply miserable and really had no idea what to do next. When you are only twenty-five years old and regarded as scarcely dry behind the ears by your old neighbors, how do you handle them? And if you don't obey your superior, what will he do? Well, I wrote Chalfant and got some sage advice from the old man (mainly telling me to calm down).

I never mentioned the subscription again to anyone. When asked by Mather about the Inyo Good Road Club, I simply said they had no money to donate. Fortunately, the money needed was somehow "subscribed"—almost all coming from San Franciscans. I never knew of any record that was kept of the total cost and total subscribed. Mather rounded most of it up himself, and if enough was not raised I suppose he just wrote another check. Also, when the legal procedures for turning the road over to the United States were completed, the government stepped in to clean up and regrade the road, so that it was passable for the tourists by midsummer of 1915. The whole episode was a rough learning experience for me, but it did work out all right in the end.