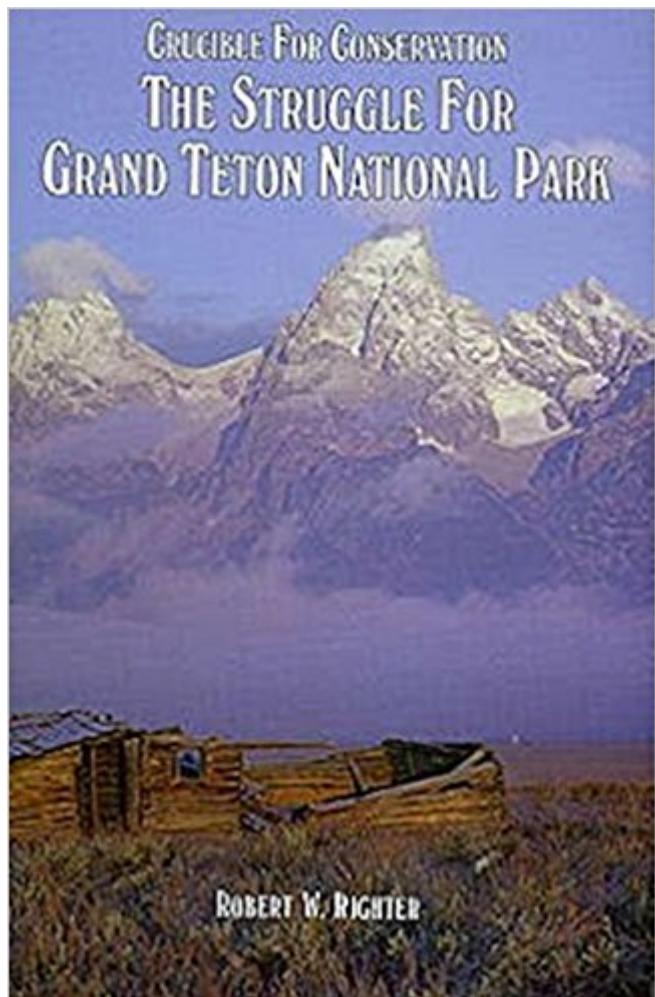


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Crucible For Conservation



Synopsis

With its unmatchable mountains and broad vistas, it is difficult today to imagine that the land of the Tetons could be anything but a national park. But for over fifty years, the question of national park status remained unsettled as a myriad of public and private interests fought for control over Jackson Hole and the Tetons. Many divergent views of conservation and land use had their hearing in Jackson Hole during the long struggle to establish the Park. Rugged individualists, cattlemen, Easterners, "New Dealers," "state's righters," state of Wyoming officials, Forest Service personnel, and Park Service leaders all wanted hegemony over Jackson Hole and the Tetons. The way in which they cajoled, fought, sued each other and ultimately resolved the issue is a classic case in the difficulties of park-making. Grand Teton National Park is thus no product of chance, but rather the design of men and women working in a noble cause. What they achieved was, Righter suggests, "perhaps the most notable conservation victory of the twentieth century."

Book Information

Paperback: 192 pages

Publisher: Grand Teton Association (April 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0931895545

ISBN-13: 978-0931895548

Product Dimensions: 8.5 x 1.2 x 11 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 2 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,030,502 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #11 in Books > Travel > United States > Wyoming > Jackson Hole #879 in Books > Travel > Food, Lodging & Transportation > Parks & Campgrounds #1501 in Books > Travel > United States > West > Mountain

Customer Reviews

In this book, Robert Righter provides a readable history of Grand Teton National Park. His story emphasizes the creation of the park in several stages, originally a national monument covering just the mountains and then eventually a national park that includes a significant part of Jackson Hole. The sagebrush flats of the Hole are unremarkable in themselves, but protecting them gives visitors a "natural" vantage point from which to view the mountains free of intensive vacation home development. That's a strange reason for making something a national park, if you think about it,

and Righter presents both sides of that argument fairly. The crux of the history comes with the entry of John D. Rockefeller Jr., who eventually bought up much of the flats in secret. Working with Interior Secretary Harold Ickes and others in the Roosevelt administration, Rockefeller presented the Congress with a fait accompli that brought the park into existence within its current boundaries. Righter doesn't spend as much time on the management of the park in the last half-century as he does on its creation. Nor does he put it into the social context of the area or the national political context. But Righter does a good job with the book as a self-standing history of the park that emphasizes the battle for its establishment.

If it wasn't for John D. Rockefeller, Jr., President F. D. Roosevelt and a handful of others' vision, determination and patience, the extended boundaries of today's Grand Teton National Park would possibly be non-existent. The original idea for an extension of Yellowstone Park was envisioned by General Philip Sheridan in 1882 to no avail. Later, in the 1890's it was proposed to have a separate park bordering the Tetons to preserve the beauty of this spectacular landscape. With this said, it wasn't until 1929 that Grand Teton National Park was finally established. The issue now was that the new Park existed as just a sliver of land skirting the mountains. Enter John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Rockefeller bought a good portion of the Jackson Hole valley for boundary extensions and preservation of scenery for future generations. Battle after battle between the Forest Service, grazing rights, "dude" ranches, politicians, public opinions, other Federal Government branches, etc. dragged on for a few more decades. Ultimately, in 1950 boundary extensions were approved and Grand Teton National Park was expanded to its current status. This was a most admirable undertaking on Rockefeller's behalf for conservation. Instead of the pristine view that we all now enjoy, it could have been power lines, lumber mills, hundreds of summer homes, etc. etc.

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