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UNITED STATE GOVERNMENT

Department of Agriculture – Forest Service

Memorandum

To: Forest Supervisor, Wasatch N.F. File No. 1 650
From: Marvin H. Combs, DFR Date: March 25, 1965
Subject: Contacts and Other, (Historical Files) Your Reference:

Reference is made to your memorandum of the above designation of April 15, 1964. Attached please find that information required from Mountain View Ranger District.

Marvin H. Combs

EARLY FUR TRADERS AND TRAPPERS

Long before the emigrant's first whitetopped wagon trains appeared upon the Great Plains horizon, the West was an open book to the trappers and fur traders. They were fearless and rugged breed of men who explored every stream and valley, glazed ever trail, and defied savages, grizzly bear and the innumerable terrors of the wilderness in their relentless quest for animal wealth.

The western fur trade embraces the period 1807 to 1843. St. Louis was the headquarters of the industry, but its ramifications extended throughout the entire Mississippi west.

The wealthy Central Rock Mountain region became the most hotly contested trapping grounds. Here in the upper reaches of the Snake, the Yellowstone and the Green River were those fabulous valleys, such as Jackson Hole and Pierre's Hole which became the true home of the historic trapper or "Mountain Man".

Beaver pelts, worth about six dollars each, were the primary object of the western trapper's search, although there was some traffic also in raccoon, otter, mink, fox, deer, bear and buffalo. Before the introduction of silk in 1840, the mark of social distinction among fine gentleman was a large plug hat fabricated from the rich fur of the beaver, and these quaint amphibious animals were therefore a premium. Thus male vanity inspired the lawless adventurer's thirst for peltries and profits and the resulting exploration, the heroic exploits, the bitter struggle of factions, even the war between nations, which characterized our frontier history.

The fur trade was facilitated by a loose system of forts or trading posts strategically located in Indian country, usually at stream junctions; but these served, as well, the purpose of protection against Indians. The forts were usually in the shape of a rectangle, with wooden palisades and two diagonally placed bastions or blockhouses. These posts reflected every degree of prosperity and pretention, from the small ramshackle forts of the "free traders" to the rather elaborate establishments of the American Fur Company.

A standard "pack" of furs contained 10 buffalo robes, 14 bear, 80 beaver, or 600 muskrat skins.

The most common trappers on the Upper Green River and its drainages were known as the free trappers. He labored mightily throughout most of the year to ensure himself a meager profit, then would squander his last penny, even plunge recklessly into debt, in order to gratify some trifling whim or vanity, or outdo a friend in generosity. He was commonly very gloomy, yet on occasion he could become boisterous and convivial, indulge in a gargantuan salty humor, or vie with his fellows in bragging of his beaver catch or his latest Blackfoot scalp.

The appearance of the trapper was in conformity with his singular character. His frame was gaunt and sinewy from his constant exertions, his face dark and swarthy from exposure to all the seasons, his eyes hawklike and glittering. His hair dangled to his shoulders, usually coarse and unkempt; but if a dusky forest maiden perchance became the object of his affections, the dark tresses might be carefully combed out, plaited neatly and tied up in multicolored ribbons. From necessity as well as romantic inclinations, he closely imitated the wild attire of the Indians, from

whom, indeed, he was frequently indistinguishable. His clothes were mainly of buckskin, frayed at the seams, which he fashioned himself during his enforced winter idleness. The hunting-shirt, which sometimes fell to his knees, might be of leather, coarse blue cotton, or ruffled calico of bright dyes. Below were leffings or pantaloons, reaching a pair of moccasins. Headgear consisted of low crowned hat of felt, a coonskin cap, or a bandana handkerchief adjusted like a turban. All of this picturesque raiment usually was profusely ornamented with gay embroidery, beadwork, porcupine quills, hawk's bills and feathers. From his shoulder was slung his powder horn, bullet mold, and a pouch for lead balls, together with flint and steel for firemaking. A belt or sash at the waist might hold a pipe, butcher knife, hatchet, pistols, whetstone and mending materials. Added to this cluster of traps and culinary utensils, a carotte of tobacco, a blanket of scarlet or a buffalo robe, a flintlock gun studded with brass tacks and a spirited horse, streaked with vermilion and caparisoned with eagle plumes.

Some of the outstanding traders and trappers of the Green River drainages were Jim Bridger, Henry Perry, Uncle Jack Robertson, Kit Carson, and Tom Fitzpatrick. Tom was called "Broken Hand" by the Crow Indians; but the other inter-mountain tribes called him "White Head" after he had a narrow escape from the Blackfoot Indians causing his hair to turn white.

