

The McCoy Family
The LeVan Family
and some of their associates in
the Big Creek-Chamberlain
backcountry, 1920 - 1950

Written by
Peter Preston
Dan LeVan Jr.
Aloha Beck McCoy
Bob McCoy
Althea Miettunen

Edited by
Peter Preston
July 2007

The McCoy Family
The LeVan Family
and some of their associates in
the Big Creek-Chamberlain
backcountry, 1920 – 1950

Written by
Peter Preston
Dan LeVan Jr.
Aloha Beck McCoy
Bob McCoy
Althea Miettunen

Edited by
Peter Preston
July 2007

Preface

McCoy & LeVan Families Big Creek – Chamberlain Backcountry, 1920 – 1950

The early "Forest Service Organization Era" was from 1905 to 1910. The Idaho National Forest was established on July 1, 1908. The "Forest Protection Era" was from 1910 to 1933. In 1922 the earliest Big Creek Ranger Station was established in a set of old mining cabins on Smith Creek two miles north of Big Creek and Edwardsburg, Idaho. In 1923 the headquarters was relocated to Big Creek. The first ranger station at Big Creek consisted of a 7 x 9 foot canvas tent. The warehouse and barn consisted of two, 14 x 20 foot tents. The cook shack was made of leftover canvas. Construction of the first permanent log building for the new Ranger Station began in 1924. Forest Service employees selected the building site, felled lodgepole pine trees, prepared and shaped the logs and constructed a large log building measuring 24 feet wide by 54 feet long. The interior of this building was divided by two evenly spaced log walls creating three ground level rooms. The second level had two rooms open to the rafters. On the ground level the westernmost room was the commissary containing food, dried goods and other supplies. The middle section was the office and telephone switchboard. The eastern room was for livestock tack, feed, and tools. The sleeping quarters were on the second level. This multifunctional building was completed in 1925, the same year the first telephone line was installed in Big Creek Ranger Station. In 1926 the telephone line extended from the Big Creek Ranger Station to Ramey Ridge Fire Lookout, Chamberlain Basin Ranger Station and beyond to Little Sheepeater, Chicken Peak, Grass Mountain, Cottonwood, Black Butte, Two Point Peaks, and Lookout Mountain fire lookouts.

The Big Creek Ranger Station was the setting where the McCoy and LeVan families came together and where the following short stories originated. Dan LeVan was the Big Creek Ranger from 1924 through 1950 and was responsible for keeping the trails open, the telephone service operating, and keeping the fire lookouts and Chamberlain Basin Ranger Station supplied. These were just some of his duties. LeVan raised and taught his children. He involved his children and the McCoy's in learning and doing what was necessary to keep the administrative services operating efficiently in the backcountry and here is where the stories begin. The authors Dan LeVan Jr. and Bob McCoy grew up together while their fathers (and mothers) worked for the Forest Service. Their two families were close and were the best of friends. They recalled family events with fondness and reflected on the landscape that shaped their experiences. Aloha Beck McCoy worked for Dan LeVan during this same time period. Althaea Mietunnen's father, Ed James, also worked for Dan LeVan and the story she tells is of her visit to Big Creek in 1951.

Peter Preston knows the backcountry. He has done his share of flying to remote airfields, riding mules and hiking in the forested and mountainous landscape. Peter knew some of the contributing authors and their relatives that are mentioned in this manuscript. Peter collected and compiled these short stories. Like the people telling these stories, the stories are unique and special. This is true down-to-earth Idaho history. It is not likely that these types of experiences will ever be replicated. Life in the backcountry has changed but these stories allow us to gain some understanding of those early days on the Idaho/Payette National Forests.

Gayle Dixon and I read and reread this manuscript. We made only minor editorial changes. We did what we could to reconstruct the incomplete bibliography. The historical photographs were acquired from Bob and Joyce Dustman of Salt Lake City, and Dan LeVan Jr. of Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Peter Preston mailed Dan LeVan Jr. a copy of the original manuscript several months before Dan Jr. passed away (September 30, 2007). We are so lucky to know Peter Preston. It was his interest, energy and foresight to collect this living history. We thank him for sharing it with us.

Lawrence A. Kingsbury & Gayle Dixon
McCall, Idaho
December 10, 2007

The McCoy Family-LeVan Family and Associates

TABLE OF CONTENTS

The McCoy Family of Yellow Pine, Idaho	
McCoy Family Beginnings-----	1
Archie "Bert" McCoy, the Family Leader-----	1
The McCoy Brothers, Owyhee Desert Horse Wranglers-----	2
Walter McCoy-----	4
Archie McCoy Settles in Yellow Pine-----	8
McCoy Children in Yellow Pine School-----	10
The Willey Ranch Connection-----	11
Gill McCoy-----	12
Monumental Creek Ranch-----	14
Myron "Skook" McCoy-----	22
Leslie "Whitey" McCoy-----	23
George Henry McCoy-----	24
Verna McCoy-----	24
Aloha McCoy History-----	25
Simeon "Sim" Willey Family History-----	29
Ranger Dan LeVan-----	31
Starting the Day at Big Creek Headquarters, 1943-----	33
Backcountry Telephone Network-----	35
Big Creek Trail Crew, 1944-----	36
Memories of Gill McCoy-----	38
Al Stonebraker, Stonebraker Ranch-----	40
Ed James-----	42
Adventure in the Backcountry, 1951-----	44
"Profile" Sam Willson-----	46
Arthur and Viola Garden-----	47
Dewey Moore-----	48
McCoy Family Tree-----	49
Incomplete Bibliography-----	50

Compiled and edited by Peter Preston
649 Poplar Grove Lane, Mathews, Virginia 23109
E-mail peterpreston@verizon.net

THE McCOY FAMILY OF YELLOW PINE, IDAHO

The McCoy Family Beginnings

The McCoy family, of Yellow Pine fame, was started by one James F. McCoy, born in Tennessee in 1815. He went to California during the gold rush days with his young wife Eliza and there started his family. From the California gold fields he worked in various localities in the desert triangle of northeast California, Nevada, and southern Oregon as a horseman-cowboy until his death in Drews Valley, Oregon, in 1884. Four of his eight children had married and gone in different directions at the time of his death: James H. McCoy, and his sisters Janetta, Verena, and Mary Ann. The senior unmarried son, John B. McCoy, apparently became the leader of the remnant family which consisted of:

John B. McCoy, born 1862, Millville CA

Archie Augustus McCoy, born Jan 11, 1872, Susanville CA

Walter S. McCoy, born April 3, 1878, Clover Valley (Elko County) NV

Katherine Elmira Elizabeth McCoy, born Sep 23, 1880, Clover Valley NV

Sylvia Elizabeth "Eliza" Johns McCoy, born 1837, their widowed mother

In 1888, John was working in Bruneau, Idaho, in the Owyhee County desert. He worked for the Wilkins Horse Company, the largest horse company in Idaho, with over 4000 head of horses. Owner Kitty Wilkins (1879-1936), was known as the "Horse Queen of Idaho." (Owyhee Cattlemen, 1979:33) In the 1900 census, Elizabeth, John, Archie, and Katherine were recorded in the Meeteetse, Wyoming census. Katherine was listed as Katie Beck, living with her mother and brothers, and had a newborn daughter that was not named. They lived in the household adjacent to Verena McCoy Baldwin.

Archie (Bert) McCoy, the family leader

Archie McCoy hated his name so was called Bert by his family and friends. He left the family group at an early age to work in the mines at Butte, Montana. He then returned to range work at the ranch of his older sister, Verena McCoy Baldwin (1862-1935), on the Greybull River north of Meeteetse, Wyoming. It was there that Bert met and married Jennie Avery in July 1903. Jennie was born in Ulysses, Pennsylvania, on January 31, 1885, and had come by covered wagon to Wyoming as a young girl. The newly married couple went to California where their first child, Eva Augusta, was born at Cedarville on July 7, 1904. They moved again a short time later to Paradise Valley, near Elko, Nevada, where their first son, Archie Gilbert McCoy, who became known as Gill McCoy, was born on October 25, 1905. Bert and family continued to move frequently, and the rest of his children were born at various localities in Idaho: son Leslie James McCoy, who became known as "Whitey," was born on May 11, 1907, at Avery; and two daughters born at Bruneau, Ina Evelyn McCoy, born June 25, 1909, and Verna Luella McCoy, born January 21, 1911. (Aloha McCoy, letter Nov 7, 1995)

The Bert McCoy family rejoined the other McCoy family members in Bruneau, Idaho, in the spring of 1909. In the 1910 census they were shown living in two adjacent households. The elder brother, John McCoy was noted as head of one household, still unmarried, and living with him was his youngest sister, Kate, and her two children. Katie's children were named in the census as Elizabeth Beck, age 7, and William Beck, age 5. Bert McCoy's household included, in addition to his wife and children noted above, his older brother Walter, and their aging mother Eliza (her name was listed as Sarah on the census). Eliza Johns McCoy died later that same year in Bruneau, at age 73, on November 27, 1910. Early the following year Bert and Jennie's daughter, Verna Luella McCoy, was born in Bruneau on January 11, 1911; but their daughter Ina Evelyn died on August 19, 1911, of a congenital heart problem and was buried in the Owyhee desert. Their youngest sons were born north of Bruneau at Mountain Home: George Henry McCoy on March 1, 1913, and Myron Burdett McCoy on April 19, 1915; Myron became known as "Buster" to his family.

The McCoy Brothers, Owyhee Desert Horse Wranglers

The McCoy brothers were working as horse wranglers in the Bruneau-Mountain Home area at the close of World War I in 1918. Around that time the horse business began a very rapid decline, due to the increasing use of automotive power, noted by the Owyhee County historian Mildretta Adams (*Owyhee Cattlemen*, 1979:13). The decline in the horse business probably led the McCoy's to begin searching for other venues of work. In 1918 Bert McCoy left his family in Mountain Home and went north to Valley County to seek work. He worked as a logger in the vicinity of Cascade, Idaho, and drove a freight wagon carrying supplies to the small community of Yellow Pine, 62 miles east of Cascade. Bert also worked at the mines around Yellow Pine, wherever there was a job.

Bert was settled in Yellow Pine when he sent for his family in the spring of 1919. His wife Jennie loaded all of their belongings into their wagon and headed north with the younger children, leaving Gill and Whitey behind with other McCoy's. Jennie drove the four-horse team as far as Horseshoe Bend where Bert met her and drove the wagon the remaining distance to Yellow Pine. Bert and his family were met and befriended by store-keeper Albert Behne, who helped them establish their home in Yellow Pine. (Aloha McCoy, Jan 1980)

In the late spring of 1919, a short time after Bert and Jennie arrived in Yellow Pine, the rest of the McCoy clan, led by brothers John and Walter, rounded up about 100 head of horses, not belonging to them, from the Owyhee Desert and drove them to Yellow Pine. Horse thievery was not new to the McCoy's, as noted in the Owyhee Avalanche, November 23, 1917:

"Sheriff Charlie Rogers returned Tuesday from a four day trip to the Bull Basin Country in the southwestern part of the county where he went to

arrest Walt McCoy, charged with altering brands. Despite the wild stories afloat over the county as the ability and willingness of McCoy to use a gun if necessary, Charlie experienced no trouble in landing his man here, but admits he kept his weather eye open during the homeward trip."

Also, Ambros Maher, a rancher on the Owyhee River, noted in his diary on April 18, 1918: "Charlie Rogers is here tonight on his way back from across the river after Archie McCoy, didn't get him." (Maher diary). Historian Mildretta Adams notes, "Horse stealing continued for years in Owyhee County." (Owyhee Cattle-men, 1979:13)

The McCoy clan, including Archie's sons Gill and Whitey, drove the stolen horses to Yellow Pine. Gill's son Bob provided this story of the event:

"When my dad was thirteen and his brother Whitey was eleven, they trailed 100 head of horses off the Owyhee Desert in Nevada into Yellow Pine. Dad told me that they [the McCoy children] had never seen a town of any size and most of the horses were wild that they had caught off the desert. He said when they got into Boise they had horses scattered all over town, and the police department helped them gather the horses and get them through town just to get rid of them. They saw their first pine tree above Horseshoe Bend on the Payette River. They were amazed at their size... A lot of the horses died the first winter because of deep snow and the lack of food, something they never encountered on the desert." (Bob McCoy correspondence, Oct 27, 1995)

The stolen horses were apparently kept in the upper Big Creek valley soon after their arrival in the Yellow Pine area, as Gill McCoy was noted in a newspaper article as having been to Warren to get supplies and was returning to Big Creek where he was running a large herd of horses (Payette Lakes Star, June 27, 1919). At that time the only habitation of consequence in the upper Big Creek area was the Edwards family store-post office at "Edwardsburg," as the Big Creek Ranger Station complex was not established until 1924. The Big Creek Ranger Station "Headquarters" was established in the large meadow where Gill probably ran his horses.

The McCoy clan spent the winter of 1919 in Yellow Pine basin. They apparently seemed secure in the Yellow Pine community but their horse thievery may have been discovered by outsiders as they assumed an alias family name "Hollan," duly noted by census taker-storekeeper Albert Behne who knew their true names (US Census 1920, Idaho, Valley County, Yellow Pine Precinct). Possibly fearing apprehension, in the late spring of 1920 John, Walter, Katie, and Katie's two children took off with the remaining 70 stolen horses that survived the winter, heading cross-country to the Salmon River. Their route of travel would have been

over Profile Gap to Edwardsburg, then down Big Creek probably to the end of the wagon road at the Snowshoe Mine. They crossed Chamberlain Basin, picking up an old Nez Perce Indian trail that crossed the Salmon River at Disappointment Bar, then went up-river about a mile to what is now known as Lantz Bar, on the north side of the river, where they settled in the early summer of 1920. The McCoy's probably thought they were at the ultimate hideout, deep in the Salmon River wilderness. However, soon after settling in at Lantz Bar, the McCoy clan was enumerated by a census taker who was very conscientious to have found them in such a remote location. The census taker noted John McCoy, his sister Katie Beck, and Katie's two children who were then noted as, "Nellie Beck, age 20" and "Joseph Beck, age 19," both born in Wyoming, which does not correspond with the 1910 census data. Katie later ended up in Pendleton, Oregon, where she died October 25, 1956. Nellie Elizabeth Beck married Daniel Strong on June 13, 1921 in Boise. Daniel Strong was a lodger at Curley Brewer's ranch on the South Fork of the Salmon in 1920. They moved to Canada and had three children. Katie's children's father, named Beck, has not been identified in any records.

