



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Minnesota State Archives

STATE PARK COMMISSIONERS

An Inventory of the Reports and Miscellany of the State Park Commissioners

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

Series Title: Reports and miscellany of the state park commissioners,

Dates: 1891-1919.

Abstract: Annual reports, contracts, and miscellaneous correspondence of the commissioners of Itasca, Interstate, and Jay Cooke state parks.

Quantity: 4 folders, boxed.

Location: lower shelves stack row 121, alphabetical

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS

Annual reports to the governor, contracts, and miscellaneous correspondence of the commissioners of Itasca, Interstate (Dalles of the St. Croix) and Jay Cooke state parks, comprising 19 documents or document groups. They provide information on an 1889 survey of the Lake Itasca area, logging in Itasca, construction of Douglas Lodge, land acquisition for Interstate and Jay Cooke parks, construction of a bridge across the St. Croix River, and general maintenance and management of the parks. While no documentation has been found that indicates the State Park Commissioners existed as a formal entity, each individual park was managed by a commission or commissioner, who for certain administrative and policy purposes acted in concert.

Twelve items (2 folders), 1891-1907, concern **Itasca State Park**. A report (August 15, 1891) from Commissioner Jacob V. Brower discusses his survey of the Lake Itasca area, which began in 1889 and which concludes that the lakes in the Greater Ultimate Reservoir (southwest of Lake Itasca), which are at a higher elevation and drain into Lake Itasca, are the true source of the Mississippi River. There are annual reports of Itasca State Park commissioners A. A. Whitney (1896), William P. Christensen (1899-1900), John P. Gibbs (1901-1902), and C. E. Bullard (1904). They review their activities during the past year and make recommendations for the upcoming year. Whitney comments on the impracticality of his having to travel 25 miles to Park Rapids to obtain an arrest warrant rather than being able to arrest trespassers and poachers on the spot. One case of hunting trespass during 1899 was thrown out because it was on private land inside the park borders that was still owned by T. B. Walker. Christensen comments on 6,000 trout planted in park lakes and 25 miles of trail built (the Lind Trail). Several men mention

the difficulty of entertaining several hundred visitors per year in addition to patrolling the park and performing their other duties on a salary of \$600 per year. Other comments concern hiring help to patrol the park during hunting season, house and lodge construction and repair, road construction, timber sales, and the transplantation of pine trees and a family of beavers.

The second Itasca Park folder contains contracts and related correspondence. Two contracts allowed the Brainerd Lumber Company and the Crookston Lumber Company to log land surrounding the park, use logging roads through the park to transport logs to Lake Itasca, and float them out via the Mississippi River in the spring of 1904. Another contract (March 1904) is with Thomas C. Myers & Son of Park Rapids to build what became known as the Douglas Lodge. Other correspondence concerns the sale and removal of down timber in the park. A 1907 notice from the governor authorizes repair work on Douglas Lodge.

There are six items concerning **Interstate Park** (1897-1919). Two petitions from citizens of Taylors Falls in 1897 express support for park commissioner George Hazzard and appoint two men to assist Hazzard in spending the legislative appropriation. Rules and regulations of the park prescribed by the governor in 1897 are present. A packet of documents from 1899 and 1900 concern a lawsuit by Julia Dorothy, who was not happy with the settlement for her land and sued for more money. Another packet (July 1911) concerns the claim of A.Y. Bayne & Company, contractors for construction of a bridge across the St. Croix River, who objected to deductions from their bill for late completion, claiming that the delays were beyond their control. The annual report of commissioner Charles Truesdell (March 1919) reviews the current conditions of the park and its future requirements.

The final folder contains a report of the commissioners of **Jay Cooke State Park** (October 22, 1915). The legislature had passed an appropriation for establishment and maintenance of the park, contingent upon conveyance to the state of some 2,350 acres of land owned by the Cooke family's St. Louis River Water Power Company (Laws 1915 c374). The report goes into some detail on negotiations between the park commissioners and the Cooke heirs over this land. An impasse was broken when leading citizens of St. Louis and Carlton counties pledged to raise more than \$18,000 to pay taxes due on the land, in case the Legislature in its next session did not appropriate funds. [Note: Governor Burnquist vetoed the state parks portion of the 1917 appropriations bill, S.F. 1026 (*Pioneer Press*, April 24, 1917), and no evidence was found that the legislature subsequently appropriated public funds for this purpose.]

RELATED MATERIALS

The Minnesota Historical Society library contains the first report (1895-1896) of the Commission of the State Park of the Dalles of the St. Croix (Interstate Park). As well as Commissioner Hazzard's report, it contains reprints of five lectures on the natural history of the area and the mission of public parks by Frank Nutter, E. E. Edwards, Warren Upham, Henry Osborn, and Conway MacMillan. An earlier version (1896) contains numerous additional photographs and advertisements. A file among the records of Governor David M. Clough – “Report and Valuable Papers of the Commission of the State Park of the Dalles of the St. Croix” (1895) – provides details (with names) of how the land for the park was transferred from private ownership.

