

This issue's theme:  
**Yellowstone National Park**



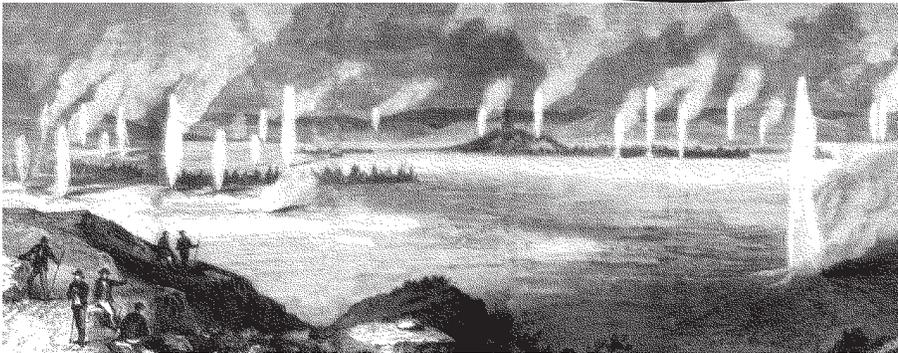
### Contents

Feature	1	Fun page	5
Famous Places	3	Next Month	6
From the Attic	4		

The Newsletter of the Idaho State Historical Society's Junior Historian Program

# PROSPECTOR

Oct.-Nov., 2009



## Yellowstone

**A**t the northeastern corner of Idaho sits one of the most well known landscapes in the American West, Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone spreads across three states including Idaho and Montana, but the majority of the park lies in Wyoming. Yellowstone sits on the enormous mouth of a sleeping volcano, which is responsible for many of its unusual features. People travel from all over the world to witness Yellowstone's famous wildlife and incredible geysers. In addition to all of the spectacular sites a visitor can experience in the park, Yellowstone has a fascinating history.

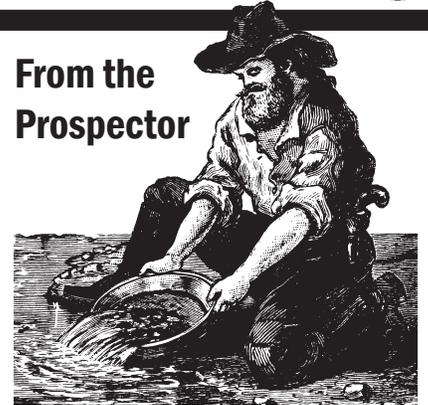
Of course, Yellowstone wasn't always a national park. Hundreds of years before a

tourist ever set foot in the park, Yellowstone was home to Native Americans. Many tribes visited the Yellowstone area. The Blackfeet, Crow, Gros Ventre, and Bannocks were probably frequent visitors to the region, but the most well known inhabitants of Yellowstone were a small band of Shoshone known as the Sheepeaters. The tribe probably did not live year round in the mountains of the park. The harsh winters would have pushed the Indians to seek shelter in the warmer valleys. But in the summer, the tribe spread out to hunt game and gather plants. The Sheepeaters are best known for creating clever hunting bows out of bighorn sheep horns instead of wood.

We'll never really know what the early inhabitants of the park

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## From the Prospector



### Howdy New Prospectors!

**W**elcome to the fourth grade and the Prospector Club Junior Historian Program. My name is Lucky Noah and I'm in charge of writing your newsletters. Although most of the time I'm out in the mountains looking for gold, my mule and I have an office in the basement of the Idaho State Historical Museum, which is located in Boise.

This is the first of four newsletters you will receive as a Prospector. Each issue will have exciting stories on a different Idaho history topic and fun activities for you and your class to do. For this month's newsletter we are going to take a little trip to one of the most famous vacation spots in the West.

