

A Lady's Trip to "Earth Could Not Furnish Another Such Sight"

by Margaret Andrews Cruikshank
edited by Lee H. Whittlesey

In 1883, the newly completed Northern Pacific Railroad began service to Yellowstone National Park on its branch line that ran south up the Yellowstone River from Livingston, Montana. The railroad advertised the Park as "Wonderland," an idyllic and almost magical place. Tourists came by rail and took the "Grand Tour" of the Park, rubbing elbows with some of the highest and lowest class of travelers in the Victorian world.

One of the tourists that summer was Margaret Andrews Cruikshank, single woman, historian, and world traveler. Born in 1825 in old Georgetown, D.C., where she lived during the first thirty years of her life, Cruikshank and her divorced mother lived in the home of Dr. Thomas Sewall. Sewall was a close friend to several Washington personalities, including Daniel Webster and Samuel F. B. Morse. So "Margie," as she was called by relatives, grew up in an atmosphere of culture and influence.¹ She developed great curiosity, a talent for learning and an interest in exploration, and considerable social skills. Her letters reveal that she was a keen observer and intensely interested in history. She wrote two volumes of family genealogy.²

When Cruikshank visited the Park in 1883, she was fifty-eight years old and living in Minneapolis, where she worked as a teacher for many years.³ To get to Yellowstone, Cruik-

shank traveled on the Northern Pacific Railroad's branch line to near present-day Corwin Springs, Montana. The railroad was not yet completed all the way to the Park when she arrived on August 22, 1883, although workmen finished it twelve days later. Her party alighted from the train at the end of track, and coaches carried them to the unfinished National Hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs.

In late August 1883, Yellowstone National Park was a "three ring circus" because of the near-simultaneous visits of President Chester A. Arthur and two parties of important railroad officials and potential customers of the company that planned to develop hotels in the Park. A local observer at the time commented that "the Park is full of notables and one cannot go ten rods in any direction without rubbing against a lord, a duke, a senator, a government guide or some other gentlemen of high degree."⁴

Against this backdrop, Margie Cruikshank boarded her carriage from the 414-foot-long veranda at the front of the National Hotel and began her "Grand Tour" of Yellowstone. In her memoir of the tour, she commented on the Park's attractions, the accommodations, and her fellow tourists, giving us an especially delightful perspective on tourism during the Victorian era.⁵

Yellowstone, 1883



All photographs by F.J. Haynes are from F.J. Haynes Foundation Collection, MHS Photograph Archives

Riverside Geyser in the Upper Geyser Basin in about 1899

A Lady's Trip to Yellowstone in 1883

The morning of August 23rd we left the Mammoth Hot Springs to make the round of the park. Our proposed route was this: to Norris Geyser Basin, 21 miles; then . . . to the Forks of Fire Hole River, 15.12 miles; to Upper Geyser Basin, 11 miles; then coming back to the Forks of Fire Hole River we would take a route easterly . . . to the falls of the Yellowstone, 29.98 miles. Thence back again to the forks and thence over the road first travelled to our starting place, the Mammoth Hot Springs.⁶ . . . The miles given are, I believe, surveyors' measure, but never were miles so absurdly understated. Be sure of this, that a Park mile according to the book, is worth any two, if not five, elsewhere. The horses that you start with have to make [the entire] trip as there are no relays to be had (after leaving the Hot Springs except at the Forks of the Fire Hole, you see not a house) and surely that last day's travel from the forks to the Mammoth Hot Springs was to our feelings at least one hundred miles. Our man, Isaac Door, an experienced Utah stage driver said, "it was a good fifty miles as he ever drove." Yet the book called it only thirty-six.

But our [outfit]—it was a light, strongly-made two-seated vehicle, with an outside seat for the driver. It had a top and curtains all around that were kept rolled up for air and view. This vehicle was drawn by two strong horses, mountain-born and mountain-bred; for no other horseflesh could endure such toil for a day. Behind the carriage was a boot where were stored a small tent, blankets, and cooking utensils; oats and a bucket for the horses' use were not forgotten; while inside, under the seats, were boxes and baskets carrying provisions. Our wraps, water-proofs, handbags, and guidebooks also found places, and we were ready to start—four of us [and] the driver.

