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The National Park as a Playground

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When the National Park Service was established in 1916, its purpose was partially defined by the statement: "The Service thus established shall promote and regulate the use of the federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations." While promoting and regulating recreational use was to be a primary function of the Park Service, the Congressional mandate also stipulated that it must do so in a manner that "would leave them [the parks] unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."[1]

But the idea of promoting use of "unimpaired" natural areas for outdoor sports like horse riding, mountaineering, boating, swimming, or hiking, while also maintaining a concept of preservation, soon faced drastic alteration because of a change in popular recreational demands. The second decade of the twentieth century saw the American public becoming motorized. In 1913, only 1.3 million automobiles were registered in the United States; by 1930, nearly 27 million cars were privately owned; and by 1972, nearly a hundred million automobiles ranged over the nation's roadways.[2] The physical effort once necessary in so basic an element as personal movement was being replaced by a sedentary, mechanized experience. Speed and comfort soon enraptured the populace and the implications for American society in general, and for outdoor sports and recreation in particular, became overwhelming. Increasing numbers of people were able to journey far afield. Weekends and vacations allowed motorists time enough to seek pleasure in national parks, most of which had been considered too remote in the pre-automobile era. At the same time, the motorists' actual encounters with the out-of-doors began changing from a direct participation in some healthful physical ac-

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tivity to become primarily a spectator-oriented sightseeing. Comfort and convenience associated with daily use of the automobile were also directly applied to holiday excursions and vacation travel.

Within the "unimpaired" preserves of the national park system, even in out-of-the-way places like Glacier National Park in northwestern Montana, government officials in combination with concessionaires sought to accommodate the new automobile culture. In managing the parks, or "playgrounds" as many writers at the turn of the century referred to them, planners began to direct the majority of visitors away from the realm of personal physical contact with nature and treated the national parks as if they had suddenly been placed on exhibit.[3] Greater and greater emphasis was directed toward automobile-borne recreationalists. A brief review of the Park Service actions in Glacier National Park, from 1917 to 1970, particularly in promoting certain types of recreation, in encouraging mass visitation, and in advocating conjunctive facilities, displays the evolution of a shallow and hurried form of national park use not envisioned by preservationists of an earlier era.

National Park Service officials taking charge of Glacier in 1917 found that some recreational trends had already been established. Glacier had been designated a national park in May of 1910, specifically "set apart as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of the United States."[4] It had earlier been used as a "pleasure ground" beginning in the 1890s. Local homesteaders in the Lake McDonald region constructed cabins, a hotel, and some eating establishments and, in addition, provided lake transportation, catering to the few transcontinental travelers of the Great Northern Railway who bravely detrained at Belton station and hiked the three miles to the foot of the lake. Nearby Flathead Valley residents and a few of these "Eastern dudes" were attracted to the beauty of the area and to its primitive trails leading to Granite Park, Avalanche Lake, or Sperry Glacier. Numbering perhaps two thousand individuals each summer by the late 1890s, visitation gradually increased to an estimated four thousand during the summer of 1911.[5]

Making the area an official "pleasure ground" in 1910 sanctioned the recreational aspect of the Lake McDonald area and the surrounding fifteen hundred square miles of virtual wilderness. While preservation was a stated goal, national park leaders believed that wilderness *per se* would not attract visitors of that era. The early park administrators, most specifically Superintendent William R. Logan, and early park developers, most importantly Louis W. Hill, combined to "promote" Glacier by providing roads and trails into and through the park as well as hotels and

other elements of civilization deemed necessary to expedite and encourage visitation and recreational use in this "pleasure ground."

In 1911, Louis W. Hill, son of railroad tycoon James J. Hill, announced that he intended to devote his full attention to this "Playground of the Northwest." "The work is so important," said Hill regarding the construction activity beginning in Glacier, "that I am loath to intrust the development to anybody but myself."[6] Intensive development by the Great Northern followed, earning Hill the sobriquet "Godfather of Glacier." The railway constructed major hotels at Many Glacier and at Midvale (East Glacier) and added nine chalets and numerous "tepee camps" at scattered locations throughout the mountains to provide accommodations for Glacier's visitors. The chalets, hotels, and camps linked by mountain trails, some of which were also constructed by the Railway company, made each of the picturesque facilities generally a day's horse ride apart.

