

A History of the Upper Sevier River
The Inhabitants and Their Use Of The Land

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This paper will examine the upper Sevier River and the challenges, hardships and rewards of the inhabitants from prehistoric times to the present. It will observe the Indians, their use of the land and how they survived in this rugged country. The first Anglo-Saxon newcomers to the area will be examined from the Spanish Explorers to Mormon settlement of the land. Natural resources in the area that made it possible for the people to survive with relatively short growing seasons will be reviewed. Resources will be examined that allow human life in this environment today. The impact on the land itself by the inhabitants will be measured before and after the United States Forest regulated grazing, timber and other environmental issues. The inhabitants were concerned about preserving the land because they had to live off of it. However, the Forest Service has helped make a positive impact on the land of the Upper Sevier.

The first inhabitants to roam the land of the Upper Sevier River were the Paleo Indians. Their culture entered south central Utah about 12,000 years ago. Although, not known for sure, it is believed this group of inhabitants crossed the Bering Strait land bridge that once existed between Alaska and Siberia. Remains and artifacts from the Paleo-Indian culture can be found in the watershed from current Garfield County further north into Piute County. Projectile points, such as clovis points, can be found in the area dating back 12,000 years ago. Clovis points are among the oldest artifacts found among the ancient Paleo people. It is presumed that these points were used in taking down large megafauna and mammoths that existed in that particular time period. Clovis points are easily recognized by the chipped stone and the large flakes that have been removed along the center of the point. Just north of present day Circleville, Utah, a

Paleo-Indian site exists today. Evidence suggests that these Indians traveled in small groups and mostly depended on large game to satisfy their diets. They may have dieted on some smaller animals and fish but did not indulge in any form of agriculture. The Paleo Indian culture began to fade and disappear about 5000 B.C. ¹

The Archaic introduced themselves in the watershed about 9000 B.C. and were more advanced than their predecessors. They migrated with the seasons and used some forms of vegetation to satisfy their diets. These people used berries, seeds, badger, beaver, deer, sheep and other small rodents. Many species of vegetation were also used to satisfy their diets. Tools were used such as spears, knives, milling slabs, grinders and snares for catching wild game. They also were able to make needles from animal bone so they could sew. They made clothing such as moccasins, leather coats and other apparel.

One advancement the Archaic people had over their predecessors was a basic but advanced tool called a spear thrower. Spear throwers were made from wood and ranged from about 14 to 28 inches in length. One of the ends was hollowed out so that a smaller foreshaft could be inserted. A hunter could throw a spear with a lot more thrust and trajectory than by regular hand. This tool made big game an easier target for a hunter with an objective to achieve food.

The Archaic people were highly mobile and found over a vast variety of landscapes. These people usually hunted in the higher elevations such as the Paunsaugunt Plateau and gathered in the valleys according to the time of year and season. There have been numerous site findings of evidence left behind by these ancient people. Such sites are found at current day Otter and City Creek. These people were more numerous than their predecessors because they

adapted better to the environment. They would often find shelter under overhanging cliffs and small caves and were able to keep out of harsh weather conditions.

It is not known for sure what happened to the Archaic people in the Upper Sevier region. At times these people flourished in this environment adapting to the harsh conditions that surrounded them. There are two hypothesis to what may have happened to them. One guess is that the people may have simply disappeared from the landscape leaving it for others to inherit. Another guess is that their way of life was replaced with more emphasis based on agriculture and crop growing that may have been introduced from Mexico. Whatever the reason, there is not a trace of these people after 1500 B.C. ²

The next group to inhabit the Upper Sevier country was the Fremont Indians. They lived along the Sevier River from about A.D. 800 to 1200. In this area the Fremont were the first to have a strong agricultural base and grow crops like corn, beans, squash and more. They used these crops to supplement hunting and gathering. The Fremont built such structures as pit houses, adobe and masonry structures. Like the Archaic people, the Fremont took advantage of big ledges, canyon walls and cliff overhangs to build adobe dwellings. In these dwellings they made fire pits, storage rooms and grainaries to prepare them for severe weather and the coming of winter. The Fremont were more organized and had a more complex social environment consisting of villages.

