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Sheep Herding in the Sierra National Forest

as told from
Notes in a Can

Left by
Dunford Thornton, Sheepman
1922-1938



Left: A flock of sheep in the mountains, 1919. Sierra National Forest Photograph HP00907.

Right: Sheep in the mountains, 1918. Sierra National Forest Photograph HP02327.



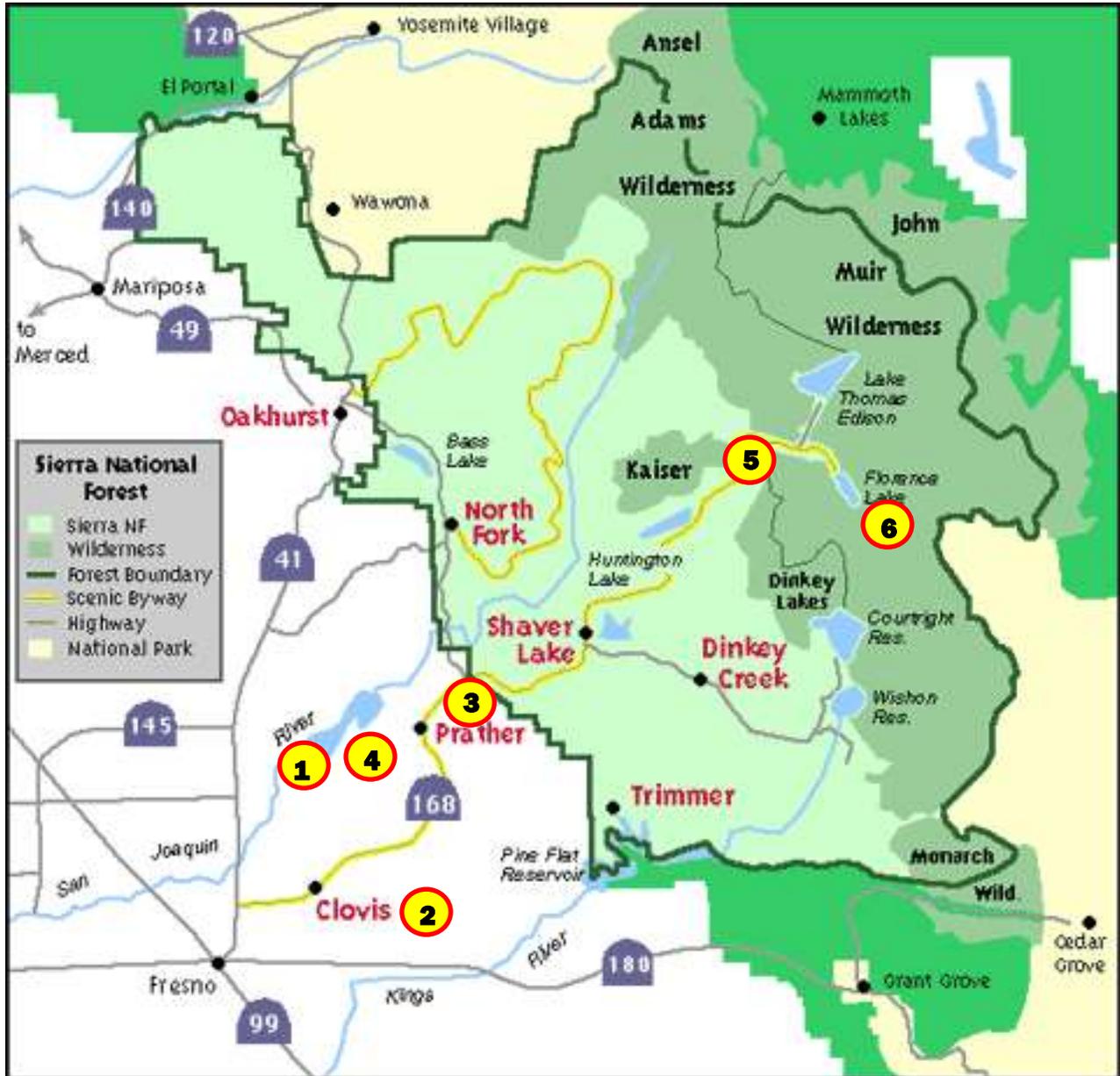
Sheep crossing a suspension bridge, Simpson Meadow, Sierra National Forest, date unknown.

Sierra National Forest Photograph HP00596.

Steve Marsh
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2014

Sheep Herding in the Sierra National Forest

Sierra National Forest Map



1. Millerton, CA – place of birth, 1870.
2. Sanger, CA – youth and young adulthood, 1880s-1890s.
3. Big Sandy Valley and Tollhouse, CA – first ranch, 1890s.
4. Table Mountain – land and property, 1900s.
5. Mt. Givens – notes in the can.
6. Hot Springs and Mount Henry sheep allotments.

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Mount Givens is a prominent mountain with a bare rocky top overlooking the high country wilderness named after John Muir in the Sierra Nevada, with views over the ranges and streams that empty into the South Fork of the San Joaquin River. On top of Mount Givens, concealed in a pile of rocks, a hiker and his little dog found an old tobacco tin rusting away, and stuffed closed with newspaper. Inside the tin were a number of notes left by local sheepman Dunford Thornton and his herders between 1922 and 1938. Although cryptic, the notes provide a window into the life of the Sierran sheep industry and the men who once ran the herds of sheep on national forest land. In this ‘high-tech’ world of the twenty-first century, it is a way of life that has passed beyond recognition, and almost beyond imagination, but this time-capsule of penciled notes on pieces of scrap paper can remind us of a time nearly three-quarters of a century ago when flocks of sheep and the men who herded them roamed what we now often think of as natural wilderness.

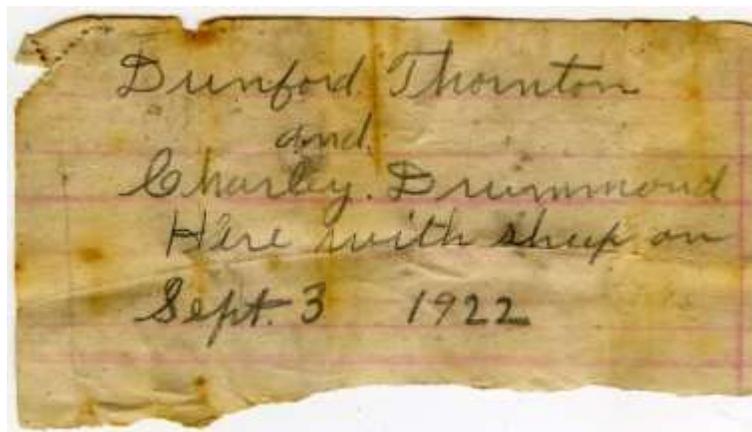


The rock marker on Mt. Givens, with Lake Edison and the High Sierra in the background¹

A popular conception of sheep was coined by John Muir, the great naturalist philosopher, who called them “hoofed locusts.”² He was referring to the domestic sheep he herded as a young man in his first trip from the Central Valley of California to the Sierra Nevada mountains in 1869. The impression given, rightly or not, is that of a horde of vegetation-stripping nature-destroying

livestock, ruining the beauty of the natural environment. For Muir, his first-hand experience in tending sheep in the mountains was certainly a factor in his drive to protect the Sierras. In a series of magazine articles, Muir pointed out the devastation of mountain meadows and forests by livestock, and he went on to found the Sierra Club in 1892 in part to protect the newly created Yosemite National Park from intrusion by stockmen.³ But despite the environmental consequences of sheep herding in the Sierras, the practice has a long history on the Sierra National Forest, and Thornton's notes in the can provide a name and face that illustrate that history.

I Sheep in the Mountains



The earliest note was left in the can in 1922. It reads simply “**Dunford Thornton and Charley Drummond here with sheep on Sept. 3, 1922.**” They were ‘here’ on Mount Givens as part of a long history of sheep herding in the Sierra Nevada mountains, and particularly in Fresno County, that began a half-century before the national forests were established.

Woody Van Vleet, a local cattleman, summed up the history of sheep in Fresno County with the brevity one would expect from an “old-timer.”⁴

Well, in the first place you know this country was all settled with sheep men. The cattle men came in and converted the sheep men. And this old –[Dunford] Thornton.⁵ He never did convert, he stayed sheep all the time.

