



*A Historical Handbook  
for the Employees of*

# **GLACIER PARK LODGE**

*by the  
Glacier Park Foundation*

*May 2025*

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Dear Glacier Park Lodge employees,

Welcome to the traditional gateway to Glacier National Park! Glacier Park Lodge was known for many years as the “Entrance” hotel because so many visitors to Glacier first arrived here. We’ve prepared this handbook to help you orient visitors to the hotel, and to enhance your own experience working here.

The Glacier Park Foundation, which created this handbook for you, is a citizens’ group primarily made up of former Glacier lodge employees. We have more than 800 members, from all the lodges and from all eras.

We seek to promote the public interest in Glacier, with an emphasis on historic preservation. We work co-operatively with Pursuit’s Glacier Park Collection, Xanterra’s Glacier National Park Lodges, and the National Park Service. All of our directors and officers serve on a volunteer basis.

We publish a membership journal called *The Inside Trail*, which features articles on public affairs, park history, and stories of Glacier. Past issues are posted on our website, [www.glacierparkfoundation.org](http://www.glacierparkfoundation.org). We invite you to join us through the website. (We offer a complimentary annual membership to current Glacier employees.) Also check out our Facebook page.

We look back with great pleasure on our summers in Glacier and cherish the lifelong friendships we made there. We wish you a delightful summer!

Sincerely yours,

The Directors of the Glacier Park Foundation

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF GLACIER PARK LODGE**

Glacier Park Lodge was built in 1912-13 for the Great Northern Railway. It stands on the Blackfeet Indian reservation, just outside Glacier National Park. The lodge's history is intimately linked to those three entities – the railway, the national park and the Blackfeet.

When Glacier Park was established in 1910, the frontier was a living memory. The Blackfeet were a largely independent people until the buffalo disappeared about 1882. The Great Northern laid tracks across the Rockies in the 1890s, on what became Glacier's southern border.

The Great Northern's founder was the "Empire Builder," James J. Hill. Hill's son Louis conceived the vision of building hotels in Glacier Park. He took inspiration from the Northern Pacific Railway's success in building lodges in Yellowstone and transporting visitors there.

Louis Hill showed great energy in constructing Glacier's lodges. Within five years, he created Glacier Park Lodge, Many Glacier Hotel, and nine chalet groups (Two Medicine, Cut Bank, St. Mary, Going-to-the-Sun, Gunsight Lake, Sperry, Granite Park, Many Glacier, and Belton). Glacier Park Lodge was originally called "Glacier Park Hotel," and was known familiarly as the "Entrance hotel" or "Entrance."

Glacier Park Lodge opened its doors on June 15, 1913. There was no celebration to mark the occasion. The manager said the staff was too new and needed at least a week of further training, so the opening party was delayed until June 22, when a trainload of visitors from Whitefish, Kalispell, Columbia Falls and Belton (West Glacier) arrived, along with the Kalispell Elks Club Band.

The hotel was a marvel to behold, both inside and out. The "big tree lodge," designed by architect Samuel Bartlett, featured a forest lobby of huge Douglas fir timbers, each more than 40 feet tall and up to three feet in diameter. It had taken more than a year to build, the work of St. Paul contractor Edwin Evensta and his crew of nearly 100 men.

The Blackfeet played a major role in the railway's promotion of Glacier and were featured at the lodge and in advertising. Groups of Blackfeet, outfitted in the ceremonial regalia, were toured across the United States. On these tours, citizens of major eastern and Midwestern cities were given a glimpse of the Blackfeet and encouraged to come and see the "Glacier Park Indians" in their homeland of Montana.

At the hotel, visitors were not disappointed as members of the Blackfeet tribe were paid to greet the arriving morning train. They did cultural performances each evening, demonstrating songs, dances and sign language. The Blackfeet also set up a teepee village on the hotel grounds which guests could tour. Despite efforts by the reservation superintendent to have the Blackfeet live modern lives, tribal members were paid by the railway to dress and live as they had when buffalo roamed the West.

In its early years, Glacier was chiefly a horseback park. Visitors travelled in large parties, escorted by wranglers, over trails which linked the hotels, the chalets and several large tent camps. Most guests arrived on Great Northern trains, spent a night at "Entrance," and then set off either on horseback or in tour buses, which have become symbolic of Glacier.

In the 1920s and '30s, travel patterns began to change. Travelers increasingly arrived by car instead of by train. The National Park Service recognized this trend and built Going-to-the-Sun Road, which opened in 1933. Visitation decreased markedly at the start of the Depression. The Great Northern lost money on the hotels and became increasingly eager to sell them. No buyers came forward and the quest to sell the hotels went on for decades.

The lodges were closed for three summers (1943-45) during World War Two. Postwar prosperity brought more visitors to Glacier, mostly by car. Great Northern poured money into an increasingly urgent effort to find a buyer for the hotels.

In 1956, the Great Northern hired the Knutson Hotel Company to manage and renovate its lodges in Glacier and in Waterton Lakes National Park in Alberta. Donald Knutson's company took over Glacier Park Hotel and the rest of the facilities for the summers of 1957 through 1959. Major renovations were made to the hotel, including renaming it "Glacier Park Lodge."

The original "plunge pool" in the hotel basement was closed and an outdoor swimming pool built later beside the chalet. The gift shop was expanded, all rooms got private bathrooms, the Medicine Lounge was updated, the Grill Room in the basement was closed, and a small cafeteria was opened in the lobby.

Knutson also cut ties with the Blackfeet, whose performances were no longer welcomed. Instead, he moved the hotel to more of a cowboy theme and hired professional musicians to entertain hotel guests. The Great Northern paid for all these changes, hoping that Knutson would buy the hotels, but that did not happen.

