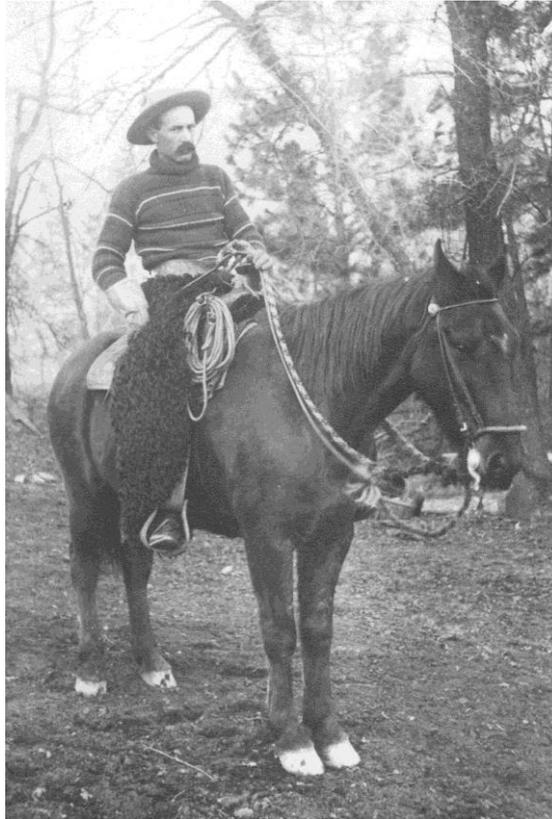


*"I am proud of the fact that I was one of those pioneer Rangers that helped two important services, the U.S. and the State Forest Service, out of the cradle into the kilts and to more competent hands."*¹

Gene Tully – Pioneer Ranger by Marie Mogge

There were at first tens, then hundreds, then thousands of men who gave, and are giving, the best that is in them to the common purpose and the common need, men who love the work because they know its meaning, because they see the end from the beginning, because the ideal of public service has gripped them, because their lives belong less to themselves than to the commonwealth. Gifford Pinchot, 1916.

