

1906 -

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MY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MANTI FOREST

By J. W. Humphrey

Sometime about the middle of July, 1905, some friends of mine suggested that we go to Mount Pleasant and take the Forest Ranger examination which was scheduled for July 23 and 24. At that time I was living in Salina, and the nearest Forest Office where the necessary blanks could be secured for making application for the examination was Ephraim. I lost no time in securing the blanks and filing same with the Civil Service Commission.

The Manti Forest office was located upstairs over the present Christiansen Furniture store in Ephraim. We reached the office by climbing the stairs next to the present ranger's office, and walking a plank south across the greater part of the store roof as the office was in the south side of the building. About eight months later I received an appointment as Assistant Forest Ranger on the Manti Forest, with headquarters in Orangeville, Ranger District #2. My appointment became effective the day of the San Francisco earthquake, April 18, 1906. A. W. Jensen was Forest Supervisor, and Parley Christiansen, David Williams, Frank Andersen, Beauregard Lesner, and Ernest Winkler were the rangers. Winkler and Arthur Jaffe were forest guards up until 1906 when Ernest Winkler was made assistant ranger.

On April 18, 1906, I received a compass, a Jacob staff, a marking hatchet (a very good one), a surveyor's link chain and pins, a small "Use Book" that I could put in my hip pocket, Gifford Pinchot's "Primer of Forestry" in two volumes, numerous forms, most of which were for free use, and some stationary, including township plate and a map of the forest. Some very good advice was given me by the very busy Forest Supervisor A. W. Jensen, who had to do all his own clerical work. I will remark in passing that I consider A. W. Jensen as one of the most enthusiastic, honest, able leaders that I have ever had the good fortune to work under -- loyal to his men and to the Forest Service.

To continue, I went back to Salina on the train. At Garrison we learned of the San Francisco earthquake. The following day I left for Orangeville with one saddle horse and one pack animal. At Emery I received some good advice from Ranger D. H. Williams, a very efficient and able officer. Arriving at Orangeville, my headquarters, I rented a pasture up near the forest boundary (to guard the forest). E. H. Clark, then Supervisor of the Wasatch National Forest, had been ranger two years before, and Arthur Jaffe had been temporary guard the previous summer. I had no tent so I used an open cabin on the pasture that I rented, and which I later bought. In June I hired a timber man to move my wife and baby up into Upper Joe's Valley where I built a hog-proof enclosure which I covered with a large tarpaulin, and this served us the first year as a tent. The following year I received an authorization of \$65 with which to build a cabin and to buy a stove. I hauled some homemade slab chairs and a rough lumber table from one of the old abandoned sawmill sets. This sufficed for furniture for another year or so when funds became available for a better stove and additional furniture.

In 1907 I was given the responsibility of a ranger nursery, 36 by 36 feet, enclosed with lath fencing, and shaded also with the same material. I hauled the fencing, built the nursery, and planted it to Ponderosa pine from seed secured from the Bossey Nursery at Halsey, Nebraska. I did all this alone as there were no neighbors within twenty-five miles, no telephones, and the road was difficult to get over with a light buckboard. It did not take long for me to find out what rodents and birds could do to a beautiful little nursery like I had. I improvised a sprinkling

system for the nursery by setting up a barrel to which I attached a hose. I did this only after I found that friend wife could not carry the necessary water from the creek to water the nursery with a sprinkling can when I was away for a few days at a time. This nursery had to be planted twice the first season. I was furnished a shotgun to shoot the birds, and poison to kill the rodents; and we (the Mrs. and I) succeeded in getting about 200,000 nice little seedlings in that nursery. I was instructed by J. H. Fetherolf to mulch the plants in the fall. This I did with aspen leaves. The following spring I was disheartened to find that most of the seedlings had died from "damping off". Well, we learned by experience that nursery work was not for any one who could not be around every day to look after the plants. Some of the Engelmann spruce 1-1 seedlings I planted in Joe's Valley Canyon, each one by the stump where a sawmill operator had cut the trees several years before. These little trees were doing well when I was transferred to the Cache Forest, but when I came back to the Manti as Forest Supervisor I could not find a single living tree as the result of the planting.

The Manti Forest was three years old at the time of my appointment. However, Manti Canyon, from which the forest received its name, was under the supervision of Manti City beginning in 1901 and continuing until the people of Manti accepted the supervision of their watershed by the Federal Government. Manti City had paid the cost of range management on their watershed until 1904, when the Forest Service assumed the responsibility.

