

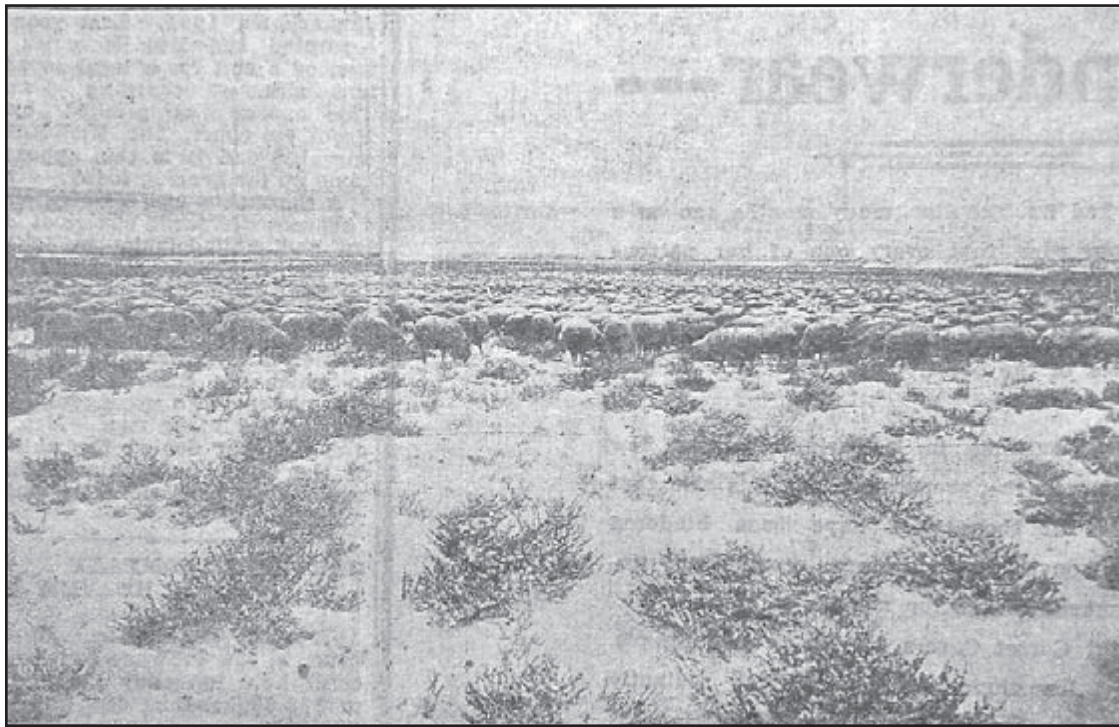
FIRST DRAFT

# In 1908, an 'army' of 21 thousand sheep and their guards crossed Mesa County

In January of 1908, residents of Grand Junction witnessed an unusual parade: 21,000 head of sheep in three groups of 7,000 moved from Orchard Mesa across the Fifth Street Bridge and headed west toward Utah. It took several hours for the entire cavalcade to move through the city. The Daily Sentinel reported.



BOB SILBERNAGEL



The flock of 21,000 sheep extends clear into the foothills beyond. The sheep were worth at least \$125,000 in total.

Livestock had been an important part of the local economy since Grand Junction was founded, and having animals in the city was not unusual. However, the Sentinel reported this was "one of the greatest flocks that ever moved overland in western Colorado."

It wasn't just the number of sheep that made this event noteworthy, though. It was the fact that there some 200 armed men accompanying the animals, including sheepherders, hired gunmen and volunteers from other sheep operations. Armed sentries appeared on the ridges, surveying the landscape for potential trouble, where ever the large flock traveled.

The Sentinel coined the term "sheep army" to describe the flock and its guards. And, at a time when conflicts between cattlemen and sheepmen raged across much of the West, other publications from New York to San Francisco used the term to describe the procession that traveled across western Colorado.

The woolly critters were being herded from their summer and autumn quarters in the high country near Montrose to a winter pasture in Utah. It was a time of open range, with no grazing permits required for most public lands, but Cattlemen who depended on the range were not fond of sheep that consumed most of the grass in their path.

The sheepmen had reason to be watchful. Nine months earlier, in April 1907, a young sheepman from Montrose named Peter Swanson was shot and killed by masked men

while camped on Indian Creek just south of Kannah Creek. Swanson and his brother, Al, and another sheepherder were tending a flock of 2,000 sheep they were moving from winter quarters in Utah to higher country near Montrose.