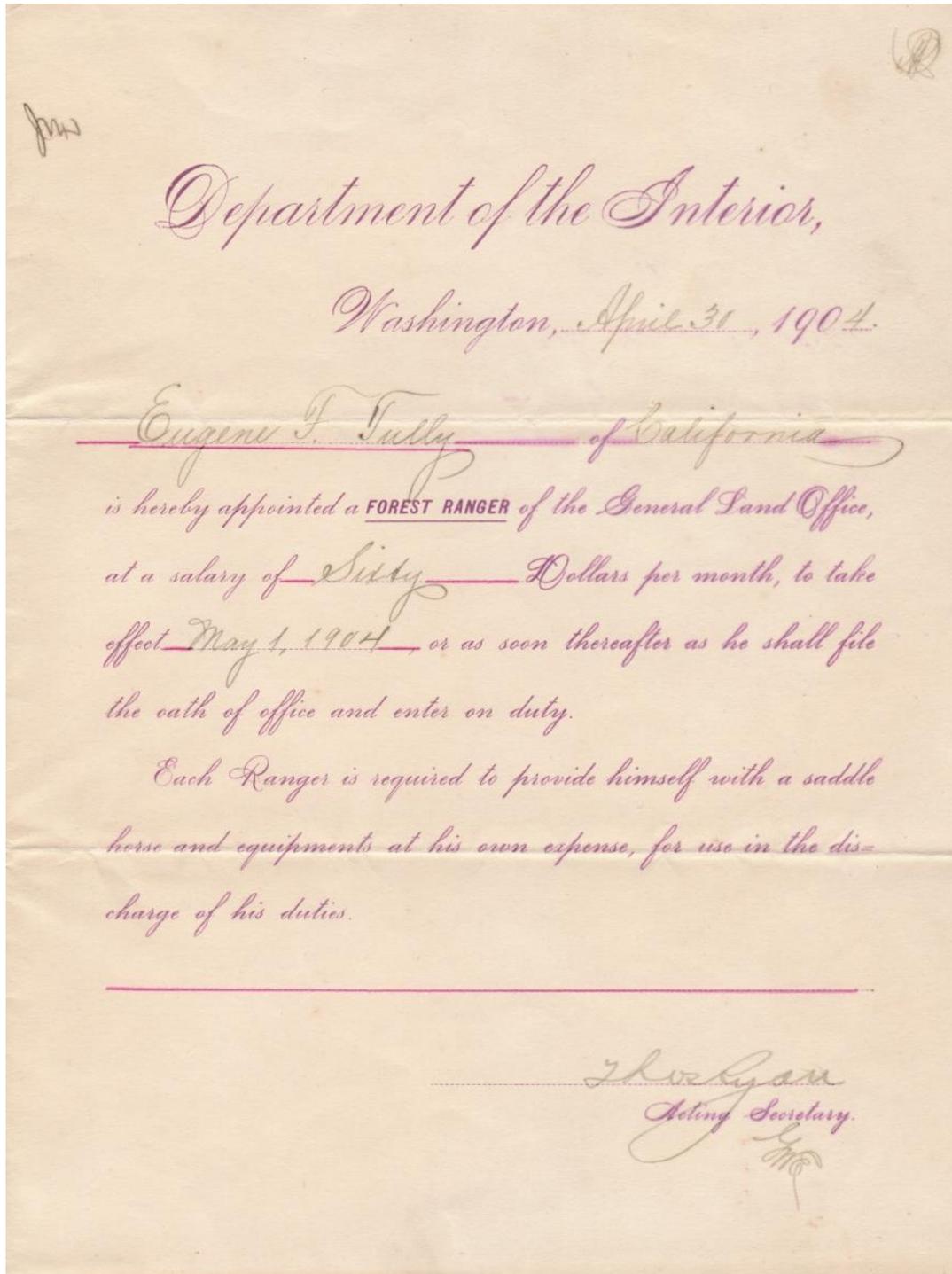
These words penned by the first chief of the Forest Service could have been spoken specifically about Gene Tully. He was one of the first sixty National Reserve Patrolmen hired for the Forest Reserves, the precursor to the National Forest system. He gave his heart and soul to the forest. He gave the best that was in him to give, forsaking home life and enduring many hardships. Serving with men like Charles Shinn, Maurice Benedict, Audie Wofford, Frank Price, and Boot Taylor, he was one of the Sierra National Forest's earliest pioneer rangers.



Classic Tully – angora chaps, leather gauntlets, and handmade horse hair ropes.

Born in Hollister, CA in 1875, his family had a long history in the ranching business. His grandfather, Edward Calhoun Tully, was one of the first major stockman in California. Growing up on the Tully estate, Gene Tully learned how to handle a horse and ride the range. As a young man, he worked on ranches across the San Joaquin Valley, then he became a teamster, hauling lumber from the mountains to the valley, and supplies from the valley to the mountains. Between the heat and the cold, the steep grades and long distances, it was backbreaking work.

Working in and around North Fork in 1903, Tully became acquainted with Sierra Reserve Supervisor Charles Shinn. Shinn offered Tully a job with the fledgling Forest Reserve. Reluctant at first, but hungry, and at 28, looking for adventure, Tully joined as a Patrolman in 1903. In 1904, he was appointed a Forest Ranger, earning the sum of \$60.00 per month.



