To Preserve the View: A "Tour" in Text and Pictures of Historic Sites Relating to the Establishment of Grand Teton National Park

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A “Tour” in Text and Pictures of Historic Sites Relating to the Establishment of Grand Teton National Park
By Tamsen Emerson Hert

Picture a dance hall on the east side of Jenny Lake or 400 summer homes dotting the shores of Jackson Lake. Imagine scores of fast food restaurants, motels and curio shops lining Highway 191. This sight could have been seen were it not for the strong commitment to conservation that a number of Jackson Hole residents demonstrated between 1920 and 1950. Concern for the preservation of the Tetons as well as the view from east of the Snake River pitted neighbors against each other. Nathaniel Burt, son of Struthers Burt, gave tribute to those concerned individuals: “To those like my father and his friends who loved the country as they had first known it, but who recognized that the tourist was coming, some sort of special preservation scheme was imperative. Letting human nature take its course meant ruin.”

At times even those on the same side disagreed over practices and plans for the Park. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., entered the scene early on and without his involvement, the Park certainly would have been smaller.

This tour will guide you to some of the scenes, and discuss some of the individuals, that were most significant in the park debate. A few of the sites simply provide a little history about the Jackson Hole region.

Begin at Park Headquarters in Moose. Directions to the next site follow each summary. Some of the roads you will be traveling on are dirt and by looking at the map you can find alternative routes if you wish to remain on paved roads.

Directions: Leave the parking lot at the Visitor Center. Turn towards the Park Entrance Gates. Your entry fee is good for seven days at both Grand Teton-Yellowstone National Parks. Go north on the Teton Park Road. Turn right at the road to the Chapel of the Transfiguration and Menor’s Ferry.

MAUD NOBLE CABIN

This is where it all began. On July 26, 1923, Horace Albright, Superintendent of Yellowstone National Park, received an invitation to meet with local residents and conservationists Struthers Burt, Horace Camcross, Jack Eynon, Joe Jones, Dick Winger and Maud Noble. These individuals discussed their concerns about the future.

2 The story of the struggle is quite involved. Robert Righter has provided the full story in his book, Crucible for Conservation: The Struggle for Grand Teton National Park (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 1982).
of the valley. Commercialization threatened the destruction of wildlife as well as the scenic beauty. Struthers Burt, a writer and dude rancher, stated the plan: "It would be a museum on the hoof" — native wild life, cattle, wranglers, all living again for a brief time each summer the life of the early West with its glamour, romance and charm." The majority felt that this proposal was sound. A "recreational area" reflected their preference for protection but not the limitations of preservation as then existed in Yellowstone. They wanted to provide for traditional activities such as hunting, grazing and dude ranching.

The plan of action required one or more wealthy individuals to quietly purchase land north of Jackson’s Hole. The individual(s) would then hold the land until Congress would reimburse the landowner and turn the land over to the National Park Service. Those concerned people attending this historic meeting had no idea that they would need only one individual to accomplish their dream.

The plan first discussed at this site has been accomplished by the creation of Grand Teton National Park. A plaque on the doorway reads: "The broad vision and patriotic foresight of those who met here that July evening in 1923 will be increasingly appreciated by our country with the passing years." [2]

**Directions:** Tour the Menor’s Ferry area and visit the Chapel of the Transfiguration. Travel east to Moose Junction. Turn north on Highway 191. Drive a short distance to Antelope Flats Road, turn right. At the first dirt road (Kelly), turn south. This area is known as Mormon Row.

MORMON ROW

Mormon Row was settled around the turn of the century by several Mormon families moving into the area from Idaho. May, Moulton, and Chambers are just a few of those early settlers — many of their descendants reside in Jackson today. A school, church and other buildings are all that remain.

John Moulton and his wife Bartha, homesteaded here in 1908. While proving up on the land, John worked on other ranches and trapped beaver and coyotes. The Moulton homestead was sold to the National Park Service in 1953 with a lease on the land until John Moulton’s death. The Moulton Barn, on the west side with the Tetons as a backdrop, is one of the most photographed sites in Wyoming.

Other residents of Antelope Flats took the opportunity to sell their lands to John D. Rockefeller Jr.’s Snake River Land Company. Many people, including Gov. Frank Emerson were unhappy about these sales. They believed good, arable lands should not be part of the land purchase. However, settlers in Mormon Row wanted to sell. The Snake River Land Company purchased the land for $50 an acre. Homesteads that had not been improved in the required amount of time were terminated by the General Land Office.

