SOLDIERS OF YELLOWSTONE

The Role of the U.S. Army in the World’s First National Park

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Abstract

By the 1860s, the United States’s colonization of the West was reaching its peak. Not even the most challenging terrain could escape European-American exploration, as was proven when groups began to enter the Yellowstone region in 1869. Within three years, the spectacle and promise of the area prompted lawmakers to designate Yellowstone as the world’s first National Park. That designation led to many questions, though; what was a National Park? How should it be managed? Who would do the work of maintaining it? After over a decade of uncertainty, the U.S. Cavalry was eventually given the responsibility of keeping the Park in 1886, and would go on to hold that responsibility until 1918. Throughout the periods of exploration, of Native conflicts, and of Army management, the role of the military in Yellowstone’s history has left an indelible mark on the people and the landscape of Wyoming, Montana, and Idaho. All through this period, the motivation was the search for value; while the Army had initially sought a strategic use for the landscape, their discoveries only invited profit-seeking ventures. When Yellowstone proved to have greater economic value than strategic, the Army moved away from its original mandate to defend and facilitate that economic usage.
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A Note on Language

Before I begin, I should clarify some linguistic choices. There are three major categories that must be addressed: animals, places, and people.

There are three major animals that have historically been known by different names, and play a significant role in the history and environment of Yellowstone. I have made an effort to standardize the terminology with which I refer to them, despite some variations in source material. While some sources may use the name “silvertip bear,” “silver tip bear,” or “brown bear,” all of these refer to the grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*). Similarly, while the names “cougar,” “catamount,” “puma,” or “panther” may all refer to the same animal, I have selected “mountain lion” as my name of choice for *Puma concolor*. Finally, despite both historic and modern naming conventions, there is not now nor has there ever been an American species of buffalo. The correct term for the large herding ungulate of North America is “bison,” (*Bos bison*) and that is the term used here.

The question of place names is significantly more of a challenge. Yellowstone and the surrounding regions have been occupied and used by a number of different peoples over the thousands of years that humans have lived in the Americas, and many names have been applied to most landmarks within the region, as well as the region itself. While I do not intend to downplay the role of Indigenous people in Yellowstone, I have elected to primarily use the European-influenced names for landmarks and places in this paper. This is because the European-influenced names are the ones that can be found on most modern maps, and I hope to make it simple to develop a spatial understanding of Yellowstone alongside a chronological one. It is my personal view that the effort to return Indigenous names to major sites around the
Americas is a noble one, but until Yellowstone receives the same treatment as Denali, these are the restrictions with which I must contend.

The names for peoples is also a very touchy subject. In general, I have sought out commonly used names that are considered acceptable among the peoples that are described by them. For instance, while the name of one people now living in southern Montana has been alternately latinized as “Apsáalooke” or “Absaroka,” the official website for their tribe uses the more common name “Crow.” Based on this, I refer to them as “the Crow people” or some equivalent, in order to allow the reader to make connections with other narratives of the American west, both historical and contemporary. Similar considerations were made for all applicable peoples to which this writing refers.

While I have worked with a large number of sources in order to produce this work, I recognize that I may have missed some key factor in the most preferred and accurate names. Likewise, I recognize that language changes, and what may have been considered appropriate at the time of writing may be seen completely differently in the future. I made these choices with the best possible intentions, and apologize if anything is read as offensive or insensitive.
Introduction

By the mid-1800s, the United States was finishing up its last territorial acquisitions in what would become the Lower 48. With the finalization of the Gadsden Purchase in 1853, the modern-day borders of the Continental United States were set. This ushered in the next era of American Westward Expansion: that of settling and colonization.

The American frontier had been moved countless times, a process that began before even the Revolutionary War. When once the fledgling United States had been bounded by the Appalachian Mountains, the borders had now been pushed well beyond the Mississippi River, Great Plains, and Rocky Mountains, all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Though they were not the first, large numbers of eastern hunters, trappers, and explorers were beginning to make their way deep into the mysterious country out west, and would soon be replaced by settlers and homesteaders. The presence of Indigenous peoples was often either disregarded or derided; this was the age of Manifest Destiny, and no force would stand between the expansionist might of the newly minted American Empire and what it saw as its God-given territory to the west.

Wherever United States citizens could be found in this wide-open country, the U.S. Army was not far away. Fortifications soon appeared all across the frontier, a response to those disregarded and derided Native peoples. Sometimes, those already present struck back at the colonists moving into their ancestral lands; other times, the Army would strike first in an effort to clear the land for exploitation. In either case, as the United States moved west, so too did the conflicts. The country began to fill with European Americans, and with them, the instruments of the government’s force.

As the country began to fill, it became clear that some areas were just not suited for colonization. One such region was taking shape on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains,
where neither settlers nor explorers had managed to establish themselves. While the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804-1806 had passed within 100 kilometers of it a half-century before, they had only vague stories passed along by an Indigenous man that they met along the way to report of it. The Army itself organized an expedition into the area planned for 1860, but they were unable to even find a way in due to impassible snowdrifts as late as June. The Civil War, illness, and fear of hostile Native peoples stymied all attempts to learn more about this mysterious blank spot on the map until late 1869, when three intrepid adventurers resolved to see what had lain hidden to outsiders for so long. Within two and a half years of this journey, the “blank spot” had been transformed into something completely new in the world: a National Park, one designed to protect and preserve the headwaters of the Yellowstone River. Today, it is known as Yellowstone National Park, or sometimes simply “Yellowstone.”

Yellowstone’s origin story is a long and far-reaching narrative, involving key figures from everywhere between Washington D.C. and the state of Washington. However, the most significant presence in the Yellowstone Region, and eventually the Park, was that of the United States Army; from engineers to cavalry, soldiers and Army employees alike were crucial to the formation and development of the world’s first National Park. The role that they played, much like the place in which they played it, was unlike anything seen before in military history. This led to significant difficulties. The duties that the Army accepted in Yellowstone led to serious questions about what the role of an armed force was, how their authority could be wielded, and who they were responsible for serving. While they served only to secure and assist in exploring the area in the beginning, they would eventually come to be sole authority in the Park for over
thirty years. All of this began with a single act, signed in March of 1872 “for the benefit and enjoyment of the people.”

This act did not take place spontaneously; it was the result of the combined efforts of explorers, scientists, philosophers, soldiers, artists, and politicians, each with their own vision of what Yellowstone could become. Some sought their fortune in the untapped riches of the Yellowstone region, while others envisioned a strategic corridor for men and materials through the Rocky Mountains. Some who would come to be among the most influential figures, however, looked to another inspiration: the beauty of the land itself, and the bounty that its natural state held. This school of thought had its roots in a philosophical movement that had emerged only recently.

The American Industrial Revolution had been ongoing for almost as long as the expansion west, having begun around 1820. Even as isolated settlers sought a new life on the frontier, many more flocked to the cities seeking work in the factories that were growing with every new invention. The rise of the urban industrial lifestyle inspired a response in the form of the first great environmental movement: Transcendentalism. Philosophers like Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Walt Whitman prompted people to consider the place of man and God in the natural world, and to question whether the ongoing march of progress was truly the way that society should be directed. They argued that there was a far nobler pursuit, as Emerson did in 1841: “We can never quite be strangers or inferiors in nature…But we no longer hold it by the hand; we have lost our miraculous power…When man curses, nature still testifies to truth and love.”

1 42nd US Congress, Session II, 1 March 1872
2 The Method of Nature
thinking of the day. Emerson’s contemporaries voiced similar feelings with greater or lesser
degrees of subtlety; for instance, Amos Bronson Alcott wrote that “All departures from perfect
beauty are degradations of the divine image,” implying that only the natural Creation holds
beauty, not works of man. In contrast, the same Alcott once wrote “Man never tires of Natures
scene | Himself the liveliest evergreen,” firmly placing humanity in nature. The works of these
philosophers, which began in the 1830s and continued for decades after, had an indelible effect
on the American psyche, planting the seed of a new perception of humanity’s place in the natural
world. Once these ideas went mainstream, one didn’t need to even associate with
Transcendentalism to be seen as a naturalist; people from many walks of life, from hunters to
scientists, implemented aspects of naturalism into their lives.

The works of the Transcendentalists were indeed influential, but they were still not
enough to bring about revolutionary policy change alone. There were close to forty years
between the beginning of the philosophical movement and the first National Park. What was
necessary to catalyze the reaction between natural beauty and federal policy was simple: a profit
motive.

The search for value in Yellowstone was the main motivating factor for the region’s
exploration, and directly led to its designation as a National Park. This value took several forms,
but can largely be summed up by two: strategic and monetary worth. While the inherent natural
beauty of the land had its own value, this was only a key factor for a select few in the earliest
days of the National Park; most all development before and after for decades to come would be
defined by how it could be used by the Army and by private businesses. These factors did not
only motivate exploration, they also gave the U.S. government a reason to wield the Army as a

3 Orphic Sayings, Beauty (91)
4 Thoreau and Emerson, Outlook (93)
tool throughout the process, even after the strategic aspect had run its course. This gives a motive, but leads to significant questions: what was the actual role of the Army in Yellowstone’s history? How did they contribute to what it would become?

At first, the Army and the private profit-seekers both sought to take advantage of the Yellowstone region in their own ways; the Army wanted it to be a transport corridor for supplies and personnel, and the others saw it as another resource-filled part of the west that could be made to produce crops, livestock, valuable minerals, and more. However, as the age of exploration ended, both began to realize that their conceptions of Yellowstone had been inaccurate, because the geography made the area unsuitable for traversal and extractive use. Throughout the period of Indigenous conflict, the area was used as a bargaining chip during treaty negotiations, but as that concluded, one possibility presented itself: the profit to be gained from tourism. Once this was established, and once the conflicts that had demanded the Army’s attention were at an end, both the Army and the profit-seekers of Yellowstone worked together to fully realize the potential of tourism. This was done by first eliminating obstacles to the touristic development of the Park, then actively constructing and promoting tourism-focused resources. This conversion of Yellowstone from a location to a destination would fundamentally change America’s perception of natural spaces, and define the role of this and every other National Park in American society up to the present day.

In recounting and analyzing this history, a wide range of sources must be consulted. For much of this time period, the best sources are firsthand accounts; expedition journals, memoirs, and military reports are all of great help in reconstructing the events that characterized the Army’s role in Yellowstone. Much of the exploration history is chronicled in the personal accounts of Charles Cook, David Folsom, and William Peterson, as well as Nathaniel Langford,
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Lieutenant Gustavus Cheyney Doane, and Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden. Personal accounts by
Cook, Folsom, and Peterson are also of use when discussing the modern Native history of the
area, as are personal accounts by Frank Carpenter, Yellow Wolf, and General Oliver Howard.
Throughout the period of Army residence in the Park, a collection of journals kept by Army
Scouts describing their day-to-day operations were invaluable. All of these provided unique
insight from the day and age that this was all taking place.

At some points, however, original documentation is not available or is too widespread
and vague to be of use, and secondary sources become necessary. Other historians have done
excellent work cataloguing the histories of Yellowstone’s early tourist offerings, relationships
with major historical figures and trends, and histories of violence and death, all of which come
into this narrative. Dr. Thomas C. Rust’s Watching Over Yellowstone: The US Army's
Experience in America's First National Park, 1886-1918 provides a detailed view of the personal
and professional lives of the soldiers who were stationed at Fort Yellowstone during their time in
charge. Aubrey Haines’s The Yellowstone Story is a vast trove of knowledge about the Park
Region, and was a great help in filling in blanks left by other sources from the beginning to the
end of the Army period. Lee H. Whittlesey’s Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness
in the First National Park was integral to pinning down specific events in the Army’s history at
the Park and determining the larger role they played in the region at large. Mary Shivers Culpin’s
"For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People:" A History of Concession Development in
Yellowstone National Park, 1872-1966 was of great help in comparing the tourist history of the
space to that of the Army.

Between these and several smaller sources, the greater narrative of Yellowstone’s history
emerges, but it is patchy and incomplete. For the most part, Yellowstone was not considered any
different from any other uncolonized part of the frontier until the late 1860s, when a sudden
flurry of interest about the area appeared. A series of explorations followed, which resulted in it
being named a National Park. For the next several decades, the US Government, primarily the
Department of the Interior and the Department of War, struggled to determine what that meant
for them, and how exactly such a space should be run. Once the Army arrived in 1886, they did
what they could to complete the job until the National Parks Service supplanted them in 1918.

By placing the historical perception of Yellowstone’s origins in conversation with the
original documents, a greater and more cohesive understanding of Yellowstone’s development
may be reached. This history generally separates the Army’s role in the exploration of
Yellowstone and forays into the regions around it from its later role as the Park’s administrators
and guardians. In so doing, those historians have overlooked the key motive throughout this
process: that search for value and profit to be gained from Yellowstone, a search in which the
Army played a significant and continuous role. By instead looking at the Army’s work in
Yellowstone as a continuous narrative through these primary accounts and secondary histories,
the motivations guiding both the Army and those around and under them can be more thoroughly
explored.

While the National Parks Service that would replace the Army in their Park roles is a far
cry from a military organization, it is undeniable that their histories are linked. The National
Parks Service took up the same jobs that the Army had developed from scratch, accepted former
Army personnel, and stepped into the same niche that the Army had occupied for over thirty
years. This was not only isolated to Yellowstone; as the Army took command of the other early
National Parks, the policies enacted in Yellowstone went on to inform those in use around the
United States before the Service appeared.⁵ Because of this, the modern National Parks Service has its roots in what the Army did during this period. It is crucial to recognize what those roots are when thinking of today’s National Parks Service, and what role they play in the history of American conservation.

⁵ Black Officer in a Buffalo Soldier Regiment, 140-154
Chapter I: Exploration of the Yellowstone Region (1859-1883)

The region now known as Yellowstone National Park is not an easy one to access. Nestled in the Rocky Mountains and straddling the Continental Divide, the altitude, terrain, and weather make the area much more dangerous than the plains to the east or the high deserts to the west. Between the volcanic activity, the harsh Winters that stretched from September or October through April or May, and the high mountains that reach miles into the sky, it is hard to believe that anyone would put in the effort to make a life here. Despite this, humans have long lived in and used the space.

Evidence of Native American occupation dates back thousands of years,6 and European Americans have been passing through the area since they first pushed past the Mississippi River. John Colter, a veteran of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, is generally viewed as the first non-Native person to come across the volcanic hot spot that would fascinate so many for years to come, lending his name to a particularly infernal point later referred to as “Colter’s Hell.” When he trekked through the Yellowstone Region on his own in the Winter of 1807-1808,7 he became the first of a number of American “mountain men” who would find themselves there in the decades to come.8 The first serious exploratory efforts, however, would not come until over a half-century after, and successful efforts would be even later.

Even decades before any railway would establish a line this far to the northwest, there was a fascination with this rumored land. The first European American explorers did not organize their first tentative excursions into the area until the late 1850s, and would not have enough confidence to send large groups until the early 1870s. Only a few years later, however, there came an explosion in enthusiasm over Yellowstone, and many more explorers found

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6 Before Yellowstone
7 The Fate of the Corps, 43-44
8 The Valley of the Upper Yellowstone, xix-xx
themselves in the region, now forced to share it with other visitors. Throughout this exploration, the US Army was a critical presence, organizing, supporting, and supplying most of the missions that would lead to a better understanding of the region and the potential value that it held.

“At all Hazards:” 1860-1870

The first attempt at an organized expedition into the Yellowstone Valley by European Americans came in 1859 and 1860, when then-Captain William F. Raynolds, and Engineer in the US Army, was tasked with leading an expedition party that was intended to, among other things, discover the headwaters of the Yellowstone River. The orders from the Army’s Captain Topographical Engineer In-Charge were clear and explicit, outlining a set of goals that would improve military knowledge of the terrain.

To accomplish these objects [finding the best routes between several frontier forts] most effectually the expedition should proceed by the Missouri River to Fort Pierre…[proceed] to the source of the Powder river by the Shayanne [sic] and its north fork, by which a new route leading west from the Missouri river would be examined…From the source of the Powder river the expedition should proceed down that stream to its mouth; thence along the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Tongue river, up which a detachment should be sent to find its source. The remainder of the party should continue on the Yellowstone to the mouth of the Big Horn river, and ascend the latter stream to the point where it leaves the mountains. Here the two divisions of the party should be united…The next season should be spent in examining the mountain region about the sources of the Yellowstone and the Missouri, to ascertain the character of the routes leading south and west from the navigable parts of those rivers.9

This first expedition was clearly not focused on the Yellowstone region for its own sake; the only reason it held any interest at all for the Army was for its strategic value, as a potential

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9 Raynolds Report, 4-5
route through or over the Rocky Mountains. The name “Yellowstone,” in this case, only refers to the river, as no explorations had yet probed into the region that would come to share the name. Even in this, Yellowstone was hardly unique, with Captain Raynolds being ordered to survey a large number of rivers, more than are mentioned in this passage. While this marked the first organized trek toward Yellowstone, it was not to be the first expedition into the area.

In part due to the wide purview of Captain Raynolds’s orders, he was not able to complete his task as it was assigned to him. Besides being assigned an area of about 250,000 square miles for survey, he reported that the geography and climate seemed to conspire against him as he approached the future park.

Beyond [Pryor’s river, Clark’s fork, the Big Rosebud, and Beaver river] is the valley of the upper Yellowstone, which is, as yet, a terra incognita. My expedition passed entirely around it, but could not penetrate it. My intention was to enter it from the head of the Wind river, but the basaltic ridge previously spoken of intercepted our route and prohibited the attempt. After this obstacle thus forced us over on the western slope of the Rocky mountains, an effort was made to recross and reach the district in question; but, although it was June, the immense body of snow baffled all our exertions.

After this disappointment, the explorers returned to Omaha, and no further expeditions were planned immediately. The outbreak of the Civil War resulted in Raynolds and his party being called to active military service. He fell ill soon after, which resulted in his taking a period of leave from active duty, followed by a period working several non-combat roles concurrently in the region of the Great Lakes. With all of these distractions, the final report of this expedition was not published until 1866, by which point he had attained the rank of Brevet Brigadier General. No other official attempt had been made at entering the Valley of the

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10 Raynolds Report, 6
11 Raynolds Report, 10
12 Raynolds Report, 2-3
Yellowstone in the meantime, nor would any more for several years; even after the Civil War came to a close and the Union Army began to return reserve troops to their former duties, there was silence with respect to this point on the border of the Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming Territories.

In any case, Raynolds had proven the Yellowstone River to be inadequate for navigation. If he had not been able to enter the Valley in Summer due to snow, it seemed unlikely that any serious movement through the region could be effected. While a lone hunter or trapper could probably make it through, as many would and did, it would be foolish to try to move people or goods through the Rocky Mountains using the Yellowstone River. In other words, it had no strategic value at that time. This answer, though, did not seem to satisfy everyone, including the local Army outpost; three years after Raynolds’s publication, a detachment prepared at Fort Ellis, outside of the region’s northern border, to accompany a civilian expedition into the Valley. This detachment, however, was never dispatched.\(^{13}\) Contemporary historians of the affair recorded that this spelled the end of that attempt, as few were willing to enter the Yellowstone Region without an escort.

Early in the Summer of 1869, the newspapers throughout the [Montana] Territory announced that a party of citizens from Helena, Virginia City, and Bozeman, accompanied by some of the officers stationed at Fort Ellis, with an escort of soldiers, would leave Bozeman about the fifth of September, for the Yellowstone Country, with the intention of making a thorough examination of all the wonders with which that region is said to abound…Then came news from Fort Ellis, that owing to some changes made in the disposition of troops stationed in the Territory, the military portion of the party would be unable to join the expedition; and our party, which had now dwindled down to ten or twelve persons, thinking it would be unsafe for so small a number to venture where there was a strong possibility of meeting with hostile Indians, also abandoned the undertaking. But the writer and his two friends…resolved to attempt the journey at all hazards.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\) The Valley of the Upper Yellowstone, 4
\(^{14}\) The Valley of the Upper Yellowstone, 4-5
The writer here is David E. Folsom, and his two friends are Charles W. Cook and William Peterson, three civilians who had been associated with the expedition but had no part in its organization. Together, the Cook-Folsom-Peterson Expedition would be the first to enter into the Yellowstone region and spend any significant time exploring it. It was significant for a number of other reasons as well; it would be the last expedition not escorted by federal troops until the beginning of Yellowstone’s time of tourism, it stood as perhaps the sole instance of American expansion in the West exclusively dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge rather than strategic or economic gain, and it marked the transition of the Yellowstone area of the frontier from just another patch of frontier land used by Native peoples and the occasional White wanderer to a place renowned for its unique geography and features. Even though Cook, Folsom, and Peterson had only entered the region out of curiosity, there would be significant consequences for their actions. Yellowstone was becoming someplace special, and thus worth paying attention to on a national level.

The Cook-Folsom-Peterson expedition set out near Fort Ellis and lasted for just over a month, encountering several groups and signs of Native peoples, contending with the weather, topography, and wildlife, and coming across sites still among the most famous in the Park today, including multiple hot springs and geysers.\footnote{15 The Valley of the Upper Yellowstone, 42-43} While they had not been the first European Americans to enter the Region, their stories focused local attention on the nearby blank spot on maps. It wasn’t long before some of the Territory’s notable figures began to consider a more robust journey, one better paid-for, provisioned, protected, and planned. Clearly, the Native peoples that they had been concerned about before were not as much of a problem as they had
thought, so there was much less reason to hesitate now. Their opportunity would come a year later, in 1870.

In August of that year, a party of 18 set out from Fort Ellis toward the Yellowstone region. This group included Lieutenant Gustavus C. Doane of the US 2nd Cavalry, as well as several subordinates. These would become the first active representatives of the Army in that region.

Led by Henry D. Washburn, then Surveyor-General of the Montana Territory and himself a retired Brevet Major General, the party also included a number of members of Montana’s “higher society:” a US Attorney, the President of Helena’s First National Bank, and a former tax collector named Nathaniel P. Langford, among others.16 This Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition, although it lasted about as long as the Cook-Folsom-Peterson and partially retraced its steps, resulted in a number of discoveries, among them being the geyser they named “Old Faithful.”17

The non-military members of this particular expedition demonstrated a distinct care for the environment that they were traversing. Among their number was one of the first to advocate for the establishment of Yellowstone as a National Park, and Langford would go on to become the first superintendent of that park when it was eventually founded. Lieutenant Doane, however, seemed to have much more worldly priorities.