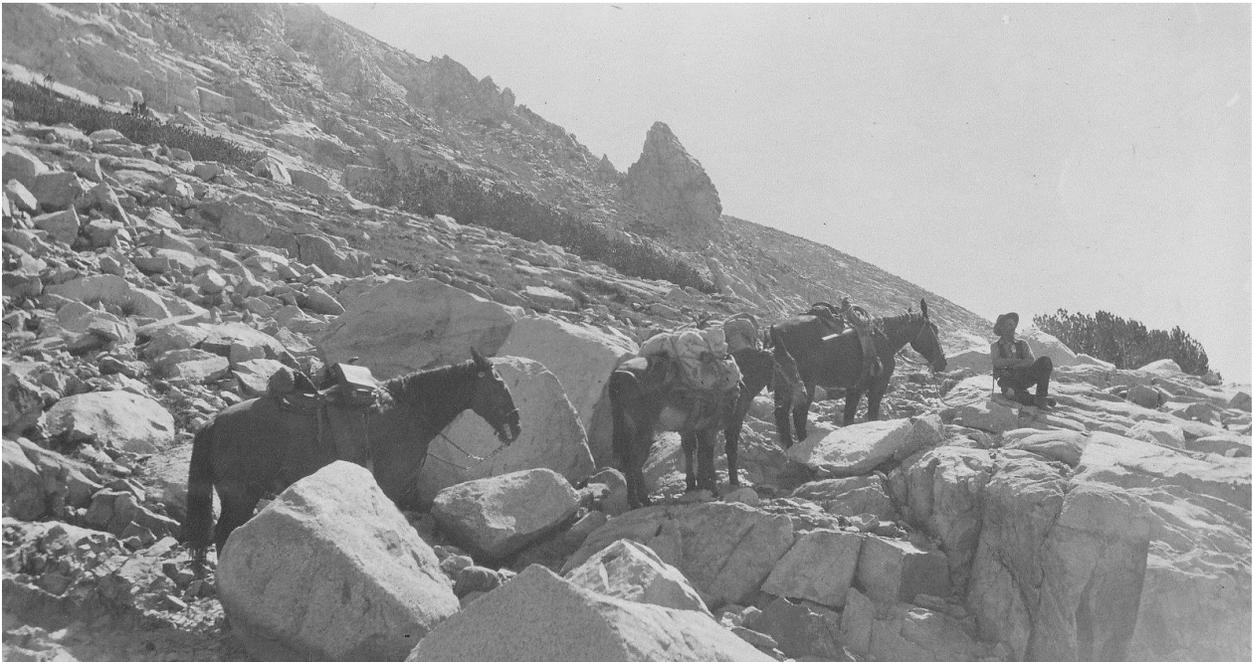
Tully's 1st appointment, from the Department of the Interior.²

The appointment included having to provide, at his own expense: his horse, saddle, pack animals, fire tools, food, clothing, and living quarters. Paychecks could often be counted on to be two to three months late. Many of the early rangers had to depend on mountain storekeepers who extended credit, to stave off starvation, particularly when they had families to support.

In August of 1905, Tully was given charge of range management on what had become the Sierra National Forest by Forest Supervisor Charles Shinn:

It is in my mind to have you come back here as soon as you can conveniently, leaving Ellis in charge, and after a full report, take charge of cattle grazing and review of ranges, district by district. This I think very much in your line, as you deal so nicely with cattle men, and with a little more map work and study you will do it all very well.³

A tall order since in those days the forest encompassed the present day Sequoia/Kings Canyon National Park, Sequoia National Forest, Sierra National Forest, and parts of the Inyo National Forest and Yosemite National Park. With 4,000,000 acres of range, 65,000 sheep, 35,000 cattle, 2,000 hogs, 2,000 horses, angry stockmen, and trespassing permittees, it was a challenging job to say the least. It often took Tully six weeks in the saddle to complete an entire circuit of his charge.



Heading out over Seldon Pass, circa 1905.

Speaking years later, Tully would recount the hardships of the early days, “ Often the roof over my head was the open sky. Sometimes I was fortunate enough to find an abandoned cabin. Life as a ranger was not a bed of roses. In those days the public didn’t have much respect for rangers. I had to break in my own horse. The food wasn’t the best. I still can’t stand the thought of sour-dough biscuits and the sight of canned beans makes me sick.”⁴

These were the days when grazing allotments were known as “six-shooter leases”⁵, where order was sometimes kept (and sometimes not) by the threat of a gun. Scenes could be tense. The idea of national forests was new, and not always welcome. The men had no uniforms in the beginning, but the rangers wore badges to identify themselves. Badges were frequently placed under their jackets, yet over their hearts, to limit being a target.

Like many early rangers of the day, Tully was also a cattle rancher. In fact, Tully was issued the 1st grazing permit on the Sierra Reserve on June 22, 1900, “over the advice and protests of the cattlemans association”⁶ that he was a member of.