Today the Park Service does not have plans for this area. There is potential here, as with other areas throughout the Park, for a "living history" program.

**Directions:** Return to the Antelope Flats road and turn east. Log structures stood on the north side of the road. This was the Pfeifer homestead. The original buildings here were left to decay and burned in a wildfire in 1994. Joe Pfeifer came to Jackson’s Hole from Montana in 1910 and lived here, without any modern conveniences, until his death in 1964. Continue on the Antelope Flats Road. Before reaching the Schwiering Studio, take the old Yellowstone Wagon Road and travel north.

HEDRICK’S POINT

John D. Rockefeller, Jr., and his family visited Horace Albright in Yellowstone in July 1926. Albright took the family on a tour of the Jackson Hole area. The spectacular scenery of the Tetons made an impression on Rockefeller and his wife. Both were disturbed by the commercial developments encroaching on the Leigh-String-Jenny Lake region.

On the return trip to Yellowstone Albright stopped near this point on the bluff overlooking the Snake River. (See photograph, page 14). Albright described it:

It was particularly lovely that afternoon. The shadows of the Tetons were already reaching across the river bottoms, but Antelope Flats, the lands around Blacktail Butte and the distant hills cutting off Jackson from the Gros Ventre were still bathed in sunshine from a clear sky. As we stood on this little “rise” and absorbed the beauty of the scene spread before us, I told Mr. and Mrs. Rockefeller of the meeting at Miss Noble’s cabin three years earlier and the plan to protect and preserve for the future this sublime valley.6

Rockefeller’s commitment to preservation of the valley may have come from stopping at Hedrick’s Point. That winter, Rockefeller requested Albright’s report and map discussing the proposal outlined at this point overlooking the Snake. Rockefeller made his decision — acquire lands throughout the valley to protect the scenery and preserve the wildlife.

The Snake River Land Company was incorporated on August 25, 1927, and purchase of the lands began.

Directions: Continue north on the wagon road until you return to Highway 191. Turn right (north) and then turn left at the Cunningham Cabin Historic Site.

CUNNINGHAM CABIN

J. Pierce Cunningham lived in Jackson Hole for 40 years. This homestead, established in 1890, formed the nucleus of his Bar Flying U Ranch. Cunningham served as postmaster, game warden and justice of the peace. When Teton County was organized in 1923, he was chosen as one of the commissioners. From the parking area there is a short trail to the buildings. A guide to the area is available.7

Reports of a horse stealing operation based in Red Lodge, Montana, appeared in many newspapers during 1892. In April 1893, two suspected horse thieves, George Spenser and Mike Burnett, who had wintered at Cunningham’s Spread Creek Ranch, were shot by posse members. Later investigation revealed that the leaders of the posse were not U. S. marshals.8

Directions: Continue north on 191 to Moran Junction. Turn west and continue to the Oxbow Bend Turnout.

OXBOW BEND

Laurance Rockefeller inherited his father’s love of nature and interest in conservation. He took over the Jackson Hole Project in 1945 and developed tourist attractions that would appeal to those visitors in the valley for only a short visit. One of these attractions

7 Cunningham Cabin Self-Guided Trail. (Moose: Grand Teton Natural History Association, 1985).
was the Jackson Hole Wildlife Park located at the Oxbow Bend.

The Wildlife Park was to be a fenced area containing buffalo, elk, deer, antelope, black bear, beaver and other native species. The plan suggested that such an attraction would serve as "a gathering point for naturalists and wild-life enthusiasts, and an area for scientific study in wild-life conservation, propagation, and management on a scale unparalleled in the nation." Such a park would ensure visitors a view of western wildlife.

This "zoo" (as it was referred to by some) incited another battle between already warring factions. Conservation groups were especially upset at this plan. Olaus Murie, wildlife biologist and supporter of the park plan, was vehemently opposed to such a "park." In an article in *National Parks Magazine* in 1946, Murie wrote:

I gave whole-hearted support to the creation of the Jackson Hole National Monument, with the thought that the area would give protection to the intangible values that are so important in this valley. I want to make it clear that I did not advocate a road-side zoo in the midst of the grandeur of Jackson Hole. On the contrary, it is this kind of intrusion which must be kept out of the valley.10

Supporters of the wildlife park argued that it would serve as an educational instrument. In the end, Laurance backed off and the fences came down.

