

SQUIRREL MEADOWS CHRONOLOGY

Mountainmen

FUR TRAPPERS

Schultz
Purdy
Toller

OPEN RANGE

1910

Freight Line
Reclamation Road

1912

Homestead 101
J.E. Johnston

Homesteads 102-103
Milt Porter
Ross Porter

1919

Deeded Land
Cattle
Pigs

Deeded Land

1927

Cattle
Sheep

1931

Mark Weaver

1949

Foxes
Beaver
Cattle

Ed Rindlisbacher

1959

Mark Weaver

Cattle

1968

Oather Vance

1982

Big Hole Investment

1983

Vic Merrill

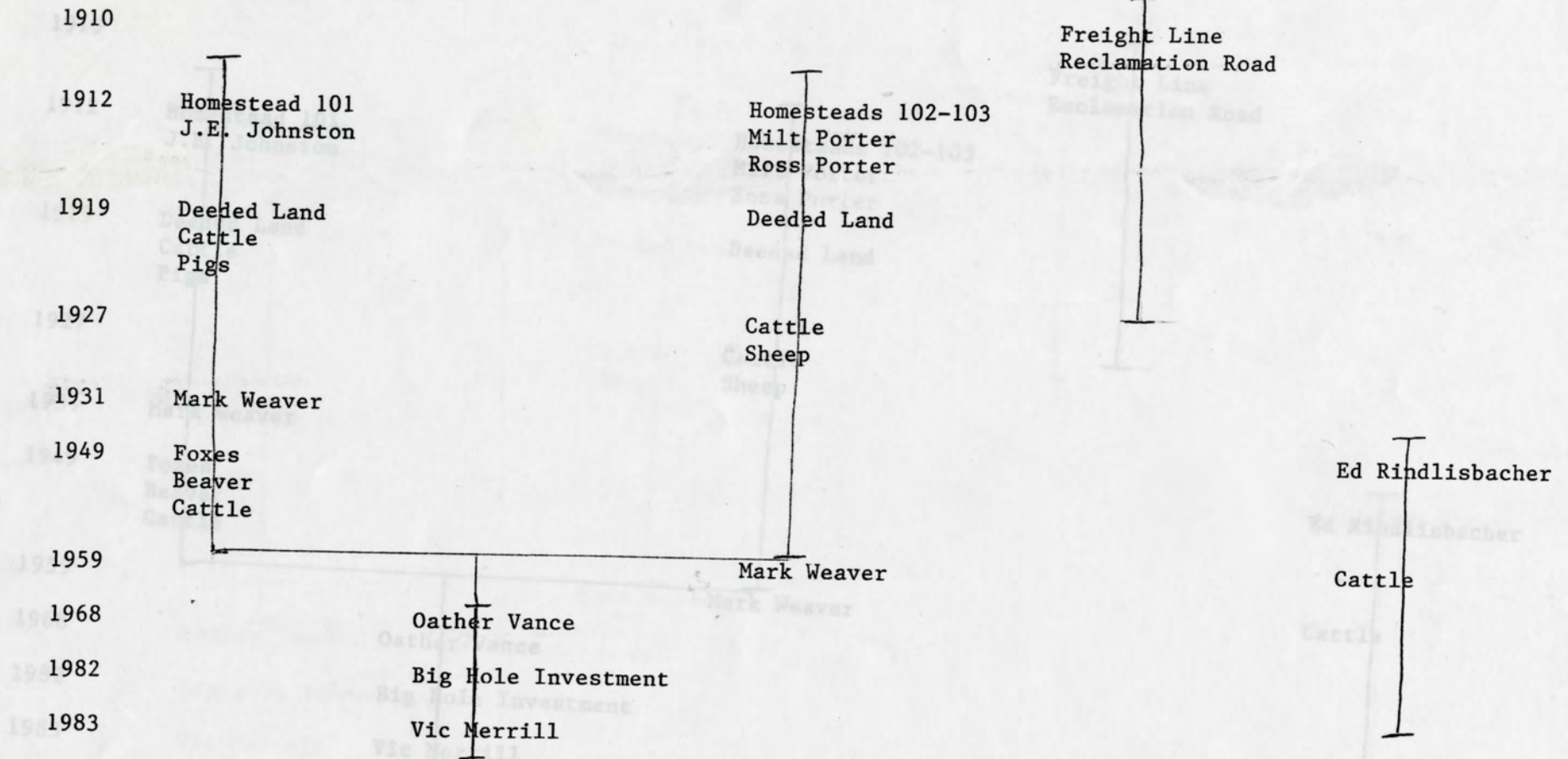
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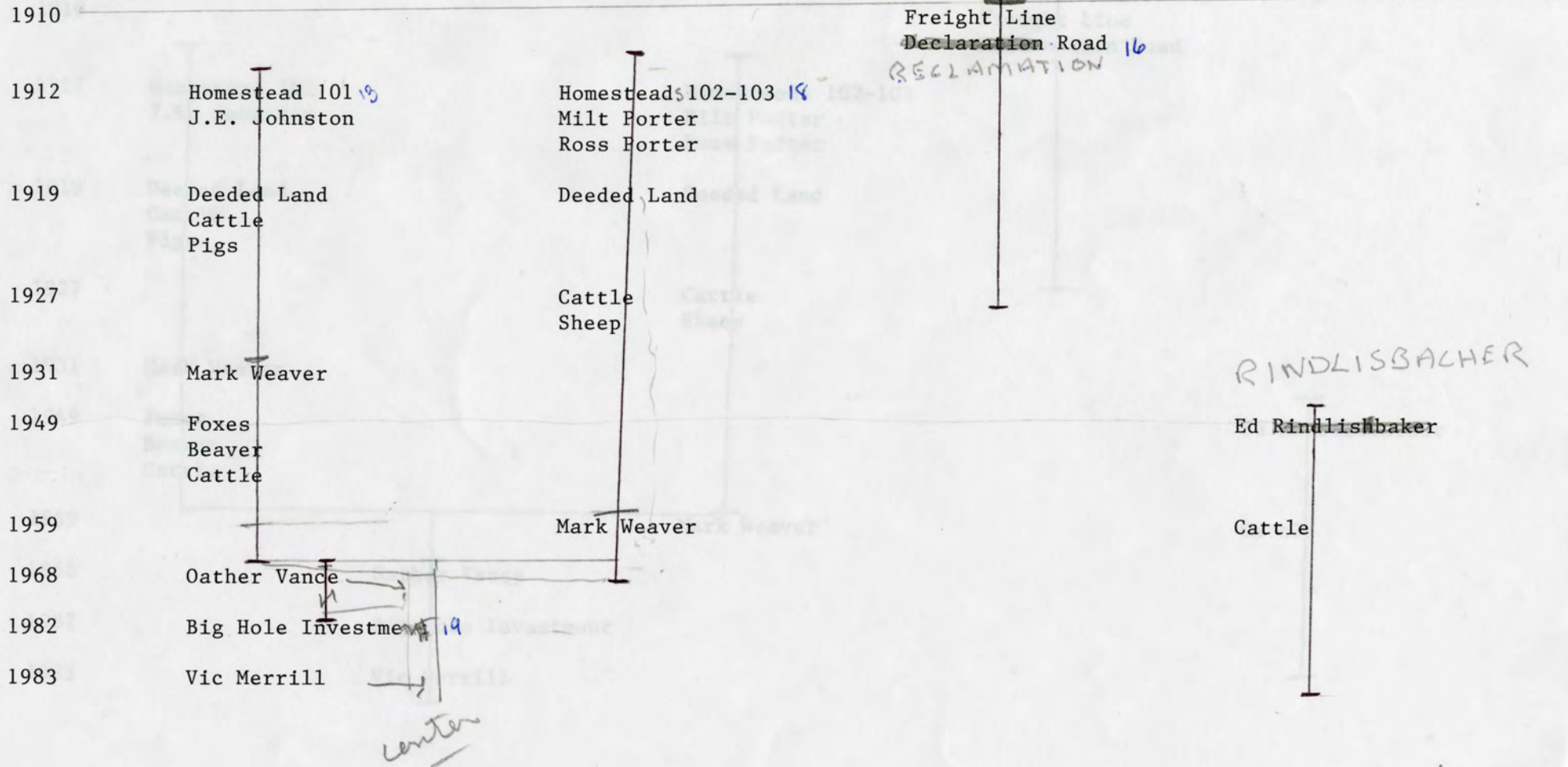
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In the neck of the meadows North of the cabins - just a few hundred yards East of Echo Hill is a little secluded place in the trees where we always killed and butchered the horses for fox feed. After we'd skinned the hide off and cut all the useable meat from the bones, we left everything else on the spot. We called this place "The Bone Pile." I'm sure the sweet aroma from The Bone Pile drifted easily over to Boone Creek and most likely on over the ridge to Dog Creek and on to Vinegar's Hole. At any rate, it quite effectively attracted any bears in the area.