Although grazing in “this country” of California began with the Spanish missionaries on the coastal regions, the great influx of livestock into the Sierra and its foothills began with the Gold Rush of 1849. Within five years of the Gold Rush, an estimated 300,000 people had migrated to the gold camps of the Sierra Nevada from all over the world. This growing population generated a demand for food and wool in the mining camps, and the livestock industry expanded to meet that need.⁶ Following the Gold Rush, “a few intrepid shepherders” drove their flocks into the Central Valley where they encountered strenuous resistance from the cattlemen until the drought of the mid-1860s served to undermine the cattle industry and show that sheep required less

grazing land per head. Before long, former cattlemen began importing flocks from Southern California and Mexico. In 1867 French and Spanish Merino sheep were imported as a shift happened from production of mutton to production of wool.⁷

In a 1935 article about the history of the livestock industry in Fresno County, the Fresno Bee newspaper reported:

The stockmen had the field to themselves until the sixties [1860s] when they found themselves competing with incoming sheep, a situation which created many bitter feuds and some bloodshed. The chief altercations centered around range land. Many sheep growers were rudely treated by the “cattle barons” for with the encroachment of sheep, the cattleman saw his heretofore unchallenged pasture land being reduced and more than that the sheep stripped the country bare and left nothing upon which stock could feed....Despite the opposition of the cattlemen, the sheep business thrived for the reason that sheep could live cheaper than cattle, and further, the sheep could penetrate farther into the mountains and live more comfortably for more months in the higher elevations.”⁸

By the 1870s the flocks had expanded to a peak at about 6.4 million sheep statewide,⁹ but during the 1880s the low price of wool and gradual reduction of range land caused a decline in sheep raising.¹⁰ Fresno County in 1880 was reported as containing 750,000 sheep, and a decade later in 1891 there were about 375,000. Even with the diminished number it was still the richest sheep county in California. In 1880 mutton sold for 2½ to 5 cents a pound, but in Fresno in 1891, it was 15 cents a pound.¹¹ The Fresno Bee reported in 1935:

The raising of cattle, sheep and hogs has been a major occupation in Fresno County since the earliest years of its settlement by the white man. Its history dates back nineteen years before the incorporation of the City of Fresno—and by reason of the topography of the county it will continue to play a major role in the development of Fresno. The plains of Fresno County and the pasture land adjacent to the San Joaquin and Kings Rivers offered a natural habitat for cattle, sheep and hogs and it is only natural that Fresno’s early day folk turned their attention to building fortunes upon this industry when the gold mines dotting the rivers and streams began showing diminishing returns.¹²

The movement of livestock from the valley and foothills into the Sierra was a natural response to the state of the environment in central California. The San Joaquin Valley was a desert in the summer until irrigation was introduced. Summer forage was quickly exhausted, and herders looked to the higher mountains for water and grass. The droughts of 1862-63 and 1876-1877 added impetus to summer grazing in the Sierra. By the 1880s thousands of sheep were driven to the mountains to find feed at all costs.¹³ Mountain ranges provided lush summer forage, better water supplies than foothill ranges, moderate temperatures, and relative freedom from insects and disease.¹⁴

This early grazing was unregulated, as herders took advantage of any forage at any time. Overgrazing during this time was widespread and erosion from these practices was extensive. The mountain ranges quickly deteriorated in feed value.¹⁵

With the passage of the No Fence Law of 1874 the stock owner was obligated to herd his cattle and sheep and be responsible for any damage done. It signaled the cattleman's decline, as free range was ending and the agriculture industry becoming increasingly important.¹⁶ With the No Fence Law and overgrazing, competition arose between stock men vying for summer range in the Sierra. Conflicts arose between range rivals, leading to the exclusion of Chinese herders, and later between Portuguese and Basques. Competition also ensued with the cattlemen and the troubles continued until the Forest Service asserted control and allotted grazing ranges. By the close of the 19th century, much of the mountain and foothill rangeland was severely overgrazed in a struggle for forage among the numerous cattle and sheep outfits.¹⁷ The threat to the California sheep industry was apparent, and they reacted with vituperation toward any who suggested that sheepmen were responsible for overgrazing and resulting erosion, uncontrolled fires set in the mountains to clear brush for browsing, or any number of "environmentally-unconscious" acts. The Bureau of Animal Husbandry of the US Department of Agriculture included a number of statements of outrage in its 1892 report, *The History and Present Condition of the Sheep Industry in the United States*, including this response to the idea that erosion was related to sheep grazing:

From this it can be seen that the virtual destruction of the sheep interests in Fresno, by keeping up what all men having practical knowledge on the subject declare to be a causeless scare and unfounded prejudice, inflicts an injury to that county and to the entire State. If the delusion spreads it will soon be transmitted to other states having high mountain ranges and lands requiring irrigation.¹⁸

The Forest Reserve Act of 1891 was established in response to public outcry of the abuses to the great forests of the west. This was another dire threat to the livestock industry because the Act prohibited certain uses of the reserves, the forest lands set aside for public use. But without an administrative organization to prevent trespass, unrestricted livestock use continued. In 1897, Congress acted to provide for administration of the reserves, and grazing regulations were established to protect, develop and improve the forage resource while encouraging independent range operators.¹⁹ With the inclusion of large parts of the Sierra Nevada into the national forest reserves and National Parks in the 1890s and early 1900s, regulation of grazing by the federal government commenced and use declined. Sheep grazing in the National Parks ended by the 1900s.²⁰

By 1904 the Bureau of Forestry, the precursor to the Forest Service, had developed a grazing policy which recognized priority of use, made gradual changes in stock numbers, gave preference in permits to small owners, and established use to the extent consistent with good forest management, with stockmen given a voice in making rules for management.²¹ Effective control of grazing through the issuance of grazing permits began with the formation of the national forest system and establishment of the Forest Service in 1905. Grazing preference for national forest ranges was granted to small owner-operator ranches located on foothill land adjoining the national forests in an effort to foster community prosperity and stability. After 1905 a number of sheep ranches were commenced to establish residency to obtain these permits, and sheep were allotted ranges too dry for cattle. The permitting process eventually brought undesirable seasonal use of ranges under control. The tramp or gypsy sheep bands told of in anecdotal accounts arose in large part when immigrant herders, primarily Basque shepherds from

Western Europe, began herds of their own by taking ewes instead of cash for payment. The regulations for acquiring National Forest permits were designed to move these operators off the lands. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 ended the nomadic herders.²²

On the Sierra National Forest, sheep were not permitted beginning in 1908. An editorial in the December 1911 issue of *The Sierra Ranger*, a bulletin of the Sierra National Forest, complained:

This order was made for a good reason – because of the effect of sheep grazing on reproduction. Since that time, however, the wisdom of this action has often been questioned, but only in regard to the exclusion of sheep in the high Sierras. This country is not covered by even a protective forest and therefore the arguments against sheep grazing in the timber zone will not hold here. Anyone that has gone over the vast areas of bunch grass and short-hair range which because of its inaccessibility to any class of stock except sheep is now unused feels that the order of 1908 should be changed so that sheep from the east side can utilize the range. By doing this, no damage whatever to reproduction could result, and the “greatest use” policy of the Service would be carried out.²³

The policy would soon be reconsidered and carried out. In 1913, the Forest Supervisor began accepting sheep permits for Sierra ranges adapted for grazing. Approximately 21,000 sheep would enter the Forest from the west side, including 6,000 in the South Fork of the San Joaquin River watersheds where Mt. Givens is located.²⁴

Looking back in 1915, Sierra Ranger C. E. Jordan noted marked changes in the way grazing was handled since the early days of federal administration: The “men of the Service” were now making a careful reconnaissance of their grazing resources, and getting “things on a business basis.” Sheep were admitted to ranges on the forest where cattle and horses would not thrive.²⁵

Things were on a “business basis” both locally and nationally. The Forest Service extolled its new policies in a 1920 handbook entitled *The Handling of Sheep on the National Forests*:

The grazing of live stock on the National Forests [is] for the primary purpose of protecting the forests and watersheds, secondarily, because the Government recognized the grass as a valuable resource which should be protected and made to produce the maximum amount of animal food for the benefit of the stockmen, as well as all people.