This location was also the original site of the University of Wyoming/National Park Service Research Center. The buildings were relocated to the AMK Ranch when it became the research center.

**Directions:** Continue on Highway 89 past the Jackson Lake Junction. Stop at the Willow Flats Turnout. Across the road is the former Jackson Lake Ranger Station.

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**JACKSON LAKE RANGER STATION**

This was the site of the most physical battle in the struggle to create Grand Teton National Park. President Franklin Roosevelt established Jackson Hole National Monument March 15, 1943 — withdrawing a portion of acreage from the Teton National Forest. This did not bode well with the U.S. Forest Service. As Robert Righter described it, "From the beginning the Forest Service had openly or covertly opposed National Park Service objectives in Jackson Hole. Now it was difficult to admit defeat and graciously turn over some 130,000 acres of land and lakes."11

Regional Director of the National Park Service, Laurence C. Merriam, arrived in Jackson Hole to oversee the changing of the guard. A description of what he found is reported by Righter.

When the Forest Service evacuated in June, 1943 it was not done with what one might call a spirit of camaraderie. Not only were the furniture and equipment taken from the Jackson Lake Ranger Station, but all the plumbing in the basement, kitchen, and bathroom was removed. Even doors, cupboards, drawers, and cabinets, plus the accompanying hardware, were considered "movable equipment." Well tubing was removed, and an underground tank unearthed and packed away. To complete the task a four-foot square hole was cut in the living room, severing not only the flooring but the floor joists as well. In short, the station was uninhabitable.12

The Forest Service agreed to make the necessary repairs and provide replacements of fixtures to make the structure livable. Today this infamous structure is a residence for park employees.

**Directions:** Continue north on 89 to Jackson Lake Lodge.

**JACKSON LAKE LODGE & LUNCH TREE HILL**

Lunch Tree Hill is the spot from which John D. Rockefeller, Jr. first viewed the Teton Range in 1926. A plaque on top of the hill reads:

This tablet is placed here in tribute to Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., whose vision, generosity, and love of country have made possible the preservation of this region in its pristine beauty and grandeur. Here the spell of the magnificent Teton Mountains and the beautiful valley they guard first captivated him. He has since come often to this hilltop for renewed inspiration.

The original resort was the Amoretti Inn, built in 1922. Located only 1/2 mile from Moran, it was one of the largest of early tourist resorts. Its name was changed to Jackson Lake Lodge a short time after it was built. Purchase of Jackson Lake Lodge by Rockefeller interests was not part of the original plan. However, the owners wanted to sell. They received $40,000 in Teton Investment Company stock and $35,000 in cash

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9 Ibid., 9.
10 Righter, *Crucible for Conservation*, 121.
11 Ibid.
for the lodge. Tourist facilities were not encouraged in the original plan for park expansion, but following the establishment of the larger park, it became necessary to provide overnight facilities.

It took nearly three years to build the present Jackson Lake Lodge. John D. Rockefeller, Jr. carefully selected the site — adjacent to Lunch Tree Hill. The main lounge picture window, 60 feet wide and 2 stories high, frames the Tetons. According to Bonney’s Guide, Rockefeller had a scaffold erected to the exact level of the lounge floor — he wanted to be sure that “America saw the Tetons in the perspective he saw them.” The Lodge was dedicated June 11, 1955, “both as a gift to the American people and a pilot project in park development.”

While the view is inspirational, the architecture has been debated. Some claim that the poured concrete structure, supposed to resemble wood-grain, does not blend with the environment.

Take time to enjoy the view from the lounge or the patio. Moose and beaver are frequent visitors to the willow flats. Don’t miss the murals in the dining room!

Directions: Leave the lodge area and head north on 191 & 287. Travel past Colter Bay. Turn left at the exit for Leek’s Marina.

LEEK’S LODGE

Stephen N. Leek (1858-1943) arrived in the Jackson Hole area in 1888 and became one of the first settlers to establish a permanent residence. His ranch is thirty miles south of this lodge and was among the earliest dude ranches in the valley.

