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'At the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer': The Schwatka-Haynes Winter Expedition in Yellowstone, 1887

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Citation Details

Lang, W. L. (1983). "At the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer": The Schwatka-Haynes Winter Expedition in Yellowstone, 1887. Vol. 33, No. 1 (Winter, 1983), pp. 14-29.

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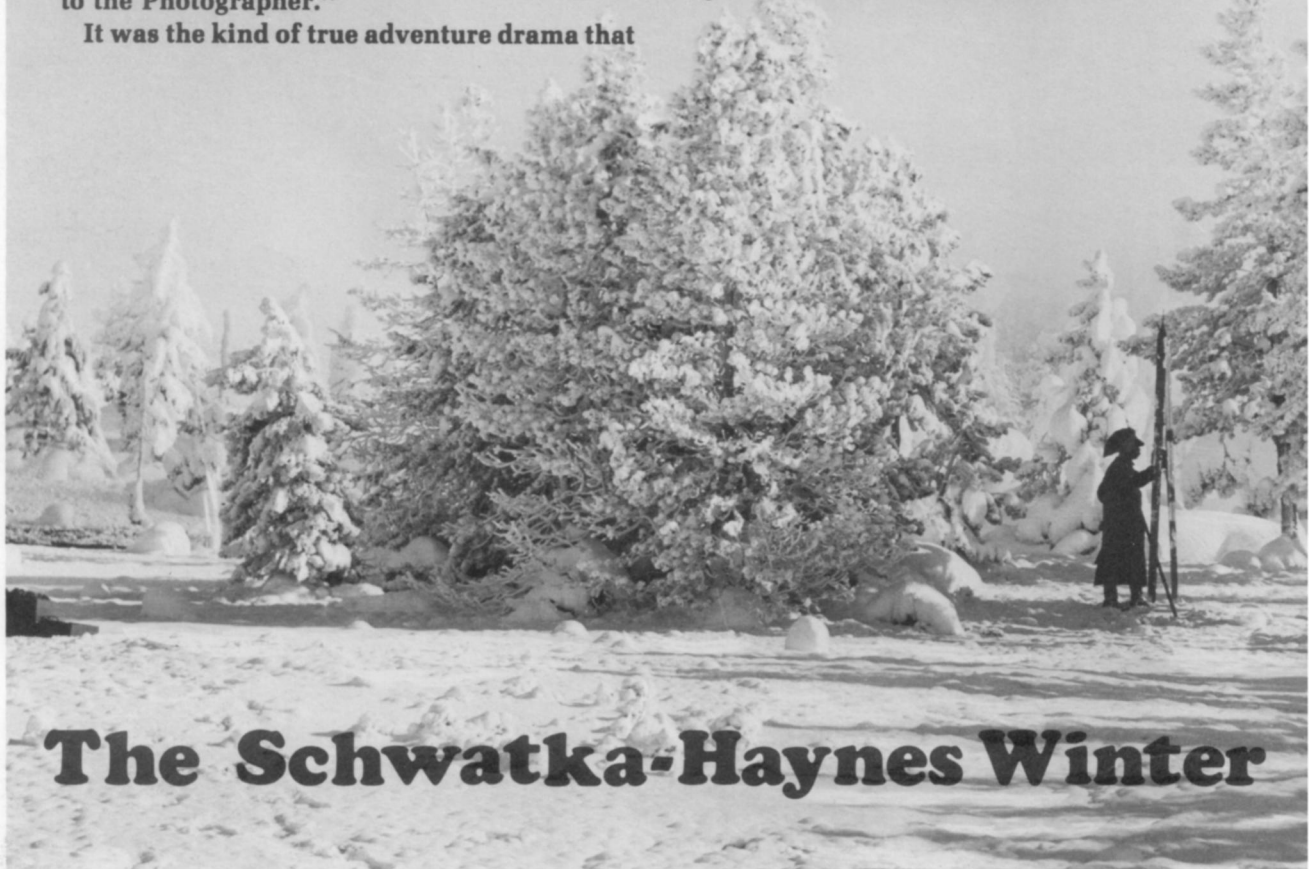
"At the Greatest Personal Peril"

by William L. Lang

Step by plodding step the four weary skiers felt their way around the mountain, peering into the white fastness and hoping to strike a familiar landmark before their energy and time faded. It was January 1887, in the middle of the worst winter on record in the northern Rockies, and the four disoriented men were lost in a blizzard on the slopes of Mt. Washburn in the howling sub-zero chill of Yellowstone National Park. One guide, two sturdy outdoorsmen and a photographer from Fargo, Dakota Territory, the last of a much larger force that had begun a mid-winter circuit of the Park some twenty days earlier, had left that morning, a day's ski from shelter. Their story of near disaster and eventual success justified the photographer's claim to have acquired views "at the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer."

It was the kind of true adventure drama that

needed no embellishment but inevitably suggested it. It was the kind of story that ideally suited the histrionics of popular lecturers like John L. Stoddard. And it was the kind of event that becomes legend practically before it has concluded. Listeners, no doubt, involuntarily gripped their chair arms as Stoddard pulled them along with the frozen and threatened quartet. "The cold and wind seemed unendurable, even for an hour," Stoddard told them in icy tones, "but they endured them for three days. A sharp sleet cut their faces like a rain of needles, and made it perilous to look ahead. Almost dead from sheer exhaustion, they were unable to lie down for fear of freezing; chilled to the bone, they could make no fire; and, although fainting, they had not a mouthful for seventy-two hours. What a terrific chapter for any man to add to the mysterious volume we call life!"¹



The Schwatka-Haynes Winter

to the Photographer”

Stoddard exaggerated the perils, although they were real enough, but so did everyone else who told and retold the story of photographer F. Jay Haynes and his companions' narrow escape from an icy death. And in the tellings, comparisons between Haynes and the great Lt. Frederick Schwatka, famous Arctic explorer, invariably spiced the conversations. It was Schwatka who initially led the Yellowstone trek and it was Schwatka who presumably knew the methods of exploring frozen terrain, but the veteran explorer's health gave out quickly and forced him to stop, while Haynes skied on in pursuit of the spectacular winter views that had originally lured him on the mission. In some versions the personalities of Schwatka and Haynes nearly overshadow the death-cheating drama itself. The image of the plucky Dakota photographer outdistancing the conqueror of the

Arctic wastes appealed too much, especially when westerners talked about a self-important easterner, like Schwatka, who underestimated the rigors of the frontier.

With or without the element of personal competition, the story is as terrific as Stoddard said it was. But how accurately has it been told? What actually happened out there in the merciless sub-zero cold of Yellowstone's worst winter? What happened to Schwatka and his party and what prompted a man who had skied only a few times to slog his way for nearly 200 miles when he knew danger lurked? And why did any of the expedition members eagerly start off on such a journey in the first place?



