

Grazing—Past and Present in my Locality

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IMAGINE yourself viewing this dramatic picture in the year 1929, one mile north of a prosperous western cattle ranch: A well-dressed cattle man is talking to a camp tender standing at the camp watching his boss's sheep, which are grazing for miles around on this beautiful ranch—two herds consisting of 4,000 head. You hear the cattle man say, "When are you moving on?" The tender says, "No speak English." The rancher says, "This is the second time I have told you to leave. You have been here for a week. Now I mean it! Move on! Get out of here!" The tender replies, "No speak English." Turning away, the cattle man states "You'll be arrested!" The tender replies, "No speak English."

The rancher immediately calls the Sheriff who says he will be out as soon as possible. In the meantime, the Sheriff contacts the owner of the sheep, who lives in another state. A week passes before the authorities take any direct action to remove the sheep. When they finally do, the sheep man gladly pays the \$200 fine for violating the law which prohibits anyone from grazing livestock within one mile of a spring. He has had 15 days grazing for 4,000 head of sheep at a cost of only \$200.

This incident happened year after year, until the rancher was provoked into using his horse whip on a camp tender, who for weeks had postponed his departure by the phrase, "No speak English." This white sage flat was used by the cattle rancher for spring grazing and calving. The feud between this rancher and the sheep men almost led to murder, many times.

County, state and federal officials

were very much aware of the fact that something had to be done. In 1930, Henry Wallace, later Secretary of Agriculture under Pres. Roosevelt, published an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* on "The Western Open Ranges." His was the first suggestion for federal control.

In 1934, Senator Taylor from Wyoming, and Senator Isaacs from

NEVADA CONTEST WINNER

This article won first place in an essay contest sponsored in 1954 by the Nevada Section of the Society for high school students. The contest topic was "Grazing—Past and Present in My Locality".

Idaho proposed the bill which is now called the Taylor Grazing Act. Its purpose was "to stop injury to the public grazing lands by preventing overgrazing and soil deterioration; to provide for their orderly use, improvement and development; to stabilize the livestock industry dependent upon the public range."

In 1936, my dad was running cattle in what is now White River and Cave Valley units of Taylor Grazing District #4. The area was crowded with 30,000 and 40,000 out-of-state sheep every winter. Naturally, the cattle were suffering. My dad talked with other cattle men and encouraged and urged them to join us in petitioning to be taken into the Taylor Grazing District #4. We were accepted. We realized that this wasn't exactly what we wanted; nevertheless many sheep were eliminated

from this area and very quickly. However, the shoe started to pinch us. It was seven or eight years after the act had become a law, that all livestock owners in District #4 were called into an important meeting.

My mother was representing the Murry Whipple Estate at the meeting. She, with all the other livestock owners, was amazed at the statistical data of every individual spread, mapped in full scale on a large wall. For several years prior to this meeting, qualified government officials had quietly gone about the district making a survey of facts. They got information from the county auditor, clerk and assessor's offices, and they actually lived on and studied the open range.

Much of this information led to protests and heavy arguments—even to the pulling of coats in the meetings. However, democracy proved invulnerable—people could disagree without becoming enemies. There were many, many hearings and protests, but eventually a ten-year permit was granted to users of the range. Each year a group of officers would be elected to a governing grazing board known as the Advisory Board of the district. Much power lies in their hands. The board would comprise representatives of sheep and cattlemen from the sub-divisions within the district. The grazier would sit as a member of the board, with no power to vote, but could act with a veto. Each permittee must make application for a designated pattern on which to run each year. He must pay a grazing fee for cattle and sheep. Each permit is measured in terms of A. U. M.'s or animal unit months. The amount of A. U. M.'s owned was broken into seasonal use in percentages.

All this government control was aggravating to men who had operated with a free hand heretofore.

But something had to be done, and the livestock men agreed that although government control had a long way to go before perfection, it had bettered the situation.

Range control in this locality has been a gradual process. At first, only people who desired and petitioned for it were placed under Taylor Grazing. Some in, and some out, did not prove successful, however, so the government took a firm hand. They demanded that every owner of water rights or operator on open range belong to Taylor Grazing or take a rental lease on the open range. There was much adverse reaction, but it was a government demand.

At first, our area—just north of Hiko and the Coal Valley area, with a line extending northeast of Hiko to the six mile area—belonged to Taylor Grazing. After the new law, "Taylor Grazing—or lease", all the range south of Hiko was admitted and designated as Grazing District #5. The offices for this district were located at Las Vegas. Immediately, range development progressed: The expenses were

shared equally between the government and the permittees. Many water holes, wells, reservoirs and pipe lines were installed. Brushing, reseeding and fencing followed. There was a real program of utilization and progression in these first years.

Everything with the sheepmen and cattlemen went smoothly till the drought of 1952-53—then the common expression "old dog eat dog" was recognized everywhere. The government, however, came to the rescue of livestock owners with the drought feeding program.

The Bureau of Land Management in District #4 has used the funds of grazing fees collected from its district for improvements within the district. This improvement program, aided by private contributions from licensed livestock operators, has been carried on since June 30, 1953, with extensive range reseeding and fencing. One 6,800 acre field, which formerly supported big sage and other low-value livestock feed, has been plowed, seeded and fenced. Other benefits have been carried out on a

regular program basis such as: cattleguard construction, spring developments, reservoir construction and construction of water spreader systems.

A twelve-year range conservation and improvement plan has been formulated for different sections of Grazing District #4. The plan has been worked out with the U. S. Soil Conservation Service for the planning and treatment of private lands located within the 637,000-acre major portion of the watershed. Also, private allotments are being worked out. My brother and I are young, but we look forward to reaping the benefits of our grazing and soil conservation practices.

In the past, our forefathers reaped all the value from the free, open ranges, but due to the abuse of overgrazing and climatic conditions, government range management became a necessity. Many problems arose by its acquisition, but government control, which at first horrified the free operator, has the prospect of beginning the "Golden Age" of grazing in my locality.

PHOTOGRAPH CONTEST

Eighth Annual Meeting of the American Society of Range Management

San Jose, California, January 25-28, 1955

Members of the Society may enter photographs that they have taken under any of the following six classes:

1. Range types.
2. Range condition (including fence line scenes).
3. Individual plants.
4. Seeded ranges.
5. Grazing scenes showing utilization of particular range plants by livestock or wild life.
6. Color pictures.

The first five classes are for black and white photographs, 8 by 10 inches or larger, with non-glossy surface. The color prints should be 3 by 4 inches or larger. All entries should be mounted with borders at least 3 inches wide, but without

frames. A description, 50 words or less in length, typed on a separate sheet should be attached to the photo mount to be visible. Also, the contestant's name and address should be attached but not visible to the voters until after the competition.

Entries will be numbered and voted upon by members attending the meeting to determine three highest placing within each class and three highest for the entire exhibit.

Photographs are to be taken to and from the display booth by the contestant or someone he has designated who attends the meeting. An individual may have a maximum of six entries.—*Donald R. Cornelius*, Chairman, Displays and Contests Committee.