



*A History Handbook
for the Employees of*

ST. MARY VILLAGE

*by the
Glacier Park Foundation*

May 2025

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Dear St. Mary Lodge employees,

Welcome to one of the most beautiful valleys on Earth, at the eastern gateway to Glacier National Park! This summer will add another chapter to the long and colorful history of St. Mary Lodge. We've prepared this handbook to help you orient visitors to the lodge and to enhance your own experience in working there.

The Glacier Park Foundation, which created this handbook for you, is a citizens' group primarily made up of former 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. 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 ST. MARY LODGE & RESORT

Hugh Black and Margaret James were married in 1932. Later that year, they leased property at the junction of the Blackfoot Highway (Highway 89) and Going-to-the-Sun Road (still under construction). Thus began two lifetime journeys together: a marriage and a business.

The marriage lasted until Hugh's death in 1983, at age 81. The Black family's involvement in the business continued until 2008, when Margaret died at age 105 and the property was sold. The marriage and the business were intimately interwoven as the business developed into what we call today St. Mary Lodge & Resort.

The Black marriage started in time-honored fashion. The business began less formally in 1932 with the lease of a 12- x 18-foot building that served as both a gas station and a grocery store. Hugh and Margaret soon added the Curley Bear Café and began building one-room cabins complete with wood stoves and water pails.

The cabins were painted white and were advertised as the Hugh Black Cabins. The cost was \$2 per night (\$2.50 with bedding). There was a central "shower house" and lavatory. Eventually a curio shop was added next to the grocery store. Later in the 1930s, the Blacks built a 10-room motel, now the East Motel, and a few "modern" cabins (because they had bathrooms and electricity). The first two of six children, Hugh and Patsy, arrived in 1934 and '38.

Going-to-the-Sun Road was opened in 1933, and auto traffic dramatically increased until World War Two. Then gasoline rationing was imposed. The near-total dependence of business at St. Mary on automobile travelers became clear. The Blacks were now able to purchase the land they had been leasing, and more land as well, but tourism slowed to a crawl during the war.

To make ends meet, Hugh ran cattle. He also cut ice in the winter from Lower St. Mary Lake (outside Glacier Park) for the Great Northern Railway's refrigeration cars. Hugh hauled ice from various lakes to railroad centers in Montana and North Dakota. With the end of the war in 1945, tourism returned to St. Mary. A second motel, the West Motel, was built in 1948.

Four more children were born in the 1940s – Roscoe (1940), Terry (1942), Lucky (1944), and Sally (1949). Margaret home-schooled the children until 1948. At that time, the Blacks bought a house in Margaret's home town of St. Paul, Minnesota.

With the children in school in St. Paul, Hugh and Margaret established an office in their Summit Avenue home. It was occupied mainly by Margaret. A second office in their home at St. Mary was occupied mainly by Hugh during the school year. This reflected the seasonal nature of the business at St. Mary.

Margaret handled the hiring of employees for the coming summer, purchasing and bookkeeping. Hugh dealt primarily with seasonal maintenance and ongoing construction. The family was all together, working hard each summer at St. Mary. Extended family members worked there as well, and non-family members with special skills found a summer home at St. Mary year after year.

The 1950s and '60s were years of growth at St. Mary, highlighted by the building of St. Mary Lodge in 1954. The lodge was placed across Going-to-the-Sun Road from the West Motel. It featured a dining room, two large kitchens, an extensive curio and gift shop, a lounge and 29 guest rooms.

Other buildings at St. Mary included the Black family home, a general store which later became the current grocery store, a guest laundry, the original white cabins (in transition from tourist cabins to employee-occupied cabins), employee dormitories, the remodeled Modern Cabins, a Snack Shop and three gas stations. Two of the gas stations had garages for repair of the ever-increasing vehicle traffic.

In early June 1964, a devastating flood struck western Montana, and Divide Creek flooded St. Mary. The lodge and the West Motel were especially vulnerable, and water inundated the basement of each structure. The St. Mary operation was closed until July 3 (opening just in time for the July 4th holiday).

The economic consequences of the flood were serious for the Blacks. The location of the lodge so close to the creek showed the need for flood prevention measures. The Divide Creek Bridge (still present today) is designed with small arches. Trees and other debris floating rapidly down the creek jammed the arches and created a dam, diverting water into St. Mary townsite.

In June 1975, another large flood struck Glacier Park, and Divide Creek overflowed its banks once more. St. Mary Lodge was damaged again. This led to the construction of protective berms, as well as a protective remodeling of the lodge itself.

In 1975, Hugh's and Margaret's son Roscoe began a lease arrangement with the Black family's corporation. This relieved Hugh and Margaret of many of the duties that they had been performing since 1932. They remained on the board of directors and still worked at the resort, but Roscoe and his staff, including his wife Susan, handled the most important aspects of the business – hiring, purchasing, marketing, the dining room menu and gift shop matters. This arrangement continued until 2006, when the lease was terminated.

Significant modifications of the lodge took place under Roscoe's management. Rooms were upgraded and the lounge was expanded to accommodate live entertainment. The dining room was remodeled and expanded as the Snowgoose Grill, offering several wild game dishes including bison.

