

A bit about my Grandfather as a sheep rancher!

From the book **Where The Old West Stayed Young** by John Rolfe Burroughs, published in 1962 by the William Morrow Company in New York. This book has some excellent Northwest Colorado History, although I am unsure if it is still in print!

It was the policy of the Cosgriff brothers to extend their sphere of influence by entering into partnership with promising young men. One of them was **John K. Hartt**, who had been a horse wrangler for Ora Haley in the days when the later was getting his start in the cattle business on the Laramie Plains. Doing business under the style of the Cow Creek Sheep Company, the Cosgriff-Hartt operation lay just north of the Colorado-Wyoming line some 60 miles east of the area we have had under consideration.

Eventually **Hartt** bought up the Cosgriff's Cow Creek holdings in the Savery-Battle Creek district. Like Edwards, he took steps to avail himself of the summer pasturage so tantalizingly close in the cool Colorado mountains. Early in the summer of 1903, word quietly passed among Routt County cattlemen and ranchers that several bands of Cow Creek sheep had entered Whiskey and Big Red Parks, northwest of Steamboat Springs and some 15 miles south of the Wyoming border. In the words of one of the participants: "Over three hundred of us rode . . . and one of the greatest sheep stampedes in the history of the range warfare occurred that night and the following day. Nothing was ever said about it, and no one was killed; but the sheep moved out."

If **Hartt** was somewhat more cautious than Edwards, he was no less persistent. According to James Harl Sizer, widely known as Northwestern Colorado's "Cowboy Poet," who at the time happened to be wagon boss of Ora Haley's Two Bar outfit: "I think it was early June the next year that seven or eight bands of sheep were shoved across the Little Snake River north of Hahn's Peak onto cattle range in a heavily timbered area where evidently the sheepmen thought they would not be discovered . . . They had little more than gotten their sheep distributed . . . when one of the herders saw two heavily armed men riding through the timber in his camp. Mindful of what had happened in Slatter Park only a few years previously and fearful that he was about to loose his life, this herder lost his head. Setting his dogs on the sheep, he pointed them down through the timber in the general direction of Wyoming.

In their headlong flight, the band ran into and panicked several other bands of sheep belonging to other owners, the result being that 25,000 or 3,000 exhausted, terrified sheep were forced through dense forests strewn with down timber on the dead run. Inevitably a large number of them were lost, crippled and killed outright. By the time the survivors arrived in Wyoming, the bands were so thoroughly intermingled that it took several days in the sorting pens to straighten them out again. (Reprinted from page 141. I took the liberty to correct the spelling of grandfather's last name from Hart to Hartt in this passage.)

My mom and aunts spoke to me a few times about grandma's "culture shock," as a fine New England lady who came West to marry my grandfather. As she stepped from the train in Rawlins for the first time with my grandfather, they were immediately greeted by one of the sheepmen telling grandfather something like "Sir, they shot Wilks last night." Over the years, grandma became quite a fisherwoman and she and her six daughters adapted to the Western culture. In fact, the Forrest/Park Service even made grandma a special lake called "**Minnie Pearl**" (grandma's legal name, by the way) just across the road from her cabin after "**Big Pearl**" was made, so grandma could continue to enjoy fishing in her senior years. On the pages that follow are the story of the family behind the State Park named **Pearl Lake**.

Cathy Hartt (I took mom's maiden name legally about 15 years ago - my maiden name was Keffeler)