The Jacob V. Brower Papers (P765) contain some information on Brower's activities in the Lake Itasca area and his role in the creation of Itasca State Park. Several letters from John Lind

and Portius Deming to Josephine Brower (a daughter) recall legislative battles over park appropriations and express appreciation for Jacob Brower's efforts. Letters and maps from Julius Chambers (an 1872 Itasca area explorer) also are included. Timber surveys of Itasca State Park are among the records of the state Forestry Board.

The Legislative Manuals (blue books), published in odd-numbered years, contain information on the various state parks (somewhat repetitive, but some years are more informative than others, particularly 1903 and earlier).

In 1925, administrative control of the state parks passed from the state auditor and state forester (Itasca) to the newly created Conservation Commission. The records of the state auditor prior to 1925 and of the Conservation Commission after 1925 may contain further information on the early years of the state parks system.

INDEX TERMS

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Minnesota Historical Society. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons or places should search the catalog using these headings.

Topics:

- Bridges--Saint Croix River (Wis. and Minn.).
- Douglas Lodge (Itasca State Park, Minn.).
- Parks--Minnesota.

Places:

- Dalles of the Saint Croix (Wis. and Minn.).
- Itasca State Park (Minn.).
- Interstate Park (Minnesota and Wis.).
- Jay Cooke State Park (Minn.).

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

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See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.

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ITEM LIST

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note the location number shown below.

Location	Box	Contents
row 121, alpha		<p>Folder 1. REPORTS OF THE ITASCA STATE PARK COMMISSIONER, 1891 - 1905.</p> <p>August 15, 1891: Commissioner J. V. Brower to Governor William R. Merriam. 18 typed pages.</p> <p>November 28, 1896: Commissioner A. A. Whitney to Governor David M. Clough. 4 handwritten pages.</p> <p>December 1, 1899: Commissioner Wm. P. Christensen to Governor John Lind. 3 handwritten pages. On Itasca State Park illustrated letterhead. With cover sheet, December 6, 1899.</p> <p>December 1, 1900: Commissioner Wm. P. Christensen to Governor John Lind. 8 typed pages with annotations.</p> <p>December, 10, 1901: Commissioner John P. Gibbs to Governor S. R. Van Sant. 7 handwritten pages. On Itasca State Park illustrated letterhead.</p> <p>[December 1902?]: Commissioner John P. Gibbs to Governor S. R. Van Sant. 5 typed pages. Undated, noted as second annual report. Attached on top of another version of the 1901 report (above), noted as the first report and also comprising 7 handwritten pages.</p> <p>March 20, 1905: Commissioner C. E. Bullard to Governor John A. Johnson. Handwritten (6 pages), accompanied by typed copy (4 pages). Report for the year 1904.</p>

Location	Box	Contents
row 121, alpha		<p>Folder 2. ITASCA STATE PARK MISCELLANEOUS CONTRACTS AND CORRESPONDENCE, 1903 - 1907.</p> <p>September 11, 1903: Attorney General William Douglas to Governor Van Sant. 2 typed pages. Encloses a two page contract for the Brainerd Lumber Company to haul logs through the park.</p> <p>January 15, 1904: Contract for the Crookston Lumber Company to haul logs through the park. 2 typed pages. Six pages of correspondence, December 1903 - January 1904, are attached.</p> <p>March 18, 1904: Contract with Thomas C. Myers & Son of Park Rapids to build what became known as the Douglas Lodge. 2 typed pages.</p>

September 13, 1905: Commissioner C. E. Bullard to Governor John A. Johnson. 4 handwritten pages.

Concerns selling and removing of down timber in Itasca Park. On Douglas Lodge illustrated letterhead.

March 20, 1907: Notice to Whom it May Concern from Governor John A. Johnson.

Authorizes repair of Douglas Lodge with reimbursement promised at a later date.

Location	Box	Contents
row 121, alpha		<p>Folder 3. INTERSTATE PARK, 1897 - 1919.</p> <p>[1897]: Proclamation from Taylors Falls citizens appointing A. J. Anderson and Benjamin Clayton to assist Hazzard in spending the monies granted by the Legislature for the Park. 1 page.</p> <p>May 20, 1897: Petition of support from citizens of Taylors Falls for Park Commissioner George Hazzard. 1 page.</p> <p>June 18, 1897: Rules and Regulations prescribed by the Governor for the State Park of the Dalles of the St. Croix. 5 pages, typed carbon copy.</p> <p>May 5, 1900: Commissioner George Hazzard to Governor John Lind. 3 typed pages with 9 pages of attachments.</p> <p>Concerns the Julia Dorothy lawsuit and acquiring land for the park.</p> <p>July 8, 1911: A.Y. Bayne & Company. 13 pages, typed carbon copies.</p> <p>The contractors for a bridge across the St. Croix do not accept deductions from their final bill. A compilation of extracts from contracts and from minutes of the Joint Interstate Park Commission, with related memos.</p> <p>March 3, 1919: Commissioner Charles Truesdell to Governor J. A. Burnquist. 5 typed pages.</p> <p>Statement on current conditions of the park and future requirements. Some financial data included. With cover letter, March 4, 1919.</p>

Location Box Contents

row 121, alpha

Folder 4. JAY COOKE STATE PARK, 1915.

October 22, 1915: Report of Commissioners to Governor Winfield S. Hammond. 10 typed pages.

Letter of attorney Oscar Mitchell to Hammond (October 18, 1915) is stapled on top.