First known as Lake Eustis.


Yellowstone Lake here appears as Lake Eustis, but the name is almost obliterated, and can barely be made out on the map as printed in this Edition.

1807-1814. Contributions to Montana Historical Society, vol. II, page 128, Historical Sketch by Peter Koch, states:

"A member of Lewis and Clark's expedition by the name of Colter returned to the Rocky Mountains with a band of trappers, even before the expedition had reached St. Louis. On the map which accompanied Lewis and Clark's report, when it was finally published, is laid down a dotted line, marked Colter's track. This leads around Yellowstone Lake, then called Eustis, and near what is now known as Sulphur Mountain, we read the legend 'Hot Springs - Sulphur.'"

1807-1814. Hiram Chittenden, in his History of the American Fur Trade: in the Far West, at page 716, states:

"Colter, upon his return to St. Louis, gave to General Clark a description of his route, which the latter placed upon the map accompanying the report of the Lewis and Clark expedition, and legended it 'Colter's route in 1807.'"


"We do not know where Colter spent the following winter (1806-7) but he probably wintered on the Lower Yellowstone, for in 1807 he was on Pryor's fork of that river. On one of the Lewis and Clark maps, published in 1814 in the Paul Allen edition of their report, Colter's route of travel is distinctly marked by dotted lines. From Pryor's fork he moved westward to the Yellowstone, which he crossed just below the Grand Canon. He then followed up the river on the west side, passing by Crater Hills and Sulphur Mountain, thence along the west shore of
Yellowstone Lake, rounding the south westerly arm to the south side, and thence crossing the dividing ridge of the Rocky Mountains to the river or creek which bears his name, and which was supposed to be one of the forming streams of the Rio del Norte, but which afterwards proved to be a tributary of Snake River. His route, so plainly marked on the map, does not indicate that he crossed the divide between the Yellowstone and Fore Hole rivers."

1802–1813. The following is considered significant:

1808–1813. Nelson's Perpetual Loose Leaf Encyclopedia, vol IV, page 519-530 has the following:
"Eustis - William. (1753-1835) American legislator and physician, was born in Cambridge, Mass. He served as surgeon throughout the American Revolutionary war. From 1788 to 1794 he was a member of the Massachusetts legislature; from 1801 to 1805 a Republican member of Congress; and from 1807 (sic) to 1813 U.S. Secretary of War. He was minister to Holland (1814-1818), and again a member of Congress (1820-1823); and in 1823 became Governor of Massachusetts."

In this connection the American State Papers have been examined but no record is found to date of Colter's report to Clark of his discovery of Yellowstone Lake, or of Clark's naming the Lake after William Eustis, at the time the map accompanying his report was drafted.

This Map gives Yellowstone Lake as Lake Eustis.

Comment: Up to date direct evidence that Clark named Yellowstone Lake after William Eustis, Secretary of War from 1809 to 1813, is lacking. Circumstantial evidence is strong, however, that the lake was so named.
1. In naming rivers, streams and other natural objects encountered, the Lewis and Clark expedition either retained the names by which they were already known; or gave names which seem suited by reason of some peculiarity marked in the object named; or attached thereto the name of some member of the expedition, or name of some powerful friend or patron of the expedition. For example, the Yellowstone River, called by the French the Roche jaune, or Yellow stone, was so called by the expedition. Many Creeks were called dry Creek, or Muddy Creek, as they appeared to the party at the time of discovery. Shield's river was named after the blacksmith who accompanied the expedition, and York a body servant had a creek named after him. The Madison, Gallatin and Jefferson rivers were named after powerful friends and patrons of the expedition.

2. The discovery of Yellowstone Lake was not reported to Clark until after his return to St. Louis, and during a time when the Map and report were in course of preparation for submission to the proper authorities. The new discovery was indicated as an amendment on the map being prepared, and the preparation of the map and report is almost coincident with the time during which Eustis was Secretary of War, and as such a good man for Clark to compliment by naming a lake after him.