The Forest Service wishes to make the National Forest ranges produce year after year the greatest possible amount of mutton, beef, wool and hides. If the annual production is to be kept up the stock must be so handled as to not to injure forage plant growth, except to feed off the annual crop.²⁶

Collection of grazing fees inaugurated in 1906 brought an economic return equivalent to timber sales to the national forests until about 1930. The bedrock of the economy in the western states was mining and livestock grazing on public lands, and practical leaders of the early Forest Service realized the economic importance of livestock grazing. Steady annual increases in livestock numbers in the early 1900s reflect this optimism. Sheep herding on the national forests reached a peak during World War I, when most ranges were overstocked by presidential request to supply more meat to the nation. By 1918, however, despite a new focus on management over

the preceding decade, most of the ranges had declined in productivity.²⁷ Since then sheep use has declined to extremely low levels at present.²⁸

After the turn of the twentieth century, increased demand during the world wars and widespread poverty of the Great Depression of the 1930s affected use of public grazing lands. During these emergencies, livestock use of national forests increased dramatically. Western droughts between 1919 and 1935 and overstocking during WWI led to exhaustion of public grazing lands. The Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 drew attention to rangeland carrying capacities. Between the wars, many grazing allotments changed from sheep to cattle for economic reasons, but since WWII, there has been a general decline in the amount of livestock use on public lands.²⁹

In looking back upon the history of the county in 1935, the Fresno Bee reported that,

Today finds the stock and sheep raising districts sharply defined and widely separated... With the development of irrigation, a natural boundary was established which more or less confined the sheep industry to the west side of the county, while cattlemen roamed the lower Sierra in the winter and the higher ranges during the summer. This segregation became more distinct when the Federal Government set up the national forests. The Forest Service took over control of the national forests and introduced the policy of issuing permits for grazing rights. The aggressiveness of the cattlemen largely preserved the high country for cattle. There are still some sheepmen who have grazing privileges in the mountains and annually herd their sheep in the high regions for food and water.³⁰

Dunford Thornton was one of those sheepmen herding his sheep in the “high regions”, which is what found him on top of Mount Givens in 1922, taking a break from his shepherding to pen and cache a note for posterity.

II The Sheepman: Dunford Thornton



Just a year later, another note was added to the can on Mt. Givens. This time, the author wasn't Dunford Thornton, but one of his herders. The note read: **Low Baley here with Thornton sheep Aug. 18, 1923 12 hundred head.**

Twelve hundred sheep sounds like a very large number, which may explain why Mr. Baley assisted Thornton is moving his sheep into the mountains that year. Baley had enough familiarity with Thornton's operations that he was able to find the small can hidden in the rocks on Mount Givens, and supplement it with another year's note. This small handwritten glimpse into the past suggests that Thornton's sheep business was thriving at least two years in a row at this point, indicating some economic stability. Such stability was probably very precious in the life of a stockman in early Fresno County, and in the life of Dunford Thornton in particular.

Dunford Thornton was born in Fresno County on June 24, 1870, as the second of four children of James and Mary Thornton. The other children were William O. Thornton, born at Fort Miller in 1869, daughter Alice, born in 1872,³¹ and George M., born possibly around 1875,³² although reported dates vary.³³

The 1870 census lists a 30-year-old James Thornton from Missouri with an occupation of a butcher, and Fresno County records indicate that a butcher named James Thornton was in business in the town of Millerton between 1865 and 1870.³⁴ He most likely died when Dunford was a young child, about 1876.³⁵ Dunford's mother also died early in his life. She was an Irish immigrant, of the last name O'Connell³⁶ or Cornell,³⁷ and was 17 years old the year Dunford was born.³⁸ She was said to have died in an institution of a "mental disturbance"³⁹ in 1875. One wonders if the pressure of being a young woman with four young children overcame her. Dunford Thornton was an orphan at a young age.

What happened next to him is unknown, but it seems as though he and his siblings were taken in or adopted by different families. His older brother William stayed in Fresno County, as did Dunford, as described by his niece, Mrs. Annie Stearley, in an interview given in 1968 with June English, a Fresno County historian:

Mrs. English: ...there were people by the name of Elliott and the Census records said they adopted Dunford. William stayed with the Corlews. He was listed in the 1880 census as living with the Corlew family.

Mrs. Stearly: I'll tell you who raised Dunford. When he was a boy with the old Gardner (?) family down at Sanger. That is where he made his house when he was a young fellow. Uncle Dunford was down there.

Mrs. English: According to the census...their name was Elliott, and it says they adopted Dunford.⁴⁰

The 1880 US Census for Fresno County indicates a ten-year-old boy named "Damford" Thornton was indeed living with the family of Joseph and Jane Elliott, a farmer and housekeeper, another American man with an Irish immigrant wife. Mrs. Stearly's remembrance of Dunford's family may indicate that he lived with more than one family during his young life.⁴¹

His brothers and sister may have been taken in by relatives or sent to an orphanage. The 1880 Census lists both a George and Alice Thornton living in San Francisco in a household with twenty children ages 4-14.⁴² Brother William was living with the Corlew family in Auberry Valley in eastern Fresno County. At very young ages, the Thornton children had lost their parents and then were separated from their siblings. Untimely death would strike the family again. George Thornton, who became a vaudeville actor, committed suicide in San Francisco in 1924. His roots in Fresno County were strong, and he was brought back for burial. Dunford's sister Alice had married and had also returned to Fresno County by then.⁴³

The story of Thornton's youth and young adulthood may be lost to history. His brother's obituary mentioned ranching in Oregon for a short time, and it is possible that the brothers did that together, as they would own land together in Fresno County later in life. Voter Registration records indicate he was in the town of Sanger, in Fresno County in his early twenties.⁴⁴

In 1896, Thornton married Lucretia Morgan, when he was twenty-five and she was twenty-one, and the next six years he lived in the Big Sandy Valley and Tollhouse area, where he established a sheep ranch.⁴⁵ Lucretia, or 'Sadie Lou', was a member of the Morgans, another Fresno County pioneer family. Soon he and his wife had a daughter, Marjorie, in 1899.⁴⁶ The personal crises continued to haunt him. As a boy, he had lost his parents, and as a parent, he lost a son to an untimely death: Dunford Mansfield Thornton was born in 1909 and died in 1923.⁴⁷ His wife also died young, passing away in 1910.⁴⁸ In 1920 he was a widower, living with a housekeeper, an immigrant in 1918 from England named Mary E. Turner,⁴⁹ who probably was employed to help him raise his children.

Dunford was in late thirties when the Fresno Morning Republican newspaper mentioned him as a ballot clerk for the Millerton precinct in the 1908 election.⁵⁰ Thornton apparently was a respected community member to hold this position, as he was an inspector for the Millerton

precinct in the 1910 general election,⁵¹ and was politically active as a Democratic county convention delegate for the Millerton precinct again in 1912.⁵²

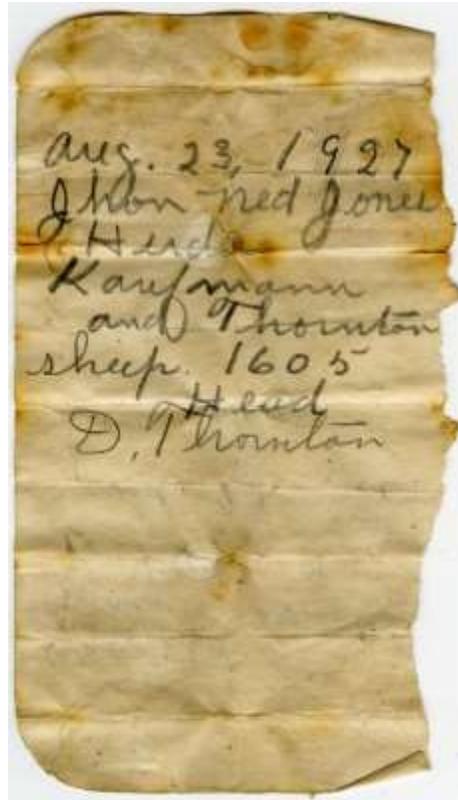
It is unclear where and when Thornton first entered the sheep business, but Woody Van Vleet indicated that he had “stayed sheep all the time,”⁵³ suggesting it was early in his life. The headline in the Fresno Bee newspaper from June 25, 1924 read, *Sheep Moved to National Forest Areas to Graze*. The article describes how sheep men of the central valley of California were moving large bands of sheep into the Sequoia and Sierra National Forests following actions by the federal government to open range to 22,000 sheep to relieve a feed situation.⁵⁴ When this note was left in the can on Mt. Givens in 1923, the business of sheepherding in Fresno County was about to improve.