In 1960, the Great Northern told the Park Service that it would not open the properties the following year. But in December, it finally found a buyer – the newly created Glacier Park, Inc. (GPI), led by Don Hummel, then mayor of Tucson, Arizona. GPI aggressively reduced the size of the workforce at the hotels compared with how they had been run by the railway, and took other measures to eliminate deficits and try to turn a profit.

The 1960s were a tumultuous and sometimes tragic decade. In 1962, a boiler explosion rocked the hotel. In 1964, the biggest spring flood in Montana's history knocked out the water system, washed out roads and closed Glacier's lodges for many days. In 1967, a Glacier Park Lodge employee was one of the victims of the terrible "Night of the Grizzlies." (See the *Stories* section below.)

In 1981, Greyhound Food Management purchased the hotel from Don Hummel's company and reorganized Glacier Park, Inc. The company later was acquired by the Viad Corp. It continued to operate all the Glacier lodges for 33 years.

Glacier Park Lodge marked its centennial in 2013. In that same year, the historic lodging system was divided. The National Park Service granted concession rights inside Glacier to the Xanterra Parks & Resorts. Pursuit's Glacier Park Collection (formerly Glacier Park, Inc.) continues to operate the gateway lodges (Glacier Park Lodge, St. Mary Lodge, the West Glacier facilities including Belton Chalets and West Glacier Mercantile, and the Prince of Wales Hotel in Canada).

# ARCHITECTURE AND ART

## The Lodge's Design

The design of Glacier Park Lodge was inspired by the Forestry Building at the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland, Oregon. Both Louis Hill and his father James J. Hill visited the exposition and were impressed by the Forestry Building, which had tree-trunk pillars in its lobby.

When it came time to design Glacier Park Lodge, Louis Hill ordered a set of blueprints of the Forestry Building for architect Samuel Bartlett. Hill also sent Bartlett copies of various books on Swiss architectural design for inspiration.

The design of the 200-foot-long by 100-foot-wide lobby was influenced by Romanesque cathedrals which Louis Hill had seen in Europe. The Douglas-fir pillars have small horizontal logs at their tops to suggest the Ionic capitals on classical pillars. The design of St. Andrew's cross is incorporated in the balcony railings.

The lodge as a whole was styled to resemble a Swiss chalet. The exterior features an overhanging roof with deep eaves. The pillars of the portico and the exterior are western red cedar.

The Douglas-fir lobby pillars came from Oregon. The logs are more than 40 feet tall and between 36 and 42 inches in diameter. They were as much as 800 years old when harvested and were cut before the sap rose to ensure that the bark stayed attached.

The Great Northern built a temporary track to the lodge construction site to deliver the logs. They were so massive that only two could generally be carried on a flatcar. A system of pulleys was used to move the logs into their upright positions.

The great flower garden between the station and hotel was not in the original plan. Rather, the space was supposed to feature three pools with fountains. The initial pool in front of the railway station turned into a maintenance headache. It was filled in and replaced with the garden, which has grown more lavish over the years.

## The Paintings and Prints

Glacier Park Lodge features the pictures of two renowned artists, John Fery and Winold Reiss. Both were European emigres recruited by Louis Hill.

Six original paintings by John Fery hang in the lodge. They are some of the hundreds of paintings Hill commissioned Fery to create for the Great Northern's "See America First" campaign. One is in the dining room above the fireplace, and several are on the mezzanine (second floor) of the lobby. Three paintings in the hotel are in the Fery style, but by unknown artists.

Fery was an Austrian Jew who emigrated to America to escape persecution. He devoted his art to the Rocky Mountain West. His style is impressionistic, using bright colors and exaggerated forms.

Starting in 1910, Fery spent his summers in Glacier making field sketches from which he created the finished paintings. Hill provided Fery with a studio in St. Paul. For a time, he also occupied a studio in West Glacier.

Fery's contract called for 14 paintings a month, a prodigious output. Between 1910 and 1913 he completed 347 paintings of Glacier, as well as other scenes along the Great Northern's line from St. Paul to Seattle. The paintings were displayed in railroad offices and depots to promote travel to Glacier.

Fery's paintings were large and his production was impressive. But Louis Hill, himself an amateur painter, believed that Fery was working too slowly, and the two had a falling out. Fery left the Great Northern and went to work for the Northern Pacific Railway, painting scenes of Yellowstone National Park.

One thing that Hill especially wanted to capture on canvas was images of the Blackfeet. In 1927, he found an artist who was uniquely capable of that work, the German portraitist Winold Reiss.

Reiss painted hundreds of vivid images of the Blackfeet. The works were spectacular in their realism and color, and Hill immediately realized their suitability for calendar art. From 1928 to 1958, Reiss's Blackfeet portraits adorned railway calendars and became an advertising and publicity hit.

Glacier Park Lodge has an excellent collection of Winold Reiss prints lining the walls of its Annex. They display the great variety of his subjects, from Native women and local pioneers to children and wizened Blackfeet warriors. Reiss's work encompasses many of the most authentic and realistic portrayals of the Blackfeet that have ever been done.

In 2015, GPI generously donated the Fery paintings and other historic artwork from the Great Northern era to Glacier National Park.

### **The Two Guns White Calf Statue**

In the lobby of the hotel is a large wooden statue of Two Guns White Calf (see the *Personalities* section). It was carved by Hans Reiss, the brother of artist Winold Reiss. At that time, the mid-1930s, the two were operating a summer art school at St. Mary Chalets.

The statue is carved impressionistically, featuring Two Guns' distinctive hair style and facial features. Old photos of the statue show its clothing painted in a Blackfeet style, but it has been repainted over the years with Navajo-influenced decoration.

The statue originally stood at St. Mary Chalets, where it was carved. It was moved to Glacier Park Lodge when the chalets were torn down during World War Two. During the 1950s, the statue stood near the flagpole on the walk between the railway station and hotel. It was moved to the hotel entrance in the 1960s. Due to deterioration from weathering, it later was moved inside to the lobby.