In 1999, another remodeling of the lodge complex took place. It featured a new Curly Bear Café down the highway from the 1932 café. In 1995, six cottages were built on the hill above St. Mary – one for each of the six children. These cottages were rented to guests when not in use by the family.

Perhaps the major event under Roscoe's management was construction of the Great Bear Lodge in 2001. This three-story, 48-room lodge is an upscale complement to the original lodge.

Its design included a deeply seated rock wall at its base to deflect excessive spring runoff waters from Divide Creek.

In the mid-1990s, the Black family corporation added non-family members to its board of directors. This was a major change. Some non-family members had been employees in their younger years and some had not. All brought to the board a devotion to the family, a love of St. Mary, and business experience. By that time the business had been in operation for more than 60 years.

In 2005, it was agreed that a sale of the resort was in the best interest of the shareholders, all of whom were Black family members. The property was sold soon after Margaret's death in January 2008. The business run by the Black family, so interwoven with her marriage, also now ended.

Pursuit's Glacier Park Collection, formerly Glacier Park, Inc., acquired the property in 2011. Pursuit also operates Glacier Park Lodge, the gateway properties in West Glacier, and the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada. In 2017 Pursuit expanded its St. Mary Lodge guest accommodations by building and opening a village of 10 tiny homes behind the West Motel along Divide Creek.

PERSONALITIES

Hugh Black

In 1926, a college student named Hugh Black drove a Ford Model T from his home in Michigan to Glacier National Park, where he hoped to find work. He was placed on a National Park Service fire crew. He nearly lost his life in a runaway fire near Polebridge, but enjoyed the adventure and came back as a ranger for an additional five summers.

In 1928, Hugh's principal duty was patrolling the west side of Going-to-the-Sun Road. (See "Stories," below.) He also was assigned to patrol trails in the southeast area of the park. One day, while patrolling a trail on Mount Henry, he met a beautiful woman on horseback by the name of Margaret James. (See "Stories," below.) They married and created St. Mary Lodge.

Hugh was "a wonderful person to work for because he respected the employee who worked hard, did not respect the employee who did not, and let you know which camp you were in. He had a great sense of humor, and a temper. He was a prescient businessman, anticipating events before they occurred. Planning was pragmatic. People who could fix things were held in high esteem." This assessment of Hugh, by longtime St. Mary employee Steve Berg, could be attested to by countless alumni.

Hugh was a visionary and a tireless worker. He always looked for ways to expand and improve the resort. Its growth from one tiny store to its present scope is testimony of his vision and energy.

In the 1940s, Hugh served as a Glacier County commissioner. The roads to St. Mary often were closed for months in the winter. Hugh sometimes would snowshoe about 30 miles to Browning, where he would catch a ride to Cut Bank for commission meetings.

During the school year, Margaret and the children lived in St. Paul, while Hugh was often at St. Mary. He loved to call St. Paul at times when St. Mary was basking in a chinook (a warm winter wind from the Pacific) and temperatures there were in the 50s while Minnesota was below zero. The family referred to him as “the St. Mary Chamber of Commerce” because of those calls.

Hugh was very generous to local residents, and was esteemed in the community. He never refused credit at the store to people who needed propane to heat homes or who were short of cash to buy groceries, although repayment might be unlikely.

In the 1950s, Hugh survived a near-fatal auto accident. Thereafter he walked with a limp and had to deal with intractable pain. Still he remained completely engaged in the life and work of the resort. His daughter Sally recalls: “In his later years, he often took to sitting in the lobby in the evenings. The light would shine on his glasses in such a way that it was hard to determine whether he was asleep or awake. In this very quiet way, he was able to maintain a calm atmosphere in the lounge and bar and in the lobby area.”

Hugh died in 1983. He is buried next to Margaret on the hill beside the cottages above the lodge. Travelers are welcome to visit and read the headstones that tell the story of their lives.

Margaret James Black

Margaret Black was a perfect partner for Hugh. Associates describe her as “hard-working, honest, funny and fair” (Steve Berg) and as “strong, spirited and smart-as-a-whip” (Jan Didra Stubbs). She matched Hugh’s energy and spirit, and she complemented his skills.

Margaret was raised in St. Paul, Minnesota, the eldest child in a large Catholic family. Her father was a Great Northern Railway conductor. Margaret went to work as a secretary for Great Northern executives.

In 1928, Margaret worked at East Glacier Park for the general manager of Great Northern’s Glacier Park Hotel Company. That summer she met Hugh Black in his ranger persona (see the colorful details in “Stories,” below). The Depression in 1929 complicated their romance. But they married, and in 1932 pooled their modest savings and went into business at St. Mary.

Winters in the 1930s and ’40s were rigorous in the St. Mary Valley. Electrical power was unreliable, and telephone service once was interrupted for over a year. A librarian dropped off books in the fall and picked them up again in the spring. Margaret home-schooled the children for several years and (as Stubbs observes) “had to be doctor, nurse, lawyer and chief of the Black household.”

Margaret and the children eventually moved to Minnesota during the school year. While in St. Paul, she hired lodge employees to work at the lodge. Back at St. Mary during the summers, she worked with legendary energy. Her daughter Sally recalls those labors:

“A typical summer day would find Margaret up and at work before 7 a.m. Once over at her office in the lodge, she would review the daily specials for the dining room, revise the weekly scheduling as necessary for the 140 employees, meet with a local artist or crafter selling wares for the gift shop, balance checkbooks, pay bills, prepare all the cash drawers for the next day and balance the day’s cash before she was ready to relax. She always took time for at least a short walk and a Manhattan on the rocks before dinner. It also seemed that she always had time to hear the problems and concerns of an employee or welcome back a former employee. Someone once said that she truly was a Mother who raised a village.”

