



# Glacier's Past

## Glacier National Park- A Look Into the Past

Recent archaeological surveys have found evidence of human use dating back over 10,000 years. These people may have been the ancestors of the tribes that live in the area today. By the time the first European explorers came to this region, several different tribes inhabited the area. The Blackfeet Indians controlled the vast prairies east of the mountains.

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In 1806, the Lewis and Clark Expedition came within 50 miles of the area that is now the park.

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The Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai Indians lived and hunted in the western valleys. They also traveled east of the mountains to hunt buffalo. In the early 1800's, French, English, and Spanish trappers came in search of beaver. In 1806, the Lewis and Clark Expedition came within 50 miles of the area that is now Glacier National Park.

As the number of people moving west steadily increased, the Blackfeet, Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai were forced onto reservations. The Blackfeet Reservation adjoins the east side of the park. The Flathead Indian Reservation is southwest of Glacier.

This entire area holds great spiritual importance to the Blackfeet, Salish, Pend d'Oreille and Kootenai people.



Dr. and Mrs. George Bird Grinnell on Grinnell Glacier in 1932

The railroad over Marias Pass was completed in 1891. The completion of the Great Northern Railway allowed more people to enter the area. Homesteaders settled in the valleys west of Marias Pass and soon small towns developed.

Under pressure from miners, the mountains east of the Continental Divide were acquired in 1895 from the Blackfeet. Miners came searching for copper and gold. They hoped to strike it rich, but no large copper or gold deposits were ever located. Although the mining boom lasted only a few years, abandoned mine shafts are still found in several places in the park.

Around the turn of the century, people started to look at the land differently. Rather than just seeing the minerals

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they could mine or land to settle on, they started to recognize the value of its spectacular scenic beauty. Facilities for tourists started to spring up.

In the late 1890's visitors arriving at Belton (now called West Glacier) could get off the train, take a stagecoach ride a few miles to Lake McDonald, and then board a boat for an eight mile trip to the Snyder Hotel. No roads existed in the mountains, but the lakes allowed boat travel into the wilderness.

# Glacier National Park

## Historical Timeline

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Prior to 1891, Blackfeet, Kootenai, Salish, and Pend d'Oreille live in and around this part of the Rocky Mountains for thousands of years.

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- 1891 George Bird Grinnell calls for the creation of a national park to protect the area.
- 1900 The area becomes a Forest Preserve.
- 1910 On May 11, 1910, President Taft signed the bill creating Glacier National Park.
- 1910 First park Superintendent proposes a road across the park.
- 1916 August 25, 1916, Congress passes the National Park Service Organic Act establishing the National Park Service.
- 1932 Waterton Lakes and Glacier National Parks are designated as the world's first International Peace Park on May 2nd. This same year, the Going-to-the-Sun Road is completed.
- 1934 President Franklin D. Roosevelt broadcasts address to the nation from Glacier National Park.
- 1960 Fiftieth Anniversary of the Park.
- 1976 Glacier National Park is designated a Biosphere Reserve.
- 1977 Granite Park and Sperry Chalets are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1995 Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park is designated a World Heritage Site.
- 1997 Going-to-the-Sun Road is designated a National Historic Landmark.
- 2010 Glacier celebrates its 100th Anniversary.

Soon people, like George Bird Grinnell, pushed for the creation of a national park. Grinnell was an early explorer to this part of Montana and spent many years working to get the park established. The area was made a Forest Preserve in 1900, but was open to mining and homesteading. Grinnell and others sought the added protection a national park would provide. Grinnell saw his efforts rewarded in 1910 when President Taft signed the bill establishing Glacier as the country's 10th national park.

After the creation of the park, the growing staff of park rangers needed housing and offices to help protect the new park. The increasing number of park visitors made the need for roads, trails, and hotels urgent. The Great Northern Railway built a series of hotels and small backcountry lodges, called chalets, throughout the park. A typical visit to Glacier involved a train ride to the park, followed by a multi-day journey on horseback. Each day after a long ride in the mountains, guests would stay at a different hotel or chalet. The lack of roads meant that, to see the interior of the park, visitors had to hike or ride a horse. Eventually, the demand for a road across the mountains led to the building of the Going-to-the-Sun Road.

The construction of the Going-to-the-Sun Road was a huge undertaking. Even today, visitors to the park marvel at how such a road could have been built. The final section of the Going-to-the-Sun Road, over Logan Pass, was completed in 1932 after 11 years



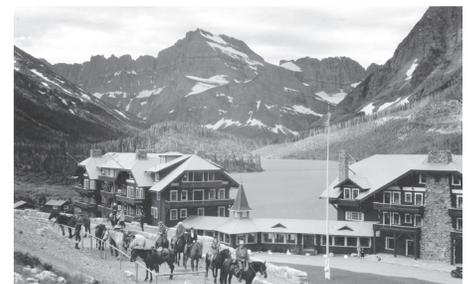
Going-to-the-Sun Road construction 1928

of work. The road is considered an engineering feat and is a National Historic Landmark. It is one of the most scenic roads in North America.

The construction of the road forever changed the way visitors would experience Glacier National Park. Future visitors would drive over sections of the park that previously had taken days of horseback riding to see.

Just across the border, in Canada, is Waterton Lakes National Park. In 1931, members of the Rotary Clubs of Alberta and Montana suggested joining the two parks as a symbol of the peace and friendship between our two countries. In 1932, the United States and Canadian governments voted to designate the parks as Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, the world's first. More recently the parks have received two other international honors. The parks are both Biosphere Reserves, and were jointly designated as a World Heritage Site, in 1995. This international recognition highlights the importance of this area, not just to the United States and Canada, but to the entire world.

While much has changed since the first visitors came to Glacier, it is possible to relive some of Glacier's early history. You can take a horseback ride like an early visitor. Miles of hiking trails follow routes first used by trappers in the early 1800's. Several hotels and chalets, built by the Great Northern Railway in the early 1900's, house summer guests to the park. A visit to Glacier National Park is still a great adventure!



Horseback party leaving Many Glacier Hotel, July 8, 1932

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