

*A Historical Handbook
for the Employees of*

**Belton Chalets,
West Glacier Mercantile,
Apgar Village and
Motel Lake McDonald**

*by the
Glacier Park Foundation*

May 2024

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Dear Pursuit Glacier Collection employees,

Welcome to the traditional western gateway to Glacier National Park! We've prepared this handbook to help you orient visitors to the West Glacier-Lake McDonald district, 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 Glacier concession and park 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 cooperatively with Pursuit's Glacier Collection, 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.)

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

BEFORE GLACIER NATIONAL PARK

It's common to think of Glacier National Park as existing only from the day of its creation, May 11, 1910, and that little of consequence happened before that.

The land surrounding Lake McDonald, the western portion of what is now Glacier, has a rich history that long preceded the park. This includes the stories of Native Americans as well as Euro-Americans, in the case of the former an experience dating back thousands of years.

Some of the original people on this land were members of the Kootenai tribe. They tell a creation story about the Rockies that involves the chief animal, Nalmuqcin, who was trying to vanquish the water monster Yawu'nik. Because Nalmuqcin was so tall, he kept hitting his head on the ceiling of the sky. Following the advice from a wise one, Nalmuqcin used his massive arm to create a lake where he could trap the water monster. After conquering the water monster, Nalmuqcin stood up, hit his head on the sky and fell down dead. His body became the Rocky Mountains.

Several bands of Kootenai have a long association with this section of the Rockies that make up Glacier Park. They camped, hunted and recreated throughout the western portions of the park, and would frequently cross the mountains to hunt bison on the plains.

Kootenai names are still associated with locations in the North Fork valley, such as Kintla Lake and the Kishenehn. In some cases Kootenai names have been replaced or modified, but are still remembered. Logging Lake was "Where There's a Big Beaver" to the Kootenai, Red Medicine Bow Peak was just "Red Medicine," and even glaciers had Kootenai names, such as "Old Man's Daughter" for Harrison Glacier and "No Bear Ice" for Pumpelly Glacier.

Lake McDonald was referred to by the Kootenai for the long-used campsite at Apgar, which was known as Ya Kit Haqwitnamki or "The Place Where They Dance."

To learn more about the history of the Kootenai and Blackfeet in Glacier, see *People Before the Park* by Sally Thompson, the Kootenai Culture Committee and the Pikuni Traditional Association.

THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY ARRIVES

The start of much of the modern, or Euro-American, history of what is now Glacier can be traced to the building of the Great Northern Railway. The railway originated in St. Paul, Minn., spearheaded by its Canadian-born president, James J. Hill, who pushed the line out from that city west toward Seattle, Wash. The railway would become the northernmost transcontinental line in the United States.

J.J. Hill's work crews got as far as Havre, Mont., when they hit a roadblock in 1887: they had no planned route through the Rocky Mountain front to continue to Seattle. There was a known pass to the south, but that would mean a long diversion and Hill wanted the most direct route to the West Coast. While hunting for a suitable railway pass through the mountains, Hill kept his crews busy building a spur line to Great Falls.

The man who would locate a place for the Great Northern to cross the East Slopes was John F. Stevens, who had done mountain surveying for the Canadian Pacific Railway. In December 1889, Stevens set off with a reluctant Flathead Native guide, Coonsah, from Browning to look for a way through the Rockies. On a bitterly cold day, Stevens located Marias Pass.

While Stevens would later be touted as the “discoverer” of Marias Pass, it had been long known and used by the Blackfeet—Little Dog had described it to Euro-Americans 35 years before Stevens came along—and the Kootenai, who used it frequently to get to the Prairies, knew it as “The Big Gap.” Stevens and earlier explorers simply hadn’t asked the right people where it was.

Marias Pass, one of the lowest crossings of the Continental Divide in the Lower 48 at 5,213 feet, got its name from the Marias River, explored in 1805 by Capt. Meriwether Lewis who named it for his cousin Maria Wood. Lewis did not know the Blackfeet name for the stream was Bear River.

THE WHITE MEN ARE COMING

With knowledge of Marias Pass in hand, navvies for the Great Northern pushed the line through it over the winter of 1891-92, arriving in Kalispell in April 1892.

The fledgling community of Belton (now West Glacier) got its name from Daniel Webster Bell, a Civil War veteran who had established a camp at the site to house and feed railway workers.

Even before the line was completed through Marias Pass, settlers followed the tote road looking for land to homestead. Among the first arrivals were Charlie Howe and Milo Apgar, who quickly staked claims around scenic Lake McDonald. The lake is named for Duncan McDonald, a Hudson’s Bay Co. trader who worked in the Flathead Valley.

The beginning of transcontinental service on the Great Northern Railway spurred many of these early settlers to realize there was more money to be made catering to tourists looking to vacation by Lake McDonald than trying to make a living off their homesteads by farming and trapping.

Both Apgar and Howe were soon renting purpose-built cabins to people stepping off the train at Belton. Ed Dow set up a hotel in Belton and, once a bridge was built across the Middle Fork of the Flathead River in 1897 (some reports say 1895), he ran a horse-drawn stage to take people from the station to Lake McDonald. Prior to the bridge, travelers crossed the river by boat.

George Snyder, who had homesteaded where Lake McDonald Lodge now sits, brought the first powered boat (the *F.I. Whitney*) to Lake McDonald in 1895. The boat carried tourists to his hotel, and also delivered patrons and goods to tourism developments at the head of the lake run by Frank Kelly and Frank Geduhn.

GLACIER NATIONAL PARK ESTABLISHED

The creation of Glacier National Park is due in great part to lobbying by George Bird Grinnell, a New York publisher and co-founder of the Audubon Society who had a fascination with the region. He helped push three attempts, starting in 1907, to have the land set aside as a national park, finally succeeding in 1910. The park bill was signed by President William H. Taft on May 11, 1910.