## Yellowstone Continued

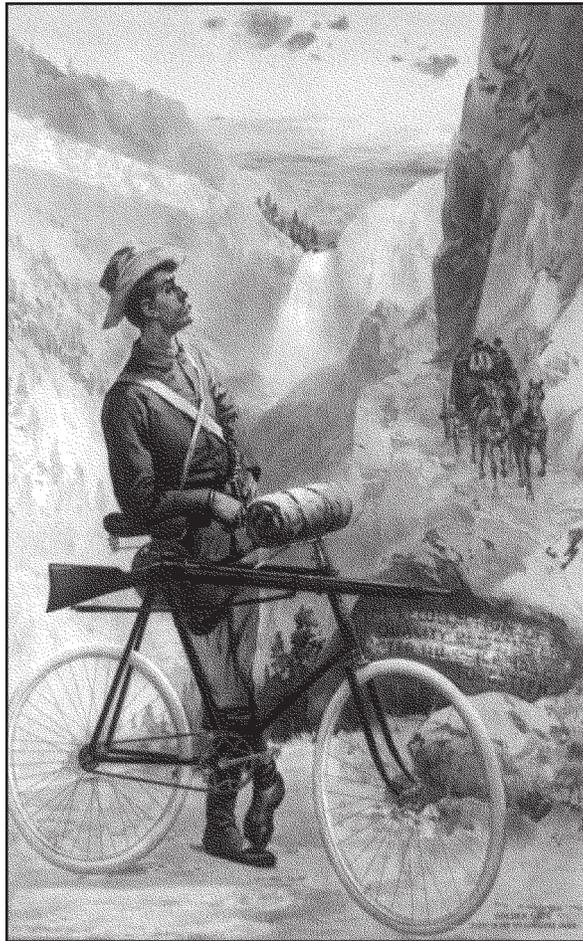
thought of Yellowstone's exploding geysers and bubbling mud pots, but we can guess that they were as fascinated as later visitors would be.

The Lewis and Clark expedition came close to the Yellowstone region on their famous trip west, but unfortunately they passed too far south. Surprisingly though, it would be a member of the expedition who would be known for first exploring the park. John Colter was a soldier in The Corp of Discovery. He served faithfully under Capitan Lewis and Capitan Clark all the way to the Pacific and back. On the way home, the explorers came across a group of fur trappers traveling west. John Colter asked for and received permission to leave the Lewis and Clark expedition and join the fur trappers.

Colter was known for his many adventures in the West. One of these was an epic journey he took across the Grand Teton Mountains and through Yellowstone. We don't know for sure if Colter was the first non-Indian to explore Yellowstone, but his story is the only one to have survived. Colter sent reports of his epic 1807-08 journey to his former commander William Clark, who later released a map of Colter's findings.

After Colter, many other fur trappers headed to the region to try their luck. Within a few years, large groups of fur trappers were meeting in nearby south eastern Idaho for an annual trading party called a rendezvous. With all of the traffic in

the area, word started to spread about the wonders of the Yellowstone region. By the late 1860's small expeditions traveled across the wilderness specifically to explore the park.



*A fanciful picture of a park ranger in the late 1800's*

One of these expeditions was sponsored by the Northern Pacific Railroad. Known as the Washburn-Langford-Doane expedition after its leaders, the group of soldiers and citizens explored the area in 1870 in order to attract tourists and railroad investors. The expedition named

many of the park's most famous features, including Old Faithful. When the explorers returned, their story was publicized in newspapers across the country. In 1871 another expedition headed into the park led by Dr. Ferdinand Hayden. This expedition also included painter

