

# Crossing the South Fork

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A HISTORY OF THE SOUTH FORK GUARD STATION AND  
ITS ENVIRONS ON THE PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST  
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SOUTH FORK GUARD STATION AND DUSTIN BRIDGE, C.1929

COMPILED BY  
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HERITAGE PROGRAM  
PAYETTE NATIONAL FOREST  
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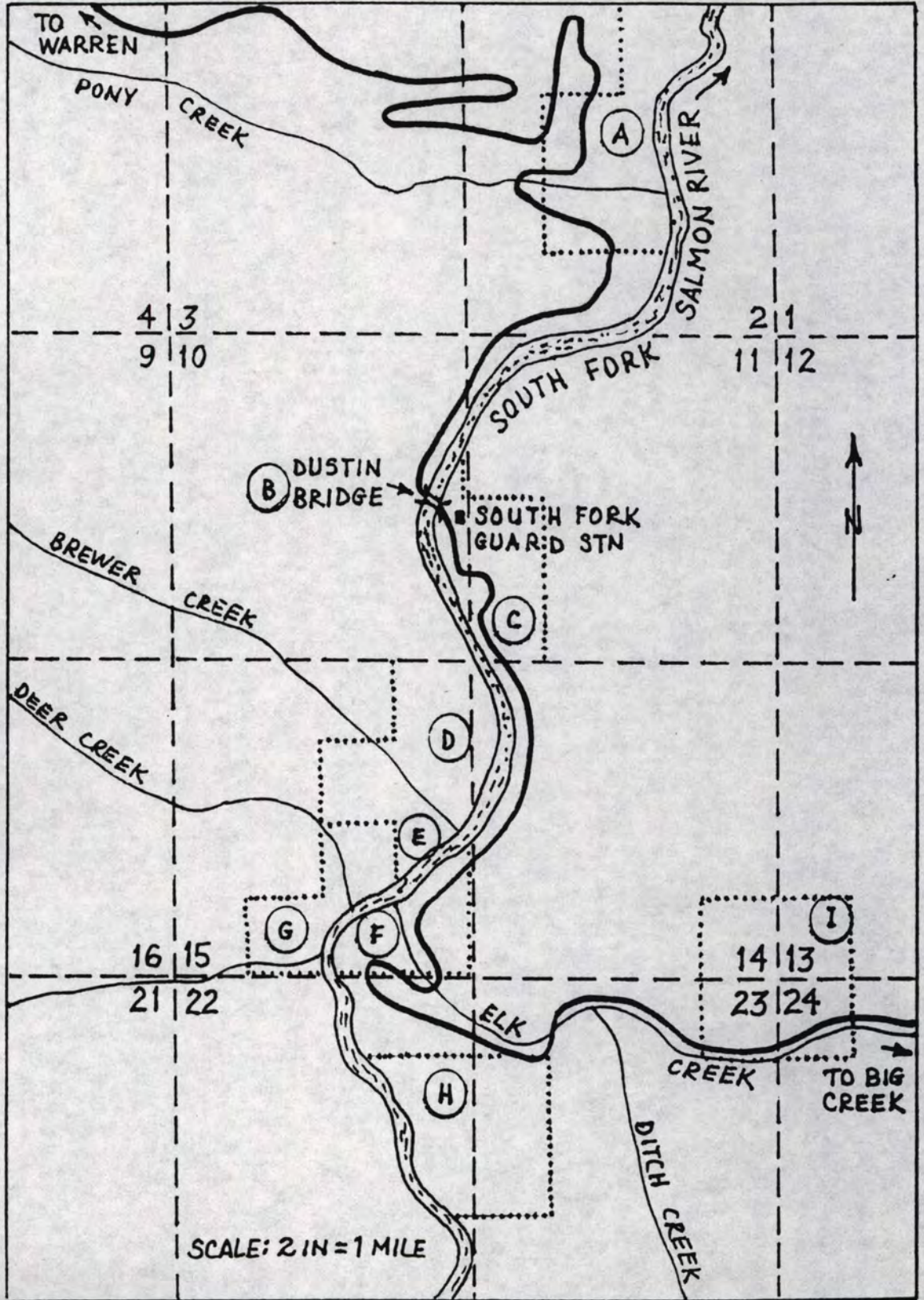
The geographic location now occupied by the Payette National Forest's South Fork Guard Station is rich in history. The site might be better recognized by one of its several former names: Hall's Crossing, the Jack Shiefer Ranch, and the Tom Carrey Ranch. The South Fork Guard Station is located on the South Fork of the Salmon River, about twenty miles up river (south) from its confluence with the main Salmon, at the point where the old Warren-Edwardsburg Wagon Road crosses the river (see map, page 2). This road began as a trail in the late 1860's when miners from Warren began looking for new prospects to the east. The three-mile section of the road in the river bottom extends from Pony Creek, at the north end, south to Elk Creek. Along this section were several early ranches, such as those of Sylvester "Three Finger" Smith, "Pony" Smead, and others, all playing important roles in the area's history.

A major factor involved in the historical settlement of this area, and its strategic importance in the local transportation system, is the area's locally-unique geography and its resultant microclimate. At the bottom of the steep-sided South Fork gorge at an elevation of 3000 feet, the area is almost 4000 feet lower than the road at Warren Summit (6974) a few miles to the west, and well over 5000 feet lower than the road at Elk Summit (8670) to the east. The low elevation and the protection of the surrounding high mountains induce short, generally mild, winters such that this area, as well as several other small ranches downriver, were very hospitable for year round habitation; and there was an adequate season for growing vegetable crops and raising livestock. The site of the South Fork Guard Station was, in effect, located within a localized "banana belt", the agricultural products of which fed the mining communities of Warren, to the west, and Big Creek and Thunder Mountain to the east.