With the establishment of the park, Great Northern president Louis W. Hill Sr. launched a major program to develop tourist facilities in Glacier, mostly east of the Continental Divide. These included two major hotels, Glacier Park Lodge and Many Glacier Hotel, as well as a series of chalet colonies.

The first chalet opened was in Belton in June 1910, just six weeks after Glacier became a national park. Hill had obviously been planning for this event well beforehand.

Over time, Glacier went from being a park where the majority of people arrived by train and toured on saddlehorses to one visited mostly by tourists arriving in their own vehicles and camping. This resulted in a push for better roads in and around the park, including roads connecting the east and west sides of Glacier. Two were undertaken almost simultaneously.

Going-to-the-Sun Road was started in 1921 and completed in 1932. A tour by President Franklin Roosevelt and his family across the road in 1934 did much to boost visitation to Glacier in the midst of the Great Depression.

The Roosevelt Highway, now called Highway 2, linking East Glacier Park and West Glacier, was completed in 1930. It allowed for direct travel between the two sides of Glacier without having to take the train.

The impact of the opening of the full Sun Road in 1933 cannot be underestimated when it came to tourism in Glacier. For the first time, visitors could take an automobile trip through the heart of the park rather than having to take a saddlehorse trip or hike.

The road was a response to the ever-increasing number of people coming to Glacier in their own cars rather than taking the train. Of the 76,000 people who visited Glacier in 1933, only 3,800 arrived by rail. The era of the dominance of railways for long-distance travel in America was nearly over, with one last hurrah during the Second World War.

The Great Northern Railway reluctantly maintained its tourism business interests in Glacier until 1960. Then they were sold to Glacier Park, Inc. (GPI), a company set up by Tucson, Ariz., Mayor Don Hummel and his partners. The railway had previously sold the Belton Chalets complex and torn down many of its underused or dilapidated chalet colonies elsewhere in the park.

GPI ran the hotel and motel concession in Glacier until 1981, when it was sold to Greyhound Food Management, later acquired by Viad Corp. GPI (reconstituted as a new corporate entity) continued to operate the concession under that name until 2013. Then the Park Service awarded the concession rights in the park to the Xanterra corporation. The following year, Xanterra assumed control of Lake McDonald Lodge, Many Glacier Hotel, the motels, and the Red buses operations from GPI.

GPI continues to operate the gateway facilities: Glacier Park Lodge, St. Mary Lodge, the Prince of Wales Hotel, Belton Chalets, West Glacier Mercantile Village as well as Apgar Village Lodge and Cabins, the Cedar Tree Gift Shop and Motel Lake McDonald. GPI has since been renamed the Glacier Park Collection under the Pursuit brand, an effort by parent company Viad Corp. to bring all its tourism properties across North America under one banner.

BELTON CHALETS

The Belton Chalets were the first of a series of nine chalet colonies constructed by the Great Northern Railway to serve tourists arriving at the newly created Glacier National Park. The main Belton Chalet, the first building in the group, was opened just six weeks after President William Taft signed the bill on May 11, 1910, creating the park.

The timing of the opening shows the advance planning Great Northern president Louis Hill had made in preparation for the establishment of Glacier. Construction on the other chalet groups would begin in 1911.

The design of the Belton Chalets in some ways set the tone for the rest of the chalet colonies. The architectural style was Swiss in its origin, with Arts & Crafts elements. The Swiss style reflected a major advertising theme the Great Northern would use for the next decade, touting Glacier as “America’s Switzerland.”

“See Europe if you will, but see America first” was the mantra of the railway’s advertising and publicity efforts (shortened to “See America First).” It was a catchphrase picked up from a movement started in Utah a few years earlier, although often improperly attributed to Louis Hill.

It’s unknown who actually designed the main, three-storey Belton Chalet. Hill initially requested a design from Spokane, Wash., architect Kirtland Cutter, who had won accolades for his work, and whose own home was done in a Swiss style.

Cutter’s design was not selected, although the one the railway used was similar. The Swiss elements can be seen in the liberal use of balconies with elaborately cut balustrades, fret work around the windows and doors, exposed timbers, and brackets supporting wide roof overhangs.

Belton Chalet opened for business on June 27, 1910, with W.H. Cumming, a Belton area resident, as the manager. The 1910 season was not profitable for the chalet, despite the Great Northern’s promotional efforts. The loss on the chalet books was an omen; it would never make money for the railway or a series of subsequent owners.

The Great Northern wasn’t put off by the first-year results. In 1911 it added two cabins to the east of the main chalet which are now called Lewis and Clark. The idea was to expand the number of rooms from the 10 in the main chalet.

At the same time, a building dubbed “The Studio” was built to the west of the main chalet. It was meant to house artists hired by the Great Northern to paint images of scenery in Glacier Park as part of its promotional campaign.

The first resident of The Studio probably was German-born artist John Fery. His two daughters, Fiammetta and Lucience, ran Belton Chalet for the 1911 season. The Fery sisters had no better luck than their predecessor in wringing a profit out of the operation.

The final building in the Belton Chalets complex was a 35-foot by 104-foot, two-storey dormitory added for the 1913 season. It was constructed by Edwin Evensta’s building company, which had also erected Glacier Park Hotel for the railway. The dormitory added a further 24 rooms to the Belton Chalets, which then could accommodate about 80 people.

Louis Hill had anticipated a major increase in tourism in Glacier with the opening of the Glacier Park Hotel in 1913, but few tourists stayed at the Belton Chalets. Instead, they got off the train at the station and immediately took a horse-pulled stage to Apgar and Lake McDonald.

That, in essence, is why the Belton Chalets never made a profit for decades. People wanted to get to their destination, the lake, instead of staying in Belton where there were few attractions. And when John and Olive Lewis put up a new hotel (Lake McDonald Lodge) with amenities that matched or surpassed those of the Belton Chalets—hot and cold running water, electricity, inside washrooms and great meals—there was no competition as to where tourists wanted to go.

Between 1915 and 1946, the Belton Chalets opened only intermittently, for trial periods of a year or three. The railroad undertook those trials to see if the whims of visitors had changed. They hadn't, and the losses piled up.

