

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest Service

Intermountain Region
Ashley National Forest

Men on the Mountain

Ashley National Forest
Vernal, Utah

Jim Fazio
Vernal, Utah
1967

This story is dedicated to the personnel - - -
past and present - of the Vernal Ranger District.

- - Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with
thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge,
nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.

- Eccl. 9:10

Preface

"Hell is paved with good intentions," and the undertaking to write this history is a monument among them. At the onset, I fully intended to make this complete to the minutest detail and as flawless as human ability permits. Three things have thwarted these noble desires. 1. The preponderance of historical events and information in the area - mostly in the form of old-timers; 2. The scarcity of written information of the area and, worse yet, the unreliability and contradictory nature of what recorded history exists; 3. The necessity of completing this work in four months instead of the intended period of at least one year.

Nevertheless, the history of District 2 is begun. Corrections will be needed in this text and should definitely be made. Omissions should be added and sketchy incidents enlarged upon. This responsibility will rest with those following me, but within these covers is the start of what could be a model for historical reports of other Ranger Districts in the Forest service.

It was once said, "History is, indeed, little more than the register of the crises, follies and misfortunes of mankind." I say history is, indeed, little more than people. And while this is largely crime, folly and misfortune, there is also the industry for which Utahns are famous, the integrity and self-sacrificing devotion which characterizes the United States Forest Service, and a genuine desire for quality which tries hard to predominate on the Ashley National Forest. These are the ingredients of "Men on the Mountain."

Acknowledgements

Several people deserve special thanks for their valuable assistance in making this history possible, and these include my wife Gale; Vernal District's very capable clerk-typist, Mrs. George (LaVon) Wall; District Ranger, Tom Sevy and his assistant, Allen Shippee; Forestry Technician and the affable chief "old timer" of the District, Virt McConkie; and Glen Lambert, ex-District Ranger, who capably served the District for 29 years.

There are many others who have contributed their time and knowledge to the work, and to each of you goes a hearty thanks.

Special thanks also is extended to the Davis Adair Company, publishers of the "Outlaw Trail" by Charles Kelly, for their kind permission to use Mr. Kelly's vivid description of the Dry Fork gunfight.

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In The Beginning

On September 13, 1776, the United States of America was the World's newest nation. Not yet four months old, Washington's Army was being hard pressed in New York, and the future of a free nation looked grim indeed.

On this same day in history, Daniel Boone and his stalwart followers were struggling to establish Boonesboro in the Kentucky wilderness. Barely a year old, the crude stockade and log cabins were on the edge of the western frontier, and the country beyond was full of mystery and foreboding to the American people.

But fifteen hundred miles to the west, a small party of men and horses had just crossed a river they recorded in their diary as the San Buenaventura. Dwarfed by the endless landscape of a rocky plain with protruding mesas and countless ravines, the ten men made their way southwest to a small tributary of the river, and then turned west across the empty waste.

Over a month earlier, the little party had departed from the Catholic mission at Santa Fe, New Mexico. In charge were two Fransiscan friars, Francisco Antanasio Dominques, and the scribe, Silvestre Vales de Escalante. Seven other Spaniards and an Indian guide were also among the party.

The explorers had set out in answer to an appeal from the church to find a better route to the west coast mission at Monterey. What brought them this far north to the foot of the Uinta Mountains is not definitely known. The most vindicated theory is that they were looking for a westward flowing river that emptied into the Pacific near Monterey, and what was probably the San Joaquin or the Sacramento. The Spanish Fathers on the west coast had heard reports of such a river from the Indians, and had relayed this information to Santa Fe.

Their northern trek ended during the second week of September, and the spot where they camped and crossed the San Buenaventura (now called Green River) was named in their diary "Santa Cruz." At this spot stood six large "black poplars", and for many years, one of these trees bore an inscription made by the men.

These were the first white men to ever lay eyes on what is now the Vernal Ranger District. They were the first to see the waters of Brush Creek and Ashley Creek, and in fact, described the latter as a narrow ribbon winding its way through the dry land.

As they made their way west along the base of the Uinta Range, they must have wondered what treasures lay hidden on the green hills to the north which must remain for later explorers to discover.

Crossing the Wasatch Range, Dominques, Escalante and their men made their way down the mountains to what is now known as Utah Lake, and then turned south again. Discouraged by negative replies from Indians and other Spaniards, to questioning about the westward flowing river, the little party quarreled among themselves as to whether or not to strike out west across the bleak desert, or head southeast to Santa Fe. Better judgment prevailed, and the expedition returned to their mission without finding the new route to Monterey.

Home of the Indian

As the strange and alarming procession of white men faded into the west, watchful eyes turned from their vantage points on the cliffs and mesas back to the normal pursuits of every day existence.

The lower reaches of the mountain served as home to these red men from the dawn of history. While probably not inhabited on a permanent basis, the higher altitude undoubtedly also received heavy use by summer and autumn hunting parties, traveling war parties, and the hunted seeking refuge.

It is believed by some that one or two flat areas near the present Colton Guard Station were once used by these early people as dancing grounds. Otherwise, except for an occasional arrowhead, the preponderance of relics and other evidence of habitation has been found in the rocky canyons of Ashley and Brush Creeks and the Juniper covered slopes between.

From the Utah Field House of Natural History comes the record of the original users of the mountain. The very earliest residents are said to have belonged to the *Desert, Basketmaker* and *early Pueblo* cultures of the Southwest and Great Basin, and are generally referred to in this area as the Fremont Culture.

"They were already practicing irrigation in the early part of the Christian era, if not by means of ditches, at least by diversion of flood waters, to their farms many hundreds of years before the Mormon pioneers became the Anglo-Saxons to divert water from streams for the growing of crops.

"The cultivation of corn and squash and later of beans by these early inhabitants marked the beginning of a sedentary life and the waning of the nomadic existence dominated by the pursuit of game as the mainstay of survival. The farmer had replaced the nomadic hunter who now played a supplementary role in supplying the larder. No agricultural surpluses plagued these struggling farmers who were forced not only to fight against the fickleness of nature but also to defend their meager stores from the raids of less enterprising enemies."

These Fremont people bridge the gap between the very first hunters and farmers and the Uintah Ute Indians that watched Escalante's party pass through their domain.

The majority of the now famous petroglyphs (rock writing) in the Vernal area lies just south of the Ranger District boundary. Among these are perhaps the best displays of this ancient art to be found anywhere in the United States. Most of the cliff murals are credited to the Fremont Culture and are dated at 1200-1600 years old.

"While most of the cliff murals represent chieftains, male and female individuals, ceremonials, hunting scenes and other activities of that time, they had no narrative or language significance and do not attempt to tell a continuous story. The trapesoid-shaped human figures with horned headdress, ornamental neck pieces and belts, and decorated chests, often showing outstretched fingers, are typical of FREMONT CULTURE. Occasionally figures appear to be carrying heads of other individuals, some of which may represent masks, but those with necks and what appear to be drops of blood, are probably trophy heads. The "round-bodied" figures are warriors wearing large round shields. They have been shown to be typical, not of a culture younger than the "trapesoid", as formerly thought, but also of FREMONT.

Besides the petroglyphs both on and off the District, relic hunters regularly find arrowheads, grinding stones, spearheads, and other relics. Vernal's most unusual display of these and other remnants of its earliest people can be viewed at the -V- Ranch in Dry Fork Canyon.

White Men Again

In 1806, Lewis and Clark returned to St. Louis following their epic journey to the Northwest, and set off a new period of history which we will call the Mountain Men Era.

This era was also stimulated by the social customs of the time which made beaver furs a commodity very much in demand - even more so than mink today. But unlike mink, beavers were abundant and easy to trap. That is, for those who dared risk their scalps to invade the little known land that the Indians jealously called "home" for many centuries.

Probably the most rugged breed of men America has ever produced, these fearless, restless brutes trapped beaver on almost every stream in the west within the short span of about 40 years. They trapped not only in hopes of monetary gains, which they normally blew at the annual rendezvous, but because of their insatiable desire to hunt and trap in "new country", never before disturbed by white men.

Forty nine years after Escalante's party crossed the Green River seven men stood on its banks studying the country for "sign" of Indians.

Among those mountain men were several of the most famous of the era, Robert Campbell, Thomas Fitz Patrick, and their leader, William Ashley, organizer of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

When they stood on the banks of the Green River somewhere near the spot where Escalante made his entry into our country, the party had just completed the treacherous run through the Split Mountain Gorge and the other rapids in the narrow canyons south of Brown's Park.

At the entrance to what is now known as Red Canyon, the men painted with iron oxide the words, "Ashley - 1823", which remained visible until early in this century. But the men left several names that will live on into the final annals of recorded history, namely, The Ashley Valley and Creek, from which the National Forest to the north got its name. It is a fitting tribute to the man among men who stood out not only in bravery and strength, but also in honesty, intelligence, and industry.

Another name resulting from this exploration is the Green River, named in honor of a fellow trapper and St. Louis friend of Ashley's, a Mr. Green.

The men passed on south to where the town of Green River now stands, and then, convinced that the Green was a westward flowing river, secured horses from the Indians and rode northwest to the Salt Lake country.

In the Ashleys' footsteps came the first group of white men on the mountain. Finding beaver abundant in the tributaries of the Green, numerous trappers passed through the area taking with them valuable pelts from Ashley Creek, Brush Creek, and other streams on the District that are still trapped today.

To the west near the present town of Whiterocks, two such men by the names of Jim and Toopeechee Reed established the first white settlement in Utah about 1828. Set up to trade guns, knives, cloth and coffee beans to the Indians for beaver pelts and other furs, the Reed Fort lasted about three or four years. During this time, another partner, Denis Julien, inscribed his name in the rocks at numerous locations in northeast Utah and western Colorado. One such inscription, with the date 1831 can still be seen today several miles south of the old fort site.

After selling out about 1832, Jim Reed later returned to the Uintah Basin and lived to the ripe old age of 117 years. The men who came to live in the trading post after Reed's day were not as fortunate.

The new purchaser was the infamous Antoine Robidoux, who some unenlightened historians credit with having established Utah's first settlement.

Actually, this Frenchman located his fort twenty yards from the site of Utah's first, and definite evidence of both has recently been uncovered.

Robidoux, in addition to trading the usual items, added Indian maidens to the inventory. In addition to selling them to eager trappers, it is said he took both women and young children south to Spanish territory where he found a ready market for slaves.

At the fort, the women were bought and sold among the men, and won and lost around the gambling table. Whiskey was another popular item which was probably responsible in part for the cruelty which also prevailed at the fort. Not only were Indian children tied to trees as sport in target shooting, but one account from the diary of a traveler who was stranded at the den of iniquity for eighteen days tells of one Frenchman who buried alive one of his half-breed offspring.

In spite of its sins - or possibly in some cases because of them - Fort Robidoux had many famous visitors. Kit Carson is said to have spent the winter in 1833-34. Jim Bridger stopped there, as did the missionary-pioneer, Marcus Whitman in 1842. And even the so-called "Pathfinder", John C. Fremont showed up at the fort, undoubtedly led there by the grizzled mountain men who led him to all the other places he is sometimes given credit for discovering.

At this time, there were two Indian trails over the Uinta Mountains. One crossed just west of Gilbert's Peak and the other - later known as Lodgepole Trail, and then the Thornburg Military Road - ran from Burnt Fork, Wyoming to the Ashley Valley. Since Robidoux supplied his fort from the Fort Bridger vicinity, he undoubtedly used this later route, which crosses the Vernal District. Apparently it was locally known as the Robidoux Trail for a while, at least, and one early writer says "...he made (he probably just used the existing trail mentioned above) a pack horse trail across Taylor Mountain to Fort Bridger...which is still used by the cattlemen on the face of Taylor Mountain..."

The Utes finally had their fill of the Frenchman and in terrifying revenge, swarmed over the trading post in 1844, killing every white man there and burning the buildings to the ground.

But, as fate would have it, the chief villain, Robidoux himself, was away at the time and escaped to California where he died of old age!

Trappers to Settlers

Between the time Fort Robidoux was destroyed and the Valley was first settled, another figure prominent in Western history passed this way and cast inquisitive eyes toward the mountain.

This was the famous one-armed river explorer and first white man to shoot the rapids through the Grand Canyon, Major John W. Powell. In 1869, the Major was descending the Green River on his way to the Colorado.

He stopped somewhere near the present site of Jensen, and stayed in the Uintah Basin long enough to hike over to the newly established Indian Agency at Whiterocks. Following his exploits, Powell made known to the world the spectacular canyons now included in the boundaries of neighboring Dinosaur National Monument, and the Flaming Gorge National Recreation Area.

Two-years following Powell's visit to this area, history missed the Vernal Ranger District by only a few miles. At a spot just east of the District boundary now called Diamond Gulch, two swindlers salted the mountain with several thousand dollars worth of diamonds and initiated the greatest mining swindle in American history.

The Diamond Hoax of 1871 is not within the scope of this paper, although it is the way Diamond Mountain received its name. A mountain named after a crime is very appropriate for one which was later traversed and used by Butch Cassidy, Elza Lay, Matt Warner, and countless other outlaws who today border on the legendary.

In passing, it is interesting to note that the two swindlers got away with \$600,000 for their efforts in planning and executing the daring hoax.

Settling the Ashley Valley

A native Pennsylvanian has been given credit for being Ashley Valley's first permanent settler. Lt. Pardon Dodds, a bachelor and Civil War veteran was appointed Indian Agent at Whiterocks by Andrew Jackson in 1867. Following his retirement from the Agency, Dodds is said to have built a log cabin on Ashley Creek in February 1872.

However, this phase of history, like many other phases, seems to be quite befuddled in the minds of local historians. Dodds apparently was accompanied by at least two other men, and it is fairly well established that their main attraction to the area was the suitability of the mountain to the north for grazing cattle.

Another man mentioned as the first settler is one Mr. Bartlett. And in addition, some Daughters of the Utah Pioneers stoutly proclaim that John B. Blankenship and Morris Evans were the first. These two men, they say, rode into the valley two days before Dodds, but then in "Builders of Uintah", quote the year as 1875, or three years later than Dodds! A minor point to be sure, and it seems to be generally conceded that the honor goes to Dodds and the men accompanying him on February 14, 1872.

Three years later in 1875, Robert Snyder drove a large herd of cattle into the valley to join the growing numbers being grazed on the face of Taylor and Diamond Mountains, as well as near by Blue Mountain. In fact, by this time there were well over 5,000 head of cattle and horses on the slope of the mountain. Morris Evans is said to have had about 2,000; A. Hatch more than 2,500; and who knows how many Dodds, Snyder and the others had grazing.

The following year, exactly 100 years after Escalante crossed the Basin, Snyder brought his wife and daughter into the valley and into local history as the valley's first white women.

In 1903 when a Ute Indian by the name of Red Cap learned that the Utes were to be given allotments of land on which to live, and that the surplus land would be open to homestead by non-Indians, he made the statement which strikes a sad note in the heart of any resource manager today. He said, "the streams, the land, and the timber upon the mountains, you cannot take that away. These things, they are a part of the earth and they are heavy, you can't move or lift them, I don't care how big you are."

How wrong the poor man was! Little did he realize that almost thirty years earlier, the big white man had already begun to move the land. He began with the soil and the forage by grazing large herds on the steep slopes of Taylor Mountain the year 'round. Range managers today can only guess how lush the vegetation on the mountain was originally and watershed specialists are still faced with erosion problems initiated by over grazing prior to the establishment of the Forest.

