

RIFLE'S BLAST FROM THE PAST

RIFLE HERITAGE CENTER

P.O. Box 1882, Rifle, CO 81650
Museum Address: 337 East Avenue, Rifle

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Welcome to 2016. It should be an exciting year for the museum. We have much to discuss and decide as far as the future of the museum: the use of the Henry Building, and the possible remodeling of the existing facility to accommodate new displays. This newsletter takes us back exactly one hundred and ten years ago on Jan 1, 1906 when a major change in Forest Service Regulations would forever change the ranching and settlement of the Rifle area. Hope you enjoy and learn a little, have a wonderful new year. George Pearson, Newsletter Editor

The Utes were gone, and eleven million acres of western Colorado were officially open to homesteaders. The year was 1882. Abram Maxfield and Charles Marshal arrived at the confluence of Rifle Creek and the Colorado River and decided to settle. They had come to a land rich in deer, elk, moose and even a few buffalo, a land with beautiful high mountain pastures and little did they think that any of that would change, but they were wrong.

It only took a year for commercial hunting to wipe out all of the moose and buffalo, and the slaughter on the deer and elk had begun. The demand for meat for the mining camps and settlers was just the tip of the iceberg, and by 1895 Nelson Downey killed the last native bull elk in Garfield County. In twelve years the entire elk herd was gone. By 1890 the Rifle Reveille newspaper had projected that there would be no more deer left in two years if the slaughter continued. The hunter's paradise that Teddy Roosevelt found when he came to Rifle in January of 1901 was quickly changing and Roosevelt took notice.

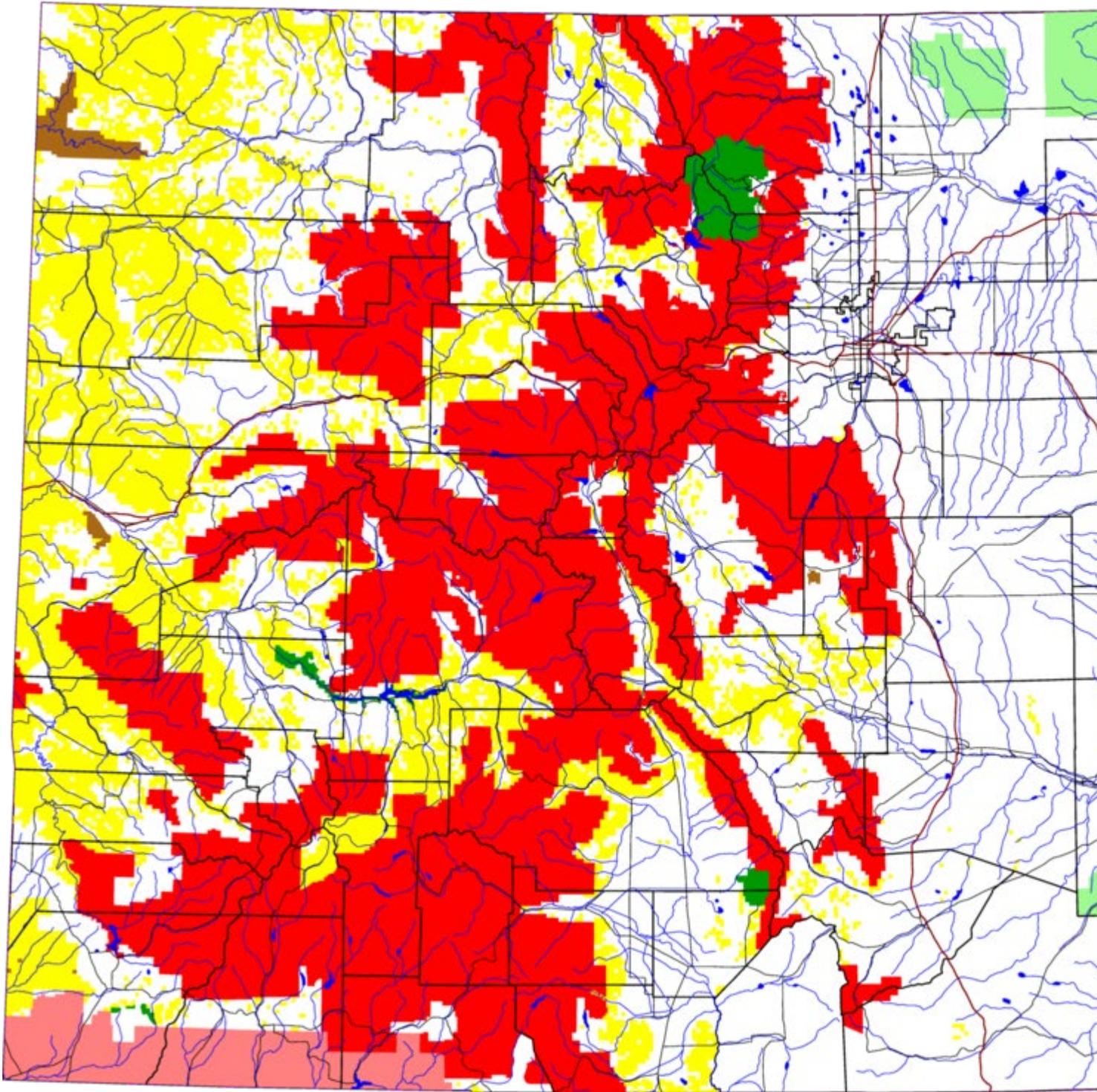
Roosevelt knew that President Benjamin Harrison had established the White River Plateau Timberland Reserve in 1891. The reserve was the second oldest such timberland reserve in the nation being second to the Yellowstone Timberland Reserve, which had been established seven months earlier. He also knew that Harrison had in 1892 established the Battlement Mesa Forest Reserve. These two reserves had removed from settlement almost two million acres of timber land. The problem was that the reserve had no way to enforce wildlife and grazing management, so the hunting and over grazing continued. Thousands of head of cattle were grazing on the mountain pastures with no regard to the land or the damage to wildlife. Local settlers banded together to oppose the removal of so many acres to settlement and Congressman Bell introduced a bill in 1902 that would cut the 1,200,000 acres to 870,000 acres and would establish the White River National Forest. In 1907 the Battlement Mesa Forest Reserve would become the Battlement Mesa Nation Forest. Roosevelt again returned to the Rifle area in 1905 this time to hunt bear as President of the United States. He observed firsthand the condition of the range and forest lands and he returned to Washington determined to make a change.

