



# Unpacking Yellowstone

## *The American National Park in Global Perspective*

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On 19 September 1870, the Washburn-Langford-Doane Expedition struck camp on the Yellowstone Plateau. Over the campfire, the group ruminated on a three-week-long Rocky Mountain adventure that had taken in towering peaks, crashing waterfalls, spouting geysers and otherworldly mineral deposits. In keeping with the modish ethos of westward expansionism, discussion swiftly focused on territorial claims, profit and tourist potential. Judge Cornelius Hedges turned to his compatriots and instead proposed that the area be ‘set apart as a great National Park’. Fellow explorer Nathaniel Langford later remarked, ‘His suggestion met with an instantaneous and favorable response ... I lay awake half of last night thinking about it.’ Two years on, following political lobbying from the likes of Langford and Hedges (among others), 3,300 square miles of monumental scenery in present-day northwest Wyoming was preserved for posterity as Yellowstone National Park.<sup>1</sup>

The inception of the national park idea by a group of altruistic Americans around the campfire remains a compelling image to this day. From Hiram Chittenden’s *The Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive* (1895) through countless pamphlets and pageants, the Madison Junction campfire became associated with the crafting of an illustrious concept. Even doubts over the authenticity of the story failed to dampen its lustre. In a speech commemorating Yellowstone’s 125-year anniversary, then vice-president Al Gore paid heed to Madison Junction as the ‘holy ground’ of American wilderness. The central themes of the story – environmental philanthropy, frontier exploration, wilderness tourism and monumental landscapes – highlighted the symbolic power of conjoining nature and nation. As historian Richard West Sellars mused, ‘Surely the national park concept deserved a “virgin birth” – under a night sky in the pristine American West, on a riverbank, and around a flaming campfire, as if an evergreen cone had fallen near the fire, then heated and expanded and dropped its seeds to spread around the planet.’<sup>2</sup>

In the years since its establishment, Yellowstone has become an American icon. Writer Wallace Stegner issued an effusive celebration of the national park as ‘the best idea we ever had. Absolutely American, absolutely democratic.’ Yellowstone symbolized the special connections between Americans and their land as well as the egalitarian mores of a new republic. It attracted devotees across the social spectrum. In the late 1950s, Hanna Barbera offered an animated homage in the form of ‘Jellystone Park’ and the antics of Yogi Bear while Disneyland in California featured a runaway mine train ride (1956–79) that transported theme park visitors to a facsimile ‘nature’s wonderland’ of geysers and mud pots.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond the United States, Yellowstone achieved global resonance in the realms of environmental diplomacy and popular culture. For environmental historian Donald Worster, the national park denoted ‘one of America’s major contributions to world reform movements’. Just four years after its establishment, the British Earl of Dunraven applauded U.S. authorities for ‘having bequeathed as a free gift to man the beauties and curiosities of “wonderland”’. The preserve in northwestern Wyoming swiftly emerged as the ‘model’: an original national park template that set down critical precepts of protecting wild nature from commercialism, federal/national responsibility for natural resource management and rights of public access and recreation. This formula became a transnational staple for modern states inspired by the remit of civilizing nature, namely, managing relatively unspoiled environments for the purposes of conservation, tourism and identity politics. As historian Aubrey Haines noted, ‘[Yellowstone] has become synonymous, both here and abroad, with much that is basic to the national park ideal.’ By the end of the twentieth century, that ideal had facilitated the creation of 3,881 parks from Arthur’s Pass, New Zealand (1929) to Zakouma, Chad (1963).<sup>4</sup>

This chapter explores the formation, evolution and dissemination of the Yellowstone ‘model’ with a view to understanding its power as a cultural and environmental signifier and globalized conservation product. The first section looks at the birth of the national park movement, situating Yellowstone as a product of American exceptionalism *and* as part of a transnational park-making tradition influenced by ideas about aesthetics, spirituality and ‘the wild’; the mechanics of colonial encounter; and Western modes of territorializing nature. The second section explores early management practices in the national park, looking at how foundational (and now iconic) principles of land protection, public access and nature preservation operated on the ground. Here the idea of a Yellowstone ‘original’ is challenged to reveal the national park as an experimental landscape governed by shifting cultural values. Hence, the civilizing of nature was far from categorical, with practices determined by changing scientific ideas and envirosocial codes. Finally, the third section considers the power of Yellowstone as an export. Despite its overwhelmingly

'American' patina, Yellowstone was an ideal type of the national park brand and a standard for imitation worldwide, with diverse cultures reformulating its basic tenets of resource conservation to fit specific localities.<sup>5</sup>

## **The National Park Movement in the United States**

The national park movement in the United States was irrevocably connected with processes of westward expansion. As Euro-Americans moved westwards across the frontier, taking the modern state, rubrics of 'civilization' and capitalist democracy with them, they engaged with ideas of discovery, progress and environmental transformation. It was precisely this interaction with the 'untamed' West that prompted artist George Catlin to consider the concept of a national park: the first recorded instance of such an idea. Travelling across the Dakotas in the early 1830s, Catlin was mesmerized first by the expanse of the prairie landscape and second, by its residents. Predicting the demise of the Sioux and the bison at the hands of what he termed 'the deadly axe and desolating hand of civilized man', Catlin argued that the government should create a '*nation's Park*, containing man and beast, in all the wild and freshness of their nature's beauty!' In calling for the protection of grasslands, animals and Native American communities as integral aspects of the prairie environment, Catlin's vision proved truly revolutionary.<sup>6</sup>