John McCoy's hideout at Lantz Bar was the early squatter's claim of John Mitchell "Mitt" Haynie. McCoy bought Haynie's improvements at Lantz Bar in 1921 and stayed there until the autumn of 1923, according to the late Salmon River historian John Carrey. In 1925 Frank B. Lantz established a homestead on the bar and thus the name (Carrey and Conley, 1978:116). John McCoy's whereabouts is unknown after 1923. Bob McCoy said his great uncle died in Montana at age 71 [about 1933] when he fell off a hay wagon, breaking his neck (Bob McCoy letter, 1995, undated). A search of death records and census records in Montana and adjacent Idaho for that era failed to find anything about John McCoy (Bill Salmon correspondence, 2006).

Walter McCoy

Walter McCoy (aka Walter Hollan) was not enumerated on the 1920 census. If he had gone to Lantz Bar with his siblings, he only stayed there a very short time, as in 1920 he took up residence on McCalla Creek in Chamberlain Basin. It may have been that en route to Lantz Bar he discovered the abandoned homestead claim that had been established in 1915 by R. A. Wallingford and vacated in 1919. (Preston, 2001:29) The homestead site on McCalla Creek is about three miles downstream from Moose Meadows and about 15 miles by trail to the location of John McCoy's camp on the Salmon River at Lantz Bar.

Soon after of Walter McCoy's settlement on McCalla Creek, the place became known as "McCoy Cabin," and was so noted on Forest Service maps until recent years. His neighbors were few. Jesse Root (1883-1935), who McCoy came to dislike intently, lived part-time at his homestead-ranch on Whimstick Creek, about eight miles away by trail to the southeast. Further to the southeast was Cold Meadows, where a ranger station was built in 1923 and occupied during

the summer. To the west, in the Chamberlain Meadows area, lived William Allen "Al" Stonebraker and August Hotzel, and the Chamberlain ranger station was occupied from June to early October (see Preston, 2001:25-33 for detailed historical descriptions of the habitations in the Chamberlain complex).

An oral history made by an early Yellow Pine resident, the late Lafe Cox (1914-2002) adds information about Walter McCoy's place on McCalla Creek: In mid-May, 1927, the family of Clark and Beulah Cox, including their 13-year old son Lafe, left their home near Emmett, Idaho, to look for a new ranch in the Salmon River backcountry. They had 14 head of horses; Bud Joy and his son Rex had been engaged to guide the Cox family. Their destination was Mallard Creek, on the north side of the Salmon. After an abortive attempt to reach Mallard Creek by way of the South Fork, they turned around and went across Elk Summit to Big Creek and then on through Chamberlain Basin to Campbell's Ferry on the Salmon River. Campbell's Ferry was then owned by Robert A. "Bob" Hilands (see history of Campbell's Ferry: Preston 2002). They could not get across the river because the water was too high, so Bob Hilands sent them back through Chamberlain to Walter McCoy's place to get McCoy to take them down the Salmon on a "goat trail" to a point opposite Mallard Creek where they could get across by rowboat.

Lafe Cox described Walter McCoy:

"McCoy was his name but at that time he was going by the name of Holland. They had come out of Oregon [really Owyhee County, Idaho] and they had got too many horses of the wrong fellows and they had to leave and he ended up over here in Chamberlain. And if he didn't know you, you couldn't see him. He worked rawhides to make a living. He made rawhide bridle reins and hackamores and he'd often sell them to the Forest Service fellows. He'd get enough money to buy groceries on. And his brother [Bert/Archie] lived here at Yellow Pine and he'd take groceries over part way and take them over to him."

Lafe Cox goes on to describe Walter McCoy's place on McCalla Creek:

"You had to know where it was, had to be told because he didn't have many trails in there. They never traveled the same way twice. He was hiding out from the law. He talked to us and he had a campground. We went down and camped and he ate with us. It started to rain so we moved over to his house. Dad and mother stayed in his guest room. Bud Joy, Rex, and I stayed in another building. There were several buildings, but they're all gone [burned by Forest Service]. His house had a porch on it, and a step to get on the porch. He had a picket fence around his garden, probably seven feet high on account of the elk and deer eating up his garden. And he had his yard fenced

with jack pine poles all standing on end. A deer or an elk will not jump a picket fence. You can take a picket fence and put it up four feet high and they won't jump it."

After staying at McCoy's place four or five days, the Cox family went down the Salmon River to a point opposite Mallard Creek. Clark Cox did not like what he saw, turned around, came back through Chamberlain, went down Crooked Creek to the Snowshoe Mine where they camped. They went the next day to Big Creek, over Profile Gap to Yellow Pine, and started up Johnson Creek, stopping to camp at Alec Forstrum's place. Clark Cox bought the Forstrum place; they moved there in early August 1927 and started Cox's Dude Ranch (Cox 1973: 14-23). Lafe Cox and his wife Emma later took over the dude ranch from his parents and operated it until their retirement in 1992 when it was sold. The former Cox Dude Ranch is currently operated as Wapiti Meadows Ranch.

Walter McCoy was sometimes labeled the "wildman of Chamberlain Basin." For a few years prior to 1928, Walter McCoy was reported to have threatened some of the area's few ranchers and trappers with his shotgun, and had been peeking into windows, robbing cabins, and otherwise acting strangely. McCoy was also known to have been taking provisions from the Forest Service commissary (supply building) at the Chamberlain Ranger Station, when it was vacated for the winter. However, at the close of the 1928 season, when no supplies were left, McCoy left an angry note, demanding "his" supplies.

Forest Ranger Dan LeVan, who had known McCoy since LeVan had been appointed the area's Forest Ranger in 1924, said McCoy had been living alone for seven years, his appearance was neat and clean, and his cabin was a model of cleanliness; but "too much isolation, too much brooding over real or fancied wrongs and other causes have injured the memory and brought on visions." Fearing that McCoy "was not in his right mind" and might become violent, Ranger LeVan contacted Idaho County Sheriff Herve Rothwell in late October, 1928, to apprehend McCoy. (Idaho County Free Press, Nov 1, 1928)

The task of apprehending McCoy was not an easy one, considering that there were no roads in the mountain wilderness and there was a foot of snow on the ground. From his winter ranger's office in McCall, Dan LeVan must have had several telephone discussions with Sheriff Rothwell in Grangeville, and others, to develop the apprehension plan. A family story, related by Dan and Dave Cook, grandsons of Warren Cook, indicates that Warren Cook and Jesse Root, both of whom were good friends of Dan LeVan, and also knew Walter McCoy, were involved in the plan. Warren Cook, a former Forest Ranger, lived in McCall; Jesse Root was postmaster-storekeeper in Warren. The involvement of Jesse Root in

the plan had to do with McCoy's long time hatred for Jesse Root who had a ranch in the backcountry a few miles from McCoy's place.

It was quickly determined that for Sheriff Rothwell to come from Grangeville (the county seat of Idaho County) to the scene would require an auto trip of at least two to three days, through McCall and Warren, thence by horseback a day's ride to Chamberlain Ranger Station, or the adjacent Stonebraker Ranch, and another day or more to locate McCoy. Given that there was already snow on the ground and more to come, it was not reasonable for Sheriff Rothwell to come to the scene by that means. It was also known that two weeks prior to the McCoy incident, a few pilots from Nick Mamer Flying Service of Spokane, had begun flying big game hunting parties from Grangeville to the Stonebraker Ranch in Chamberlain Basin. (Lewiston Tribune, Oct 13, 1928) So Sheriff Rothwell called Nick Mamer to arrange for pilot Jack Rose to pick up Rothwell and "a deputized forest ranger" in one of Mamer's airplanes and fly them to the Stonebraker Ranch on Friday, October 26, to begin the hunt for Walter McCoy. The Stonebraker Ranch was about 12 miles from where McCoy lived on McCalla Creek. (Idaho Statesman, Nov 1, 1928; Idaho County Free Press, Nov. 1, 1928)

The Cook brothers' story indicates that their grandfather, Warren Cook, worked with Sheriff Rothwell to apprehend McCoy; so, it was Warren Cook who was the "deputized forest ranger" in the newspaper account. The Cooks' story is a bizarre tale, reminiscent of an Old West dime novel. The story notes that upon their arrival at the Stonebraker Ranch on Friday afternoon, Rothwell and Cook were met by Jesse Root. Root would have come by horseback, probably from the road's end at Hays Station, a full day's ride. The plan was to dupe McCoy into believing that he was playing a good citizen's part in assisting in the arrest of his enemy, Jesse Root, and thereby Rothwell could avoid McCoy being a belligerent captive.

The sheriff's posse no doubt stayed overnight at Stonebraker's, then started their hunt for McCoy on Saturday morning, with Cook and Rothwell borrowing horses from Al Stonebraker. As was their plan, Jess Root went to his ranch on Whimstick Creek and waited while Cook and Rothwell went searching for McCoy. They first went to McCoy's cabin on McCalla Creek but McCoy was not there so they tracked him in the snow for two days, eventually returning to McCoy's cabin on Sunday where they found him standing behind his corral fence. Cook apparently introduced Sheriff Rothwell and McCoy asked, "What do you want?" Rothwell replied, "We need your help to catch Jesse Root, go saddle a horse." Since he had a great dislike for Jesse Root, McCoy readily agreed to help "capture" Root. While McCoy was diverted, saddling his horse, Rothwell secretly unloaded McCoy's shotgun, which was leaning against the fence. The three men then mounted their horses and rode off to Jesse Root's place, a few miles away on Whimstick Creek. As they approached Jesse Root's cabin, McCoy was instructed

by Rothwell, "If I holler for help, you come!" Sheriff Rothwell and Cook entered the cabin and returned with Jesse Root in handcuffs. The four men rode off with McCoy guarding Root from behind, with his unloaded shotgun. (Dan and Dave Cook, interview Oct 12, 1999)

The newspaper account indicates that the sheriff's posse came out of the back-country "by way of Warren and McCall by stage and auto." (Idaho County Free Press, Nov 1, 1928) By deduction, the sheriff's posse must have gone by horseback to Stonebraker's for overnight Sunday, then a day's ride to road's end at Hays Station where they were picked up by auto and taken to Warren. From Warren they took the stage to McCall (the "stage" is a term left over from the days of the horse-drawn stage coach which at that time denoted the automotive transport that hauled freight, mail, and people between Warren and McCall). On arrival in McCall, according to the Cooks' story, the sheriff's posse marched into the jail cell, then exited, leaving a befuddled McCoy behind bars with his empty shotgun. The next day, Tuesday, October 30, Walter McCoy was taken to Grangeville by Sheriff Rothwell, accompanied by Forest Ranger Dan LeVan. On Wednesday there was a sanity examination of McCoy in the court of Judge Wilbur L. Campbell. Present at the examination were Sheriff Rothwell, Ranger LeVan, Doctor John Shinnick, and Attorney Berchman (Bert) Auger. When questioned, McCoy said that during July and August the sun got too fast and he tried to stop it; he said he spent several days and nights worrying over that and also claimed that he was being pursued by the "pitchfork gang, little red devils, the 'Flirt', and a 'Riddle'." Walter McCoy was declared insane and was committed to the Idaho State Mental Hospital at Orofino the next day, October 31, 1928. (Idaho County Free Press, Nov 1, 1928) Walter S. McCoy died at the hospital a few months later on April 17, 1929, and was buried at the Riverside Cemetery in Orofino.

Bert/Archie McCoy Settles in at Yellow Pine

When Bert McCoy arrived in Yellow Pine with his family in the spring of 1919, he was befriended by storekeeper Albert Behne, as noted above. Behne had arrived in Yellow Pine basin in 1902 from Spokane, pushing a wheelbarrow during the Thunder mountain gold rush. Albert Behne (1854-1945) was not a prospector and did not have many outdoorsman skills, but he saw a business potential in Yellow Pine basin. He established a store, and subsequently the Yellow Pine post office. Behne filed a homestead claim for 47.5 acres for what is now the Yellow Pine townsite, patented January 31, 1925 (BLM homestead records).

Long-term Yellow Pine resident Harry Withers (1898-1994) remembered:

"The McCoy family (Holland then) had moved into the basin and had a team of horses, which was used to plow up the meadow back of the hotel and Murph's joint [Murph Earl's Yellow Pine Tavern] and planted and harvested a crop of wheat that helped to prove up on the homestead. McCoy claimed Behne promised him the whole block in the northwest corner in payment for

his help in proving up. McCoy did get two lots, the two I [Harry Withers] now have." (Sumner 1986:13)

Long time Yellow Pine resident Pete Hillman and Bert McCoy bought the café-bar from Dan Drake. They needed \$1000 down payment and between them they came up with \$500, borrowing the remainder from Charlie Maples (Sumner 1986: 23). Bert's daughter-in-law, Aloha McCoy, writes that Bert added a lean-to on each side of the building and one in back. One side was a restaurant, in the middle was a pool hall, and a barber shop on the other side which he leased out. The lean-to in back was a woodshed. The lean-tos have been removed. Bert lost the café-pool hall in a card game (Aloha McCoy 1980). The old building, now renovated, is the Yellow Pine chapel and community center.

Harry Withers wrote, "The McCoy's owned the restaurant and pool hall. I spent the winter with them and was chief cook by common consent, as I liked to cook and the senior McCoy [Bert] was inclined to become slightly incapacitated occasionally. Also, the boys' [Gill and Whitey] talents didn't seem to run toward the culinary arts." Withers added that the restaurant was often the scene of raucous feasts with jugs of locally-produced moonshine whiskey (Sumner 1986:57)

Lafe Cox described Yellow Pine as a center for illegal whiskey production during the Prohibition Era of the late 1920s and early 1930s. From Cox's description it appears that the entire community of Yellow Pine was involved in bootlegging, including Bert McCoy. Bert was arrested in 1931, along with other Yellow Pine residents Roy Elliot, Charles Carwater, Mike Smith, Morris Corbett, Wayne and Mrs. Shapply, Rose Pigg, and LeRoy Parker (Idaho Daily Statesman, August 11, 1931). All were jailed in Cascade and Bert's son Gill had to pay his fine. The "revenueurs" were constantly after them, drawn to Yellow Pine by the large quantities of sugar and grain being sent to storekeeper Albert Behne. Lafe Cox indicated that the whiskey production occurred during the winter and hundreds of barrels would be hidden in the snow. Lafe and his friends would randomly ski throughout the area so that there was a confusion of ski trails so the federal agents would not find the places where the whiskey barrels were buried (Cox 1972:32-35).

