



People have spent time in the Yellowstone region for more than 11,000 years. Rock structures like this are evidence of the early presence of people in the area.

History of the Park

The human history of the Yellowstone region goes back more than 11,000 years. The stories of people in Yellowstone are preserved in objects that convey information about past human activities in the region, and in people's connections to the land that provide a sense of place or identity.

Today, park managers use archeological and historical studies help explain how humans left their mark in times gone by. Ethnography helps us learn about how groups of people identify themselves and their connections to the park. Research is also

conducted to learn how people continue to affect and be affected by places that have been relatively protected from human impacts. Some alterations, such as the construction of roads and other facilities, are generally accepted as necessary to accommodate visitors. Information on the possible consequences of human activities both inside and outside the parks is used to determine when restrictions are needed to preserve each park's natural and cultural resources as well as the quality of the visitors' experience.

History of Yellowstone National Park

Precontact

- People have been in Yellowstone more than 11,000 years, as shown by archeological sites, trails, and oral histories.
- Although Sheep Eaters are the most well-known group of Native Americans to use the park, many other tribes and bands lived in and traveled through what is now Yellowstone National Park prior to and after European American arrival.

European Americans Arrive

- European Americans began exploring in the early 1800s.
- Osborne Russel recorded early visits in the 1830s.

- First organized expedition explored Yellowstone in 1870.

Protection of the Park Begins

- Yellowstone National Park established in 1872.
- Railroad arrived in 1883, allowing easier visitor access.
- The US Army managed the park from 1886 through 1918.
- Automobiles allowed into the park in 1915, making visits easier and more economical.
- National Park Service created in 1916.
- First boundary adjustment of the park made in 1929.

Park Management Evolves

- "Leopold Report" released in 1963; its recommendations changed how wildlife is managed in the park.
- 1970: New bear management plan eliminated open-pit garbage dumps in park.
- 1988: "Summer of Fire."
- 1995: Wolves restored to the park.
- 1996: Federal buyout of gold mine northeast of Yellowstone protected the park.

Paleoindian Period

~11,000 years ago

A Clovis point from this period was made from obsidian obtained at Obsidian Cliff.

10,000 years ago

Folsom people were in the Yellowstone area as early as 10,900 years ago—the date of an obsidian Folsom projectile point found near Pinedale, Wyoming. Sites all over the park yield paleoindian artifacts, particularly concentrated around Yellowstone Lake.



**Hell Gap point,
9,600–10,000
years ago**

9,350 years ago

A site on the shore of Yellowstone Lake has been dated to 9,350 years ago. The points had traces of blood from rabbit, dog, deer, and bighorn. People seem to have occupied this site for short, seasonal periods.

The Earliest Humans in Yellowstone

Human occupation of the greater Yellowstone area seems to follow environmental changes of the last 15,000 years. How far back is still to be determined—there are no sites that date to this time—but humans probably were not here when the entire area was covered by ice caps and glaciers. Glaciers and a continental ice sheet covered most of what is now Yellowstone National Park. They left behind rivers and valleys people could follow in pursuit of Ice Age mammals such as the mammoth and the giant bison. The last period of ice coverage ended 13,000–14,000 years ago, and sometime after that and before 11,000 years ago, humans arrived here.

Archeologists have found little physical evidence of their presence except for their distinctive stone tools and projectile points. From these artifacts, scientists surmise that they hunted mammals and ate berries, seeds, and roots.

As the climate in the Yellowstone region warmed and dried, the animals, vegetation, and human lifestyles also changed. Large Ice Age animals that were adapted to cold and wet conditions became extinct. The glaciers left behind layers of sediment in valleys in which grasses and sagebrush thrived, and pockets of exposed rocks that provided protected areas for aspens and fir to grow. The uncovered volcanic plateau sprouted lodgepole forests. People adapted to these changing conditions and were eating a diverse diet of medium and small sized animals as early as 9,500 years

Cody knife (9,350 years ago)
from the Yellowstone National
Park Museum Collection



ago. They could no longer rely on large mammals for food. Instead, smaller animals such as deer and bighorn sheep became more important in their diet, as did plants such as prickly pear cactus. They may have also established a distinct home territory in the valleys and surrounding mountains.

This favorable climate would continue more than 9,000 years. Evidence of these people in Yellowstone remained un-investigated, even long after archeologists began excavating sites elsewhere in North America. Archeologists used to think high regions such as Yellowstone were inhospitable to humans and thus, did little exploratory work in these areas. However, park superintendent Philetus W. Norris (1877–82) found artifacts in Yellowstone and sent them to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Today, archeologists study environmental change as a tool for understanding human uses of areas such as Yellowstone.

More than 1,800 archeological sites have been documented in Yellowstone National Park, with the majority from the Archaic period. Sites contain evidence of successful hunts for bison, sheep, elk, deer, bear, cats, and wolves.

Campsites and trails in Yellowstone also provide evidence of early use. Some trails have been used by people since the Paleoindian period.

Some of the historic peoples from this area, such as the Crow and Sioux, arrived sometime during the 1500s and around 1700, respectively. We have little scientific evidence to conclusively connect other historic people, such as the Salish and Shoshone, to prehistoric tribes, but oral histories provide links. Prehistoric vessels known as “Intermountain Ware” have been found in the park and surrounding area, and link the Shoshone to the area as early as approximately 700 years ago.

Archaic Period (7,000–1,500 years ago)

7,000 years ago

Vegetation similar to what we find today begins to appear. Projectile points begin to be notched.

Beginning 9,000 years ago until 1,000 common era (CE), people leave traces of camps on shores of Yellowstone Lake.

