

Gallatin Gateway

On August 1, 1926, the Railroad dedicated a large wooden Gateway arch south of Salesville, Montana at the narrowing of the Gallatin Canyon,¹ and all who traveled that road to Yellowstone Park passed through this Milwaukee Road Gateway. That year, the Company began building the spectacular Gallatin Gateway Inn as a strong bid for tourist traffic destined for Yellowstone National Park.

Construction began February 18, 1927 on the Milwaukee Road's most ambitious tourist promotion effort, the Gallatin Gateway Inn. Designed to establish the Milwaukee as a primary rail carrier for Yellowstone National Park tourism, the Inn complemented a large rustic wooden structure a few miles down the road that touted the Milwaukee's "Gallatin Gateway" to Yellowstone.

Over 500 construction workers labored to finish the Inn in a remarkable four months. On the opening day, Milwaukee officials greeted Montana Governor John Erickson, who gave a round of inaugural



The Milwaukee Road re-engineered the road from Salesville to Yellowstone Park and constructed this portal.
Milwaukee Road Photograph.

¹ Construction completed on this large wooden "gate" on August 1, 1926. Source: "miscellaneous data sheet" of the Milwaukee Road Passenger Department, dated July 3, 1952.

speeches to celebrate the opening of the grand facility. Designed in a Spanish style, the grand opening on June 17, 1927 was heralded as a new era for the Gallatin Valley, putting it firmly on the map as a tourist center. The Inn cost \$500,000 to build, and the railroad spent another \$100,000 upgrading the track between Three Forks and the end of the branch line as Salesville, Montana, quickly renamed Gallatin Gateway in honor of the little communities' most prestigious resident. Some 26,000 pieces of unique china, "Galatea," was ordered up for use at the Inn. Twenty eight guest rooms underscored the Inn's primary purpose as a transfer station from Milwaukee passenger trains to buses for the trip to Yellowstone. The dining room, on the other hand, could seat 186.



Gallatin Gateway Inn, circa 1928, the Milwaukee Road's Yellowstone Park hotel. The Union Pacific and Northern Pacific had nothing like it. Montana Historical Society.

The Inn, opened June 20, 1927, was built south of Bozeman, Montana at the town of Salesville. The Inn was constructed to take advantage of this Milwaukee gateway -- the Gallatin Gateway -- as a counter to the Northern Pacific Railway's facilities at Livingston, and the Union Pacific's similar efforts at West Yellowstone.²

Little Salesville, overwhelmed by this attention, "blushingly changed its name to Gallatin Gateway."³ The Gallatin Gateway Inn was of "semi-Spanish architectural design, an imposing building patterned after and having the facilities of an up-to-date country club."⁴

The railroad hoped for 10,000 tourists the first season. It planned to bus them from there to the Old Faithful Inn via the Gallatin Canyon ... The Gallatin Valley greeted the opening of the Inn with lavish festivities. The day began with a Bozeman parade, featured by a noon picnic on Specimen Creek and an address by Governor John Erickson, and ended with an evening ball at the plush new inn, which nearly 2,000 people attended. As many speakers that day put it, the Gallatin

² In 1926, 5,313 people entered Yellowstone by the Milwaukee's Gallatin Gateway route. In 1930, 1,637 by MILW; 10,271 by UP; 9,209 by NP. In 1933 found 328 by MILW; 2,146 by UP; 2,955 by NP. 1934 streamliners were introduced by UP. 1935 found 986 by MILW; 6,566 by UP; 6,346 by NP.

³ Malone, Michael P., *op. cit.* p. 11. Although Malone leaves the impression that it was in response to the construction of the magnificent Inn, the name change was made after the construction of the large wooden "gateway", but preceded the opening of the Inn itself by nearly six months. Letter from J.T. Gillick, Chief Operating Officer, Milwaukee Road, to W.B. Dixon, General Passenger Agent, dated January 15, 1927, making the station name change from Salesville to Gallatin Gateway effective "February or March 1st," 1927.

⁴ Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railway Company advertising brochure, no date, circa 1927.



Main Lobby, restored, 1998. Anne Kofsky Photograph.

Valley was now 'on the map' as a tourist center.⁵

The Inn had only 26 sleeper rooms and served primarily as a dining facility and transfer point for Yellowstone-bound passengers. Passengers arriving had lunch and rested before boarding a bus for the park. Home-bound tourists arrived back from the park in the evening and had dinner before catching the train back to the east. Only people traveling west from Yellowstone remained overnight.⁶

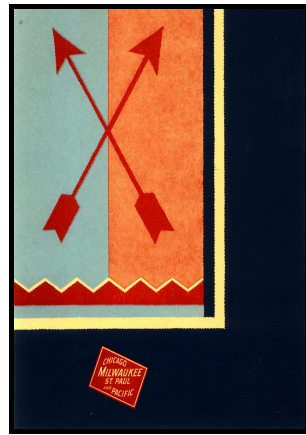
On June 20, 1929, the Company arranged for Yellowstone Park's official summer season to be opened from Gallatin Gateway, and the official opening ceremonies included bestowing of Indian titles on various dignitaries present. Park Director Horace Albright was named "Chief Epeak Acmquta", meaning, in some Indian language apparently, Chief White Snow, Milwaukee President H.A. Scandrett received "Chief Octum Selcka Holqua", meaning Chief Big Electric

⁵ Malone, Michael P., op. cit.