The strategic importance of the South Fork crossing, to gain access to the Big Creek area and Chamberlain Basin, is illustrated by the continual building and rebuilding of bridges at two sites beginning in the mid-1870's. The primary site was the current bridge site at the South Fork Guard Station and a secondary site a mile and a (text continues on Page 5)



MAP OF THE AREA OF THE SOUTH FORK CROSSINGS



(FOR EXPLANATION OF LETTERED ANNOTATIONS, SEE PAGES 3-4)



EXPLANATION OF LETTERED ANNOTATIONS ON THE MAP ON PAGE 2,  
INDICATING SUCCESSION OF NAMES, OCCUPANTS, AND EVENTS:

- A.1. Amasa D "Pony" Smead, wife Mary (Molly), Smead children  
(Hall Post Office, site 2)  
2. William Cadby, "South Fork Hotel"  
(Comfort Post Office, site 2)  
3. Mary Hall  
4. Bailey O Dustin  
5. Bradford Carrey  
6. Fred Davis  
7. Ralph Barkell  
8. Sylvia Barkell McClain estate + various small lot owners

## Burials:

George Woodward  
George Dyer  
Ella and Ethel Smead, Pony Smead's daughters  
Amasa "Pony" Smead  
Mary (Molly ) Smead, Pony Smead's wife  
Kate Smead  
Mary Hall  
Geneva Jane Blackwell, daughter of Wallace W Blackwell

- B.1. Hall's Crossing  
2. Shiefer Bridge  
3. Dustin Bridge

- C.1. Solon Hall  
2. Ben Day  
(Hall Post Office, Site 1)  
3. Jack Shiefer, wife/widow Frankie Shiefer Waln  
4. Carl Brown  
5. Mary (Mamie) Carrey McCall  
6. Thomas J Carrey  
7. Hoff & Brown Tie & Lbr Co  
8. U.S. Forest Service (South Fork Ranger/Guard Station)

## Burials:

Jack Shiefer  
Unnamed male twins of Tom & Jeanie Carrey

- D.0. (Site of Army encampment 10 June 1879, Sheepeater War)  
1. Simeon A Willey  
2. Crosby "Curley" Brewer  
(Brewer Post Office)  
3. Partick L Irwin  
4. Idaho Dept of Fish & Game

(Continued on Page 4)



(Continued) EXPLANATION OF LETTERED ANNOTATIONS ON THE MAP ON PAGE 2, INDICATING SUCCESSION OF NAMES, OCCUPANTS, AND EVENTS

E.0. (Abandoned bridge site)

1. Willey Bridge
2. Brewer & Babendorf Bridge / Brewer Bridge
3. USFS Pack Bridge

F.1. Sylvester "Three Finger" Smith, Smith's sons  
(Comfort Post Office, Site 1)

2. James H "Jimmy" Taylor
3. Bradford Carrey
4. Unity Gold Production Co (hydroelectric power plant)
5. Margaret Vernon

Burials:

Bob Smith  
Juanita Smith, wife of Sam Smith  
Sylvester Scott Smith  
Wallace Smith

G.1. James J "Jimmy" Flynn

2. Patrick L Irwin
3. Idaho Dept of Fish & Game

H.1. Hugh "Bob Tail" Johnson

(Site of Johnson/Dorsey massacre, beginning Sheepeater War)  
(Site of Army encampment, 10-12 Aug 1879, Sheepeater War)

2. Michael Nevins
3. James H "Jimmy" Scales
4. Jack & Alice Chapman
5. Frank & Addie Francis
6. Arnold E "Red" Fisk
7. Idaho Dept of Fish & Game

Burials:

Hugh Johnson  
Peter Dorsey  
Michael Nevins

I.0. (Site of Army encampment, 14 Aug 1879, Sheepeater War)

1. Edward Anderson/Yellow Jacket Mine
2. James & Flora Hackett, Hackett children May & Clarence
3. Robert McBride
4. Roger & Kathleen Cadwalder

Burials:

Edward Anderson  
Annie (Mrs Ed) Anderson  
Flora (Mrs James) Hackett, daughter of Annie Anderson



half upriver (south) from the Guard Station. Bridges were built at both sites, only to be washed away by high waters, and then rebuilt a number of times. It was not until 1936, when the current steel bridge was built at the South Fork Guard Station, that a bridge was built to withstand the periodic spring floods on the South Fork.

#### PRE EURO-AMERICAN OCCUPATION

A vast area covering southeastern Washington, northeastern Oregon, and virtually all of central Idaho, including the Salmon River drainage, is considered the traditional domain of the Ninimpu people, popularly known as the Nez Perce, the principal branch of the Shahaptian speaking people of the Columbia Plateau (Beal 1963). The southern reaches of this Nez Perce domain, including the South Fork of the Salmon, was also within the northern range of a Shoshonean speaking people called Tukudika, meaning "sheepeater", reflecting the bighorn sheep as a principal element of their diet (Jones 1993).

With the opening of the Oregon Territory the U.S. Government negotiated a treaty with the Nez Perce in 1855 which essentially recognized their traditional domain described above, which included the main Salmon River and its tributaries south to an arbitrary east-west line between the confluence of the Salmon and Pahsimeroi rivers on the east to the present-day Oxbow Dam on the Snake River in the west (Beal 1963). Thus, the 1855 treaty area included the area of the present-day South Fork Guard Station within the Nez Perce domain.

The Treaty of 1855 lasted only long enough for it to be broken by trespassing Euro-American gold seekers, first on the Clearwater River in 1860, the Salmon River highlands at Florence in 1861, and on to "Warren's Camp", on the south side of the Salmon in 1862. The crush of gold fever among the Euro-American settlers brought about the "renegotiated" treaty of 1863, which reduced the Nez Perce homeland to the present-day reservation on the Clearwater. A number of Nez Perce chiefs did not sign the 1863 treaty which, along with continual degrading acts against them by the settlers and the U.S. Government, resulted in their rebellion and the Nez Perce War of 1877. The non-treaty warrior faction of the Nez Perce, led by Chief Joseph, were defeated and banished to Oklahoma, subsequently returning to the Colville Reservation in northeastern Washington in 1884 (Beal 1963). The remnant of the once-proud nation, making excursions from the Clearwater River reservation, were still seen in the early 1900's fishing for salmon in the Payette Lake-Salmon River country (Blackwell 1978), but the land was now theirs only in spirit.