One night we heard the dogs barking and knew there must be a bear over at The Bone Pile. Well, that was just fine with me because I wanted a bear rug. We'd just finished building the new bunk-house and that rough wooden floor was cold and ~~splintery~~^{slippery} on the feet in the mornings getting dressed. How sweet it would be to slip out of bed onto a nice soft bear rug.

I wanted to be prepared for the next night, so I had my 300 Savage propped up in the corner and made sure it had the usual five shells in the ~~chamber~~ magazine and one in the barrel (a rite usually done only when game is in sight.) I also put my boots, socks, and trousers nearby with a flashlight in one boot. I made sure the flashlight was in working order.

One reason I was very careful about these details is that Dad had gone chasing a bear in the middle of the night about two weeks before - without his boots and with a bum flashlight. After several hundred yards of pursuit he gave up and started home - then discovered the flashlight didn't work. It was a dark night and he lost his sense of direction in the timber, wandering clear over to "Big Rock" before he knew where he was. Then he took the trail back to the cabins, but he was gone over an hour and Mom was getting pretty worried. Well he was kind of foot sore for the next couple of days, but to top it all off, on checking the 32 he discovered there were no shells in it. Of course Dad was the brunt of a few jokes after that and I didn't want to repeat his performance.

So I was prepared and "loaded for bear." About midnight the dogs started barking and Don said "Sounds like he's here Van. You'd better get going." Well I laid there for a minute partly to work up some nerve

and partly to plan what to do. I thought I'd best sneak out through the timber, cross wind of the Bone Pile so he wouldn't smell me and go high-tailing it. As I laid there, the dogs barking seemed to be getting closer.

I bounced out and slipped my trousers on and socks and boots. I even took the time to tie my boot laces around the ankles, figuring I might have to do some running. I slipped the flashlight into my back pocket, and thought at the time "Now why am I taking this?" because it was a bright moonlit night. But the flashlight was part of the plan.

Beautiful

The strange beauty of that meadow in the moonlight made me catch my breath. As I slipped out the bunkhouse door into the brightness I spotted him ~~right off~~. He was a big black one - about a two year old and was out for 5 seconds by the big gate headed toward the corrals, which were about 50 yards South through the trees. His unexpected location and direction of travel added a new twist to things. It forced me to quickly change my plans and added some urgency to the whole thing. Rendel's mare had just dropped a new colt a few days ago and they were probably out by the corrals. "That danged bear is after the horses!" Then

He was getting pretty close to the trees, so I chose a course West by South in hopes of heading him off. I knew there were occasional big rocks around and didn't dare run fast for fear of tripping with a loaded rifle, but I trotted as fast as I dared through the high grass and lumpy ground. After about 30 seconds the bear heard or ~~saw~~ ^{saw} me and stopped dead still in his tracks - testing the air with his nose and deciding what to do. This standing target was too good for me to miss out on, so I decided to take a shot - even though it was a long one for moonlight. We were about 50 yards apart then. I flipped the safety off and tried to draw a bead on him, but the moon was in the wrong position for my sights so I sighted down the barrel as best I could and squeezed one off. I plumb missed I guess, but he hesitated just a few seconds and I had time for one more ^{quick} shot. That decided him and he wheeled around and headed back toward the Bone Pile at a high lope. I wanted that bear rug pretty bad, so I started loping after him

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Now I didn't know just how fast a bear could lope or if he was really running, but I was a pretty long-legged kid and always did a lot of running around the ranch. I found to my surprise that I was gaining on him. His course gave me an advantage because I knew the lay of the land pretty well. He went right past the sawmill and out into the trees by the old fox cellar. As we entered the woods, we lost the full benefit of the moon and it quickly became much darker. We both slowed down to avoid fallen trees and other obstacles. But this began giving me even more advantage. As the bear altered course here and there to find the best way through it slowed him down a little and at the same time pointed me to the easiest way to go. I was making good time and was sure glad I'd taken the trouble to tie my boots on.

For a while I was getting pretty cocky and proud of myself. Here I was actually outrunning a bear. I began to wonder how much it would cost me to get a bear hide tanned and where I would take it to get the job done. I wanted to get closer where I could get a sure ~~thought~~ shot. Then I got to thinking. "Why is this bear slowing down? He can't be that tired. I'm not even tired. Maybe he's not all that scared of me."

Ordinarily a black or brown bear will avoid men if possible, but sometimes they will turn on a man, even if there are no cubs around. What should I do if this old bear decided to go South instead of North? Could I shoot quick enough and sure enough in the dark? I remembered the experience Rendel had a few years ago.

Rendel was the hired man. He was Mother's nephew, the son of Moroni Daines. He got to stay at the ranch all winter (the lucky dog.) Four or five months of the winter the snow was too deep for horses. This was before we had dogs and sleds, so the only way in and out was on skis or webs. Packing supplies in was tough - a good 15 miles from the nearest dry farm, which ~~the~~ was the Lenz family. It was uphill all the way and took a real man to make the trip. Rendel was a real man - though barely 18 years old. He was six foot two inches tall and lean but very strong. I've seen him throw a hind quarter of elk on his shoulder and walk away with it grinning. He grinned most of the time. He was my boyhood hero - was always kind to us kids and didn't often cuss in our presence. Actually I really loved that guy, but love was not a word to be used by men talking of other men. Sometimes kids could get away with talking about loving their dogs,

but the men only used the word love when talking about their horses or their guns.

Rendel always carried a pearl-handled six shooter on these winter trips alone. It was a 44 caliber colt. During one trip into the meadows near Indian Lake he was real glad he had the old "Colt 44." A black bear came at him and Rendel put four slugs into him before he finally went down. By that time the bear was practically on top of him. After that episode, Rendel did quite a lot of target practicing and wore his ~~wore his~~ six-shooter about everyplace on the ranch instead of just on winter trips.

These pictures flashed through my mind as I got closer and closer to the bear. Then I got to calculating. "A 44 caliber slug is a big piece of lead - bigger than any rifle bullet I've ever seen. If it takes four 44 slugs to drop a bear, how many 30 calibers would it take. I had four shells left. Could I place all four in the dark? " Soon I became much less impressed with my fast running and more impressed with the dark. The exact mathematics of 44 caliber vs. 30 caliber escaped me, but I have seen a bear running full steam for 200 yards after receiving a 30 caliber mushroom slug in his rib-cage, and I've seen what a bear's claws can do. I began wishing I was six foot two, like Rendel.

By this time I was getting pretty close to the bear. We were about abreast of the cellar. I could hear his feet scuffing on the ground. I'd never been this close to a bear before except at the zoo. I felt sure I could get at least two shots into him if he turned back on me, but would that stop him soon enough? I decided I didn't really want to find that out. This wasn't very close for a shot in the dark, but it was close enough for me. So I dropped to one knee and tried one more time. I missed, no doubt, cause he put on a full head of steam and was clean out of sight through ^{the} trees in about 10 seconds.

As I plodded back to the cabins I was pretty sad that I wasn't going to get my bear rug, but pretty glad that he didn't chose to reverse direction and make a rug out of me.

Rendel came in the cabin the next morning while we were eating breakfast, and wanted to know what the shooting was all about. As nonchalantly as I could I said, "Oh, I took a couple of shots at a bear out by the big gate. Missed him though." Rendel's face turned a little pail just for a ~~wt~~ couple of seconds then his grin returned and as he headed to the door, he said, "Damn to you Van. If you've shot my new black colt I'll" I didn't hear the rest. He was going for the corral just to make sure.

P.S. I did finally get my rug.

The next summer at "The Bone Pile."

One shot, through the lungs.

Fred Wellman, the ranger's son was with me.

He can vouch for it.