He began by running about 40 head of cattle in the Ellis Meadow (now known as Benedict Meadow) area, fencing the meadow, building a corral and occupying some abandoned buildings left by two earlier pioneers, McCabe and Ellis, who had tried to establish a lumber mill in the area by claiming land through the Swamp and Overflow Act. Their efforts were unsuccessful, but Tully was quite pleased to have buildings that were already constructed in a meadow that suited his needs for his cattle.

Early on, before stricter regulations were enforced, cattlemen and sheep herders generally claimed ranges by occupying them, whereby, whoever got there first claimed the range. This could sometimes lead to disputes and squabbles, as in the case of Tully and Ellis Meadow. When Tully first found Ellis Meadow, sheepherders who had been using the meadow area did not take kindly to Tully showing up before them and establishing himself, but Tully was not going to let the sheepherders have the range that he had decided should be his. Warned by Tully and his associate, Ed, to keep their sheep away, the sheepherders, also determined not to give up their range, started their sheep towards the disputed meadow anyway. Tully and Ed strapped on their “persuaders”⁷, saddled their horses, and rode up to meet the sheepherders. Words were exchanged. A scuffle ensued. Gunfire broke out. The horses became spooked, throwing Tully and Ed to the ground. Someone was shot - winged in the shoulder. According to Tully, after about a minute and a half, the battle was over. Forever keeping the full details of the battle to himself, Tully did manage to drive away the sheep and claim the meadow for his stock, however, it took several months before he and Ed were released from custody and bonds.



Disputed ground - Ellis Meadow - first speculators, then Tully, then the Forest Service.

After the shepherd incident, Tully was free to use Ellis Meadow for his cattle until the Forest Service claimed the buildings and structures for administrative purposes, eventually establishing a summer headquarters there. Later, Tully ran about 200 head of cattle around Green Mountain, after the allotment system became more regulated. Tully continued ranching until about 1912, when he sold his stock and permit.

Family life was difficult for a man such as Tully. Roaming the range for weeks at a time left little time for a home life. Tully was married and lived with his wife in a two-story house on Nob Hill, overlooking North Fork, but Mary Searles Tully spent much of her time alone with their children.

Altogether, the Tullys had four children, two girls (Dulce and Dorothy) who lived into adulthood, and two boys who died as babies. The boys were buried along the creek on Nob Hill. Later, Tully would have another son with his second wife, Jenny. Tragically, Donald Tully was shot down on a mission during World War II and was never found.

