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LOLO FOREST ISSUE

FOREWORD

A Forest's standing in a community is gauged by sym-

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E. G. Kyrle

THE POWELL DISTRICT

By Ranger Ed McKay

White men's first visit of record to the Powell District was made by the Lewis and Clark expedition, 131 years ago. The expedition crossed the Divide September 13, 1805, and the following day moved westward to camp overnight where the Powell Ranger Station now stands. They climbed from the Lochsa River north to the old Lolo trail September 15, and found year-long snowbanks on the north slopes. On their eastbound journey the following June 29, they found the snow seven to nine feet deep on the Divide. Climatic conditions have changed considerably since then; now the fire season is beginning at that time.

No game was found in the area, the party having to kill a colt for food at Powell camp. Civilization's advance has crowded the game back to the extent that last winter's count showed 1,800 elk, 90 moose, and a few deer in the district. The average annual kill by hunters is 187 animals.

Fur worth thousands of dollars has been taken from the Powell District in the last 40 years. The area has been trapped regularly for as long as man can remember. Several creeks, ridges and peaks, as well as the Powell Station, are named in memory of oldtime trappers. Milton Savage, Tom Beall, Charlie Powell, Frank Kube, Jerry Johnson, Rhodes and Williams, are some of the men who spent many long winters on the trap lines.

Surveys following the Lochsa Canyon have been made by three railroads. The Northern Pacific and Union Pacific waged a bitter contest in 1905 and 1906, each trying for right-of-way priority. The Northern Pacific started construction at various places along Lolo Creek. The Union Pacific finally gave up, and neither line was built. The Milwaukee Railroad made its survey in 1908, but gave it up in favor of the Coeur d'Alene line.

Until 1934, the Powell District was part of the old Selway Forest, administered by the Lolo for many years because it was more accessible from Montana. Pack trains supplied the area from the end of the road at Lolo Hot Springs. When I first arrived on the district, three lookouts were the maximum protection force. Only one had telephone communication. Six days were required for the round-trip by pack train to the farthest outlying point. Twenty regular lookouts are now in place.

Construction of the Lewis and Clark highway began at Lolo Hot Springs in the fall of 1923. The first automobile arrived at Powell September 27, 1928. Construction of motorways began in August 1930, and now their mileage totals 138. A motorway extends along the old Lolo Trail from Powell to Orofino, passing many places of historical interest which should be preserved: Lewis and Clark's camps, General Howard's camps and Indian Post-office are some.

Before the improvement boom in the back areas, many difficulties with pack-mule transportation were encountered. Crossing the Divide in spring was fine if the crusted snow supported the mules; if not, there was lots of trouble. In the spring of 1921, Elk Summit was to be supplied by

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way of Powell. Bill Bell was ranger at Elk Summit. We arrived at White Sand Ford the night of June 2, to find a torrent of white water 210 feet wide, impossible to ford. We had anticipated this, and had taken along some used cable from the elevator of the Montana Building at Missoula. Camp was made, and the following morning we stretched the cable across the river over a couple of tree stumps, tightened it with a roller and two crowbars, made a raft of cedar logs, and crossed, one mule at a time. After two days of tugging and pulling, 31 head of stock with packs and equipment were ferried and Bill continued on his way.

A large steel bridge now spans the stream and many automobiles cross it daily.

Construction of the Lewis and Clark highway is continuing from the west and some day we may be able to ride through the canyon on rubber tires.

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WHAT DEVELOPMENT

By Jack Clack

When I joined the Forest Service on April 1, 1907, the Lewis and Clark (South) National Forest included practically all of the present Seeley Lake Ranger District, the southern boundary of the Forest from the North Fork of the Blackfoot River to Seeley Lake being the same as at present, but from Seeley Lake the boundary continued due east to the Indian Reservation.

My first ranger district included the North Fork of the Blackfoot from the Kleinsmith Flat to the head of the stream. When I hear of Bob Johnson making a trip to Big Prairie in less than an hour, it brings up memories of my first trip into that country.

When I received my appointment as deputy ranger, I was sent to Lubec to help Ranger Virgil Woods build fences. I worked with Woods until April 17, when Supervisor Bunker told me to start for my own district. My first job was to build a trail from Black Bear Station north. A crew of guards had been ordered to meet me there. The Supervisor also told me that it was impossible to cross Marias Pass with horses, so I would have to go by the way of Choteau, Augusta and the Lewis and Clark Pass.

I left Lubec the morning of April 18, with a saddle horse and two pack horses. I reached Choteau on the night of April 21. I camped at a ranch on the Teton, and the next morning was faced by a howling blizzard that lasted two days. I left Choteau the morning of April 24, and on the 26th I camped at the Elk Creek Station with Ranger and Mrs. Ed Schoonover. On April 28, I crossed the Lewis and Clark Pass and camped at the Patterson ranch on Alice Creek, and on May 2, I started up the North Fork of the Blackfoot, having finally reached the border of my district. I found the snow deep at Cooper's Lake and along McDermott Creek. As I tried to progress up the river I found the snow much deeper and at a point where the trail followed a steep hillside, I could go no further - the trail was under three feet of snow.