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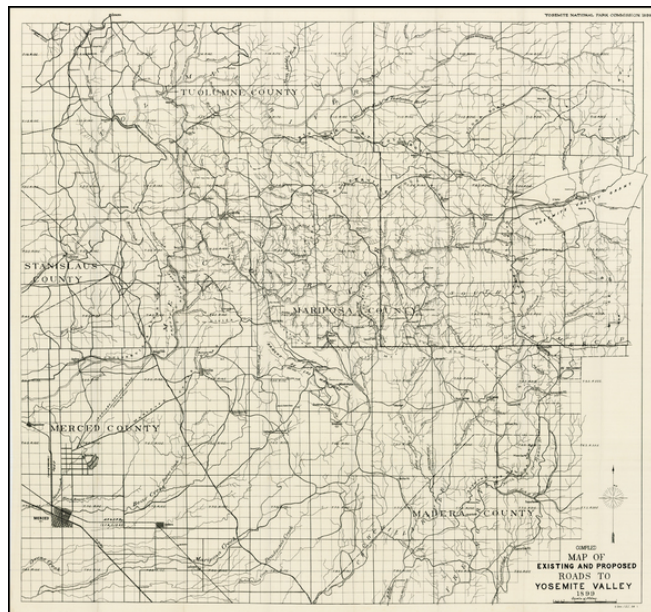
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Compiled Map of Existing and Proposed Roads to Yosemite Valley 1899

Stock#: 25441
Map Maker: Yosemite National Park
 Commission
Date: 1899
Place: Washington
Color: Uncolored
Condition: VG+
Size: 30.5 x 32 inches
Price: \$245.00



Description:

Fine example of the large format map of the entire Yosemite National Park and adjoining regions, which accompanied the *Official Report of the Yosemite National Park Commissions*.

The subject map is the result of a ten year effort to increase public access and use of Yosemite National Park, and to simplify the ownership and control of the roads which provided access to the Park, at the end of the 19th Century.

As of 1890, Yosemite Valley was serviced by four toll roads, which passed through the National Park. Because the initial road construction had been costly and tough to maintain, various road companies charged high toll rates for passage. Payment of tolls added to the exorbitant prices for hay and grain in Yosemite Valley. In addition, tolls were deemed incompatible with the concept of a national resort and recreation area open to all, rich and poor alike. The army believed that federal acquisition of those roads would encourage more public use of Yosemite and would enable maintaining them in proper condition to facilitate the supply of army troops and the discharge of their duties in enforcing the rules and regulations of the Park.

On February 18, 1892, Secretary of the Interior John Noble sent a letter to A. G. Speer, special agent of the General Land Office in San Francisco, stating that the Interior Department wished to foster a system of roads and transportation and hotel accommodations that would make visitor excursions to the park as



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agreeable as possible. At the same time, the department would attempt to be as liberal as possible to all private interests as was compatible with the purposes of Congress in establishing the Park.

Noble directed Speer to consult with Capt. Abram Wood to obtain information on the condition, origin, and right of franchise of all the toll roads within the Park as well as on the convenience and use of the roads by the public. Noble also requested that Speer meet with the various owners and managers of the toll roads to enable them to make their claims to recognition by the Department of the Interior.

In the summer of 1892, Capt. John S. Stidger and Maj. Eugene F. Weigel joined Speer and Wood in this project. Weigel, a special land inspector of the Interior Department, also was charged with investigating the condition of affairs in Yosemite Valley. In September, 1892, Speer was replaced by Stidger, who was directed to continue the work relating to the toll roads with Weigel and Wood. Weigel reported in October 1892 that the toll roads inside and outside of the Park were very annoying to travelers and recommended that the federal government acquire all such roads within the limits of Yosemite.

On October 21, 1892, representatives of the four toll roads—the Big Oak Flat and Yosemite Road, the Coulterville and Yosemite Road, the Great Sierra Wagon Road, and the Yosemite Stage and Turnpike Road—met Weigel, Wood, and Stidger at the U. S. Land Office in San Francisco and presented them with statements from the corporations owning those roads, showing their condition, franchise rights, length, cost, rates of toll, etc. Stidger recommended that the United States government follow the example set by the state of California, by purchasing the toll roads and opening to free use all the roads within the boundaries of Yosemite National Park. Congressional representatives from California and the Executive Committee of the Yosemite Board of Commissioners also made pleas to that end, citing federal money that had been appropriated for roads and bridges at Yellowstone National Park and at the National Military Park created on the Chickamauga and Chattanooga battlefields.

After several attempts, the legislature approved the request in March 1899, providing \$4,000 for the protection of the park and for specific construction and improvement work, and also provided that the Secretary of War expend some of the money to appoint three commissioners to examine and collect data on the existing toll roads; on new wagon roads from Yosemite Valley to Merced, Mariposa, and Tuolumne counties; on a new wagon road connecting the Tioga Road with roads in Mono or Inyo counties; and on a wagon road to Hetch Hetchy Valley.

Secretary of War Russell A. Alger, appointed the Yosemite National Park Commission on April 28, 1899, composed of Col. Samuel M. Mansfield, Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.; Capt. Harry C. Benson; and J. R. Price, of the Department of Highways of the state of California. Just prior to the commencement of the commission's work, Mr. Price ceased to be a member of the Department of Highways and retired from the commission. Joseph L. Maude, commissioner of highways of the state, succeeded him. The commission



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performed its work during the summer and fall of 1899 and reported to the Secretary of the Interior on 4 December.

The commission pointed out that up until 1890, little attention had been paid to the National Park lands surrounding Yosemite Valley. Now, however, the tolls demanded by owners of the only access routes restricted travel into the Valley. The commission recommended either purchasing the existing roads or constructing new toll-free ones. The commission recommended that the government own all entry roads into the Park to ensure proper control of traffic.

The commission also found that the existing roads used for patrol purposes were not adequate for the troops guarding the Park. The construction of additional roads would also lessen the cost of transportation of supplies to the troops and enable better fire control. Eliminating tolls on all the existing roads and constructing new ones would also enable visitors as well as the military to reach all sections of the Park. The proposed new roads suggested by the Commission included roads from the Tuolumne Soda Springs on the Tioga Road, along the Lyell Fork of the Tuolumne, to the foot of Lyell Glacier; from the Mono Valley to the Tioga Road via either Mill Creek, Lee Vining, or Bloody Canyons; from Tenaya Lake, on the Tioga Road, down Tenaya Creek Canyon to the floor of Yosemite Valley; and from Yosemite Valley, utilizing the existing road to The Cascades, west down the Merced River canyon. The latter road, providing access from the Mono Valley on the east to the San Joaquin Valley on the west, would be easier and faster than any existing routes and would remain open through the entire year. The road down Tenaya Creek Canyon would shorten the distance between Yosemite Valley and Soda Springs and avoid the high altitude of the Tioga Road at Snow Flat.

The attached map illustrates the work of the Commission and provides an original detailed illustration of the proposed roads.

Detailed Condition: