

MY UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA YEARS (1910-1914)

After enrolling at the University I supplemented my meager savings with a dish washing job, but during the year I had the good fortune to get a job for 15 cents an hour filing maps for the Geography Department. Each day hundreds of maps used in the laboratory had to be returned to the proper files, and a similar supply taken from the files for the following day. In the process, I developed an intense fascination for maps that has never left me. It was the real beginning of my geography career.

At the end of my freshman year at the University I secured a job as field assistant in a forest survey party in the Targhee National Forest in eastern Idaho, adjoining the western boundary of Yellowstone National Park. I bought a round trip railway ticket from Nebraska to Yellowstone National Park for \$40.00, and the ticket was good for all summer. It included a round trip from Ogden to Salt Lake City and to Saltair, a resort hotel at the south end of Great Salt Lake, and a round trip from West Yellowstone to Old Faithful Inn by stagecoach. I left Nebraska early enough so that all the side trips could be taken before my job began on July 1, 1911.

The forest headquarters was at St. Anthony in

eastern Idaho. Our work area was bounded on the east by the western boundary of Yellowstone National Park, and extended north about 50 miles from a dirt road leading east from Ashton, Idaho, toward the north end of Jackson Hole.

Our field party included the party chief, a permanent Forest Service employee, and 10 college students, mostly forestry majors (Figs. 3 and 4). Our cook was an elderly man, an Oxford University graduate.

The work area was situated on a high basaltic plateau that was almost entirely without streams or lakes. Thus, our water came to us by packhorse in kegs -- Coca Cola kegs! We drank water with a slight Coca Cola flavor, we ate food with a slight Coca Cola flavor, and our occasional sponge baths had a slight Coca Cola flavor. The flavor was not enough to be good, but it was always there! (Publication 30).

Little was known as to the character of our work area, it was unsurveyed, and the first task was running a transit survey to keep our work accurately located (Fig. 5). Day to day work was closely tied into the transit line, which was in turn tied to surveyed land in the vicinity of the road leading easterly from Ashton, some miles west of the west



Fig. 3. The forest survey party preparing to leave Ashton, Idaho, for Targhee National Forest, July 3, 1911. W.A.R. with one foot on boardwalk.



Fig. 4. The forest survey crew at our first camp in Targhee National Forest, 1911. W.A.R. kneeling, front row, second from left.



Fig. 5. Surveying crew, Targhee National Forest, 1911. W.A.R. standing, right rear.

boundary of Yellowstone Park. Our work lines for recording the timber conditions were generally oriented east-west, and involved about 20 or more miles daily. We estimated the timber on but a minor fraction of the total land area, but it was large enough to give a good idea of what the country was like.

Our first transit line was through rolling to level country, but with one very deep canyon draining to the east. When our transit crew reached the south rim of the canyon, I was chosen to scramble to the bottom, and climb the steep slope up to the north rim. I had a stadia rod so that the transit man could determine the distance. As I was climbing the steep slope, I followed a game trail that wound its way up to the north rim. Suddenly I met a bear coming downslope along the same trail, and there was nothing between us but a little air. I turned tail and ran back down the hill until I discovered the bear was not following me, and then resumed my climb to the top. When I reached the rim, the transit man got his reading, and the rest of the crew wound their way across the canyon to continue the transit survey northward. When they reached me they said my meeting the bear had been very funny, for I had gone downslope only a few steps before the bear had gone uphill several times as far (and as fast) as I had gone downhill; the bear was more scared than I. Since in 1911 this was untravelled territory, it was quite possible that I was the first human the bear had ever seen.

Except for the deep canyon, we saw no running water during the entire summer's work. We did encounter one channel that was reduced to a few large, rather deep pools. One such pool even looked as though it should have trout in it. On that particular day two other men (Saxton and Grossman, foresters from the University of Michigan) and I were working together. We stopped at the large pool, and Saxton picked a small blue flower and threw it into the pool from the high west bank. There was a swirl in the water, so we then tried to devise some way to catch that fish. Saxton got a short willow pole, we found a piece of string in our gear, a small hook from a hatband, picked another blue flower, and tried it again. Saxton hooked the fish, and a lengthy battle followed. The fish began to tire, but we felt we would lose him if we had to lift him from the water. Saxton carefully led the fish toward the shallow side of the pool, and Grossman and I got into the deep side of the pool, lay down in the water end to end, and together we rolled toward the shallow side, literally rolling the fish onto the sandy bar. It ended with us having an eight

pound rainbow trout, the only one we caught all summer.

