

REPORT

OF THE

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT

OF THE

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

TO THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

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1899.

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YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK,  
OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT,  
*Wawona, Cal., October 28, 1899.*

SIR: In compliance with instructions from your office I have the honor to make the following report of operations in the Yosemite National Park for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1899:

On the 26th of May, 1898, Mr. J. W. Zevely was appointed special inspector and acting superintendent of Yosemite National Park. Under his directions suitable notices were published in the newspapers of the surrounding counties, warning all persons against trespass; also, notices were posted in prominent places at the entrances to the park. During the time he was acting superintendent, namely, up to September 1, 1898, he states that he expelled from the park 189,550 head of sheep, 350 head of horses, 1,000 head of cattle, and captured 27 fire-arms.

On September 1, 1898, he was relieved as acting superintendent by Capt. Joseph E. Caine, Utah Volunteer Cavalry. Captain Caine reported forest fires numerous. The late arrival of his command left the park practically unguarded during the spring and summer months. He reports that the drought during the year forced many sheep and cattle men to seek grazing in the National Park; that there was work for an entire troop of cavalry, and that a squadron could be used to advantage; that he captured many herders and subdued many incipient forest fires; also, that the owners and lessees of patented lands within the park allowed their sheep and cattle to roam over the entire park. He scattered this stock, but as the law does not provide for any other punishment this was about all that could have been done. He reports the condition of the toll roads in the park as excellent. He recommends that the Tioga road be repaired, as it is now practically useless, repairs costing probably \$15,000.

Captain Caine considers this the most important road in the park for a proper patrol of the same. He urges the necessity for a system of severe penalties for trespass by herders, hunters, and other violators of the rules of the park. He also recommends the purchase by the Government of all patented lands within the park limits. The final report of Captain Caine was dated January, 1899. From records in this office I find that the park was under the control of Lieut. W. H. McMasters, Twenty-fourth Regiment of Infantry, with a detachment

of 25 men of the Twenty-fourth Infantry, he being relieved June 21, 1899, by Lieut. William Forse, Third Artillery, with a similar detachment of that regiment. I am unable to find any records as to the operations of these troops outside of the monthly reports rendered to the Interior Department, but from the present condition of affairs I am convinced that the park was as well guarded and protected as possible considering the small number of men detailed for the purpose.

As requested by the Secretary of the Interior I have the honor to render the following report:

Under orders from the commanding general department of California I left the Presidio of San Francisco, Cal., August 1, 1899, arriving at Wawona, Cal., August 4, 1899, and relieving Lieutenant Forse, Third Artillery, as acting superintendent. I had with me 50 men of my troop, and very soon discovered that I could actively and usefully employ the two officers and the remaining soldiers pertaining to my command. The balance of the troop was ordered to join August 22, 1899. I found the camp near Wawona in very bad condition for the comfort and health of soldiers. My first efforts were devoted to fixing up the camp. I purchased the necessary lumber for the construction of tent floors, which were constructed by my soldiers. After the camp had been placed in a proper condition I proceeded upon a system of patrols in all directions within the limits of the national park. One patrol, on returning to camp, was immediately succeeded by another over the same part of the country, to prevent the possibility of herders and hunters coming in on the heels of the troops. This system I continued and am continuing at the present writing. I have found evidences of sheep having been grazed, prior to my arrival, in the southeastern and northern parts of the park, also that cattle owned by the holders of patented lands have been allowed to stray to a limited extent; these I have scattered as far as possible and have directed their owners, in personal interviews, to comply with the law in this respect, as well as that of having their lands properly surveyed and monumented. The instructions have been complied with, and for the past two months I do not believe there has been any unlawful herding or trespassing within the limits of the park. The grass in all the meadow lands is high and affords good grazing. There has been no hunting in the park since my arrival. The deer are fairly plentiful and very tame, showing that they have not been fired upon recently. Frequent bear signs have been observed, quail and gray tree squirrels are numerous, and I have observed a number of tracks of the mountain lion and lynx. Trout are plentiful in the streams and lakes, being mostly of the rainbow variety. The protection of the game can only be accomplished by the presence of troops. I have deprived campers and would-be hunters of about 30 firearms since my arrival. As the game is a source of great pleasure to tourists, it can not be too carefully preserved.

As to repairs within the park limits I have the honor to renew the following recommendations:

1. Rebuilding bridge over Toulumne River, in Hetch Hetchy Valley.
2. Rebuilding bridge over Rancheria Creek, in Hetch Hetchy Valley.
3. Building bridge over Fall River, in Hetch Hetchy Valley.
4. Repairing about 100 yards of trail about bluff on north side of Toulumne River, in Hetch Hetchy Valley.
5. Building bridge over North Fork San Joaquin River.

6. Repairing trail up Chilnualna Creek.
7. Repairing and changing trail into Hetch Hetchy Valley.
8. Building trail from Granite Creek to Merced Basin.
9. Repairing trail up Rancheria Mountain.
10. Building bridge over Slide Creek at Pleasant Valley.
11. Repairing trail from Pleasant Valley to Rodgers Meadows.
12. Building bridge over Toulumne River at Soda Springs.

