

CENTENNIAL 2011 OCHOCO NF- information

Ochoco National Forest History, #1

The first beginnings of the US Forest Service was due to a last minute rider attached to a non-associated bill before Congress in March of 1891. President T. Roosevelt, unbeknownst to most Congressmen, allowed the federal government to "set apart and reserve...public lands bearing forests...or in part covered by timber or undergrowth, whether of commercial value or not, as public reservations." This rider became known as the Forest Reserve Act. No funding or management was set aside for this rider until 1897 when the Forest Management Act was passed. This later Act gave funding and instructions to the Department of the Interior and the General Land Office, who had largely been ignoring the 1891 Act.

But, there were other reasons why Forest Reserves were created. Clean water in this country was already a concern. GLO agents were instructed to "with first importance, reserve all public lands in mountainous and other regions...at the headwaters of rivers and along the banks of streams." In 1897, the Secretary of the Interior, John Noble, stated that he wanted the reserves to "preserve the fauna, fish, and flora of our country, and become resorts for the people seeking instruction and recreation." Gifford Pinchot, first Chief of the Forest Service, stated that the March 1891 legislation represented the "beginning and basis of our whole National Forest system."

References: *The Origins of the National Forests*, Edited by Harold K. Steen, 1992
Breaking New Ground, Gifford Pinchot, 1947

Book Dedication: "To the men and women of the Forest Service, whose courage, devotion, and intelligence have made it and kept it the best organization in the Government of the United States." G. Pinchot

Ochoco National History, #2

In May of 1925, Ochoco NF Supervisor, Vernon V. Harpham, started *The Ochoconian*, an informal, in-house newsletter by and for the district rangers and fire guards on the Ochoco National Forest. Each month, the men would send in newsy stories of what they were doing and observing in their corner of the Forest. This newsletter lasted until 1932 and today is a gold mine of information regarding the day to day lives of the early Forest Service employees on our Forest. Below are some short *Ochoconian* newsletter stories.

June 1925: "Rangers Congleton, Elder and Blevins just completed 7 ½ miles of telephone line in Summit-Prairie. This line is the last link to be constructed of the Forest Service line connecting Prineville with the Snow Mountain district. With the exception of rain storms, mud up to the axles, and bridge washouts, the work went along in fine shape." Supervisor Harpham

June 1925: "The Central Dispatcher will soon be a part of the Ochoco fire plan. This system of handling fire protection, detection, and suppression work has been tried out on just about every Forest of District (Region) Six for a number of years, and is a system that has come to stay. It has proven itself to be so much of an advantage over the individual Ranger District method of handling fires. Every Forest Officer, therefore, should fall in line." Ibid.

October, 1925: "The Ochoco has become a Mecca for hunters. The fame of our mule deer seems to be known in nearly all parts of the country. We have had as high as 250 hunters in the Forest in one day, in fact, the hunting grounds here have been overrun every day of the season. If this condition continues to exist it is very probable that the mule deer on the Ochoco will go the way of the passenger pigeon." Ibid.

November 1925: "Mr. G.L. Conklin, employed by the Shevlin-Hixon Company, a large sawmill operation of Bend, is making his headquarters at the Ochoco Ranger Station while he looks over the timber land in the Horse Heaven, Ochoco and Marks Creek watersheds." Ibid.

January 1926: "Ye Supervisor is doomed for another journey to Pendleton for the annual meeting of the Oregon Woolgrowers which starts January 21 and lasts for three days. I intend to take along a tally register so as to get an accurate count on the "cussings" that the Forest Service will get from those sheepmen who do not agree in a 100% way with our range appraisal figures." Supervisor Harpham

April 1926: "There will be no sheep permitted on the Lookout-Pisgah District this season. This will be a happy lonesomeness – possibly I will find a little time to fight fire, etc, out of time formerly used in keeping sheep and cattlemen from cutting each other's throats." Ranger Lee Blevins

From The Ochoconian newsletter:

June, 1926: "Bert Tolladay and I have been on a trip over the Black Canyon trail. We took pack horses, axes, saw, TNT, caps, and fuses, and as a result the rocks, logs and brush have disappeared from that much traveled thoroughfare. We will probably get called for drifting back into the "good old day of 1907", for as I stated we had packhorses along and when noon came we nooned, and when night came we nighted. The old way is still the best. We advocate bedding out now as never before." Ranger Charles Congleton, Beaver Creek (Paulina) RD

August, 1926: "All fires are out or at least under control, and the person responsible for the 85 acre Cherry Creek fire was taken before Justice Turner at Madras and was parted with twenty-five dollars plus costs as an inducement toward being more careful with matches and smokes in the future." Ranger J.O.F. Anderson, Mill Creek RD

March, 1927: "It is with much regret that we must officially say good bye to Ranger Congleton on June 15 when he severs his connections with Uncle Sam. He is one of the "old timers" in the Forest Service having been on the job continuously for more than twenty years. He knows all of the old cows in the Paulina section by their first names, and it will not be right easy for a new man to get started in that part of the country." Supervisor Vernon Harpham

From the "Ochoconian":