Expedition in Yellowstone, 1887

THE FIRST PRINCIPAL in the story of the Yellowstone winter expedition in 1887 brought with him a considerable reputation as an explorer and adventurer. In that era of highly publicized expeditions to remote areas of the globe, anyone interested in the Arctic regions knew of Lt. Frederick Schwatka of the U.S. Army. The leader of the last great expedition seeking to learn the fate of Sir John Franklin, who had disappeared in the Arctic in 1847-1848, Schwatka vaulted to fame as readers of James Bennett's *New York Herald* followed his progress north from Hudson Bay across the frozen wastes in 1878-1880. Reports in 1878 of new leads in the three-decades-old search for Franklin's ship and records had fired Schwatka's enthusiasm for exploration and high adventure. After much persistent discussion, Schwatka had convinced Judge Charles Daly of the American Geographical Society that his expedition warranted the Society's support, as small as that support promised to be. Daly finally agreed and Bennett added interest by contracting with expedition member William H. Gilder as correspondent for the *Herald*.

Herald readers anxiously absorbed each installment of Gilder's expedition story, much as they had nearly a decade earlier when Bennett sent Henry M. Stanley to Africa in search of Dr. David Livingstone. "Schwatka's Search" became a colloquialism of the day for anyone's indefatigable pursuit of a goal; such was Schwatka's instant fame. A popular hero in the United States, he received unsolicited honorary memberships from explorers' clubs the world over. It was not his search for the Franklin party's remains, however, that made him famous. In Gilder's articles and in his later book, *Schwatka's Search*, what impressed all and triggered the popular imagination was the lieutenant's courage and endurance in the face of impressive obstacles—his adventure on the ice.

Schwatka's force, consisting of four explorers and several Eskimo guides, and lightly outfitted with necessary gear, a pack of dogs and sledges, travelled just a few days short of one year over the Arctic ice. They journeyed over 2,000 miles on a northward cir-



Courtesy of Dr. Adam Lin, Portland, Oregon

Frederick Schwatka, ca. 1881

cuit from the northern reaches of Hudson Bay in conditions that few expeditions had endured. All previous polar expeditions had avoided similar overland routes, preferring to travel by water during the best season for such travel. Even Schwatka's Eskimo guides nearly refused to accompany the group into untraversed territory.

Gale-force winds and mercury thermometer readings of -65° and -70° slowed the group to a near crawl in January and February 1880 on the return leg of their trek. After all but one Eskimo had deserted them and they had lost all of their forty-two dogs to the elements, the rugged party followed Schwatka's lead in pulling the sledges and living off the iced landscape. They fed themselves by hunting musk-ox and caribou and learning to eat decaying fish and walrus. Schwatka, in one of the longest sledge journeys on record, set new standards for Arctic exploration, proving that one could penetrate the northern polar region in winter if Eskimo-style travel and living were adopted.²

This epic Arctic journey began Schwatka's remarkable fourteen-year career of daring adventures. Born in Galena, Illinois, in 1849, Schwatka grew up in

1. John L. Stoddard, *Stoddard's Lectures Vol. X* (Chicago: Belford, Middlebrook and Co., 1898), pp. 291-292. For previously published discussions of Haynes' role in the expedition, see Freeman Tilden, *Following the Frontier with F. J. Haynes, Pioneer Photographer of the Old West* (Knopf, 1964), pp. 339-356; Aubrey L. Haines, *The Yellowstone Story* (Boulder: Colorado Associated University Press, 2 vols., 1977), II, pp. 8-11; Jack Ellis Haynes, "The First Winter Trip Through Yellowstone National Park," *Annals of Wyoming* 14 (April 1942), pp. 89-97.

2. Schwatka's findings did not contribute significantly to knowledge of Franklin's fate, but he did confirm the earlier discoveries of Sir Leopold McClintock and he found the identifiable remains of Lt. John Irving of the Terror, one of Franklin's two vessels. William H. Gilder, *Schwatka's Search: Sledging in the Arctic in Quest of the Franklin Records* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1881), pp. vii-xii; Frederick Schwatka, "A Musk-Ox Hunt," *The Century Magazine* 26 (September 1883), pp. 671-678; Noel Wright, *Quest For Franklin* (London: Heineman, 1959), p. 131; L. P. Kirwan, *A History of Polar Exploration* (NY: W. W. Norton, 1959), pp. 173-174, 257, 299; L. H. Neatby, *Conquest of the Last Frontier* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1966), pp. 155-165.

Salem, Oregon, where his family had relocated the following year. His youth in Salem included apprenticeships in the print shops of two local newspapers before he received an appointment to West Point in 1867. He graduated in 1871 and took his commission with the 3rd Cavalry, which brought Schwatka to the plains and eventually into combat against the Sioux in 1876.

In those postwar times, West Point graduates could expect assignment on the western frontier or in the Reconstruction South, and it is likely that Schwatka welcomed the chance to serve west of the Mississippi. He loved the adventure of life on the plains, especially the thrill of the hunt and the enjoyment of scouting and camping in open country.³ He took a restless energy with him to a succession of posts in Kansas and Nebraska in the early 1870s. Perhaps because military life offered too few challenges or because he had to satisfy a larger ambition, Lt. Schwatka studied law in his free hours and gained admittance to the Nebraska bar in 1875. One profession evidently was not enough, for the following year he took leave from his military assignment to study medicine in New York City, earning a medical degree in surgery from Bellevue Hospital Medical College. In the spring of 1876 he rejoined his regiment in time to participate in the Tongue River, Rosebud and Slim Buttes battles in the Sioux War. After his Arctic adventure in 1878-1880, the lieutenant again returned west, this time as aide-de-camp to General Nelson A. Miles at Fort Vancouver, Washington Territory. In 1882 he married Ada J. Brackett and in the following year he was off on another adventure, again obtaining military leave for his explorations.⁴

The north country lured Schwatka again and again. Although he felt a kinship to the plains and he enthusiastically investigated native cultures in the American Southwest and northern Mexico in the 1880s,⁵ the land of snow, ice and mountains mercilessly pulled at him. And he loved to tempt the odds. Perhaps that, more than anything, constituted the attraction. He challenged himself again in 1883 when he led a party of seven on the first full exploration of the 2,000-mile-long Yukon River, from the Kotusk Range to Norton Sound on the Bering Sea.

3. Frederick Schwatka, "An Elk-Hunt on the Plains," *The Century Magazine* 35 (January 1888), pp. 447-456. Schwatka wrote several articles for *The Century* in the 1880s, many of them illustrated with engravings rendered from the lieutenant's fine and detailed field sketches.

4. Frank E. Hodgkin and J. J. Galvin, *Pen Pictures of Representative Men of Oregon* (Portland: Farmer and Dairyman Publishing House, 1882), pp. 65-66.

5. See, for example, Frederick Schwatka, "Among the Apaches," *The Century Magazine* 34 (May 1887), pp. 41-52.

6. Frederick Schwatka, "The Great River of Alaska," *The Century Magazine* 30 (September 1885), p. 738, and Pt. II (October 1885), pp. 819-829.

7. Walter A. Wood, "United States Arctic Exploration Through 1939," in *United States Polar Exploration*, edited by Herman R. Friis and Shelby G. Bale, Jr. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1970), pp. 14-15.