Archaeologically, the South Fork Guard Station site has yielded lithic evidence of at least temporary occupation by Native Americans; however, the site has not been fully explored. To date, the prehistoric Native American evidence consists of a few projectiles and manos unearthed as a result of tilling a garden area to the north of the Guard Station (USFS/Fee 1982).

#### EURO-AMERICAN OCCUPATION

1872 - EARLY SETTLEMENT NEAR THE SOUTH FORK CROSSINGS. By 1872 there were several permanent residences on the South Fork in the immediate vicinity of the South Fork Crossings, including:

SOLON HALL. At least by 1872, and an undetermined period prior, the site of the current South Fork Guard Station was the squatter's claim of Solon Hall, who had been sheriff of Idaho County in 1869, when the county seat was located at Washington, the name then applied to Warren's Camp. Solon Hall and his family had 25 to 30 acres under cultivation, raising vegetables for sale to the miners at Warren (Washington). The horse trail that accessed the South Fork properties from Warren, via Warren Summit, crossed the river from the west side to the east side at the Hall place and it became known as Hall's Crossing. Hall had built a log pack bridge there at some time during his tenure, but the bridge washed away during the spring high water of 1879. Solon Hall had at least two sons, Edgar and Abbey, the youngest, born around 1861. Solon Hall won the mail delivery contract to Warren in March 1876 and moved to Indian Valley, near Council, which was the origination point of the 125-mile mail route to Warren (Helmert 1988).

AMASA DANIEL SMEAD. "Pony" Smead, by 1872, had established a residence and mining activity at the mouth of Pony Creek, along with his partners George Woodward, George Dyer, and James P Raines (who was killed in 1879 during the Sheepeater War). So the story goes, a horse and some flour were traded for a ten-year old Tukudika Indian girl to cook for them. Pony Smead later bought out his partners and married Mary (Molly), the Indian girl, and had eight children: Ella, Ida, Maggie, Willy, Mary, Ethel, Earl, and George. Pony Smead was a Justice of the Peace in the Warren District 1891-1896. He died 18 January 1899 and was buried on the ranch beside his daughter Ella who died in 1889 at age four. Pony's wife Molly died in 1912 and was also buried at the South Fork ranch. The ranch was sold by the Smead children in 1912 or 1913 to Bailey Dustin and wife Mary Blackwell Carrey Dustin.



SYLVESTER SCOTT SMITH. "Three Finger" Smith was an early pioneer in Idaho County, having been at Florence and Warren when the initial strikes were made. By 1872 he was well-established on his ranch at the mouth of Elk Creek, a mile and a half upriver (south) from Hall's Crossing. He also raised vegetables for sale in Warren, with 25-30 acres under cultivation. He received his cognomen when he rested his hands over the muzzle of his rifle which discharged removing both middle fingers. He was badly wounded in an encounter with Indians in upper Long Valley in August 1878; the Indians were believed to be renegades from the Bannock-Paiute War in eastern Oregon. Three Finger Smith and wife Sylvia had four sons: Sam, Warren, Henry, and Bob, the youngest. Bob was carrying mail to the backcountry in February 1890 and did not return; his body was found in May near Elk Summit where he had frozen to death. He was buried at the Elk Creek ranch, as well as Sam's wife Juanita. Three Finger Smith died on 28 April 1892, at the age of 63. At his request, he was buried at the ranch, wrapped in a buffalo robe with a sluice box for his coffin. (Carrey 1968).

1876 - BEN DAY. In June of 1876, Ben B Day took over the Hall place and presumably continued raising produce for the Warren miners, who had begun looking for new "digs" to the east. Pay dirt was discovered in the Big Creek drainage, at several locations, beginning in 1883 (Jones 1990), which no doubt had an impact of increasing the traffic at Hall's Crossing. Ben Day was elected Justice of the Peace for the Warren District in 1890, a post he held for a number of years. He and his family lived in Warren during the summer and moved back to their South Fork place for winter (Helmert 1988).

1879 - SHEEPEATER WAR. In 1879, the so-called "Sheepsteater War" erupted and closed in a few month's time, involving the isolated South Fork community of little ranches. Hugh "Bob Tail" Johnson had a small ranch near the mouth of Elk Creek, immediately upriver from Three Finger Smith's ranch, about two miles upriver (south) from Hall's Crossing. When Johnson had not been seen for a long while, a party of neighbors went to investigate on 22 May 1879 and found that Johnson and visiting friend Peter Dorsey had been killed at least a month prior. Evidence indicated that they had been killed by three or four Indians who had come out of Big Creek, down the Elk Creek trail, and exited by the same route. It was later learned that these were a small element of a band of "renegades" which included native Sheepsteaters, a few Bannock and Paiute escapees from the 1878 Bannock-Paiute War, apparently led by Tamaro (War Jack), of Bannock and Nez Perce parentage, said to be successor to Nez Perce Chief Eagle Eye. Seeking safety from the unknown, the South Fork residents in the vicinity of Hall's Crossing moved into Warren and a request was dispatched for Army protection.



Two companies of mounted infantry, under Lt Henry Catley, arrived at Warren around 9 June from Camp Howard, near Grangeville. The following day the troops moved to the South Fork and camped on a bar that later became the "Curley" Brewer ranch, a mile upriver and opposite the Ben Day place. Indian activity was reported downriver; Catley and troops went in chase which resulted in their defeat by the Indians at Vinear Hill on Big Creek on 29-30 July; Catley's command retreated to Warren. On 29 July additional troops arrived on the South Fork, a company of cavalry from Boise Barracks under Capt Reuben Bernard. They camped at "Pony" Smead's place, a mile and a half downriver (north) from Hall's Crossing. The bridge at Hall's Crossing was found to have been washed away by high water. Catley's troops, and another cavalry company from Camp Howard under Lt A.G. Forse, joined Bernard's company at Johnson's ranch on the South Fork on 10 August. (Dave Lewis was packer-guide for the Army troops; "Cougar Dave" lived at Pioneer Creek on lower Big Creek, died there in 1935 at age 93). The combined force worked its way down Big Creek, encountered the Indians a few miles above the Middle Fork of the Salmon River on 19-20 August, then exited the area by heading up the Middle Fork, having exhausted their supplies and themselves by marching 1168 miles since 31 May. In mid-September Lt E.S. Farrow, with nine men and 20 Umatilla Indian scouts, headed east from Warren in search of the hostiles; they were discovered in Chamberlain Basin and defeated on 1 October; fifty one Indians were removed, first to Vancouver Barracks, thence to the Fort Hall Reservation in southeastern Idaho; thus ended the Sheepeater War. The Native American presence was effectively eliminated from the Salmon River backcountry and the South Fork ranchers returned to their peaceful lives (Carrey 1968, Helmers 1988, Hockaday 1968).