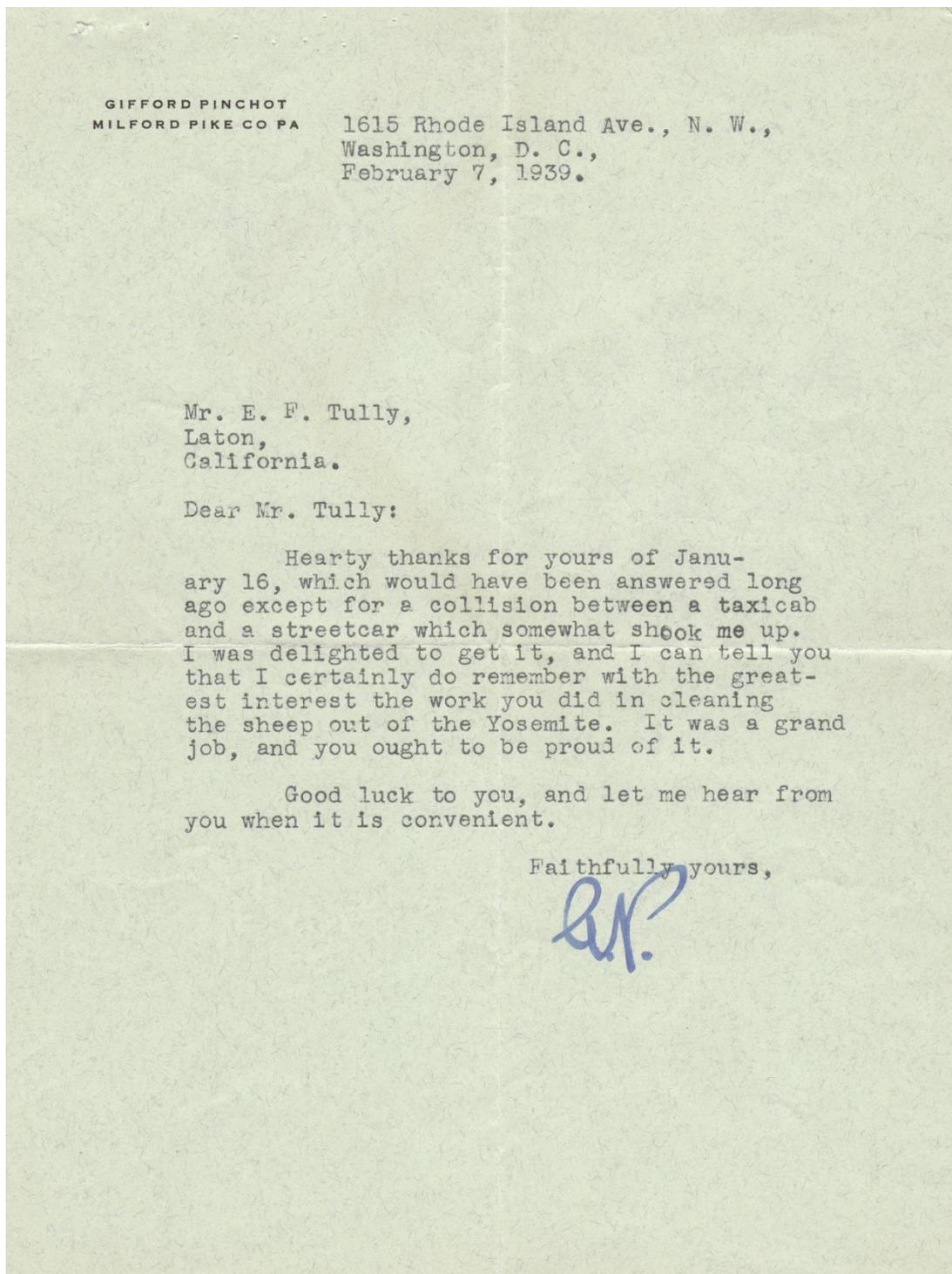
Dulce Tully Rose, one of Gene Tully's daughters, remembers few times as a child that she saw her father, although she always knew where he was and wrote letters to him frequently. Divorcing when their daughters were still quite young, Mary Searles Tully was left with half of their cattle, which she ran in the Graveyard Meadow area, and the bills accumulated by Tully on credit at Franklin's store in North Fork, that she had to work to pay off. She remarried to Jerry Brown, an uncle of early rancher LeRoy Brown, and she relocated to Coarsegold.

In the summer of 1907, Tully had the circumstance to become acquainted with Chief Forester Gifford Pinchot. Leading a party from Washington which included Mr. McCormack, U.S. erosion expert, Professor Holms, U.S. Geologist, and Fredrick Olmstead, Pinchot and his party were accompanied by Tully and Ranger Billie Brown (for whom Brown's Meadow is named) to view some of the high country of the Sierra National Forest. While the party rested at McQuarry Meadow, Tully and Pinchot traveled on and spent a few days together at 77 Corral, hunting, fishing, talking forestry, and becoming friends. Tully shared the story of his background, his life in the Forest Service, and his views on protecting and preserving the forest. Pinchot shared his thoughts on lookouts, telephones, fire tools, emergency response, fire suppression and fire crews, among other things.

Tully became a disciple of Pinchot. In a notebook, he kept a list of the "Three great purposes"⁸ of Pinchot's conservation policy, in which he believed and towards which he worked:

- 1 -- Wisely to use, protect, preserve, and renew the natural resources of the earth.
- 2 -- To control the use of natural resources and their products in the common interest, and to secure their distribution to the people at fair and reasonable charges for goods and services.
- 3 -- To see to it that the rights of the people to govern themselves shall not be controlled by great monopolies through their power over natural resources.⁹

Like most people, Pinchot was impressed with Tully. So much so that Pinchot brought Tully to Washington D.C. to serve as Acting Chief of the Forest Service from October 1907 through April 1908. The two foresters remained in contact until Pinchot's death in 1946.