The Fremont made further advancements in technological measures than others before them. They were the first to invent the bow and arrow, which could shoot further and more accurate than spear throwers. Pottery was also made by the Fremont people in this area and was gray in color without much design. Some of the Fremont pottery in other areas of Utah has

more color probably from their interactions with the Anasazi culture. The Fremont Indians also made moccasins that were distinct from other cultures. The moccasins were unique in that they were made from the front leg of deer and mountain sheep, with the hair of these animals left on the moccasins.

Some of the evidence the Fremont left behind is distinctive pictographs of humans in a triangular shape, wearing extravagant necklaces and clothing, appearing to have horns on their heads. Some of the pictographs display deer, sheep, rattlesnakes and other animals they may have used for harvesting. Just off the Sevier River in Dry Creek there are pictographs left behind by the Fremont people. No one is quite sure what the pictographs are trying to express to the viewers, but it's believed that many of the Fremont pictographs are portraying the big game harvests, among them, as a people.

The Fremont people disappeared from the Sevier River from about A.D. 1200 to 1300. There are many opinions and guesses as to what happened but not a certain answer. One guess is that a severe drought made it impossible for them grow crops and drove them to other lands. Another suggests that they evolved into Numic people forming later tribes such as the Piute and the Ute. No matter what became of these people, their identity disappeared and they have many traits and characteristics that categorize them apart from others.

The Numic people made use of the Sevier River and the watershed. Ute and Southern Piute Indians have made their home in this area from about A.D. 1300 to the present time. Small Ute bands such as the Pahvant and Koosharem bands lived on the East and South Forks of the Sevier River. The Southern Piutes such as the Kaiparowits lived further south in present day Garfield County along the Paunsaugunt Plateau and the Upper Sevier valleys. When

Europeans first entered the area, they judged the Utes to be far superior to the Paiutes.

These Numic groups all spoke dialects from the Shoshoni language which originates from the Uto-Aztecan language. Both Utes and Paiutes in this area took advantage of what the land had to offer by hunting a lot of small game like rabbits, squirrels prairie dogs, beavers and more small rodents. The river itself provided some great trout fishing for the bands and supplemented a sizable portion of their diet. Pine nuts were a valuable item in that they could be picked, stored and used in the winter months. Paiutes used the pine nuts and mixed them with warm water to make a mush similar to oatmeal. The Utes and Paiutes made clothing out of buck skin and rabbit skin. The Paiutes formed small shelters called wickiups made out of cedar limbs and sage brush insulated with mud.³

The first inhabitants ranging from the Paleo to the Numic people experienced great challenges in the watershed. Each of these groups had a lot in common but were still very unique. Survival for each group depended on taking from the land of the Upper Sevier from vegetation and fishing to small and big game animals. Each culture adapted in their own way. They practiced their own customs and methods for survival in the rugged terrain. The watershed of the Upper Sevier provided elements to aid in their survival.

The first white man to ever visit the Upper Sevier River country was probably of Spanish descent. In 1540 Spanish conquistadors began to visit the southwestern United States. In 1604, Father Estevan Perea and his followers began penetrating into northern and central Utah, exactly how much they came in contact with the Upper Sevier River is not known. Some of the earliest traders to visit the Upper Sevier country were Lagos Garces and Mauricio Arze, who more than likely visited this country in the early 1800s. In 1776, Fathers Dominguez and

Escalante journeyed into Utah and visited Sevier Lake in present day Millard County but did not follow the river into the Upper Sevier region.

As Spanish explorers and traders ventured into northern Utah, they introduced the horse to the Ute Indians. This made the Utes better able to acquire food through hunting by being more mobile. Spanish traders kidnapped Ute women and children and sold them into slavery back in the New Mexico territory. In retaliation ,the Ute people began to raid on the Southern Paiutes, kidnapping their women and children and trading them to Spanish traders. Slave trade was very popular and profitable for both themselves and the Utes. Paiutes living along the east fork of the Sevier River became prime targets to be kidnapped. If Spanish or Ute traders found a poor Piute family, they would sometimes trade their own child to them for a poor mule or horse they could butcher. Spanish traders wore very fine apparel consisting of vests and silver bell shaped buttons on fancy jackets. A French observer, Duflot de Mofras, described the Mexican trading parties.