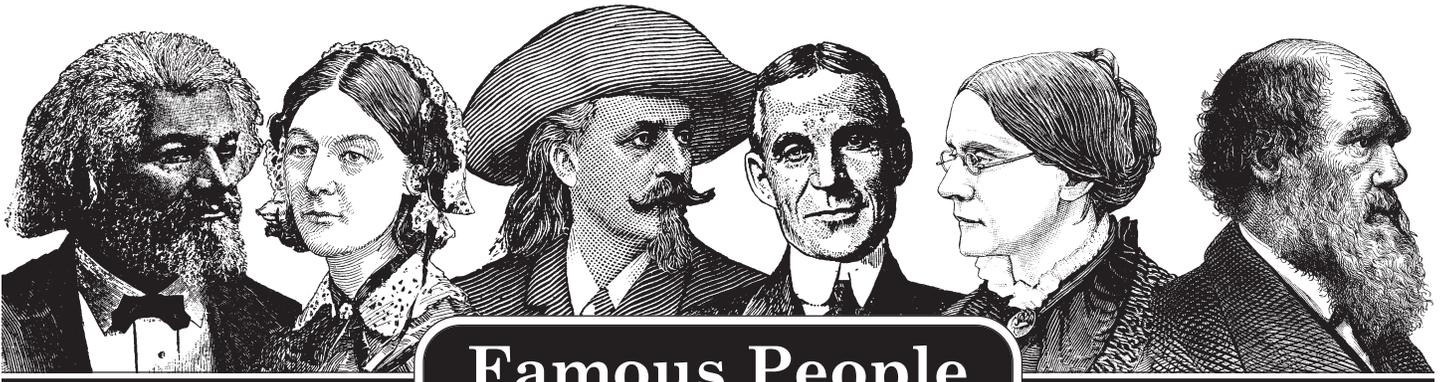
Thomas Moran and photographer William Jackson. The expedition's pictorial record of the area helped persuade the U.S. government that Yellowstone was an important and unique place. In March of 1872, congress passed a bill to protect Yellowstone. President Ulysses S. Grant signed the bill and the first National Park was born.

Early visitors to Yellowstone had a difficult time. Travel to the region was long and hard and there were none of the hotels and roads that exist in the park today. Early tourists could have other unusual hazards to worry about. In 1877, the Nez Perce tribe went to war with the United States. The tribe went on an incredible journey, first to find fellow Indian allies and then toward Canada to escape the U.S. Army. Part of this journey brought them through

Yellowstone. The few tourists and prospectors in the park at the time were unlucky to be right in the path of the fast-moving war. Two men were killed, one badly wounded, and a few more were horribly frightened when the tribe temporarily captured them.

Unfortunately, early visitors to the park didn't treat it with much respect. Tourist broke pieces off of

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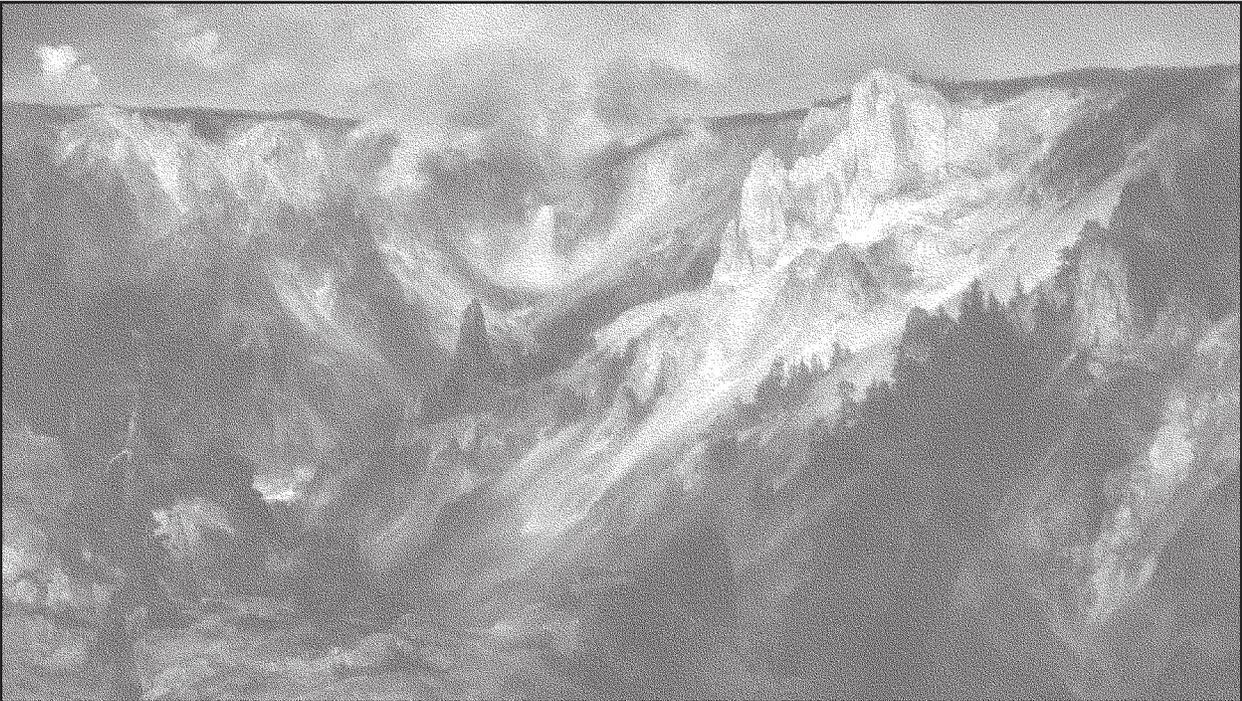
## Famous People