Margaret learned to cross-country ski at the age of 74. She learned to use a computer at 95 and drove Going-to-the-Sun Road in her mid-90s. She supervised bookkeeping at St. Mary Lodge until the age of 97. After turning 100, she celebrated her birthday twice a year (she got birthday cakes with messages such as “100.5 on your dial!”). She died at the age of 105, and was buried at St. Mary beside Hugh.

Margaret has the distinction of likely being the person with the longest work-related association with Glacier, at more than 70 years of active service.

STORIES

Hugh Meets Margaret

One day in 1928, Margaret James took a horseback ride from the stables in East Glacier Park. She was accompanied by three other Glacier Park Hotel employees. The two young men in the party knew that horses weren’t allowed on the Mount Henry trail, and that a ranger was on patrol there. They didn’t enlighten their companions.

At a fork in the trail, the two men slyly turned off. They told the young women that they would rejoin them when the trails converged on the other side of the mountain. Margaret and her companion rode on up the steep, rocky Mount Henry trail.

Abruptly, the women were confronted by a stern Glacier Park ranger. It was Hugh Black. He reprimanded them, and Margaret made a spirited rejoinder. That was the beginning of a relationship that progressed for four years till they married in 1932.

The romance was abetted by Father M.J. Halligan, a Catholic priest who served on the Blackfeet Indian Reservation. Margaret helped him gather stones to build the Little Flower Church, which stands beneath the water tower in Browning. Father Halligan in turn gave Margaret rides to visit Hugh at the Cut Bank ranger station and the St. Mary ranger station.

Road Patrol

In 1929, Hugh Black's primary duties were to patrol the nearly finished west side of Going-to-the-Sun Road. The road was only built to Logan Pass. The difficult pitches through the high cliffs east of the Pass would not be completed until late 1932.

Hugh's road patrol work was not glamorous. Among other things, it involved tending the outhouses at Logan Pass. Primitive "two-holers" there were the only facilities of any sort, a far cry from the visitor center today.

Hugh also had to deal with problem bears. In an interview with *Going-to-the-Sun* magazine's Rolf Larson, Hugh recalled his task of keeping bears away from the road workers' camps:

"They furnished me with a Ford pickup and a shotgun with birdshot to move the bears out of the camps. The bears were real pests at that time, because ... huge camps ... had been there to build the road and the bears had been raised eating out of their garbage pits. So, they immediately took to the Park Service maintenance camps. The garbage collection wasn't up to what it is now and, consequently, it meant shooting the bears with birdshot a few times to let them know they weren't welcome around the road camps. The garbage was buried, rather than collected and hauled out. You see, the bears like their food a little bit decayed. The smellier it is, the better they like it. That was the problem."

"Huge Black Cabins!"

When Hugh and Margaret went into business in 1932, Hugh recalled: "I started to build little one-room cabins as fast as I could. I was able to rent them as fast as I could build them. We would rent them out before we had them finished. Someone would come in and ask, 'Do you have a cabin?' We'd answer, 'No, but we'll have one by tonight.' We'd rent them at noon while the carpenters were working on them."

Hugh and Margaret put up a big sign that read "HUGH BLACK CABINS." That led to comical misunderstandings. Tourists repeatedly entered the store and demanded, "Where are these huge black cabins? All I see is little white ones."

Razing St. Mary Chalets

In 1912, the Great Northern Railway opened a chalet complex on St. Mary Lake. The St. Mary Chalets were a popular stop for horseback parties, for tourists aboard excursion boats from Sun Point and later for automobile travelers.

All the facilities in Glacier were closed from 1943 to 1945 due to gasoline rationing and austerity measures during World War Two. St. Mary Chalets weathered heavily, and the Great Northern and the Park Service decided to tear them down. Hugh was awarded the contract to do so. He recalled:

"They asked for a bid on taking down these 17 buildings, so Fred Stone, an Indian, and I bid it. Our contract called for cleaning up and doing away with all signs of buildings being there.

I knew that I would never be able to burn that much any place around St. Mary without scorching trees and such, so I decided to push them out on the lake during the late fall when there was already 10 inches of ice on the lake. We would take the buildings down with a Cat and push them out on the lake. We set up a large burn pile out there and waited for the first good snow storm before we set it off. The pack rats really took for the trees across the ice then.” The charred remains of the chalets are at the bottom of St. Mary Lake.

Ronald Reagan on Housekeeping Duty

Ronald Reagan visited St. Mary during his career as a Hollywood actor. In 1954, he co-starred with Barbara Stanwyck in *Cattle Queen of Montana*, which largely was filmed in the Lower St. Mary Valley. Reagan came early and became memorably involved in the life of the Lodge. Hugh recalled:

“After being here a few days, he decided he wanted to go fishing. He asked me if I wanted to go. I told him, no, I was too busy. Well, Roscoe was there and said, ‘I’ll go with you as soon as I get my work done.’ Reagan said, ‘I’ll help you.’ Well, Roscoe was head man – he cleaned the toilets in the West Motel. So Reagan helped him so that he could get off sooner and go fishing.”