3,000 years ago

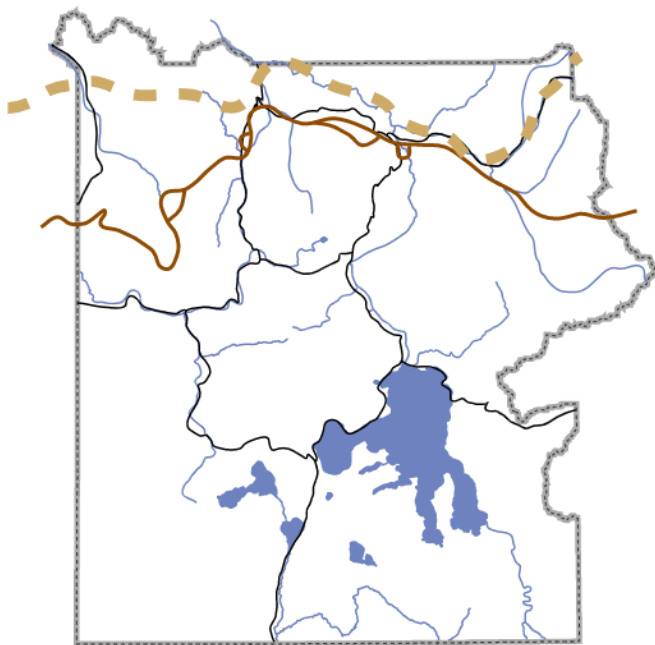
Oral histories of the Salish place their ancestors in the Yellowstone area.

1,500 years ago

Bow and arrow begins to replace atlatl (throwing spear); sheep traps (in the mountains) and bison corrals (on the plains) begin to be used in the Rocky Mountain region.

Increased Use

People seem to have increased their use of the Yellowstone area beginning about 3,000 years ago. During this time, they began to use the bow and arrow, which replaced the atlatl, or spear-thrower, that had been used for thousands of years. With the bow and arrow, people hunted more efficiently. They also developed sheep traps and bison corrals, and used both near the park, and perhaps in it. This increased use of Yellowstone may have occurred when the environment was warmer, favoring extended seasonal use on and around the Yellowstone Plateau. Archeologists and other scientists are working



An ancient trail, now called the Bannock Trail, is shown in two possible locations. Physical evidence of the trail is extremely difficult to find. Historic maps and journals do not match modern maps, and oral histories of tribes do not always match what little evidence exists of the trail. The solid line shows the trail's location as interpreted in the 1900s. Today, many scholars think the dashed line shows a more accurate location, which is based on an 1869 map by Henry D. Washburn.

Obsidian Cliff



Where to See

Grand Loop Road between Mammoth and Norris.

Significance

- Obsidian is found in volcanic areas where the magma is rich in silica and lava has cooled without forming crystals, creating a black glass that can be honed to an exceptionally thin edge.
- Obsidian was first quarried from this cliff for toolmaking more than 11,000 years ago and gradually spread along trade routes from western Canada to Ohio.
- Unlike most obsidian, which occurs as small rocks strewn amid other formations, Obsidian Cliff has an exposed vertical thickness of about 98 feet (30 m).
- It is the United States' most widely dispersed source of obsidian by hunter-gatherers.
- Obsidian Cliff is the primary source of obsidian in a large concentration of Midwestern sites, including about 90% of obsidian found in Hopewell mortuary sites in the Ohio River Valley (about 1850–1750 years ago).

Recent History

About 90% of the Obsidian Cliff plateau burned in 1988. Although the fire did not affect the appearance or condition of the cliff face, it cleared the surface and most of the lodgepole pine overstory, creating optimal conditions for archeological surveys. The surveys have added substantially to knowledge about how and where obsidian was mined from the bedrock and collected as cobbles deposited within the overlying glacial till. The site was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1996.

The kiosk at Obsidian Cliff, constructed in 1931, was the first wayside exhibit in a US national park. It was listed on the National Register in 1982.

1000–1700s CE

1400

Oral histories of the Kiowa place their ancestors in the Yellowstone area from this time through the 1700s.

1450

Little Ice Age begins.

1600s

North American tribes in the southwest begin acquiring horses in the mid- to late 1600s. Ancestors of the Crow may have come into Yellowstone during this time.

1700s

Lakota Sioux begin exploring the Yellowstone area.

CE = Common Era (replaces AD)

together to study evidence such as plant pollen, landforms, and tree rings to understand how the area's environment changed over time.

The Little Ice Age

Climatic evidence confirmed the Yellowstone area experienced colder temperatures during what is known as the Little Ice Age—mid-1400s to mid-1800s. Archeological evidence indicates fewer people used this region during this time, although more sites dating to this period are being found. Campsites appear to have been used by smaller groups of people, mostly in the summer. Such a pattern of use would make sense in a cold region where hunting and gathering were practical for only a few months each year.

Historic Tribes

Greater Yellowstone's location at the convergence of the Great Plains, Great Basin, and Plateau Indian cultures means that many tribes have a traditional connection to the land and its resources. For thousands of years before Yellowstone became a national park, it was a place where Indians hunted, fished, gathered plants, quarried obsidian, and used the thermal waters for religious and medicinal purposes.

Tribal oral histories indicate more extensive use



Wickiups provided temporary shelter for some Native Americans while they were in Yellowstone. No authentic, standing wickiups are known to remain in the park.

during the Little Ice Age. Kiowa stories place their ancestors here from around 1400 to 1700. Ancestors to contemporary Blackfeet, Cayuse, Coeur d'Alene, Bannock, Nez Perce, Shoshone, and Umatilla, among others, continued to travel the park on the already established trails. They visited geysers, conducted ceremonies, hunted, gathered plants and minerals, and engaged in trade. The Shoshone say family groups came to Yellowstone to gather obsidian, which they used to field dress buffalo. Some tribes used the Fishing Bridge area as a rendezvous site.

The Crow occupied the area generally east of the park, and the Blackfeet occupied the area to the north. The Shoshone, Bannock, and other tribes of the plateaus to the west traversed the park annually to hunt on the plains to the east. Other Shoshonean groups hunted in open areas west and south of Yellowstone.