What I have said about the horses will be appreciated when I state that the first thing was to climb Terrace Mountain. Within the distance of two miles, four "hitches" as they call them, carried us nearly 3,000 feet higher than the level of the hotel from which we started.⁷ Animals drawing loaded teams sometimes cannot make this in less than a day, yet tourists expect to be hauled up in the course of an hour or so. . . . At the steepest places we got out and walked—and then began our sufferings. The dirt was almost ankle deep and the heat and clarity of the air made it a serious business. Still it had to be done, if we expected those same horses to last through our journey. . . . This may be laid down as certain: wherever you go there are streams to ford, corduroy to fall over, sagebrush plains to crawl along and mountains to cross. The strong can stand it, and enjoy it; but [this] is no place for

1. Cruikshank wrote in one of her letters: "I knew Morse before a single telegraph wire had been stretched and often heard him in our parlor speaking of the possibilities. . . . The Annie Ellsworth that gave Mr. Morse his great motto—"What hath God wrought"—was my playmate." Cruikshank to "Anna," August 10, 1916, Yellowstone National Park Research Library, Mammoth, Wyoming [YNP Library]

2. Elizabeth Oakes Clarke, "Margaret Andrews Cruikshank," April 17, 1980, YNP Library.

3. Clarke, "Margaret Andrews Cruikshank"; Cruikshank to "Anna," August 10, 1916, YNP Library.

4. *Livingston Enterprise*, September 1, 1883.

5. This manuscript, entitled "Notes on the Yellowstone Park by M.A.C. (August 1883)," along with a

collection of copies of Cruikshank's letters, was donated to the Yellowstone National Park Research Library in 1980. It is not known when Cruikshank wrote it, although descendant Elizabeth Clarke believes it to have been written at the time of the trip or just shortly thereafter. The version published here is abridged.

6. She appears to have taken these distances from the guidebook she was carrying. New that year, it was Henry Winsler's *The Yellowstone National Park. A Manual for Tourists* . . . (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1883), 25, 32, 65. The distances are similar to today's road distances, but the routes are now somewhat different.

7. "Hitches" are stretches of road. The elevation change is closer to 1,000 feet from Mammoth to the top of the road.



E.J. Haynes, photographer

Guests arriving at National Hotel at Mammoth Hot Springs, 1886

the delicate. Even the strong would be satisfied with less of it. I never longed for railroads as I did there.

As we made our way to Norris, the first wonder was the Obsidian Cliffs, upheaved somewhat-columnar masses of black volcanic glass suggesting mines of the finest anthracite. The road beneath them is macadamized with the fragments—a glass road a quarter of a mile long.⁸ . . .

We had left the Hot Springs Hotel before eleven, and it was after dark when we reached Norris, so long are twenty-one miles in the Park. It had been hot during the day, but as evening approached we were glad to draw about us heavy wraps. This was our constant experience. It was well that accident had prevented our wearing the usually advertised winter clothing; in the middle of the day especially when climbing hills, it would have been intolerable. Our faithful Isaac sometimes tried our patience by care for his horses, but we were satisfied afterwards that he was right, at the last we fared better than most.

As we started just in advance of the first detachment of the Hatch Party⁹ (some twenty-five—all that the slender accommodations could provide for at once), we had had the pleasure all day of being passed by equestrians and teams, and now as we mounted the slight hill on which the hotel tents were placed we found ourselves the last of a numerous party and no welcome addition. The caravanserai¹⁰ at Norris consisted of half a dozen tents: one for the dining room, one for kitchen, and four for sleeping; and all told, drivers included, there were seventy of us there that night.¹¹

8. This road past Obsidian Cliff had been built in 1878 by Park Superintendent P. W. Norris.

9. This party, led by Rufus Hatch (the New York entrepreneur who was financier of the new Yellowstone Park Improvement Company), was one of three large groups of important people to travel through Yellowstone in 1883. Divided into several separate traveling groups, the Hatch party consisted of seventy-five elite guests, many of them journalists who had been specifically invited by Hatch to help him celebrate, promote, and ultimately profit from his new national park enterprise. Hatch paid all expenses, which he later admitted "cost me \$35,000." *Livingston Enterprise*, August 22, August 23, 1883, September 5, 1885.

10. Accommodations. Originally *caravanserai* meant

an Oriental inn where caravans stopped for the night.

11. George Thomas, Park employee in 1883, described the tent camp at Norris that summer: "The camp was located in a small grove of trees near the geyser basin. There were no buildings to house the guests, or for the dining room and kitchen. Two large wall tents were placed end to end and were made to serve the purpose of a building until one could be erected in time for the arrival of the guests of the next season. Small wall tents were used for sleeping purposes, each one provided with a double bed. Straw was spread on the ground and then covered with heavy carpets to form a floor. The beds were good, but many blankets were needed on chilly nights." George Thomas, "My Recollections of Yellowstone Park" (1883), 7, YNP Library.

