

REPORT

OF THE

ACTING SUPERINTENDENT

OF THE

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

TO THE

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

FOR

THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1897.



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ACTING SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK.

YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK,
OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT,
Camp near Wawona, Cal., August 26, 1897.

SIR: In compliance with your instructions, I have the honor to submit the following report of the condition of affairs in the Yosemite National Park.

Under orders from headquarters, Department of California, I reported to you by letter, and received soon after my arrival here a letter directing me to be guided by the instructions given to acting superintendents in the past.

I left the Presidio of San Francisco on May 10 with Troop K, Fourth Cavalry, which had been designated to guard this park during the present season. The troop reached this place on May 22.

On May 26 the first patrol went out to scout the western part of the park, going as far as Till Till. Since that time patrols have been moving through the whole park. Up to last week they have been under command of officers, but now, owing to the fact of there being but two officers on duty here, it has become necessary to send out some of them under noncommissioned officers. The guard at Crocker's, consisting of a noncommissioned officer and three privates, established last year by Colonel Young, has been kept up this year, and is valuable and necessary. It gets most of the firearms brought in over the Big Oak Flat and Coulterville roads, instructs campers as to the park regulations, escorts cattle brought in on permits and belonging to holders of patented lands within the park, besides performing numerous other duties. The regular patrols have found that there is less trespassing in the park than in past years. Very few signs of sheep have been found inside the park line, and they were mainly in the eastern and southeastern part of the park, which are accessible to persons crossing from the eastern side earlier than they are to our patrols. Even when we can get through the snow, progress is often barred by the lack of bridges, to which attention will be called later. The patrols sent there at the earliest possible date found signs of sheep having been driven across the southeast corner of the park.

In July, Lieutenant Benson caught a herd of sheep and three herders near the head of Rush Creek. With the exception of that part of the park, there seem to have been no sheep more than half a mile inside the line. The depredations committed by sheep and their herders are the worst that we have to contend with. The northern part of the

park, which was formerly full of sheep, is now clear. Cattle which used to range over the whole western half of the park are now restricted to the land belonging to their owners, who are held to a strict compliance with the rules laid down by the Secretary of the Interior. One cattle owner, whose range in the northwestern part of the park is difficult of access, owns 160 acres and claimed the right to use a whole township. He had also been in the habit of making campers move on, claiming to own the land in which they camped. He has now removed his cattle and horses from all the land not owned by him.

The game in the park seems to be increasing in numbers, and the deer and other animals show less fear of human beings than they have shown in past years, an indication that they are not hunted so much as they formerly were. The rigid enforcement of the rule against carrying firearms in the park has produced good results. This is largely due to the establishment of the guard near Crocker's, as a large part of the game killers formerly entered by the Big Oak Flat and Coulterville roads. One hundred and thirty-two firearms of different kinds have been taken from persons entering the park. I know of only one person having been found inside the park with firearms in his possession, and that was a small pistol. Colonel Young received information that, after the departure of the troops, last November hunters came into the park and killed a good many deer. In this connection it is deemed important to call attention to the fact that Indians from Nevada come in late every fall and kill deer in great quantities. A party of them were caught in the act of hunting on Porcupine Creek in the latter part of October, 1895. The Interior Department should take steps to prevent a recurrence of this conduct on the part of the Indians.

Through the courtesy of the United States Fish Commission, and still more so through the efforts of the California fish commission, many streams and lakes have in the last few years been stocked with trout. This subject was fully reported upon by Colonel Young in the two reports submitted by him last year.

It is to be regretted that the trout furnished this year were in such a weak condition that many of them died before they could be distributed, although the distribution was begun at the earliest possible date. The fish intended for waters then inaccessible were put in streams that could be reached.

During the last two years most of this work has been done by First Lieut. Harry C. Benson, Fourth Cavalry, to whose energy and judgment is largely due the great increase of fish in the streams and lakes of the park.

Forest fires have been unusually numerous this year. Owing to the prompt action and hard work of the noncommissioned officer in charge of the guard at Crocker's, a fire that threatened the Merced Big Tree Grove was put out before it could do any harm to these trees. The largest fire occurred near Hazel Green, and burned over a tract covering several square miles. A detachment of 20 men did much to prevent its spreading still more. At last accounts it had been extinguished by rain, except in one place. Many fires were reported soon enough to enable detachments to extinguish them before they had spread very far. These fires are generally due to the ignorance or willful carelessness of campers. The one near Hazel Green was undoubtedly started by two campers, who had, unfortunately, left the park before the starting of the fire was traced to them. Some large timber, much of fair size, and all the young growth were destroyed.