The white man was here to stay. Henceforth he would cut the trees, use the forage, build roads, construct dams, name the places, kill, build, destroy and leave his mark - sometimes good, sometimes regrettable, on virtually every acre of the mountain.

Indian Trouble

As the result of Indian trouble in 1879, a mark was made across the District that is still visible today.

It all began on September 29, 1879 near the White River Indian Agency in eastern Colorado. Because of a long series of incompetent dealings with the Indians on the reservations and much misunderstanding on both sides, troops were led into the area by Major T.T. Thornburg and ambushed by about 300 Ute braves.

During the ensuing battle, Major Thornburg and twelve of his soldiers were killed by the Indians. The remainder of the troops were rescued several days later, but not in time to save the lives of Agent Meeker and the other male employees at the nearby agency.

Fanned by sensationalist journalism and unfounded rumor, the flames of fear spread rapidly through the frontier settlements in Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah. Because of the heroic efforts of Chief Ouray, his wife Chipeta, and several others who kept cool heads, there were in actuality, only minor and scattered incidents following the ambush and massacre in Colorado.

Nevertheless, frightened settlers throughout the tri-state area hurriedly built stockades and other fortifications. Some even abandoned their cabins and moved lock, stock and barrel to the more defensible towns.

So it was in the growing settlements of the Ashley Valley. On a broad, flat expanse of land about one mile from Ashley Creek, the Hatch family settled on what had previously been known simply as the "bench".

Upon hearing of the Meeker massacre, Hatch and some of his neighbors arranged their 16' square cabins in the shape of a V with 16' between each cabin. Situated at the site of the present day Penney's store and less than a block from the present headquarters of the Vernal Ranger District, the resemblance of a stockade was called "Jericho".

It is not definitely known whether Jericho was so named because of one of its residents, Uncle Jerry Hatch, or factitiously after the biblical Jericho with its stout walls of stone. Probably, it was a little of both.

At any rate, during what is now known as the "hard winter of 1879-1880" about two dozen families lived and nearly starved in the old Vernal stockade, as it is sometimes called. Their restless Ute neighbors caused them absolutely no trouble other than worry, but the unusual cold and deep snow took large numbers of cattle and horses.

When spring arrived, the Government decided to move the White River Utes from their reservation in Colorado to the reservation in the Uintah Basin which was home to the Uintah Utes. Because of the previous trouble at Meeker, and the continuing restlessness among the Utes, it was also decided that it was necessary to re-establish an Army post in the Basin.

The first step was the re-establishment of old Fort Bridger in Wyoming. From here, the proposed fort in the Basin could be supplied by wagon road via Park City, Utah, or Green River and Brown's Hole to the east.

The Thornburg Road

The advantages of a direct route across the Uinta mountains became immediately apparent to the War Department. Two existing Indian trails presented possibilities. The one, then known as Soldier Trail, which crossed just west of Gilbert's Peak is said to have been used in 1857 by General Marcy during an emergency trip to New Mexico to supply the army sent to Utah under the command of General Albert Johnson. The other trail was probably the one used earlier by Robidoux, and called Lodgepole Trail. Because of its lesser grade, it was this trail that was chosen for improvement into a more usable wagon road.

From a letter loaned to us by Leland Sowards, we have an account of the District's earliest known road construction activity. It is told by William A. Carter, son of Judge William Carter, the man who undertook the mammoth task of building the road in hopes of securing a contract with the Army to freight supplies to the new fort in Ashley Valley.

"There was much rivalry between towns in Colorado, Utah and Wyoming for the location of the road to the new military post, but Fort Bridger was favored by distance. On this account and because of General Crook's approval, Judge Carter undertook, at his own expense, the work of making a passable road along the route designated, expecting that it would be adopted and improved later by the War Department. The winter of 1881-1882 was approaching, there was no time for surveys, streams had to be bridged, marshes corduroyed, a roadway cleared through timbered sections, and two long and difficult dugways were to be constructed. One of the latter, a half-mile long ran from Sand Canyon to the top of the mountain near Lodgepole Park, and the other two miles long, climbed the main range between Mammoth Springs and Summit Park.

As a result of the hardships suffered in this enterprise, Judge Carter was taken sick at his camp on the stream named after him, Carter Creek, and died shortly afterwards of Pleurisy at his home in Fort Bridger.

"In the fall of 1881, a military post with small garrison was established on Ashley Creek, near the present town, Vernal, Utah, and was named Fort Thornburg, in honor of Major J.M. Thornburg, who was killed in 1879 in an engagement with the White River Utes. Early in 1882, a contract was let by the Chief Quartermaster of the Department for freighting supplies by way of the new road from Carter Station on the Union Pacific Railroad, via Fort Bridger, to Fort Thornburg. It fell to the lot of the writer to carry this contract out, and on the first day of May, 1882, we started with twenty two, six-mule teams and wagons, loaded with freight for the new post.

"It soon became evident that from the character of the past winter at Fort Bridger, we had very erroneous conceptions of what we would encounter in attempting to freight through the mountains so early in the spring. The dugway between Sand Canyon and Lodgepole was blocked with snow and ice, which had to be removed before we could get our outfit up the mountain. From the head of the dugway the road was almost impassable. Ravines filled with melting snow and water nearly up to the wagon beds; bogs in which both teams and wagons were often mired down at the same time; hills so soft that all the teams we could hook on were often required to pull a single wagon to the top; and slopes so sidling that the whole crew, with ropes, was needed to keep a loaded wagon from upsetting, were everyday experiences.

"Up the long dugway above Mammoth Springs and on top of the main range, our difficulties seemed to have been overcome, when we reached Brush Creek, where in one locality, a separate road had to be cut through the timber for each wagon. The ground at this place appeared dry and firm, but each team broke through a thin crust into a quicksand beneath, making the road impassable for the next team. In spite of obstacles we delivered the freight at Fort Thornburg in three weeks from the day we started.

"As soon as conditions permitted, in the summer of 1882, Major W.H. Bisbee, who was then in command at Fort Bridger, sent Lt. R.H. Young with a detachment of soldiers, to work on the road, which from that time was known by the Army as the Thornburg Road. Such good work was done by this party, especially in removing large boulders from the roadway and corduroying the swamps, that when we had to take a second train of supplies over the road, in July 1882, it was a different story. We had learned, too, that mules were not best adapted to such conditions, and we used work oxen with "bullwhackers" instead of "muleskinners" for drivers. The succeeding trips were still less difficult, although Fort Thornburg had been moved during the summer, forty miles further away to a point on Green River, opposite the mouth of White River.

"In the summer of 1883, four companies of Infantry, under Major I. DeRussey were ordered to work on this road, for a period of three months, and by then the greater part of the corduroy through the mountain parks was laid. The abandonment of Fort Thornburg, and the establishment, shortly afterwards, of Fort Duchesne, fifty miles west of the Green River, made the Thornburg Road no longer necessary, and no further work on it was performed.

"To the traveler who comes upon this road at any part of its course, through the Uinta Range, it seems to present an unusual example of wasted effort and money, but like many

other of the works of man, it served its purpose, and gave way to changes in the development of the country."

It was also along this route that Ashley Valley received its first direct communication with the outside world. A telegraph line was strung along the route between Fort Bridger and Ashley in 1881 and was in operation until the abandonment of Fort Thornburg in 1884. When it ceased operating, the settlers went on the mountain and rolled up the wire for use as fencing.

The following account of the establishment of Fort Thornburg is taken from "Builders of Uintah". The dates differ slightly from those given by William Carter, as well as the order in which the fort was located at the Green River and Ashley Valley sites. This is one of the places where additional research and revision is needed. Nevertheless, we have the following information about the old fort:

"...Pete Dillman came through Brown's Park over Diamond Mountain in 1877 and was the first man to file on the Fort Thornburg site.

"Before the soldiers came, a coal mine, known as the Wardle mine today, was opened by Wm. G. Reynolds, Otto Peterson, George W. Brown and N.M. Reynolds. After the soldiers came, a statement of regret was made by one of the officers in charge, that they did not file on and extend the reserve one mile further west to take in the coal mine.

"Mr. John A. Lambert, Sr. who enlisted in the Army in 1881, was one who came to Ft. Garland, Colorado, July 6, 1881, and joined the Sixth Infantry. They were transferred to Cheyenne, Wyo., and from there were ordered into the Uintah Basin to establish Fort Thornburg. Four companies of the Sixth Infantry were ordered here. Mr. Lambert was a member of one company with J.P. Slincler, captain. The companies came as far as Park City on the train. They were unloaded at the forks of the road just below Park City and began their long trip into the Basin. There were 200 men, 76 six-mule teams, and 75 pack mules. The companies arrived in Ouray in October 1881. They camped about where the town of Ouray now stands. They were the first soldiers in this section. In the spring of 1882 the Indian Department issued instructions that they could not establish a fort on Indian Territory, so the camp was moved to the north of Ashley Canyon on the Green homestead and Fort Thornburg was definitely located. During the summer, the soldiers were engaged in making adobes for the Fort. Part of the men were assigned to build a road over Taylor Mountain. The road from the Fort north to Government Park was constructed by these soldiers. Men from Fort Bridger built the road from the park north to Fort Bridger and Carter Creek station as the nearest point to a railroad. The country over which this road was constructed, which is so dry and dusty today in summer, was then so wet and swampy that it was necessary to build what they called

corduroy roads which had to be done mostly with pick and shovel. During this road construction, military camps were established along the way, one being at Davis Hollow.

"In about the center of Government Park, a sawmill was established for the purpose of sawing lumber for Camp Thornburg. This mill was operated by the soldiers with Henry Ruple as their sawyer. While they were here, their freight supplies of all kinds were brought in by team over Taylor Mountain. One of the contractors of that day, hauling freight, was Wm. Richmond, who used eight horses and mules and two wagons. They were frequently mired during the rainy season and often times three weeks were required to make the trip. Very high wagon boxes were used. These wagons also had an elevated spring seat. One of the boxes actually used at this time can be seen twenty feet northwest from the old home of Joseph McKee in Glines ward and now owned by Ernest Johnson.

"...During the time Fort Thornburg was established in the canyon, a military cemetery was located just south of where George Perry's house now stands in the canyon. He would oft times follow the old road that followed the river and directly down by the fort and there he would market his eggs and butter. Upon one occasion, Uncle Tommy remembers after returning home that he had been paid 25 cents too much for his eggs and butter. The next trip he made, he brought an extra 25 cents and told them of the mistake. They told Uncle Tommy that it was too late now to make any changes and that it was all right for him to keep the money.

"...Some of the people living here at the time of the old Fort Thornburg were: Robert Bodily, Wm. Shaffer, Philip Stringham, Martin Oaks, Wm. Oaks, Wm. Reynolds, W.P. Reynolds, Finn Britt, Otto Peterson, George W. Brown and others.

"The sum of \$3,437.00 was paid by the Government to private property owners.

Although the fort was mustered out of the Army about 1884, the road again felt the prancing of horses and footsteps of soldiers during the summer of 1887.

Uneasiness on the Uintah reservation brought Companies I,K,F, and C of the 21st U.S. Infantry to the valley. Under the direct command of one Captain Duncan, the troops made their way over the mountain to old Ashley. Following them in an Army ambulance was the famous veteran of the Indian wars, Brigadier General Crook.

Their mission was to establish a fort on the Duchesne River. At Ashley, the Captain decided to take a short cut along "the Deep Creek road". Just as they were about to depart, a Captain Billy of the Indian police galloped up on a foaming steed and warned the men of 300 Ute braves waiting in ambush along the route.

Captain Duncan changed his mind and settled for the longer route to the south. In doing so, he undoubtedly averted another "Custer Massacre" which was still fresh in the minds of the western soldiers.

It is said that as the men crossed the Uintah River, they were openly confronted with about 700 Ute and Ouray braves in full war dress and paint. Thinking they had reached the Duchesne, the men threw up some pickets, dug trenches on a little bluff overlooking the creek, and christened it Fort Duchesne, which it remains in the modern version to this day.

The surrounded soldiers were holed up in their trenches for three weeks, before finally being rescued from the "waiting game" by the now famous colored cavalry, Companies B and C of the 9th U.S. Cavalry.

From about 1886 to 1905, practically all freight came to Ashley Valley from Price. However, the old military road remained in use. But in place of the echoes of soldiers, omissions, and ambulances, came the heavy thud and breaking of oxen-driven ore wagons enroute to the railroad of Carter, Wyoming from the newly discovered Dyer Mine. Green bits of copper ore can still be picked up along the route today.

The old road has also seen many travelers work their way up its slopes and through its mud. Soldiers, Indians, prospectors, miners, settlers, cowboys, and today historians and recreationists.

We have one traveler's account which reveals a little of what a typical trip over the mountains may have been like. It was written by Mrs. George (Bessie) Ward many years after she made the journey in 1897.

Bessie was then a girl of nine years old, traveling by horse and covered wagon from near Grand Junction, Colorado to Lewiston, Idaho, with her mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. David Cunningham Blake.

They arrived in Vernal before the snow was off the mountain, and bid time fishing and doing odd jobs to earn some badly needed money. Finally, it looked as if they could get across.

"(We) started one early morning to climb the mountain range between Utah and Wyoming. It got so cold (and) mother was getting so chilled till dad stopped the horses and told me to unhitch them while he hurried to build a fire and put rocks in the fire and put snow in a kettle to get water hot to make tea for mother. He put the warm rocks in the bed and gave mother hot tea to drink. He then piled on lots of grease wood, on the fire. Then Dad and I laid down on the ground that was warmed by the fire and we slept for a while. Then Dad fed the horses, got a lunch for all of us, then he put the horses to the wagon. We drove in to the dark....We found a farm and they asked us in and Oh, how the warm fire felt and how good the food on the table tasted.

"The next day we were driving along when all of a sudden the back wheels went down in a swamp and mud, (possibly in the vicinity of Government Park:. Pull all we could, the horses still could not pull the wagon out, so Dad and Mother and I got out of the wagon.

Dad built a fire to keep Mother warm while Dad and I went to the trees, chopped down a long pole and three short ones. Then Dad built a frame to put the long pole on. When he spoke to the horses, mother and I put our weight on the pole and lifted the wheels, and the horses pulled the wagon out of the swamp.

"That night we came to a camp where some folks had been there before we came. It was a pretty place with young trees, and creek and lots of green grass and the horses enjoyed the grass and never stopped eating while we were there. The campers had left the most beautiful set of deer horns in the velvet that anyone could wish to see. Of course, I wanted those horns, so Dad said, "If you want them, you will have to walk and carry them". For three days I walked and carried the horns. The third day we had come to lower and warmer ground with the sun shining. The horns began to smell. That was very unpleasant so I carefully laid them down by the side of the road and so sorrowfully walked on and left them there. Then Dad let me in the wagon to ride, but not for long.

"Oh...out on the desert plain we drove into a band of rattle snakes. Rattlesnakes...big ones.

"Dad would walk ahead of the horses and whip the snakes back for the horses to walk through. He changed off with me and I would whip and he drove the horses, for a whole day. Then we drove out of them like driving out of a river. We saw not even one straggler outside of the line of march.

