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Stephen t. mather

Stephen Tyng Mather, the great-grandson of Deacon Joseph Mather who built the Mather Homestead in 1778, was born on July 4, 1867 in Berkeley, California. He was named after the prominent New York Episcopal Minister, Stephen Tyng, who married his parents, Joseph W. Mather and Bertha Walker Mather, three years earlier in New York. Another son, Josie, was born in 1869. He passed at the age of 19 from spinal meningitis. Mather was educated at Boys' High School (now Lowell High School) in San Francisco, and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1887. While Mather grew up in California, he spent summers at the Mather Homestead in Darien, CT and considered it his "true home." He loved the outdoors and spent much time both in California and Connecticut exploring. Mather was attracted to nature in part because he found it helpful in moderating the debilitating bouts of chronic depression from which he privately suffered, while presenting to the world as ever: charming, friendly and garrulous. Mather worked as a journalist for the New York Sun for five years following his graduation from Berkeley in 1887. By family lore, he met Jane Thacker Floy of Elizabeth, New Jersey whose father did not think journalism was a suitable career for his daughter. Mather left journalism in 1893 and joined the Borax Company where his father worked. Jane Thacker Floy was born in Elizabeth, New Jersey on February 7, 1868. She and Stephen Mather were married in October 12, 1893 in New York City. She gave birth to one daughter, Bertha in 1906. Following her husband's death in 1930, she lived with her daughter's family at the Mather Homestead until her death. She passed on August 19, 1944 and is buried in the Mather Cemetery on Stephen Mather Road. After leaving the New York Sun in 1893, Mather joined the Pacific Coast Borax Company, where his father worked, in the New York office. In 1894, he moved with his new wife to Chicago, where he established a distribution center for the company. Mather proved to be a marketing genius and is credited with creating the slogan "20 Mule Team Borax" which propelled Borax to become a household name throughout the country.In 1898, Mather helped his friend, Thomas Thorkildsen, start another borax company. After suffering a severe episode of bipolar disorder in 1903 and having his salary withheld during extended sick leave, Mather resigned from Pacific Coast and joined Thorkildsen full-time in 1904. They named their firm the Thorkildsen-Mather Borax Company. Their company became prosperous, as they were millionaires by 1914. He then retired to pursue his interest - the National Parks. Mather's interest in national parks was influenced by a 1904 trip to Europe he took with his wife, Jane. Climbing the Swiss Alps and seeing how accessible they were to visitors inspired Mather to bring this model to park management in the United States. On his return, he became a dedicated conservationist, a friend and admnirer of the influential John Muir, joined the Sierra Club, and climbed Mount Rainier. Through his activities in the Sierra Club, Mather made numerous allies who supported the creation of the National Park Service. In 1916, the Sierra Club made him an honorary vice-president. Note: vintage photo of the alps from "The Alps 1900. A Portrait in Color" published by Taschen. Mather traveled to Yosemite in 1914 and noticed the abysmal conditions of the park which were then managed by the US Army: bumpy, dangerous roads, inadequate lodging, cattle and sheep grazing and destroying pristine meadows, plus logging, hunting, mining and more. Mather wrote a letter to Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane, also from the University of Berkeley, espousing the deplorable conditions in the park. He received a letter back stating, "Dear Steve, If you don't like the way the parks are being run, come on down to Washington and run them yourself." And so he did. Mather went to Washington and became Assistant Secretary of the Interior in January 1915 and tirelessly made the case for the National Park Service. In his first 12 months as special assistant for national park concerns to the Secretary of the Interior, Mather worked the corridors of Washington, D.C., traveled 30,000 miles and hosted one of the most spectacular lobbying sessions in American history. Nineteen politicians, businessmen, and scientists, along with the vice-president of the Southern Pacific Railroad, the editor of National Geographic, the president of the American Museum of Natural History and a congressman, who later became the Speaker of the House, accepted Mather's invitation for a two-week camping trip in July of 1915 through the Sierra Nevada mountains. Known as the Mather Mountain Party, the purpose of the trip was to lobby this captive audience to support the creation of the National Park Service. Mather paid for the entire trip, hiring touring cars, horses, mules, and providing everyone with the latest in camping comfort—an air mattress. He hired a cook to prepare gourmet meals served on white linen tablecloths with fine china in remote areas of the park. In addition to having a memorable experience, the members of the Mountain Party saw the poor conditions of the campsites, the barely passable roads, the vulnerability of