30 years later, Gifford Pinchot would still remember the fine work that Gene Tully did on the young Sierra National Forest.¹⁰

Something of a dandy, Tully, who was once referred to by his daughter, Dulce Tully Rose, as a “Don Juan” who swept her mother off her feet “with his fancy horse and fancy chaps and silver-mounted saddle,”¹¹ was known to have opinions on many subjects - and was not afraid to express them.



“Don Juan” Tully?

Speaking of sheep, he once said, “If one of these stupid sheep fell off the log, every damn one would jump off after the one ahead until the shepherd could stop them. That is why so many herders drowned; they jumped in the water to try and stop them!”¹³



Sheep crossing the South Fork of the San Joaquin, circa 1910.

He sometimes referred to tourists as “greenhorns”¹² who complicated his job by getting lost, starting fires, and asking foolish questions.

He spoke frequently and with great admiration for Julia Shinn, wife of the Sierra National Forest’s 1st Forest Supervisor Charles Shinn, as one of “the finest ladies I have ever known,” with an ever present “cheerful loving smile always shining through a tire face” who meant the world to a “handful of ragged, half clad struggling rangers.”¹⁴



Julia Shinn - she was greatly admired by all who knew her, including Gene Tully.

“Mrs. Shinn’s memory is deserving of a monument that would break the back of Peckinpah’s mountain and reduce Shuteye to a pimple.”¹⁵

Thinking of public relation (PR) work in 1906 as “one of the biggest and most interesting jobs the Forest Service will have to tackle”, Tully believed that he would continue that work long after he was gone, “After I die I shall continue to do PR work, for there are a few old timers who passed away before I had them won over, so when I meet them “down there” I am going to start in on them where I left off.”¹⁶

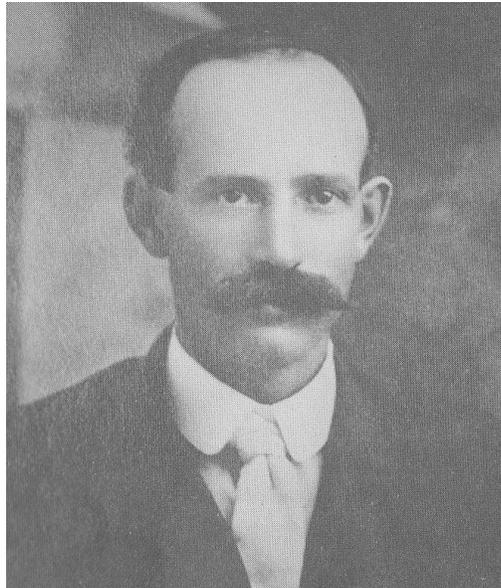
Talking of his love for the Forest Service as if it was an incurable illness he said, “The only cure for this ailment is to shoot the victim.”¹⁷



Tully in the early days.

Referring to life as a ranger in the early days, “Back in aught-two, the sky was our ceiling and the ground our bed. Like coyotes, we could eat three meals in one day or one meal in three days. Fried bread was a staple in our diet. For fast transportation we relied on spurs instead of octane count.”¹⁸

Tully worked on the Sierra National Forest from 1903 until 1914, when he resigned. He then returned to the Forest Service in 1917-1919 after a special request to help out during the manpower shortage of World War I. He returned again in the 1930s to help with the Civilian Conservation Corps crews on the Mendicino National Forest.



Ready to serve when needed.

Tully did other jobs besides administering grazing. He blazed trails, fought fire, surveyed and mapped the forest, prepared allotment maps, strung telephone line, and prepared timber sales.