The establishment of America's inaugural national parks came with the discovery of the soaring peaks and rugged vistas of the far West, a monumental landscape very different to the East. First witnessed by Euro-Americans in the 1850s, the Yosemite Valley of California prompted grandiose commentary from explorers for its redwoods and glacial features. Desires to protect Yosemite from private despoliation led to state park status in 1864, with forty square miles of the Sierra Nevada preserved 'for public resort and recreation'. Moves to protect Yellowstone reflected similar fascination with fantasy worlds of rock and ice. Officially designated as a 'public park' in 1872, Yellowstone stood apart from Yosemite by virtue of its size and federal jurisdiction. Right from the start, Superintendent Nathaniel Langford favoured the appellation 'national park', as did the *Helena Herald*, who proudly referred to Yellowstone as 'our National Park'.<sup>7</sup>

Governed by an emergent cult of wilderness, a reevaluation of nature underpinned the American conservation movement. According to Wallace Stegner, the national park seemed inevitable 'as soon as Americans learned to confront the wild continent not with fear and cupidity but with delight, wonder, and awe'. Whereas the traditional pioneer mentality cast wild nature as a place of temptation, waste and threat, a new generation of Americans (comfortably installed in more urban, and urbane, environments) ventured fresh assess-

ments. No longer viewed as a moral maze requiring subjugation by plough and biblical zeal, untamed spaces earned value for their divine, aesthetic and intellectual qualities. The industrial state came to see wild nature as a place for its citizens to go for spiritual renewal and socioeconomic repose. Modernity demanded pristine nature as its foil. Hence, where pastor William Bradford spoke disparaging of the 'hideous and desolate wilderness' in 1650, Henry David Thoreau proclaimed 'in Wilderness is the preservation of the world' by 1851. Significantly, this idolization of wilderness coalesced around the illusion of a pristine American landscape untouched by humanity, a geography without indigenous peoples and hence very different to George Catlin's 'nation's park'.<sup>8</sup>

According to the dominant epistemology, the wilderness cult was a specifically American phenomenon, a signal of the unique connections between the residents of the New World and their soil. As historian Roderick Nash noted, 'The special American relationship to wilderness – having it, being shaped by it and then almost eliminating it – soon provided the strongest reasons for appreciating Yellowstone and subsequent national parks.' The appreciation of wilderness grew from a frontier condition and pivoted on the idealization of landscapes apparently unmodified by agriculture (and thus distinguished from the Old World). To Nash and others, it exemplified American exceptionalism, expressed in natural bounty and assertive nationhood. However, European as well as American factors exerted an influence. In particular, the philosophy of Romanticism, with its veneration of rugged nature as a repository of spiritual inspiration, advanced the worship of the wild. Thus, when explorer David Folsom described the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River in 1869 as 'beautiful, picturesque, magnificent, grand, sublime, awful, terrible', he referenced the archetypal superlatives of the European Romantic vernacular. From Gainsborough and Wordsworth to Goethe and Rousseau, a legion of Old World artists, poets and writers had betrayed a hankering for gnarled trees, precipices and waterfalls. Meanwhile, in British landscape parks such as Prior Park, Bath, (1754) and Hampton Court (1515), untended chunks of woodland, filled with winding paths and grottoes promised their own playgrounds of thrill, disorder, and transcendence. Europe too boasted a fetish for 'wildernesses', albeit crafted by gardening conceit rather than primordial design.<sup>9</sup>

Along with Romanticism, patriotism contributed a great deal to the U.S. national park project. In place of the castles and cathedrals of Europe, America boasted equally grand *natural* monuments in the form of ancient trees, soaring peaks and rugged chasms. The West thus emerged as a heroic geography, a territory of profound destiny in which Americans planted claims to national greatness, New World identity and moral turpitude. In 1864, Clarence King offered a litany in nature-jingoism in hailing the Sierra redwoods 'living monuments of antiquity' vastly superior to any 'fragment of human work, broken pillar or sand-worn image'. Beautiful nature signalled a solid and pure basis

on which to craft an equally illustrious American empire. Geographic features became figurative ammunition to hurl across the Atlantic in repose to accusations of crass materialism and cultural infancy. Nature was nationalized and nation naturalized. In 1872, the U.S. government paid artist Thomas Moran \$10,000 for a seven-by-twelve-foot canvas entitled *The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone*. Resplendent in the lobby of the U.S. Senate, Moran's homage to Rocky Mountain geo-histrionics offered clear evidence of 'nature's nation' as a foundational myth of the American republic.<sup>10</sup>

Joining affections for wilderness and nation in the story of the American national park was a democratic impulse. According to Nash, the formation of reserves remained 'inconceivable' without a democratic mandate. The creation of national parks predicated on a desire to protect landscapes from rampant commercialism on behalf of the public good. In that sense, the modern industrial state secured its own claims to 'civilization' via altruistic acts of emparkment. Geologist Ferdinand Hayden conveyed such sentiments in a report to the U.S. House Committee (1871) recommending the preservation of Yellowstone from selfish interests. Hayden highlighted profiteering and materialistic practices at Niagara Falls in his argument. As historian Alfred Runte pointed out, if Niagara's British detractors had seized the imperative, 'England, and not the United States, would now be credited as the inventor of the national park ideal.' Instead, the tenets of Republican virtue, access to commons and the rights of the everyman lent the park movement a New World countenance. This democratic rationale distinguished the national park from the preserves of Old Europe, whose ornamental lakes and corralled environmental resources were tied to aristocratic purse strings.<sup>11</sup>