Caravans travel once a year from New Mexico to Los Angeles. These consist of 200 men on horseback, accompanied by mules laden with fabrics and large woolen covers called serapes, jersas, and coberstones. This merchandise is exchanged for horses and mules, on a basis, usually, of two blankets for one animal. Caravans leave Santa Fe, New Mexico, in October, before the snows set in and finally reach the outlying ranchos of California from where the trail leads into El Pueblo de Los Angeles. This trip consumes two and one-half months. Returning caravans leave California in April on order to cross the rivers before the snow melts, taking with them about 2,000 horses. The expedition that reached El Pueblo in November, 1841 included in addition to some 200 or more New Mexicans, 60 or more North Americans.⁴

One of the first expeditions on record to enter the Upper Sevier country was led by William Wolfskill and George C. Yount in 1830. Leading twenty other trappers with them, they were the first to view Piute and Garfield Counties. Yount and Wolfskill entered the Upper Sevier through Marysvale Canyon and followed the old Spanish Trail on down into Garfield

County. They entered into Panguitch and then into Markagunt Plateau where they encountered a terrible snow storm. Their story is as follows:

Our trappers, with much toil, reached a strip of Table land, upon a lofty range of mountains, where they encountered the most terrible snowstorm they had ever experienced. During several days, no one ventured out of camp. There they lay embedded in snow, very deep, animals and men huddled thick as possible together, to husband and enjoy all possible animal warmth, having spread their thick and heavy blankets, and piled bark, and brush wood around and over them...After the storm subsided and the weather had softened, Yount and Wolfskill ascended a lofty Peak of the mountains for observation. In the whole range of human view, in every direction, nothing could be discerned, in the least degree encouraging, but only mountains, piled on mountains, all capped with cheerless snow, in long and continuous successions, till they seemed to mingle with the vault of heaven and fade away in the distance.⁵

Wolfskill, Yount and their party almost lost their lives in the bizarre event. They eventually worked their way over the mountain and into present day Parowan Valley where they killed the last of four cattle. Other explorers like Wolfskill and Yount experienced similar situations while traveling through the Upper Sevier country. This country has offered numerous challenges to those who have explored, settled and resided in the area.

Other explorers also visited the area such as Kit Carson in the late fall or 1847. He ventured into this area on the Spanish Trail. Carson was a mail carrier who carried mail from the West to the nation's capital. On his 1847 trip to California, Carson took the old Spanish route through the Upper Sevier country to avoid hostile Indians along the southern route. Later that spring Carson and one of his friends, Elijah Barney Ward, traveled back east following the Old Spanish Trail and viewed some of the Upper Sevier country. Ward was impressed with the country and later made his home in Utah where he frequently visited the Upper Sevier country.⁶

Explorer John C. Fremont did not enter the Upper Sevier River area until his fifth

expedition in 1853-54. The expedition was caught in a winter storm near the San Rafael River. The expedition resorted to killing their horses and eating them for food. They had to leave all their valuables along the trail such as pack saddles, scientific instruments, photographer paper and other precious materials that would aid in their search for a future railroad route. The expedition followed a unknown river now called the Fremont River up through Capital Reef and down through Grass Valley to the East Fork of the Sevier River. They followed it down Kingston Canyon to where the south and east fork of the rivers meet at present day Junction, Utah. The men suffered from frost bite, nearly starved to death and had eaten nothing but horse meat for fifty days. A photographer and adventurer named Solomon Nunes Carvalho described crossing the Sevier River.

I was almost certain I was within the precincts of civilization. I saw numberless large trees cut down near the roots, appearing to have been hewn with an ax; some of them laid directly across the river; in one place there were three trees lying parallel with each other, evidently intended, I supposed, as a bridge across it; at this spot, the stream was not more than thirty feet wide; no other indication of civilization being around us, I supposed we occupied an old camping ground of Indians. I was doomed to disappointment again; the beavers had constructed the dams, and cut down the trees, and not until I had closely inspected the work, could I believe that this was not the work of men.⁷

The first Mormon expeditions to visit the Upper Sevier took place between 1847 and 1849. Over 11,000 Mormons had entered the Salt Lake Valley between 1847 and 1849. The were accustomed to living on roots, bulbs, Mormon tea and other sparing rations. Abner Blackburn, Ephriam Knowlton and Tom Williams decided to ride south and work up some trades with the Indians. They ventured down south and followed the Sevier River to where the east and south forks meet. They were the first Mormon men to see the Upper Sevier River.