the ancient Sequoia groves to logging interests, and how grazing cattle were decimating meadows. At the end of the trip, Mather said to the group: "I think the time has come ... that I should confess why I wanted you to come along with me on this adventure—not only for your interesting company, but to hope you'd see the significance of these mountains in the whole picture of what we are trying to do. Hopefully you will take this message and spread it throughout the land in your own avenue and style." In the end, Mather's charisma coupled with the amazing scenery of the Sierra Nevada mountains created a memorable trip that won everyone over. "If he was out to make a convert," one participant said of Mather, "the subject never knew what hit him." Back in Washington, D. C., the men from the Mather Mountain Party lobbied successfully to create the National Park Service.On August 25, 1916, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Organic Act, thereby creating the National Park Service. Mather was appointed its first director in May of 1917. During his tenure, and working closely with his assistant Horace Albright, Mather created a professional and highly respected organization to administer the parks, including a cadre of Park Rangers to oversee the parks and educate visitors. He expanded the parks, nearly doubling the land in the system to include some of the nation's best-known natural wonders and landscapes such as Grand Canyon, Zion, Hawaii Volcanoes, Denali, Acadia, Hot Springs, and Shenandoah. Mather hired, with his own funds, Robert Sterling Yald, a former co-worker at The New York Sun and friend, to publicize the parks and promote American tourism. He initiated the development of lodges and campsites, as well as railroad access and new roadways to make the park lands accessible. He even contributed generously to the parks from his personal fortune. Mather was firm in preventing private development in the parks that would mar their naural beauty. He built public appreciation for preserving and publicized the nation's natural beauty and history. MORE about Stephen Mather and the history of the National Parks.In 1906, Mather became the sole owner of the house and 22 acres following the passing of his father, Joseph Wakeman Mather, in 1905. He immediately made changes to the house, giving the house a more Colonial Revival appearance, building a barn, a cottage for a gardener, and in 1909, establishing a sunken garden designed by Walter Burleigh Griffin who went on to design Canberra, Australia's new capital city. In 1927, Mather nearly doubled the size of the house using architect Thomas Harlan Elliott. He added a porch to the side of the house and a two-story addition to the rear included a modern kitchen with bedrooms upstairs, and the portico over the main entrance was renovated. The interior of the house retained its original character and finishes during these renovations except for the old kitchen ("keeping room"), which was converted into a living room.Stephen Mather suffered a heart attack in 1927, ten years after he became director of the NPS. A month later, he was mountain climbing and back at his desk maintaining his frantic work schedule. One year later, he suffered a massive stroke that left him incapacitated, forcing him to retire. He died on January 22, 1930 and is buried in the family cemetery on Stephen Mather Road in Darien. He left behind a huge legacy. Stephen Mather recognized the need for and met the challenge of creating a National Park system. He expanded the park lands and created the first parks in the East (Shenandoah and Acadia). He established professionals to manage the parks - the National Park Rangers who are among the most respected professionals in our country. He prevented industries from destroying park resources for their own gain. Most importantly, he welcomed Americans to the parks and encouraged them to experience the natural wonders of their country. His life is well summarized — on a series of bronze markers which were posthumously cast in his honor and distributed through many parks:"He laid the foundation of the National Park Service, defining and establishing the policies under which its areas shall be developed and conserved, unimpaired for future generations. There will never come an end to the good he has done. . . . " Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. 6.4KStephen Mather went to the wilderness to heal the brain sickness that plagued him throughout his life. Ironically, his work to save America's wilderness sent him into a depression that took him two years to pull out of.Stephen MatherMather had a head full of ideas and enormous energy. He was brilliant, athletic, charming, generous and impulsive. From time to time he suffered what people then called a nervous breakdown, now called bipolar disorder. He broke down soon after the National Park Service came into existence in 1916. President Woodrow Wilson then appointed him director of the National Park Service.But Mather's loyal 27-year-old assistant, Horace Albright, secretly did the job for him for two years. That Mather served as the first National Park Service director in anything but name only is a fiction the park service keeps up to this day.Horace AlbrightStephen MatherMather was born July 4, 1867, in San Francisco, but considered Connecticut