January, 1928: "Rangers Anderson, Butler, and E.W. Donnelly are now doing time in the Forest Service warehouse, working on Service equipment in general and giving it the annual winter overhaul. Our old WWI Army tents and canvas are getting pretty badly worn, but we plan to salvage and repair enough of this equipment to last through next field season." E.W. Donnelly, Snow Mountain District Ranger

February, 1928: "The Crook County Court is petitioning the Forest Service to advertise the government timber on McKay Creek. The County Court's petition has been strengthened by the endorsement of the Prineville Businessman's Club." Forest Supervisor, V. Harpham

July, 1928: "A fir tree on Foley butte was properly decorated with a 8'x10' platform, a good substantial railing around the edge, telephone and fire finder. The arrangement will greatly improve the lookout situation from this point." J.O.F Anderson, Mill Creek District Ranger

August, 1928: "Probably few people know that we have huckleberries in the Beaver-Maury (Paulina) District. Well, we have, and quite a few of them in different localities - but we are not telling where they are." R.R. Butler, Beaver-Maury District Ranger

August, 1928: "Al Fray saw rattlesnakes the other day. While trying to straighten up a rock crib around a telephone post, he was struck on the shoe, 3 inches from the top by a rattler. Didn't quite go through which is just as well as he didn't have a drop of anything to take for snake bite." E.W. Donnelly, Snow Mountain District Ranger

From the "Ochoconian":

March, 1927: "Have been receiving several applications lately for summer jobs in the mountains. I haven't found the man to suit one or two jobs I have and the Cold Spring job will not be very attractive, since it will be quite a job living in tents and keeping within hearing of the switchboard. Even if we get money to build a cabin it will probably not be completed early enough to be used more than half of the summer and living and handling a switchboard in a tent will not be the easiest job in the world." Ralph Elder, Antone District Ranger

March, 1927: "Ranger Congleton who has recently spent something like a month at the Prineville office and warehouse has returned to his own Paulina district where according to the way work is mapped out he will without a doubt be able to keep fully busy until the time he will sever his official connections with Uncle Sam on June 15. It is with regret that we look forward to the time when we must officially say goodbye to Ranger Congleton. He is one of the "oldtimers" in the Forest Service having been on the job continuously for more than twenty years. It will not be right easy for a new man to get started and it will of course take time for him to learn the people, the country, and the like in even a small percentage of the way that Ranger Congleton knows them. However, we can not all stay in the Service forever. We just hope that when the rest of us get ready to quit we will be able to supply as legitimate a reason as Mr. Congleton. Through his thriftiness he has developed a ranch property in the Paulina Valley which is one of the choice farms of the section. He now has this ranch stocked with approximately 150 head of cattle, with horses, sheep, pigs, chickens and turkeys in proportion." V. Harpham, Forest Supervisor

From the "Ochoconian":

March 1930: "I predict that within the next decade, Prineville will grow to 4000-5000 population; headquarters for at least one large sawmill operation, a good percent of the timber for which will come from the ONF; great strides will be made in the management of our grazing resources, probably more fences will be constructed, rodents will be largely exterminated and probably some artificial re-seeding will follow rodent extermination and erosion control. Airoplanes will be flying over the Forest in considerable numbers and probably a number of landing fields within the Forest developed. Steel lookout towers will to up, more telephone lines will be built or else a substitution made in the form of wireless telephones. We shall not be surprised if an east and west railroad will pass through the ONF within the next 5 years." V. Harpham, Forest Supervisor

May, 1930: "I well remember the first time I saw a Forest Ranger. We were camped with our band of sheep on Big Happy Creek in August of 1907. One night along sundown when we were just cooking

dinner a man came riding into camp leading a mule on which was a neat pack lashed on with a diamond hitch and on top of the pack was double bitted axe and a shovel. Forest Ranger thinks I. I bet we will catch hell if we are not on our allotment. The fellow rode up and got off of his horse. "Howdy boys, what's the chance to camp here with you for the night?" The herder and I said fine and asked him to have supper with us. He asked what he could do to help. The herder told him he could make the bread, winking at me thinking he might have some fun with this green ranger. The ranger said, "sourdough or baking powder?" Sourdough, said the herder pointing to the flour sack and sour dough jar. The ranger washed up in the creek, and made frying pan sour dough bread like a veteran. We could see that this man was not new in the woods for no one but a veteran could run out such bread as this. I spent the next two days with him, surveying and posting the boundary of the allotment. He taught me how to run a compass line, read section corners, and trace a blazed survey line through the woods. And he showed me a few things about catching fish in Deep Creek. I made up my mind that summer that I would like to be a Forest Ranger." William Donnelly, retired Forest Ranger.

September, 1928: "Lambs coming off the Forest; Rhys Humphreys and M.M Derr are delivering lambs to the new railroad in Bear Valley. Some of the others are taking lambs to railroad in Fossil, Prineville, two or three ranchers are delivering lambs at their ranches to local buyers; P.R. Barnhouse is trucking lambs to Prineville." V. Harpham, Forest Supervisor

December 1931: "Compensation injuries this year to ONF rangers: injury to ribs, axe cut on left thumb, infected hand, heart strain (McKay Creek Fire), axe wound on knee, cracked bone in wrist, wrenched back, hip and muscles of left leg, injury to right eye." V. Harpham, Forest Supervisor