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# Mostly Division "R" Days

*Reminiscences of the Stormy, Pioneering Days of the Forest Reserves*

HAROLD D. LANGILLE*

In 1892 I joined my mother and eldest brother at Cloud Cap Inn, the pioneer snowline hostel of the Northwest, built in 1889 on the north side of Mount Hood. My vocation was assistant handyman about the Inn. My avocation was guiding and my hobby was collection of the alpine flora.

There the alpine forest of the Cascade Range was first made accessible, and to that once-famed atmosphere of "Tant Sannie's" hospitality came luminaries of many sciences. It was my great and rare privilege there to come to know such men as Gannett, Pinchot, Newell, Coville, Mer-

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*These autobiographical memoirs, written by the late Mr. Langille in 1941, depict with contemporary color incidents in the formative, controversial days of the forest conservation movement prior to 1905. He was for a few years in Division "R" of the General Land Office, Department of the Interior, "the praiseworthy little band" that was attempting to regulate grazing and stop timber trespass on the newly created forest reserves, in inspecting the meagre fieldforce and its administration, in, arbitrating complaints against the "reserve system" and in making converts to the government's new forest policy.

This story deals with the period prior to 1905, at which time the forest reserves were transferred by President Theodore Roosevelt from the Department of the Interior to the Bureau of Forestry, Department of Agriculture, soon to be the Forest Service, and the forest reserves were thereafter to be national forests.

Mr. Langille's original text (which was not written for publication) has been somewhat abridged, a few phrases clarified and footnotes added.

Harold Douglas Langille, born in Nova Scotia in 1874, was brought up in the upper Hood River Valley, Oregon. From 1900 to 1905 he was in government service (except for one winter at the Yale Forest School). Later he was timber broker, consulting forest engineer, mining prospector, major in World War I. He died in Salem, Oregon, in 1954.

THORNTON T. MUNGER.

riam, Bailey, Sargent, Brewer;[1] each of whom left an impress of character and devotion upon a boy who sat at their feet, of foresight and profundity upon the awakening issue of national forest administration.

To the Inn in 1892 came ardent Professor J. G. Lemmon of California (author of *Handbook of West-American Conebearers*) and his estimable artist wife. Under the spell of their fine enthusiasm and tireless search for new knowledge of the alpine conifers, "nut pine" soon came to be *Pinus albicaulis*, "black hemlock" was familiarly referred to as *Tsuga mertensiana*. I learned to talk about the local species with a flow of words well calculated to impress the uninitiated.

By proclamation dated September 28, 1893, President Cleveland created the Cascade Range Forest Reserve, one of the first forest withdrawals.[2] It extended almost across Oregon, embraced Mount Hood and its environment—my habitat.

The order presumed to bar from the reserve area the wooly flocks that annually swarmed over the grassy, flower-decked slopes, grazed to our doorstep in clouds of dust. But the atavism and appetence of the sheepmen did not yield so readily to remote command. For years their bands had roamed the highlands; no executive order could bar the way to pastures lush and sweet waters flowing.

As the season of 1895 came on the usual clouds of dust rose from the outer hills, moved toward our sanctuary. To test the potency of executive order the invasion was reported to the United States District Attorney and presently Assistant Attorney Schnabel and Special Agent Nixon were led to two bands of trespassing sheep. The dust subsided.

The cases of U. S. *vs.* J. H. Sherar and U. S. *vs.* Phil Brogan were heard by Federal Judge Bellinger in September 1896 and dismissed on grounds of "insufficient information, and facts sufficient to constitute crime"; but Judge Bellinger issued an injunction "strictly commanding and enjoining J. H. Sherar, his clerks, agents, servants and workmen, under pains and penalties; to desist from trespassing and herding sheep upon" the forest reserves. These, I believe, were the first cases of attempted reserve administration in the Pacific Northwest.