home. He was part of an old, well-known New England family: the Mathers. A distant relative of Increase and Cotton Mather (as well as John Cotton), he eventually inherited a farmhouse in Darien that his great-grandfather, Deacon Joseph Moses Mather, built in 1778. His family spent summers there.Stephen Tyng Mather home in DarienMather graduated from the University of California-Berkeley in 1887. He then worked for the New York Sun for five years, but moved to Chicago as sales manager for the Pacific Coast Borax Company. There he came up with the "20 Mule Team Borax" brand, still in use.In 1903, Stephen Mather collapsed from overwork and stress. He took a vacation in the South for five weeks, which seemed to help. But every time he returned to work, his malaise and depression returned. He spent four months at a Wisconsin sanitarium, then a few more months at the seashore. It didn't work. Finally his doctor told him to give up all work, and he took an eight-month trip to Europe. When he returned to his old job, he discovered the company had fired him. He went off and started his own borax company with a partner in Chicago. They made a huge success of it and made a million dollars – a lot of money back then. Occasionally he showed signs of his old trouble, but he cured himself by going to the western wilderness – in 1906, 1912 and 1914.The Dynamic DuoDuring that long trip to Europe, Stephen Mather renewed his interest in nature and the outdoors. He returned to the U.S. a dedicated conservationist. Mather joined the Sierra Club, met John Muir, climbed Mount Rainier. He made enough money in the borax business to retire in 1914 and pursue his interest in conservation.At the summit of Mount Rainier, 1888. Left to right: D.W. Bass, P. B. Van Trump, John Muir, N.O. Booth, Edward Sturgis Ingraham.An apocryphal story has Stephen Mather writing a letter to Interior Secretary Franklin Lane. In it he complained about the exploitation of the national parks and the theft of parkland. Lane replied, "Dear Steve, If you don't like the way the parks are being run, come on down to Washington and run them yourself."It never happened. Rather, a mutual friend of Lane and Mather suggested they meet in Chicago. They did, and Lane offered Mather the job of assistant secretary of the Interior.Mather doubted he could do it. "This is all so very new to me. I have never been under restrictions or a lot of regulations. I'm just not temperamentally fitted for this type of work in Washington. I'll probably get in trouble before the job is an hour old." Lane said he'd give him Horace Albright — "a young fellow who knows the ropes and who'll handle the legal and other troubles you'll run into. He's the man to keep you out of trouble, someone who knows the department, can handle the routine." They're So DifferentMather said he'd take the job if Albright served as his assistant. Albright, also a UC Berkeley graduate, felt an instant affinity for Mather and agreed. Mather sweetened the deal by supplementing Albright's salary out of his own pocket.As an old man, Albright recalled how he and Mather melded into an indivisible unit. They complemented each other beautifully. As Albright later wrote, "These fellas remind me of each other — they're so different." Albright grew up poor in California and worked his way through college. He had a part-time job with economist Adolph Miller, who then accepted a position in Washington as assistant secretary of the Interior Department. Miller brought Albright with him. He soon moved on as one of the first governors of the Federal Reserve, but Albright stayed at Interior.'I'll Buy It Myself'Interior Secretary Franklin Lane wanted Stephen Mather to work on establishing an independent park service bureau. At the time, the national parks were a loose collection of properties run by the army or political hacks.The parks suffered from neglect within the government, with no advocate within the administration, no budget, no rangers. The hotels, restaurants and sanitary facilities in the parks were abysmal, and the parks themselves were bedraggled and inaccessible to most people.Yosemite National ParkMather passionately wanted to create a National Park Service despite his reluctance to take a government job. Full of plans and ideas, he spent his own fortune to make his dream come true. He didn't take a salary, and he hired a full-time publicist out of his own pocket. He spent thousands of his own dollars to buy the Tioga Road, which made Yosemite more accessible to the public. Once, in Glacier National Park, Mather got angry when he discovered the park headquarters were located three miles down a nearly impassable road from the railroad station.The supervisor said all the land between the station and headquarters was owned privately. Mather said, "Well, if that's the only problem, I'll buy it myself." Glacier National ParkStephen Mather Saves the SequoiasMather worked zealously to promote and preserve his parks. In 1915, the government created Sequoia National Park. Mather learned a large portion of the Giant Forest, containing the best of the giant sequoias, remained in private hands. The owners planned to build a summer resort.Mather then held a two-week mountain party to win influential congressmen, wealthy businessmen and publishers.Mr. Mather invited a number of wealthy Easterners to