



Yellowstone's cultural resources tell the stories of people. Fort Yellowstone was constructed when the US Army administered the park. The protection of resources affects how the park is managed today.

Preserving Cultural Resources

Yellowstone National Park's mission includes preserving and interpreting evidence of past human activity through archeology and historic preservation; features that are integral to how a group of people identifies itself (ethnographic resources); and places associated with a significant event, activity, person or group of people that provide a sense of place and identity (historic buildings, roads, and cultural landscapes). All of these materials and places tell the story of people in Yellowstone. Collectively, they are referred to as cultural resources.

Archeology

Archeological resources are the primary—and often the only—source of information about humans in Yellowstone for nearly the entire time that people

have been in the area. Archeological evidence indicates that people began traveling through and using the area that was to become Yellowstone National Park more than 11,000 years ago. Because the intensity of use varies through time as environmental conditions shift, archeological resources also provide a means for interdisciplinary investigations of past climate and biotic change.

Many thermal areas contain evidence that early people camped close to these resources. At Obsidian Cliff, a National Historic Landmark, volcanic glass was quarried for the manufacture of tools and ceremonial artifacts that entered a trading network extending from western Canada to the Midwest. (Obsidian from different lava flows can be distinguished from one another other using X-ray fluorescence

Quick Facts

Archeological

- More than 2,000 known prehistoric and historic Native American archeological sites and historic European American archeological sites.

Ethnographic

- More than 300 ethnographic resources (animals, plants, sites, etc.).

Historic

- 25 sites, landmarks, and districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places, many more eligible for listing.
- More than 840 historic structures.
- 1 National Historic Trail.

Collections

Housed in the Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center.

- Museum collection of more than 1 million museum items, including 30 historic vehicles.
- Archives containing millions of historic documents.
- Research library holds more than 20,000 books and periodicals available to the public; plus manuscripts and rare books available to historians and other researchers.

analysis [XRF].) These remnants of past cultures must be preserved, as they are invaluable in our understanding of early people in this region. Historical archeological sites in Yellowstone reflect Native American activities, early tourist camps and hotels, and events of the 1877 Flight of the Nez Perce, as well as US Army activities.

Findings in Yellowstone

Although more than 2,000 archeological sites have been documented since the park's archeology program began in 1995, less than 3% of the park has been inventoried. Most known sites are located in developed areas because archeological resources have been identified as part of National Historic Preservation Act compliance research related to construction, hazard fuel reduction, or other projects. Multiple prehistoric sites throughout the park are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Condition assessments performed on most of the documented sites found 1,109 are in good condition, 467 are fair, 209 are in poor condition, and 250 lack condition data. Twenty-four of the sites no longer exist because of two sites being combined into one, natural erosion, damage from the historic 2022 flood, or disturbance as a result of construction or other authorized activity. Excavations have been conducted at some sites where archeological remains are especially vulnerable to disturbance or loss through erosion or

illegal collecting.

Prehistoric sites contain projectile points, knives, scrapers, abraders, and other tools, and concentrations of burned and butchered animal bone. Radiocarbon dating is used to establish the age of organic artifacts such as charcoal or bone. Organic materials (wood, bone, basketry, textiles) rarely persist in the Yellowstone environment because of the acidic, thermally influenced soils within the caldera. However, ice patches in some areas of the park can and do preserve fragile organic artifacts. These perishable artifacts complement the oral histories of indigenous peoples as well as an archaeological record of abundant stone tools and manufacturing debris.

Stone artifacts provide most of the chronological information on Yellowstone's prehistory. Most of the stone tools are associated with a particular time period based on distinctive stylistic characteristics, which define a point type. These include some knives, such as Cody knives, or projectile points, such as spear and dart points, as well as arrowheads. At several locations in the park, campsites from distinct periods of indigenous use spanning more than 9,600 years are layered upon each other starting at five feet below the surface. These occupations reveal how tool manufacture and lifeways changed in this region through time.

The earliest evidence of humans in Yellowstone are two 11,500 to 10,900-year-old Clovis-type spear points found near Yellowstone Lake and north near

Cultural Resource Laws

The Antiquities Act (1906)

Provides for the protection of historic, prehistoric, and scientific features and artifacts from federal lands.

The Historic Sites Act (1935)

Sets a national policy to "preserve for future public use historic sites, buildings, and objects."

The National Historic Preservation Act (1966)

Requires that federal agencies take into account effects of their undertakings on historic properties. Authorizes the creation of the National Register of Historic Places and gives extra protection to National Historic Landmarks and properties listed on the National Register. National parks established for their historic value are automatically registered; others, such as Yellowstone, must nominate landmarks and properties to the register.

The Archeological and Historic Preservation Act (1974)

Provides for the preservation of significant scientific, historic, and archeological material and data that might be lost or destroyed by federally sponsored projects. For example,

federal highway projects in Yellowstone include archeological surveys.

American Indian Religious Freedom Act (1978)

Protects and preserves American Indian access to sites, use and possession of sacred objects, and the freedom to worship through ceremonial and traditional rites.

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act (1979)

Provides for the preservation, protection, and custody of archaeological sites, excavated materials, records, and data.

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (1990)

Assigns ownership or control of Native American human remains, funerary objects, and sacred objects of cultural patrimony to culturally affiliated Native American groups.

Executive Order 13007

Guarantees access to and ceremonial use of Indian sacred sites by Indian religious practitioners to ensure that these sites are not adversely affected.

the Yellowstone River. Later, projectile point types increase, both in number and the variety of types (style), which may indicate an increase in the number and diversity of peoples using the area. Most documented sites in the park date to the Archaic period (8,000–1,500 years ago), suggesting that may have been the most intense period of use by pre-park peoples. Recent archeological surveys have identified a large number of sites dating to later periods in prehistory (approximately 1400–1800 CE). Distinguishing use of these sites by different ethnic groups or specific tribes, however, has not yet been possible.

Yellowstone Lake

Some of the earliest intact archeological deposits in the park have been found at a site on the shore of Yellowstone Lake. The site was excavated because it was at high risk of erosion, and that work revealed evidence of a 9,350-year-old camp likely occupied by several families. People used this area while hunting a wide variety of game, including bison, sheep, bear, elk, deer, felines, rabbits, birds, and other small game, gathering plants for food and medicine, and making tools and clothes. Artifacts dating to 3,000 years ago have also been discovered on islands in the lake, leading some archeologists to speculate that indigenous peoples used watercraft to travel on the lake, or crossed over on the frozen lake.

Tourism in Yellowstone

The majority of historical archeological sites in the park are associated with tourism in some manner. Examining these types of sites help us trace the park's history. Tourism is directly connected to larger social and economic changes occurring across America, including widespread settlement of the American West, and the increasing shift towards a globally integrated economy.

Refuse dumps, also known as trash middens, are important sources of information, as they contain a variety of artifacts which provide insight into people living and working in the park. In 2019, archeological fieldwork near Lake Lodge revealed over 450 artifacts dating to the late nineteenth/early twentieth century associated with meals, such as ceramic tableware, utensils, drinking glasses beverage bottles, and butchered animal bone. The various types and qualities of goods, reflected through artifact collections, grant us a unique view of leisure and tourism development in Yellowstone over the



Selection of meal-related artifacts manufactured from 1883 to 1923 recovered from a refuse dump near Lake Lodge. These items were commonly used by concessioners to serve visitors throughout the park.

past 140 years, a viewpoint that is unavailable in most other places in North America.

