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The Forest Service

Will C. Barnes, Ass't Forester

Early in 1896 the Arizona papers carried some press reports to the effect that the President had designated certain areas in the west as Forest Reserves, some of them located in the timbered areas of northern Arizona. The news created but languid interest among Arizonians. Washington was several thousand miles to the east, many of them had scudded for the mountains with the Apaches, and all were filled with the old pioneer spirit of discovery and ownership. We were in possession. Why worry?

Later on there appeared upon the scene a so-called forest ranger, who advised us that the government looked upon grazing of livestock in the timbered mountains as injurious to the trees and watershed and that sheep especially were to be excluded and mebbeso cattle. How the stockmen did snort over this idea! The ranger called on the stockmen to furnish him with the number of sheep or cattle we had been grazing on the mountain ranges, how long we had used them, how much land we owned and where located, and various other inquiries of similar import. To all of these we were inclined to reply that it was none of his blankety blank business, etc., etc. Some did make such reply in loud coarse voices and with ily concealed disrespect for the ranger's
authority. If the ranger had not been an ex-cow puncher whom we all knew there surely would have been a movement to hang him; in fact in those days a forest ranger was certainly persona non grata to the majority of stockmen in the western range states.

Then followed a year or two of wrangling over the removal of the stock. Those fellows back in Washington seemed really to mean what they said. In 1897 came orders that pending a decision each stockman must procure a permit covering every head of stock he was grazing on these sacred areas. What those western stockmen said about this proposition was a plenty. There was no question whatever in their minds about the need of a hanging festival with several forest rangers in the title roles. Cooler heads prevailed, however, and most of them secured their permits in due time. Those that didn't lived to regret it.

Some time during the year 1900 there appeared in the mountains of northern Arizona two long, lean, clean cut young fellows who were immediately spotted as scientists ("bug hunters") by the local people. They turned out to be government men from Washington. Their official mail came addressed to Gifford Pinchot and Frederick V. Coville. They tramped over the mountains, measuring trees, taking photographs, gathering specimens of plants and flowers, watching the stock graze, talking to the stockmen, and altogether deporting themselves according to the conception the average western man had at that time of a government scientist. They seemed perfectly harmless, however, and comparatively little attention was paid to their actions. Coville, we learned, had previously spent a couple of years studying sheep and cattle grazing in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon and Washington. Eventually we heard they had advised the Washington authorities that a reasonable amount of cattle grazing was comparatively harmless to the forests in Arizona, but that sheep should be carefully watched, and kept from some areas entirely and limited on others. This policy was put into effect by a Land Office circular of November 6, 1900. The sheep men fought this idea vigorously but made no great headway against it. The situation, however, was irritating to the stock interests and they appealed to Congress to help them out. We talked brilliantly about our inalienable right as American citizens to use the public lands when, where and how we pleased, but made precious little impression on Congress, or anybody else.

The final blow-up came, however, when in 1905 the announcement was made that the Government was going to
charge fees for the livestock using the forest areas. This fairly took our breath away. Wow! How we did go on! The plan was resurrected for hanging all forest officers, regardless of their personal charm. It seemed the most satisfactory means of settling the controversy and the method was talked about very freely wherever a few western stockmen got together.

Meantime, in 1905 an act of Congress took the Forestry Bureau from the General Land Office in the Interior Department and placed it in the Department of Agriculture. Gifford Pinchot was put at the head of the new Forest Service, which took the place of the old Bureau of Forestry. Some of us Arizona cow persons who had talked with him on the ranges saw light ahead. Pinchot really seemed almost human we agreed.

As they began to get better acquainted with and learned something of the plans of the Forest men for handling the forest areas, the more level headed of the stockman realized that there was more in the idea of injury to the young timber and also to the watersheds by heavy grazing than we had previously cared to admit.

Also we realized, but hated mightily to admit it, that the ranges had been seriously damaged and that the grasses had not been given a fair chance for their lives, with the result that the carrying capacity of the ranges was steadily growing less and that we were the heaviest losers. It had been obvious for some years that the stockmen themselves could not regulate their affairs on the range in any satisfactory manner. Hence the intervention of the Government officials who had the power to lay down certain rules for the use of the range rather appealed to many who believed it was bound to react for the good of the industry and give the stock business a stability and permanence that could be secured in no other way.

Mr. Pinchot went to Arizona and coaxed Albert F. Potter, a young stockman who knew the range business from one end to the other, also he had good judgment and common sense plus, to come to Washington as his Chief of Grazing, a wonderfully wise choice. Potter had "run" both cattle and sheep, a rare thing then.

In those days forest rangers were mostly cowpunchers, sheep herders, lumberjacks, and the like, local men whom we knew well. They understood the west and its people, knew the livestock business from the ground up. They had very little practical knowledge of forestry or the effects of overgrazing on watersheds, but were admirably suited in
every way as pioneers in paving the way, so to speak, for a later class of men educated and trained for the work who have followed them and to a large extent have taken the places of the old timers on the ranges, in the lumber camps, and in general administration of the Forests throughout the west. The old timers were able to stand an examination as to their ability in riding a bucking horse, throwing the diamond hitch, shoe a pack mule or a horse, finding their way through the timber back to camp of a dark night, rounding up a bunch of wild horses, cutting cattle out of the roundups, or handling a lambing camp. However, on the technical, professional side of their job the early rangers were sadly lacking. They didn't know whether cambium was a new breakfast food or a patent medicine. The whole world was veritably covered with trees, why worry about any more? Today their places are being filled gradually by young fellows, graduates of the forestry schools, agricultural colleges, and such educational institutions, where they have secured a thorough knowledge of the fundamentals of forestry, in-
cluding botany which is a prime requisite for the grazing work to which many of them turn their attention after they enter the Forest Service. These boys who are now coming to us from the forest schools may know comparatively little about the diamond hitch, the merits of a double rig as against a single rig saddle, how to make sour dough bread, rope a calf or dip sheep. On the other hand, however, they know all about trees, plants and their forage values, the effect of erosion on denuded mountain sides and such matters, and what they lack of practical range experience can be secured as apprentices right on the ground under the keen

The present day type of forest ranger. The forest uniform is worn generally by everyone in the field and by the majority of those in the offices.
eye and friendly guidance of a competent experienced forest ranger.

The class of men now being turned out from colleges such as Ames, has raised the character of our work and our men tremendously within the last few years. This is especially true as regards the grazing side of our work. We are more and more depending upon the trained technical man for solution of the problems which the old timers worked out in rather a hit and miss way through their practical knowledge of the stock raising business. Not infrequently our practical plans are proven correct when tested by scientific technical methods. These early methods were all right in their time, but with the present tremendous demand for grazing on all of the National Forests which we are wholly unable to meet, the new and more exact methods are bound to show definite results in increasing the numbers of stock on the ranges, lessening the injury to ranges through overgrazing, and at the same time secure a better satisfied lot of stock men using the National Forests.

The possibility for advancement in the Forest Service for young men graduating from Colleges like Ames was never better than it is today. They come to us full of pep and enthusiasm for their work in the forests and grow to be immensely proud of their jobs and the little bronze ranger badge we all wear.