

# WELCOME TO COLTER CAMPGROUND



GALLATIN  
National Forest  
GARDINER  
RANGER DISTRICT



Piercing blue eyes and an uncanny sense of direction characterized John Colter, namesake for this campground. Born in Virginia in the mid-1700s, Colter grew up a farmer. An appointment by Meriwether Lewis to the Corps of Discovery in 1803 was his ticket west and the beginning of a new way of life for Colter, who later chose to remain in the west, trapping beaver and earning legendary status due to his incredible escape from the Blackfeet Indians.

Most likely the first white man to ever lay eyes on the astonishing sights of what is now Yellowstone National Park, Colter and his seemingly tall tales of bubbling mud cauldrons, steaming cracks into the earth, and geysers shooting water high into the sky were believed by no one. Not until many years later, when the area was explored again by Jedediah Smith, Jim Bridger and others, were his sightings verified.

A map later published by William Clark of that famed expedition, showed Colter's trail just southeast of here, along the banks of the Clarks Fork River. It is thought he may have traveled on the Bannock or Great Trail of the Indians, a route that ran from central Idaho into northern Wyoming to access buffalo hunting grounds. The trail was used for thousands of years, absorbing the footprints of many native peoples.

Colter eventually ended his trapping days and signed on with Nathan Boone's Company of Volunteer Mounted Rangers, serving in the War of 1812. In that year, John Colter's remarkable life ended. After surviving a host of dangers and enduring untold hardship, he succumbed to jaundice before reaching 40.



Toilet, all



Water, all

