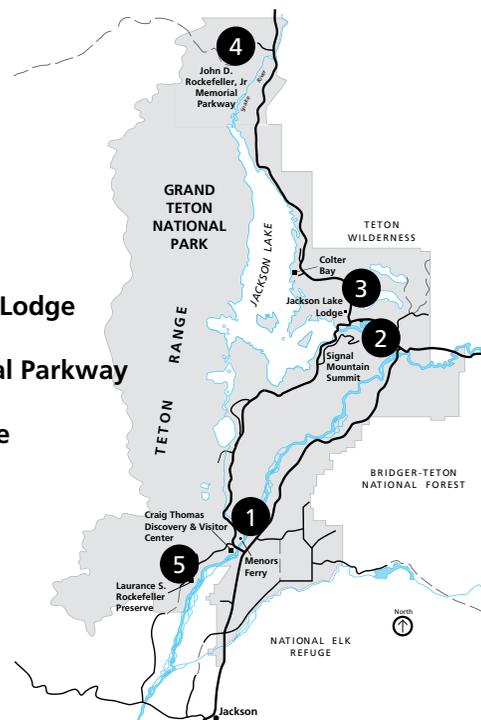




A Grand Vision – John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s Gift

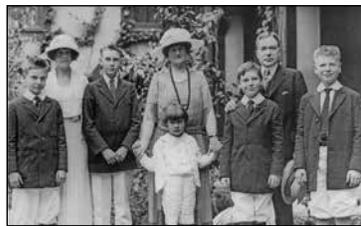


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Let John D. Rockefeller, Jr. be your guide. Explore the places that tell of how Mr. Rockefeller helped protect Grand Teton National Park and many others. The Rockefeller family’s commitment and generosity stemmed from a belief that nature had the power to “nurture the human spirit.”

A Rockefeller Road Trip



John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and family ca. 1922; (L to R): Laurance, Abby (daughter), John III, Abby (wife), David, Winthrop, John Jr., Nelson.

The natural world inspired a 12 year-old John D. Rockefeller, Jr. when his family visited Yellowstone National Park in 1886. They traveled by train to the park entrance near Gardiner, MT and toured the major attractions by carriage and horseback—the geysers, Grand Canyon of Yellowstone River and Mammoth Hot Springs.

Never forgetting his experience, Rockefeller brought his three oldest sons – John III, Nelson and Laurance – to visit Yellowstone 1924.

Superintendent of Yellowstone Horace Albright, hosted the family, providing an itinerary and a guide. However, he was instructed not mention park business or hint at any financial needs.

Knowing the land would speak for itself, Albright suggested the family travel south of Yellowstone to experience the majesty of the Teton Range. This trip changed Rockefeller and the course of history for Grand Teton National Park.

Maud Noble Cabin

1

Maud Noble first came to Jackson Hole as a “dude,” a wealthy easterner experiencing the cowboy life. She fell in love with the area and in 1918 purchased and operated Bill Menor’s homestead and ferry.

On July 26, 1923, Maud Noble hosted an historic meeting. Prominent business owners and local ranchers, along with Yellowstone Superintendent Horace Albright, gathered to discuss the changing character of Jackson Hole. They wanted to protect the valley from further development and preserve their traditional way of life.

In 1929, Congress set aside 96,000 acres as the original Grand Teton National Park—a significant victory for preservation. For some, the designation did not offer enough protection for the valley.

For others, it fueled anti-park sentiments that continued for 52 long years.

THE PLAN

As early as 1897, people proposed expanding the south boundary of Yellowstone National Park to include Jackson Hole. The participants of the meeting at Maud Noble’s cabin recognized the value of preserving wildlife and the beauty of the valley, but did not want government control.

They developed what would become known as the “Jackson Hole Plan.” The plan’s goal was to purchase private lands in the valley and “turn the entire Jackson Hole back to nature as the greatest scenic and wildlife preserve on the face of the Earth.” (Horace Albright) There was only one problem with the plan: who could raise the money.

Signal Mountain Summit

2

In 1926, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. returned with his wife and three younger sons—Laurance, Winthrop and David. This time Horace Albright personally guided them into Jackson Hole with a grand plan in mind.

Albright took them to a viewpoint much like the Signal Mountain summit. This inspiring spot overlooked the valley and the towering Teton Range. As they watched a moose graze in the glow of the sunset, Albright related the details of the plan developed at Maud Noble’s cabin.

Albright later said he hoped Rockefeller “might find in the awesome majesty of its snow-clad mountains and the peace of its verdant valleys, refreshment of body and inspiration of spirit.” As the family prepared to leave, Rockefeller asked

Albright to compile maps of the valley’s private properties and determine their cost. Albright was ecstatic. The Jackson Hole Plan had financial support. Another 24 years of controversy passed before this dream became a reality.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. said although Horace Albright saw the Jackson Hole Plan as a “dream” he saw it as an “ideal project.” As he wrote in a letter to Albright, it was an opportunity to protect “the marvelous scenic beauty of the Teton Mountains and the Lakes at their feet, which are seen at their best from the Jackson Hole Valley and the fact that this Valley is the natural and necessary sanctuary and feeding place for the game which inhabits Yellowstone Park and the surrounding region.”



