



## HISTORY OF CROSS MOUNTAIN RANCH

They trod swiftly and softly through the forest not disturbing the pine laden paths. They were now in their favorite summer hunting grounds where the game was plentiful and their lodges nestled in the ponderosa and lodgepole pine. The wind chimed through the douglas fir and aspen. At the end of the warm days when the crisp air of autumn blew the aspen leaves and the forest became gold and red, the Ute Indian tribe would pack up their lodges and start their journey to the low country along the Yampa River where the game would migrate and settle in during the long winter months.

From the 14th century until they were "relocated" onto reservations, the Ute tribes, a part of the Shoshone family, hunted and gathered, procured horses from the Spanish of the southwest and protected and governed their lands of Northwestern Colorado.

The Cross Mountain Ranch, where the Utes summered, is located in the Upper Country at an elevation of 8,000 feet. There are 30,700 deeded acres in Routt and Rio Blanco counties, near the township of Hayden, Colorado. The Low Country consists of 27,700 deeded acres west of the town of Maybell, Colorado in Moffat County at an elevation of between 5,500 and 7,500 feet. It was here that the Utes wintered due to the more mild weather and the vast herds of elk, antelope and deer.

The Upper Country and the Lower Country are non contiguous parcels of property separated by fifty miles but surrounded by an assortment of federal, state, private leases and permits which total approximately 341,600 acres. Thus, the deeded and leased parcels total approximately 400,000 acres.

From the early days of the wandering Utes to the present ownership of Cross Mountain Ranch, this area of Colorado has been steeped in history, legend and lore, all of which testified to the romance and wildness of the early settlement of this part of the West.

For four centuries, from the 14th to the 18th, the Utes lived relatively undisturbed lives, occasionally defending their hunting grounds from incursions by the Arapahoe, Sioux and Cheyenne. When the white man did venture in, they came as explorers, mountain men and fur trappers and the Utes assisted them. Early settlers found the Indians peaceful and friendly. They bartered for sugar, biscuits and medical help in exchange for meat, moccasins and pelts. Only when gold seekers began to harass and encroach on Indian territories in the vicinity of Steamboat Springs in the mid-1800's did the Indians begin to show signs of hostility.

But the turning point in the history of Northwestern Colorado and the eventual settlement of this country by the whites was the Meeker Massacre. Nathan Cook Meeker was a Greenwich Village poet and agricultural editor of Horace Greeley's ("Go West, Young Man") Tribune. He was appointed Indian agent for the White River Agency and attempted to convert the Utes from hunters to farmers. He was unyielding in his fervor and told the Utes to plow and thresh their favorite gaming and racing fields. The result was a massacre of Meeker and all his employees and an ambush of Colonel Thornburgh's U.S. Cavalry detachment at Milk Creek on September 29, 1879. From that moment on, the fate of the Utes was sealed and the opening of Northwestern Colorado to homesteading was an eventuality.

The site of the Milk Creek Massacre is approximately twelve miles from the Upper Country parcel of Cross Mountain Ranch, as the crow flies. It was determined that a renegade band of Utes, numbering about twelve, had actually committed the crimes for which they stood accused. The peace-loving Chief Ouray of the Utes negotiated with the Army officers over the fate of his braves and he (Chief Ouray) insisted that they be tried in Washington. Ten braves did go to Washington, but nothing of consequence happened to them. Instead there was a final ratification of a Ute treaty whereby the Utes were divided; half went to a reservation in southern Colorado and half to the Uintah reservation in Utah.

In 1882, the Northwestern territories of Colorado were opened to homesteaders and a steady but small stream of pioneers came to this area and cleared land and erected log cabins on their 160 acres. The Upper Country, which is now the Cross Mountain Ranch, was originally many small ranches and homesteads whose patents date from 1900 to 1911 and later. Mr. Ralph Pitchforth began to buy up these ranches and homesteads in the 1920's. Later in the early 1950's under Mr. J Burton Tuttle, the ranch increased its holdings until it was known as the Cross Mountain Ranch of both Upper Country and Lower Country. Bogle Farms bought the Cross Mountain in 1963 and sold it to the most recent buyer in 1991.