1887 - WILLEY BRIDGE. At an undetermined time subsequent to the 1879 washout of the bridge at Hall's Crossing, another bridge was constructed near the mouth of Elk Creek, about a mile upriver from Hall's Crossing. On 15 April 1887, Three Finger Smith bought Sim Willey's interest in the bridge. Unfortunately for Smith, the bridge washed out on 17 June 1887. The bridge was considered of such importance that Warren area residents submitted a petition in October to the Idaho County Commissioners to rebuild the bridge with county funds; however, the time required to solicit bids and accomplish the task was such that a bridge would not be available for traffic in 1888.

Simeon A (Sim) Willey was an early Warren miner, brother of Norman B Willey, former governor of Idaho and also a Warren miner. Sim Willey, from an undetermined date prior to 1887, apparently occupied the bench land on the west side of the South Fork that became the Brewer Ranch. Sim and wife Mary, whom he married in 1890, had eight children: Blanch, Argie



(married George Mosher), Mary, Pearl, George, Ernest, Raymond, and Warner. In the summer of 1896 the Willey family moved upriver about eight miles to Sheep Creek where Sim stayed until his death. It is said that some of Sim's children were eighteen years old "before they saw a wheel turn" as all work done on the ranch was by hand without the aid of machinery. (Helmert 1988, Thompson 1994).

1894 - HALL POST OFFICE. The increased population in the Big Creek area, resulting from mining activity, although involving only a handful of people, was sufficient to establish a post office on the South Fork at the Ben Day place, named Hall, for Hall's Crossing. From Warren, the South Fork was an easy day's ride by horseback, or a hard day's travel by snowshoe in the winter; thus, the Hall Post Office was an overnight stop for the mail carrier on the Warren-South Fork-Big Creek route. Minnie A Day, Ben's wife, was named postmistress of the Hall Post Office on 12 March 1894. Although Ben Day did not release his claim on the South Fork property, it appears that the Day family discontinued their residence there to live full-time at Warren, as Herbert B King, a Warren miner associated with the Mayflower Mine, was appointed Hall postmaster on 16 September 1895. Herb King was followed as Hall postmaster on 22 January 1896 by Simeon (Sim) A Willey. The Hall Post Office was moved geographically a mile and a half downriver (north) to the Smead place, Amasa Daniel "Pony" Smead being appointed Hall postmaster on 26 August 1896. The Hall Post Office was discontinued on 14 June 1899, subsequent to Pony Smead's death on 18 January 1899 (USPS Archives).

1897 - JACK SHIEFER. In January 1897 Ben Day sold his claim to the South Fork property to John (Jack) Shiefer, and the property became known for many years as the Shiefer Ranch. Jack had been a Warren miner for a number of years, operating as John Shiefer & Co on a placer claim in Warren Gulch. On 9 February 1894 Jack married Frances (Frankie) Smith Wilson, widow of Jack Wilson, who had been shot and killed at the Little Giant Mine in 1892. Jack and Frankie had two children, George and Fred, born in 1895 and 1898.

With the discovery of rich placer grounds by the Caswell brothers and William "Shepherd Bill" Borden on Monumental Creek (a tributary of Big Creek) in the spring of 1897, prospectors began transiting the South Fork in increasing numbers en route to the Big Creek drainage. Recognizing an opportunity to capitalize on the event, Jack Shiefer began building a toll bridge at his ranch in February 1898 and had the log bridge in operation when the flood of gold seekers began pouring through the South Fork from Warren in the spring of 1898.



Jack Shiefer raised cattle and garden crops to feed the area miners. Not long after the gold rush began, the Shiefer's began operating a road house at their place to lodge and feed the many transients. A newspaper report of 1 May 1902 noted that there were 50 horses and as many men quartered at the Shiefer Ranch awaiting Elk Summit to open for access to the backcountry and the new strikes at Thunder Mountain. There is not a factual report, but peripheral evidence suggests that high waters may have washed away the low Babendorf & Brewer bridge (see below) and may have damaged the Shiefer bridge in 1905. It is recorded that Jack Shiefer was repairing his bridge on 29 March 1905, assisted by neighbors Bill Cadby, Crosby "Curley" Brewer, and Sam Spicer, when Jack fell from the bridge and drowned. Jack was buried on 1 April on the ranch. Jack's widow Frankie subsequently married Wren (Ben) Waln, operated the ranch for a few years, then moved in 1909 to Meadows Valley. The Shiefer boys, George and Fred, returned to live and work at various occupations in the Warren area for many years (Helmets 1988, Carrey 1968).

1899 - OLD JOHNSON RANCH. It is noted that in 1899 the old Johnson ranch at Elk Creek was occupied by Michael (Mike) Nevins, who made significant copper ore discoveries in the headwaters of Smith Creek. The Johnson ranch was where the 1879 Sheepeater War began with the massacre of "Bob Tail" Johnson and Peter Dorsey (Carrey 1968).

1900 - BREWER BRIDGE. The traffic of prospectors crossing the South Fork was heavy enough that in 1900 a second toll bridge was built by Henry Babendorf and Crosby "Curley" Brewer at the mouth of Elk Creek, about a mile and a half upriver (south) from the Shiefer Bridge. The Babendorf & Brewer Bridge, later called the Brewer bridge, was ten feet wide and extended 150 feet from Brewer's place on the west bank to "Three Finger" Smith's ranch on the east bank of the South Fork. The tolls on the bridge were \$1 for a wagon and four-horse team, 75c for a wagon and two horses, 50c for a wagon and one horse, 25c for a man and horse or a man on foot, and 5c for each head of cattle.