In the early 1700s, some tribes in this region began to acquire the horse. Some historians believe the horse fundamentally changed lifestyles because tribes could now travel faster and farther to hunt bison and other animals of the plains.



Tribes used hydrothermal sites ceremonially and medicinally. The Mud Volcano area is especially significant for the Kiowa. Their tradition says that a hot spring called Dragon's Mouth (above) is where their creator gave them the Yellowstone area for their home. The Crow also have stories about this feature.

Associated Tribes of Yellowstone National Park



- Assiniboine and Sioux
- Blackfeet
- Cheyenne River Sioux
- Coeur d'Alene
- Comanche
- Salish and Kootenai
- Colville Reservation
- Umatilla Reservation
- Crow
- Crow Creek Sioux
- Eastern Shoshone
- Flandreau Santee Sioux
- Gros Ventre and Assiniboine
- Kiowa
- Lower Brule Sioux
- Nez Perce
- Northern Arapaho
- Northern Cheyenne
- Oglala Sioux
- Rosebud Sioux
- Shoshone-Bannock
- Sisseton Wahpeton
- Spirit Lake
- Standing Rock Sioux
- Turtle Mountain Band of the Chippewa
- Yankton Sioux

Note: Map shows each of the 26 tribal reservations; it does not show historic territory.

The "Sheep Eaters"

Some groups of Shoshone who adapted to a mountain existence chose not to acquire the horse. These included the Sheep Eaters, or Tukudika, who used their dogs to transport food, hides, and other provisions. Sheep Eaters acquired their name from the bighorn sheep whose migrations they followed. Bighorn sheep were a significant part of their diet, and they crafted the carcasses into a wide array of tools. For example, they soaked sheep horns in hot springs to make them pliable for bows. They traded these bows, plus clothing and hides, to other tribes.

late 1700s–1840s CE

late 1700s

Fur traders travel the rivers into the Yellowstone region. Tribes in the Yellowstone area begin using horses.

1804–1806

The Lewis and Clark Expedition passes within 50 miles of Yellowstone.

1807–1808

John Colter explores part of Yellowstone.

1820s

Trappers return to Yellowstone area.

1834–1835

Trapper Osborne Russell encounters Sheep Eaters in Lamar Valley.

1840s

Trapper era ends.

European Americans Arrive

In the late 1700s, fur traders traveled the great tributary of the Missouri River, the Yellowstone, in search of Native Americans with whom to trade. They called the river by its French name, “Roche Jaune.” As far as we know, pre-1800 travelers did not observe the hydrothermal activity in this area but they probably learned of these features from Native American acquaintances.

The Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804–1806), sent by President Thomas Jefferson to explore the newly acquired lands of the Louisiana Purchase, bypassed Yellowstone. They had heard descriptions of the region, but did not explore the Yellowstone River beyond what is now Livingston, Montana.

A member of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, John Colter, left that group during its return journey to join trappers in the Yellowstone area. During his travels, Colter probably skirted the northwest shore of Yellowstone Lake and crossed the Yellowstone River near Tower Fall, where he noted the presence of “Hot Spring Brimstone.”

Not long after Colter’s explorations, the United States became embroiled in the War of 1812, which drew men and money away from exploration of the Yellowstone region. The demand for furs resumed after the war and trappers returned

to the Rocky Mountains in the 1820s. Among them was Daniel Potts, who also published the first account of Yellowstone’s wonders as a letter in a Philadelphia newspaper.

Jim Bridger also explored Yellowstone during this time. Like many trappers, Bridger spun tall tales as a form of entertainment around the evening fire. His stories inspired future explorers to travel to see the real thing.

Osborne Russell wrote a book about fur trapping in and around Yellowstone during the 1830s and early 1840s.

As quickly as it started, the trapper era ended. By the mid-1840s, beaver became scarce and fashions changed. Trappers turned to guiding or other pursuits.

Looking for Gold

During 1863–1871, prospectors crisscrossed the Yellowstone Plateau every year and searched every crevice for gold and other precious minerals. Although gold was found nearby, no big strikes were made inside what is now Yellowstone National Park.

Expeditions Explore Yellowstone

Although Yellowstone had been thoroughly tracked by tribes and trappers, in the view of the nation at large it was really “discovered” by formal expeditions. The first organized attempt came in 1860 when Captain William F. Reynolds led a military expedition, but it was unable to explore the Yellowstone Plateau because of late spring snow. The Civil War preoccupied the government during the next few years. Afterward, several explorations were planned but none actually got underway.

The 1869 Folsom-Cook-Peterson Expedition

In 1869, three members of one would-be expedition set out on their own. David E. Folsom, Charles W. Cook, and William Peterson ignored the warning of a friend who said their journey was “the next thing to suicide” because of “Indian trouble” along the way. From Bozeman, they traveled down the divide



The continued reports by mountain men about the wonders of the Yellowstone area, artist renderings of the area, and reports by explorers contributed to the establishment of Yellowstone National Park in 1872.

1850s–1871 CE

1850s

Little Ice Age ends, climate begins to warm.

1860

First organized expedition attempts but fails to explore the Yellowstone Plateau.

1862

Gold strike northwest of Yellowstone.

1869

Folsom–Cook–Peterson Expedition.

1870

Washburn–Langford–Doane Expedition; Old Faithful Geyser named.

1871

First Hayden Expedition.



Several early trappers and expeditions passed by Tower Fall, painted here by Thomas Moran who accompanied the Hayden Expedition. One of the first may have been John Colter, who left the Lewis and Clark Expedition as they returned east to join fur trappers in the Yellowstone area. He probably crossed the Yellowstone River near Tower Fall.

between the Gallatin and Yellowstone rivers, crossed the mountains to the Yellowstone and continued into the present park. They observed Tower Fall, the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone—“this masterpiece of nature’s handiwork”—continued past Mud Volcano to Yellowstone Lake, then south to West Thumb. From there, they visited Shoshone Lake and the geyser basins of the Firehole River. The expedition updated an earlier explorer’s map (DeLacy, in 1865), wrote an article for *Western Monthly* magazine,

and refueled the excitement of scientists who decided to see for themselves the truth of the party’s tales of “the beautiful places we had found fashioned by the practiced hand of nature, that man had not desecrated.”