"When I humbly suggested a raft as my future conveyance, and hoped to make the whole river in a summer's dash," Schwatka later wrote, "I was hooted at and ridiculed by natives and white men alike."⁶ With that chip on his shoulder, he scoffed at the timid, just as he had done in the Arctic in 1879, and successfully brought his party down the river to the sea. His June-to-August expedition, which experts have called brilliant, placed his explorers in life-threatening jeopardy time and again as they negotiated their raft through narrow canyons and churning rapids. His fame increased.⁷

By now, exploration had become Schwatka's passion. In 1885 he turned his back on military life, resigned his commission, and devoted his energies to planning future expeditions and writing.⁸ The Yukon adventure had whetted his appetite for Alaska and, with support from the *New York Times*, Schwatka eagerly agreed to lead an expedition to Mt. St. Elias in the Alaskan coast range in July and August 1886. The *Times* expedition hoped to ascend the 15,350-foot peak and conduct the first thorough geographical exploration of the mountainous region. After a strenuous approach to the remote mountain, Schwatka and two experienced alpinists struggled up the massive Tyndall Glacier, reaching the 7,300-foot level before giving up the climb.⁹ Resourceful as he was, Schwatka could not find a safe path through the glacial field of yawning crevasses on Tyndall Glacier. He returned from the St. Elias expedition in late August 1886 with exploration still on his mind, and with the same pull back to ice, snow and mountains. In the fall of 1886 he began to plan the first mid-winter circuit of Yellowstone National Park.

F. JAY HAYNES, the second principal figure in the Yellowstone winter drama in 1887, did not exhibit Schwatka's urges to explore remote regions or tempt fate on raging rivers, but adventure played a significant role in his life too. Seldom did he pass over an opportunity to capture a new or spectacular view with his camera, particularly in Yellowstone National Park. From canyon bottoms to mountain peaks, he took his cameras to points where he could capture unique and artistic views. On the Yellowstone expedition he would prove himself a resourceful outdoorsman and above all a courageous leader. And this he had in common

8. In addition to his *Century* articles, Schwatka wrote of his Yukon trip in *Along Alaska's Great River* (NY: Cassell Publishing Co., 1885) and of his Arctic adventure in *Nimrod of the North* (NY: Cassell Publishing Co., 1885).

9. Frederick Schwatka, "The Expedition of 'The New York Times' (1886)," *The Century Magazine* 41 (April 1891), pp. 865-872. See also Schwatka, *Children of the Cold* (NY: Cassell Publishing Co., 1888) and *Summer in Alaska* (St. Louis: J. M. Henry, 1891).

with Schwatka; Haynes expressed leadership and sought recognition.

Haynes was born in Saline, Michigan, in 1853, where he spent his youth learning his father's mercantile business, selling hardware and other items in Saline and in the Michigan countryside. By age twenty-one, Haynes had enough experience to gain other employment easily when hard times forced his father to relocate and abandon his business. Haynes found a job with an itinerant salesman of chromolithographs in Ann Arbor, and then after poor results on his own selling various items, he became a photographer's apprentice in Wisconsin in 1874. The following year he gained more experience working for another photographer before taking the double risk of striking out on his own and moving to Moorhead, Minnesota, on the edge of the frontier.¹⁰

He opened his first studio in Moorhead in 1876 and went about the work of being a photographer in a small western community. Success came quickly. His sales background stood him well as he built a reputation on fine studio portraits and saleable stereoscopic views of the Minnesota and Dakota countrysides. Landscapes and exterior views captivated Haynes and challenged his improving talents. His results caught the eye of Northern Pacific Railroad officials who desired promotional views of their new transcontinental line, just then resuming construction in Dakota Territory. His first NP commission in 1876 began a life-long professional and business association that would bring him considerable recognition and financial reward. Two years later he married, and moved his studio to nearby Fargo, Dakota Territory. By 1879, Haynes worked regularly for the NP, on a commission basis, taking pictures of railroad construction and trackside subjects west of Bismarck and east of Tacoma, Washington Territory.

The NP connection brought Haynes to Yellowstone National Park in 1881, his first visit to "Wonderland." Charles S. Fee, General Passenger Agent in St. Paul for the NP, and Haynes' friend and promoter, arranged the trip for Haynes to photograph what would become the railroad's principal western tourist attraction. The Park and its spectacular scenery overwhelmed the photographer; the subject would dominate the remainder of his professional life. In 1884, one year after the Northern Pacific and the Yellowstone Park Improvement Company had both designated him their "Official Photog-

rapher," he secured the first commercial concession in the Park and soon built a studio at Mammoth Hot Springs. That began a yearly summer pilgrimage to the Park, where he took up the challenge of photographing its wonders.

Yellowstone's natural splendor lured Haynes to nearly every accessible thermal and geological feature and to many that were anything but accessible. The Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone River, a magnificent 1600-foot gash through thermal-colored volcanic rock, drew Haynes' most concentrated attention, particularly at the breathtaking Lower Falls. Haynes approached his subjects adventurously, lowering his ninety-pound camera to the canyon floor and perching his tripods at the edges of hissing fumaroles and explosive geysers. He became an expert on the Park's features, a committed promoter of Yellowstone, and its most creative photographic interpreter.

By 1886, when Frederick Schwatka began planning his Yellowstone winter trek, the thirty-three-year-old F. Jay Haynes stood as the best and most experienced photographer who might accompany the expedition through "Wonderland." The story of how Haynes came to join Schwatka is the beginning of one of the most interesting episodes in Yellowstone National Park history.

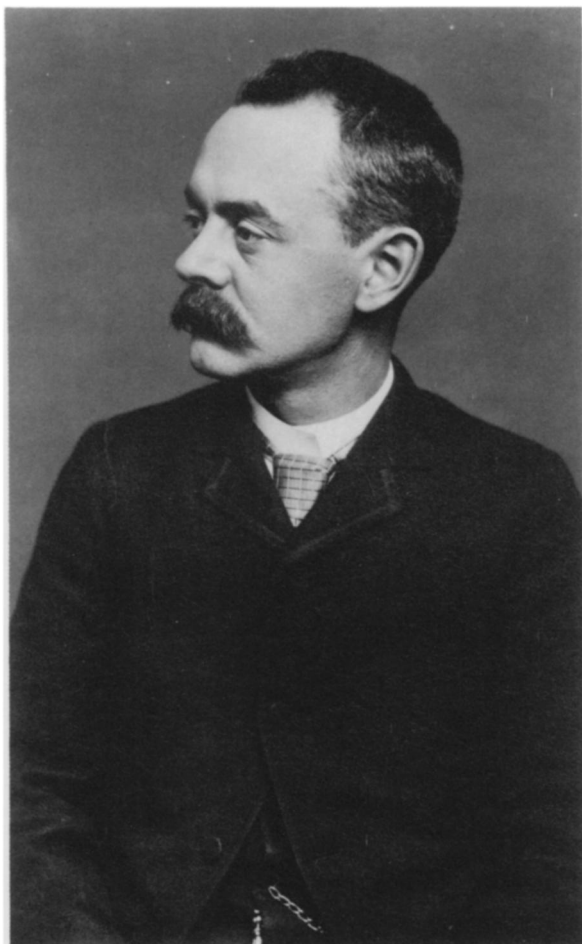
Frederick Schwatka had an eye for publicity. He never failed to publicize his expeditions through newspaper stories and popular journal articles, mostly written by himself. In 1886, *The Century Magazine*, where Schwatka had published several pieces, and Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* newspaper recognized the potential in Schwatka's planned expedition in Yellowstone and agreed to provide partial support. The combination of one of the nation's most celebrated Arctic explorers and the mysteries of Yellowstone's thermal unquities in icy winter assured popularity. Although it is unclear which publication Schwatka approached first, he considered appearance in *The Century* most important.¹¹

Transportation, however, not publicity, proved to be the critical link in Schwatka's preparations. Sometime in September or October 1886 he contacted the NP offices in St. Paul about rail passage for his expedition party to Yellowstone. Passenger Agent Charles S. Fee handled the request and soon offered a suggestion, one that promised to embellish the expedition's results. The inclusion of F. Jay Haynes of Fargo, the Northern Pacific's "Official Photographer," would assure Schwatka of the finest expedi-

10. For biographical information on F. Jay Haynes see Tilden, *Following the Frontier*; Montana Historical Society, *F. Jay Haynes, Photographer* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 1981), pp. 7-17. The most complete treatment of Haynes' life is David A. Walter, "F. Jay Haynes (1853-1921)," typescript, 1981, Archives, Montana Historical Society, Helena.