3. It is doubtful if Colter, considering the circumstances of his journey to Yellowstone Lake, gave it a name, or could ascertain whether or not it had a name. Furthermore, a diligent search up to the present date, has failed to disclose the name of Eustis among the early trappers and explorers in that part of the country.

4. All evidence seems to point to the fact that, so far as is known, Colter was the first white man to reach Yellowstone Lake.
Yellowstone Lake as Sublette Lake.

This map gives Yellowstone Lake as Sublette Lake.

This map gives Yellowstone Lake as Sublette Lake.

This map gives Yellowstone Lake as Sublette’s Lake.

1830-1834. Hiram Chittenden in his History of the American Fur Trade of the Far West, at page 254, states:

"Milton G. Sublette was a great deal in the mountains with his elder brother" (Andrew Sublette) "and was one of the firm of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, and later of the firm of Fitzpatrick, Sublette and Bridger. He was an able trader, although less distinguished than William L." (Sublette) "His death was caused by a disease in his leg, which compelled him to relinquish his expedition of 1834 to the mountains. His leg was twice amputated, but to no purpose, and he died at Fort Laramie December 19, 1836."

1830. Hiram Chittenden in his History of the American Fur Trade of the Far West, at page 293, states:

"Fitzpatrick, Sublette and Bridger, with a party of over two hundred men, moved north through the Big Horn Basin, crossed the Yellowstone River, and continued in a northwesterly direction until they reached the Missouri River in the vicinity of the great Falls. Turning south they ascended the Missouri to the Three Forks, and then followed the Jefferson Fork to the Divide. The expedition was a successful one, and a large quantity of game were taken, while the formidable appearance of the party kept the Blackfeet from attacking."


"He" (Bridger) "knew of the great geysers of the Firehole
Valley in Yellowstone Park as early as 1840 and visited them about 1844."

The same article, at page 167 states:
"In an old Mormon newspaper 'The Wasp' published at Nauvoo, Ill., in 1843 an unknown writer gives an accurate account of the geysers in Yellowstone Park, which he visited with one Alvarés in 1833.

1846. Contributions to Montana Historical Society, vol. II, at page 331, in an article entitled The Late James Gemmell by William F. Wheeler, Mr. Gemmell is quoted as follows: "We camped for a time near the west arm of the lake" (Yellowstone Lake) "and here Bridger proposed to show me the wonderful spouting springs at the head of the Madison. Leaving our main camp, with a small and select party, we took the trail by Snake Lake (now called Shoshonne Lake) and visited what have of late years become so famous as the upper and lower Geyser Basins. There we spent a week and then returned to our camp, whence we resumed our journey, skirted the Yellowstone Lake along its west side, visited the Upper and Lower Falls, and the Mammoth Hot Springs, which appeared as wonderful to us as had the geysers."

Comment: Bridger and Sublette were partners from 1830, to Sublette's retirement from active trading prior to the expedition of 1834, Bridger knew of the Yellowstone Park as early as 1840. Lake Yellowstone appears as Sublette Lake on Greenhow's map of 1844. Either Bridger and Sublette both knew of Yellowstone Lake prior to 1834, which seems plausible if Alvarés knew of it in 1833, and Bridger and Sublette were in that part of the country in 1830, or Bridger became acquainted with Yellowstone Lake after Sublette's retirement, and gave the Lake his former partner's name. This would not be improbable.

Yellowstone Lake under its present name.

Part 4 of the Hearings. Original Map now in the Map Division of the Library of Congress.

On this map two lakes are given at the source of the Yellowstone River. The lower, and larger lake, which may be the present Yellowstone Lake, is given the name Yellowstone Lake. From this lake a stream leads to a smaller lake higher up, and the smaller lake is called Birdger's Lake, and the connecting stream is called Bridger's River.


This map gives Yellowstone Lake under its present name.

1877. At page 64 of Langford's book, above cited, is given: The first accurate sketch of Yellowstone Lake.

The name Yellowstone.

1805. Lewis and Clark Expedition, Heomer's Edition, at page 210. Friday, April 26, 1805 — "This river, which has been known to the French as the Roche jaune, or as we have called it, the Yellowstone, rises, according to Indian information in the Rocky Mountains."