# Thomas Moran

One of the men who helped convince the government to turn Yellowstone into a national park wasn't a scientist or tourism promoter; he was a painter. Thomas Moran was born in England in 1837, but his family moved to Pennsylvania in 1844. As a young man Thomas worked for an engraving business. Using the skills

he learned on the job he moved on to illustration and watercolor. In 1871 Moran joined the Hayden expedition to Yellowstone. Along with early photographer William Henry Jackson, Moran spent the expedition making a pictorial record of the wilderness. When the group returned east, the paintings and photographs were

distributed to a wide audience and the public began to understand the true wonder of the Yellowstone area. It is believed that the paintings also had a strong influence on the government and helped persuade them to declare Yellowstone a national park in 1872. ♦



*One of Thomas Moran's most well known paintings, "The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone"*



## From the Attic

# Old Faithful Inn

One of the most fantastic places in Yellowstone National Park is only a little more than one hundred years old. Located right next to the famous Old Faithful geyser, The Old Faithful Inn is a breathtaking sight. The hotel was built between 1903 and 1904 by The Northern Pacific Railroad. The railroad hired a 29

year-old architect named Robert Reamer to design the building. The young architect ended up building one of the most memorable buildings in America.

Using stone, timber, and clay from the park, The Old Faithful Inn fits in well with its wilderness surroundings. It's a beautiful building from the outside, but visitors

have to step inside to experience the magic of the Inn. Beyond the massive wooden front doors, the building opens up to a giant lobby that is seven stories tall. Everywhere you look twisted branches and logs make up the posts and railings. Across from the front entrance is a gigantic fireplace built out of over 500 tons of stones.

In the early 1900's the lobby featured a platform near the ceiling called the Crow's Nest. Visitors could carefully climb a series of scary staircases up to the top and watch the action in the lobby below. During the evening, musicians would sit in the Crow's Nest and play music while people in the lobby danced. Unfortunately, The Crow's Nest is closed today. An earthquake in the 1950's made the staircase unstable and visitors are now only allowed up onto the first few balcony levels. ♦