## **PERSONALITIES**

### **Louis Hill**

Louis Hill, the president of the Great Northern Railway, was the driving force behind the establishment of visitor facilities in Glacier. Federal money was lacking, so Hill poured Great Northern funds into the building of roads and trails, as well as the hotels and chalets.

Hill was garrulous, dynamic and creative, full of ideas for promoting the railway and Glacier Park. Among other matters, he adopted Glacier's mountain goat for Great Northern's logo and included the slogan "See America First" in all railway publicity.

Hill threw himself into the design and construction of the lodges. He bombarded the architects with books about Swiss architecture. He personally selected flowers for the great front garden at the Entrance lodge, and had them shipped from a railway greenhouse in Oregon.

Hill famously feuded with the National Park Service. He issued a volcanic protest when a new superintendent absurdly suggested spending one-sixth of Glacier's annual budget to plant trees on barren Mount Henry. But Hill was essentially a warm man. He reputedly knew more people of more different kinds than anyone of his generation. He indisputably is the foremost figure in the history of Glacier Park Lodge and Glacier National Park.

### **Two Guns White Calf**

John Two Guns White Calf came to be one of the best known Native Americans in the United States due to coincidence. Two Guns's profile bore a striking resemblance to the image of the Native man on the so-called "buffalo nickel," a coin circulated from 1913 to 1938. Recognizing the similarity, Louis Hill told his public relations people to issue a news release thanking the government for putting White Calf on the nickel and supporting Great Northern's "See America First" campaign.

Two Guns was not involved in any way in the creation of the coin, a fact confirmed by coin designer James Earle Fraser. But that didn't stop the Great Northern from touting Two Guns as the model and having him and other Blackfeet tour the country.

Two Guns served as an ambassador for the Blackfeet, for the Great Northern, and for the park. He was a frequent presence at Glacier Park Lodge, greeting visitors arriving by train, taking part in the nightly Blackfeet dances and cultural exhibitions, and mixing with the public.

When photographer Tomer Hileman produced a postcard with Two Guns on it, Two Guns took to signing his pictographic signature on the cards for pocket change. These cards (signed with two rifles and a stylized bison calf) now are highly collectible.

Two Guns would remain as titular chief of the "Glacier Park Indians" until 1932. He then had a falling out with the hotel company's management and retired. He died in 1934 of pneumonia.

## **John L. Clarke**

The mixed-blood Blackfeet woodcarver John Clarke (1881-1970) was a grandson of two notable Montanans, Chief Stands Alone and the fur trader Malcolm Clarke. John Clarke was a deaf mute from age two because of scarlet fever. For that reason, his Blackfeet name was Catapuis, the Man-Who-Talks-Not.

While at schools for the deaf, Clarke learned to carve wood and later settled in Midvale (now East Glacier Park) where he opened a business to sell his carvings. "I carve because I take great pleasure in making what I see that is beautiful," Clarke said. "When I see an animal, I feel the wish to create it in wood as near as possible." Family legend has it that Clarke's carving of a mountain goat is what inspired Louis Hill to adopt it as the corporate logo for the Great Northern Railway.

Clarke's studio, not far from Glacier Park Lodge, was a must-see stop on any visitor's trip to Glacier. President Warren Harding displayed a Clarke eagle holding the American flag in his Oval Office. In 1924, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., a guest at the hotel, visited the studio. He purchased four of Clarke's carvings, including one of a walking bear which was three feet tall and weighed 150 pounds. Rockefeller donated it to the Chicago Art Institute.

The famed Western artist Charles M. Russell was a good friend of Clarke's. Russell knew Indian sign language, which enabled him to communicate with Clarke. In the summer of 1963, Clarke displayed his work at an art show at Glacier Park Lodge. One day, a doctor from Great Falls offered to trade a piece of art by Russell (now long dead) for one by Clarke. Clarke responded by writing a note: "Good for Russell, not for me."

The original John Clarke Gallery and home were destroyed by a fire in the 1960s. They were replaced by the Western Art Gallery in East Glacier Park, which still is managed by Clarke's family.

## **Winold and Hans Reiss**

The Reiss brothers grew up in the Black Forest region of Germany, the sons of an artist. Influenced by James Fennimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, Winold came to have a fascination with Native Americans. Both brothers emigrated to the United States at an early age.

Hans was hired by the Park Saddle Horse Company as a climbing guide. He used to do climbing exhibitions on the great stone chimney at Many Glacier Hotel (until unskilled bus drivers started to copy him, and the hotel company banned the practice). Hans urged Louis Hill to hire his brother to paint portraits of the Blackfeet, and Hill did.

During the summers of 1927 and 1928, Winold had a studio in the basement of the Glacier Park Hotel. He painted scores of Blackfeet portraits and early settlers in the Glacier area. These paintings and others he created in later years were used on Great Northern calendars from 1928 through 1958.

For four summers beginning in 1934, Winold and Hans Reiss ran a summer art school in Glacier. The school was located at St. Mary Chalets, which had been closed for lack of business due to the Depression. The art school flourished, with Winold and his students painting portraits of Blackfeet. Hans also taught sculpture at the school. He created the wooden statue of Two Guns White Calf which now stands in the lobby of Glacier Park Lodge (see the *Architecture and Art* section).

## **Don Hummel**

When Don Hummel and his newly founded company Glacier Park, Inc. bought the Great Northern's money-losing hotels in December 1960, it was a last-minute decision. The railway had notified the Park Service that it would not reopen the lodges in 1961. There was panic on all sides about what would happen. Hummel, an experienced concession operator in Lassen and Mount McKinley (now Denali) national parks, was courted by the railway but reluctant. Only after the railway conceded to a generous financing package did he agree to the sale.

Hummel, a lawyer and mayor of Tucson, Ariz., had strong political connections with the Udall family and with Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. He was first and foremost a very skillful businessman. Had he not acquired the lodges and eliminated their operating deficit, they likely would have closed for good.