Earlier, James J. Hill had remarked: "I taught people how they could slide across the National backbone with their eyes shut." And Louis Hill added: "And I am teaching people that, if in passing, they will open their eyes and scratch the nation's backbone they will experience the thrill of their lives."[7]

Hill was fully supported in his development schemes by park officials in Glacier and in Washington. William R. Logan proposed an extensive road and trail system in Glacier with resorts near every major lake and chalets at many high country sites. His intention to "develop the Park as rapidly as possible"[8] was seconded by Interior Secretary Walter L. Fisher in 1912. Fisher stated:

> We thoroughly appreciate the expenditures which the railroads have made in many instances for the development of the parks; I mean expenditures made in the furnishing of increased facilities in getting to the parks, and particularly the work of publicity they are carrying on.[9]

Even in 1915, after considerable development was completed in Glacier, Mark Daniels, General Superintendent and Landscape Engineer of the National Parks, when asked if "development" within the park was not about finished, replied:

> The parks are not developed. Our work has just begun. There are roads to be built, and there are bridges to be built, and there are hotels to be built, and sanitation must be taken care of. Insect pests must be removed.[10]

Daniels added that "every national park . . . in the United States is primarily for recreation in its character" and that the new facilities made

recreation feasible. The park administrators agreed that: "Scenery is a hollow enjoyment if the tourist starts out after an indigestible breakfast and a fitful sleep on an impossible bed."[11] Steve Mather, first director of the Park Service and defender of the parks, agreed and added: "The Government must do its part to make the national parks as cheap and as attractive as possible to the people, in order that the people, by coming yearly in great numbers, may make business profitable for the concessionaires."[12] While increasing visitation meant success for the concession operations, it also became a signal to Congress of national park popularity and a symbol of national park success.

Applauding the recreational aspects of Glacier as this construction and development proceeded, writers referred consistently to the "pleasure ground" or playground concept, generally associating the hotels and chalets as well as the roads and trails as an integral part of recreational enjoyment. At the same time, renowned conservationist William T. Hornaday, in an article about Glacier entitled "America's Next Great Playground," exhorted his readers: "If your nerve wracked American will but get out into the rough places, and make his body fit to kill while his brain and stomach rest, he shall come back to his desk wholly made over and as good as new." To outdoor writer R. H. Sargent, writing in *Travel* magazine in 1911, Glacier was a "mammoth playground" where he prophetically suggested that the "valleys will echo to the laughter of the pleasure seeker and automobiles will disturb the quiet of nature."[14] During this period, developed facilities were seen as augmenting the wildness of the park, not as infringing upon or destroying wilderness values.

Visitors to Glacier were expected to experience the envigorating environment of the park and to be active in the out-of-doors. Describing the ideal Glacier Park visitors, publicity writers found them "dignified in manner, and clad appropriately in knickerbocker and meadowbrook riding suits, and they are here with keen appreciation . . . For them no ride is too strenuous, no climb too fatiguing, no trail too steep."[15] Probably the foremost publicist for the hotels and chalets, Mary Roberts Rinehart, pleaded with the potential park visitor to "throw off the impediments of civilization. Go out to the West and ride the mountain trails. Throw out your chest and breathe—look across green valleys to wild peaks where mountain goats stand impassive on the edge of space." And she warned: "Then the mountains will get you. You will go back."[16] Her Great Northern sponsored tracts sold potential visitors a theme of wildness and civilized comforts combined. Wilderness recreation, somewhat modified by chalets and hotels, would attract American vacationers—or so the Great Northern Railway hoped.

Following the recreational and visitation pattern established by Hill and

the Railway, park visitors detrained at either Belton or East Glacier and rode horseback to various locations within Glacier. Tour buses and lake launches provided optional methods of transport to a few spots of interest. Focal points of recreation were the enclaves of hotel, chalet, or camp development. Horseback riding became the primary recreational activity by default. Rowboating, fishing, taking short hikes, or riding across a lake in a gasoline launch supplemented the equestrians' stay until time came for entraining once again on the Great Northern. For over two decades, including a decade and a half after the Park Service took charge, this method of visiting Glacier was nearly obligatory.