The Great Flood of 1964

The most prominent event in the history of St. Mary Lodge was the flood of June 1964. This was a catastrophic event throughout western Montana. Torrential warm rains persisted for several days, which melted the winter snowpack and brought huge volumes of water into the rivers and lakes. Dams burst, and dozens of people died.

Divide Creek overflowed its banks and inundated the St. Mary townsite. Roads were washed out, and yards and buildings were plastered with mud. Electrical power failed, pipes were clogged, and toilets sometimes were unusable. The basements of the Lodge and other buildings were filled with water and debris.

The staff worked for nearly a month to clean, refit and reopen the resort. The goal was to reopen by the Fourth of July, and the staff achieved it with one day to spare.

Christmas Parties

It always seemed to snow in the mountains in late August. During one such episode, the Blacks gave a Christmas party for the employees in their St. Mary home. Lots of carols were sung. This “Christmas in August” party became a tradition in subsequent years.

At each party, Margaret insisted that “The Bells of St. Mary” be sung – a song she obviously loved. It’s a sort of farewell-to-the-summer song. Employees had left or were about to leave soon, and an air of nostalgia crept into the beautiful living room, replete with a decorated Christmas tree.

The Blacks also hosted a famous Christmas reunion each year at their Summit Avenue home in St. Paul. Multitudes of former St. Mary Lodge employees attended these events. Margaret again would lead “The Bells of St. Mary” at this annual gathering.

ST. MARY LODGE – A HISTORICAL TIMELINE

1845/46: Hudson's Bay Company employee Hugh Munroe visits the St. Mary lakes with a party of Kootenai natives. The Blackfeet know the lakes as "the Lakes Inside," but Monroe later christens them St. Mary lakes for the Virgin Mary.

1860s: Hugh Monroe settles along the shores of the St. Mary lakes, becoming the first European settler in the region. The Blackfeet gave Monroe the name of Mahkuyi-opuahsin (Rising Wolf), later bestowed on a mountain overlooking Two Medicine Lake. Sinopah (Kit Fox), across the lake and opposite the Two Medicine Camp store, is named for Monroe's wife.

1895: Blackfeet agree to sell the western portion of their reservation, the so-called "ceded strip," to the U.S. government so the region can be opened to miners. The ceded strip is the portion of Glacier Park from the Continental Divide east, plus an area to the south of the park. The reason for the sale and the terms are disputed to this day.

1897: The opening of the "ceded strip" gave rise to settlements at Altyn, in the Swiftcurrent valley, and St. Mary. All efforts to exploit minerals in the region soon petered out, with Altyn abandoned and St. Mary withering to just a few shacks (Old Town). Some settlers remained, such as Joe (Butch) Henkel in the Swiftcurrent valley, Henry Powell along Kennedy Creek, and Jack Wagner, near present-day Babb.

1902: Oil is discovered in the Swiftcurrent valley by Sam Somes and an attempt is made to drill a commercial well. No one could make a go of the oil find.

1910, May 11: President William Howard Taft signs a bill creating Glacier National Park.

1911-1914: Louis Hill and the Great Northern Railway commission the construction of nine chalet groups throughout Glacier, as well as Glacier Park Hotel.

1911: Great Northern operates a tent camp near St. Mary while the chalets are being built. The camp consists of about 20 tent houses, each provided with bedding and a heating stove. There is also a dining room and kitchen, both under canvas.

1912, August: A road is completed from Midvale (now East Glacier Park) to St. Mary Chalets.

1913, June 15: Glacier Park Hotel opens for its first season.

1913: Capt. William Swanson constructs a boathouse and then assembles the *Motor Vessel St. Mary* to carry tourists on St. Mary Lake from St. Mary Chalets to Going-to-the-Sun Chalets. The *St. Mary* is 66 feet long with a 14-foot beam and a capacity to carry 100 passengers.

1914: Great Northern Railway establishes the Glacier Park Hotel Company to manage its Glacier operations. One operation is to commercially net whitefish in St. Mary Lake to supply hotel and chalet dining rooms. The park service permitted the hotel company to fish the lake until 1939.

1914: This is the last year that tourists in Glacier ride between hotels and chalets in wagons drawn by horses operated by the Brewster Brothers. The next year, the Brewster deal with the railway is cancelled and tourists are carried in White Motor Company buses operated by Roe Emery and his Glacier Park Transportation Company.

1915: Many Glacier Hotel opens on July 4.

1920: The earthen dam on Sherburne Lake is completed, supplying water to the St. Mary irrigation system that had been built years before by the Blackfeet.

1920: Chicago-based director Marshall Neilan films scenes of his western epic *Bob Hampton of Placer* near St. Mary using Blackfeet as substitutes for Sioux in this story of the lead-up to the Battle of the Little Big Horn. The movie, starring James Kirkwood, Marjorie Daw and Noah Beery, would be released the following year.

1921: National Park Service director Stephen Mather talks about expanding the border of Glacier Park east to Highway 89, to include Babb and St. Mary, to prevent “unsightly filling stations, hotdog stands and shacks” from “springing up like mushrooms.” Nothing comes of the idea.

