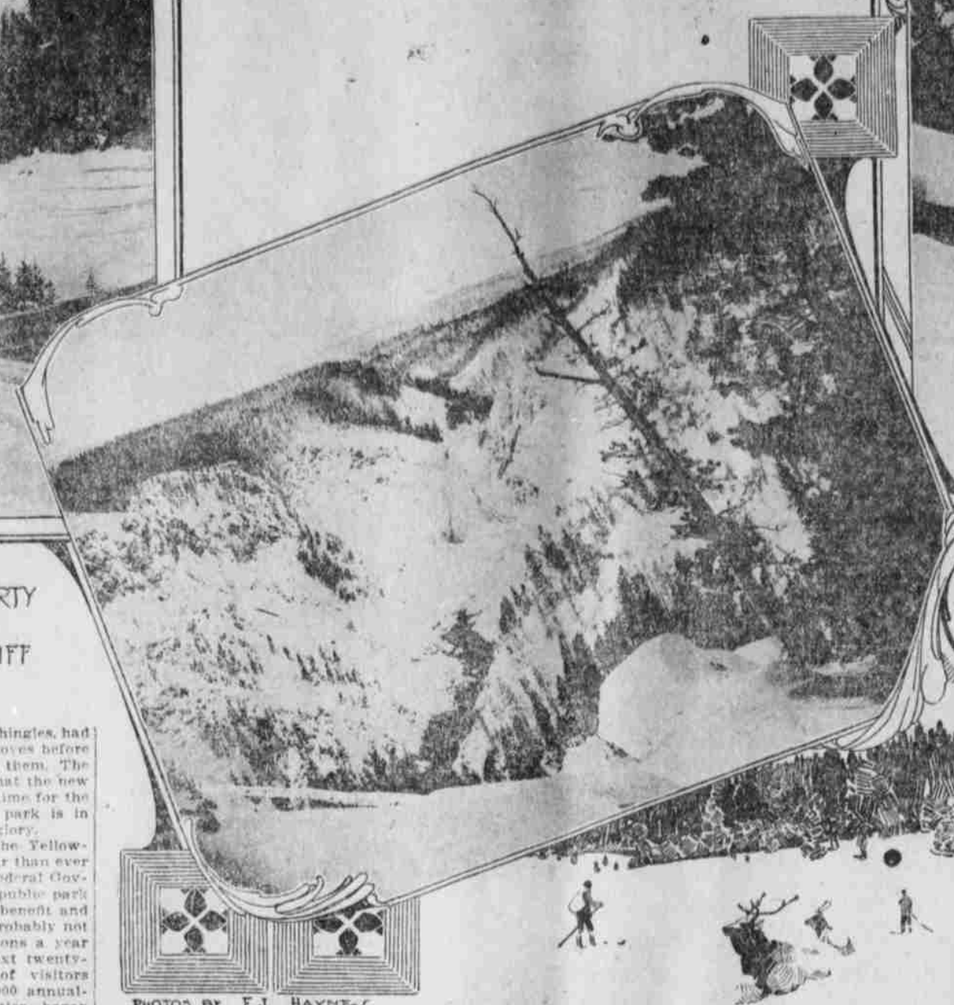
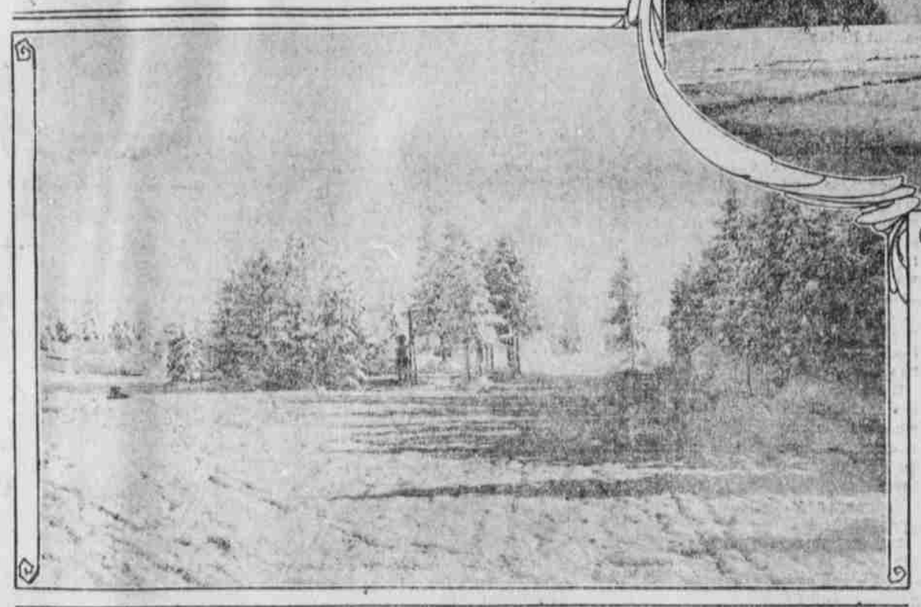
THE YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK in WINTER