Our camp was situated at the base of the foot-hills, near a small grove, from which flowed several large springs of clear water, capable of irrigating the whole bottom in front. The soil here is very fertile and lies favorably for irrigation; timber is convenient, water everywhere abundant, and the climate for this region remarkably mild. Residents informed me that snow seldom fell in the valley. Stock of every kind subsist through the winter without being fed or sheltered.

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16 Discovery of Yellowstone, Introduction
17 Secretary of War Letter Doane
Excepting the Judith Basin, I have seen no district in the western Territories so eligible for settlement as the upper valley of the Yellowstone.18

This was not the only time that the Lieutenant commented on the value of the land in the context of Westward Expansion; he later mentions that “Beaver, mink, and muskrat are also abundant,”19 referring to three highly valued animals in the fur trade. On one occasion, he even mentions rumors of Gold nearby,20 as if to round off the trifecta of “ways to make a living in the American West:” land, furs, and mineral wealth. While all of these excerpts are surrounded by comments on the geology, hydrology, and other natural features of the region and woven through his narrative of the expedition, they demonstrate a motive for the exploration not totally in line with the environmental consciousness of the civilians. Even as the civilians were planting the seeds of a new method of conserving the natural world surrounding them, Lieutenant Doane was imagining all the ways that the land beneath his feet could be used and sold.

“The Attention of the Whole Country [on] that Region:” 1871-1873

Following the safe and successful return of his expedition, Lieutenant Doane sent a full report of it to his highest superior short of the President, the US Secretary of War. He then passed it along to the Senate in early 1871. Around this time, a perfect candidate for expedition leader, Ferdinand V. Hayden, was in Washington D.C. following an exploratory mission in the Wyoming and Idaho Territories. Hayden was a naturalist who had been on numerous expeditions west of the Mississippi River in search of scientific samples and knowledge. A significant contributor to the Smithsonian collections, Hayden was no stranger to using Army funds for his

18 Secretary of War Letter Doane, 3
19 Secretary of War Letter Doane, 22
20 Secretary of War Letter Doane, 8
research; his first expedition had been up the Missouri River with an Army Colonel who paid well for his natural history expertise, and those that followed were even better resourced. He had been part of Raynolds’s failed 1860 expedition, and although he paused his expeditions to serve as a doctor in the Union Army, he did not miss the opportunity to send back preserved animal samples from coastal South Carolina to his mentors in the North. Since the Civil War, he had returned to the western expeditions, now firmly established as an expert and leader in such efforts. Having seen Doane’s report, and having an accomplished surveyor with such relevant experience so nearby, Congress sent Hayden to Yellowstone for a more robust investigation of its natural features.

By the time he was placed in charge of the survey, Hayden had already completed four federally funded Geological Surveys of the Western Territories. These expeditions stood in stark contrast to those that had been undertaken by individuals from the Territories into Yellowstone; Hayden was funded directly by the government, spent weeks and months in the field, and returned richly detailed reports that tied together geology, botany, ecology, meteorology, and more. His studies gave an extremely detailed picture of the lands he worked in, returning information of great economic and strategic value. This made him the best choice for leading a new expedition into a region that only a handful of European Americans had ever even seen. He went on to study the Yellowstone region until well after its 1872 designation as a National Park, sending back two reports that together totaled over 1,300 pages on Yellowstone and the surrounding environs in only two years. Another early proponent of the designation, Hayden produced several maps depicting the Yellowstone Plateau and Valley, one of which being

21 Hayden as Naturalist, 344-345
labeled “Yellowstone National Park” based on data collected the year before Congress passed the bill that designated the region as such.22

Figure 1.1: Hayden’s 1871 Map of the Yellowstone region, labeled “Yellowstone National Park.” The existence of this map demonstrates that Hayden was not only aware of the efforts to make Yellowstone a National Park, but he also wished to contribute to the effort. This map would be included in his report of his

22 1871 Map
first survey in the region, which was being printed and sent to the U.S. Congress as they voted to create the National Park.23

Hayden was not a soldier, or even a civilian employee of the Army; in fact, he referred to himself simply as “US Geologist,” and associated with the US Department of the Interior rather than the Department of War. However, his reports make it clear that he could not have achieved what he did without the aid of the US Army.

Armed with orders from the honorable Secretary of War, General Belknap, upon the military posts of the West for such assistance as could be afforded without detriment to the service, my whole party was everywhere received with marked kindness and generosity. The outfit obtained from Colonel C. A. Reynolds, of Fort D. A. Russell, Wyoming Territory, was even greater than that of the preceding year, and the aid which both himself and his subordinates cheerfully gave us, formed one of the most important elements of our success. An outfit so suitable for our purpose could not have been purchased in the country outside of the Quartermaster's Department, however great our appropriation… [T]hese favors [were] essential to the complete success of a party exploring the remote sections of the interior of our continent… At Fort Ellis we were indebted more or less to all the officers of the post for courtesies… By orders of Generals Sheridan and Hancock, one company of the Second Cavalry… was directed to escort the party… Lieutenant Doane reached us at our camp on the southwest shore of the lake, and from that period to the time of our return to Fort Ellis we received the benefit of his experience of the previous year… To my excellent friend, General H. A. Morrow, in command of Camp Douglas, Utah, I am indebted for many favors, not only as an officer of the Army, but as an earnest and successful student of geology, in the form of valuable specimens and much information.24

This account, written by Hayden to precede his report on the 1871 Geological Survey, shows that Hayden was afforded many more supplies than the explorers who had preceded him. While his predecessors had only managed to secure a small escort, Hayden’s expedition relied on

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23 5th Geological Survey of the Territories, 162
245th Geological Survey of the Territories, 6-7
Army resources for not only a full company of escorts, but also supplies, provisions, short-term lodging, and experienced guides for the region and its natural features. This passage even mentions that one of the cavalrmen who took part in the expedition was Lieutenant Doane, the Lieutenant Doane of Washburn-Langford-Doane fame; now only a year after that, the Lieutenant was likely the Army’s best expert in the Yellowstone region. In short, although the journey was undertaken and led by a representative of the Department of the Interior, it was dependent on the Army for a great deal, and it would be the local Army outpost that would most directly benefit from his investigation. In effect, this whole journey could be viewed as one led by civilians but carried by the Army. The effort that they put into this expedition shows that there was a very real interest on the part of the Army in what Hayden would find. Whether they sought the strategic value that Raynolds had been sent to search for or the economic possibilities on which Lieutenant Doane had remarked, the officers who equipped Hayden and sent him on his way knew that there was an incentive for them to ensure his success.

Entering the Yellowstone region from the direction of Fort Ellis, Hayden’s expedition was the first to find evidence of the area’s thoroughly volcanic history. From very early in his writings, he comments on the geological features, be they evidence of ancient eruptions, sandstone ridges built up over eons, or fossils of long-gone plants. Amidst all of this, however, he makes time to comment on the future of the area.

As we approach the base of the hills from the level terrace on which Fort Ellis is located, the gorge appears so narrow as to be impassable; but on entering it, we find ample room for a bridle-path, and we make our ascent without difficulty. As this is the canon which is regarded as most available for the passage of the Northern Pacific Railroad, it is invested with no small degree of interest.25

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25 5th Geological Survey of the Territories, 46
This is not the first time that he references the railroad; in fact, immediately after thanking the many representatives of the Army who contributed to the expedition’s success in his foreword, he took the time to appreciate “the officers of the railroads and stage-lines.” He adds to this his personal thanks to “Mr. Bradley Barlow, and Gilmer and Salisbury, proprietors of the stage-routes in Idaho and Montana” in particular. Because of these statements, he seems to have a special respect or affinity for the railroads and stagecoaches that permit travel to the Western Territories. Hayden never reports on any specific affiliation with any rail or stagecoach lines, but he does reference them almost as an inevitability; most times that the Northern Pacific Railway is mentioned, it is in the context of its future development in Montana. While his exploration seemed to agree with the implicit conclusions of the Raynolds expedition, that the region would be impassible as a transportation corridor, Hayden seemed to have a different use for the companies in mind.

In light of these comments, and taking into account his early support of the idea of Yellowstone as a National Park, an image of Hayden as something more than just an adventurous geologist emerges. While those around him saw Yellowstone as like any other part of the frontier, and usable only in the same ways that the rest had already been used, Hayden saw the potential for a tourism industry in the Valley. Whether this idea was reached based on his experience with the disappearing uncolonized places of the West, or simply because of the unique nature of the Yellowstone region, is unclear, but it is evident that Hayden saw a great deal of economic potential in a Yellowstone Park, especially in certain specific regions that he thought were best suited for the tourists who would eventually flock to this corner of the Territories.

26 5th Geological Survey of the Territories, 7
27 5th Geological Survey of the Territories, 7
We were traveling through this region in the latter part of the month of July, and all the vegetation seemed to be in the height of its growth and beauty. The meadows were covered densely with grass, and flowers of many varieties, and among the pines were charming groves of poplars, contrasting strongly by their peculiar enlivening foliage with the somber hue of the pines...The climate during the months of June, July, and August, in this valley, cannot be surpassed in the world for its health-giving powers. The finest of mountain water, fish in the greatest abundance, with a good supply of game of all kinds, fully satisfy the wants of the traveler, and render this valley one of the most attractive places of resort for invalids or pleasure-seekers in America.28

This excerpt from Hayden’s journal seems to be the first mention of Yellowstone as a potential resort area. In fairness, the idea was hardly unprecedented; hot springs and the vacation towns that surrounded them had long been associated with a number of possible health benefits among Europeans and Americans, with famed locales from Bath, England to the ruins of Hierapolis in modern-day Turkey. Additionally, by this point, many suffering from Tuberculosis were either vacationing in or moving to the undeveloped regions of the West in search of “fresh air.”29 Still, being one of the first people who would be in a position to come to such a conclusion, it’s impressive that he so quickly recognized this potential value of the region in ways that participants in the previous expeditions seemed to have totally overlooked.

His ambitions were not limited to the fields and forests of the region, but also included the nearby towns; “It is most probable that within a short period the Northern Pacific Railroad will pass down this valley, and then [Bozeman, Montana’s] beauty and resources will become apparent.”30 By positioning Bozeman as a stop along the railway, he likely envisioned it as the

28 5th Geological Survey of the Territories, 76
29 Spitting Blood, 134
30 5th Geological Survey of the Territories, 44
civilian gateway to what would become the Park, much as the nearby Fort Ellis had served as the gateway for his and the previous two expeditions.

Hayden not only favors the potential of the Yellowstone region for tourism, he also expresses implicit doubt toward its use for some of the other popular, profit-oriented land uses in the American West. Although he spent about 15 pages of his first Yellowstone report simply recounting his observations between Fort Ellis and the future Park, he crammed all of his thoughts on the agricultural value of that land into the last paragraph. The almost flippant way that he tosses this potential aside suggests that he feels obligated to address the issue, but unwilling to even consider it as a possibility.

We may not look for any districts favorable for agriculture in the Yellowstone Valley above the second cañon, but this entire lake basin seems admirably adapted for grazing and for the cultivation of the usual crops of the country. The cereals and the roots have already been produced in abundance, especially wheat and potatoes…The elevation of the valley at this ranch is 4,925 feet, and this may be regarded as the average in altitude… It will always be a region of interest, from the fact that it is probably the upper limit of agricultural effort in the Yellowstone Valley.31

While Hayden recognizes the practicality of farming the Yellowstone Valley in a specific region of Montana, he makes it very clear that this section is limited in size and distant from the central region that would later become the Park. Furthermore, he expresses his doubts that any part of the region above about 5,000 feet in elevation would not even be possible to farm; as the whole section of the Valley he is describing lies downriver from the Park region, this maximum elevation could not hope to include the vast majority of the region. In fact, the average elevation of Yellowstone National Park has since been calculated to approximately 8,000 feet,32 with some

31 5th Geological Survey of the Territories, 58-59
32 Geological History of the Yellowstone National Park
points standing in excess of 11,000 feet. This places most of the region in a space now defined by the United States Department of Agriculture as “Zone 3,” which is hospitable to only a few extremely cold-hardy fruits, vegetables, and herbs even with today’s advancements in selective breeding and genetic modification. Even for those crops that can survive in such a climate, seeds should be planted before the year’s last frost, requiring the use of a climate-controlled nursery. Although farmers in Hayden’s time would have not used the same terms, they would have recognized the impracticality in attempting to cultivate that sort of land. In making this claim with respect to the agrarian viability of the Yellowstone Valley, Hayden seeks to dispel the notion that Yellowstone would be a potential target for the same agricultural exploitation that had gripped much of the West at that point.

Armed as he was with the records of the Cook-Folsom-Peterson and Washburn-Langford-Doane Expeditions, Hayden knew that Winter fell early in Yellowstone. By the end of August of 1871, his party was on its way down from the mountains, and his report was soon in the hands of the relevant authorities back East. It would not be long before Hayden would see massive changes taking place concerning the region he had just left. Hayden’s party had not been limited to simple study and description of the Yellowstone Region. Alongside the scientists and soldiers had been two men with a very different job: Thomas Moran, a painter, and William Henry Jackson, a photographer. Both had been handpicked to document the expedition and the wonders that earlier explorers had reported. While Jackson, an expert in early wilderness photography, was employed by the government for record-keeping purposes, Moran was chosen by a representative of the Northern Pacific Railway.

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33 Park Peaks  
34 Zone 3  
35 5th Geological Survey of the Territories, 137
The Railway company, which was planning on expanding into the area just north of the Region, relied heavily on original artwork as an advertising tool. If the earlier reports were to be believed, Moran would have no shortage of subjects for the exact sort of art that they wanted.36

Figures 1.2 and 1.3: Moran’s37 and Jackson’s38 images of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. On the left, Moran’s 1972 painting places the tiny silhouettes of other expedition members before the enormity of the natural features of Yellowstone; on the right, Jackson’s photograph peers down into the canyon from a different angle.

The images that Moran and Jackson sent back had an even greater effect than Hayden’s report ever could on its own. The natural beauty of Yellowstone was on full display, and both the railroad magnates and lawmakers back east could tell that there was a great deal of potential in it. The art had given vision to the calls voiced by Hayden for preservation. A response was not long in coming.

It was in the Winter of 1871-1872, after Hayden’s expedition came to a close and before another could begin, that a massive change was made to the status of Yellowstone. On the first of

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36 Legendary Teamwork
37 Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone
38 Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone from Brink of Lower Falls
March, President Ulysses S. Grant signed off on the bill that would make the region something the world had never seen before.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States in Congress assembled, that the tract of land in the Territories of Montana and Wyoming, lying near the head-waters of the Yellowstone river…is hereby reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale under the laws of the United States, and dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people39

Likely owing in large part to Hayden’s work, Yellowstone was now the first National Park, and immediately placed under the exclusive authority of the Department of the Interior. It would be difficult to overstate the effect this would have; overnight, this obscure stretch of perceived wilderness, to which no railway or formal road led, had been set aside and federally protected from settlement and exploitation. Much of the environmental history of America hinged on this moment; by protecting the environment here, President Grant set in motion a new mechanism of the US government that has since been used to protect important natural and historic places throughout the States and Territories. While the practical effects and limitations of this pronouncement will be explored later, suffice to say that this proved that the expeditions made into Yellowstone had been noticed, and the efforts of those like Hayden who had contributed to the Park in the first place had been listened to.

“A Public Park or Pleasuring-Ground:” 1872-1883

It would not be long after this that preparations for another expedition began in earnest, this one even more thoroughly funded than the last; once again organized by Hayden and heavily

39 42nd US Congress, Session II, 1 March 1872
assisted by the Army, this expedition had enough support to involve two complete parties. While a subordinate would set out from northern Utah toward the Idaho Territory, Hayden would lead his group from Fort Ellis back into the Yellowstone region, where they would go on to explore places that they had been unable to reach previously. They set out on the 20th of July, and would go on to spend just over a month in the area before returning.

Hayden’s report this time contained much less flowery language and fewer statements as to the use of the region for resource extraction; instead, he remained focused on the geological character of the areas he studied throughout the report, avoiding the topic of land value. The sole exception to this was when he briefly mentioned visiting an area to the East of the Park’s boundary where a number of silver mines could be found.

About the sources of the Middle Fork and Clark's Fork are some very interesting silver-mines…The "croppings" are of a rusty yellow color, a sort of rusty limestone or quartzite, which can be traced for miles. The mines have not yet been developed to any extent, but the ore, which is galena, looks well. I think the ore is located in regular fissure-veins, extending downward about at right angles with the strata, (which are nearly horizontal,) and probably reach down into the metamorphic rocks beneath. There is the greatest abundance of water and wood in this region to work these ores should they prove of any value; but the mines are at present so difficult of access, so far from market, and the seasons are so short, that their value is nominal at this time.

In a similar way to his earlier comments regarding the viability of farming in the Yellowstone region, Hayden made it clear that the mining industry has limited value here, and makes a point of distancing it from the Park’s lands. While he recognizes that future prospects are uncertain, he’s not shy about expressing his issues with the project; not only is the ore

40 6th Geological Survey of the Territories, 1-2
41 6th Geological Survey of the Territories, 28
42 6th Geological Survey of the Territories, 58
43 6th Geological Survey of the Territories, 47
arranged in such a way that would make tunnel mining difficult, being almost perfectly vertical, but the mines are so isolated as to make transporting either ore or refined Silver prohibitively difficult. Although Silver mining had proven viable in Nevada and California, it did not seem like the same success would be repeated in this part of Wyoming and Montana. Much like with agriculture, this suggests that Hayden was keen on keeping this industry away from Yellowstone, even if it has already been legalized within Park borders by the official designation.

After returning from this short diversion, Hayden continued his expedition as before, with little reference to the economics of Yellowstone. Before long, the season ended, the party returned to the Montana Territory, and the expedition came to a close. This would be the last time that Hayden would work in Yellowstone until 1878, when he would conduct his third and final geological survey of the Yellowstone region. Before that time, however, there came still more “exploratory” expeditions.

It should be noted that, from this point onward, the whole Yellowstone region can no longer completely be classed as “wilderness,” even from the perspective of most of the United States population at the time. This is not because of the new legal classification, nor can it be attributed to the trails that the surveyors and Army escorts cut deeper into the countryside with every passing year; this change came because of the influx of people into the Park region. Hayden had gotten his wish: Yellowstone National Park was beginning to attract tourists.

While a nearby railroad station would not be established for decades, and regular stagecoach service was still years away, small groups of tourists still found their way to the Park. In fact, the historian Mary Shivers Culpin records that the first hotel to be built in Yellowstone predated the Park itself; James McCartney built a hotel and bathhouse near the Mammoth Hot Springs, and was joined by Matthew McGuirk, who also built a bathhouse in the area. The two
would operate for several years, until in 1879 and 1878 respectively, they were forced to close and surrender the properties to the government. They were not the last, though; having gained explicit permission to work in the Park, several more entrepreneurial individuals would go on to open hotels, lodges, stores, and other businesses starting in the 1880s. These amenities had to serve someone in order to be profitable, so it would seem that there were more than a few making the daring trek into the Territories in search of a vacation destination.

That being said, the tourism at this time was localized largely around the Mammoth Hot Springs near the northern end of the Park. Even if the Hot Springs had become a metropolis, that still left thousands of square miles free of European-American habitation. Even so, some of these last expeditions would go on to sound more like tourist trips themselves.

That same summer of 1873, another expedition was sent to the area, this one led by an Army Engineer named Captain William A. Jones. The report from this expedition, published in 1874, is similar to Hayden’s publications in several ways, albeit on a smaller scale: it leads with a recounting of the expedition, followed by sections on the natural features of the area. The letters attached to the beginning of the report, however, are the most telling. Added by the various officials who read and passed along the report on its way to Congress, they tell the story of how Jones’s findings were received in Washington D.C. The final addition frames the issue to which the report gave rise succinctly: this note frames it as a “report of a reconnaissance made by Captain W. A. Jones, Corps of Engineers, in the year 1873, for a wagon road from the line of the Union Pacific Railroad, in Wyoming Territory, to the Yellowstone National Park and Fort Ellis, Montana Territory”. This summarizes the challenge; even after the disaster of the 1860

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44 For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People, 126
45 The Reconnaissance of Northwestern Wyoming, III-V
46 The Reconnaissance of Northwestern Wyoming, 1
Raynolds Expedition, there were still those in the Army who believed that routing a road through Yellowstone would bring benefits to the Army, and Jones’s report had encouraged them.

Jones’s superior, the Chief of Engineers, was in favor of the idea. In his addition, he wrote “It would appear from the report of Captain Jones that the wagon-road to Montana, by the Yellowstone Park, proposed by him, would open a route that…would tend to keep down rates, and would prove advantageous to the Government in the transportation of military and Indian supplies.”

A higher authority dissented, however; Lieutenant General Sheridan, a hero of the Civil War, wrote “I wish it to be distinctly understood that I in no manner can indorse the contemplated road from the Point of Rocks on the Union Pacific Railroad, to Fort Ellis, via Yellowstone Lake, as a military necessity.” Sheridan is clear here, going on to argue that there are already enough perfectly good roads to keep the region’s forts supplied. In this exchange, the struggle over the value of Yellowstone becomes clear; while Sheridan has given up on the region as any sort of strategic boon, others are looking to the area with a different view. The Chief of Engineers’s comments on “keeping rates down,” however, are more reminiscent of the profit-seeking ventures that Hayden had decried. The framing that the Chief used here suggests that his main thought was for the transport of goods, and that access to Yellowstone in its own right was little more than an afterthought. While Hayden may have supported a road from the nearest railroad to the Park, as it would have been a step toward his idea of Yellowstone as a destination, his comments on other development in the Park area suggest that he might not think the same way about a transport corridor being built through the Park. At any rate, Jones’s road was never built; whether this was because Sheridan personally killed the project or if it was simply not something that Congress was interested in funding remains unclear, but the effect was the same.

