

AT LAYING OF CORNERSTONE OF GATEWAY TO YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK

GARDINER, MONTANA

APRIL 24, 1903

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Superintendent, and my Fellow-Citizens:

I wish to thank the people of Montana generally, those of Gardiner and Cinnabar especially, and more especially still all those employed in the Park, whether in civil or military capacity, for my very enjoyable two weeks holiday.

It is a pleasure now to say a few words to you at the laying of the cornerstone of the beautiful road which is to mark the entrance to this Park. The Yellowstone Park is something absolutely unique in the world, so far as I know. Nowhere else in any civilized country is there to be found such a tract of veritable wonderland made accessible to all visitors, where at the same time not only the scenery of the wilderness, but the wild creatures of the Park are scrupulously preserved; the only change being that these same wild creatures have been so carefully protected as to show a literally astounding tameness. The creation and preservation of such a great natural playground in the interest of our people as a whole is a credit to the nation; but above all a credit to Montana, Wyoming and Idaho. It has been preserved with wise foresight. The scheme of its preservation is noteworthy in its essential democracy. Private game preserves, though they may be handled in such a way as to be not only good things for

themselves, but good things for the surrounding community, can yet never be more than poor substitutes, from the standpoint of the public, for great national playgrounds such as this Yellowstone Park. This Park was created, and is now administered, for the benefit and enjoyment of the people. The government must continue to appropriate for it especially in the direction of completing and perfecting an excellent system of driveways. But already its beauties can be seen with great comfort in a short space of time and at an astoundingly small cost, and with the sense on the part of every visitor that it is in part his property, that it is the property of Uncle Sam and therefore of all of us. The only way that the people as a whole can secure to themselves and their children the enjoyment in perpetuity of what the Yellowstone Park has to give is by assuming the ownership in the name of the nation and by jealously safeguarding and preserving the scenery, the forests, and the wild creatures. When we have a good system of carriage roads throughout the Park for of course it would be very unwise to allow either steam or electric roads in the Park we shall have a region as easy and accessible to travel in as it is already every whit as interesting as any similar territory of the Alps or the Italian Riviera. The geysers, the extraordinary hot springs, the lakes, the mountains, the canyons, and cataracts unite to make this region something not wholly to be paralleled elsewhere on the globe. It must be kept for the benefit and enjoyment of all of us; and I hope to see a steadily increasing number of our people take advantage of its attractions. At present it is rather singular that a greater number of people come from Europe to see it than come from our own Eastern States. The people near by seem awake to its beauties; and I hope that more and more of our people who dwell far off will appreciate its really marvelous character. Incidentally, I should like to point out that some time people will surely awake to the fact that the Park has special beauties to be seen in winter; and any hardy man who can go through it in that season on skis will enjoy himself as he scarcely could elsewhere.