A SUMMER HOTEL IN JANUARY

THE GREAT FALLS OF THE YELLOWSTONE

OLD FAITHFUL GEYSER, WINTER



ENTRANCE TO NORRIS GEYSER BASIN AFTER A BLIZZARD

SNOW SHOE PARTY AT OBSIDIAN CLIFF

PHOTOS BY F. J. HAYNES

THE polar regions are hardly less accessible than the Yellowstone National Park—the greatest playground of the American people—is in winter. This is scarcely conceivable, for in summer 40,000 visitors now find it one of the easiest places to reach and to travel through.

Lieutenant Frederick Schwatka made an attempt to explore the park in January nearly twenty-five years ago. He had returned not long before from an expedition in search of Sir John Franklin's party that had perished in the arctic regions. Before that he had been on a 3,000 mile sledge journey in the frozen north and had suffered terrible hardships. On his trip into the Yellowstone Park Lieutenant Schwatka was accompanied by a large, well-organized party. They traveled on Norwegian skis and Canadian web snowshoes; but the snow was so light that it would not support them, and their toboggans were exceedingly difficult to draw. It took them three days to cover twenty miles. Lieutenant Schwatka, inured as he was to such hardships, fell ill and was unable to proceed. He and all the rest of the party but four of the sturdiest men turned back. The photographer, F. Jay Haynes; Edward Wilson, a government scout, and two other [illegible] on. It took them twenty-nine d[illegible] the circuit of the park. 20[illegible] thermometer ranged betw[illegible] and 50 degrees below zero most of the time, and the adventure nearly cost them their lives.

Winter Population of the "Playground."

The total winter population of the park is usually between four and five hundred people. These include three troops of cavalry. The cavalry can use their horses only during the summer months. During the winter they are stabled at Fort Yellowstone. The stage horses are driven down to the lowlands, miles away, when the tourist season is over, and graze in the sheltered valleys there until the snows melt.

In the great hotels that are thronged during the tourist season live only the caretakers, generally two in each place, a man and his wife. The first blizzard isolates from the world outside everybody in this great national domain that has an area of 3,312 square miles. No valley within its limits has an elevation of less than 6,000 feet, while many of the mountain peaks within and near the Park rise from 10,000 to 14,000 feet above sea level. Yellowstone Lake, 15 by 20 miles in size, is the largest body of water in America at that altitude, 7,741 feet above the sea. On the summit of the range, a few miles south of Yellowstone Lake, is Two Ocean Pond, a small lake with two outlets, one into the Atlantic through the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, the other into the Pacific through the Snake river, a branch of the Columbia. The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, ten miles long, has an average depth of 1,200 feet, and is the most brilliantly colored landscape in existence. But in winter everything is blanketed with snow eight to ten feet deep. All is ice-bound except the more than half a hundred great geysers that throw their columns of boiling water hundreds of feet in the air, almost as little seen by humankind as when they began their spoutings ages ago.

From December to March the enforced dwellers in the Park are nearly as much cut off from the world as though they were penned in by the Polar ice. Of course the telephone and the telegraph bring them scraps of news from the outer world, but the only way of getting about is on snowshoes or skis. Even then the distances between the places where the people live are so great and the ways so dangerous that few venture forth. Only the Government scouts, whose duty it is to look after the wild life in the Park and see that it is not molested by poachers, get out at all. The rest of the people there are like the bears—they hibernate until Spring. An ample supply of fuel and provisions is laid in before the first snowstorms begin to sweep over the Continental Divide, and there is little to do until the sun swings northward and the snows melt.

Building a Hotel Amid Arctic Temperature.

Despite the arctic rigors of this region, however, 250 men have been fighting the cold there this winter completing the fifth of the big hotels that are the halting places of tourists in this summer playground that belongs to the people of the United States. The first order prepared on the kitchen ranges of this new hostelry, which stands on the brink of the great precipice down which roars endlessly the mighty cataract of the Yellowstone, was for nails. Nails big and little, brads and spikes, tenpennies and shingles, had to be heated on the cook stoves before the carpenters could handle them. The reason for this haste was that the new hotel had to be finished in time for the summer season, when the park is in its brief period of verdant glory.