An acrimonious hullabaloo followed. Chambers of Commerce passed resolutions, railed against usurpation of the rights of freemen. Columns of the press were filled with disputatious arguments for and against the withdrawal of public lands from free public access, and the right of the public to do upon them as it pleased—and had always done.

On August 22, 1896, the Forest Commission of the National Academy of Sciences, requested by President Cleveland to report upon the advisability of extending forest reserve withdrawals, arrived at the Inn. It consisted of savants Sargent, Brewer, Goode and Gannett, and others who were not there.[3]

A lad in overalls provoked much bantering of the late great Sargent by correcting his classification of *Abies nobilis*, and pointing out a variable which Sargent later described as *Picea engelmannii, var. columbiana*. I do not know whether or not this subspecies has since been recognized. For two days a stripling of the bush absorbed the wisdom and profundity of these master minds. That visitation blazed the way to my brief career in government forestry.

And so we carried on as voluntary guardians of the forest within our locale until administration was established. Expanding acquaintance among the bureau chiefs in Washington developed many esteemed friendships; the objectives of the reserve policy came into full view.

1. Henry Gannett, geographer U. S. Geological Survey; Gifford Pinchot, later chief of the U. S. Forest Service; F. H. Newell, chief of the U. S. Reclamation Service; Frederick V. Coville, botanist U. S. Department of Agriculture; C. Hart Merriam, chief of the U. S. Biological Survey; Vernon Bailey, chief field naturalist U. S. Biological Survey; Charles S. Sargent, director of the Arnold Arboretum; William H. Brewer, scientific explorer, professor at Yale.

2. Now parts of the Mt. Hood, Willamette, Umpqua, Deschutes and Rogue River National Forests.

3. The entire official membership of this Commission was Charles S. Sargent, chairman; Gen. Henry L. Abbott, army engineer; Alexander Agassiz, curator of the Harvard Museum of Zoology; William H. Brewer; Walcott Gibbs (ex-officio) chemist and physicist; Arnold Hague, geologist of the Geological Survey; and Gifford Pinchot, then a practicing consulting forester.

In the spring of 1900 Geographer Henry Gannett of the Geological Survey asked me to assist Fred G. Plummer in making an examination of the Cascade Mountain area of central Washington, between the Mount Rainier and Washington Forest Reserves. Thus I was inducted into government service, got my first lessons in topography, timber estimating, mapping. Fred was an accomplished chorographer, the only one I have ever known who could depict the chorography of a mountain from a single station at the base of one side.

With the burgeoning of spring in 1901 Mr. Gannett called upon me to make a topographic map and report upon conditions in the Cascade Range southward from Columbia River to a boundary south of Mount Hood. I protested my lack of knowledge of instruments required for topographic mapping, was assured that sufficiently accurate results were obtainable by plane table and telescopic alidade.

I wouldn't have known a telescopic alidade from a perambulator. My need for education as an engineer was immediate. It was urgent. So I hurriedly sent three dollars to the nearest bookseller, received a two-volume set of "Gillespie's Surveying," which I still treasure.When the outfit arrived the plane table was set up on the back stoop. Knowing from long residence in the community about where north was, orientation was not difficult. A sight at the stovepipe on Ho My's washhouse began my experience as a topographic engineer.[4]

At about this time administration was established on the Cascade Range Forest Reserve under Superintendent S. B. Ormsby as the overlord, William Henry Harrison Dufur as supervisor of the northern half and S. C. Bartrum of the southern portion. The prize qualification of these administrators was political intimacy with Commissioner Binger Hermann of the General Land Office. My first contact with forest administration occurred as I conveyed that plane

4. This assignment resulted in Mr. Langille sharing the authorship of U.S.G.S. Professional Paper No. 9, "Forest Conditions in the Cascade Range Forest Reserve, Oregon," of 298 pages with illustrations and maps, published in 1903.



table and alidade over Harrison's bailiwick. One of my assistants, returning from a long day's work afoot, met the supervisor, asked the distance to camp. Harrison's thin lips snapped together. "It's two or four miles, by God, sir; Uncle Sam ain't paying me to ride these trails to tell sheepherders where camp is," and he spurred his good horse down the trail.