"In a couple of days we came to a place that had been a grave yard, but the graves had all been dug open. We thought that very strange. We drove over a low hill and there we saw a pretty town with lovely green trees and flowers. Then Dad knew the place. He stopped the horses and sat down and looked and looked. Then he broke down and cried and cried until mother asked what the matter was. Dad said that this is Fort Bridger and the soldiers grave yard was there when he was a boy. That there had been such a change that it hurt him.

"We camped there in town and when the sun set, the gun cannon boomed and again at sunrise."

Her Father had passed through Fort Bridger when he was a lad of nine. That was "about the time the North and the South were starting a fued", and he was helping to take his Father's horses from "near the borderline" to the new county near Camp Carson (Nevada).

The old Thornburg Road - carved into the mountain as an outgrowth of Indian trouble - is still visible today. Set aside in the District's Multiple Use Plan as a special management unit, it certainly deserves preservation.

Besides the swath through the doghair lodgepole stands, there also remains at least one roadside mileage marker, the remains of corduroy in several places, the remains of some roadside building cairns for food caches, and other evidences of this episode from the pages of history. It is the opinion and suggestion of the writer that vestiges of this road be marked through its entire length by some small, distinctive marker.

One possibility is a metal sign about the size of a forest boundary marker which could be produced in quantity and nailed to trees or small sign backings. It should be distinctive and simple. Below is an example:

Rim of wheel, spokes, and lettering: Black.

1881	1884	
		Background: Brown.
Fort Thornburg		
<u>Military Road</u>		

During the summer of 1965, Ranger Thomas Sevy accompanied two historians on an exploration of the road. A more comprehensive history should be published soon in the "Utah Historical Quarterly", which will be a valuable contribution to the historical files of the Ranger District, and should provide a better basis for preservation and interpretive planning. In any event, procrastination can cost the Forest Service a real opportunity here to preserve a portion of our historical heritage, and action should not be delayed.

It should also be noted here, that the old roadside markers have all but disappeared. As mentioned previously, there probably remains but one in its original location. Another good one is presently on display at Virt and Sadie McConkie's -V- Ranch in Dry Fork.

Vernal is Named

Next in the succession of events in the early history of the District, is the establishment of the name "Vernal."

In January of 1880, it is recorded that 136 citizens living along the Ashley Creek petitioned the State Legislature for the creation of a new county. This area was then part of Wasatch County, with the county seat inconveniently located at Heber City.

Probably because of some coal outcroppings which were found in the area, and possibly as an infant attempt at attracting industry, the citizens further requested that the new county be dubbed "Coal County".

On February 17, 1880, the legislature approved the creation of the new county, but better judgment prevailed and the name "Uintah" was designated, with Ashley as the county seat.

A mile away on "the bench", another little settlement soon gave up the name of Jericho for the more honorable, or at least less subtle, name of Hatch Town.

As the town grew, it became apparent that a post office was needed, and for some unknown reason, the settlers now desired the name "Ashley Center". An article written for "Builders of Uintah" by C.B. Bartlett tells us that Ashley Center stood as a name until:

"two young enterprising merchants from Salt Lake City appeared on the scene and purchased from the Merkley family the corner occupied at present by the Bank of Vernal, and established a business under the firm name Blythe and Mitchell. They applied for and secured a post office with Mr. Mitchell as postmaster. As soon as the then new post office was open for business, September 23, 1886, a neatly painted sign appeared over the front door of the Blythe and Mitchell store bearing the words, "Vernal Post Office". That was the introduction of the name Vernal.

...When (Mr. Mitchell) applied for a post office he sent to the Post Office Department the name "Ashley Center", but the Department would not accept the name because of the confusion it would cause with the Ashley office so near. The letter rejecting the name was signed by the fourth assistant Postmaster General, who also suggested in the same letter that "Vernal" was a good name for a Post Office that had never been taken and would be very acceptable to the Post Office Department. Mr. Mitchell immediately replied that he would accept the name "Vernal" and thus the matter was settled.

However, the matter was not settled, for the settlers did not think kindly of having their choice of "Ashley Center" rejected by the Government, and quite a controversy ensued. However, the name "Vernal" withstood the test, and we are rather inclined to agree with Bartlett when he further states:

"The word "Vernal" sounds rather poetic. It means, according to the dictionary, "pertaining to spring", and also "pertaining to youth". Either definition implies at least a tinge of green. In a practical way, it is a very good name for a city, as it is a striking name and is easily remembered. These qualities of the name have made Vernal the best known city in Utah east of the Wasatch mountains."

It is more likely that the name was more in hopes of things to come rather than for what actually existed at the time.

The creation of the post office came in September, 1886, only eight years after Hatch formed the settlement in country which was described as "not having a tree, a shrub, or a green twig of any kind". While this in itself is an exaggeration, it is known that even Escalante took note of the land being "dry and arid, the soil sandy, and the vegetation consisting mostly of sage brush, cactus and other desert plants.

Much of the surrounding Basin country today is little changed from that description, but Vernal is indeed the green oasis visualized by those early promoters.

Efforts toward this end began around 1880 when George and Jenny Freestone started the first shade and fruit tree nursery, which supplied the inflowing settlers for many years.

So it is that today we have the town of Vernal, namesake of the Ranger District which makes this its headquarters.

The Dyer Mine

About the same time, the mountain was being discovered for its favorable forage, prospectors began the search for hidden riches. About 1875, two brothers by the name of Will and Findley Britt befriended a rich miner in the Black Hills of South Dakota. The man produced a map of a gold mine supposedly located somewhere on what is now Carter Creek and near the Carter Creek dugway.

Apparently nothing ever came of this lead, because the two men along with a third, Peter Dillman, came to the area in May, 1876 and searched until autumn of the same year. The incident, however, does point up the probability that prospectors were on the mountain at that early date. Further evidence is found in events surrounding the Great Diamond Hoax even earlier in the decade.

The next decade brought to the mountain a new era - one steeped in mining lore and the discovery of one of the richest ore deposits in the Uinta Range.

In 1880, interests in the mining aspects on the mountain were at a high pitch. Mining companies, corporations, districts, and partnerships were made and dissolved almost daily. One interesting meeting occurred on June 4, 1880 at what was called "Vortex Cave" and which may be what we now call Big Brush Creek Cave.

In "Builders of Uintah" we find the following item concerning the early meeting:

"Preliminary miners' meeting at Vortex Cave, Uintah County, Utah, June 4, 1880. Contains resolutions, constitution, and by-laws of the Carbonite Mining district of Uintah County, Utah. An election of officers for the ensuing year resulted as follows: President, J.C. Boles; Recorder, Warren Parsons; Secretary, M.J. Hovey. Meeting adjourned until June 5, 1880.

Another article reads:

"No Chinaman shall be tolerated in this district. The size of this district shall be ten miles square with the mouth of Vortex Cave as the center. The boundary may be found by running a line five miles south of the mouth of the Vortex Cave and five miles in width on either side of the cave".

The mists of time have closed in around much of the mining activity on the District. The name Bullionville excites the imagination, but many believe that in reality this site was neither named nor occupied until the location of a CCC camp there in 1933.

On a 1905 U.S.G.S. map, no such name is indicated, but three buildings are shown at the site. But, going back even farther, there appeared in the local paper, the following:

July 3, 1880.

Bullion, Uintah County, Utah

"Another claims:

...claim being situated in Carbonite Mining District near Bullion Townsite in Uintah County, Utah Territory."

John Garrison

The dateline and the article indicate there was a town of Bullion, and that it was in the Carbonite Mining District. This is what leads us to suspect that the historic preliminary miners meeting which set up this mining district and was held at "Vortex Cave" was really held at what we call Big Brush Creek Cave, less than a mile from Bullionville.

But some more confusion is stirred into this theory when we find various claims in the vicinity of this cave being recorded as "located in Bullion Mining District".

If "Vortex Cave" is Big Brush Creek Cave", then how can claims around the latter be in Bullion Mining District when Vortex Cave is in Carbonite Mining District?

The only explanation offered here from the results of our hasty research is that the same area was in two districts at least in the minds of some prospectors. Evidence supporting this idea can be shown like this:

Mining Claims

Name of Claim	Mining District	Location	Year
Unknown	Carbonite	Near Bullion Town Site	1880
Legal Tender	Bullion	¼ mile above Big Brush Creek Cave	1887
The Grapper	Bullion	Between Big Brush Creek and the Sinks	1889
Big Cave	Carbonite	300 yards above mouth of cave	1891
Numerous more claims (mostly gold)	Carbonite	Around Big Brush Creek Cave	1895

This is just a sampling of the claims in the area. Most were after "gold", silver, and other precious minerals", and if the trees around Bullionville could break their silence, they would no doubt reveal some very interesting tales.

None of the mines made their owners rich except one. We find what may possibly be the beginning of this story in a brief paragraph on Page 51 of "Builders of Uintah". It mentions that a Louis Kabell, who came to the Ashley Valley in 1879..."with a partner, discovered and located the Kyer Copper mine on the Brush Creek Mountain and sold it for 200 pounds of flour. (Underscore supplied by author).

This is indeed an interesting fact if the Kyer is simply one of the multitude of typographical errors that plagues that book, and it was really the Dyer mine which was intended. This would mean that a \$3,000,000 mine was bought for 200 pounds of flour - not a bad deal. Another point where additional research is needed.

At any rate, elsewhere in the same book is an item written mostly by A.R. Morrill which best relates the history of the Dyer Copper Mine.

"A Mr. Dyer from the East acquired knowledge of the ore pocket deposits back on Brush Creek mountain and after filing his claim, started operation about 1886. He was in need of capital and borrowed \$30,000. in Salt Lake City and by his display of ore, produced what appeared to be of amply security or at least grounds to ask for a loan. Then with these loans safely secured, he skipped the country, or at least disappeared. Mr. Gates held a first mortgage claim to the property and having been notified by J.T. Pope (Sheriff), came out and bid \$40,000. for the property and having the claim held by the Salt Lake concern who had loaned Mr. Dyer \$10,000. The mine produced fifty percent copper bearing ore and Mr. Gates' company, called the Dyer Mine Company, shipped over \$3,000,000. worth of copper before they exhausted the ore deposit that seemed to be in pockets. Mr. Gates and his company built a smelter near the mining grounds. They melted all ore between forty and ten percent and shipped East all ore over forty percent.

It is interesting to note here that the Vernal Express carried the following news item in 1899: "LeGrande Young is down from the Dyer mine during the week. He is moving his family up there for the winter as he has the contract for hauling ore from the mine to the smelter. The last trip he made to Carter station, he hauled 98,000 pounds of ore from the mine to the railroad with six horses.

Mr. Gates and Coombs, after they got possession of the mine, wrote to R.M. Pope, a practical mining engineer who had been working at the mine and asked him to dress it up for sale in the Spring.

In the Spring, an eastern company looked it over and offered \$160,000 for it. At that time, a young college mine expert, Mr. Launsbury, who had been hired by Gates, advised against taking the \$160,000 so Mr. Gates went to R.M. Pope and he advised Gates to take. Gates took young Launsbury's advice and kept the mine. They took \$160,000

worth of ore and spent \$140,000 trying to find more ore, but never succeeded. The mine finally went for taxes. Mr. Pope bought the property and some of the dumps have since been worked over by hand but have hardly given ample wages for the toiler. The monthly payroll for the 100 men who worked the mine at one time was \$1,000."

In 1929, Mr. Morrill, whose articles we are using, visited the mine and states that he was greatly impressed by the remaining old buildings still there, the old sunken mine shafts and the evidence of the vast amount of activity which was once engaged in.

The following was taken from the Uintah Papoose of January 16, 1891:

"It seems that the last teams loaded with ore called a halt twenty miles from camp after four days' buffeting with wind and snowdrifts. They were forty eight hours without food or water for their teams.. The Carter teams have about abandoned the idea of hauling ore...If they do it will be at the rate of \$40 per ton..It had been demonstrated that a good road can be made leading from the mines to Vernal and thence connect with the Price road for a small outlay, over this road an immense amount of mineral will be carried. There are \$40,000 worth of ore in the bins at Victoria and over \$100,000 worth in site. The proposed road will run due north of Vernal street, then through Steinaker's Gap to McKees ranch, at which point it will cross Big Brush Creek and from thence to the mines. It will run between Big and Little Brush Creeks. Freight can be profitably hauled on this road to Price for \$35 per ton. It means that a large amount of money will be circulated in the valley that would otherwise go to Carter."

Throughout the 1890's, mining interests on the mountain remained high. Some old newspaper excerpts from the summer of 1894, give us an idea of how it was.

"The old time pack horse can be seen on the streets every day lately, on their way to the mine."

"The miners of the Marsh Peak Mining District have a semi-weekly mail from Vernal. The carrier is paid by contribution."

"There are plenty of prospectors in the hills and very high assays from the prospect first discovered. Hundreds of claims are staked off, a few are being worked by their owners. The majority are waiting on these, a few thinking that if the claims that are worked are good, theirs will be."

"The work on the Dead Man Mine has been stopped and Mr. Warner goes to Salt Lake on business. Frank P. Warner, his brother, reports that he believes that the mine will prove to

be a genuine bonanza. He found a ledge bearing free gold about two miles west of Dead Man."

Mining interest on the mountain cooled off somewhat about the time of the turn of the century until its revival with the discovery of phosphate about 1916.

Dry Fork Gunfight

The success of the Dyer mine put a tinge of copper in the blood of nearly every man in the territory. This prospect of wealth led to one of the outstanding historical events within the boundaries of the present Vernal Ranger District.

The story is best told in that excellent history of the cowboy outlaw era, "*The Outlaw Trail*", by Charles Kelly. To the author and to the Davis Adair Publishing Company, goes our thanks for their permission to use the following excerpt:

"At the head of Brush Creek, near Vernal, Utah, a rich copper deposit was being hauled over the Uinta Mountains by ox team to Carter, Wyoming, for shipment. In Dry Fork, west of Brush Creek, some shepherder found a green stain on the rocks which he believed was another rich deposit of copper.

"E.B. Coleman, then living in Salt Lake City, heard of the reported discovery and determined to file on the prospect. Coleman was a tall, thin man of 52 from Davenport, Iowa, who had prospected all over the West. He claimed to have been the original discoverer of the Homestake mine in the Black Hills, fountainhead of the Hearst millions, and had also been among the first at Alder Gulch in Montana. On his Dry Fork expedition he was accompanied by another miner, Robert Swift. They secured a pack outfit in Vernal and began combing the hills. At last they located the shepherder who had seen the outcrop, learned its general location, and started out to take claims.

"Three other prospectors from Vernal, David Milton, Adenires W. Staunton (known as Dick) and his brother, Isaac Staunton, learning that Coleman and Swift were on their way to locate some rich claims, began to follow them, intending to make locations in the immediate vicinity. Coleman tried to shake them off his trail by traveling through extremely rough country, but every night when he made camp, the other three would pitch camp close by. Day after day the same performance was repeated until Coleman got tired of it.

"Coleman and Swift at last reached Taylor's Draw in Dry Fork, within a few miles of the prospect. That night, Milton and the Staunton brothers came up and camped fifty feet from Coleman's tent. Coleman ordered them off, but they refused to move. Considerable argument ensued. Milton finally made a proposition that if Coleman would pay him \$1,000 he would go back to Vernal and remain ten days. The latter said he couldn't raise that much money, but would give him \$500, to which Milton agreed. Coleman then returned to Vernal, leaving Swift in camp."