It is to be regretted that the persons to whose carelessness these fires were due escaped without being taken into custody. There is good reason to suspect that some of the fires have been deliberately started by persons just outside the park line and brought in by the strong westerly winds that have been blowing for some time.

In 1894, Lieutenant McClure, Fifth Cavalry, on duty in this park with Troop C, Fourth Cavalry, prepared a map of the park. He was again on duty here in 1895, and made important additions and corrections in his map, from notes taken by himself and Lieutenants Benson and Smedberg, Fourth Cavalry. Last year Lieutenant Benson took up the work where Lieutenant McClure had left it. All through last winter he worked at it, and has produced an excellent and accurate map. A comparison of this map, which is inclosed, with that of Lieutenant McClure, which was published with my report in 1895, will show the corrections made, and will also show the new trails opened and blazed during the past two years. I have the honor to recommend that Lieutenant Benson's map be published with this report, and that the original be returned.

By careful study of the records of the land offices at Stockton and Independence, and by making tracings of the maps in the surveyor-general's office, Lieutenant Benson has also compiled a large scale map, showing in colors all patented lands within the boundaries of the park. This map has been of great value in passing upon the many questions of ownership that are constantly coming up, and it can not fail to be of inestimable service to any new officer coming here as superintendent.

The necessity for a careful and accurate survey of the park lines has been urged ever since the park was established, and grows more imperative from year to year. I saw in the public press a report that the survey was to be made this year, and received later a letter from a surveyor, who said that he had the contract for making the survey. Since then nothing more has been heard from him, but it has been rumored that the survey is not to be begun this year. The lines of the park ought to be carefully surveyed and clearly marked, in order that the law abiding may know how far they can properly go, and that the willful trespassers may not be able to advance a plea of ignorance.

There are in the park four principal roads, the only ones really worthy of the name. These are the road of the Yosemite Stage and Turnpike Company, from Wawona to the Yosemite Valley; the Big Oak Flat road, which enters the park about 3 miles west of Crocker's and runs into the Yosemite Valley at the foot of El Capitan; the Coulterville road, which crosses the park line about 3 miles south of the Big Oak Flat road and runs to the lower end of the Yosemite Valley; the Tioga road, built by the Great Sierra Wagon Road Company, running from Crocker's to the eastern part of the park, about 50 miles. All these roads are toll roads, and all are kept up by the companies running them, except the Tioga road, which has been allowed, through disuse, to become entirely out of repair. The three first-named roads are the routes by which nearly all tourists and campers enter the park, the number coming in on horseback by trail constituting only a very small percentage of the total number. The roughness of the country and the many difficulties of construction to be overcome made the first cost of these roads very great; the severe winter, with a very heavy snowfall, make necessary the expenditure of considerable sums annually to put them in repair in the spring. The consequence is that the companies, to get a fair return on their investments, have to charge

high rates of toll. Now that the Government has established a national park, it seems only right that it should buy and maintain all these roads, including the Tioga road. The last-named road was fully described in Colonel Young's report in 1896. There is nothing to add to his remarks, except to call attention to the fact that the condition of this road grows worse from year to year.

Besides the tourists who go to the Yosemite Valley by the different stage lines, it is a conservative estimate to say that from 3,000 to 4,000 persons enter the park in wagons owned or hired by them. Some of them are people of sufficient means to buy what hay and grain they need and to pay their toll without feeling the expense, but the majority are not. Many farmers in the hot and unhealthy San Joaquin Valley harvest their crops and then take advantage of the season of comparative rest to put their families and a few weeks' provisions in their wagons and take them to the mountains. Most of them have to carefully consider every item of expense. Free roads, well kept, and plenty of good grazing would enable many of them to seek health and pleasure in the Yosemite National Park who are now unable to do so. For these the purchase and repair of the Tioga road would be of great benefit. Along this road are numbers of large and beautiful meadows, furnishing excellent grazing for the stock, and the scenery along the road includes some of the most beautiful in the park. From different camping places along this road persons traveling in wagons could visit points, now accessible to none but those having pack animals. Cathedral Park, Virginia Canyon, Mount Conness, Mount Gibbs, Mount Lyell, the Parker Glacier, and other places of scarcely less interest could be visited by trips of only one day from points that could be reached by wagons. The cool climate and the excellent and abundant water would attract many campers, who would take an interest in the park and would derive much benefit from it. The State of California has bought and made free all parts of those toll roads lying within the Yosemite grant belonging to the State.

