
# *The Mather Mountain Party*
## *1915*

*The Mather Mountain Party was one of the greatest adventures of my life and one ihat had an enormous impact on the history of the National Park Service. Members had been arriving for several days by automobile as well as by the private railway car of E. O. McCormick of the Southern Pacific Railroad. The group gathered for the first time on July 14, 1915, in Visalia, California, at the Palace Hotel, for a dinner party hosted by local businessmen. It was a Mexican dinner, not for the weak-hearted, but probably designed to see who would be capable of enduring the exigencies of the mountain party. Later someone reported that "the coolest condition was the Tabasco sauce."*

The mountain party was a fascinating mixture of occupations and personalities. The Interior Department contingent, besides Mather and Albright, included Mark Daniels and Robert Marshall. Others were Burton Holmes, renowned lecturer, world traveler, and author, and his cameraman, Frank Depew; Emerson Hough, popular novelist and magazine writer, an ardent conservationist; Gilbert S. Grosvenor, director of the National Geographic Society and editor of its magazine; Peter C. Macfarlane, novelist and writer for such magazines as the *Saturday Evening Post;* Congressman Frederick H. Gillett of Massachusetts, ranking Republican on the House Appropriations Committee and at sixty-five the oldest member of the party; Ernest O. McCormick, vice-president of the Southern Pacific Railroad, a forceful business promoter and leader in the development of Crater Lake National Park; Henry Fairfield Osborn, pres-

ident of the American Museum of Natural History and the New York Zoological Society, paleontologist for the Canadian and U.S. Geological Surveys; Ben M. Maddox, owner and publisher of the *Visalia Daily Times*, general manager of the Mount Whitney Power Co., and leader in the development of Sequoia National Park; Wilbur F. McClure, California state engineer, the man responsible for construction of the John Muir Trail to connect Yosemite Valley with Mount Whitney; George W. Stewart, Visalia attorney and newspaper editor who had organized the publicity campaign to create the Sequoia and General Grant National Parks; Clyde L. Seavey, member of the California State Board of Control (state finances); Henry Floy, electrical engineer from New York City, Mather's brother-in-law; F. Bruce Johnstone, Chicago attorney and close friend of Mather's; and Samuel E. Simmons, Sacramento physician and brother-in-law of Robert Marshall. Lending critical support were Sequoia National Park Ranger Frank Ewing as chief packer and the Chinese cooks for the Geological Survey, Ty Sing and his assistant Eugene.

The next morning, Thursday, July 15, we were up bright and early, had a good breakfast, and climbed into cars provided by Mather and various Visalia businessmen. The route to be traveled to Sequoia National Park, up sixty miles and six thousand feet, was the narrow, rut-filled, steep, and torturous Colony Mill Road. It was a terrible road, so bad that the passengers often had to pile out of the cars and push to get them over the worst places.

At Cedar Creek camp, halfway up the mountain, we came on an awful mess. There were papers, tin cans, and parts of lunches scattered all over on the ground. Mather stopped the cars and got Gillett and McCormick to help him pick up the debris. When it was spotless, Mather left a sign warning, "We have cleaned your camp. Keep it clean."

The weary travelers felt that the long, trying ride to Sequoia Park was well worth the pain as we gawked at the giant redwoods. A camp was laid out on the floor of the Giant Forest.

A word about the equipment for the outing: earlier Mather had written his guests that he would provide transportation, food, bedding (newfangled air mattresses and sleeping bags), and services. They only had to be responsible for their personal needs. "Our suitcases and city clothes will be left behind when we leave Visalia," he told them, "to be expressed around the point from which we leave the mountains, so that they will be available when we come out." Even so, although there were levis, boots, and western hats present, everyone wore a shirt and tie up the mountain.

That night, after we had changed to "great outdoors" clothing, dinner was served—a sumptuous one prepared by Ty Sing, who was to be the camp cook for the next two weeks. He had been handpicked by Marshall, who knew him from Geological Survey expeditions as the finest gourmet "chef" available. Ty Sing had worked for the survey for twenty-eight years, and for this trip he had brought Eugene, another USGS veteran, as his assistant.

A famous picture was taken by Gilbert Grosvenor to commemorate the "dinner under the redwoods," as Mather called it. It was served on a long table, covered with a white linen tablecloth, but our seating was on logs and, where they ended, wooden boxes. Although we had had little knowledge of each other just the day before, we seemed like old friends by the end of the first evening in Sequoia. Nicknames even emerged: "Chief" Marshall, "Tenderfoot" Grosvenor.

