

BRIDGER HISTORY NOTES

Source: Harmon Shannon
Justice of Peace
Pinedale, Wyoming

Mr. Shannon is a former U.S.F.S. District Ranger. He served as the principle District Ranger on the Green River Ranger District from November 16, 1922, to December 31, 1951.

The investigator found Mr. Shannon to be keen of mind and more than willing to share his portion of the Bridger National Forest's past history. Mr. Shannon was the last ranger on the Green River District without a formal education in the Science of Forestry.

The following text has been compiled to represent the period in which Mr. Shannon served as District Ranger. Some dates are not firm in his recall, hence we shall show them with a question mark. The outline below follows the pattern suggested in R-4 1658.41 supp. #153, 2/64. The topic headings will be shown, but the reader will be guided by the above reference for the sub-topics. Deviations or additional sub-topics will be stated within the text. *[Editor's note: this explains why numbers/letters are not always sequential.]*

4. Early Administration

a. Willow Creek Ranger Station

The following men have served at the Willow Creek Station:

1. John Allen – 1907-1917 (Documented)
2. _____ Terry
3. Bert Clark – 1921-1922 (a former Ranger from Cody 1916-1919)
4. Harmon Shannon – 1922-1926

This Ranger Station changed to a Guard Station in 1926.

b. Kendall Ranger Station

1. George M. Glover 1903-?
2. Charles Bayer
3. Doc W. B. Rickert
4. Bert Cheesman
5. Harmon A. Shannon 1927-1940

This Ranger Station changed to a Guard Station about 1940?

c. Green River Ranger District Headquarters, Pinedale

1. Harmon A. Shannon 1940-1951
2. Darrel Fluckiger
3. Paul Haarala _____-1961
4. James R. Moorhead 1961-?

The Kendall Guard Station was a former headquarters for the Bonneville National Forest. (Dates unknown at this time.) The Supervisor had his residence and office in some of the vacant tie-cabins.

In 1904, Zeph Jones, Forest Supervisor, had his headquarters at Kendall.

Henry Hall was the first Forest Supervisor to have his headquarters in Pinedale.

- e. Never enough money was appropriated to do the jobs assigned to each ranger district. Funds were appropriated or allotted to specific jobs. Range improvement money came from the grazing fees paid by the Supervisor Office and redistributed the following year to the districts. This money was seldom proportioned back to the district from whence it came.
- f. Prior to 1945, the District Ranger provided his own automobile. He was paid .05 cents a mile for travel expenses; Ranger Shannon recalls how they fussed in the supervisor office to hold the mileage down.
- g. Fire detection and suppression was no problem during the 1920's and early 1930's. Kendall residents would flock to a fire on a moment's notice, with or without advising the ranger. As a result, the cost to the government for small fires was relatively high. Ranger Bert Cheesman had this same problem when he was at Kendall. Supervisors could not understand why costs were so high. Mr. Shannon reminisced that the cost wasn't the important thing . . . the rangers were getting cooperation and that's what really counted.

Ranger Shannon had his first fire in the fall of 1923. He thinks that local people were busy setting up a still and flipped a cigarette into the brush. The fire was observed and before long, 14 people showed up to fight the blaze. They confined the fire to 60 acres. This fire cost the government \$900.00 and Ranger Shannon got a healthy lecture from the Forest Supervisor for letting the cost run up so quickly.

5. General Administration

- b. A large CCC camp was located near the big bend of the Green River. The only year this camp operated at full capacity was during 1933. Afterwards, they operated the men from scattered spike camps. Captain Church was the army administrator and Tyrus Gill was the civilian commander.

The New Fork Lake Dam was rebuilt in 1930.

- f. When the dam on New Fork Lake broke in 1928, it caused considerable downstream havoc. The Alexander and Barlow ranches received a lot of damage. There was no loss of human life. The bridge on Boulder Creek was washed out. (This was a bridge near the town of Boulder.)

