



Exploring the Parks, North by Northwest 1915

From Tuolumne Meadows, several park rangers joined me to mount our horses and descend into the valley of the Merced Yosemite. With all the grandiose descriptions I had heard and all the pictures I had seen, I still wasn't prepared for the majestic beauty of this land. The high country was bleak and primordial, whereas the valley radiated grandeur with its sheer cliffs, airy waterfalls, clear lakes and streams, soft meadows, and stately trees. It had taken us three days of horseback riding to arrive at the Sentinel Hotel, where Mather, Marshall, and a few others were resting from their strenuous outing.

No rest for me though. Mather instantly assigned me to talk with David Curry, to relay Mather's intentions of strengthening his rival, the Desmond Company, and warning him to be quiet and take orders or find his lease nonrenewable.

I found the Curry situation a mixed one. Curry was as combative and difficult as everyone had said, but from the first moment I met her I loved his wife, Mary Curry, fondly called "Mother" Curry by all who knew her. I was sure no man was worthless who had a wife like her, and through the years her intelligence, good humor, and great common sense kept me from allowing anyone to do real harm to the Curry Company.

Mather was immersed in Desmond Company matters. He kept me out of them except for a bare sketch of his decisions. I felt he really didn't want me to be involved or even to know too much of the inner

workings of that outfit. This was probably because he knew I was concerned and suspicious about the whole concession plan he and Dohrmann and the others had set up. Actually, I was more worried about his own financial involvement in that company.

I managed to see almost everything in the valley in my spare time. I hiked up to Vernal and Nevada Falls and walked the circumference of Mirror Lake, taking dozens of pictures. Tourists were camped along the Merced River. Their makeshift tents of bed sheets angled off their flimsy cars, while the children floated in tire inner tubes on the water. And it was quite a sight to see everyone getting a liberal shower of dust whenever an auto passed by.

Without Mather's knowledge, I made a careful inspection of the trails, roads, sewage disposal, ramshackle power plant, hotels, and Camp Curry—the latter both by day and by night. One evening I went incognito to the camp to enjoy the singing. I was sort of sorry there was no Curry Firefall anymore, when buckets of flaming coals were poured over the cliff from Glacier Point to the valley.

The firefalls were ended in this way. Only a month or so after Adolph Miller and I came to Washington in 1913, David Curry came into the office making all kinds of demands. Miller listened impassively, although I knew his famous temper was beginning to boil at Curry's dictatorial ranting. When quiet reigned once more, Miller spoke softly but murderously: "Mr. Curry, I am not going to give you anything you demand. In fact, as a lesson to you, I am going to take away something in which you have great pride. You no longer can produce your firefall." It was a terrible blow to Curry and also to his scores of summer visitors.

Of course, there were things that upset the perfection of the natural scene, the signs of man's presence: cows grazing in meadows, barns, stables, piles of manure along the road, ugly fences, many of them broken down. But even these didn't spoil my first visit to Yosemite. I loved every minute, as it was really my first experience as a tourist to a national park and my first experience as an "inspector" for the Interior Department. I took copious notes and gave them to Mather when we returned to Washington. Contrary to what I had anticipated about my being secretive, he wasn't angry at all. In fact, he was rather pleased at all the information I had gathered.

After two or three days in Yosemite, Mather was itching to get on the move again. He had his private car and chauffeur come up from Berkeley to drive him back to the Bay area. I was supposed to go with him, but he suddenly detailed me

to go to Wawona to inspect the hotel there and meet the owner. Then he waved good-bye, shouted, "Have a good time and behave yourself," and went off to join his family in Berkeley, where he intended to follow up on his Giant Forest plan, spend some time at the exposition with his daughter, and have a rousing few days at the national convention of Sigma Chi.

At last I hopped the train to Berkeley and arrived on August 7. And I was in seventh heaven. When I had left Grace the summer before, I hadn't expected to see her for at least a year, and now here was the second visit in about four months.

Our time together was quite limited. Mather, notwithstanding his promise to let me have some free days, was ready to get back to national park business. So Grace and I sandwiched in several trips to the exposition, one movie, and a few hours of making plans for our future.