The Parley P. Pratt Expedition of 1849 and 1850 was sent from the Salt Lake Valley to

explore possible new settlements. Brigham Young, the Mormon church prophet, commissioned Parley P. Pratt to head an expedition of fifty men to explore and report on the regions to the south. On this journey they were to report on potential sites for settlement and soil conditions, timber, grazinglands, rivers, Indians and other resources. They left Salt Lake City on November 24, 1849 and headed south through present day Utah County. They encountered harsh weather conditions and sub zero temperatures of twenty degrees below zero. On this expedition Pratt and his followers met Ute Chief Wakara and his tribe. The Pratt expedition showered them with gifts like flour, tea, coffee, meat and other useful substances. Chief Wakara provided a member of his tribe named Ammon to serve as a scout for the expedition.

Because of the deep snow and blizzard like conditions, the Old Spanish Trail was hard for Ammon and the Pratt expedition to follow. Ammon complained that he had a bad cold and that the white man medicine was not working. Ammon eventually left the expedition, complaining he was too sick to lead and that he would catch up later. Pratt and his followers moved on down the Sevier River and camped at a nice site with a bunch of cottonwood trees that provided a vale. Pratt named the place "Merry Vale" because of this and the merry time the men had at this camping spot. On December 14, 1849 the expedition came to the junction of south and east fork of the Upper Sevier. On December 15, 1849 they camped just south of present day Circleville, Utah. They continued on through Circleville canyon and into Garfield County and eventually over to Iron County. They arrived back to the Salt Lake Valley in February of 1850 with some valuable information about the Upper Sevier and other Southern Utah points. Pratt reported about the Sevier River and the places

along the river that would be excellent places for settlement. Because of his expedition, settlements such as Circleville were opened up for settlement in as early as 1864.⁸

Circleville, Utah became the earliest settlement on the river, settled in February 1864, one month before Panguitch was settled. In 1863 Apostle Orson Hide began encouraging members to settle on the reaches of the Upper Sevier River. In late 1863, William James Allred, James Tilman, Sanford Allred, James Willard Munson and four other men from Ephraim explored CircleValley for settlement. When they arrived they were not too pleased with what they encountered. As a group, they felt it was too small, too isolated and too inaccessible for settlement. However, some in the group disagreed about what the valley would support.

A member of the group composed the following ditty: “Some did not like the county, they said it was too small, some said very little, some nothing at all, some said of the county, they could not complain, but alone in that desert they dared not remain.” Some in the group did not like the idea of settling alone and the idea of Indians being in the area. Others objected but on February 4, 1864 a small group left Ephraim to go to Circleville. William Allred was the leader of the small party. When they first arrived they did not waste any time getting to work. One of their first priorities was to build a dam across the river before the spring runoff made it too difficult. Not long after their arrival Edwin Fox began to survey the town and divide it up into ten acre plots.⁹

The community worked hard together to prepare to plant such crops as grain, potatoes and other vegetation. Most of the cultivation took place on the east side of the river. While they were there they experienced some challenges. The wind blew constantly making life very cold

and uncomfortable for a group of new settlers. Men and women had to work in this cold environment for long hours cooking around a campfire and plowing and building structures. Another big challenge they had was with the land. Many parcels were filled with prairie dog and gopher holes. When the newcomers would irrigate, much of the water would sink down the holes of the prairie dogs and come up somewhere else. Much of the planted seed got washed away or did not receive adequate moisture. Later that spring and into early summer, late frosts were experienced with inadequate moisture for their crops. Many of the early settlers began to complain and worry about the growing season in the area.