6. Watershed and Multiple Use Management

- a. In 1939, Ranger Shannon was asked to map the serious erosion areas on his district. (This map is still on the district.)
- b. See New Fork Dam Flood item 5f.
- c. Nothing was ever done in this field.
- d. Incidental – A Dr. Baker, from Texas A&M, used to bring Geology students with him for summer training on the Upper Green (mid 1930's). Dr. Baker was reportedly one of the geological survey men who mapped the Fremont Peak area in 1906. Ranger Shannon named Baker Lake after him. Scott Lake was also named by this Ranger for a Dr. Scott, who investigated the glaciers in this area. Dr. Turner was also an early investigator in this same area.

Dr. Baker is also the man who encouraged the first drilling for oil on Rock Creek and Tosi Creek.

- e. The term “Multiple Use” was familiar to this ranger during his reign, but no specific plans were ever laid down.

(Tyus Gill, prior to the CCC job, had cruised portions of the Green River District with Tom Mathews (1931)).

The camps were disbanded in 1939.

Spike camps were located as follows:

1. Fremont Lake
2. New Fork Lake

After 1933, Fremont Lake became the main camp.

- c. The CCC boys built a new station at Kendall and Willow Creek in 1933. They also built the Jim Creek Guard Station cabin. (This cabin was moved, about 1952, to its present location on Boulder Creek.) This program was responsible for many other projects that appear later in the text under more appropriate headings.

- e. The following out cabins were noted by Ranger Shannon:

1. Faler Cabin – overnight stop, origin unknown.
2. Clear Creek Ranger Cabin- overnight stop, origin unknown.
3. Spring Creek Park Ranger Station
4. Little Sheep Lookout Cabin – built after the fire of 1912.

The Green River Road during the 1920's was a mere wagon trail on the east side of the river.

A bridge was constructed across the Green River, near the Moose Creek outlet, in 1923. Frank Allen was the forest engineer and Joe Martin was the ARF engineer for this project.

7. Range Management

- a. Nothing big or important was ever done in this field. Prior to Ranger Shannon's time, they laid small squares of land out but were often insignificant or hard to interpret. Proper use was estimated rather than computed. An approach to deferred grazing was tried.
- b. Prior to 1930, no sheep were grazed on the upper reaches of the Green River. Petitions were presented for the grazing of sheep by the following sheep ranches: John Rahm – Willow Creek; Lumen and Sons – Green River; Mocroft- Beaver and Twin Creek.

Little attempt has been made to record accurate estimates for cattle and sheep numbers because of the confusion of early day policies. This information would be more reliable if obtained from official documents rather than memory. Ranger Shannon did mention that approximately 12,00[0?] head of cattle went on his district per year. He also brought out the fact that permits meant little to the ranchers. They knew the forest was understaffed and could not maintain a strict vigil over numbers. Mandatory grazing cuts were equally as hard to enforce.

- h. Driveways already established before 1922. In 1937-38, Ranger Shannon moved a section of the Upper Green Driveway fence closer to the Green River Road. (Fence opposite the Circle S nowadays.) Before the change was initiated, a large triangular patch of ground in this area was being grubbed out by drifting cattle.

8. Timber Management

- a. Jay Hahn made a timber survey on the Green River District about 1926.

Tom Mathew and Tyrus Gill and party made a survey cruise in 1931. (North Beaver - Twin Creek – Rock Creek) Terry Skarara and Archie Murchie cruised the Gypsum Creek Area after 1931.