Mather had seen enough of expositions and cities and decided we'd get out and inspect some national parks. He had only brushed Mount Rainier with the Appropriations Committee and hadn't really seen the park since he had climbed there with the Sierra Club ten years before. E. O. McCormick of the Southern Pacific Railroad had enjoyed himself so much on the mountain trip that he suggested we all go along together to Oregon and Washington. He assured us that he always had some legitimate company business to attend to, so we could travel in his private car, Sunset.

Mather asked Robert Marshall to join us. He did not ask Mark Daniels. He had grown to admire Marshall immensely, and it seemed apparent to me that he was grooming him to take Daniels's place as head of the parks when a bureau was set up.

So here we were again, some of the mountain party, aboard this beautiful private rail car. We left San Francisco on the night of August 18. In the morning we were met in Klamath Falls and driven up to Crater Lake National Park, about fifty miles of the worst road I had ever been on. Probably an animal track would have been better than that deep-rutted dust bin. We had left McCormick with his railroad car to meet us when we came out of the park at Medford.

At the headquarters of Crater Lake, we were met by William G. Steel, the supervisor. We had gotten to know him at the superintendents' conference, although he had been very retiring and not easy to talk to. The lake had been discovered in 1853, but it took the vision and determination of Steel to make it a national park. From 1885 until 1902, he had devoted his life to this cause and had accomplished wonders almost

single-handedly. A political appointee had been the park's first supervisor, but in 1913 Steel had replaced him.

Because of a short tourist season due to inclement weather, difficult access, and poor accommodations, few people attempted to make the trip up to the park. Consequently, it received scant attention and miserly appropriations. It was in terrible shape, and something drastic had to be done.

Mather had requested that George Goodwin be "loaned" to him from the Army Corps of Engineers, and he met us at park headquarters. Steel had managed to get a road started that would encircle the lake, but the rest of what passed for roads were impossible. It took Goodwin to straighten out these problems. While working on this, Goodwin, Mather, Marshall, Steel, and I traveled for two days around the rim, studying where vista points should be located as well as making decisions on campsites, trails, and lodgings for future tourists.

Accommodations were a real problem. Steel and an old friend, Alfred L. Parkhurst, had been running the only concession in the park, the Crater Lake Company. They were too poor to build the thing up and couldn't be thrown out because they had the only accommodations. On the other hand, Mather determined they couldn't stay.

On the August 22 our party climbed into open touring cars to drive down to Medford. If we thought the trip up was bad, it was a dream compared to this one. Those seventy-five miles will live in memory. It was a boiling morning to start out with and got hotter by the minute as we bounced and crashed over something someone had the nerve to call a road—much worse than the one from Klamath Falls. For the first time ever, Mather gave up trying to talk. He just held onto his hat with one hand and a handkerchief over his face to ward off the dust with the other. When we staggered out of the car in Medford at the University Club, lodged over a grocery store, we were tired, hungry, thirsty, and parboiled.

We were met by two delegations—a group of Reclamation Service people and a group interested in national parks, Crater Lake in particular. So after we had scraped off a few inches of dirt, we joined these men as well as E. O. McCormick, who had made his way around to Medford. We still hadn't eaten and we were still parched.

Mather had two bridge tables set up in the meeting room and told me to take the Reclamation group while he would talk to the men interested in national parks. Someone brought in trays of deliciously cool pastel drinks, which looked and tasted like fruit punch. On empty stomachs, we sipped these while talking to our visitors. Every time my glass

seemed to be nearly empty, it was miraculously refilled or replaced by a new one.

When night was coming on, someone said we had to get to the station to board McCormick's railroad car. None of us who had spent the afternoon in the University Club—McCormick, Mather, Marshall, and myself—were able to tell for sure what had occurred, to whom we had talked, or how we got back to the train. Somehow I got to the station and even deposited all our bags safely on the private car. The only thing I vaguely remember of the lost afternoon was that some Medford men were singing, to the tune of "You're a Grand Old Flag," "You're a grand old town, You're a fine business town, And forever advancement you'll make, You're the center of a land renown, The gateway to fair Crater Lake," etc. We later found out that our innocuous beverages, called "Rogue River Rhapsodies," were mostly aged applejack. It was probably one of the few times in our lives that any of us got drunk.

