

*This is a transcription of a photocopied document cataloged in the R4 History Collection as R4-1680-2009-0396. Original page breaks, grammar, punctuation, and misspellings have been retained.*

## PINEDALE DISTRICT HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### Natural Features

This district is located on the southwest portion of the Wind River Mountains. The Wind Rivers are a major mountain range in west central Wyoming. The range is 125 miles long by 40 miles wide; extending NW and SE between latitudes 42 & 44. This is primarily a high rugged range with much of the area above timberline. Fremont Peak (13730) is the highest point on the district. It was named for General John C. Fremont. These mountains have stood through at least two glacial periods; it is a young area geologically speaking. Glaciation has formed an estimated 1000 lakes on the Bridger side of the mountains.

### Range Resources

#### History

The first sheep were taken on the district area about 1889 or 1890. According to William D. Thompson, son of Joseph Thompson, of the Joe Thompson and Sons Sheep Outfit. A man named Jim Dickey took the first sheep into Big Sandy Openings. McCrady and Blucher grazed sheep on the fringes of what is now the Bridger N.F. This was about 1888. They did not attempt to take the sheep further into the mountains at this time.

Around the turn of the century the lower ranges became crowded, forage became short and sheep outfits began looking further into the mountains for summer feed. In 1902 or 03 there were five bands of sheep from Utah in the Silver Creek Drainage area. There were also several bands belonging to the Thompson Sheep Outfit. The line, separating sheep and cattle (maintained by the cattlemen) started at the headwaters of East Fork and followed the river until it ran out of the foothills. The line then followed the river until it ran out of the foothills. The line then followed the foothills to Big Sandy Creek; thence down Big Sandy to Yellow Wash to Green River. It followed Green River to Fontenelle Creek; then up the creek to Miller Mountain and across the mountain to Deadline Ridge. These sheep were across this line which fact precipitated the Raid Lake Incident.

In the summer of 1902 or 03, the difficulties between sheep and cattle interests were at a peak. The forest reserves had not been created and there was no real control over grazing on public lands. Livestock numbers were high and lack of range management had created a serious range shortage problem.

Sheep and cattle from Utah and Idaho were being brought into the area and the local livestock interests had to compete with them. Grass was at a premium, an ungrazed area was almost a thing of the past.

Five bands of sheep from Utah, owned by Peterson Brothers, and several local bands of Joseph Thompson and Sons Sheep Company were in the South Fork Area. The bands sometimes became intermixed and it was necessary to build corrals where the sheep could be separated. Such a corral was

built in the timber behind the old South Fork Guard Station. (The buildings of course were not there until 1915).

A band of Utah sheep had been run into the corral in the evening so the sheep of a local sheepman could be separated from them. The Utah sheep had then been taken from the corrals and bedded on a nearby ridge. At dawn the next morning a group of wild cowmen rode into the sheep camps. They roughed up the herders and camp jacks, tied them to trees and proceeded to cut and bust up pack and camp equipment. They also broke several of the herders rifles over rocks. From here they went out to the sheep corral. By this time some of them were feeling a twinge of conscience. They recognized the brand of their neighbors sheep and rather than harm these they proceeded to drive them from the pens and replace them with the Utah band which was feeding nearby. Safely corraled, these sheep were killed with guns, clubs, rocks, and whatever else was available. When this proved to be enough to excite the cowmen, but too slow to suit them, they then proceeded to round up all the sheep they could find (feeling for neighbors forgotten at this stage) and wasted considerable time trying to drive them into a lake.

The sheepmen were not completely without protection during this time. Most of them were tied in camp, one man, Tom Thompson, had escaped with his rifle and was hidden in the timber. He could have done considerable damage, but his brothers were among those tied in the camp and he feared retaliation on them. In the heat of sheep killing he had fired a single shot at one of the raiders he recognized and especially disliked. He had always been know for his marksmanship and the man was an easy target, his later remark --- "I'll never know how I missed the -----."

Another tragedy occurred as a sidelight to this violent action on the part of the cowmen. Several miles away, on the East Fork River, a herder was informed of the actions of the cowmen. The fear that this information stirred in this lonely man caused him to take his own life rather than face the violence of the raiders. Chances are he would never have seen them but the possibility was too much.

Another of the men who had been man-handled, tied and blind-folded, went blind in later years. People felt that a dirty handkerchief blindfold was the cause.

There were possible repercussions to this that cannot be written as history. One of the raiders met with a fatal accident after an argument with a sheepman at the bar at Leckie Ranch. Other incidents also occurred but factual data has not been given. Bill Thompson tells of the arguement and the accident as just exactly that, he does not elude to a killing.

After the incident neither cattle nor sheep grazed in the area for several years. Ranger G. E. Belknap reports the sheep range largely overgrazed in 1913.

A remittance man from England, Kenneth Meek, and his partner, Abner Luman, followed Jim Dickey into the area of the Big Sandy Openings. Meeks Lake is named for this man. Meek had been a member of a wealthy family in England, his sport had been fox hunting. He brought hunting hounds into the area and made sport of running coyotes the way he had chased foxes in England.

William D. Thompson reports that the establishment of the forest reserve, the issuing of permits and creating allotments had a stabilizing effect on the sheep industry that no other event could have given.

Cattle use started on the forest area at about the same period as sheep use. They ran in the Silver Creek Area and north. They used only the foothill area, in 1911 one of the Jensens stated that he could not afford to drive cattle into the high country. Cattle numbers, as well as sheep, reached a very high peak just prior to the creation of the forest reserves. They have been on a decline since and will be until the range is properly stocked.