Hummel is a controversial figure in Glacier Park history. Some found him to be cold and stern. He feuded frequently with the National Park Service, and once used his political influence to have the director of the Park Service fired. He struggled constantly to make Glacier's lodges break even in a short season (about 90 days) and a harsh environment. He was extremely frugal in maintaining the historic buildings and in other matters, often alienating his staff.

Hummel's greatest challenges were the floods of 1964 and 1975. They shut down the facilities for days, costing revenue and requiring repairs. Still Hummel managed to turn a profit. In 1981, he sold the Glacier Park, Inc. operation to Greyhound Food Management.

## **Cy Stevenson**

Cy Stevenson was chief engineer both for Glacier Park Lodge and for all the Glacier lodges from the 1936 through the 1978. Cy was famously cantankerous and blustered at everybody, including his bosses. He couldn't be fired because he alone understood all the antique operating systems in the hotels.

A story which illustrates Cy's temper involves the motor launch *International*, which runs on Upper Waterton Lake. Each fall the launch was drawn out of the water by a cable attached to an ancient Model T engine. The engine had to be started with a hand crank. One year, it treacherously backfired, and the crank nearly broke Cy's arm. He angrily flung the crank into the lake, and the company had to hunt high and low to find another.

In June 1962, Don Hummel was in Washington, D.C., on business. At 1:30 a.m. he received a phone call. "Hummel," Cy snapped, "you're out of business. They just blew up the power plant!"

Hummel flew back and found that the Glacier Park Lodge boiler room indeed had been blown up. The building's roof had been raised by three feet and its sides had been pushed out. An electrical storm had extinguished the pilot light, and the engineer had foolishly put a torch into the boiler without shutting off the fuel. (Miraculously, the man had been shielded from the blast and emerged unhurt).

Cy patched together a system for operating the kitchen and feeding the guests while Hummel called the president of the Great Northern and obtained a boiler crew for emergency repairs. That incident, along with Cy's resourcefulness in handling the floods of 1964 and 1975, crown his legend as the ultimate Glacier repairman.

## STORIES OF GLACIER PARK LODGE

### **The Glidden Auto Tour**

In July 1913, barely a month after opening, Glacier Park Hotel was the endpoint for an automobile endurance contest. It was the American Automobile Association's ninth (and last) Reliability Tour, popularly called the Glidden Cup. The tour had been established in 1905 with funds from the industrialist Charles Glidden to prove that the recently invented automobile was durable enough for long-distance travel.

The 1913 race began in St. Paul and followed the Great Northern's mainline. It ran in nine stages, with the drivers stopping each night at a designated town (Alexandria, Fargo, Devil's Lake, Minot, Williston, Glasgow, Havre, Glacier Park Station). The tour's emphasis was on automobile reliability rather than on speed. Penalty points were assessed against cars which developed mechanical troubles with motors, brakes, springs or axles.

The Great Northern sent a "hotel train" to serve the tour. It provided meals, housed the drivers in sleeping cars, and hauled a garage car with auto supplies and mechanics. It also had a press car, with typewriters, a darkroom for photographers, and printing equipment.

Louis Hill was the creative mastermind behind the event. He also took part in it, leaving the starting line at the wheel of a Packard and leading the tour for several hours before returning to St. Paul. On the eighth day, he met the tour on horseback, leading a Native cavalcade.

The tour was won by a team of three Metz roadsters which finished with perfect scores. The event was discontinued thereafter, since the durability of automobiles now was well-established. As Hill had hoped, the final tour brought national attention to Glacier and to the new hotel.

### **Softball in the Early Decades**

The 1920s were a golden age of baseball, with Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb, Walter Johnson and other legendary players in the prime of their careers. In Glacier, the national pastime inspired a softball rivalry between the hotel staff and the "gearjammers" (the Red bus drivers). Weekly games were played from about 1927 until World War Two.

The Glacier Park Transport Company was headquartered across the road from the lodge employees' quarters. Weekly games were played on the transport company's grounds, John Turner (a gearjammer in 1936) recalled, "There were lots of skinned knees and elbows resulting from the dirt-gravel parking lot where we played."

Dan Hays, another old-time gearjammer, recalled, "The game began as soon as possible after dinner, with the hotel team arriving on the field in their own trucks accompanied by a cloud of dust and the loud cheers of their supporters! Special rules applied – i.e., hit fly balls landing on the roof of Garage No. 1 or 2, which were very difficult or impossible to field, were automatic 'two-baggers' instead of probable home runs."

Hays recalls that the teams were quite evenly matched, but that the gearjammers had disadvantages. Their star players often were away at other locations. The hotel staff claimed the right to include hotel guests on their team, and hotel guests also acted as the umpires. Hays concluded, “Possibly due to some of these factors, it is my impression that in most years the hotel company clearly won the series!”

## **A Suspicious Object**

In the 1950s (a more relaxed era), the Glacier Park Hotel maintenance crew had a key to the gate at the Canadian border. One night, an employee drove a pickup truck across the border with a new fuel tank for the motor launch *International*, which runs on Upper Waterton Lake.

A Royal Canadian Mounted Police car loomed up in the dark behind the pickup, and tailed it to the Waterton boat dock. “What is that?” the Mountie demanded, pointing to the fuel tank. The employee informed him, and the Mountie exclaimed, “I thought it was a bear trap!” (Evidently he suspected the Americans of smuggling problem bears across the border.)

## **The Hebgen Lake Earthquake**

One evening in August 1959, the chandeliers suspended over the lobby suddenly started to swing and sway. A guest called down from a third-floor room, demanding to know why her bed was shaking, and that it be stopped. Employees in the dormitories heard an uncanny rapping on the windows, which seemed to be the work of unseen hands.

