

The Prehistory and History  
of the  
Encampment River Basin  
Routt National Forest  
Northern Colorado

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November 1976

Introduction

The "Main Fork and West Fork to their confluence, thence the Encampment to the Colorado-Wyoming border, including tributaries and headwaters," hereafter called the Encampment River Basin, has been authorized by Congress for study under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. Cultural--i.e., archaeological and historical--resources which may add to the suitability of the Encampment for inclusion in the National System must be considered as part of the Encampment River Study.

No archaeological research has been conducted in the Encampment River Basin of Colorado. Many areas of Routt National Forest have, however, been archaeologically surveyed under the Cooperative Agreement between the Colorado State Historical Society/Office of the State Archaeologist and the U. S. Forest Service. The final reports of those surveys form the nucleus of this prehistory summary.

Likewise, the history of the Encampment River Basin has not yet been intensively studied, but Routt National Forest has compiled, through an on-going program, a considerable amount of historic data for the area. This Routt Forest data, supplemented by data from the Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites, is the main source of the historic information presented below.

I also accompanied the Study Team on a backpacking trip into the Encampment River Basin in July of 1976. Although this study trip can in no way be considered an intensive cultural resources survey, few cultural resources were observed. No prehistoric archaeological resources were encountered, and only a few "tie-hack" cabin ruins and the historic Hog Park Guard Station were noticed as sites having historical value.

Prehistory

The Encampment River Basin in Colorado may have been inhabited by Paleo-Indians as early as 20,000 years ago. Sites indicative of this cultural/temporal stage--which was characterized by large mammal (mammoth, extinct bison species, etc.) hunting and lanceolate projectile points--have been discovered in surrounding areas of Colorado and Wyoming (Husted 1962; Wheat 1972; Wormington 1957). Husted (1962:65)

has documented the occurrence of Clovis, Hellgap, and Allen Paleo-Indian projectile points in Rocky Mountain National Park. Benedict (1974) has also reported Paleo-Indian artifacts at high altitudes in Northern Colorado.

Although evidences of the Early Middle Prehistoric (McKean-Duncan-Hanna) Period, which spans the period of about 4,500 to 2,000 years ago, have not yet been discovered in the immediate Encampment Basin area, Mummy Cave in Wyoming has produced large quantities of McKean material (Wedel, et al. 1968).

Late Middle Prehistoric Period use of the Encampment Basin is also expected but not yet documented. The Big Horn Mountain of Wyoming, however, have yielded such evidences (Frison and Wilson 1975).

The archaeological evidence attributable to Late Prehistoric Period (post A.D. 500) use of the Routt National Forest area is amply discussed by Ward-Williams (1976) and in other Routt survey reports.

During the Proto-historic and Early Historic Periods the Encampment Basin was within the territory of either the White River Ute or the Eastern (Wyoming) Shoshone (Stewart 1958, 1966; Smith 1974; Mulloy 1958; Trenholm and Carley 1964). Of course, after the arrival of the horse Indian societies became highly mobile and territorial boundaries constantly shifted. In fact, "The Routt country was a meeting grounds for the mountain tribes such as the Arapahoes and Gros Ventres, and the Sioux and Cheyenne Indians of the Great Plains, and the Utes of the Colorado and Great Basins" (Routt National Forest 1965:1):

The prehistoric archaeological resources of Routt National Forest are characteristically located on stream terraces near mountain passes, in saddles between drainages, and along aboriginal trails (Ward-Williams 1976:83-85). Seasonal hunting was probably the focus of occupation in the Encampment River Basin. Archaeological sites, reflecting the seasonal hunting focus, are typically sparse scatters of the waste material generated during stone-tool manufacture. Few indications of habitation will reflect any permanency. The archaeological value of the Encampment River Basin will probably stem not from any one site, but from studies of the distribution of sites (settlement pattern) and aboriginal utilization of high-altitude resources.

### History

Just as the game resources of the Routt country had attracted the Native Americans to the area each summer and fall, the white trappers were drawn to the area from 1825 through 1845. "The main rendezvous of the fur traders was in the Green River country in Wyoming" (Routt National Forest 1965:10), and one of the few nearby trading posts was in Brown's Hole (Park). The Encampment Basin undoubtedly was exploited by these fur trappers.

Explorer Colonel John C. Fremont passed through the Encampment Basin in 1844 on return from California. He remarked: "It is from this elevated cove and from the gorges of the surrounding mountains and some lakes within their bosoms that the Great Platte River collects its first waters and assumes its first form and certainly no river could ask a more beautiful origin" (Routt National Forest 1965:7).

In 1862 Joseph Hahn made the discovery of gold in Hahns Peak Basin. Throughout the 1860's gold attracted newcomers, and in 1874 "the Purdy Mining Company, Hopkins, Harris, Dunbar and Co., Lambert, William Bell, S. D. N. Bennett and others, began extensive developments" (Routt National Forest 1965:12).

One of the earliest freight roads constructed in Routt County, the Ellis Trail, was built in 1877 from the Hahns Peak gold area, through the Encampment River Basin (Hog Park), to Laramie (Routt National Forest 1965:12, 177, 180).

The 1860's and 1870's were also characterized by an influx of homesteaders into the region. The rich pasturage of the Encampment River Basin--Hog Park, West Fork Meadows, etc.--was no doubt utilized by these early cattle ranchers.