The accommodations were ludicrously insufficient and all who could provide for themselves at once withdrew. Among these were our two fellow passengers, a gentleman and his wife. Guided by Isaac they found a tolerable camping place, ate a hastily cooked supper, set up their three yards of canvas and crawled in, while Isaac [attended] to the carriage. Miss A.¹² and myself, however, had no tent, and [had to] rely upon the overtaken resources of Norris. But where did all the seventy come from? There were many parties in the Park and by a [coincidence] they all focused that night at Norris. . . . It had been the plan of the Park authorities . . . that the best accommodations should be reserved for the Hatch party, but a high military dignitary¹³ had stolen a march upon them, gotten there first and had taken possession of at least one tent for the accommodation of his ladies. When therefore the Hatch party arrived great was their dissatisfaction to find even the poor accommodations that had been promised them not at their command.

As we ascended the hill what a scene presented itself! The air had grown keen and frosty and a great campfire had been kindled about which sat or stood (for even the crude seats were insufficient) about fifty ladies and gentlemen. All but those in possession [were] wearing an air of uncertainty deepening into anxiety. . . . “How and where shall I sleep?” became the important question. Miss A. and [I] at once resigned all hope of decent accommodation, thankful if only we were not left utterly shelterless. There fortune favored us and we found a most agreeable fellow sufferer in an English lady [a Miss Neave]. She was one of those independent single women of wealth and position who followed the example of Miss Bird,¹⁴ determined to see foreign countries, not after the goldfish fashion. With her own servants she had been camping in the Park for a month. She had pitched her tents or “broken camp” as fancy dictated, staying till fully satisfied in favored spots. How we envied her! It is the only true way to see the Park. . . .

We three “lone women” made common cause, and the host of the “grand hotel,” as soon as supper was cleared away, informed us that he would give us a corner of the dining tent but he had no other accommodation to offer. In this same tent fifteen gentlemen were to sleep. They were busy arranging their blankets when we went in. Some had two, and indulged in the luxury of a blanket beneath as well as above them. Handbags in hand and each with her blanket, we marched to our appointed corner. The host (poor driven man) was graciousness itself: “Ladies if you have any pins I will put up a curtain for you.” The pins were provided but the curtain, a dirty piece of burlap, was “as odd as Dick’s hatband” (that went half-way round and tucked under). It ran along the [foot] of [the] private apartment but left the broad side wholly exposed. “Here, ladies, is a pillow for you,” and with these encouraging words he hauled out from beneath a crude bench (where it had been partly on the bare ground and partly on a quarter of beef) a very dirty burlap sack full, he said, of potatoes! After these princely acts of hospitality he left us to our slumbers. . . .

[August 24]

Having got through the night the next thing was how to make a toilet. Alas! no conventionalities, no decencies for us that morning. I appealed to our English friend [Miss Neave]. “Shake yourself like a donkey—that is all you can do,” said she, and as an old campaigner I felt that she knew. . . .

Seeing no possible chance of even a tin basin to myself (no not even a mug of water), I took a courage and cloth in hand [and] advanced to the wash bench. “Will you please Sir pour a little water over this cloth for me?” The nearest gentleman obliged me; with my wet cloth I rubbed off my face and finger tips, and my toilet

12. A Miss Abbott, her traveling companion.

13. Probably General James S. Brisbin, a military man who for several years had been in charge of Fort Ellis, near Bozeman, Montana.

14. She refers here to Isabella Bird, whose book, *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* (London: John Murray; New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1879), was well-known by this time and in its seventh edition.

was made. My hair was not touched from my rising of one day at the Hot Springs till my going to bed of the next at the Upper Geyser [Basin]!... After such a night stimulants were much in demand . . . Miss A. and I had a mere vial of brandy, but we were glad enough to have recourse to it and offered to Miss Neave. She declined, brandy not being her "tippie," but went off into the kitchen where she got hot water and condensed milk and came back with a whiskey punch which she kindly shared with us. There was no getting through such an experience without frequent "little goes" of strong waters. . . . One English lady of the Hatch party came up to Miss



Courtesy of Elizabeth Oakes Clarke

Margaret Andrews Cruikshank in about 1883

Neave and seemed solicitous of a closer acquaintance with her. Miss N. was polite but cool and when said lady retired remarked to us, "That person is of what we call the tradesman class in England." Wasn't that English? But Miss Neave was right—the English of the Hatch Party were certainly not highbred. . . .