Interesting sidelights to the areas range resource and livestock industry are found in some of our district documents. The early practice was to cut hay only for saddle and work horses and for milk cows. Range cattle were wintered out. The winter of 89 and 90 is reported to have killed about 80% of the cattle in the area.

Early livestock people, in reporting of this operation, gave the following information: Homesteading had little effect on the cattle business; the operation was carried out with very little overhead, nearly all profit; they operated with mixed breeds; cattle were sold as two or three year olds; some by the head, some by pound. Some years wolves took one third of the calf crop.

Conservation practice on range resource, before forest reserves, amounted to a gentlemen agreement; to use lightly the following year areas which were heavily used in a current year.

Following is a list of S&G permittees from 1910: B.W. Brady – Jensen Bros. – F. Schiestler – W. Dunton – T.S. Taliaferro – M.J. Larson Sheep Co. – Midland Livestock Co. – Lander Land and Livestock – J. Thompson – T. Thompson – W. Thompson – J. L. Thompson – Leckie Sheep Co. – Abner Luman.

This is a list of some important pioneers of the livestock industry in this area and where they were located:

Sam Leckie : Big Sandy (one of the oldest ranches in the area) he ran a small store and an establishment known as “Sheepherders Delight”.

Morris Johnson: Muddy Creek (Ranch now owned by Jensen’s)

George Hittle: East Fork

Knute Jomen: East Fork  
Fred Morris: Near East Fork  
Eli Morris: Near East Fork  
Ras and Baldy Lovatt: Silver Creek  
John Vible: Silver Creek (also had a store)  
Tom King: Silver Creek  
Roy Ditton: Boulder  
Macintosh: Boulder  
Harvey Hoff: Pinedale  
Vint Faler and Father: Pole Creek  
Alva Thompson: Boulder  
Oscar Evans: Boulder  
Fred Fisher: Pole Creek  
Ed P. Steele: Boulder  
Wm. Postel: Boulder

#### Timber Resource

Timber from the area which is now Pinedale District, was used for house and building logs before the creation of the forest. The Sweeny Creek and Elkhart Park areas yielded timber for some of the earliest dwellings in the Pinedale area. The first sawmill was established on Boulder Creek about 1895 by Sandy Marshall.

The timber industry has never grown to large proportions on the district. As far as we know there have been no tie-hacking or mine timber operations here. Through the years there have been numerous small sawmill operations, but they have not grown large and much of the district has never been timbered.

Timber stands on the district bear out the stories of several large fires around 1900. Old records show that one of the Titcomb brothers stated that when he climbed Fremont Peak in 1902 he saw fires burning everywhere in the forest. A large one in Sweeny Creek. He had to travel around them in order to reach the peak. He said the settlers would ride out and check them occasionally but made no concentrated effort to put them out.

William D. Thompson reports an incident of a man named Billy Helm. Helm

had herded sheep in the Irish Canyon area through the summer, and he made the statement, "I'll fix that place so we can drive sheep through there without being bothered with all the down timber." That fall after the sheep were taken out of the area he started a fire. Mr. Thompson states that the sheepmen still call this the big burn. Charred stumps and other evidence indicates that it did cover a large area. Mr. Thompson said if he remembered correctly, Billy Helm served time in prison for this act.

### Recreation Resources

Recreation use has steadily increased to its present high level. Some of the first evidence of recreation use we have record of are as follows: In 1910 the local ranger recommended that the area near Big Sandy Lake be closed to sheep grazing and reserved for recreation and ranger horse use. (This was apparently closed only for the one season). In 1915 Ranger Geo. E. Belknap, recommended closing of the Porcupine Lakes to accomodate recreation horses.

The first Trail Riders to visit this area were in 1935. Currently one or more large Trail Rider groups visit the area each year.

From the origin of the forest and the district, recreation has been the fastest growing resource. It promises to continue growth at an even higher rate.

### Wildlife Resources

The first fish planting in this area was in 1912. This was a hit and miss proposition. They were planted because the tourists had caught all of the fish in the lower streams. The Forest Service made their first plants in 1919, there was a cooperative agreement with the State Game Warden in this year. There were 75,000 planted in Fremont Lake and tributaries and streams outside the forest.

The great elk migrations, into the desert, came to a close with fencing and intensive management. Deer and moose have increased in numbers since the establishment of the forest. Elk have increased from the days of market and hide hunters. Grizzley bear, mountain sheep, wolverines and wolves have decreased in the area, some have disappeared. The small fur bearing animals have returned to the scene with the protection afforded them on forest land.

William D. Thompson reports seeing 200 head of elk killed, in East Fork River Area, for their teeth and hide. Other old timers report similar happenings.

Game populations are in good shape generally. A few problem areas exist but they are being straightened out as they arise.

## General Interest

The Astorians on their way to Oregon held the first organized hunt ever held in Wyoming.

Robert Stuart and [had] his party stopped at the site of Pinedale in 1811. They found the remains of a large Indian encampment at what is the present town site.

In 1867-68-69, Joe Lamreaux, a former Hudson Bay Trapper, cut hay with a sythe on Lamreaux Meadows. He raked this hay with a wooden hand rake and hauled it with an ox team to Fort Stambough where it was used for cavalry horses.

Joe Himmelsbach cut hay on Dutch Joe Meadows. The hay was cut with a mowing machine and raked with a team rake. He was one of two dutch trappers who had a cabin in the area. His partner was Johnny Penny. They were known as Dutch Joe and Dutch John.

Jule Coffee and George Quinn are also mentioned as having cut hay in the Big Sandy Drainage.