

# Cooperation Earned An Increase

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My Father and Mother were pioneers in Sumpter Valley. They proved up on a 160-acre homestead in 1906. This place was located on the south side of the valley at the foot of the mountains. I mention this because the open range that was handy was on the north slopes of the mountain, and at that time and until 1936, a large portion of this range was privately owned.

In the early days it was the practice to turn the cattle out without the consent of anyone when the grass greened up in the spring. This method was fine, as in those days there were not many cattle in the valley.

As time progressed and the country increased in both people and livestock, some cattlemen from Baker Valley began trailing in their stock. In some cases one outfit would bring more than the total count of cattle in Sumpter Valley. Nothing was done to prevent this overstocking. I suppose no one knew where to begin.

Then, as the Forest Service grew in stature and began issuing permits, the cattle drives were stopped but the animals were allowed to drift in. The

Forest Service did not have much control over the area we used because most of the 15,000 acres was privately owned. In fact, we were dealing with the Forest Service and two private companies; Hewett Land and Stoddard Lumber.

In the early 1920's, however, this Baker Valley drift was controlled, but we were faced with a worse situation. Burnt River, lying some sixteen miles due south, had also grown to about 2,500 head of permitted stock and another 1,000 unpermitted animals. We began getting large numbers of these cattle into our valley.

This continued until 1928 when we realized that the only solution was to fence. This we did at our own expense. We erected twelve miles of four-wire fence along the south boundary. For the first time we felt that our troubles were over and that only the Sumpter Valley cattle would now use this range.

Then our dreams vanished. The lumber companies began logging and as the Forest Service had no control over private land, our fence was almost completely destroyed. The permittees were

still paying for it by special assessment.

In 1931 the Forest Service acquired title to a great portion of the Oregon Lumber Company land, and as rapidly as possible gained control of this allotment. The district ranger made extensive studies of our range situation. He worked out a management plan with our assistance and for a few years we hired a rider in cooperation with the Burnt River Association. This was some help, but by no means the answer.

By 1936 the Forest Service had enough control that we could think about rebuilding the twelve miles of fence. On February 17, 1936, we had a meeting with the Forest Service to discuss the formation of a new association. We were no longer dealing with any private owner.

I just don't know what happened in 1937, but according to the old minutes we petitioned to form this association March 3, 1938. On the 24th of March 1938, we had our first meeting. All permits were put on an individual basis, and the grazing season set for May 16 to October 31.

Our district ranger got some priority to replace the fence on the south and a small crew of CCC boys started at the east end to build a new four wire fence.

This project moved slowly, but the fence was completed in 1940. The finished project has proved a real success. Now we gather only three to ten strays in the fall—some years none at all. Before the fence was built I have seen 400 to 600 head of foreign cattle, about equal to our permitted number on our range.

When we had again secured our range from trespass, we began thinking about cross fences, and in the spring of 1940 erected a little over three miles of fence. The Forest Service furnished the hardware and the permittees the labor. We fenced about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of our 15,000 acres into an early pasture. At first we put all the cattle in this one pasture for about six weeks. This worked very well for a time as the higher country and also this fenced area seemed to hold their own. I think from 1940 until 1948 our entire range was on the up trend. After 1948 we began having lighter snow and rainfall, but we had our range fenced, so thought the situation would adjust.

Our north, east and west boundaries had been fenced for years; the north by Sumpter Valley Railway, the east by private land, and the west with a drift fence between cattle and sheep allotments. By 1948 three miles of the old drift fence had to be rebuilt. The Association built one-half and the Forest Service the other. Also, in 1948 we had to buy three miles of fence (which had to be rebuilt in the fall of 1954) from the Sumpter Valley Railway.

I am going to skip the period from 1948 to 1954. I guess, to be honest, and I hate to admit it, we were all sleeping during this time. Anyway, in the fall of 1954, with the Forest Service, we made a horseback inspection of the range. For the first time we realized just how soundly we had been sleeping. Our range was a pretty sad sight, due to the old damage of overstocking by drift and logging operations,

along with several years of light moisture.

In the spring of 1955 at our annual meeting with the Forest Service, we were offered an additional 15,000 acres of sheep range that had been in non-use for five years, provided we would fence and maintain it at our own expense. This we agreed to do. At the time we had no assurance that we would ever be granted an increase.

For years 450 head of cattle were permitted on our old range. This allowed  $33\frac{1}{3}$  acres per head for a five-month season. With the addition of a new range, the Camp Creek allotment, the acreage was doubled to  $66\frac{2}{3}$  acres per head.

In June of 1955 we built one and one-half miles of fence on Camp Creek to control the major drift of our cattle to an adjoining allotment. We also installed one cattle guard and developed seven ponds. In July we put 250 head on this range, which was fifteen miles from headquarters. Our old Dean Creek allotment was almost in our back yard. This move relieved Dean Creek of some of the grazing pressure. We also built three more miles of cross fence on Dean Creek, thus putting our old range into three units.

We estimated in the beginning that it would take sixteen miles of fence to enclose Camp Creek but there was a five mile error in that estimate. By late fall, 1958, we had the 15,000 acres fenced. We also had two cross fences of some three miles each, plus one and one-tenth miles of fence for a holding pasture for the fall gather. With the cross fence on Dean Creek and some old fence that we rebuilt, it all added up to thirty-two miles and four cattle guards.