Contrary to the rhetoric of American exceptionalism, Yellowstone and Yosemite did not represent inaugural experiments in 'people's parks'. Setting aside land for civic purpose and public leisure dated back to the classical world. Likewise, the movement to create *rus in urbe*, to open up green spaces in the industrializing cities of Europe, was similarly democratic. Designed by industrial philanthropist and social reformer Joseph Strutt, Derby Arboretum opened to the public in 1840, while Halifax, Yorkshire, boasted a 'People's Park' as of 1857. Stewards of the royal parks of London, Berlin, Prague and Paris tore down park gates and revised selective entrance rules by the early 1800s. In the nineteenth-century city, the public park symbolized civic uplift, urban identity, science, imperial display and healthy recreation for the working class. Frederick Law Olmsted, famous architect of New York's Central Park (1857–61) and Commissioner of Yosemite (1865), visited Birkenhead Park, Merseyside, in 1850. Mesmerized by architect Joseph Paxton's grand experiment in green populism, Olmsted related, 'I was ready to admit that in democratic American there was nothing to be thought of as comparable with this People's garden.' National parks may have illuminated a particularly American

blend of natural iconography and democratic zeal, but such associations were already part of the global park phenomenon.<sup>12</sup>

Romanticism, cultural nationalism and notions of popular democracy provided aesthetic and theoretical foundations for the American national park movement. For appreciation to become preservation – and civilizing nature a national prerogative – a sense of imperilment and activist zeal appeared necessary. Both were ignited thanks to processes of territorial expansion that saw the United States become a transcontinental and industrial nation in less than a century. The mechanics of acquisition and discovery along with rapid environmental change explained why national parks emerged first in the United States. As historian Francis Parkman noted in his 1892 edition of *The Oregon Trail*, ‘The Wild West is tamed, and its savage charms have withered.’ Critical voices castigated the redemptive arrogance of the pioneer ethos, the myth of superabundance and the relentless worship of the almighty dollar. For George Perkins Marsh, author of *Man and Nature* (1864), the capacity of humans to transform their environment demanded a change of mentality and attention to posterity. Likewise, John Muir, co-founder of the Sierra Club (1892), the oldest grassroots environmental group in the United States, lofted wild nature as in need of protection from industrialism. As he proselytized in *Our National Parks* (1901), ‘Mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of life.’ Appreciation turned to preservation, crucially, at a time when sizeable chunks of grandiloquent Western scenery remained relatively undisturbed. In this regard, Yellowstone represented a prime cut.<sup>13</sup>

### **Management in Yellowstone: Taming the Wild for Tourists**

The bill to establish Yellowstone National Park was introduced into Congress in December 1871, with the park formally established on 1 March 1872. Such swift passage through the bureaucratic machinery suggested little opposition to the national park idea as well as a broad understanding of its purpose. Yellowstone was set aside ‘from settlement, occupancy and sale’, designated as a ‘public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people’, with stipulation ‘for the preservation ... of all timber, mineral deposits, natural curiosities, or wonders within said park, and their retention in their natural condition.’ Such aspects – government protection of a large piece of land, public access and the conservation of nature – became foundational tenets of the national park ideal and were readily exported to other nations keen to civilize nature. However, a closer look at Yellowstone in its formative years reveals a reality more provisional, fluid and, at times, contradictory. As Nash noted, ‘We had a national park, in other words, before we realized its full significance.’ The

U.S. government did not provide any funds for Yellowstone's management in its first five years. The only guidance that Superintendent Langford had was the enabling act itself. Hence, the Yellowstone 'model' did not represent a finished product in 1872. Instead, the park represented an experimental landscape in which ideas about the West, natural aesthetics, tourist dollars, capital and scientific authority played out. Particularly problematic was Yellowstone's dictate to preserve pristine wilderness while at the same time crafting an accessible and popular tourist resort: an inherent conflict within national park purpose that had significant environmental consequences in later years.<sup>14</sup>

Yellowstone's iconic status in global conservation owed much to the terms of the 1872 Act. The ceding of 3,300 miles of terrain (the size of Rhode Island and Delaware combined) as a national park was a milestone in environmental protection, especially in an age when nature was read in dollar bills, wheat acreage and timber square feet. That said, park establishment did not signal a wholesale governmental commitment to wilderness preservation or a disavowal of materialist readings of nature. Yellowstone's act may have set aside land from spoliation by private interests, but the protection of an ecological system scarcely represented a governing mandate. Instead, the size of the reserve reflected excitement over undiscovered geothermal curiosities. Organic freakery rather than biotic integrity carried the day. For all its altruistic intentions, the creation of Yellowstone did not venture an assault on dominant socioeconomic and commercial valuations of nature. As Alfred Runte contended, the easy passage of the park bill reflected surprisingly little congressional interest in the economic utility of the plateau. Debates focused on marginal agricultural productivity, minerals and timber stands, rendering Yellowstone as 'worthless land' according to the currency of the time. Outside of Congress, people quickly recognized the potential to make Yellowstone into a cash cow. Saluting the park as 'our American wonderland – nay, the world's wonderland', the booster publication *Resources of Montana Territory* (1879) anticipated Yellowstone as 'a great central resort for the lovers of the grand, the beautiful and the sublime in nature from all parts of the inhabited universe'. Nature and capital appeared symbiotic.<sup>15</sup>