We went on to Portland, where we had a series of meetings concerning the problems we had found at Crater Lake. Mather talked to a group of businessmen as well as representatives of a mountaineering club in Portland, the Mazamas, whom he had been with in Mount Rainier in 1904. His enthusiasm paid off as usual. He raved over the lake, saying, "When I was a boy, I used to take sticks of blueing and see how deep a shade I could color a tub of water. I never achieved any blue as profound or as deep as that you see in the Crater Lake water."

Then he exhorted them: "All you people from Medford and Portland had better get together or Klamath Falls will take business away from your end of the state. There is every advantage in having Medford and Klamath Falls cooperate, as no one wants to go to any park and return over the same ground."

Local newsmen promised informative and enticing articles about the park. The Mazamas entered wholeheartedly into Mather's idea to apply political pressure to improve the roads on the state level while he obtained appropriations on the national level.

Mather persuaded R. W. Price, the manager of the Multnomah Hotel in Portland, to buy out Parkhurst, form the Crater Lake National Park Company, and get busy on suitable food and lodging. Changes were made almost immediately, and eventually a large, rustic hotel emerged from the old shell. It opened in 1928.

Lastly, McCormick got up to announce that the Southern Pacific would add a new rail spur for an east entrance to the park, starting at

Weed in California and extending to Eugene in Oregon. This would be known as the Crater Lake Cutoff.

Many people from Seattle to Portland were urging us to make national parks out of every volcanic mountain from Mount Baker to the California border. Mather and I agreed we couldn't make every peak a park and didn't have time to inspect them. We already had Mount Lassen, which had been erupting and was quite the sensation. It had been made a national monument and in 1916 was upgraded to a national park.

Maybe this is the place to tell a little story about the hearings on Lassen. Right after the park was created, I had to go up to the Capitol with a deficiency estimate to take care of the operation of the park until the next regular appropriation bill was passed. A member of the committee before which I had to appear was old Uncle Joe Cannon, who had been Speaker of the House for years before the present Democratic Congress took over.

When it was too hot for him, Cannon would take off his coat and take down his suspenders so that his pants seemed likely to fall off. On this day the committee chairman, who was from South Carolina, went on and on about our estimates. I recognized that he was thinking in terms of city parks like those in Charleston when he asked, "Are you going to plant some lawns and grow some roses and other flowers up there in this Lassen?"

Before I could tell him this was a huge volcano with a great forest around it, thousands of acres of wilderness, Uncle Joe, blowing smoke like a furnace from his black cigar and with trousers about to drop on the floor, jumped to his feet and barked out: "They don't plant roses and grow flowers in these areas. It's a big place. Big place. Pretty near as big as your whole dern state."

Well, you see, you had to educate these congressmen. You'd have to be careful that you didn't let them know that you knew they didn't know what you were talking about. You had to work around it, pretending that they did know.

When a new park was created, usually by pressures from their areas, congressmen inclined to get the cart before the horse. An amendment would get tacked on limiting annual expenditures to tiny amounts. Of course, we'd have to go back and ask for more. Then the standard saying from them would be, "Well, let's see some people in the park. Let's see what the use of the place is. Give us some people. We'll give you some money." And our quandary was: if we can't get anybody in because of no

roads, no development, no accommodations, how can we get any money? And vice versa.

We arrived in Tacoma on August 27 and went to the hotel. We were met by two groups of Mount Rainier supporters, men from Tacoma and Seattle. One reason we had come to visit the park was the rivalry between these two cities over whether the park should be called Mount Rainier or Mount Tacoma.

Aside from that, their interest in the park had forced them to work together, and they had accomplished a great deal under an organization called the Seattle-Tacoma Rainier National Park Committee. Mather found he could work with all of them, as they were mainly interested in money, and he had a lot of ideas about how money could be made if only the park could be improved to lure more tourists. More tourists meant that more appropriations could be squeezed from Congress for better roads and perhaps even an enlargement of the boundaries. That meant more tourists. A perfect circle.