The Norris Geyser Basin is on the headwaters of the Gibbon River, one of the branches of the Madison. From the road we survey it, a square mile or so of hot

springs and geyser-like action. We look down upon a valley that seems all boiling water, mud puffs, embryo geysers, etc. just crusted over with a sheet of geyserite and looking exceedingly treacherous. They say explorers have ventured there, but I wouldn't for any money.¹⁵ . . .

Our next stage was Marshall's on the Forks of the Fire Hole River. To reach this we went thru Gibbon Canyon, the rocks often towering above us but neither so narrow or so dark as to be very impressive. In some places the rocks encroach so that the road is in the river, but only for a short distance. . . . Wherever one goes in the Park boiling springs may be found. There is one close to the Gibbon River, so close that it is difficult to get by it.¹⁶ A team that we met . . . there had come to grief—at least one of the horses certainly had—the poor creature had fallen not into the springs mud but into a quagmire that the escaping hot waters had made in the road. I hope it did not find its involuntary bath very hot. . . . At any rate it was a warning to us. Passengers got out and picked our way across while Isaac [with] the aid of some logs managed the safe navigation of his team. Another team more luckless was almost wrecked and we had to help them right themselves. Often the road is so narrow that precautions have to be taken a mile [in advance] to prevent the meeting of teams where it would be impossible to pass. . . .

We constantly met the most rustic of vehicles drawn by the roughest of farm animals and filled by the genuine sons and daughters of the soil. It was really strange to see how perfectly this class appreciate the wonders of the place and how glad they were to leave for awhile their hard labor for the adventurous, the beautiful and the sublime. . . .

The lack of time was [our] chief difficulty. Many things had to be passed by such as the monument geysers and the paint pots.¹⁷ Of [the] latter (by a toilsome walk through the brush) we saw only a few inferior specimens. They were caldrons of boiling mud, boiled till it was fine as flour paste and thick as mush—blob! blob! in great sullen bubbles that gave off steam or gas. Two of them side by side, one stewing a light chocolate paint and the other a light blue. All about these was evidence of paint pots that had ceased to boil, had in fact dried up, and the "paint" was returning to the dust from whence it came—retaining nothing of its coloring, just mere vulgar hardened mud.

So we went on a rather monotonous day's journey till the early afternoon brought us to the Forks of Firehole—Marshall's.¹⁸ About a mile before we reached this, the only house in the Park, we came to a substantial log house that is a government building. Some kind of official has his headquarters there and it professes also to be a post office but I fancy the mail is not very regular.¹⁹ . . .

Fording the stream (about up to the hubs), dragging up a slight activity, passing a hot spring²⁰ utilized as a supply for bath and wash house, about a quarter of a mile over the level plain bring us to Marshall's—a log house, or rather two or three of them put together. Back of the house toward the west and south [are] pine-covered mountains not at all grand. . . . This time we only stop to lunch and bait the horses. . . . [George] Marshall is a man who having . . . no [Park permit] has chosen to assume that he could keep such a house of entertainment, that the [Yellowstone Park Improvement] Company would be glad to let him stay. [When] only rough teamsters and hunters visited the Park I suppose he gave satisfaction. . . . But now that crowds throng there and [are] of a more fastidious sort Marshall won't do.

15. This was probably near Porcelain (Terrace) Springs of Norris Geyser Basin. It is a treacherous, thin-crust thermal area. Park tour guide G. L. Henderson noted in 1888: "Visitors ought not to cross this basin without a competent guide, and then it is at the risk of their lives. There is a board marked 'Dangerous' easily seen from the road." G. L. Henderson, *Yellowstone Park Manual and Guide*, 2nd ed. (Mammoth Hot Springs, Wyoming: Privately printed, 1888), 2.

16. This is Beryl Spring, named in 1885 from its

blue-green color. At that time, the road actually ran in the river for stretches because of the steep walls of Gibbon Canyon.

17. Monument Geyser Basin and Artists' Paintpots (then "Gibbon Paintpot Basin"), require a walk from the main road. See Winsor, *Yellowstone National Park*, 29.

18. This was Marshall's Hotel (later called "Firehole Hotel"), 1880-1891. See Lee H. Whittlesey, "Marshall's Hotel in the National Park," *Montana, the Magazine of Western History* 30 (Autumn 1980): 42-51.

Marshall must go. The effective force here was only three—Marshall, his wife, and a Chinamen—and they are all overworked and all cross. Not being forethoughted nor forehanded as to providing and not having very high standards I cannot praise their results.