"Coleman attempted to borrow \$500 in Vernal on his note but only succeeded in raising \$100. In a saloon that evening he met Matt Warner and William Wall, a gambler, both of whom had just returned from a prospecting trip to Gosling Mountain with Sheriff John T. Pope. Pope was still in the mountains. Discussing his dilemma with Warner, Coleman decided that rather than buy off the three men he would pay Warner and Wall to frighten them off. A contract was entered into whereby the latter were to accompany Coleman back to Dry Fork, frighten off the three trailers and receive \$500 for their "protection". All three started for Dry Fork next evening, timing their arrival at camp by sunrise.

"Just as day broke on May 7, 1896, Ike Staunton arose, stepped out of his tent and began building a fire. Hearing horses approaching and suspecting trouble, he grabbed his rifle and started shooting, killing Matt's horse. He then raced for a nearby group of aspen trees.

"Matt fell to the ground cursing. "Take your medicine, you dirty sons of bitches," he yelled as he began pouring a volley of lead into the tent. Wall had dismounted and was also pumping lead.

"One of the first shots into the tent fatally wounded David Milton, who was still lying in bed. Dick (A.W.) Staunton rushed outside long enough to receive a leaden messenger, then fell back inside. Two of the three were definitely out of the fight, and the other badly wounded, having been hit in the neck and thigh.

"From his place behind a good sized aspen tree, Ike Staunton began shooting at Warner, who immediately took refuge behind another tree thirty yards away. Wall also took cover and both began firing at Ike. They were armed with .44 repeating rifles, while Staunton's rifle was a .45-110 single shot.

"The tree behind which Matt had taken refuge was thirteen inches in diameter. Matt was a stocky man and had to stand sideways to keep from being hit, in this position it was awkward for him to shoot. Although Staunton had only a single shot gun, he was a good marksman and held his own against the two hired outlaws, directing his particular attention to Warner. Seeing he could not make a direct hit, he began firing at a spot about the size of a dollar on Warner's tree, with the idea of boring a hole through it with bullets. The green aspen wood was soft and each heavy bullet went deeper. At last the hole was almost through. From his side of the tree Matt saw the white bark begin to bulge as bullets struck and realized the next shot or two would come through, yet he could not step away without being drilled. It was a ticklish moment and one he never forgot. Just at that moment, one of Wall's bullets struck Staunton across the bridge of the nose, filling his eyes with blood and knocking him senseless. The fight was over.

"When the firing ceased, Robert Swift came up from his own tent fifty feet away. Under the excitement of the moment, Warner fired at him.

"For God's sake don't shoot!" he yelled.

"Get your hands up, then," replied Warner.

"I've got 'em up as high as they'll go. Don't shoot me, I'm Coleman's partner." Warner was still suspicious. Coleman, at the first shot, had disappeared behind a ridge and was nowhere to be seen.

"Tear down them tents," commanded Warner, "so we can see if there's anyone else hiding in 'em," Swift complied.

"The falling canvas revealed Milton and Dick Staunton lying mortally wounded. One bullet had entered Milton's shoulder and ranged down along the spine. Dick Staunton was shot in two or three places and both were bleeding profusely.

"My God!" exclaimed Matt when he saw them. "If I'd known it was you fellows, I wouldn't have shot."

"It ain't your fault," replied Milton, "and I don't hold it against you, Matt. It's that Coleman. He's at the bottom of the whole trouble. He went to Vernal for the money, and look what he brought back! Give me a gun, some of you fellows, and I'll kill the son of a bitch yet before I die."

Milton and Dick Staunton were still alive, though in poor condition. Ike Staunton had stopped three bullets and was temporarily unconscious. Matt immediately took charge of the situation. He stripped off Milton's clothes and tried to bandage the wounds. Then he attended to Dick, and lastly to Ike Staunton. He put Wall on a horse and sent him galloping toward Vernal to bring a doctor and a wagon to carry the wounded men back to town.

William Wall, outlaw and gambler, made a dust for Vernal. Arriving in town, he met Marcellus Pope, 22 year old brother of Sheriff John T. Pope, acting sheriff during his brother's absence.

"What's the excitement?" Marcellus asked.

"Three men shot in Dry Fork!" he yelled as he rode down the street. "Tell you about it later."

Wall rushed to Dr. Lindsay's office. "Three men shot in Dry Fork." he gasped. "Go back with me right away."

"Can't do it," replied Lindsay. "Get Dr. Rose."

Wall rushed to Rose's office. "Can't go," said Rose, "I'm sick myself."

"I'll give you twenty dollars if you'll go up there," begged Wall.

"Sorry," said Rose. "See if you can get Dr. Hollingsworth."

Wall rushed to Hollingsworth's office, only to be again refused. Evidently doctors didn't relish the idea of getting mixed up in a gunfight. At last he hunted up Deputy Pope.

"You're the sheriff while your brother's away; get a wagon and to up Dry Fork after Milton and the Staunton brothers. They've been shot."

"Haven't got a wagon," said young Pope.

"Well, I'll hire one then," shouted Wall. "Get ready and go back with me. There's been a fight and those three fellows are badly hurt. We've got to get them to town; the doctors won't go back with me."

Wall, the gambler, one of the men who had done the shooting, then paid ten dollars for the use of a team and wagon and started back with Marcellus Pope to look after the injured. They reached Taylor's Draw after several hours, where they found Matt Warner bathing the wounds of the injured. Wall had brought several bottles of whiskey along to revive their spirits.

Warner and Wall then loaded their victims into the wagon, which had been half filled with hay, and drove carefully back to Vernal, Swift stayed at the camp. Coleman came back to town next day. Dick Staunton died that night, followed in the morning by David Milton. Ike Staunton, who fought the duel with Warner, was not expected to live but did recover eventually after losing his leg.

Citizens of Vernal were incensed at the killings, as both dead men were well known. There was talk of lynching, so Warner, Wall, and Coleman insisted on being locked up for their own safety. In a day or two, Sheriff John Pope came down from Gosling mountain

and took charge of affairs. By that time a vigilance committee had been formed. The evening after Pope's arrival, a mob advanced on the log jail, demanding the prisoners. Milton had done considerable talking before he died and the mob was more anxious to get their hands on Coleman than on the actual killers.

Heavy logs had been hauled some time before for an addition to the jail. Pope arranged them into a breastwork, defended by himself, his four brothers, and his eighty year old father.

There was considerable parlaying between the defenders and the mob, but Pope had the last word.

"You didn't want these men bad enough to go after them while they were armed. Now, that they're harmless, you are mighty brave. You had your chances; now, they're in my custody and I'm not going to turn them over to anyone but the court."

There was no further trouble from the vigilance committee.

According to Kelly, Butch Cassidy's famous Montpelier Bank Robbery was a direct outgrowth of this incident, and was pulled off to raise funds in an effort to obtain the best available legal assistance for his friend, Matt Warner.

It is interesting to note that the green stain on the rocks, which was the cause leading to the killing, was later found to contain no copper, and the claims were abandoned!

Virt McConkie tells us that the late Orson Hall, as a boy living in Dry Fork Canyon, heard the excitement and, with his father and in their own wagon, followed Pope and Wall back up the canyon to the scene of the shooting.

Later, Orson returned, and is said to have cut down the tree containing the bullet-bored hole and Ike Staunton's slugs. Years later, he gave it to Virt and his wife, Sadie, who are in possession of it today.

The site of the gunfight is now known locally as "the scrapping grounds". Its exact location is in danger of being lost, and it is urged that the spot be marked this coming summer. Virt has offered to guide anyone interested to the spot, and there even exists the remote possibility of locating the old stump of Matt's tree. At any rate, some marker, even a pile of rocks, should be erected to record this location before it is certainly lost as part of the past.

Ashley National Forest

On February 22, 1897, President Grover Cleveland by proclamation, created the Uinta Forest Reserve out of a large tract of public domain land. Again, by presidential proclamation, Theodore Roosevelt added part of the area within the Indian Reservation to the Uinta Forest Reserve on July 14, 1905.

Then, on July 1, 1908, the Ashley National Forest came into existence by executive order of President Roosevelt, and included that portion of the old Reserve east of Rock Creek and Smith Fork drainage.

In 1953, a change was made in Forest boundaries between the Wasatch, Uinta, and Ashley National Forests. All of the north slope of the Uinta Mountains west of the Burnt Fork Drainage was transferred from the Ashley National Forest to the Wasatch National Forest. The Ashley National Forest received the Rock Creek and Duchesne River drainages from the Wasatch National Forest and Tabby Mountain and Avintaquin units from the Uinta National Forest.

The boundaries of the Forest have remained essentially the same, although there have been numerous adjustments in the borders and area of the Vernal District. Unfortunately, time does not permit the writing of this chapter, which will involve considerable difficult research, but will remain for others to do at a later date.

When the Ashley was carved out of the old Reserve, William N. Anderson, became the first Forest Supervisor. A book could and probably should, be done on the fascinating life of this man. When he began work for the Government as a Forest Ranger on the Reserve, he wasn't at all sure if he could do so with a clear conscience. Bill well remembered his first contacts with "Forest Men", as a boy in Kamas, Utah, in 1898.

"The first one I remember was Col. May, from Denver, Colorado, who came to a logging operation that I was employed on and spent three or four days in the bunkhouse playing sluff. At that time, we didn't have to pay for timber or cut it under any kind of rule, except that Col. May had to be subsidized to his satisfaction."

In trying to make up his mind as to accept the offer or not, he said to his father, "Surely you don't want me to get tangled up in that crooked outfit do you?"

Somewhat prophetically, his father answered, "It won't always be that way and if you go straight, you will come out all right anyway."

Bill took the advice and, to his everlasting credit, did a magnificent job of forming the foundation of the Forest Service in northeastern Utah."

The most interesting, best written historical article this writer ran across while researching for "Men On the Mountain" is Bill Anderson's account of the early history of the Ashley National Forest. In many respects, it is Bill's own story, since the two are inseparable. At the present, this valuable document is crammed into the disorderly historical files in the Supervisor's office where a filing clerk could easily discard or misfile it and lose forever its valuable information.

The Vernal Rangers

The creation of national Forests from the old reserves was really the first concrete step towards resource management on the public lands. In fact, it was about this time that the word "conservation" was popularized and defined as "wise use".

As the larger blocks of land were broken down into smaller units, the men responsible for their protection and management could more closely look after their areas. The evolution of the Ranger Districts, as such, is difficult to follow, but we do have a record of the Rangers assigned to the Vernal District, and will need to await more energetic research to be certain of the succession of boundary changes.

Dan S. Pack, followed by Grant Carpenter were the pioneer Rangers out of Vernal, with Carpenter probably still Ranger at the creation of the Forest, (see Appendix).

About 1908, A.A. (Bert) Hardy took over for an unknown length of time, before being re-assigned to the Manila District at a pay rate of about \$50 a month. This Ranger retired in 1938 and went to Redwood City, California, where he passed away several years later.

John S. Bennett came next and stayed until 1919 when he resigned to develop his ranch on Sheep Creek. In 1923, he worked as construction foreman on the building of the "switchback road" up the face of the mountain from Spring Creek. Sometime later, he also migrated to the milder climes of California where he lived out his last years.

One of the most colorful figures to occupy the ranger position was Harry Van Tassell, who spanned the period from 1919 to 1927.

Harry fell lot to the District during the turbulent prohibition days, when stills blossomed across the nation in cellars, attics, cabins, and a dark, dingy corner in the basement of the United States Capitol Building.

The Vernal Ranger District had its share, too, as later evidenced by Ranger Glen Lambert, who found their tubs and tubing near the present site of Trout Creek guard station, at the Bullionville site, in the East Fork of Pothole Creek, to the northeast in Pot Creek, and elsewhere.

Unfortunately, like a large portion of the American populace at the time, Ranger Van Tassell had a thirst that more legislation could not quench. This character weakness led to an unfortunate situation on the District, and as the Ranger passed through Vernal in his black Chevy sedan, it is reported that the citizens were fully aware of the existing corruption.

At the Windy Park guard station, which was later replaced by the Trout Creek guard station, Harry brewed his beer. The station gained a reputation for its wild parties of drinking and gambling, and the questionable characters, both male and female, that made this their hangout.

Good luck turned to bad luck at Windy Park when Harry took a fellow for \$600 one day in a card game. Sentiment was definitely building against him. His next mistake was "borrowing" from forest permittees, and then refusing to repay. His luck ran out completely when the wife of one such permittee spilled the whole apple cart to the Regional Office.

In July, 1927, a tri-forest range management meeting was held at the head of Wolf Creek in Cold Springs campground on the Uinta National Forest.

In attendance were the various Rangers, their chief assistants, and one C.N. Woods from the Regional Office. Honest and strict, the old forester reminded the men of their responsibilities as public servants, and refreshed their awareness that their conduct reflected the trust and confidence of the public. He reminded them of the high principles they were expected to adhere to which would insure such trust and confidence, and that the U.S. Forest Service was no place for those unable to maintain the high standards of the organization.

Then, turning to Van Tassell, he fired him on the spot, and asked Glen Lambert to take over the reigns.

Lambert did take over, and from 1927 to 1956 managed the District with the integrity and competency that his predecessor lacked.

Glen's first job with the Forest Service was that of guard at the Moon Lake Station, where he often patrolled in a canoe. About 1923, the Lake Fork District Ranger was called back East on personal business, and Lambert took over as Acting.

During this period, he narrowly escaped what would have been a rather unusual death in these parts. He was about one and one half miles above Moon Lake when the Ranger's dog, which he was keeping, set up an awful howl. Running to see what was the trouble, Glen found the dog in a losing battle with what he thought were two large coyotes.

Not wanting to carry his usual firearm that day, he had left it behind in the cabin. So, grabbing some big rocks, he ran up and let one fly before suddenly realizing that they were not coyotes, but wolves.

When a rock struck the one squarely on the head, it turned its attention away from the dog and towards Glen. The dog headed for home on the wing, but there stood Glen, face to face with two large, snarling wolves.

With his heart thumping so loud he could hear it, Glen slowly backed down the trail. Finally around a bend, he took off on the run, and for some time could hear the wolves singing high up on the mountain.

Following several assignments and his position on District 2, Ranger Lambert retired and is presently enjoying an active life in the Vernal community.

His period as Ranger covered the CCC days with its road and trail construction activities, range improvements, and the beginning of other developments on the District.

Following Lambert's retirement, Dean Rowland took charge of the District for one year and became the first college graduate to be Ranger here. In 1957 he moved up to the post of Recreation and Land Use Staff Officer on the Ashley, and is presently serving in that capacity.

Thomas H. Sevy became the next Ranger in the autumn of 1957. A graduate of the old Utah State Agricultural College (now Utah State University), Ranger Sevy has seen the rapidly changing technological advances and population pressures bring the District under modern management and closer to the ultimate objectives of the 1960 Multiple Use Act.

Presently serving as District Ranger, his Assistant is Allen Shippee and Clerk is LaVon Wall. In September, 1966, Jim Fazio became the first to fill the Forester's position which put three full time professional foresters on the growing District.

Ranger Stations

Here again, the details concerning the locations, dates, etc. of the buildings on the District are rather fuzzy. When Bill Anderson came to Vernal in 1908 to set up the Supervisor's Office, he rented two rooms in an old building near the center of town, possibly where the Bank of Vernal now stands.