In 1905, working with newly formed Forest Service, he instructed that on Jan. 1, 1906 the Forest Service would enforce a grazing fee for each head of cattle grazing on Forest Lands. This simple change would have dramatic impact on the number of cattle in the Rifle area; the local ranchers rallied around the Colorado Cattle & Horse Growers Association and sought to overturn the new legislation. By December first of 1905 they arranged a meeting in Glenwood Springs to discuss the new

legislation. Roosevelt sent his friend and most trusted spokesman Gifford Pinchot the head of the Forest Service to meet with some one hundred local cattlemen. The president was firm and told the cattlemen that the "Free Range System" had been destructive in the past and therefore it was the duty of the government to see that these lands are used in a way that will preserve their grazing value and give them the greatest usefulness to the people of the United States. It was a bitter pill to swallow and there were many violations from 1906 to 1911, but the Supreme Court upheld the laws and rangers such as Jim Clayton and his wife Adelaide worked with the local cattlemen and soon all fell into line.

In 1913 the Elks Lodge of Aspen brought in 16 head of elk from Yellowstone. In 1914 they brought in 22 more, and then 24 more. By 1929 the elk season that had been closed since 1903 was again open to limited hunting. The deer season was closed from 1913 to 1918 and again only open to limited hunting by 1941 the 16,000 estimated deer in the area in 1913 had become over 250,000. Moose were brought in 1978 and now have expanded almost state wide. The Mountain Buffalo were never brought back and continue to be absent in our area.

In 1941 the Sopris National Forest which had been established in 1909 merged with the Holly Cross National Forest which then merged with the White River National Forest with a total combined area of 2,285,970 acres. The Battlement Mesa National Forest became the Grand Mesa National Forest in March of 1924 with 753,720 acres of protected forest land. Currently the National Forest Service has 14.5 million acres in Colorado and the BLM has 8.4 million acres most all of which were originally part of the Ute Indian Reservation. So most of the land the Utes tried to protect has become protected by the United States government. The land we see today is far different than what Abram Maxfield saw, but there are still places that are the same and that will remain the same. I am thankful to know that the view of the Flattops Wilderness area that I see almost daily on my way to town will remain the same for generations to come thanks to the foresight of President Theodore Roosevelt.



RIFLE HERITAGE CENTER NEWSLETTER

THANKS TO VOLUNTEERS

Thanks for all the hard work to make the 2015 year so successful.

2015 MEMBERS LIST

Businesses:
ALPINE BANK

UP COMING EVENTS:

Museum's remodel committee meeting Jan5, 2016
at 9:30 AM at the Pearson Agency office.

Museum Board Meeting Jan. 18, 2016 at 6:00 PM
at the Library

BOWLES BOOKKEEPING
CHERYL & CO. REAL ESTATE
GRAND RIVER HOSPITAL DISTRICT
MICHAEL CHAFFEE – PHOTOGRAPHER
MILLERS DRY GOODS
NEW UTE THEATER SOCIETY
NITA SMITH - NLS BUSINESS SOLUTIONS
PEARSON INSURANCE
SOUTH BANK SECURE STORAGE
TOWN & COUNTRY VETERINARY HOSPITAL
WEISS & ASSOCIATES
SPORTSMAN'S BARN TAXIDERMY

Individuals/Seniors/Families:

PHIL, MARLEA & MARCIA ANTES
LORI BABCOCK-WARGO
JUDY BUILTEMAN
TRAVIS & DIANA CASEY – Lifetime Membership
DAVID CAYTON – Lifetime Membership
BETTY CLIFFORD
GAIL COOMBS
ROGER & JANICE DAY
MARY ELDER
KIM FAZZI - Lifetime Membership
STEVEN FULLER
HARRY HUTTON
ALAN & PATTY LAMBERT
JAMES & ALBERTA LANGSTAFF
DAVID & SHIRLEY LAWSON
RUTH LAWSON
WALTER LEMON
JAKE & BECKY MALL
DIRK MYERS
DICK & KAREN RHOADES
KEVIN & KATHY RUNIA
CECIL & BETTY WALDRON
JOHN SCALZO
ELAINE & RAYMOND LANGSTAFF
MARYHANNAH THROM

NEEDED ITEMS FOR DISPLAY

White River and Battlement Mesa National Forest
maps and information from the early days.