11. Comments in Schwatka letter to Charles S. Fee (December 1, 1886) as quoted in Charles S. Fee to F. Jay Haynes, December 8, 1886, Haynes Collection, Montana State University Special Collections [MSUSC], Bozeman.

12. Charles S. Fee to F. Jay Haynes, November 13, 1886, Haynes Coll., MSUSC. Fee asked Haynes to supply specified photographs to Prof. William Libbey of Princeton for Libbey's lectures on Schwatka's explorations. Libbey was a member of the Mt. St. Elias expedition. This may have been the way Schwatka learned of Haynes and his expertise. Fee pressed Haynes to comply with the request stating that it would be "a good advertisement for us . . ."



Haynes Foundation Coll., MHS

F. Jay Haynes in 1886

tion photography. And besides, Haynes knew the Park and its features as well as anyone.¹²

Schwatka had already contracted with a sketch artist, Henry Bosse of Rock Island, Illinois, to provide artwork for the *New York World* articles, but the prospect of getting high-quality photographs of the expedition excited him. Haynes' work could greatly improve his *Century* articles. As Schwatka outlined to Fee in early December, *The Century* should receive "a full dozen or twenty" of Haynes' best photographs to illustrate the articles. Schwatka told Fee:

the most important publication to us (and to Mr. Haynes too for that matter as an advertisement for his photographs) will be *The Century* article or articles. And they are as particular as they can be about having exclusive right to the pictures they publish (until published) and would not consent for an instant to the use of anything that had been similarly used by others.¹³

Schwatka's demands included more special treatment. He asked if it would not be possible for him to purchase "three or four sets of his [Haynes'] photo-

graphs" at cost for himself, Joseph Pulitzer and the *World's* editor. Eager to conclude a deal with Schwatka, Fee suggested to Haynes, "I consider the Lieutenant's request [sic] very modest, and I have no doubt you will comply with them."¹⁴

DETAILS OF THE arrangements between Schwatka and the NP are not clear, but it is probable that Schwatka had initiated discussions when he visited St. Paul in the fall of 1886. What is certain is that Charles Fee thought enough of the lieutenant to give him and his plans an upper hand. There is evidence that Fee arranged most of the expedition's itinerary and ran several errands for Schwatka, including an attempt to locate dog teams in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Haynes himself seemed to get less consideration. Although he received a free ride to Yellowstone, the photographer had to chip in \$50 as his share of the general expedition expenses; his photographic supplies and special equipment remained his responsibility.¹⁵

Schwatka, as he had in organizing the Alaskan adventures, put together a highly selective group to tour Yellowstone with him. Along with sketch artist Bosse and photographer Haynes, he enlisted two expert snowshoers, Canadian James G. Ross, vice-president of the Montreal Snow Shoe Club, and Henry C. Wadsworth, president of the Buffalo [N.Y.] Snow Shoe Club. To this group he added seventy-five-year-old Col. Joseph W. Brackett of Rock Island, Illinois (Schwatka's father-in-law), who would serve as quartermaster. Brackett would prove himself to be much tougher on the trip than his age would have suggested. In St. Paul, where Fee had arranged several meetings with NP officials and local snowshoe clubs, the expedition leader signed on two more outdoorsmen, John W. Coho and W.W. West.¹⁶

Perhaps because of his experiences in the Arctic and Alaska, Schwatka approached the Yellowstone trek as a similar but easier undertaking. It is true, of course, that his Yellowstone journey had no exploration component, as had his previous ones. Still, he seemed to have approached the entire mission with a cavalier attitude. He claimed that he first learned of Yellowstone's winter mysteries in 1871 from the famed scout, Jim Bridger. That seems unlikely, since Schwatka appeared very uninformed on the nature of winter conditions in the Rockies when he arrived

13. Schwatka quoted in Charles S. Fee to F. Jay Haynes, December 8, 1886, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

14. Charles S. Fee to F. Jay Haynes, December 8, 1886, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

15. Charles S. Fee to F. Jay Haynes, November 29, 1886, Haynes Coll., MSUSC; *New York World*, December 29, 1886.

16. *New York World*, December 28, 1886; *Minneapolis Tribune*, December 29, 1886.

in St. Paul. Writing of snow conditions, for example, he claimed that very little snow actually fell in Yellowstone, which would make “the way easier to the footmen than snow-shoeing.” If snow did fall in some quantity, he added, “the snow may be so hard that snow-shoes are not needed to walk over its rock-like masses.” Before snowshoers in St. Paul argued him out of it, he had planned to make the circuit of the Park with dogs and sledges, Arctic style, and with additional support from mounted Crow Indians. The St. Paul men who had tramped the Rockies in winter quickly informed Schwatka that snow in the region lay too deep and too light for walking or sledge travel; the prospect that any group of Crow Indians would jog around the Park on horseback through four-foot drifts seemed almost laughable.¹⁷

While Schwatka corrected these initial miscalculations, Col. Brackett and most of the expedition gear sped on NP rails to Livingston, Montana. Once there, Brackett was to hire local guides and men to tend camp on the trip. The lieutenant, with his expeditionary group, proceeded to Fargo and picked up Haynes three days later, on December 30. Believing, as he wrote to Fee, that the expedition’s beginning “should be regulated wholly by the full moon . . . [which] gives as an average the clearest, coldest weather on the plains, the kind we want . . .,” Schwatka planned to leave Mammoth on January 1 or 2.¹⁸ When Schwatka, Haynes and others arrived at Livingston, they found that Brackett had already left on the NP branchline to Cinnabar, the jumping off place for entering the Park. Brackett had caught that week’s train on December 30; the main party could not follow until January 3.¹⁹

Just before leaving Livingston with equipage, Brackett had contracted with four local outdoorsmen to accompany the expedition. Charles A. Stoddard, David Stratton, Charles H. Taylor, and James A. Blakely agreed to serve as equipment handlers and general handymen during the trip. Some twenty days later, Stoddard and Stratton, the two most experienced snowshoers, would get a more thrilling adventure than they had expected on Mt. Washburn, but on the way to Mammoth all they knew was the journey’s general outline and the sizable amount of equipment they would be handling. That equipment would prove to be a major problem early in the expedition.

They planned to travel on roads and trails using Norwegian snowshoes (skis) and Canadian web snowshoes. Their clothing included woolen underwear, Arctic gloves, flannel and woolen shirts,

leather vests, buckskin leggings, canvas pants and overcoats, woolen outer socks and Arctic overboots, and woolen hats. Personal gear included a standard array of hand weapons, matches, knives, hatchets and other utensils spread among the travelers.