The first furnishings consisted of "one table, two chairs, one of which was a swivel chair, one Oliver typewriter, one filing case (imagine that!) and a few paper guides...some stationery...and...a girl without training..."

Next, the Forest Service occupied rooms above the Uintah State Bank (now the First Security Bank of Utah). When the Post Office building was completed about 1925, all Forest Service offices were moved to that location, and remained there until August of 1959 when swelling numbers caused the District offices to be moved across the street to the second story of the Cooper Building. After a move of a couple rooms down the hall, the District 2 headquarters came to rest in the three rooms it presently occupies.

The first field station, or guard station was the notorious Windy Park station, constructed of square, sawed logs. Sometime during the 1920's this station was torn down and removed by the high bidder for \$30-\$40 and replaced, following the same construction plan, by the Red Cloud Station in the head of Black Canyon.

This new station was built in the fall of the year on what appeared to be a good site. However, when summer came the next year, it was discovered that it sat squarely in a swamp and over a spring.

Efforts were made to drain water away from the site by digging ditches, but nothing seemed to do much good. The corners kept sagging and had to be jacked up, and inside, the floor sloped noticeably. Finally in the 1930's it was given to someone to tear down for materials.

Early in the 1930's, the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) boys built Trout Creek Station, the District's first frame building. About the same time, Colton Guard Station was erected, and then remodeled in 1934.

Thirty years prior to the construction of Colton Station, Louis Freestone and two other men found a dead cowboy at the site. It was reported that he had been thrown from his horse, crawled to the creek for water, and died where he lay. Glen Lambert, however, later heard one of the men that buried him say he had been shot - not thrown.

The grave is located squarely beneath the present station. Lambert and the others were aware of this in choosing the location, but since it was the best spot, and hoping that the cowboy wouldn't mind and others would probably not know the difference, the little station was built where it stands today.

Livestock on the Mountain

In 1861, Brigham Young's exploration party into the Uintah Basin reported that the area was "fit only for grazing." Indian Agent Dodds also recognized this potential, and as already mentioned, began settlement of the Ashley Valley for this purpose.

The story is told by Leland Sowards in an article written for the Vernal Express, December 31, 1953:

"Captain Pardon Dodds brought the first cattle into Uintah County in the spring of 1868 after he had moved the Uintah Agency to Whiterocks from Rock Creek. The cattle were some he had bought around Heber Valley. He ranged these cattle east of Whiterocks, mainly around Deep Creek near Lapoint and Dry Fork.

"These cattle gradually increased in numbers and in the year 1872, Dodds resigned as Indian Agent to devote his full time to the cattle and horse business and along with Marvin Crouse, came to Ashley Valley that same year where he set up ranching headquarters and built Ashley Valley's first cabin at the Dodds Ranch.

"Morris Evans trailed about 2000 head of cattle into the valley, most of which he had bought in Idaho.

"The following year, 1874, A. Hatch and Company brought in about 2500 cattle and a large band of horses. Most of these cattle and horses were ranged across Green River, and on Blue Mountain. It wasn't but a few years, though, that all of the surrounding ranges were fully stocked. Many of the cattlemen coming in from Wyoming and Idaho.

"Sometimes long and hard winters would thin the herds out, but on the whole very few places in the West had as excellent summer range with equally good winter range. This near ideal set up made cattle the major livestock industry, and although the cattle numbers have declined, the range cattle industry remains Uintah County's most valuable."

In the same article, Sowards tells something of the rustling situation in the early days:

"..The very nature of the county with its high mountain valleys, rugged isolated canyons and close proximity to two other states, Wyoming and Colorado made an ideal place for the cattle rustlers, and cattlemen had to form associations for their mutual protection. Probably the first white men killed in Uintah County were cattle rustlers. During the summer of 1874, three Irishmen held up the Bridgeport Stage at Brown's Hole. Carrying their loot with them they came down into Ashley Valley and across Green River where

they proceeded to round up a herd of cattle belonging to Dodds, Evans, and Hatch and Co. and started South along Green River. These cattle were soon missed by Dodds and he, along with Joe Workman and a man named Bell were able to follow the trail of the missing cattle, overtaking them at a place now known as Irish Flats. The two men had made camp and the third had gone to the river for water. Captain Dodds hailed them saying that they were out of salt and as was the custom in those days, left his guns behind with Workman and Bell. As he came nearer he noticed a rifle leaning against a tree. He immediately made a grab for it and was successful in getting hold of it, but one of the Irishmen was there at about the same time and a struggle ensued for possession of the gun with the second Irishmen helping his companion. In the meantime, Bell, seeing what was going on came in shooting and when the smoke cleared away, two of the rustlers were dead, but the one that had gone to the river for water was able to get his horse and make good his escape.

"The present day cattle rustler works in an entirely different way. He drives a high powered car along some lonely mountain road where he kills a calf, loads it into the trunk of his car and in a few hours is 100 to 150 miles away..."

In "*The Outlaw Trail*", Charles Kelly also mentioned that the rustlers from Brown's Hole (now called Brown's Park) took their toll of the 'small Mormon herds' in the Uinta Mountains, and even forced some out of business.

Efforts by the Government towards cattle allotments began prior to the creation of the Ashley. In the Appendix are copies of some of the first permits, with one dated May 14, 1903.

A few of the early permittees included Edward and John Evans, Louis Freestone, Earl Hunting, Louis Kabell, George McKee, the Merkley brothers, Sid Morrison, and Louis Soderquist.

Lycurgus Johnson and S.D. Colton are said to have first fenced what is referred to as the "V" on Brush Creek Mountain.

In 1932, the first forage studies began by the Forest Service, and in 1947 a detailed watershed study was undertaken.

This report included the following conclusions"

Character of damage and location of impaired area:

Small area of Class 2, erosion on the Dry Fork watershed at the mouth of Brownies Canyon. Caused by grazing steep slopes.

Some Class 1, erosion on the South slope of Taylor Mountain Ashley Watershed near the forest boundary, mainly sheet erosion caused by over grazing prior to the time the area was made a National Forest.

Considerable Class 1 and 2 erosion on the Brush Creek watershed. This is located on the South slope near the forest boundary and is nearly all included within the Humphrey Phosphate lands which were patented 1929 to 1930. These lands are leased to individuals for grazing at a price of about five times that paid for grazing on the National Forest. It is, therefore, being fully exploited. Most of the top soil is gone and the range is bordering on depletion at present.

The Pot Creek-Diamond Gulch watershed has one small Class 1 and 2 erosion area located at the mouth of the pot-hole canyon. This is caused by overgrazing and particularly by sheep trailing into water along the creek.

Recommendations in this report were:

Acquire privately owned lands on which the most serious erosion exists and rehabilitate these lands through better management.

Adjust the use on the grazing allotments to a figure well within the carrying capacity of the range. Instigate measures to rehabilitate any overused or eroded areas.

Reduce the wildlife use on the Spring, Fall and Winter range to correspond with the forage supply and maintain the herd at this level.

Ten years later the Cattlemen's Association joined together in establishing the Ashley National Forest Cattle Advisory Board, with the expressed purpose:

"To promote and protect the interests of its members, to secure an equitable and just administration of the grazing business on the Ashley National Forest, and to work in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service for the protection and economical use of the grazing lands within that part of the Ashley National Forest in which the members of this organization are directly interested."

Representing the local associations at that charter meeting in February, 1957: Hugh W. Colton for the Diamond Mountain Cattlemen's Association; Alma Preece, Brush Creek Cattlemen's Association and Leland Sowards, Taylor Mountain Cattlemen's Association.

Throughout the District's history, no concrete evidence can be found that would indicate that the stockmen here were troubled very much with the famous sheep-cattle range wars. This, of course, was not the case in other areas of Utah, Wyoming or Colorado, but the following excerpt from "Builders of Uintah" pretty well sum up all the opinions and information this writer could find concerning this portion of the past.

"There was no real trouble between the sheep and cattlemen on Diamond Mountain. The sheep men bought out the cattlemen's interest and it was sort of agreed that the sheep would stay off Blue Mountain, which the cattlemen claimed as their ground, and they made a fuss as the sheep men tried to go on Blue. There was always talk about trouble but very little happened."

Sheep came to the District just a few years after the first herds of cattle. One account is that Thomas Caldwell, Sr., brought the first sheep in the mid 1870's.

On October 13, 1886, Edward J. Young and his brothers brought sheep "through Wyoming to the Uinta Range over Taylor Mountain...and grazed the herds...(there)...until December 9, 1886. About May 1, 1887, they drove the herds to Diamond Mountain, where the sheep grazed until the snow was gone, then took them to Pot Creek to shear them."

Next, came the Reader herd from Sanpete County in 1887. To cross the Indian Reservation, they were assessed 5 cents per head.

Trouble was in store for the sheep men in 1903 and is best told by the pen of Bill Anderson:

"We then went on through the country, finally reaching Vernal, Utah where Ranger Grant Carpenter was located, and where lived a large number of sheepmen that had used the forest for years. It seemed that some inspector and, as I remember it, his name was Smith Riley, had been in there in the Fall of 1905 or sometime previous to 1906, and said that in his opinion the forest was over grazed, and he had recommended to Washington that sheep be excluded from the forest range entirely. So, when we arrived in Vernal, the stockmen were up in arms and something had to be done, because they didn't have any other range and exclusion from the Forest meant ruin to many. I didn't get in on some of the first meetings Benny and Olmstead had with the stockmen, because I was busy getting our horses shod to go on, and then Ranger Carpenter was there. About the second afternoon, Benedict said to me, "Bill when you get a wire from Washington, we will be ready to go." That evening the wire came and read as follows: "Take charge of the situation at Vernal."

The next morning we started for the forest and that afternoon Benedict said Olmstead left me to work the situation out. Most all of the stock came on to the Forest near the same place, and when I got there, the owners were all congregated at that point, waiting and ready to go with permission, if possible, or without, if necessary. I felt that the Service didn't intend to be so radical, or at least couldn't in this case, so I made up my mind to try and make the best of the situation, and since I didn't know just where to begin, I decided to use the stockmen's opinions in as far as I could. Prior to this time, there never had been any allotments for sheep, and the practice was to race for the best, thereby trampling a large amount of feed and therefore, too, was the reason that it had been that the range

was ruined. When Riley went over it, there never had been any counting of sheep, so I proposed to the sheepmen that if they would honestly cooperate with us, I would take it upon myself to allow them to go on. We didn't have maps at all, so I suggested that each man tell what country he felt he was entitled to, being honest and considerate of his neighbor and we would make individual allotments if possible. I cleared off a large space on the ground. We all got sticks and started in to mark. Wish I could tell how many times I wiped all the marks off and started over, but finally, we agreed and the thing worked out fine. I, too, think that possibly this was the first individual allotments made on the forest range in this country.

"About this time, too, we established a line between the cattle and sheep that had caused so much trouble, and which was so vigorously opposed for several years by the cattlemen. In one instance, Will C. Baines came from Washington to help with the dispute. This line however, has stood almost without change up to the present time."

From "Builders of Uintah" we have the following story of further developments of the sheep industry on the Vernal District:

"In 1910 our summer pastures, the Ashley Forest was put under control and reproduces, year after year, about the same amount of forage. In 1935, the Public Domain was placed under Federal regulation. These ranges were in such a depleted condition due to over grazing and drought, that drastic reductions had to be made in livestock. The number of sheep was reduced 33 percent and large numbers of cattle eliminated. This worked a hardship on the citizens of our County. But they were necessary in order to save this great natural resource of ours."

Again, hardship was worked on the sheep men during the first years of the 1930's. An item from the history of the Uintah Stake reveals:

"The end of the March 31 quarter marks the ending of one of the coldest longest drawn out winters in the history of this country, following as it did the driest season known here. It occasioned a very heavy loss in all kinds of livestock. The sheep industry was the hardest hit, many owners losing from 30 to 40 percent of their herds."

As early as 1926 there were efforts toward cooperation which was the only way to bring good management practices to the mountain slopes.

"February 27, 1926, a group of the sheep grazers of the Ashley National Forest, met at the Uintah State Bank Building. A.G. Nord, Supervisor of the Ashley National Forest, met with them to explain that it was his desire to have the sheep grazers form an organization

with which the Forestry Department could deal. The Secretary of Agriculture had given orders that a Grazing Board be formed, consisting of a member of the Sheep Association, the Cattle Association, and a member of the Forestry Department, for the purpose of handling matters pertaining to the welfare of both on the range. It was decided that the Grazers Association be formed and that the board be organized to include the grazers on the Ashley National Forest. Thus, the Uintah Sheep Grazers Association was formed with the following officers: President, John Bennion; Vice President, W.H. Siddoway; Secretary and Treasurer, J. Clive Davis; Directors, besides the officers, W.M. McCoy and John S. Hacking. They voted that the directors proceed to incorporate under the laws of the State of Utah. John S. Hacking was nominated to represent the sheepmen on the Grazing Board."

The following men are listed as being in attendance at this milestone meeting:

"...A. Theodore Johnson, Rulon Hacking, John S. Hacking, Lorin Hatch, Ashley Bennion, Ford DeJournette, W.M McCoy, Stanley Crouse, W.A. Murray, W.H. Siddoway, T.J. Caldwell, Charley Taylor, O.E. Rasmussen, A.A. Hatch, John Bennion, John L. Siddoway, H.L. Green.

"In order to comply with the rules and regulations of the Forest Service, the organization was re-incorporated in 1934. The name was changed to the Uintah County Wool Growers Association. It became affiliated with the State and National Wool Growers Associations. Meetings are held annually to carry out the purpose, as in the beginning, of promoting in any way possible the interests of the sheep grazers on the Ashley National Forest and of the sheep industry."

On February 17 of the same year, the organization was re-incorporated, the Ashley National Forest (Ashley-Uintah) Woolgrowers Advisory Board was established. With Clifton McCoy serving as first chairman, the Board was created to "serve as advisory group for and between the Ashley National Forest Supervisor and the members of the Ashley-Uintah Woolgrowers Association." Charter members were: Allen Bennion, Harold Davis, Lorin Hatch, L. Huber, and Ralph Siddoway.

On the Vernal District today, there generally prevails a cooperative spirit between stockmen and Forest Service, both realizing their dependence on the other for proper management of the range resource which in the end is of the greatest benefit to both.

The Mountain Yields its Timber

Timber harvesting on the mountain began with the advent of settler in the mid 1870's. Teancum Taylor has been given credit for bringing the first load of pine logs off the mountain that now bears his name, in "1877 or the spring of 1878." It is more probable, however, that since settlement began five years prior to this date, the mountain's timber was also being used earlier. If in fact, Dodds cabin was built on the mountain about 1877 to accommodate his hired pole cutter, Steinaker and Dillman, who went into business for themselves the following year, 1878.

At about this same time, Alma Taylor and Chellus Hall were also reported to be hauling logs to build their homes in Dry Fork. And during the spring of 1878, we find that a man called John Fairchild traded 300 poles to a Pat Lynch for a homestead right.

Another early writer has left an account about a party of settlers arriving early in June, 1878: "The first thing the men did was to go into the mountains to get logs for their homes."