Whiskey was an essential ingredient for most social activities in early Yellow Pine; Ted Abstein noted, "Bert McCoy was a great fiddler at the dances when we had live music, which wasn't very often. That was my downfall. I just loved his fiddling and wanted to be a fiddler when I grew up." (Sumner 1986:87)

Carl Kitchen Jr. wrote:

"During prohibition days the fellows in the village would get real serious about going out and cleaning up the cemetery, building fences, etc. Men such as Jim Leahy, Paddy Breen, Bert McCoy, Jack Hanby, and others would pass the hat to collect money for cemetery renovation. Then the fellows would buy a jug or two of bootleg whiskey and go out to the cemetery to work. Somehow, between whiskey and swapping yarns about departed friends, the work never did get done" (Sumner 1986:35).

Harry Withers wrote this story:

"Pat Leahy, Cinnabar [Mine] foreman, and his brother Jim Leahy, Fiddle Creek foreman, and I hiked to Yellow Pine on May 24 [1928]. They started looking for a jug. Bert McCoy, who lived where I now live, had moon-shine, but was away. One of his sons, who was working at Ray Call's sawmill told the Leahys where to find an empty jug and where to dig by a certain garden fence post to find a 10-gallon keg of moonshine. We filled a gallon jug, re-buried the keg, paid for the jug, and left for Bryant's Ranch to spend the night." (Sumner 1986:52)

In addition to being a restaurateur and moonshiner, Bert was a part-time prospector and had a little dig near the mouth of Monumental Creek where he built a cabin in 1931. Bert's daughter, Verna, said, "He was always going to get rich next year," (from Fuller interview, 1984). Bert was working at the claim in the winter of 1933 when he developed pneumonia and had to be rescued by his son Gill with his dog sled. Bert never recovered from the pneumonia and died on June 12, 1933, in a Boise hospital. Bert's mining claim was later relocated by Big Creek summer resident Wilbur Wiles and patented in 1983; the cabin built by McCoy burned in a wildfire in 2002.

McCoy Children in Yellow Pine School

The presence of Bert's children prompted the establishment of a school in Yellow Pine in 1920, first held in a tent. The following year a log school house was built in the flat at the southwest corner of the village which served until 1936, when the present wood frame school house was built. The first children to attend the Yellow Pine school in 1920 were Doris Edwards, Helen Trinler, Ted Abstein, and the McCoy children, Eva, Gill, Leslie ("Whitey"), George, and Myron ("Buster"). However, the 1920 school year lasted only a few days. Gill and Whitey wrapped a bear hide around Buster and pushed what appeared to be a bear into the tent, frightening the young school teacher, Letha Smith, such that she quit, leaving the Yellow Pine school without a teacher until the following year. The teacher for the two years following was Mark Lawton. His students in 1922, in addition to the McCoy's, included the four oldest children of William "Deadshot" Reed: Sam, Mabel, Pat, and young Bill. Deadshot had moved his family to Yellow Pine from

his ranch on the South Fork for the winter for schooling, but the family returned to the South Fork in the early spring before the school term ended. (Lawton, in Sumner 1986: 110; Deinhardt-Hill, 2003:86)

For summer recreation the McCoy children went on fishing expeditions with their mother, Jennie. Youngest daughter, Verna, recalls, "My mother was a fisherman. She would drag all of us kids up someplace so she could fish. [My brothers] George and Buster and me would ride one horse with her. I was about eight years old then. We used to go up to Profile [Summit] to Crater and Fish Lakes. We'd camp up there until we all got so full of fish she'd get mad at us because we couldn't eat 'em all (McCoy interview attached to Fuller letter, April 27, 1984).

Bert and Jennie McCoy had their last child, William ("Billie") Morris McCoy, on October 31, 1923, in Cascade. Billie drowned on Easter Sunday 1931, in the mill pond in Emmett (Aloha McCoy letter, Nov 7, 1995).

The Willey Ranch Connection

On the South Fork of the Salmon River, northwest of Yellow Pine, was the ranch of Simeon "Sim" Willey. The Willey Ranch was reached from Yellow Pine by a 12-mile steep trail, known as the "Willey Trail," over Rainbow Saddle and down the South Fork of Sheep Creek. As the Willey Ranch was lower in elevation than Yellow Pine, gardens crops could be grown there much earlier in the spring and later in the autumn. Sim Willey would periodically make the trip to Yellow Pine to sell or barter his vegetables. Sim also raised cattle on his ranch which were trailed to Yellow Pine for slaughter. It was by this agricultural commerce that the McCoy children became well acquainted with the several children of Sim and Mary ("Minnie") Willey, resulting in two marriages, as noted below.



Gill McCoy, assistant ranger at Chamberlain, n. d.
Photo courtesy of Dan Levan Jr.

Archie Gilbert "Gill" McCoy

Gill was the oldest of Bert's children, born in 1905. At an early age he ran a trap line in the winter for marten and fox. In the mid-1920s Gill assisted his father freighting mining equipment and supplies by pack string from Yellow Pine, which was the end of the road at that time, to mines further in the wilderness. On the return trips ore would be transported to Yellow Pine to be loaded onto trucks. In 1927, several mines at Stibnite were consolidated under the ownership of F.W. Bradley who formed the Yellow Pine Company. A truck road was completed to the Stibnite mines in 1929 so that the complex ore, which contained gold and antimony, could be transported to the railhead at Cascade and thence to the smelter at Salt Lake City. The truck road terminated Gill McCoy's business of freighting to Stibnite by pack string. (Fuller 1987:227)

Gill was an expert long distance dog sled driver. In the winter, when the road was closed by snow, Gill would transport the mail by dog sled between Yellow Pine and Cascade for the primary Post Office Department contractor, George Stonebraker, younger brother of Chamberlain rancher Al Stonebraker. Gill was the winter mailman from the mid-1920s until 1930, when Stonebraker began winter mail delivery by aircraft (Preston 2003:5) George Stonebraker had a dog sled race team of nine Irish setters that Gill drove in competition for Stonebraker. In one such event Gill won fourth place in the slush on Payette Lake in 1931 (Idaho County Free Press, March 5, 1931; Bob McCoy correspondence, Oct 17, 1995).

Gill McCoy, Bill "Slim" Clark, Bill Timm, and a man called "Frenchy," established a mining claim in the 1930s on Monumental Creek opposite the mouth of Camp Creek. A stamp mill was moved to the site by Slim Clark from an abandoned mine on the west slope of Routson Peak, which had been worked around 1908 and the early 1930s. A substantial cabin was built on the claim. Over the years, the ownership of the claim became confused. In 1963, the question of ownership, which included Jim Burris, resulted in the shooting of Slim Clark by Burris's son. Slim Clark bled to death before he could get medical attention (interview with George Dovel, Aug 15, 1977, in Hartung 1978:42). The cabin became known as the "murder cabin;" which was destroyed by wildfire in 2000 (Kingsbury, pers. comm. 2001).

Gill McCoy marries Blanche Willey

After an across-the-mountain courtship of several years, 22-year old Gill McCoy married 21-year old Blanche Willey on May 5, 1926. They had a little one-room house in Yellow Pine where they lived for four years. For entertainment they went to dances in the school house, where they "danced all night long," said Blanche McCoy. Gill's brothers, George and Buster (Myron) stayed with them, sleeping in a tent next to the house, even in the winter. When Buster was in the 8th grade, about 1923, he quit school and took off across the mountain to live with the Willey's. At that time Gill had a string of horses which he and Bud Joy and Sam Cook used for packing hunters and fishermen, as well as hauling freight to and from Stibnite. From 1931 to 1938, Gill and Blanche lived at Stibnite where Gill worked outside using teams to haul mine timbers and other roustabout work. (Blanche McCoy interview, August 3, 1978).

Gill and Blanche's children were:

Betty McCoy, born May 20, 1927, in Boise; died October 9, 1979.

Bob McCoy, born November 11, 1929, at Emmett; died July 9, 1998

Colleen "Babe" McCoy, born July 7, 1931; at Cascade; died April 29, 1995.

Joe McCoy, born April 1, 1939 at Emmett, currently living in Idaho.



Monumental Creek Ranch that Gill McCoy bought in 1933.
This photograph was taken ca. 1955 when it belonged to the USFS.
Photo courtesy of Bob and Joyce Dustman

Gill buys Monumental Creek Ranch

In 1933 Gill McCoy bought the Monumental Creek Ranch, at the mouth of Holy Terror Creek, four and half miles north, or downstream from the abandoned townsite of Roosevelt. The ranch had its beginnings as the 1913 homestead claim of R.A. Wallingford. In the early 1920s Rufus A. "Rufe" and Ora Hughes took over the place and received a patent on the 95-acre property on June 14, 1928. Roy Elliot had become Hughes' partner and then bought him out. In the autumn of 1929 Jess and Vernie Vanderpool bought the ranch and ran it for two years. Jess was also known in the Yellow Pine area by the alias Jess Warner as he was wanted for horse stealing. Vernie's daughter by her first marriage, Aloha Beck (see biographical note on page 22), lived on the ranch as a child and later married Gill's younger brother Myron "Buster" McCoy. When the Vanderpool's could not pay for the ranch, Roy Elliot sold the place to Gill McCoy (see homestead plat on page 14).

Gill moved his family to the Monumental Creek Ranch in 1933 where he packed supplies for the Forest Service in the summer and did packing for hunters in the autumn. Gill also ran a few cattle on the ranch and the adjacent forest land. The family lived on the ranch year around until 1939 when they moved to Emmett for better schooling for the children.

Gill McCoy began his full-time employment with the Forest Service in 1939, as alternate ranger on the Big Creek District, working for Ranger Dan LeVan. Ranger LeVan's children were the same age as those of Gill McCoy, resulting in a very close working relationship and family relationship. When Dan LeVan's wife Persis died at age 41 in 1945, Blanche McCoy became the surrogate mother to Dan's young children. Dan LeVan Jr. refers to Blanche McCoy as "my other Mom" (LeVan letter, Jan 1, 2007). The LeVan-McCoy relationship is further described in a following Dan LeVan biographic sketch and the included articles by Dan LeVan Jr.

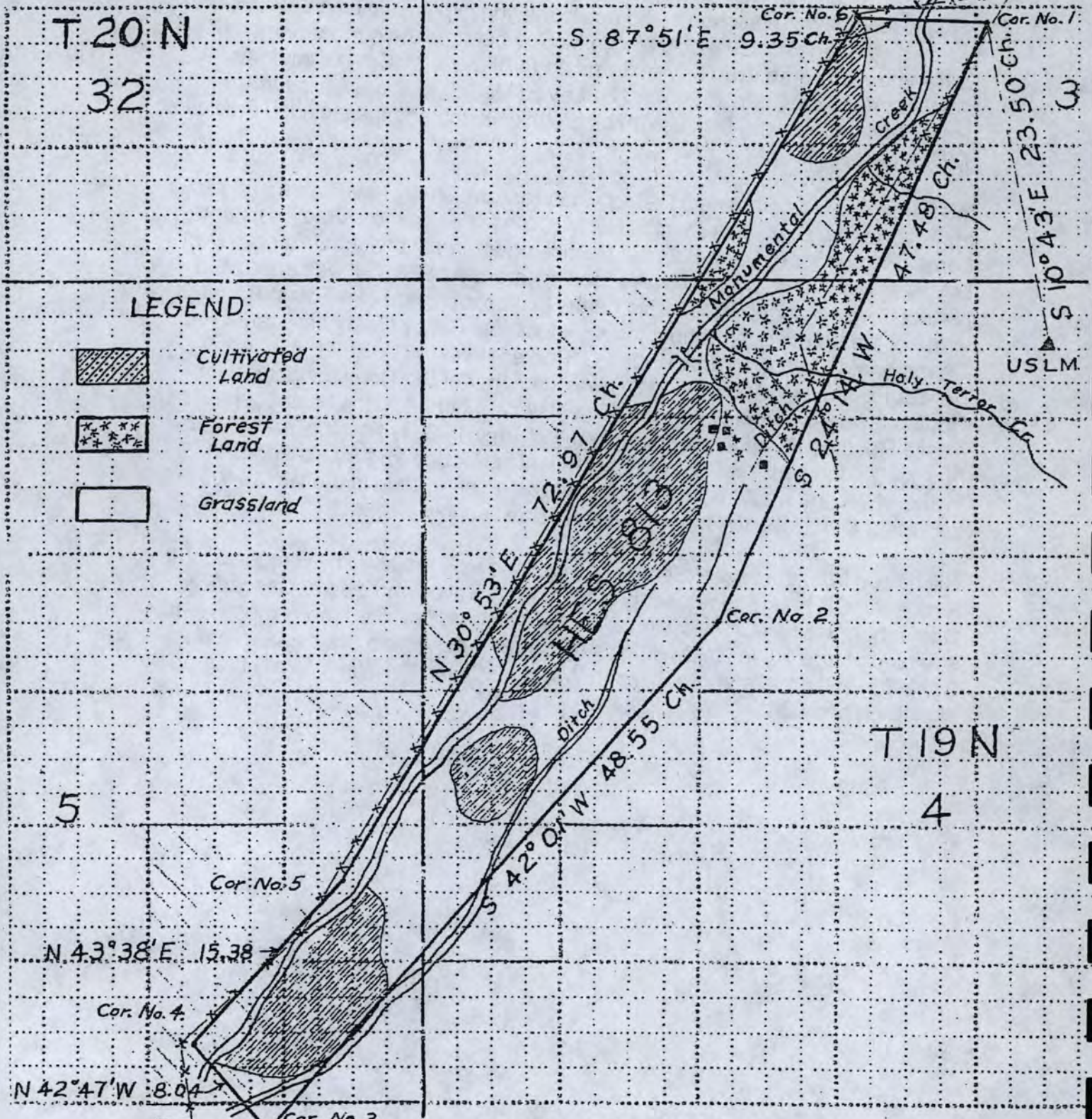
In 1946, the old Chamberlain District was organizationally reactivated and separated from the Big Creek District. Gill McCoy was assigned as the Assistant Forest Ranger for the Chamberlain District, under the oversight of Ranger Dan LeVan at Big Creek. Upon LeVan's reassignment in 1950, Gill was appointed District Forest Ranger, believed to be the last appointment of a Forest Ranger by virtue of job knowledge, without formal education. Gill's primary assistant in Chamberlain was Buff Parke (Elbert C. Parke, 1894-1981). Buff's wife, Adelia (Adelia Routson Parke, 1898-1981) was daughter of Big Creek pioneer John Routson (Adelia authored a fascinating history of her life in the back-country; see Adelia Routson Parke's, Memoirs of an Old Timer). Sally Preston, remembers how kindly she was treated by Gill and Blanche McCoy and Adelia and Buff Parke when she would fly to Chamberlain as a young child in the late 1940s with her father Don Park, the Idaho National Forest supply officer.