Mr. Ralph Pitchforth was the farsighted rancher who consolidated his holdings in the Upper and Lower Country realizing that the richness of the grasses in the Upper Country would feed his herds of sheep and cattle in the summer and the natural and nutritious bluestem grasses of the Low Country would sustain his herds through long and difficult winters without putting them "on the stack."

The Boeddeker family, present owners of Cross Mountain Ranches added another prime property to the ranch when they purchased the Pyramid Ranch in 1993. The Pyramid Peak Guest Ranch is located in the Upper Country (Rio Blanco County). Situated in a box canyon at the end of the east fork of the Williams Fork River, this beautiful, pristine and remote ranch sits at an elevation of 8,000 feet at the foot of Pyramid Peak (13,000 feet). Crossed with streams, nestled in forests of pine and aspen, teeming with wildlife and surrounded by the Flat Top Wilderness, the Pyramid Peak Guest Ranch offers solace and beauty to the weary traveler.

At the turn of the century, the Pyramid Peak Guest Ranch was a freight, mail and way-station for travelers traversing the Williams Fork and Ripple Creek Pass. Historically accessible only during the summer and fall due to heavy snows, the PPG Ranch is now a perfect place to enjoy year-round winter and summer sports.

Much has been said and written about the beauty of the Upper Country with its pine, spruce and aspen forests, its rich game and rushing rivers, the Williams Fork Valley and the Willow Creek area which is summer ranch headquarters. But not to be outdone, lies the fertile and historic Cross Mountain Ranch of the low country along the wide and beautiful Yampa River which courses twenty-five miles through Cross Mountain Ranch with its white water gorges and peaceful running course.

It was here that men such as Kit Carson, Colonel John Fremont, Major John Wesley Powell and those intrepid explorers walked and rode, hunted and fished, charted and mapped these lands. Through these Lower Country lands, Butch Cassidy, the Sundance Kid and his gang, the "Wild Bunch," rode and fled from posses. Brown's Park adjacent to the Cross Mountain

Ranch Low Country was the rendezvous of cattle rustlers and hardy early ranchers. The introduction of sheep from Wyoming was met with stiff resistance in this area by cattlemen, many of whom had the largest spreads in Northwest Colorado. Three of these ranches stand out for their size and fame. They were the White Bear Land and Cattle, Co., the Sevens and the Two Circle Bar.

Of these three, the White Bear Land and Cattle Co. and the Sevens are now part of the holdings of the lower portion of Cross Mountain Ranch. These ranches were very famous in their day for the number of cattle they ran and the quality of wranglers and foreman who operated them.

The "White Bears" were a consortium of eastern investors comprised of preachers, college professors, and professionals who were basically ignorant of ranch operations but lured by the tales of the west which were told to them by a Denver promoter names James D. Husted. The origin of the name White Bears is cloudy. Popular conjecture held that the Yampa River, originally called the Bear River (because of the number of bears in the vicinity), could have had significance in the naming. Mr. Husted's holdings consisted of a big ranch in Lily Park, so named because of the profusion of beautiful sand lilies that bloomed in the spring. The Little Snake Joins the Yampa at Lily Park. The White Bear's holding were 5,000 acres. The company adopted the brand the W Bar W.

"The White Bear operation in Lily Park was in itself a fascinating complex, encompassing the construction of a huge wing dam in the Yampa at the point where the river emerges from Cross Mountain Canyon gorge, the ditching and irrigation of more than two thousand acres of land on the first bench above the river, the cultivation of alfalfa, grain and root crops (some of which won prizes at the 1913 National Western Stock Show in Denver) and running a considerable herd of cattle on the open range and growing hogs, turkeys, chickens, geese and ducks for market." (1)

The W Bar W spread bordered the Sevens along the Yampa and was strictly a steer outfit. Each year 4,000 to 5,000 yearlings were bought in the Southwest or Old Mexico and an equal number of mature animals were trailed to market at Wolcott, a station on the Denver and Rio Grande railroad in the Eagle River Valley. Eventually Mrs. N.N. Pierce's nephew, Billy Wear, became the third foreman of the Sevens following the ouster of George Watson, a very capable cowman but unfortunately not related to the owner. Billy Wear was a colorful foreman, handsome, hard-working and hard-drinking. There is a story about Billy Wear and a cattle drive to Steamboat Springs which could be a scene out of a John Huston western.