At the time I entered the Forest Service I had no acquaintance with any part of the forest other than a small part of Twelve Mile Canyon where I went to a sawmill with my father. This was in 1869, and I had the pleasure of helping Will Gribble drive oxen skidding logs. Gribble was only nine years old and skidded logs regularly for his father during the summer season. I mention this visit to the Twelve Mile area because of the fact that I had never seen so many chokecherry shrubs and trees as were found there, nor so many very large delphinium plants in large patches. In 1916 in visiting the same areas with Homer Fenn, Assistant Regional Forester in Range Management, and a number of forest supervisors I recall that the chokecherry bushes were showing effects of heavy cattle grazing. Today the same chokecherry has been very heavily grazed -- many of them killed out. I was not surprised at chokecherry being killed on heavily grazed cattle range, since I had seen heavy and even small chokecherry trees killed completely out on the Smith Canyon cattle allotment south of Circleville on the old Sevier Forest.

After coming to the Manti as Forest Supervisor I soon learned the reason for the injury to the chokecherry. Sometime between 1907 and 1910, Sam Pierce was hired to trap the bear that were very numerous in Twelve Mile and adjoining canyons. As I recall, between fifty and one hundred bear were taken out by Mr. Pierce. Prior to that time the bear had kept the cattle out of the high country so that the upper range and the chokecherry had been left very lightly grazed. I also learned that in 1914, on the recommendation of Assistant Regional Forester Homer Fenn, the cattle numbers were increased in the canyon; and slowly but surely the range began to show the effects of too heavy use. The deer also increased so that the reductions in date of entry to the forest, the other reductions in numbers of stock (both cattle and sheep), increase in the area by donation of lands by the cattle owners, and exchanges from cattle to sheep at a two to one ratio still left the allotment too heavily used.

For Manti Canyon the forest records were not too clear. It appears that because of the floods that visited that city, the people had, through some law that was in effect at that time, secured control of their watershed and placed it under the

management of the Manti City Council. This meant the elimination of sheep grazing on the watersheds, at least within a distance of seven miles from the intake of the city's water supply. The distance was by section lines, or, in other words, "air line". This law was enforced in various parts of Utah, principally to eliminate sheep grazing; and, while the law did not specifically prohibit sheep only from grazing, the law was so worded that sheep were eliminated from the range because of their grazing in bands. Cattle, on the other hand, grazed singly, or at least not in droves. I refer to this since I found in the history of grazing in Manti Canyon that after the sheep had been excluded from the range 1,329 cattle were permitted in 1904, and 1,550 cattle and horses were authorized to graze in Manti Canyon in 1906. A fence was constructed across the canyon below the Forks, and a herder was employed to look after the stock and see that numbers did not exceed the allotment. Wallace Riddle was the herder. Later he became a Forest Supervisor of the Powell Forest. In 1907 the allotment was reduced to 867 cattle and horses, and in 1909 to 509 cattle and horses. (Perhaps this reduction was due to the fact that the owners did not fill the allotment to that unit.) In 1913 there were only 456 cattle and horses permitted — just why I could not learn. In 1919 it was increased to 922, and Ephraim permittees were allowed a drift of 350 cattle into the head of Manti Canyon.

It is significant that no damaging floods have ever occurred in that canyon since it was placed under Forest Service management in 1904. The flood situation in Manti Canyon, as I was able to gather from the meager records available, had its beginning in the early settlement of Manti. In 1834 a fisherman left his campfire burning and went fishing. The wind came up and blew sparks into the timber, and we lost a lot of range and timber. That fire was known as the "Burnt Hill Fire". Several hundred thousand feet of good Douglas fir timber went up in smoke at that time.

The exchange from cattle to sheep on the Ephraim range practically eliminated the 350 head of cattle drift into Manti Canyon, which was allowed only after the Manti cattle were permitted on the upper range — I believe August 1st. With regard to the flood situation from Manti Canyon, I am at a loss to explain why there have been no serious floods in that canyon during the past forty-five or fifty years. Last fall I noticed where they were digging trenches in all parts of the city that there were many large boulders from the surface down as deep as the excavation reached, indicating that the alluvial fan on which the city stands has been built up not from the deposit of the high spring runoff alone but also from floods from time immemorial. Perhaps I should mention that there was a small flood that got out onto the street — I believe it was in the late thirties. This was not due to the channel not being able to carry the water, but because of the fact that some resident had built up a barrier under the covered channel east of the bank in order to get the waste water from the creek onto his garden. This diversion dam diverted the water from the channel out onto the street, and two basements were filled with water.