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47 The Reconnaissance of Northwestern Wyoming, 1
48 The Reconnaissance of Northwestern Wyoming, 4
In 1875, there came a visitor to Yellowstone who should have known as much as anyone who hadn’t been there could know about the region: the Secretary of War, William Belknap. Lieutenant Doane’s report to Congress had been transmitted by Secretary Belknap, as had several other communications from Fort Ellis’s soldiers regarding the Park region. Led by Lieutenant Doane himself, Belknap took a tour of the country, but contributed little to the breadth of knowledge that was being assembled about it.49

In the Winter of the following year, Lieutenant Doane returned to Yellowstone for what would prove to be his last expedition. Explorers of America’s remaining wild spaces were becoming notable figures in the public eye; only a few years before, the Civil War veteran John Wesley Powell had led a raft excursion down the Colorado River through the Grand Canyon, and his published journal had made him famous.50 Doane sought the same distinction.

Explorers like Hayden had already mapped most of the Yellowstone region in broad strokes, but there were still places that Lieutenant Doane could make a name for himself. The Snake River, for instance, flowed westward from the Park, passing through a vast unmapped region of modern-day Idaho before joining the Columbia River in Washington. Doane saw an opportunity there, and set out with a party to boat down the Snake River in order to map the area and determine the river’s navigability. The expedition was ill-conceived from the beginning; they did not set out until October, well after the time of year that previous expeditions had left the region. Furthermore, the vessel they relied on was of a modular design, and ill-suited to harsh conditions such as those on the treacherous and partially frozen Snake River. Progress was slow and hard-won. Just over two months into the trek, the boat capsized, and they lost nearly all of their supplies. They were not found until two weeks later, when a party from Fort Hall further

49 Early History of Yellowstone National Park, 36
50 John Wesley Powell, 4-12
downriver came across them. The party had been sent out after them, but not as a rescue; they had been missing for so long that Doane had been reported as a deserter. The misunderstanding was quickly remedied, and all of the explorers survived, but they had to return the Fort Ellis after nearly three months of exploration with nothing to show for it. The expedition, although it had left the Park, had not even reached the unmapped section of river; even if they had recorded anything of note, the expedition’s papers and notebooks had all been lost in the wreck. 51 Doane never again attempted such an adventure.

Upon his 1878 return to the Park, Hayden once again submitted a report detailing his findings in the Park. This report, however, while over double the length of that of 1872, did not include a narrative of the journey as the two prior did; in fact, Hayden even went so far as to delegate the Geological aspect of the report, Hayden’s own wheelhouse, to a W. H. Peale. This time, Hayden’s only contribution to the narrative was compiling others’ work and writing a letter to accompany it to Washington.52

Not long thereafter, the age of exploration in Yellowstone came to an end. A persistent stagecoach line was established to Bozeman, MT in 1883, allowing well-paying tourists to come within a few miles of the park border, close to the Mammoth Hot Springs. The same year, then-President Chester A. Arthur visited Yellowstone, not for any official reason, but simply for vacation. As it turns out, he had heard the reports like Hayden’s that the region was good for fishing. While more geological surveys would be conducted, none were as significant as Hayden’s had been. If Yellowstone was yet a wilderness, it was an exceedingly well-mapped and well-peopled one.

51 Battle Drums and Geysers, 439-567
52 12th Geological Survey of the Territories, Table of Contents
Conclusion

The early explorations of the Yellowstone region did not only share their dependence on the Army starting points and general paths, they also often shared goals: they were designed to determine the wealth and value that the region held. While the specific intent behind each expedition varied, and was rarely even consistent between different members of the same expedition, the broad strokes can be broken down by the three periods.

In the initial phase, which took place in the 1860s, the goals were simple: determine the intrinsic value of the land. Raynolds was first tasked with finding the strategic potential of the River, Valley, and headwaters; Cook, Folsom, and Peterson were interested in exploring and possibly opening a new frontier; and even as Washburn and Langford stood in awe of Yellowstone’s natural beauty, envisioning it as a preserve, Lieutenant Doane was tallying the worth of the area in terms of agricultural, mineral, and wildlife. Throughout, the Army guarded the travelers as they approached the future Park, and with the exception of the Cook-Folsom-Peterson Expedition, even farther. Throughout this period, the Army’s goal was to facilitate an appraisal of Yellowstone’s resource value.

Those dreams of Washburn and Langford were made manifest by the next era, one that was characterized by national attention. Hayden’s two expeditions both struck down the ideas that value could be extracted from Yellowstone by conventional means and led to an alternative: the National Park, a tourist haven. This argument was evidently sufficiently persuasive to convince Congress. While it had stood in opposition to the original goals of the Army’s presence in the region, they are nevertheless instrumental in Hayden’s expeditions, and thus his reaching these conclusions.
The third period saw a decline in the pure exploration, and showed the beginning of the space as the destination that Hayden had envisioned. In turn, the Secretary of War, Lieutenant Doane, Hayden, and eventually even the sitting President of the United States would visit Yellowstone National Park, apparently seeking that wilderness that had begun to captivate the imagination of the nation, but already that wilderness was disappearing. Bathhouses, hotels, and general stores appeared almost immediately, followed by stagecoach lines, wagon roads, lake boats, and eventually, a railroad. The Army was present for all of this; in the Secretary of War’s case, it was more than just a cavalry company that would make an appearance, but rather, the man who most thoroughly and uniquely embodied the American Military. Even after the explorations tapered off, it was the Army that observed, and sometimes participated in, the development of the Park. Before long, they would acquire an observation post much closer to the action than Fort Ellis.
Chapter II: The Native Peoples of the Yellowstone Region

The Army was far more than a simple surveying force, or escort thereof. There was a reason that such a significant military presence existed in the Montana Territory, there was a specific purpose behind the construction of Fort Ellis, and there was a demand for the “services” provided by the cavalrmen stationed there: Native Americans. Interactions with Natives, both peaceful and hostile, were a significant and constant aspect of life in the Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming Territories long before the Raynolds Expedition was ever conceived of, and they would continue until well after the Park was designated. Many of these interactions, of both types, would take place either inside or near to the area that became Yellowstone National Park.

Many different Native peoples lived in the Territories that would come to contain Yellowstone National Park. There were great diversities between them: some were sedentary, some nomadic; some largely peaceful, others with histories of war; some who cooperated and made deals with the United States as it expanded, other that stood against it. Despite this, all of them would eventually get in the way of the westward expansion of the United States. Because of the threats they posed to the economic usage of the American West, the Army invariably became involved. Yellowstone’s history is inextricably tied to two of the only official wars ever waged on Native Americans,53 and many more battles would be waged over the years in undeclared conflicts. This would all come to a head in one of the last and largest conflicts between Native Americans and the forces of the United States, a significant portion of which took place in Yellowstone National Park. Before investigating the Army’s history in the conquest of this region, however, there is a serious and pervasive misconception that must be dispelled in order to properly address Yellowstone’s true history.

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53 Restoring a Presence, 222
Native Americans in Yellowstone Before Europeans (9500 BCE – 1870)

Through the years, many tall tales, inaccuracies, and outright falsehoods have crept into the story of the National Parks and their creation. Despite this, it would be difficult to find one nearly as transparent, as foolish, and as sinister as the myth that Native Americans habitually avoided the areas that would eventually become some of America’s most beloved National Parks.54 This lie, immortalized in academic literature in 1954 by the religious ethnologist Åke Hultkrantz,55 was parroted for many years.

The first published mention of this misconception came from a book published in 1895 entitled The Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive. Written by Army Engineer Hiram Chittenden, this account mentions that it was generally assumed at the time that Native peoples had not significantly used the area that would become Yellowstone National Park because the European-American explorers had not learned about the unique features of the land from them. Chittenden briefly questions this line of reasoning, rebutting that a small and isolated people known as the Sheepeaters had lived there permanently, and others had used the region for hunting and quarrying.56 When Hultkrantz cited Chittenden in 1954, however, he rejected Chittenden’s argument that the Native population had been small due to the difficulty of traversing the region. Instead, he stated that nearby Native peoples were afflicted by a “superstitious fear” of the Region. This, he argued, explained the absence of Indigenous accounts of Yellowstone.57 What little nuance that Chittenden and Hultkrantz accounted for was lost on

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54 Debunking the Myth
55 The Indians and the Wonders of the Yellowstone
56 The Yellowstone National Park, Chapter II
57 The Indians and the Wonders of the Yellowstone, 38-40
the public, though; as late as 1971, a pamphlet assembled by the US Department of the Interior included the statement “A hundred years ago another powerful force entered the Yellowstone Scene. Man,” completely ignoring the presence of Indigenous residents of the area. Around the country, as more National Parks have been formed, the Native histories of those places have become subject to erasure in similar ways. While the general perception seemed to be that there was no Native occupation of Yellowstone, and the ethnological perception only accounted for a small Native role, they agreed that the Natives’ effects on and relevance to the histories of Yellowstone and other parks have been negligible.

While the statement hardly deserves comment, I will provide it: this is false, and there is plenty of obvious evidence that proves it. Inside the Grand Canyon, some of the most popular hiking trails pass among rocks marked with petroglyphs and ancient dwellings; in Great Smoky Mountains, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians still live practically in the shadow of National Parks peaks; to this day, the Blackfoot Nation is still fighting to regain the valuable land stolen from them when Glacier National Park was created. In this, Yellowstone was no different. Although many have stated that the volcanic nature of Yellowstone frightened off any nearby Natives, it is in fact part because of that very volcanic activity that its documented Native history ranks among the oldest and most robust of the National Parks lands.

While there are few materials capable of lasting to become artifacts, especially among the preindustrial and often-nomadic peoples who lived in the American West before the incursion of Europeans and their descendants, plenty has been found that proves a Native presence in the Yellowstone region dating back millennia. One of the most popular and alluring of those media

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58 The Geologic Story of Yellowstone National Park, 89
59 American Indians and National Parks, xii
60 Ethnic Cleansing and America’s National Parks, 55.
that do tend to survive is the spear- or arrowhead. Based on the design and craftsmanship of such a weapon, an archaeologist can make specific determinations on the people and time period from which it came. Take, for instance, a Clovis Point.

The Clovis people were among the first to appear in the North American archaeological record, and yet little remains of them save the tips of their weapons. In one site in Northern Mexico, a Clovis Point was found among the remains of a now-extinct species of pachyderm, dated to approximately 11,500 years ago. Other Clovis Points are dated to within 1,000 years of this. While not the oldest evidence of human habitation of North America, this figure demonstrates that Natives have been in North America for a very long time, specifically in places where one can find a Point.61

In 2007, a University of Montana team discovered a Clovis Point along the Yellowstone River in Montana. In 2013, another was found near Yellowstone Lake in Wyoming. Together, these have been accepted to prove that humans were present in Yellowstone at least 10,500 years ago, and perhaps as much as a millennium before that.62 Native occupation did not stop there, though, and neither did the advancement of projectile weapon technology. The Yellowstone region stood at the heart of both; as an intensely volcanic region with a history of eruptions that can be dated back millions of years, it was only a matter of time before it was tapped as a source of material.

Obsidian is a black volcanic glass known for its strength and sharp edges when properly fractured. Alongside flint and chert, it has long been a crucial material in the construction of weapons without the use of metal. Finding a reliable source of it would have been very fortunate, as it could provide both a necessary resource for survival and a valuable commodity for trade.

61Before Yellowstone, Chapter 2
62 Before Yellowstone, Chapter 2
And, as it happens, there stands a geological feature between what’s now known as the Norris Geyser Basin and Mammoth Hot Springs that is literally called “Obsidian Cliff.”

This is not just a name; modern-day elders in the Crow Nation still remember how rich a source the Cliff (or, as they called it, Shiiptacha Awaxaawe) was for the volcanic glass. Nor was the Cliff the only source of usable stone, or even obsidian, as plenty of other quarries dotted the landscape. In many of these places Natives actively mined shards of obsidian and stone, before working them into effective tools on-site. Evidence of this activity can be traced back over 9,000 years, and seems to have been continuous nearly to the present day. Furthermore, obsidian from Yellowstone quarries has been found in sites as far away as Michigan, Ohio, and Ontario, indicating a thriving trade network between the people of the northern Rocky Mountains and the Great Lakes region; there is no geological way that Yellowstone obsidian could be so widely spread throughout North America if it was not carried by someone, or a series of someones, and the peoples of Yellowstone never spread that far east on their own. This would suggest that there were not only Native peoples in the Yellowstone region long before it was “discovered” by European-Americans, but that they were also significant contributors to the goods traded among the early peoples of North America.

Not all evidence of Native life in Yellowstone is made of stone, however. In 1962, a Wyoming historian and amateur archaeologist discovered an arrow shaft at a cave just outside of the Park. When he returned with another local historian for a more thorough investigation, they uncovered the remains of a man that dated from the 700s CE. This would give the site its name:

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63 YNP Road Map
64 Approximately translated, “Ricochet Mountain.”
65 Before Yellowstone, 70
66 Before Yellowstone, 76
67 Before Yellowstone, 79
68 Before Yellowstone, 79
Mummy Cave. The two contacted the Smithsonian Institution, which sent a professional archaeologist who had worked in the region. The professional’s team would go on to methodically peel back the layers of earth and uncover millennia’s worth of plant and animal remains, campfire sites, and tools of stone and bone. When all was excavated, they estimated that occupation of Mummy Cave had been near-continuous from before 7000 BCE to perhaps as recently as 1670 CE.69 This establishes that Natives were present in the Yellowstone region until European occupation began to spread across the continent, in spite of the volcanic activity; Mummy Cave was, in fact, situated between the hot spot that came to be known as “Colter’s Hell” and the National Park Geyser Basins. After this point, archaeological evidence is no longer required.

In January of 1805, William Clark of the famed Lewis and Clark expedition wrote that he met with “the Big White Chef [sic] of the Lower Mandan Village,” who described the path of the Yellowstone River up into the high country; he notes that it is full of timber and beavers, specifically.70 While the Lewis and Clark Expedition would never enter the Yellowstone Region, this account attests that Native peoples already knew the area well even as the first European-Americans began to explore beyond the Mississippi River.

As with everywhere else in America, the Native peoples did not simply turn and run at the first sight of European-Americans crossing the horizon; over a half-century after Clark’s account in his journal, even as settlements and forts had been firmly established all around, the Yellowstone Plateau was still seen as a center of Native activity. David Folsom of that first successful expedition specifically cited fear of Native attack as a reason that the first planned

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69 Restoring a Presence, 51-53
70 Clark’s Journal, 7 January 1805.
expedition of 1869 never took place,\textsuperscript{71} and Nathaniel Langford mentioned in his write-up of the Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition of 1870 that the fear of Natives had frustrated his plans for expeditions in 1867, 1868, and 1869.\textsuperscript{72} It was only by putting aside those fears that the Folsom-Cook-Peterson Expedition was carried out.

The rumors had been true, at least in part: Folsom and Cook recounted that they encountered two Native women at a habitation on their way into the Region, and that they warned the explorers of a Native hunting party ahead of them.\textsuperscript{73} Two days after this meeting, they came across a herd of Native horses being herded to a camp, followed by a pair that identified themselves as Sheepeaters before asking after certain supplies.\textsuperscript{74} They also later specified that they were following an established trail, attributed to the Bannock people.\textsuperscript{75} Notably, none of the peoples they encountered or even heard of while on their expedition were ever hostile, in spite of the many suppositions that had been made about them. In fact, no Yellowstone Expedition would ever encounter Native hostility. It seems likely that it was the upending of these preconceptions by the Folsom-Cook-Peterson Expedition more than anything else that emboldened the members of the Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition to enter the Region, including the Army representatives. In contrast to the falsehoods peddled by the likes of Hultkrantz, the early European-American explorers of the Yellowstone Region were well aware of the Native American presence in that area, both by reputation (albeit a distorted one) and by observation.

\textsuperscript{71} The Valley of the Upper Yellowstone, 5
\textsuperscript{72} Diary of the Washburn Expedition, ix
\textsuperscript{73} The Valley of the Upper Yellowstone, 16-17
\textsuperscript{74} The Valley of the Upper Yellowstone, 19-21
\textsuperscript{75} The Valley of the Upper Yellowstone, 26
It is evident that the misconceptions surrounding Native habitation of the Yellowstone Region were wrong on their face, and that Native habitation of the space had a long and important history. As these nations and peoples came into conflict with the expanding United States, though, and especially as the US Army became the sole authority in certain parts of the Western Territories, interactions with the Army became both more frequent and more bloody.

**The Removal of the Yellowstone Region Nations (1850-1880)**

While many different groups had hunted, gathered, and lived in the Yellowstone region through the millennia, only a few major groups claimed it as being part of their sphere of influence by the time that it became known to European-Americans: the Shoshone, hailing from the south but taking up permanent residence in parts of the region, the Crow (Apsáalooke), living largely to the east, the Bannock, generally keeping to the west, and the Blackfoot (Siksikaitisitapi or Niitsitapi) and Flathead (Salish, among others), typically keeping to the north. Numerous other tribes, bands, and nations passed through or lived within the boundaries of what would become the Park, but these were the largest and most influential in the period immediately before and during Native removal.

While Native conflicts in the Americas had been continuously ongoing since Columbus’s first voyage, most of these groups had managed to remain geographically isolated from those direct conflicts that arose from meetings between Native peoples and European or European-American people. Although some French trappers and traders had made their way deep into the American West, there was little rigorous exploration of the region until the Lewis and Clark

76 Restoring a Presence, Table of Contents.
Expedition in the first decade of the 19th Century. That expedition actually says quite a lot about the state of Native relations at that time.

In order to be able to communicate at all with the residents of the Territories they were charged with exploring, Lewis and Clark hired Toussaint Charbonneau, a French trader who had spent much of his life in the frontier regions of Canada. It was not Charbonneau that they needed, however, but his slave-bride Sacagawea, a Shoshone girl he had acquired from a group of Hidatsa raiders who had captured her out west. Although she spoke several Native languages, she did not speak English, so it was also necessary to bring along Charbonneau to translate her translations for the benefit of the rest of the expedition party. The fact that this was considered the most practical, simplest, or most effective way to establish communication with the Native peoples that they would meet along the way speaks volumes about what was known about the lands to the west by European-Americans: nothing. No other alternative presented itself, so this grand journey into the United States’s newest territory would be guided in part by two linked interpreters, one of which owned the other, and that they could only hope would know all the languages that they would need.

This era of ignorance would not last, though. Within a half-century of Lewis and Clark’s return, the Continental United States had expanded to its modern-day boundaries, the western territories were starting to fill with settlers, and increasing frequency of interaction had resulted in a great deal more linguistic and cultural exchange between the two worlds. European-Americans were coming to realize the complexity of sovereign and territorial claims on the lands to the west, further complicated by unfamiliar ideas about what ownership and use of the land actually looked like. As these formerly isolated nations found themselves living in the midst of
places rich in resources desired by the rapidly-expanding American Empire, conflict was becoming inevitable.

One of the first removals that would take place in the regions surrounding Yellowstone came almost two decades before it was made a park. In 1854-1855, negotiations were simultaneously opened with a large number of Native groups from the Pacific Northwest to Montana and Wyoming, including the Flathead and Blackfoot. Initial negotiations were peaceful; ostensibly, the treaties were designed to end intertribal wars, on account of how much trouble they were for white settlers. In fairness, the Flathead and the Blackfoot had historically been bitter rivals, and violence between them was not unheard-of. For independently-mediated peace treaties, however, these were horribly one-sided in favor of the mediator, being largely designed to force the different groups together into a small number of reservations, limiting their ability to hunt, fish, and gather food. The US Government had evidently used this treaty process as an opportunity to extend its sphere of influence deep into Native territory while at the same time stripping them of their own sovereign authority. Despite this, approval was given; the cultural and linguistic differences between the negotiators and Native peoples have led historians to question whether the treaties were understood by both sides, to say nothing of the threat of violence employed by the European Americans. Washington historian David M. Buerge wrote "Few native people were familiar enough with the ideas of land title and treaty negotiations to understand fully the irrevocable nature of their signatures, and those who had such an inkling muted their displeasure out of politeness or fear of the...armed escort."77 When those treaties were signed in early 1855, it would prove to only be the beginning of the troubles in the Washington Territory.

77 Big Little Man, 90
The treaty summits had been organized and led by a man named Isaac I. Stevens. Stevens had graduated at the top of his class from West Point,78 and was by this point in the 1850s a veteran of the US’s wars of expansion with Mexico.79 Having supported Franklin Pierce in his successful presidential campaign of 1852, Stevens secured a notable role as the first Governor of the Washington Territory,80 a job that came with the title of “Superintendent of Indian Affairs.” He evidently took both of these very seriously; in an effort to put the new Washington territory on the map, he soon embarked on a survey from Minnesota to Washington to determine the practicality of a trans-continental railroad81 that would connect to a proposed port in the Puget Sound that could act as a gateway for trade on the Pacific Ocean.82 Notably, he did not even wait until he had been to the Territory he was soon to be placed in charge of before beginning this venture; instead, the journey across the northern part of the country was how he first entered his new domain. In the course of this survey, he also documented the Native groups that he came across.83

Upon reaching Washington, Stevens set about addressing one of the key problems that had plagued the early settlers in that Territory: they had been “given” lands that Native peoples were actively living in and using.84 Without a strong governmental presence to mediate or crush the conflict, the disputes over land had devolved into serious concern for Washingtonians that threatened to turn bloody. Stevens immediately ordered that agents set about finding representatives who could speak for the Native peoples. A year later, he returned to the issue to set up the meetings that would result in the treaties.