After the fine repast, sleeping bags and air mattresses were laid on the pine-needled floor under the giant trees. Mather warned everyone to stay away from areas where debris might fall, but Grosvenor, unafraid, laid out his bed against a mighty redwood trunk. I felt Grosvenor was so important that I said I'd join him and even offered to inflate his air mattress, thinking how difficult it would be for an eastern "greenhorn" to do this at six thousand feet. I had to show off a little by scorning the use of a pump. Instead I just used my lungs to blow it up. What's more, I stood on the mattress while inflating it. Emerson Hough tried to do the same for Maddox, but had to use a bicycle pump.

This first quiet night in the woods came to an early and abrupt end when Johnstone and a fellow member of the Sierra Club introduced their new comrades to the fine points of mountain reveille. The rousing Sierra Club yell not only woke everyone up but jolted a few nerves to boot.

After breakfast the Wranglers brought around horses and mules to be assigned to members of the party. Most picked mules; a few elected horses. Before we left, a famous photo was snapped by Grosvenor that later appeared in the *National Geographic Magazine,* It showed thirty men, arms outstretched, encircling the General Sherman Tree, the largest in the world. Of course, it took the addition of two horses, hidden by the trunk, to complete the circle.

Back in the saddle, we set off through the Giant Forest, led by Walter Fry, supervisor of Sequoia National Park, who, along with a park ranger or a visiting scientist, explained the natural features to us as we rode along.

Arriving at Moro Rock, Mather insisted that everyone, old and young, out-of-shape or not, make the tough climb to the top of this giant outcropping. What little breath we had left after scaling the dome was sucked in when we silently gazed at the awesome panorama of the Sierra Nevada through which we were about to travel.

The following morning, after another ear-jarring Sierra Club yell shook the Mather party out of their sleeping bags, Ty Sing served an enormous breakfast of fresh fruit, cereal, steak, potatoes, hot cakes and maple syrup, sausage, eggs, hot rolls, and coffee.

Horses and mules stood by to be packed and mounted. Ty Sing selected the two most gifted-appearing mules and, from this morning on, would not let another person touch them. One mule carried linens, silver, dishes, washtubs, and Japanese lanterns. The other had two sheet-metal stoves along with Ty's pots, pans, utensils, and special sourdough starter. Each morning Ty would fix a new batch of dough from this venerable starter and pack it next to the mule's warm body. In his own words, this is how it worked: "We late. No time raise biscuit beside hot coals. We got to hustle. Mule get hot on all day trail and raise dough under stove and pots he carry on back. So we got hot biscuit for dinner all right. See?" "Major Domo" Sing rode next to these two mules but never took his eyes off the animals that carried the fresh fruit, eggs, meat wrapped in layers of wet newspapers, and other food.

The weather was perfect, warm and sunny with a soft breeze stirring the high branches of the sequoias, as the Mather Mountain Party slowly wound its way out of the Giant Forest.The saddled riders, followed by the pack outfit, numbered about thirty men and fifty horses and mules. Macfarlane and Stewart had dropped out at Giant Forest.

All day we enjoyed the beauty of the country except for the incessant photography of Frank Depew, who filmed us with both still and motion picture cameras. Of course, everything we did had to be repeated endless times until he was satisfied with his artistic achievements. Over and over, Depew ordered the party to halt as he arranged his scenes. Emerson Hough finally snarled at Holmes, "Look, if I'm going to be a movie star, I want to get paid."

After crossing 8,6oo-foot-high Panther Gap, the party descended into the mile-deep canyon of the Middle Fork of the Kaweah River, then stopped for lunch at Buck Canyon. Ty Sing would cook deluxe meals at breakfast and dinner but couldn't spare the time to unpack the mules for lunch, so in the morning he made up individual lunchbox meals.

After our midday meal, Mather suddenly jumped up, stripped, and leaped into the icy waters of a nearby stream. Challenging the party as "chickens" and caroling out some appropriate "Buc, Buc, Bucs," he lured in a few brave souls, including McClure and Seavey. Suddenly he spotted me and yelled, "Albright, come on in! This is your native Inyo County water."

Alas, I had never learned to swim because the waters in Bishop were icy Sierra streams, so I shouted back, "I can't swim here. This is Tulare County water."

In the early afternoon we reached our destination for the day, Redwood Meadow, a beautiful area on private land, outside Sequoia National Park. It contained one of the loveliest groves of sequoias in the Sierra. Mather later bought it with his own funds and donated it to the United States government. Arriving at the meadow, we found our pack train unloaded and dinner being prepared.

"Roughing it" was not a term to be used for our dining. As it was every night on our trip, the table was set with a snowy white linen tablecloth and napkins, silverware, and china. Ty Sing and Eugene somehow managed to wash and iron the linen each day in addition to packing, traveling, unpacking, baking, and cooking meals.