But the park administrators and hotel managers believed that horseback riding and sightseeing might not be enough. In the Park Service 1918 information circular, visitors were informed of "amusements" available in Glacier, with the description: "Throughout the park at the various hotels and chalets there are forms of indoor, as well as outdoor, recreation and amusements that may be enjoyed by the tourists."[17] While horseback riding was admitted to be "the most popular amusement," rowing boats, fishing, swimming, and sightseeing, all took minor roles when compared to dancing. The circular explained:

> At all the principal hotels in the park dancing facilities are provided each evening for the guests, good music being furnished for this purpose. At some of the chalets there is opportunity for impromptu dancing, as phonographs or pianos are provided for furnishing music. All dancing is, of course, strictly informal and usually occurs in the grill room. or sometimes in amusement halls which are operated in conjunction with the hotels.[18]

But the new Park Service administrators soon changed from merely reporting activities to more actively producing "amusements."

A project with the most overwhelming impact upon the recreational use of Glacier ever produced by the Park Service was advanced immediately upon its obtaining administrative control. This project was called the "Transmountain Road" and eventually became today's "Going-to-the-Sun" highway. A project of this type had been initially advocated by Superintendent Logan in 1911, but little action resulted.[19] While automobiles could approach the periphery of Glacier, they were unable to penetrate any of the backcountry. Growing numbers of motorists complained of the lack of roadways in the park and of the poor conditions of those that existed. With the power of a new bureau and a penchant for "development," the new road through Glacier became a major Park 'Service addition to the park scene. By 1918, surveying began for this highway across the Continental Divide, which eventually bisected Glacier's wilderness with a corridor of concrete. Director Mather advocated

and promoted this development. He explained, “Roads . . . had to be developed and expanded” because “cross-country motoring was just then developing and motorists were urging that the parks be opened to automobiles.”[20] Mather’s successor, Horace M. Albright, further justified this project, adding, “Although Glacier will always remain a trail park, the construction of this one highway to its inner wonders is meeting an obligation to the great mass of people who because of age, physical condition, or other reason would never have an opportunity to enjoy, close at hand, this marvelous mountain park.”[21]

However, no ranger would be checking to see that only the elderly or the infirm traveled through Glacier via motor vehicle. For once completed, everyone wanted to see this “engineering marvel” and the sights along it. The trails remained to be used, but visitors began to confine their visits to areas reached by motorized transport. Motor vehicles filled with tourists headed toward Logan Pass, and the trip across the narrow and often frightening roadway became a major thrill for a majority of park visitors.[22] When the road was officially opened in 1933, travel through Glacier no longer centered on the horseback rider going to the chalets but instead upon the private automobile occupant riding to his motel or campground. A new pattern of park visitation and use resulted.

The automobile gained predominance gradually, however, with the Park Service unmistakably eager to cater to this utilitarian-cum-recreational machine. “Free autombile camp service” was advertised as early as 1917. Roadways were to provide the park visitor with a “minimum of inconvenience” as would additional campgrounds and picnic areas well supplied with fresh water, shower, laundry, and toilet facilities (with campground expansion and electrical hookups eventually on the drawing boards). Part of this reaction in favor of the automobile might be explained by economics. The national parks were to be financed (and some argued self-supporting) through their taxation of concessionaires, charging for public utility use, marketing of natural resources, and most significantly, by selling automobile entry permits. While horseback riding, hiking, fishing, or rowing a boat while might have been healthy recreation, those activities did not produce the amount of revenue which a motorist driving over Logan Pass would provide. Even though Park Service planners had the transport of the aged and ill in mind, the addition of a roadway attraction brought tangible financial benefits.[23]

The new Park Service reported in 1917 that “the tremendous growth of motor travel in the parks has particularly influenced the increase in revenues.”[24] Those fifteen thousand visitors of 1917 riding or hiking Glacier’s trails had produced far less revenue than the two hundred thou-

sand visitors driving across Going-to-the-Sun highway by 1936. Thus, the new road became a significant attraction, a source of thrills, a producer of revenue, and a center for recreational activity oriented to the automobile.