1921: Trout and whitefish spawn are planted in St. Mary Lake for sports fisherman and to maintain a supply for the Glacier Park Hotel Company’s commercial fishery on the lake.

1922: There continues to be a rocky relationship between the Blackfeet and Glacier Park officials over treaty rights in the park, a legacy of the 1895 sale of the “ceded strip.” Glacier rangers arrest several Blackfeet and Cree Natives for killing five elk a mile east of the park boundary. The charges are thrown out of court.

1922: September: Gearjammer Charles Barker of Kalispell dies when the bus he is driving skids on a sharp turn on Divide Creek Hill and goes down a 50-foot embankment. The bus had only six passengers, two of whom were injured in the incident.

1925: Work starts on improving and realigning Highway 89. A new route down Divide Creek Hill is devised, bypassing St. Mary Chalets. Work on the road would continue through to 1927.

1925: July: Lena Longini, 17, and her brother Henry, 11, of Cincinnati drown at St. Mary Falls. Henry slipped on rocks by the falls and his sister jumped in to try to save him.

1926: Michigan State College student Hugh Black comes to Glacier, where he gets work as a seasonal park ranger. He spends part of the summer fighting a forest fire ranging between Howe Lake and Kintla Lake. One of the water boys working with Black is Ace Powell, who would later become a saddlehorse tour guide and a renowned Montana artist.

1926: Captain Swanson introduces a new, 45-foot-long boat on St. Mary Lake to handle overflow traffic. The *Little Chief* was later be moved to Two Medicine and renamed the *Sinopah*.

1926: John D. Rockefeller (1839-1937) takes his family on an automobile trip through Glacier. Rockefeller and his sons returned to Glacier for another vacation in 1930.

1927: The Great Northern Railway opens the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton Lakes National Park, in Alberta, Canada.

1927: Roe Emery turns over management and part-ownership of the bus company to Howard Hays of Riverside, Calif. Hays renames the firm Glacier Park Transport Company.

1928: Members of the Noffsinger family, which run the saddle horse concession in Glacier, have roles in a Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer picture being filmed on the Blackfeet reservation. The western movie, starring Tim McCoy (1891-1978) and Dorothy Janis (1912-2010), also featured members

of the Blackfeet tribe again playing the role of Sioux. Originally called “The Humming Wires,” it would be released the next year as *The Overland Telegraph*.

1928: Hugh Black meets Margaret James, secretary to the general manager of the Glacier Park Hotel Company. She is a beauty and is crowned Miss Glacier in a hotel pageant that summer.

1929: With completion of Going-to-the-Sun Road from Apgar to Logan Pass, work would begin in 1930 on the east side, from St. Mary to Logan Pass. The job is finished in September 1932.

1929: Glacier Park has one of its busiest summers, so much so that tourists complain about double-deck beds being used at Going-to-the-Sun Chalets. Hugh Black is employed by the park on a fire crew fighting the Halfmoon Fire on the west side of the park.

1930s-1950s: Artist Hart Schultz (Lone Wolf), the son of author James Willard Schultz, spends summers at a cabin on the west shore of Lower St. Mary Lake where he paints and sculpts.

1931: A squall capsizes a small boat on St. Mary Lake. One passenger, Stanley Clark, a park mechanic and veteran of the World War I, drowns. One of the others involved is Jette Stevenson, the sister of Cy Stevenson, longtime engineer for the hotel company.

1932: Hugh Black marries Margaret James.

1932: Anticipating the coming change in traffic with the eventual opening of Going-to-the-Sun Road, Hugh and Margaret Black lease land at St. Mary for a gas station, café and six rental cabins. Hugh and Margaret spend their first winter in a back room of the Curley Bear Café.

1932: Glacier Park Hotel (now Glacier Park Lodge) hosts the dedication ceremony for Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park. Rotarians from Canada and the United States, who took the initiative to promote the Peace Park, gather to mark the occasion. President Herbert Hoover and Canadian Prime Minister R.B. Bennett send greetings.

1933: The Glacier Park Hotel Company does not open its chalets at Cut Bank and St. Mary due to a drop in park visitation as a result of the Depression, but the *Motor Vessel St. Mary* continues to operate daily between St. Mary Chalets and Sun Camp.

1933: Going-to-the-Sun Highway is officially opened in July. The “highway” is later renamed a “road” to better reflect driving speeds and conditions. Tourism to the park, which had declined during the early years of the Depression, rises sharply with the opening of Sun Road.

1934: Work begins on the Kennedy Creek “cutoff,” a shortcut between Glacier and Waterton parks. The road is a make-work project for men on both sides border left unemployed by the Depression. The road is completed in 1936 and named Chief Mountain International Highway.

1934: New York artist Winold Reiss (1886-1953) gets permission to use St. Mary Chalets as an art school to teach students painting and sculpting. The school runs through 1937. Other teachers include Carl Link (sculptor) and Hans Reiss, Winold’s brother, an artist and sculptor.

1934, August 5: U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt, his wife Eleanor and sons (James, John and Franklin Jr.) travel Sun Road, stop for lunch at Many Glacier Hotel and then make a brief visit to Two Medicine Chalets, where FDR makes a radio broadcast to the nation. While the president’s car speeds through St. Mary, Eleanor has her car pull over and meets Winold Reiss, some art students and Blackfeet who had waited all afternoon for the motorcade to pass.