Assessing Wildland Fire Impacts

Archeological resources can inform us about paleoclimate, paleoenvironment, and the human response to climate change over the past 11,500 years. Long-term climate data suggest current temperature rise and precipitation contribute to longer annual droughts and shorter wet seasons. Given changing environmental conditions, in 2016 the park embarked on a ten-year project to assess wildfire impacts on archeological resources, including those impacted by the historic 2016 Maple Fire and Tatanka Fire Complex. Data indicate sites subjected to intense heat and loss of vegetation are more susceptible to post-fire erosion, flooding, and other landscape processes which expose or threaten archeological resources.

Obsidian Sourcing Studies

Archeologists have completed intensive inventories across several river valleys that served as transportation corridors for many pre-park peoples. Newly identified sites include prehistoric quarries, campsites, and lithic scatters dating to between 11,500 and 300 years ago, as well as historical period quarries, campsites, and refuse dumps. These prehistoric sites are increasing our understanding of how early humans procured and used obsidian across the park. Most sites in the northern portion of the park show a heavy reliance on Obsidian Cliff materials and chert, a cryptocrystalline sedimentary rock. Materials from smaller obsidian sources in the park were locally used, supplementing the Obsidian Cliff toolstone.

However, along the Lewis and Snake rivers a more diverse range of materials was used. Obsidian was primarily locally sourced from nearby Warm Spring, Teton Pass, and Park Point quarries, while ortho-quartzite, a classic sedimentary rock, was the most common material used for manufacturing tools.

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Tribal Affairs & Partnerships

Yellowstone National Park is the traditional shared homelands of many Tribal Nations whose cultures and traditions have shaped the landscape throughout generations. The National Park Service honors with gratitude these Indigenous peoples and values their continuous connections to their homelands. We are committed to working together to protect the land and resources now known as Yellowstone National Park.

Our Goals

- **We respect and strengthen Indigenous connections to Yellowstone and their role in park stewardship.** Indigenous stories, traditions, and ethnographic resources are an important part of the history and current stewardship of Yellowstone. Creating space for Indigenous people to share their own connections to the land and including these perspectives is a critical part of stewarding Yellowstone.
- **We enhance Nation-to-Nation relationships.** To honor the federal Indian trust responsibility, the National Park Service consults with Yellowstone's Associated Tribes, who are sovereign nations, on a government-to-government basis when making decisions that affect culturally significant resources.
- **We incorporate Indigenous perspectives and voices into interpretation and education programming.** Yellowstone offers opportunities for visitors to hear directly from Tribal members at the Yellowstone Tribal Heritage Center and special Indigenous cultural events and to learn about Tribes through publications, exhibits, and educational programs.

Tribal Affairs

Park managers with the National Park Service meet periodically with Tribal representatives for government-to-government consultations to formally exchange information about park projects and ethnographic resources. Tribes provide input into resource management and decision-making, conduct ceremonies and other events in the park, and identify plants and minerals for traditional uses.

Bison Management

Many Tribes have a physical and spiritual connection



In 2022, members of the Nez Perce Appaloosa Horse Club rode in traditional regalia and presented about the history and culture of the NiMiiPuu (Nez Perce).

to bison in Yellowstone. Starting in 2007, some Associated Tribes have exercised their treaty rights and conducted bison hunts outside the park.

Starting in 2009, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, the InterTribal Buffalo Council, and the Nez Perce Tribe have joined the Interagency Bison Management Plan and participate in the development of adaptive management strategies for bison and brucellosis in the areas immediately outside Yellowstone.

Tribal Representation

In 2018, the park consulted with Associated Tribes on increasing opportunities for non-consumptive ceremonial use of the park. Consultants also reviewed park educational media and programming for representation of native peoples and perspectives.

Previous education consultation focused on the Yellowstone segment of the Nez Perce National Historic Trail and the associated sites and events of the 1877 Flight of the Nez Perce and the park has worked with many other Tribes on vetting educational content. In partnership with Yellowstone Forever, the park continually works with a collaborative group of Indigenous educators to review and incorporate Indigenous perspectives into the park's educational content.

Place Names

In 2016, the Executive Committee of the Blackfoot Nation contacted Yellowstone National Park to request name changes of two locations inside the park. National place names are managed by the United States Geologic Survey (USGS), and the



The Yellowstone Youth Conservation Corps provides an opportunity for young people aged 14–17 to come work, live, and learn in Yellowstone National Park.

representatives were referred to the USGS Board of Geographic Names at that time. The committee requested the park change Mount Doane to “First Peoples Mountain” and change Hayden Valley to “Buffalo People’s Valley.”

In 2022, the USGS, based on a recommendation by the NPS, changed the name of Mount Doane to First People’s Mountain.

Native Student Opportunities

Currently, Yellowstone hosts an internship program which places Native American students into resource management and resource education internships with the National Park Service. In addition, Yellowstone also hosts Native American youth conservation volunteers through the Montana Conservation Corps.

More Information

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Historic Structures, Districts, and Cultural Landscapes

Historic districts, historic structures, and cultural landscapes built between 50 and 150 years ago are cultural resources that tell the story of how people managed, enjoyed, and traveled through the world's first national park.

The park's front country consists of developments that were historically constructed around Yellowstone's natural features. A figure-eight system of roads provided access to these developed areas and features. Much of the front country contains buildings (e.g., lodges, cabins, employee quarters, ranger stations), roads and bridges, trails, and cultural landscape features and patterns (e.g., overlook structures, vegetation patterns, viewsheds) that are considered historic properties or contribute to the character of a historic district. Historic districts can be comprised of a variety of buildings, sites, structures, and/or objects listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

Yellowstone's backcountry cabins are part of a large network of patrol or snowshoe cabins, based on a geographically strategic patrol operation established during the military administration of the park (1886–1918), and expanded through the National Park Service's leadership (1918–present). They continue to be used today.

The legal requirement to protect and understand the importance of these resources affects how the park is managed today. So far, 843 structures including roads, bridges, utility structures, and grave



The Old Faithful Upper Service Station, built in 1929, is an example of rustic architecture, intended to enhance rather than detract from the setting of the Old Faithful Geyser.

markers are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Over 600 of these structures are buildings. The park is in the process of evaluating properties for National Register of Historic Places eligibility, including 173 structures on the List of Classified Structures, approximately 127 buildings constructed during the NPS Mission 66 period (1945–1972), and 124 trails. To date, seven (25%) of the park's cultural landscapes have been inventoried and evaluated for their historical significance.

Unlike other park resources, historic structures and cultural landscapes require cyclic maintenance such as in-kind replacement of roofs and pavement. Alterations are often required to bring historic structures up to safety codes such as strengthening a building so it withstands seismic events. Preserving a historic structure or cultural landscape requires

Historic Designations

The **National Register of Historic Places** is the nation's official list of historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register coordinates and supports efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect historic and archeological resources that are significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. Properties from Yellowstone include

- Grand Loop Road Historic District
- Fishing Bridge Historic District
- Lake Fish Hatchery Historic District

- Lamar Buffalo Ranch Historic District
- Mammoth Hot Springs Historic District
- North Entrance Road Historic District
- Old Faithful Area Historic District
- Roosevelt Lodge Historic District
- Obsidian Cliff Kiosk
- Queen's Laundry Bathhouse
- Mammoth Post Office

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional

value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Today, fewer than 2,500 historic places bear this national designation. In Yellowstone, they include

- Fishing Bridge, Madison, and Norris Trailside museums
- Fort Yellowstone; includes Norris and Bechler River soldier stations, and Roosevelt Arch.
- Northeast Entrance Station
- Obsidian Cliff Archeological Site
- Old Faithful Inn
- Lake Hotel

minimizing the rate at which historic fabric is lost and ensuring additions and alterations are compatible with historic character.