We were entertained at dinner that night, and Mather, as usual, soothed their apprehensions, asked for their suggestions, and enlisted their support for his plans. He made a point that first-class facilities should be set up in the park, financed by private capital, and when they were completed the backers should be given long-term, monopolistic contracts. He played the same game that he had in Oregon, warning that if local Washington state people didn't come up with this type of concession company, he'd have to look elsewhere. Shortly thereafter, the Rainier National Park Company was organized and went into operation, with the former concessioners selling out to the new monopoly. By 1917 a beautiful new hotel was opened at Paradise, replacing the crude old camp.

There was one thing I remember about that evening in Tacoma. Some man, whose name I never did get and who seemed to be an expert on animal and plant life, propounded in detail that boundaries of a park should not be made along geometric lines. They should be drawn to protect the flora and fauna, the flow of streams, the interworking of nature. He suggested that here in Rainier the west and south boundaries should be irregularly extended to accommodate natural forces. Everyone was fascinated, and Mather asked him to write up his ideas for us to study when we returned to Washington. Unfortunately, he never did, and we never found him again. But I for one never forgot what he said, especially a few years later when it applied to the Greater Yellowstone situation.

At Tacoma we were joined by Asahel Curtis, who would be leading our party in Mount Rainier. He was a famous photographer, the brother of the even more famous Indian photographer Edward Curtis. The brothers fought like cats and dogs and hadn't spoken to each other in years. When the Seattle and Tacoma men organized their committee, they chose Curtis as chairman and T. H. Martin as secretary. Another interesting addition to this committee was Richard Ballinger, who had been secretary of the interior under President Taft and a longtime national park advocate.

Mather intended to inspect every inch of the park and decided to do it via pack trip. In cars provided by the Tacoma-Seattle Committee, we drove to the park. A new road from Longmire to Paradise Valley had opened in June. Designed by Hiram Chittenden, who had engineered the roads in Yellowstone, it was a marvel. Climbing a perilous 3,000-foot grade, up a narrow canyon road, it was nearly as heart-stopping as the Tioga but even more gloriously scenic and very much safer.

At Paradise, Mather inspected the "Camp in the Clouds," owned by John Reese. There were two hotels at Longmire, outside the park, but this was the only accommodation for tourists within Mount Rainier. Reese's camp was a filthy mess of floorless tents and greasy food, but amazingly enough, sparkling clean linen. To replace it, Mark Daniels had designed a spacious resort hotel, but Mather made an instant decision to exchange Daniels's ideas for a rustic-type building to nestle in the hills. And that's what was built.

Shortly before we arrived, a 93-mile Wonderland Trail, which encircled Mount Rainier, had been completed for hikers, Mather planned his pack trip to get a good inspection of it, but time did not permit us to complete this circle.

The pack train consisted of Mather, park supervisor Dewitt Reaburn, Robert Marshall, Chief Forest Ranger T. E. O'Farrell, Asahel Curtis, myself, and ten horses. Mather was on the Reese inspection for so long that we weren't "horse-borne" until 3:00 P.M. We crossed over the lower Nisqually Glacier, started on the wagon highway at Tahoma fork, and branched off on to the pony trail around the west side of the mountain. It was slow going, as the trail was very narrow and rocky.

Here we had some real excitement. Mather was leading when he plowed into some nests of yellowjackets. Our horses reared and would have flown in all directions had there been any place to fly. All we could do was to keep our horses' heads down and circle them out of the buzzing inferno. Mather rode directly through it all and was the only one, I think, who wasn't even stung. We didn't get very far and made camp early on the north fork of the Puyallup River.

The next day dawned brilliant and clear. Mather excitedly roused everyone out and started saddling his horse. Curtis politely suggested that we all might like to eat something before setting off on a tough ride. Mather seemed a little startled. I really don't think he thought about food when his mind was racing to the adventures ahead. We did sandwich in some breakfast before we were mounted and crossing over to the Fairfax—SprayParktrail.

It was a glorious day for me, as every minute was a fresh experience, with new glimpses of this fascinating wooded and iced park around every bend in the trail. Curtis had his camera on the ready and snapped innumerable pictures of us and the majestic mountain that always formed a backdrop.