The cattle interests grew quite strong in the area, and the gradual intrusion by the Wyoming sheepmen precipitated violent retaliations in the late 1800's (Routt National Forest 1965:47-50). Sheep were, however, grazed in the area shortly after the turn of the century, and the proportion of sheep to cattle steadily escalated. Homesteaders' fences, the elimination of foothill lands from cattle-grazing, and range depletion helped bring on this trend from cattle to sheep (Routt National Forest 1965:51-52). In 1938 the West Fork of the Encampment River was noted as suffering from range depletion (Routt National Forest 1965:53).

The Park Range Forest Preserve was proclaimed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905, and its name was changed to Routt National Forest in 1908.

One of the memorable events in the history of Routt National Forest was the Carbon Timber Company trespass.

The Carbon Timber Company was a Wyoming corporation with headquarters at Hanna, Wyoming. It operated within the boundary of the Routt in the Encampment and Damfino drainages, presumably on private land. The land was undoubtedly gained fraudulently as Harry Ratliff reports that in 1901 and 1902, Andy Olsen, Dan Wilt and P. O. Short hauled wagon loads of men to Steamboat Springs and Walden to file on timber claims just south of the Colorado line in the Encampment and Damfino areas. These claims

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evidently were proved up on in a hurry because he also states that from 1903 to 1905 he and other Elk River ranchers furnished the Carbon Timber Company tie camps, along Encampment River, Damfino Creek and Hog Park, with hay, grain and meat.

In 1906, the Carbon Timber Company made inquiries to purchase National Forest timber on the Routt but evidently the Service had by that time got wind of illegal cutting in the area. No sale was made to them. In July, 1907, Supervisor Hogan sent Ranger Sam Coleman and guard Earl Salisbury in to Hog Park to cruise the area for trespass. Nothing happened, so in September, Hogan sent Harry Ratliff, then a Ranger and Stapleton, a guard, in to find out the trouble. They found Salisbury working with Company tie hacks and Coleman locating trespass cutting with the help of Company men and with the use of Company data. No maps had been prepared and tally sheets were grossly inaccurate. Ratliff took over and started running control lines to the State line to locate the areas of trespass. Coleman was transferred from the job to Steamboat Springs and took all U.S. marking hatchets with him. Ratliff had to follow him a ways to get the equipment. It is said that some fisticuffs resulted on this occasion. Anyhow, from September to late November, Ratliff mapped and cruised the area finding approximately 1,200 acres of forest land cut over and 1,078,348 feet b.m. of saw timber, 235,680 ties, 23 mine ties, and 156,240 mine props cut in trespass. He recommended settlement on an innocent basis and fixed charges at 6-2/3 cents per tie, 3 cents per mine prop and \$2 per M b.m. for saw logs. He also recommended a \$1.00 per M deposit for brush burning and cleanup. His report was dated 11/9/07.

The Carbon Timber Company under signature of its President, Andrew Olson, 1/19/09, offered to settle the trespass for \$8,496.89 at the rate of \$1 per M for 7,519,431 board feet and \$2.50 per M for 386,982 board feet, and also agreed to skid and clear a strip 100-200 feet wide between their property and National Forest lands. On March 29, 1910, the Company agreed to settle on the basis of 11,278,293 feet b.m. out in "unintentional trespass" for \$14,775.18 and, in lieu of cleaning the brush and debris between the Company's land and the National Forest, to clear a "fire line" approximately on the top of the Continental Divide, in Colorado and Wyoming, from a point where the Continental Divide crosses the township line between

Townships 10 and 11 N., R. 84 W., 6th P.M. in Colorado to a point where Continental Divide crosses line between Sections 14 and 15, T. 13 N., R. 85 W., 6th P.M. in Wyoming. Thus was settled timber trespass number 1 on the Routt and so also was built the famous Fireline Driveway over which millions of Wyoming sheep have travelled from the deserts to the high summer ranges of the Routt (Routt National Forest 1965: 39-40, see also 211).

Ruins of the small log cabins occupied by "tie hacks" still survive along the edges of Hog Park and elsewhere in the Encampment River Basin of Colorado.

The Hog Park Guard Station was built in 1910. The guard station is still used by Routt National Forest. The footbridge across the Encampment River and the original buck-and-pole horse pasture fence also survive.

### Conclusions

Based on present evidence, the Encampment River Basin is not "outstandingly significant" in terms of prehistoric archaeological resources. The Encampment Basin is, however, "outstandingly significant" historically. Three historical resources of considerable value are associated with the Encampment River: (1) the Ellis Freight Trail to Hahns Peak, (2) the Hog Park Guard Station, and (3) the "tie hack" cabins associated with the Carbon Timber Company Trespass incident.

The Ellis Freight Trail was constructed in 1877 to supply Hahns Peak. It also served as the major horseback, ski, snowshoe, and walking route from the railhead at Laramie to the Hahns Peak gold fields, and as the supply route to the Encampment River Commissary, from the Elk River ranches to feed the "tie hacks" living in the Hog Park area (Colorado Inventory of Historic Sites).

Hog Park Guard Station is a single story building of about 15 by 30 feet that has a rock-and-cement foundation and log walls. Built in 1910, it survives as the (second?) oldest remaining guard station on Routt National Forest. Associated bridge foundations and a buck and pole fence also remain.

The "tie hack" cabin ruins, which dot the flanks of Hog Park, are also of historic value as they relate to (1) the regionally important tie-cutting industry stimulated by the Union Pacific, as well as other roads, and (2) the "infamous" Carbon Timber Company Trespass case.

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