EARLY TRAIL CONSTRUCTION

One of the earliest trails is known as the North Side Highline Trail which was constructed in about 1925. The trail starts at Whitney Ranger Station in the West Fork of the Bear River, thence eastward along the north slope of the Uinta Mountains and ends on the Ashley National Forest.

The trail is approximately 60 miles in length. A crew of 6 to 10 Forest Service men worked approximately 4 months a year for about 8 years constructing 5 to 10 miles of the trail per year.

The purpose of this trail was for communications, fire protection and recreational use. Part of this trail are still in use today and are maintained by the Forest Service personnel.

PIONEER LOGGING

Some of the early logging was done by the Union Timber Company in a period from about 1926 to 1936. Their camps and cabins were located about 20 to 30 miles southwest of Mountain View, Wyoming in the West Fork Smithsfork and Blackfork drainages.

The timber was used for railroad ties. A tie was a log 8 feet long and nine inches in diameter. These logs were flattened on two sides by the use of broad axes and were then hauled by horses to the nearest river bank. When spring came and the rivers were swollen from melting mountain snow, the ties were pushed into the high water and floated down stream to the nearest railroad yard, which was at Granger, Wyoming. Here ties were loaded onto railroad coal cars and shipped to Laramie, Wyoming for creosote treatment.

There were some problems, however. Cold spring nights would halt the melting snows and the water flow would subside. To solve this problem a dam was built near the head waters of the

Smith Fork in about 1930. During the night a wooden headgate would be closed to store up water. The next morning the headgate would be opened and sufficient water was turned into the slowed river to continue the flow of ties.

Only trees large enough to yield at least two ties eight feet long with a nine inch face were cut. Tree tops were trimmed into mine props. A good "tiehack" could easily trim out twenty-five ties a day and about ten props.

The annual drive down Smithsfork River consisted of 250,000 railroad ties and 100,000 props. The seventy mile drive lasted from twenty-five to thirty-five days each spring.

Early Ranger Conditions as Contrasted With the Present on the Mountain View Ranger District:

Information on early range conditions as to condition, production, trend, soil stabilization etc. are entirely absent. This is mainly because no studies were taken or even devised before the National Forest was set aside. Some of the old timers say conditions were much better then, while others say things have not changed. What may have been good conditions to one man may be only fair or even poor to the next.

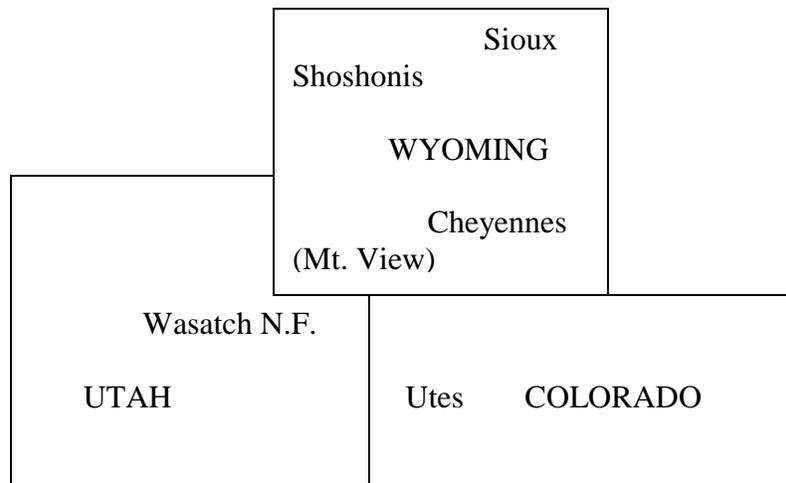
Ecologically speaking, before 1900 very few domestic animals used National Forest land; therefore, the largest impact was buffalo and other wild game. Now the district is used in most areas, to it's fullest capacity, and in some areas, over it's capacity. As a result of domestic use, areas in poor condition exist more now than before 1900. This, however, is established only by inference.

Local Indians – Their tribes, culture, trails, wars, and relations with Early Settlers Near What Is Now the Mountain View Ranger District on the Wasatch N.F.

Three main Indian tribes existed long before the setting aside of the Wasatch National Forest. They were: Utes, Shoshonis, and Cheyennes. However, Arapahoes, and Sioux occasionally passed through this district. The Sioux tribes were mainly plains indians except the Teton Sioux and Sontee Sioux, but due to their nomadism they occasionally visited this area. The Ute indians and Shoshonis hunted and trapped in the Uinta Mountains more than any other tribes.