Another routine was set up when darkness fell and the air became crisp. Prank Ewing, the head packer, built a roaring fire, and we gathered around it, discussing the events of the day and the wonder of our surroundings.

Sunday, July 18, was a bad day for Ty Sing. One of his mules had been packed early, then let out to graze. When the time came to leave, the mule could not be found. Everyone frantically searched. No mule. Mather impatiently said to forget it, that time was more valuable than the mule. Well, that was all right for Mather, but poor Ty was nearly in tears. This particular mule carried the "delicacies," so no more cantaloupe, fresh lemonade, or sardines and crackers.

The late start affected the party's timetable, and a change of plans had to be made: abandon the route through Farewell Gap and go only as far as Mineral King. We arrived at the Johnson camp in Mineral King about noon, so we had a wonderfully free afternoon, resting, fishing, and exploring. Osborn and Grosvenor set off with cameras and binoculars. Maddox scribbled notes for the *Visalin Times*. Emerson Hough was fascinated with the intricacies of packing and spent his afternoon with the men who handled this chore. From then on, he more often rode with

the pack train than with the saddle group. Naturally, Depew was out taking photos. The energetic ones followed Mather in scrambling around the woods and eventually finding some more cold water for a swim. I'd been afraid this would happen, so I had sneaked off into the woods before Mather could catch me.

As if to prove that the tragedy of a lost mule could be overcome, Ty Sing and Eugene spent the whole afternoon whipping up a fabulous dinner of soup, salad, fried chicken, venison and gravy, potatoes, hot rolls, apple pie, cheese, and coffee. Some smart aleck asked where was the vanilla ice cream for his apple pie.

A question arose about the route for Monday. Marshall and McClure, the most knowledgeable about the Sierra, suggested the party cross the Great Western Divide via Franklin Pass rather than Farewell Gap. It would be shorter, faster, and easier. Mather agreed to that and then added, "We don't want to leave any bones behind us." Well, someone immediately asked what was this about bones. Mather solemnly described the hazardous terrain, the steep trail, sudden violent storms, rock avalanches, rattlesnakes, fierce mountain lions, and ferocious bears. And bones? Well, you saw them along the trail. Here and there. Animal and human. Just ignore them. They were just a fact of life in the hazardous Sierra!

Two of the hardy mountaineers slept on Mather's words. Or maybe didn't sleep, for in the morning Burton Holmes proclaimed that he had an ulcerated tooth. Although Dr. Simmons examined him and found nothing wrong, Holmes was adamant that he and Depew would wait at Mineral King for the scheduled stagecoach, although it wouldn't be there for several days. Mather felt pretty bad about the results of his kidding, but later admitted that he had wanted to see how the "fearless world traveler" Holmes would react. Of course, he got more than he bargained for.

Due to this unexpected event, another late start was inevitable. To speed up the journey, the Inyo County boys, McClure and Albright, along with Johnstone, volunteered to hike the steep, grueling trail with the pack train. It was slippery granite sand rising almost four thousand feet in just five miles. The crossing of the Great Western Divide, the approach to barren Franklin Pass, was particularly hard, weaving between the uptilted slabs and the mounds of old snow. At the summit of 11,600 feet, we silently gazed across the lesser granite peaks of the Sierra to the first sight of Mount Whitney, the highest mountain in the continental United States. Hough summed up the scene when he wrote: "North, south, east and west are mountains, and again mountains—and such mountains! A

sort of delirium seizes one in surroundings such as these. The world seems very far away, and one seems put back into some primordial state of being in which civilization has not yet dawned."

In the afternoon, there was a steep descent into the gorge of the Kern River via Rattlesnake Creek. It was a magnificent experience except for the trail, which wound down in endless switchbacks. Sometimes seven or eight layers of horses and mules were in view, some heading one way and others seeming to be going the opposite direction. Off and on there were lush meadows, but many were gnawed flat by grazing cattle, which badly disturbed Mather. Once we came across the evidence of a snow slide a few years before with hundreds of trees uprooted or broken off above ground.

Halfway down, Johnstone dared everyone to plunge into an icy pool scooped out of a tangle of rocks. "Here we go again," I said to myself. And sure enough, Steve Mather was the first to drop his clothes and wade in, flapping his arms and making chicken noises to the others. Only four brave men got wet. And I can assure you I was not one of them.

Near the floor of the Kern River Valley, the trail suddenly dropped off about two thousand feet. This last precipitous descent had all but the hardiest gasping and worn out. Even after we reached the level floor of the steep-walled canyon, we still had four miles to ride before reaching camp at Upper Funston Meadow.