I would further recommend that authority be obtained from the State of California for the establishment of a camp for troops within the Yosemite Valley, that being a more central and convenient point from which to patrol. The only objection is the difficulty of getting in supplies in bad weather.

A permanent camp should be constructed in the vicinity of Wawona. The weather in the fall is cold and wet, and the snow liable to be very deep. My horses and mules are now suffering very much from this cause. A good shed stable is a necessity; a mess house and kitchen and a large room for a library should be built. Lumber is easily obtained from the Miami sawmills, 14 miles from Wawona, at a reasonable cost. The total expense of the three buildings, in my opinion, would not exceed \$1,000. Troops will always be necessary here for the proper protection of the park.

It is a grand and beautiful country, abounding in interesting flora and fauna, and the scenery I believe to be the most magnificent in the world. There has been this year a large increase of tourists and sight-seers, and the increase will continue from year to year if facilities for travel and conditions of park improve.

As far as I can learn the national park has not been properly surveyed and monumented. This is a most important matter, and should receive attention as soon as possible. The owners of patented lands should all be bought out by the Government, thus removing one great source of trouble and destruction within the park limits.

I earnestly recommend that penalties be fixed for violation of park regulations, as is the case in the Yellowstone National Park. In the absence of fixed laws in this respect little can be done beyond harassing and making it uncomfortable, as far as possible, for trespassers.

With regard to forest fires there have been several large fires in the northeastern part of the park, above the Yosemite Valley, also one fire on the southern border. Everything that was possible was done to extinguish these fires, but they were entirely beyond control. They did little or no damage. In reference to this matter, these fires only destroy the fallen and dead timber and dry underbrush, doing little damage to live trees, but making them unsightly on account of the blackening of the bark. In my opinion a systematic burning out of fallen timber, underbrush, and dead trees along the traveled part of the park would be a great benefit and prevent the recurrence of forest fires. These fires have been extinguished by recent heavy storms.

The question of diverting waters flowing into the park has been reported to the honorable Secretary, and a definite decision in this respect should be arrived at. The particular instance brought to my attention was that of a lumber firm which has dug a ditch for the purpose of diverting the waters of Raynor Creek. Raynor Creek supplies most of the water that flows into the South Fork of the Merced River, through Big Creek, and Big Creek is the only source of water supply for drinking purposes of the Government camp near Wawona. This

ditch is constructed on private lands, but, in my opinion, the riparian law ought to have effect in this instance. It would be a bad precedent to permit the diversion of waters flowing into the park.

The preservation of the park is a matter of national interest, and this interest will increase as years go by; therefore it is well worthy of all the care and attention that can be bestowed upon it.

I can, at the present date, report the park free from hunters and stock. The old residents and guides here have informed me that they have never seen the park in better condition.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. F. WILLCOX,

*Captain, Sixth Cavalry,*

*Acting Superintendent Yosemite National Park.*

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

*Washington, D. C.*

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PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.,

*October 28, 1899.*

SIR: I have the honor to make the following report upon the condition of affairs in the Yosemite National Park during the time I was acting superintendent, June 19 to August 3, 1899. During this time I found stock, in several instances, had been allowed to graze on Government land, and in each case coming to my notice it was driven out. Some of the stock was found just inside of the park boundary line, having been allowed to wander over by the herders from without to graze on meadow grass. In other cases stockmen with permits to drive their stock to their patented land would, after having it there, allow the stock to stray onto Government land. In most cases it was found that the fences were in poor condition, and consequently the stock could not be kept within bound unless herders were kept on the watch at all times. In several instances I had the stockmen repair their fences before the stock was driven in.

Hunters and fishermen did not violate the park regulations; at least no one was found killing game or with it in their possession. I granted permits to persons wishing to fish, but to no one did I grant a permit to kill game. In some instances, however, persons were found carrying firearms within the park limits without permits; in such cases the arms were taken up.

Forest fires were the most difficult problem with which I had to contend, the underbrush being very thick in some places, and a fire, once under headway, is difficult to control unless a large force of men, about one hundred, with proper implements, be immediately put to work. In making recommendations I would recommend that about twenty shovels and about one hundred strong iron rakes be kept at all times within the park. These implements, I think, should be under the charge of the acting superintendent of the park during the time the troops are there; and when the troops are not there, I recommend that these implements be kept at some central point, say near the Sentinel Hotel, and under the charge of some responsible person who understands how to fight fire, whose duty will be to look after the interests of the park and who will have authority to hire men in case of fire.

Another means of lessening the danger of fire would be to burn out the underbrush. This could be done without great danger by doing so after the first rains or snows. This means would, in a manner, mar the rugged beauty of the park. I think the former plan the better one. My reasons for making the above recommendations are as follows: Troops stationed within the park do not have many rakes and shovels with them, and sometimes not the proper kind, and therefore could not be depended upon to furnish the necessary implements in case of fire. I could not furnish one-tenth enough in such a case, and could not get the necessary implements within the park unless I purchased them, and then only a few.

Very respectfully,

WILLIAM FORSE,  
*Second Lieutenant, Third Artillery.*

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