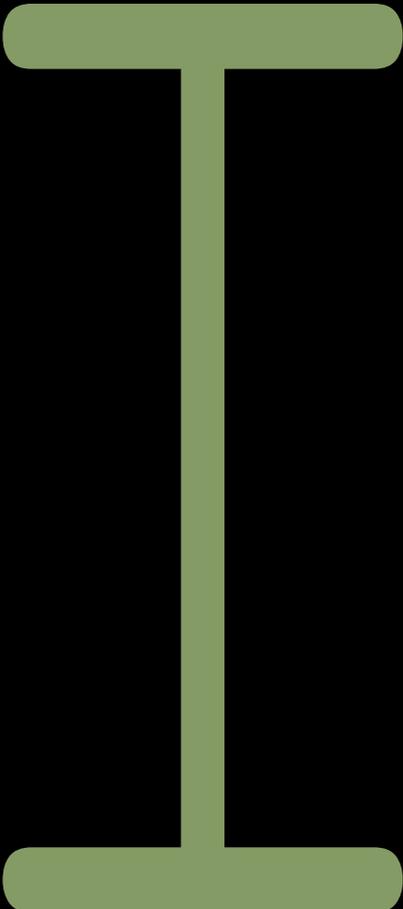


View with a Room

Glacier's Historic Hotels & Chalets.

By Ray Djuff and Chris Maorrison. Helena, MT:
Farcountry Press, 2001.

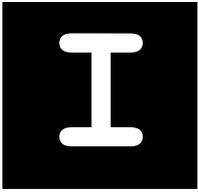
Photo Courtesy Glacier Historical Society
A Book Review by Jerry Fetz



can't imagine that there are many people who have spent a night or two or ten in one of the majestic hotels or rustic chalets in Glacier or Waterton Lakes National Parks who don't look back on their experiences with excitement, a little nostalgia, and a desire to return and enjoy the company of other visitors who have been released, even if only briefly, from their "normal" lives. In these lodgings one is invited to enter into a place where wilderness, romance, the smell of wood smoke, the taste of amazing food, and unparalleled vistas to die for are inspiring, thrilling, and highly memorable. To my mind, anyone who isn't enchanted by these parks' lodgings is missing one of life's great

experiences. Let me state here at the outset: if there is such a thing as a "lodge" or "chalet" junkie, I am one.

There are clearly numerous, legitimate angles or perspectives one can take when relating the history of certain events or of a place. In the case of Glacier National Park and/or Waterton-Glacier International Peace Park, one can present, for instance, the natural history of this spectacular part of the Crown of the Continent, as David Rockwell has done so informatively and effectively in his *Glacier. A Natural History Guide*, the second edition of which we reviewed and recommended to our readers in the 2nd issue of this UM Crown E-Magazine from Winter 2009.



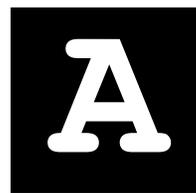
In his natural history, stretching back millions of years, buildings erected by humans play no major role. Or, as is the case with this marvelous book we are recommending here, *View with a Room*.

Glacier's Historic Hotels and Chalets, one can choose a different angle, as Ray Djuff and Chris Morrison have done, and, using both elegant text and an abundance of evocative illustrations, relate another kind of history: the history of the parks through the lens of the development of and stories about the hotels and chalets, both magnificent and rustic, both still present and no longer there, to which visitors have been attracted and in which they have spent time during the past one-hundred-plus years.

The history and stories of these park lodgings, as presented in this book, also give readers a fascinating look into the lives, actions, and impacts of most of the major players in the establishment and development of Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks. One learns much about the institutions (the Great Northern Railway and Glacier National Park, for instance) that have played the most central roles in making these exceptional parks what they are today, institutions that had to change, adapt, and deal with a highly dynamic creation. They and their representatives came, stayed for shorter or longer periods of time, cooperated with one another some times, disagreed and quarreled at other times. They all had to alter their plans, which were often conceived elsewhere or without full consideration of the exigencies of this extreme place, and adapt them to the realities of weather, finances, changing expectations, new means of transportation, and fluctuations in numbers of visitors. Unpredictable weather, floods and fires, wars and depressions, automobiles and roads—these are all important players in the creation, development, significant changes, and history of these hotels and chalets and of the parks in which they are located. This book provides an extremely well-researched, well-written, and richly illustrated history of these

hotels, lodges, and chalets. In the process of that focus, though, it also gives us a very important kind of overall history of these two magical places, Glacier and Waterton Lakes National Parks.