The word Wasatch is derived from the Ute Indian's word meaning "pass". As early trappers traversed through the area, occasionally encountering indians, the indians generally pointed towards high snow covered passes and said the word "Wasatch". The trappers thought they meant the name of the mountains. Actually the indians meant the pass on the divide which now separates the Ashley National Forest and the Wasatch National Forest.

Following is a schematic drawing indicating the general location of each indian nation and their relative territory.



One of the so called “King of the Mountain Men”, namely Jim Bridger, was married to three indian women at various times; a Shoshoni woman, a Flathead and one from the Ute tribe. Many of the early trappers and traders married indian women. The squaws cooked for them, cared for them when ill, tanned hides – what better help could they find. The Earl of Dunroven describes the role of the indian woman as a Whiteman’s wife. This description applies directly to the early trappers who trapped throughout this district in the 1800’s.

“These men looked very happy and comfortable. Unquestionably the proper way for a man to travel with ease and luxury in these mountains was for him to take unto himself a helpmate chosen from the native population. No amount of art, industry, and study can rival the instinct displayed by savages in making themselves comfortable, and in utilizing for their own benefit all the accidents of nature. Nobody can choose a camp or build a fire as well and quickly as an indian. With an indian wife a man could devote himself to hunting, fishing or trapping without a care.

His camp was well arranged, the stock watered, picketed, supper cooked, his clothes and hunting gear looked after.”

In essence the indian woman was a willing and affectionate slave to the trappers throughout this area.

As was previously mentioned the Shoshonis were most closely associated with South-Western Wyoming. As a race, they are connected to the Utes and Piutes, who were settled to the south and west of them, but the Shoshonis were of a higher order of physical and mental development than the Utes and Piutes. On the other hand they are quite distinct from the Arapahoes. Seldom did the Shoshonis intermarry as each tribe looks down upon the other with true tribal pride and prejudice. The Shoshoni were slower than other tribes in accepting religious teaching.

In appearance the Shoshonis were of medium height. Polygamy was common among them; however, they were, as a rule, true to their ideas of virtue. The squaws were treated with good-

natured indifference, and children were the objects of great interest to men as well as women. When young, the women were graceful and comely, but they grew fat and shapeless with advancing years. The women were generally clothed in articles discarded by the men, and looked shabby in appearance. The Shoshonis were very skilled in bead work and took a great deal of pride in decorating their papooses. The hair of the men hung down in a thick braid on either side of the face, with a scalplock twisted on the top of the head through which an eagle feather was stuck. The blanket of course was their favorite garment.

Besides beadwork, the women were excelled in the painting of tanned hides, which were often quite elaborate. This tribe believed after death they were to be incarnated into some other form of animal life, according to the deeds done in the body.

If death occurred, the custom was to wrap their dead in skins and deposit them in caves or clefts between the rocks with a generous supply of material things for the journey into the unknown. Mourning for the dead consisted of three to five days of loud lamentation.

The most famous Shoshoni Indian was Chief Washakie who was born in 1804, became chief at the age of nineteen and remained leader of his tribe for nearly eighty years. Chief Washakie was five feet ten inches in height. He was a familiar figure on the streets of Evanston and Fort Bridger in the 1870's and was also a welcome guest in many homes.

Another member of the Shoshoni tribe was Sacajawea the noted squaw who guided the Lewis and Clark expedition.

In the courthouse in Evanston, Wyoming there is record of a treaty signed July 3, 1868 at Fort Bridger, which was at that time still part of Green River County, Utah. Among the indian rights involved in this treaty was that of continual hunting rights "on the unoccupied lands of the United States so long as game may be found thereon, and so long as peace subsists among the whites and Indians on the borders of the hunting districts."

Without question these indians spent a great deal of time on the Wasatch National Forest securing furs and pursuing game.

The old pioneer wagon road routes, pony express, and other major trails taken by early settlers near the Mountain View Ranger District, Wasatch N.F.

There were three main trails near the Mountain View Ranger District, and none actually on the district itself. They were: The Oregon Trail, Mormon Trail, and the Pony Express Trail.