The 1870 Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition

In August 1870, a second expedition set out for Yellowstone, led by Surveyor-General Henry D. Washburn, politician and businessman Nathaniel P. Langford, and attorney Cornelius Hedges. Lt. Gustavus C. Doane provided military escort from Fort Ellis (near present-day Bozeman, Montana). The explorers traveled to Tower Fall, Canyon, and Yellowstone Lake, followed the lake’s eastern and southern shores, and explored the Lower, Midway, and Upper geyser basins (where they named Old Faithful). They climbed several peaks, descended into the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, and attempted measurements and analyses of several of the prominent natural features.

The 1871 Hayden Expedition

Ferdinand V. Hayden, head of the US Geological and Geographical Survey of the Territories, led the next scientific expedition in 1871, simultaneous with a survey by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

The history of science in Yellowstone formally began with Hayden’s expeditions. Hayden’s 1871 survey team included two botanists, a meteorologist, a zoologist, an ornithologist, a mineralogist, a topographer, and an agricultural statistician/entomologist, in addition to an artist, a photographer, and support staff. The Hayden Survey brought back scientific corroboration of the earlier tales of thermal activity. The expedition gave the world an improved map of Yellowstone and visual proof of the area’s unique curiosities through the photographs of William Henry Jackson and the art of Henry W. Elliot and Thomas Moran. The expedition’s reports excited the scientific community and aroused even more national interest in Yellowstone.

1872–1900 CE

1872

Yellowstone National Park Protection Act establishes the first national park.

1877

Nez Perce (Nee-me-poo) flee US Army through Yellowstone.

1883

Northern Pacific Railroad reaches the North Entrance of the park.

1886

The US Army arrives to administer the park. They stay until 1918.

1894

Poacher Ed Howell captured; National Park Protection Act (Lacey Act) passed.

Hayden noted that in terms of scientific value, “The geysers of Iceland . . . sink into insignificance in comparison with the hot springs of the Yellowstone and Fire-Hole Basins.”

Birth of a National Park

One of the most enduring myths of Yellowstone National Park involves its beginning. As the myth goes, in 1870, explorers gathered around a campfire at the junction of two pristine rivers, overshadowed

by the towering cliffs of the Madison Plateau. They discussed what they had seen during their exploration and realized that this land of fire and ice and wild animals needed to be preserved. Thus, the legend goes, the idea of Yellowstone National Park was born.

Though it is a myth, the explorers were real and their crowning achievement was helping to save Yellowstone from private development. They promoted a park bill in Washington in late 1871 and early

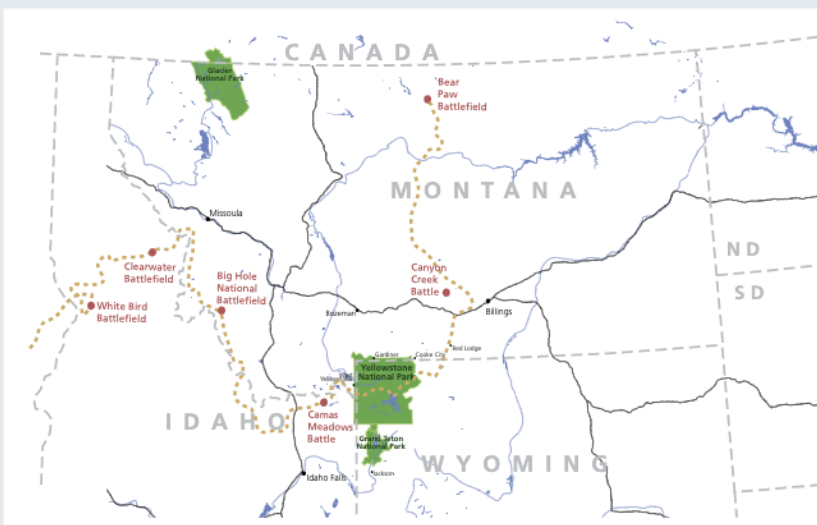
Flight of the Nez Perce

Summer 1877 brought tragedy to the Nez Perce (or, in their language, Nimiipu or Nee-Me-Poo). A band of 800 men, women, and children—plus almost 2,000 horses—left their homeland in what is now Oregon and Idaho pursued by the US Army. Settlers were moving into their homeland and the US Government was trying to force them onto a reservation. At Big Hole, Montana, many of their group, including women and children, were killed in a battle with the Army. The remainder of the group continued fleeing, and entered Yellowstone National Park on August 23.

In Yellowstone

Only a small part of the route taken by the Nez Perce who fled from the US Army in 1877 went through Yellowstone, and they largely eluded their pursuers while in the park. However, the 13 days that the Nez Perce spent in Yellowstone became part of the tragic story they continue to pass down to their children.

During the time they crossed the park, the Nez Perce encountered about 25 visitors in the park, some more than once. Warriors took hostage or attacked several of these tourists, killing two. The group continued traveling through the park and over the Absaroka Mountains into Montana. The Army stopped them near the Bear's Paw Mountains, less than 40 miles from the Canadian



border. Some Nez Perce escaped to Canada, but after fierce fighting and a siege, the rest of the band surrendered on October 5 and most of the survivors were sent to the Indian Territory in Oklahoma. This is where it is believed the flight ended and Chief Joseph said, “From where the sun now stands, I will fight no more forever.”

Nez Perce Commemorative Sites

The Nez Perce National Historical Park, established by Congress in 1965 and managed by the National Park Service, includes 38 sites in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington that have been important in the history and culture of the Nez Perce.