Gill retired from the Forest Service in 1952 and was replaced by Ranger G. Val Simpson. Gill retired to a rancher's life in Long Valley and died at Cascade on December 31, 1964. Gill's wife, Blanche Willey McCoy lived many more years; she died at age 90, in Caldwell, on August 18, 1995 (Idaho Statesman, August 21, 1995). See more about Blanche Willey McCoy in the Willey family biographic sketch on page 26.

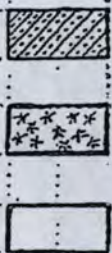
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE—FOREST SERVICE

BLACKFOOT Land district. Mag. declin. 20° 50' Area 95.26

MCCOY, GILL S. 4 & 9th 33 T. 19 & 20 N. R. 11 E. B. Ver. Scale 8 inches = 1



LEGEND



Cultivated Land
Forest Land
Grassland

Work by F.E. Powers Date Oct. 31, 1939 Platted by F.E. Powers
Remarks Boundaries Traced from Township Platt of 1923 Survey
Approved



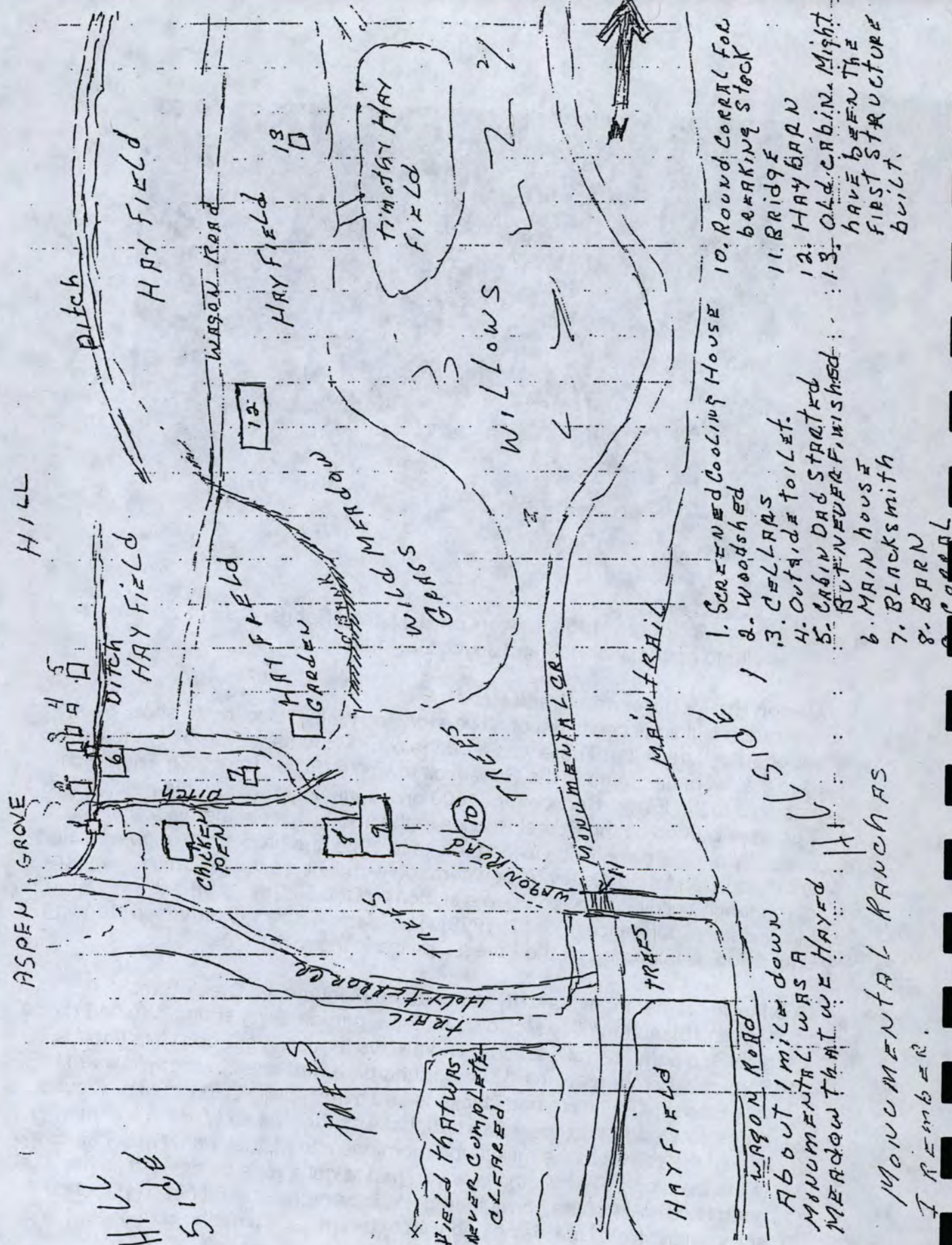
Bob McCoy, ca. 1950, at work on Big Creek Ranger District
Photo courtesy of Bob and Joyce Dustman

Life on the Monumental Creek Ranch

The ranch buildings consisted of a two-story log house, blacksmith shop, barn, warehouse, and cellar. There was a bridge over Monumental Creek to the wagon road that went upstream to the Roosevelt townsite (Fuller 1987:232) The ranch was sold to the Forest Service for \$1500 on August 29, 1941. All the ranch buildings were burned by the Forest Service in the 1960s, except the blacksmith shop. When Gill's son Bob visited the site in 1966, the blacksmith shop was still standing. Bob found his toy truck where the woodshed used to stand. A layout of the ranch buildings, based upon a sketch by Bob McCoy, is on page 16. (Bob McCoy correspondence, Oct 17, 1995) The blacksmith shop remained standing until it, too, was burned by the Forest Service in the mid-1970s.

Bob McCoy remembers his early years at the Monumental Creek Ranch:

"Mother (Blanche Willey McCoy) planted a garden every spring. We had radishes, onions, carrots, lettuce, and always turnips. I still don't like turnips. Someone before us planted some rhubarb. It was still growing wild when I was there in 1966. We had chickens and every spring Dad would pick out a range cow with the biggest bag and that was the milk cow for the summer. We let the calf have the milk in the mornings and Mother would milk [the cow] in the evenings. To milk the cow you had to get a rope on her and tie her head to the side of the corral then get another rope around her hind feet so she couldn't kick. Us kids helped with that part. One time the cow got out and



was across the bridge over Monumental Creek. Mother had us kids wait at the trail across Holy Terror Creek so when she chased the cow back across the bridge we could head her up towards the corral. Mother was running through the trees to get around the cow when suddenly she screamed, then no more noise. My older sister Betty waded Monumental Creek but my younger sister Colleen ("Babe") and I weren't big enough at the time so we ran across the bridge. We found her [Blanche] laying flat on her back, trying to get her breath. She had run into a rope corral that Babe and I had built for our stick horses and knocked the breath out of her. Beside getting a good spanking we quit building corrals.

"I don't remember learning to ride – it was something you just did. We all had our own horse. My first horse was a mare named Liz. Until I got bigger, to get on her I would have to get her close to the side of the corral then climb the corral and jump on her. Sometimes it would take more than on try. She would not always stand still."

"We all had our chores to do. My sister Betty wasn't much of an outside person so she did household chores and Babe and I took care of the outside chores. We got the firewood in, took care of the chickens, tended the garden, and helped irrigate which we especially liked because every so often [spawning Chinook] salmon would get in the ditch. It was great sport chasing the salmon down and wrestling it out of the ditch. Once in a while we would get one too big and Dad would help us. As I think back, I believe Dad got as much enjoyment watching us as we did chasing the salmon."

[Spawning Chinook salmon were common in all the backcountry streams at least until the late 1950s, as observed by the author when living on the Secesh River, and observed by the late Val Simpson (1924-2005) in Chamberlain Creek when he was Forest Ranger on the Chamberlain District on the Payette National Forest (G. Val Simpson, oral history 1984)]. Bob McCoy continues his story:

"I can't ever remember wanting for anything while we were on the ranch. Wild game was plentiful, the best fishing anywhere, and lots of grouse. Wild berries grew everywhere. Writing about ranch life brings back lots of memories. During haying season everyone helped. When I was seven I was old enough to drive the team pulling the hay rake. Dad wouldn't let me on the mowing machine because it was too dangerous. When we were putting the hay in the hay barn, Betty led the workhorse that pulled the Jackson fork up and along the trolley in the top of the hay barn. She hated it because she was scared of animals. One day she got scared about something and came running around the barn and the old workhorse, Rondo, followed her. He pulled the Jackson fork out through the end of the barn. [My other sister] Babe led the horse from then on. She wasn't scared of trying anything. My job was up in the barn throwing the hay to the sides as it was dumped from the Jackson fork.

"When school started in the fall, Mother and us kids moved to Yellow Pine where we had a home. My first two years of school [1935-36] were in a log cabin. The school district finally built a school house on the flat below town. All the grades were in one room. There was never over nine kids in school at any one time. When Betty graduated from the eighth grade [1939], Dad bought a place at Emmett where there was a high school. We stayed there in the winters from then on.

"I started working for the Forest Service in 1942. I was a flunky in fire camps. I was twelve years old. I worked every summer through 1945 in the Big Creek district on trail crews and on fires. When I was older and working for the Forest Service, the most enjoyable times were when I would be out alone with my pack string for three or four days at a time. In 1946 I was stationed at Chamberlain Basin as a packer. My main job was packing out smokejumpers. During World War II, most of the smokejumpers were conscientious objectors. They were very dedicated firefighters. Someone from the McCall [Supervisor's] Office found out I was only sixteen years old and I was laid off (you had to be seventeen years old then to work for the Forest Service). I then joined the Marine Corps." (Bob McCoy correspondence, Oct 7, 1995)

"Every fall the Forest Service [pack stock and riding] stock was trailed out to lower country for the winter; most of the time on the Salmon River below Rig-gins. In the spring they were trailed back in [to Big Creek]. They would camp on Profile Creek above Yellow Pine and wait for snow conditions to get just right [with a hard crust] so they could take the stock over Profile Summit on top of the snow. On my first leave from the Marines, spring of 1947, they were camped, waiting on snow conditions. There was Dad, [Ranger] Dan LeVan, Skook [Myron] McCoy, Warner (Slim) Willey [Blanche McCoy's brother], and I think Ed James. I caught the mail stage into Yellow Pine and walked up to their camp. The next day the snow was right and I helped them take the stock over the summit. When you started over Profile Summit you had to make in one day because there was no place to hold the stock. When we went over there was still eight feet of snow on the summit. I stayed with them until my leave was about up, then radioed McCall and had a plane fly into Big Creek and get me.

"When I was discharged from the Marines the summer of 1948, I went back to work for the Forest Service. I was stationed on a lookout in the Big Creek District. In 1949 I was [again] stationed on a lookout in the Big Creek District. In 1950 I was foreman of a trail crew at Big Creek. That was my last year with the Forest Service" (Bob McCoy correspondence, 1995).

In his last year of packing for the Forest Service, Bob McCoy and Bob and Joyce Dustman, who had been Big Creek summer employees for several years, were workmates for most of the 1950 summer. The Dustman's and two other Forest Service summer workers had the project of clearing many miles of trails in the lower Big Creek area. Bob McCoy was their packer. Bob and Joyce Dustman wrote of their experience working for the Forest Service in Fourteen Summers with the Payette National Forest, which includes several pages about their association with Bob McCoy and their description and photographs of the McCoy Ranch on Monumental Creek as they found it in 1950, with the ranch buildings still standing.

Bob McCoy was married to his first wife Harriet, in 1949, and together they had six children. In 1967 he married his second wife Reva and together they traveled to North Africa and the Western States on pipeline construction projects until his death at age 68, on July 9, 1998, while he was en route to the historic landmark dedication at the old Big Creek Ranger Station (Payette Lakes Star-News, July 16, 1998).



Skook McCoy, alternate ranger at Big Creek, before 1947
Photo courtesy of Dan LeVan Jr.

Myron Burdett "Skook" McCoy

Myron McCoy was known only as Myron to his wife, Aloha. To his family he was known as Buster. To his workmates he was known as "Skook." Skook is short for the Chinook Indian jargon "skookumchuck," meaning "powerful," or close to that.

In 1927, at the age of 12, Skook was essentially on his own and began working for Milt Hood, packing a string of mules to Stibnite and Thunder Mountain. However, with the completion of the truck road to Stibnite in 1929, the mule packing job dried up (Milt Hood, and his wife Mary, subsequently leased the Thomas Creek Ranch on the Middle Fork and established the successful Middle Fork Lodge). In those early winters, Skook also did some trapping. In 1931 Skook was employed by the Forest Service, as was everyone in the backcountry, on the great Chamberlain fire. He then did placer mining at Thunder Mountain and later went to work for the Jensen brothers at the Snowshoe Mine on Crooked Creek. In 1935 Skook went to work for Blackie Wallace at the Flying "W" Ranch on Cabin Creek (see Preston 2001:39-40). Skook fed Blackie's cattle and carried the mail on the Big Creek route (Wallace had the mail contract at that time). Aloha Beck's mother and step-father, Jess Vanderpool, had leased the former Bellingham place on Cabin Creek from Wallace. It was at Cabin Creek that Skook met 15-year old Aloha Beck. The following spring, 1936, Skook began working for the Forest Service on Ranger Dan LeVan's trail crew on Big Creek, where he could keep his eye on Aloha. On September 16, 1936, Myron "Skook" McCoy and Aloha Beck were married in Cascade (see details of their courtship on page 27).