Leek is remembered for his involvement with the Jackson Hole elk herd. During the 1890’s and 1900’s he witnessed the winter starvation of the elk. He used a portion of his hay harvest to feed the elk and prevailed on neighbors to do the same. The Jackson elk herd became his crusade. Telling photographs and lectures in the East brought national attention to the plight of the elk. He aroused enough attention that in 1912 the Jackson Hole National Elk Refuge was established.

Leek also served as a guide and outfitter to hunters. It was not until 1926-27 that he built his hunting lodge. He was both architect and builder. The nomination of Leek’s Lodge to the National Register of Historic Places reads:

Leek’s name stands in a prominent place among the organizers and workers of the nation’s earliest conservation efforts. This lodge should also be preserved as a memorial to a man who, given only a limited formal education, became, in the interest of wildlife preservation, a self-educated biologist, an author, a lecturer, [and] photographer and still remained a frontiersman.

Leek’s Lodge remained in use as a recreational facility for visitors through 1974-75 and was removed in 1998. All that remains today is the stone fireplace.

13 “Jackson Lake Lodge Dedication,” June 11, 1955, foreword.
There is speculation that Sargent's episode. Some imply that Sargent beat her; others that she drowned body death but this was never proven. Six years later, a very treating her illness the best he could. Sargent

A lexander Hamilton). Marymere. Sargent received medical treatment. Adelaide Sargent died April 11, 1897. There are many conflicting stories about this episode. Some imply that Sargent beat her; others that she'd had some sort of accident and her husband was treating her illness the best he could. Sargent was scheduled to stand trial for the murder of his wife in April 1900 but the case was dismissed due to conflicting testimony and the lack of substantial evidence.

After the death of Adelaide, Sargent renamed Marymere the Pinetree Ranch. A few years later, he remarried. Most people considered his new wife crazy because she would sit in a tree completely naked, play her violin and eat peanuts. John D. Sargent lived here until his suicide in 1913. The ten-room cabin was torn down several years later.

Pinetree Ranch was sold for $600 to cover delinquent taxes. Lou Johnson, a sales executive for the Hoover Vacuum Cleaner Company, purchased Sargent's ranch in 1926. The Johnson home, built the following year, is a two-story building because Johnson's wife was afraid to sleep in a ground floor room with bears in the area. Several other buildings including a boathouse were constructed at this site. The Johnson's named their residence on Jackson Lake the Mae-Lou Lodge.

Following the death of Lou Johnson in 1931, Slim Lawrence became caretaker of the Mae-Lou property. Alfred Berol of the Eagle Pencil Company (became the Berol Corporation in 1969) purchased the ranch in 1936 for $24,300. Construction began on the Berol Lodge in 1937. A new name was adopted — AMK Ranch — representing the first letters of the first name of each family member. The Berol home is a single-story structure with windows looking out at Jackson Lake. Today, the master bedroom serves as a research library for the University of Wyoming.

Alfred Berol was notified in 1938 that the AMK could be condemned as part of the proposed extension of Grand Teton National Park. As executor of his father's estate, Kenneth Berol deeded the AMK to the United States in 1976 for $3.3 million. The University of Wyoming - National Park Service Research Center relocated to the AMK property July 15, 1977. Research is conducted here on all aspects of the Greater Yellowstone ecosystem. Recently, the focus has been on the aftermath of the 1988 forest fires.

Directions: Leave the Leeks Marina area and go south on 191 & 287 to the Jackson Lake Junction. A museum and visitor center is located at Colter Bay. At the Jackson Lake Junction, take the Teton Park Road to Jackson Lake Dam. There is a small parking area on the south side of the dam.

JACKSON LAKE DAM & MORAN TOWNSITE

When the original dam was proposed by the Bureau of Reclamation, not one word of protest was raised. The first dam on Jackson Lake was a crude rock-filled, log-crib structure erected in 1906. This dam washed out in 1910 and was replaced by a reinforced concrete dam in 1911. The second dam was barely finished when instructions were received to raise the lake level an additional ten feet — this was completed in 1916. During the 1980's additional work was done on the dam.

The argument against the dam arose when park expansionists wanted to include Jackson Lake. Some residents felt that the dam itself was a violation of wilderness. The National Parks Association argued that to include a reservoir was a violation of the sanctity of a national park. Bob Righter states “the damming of Jackson Lake was an act of environmental desecration second only to the inundation of Yosemite's Hetch Hetchy Valley.”