The Glacier facilities were closed for three years during World War Two. When the Great Northern reopened them in 1946, the Belton Chalets were no longer part of the chain. They had been sold to William Murrell for \$25,000, substantially less than the railway's original \$60,000 investment.

Murrell left after just three years, selling out in 1949 to H.A. Berryman. Two more ownership changes followed in the next 20 years.

The repeated ownership changes halted in 1970 when Ross and Kay Luding acquired the property. The Ludings had successfully run the concessions at Granite Park Chalet and Sperry Chalet since 1954, and were hoping to make a go of the Belton where others had failed.

Over the next 27 years the Ludings tested the waters. Sometimes the Belton Chalets were open, and at other times the main building alone was open as a dining room and pizza parlor. Kay Luding had thoughts about restoring the complex, but they were never realized.

Work began in the mid-1970s to widen Highway 2 from Hungry Horse to West Glacier. The Luding family fought with determination against a proposal that would have removed some or all of the Belton Chalets to make way for the improved road.

Their determination saved the complex from what seemed a certain fate. The awareness they raised about the historic nature of the property helped get it added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1978.

The future of the Belton Chalets took a turn in 1997 when Cas Still and Andy Baxter of Bigfork, Mont., bought the property. By then the buildings were in a sad state, as few previous owners had made enough money to maintain them.

The fact that the buildings were largely intact—not chopped up—is what gave Baxter and Still hope. They launched a three-year restoration project. They'd had previous experience reviving historic buildings in Florida (one being a former brothel where the writer Ernest Hemingway once drank and, on occasion, brawled).

Just about everything needed rehab at the Belton Chalets. The new owners replaced crumbling foundations, put in all new wiring and plumbing, and installed washroom facilities in each room. The work was overseen by Bigfork architect Joseph Magaddino, who tried to ensure the authenticity of changes.

When the main chalet and two cabins were opened in 1999 for business, they were spectacular, looking much as they would have when new—but better. It took an additional year to complete the dormitory, which reopened in 2000.

Still and Baxter received an award from the National Preservation Trust for the care they had shown in the restoration project. They then faced their next challenge: to do what previous managers had not been able and operate the chalets at a profit.

The new owners advertised widely, accentuating the historic nature of a visit to the chalets. They hired top-notch dining and kitchen staff. They soon established a reputation as one of the premier dining spots in Montana, while also appealing to the heritage tourism market.

Baxter and Still also expanded the business from the traditional three-month summer season. They kept the buildings open in the shoulder seasons with special events, and they hosted small gatherings such as weddings and receptions.

In January 2019 Still and Baxter announced they were turning over the reins of the Belton chalets to their son Andrew and his wife Ali. However, in May of that same year, the family decided to sell the 14-acre property to Pursuit's Glacier Park Collection.

Pursuit is maintaining the successful formula it inherited. This includes the motto that has served the Belton Chalets for the past decade: "Where the way it was still is."

WEST GLACIER MERCANTILE

The West Glacier Mercantile started life as the Belton Mercantile, formed in the 1910s by local businessman George W. Slack, former Glacier Park employee Henry Hutchings, Ed Swetnam and Herb Chatterton. They purchased much of the land hotelier Ed Dow held in the Belton townsite. The Belton Mercantile was a profitable business, with a gift shop, restaurant and dry goods store to serve tourists and local citizens.

When the Belton Chalets fell on hard times in the 1920s, George Slack offered to buy the complex from the Great Northern for \$10,000. This was \$50,000 less than the railroad had invested in erecting the buildings. The Great Northern considered and refused the offer.

The Belton Mercantile partners decided to expand their business after the railway underpass was built in 1936. The road through the underpass was aligned with a new bridge built in 1938 across the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. The original bridge was half a mile to the east. The new road went right through their property, but nowhere near their existing store and restaurant. To address that, in 1938 they built a gas station on the new road alignment. And over the winter of 1938-39 they added three more buildings on the west side of the road: a restaurant, a gift shop and a grocery store. A post office, in a matching Arts & Crafts style, soon was also part of the complex.

Following the Second World War, Belton Mercantile was sold and renamed West Glacier Mercantile. The buyers were Dan Lundgren Sr., his sons Conrad, Everett, and Dan Jr., and family friend Dave Thompson. The Merc became a family business with members (eventually including grandchildren) working in all its divisions.

Conservative but thoughtful management saw expansion of the business with the addition of the 32-room West Glacier Motel and Cabins, and the creation of Freda's Bar. With support from their spouses, the Lundgren partners added the Apgar Village Lodge and Cabins, and the Cedar Tree Gift Shop, both in Apgar.

Apgar Village Lodge includes some of the original cabins built by pioneer Milo Apgar in the early days of Lake McDonald tourism. The Cedar Tree is unusual in that the building was constructed around old-growth cedars rather than cut them down.

Dave Thompson retired and sold his shares to his partners in 1976, leaving the West Glacier Mercantile operations solely in the hands of the Lundgren family. When the last of the brothers, Ev Lundgren, died in 2012, it was the end of an era. Two years later, the family sold its interests to Glacier Park, Inc., now renamed Pursuit's Glacier Park Collection.

In 2019 Pursuit opened the 178-acre West Glacier RV Park on land it purchased from the Lundgren family as part of the West Glacier Mercantile buyout. The site includes 25 guest cabins designed to reflect the architectural style of the West Glacier Mercantile buildings

MOTEL LAKE McDONALD

The Motel Lake McDonald began life as the Stuart Motel. It was launched by Conrad, Mont., businessman Frank Stuart and his wife Laura on a private inholding about 100 yards from Lake McDonald Lodge.

Construction of the Stuart Motel began in 1952, and it opened in 1955. The complex consisted of an office building/general store and gift shop (with family and staff quarters on the second floor), and a single-storey motel unit featuring split-log construction on the exterior walls.