1936: Hugh and Margaret Black's gas station-café-motel is thriving and they buy the land they have until then leased.

1936: The first of the new Red buses, from the White Motor Company in Cleveland, Ohio, arrive in Glacier. More would be received over the next three years.

1937: Clare Sheridan, an English sculptor and cousin of Winston Churchill, spends part of the summer at the Reiss art school at St. Mary Chalets.

1937: Clark Gable (1901-1960) stops at Black's St. Mary gas station to buy a bottle of Coke.

1937: FBI boss J. Edgar Hoover (1895-1972) passes through St. Mary on his way to and from Waterton for a one-day visit to the Canadian national park.

1938: Electricity is hooked up in St. Mary, allowing Hugh and Margaret Black to open a new St. Mary Café, now featuring electrical refrigeration rather than ice for cooling. Hugh and Margaret also add the 10-unit East Motel to their St. Mary operation.

1938: The Blackfeet set up an arts and craft store in St. Mary to sell locally made items. The arts and craft co-op is headed by Nora Spanish, daughter of Julia Wades-in-the-Water, with help from Jesse Donaldson Schultz, the wife of author James Willard Schultz. The store is located in a building owned by the Blacks and leased to the tribe for this purpose.

1938: The Lake McDonald Boat Company is established by Arthur J. Burch, a banker in Kalispell, who obtains the contract to provide tour boat services in Glacier from Captain Swanson. The commercial name of the operation is Glacier Park Boat Company.

1940: The Glacier Park Hotel Company opens the East Glacier Auto Cabins, to cater to automotive tourists. It is now known as Rising Sun Motor Inn.

1943: Tourism in Glacier Park is shut down due to the Second World War. To make ends meet, Hugh Black takes to raising and selling Herefords.

1943: Hugh Black gets the contract to raze St. Mary Chalets. He uses a Caterpillar to knock down the buildings, then during the winter of 1943-44 pushes the scrap wood onto the frozen St. Mary Lake and sets it on fire. The remains sink to the bottom of the lake upon spring thaw.

1945: The Park Saddle Horse Company relinquishes its concession in Glacier. Bernice Lewis picks up the contract in 1947. The Park Saddle Horse's Bar X6 ranch was near Duck Lake.

1945: Glacier park rangers stop feeding deer during the winter.

1948: Going-to-the-Sun Chalets complex is torn down and the site restored to its original state. It is now called Sun Point.

1948: Hugh and Margaret Black open the 47-unit West Motel at St. Mary.

1950, February: Some of a herd of about 500 elk in the St. Mary region migrate outside the Glacier park boundary, where local natives are waiting. Blackfeet hunters harvest 200 animals.

1950, June: A man from Browning lands a 26-pound Mackinaw in St. Mary Lake, sparking a fishing frenzy that summer to reel in similarly sized fish.

1950, June: The U.S. Air Force erects a rest camp for airmen and their families from its Great Falls base along the east shore of Lower St. Mary Lake. The camp is removed in the 1990s.

1950, August: Frank Denny, 62, of Cut Bank drowns in St. Mary Lake when a windstorm upsets his boat. Another man with him in the boat survived. Drowning is one of the most common causes of death in Glacier.

1951: The East Glacier store, cabins and campground on Sun Road are renamed Rising Sun to avoid confusion with the town of East Glacier Park.

1951: The *Motor Vessel St. Mary*, which had been stored in a shed by St. Mary Lake unused since the war, was sold to Stan Koss, who moved it to Flathead Lake. It was used for tourism there until it was destroyed in a fire in 1961.

1952: Helen and Ed Hilton start the Park Café, a grocery store and gas station in St. Mary.

1953: Scenes of the movie *Dangerous Mission*, starring Victor Mature, Piper Laurie, Vincent Price and William Bendix, are filmed at St. Mary and other locations in and around Glacier Park. The RKO Pictures movie is released the following year.

1953, September: Scenes from the Republic motion picture *Timberjack* are filmed near St. Mary Lake in Glacier. The film is based on the book by Great Falls author Dan Cushman. The movie stars Vera Ralston, Adolphe Menjou and Hoagy Carmichael.

1954, June: Work is completed on the new, three-storey St. Mary Lodge, featuring a dining room overlooking the lake, a curio shop, a lounge and 29 guest rooms. Much of the cedar used in the interior came from Flathead Valley mills. St. Mary Lodge is the pride of Hugh and Margaret Black's growing St. Mary business empire.

1954: Hollywood actors Barbara Stanwyck and Ronald Reagan stay at St. Mary for part of the filming of the movie *Cattle Queen of Montana*, released later that year.

1954: Highway 89 from the top of Hudson Bay Divide to St. Mary is surveyed for realignment.

1955: Plans to film *The Story of Charles Russell* in the St. Mary valley are shelved. The movie about the Montana artist, who had a home in Glacier, was to star Audie Murphy in the lead role, along with Donna Reed.

1956: The Alberta Travel Bureau sets up an office in St. Mary, the first outside the province, to lure tourists north into Canada. It closes in the 1970s.

1957: Great Northern Railway turns over management of Glacier Park Company to Donald T. Knutson, who owns a construction company and hotels in Minnesota and North Dakota. Knutson begins renovations to most of the properties.