While we were fording the Big Arroyo, a major tributary of the Kern River, Johnstone's horse was swept off its feet. Gillett was next and refused to ride across, taking the foot log instead. He proved correct in that his animal was upset in midstream, rescued, but then mired in a bog along with almost every other horse and mule. It was a time-consuming and exhausting job to rescue the animals and ford the river, so when the group finally staggered into camp at 6:00 P.M. they were stunned to see that the pack train hadn't arrived.

Ty Sing with the food had gone along with McClure and me while we hiked on foot. Then McClure said he'd hurry along with one mule and take a "shortcut," leaving Ty and me to follow the regular trail. We joined the main party, but McClure never did appear until late at night, giving the excuse that the supply mule had somehow disappeared on him.

Now that wasn't the only bad news. Earlier in the day, while plodding along the trail, a mule carrying the cook's "essentials" fell sound asleep and quietly walked off a 300-foot cliff. McClure and I, who had been hiking along below, were astonished to see a mule come rolling over and

over down the rocks, spraying knives, grapefruit, and assorted items. The mule landed on all fours and promptly climbed back up the cliff. Except for a skinned nose, he was unhurt and, said Hough, "probably never woke up through the whole episode." Poor Ty Sing frantically picked up the spilled items, cussing the mule in every language he knew. That evening Ty discovered his indispensable sourdough starter was missing, so there were to be no more delicious bread and rolls for the rest of the trip.

The dinner, although served at 10:00 P.M., was as delicious as ever, especially the applesauce made from the fruit damaged in the roll down the cliff. Ty Sing dressed up the dinner table with hanging Japanese paper lanterns, and some witty soul commented that we should have had electric lights when dinner was so late.

To compensate for the previous day, the usual siren call of the Sierra Club did not sound this beautiful morning of July 20. Mather and Marshall had decided the night before that their charges were exhausted and so let them sleep until 9:00 A.M.

Breakfast was late, but of course gourmet. Most of us consumed two grapefruit, several trout, two tenderloin steaks with potatoes, a stack of biscuits and honey, and a couple of cups of coffee.

Today was to be relaxation day: fishing, swimming in the Kern River, washing clothes. A few truly lazy souls did absolutely nothing but sunbathe and paid Eugene to do their laundry.

The next morning, Mather had us all back to normal and up at dawn. Before mounting our trusty steeds, he allowed time for a very solemn ceremony. The previous day Congressman Gillett had discovered a wonderful hot spring. Here a suitable-size bathtub had been dug out of the ooze, allowing Gillett to soak for hours while the 115-degree water bubbled over him. Now it seemed appropriate for Mather to anoint this spot by sprinkling "holy water" on it and solemnly christening it "Gillett Hot Spring."

About a mile north of the hot spring the walls of the canyon became almost vertical. It was an impressive sight, especially where beautiful waterfalls cascaded down the granite precipices. The ride this day wasn't difficult, and the party reached the destination at Junction Meadow far ahead of schedule. Here we found a lovely grassy field that seemed right in every way until it was discovered that mosquitoes and ants liked the area too. In the cool of the evening the pests disappeared except in McCormick's thirty feet of territory. To rid himself of them, he had carefully burned off the grass, but didn't realize that by doing so he had

warmed the earth. The ants found this so cozy that they stayed around all night.

Most of the party relaxed at camp during what was left of the afternoon, but Mather was always unable to sit still for an hour. He coerced Grosvenor and me into climbing up into the Kern-Kaweah Canyon. It was a perfect afternoon. We reached the notch where the Kaweah Peaks lay spread out before us, with the Rockslide Lakes far below.

I will always remember that day, that place, and the discussion we had. This part of the Sierra presented a whole new world to us—even to me, a person never far from it until I was a grown man. We were silent and awestruck by the bold majesty of the vista. Then, almost in unison of thought and speech, we began an earnest discussion of what could be done to enclose the Kern, Kings, and Whitney regions into an enlarged Sequoia or an entirely new park.

Mather was all for an enlarged Sequoia, just one park, the present one plus General Grant and these other new areas. Grosvenor and I felt that Sequoia and General Grant Parks were "Big Tree" parks, whereas these wild, majestic canyons and awesome mountains projected a different image. Maybe someone had thought of the name before, but I always felt Grosvenor deserved the credit for the perfect name: "The Sierra Wilderness Park." Eventually, when our dream park was finally created many years later, the name "General Grant" was dropped and the new park was named Kings Canyon National Park.