- b. The Green River District has in its possession, a copy of the Green River Working Circle Plans dated April 6, 1929.
- c. Large sales on the Green River District from 1920 to 1943:
 - 1. Upper Green Lumber Co. – Boulder Basin, 1920-25 – Lumber
 - 2. Charlie Thomas – North Beaver – 1924-1943 – Lumber
 - 3. Ryder Melgaard – Little Flattop – 1943 – Mine props
- d. No timber planting was attempted on timber sale areas.
- i. In the Green River Canyon, near Clear Creek, Ranger Shannon, in the late 1930's, made an attempt to control an outbreak of mountain pine beetle. He thought this area might break out if left alone to fester. With the aid of CCC boys, they sprayed and burned about 60 trees. (The standing tree was sprayed with oil and then ignited.)
- l. During the 1940's (about the same time a large amount of wind damage was done near Fremont Lake) scattered pockets of blowdown occurred on the Green River District. Ranger Shannon remembers finding blowdowns on Clear Creek, Gypsum Mountain, South Gypsum, and Indian Park above Soda Lake. (I believe we found one this fall on the eastern slopes of South Gypsum Creek, just below the wilderness boundary (T.J.K. & G.E.S. 1964). He further concluded that this may very well have been the start of the spruce bark beetle epidemics of the late 1950's and early 1960's. The presence of the spruce bark beetle was noticed by early investigators in the area of Moose Creek.

9. Wildlife Management

- a. The boundaries of a game preserve known as the Popo Agie is not clear in Ranger Shannon's mind. This preserve started on the Pinedale District and crossed the mountains onto the Green River District. It had been established prior to his arrival. He reports that it was abandoned during the late 1920's.

The Upper Green Preserve was established in 1930 and covered most of the Roaring Fork and Porcupine areas. In 1940, this area was opened to controlled permit hunting only. This was continued for 3 or 4 years and was then opened to all hunters.

- c. Excellent cooperation was received by both organizations.
- e. ELK: Ranger Shannon found old game reports compiled by a previous Kendall Ranger, Dr. W. B. Rickert during 1916. Shannon and Thompson divided the district in 1938 and started their own game count. They recorded the locations and numbers of sighted elk on maps. When they compiled their findings, the 1916 map and 1938 map were almost identical. The numbers of elk counted in 1938 revealed about 1100 head. This figure was give or take about 25 head from the 1916 count.

One day during December of 1937, it rained steady for 36 hours. The 16 to 18 inches of snow already present settled and froze solid after the unusual rain stopped. As a result, the elk in this area could not obtain the proper forage and browse. Ranger Shannon estimated in his reports that spring, a winter kill of 15 – 20% of the elk herd. This occurred in the area below the Green River Lakes Campground. Similar winter kill figures came from the Jackson, Wyoming area.

DEER: There used to be a buck only season near the Willow Creek Ranger Station.

Large deer populations were never noted in the Upper Green River Area. Ranger Shannon concluded that there is more deer today than there ever was during the 1920's and 1930's.

MOUNTAIN SHEEP: No permit was needed, during the 1920-29 period, to hunt sheep. Two large rams were killed by vacationing forest personnel near the Upper Green River Lake in 1924. Ranger Shannon recalls seeing sheep often in his travels through the wilderness areas. The one outstanding observation he made about wild sheep was the fact that he always saw many more ewes and lambs than yearlings.

MOOSE: No moose hunting was allowed during his time as ranger. In 1952, 90 or 100 permits were issued to hunters.

BEAR: Ranger Shannon thinks there are more black bear nowadays. Grizzly bear: In 1943, Ranger Shannon and Bob Johnson were riding horseback through the Lime Creek Sheep and Goat Allotment and suddenly came across several dead sheep. On a hill above them was a large black object. Bob Johnson urged his horse over that way to get a closer look. Unknowingly, he had placed himself between the sow and her two bushed-up cubs. Ranger Shannon recalls Bob came riding back from the other side of the hill at a mighty fast pace, with the sow hot in pursuit. This was the last grizzly Ranger Shannon recalls seeing.

MOUNTAIN LION: About 1923 or 1924, Will Barnes (W.O.), Ranger Cheesman and Forest Supervisor Faure [Favre?] shot a lion near Green River Lake. Bill Clemens (forest worker) saw a 1/2 - 2/3 grown lion on the slopes of Gypsum Mountain in 1937 or 1938.