Orson Hyde decided to take a trip to CircleValley and see what conditions were like there. He arrived in Circleville on about May 22, 1864 and found conditions in good order. He examined the lush grasses in the valley and how they could be used later that summer for the animals. However, the lands south of Junction to Circleville were owned by the Piute Indians. While Hyde was visiting the area, the Piute chief asked what he and the others were going to give them for taking their land. Hyde exclaimed:

I do not know that we want your land at all, for I had heard that the frost and wind had killed the wheat, and I came up to see about it. If we can not grow wheat, corn, oats, and potatoes then we should not remain on the land and consequently should not want to buy it. We will, therefore, wait till the leaves fall, then we can tell whether your land is good to produce or not. If we then want it, we will talk...about some considerations. In the mean time it is much better for you and your people to have the Mormons here though you get nothing for your land, than to have them away; for your people now got many a biscuit that they would not have if the Mormons were not here.¹⁰

The chief agreed to what Hyde said and agreed to let them feel out the land to see if sufficient crops could be harvested in the area. As the summer months passed the settlers found more promise in the land they had cultivated. By mid-summer over 300 acres of land had been

cultivated for growing crops. Dugouts were made in river banks for the settlers to live until they could build log structures. Just east of Circleville the inhabitants found large pine trees to serve as wood for building their structures. The first structure was a cabin built to serve as a meeting house for the people. By fall many of the men went back to present day Sanpete County to bring their families. Despite the short growing seasons, adequate wheat was harvested in the fall of 1864 to support the new coming settlers who would make their home on the Upper Sevier.

Panguitch, Utah was first inhabited by settlers on March 16, 1864 just one month after Circleville, Utah was founded. A group of pioneers from Parowan and Beaver were the first to settle this cold valley. Jens Neilsen was the leader of the expedition which originated in Parowan and then worked their way up through Little Creek Canyon and into the rugged Bear Valley country. These first settlers worked with all their might to form a roadway that still exists across Bear Valley today. When the settlers arrived to the valley they found it in the shape of a V and found adequate water and fertile soil. They began to cultivate the land and plant crops to prepare them for the winter months. This first year was very hard for them because there was only one team to plow for every three families. Also in their first year in the valley, crops did not mature before winter came, putting their lives at risk.

In the mid winter of 1864 and 1865 they were on the verge of starvation and lacked having enough flour. The closest flour mill was 40 miles away in Parowan and this meant they would have to cross back over the mountainous terrain of Bear Valley. Seven men left Panguitch to get supplies for their families in Parowan. Alex Matheson, one of the seven men, gave the following account of what happened.

At one time we were about to give up but we had a little prayer circle and asked God for guidance. We decided if we had faith as big as a mustard seed we could make it and bring flour to our starving families. So we began our quilt laying in prayerful earnest. In this way we made our way over the deep crusted snow to Parowan. The return trip was harder with the weight of the flour but we finally made it to our wagon and oxen and on home.¹¹

These men were able to use their quilts to help them make it through the snow and on into Panguitch. In later years the community of Panguitch has celebrated “Quilt Day” for the efforts of these seven brave men in aiding the community.

The name Panguitch comes from the Piute Indians meaning big fish. As the settlers began to build structures and cultivate the land, the Indians in the area became very hostile towards them. In this early settlement a fort was built to protect the settlers against Indian attacks. In 1866, the Indians became even more hostile and a battle was fought between the conflicting parties on Panguitch Creek. William Wallace, John Lowder, Alexander Matheson and others lead the small group of men to fight against the Indians. In this small battle two men from Panguitch were wounded but none of them killed. More violence erupted and the settlers decided that their only choice was to abandon Panguitch. In May 1866, after much hard work and endurance, everyone left Panguitch and returned to Parowan and other settlements.¹²

Panguitch was again settled in March of 1871. Brigham Young commissioned Bishop George W. Sevy of New Harmony to gather a group of followers together for the resettlement of Panguitch. George W. Sevy gave special instructions that all who wished to go with him to resettle Panguitch were to meet at Red Creek on March 4, 1871 and then travel eastward over Bear Valley. When the company arrived they found no snow and dry dirt. They also mentioned how the crops and buildings had not been destroyed by the Indians. Everything seemed to be in

the way the abandoning party had left it. In the spring of 1871 Ira W. Hatch arrived at Panguitch and on October 16, 1935 he made a statement about the land then and now.