Because of his experiences north of Hudson Bay in 1880, Schwatka had instructed Brackett to outfit the expedition with tents, buffalo robes, Arctic sleeping bags and other items for winter camping, even though they had planned to be in one of the Park’s hotels or military stations each night. He especially worried about food—memories of living on decayed fish no doubt plagued him. “The party will, of course, be well supplied with provisions,” Schwatka wrote in late 1886, “and somewhat on the plan of an Arctic sledge journey; plenty of fatty, heat-producing material . . . as my policy on all cold-weather cruises is to have plenty to eat, if it is possible to be procured.”²⁰

Here is another example of Schwatka’s misunderstanding of Yellowstone winter conditions. With that amount of gear, which has been correctly characterized as excessive, the expedition would have to rely on wagon transportation for much of the trip. That meant pulling iron-tired wheels through deep snow; dogs and sledges, as earlier suggested, would have served better than wagons. Further, the originally planned route through the Park had the party proceeding east from Mammoth along the Cooke City wagon road to Yancey’s in Pleasant Valley, and then south to Tower Fall, over Mt. Washburn and down to the Canyon and Falls area. In 1886, only trails linked Yancey’s with points to the south, and the terrain would have made wagon travel arduous even in summer. At Livingston or at Mammoth, Schwatka altered the route to circle the Park in the opposite direction, heading south out of Mammoth to Norris and the Geyser Basins, and then to the Canyon area. It is likely that Lt. Herbert E. Tutherly at Camp Sheridan, the months-old military cantonment at Mammoth Hot Springs, or seasoned guides C.J. Baronett or Ed Wilson advised the new route.²¹

ON THE MORNING of January 5, 1887, with mild weather and over hard snow covered with a light dusting, Schwatka’s expeditionary force left Camp Sheridan on the wagon road that ran between the Hoodoos and Bunsen Peak through Golden Gate. The expedition, including Baronett, who joined them at Mammoth, numbered thirteen, all travelling on ten-foot-long, four-inch-wide,

17. *New York World*, December 29, 1886; February 13, 1887; *Helena Independent*, January 2, 1887.

18. *St. Paul Globe*, January 1, 1887; Schwatka quoted in Charles S. Fee to F. Jay Haynes, December 8, 1886, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

19. *New York World*, February 13, 1887.

20. *New York World*, December 29, 1886; *Avant Courier* (Bozeman), January 6, 1887.

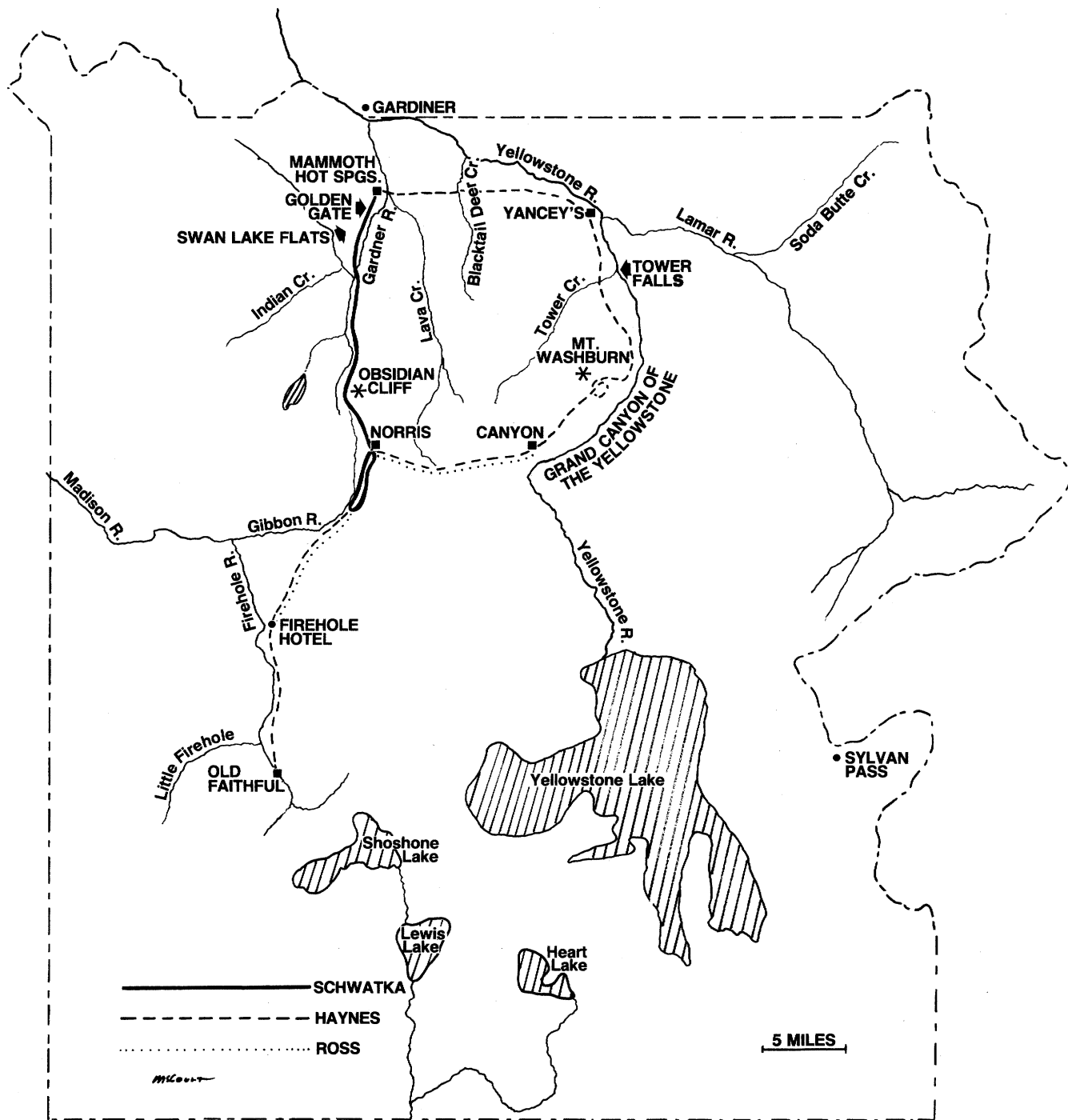
21. *St. Paul Globe*, December 20, 1886; *New-Northwest* (St. Paul), January 7, 1887.

Norwegian skis. Schwatka had prevailed on Lt. Tutherly to carry the gear in an Army wagon drawn by four mules. Wagon transportation held out for just under four miles of the projected 175-mile journey. By the time they had reached Swan Lake Flat, nearly 1,000 feet above Mammoth, the mules struggled as the wheels sank deeper and deeper in the snow. Drifted snow over the road made passage impossible, forcing Schwatka to make his first expedition decision. Always prepared, the Arctic explorer had his

men transfer most of the gear from the wagon to several toboggans. While the soldiers headed back to Mammoth, Schwatka's force continued south toward Norris, dragging the toboggans behind them as they skied.²²

Only two in the party claimed any expertise in the use of skis. Schwatka, Haynes and others practiced a bit in Livingston just before New Year's, but only

22. *Helena Independent*, February 6, 1887.