Oregon Trail

This trail came into Wyoming, where immigrants generally purchased supplies at Fort Laramie. It then proceeded across South Pass and then on to Green River near the mouth of the Sandy, and dipped south to Fort Bridger. At Fort Bridger they purchased provisions again (at exorbitant prices). From Fort Bridger the Oregon Trail turned northwest toward what is now Kemmerer, Wyoming, then onward to Fort Hall.

In 1843 Marcus Whitman and Amos Lovejoy started west on this trail with an emigrant train of a thousand men, women and children. They had two hundred wagons and a thousand head of cattle and they carried implements and seed grain. The following year about fifteen hundred immigrants traveled the Oregon Trail, and in 1845, three thousand.

In 1848 the gold rush to California began. Twenty thousand people traveled the Oregon Trail in the early spring, and the number was greatly increased by midsummer. All sorts and conditions of humanity were represented, and great was the variety of vehicles, ranging from prairie schooner to hand carts.

In the summer of 1852, the year of the Cholera, over five thousand people died on the Oregon Trail.

Mormon Trail

This trail originated at Council Bluffs, Iowa and ended in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Mormons, after being bitterly persecuted, left Council Bluffs on April 5th, 1847 with 72 wagons, 93 horses, 52 mules, 68 oxen, 19 cows, and numerous dogs and chickens. There were 143 men with three women and two children all under the leadership of Brigham Young. On July 7, 1847 the first Mormon train camped at Fort Bridger and spent two days for rest and blacksmith repairs. From Fort Bridger, the Mormon immigration went in a southwesterly direction, leaving the so called "Bridger Butte" on their right, then struck the creek known as Three Mile Creek. They then continued onward to Piedmont then to Sulphur Creek and across the Bear River and on to Salt Lake City, Utah.

Pony Express

In 1854 William Gwin, Senator from California dreamed up the idea of the Pony Express; however, it did not materialize until 1859 when W.H. Russell became interested and a contract was made for his company to carry the mail by horseback from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California – a trip of 1,960 miles. There were 190 stations along this route, each equipped with horses and provisions for the riders. Pony Express stations near this area were at Piedmont (or Quakenasp Springs) and Needle Rock. At first the rate was ten dollars an ounce, but was later reduced to two dollars per ounce of mail. The average trip required ten days which was 196 miles per day. At the time of Lincoln's first inaugural the Pony Express carried his message at the rate of 255 miles per day. The Pony Express did not last long – 16 months, but ended as a business failure. In March 1862 the Indians made a concerted attack on the relay stations between the Platte and Bear River and captured every horse in the service. Thus the end of the Pony Express.

Other Trails

In 1851 two men known as Hackaday and Leggitt established a stage line to Salt Lake City from the Missouri. This route went to Fort Bridger then split, one line going to Fort Hall and the other to Salt Lake. The fare was one hundred and fifty dollars.

In 1858 Russell, Majors and Waddell bought out Leggitt and Hackaday and built stage stations every 20 miles apart, one at Fort Bridger, one on Big Muddy and one on the Bear River Crossing. These stations are approximately 30 miles north of the Wasatch N.F.

As can easily be seen, Fort Bridger was a main split in the trails and provided a means for immigrants to rest and purchase supplies.

Early Dairying on areas now in the Mountain View Ranger District, Wasatch N.F.

All available historical data indicates there was no dairying on this district. However, many long time residents believe several cows were maintained by the early loggers in this area. No concrete information is available to justify this.

COMPLETE HISTORY OF FLOODS ORIGINATING ON THE FOREST

The only known flood on the district was man-made. About 1933 the Beaver Meadows Reservoir dam broke. Not far below, the torrent of water went underground. Fifteen miles down hill it emerged, muddy and foaming, from "Paradise Spring" on Sheep Creek.

Any other flooding reoccurs periodically as high water in the spring. Water gauge readings from 1930-1960 on Smith's Fork at China Meadows Damsite and the Black's Fork indicate that water flow varies from 50% of average to 175% of average (or 350% of low water). Since much of this comes at once as spring runoff, it approaches what could be called flooding if it didn't occur so often.

A study of water impoundment and control by beavers on the north slope of the Uintas had made the Wasatch a nation-wide "household word" to wildlife students.

COMPLETE HISTORY OF THE CCC AND OTHER MAKE WORK PROGRAMS

C.C.C. work on the district was done for only two summers, in 1932 and 1933. [*Editor's Note: the CCC did not exist until 1933.*]

In the fall of 1933 a state relief camp was set up in the C.C.C. area to work local people. They built the state-line fence. In the summer of 1934 the state worked and camped transients on the district.