Next morning, all these mysteries were explained. A tremendous earthquake had occurred at Hebgen Lake on the outskirts of Yellowstone Park, some 400 miles away. Nearly 30 campers had been killed. A number of Glacier employees quit their jobs and went to join the rescue effort.

## **The Great Flood of 1964**

In June 1964, a torrential warm rainfall melted a very heavy snowpack. The greatest flood in Montana history knocked out bridges, dams and roads. More than 30 people died on the Blackfeet reservation, after dams broke at Lower Two Medicine Lake and near the town of Heart Butte.

Bridges across the Flathead River at West Glacier were wrecked, isolating that part of the park. Snyder Creek at Lake McDonald flowed backward. Two dozen bridges on Glacier’s trails were washed away, and three feet of water entered Many Glacier Hotel.

At East Glacier Park, the flood destroyed a reservoir that held water for the lodge and for the town. Cy Stevenson, the chief engineer at Glacier Park Lodge, rigged a system to pump creek water into the pipes. For safety’s sake, he injected very large doses of chlorine into the system. Chlorine vapor hung above the faucets, and the water tasted powerfully until a permanent system was restored.

One of Cy’s maintenance crew recalls, “Fortunately, the first convention at the hotel was a Jaycee convention. They were a partying group and quite tolerant of conditions. I remember getting a call to clean a faucet screen [clogged with debris from the flood] in the Annex. I apologized to the guest, and he said, ‘Don’t worry about it, I’ve been drunk for two days and I don’t need water anyway.’”

## **The Night of the Grizzlies**

Throughout Glacier's history, people have had uneasy interactions with grizzly bears. Occasionally, hikers were mauled by these powerful and often truculent beasts. But for 57 years after Glacier's founding, there never was a confirmed fatality. (Several hikers, however, disappeared inexplicably in the park in those early decades.)

Then the Night of the Grizzlies occurred. On August 13, 1967, two hotel employees were killed by bears at two widely separate locations in the park. Michelle Koons (an employee at Lake McDonald Lodge) was attacked while sleeping with three companions at the Trout Lake campsite. Julie Helgeson, a laundry employee at Glacier Park Lodge, was attacked and died at Granite Park Chalet.

Granite Park is in a remote location accessible only by trail. The chalet unwisely had kept a garbage dump, attracting bears for visitors to observe. The dump brought bears into proximity with a campground near the chalet.

Julie Helgeson and another employee were sleeping in the campground when she was attacked by bears which had frequented the dump. Rescuers brought her to the chalet, but she died before she could be flown out. These tragic events are the subject of Jack Olsen's book, *The Night of the Grizzlies* (1969).

## **A Wild West Adventure**

Late one evening in 1967 all was quiet in the lobby at Glacier Park Lodge. The lounge had closed, the guests were in bed, and the night clerk and the night auditor had started to tally revenue for the day. Suddenly a night watchman came running into the lobby with a bloody forehead. Behind him came two men in cowboy hats, with bandanas over their faces. Both the men were carrying shotguns.

The robbers had captured the watchman and then had tried to break into a safe in the management office downstairs. The watchman had broken away in a dazed state, and the robbers had pursued him into the lobby of the hotel.

The night clerk offered the robbers the meager night shift money, but they weren't interested in that. The next day was payday, and they wanted the payroll money in the downstairs safe. Meanwhile, a young honeymoon couple walked into the hotel, and the robbers captured them, as well.

The robbers took their five captives through the dining room and kitchen and out the back door. As they emerged, a shot rang out! A second night watchman was outside the door, and had fired his pistol into the air to scare the robbers.

The robbers grabbed the night clerk and the night auditor, who pleaded to be released. The robbers told them to start running and not to look back. The employees sprinted into the darkness down the first fairway of the golf course. The robbers vanished into the night. They did not get the payroll money, but the crime was never solved.

## GLACIER PARK LODGE – AN HISTORICAL TIMELINE

**1889.** The Great Northern Railway lays track westward from Havre, Montana, heading toward the Pacific Ocean. Rejecting advice to cross the Rocky Mountains farther south, James J. Hill charts a course due west through Blackfeet country and over Marias Pass.

**1891.** The township of Midvale is created at Milepost 1138 on the Great Northern's mainline (heading westward from St. Paul). Nearly 60 years later, the community will be renamed East Glacier Park.

**1895.** The Blackfeet sign a treaty selling land on the west side of their reservation to the United States. This "ceded strip" will become the eastern portion of Glacier National Park.

**1910.** President William Howard Taft signs a bill establishing Glacier as the country's 10th national park. Louis Hill, then president of the Great Northern, is already working to promote railway travel there. Belton Chalet opens, and Hill dispatches artist John Fery to the park to paint promotional landscapes of Glacier. Photographer Fred Kiser starts his second season taking publicity pictures.

**1911.** Hill establishes a network of tent camps, chalets and hotels in Glacier. "Chalet Camp #1" and the train station are under construction in Midvale, now East Glacier Park. St. Paul architect Samuel Bartlett submits a plan for the Great Northern's "Eastern Entrance Attraction," Glacier Park Hotel.

**1912.** An act of Congress permits Louis Hill to buy 160 acres of Blackfeet reservation land in Midvale. Hill turns the land over to the railway for his proposed hotel. Sixty huge Douglas fir and western red cedar logs arrive by train from Oregon as pillars for the hotel. The Blackfeet name it "Um-Kula-Moosh-Taw," or "Big Tree Lodge." Construction of the building begins in April.

**1913.** "Phase-One" of the Glacier Park Hotel (the lobby, dining room, and 61 guest rooms) opens on June 15, but the official opening is delayed for a week, until June 22. The Kalispell Elks Band plays at the opening ceremony. The Great Northern transports crowds of people from Kalispell, Whitefish, Columbia Falls and Belton (West Glacier) across the mountains for the party. Logs left over from construction are used to build an archway between the lodge and the railway station.

