

The following is a transcription of a document by William Roy Bandy. The original, a typewritten draft (carbon-copy on onion skin), was found in the materials sent to Glenn Borkenhagen by Bandy's grandson Dirk Reith during August 2019. This document was scanned, but the scan was illegible. The pagination has been maintained

Page 3-A

The Garland Country

The country around Garland where I received my first introduction to Wyoming is typical of the desert valley lands of Wyoming. It receives an annual rainfall of less than 10 inches. The village itself is on a salt-sage flat that was known locally as "Garland Flat". It is situated on the Burlington Railroad between Billings and Cody. The level flat land extends about five miles north to the foot of the badland slope rising to the rim of Polecat Bench which is a level plateau lying several hundred feet above the surrounding country. The flat extends south about the same distance to Shoshone River a tributary of the Big Horn. The foothills of Heart Mountain begin about eleven miles to the west. The vegetation is mostly salt-sage which is short and grown in small bunches on slightly raised elevations or hummocks with bare ground between. There is also some buffalo grass and grama grass. The land is best adapted for grazing sheep during the winter months when the winter snows supply the necessary water for the sheep. There were a few antelope ranging on the flat and on Polecat Bench, and the bucks would sometimes circle around us and whistle at us for invading their domain.

Rattle-snakes

Rattle-snakes were plentiful at that time. We would usually kill several every day as we worked on the prairie and along the rocky slopes. We made it a point to try to kill every rattle-snake we saw. At first I was inclined to give them a wide berth. They were usually coiled up ready to strike when you were attracted to them by the never to be forgotten buz-z. They would be daring you to come any closer. I was working on my brother's party at the time and when

he would see me see me sparring with a rattler - circling around throwing clods or reaching away out with my shovel trying to strike it without getting close enough, my brother would become impatient with me for taking so long to kill the snake. He would come at tease the snake until it struck at him then he would rush in and kick it before it could coil up again. Then before the rattler could gather himself again to fight my brother would jump on its head with the heel of his boot, and that would be the last of the snake. He would reach down and twist off the rattles. I soon had a good supply of rattles in a cigar box for souvenirs. Later on I became proficient at killing snakes also. We wore high laced boots with 16-inch tops so there was not much danger of getting bit on the legs. The danger is in picking up rocks where there might be one hid underneath. The worst place for rattlesnakes was on Sand Creek north of Heart Mountain. We kept track for a month over there and killed ninety-nine snakes. One morning I killed fourteen before noon as I was running line. I got so I would go around every grease wood for fear there was snake under it.

In 1905 we never dreamed that one of the richest oil fields lay just northwest of Garland. Some ten years later the famous Elk Basin field was discovered along the north side of Polecat Bench along the Montana-Wyoming line. Later on the field was extended eastward toward Frannie. In 1908 a farmer at the nearby town of Byron had a well that was allowed to flow oil into an irrigation ditch because there was no sale for it.

Shoshone Project

In 1905 there were only two families living between Garland and Cody. There was a station agent at Ralston, and the Landbury family at Eagle Nest. Now the area is thickly settled, and irrigated, with a thriving town at Powell, between Garland and Ralston.

This area is a part of the Shoshone Irrigation Project of the Bureau of Reclamation which was constructed in the years 1907 to 1910. I had the privilege of having a small part in the development of this project. By July of 1907 I had completed my work with the Brunts on the Public Land Surveys and secured a job as head of a survey party for the Bureau of Reclamation at Camp Coulter, Wyoming, now known as Powell. I was engaged at running the center lines of several of the laterals that were to be constructed across the Garland Flat, and cross-sectioning them. I worked on Laterals "F", "A", and some others including lateral "W" which was the smallest and last one before getting to Garland. I remember that surveying out some of the curves where the laterals turn off from the main canal gave me trouble because they were such sharp curves. I had learned how to figure normal curves like those encountered on railroads and large canals where the degree of curvature would not exceed 10° or 20° but on these turnouts we had as high as 90° curves. My book did not go that high. I found I had to adopt shorter chords of 10 or 25 feet.

I also staked out several of the "drops" along the main canal that follows the railroad. That is, I put in stakes for the carpenters to go by in building the forms for the concrete work, Mr. Strickler was construction engineer on the "drops".

I got in bad one day! On this day when I got into camp from field work Mr. Stebbins informed me Mr. Strickler had reported one of the grade stakes I had set for them on one of the drops was wrong. They had not discovered it until they had poured the concrete and now they would have to blast it out. An error of this kind did not add much to my reputation as a surveyor. I tossed and rolled in bed considerably that night, and early the next morning went up to check.

The alleged mistake was in setting the grade stake for the concrete placed in the bottom of the catch basin below the falls of the drop. Such grade stakes were colored red on top with keel and called “red top”. Fortunately for me the stake was still there and checked out alright the proper elevation, but the carpenters had used the top of the guard stake instead of the red topped stake. This made about a foot difference in elevation. So I came out of that one with a clean slate!