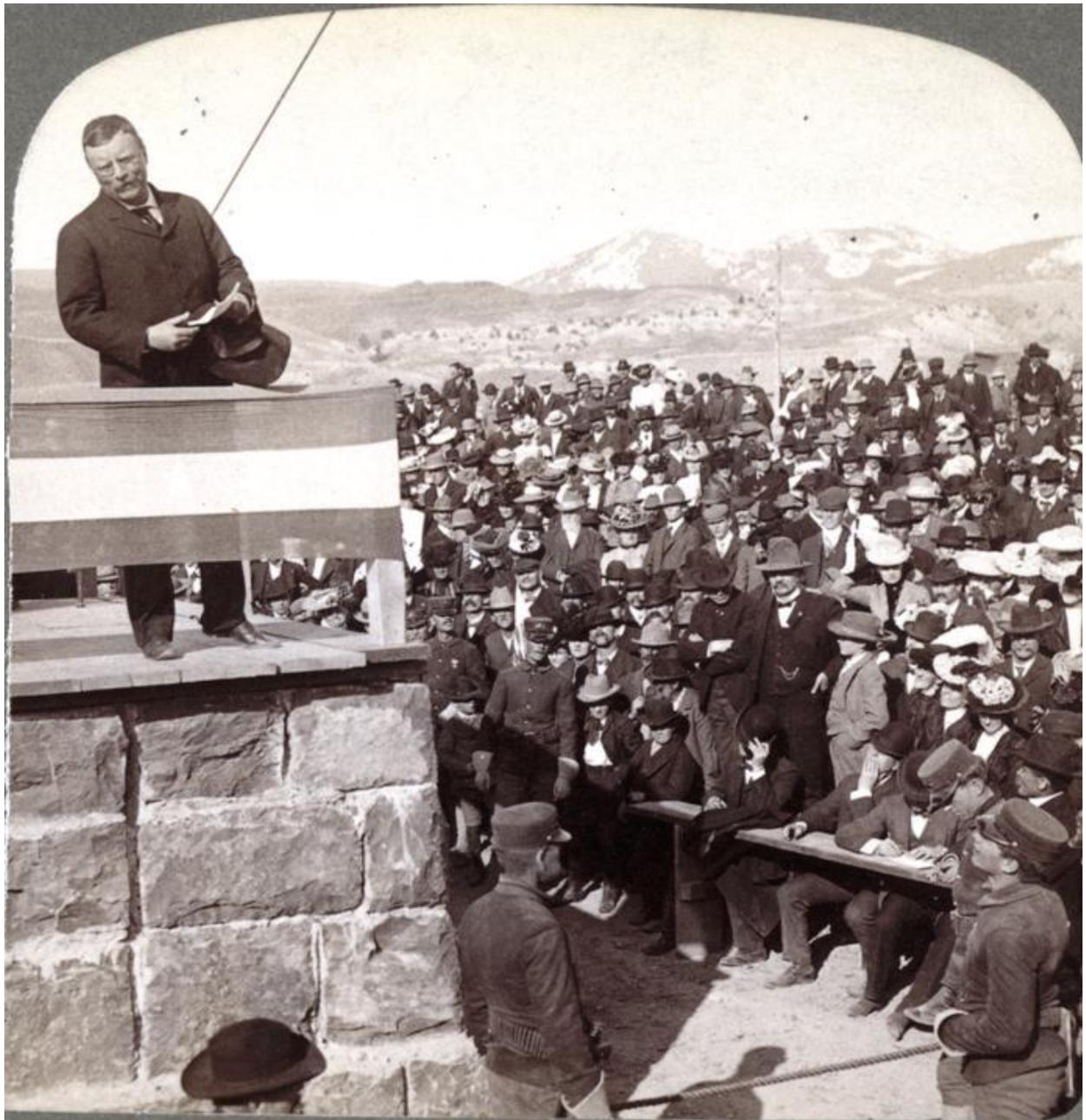
I wish especially to congratulate the people of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho, and notably you of Gardiner and Cinnabar and the immediate out skirts of the Park, for the way in which you heartily co-operate with the superintendent to prevent acts of vandalism and destruction. Major Pitcher has explained to me how much he owes to your co-operation and your lively appreciation of the fact that the Park is simply being kept in the interest of all of us, so that every one may have the chance to see its wonders with ease and comfort at the minimum of expense. I have always thought it was a liberal education to any man of the East to come West, and he can combine profit with pleasure if he will incidentally visit this Park, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, and the Yosemite, and take the sea voyage to Alaska. Major Pitcher reports to me, by the way, that he has received invaluable assistance from the game wardens of Montana and Wyoming, and that the present game warden of Idaho has also promised his hearty aid.

The preservation of the forests is of course the matter of prime importance in every public reserve of this character. In this region of the Rocky Mountains and the great plains the problem of the water supply is the most important which the home-maker has to face. Congress has not of recent years done anything wiser than in passing the irrigation bill; and nothing is more essential to the preservation of the water supply than the preservation of the forests. Montana has in its water power a source of development which has hardly yet been touched. This water power will be seriously impaired if ample protection is not given the forests. Therefore this Park, like the forest reserves generally, is of the utmost advantage to the country around from the merely utilitarian side. But of course this Park, also because of its peculiar features, is to be preserved as a beautiful natural playground. Here all the wild creatures of the old days are being preserved, and their overflow into the surrounding country means that the people of the surrounding country, so long as they see that the laws are observed by all, will be able to ensure to themselves and to their children and to their children's children much of the old-time pleasure of the hardy life of