The business that Steinaker and Dillman began in 1878 could possibly be billed as the District's first sawmill - if one cares to stretch a definition. The sweat and blood of these two enterprisers produced a total of 150 board feet a day - by hand sawing it on what is known as a whip saw. This torturous little device is nothing more than a version of the two-man cross cut saw, and didn't begin to meet the demand by the inflowing settlers for sawed lumber. It was from this firm of Dillman and Steinaker that came Ashley Valley's first weather boarding, door and window frames, and plank flooring.

It is interesting to note that during the ensuing winter (1878-79), the weather remained so mild that for much of the season, men logged on the mountain in their shirt sleeves. The following winter (1879-80) was the worst in history.

While hauling logs from the mountain in the summer of 1878, Alma Johnstun first saw the possibilities of a mechanical sawmill in the growing community.

"Builders of Uintah" tells us that Johnstun went to Park City where he purchased a sawmill and brought it to the Ashley Valley on October 27, 1880. It climaxed a long, difficult journey which saw the heavy equipment being brought over extremely rough roads and across bridgeless streams.

"The mill was taken to Dry Fork Mountain and for many years supplied the lumber for builders in the Valley. The mill was set in different parts of the mountain, and Mr. Johnstun built a planing mill on the northeast corner of what is now Main Street and Fifth West. This was in 1882. It was destroyed by fire in May of 1892. Mrs. Johnstun went into the mountains with the men to do the cooking, taking her family with her."

Patrick Carroll is also given credit some places in "Builders of Uintah" for establishing the first mill. This is not unusual, though, for throughout that book, as is the case of any local history, several descendants claim their ancestors or friends were "first" for any given occasion.

But, for lack of better evidence supporting the other claims, we feel that Johnstun's mill was probably the first on the District. Besides its Dry Fork Mountain locations, this mill was also located at Red Pine Setting and then at Oaks Park.

Next, we hear of a sawmill operating in Government Park.

"Mr. (Henry C.) Ruple began operating the Government sawmill which was located at Government Park in the vicinity of Taylor Mountain. He sawed lumber for the construction of Fort Thornburg which was established by the U.S. Army in December, 1881."

In the summer of 1882 Hyrum Oaks and his son, Martin began turning out shingles from the place they called Shingle Flat. Eleven years later, the two men purchased a sawmill from William Turner in Heber City and moved it the next summer to Shingle Flat - which by that time was becoming known as Oaks Park.

This old sawmill cut many a tree on the District, and we are able to trace its ownership for some time. After the long haul from Heber City and turning out lumber in Oaks Park for almost 14 years, H.C. Ruple bought the mill in 1907 and moved it to a location on the Green River where its engine was used to pump water for an adjacent homestead.

Dick Slauch moved into the Oaks Park site and worked his mill there for an unknown length of time.

After pumping water from Green River for three years, the equipment was moved by Ruple to Francis Creek in McKee Draw where he re assembled it into a mill, and with the aid of oxen, logged in the nearby timber and began turning out lumber.

Then he would use the oxen to haul the sawed lumber to customers down in Vernal. On one such trip about 1910, "one of the oxen got down in the crossing on Brush Creek and drowned."

The following Saturday, a forest ranger by the name of Charles DeMoisy, Jr., who later became Forest Supervisor, was on his way to town. As he crossed Brush Creek, he noticed an animal lying dead in the stream, but thought little of it.

"On my return from town Monday, a hunting party of 25 or more Indians were camped at the crossing and having a feast and rare good time. They had hauled the dead ox out of the stream, skinned it and hung up the hide. They had cooked up a lot of the meat to eat on the spot and cut up the rest into strips to hang on the bushes to dry. They thus, made sure of their meat before continuing over the mountain to hunt."

Next, the mill was sold to a Shorty Dagle on credit, and moved to the sinks on Little Brush Creek. But Shorty couldn't make a go of it, and Ruple repossessed it the following year.

From the Brush Creek sinks, the old mill was moved once more, this time to Pot Creek. From there it fades into the obscurity of the years.

Some other early mills we have record of includes one somewhere on Brush Creek Mountain owned and operated by Swen Anderson and his son George. It ran for about five years.

Pat Carroll operated his mill for a time near the mouth of Ashley Creek, where it was powered by water. In 1891 he moved it to the mountain, and from Ashley Valley's first newspaper, the "Uintah Papoose," the following notice is found in its yellowing pages of September 17, 1891:

"Notice is given that the undersigned will make application to the Hon. Secretary of the Interior for a permit to cut and remove various kinds of timber from a tract...commencing at a point (a rocky point on the South bank of Ashley Creek) about one mile west from where Fort Thornburg and Bridger wagon road crosses the Soldier Park fork of Ashley, running thence south.

Patric Carroll and Sons
P.O. Address: Ashley, Uintah Co., Utah

In 1898 George Bartlett and Gill Colton bought a sawmill and moved it to Windy Park. Windy Park is said to have been subsequently fenced by one William Gibson, but was then "disposed" when the Ashley National Forest was created.

All the early logging was entirely for local use, and the settlers could purchase it "at cost or at a reduced rate to improve their own places."

It was then the Ranger's job to go around during the winter months checking to make sure the lumber was being used as intended.

There were no "arm chair" Rangers in those early days, and, like today, no end to their problems. Following are comments made by Dan S. Pack, about his brief stay in Vernal around 1902, as a Forest Ranger on the Uintah Reserve:

"I hadn't been in Vernal but a short time before the fall storms started. I stamped for cutting, about 50,000 feet of sawlogs and scaled about 30,000 feet of logs for a fellow, I think, by the name of Jim Griffen. A short time later while riding in Ashley Creek I found where a load of house logs had been cut in trespass. I located the logs near Lapoint - I charged the party with willful trespass and placed a price on the logs at what they were worth where found.

A short time later snow on the Forest made it difficult to continue milling.

"Vernal was the coldest place I had ever wintered in."

William Anderson has told a little of his experience in Vernal during the early logging days - which consisted mostly of problems - and how he handled them.

"In the early winter of 1905 and 1906, Supervisor Marshall detailed me to go to the Eastern Division of the Forest to make my headquarters at Vernal, Utah, and clean up the timber situation there. It seemed that the lumbermen there were in trouble with the Washington Office, and although Ranger Grant Carpenter was in Vernal, it seemed that no suitable arrangement or understanding could be reached. I left Kamas, Utah, for the two hundred mile trip by saddle and pack horse on Thanksgiving Day of 1905. I was six days making the trip and the temperature was around twenty degrees below the entire time.

"I arrived at Vernal and put up at a small hotel. (We picked out the small ones because for several years in the early history of the Forest Service, we paid our own expenses in every way). I had been in the hotel by the stove for only a short time, when in walked a keen looking, well dressed gentleman and asked the proprietor if there was a Government man there. The hotel man said not that he knew of. I answered that maybe it was me he was looking for. He sort of laughed and said maybe so, but we were looking for a man by the name of Anderson from the Forest Service. 'Yes', I answered, 'Little as I look it, I am Anderson. He then informed me that his name was Philipi and that he and his law partner, Wilson, were attorneys for the sawmill owners association, and that they had a wire that I would be there and would I please come to their office soon.

"I went with him and learned that all the small operators had formed an association and that they had a long petition which was being circulated and signed by the people asking for the disbandment of the Forest Service entirely, or at least the new Supervisor be appointed and stationed at Vernal, Utah. I learned further that every operation was tied up in trespass by Inspectors Langelles and Riley, for cutting timber not marked for cutting and not piling the tops of trees for burning. Not knowing just what to do, I requested that we call the mill owners together the next day. This was agreed upon. I went back to my hotel and spent most of the night reading the Use Book as it was called at that time in an attempt to determine what to do.

"The next morning I met the mill owners and found them all to be small operators, trying to make a living and not in any way trying deliberately to beat the Government. I could plainly see that they couldn't afford to pay any penalties. Neither could they afford the expense of piling the brush for several years cutting. I made up my mind that the only thing the Service could expect was fairness and reasonableness, so I proposed to each and everyone there that I would make them a sale of timber to the value of \$100.00, and that

if they would give me a postal money order, Payable to the United States Treasury, that I would transmit it with the sale contracts, which, at that time, had to go to Washington for approval, and I would mark timber for cutting at once and would recommend the cancellation of all trespass cases that didn't involve criminal intent, provided they call in and discontinue the circulation of their petition. I am happy to relate that within a short time, probably four months, the whole situation was cleared up and the Service was on a much better footing with the people of that section, even though I bucked snow two and a half to three feet deep in making the sales and marking and scaling the timber."

Today, many of those old sales still plague the District in the form of silvicultural nightmares. Most of the areas are high graded, selective or partial clear cuts, and the logging then generally did not include such modern niceties as slash disposal.

But over the years, forest management did come to the District, and today foresters are even beginning to eye the thousands of acres of doghair "Wastelands" with visions of a more productive future in the form of pulpwood.

With management plans and more efficient logging and milling methods, the output of timber, on a sustained yield basis, has continued to grow. In 1917, 11 mills in the entire Uintah Basin, using timber from all over the Ashley, produced 2,643,000 board feet of lumber. In 1949, 35 mills were putting out 10 million board feet in the entire Basin. Today, the annual allowable cut from the Vernal District alone is over 7 million board feet and supplies only about four local sawmills.

Water, Water - Not Everywhere

To farm in the Ashley Valley is to irrigate. The semi-arid nature of the land makes this the sad truth, and for this reason, the first farms stuck close by Ashley, Brush Creek and the Green River.

As mentioned earlier, the Indians had even started irrigating long before Brigham Young and his people became the first Anglo-Saxons to divert stream waters for agriculture purposes. Powell, in his passing through this area, noted in his diary, small patches of pumpkins, melons, potatoes and other vegetables being grown by the Indians.

To the first settler, Pardon Dodds, goes credit from the Daughters of Utah Pioneers for the first ditch, which is yet in use today northeast of Maeser and still called Dodd's Ditch.

In 1879 Jim Henry and possibly A. Hatch and A. Morrill built a canal to the present site of Vernal. The method used in these early attempts consisted of surveying the line, then as one man and horse would plow the ditch, others would follow and clean it out with a V-shaped scraper called a "go devil."

Irrigation companies were being formed by the water users here as early as the mid-1880's. The Ashley Central Irrigation Company was incorporated on January 17, 1884 with 57 stockholders and a canal length of six miles. Later, the same year 38 stockholders formed the Ashley Upper Canal. And as the years passed, more and more canals scored the mountain and the plain below to bring life giving water to the farms and ranches.

To the north of Vernal in the Dry Fork of Ashley Creek, there exists a phenomenon of nature which is not too uncommon in sandy soils of the arid west. Surface water, which flows from a watershed of considerable size, suddenly disappears into the ground and is "lost" to sub surface stratum.

It was pure grief to the early sod busters to watch this good water sink into the soil many miles above their homesteads. At least two major projects were undertaken to alleviate this problem, and we have borrowed the following write up from the Uintah Water Conservancy District to tell the story:

The following is an account recalled from memory by Mr. Dan Adams, age 83, of Vernal, Utah formerly of Dry Fork, Utah, where he lived as a boy and farmed as a man for 71 years of his life. This account was written in cooperation with Mr. Frank Watkins, age 87, of Vernal, Utah, who also worked on the project. These two men are the only living persons at this time, March 3, 1961, who can recall events concerning this brave effort made by the pioneers of the valley who realized the importance of the water which was being lost in the mysterious Dry Fork Sinks.

"The account was told to Mrs. Dan (LaVern) Adams, who wrote of the events in longhand and gave the document to the Uintah Water Conservancy District for the Record.

"When Dan Adams was a small boy he can remember of going to Dry Fork Canyon with his father and other men of the community to construct a ditch around the largest sink in the canyon in an effort to save the precious water for irrigation purposes. The men dug a ditch around the sink hole, only to have the water disappear into another sink hole. Dan Henry Hall and others stood by, hoping to salvage a mess of fish, but to their dismay, the fish, water and all disappeared into the sink hole. The boys were approximately 9 and 10 years old, so this venture would have happened about 1887 or 1888.

"Dan recalls that through this experience, the water users of Ashley Valley formed a company and decided that a flume constructed to carry the water over the sink areas was the answer to the water saving problem. They bought a sawmill to saw lumber for use on the flume. Dave Bingham, Frank Watkins, Billy Gillman and others built the road to the old mill setting in 1894 or 1895. Building roads in that early period was a long and laborious job, as only the crude scraper and horse along with the trusty shovel was their equipment to do the job.

"Tine Nickel and his son, Milt Nickel, were the timber choppers. Dave Bingham was Supervisor of the work; Jim Griffin, the sawyer; Billy Gillman, the Engineer; Jack Kelstrum, the Ratchet Setter; Frank Watkins, Off Bearer; Earnest Eaton took care of the piling of lumber; Dan Adams piled the slabs and disposed of the waste materials. Kathleen Gillman cooked for the crew and Susan McKowen along with Isabell McKowen were her helpers.

"In the fall of 1895, Dan Adams and Charles Searle hauled the lumber on sleighs down to the site of the flume. The following spring, some of the stockholders of the company began construction of the flume. It leaked so badly that the dirt supporting the trestles was softened and washed away, allowing the trestles to give 'way and toppling over. This entailed another operation to construct a better foundation for the structures.

"The Company continued to saw lumber at the mill the remainder of the year of 1896 in an effort to raise enough money to complete the project. They were unsuccessful and later made a deal with Lycurgus Johnson to put the water down below the sink area but this effort also failed."

"This water saving problem proved too much for our pioneers who had not the facilities to build a successful flume. The old structures still stand in Dry Fork Canyon...A Monument to a brave group of pioneers."

When the 1890's rolled around, the men of Ashley Valley began scheming to find ways to utilize the water of the District's high mountain lakes. The first attempt was a little irrational.

With picks, shovels, and an awful lot of sweat, the settlers set about to cut down the outlets - the natural dams - of those mountain lakes, "in hopes of augmenting the natural stream flow."

What they were actually doing was lowering the water table and making less water available late in the summer months when it was needed most.

In fact, the problem of late summer water was so critical that many of the old pioneers forgot that "neighborliness" business with which they are always characterized by their modern daughters, and fought their way right into the court.

To settle the heated disputes, the court issued the first water allotments and set up a water commissioner to oversee the whole mess, and settle future disputes.

The water users soon realized their efforts at the mountain lakes were in just opposite direction from the way they should be going. So, they next tried their hand at dam building and, using rocks, logs, and dirt, they put some crude structures at the outlet of some of the lakes, most notably the Ashley Twins and Hacking Lakes.

But real dam building did not get underway until 1912 when a special use permit was issued for the East Park Reservoir. It was completed in 1917 and followed in two years by improved structures on the Ashley Twins and Goose Lakes. In 1934 the permit was issued for Long Park Reservoir, and Oaks Park, the District's largest was finished in 1939.

On February 3, 1948, Ranger Glen Lambert submitted an unprecedented report on the condition of Vernal's watershed. In it he identified about five problem areas and, as mentioned earlier, place much of the blame on over grazing.

During the summer of 1966, an extremely detailed hydrological analysis was initiated on the District and when complete will further identify present and potential danger spots as well as give land managers an array of other useful information and data. This can then be incorporated into future water development planning in an effort to secure a maximum water yield from the mountain while protecting all the other resource values simultaneously.

An item in the 1950 I & E Plan which remains as pertinent today as then, points up the continuing need for public education in the field of watershed management.

"The watersheds on the Ashley Forest are in fair condition. People depending on these watersheds accept water as a matter of course and do not understand the complexities of water production. They do not realize that to abuse the mountain is to ruin the valley."