I earnestly recommend that the Government purchase all these roads and that ample provision be made for their maintenance and repair. The cost of putting the Tioga road into good condition would probably be not less than \$10,000.

The purchase and repair of this road by the Government would make the guarding of the park much easier, and would add greatly to the practical efficiency of the troops assigned to that work.

In the winter of 1895-96, after the return of this troop from the park, Brig. Gen. James W. Forsyth, commanding the Department of California, after consultation with myself and the other officers who had been on duty here the season before, made the following recommendation:

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There should be a good trail just inside of the border, starting from Wawona, going by Duncans, Buck Camp, Granite Creek Plateau, Merced Peak, and Little Jackass Meadows; thence by the Mammoth trail to Soda Springs, on the San Joaquin; thence to Agnews Pass, Rush Creek, Gem Pass, Glacier Pass, Parker Pass, to the head of Mono Pass; thence by the Alkali Creek to Virginia Canyon, Piute Mountain, Benson Lake, Arndt Lake, Thompsons Canyon, Stubble Field Canyon, Jackmains Canyon, Laurel Lake, Lake Eleanor, McGills Ranch, via Lake Vernon, Till Till Valley, to Hog Ranch. When this trail is completed, other trails running from this toward the center of the park should also be constructed, in order to facilitate proper patrolling of the interior.

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It is difficult to make an accurate estimate of the total cost of these trails, but I recommend that the sum of \$7,000 be appropriated and

expended in the construction of so much of them as can be built for that sum. This would include the construction of bridges over the following streams:

Chilnualna Creek.....	\$75
South Fork of Merced River.....	100
Granite Creek.....	100
North Fork of San Joaquin River.....	150
San Joaquin River.....	150
Rush Creek.....	150
Mount Lyell fork of Tuolumne River.....	150
Dana fork of Tuolumne River.....	100
Alkali Creek.....	75
Return Creek.....	100
Matterhorn Creek.....	100
Slide River.....	100
Rancheria Creek (in Hetch Hetchy).....	150
Tuolumne River (in Hetch Hetchy).....	400
Fall River, below fall.....	50
Fall River, at Lake Vernon.....	200
Lake streams in Eleanor Creek.....	200
Total.....	2,350

These estimates are merely approximate. Some of these bridges might be built for less than the sum named, while others might cost more. It is, however, believed that if one man had the contract for all the work the bridges asked for could easily be built for the total sum named.

These bridges should be of hewn timber, with strong flooring and substantial side rails, and built for the passage of pack and saddle animals. All the streams named are dangerous to cross in the spring and early summer; some of them at all times. Besides their value to the troops patrolling the park, these bridges and trails would enable tourists to have access to many parts of the park now practically closed to them. A telephone line, with not less than six stations, should be built on the course of the trail.

The necessity for more stringent regulations and for a penalty for violation thereof has been dwelt on by all superintendents, and it is essential to the welfare of the park that penalties be imposed for trespass.

The subject of mining within the park limits is an important one, to which it has hitherto been impossible to give the necessary attention, in view of the other more important ones that have so fully occupied the time and work of the troops. After a careful study of the subject, I shall report upon it in a supplementary report at the close of the season. The present excitement on the subject of mining will probably make this a more important matter than it has been in the past.

Much of the land in the park is owned by individuals, the title thereto having been acquired before or soon after the establishment of the park. The Government should own all the land inside the park, and none should be given over to private use, except for the purpose named in the act reserving the land now included in the Yosemite National Park. The prompt purchase by the Government of all patented lands within the park will be to the benefit of the United States and to that of most of the owners of such lands.

Repeated efforts have been made to cut down the limits of the park. Three years' experience here has convinced me that no reduction should be made; and that no concession for the use of any part of the park by private individuals should be made, except for the purpose already mentioned.

As the weather is cold and wet here in the fall, a messhouse and kitchen, with a large room for the library, should be built, so that the men may have a comfortable place to spend the long evenings. A stable with open sides is also needed.

The Yosemite National Park has now been in existence for nearly seven years. During this time the officers and enlisted men on duty here have done much hard work to carry out the purpose of the act of Congress creating the park. No money has been appropriated for its maintenance; no penalty has been imposed for violation of the law and of the regulations prescribed under the law. In order to carry out the intent of the act, money must be expended and violators of the law must be punished. This park should be put upon the same footing as the Yellowstone National Park.

Very respectfully,

ALEX. RODGERS,
Captain, Fourth Cavalry,
Acting Superintendent Yosemite National Park.

The SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, D. C.

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