For a number of years, beginning in 1937, Skook and Aloha spent their summers on fire lookouts in the Big Creek District of the old Idaho National Forest, working for Dan LeVan. The summers of 1937 and 1938 were spent on Chicken Peak. The intervening winter was spent running the Big Creek Hotel, which they had leased from owner Dick Cowman (1905-2004). The summers of 1939 and 1940 were spent on Horse Mountain; 1941 was spent on Rush Creek Point, and 1942 on Lookout Mountain. As a result of a manpower shortage during WW II, in 1943 the two were separated, with Aloha sitting alone on Lightning Peak and Skook on Lookout Mountain. At the close of the 1943 season, Skook joined the Navy Seabees, returning to the Forest Service at the close of WW II. They spent one more summer on Lookout Mountain, then Skook became the Assistant Ranger at Big Creek, working for Ranger Dan LeVan, while Skook's older brother, Gill, who had been LeVan's assistant, went to the Chamberlain Ranger Station. Meanwhile, their son, James Burdett McCoy, was born at Emmett on December 4, 1947. In August 1948, they established their permanent home in McCall. When Dan LeVan was reassigned from Big Creek, Skook resigned from the Forest Service to work for Brown's Tie and Lumber Company in McCall. They later bought a small ranch at Emmett where Myron "Skook" McCoy died of cancer on August 31, 1991. Aloha still lives at the ranch. Their son James, is a mining engineer, a graduate of the University of Idaho. Skook is also fondly remembered in the Dustman story Fourteen Summers with the Payette National Forest.

Leslie James "Whitey" McCoy

Whitey was born at Avery, Idaho, on May 11, 1907. He first married Mary Willey in Oct 1931, but divorced in early 1937. They had one son, Eugene Leslie McCoy, born in Boise on Oct 18, 1933, who became an attorney. Whitey's second marriage was to Thelma Collins. They had daughter Thelma Patricia McCoy.

As a young man Whitey worked in the Yellow Pine area in the mines of Henry Abstein. He later worked for Sumner Stonebraker (younger brother of Al Stonebraker) packing supplies and machinery to Stibnite, then subsequently went to work at the Stibnite mine. After his divorce from Mary Willey in 1937, Whitey went to work for the mines in north Idaho and Butte, Montana. He met and married Thelma Collins in Washington, then returned to north Idaho to work in the mines. Whitey returned to Big Creek where he carried the mail for two years, then worked at the Stibnite mine during WWII. After WWII they bought a ranch in northern Washington, then sold the ranch and moved to Caldwell, Idaho, where he bought a stock truck, but he spent so much time away from home he sold the truck and returned to ranching. Whitey died of a heart attack Dec 31, 1960.

George Henry McCoy

George was born March 1, 1913, at Mountain Home, Idaho. As a young man he worked at the Mile High Ranch of Ernest and Roy Elliot on Big Creek, where he put up hay and packed in supplies from Warren. In the autumn he helped the Elliots pack hunters and in the winter George hunted cougars and coyotes. During the great Chamberlain fire of 1931, George worked for the Forest Service with his pack string. He married Doris McFarland; they had a son John Walter McCoy born at Emmett, Sep. 8, 1938; and daughter Judith Lynn McCoy, born at Emmett Dec. 21, 1949, she died April, 1978. George died of a heart attack Jan. 25, 1964.

In the early 1930s, George went to Pistol Creek, on the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, packing supplies, and then spent a short time working in the mines. He returned to Yellow Pine where he packed supplies to Thunder Mountain mines. In the late 1930s George leased the Flying W Ranch on Big Creek from Blackie Wallace. George formed a partnership with George "Blondie" McGill for cattle ranching.

Around 1940 they purchased the former Stonebraker, Beale, and Hotzel ranches in Chamberlain Basin. There they ran cattle in the summer and hunting camps in the autumn, removing the cattle to winter range near Mountain Home before the hunters came. The Chamberlain Basin ranches were sold to the Idaho Fish and Game Department in 1949. The last cattle drive was in the autumn of 1949 in which 60 head of cattle were moved to the road's end at Big Creek by George and his 11 year-old son John, and 10 year-old Joe McCoy, youngest son of Gill McCoy. After selling the Chamberlain ranches, George bought a ranch near Pine, Idaho, in the Mountain Home area. George also had heavy construction equipment that he used building logging roads in the Mountain Home area.

Verna Luella McCoy

Verna was born at Bruneau, Idaho, on Jan 21, 1911. She married Ivan Lee Evans on Aug 31, 1929. They had son Jerald Lee Evans, born at Cascade on Sep 6, 1931; and Verna Jean Evans, born at Emmett on June 2, 1933. Verna and Ivan divorced and she married Jim Scovel. Verna died of cancer on April 29, 1995. Her son Jerald Evans became Idaho Superintendent of Public Instruction.

ALOHA BECK McCOY

Aloha May Beck was born in 1920. Aloha is noted in the 1930 census in Lemhi County, Idaho. The following is Aloha's story, which was attached to her letter dated, April 27, 1995:

"My life in the backcountry started in 1930. My mother [Vernie] and my father were divorced in 1929. Mother took up with a man called Jess Warner [an alias for Jess Vanderpool] in the backcountry. They saw an ad in the Salmon paper for a ranch for sale on Monumental Creek. They went to see about it, liked it and put a down payment on it. I had a brother, Isaac LaVere Beck (called LaVere), and a sister, Lila Lee Beck. The spring of 1930 we left the Lemhi River with everything we had on horses. We were on our way to Monumental Creek. I do not remember how long it took us, but I do remember all the rain, snow, and wind. Lila wanted to be put in the grub box so she could stay warm. I remember staying over at Meyers Cove because it was snowing so hard. We also stayed over a day at the Crandall Ranch on the Middle Fork. It is now called the Flying "B" Air Strip. We went up Brush Creek over Two Point Peak. No trail there any more. We went past Lookout Mountain and up to the ranch. It was way after dark when we go to the ranch house. Everyone was so tired and cold. In a few days we wanted to go riding so Jess had us gather around the table and said, "I have something to give you and something to tell you. I do not want you to ever forget it." Then he gave us each a pocket knife and a little container of matches. He told us that if we ever got lost to put our reins over the [saddle] horn so our horses could not eat, then let them go where they wanted to go. He told us that they will always take you back to where you started. He said, "The matches are never to be used unless you are out someplace and your horse or you break a leg. In that case, build a fire and make good smoke and someone will see it and come. Your pocket knife may come in handy in lots of ways." My sister Lila and I would ride all over that [first] summer. We tried putting the reins up and kicking our horses in the ribs to see if they would go home. They always did. My brother LaVere liked to fish instead of riding with us. The salmon used to come there [to the ranch] in the irrigation ditches. The field out there would just be covered with salmon. We used to go out there and get them and put them under plants and everything else. Also, when they were irrigating the fields, you'd see does and fawns all over.

"In the hay field was lots of badgers and [ground] squirrels. One day Jess told me if I would shoot them and bring him 200 tails he would give me an old single-shot .22 rifle. Well, I wanted that rifle so it did not take me long before it belonged to me. Jess gave all the shells I could use for the job and gave me instructions on the care of my gun. Then he told me I was on my own. I still have the .22. My son [James McCoy] learned to shoot with it, too, in later years."

"Mom took us kids up to Roosevelt Lake. We could see lots of houses in the lake and some in the [mud] slide. We went into one house in the slide that was like walking uphill. Lots of books and ledgers all over the floor. Mother said it had been an office. Later, fishermen set fire to everything so they could land a plane on the ice."

"At times Lila and I would ride down the creek to visit with Claude and Elsie Taylor [see Preston: 2001:42]. In the fall we would go to Yellow Pine to school. In the spring Jess would bring the horses to get us. We would camp at the Fern Mine. The next morning, long before daylight, we were on our way over Monumental Summit while the snow was still frozen. It was always a mess because some places the snow was too soft to hold the horses. The summer of 1931 Jess packed to the 1931 fire out of Chamberlain Basin. Mother wanted to go with Jess so she left us kids alone for weeks at a time [see an account of this major wildfire in Briggs 1963:75-104]. In the fall of '31 we all went to Leslie's and Mary Willey McCoy's shivaree [wedding party]. Everyone had a good time. In the fall of '32 we were camped on Johnson Creek, waiting for the people to move to Boise so we could rent the Van Meter house [in Yellow Pine]. Mother and I was getting supper over a campfire when Roy Elliot came running up. He told Mother that he wanted the rest of his money right then [for the Monumental Creek Ranch]. She told him she did not have it. He cussed her with language I'll not repeat. So Mother told him to get out and he could take over the place next spring. He told Mother he could sell the place for cash. Mother told him to do so." [Elliot sold the ranch to Gill McCoy].

"On March 21, 1933, my half brother [Jess Vanderpool Jr.] was born in the Van Meter house; first baby born in Yellow Pine. Mrs. Bill Newell, Mary [Willey] McCoy, Jess, and myself was with Mother. Mother did not want any of us kids and let us know it every day. When Jess Jr. came she did not want him either. I tried to shield him as much as possible. I learned to do the family wash on the board. Jess taught me to make sour dough and bread made from it. He taught me to cook other things too. The summer of 1933 Jess got a job cutting wood for Dan McRae at the Sunnyside Mine in Thunder Mountain. We moved into an old one-room shack. Mrs. McRae ask Mother if I could help her in the kitchen. She was cooking for the miners. Mother was pleased I brought home a silver dollar every day. Every night when I got home the family wash was soaking, waiting for me to do. When the work for Jess was over we moved to the Mormon Ranch. Jess went to work for Mr. Crandall [who was running cattle on his ranch and the adjoining Mormon Ranch on the Middle Fork]. No school again. On my 14th birthday I took little Jess for a walk. When we got back George McCoy was there. He had been up to visit Fred [Paulsen] and Daisy Tappen [up river at the Pistol Creek Ranch]. He was headed for the Mile Hi [Ranch on Big Creek] to hunt cougar with Ernest Elliot. In May [1934] we moved from the Mormon Ranch to the Garden Ranch on Big Creek. That summer Ernest Elliot died [of spotted

fever]. He was buried on the Mile Hi. We went to his funeral. A lot of people came. George and Myron [McCoy] were there. That was the very first time I had ever seen Myron McCoy. He was later to become my husband of 54 years."

"The fall of 1934 we went to Yellow Pine to school. The spring of 1935 we moved to the Bellingham Ranch on Cabin Creek. The folks had leased the ranch [from Blackie Wallace]. We moved into boarded-up tents. Jess went to work for a surveying crew with his pack string. Fall of 1935, no school. Fall of 1935 Myron McCoy went to work for Blackie Wallace [Merl R. Wallace, 1895-1972] on Cabin Creek below us. He was packing the mail and feeding cattle. In the spring of 1936 Jess got a bunch of fellows together and built the cabin on Cabin Creek, later called a lodge. Myron McCoy went to work again for [Big Creek Ranger] Dan LeVan as soon as trail work began, spring 1936. When Myron got back up to the ranch, he ask me to marry him. I told him I would when I was eighteen [she was then 16]. Later that summer he brought me an engagement ring. Mother was furious, so Jess told her to calm down because in two years I would probably change my mind. From that time on things just kept getting worse. Jess went back to work for the surveying crew again. Mother started to go with them but the boss told her no women could go. He told her he was not going to take a chance of her getting hurt. So things at home really got bad."

"In July, Mother went up to the store [at Big Creek]. While there, Dick Cowman [the owner] ask her if I could come work for him. He needed someone to help in the hotel. So I went to work with Mrs. [Lesta] Coonrod. I really enjoyed working there. My brother [LaVere, then about 14] had gone to live with Dad. Lila would not take care of little Jess. On September 14, Mother brought little Jess up for me to watch. I told her I just did not have time to watch him. She told me I would have to any way, so I told Mrs. Coonrod about it. She went to Dick and told him we were so busy I had no time to take care of both jobs. Dick told Mother if I was to baby sit, I could go home to do it. If she wanted me to work there, I could not baby sit. She gathered my wages, then called me to her room next to the store. She told me I knew who Jess was seeing and just would not tell her. I could not tell her because I did not know. Then she cussed me and threatened my life. By that time she was yelling. Lots of fellers from trail work and hunters coming in were on the store porch and could not help but hear her. I was so ashamed of her. The next day Jess brought the surveying crew in for mail and more grub. Later that same day, Myron came in off trail work. They both heard all about what had gone on. Everyone decided we should get married. Jess found us a ride to Cascade, also someone to stand up with us. So September 16, 1936, we were married."

In a later letter, April 27, 1996, Aloha McCoy wrote:

"You ask about Bill Adamson. I had never seen or heard of him until he came in to Big Creek as [Ranger] Dan LeVan's government packer. For years, he was [the Forest Service fire] guard at Burgdorf. They let him go, so he ask Dan for a job. Mother and Jess [Vanderpool] split the blankets the spring of 1937. She came back to Big Creek but Jess never did. Mother took up with Bill Adamson, then around Christmas got married. Bill worked two or three years for Dan. Dan had to let him go because of my trouble-making mother. They then moved to Cambridge where he worked in the sawmill. They never went back to Big Creek."

Aloha wrote on December 2, 1998:

"I have five acres here [in Emmett] and rent the pasture in the summer to a neighbor for his cows. It helps pay the taxes and I don't have to work keeping it up. It gives me my yard to putter in. My [children] Jim and Kathy live in Boise so I drive over there or they come over here...I can look out my front window and see the snow-capped mountains behind Horseshoe Bend...It really is nice here."

SIMEON ASA "SIM" WILLEY

Sim Willey was an early Warren miner, a brother of Norman B. Willey, also a Warren miner and former governor of Idaho. Sim Willey established a squatter's homestead on a bench on the west side of the South Fork of the Salmon River, that subsequently became the Crosby "Curley" Brewer Ranch, about a mile upriver from the bridge at Hall's Crossing. The bridge at Hall's Crossing (present day South Fork bridge) washed out in 1879. Sim Willey built a bridge across the South Fork near the mouth of Elk Creek, about two miles upriver from Hall's Crossing. On April 15, 1887, Sylvester "Three Finger" Smith bought the bridge, but it was washed away on June 17, 1887. Sim married Mary "Minnie" Alma Vickers on Sept 30, 1890, at her parental home in Bonaparte, Iowa. The first five of their nine children, noted below, were born at the "Brewer Ranch". The other four children were born at the Willey Ranch at Sheep Creek. Sim was post-master of the short-lived Hall Post Office, at Hall's Crossing, from September 16, 1895, to January 22, 1896. Sim's wife Mary was born about 1865, died about 1918; Sim, born in New York, about 1860, died Nov 26, 1939. Both died at their South Fork ranch.