Toward the end of that field season I first met Gifford Pinchot, then Chief of the Division of Forestry, Department of Agriculture, and F. H. Newell, Chief of the Reclamation Service. Sheep had been excluded from the northern part of the reserve. "G. P.," as we affectionately knew him, was bent upon determining the effects of sheep grazing. I met him and Newell at Cloud Cap Inn, escorted them afoot around the mountain under the glaciers, through the alpine forest and peteros, gay and bright with the blossoming of these enchanting spots, to camp. That night two weary chiefs stretched themselves on ostermoors of hemlock laid high and deep. Their suspirations wafted away on the evening breeze like the sound of surf flattening on a beach of sand.

Next day we crossed into the sheep country. Soon G. P. gave tongue, for he had found the spoor he sought. Some old mother ewe trailing back to the winter range had paused to peel a cud of juicy, resinous bark from a sapling lodgepole pine ere she went down to the bitterness of sage on the windswept desert. But here was the *corpus delicti*, proof positive that sheep devour forests, and the proof was in the hands of none less than the chief forester himself. A bad day for the woolies looking back to the blue of their summer home.

At the end of the field season I was called back to Washington to prepare my report. Upon completion of the report G. P. informed me that Secretary of the Interior Hitchcock wanted an inspector to advise him as to personnel and conditions on the forest reserves and I had been nominated for the job. That led me into companionship with the praiseworthy little band that then constituted Division "R" of the General Land Office. No group in Washington ever strove with greater fidelity.

Early in 1902 I set out on my first assignment. Then followed happy months of carrying a concept of the primary

purposes of government in forestry to the people of the West; of cauterizing festering sores that had already broken out; of bringing the warring cowmen and sheepmen to sop their doughgods in the same pan of gravy; of holding in the public domain great areas that would have been taken from it through fraud and collusion; or ridding the service of incompetent parasites grafted upon it by political forces.

Let us pass up the criminality and moral turpitude of the times: the land fraud cases; the wholesale theft of timber through connivance with supervisors; grand and petty larceny in the allocation of range, flagrant violation of rules and regulations. Not that these conditions, or any of them, were to be found in every reserve. They were not. There were earnest, honest endeavorers doing the best they knew in the absence of coordinative understanding, and these constituted a majority. But the original type of political appointee was mostly or hopelessly unqualified.

As an inspector, I had large authority to hire and fire, interpret in the field the law and such regulations as there were. That first year's scouting left a trail of decapitated supervisors and rangers, seized sawmills, frustrations. And here it is meet to record that no request, telegraphic or other, was ignored or denied by Secretary Hitchcock. He never failed to uphold me whatever the opposing political force or however large the guns used.

On one occasion a visit to the General Land Office in La Grande, Oregon, disclosed that a carload of timber claim locatees had arrived that morning from Minnesota, taken team to the Wallowa country. Hastily looking over the township maps to plat the timbered area I wired the Secretary asking temporary withdrawal. By the time the would-be locators returned next day the withdrawals had been made. All applications were denied. Presumably the administration lost some votes in Minnesota.

Following a summer of experiences in Utah and Colorado sufficient to make material for a book I was sent to Oregon to mop up behind ex-supervisor Dufur and pass upon the activities of his successor, familiarly known as "Pete," a GAR veteran and one time Special Agent of the General



Land Office, given to political eructations in behalf of the GOP.