Many of these sites are also on the 1,170-mile Nez Perce National Historic

Trail, established in 1986 and managed by the US Forest Service. The route extends from Wallowa Lake, Oregon, to the Bear's Paw Mountains in Montana. Although none of the officially designated historic sites associated with the Nez Perce are located in Yellowstone, the historic trail goes through the park, and it is considered a sacred place by many Nez Perce who have continued to honor their ancestors and carry on their memories through ceremonies conducted in the park.

- Nez Perce National Historic Trail: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/nphnt/>
- Nez Perce National Historical Park: <http://www.nps.gov/nepe/>



As Yellowstone's second superintendent, Philetus Norris set the future course of national parks on many fronts: protection, addressing visitors' needs and interests, and science-based management. Despite a lack of support from the Department of the Interior or Congress, he pleaded for legislation that would adequately protect the park and had grand aspirations for Yellowstone.

1872 that drew upon the precedent of the Yosemite Act of 1864, which reserved Yosemite Valley from settlement and entrusted it to the care of the state of California. To permanently close to settlement an expanse of the public domain the size of Yellowstone would depart from the established policy of transferring public lands to private ownership. But the wonders of Yellowstone—shown through Jackson's photographs, Moran's paintings, and Elliot's sketches—had caught the imagination of Congress. Thanks to their continued reports and the work of explorers and artists who followed, the United States Congress established Yellowstone National Park in 1872. On March 1, 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act into law. The world's first national park was born.

The Yellowstone National Park Protection Act says "the headwaters of the Yellowstone River . . . is hereby reserved and withdrawn from settlement, occupancy, or sale . . . and dedicated and set apart as a public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people." In an era of expansion, the

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION:

Did other national parks exist before Yellowstone?

Some sources list Hot Springs in Arkansas as the first national park. Set aside in 1832, forty years before Yellowstone was established in 1872, it was actually the nation's oldest national reservation, set aside to preserve and distribute a utilitarian resource (hot water), much like our present national forests. In 1921, an act of Congress established Hot Springs as a national park.

Yosemite became a park before Yellowstone, but as a state park. Disappointed with the results 26 years later in 1890, Congress made Yosemite one of three additional national parks, along with Sequoia and General Grant, now part of Kings Canyon. Mount Rainier followed in 1899.

As an older state park, Yosemite did have a strong influence on the founding of Yellowstone in 1872 because Congress actually used language in the state park act as a model. It's entirely possible that Congress may have preferred to make Yellowstone a state park in the same fashion as Yosemite, had it not been for an accident of geography that put it within three territorial boundaries. Arguments between Wyoming and Montana territories that year resulted in a decision to federalize Yellowstone.

federal government had the foresight to set aside land deemed too valuable to develop.

Formative Years

The park's promoters envisioned Yellowstone National Park would exist at no expense to the government. Nathaniel P. Langford, member of the Washburn Expedition and advocate of the Yellowstone National Park Act, was appointed to the unpaid post of superintendent. (He earned his living elsewhere.) He entered the park at least twice during five years in office—as part of the 1872 Hayden Expedition and to evict a squatter in 1874. Langford did what he could without laws protecting wildlife and other natural features, and without money to build basic structures and hire law enforcement rangers.

Political pressure forced Langford's removal in 1877. Philetus W. Norris was appointed the second superintendent, and the next year, Congress authorized appropriations "to protect, preserve, and improve the Park."

Norris constructed roads, built a park headquarters at Mammoth Hot Springs, hired the first "game-keeper," and campaigned against hunters and vandals. Much of the primitive road system he laid out remains as the Grand Loop Road. Through constant

1901–1917 CE

1903

President Theodore Roosevelt dedicates arch at the North Entrance in Gardiner while on vacation.

1906

The Antiquities Act provides for the protection of historic, prehistoric, and scientific features on, and artifacts from, federal lands.

1908

Union Pacific train service begins at West Yellowstone.

1915

Private automobiles are officially admitted to the park.

1916

The National Park Service Organic Act establishes the National Park Service.

exploration, Norris also added immensely to geographical knowledge of the park.

Norris's tenure occurred during an era of warfare between the United States and many Native American tribes. To reassure the public that they faced no threat from these conflicts, he promoted the idea that Native Americans shunned this area because they feared the hydrothermal features, especially the geysers. This idea belied evidence to the contrary, but the myth endured.

Norris fell victim to political maneuvering and was removed from his post in 1882. He was succeeded by three powerless superintendents who could not protect the park. Even when ten assistant superintendents were authorized to act as police, they failed to



Soldiers pose with bison heads captured from poacher Ed Howell. When Howell returned to the park that year, he was the first person arrested and punished under the National Park Protection Act, passed in 1894.

Guidance for Protecting Yellowstone National Park

Yellowstone Purpose Statement

Yellowstone National Park, the world's first national park, was set aside as a public pleasuring ground to share the wonders and preserve and protect the scenery, cultural heritage, wildlife, geologic and ecological systems and processes in their natural condition for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Significance of Yellowstone

- Yellowstone National Park is the world's first national park, an idea that spread throughout the world.
- Yellowstone was set aside because of its geothermal wonders—the planet's most active, diverse, and intact collections of combined geothermal, geologic, and hydrologic features and systems, and the underlying volcanic activity that sustains them.
- The park is the core of the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, one of the last, largest, nearly intact, natural ecosystems in the temperate zone of Earth. It preserves an exceptional concentration and

diversity of terrestrial, aquatic, and microbial life. Here, natural processes operate in an ecological context that has been less subject to human alteration than most others throughout the nation—and indeed throughout the world. This makes the park not only an invaluable natural reserve, but a reservoir of information valuable to humanity.

- Yellowstone contains a unique and relatively pristine tapestry of prehistoric and historic cultural resources that span more than 11,000 years. The archeological, architectural, historical, and material collections constitute one of the largest and most complete continuum of human occupation in the western U.S. and collectively represent the material remains of the birth of the National Park and conservation movement.
- Yellowstone was the first area set aside as a national public park and pleasuring ground for the benefit, enjoyment, education,

and inspiration of this and future generations. Visitors have a range of opportunities to experience its unique geothermal wonders, free-roaming wildlife, inspiring views, cultural heritage, and spectacular wilderness character.