John D. Rockefeller, Jr. (left), wife Abby (center), and Superintendent Woodring (right) on a visit to Jackson Hole.

Signal Mountain Summit (continued)

THE COVER UP

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. established the Snake River Land Company to purchase private lands on his behalf. He understood that if people found out a Rockefeller was behind the purchases, land values would inflate and people might resist selling.

Through the Snake River Land Company Rockefeller purchased nearly 35,000 acres and spent more than \$1.4 million. Today, to purchase this amount of land in Jackson Hole would cost over \$1 billion.

Lunch Tree Hill at Jackson Lake Lodge

3

Rockefeller met resistance when he tried to donate his land to the federal government. Locals opposed government control; the US Forest Service disliked the idea of turning lands over to the National Park Service; and Wyoming officials worried about losing tax revenue.

In 1942, a discouraged Rockefeller wrote a letter to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes threatening to sell his land. The threat spurred action. In 1943, under the Antiquities Act, President Roosevelt designated Jackson Hole National Monument protecting federal lands of the valley floor along the base of the Teton Range.

Many saw the designation as a victory, but anti-park expansion forces mobilized. They had not anticipated the national monument option, and the controversy grew more bitter.

Transfer of land ownership to the National Park Service provoked several vindictive deeds. Prior to transferring their property to park staff, the US Forest Service gutted buildings, and placed a dead skunk in one.

An unsigned letter circulating at the time warned

“your recreation privileges in Jackson Hole will be practically at an end.” Challenges to the designation ensued. Wyoming Congressman Frank Barrett introduced a bill to abolish the Jackson Hole National Monument and it passed both the House and Senate. President Roosevelt, however, vetoed the bill.

THE PROTESTS

Eager to show their opposition, armed ranchers drove 500 cattle across the newly established Jackson Hole National Monument in 1943.

Wyoming Governor Lester Hunt threatened to remove “any federal official who attempts to assume authority in the monument area.” The state of Wyoming filed a lawsuit against the monument, challenging the constitutionality of the presidential proclamation. When the suit was dismissed, Congress voted instead to block funding for the monument.

The national monument caused so much tension that Congress passed a law barring further use of the Antiquities Act in Wyoming. A law that still applies today.



Snake River Land Company headquarters (a.k.a. Buffalo Dorm).



Protestors drive cattle across Jackson Hole National Monument.

John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway

4

In 1949, a compromise agreement to expand the park prompted Rockefeller to finally convey his gift of 32,117 acres to the government.

On September 14, 1950, Rockefeller’s “ideal project” became reality when President Harry Truman signed the law establishing present-day Grand Teton National Park. The park now included the original 1929 park, most of the 1943 national monument, and Rockefeller’s gift.

In 1972, the John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Memorial Parkway was established to commemorate Mr. Rockefeller’s “many significant contributions to the cause of conservation in the United States.” Rockefeller traveled south from Yellowstone on this road in 1924 and 1926 to visit the area.

The Parkway establishes an historical link between John D. Rockefeller, Jr.’s first experiences in Yellowstone and his efforts to protect Jackson Hole. Perhaps more importantly, the Parkway links Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks—protecting land in the heart of the Greater

Yellowstone Ecosystem (GYE). The GYE is the largest intact natural area in the lower 48 states containing important wildlife habitat and migration corridors.

A CHANGE OF HEART

As time passed, some of those who had originally opposed the creation and expansion of the park came to embrace the idea. Former Wyoming Governor, Clifford Hansen, who led a protest against the Jackson Hole National Monument, later stated he was glad he had lost that fight.

Imagine this landscape without protection. . . Subdivisions, strip malls and billboards might obscure your view. Because of the efforts of many people, such as John D. Rockefeller, Jr. and Horace Albright, this place retains grandness. A valley covered in fragrant sagebrush with abundant wildlife, towering peaks and sparkling glacial lakes provide that “refreshment of body and inspiration of spirit” that Horace Albright hoped Rockefeller might find.



Laurance S. Rockefeller Preserve

5

In 1932, the Snake River Land Company purchased the JY Ranch. Tucked away on the shores of Phelps Lake, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. decided to keep this land for family use rather than donate it to the federal government.

This summer retreat remained in the Rockefeller family until 2007 when Laurance S. Rockefeller, son of John D. Rockefeller, Jr. donated the last 1,106 acres of ranch lands to the National Park Service. This land is now the Laurance S.

Rockefeller Preserve and is open to the public.

Laurance’s goal for the Preserve was to reflect the vision he shared with his father, to “not only give generously, but also that people should live in harmony with nature.” At the presentation ceremony on the ranch in 2001, Laurance said, “For 75 years, the majestic property has been preserved for our family, and I am gratified that henceforth it will be preserved for the American people.”