I came to Panguitch in the spring of 1871 at the age of 18 years, and I was among the first permanent settlers of the valley. My recollection of range conditions at that time lead me to believe that the ground cover of grass and forage plants was from two to three times as great as at the present time and consisted mainly of the following plants: Blue Stem, Gamma, Brome, Giant Rye Grass together with sage on the southern exposures, Purshia, Snowberry, Choke Cherry, Service Berry, and some annual weeds.

In the draws it was common practice to cut hay and to have grass brushing the stirrups. It was the practice to winter stock in the Panguitch Valley, particularly in the north end. I remember gathering a herd of steers one winter, 1878, from this valley, trailing them to Beaver, Utah, and selling them for beef. They were in excellent condition. One of the steers was butchered at the time of delivery and dressed (with head off) about 940 pounds. Washes and floods and other signs of erosion were unnoticeable. The country at that time supported an immense number of deer and antelope. Very little damage was caused to our herds by predatory animals. Sagebrush has always been common in this locality, especially on the southern exposures, though I believe it was not as dense nor as high as at present, nor did it cover as much of the west and northern exposures as it does now.¹³

The first year for the new settlers in Panguitch was a trial. Like the first settlement, they found the growing season very short and that it had a limited harvest. Phoeve Sevy, one of the wives of George W. Sevy, boiled all the wheat in the community. Through the winter months she would divide the wheat among all families in the community to ensure everyone would have enough to make it through the winter. The first winter was a little rough but they weathered the storm.

In the months and years to follow, the community began to prosper in agriculture and some industry. George W. Sevy and James H. Imlay built saw mills on Panguitch Creek. Lumber in the area was provided for schools, homes, churches, stores and community buildings. George Sevy made butter and cheese and traded a lot with the miners in Pioche, Nevada. One of

the first structures built by the settlers was a log house constructed by Albert DeLong.¹⁴

Other settlements were also formed on the Upper Sevier River. Hillsdale, Utah was settled by George Deliverance Wilson and Joel Hills Johnson in 1871. With plenty of timber in the area and the river, it was thought to be an ideal location for a sawmill. Besides the sawmill people engaged in growing a few chickens, pigs, cattle, sheep and other farm animals. In later years people began to leave the area because of the harsh winters and flooding problems.

Antimony was another settlement on the Upper Sevier River settled for its lush vegetation and tall grasses. Albert Buiser was the first white man known to have settled there in about 1873. In 1875 Isaac Riddle herded horses through the valley and liked the area. He later returned and formed the small town of Coyote, Utah later to be called Antimony. Tom Rice King came to the area in about 1876. Other early arrivals to the area were Hans Jensen, Walter and Elizabeth Barrowmen Gleave, John Steen and others. While here in this area, most families made a living off cattle grazing and other forms of agriculture.

Kingston, Utah was settled in 1876 by Thomas King, after whom the small town was named. In its beginnings the small town of Kingston practiced the law of the United Order given them by Brigham Young. This order asked all families to donate all their belongings to the church so that church officials could divide them up among the people as needed. The order was stopped in about 1883. In its early settlement, the town had a sawmill, gristmill, woolen factory and cattle ranches.

Junction, Utah was settled in 1880 and received its name from where the south and east forks of the Sevier River meet. Most of its early residents came from Kingston when the United Order failed to work for the early settlers. One early settler was Charles Harris and his family

who settled on a 640 acre claim. Like other communities on the Upper Sevier Junction was based mainly on farming and ranching. Other settlements inhabit the Upper Sevier such as Hatch Town, Spry, Widsoe and other communities who used the land in many similar ways Timber, cattle grazing, cultivation, and hunting were all a very important part of every settlement on the Upper Sevier River. ¹⁵

When the settlers first came to the watershed, they did not experience many of the rules and regulations that have been instituted in later years. Early settlers were more concerned about providing enough food for their families let alone coping with land regulations. Farmers and ranchers of the early years farmed about 40 acres, enough to raise feed for their stock and take care of the family unit.