**1913.** The St. Paul-to-Glacier Glidden automobile rally takes place at midsummer. In September, the hotel hosts James J. Hill's 75th birthday party, reportedly with several hundred people in attendance and banquet tables filling the lobby. Every Great Northern employee with at least 25 years of service is given free transportation and lodging for the event.

**1914.** "Phase Two," the Annex wing, opens with 111 more guest rooms. The kitchen and staff dining room also are added. (In 1913, the hotel kitchen had been in the basement and food was moved to the dining room by dumbwaiter.) The total cost of building the hotel, with its laundry, warehouse and employee housing is \$786,226.67. Adjusted for inflation, the cost today would be roughly \$23 million – a huge investment by the Great Northern.

**1914.** With Great Northern's encouragement, select Blackfeet set up a teepee village on the west lawn of the hotel. These "Glacier Park Indians" meet arriving trains each morning and entertain tourists who visit the encampment with singing, dancing and tribal crafts.

**1915.** The Great Northern forms the Glacier Park Hotel Company to run its hotels and chalets in Glacier.

**1915.** Plans for a three-pond, water-geyser display between the railway station and the hotel are abandoned as a maintenance fiasco. Instead, the magnificent 1,100-foot flower garden is established and becomes an iconic feature of the hotel.

**1915.** The Brewster Brothers, who initially held the exclusive right to transport visitors in Glacier, lose the concession contract. The Brewsters had run horses and wagons, adding cars when the horse-drawn rigs bogged down on muddy roads. The Glacier Park Transportation Company now gets the exclusive right to move tourists, by bus. The original buses are grey, not the iconic red color that we know today.

**1915.** Wyoming rancher Howard Eaton takes a party of tourists through Glacier, starting from Glacier Park Hotel. Among them is novelist and *Saturday Evening Post* writer Mary Roberts Rinehart, whose book about the trip, *Through Glacier National Park*, did a great deal to promote Glacier.

**1916.** Mary Roberts Rinehart returns with her husband and family for another tour of Glacier and writes another book, *Tenting To-night*.

**1921.** Hired Blackfeet perform cultural displays of singing, dancing and sign language nightly on the west lobby porch.

**1922.** Work progresses on the Roosevelt Highway, linking Belton (West Glacier) to Midvale (East Glacier Park). Meanwhile, the Great Northern offers to transport the automobiles of tourists between the two communities for \$12.50, one way.

**1923.** Boxer Tommy Gibbons is the first guest of the season at Glacier Park Hotel. This is a publicity stunt to promote his upcoming world heavyweight championship fight with Jack Dempsey in Shelby, Montana. The fight takes place on July 4. It is a financial disaster for Shelby (bankrupting four banks in the town), because thousands of people crash the gate. Dempsey retains his title with a 15-round decision over Gibbons.

**1925.** Kalispell photographer Tomer Hileman becomes the Great Northern Railway's official photographer in Glacier.

**1926.** Howard Moon operates a photo-finishing studio for Hileman in the basement of the hotel. It offers same day photo-finishing service, decades before one-hour service came into vogue.

**1926.** A tunnel is built under the Great Northern tracks to more directly link Glacier Park Hotel to the main street of Midvale, east of the tracks. (Previously, the road went under the railway trestle across Midvale Creek.) The underpass is part of a major improvement of Highway 89 between Midvale and the Canada-U.S. border in anticipation of the opening of the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton Lakes National Park.

**1926.** The Great Northern buys property north of the hotel, in part for the creation of a golf course, but also to prohibit unsightly developments near the hotel.

**1927.** Work begins on a nine-hole golf course at the hotel, at a cost of \$80,000. The course opens the following season. It is meant to encourage people to spend several days at the hotel. The golf course forces the relocation of the Blackfeet teepee village from the west lawn to across Midvale Creek, with four demonstration teepees set up on the southeast lawn of the hotel.

**1927.** Defective wiring causes a fire that destroys the hotel's laundry facility and boiler plant. They are rebuilt.

**1927.** The bus company is sold to Howard Hays of Riverside, Calif., who shortens the title to Glacier Park Transport Company.

**1927.** German-born artist Winold Reiss spends the summer at the hotel painting portraits of Blackfoot Natives. Louis Hill buys all the portraits and invites Reiss back for the following summer. Some of the initial batch of canvases are used for the railway's first promotional calendar in 1928.

**1929.** Great Northern sponsors a radio show ("Empire Builders") on NBC to promote Glacier Park. Great Northern personnel have to correct an uninformed New York scriptwriter, who refers to "Glacier Mountain Park" and the "Big Tree Inn" (which he characterizes as a "tavern").

**1929.** Otto Thompson retires from the hotel company as its chief engineer. His wife, Margaret Thompson, would later write a book about the park: *High Trails of Glacier National Park* (1936).

**1930.** The Roosevelt Highway (part of U.S. Highway 2) opens along the southern border of Glacier, connecting Midvale with the park's west side. Increasingly, visitors arrive by automobile rather than by train, and the Great Northern loses revenue on its passenger business.

**1930.** Winold Reiss returns to Midvale, operating a private art school there during the summer. The artist and his students spend many evenings at the hotel with Blackfoot performers, who pose for the students during the day.

**1932.** Glacier Park Hotel hosts the dedication ceremony for the Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Rotarians from Canada and the United States (who inspired the peace park's creation) gather there. President Herbert Hoover and Canadian Prime Minister R.B. Bennett send greetings. A cairn erected near the hotel's flagpole marks the dedication.

**1933.** Going-to-the-Sun Road opens, drawing more automobile traffic to the park and further reducing railroad revenue.

**1933.** While Prohibition does not officially end until Dec. 31, Montana permits the sale of beer and wine throughout the state. Glacier Park Hotel adds liquor to its dining room menu, and a bar opens in the Grill in the hotel basement.