National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) possess exceptional value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States. The National Park Service is required to exercise a higher standard of care when considering undertakings that may directly or adversely affect NHLs. Fort Yellowstone National Historic Landmark District is located within Mammoth Hot Springs Historic District and continues to be the headquarters for Yellowstone National Park. Historic buildings, structures (Roosevelt Arch, Powerhouse), and sites (parade grounds, cemetery) contribute to the significance of this district.

Yellowstone is also home to five NHLs that are nationally influential examples of park “rustic” architecture—the Old Faithful Inn, the Northeast Entrance Station, and the Norris, Madison, and Fishing Bridge museums.

Lake Hotel, 1891

The Lake Hotel is the oldest operating hotel in the park. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 2015. When it opened in 1891, the building resembled other hotels financed by the Northern Pacific Railroad. In 1903, the architect of the Old Faithful Inn, Robert Reamer, designed the Ionic columns, extended the roof in three places, and added the 15 false balconies, which caused it to be known for years as the “Lake Colonial Hotel.” By 1929, additional changes—dining room, porte-cochere (portico), sun-room, plus interior refurbishing—put the finishing touches on the “grande damme” we see today.

Yellowstone Lake Fish Hatchery, 1930

People began stocking western high-elevation lakes with fish in the 1800s. Hatchery operations at Yellowstone Lake became part of this undertaking when fish hatched from Yellowstone’s trout were used to stock waters in the park and elsewhere; sportfishing was promoted to encourage park visitation, and satisfying a recreational interest took precedence over protection of the park’s natural ecology. Built in 1930 by the National Park Service, the hatchery’s log frame is also an example of the period of rustic architectural design in national parks.

The hatchery was thought to be among the most modern in the West. The main room was outfitted with tanks and raceways for eggs, fingerlings, and



Lake Hotel resembled other hotels financed by the Northern Pacific Railroad when it opened in 1891.

brood fish taken from 11 streams that flowed into the lake. Small fry were fed in three rectangular rearing ponds in a nearby creek until they were ready for planting. Superintendent Horace Albright explained that the hatchery had also been designed with visitor education in mind, by making it possible “to take large crowds through the building under the guidance of a ranger naturalist without in any way impairing the operations of the Bureau of Fisheries.”

Yellowstone was the largest supplier of wild cutthroat trout eggs in the United States, and park waters received native and nonnative fish. A rift developed, however, between the federal fish agencies and the National Park Service, which began moving away from policies that allowed manipulation of Yellowstone’s natural conditions. In 1936, Yellowstone managers prohibited the distribution of nonnative fish in waters that did not yet have them and opposed further hatchery constructions in the park’s lakes and streams. After research showed that it impaired fish reproduction, egg collection was curtailed in 1953. Four years later, the fish hatchery ceased operations, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service transferred ownership of the building to the National Park Service. Official stocking of park waters ended by 1959.

Current Status

Vegetation and stream flow have largely reclaimed the rearing ponds on Hatchery Creek, but their outlines can still be detected. Today, the hatchery building has changed relatively little. Nearly all of the exterior and interior materials are original to the building or have been repaired in kind. Now used as a storage facility, it is the primary structure of the nine buildings in the Lake Fish Hatchery Historic District, which was listed on the National Register in 1985.

Mammoth Hot Springs Historic District and Fort Yellowstone Historic Landmark District

The Mammoth Hot Springs Historic District has statewide significance as the administrative and concession headquarters of the largest national park in Wyoming. Park managers here developed significant conservation policies that greatly influenced the nascent National Park Service. It is also significant for its architecture, which includes Colonial Revival, Rustic, Prairie, Art Moderne, French Renaissance, and English Tudor styles. The district contains 189 buildings, 2 sites (Mammoth Hot Springs Campground and Fort Yellowstone Parade Ground), and 1 object (flagpole). Of these, 35 buildings also contribute to the significance of the overlapping Fort Yellowstone National Landmark, as does one structure (Fort Yellowstone Powerhouse) and one site (Fort Yellowstone Parade Ground). These remain from the 1890s and early 1900s when the US Army administered the park. They reflect the layout and architecture of a typical western army fort of the nineteenth century.

Mail Carrier's Cabin, 1800s

The origins of the building at the edge of Fort Yellowstone that became known as the mail carrier's house are unclear, but it is significant as the only 1800s log structure still standing in Mammoth Hot Springs. Its style is more typical of construction of the area and time than the buildings put up by the US Army for Fort Yellowstone. It was probably built in the mid-1890s, and over the years it has provided quarters for mail carriers as well as employees of concessions and the National Park Service.



Albright Visitor Center, part of the Mammoth Hot Springs Historic District and Fort Yellowstone Historic Landmark District, housed the first "information office" (visitor center).

History

When mail delivery was not yet provided in rural areas, mail carriers delivered the mail from railroad distribution points to post offices, where people traveled, often from many miles away, to pick up their mail, their only link to the rest of the world. In the 1800s, a mail carrier was contracted to transport mail from the railroad station in Livingston, Montana, to Mammoth Hot Springs and then to Cooke City, Montana, before returning to Livingston, a trip of several days' duration.

The cabin was either built by or later sold to an early park concession, the Yellowstone Park Association. A lean-to with a shed roof was built onto the back of the two-room structure in about 1903 to serve as a kitchen and dining area. In the 1930s, a mudroom and bathroom were added to the north side of the building, bringing the total square footage to 512. In the early 2000s, removal of the insulation added to the walls and ceilings in the 1930s exposed



The mail carrier's house, built around 1895, photographed at an unknown date (left) and in 2009 (right).

a layer of newspapers beneath, announcing the 1903 flight of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk.

In 1972, the building, then owned by a park concessioner, was “in a state of general deterioration.” Historic structure experts recommended that the vacant house be demolished because they doubted that it “could serve any useful function” that would justify the “great cost” of restoration. However, the house was listed on the National Register in 1982. Despite the building’s poor condition, it continued to house park staff for another two decades. It was structurally stabilized in 2009.

Mammoth Post Office, 1938

Yellowstone’s main post office was one of 1,007 post offices constructed from 1935 to 1938 during the Great Depression “with a view to relieving countrywide unemployment.” Using standardized plans developed from guidelines provided by the Treasury Department, these post offices were built in sizes and styles that reflect transitions in architectural design and the context of the communities in which the offices were located. The Yellowstone Post Office is a concrete building with a hipped roof in the French Renaissance Moderne style, compatible with the Art Moderne style ornament on the nearby Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel, which was partially rebuilt in 1936. The post office lobby has walls of travertine from a quarry outside the park’s north entrance. It is still a working post office today, serving park residents and visitors.

Current Status

The Yellowstone post office was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987 with 11 other Wyoming post offices built from 1908 to 1939. The buildings were said to “record the evolution of both the political/economic philosophies and the design philosophies of the federal government” during a period when building design was used “to provide a symbol of the monumental presence of the federal government in its post offices.”