Designated as a 'public park or pleasuring-ground for the benefit and enjoyment of the people', tourism and commercialization proved early priorities in Yellowstone. In his inaugural report, Langford insisted on the importance of making the park accessible, while the Bozeman *Avant Courier* enquired, 'What has the government done to render this national elephant approachable and attractive since its adoption as one of the nation's pets?' Early visitors came from the well-to-do classes, often in the guise of aristocratic adventurers, regional dignitaries or soldier-cum-sportsmen. Three hundred tourists braved Yellowstone in the 1872–3 season. Harry Norton published *Wonderland Illustrated*, the first of many Yellowstone guidebooks, the same year. 'Must see' sites



**Illustration 1.1.** Nature's Cooker. Cooking with only the heat from Hot Springs in Yellowstone Park is a novel experience, c. 1924 (National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection)

swiftly emerged, with the park revealed, in the words of one tourist manual, as 'a succession of pictures, each more striking than the other'. Mammoth Hot Springs, Tower Falls, Old Faithful, the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River, the Lower and Upper Falls and Yellowstone Lake all featured on the drive-by 'tour' of nature's carnivalesque. Visitors cooked beans in the mud-pots, filled Old Faithful with laundry and trash to provoke a more colourful eruption, and chiselled out mineral souvenirs. Yellowstone appeared a circus of delights, a Rocky Mountain theme park that encouraged frivolity not unlike later Disney playgrounds. As the editor of a Bozeman newspaper remarked of one party: "Fun" was their only thought from morn 'til night. With the arrival of the Yellowstone Park Line from the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883, Yellowstone combined its reputation for monumentally freakish nature with lavish accommodations. Sojourners travelled west in the decadent elegance of the Palace Pullman railcar before resting at the Yellowstone Lake Hotel (1889–90) and the Old Faithful Inn (1904–5). Resplendent in its pioneer aesthetic, with pine logs and rocky pillars, a fireside seat and a shop selling lantern slides, the ambience of the Old Faithful Inn summed up the 'roughing it deluxe' ethos of the nascent wilderness tourism industry in the American West and across the globe.<sup>16</sup>



In *A Ride Through Wonderland* (1892), British tourist Georgina Synge commended Congress for its wise creation of 'a National Reservation, devoted to the enjoyment of all people.' Synge marvelled at Yellowstone's 'entrancing delights ... untouched by man!' Herein was another conundrum of the national park project: the assumption within the landscape democracy of America's natural wonderland of an unpeopled space where 'man is a visitor and does not remain.' The national preserves conceived by George Catlin had allowed for the perpetuation of Native American subsistence activities. Not so in the Yellowstone version. Early park managers in the Rockies cast indigenous groups as 'pests', with traditional hunting activities an affront to the purpose of protecting game species for visitors to feast their eyes (and, in the early years, their stomachs) on. An indication of the colonial mentality embedded in national park creation in the United States and in other European settler societies, the civilization of nature mandated the removal of so-called primitive peoples. The deer parks of medieval Europe represented obvious landscapes of power in which an aristocratic elite controlled access to land and environmental resources for the purposes of political utility, aesthetic sensibility, economic production and social capital. National parks were not entirely dissimilar. Beneath Yellowstone's egalitarian rhetoric of public space for all existed a less altruistic story of imperialism, territoriality and ethnocentrism.<sup>17</sup>

Yellowstone was roamed seasonally by the Crow, Blackfeet, Shoshone, Bannock, Nez Perce and Snake, and inhabited year round by the Sheepeater. The area provided subsistence in the form of bighorn sheep, elk, berries and roots, room for spiritual quests and a route across the Rockies. Campsites, obsidian quarries, trails and meadows created by fire regimes (later beloved by tourists) all bespoke indigenous presence in the newly formed park. However, once Yellowstone earned its designation as a national playground for industrial America, moves to curtail local native uses proceeded apace. Justification centred on making the park secure for tourists, preserving game and preventing Yellowstone's wild reaches from becoming a safe haven for recalcitrant tribes during the Indian Wars. Having already forfeited most of their land on the Yellowstone Plateau during the renegotiation of the Fort Laramie Treaty (1868), the Crow and Blackfeet lost title to a slither of land in the north of the park courtesy of the lobbying efforts of Superintendent Philetus Norris (1880). The Sheepeater were dispatched to the Wind River Reservation and army patrols mopped up stray hunting parties. In 1877–8, cavalry units pursued the Nez Perce and the Bannock – dubbed by historian Norman Denzin as 'Yellowstone's most reluctant tourists' – through the park as part of their military subjugation of the West. Discourses of nation building and nature protection conjoined, a process starkly illuminated by the management of Yellowstone by the U.S. Cavalry (1886–1918). Meanwhile, as the remnants of indigenous presence were being excoriated from the plateau, officials and boosters traded

a line that presented Yellowstone's Indians as 'vanished' (hence the park was safe) and vestigial frontier curiosities (for public titillation). Chittenden's inaugural park history described the Sheepeater as 'formerly dwelling' in the region, while rail passengers apprehended Native Americans as ornaments of a passing frontier, museum pieces to be seen from the secure confines of the Palace Pullman as it made its journey from civilization to Yellowstone's virginal nature park.<sup>18</sup>