Van Weaver

4

Friday
March
1988

7:00

7:30

8:00

8:30

Grassy Dam

9:00

9:30

1937-39

10:00

10:30

15,180 AF

11:00

11:30

minerals project

12:00

1:00

earth

1:30

539,000 cu y

2:00

118 ft high

2:30

100 hyd.

3:00

1170' lt

3:30

4:00

Dennis

4:30

Bu

678-0461

5:00

Earl Greiss

March						1988	
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27	28	29	30	31			

3

EverReady® E717 by Keith Clark

Schedule film

2130

1203

End

6012

B

February						1988	
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28	29						

April						1988	
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SQUIRREL MEADOWS

There is a strange fascination about Squirrel Meadows, even a certain mystique. It is nestled deep in the beautiful forests of western Wyoming, just three miles east of the Idaho border, five miles south of Yellowstone National Park, and at an elevation of 6443 feet. The Meadows has left an imprint on the lives of all who have lived there or who have just passed through. The author, Elliot Paul, traveled through the meadows in 1910 and wrote:

The "Meadows" considered as scenery, had some qualities that remained intact in the mind, composed like a Corot landscape, but the atmosphere was strictly Idaho-Wyoming. There were broad fields of grass where, by some freak of nature, the woods had been cleared without the aid of man, so no trace of fallen trunks or uprooted stumps was visible.

Squirrel grass dominated the other grasses in those wide open fields, a foamlike grass of the genus *Hordeum*, related to barley and having long awns, the books would have us believe. The effect of a patch of squirrel grass, in terms of color is buff with mist and it is not tall enough to sway much in the wind or short enough for lawns. It is a decorative grass. Horses will eat it, sparingly, but, when other grasses are at hand, prefer others. The evergreen trees behind the road house were straight, with bare trunks reaching upward for the sun because they were so close together that the branches could not spread. The carpet of needles was several inches thick, of a cinnamon shade related to barley and buff. Some of the evergreens were cedars, others were Douglas fir, and a few were larches, and one or two the black hemlock known to Socrates. None was much taller than 100 feet. On the fringe of the meadows were bushes of mountain juniper which deer could jump and frequently did. The course of Squirrel Creek, of course, was marked by cottonwoods, as yellow as the robes of an empress, with pale taffy shades and a soupcon of attenuated blood orange. With dark Veronese green of the conifers, cottonwood yellow was in the best of landscape taste, and restrainedly effective.

In sunlight, the vistas, whichever way one turned, were radiant; before twilight they were evocative of blank contemplation; at sunset they got out of hand, and one did not look at them too long. Then there was dusk, and would be starlight.

Mrs. Annie Ethel Lamasauskas (daughter of "Boat" Johnston, the original homesteader) said, "After you went over Indian Lake Hill, the Meadows opened up to you. It was like going into paradise. When we went up there in the spring, it would be covered with wild flowers. What I remember was how thrilled we were to get to the Meadows again."

One comment made by all the people who have lived on the Meadows was concerning the abundance of wildlife. They spoke of the elk, moose, deer, coyotes, bears and all other animals of this eco-system. The snow became very deep in the Meadows in the wintertime and most of the wild animals would leave for better winter forage, but in other seasons, great numbers of wildlife lived on or near the Meadows.

When the Johnston's first built their cabin, they could stand in the door and watch the deer come out of the timber to eat on the meadows. The freighters commented on the cry of the coyotes during the night and the almost constant bugling of the elk. Everyone had bear stories to tell.

The first white man to have passed through the Meadows would have been a Mountain Man, perhaps John Colter in his travels of 1807-1809. If the Colter Stone is authentic and he was in Teton Basin and also the Yellowstone Park area, he would have crossed the Meadows in his wanderings. The Mountain Men made no mention

of the Meadows as such because they were not yet named. Beaver Dick Leigh most assuredly crossed the Meadows. In his journal he mentioned the creeks of the area during his hunting and trapping trips. He described the abundant wildlife of the area, especially the beaver. He often traveled from the Snake River Valley to Jackson Hole and would also have crossed the Meadows.

Soon after 1900, a few more modern Mountain Men moved near the Meadows. Dutch Schultz and Charley Purdy were the most important of these. Charlie Purdy was born in New Jersey but came west and lived in Jackson Hole first and then moved to the Meadows. Schultz and Purdy built a cabin at Loon Lake and began to trap the Meadows and the surrounding area. They lived there the year round and only went to town a couple of times a year. They would live on wild game, fish and whatever Mother Nature provided in the mountains. They were well respected, honest men who later became good friends with the permanent settlers on the Meadows. They were described as having long beards, yet were clean and neat in their appearance. Mrs. Tamasauskas related the following incident:

They used to come down to the house and have dinner every now and then. We used to go up there. I can remember a funny little incident. My mother had loaded all us kids in the wagon and we went up there to pick huckleberries. She went into Purdy's cabin and he was out on his trap line. There was some meat on the stove cooking and Mama said, "Look, kiddies. Come on-- let's have some of this good stew." So we set down and ate it. It tasted really delicious. He was such a neat guy in his house. He kept his floor scrubbed and his stove blackened and the tabletop scrubbed down with lye. Before we left to pick our huckleberries, he came back and he came in and he looked in his stew pot and there wasn't any stew and he says, "God damn, somebody

ate up all my dog meat. That was a coyote I had on that there cooking." Mama headed for the timbers. Us kids didn't. We thought it was good--coyote or not.

Mr. A. C. Nichols described them this way:

. . . I ate meals they cooked and I will say they were very clean in their culinary work. I liked to eat with either one of those men because I thought they were very clean and very sanitary about their cooking. They definitely wouldn't eat anything that was not fit to eat. They were very careful about what they killed in the line of game. They didn't ever waste any game that I ever knew about. They ate everything and never caught an extra fish or killed an extra sage grouse or blue grouse. My father and I always had a very high regard for both men. They were very honest men. My father had lots of dealings with them one way or another. He said they were very honest, straightforward men.

These trappers traveled entirely on foot. In the winter they used long cross-country skis. They were made as long as possible, almost twelve feet long. They would have nothing to do with horses, but always had sled dogs for winter traveling. They lived and trapped in the mountains until the 1940's when age forced them to move to town. Charlie Purdy died in Pocatello, Idaho from complications following surgery. Dutch Schultz spent his last years in Ashton. In his eighties he made one more trip to the mountains. When he didn't reappear for several days a searching party went looking and found him dead under a tree by the Meadows.

The cabin built by Schultz and Purdy was later dismantled, after the logs had been carefully marked, and rebuilt by the Porter family on the Meadows. The Porter family lived in it for many years.

Another early settler on the Meadows was Henry Toller. As

remembered by the people of the area, he was an elderly German who came from Prussia to this country. He moved to the Meadows about 1910 and applied for Homestead Rights on 160 acres. He lived year round on the Meadows for several years. He had some money coming to him from Germany on a regular basis for living expenses.

While Mr. Toller lived on the Meadows, he began to put up wild hay for sale to the freighters passing through the area and for sale to the ranchers of the Ashton area. When the Nichols family journeyed to the Meadows in the wintertime for a load of hay, they would travel up one day, spend the night with Mr. Toller and then return the next day. Mr. A. C. Nichols

remembered:

Old professor Toller played for our Christmas doings at the old Green Timber school house. There was only one person there at the time who really could totally appreciate that man's ability and that was the ranger's wife, Mrs. Retta Latham. She was a good pianist.

I will have to tell you what occurred. My father arrived there one cold winter night. I think it was 30 or 40 below zero because all of our horses bits were frozen in their mouths. We had a horrible time. After we got there (they just had a little old lean-to for us to put the horses in), my father said to leave the harnesses on them. We didn't have any horse blankets. We left the harnesses right on them for a certain amount of protection. Father said to leave the bits in their mouths for awhile until the frost got off from the horses plunging through the snow to get us there. While we were doing that, my mother would wake up a bunch of stuff for us to give to Mr. Toller. We were getting that ready to carry over through the deep snow. I remember my dad was wading with snow clear up to his hips. It was loose snow. It hadn't settled hard. I was trying to get in my dad's footsteps, and I was just mallowing. I had something to carry, and I was just having a horrible time. He was quite always ahead of me getting to old Mr. Toller's one-room cabin. The most

beautiful, strange music--as little and as dumb as I was--I knew that was real music. In those years there was no such thing as a radio. I knew it must have been Mr. Toller, of course, because it was in his cabin. By the time I caught up to my dad I thought he would be inside. I think I was bawlin' a little bit. I was cold and hungry trying not to lose what I was carrying. When I caught up to my dad he was around this pile of wood on the porch by the old homemade door. He was just standing there. He held his hand up for me to shut up. Whenever my father did that I shut up. I didn't say a word. I just stood there shivering and listening. Pretty soon the music on the inside stopped. Then my father rapped on the door. We went in and here the old fellow had been playing all by himself. He had a long beard. We gave him the food. I was tired. He had quite a fire in the old wood stove he had. My father got to talking music to him. My father knew quite a bit about classical music. My dad asked him to play certain things that he knew. The old fellow went into it and I will tell you what--I was totally enthralled.