⁶ Dilley, C.C., Personal Communication, December 13, 1973. Dilley, who retired in the mid-70's as the Milwaukee Road vice president for passenger services and corporate communications, was the last Company manager of the Gallatin Gateway Inn, when it closed its doors in 1951.



Luncheon Menu Cover, Gallatin Gateway Dining Room, ca. 1946.



Back cover of Luncheon Menu.

Railroad, and General Passenger Agent Dixon was dubbed "Chief Gallagater" dubiously meaning Chief Travelling Tourist.⁷ The Milwaukee had plans for expansion. "It is the purpose of the Milwaukee people to enlarge the hotel part of the structure another year, and extra wings will be added so before another season begins there will be 153 guest rooms," wrote the Bozeman Daily Chronicle. The Inn did not expand, as the railroad was still in receivership; its management distracted by legal battles and an ICC investigation. Too, the Gallatin Gateway Inn represented an incomplete effort. The Inn itself was a long ways from Yellowstone Park, and required another half day's travel to get there, and then stay at other facilities. The Railroad no doubt looked at extending a line from Salesville to West Yellowstone, but this would have turned into major branchline construction through a difficult canyon setting and a pass. Had the Inn been located in Bozeman, it could have served a dual



Interior, Gallatin Gateway Inn, ca. 1996.



Gallatin Gateway Inn, ca. 1996, after renovation.

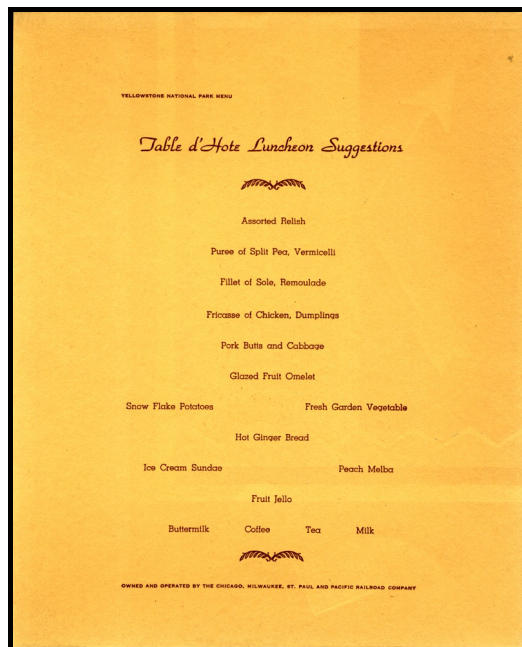
purpose for the railroad and probably been profitable. Had it been located at West Yellowstone, it very well would have been the premier accommodation for all Yellowstone Park visitors, regardless of

⁷ Milwaukee Road Miscellaneous records, Passenger Department, Memorandum dated June 20, 1929.

the method of transportation they used to get there. But, the Milwaukee located the Inn at Salesville, which is really “the middle of nowhere” in relation to any functional tourist purpose.

By 1935, 94,008 tourists arrived in West Yellowstone by automobile, 6,566 arrived via the Union Pacific Railroad which did actually extend its rails to the town, and only 986 tourists arrived from the Milwaukee’s line through Gallatin Gateway.⁸ In 1945, apparently anticipating a post-war boom in tourist travel, the Railroad made extensive plans for renovation, altering the first floor of the north wing, and adding capacity by building guest cabins to the rear of the Inn, with the addition of an outdoor swimming pool and bath house. However, the Company quickly realized that the post war boom meant that people were buying cars, not railroad tickets, and the plans were never implemented.

A buyer was sought and in 1951, the Inn was sold to a Butte businessman, Paul Holenstein. After a succession of owners, and continual decline, it was renovated in the late 1980's in a faithful and elegant restoration to its former glory.



Luncheon Menu, Gallatin Gateway Inn.

Sources: Bozeman Daily Chronicle, “C.M.&St.P’s Famous Tourists’ Home,” June 17, 1927. Milwaukee Road Miscellaneous Passenger Dept. records. Promotional Brochure, “Gallatin Gateway Inn, 1996.” Architectural record of Gallatin Gateway Inn, Milwaukee Public Library, Milwaukee Road Collection.



Milwaukee Road’s “Galatea” made just for the Gallatin Gateway Inn.

⁸ Schwantes, Carolos, Railroad Signatures Across the Pacific Northwest, *op. cit.*, p. 283.