The motel was a low-cost offering compared with Lake McDonald Lodge. Business flourished to the extent that by 1957 the Stuarts added a second storey to the motel. This essentially doubled its capacity to 20 units.

The motel escaped serious damage in June 1964 when heavy rain and snowmelt caused nearby Snyder Creek to spill over its banks and raise the level of Lake McDonald. Snyder Creek flooding tore out part of the dining room of Lake McDonald Lodge.

The motel remained a family operation until 1966. Then Don Hummel's Glacier Park, Inc. (GPI), which was operating Lake McDonald Lodge, took over the business.

The Stuart name essentially disappeared at that point. The motel was integrated into the lodge operation. It provided low-budget and overflow accommodations, even after Hummel sold GPI in 1981 to Greyhound Food Management, later acquired by Viad Corp.

When the Park Service awarded the concession for lodging and transportation in Glacier to Xanterra corporation, the former Stuart Motel found itself an orphan as Xanterra's Glacier National Park Lodges took control of Lake McDonald Lodge. The motel was privately owned, whereas the lodge had been leased under a concession contract from the Park Service. The motel (which always had been privately owned) was retained by GPI.

GPI renamed the facility Motel Lake McDonald. For the first time since 1966, bookings were made there independently from the lodge. The rebranding of GPI as Pursuit's Glacier Park Collection has helped build a new identity for the motel.

PERSONALITIES

Louis Hill

Louis Hill, alternately president and chairman of the Great Northern Railway, was the driving force behind the establishment of many 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 was responsible for the Great Northern adopting Glacier's mountain goat as the railway's logo as well as use of the slogan "See America First."

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 Glacier Park Hotel and Belton Chalets, and had them shipped from Oregon.

Hill famously feuded with the 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 backgrounds than anyone of his generation. He indisputably is the foremost figure in the history of Glacier National Park.

Joe Cosley

Joe Cosley was a tall, mixed-blood trapper who had been living off the land in the West Glacier region for 15 years before he was hired by superintendent William Logan as one of the first park rangers in 1910.

When he was posted to the ranger station at Belly River near the Canadian border, Cosley was isolated from supervision and returned to his old enterprise of trapping, taking the skins across the line into Canada to sell.

Cosley was able for nearly 20 years to keep his secret life of poaching from the very park he was supposed to be protecting, until the law caught up with him in 1929. That's when the 59-year-old was arrested and taken—unwillingly, he tried to escape twice—to Belton for trial.

Cosley was fined \$100 and his equipment and weapons were confiscated. Friends helped pay the fine and he was freed. Cosley immediately returned to his Belly River outpost to collect his cache of furs, clearing out and heading to Alberta before his pursuers arrived. He beat them by taking a direct route through the park over high mountain trails. This feat displayed incredible stamina for a man his age.

He remained in Canada and died in 1944, still trapping until the end. But he was never again caught for poaching.

Cattle Queen of Montana

Elizabeth (Libby) Collins was known as the “Cattle Queen of Montana” for being a successful woman rancher with her husband Nat Collins near Choteau. She was reportedly the first woman to ride with her cattle on a train from Montana to oversee their sale in Chicago.

When there were reports of mineral discoveries in the Glacier region in the 1890s, she headed for the mountains to make her fortune. She staked a claim on a spot in the McDonald Creek valley.

Libby Collins’ partners in the mine were her brother Chandler Smith and Frank McPartland. While rowing to McPartland’s cabin one day in August 1895 on Lake McDonald, Collins reportedly got into a fight with McPartland over a bottle of whiskey.

During the dispute, the boat they were in overturned with Collins and McPartland ending up in the lake. The fight continued in the water, with Collins struggling to get McPartland to let go of her.

People on shore at the nearby Snyder Hotel heard the commotion. Seeing people in the water and the overturned rowboat, they set out in a vessel to help. By the time they arrived to pluck out Libby Collins, McPartland had disappeared beneath the water, drowned.

It was an inauspicious end to their partnership. Some wondered if Collins purposefully had done in McPartland to enlarge her stake in the claim.

Collins’s legend would end up on the silver screen with Hollywood beauty Barbara Stanwyck playing the title role. Stanwyck bore a picturesque contrast to the frumpy and overweight real-life Cattle Queen of Montana. The film, shot near St. Mary, co-starred a future president of the United States, Ronald Reagan.

Charles M. Russell

The artist Charles M. “Charlie” Russell is one of the best-known and most beloved figures in Montana history. His western-style paintings are famous throughout the state and beyond.

Arriving in Montana as a teenager in 1880, he soon became known for his evocative paintings of Native American and cowboy life, and of the vanishing frontier. Today, his major paintings can sell at auction for millions of dollars.

Russell’s permanent Montana home was in Great Falls. He developed a special fondness for Lake McDonald before Glacier Park was established, eventually purchasing land near Apgar in 1906 and building a summer home there.

The property, which he dubbed “Bull Head Lodge,” included a good-sized log home and a separate studio building. The studio had a large skylight and a fireplace occupying nearly an entire wall. He spent considerable time at Bull Head Lodge until his death 20 years later, and the Lake McDonald area was the subject of some of his paintings.

Over the years Russell became good friends with John Lewis, the owner of the hotel now known as Lake McDonald Lodge. He was a regular visitor there for years and periodically displayed his art for sale at the hotel.

John Fery

John Fery was a German-born artist who fled Europe to escape anti-Semitism. In doing so, he changed his name from Johan Levi. Fery was hired in 1910 by Louis Hill to paint scenes of Glacier that would be featured in railway stations and travel agencies to promote travel to the park.

Fery created large-scale paintings in a distinctive Impressionistic style. His initial production was slow, and Louis Hill chastised him, saying: “We ought to get out 12 or 15 pictures per month. What we are paying you for is to paint pictures. Later in the season when snow comes and foliage changes, we may wish you to make some more sketches, but we cannot afford to have you putting in your time making sketches now.”

Fery did step up his pace. By 1913 he had turned out an astounding 267 paintings for the railway. For his work he was paid \$8,500, which works out to \$32 a painting.