Resting on that rocky ground with our eyes on the distant mountains and discussing our vision for the future, as though we had the power to make it come true, we took for granted that our immediate goal of a national park bureau was already accomplished. That was why this day was so memorable, for each of us contributed ideas, but also the practical avenues to reach these goals. We three remembered what was said that glorious afternoon when we returned to Washington.

Grosvenor vowed that the National Geographic Society would "march in step" to attain these goals. He fulfilled his promise by publishing, in April 1916, an entire issue on the national parks entitled "The Land of the Best," a glowing tribute to the "crown jewels of America." It greatly influenced the Congress when the time came to vote for the establishment of a National Park Service.

As for Mather and myself, Mather put it this way: "the spirit was riding high." I believe it might have been at this time that he began to see that the creation of a National Park Service was his highest priority, that

the improvement of the parks and publicizing them would amount to little without the power of a formal, organized bureau in the Interior Department.

On July 22, after two comparatively easy days, it was time to energize the party. Marshall and McClure decided to break away to inspect Harrison Pass, an area through which the John Muir Trail might pass. The California Legislature had just appropriated ten thousand dollars for this project and had charged McClure, the state engineer, with its design and construction. He had asked Marshall, with his vast experience in the Sierra, to share his knowledge of the prospective route.

Mark Daniels instantly stated that he would go along. Marshall, shoving his flat-fronted hat back, took a deep breath and almost too politely suggested that Daniels remain with Mather. Looking belligerent and raising his voice so that the whole group could not avoid overhearing him, Daniels replied: "You'd like to get rid of me here and with the parks, too, wouldn't you?" Before Marshall could answer, Mather quickly stepped in and said he'd like a word with Daniels. He signaled Marshall and McClure to get on their mounts and leave. It was the end of a tense scene, the only unpleasant moment the party experienced. Later that year Mather forced Daniels to step down as general superintendent of national parks and replaced him, using a different title, with Marshall.

After the departure of Marshall and McClure, the remainder of the party climbed the east wall of the Kern Canyon. It was extremely steep and very slow going. Suddenly, at about 10,800 feet, the sight of Mount Whitney and its satellite peaks burst on the horizon to the east. Actually, Whitney is not easy to pick out from its neighbors: just one more granite spike along the saw-toothed backbone of the Sierra. "It's a sight fit for the Olympian gods!" Hough shouted.

When the main group reached the campsite at Crabtree Meadows, the pack train was missing again. Seavey rode around and located it a few miles ahead, but not in an idyllic meadow of lush green grass and wild flowers. The cattle had already stripped this meadow. Frank Ewing had led the pack train up Whitney Creek to another spot but found it had also been cleaned out by cattle. Then a heavy rainstorm rolled in, and Ewing decided to quit the search for an untouched campsite. "Mighta kept going to Lone Pine before we shed all the cows," he said later.

That evening we devoted most of the time to the mountain, the route to the top, and certain safety features concerning the climb of Mount Whitney. As Alaska was still a territory in 1915, Mount McKinley at

20,320 feet was rated as the highest in the union. Hough commented, "Mountains in Alaska make Whitney look like a bent nickel." Suddenly Gillett stated that he was not going to go with the assault party. He would stay in camp and wash his clothes.

Then Dr. Simmons declared that Emerson Hough really shouldn't go either. Hough exploded, "Why the hell not?"

He was told that his heart wasn't strong enough and that he might die if he exerted himself at that altitude. Simmons concluded with, "If you go up there, you do so at your own risk, but you'd better arrange to have a decent human burial because somewhere on that rocky slope you will find your last resting place."

"Well," said Hough, "I can't think of a better place to die." And he promptly bribed Frank Ewing with a ten-dollar bill to get him to the top.

Ewing assured Hough that "for ten dollars I'll take you apart and carry you up on the installment plan."

Although Bob Marshall had scheduled an early wake-up call and departure on July 23, it wasn't until 8:30 A.M. that the mountain climbers were in their saddles and off to Mount Whitney. It took about two hours to cover the four miles to the high meadow where the horses were to be left to graze while the men set off on foot to reach the summit at 14,502 feet. That was 1915. Now it is measured at only 14,495 feet.

Whitney is relatively easy to climb. It is said that anyone in fairly good shape, even a child, can make it. And the western or Crabtree approach, the original route climbed in 1873, was easier than the one up from the Owens Valley two miles below. The Mather party, with the possible exception of Hough, seemed to be in good climbing condition. However, it turned out that Maddox had to stop at thirteen thousand feet. Ewing dragged Hough all the way to the top. Everyone enjoyed the climb, often stopping to rest, take pictures, and examine rocks and plants. Moving slowly across jumbled, flat rocks at a gentle angle, we were almost surprised when we found we had run but of mountain. Twelve of the Mather Mountain Party had reached the summit, a two-acre surface, rocky but nearly flat, even sporting a stone rest house built in 1909. Grosvenor got there first by running the last hundred feet or so.