And while numbers of visitors increased, physical contact with wilderness surroundings decreased. People opted for the more passive and hurried national park visit. Recreation meant sitting in a car and stretching one's legs at a roadside pullout two or three times during the course of a journey through the park. A trip through Glacier became a less consequential, almost synthetic experience with the Great Northern's favorite phrase "See America First" converted to "See America Fast." But the passive or disinterested visitor was not a new problem for the Park Service. Even during the first decades of recreational development, while the horses and railway facilities almost coerced each visitor into a physically vigorous activity in the out-of-doors, there were some people who seemed not to care for what the park had to offer. Many visitors seemed ill informed or unexcited about the recreational possibilities, or were simply disinclined to play in the playground. A Great Northern agent later recalled:

> When the hotels were opened the patronage came mainly from points east of Chicago and there was a desire among the majority of the guests—the tired business men and their socially-conscious wives to spend most of their time in their rooms or in the lobby or to make just brief bus trips to the outlying chalets, invariably to return in time for dinner and make another ritual of the eating interlude.[25]

While the Park Service officials hoped visitors of 1917 were turning "to the National Parks for health, happiness, and a saner view of life," looking for an "antidote for national restlessness," and seeking an environment that "begets contentment," one park visitor found many who were not particularly engaged by their surroundings. He wrote:

> I have observed that most visitors do not ride horseback and a little encouragement would at once interest them and add greatly to the pleasure of their visit. A great many tourists are timid about leaving the hotel, either afraid of the altitude, getting lost, or seeing nothing of interest ahead, the consequence is they either leave the hotel immediately or sit around until the next bus arrives.[26]

Even some who entered the backcountry failed to appreciate that recreational experience. Stephen Graham, author of *Tramping with a Poet in the Rockies,* spent his time hiking through Glacier in the early 1920s. On Browns Pass he met a tourist party on horseback, and he recalled:

> This was a rich American family on holiday: here were father and mother, grown children, young children, cousins, and in the midst of them Aunt Jemima, looking

very proud and stiff, with an expression on her face which signified 'Never Again!' They had been twenty-eight days in the mountains. camping out all the time.[27]

Getting people out into the woods and making that experience enjoyable became a Park Service function. By 1920, the Park Service advocated a nature guide service. Activities like "smelling herbs," or "bark feeling," along with more adventurous "sleeping bag trips" or a short hike to the bear feeding arena began to draw people out of their hotel rooms. While private enterprise produced a number of individuals who designated themselves as nature guides, park officials quickly found that "ranger naturalists" with their organized and informative recreational activities were popular and incorporated them into the park organization.[28] Dr. George Ruhle became Glacier's first permanent naturalist by 1929. So visitors conveyed to the hotels by bus or increasingly by automobiles were actively encouraged to hike or explore or otherwise experience some of Glacier, it was hoped, making their visit meaningful and more active.

But advocating or promoting recreational use was not without its problems. On a number of occasions hikers disappeared into the wilderness of the park never to be seen again. Eastern dudes on horseback caused one park official to remark, "Considering the large number of guests that rode over the trails, many of them never on a horse before, it is indeed interesting to reflect upon the absence of serious accidents."[29] But accidents became more common as visitors drowned, fell, or became victims of avalanche, exposure, or animal attack. Rules and regulations by the mid-1920s provided guidelines for safe and acceptable recreational activities. Campgrounds were to be kept clean; bears were not to be molested or fed; campers were not to wash their clothes in the drinking water; fishing was permitted with hook and line only; hikers were instructed to stand quietly on the trails as horses and pack strings passed; additionally, hikers were told not to take short cuts and to "confine themselves to the main trails;" animal watching was to be done by following the animals "quietly and not by large and noisy parties;" and swimming was encouraged in the pools of the large hotels, rather than in the park lakes and streams. Regulations advised:

While it is possible for tourists to indulge in lake bathing, it will be found that the water of the lakes, usually just from the melting glaciers, is uncomfortably cold, and for this reason is not enjoyed except by the most hardy.[30]

The rules further warned, "Campers and others shall not . . . bathe in any of the streams near the regularly traveled thoroughfares in the park without suitable bathing clothes."[31] And camping proved to be almost too popular as early as 1920. It was reported, "The camping situation

. . . has developed to a point where it is becoming a problem to preserve the natural conditions and at the same time provide accommodations for the tourist. The tendency for people to congregate is natural, but this results in taxing available spaces to the limit."[32]

Some contemporary critics felt the Park Service had conspired with the Great Northern to exclude the common man. A year before Going-to-the-Sun highway was opened for travel, local resident W. C. Whipps, writing an article entitled "The Great Northern Wild Animal Preserve," found:

> The people have not yet learned that Uncle Sam in his foolish generosity turned this magnificent resort. which was theirs and always should have been theirs. over to a selfish, heartless corporation and that now only the very wealthy people, silkstockings and high hats. the bears and other wild animals. the alleged park service and perhaps a few prominant individuals . . . or some very learned gentlemen. stoop-shouldered with the weight of wisdom and knowledge. are really welcome in the park. The hotels and chalets are too good for the average traveler who goes into the animal preserve for outdoor recreation and not bridge or golf.[33]

So in answer to the perceived public demands, changing styles of recreation, and some criticism, Going-to-the-Sun road, affordable to practically everyone and accessible to many, made Glacier more popular and open to the "forgotten man."