1958: After working for the Hiltons at the Park Cafe, Lester and Ruth Johnson buy land on a hill east of St. Mary and open a restaurant and campground. Family legend has it that Johnson's Cafe started with a loaf of bread and 10 pounds of ground beef.

1959: Scenes from *All the Young Men*, a Korean War-based film starring Alan Ladd and Sidney Poitier, are filmed near St. Mary on the Blackfeet reservation.

1960: Don Hummel, his brother Gail, and Don Ford, all of Arizona, pay \$1.4 million for Glacier Park Company and assume operation of the former Great Northern Railway hotels and motels under the name Glacier Park, Inc.

1960: St. Mary residents see an unusual number of white Cadillacs brought to Glacier for the Governors Conference held at Many Glacier Hotel. There were 50 of the cars supplied by General Motors for the state governors, as well as other GM vehicles for their staff.

1960s: The Blackfeet abandon the crafts store in St. Mary. The building deteriorated, and part of it was torn down in 2015. Its future is undecided.

1964: A warm spring, quick snow melt and heavy rain in early June cause the worst flooding in memory in Glacier and across Montana. Divide Creek overflows its banks and inundates St. Mary. It took three weeks to remove the debris and open St. Mary Lodge for the season.

1965: U.S. Supreme Court Justice Earl Warren, who headed the investigation into the fatal shooting of President John F. Kennedy, is a sighted frequently that summer during off-days from fishing at Duck Lake.

1966: A thief took \$10,000 from the Black residence in St. Mary.

1966: The new St. Mary Visitor Center opens. The park service sets up 11 trailers nearby to accommodate the additional staff needed to operate the center, which has a 250-seat auditorium. The center was built under the auspices of Mission 66, to mark the 50th anniversary of the National Park Service.

1967: A KOA campground is built on land leased from the Blackfeet tribe. It is operated by Dallas and Jesse Smith.

1973: Roscoe Black returns to St. Mary to help his family run the lodge. He had spent eight years at the Westin, Fairmont and Hyatt corporations gaining experience in hotel management.

1975: St. Mary is again hit by flooding. The Black family uses the opportunity to remodel the lodge and related facilities as it repairs damage caused by the flooding. The Black family corporation leases operation of the business to Hugh's and Margaret's son Roscoe.

1976, September: Roscoe Black and Theresa Wadden, both St. Mary Lodge employees, are injured when a grizzly attacks them near Stoney Indian Lake. A third person, Mary Lusher, who was with them, was uninjured and hiked ahead to the Goat Haunt ranger station to raise the alarm and mount a rescue.

1976: Glacier is named a World Biosphere Reserve, in light of its diverse ecological niches for 70 mammal species and 260 species of birds.

1979: A second unit for the movie *The Shining*, starring Jack Nicholson, films exterior scenes along Going-to-the-Sun Road. The scenes are used in the opening sequences of the movie, as Nicholson's character drives to the fictional Overlook Hotel, based on the Timberline Lodge on Mount Hood in Oregon. Nicholson was not involved in the Glacier filming.

1981: Don Hummel and associates sell Glacier Park, Inc. to Greyhound Food Management. The original GPI is folded and resurrected as a new Glacier Park, Inc.

1983: Hugh Black dies. Margaret continues to work in management while Roscoe continues as lessee.

1986: Art M. Burch, son of the founder of the Glacier Park Boat Company, launches the *Joy II* on St. Mary Lake. The 41-foot vessel was previously operated by the company on Upper Waterton Lake.

1987: Scenes from the movie *War Party* are filmed on the Blackfeet reservation. The film, starring Billy Wirth and Kevin Dillon, is set in present-day Montana and explores Native-white tensions.

1989: St. Mary Lodge's restaurant is remodeled and expanded, becoming the Snowgoose Grill. It offers several wild game dishes, including bison, and wins kudos for its food and service.

1990: The *Rising Wolf* boat used on Two Medicine Lake, originally built by Captain Swanson in 1926, is moved to St. Mary Lake and rechristened *Little Chief*.

1995: Glacier Park ranger Stephen Willis saves 19-year-old Nate Terming's life after Terming crashed his plane in August near St. Mary.

1995: Six luxury cottages are built on a hill adjacent to St. Mary Lodge by Margaret Black, on land owned by the Black family. The cabins are for each of her six children.

1996: Will and Susan Brooke take over the former KOA campground, which had lost its designation a number of years before. They have the KOA membership reinstated and begin a series of improvements.

1996: A herd of elk crash through the ice on St. Mary Lake in November. Many Blackfeet tribal members go out onto the ice to harvest the drowning elk and fill their hunting tags.

1996: Glacier and Waterton together are designated a World Heritage Site.

1999: A major remodeling of St. Mary Lodge and related facilities is completed, featuring a new Curly Bear Café, a new espresso bar, The Glacier Perk, and renovations to the Country Market. The Snowgoose Grill is now rated as one of the top 10 restaurants in Montana.

1999: Glacier's 33 Red buses are pulled from service due to metal fatigue-related issues. They are temporarily replaced by white Dodge vans.

1999: Margaret Black, age 97, retires from daily activity in the bookkeeping department at St. Mary Lodge. She would no longer have to be up to start work at 7 a.m.