Roosevelt Arch, 1903

The five-mile road from the park’s boundary at Gardiner, Montana, to its headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming, was built in 1884. The arch constructed over the road became known as Roosevelt Arch because President Theodore Roosevelt, who happened to be vacationing in



The two bears at the post office entrance were added in 1941 and commissioned by the Federal Works Agency to enhance federal buildings with artwork. Gladys Caldwell Fisher sculpted the cubs from Indiana limestone based on her observations of grizzly bears at one of the feeding grounds then permitted in the park. The three-ton bears were shipped by rail from Denver to Gardiner, Montana.

the park, spoke at the ceremony to lay the cornerstone in 1903. The plaque on the arch is inscribed with a phrase from the legislation that established Yellowstone National Park: “For the benefit and enjoyment of the people.” Roosevelt Arch continues to serve as a historical marker for a time when cultural values called for a monumental entrance to Yellowstone.

The Roosevelt Arch is in the North Entrance Road Historic District and is part of the Fort Yellowstone Historic Landmark District. The structure was conceived by US Engineer Hiram Chittenden; architect N.J. Ness contributed to the design, and Robert Reamer may have also worked on it.



The Roosevelt Arch, pictured here on a Haynes postcard.



The Old Faithful Historic District, which includes the inn and many of the surrounding buildings, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982.

Old Faithful Historic District

The Old Faithful Historic District, which includes the inn and many of the surrounding buildings, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1982. Like the Old Faithful Inn, the district is historically significant because of its rustic architecture and its role in the development of concessions to accommodate growing tourism in the early 1900s. The Old Faithful Lodge, located near the Inn, reached its present configuration in 1928 after numerous changes. The consolidation into one complex was designed by NPS Landscape architect Daniel Hull in collaboration with Gilbert Stanley Underwood, a famous architect of the time.

Old Faithful Inn, 1904

Named for the nearby geyser, the Old Faithful Inn exemplifies the use of rustic architecture at a large scale to complement a natural landscape. The rhyolite that formed Yellowstone's caldera during volcanic upheavals provided the stone for the building's foundation, and local lodgepole pine the logs for its walls. Skilled

craftsmen embellished the windows and stairways with gnarled wood selected for its inherent beauty. As designed by architect Robert Reamer, the inn combines rugged materials and organic motifs in a way that expresses both frontier sensibilities and elegance.

History

After the only hotel in the Upper Geyser Basin burned down in 1894, park officials pressured the Yellowstone Park Association, which held the lease on the property, to replace it with something more substantial. In 1902, the president of the concession, Harry Child, obtained financing from the Northern Pacific Railroad for a new structure, the first parts of which would become known as the Inn's Old House. The lobby, rising six stories beneath a steeply sloped roof, was flanked by a dining room and two three-story wings containing guest rooms.

The Old Faithful Inn was built over the winter of 1903–1904, and was equipped with electric lighting, but Reamer designed the light fixtures to look like candlesticks. Both the electricity and the radiators were fueled by a steam generator. Evening meals were accompanied by a string quartet, and dancing was customary six nights a week. Under Robert Reamer's supervision the east wing was added in 1913 and the west wing in 1927, bringing the inn's total number of guest rooms to about 340.

The August 1959 Hebgen Lake earthquake shook the Old House from its foundation and damaged the roof and chimneys, but no guests were seriously injured. After closing early for the winter, the inn re-opened the following summer. Another evacuation took place in September 1988 when the North Fork Fire destroyed some small buildings nearby, but the Old Faithful Inn was preserved with the help of firefighters and roof sprinklers installed the previous year.



The roof shingles of the Old Faithful Inn, shown here in 1912, were originally coated with a red mineral paint believed to hinder flammability.



Historic preservation has maintained the appearance and condition of the famous Old Faithful Inn lobby, shown here in the first half of the 1900s (top) and in 2003 (bottom).

Current Status

The Old Faithful Inn was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987. A major renovation program of the Old House was launched in 2004 to meet current building codes and restore the lobby so that it more closely replicates Reamer's original design. The walls and roof were reinforced with steel to make the structure more seismically stable, and electrical, plumbing, and heating systems were replaced and made less conspicuous. With the completion of this program, the Old Faithful Inn is considered to be in good condition.



The Lamar Buffalo Ranch, in operation from 1906 until the 1950s, was the center of efforts to increase the herd size of bison in Yellowstone.

Lamar Buffalo Ranch Historic District, 1906

The extermination of bison herds throughout the West in the 1800s nearly eliminated them from Yellowstone; even after the park was established in 1872 poachers faced few deterrents. With only 25 bison, counted in the park in 1901, Congress appropriated \$15,000 to augment the herd by purchasing 21 bison from private owners. As part of the first effort to preserve a wild species through intensive management, these bison were fed and bred in Lamar Valley at what became known as the Buffalo Ranch.

As the herd grew in size, the animals were released to breed with the park's free-roaming population and used to start and supplement herds on other public and tribal land. Today the Yellowstone bison population of approximately 5,900 is one of the largest in North America and among the few that is genetically pure because it has not been interbred with cattle. The buffalo ranch is therefore significant for its role in the history of wildlife management and the preservation of the American bison.

Current Status

A program to raise bison like domestic cattle in Yellowstone may seem incongruous in retrospect, but the buffalo ranch stands as a reminder that today's well-intended wildlife management policies may have unintended consequences and be overturned by changing values and advances in ecological knowledge.

The Lamar Buffalo Ranch Historic District includes five buildings: a ranger station, constructed in 1915 as the buffalo keeper's residence; a pole-fenced corral built and rebuilt from 1915 to the 1930s; a log barn for hay and horses (1927); a bunkhouse (1929); and a residence used for the assistant buffalo keeper.

The vegetation around the ranch is mostly sagebrush and nonnative grasses that were planted during the period of hay cultivation or that migrated into the area. Remnants of irrigation ditches, fencing, and water troughs can still be found.

The bunkhouse is used by the Yellowstone Forever Institute, which conducts classes and seminars during the summer, and by Expedition Yellowstone, the park's overnight program for school groups. In 1993, Yellowstone Forever (then the Yellowstone Association) replaced the old tourist cabins with insulated and heated cabins. Except for the phone line, the cabins and other buffalo ranch facilities are off grid. The main source of power is a 7-kilowatt photovoltaic array installed in 2000 with industrial battery storage and two alternating 12-kilowatt engine generators.

Funding from the park's non-profit partner, Yellowstone Forever, is enabling the National Park Service to use the buffalo ranch as a model for off-grid environmental stewardship by adding more solar panels, low-flow water fixtures, micro-hydropower, on-demand hot water, zero-waste and recycling programs, and more energy-efficient windows, while preserving the historic integrity of the original structures.

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Bison calf butting park ranger at the buffalo ranch, 1930s.

Roosevelt Lodge Historic District

The Roosevelt Lodge Historic District, which includes 130 buildings, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, with a period of significance from 1906 to 1948. The accommodations are still rustic, with unpaved roads into and around the lodge and cabins.

The area has undergone intermittent expansion and changes as visitor use has changed and facilities have aged over the years. The architectural appearance of the original lodge is retained only in the lounge and dining room. The other sections of the building have been modified. The interior has become congested with multiple activities, some of which were not part of the original building—a bar, merchandise cases, and offices.

In 2009, the National Park Service completed an environmental assessment for the Tower–Roosevelt area in order to protect the area's natural resources and preserve its historical character, including the rustic architecture of Roosevelt Lodge and the view from the lodge porch across the meadow to the distant mountains. The plan also called for pulling the parking lot away to improve views and reduce congestion near the lodge, which was accomplished in 2021.