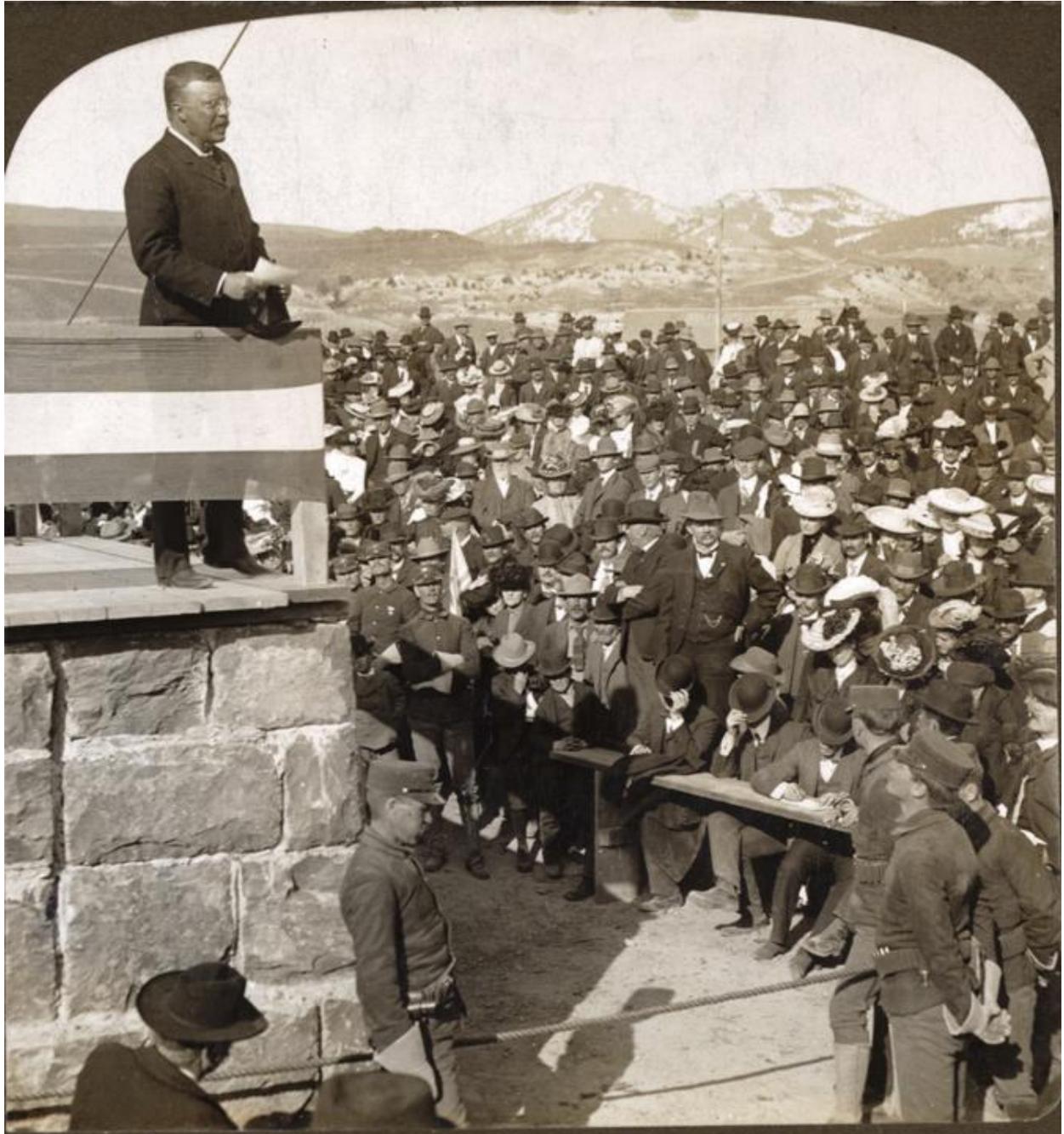
the wilderness and of the hunter in the wilderness. This pleasure, moreover, can under such conditions be kept for all who have the love of adventure and the hardihood to take advantage of it, with small regard for what their fortune may be. I can not too often repeat that the essential feature in the present management of the Yellowstone Park, as in all similar places, is its essential democracy it is the preservation of the scenery, of the forests, of the wilderness life and the wilderness game for the people as a whole, instead of leaving the enjoyment thereof to be confined to the very rich who can control private reserves. I have been literally astounded at the enormous quantities of elk and at the number of deer, antelope and mountain sheep which I have seen on their wintering grounds; and the deer and sheep in particular are quite as tame as range stock.

A few buffalo are being preserved. I wish very much that the government could somewhere provide for an experimental breeding station of cross-breeds between buffalo and the common cattle. If these cross-breeds could be successfully perpetuated we should have animals which would produce a robe quite as good as the old buffalo robe with which twenty years ago every one was familiar, and animals moreover which would be so hardy that I think they would have a distinct commercial importance. They would, for instance, be admirably suited for Alaska, a territory which I look to see develop astoundingly within the next decade or two, not only because of its furs and fisheries, but because of its agricultural and pastoral possibilities.





"veritable wonderland"—President Roosevelt speaking of Yellowstone Park, Gardiner, Montana. Copyright 1908 by Underwood & Underwood.



President Roosevelt's Western Tour—A Speech at the entrance to Yellowstone Nat. Park. COPYRIGHT 1903 BY B. Y. YOUNG.