

Bert C. Buffum—Pioneer Range Manager¹

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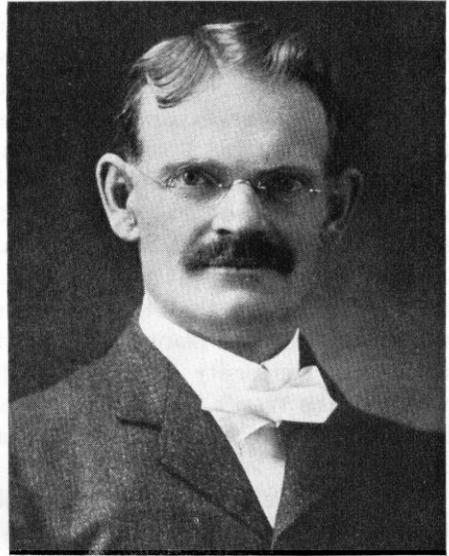
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THE present study of range management is the outgrowth of the interests of many early non-specialized agriculturalists who worked on its problems before the science was known by its present name. In an earlier article (Beetle, 1951) the contributions of P. B. Kennedy were discussed. Another of these men was Bert C. Buffum. (C. did not stand for a middle name.)

Buffum was born in South Bend, Indiana, April 7, 1868, but according to his own word, it was his father "who brought me to the Mountain Region at a tender age—who was father and mother to his boys, cook, discoverer, philosopher—who developed an irrigated stock ranch from the native wild—who fought and conquered all the hardships of the pioneer—who, though an invalid, gave no thought for himself, but put forth untold effort to supply me with every educational advantage the West afforded at the time." The Colorado family ranch was at Buckhorn, 12 miles west of Fort Collins, Colorado. He received his bachelor's degree in agriculture in June, 1890 at the then young Colorado College of Agriculture. Later he received his master's degree there on the basis of the bulletins he wrote for the Wyoming Experiment Station, instead of the usual thesis.

In the first bulletin ever published by the Wyoming Agricultural Experiment Station, Buffum wrote: "One of our most valuable grasses for pasture, the *Buchloe dactyloides* (Buffalo Grass), is being exterminated by civilization. Its patches of matted sod on the plains are, to all ap-

pearances, growing smaller and wider apart. In view of these facts, the study of, and experimentation with, the native grasses, to improve and perpetuate them, is of first importance." (Buffum, 1891; cf. Wyo. Agr. Expt. Sta. Bul. 289: 4. 1949).



BERT C. BUFFUM

In predicting the extinction of buffalo-grass, Buffum was quoting an earlier article by C. E. Bessey of the University of Nebraska and both were incorrect, (Beetle, 1950), but Buffum (1893) followed up his intention of studying native grasses and published another bulletin entitled "Grasses and Forage Plants".

It is for his work at the University of Wyoming that those interested in range management particularly remember him. Although he was not a specialist in any agricultural field, he worked in nearly

¹ Published with approval of the Director, Wyo. Agr. Expt. Sta., as Journal Paper No. 7.

every important phase during his tenure. He was appointed Assistant to the Meteorologist and Irrigation Engineer in 1891, in actuality becoming the Station's first Horticulturist, later also Entomologist. He resigned this position in 1900 to work at Colorado Agricultural College, Fort Collins, Colorado where he was Professor of Agronomy and Animal Husbandry and Director of the Experiment Station. He returned to Wyoming in 1902 to become the Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station and Professor of Agriculture.

In 1892, while Aven Nelson was getting an M.A. degree at Harvard University, Buffum started the collection of plants which Nelson later expanded into the present well known Rocky Mountain Herbarium. This first collection was primarily native grasses and forage plants for a Wyoming exhibit at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. It was under the direction of Buffum that the important research in poisonous plants was inaugurated at the University of Wyoming. He was one of the West's first experts on the alkali problem. (cf. Wyo. Agr. Expt. Sta. Bulletins No. 8, 29, 39).

While at the Colorado Agricultural College, Buffum edited "Agricola Aridus" (1900-1901) published every other month for the six issues of Vol. I. The publication ceased with Vol. II, No. I because "the promotion to an advanced position elsewhere of the individual back of it, leaves the Magazine without a devil, an editor, a business manager, or the necessary financial support to continue." Among the articles published is one telling of the formation of an experimental grass garden at Fort Collins "in which will be planted nearly 100 different grasses." Among these was smooth brome (*Bromus inermis*) which "is very persistent when once started and makes excellent early spring and late fall pasture." Another article

states "Rational agriculture, like a provident man, considers the future fertility of the soil, as well as its present fertility. The power of the soil to produce is quite limited. The inexhaustible fertility of our virgin prairie soil is a myth, a good story to tell to the hesitating immigrant, not a condition with which our readers have to deal. We may reap the present crop, but have to build for the future." Another article deals with the value of barnyard-grass (*Echinochloa crusgalli*).

In 1907 Buffum represented Wyoming at the first Dry Farming Congress, held in January in Denver, Colo. (Buffum, 1907), but soon after resigned from the University of Wyoming staff to head a company he founded called the "Wyoming Plant and Seed Breeding Company" at Worland. There he carried on extensive development work in new and improved grains, notable of which was emmer, which he perfected. Somewhat less than 1,000 acres a year are still grown in Wyoming. He started the Emmer Products Company at Worland to manufacture stock feed and breakfast foods. When the Wyoming Industrial Institute was established at Worland, he was placed on the staff as agricultural director, but carried on his grain development to become one of the best known American authorities, particularly for securing a beardless heavy-yielding black winter emmer wheat. In 1916 Buffum moved the Emmer Products Company to Denver, and he died there March 25, 1944 (Northern Wyoming Daily News, March 31, 1944).

In 1909 Buffum privately published a book entitled "Arid Agriculture", one of the first books to deal with the western type of agriculture. In this book, he treated nearly all phases of the early dryland and irrigated farming, as well as ranching. He discussed the grasses, and grass mixture suitable to the area, and the haying methods of that day. He objected

to the term "dry farming" because "no crop can be produced without moisture."

Buffum founded a magazine named "The Ranchman's Reminder" which gave agricultural information of the type now supplied by the publications of the Extension Service. In this magazine, he presented the new information that was becoming available on the forages such as grasses, hays and other range management problems as well as that in the other agricultural fields.

Although Buffum was not a specialist in range management, he made many notable contributions toward it, not the least of which was a start towards a great deal of interest in that field. Since he entered into every task with zest, all of his work was characterized by initiative, enthusiasm, and imagination. His friend and contemporary, Aven Nelson, named

two western plants for him, a paintbrush *Castilleja buffumi*, and a wild primrose, *Anogra buffumi*.

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BRIEFS

One who is disciplined in the fine art of doubting can never be sure of anything; absolute certainty is the privilege of uneducated minds—and fanatics.—*Anonymous*.



There is no readier way for a man to bring his own worth into question than by endeavoring to detract from the worth of other men.—*John Tillotson*.



He who sees his own faults is too much occupied to see the faults of others.—*Arabic Proverb*.