Copy of a photograph in Sierra National Forest files entitled: Pine Ridge Stockmen 1900 – '30. The original was created by photographer R. W. Riggs of Fresno, CA in 1930. Dunford Thornton is in the lower left.

III

Sheep on the Forest



The next note was left in the can four years later: **Aug. 23, 1927 Jhon Ned Jones Herder Kaufmann and Thornton sheep 1605 head D. Thornton.**

If it is possible to picture 1,600 sheep in one's mind, moving through the forest, what may be remarkable to consider is the thought of almost 70,000 at one time. A summary of livestock permitted to graze in the Sierra National Forest between 1909 and 1958 lists sheep and goats combined beginning in 1913 with 12,203 head, up to the year 1958 with 3,250 head. The peak years were those of World War I, 1917-1920, with a high of 66,840 head in 1919.⁵⁵ The Sierra National Forest described the war years as a campaign to utilize all available forage to feed the army and its allies, with a total increase of sheep in 1918 of 35,372 head, "not including lambs."⁵⁶

Following the war, sheep herding declined. Just a decade later, in 1929, the Sierra National Forest issued 157 grazing permits for 13,265 head of cattle, 388 horses, and 21,525 sheep to graze,⁵⁷ a reduction of two-thirds of the sheep in just ten years. The decline on the Sierra National Forest did not signal a regional decline, however, but signs were evident that such was coming. In 1929, the Fresno Bee reported,

The California sheep industry has shown an increase of over 55 per cent in the last seven years and more sheep are produced in the state than in any other state except Texas.

California has 4 million sheep compared to 5 million in Texas. 575,000 lambs were shipped to market in 1929. California is third in wool production. It would appear that peak prices in the sheep industry have been reached and unless new markets are found for both lambs and wool, the man who makes a profit out of this industry must reduce his losses from predatory animals and sheep diseases.⁵⁸

The years of the Great Depression, between 1929 and 1940, certainly affected every part of the national economy, including stock raising in the Sierra National Forest. Thornton himself was not immune. In his 1935 permit application, Thornton answered the question about “how many head of stock do you actually own?”, with a listing of 500 head. This fell to 135 in 1936, and then increased from 450 in 1937 to 800 in 1939.⁵⁹

However, despite the difficulties, sheep were annually moved onto the Forest. A document entitled “*Report of Cattle Entering Sierra Forest, Shaver Guard Station, 1936*” not only lists cattle, but also sheep, with five herders accounting for a little more than 10,000 sheep that year, and Dunford Thornton contributed to that with 1,283 head.⁶⁰ Assumably, most of these were not his own stock.

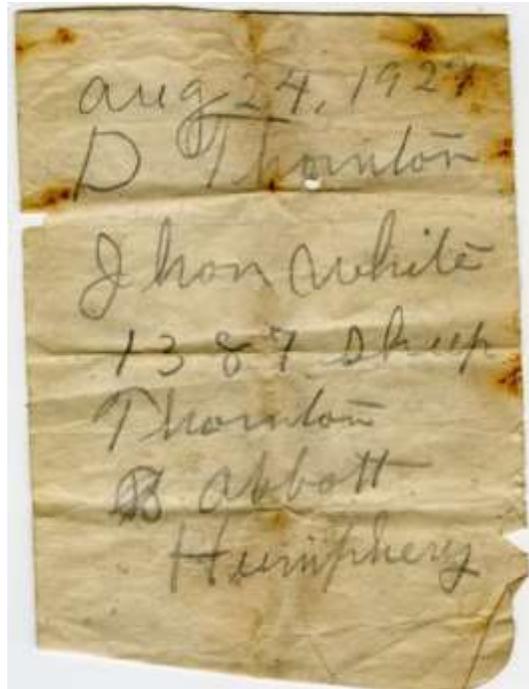
A Sierra National Forest document listing grazing permits issued from 1929-1940 does not list Thornton for some reason. Most of the sheepmen listed have Portuguese or Basque surnames, indicating that Thornton was also unusual for staying with sheep as an Anglo rancher:⁶¹

Bidegaray.....	1929-1940
Arbios Bros.....	1925-1948
Arдохайн.....	1920-1946
Arrosagaray.....	1933-1935
Avila.....	1933-1950
Bidart.....	1935-1936
Saldabehere Bros..	1930s
Sholer.....	1930s
Urutia.....	1935
Humphreys & Clark	1934
Johnson.....	1923-1924
Jones.....	1922-1925
Lagoity & Huarte..	1940-1949
McClain.....	1939
Urrutia.....	1921-1938
Yraceburu-Baird Bros	1933-1938

Interestingly, Humphrey and Jones are surnames on the notes in the can, and Thornton describes wintering on “Mr. Clark’s Ranch”, so there may have been a number of partnerships there.

Following World War II, livestock use declined again. By 1962 on the Sierra National Forest, only three allotments were available to sheep, but none were utilized.⁶² Yet, Fresno County still remained one of the top five counties in productions of lambs and wool in California into the 1970s.⁶³

IV Sheep and Land



The note from 1929 read: **Aug. 24, 1929 D. Thornton Jhon White 1387 sheep Thornton Abbott Humphrey**

1929 was a seminal year in American history. It marked the beginning of the Great Depression, an economic earthquake that rattled the foundations of the country, including the stock industry in Fresno County. Dunford Thornton particularly felt the effects of the Depression as a property owner.

Land and property, owned or leased, was important to the small stockman. It meant a land base for their stock, established them in the local community and economy, and made them eligible for grazing permits on public land. For Dunford Thornton, his home base was in Big Sandy Valley near the town of Tollhouse in the final years of the 1800s, even before the Sierra National Forest would come into being just a short distance up the mountain.

Big Sandy Valley is good sheep country. It is a large stretch of rolling grassland studded with oak groves that sits below the Big Sandy Bluffs where the foothills give way to the steep Sierra Nevada in eastern Fresno County. To the northwest is the town of Auberry, and on the southeast end is Tollhouse. Black Mountain is a bulwark between the valley and the foothill range on the edge of the San Joaquin Valley. It was in Big Sandy Valley that Thornton had his earliest sheep ranch.

The Fresno Morning Republican newspaper published a deed transaction from Frank Short to Dunford Thornton in November 1899, when Thornton was 29 years old, for 160 acres in Big Sandy Valley, for the sum of \$10.00.⁶⁴ Seven years later he added another 40 acres with a half interest from his brother William, for another \$10.00.⁶⁵ His brother William had earlier established himself as a rancher in Big Sandy Valley. Under the authority of the 1862 Homestead Act, William had patented 160 acres of land in Big Sandy Valley in 1892.⁶⁶ William and Dunford, though separated as orphans, were now neighboring landowners and partners in the fertile grasslands near Tollhouse. Both a 1907 Fresno County Atlas⁶⁷ and a 1913 Fresno County Atlas⁶⁸ shows them co-owning part of the property.



Big Sandy Valley, looking south from Big Sandy Bluffs to Black Mountain.⁶⁹

It wasn't long before Thornton moved his land base. As early as 1907, he had land on the western slopes of Table Mountain, overlooking the San Joaquin River, near the town of Friant.⁷⁰ In 1910, under the Homestead Act of 1862, he patented an adjoining 160 acre parcel.⁷¹ The 1923 Fresno County Atlas shows his land in Big Sandy Valley under the ownership of his brother William by this time.⁷² In 1928, he patented another 161 acres nearby on Table Mountain under the 1916 Stock Raising Homestead Act.⁷³ The Fresno Bee Newspaper of May 4, 1930 describes a Fresno YMCA Archery Club outing on Thornton's ranch on Table Mountain, where in addition to hunting rattlesnakes, "the party was entertained by Thornton at luncheon."⁷⁴

As a small stockman, life in the early twentieth century was probably a delicate balance of economic survival, dependent on the whims of the marketplace and uncontrollable factors of drought, depredation and disease. The spiral of the United States into the Great Depression in 1929 had a disastrous effect on the sheep industry, combined with local drought conditions, but the US Government took an active role. The Fresno Bee reported on the government's emergency drought relief sheep buying program initiated in September 1931 to afford relief where there was real stress from shortage of water and feed, improve the quality of sheep

through culling, provide food for the needy, and improve sheep prices. Fresno county ranchers offered 3,375 sheep for sale.⁷⁵ By 1935, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration initiated a program to assist sheep raisers in drought areas by purchasing sheep for \$2.00 for each sheep one year or older. Fresno County was included in the drought counties.⁷⁶ There was economic relief for the effects of adverse environmental conditions on the industry, although whether Thornton needed drought relief is unknown; but the Great Depression also had a disastrous effect on Dunford Thornton's fortunes.

