



Manuscript Group 190

DAVID (Cougar Dave) LEWIS, ca.1844-1936

Papers, 1879-1984
0.5 cubic feet



The papers of Cougar Dave Lewis were originally contained in a tin box which he left at his ranch in the care of its new owner Jess Taylor when he left the ranch for the last time in the spring of 1936. In 1969 Jess and Dorothy Taylor gave the papers to the University of Idaho College of Forestry, which in turn donated them to the Library in March 1990. They were processed by Judith Nielsen immediately upon receipt.

A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DAVID LEWIS

Almost nothing is known about the early life of David Lewis. In conversations with Jess Taylor he related a few facts: He served in the Civil War where he was at the Siege of Vicksburg with Wild Bill Hickock. He scouted for Captain Benteen at the Battle of the Little Bighorn, but missed the action. He was also in charge of the ammunition train, consisting of two mules, during the Sheepeater Campaign of 1879.

1879 settled in only true here statement

He found the wilderness of Idaho to his liking and settled in the Big Creek area about 1879, and in 1924 patented a homestead on 65 acres. He built a cabin on Big Creek, a major drainage of the Middle Fork of the Salmon River, about 30 miles from the confluence of the Middle Fork and the Main Salmon, where he lived alone for 50 years, occasionally acting as guide to hunting parties.

employed as a "forest guard"

In 1910 he was named predatory animal hunter by the Forest Service, a job he held for many years. He had a particular dislike for the cougars in the area and killed over 1,000 in his lifetime, thus earning his name "Cougar Dave." On occasion he would wrestle a big cat out of a tree, dropping it to his dogs below, no mean feat for a man who stood 5'7" and weighed only 130 pounds.

*??
not likely
only if dead*

Jess Taylor met Dave Lewis in the fall of 1934, and purchased his ranch the following year. Dave stayed with Jess during the winter of 1935/36, but in the spring was anxious to be away. At the age of 93 he left his ranch alone, with his pack horses. He died of pneumonia shortly after reaching the town of Cascade.

In 1969 the University of Idaho bought the Taylor Ranch for use as a wilderness research station.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The papers of David Lewis span the years 1879-1984, with the bulk of the material covering

48?

the years 1907 to 1935. Included are correspondence, photographs and newspaper clippings, some about Lewis, others about things of interest to him. Two relics of the Sheepeater Campaign, a fork and the shoe of a mule, were returned to the Taylor Ranch in December 1991. Material relating to the use of the Taylor Ranch by the University of Idaho College of Forestry is found in the papers of President Ernest Hartung (UG 13).

ARRANGEMENT AND DESCRIPTION

The papers were in no apparent order when received, therefore a series order was imposed during processing. The material was divided into two sections, those items concerning David Lewis and those items of a later date. The material was then separated by type, and the folders placed in alphabetical order.

The first item in the first series is the 1935 agreement between Lewis and Taylor for the purchase of the property, which includes a legal description of the land.

The correspondence includes a list of provisions purchased by Lewis in 1907, page two of a letter from Frederick Weyerhaeuser thanking Lewis for his hospitality, letters appointing him hunter of predatory game for the Forest Service, plus letters from hunters who refer to him as "Uncle Dave."

The maps include one of the Sheepeater War, and one of the Idaho National Forest.

Some of the newspaper clippings make mention of Cougar Dave, but many are simply interesting items he saved and have no relation to him or the Big Creek area.

The photographs include pictures of Lewis and his dogs, and the area around his cabin. The scrapbook contains correspondence, photographs, and newspaper clippings.

The second series contains correspondence about the Taylor Ranch, including a letter from Warren Bowles in which he enclosed photographs which he took of the area in 1928, Taylor's notices of location of mining claims and proofs of labor statements, photographs and interviews of Jess and Dorothy Taylor, and several items relating to the 1961 wilderness legislation, Senate Bill 174.

SERIES LIST

- I. Cougar Dave's Papers, 1879-1948 1
- II. Later Papers, 1955-1977 1



DAVID LEWIS INVENTORY

Box	Folder	Description	Items
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I. Cougar Dave's Papers, 1879-1948

1	1	Agreement to Purchase Property, 1935	2
	2	Colt Pistol Instructions, n.d.	2
	3	Correspondence, 1907-1929	22
	4	Maps, 1879-1930	2
	5	Newspaper Clippings, 1922-1948	11
	6	Photographs, 1918-1931	30
	7	Scrapbook, 1896-1928	1

II. Later Papers, 1955-1984

8	Interviews with Jess and Dorothy Taylor (audiotapes), 1984	3
9	Correspondence, 1969-1977	4
10	Map of Taylor Ranch, 1957	2
11	Jess Taylor's Mining Claims, 1955-1970	31
12	Photographs, 1956-1963	13
13	Wilderness Legislation, 1961	3

- Add my 100 yrs. of TR History & P. Peck's recent article

November 1995 / MG190.htm / speccoll@drseuss.lib.uidaho.edu



Visit & provide clarifications