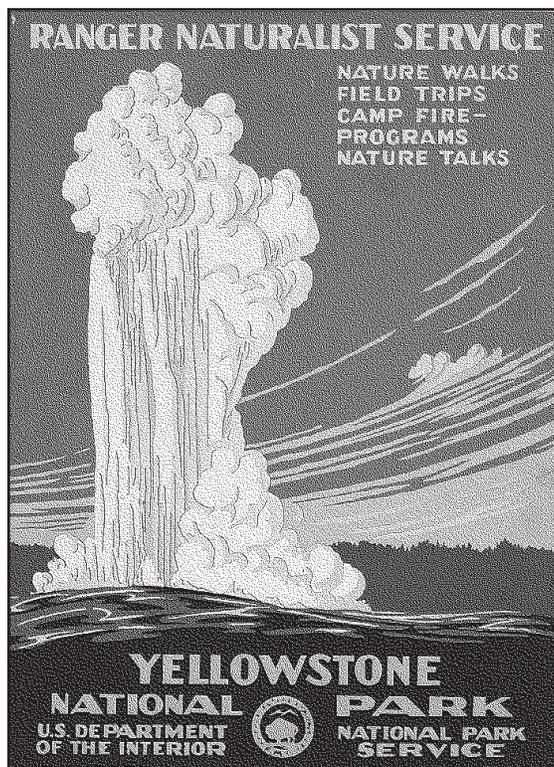


## Next Month's Activities

**W**ell, we've told you all we know about Yellowstone, now it's your turn. This month you can pick from one of the activities listed below or make up your own Yellowstone project and send it to our Prospector Headquarters. We'll take some of your best work and print it in our next magazine. Remember to include your name, the town and school where you are from, and the name of your Prospector Club Chapter. We can't wait to see what you send in!

**Space Park:** In today's age there are national parks all around the world. National parks are created to protect unique natural and cultural attractions so that they will be around for future generations. Maybe, as humans invent new technology, our descendents will travel through space and find beautiful landscapes on other planets that need to be protected. Pretend you are an explorer astronaut living far in the future. The president of the Space Federations has asked you to fly to a distant planet and check out a fantastic landscape that might need protection. Write a short story describing your visit to the planet.

What natural wonders did you see on your mission? Did you discover any new fantastic creatures living there? Do you have a name for the new planetary park? We can't wait to see what you come up with!



**Other National Parks:** Yellowstone was the first national park, but it certainly wasn't the last. Since Yellowstone was created, the United States has established hundreds of national parks and

monuments across our country. Pick another park and do a little research on it. Where is the park located? When was it established? What would visitors see if they went there? Write up a short report and send it to us so that we can share it with our readers.

**The Wildlife of Yellowstone:**

One of the reasons people visit Yellowstone is to see the waterfalls and geysers, but often times it's the park's animal inhabitants that get all the attention. Yellowstone has an unbelievable amount of wildlife. It's one of the only places in the U.S. where you might see a wild buffalo, bear, and wolf in the same day. What's your favorite animal of Yellowstone? Pick one of the park's native creatures and give us a few facts about how it looks and lives. If you are an artist, draw us a picture of your critter too.

Send in your work by December 15<sup>th</sup> to:  
 Prospector Club/Lucky Noah  
 Idaho State Historical Museum  
 610 North Julia Davis Drive  
 Boise, ID 83702  
 Or email it to us at  
[kurtzwolfer@ishs.idaho.gov](mailto:kurtzwolfer@ishs.idaho.gov)

## Yellowstone Continued

geyser formations and threw rock into the thermal pools. Nearby prospectors and settlers began to over hunt the park's famous wildlife. In order to protect the park, the Army built forts across Yellowstone in the 1890's. It's hard to believe that the first stewards of the park weren't park rangers in their wide brimmed hats, but army soldiers in military uniforms.