More people will go to the Yellowstone National Park this year than ever before. In 1872, when the Federal Government dedicated it "as a public park or pleasure ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people," probably not more than a thousand persons a year were visiting it. In the next twenty-three years the number of visitors climbed slowly to about 5,000 annually. In 1895, the authorities began counting the persons who entered the Park, and complete records have been kept ever since. There were 5,438 visitors in 1895. Ten years later the number had risen to 26,188. In 1906, it dropped to 17,172. The next year it fell off nearly a thousand. In 1908, the total was 18,748. Then came the most remarkable increase in visitors that the park ever has known. In 1909, there were nearly twice as many (32,545) as the year before. This was principally due to the opening of a new railroad gateway to the park—at Yellowstone, Montana—which made it much easier of access.

A Bit of E. H. Harriman's Wizardry.

This came about through a visit that the late E. H. Harriman made to the Park in the summer of 1904. He was so impressed by the wonders of the Park that he immediately ordered the location and construction of a branch from the Oregon Short Line, a part of the Union Pacific system, to the western border of the Park. This road, from Idaho Falls to Yellowstone, Montana, twenty miles from the lower Geyser Basin, was finished Nov. 12, 1907, and was opened for traffic the following June. It is 107 miles long and cost nearly $2,000,000. Its construction called into play the greatest energy and skill in the science of railroad building.

Owing to the deep snows and severe winters work could be carried on during only about four months of the year. But, in that brief season, a vast army of men and machines toiled night and day. The giant mountain barriers with their deep valleys in between had to be conquered. That part of the earth where the rails ran had to be remodeled so as to secure the safest and easiest grades. Probably no railway, where so many obstacles had to be overcome, ever was built in so short a time. But the largely increased number of visitors to the Park has proved that the new line is fully appreciated. Of the more than 40,000 who entered the Park last year nearly half went by this new Western Gateway that Mr. Harriman created.

The government scouts who are guardians of the wild creatures are about the only ones who ever see much of the winter beauties of the Park. Those who have been there any length of time have learned much that is new about the habits of the animals that abound there, although they are chiefly concerned in keeping poachers out of the park. There are fewer of these now than there used to be, because heavier penalties have been laid by the Government on those who are caught. The few that do venture into the Park mostly come in winter. Then there is less chance of their being detected, but more risk of losing their lives in the cold and snow. One thing more than all others tempts them—the buffalo. Unscrupulous taxidermists will pay the weight in silver for a buffalo head nowadays, for these heads are practically unattainable by legitimate means. The rest of the wild creatures that make their homes in the Park are seldom molested.

Poaching in the Deep Snows.

It has been seventeen years since one of these poachers after buffalo has been caught, but he did so much damage before he was arrested that it has taken a long time to make up for it.

Early in March, 1894, a party was organized at Fort Yellowstone for the purpose of visiting the winter ranges of the game to ascertain the exact number of buffalo that still existed and to photograph them. The party traveled on Norwegian snowshoes, with packs of sleeping bags, provisions and camera, directly to Hayden Valley via Norris and the Grand Canyon. They found eighty-one buffalo in the valley, together with numerous small groups of elk aggregating more than 300.

In a secluded spot toward the end of the second day's march they discovered the cache of a poacher. They were much surprised at this, as they had had no idea that there was any one in the Park killing game. The cache consisted of a canvas tepee, sleeping bag, provisions and toboggan, and they found six buffalo heads suspended in a tree nearby. A trace of fire in the tepee led the scouts to believe that the poacher was not far away. To capture him was the next move. It had been snowing constantly all the morning, and all the snowshoe tracks leading from the camp were entirely obliterated. The scouts separated and went in different directions.

When five miles from the camp one of them heard a half dozen rifle shots in rapid succession. Hastening through the timber in that direction, he came upon an opening in the forest and saw the poacher. He had driven six of the buffalo into the deep snow and had slaughtered the entire band. The scout was alone and armed only with a revolver. Poachers of this kind are desperate men. They know that the arm of the Federal Government is long and its grip sure once it seizes them. Therefore they fight to the last. No desperado is more reckless of his life. The scout knew all this, but did not hesitate for a moment. It was still snowing hard, and neither the poacher nor his dog noticed the scout's approach. The scout was within twenty feet of the poacher and had him covered with his revolver before he told him to throw up his hands. A moment more, and he was disarmed. Then he was handcuffed and taken to the guardhouse at Fort Yellowstone. He had killed about one-eighth of all the buffalo in the Park.