As mentioned before, I was assigned as an Assistant Forest Ranger to District #2, Manti National Forest, in 1906. This district included the watershed of the Cottonwood Creek, with the exception of Beebe Canyon north of Patten's Canyon. It also included the upper drainage of Huntington Creek off the north side of East Mountain as far north as Binda Canyon, and down to the "Breaks" on East Mountain. The Rock Canyon drainage into Cottonwood was also a part of the district.

The south part of Trail Mountain, Straight Canyon, and the north part of the North Horn, besides a part of Lower Joe's Valley were not within the forest. In 1906,

my first year on the Manti, we had a very favorable season, lots of snow on the higher range, and opportune storms throughout the summer on all parts of the range. The result was that the range appeared to have made a quick comeback. Everyone mentioned how the Forest Service had saved the ranges. Notwithstanding the favorable year there was little grass for saddle horses when you got above the coarse grass zone. I must say, however, that 1906 witnessed the heaviest growth of vegetation that I ever saw in all the years I was on the Manti — veratrum, larkspur, fireweed, elders, etc. Lupine on the lower ranges were up to your stirrups.

In 1906, Hort Hortensen of Hayfield lambed a herd of sheep on the North Horn on the range off the forest, and Lawrence Lowery summered a dry herd on the same range and the area in Lower Joe's Valley that was outside of the forest boundary. In fact, he summered a herd of dries on that same range for two or three years — I believe 1906, 1907, 1908.

In 1906, and perhaps in 1907, ewes and lambs were counted. I have forgotten the system used. Something like two ewes and their lambs were counted as three sheep. In 1907, Ranger Williams, who was afraid to cross Ferron Creek and its tributaries to get over as far as his district extended (which was Wagon Road Ridge), induced me to take over the range as far south as the creek south of Trail Ridge. I accepted the additional range as I only had to take three herds of sheep on that range, and since the area was capable of caring for five herds this would give me room for two additional herds that my district would not take care of. That was the year that individual allotments were made for all herds on the Manti Forest. Up to that time herds moved around where they thought the feed was better.

Individual allotments worked out fine to start with. Flock owners — many of them at least — had outside range on which they could hold their sheep later or to which they could return before the end of the season if the feed became short on their allotment. This private range went into other hands through homestead, scrip purchase, or other plans. This left the permittees out on a limb. They immediately came back and demanded more range to care for their stock for the full grazing season. They said that they had paid the same fee as others who now had range to carry their stock for the full grazing period. This situation necessitated shifting numbers between allotments, or in overgrazing those particular allotments. In 1913, I believe it was, an addition was made to the forest in Hills Canyon. This area had been used as lambing range and also for summering dry sheep for short periods. When the area was added to the forest these users came in and claimed preferences because of prior use for some 2,000 head of sheep for the full summer season. Some of them also were given lambing preference for all or part of their stock. In fact, lambing preferences were given, perhaps because of prior use of the range in this addition, for more than the range would support for lambing only. As a result, 2,000 sheep were shoved over on the summer range where I had made the individual allotments in 1907; and you know what the result would be. When I came to the Manti as Supervisor, I was told by permittees that these permits for 2,000 sheep were not as good as the permits that were secured under original prior use. I took the matter up with the Regional Office and tried to get permission to straighten the situation up by applying reductions to the permittees who had secured permits in that way to the actual carrying capacity of the Hills Canyon addition. Because of the elapse of six years time since the action was taken I was not allowed to make that fair and equitable adjustment which, had it been done, would have given full relief on about ten full sheep allotments.

On East Mountain and other areas coal lands went to patent and the owners of the lands, of course, wanted the grazing rights to the surface areas. About half of

the Gantry Mountain, about 1,200 acres in Farron Canyon, 400 acres on the Horn Mountain, and some lands in Quitchupah went into private ownership. These lands had all been used by forest grazing permittees. All these changes kept the local officers — yes, and many of the Regional Office — guessing what to do next. Then came the increase in deer and elk on the forest ranges. Except for winter range areas there was not too much complaint about the deer. One stock man said that "He did not give a damn for the deer, as a hard winter would come on and kill most of them off, but the ~~small~~ ~~big~~ elk would live and kill the range and starve the cattle and their owners.