. . . My father talked to my mother about his violin. Mrs. Red Aldridge told my dad and mother that Mr. Toller was a concert violinist. He was one of the world's greatest. She told my mother, "That's a true Stradivarius."

Mr. Toller must have been a fine gentleman. Everyone spoke highly of him. He was a big tall man with a beautiful beard. He was very stately and spoke English with an accent but it was good English. Mr. Nichols continued:

Someone said that in Germany he was Professor Toller and had played in Bismark's military band. He came to this country to get as far away from the military as he could and located on Squirrel Meadows.

In 1915 a nephew came from Germany and spent the winter with Mr. Toller and the next spring the nephew convinced him to move to Oregon or Washington. He and his nephew had had enough of the long winters on the Meadows. Before he left he turned his homestead rights over to Ross Porter and soon the two Porter families owned much of the Meadows.

A very important aspect of the history of Squirrel Meadows was the Reclamation Road that ran directly through the Meadows. Located in Jackson Hole, Wyoming was the Moran dam which had been built in 1906-1907. The dam impounded the waters of the Jackson Lake Reservoir. The winter of 1910 had an unusually heavy snow fall. The extremely heavy spring runoff was too much for the poorly constructed temporary dam and when it failed, the Bureau of Reclamation immediately made plans to reconstruct a much bigger and better dam on the Snake River.

Jackson Hole, Wyoming is one of the most remote places in this nation. Especially difficult are the supply roads into the area. Victor, Idaho is forty-nine miles from the Moran Dam site, but the route goes over the steep Jackson Pass, which has an elevation of 8429 feet. The Bureau selected Ashton, Idaho as the railhead even though it was seventy-five miles from the dam construction site, but the route lay much flatter and traversable. In order to use the Ashton supply center, the Bureau constructed the Reclamation Road that ran directly across Squirrel Meadows. The Bureau also built a large warehouse in Ashton and hired many people from the area to work for the Bureau. The warehouse helped Ashton grow from a very small village to a large town. At the warehouse on the north end of Ashton could be seen thirty horse-drawn wagons waiting to be loaded for their trip.

It took seven days to make the round trip to Moran and return, four days over and three on the return trip. On the

return trip they would be empty and would travel faster and easier. Squirrel Meadows was twenty-five miles from Ashton and was the stopping place the first night. At night outfits could be seen camping across the meadows.

The Dam construction led to the creation of the Ashton, Idaho-Moran, Wyoming Horse and Wagon Freight Line to haul the materials for the Jackson Dam. The freight line which ran from mid July of 1910 to October 15, 1927, was the last major horse and wagon freight line in the United States. It carried all the supplies for the construction of the Jackson Lake Dam and also the supplies needed by the ranchers of Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

The standard freight unit was either four or six horses pulling two wagons in tandem. Each outfit carried all the equipment and food needed for the seven day journey. A few of the things needed would be horseshoeing equipment, hay and grain, food and bedding as well as extra heavy winter clothing for the cold months. Two or more wagons would usually travel together for safety.

The road across the Meadows was flat with no trees or rocks to dodge, so it was easy to cross. One bad feature of the freight road on the Meadows was the boggy spots. The Johnston and Porter families kept snap teams available to assist the wagons through the mud. Mr. A. C. Nichols of Ashton, Idaho recalled crossing the Meadows on his father's freight wagon about 1910. When asked if the wagons were ever stuck on the Meadows he replied:

Every trip. As you would cross the open part of the meadows, between there and the next little tongue

you would come out in, the mud would be on the meadow itself. When you would get to the tongue of timber, you would get to a little gravel and harder stuff. They would have their buildings in the edge of the timber. The freight road went right across the meadows. We would go through the little tongues of timber and then through the meadow again. It was boggy. Those big wagon tires would cut down. The freight wagon tires were wider. Some of them were the little narrow high wheelers and they would cut down to beat the dickins. They were a lighter wagon and an easier team to pull. The narrower the rim on the wagon and the bigger the wheel the easier it was for the team to pull. The freight wagon with the wider rims were heavier built and were harder on horses and had smaller wheels in order to stand under that much load. It was tough for the horses. There were also a lot of rocks.

Often the freighters would corduroy the logs by laying logs close together to keep the wagons from sinking in the mud. The teamsters usually slept out at night, but when the road was the busiest, road houses were built at convenient locations.

One such road house built on the west end of Squirrel Meadows was established by Jim and Jenny Nedrow about 1912. They only maintained it for a few years and then abandoned it and moved to Ashton. At the road house the teamsters could buy hay, grain, food, liquid refreshments and emergency supplies for their outfits. The "Boat" Johnston family maintained a semi-road house on the Meadows for several years. They were prepared to feed any freighters who wanted to stop and pay for a meal. They also sold hay and oats to any freighter who had fed his up, especially to those on the return trip to Ashton.

The 1920's was a busy time in the area of the Meadows. Wagons were still crossing the Meadows carrying their cargo to Jackson Hole. The Bureau was working on improving the

Reclamation Road. Several sawmills were in operation in the area, and it was reported that a few stills were also in operation. Tourists had discovered that they could travel from Ashton to the South Entrance of Yellowstone Park by using the Reclamation Road. It was a difficult road but well worth the trip. Of course, they would travel across the Meadows as they made this journey. In the mountains several miners were trying to find valuable ore, but none was ever found. The Porter and Johnston families were ranching. Perhaps the Meadows had more activity then than at any other time.

The first family to make a home on the Meadows was the Johnston family. James Elijah "Boat" Johnston was born in Ogden, Utah on December 16, 1869. His family moved to Stone, Curlew Valley, Idaho where he grew to manhood. "Boat" married Annie Householder September 23, 1890. In 1902, Annie inherited 160 acres of land at Marysville, Idaho. They moved to this farming area where they began to prosper in both cattle and land. In 1911 he became interested in some summer grazing land at Squirrel Meadows, twenty miles east. In 1912 he filed for homestead rights on 160 acres of the Meadows and his family spent the next fourteen summers and two winters there. The family maintained their home in Marysville, but as early in the spring as possible, the family, livestock and all, moved to the Meadows for the summer. Mrs. Lamasauskis said:

" . . . Mom would see those geese flying over and she'd say, "Dad, it's time to go to the Meadows." So he'd hook up the old wagon with us kids and Mom would load it up and away we'd go. Dad would go up to see if

we could get through on horseback.

In the summertime Mr. Johnston stacked prairie hay.

The year 1918 was a very prosperous one for "Boat". He had good crops both in the valley and on the Meadows. He decided to expand his operations the next year and purchased more cattle. The next year, 1919, was very dry. "Boat" mortgaged his farm in order to buy \$1800 worth of hay to feed his cattle through the next winter. They decided to stay on the Meadows with the stock that winter. The snow became very deep and spring was much later than anticipated. In the worst part of the winter, the family hauled hay three miles on skis in an effort to save the starving cattle. They broke a trail through the heavy drifts so the healthier stock could reach the timber and they worked hard to feed the weaker ones. Eventually the hay was gone and the bitter weather continued. When spring finally arrived they had lost twenty-five head of cattle. The next summer was also bad for farmers and in 1920 "Boat" had to mortgage the Meadows to meet his obligations.

They raised pigs on the Meadows for several years. They took the pigs up in the spring and turned them loose. The pigs would root up the Meadows for the camas root. By fall when they rounded up the pigs, they were so fat they could hardly waddle.

"Boat" was never able to recover from his financial problems and in 1927 he lost the Meadows. He passed away July 31, 1934 and all his remaining possessions were sold to pay his debts.