Arno Cammerer, Director of the NPS argued in favor of including the reservoir: “...the construction of a new reservoir which means violation of another great scenic

17 Righter, Crucible for Conservation, 10.
area, is a very different thing from the attempt to save a previously violated area from further exploitation.\textsuperscript{18}

In the end, park extension won the battle for inclusion of Jackson Lake in Grand Teton National Park.

The original town of Moran was located just east of the Jackson Lake dam. In 1928 the Snake River Land Company purchased the land and all buildings from Ben Sheffield for $106,425. The town was dismantled in 1957—buildings were destroyed or relocated to other sites and the natural environment has reclaimed the area.

Directions: Continue south from the dam. To the right is Signal Mountain Lodge. Turn east at the Signal Mountain Scenic Drive exit. This is a five-mile drive to the summit of Signal Mountain.

SIGNAL MOUNTAIN DRIVE

The naming of Signal Mountain stems from the Sargent-Hamilton partnership. When Robert Hamilton was reported lost in 1891, searchers agreed to light a signal fire on the summit of this mountain (elev. 7,731 ft.) when his body was found.

Pioneer photographer William Henry Jackson accompanied the 1871 Hayden scientific expedition of to Yellowstone. Jackson’s photographs contributed to the establishment of Yellowstone National Park. Hayden and Jackson returned to the area in 1872. William H. Jackson first recorded the majesty of the Tetons from the summit of this mountain in 1878.

In an address prepared for, but not read, at the dedication of the Teton National Park on July 29, 1929, Jackson discussed the numerous times he visited the area and the conditions in which he worked. He concluded:

I have returned here frequently in the meantime, for pleasure instead of profit, for there is — on our continent, no grander or more satisfying prospect than the one now before us in which beauty, as well as majesty, are combined.\textsuperscript{19}

Directions: Return to the highway and continue driving south. Turn west at the North Jenny Lake Junction. This is a one-way road to the south. There are several pullouts for photo opportunities.

JENNY LAKE DRIVE

The boundaries of the Park established in 1929 included the Tetons and the eastern edge of Leigh, String and Jenny Lakes. Ideally, Grand Teton National Park was to be the first “wilderness” park. No hotels or facilities were to be included in park boundaries — not because Jackson residents were committed to wilderness but because they wanted to protect private and commercial interests. While there was little opposition

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 91.
\textsuperscript{19} William H. Jackson, “Address Regarding First Photographing of the Tetons,” \textit{Annals of Wyoming}. 6 (July-October 1929), 189.
to preserving the mountains, the battles began when conservationists and John D. Rockefeller, Jr., expressed an interest in protecting the view.

Over the next 14 years Rockefeller’s Snake River Land Company purchased some 35,000 acres in order to protect the area. In 1942, after numerous attempts at park expansion, Rockefeller threatened to sell the acreage if the Government did not want it. On March 16, 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt established Jackson Hole National Monument. Rockefeller deeded his 35,000+ acres as a gift to the federal government on December 6, 1949. After protracted disputes, Congress established the present Grand Teton National Park in September 1950 by combining the 1929 Park and 1943 Monument.

To acknowledge the Rockefeller’s contribution to the preservation of Jackson Hole, Congress authorized the transfer of 24,000 acres of Forest Service land as the John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Memorial Parkway. Robert Righter states that the purpose of this land transfer was twofold: “To commemorate the many significant contributions to the cause of conservation in the United States by Rockefeller, and to provide both a symbolic and desirable physical connection between the world’s first national park, Yellowstone, and the Grand Teton National Park.”

Directions: Along this drive are Jenny and String Lakes; Jenny Lake Lodge; and the Jenny Lake Ranger Station and Store. Coming out at South Jenny Lake Junction, continue driving south. Just south of the Glacier Gulch turnaround a dirt road goes west to the Lucas-Fabian Site.

LUCAS - FABIAN SITE

Mrs. Geraldine Lucas was the first Jackson area woman to climb the Grand Teton and she did that at the age of 59. A hardy individual, Mrs. Lucas bathed daily in Cottonwood Creek which flows just north of the Lucas cabin.