The view from the top was incredible. Waves of majestic peaks fanned out in all directions: the Kaweahs of the Great Western Divide to the west; the main spine of the Sierra from north to south; its eastern ramparts dropping off abruptly to the low Alabama hills and the Owens Valley. Across the flatlands were the dimly seen Panamint and Funeral Mountain?

enclosing Death Valley, the lowest point in the United States, 262 feet below sea level.

There was much awed comment on the panorama, especially as the party was standing on the highest point in the United States and, at the same time, gazing at the lowest point. I was so proud of Mount Tom (at 13,652 feet), which towered over my birthplace, Bishop, that I wanted to show it off to the party. But I was stunned to discover that I couldn't find it in the maze of towering peaks to the north. It was impossible to locate. With gales of laughter at my muttered frustration, my companions immediately nicknamed me "Bishop." Everyone who had a camera snapped photos while Osborn and Grosvenor took notes. Proudly crowing about his accomplishment in not dying, Hough strode around so energetically that the others began to fear he might yet make Simmons's prediction come true.

With the sudden appearance of black clouds, thunder, and lightning, the horseplay ceased. Marshall urged us to pick up our gear and get off the mountain fast, as Sierra storms moved rapidly and were ferocious. How right he was! Soon waves of snow nearly wiped out our vision. We started down the mountain, tacitly recognizing McClure as the leader. As a safety precaution, he spaced the experienced Sierra men—himself, Marshall, and Ewing—between groups of us novices.

The fury of the snow and sleet changed to a driving rain as we descended. The trail was treacherously slippery and uneven, sometimes invisible. Even for men who wouldn't acknowledge fear, it was a nerve-wracking experience. Suddenly Johnstone began to sing "It's A Long Way to Tipperary." He followed that with more rousing songs, and other voices joined in. Down the mountain came the soaked, half-frozen, fearful climbers, singing over the noise of the storm everything from "Onward Christian Soldiers" to Huhn's "Invictus" and saloon songs about "the goddamn Dutch."

Horses were waiting when we finally got off the mountain, and a fast ride back to camp was made. Here the weary climbers were met with roaring fires and dry clothes. Ty Sing's dinner surpassed his previous wonders. He even had concocted an English plum pudding with brandy sauce for dessert. Warm, and with a full stomach, the bone-weary mountaineers headed for the sleeping bags, which had miraculously been kept dry.

There were no wake-up calls the next morning. The only sounds were groans from partially disabled veterans of the Mount Whitney climb.

Osborn fared the worst, for he was one of the oldest. His muscles were not accustomed to the Sierras, and he had also scraped his leg rather badly. He was still in his bedroll when Dr. Simmons came along. Somehow he mistook Osborn for Hough. He shouted gleefully to the camp, "Hey, look at this! I said the climb would kill Hough, but I didn't say when. For proof, here's the body!"

And then Hough leaped forward, fully clad, wildly exhilarated, shouting with glee, "Hey, look at this! Though dead, he has arisen!"

Everything moved so slowly this morning that it was close to 9:00 A.M. when the party hit the trail. For the first time our leader, Steve Mather, rode at the head on his trusty white mule, "Tobe." It wasn't long, however, before Bob Marshall had to take over because yesterday's storm had obliterated part of the trail. The party wound its way slowly by Mount Guyot to Siberian Pass, where we stopped for lunch. The morning had been another sensory experience, with the glow of sunshine alternating with the flashes of lightning and furious black thunder heads. Grosvenor later wrote glowingly of "the divine dignify of the Great Siberian plateau, nearly 13,000 feet above the sea and bordered by bleak peaks towering 3,000 feet higher, and yet carpeted from end to end with blue lupine and a tiny yellow flower I did not recognize." When the storm finally broke on us, the overhanging trees and rocks along the South Fork of Rock Creek offered enough shelter to keep us moderately dry.

On reaching Whitney Meadows in the early afternoon, we found 350 cows occupying the intended campsite. Everyone was getting a little exasperated with these domestic beasts on federal land, leveling the grazing and leaving an unsanitary mess behind. Marshall bitterly observed that the government received the ridiculous sum of thirty cents per cow for the privilege of destroying what God had created to sustain the flora and fauna of the region. It was a learning experience for Mather and me. We fought grazing in national parks the rest of our lives.