Ross and Wadsworth could negotiate hills and glide on the flats with any efficiency. The skiers moved forward with a gliding, walk-like motion, thrusting one leg then the other forward vigorously as they pushed off with a long, stout pole. Unlike today's light-weight touring skis with bindings that clamp boot to ski, the skis in 1887 weighed well over ten pounds and had little more than a leather-strap loop to hold the skier's boot on the ski.²³

That first day of skiing and hauling the laden toboggans, especially for those who were unaccustomed to the high altitude, left the party exhausted. They camped near Indian Creek, not more than eight miles from their point of departure. Schwatka realized the folly of men on skis trying to pull sleds. As he wrote later:

...we afterwards found in practice that mounted on our "skies" [sic] our traction engines were of no value, for the rope had to be long and the bob would take any direction it pleased, and it generally pleased to shoot off at wild tangents, or coming down a slight incline, to slide off and nip some unsuspecting explorer in the legs, knock him over and endanger his salvation. The draggers, therefore, had to use the web snowshoe, and even with these our trials and tribulations with the bobs were many and varied.²⁴

Schwatka made his second decision. Leaving nearly all of the gear in a storage barn at Indian Creek, he had the men jam necessary items into packs to lighten the load in the two sleds they pulled to Norris. Another day of difficult going in the deep snow took them little more than a couple of miles closer to their destination. At that point, in Willow Park near Winter Creek and about two miles beyond the bridge across the Gardner River, Schwatka established a hasty camp and erected a Sibley tent to lessen the effects of the now sub-zero chill.

According to later comments by one of the men Brackett had hired, expedition morale slipped as the men realized how little ground they had covered.²⁵ But on the third day, when Schwatka and Brackett evidently had inequitably assigned pack burdens and

sled-pulling chores, some men grumbled and Haynes wondered to himself how this group expected to make the Park circuit in anything resembling timely fashion. Indeed, he grew concerned that they would make it at all, and he became the more apprehensive when the last of the group straggled into the month-old Norris Hotel at 10 p.m. Tired and some the worse for wear, Schwatka's expeditionary force had travelled only twenty-two miles in three days.²⁶

The next day, January 8, dawned clear and cold; the mercury had dropped to at least -30°. Haynes, artist Bosse, and others snowshoed around Norris Geyser Basin, taking in the sights. The extremely cold temperatures, which settled down on the Park with the same force that they did on the plains in that coldest of winters, had transformed the geyser-steamed trees into imaginative ice sculptures—the ideal subject for sketch pad and camera lens. Haynes later described the scene as "beautiful beyond description." Steaming fumaroles in the midst of heavily iced trees gave the Basin the aura of "a great manufacturing center."²⁷ This was why Haynes had been eager to join Schwatka, and the Norris views only whetted his appetite for the spectacular scenes he expected in the Firehole and Upper Geyser Basins. Although Henry Bird Calfee, a Bozeman photographer, had earlier taken winter pictures of Yellowstone's geysers, Haynes knew that his portfolio of photos from this expedition would constitute the first complete mid-winter photographs of Yellowstone's wonders.²⁸ Their use to Charles Fee and the Northern Pacific Railroad was certain and the commercial possibilities were obvious.

On January 9, Schwatka led the snowshoers, all carrying moderately heavy packs, south and west away from the Norris geysers along the Gibbon River, heading toward the Lower Geyser Basin. They expected little difficulty on the eighteen-mile trip to the Firehole Hotel at Nez Perce Creek, save the tricky passage at Gibbon Canyon. But not quite four miles out the energetic and resolute Lt. Schwatka, the man who had beaten Arctic blizzards at -70° and floated the mighty Yukon, collapsed on the trail. Accounts that later appeared in local and regional newspapers described Schwatka's symptoms as hemorrhaging lungs, but the actual nature of his illness remains mysterious. He had tired in the trek from Mammoth, and it is likely that the combination of altitude, and a condition weakened by previous expeditions, had

23. *Forest & Stream*, March 17, 1887. The Norwegian ski ranged in length from 8½ to 11 feet and varied in thickness from 2 to 1 inches at the thickest point. Hickory, ash and red fir were the preferred woods, and they constructed most skis with plenty of camber. To increase glide and protect the ski, they usually flame-scorched the ski bottoms, which had been coated with a mixture of beeswax, linseed oil, and rosin.

24. *New York World*, February 13, 1887.

25. *Forest & Stream*, April 7, 1887. Report of expedition morale was repeated by T. E. Hofer in articles written for *Forest & Stream* as he covered part of the Schwatka route several weeks later and discussed the Schwatka expedition with Park personnel who had talked with expedition members.

26. *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1887, newspaper clipping in Lily Haynes' scrapbook, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

27. *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1887.

28. *Helena Independent*, January 19, 1887.

29. *Livingston Enterprise*, January 22, 1887; *Helena Independent*, February 6, 1887.

30. Telephone communications connected the soldier stations and hotels with Mammoth. The massive snow storm that trapped Haynes at the Upper Geyser Basin pulled down the telephone lines for several weeks.

31. James G. Ross to F. Jay Haynes, March 23, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC; Haines, *Yellowstone Story*, I, pp. 318-319; J. E. Haynes. "First Winter Trip," p. 95; *Helena Independent*, February 6, 1887; undated newspaper clipping, *Detroit Free Press*, in Lily Haynes' scrapbook, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

taken their toll. Whatever the problem and its cause, Schwatka could not continue; the leader had fallen. With Brackett, the guide Baronett who also complained of maladies, and John Coho, he retraced the route back to the Norris Hotel, while the others skied on to the Firehole.²⁹

NO ONE KNEW if rest could restore Schwatka's strength. Although the plan had been to visit the Upper Geyser Basin, Yellowstone Lake and then the Grand Canyon before returning to Norris, Ross, Wadsworth, Bosse and other members of Schwatka's recruited entourage decided to head back to Norris the next day, January 10. Perhaps the lieutenant could rebound in a day or two. Haynes grew impatient with these developments. He could see his photographic mission to Upper Geyser Basin evaporating as surely as geyser steam if he also returned to Norris and awaited the end of Schwatka's illness. In a headstrong manner typical of both the lieutenant and himself, Haynes made his first expedition decision. Enlisting two of the strongest men, Charles Stoddard and David Stratton, and telephoning guide Ed Wilson to meet him at Upper Geyser Basin, Haynes left the group and skied south to Old Faithful, while Ross and the others headed for Norris.³⁰

Ross, whom all recognized as the ablest snowshoer on the expedition, led his group back to Norris as heavy weather rolled across the Yellowstone Plateau from the west. Some of his men, especially the slightly overweight Bosse, struggled to make decent time on their skis in the -20° temperatures. At Norris, they found little improvement in the lieutenant. By the following day, January 11, the storm raged, confining everyone to the hotel. Meanwhile, Haynes and his two companions skied to their destination, the flimsy and recently constructed "Shack" hotel near Old Faithful. When Haynes arrived he found James Roake, winterkeeper at Upper Geyser Basin, and his family living near the hotel structure in a hastily-built log cabin, which was all but buried in the ten-foot-deep snow. Residing in the hotel in winter, Roake explained to Haynes, had been hopeless; building a fire in the poorly constructed hotel did little but create bone-chilling drafts. The Haynes party had taken only essentials along in their light packs and they now had to borrow a tent from Roake for their own shelter, which they set up near the warming effects of Old Faithful.³¹