Billy was approaching the town of Steamboat Springs with a herd of four to five thousand head of hot, dirty and tired cattle on their way to the railhead at Wolcott. He had been on the trail for several days when he was met at the end of town by the constable who told him it was no longer permissible to drive cattle down Main Street. The herd would have to bypass the town. To do thus they would have to cross the Yampa twice and ride over mountainous terrain. The town had recently installed brand new plank sidewalks on either side of Main Street. The town fathers did not relish the idea of fresh cow manure spattered on their brand new sidewalks.

Billy Wear languidly eyes the official, considered the ultimatum and said to the constable, "So we can't take our cattle through town anymore?" "That's right," the marshal said, "the town council won't stand for it."

Wear took a drag on his cigarette, squinted hard at the official then flicked the butt in his face and raised his arm and motioned to his outriders. A sweating, bawling, running head of six million pounds of beef filled Main Street from curb to curb. Wild-eyed and hard-hoofed they roared through the center of town on their way to Wolcott.

There are also stories of Tom Horn, the over-zealous lawman who ran down outlaws only to be hanged himself for murdering a young black boy. Pat Lynch, the Hermit of Pat's Hole is buried at Lily Park. Pat was born in Ireland, took to the sea at fourteen years of age, shipwrecked in Africa, rescued by an English ship, went to India and found his way to America where he joined the Navy. He fought in the Civil War and made his way to Northwestern Colorado. He lived the life of a hermit in a canyon where the Green River joins the Yampa. He stored jerky and bread all over the mountains and was said to have tamed a mountain lion who he would call and the lion would answer with a plaintive cry and sometimes bring him a fresh kill of deer. He lived his last three years at Lily Park where he died and was buried at the age of ninety-eight.

At one time, the Wells Fargo Co. and also the famous Cary Ranch owned the Sevens. We cannot leave this area of Lily Park (site of the White Bear Land and Cattle Co.) without mentioning the beautiful story of the Indian maiden and the warrior she loved. There are three places on Cross Mountain Ranch (in the Low Country) called Disappointment, Vale of Tears and Happy Hollow. It seems there was an Indian maiden and a warrior from different tribes, Piute and Shoshone. This couple was pledged to marry on the annual hunting trip. This event was to take place at the lower end of Lily Park at the foot of Blue Mountain. The warrior was to overtake his maiden here but when he arrived, his sweetheart was gone so he called this place Disappointment. He then crossed to the south side hoping to find her there but she was not to be

found. He sat down and wept and called this place Vale of Tears and he went on. He finally found her some miles up the river and named this place Happy Hollow. These names are a part of Cross Mountain Ranch.

Cross Mountain Ranch today is a diversified operation comprised of four entities; agriculture, livestock, hunting/fishing and recreation. It is a working cattle and sheep ranch with significant haying lots, and offering world class hunting. The recent survey of the Fish and Game Department counted herds of elk numbering around 7,000 head. Fishing, hiking, backpacking, nature trails and white water rafting are among the many recreational possibilities.

Guests will lodge in the Upper Country at the historic Pyramid Peak Guest Ranch and in the Lower Country at the historic Victorian Sevens Ranch. Between the two unique locations and elevations (8,000 feet to 5,000 feet), guests will enjoy all winter sports (snowmobiling and cross country skiing) to fly fishing, horseback riding, white water rafting, and cattle drives in the summer.

It is the intention of the owners to continue to operate Cross Mountain Ranch as a sole entity of Upper and Lower Country parcels, headquartering the ranch at the Willow Creek area in the Upper Country with winter operations running concurrently out of the Lily Park area. The owners are sensitive to the vast historical influences of this special property and plan to maintain and improve all aspects of this unique ranch.

Kitty Boeddeker, Owner  
Cross Mountain Ranch