Curley Brewer had established his ranch on the west bank of the South Fork, probably in 1899, at the site previously occupied by Sim Willey. He was a prospector, having discovered rich sites in the Big Creek area. He was first married to then divorced by Georgia Ellen Smith, who was Frankie Smith Shiefer's sister. He and his second wife Annie had two sons, John and Bud. Curley patented his South Fork homestead 13 August 1918. Curley's son John took over the ranch operation, having the largest cattle herd in the area with 300 head. Curley continued to wander through the mountains looking for his next strike when he died in the Profile Gap area and is there buried. The Brewer Ranch was sold to Patrick L and Teresa Irwin in 1925.



1903 - COMFORT POST OFFICE. U.S. Post Office "Comfort" was established at the former "Three Finger" Smith Ranch, at the mouth of Elk Creek, on 7 October 1903, with Lawrence J Phelan named postmaster (Larry Phelan was subsequently manager of the Burgdorf Hotel for a number of years). On 15 Jun 1904 Earnest W Heath was named Comfort Postmaster until 22 March 1906 when the Comfort Post Office was geographically moved to the Smead Ranch at the mouth of Pony Creek. Charles S Smith (son of C F "Frank" Smith) was named postmaster at that location. The Comfort Post Office was discontinued on 27 June 1907 (USPS Archives).

1905 - SOUTH FORK HOTEL. At least by 1905, probably earlier, William "Bill" Cadby and wife Emma had established themselves at the mouth of Pony Creek, adjoining the Smead Ranch on the south. Their place became a travellers' rest stop, known as the South Fork Hotel. School was also conducted there for the South Fork children.

Bailey O Dustin and his wife Mary Blackwell Carrey Dustin arrived in Warren around 1905, having been preceded by Mary's brother Clement W (Clem) Blackwell. Their family included several children by Mary's deceased first husband "French John" Carrey: Cude, Bob, Brad, and Mary (Mamie); and two from the Dustin union, Opal and Bailey. Mary also had two older sons not living with them: Raymond (Rame) and Tom Carrey. In 1909 Bailey Dustin Sr was a "ranger" (forest guard) for the newly-established Idaho National Forest. The Dustin's acquired the Smead Ranch from Pony Smead's children in 1912 or 1913, and subsequently acquired the adjacent Cadby property (the South Fork Hotel), which were collectively patented as the 157-acre Dustin homestead on 17 October 1916. The Dustin's continued to operate the South Fork Hotel until 1924 when Bailey Dustin was appointed Valley County Assessor and they moved to Cascade. The Pony Creek property was then taken over by Mary's son Bradford J (Brad) Carrey (family records, Hockaday 1968, Carrey 1968).

1906 - ELK CREEK RANCH. The former "Three Finger" Smith ranch at the mouth of Elk Creek was acquired by James H "Jimmy" Taylor around 1906 and was subsequently patented as his homestead on 18 March 1917 (court records).

1908 - IDAHO NATIONAL FOREST ESTABLISHED. Under the provisions of the federal Forest Reserve Act of 1891, The Idaho National Forest was created on 1 July 1908, which included the area of the South Fork Guard Station (Later, the Idaho National Forest and the Weiser National Forest were consolidated to form the Payette National Forest on 1 April 1944). Of significance to the small ranches on the South Fork was the affirmation by the U.S. Government, by the Act of 11 June 1906, that it was still possible to patent a homestead



within the areas designated as Forest Reserves. The establishment of the Idaho National Forest, headquartered in McCall, began an era of Federal land management, fire protection, trail building and maintenance, and installation of telephone lines, which created employment for numbers of the Warren-South Fork residents (Hockaday 1968).

1909 - CARL BROWN. Carl Brown, who would be later noted as the patriarch of the prominent lumber family of McCall, had been working in Edwardsburg-area mines in 1907-1908, with he and his wife Ida and daughter Betty (born 1906, later married Ted Harwood) living with the William Edwards family. In the early spring of 1909, outbound to the Boise Valley, the Brown family trudged through still-deep snow on Elk Summit to reach the Shiefer Ranch for an overnight stop. Carl had earlier decided that he did not want to continue mining, so when the Brown's learned that the ranch was for sale, they gave it consideration as a base of operation for a mail delivery contract from Warren to Edwardsburg that Carl felt he could get.

The following morning the Brown's purchased the ranch for \$500 (still a squatter's claim) from Frankie Waln, remarried widow of Jack Shiefer. With the purchase the Brown's acquired "160 tilted acres", some of the acreage in cultivated hay and some in steep hillside pasturage. There was a good garden and orchard and a few pieces of well-worn farm machinery. Livestock included three cows, two calves, and chickens. Eggs, butter, chickens, and produce excess to the ranch needs could be easily sold in Warren. The house had a fireplace and three rooms downstairs, one large room upstairs, and a porch wide enough for bedrolls. The inside walls were covered with old yellowed newspaper, which Ida Brown soon replaced with fresh colored pages from Ladies' Home Journal. The place was still a rest stop where travellers paid 50c for a bed and 50c for a meal.

In the early part of 1909, a telephone line, called the "forest line" by backcountry residents, was extended from Warren to the Shiefer Ranch by the newly-established Idaho National Forest, providing a much-needed communications link for the isolated South Fork community. Prior to the installation of the "forest line", emergency communication was by means of a man on horseback or, in winter, the sometimes hazardous means of a man on snowshoes.

Carl Brown did land the Warren-Edwardsburg mail delivery contract, being paid by the U.S. Government \$75 per month for a weekly round trip in the winter, and \$150 per month for two weekly trips in the summer. He also packed freight for miners at 3c per pound, using a dog sled in winter and pack horses in summer. The dog sled hauled 300-400 pounds, pulled by a



mastiff and a great Dane. Carl introduced the use of snow shoes for his pack horses, which were at first wooden pads about twice the size of the horses' hoof and, later, a snow shoe from Minnesota made of malleable cast iron. The arduous 80-mile round trip took four days in winter, three days in summer. Periodically his mail load would include gold bars, locked in the waterproof canvas bags of registered mail, being sent from the backcountry mines to bank depositories.