Opposed to park extension and Rockefeller’s land purchases, Lucas promised that she would never leave her land. According to Bonney’s Guide, she told Rockefeller “you stack up those silver dollars as high as the Grand Teton and I might talk to you.” When she died in 1938, her ashes were buried on the property.

It is ironic that her adversaries, Harold and Josephine Fabian, president and secretary of the Snake River Land Company, occupied the ranch after Mrs. Lucas’ death. The Fabians were responsible for planning and completing the restoration of Menor’s Ferry. Josephine Fabian was instrumental in the Jackson Hole Oral History Project and has written about the area’s history.

Directions: Return to the Teton Park Road and go south. The exit to the Bar B C Ranch is on the left (east). (If you reach the Cottonwood Creek turnout, you’ve gone too far).

BAR B C RANCH

Struthers Burt, a writer from Philadelphia, and Dr. Horace Carncross, a psychiatrist, established the Bar BC in 1910 after a lengthy search for the ideal site for a dude ranch. They both agreed on this site directly east of the Grand Teton and on a curve on the west bank of the Snake River. Zoe Hardy wrote: “It was a place that could support the practical needs of a ranch — water, grazing land, trees and bountiful hunting and fishing. It had two additional ingredients for a successful dude ranch: isolation and exceptional beauty.”

The Bar B C was the second dude ranch in the valley. “Dudes” first arrived here in 1912. In the early years there were dances, costume balls, trapshooting, rodeos and horseback riding. Nathaniel Burt recalled:

The principal occupation of the ranch and of its dudes was riding... To take care of all this riding there was a complex of constructions. There were two big corrals, a long low saddle shed (never “tuck room”) open on one side...hitching fence opposite the saddle shed, and back beyond all this the barn and blacksmith shop.

Struthers Burt supported the idea of park expansion. The Bar B C and the Three Rivers Ranch hosted people supporting both sides of the argument. Struther’s son, Nathaniel remembered several heated discussions between 1930 and 1950. In Jackson Hole Journal he summed up the differing viewpoints. “The opposition was funda-mentally based on plain instinctive hatred of government encroachment. The support was based on equally instinctive hatred of commercial encroachment.”

Burt and Carncross gave up the Bar B C in 1930. The Burt family moved farther north to the Three Rivers Ranch. Irving P. Corse controlled the Bar B C after that. The Snake River Land Company purchased it and provided a lifetime lease to Corse and his second

20 Righter, Crucible for Conservation, 148.
23 Nathaniel Burt, Jackson Hole Journal, 34-35.
24 Ibid., 129-130.
wife. He died in 1953 and Mrs. Corse operated the ranch, run-down as it was, until 1986. This historic dude ranch is now part of Grand Teton National Park.  

**Directions:** Return to the Teton Park Road and go toward the Moose Visitor Center. After passing through the Park gates, take the Moose-Wilson Road south. The private road to the Murie home is on the east.

**MURIE HOME**

Margaret (Mardy) and Olaus Murie moved to Jackson Hole when Olaus was appointed head of the National Elk Refuge in 1927. Both were avid conservationists and supported the idea of park expansion. Dr. Murie is recognized as the foremost authority on North American elk and caribou. Olaus’ private convictions often clashed with the policies of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — his employer. He retired in 1945 to become national director of the Wilderness Society, a position he held until 1962. Righter described Olaus Murie as a “man who combined scientific knowledge and love of the wilderness with honesty and openness.” As mentioned earlier, it was Olaus who was vehemently opposed to the Jackson Hole Wildlife Park.

Mardy Murie was the first female graduate of the University of Alaska. A well-known conservationist, Mrs. Murie continues her crusade. Autobiographical books, *Two In The Far North* and *Wapiti Wilderness*, describe her life in Alaska and Jackson Hole.

Olaus’ “naturalist’s studio” and some research notes have been retained by his widow in their log home south of Moose. Mardy frequently gives talks to students from the Teton Science School and to other groups. The Murie home is now part of Grand Teton National Park though Mardy Murie holds a lifetime lease.

**Directions:** Return to the Moose-Wilson Road and go south. This road, while paved, is narrow and has several curves. At the point where the pavement ends is the gate to the JY Ranch.

**J Y RANCH**

The West, the new summer playground of America. A veritable invasion of eastern tourists has followed the opening of this beautiful country which offers the vacationist, known in the parlance of men of the range as “dude,” a solution for the summer vacation problem.