That was the most heinous of incidents that had been going on for more than a decade. Sheep were attacked and killed by unidentified men, and sheepherders were often threatened to make them leave the country. Occasionally, cattlemen or cowboys who worked for them were arrested for the crimes, but they were rarely convicted.

After the Swanson murder, sheepmen in Mesa, Montrose and Delta counties offered a reward of \$5,000 for the arrest and conviction of his killers.

By the time the sheep army moved slowly across the Western Slope, the reward had been increased to \$10,000. As the army traveled toward Grand Junction, it stopped at Indian Creek and erected a rock monument where Swanson was killed, with a notice of the \$10,000 reward.

Even so, it would be seven years before those believed responsible for his death were indicted by a grand jury and arrested. Cowboy Claude Timbrel was taken into custody in Twin



One of three armed detachments guarding the flock prepares to start the day. Some 200 armed men accompanied the animals, leading The Daily Sentinel to describe the procession as a "sheep army."

Falls, Idaho. The other three — George Hughes, Dale Mitchell and T.D. Bowman — were all prominent Mesa County cattlemen and turned themselves in. They were scheduled to go to trial in January 1915, but all charges were dismissed when the prosecution's lead witness, Swanson's brother, who was then living in Oregon, failed to appear for the trial.

The range wars between sheepmen and cattlemen would continue in western Colorado for several decades. They effectively ended after the Taylor Grazing Act of 1934 brought some regulation to grazing on

the public range. The sheep army that moved through Mesa County early in 1908 did so without engaging in any military action. The photos on this page, published by The Daily Sentinel on Jan. 21, 1908, were taken as the sheep army was camped near Loma before crossing into Utah, where the threat from cattlemen subsided.

*Thanks to Marie Tipping for her considerable assistance researching this article, and to the Museum of Western Colorado. Bob Silbernagel's email is bobsilbernagel@gmail.com.*

## Ute Mountain Utes open \$4M corn-mill facility

By JIM MIMIAGA  
Cortez Journal

CORTEZ — "Value-added agriculture" is a popular buzz phrase in rural areas for locally processing a raw crop into a more profitable, packaged food item.

The Ute Mountain Ute tribe is done with the talking. On Sept. 30 they took action with the official opening of a \$4 million corn-mill facility on their farm and ranch enterprise.

The state-of-the-art mill will produce and package several varieties of food-grade cornmeal under the Bow and Arrow brand name.

White, yellow, blue and Indian corn are planned for processing using 3,000 acres of corn grown on adjacent tribal farmland, located south of Towaoc.

"As proud members of the Ute Mountain tribe, we move into the future with this enterprise," said tribal Chairman Manuel Heart, during an open house and ribbon cutting ceremony.

"Our children and grandchildren will benefit from the jobs and economic growth that our new mill brings."

Hundreds of invited guests gathered at the sprawling farm operation for the annual Ute Mountain harvest feast, featuring barbecued meat and corn bread made from the new product.

Spiritual leader Terry Knight performed a ceremonial blessing in the Ute language, and several speeches were made by local dignitaries and farm managers.

"It's amazing what you can do with a little bit of water," said farm foreman Eric White. "Get ready to taste something good."

Then the factory bay doors were rolled up, revealing gleaming new equipment positioned on upper and lower floors, just waiting to be turned on.

"We can't wait to flip the switch, which is actually on a Palm Pilot," said marketing consultant Mike Abeyta. "We have buyers lined up."

The milling will begin soon, said farm and ranch manager Paul Evans, once the corn is harvested in the coming days.

"It is the workers that made this happen," Evans said. "I'm filled with gratitude that the tribe has faith in our farm and ranch operations. We know we will be successful."

The mill expands a small-scale operation that already provides whole and milled corn products for local stores in Pleasant View and Mancos, and for the Durango snack maker the Chip Peddler.

The major ramp-up in operations allows the tribe to expand its market. Negotiations are ongoing with Affiliated Foods, an undisclosed baking company, and Kroeger Co., which includes City Market grocery stores.

"Our goal is in five years for Bow and Arrow to be a national and international brand, a household name that reaches our target of 1,100 stores," Abeyta said.

The 7,200 square-foot mill is unusual in the country because of its highly efficient milling process, said head miller Britni Beck. It can process 180 to 215 bushels per hour.

To get to the edible cornmeal, the corn is husked, the cob is removed and the kernels cleaned. It then goes through a degerminator and is processed through different-size roller mills and screens before moving to the packaging line and onto trucks.

Hominy, a byproduct from processing the corn, will be sold for livestock feed.

The mill will create four or five new jobs, Evans said, which could increase, along with the corn crop, based on demand for the product.