78 Isaac I. Stevens, 19
79 Isaac I. Stevens, 68
80 Isaac I Stevens, 96-97
81 Isaac I. Stevens, 97-107
82 Reports of Explorations and Surveys XII, 7
83 Reports of Explorations and Surveys, throughout.
84 Isaac I. Stevens, 170
Before negotiations had even concluded, however, a member of one of the involved tribes reportedly murdered an Indian Agent. While this did not immediately end the negotiations, it led to an explosion of violence across the Territory. Stevens insisted on immediate and brutal suppression by the Army, but General John Wool, who commanded the US Army of the Pacific, argued that this would only worsen the violence. Wool advocated instead for a gentle hand and overtures for peace. Stevens reported General Wool to Congress for not supporting the governor’s plans for war, forcing him to return to Washington D.C. to answer for the accusations. Stevens went on to expand his efforts to include levelling charges against integrated European-Native families and people in the Territory. Using a combination of the state militia and Army who were now forced to intercede by the increase in tensions, the campaigns against the Natives continued, at one point resulting in the hanging of a Native chief for allegedly killing a soldier in open combat. Eventually, the Natives were subdued and forced into the reservations the treaties had relegated them to years before, only now there was more than two years’ worth of bloodshed to seal the deal. Those that had used vast swaths of land, including parts of the Yellowstone Region, were perpetually locked out of that space. Although Stevens’s time as Governor and Superintendent would end in the election of 1860, and he would go on to die fighting for the Union in the Civil War, the results of his actions still echo today. 85 Despite acting as an appointed official rather than a soldier, his policy was unmistakably militaristic, and resulted in the Army prosecuting a war against, among others, the Natives of the Yellowstone region.

Not all removals were quite so antagonistic, at least on their face. The Crow Nation, whose territory once stretched from the headwaters of the Yellowstone River clear across

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85 Big Little Man
Wyoming to South Dakota’s Black Hills, were frequently allied with US Army operatives in the region. Despite this history of alliance, the Crow were still pressured heavily by westward migrations, and the Army generally abandoned them to their ill fate.

Having signed the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851, which was negotiated with the federal government of the United States to define the borders of the most influential Native groups in the region and establish a lasting peace between them, the Crow had perhaps hoped to be able to settle down in peace. This dream was soon shattered, however, as some of the Treaty’s other signers, including the Sioux, Arapaho, and Cheyenne, began to encroach on land that had been set aside for the Crow people. Before long, all parties had given up any pretense of keeping to the Treaty’s initial borders, and the 1851 Treaty was rendered effectively meaningless. The US Army had no vested interest in maintaining the peace; by recognizing the Nations as independent as they had, the US negotiators had washed their hands of whatever issues might come up among them.

The next twenty to thirty years fell into a pattern that did the Crow no favors: while they were willing to work with the Army against other groups, especially those that had made incursions into their territory, the Army never lifted a finger to defend their allies.

The Sioux initially moved against the Crow almost immediately after the 1851 Treaty, and continued pressing for over ten years. The only step that the Army took was to reinforce a popular settler’s trail through Crow territory with a string of forts, with which the Native people cooperated; that area was considered at risk of Sioux conquest, but the Army only stepped in to defend white interests. Later, in the infamous Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the US recognized Crow territory that had been conquered by the Sioux as rightfully-owned Sioux land, adding it to the swathe they had already recognized across Wyoming and South Dakota. In the same year,
due to pressure by both the Sioux and white settlers, the Crow ceded even more of their ever-dwindling lands and accepted an even smaller allotment of land. At this time, however, they still held a significant part of what would become Yellowstone National Park, although not for long.

In the early 1870s, even as Hayden was searching for new discoveries in the Yellowstone region, a discovery of Gold took place in South Dakota’s Black Hills. The United States soon broke the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, attempting to seize the lands that they had formally recognized as belonging to the Sioux and Cheyenne Nations in an effort to claim the mineral value held therein. While the Black Hills were on the opposite side of the Wyoming Territory from Yellowstone, the Sioux and Cheyenne were nomadic peoples who required vast spans of land to maintain their political economies. The presence of European Americans and US government interests had already pushed them west into Crow lands, and this incursion only worsened the tension. Fighting quickly broke out between US and Native forces, escalating until it came to be called “The Great Sioux War of 1876.” That same year, what would become one of most famous battles in the history of American imperialism would be fought.

The Battle of Little Bighorn took place in June of 1876 only about 200 kilometers from Yellowstone’s borders, and not much further from Fort Ellis. The broad strokes of this battle are well-known; also known as “Custer’s Last Stand,” this event saw the overwhelming defeat of General George Armstrong Custer and his Cavalry by a coalition of Plains Nations, led by such figures as Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. What is less well-known, however, is that the battle was fought on Crow land, and the Plains Nations that had destroyed Custer’s force were the same ones that had been pressing into Crow territory for over two decades by this point. All of this conflict was connected to how the US government, using the Army, had inserted itself into the delicate balance of the Native peoples who lived in the region around Yellowstone for the
purpose of safeguarding the American investment, not caring what the consequences might be to those already living there. As before, now that there was a legitimate threat to the dominance of the United States in the region, it became important for the government to invest vast resources into the region. Less than a year later, after a campaign that raged across the plains, Sitting Bull had fled across the Canadian border, Crazy Horse had surrendered and been murdered, and the land formerly recognized as belonging to the Sioux and Cheyenne was formally claimed by the United States. This included captured Crow land that now included part of Yellowstone National Park, which was not returned to the Crow upon the defeat of their enemies.

Unfortunately for the Crow, no measures could save them their land. Although they had supported the Army throughout the conflict, with some even reported as having wept openly upon hearing of Custer’s defeat, their support did not spare them from the government’s distaste for Native peoples. The government never returned the territory that they had recognized as having belonged to the Crow in 1851, despite their participation in the efforts to reconquer it from the other groups. Indeed, some of the same pressures that had forced the cession in 1868 would continue to weigh on them, resulting in even more land being lost as the years went on.
Figure 2.1: An 1899 map depicting territory the Crow had been recognized as possessing. The 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty described the areas marked “517,” “619,” and “619” as theirs; 517 was ceded in 1868, followed by 619 in 1882. 635 would go on to be broken up and partially ceded two more times, in 1892 and 1906, reducing the reservation to its current boundaries. Other pre-Park treaties designated “398” as a common hunting ground for a number of peoples, including the Flathead, Blackfoot, Blackfoot and Nez Perce, and “520” as belonging to the Shoshone Nation.

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86 18th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, Plates CXLVI and CLXIII
87 Indian Affairs 1, 195-197
88 Indian Affairs 1, 958-967
89 Indian Affairs 3, 614-618
90 18th Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 787; Indian Affairs 2, 736-737
The first territory to be lost contained what remained of Crow holdings in the Yellowstone region; while they had retained a form of sovereignty over the land, its foundation as a National Park had made hunting, fishing, and gathering illegal. Since it criminalized the main Crow uses for Yellowstone land, they only had legal rights over it as a formality. By the time that they relinquished control over that area in 1882, the enforcement of Park regulations was beginning to have a real effect, and the land had become practically useless to them. Additional cessions in 1892 and 1906 reduced the reservation to its modern-day proportions; while still the largest reservation in Montana and among the largest in the United States, it pales in comparison to the territory they once controlled.

Perhaps the smallest discrete Nation active in the time and place, the Bannock people lived primarily in what is today southeastern Idaho, but frequently crossed what would become the Wyoming border into the Yellowstone region. Tenuously connected to the Paiute people centered further south, their culture has been heavily influenced by the nearby Shoshone, something made all the more true by their sequestration on the same reservation since the 1870s. According to reports, they numbered only 1,000 in 1845, and their numbers diminished by 30% in less than 15 years.92

Despite living relatively near to some of his other targets, the Bannock managed to avoid Stevens’s pushes into Native territory, both the diplomatic and militaristic. Still, they were not spared by the relentless march westward. After being harried by US diplomats seeking to establish treaties several times, they finally acquiesced to relocation to the Fort Hall Reservation. There, government agents attempted to force an agrarian lifestyle on them, but a combination of

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92 Restoring a Presence, 212
Native resistance and extremely poor harvests rendered this plan untenable.\textsuperscript{93} Outrage at the lack of supplies and rations available in the reservation soon led to conflict; in 1878, the Bannock War broke out.

Although it had humble origins, springing from an isolated dispute between two Bannocks and three stockmen that claimed no lives, that one event proved to be the spark that would light the powder keg that had been assembled in Bannock territory. Chief Buffalo Horn, who had been agitating against the United States presence and authority in the area, soon had a fighting force of two hundred Bannocks.\textsuperscript{94} They went on their way, destroying several isolated ranches, a stagecoach station, and a wagon train, also rendering a ferry inoperable. Word of this soon came to Portland, where General O. O. Howard wasted no time in sending out orders to crush the rebellion; in Boise, much nearer to the action, the local Cavalry garrison mobilized in pursuit.\textsuperscript{95} Eventually, the Cavalry caught up to Buffalo Horn, mortally wounding him in battle; it’s believed that this prevented any other groups from joining the war, thus ending the threat it may have posed.\textsuperscript{96} After this point, the Bannock group was reduced to a fighting retreat; while another chief rose to lead the group, it was not leadership that they lacked for. General Howard soon caught up to the Cavalry, and their combined forces pursued the Bannocks for close to two months before they elected to return to the Fort Hall Reservation. The return was every bit as bloody as the conflict had been earlier, but the Army forces did not manage to catch up before they reached the reservation. Reportedly, no participants who reached the reservation were ever caught or punished;\textsuperscript{97} it seems that the force was too small and the reservation population too

\textsuperscript{93} History of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
\textsuperscript{94} Pacific Northwest Indian Wars, 227-228
\textsuperscript{95} Pacific Northwest Indian Wars, 228-229
\textsuperscript{96} Pacific Northwest Indian Wars, 229-230
\textsuperscript{97} Pacific Northwest Indian Wars, 230-237
large to effectively determine blame. Still, that did not save the Bannock rebels or people from the cruelty that had existed on the reservation before and inspired the push, or that would characterize it as time went on.

While the Fort Hall reservation had originally been placed at 1.8 million acres, two major cessions have reduced it to less than a third of that size. Additionally, despite the treaty stipulation that reservation land would solely belong to the Bannock Nation, an 1887 act gave the government authorization to subdivide and sell off its land to settlers. After many long years of war, removal, and erasure, fewer than a hundred people alive in 2010 claimed Bannock ancestry. Once again, the Army had been employed to forcefully remove an Indigenous nation from the region of Yellowstone National Park, further emptying it of its original inhabitants.

Perhaps the largest, best-known, and most influential Nation to have lived in the Yellowstone Region was the Shoshone. While this term can apply to a number of groups, each with unique and separate cultures and territories, those most closely connected to Yellowstone have historically been the Eastern Shoshone and the Sheepeaters. While they shared many cultural features, these groups were sufficiently isolated as to develop distinctly and follow different historical trajectories.

The Eastern Shoshone were early adopters of horses, and transitioned to a more plains-hunting lifestyle after their introduction. This placed them in conflict with other Nations that had already established themselves in the region, including the Crow. While not rising to the level of the Sioux conflicts, the Eastern Shoshone did contribute to the pressure placed on the Crow as their territory shrunk. Violence broke out at various points in the overlapping spaces they claimed, including a mountain range that stretched up to the Yellowstone Plateau. These

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98 History of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes
99 American Indian and Alaska Tribes Census 2010
conflicts came to a definitive end in 1866, when a group of Shoshone warriors led by Chief Washakie met a group of Crow at the place that would come to be known as Crowheart Butte. While the precise events of the battle differ based on the storyteller, the narratives largely agree that Chief Washakie eventually called out a champion of the Crow, seeking to end the bloodshed with single combat. Chief Washakie slew his opponent, claiming the land for the Eastern Shoshone. The Chief was in his sixties at the time.

While this was certainly not Chief Washakie’s first or only moment of glory, it would have thoroughly cemented him in the eyes of his own people and most any onlooker as the most respected man among the Eastern Shoshone. This placed him in the position of having to negotiate with the United States authorities as they sought to claim and catalog the land occupied by the Shoshone. Because of this, in 1868, Chief Washakie found himself signing a treaty that he had personally negotiated, designating a patch of land to the south of what would soon become the National Park as the Wind River Reservation, exclusively for the Eastern Shoshone. This treaty was not about the removal of the Shoshone Nation from any area, but rather, about ensuring that there was a non-hostile Indigenous people firmly established in the region, which encompassed much of the Territories. As the United States waged war on other Native peoples of the plains and desert southwest, there would be a great deal of Native movement between the areas; the Shoshone were to be a state-sponsored bulwark against that. Despite the cooperative effort that the treaty had begun as, however, pressures like those afflicting the Crow people began to affect the Shoshone, and they soon ceded what remained of their land in Yellowstone,

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100 Juxtaposed Narratives of the Battle of Crowheart Butte, 568-573
101 People of the Wind River, 25
102 People of the Wind River, 47-51
and much more besides. Not even the exclusivity deal was maintained, as the Northern Arapaho people were placed in the same reservation.

The Eastern Shoshone were not the only Shoshone people to live in and around Yellowstone. In fact, a smaller subgroup of the Shoshone, the Sheepeaters, were the only Native group to live consistently and almost exclusively in the Yellowstone region. Taking their name from the bighorn sheep they frequently hunted in the mountains around the Yellowstone Plateau, they lived in the space left unoccupied by the numerous distinct groups of Northern Shoshone to the west and the Eastern Shoshone to the east. While not affiliated in any official way with the other groups, some of them migrated down the mountains to the Wind River Reservation to which Chief Washakie had led the Eastern Shoshone or the Fort Hall Reservation that the Northern Shoshone shared with the Bannock. This seemed to be in pursuit of the benefits promised to peaceful residents of the reservations. Never having been an exceptionally large group, their assimilation into the larger Shoshone concentrations led to a near-total loss of their separate and unique culture. That does not mean that they simply disappeared after many came down those mountains, though; the Sheepeaters soon became infamous in the Territory.

In 1879, the bodies of five Chinese immigrant laborers and two white settlers were found separately near the Salmon River, which runs across Idaho. Despite suggestions that the Chinese victims had been killed by white people, it was soon taken as fact that these were murders perpetrated by the Sheepeaters from the mountains. The truth of the matter will likely never be known with certainty, but the isolated nature of the Sheepeaters and the distance between the Salmon River and Yellowstone support the case for the Sheepeaters’ innocence. General Howard, who was at the time cleaning up the last remnants of the Bannock War, did not see it that way. He soon dispatched a detachment into the Sheepeater-controlled region in order to
eliminate them as a threat or influence. Although harried by guerrilla tactics, the Army soon tracked down and captured the last clusters of Sheepeaters. In doing so, they captured only forty-four prisoners, and discovered a grand total of eight firearms.\textsuperscript{103} In the end, the last of the free Sheepeaters found themselves in the same two Shoshone reservations: Fort Hall and Wind River.\textsuperscript{104}

This extremely imbalanced conflict would prove to be the last Native conflict in the Region; the last local independent groups had by now been driven into reservations, where they would remain for generations to come. Although the removal had been piecemeal and presided over by a revolving cast of important figures, the results had been consistent: the Indigenous peoples of the plains, mountains, and forests in and around Yellowstone were rendered powerless and neatly cleared out of the way for the habitation and use of white Americans by the forces of the US Army. There was only one event that seriously jeopardized the ‘peace’ wrought by the Army here, and ironically, it involved none of the Native nations whose territory bordered or overlapped the Yellowstone region.

**The Nez Perce War (1877)**

The Nez Perce people once held territory in the north-central region of what is today the state of Idaho. While their land was near to, perhaps even bordering on, Bannock territory, their command of the Yellowstone region was comparable to that of white Americans prior to the Folsom-Cook-Peterson Expedition: isolated hunters had found themselves in the area before, but it was not part of their consistent range.\textsuperscript{105} Despite this, in the last years of Native independence

\textsuperscript{103} Restoring a Presence, 233-244.
\textsuperscript{104} Restoring a Presence, 286-288.
\textsuperscript{105} Restoring a Presence, 201
in Idaho, they would quickly become the most influential Native people in the history of the National Park.

Governor Stevens’s flurry of treaties had included one with the Nez Perce people, or at least with someone willing to claim that they spoke for the Nez Perce people. This treaty stripped them of vast swathes of territory in modern-day Washington, Oregon, and Idaho, and thus was met with significant hostility from many among the Nez Perce. A familiar story played out when, even in the greatly reduced space they had been permitted to keep, Gold was discovered a few years later; forced to cede even more land, it was becoming obvious that there were those among the Nez Perce who were growing more and more frustrated with the state of affairs. Even though it took some time, these feelings eventually boiled over in June of 1877.  

As settlers moved into Nez Perce lands, the last of them who yet refused to recognize the treaty were being forced out. This came to a head in Wallowa Valley, where a few young warriors killed four settlers. A band of anti-treaty Nez Perce soon coalesced around one Chief Joseph and made their way across Idaho toward Yellowstone, occasionally visiting violence on those who crossed their path.

While the Park had only existed for five years at this point, and there existed neither a train nor a stagecoach that consistently brought people to it, groups of tourists were nevertheless beginning to make their way into the wilds of the territories, seeking the wonders that had been talked of back east. Indeed, as Chief Joseph’s band entered the Park that August, there were several such tourist groups present. It was just their bad fortune that they happened to be in the path of the Nez Perce.

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106 Restoring a Presence, 225-226
107 Restoring a Presence, 226
On the morning of August 24th, a group of tourists from Radersburg, Montana were met in their camp by five Nez Perce scouts, among them one known as Yellow Wolf. Both Yellow Wolf and one of the tourists, Frank Carpenter, would go on to have their versions of the story published. These stories agree that the tourists responded fearfully to the arrival of the Nez Perce, Carpenter elaborating that they knew of Chief Joseph’s band by reputation at this point. Eventually, Carpenter decided they should go personally meet with Chief Joseph in order to secure his permission to leave, in spite of Yellow Wolf’s advice. Upon reaching the outer edge of the massive Nez Perce host, the tourists were relieved of many of their belongings, including most of their guns and ammunition, their horses, and at least one blanket. Realizing the precariousness of their situation, two of the tourists managed to escape, but a third and fourth were shot in the head shortly thereafter. Despite this, upon finally reaching Chief Joseph, the remaining members of the party were freed to return home. In the coming days, it would be revealed that the whole party had escaped with their lives, even those who had been shot and left for dead; one bullet had passed through one tourist’s mouth without striking anything vital, the other flattening against another’s skull without penetrating. It was not long before the separated pieces of the party found themselves among another group of warriors, though. Those that had escaped were picked up by General Howard’s men, pursuing the Nez

108 Yellow Wolf, 174
109 The Wonders of Geyser Land, 54
110 The Wonders of Geyser Land, 56-58
111 Yellow Wolf, 175
112 The Wonders of Geyser Land, 65-69
113 The Wonders of Geyser Land, 70
114 The Wonders of Geyser Land, 72
115 The Wonders of Geyser Land, 104-107
116 Yellow Wolf, 177
Perce from Idaho;\textsuperscript{117} those that had been released, including Carpenter, found themselves in the hands of Lt. Doane, guarding the northern exit from the Park.\textsuperscript{118}

Even as the Radersburg tourists who had been released were reaching the Army, another group of Nez Perce came across another tourist camp, this one numbering eleven hailing from Helena. These, too, had heard of the Nez Perce War, but failed to realize the proximity of the threat. Unlike the scouts that had met the Radersburg party, these Nez Perce were not interested in taking hostages; they struck violently against the camp, killing one and injuring two more. They took what they wanted, including $263 and a silver watch, and destroying some of what remained, including the party’s shotguns. The party’s survivors made their way to a nearby lodge hotel, finding there some of the Radersburg party.\textsuperscript{119}

The tourist parties had found themselves in the center of a war, a war currently focused on Yellowstone National Park. While they had been vacationing, far from news of the outside world, the news had come to them. The Army had amassed forces at several of its exits, intending to cut off any possible escape. The Army stood to lose quite a lot if this went the wrong way; besides the obvious losses to manpower and morale, the famous General William Tecumseh Sherman had only days before been himself vacationing in the Park.\textsuperscript{120} His capture or killing by the Nez Perce would have been disastrous for reasons of both practicality and morale. Luckily for them, his itinerary took him out of the Park just before the Nez Perce arrived, so close that he had actually met the Radersburg party.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{117} Nez Perce Joseph, 239-240
\textsuperscript{118} The Wonders of Geyser Land, 135
\textsuperscript{119} The Yellowstone Story Vol. 1, 226-228
\textsuperscript{120} The Wonders of Geyser Land, 19
\textsuperscript{121} The Yellowstone Story Vol. 1, 220
Communication was difficult in the time and place. As General Howard’s force picked up the Radersburg party’s escapees, one of them claimed to have been the sole survivor. Although evidence would go on to prove him wrong, these misunderstandings turned to fearful legends. One newspaper recorded that “Nez Perce in the geyser basins struck the Helena and Radersburg parties. They killed 7 men and took Mrs. Cowan and sister and brother prisoners. They attacked another party of 10 and killed 9.”\textsuperscript{122} It did not seem to matter that the Radersburg party, which included Mrs. Cowan, only included nine people and the Helena party included eleven, nor indeed that only perhaps three were even believed dead at this point; the story was growing well beyond reality. Not even General Howard could help himself; when he published his memories of the campaign four years later, he noted that one of the men shot and left for dead, Mr. Cowan, had actually survived, but then included a lie stating that he had since died, only a short time after reuniting with his wife. This particular falsehood could not even make it to publishing without being fact-checked; the book contains a footnote reading “An army officer from Montana says: the report of Mr. Cowan's death is an error; he is still living.”\textsuperscript{123}

Chief Joseph’s band fragmented somewhat as they passed through Yellowstone, and it had never been the strongest confederation. Both of the tourist parties had been met by small fragments separated from the main host, and it seems that these groups of raiders did not cease to exist as they left the Park borders. Lt. Doane’s arm was closest by when some Nez Perce warriors conducted the last raid in the Park area, this time attacking a ranch just outside the boundaries built the year before its foundation. They set fire to the buildings, but fled from

\textsuperscript{122} The Yellowstone Story Vol. 1, 229
\textsuperscript{123} Nez Perce Joseph, 240
Doane before there were any casualties. In their flight, they came across a survivor from the Helena party; he would be the last person killed before they left the region.\textsuperscript{124}

The trap that Howard and Doane had laid around Yellowstone had failed to snap shut on the Nez Perce host, and they continued northeast. The historical narrative has claimed that they were seeking aid from the Crow, with whom they had hunted in the past,\textsuperscript{125} but whether this was the case or not, they never found it.\textsuperscript{126} As they had in other conflicts, the Crow sided with the Army.\textsuperscript{127} Instead, the Nez Perce struck out northward, now making for the Canadian border. They came to a stop only forty miles from the border, where Chief Joseph famously stated “From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.”\textsuperscript{128}

Conclusion

Any history of the American West must at some point address the role of Native Americans in the story, even more so when the history is explicitly that of the Army and its actions. While the Army would enjoy a remarkably peaceful existence as the stewards of the National Park in the decades to come, it would be both irresponsible and foolish to think that this “peace” was not established and enforced with trickery, betrayal, and blood.