A detachment of the Hatch Party had preceded us and [had] eaten up everything *clean*, except some dry imported baker's bread and some poor cake. After a wearisome delay we managed to get some not very hot water with which we made some "Lieby's Extract" beef tea from our own stores. As we crumbled the baker's bread into this we were charged fifty cents apiece. We left as soon as possible.

There were now twelve miles left between us and the Upper Geyser Basin [where] our friends Bishop and Mrs. Foss (of the Methodist Church) Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Harrison, Mr. and Mrs. John Douglas and our good neighbor Mrs. Goben had all preceded us.²¹... The first thing that informed us that we were nearing our destination was a geyser in full blast. It was close to the river just where we had to cross it by a bridge (you may imagine boiling water is not good for horses' feet) for once in the Geyser Basin the road is on the west [side of the Firehole River]. It was



EJ. Haynes, photographer

Yellowstone Park Improvement Company tourist camp in Upper Geyser Basin, 1883

"the riverside" [Geyser] firing away across the river at an angle. If the wind sets directly towards the bridge there is no getting over till the performance is ended . . . 10 to 13 minutes. It goes off three times a day.

After this every step revealed new wonders. The formations of world-renowned geysers—the Giant, the Castle, the Grotto, etc.—were around us but I am sorry to say they were not in active operations, only spurting a little water which [fell] in

19. This building was a blacksmith shop, run by George Graham Henderson; it was located at Prospect Point, where the roads forked, one road leading south to the Upper Geyser Basin and one leading east to Mary Lake and the Yellowstone River.

20. Hygeia Spring, near Marshall's Hotel, named for

the Greek goddess of health because its waters were used for bathing.

21. These people are mentioned as arriving at Livingston in the *Livingston Enterprise*, August 28, 1883. All appear to have been Mrs. Cruikshank's friends from Minneapolis. Goben is "Goheene" in the *Enterprise*.

sprays, or throwing up an inconsiderable amount of steam. The sun was disappearing when we found ourselves before the semi-circle of tents. [There were] between twenty and thirty . . . that formed the Company's hotel. Back, hidden from ours by a tongue of pines, was the President's [Chester A. Arthur] encampment.

Our friends met us with hearty greetings and [so did] Mr. Hobart,²² though [he was] at his wits' end striving to achieve the impossible. He . . . came forward cordially and after a few moments of puzzled thought took us to a tent which was



F. J. Haynes, photographer

President Arthur's ambulance train at Fort Washakie, Wyoming Territory, August 1883

to be all our own. I could but exclaim (after our experience at Norris) "Palatial magnificence!" . . . We were put in complete possession of a 13 by 16-foot tent with a rough-hewn wooden door fastened by a button inside and with a string to wind round a nail outside, when [we] ladies were "not at home." It had a bright-striped hemp carpet tacked all round to the lowest bar of its frame (slender firs) and a good mattress bed on the floor with a white honeycomb quilt. The washstand was a rough packing box, but it was furnished with a pitcher and basin, plenty of soft geyser water, soap and two towels. . . .

While we were . . . busy . . . we heard a "Swooop!" and "there he goes" was the cry. It was dear Old Faithful—the never-disappointing, the beautiful, the grand, the typical geyser. Mr. Hobart drew aside the tent curtain and there, not an eighth of a mile away, towered in the rosy evening light the clean shaft, the fearless column. For a while . . . we could only look and exclaim; the display [lasted] some five or six minutes. . . . There are others, geysers that rise higher, *much*, but for all practical purposes this is enough; and as you start back in dread and awe, the 130 or 140 feet is just as grand as if it were 200 or more. Then Faithful rises so straight and clean, uninterfered with by side spurts and splashing, that he is really the perfect geyser. Bless him! He is so entirely all that we had anticipated and was so reliable, playing for us every hour, that we learned to love him. . . .

22. Carroll T. Hobart, manager of the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company (then the largest Park concessioner), had secured the original lease for the company from the Secretary of the Interior and had then taken Rufus Hatch as a financial partner. Richard A. Bartlett, *Yellowstone: A Wilderness Besieged* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985), 128.

23. The President departed, as the reporter for his party wrote, because "it was the intention of the President's party to remain over Sunday [August 26] at Upper Geyser

Basin until it was ascertained that the vicinity of the camp offered insufficient forage for the animals. This discovery made it necessary to resume our march this morning [August 25]. We broke camp at the usual hour, and returning to Shoshone Lake by the same trail over which we rode Friday, proceeded thence in an easterly course to the Yellowstone Lake. . . ." *Journey Through the Yellowstone National Park and Northwestern Wyoming 1883* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1883), August 25 entry.