Fire on the Mountain

Sometimes the Ashley is jokingly referred to as the 'asbestos forest'. So was the Bitterroot National Forest in Montana before its 3,000 acre Saddle Mountain Fire, followed the next year by the 32,000 acre Sleeping Child Fire.

Although fires in recent years have been relatively small and harmless on the District, there are indications that large fires in the past burned over large portions of the mountain.

In the Forest Service files is the statement:

"From the age of regrowth and stories of the earlier settlers, it appears that the majority of the large fires which burned many sections (of land) at a time ran unchecked in the 1880's."

It was these fires that have left us blessed with the many hundreds of acres covered with stagnated stands of "doghair" lodgepole. But the blame cannot all be laid to the settlers, since even before their arrival, it is reported that Indians burned off the land in an effort to get rid of the bears!

One holocaust that burned near the District boundaries is recorded in September, 1902 in the Elk Park area. It burned unchecked for ten days.

There are several 200-300 acre fires remembered by the old timers, notably in Davenport Draw, Jackson Draw, and elsewhere.

In 1930 a man caused fire occurred on Dry Fork Mountain and blackened 2,000 acres. Forest Officers found horseshoe prints leading to three different sets, and although none of the valley people would cooperate at the time, many later revealed knowledge of the two arsonists responsible for the fire. The motive is said to have been to create work, and if so, it succeeded, as \$10,000 was spent by the Government to suppress the blaze. The men said to have started it, returned to the scene and obtained employment for about \$1.00 an hour. One suspect is now dead, and the other is living in the Salt Lake City area, but lack of expert law enforcement at the time failed to bring any charges against the two.

"The District's 1946 "Fire Deficiency" report to the Supervisor went as follows:

The 1946 fire season was extreme in danger rating but was not the highest we have experienced on the Ashley.

"The Vernal District had four reportable fires. Three of these were camp fires and one, the largest, was a Public Domain fire which started outside of the Forest and spread to the Forest. This was a sage brush fire and burned about 140 acres, one half of which, was on the National Forest. All were man caused fires. I succeeded in getting one conviction on one of the camp fires. The guilty party was fined \$100.00. \$35.00 of this was paid and the balance was suspended.

"I have received very good cooperation from the users and general public. In fact, all of the camp fires and the law enforcement case were picked up through cooperation of the users. Some overtime by both myself and guard was spent in contacting the public on weekends and holidays. This, I believe, is one reason why we had no large fires during the period of greatest hazard. One of our problems is that we cannot employ men for overtime work on weekends and holidays for educational and preventive work. A few hours of personal contact at the heavily used areas at weekends and holidays, in my opinion, is superior to any other means of prevention. The checker placed on the Vernal-Manila road for a short period during the period of greatest emergency no doubt contributed considerably to our prevention measures. An average of 100 cars per day were checked into the Forest during the period this station was maintained.

"The two World War II veterans which were employed on the District as Guard and Sealer did excellent work on fire prevention. They are both efficient men in making personal contacts of visitors on the Forest and spent considerable time on this work during the period of fire emergency. I am sure that results were obtained from this source. A good guard employed for 3 1/2 to 4 months on the Vernal District is very essential."

G.A. Lambert

Two years later, Ranger Lambert commented in his annual report:

"...quite unusual that a fire hazard exists during the hunting season...It may be advisable to put on a patrolman for the years when the fire hazard extends into the hunting season."

He also noted that again cooperation from other agencies, sawmill operators and resort operators was very good, but that, "cooperation from range users is only fair."

In 1950 the following statement appeared in the annual Ashley Forest I & E Plan:

"There is a little opposition to our fire prevention campaign by the few unenlightened stockmen who have expressed the opinion that some heavily timbered forest areas would be better if burned off to provide additional grazing ranges."

1952 was reported as one of the longest fire seasons in the history of the forest, with 13 fires reported which burned 8.5 acres. Only two of these were on the Vernal District.

From 1950 to the present time, the Vernal District has averaged less than three fires each year, with the largest number being eight in 1956. The greatest percentage of these have been lightning caused, followed by campfires and smokers in that order. No incendiary fires have been reported during that period.

Since history bears out the fact that the Vernal District, like the rest of the Ashley, is certainly not "asbestos", there is little reason to believe that fire could not become a serious problem under the right conditions. However, it appears that credit for the low amount of man caused fires goes to the continuing educational efforts in the Vernal area, adequate seasonal personnel, and the excellent cooperation of all forest users, including today, the stockmen.

Roads and Trails

One attribute to prompt fire suppression on the District is the road and trail system that presently provide adequate coverage of the area. The system began, as discussed earlier, with Indian trails used as pack trails and then improved into wagon roads.

Before the Thornburg Road was constructed, immigrants came to the Ashley Valley by one of two routes which are described in the May 25, 1878 edition of Deseret News:

"There are about 100 inhabitants in this precinct (Ashley Valley).. The roads that lead to this place, whether by Fort Bridger or Heber, are very rough and twenty hundred is a heavy load for four animals.."

The road from Fort Bridger at that time apparently came in via Brown's Park. One record describes the route as going from Rock Springs to Brown's Park, crossing the Green River by ferry. Then to the mouth of Sears Canyon, up the canyon and across Diamond Mountain to Diamond Spring and thence to the Ashley Valley.

In 1877 the Bingham party chose the Brown's Park route and made the trek from Huntsville in 30 days.

By 1879, mail was being carried over Taylor Mountain to Green River, Wyoming by one Otto Peterson who made the trip in winter on snowshoes. And, by the way, his pay consisted of whatever produce or other compensation the settlers could spare for his services.

The old route from Rock Springs with some modifications, was chosen in 1880 as a short lived Pony Express route. From Brown's Park, it went up Mail Draw, over Diamond Mountain, across Brush Creek, and through what was called Little Mail Draw, east of Steinaker Draw.

About this time, the Thornburg Road made a new wagon entrance into the valley, before being out classed by other routes from the south, west, and east. Simultaneously, many other spur roads were being pushed into the forests on the mountain, mostly for the timber, and prospectors undoubtedly made good use of Indian paths, as well as starting some of their own trails.

Roads in the valley and on the mountain continued to grow and were, like today, slowly improved. On April 13, 1917, Supervisor Anderson reported to the Western Division of the War Department that the Uintah Basin contained the following privately owned automobiles:

"80 Fords, 50 Buicks, 25 Overlands, 10 Oaklands, 10 Dodges and 7 Studebakers. There were also four trucks of unknown make, and eight Buick 3-tons."

First efforts toward improving what was probably to become the Vernal-Manila Highway (Route 44) began about 1918. In the July 12 edition of the local paper appeared this item:

\$500 of county funds and \$825 from sheepmen, and men owning farm lands on Diamond Mountain will contribute labor for a road to be built to the summit of the mountain so that cars can travel over it."

Whether or not the 1918 efforts materialized is not known to this writer. Items from Forest Service files indicate that work on the highway did not actually begin until five years later. These items say that until 1923, there were only wagon roads and trails, mostly connecting the valley settlement with sawmills, ranger stations and stockmen's camps, "plus the old military road across the entire mountain range."

"In 1923 with the increase of motorized travel, the first efforts were made to make some of these roads passable to autos. Uintah County matched a Forest Service appropriation of two or three thousand dollars to improve the road onto Brush Creek Mountain mainly to reduce grades to not more than 15%. This might be said to be the beginning of the present Vernal-Manila Highway.

"All the work was done by horses, plows, and scrapers, as no heavy equipment was available to the Forest Service at this time."

Further road work of any magnitude on the District awaited the arrival of the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) boys several years later.

The Wildlife Resource

Every man is an expert on two things, women and wildlife. Around the latter centers another old, and today one of the hottest, controversies on the District. It boils down to three points of view and dozens of ideas about what to do about each.

1. There is more game than the land can satisfactorily sustain.
2. Big game and the land are now in a proper balance and should be kept at this level.
3. "There are no deer" (and fewer elk)!

No attempt will be made here to join the "experts" - the real ones and the pseudo ones - in their debate. From the meager records available to hasty research, we set forth here merely some of the observations and events which have occurred on the Vernal Ranger District and been recorded for our benefit and interest.

There seems to be no doubt that there has been a continuous cyclic pattern in game abundance through the years. Many factors have influenced these cycles, but, of course, that is outside the scope of this paper.

The settlers around 1878 seemed to have found game plentiful. Also, in 1890, it is said that "great herds of antelope (were) along Ashley Creek and in the valley, serving an important part of many pioneer diets."

That same year a Joab Collier shot an elk which was feeding among his cows just south of the Vernal townsite. Fishing wasn't bad that year either, and will naturally assume that fishermen then told no lies in reporting "a fish 6 feet long" caught in the Green River. Isaac Slaugh and Joseph Atwood hauled it in.

About 1900 Charles Atwood became the first game warden in this area, and two years later, the Vernal Rod and Gun Club became Utah's first organized sportmen's group.

At about this same time hunting and fishing licenses made their appearance and California quail was introduced on the lower slopes of the mountain.

Come 1908 and rangers reported that "deer were seldom seen and deer tracks were a novelty arousing interest." This condition is said to have existed for "a score" of years later.

Then, we find that "sizeable herds" became established by the mid 1920's, and that Rangers credited this to the advent of law enforcement, reduction of predators, and curtailment of large scale Indian hunting - both in and out of season.

Charles DeMoisy gives us a clue to the fishing situation around 1930:

"Most of the streams and lakes were well stocked with fish. Trout fishing was par excellence nearly everywhere, especially in the higher waters accessible by pack outfits only. Since there were few roads in the forest passable to automobiles and local population was not large, these excellent fishing conditions extended to the 1930's when

the more accessible waters began to succumb to heavy fishing pressure and more people had to use pack outfits to reach good fishing."

In October, 1935, "10,000 fingerling black spotted trout from the federal hatchery at Springville" were planted in Trout Creek.

Prior to 1940, at least three attempts at "stocking" elk on the mountain ended in failure. But elk brought in from what is now the Manti-LaSal National Forest found the area favorable and today about 100 are harvested each autumn.

The local paper carried the following item on Thursday, November 19, 1942:

VERNAL SPORTSMEN SECURE FIRST LEGAL ELK ON ASHLEY NATIONAL FOREST

"Owen Hacking and Ernest Caldwell shot the first two elk ever taken out of the Uintah Basin, during the legal season which closed Tuesday.

"When the two successful hunters returned to town Monday morning, a general traffic jam was the result. Curious onlookers crowded about the truck to inspect the prize catch. The two animals dressed out at 575 and 475 pounds. They were shot late Sunday afternoon, November 8, at Carter Creek, without any difficulty, requiring only four shots to bring down both elk, Mr. Caldwell stated...

"The other hunters issued a special elk hunting license permitting them to hunt until November 17 were: Lester Bingham, Edward S. Anderson, Dick Bennett, Roy Boren, Wm. D. Hurst of Manila, F.M. Fenwick of Salt Lake and Francis Johnson of Grantsville.

Exactly fifty percent of the hunters came back with their game.

"The Carnegie Museum party, headed by Dr. LeRoy Kay, were also successful. They had a special license, allowing them to hunt until an elk of each sex had been secured. These elk will be mounted."

By the end of World War II, game habitat management was beginning to be thought of in more than an academic manner. As now, factions differed on management needs and methods. The following description of the problem at that time is from a report to the Forest Supervisor by Ranger Glen Lambert written in January, 1945.

1. Description of the Situation.

Winter and summer range is well balanced. Most of the deer leave the Forest for winter range on private land and Public Domain.

The range is considered to be fully stocked with a few over grazed areas showing up.

2. Nature of Opposition.

The opposition comes mainly from the State Game Department and the local sportsmen (sic). These parties seem to have no idea of what game management means. When we attempt to promote a game management plan of some sort, there immediately goes out a shout from the local sportsmen and state representatives that the Forest Service is attempting to exterminate all of the deer.

3. What Needs to Be Done.

We first need to convince the State Game Department as to the need for a Big Game Management Plan. It should be gotten over to the sportsmen that we need a system of management for the game the same as for any other forest resource. They should be educated to the fact that the supply of forage for the game is limited and that the quickest way to exterminate the deer herd is through allowing them to over graze the range. The objective in this line is to have as many big game animals as the range will carry and at the same time be consistent with other uses.

The Phosphate Lands

In 1916, an adventuresome man by the name of Harry Ratliff was employed by the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad. Fate had it that Mr. Ratliff was in Vernal when the news shocked America that the Germans had just sunk that great ocean liner, the Luisitania.

It was a double shock to Mr. Ratliff, since the president of his company, Mr. Newman Erb, was aboard the ship, and listed among the dead. This caused some changes in his plans, and he found himself detained here in Vernal.

"While waiting, I became acquainted with Judge McConnell, and he showed me some ore he thought might be silver...

"The railroad company wanted me to see some of the cattlemen who planned shipping beef that fall, so I saddled up and headed for Diamond Mountain, stopping for the night with Mr. Frank Goodman. Mr. Goodman showed me some more rock similar to the specimen Judge McConnell had. I knew it was phosphate rock. Next day I started from Little Brush Creek and followed the canyon edge where I had found the phosphate bed to be in place. I laid out that night on the Broken Cliffs about three miles northeast of the ranch of Joseph Campbell. The next day I got into Big Brush Creek Gorge and laid out that night in the big cave about three quarters of a mile above where the Gorge ends.

"The next morning about eleven o'clock, I discovered Joseph C. Campbell's house, and found these people to be "salt of the earth." I stayed there two days. I brought samples of phosphate rock from several natural exposures. When I returned to Denver, my findings were confirmed by analysis.

"It took thirteen years to get patent to these lands and it was pretty tough going until Colonel A.E. Humphreys joined me."

When patent did come, with Mr. Humphreys' financial aid, almost 15,000 acres of National Forest land went into private hands. This occurred in the late 1920's.

The phosphate land is undoubtedly the richest mineral strike in District history, and one of the richest deposits of this chemical in the nation. It has been estimated that the bed is an average of 22 feet thick and contains enough phosphate to supply the entire U.S. market for 1,000 years.

C C C(Civilian Conservation Corps)

As the Great Depression spread across the United States, and the Civilian Conservation Corps was formed, the Vernal District soon found itself host to a CCC camp.

In the spring of 1933, a main camp was established at Bullionville at the site of earlier mining activity. From this camp, construction and improvement work was done on many of the District's roads and trails. Other work included livestock ponds, fences, bridges and several other projects.

The Bullionville location lasted only one summer. The following year the main camp was at Manila, and two "spike" camps were set up for project work on District 2. The one was at Red Springs, and the other at Kaler Hollow.

Both spike camps had a few buildings, with the Kaler Hollow site containing a mess hall, equipment shed, and power house.

There was also a main camp located at Moon Lake, and in 1935 a spike camp crew from there "completed four miles of metallic circuit telephone line from Vernal to the edge of the Valley", which was cheered for greatly improving the telephone service over those lines, by reducing interference from nearby power lines.

Later that year, two items appeared in a little Ashley National Forest newspaper, expressing concern for the future of the Corps here.

December 16, 1935

"Under a Washington dateline of December 11, the Salt Lake Tribune carried an item stating that 389 CCC camps are to be cut out by the end of this month. Here is hoping we don't lose one of our camps - but we may be on the unlucky list.