Despite the obvious fact that Native peoples had been living in the Yellowstone region for millennia and lived in a wide range of societies, each with their own conception of, use for, and relationship with the land and its resources, the United States engaged in a deliberate campaign to erase this history and eliminate those societies in order to claim the products of the

\textsuperscript{124} The Yellowstone Story Vol. 1, 233
\textsuperscript{125} The Yellowstone Story Vol. 1, 219
\textsuperscript{126} Yellow Wolf, 170
\textsuperscript{127} The Yellowstone Story Vol. 1, 231
\textsuperscript{128} The Surrender of Joseph
land for themselves. At every step along this path, the Army was an integral part of the strategy; whether that involved accepting aid from without ever lifting a finger to help an ally, forcibly pushing Native peoples onto ever-shrinking reservations, or waging open war on them for any sleight, perceived or real, the effect was the same: the Native Americans of the Yellowstone region have been sequestered far from it, an act that aids in the mythologizing of the National Park as a place ‘untouched by human hands.’ And, in each case, the motive was also shared: by removing Native peoples from these vast expenses of land, the spaces were opened up to economic use by white people, be it agricultural, mineralogical, or touristic, the presence of Natives threatened the ability of white Americans to extract value from the land, and thus, needed to go.
Chapter III: Managing the Yellowstone Environment (1886-1918)
Although the promise of tourism had played an important role in the foundation of Yellowstone National Park, the first decade of its existence did not see that many visitors. While there were certainly tourists in the Park at the time, as evidenced by General Sherman and the Radersburg and Helena parties in August of 1877 alone, they were generally limited to those who lived conveniently to the Park or were willing to cross vast stretches of land in order to explore the area. While this would soon change, there were other visitors to the area in the meantime, ones with very different priorities to those of the isolated tour groups: poachers.

The law that had formed the National Park had clearly stated that “[The Secretary of the Interior] shall provide against the wanton destruction of the fish and game found within said park, and against their capture or destruction for the purposes of merchandise or profit.”\textsuperscript{129} However, it failed to outline any enforcement mechanism, determine what judicial system would be responsible for trying such cases, or even allow a sufficient budget for the maintenance of the new Park. The Yellowstone Plateau has long been a home for American medium and large game; moose, elk, deer, pronghorn, bears, and bison could all be found inside the borders, as could a population of trout that many early visitors commented on. Although the law made implicit concessions for sustenance and self-defense, it was uncompromising in the statement that collecting meat, pelts, or other animal products in Yellowstone was illegal, as was the destruction of wildlife for its own sake. Despite this, there were plenty of hunters who illegally crossed the Yellowstone borders in search of the great hosts of wildlife living therein, and the local enforcers and judges were woefully unprepared to deal with them.

\textsuperscript{129} An Act to set apart a certain Tract of Land lying near the Head-waters of the Yellowstone as a public Park
Between this and the hosts of tourists that began to arrive following the completion of the Northern Pacific railroad in 1883, management of the Park soon became a nigh impossible task. The office of Superintendent, the highest authority inside the Park, had never been a cushy one; in fact, when Nathaniel Langford (of the 1870 Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition) became the first in 1872, there were no funds available to pay him a salary. Langford had to keep working as a bank examiner for the Montana Territory in order to make ends meet, which had the added effect of ensuring he could not adequately look after the Park. Although both this budgeting shortfall and the Superintendent would be changed in the coming years, the resources never rose to meet the need. On the terms that Congress and the Department of the Interior had handed down, Yellowstone was unmanageable.

The first alternative was proposed in 1882, when a pair of North Dakota businessmen approached the Secretary of the Interior with a proposal to lease them 4,400 acres for the purposes of running a monopolistic tourism organization. While the new Superintendent, a former US Marshall named Patrick Conger, was opposed to it, the Secretary considered this plan as the cheapest way to develop the Park for the government. Before any decisions could be made, however, Lt General Philip Sheridan, a veteran of the Civil and Native Wars and next in line to become the General of the Army, heard of the scheme. He vehemently opposed the privatization, promising to send in soldiers from nearby forts to keep out the poachers if granted permission. He sound secured a number of allies in Washington D.C., and was integral in President Arthur’s 1883 visit. He was joined in his push by George Bird Grinnell, who owned and edited the magazine *Forest and Stream*; Grinnell specifically called out the commercialization of Niagara Falls, and warned that Yellowstone could easily become just as bad if permitted to. The resulting outcry was enough to scuttle the 4,400-acre deal, although the
businessmen did still secure smaller leases around the more popular Park destinations, such as Mammoth Hot Spring.

Lt General Sheridan’s proposal had not gone unheeded. Congress seriously considered using the Army to protect Yellowstone; by the end of 1884, a bill was passed that stated that the Department of the Interior could request the aid of the Department of War, as Sheridan had suggested, should Yellowstone grow too difficult to manage. The same bill also ensured that Superintendent Conger would be paid for himself and ten assistants to patrol the park lands. While it was still far too much for eleven men to patrol the entire region with any regularity, this was still a vast improvement over the original system, having a single unpaid volunteer doing all the work. Congress then washed their hands of the issue, secure in the knowledge that they had addressed the relevant concerns.

Not long after, the Department of the Interior sent an investigator to Yellowstone to see how well Superintendent Conger was managing. The report was far from flattering. Conger argued that eleven men was not nearly enough to secure the entire Park, but was lambasted regardless. Conger “either failed to comprehend the importance of the duties of this office or had intentionally disregarded the same,”130 according to the report. Soon, the Secretary of the Interior asked for Conger’s resignation, replacing him with a supporter of large-scale leases. After the election of 1884, however, both the Secretary and Superintendent were replaced. Finally, both Congress and the Department of the Interior began to seriously investigate the organization of Yellowstone; they definitively established that pushing responsibilities onto local authorities had been a mistake, the Wyoming courts proving inadequate, even on the rare occasion that someone was actually caught committing a crime in the Park, given the few personnel to whom the duty of

130 Watching Over Yellowstone, 8
enforcement fell. The issues that had been proven to exist soured many in Congress on the idea of the National Park as a whole; they slashed the budget for Yellowstone in half, once more eliminating the salaries for the Superintendent and his assistants. This left the Department of the Interior with no choice; two days after the revised budget passed in August of 1886, the Secretary of the Interior formally requested that the Department of War step in and assist. The request was passed along to now-General Sheridan, the leading man in the United States Army. Sheridan decided to call in his old troops, the capabilities of which he knew better than any other units in the Army: the Cavalry.

That same month, Troop M of the First United States Cavalry, led by Captain Moses Harris, arrived at Yellowstone from Fort Custer, Montana. At that time, no one knew what would come next; how long they would be there, how they were to proceed, and what they were expected to do were all unclear. There were no permanent structures in the Park except the lodges built for tourists; carrying only tents for lodging, they did not even know if they would be wintering in the park or returning to Fort Custer at the end of Summer. 131

With the Native Wars largely concluded, the Army was faced with a dilemma. While it was for the best that fewer conflicts were taking place, it also meant that the United States’s standing Army would have no reason to remain together. Just as times of war lead to soldiers gaining experience and armies innovating in technology and strategy, times of peace lead to stagnation and the loss of experience as battle-hardened personnel retire. In the period between the Native Wars and the next major conflict, the Army’s leadership needed to keep Army personnel occupied.

131 Watching Over Yellowstone, 2-12
This issue was a key focus of study following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when the United States suddenly lost its closest peer, and thus was forced to completely shift its military priorities. Lieutenant Colonel Jerry D. Hatley summarized the issues with peacetime operations in a 1996 report to the US Army War College.

Although there are many positive effects Operations Other Than War (OOTW) has on the readiness of the United States Army and while some units benefit more than others, the prolonged effect could be disastrous to the Army as a whole. Combat units and some combat support units lose the opportunity to train on their warfighting skills while they are involved in peacekeeping missions.\textsuperscript{132}

The same problems faced the United States armed forces after the end of Native conflicts, and there was a serious risk that America’s armed forces would not be prepared for a future war. While running Yellowstone was hardly a combat role, it nevertheless demanded that the soldiers be constantly preparing for asymmetric conflict by seeking out and defending territory from a dispersed enemy, whether that be poachers, predators, or petty criminals. Apparently, the training environment was at least somewhat effective; Scout Whittaker reported leaving Yellowstone to serve in the Philippines between his 1901 and 1907 patrols. It is no coincidence that the Army left Yellowstone in 1918, as the First World War was the first conflict to demand full mobilization of the American war machine since the Civil War. Until that time, Yellowstone remained a training ground for soldiers not at war.

Captain Harris had no way of knowing that the Cavalry would not leave until 1918, nor could he have had any idea of the effect that their time there would have on the future of the Park. Although the arrival of the Army had resolved the political issue of funding for the Park for

\textsuperscript{132} The Effects of Operations Other than War, 18
decades to come, it led to a whole new pile of issues. How was a band of soldiers supposed to administrate a National Park? What did they have to do with the preservation of a natural space?

Through investigation of reports by some of the soldiers stationed there, a narrative begins to emerge. Although the Army began by upholding the laws of the National Park, combatting poaching within Park borders, their mission would eventually expand. Before they left, they would find themselves both carefully shepherding the herds of bison, elk, and other herbivores of the Park, but also engaging in that selfsame “wanton destruction” that the Park’s foundation had been meant to prevent. Throughout, however, the aim remained the same: to prop up a misconceived image of the “natural state” of the American wilderness, one that was in fact painstakingly created and curated through the decades.

The First Enemy: Poachers

Before anything else, Troop M had to address the issues of poachers. Sheridan’s key concern during his recent visits, records and rumors of the destruction of the great fauna of the Yellowstone Region had been a significant part of the push for greater oversight in the Park. While there had been other concerns, poaching was the main reason that he had sent the Cavalry in the first place.

It should be noted here that there are a number of disadvantages to specifically placing a Cavalry troop in this position. While useful for their maneuverability and power on an open battlefield, a unit of mounted soldiers is significantly less effective against a dispersed enemy in a large space with difficult terrain, such as thick forests and steep mountains. Since it was unlikely that the poachers would ever assemble in a host and meet Troop M in the field, they would have to use some different strategies from those developed in the Civil and Native Wars
where much of the Army’s leadership at the time would have cut their teeth. From this need for innovation came the reliance on scouts, something pioneered in the Native Wars but only now coming into full use.

Although even drills designed to build up individuals were completed in groups, the cavalrymen had to learn to operate independently far from resupply. While a larger unit would need to concern itself with organization, chain-of-command, and supplies, a lone, experienced horseman or small group could move freely throughout the Park land in effective silence. They could supply themselves for days or weeks at a time off the land, investigating any signs of incursion into the park or moves made against its wildlife. This, however, required a command post where scouts could return to after a mission, and find help if they came across something too big to handle alone. Once the Troop’s temporary camp, a city of tents, was established in the shadow of Mammoth Hot Springs, they were ready to begin.

Despite the pressing concerns, several delays kept Troop M from focusing all of its energies on the poaching problem. The first greeted them even as they first entered the Park: a number of forest fires were actively burning throughout it. Attributed variously to inattentive tourists and hunters trying to drive Yellowstone wildlife out of the Park, they posed a threat to both the legitimacy and the already-limited resources of the soldiers. If they could not stop a mindless fire, how could they be expected to stop the deliberate efforts of the poachers? If they committed the substantial resources necessary to stopping the fires, how could they also stop poaching? As the smoke rose within sight of the camp at Mammoth Hot Springs, which soon took up the name Camp Sheridan, the soldiers found themselves in the unenviable position of having to be firefighters without training or experience.
Even once the fires were put out, there was still much more to be done. Used to life at established forts, Troop M discovered that they would be expected to spend Winter in the Park, and that they were to make any necessary preparations in order to do so. The few months’ notice they had been given were far from enough; although they managed to survive the Winter, it would be more than five years before the tent city of Camp Sheridan would be transformed into a more permanent complex of wood and stone structures, Fort Yellowstone.133

In spite of these delays, the soldiers did begin the difficult work of rooting out poaching in the Park. One of the first actions they took that would gain national attention was the 1894 apprehension of the poacher Ed Howell in the act of butchering several bison he had killed within the Park. *Forest and Stream* magazine, a weekly publication that focused on hunting, fishing, and other outdoor living stories, published an article on the capture. The first article from a journalist in Yellowstone in Winter, the *Forest and Stream* report included interviews with both Scout Burgess, who effected the capture, and his commanding officer, a Captain Anderson who was at the time working as Yellowstone’s Superintendent.

“I expect probably I was pretty lucky,” said [Burgess]. “Everything seemed to work in my favor…After I had found the cache of [bison] heads and the tepee, over on Astringent Creek, in the Pelican Valley, I heard the shooting, six shots. The six shots killed five buffalo. Howell made his killing out in a little valley, and when I saw him he was about 400yds. away from the cover of the timber. I knew I had to cross that open space before I could get him sure. I had no rifle, but only an army revolver, .38cal., the new model. You know a revolver isn’t lawfully able to hold the drop on a man as far as a rifle…Howell’s rifle was leaning against a dead buffalo, about 15ft. away from him. His hat was sort of flapped down over his eyes, and his head was toward me. He was leaning over, skinning on the head of

133 Watching Over Yellowstone, 17-28
one of the buffalo...I thought I could maybe get across without Howell seeing or hearing me, for the wind was blowing very hard. So I started over from cover, going as fast as I could travel...I ran up to within 15ft. of Howell, between him and his gun before I called to him to throw up his hands, and that was the first he knew of any one but him being anywhere in that country. He kind of stopped and stood stupid like, and I told him to drop his knife. He did that and then I called [Private] Troike, and we got ready to come over to the hotel.134

This episode shows the strange amalgamation of military strategy and individual backcountry experience necessary for work in Yellowstone. Although Scout Burgess had one companion, Captain Anderson noted that the Private had been unarmed, so Burgess was effectively on his own. Because of the circumstances of the day, Burgess found himself, a lone cavalryman on foot, equipped with only a revolver against a skilled and armed rifleman. By using his Army training to gauge the imbalance in force and his outdoorsmanship to sneak up on the poacher and his dog over open ground, Burgess’s story made a serious and compelling argument for the effectiveness of the Army in guarding the Yellowstone herds. This story was then spread throughout the eastern states by Forest and Stream when it was published that May, accompanied by the journalist’s anguish at the fact that there was no penalty defined for Howell’s crime other than removal from the Park. According to the article, Howell had already been ordered to be released to “kill more buffalo, and have another hunt made after him by the U.S. Army.”135

134 Forest and Stream's Exploration, 378
135 Forest and Stream's Exploration, 377-378
It is notable that Howell’s target was bison, that Burgess put so much effort into protecting them, and that *Forest and Stream* placed so much emphasis on how bad his crime was. This whole event took place only a few years after wars against Native peoples in the region had been concluded, and a massive part of the strategy employed by the United States in those wars had been the destruction of the American bison. General Sheridan, who would go on to decry the destruction of the great herds of Yellowstone, had previously written to General Sherman that “The best way for the government is to now make [the plains peoples] poor by the destruction of their stock, and then settle them on the lands allotted to them.” Sherman had written Sheridan earlier, stating that “it would be wise to invite all the sportsmen of England and

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136 Poaching Pictures, 36-37.
137 The Frontier Army and the Destruction of the Buffalo, 323
Murphy 72

America thus this fall for a Grand Buf hunt, and make one grand sweep of them all.”138 Both of these letters were penned in 1868, with Sherman writing from Fort Laramie during the relatively peaceful negotiation of the second treaty there with the Sioux and Cheyenne people. Following this, both the US Army and the non-military sportsmen of the world set about ensuring the eradication of the wild bison as well as they were able. Profit hunters slaughtered vast numbers of them, taking the valuable parts and leaving the meat to rot; pleasure seekers shot at them from moving trains; even foreign dignitaries joined in on the action. In 1871-2, the Grand Duke Alexei Alexandrovich Romanov of Russia visited the Great Plains of the United States, spending several days on a bison hunt escorted by contemporary Generals Sherman and Custer.139 Even when it came to foreign diplomacy, the Army was finding ways to involve the destruction of the bison.

This wanton destruction of the bison population led to a massive reduction of their population, and Yellowstone soon became one of their last strongholds because of its restrictions and inaccessibility. This made the Army’s defense of the bison in 1894 that much more surprising; up to very recently, they had been part and party to the extermination. This would suggest that the Cavalry’s focus had been changed from the destruction of a strategic asset to their enemies to the protection of a valuable symbol. Public opinion of bison was shifting, now that the Native peoples that had depended on them had been pushed out of sight.

In 1913, less than forty years after the last of the plains wars and the extermination campaigns, the United States Mint began producing nickels depicting a Native man in profile with an American bison on the reverse. The coin was not the only sign of changing times: media historian Jane Marcellus has cited instances of Native imagery to sell medications at the turn of

138 Letter of Sherman to Sheridan, 10 May 1868
139 Last of the Great Scouts, 176-179
the 19th Century due to a perceived link to “nature,” and student of decorative arts history Whitney Marlow Hopkins has noted adoption of Native aesthetics in home décor magazines as early as the 1890s. These seemingly minor shifts signify a greater narrative of how by this point, rather than enemies, these images had come to represent the bygone days of the West, and Yellowstone National Park had become a deeply entrenched part of that story. By protecting the bison and other herds of great American herbivores in the National Park, the Army was propping up that perception of Yellowstone as an untouched land, a part of the West that still remained a frontier. This perception, the feelings it inspired, and the tourism that it went on to encourage were deemed more valuable than the profit that could be gained from killing the few remaining bison in the Park.

The destruction of the bison had another effect on Yellowstone’s animals. Confined to reservations all around the Park, many Native groups had to make do without the game that their ancestors had relied on for generations. Environmental historian Karl Jacoby cites this struggle in his book *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the Hidden History of American Conservation*. Because bison could not be hunted outside of the Park, and those within its borders were too closely guarded, Native hunting parties began slipping out of their reservations and hunting the edges of the Park for other game. The Army recognized this as poaching, despite the sustenance exception; however, since these parties never strayed far past the border, it was difficult to catch them. Even when they were caught the Army’s jurisdiction, the consequences were the same as for Howell: the offending individuals were forced to leave,

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140 Nervous Women and Noble Savages, 800
141 Native Décor, 21
but that was it. This form of “poaching” remained a factor in the Park for some time, but was supplanted almost entirely by profit hunting like Howell by the mid 1890s.\textsuperscript{142}

While the pursuit of Yellowstone bison would become less popular as the years passed, this did not stop poachers from entering the Park. Because of this, scouts like Burgess needed to remain vigilant. A few of the Yellowstone scouts left behind journals of their time on patrol, detailing the day-to-day implications of that vigilance, of which some have since been digitized by the National Parks Service. These records date from as early as November of 1897 to as late as June of 1916, only two years before the Army left. Pursuits of poachers play a prominent part in several of these journals. The first such mention came in February of 1898, in the journal of one Scout James Morrison.

\begin{quote}
Feb. 27\textsuperscript{th} 1898. Left Post with Deputy Game warden Koouw of Mont. to show him game killed by Frank Bezere in Mont. went to Brundage’s place on Eagle Cr. Then to where elk were killed near Forsyth’s place on north slope of Eagle Mt thence down trail cr. to Yellowstone R. to Basset’s place on same, and from there back to Post on east side of River to Gardiner…Distance 30 miles.\textsuperscript{143}
\end{quote}

This account describes Morrison working with a local law enforcement officer to prosecute a poacher who killed some elk in the Montana portion of the Park. The record implies that Morrison is accustomed to travel of the sort, mentioning notable landmarks along his path and concluding with a total mileage count. Not only is he used to it, so is the command structure; the outline of this day’s report matches most of the others in the collection, suggesting that this is the standard method of producing a report to be submitted.

\textsuperscript{142} Crimes Against Nature, 88-93
\textsuperscript{143} Scout Diaries, 108
Morrison’s contribution didn’t end with the investigation, however. His journal records that he left Fort Yellowstone a few days later for the same case.

March 2nd 1898. Left Post for Livingston Mont. on trial of Frank Bezere.

March 3rd 1898. Returned from Livingston Bezere held on bond of $250./100 for trial in District Court of Park Co.

Although Morrison’s journal from the days and weeks before this was not in the collection, his presence at the trial indicate that he was the one who found and arrested Bezere; if all he had to report was the crime scene, the Deputy Game Warden could have spoken for him. This means that the soldier discovered a poacher, apprehended him, assisted in the investigation of the crime, and then was given leave to speak at his trial. By 1898, the Army was clearly very serious about its duties with respect to the prevention of poaching. Additionally, Howell’s release was no longer the standard; there was not only a law in place for the punishment of poachers, but also an infrastructure to ensure its enforcement. The public outcry in response to the *Forest and Stream* article had been effective, as a law outlining the penalties for poaching had been passed in 1894. The Lacey Act, as it was known, forbade all hunting in the Park except that directed at specific dangerous animals, and restricted fishing to only hook-and-line. It also established a legal framework for prosecuting poachers, referring them to a specific court that followed Wyoming standards of justice.¹⁴⁴

This episode would not be the last time that Yellowstone soldiers encountered poachers. In September of 1899, Morrison recounted another case that he investigated, this time focusing on the initial investigation itself.

¹⁴⁴ Lacey Act, 1-2
Sept 1st
Stayed in camp. Found a moose skin about 200 yds north of where the road crosses Boundary Cr. I think it has been killed about 10 days. There has been three wagons in here from toward St. Anthony. Somebody in this party evidently killed it as it was near their camp.