[Saturday, August 25]

The next morning I was up and out bright and early, but not early enough. I walked up to Old Faithful's mound which brought me into full view of the President's encampment. This was astir with others.

Some foreigners were watching anxiously for a [glimpse] of the ruler of this great country. The ambulance that we had seen the evening before stood ready, we fancied waiting for him. Alas! we were disappointed. He, Sheridan, Lincoln, [and the others] had taken to the saddle an hour before and were off for the Shoshone Lake and geysers still farther south and [off] the usual route of travel. We could only see the long train of pack mules and part of the military escort, in all some hundreds. Quite a sight but the magnates had escaped us. It seemed churlish in the President to treat thus, not only his lieges, but the foreign guests. It is part of his office to be looked at. I was ashamed of him. He had secluded himself from all eyes while he was in the basin.²³...

[Sunday, August 26]

It was Sunday morning. I thought of the Scotch lassie's saying, "Sunday does not come aboon the pass" for here we were surrounded by wonders that we must see then or never, [and] forced to leave the valley that same afternoon.²⁴...

As soon as possible Miss A. and [I] set off on our sightseeing. We crossed the Fire Hole on a little footbridge just in front of the camp and ascended the geyser hill. . . . [We saw] strange formations with bubbling and steaming pools, some with no rim above the general surface, some blue, some green, some dripping . . . with iron rust. The Giantess [Geyser] has a slightly raised mound and a rimless pool about thirty feet across. [It is] blue and slightly boiling, but with no great beauty or [other] striking features. We stood by it for some time and wished that we could see it go off. But I [would] not choose to be . . . close when it does, for they say the earth is shaken as if by an earthquake, and the tents (on the opposite side of the river) reel. [When it erupts] it discharges (with short intervals of quiet) for more than 24 hours, throwing its column to the height of 250 feet. They say the volume of Fire Hole River is sometimes doubled by its waters. . . .

In my guidebook I read that the little pools around [Old] Faithful have "pink and yellow margins and being constantly wet the colors are 'beautiful beyond description'."²⁵ Then all I can say is that I must be colorblind. I could see a faint ashes-of-rose tint, a pearly gray, and the tawny yellow of iron rust, but "brilliant beyond description" makes one imagine vivid greens, intense yellows, clear blues, flaming scarlets, and flowing crimsons; and I saw none of these.

Occasionally we did see beautiful things, beautiful enough for a poet's dream. I remember that we paused long by an inactive geyser whose pool was the perfection of geyser water—a great pure sparkling sapphire, rippling with heat and catching the sunlight [in] its undulations to reflect in it broken gleams into its wondrous depths. It was bordered as far down as we could see by the softest of coral-like formations, white and pearl gray. Here we stood entranced gazing into its funnel throat for perhaps twenty feet. Far down in its indigo depths there would form a phantom—a faint white cloud—growing whiter and more defined as it floated up to the surface and discharged itself in ebullition. That will give you an idea of the heat of the water—that masses of steam rise through it uncondensed.

As we went on we were joined by some of the Hatch party—all making for the Grand [Geyser] which it was hoped would go off in the course of the day. It boiled and splashed and spurted to the height of perhaps half a dozen feet a number of times and excited our hopes to the utmost, but go off it would not.²⁶ It was small comfort

24. This Scottish saying means that Sunday rest cannot be enjoyed before the efforts of the week are over. "Aboon" means *benefit* and relates to Scottish servants being released from work on Sundays. Muriel Steel, Aberdeen, Scotland, to Lee Whittlesey, October 3, 1987.

25. From Winsler, *Yellowstone National Park*, 45-46, quoting Lieutenant Gustavus C. Doane's description.

26. It was "going off," for this was Turban Geyser boiling and splashing rather than the larger nearby Grand Geyser.

to hear an habitué of the place say "Why when I was coming into the basin last week, the Grand and the Spasmodic were both in full play, clear up, hundreds of feet!" The Spasmodic finally gave an inferior exhibition but the Grand was sullen and refused to perform.²⁷ . . .

After Old Faithful the most satisfactory sight was the Sawmill [Geyser]. It erupted several times during the two hours, from twenty to thirty minutes at a time, with a regular kind of throb that at a little distance sounds like a sawmill. It kindly gave us one of its most beautiful exhibitions. It rises from a lovely blue pool, very shallow near its rim then suddenly deepening. It throws up not a shaft but a full fountain and not more than thirty feet. But the water is so beautifully broken into large drops that flash like diamonds in the sun that while the performance lasts it is impossible to turn away. Lingered about, in hopes of seeing the Grand, we saw the Sawmill twice.²⁸ . . .