During the 1911 season, Fery arranged for his daughters Fiammetta and Lucienne to have jobs at the Belton Chalets. Fiammetta was the manager and her sister the bookkeeper. We believe, but have no proof, that Fery himself and his family spent the summer based out of The Studio building west of the chalets.

Fery’s daughters had little luck in making a profit at the chalets, ending the season \$1,500 in the hole. They were not rehired for the following season.

The Great Northern was a hard task master, as their father Fery had already learned. The previous year, when the auditor discovered the chalet account was a nickel short, he demanded that the missing money be paid by the manager!

The Mankenbergs

The manager of the Belton Chalets in the late teens and early 1920s was Charles Mankenberg, a school teacher. His wife Berta assisted him in running the operation.

The Mankenbergs were cultured German immigrants who came to America to start a new life. Charles was an experienced hotel manager, having previously been posted at Granite Park Chalets. He would later work at St. Mary Chalets.

During the First World War, the Mankenbergs tried to keep a low profile. They didn’t want to arouse suspicion as former citizens of a country now at war with the United States.

Anti-German sentiment took a toll on Berta Mankenberg, in particular. She had been a noted mezzo-soprano singer in Europe, but she could find no opportunity to sing in the U.S.

During summers when school was out, the Mankenbergs labored manually for the hotel company at its chalets. They looked after the needs of guests and tended the gardens around the buildings.

When the stigma of their origins died down in the postwar period, they left the employ of the hotel company and set up their own restaurant, Mankenberg’s Café, in East Glacier Park, to great success. Their daughter Karola took art lessons from Winold Reiss at his summer art school at St. Mary Chalets in the mid-1930s. Reiss was known for his portraits of Blackfeet natives used by the Great Northern Railway for promotional purposes, particularly on its annual calendars.

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 (today's Denali) national parks, was courted by the railway but reluctant. Only after the railway agreed 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 sharply alienating his staff.

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

STORIES OF WEST GLACIER

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 overflowed its banks, wrecking the dining room at Lake McDonald Lodge and causing other damage at the facility. 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 in the park in those early decades, suspected to be victims of bears.)

Then the Night of the Grizzlies occurred. On Aug. 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, 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).

Inholders and community members

One of the things that sets the Lake McDonald region apart from much of the rest of Glacier is the fact that it isn't isolated from other buildings and people ... it has always been part of a small but cohesive community of summer residents.

This is because a small handful of settlers arrived here back in the 1890s, before the area became a national park, and claimed a series of homesteads around the lake. Much of this former homestead land remains privately held today, occupied by summer cabins that have often been in the same family for generations.

Among the lake's summer home residents were two men who were among Montana's most influential politicians in the early years of the 20th century. Burton K. Wheeler, who occupied a cabin just past the Lake McDonald ranger station, was a powerful U.S. senator from Montana. In office for 24 years, he was also a third-party candidate for vice-president in 1924.

U.S. Senator Thomas J. Walsh owned a large summer home to the south of Wheeler's. He held office for some 20 years, dying just after being appointed U.S. Attorney General.

Other former homesteads around the lake were developed into tourist facilities. Two of the earliest were set up by Milo Apgar and Charlie Howe. (The Apgar Village Lodge and Cabins includes some of the original structures built by Milo Apgar.)

While some of these homesteads are now owned by the Park Service, many remain in private hands today. Their owners continue a century of families having spent their summer holidays in Glacier.

GLACIER PARK – A 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. Fortunately, engineer John Stevens locates the fabled Marias Pass, then the lowest crossing of the Continental Divide through the northern Rocky Mountains.

1890. Daniel Webster Bell establishes a camp to feed and house workers building the Great Northern line through Marias Pass. The settlement is later known as Belton, in honor of the Civil War veteran.

1891-92. Settlers following the railway trek over Marias Pass even before the Great Northern's line is completed. The settlers establish homesteads at Belton, and around Lake McDonald. The settlers include Frank Geduhn, Milo Apgar, Denis Comeau and George Snyder.

1893. The Great Northern Railway begins transcontinental train service between St. Paul, Minn., and Seattle.

1894. Businessman Ed Dow builds a hotel in Belton to serve travelers getting off the train and destined for Lake McDonald, where homesteaders who were farming and trapping quickly learned they could make more money turning their cabins into restaurants and rentals to serve tourists.

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

1895 or 1897. First bridge is built across the Middle Fork of the North Fork River, connecting Belton to Apgar. Previously tourists crossed the river on a boat.

1895. George Snyder homesteads a tract of land where Lake McDonald Lodge is now located and builds his first primitive hotel on the site. Tourists get to his hotel, and access camps run by Frank Geduhn and Frank Kelly, by taking a small steamship from Apgar (as there is no road to the head of Lake McDonald). To get tourists and supplies to his and the other camps, Snyder buys and hauls a steam-powered boat, dubbed the *F.I. Whitney*, to the lake.

1902. A group of volunteer college students join Prof. Lyman Sperry and start building a trail from Lake McDonald to Sperry's namesake glacier. The project is funded by James J. Hill, founder of the Great Northern Railway. The trail is completed in 1903.

1906. Cowboy artist Charlie Russell and his wife Nancy buy Bull Head Lodge, on Lake McDonald near Apgar. It becomes their summer home for the next two decades.

1906. Columbia Falls businessman John Lewis and his wife Olive buy John Snyder's homestead land and hotel. They gradually begin improvements and expand the operation with cabins.

1909. Louis Hill reveals his tourism development plans for the proposed Glacier National Park to a group of Kalispell businessmen. That summer he hires Portland, Oregon, photographer Fred Kiser to begin shooting images of the region for publicity purposes.

1909. A new Belton railway station replaces the "shack" previously used by travelers.

1910. President William Howard Taft signs a bill on May 11 that establishes Glacier as the country's 10th national park. Louis Hill, now president of the Great Northern, is already working to promote railway travel there.