Louis Joy arrived in Jackson Hole in 1907 and established his homestead in 1908. The JY Ranch was the first dude ranch in the area. Struthers Burt partnered with Joy until Burt established the BarB C farther north along the Snake River. Owen Wister stayed at the JY while his cabin was constructed at the R Lazy S Ranch just to the south. (The Wister cabin was dismantled and reconstructed at Medicine Bow, Wyoming, in the mid-1970s).

A Pennsylvania businessman, Henry Stewart, purchased the JY in 1920. Stewart recognized the recreational value of Jackson Hole and was an active


supporter of the idea discussed at Maud Noble’s in 1923. Under Stewart’s ownership, the JY prospered.

The boundaries of the 1929 Grand Teton National Park included the JY Ranch. Stewart asked $250,000 for the ranch when the Snake River Land Company first approached him. He received $90,000 in 1932. Considered the “most scenic” of all dude ranches in Jackson Hole, Rockefeller and his sons favored it. Rockefeller requested that the JY be retained by his family. Rockefeller wrote:

My children are greatly interested in this ranch and are anxious that I should retain it, for the present at least, for the general use of the family. This I shall presumably do. However, so long as the Park line remains as it is, it would be possible for me to give the whole or any part of this land to the Park at any time in the future without any government action. On the other hand, if our family should permanently retain it, no harm would be done.27

The JY remains in the possession of the Rockefeller family today. This “special treatment” has left some bitter feelings. Nathaniel Burt expressed just such a sentiment. “...the fact that the Rockefeller family itself bought and kept the old JY Ranch ...instead of selling it to the Snake River Land Company as my father sold his ranch — this too has not been popular... The JY Ranch is well kept and in good hands; but private holdings of that kind in the park were not supposed to be encouraged.”28

The JY and Bar BC ranches led the way for others to provide services for the dudes. As Nathaniel Burt wrote, “Though the two originals, the Bar BC and the JY, no longer operate as true dude ranches, their descendants, whether as private ranches or as active dude ranches, still proliferate.”29

Directions: Return to Jackson Hole. Either continue on the dirt portion of the Moose-Wilson Road or backtrack to Moose and return to Highway 287. The final stop of this tour is at the National Elk Refuge.

NATIONAL ELK REFUGE

JACKSON, Wyo. Feb. 7, 1911. — Unless fed, five thousand elk will perish within two weeks.

S.N. LEEK30

Jackson Hole and the surrounding mountains are home to the largest elk herd in the world. Theodore Roosevelt referred to the Jackson area as the “home of all homes for the elk.”31

It is thought that there were 60,000 or more elk in the Jackson Hole area in the 19th century. Summer range encompassed the surrounding mountains as far north as Yellowstone. During the winter months the elk would congregate in the Jackson vicinity. Dean Krakel II has pointed out that the elk population was kept in check by disease, predators and starvation.32

With the arrival of settlers in the region, much of the traditional range of the herds was used for livestock and crops. Fences blocked the age-old migration routes. There was not sufficient amounts of grass left to feed the elk so thousands starved.

The winter of 1910-11 was particularly harsh — thus the message sent by Stephen Leek to communities throughout Wyoming. Three days later the first load of hay arrived. Leek was among the first to help feed the elk. With his photographs and lectures, he brought attention to the decimation of the elk.

After federal investigation concerning the starving elk, a refuge project was initiated. The National Elk Refuge was established August 10, 1912, for the care and preservation of the elk. From 2,800 acres in 1912, the refuge has increased to 23,754 acres. Elk may be the primary reason for the refuge but other wildlife benefit as well. Moose, mule deer, bighorn sheep and a small flock of trumpeter swans live here.

This “tour” discussed only a few of the places significant to the creation of Grand Teton National Park. There are many more scattered throughout the Park but their existence is ignored by the National Park Service. Many of these, such as Leek’s Lodge and the Pfeifer Homestead, have been lost in the last five years. Nonetheless, remaining historic sites help tell the story of the struggle to preserve the view.

Tamsen Emerson Hert is the Wyoming Bibliographer at the University of Wyoming Libraries. She holds masters degrees in library science and American history from Emporia State University in Kansas. A regular contributor to Annals, this article stems from her interest in historic structures in national parks.