Early in the afternoon we were obliged to leave. . . . and journey back to Marshall's. . . . When we got to Marshall's a storm cloud was looming . . . over the mountains and it hurried in all the travellers on the way. Those . . . who had hitherto tented now claimed shelter in the house. Moreover, Mr. Hatch had got that far with the second detachment of his party, [but had fallen] sick [and] was unable to go on. . . . there were fifty of us there that night. But the drivers had to provide for their [own] sleeping [quarters].

We had a tolerably good supper which I enjoyed. Part of the reason was that our party got in early and the over-worked cook was not so rushed. We had fish nicely fried and quite tolerable coffee. I often found it difficult . . . when things were at their worst [at Marshall's] to force down enough [food] to sustain nature, such abominable messes were served up to us. . . .

Above the square part of the building was a great loft, and this was elegantly subdivided into cells by burlap partitions reaching rather more than half-way up. Judging by their size I [thought] that there must have been more than a dozen of these little cubby holes, dark [and] stifling! Into these . . . most of us were stowed. Beyond beds, the [less] said about our accommodations the better. Many slept on the floor. . . .

Our room was in the southeast corner upstairs and had two beds in it, one at each end. Mrs. Goben was our roommate. While we were getting ready for bed, from time to time I felt a queer shaking. I knew the house was shakey but did not think that sufficient to account for it. Miss A . . . thought it was so . . . I noticed that she broke out into singing "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep" . . . I thought it most appropriate.

It fell to my lot to sleep . . . where the eaves came down over me like the crust over the blackbird in the pie. Mrs. Goben objected . . . to having the window open. The bed was stuffed with sagebrush and had a horrid medicinal, quininey smell. And though the bedclothes may have been clean, I fancied that they had [covered] every teamster in the valley, beside being washed in that hot spring till the blankets were perfect felt. Moreover, with the sagacity usually exhibited by the lower classes in bed making, every double blanket had its fold up towards the head, so that if you were too warm you [had to] throw off both thicknesses or neither. . . . Marshall's charges were most exorbitant. He charged Mr. Hatch in this way: for lunch for 13 and for a day each for seven . . . ninety-seven dollars! With us were two agreeable Scotch gentlemen being convoyed by a Chicago lawyer. Marshall hocus-pocussed one of the Scotchmen and the lawyer into each paying the bill. It was only as their driver gathered up his reins to [leave] that the fraud was discovered. It is said that [Marshall] has followed after men unwilling to be thus fleeced with a revolver. Mr. Hatch said the bill brought to him sealed Marshall's death-warrant; so if you ever visit the Park you will search in vain for Marshall's.²⁹ . . .

27. Spasmodic Geyser probably never erupted

"hundreds of feet high," although Grand Geyser did.



E.J. Hannes, photographer

Marshall's Hotel on the Firehole River in 1884

[Monday, August 27]

It was the morning of Monday August 27 that we were to leave Marshall's for the Falls, striking off in a northeasterly direction from the north and south course [we had] hitherto pursued. How long it seemed before we could get Isaac started! . . . Our fresh team went off at a round pace, the little black mule doing particularly good service; [before] long our serenity was restored and we gave ourselves up to such enjoyment as we could get out of our long hot dusty ride. . . . But when once [ascended] before we entered the [forest], what a view! Marshall's and our [tracks] for miles lay beneath us, and the rivers with their junction. Here and there, near and far, clouds of steam rising through the dark pines told of concealed wonders never to be enjoyed by us, while all around rose the mountains. . . . It was at noon camp in Hayden Valley that we gathered . . . fir cones and made [a] fire to boil our coffee . . . and cook our eggs. Strange, what a flavor there is to such simple experiences. I shall always love [that] spot even though I [shall] never see it again.

Somewhere on this route Isaac pointed to the turning that led to Yellowstone Lake—only fourteen miles off and we could not go!³⁰ It made us heartsick. We had neither the time or the money it would have required, nor were there any public accommodations there. . . .

28. Sources disagree about Sawmill's behavior in 1883. One noted that it erupted once per twenty-four hours for seven to ten minutes, while another noted that the geyser erupted "often" and lasted one to three hours.

29. Rufus Hatch was very angry at Marshall's charges, as the *Livingston Enterprise* reported on August 31, 1883: "He is very mad because the only hotel in the Park not belonging to the company, charged him an enormous

price for lodging and breakfasting with them and he says he is going to put up a tent hotel near by that will cut off all the travel from his rival and bust him up in business." Hatch's company, however, was out of business before he could make good on his threats.