Elks and Bears Very Comfortable in the "Big Cold."

There are about 250 buffalo in the Park now. To protect them more effectually against poachers about 200 are kept in an inclosure and have become partly domesticated. The remainder run wild in the country to the east of Yellowstone Lake.

Fully 5,000 elk winter in the foothills of Mount Washburn, on Specimen Ridge, along the east fork of the Yellowstone and along the main stream of that river clear to the base of Mount Evarts. During the winter the elk live in "yards"—places 500 to 1,000 feet in diameter, where they keep the snow trodden down. The bull elks patrol these "yards" at night so as to keep away the mountain lions and other animals that prey upon them.

The elks shed their horns about the first of March, and until they grow out again lead a quiet life so that their sprouting horns will not be injured. At the time when they shed their horns they are still herded together, and now and then a scout will run across some secluded spot in the primeval wilderness where the ground is covered with two or three score of these great antlers, some of them six or seven feet long. They are allowed to remain where they are, for it is not permitted to take them from the Park or even to use them for decorative purposes there. But before the end of the next winter they disappear. The field mice and other small rodents eat them.

The bears that are seen around the hotels in the summer time, stealing garbage or fighting the searchlight when it is turned on them at night go into winter quarters in November or December and sleep until spring. There are hundreds of them, black, brown and grizzly. They go into caves or hollow logs or under the roots of trees that the snow will cover. There are many natural caves in the Park. Sometimes four or five bears will snuggle up to each other in the same cave and sleep the winter away. It is in winter, too, that the cubs are born. When the baby bear comes into the world he is not much bigger than a rat, but he grows and grows in his cave, kept warm by his mother until spring. When he emerges into the light he is a full grown cub, quite able to take care of himself and fight anything of his size.

A Paradise For Wild Things.

Millions of trout come up into the smaller streams to spawn in the spring. Bears live mostly on berries and fish, when they can get them. Since there are no berries in the spring the bears break their fast on fish. They wade into the creeks and scoop them out with their paws. When the little bears get tired of catching fish in the shallow pools they go hunting for moles and work as industriously as puppy dogs digging them out of the earth. Springtime, when the bears are lean and hungry, is their busiest time.

Three-fourths of the Park is a dense forest, a primeval wilderness. Away from the few hotels, the roads and the trails the Park today is what it was before even a Pharaoh reigned in Egypt. It is such a paradise for the wild things that roam at will there that they have less to fear, even from each other and from the elements, than anywhere else in the wilderness. When the fury of the winter storms drives the elk, deer, mountain sheep and antelope into the sheltered valleys and canyons they have nothing to be afraid of except the pelting, driven steel-dust of the mountain blizzards. Nature is kind even to the birds. On the great terraces where the stupendous springs of hot water flow incessantly gather great flocks of wild ducks and other fowl.

In this region, nearly 8,000 feet above the sea, where the mercury sinks away below zero from December to March, there is far more wonder and mystery in midwinter than the summer tourist ever gets a hint of. Civilization is miles away across a wilderness of shining, snowclad mountains. The gale driven snow dances over this waste and is piled into fantastic drifts. Sometimes it is swept with a roar through the mountain gorges faster than the swiftest railway train ever traveled. It covers to the eaves some of the big hotels. In summer time these places are buzzing with life, but in winter they are pictures of desolation, almost indistinguishable from the rest of the landscape beneath the enshrouding snow. If the caretakers wish to get out they have to obtain exit from a window on one of the upper floors. Tall trees buried in the snow appear like bushes. The general aspect of the country is entirely changed.

Masses of Purest White in Place of Brilliant Hued Rocks.

The incomparable wonder of the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone, that huge gash in the earth whose walls glow with every tint of jewels and flowers, is a mass of purest white save where here and there the winds have swept away the snow and left the brilliant hued rocks exposed. Their reds and yellows and purples and crimsons glow the brighter in contrast with the surrounding whiteness. The black foliage of the pines stands out sharply. Where the water slides over the precipice and forms the Great Falls of the Yellowstone it roars down as white as carded wool. Down at the bottom of the gorge, where the waters are swift and deep, they are black. There are immense icicles 200 feet long. An ice bridge a hundred feet high is formed at the base of the falls.