Sept. 2.
Went up to Ouzel Falls where we found the carcass of the moose. While up there two men from Marysville came up there with a wagon. They said that fishing was their object I think it was as they had no guns and plenty of fish poles. One of them told me that a party of 3 wagon had gone down the St. Anthony road about 10 days ago. About 15 miles.

Sept. 3
Made a circuit around the Basin and saw the 5 horses again No signs of anyone in the basin except the 2 men fishing About 12 miles

Although unsuccessful, this investigation indicates several things about the way that hunting is dealt with in the Park now. First, because the pelt was left behind and only one animal was killed, this was likely not a killing for profit; however, because the meat was apparently taken, it was also not an act of wanton destruction. Despite this, Morrison still seems to be interested in pursuing the party that killed it; this indicates that the Army does not recognize the subsistence exclusion in the National Park law, or that it has been changed. However, because he says nothing to the fishermen about it, this change does not seem to apply to fish, only to terrestrial animals. These are consistent with the revisions to the original plan outlined in the Lacey Act; it is clear that the revised standards are in full effect by this point, and the Army is enforcing the newest laws. Second, it is clear that Morrison conducted as thorough of an investigation as he could, even determining the only likely suspects for the act. He only broke off

145 Scout Diaries, 122-123
pursuit when it became obvious that they had passed out of his jurisdiction. Much like the episode from February, this indicates that the anti-poaching efforts taken by Army scouts were far from cursory. Morrison very much wanted to catch his poachers, and when he did, he contributed significantly to their criminal trial.

Morrison would not be the last one to deal with poaching, nor would his be the most exciting story. November of 1898 saw the episode of the Cavalry’s history in Yellowstone that most closely resembled the Army’s work elsewhere when Scout George Whittaker met real resistance to his work in the Park.

Nov 8th 10 miles
Remained in camp myself and sent pvt Bremer and McRae to Gardiner to notify all parties to remove their stock from the park by the 10th

after they returned to camp i took station on a high point that over looks all the antelope range about 4 oclock they began to go down to the park Line i watched them until 20 minutes before Dark then went to camp had Just got to camp when shooting began among the antelope i took my two men and ran down as quietly as possible but it was to Dark to see over 100 yds from you when i got to where i had seen the antelope from the hill i sent pvt Bremer to my Left about 100 yds and i took the right sent pvt McRae in the Centre so he would be out of Danger for i saw he was a little afraid to go unfortunately he fell in behind pvt Bremer and caused me to Loose two poachers for i had not gone over 75 yds after i left them when i ran right into two men on horse back they were following up the antelope but when the saw me i was at Least 75 yds away they wheeled their horses and run them for all they were worth i called to them to halt but they kept going so i opened fire on them and fired my 4th shot before my 2 men began to fire my 4th shot and pvt Bremer shot Both went off about the same time and my candid opinion is that we hit either the man or horse from their actions after the shot was fired they were in the park about ½ mile 1 ½ miles west of Gardiner and
¾ miles from our camp they ran toward Cinnabar I followed them to park Line then returned to camp saddled our horses and went to Cinnabar and Gardiner but could not Learn who the men were but may be able to do so Later as they fired 8 shots at the antelope about 200 in number they all ran back into the park when the shooting began I did my best to get the men but my pistol proved to be useless at such Long range and dark at that the sunset gun at the post Just went off as the shooting was over got back to camp from Gardiner at 1030p.m weather cloudy cold

Nov 9th
Left camp at daybreak with pvt Bremer proceeded ¾ miles from camp to where the shooting took place to see that the 2 poachers did not return for any Game they might have killed remained there till 830 then looked around for dead antelope but found none so i dont believe there were any killed by the two men. i returned to camp and wrote a letter to Capt James B. Erwin acting supt Y. N. P. to inform him of the shooting that took place last night and request that a round up of all stock be made tomorrow by Detachment from the post. sent letter to post by pvt McRae there were no antelope in sight this a. m. Layed on hill this p. m. to watch them but they did not come down pvt McRae returned from post at 4 p.m. with letter from Capt. Erwin to me my 2 mules returned to camp this p. m. weather clear and cold

On this date, Whittaker and the two privates with him were engaged in a shootout with poachers near to the Park boundaries. Much like Morrison’s account, this one says a lot about how the scouts addressed poaching. Most obviously, it establishes that the Army is not just there for the intimidation factor; Whittaker was ready and willing to do battle with these poachers, and did not hesitate to draw his weapon and fire when they appeared before him. Additionally, it confirms the apparent limit on Morrison’s pursuit; although Whittaker crossed the border briefly

146 Scout Diaries, 162-163
to ask after the poachers in the nearby towns, he did not chase them across the line. Let it be clear: there was a shootout involving multiple United States cavalrymen on US government property, and yet not only did the trespassers get away from the scene, but they were also not tracked down and punished. Clearly, the authority of the Army ended at the Park Line, even when it came to violent conflict; either the problems associated with jurisdiction or the territorial advantage were too much to continue the pursuit. In short, these are not the actions of a combat unit, but rather, a police force. Another interesting note is that the acting superintendent of Yellowstone is still an Army officer, Captain James B. Erwin; not only are they the police of the Park, but also its administration. While Captain Anderson alone may have been an aberration, this establishes a pattern of Army leadership in all aspects of the Park. Finally, it bears repeating that this was a shootout over a herd of pronghorn. Pronghorn have never been endangered as a species, and are not even among the popular animals of Yellowstone, as the bison had been; despite this, Whittaker began a horseback firefight on their behalf. This once again returns to the idea of the Army’s legitimacy as a force in the Park. After all, if they cannot protect some small and easily-herded pronghorn, it would logically follow that they can do nothing for the larger and more valuable animals. It was imperative for Whittaker to communicate that the authority, readiness, and capability of the Army to defend the Yellowstone herds was not something worth challenging.

It should also be noted that, even as they pursued this campaign against poaching throughout the Park, they too engaged in it. Frontier historian Thomas C. Rust cites evidence of soldiers turning up their noses at the Army-issue rations in favor of fresh game to the point that some of the more remote cabins were adorned with elk skulls and antlers, even after the Lacey
Act banned subsistence hunting.\textsuperscript{147} It is possible that they believed that only taking a few here and there would have a minimal effect on the overall population, or that they had the right to take from the herds that they maintained, just as a rancher may do with their livestock. In any case, they were not above poaching for themselves. This was apparently never addressed in any meaningful way; both officers and enlisted men partook, and no discipline was recorded as having been used in response. In this way, the most consistent and insidious form of poaching was permitted to continue until the Army’s departure.

While independent poachers would continue to menace the wildlife of Yellowstone, the soldiers’ campaign against them grew more and more effective with every passing year, based on the reducing frequency and intensity of encounters recorded in the journals. At one point in 1898, Whittaker noted a capture of a professed rabbit hunter 100 ft inside the Park line, who was fined $15.50 for it; about $500 today, this punishment mechanism evidently began to take effect. Scout S.M. Fitzgerald noted in a journal report from September of 1907 that an entire region just outside the Park was devoid of hunters, even though hunting there was not prohibited by Park rules.\textsuperscript{148} While this did not indicate the end of hunting in and around Yellowstone, as another few were apprehended by Scout S.M. Kilpatrick as late as 1915,\textsuperscript{149} it demonstrates that the threat is waning. By the end of the digitized journals, there is no reference to poaching; Scout Donald Stevenson even goes so far as to note in his entry for 30 April 1916 “About all the loss [in Elk, Deer, and Antelope herds] from now on will be caused by Wolves, Lions, and coyotes…Bears kill weak elk in some cases.”\textsuperscript{150} Stevenson does not even consider poachers as a threat to the herds at this point, seemingly believing that those caught by Kilpatrick were the last. It had taken

\textsuperscript{147} Watching Over Yellowstone, 33-34
\textsuperscript{148} Scout Diaries, 23
\textsuperscript{149} Scout Diaries, 67, 70
\textsuperscript{150} Scout Diaries, 147
close to thirty years, but the Army had finally managed to put an end to the large-scale threat of poaching in the Park, the problem that had prompted their deployment into Yellowstone in the first place. But with that threat gone, what did that leave for the Army to do?

The Second Enemy: Predators

As the menace posed by poachers dissipated, new threats to the herds became apparent to the soldiers managing them. Now that the man-made threat of profit hunting and wanton destruction was dealt with, the more natural threats came into focus. From this point, the Army focused much of its efforts on reducing the population of major predators in the Park. Yellowstone is host to a number of large predator species, including wolves, coyotes, mountain lions, and black and grizzly bears. In turn, each of these would attract the attention of the Army, and this attention was rarely positive.

Scout Morrison was the first scout to record an interaction with a large predator, noting in August of 1898 that he had seen a mature grizzly with two cubs. He, however, did not pursue them, or even make further comment; apparently, this was an observation worth noting, but not acting upon.151 The next recorded encounter with a large predator was by Scout Whittaker the following year, when he came across a mountain lion. Whittaker did not hesitate to kill this animal, although the reason for this is debatable; while he did find it in the act of eating three elk from a nearby herd, it was also about 300 yards from the cabin in which Whittaker was staying at the time.152 This could have been an effort to protect the herd, himself and his comrades, or both.

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151 Scout Diaries, 110  
152 Scout Diaries, 195
but it is clear that Whittaker felt a duty to act in response to the animal’s mere presence.

Mentions of predators largely disappear from the record here until 1907.

As the height of poaching in Yellowstone was apparently in the 1890s, based on Howell’s acts and the scouts’ journals, it seems that poaching must have declined to a negligible level by 1907, and the impact of predators was becoming more apparent. The year started with Scout James McBride setting out coyote traps on 1 January, and continued as one might expect from there. McBride recorded killing 17 coyotes,153 as well as one red fox,154 one black bear,155 and two grizzlies156 in that year alone. After this year, efforts are shifted somewhat; these are the only bears that the digitized journals recorded as having been killed, and foxes are not mentioned again. Instead, the focus of anti-predator measures is placed exclusively on pack canids and mountain lions from this point on.

Mountain lions were apparently uncommon in Yellowstone, but several scouts recorded encounters, most of which ended like Whittaker’s. Once again, McBride was one of the first to record dealing with them; he reports having killed one in the first days of 1908,157 and notes spending one January day in 1908 on “Patrol west to reese creek hunting For Mountain lion and return to headquarters Dist 30 miles.”158 McBride does not say that he is hunting lions, plural, but rather a single animal, likely one reported by another scout or visitor to the Park. Thirty miles in a single day is a long ride, compared to others in the journals; to have done this in January suggests that there was a good deal of pressure to deal with this animal.

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153 Scout Diaries, 81-102
154 Scout Diaries, 85
155 Scout Diaries, 89
156 Scout Diaries, 92, 95
157 Scout Diaries, 103
158 Scout Diaries, 104
Having a reputation for solitary living, mountain lions are among the most feared of American wildlife. While they are generally few and far between, they can be very territorial, and human interaction could easily end very badly for one or both parties. For this reason, as with Whittaker’s episode, it’s difficult to class the efforts to extirpate mountain lions in Yellowstone as a herd-protection effort. While the small population of lions in the Park would have had a minimal effect on the prey animals’ populations, the fear of what they might do to a tourist could have been a much greater motivator. The Lacey Act had carved out an exemption in the total prohibition of hunting for animals except for “when it is necessary to prevent them from destroying human life or inflicting an injury;”159 it seems that this exemption was made for the explicit purpose of addressing the potential threats of animals like mountain lions. For these reasons, a number of mountain lions were killed.

In all of the journals in the collection, six mountain lion kills were recorded: Whittaker’s, McBride’s, and four by Stevenson in February of 1916.160 Those last four were likely a significant portion of the remaining population in the Park, itself probably an island of such animals in the region. As they were such isolated animals, and with only the Army being permitted to hunt within Yellowstone, civilian hunters and ranchers in the surrounding regions had by this point had plenty of time to rid themselves of the nuisances posed by such predators. At any rate, most all mountain lions that any soldiers or scouts encountered during this time were killed. Today, Yellowstone National Park recognizes fewer than fifty mountain lions in the entire Park, admittedly an improvement from figures from the early 1980s that totaled about twenty,161 but a number unquestionably lower than it would have been without the Army’s efforts.

159 Lacey Act, 1
160 Scout Diaries, 142
161 Yellowstone Cougar Project Report, 2
In the years after McBride’s early hunts, most of the scouts recorded hunting for or killing coyotes as part of their duties. Stevenson’s 1915 journal suggests that, after a certain point, there was little else for them to do.

Oct 6 Wed
Gardner to Mammoth took oath of office and returned to Gardner Distance traveled 10 miles.

Thur Oct 7
Patrolled frome Gardner hunting coyotes Distance 8 miles Also preparing for trip into Park.

Fri Oct 8
Gardner to Mammoth Hot Springs and hunted coyotes on foot in P. M. Distance traveled 9 miles.

Sat. Oct 9
Hunted coyotes from M. Hot Springs Via Glen Cr. Swan Lake Flat and Snow Pass. Distance traveled 15 mi.

Sun Oct 10
Hunted coyotes…

Mun Oct 11
Hunted coyotes…

Tue Oct 12
Hunted coyotes…

Wed Oct 13
Hunted coyotes…

Thur Oct 14
Hunted coyotes frome Canyon to Lake Station 3 coyotes and one Lynx track seen set traps in P. M. Distance traveled about 16 m.
Fri Oct 15
Attended traps in A. M. Traps all tore up by Bear Set traps in P. M. no game seen
distance traveled about 10 miles

Sat Oct 16
Attended traps in A. M. Two coyotes caught skinned coyotes and set more traps
in A. M. distance traveled about 8 miles One Elk seen.162

This sequence of days is representative of much of Stevenson’s journal. It seems that,
from the first day that he was part of the garrison at Mammoth Hot Springs, he was a dedicated
coyote hunter and trapper. Scarcely a day went by without him hunting, trapping, or processing
coyotes. Stevenson’s journal is one of the latest of the collection; from this, it would seem that
the Army was engaged in the battle against coyotes right up until they left Yellowstone in 1918.

This focus on coyotes can be tied back to several factors. The first of these is the
perception that coyotes posed a threat to the herds under the protection of the Army. The reasons
for this are not difficult to divine; even as McBride recounted killing as many predators as he
could, he also noted coming across several deer carcasses that he attributed to coyotes. While he
does not elaborate on what factors led him to conclude that they were responsible for the kills,
the significant differences between bear, mountain lion, wolf, and coyote preferences, bite
marks, and prevalence combined with McBride’s experience as a scout and with coyotes
specifically indicate that he should be taken at his word.

The second factor is that, by 1915, the Army’s presence promoted the growth of coyote
populations. Coyotes are not native to the Yellowstone Region in great numbers, generally
choosing desert and plains environments to mountains like those surrounding and running

162 Scout Diaries, 133-134
through the Park.\textsuperscript{163} In fact, research has shown that humans have unwittingly facilitated their spread across North America.\textsuperscript{164} While they can fill a similar niche to wolves, that of the pack-hunting apex predator, they can also act as scavengers at the edges of human civilization, and sometimes closer than the edges. This may be why scouts like Stevenson reported hunting coyotes near Mammoth Hot Springs, where Fort Yellowstone was placed: where there are people, there is refuse. If there are food scraps, heels of bread or discarded bones, scavengers will congregate, and coyotes are more than capable of scavenging.

The third factor is that by conducting a campaign against predators, the Army was paradoxically improving the environment for coyotes. They began by removing the wolves, a main competitor with coyotes; due to their rapid breeding, even had the campaign ended and the wolves returned, they may not have been able to oust the coyotes and regain their niche. Then, the soldiers set about attacking the coyotes themselves; however, coyotes are uniquely adapted to respond to such pressures. By howling at night and listening for others, they take a sort of census of other coyotes in the area; if they receive no response, it triggers a hormonal response that increases reproduction.\textsuperscript{165} Because of this, the Army’s efforts to wipe them out were doomed from the start; unless they had been able to destroy a significant portion of the total population in a single season, the quickly-growing and extremely adaptive group that remained would have easily recuperated the loss.

Yellowstone’s wolves were not so fortunate. The scouts were also integral in the campaign against them, but this campaign was far more successful than the one waged against the coyotes. Stevenson’s journal holds most of the records in the collection on this subject, his

\textsuperscript{163} Coyote America, 4
\textsuperscript{164} Coyote America, 5
\textsuperscript{165} How the Most Hated Animal in America Outwitted Us All
first mention coming in November of 1915 when he remarked that he had come across several wolf tracks near Pelican Creek. He left some traps there and went on his way. \textsuperscript{166} Tracks would be all he saw until January, when he recorded seeing three and killing one. \textsuperscript{167} As he hunted coyotes and mountain lions, Stevenson remained on the lookout for wolves; his next major find came in late March, when he managed to discover the location of some dens. He staked them out for several days, but was unsuccessful in the hunt; forced to restock his supplies and attend to other duties, he left the dens for a few days. He returned in mid-April.

April 14
Went up and dug out Wolf den but they had moved. 8 m.

April 15
Found Wolf den. One dead Elk seen. 10 m.

April 16\textsuperscript{1}
One Wolf seen. Six pups caught. 10 m.

April 17
Hell Roaring Cabin to Tower Falls with pups via raft 6 m.

April 18
Hunted Crescent Hill for Wolf den tracks…

April 28
Hunted wolf dens. 10 m.

April 29
Wolf den found. One old Wolf shot 10 m.

April 30
Raided Wolf den. One pup dug out\textsuperscript{168}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{166 Scout Diaries, 135}
\footnote{167 Scout Diaries, 139}
\footnote{168 Scout Diaries, 146-147}
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In this extermination of the wolves, apparently nothing was off-limits, not even the dens. While digging into wolf dens allows a hunter access to the greatest concentration of vulnerable wolves at a time, also runs the risk of meeting with a territorial and defensive adult wolf in close quarters. Stevenson’s account here demonstrates a supreme confidence in his actions, indicating that he has some experience in hunting wolves in the area. At any rate, this journal includes the killing of two mature wolves, and the implied killing of another seven pups.\textsuperscript{169} Pursuing wolves in their dens, hunting down and killing even pups, and killing in such numbers are the hallmarks of an extermination effort, one designed to ensure that the population would never recover. However, this was still only a small part of a greater effort to destroy Yellowstone’s wolf population.

In 1914, Congress had earmarked funds for the promotion of campaigns to destroy, among other animals, wolves, on account of their effect of agriculture. Although agriculture was not permitted in the Park, the soldiers of Yellowstone treated the herds as if they were domestic, and set about massacring the wolves. Even after the Army left, the fledgling National Parks Service continued the crusade; between their taking over in 1918 and 1926, almost 150 wolves were caught and slaughtered in the Park. This completely destroyed the native wolf population.\textsuperscript{170} Up until a successful push for reintroduction in the 1980s and 1990s,\textsuperscript{171} the anti-wolf measures begun by the Army and concluded by the NPS had been the last word on Yellowstone’s great canines.

\textsuperscript{169} Scout Diaries, 139, 147
\textsuperscript{170} Wolf Wars, 21-22
\textsuperscript{171} Wolf Wars, 96
The venom with which the scouts attacked coyotes, wolves, and mountain lions naturally leads one to ask why other predators were not included in the kill order. Why was McBride the only one to catch and kill foxes and bears? Why were they not also exterminated? The cause for this is easy to determine, when one takes into account the journals’ records on animals they had found already dead; while many were attributed to poachers, and more than a few to mountain lions and canids, no journal ever blames the killing of a herd animal on a bear or fox. Foxes, while similar in size to coyotes, hunt alone, and are thus restricted to smaller prey; the loss of a few squirrels and rabbits here and there was on no concern to the Army. As for bears, it seemed that they did not pursue the large herbivores nearly so much as the other predators. As they lacked both the pack social structure of the canids and the speed of the mountain lions, bears have a different lifestyle, boasting a diverse diet that includes insects, fish, and plants as well as meat.\textsuperscript{172} McBride’s kills were isolated events; the first was a black bear that he noted as exceptionally dangerous,\textsuperscript{173} and the third was a grizzly had been in contact with humans at some point.\textsuperscript{174} Notably, when an anonymous scout reported seeing two bears in April of 1911, he left them alone,\textsuperscript{175} suggesting that the Army had no interest in them at this point. That this is the last mention of bears in the journals only reinforces that idea. In short, predators like bears and foxes were overlooked by the Army for the same reasons that snakes, hawks, and martens had been; so long as they posed no threat to the herds, they were beneath notice. Without posing a direct threat to the herds, they were harmless to the image of Yellowstone, and in the case of bears, sometimes even a contributor.

\textsuperscript{172} Grizzly Bear
\textsuperscript{173} Scout Diaries, 89
\textsuperscript{174} Scout Diaries, 95
\textsuperscript{175} Scout Diaries, 155
The Herds

At this point, one might ask why the herds were so important to the Army, and what they actually entailed. As ranches had begun to cover all the unoccupied land outside of the Park, the protected area within its borders became a haven for a number of large herbivore species, many with significant social aspects to their survival strategies: pronghorn, deer, bighorn sheep, elk, bison, and moose could all be found in Yellowstone, and still can today. The threat posed by poachers against these herds had been one of the main reasons that the Army had been called into Yellowstone; because of this, the Army’s efforts would not be limited to removing threats, but rather would include significant steps being taken to manage the individual populations almost as one would a domestic herd.

One of the few consistent features of the journals is that each scout kept count of how many animals they saw on a day-to-day basis. While this was occasionally a useful tool for finding predators and marking them for pursuit, it was most often just a tally or census of how large the herds were on a given date in a specific place. An example of this can be seen in Scout Louis Martin’s journal from December of 1901.

12th Made a trip to Cache Creek Saw about 2000 Elk

13th went to [Slough Creek] the Rud Prarie” to see if any Hunting was going on by Cooke People Saw about 600 Elk

14th Stayed at Station to repair my Skies

15th Started on trip to NELine but order came for me to report to Com. Officer For instruction returned to Station to prepare for the Journeys Saw about 800 Elk Weather Cold and Stormy
Just as most of the day-to-day accounts have included a mile count at the end, many have estimates for the sizes of the herds that the scout passed. While the reports lack detail, simply having rough counts and the areas in which they were taken can be of use when working in the conservation of herd animals. This in itself is not out-of-the-ordinary for environmental managers; simple counts like this are still useful tools for estimating population. As Martin’s journal continues into January, however, it becomes clear that the scouts do not stop at simply counting.