The next four days must have been frustrating for F. Jay Haynes. He slept within yards of one of his

primary photographic objects and could only look skyward in hopes that the snow would end, the clouds would race on, and enough light would return for good views of Old Faithful and other Upper Geyser Basin features. The storm finally subsided on January 15 and the skies cleared that night, dropping the temperature to -37° by morning. Haynes got his light the following day and he took spectacular photos of the geysers. And as though the long wait was a test of his endurance, Haynes' reward was a unique sight that he remembered the rest of his years—the simultaneous eruptions of Old Faithful, Giantess, Grand, Bee Hive and Castle Geysers. He photographed one after the other as quickly as possible but just missed exposing a plate before Grand, the largest of the Park geysers, ceased eruption.³²

Excited by the photographs he had taken on January 16, Haynes remained part of the next day and then skied back to the Firehole Hotel and the hospitality of hotel keeper James Dean and his wife. Haynes and his three companions rested there on January 18 before skiing on to Norris the next day. While Haynes had been hunkered down in the storm at Upper Geyser Basin, Ross, Wadsworth, and an unknown number of others in the Schwatka group at Norris skied over to Canyon with Al Thorne, one of the winterkeepers at the new Canyon Hotel, a recently-constructed prefabricated building. Ross and the others spent at least a day and a night at Canyon, probably January 16 and 17, and then headed back to Norris. Schwatka, evidently still in command of his group, tried to accompany them to Canyon on web snowshoes, but he quickly lost his strength again and returned to Norris after negotiating only a few miles.³³

Schwatka's second collapse finished the expedition for him. He regained his strength sufficiently to ski back to Mammoth on January 18, but now he could count his expedition as nothing but a failure. He had never been denied his objective before and that realization must have gnawed at him. Whether Haynes knew when Schwatka and his party had left Norris for Mammoth or that some of them had skied over to Canyon is unclear. The Schwatka party may have left a note for him or some other sign at Norris, but there is no evidence that Haynes knew of their location or experiences when he arrived at Norris on January 19. In fact it appears that Haynes never saw Schwatka again after the lieutenant's first failure along the Gibbon River on January 9.³⁴

On January 20, after a day of relaxation at Norris, Haynes, Stoddard, Stratton and Wilson headed over to Canyon. When they arrived at Canyon Hotel, Thorne and Major Lyman, the other winterkeeper, were busy shovelling snow off the prefabricated building's roof, fearing that it might collapse. No

32. *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1887; Fred Lockley to Jack E. Haynes, June 20, 1934, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

33. *Forest & Stream*, April 28, 1887; James G. Ross to F. Jay Haynes, March 23, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC; *Helena Independent*, January 19, 1887.

34. James G. Ross to F. Jay Haynes, March 23, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

doubt Thorne and Lyman told Haynes of the Schwatka party's visit, but the photographer now had one thing on his mind—to be the first to photograph the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone and the magnificent Lower Falls in winter. The brilliant colors of the Canyon were gone, covered by snow and ice, Haynes later remarked, but sight of the ice-sheathed Lower Falls stunned him. Skiing along the north rim of the Canyon, Haynes stopped near Point Lookout and strapped on a pair of web snowshoes to hike down to Red Rock, where he took photographs of the iced falls. A thick span of ice reached across the falls at the top and, armor-like, it covered the rushing water underneath to nearly the bottom of the drop. Arching over the falls pool at the Canyon floor stood a 75-foot-high ice ramp that had been formed by the spray.³⁵

HAVING CAPTURED the breathtaking views on his fragile photographic plates, Haynes left Canyon with his fellow snowshoers for the return to Mammoth, on January 23. They debated what route to take. Should they ski back the twelve miles to Norris and then plod over the outward track to Mammoth Hot Springs and observe no new winter sights, or should they strike in a direct line by way of Blacktail Deer Creek and Gardner Falls, or over Mt. Washburn and to Yancey's in Pleasant Valley? If Haynes could have foreseen the events of the next two days, it is unlikely that he would have chosen the perilous route he took over 10,243-foot Mt. Washburn—a passage that had not been undertaken in winter before. But Haynes felt the challenge; he was not so different from Schwatka.

Haynes and his companions left Canyon unprepared, and why is still a mystery. Ed Wilson, the experienced Yellowstone guide and snowshoer, should have known better; he knew how rapidly and mercilessly Yellowstone's weather could change. If Wilson cautioned Haynes, the photographer ignored the advice and they confidently got an early-morning start for their expected day-long journey to Yancey's

station, some twenty miles to the north. They left that sub-zero morning from Canyon with no blankets, compass, extra clothing or much food, save a few biscuits and some chocolate. It was a matter of too much confidence and not enough respect for the ferocity of Yellowstone in winter, the same mistake Schwatka had made. "With our experience we were getting to be experts on snowshoes," Haynes later wrote. But expertise on skis would mean little when a blizzard obscured the way.³⁶

The deep snow had already covered the tree blazes, leaving Haynes and Wilson with no way to follow the East or Canyon Trail over Rowland Pass, the summer route they planned to follow from Canyon to Tower Fall. The -21° clear weather subtly changed as the quartet skied past Washburn Hot Springs and began their ascent of Mt. Washburn. Then, as is so common on the Yellowstone Plateau, the bad weather raced in from the west, bringing wind and snow. By noon, when they stopped to snack near Rowland Pass, expecting a relatively easy afternoon of skiing ahead of them, the snow squalls turned to blizzard and all landmarks faded from view in a blinding white-out. Struggling to find their way in the deep snow and the steep and disorienting terrain, Haynes and his fellows wandered, lost, for the remainder of the day. Their confidence wavered as they thought about the intensity of the previous storm just days earlier at the Upper Geyser Basin. There they had a tent, the warmth of Old Faithful and the Roakes' cabin; now they were lost on Mt. Washburn near the edge of the Grand Canyon.

That night Haynes and Wilson found a protective arbor of small fir trees where they dug a snow pit with their skis and built a fire. Afraid to sleep, the men alternately told stories and hoped the dawn would bring clear skies. The storm took no rest and January 24 looked worse. They hesitatingly continued their search for a way off the mountain and spent a second night in constant motion, this time with the added handicap of no sleep and with dancing, mirage-like images floating before their eyes. They avoided the deceptive sleepiness associated with hypothermia by staying awake, but in the darkness they could sense little but snow depth and changes in terrain. January 25 brought clear weather and Haynes realized that they had travelled but two miles or so in disoriented circles during the preced-

35. *Helena Independent*, February 6, 1887. Some accounts, notably the *New York World's* of February 19, 1887 (which G. L. Henderson was certain was the work of Lt. Tutherly, although that seems very unlikely) had Haynes climbing down into the canyon and ascending the ice arch to take photographs of the Lower Falls. There is no documentation of Haynes doing this, nor did he ever make the claim himself. No photographs of the falls in winter from the Canyon floor are included in the views Haynes sold.

36. *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1887.

37. *Forest & Stream*, April 14, 1887; *Chicago Tribune*, March 5, 1887.