camp with him in the grove, explained the situation, and wasThey rode mules and camped with comfort in the High Sierras. The mountain party promised enough money to buy the lands for the government.Gilbert Grosvenor, president of the National Geographic Society, came along. For the next century National Geographic magazine staunchly promoted the national parks.NPS Employees, Directors The Mather Mountain Party of 1915 Mather seated at head of table (left), Albright in front of cook (Tyng Sing). Image was redistributed by National Geographic.Camping in ComfortMather brought along an accomplished cook, Tyng Sing. He believed the parks would only attract tourists if they offered good food and comfortable accommodations, and Tyng Sing drove home the point. The mountain party, for example, enjoyed a white-tablecloth banquet under the redwoods in the Giant Forest.At the end of the party, Mather spoke to the group:To each of you, to all of you, remember that God has given us these beautiful lands. Try to save them for, and share them with, future generations. Go out and spread the gospel!Sunset at Mather Point, Grand CanyonMather believed in the power of publicity to realize his dream. He wanted to create a grassroots system of support for the parks, and Congress would respond to public pressure to create and fund the National Park Service.His publicist, Robert Yard, poured out articles and pamphlets about the parks' breathtaking scenery. He extolled the beautiful alpine lakes of Glacier; the unbelievable blue of Crater Lake; Yellowstone's wonderland of geysers, mountains and rivers on top of a supervolcano. The Grand Canyon wasn't a national park yet, but Yard promoted it as well.Geyser at Yellowstone National ParkBreakdownOn Aug. 25, 1916, President Wilson signed the bill creating the national park service into law. Shortly afterward, Albright noticed Stephen Mather began to act erratically. His moods suddenly changed. In one meeting, he poured forth wildly extravagant ideas. He ordered Albright to drop everything in Washington and meet him in Chicago. When Albright arrived, Mather asked him, "What are you doing in Chicago?" Then, during a national conference on the park service that lasted several days, Mather went missing times. He was supposed to be running the conference. Finally, a few days afterward, Mather had dinner with friends at the Cosmos Club in Washington. He began to talk about his failures, threatened to leave the park service and then grew silent. His friends continued to talk, trying to cheer him up. But suddenly he put his head down on the table and began crying.The Cosmos Club todayAlbright got a call at 10:00 p.m. A friend of Mather's, E.O. McCormick, was at the Cosmos Club, where Mather stayed while in Washington, D.C.Albright wasn't prepared for what he saw at the club.His friends had taken Mather into a small reception room and closed the door against curious onlookers. Though loosely held by McCormick, he was rocking back and forth, alternately crying, moaning, and hoarsely trying to get something said. I couldn't understand a thing. He was incoherent. His movements became more agitated while his voice rose. I feared he might hurt himself. As I was younger and stronger, I replace McCormick, holding him with both arms. Several us talked quietly to him, trying to soothe his wild mood, but to no avail. Suddenly he broke out of my hold, rushed for the door, and with an anguished cry, proclaimed he couldn't live any longer feeling as he did.They grabbed hold of him again, hustled him into a room and called for a doctor, who administered a sedative. Albright then called Jane Mather, his wife, who told him to take him to Dr. T.H. Weisenberg in Philadelphia.The 1915 dedication of Rocky Mountain National Park. (l to r): Stephen Mather, Robert Yard, acting superintendent Trowbridge, NPS photographer Herford T. Cowling and Horace M. Albright.RecoveryInterior Secretary Lane told Albright to keep Mather's illness quiet. He appointed Albright as acting director of the National Park Service, a placeholder until Mather could return. If he returned in 1917, treatment for mental illness involved isolation from the outside world, exercise, a healthy diet and exercise. No excitement, no problems. 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All the while, Albright worked to keep commercial interests out of the parks.United States - California - Sequoia National ParkReappearanceMather suddenly reappeared in Washington in November 1917, nearly a year after his breakdown. He announced he'd resume his old duties as National Parks director. His staff went along with him — sort of. They screened his calls, his mail, his visitors.The doctor told Albright to let him play at being director. "Keep all the problems away from him while you do all the work," the doctor ordered.Fortunately, Mather got interested in saving the redwoods and stayed out west. Then in 1918 Mather inspected Mount Rainier. He spent the summer of 1918 in California, far away from the stress of Washington.Zion Canyon at sunset in Zion National Park as seen from Angels Landing looking south.FrenzyMather came back to Washington in January 1918. Albright had then taken a vacation to visit family in California when he got a telegram from the Interior Secretary. 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