Yellowstone Mission Statement

Preserved within Yellowstone National Park are Old Faithful and the majority of the world's geysers and hot springs. An outstanding mountain wildland with clean water and air, Yellowstone is home of the grizzly bear and wolf and free-ranging herds of bison and elk. Centuries-old sites and historic buildings that reflect the unique heritage of America's first national park are also protected. Yellowstone National Park serves as a model and inspiration for national parks throughout the world. The National Park Service preserves, unimpaired, these and other natural and cultural resources and values for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.

1918–1939 CE

1918	1929	1932	1933	1934	1935
US Army turns over park management to the National Park Service.	President Hoover signs first law changing park's boundary.	President Hoover expands the park again.	Civilian Conservation Corps established, works in Yellowstone through 1941.	The National Park Service Director's Order prohibits killing predators.	The Historic Sites Act sets a national policy to "preserve for future public use historic sites, buildings, and objects."

stop the destruction of wildlife. Poachers, squatters, woodcutters, and vandals ravaged Yellowstone.

The Army Arrives

In 1886 Congress refused to appropriate money for ineffective administration. The Secretary of the Interior, under authority given by the Congress, called on the Secretary of War for assistance. On August 20, 1886, the US Army took charge of Yellowstone.

The Army strengthened, posted, and enforced regulations in the park. Troops guarded the major attractions and evicted troublemakers, and cavalry patrolled the vast interior.

The most persistent menace came from poachers, whose activities threatened to exterminate animals such as the bison. In 1894, soldiers arrested a man named Ed Howell for slaughtering bison in Pelican Valley. The maximum sentence possible was banishment from the park. Emerson Hough, a well-known journalist, was present and wired his report to *Forest & Stream*, a popular magazine of the time. Its editor, renowned naturalist George Bird Grinnell, helped create a national outcry. Within two months Congress passed the National Park Protection Act, which increased the Army's authority for protecting park treasures. (This law is known as the Lacey Act, and is the first of two laws with this name.)

Running a park was not the Army's usual line of work. The troops could protect the park and ensure access, but they could not fully satisfy the visitor's desire for knowledge. Moreover, each of the 14 other national parks established in the late 1800s and early 1900s was separately administered, resulting in uneven management, inefficiency, and a lack of direction.

The National Park Service Begins

National parks clearly needed coordinated administration by professionals attuned to the special requirements of these preserves. The management of Yellowstone from 1872 through the early 1900s

Two "Organic Acts"

The laws creating Yellowstone National Park and the National Park Service are both called "The Organic Act" because each created an entity. (Also called "enabling legislation.") However, the name most often refers to the law that created the National Park Service. To avoid confusion, we refer to the laws by their names as listed in the US Code Table of Popular Names: The Yellowstone National Park Protection Act and The National Park Service Organic Act.

National Park Service Organic Act

Passed in 1916, this law created the National Park Service and established its mission:

"to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

National Park Service Mission

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. The National Park Service cooperates with partners to extend the benefits of natural and cultural resource conservation and outdoor recreation throughout the United States and the world.

helped set the stage for the creation of an agency whose sole purpose was to manage the national parks. Promoters of this idea gathered support from influential journalists, railroads likely to profit from increased park tourism, and members of Congress. The National Park Service Organic Act was passed by Congress and approved by President Woodrow Wilson on August 25, 1916.

Yellowstone's first rangers, which included veterans of Army service in the park, became responsible for Yellowstone in 1918. The park's first superintendent under the new National Park Service was Horace M. Albright, who served simultaneously as assistant to Stephen T. Mather, Director of the National Park Service. Albright established a management framework that guided administration of Yellowstone for decades.

1940–1959 CE

1948

Yellowstone receives one million visitors.

1949

Nineteen snowplane trips carry 49 passengers into the park in winter.

1955

Mission 66 initiated. The first concession-run snowcoach trips carry more than 500 people into the park in winter.

1959

Magnitude 7.5 earthquake strikes on August 17 west of Yellowstone, killing campers in Gallatin National Forest and affecting geysers and hot springs in the park.

Today's National Park Service

Implementing the National Park Service Mission

The National Park Service mission statement expresses the dual responsibility of preserving parks in their natural state (or, at historical areas, to preserve a scene as nearly as it appeared on a certain date), and making these areas accessible for public use and enjoyment. These two fundamental goals can be incompatible and present difficult choices; two policies provide some direction:

- **Natural resources** (biological and physical, esthetic values such as scenic vistas, natural quiet, and night skies, etc.) are managed to maintain, rehabilitate, and perpetuate their inherent integrity. Native species that have been exterminated should be reintroduced and nonnative species eliminated, if possible. Livestock grazing, hunting, and resource extraction are prohibited in National Park System areas, with a few exceptions.
- **Cultural resources** (prehistoric and historic structures, landscapes, archeological and ethnographic resources, and museum collections) are preserved.

International Leadership

The National Park Service example has inspired countries around the world to establish more than 100 national parks—modeled in whole or part on Yellowstone National Park and the National Park Service idea. Additionally, the National Park Service lends its experienced staff to other countries to evaluate park proposals, management plans, and resource issues. As the first national park, Yellowstone also continues to be a leader in developing and implementing policies in the National Park Service.

The National Park Service manages approximately 83 million acres in all 50 states, the Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa.

- National parks are the oldest, most well-known part of the system and are usually areas of spectacular natural scenery relatively untouched by human development. National parks are established by acts of Congress.
- National monuments are areas of historic or scientific interest established by presidential proclamation.
- National historical parks and national historic sites are both set aside to commemorate some facet of the history of the people of those areas.
- Many national memorials fit the description for national historical parks or sites, but some of these are also set aside because of important historical issues not specifically linked to the site of the memorial, such as Mt. Rushmore and Vietnam Veterans.