The spring runoff in 1909 brought unusually high water to the South Fork and there was a huge pile of driftwood lodged against the Shiefer Bridge, causing fear that the bridge would be washed away. A cable was strung across the river to ferry the mail sacks in that event, but the driftwood was dislodged with heavy blasting powder and the bridge was saved. Carl did, however, lose one of his best pack horses to the raging river when the horse rolled off the trail near the Brewer bridge. Carl had intended to continue their current business at the Sheifer Ranch, however, he was underbid for the 1910 mail contract and decided to move on to McCall; there he based yet another mail and freight business and, soon following, the family sawmill and lumber business that was the lifeblood of McCall for many years. In the early summer of 1910, Carl Brown sold his claim to the Shiefer Ranch to Thomas McCall, for \$500 cash and six lots in McCall, including a two-room house next to Clement W (Clem) Blackwell (deed recorded 26 September 1910). Tom McCall, for whom the town is named, had purchased the Shiefer Ranch as a wedding gift for his son Ted McCall and Mamie Carrey (Jordan 1961, court records, family records).

1910 - MARY CARREY McCALL. Mary (Mamie) Carrey was born in Grant County, Oregon in 1894, the youngest child of Mary Blackwell Carrey Dustin's deceased first husband. Mamie Carrey, at age 15, was married on 22 February 1910 to Cyrus T (Ted) McCall. Ted McCall was the first "ranger" (forest guard) for the Chamberlain Basin area of the recently-formed Idaho National Forest. Ted and Mamie moved onto the Shiefer Ranch when it was vacated by Carl Brown in the early summer of 1910, however, the isolated ranch life was not to Mamie's liking, as husband Ted McCall was working in the Chamberlain backcountry for long periods. It appears that she lived at the Shiefer Ranch only for the summer of 1910. In the winter of 1911-1912 Ted McCall died at age 27, leaving Mamie a widow with their infant child Marjorie McCall (Deasy), born in McCall on 17 December 1911. Later that winter, at the age of three months, Margie was taken by dog sled to Warren by her uncle Bob Carrey, to live with her grandmother Mary Dustin (family records, Hockaday 1968).



1911 - TOM CARREY. Thomas J Carrey was born to Mary Blackwell Carrey (Dustin) in Grant County, Oregon, in 1889. Tom did not get along well with his step-father Bailey Dustin, so when his mother and step-father moved to Warren in 1905, Tom stayed behind in Oregon working as a ranch hand. Tom married Scottish-born Jeanie McLeay in 1908 and moved from Oregon to Warren where he was employed by the Forest Service as a packer. When Tom's younger sister Mamie Carrey McCall vacated the Shiefer ranch, Tom and Jeanie took over the place in 1911. At that time the old log bridge built by Jack Shiefer was gone, apparently the victim of a high water washout. Access was then by the small hand-operated cable car which had been installed by Carl Brown in 1909. This was the only means of crossing the South Fork with dry feet until 1917 when the Forest Service built a cable-suspended pack bridge a mile upriver at the mouth of Elk Creek (see below). Tom started his stock business with a band of sheep which were trailed to McCall at market time. In time, beef cattle were introduced to the ranch.

The place soon became known as the Carrey Ranch and was legally patented as a homestead of 104 acres on 17 October 1916. The Carrey's first child was born at the ranch on 2 June 1914, John Hay Carrey, who followed his father as a stockman and later as a noted area historian-writer. Their second child, Gay McLeay Carrey (Robie), was born on 15 November 1915. In 1919 Jeanie had a premature delivery of twin boys who died at birth and are buried on the ranch south of the house, near the site of the USFS powder house. The loss of the twins took a heavy toll on Jeanie, both physically and psychologically, which may have contributed to them moving in 1920 to the old Frank Smith ranch (more recently called the Hettinger Ranch), about ten miles downriver (north). While the Smith ranch was their home, their third child was born, Mary Colina Carrey (Megorden), on 4 February 1921. The Tom Carrey family vacated the South Fork properties in 1924, moving to Short's Bar on the main Salmon near Riggins.

On 15 April 1924 Tom and Jeanie Carrey sold the former Shiefer Ranch to Hoff & Brown Lumber Company of McCall, with Carl Brown being owner of the property once again, albeit for a short time, as the property was returned to U.S. Forest Service administration in 1925 (assembled from Carrey 1968, Megorden manuscript, family records, and court records).



1913 - DESCRIPTION OF THE WARREN-EDWARDSBURG WAGON ROAD. An article appearing in the Idaho County (Grangeville) "Free Press" on 25 December 1913, provides a somewhat poetic view of the wagon road crossing the South Fork: "... There are miles and there are Edwardsburg miles. The prospectors of the hills will estimate a mile as the birds fly, but when he starts out to walk that mile, it is around the mountain three or four times. From McCall, the outskirts of civilization are left at Resort (now Burgdorf), the fringe at Warren then over the summit of the mountains into the South Fork country before the last great climb into the wilderness commonly known as Edwardsburg (now Big Creek). Normally a man might be perfectly sober when he begins the descent toward the South Fork, but by the time he has circled twenty seven times and seen the Dustin Ranch from as many angles, he begins to doubt his sobriety even though grape juice is served in Warren (this was during the time of Prohibition, but the reference appears to be tongue-in-cheek). The chief difference between the Elk Creek ascent and the descent from Warren is the latter is a winding round and round until your head begins to swim and your feet follow corkscrew curves (whereas) the Elk Creek climb is a perpetual crawling over with the blissful hope of the last being the last instead of the beginning of the beyond. There is something fiendishly cynical about this summit (Elk Creek); you are murderously inclined toward your guide for his ever-encouraging 'we are nearly there now'. There is an end to all things and when the summit is reached and one lingering look is given to the South Fork country, there is a feeling that there is a 'Great Divide'. With the passing years this feeling strengthens and gives an added charm to the all too desolate life in the hills." (cited in Helmers 1988).