The great geysers play endlessly, each at its appointed period, although no one is there to see them. Every seventy minutes Old Faithful sends its column of water and steam 300, 500, sometimes 1,000 feet into the air and holds it there for three minutes. Sometimes the winds unfold from its top an iridescent banner of spray; at other times the fountain form is a perfect cone. In winter its boiling hot water gives off a vast cloud of drifting steam. At nightfall of a January evening this immutable water clock of the Yellowstone becomes a spectre of ghostly white, a sight so strange and startling that even those who neighbor with it never lose their awe of its majesty. All about the geysers the foliage of the trees is heavily laden with ice, giving them a thousand fantastic shapes. A cloud of vapor, like the steam from some great manufacturing city, hangs and drifts over the geyser basins—the workshop of nature.

The "Sisterhood" of the Geysers.

There are more than fifty in this giant sisterhood of geysers. Not even in Iceland or New Zealand or anywhere else where the earth is still being made is there such a convent of their order as in the Yellowstone. No one ever has been able to describe them adequately in words any more than it has been possible to tell on the printed page the extent of the wonders in this "workshop of the Almighty." It is a place where almost every form of creative eccentricity in nature is found.

But the geysers play unseen, and the agents that are molding the earth keep at their tasks in solitude all winter long. The great streams and waterfalls never rest in their toil of tearing down the heights and building up the valleys. Only during three months in the year is it possible for many people to see this Titanic work of Nature in progress. If those who travel for pleasure every summer knew how curious and beautiful a place the Park is there would be as great an influx of visitors between the 15th of June, when the season begins, and the 15th of September, when it ends, as now sail away to Europe for rest and play.

To get to the new gateway to this wonderland by the most direct route the traveler branches off from the main line of the Union Pacific at Ogden, Utah. A night's ride in a Pullman lands him at Yellowstone station, the western entrance of the Park, ready for the 158 mile tour in the Monida and Yellowstone stages that are awaiting him. The trip through the Park may be made in five days, or it may be cut down to two by visiting the region of the Geysers alone.

Many, Many Wonderful Things.

There are many wonderful things on the road before one gets to the Yellowstone park, however. Going west from Ogden on the Union Pacific is one of the most stupendous pieces of railway engineering in the world, the great Salt Lake cut-off that was constructed at a cost of $6,000,000 to save forty-three miles of the distance between Ogden and San Francisco. It crosses the Great Salt Lake at its deepest portion and is 102½ miles long. Some of the best engineers in the world pronounced this cut-off impossible, but it was built and is one of the unique features of American railroading.

Another thing that attracts travelers is Salt Lake City itself, which has been constantly in the public eye ever since it was a little huddle of wagons in the wilderness more than three generations ago. In many ways it is one of the most remarkable cities in the world, and as the seat of power of the religious empire of the Mormons it is unique. The Tabernacle, with its great organ, the biggest in the world, and the other notable buildings have been described over and over again, but no words or photographs can picture them adequately any more than they can a bath in the lake itself—in water in which one cannot sink.

To get to the Yellowstone National Park or to Salt Lake City is now one of the easiest things imaginable. The directions are simple: You go to Ogden by the Union Pacific, the new and direct route, turn to the north for the park and to the south for the "City of the Saints."

The "First Man on the Ground."

It is just a hundred and four years since the Yellowstone territory was discovered. A trapper and hunter found it. He was one John Colter, a private of the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition. When, in 1806, this distinguished band of pioneers retraced their steps and started back to St. Louis over their route that eventually opened up the great Northwest Colter broke away. All by himself, he set out for the headwaters of the Missouri. He was practically forgotten when, four years later, he came into St. Louis, tattered, torn, Indian-like in his ways, but bubbling over with enthusiasm.

He had seen the most wonderful place in the world, he said, where steam came out of the earth and scalding water leaped miles high, where there were diabolical furnaces under ground. It would have been the "abode of the damned," he said, but for the fact that there was no sign, for hundreds of miles, of human beings. Surrounded by the curious, John Colter talked for days on the wonders he had seen. And he met with the fate of many; no one believed him.

He told of too many wonders. Mt. Louisiana marveled, then laughed, then, for many a long year, spoke of "Colter's Hell." They thought he had imagined it all.

But Colter, trapper, pioneer and discoverer, proved exactly right. It was not until thirty-four years later that he was found to have told the truth. Bridger, the noted guide, confirmed his romantic story.