When Frances Pound applied for a position in 1926, Yellowstone Superintendent Albright suggested she use her nickname, Jim. She was one of the first women hired to do law enforcement in Yellowstone. Today's National Park Service workforce aims to reflect our nation's diversity.

Total National Park Service areas = 401

National Battlefields	11
National Battlefield Parks	4
National Battlefield Site	1
National Military Parks	9
National Historical Parks	46
National Historic Sites	78
International Historic Sites	1
National Lakeshores	4
National Memorials	29
National Monuments	78
National Parks	59
National Parkways	4
National Preserves	18
National Reserves	2
National Recreation Areas	18
National Rivers	5
National Wild and Scenic Rivers and Riverways	10
National Scenic Trails	3
National Seashores	10
Other Designations	11
Total Units	401

As of July 2013.

1960–1975 CE

1963

The Leopold Report is issued.

1966

The thermophile *Thermus aquaticus* discovered in a Yellowstone hot spring.

1970

New bear management plan begins, which includes closing open-pit dumps in park.

1971

Overnight winter lodging opens in park.

1975

Grizzly bear listed as threatened species in the lower 48 states.

Boundary Adjustments

Almost as soon as the park was established, people began suggesting that the boundaries be revised to conform more closely to natural topographic features, such as the ridgeline of the Absaroka Range along the east boundary. Although these people had the ear of influential politicians, so did their opponents—which at one time also included the United States Forest Service. Eventually a compromise was reached and in 1929, President Hoover signed the first bill changing the park's boundaries: The northwest corner now included a significant area of petrified trees; the northeast corner was defined by the watershed of Pebble Creek; the eastern boundary included the headwaters of the Lamar River and part of the watershed of the Yellowstone River. (The Yellowstone's headwaters remain outside the park in Bridger-Teton National Forest.)

In 1932, President Hoover issued an executive order that added more than 7,000 acres between the

north boundary and the Yellowstone River, west of Gardiner. These lands provided winter range for elk and other ungulates.

Efforts to exploit the park also expanded during this time. Water users, from the town of Gardiner to the potato farmers of Idaho, wanted the park's water. Proposals included damming the southwest corner of the park—the Bechler region. The failure of these schemes confirmed that Yellowstone's wonders were so special that they should be forever preserved from exploitation.

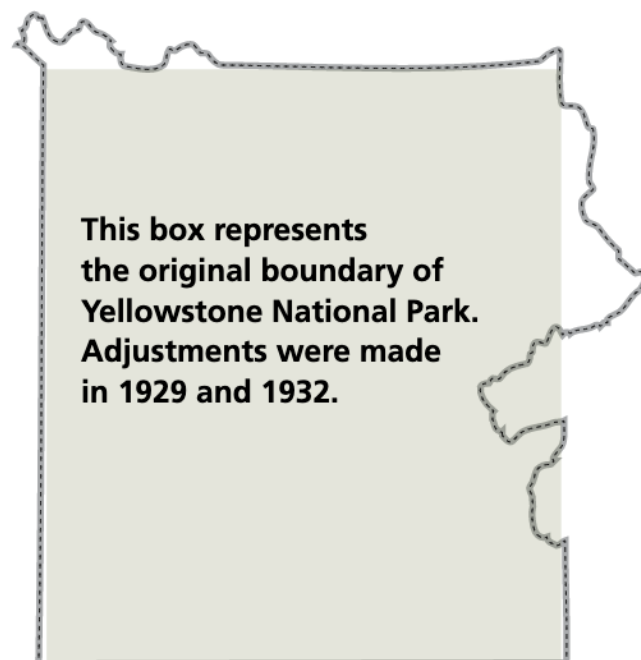
World War II

World War II drew away employees, visitors, and money from all national parks, including Yellowstone. The money needed to maintain the park's facilities, much less construct new ones, was directed to the war effort. Among other projects, the road from Old Faithful to Craig Pass was unfinished. Proposals again surfaced to use the park's natural resources—this time in the war effort. As before, the park's wonders were preserved.

Visitation jumped as soon as the war ended. By 1948, park visitation reached one million people



Yellowstone Superintendent Horace Albright, shown here with future president Herbert Hoover in 1928, was involved in the creation of the National Park Service. Later, as agency's director, he greatly increased the number of parks east of the Mississippi and expanded the agency's mandate to include preservation of historic sites, creating a more truly national park system.



1976–1998 CE

1988

Public Law 100-443 protects hydrothermal features in national parks from geothermal development on adjacent federal lands; Summer of Fire: more than 790,000 acres affected by fires in Yellowstone.

1991

Clean Air Act Amendments require air quality monitoring at sites including Yellowstone, a Class I airshed.

1994

Congress enacts a law allowing a percentage of park entrance fees to be kept in the parks.

1995

Wolves are restored to the park.

1996

Federal buyout of gold mine on Yellowstone's northeast border is authorized.

1998

The National Parks Omnibus Management Act is passed.

per year. The park's budget did not keep pace, and the neglect of the war years quickly caught up with the park.

Mission 66

Neglected during World War II, the infrastructure in national parks continued to deteriorate as visitation soared afterward, leading to widespread complaints. In 1955, National Park Service Director Conrad Wirth persuaded Congress to fund an improvement program for completion by the National Park Service's 50th anniversary in 1966. Also designed to increase education programs and employee housing, Mission 66 focused mainly on visitor facilities and roads. Trained as an architect, Wirth encouraged the use of modern materials and prefabricated components to quickly and inexpensively construct low-maintenance buildings. This architectural style, which became known as Park Service Modern, was a deliberate departure from the picturesque, rustic buildings associated with national parks; their "fantasy land" quality was considered outmoded and too labor-intensive for the needed scale of construction.