1914 - BREWER POST OFFICE. The U.S. Post Office "Brewer" was established at the Brewer Ranch on 9 April 1914 with Annie Brewer, wife of Crosby "Curley" Brewer, being named postmistress. The Brewer Post Office, however, had a short life as it was discontinued on 15 February 1916, following the sudden death of Annie Brewer. This was the last of the three post offices that had been established on the South Fork (USPS Archives).

1914 - JIMMY FLYNN SAWMILL. By 1914 James J "Jimmy" Flynn and wife Della had established a sawmill on their ranch on the west bank of the South Fork, on the south side of the Brewer Ranch. Jimmy Flynn had come to the South Fork with Curley Brewer for a visit in 1909 and later returned to stay. Jimmy Flynn patented his homestead on 3 October 1917. In 1925 the property was sold to Patrick L and Teresa Irwin (Carrey 1968, court records).



1917 - JIMMY SCALES PATENTS OLD JOHNSON RANCH. At an unrecorded date, James H "Jimmy" Scales took over the old Johnson ranch at Elk Creek, and subsequently received a homestead patent for the property on 20 August 1917. It was later purchased by Jack and Alice Chapman, followed by Frank and Addie Francis in the early 1930's. Around 1934 the property was purchased by Arnold E "Red" Fisk who held the property for a number of years (Carrey 1968, court records).

1917 - SOUTH FORK PACK BRIDGE. In July 1917, Forest Supervisor Walter Mann, who had been Warren District Ranger 1911-1916, surveyed the South Fork crossing and found the pack bridge, planned for crossing at Jimmy Taylor's ranch to join the Elk Creek trail, would have been too narrow (four feet) for pack horses with pack saddles. Supervisor Mann had the bridge redesigned wider to accomodate pack stock and relocated the crossing to the lower end of Taylor's ranch at a point where the crossing was only 50 feet instead of 200 feet (the site description equates to that of the Babendorf & Brewer pack bridge built in 1900). Cabling for the suspension pack bridge was brought to the site in 1917 and floor boards provided by Jimmy Flynn's sawmill. Construction was supervised by Warren District Ranger Charles DeWitt (Helmert 1988).

1918 - BRAD CARREY PURCHASES "THREE FINGER" SMITH RANCH. Bradford J (Brad) Carrey, youngest brother of Tom Carrey returned to the South Fork in the autumn of 1915 from a mining venture in Grant County, Oregon, with his wife Margaret McGuinnis Carrey and infant daughter (19 July 1915) Mary Carrey (Mende). They moved in with Brad's mother and step-father at the former Pony Smead ranch (South Fork Hotel) at the mouth of Pony Creek. Brad's second child, Margaret Carrey (Gribble), was born there on 25 September 1916. Two years later, on 9 October 1918, Brad Carrey purchased the former "Three Finger" Smith ranch from Jimmy Taylor and moved his family there. Thus, for a period of two years, on the three-mile stretch of the South Fork where the wagon road ran in the river bottom, there were three Carrey families in residence: Brad at the former Smith place, Tom at the former Shiefer Ranch, and their step-father, mother, and brother Bob (Robert Hacker Carrey) at the Dustin (Smead) Ranch. In 1919 Brad Carrey was appointed Forest Service "ranger" (forest guard) for the South Fork area. When Brad's mother and step-father, the Dustin's, moved to Cascade in 1924, Brad moved his family to back to the ranch at Pony Creek, having sold the former Smith ranch to the Unity Gold Production Company for the installation of a hydro-electric power plant (see below) (Hockaday 1968, family records, court records).



1922 - TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS. Recognizing the strategic importance of the Warren-Edwardsburg wagon road, Forest Supervisor Walter Mann had announced in February 1920 that the USFS would begin a major road improvement project, however, that work did not begin in earnest until 1922. In 1922 a pre-engineered wooden truss bridge was built at the old Shiefer log bridge site, supervised by District Ranger Andy Casner. John Brewer, Curley Brewer's oldest son, was contracted to saw the timbers and floor boards for the bridge (probably at Jimmy Flynn's sawmill, upriver about a mile), and to build the bridge. The construction crew was a family affair: John Brewer, his brother Bud, their father Curley, and Curley's brother George.

The new bridge was called "the Dustin Bridge" due to its proximity to the Dustin Ranch, a mile and a half downriver (north), which had been operated for several years as the South Fork Hotel by Mary Blackwell (Carrey) Dustin. Between 1922 and 1924 the old wagon road between Warren and the South Fork was rebuilt to accommodate automotive traffic, especially the tortuous switchbacks, known as the Dustin Grade, coming down the breaks of the South Fork to the Dustin Ranch. The wooden bridge built in 1922 was replaced in 1936 with the current steel bridge (Hockaday 1968, Helmers 1988).

1924 - GATEWAY TO BIG CREEK. Commensurate with the rebuilding of old wagon road from Warren to the South Fork, the old wagon road from the South Fork over Elk Summit to Big Creek was also rebuilt. The completion of the new road in 1924 provided a much-needed gateway to Big Creek for Forest Service trucks to haul materials to build the Big Creek Ranger Station there in 1925 under the supervision of the Big Creek District Ranger Dan LeVan (Helmers 1988, Hockaday 1968, Parke 1955).

1924 - UNITY GOLD PRODUCTION COMPANY POWER PLANT. In the winter of 1923 a hydroelectric power plant was constructed at the former "Three Finger" Smith Ranch, sold to Unity Gold by Brad Carrey. The power plant went into operation in the summer of 1924, delivering 240 KW to the Little Giant Mine and the town of Warren, produced by two pelton wheel units from a 415 cfm water head through a redwood pipe taking water from Elk Creek. Unity Gold owner-manager was Jay A Czizek. Power plant construction and subsequent operation was under the supervision of Patrick L Irwin, who purchased both the Brewer and Flynn ranches on the west side of the river in 1925. The power plant employees had a number of children who attended school at the former Brewer ranch. The Brewer place was then accessed by a footbridge, which was washed away by high water



in 1928. In 1932, "Three Finger" Smith's son Warren died and was buried by the Irwin's next to his father at their former ranch. Beginning about 1933 the power plant provided electricity to three gold dredges operating in Warren Meadows until operations terminated in 1942 as a result of World War II restrictions, and the power plant concurrently ceased operation (Helmert 1988, Thompson 1994).