If Yellowstone's public access issues related a more complicated dialogue between democracy and sovereignty, then so too did its imperative to preserve the park 'in a natural condition.' Just as the sanctification of Yellowstone as a tourist playground for the 'benefit and enjoyment of the people' precluded indigenous subsistence, so too did resource management policy organize the park according to a specific landscape aesthetic. Hence, preserving wilderness in a 'natural condition' actually meant creating a vision of nature that satisfied Euro-American visual, moral, philosophical, economic and nationalist parameters. Certainly, official discourse consistently promulgated the park as an unspoiled Eden, American terrain in all its untamed, exceptional and iconic glory. Acting Secretary of the Interior B. R. Cowen advised Langford, 'It is not the desire of the Department that any attempt shall be made to beautify or adorn the reservation.' However, for Yellowstone's managers, tinkering with biotic systems did not strike as counterproductive to their conservationist remit. Instead, guided by the dictates of tourist access, landscape design, socioeconomic utility and hard science, officials saw it well within their purview to improve and enhance nature's complement. Like modern-day Capability Browns, park stewards worked with the flora on display to accentuate the picturesque and the pastoral, to please the eye. Tree stands were cut to allow for panoramic views, exotics planted and natural fire regimes stifled. In aesthetic terms, the national park 'look' compared with the English landscape parks of the Romantic period and their lawns, lakes and grottoes. Even John Muir, the patron saint of American wilderness, celebrated his beloved Yosemite as a 'landscape garden with charming groves and meadows'.<sup>19</sup>

In wildlife management too, the maintaining of 'natural conditions' was marshalled by ideas of 'good' and 'bad' animals as dictated by contemporary social mores. Entertainment potential proved a critical factor in the treatment of fauna. Bison were corralled in Hayden Valley and stampeded on demand. Bears, Yellowstone's 'quasi pets' according to *Wonderland Museum* (1901), earned a special place in visitor hearts for their comic anthropomorphism. Crowds gathered to see the bumbling antics of Yellowstone's bruins at feeding stations, where the most fearless tourists even queued up to have honey licked from their hands. As Lord Pethick-Lawrence commented, Yellowstone offered a well-choreographed nature show: 'The bears come down at 5:30 and the geyser plays at 6'.<sup>20</sup>



**Illustration 1.2.** Bear hold-up, c. 1958 (National Park Service Historic Photograph Collection)

Also implicit in park wildlife management was a species hierarchy that graded animals according to a biologically informed morality. Animals perceived as docile, elegant and nonthreatening (herbivores) earned top billing whereas those seen as a threat either to people or other animals (predators) found no place in the park. Superintendent Philetus Norris tendered a distinction between the ‘beautiful, interesting, and valuable’ elk under his charge and the ‘ferocious’ and ‘sneaking’ coyote. Under the umbrella of ‘natural conditions’, park managers encouraged the multiplication of bison, elk and deer and aggressively prosecuted the extermination of carnivores. Wardens pursued resident wolf packs with guns, dogs and poison, viewing them as criminal interlopers in an ungulate paradise. In this sense, national park rangers appeared analogous to the gamekeepers of Old Europe, with practices in Yellowstone harking back to the original definition of a park in old English as ‘an enclosed piece of ground stocked with beasts of the chase’. This was wilderness by design.<sup>21</sup>

## **From American Icon to Global Export**

By 1900, the United States boasted four additional national parks – Sequoia, Yosemite, General Grant and Mount Rainier – all in the West and all marked

by their dramatic vistas of rock and ice. Scenic monumentalism presided over the creation of Grand Canyon (1908) and Glacier (1910), and dominated the park-making canon. Newly installed officials looked to Yellowstone as the 'original,' the 'crown jewel' and exemplar of park practice. Glacier's superintendent Henry Hutchings regularly wrote to his colleague in Wyoming for advice on predator control. Meanwhile, the creation of the National Park Service (NPS) in 1916 facilitated a broader notion of American primacy in national park matters. With a bureaucratic apparatus, financial backing and scientific infrastructure, the NPS pointed to the emergence of the United States as a global leader in environmental diplomacy.

From its inception, Yellowstone stood Rocky Mountain high as a sacred marker of Americanism. In terms of landscape typology and cultural purchase it intimated a powerful (and perhaps particular) alliance of nature and nation in the New World. And yet, for all its national(ist) qualities, the ideal type of Yellowstone National Park proved eminently transferable. In the years after its establishment, the Yellowstone model influenced park making not only in the domestic sphere but also across the globe. Despite the peculiarly American aspects of its establishment, the global renown and lineage of the broader 'park' label, together with Yellowstone's translatable mantras of government oversight, popular ownership and nature conservation ensured its sizeable international purchase. With many societies keen to work out their own relationships with recently acquired territory, processes of nation building, public belonging and land management, the Yellowstone example provided useful direction: a set of worthy general principles that could be readily grafted onto local conditions and modified at will. The core themes at play in Yellowstone – government protection of unspoiled territory, the overlapping of Romantic readings of nature with commercial intentions, the clearing of space and removal of indigenous humans and symbiotic processes of naturalizing nation and nationalizing nature – proved of global significance and were eminently exportable. The Yellowstone 'model' seemed especially applicable to other settler societies, where 'empty' spaces and exotic scenery conjoined with processes of land assimilation, cultural legitimization and identity formation to create fertile ground for national parks to flourish. The project of civilizing nature via national park creation had broad transnational appeal.