**1934.** President Franklin Roosevelt drives by the hotel on his August trip through Glacier. He was to stay at Two Medicine Chalets after a day touring Going-to-the-Sun Road and lunch at Many Glacier Hotel. Instead, he retires to his private railway car, which is parked at Glacier Park Station. He is the only sitting president ever to visit Glacier Park.

**1936.** The first new Model 706 White Motor Company buses arrive. These are the famous Red buses still on the road in Glacier today.

**1938.** Hollywood actor Clark Gable visits the hotel and poses for pictures with the Blackfeet.

**1940.** Bellman Jack Gibbons (a nephew of the boxer Tommy Gibbons) develops a blister while hiking. It becomes infected and he dies of blood poisoning (a condition which now can be treated with antibiotics, but which frequently was deadly in the pre-penicillin age).

**1942.** The hotel posts signs apologizing for poor service due to lack of manpower as the country mobilizes for war. The number of hotel guests declines dramatically.

**1943.** The Glacier Park Hotel Company, the Great Northern subsidiary that runs the railway hotels and chalets in Glacier, is renamed the Glacier Park Company.

**1943-45.** All the railway's lodges and chalets in Glacier are closed because of wartime rationing and austerity.

**1946.** Glacier's lodges reopen. Several chalet groups (Going-to-the-Sun, Cut Bank and some of the Two Medicine group) have deteriorated badly and are torn down.

**1948.** Louis Hill dies. After Hill's passing, his successors in Great Northern's management urgently seek buyers for the Glacier lodges, which consistently have lost revenue.

**1948.** Liquor service is expanded. Alcohol now is available in the hotel's dining room, in the Grill Room in the basement, and in a cocktail lounge, the Medicine Room (created by enclosing a portion of the west patio of the hotel). The plunge pool in the basement remains open. Medical service is available from a resident nurse, there is laundry and valet service, a beauty parlor and barbershop, and dancing weeknights in the Grill Room.

**1949.** Midvale, a.k.a. Glacier Park, is renamed East Glacier Park.

**1952.** Hollywood crews stay at the hotel while filming parts of the movie *Dangerous Mission*, starring Victor Mature, Vincent Price, William Bendix and Piper Laurie. The plot involves a witness to a murder hiding in Glacier and being pursued there by an assassin and a federal agent.

**1954.** Ronald Reagan, Barbara Stanwyck, and other Hollywood personnel stay at the lodge and also at St. Mary Lodge while filming of *Cattle Queen of Montana*. (The film has nothing to do with the real "Cattle Queen of Montana," Mrs. Nat Collins, who worked an unsuccessful mine on Cattle Queen Creek in the 1880s in what is now Glacier.)

**1955.** Howard Hays sells the Glacier Park Transport Company to the Glacier Park Company.

**1957-59.** Great Northern hires the Knutson Hotel Company to renovate Glacier's lodges and to manage them for three years. It invests \$3 million in the renovations, hoping that this will attract a buyer. The hotel is renamed Glacier Park Lodge. Blackfeet pictographic murals lining the lobby walls are removed. Bathrooms are installed in all the guestrooms (previously, 48 had no bath). Iceboxes in the kitchen are replaced with refrigerators, the gift shop is expanded, and a swimming pool is added beside the chalet.

**1958.** The lodge has an employee band called The Medicine Men, because they play each evening in the Medicine Room. The band includes a tuba player, who roams among the tables playing *The Tiger Rag* and polka tunes. Guests toss tip money into the tuba.

**1959.** The Hebgen Lake Earthquake, 400 miles away in Yellowstone National Park, rocks Glacier Park Lodge.

**1960.** Bellmen, who in 1959 had been dressed as cowboys, this summer are dressed as Indians. Waiters and waitresses wear headbands with a red feather tucked behind it for each year of service.

**1960.** Don Hummel's Glacier Park, Inc. buys Glacier Park Lodge from the Great Northern and acquires concession rights to the railway's other lodges inside the park, and the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton. Hummel trims 400 jobs from the workforce to eliminate the operating deficit.

- 1964.** The greatest flood in Montana's history knocks out the East Glacier water system and blocks transportation between Glacier Park Lodge and the other Glacier hotels. Cy Stevenson pumps stream water (massively chlorinated) into the lodge's pipes. Weeks of work are required to restore normal transportation and hotel operations in the park.
- 1965.** Glacier Park Lodge staff challenges Many Glacier Hotel staff to a touch football game. The game is played on the lodge's lawn, and GPL wins 42-0. The following year, personnel director Ian Tippet (who also is Many Glacier's manager) hires GPL's star quarterback to be Many Glacier's head bellman, and Many wins a rematch 28-0.
- 1967.** GPI holds a beauty contest at Glacier Park Lodge for its female employees. Miss Lake McDonald Lodge, Randee Jane (Dee) Crisman, 20, of Missoula is crowned queen.
- 1967.** Julie Helgeson, a Glacier Park Lodge laundry worker, dies at Granite Park Chalet in the shocking "Night of the Grizzlies."
- 1974.** Scandal-ridden President Richard Nixon announces his resignation from office. A television set is placed on the glass case which holds the mountain goat in the lobby to air the resignation address. A trombonist spontaneously plays a funeral "Hail to the Chief" from the top lobby balcony.
- 1975.** Flooding again occurs throughout much of Glacier, but Glacier Park Lodge is unscathed.
- 1976.** Glacier is named a World Biosphere Reserve, with its diverse ecological niches for 70 mammal species and 260 species of birds.
- 1978.** Cy Stevenson, chief engineer for the hotel company, retires after 53 years of service. He remains a consultant with GPI until 1980.
- 1981.** Don Hummel sells Glacier Park, Inc. (GPI) and the concession rights in Glacier to Greyhound Food Management, Inc. (GFM). GPI is reorganized to operate the lodges for GFM, which later is acquired by the Dial Corporation and then by the Viad Corporation, its present owner.
- 1993.** Johnny Cash, his wife June, The Judds, Tom Selleck, Julius Irving, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf and many other dignitaries visit the hotel for an American Academy of Achievement meeting.
- 1995.** Glacier and Waterton together are designated a World Heritage Site.
- 1995.** "A Country Western Cabaret" is staged in the Moccasin Room Theater, directed by Mike Rihner under the auspices of American Cabaret Theater. The show features dozens of talented Glacier Park Lodge employees. More than 80 performances are held from June to September. Cabaret performances continue at the lodge for several years.
- 1996.** The inaugural version of the Harvest Moon Ball, started by Blackfeet activist Eloise Cobell, is held at the hotel. The evening's highlight is a live auction of artwork created by award-winning Native artists. The annual ball is a fundraiser for the Blackfeet Community Foundation Endowment.
- 1999.** *USA Today* names the hotel one of the 10 best lodges in America's national park system.
- 1999.** Glacier's famous Red buses are pulled from duty due to old age, metal fatigue and safety issues.
- 1999.** Squaw Mountain, a noteworthy peak visible from the hotel balcony, is renamed Dancing Lady Peak as part of an initiative to remove the racial epithet from Montana landmarks.