However, as time emerged into the late nineteenth century things began to change. More cattle, sheep, and other grazing animals came into the area. Farmers and ranchers were acquiring larger spreads and more livestock. In some cases overuse and grazing of land took place. Although many cattle and sheep men cared about the land, they did not realize the long term results of their decisions to introduce livestock in over quantities to the land. Joseph J. Porter stated.

I helped the Griffins take their sheep out on the Griffin Top about the first time sheep were ever taken out there. That was about 1890. I remember the grasses were so high that we could hardly see the sheep for it. Griffin Spring Draw was just a large willow patch from one end of it to another. While we were herding the sheep in that country we never did turn our horses loose, we just tied them with a long rope and they would get all they wanted to eat throughout the night. We also brought our sheep back to the same bed ground each night and they never had to go very far during the day to get all they wanted to eat. We did the same down in the desert during the winter. They bedded their sheep on the same bed grounds for three or four months at a time. Griffins built some small cabins and

and camped in them all winter. Everyone handled their stock the same way until feed started to get scarce, then they had to move around for good food, but they never had to take them off the desert” “Even at the time the Forest was created the mountain was badly depleted and the floods in the streams were very common. At that time about 150,000 head of transient sheep were forced out of the country because the government would not issue permits to them. Since that time the mountain or forest range has come back considerable, but I don’t believe it is over 50% as good as it used to be. The desert range has continued to go down until it will care for less than 10% of what it would formerly.¹⁶

One thing that also effected the early vegetation and soil was bedding area for the sheep and the cattle. Some of these bedding areas were usually established by a water hole or creek near the camp of the herder. Some of these areas were used only three weeks but sometimes longer. These corrals and herding areas for sheep and cattle would sometimes leave permanent damage to the vegetation around the immediate area.

Sheep and cattle damaged the immediate soil by turning the soil into a powder causing erosion to the soil. Many herders followed broken trails often made by wild game in the area This practice caused the soil to erode much faster than limited use by wild game and through the years caused trenches to form as deep as 10 feet. There has been damage in certain areas that cannot be replaced. Some of the costs with filling in these trenches would be to expensive.

Before the Forest Service played a role in grazing, overgrazing took place in many areas of the land. Cattle and sheep in the area skyrocketed in population until about the turn of the century when the Forest Service was organized. It has played a big role in keeping forest lands free from soil decay and overgrazing. They have strictly limited the number of livestock that can be on forest lands. In later years, cattle and sheep ranchers have been issued permits to run a certain number of their herds in certain areas. In the watershed cattle and sheep are usually run on forest lands during the late spring, summer and sometimes

into mid fall. Cattle and sheep are earmarked in certain areas to give forest service personnel a way to identify and count herd numbers. In the twentieth century they have used a style of “Multiple Use Management” which refers to managing all interests including the public and cattle and sheep ranchers.¹⁷

Before the Forest Service became involved, the use of timber and tree cutting was abused in certain areas. For instance, early settlers and business men built saw mills wherever a good source of power and timber could be found. Timber was cut in areas where many forms of wildlife resided and where timber vegetation may have had a hard time returning. With the management of the Forest Service coming into play, many more options were considered. For instance, in many areas where timber is cut today, the Forest Service goes in and plants new timber to replace that which has been cut. Studies are also done on areas to find out what forms of wildlife will be disturbed and the overall impact of taking timber in certain areas. All in all, forest lands have been regulated in order to preserve all forms of vegetation and habitat throughout the watershed. Since the area has been more regulated, vegetation has made a vast improvement over the times of unregulation.¹⁸

The Widsoe Project was a big land improvement for the US Department of Agriculture. The town of Widsoe in the early 1930’s consisted mainly of dry land farmers and a few ranchers. Originally, this land was within the Dixie National Forest boundary, but many people put pressure on the Forest Service to open up the lands to settlement for the purpose of dry land wheat farming. This area was used long before the turn of the century primary for the grazing of livestock. Many people came to the area because of high grain prices and because they figured

they could make a living, are not found many other places. The watershed is truly a land of its own like no other.²²