With a similar Western topography and socioeconomic values, Canada was likely to mirror American park making. Both countries established national parks courtesy of grand Western scenery, frontier expansion, Romantic valuations of nature and the lure of tourist dollars. In common with the Northern Pacific in Yellowstone, the Canadian Pacific Railroad played a critical role in the formation of Banff National Park (1885–87), Alberta, from the discovery of hot springs by three of its workers in November 1883 to the advertising of

the reserve as a paradise playground in the years that followed. Designated as a 'public park and pleasure ground for the benefit, advantage, and enjoyment of the people of Canada', Banff's enabling legislation paid clear homage to the nomenclature of the Yellowstone Act, albeit with an added addendum and a \$141,254 stipend for making the park into a veritable resort that would 'recuperate the patients and recoup the treasury'. As in Yellowstone, Canadian park planners saw their remit as one of conserving scenic splendour, creating a reserve dedicated to the democratic nation and establishing a lucrative tourist destination.<sup>22</sup>

Significantly, Canadian glances across the border were not all about emulation and common experiences. Roderick Nash may have listed national parks along with Coca-Cola and basketball as 'American contributions to world civilization' but local circumstances and the discrete needs of nature and nation ensured the national park was effectively patriated. In the example of Canada, preservationist discourse stressed the nonpareil qualities of scenery north of the 49th Parallel. MP Donald Smith argued that 'anyone who has not gone to Banff ... and not found himself elevated and proud that all of this is part of the Dominion, cannot be a true Canadian.' Moreover, as a Canadian park system developed, officials appeared keen to assert the conservation values and leadership provided by domestic institutions. The establishment of the Canadian Parks Branch (1911) proved a notable point of patriotic reference. Commissioner James Harkin proudly stated how 'Canada was the first country thus to acknowledge its responsibility with regard to the conservation of its places of outstanding beauty or other interest by creating a special government office to protect, administer, and develop them.' Later, in a 1957 policy document, a copy editor replaced the line 'the founders of our Parks system were guided by National park purposes and policies of other countries, especially the United States' with a reference to the establishment of the Canadian Parks Branch five years before the United States. Yellowstone may have offered direction, but the dictates of nationalizing nature took precedence.<sup>23</sup>

Outside North America, Yellowstone's unique reputation, tours by foreign dignitaries and an international dialogue among scientists and politicians collectively fostered the export of the national park idea. Created in 1879, Australia's 'national park' (renamed Royal) became the second national park in the world (although patriotic Antipodeans claim first by virtue of its 'national' designation). Its establishment came about by a blend of national, imperial and American influences. The Yellowstone example provided inspiration for park boosters who came up with the idea of an Aussie reserve in direct response to a U.S. visit. That said, impetus for emparkment also drew inspiration from the European ideology of *rus in urbe*, with Australia's inaugural preserve, just 32 kilometres from Sydney, conceived as a bucolic refuge for urbanites.

Its natural composition, while far removed from the rock and ice freakery of Yellowstone, nonetheless reflected similar processes of frontier assimilation, cultural uplift and identity formation at work. The Australian preserve celebrated connections between settlers and their adopted homelands and also enacted an epistemology of colonial takeover and transplant. As in Yellowstone, park creation reflected a desire to cement a sense of belonging with the landscape - of naturalizing processes of nation building - with a preference for Romantic-Arcadian aesthetics. Hence, amidst the iconic 'bush' landscape were markers of pastoral beauty in the form of 3,700 ornamental English trees, deer and rabbits.

In New Zealand, the Yellowstone precedent also loomed large. In his campaign to create a park at Lake Rotomahana, artist and politician William Fox paid direct homage to the Rocky Mountain preserve. Fox had toured the American West in 1874, painting landscapes of monumental nature, and returned to New Zealand keen to protect the volcanic features and distinctive pink and white terraces of North Island. The establishment of New Zealand's first national park, Tongariro (1887) referenced the language of the Yellowstone Act and depicted familiar themes of scenic preservation, Romantic nationalism and tourist lustre. However, the particularities of the designation - gifted by Maori chief Te Heu Heu Tukino IV to protect the sacred mountain from white settlement - offered a very different indigenous message and one more akin to Catlin's vision.

Impetus to create national parks in Africa largely reflected an imperial exchange between metropole and periphery and focused on the preservation of game animals. However, the Yellowstone template still proved significant. The first national park on the continent, the Parc National Albert (later Virunga) in the Democratic Republic of Congo (1925), reflected the importance of the Yellowstone 'tour' and the involvement of a (largely American) scientific community engaged in a process of 'nature importing'. King Albert of Belgium visited Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and Yosemite in 1919, camping with prominent conservationists John C. Merriam and Henry Fairfield Osborn, Sr. Albert returned to Belgium inspired by the park ideal, believing the colonial landscape of the Congo, marked by its primitive exoticism and 'empty' spaces, to be an ideal place for a similar experiment. Assumptions of wilderness as a place devoid of human modifications operated in the African as well as the American colonial conservation mindset. In South Africa, the glorification of the veldt and the cult of the Voortrekker (both instrumental in the founding of Kruger National Park [1926]) bore distinct similarities with the appropriation of America's Western wilderness as a national(ist) landscape, albeit with animals rather than rugged scenery invested with a range of aesthetic, historical and Romantic signifiers. Direct references were also made here to Yellowstone

as a global marker of environmental leadership. Aubrey Woolls-Sampson assured his colleagues in the legislative assembly of the Transvaal (1907) that the reserves in their state could, in time, become like Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone had become a global signifier representing 'blue-chip' nature and far-sighted governmental legislation.<sup>24</sup>

With its lionization of uninhabited wilderness, exotic scenery and gigantism, the Yellowstone model readily transplanted to other European imperial settler cultures. However, its influence did not stop there. Discussions over the creation of national parks in Britain consistently invoked the spirit of the Wyoming preserve. The symbolic import of Yellowstone, its status as a conservation milestone and signifier for altruistic government action and recreational democracy, lent it currency even in a small, overpopulated island bereft of opportunities for large-scale preservation according to the essentialist wilderness model.