Roosevelt Lodge, 1920

Indians, fur trappers, and explorers on the Bannock Trail camped in this area where a sagebrush meadow was encircled by Douglas fir, quaking aspen, and a mountain stream that tumbled toward the Yellowstone River. As part of his journey through the park, President Chester Arthur camped in this

area in 1883. In 1906, the Wylie Permanent Camping Company built a tent camp that became known as “Camp Roosevelt,” though Theodore Roosevelt never camped there. The tents were replaced by a lodge and cabins in the 1920s, and Lost Creek has shifted course, but people still enjoy staying at this scenic spot on the park’s northern range.

For Dudes and Scientists

Camp Roosevelt’s location provided an overnight stop for visitors traveling between Mammoth Hot Springs and Canyon. As at other Wylie camps, guests slept in striped tents with wood floors, gathered at a larger tent for communal meals and sing-alongs, and were transported around the park in the Wylie Company’s vehicles. The successor to the Wylie Company, the Yellowstone Park Camping Company, built the park’s first and smallest lodge at Camp Roosevelt in 1919. The lodges were built to accommodate the increasing number of visitors arriving in their own automobiles who wanted something more than a tent but less expensive and formal than the park’s hotels.

At Camp Roosevelt, the concessioners wanted to create the atmosphere of a dude ranch, and Superintendent Horace Albright described it as “a place visitors would like to stay indefinitely.” It did provide a base for fishing parties and saddle-horse trips, but it also served as a field laboratory where teachers and their students could conduct research at minimum expense, a purpose that the first director of the National Park Service, Stephen Mather, promoted for the parks. In what was a forerunner to the



The Roosevelt Lodge before it faced a parking lot (Haynes postcard, 1927).

educational programs found in the parks today, the National Park Service hired H.S. Conard, a naturalist at Grinnell College, to present lectures and to conduct daily field trips for Camp Roosevelt visitors and collect botanical specimens for the park museum. Scientists based at the lodge conducted studies on the park’s wildlife. From 1921 to 1923, the lodge was the headquarters for a boy’s summer camp run by Alvin Whitney of the New York State School of Forestry at Syracuse University.

The Buildings

The lodge, constructed of unpeeled logs and completed in 1920, was originally surrounded by 43 small log cabins, the first of which were completed in 1922. Over the years, the Roosevelt Lodge area became a repository for guest cabins brought from areas in the park where they were no longer wanted. By 1982, the corral had been moved farther from the cabins, of which there were now 110 of four main types.

Northeast Entrance, 1935

The entrance station and ranger residence at Yellowstone’s Northeast Entrance were constructed in 1935 in a rustic style that was becoming emblematic of national park architecture. According to its listing as a National Historic Landmark in 1987, the entrance station “subconsciously reinforced the visitor’s sense of the western frontier and the wilderness he was about to enter. The building was not only the physical boundary, but the psychological boundary between the rest of the world and what was set aside as a permanently wild place.” The station is considered “the best of its type remaining in the National Park System.”



Roosevelt Lodge interior with photograph of Theodore Roosevelt, 1920s.



Northeast Entrance station is considered “the best of its type remaining in the National Park Service.”

The entrance station was constructed with two traffic lanes passing through it. When it became necessary to accommodate the increasing number of recreation vehicles too tall to fit in the passage, a lane was added to each side of the building rather than alter it.

The station is currently considered to be in good condition. Extensive rehabilitation of the entrance station in 1984 repaired log ends and replaced log rafters and the roof. The oakum rope chinking remains. Two street lights and a flagpole were added, and concrete bollards were placed on the east and west sides to prevent vehicles from driving into the building. The interior of the checking station has undergone little change over the years. Although the original plans called for earthen floors, the rooms have concrete floors that were probably poured sometime after construction. The original wood stove that heated the central portion of the station was replaced with an oil stove in the same location.

Backcountry Cabins

Backcountry cabins are part of a large network of patrol or snowshoe cabins, based on a geographically strategic patrol operation established during the military administration of the park (1886–1918), and expanded by the National Park Service (1918–present). The original purpose of these cabins was to prevent poaching and vandalism.



Pelican Springs backcountry cabin is an example of early rustic style of national park architecture.

The spacing between each cabin is roughly a day’s walk or ski, and allows for full coverage of monitoring the park, even during the winter months and in the most remote areas. They are stocked with survival rations, firewood, cleaning supplies, and basic furnishings. Strict rules, handed down from the Army, dictate how the cabins are kept clean and tidy, and ready for the next occupant. For example, firewood must be brought in and kindling laid for the next fire in the wood stoves, in case someone reaches the cabin in danger of frostbite or hypothermia and needs to light a fire quickly.

Architectural styles include primitive log structures (soldier stations or snowshoe cabins, which were constructed by the US Army), and Early NPS Rustic style, many of which were constructed by the CCC during the 1930s. The cabins are often accompanied by a barn, corral, and/or privy. These cabins are still used today for research, resource management, search and rescue operations, and backcountry patrol against poachers; they are significant in Yellowstone’s history for the role they played in the preservation, maintenance, and resource management throughout the park and the role the US Army played in the park’s early management.

Historic Roads, 1905

The road construction that began in Yellowstone in the 1870s became the United States' first large-scale road plan and served as a model for other parks, especially in its use of local materials. Even after Yellowstone could be reached by train in 1883, the difficulty of transport and road construction in a geologically and climatically challenging terrain required enormous labor and innovative engineering. The development of a road system was essential in making Yellowstone more accessible to the public. Over the years, advances in road standards and construction technology have led to changes in the roads' appearance, but the overall design has remained largely intact, along with many historical features such as bridges, culverts, and guardrails.

Touring the Park



At first, travel to and within the park was difficult. Visitors had to transport themselves or hire an expensive guide. In the park, they found only a few places for food and lodging. Access improved in 1883 when the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Cinnabar, Montana, a town near the north entrance.

A typical tour began when visitors descended from the train in Cinnabar, boarded large "tally ho" stagecoaches (above), and headed up the scenic Gardner Canyon to Mammoth Hot Springs. After checking into the hotel, they toured the hot springs. For the next four days, they bounced along in passenger coaches called "Yellowstone wagons," which had to be unloaded at steep grades. Each night visitors enjoyed a warm bed and a lavish meal at a grand hotel.

These visitors carried home unforgettable memories of experiences and sights, and they wrote hundreds of accounts of their trips. They recommended the tour to their friends, and each year more came to Yellowstone to see its wonders. When the first automobile entered in 1915, Yellowstone became accessible to anyone in the nation who could afford a car.

Hiram Chittenden

The 310-mile (500 km), figure-eight road system that connects Yellowstone's five entrances, developed areas, and major attractions remains largely the same as when United States Army Corp of Engineers engineer Major Hiram Chittenden finished his work on it in 1905. Through his role in designing Yellowstone's roads, bridges, and other structures, Chittenden had a lasting effect on the appearance of our national parks. While stating that they should be maintained "as nearly as possible in their natural condition, unchanged by the hand of man," he would use masonry and add or remove trees and other landscaping so that "the roads will themselves be made one of the interesting features of this interesting region."