The popularity of camping in newly established roadside campgrounds coincided with the completion of the transmountain roadway in 1933. The Park Service stressed recreational activities geared to the increasing numberg of automobile visitors. In the 1930s, "thousands of travelers who would not have time, funds, and perhaps the strength for pack trips" came to Glacier.[34] The park naturalists produced a variety of displays at the hotels or in special exhibits or museums easily accessible to roadways. In addition, the naturalists themselves were mobilized, as one report proclaimed: "Automobiles assemble each morning at Sprague Creek and Avalanche Creek for a naturalist guided caravan trip to Logan Pass."[35] The caravan was halted at particular spots along the route where the "guide" explained the scenery. At the Pass, another naturalist was stationed "who conducts local field trips and walks to nearby Hidden Lake and Clements Glacier."[36] Automobile-conveyed campers found eight free campgrounds available, with four located on either side of Logan Pass. Camping in the backcountry was advocated, but only for the few who could afford to hire a guide and "set forth upon trails to wander at will." Where twenty years earlier the Great Northern had encouraged people to hike through Glacier on less than a dollar a day, by 1933 the Park Service advised that only the more adventurous and wealthy would obtain a guide and horses allowing them to "venture far

afield, . . . explore glaciers, . . . climb divides for extraordinary views, . . . linger for the best fishing, and spend idle days in spots of inspirational beauty."[37] The highway began to alter the nature of the visitor's recreational experience, most dramatically changing the typical tourist from an equestrian into an automobilist. By the beginning of the 1940s the hotels, chalets, saddle horses, wranglers, and tent camps remained, but were becoming less and less popular. The free auto campgrounds, the ride over Logan Pass, new motels and coffee shops, all answered the demands of a more transient, hurried park visitor. By the time World War II created a temporary but immediate halt in park tourism, the automobile recreationalist had nearly completed his predominance.

The impact of the war sounded the death knell for two early elements significant in Glacier's recreational use. George Noffsinger, who owned the Park Saddle Horse Company (which managed nearly sixteen hundred horses during a typical 1920s summer), found people no longer interested in his services. He stopped making backcountry trips in 1942 and terminated his contract in 1945. Smaller horseriding concessions would replace his, but the era of the horse as a major conveyance and source of recreation had passed.

At the same time, many of the chalets and backcountry camps fell into disuse and disrepair. The war meant that rail travel was curtailed and the now-more-numerous automobile tourists failed to associate with the rustic chalets and the recreation style they afforded. So, by the end of the war, the park officials and hotel managers agreed to destroy the chalets at Sun Point, at the foot of St. Mary Lake, on Cut Bank Creek as well as most of the chalet complex at Two Medicine. Most of the tepee camps were dismantled at the same time. By 1950, few traces of these older structures could be found. But those facilities approachable by automobile, such as the hotels at Many Glacier, East Glacier, and Lake McDonald remained, and motel-type structures at Rising Sun, Swiftcurrent, and Apgar took the place of the destroyed facilities. The war years produced a deleterious effect upon the marginal park concessions, centering the recreation and visitation of the following decades down the road through the middle of the park.[38]

A post-war boom in visitation to all national parks, Glacier being no exception, brought renewed Park Service emphasis in catering to the automobile visitor and his needs. More campgrounds, expanded campgrounds, more motels, more picnic areas, vista clearing projects enabling sights to be more easily seen over the dashboard, all became part of the Park Service effort. The automobile, with its allied forms of recreation, even proved to be a tool used in a preservation battle.

In the late 1940s, the Army Corps of Engineers proposed a dam building project on Glacier's western boundary which would have flooded some twenty thousand acres of park land. Park officials led the fight opposing construction of this "Glacier View Dam." Park Superintendent John W. Emmert attacked this incursion upon Glacier's wilderness with a double barreled blast against the suggestion that that section of the park was not being used.