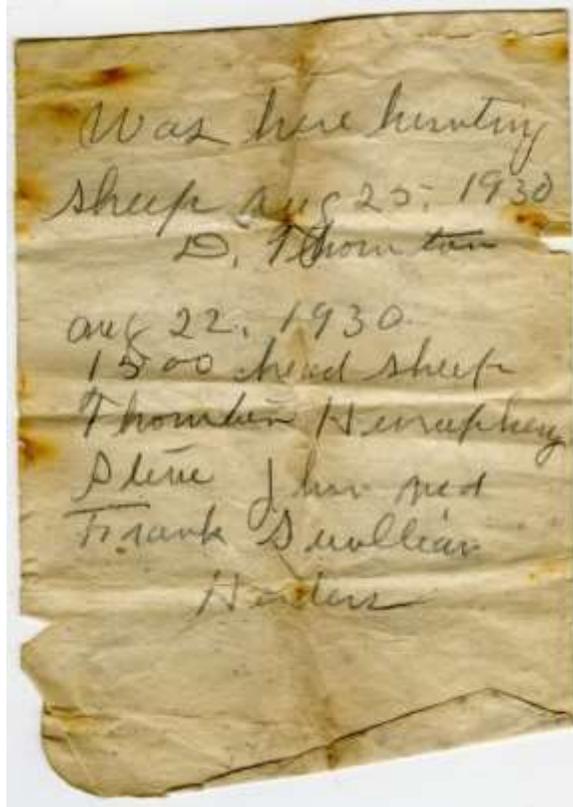
The November 11, 1934 Fresno Bee newspaper listed Thornton's bankruptcy filing, showing liabilities of \$2,477.00 and assets of only \$55.00,⁷⁷ an astonishingly small sum as we look back from the early twenty-first century. A series of grazing permit applications provides a timeline of his land ownership difficulties during the depths of the Depression, although his sheep business continued. The Sierra National Forest grazing permit application asked a number of questions about the applicant's land base.⁷⁸ In 1935, Thornton declared his residence as "near Friant," owning 640 acres on Table Mountain. But in 1936-1939, he answered negatively to the question "do you own ranch property?", and he listed his address as a post office box in Clovis, California.

As a sheepman, though, Thornton needed a land base for his flocks, even if he could no longer afford to own one. The 1936-1939 permit applications describe an increasing number of acres Thornton leased or rented in the Auberry area: 800 acres near Meadow Lakes in 1936, 1,300 acres near Backbone in 1937, 1,620 acres in 1938, and 1,400 acres in the vicinity of Clovis in 1939.

Upon his death in 1948, Thornton was living in the town of Clovis, having long lost his lands in Big Sandy Valley and Table Mountain.

Thornton's life may serve as an example of the life of the early twentieth-century Fresno County stockman holding permits for national forest grazing land, given the need for good winter home range with forage, and the means to acquire it. Thornton found his land bases in the valley grasslands bordering the national forest, partnering with his brother, and privatizing public land through the legal homesteading process. Although the Great Depression hindered him economically, he continued to raise his sheep, moving them each year from the valley to the mountains of the Sierra National Forest.

V Thornton's Sheep



Over three days in 1930, two notes were left in the can:

Aug. 22, 1930, 1500 head sheep Thornton Humphrey Steve Jhon Ned Frank Sullivan Herders

Was here hunting sheep Aug. 25, 1930 D. Thornton

Moving herds of sheep from the valley to the mountains, and managing them for weeks or months in the remote Sierran wilderness could not have been an easy undertaking. The modern highways and paved roads of today which reach high into the forest did not exist in the 1920s and 1930s. Sheep could not be trucked to their Sierran allotments; they had to walk. And the shepherds had to walk too, with time enough on their hands to leave small notes in a can on a high mountain. These notes are too brief to tell much of the story of these shepherders, but Thornton's operations can also be pieced together from information in his permits, Sierra National Forest range condition reports, and stories by his fellow stockmen who knew him.

The sheep industry followed the turn of the seasons. In 1931, the Fresno Bee described the industry and the seasonal cycle:

In Fresno County, there are nearly 300 ranchers engaged in the sheep industry. The first of December is the beginning of lambing season. The spring is the best time for shearing, when the sheep reluctantly part with their winter coats. During the summer months the sheep range in bands of 1800 sheep to the band. They feed on stubble fields and grain fields. In the fall alfalfa and vineyards are available.⁷⁹

Lambing season, mostly in March and April, was the beginning of the annual cycle. For Thornton, he listed his residence in 1935 for lambing season as on “Mr. Clarks Ranch”. On the permit applications, in answer to the question, “where do you winter your stock?”, he noted that in 1936 it was on “Mr. Clark’s ranch”. Thornton was probably still recovering from his bankruptcy at this time. By 1937 and 1938 he used ranges on public land, and in 1939 his winter range was on private lands.⁸⁰

As spring turned to summer, the sheep were moved to spring ranges. In 1932, W. A. Baird, of the Baird Brothers sheep company in Fresno County, wrote to the Sierra National Forest Supervisor:

“I understand also that Mr. Thornton is giving up his range situated above Tollhouse which he uses in the spring, April, May and June for sheep. I would like, if the opportunity affords itself, to apply for some low range for spring feeding...”. “The price of stubble or voluntary feed, even with the present prices, is prohibitive when it comes to running sheep and trying to break even.”⁸¹

The search for adequate feed for the “hoofed locusts” was probably all-consuming for the stockman. The spring season is short in the foothills of California, as summer heat seems to approach suddenly and dramatically, and the once luscious green hills of grass turned into fields of brown, dead vegetation with no forage value. When summer arrived, it was time to move the sheep to the highest ranges of the mountains.



Sheep being counted in Tollhouse before moving up into the mountains.⁸²

Sierra National Forest files indicate that Thornton's permits allowed for grazing in the Mt. Henry and Hot Springs allotments. These were deep in the steep mountains of the current John Muir Wilderness on the South Fork of the San Joaquin River, where lodgepole pines dominate and forage is found in meadows and along streams. A 1922 Range Appraisal Report by Ranger Roy Boothe described the Hot Springs Allotment season to run from July 1 to September 20, carrying a total of 1,000 head of sheep. The range, wrote Boothe, is "better adapted to sheep—should be held for summer feed for small bands owned by local stockmen—the carrying capacity is too small for larger owners." The report noted that this range was used by sheepmen in the "early days", and later on some of the more accessible parts of this range in the west end was used by permittee's cattle on the George Shipp allotment and likewise on the east by permittee on the Pargan allotment. Boothe wrote, "Since 1922 Mr. D. Thornton and others have been grazing sheep on this allotment. His system provides for feeding at the lower elevations and gradually working back as feed matures."⁸³

Boothe also described the Mt. Henry range as useful only by sheep, as cattle could not use the forage due to "rough and steep" country.⁸⁴ An undated Mt. Henry Range Condition Report indicates that the allotment was established in 1910 and used as sheep range "ever since". It is a strip down the south side of the South Fork of the San Joaquin River from Jackass Meadow to Mt. Henry, 12 miles long and 2-4 miles wide.⁸⁵

To get to the summer range, Thornton had to drive his sheep from his ranch near Tollhouse. The Sierra National Forest Range report describes the distance:

About 8 days drive for sheep by trail and road from El Prado [Auberry]. The range is about 7 days drive from permittee's ranch and 5 days drive from Forest boundary. A good road constructed by SCE Co. from Big Creek to Florence Lake makes delivery of salt and provision easy, compared with the time when it was necessary to pack from Shaver [Lake] a distance of 28 miles.⁸⁶

Woody Van Vleet also told of Thornton's sheep drive:

He had these little trails cut in there that he could drift his sheep into the mountains over through [the town of] Big Creek--then he'd walk through at Stump Springs, around the mountain [Kaiser Ridge], and go clear back up through the high country in the summertime... That was at Flying Creek. That was the summer range.⁸⁷



Sheep crossing the South Fork of the San Joaquin River on a log, 1910.
Sierra National Forest Photograph HP00578.