Pete was quite perturbed when called upon to accompany me on a tour of inspection. He was not accustomed to woodland ways, the feel of a horse under saddle. Far back in the Cascades, toward the end of a raw, wet day, we came to a little old sawmill, miles from any habitation, at which we would spend the night. The mill was down for the winter, only the owner was present. Brief conversation disclosed that the mill's log supply was cut illegally from the reserve. The nature and penalties of trespass were explained, resulting in quite a noticeable agitation upon the part of the owner. He immediately proposed that we should partake of the contents of a dark bottle brought from the cupboard, forthwith prepared a round of hot toddies.

Now it was Pete's cardinal weakness to look kindly and affectionately upon hot toddies of any nature, however constituted. And on this occasion, wet to the skin, chilled and conscious of certain abrasions due to contact and combat with the saddle, he was exceedingly elated by the aroma and potentialities of this concoction of venomous "white mule."

Explaining that I would look over the cutting area preliminary to drafting a proposition of settlement I went out leaving Pete to thaw by the fire and allay the obvious fears of the trespasser. Returning at dusk Pete met me at the edge of the clearing, cold and white. Following my departure our host's agitation had increased. Also the cocktails. Pete, having greater resistance, bore up valiantly. The effect upon the trespasser was quickened mentality which pointed a way out of the dilemma. From the corner of the cabin he produced two rifles. One he leaned against Pete, the other he examined carefully to make sure it was in order and loaded. Then he proposed that this matter of trespass be settled without legal formality; to hang or not to hang be determined at twenty paces firing ad lib.

It was a long, long way back to Civil war days when Pete had last looked into the mouths of cannon. This proposition of settlement was perturbing. As a special agent he had not settled trespass cases in the manner proposed. So far as he

could remember the new book of instructions did not prescribe the procedure to be followed in such an emergency. A stay of execution was imperative, diplomatic conversation seemed crucial; so Pete explained that always in such an affair of honor there should be a referee to see that no advantage was taken, to give the signal for opening fire; and suggested that inasmuch as the inspector was a party to the case he should be called in. Meanwhile it would be well to have another drink. These suggestions, particularly the latter, sounded reasonable. Another shot of lethal concoction was made. Pete surreptitiously dumped his, excused himself to fetch the inspector, quite unmindful of the rain. By the time I reached the cabin the trespasser had succumbed to the final kick of the "white mule," was dormant in his bunk. I cooked supper for two. This, I opine, was Pete's first, last and only excursion into his forest domain.

Doubtless the most controversial of all withdrawals was the early setting aside of the proposed Blue Mountain Forest Reserve[5] upon recommendation of the Geological Survey. It was a huge withdrawal. It bore upon the economic life and welfare of almost the entire northeastern quarter of Oregon. Agriculture, stock-raising, mining, lumbering and all of their adjunctive interests were actually or potentially concerned.

The controversy was not between the residents affected. It was bitter, outspoken opposition to a governmental policy that contemplated curtailment of the time-honored privilege of grab and take. Miners and stockmen's associations, chambers of commerce, local "protective" organizations and the local press, inspired and motivated by powerful lumber concerns, denounced the purpose. Temperatures ran high.

In the early winter of 1902 I was directed to make a report on the withdrawal, lay down the boundaries to be defined by creating the reserve. To eliminate state school sections and thereby defeat the lien selection graft as far as possible was of first importance. To inform the concerned people of the

5. Now parts of the Whitman-Wallowa, Malheur, Ochoco and Umatilla National Forests.



effect upon their economy and gain their support and goodwill was desirable. The latter was attempted through a series of public meetings—memorable events in local history.

The assembly at Canyon City was typical, not only of the Blue Mountain area but of later meetings in the range districts of California and elsewhere. The largest number of people ever gathered together in the community was present. Stockmen came on horseback from distances as great as 150 miles. I talked to an intent audience for one and a half hours, then opened the meeting for discussion which continued another hour and a half. The sponsor's program called for a meeting to follow at which an anti-reserve organization was to be formed. Leaving the assembly to carry out its program without embarrassment I walked to the hotel, looked back and saw the crowd pouring out of the court house. Presently a group called at my room. When asked why the meeting adjourned they explained that after listening to my elucidation of the purposes of the forest reserves no basis for further opposition could be found; that if those purposes were carried forward and made effectual the desires of the people would be fully met and they would stand solidly behind the movement.