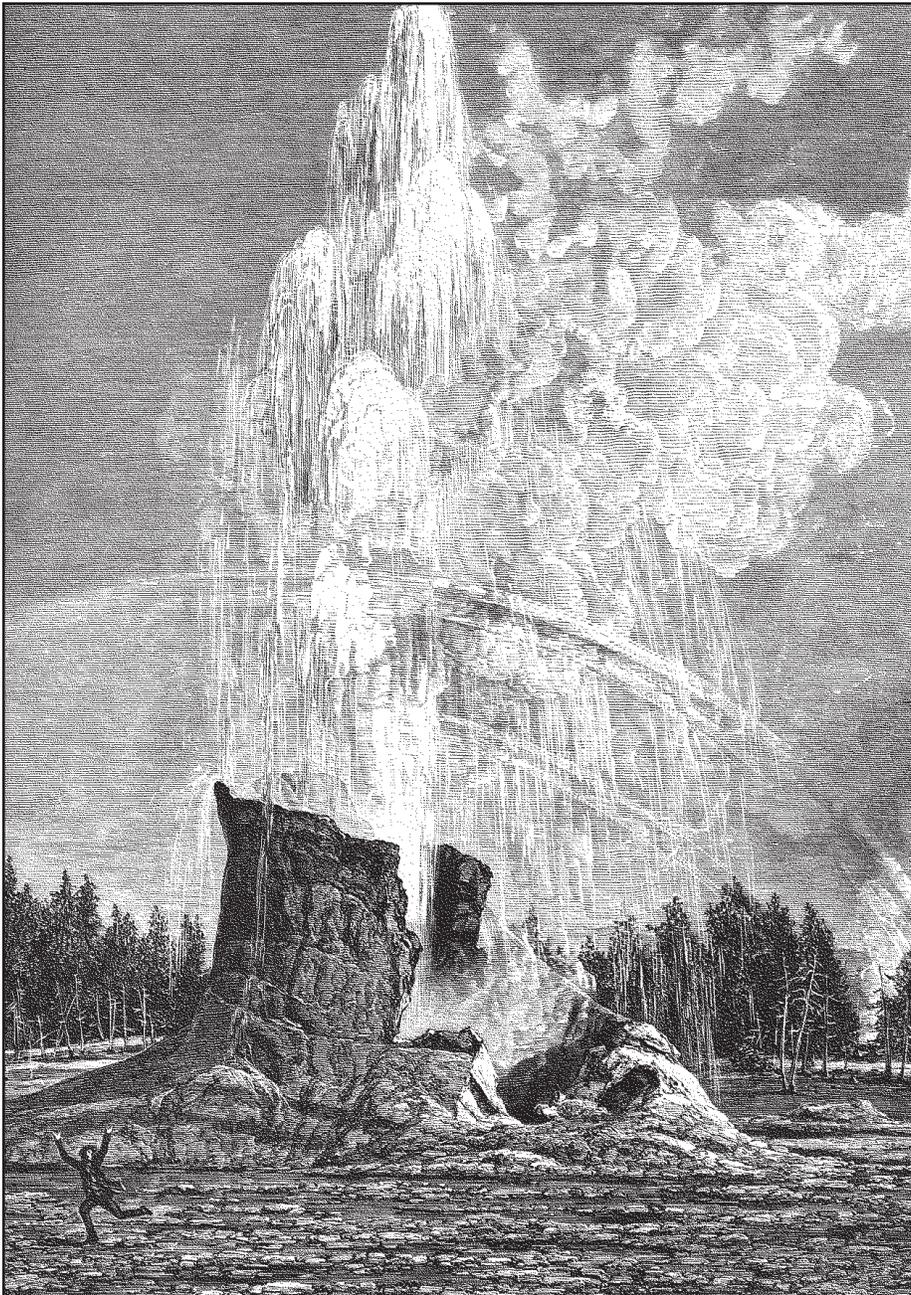
In the early 1900's, control of the park switched to a new government organization called the Park Service. As new national parks were established

across the country the Park Service grew in size and prestige. Yellowstone went through many changes in the next few decades. Cars replaced horses and roads were built throughout the park. Hotels, shops, and gas stations were created to handle the huge number of visitors.

In 1988 another event added to Yellowstone's complicated history. That summer a huge wildfire swept across the park. Tourists were evacuated and firefighters rushed in. Many people watched on television as huge walls of flames headed toward the

well known Old Faithful Inn. In the end, firefighters saved the historic buildings, but hundreds of miles of forest were burned. Although many people thought the park was destroyed, the fire was probably good for Yellowstone. Scientists studying the fire have shown that the burn allowed new trees to take seed and opened up new grazing areas for big animals like elk. It seems that fires have always been a part of the natural world of Yellowstone.

Yellowstone seems to be changing all of the time. In recent years, the reintroduction of wolves, arguments between snowmobilers and skiers, and scientist studying bacteria in the park's thermal pools, have made headlines across the country. In addition, nobody knows when the sleeping volcano beneath the parks surface will once again cause changes to the landscape. No matter what the future brings, though, Yellowstone will always be an important place in our state and country's history. ♦



*A geyser explodes at Yellowstone*

# Solution