He was a lookout at Shuteye Peak, camping in a tent in Billie Brown Meadow (now Brown's Meadow) because there was no feed for stock at the lookout. He built and blazed the trail he used to get to the lookout each day, while watching for smoke. He kept in regular contact with nearby lookout William “Boot” Taylor, who camped at Keltie Meadow, through a hole in a tree on their mutual boundary of the Little Shuteye Trail, where they would each stash notes for the other.



Embedded in a rock at the Shuteye Peak Lookout where Tully once stood guard, this plaque commemorates a true pioneer for his dedicated service to the forest that he loved.

Returning to the Fresno area to live with his daughter, Dulce Tully Rose, for the last 15 years of his life, he devoted himself to public relations for the good of the Forest Service.

He volunteered, spoke to school children and historic societies, and wrote letters imploring the government and citizens to increase the Forest Service budget in order to continue its important work.

In 1968, he wrote to Forest Supervisor Walt Puhn, expressing his continuing devotion to the Sierra National Forest, "I loved the forest. I have worked for its good, and enjoyed doing so, and still do what I can and hope to continue as long as I keep Father Time in good humor."¹⁹



Living to 98, he always referred to the Sierra National Forest as “my baby,”²⁰ and challenged those who came after him to care for it. He carried on a long running correspondence with Sierra National Forest Supervisor Walter Puhn, imploring Puhn to take care of the forest that he so loved:

Walter, I am going to ask a favor of you. More than 50 years ago I became one of those who took the ‘Baby North Sierra’ in arms and helped to nurse her through the hard-sledding days. Now I beg, beseech and command you to take good care of her.²¹



"I was a ranger for 12 consecutive years and then quit for a spell, but I went back. It just got in my blood."²²

Notes:

¹ Tully, Gene, notes transcription (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00038) 6 October 1964.

² Ryan, Thos., Department of the Interior appointment (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00001) 31 April 1904.

³ Shinn, Charles H., letter to E.F. Tully, (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00009) 2 August 1905.

⁴ Mitchell, Melvin, "Ex-Ranger Tells Of Early Years," *The San Diego Union*, (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00075) 2 March 1961.

⁵ Tully, Gene, letter to Dr. Wagener (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00052) 17 November 1965..

⁶ Department of the Interior Grazing Permit (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00005) 22 June 1900.

⁷ Tully: HD00052.

⁸ Tully, Gene, handwritten notes (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00067) no date.

⁹ Tully: HD00067.

¹⁰ Pinchot, Gifford, letter to E.F. Tully (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00023) 7 February 1939.

¹¹ Jansen, Virginia, interview of Dulce Tully Rose (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Interview Collection, HD00209) 17 May 1984.

¹² Mitchell: HD00075.

¹³ Tully, Gene, photograph caption (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD000071) no date.

¹⁴ Tully: HD00052.

¹⁵ Tully: HD00052.

¹⁶ Tully, Gene, "The Winning Spirit of the Old Timers," *California Ranger*, Vol. IV, No. 47 (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00054) 20 October 1933.

¹⁷ English, June, "Gene Tully -- he saved mountains for future generations," *The Fresno Guide* (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00074)

¹⁸ O'Connell, "Rangering in 1902, Machine Age Differ," *Evening Tribune*, (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00076) 12 January 1953.

¹⁹ Tully, Gene, letter to Walter Puhn, (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00058) 2 October 1968.

²⁰ Tully, Gene, letter (Bass Lake Ranger District Historic Document and Information Database, Gene Tully Collection, HD00032) 29 July 1954.

²¹ Rose, Gene, *Sierra Centennial*, (Clovis: Sierra National Forest, 1993) 27.

²² Mitchell: HD00075.

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Jansen, Virginia, et al. Interview of Dulce Tully Rose: 17 May 1984. Historic Document and Information Database, Interview Collection: HD00209. On file: Sierra National Forest, Bass Lake Ranger District.

Popelish, Connie. Interview of Dulce Tully Rose: 19 May 1993. Historic Document and Information Database, Interview Collection: HD00208. On file: Sierra National Forest, Bass Lake Ranger District.

Rose, Gene. *Sierra Centennial*. Clovis: Sierra National Forest, 1993.

Historic photographs are from the Sierra National Forest Historic Photograph Collection.