First, Emmert tried to show that Glacier was being used and was of tangible value to the state. He cooperated with the Bureau of Business and Economic Research of the University of Montana "to determine the economic value of Glacier." Data showed that, in 1951, 480,000 park visitors spent over twenty million dollars in Montana. Only four percent of these visitors came without an automobile, and the local motels gained sixty percent of the lodging business. The survey also revealed that the automobile tourist stayed less than two full days in Glacier, hardly time enough, as Mary Robert Rinehart had earlier advocated, to "throw out your chest and breathe."[39]

Park officials publicized this economic evidence of Glacier's recreational "use," and they also proposed a new highway into the dam-endangered region, with additional picnic areas and campgrounds to facilitate "recreation." While the campgrounds were never developed and few visitors could be encouraged to use this ten mile road, its presence in the disputed region became a signal to the Army Corps of Engineers that the Park Service was not forgetting about using this section of the playground. The road into that undeveloped area was completed in 1967 using Mission 66 funds, finalizing Superintendent Emmett's fight for preservation. Mission 66 was a vast, Park Service-wide construction program intending to bring national park facilities in line with an anticipated increase in numbers of visitors to all national parks by the target year 1966.[40]

Immediately following the Glacier View Dam fight came the comprehensive Mission 66 construction program, dominating park management activity in the late 1950s and through most of the 1960s. It augmented the travel and recreation trends centering upon the automobile. While numerous campground and picnic area improvements were carried out, major projects included two visitor centers, one at Logan Pass and another at the St. Mary entrance. Containing rest rooms and informational displays, these centers provided a respite from driving, a superficial amalgam of information about the natural features of the park, and an artificial attraction which resulted in congregation and a minimum of physical recreation.[41]

As these new attractions came into existence, the old hotels, which had become an increasing liability to the Great Northern since the 1930s continued to be unprofitable. At the same time, two new coffee shop-filling station complexes were added at Lake McDonald and at Rising Sun. Management of the older facilities struggled to attract visitors to their accommodations, but with little success. Late in the 1950s the Knutson Corporation took over the management of the Glacier Park Hotel Company and initiated an onslaught of gimmicks to draw fun seeking visitors. A playhouse program with Broadway actors in theatre productions, square dance schools, outdoor jazz festivals, golf tournaments, a "full schedule of entertainment events each day," and attempts to offer "more fun per square minute than a circus," all were meant to make the hotels the centers of recreation that they had been in the past.[42] Mel Ruder, editor of the local *Hungry Horse News,* defended the Knutson Corporation and these promotional activities, when he wrote: "Glacier isn't acquiring quite the Las Vegas plus Banff touch, but the outlook is for something more than nice elderly people sitting on the porch."[43] Ruder was suggesting that some "entertainment" and a "circus" located amid spectacular mountain scenery seemed to be an unbeatable combination for businessmen and promoters alike. But the Great Northern facilities continued to lose money, and in 1961 it sold its interests to Glacier Park Incorporated. The pattern of visitation and recreation envisioned by Louis Hill, vanishing since the early 1930s, produced an economic anachronism in the operation of the large hotels and lodges.

Slowly the Park Service began to realize that the experience of traveling through Glacier had become a superficial experience for a majority of park visitors. While the Glacier View Dam fight was just beginning, Superintendent Emmert feared that the 1948 season would "bring a large floating population through the park . . . which will not be fully appreciative of Glacier's values, and careless use of the area is anticipated."[44] Road building and Mission 66 did not aid the problem of a declining aesthetic appreciation and physical contact with the wilderness among the park visitors. The problem of the 1960s was similar to the difficulty of motivating the hotel patron of the 1920s to step out of the lobby: how could people encased in metal boxes, gliding through the park at a constant speed, relate to the natural phenomena of the park? How could they find Glacier National Park any different in terms of recreational experience from the other two thousand miles of their vacation journey?

Some suggested that the entrance fee be raised to twenty-five dollars to discourage the casual visitor; others suggested that instead of publicizing the visit to Glacier *per se*, publicity should have stressed a longer stay. One observer found the auto-dwellers to be the major source of park

problems, finding that they "had the nauseating ignorance to complain that [they] had to descend from [their] chariots to see the 'attractions.' " This critic continued, "From what philosophy did this tribe get the pathetically vain belief that natural grandeur was created recently for their benefit? And that it had better produce."[45]