December 25, 1935

"We feel somewhat better now as we have had no notice to abandon a camp and it is nearing the end of the month."

Many beneficial projects have been credited to the CCC's, and it is no doubt the District was greatly improved for their having been here. But they were much less than heroic in the eyes of the townspeople.

Most fathers prohibited their daughters from going out with the corpsmen, and rumors persist today of rapes, gang fights, and other acts of violence which in actuality were rare and outstanding exception to the general rule. Some of the young men liked Vernal well enough to make it their home when the Corps was mustered out prior to the Second World War, and are, in fact, today, leading citizens.

Death Stalks the Mountain

Through the years as the valley residents and others swarmed over the mountain pursuing their particular interest, the heavy hand of fate awaited some.

On June 16, 1878, an early summer lightning storm displayed its wrath over the mountain and black clouds shrouded the higher peaks. Robert Snyder, Ashley Valley's first settler who dared bring his wife and family to the new land, stood in the little yard by his cabin watching the storm.

Suddenly a blinding streak slipped out of the storm's edge and with a deafening crash of thunder, claimed its first victim. Mrs. Snyder was alone with her children to pioneer in the empty land.

Half a century later, a restless herd of cattle were making their way across Diamond Mountain in the gathering darkness of a thunderhead. Behind the herd rode two men, Ray Searle and Sid Morrison, Again lightning streaked earthward and with a tremendous roar, scattered the terrified cattle to the four winds.

About two hours later, Morrison shook the drowsiness from his head and climbed to his feet. Next to him lay his horse, unconscious, but alive. His partner was not as lucky - as he lay motionless beside his faithful mount.

Today, at the spot near Chicken Peak, about five miles from the Vernal District towards which they were heading, stands an unique memorial to the man, the horse, and the occasion.

Built of stone and imbedded with the bleached bones of the horse, the plaque on the monument reads, "In Memory of Our Husband and Father, Raymond M. Searle, who was killed here by lightning on October 11, 1923."

But death used more than lightning in its search for victims on the mountain. During construction work on Long Park reservoir during the 1930's, two workmen decided on doing some fishing one evening. Both boys were in their late teens or early twenties, and the one was an epileptic.

They decided to circle the lake - each heading in a different direction - and meet about half way around. When the one fellow had made the complete circle without meeting the second, he returned to their nearby camp to see if he had returned there.

Not finding him, he and the other workmen took flashlights and started back into the night in search of the missing man. Shortly later, he was found dead in water not more than about five feet deep - the apparent victim of an epileptic seizure at exactly the wrong place at the wrong time.

Almost a decade later, another fisherman met death on the mountain. Frank Abplanalp and his partner had been fishing in the Red Pine Gorge. Toward the end of the day, they began the uphill climb along the sheep trail to their camp at Red Pine Setting. Part way up the hill, Mr. Abplanalp's heart gave out and he died on the spot.

The mountain has also had more than its share of hunting deaths, to say nothing of the non-fatal accidents.

One such victim was shot and killed by a California hunter on Grizzly Ridge. When the bushes moved, the Californian figured what else could it be but a deer!

An incident occurred on Taylor Mountain which has yet to be ironed out for detail. Lawrence Burton, whether a hunter or just there to cut poles, was sitting on a pile of posts when his leg was shattered by a bullet. The story is that the victim either fought off first aid which would have saved his life, or that none was offered. At any rate, he bled to death while others watched, and before a doctor that was hunting nearby could reach the scene.

Another hunting victim was a woman by the name of Hatch who was hit by a ricocheting bullet from her husband's gun.

In Pot Creek, a man named Calder was sitting on a stump with his rifle across his lap. Out of nowhere a bullet shattered against the steel of his gun, and the deadly slivers riddled his intestines. Again, "he looked just like a deer!"

One other hunting accident that was brought to our attention, occurred along the road to the Colton Guard Station. Two brothers - both conscientious objectors - were driving slowly along the road when a deer went bounding across and into the dense timber. The men gave chase on foot, and the one fell victim - a bullet in his back - to the other.

As the present decade rolled around, the Grim Reaper became determined to stalk more victims on the mountain. His first was John L. Siddoway, a sheep permittee on the Leidy Peak allotment. One day in August, John stopped by the Center Creek timber sale to see an old friend, a Mexican called Joe. Going into the sale, Siddoway met John Helman skidding a load of logs, and was told by the latter that Joe would be coming out in a few minutes to eat lunch.

Wanting to watch Joe "knock a tree down", John went into the sale area and found the Mexican hard at work. Joe was glad to see his friend, and showed him the tree he would cut and where it would fall. So John walked off in the opposite direction and sat down on an old log about 50 feet from the tree. Joe cut the tree and it fell in the predicted direction. But, as it crashed to earth, it violently struck a dead, fork-topped snag, snapping off a piece of it about six feet long and three or four inches in diameter. Joe saw the broken limb whip back toward John and yelled a warning. John reacted by protecting his head - covered only by a cloth cap - with his crossed arms. Had he moved a foot or two in either direction, he would be alive today. As it happened, it struck him squarely across the head, instantly breaking his neck.

Lightning sought additional victims in the 1960's. Virt McConkie, Orval Sowards and Oliver Trujillo were repairing a metal stock watering trough at Point Springs on Taylor Mountain. They were quite a distance from their truck, so when a sudden storm brought a deluge, the three sought refuge under the trough where they could sit almost comfortably. They hadn't much choice, since the country there afforded little other shelter.

Suddenly there were two deafening claps of thunder, and a force like a giant hand tried pushing the men from their shelter. All were alive, but badly shaken. Trujillo shook so violently and was jumping like a man possessed, that he did not stand still until Virt yelled at him.

When they arrived in town, Ranger Sevy had them go to Dr. Christian for a checkup. On the back of each man, where he leaned against the trough, was a patch of marks like a chicken would make in the dust. Apparently the trough had either been directly hit, or the strike was so close that the metal was highly charged with electricity. Death missed its victims by a hair's breadth.

Lightning struck again on the afternoon of August 6, 1966. Cattle permittee, Neil Caldwell and several others with him were hunting stray cows in the Kane Hollow vicinity. A bolt of lightning struck so close it sent Caldwell's horse to its knees, and things went black for a moment or two. Neil's eyes opened just in time to see one of the others drop his reigns as the horse was about to run off in panic. He yelled and just in time for someone to grab the reigns of the would be runaway, and no damage was done. Again, death missed its victims.

But, on that summer day, the Angel of Death was not to be denied for long.

Two hours later, sightseers along the Vernal-Manila highway were admiring Brush Creek Gorge when they heard the drone of a light plane approaching. Looking to the south, they saw the single engine craft and watched in horror as it headed toward a nearby sage covered knoll. A cold chill went through them as they saw the plane skim over the hilltop, missing it by a matter of feet.

Their relief was only temporary, however, as the plane sunk into Kabell Hollow and temporarily out of sight.

Inside the plane was the vacationing Mansfield family. Donald Mansfield 41; his wife, Arlene 39; and their three daughters, Terrie 16; Donna 15; and Robin 14; were enroute to relatives at Hardin, Montana, from their home in San Diego. Their last stop had just been minutes before, when they landed at the Vernal Airport to refuel.

As the plane sank toward a patch of quaking aspen, Mr. Mansfield fought to nose up his plane and gain altitude. Two of the girls hugged each other in their desperate fright, and another reached upward, groping hopelessly for some measure of security.

Shearing off the tops of 8-10 inch aspens, the plane "pancaked" into the earth and exploded into a ball of flames.

Larry Hacking and Dennis Hatch were on the Colton road when they spotted the black column of smoke. Rushing to the scene, they were the second party to arrive. Hatch returned to Colton where he notified the Vernal fire dispatcher, gathered up fire extinguishers and hurried back to the fire. Enroute he picked up Virt McConkie who had been visiting Neil Caldwell at the Brush Creek cattle camp.

Arriving at the fire, the men made a desperate attempt to douse the flames, but the extinguishers were drained before the fuel fed flames were out completely, and they soon sprang back to their full intensity. The surrounding brush was in little danger of igniting, as it was still wet from the downpour earlier that day.

The men, plus the gathering crowd of sightseers, stood by helplessly as the victims were consumed in the inferno. One of the group, J.L. Brown, of Salt Lake City, had a camera and took an award winning photo of the flaming wreckage.

Down in the valley, Ranger Sevy was enjoying a Saturday afternoon at home, when his phone rang. Gathering up four other employees, he arrived at the smoldering fire about one hour after the crash.

The grizzly task of removing the five charred, almost unrecognizable bodies, began about sundown. What the men thought was part of a body, later turned out to be the sixth member of the family - their pet dog.

At about nine o'clock, the bodies were taken to the Vernal Mortuary - two in Ranger Sevy's truck, and the others in the County Search and Rescue vehicles. The most tragic day in the history of the Vernal Ranger District had come to an end.

A Bright Tomorrow

So, it is, the story of Men on The Mountain. But, to end the story of District Two on an unhappy note would indeed be a mistake.

Through trial and error, tribulations and successes, the citizens of the area and the United States Forest Service have come to the understanding that the mountain's resources must be utilized.

Appendix

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Chronological Summary

- 1776 Escalante party sees Uinta Mountains.
- 1825 Ashley descends Green River and views Uinta Mountains.
- 1828 Reed establishes first settlement in Utah near Whiterocks.
- 1832 Reed sells out to Robidoux, who supplies Fort from Fort Bridger.
- 1844 Massacre at Fort Robidoux, which is burned to the ground.
- 1869 John W. Powell descends Green River and views Uinta Mountains.
- 1871 The Great Diamond Hoax.
- 1872 First settler arrives in Ashley Valley.
- 1872 First grazing in area.
- 1876 First white woman settler in Ashley Valley.
- 1877 First reported timber taken off the mountain.
- 1878 Snyder killed by lightning.
- 1879 The Meeker Massacre in Colorado.
- 1879-80 "The Hard Winter."
- 1880 Uintah County is established.
- 1880 First sawmill brought to area.
- 1880 Preliminary miners meeting at Vortex Cave.
- 1881 Fort Thornburg established on Ashley Creek.
- 1881 Thornburg Military road is begun.
- 1884 Fort Thornburg abandoned.
- 1886 Vernal is named.
- 1887 Fort Duchesne established.
- 1887 Attempts made to by pass Dry Fork Sinks with irrigation.
- 1896 Work begins at the Dyer Mine.
- 1896 Dry Fork Gunfight.
- 1897 Uintah Forest Reserve is created.
- 1902 Vernal Rod and Gun Club is formed.
- 1908 Ashley National Forest created from portion of Uinta Forest reserve.
- 1910 Telephone line is built over Taylor Mountain from Vernal to Hole-in-the-Rock Ranger Station.

Origin of Names

Name	Origin
Alma Taylor Hollow (and Lake)	Early settler - among those in Dry Fork Canyon during the "hard winter of 1879-80."
Ashley	The Valley, the creek, and later the National Forest, were all named after William N. Ashley, fur trapper, explorer, and organizer of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.
Bodily Spring	Early settlers. The Robert Bodily family came to Ashley Valley in 1879.
Bullionville	Probably because of the numerous mining claims in the area during the 1880's. While copper resulted as the most valuable find, most of the claims listed "gold", silver and other precious metals" as their basis. Bullion Mining District surrounded the Bullion "townsite" about 1880.
Charley's Park	Possibly after stockman Charley Taylor, a charter member of the Uintah County Wool Growers Association.
Lily Pad Lake	Named for the profusion of lily pads that crowd the surface of this little lake.
Colton Guard Station	Sterling Driggs Colton, cattleman and first Sheriff of Uintah County. Ranged cattle on Brush Creek Mountain. Colton Spring also named after him.
Davis Hollow	Nathan C. Davis, one time bodyguard of Joseph Smith. Brought cattle and horses to Ashley Valley in 1880 and built a cabin in hollow bearing his name to accommodate his riders.
Diamond Mountain	Named for the 1871 diamond swindle which occurred at a location on this mountain, several miles east of the present forest boundary.

Name	Origin
Dodd's Hollow	Ashley Valley's first settler, Pardon Dodds. Built cabin in this hollow in 1877 to accommodate his hired pole cutters.
Dry Fork of Ashley Creek	Although a deep canyon with a drainage area of considerable size and year round water at its head, the soil in the canyon bottom is extremely pervious and carries surface water only during the wettest portions of the year.
Dyer Ridge	Dyer, an Eastern man who acquired early interests in the copper discoveries on the ridge which known as the Dyer Mine.
Hacking Lake	Early settlers and stockmen who later became involved in water development projects. James C. Hacking settled in Ashley Valley in 1879.
Hick's Park	Early residents in Valley.
Hopper Lakes	Named as the result of a group of men encountering a grasshopper infestation near the lakes.
Kabell Hollow	Louis Kabell, early Ashley pioneer and prospector. Came to Ashley Valley in 1879.
King's Cabin	Located in Kane's Hollow, this source of controversy may be a cartographer's error, since another mistake appears on the same 1906 U.S.G.S. map calling Steinaker Draw, Stanaker Draw, or it may be named after Samuel A. King or W.M. King, 1890 prospectors in that area. More research is needed here.
Leidy Peak	Professor Joseph Leidy, who came to this area in 1871 to study fossils.
Marsh Peak	Originally and appropriately named Bald Mountain. This prominent Uinta peak is now named in honor of Professor Othniel C. Marsh of Yale who headed an expedition to this area in 1870 to study fossils.

Name	Origin
McKee Draw	James McKee, early cattleman who ranged his stock in the vicinity of this draw.
Oak's Park	Originally called Shingle Flat, it later became known for Hyrum Oaks and his son, Martin, who began making shingles there in 1882.
Odekirk Spring	Probably for John Odekirk, early Ashley Valley pioneer.
Pat Carroll Park	Patric Carroll, Ashley Valley settler of 1878 and one of first sawmill operators in this vicinity.
Pot Creek	An intermittent creek named for the numerous potholes found along its course.
Reader Creek	Probably for the John Reader family. Early Ashley Valley settlers and sheep raisers.
Steinaker Draw	Named after early Ashley Valley settler. On a 1906 U.S.G.S. map, erroneously spelled "Stanaker" which carried through to the building of the reservoir. Following requests from descendants and a campaign by the Vernal Chamber of Commerce, the original spelling has been restored in most cases today.
Taylor Mountain	Teancum Taylor (1836-1907), who was hauling logs off the mountain as early as 1877. One of first settlers in Dry Fork.
Uintah	According to Dr. Began, this is derived from the Indian word, "Uimpahugump" which means "The stream of water at the edge of the pine", and refers to a particular spot north of the present town of Whiterocks. The county bearing this name was organized in 1880 with the town of Ashley as county seat.

Name	Origin
Utah	<p>Derived from "Yutas", an early spelling of the "Ute" Indians. Perhaps the succession is Uimpahugump - Yuta - Ute.</p> <p>Made a state in 1896.</p>
Vernal	<p>Name succession is, "the bench" - Jericho - Hatch Town - Ashley Center - Vernal. Name was selected by first postmaster from a list submitted by the U.S. Post Office Department in Washington, D.C. From the Latin, "vernalis" which means "belonging to spring", spring like, fresh, youthful and with a suggestion of greenness.</p> <p>Named in 1886. Replaced Ashley as county seat on November 7, 1893 by a vote of 300 to 33.</p>