Again we made camp early at Spray Park. We had just gotten off our horses when we heard a great rumbling roar that lasted for almost five minutes. Curtis explained that it was a giant avalanche over Willis Wall, a sheer 4,000-foot drop on the north face of the mountain, not far from us to the east. Most of us newcomers to Rainier were scared stiff, but Mather was all for going to see it. Stubbornly, Curtis absolutely refused to show him the way.

After dinner, lounging around the campfire, we talked until nearly midnight. It was a magical night with a full moon and the camp enclosed between the brilliant glaciers. A memorable interlude was when Asahel Curtis recited a few poems about the mountains, the spirit of nature, and the wildness of the outdoors. I especially recall his rendition of Robert W. Service's "The Spell of the Yukon." It was an evening reminiscent of the Mather Mountain Party, the camaraderie, and the spiritual closeness of the group.

The next day was Sunday. Mather decided we'd leave our horses at Spray Park and set off on foot. We hiked twelve miles through the Spray, Mist, and Seattle sections of the park to the west bank of the Carbon glacier. We crossed the glacier for one and a half miles above its terminus at an elevation of more than six thousand feet. From here we emerged in Moraine Park and descended to Glacier cabin (3,100 feet) at the junction of the Spray and Moraine trails. Our horses had been returned to headquarters, so we rode on what Curtis called a "gasoline speeder" down a logging company's road to Cardonado, quite a distance outside the remote northwest park boundary.

Gratefully, we saw some automobiles waiting for us here. T. H. Martin of the Inter-City Committee and J. F. Hickey of Tacoma had thoughtfully decided our party probably had enough saddlesores by 6:00 P.M. We sank

into the soft seats with paper cups of lemonade while they drove us back to the hotel in Tacoma. We had covered about eighty-five miles on horseback and foot. It was a most memorable trip in all respects.

We stayed over in Tacoma for part of the day, as Mather had agreed to give a talk on the national parks at noon at the Commercial Club. He opened this with: "I visited Rainier National Park ten years ago and climbed to the top of the mountain. I have been interested in national parks ever since. The great view gave me an inspiration, a love for the open." Then he compared the last few days with this first trip, complimenting everyone who had helped improve the trails and other conditions, saying they were much better than before. He also said that he would recommend to Secretary Lane that the road projects be speeded up, so that visitors could see more of the magnificent park. And he certainly would get the concessions improved because he found them most deplorable.

He never once used the name "Tacoma" or "Rainier." Before he spoke, I had warned him to remember the story about Grover Cleveland's vice-president, Adlai E. Stevenson. It seems he had made a visit to Mount Rainier, come back to Tacoma, and made a speech about the glories of the mountain without calling it by name. He concluded with, "Ladies and gentlemen, there is no doubt in my mind what that mountain should be called." There was great applause because the audience thought he meant Tacoma. He then went on the Seattle and made the identical speech, word for word, with the same ending, and got the same applause because, of course, they thought he meant Rainier.

Well, we also went on to Seattle the next morning. We met with a number of people in connection with launching the Rainier Development Program. Mather wanted to be sure no noses were out of joint because we had spent quite a bit of time with Tacoma men.

Marshall, Mather, and I did sneak away to make a quick trip across the Olympic Peninsula to get a glimpse of Mount Olympus National Monument, which was held by the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture. We all thought it spectacular and greedily eyed it as potential national park material (which didn't come about until I got it in 1933).

We were supposed to be driven by some local enthusiasts out of Seattle toward Mount Baker, but we deliberately got back too late. We didn't want to get into any discussions about making this area a national park. That left only an hour or so until we had to catch our train for Denver.

It was a relief just to rest and do little for a couple of days on the train. When we arrived in Denver on September 2, however, the frantic pace began again. Bob Yard was waiting for us at the hotel. He had been in Rocky Mountain National Park for a month, gathering information for the *National Parks Portfolio*. Yard and Mather spent the time before dinner talking over plans for their publicity campaign.

That night we attended a dinner given at the Brown Palace Hotel to honor Mather, who gave his usual pep talk. His ideas were getting bigger and bigger. Speaking of Rocky Mountain National Park, he said: "Some system that might be designated as an 'Americanized-Swiss' plan might be adopted with profit. We can adapt the Swiss idea of inns, chalets, and campsites at intervals of nine or twelve miles over a complete system of roads and trails covering all of the areas of scenic interest and combine these with some of the up-to-date American ideas and methods and make the great new park one of the greatest assets in the world."