1910. Six weeks after Taft signed the bill creating Glacier, the Great Northern opens Belton Chalet on June 27. The building has three storeys and 10 rooms, as well as a waiting lounge and dining room. The price for a night's stay is \$2, which includes meals.

1910. Louis Hill hires artist John Fery to paint landscapes of Glacier that will be used for promotional purposes by the railway.

1910. Glacier Park superintendent William Logan rents the Belton Chalet as his winter headquarters, as he awaits the construction of buildings for him and his staff of rangers.

1911. Two cabins, now called Lewis and Clark, are constructed to the east of the Belton Chalet, to increase sleeping capacity. A "Studio" with a skylight is built west of the chalet, intended to house artists hired by the Great Northern. It is believed the first residents were artist John Fery and his family.

1911. Hill orders the establishment of a network of tent camps in Glacier, while permanent chalets are under construction that summer. The tent camps are connected by saddlehorse tours operated by a number of independent contractors.

1911. Kalispell businessman Frank Stoop's car, driven by his mechanic Frank Wahlen, is the first automobile to enter Glacier Park. They drive three miles from Belton to Apgar over an unfinished road.

1912. An Act of Congress permits Louis Hill to buy 160 acres of Blackfeet reservation land in Midvale (now East Glacier Park). Hill turns the land over to his Great Northern Railway for Glacier Park 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.

1912. The Great Northern hires the Brewster Brothers of Banff in Canada to set up a saddlehorse and stage operation to serve its chalets in Glacier. The stages, pulled by four-horse teams, run from Midvale to Two Medicine Lake, to St. Mary Lake and to Swiftcurrent Lake in the Many Glacier valley.

1913. Glacier Park Hotel (the lobby, dining room, and 46 rooms, maybe 61 if you count the chalet guest rooms) opens on June 15, but the opening celebration is delayed for a week, until June 22. The Great Northern transports crowds of people from Kalispell, Whitefish, Columbia Falls and Belton (West Glacier) across the mountains for the opening party.

1913. The Sperry Chalet dining room/kitchen complex is opened for business following its construction the previous year. Built of stone, the building replaces the tents for the dining room and kitchen used there since 1911. A dormitory would be added to the Sperry complex and opened for use in 1914.

1913. In anticipation of increased tourism to Glacier due to the opening of the new hotel in Midvale, the Great Northern has a dormitory building added to the Belton Chalets complex. The two-storey dormitory, built by Evensta Construction of St. Paul, Minn., has 24 guest rooms.

1914. John and Olive Lewis commission the building of Hotel Glacier (now Lake McDonald Lodge) on Lake McDonald. The new hotel, often referred to as the “Lewis Hotel” or Lewis’s, was designed by Spokane, Wash., architect Kirtland Cutter. It was built over the winter of 1913-14. The hotel, opened in June, is a worthy competitor to what the Great Northern offers on the other side of the Continental Divide.

1914. An annex with 111 more guest rooms is added to Glacier Park Hotel, along with a kitchen and staff dining room. In 1913, the hotel kitchen had been in the basement and food was moved to the dining room by dumbwaiter.

1914. The Glacier Park Transportation Co. is formed to run buses between Glacier Park Hotel and Many Glacier Chalets. Its bus service replaces the automobile and stage service run by the Brewster Brothers. The original White Motor Co. buses were not painted red, but had gray bodies with black fenders.

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

1915. Many Glacier Hotel is opened on the shore of Swiftcurrent Lake (then called McDermott Lake).

1915. Glacier Park Transportation Co. starts running buses between the Belton train station and Apgar, supplementing the horse-drawn stage service offered by John Weightman.

1915. The Brewster Brothers, who initially held the right to transport visitors in Glacier by saddlehorse for the railway, lose their contract. They are replaced by a number of private contractors, the largest being the Park Saddle Horse Co. established by Kalispell lawyer Wilbur Noffsinger.

1915. Wyoming rancher Howard Eaton takes a party of tourists through Glacier, starting from Glacier Park Hotel and ending at the Glacier Hotel (Lake McDonald Lodge). Among the participants is artist Charlie Russell and novelist and *Saturday Evening Post* writer Mary Roberts Rinehart, whose account of the trip, *Through Glacier National Park*, was published the next year.

1916. Mary Roberts Rinehart returns with her husband and family for another tour of Glacier as well as a float down the North Fork of the Flathead River, chronicling the trek in another book, *Tenting Tonight*.

1916. Wilbur Noffsinger’s Park Saddle Horse Company gets the exclusive contract to offer saddle and pack horse services in Glacier for patrons at Great Northern’s hotels.

1918. A group of businessmen including George W. Slack, former park employee Henry Hutchings, Ed Swetnam and Herb Chatterton form Belton Mercantile. In 1922, they purchase much of the land around the original community of Belton from hotelier Ed Dow. Their business consists of a restaurant, a gift shop and a grocery-dry goods store.

1920. U.S. Vice-President Thomas Marshall visits Glacier, the first time the second-highest member of the executive branch of government has toured the park since its creation in 1910.

1921. National Park Service engineer George Goodwin's idea of a transmountain road (what is now Going-to-the-Sun Road) through Glacier across the Continental Divide receives \$100,000 in funding from Washington. Work begins that summer to extend the road from Apgar north toward Lewis's hotel.

1921. A new, concrete bridge is built over the Middle Fork of the Flathead river at Belton to connect to Apgar and the park. The previous wooden bridge was so rickety that during the 1920 season no heavy traffic was allowed over it and bus passengers were told to get off and walk across, with the bus travelling empty to avoid collapsing the bridge.

1922. Work progresses on what would become the Roosevelt Highway (Highway 2) to link Midvale (East Glacier Park) to Belton (West Glacier). The road now extends about 17 miles west from Midvale, to Marias Pass. Meanwhile, the Great Northern offers to transport the automobiles of tourists between the two communities for \$12.50, one way.