In 1900 Sim and Mary moved upriver to the mouth of Sheep Creek, establishing a 160-acre homestead, which was patented in 1923. The Willey Ranch, as it was called for many years, could only be reached by trail; there was a cable trolley to access the far side of the South Fork. They were a self-sufficient family, raising cattle, hay, fruit, and garden crops, all tended by hand with no mechanical equipment. Sim's son Ernest established an 80-acre homestead abutting that of his father, and both properties were operated as a collective unit. Garden crops were packed to Yellow Pine and Warren for sale, as those localities were too high in altitude to grow crops. Also, cattle were trailed to those locations for slaughter. Staples, such as flour and coffee, were packed in by horseback from Warren once a year in the autumn. Although the Willey Ranch could only be reached by trail, there were people transiting the place quite regularly in her childhood, said Blanche Willey McCoy.

The main house had five rooms: a large room on the upper floor where the girls and the school teacher slept, a bedroom downstairs, a kitchen, and a dining room. The dining room had a great long table with a bench on each side. Another building was the bunk house and school; the boys slept upstairs and the ground floor was the school. Sim Willey was a well-educated man and had many books in the library. The children learned to speak some French and German. Blanche Willey McCoy remembers that one of her teachers was Mary Zumwalt (wife of Charles C. Zumwalt). In the evening, especially during winter, they would spend an hour or two reading. They would read from the Bible, and then each of the children would take turns reading paragraphs from the many books. (Blanche McCoy interview, Aug 3, 1978; Idaho State Historical Society, Boise, Idaho)

There were nine Willey children:

1. Argie, born January 10, 1892, married George Mosher on Nov. 7, 1923; George grew up in remote Chamberlain Basin. They first lived at the old Lawman place on the South Fork, then bought a ranch in the Council area where they later died. They had no children.
2. Raymond Asa, born 1893, died of heart failure Oct. 8, 1918. (He was rejected for military service earlier in the year because of his heart condition.)
3. George Edgar, born Dec. 17, 1895, enlisted in Marine Corps in 1918. After he completed his Marine Corps service he returned to the ranch on the South Fork. Later George went to Missouri, then died in Florida in May, 1977 (from social security records).
4. Ernest Norman, born Mar. 22, 1897, Army private, killed in action during the last few days of WW I on Nov. 4, 1918. He received a post-mortem patent on his 80-acre homestead adjacent to his father's homestead.
5. Edith, born 1899, died at age 3.
6. Warner L (Slim), born Mar. 27, 1900, died Dec. 1, 1966; was long-term packer for the Forest Service at Big Creek, working for Dan LeVan.
7. Pearl Louise, born 1903, married Floyd Smith, Mar. 29, 1941.
8. Blanche I, born Aug. 15, 1905, died Aug. 18, 1995; married Gill McCoy.
9. Mary Vickers, born 1908
 - a. had son Ernest L Willey, born Aug. 24, 1924, died May 6, 2001; he was unmarried, lived near Tacoma WA.
 - b. married Leslie "Whitey" McCoy in October 1931, divorced 1937; They had son Eugene Leslie McCoy, born Oct. 18, 1933, at Boise.
 - c. married ?? Hall

Blanche Willey McCoy had an eighth-grade education by home schooling at the remote Willey Ranch, and a year of high school by correspondence. Despite those humble beginnings, Blanche, at age 82, was noted as the oldest enrolled student at the University of Alaska at Anchorage in 1987, working on her Bachelor of Arts degree. Blanche said, "I've never missed one day of class and I'm never late." She returned from Alaska to Idaho in 1991 and died in Caldwell in 1995. (Anchorage Daily News, 1987; Boise Statesman, Aug 21, 1995)

After the death of Sim Willey in 1939, the ranch was sold to Clarence Rebillett, who had two children, Louie (c1932-c1979) and Bonnie (b.1931). Bonnie, who had married Del Davis, became owner of the ranch. A short, side hill airstrip was built on the property. All the ranch buildings and their historical contents were destroyed by the 1994 South Fork wildfire.



Dan LeVan, Big Creek Ranger 1925-1949
Photo courtesy of Dan LeVan Jr.

RANGER DAN LEVAN, "PRINCE OF THE PINES"

Dan LeVan earned the sobriquet "Prince of the Pines," and became a legend in his own time, as U.S. Forest Service District Ranger on the Big Creek and Chamberlain Districts, in the Salmon River backcountry, from 1924 to 1950. That 26-year tenure, at one location, is one of the longest in the history of the Forest Service.

Dan Hastings LeVan was born on January 4, 1895, on a farm in Caldwell, Idaho. As a young man he worked as a cow hand on ranches in Jordan Valley and the Owyhee country, before serving in the Army during World War I. In 1922 he got on his horse and rode north to McCall, camping and fishing along the way, having heard that there might be a packer job there with the Forest Service. Dan later recollected,

"The closer I got to Round Valley, and started into the timber, the more I liked what I saw. Going through Long Valley toward McCall really hooked me, and when I broke over the last rise before hitting McCall, I saw that deep blue lake, I said to myself, 'Damn, I hope I get that job so I can stay around a while.' I guess we talked the same language at the Forest Office 'cause I got the job. When they told me I'd be going into the backcountry, the wilderness,

I was plumb excited. After just a little while packin' back in those mountains thick with timber I really felt like I had a home. It was so wild and free, I came here intending to stay a year and look how long I've been here."

Dan stayed on the Idaho National Forest, which became the Payette, for 28 years; the first two years at Chamberlain, then as District Ranger at Big Creek, which then included the Big Creek and Chamberlain Basin areas, some 1,222 square miles of wilderness. Within the area were a few homesteads and mines, but no roads. Two-thirds of Ranger LeVan's area had been just set aside as National Forest land, so he had the very large job of establishing a fire reporting system of over 20 lookout positions, and a 400 mile-long telephone network to connect those lookout positions with the "Headquarters" at Big Creek. In the early 1930s, Ranger LeVan saw the value of the use of aircraft in supporting fire control activities, so had the pasture at Big Creek made suitable for a landing strip. Other landing strips were established at remote locations in the backcountry for Forest Service logistics support. Ranger LeVan was a participant in the development of new aerial fire support techniques.

Dan married Persis Dee, of Caldwell, Idaho. They lived in two locations; Big Creek for the summer season, until snow drove them out to their winter home in McCall. Dan and Persis had two children; Dan Jr and Wanda, who spent their summers at Big Creek, learning the ways of the backwoods. Working with Dan was his long-term assistant, Gill McCoy, whose wife and family also lived at Big Creek. The LeVan and McCoy children were the same age, so they became an integrated family that endured for many years. During the manpower shortage during WW II, the LeVan-McCoy family team of parents and children did all the necessary Forest Service jobs. Dan's wife Persis died unexpectedly in 1945, when she was only 45 years old, leaving young children and a bereft husband. Gill McCoy's wife, Blanche Willey McCoy, became the surrogate mother to Dan's children.

Dan LeVan left Big Creek in 1950 for another ranger job on the Targhee National Forest in southeastern Idaho, where he retired in 1954. Among the many letters Dan received upon his retirement was one, dated June 25, 1954, from Don Park, a co-worker and close friend since 1925. The letter said, in part,

"Your philosophy in handling those you worked with and the people in the backcountry, by using the language they spoke and understood, was always a marvel to me. Many have tried to imitate you but only came to grief. No [Forest Service] manual will ever be written on it as it would be unprintable."

Dan settled into the life of a rancher in Dubois, Idaho, where he died in 1967, to be long remembered by those whose lives he touched.

Starting the Day at Big Creek Headquarters, circa 1943 A 1996 Recollection by Dan LeVan Jr.

By 6:30 in the morning, the telephone roll call to all stations and lookouts had been simultaneously completed. All reports were noted and recorded [by the Fire Dispatcher at Big Creek Headquarters], and all residents in the country had hung up their phones after listening in.

The smell of wood smoke emitting from the several employee tent houses suggested that breakfast, in many different menus, was being prepared. Levis and riding boots or packer boots with White, or maybe Redwing brand, were already on the "Knights of the Forest," who were all ready for the assignment of the day. From the big house, the bunk house, and the tent houses the crews would emerge, heading from here and there, all going to the central meeting point at the commissary building and dispatcher's office.

Three or four fellows are talking about what needs to be done, as they unconsciously size up the surrounding panorama of the valley and distant mountains. Ravens are leisurely floating with the up-drafts that rise above the Hogback behind the Ranger Station. A couple of kids can be heard in the background. Some of the mules and horses make their way toward the hustle and bustle of activity around the corral. If their thinking is lucky, they will be getting a handout of oats or something else good. Their pleasure will show enough to attract the rest of the stock. No one will have to walk to the other end of the meadow to get them this morning.

The forest-green pickup, loaded with tools and six men, four of them newly-hired lookout men, drives through the main gate heading south toward Profile Summit, then onto the trail head to Missouri Ridge lookout. Eight miles of trail and telephone line will be cleared and rehung by late afternoon.

Slim [Warner Willey], the packer, has coaxed all of his eleven mules and the bell mare into the corral with sweet talk and friendly ear scratching. The tack for each of them is laid out in the regular string order. The bell mare was unsaddled last, so her saddle is on top. She is first. The mules are placed in the order by the packer after trial and error, finding out who gets along with who best, sort of a personality decision. Likewise, the load for each animal is designed and cargoed (wrapped in manties/tarps). The packer knows which animal will carry what best. Others helped cargo the loads last night. To leave the station, all animals are strung together. Tomorrow they will travel unattached (on their own). The string will leave by 9:00 heading for Chamberlain.

The two teen-age daughters [Wanda and Babe] of both bosses [Dan LeVan and Gill McCoy] will saddle up their horses and saddle up a couple more horses for

the smaller kids. The girls will take the remaining 30 or so head of horses out to open grazing areas up the flats a mile or two and turn them loose to graze on their own for a few days. The stock that the kids rode will be kept at Headquarters on standby.

The dispatcher has been busy all morning with calls in and out. Contact, for several reasons, has been made with McCall [Forest Supervisor's Office]. Ranger Dan LeVan will probably talk to Warehouseman Don Park about supplies coming in tomorrow by truck. McCall Dispatcher Slim Vassar wants to know when the smokejumpers will be coming in from the small fire on Coin Mountain. A "civilian" will come into the office to gripe about so and so doing something they didn't like.

After the dishes are done the women will get together and check out the supplies they need to replace after feeding the fire training school last week. Later in the afternoon, cards will probably be played. If any old timers drop by, cribbage will be played for sure.

Trail trips are being planned. Lookout Mountain lookout needs some new telephone wire. They found where the old bull elk got his horns tangled in a low hanging wire and pulled down about a mile of wire, a good bit of it tangled around its horns which are still attached to its carcass. Good thing it's not a main line, as it will take awhile to fix.

Fishermen are driving down the road toward Smith Creek too damn fast. Oh boy, it's lunch time pretty soon. Those darned kids (young men) on the crew to Missouri Ridge took about five sandwiches apiece!

And so it goes ...

BACKCOUNTRY TELEPHONE NETWORK

Most of the land drained by Big Creek was added to the National Forest system in 1919. When funding became available, a Forest Service ranger station was built in 1924-1925 in the little valley on upper Big Creek. This ranger station was the hub of all activity in the backcountry, and was known as "Headquarters." The principal purpose of the U.S. Forest Service, at that time, was to control wildfire. The front line of the Forest Service fire reporting system was a network of lookout sites, strategically placed on mountain peaks with a good view of the surrounding territory. Over 30 lookout sites served the Big Creek-Chamberlain area, all of which were within the operational purview of the Big Creek "Headquarters."

Big Creek Headquarters was the focus of the backcountry telephone network, with a switchboard and a fire dispatcher on continuous duty during the summer fire season. Headquarters had telephone connection with the outside world via Yellow Pine and McCall. Beginning in the late 1920s an open wire (no covering insulation) network was established to communicate with the backcountry lookout sites as they were built. The network was established using a trunk line system, with the several trunk lines each serving a section of the backcountry.

The first trunk line to be established, probably in the late 1920s, is believed to be the Big Creek main line, from Headquarters along Big Creek as far east as the Dave Lewis place, now the Taylor Ranch. Although this main line along Big Creek was established and maintained by the Forest Service, it provided telephone connection to the several "ranches" and mining activities along the way, with the notion that the occupied places would serve as fire reporting locations, in addition to the fire lookout sites. Probably by 1930, Dave Lewis was provided a telephone instrument by the Forest Service, which was hung on the interior wall of his cabin. Dave Lewis deeded the property to Jess Taylor in December, 1935; Jess Taylor took possession of the property after Dave's death in 1936. Jess Taylor built a new residence in 1950, which is now the University of Idaho Field Station manager's residence. The telephone instrument, which is now on the wall of the Field Station laboratory building, was originally in the Jess Taylor residence. The telephone was powered by two large dry cell batteries, and the ringer was actuated by a magneto attached to the "ringer" handle on the side of the telephone box. Each telephone location had a specific ring code of long and short rings, such as one long, two shorts.

The backcountry telephone system eventually had over 400 miles of wire connecting the lookout sites, ranches, mines, and wayside locations. The lines were hung on trees, using porcelain or glass insulators, as the open wire was subject to grounding effects. Maintenance of such a large system was problematic, with damage by falling trees, winter snow, and even entanglement by elk. The open wire system was abandoned about 1950, in favor of radio communication.

BIG CREEK TRAIL CREW – 1944

(From an interview with Dan LeVan Jr., August 24, 1995)

During World War II, manpower was in short supply for Forest Service work crews. Big Creek Ranger Dan LeVan had a big job to do, clearing the trails and repairing the telephone lines servicing all of the fire lookouts in the Big Creek drainage, down as far as the Middle Fork of the Salmon River. To get the job done, Dan organized his family, and the family of Dan's Assistant Ranger, Gill McCoy, as the trail crew. The crew consisted of:

Ranger Dan LeVan, crew boss
Persis LeVan, Dan's wife, principal cook
Gill McCoy, principal packer and horse wrangler
Blanche McCoy, Gill's wife, second cook and horse wrangler

The crew included the LeVan and McCoy children, all of whom had jobs:
Dan LeVan Jr, 16, cleared trail with ax and crosscut saw
Bob McCoy, 14, cleared trail with ax and crosscut saw
Colleen (Babe) McCoy, 13, camp tender, packer, telephone line repairer
Wanda LeVan, 12, camp tender, packer, telephone line repairer
Joe (called "Little Joe") McCoy, 5, gathered firewood

Preparation for the venture took place many days ahead. All the horses and mules were properly shod; the tack for the stock was inspected; the camp gear for the crew was gathered; the food for the crew was set aside. The food for the crew went into four large pack boxes, with eggs in special containers (eggs keep well for many days in their boxes, and were used for camp cookery whenever available; likewise, salt-cured meat, such as bacon, was a staple for camp cookery). Everyone participated in the preparations for the departure on July 1, 1944.