38. James G. Ross to F. Jay Haynes, April 11, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

39. Loa V. Snyder to May & Dot, January 30, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

40. G. L. Henderson to F. Jay Haynes, February 10, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

41. *Helena Independent*, February 6, 1887; *Livingston Enterprise*, February 5, 1887; *New York World*, February 19, 1887.

42. James G. Ross to F. Jay Haynes, March 23, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

43. John Hyde to F. Jay Haynes, December 1, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

44. Charles S. Fee to F. Jay Haynes, February 12, 1887, Haynes Coll., MSUSC.

45. Schwatka was found dead on First Street in Portland near the Morrison Street Bridge on November 2, 1892. See front page obituary in *New York Times*, November 3, 1892.

ing forty-eight hours, and were nearly where they had been when the blizzard hit. They oriented themselves and struck another trail, just to the east of Rowland Pass and on the edge of the Canyon, which took them to the head of Antelope Creek and a direct track to Tower Fall. Reaching Tower Creek by early afternoon, Haynes skied on ahead of the rest of the group and arrived at Yancey's by 3 p.m. After a day of rest, they made their way easily to Mammoth, arriving on January 27.³⁷

LT. SCHWATKA and his force had no knowledge of Haynes' perilous experience on Mt. Washburn. "I did not hear of the adventure on Mount Washburn," James Ross wrote Haynes in April, "but should be glad to receive a short description of what took place. It must have been well worth undergoing to come out none the worse and yet have had such a narrow squeak for existence."³⁸ Schwatka, Ross, Wadsworth and the others had caught what would be the last train that winter from Cinnabar, on January 24, arriving at Livingston two days later after train crews had cleared drifting snow off the tracks. The great explorer left the Park and Montana with little to tell. There would be no series of stories in the *New York World* with Henry Bosse's artwork nor would there be any Haynes-illustrated article published in *The Century*. The explorer returned empty-handed.

"Schwatka was a fraud and went back to the Hotel," Haynes' sister-in-law wrote, "and staid while F.J. made the trip and led the men and got over 40 sights. It will be another feather in his cap as Fee thinks Schwatka immense. . . [but] he is a fraud."³⁹ For F. Jay Haynes, his family, Charles Fee and the NP, and newspapers who were eager for stories about the howling winter on the plains, the Yellowstone Mid-Winter trip became the Haynes Expedition. Haynes had eclipsed Schwatka. G.L. Henderson, a friend of Haynes and the owner of the Cottage Hotel at Mammoth, wrote a widely reprinted account of the expedition for the *Helena Independent* that highlighted the heroics on Mt. Washburn and mildly criticized Schwatka's failure. "I send you the *Independent*," Henderson wrote Haynes, "You are the head and front of the Schwatka Expedition."⁴⁰ That article, and others that followed in the spring of 1887, justifiably made Haynes the hero.⁴¹ But the embellishments and puffery distorted the story. Haynes had not taken over the expedition; he had gone off on his own, mostly out of frustration, to get the photographs he desperately wanted—views he knew would be profitable and of use to the NP. "I was very sorry that you were unable to finish out the trip with

us," Ross wrote Haynes in late March, "as it would have made the tramping ever so much more interesting, and besides your knowledge of all points worthy of notice in the Park so large that much scenery and information which we lost would have been secured to us."⁴² In fact, then, there had been two expeditions in Yellowstone during January 1887, Schwatka's and Haynes'.

The emphasis on the ordeal on Mt. Washburn is understandable. Lecturer John L. Stoddard, and everyone else, knew a good adventure story when they heard one. But in the promotion of the tale and Haynes' spectacular photos in the Park, which were immediately in great demand, Schwatka's role and image suffered more than it should have. One of the NP's publicists, for example, insisted to Haynes that "It would not do to call them [Wilson, Charles Stoddard, and Stratton] guides, for that would detract from the credit that really belongs to you. . ."⁴³ But then Schwatka did his cause little good by acting in a haughty manner as he left the Park and causing Fee some embarrassment. As Fee commented, "there is no use in 'crying over spilt milk,' . . . [but] if I ever get an opportunity to even up there is a man [Schwatka] in Rock Island, Ill. that will know it, whether it is one or twenty years from now. I have a pretty good memory myself."⁴⁴

As much friction as might have developed after the expedition, and there was some, Haynes, Fee and the others knew that without Schwatka there would have been no Yellowstone Mid-Winter Expedition. He had planned it and it was his eye for publicity and adventure that had made it attractive to Charles Fee and the NP. Schwatka went to Yellowstone at less than his full strength, probably suffering from the effects of years of strenuous activity in unhealthful conditions. Within five years of the Yellowstone trip, at age forty-three, Schwatka died suddenly on a Portland, Oregon, street.⁴⁵ Haynes went on to market his fabulous winter photographs, acquired "at the Greatest Personal Peril to the Photographer," and to live out his life as one of the great photographers on the western frontier and the master of photographing Yellowstone. And the memory of what happened out there in the fierce Yellowstone winter of 1887, to himself and to Lt. Frederick Schwatka, likely stayed with him for the rest of his life. ♪

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Photos



Above, in this posed view of some of the Schwatka expedition as they passed Obsidian Cliff, Lt. Frederick Schwatka leads the skiers south toward Norris. Clearly visible are the two small sleds carrying the expedition's lightened equipage. *Below*, one of the photos of Old Faithful erupting, for which Haynes had waited patiently. This view captured the magical and breathtaking nature of Yellowstone in winter, and it was for views like this that Haynes willingly exposed himself to dangers and harsh conditions on the historic ski trip.





All photos from the Haynes Foundation Collection, Montana Historical Society.

Above, left, expedition sketch artist Henry Bosse stands in the sub-zero frost of Norris Geyser Basin. Bosse likely joined the expedition because he was a friend of Schwatka's father-in-law, Joseph Brackett. Above, right, part of the expedition at the Norris Hotel on January 9. Schwatka is the fifth man in the direct line. Others are unidentified, but the third from the front is likely either David Stratton or Charles Stoddard, and man at front is probably Henry Bosse. Below, in the Upper Geyser Basin on January 16, the eruption of Castle Geyser, a view Haynes obtained after camping near Old Faithful and enduring the five-day storm.



Yellowstone
Winter 1887

Photos



Above, winterkeepers at Canyon Hotel, with two of Haynes' group helping, shovel snow off the burdened roof, on January 20 or 21, before the fateful trip to Yancey's. Below, the iced Lower Falls in the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone at -20°. Haynes photographed it from Red Rock, down below the north rim of the Canyon. Haynes and his party (the figure in the photo is probably Ed Wilson) had hiked down to Red Rock using web snowshoes.





Above, the Haynes party at Upper Geyser Basin, on January 16 or 17. Haynes leads, with probably Ed Wilson second and David Stratton and Charles Stoddard behind. The ski tracks show the side-poling technique used to step-and-glide on the long Norwegian skis. This photograph was probably taken by James Roake, winterkeeper at Old Faithful. Below, at Yancey's northwest of Tower Fall where Haynes, Wilson, Stratton, and Stoddard recuperated after their ordeal on Mt. Washburn. In this posed photo, Haynes stands in the lead, he and the others with the 40-pound packs they carried. Among other things, the packs contained the photographer's camera and valuable glass plates.



Winter 1887

Yellowstone