William Wordsworth had called for 'a sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy' back in 1810, but it took another century for substantive debates about British national parks to take place. James Bryce, MP, mountain climber and advocate of national parks as America's 'best idea,' sponsored the Access to Mountains (Scotland) Bill in 1890, while Viscount Bledisloe campaigned for preserves in Britain after visiting Yellowstone, Yosemite and Grand Canyon in 1925–6. Bledisloe roamed the familiar ideological terrain of the Yellowstone brand in his elevation of national parks as 'beautiful sanctuaries for wild animals and birds' as well as yielding 'a most perfect holiday resort for persons of all classes.' Notably, Bledisloe wrote to the prime minister offering his own estate in the Forest of Dean for such purpose, but the Office of Works and the Forestry Commission ruled that the activities of free miners and an unremarkable avian complement (dominated by magpies) did not pass muster as national park material. Three years later, the government-appointed Addison Committee deemed the Cairngorm Mountains grand enough to qualify as national park terrain along 'broadly American lines.' Further documents continued to reference the Yellowstone 'original,' including the Standing Committee on National Parks (1938) and the Dover Report (1940). When British national parks were finally created under the auspices of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949), the echoes of the Yellowstone cessation could be heard in clauses dedicating space for the 'preservation and enhancement of natural beauty' and 'the enjoyment of the opportunities for open-air recreation.' Nationalism, nature protection and tourist democracy once again facilitated the transplant of the American national park idea, with added refinements dictated by local circumstance. As Lord Pethick-Lawrence noted, 'Unfortunately, we have not the great wonders in this country that they have

in the United States ... but I do think we have great beauties characteristic of our country which are worthy of being classed as national parks. After all, size is not everything.<sup>25</sup>

## Conclusion

In 1962, the First World Conference on National Parks took place in Seattle. The meeting drew representatives from 63 countries: attesting to the global reach of the national park idea and to the internationalization of conservation discourse. In a series of lectures and workshops, natural resource managers debated salient issues facing the world's preserves based on a governing remit of gaining a 'more effective international understanding and to encourage the national park movement on a worldwide basis'. And yet, for all its lofting of the park as a transnational product, the Yellowstone 'model' still loomed large. Over half of the conference delegates hailed from the United States while conference proceedings affirmed Yellowstone as 'the first such park in the world', which 'created widespread response throughout the world'. Ten years later, the Second World Conference on National Parks took place at Yellowstone itself. At Madison Junction, President Richard Nixon braved a hailstorm for a dedication ceremony in which he symbolically relit the campfire with an Olympic-style torch. Yellowstone stood at the centre of the national park pantheon, its scenery as statuesque, histrionic and American as ever. However, as this chapter has indicated, the Yellowstone 'original' sat in an eco-genealogy of park making dating back to classical civilization. Its creation reflected distinctly American developments, Old World cultural forms and the broader translatable mechanics of colonial expansion. Moreover, the Yellowstone national park 'model' was far from definitive in 1872. Instead, the preserve represented a place of experiment, a wilderness by design and one under constant reinvention. Under the broad dictates of nature protection and tourism, policy on the ground reflected the oscillations of socioeconomic and environmental attitudes. And yet, through all this, Yellowstone held sway as a conservationist signifier and 'model' for worldwide emulation. Despite being grounded in American geology and nationhood, it proved ripe for global export. Yellowstone carried purchase as 'the first', lending it currency and prestige beyond the domestic sphere and also making it a place of pilgrimage and reportage. Scientists, citizens and politicians visited the park, assimilated the essentials of the typology and took 'the Yellowstone image' back as a conceptual cutting to their homelands. That Yellowstone boasted the esteemed (and widely recognizable) 'park' label aided the exchange: parks were already known as places of retreat, play, leisure and romance. Moreover, the founding tenets of America's first national park sported a fertile combination of clarity and flexibility. Yel-



lowstone's principles of protecting pristine nature bereft of human influence, commercial and tourist goals, and the ideologies of Romanticism, democracy and patriotism were plainly articulated, epigrammatic and suitably grandiose in design. And yet, the malleability of such terms as 'natural conditions' and 'for the benefit and enjoyment of the people' allowed other nations to take the template and adapt it to their own proclivities. This ability to evolve, refine and sometimes even reverse the details of park policy ensured the continued relevance and sustainability of the Yellowstone prototype. Both in the United States and beyond, the national park project of civilizing nature allowed for many translations in detail and design. As Jean-Paul Harroy, chairman of the International Commission on National Parks, related at the 1972 conference, 'Although [Yellowstone] has produced followers for a century now, the imitation has often been extremely free.'<sup>26</sup>