Mrs. Lamasauskis recalled her summers:

We'd go in there and there was that beautiful meadows laid out and the timber then (the pole pines) was just a green wall all around it. It looked like a fort. I know us kids--off would go our shoes. We didn't have any more shoes for the rest of the summer from the first when we got there. We'd kick our shoes off and take off through the timber and climb pine trees and go round up the horses so we could go for a horseback ride.

Yes. Oh, there were skunks. I got shot by one. There were the skunks and the porcupines. I used to follow a porcupine because he'd go chugging off through the timber--talking to himself (growling). They were comical little animals. Then we had our squirrels. Even when Mama and I were up there alone, I could go out in the timber and lay down under a pine tree where a squirrel had eaten and he'd get up above me and just chatter, chatter, chatter at me. He'd throw pinecones down at me. Oh, kids don't know what's beautiful nowadays.

The Porter family moved to the Meadows in 1916. In 1915, Rawlston (Ross) Porter and Milburn (Milt) Porter were herding cattle near the lodge at Yellowstone Lake. They were riding from the Park to Rexburg when they first saw Squirrel Meadows. They stopped and visited with the old homesteader, Henry Toller, and found that he wanted to sell his Homestead Rights. Ross and Milt purchased the rights and the Porters were then in possession of 320 acres on the Meadows, but it was not until 1919 that they had a patent on their land.

They fenced the Meadows and where the Reclamation Road crossed the freighters had to open gates. The freighters would also stop to eat and have refreshments at the Porters. Mr. Arthur Porter, son of Milt, said:

I can remember them coming through there (the Meadows) all the time. . . . They would always go down to the old root cellar for Mother's buttermilk. Years ago I found out that Mother would say it was her buttermilk, but this old Charlie Purdy was an old

bootlegger. Dad always kept a jug of his bootleg whiskey down in the cellar. The freighters would always go down there and have a sip before supper.

The Porters had a home in Ashton where the family lived in the winter so the children could attend school. As soon as school was out the Porters moved to the Meadows.

Squirrel Meadows was a popular place for tourist's traveling between Ashton and the South Entrance of Yellowstone Park, even though the road was unimproved much of the way. In fact, many of the creeks had to be forded because of the lack of bridges. The Meadows was also a popular location to visit in the summer time. Mr. Porter remembered:

Of course we always had a lot of company up there all the time, especially on Sundays. People would come and leave their kids up there on Sunday until the next Sunday.

There were relatives and school friends who enjoyed outings to the area. There were many things to do: fishing, hunting, horseback riding, swimming in the swimming hole and just enjoying the beauties of the area.

Ross Porter was never married and he lived on the Meadows year round. In the wintertime he fed the cattle and trapped for furs. The Porters grazed their cattle on the Meadows and in other areas. They plowed part of the Meadows and planted timothy and clover hay which had to be mowed and stacked in the summer time. Buck rakes and slings were used to stack the hay. Arthur Porter said:

I can remember that timothy used to be as high as the back of a horse. I would be out there mowing the hay. I would be on one side and all I could see of the

other side was the horse's ears and head above the timothy.

In 1929, just as the Great Depression was beginning, the Porters sold many of their cattle and bought a band of sheep. After they purchased the sheep, they never stacked hay again, but used the Meadows for sheep pasture. They had a summer range near Survey Peak, just east of the Meadows and a winter range near Kilgore, Idaho.

Jack Porter, another son of Milt Porter, reminisced:

. . . It is the only place in the world to spend summer. I left the country in 1942, but all through my childhood and up through school I looked forward every year to going back to the meadows. It was beautiful and peaceful. I guess mainly because you could just about do whatever you wanted in the summer. You had time. There were no clocks. In later years after Art left home, I spent a good share of the summers out with dad and the sheep, moving the campsite and one thing or another. We always had plenty of time to take the horses and go somewhere fishing or pack up into the mountains.

As soon as the snow was gone in the spring they would move their sheep from the winter range to the Meadows, then, as the snow line retreated, to the higher summer range.

Just as World War II was beginning, the Milt Porter family moved away from the Meadows. The year 1941 was the last year they were there. They moved to Portland, Oregon but Ross Porter continued to live on the Meadows until he passed away in 1950. Ross leased the Meadows to various cattlemen. Glen Orgill ran cattle there until after Ross died. Arthur Porter, who lived in Pocatello, then attempted to operate the Porter property. He tried to maintain the fences but it wasn't easy. Every fall the

staples had to be removed and the barbed wires placed on the ground because the heavy snow fall would break the wires. In the spring all the wires would have to be restapled to the fence posts. Frank Beattie of Rexburg, Idaho ran cattle on the Meadows until 1959 when the Porters sold their interests to Mark Weaver.

When asked about the bears in the area, Arthur Porter replied:

. . . One night I remember in the old cabin. We had gone to bed and mother baked bread that evening. She set it out on the cupboard to cool. During the night, bears were always coming around. Dad heard something outside and thought it was the old milk cow. In a little while I heard something. The bear broke down the door in the kitchen and stole a loaf of bread. Some of us kids were sleeping out on the old back porch. Dad heard him come in and got up. It scared him so bad he took one door off the cabinet in the kitchen and broke the kitchen door on the way out. We just had the wooden latches on the door then. That old bear just lifted the latch and came in.

When asked about the elk in the area, he said:

Yes, we always had--I guess it don't hurt to tell about it now. I can never remember eating a beef steak until I went railroading. Of course, in those days the forest ranger was the game warden and everything, old Ira Latham. He knew that as soon as the elk and deer got fat enough in the summer time we had our meat. Ira would come up there and he would be disappointed if we didn't give him some.

A few miles north and paralleling Squirrel Creek is a beautiful river called Falls River. In ____ the Bureau of Reclamation decided to build a dam on this stream at a place called Grassy Lake. The Reclamation Road was the main access road to the construction site and for a few years the Meadows was again a heavily traveled area. The Bureau made more improvements on the road, but the increased traffic brought

problems. Mr. Arthur Porter stated, "before the construction of
Grassy Lake, we never had a lock on the place. After that dam
started to go in with no one around, they just raided the whole
thing. We had elk horns, deer and bear hides in the cabin and
someone took them all. After the dam was completed, traffic
across the Meadows decreased and the Meadows became a quieter
place.
In the late 1920's when the Johnston family became
discouraged trying to make a living on cattle and milk cows, they
abandoned the Meadows. In 1931, Mark Weaver took possession of
the Johnston property. The Weavers paid \$2,000 for 160 acres.
The buildings were dilapidated and they were burned.
The Weavers were in the fur business in Idaho Falls, more
specifically raising silver foxes. They had a good breeding
program there but needed a location in the mountains to raise
their pups. They needed a cold climate to grow a dense fur and
the Meadows was an ideal location. There were few trees on the
Weaver's land so the Forest Service gave them a special use
permit for some wooded land just north of the Meadows. They
built fox pens in the shade and a big cellar type building where
the young foxes could retreat in the heat of the day. They
raised some very beautiful furs which were quite valuable at the
time.
The Weaver family lived in Idaho Falls during the winter but
as soon as school was out the family moved to the Meadows and
remained there until school would begin in the fall. Mr. Van

Weaver, son of Mark Weaver, remembered his summers on the Meadows:

That was a wonderful place to grow up and I would always thrill when we came off from Indian Lake Hill. The road was different than it is now. It would come right down through the woods. . . . It was a deep-wooded area all the way and then you'd drop off at Indian Lake Hill and get that view of the Meadow. It would just thrill you every time you did it. It still does today, every time I see it. . . . The place is entirely surrounded with woods and you have this beautiful view of the Tetons right behind the Meadows.

The family lived in tents the first summer. One of the first things the family did the second year was dig a well. They dug it by hand using a pick, shovel, bucket and rope. They dug down ten or twelve feet and found delicious, cold water, described by Van Weaver as: "the best water I've ever tasted--probably ever will taste!" When the well was completed they built their cabin over the well. When the cabin was completed they built a trap door going down into the well and built shelves on the sides of the enclosure to keep butter, cream, milk, vegetables and fruits. It made a good refrigerator. It was also good in the winter time when the streams were frozen solid. They built a sod roof on the cabin which was warm in the winter, but in warm wet weather, it leaked. The parents slept in the cabin, but the children slept in tents and never in the cabin during the years they were there.

They built a saw mill powered by a tractor engine to cut their logs, cut lumber for a better roof and for other buildings. During the summer they pastured a few cattle, had some milk cows, put up hay, built buildings, and tended the foxes, and then later mink and beaver. They hired a caretaker to spend the winter on

the Meadows to tend the livestock, shovel the snow off the roofs and care for what fur animals were left on the ranch.