The pack string consisted of 17 or 18 head of horses and mules, including horses for the crew. The pack stock carried the crew's camp gear, food, and tools for the trail work, a sizeable load for the 14-day trip. The crew moved about fifteen miles a day, making ten camps in those fourteen days. As the crew moved along, Dan Jr. and Bob would ride ahead, clearing obstructions from the trail, enough so the pack string could get to the next camp spot. While camp was being set up, Dan Jr. and Bob would continue to clear the trail in both directions from the camp site. Also while en route, Wanda and Babe, and others as needed, would rehang telephone wire where it had been pulled down by falling trees and winter snow.

Their route of travel from Big Creek "Headquarters" was up through Cougar Basin and Bear Lake to the headwaters of the West Fork of Monumental Creek, down Monumental Creek to Lookout Mountain, then Telephone Creek, Rush Creek, and Shellrock Creek to Rush Creek Point; they went down to Big Creek, to Cave Creek, Soldier Bar, and up again to Eagan Point; they crossed Big Creek to the north side to inspect lookouts on Big Hill, Black Butte, Horse Mountain, then dropped down to the summer guard station at Cold Meadows; then it was up again to Cold Mountain, down to Crescent Meadows and Crooked Creek and home to "Headquarters." In effect, the LeVan-McCoy trail crew circumnavigated the Big Creek drainage in their 14-day venture.

Soon after their return to Big Creek "Headquarters," Persis LeVan wrote a letter to some of her relatives in McCall, dated July 22, 1944, which said in part, "...We had a grand time and saw a lot of new country. All of it was pretty and some of it was beautiful. Down Big Creek, at Soldier Bar, the Indian caves, etc, it is so rugged it almost frightens you. When we were down by the caves looking up to the bar, it made us dizzy. Then when we rode up to the bar, where the landing strip is, we still looked up rugged bluffs. It is really awe inspiring. In the caves is the Indian writing. Wish I could read it. As you know, that country was the battle ground for the Sheepeater Indian war..."

In reflection, Dan LeVan Jr. said they saw lots of game and spring flowers were everywhere, and the two families had wonderful campfire talks, as the LeVans and the McCoy's had a live together-work together partnership for almost 20 years. For Dan LeVan Jr., this trail crew venture was a most memorable one, a trip of family bonding that he will never forget.



Trail near Two Point Peak - Bob McCoy with saw - Joyce Dustman leading mare.
Photo courtesy of Bob and Joyce Dustman ca.1952

Memories of Gill McCoy, circa 1946

(from a letter by Dan LeVan Jr., December 19, 1996)

One thing I seem to remember about the McCoy's is the picture I have of all the men, and [also Gill's daughter] Babe, always having a sack of Bull Durham and papers in their left shirt pockets. Babe didn't smoke, but she rolled the best, and best looking cigarette of all of them. Gill, who was always busy doing something, would often say, "Hey Babe, roll me a smoke, would ya?" I seem to remember that all the McCoy's had the smokes dangling from the left side of their mouths. When they held the smoke in their fingers it was never held perpendicular between the first and second fingers, but held backwards by the tips of the thumb, first, and second fingers, with the lit end pointing inward toward the palm of their hands. I remember many backwoods boys doing this; maybe it was a way to keep ashes or fire from falling on the ground to possibly start a fire.

One morning after breakfast, Bob [McCoy] and I went to wrangle the horses; we walked a good distance down Beaver Creek from Matty's upper cabin [Matty Mahan's cabin on Ramey Ridge] to get the livestock. We were a little put out from the long, hurried walk, so when we got chewed out by Gill for taking so long, we got damn mad, and Bob said something like, "God damn it, next time you go get 'em!" Gill heard the comment and came over to Bob and mentioned the fact that he, Bob, might get knocked on his butt if he kept up wise-assing. We all started catching the stock and putting the saddles on each animal. So Bob caught his own hot-blooded quarter horse and put his saddle on it. Bob said to me, "By God, I'm going to ride Socks today." Uh oh, Gill saw what Bob had done and yelled to him, "Get your saddle off of him and put mine on him, like you're supposed to do! I told you, you're not going to ride Socks until I've rode the meanness out of him." Things got switched around and the whole outfit got headed out of camp. Gill, Bob, and I were the last out, riding behind the string. Gill and Socks were having a little set-to, and Socks unloaded Gill. When Bob saw his dad piled in the middle of the trail, he exploded with laughter, which was the wrong thing to do. I kept on riding; I didn't want to see my riding pardner get knocked on his butt. I never knew if he did. I have reflected on the correction or punishment that we received for wrong doing when we were on the trail. It was sort of cowboy-to-cowboy. You had your lumps coming and you took them. It was never father-to-son personal in front of the other men.

Gil McCoy was a kind and gentle man, one with great amount of patience when dealing with young people and kids, educating minds or teaching the techniques of some backwoods art, such as sharpening saws or breaking horses. He was

fun to be around, and was a comic around people he knew very well. We loved him like our own father. But remember, he was rawhide tough and could be a fearful man when pushed or confronted. Most people I knew, that knew him, all felt about the same; they would rather hit both hind feet of a mule with their chin than tangle with Gill. He was a died-in-the-wool, hard-raised cowboy-mountain man combined. A real man, by Gawd! He had taken his hard knocks, lived through them, and had come out a good soul to know. No one can describe his big wide grin, but it was of pure mirth and happiness, and very infectious.

AL STONEBRAKER and the STONBRAKER RANCH

William Allen Stonebraker, known as Al, was born in California in 1879, the first child of George and Minnie Stonebraker. The Stonebraker family migrated to Oregon, then to Lewiston, Idaho, in 1888. By 1898, Al Stonebraker, who was then 19 years old, had a pack string operating in the Buffalo Hump mining district on the north side of the Salmon River. He was an eager explorer and came to know the Salmon River country quite well. In that process he made life-long friends with three others who were his partners in constructing the Three Blaze Trail: William Campbell (builder of Campbell's Ferry), August Hotzel (homesteader in Chamberlain Basin), and Harry Donohue, who subsequently became Stonebraker's ranch caretaker. The Three Blaze Trail was constructed in 1900, from Campbell's Ferry on the Salmon River, across Chamberlain Basin to the Thunder Mountain gold field. Stonebraker, Hotzel, and Donohue, operated a pack string business from Grangeville, via Campbell's Ferry to Thunder Mountain. Al Stonebraker's younger brother "Tude" (Lillburn C. Stonebraker, 1883-1929) was also a Thunder Mountain packer, operating on a route from Lardo, via Warren and Elk Summit, to Thunder Mountain. Tude quit packing to Thunder Mountain in 1909 and went to Alaska. Al also had two younger brothers, Sumner and George, who made a homestead application in Chamberlain Meadows, but the application was later invalidated.

Al Stonebraker, on his pack trips to Thunder Mountain, had noted the extensive meadows in Chamberlain Basin. His pack train business came to a halt in 1909 when the town of Roosevelt was inundated as a result of a massive mud slide. Al then claimed a homestead ranch in Chamberlain Basin, assisted by his packer-friend Harry Donohue. In 1912, Al made a formal homestead claim to 160 acres on the West Fork of Chamberlain Creek, about two miles north of the site of the present Forest Service Chamberlain Guard Station. In 1916 Al was contracted to build, for \$350, the second Ranger Station at Chamberlain (which was razed in 1939 when the current Guard Station was built). Al Stonebraker's homestead was examined on August 17, 1917, and noted a large barn, dwelling, outbuildings, cultivated and wild hay, and a large garden with root crops. A month later, on September 20, 1917, Al married Lillian Carter (c1886-c1921), however she died in the early 1920s. Al Stonebraker's homestead patent was issued on March 1, 1920. He married a second time, on May 14, 1928, to Goldie Bickel. Goldie had a son by a previous marriage, Adolf Reeder, who was known as Bill. Bill, who was born about 1916, became very close to Al Stonebraker as his stepson. Al Stonebraker and Bill, assisted by the aging Harry Donohue, were Forest Service packers, occasional fire guards, and hunting guides.

In the summer of 1928, Nick Mamer landed an aircraft on the Stonebraker pasture thus beginning a close relationship of aerial transportation of hunters to the Stonebraker Ranch for guided hunting parties. Along with Nick Mamer was Spokane industrialist Clarence Paulsen, Mamer's business partner, who later purchased the Beal homestead adjacent to Stonebraker. Al Stonebraker's youngest brother George became enamored with flying and soon had his own airplane, based in Cascade, for winter mail delivery to Yellow Pine. In October 1928 the Stonebraker Ranch was the focal point of the apprehension of Walter McCoy, a wilderness fugitive. One of Nick Mamer's pilots flew the Idaho County sheriff and a Forest Service officer to the Stonebraker Ranch to begin the search for McCoy.

Al Stonebraker died in 1932 of an apparent heart attack while on a pack trip with stepson Bill. The status of the Stonebraker Ranch is unknown from 1932 to 1939, during which time Harry Donohue remained as caretaker. In September, 1939, Frances Coyle (1913-1986) arrived at the Stonebraker Ranch from Texas, to assist Donohue with care taking. Frances Coyle married widow Joe Zaubmiller in 1942 to become a Salmon River icon at Campbell's Ferry. Harry Donohue was mortally injured when run over by a hay wagon on the Stonebraker Ranch in 1944. Frances Zaubmiller estimated that Harry was about 85 when he died, thus born about 1860.

The Stonebraker Ranch sat idle for a couple of years, then was purchased by the partnership of George McCoy and George "Blondie" McGill, who also purchased the adjacent Beal homestead from Clarence Paulsen, and the nearby Hotzel Ranch from the aging August Hotzel. The McCoy-McGill partnership ran cattle on the properties, and Forest Service grazing allotments, until 1949. All three properties were then sold to the Idaho Fish and Game Department for big game management within the Payette National Forest. In 2000 the Hotzel Ranch was transferred to the Payette National Forest. The Idaho Fish and Game Department continues to administer the contiguous Stonebraker-Beal homesteads.

References

1. Preston, Peter. n.d., unpublished manuscript, Stonebraker Ranch
2. Preston, Peter. 1995, Chamberlain Basin's Historic Three Blaze Trail
3. Preston, Peter. 2000, History of the Hotzel Ranch
4. Preston, Peter. 2002, Campbell's Ferry, A Historic Site in Idaho's Salmon River Wilderness
5. Preston, Peter. 2003, Aviation History of the Central Idaho Wilderness



Ed James at Rock Rabbit Lookout, 1949
Photo courtesy of Bob and Joyce Dustman

Ed James

Worthen E. (Ed) James was born December 25, 1895, in Fullerton, California. His mother died when he was too young to remember her. At age 12, he and his extended family, led by his father, moved by wagon to Oregon. At age 14 Ed was on his own, working as a cowboy in Oregon, then drifted to Meadows Valley in Adams County, Idaho, where he met Arthur E. Garden. Ed and "Kid" Garden drove a herd of cattle from Meadows Valley to Big Creek in 1916, where Ed got his first exposure to the backcountry. He overwintered with the Elliot brothers and the Gardens, then enlisted in the Army in June, 1917. He was hit by mustard gas in France, which damaged one of his eyes. He was discharged from the Army in March, 1919, returned to Idaho where he married Louise Bartheld (b.1900) the summer of 1919. They went to Big Creek and took up residence at Cabin Creek where their first child, daughter Althaea, was born on March 6, 1920. Ed's plan to buy Archie Bacon's place at Cabin Creek didn't work out, so Ed and his new family moved further up Big Creek to the Routson place (last owned by Dewey Moore) in the spring of 1920. Ed was caretaker of the Routson place, mail carrier for Big Creek, de facto postmaster of Clover Post Office, and ran cattle on the Garden Ranch for Edward Osborne of New Meadows. Ed's

second child, Ethyl (Warzinski) was born at the Routson place on August 13, 1921. But life was too tough on Big Creek for the young James family so they vacated the Routson place and went to California in the late summer of 1921. The James family moved from here to there, had a son, Ed, and finally the family split with Ed ending up fox farming in Klamath Falls, Oregon. The fox farm was fairly successful and eventually included Ed's son in the business. Ed deeded the fox farm to his son about 1945 and returned to the Salmon River backcountry.

In the following years Ed worked with Howard Elkins, then owner of Root Ranch; George McCoy, then owner of the Stonebraker Ranch; and back to Cabin Creek where he was a dude wrangler for the Pinto Dude Ranch for a couple of years. Ed was a part-time packer for the Forest Service, working for Ranger Dan LeVan in the early 1950s, alongside Gill McCoy and Skook McCoy. In 1951, Ed invited his daughter Althaea to join him on a three-week pack trip through the backcountry; Althaea's description of that adventure is included following this biographic sketch. Dewey Moore came to Big Creek in 1947, bringing with him two young daughters. Ed married Dewey's daughter Addie [Adelaide?] who was about 18 at the time, Ed was about 55. Addie was Ed's fourth wife; they ended up in Portland where Ed died in 1984.

This biographic sketch was composed from information provided by Ed James' Daughter, Althaea Miettunen [died 2003] and Ed James 1979 autobiography "Hanging and Rattling," as told to Dulcimer Nielsen.

ADVENTURE IN THE BACKCOUNTRY - 1951

By Althaea (James) Miettunen

[Editors Note: Althaea Miettunen was the daughter of Ed James, whom she had not seen in many years, when she was invited by her father to spend three weeks with him during the summer of 1951, exploring the backcountry. The article below, describing that adventure, does not mention that it was a father-daughter event, and I don't know why; it would have made the article so much more meaningful. At the time of the adventure Althaea was a 31-year old school teacher, living in Aberdeen WA. Althaea had been born on March 6, 1920, at Cabin Creek, on lower Big Creek, where father Ed was the ranch caretaker and Big Creek mail carrier at that time. Althaea died on October 28, 2003. She wrote the following story.]