The first note in the can of 1930 gives an indication of just how labor intensive sheep herding was:

Aug. 22, 1930, 1500 head sheep Thornton Humphery Steve Jhon Ned Frank Sullivan Herders

Just to move 1,500 sheep into the range took a number of men, and their dogs, the eight days to drive the sheep to the mountains.

Once the sheep were on the range, it fell to the owner to supply provisions to the herders who stayed with the flock. The Range condition reports indicate that Thornton used pack burros to bring in supplies and salt, and constructed several miles of trails in 1925 for their access. The Ranger noted that he used “practically the same route every year,”⁸⁸ providing another explanation for the successive notes in the can on Mt. Givens.

For the summer, the herders spent their time managing the sheep, moving them across the allotments to obtain good forage. The Range Condition Report noted “The permittee drives the sheep to the lower portion of the range and gradually works back to higher elevations as feed matures. This range is the poorest within the High Sierra District, the feed being spotted; unless sheep are herded in many places, heavy grazing will show up.”⁸⁹ A 1939 Range Report noted that forage matured early that season, and lambs did especially well, but part of the Mt. Henry range was not used that year, or in 1938, as the “sheepmen did not consider the feed sufficient in amount to be worth going after. Accordingly, they left the range early and did not overgraze.”⁹⁰ Thornton’s permit application for 1939 includes a note that indicates it was cancelled, as he did not go on the forest that year.⁹¹ Although the search for good forage was a consuming task, a 1940 Fresno Bee article rhapsodized the life of a sheepherder of those days:

“What a lonely life must be his! Summer and Winter he must be here—his visitors few and far between. Sunday and weekday are alike to him. Up and dawn, he gets his breakfast, and drives his sheep out into the early cool air of the morning twilight. He carries a little bag in which is his noon meal. He watches the sheep among the hills the entire day, and at night brings them into the fold or corral, beside which he sleeps, to keep away coyotes, wolves and bears. Such is the monotonous live of hundreds of shepherders in California.”⁹²



Sheep crossing Dinkey Creek, date unknown. Sierra National Forest Photograph HP00595.

The Range Condition Report for one year of Thornton’s use indicated some of the challenges faced by the herders. In that year, Thornton’s sheep herds had “some losses due to poisonous plants—azalea and black fern, and some attributed to coyote. None to bear or lion.”⁹³ Another challenge was tracking strays, escapees, and wanderers from the flock. In 1930, a second note was left in the can only three days after the first: **Was here hunting sheep Aug. 25, 1930 D. Thornton.** Cattleman Lynn Akers described the hunt for the stragglers:

Well, the sheep men would come through there. Old Dunford Thornton, he was one of them. We got to be good friends. I'd catch them--I was pretty good with a rope, you know. He drove through our camp and went on up to Blayne Hot Springs country, up in there, and then a lot of them would come back. Not a lot, but maybe an old ewe and her lamb would come back and I'd catch them and tie them up. But he didn't care about them but there was some of those old bucks would come back; he paid pretty good money for them--they were purebred or whatever you call them. And I'd catch them and tie them up and he'd take them all right. He'd take them up to camp, to his herders.⁹⁴

The shepherd would identify his flock by their brands. Thornton’s brand also changed over time, as shown in his permit applications. In 1935 and 1936 it was a stylized “U”, or “the same as Mr. Clark’s”. In 1937-1938, the brand used was a “7D” as two distinct characters, but in 1939, he drew his brand as a “**D**”, a single character with the combined digits.⁹⁵

Assuredly, another challenge for the herders was the Forest Service. The Rangers made sure that range conditions were met and environmental damage minimized. The 1920 guidebook for handling sheep on the National Forests gave the following advice to the herders:

“The Ranger wants to be your friend. It is his job to see that you handle your sheep so they do not damage the range. He will help you with advice and suggestions if you wish him to. If you herd your sheep properly he will have the supervisor give you a card of thanks and recommendation that you are a good herder. If you do not handle your sheep properly he will have to report to the supervisor that you are a poor herder. Your Government card will show everyone that you are a good herder and will help you get a job anywhere”.⁹⁶

There was also constant demand for the high country forage, and Thornton not only shared the allotments with other sheepherders, but the cattlemen were also looking to utilize it, officially or not. In 1933, cattleman A. W. Bartlett wrote to the Sierra Forest Supervisor:

As the Thornton sheep range was not used last year, that is that part that joins the Sample Meadow range, I am wondering whether it is going to be used by any one this year, as it is a good cow range and would go well with Sample Meadow range, could not it be used with that range and increase the cattle that [?] on that range, it isn't going to be used otherwise? It is rather difficult to keep the cattle off of it anyway as there is no natural barrier between them and cattle naturally drift onto it. Suppose it will be in demand by someone this dry year—but trust there will be no harm done in asking about it, so I am up against it for feed of course like lots of others.⁹⁷

J.W. Poore, Acting Forest Supervisor, replied by letter: “It will be impossible to increase your permit by placing some of your cattle on the Hot Springs range as this range is going to be fully stocked by sheep this year.”⁹⁸

Thornton's allotments did not stay sheep forever, as time conspired against the sheepmen. A Sierra National Forest document entitled *Explanation by Years of Increases and Decreases* described the allotment use. In 1936-1940 permittees H. H. Welsh and W. T. Davis ran sheep in Mt. Henry and Hot Springs ranges with up to 1,600 head. In 1940, Davis discontinued his permit, and Welsh followed suit in 1943. Permittee S. P. Arbias applied for non-use in 1944-45.⁹⁹ In the Annual Grazing Report of 1948, the Sierra National Forest noted the change in the Hot Springs range from sheep to cattle, made to show the actual use pattern and better utilize available forage. The report also noted non-use of Mt. Henry range since 1946 for recovery.¹⁰⁰

In the fall, before the snows of winter, it was time to move the sheep again. Cattleman Van Vleet again put it concisely: “In the winter time, it was all ‘go home’. When it turned cold up there.”¹⁰¹ A September 1936 newspaper article described the fall exodus of livestock from the mountains:

Large herds of cattle belonging to the Simpson brothers, Harry Sample, D. C. Sample, and Arthur Bartlett are being moved from the government ranges in the higher mountains to their foothill ranges at Academy. Sheep belonging to Dunford Thornton are also being moved from the mountains to pasture on the plains.¹⁰²

Cattle, Sheep Are Being Moved From Mountains

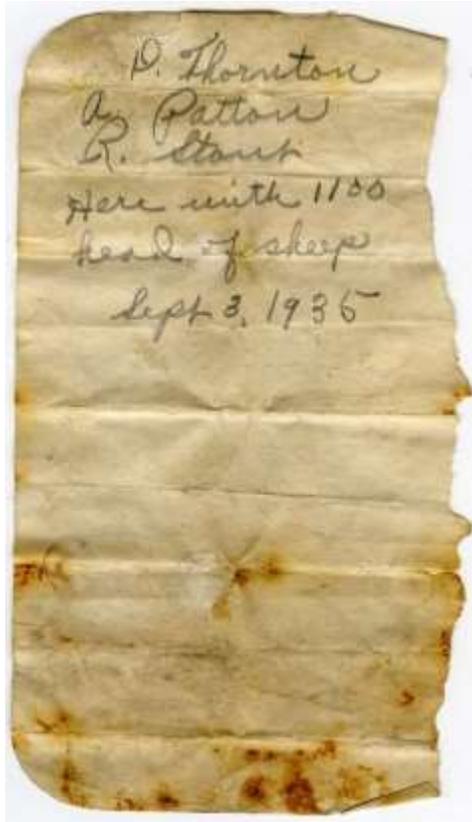
ACADEMY (Fresno Co.); Sept. 26.—Large herds of cattle belonging to the Simpson brothers, Harry Sample, D. C. Sample and Arthur Barlett are being moved from the government ranges in the higher mountains to their foothill ranges at Academy.

Sheep belonging to Dunford Thornton are also being moved from the mountains to pasture on the plains.

Fresno Bee, September 27, 1936

Down on the winter range, the cycle of the seasons would start over again in the spring, when the lambs arrived and the grass became green.