A meek Park Service reply to this increasing mass of automobile vacationers was to hand an informational brochure to the driver of each automobile entering the park. Early in the 1960s, the Park Service pamphlet read: "Your visit to this park can be a rewarding experience." And that phrase was followed very closely with an encouragement to get out on the trails. Beckoningly, it read, "The trails are well marked, and you need not worry about venomous snakes or such unpleasant plants as poison-oak or poison ivy. We suggest that you pack your lunch, leave your automobile in the parking area, and spend a day or as much time as you can spare in the out of doors. Intimacy with nature is one of the priceless experiences offered in this mountain sanctuary."[46]

By the end of the 1960s, one of the components serving the increasing mass of automobile tourism surfaced as a major environmental problem. The disclosure that sewage from the Logan Pass Visitor Center was polluting adjacent streams splattered across the headlines of many Montana papers. Hundreds of visitors congregating on summer days at the Logan Pass site also overtaxed the area's primitive trails and produced deleterious effects on nearby alpine meadows. Encouraging great numbers of people to park their cars and pause on their day-long journey through the park produced an Old Faithful syndrome at Logan Pass. So serious had this invasion of the automobile become that, in 1973, Superintendent William J. Briggle exclaimed: "I've got no trouble with people. I've got trouble with cars. Take away the cars and I can go fishing."[47]

As Glacier entered the 1970s, visitation skyrocketed to nearly a million and a half persons per year, compared to only four thousand back in 1911, with most individuals arriving by automobile during the months of June, July, and August. It was estimated that nearly one hundred thousand of the visitors attended an evening campfire lecture, or some other naturalist-conducted activity such as a "beaver hike," or an "ecotrek." The transient visitor remained in the park an average of only twenty-five hours, confining his recreational experience to the sights along the ribbon of roadway. Less than two percent of the total visitors entered Glacier's backcountry to spend a night camping. Those visitors who desired to camp in the backcountry found their movements restricted by "carrying capacities" which determined the proper number of campers ecologically or esthetically permissible at a given site. The

automobile tourist could still find lodging at the historic hotels, just as the hiker or horse rider could still stay at two remaining chalets. But there was no "carrying capacity" to confront the automobile driver. The only major restriction to the motorist was the size or length of his vehicle, which determined whether he could travel the most narrow portion of Going-to-the-Sun highway. Nearly a quarter of a million visitors used the no-longer-free campgrounds, with some filled or overcrowded conditions during the month of July. Riding in or driving the motorized vehicle continued to predominate as the primary activity experienced by visitors, while fishing, hiking, swimming, and other traditional recreational activities were experienced by a very small percentage of visitors.[48]

It is possible that the events leading to the domination of automobile-oriented travel and recreation in Glacier are not unique. Research may show that Yosemite, Yellowstone, Rocky Mountain, Mt. Rainer, and many other major national parks had similar developments imposed upon them by administrators eagerly catering to automobile travelers. It should be noted, however, that through the years Glacier Park officials also embarked upon many programs to preserve the wildlife, to care for the forests, and to keep other natural features in an "unimpaired" condition. Ranger naturalists, in particular, worked to educate the public regarding the natural phenomena to be found in the region and induced people to explore for themselves. Whether the "wildness" of Glacier Park was preserved and remains today is an issue for debate. The education and preservation efforts certainly seem mandated in the very origins of every American national park and in the Park Service itself. But the preservation and education efforts seem feeble in comparison with the active role National Park Service officials played in determining the method of park visitation and in promoting the dominant form of mechanized recreation experienced by visitors of our national playgrounds today.

Notes

1. Department of the Interior, *Report of the Director of the National Park Service, 1916* (Washington. D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1917), p. 829.

2. Richard B. Morris, ed. *Encyclopedia of American History* (N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1976), pp. 616-617.

3. See: George O. Smith, "The Nation's Playgrounds," *Review of Reviews,* 40 (July 1909), 44-48; William T. Hornaday, "America's Next Great Playground," *Recreation,* 31 (May 1910), 211-216; Guy E. Mithcell, "A New Playground for the Nation," *Review of Reviews,* 41 (June 1910), 710-717; and C. J. Blanchard, "Man-Made Playgrounds," *American Forestry,* 24 (January 1918). pp. 5-12.

4. Department of the Interior, *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Interior,* 1910 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), p. 551.

5. For a complete discussion of this issue, see: Michael J. Ober, “Enmity and Alliance: Park Service-Concessionaire Relations in Glacier National Park, 1892-1961” (unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Montana, 1973), pp. 13-49.

6. *Daily Inter Lake,* 22 December 1911.

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