## Notes

1. Aubrey Haines, *The Yellowstone Story* (Boulder, 1977), 1:130; Nathaniel Langford, *The Discovery of Yellowstone Park* (Lincoln, 1905), 117–18.
2. Richard West Sellars, *Preserving Nature in the National Parks: A History* (New Haven, 1997), 8; Hiram Chittenden, *The Yellowstone National Park: Historical and Descriptive* (Cincinnati, 1915 [1895]), 74; Haines, *Yellowstone Story*, 1:129–130; C. J. Magoc, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape* (Albuquerque, 1999), 13.
3. Wallace Stegner, 'The Best Idea We Ever Had', in *Marking the Sparrow's Fall: The Making of the American West*, ed. Page Stegner (New York, 1998), 135–42. See Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience* (Lincoln, 1979) for the 'national' story of park creation in the United States.
4. Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (New York, 1994), 261; Dunraven quoted in Katherine Early, "For the Benefit and Enjoyment of the People": *Cultural Attitudes and the Establishment of Yellowstone National Park* (Washington, DC, 1984), 42; Haines, *Yellowstone Story*, 3.
5. Discussion of national parks, American leadership, and the transnational context has only recently emerged in scholarly treatments. See Thomas Dunlap, *Nature and the English Diaspora: Environment and History in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (New York: 1999); Ian Tyrrell, 'America's National Parks: The Transnational Creation of National Space in the Progressive Era', *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 1 (2012): 1–21. Tyrrell argues that Yellowstone did not represent a 'model' or 'uniform rationale' for national parks in other countries, yet admits the presence of 'transnational connections or influences' (4).
6. George Catlin, *North American Indians* (Philadelphia, 1913), 1:2–3, 1: 294–95. Protection of the plains finally came with Tallgrass Prairie Reserve (1996), while the National Park Service included indigenous subsistence rights under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (1980).
7. *Helena Herald*, 28 February 1872.

8. Stegner, 'The Best Idea We Ever Had', 135–42; William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation* (Boston, 1901), 94–97; Henry David Thoreau, 'Walking', in *Nature Writing: The Tradition in English*, eds. Robert Finch and John Elder (New York, 2002), 192.
9. Roderick Nash, 'The American Invention of National Parks', *American Quarterly* 22/23 (Autumn 1970): 731; Haines, *Yellowstone Story*, 98.
10. Runte, *National Parks*, 20–21.
11. Nash, 'American Invention', 726; Runte, *National Parks*, 7.
12. See Charles Beveridge and Carolyn Hoffman, eds, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmsted, Supplementary Series* (Baltimore, 1997). Tyrrell further argues that international conservation organizations including the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society (1895) were engaged in international discussions with likeminded organs in Europe as part of a 'transnational circulation of information' that facilitated a range of conservation measures including wildlife treaties and national parks. See Tyrrell, 'America's National Parks,' 6–13.
13. Francis Parkman, *The Oregon Trail* (Boston, 1892), ix; John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Madison, 1981 [1912]), 97.
14. Nash, 'American Invention', 731.
15. Runte, *National Parks*, 50–54; Robert Strahorn, *Resources of Montana Territory* (Helena, MT, 1879), 68.
16. Bozeman *Avant Courier*, 31 July 1874; Henry Winsor, *The Yellowstone National Park: A Manual for Tourists* (New York, 1883), 7; Bozeman *Avant Courier*, 12 September 1873.
17. Georgina Synge, *A Ride Through Wonderland* (London, 1892), 3.
18. Norman Denzin, *Searching for Yellowstone: Race, Gender, Family and Memory in the Postmodern West* (Walnut Creek, CA, 2008), 51; Chittenden, *Yellowstone National Park*, 9.
19. Nathaniel Langford, 'Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Yellowstone National Park for the Year 1872' (Washington, DC, 1872), 1; John Muir, *The Yosemite* (New York, 1912), 3.
20. Quoted in Chris Magoc, *Yellowstone: The Creation and Selling of an American Landscape, 1870–1903* (Albuquerque, 1999), 153; Hansard HL vol 164 col 989 (19 October 1949).
21. P. W. Norris, 'Annual Report of the Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park to the Secretary of Interior for the Year 1880' (Washington, DC, 1880), 38–42.
22. Robert Brown, 'The Doctrine of Usefulness: Natural Resource and National Parks Policy in Canada, 1887–1914', in *The Canadian National Parks Today and Tomorrow*, ed. J. G. Nelson and R. C. Scace (Calgary, 1968), 1:98.
23. Janet Foster, *Working for Wildlife* (Toronto, 1998), 22; Roderick Nash, 'International Concepts of Wilderness Preservation', in J. Hendee, G. Stankey and R. Lucas, *Wilderness Management* (Washington, DC, 1978), 43; Mabel Williams, ed., *The Origin and Meaning of the National Parks of Canada: Extracts from the Papers of the Late Jas. B. Harkin* (Saskatoon, 1957), 5–6; 'A Policy Statement Respecting Wildlife in the National Parks of Canada', January 1957. RG84, vol. 2140, U300:1, Public Archives Canada, Ottawa. To further complicate Canadian claims, Sweden established a national organization for the oversight of national park areas in 1909.

24. Jane Carruthers, 'Creating a National Park, 1910 to 1926', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 15/2 (1989): 203.
25. William Wordsworth, *A Guide Through the District of the Lakes* (Bloomington, 1952 [1810]), 127; John Sheail, 'The Concept of National Parks in Britain, 1900–1950', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 66 (Nov 1975): 42; John Mair and John Delafons, 'The Policy Origins of Britain's National Parks: The Addison Committee, 1929–31', *Planning Perspectives* 16 (2001): 294; Hansard, HL vol 164 col 989 (19 October 1949).
26. National Park Service, *First World Conference on National Parks Proceedings, Seattle, Washington, June 30–July 7, 1962* (Washington, DC, 1964), 386; Hugh Elliott, ed., *Second World Conference on National Parks, Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks, USA, Sept 18–27, 1972* (Morges, 1974), 24.