As Sunday was supposed to be a day of rest, the Mather Mountain Party was content to stay at Big Whitney Meadow. We set up camp here, just a short distance from Golden Trout Creek. Hough was gleeful at the sight of so much life in it. "If you aim right, you can hook the fish, land it in the frying pan, and let Ty do the rest." It seemed like paradise to the weary travelers.

The most active—usually the same gang of Mather, McClure, Albright, Marshall, and Grosvenor—today were joined by Seavey and McCormick. Off we went, exploring, hiking, and photographing. In

camp Johnstone, fulfilling a promise to Maddox, was writing a chronicle of the trip. Osborn puttered around collecting specimens. Simmons tried to find a use for all the medical equipment he'd brought but could only dig up a few scratches and insect bites. As usual, Gillett and Floy, saying and doing little, were quietly lapping up the beauty of the Sierra.

Hough was making a conclusive study of the Golden Trout. The minute he had spotted them in the crystal waters a few yards from camp, he had been enchanted. Their color was a miracle to him, and he had to know why they sparkled and glowed. He ran up and down the banks of the stream. He caught some, studied them, and threw them back. He furiously scribbled in his little notebook. Later he wrote for *Forest and Stream* magazine: "There you are in Golden Trout country. There are several streams here each of which has a yellowish bottom and which hence raises Golden Trout. It is considered the correct thing to have a species of these named after you. There were eighteen in our party, and each of us had a new species named after him. When you are in the business of getting famous there is no use drawing a line too soon."

Monday, July 26, started a new week with everyone rested and refreshed, but hanging around camp there was a certain air of sadness. It was to be the last full day on the trail, but an unforgettable one, traveling from "Whitney Meadows through Cottonwood Pass to Horseshoe Meadows. At the summit Floy and McClure felt playful and stood up on their saddles to get their pictures taken. Of course, Mather had to copy them and insisted I do the same. At the strategic moment, Hough shouted to Johnstone, "Hey, now's the time to give that goddamn Sierra yell."

Then it was all downhill to the lovely grassy meadow where we made camp early in the afternoon. McClure, Marshall, and I broke away from the main group and headed for Cottonwood Lakes. The remainder of the party spent a lazy afternoon around camp. Fishing held the attention of most men, as the trout-filled stream was only fifteen feet from Ty Sing's stove.

Because we would be returning to civilization the next day, there was a lot of scrubbing of clothes and bodies. Sadly, the razors had to end the competition for best facial hair of the expedition. Gillett and McCormick had been bearded at the start, with McClure, Hough, Osborn, Floy, and Grosvenor sporting mustaches. By July 26 everyone in the party looked like a caveman. Mather shaved everything but his mustache and preened around with this fluffy, silver bush until the next morning. I hated beards

and had only grown one because of my imitation of Mather. After I scraped my face clean that day, I never again had an extra day's growth.

Our farewell dinner was late but festive. Ty and Eugene had outdone themselves. Japanese paper lanterns were again strung between the trees. Small "bouquets" of cones and green boughs were at each place on the freshly washed linen tablecloth. Dinner was superb—more than usually superb. Along with trout, venison, and the last of the treasured "tasties," as Ty called them, was a special dessert—the pastry that enclosed a "future fortune" for each of the Mountain Party. Ty Sing had personally written his notes in Chinese and English. They showed that this man could be counted not only as the "gourmet chef of the Sierra" but as the "philosopher of the Sierra."

Unfortunately, not all of Ty's wise messages are known, but a few were recorded. To Marshall: "Chief, long may you search the mountains." To McClure: "Long may you build the paths through the mountains." To Mather: "The sound of your laughter will fill the mountains when you are in the sky." Mine said: "You are the spirit and soul of your leader." And to Hough: "Where but in the mountains would such a man be spirit with the mountains."

As our final bonfire burned brightly and the last round of fine Havana cigars was lit, Mather stood up to say a few words of farewell. Apparently they were very inspiring, as several of us recorded almost the same message. Paraphrasing, it went something like this:

> Well, men, we've had a glorious ten days together, and we'll have a few more before we part in Yosemite. I think the time has come, though, that I should confess why I wanted you to come along with me on this adventure. Not only for your interesting company, but to hope you'd see the significance of these mountains in the whole picture of what we are trying to do. Hopefully you will take this message and spread it throughout the land in your own avenue and style. These valleys and heights of the Sierra Nevada are just one small part of the majesty of America. Although Sequoia, Yellowstone, Glacier, Crater Lake, and others are already set aside, just think of the vast areas of our land that should be preserved for the future. Think of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, the wonders in our territories in Alaska and Hawaii.
>
> But unless we can protect the areas currently held with a separate government agency we may lose them to selfish interests. And we need this bureau to enhance and enlarge our public lands, to preserve

infinitely more "for the benefit and enjoyment of the people," as the Yellowstone act stated.