Godfrey Rahm got several toes off a lion in a trap at Green River Lake around 1904.

LYNX – BOBCAT: These two cats have increased more off the forest than on in the last 30 years.

COYOTES: This animal was abundant before the 1930's. When sheep were started on the forest, the program for liquidating the coyote took a more serious turn.

BEAVER: There was a closed trapping season on the beaver in those days, but poachers were taking their toll.

OTTER: Bert Hill was reported to have trapped or seen an otter near the red dugway on the Green River Road.

WOLVERINE: A shepherd who had been camped at Sawmill Meadows the summer of 1937, saw a wolverine. The same year, Ed Hill reported seeing a wolverine to Ranger Shannon. Another report came from Jack Reynolds seeing this critter near Clear Creek.

WOLVES: A reliable wolf report came to Ranger Shannon from _____ Robinson, who was in the Kinky Creek Area in the late 1920's. Ranger Shannon said reports of wolf sightings continued into the early 1930's. As long as he was ranger, he never saw a dead one brought in to the station.

- j. The boys from the CCC camp did stream improvement work on Rock Creek and Tosi Creek in 1933-34.

FISH PLANTING: Ranger Shannon estimates that he helped stock or plan the stocking of 60 high mountain lakes between 1924 and 1939. As a net result, about 90 to 100 lakes now have fish in them from the original stocked lakes.

Cooks Lake, in 1929, received the first known batch of Golden Trout in this area. Faler Lake and the Bridger Lakes were planted to Goldens in 1938. Clear Lake and Elbow Lake were planted to Goldens in 1930. Peak Lake and Stonehammer Lake received their first Golden Trout in 1935. Incidental stocking were also tried on the lower lakes:

1. Mosquito Lake – No success.
2. Dollar Lake – Montana Grayling – No success.
3. Brook Lake – No success.

Warm Springs, located just above the Kendall Bridge, has an unusual sub-species of Dace in its waters. This Dace (*Rhinichthys Osculus Thermalis*) only occupies the natural warm waters of this unusual creek. The fish obtains a maximum length of 2 inches. The water has been recorded at about 84.5° F and running about 3.4 feet per second over a maximum depth of 12 inches. (J. Simmons - 1946)

- p. ENFORCEMENT: In 1933, Ranger Shannon collected enough evidence against a poacher to win a conviction by jury trial.

Fred Rossale killed an elk out of season on Tepee Creek. He was found guilty and fined \$75.00. Ranger Shannon believes this may have been the first conviction of a game violation by jury trial in this area.

10. Engineering

- a. Not much was ever done after the initial surveys were made in the mid 1900's.
- e. The Green River Lake Road was completed in 1934. The present bridge crossing over the Green River was built in 1947. The bridge crossing over the Green River near Moose Creek was torn down in 1948. Bridges on Tosi Creek and Wagon Creek were rebuilt by the CCC's in 1933.

- f. The following trails were built in 1928:
 - 1. From Green River Lake to Green River Pass.
 - 2. Three Forks Park to Trail Creek.
 - 3. Martin to Double Top Mountain.

The following trail was built in 1926:

Palmer to Summit.

The following trail was built in 1925:

Palmer Canyon.

The Lowline Trail, from Kendall to North Beaver was kept open and frequently used.

Stroud Peak Trail – 1937

Crows Nest to Long Lake Trail – 1935

Porcupine section of New Fork Lake Trail – 1934

Glacier Trail – 1934 – 1935 – 1936

Section Corner Lake Trail – 1930 – 1931

- i. The original telephone lines on the Green River District were as follows:

Pinedale to Hay Gulch then past the Binning Ranch, - Branch to Willow Lake, to Willow Creek, - to New Fork Lake on through McDowell Flat, - Branch to Boulder Basin, - to Kendall down west side of Green River then crossing over to the Wells Ranch and up to the top of Little Sheep Mountain and thence into the Green River Campground.