We used 452 spools of wire and 25 kegs each of nails and staples. When one sees that much hardware in one pile it is a pretty sizable-looking project. But the finished project is a joy to be-

hold. Our entire fence on Camp Creek is all rock-jack and figure four construction. There is a jeep road around the outside and along the cross fences to make maintenance much easier.

In 1956 and 1957 we put 75 percent of the cattle on Camp Creek. In 1958 we divided them equally between Camp Creek and Dean Creek. We were on the way to our original goal, rest-rotation grazing.

Since the completion of the fences, it has been our practice to defer one unit each year on each allotment. The results are very gratifying. The Forest Service has several transects on each range. They read these on approximately the same dates each year and by so doing have taken the guess work out of range appraisal. Rest-rotation grazing has improved range condition on every study plot. I believe that if we had practiced this method of grazing, beginning in the early 1930's, Dean Creek would have carried the 450 head without the addition of Camp Creek.

All this fencing cost approximately \$8,500. That doesn't include a lot of ignorant labor by the permittees, nor does it include depreciation on the jeeps and cats that were used. I imagine that the overall cost was nearly \$10,000.

Since we have our two allotments divided into three units each, it is possible to defer one unit for two years should any sore spots develop. The Forest Service has been very cooperative, not only in advice but by seeding some logging roads. In October of this year they fertilized and seeded two hundred acres on Camp Creek. This two hundred acres is on a poor type of soil, so we are all anxious to see the result of fertilization. Of course, the unit containing this seeding project will be deferred for one and maybe two years.

We now have complete control over our range, with the exception of large herds of deer and

elk. They concentrate each year on deferred units. In some cases they take fifty percent of the forage, but maybe there is a bright spot there, as it makes better relations between the sportsmen and the stockmen.

Now for the payoff of our labors. Since we have been in a position to practice rest-rotation grazing, our calves are forty pounds heavier and our cows are carrying much more flesh in the fall. To go back to the above mentioned cost of fencing; forty pounds a calf on four hundred calves adds up to 16,000 pounds at twenty-five cents a pound, or \$4,000 a year. That, added to the extra flesh the cows are carrying, would probably make \$5,000 a year that we have gained. Therefore, we retired the cost of fencing, water development, etc. in two years. In addition, and I would like to boast a little here, I believe that we are one of the very few associations in Oregon

that was granted a ten percent increase in our grazing permits. This ten percent is temporary, but I am sure that by practicing the present method of grazing it will become preference with perhaps another five or ten percent increase in the next five years. I feel sure that this increase was justified due to the up trend of the ranges. This ten percent increase made us real happy, because, as I mentioned before, we were not assured of any increase when we accepted Camp Creek in 1955.

Range management is an unceasing challenge, as each year you will find where it can be improved. This last October, with the aid of the Forest Service, we installed four metal troughs on Dean Creek at some rather weak springs. If a spring will only water ten head a day it is worth developing. Proper salt distribution is important to overall use of the range. Even with

our ranges being in separate units, I find it pays to occasionally move some cattle into areas that are not being grazed properly. I find that once in a while it also pays to establish a new salt ground to hold them in these areas.

Finally, grass is a great heritage and one of our better natural resources. I feel that it is the obligation of everyone who has the privilege of using our public lands to treat them as he would his own. This becomes more apparent when we look at the increase in our population.

My thought is that we have a great challenge to use and, at the same time, preserve our grass. We all love our nation, our children and grandchildren, so let us bend every effort to leave them their rightful heritage, for there is nothing more pleasing to the eye of a stockman than grass that is high enough to wave in the breeze.

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## A SESQUICENTENNIAL OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Although Federal administration of public rangelands by the Bureau of Land Management is familiar to most ranchers and stockmen of the West, it is one of the youngest of many functions of the Department of the Interior.

More deeply steeped in our national traditions is the broad history of the administration of all types of public lands. And in 1962, it is appropriate to mark the Sesquicentennial of the first organized system of Federal land and resource management as well as the 150th Anniversary of founding the General Land Office. The natal day: April 25, 1812.

Since then, lands of the public domain have been furnishing natural resources to help meet the needs of a nation that has grown from less than 4 million people bunched in 13 States to more than 180 million people widely scattered across the 50 States.

For 150 years, the history of the public domain has been the history of the pioneering and development of our western world. Grazing and raising livestock has been a matter of Governmental concern for many years—particularly during the years of the Grazing Service, and our more active administration of the public rangelands demanded by the Taylor Grazing Act since 1934.

Today, through issuance of grazing permits within districts and of leases on public lands outside such districts, the Bureau of Land Management—successor to the old General Land Office, and the Grazing Service—is vitally interested in every aspect of use of the public rangelands. This includes protecting the productivity of these lands, assuring the best and highest use of available forage, retarding soil erosion and water dissipation, and controlling multiple use of the lands.

In addition, the Bureau of Land Management is continuing surveys and inventories of all major areas of rangelands in the West for purposes of evaluating and classifying the lands for their best and most effective use. Soil and water conservation, mining and mineral leasing, forestry, wildlife, recreation, and other resource uses must be integrated with livestock raising for the greatest benefit of the most Americans.

The multiple-functions of the Bureau of Land Management are geared today to assure the multiple-purpose usage of public rangelands—a considerably diversified expansion of effort compared to the early days of Federal land and resource management 150 years ago: in 1812.