View with a Room is organized effectively into 12 chapters, each of which runs between 10 to 20 pages. The first chapter, titled "Call of the Mountains," provides an excellent discussion of how the parks came into existence, the roles played by Louis Hill and the Great Northern Railway, by Dr. Lyman Sperry and George Bird Grinnell, by the U.S. Congress and the National Park Service, and by numerous other colorful characters and institutions that populate the intriguing history of the parks. As with all of the chapters, this first one offers a plethora of terrific illustrations (photos, posters, drawings, art work) that add a very powerful visual component to the history it relates. This first chapter covers --carefully, informatively, but unavoidably briefly-- the overall development of the parks and their lodging facilities, stretching from the years before Glacier National Park was officially created in 1910 up to the 1990s. It provides a very useful general context for the chapters that then follow, each of which is dedicated to specific hotels, chalets, or chalet groups, and both those that still exist and those long gone.



Anyone who has had the good fortune of staying in one or more of the still existing hotels or chalets in Glacier and Waterton Lakes

National Parks will undoubtedly find the chapter or chapters that deal with those that are known from personal experience most compelling; these are familiar and evocative of exciting times spent in the parks. This reader and devotee of these two unique parks has had the good fortune of staying, multiple times, in several of them over the past 50 years: Glacier Park Lodge, Many Glacier Hotel, Prince of Wales Hotel, Sperry Chalet, and Lake McDonald Lodge. And each of these hotels or chalets is granted one chapter

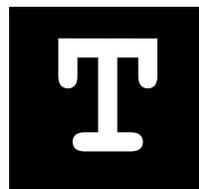
in the book. Even though I already knew something about these lodgings, in each case I learned not only a lot more of the history of their origins, about their high times and low times, about their renovations and challenges, but also and importantly about the external factors that turned them into microcosms of what was going on in the world beyond their walls—in the parks themselves, in the region, and in the countries and societies in which they are located. Each of these chapters contains explanations and examples of how the facilities needed to change as visitors changed --with different means of transportation (horse and railroad to the automobile, for instance), with different expectations of what a park sojourn could and should include, and with different (and sometimes competing) views about what national parks themselves, and these two in particular, should be. One learns, for example, about the direct effect of the building of roads and their locations on these hotels and chalets, of the two World Wars and the depression, of the hands-on involvement and then withdrawal of the Great Northern Railway from the management of these facilities and the parks, and of the toll taken by winter weather, floods, and fires on them. These chapters that focus on these lodgings that I know personally provide both a depth and breadth of historical information that will make them even more fascinating to me the next time I experience them as a visitor. I am certain that this will be the case for other readers who know these lodges and chalets personally as well.

As I read the chapters one after another, my understanding of how the park developed and changed over the past 100-plus years also grew cumulatively. And when I began to read the chapters about the lodgings that no longer exist, this for differing reasons in each case that are well told, I was primed and better prepared to imagine even those marvelous hotels and lodgings that are now ghosts of a colorful past.

If one is interested in the buildings themselves, their

styles, their early forms, their renovations and expansions over the years, the reasons some of the lodgings still exist and flourish and the reasons why some are only ghosts today—one can learn a lot from these individual chapters. One can learn, for instance, how the unique architectural style of these facilities overall (“parkitecture,” as some have called it) came to be: a combination of Swiss-Alpine chalet styles, Adirondack cabin and lodge styles, and Craftsman style, all with unique Rocky Mountain touches and materials. One can learn in the chapters on those facilities that no longer exist –Two Medicine Chalets, Cut Bank Chalets, St.Mary Chalets, and Going-to-the-Sun Chalets – what their brief histories were all about and just why they fell victim to waning interest, weather damage, roads, closures caused by the Great Depression, competition, or the Second World War, as well as about some of the important and colorful

characters who came and went with them.



hus: over the course of this highly instructive and thoroughly enjoyable book, one learns a great deal about these parks and their histories in general as well. It is a book that contains great substance and excellent historical writing, a book from which pretty much anyone with any level of knowledge about the parks will be able to learn many new things. It is also a wonderful “coffee table” book, a book that invites casual browsing of many kinds of compelling visual images. It would make a wonderful gift to anyone who has stayed in any of these lodges or chalets, anyone who has visited the parks once or many times, or to anyone who plans to visit them or just imagines what it would be like to do so. I just made a couple of reservations for the lodges myself and can hardly wait to walk through their doors, smell the wood smoke from the lobbies, and enter places that are magical in themselves and serve as launching pads for many other magical places in these two spectacular parks. Thanks to the two authors for making this special book and all the information it contains available to