Near the western Park boundary we encountered a hot spring with a basin about twice the size of a bathtub. For a very few days we had a daily bath that we really enjoyed. The spring was not too hot for two or three of us at a time to enjoy a good soaking. Unfortunately, that was our only bath luxury all season. Yet, for all the discomforts, it was a very satisfying summer.

After my second year at the University of Nebraska I worked for the Forest Service in Tahoe National Forest in California. I left school early to accompany my history professor for a two week cruise on a Mexican coastal ship, prior to starting my Forest Service job. Enroute to Mexico I made brief stops at the Petrified Forest (Fig. 6) and the Grand Canyon, where I hiked down to the river and back. I met Professor Persinger at Tijuana, Mexico, on June 14, and we departed on the 15th for a trip down the coast, riding steerage. The inferior accommodations made for a really unpleasant experience! The ventilation was practically nil since the steerage deck was below waterline; a high hatch was the only means for fresh air to reach us, and very little did. We got enough of steerage in one week southbound, and Professor Persinger took a cabin for our northbound return to Tijuana.

I reported to the Forest Service at Truckee, California, on July 1, 1912, for work in the Tahoe National Forest (Fig. 7). This summer's work gave

me a splendid introduction to the vegetation and terrain on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada, as well as an introduction to wasteful logging practices. It also helped to whet my appetite for living and working in the West (Fig. 8).

After my junior year at the University I spent another summer working in the west, this time on a survey party for the Canadian Pacific Railway in the Selkirk mountains of southeastern British Columbia (Fig. 9). Included in the photographs that I took that summer of 1913 were several of a very unusual glacial formation near Windermere -- a small glacier about 125 feet thick and about 200 feet wide, that had undercut a layer of resistant caprock, cutting away the softer underlying strata, with the top of the glacier scraping the underside of the caprock. When Professor Condra, head of the Geography Department at Nebraska, saw the pictures he contacted Professors Chamberlin and Salisbury at the University of Chicago, who in turn invited me to Chicago to share with them my comments and photographs of this unusual feature. They later informed me of their plans to use one of my pictures in an upcoming textbook on Physiography, but I never heard any more about it. I would liked to have returned to the site of the glacier, but never had the opportunity.

My undergraduate work at the University of Nebraska was completed in the spring of 1914 (Figs. 10-12), and I graduated in June with a degree in Agriculture, but with very close ties to Geography.



Fig. 6. Touring in Petrified Forest, Arizona, June 1912.



Fig. 7. Tahoe National Forest, July 1912.



Fig. 8. W.A.R., Tahoe National Forest, 1912.



Fig. 9. Members of survey party at British Columbia cruising camp, 1913. W.A.R. lower right.



Fig. 10. Members of University of Nebraska Geology 31 class in field camp at Weeping Water, Nebraska, March 16, 1914, "Before the Storm." Professor E.F. Schramm standing, 5th from right; W.A.R. kneeling, on right.

Geology Students Camp Out in Snow at Weeping Water

Professor Schramm and a geological party of seventeen students are getting a taste of real pioneer life this week while camping near Weeping Water. The party set out to do field work in geology and did not count on the terrors of winter during the spring vacation. One large tent is supplying shelter to the entire number, and equipped with one stove they are managing to stick out the week. The party will probably return Saturday night.

W.A.R. - 2-20-14

Fig. 11. Newspaper article found in the Museum Archives at Lincoln and provided by Professors Leslie Hewes and T. Milan Stout of the University of Nebraska.



Fig. 12. Geology 31 camp at Weeping Water, Nebraska, "After the Storm." Apparently the snowy camp made less impact on W.A.R. than on a local newspaper reporter, because Rockie made no mention of the incident, although his files included photos of the camp.