**2002.** After extensive renovation by the Ford Motor Company, the historic Red buses are returned to service. Scores of former gearjammers attend a June reunion to welcome the buses back. GPI donates the buses to the National Park Foundation so they can be refurbished by Ford. The foundation then turns them over to the Park Service, which leases them back to the concessioner.

**2002.** Musician Mike Rihner begins a 15-year performance tradition in the lobby of Glacier Park Lodge. Rihner, a pianist, guitarist and composer, plays a wide variety of genres.

**2003.** An early recycling effort processes 50,000 pounds of cardboard at the hotel. By 2010, 91,000 pounds of cardboard are recycled. The company also recycles aluminum.

**2009.** The laundry facility at the hotel is upgraded with new washers, which conserve thousands of gallons of water as compared to the previous machines.

**2010.** Former gearjammers gather for a reunion at the lodge to mark the centennial of Glacier National Park. Some 350 people attend, including Dan Hays, the son of Glacier Park Transport Company president, Howard Hays.

**2013.** Glacier Park Lodge celebrates its centennial. The dining room serves the menu from James J. Hill's birthday party in 1913: "Going-to-the-Sun canapes," beef tenderloin with fresh mushrooms, mountain trout muniere, Parisienne potatoes served with claret, stuffed bell peppers, salad and desserts. Four hundred people attend a reunion of former Glacier Park Lodge employees.

**2013.** Ian Tippet works his last summer in Glacier as manager of the GPI mailroom. Mr. Tippet worked for 63 years with the hotel company, one of the longest career of anyone in Glacier Park history. (Margaret Black, co-founder of St. Mary Lodge, tops him at more than 70 years.) Tippet returned the following summer, 2014, to stay at his cottage, and then retired permanently from the park.

**2013.** The Park Service awards concession rights for lodging and transportation in Glacier Park to Xanterra Parks & Resorts. The following year, Xanterra assumes control of Lake McDonald Lodge, Many Glacier Hotel, the motels, and the Red buses from GPI. GPI continues to operate the gateway facilities: Glacier Park Lodge, St. Mary Lodge and the Prince of Wales Hotel.

**2014.** Glacier Park, Inc. acquires the gateway facilities of West Glacier Mercantile, West Glacier Village and Apgar Village Lodge.

**2017.** Glacier Park Inc. is renamed the Glacier Park Collection under the Pursuit label, an effort by Viad to standardize branding of its collection of hotels and travel facilities across North America.

**2019.** Pursuit's Glacier Collection acquires Belton Chalets, expanding its presence in West Glacier.

**2020.** The worldwide Coronavirus pandemic results in the shuttering of tourist facilities on the east side of Glacier Park, including Glacier Park Lodge. The Blackfeet tribal council limits travel on the reservation, to protect its elders. Facilities on the west side of the park offer limited services. The U.S.-Canada border is closed to non-essential traffic all summer, meaning no Canadian vacationers to Montana.

**2021.** The Blackfeet tribe permits travel on the reservation, and hotels on the east side of Glacier are opened for the summer, with COVID protocols in place. Tourism services are also open on the west side of the park. The Park Service introduces a ticketed-entry system to control access to Sun Road. The U.S.-Canada border is opened to non-essential travel after the end of the tourism season.

**2021.** Several rooms in Annex with fireplaces are redecorated and their bathrooms upgraded as a trial for further conversions to upscale accommodations.

**2024.** The west deck of the lobby was replaced.

**2024.** The 1,000-foot garden got an extensive makeover with new soil, an improved underground sprinkler system and featuring perennial flowers exclusively versus the previous mix of annual and perennials. It is now designated butterfly garden.

**2025.** Viad Corp. sells its conventions and exhibits businesses and is renamed Pursuit Attractions and Hospitality, Inc.

### ***For additional history ...***

We hope that this handbook has whetted your interest in the history of Glacier Park Lodge and of Glacier Park! For a more detailed and beautifully illustrated history of the Glacier lodges, see *View With a Room* by Ray Djuff and Chris Morrison, available in the hotel gift shop.

## The Glacier Park Lodge story ...

Glacier Park Lodge is a remarkable place ... an architectural landmark that has served as the gateway to Glacier for over a century. Here are some links to tell you a little more about the Lodge.

1. Here's a short YouTube video with some info on the Lodge's history, featuring the voices of some of its former employees:



2. This video shares the history of the park's development in general, and the hotels that have operated here for over a century:



3. To learn even more — and be ready to answer guests' questions — here's a history of the Lodge that's worth a read:



These materials were prepared for you by the **Glacier Park Foundation**, a group founded by former concession employees in 1980. Check out [www.glacierparkfoundation.org](http://www.glacierparkfoundation.org) to learn more.