30. This road junction was located about one and one-half miles south of Crater Hills in Hayden Valley, along Trout Creek.

[Tuesday, August 28]

The sun was not as high as it should have been to show [the Lower Falls] to the best advantage, but it was enough. It was all perfectly wild and untouched nature and grandeur unsurpassed.

Niagara is the standard by which all cataracts are judged. Well, this was not Niagara with its immensity of volume and power, but the general feeling was that in everything else [this] was greatly the superior. The setting was so superb [with] the dark green of the pines, the emerald green of the water, the white foam of the broken masses, and the wonderful, wonderful canyon. . . . Then from the Fall the river dashed wildly away, like a hurt thing and down, down in the bottom of the canyon it looked so frenzied that it no longer seemed merely water. We looked at it (they said) from a height of 1875 feet . . . sheer depth!³¹ . . . But the Falls and the Canyon! How [could one] turn away and leave them after such a mere glimpse? The sun every instant shone more directly into the canyon, fairly illuminating it. . . . We all agreed that earth could not furnish another such beautiful sight. I shall never forget it. How thankful I am to Miss Abbott for getting me there! I think we stood on the very spot from which my very best stereographs were taken. . . .

We had to go, for we [had to] reach Marshall's again that night. By eleven o'clock we had set out on our return journey. There were a few objects of interest that in our haste the evening before we had left unvisited. We stopped for a short time at Sulphur Mountain, apparently a mass of sulphur enclosed in a thin shell of geyserite.

There are many vents where the sulphur fumes burst out and around which crystals of almost pure sulphur are deposited. The whole thing is hot, and any particular piece of sulphur is apt to be very hot. It is [a] superstition of the drivers that they are several times hotter than red hot iron. However, we possessed ourselves of a few specimens, and then ordered Isaac to drive on, with the feeling that all was over for us so far as the Park was concerned. In fact the return journey was only dull endurance. . . .

[Wednesday, August 29]

We had no geyserial premonitions that night [at Marshall's] to disturb our slumbers and we were getting used to quinine mattresses and smelly felted blankets. We slept well, but early rising is a natural concomitant of the Park air and excitement. I believe we had "Har meat" [horse meat] for breakfast [and] everything was poorly cooked . . . Marshall [was] less attendant and his wife crosser. We were very willing to see the last of [that] place. . . .

Fifteen miles brought us to Norris where under the trees we took our last lunch and also stopped for a last look at the geyser basin as the horses [took] a long rest; 21 miles and the worst of the road lay before them. The tents were still there of course, but we did not enter them. There were no tourists, no sign of life. It is to be hoped that the overworked force of four were all sound asleep. . . .

About one o'clock we resumed our journey. This last stage was tiresome in the extreme. It promised nothing to break the monotony. . . .

We were within the last five miles [of Mammoth] when we entered upon the [descent] of Terrace Mountain. A cloud that had added to the beauties of sunset suddenly grew threatening. It rapidly spread over the sky and rain began to fall. It was now quite dark, and how cheery the bright lights of the hotel looked! Oh! at last . . . we were there! At the sound of our wheels, various officials rushed out with umbrellas to assist us to dismount and to help us up the rather ladder-like steps of the grand entrance, for all who have made the tour of the Park are expected to return half dead, spent, and powerless.³² . . .

31. The actual depth is closer to 900 to 1,000 feet.

32. The National Hotel (the first Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel) was still under construction and not yet complete when Mrs. Cruikshank toured the Park. The massive green and red hotel was 414-feet long and 60 feet wide and was said to accommodate 800 people.

33. Clarke, "Margaret Andrews Cruikshank"; Oak-Hill Cemetery Company, Washington, D.C., to Lee H. Whittlesey, August 3, 1987; *Washington Post*, July 4, 1919. The *Post* gave her age at death as ninety-four, but cemetery officials list her age as ninety-three years, eleven months.



E. J. Haynes, photographer

The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and the Lower Falls as seen from the north rim in 1884

Margie Cruikshank apparently never returned to Yellowstone. In her later life she continued to teach history and traveled extensively in Europe. She appears to have saved prudently, but entrusted her money to a friend prior to one of her trips and when she returned, it was gone. She retired to the Louise Home in Washington, D.C., a home for “genteel ladies who had fallen into financial hardship through no fault of their own.” It was there that she died at 6:55 o’clock on the evening of July 3, 1919, at the age of ninety-three.³³

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