After many arrived they began to realize that this land was not very suitable to dry land farming. The first few years were above average in precipitation and they had better luck keeping the frosts away. However, after a few years it became apparent that dry land farming was not going to work in the area. Widsoe is about 7,600 feet in elevation and receives from 6 to 18 inches of precipitation each year. Many times the precipitation does not come to the area until late summer or early fall. The grain in the fields did not have sufficient rain fall through the early mid summer months to sustain them.¹⁹

Another problem with the area was the frosts were very unpredictable. Widsoe experienced about 110 frost free days. Through in other parts of the valley, it can range from as little as 43 to 155 days per season. There are certain sections in the area that can expect frost about every month. The short growing seasons in the valley are a result of the high elevation and inadequate air drainage of the valley.²⁰

Many people began to leave the valley because of arid conditions and only about 215 residents remained when the Widsoe Project was started in about 1935. The purpose of the project was to purchase the lands of the present inhabitants, make improvements on the land, and formulate it back to its natural habitat. Originally, the government planned to purchase about 35,000 acres for about \$2.00 per acre. However, there were variations in the land depending on the improvements that had been made. The land was sold for about 75 cents to \$2.00 per acre. Some pieces of property were sold to the department for their appraised value.

After the residents of Widsoe were purchased out, there was much work that had to be completed in preserving the lands and improving the range. One of the first things taken into consideration was the obliteration of farmsteads. Many of the buildings in the area were disposed of to prevent squatters from coming in and to improve the area for grazing.

Some of the structures in the area were offered for sale under government regulation. Other materials in the area were discarded as salvage. Many of the buildings left behind were made of cheap materials and were neither saleable or salvageable.

Fences all around the area were taken down so it could be adapted to its new use. Many of the wire and posts taken from the fence lines were either salvaged or sold. Some of the fences were viewed as hazards to the animals who would graze in the area. Rodents were also controlled in the area. The Department of Agriculture participated in developing plans to exterminate the rodents in order to improve the habitat and range land. Dams had to be constructed and reconstructed at areas like Tropic Reservoir and Pine Lake. These dams were improved in order to provide adequate water supplies and avoid flood control which could lead to erosion.

Other such jobs were conducted in areas such as road repairs and trail repairs where flooding may have led to erosion. Timber stand improvements were also made in the area. Forest Service officials recommended that timber must be treated with insecticides in order to improve timber stands in the area. Over 16, 000 acres of land were treated to prevent timber from being infested by insects. Other vegetation was cleaned up such as fallen timber, brush, and trash to keep forest fire possibilities to a minimum. Other improvements were also made in the area to benefit the land.

All in all, the Widsoe Project was a benefit to the area in preserving the land and guiding it back to its original vegetation. The Widsoe Project cost all together about \$210,083 and was completed on June 30, 1939. As a result of forest service intervention much of the vegetation was preserved. The management and regulation of forest lands has been a benefit for all walks of life. Citizens from every background can recreate and enjoy forest land such as Johns Valley and other areas in the watershed. Through regulation, much of the vegetation and forest area remains close to its original form. In the future proper forest management will provide forest lands for generations to enjoy.²¹

In the late twentieth and twenty first century the watershed remains much the same. Farmers and ranchers still depend on the land today like they did 150 years ago. Cattle and sheep grazing are a part of the watershed. Recreation has also become very prominent in the area such as horseback riding, ATV riding, camping, hunting, fishing, mountain biking and sight seeing. The timber industry is still a part of the watershed but has faced much opposition by environmental groups. In the late 1980s and 1990s, it has been all but shut down. However, in the new century timber cutting seems to be returning to the area. The harsh winters still exists that make for a short growing season. Potatoes are raised in some areas along with alfalfa and pasture lands. The service industry in the area has grown substantially throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Many come to the watershed to view the history, spectacular scenery and pass through to other areas. Other employers include, hospitals, trucking companies, sawmills, law enforcement, service stations, and more. The watershed has changed since the first white settlement but much of the population has remained close to the same for decades. The

watershed area provides a more laid back atmosphere where just about everyone knows each other. People in the region are close to one another and depend on each other. These qualities are not found many other places. The watershed is truly a land of its own like no other.²²