1924. The appropriation from Congress to build Sun Road is increased from \$100,000 annually to \$1 million to fund a three-year construction program. A major decision that year revised the proposed route, which initially would have had 15 switchbacks to reach Logan Pass from the west. Instead, the revised route would see a single switchback, the Loop, and a gradual climb along the Garden Wall to Logan Pass. Frank Kittredge of the Bureau of Public Roads leads the survey of the new route.

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

1926. Business was slow the previous season at Belton Chalets and the Great Northern decides to keep it shuttered. The chalets won't reopen until the summer of 1930.

1927. The bus company is sold to Howard Hays of Riverside, Calif., who shortens the title to Glacier Park Transport Company. Hays bolsters the fleet with eight new Cadillac touring cars custom ordered to his specification. All the buses and cars are painted red, to reflect the color of the ripe berries of a mountain ash.

1927. The Prince of Wales Hotel, commissioned by the Great Northern Railway, is opened in Waterton Lakes National Park, Alberta, in Canada.

1928. The western portion of Sun Road from Apgar to Logan Pass is completed late in the season. It will take four more years to complete the eastern portion of the road.

1929. Glacier Park Transport Co. buses start shuttling tourists from Lewis's hotel to Logan Pass. This is a round trip back to the hotel, as the road is incomplete on the east side of the pass.

1929. The Half Moon fire burns 100,000 acres in and around the park. It blows through between Apgar and Belton, destroying a few homes in Apgar. Some 500 firefighters prevent it from reaching Belton. However, the old growth hemlock forest between Belton and Apgar is destroyed, replaced today by lodgepole pines.

1930. John and Olive Lewis sell their hotel to the Great Northern, which renames it Lake McDonald Hotel. The railway would later sell the hotel to the National Park Service, and begin leasing the property.

1930. The Roosevelt Highway (U.S. Highway 2) opens along the southern border of Glacier, connecting Midvale to Belton.

1930. J.W. (Captain Billy) Swanson constructs the tour boat *DeSmet* for the Glacier Park Transport Co. for use on Lake McDonald.

1932. Belton resident George Slack builds a 1,600-foot runway west of town. The airport is a short-lived bid to lure air travelers to Glacier.

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.

1934. President Franklin Roosevelt arrives by rail in Belton in August for a trip through Glacier. He tours Going-to-the-Sun Road and heads to Many Glacier Hotel for lunch. Later, he stops at Two Medicine Chalets, from where he makes a national radio address. Roosevelt's one-day visit is the only occasion where a sitting chief executive visited Glacier Park.

1936. The first new Model 706 buses from the White Motor Company in Cleveland arrive in the park. These are the same Red buses still on the road in Glacier today.

1933-42. The Civilian Conservation Corps is set up in 1933 as a way to give unemployed men some paid work during the Great Depression. Some 1,700 men were employed in Glacier over nine years, staying at camps throughout the park and undertaking public work projects such as trail building and maintenance. One of the CCC camps was at Belton.

1936. The Belton railway station is moved about 100 yards west from where it was built, and expanded, incorporating the original station as the baggage area of the building. That same year, a tunnel under the train tracks is completed, providing easier access to Belton than the earlier level crossing.

1937-45. The Belton Chalets are periodically closed due to lack of business during the Great Depression, and later due to the Second World War.

1938. Ted Marble, a well-known photographer with a studio in Belton, dies. He was 55 years old. Marble, of Whitefish, had opened his studio in Belton about 1930, and produced many postcard scenes of the park.

1938. The road into Glacier Park from Belton is realigned with the construction of a new bridge over the Middle Fork of the Flathead. The new road now lines up with the railway underpass.

1939. The owners of the Belton Mercantile decide to expand from their original store in the old townsite. Over the winter of 1938-39, they construct a series of Arts & Crafts-style buildings that include a restaurant, a gift shop and a grocery-dry goods store along the west side of the new alignment of Sun Road.

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.

1942-45. Conscientious objectors to being part of the American military during the Second World War are housed in former Civilian Conservation Corps camps in Glacier Park. They maintained trails, fought fires and plowed Sun Road, doing work that would have been done by park crews now serving in the military. The Belton site, Camp 55, which housed mainly Mennonites, Amish and Quakers, opened in September 1942.

1946. Dan Lundgren Sr., family friend Dave Thompson, and Lundgren's sons, Conrad, Everett and Dan Jr., purchase the Belton Mercantile and rename it West Glacier Mercantile.

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

1946. The Great Northern sells the Belton Chalets to William Murrell. The Studio is also sold, as a separate property.

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

1949. Belton Chalets are sold again, to H.A. Berryman.

1949. Belton is renamed West Glacier and Midvale (sometimes called Glacier Park) is renamed East Glacier Park.

1952. Hollywood actors Victor Mature, Vincent Price, William Bendix and Laurie Piper (Piper Laurie) visit Glacier to film the movie *Dangerous Mission*.

1953. The first portion of the Highland Motel complex is completed, and expanded in 1954.

1954. Ronald Reagan and Barbara Stanwyck film *Cattle Queen of Montana* on the Blackfeet reservation adjacent to Glacier Park. The film is loosely based on the life of Elizabeth Collins, who worked an unsuccessful mine in what is now Glacier in the 1890s.

1955. Frank and Laura Stuart, owners of a private inholding near Lake McDonald Hotel, construct and begin operating a private motel.

1955. Howard Hays sells the Glacier Park Transport Co. to the Great Northern's Glacier Park Co., ending Hays's 28-year history with the park.

1957-59. Great Northern hires the Knutson Hotel Company to renovate Glacier's lodges and to manage them for three years. Major changes occur at the hotels.

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

1960. The Great Northern sells its Glacier properties to Don Hummel, the mayor of Tucson, Ariz., and operator of national park concessions in Lassen Volcanic and Mount McKinley (now Denali). Hummel operates the concession under the name Glacier Park, Incorporated (GPI) and trims 400 jobs from the workforce to eliminate the operating deficit.