1925 - SOUTH FORK RANGER STATION. The U.S. Forest Service regained title to the Carrey Ranch in 1925, in a land exchange with Hoff & Brown Lumber Company, as a result of a three-way deal that had been arranged with Tom Carrey the year prior. The old buildings were razed and a new dwelling was constructed during the winter of 1925-1926, beginning a new era for the property as the South Fork Ranger Station. The new log dwelling included two bedrooms, kitchen, living room, and a bathroom on a ground plan of 38 x 22 feet. Orin Latham was the first ranger-in-residence at the new ranger station. In 1926 a new 22 x 22 foot log barn was constructed. Around 1927 a 60 x 20 foot warehouse (no longer standing) was constructed along the Warren-Edwardsburg road, about 200 feet south of the dwelling. Around 1929 the South Fork District was subordinated to the Warren Ranger District and the South Fork site became the South Fork Guard Station. Still standing today, the guard station dwelling, according to former occupant Lavelle Thompson (see 1934 below) "is the finest example of log construction of its type." (Hockaday 1968, Helmert 1988, Thompson 1994)

1928 - DUSTIN RANCH TRANSFERS TO BRAD CARREY. After the death of Mary (Carrey) Dustin in May 1928, Bailey Dustin had no interest in keeping the ranch, so it was sold to Mary's son Brad Carrey on 10 November 1928. In time, Brad Carrey and family moved to Warren, thence to McCall, and the Dustin Ranch was sold to Fred Davis in 1943, who in turn sold it to Ralph Barkell. In a divorce settlement the Dustin Ranch was transferred to Sylvia Barkell (McClain), now deceased. In recent years the property has been subdivided into summer home sites and a seldom-used but currently serviceable 1200 foot north-south airstrip was established near the center of the former ranch area (court records).



1932 - BIG CREEK CREW PASSES THROUGH SOUTH FORK. Since the establishment of the Big Creek Ranger Station in 1925, the spring ingress and autumn egress to and from Big Creek was made by transiting the South Fork crossing, usually with an overnight stop at the Guard Station to rest the men and the pack stock. On 16 November 1932, Big Creek District Ranger Dan LeVan and his ten-man crew arrived at the South Fork Guard Station, having exited Big Creek for the winter, en-route to McCall via Warren. This event is notable in that the Big Creek crew included Don Park and his wife Leona Hoff Park who had spent the summer at Chamberlain Ranger Station, having been married in May. Leona (Lonie) Hoff was the daughter of the widowed Mamie Carrey McCall (see 1910 above) and her second husband Henry Hoff, of the Hoff & Brown Lumber Company family. By the time of their departure from Chamberlain Ranger Station in early November, Lonie Park was very pregnant and could not ride a horse so had to walk the 35 miles through early snows to Big Creek, holding onto a horse's tail. Don and Lonie Park's first child, Don H (Tib) Park, was born in McCall on 8 February 1933 (Helmets 1988, family records).

1934 - THOMPSON BROTHERS. The Thompson brothers, Glenn and Lavelle, spent their maturing years at the ranch of their father Lou Thompson, the former Frank Smith ranch on the lower South Fork. Forestry was in their blood and both made notable careers with the U S Forest Service, with beginnings at the South Fork Guard Station. Glenn (1909-1977) was fire guard at the South Fork station in 1934 and 1936 and was subsequently the Chamberlain District Ranger. Lavelle (born 1912) was fire guard at the South Fork station in 1935, 1937, and 1938. Lavelle was Fire Control Officer on the Payette National Forest in the 1950's, subsequently completing his long USFS career at the Southwestern Regional Office. (Thompson 1994)

1994 - CURRENT OWNERSHIPS. In recent years, the Idaho Department of Fish and Game has acquired several of the early South Fork homesteads, removed evidence of occupation, and returned them to natural state for big game winter range. These properties include the homesteads of Curley Brewer, Jimmy Flynn, and Jimmy Scales (old Johnson ranch). Only two properties on this section of the South Fork remain in private ownership: the former "Three Finger" Smith ranch now owned by Margaret Vernon, and the former Dustin Ranch in a number of small ownerships (court records).



COMPILER'S NOTE: This history of the South Fork Guard Station had its origin in the still-in-progress family history of my wife, the former Sally Park, born in McCall in 1938. During the collection of information on her family, I found that there was a fascinating history involving a single property and its immediate environs; e.g., the South Fork Guard Station property once belonged to Sally's grandmother. Noted in the text are a number of Sally's relatives: Mary Blackwell Carrey Dustin was her great grandmother, Mamie Carrey McCall Hoff her grandmother, Tom Carrey and Brad Carrey her great uncles, and so on. Ranger Dan LeVan was best friend and mentor to Sally's father, Don Park, who was a career USFS employee. Sally and I were one-time South Fork residents, too, when I was USFS Assistant Ranger on the old Krassel District during the first year of our marriage in 1956. At that time we had no knowledge of or interest in Sally's South Fork "connection", but it has now taken a special meaning. Of the old timers mentioned in the text, John Carrey lives in Riggins, Margaret Carrey Gribble in Las Vegas, Marjorie McCall Deasy in Boise, and Lavelle Thompson in Albuquerque. The spirits of the others, and the spirits of the Native Americans before them, are still on the South Fork.

COVER SKETCH: The cover sketch is a composite of old photos and site plans of the 1920's and 1930's. The view is to the southwest from a vantage point on the hillside above the Guard Station, in the vicinity of the 1/4 corner between Sections 10 and 11. Note that at that time, the lower bench area, adjacent to the bridge, was a large horse pasture and had been a cultivated hay field when this site was a production ranch; this area has since been returned to natural state and is covered with small trees.

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