Throughout the park, he replaced many wooden bridges with steel or concrete. His most difficult project was the replacement of the rickety trestle at Golden Gate with a 200-foot (61-meter) viaduct, a series of 11 concrete arches built into the cliff wall over a canyon. In 1902, he persuaded Congress to make the appropriation needed to complete the park's road system. This included some of Chittenden's signature achievements: the road over Sylvan Pass, the road to Mount Washburn (now called Chittenden Road), and the first bridge over the Yellowstone River above the Upper Falls, which at last provided a direct means of getting to the east bank of the river. Over the years, the Golden Gate viaduct had to be reconstructed, and the bridge over the Yellowstone River was condemned in 1959 and replaced by a modern bridge.

Before leaving Yellowstone in 1906, Chittenden was also responsible for overseeing the redesign of the park's north entrance, including construction of the arch and, through irrigation, fertilization, and the planting of alfalfa, transforming 50 acres adjacent to Gardiner into a green field that would provide winter forage for pronghorn and other game animals. Today, park staff and partners are working to restore the field to its natural condition, but the Roosevelt Arch endures.

Trailside Museums (1929–1932)

The museums at Fishing Bridge, Madison Junction, and Norris Geyser Basin were designated National Historic Landmarks in 1982 because their exaggerated features and organic forms exemplify rustic design in the national parks and served as models for hundreds of park buildings constructed during work relief programs of the 1930s. As envisioned by the chairman of the American Association of Museums, Hermon Bumpus, they also established the idea of “trailside museums” where visitors could learn about an area within a park. Bumpus regarded national parks as “roofless museums of nature” with unlabeled exhibits and the trailside museum as the place to provide the labels.

Designed by architect Herbert Maier in a style that became known as “Parkitecture,” the museums have the battered rubble masonry and clipped gables of a traditional bungalow style, but use locally available materials left in their natural condition to reflect the scale and roughness of the landscape. The asymmetrical boulders and gnarled logs display the irregularities of nature. Maier, who also designed museums for Grand Canyon and Yosemite, regarded buildings in national parks as “necessary evils” because even the best was “somewhat of an intruder.” Maier’s designs laid these buildings lightly on the landscape, using retaining and foundation walls made of large boulders that allowed the retention of adjacent trees and blurred the line between where the building ended and the natural landscape began. The buildings’ National Register nomination described the trailside museums as “a perfect solution for an architecture appropriate to the outdoors: informal through the use of natural materials and horizontal lines,” but with “a strength of design and heavy-handed expressions” that “suggested the smallness of man in relation to nature.”

History

In 1928, Yellowstone Superintendent Horace Albright proposed the construction of “small local museums” to provide visitors with information that would “make their sojourn educationally as well as recreationally profitable.” With a grant from a foundation set up by John D. Rockefeller and the guidance of Dr. Bumpus, the American Association of Museums built four such museums in Yellowstone.

The Museum of Thermal Activity, constructed at Old Faithful, opened to acclaim for its quality materials

and construction, and for the way it blended into its surroundings. However, it was razed and replaced by a more modern visitor center in 1971. The exteriors of the other museums have changed little since their completion by 1932, but the interiors have undergone some alterations in design and use. Only the Norris Geyser Basin Museum still has its original name.

In a 1942 report, park naturalist Bert Long pointed out that “due to lack of funds,” there were “many obvious gaps and inadequately told phases” of the Yellowstone story as told in its museums, and that many of the exhibits contained obsolete scientific theories. “Every attempt should be made to include in each museum information pointing out what there is to do of a recreational nature in its surroundings,” Long urged. “Get the people out of their cars, on the trails to the features and half the battle is more than won.” The difficulty of funding and keeping exhibits up to date has not lessened over the years, nor has the goal of getting people out of their cars.

Fishing Bridge Museum, 1931

Now called the Fishing Bridge Visitor Center, the building was designed so that visitors approaching from the parking lot could see through it to Yellowstone Lake, where stone steps lead down to the shore.

Antlers, rams’ horns, and bighorn sheep skulls still decorate the two wrought-iron chandeliers, but they were removed from the log frame around the screen in the adjacent amphitheater, where the original log seats have been replaced with thick plank seats. No longer used, the fireplace beneath the large stone chimney inside the museum is concealed from public view in a small area used for offices. In 2021–2022, linoleum tiles were removed to reveal the original



The Fishing Bridge Museum, 1931.



The Norris Geyser Basin Museum, c. 1930.

scored concrete floor, and plywood covers were removed to reveal original windows that had been covered to accommodate shelving in the book sales area. The museum display cases (many designed and built by Dr. Carl Russell) were also rebuilt to accommodate shatter proof glass and reinstalled.

Norris Geyser Basin Museum, 1929

The open foyer through the middle of the Norris Museum still functions as the visitor's gateway to the Norris Geyser Basin; in particular, it frames the view to the north of the Porcelain Basin. One of the two rooms on either side of the foyer originally contained bird specimens, but both now have exhibits explaining hydrothermal activity and life in thermal areas. In 2020, the exhibits were updated, windows uncovered, and a removeable ramp was installed. Also designed by Maier with rustic architectural features, the nearby comfort station was converted to a Yellowstone Forever bookstore after a larger restroom of more contemporary style was built closer to the parking area.

Madison Museum, 1929

Overlooking a meadow beyond which the Gibbon and Firehole rivers join to form the Madison River, the Madison Museum was intended to focus on park history, especially the nearby site where the 1870 Washburn Expedition was thought to have originated the idea of a national park as a way to protect the thermal areas from commercial development. In



The Madison Information Station, c. 1930s.

accordance with Bumpus's vision of the museum's "function as a national monument," a large glass transparency created from a 1930 photograph was placed prominently in a window where the light shone through a re-enactment of the Washburn party gathered around a campfire.

In 1940, a park naturalist suggested that the main room's floor, made of large, uneven pieces of rhyolite, should be covered with oak or pine to "avoid possible hazards to visitors from stumbling falls" and make it easier to clean. That did not happen, but when the building was transformed into the "Explorers' Museum" as part of Yellowstone's 1972 centennial celebration, carpeting and track lighting were installed, the wood stove that used to heat the building was removed, and the exhibits were redesigned.

In acknowledgement of evidence long put forth by historian Aubrey Haines that refuted the "campfire story," the re-enactment image and references to the Washburn party's role in establishing the first national park were removed from the museum. However, in deference to Albright, still influential in retirement, and National Park Service officials who would not abandon the story, the purported campfire discussion was commemorated in a sign placed outside the museum: "...there emerged an idea... that there should be no private ownership of these wonders but that the area should be preserved for public enjoyment."

Haynes Photo Shops

As leaders in concessions development in Yellowstone from 1884 to 1962, Frank Jay Haynes and his son, Jack Ellis Haynes, constructed many buildings for their enterprises. Among the few that remain, the Haynes stores at Old Faithful (1897 and 1927) and in Mammoth Hot Springs (1929) were most important to the primary business of taking, developing, and selling photographs. By helping Yellowstone gain international recognition for its natural wonders, the Haynes' photography promoted both tourism in the West and the idea of a national park.

The Old Faithful building is an example of the rustic style that was becoming popular in western parks, while the Mammoth building displays a transitional architectural style influenced by the Crafts movement, a departure from more traditional revival styles prevalent in Mammoth and unrelated to the rustic architecture common elsewhere in the park.

History

F. Jay Haynes first photographed Yellowstone National Park in 1881 to publicize the Northern Pacific Railroad. Encouraged by Superintendent Philetus Norris, who wanted to promote park visitation, Haynes built stores on land leased in Mammoth Hot Springs in 1884 and at Old Faithful in 1897. After he retired, his son Jack took over the business, and in 1927 built stores, called photo or picture shops, in the Mammoth and Fishing Bridge campgrounds, and a larger facility near what was then the Old Faithful Auto Camp. Eventually, 13 Haynes stores were opened in hotels or their own buildings.