2001: The Great Bear Lodge, a three-storey, 48-room addition to St. Mary Lodge is opened adjacent to Divide Creek. The expansion cost \$2.5 million. Each room has a wet bar, refrigerator, color TV with satellite link and coffee maker. Rock walls and berms are constructed along Divide Creek near the two lodges as protection against flooding.

2002: The first of Glacier's Red buses returns to the park following rehabilitation under the auspices of Ford Motor Company. The buses, which had been owned by GPI, were turned over to the National Park Service and leased back to GPI.

2002: The Blackfeet Tribal Business Council talks about building a 62-room resort near St. Mary, at Chewing Black Bones campground. The project is never started.

2002, July: Homes east of St. Mary are evacuated due to the Fox Creek fire on the ridge east of the village. Lightning was believed to be the cause of the blaze.

2003: The Blackfeet tribal police open a substation in Babb to more rapidly respond to calls in the region.

2004, May: A St. Mary Lodge employee encounters a bear near Baring Falls. He is carrying bear spray and gets away with minor injuries. Never hike or run alone in bear country.

2004: Secret Service men ensure there's a table available for First Lady Laura Bush and her friends in advance of their stop at the usually busy Park Café. Bush and friends are on a low-key vacation, which includes a trip to the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton.

2005: The St. Mary Lodge and related facilities are put up for sale.

2006: The Red Eagle Fire ignites near Red Eagle Lake in Glacier Park. It blows rapidly eastward, passes within a quarter mile of St. Mary, and burns tens of thousands of acres of land in the park and on the Blackfeet Reservation.

2006: Roscoe Black terminates his management lease with the Black family. Buffalo, New York-based Delaware North Companies Inc. is granted a two-year lease to run the Black family businesses in St. Mary.

2007: The National Park Service proposes modifications to the St. Mary Visitor Center, including remodeling the building to create a transit center tied to free shuttle buses for tourists on Sun Road.

2008, January: Margaret Black, who was 105 years old, dies.

2008: The Black family sells St. Mary Lodge to a company headed by John Blumfield. That summer, the new owner moves 10 cabins that are north of the lodge to the south. The lodge is marketed in Alberta as a time share under the banner The Club at Glacier.

2008, September: Crew members filming *My Sister's Keeper* stay at the lodge. The film's stars include Cameron Diaz and Alec Baldwin.

2011: Glacier Park, Inc. acquires St. Mary Lodge and Resort and Grouse Mountain Lodge.

2014: Xanterra is awarded the contract to run concessions in Glacier Park formerly operated by Glacier Park, Inc., including the Red buses, Many Glacier Hotel and Lake McDonald Lodge.

2014: Glacier Park, Inc. acquires West Glacier Mercantile's operations in West Glacier, Apgar Village Cabins and the Cedar Tree Gift Shop, both in Apgar, from the Lundgren family.

2015, July: The Reynolds fire, burning along Sun Road, forces evacuations at Rising Sun Motor Inn and the St. Mary campground in Glacier. The fire appears headed for St. Mary, but is stopped before it reaches the summer village. Fire crews stay at Chewing Black Bones campground when not fighting the blaze.

2016: The Black family home is remodeled and rented as the "Homestead House."

2017: Glacier Park, Inc. adds a new group of cabins at St. Mary, designated "Tiny Homes."

2017: Glacier Park, Inc. is renamed the Glacier Park Collection under the Pursuit label, an effort by parent company Viad Corp. to standardize branding of its collection of tourism facilities across North America.

2019. Glacier Park Collection acquires Belton Chalets, expanding its presence in West Glacier.

2019. Pursuit opens a 178-acre West Glacier RV Park for the first season following construction in 2018. It has space for 102 recreational vehicles, and has 25 guest cabins.

2020. The worldwide Coronavirus pandemic results in the shuttering of tourist facilities on the east side of Glacier Park due to an order by the Blackfeet tribal council prohibiting tourists traveling on the reservation. Facilities on the west side of the park offered limited services. St. Mary Lodge was days from opening when staff had to reverse all they had done to close it again. Pursuit tried to find other jobs in Glacier for its employees. The U.S.-Canada border was closed to non-essential traffic all summer, meaning no Canadian vacationers to Montana.

2021. The Blackfeet tribe permitted travel on the reservation and hotels on the east side of Glacier were opened for the summer, with COVID protocols in place. Tourism services were also open on the west side of the park, with the park service controlling access to Sun Road through ticketed entry. The U.S.-Canada border was opened to non-essential travel, but after the end of the tourism season.

2024. The need for visitors to have reservations to enter Glacier park at St. Mary is dropped, while reservations are now required for entry to Two Medicine Lake and the Many Glacier valley. The reservation system is to address overcrowding on park roads and sites.

2024. The washrooms in the West Motel get a makeover.

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 whet your interest in the history of St. Mary 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.

The St. Mary Lodge story ...

St. Mary Lodge is a remarkable place ... a haven for travelers and the eastern gateway to the famed Going-to-the-Sun Road for nearly a century. Here are some links to tell you a little more about the Lodge.

1. Here's a short YouTube video sharing the history of Glacier's famous hotels and lodges, featuring the voices of some of its former employees:



2. To learn even more — and be ready to answer guests' questions — here's a written 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 to learn more.