15th Found about 20 Calves snowed in up in Mountain above Slough Creek in a very weak and Starving condition. drove them down to the lower Country to a large Bunch of Elk about 600

16th Weather too stormy for traveling. Made a few trips up along the Line, found nothing of any importance. Saw about 200 Elk.

17th Strated for Hell-Roaring Country in the Morning Saw about 800 Elk in all our travel today

18th Went up to the Line and drove back a large Bunch of Elk of about 250 all Cows and Calves. drove them far down on the flat where they Could Secure good feed their Condition very good.

By driving up the animals to what they deemed to be a better place, the Army takes an active role in the preservation of the animals, treating them more like livestock than a wild herd. Whether the judgements were made based on the condition of the animals, the presence or absence of food, or proximity to the border with unprotected lands, the effect was the same: the Army decided how to manage the herds, and thus changed the course of nature in a specific and
direct way. If left to themselves, these elk would have passed out of the protection of the Park, and may have been picked off by hunters perfectly legally. With the intervention of the Army, however, that natural impulse was curbed, and the animals were kept safe artificially.

Martin was only one of the many scouts who did this work; in fact, compared to some, the part he played was relatively minor. Immediately after his shootout over the pronghorn near the Park boundary, Morrison called for a “round up of all stock,”176 presumably asking that soldiers be diverted to the area in order to ensure that the pronghorn herds remain safe and secure in the Park. Kilpatrick reported having hauled in some alfalfa hay as Winter food for the deer and bighorn sheep in 1915;177 the anonymous scout recorded something similar in January of 1911, adding that it was primarily done at Headquarters and “Gar. Sheep Correll.”178 This also suggests that the Cavalry was corralling some of the herds into pens. That implication is confirmed by Whittaker’s December 1898 journal, which mentions offhand “assist[ing] scout Burgess with deer pen.”179 If there was any doubt, Burgess’s own journal from February of 1899 records that he was ordered “to try and pen 2 Buffaloes wish are wintring on snake river.—that is I can buy Hay for them”.180 The following days record him journeying to Snake River, finding the bison, trying and failing to buy hay, and ultimately giving up on corralling the bison.181 That he was ordered to attempt it in the first place, however, makes it clear that personally managing the wildlife as one would cattle is a fairly standard operating procedure for these soldiers.

This strategy of mirroring ranching techniques for the preservation of the herds through the Winter leads to a few questions. First and foremost, why did the Army see fit to expend

176 Scout Diaries, 163
177 Scout Diaries, 69
178 Scout Diaries, 148
179 Scout Diaries, 167
180 Scout Diaries, 15
181 Scout Diaries, 15-16
resources on ensuring the survival of wild animals? Following that, why worry about animals that are clearly well-adapted and well-suited to life in this environment, having survived and thrived here for far longer than any government presence? The answer seems to lie in the arguments for anti-poaching efforts; significant and influential figures from the east like who visited the Park like General Sheridan were dismayed upon seeing the signs of poaching, namely, dead animals and dwindling populations. Because only a select few European-Americans had even seen the Yellowstone Region before the environment was thoroughly changed by the removal of the Native peoples who had lived in and managed their parts of it, all those conceptions of Yellowstone National Park were based on a flawed premise. Rather than preserving the environment as it had existed, they sought to make it as it must have been, as it should have been: a paradise, an Eden. The paradise that they envisioned held vast herds of picturesque game animals, free of the fear of a gun or predator, so that is what they made Yellowstone into. After a certain point, the truth of Yellowstone’s natural history ceased to matter, because it could not compare to the value of that fantasy.

**Conclusion**

By combining anti-predator efforts with pro-herbivore ones, the Cavalry was developing what passed at the turn of the 20th Century for a balanced game management plan. In doing so, they sought to meet the expectations placed upon them by those who had sent them to Yellowstone in the first place, not realizing or not caring that their efforts were manufacturing a false conception of the “unspoiled” American West.

From the early challenges posed by fire through the considerable time, manpower, and effort invested into the destruction of the poacher and the predator alike, always accompanied by
small attempts to treat the wild herds like domestic animals, the soldiers were serious about the environmental management of their charge. The only major flaw in the attempt was that they were working to preserve a symbol rather than a reality; they were more concerned with how Yellowstone should be perceived than what it had truly been. It was this conceit that led to the wholesale destruction of the Yellowstone wolf, the massive reduction in the population of mountain lions, and the invasion and explosive growth of the coyote in the region. While they were largely successful in the campaign against poaching, and poaching is widely considered to have been a good thing to be rid of, this stands as a singular example of a successful and justifiable measure taken in this overall struggle. Even by improving conditions for the herds of herbivores, they placed strain on other areas of the ecosystem, prompting the reintroduction of wolves before the end of the century.

Such a contradictory result came about because the perception of Yellowstone was considered more valuable than the reality. The fact that the Army was willing to put so many resources into the construction of this new Yellowstone says that they believed that there would be some value returned from it, that Yellowstone would be worth something in its revised state. This would become more obvious, and in part be proven correct, by the rise of Yellowstone’s greatest boon: tourism.
Chapter IV: Tourism, the Reason for it All

When speaking of the value that Yellowstone National Park held, there can be some uncertainty as to what that initially meant. Lt Doane expressed in one of the first expeditions into the future Park several possible economic uses for the land, and Hayden’s journals from his early explorations of the region hold accounts of a number of individuals and groups seeking their fortune in the resources held therein; however, there were also those who traveled with Doane who saw the Yellowstone region as something valuable only in its natural, “unpeopled” state. Hayden himself had a prescient view of Yellowstone’s potential, writing of it as a potential vacation destination because of its natural features, which should not be disturbed. Eventually, it was that value that had prompted Congress and President Grant to take the unprecedented step of designating it a National Park in 1872 and had led to General Sheridan sending the Cavalry to manage the region some years later: the value of tourism.

The interstate highway system that would facilitate cross-country travel on a grand scale was still almost a century away at this point,182 so such a proposition may have seemed impossible at the time. Despite this, Hayden’s ideas of Yellowstone as a remote resort soon came to pass, as rail lines expanded and tourists began to trickle in. Accounts of the Nez Perce War offer a window into the earliest era of this tourism.

As Chief Joseph’s band were approaching and entering Yellowstone National Park, the record speaks of three parties of tourists being there: the Radersburg and Helena Parties, both relative locals from Montana, and General Sherman’s Party, an expedition by a powerful and adventurous figure from back east. Taken together, the presence of these parties indicates that those early tourists were mostly local, with the occasional eastern adventurer. This should not be

182 Federal Aspects of the Interstate Highway Program, 377
a surprise; at this time, the only way to reach the park was on foot, horseback, or wagon, and little to no infrastructure existed to facilitate even this limited movement. That would change in 1883.

When the Northern Pacific Railroad completed its line that year, it suddenly became possible to travel from St Paul, Minnesota to Portland, Oregon in four days, a remarkably short time for a journey of over 2,000 kilometers. While Yellowstone was not the only reason to take a Northern Pacific train, it was both a major selling point and a key focus for the company; the entire portion of the line in Montana was labeled the “Yellowstone Division,” and a branch of track ran south from the main line to a station just outside of the Park borders with no stops in between. This clearly had an effect; while there were only about 8,300 total visitors to Yellowstone in the first eleven years of the Park, the completion of the railway caused that number to explode to over 53,000 by the end of 1890.

Figure 4.1: Selection from an 1883 map published by Rand McNally and the Northern Pacific Railroad depicting the rail route from Minnesota to Oregon. While the entire Montana section is labeled as “Yellowstone Div.,” note the circled segment drawn south from Livingston, Montana, which ends at the Park’s edge. Emphasis mine.

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183 Northern Pacific Railroad Map
184 The Evolving National Park Idea, 199
When taken together with then-President Chester A. Arthur’s visit to Yellowstone in the same year, Yellowstone was becoming quite the destination. While the President’s focus had been on the fishing prospects in the Park, word was getting out about the wondrous hot springs, spectacular geysers, and magnificent wildlife. The railroad took an active role in this process, albeit a subtle one. The Northern Pacific Railway Company sent out numerous advertisements for Yellowstone itself, noting that they were the only company that could take one there from the East and Midwest. They even went so far as to publish a series of books entitled *Wonderland* that described the many places that the railway visited. Yellowstone is featured early on. Such advertisements must have been successful, because they kept producing them well into the 1930s. It was becoming obvious to plenty of businessmen around the United States that there was a great deal of money to be made in Yellowstone off of tourism.

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185 A President in Yellowstone, 3
186 Sketches of Wonderland, 26-51
Figures 4.2\textsuperscript{187} and 4.3\textsuperscript{188} Two advertisements put out by the Northern Pacific Railway. On the left, a magazine page from 1912 that shows an image of Yellowstone’s natural beauty alongside calls to come and see the other attractions of the Pacific Northwest; on the right, a flier from 1914 that depicts the gate to the Park above the names of key sites around the Park. While both of these are post-1910, they are examples of an advertising strategy that had been ongoing for quite some time by this point.

By the time that the Army began to settle in long-term in 1886, the government had fielded more than twenty applications to construct lodging within the Park, of which at least six were submitted between 1883 and 1884 alone.\textsuperscript{189} For the new overseers of the Park, it was impossible to remain uninvolved with the burgeoning tourist industry; in fact, having been sent by General Sheridan to protect the image of Yellowstone, their duty was arguably to ensure that

\textsuperscript{187} 1912 Advertisement
\textsuperscript{188} 1914 Flier
\textsuperscript{189} For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People, 117-119
visitors had the best experience possible while there. In other words, even as they pursued the elusive predators, chased down the backcountry poachers, and carefully managed the herds of the Park, the cavalrymen found themselves working in the hospitality business.

This business took a few major forms: security, maintenance, and development. While the Cavalry served all three roles throughout their years in the Park, the balance of focus shifted greatly over time; security was perceived as crucial at first, but as the memory of threats grew more hazy and the crowds of tourists grew larger, maintenance and development became more important. On occasion, the Army would even provide a direct service for the tourists. This was all a continuation of the policies that had led them to explore, claim, and defend the resources of Yellowstone: the need to extract value from the Park, this time through the touristic development of the area. While the Army had begun with the intention of simply defend the space and maintaining combat effectiveness, these goals were soon turned toward ensuring that the tourism economy would run smoothly.

**Protecting the Visitors**

Even before the Army took command of Yellowstone, one of its most influential interventions in the region involved the protection of tourists from a threatening force. When Chief Joseph’s band reached Yellowstone in 1878, it was the tourists and the few hospitality workers who were in the line of fire. When the Army arrived to engage the host, they began a tradition of defending the tourists of the Park.

It should be noted that the soldiers probably did not go to Yellowstone in that Summer of 1878 with the specific intention of eliminating threats to tourism. The Nez Perce War had been going on for some weeks before it reached this point, and Yellowstone would merely have been
a convenient spot to lay a trap for the host. This is further reinforced by the fact that the Army did not enter the Park in great numbers to oppose the Nez Perce forces, choosing instead to encircle the region and wait for them to attempt an escape. The Army commanders would have known that there was at least one group of tourists in the Park, as General Sherman’s party had met the Radersburg Party only a few days before their capture. That he and the other leaders chose to wait for the Nez Perce to make the first move, rather than taking command of the Yellowstone region and rescuing or securing the tourist parties present at the time suggests that the primary intention was not the defense of civilians, but rather, the complete capture or destruction of Chief Joseph’s host. In this, their mission was more in line with the greater work of the Army in the West, to ensure that Native peoples were rendered incapable of threatening the expansion of the United States’s influence, than some ideal of protecting the sanctity of the new National Park.

Despite this apparent lack of interest in the defense of tourists, the campaigns directed against the Native peoples of the West created a perception of the Army as the main line of defense against the enemies of American expansion. Even after the Nez Perce War, one of the last conflicts of the Pacific Northwest and Great Plains, the perception remained, as evidenced by President Arthur’s preparations for his 1883 journey: along with General Sheridan as a guide, the President’s retinue included a military escort of seventy-five men.190 That this was deemed necessary is very telling.

It had been close to four years since the Sheepeater War had ended, and there had been no major outbreaks of violence in the region since then. The President’s itinerary did take him through recognized Native land, to be sure, but the territory in question was the Wind River

190 A President in Yellowstone, 3
Reservation.\textsuperscript{191} The Wind River land was populated almost entirely by the Shoshone, who had never conflicted with the United States. The presence of the escort, therefore, corroborates that there was an idea of the Wyoming Territory as a lawless wasteland, or even enemy territory, otherwise President Arthur would not have needed such an entourage. By contrast, his trip to Florida earlier that same year had involved no such escort whatsoever, despite the adventure being described as the President “reach[ing] the end of civilization” only halfway down the peninsula.\textsuperscript{192}

The President’s party would mark the first and only documented time that the Army was present for the protection of tourists specifically.\textsuperscript{193} Neither the President nor any official significant enough to merit a military escort would visit between 1883 and the Army’s takeover three years later, at which point a consistent security apparatus was put in place. Despite the perception of the Territory that had led President Arthur to bring along such a large force, this apparatus was never tested by a conflict against Native people in any numbers, just as the President’s party had gone untested. As the “Wild West” grew more and more tame, the role of the Army in Yellowstone grew more and more muddled. It is worth noting that, when the Army relinquished control of Yellowstone in 1918, the last Native American wars in the region had ended two generations ago. Any serious threat posed by Native peoples in the region had been completely quashed, and the Army’s role was transitioning into one focused on continuing training.

This, at least, was one intention for Yellowstone, but the reality on the ground was a very different thing. Without a military enemy, the cavalry of Yellowstone found itself serving a role

\textsuperscript{191} A President in Yellowstone, x
\textsuperscript{192} Gentleman Boss, 355-359
\textsuperscript{193} While it seems likely that General Sherman would have brought along a small escort or guard, no evidence of such precautions was apparent.
more akin to policing, since even the poachers were a poor analogue for asymmetric warfare. Even this, however, was limited; although the frontier towns around the Park saw their fair share of violence, historian Lee Whittlesey, author of *Death in Yellowstone: Accidents and Foolhardiness in the First National Park*, records only seven intentional deaths throughout the entire period that the Army ran the Park inside its borders: four Army or Park employees who died by suicide (1891, 1906, and two in 1911), one Private shot by a Sergeant in what was ruled a self-defense case, a child living in Mammoth Hot Springs who was killed by his mentally ill mother (1899), and one man shot over a gambling debt on the edge of the Park (1913). In none of these cases did someone capable of rational thought commit an act of criminal violence against another under Army authority, and only two cases involved a civilian. In other words, at no point was the Army placed in a position where it needed to act as a police force within the Park for a serious crime.

The only cases for which the Army was consistently called upon for policing work are surprisingly familiar to those familiar with America’s parks in the present day. In *Watching Over Yellowstone*, frontier historian Thomas C. Rust notes that some tourists would carry off parts of the geological features, or etch their names into the stone. Rust also says that soldiers would frequently check the features for new names, cross-reference them against hotel registries, and have the offending party return to the scene of the crime to remove the offending marks. This shows that the Army was responsible for everyday policing, even if circumstances did not bring the most serious crimes under their purview.

This lack of real threats leads to a couple of possible responses. The first would be that the presence of the Army was overkill, and thus unnecessary; if the most serious challenge to the

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194 Death in Yellowstone, 222-255
195 Watching Over Yellowstone, 44
law that would be taking place in the Park was the occasional poacher, then a much smaller and less extensive policing force could have done the job. The difference between one superintendent plus eleven deputies and an entire cavalry fort is titanic, and much could have been done between those levels of commitment. Although Congress had been unwilling to fund such a force in the years before the Army takeover, there was nothing stopping them from doing so now, so why was the Army still running things? The second response provides a possible answer to this: the Army is such a looming presence that almost no one in the area was willing to defy its authority. Whittlesey also reports on the region just north of the Park, including the towns of Gardiner and Cooke City, saw at least nine murders in the same period. In light of this, it seems more likely that the Army’s mere presence acted as a deterrent to violent crime. When the combined force of a detachment of cavalrmen is waiting for any hint of trouble, someone who might have started something in a small town with an ineffective police force might consider their actions a bit more carefully. This, coupled with the need to keep the cavalrmen in order, gave plenty of reason to keep Fort Yellowstone in operation.

This is not to say that Yellowstone was perfectly safe during the Army years; Whittlesey notes that quite a few entered the Park and never left in this time, and not all of these episodes have been explained. While it is possible that some of those who went missing in Yellowstone in this period were murdered, every national park or wilderness area like Yellowstone has had a number of disappearances; between the volcanic pools full of near-boiling and highly acidic water, the vast swathes of difficult or impassable terrain, and the many forms of wildlife that can be deadly, there were and are plenty of ways to explain disappearances without resorting to foul

196 Death in Yellowstone, 225-248
play, especially in the days before the land was mapped in great detail. Yellowstone has never needed human help to kill.

In fact, it seems that the only way that the Army actually had to make an effort to protect tourists was when it came to that wildlife. It has already been established that the Army dedicated a great deal of time and resources to hunting down large predators like wolves and mountain lions in the Park, much of that with the apparent goal of protecting the wild herds of herbivores. Some of those cases, however, can also be attributed to concern over how the predators might react to or interact with humans. Take, for instance, Scout McBride’s report after having killed a grizzly bear:

Sept 11 [1907]
Patrol in the Vicinity of Yellowstone Lake and Killed 1 Silver tip Bear with can on it foot Dist 10 Miles

McBride takes care to note that this particular bear had definitely had human contact before, whether that meant that it had raided a camp or had been digging through a rubbish heap. In the century since McBride patrolled Yellowstone, some advances have been made in the field of animal behaviorology. Modern understanding states that wild animals that grow accustomed to humans and human materials in their environment may lose their fear of humans and become a threat due to their boldness. “A fed bear is a dead bear” is a common refrain in today’s outdoor communities, referencing that unafraid bears will eventually hurt someone, and then must be euthanized. While this wasn’t well-known in McBride’s day or for some time after, with the

197 Scout Diaries, 95
National Park staff permitting and even encouraging the feeding of bears well into the 1960s,\textsuperscript{198} it’s possible that McBride recognized the possibility of trouble if a bear accustomed to eating human food were to be left alone. It’s also possible that he simply didn’t mention it, but that the bear had already been reported for threatening or violent behavior. Since this was one of only two grizzly bears that the journals recorded as having been killed, it seems that this was not a common issue, and this bear posed an exceptional problem. Exceptional problems, however, still color the public perception of a place, and it would be crucial for the image of Yellowstone as a tourist attraction to deal with potential threats to visitors with swift and effective force.

Whittlesey, for his part, recorded many human injuries caused by bears during the Army years; between 1891 and 1973, every year saw at least one bear-caused injury in the Park, and one year had 115 reported incidents.\textsuperscript{199} However, he also noted that the first reliable report of a bear-related fatality dated from 1916,\textsuperscript{200} well after McBride’s hunt. Additionally, none of the scout journals record encounters with bears in which the scout is injured. This indicates that the vast majority of bear encounters were relatively minor and primarily affected visitors, and that hunting them down was not nearly so much of a priority as the wolves and coyotes were. When it came to bears, the Army seemed to largely leave them alone, except when one became a serious problem for the tourists; then, and only then, would they step in and remove that individual.

The scouts’ responses to mountain lions were very different. While none of the scout journals record mountain lions acting aggressively toward visitors, Whittaker’s 1898 record notes that the one he killed was close by an occupied cabin, evidently unafraid of the human in

\textsuperscript{198} Smithsonian Bear Video
\textsuperscript{199} Death in Yellowstone, 47-48
\textsuperscript{200} Death in Yellowstone, 51
its territory. While this might seem to foreshadow an unfortunate meeting of a tourist with a mountain lion, this does not seem to have been the case; in contrast to the 44 pages Whittlesey dedicates to bears, making up the longest chapter in *Death in Yellowstone*, he records not a single human death or injury caused by mountain lions. However, unlike the bears, the journals record multiple scouts specifically seeking out and killing mountain lions, so clearly there was more at play than the animals’ actions. By continuing to pursue mountain lions even as the bears were left alone, despite the cats’ small numbers and thus relatively minor effect on the herds, the Army may have been working to eliminate a threat to the people in Yellowstone as well. At the very least, it would have made their own jobs easier.

Unfortunately, due to the scant nature of the reports made by the scouts, such nuance has been lost. It is also possible that these hunts were simply methods of self-preservation, efforts to remove possible threats to the cavalrmy, and the reduced danger for the visitors was an unintended side effect. Whether or not this is the case, the Army spent far more time, effort, and ammunition pursuing dangerous animals than they ever had cause to spend on dangerous humans while running the National Park, but they still maintained an air of authority and security within its borders. Between the real work they did against the animals and the perceived work they did against humans, the Army endeavored to provide at least some sense of security for those visiting Yellowstone National Park.
Making Sure that Visitors Got the Full Experience

Since the job of policing Yellowstone was easy enough that the scouts could easily manage on their own with time to spare, the need arose for more work to do. The commanding officers of Fort Yellowstone evidently decided that maintaining the Park’s resources was a reasonable use of their efforts. In a certain sense, part of this is what General Sheridan had sent them to do: protect the natural value in Yellowstone National Park. It did not take long to expand this order from simple protection to carefully tending the resources, ensuring that they were in the optimal state for tourists. The mechanics of how they did this have already been explored with the herds, but it is also worth delving into why.