The 1927 Old Faithful store, designed and constructed in two months by contractor George Larkin, had living quarters on the second floor over a photo-finishing operation as well as a retail shop. A two-story dormitory for Haynes employees was added in 1951, and an addition to the rear of the building several years later.

The Mammoth Hot Springs facility, designed by Bozeman, Montana, architect Fred Willson and completed in 1929, served as the headquarters for the Haynes photographic business in the park. It included an overnight photo-finishing service, and retail space that carried an assortment of photographs, books, camera film, and other supplies. The drive-through canopy acknowledged the growing influence of the automobile on architectural design.



From a Haynes postcard of the Haynes Picture Shops Headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs, 1934.

Current Status

Jack Haynes operated the family business until his death in 1962. After running the company for another five years, his wife Isabel sold it to Hamilton Stores, owned by the Povah family. After most of the Old Faithful building was moved in three pieces and reconfigured near the newly constructed Snow Lodge in 1971, Hamilton Stores renovated the dormitory and added a front porch. Nearly all of the exterior materials on the original store are still present or have been replaced by the same materials. By 1998, the original Snow Lodge had been razed and a new Snow Lodge opened immediately adjacent to the Hamilton Store.

When the Hamilton Stores contract expired in 1999, the National Park Service purchased the buildings at Old Faithful and Mammoth. The Old Faithful store detracted from the appearance of the new Snow Lodge, and after considering several alternatives, in 2009 the National Park Service dismantled the dormitory and moved the original portion of the building to a site near its original location. Yellowstone Forever now occupies the old photo shop. Its former site has been landscaped as public open space.

The Mammoth Hot Springs photo shop has been used for multiple purposes since it was sold, including retail and storage. Over the years, its condition deteriorated significantly. After a considerable rehabilitation and restoration project, the park concessioner, Xanterra Travel Collective, has relocated their headquarters to the building.



The Fountain Hotel (left) and Grand Canyon Hotel (right), shown here from Haynes postcards, are two of several hotels that are no longer standing in Yellowstone.

Lodging No Longer Standing

Marshall's Hotel, which stood near the present-day intersection of Fountain Flats Drive and Grand Loop Road, was built in 1880 and was the second hotel in the park. Later renamed the Firehole Hotel, it was mostly razed in 1895, with other buildings removed later.

Fountain Hotel opened in 1891 north of Fountain Paint Pot. This was one of the first Yellowstone hotels where bears were fed for the entertainment of guests. The hotel closed after 1916 and was torn down in 1927.

Four lodging facilities were built at Norris. Three were built between 1886 and 1892; the first two burned. The last hotel at Norris, which overlooked Porcelain Basin, served the public from 1901 to 1917.

Three hotels were built in succession at Canyon, the last being the largest structure in the park. Sited where the horse stables are now, the Canyon Hotel was closed in 1958 due to financial and maintenance problems and burned in 1960.

These and other sites of former park facilities are historic archeological sites. They are studied and documented for what they reveal about past visitor use in the park.

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Construction of Other Park Buildings

Lake General Store, 1920

Lake Ranger Station, 1922–23

Mammoth Chapel, 1912–13

Mammoth Gas Station, 1920

Old Faithful Gas Station (Lower), 1920, 1925

Old Faithful Lower General Store, 1897, 1921 addition

Old Faithful Upper General Store, 1929–30

South Entrance Ranger Station Duplex, 1928

Tower General Store, 1932

West Thumb Ranger Station 1925; now an information station

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Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes are settings that human beings have created in the natural world. They are geographic areas that have been shaped by human manipulation of natural and cultural resources and are associated with historic events, people, or activities in the park. They reflect significance of the historic setting and recognize the influence of human beliefs and actions over time on the natural landscape. A cultural landscape is an indicator of cultural patterns, values, and heritage through the way the land is organized and divided, patterns of settlement, land use, circulation, and the types of structures that are built and their placement in the landscape.

Yellowstone National Park contains an array of landscapes that reflect the park's history, development patterns, and a changing relationship between people and the unique Yellowstone environment. In Yellowstone, these landscapes are often a physical record of the early and ongoing efforts to balance resource preservation and facility development for public enjoyment. They include sites such as Artist Point and Apollinaris Spring and the landscape features and patterns that contribute to the character of the Roosevelt Lodge Historic District. They also include areas significant to Native American cultures, such as Obsidian Cliff and sacred sites. Yellowstone's cultural landscapes are being inventoried to identify landscapes eligible for the National Register and to ensure new undertakings are compatible with them.

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This iconic view of the Lower Falls of the Yellowstone River was photographed from Artist's Point. Artist's Point was named to recognize the crucial role of the work of artists in the creation of Yellowstone National Park. The work of photographers and painters like Thomas Moran, persuaded distant legislators of Yellowstone's awesome beauty and natural and cultural significance.



T. MORAN/DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR MUSEUM

Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River. Oil on Canvas 1872 by Thomas Moran.

Staff Reviewer

Zehra Osman, Landscape Architect

Collections

Yellowstone's collections document the cultural and natural history of the world's first national park and the conditions of its resources. The historic collections document the park from pre-history through the present. The collections include objects and written records that document the history and science of the park, changes in perception and meaning over time, and the interaction between people and nature. Specimens range from geologic and natural history to Native American and European American cultural materials.

It is National Park Service policy to collect, protect, preserve, provide access to, and use objects, specimens, and archival and manuscript collections to aid understanding and advance knowledge. Collections play important roles in resource management, research, and education programs, and function as baseline databases for park natural and cultural resources.

With over 6.7 million items, Yellowstone has one of the largest collections in the National Park Service. The collections grow continuously with the addition of archival records, archeological artifacts, and scientific specimens.

Heritage and Research Center

Before 2005, Yellowstone's collections were stored in various locations both inside and outside the park, where they were subject to deterioration,



The Heritage and Research Center houses Yellowstone's museum collection, archives, and research library.

damage, and theft. With the opening of the Heritage and Research Center, these collections, apart from historic vehicles, were relocated and stored in a single location. This state-of-the-art storage facility meets standards set by the National Park Service, the American Alliance of Museums, and the National Archives and Records Administration. Both the Heritage and Research Center and its staff enable the continued preservation of Yellowstone's collections.

Most of these items are kept in the Heritage and Research Center, which is located in Gardiner, Montana. The Heritage and Research Center is a collections storage facility that also houses the park's herbarium and archeology lab, and features small rotating exhibits in the lobby.

Quick Facts

Numbers in Yellowstone

- More than one million museum items, including 30 historic vehicles
- The archives housing more than 5.6 million collections, including manuscripts, photos, maps, films, oral histories, administrative records, and scientific data that documents the natural and cultural resources of the park as well as its development and management
- A research library containing more than 20,000 books, periodicals, theses and dissertations, unpublished manuscripts, microfilm and other micrographic formats of historical newspapers and scrapbooks, brochures, technical reports, and audio visual material

Together, more than four million items, one of the largest in the National Park System.

Where to See

Gardiner, Montana

- The Heritage and Research Center is open Monday–Friday, 9 am–4:00 pm (except federal holidays); the public is welcome to tour the temporary exhibits located in the lobby.
- The library is open to the public Monday–Friday.
- The archives, herbarium, and museum collections may be accessed for research purposes by appointment.