1889. W.P. Clark, U.S. Army. The Indian Sign Language. Phila. L.R. Hamersly Co. 1885, at page 433, states the following: "The Indians call the Yellowstone Elk River, but the majority only so name it as far from its source as the mouth of Powder River, and some only as far as the mouth of the Rosebud. From these points to the confluence with the Missouri it is called by the same name as that by which they designate the latter stream, viz. Muddy or Big Muddy. The junction of the Yellowstone and Missouri they call the Forks of the Big Muddy."

1846. Department of the Interior, United States Geological Survey, Bulletin 611, entitled Guidebook of the Western United States, Northern Pacific Route, at pages 66 and 67, in a footnote marked 8, states the following: "The name Yellowstone was doubtless given to the river because
of some outcrop of yellow rocks along its banks; but where do such rocks occur? The traveler in passing up the valley sees no distinctly yellow rocks between Glenlivet and Livingston, and if he goes to Yellowstone Park he will see none as far as Gardiner, the northern entrance to the park. Within the park the conditions are different. The canyon of the Yellowstone below the falls is noted the world over for its gorgeous display of colors, among which the most brilliant and dominating tint is yellow. Here is the only place on the river where the rocks are so distinctly yellow as to have suggested a name for the stream, and the conclusion seems inevitable that here the name originated.

As the evidence available seems to indicate that the name did not originate with the English explorers, it must have been given by some early French traveler or by the Indians who inhabited the region. The only Frenchman who is thought to have seen the upper part of the Yellowstone Valley before the time of Lewis and Clark was Verandrye, who, between the years 1738 and 1742, penetrated the wilderness far to the west of Lake Winnipeg, and who wandered for a long time among the mountains in an ineffectual attempt to reach the Pacific slope. It is said that he reached the headwaters of the Missouri and even penetrated as far south as the central part of Wyoming, where he was so beset by hostile Indians that he was forced to return to the east.

None of the points described by Verandrye have been recognized, so the identity of the country he traversed will always remain a matter of doubt. It seems incredible, however, that he should have visited the site of the present Yellowstone Park without noting at least some of the wonderful geysers and hot springs. On this negative evidence it is reasonable to conclude that he did not visit the canyon of the Yellowstone, and therefore that the Indians were the first people to apply the name."

**Comment:** It is not quite apparent how the name Lake Sublette was dropped around 1851, and the name Yellowstone Lake substituted. As late as 1857 Stevens referred to the lake on his map as Lake Sublette, although in 1851 De Smet calls it Yellowstone.
Since the Reynolds map of 1880 the Lake has been called Yellowstone.

From Lewis and Clark's journal the word Yellowstone appears definitely to be of French origin, and this is further confirmed by W.P. Clark, who indicates that the Indians did not know of the Yellowstone River by that name. There are no yellow stones on the river, but there is an abundance of yellow earth on the river in the region of Yellowstone Park. Had the French been in the Park region prior to Lewis and Clark's expedition it seems most probable that there would be some written record of there going there. It may be that such records exist, but have not yet come to light. On the other hand, the French may never have been in the present Park region, but may have called the River Roche jaune because they heard from the Indians that there were yellow stones at its source.

**Summery:***

1. From the time of its discovery until about 1840, or 1844, Yellowstone Lake was known as Lake Eustis, and it seems probable that Clark gave the lake thus described to him by Colter this name as a compliment to William Eustis, who was Secretary of War for a time under James Madison.

2. From 1840, or 1844, Lake Eustis was known as Sublette Lake. This name was given it by Bridger, or other associates of Sublette, as they trapped in this region about that time. This conclusion seems reasonable.

3. In 1851 Father De Smet call Sublette Lake, Yellowstone Lake, and the cause for the change is not apparent. Stevens in 1852 still refers to the Lake as Sublette Lake, but Reynolds in 1880 calls it Yellowstone Lake, by which name it has gone ever since.

4. The word Yellowstone is of French, not of Indian origin, and the reasons for calling the River by such a name by the French are not at present known.

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