Referring again to the grazing on the Manti, I find in my notes a statement to the effect that up until 1938 the total reductions in permitted sheep on the Manti Forest amounted to 30% after deducting the increase in sheep permits due to exchanges from cattle to sheep. Perhaps I should mention here that because of exchanges from cattle to sheep the preference for both cattle and sheep became much more sought after and were worth more money. Here on the Ephraim allotment, before exchanges were made at a three sheep for one cattle and horse permit ratio, many cattle owners had dropped their permits as valueless. Sheep preferences were worth \$5 per head, so that when exchanges were allowed value of cattle and horse preferences automatically jumped to \$15 per head. Later, when sheep and goat preferences went up to \$12 per head, cattle and horse preferences went up to \$36; and the last year or two of high priced beef, permits cannot be bought at any price.

Up to 1938 the allotment of cattle and horses had been reduced 35%. However, if the number exchanged for sheep is deducted, the reductions in cattle and horses amount to only 10%. The greatest reduction in cattle and horse use of the Manti Forest has been in the shortening of the date of entry of the stock on most districts from an opening date of April 15 to as late on some units as June 15 and on all units not less than thirty days. In 1919 there were 1,561 cattle and horse permittees on the Manti; in 1938 there were only 852. In Manti Canyon there were 70 cattle and horse permittees in 1919, while in 1938 there were only 42. There were 624 sheep and goat permittees on the Manti in 1919, while in 1938 there were 600 permittees.

We thought for many years that we were reasonably safe from forest fires on the Manti Forest. However, when dry grass and other vegetation accumulated and we had a winter with very little snow followed by a spring and summer of lots of wind, everything was favorable for a real conflagration and that was what happened. Huntington people maintained that lightning started the fire. Sheepsman up west of where the fire started claimed that there had been no clouds or storm. I believe if I could have gone to the fire I could have prevented it from getting away the first night. I was on my way to the fire in the afternoon when I met Assistant Regional Forester Winkler and Mr. Bachford of the Huntington Office; and they insisted on me accompanying them down to Redview where they had an appointment with Burns Cox on definite instructions from the Secretary of Agriculture. I called Ranger Thursby at Mr. Winkler's suggestion, and because of his experience on fires I put him in charge of the fire. He arrived too late to make a personal inspection of the area, which was hedges and very steep terrain. He was assured by the guard (Lee Young) that the fire was under control. The following morning the terrific winds undoubtedly fanned some smoldering spot fires into flames, and the fire ran for three miles before it was stopped by natural barriers and the work of the fire fighters that were on the job.

Another fire happened in Birch Creek. The farmers who were building a diversion dam on Birch Creek three miles below the forest boundary left the oak brush and

other material that was cleared from the area where they were building the dam burning when they left. They knew there was no coulfer timber to be burned if the fire got away. This fire smouldered for a few days. I called the water users and advised them to go and put out their fire as everything was so dry. They only laughed at me and asked me how I thought a fire could burn there in that particular area. They were told that they would be responsible if the fire got away. A day or two later, while I was at the C.C.C. camp in Gooseberry, a great smoke came up and within twenty minutes from the time the smoke was visible we had fifty men down on the boundary in head of the fire; but we could do nothing as the fire -- believe it or not -- was crowning in oak, aspen and other shrubbery. Even red elderberry shrubs were burned to the ground. I saw live aspen trees on fire, burning briskly, started from sparks in the dry knots twenty feet above the ground. This fire was not stopped until it had reached the closely grazed areas near the top of the mountain.

There was a time when the Hanti Forest timber sale receipts were greater than any forest in Region 4. The sales were for mine props from areas that had been burned over before the forest was placed under Government supervision. Our sales for mine props were very good; and the prices after I came to the Hanti as Supervisor in 1919, as I recall, were from 1 1/2¢ to 4¢ per linear foot. The Uinta Forest broke up the Hanti prop business by selling green Douglas fir and lodge pole props for about half of what we were selling Alpine fir and green and dead prop material. Well, it is all in a lifetime. Following the Huntington Canyon fire we had a lot of props to sell; however, it was so difficult to get out that we never realized much for the timber.

There were very few roads on the forest in 1906. There was a road to every small operating on the forest. There had been roads to all the old mill sets, but falling trees had closed them or the runoff down the old roads had gullied them so badly that many of them could scarcely be used as horse trails.

In conclusion let me say that this is a hastily written memorandum with but little reference to any notes I have on the subject.