Said Heart, "Other tribes will look to our mill enterprise as a model for tribal self-sufficiency. It's an investment in the best interest of the community."

## Environmental groups eye Idaho sage grouse ruling

By KEITH RIDLER  
Associated Press

BOISE, Idaho — A small portion of a federal judge's ruling in Idaho against the U.S. Bureau of Land Management concerning grazing permits in sage grouse habitat is being eyed as a potential lever by environmental groups considering similar lawsuits in other states.

Most of U.S. District Judge B. Lynn Winnill's 21-page decision late last month involved his ruling that the agency violated environmental laws in issuing permits on four grazing allotments in south-central Idaho, considered test cases for about 600 other permits.

But he used three pages near the end of his decision to rule on a separate matter that the agency incorrectly used a congressional budget rider to issue additional grazing permits in south-central Idaho with no environmental analysis at all.

"This is a clear shot across the bow of the BLM," said Todd Tucci, an attorney for Advocates for the West that represented Western Watersheds Project in the lawsuit. "I will bring this argument to any federal court in the country and feel very comfortable about my likelihood of success."

Ken Cole of Western Watersheds Project said the BLM has used the rider to issue hundreds of grazing permits across the West. Winnill's decision only pertains to Idaho, but conservation groups in other states are viewing the winning lawsuit as a possible template.

"This is a legal victory that is certainly going to get a lot of scrutiny from environmental groups moving forward," said Erik Molvar of WildEarth Guardians.

Idaho BLM spokeswoman Jessica Garetto said the agency would do the environmen-

tal assessments on the four allotments as instructed by Winnill. But attorneys with the BLM said that because the ruling didn't address the other 600 permits, there was no final judgment.

The BLM attorneys, in a statement sent to The Associated Press by Garetto, said, "What this means, for practical purposes, is that Judge Winnill's latest order is not immediately appealable, and there is currently no time frame for BLM to appeal."

On the other part of the ruling, Garetto said the agency is analyzing how it will affect the BLM's grazing permit renewal process.

"The reason Congress did the grazing rider is because BLM had a backlog of grazing permits," Garetto said. "There are so many and not enough BLM employees to process them all."

She said the BLM in Idaho

manages about 2,200 grazing allotments and about 1,400 grazing permits.

Lawmakers in 2003 through a congressional budget rider gave the BLM permission to approve grazing permit requests without conducting a National Environmental Policy Act review when the agency lacked sufficient resources.

In 2008, the federal court rejected the BLM's argument that the rider allowed the agency to renew grazing permits without adhering to the Federal Land Policy and Management Act.

In the most recent case, the BLM argued the rider allowed permits to be renewed while delaying environmental reviews to a later date.

Winnill ruled that reasoning applies to the National Environmental Policy Act, but not the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, which he said must be completed before renewals.

## BLOTTER COMPILED BY SENTINEL STAFF

### Chain theft suspected

Scott Jeffrey Martin, 47, was arrested Oct. 6 on suspicion of theft of more than 126,000 pounds of No. 2 steel chain valued at more than \$70,000 from his employer Delta Rigging & Tools, 722 Scarlet Drive., according to the Grand Junction Police Department.

The theft reportedly had been happening for more than 10 months, and Martin had been recycling the steel at Western Metals Recycling, which had photos of Martin

bringing in chain. The business also had paperwork from the transactions, according to his arrest affidavit.

Martin reportedly admitted to stealing the chain on Friday night when no one was around, the report said.

### According to the Grand Junction Police Department:

- Leticia Velarde, 32, was arrested and released on a summons Oct. 6, on suspicion of third-degree criminal trespassing and false reporting to authorities.
- Joshua Scott Meuwly, 30, was arrested

and released on a summons Oct. 5, on suspicion of trespassing at ThunderStruck Valley, 436 Main St. He had to be escorted off the property.

- Someone assaulted a man Tuesday in the southeast part of the city, taking items of value. An investigation is ongoing.

- Someone unlawfully entered a residence Thursday in the 900 block of Book-cliff Avenue and stole medication.

**The Mesa County Sheriff's Office did not release a booking summary or activity report Sunday.**

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## Big game hunting means big money for Colorado

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT COLLINS — Big game hunting means big money for businesses across Colorado as the state's nearly \$1 billion hunting industry opened its first rifle season Saturday.

It's now prime time for elk hunting as hunters don their camouflage and orange and go

deep into the woods and their pockets to stalk big game.

State officials say businesses that cater to hunters and fishermen bring in an estimated \$2.8 billion a year, while Colorado Parks and Wildlife collected \$110 million from hunting and fishing licenses in 2012-13.

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