About 1942, Mark Weaver became interested in raising beaver domestically. A few people had tried to do this and Mr. Weaver had tried to do so several times. He reasoned that Squirrel Meadows would be an ideal location to attempt this again. They built a log building with a water trough running through with individual pens about six feet square. The water trough was made of tin and the walls were logs lined with fox wire. The building would not hold the beaver. The beaver chewed through the log walls and then tore through the fox wire. They did have success trapping for beaver but it was difficult to breed them in captivity. They finally found a way to breed the beavers and built stronger cement-cinder block pens to hold them. They constructed a building of thirty pens with an enclosed nest box where the animals could get out of sight and keep warm. It was a big project with a potential for great profit. Beaver pelts were bringing sixty to seventy dollars at the auction. Squirrel Meadows is the first place in the world that beaver were raised successfully in pens. They kept the project going the year round and it appeared to be a successful operation.

Problems began to emerge in the operation and it was difficult to find sufficient trees, usually aspen, for the beaver to eat. They began clearing the forest and the Forest Service became concerned! Another difficulty was heating the buildings in the winter time to keep the water from freezing. One winter

the chimney on the fireplace blew over and it burned the building, the beaver and everything. All that was left was a skeleton of a building. The beaver all died and the project was over. Squirrel Meadows was a good place for the beaver growing project, but the problems of distance, especially in the winter time, food for the animals and a decline in price for beaver helped end this project.

When they were raising the carnivorous foxes and mink on the Meadows, it took a lot of meat to feed the animals. In the 1930's tractors were replacing horses on the farms, so they could purchase horses quite cheaply. Soon they were driving large herds of horses to the Meadows. Several times a year they would have rodeos. Cowboys would come from local areas and attempt to ride these horses, many of which were quite wild. There were some wild times on the Meadows.

The Weavers finally had to abandon their attempts to raise fur bearing animals on the Meadows primarily because of the great expense of maintaining a winter operation. It was too inaccessible and in a normal year the road was closed by Halloween and after that it was either tractors, dog teams or skis. They had purchased the two Porter homesteads in 1958 and had ownership of all 400 acres. They eventually sold the Meadows to Oather Vance, an accountant from California for \$250,000.

Several cattlemen pastured their cattle on the Meadows for many years. Ed Rindlishbacher ran cattle there from 1949 to 1983. At first he grazed only the Weaver property that had been

the Johnston property. When the Weavers purchased all the Meadows, he then grazed all the Meadows. He ran cattle on the Weaver property and when Oather Vance purchased the Meadows in 1968, he leased the Meadows from him. Mr. Rindlishbacher did not have enough cattle to graze all the Meadows so several other ranchers sent their cattle there for the summer.

Mr. Rindlishbacher managed the Meadows and supervised the irrigation. About one-third of the Meadows had to be irrigated and then the sub, or water table, would rise and take care of the rest. He also took care of the fencing, which was a big undertaking, especially when all the wires had to be lowered in the fall before the winter snows began. If they weren't lowered they would break between every post. There were five miles of fence line around the Meadows. In the spring it would take four men three and a half to four days to put it up. Mr. Rindlishbacher explained driving the staples in the fence posts:

. . . In the spring you would drive them in just enough for one summer. They always asked me how far, and I said that really has nothing to do with how far. You drive them in until they are firm for one summer. You get a post that is half rotten and you drive it clear in. You get a brand new post that is a year old and you only drive it in a 1/4 inch or 3/8 inch because they are firm. This is the way we always determined how far to drive the staples. We had four wires. It is easier to go from the north side, go east and across and down if you are right handed. Your right hand has the pliers and you carry your loose staples in your left. You carry a staple apron, and then when you get a double handful, you stop at a stump and leave them. Then you try to fence the opposite way. Then you see, you left staples here and then go down to here and left some more and then when you come this way, those staples will fit. You only need about 7 or 8 percent more. There is usually 5 percent bent or gone by fall. Then you lose one or two in the spring. You don't have

to buy that many. About 5 pounds will go all around that fence. That is about all you lose per summer.

They kept their cattle there until the winter weather forced them out. That usually was in October. In the fall of 196_ the snow came early and very heavily. In just a day or so there was over three feet of snow. They could only drive their trucks to the forest boundary and then ride horses ten miles to the Meadows. They were able to round up their cattle and drive them out of the Meadows, but only with great difficulty.

Mr. Rindlishbacher operated a small sawmill on the Meadows for several years. He also built one of the small lakes by the cabins. There are two man-made lakes near the cabins on the Meadows. Mark Weaver built one for his beaver ponds and Mr. Rindlishbacher built the other. A part of Squirrel Creek was diverted for irrigation and this stream ran through the ponds and then spilled back into the main creek.

Oather Vance passed away in February of 1980. His wife attempted to run the Meadows for one year but found it too difficult. In 1982 she sold her interests in Squirrel Meadows to the Big Hole Investment Company. This company owned the Meadows for one year and sold it to Victor Merrill who still owns most of Squirrel Meadows.

SQUIRREL MEADOWS

✱ There is a strange fascination about Squirrel Meadows, even a certain mystique. It is nestled deep in the beautiful forests of western Wyoming, just three miles east of the Idaho border, five miles south of Yellowstone National Park, and at an elevation of 6443 feet. The Meadows has left an imprint on the lives of all who have lived there or who have just passed through. The author, Elliot Paul, traveled through the meadows in 1910 and wrote:

|| The "Meadows" considered as scenery, had some qualities that remained intact in the mind, composed like a Corot landscape, but the atmosphere was strictly Idaho-Wyoming. There were broad fields of grass where, by some freak of nature, the woods had been cleared without the aid of man, ~~so no trace of fallen trunks or uprooted stumps was visible.~~

In sunlight, the vistas, whichever way one turned, were radiant; before twilight they were evocative of blank contemplation; at sunset they got out of hand, and one did not look at them too long. Then there was dusk, and would be starlight. ||

✱ Mrs. Annie Ethel Lamasauskas (daughter of "Boat" Johnston, the original homesteader) said, "After you went over Indian Lake Hill, the Meadows opened up to you. It was like going into paradise. When we went up there in the spring, it would be covered with wild flowers. What I remember was how thrilled we were to get to the Meadows again." ||

One comment made by all the people who have lived on the Meadows was concerning the abundance of wildlife. They spoke of the elk, moose, deer, coyotes, bears and all other animals of this eco-system. The snow became very deep in the Meadows in the

wintertime and most of the wild animals would leave for better winter forage, but in other seasons, great numbers of wildlife lived on or near the Meadows.

The first white man to have passed through the Meadows would have been a Mountain Man, perhaps John Colter in his travels of 1807-1809. If the Colter Stone is authentic and he was in Teton Basin and also the Yellowstone Park area, he would have crossed the Meadows in his wanderings. The Mountain Men made no mention of the Meadows as such because they were not yet named. Beaver Dick Leigh most assuredly crossed the Meadows. In his journal he mentioned the creeks of the area during his hunting and trapping trips. He described the abundant wildlife of the area, especially the beaver. He often traveled from the Snake River Valley to Jackson Hole and would also have crossed the Meadows.

Soon after 1900, a few more modern Mountain Men moved near the Meadows. Dutch Schultz and Charley Purdy were the most important of these. Charlie Purdy was born in New Jersey but came west and lived in Jackson Hole first and then moved to the Meadows. Little is known of the background of Dutch Schultz other than he spoke with a strong German accent. Schultz and Purdy built a cabin at Loon Lake and began to trap the Meadows and the surrounding area. They lived there the year round and only went to town a ^{few} couple of times a year. They would live on wild game, fish and whatever Mother Nature provided in the mountains. They were well respected, honest men who later became good friends with the permanent settlers on the Meadows. Mrs. Lamasauskas

related the following incident:

quote

They used to come down to the house and have dinner every now and then. We used to go up there. I can remember a funny little incident. My mother had loaded all us kids in the wagon and we went up there to pick huckleberries. She went into Purdy's cabin and he was out on his trap line. There was some meat on the stove cooking and Mama said, "Look, kiddies. Come on--let's have some of this good stew." So we set down and ate it. It tasted really delicious. He was such a neat guy in his house. He kept his floor scrubbed and his stove blackened and the tabletop scrubbed down with lye. Before we left to pick our huckleberries, he came back and he came in and he looked in his stew pot and there wasn't any stew and he says, "~~See~~ damn, somebody ate up all my dog meat. That was a coyote I had on that there cooking." Mama headed for the timbers. Us kids didn't. We thought it was good--coyote or not.

unquote

~~Star~~

Another early settler on the Meadows was Henry Toller. As remembered by the people of the area, he was an elderly German who came to this country from Prussia. He moved to the Meadows about 1910 and applied for Homestead Rights on 160 acres. He lived year round on the Meadows for several years.