So I ask you writers to go back and spread the message to your readers. You businessmen to contact your clubs, organizations, and friends interested in the outdoors. Tell them to help financially and use their influence on members of Congress. To you, Gillett, as our only congressman present, go after your colleagues for a national park bureau. You employees of the state, urge cooperation between state and federal governments. To each of you, to all of you, remember that God has given us these beautiful lands. Try to save them for, and share them with, future generations. Go out and spread the gospel!

Stephen Mather could always inspire and excite people, and this time was no exception. To a man the Mather Mountain Party of 1915 took his words to heart and contributed far beyond his expectations.

*On July 27 our party separated, with Ty Sing, Eugene, and the pack train turning back toward the Giant Forest while the Mather group headed six thousand feet down the sheer east wall of the Sierra to Lone Pine. Mather gave cash to everyone in the pack train, and the cooks received spontaneous gifts from the grateful men they had cared for so lovingly—silver dollars and gold pieces, linen handkerchiefs, a pipe, innumerable cigars, varied fishing tackle, a gold watch chain, Simmons's box of medical supplies, and Hough's favorite red shirt for Ty, who had taken a fancy to it, a shirt so old and worn that everyone said it wouldn't lastly back to Giant Forest.*

*After a night in Bishop, where the Mather party was welcomed in various local homes with hot baths, dinner, and real beds, we reassembled in Little Round Valley for a trout breakfast and then were chauffeured across the Tioga Road, an almost perpendicular climb on a barely improved surface. Fifty-six miles long, it had been built by Chinese labor in 1882-83 for a mining company. Mather and associates had purchased it, and the United States government had improved it for use by the summer of 1915.*

The car I was in was an old open Studebaker, driven by Bishop grocery man Will L. Smith. McCormick sat in the front seat and Hough behind the driver on the outside overlooking the 2,000-foot gorge. I sat beside Hough, door ajar, with one foot on the running board. Smith assured us that he knew every twist, and we prayed he was right. When he wanted to point out the sights, he would stand up and gesture with one or both hands off the wheel. Whenever he did this, I froze at the open door, ready to leap if the car started to plunge over. Hough was

ready to follow and sobbed hoarsely in my ear, "Goddamn this scenery-loving sonofabitch!" McCormick was frozen in his seat, later confessing he had given up hope for his life.

With the gods watching over us, our party somehow reached the summit of Tioga Pass, where Mather, Will Colby, and a delegation from the Sierra Club ceremoniously cut a ribbon and dedicated the Tioga Road. Then the whole crowd moved in unison down to Soda Springs at Tuolumne Meadows, where the Sierra Club hosted a dinner and endless speeches around a campfire too small for so many people. Colby was the real hero of the evening, for he had a supply of Old Crow bourbon available behind his tent.

The next morning, the last remnants of the Mather Mountain Party split up. As it would be my first opportunity to see Yosemite Valley, I chose to go with rangers on horseback. The others went by car with Mather down the Oak Flat Road to Yosemite Valley.

The immediate effects of the mountain party were local: elimination of toll roads; publicity creating strong support in the San Joaquin Valley for extension of Sequoia or the creation of a new park to encompass the Kings and Kern canyons; purchase of the Giant Forest, the heart of Sequoia; fifty thousand dollars from the federal government; twenty thousand from Grosvenor and the National Geographic Society; precedent for private parties to purchase lands and donate them to the government (with Gillett in Congress paving the way); and impetus for the U.S. government to aid in the completion of the John Muir Trail.

Then, of course, the ideas brought forth in our daily discussions during the trip produced national results as well. The publicity about the mountain party, through newspapers and magazines, focused attention on the parks and the need for a national park service. The newly found belief in conservation and the concept of "wilderness" was generated from influential men in our group.

But, above all else, I think that every one of us who lived together, ate together, rode together, talked and thought together, and experienced the camaraderie of those two weeks provided a bond of friendship and blood-brotherhood that turned dreams into reality in the future. There was never a time when Gilbert Grosvenor did not use the force of his influential publication behind a national park project on which we needed help. Gillett fought political pressure any number of times to help us in the Congress, especially when he became head of the powerful Appropriations Committee. Hough, Macfarlane, and fellow writers and

publishers poured out support through the years whenever we needed them.

For myself, I believe that what I learned on that memorable Sierra trip lingered throughout my life, echoing back to me in formulating policy, standards, and philosophy for the National Park Service and in my conservation and preservation endeavors after leaving the service.