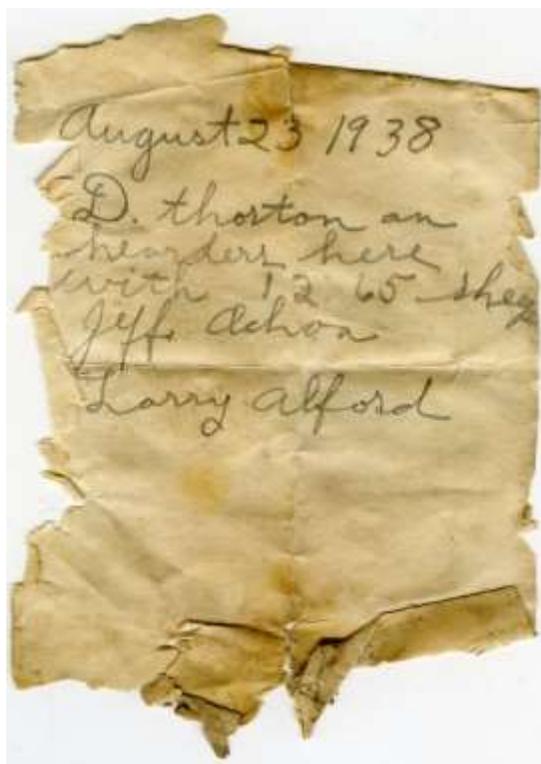
VI Return to the Mountains



D. Thornton, A. Patton, R. Stout here with 1100 head of sheep, Sept. 3, 1935

Five years passed before another note was left in the can on Mount Givens. Despite his bankrupt finances of 1934, the 1935 season saw Thornton once again with sheep in the mountains, accompanied by another set of herders. He must have been working on rebuilding his fortunes, both personally and professionally. Sometime in this decade, Thornton married his English housekeeper, Mary.¹⁰³ And by raising more sheep and moving them into the mountain areas, he was rebuilding his fortunes the way he knew best.

VII Nearing the End



Aug. 23, 1938, D. Thornton an headers here with 1265 sheep Jeff Ochoa Larry Alford

By this date, the last note in the can, Thornton was 68 years old, a long time for a senior citizen to be climbing Mt. Givens. America was facing the specter of war in Europe and Asia, and the times were changing. Soon the sheep business would change, and the flocks would no longer be driven into the high mountains each summer. Use steadily declined, and by 1958, fewer than 3,500 sheep would enter the Sierra National Forest; by the early 1960s, there were none.

Dunford Thornton passed away ten years after he left this note. As his life was succinctly described by his contemporaries, by notes in newspapers, by grazing permits, and even by small slips of paper in a can on Mt. Givens, so too was his death in his brief obituary in the Fresno Bee, where his assets were not his reputation or his sheep herding legacy, but his family relationships:¹⁰⁴

Obituary: Thornton--in Fresno, January 8, 1948. **Dunford Thornton**, beloved husband of Mrs. Mary Thornton, Clovis; loving father of Mrs. Marjorie Aldridge, New Mexico; brother of Mrs. Alice Cornelius, Sacramento. A native of Fresno County, aged 77 years. Funeral services will be held Monday, January 12, 1948 at two P. M. in the Boise Funeral Home, Clovis with Reverend C. Todd Clark, officiating. Internment Clovis Cemetery.



Thornton's headstone, Clovis Cemetery¹⁰⁵

Dunford Thornton lived to see his daughter Marjorie married, and was survived by his second wife Mary and sister Alice. Little did he know that his professional legacy was captured in short notes of pencil and notepaper, a time capsule of the life of a sheepman of the early twentieth century in the Sierra foothills. The sight of sheep in the mountains of the Sierra National Forest now is no more; cattle continue to use high country ranges, but sheep are no longer moved to the mountains each summer. Thornton's story parallels the rise, ups-and-downs, and decline of the sheep industry in the Fresno County foothills, a story now relegated to history, but thankfully, still told by the notes in the can.

Steve Marsh
District Archaeologist
High Sierra Ranger District, Sierra NF
2014

End Notes

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- ¹ Photo courtesy of Dan Pearce, 2007.
- ² My First Summer in the Sierra. John Muir. Houghton Mifflin, Co. Boston, MA. 1911.
- ³ John Muir: A Brief Biography. http://www.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/life/muir_biography.aspx. Accessed Feb. 27, 2011.
- ⁴ Woody Van Vleet. In, Oral History Interviews Pertaining to the Big Creek Hydroelectric Project, Fresno and Madera Counties, California. Theodoratus Cultural Research, Inc., Fair Oaks, CA. 1989. Woody Van Vleet was born in 1913, and ran cattle and had a cow camp in the Shaver Lake area.
- ⁵ Van Vleet 1989. Mr. Van Vleet's quote named Dunford Thornton as "Dunkirk" Thornton. One might excuse Mr. Van Vleet his mis-remembrance of Thornton's name, as at the time of the interview, Thornton had been dead for 42 years, and Mr. Van Vleet was 76 years old. As a member of the "greatest generation" his memory may have been influenced by the memory of the battle of Dunkirk during World War Two.
- ⁶ Agriculture in the Sierra. Janet Momsen, UC Davis. From, Sierra Nevada Ecosystem Project: Final Report to Congress, Vol. II. 1996.
- ⁷ Fresno County Agriculture. June English. Fresno Past and Present, the Newsletter of the Fresno City and County Historical Society. Fresno, CA. 1978.
- ⁸ Cattle Raising Was Earliest Industry. Fresno Bee, Fresno, CA. October 23, 1935.
- ⁹ Forested Communities of the Upper Montane in the Central and Southern Sierra Nevada. Donald A. Potter. General Technical Report PSW-GTR-169. USDA Forest Service, Pacific Southwest Research Station. 1998.
- ¹⁰ English 1978.
- ¹¹ Special Report on the History and Present Condition of the Sheep Industry of the United States. D. Salmon, E. Carman, H. Heath, and J. Minto. US Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Animal Husbandry. Washington, D. C. 1892.
- ¹² Fresno Bee, October 23, 1935.
- ¹³ Potter 1998.
- ¹⁴ Forest Grazing: Past and Future. Barbara Kosco and James Bartolome. Journal of Range Management 34(3), May 1981.
- ¹⁵ Potter 1998.
- ¹⁶ Fresno Bee, October 23, 1935.
- ¹⁷ English 1978.
- ¹⁸ Salmon et al. 1892.
- ¹⁹ Kosco and Bartolome 1981.
- ²⁰ Potter 1998.
- ²¹ Kosco and Bartolome 1981.
- ²² Potter 1998.
- ²³ The Sierra Ranger, Vol. I, No. 5, December 1, 1911. Issued at the headquarters of the Sierra National Forest, Northfork, CA.
- ²⁴ The Sierra Ranger, Vol. III, No. 2, June 1, 1913. Issued at the headquarters of the Sierra National Forest, Northfork, CA.
- ²⁵ The Sierra Ranger, Vol. IV, No. 4, February 1, 1915. Issued at the headquarters of the Sierra National Forest, Northfork, CA.
- ²⁶ The Handling of Sheep on the National Forests. US Forest Service, Headquarters History Collection, Washington, D.C. 1920.
- ²⁷ Kosco and Bartolome 1981.
- ²⁸ Potter 1998.
- ²⁹ Potter 1998.
- ³⁰ Fresno Bee, October 23, 1935.
- ³¹ California Death Records for Alice Thornton. <http://vitals.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ca/death/search.cgi>.
- ³² 1880 US Census. www.familysearch.org. Accessed February 27, 2011.
- ³³ Suicide's Last Rites Planned. Obituary of George Thornton. Fresno Bee, June 9, 1924.
- ³⁴ History of Fresno County, Vol. 1. Paul E. Vandor. Historic Record Company, Los Angeles, CA. 1919.
- ³⁵ William Thornton's obituary indicates he was orphaned at age seven, and that his father was a soldier. Annie Stearley remembered that James Thornton was a soldier who died in the Modoc War, which took place in 1872-