1964. The greatest flood in Montana's history disrupts power and transportation around the park. Weeks of work are required to restore normal transportation and hotel operations. The flooding wipes out the bridge from West Glacier into the park, with traffic rerouted to the original 1920 bridge until a replacement is completed in 1966. The 1920 bridge is now a pedestrian crossing.

1966. The Stuart motel is purchased by Don Hummel, president of Glacier Park, Inc., and begins to be operated as part of the Lake McDonald hotel complex, though it remains privately owned.

1967. In Glacier Park's first known bear-caused fatalities, two GPI employees camped at separate locations are killed by two different bears on the same night – the infamous “Night of the Grizzlies.” One of the victims was Michelle Koons, who worked at the Lake McDonald Lodge gift shop and was camping with friends at Trout Lake.

1970. Ross and Kay Luding buy the Belton Chalets, which have operated off and on over the past decade. The chalet complex will continue to operate intermittently for the next 27 years.

1975. Flooding again occurs throughout much of Glacier, closing roads until repairs can be made.

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

1976. Glacier Raft Co. is formed by partners Bill Hoffman, Darwon Stoneman and Onno Wieringa to take customers on floats down the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. It is now one of the longest running raft companies in Montana.

1978. Belton Chalets are added to the list of the National Register of Historic Places.

1979. Work to widen Highway 2 between Hungry Horse and West Glacier continues. The Luding family opposes the plan to widen the highway at West Glacier that would have seen the Belton Chalets razed.

1979. Some of the opening aerial scenes of the movie *The Shining*, starring Jack Nicholson, are filmed on Sun Road in the McDonald valley. Nicholson was not present for the shooting by the second unit team.

1981. Don Hummel sells Glacier Park, Inc. (GPI) and the concession rights in Glacier to Greyhound Food Management, Inc. GPI is reorganized to operate the lodges. Greyhound Food Management is later acquired by the Dial Corporation and then by the Viad Corp., its present owner.

1983. George H.W. Bush, then serving as Ronald Reagan's vice-president, vacations with his wife Barbara at Fish Creek during a visit to Glacier Park.

1991. Alberta House, a 7,000-square-foot structure to promote travel to the province of Alberta in Canada, opens in West Glacier.

1991. Burlington Northern Railway turns over the 2,400-square-foot West Glacier train depot to the Glacier Natural History Association (now the Glacier National Park Conservancy), which will renovate it to use for its headquarters and a gift shop.

1992. Scenes from the movie *Beethoven's 2nd*, starring Bonnie Hunt and Charles Grodin, are filmed on the shore of Lake McDonald at Apgar and in Glacier.

1993. Johnny Cash, his wife June, The Judds, Tom Selleck, Julius Irving, General Norman Schwarzkopf and many other dignitaries visit Glacier for an American Academy of Achievement meeting at Glacier Park Lodge and to tour the park.

1995. Glacier and Waterton parks together are designated a World Heritage Site.

1997. Cas Still and Andy Baxter buy Belton Chalets from the Luding family and begin a three-year restoration of the buildings.

1999. The Belton Chalets main lodge and two cabins are reopened for business after restoration. It takes an additional year to finish refurbishing the dormitory building. The revival project wins accolades for its preservation of the buildings.

1999. Glacier's famous 16-passenger Red buses are pulled from duty due to old age, metal fatigue and safety issues.

2002. After extensive renovation by the Ford Motor Company, the historic Red buses are returned to service in Glacier. Scores of former gearjammers attend a June reunion to welcome the buses back. GPI donates the buses to the National Park Service, which leases them back to the concessioner.

2003. The Robert forest fire burns along Howe Ridge and the north shore of Lake McDonald, forcing the evacuation of some tourists and residents, and closure of the Lake McDonald Lodge complex.

2012. Ev Lundgren, the last surviving original partner of West Glacier Mercantile, dies at age 95, sparking rumors of a possible sale of the business.

2013. The Park Service awards concession rights for lodging and transportation in Glacier Park to the Xanterra corporation. 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. The Lundgren family sells its West Glacier and Apgar tourism operations to Glacier Park, Inc. The acquisition includes the store, restaurant, gift shop and Freda's Bar that make up West Glacier Mercantile, the West Glacier motel and cabins, the Apgar Village Lodge and cabins, and the Cedar Tree Gift Shop.

2017. The Sprague forest fire ignites in the mountains southeast of Lake McDonald Lodge, greatly disrupting travel in the valley. The fire destroys the historic dormitory building at Sperry Chalet.

2017. Glacier Park, Inc., which has operated under that name in two different corporate guises since 1960, is redubbed the Glacier Park Collection under the Pursuit brand name. The Pursuit moniker is an effort by Viad, the parent company, to bring its various travel-related businesses across North America under a single corporate brand. The Glacier Collection includes Grouse Mountain Lodge in Whitefish and the Prince of Wales Hotel in Waterton.

2018. The Howe Ridge forest fire is ignited by lightning, destroying many historic homes on the north shore of Lake McDonald, including most of the Kelly's Camp complex. The west side of Sun Road is closed for much of August and September due to the fire.

2019. Pursuit opens the 178-acre West Glacier RV Park for its first season following construction in 2018. Besides space for 102 recreational vehicles, the park has 25 guest cabins designed to reflect the architecture of the West Glacier Mercantile buildings.

2019. Pursuit acquires the Belton Chalets from Cas Still and Andy Baxter.

2020. The worldwide Coronavirus pandemic resulted in the shuttering of tourist facilities on the east side of Glacier Park. Facilities on the west side of the park offered limited services. Glacier Park Hotel 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. Finding and keeping staff was a challenge for many employers. The U.S.-Canada border was opened to non-essential travel, but after the end of the tourism season.

2022. Pursuit takes over Glacier Park Raft Company, which runs tours out of West Glacier on the Middle Fork of the Flathead River. At more than 40 years old, it is one of the longest-running and most successful raft companies in Montana. The sale also included the Glacier Outdoor Center, featuring a lodge, rental cabins and wedding venue.

For additional history ...

We hope that this handbook has whetted your interest in the history 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 local gift shops.