Fig. 4.4: Selection from an advertisement published alongside the map in Fig. 4.1, which depicted the Northern Pacific Railroad operational map from 1883. This column offers land for no more than $4.00 per acre, which translates to slightly more than $112.00 in 2022 terms. The notes on the agricultural potential of the land make it clear that this was an effort to make moving out west accessible to anyone who could work on a farm. This “Northern Pacific Country,” now generally referred to as the Pacific Northwest, was by this point one of the last places where such efforts could be made in the continental United States.201

The same haze of time that was making the Native American Wars seem so distant was also beginning to cover the earlier days of American westward expansion. When the Northern Pacific Railroad was completed in 1883, it was not the first to cross the country, but it was the one that rendered the Oregon Trail obsolete. Additionally, in the same brochures and maps that the railroad advertised its speed and distance, it also conveniently advertised land for sale clear

201 Northern Pacific Railroad Map
across the country; now, even the once-harrowing process of moving out west and settling was becoming accessible. On top of all of this, the early American naturalist William T. Hornaday recorded that fewer than 1,100 American bison remained in the world by 1889. He compared this to the over three million bison that were slaughtered by white hunters between 1872 and 1874 in Kansas, Nebraska, Texas, New Mexico and Colorado alone. These old symbols and staples of the American West were disappearing, and the days when a person could pack up a wagon and drive west to stake their claim and start a new life in a fresh land were ending.

Despite all this progress, Yellowstone remained relatively untouched; no railroad passed through its borders, the stagecoach was still the best way to get around, a herd of an estimated 200 bison remained safe within its borders, and the noble cavalryman who had fought for and won the west still ranged over those mountains and meadows. While the modern conception of the Old West focuses more on the one-street towns and high-noon shootouts, these had not yet passed into myth by the time that Yellowstone’s tourism began; rather, the Park would have appealed to a form of nostalgia, one for a wild and untamed country that was just beginning to pass out of living memory. Former secretary of the Interior H. M. Teller, who served just before the Army took over, voiced this exact sentiment in an 1886 letter, arguing that the National Park should maintain the “original wild West that shall stand as the rest of the world moves, affording the student of nature and the pleasure tourist a restful contrast.” With Yellowstone, there would always be a remnant of “the good old days,” or at least, how they were remembered.

Because of this, it was the duty of the Army, Yellowstone’s only overseers, to conserve Yellowstone as this vision. The great herds and majestic landscapes that early explorers from the

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202 Northern Pacific Railroad Map
203 The Extermination of the American Bison, 501, 525
204 The Extermination of the American Bison, 464
205 The Evolving National Park Idea, 138
east like Lewis and Clark had written about were kept alive and untouched in Yellowstone. This was the last sanctuary of the wild buffalo, so it was the Army’s duty to make sure that the bison were kept alive and healthy. There were some clear-cut outcomes to this: when Scout Burgess came across a poacher butchering bison within the Park in 1894, his duty was clearly to arrest the man and put a stop to the poaching.\textsuperscript{206} However, stopping poaching was not enough for the Yellowstone command; so, when they saw the opportunity to corral a couple of wild bison in the February of 1899, they sent out Burgess to seize the opportunity.

Although there were, and are today, some captive bison populations, the Army was not intending to open a ranch with the Yellowstone herd. There was not a market for bison dairy products, and it would be quite some time before bison burgers would be marketed to tourists passing through. In short, there was only one reason to preserve the bison of Yellowstone: the Park was incomplete without the bison, and it was more valuable whole than in pieces. Yes, Yellowstone was home to the last living wild herd of bison, but in the end, the Army focused much more on the “live” aspect than the “wild” one. It was Burgess’s duty in both of these situations to prevent threats to the safety of the bison, and ensure that the dangers that they had been exposed to were minimized and prevented in the future. Only by doing these could the herd, and by extension, the complete image that the Park relied on, be preserved.

While none of the other herds were nearly as endangered as the bison, they also received similar protections. Bison may have been a major focus, but Yellowstone would have been just as incomplete without bighorn sheep, elk, and pronghorn. Just as with the bison, if preserving any of these herds meant taking away some of their wild autonomy, then that was deemed necessary. As the scouts attested, the animals were only protected within the boundaries, so

\textsuperscript{206} Forest and Stream's Exploration
animals in danger nearby were herded in; in doing so, the Army was maintaining the perception of Yellowstone’s natural state, even if it meant interfering with the natural processes that controlled it.

Building a Better Park

The Army was not just present for the purposes of maintaining a status quo, however; they also made significant contributions to the development of the Park’s resources. Although much of the development in the early years was managed by private corporations operating on leased land in the Park (i.e. hotels and stagecoach companies), the Army also played a notable role in this process.

The first and most obvious instance of this would have to be the construction of Fort Yellowstone. While the post may not have looked like the fortification that the name might indicate, its design was arguably better suited to its function than a standard fortress would have been. Without a specific organized enemy force, there was no risk of a serious attack, so no need for walls; with Fort Yellowstone being placed adjacent to Mammoth Hot Springs, a popular tourist spot, accessibility would have been more important.
Figures 4.5 and 4.6: Selections from two images of Fort Yellowstone. On the left, one from around 1902 showing some buildings from the Fort behind Mammoth Hot Springs. On the right, one from 1910 showing the home of the Park’s Headquarters in greater detail. Neither of the images much resembles a conventional fort. No information was provided as to when or how they were colorized. Images from the Yellowstone Photo Collection, NPS.gov.

This complex was not only crucial for those early Park overseers, but remains so today. The National Parks Service still uses surviving buildings from Fort Yellowstone as the Park headquarters, although they have since changed the name to the much less militaristic “Mammoth Hot Springs.” By constructing this base of operations, the soldiers not only helped themselves, they also created a valuable piece of Park infrastructure that would outlast them to serve an organization whose duties were more concentrated on managing visitors.

Fort Yellowstone may have been the largest such construction, but it was not the only one. The scout journals make numerous references to a constellation of cabins dotting the wilderness, one of the earliest being Scout Morrison in 1898.

Oct 9. Habarkan and myself went up Astringent Cr. thence over to Pelican Cr and back by the old cabin and got the dishes and quilts to the next cabin. All the rest

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207 YNP Road Map
of crew worked on cabin and finished it. Saw about 35 elk. It has snowed all day but cleared off this p.m. 6 miles.208

This excerpt outlines a few generalities about the cabins. For one, they are stocked with winter necessities like quilts, as well as cookware. Additionally, Morrison notes that they are stocking a brand-new cabin using the resources from an older one. Since the first European explorations into the area were only thirty years before, this cabin can be no older than that, and is likely much younger. Taken together, these facts indicate that either the environment is exceptionally hard on such constructions or that the initial work was so flawed that the older cabin was deemed unworthy of being salvaged. In either case, they also imply that the cabins are used often enough that someone reported this one as needing this work. Finally, it is clear that the Army is doing this work alone, unassisted by any of the tourism companies working in the Park at the time. While such groups did exist, and had a profound effect on the landscape during this period, there was little incentive for them to construct any improvements that did not immediately benefit them. As such, they would spend plenty of time and resources on building lodging for visitors, but the responsibility for building even the roads on which their wagons rode was solely on the superintendents and Army.209

A couple of other scouts make mention of the cabin system, including Whittaker in October of 1899,210 who mentions stocking a new cabin with rations, and Stevenson in October of 1915,211 who mentions cutting wood as he restocks another. While this paints a picture of some very well-equipped rest stops, these brief mentions don’t ever explain the actual use of the cabins. The time of year is very suggestive, though: all three mentions of restocking were made

208 Scout Journals, 114
209 History of Yellowstone Roads, 183-294
210 Scout Journals, 198
211 Scout Journals, 134
in October, and Morrison even notes that it was snowing on the day that he, Habarkan, and the crew finished work. Because of the poor weather for much of the year, the tourist season would have ended by this point. That they chose this time to restock the cabins, and they are stocking them with Winter materials like firewood and quilts, leads to the conclusion that they are for the Winter residents of the Park’s backcountry: the scouts themselves.

The tourists might have been gone in the Winter, but the scout journals can attest to the fact that this doesn’t mean that work was over. Many of the predator hunts took place in this off season, as did Burgess’s arrest of the poacher Ed Howell. Because of this, with the inhospitable weather of the Winter months, it is prudent to have permanent structures throughout the Park’s more remote areas so that the scouts have a secure place to rest and resupply. This is supported by Whittaker’s January 1899 report of killing a mountain lion near a cabin, in which he implied that he was staying in that cabin.\footnote{Scout Journals, 195.} This makes it clear that the cabins were primarily built and stocked for the use of the Army scouts working in the Park through the Winter.

The benefit to the tourists may not be obvious here; while there is no evidence that the cabins are off-limits to the Summer visitors in these journals, their isolated nature suggests that there is little reason for the tourists to even find them, much less make use of them. No, the benefit is less direct in this case: by constructing this infrastructure for the scouts, the Army is making it easier to do the rest of their work, most of which is that maintenance and conservation labor that is designed to keep Yellowstone the way that the tourists envision it. Then later, when the National Parks Service took over, they inherited a complete system of backcountry bases of operation to do with as they pleased, whether that involved continuing the anti-wolf crusade, organizing search-and-rescue operations for missing tourists, or something else entirely. In this
way, even these isolated structures dotting the wilderness became a boon for Park tourists and the people who managed them, even though that had not necessarily been the object of the men who constructed them.

The cabins were not the only construction that served this purpose. Scout Samuel Graham recorded in his 1906 journal that he spent a day working on a Park boundary fence on the northern border shortly before the tourist season was due to begin. The next year, McBride noted spending a day on the boundary fence as well, although his would have been after the season ended. Just like the cabins, this seems to have been an action taken to make the job of managing the wildlife easier. While it would have been extremely difficult to construct a wall encircling the entire park strong enough to prevent an animal as strong as a bison from breaking through if it so chose, the infrequent and short periods of these entries suggests that they refer to small segments of robust protection in crucial areas. Additionally, the fact that they are fence and not reinforced walls indicates that the goal is not to contain a herd of angry bison, but merely to nudge any animals intending on traveling that way back into the safety of the Park. Another possibility is that it prevents people from entering the Park in any way other than the established routes, where the Army can keep a close eye on visitors. This would then reduce the incidence of poaching, since poachers would be forced to enter and exit through the same gate as the tourists, which in the northern part of the Park would take them directly past Fort Yellowstone. While the most dedicated poachers could still find a way in through the remoter areas of the Park border, adding the fence in the more easily-accessed areas makes it much more difficult to successfully poach within the Park. Between these effects, the fence constructed and kept up by the Army

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213 Scout Journals, 25
214 Scout Journals, 97
served to maintain the tourists’ experience by preserving the wildlife that were expected of it, just as the Army did elsewhere in the Park.

The Army did not hide all of its contributions in places where the average tourist would never see them, however. In fact, only a few days after his day of fence maintenance in 1906, Scout Graham took a day to provide something that was made to be as visible as possible.

April 24
Making signs and putting them up. on formation were it is not safe for people to walk 215

In some of the more seismically active areas of Yellowstone, such as the Upper Geyser Basin, the ground can be very unstable, something of special concern when surrounded by near-boiling acidic pools. Today, these areas of the Park are clearly marked and some of them are equipped with boardwalks to keep visitors safely above the unsteady ground, but in Yellowstone’s early days, such accommodations were rare. By the time of this entry, at least four people had died falling into scalding bodies of water in the Park, and while none of them had been at the hot springs where Graham was that day, 216 the one where he was would have been highly trafficked due to its proximity to the Park’s northern entrance and the nearby concessions. As such, the Army, or at least this one Scout, took responsibility for dealing with the potential safety hazard.

While one could make an argument that the other constructions were entirely selfish endeavors on the part of the Army, Graham’s contribution here has no interpretation other than

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215 Scout Journals, 25
216 Death in Yellowstone, 8-10
that he was ensuring the well-being of tourists. It was not the cavalrmen who would be clambering all over the hot springs, but the visitors. Indeed, if it had been done for the soldiers, Graham would not have been doing this in April, just before the tourists returned, but rather in Winter, when there would have been plenty of soldiers looking for a way to warm up in the harsh and punishing Winter. This was clearly an effort by Scout Graham to ensure the safety of visitors who did not understand the threats posed by the volcanic and geyser activity in the area, with the intention of reducing injuries and fatalities caused by that unfamiliarity.

Nor were the signs the only thing that the Army provided for the direct benefit of the tourists. Scout James Wilson recorded in August of 1907 that he spent a day cutting a trail in the vicinity of Norris Geyser Basin, then another a few days later near the Firehole River.²¹⁷ As the names indicate, both of these areas are characterized by exceptional volcanic activity; the Firehole River actually flows through or past several of the most famous volcanic spots in the Park, including the Upper, Midway, and Lower Geyser Basins, which include such landmarks as the Grand Prismatic Spring and the Old Faithful geyser.²¹⁸ These areas would thus be among the most popular areas for tourists in the entire Park. In light of this, it seems much more likely that these trails were being cut for the benefit of visitors than for the soldiers. That he was doing this work in the middle of the season is consistent with this purpose, as it suggests that the need for these trails was only discovered after the season had begun; if it had been something that the scouts needed done, the work could have been completed before or after the tourist season, when there would have been less traffic to contend with. Instead, this was a job done during the tourist season, in spaces frequented by tourists more than soldiers, which makes it clear that the area was developed expressly for the benefit of tourists.

²¹⁷ Scout Journals, 232-233
²¹⁸ YNP Road Map
Providing an Essential Service

All of this evidence so far might give the impression that the soldiers’ work in Yellowstone could almost be missed by the average tourist, who might see them as only an imposing force that would occasionally discipline someone who marked up a rock. They built a number of cabins, but they were far from the popular areas; they put up signage, but completed the job before anyone arrived that year; they added trails to points of interest, but spent no more than a day on the work before disappearing back into the remaining wilderness areas. Despite this, there was one particular area in which the Army’s presence was crucial for the visitor. Dr Nicholas Senn, who visited the Park in its Army days, wrote in 1904 about this area:

The headquarters of the military force, consisting of cavalry under command of Major John Pitcher, is located here and is known as Fort Yellowstone. Major Pitcher takes great interest in the development of the Park, and is a favorite with his men as well as with the visitors to the park. The little Post Hospital is open to civilians in need of medical or surgical service, a great privilege for the visitors as well as inhabitants of the Park. Drs. Usher and Skinner are the medical officers now on duty.219

The way that this is written indicates that the Fort’s hospital is not only one that is available to residents and visitors, but the only medical service available within the Park. To be sure, although Dr Senn’s trip took him through much of the Park, this is his only reference to such services, something that a doctor would be expected to comment on. More than halfway through the Army’s time in Yellowstone, and over 25 years since the first hotels had opened in

219 Our National Recreation Parks, 43
the Park, there was still nowhere to go for medical care other than Fort Yellowstone. As the Army’s many efforts to keep tourists safe has demonstrated, there are plenty of ways that the natural environment of Yellowstone can injure a visitor, without even taking into account the myriad ways that a person could fall ill or take an injury in day-to-day life at the time. Furthermore, the Fort is located near the far northern edge of the Park, more than 50 kilometers from some of the geyser basins;\textsuperscript{220} if someone were to be scalded or injured in some other way while visiting them, they would be in for a long and bumpy ride back to anyone that could help.

As precarious as the situation might have been, it was still much better than there being no medical aid anywhere within the Park. The town now known as West Yellowstone (then simply Yellowstone)\textsuperscript{221} was itself more than 40 kilometers from some of the geysers by the road, and Gardiner actually stands on the opposite side of the Fort from the geyser basins. Neither of these were large towns, either, so there was no guarantee that a qualified physician would have been present or in any state to see an injured person at any given time. Only the Army hospital, with a staff of experienced doctors, would have been a reliable place to get help in this unfortunate scenario. As such, the presence of the Army hospital would have been indispensable, even though the medical technology available to an isolated Army post in the late 1800s and early 1900s was a far cry from modern acceptable standards. With how many bloody encounters were reported from bears alone, there must have been plenty of injuries that were treated before they had a chance to grow severe; in other words, there would no doubt have been many more tourist deaths if not for the medical services that could be provided on-site by the Army.

\textsuperscript{220} YNP Road Map
\textsuperscript{221} Death in Yellowstone, 245
Conclusion

It was obvious that managing tourism was not the main role intended for the cavalry when it was sent to Yellowstone; the problems voiced by Congress and General Sheridan that had prompted their deployment were limited to the harm being done to the natural environment, mainly by poachers and the like. Still, with the industry already having appeared before even the railroad connection was made, and only exploding afterward, it was inevitable that they would get involved. While that involvement took many forms, some more direct than others, the effect cannot be denied.

The first priority when it came to the tourists was to ensure their safety, in large part because doing so was a consequence of completing their mission in the Park. The main perceived threats to visitors were Native warriors, as had passed through in 1878, and the dangerous wildlife that remained; by winning the Nez Perce and Sheepeater Wars, they had proven themselves adept at dealing with the former, and their day-to-day work was in confronting the latter. As for violent crime, it was so rare as to be immaterial to the visitor. By managing the predators, the cavalry also contributed to the maintenance of the Park. Since the herds were considered part of Yellowstone’s assets, the efforts to manage them and eliminate potential threats were considered a necessary act to conserve Yellowstone as it “should be.” In the effort to streamline this process, the Army even began to construct infrastructure like the permanent Fort buildings, scout cabins, and boundary fences, resources which made their mission easier, with the side effect being an improved visitor experience. Some of this development was also specifically directed at tourists, including warning signage in hazardous areas and improved trails at popular sites. In addition to all of this, the Army even provided the necessary service of medical aid to any civilian who was in need of it, ensuring the safety and well-being of visitors.
Even though the role of defenders had faded over the years, the Army still found ways to contribute to the Park through maintenance development, and direct support to tourists.

This was where all the time, effort, and resources that had been invested in Yellowstone finally bear fruit. Through the tourism industry, great sums of money poured into the coffers of the Northern Pacific Railroad, the companies that operated hospitality and touring services in the Park, and the communities around Yellowstone. The United States was realizing value in all that land, its unique features, and its wildlife at long last.
Conclusion

By the 1910s, it was becoming obvious that Yellowstone’s age of Army rule was coming to an end. While no one wanted to return to the unregulated landscape that had characterized the first decade of the Park’s history, the disadvantages of the Army’s command were becoming too great to ignore. In the words of Aubrey Haines, author of an exhaustive two-volume history of Yellowstone,

Use of soldiers for policing Yellowstone Park, though necessary in the beginning, had certain drawbacks that finally outweighed the advantages. In general, the men who served in the Park were not woodsmen, which limited their usefulness; they were poorly paid, which does not encourage initiative; and service interfered with their training in military matters. Also, the system was unduly expensive.\(^{222}\)

A few alternatives to the military system of management were proposed, with the winner coming in 1916: an official, nationwide National Parks Service (NPS). The cavalry transferred what resources they could part with to the new Service, including some of the more experienced personnel, and departed. The Army was entirely gone from Fort Yellowstone by the end of 1918.\(^{223}\) The NPS has run the system unaided by the Army ever since.

This does not mean that there was an immediate and obvious change in the policies that directed the Park’s management. It was the NPS that completed the extirpation of the Yellowstone wolves, it was the NPS that continued to allow wild bear feedings well into the 1960s, and it is the NPS that still facilitates the tourist experience in Yellowstone today. In some ways, the NPS still shows the influence that the Army had on the burgeoning National Parks; for instance, Park Rangers still wear uniforms reminiscent of those worn by the US Cavalry more than a century ago.

\(^{222}\) The Yellowstone Story Vol. 2, 282-283
\(^{223}\) The Yellowstone Story Vol. 2, 279-290
Despite these ties, the NPS and the Army are two very different organizations, and they have only grown further apart since 1918. The distance between them has thrown into sharp relief the differences between modern conservation and that of the turn of the 19th Century. This unprecedented use of military force to protect and conserve the natural world stands as a unique instance in history. Its obscurity has led to it being an understudied aspect of America’s history with environmentalism; by referring back to the sources produced by the Army and those who had close contact with it over the years between the 1850s and 1918, a narrative of the Army’s time in this role has emerged.

In the earliest days of eastern awareness of Yellowstone, the only value that was attributed to it was strategic. Both the first Army explorers, who sought ways through the region, and the large-scale military thinkers, who were working to clear away the Native peoples to make space for European-American settlers, put great effort into making Yellowstone productive in this way, but neither succeeded. Other explorers began to see the economic potential of working in Yellowstone, as it was a space potentially full of unused pastureland, unplanted fields, and rich untapped ore veins, but Ferdinand V. Hayden saw early on that the most profitable use would be tourism. This vision compelled him and those like him to push for the region’s protection, which came in 1872 as it was made the world’s first national park. The Army made one last attempt to find a strategic use for the Park by keeping it as a training ground during peacetime, but in the end, this also failed. Still responsible for managing the Park, the Army then began working to aid the tourism industry. In doing so, it contributed to the economic value of the Park instead of seeking some strategic goal until they left in 1918. Throughout this whole period, the Army’s only focus was on the worth of Yellowstone in practical terms; without a monetary or military incentive, very little advancement took place.
This story was written in the personal accounts and reports of explorers and scouts working in Yellowstone, in the histories of the Native peoples who once lived all across the Pacific Northwest and Great Plains, and in the accounts of visitors to the area since its designation. Aubrey Haines’s *The Yellowstone Story* and Thomas C. Rust’s *Watching Over Yellowstone* stand tall among the modern interpretations of those early days. Together, these sources have painted a picture of an unfamiliar Army in an unfamiliar Yellowstone, a place where soldiers became policemen and civilians were alternately enemy forces or clients.

This relatively unknown chapter of history says a great deal about the place that conservation and the National Parks occupy in American society. Even though the National Parks have been widely referred to as “America’s Best Idea,”224 it is crucial to remember that their origins are rooted in Yellowstone, and the Yellowstone story is far from a simple one. The National Parks, as different as they are today, would not exist without the Army’s early contributions to exploring the area that became the Park, forcible relocation of Native peoples, massive ecological destruction based in a fundamental misunderstanding of the natural world, and prolonged efforts to ensure that Yellowstone was as profitable as could be managed. At the same time, they have preserved vast spaces from habitat destruction and fragmentation and maintained historic sites that are integral to American identity. Today, the National Parks have done great things for environmentalist causes and American society at large, but that does not mean that they can put the past totally behind them. In order maintain the high standards of conservation and public outreach that have come to characterize the NPS over the last century, it is crucial for the future of conservation that this history, good, bad, and gray, not be forgotten.

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