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1873. The casualty list of the Modoc War does not list a James Thornton, and it is likely that his death actually happened around 1876 when Dunford was six years old. This would have meant that his father did not die in the Modoc War, which happened years earlier. Modoc War casualty list: Historical Marker Database, www.hmdb.org/marker.asp?marker-63670, accessed Jan. 20, 2014).
- ³⁶ Man, 79, Born at Fort Miller, Dies. Obituary of William O. Thornton. Fresno Bee, Fresno, CA November 21, 1947. The California Death Index lists William Thornton's mother's maiden name as O'Connell as well.
- ³⁷ Reminiscences of Mrs. Annie Stearley, Pioneer Descendent, Fresno County. By June English. Recorded April 18, 1968. In, Sierra National Forest files.
- ³⁸ 1870 US Census. www.familysearch.org. Accessed February 27, 2011.
- ³⁹ English 1968.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ 1880 US Census. www.familysearch.org. Accessed February 27, 2011.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Fresno Bee, June 9, 1924. George Thornton is interred in Mountain View Cemetery, Clovis, CA.
- ⁴⁴ California Great Registers 1866-1910. www.familysearch.org. Accessed January 20, 2014.
- ⁴⁵ California County Marriages 1850-1952; California Great Registers 1866-1910. www.familysearch.org. Accessed January 20, 2014
- ⁴⁶ English 1968.
- ⁴⁷ English 1968.; San Luis Cemetery, San Luis Obispo, CA records www.slocgs.org/pdf-files/SLO-Cem-Location.pdf.
- ⁴⁸ Reminiscences of Mrs. Annie Stearley, Pioneer Descendent, Fresno County. By June English. Recorded April 18, 1968. In, Sierra National Forest files
- ⁴⁹ 1920 US Census. www.familysearch.org. Accessed January 20, 2014.
- ⁵⁰ Election Proclamation. The Fresno Morning Republican, October 24, 1908.
- ⁵¹ Election Proclamation. The Fresno Morning Republican, October 24, 1910.
- ⁵² Additional Delegates to Conventions. The Fresno Morning Republican, September 5, 1912.
- ⁵³ Van Vleet 1989.
- ⁵⁴ Sheep Moved to National Forest Areas to Graze. Fresno Bee, Fresno California, June 25, 1924.
- ⁵⁵ Summary of Livestock Permitted to Graze, Sierra National Forest 1909-1950 (with handwritten additions to 1958). Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁵⁶ The Sierra Feeds the Army. By E. E. Clark, in The Sierra Ranger, Vol. VI, No. 4, Jan. 1, 1918, a publication of the Sierra National Forest.
- ⁵⁷ Sierra Forest Host to 302,000 People in 1929. Fresno Bee, Fresno, Ca. February 9, 1930
- ⁵⁸ Los Banos Man Heads Valley Wool Growers. Fresno Bee, Fresno CA. October 18, 1929.
- ⁵⁹ Dunford Thornton. Grazing Permit Applications, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, and 1939. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁶⁰ Report of Cattle Entering Sierra Forest, Shaver Guard Station, 1936. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁶¹ Grazing Permits file. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁶² Sierra Forest Grazing Use Shows Little Change in '62. Fresno Bee, Jan 20, 1963.
- ⁶³ Fresno County Agriculture. June English. Fresno Past and Present, the Newsletter of the Fresno City and County Historical Society. Fresno, CA. 1978.
- ⁶⁴ Fresno Morning Republican, Nov. 12, 1899. Article: Instruments Filed in the Office of the Recorder Yesterday, Deeds: Frank H. Short et al. to **Dunford Thornton** et al. a grant deed in SE 1/4 of SW 1/4 and S 1/2 and NE 1/4 of SE 1/4 of section 22, T 10, R 23: \$10.
- ⁶⁵ Fresno Morning Republican, Nov. 29, 1906. Article: Real Estate Transfers, Filed for Record During Last Twenty-four Hours. William Thornton to **Dunford Thornton**, 1/2 interest in SW 1/4 of SE 1/4 of SW 1/4 and SE 1/4 of SW 1/4 of Section 22, township 10 S, R 23 E, \$10.
- ⁶⁶ Homestead Patent for William Thornton, Nov. 11, 1892. www.glorerecords.blm.gov. Accessed Mar. 3, 2011.
- ⁶⁷ William Harvey Atlas of Fresno County. 1907. <http://contentdm.califa.org>. Accessed 2010.
- ⁶⁸ W. C. Guard Atlas of Fresno County. 1913. <http://contentdm.califa.org>. Accessed 2010.
- ⁶⁹ Photograph by the author, Jan. 2014.
- ⁷⁰ William Harvey Atlas of Fresno County. 1907. <http://contentdm.califa.org>. Accessed 2010.

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- ⁷¹ Homestead Patent for Dunford Thornton, #156211. October 6, 1910. www.glorerecords.blm.gov. Accessed Mar. 3, 2011.
- ⁷² Fresno County Atlas. 1923. www.historicmapworks.com. Accessed 2010.
- ⁷³ Homestead Patent – Stock Raising for Dunford Thornton, #1020564. Nov. 8, 1928. www.glorerecords.blm.gov. Accessed Mar. 3, 2011.
- ⁷⁴ Archer Bags Snake: Fresnan Scores Feat. Fresno Bee. May 4, 1930. Archer Bags Snake: Fresnan Scores Feat.
- ⁷⁵ Sheep Men are Told of U.S. Plan Relief Program. Fresno Bee, Fresno, CA. September 4, 1931.
- ⁷⁶ Sheep Men Will Get U.S. Aid in Drought Setup. Fresno Bee, Fresno, CA. August 30, 1934.
- ⁷⁷ Fresno Bee. Nov 11, 1934. File Bankruptcy Pleas.
- ⁷⁸ Sierra National Forest Grazing Permit Applications for Dunford Thornton, 1935-1939. Henry Madden Library, CSU Fresno.
- ⁷⁹ Valley Ranks High in Lamb, Wool Industry. Fresno Bee, Fresno CA. January 4, 1931.
- ⁸⁰ Grazing Permits file. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁸¹ Letter from W. A. Baird, Baird Bros., to R. H. Blood, Sierra National Forest, North Fork, June 19, 1932. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁸² Sheep at Tollhouse, CA. http://efchs.org/old_scans/_089th.html. Accessed Jan. 9, 2014..
- ⁸³ Hot Springs Range Condition Report, undated. Range Grazing Files. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁸⁴ Range Appraisal Report, 1922. By Ranger Roy Boothe. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁸⁵ Mt. Henry Range Condition Report, undated. Range Grazing Files. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁸⁶ Hot Springs Range Condition Report, undated.
- ⁸⁷ Van Vleet 1989.
- ⁸⁸ Mt. Henry Range Condition Report, undated.
- ⁸⁹ Hot Springs Range Condition Report, undated.
- ⁹⁰ High Sierra District 1939. Summary of accomplishments. Sierra National Forest.
- ⁹¹ Sierra National Forest Grazing Permit Applications for Dunford Thornton, 1935-1939.
- ⁹² Fresno Bee, Fresno, CA, August 25, 1940: Early Day Sheep Industry in Valley Traced.
- ⁹³ Hot Springs Range Condition Report, undated.
- ⁹⁴ Interview with Lynn Akers. In, Oral History Interviews Pertaining to the Big Creek Hydroelectric Project, Fresno and Madera Counties, California. Theodoratus Cultural Research, Inc., Fair Oaks, CA. 1989. Akers was a local cattleman.
- ⁹⁵ Sierra National Forest Grazing Permit Applications for Dunford Thornton, 1935-1939.
- ⁹⁶ The Handling of Sheep on the National Forests. US Forest Service Headquarters History Collection, Washington, D.C. 1920.
- ⁹⁷ Letter from A. W. Bartlett to the Sierra Forest Supervisor. May 7, 1933. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁹⁸ Letter from J. W. Poore, Acting Sierra Forest Supervisor, to A. W. Bartlett. May 8, 1933. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ⁹⁹ Explanation by Years of Increases and Decreases, Sierra National Forest Range Report. n.d. Sierra National Forest.
- ¹⁰⁰ Annual Grazing Reports, December 15, 1948. Sierra National Forest. In, June English Collection, Madden Library, California State University Fresno.
- ¹⁰¹ Van Vleet 1989.
- ¹⁰² Cattle, Sheep are Being Moved from Mountains. Fresno Bee. Sept. 27, 1936.
- ¹⁰³ Thornton is listed as a widower in the 1920 and 1930 US Census, but is listed in the 1940 US Census as married to Mary E. Thornton, the same name, age and origin as his housekeeper listed in the 1920 Census. www.familysearch.org. Accessed January 20, 2014.
- ¹⁰⁴ Dunford Thornton Obituary. Fresno Bee. Jan. 11, 1948.
- ¹⁰⁵ <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=94571378>. Accessed Sept. 12, 2013.