Some teachers go to Europe for their vacations. I went to Idaho. Not the Idaho of potato or Sun Valley fame. The Idaho I explored was the primitive area (now called "the Wilderness Area") of the Payette National Forest. Such peace and quiet, fresh air and sunshine, beauty of scenery and sound! This, a 180-mile pack trip, begun by an exciting flight from McCall, Idaho, into the "backcountry" in an ancient, but sturdy, Forest Service Ford plane, was a three-week excursion unequalled by any "done-up" in travel magazines.

First of all, an interesting sidelight was furnished by the eight other passengers on the plane. They were smokejumpers just off the New Mexico fire... just fresh out of battle with flames "and rattlesnakes," they said. They were "going in" to work on an airfield until called out on a fire. This they (mainly pre-medical and pre-law students) considered to be rather dull but, in spite of that, they seemed to enjoy their summer in the so-called "wilds of Idaho."

"Wilds of Idaho" is not quite right. The people are friendly. So are the animals. The myriad flowers, the streams... named and unnamed, the forests, the quiet jewel-like lakes, the broken ruins of log buildings which show the hard work that once went into someone's dreams of the future, the abandoned gold mines (abandoned not in the absence of gold, but because of the high cost of mining), and the miles of well-cleared Forest Service trails all gave testimony to the fact that here is a primitive country that is struggling against the inroads of civilization.

Indications of this invasion are much in evidence. As a trail rider I was startled one day, as we were camping in a meadow, to hear the ringing of a telephone. This was not imagination. It was a Forest Service phone hanging in a nearby tree. The phones are located at strategic spots throughout the Payette National Forest and well serve their purpose in coming to the rescue in fires and other emergencies.

Another indication of the workings of civilization is the airfields. These are of the "postage stamp" variety... ledges here and there and even meadows that double as pastures for Forest Service pack animals and the local deer and elk. One, "Mile High Field" was

the most amazing. Its landing strip was not even a level one. It ran up to a 150-yard "platform" which dropped a few hundred feet straight off on one side. In landing, the plane would run up the incline to stop right on the "platform." In the take off, the pilot simply dropped his plane over the edge of the platform, glided down the incline and hoped to have enough speed to take off by the time he reached the end of the runway. Thrills and excitement there! As one of the pilots said, "In this country we can make only one mistake."

The pilots were among the many interesting people I met on my pack trip. Others were Forest Service personnel (even a "pinnacle ape" ...local term...who, after five days in a lookout tower, became "canyon happy" and was returning to his college in the East), a few miners who patiently, year after year, dig for gold that lies in considerable quantities there, and the owners and workers of the dude ranches. In one section there was a 19-year old girl who rides 30 miles on horseback three days a week delivering mail to the people in the backcountry. One day on the trail we met two girls who were herding 30 mules from the Montana border straight through the mountains to a dude ranch on the lower Salmon River.

The Salmon River...the famed "River of No Return," winds its many forks through this area. In the reaches farthest from civilization one realizes that its nickname is no misnomer. I had always planned to take a trip down the Salmon on one of those barges that one reads about. However, after climbing six hours straight down into one of those many canyons, then finally reaching its turbulent waters, I decided that THAT was just about as close as I'd ever want to get to it.

This is by no means the only river in the Primitive Area. The country is laced with rivers and creeks. The names of these are among the most fascinating I've known. What fabulous stories must exist in the origin of names such as Disappointment Creek, Dismal Creek, Starvation Creek, Hungry Creek, Cold Meadows, Sheepeater Mountain, Nugget Creek, Never Sweat Mine, and Mirage Creek. Another interesting place was Root Ranch which we visited. It was once owned by Wallace Berry who was among the first to realize the value of the airplane in a country such as this.

A description of the people, places, and things that one sees while on a pack trip of this sort could be endless. However, there should be something left untold for the next person who ventures into this type of summer holiday. Aside from the utter relaxation and vacation from the urgencies of the classroom, this trip offered something else dear to the heart of a teacher. This came in the form of only a slight drain on the bank account. In fact, the only time one needs money is at the beginning or end of the trip...and fees are relatively small. Once the vacationer is "in the hills," there is no need for money. In fact, after three weeks of not seeing a coin, I found myself trying to put a quarter into a nickel parking meter. To dispel further qualms, I should mention that one shouldn't cross such a vacation off just because of lack of practice in horseback riding. It was the first time for me too. My main interest in writing up this trip is that of encouraging others to "see America first." There's a lot here... even in areas one seldom hears about. In fact, it is in these less ballyhooed spots that one finds a real rest for little cost. I hope others will try a summer holiday in Idaho's wilderness.

"PROFILE" SAM WILLSON

"Profile" Sam was so named because he lived and mined at Profile Gap, the high point on the trail (and after 1934, the road) between Yellow Pine and Edwardsburg, or Big Creek. Samuel Montgomery Willson was born in Minnesota in 1863. He drifted west and was married, in Hailey, Idaho, to Sadie Aramenta Skinner on October 3, 1886. Their first child, Earl Willson, was born at Hailey on June 2, 1891. Their other children were Samuel Jr., Edward Ernest, and daughter Ivy. Sam Sr headed west from Hailey in 1902, bound for the Thunder Mountain gold field, but got as far as Yellow Pine and stayed in that area, prospecting in the Profile Gap area. He built a substantial cabin on the south side of the Gap, in order to catch the warmth of the sun. The following article, written by Profile's friend, Harry J Withers (1898-1994), was included in a collection, "Yellow Pine, Idaho" compiled by Nancy Sumner in 1989.

"Profile Sam Willson lived in a log cabin beside the road a short distance south of the "gap," as Profile Summit was called. All travelers were welcome to stop and have a bowl of soup if it was lunchtime as soup was his unvarying mid-day meal. I have stopped there many times and visited with him as he always had some very interesting tales. He told me he spent 17 years in one period that he never got any further than Yellow Pine toward the outside... Profile's cabin always looked neat and clean, and his clothes were always clean. His cabin burned down in March 1934. Then he built a shack out of lumber he salvaged from a CCC camp not far below his place, and there he lived until the late fall of that same year. He had a prostate gland disorder... Sam went out to a very small log building, sat down on a built-in bunk, leaned back, placed a 30-30 carbine to his chest, and pulled the trigger, thus ending another landmark in the Yellow Pine area."

A granite monument was placed on Profile Summit in 1979 by his friends:

Profile Sam Willson
He prospected this Profile Gap from 1902
Where his latchstring was always out
To sourdoughs passing through.
Interred at Yellow Pine 1935

Sam's first son Earl worked with his father and was postmaster of the Profile Post Office, located in Sam's cabin, which was active from 1914 to 1921. Earl was in the Army during WW I, during which time Sam was the acting postmaster. Earl was married in Boise on February 6, 1922, to Eva McCoy, daughter of Archie "Bert" McCoy of Yellow Pine. Their son, Virgil W. Willson, had been born the month before on January 12, 1922. Earl was employed by the Idaho Statesman

newspaper in Boise. They moved to Portland about 1940. Eva died in 1956. Earl returned to Boise, again working as a journalist for the Idaho Statesman, often writing articles about Yellow Pine history. Earl was killed in an automobile accident on April 20, 1964, as he was en route from Boise to Cascade, heading to Yellow Pine. He was buried at Yellow Pine, as was his father.

ARTHUR AND VIOLA GARDEN

Arthur E. Garden was also known as the "Yellowstone Kid" as he was supposedly an outlaw from Montana. He and his wife Viola settled on a large alluvial bench on Big Creek about 1907, at the mouth of a small creek that was named Garden Creek. They raised cattle for sale to Thunder Mountain miners and did a little gold mining on Ramey Ridge. The Garden Ranch was patented October 17, 1913. The Clover Post Office was established at the Garden Ranch to serve the lower Big Creek area, with Viola as postmaster. Arthur Garden was on a trip to New Meadows, Idaho, in 1918 when died there of influenza. Viola then sold the ranch to Edward Osborn, stockman in New Meadows. Ed Osborn and Ed James moved a herd of cattle to the ranch in 1919, and Ed James was caretaker of the ranch 1919-1920, during which time he was the acting postmaster for Clover Post Office. In 1920 the Clover Post Office was moved to the head of Garden Creek, to the Mile High Ranch of the Elliott brothers, nephews of Viola Garden. Osborne sold the Garden Ranch to Art Francis, then to John Vines who built an airstrip on the place. Vines sold the ranch to the Forest Service.

DEWEY MOORE

Dewey Moore was born in Texas on July 5, 1899, served in the cavalry on the Mexican border in World War I. He first visited Chamberlain Basin in 1919, then in 1920, a season in Yellow Pine where he observed the Christmas party of "the wildest gathering of drunken prospectors and dog fights a man ever saw." Dewey then spent a number of years in Arizona and as a packer in the Steens Mountains in southeast Oregon before returning to the Salmon River backcountry in 1945.

In 1947 Dewey Moore purchased the 33-acre Acorn Creek property on upper Big Creek which had initially been a cabin site of George Yardley in 1910, the home of the John Routson family until 1925, and then a succession of owners up to the purchase by Moore. The place was a short distance north of the old Snowshoe Mine road, that later became the well-worn Big Creek Trail. The place became Dewey Moore's headquarters for guided hunting trips in the backcountry. Dewey made many improvements to the property and original homestead buildings, such as a continuous spring-fed water supply and modern indoor plumbing with hot water. Dewey tended a large kitchen garden and raised hay for his horses. Soon after Dewey purchased the property, he had a short, side hill airstrip built to bring in supplies and client hunters. At the time of purchase, there was still a serviceable truck road along Big Creek that was legally abandoned about 1954, but Dewey still had the use of the road with his jeep while he lived there.

At least part of the time Dewey lived at Acorn Creek he had his two daughters, Virginia and Addie, staying with him. It was reported that Dewey was overly protective of them and Forest Ranger Ted Koskella warned his young summer employees to not go near the Moore place. However, his daughter Addie, about 18 at the time, married 60-year old Forest Service packer Ed James and moved to Portland (see Ed James biographic sketch). Virginia Moore married a Davis, had at least three children, and lived in Emmett in 1970.

In 1970, at the age of 71, Dewey decided it was time to retire and sold the Acorn Creek property to the Forest Service. In September, 1970, Dewey trailed his 12 pack horses from Big Creek to Long Valley, where he had purchased a small ranch. Dewey died a few years later, in New Plymouth, Idaho, in May 1976. The Forest Service razed the Acorn Creek ranch buildings soon after the transfer of the property. Dewey Moore's legacy remains in Big Creek as the name of his non-maintained, seldom-used airstrip.

(Most of the information in this sketch came from an article in the Payette Lakes Star-News, 1970, but the date had been clipped off. Other bits of information came from notes in the author's files)

Descendants of James F. McCoy

1 James F. McCoy 1815 - 1884
 .. +Sylvia Elizabeth "Eliza" Johns 1837 - 1910
 2 James H. McCoy
 2 Janetta McCoy
 2 Varena McCoy
 2 Mary Ann McCoy
 2 John B. McCoy 1862 -
 2 Archie Agustus "Bert" McCoy 1872 -
 +Jennie Avery 1885 -
 3 Eva Augusta McCoy 1904 -
 3 Archie Gilbert "Gill" McCoy 1905 - 1964
 +Blanche Willey 1905 - 1995
 4 Betty McCoy 1927 -
 4 Bob McCoy 1929 -
 4 Colleen "Babe" McCoy 1931 -
 4 Joe McCoy 1939 -
 3 Leslie James McCoy 1907 - 1960
 +Thelma Collins
 4 Thelma Patricia McCoy
 *2nd Wife of Leslie James McCoy:
 +Mary Willey
 4 Eugene Leslie McCoy 1933 -
 3 Ina Evelyn McCoy 1909 - 1911
 3 Verna Luella McCoy 1911 - 1995
 +Jim Scovel
 *2nd Husband of Verna Luella McCoy:
 +Ivan Lee Evans
 4 Gerald Lee Evans Evans 1931 -
 4 Verna Jean Evans 1933 -
 3 George Henry McCoy 1913 - 1964
 +Doris McFarland
 4 John Walter McCoy 1938 -
 4 Judith Lynn McCoy 1948 -
 3 Myron Burdett McCoy 1915 - 1991
 +Aloha Beck 1920 -
 4 James Burdett McCoy 1947 -
 3 William Morris McCoy 1923-1931
 2 Walter S. McCoy 1878 -
 2 Katherine Elmira Elizabeth McCoy 1880 - 1956
 +Beck
 3 Elizabeth Beck
 3 William Beck

Incomplete Bibliography

Briggs, A. E.

1963 *Memoirs of a U.S. Forest Ranger*, self published.

Carrey, Johnny and Cort Conley

1978 *River of No Return*, Backeddy Books, Cambridge, ID.

Deinhardt-Hill, Kathy

2003 *For Better or Worse: The Legacy of William "Deadshot" Reed*,
Big Mallard Books, McCall, ID.

Dustman, Bob and Joyce

2006 "Fourteen Summers with the Payette National Forest", Heritage
Program, Payette National Forest, McCall, ID.

Fuller, Margaret

1987 *Trails of the Frank Church – River of No Return Wilderness*, Signpost
Books, Edmonds, WA.

Hartung, John Wiley

1978 *Documentation of Historical Resources in the Idaho Primitive Area, Big
Creek Drainage*, masters thesis, University of Idaho.

Nielsen, Dulcimer

1979 *Hanging and Rattling: an autobiography of W. E. "Ed" James, as told to
Dulcimer Nielsen*, Caxton Printers, Caldwell, ID.

Preston, Peter

2000 "History of the Hotzel Ranch," Heritage Program, Payette National Forest,
McCall, ID.

2001 "An Outline of the Cultural History of the Frank Church – River of No
Return Wilderness," Heritage Program, Payette National Forest, McCall,
ID.

2002 "Campbell's Ferry, A Historic Site in Idaho's Salmon River Wilderness,"
Heritage Program, Payette National Forest, McCall, ID.

2003 "Aviation History of the Central Idaho," Wilderness, Heritage Program,
Payette National Forest, McCall, ID.

Sumner, Nancy

1986 *Yellow Pine, Idaho*, (printed privately).