Much of the C.C.C. work on the north slope of the Uintas was done from a base camp in Manila, Utah. Also, a small camp was built on the East Fork of the Smithsfork near the present water gauge.

Work from the latter site mostly entailed the girdling of wolf trees, cleaning up deadfall near the roads and building roads. Major road projects were Black's Fork to Steel Creek, the Gilbert Creek dugway, and the West Fork of Blacksfork roads.

Work from Manila involved relocating and rebuilding the 200 mile Vernal – Mt. View telephone line. They also built part of the Mountain View Administrative Site. Men from this camp cut and burned insect infested trees from spike camps.

Funds from the Accelerated Public Works program financed campground cleanup in the winter of 1962. Insect-killed trees were bucked and removed, log barriers were dug up and moved farther from the center line in the Marsh Lake and Bridger Lake picnic areas, a two-unit brick toilet and a boat ramp were built at Marsh Lake.

EARLY WILDLIFE CONDITIONS AS CONTRASTED WITH THE PRESENT

With the advent of increased logging, deer have increased phenomenally. A conservative estimate of mule deer harvested off the district last fall was 800.

Once the beaver had a high and stable population that extended far down the Green River. During the period of the western fur trade, 1807 to 1843, fantastic numbers of beaver were trapped. By 1843 the Beaver seemed to have disappeared from the North Slope of the Uintas. For years they were “protected” by virtue of their small numbers. Eventually they were protected as water control and fisheries “engineers”. Now, they are trapped in controlled numbers.

At one time mountain sheep inhabited the alpine peaks and meadows. Even yet, horns and skulls are found. However, the presence of domestic sheep has brought in diseases that completely wiped them out.

Snowshoe rabbits and ruffed grouse are in such small numbers they are rarely hunted. Sage grouse are found more abundantly.

The few bear and coyotes that remain are kept down by the sheep herders.

Small herds of elk and moose are hunted in Utah and periodically in Wyoming. This is the only native herd of elk and moose in the state of Utah.

Bobcats and lynx are still commonly seen on the district. Mountain Lion (cougar) were once found in and around the mountains. Now they are rarely sighted on the district except during the spring when they follow the deer during migration.

Fishing is still good on many high mountain lakes and streams. Fishing pressure is so great on the lakes and streams accessible by road that they must be stocked throughout the summer.

BRIEF HISTORY OF MAJOR ROADS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Many of the roads on the district were trails before it became a National Forest (boundary was established in 1906). The settlers followed trails in wagons to small sawmills and pole cutting areas up the Henry’s Fk. Cr., Dahlgreen Cr., and to China Meadows prior to 1905. These roads were rebuilt and improved by FR&T and insect control funds from 1958 through 1962.

An early road built by the Forest Service was for communications between Fort Bridger and Fort Thornburg.

Prior to 1902 local users made a road up Gilbert Creek. This road, as improved by the Forest Service, was the deciding factor that brought tie hacking into the area in the latter 1920's. Some of the "tie-hack" logging wagon and sled roads are still used today. In 1932 the Forest Service rebuilt much of this road. C.C.C. work brought it out of a creek bed by building a dugway from the sagebrush bench onto the higher land. During 1960-1962 insect control funds were used to improve the road and to bypass the low, swampy stretch from Slab Park and south into Utah.

An east-west road was built prior to 1875, by local authority, from Bear River to Bridger Lake. Parts of this road were improved by C.C.C., insect control, and forest transportation funds. Eventually it will be a good road stretching from the west boundary of the North Slope to Flaming Gorge.

From Robertson via Fort Supply and Suicide Park a road following the West Fork of Smithsfork was built to Steel Creek prior to 1881 by local authority. It was improved in 1962.

Access needed by the Insect Control project from 1958 – 1965 prompted road improvement and a road-building program. Priority was given to district road network needs. Newly available FR&T funds built: Red Mountain Road (1957-62); Poison Mountain Road (1958-62); Middle Fork of Beaver Cr. Road (prior to 1893, 1902, and 1962); West Fork Beaver Cr. (1959); Hole-In-The-Rock Road (prior to 1893 & 1962); Horse Creek Road (Prior to 1901 and in 1964); and others mentioned before. Insect Control built 60 miles of low standard work roads and 10 miles of 2 lane road between 1958 and 1964.

The road to Bridger Lake – China Meadows was built via Dry Creek in 1931. This section was bypassed on F.S. land along the hillside above the creek in 1957.

The road network will be improved and filled in rapidly as management on the area is intensified.