From Kendall to Kinky Creek to Dubois, Wyoming, to Jackson, Wyoming, - branch across Pinyon Ridge to Sherman Ranger Station (Region 2) -. This branch was abandoned before 1922.

From Kendall to North Beaver Creek, to Hoback Basin, to Jackson.

Ranger Shannon had his first radio in 1940 at the Green River Office in Pinedale. This was a large stationary A.M. set. They tried to use a portable radio at the Green River Lake Campground, but the fire guard would never use it.

12. Recreation

- a. There were not many facilities for public camping prior to 1933. Before this date, Green River Lake area had but a few pit toilets and a few, scattered, crude tables.

It was in the fall of 1927 that the G-P resort was first laid out.

In 1925, the boy scout camp was laid out. There was a proposed campsite for a girl scout camp also.

- c. New Fork Lake Campground was constructed in 1933 as was the Green River Lake Campground. Both were built by the CCC's. (The New Fork Campground was abandoned and moved to another site in 1964.) Ranger Shannon tried to convince the S.O. that the proposed New Fork Campground should be built at the upper narrows of the lake. The supervisor did not think it was a good idea because of the extra road work involved.

The Green River Lake Campground was built with 30 units and flush toilets. (This will be the only time in the history of the Forest Service where a campground was over-built). Ranger Shannon recalls that it was quite some time before the campground received full use. The overall camping pressure for the 1930's – 1920's and 1940's was light to medium according to Judge Shannon.

- d. One of Ranger Shannon's first jobs was to lay out a summer home site near Fremont Lake. (1922)

Following next on the summer home site was the present day area of Crow Creek. (? date) The cabin that presently occupies the only home site on Willow Lake was established in 1925 – 1926.

The ground work and the permit for a resort at the Clear Creek Falls was given favorable consideration, but never materialized.

- g. Trail Riders – Trail Rider trips started on this district in 1935. They were conducted in 1936, 1937, and 1938. They were started again about 1958.?

14. Fire Control

Little Sheep Mountain Fire 1912.

New Fork Lake Fire – September 1923. Started by a cigarette – 60 acres – local people making “moonshine”.

New Fork Canyon Fire – July 18, 1931 – started by escaped campfire – 1200 acres – boy scout troop on hike in the area.

South Fork of Fish Creek Fire – Fall 1934 – started by escaped campfire – 90 acres – (scattered through limber pine and rocks) – shepherd.

North Beaver Fire – 1943 – logging operations - ? acres - ? cause, burned mostly piled slash.

Early P.D. Fire Guards that helped Ranger Shannon out quite a bit in the 1920's and 1930's:

Frank Dew – Big Twin Creek

George Pape – Willow Creek

Ranger Shannon gives credit to Kendall rancher, Richard Hecox for putting out what might have been a bad fire. Mr. Hecox extinguished a fire in the tie-hack slash east of Kendall.

Chimney Butte Fire – Fall of 1931 – cause ?, - 20 acres – near the old Cooper Timber Sale.

- d. When the Long Lake Fire broke out in 1948, they summoned the aid of smokejumpers from McCall, Idaho. The wind was too much for them to handle, so the jumper foreman cancelled the jump. (D-5 fire)
- e. In 1931, they had their first organized fire patrol on the district. Men on horseback would ride from L.O. point to L.O. point. During dry spells they would put up temporary observers.

Airplanes were not used during Ranger Shannon's time to observe or drop cargo to going fire crews. He remembers using a fire pump (water) on the 1940 Cottonwood /fire for the first time. Chainsaws were not used during his fire experience either.

- h. The boy scout leader who was responsible for the 1200 acre fire in New Fork Canyon paid a \$35.00 fine.

A sheepherder paid a \$45.00 fine for a series of fires on Tosi Creek. They traced 13 different little fires to this man during the summer of 1937.

- i. They put up fire signs, but presuppression work was not a major concern.

15. Personnel

- d. It wasn't until the early 1930's that safety became a by word on this district.

Thomas J. Kovalicky

1965