At Prineville I addressed what I supposed to be a stockmen's meeting. After adjournment I was informed that only sheepmen were present; I was scheduled to talk to the cattlemen in the afternoon. So bitter was the feeling that cattlemen would not sit in the same room with sheepmen. Division and segregation of the range was promised. Next year I returned to observe results, found cowmen and sheepmen sleeping under the same blanket and carrying pockets full of grass seed to be sown on the range. Springs trampled beyond capacity to discharge to the surface were opened and troughs had been installed.

Greenhorn was then a mining camp high up in the Blue Mountains. The miners were in a dither due to allegations that if the reserve were established they would be denied all right to cut timber for mine use. At the railhead I boarded an open bobsled stage behind four horses. For hours the horses climbed at a walk, the snow depth increasing with

every mile. Snow began to fall, at times so plentifully that only the rumps of the leaders would be seen.

As night came up from the dark canyons we entered a clearing among the lodgepole pines, a row of hummocks on either side. The team was stopped and the driver exclaimed: "Here we are! Mister, just throw your suitcase into that hole and follow it. That's the hotel." Obeying this instruction I slid down the slope of the hummock, landed at the door of a hallway. From the door on the left came a sense of warmth and friendly cheer. Entering I found myself in a barroom that extended the length of the building. Beyond the bar the usual grouping of gaming tables, many men.

The barkeep advanced from the group eyeing me suspiciously. Chilled to numbness I called for a drink of warming liquor. "What might your business be?" the barkeep asked. Those were prohibition days in Oregon; every stranger was eyed as a possible revenue officer. I explained my purpose. "Hey, fellers, come 'ere. Here's the man we been wantin' to see." The group advanced *en masse*. We had one "on the house."

The now genial barkeep forthwith assumed the position of committee on arrangements, announced a meeting. Time, 8 p.m., place the barroom. The program was rendered and emphatically acclaimed. There would be timber for the mines. At 11 o'clock I excused myself to go to bed. "Hell, no," exclaimed my committee on arrangements, "the other gang's waitin' for you across the street!" Two factions in an isolated, snow-covered camp! Crossing the street through a snow tunnel I emerged in another barroom, repeated the same story of salvation, got in bed at 2 a.m. still sober; Greenhorn happy.

There were years of competition between Uncle Sam and the public in locating timber claims. Causation of withdrawals was no longer collateral solely with water supply and streamflow. Retainment of forest land in government ownership became the avowed purpose of the administration. It led to powerful opposition upon the part of the "timber barons," agitated the coastal regions as it had previously agitated the tramontane country.



Early in 1903 I was "lent" to the Bureau of Forestry (Department of Agriculture), assigned to the job of directing examinations of existing withdrawals in Oregon and Washington, recommending additions and eliminations, fixing boundaries of reserves to be proclaimed. I survived the season but almost broke with Forester Pinchot over the matter of eliminating potential and actual agricultural lands in the valleys of rivers discharging from the western slope of the Cascade Range.

When spring came in 1904 I escaped again from the toxic enclosures of Washington. Most of the season was spent in inspection of California reserves, then few in number. There was much complaint against the administration. Superintendent Newhall was a tender Christian gentleman but as an administrator he was as inept as a ballet dancer. Vicious elements intruded here and there; the officer was not strong enough to cope with them. A "southern rebel" was federal judge for the southern district, agin' the government. When an attempt to prosecute a trespassing sheepman was made the defendant pleaded guilty. The judge commanded: "Sit down; you're not guilty," and dismissed the case.

Everywhere the personnel was deplorably inadequate. Nomadic Basques ranged their sheep northward as spring came on, following the eastern base of the Sierras. One ranger was available to patrol the entire length of the North Sierra reserve. While he was north the Basques raided the southern range, and vice versa.