- Public tours may be available from June to September. Call (307) 344-2264 to reserve a space.

Conducting Collections Research

Anyone can conduct research in the collections. Archives finding aids and the library's catalog are available online. Additionally, a growing amount of material has been digitized and made available online. Visit the collection webpage for links to these materials.

For onsite research, please email us at yell_heritage_center@nps.gov to schedule an appointment or to consult with the archivists, librarians, and curators.

For more information, visit www.nps.gov/yell/learn/historyculture/collections.htm

Museum Collection

Yellowstone's museum collection contains more than one million items that, along with the archives and library collection, document the cultural and natural history of the park. The museum collection consists of natural history, archeological, and cultural objects, including obsidian points, skulls from the first wolves reintroduced in the park, Thomas Moran's original watercolor field sketches, William Henry Jackson's photographs, furniture from the historic hotels and other historic structures, and an extensive historic vehicle collection ranging from stagecoaches and wagons, through early buses and automobiles, to fire trucks and a snowmobile.

The collection is used each year by park staff and other researchers looking for background information on Yellowstone history, specific reference material, and illustrations for commercial products, school programs, special events, and adult education. The televised series, "The National Parks: America's Best Idea," by Ken Burns contained hundreds of images from Yellowstone's collections.

While the Heritage and Research Center does have some rotating exhibits in the lobby area, the facility was not designed to be a museum, but rather a research center and a state-of-the-art storage facility. With the exception of some restricted collections, such as Thomas Moran's original watercolor field sketches, William Henry Jackson's photographs, and other rare or fragile items, the museum collections are accessible to researchers by appointment only and require at least 24-hours advanced notice.



One of more than 150 skulls and skeletal materials in the museum collection from the park's Wolf Project, wolf 007F was released in Yellowstone in 1995 as a Rose Creek pup. She joined 002M from the Crystal Creek pack in 1996 to form the Leopold Pack, the first naturally formed pack of the new era. She was killed by wolves of the Geode Creek pack in 2002.

Historic Vehicle Collection

Yellowstone National Park's historic vehicle collection currently includes thirty horse-drawn and motorized vehicles. They range from stagecoaches operated by the Yellowstone Park Transportation Company (later the Yellowstone Park Company) and Monida and Yellowstone Stage Company (later the Yellowstone-Western Stage Company), to early Yellowstone Park Transportation Company touring cars, buses, and service trucks, to National Park Service scooters and a fire engine. Also represented in the collection are numerous human-powered vehicles, including fire hose carts and handcarts, or "Mollys" used by hotel maids and bellmen.

The vehicle collection is one of the largest in the National Park System. Currently housed in an historic structure (a former Yellowstone Park Transportation Company structure built in 1925 to replace the original transportation facilities destroyed by fire), it is hoped that a more suitable storage/exhibit facility will eventually be constructed, possibly as a wing of the Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center. The vehicle collection is currently not open to the public.

The majority of the vehicles were received from TW Recreational Services, Inc. (successor to the Yellowstone Park Company) in 1991. Others have been added to the collection (such as the Willys fire truck) when they became obsolete or surplus to National Park Service needs. In 2016, a 1965 Bombardier Model R-12 snowcoach (#706) became the most recent addition to the historic vehicle collection when the park phased out the use of these coaches.

Volunteers performed initial cleaning of the



Yellowstone's historic vehicle collection, one of the largest in the National Park System, includes this 1917 touring car.

vehicles, and the Yellowstone Association and Yellowstone Park Foundation (which merged in 2016 to become Yellowstone Forever) have also provided funding for preservation and conservation efforts.

More recently, some federal funding was provided for extensive preventative conservation treatment (cleaning and stabilizing some of the vehicles) by National Park Service staff. Some of the vehicles have been loaned to other museums and institutions for special exhibits, and the entire collection was the focus of a segment in “Hidden Yellowstone,” a film aired by the Discovery Channel.

Archives

The Yellowstone Archives contains records documenting the natural and cultural resources of Yellowstone. They also detail the military administration of the park (1886–1918), the evolution of the national park concept following Yellowstone’s establishment, the formulation of management policies, records of park concessioners, and ongoing developments in park management today. The collection includes historic maps, photographs, films, oral histories, administrative records, and scientific data.

The Yellowstone Archives is an affiliate of the US National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), which allows the park to permanently hold federal records instead of transferring them to the National Archives. While legal custody of these records belongs to NARA, physical custody is kept by Yellowstone National Park to allow researchers to have the best access to both current and historical resources in one location.



The archives are an affiliate of the National Archives and include records from the US Army’s administration of the park.

Research Library

The research library collects published and unpublished materials related to the greater Yellowstone area to make them available to park staff, researchers, and the public. The library collection consists of more than 20,000 books, periodicals, theses and dissertations, maps, unpublished manuscripts, microforms of historic newspapers and scrapbooks, brochures, technical reports, and audio-visual material. Support from Yellowstone Forever, private donors, and federal funding have allowed our staff to curate an impressive, possibly unsurpassed, library of Yellowstone’s resources. The library collection is owned by the National Park Service and is managed through a cooperative agreement process with the Great Basin Institute.

The Map Room collection includes a large number of published maps from 1865 to the present. In the Rare Book Room are first editions of classic volumes pertaining to the park such as Hiram Chittenden’s *Roads in Yellowstone National Park* reports and John Steinbeck’s *Travels with Charley*; one-of-a-kind annotated volumes, including Superintendent Nathaniel Langford’s edition of the *Vigilantes of Montana*; and unique ephemeral publications like tourist guidebooks, concessioner brochures, and railroad timetables. Donations from Yellowstone Forever (formerly the Yellowstone Association and Yellowstone Park Foundation), and private donors, as well as funding provided by the National Park Service, have made possible an impressive, possibly unsurpassed, example of Yellowstone National Park resources.



The Yellowstone Research Library is in the midst of a digitization project that will make library records accessible online.

Library cards are available to all park staff and volunteers, cooperator and concessions employees, and local residents. Many books and media resources are available for check-out. The library also participates in worldwide interlibrary loan (ILL) services; contact your local library for more information.

Since 2006, the library has operated a monthly bookmobile service that travels around the park interior during the summer season. A wide range of resources, from scientific and historical non-fiction to guidebooks and fun fiction are available to NPS, cooperator, and concession employees.

Staff Reviewer

Anne Foster, Park Archivist

Miriam Watson, Museum Curator

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION:

Can I access the collections online?

The Yellowstone Research Library's catalog is available through the Wyoming Library Databases consortium (https://wyld.ent.sirsi.net/client/en_US/yrl) and the National Park Service's libraries (www.library.nps.gov). Records that are available online are linked through the library catalog. Finding aids for processed archives collections may be accessed at www.nps.gov/yell/historyculture/archives.htm.

A growing amount of the collections have been digitized and made available online: Superintendent's reports, oral histories, photographs, documents, maps, and architectural drawings can be found on the Montana Memory Project (<https://mtmemory.recollectcms.com>). Additional photographs can be found on the Open Parks Network, <https://openparksnetwork.org/explore/collections/yellowstone-photo-albums/>. Electronic files of published scientific articles are available in the Data Store on the Integrated Resources Management Applications (IRMA) website, irma.nps.gov/Portal.

Some of the museum collections may be viewed on the NPS Web Catalog: <https://museum.nps.gov/>