While Mr. Toller lived on the Meadows, he began to put up wild hay for sale to the freighters passing through the area and for sale to the ranchers of the Ashton area. When the Nichols family journeyed to the Meadows in the wintertime for a load of hay, they would travel up one day, spend the night with Mr. Toller and then return the next day. Mr. A. C. Nichols

remembered:

quote

~~Star~~

I will have to tell you what occurred. My father arrived there one cold winter night. I think it was 30 or 40 below zero because all of our horses bits were frozen in their mouths. We had a horrible time. After we got there (they just had a little old lean-to for us to put the horses in), my father said to leave the harnesses on them. We didn't have any horse blankets. We left the harnesses right on them for a certain

amount of protection. Father said to leave the bits in their mouths for awhile until the frost got off from the horses plunging through the snow to get us there. While we were doing that, my mother would make up a bunch of stuff for us to give to Mr. Toller. We were getting that ready to carry over through the deep snow. I remember my dad was wading with snow clear up to his hips. It was loose snow. It hadn't settled hard. I was trying to get in my dad's footsteps, and I was just wallowing. I had something to carry, and I was just having a horrible time. He was quite always ahead of me getting to old Mr. Toller's one-room cabin. The most beautiful, strange music--as little and as dumb as I was--I knew that was real music. In those years there was no such thing as a radio. I knew it must have been Mr. Toller, of course, because it was in his cabin. By the time I caught up to my dad I thought he would be inside. I think I was bawlin' a little bit. I was cold and hungry trying not to lose what I was carrying. When I caught up to my dad he was around this pile of wood on the porch by the old homemade door. He was just standing there. He held his hand up for me to shut up. Whenever my father did that I shut up. I didn't say a word. I just stood there shivering and listening. Pretty soon the music on the inside stopped. Then my father rapped on the door. We went in and here the old fellow had been playing *his violin* all by himself. He had a long beard. We gave him the food. I was tired. He had quite a fire in the old wood stove he had. My father got to talking music to him. My father knew quite a bit about classical music. My dad asked him to play certain things that he knew. The old fellow went into it and I will tell you what--I was totally enthralled.

In 1915 a nephew came from Germany and spent the winter with Mr. Toller and the next spring the nephew convinced him to move to Oregon or Washington. He and his nephew had had enough of the long winters on the Meadows. Before he left he turned his homestead rights over to Ross Porter and soon the two Porter families owned much of the Meadows.

 A very important aspect of the history of Squirrel Meadows was the Reclamation Road that ran directly through the Meadows. Located in Jackson Hole, Wyoming was the Moran dam which had been

built in 1906-1907. The winter of 1910 had an unusually heavy snow fall. The extremely heavy spring runoff was too much for the poorly constructed temporary dam and when it failed, the Bureau of Reclamation immediately made plans to reconstruct a much bigger and better dam on the Snake River.

Jackson Hole, Wyoming is one of the most remote places in this nation. Especially difficult are the supply roads into the area. Victor, Idaho is forty-nine miles from the Moran Dam site, but the route goes over the steep Jackson Pass, which has an elevation of 8429 feet. The Bureau selected Ashton, Idaho as the railhead even though it was seventy-five miles from the dam construction site, but the route was flatter and easier to travel. In order to use the Ashton supply center, the Bureau constructed the Reclamation Road that ran directly across Squirrel Meadows. The Bureau also built a large warehouse in Ashton and hired many people from the area to work for the Bureau. The warehouse helped Ashton grow from a very small village to a large town.

It took seven days to make the round trip to Moran and return, four days over and three on the return trip. On the return trip they would be empty and would travel faster and easier. Squirrel Meadows was twenty-five miles from Ashton and was the stopping place the first night. At night outfits could be seen camping across the meadows.

The Dam construction led to the creation of the Ashton, Idaho-Moran, Wyoming Horse and Wagon Freight Line. The freight

line which ran from mid July of 1910 to October 15, 1927, was the last major horse and wagon freight line in the United States. It carried all the supplies for the construction of the Jackson Lake Dam and also the supplies needed by the ranchers of Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

The teamsters usually slept out at night, but when the road was the busiest, road houses were built at convenient locations.

One such road house built on the west end of Squirrel Meadows was established by Jim and Jenny Nedrow in 1912. They only maintained it for a few years and then abandoned it and moved to Ashton. At the road house the teamsters could buy hay, grain, food, liquid refreshments and emergency supplies for their outfits. The "Boat" Johnston family maintained a semi-road house on the Meadows for several years. They were prepared to feed any freighters who wanted to stop and pay for a meal. *They also sold hay and oats to any freighter who needed extra food for his horse* ~~had fed his up~~, especially to those on the return trip to Ashton.

The 1920's was a busy time in the area of the Meadows. Wagons were still crossing the Meadows carrying their cargo to Jackson Hole. The Bureau was working on improving the Reclamation Road. Several sawmills were in operation in the area, and it was reported that a few stills were also in operation. Tourists had discovered that they could travel from Ashton to the South Entrance of Yellowstone Park by using the Reclamation Road. It was a difficult road but well worth the trip. Of course, they would travel across the Meadows as they

made this journey.

 The first family to make a home on the Meadows was the Johnston family. James Elijah "Boat" Johnston filed for homestead rights on 160 acres of the Meadows ^{in 1914} and his family spent the next fourteen summers and two winters there. The family maintained their home in Marysville, but as early in the spring as possible, the family, livestock and all, moved to the Meadows for the summer. Mrs. Lamasauskis said:

June
 ". . . Mom would see those geese flying over and she'd say, "Dad, it's time to go to the Meadows." So he'd hook up the old wagon with us kids and Mom would load it up and away we'd go. Dad would go up to see if we could get through on horseback. *myself*

The year 1918 was a very prosperous one for "Boat". He had good crops both in the valley and on the Meadows. He decided to expand his operations the next year and purchased more cattle. The next year, 1919, was very dry. "Boat" mortgaged his farm in order to buy \$1800 worth of hay to feed his cattle through the next winter. They decided to stay on the Meadows with the stock that winter. The snow became very deep and spring was much later  than anticipated. In the hardest part of the winter, the family hauled hay three miles on skis in an effort to save the starving cattle. They broke a trail through the heavy drifts so the healthier stock could reach the timber and they worked hard to feed the weaker ones. Eventually the hay was gone and the bitter weather continued. When spring finally arrived they had lost twenty-five head of cattle. The next summer was also bad for farmers and in 1920 "Boat" had to mortgage the Meadows to meet

his obligations.

A The Porter family moved to the Meadows in 1916. In 1915, Rawlston (Ross) Porter and Milburn (Milt) Porter were herding cattle near the lodge at Yellowstone Lake. They were riding from the Park to Rexburg when they first saw Squirrel Meadows. They stopped and visited with the old homesteader, Henry Toller, and found that he wanted to sell his Homestead Rights. Ross and Milt purchased the rights, and filed on an additional 160 acres. The Porters now owned 320 acres on the Meadows.

Jack Porter, ~~another~~ son of Milt Porter, reminisced:

A *quote* . . . It is the only place in the world to spend summer. I left the country in 1942, but all through my childhood and up through school I looked forward every year to going back to the meadows. It was beautiful and peaceful. I guess mainly because you could just about do whatever you wanted in the summer. You had time, there were no clocks. *unquote*

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difficult. In 1982 she sold her interests in Squirrel Meadows to the Big Hole Investment Company. This company owned the Meadows for one year and sold it to Victor Merrill who still owns most of Squirrel Meadows.