Mission 66 revitalized many national parks; in Yellowstone, intended to be the program's showpiece, its legacy is still visible. It was a momentous chapter in the park's history, and as the park continues to reflect changing ideas about how to enhance the visitor's experience while protecting the natural and cultural resources, the question of how to preserve the story of Mission 66 is being addressed.

Work in Yellowstone included the development of Canyon Village. Aging visitor use facilities were replaced with modernistic visitor use facilities designed to reflect American attitudes of the 1950s. Visitor services were arranged around a large parking plaza with small cabins a short distance away. Canyon Village opened in July 1957, the first Mission 66 project initiated by the National Park Service.



The elk and bison populations were actively managed until the mid-1960s, when park managers allowed "natural regulation."

Modern Management

Until the mid-1960s, park managers actively managed the elk and bison of Yellowstone. Elk population limits were determined according to formulas designed to manage livestock range. When elk reached those limits, park managers "culled" or killed the animals to reduce the population. Bison were likewise heavily managed.

In 1963, a national park advisory group, comprised of prominent scientists, released a report recommending parks "maintain biotic associations" within the context of their ecosystem, and based on scientific research. Known as the Leopold Report, this document established the framework for park management still used today throughout the National Park System. By adopting this management philosophy, Yellowstone went from an unnatural managing of resources to "natural regulation"—today known as Ecological Process Management.

The Leopold Report's recommendations were upheld by the 2002 National Academy of Science report, *Ecological Dynamics On Yellowstone's Northern Range*.

Involving Native Americans

Yellowstone National Park has 26 associated tribes. Some have evidence of their ancestral presence in Yellowstone National Park through ethnohistoric documentation, interviews with tribal elders, or

1990 CE–present

2002

National Academy of Sciences confirms effectiveness of Ecological Process Management (aka natural regulation).

2007

Yellowstone's grizzly bears removed from federal threatened species list; New winter use plan approved for winters beginning in 2008.

2008

Gray wolf delisted and relisted to endangered species list. Judges rule against the new winter use plan.

2009

Grizzly bears returned to threatened species list. Wolves in Wyoming returned to endangered species list; Interim winter use plan approved for winters 2009–2011; Bioprospecting final EIS completed; Science agenda established for Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem.

ongoing consultations. Others are affiliated because of documented spiritual or cultural connection to places or resources. Many park resources remain important to these tribes' sense of themselves and in maintaining their traditional practices.

In addition, tribes are sovereign nations whose leaders have a legal relationship with the federal government that is not shared by the general public. Consequently, representatives of Yellowstone's associated tribes participate in consultation meetings with park managers. They bring tribal perspectives to current issues such as bison management. Tribes also comment on park projects that could affect their ethnographic resources.

Complex Times

Although change and controversy have occurred in Yellowstone since its inception, the last three decades have seen many issues arise. Most involve natural resources.

One issue was the threat of water pollution from a gold mine outside the northeast corner of the park. Among other concerns, the New World Mine would have put waste storage along the headwaters of Soda Butte Creek, which flows into the Lamar River and then the Yellowstone River. After years of public debate, a federal buyout of the mining company was authorized in 1996.

In an effort to resolve other park management issues, Congress passed the National Parks Omnibus Management Act in 1998. This law requires using high quality science from inventory, monitoring, and research to understand and manage park resources.

Park facilities are seeing some improvements due to a change in funding. In 1996, as part of a pilot program, Yellowstone National Park was authorized to increase its entrance fee and retain 80% of the fee for park projects. (Previously, park entrance fees did not specifically fund park projects.) In 2004, the US Congress extended this program until 2015 under the

A Decade of Environmental Laws

Beginning in the late 1960s, the US Congress passed an unprecedented suite of laws to protect the environment. The laws described here particularly influence the management of our national parks.

The Wilderness Act of 1964 particularly influences the management of national parks.

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), passed in 1970, establishes a national policy "to promote efforts which will prevent or eliminate damage to the environment ... stimulate the health and welfare of man ... and enrich the understanding of ecological systems ..." It requires detailed analysis of environmental impacts of any major federal action that significantly affects the quality of the environment. Environmental assessments (EAs) and environmental impact statements (EISs) are written to detail these analyses and to provide forums for public involvement in management decisions.

The Clean Air Act (1970) mandates protection of air quality in all units of the National Park System; Yellowstone is classified as Class 1, the highest level of clean air protection.

The Clean Water Act (1972) is enacted to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters" by prohibiting the discharge of pollutants.

The Endangered Species Act (1973) requires federal agencies to protect species that are (or are likely to become) at risk of extinction throughout all or a significant part of their range. It prohibits any action that would jeopardize their continued existence or result in the destruction or modification of their habitat.

Federal Lands Recreation Enhancement Act. Projects funded in part by this program include a major renovation of Canyon Visitor Education Center, campground and amphitheater upgrades, preservation of rare documents, and studies on bison.

A Living Legacy

The years have shown that the legacy of those who worked to establish Yellowstone National Park in 1872 was far greater than simply preserving a unique

landscape. This one act has led to a lasting concept—the national park idea. This idea conceived wilderness to be the inheritance of all people, who gain more from an experience in nature than from private exploitation of the land.

The national park idea was part of a new view of the nation's responsibility for the public domain. By the end of the 1800s, many thoughtful people no longer believed that wilderness should be fair game for the first person who could claim and plunder it. They believed its fruits were the rightful possession of all the people, including those yet unborn. Besides the areas set aside as national parks, still greater expanses of land were placed into national forests and other reserves so the United States' natural wealth—in the form of lumber, grazing, minerals, and recreation lands—would not be consumed at once by the greed of a few, but would perpetually benefit all.

The preservation idea spread around the world. Scores of nations have preserved areas of natural beauty and historical worth so that all humankind will have the opportunity to reflect on their natural and cultural heritage and to return to nature and be spiritually reborn. Of all the benefits resulting from the establishment of Yellowstone National Park, this may be the greatest.

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