On one occasion the ranger gave out word that he would leave the following morning on a tour of the northern area. Instead he rode to the reserve boundary at night. At dawn the Basques started their bands into the reserve, were halted by the ranger. An angry Basque woman advanced upon him with a double-barreled shotgun, both barrels cocked. It took some diplomatic tact to stay that trigger finger, but the ranger won.

The North Sierra was supervised by Head Ranger Shinn. His administration was unique. A colleger and former newspaper man, he had little practical knowledge of his function but he brought to it vision, idealism and enthusiasm, un-

paralleled in the service at that time. He could sit down with a Basque trespasser and make him weep tears of repentance; or shame a trespassing shake-maker to flee the forest a penitent.

And this fine spirit of endeavor developed a rare esprit de corps. But Shinn alone did not bring about the preeminence of the North Sierra. Hand in hand with him Mrs. Shinn infused the office with equilibrium, practicality, fealty. The forest trails all led to "Peace Cabin" where foresters of a later day, rangers, hillbillies, Indians, all sought wisdom, inspiration, pills and ministrations. Today, after nearly forty years, she is still the "queen mother" of the Sierra.

The lakeland of Tahoe, the sugar pines of Calaveras, the granite gashes of Mokelumne, the sequoias of Giant Forest, the grandeur of the Kern-Keweah country, Mary Austin's "Land of Little Rain," Farewell Gap—all these remain in delightful memory as markers of the pioneer trail.

In March, 1905, administration of the Warner Mountains and Modoc reserves in northeastern California was initiated. These were the early withdrawals made at the request of the residents affected following the visit of worthy Filibert Roth, then Chief of Division R, who pointed the way to escape from the plague of nomadic Basque sheep.

But after the reserves where proclaimed the local stockmen began to ponder possible repercussions. A public meeting, called at Alturas to clarify the situation, was a notable occasion in the history of Modoc County. So eloquent were the arguments for retention of the forest reserves that had a call for musketed volunteers been made at the conclusion of the meeting fo defend the reserve, the response of the stockmen would have been unanimous.

On a trip of inspection a sawmill in the Fandango district was visited. When asked how much timberland he owned the operator freely and frankly admitted that he had title to only forty acres, long since logged. When told to blow the whistle and "shut 'er down," he obeyed amiably and after the manner of one accustomed to such orders. "Now," said he, "what does this one cost me? Let's settle up so I can get to work again."



"About what have you been paying?"

"Well, one feller stuck me for $100 but the last inspector let me off with $25 because I wasn't shipping out of the country."

A happy millman was he when the procedure of timber purchase was explained. "I'm sure glad to know I can get timber for my mill without having to steal it and then being held up every little while." The way of the transgressor was not so hard but it was bumpy.

The Basque nomads boasted that they would not stop at the reserve boundary, but they did; the white-faces fattened on the lush, high meadows; in due time the stilled whistle of the Fandango mill again resounded across the juniper wastes of the Modoc; forestry of my kind had come to the Goose Lake country.

By now the Forest Service was a lusty youth. Erased was Division R, gone were the days of assessor, referee and adjudicator in the field. Unavoidably the old order changed, and with the change dissolved those factors which lent zest and stimulation to the blazing of new trails. I resigned.

But the scars of those other years have healed, the ghost forests are hidden beneath new coverings of green; no more the smoke of season-long fires obscures the beauty and grandeur of the mountain ranges; as never before the habitants and visitants enjoy their mountains and their forests; the white-faces return to the valleys broad at rump and heavy of loin; blood-red skull-and-crossbone warnings no longer mark feudal boundaries of sheep and cattle range; the once furtive Basque is now a respected hombre; the miners of Greenhorn still delve with assurance of plentiful timber supply. The Forest Service has kept the faith.