The whole next day was spent with Mather while he consulted various individuals or groups. There was a delegation from Ouray, Telluride, and Silverton that pressed for a national park in their San Juan area. There were several others promoting Longs Peak, Pikes Peak, and numerous others of the great Rocky Mountains of Colorado. Mather hated to discourage anyone, so I was left to deliver his standard rejection: "At present, we have too much to do in existing parks. No more peaks for parks at this time."

While I was meeting with these groups, Mather had struck up an acquaintance with another delegation who called themselves the Park-to-Park Highway Association. Their goal was to promote a system of good roads to link the national parks of the Rocky Mountain area, a paved highway (few were paved at this time) from Rocky Mountain National Park to Yellowstone, 564 miles, and perhaps, then, on to Glacier. They had already organized a caravan to publicize the idea. The leader was Finlay MacFarland, a Packard dealer from Denver. A former mayor of the city, F. R. Mills, other Denverites, and a group from Wyoming led by Gus Holm of Cody were to leave the next day for Yellowstone.

Mather was delighted with the idea and volunteered all the help he could give. He went even further to inform the local papers that he had organized the caravan through the *Rocky Mountain News* and the Denver Chamber of Commerce. He would take the train and meet the auto party in Cody. They, in the meantime, would take notes of current road

conditions, scenic points of interest, and other features, which he would compile into information the government would then publish.

September 4, 1915, was dedication day for Rocky Mountain National Park. At 7:30 A.M. a great throng of dignitaries and common folk assembled in their autos at the Majestic Building, Broadway and Sixteenth. Governor George A. Carlson, Congressmen Charles Timberlake and Edward Taylor, Mather's party, and delegations from the Denver Chamber of Commerce, Motor Club, and others were provided shiny new Packards by Finlay MacFarland to make the drive up to Horseshoe Park. As they pulled out, a grand procession of anything on wheels, estimated at about three hundred cars, followed the leaders 105 miles to Horseshoe Park. Bank president Leroy Bennett personally drove the Packard containing Mather, Governor Carlson, Congressman Taylor, and Horace Albright. Our driver knew every inch of the road, was a fascinating storyteller, and gave us a good grounding about this new park that none of us had ever seen—including the governor and congressman.

We arrived about noon and found that the local Women's Club of Estes Park had provided a lavish picnic-style lunch and hot coffee for all. The stirring music of the Loveland band boomed above the crowds of visitors until it was time for the formal ceremonies to begin. At 2:00 P.M. the twenty-five-piece band from Fort Collins called everyone toward the speakers' stand with a rousing rendition of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." As Enos Mills of Estes Park, chairman of the park dedication, rose to address the crowd, the band struck up "America," and a group of schoolchildren sang. The patriotic spirit seemed to grip the audience, which lustily joined in for the second and third verses.

Mills then began to extol the beauties of the region he had worked all his life to make a national park. He was quite an orator and had everyone enthralled with the sentiments that rolled out. All of a sudden thunder, lightning, and a deluge of rain also rolled out. Mather was the next speaker. He labored through his speech, praising the beauty of the new park, while an absolute downpour washed over his bared, silver hair, tanned face, and almost worthless raincoat. Governor Carlson then launched into his sonorous oration. No one could hear a word for the thunderous roar of the storm. He cut his speech short and graciously backed up to his seat in a hastily contrived canvas shelter.

The next day the *Rocky Mountain News* reported: "As Governor Carlson concluded, the clouds parted as if by the action of some mighty, unseen hand, and the sun of Colorado broke forth in rain-tinged splendor

from across the newly laid snow on Longs Peak and made a new fairy land of the dazzling land of bewilderment."

Our party escaped to tour as much of the park as we could before dinner. We returned to the Longs Peak Inn for a fine steak dinner. Afterward Mather, Yard, Trowbridge, the park's supervisor, and Enos Mills had a long conference—how long I don't know, because I wasn't asked to join them, so I gladly hurried off to bed.