

## Creation of Grand Teton National Park

Edited: chazlitt, 11/17/08

Recording info:

Voice: Female voice & male mix

Background music: Nationalistic, grand, sounding music, horns, violins...etc.

Soundtrack:

These majestic, craggy mountains and glacial lakes at the base of the Teton Range are hallmarks of the scenic valley known as Jackson Hole.

It took the efforts of far-sighted individuals like John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Horace Albright, Maude Noble, and Struthers Burt to create the national park we enjoy today.

Because so many different people cared deeply about this valley, and because their visions for its future sometimes conflicted, the creation of Grand Teton National Park took more than 50 years to complete. Compared to the world's first national park—Yellowstone, which took only *two* years from idea to creation—the story of Grand Teton's formation is especially remarkable.

Some local residents were initially resistant to the idea of a national park, and heated battles were fought over the future of the valley. Eighty percent of the valley was already under government control, and homesteaders wanted to maintain their private land. These rugged men and women ran cattle and lived off the land, and they did not want the federal government to take control of the place they had worked so hard to settle. Dude ranchers also resisted the park's formation, since their businesses involved making a living from visiting easterners who wanted to have a "western experience."  
(voices discussing loudly in the background)

On the other hand, some valley residents feared natural resource damage and the commercial development that threatened to run rampant on the valley floor. These local citizens, including some businessmen and ranchers, wanted to preserve the "old west" character of the valley, but continue to allow hunting, fishing, dude ranching and grazing. In 1923, a now-famous meeting took place at local resident Maude Noble's cabin to discuss the competing visions for the valley's future. The diverse participants at this meeting reached a compromise, known as the Jackson Hole Plan, which paved the way for the initial Grand Teton National Park to be established in 1929. This fledgling park protected only the Teton range and six glacial lakes at the base of the peaks.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. became involved in the Jackson Hole Plan after visits to Teton country in 1924 and 1926. Rockefeller began to purchase private properties in the valley, with the intention of donating these lands for national park designation. He created the Snake River Land Company as a purchasing agent to mask his association and keep land prices affordable. The company acquired 35,000 acres of critical Jackson Hole property, but attempts by Rockefeller to give this land to the National Park Service met with resistance. His threat to sell the properties on the open market prompted President Franklin D. Roosevelt to proclaim the landscape as the Jackson Hole National Monument in 1943. Though it took decades of controversy and conflict, in 1950, President Harry S. Truman combined the original 1929 park and the 1943 monument to create Grand Teton National Park in its current form.

Today's park protects incredible scenery, geologic features, plants and wildlife. Many compromises were made in the process of protecting this valley, including grazing allotments, elk hunting, in-holdings and an airport, and these compromises continue to

shape current park policy. What will the future of Grand Teton National Park look like? We can only guess. But the park service mission remains the same: to protect and preserve natural, cultural and historical areas for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations. It will be the job of these future generations to continue to protect the wildlife and their migration routes, the geologic features, the cultural history, and the scenic value of the truly spectacular Grand Teton National Park.

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