SQUIRREL MEADOWS

There is a strange fascination about Squirrel Meadows, even a certain mystique. It is nestled deep in the beautiful forests of western Wyoming, just three miles east of the Idaho border, five miles south of Yellowstone National Park, ~~and~~ at an elevation of 6443 feet. The Meadows has left an imprint on the lives of all who have lived there or who have just passed through. The author, Elliot Paul, traveled through the meadows in 1910 and wrote:

The "Meadows" considered as scenery, had some qualities that remained intact in the mind, composed like a Corot landscape, but the atmosphere was strictly Idaho-Wyoming. There were broad fields of grass where, by some freak of nature, the woods had been cleared without the aid of man, so no trace of fallen trunks or uprooted stumps was visible.

In sunlight, the vistas, whichever way one turned, were radiant; before twilight they were evocative of blank contemplation; at sunset they got out of hand, and one did not look at them too long. Then there was dusk, and would be starlight.

Mrs. Annie Ethel Lamasauskas (daughter of "Boat" Johnston, the original homesteader) said, "After you went over Indian Lake Hill, the Meadows opened up to you. It was like going into paradise. When we went up there in the spring, it would be covered with wild flowers. What I remember was how thrilled we were to get to the Meadows again."

One comment made by all the people who have lived on the Meadows was concerning the abundance of wildlife. They spoke of the elk, moose, deer, coyotes, bears and all other animals of this eco-system. The snow became very deep in the Meadows in the

wintertime and most of the wild animals would leave for better winter forage, but in other seasons, great numbers of wildlife lived on or near the Meadows.

When the Johnstons first built their cabin, they could stand in the door and watch the deer come out of the timber to eat on the meadows. The freighters commented on the cry of the coyotes during the night and the almost constant bugling of the elk. Everyone had bear stories to tell.

The first white man to have passed through the Meadows would have been a Mountain Man, perhaps John Colter in his travels of 1807-1809. If the Colter Stone is authentic and he was in Teton Basin and also the Yellowstone Park area, he would have crossed the Meadows in his wanderings. The Mountain Men made no mention of the Meadows as such because they were not yet named. Beaver Dick Leigh most assuredly crossed the Meadows. In his journal he mentioned the creeks of the area during his hunting and trapping trips. He described the abundant wildlife of the area, especially the beaver. He often traveled from the Snake River Valley to Jackson Hole and would also have crossed the Meadows.

Soon after 1900, a few more modern Mountain Men moved near the Meadows. Dutch Schultz and Charley Purdy were the most important of these. Charlie Purdy was born in New Jersey but came west and lived in Jackson Hole first and then moved to the Meadows. Little is known of the background of Dutch Schultz other than he spoke with a strong German accent. Schultz and Purdy built a cabin at Loon Lake and began to trap the Meadows and the

surrounding area. They lived there the year round and only went to town a couple of times a year. They would live on wild game, fish and whatever Mother Nature provided in the mountains. They were well respected, honest men who later became good friends with the permanent settlers on the Meadows. Mrs. Lamasauskas related the following incident:

They used to come down to the house and have dinner every now and then. We used to go up there. I can remember a funny little incident. My mother had loaded all us kids in the wagon and we went up there to pick huckleberries. She went into Purdy's cabin and he was out on his trap line. There was some meat on the stove cooking and Mama said, "Look, kiddies. Come on--let's have some of this good stew." So we set down and ate it. It tasted really delicious. He was such a neat guy in his house. He kept his floor scrubbed and his stove blackened and the tabletop scrubbed down with lye. Before we left to pick our huckleberries, he came back and he came in and he looked in his stew pot and there wasn't any stew and he says, "God damn, somebody ate up all my dog meat. That was a coyote I had on that there cooking." Mama headed for the timbers. Us kids didn't. We thought it was good--coyote or not.

Another early settler on the Meadows was Henry Toller. As remembered by the people of the area, he was an elderly German who came to this country from Prussia. He moved to the Meadows about 1910 and applied for Homestead Rights on 160 acres. He lived year round on the Meadows for several years.

While Mr. Toller lived on the Meadows, he began to put up wild hay for sale to the freighters passing through the area and for sale to the ranchers of the Ashton area. When the Nichols family journeyed to the Meadows in the wintertime for a load of hay, they would travel up one day, spend the night with Mr. Toller and then return the next day. Mr. A. C. Nichols

remembered:

Old professor Toller played for our Christmas doings at the old Green Timber school house. There was only one person there at the time who really could totally appreciate that man's ability and that was the ranger's wife, Mrs. Retta Latham. She was a good pianist.

I will have to tell you what occurred. My father arrived there one cold winter night. I think it was 30 or 40 below zero because all of our horses bits were frozen in their mouths. We had a horrible time. After we got there (they just had a little old lean-to for us to put the horses in), my father said to leave the harnesses on them. We didn't have any horse blankets. We left the harnesses right on them for a certain amount of protection. Father said to leave the bits in their mouths for awhile until the frost got off from the horses plunging through the snow to get us there. While we were doing that, my mother would make up a bunch of stuff for us to give to Mr. Toller. We were getting that ready to carry over through the deep snow. I remember my dad was wading with snow clear up to his hips. It was loose snow. It hadn't settled hard. I was trying to get in my dad's footsteps, and I was just wallowing. I had something to carry, and I was just having a horrible time. He was quite ways ahead of me getting to old Mr. Toller's one-room cabin. The most beautiful, strange music--as little and as dumb as I was--I knew that was real music. In those years there was no such thing as a radio. I knew it must have been Mr. Toller, of course, because it was in his cabin. By the time I caught up to my dad I thought he would be inside. I think I was bawlin' a little bit. I was cold and hungry trying not to lose what I was carrying. When I caught up to my dad he was around this pile of wood on the porch by the old homemade door. He was just standing there. He held his hand up for me to shut up. Whenever my father did that I shut up. I didn't say a word. I just stood there shivering and listening. Pretty soon the music on the inside stopped. Then my father rapped on the door. We went in and here the old fellow had been playing all by himself. He had a long beard. We gave him the food. I was tired. He had quite a fire in the old wood stove he had. My father got to talking music to him. My father knew quite a bit about classical music. My dad asked him to play certain things that he knew. The old fellow went into it and I will tell you what--I was totally enthralled.

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Toller was a concert violinist. He was one of the world's greatest. She told my mother, "That's a true Stradivarius."

In 1915 a nephew came from Germany and spent the winter with Mr. Toller and the next spring the nephew convinced him to move to Oregon or Washington. He and his nephew had had enough of the long winters on the Meadows. Before he left he turned his homestead rights over to Ross Porter and soon the two Porter families owned much of the Meadows.

A very important aspect of the history of Squirrel Meadows was the Reclamation Road that ran directly through the Meadows. Located in Jackson Hole, Wyoming was the Moran dam which had been built in 1906-1907. ~~The dam impounded the waters of the Jackson Lake Reservoir.~~ The winter of 1910 had an unusually heavy snow fall. The extremely heavy spring runoff was too much for the poorly constructed temporary dam and when it failed, the Bureau of Reclamation immediately made plans to reconstruct a much bigger and better dam on the Snake River.

Jackson Hole, Wyoming is one of the most remote places in this nation. Especially difficult are the supply roads into the area. Victor, Idaho is forty-nine miles from the Moran Dam site, but the route goes over the steep Jackson Pass, which has an elevation of 8429 feet. The Bureau selected Ashton, Idaho as the railhead even though it was seventy-five miles from the dam construction site, but the route ~~was~~ ^{was} flatter and ^{was} ~~was~~ ^{was} traversable. In order to use the Ashton supply center, the Bureau constructed the Reclamation Road that ran directly across

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Squirrel Meadows. The Bureau also built a large warehouse in Ashton and hired many people from the area to work for the Bureau. The warehouse helped Ashton grow from a very small village to a large town. ~~At the warehouse on the north end of Ashton could be seen thirty horse-drawn wagons waiting to be loaded for their trip.~~

It took seven days to make the round trip to Moran and return, four days over and three on the return trip. On the return trip they would be empty and would travel faster and easier. Squirrel Meadows was twenty-five miles from Ashton and was the stopping place the first night. At night outfits could be seen camping across the meadows.

The Dam construction led to the creation of the Ashton, Idaho-Moran, Wyoming Horse and Wagon Freight Line ~~to haul the materials for the Jackson Dam.~~ The freight line which ran from mid July of 1910 to October 15, 1927, was the last major horse and wagon freight line in the United States. It carried all the supplies for the construction of the Jackson Lake Dam and also the supplies needed by the ranchers of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The teamsters usually slept out at night, but when the road was the busiest, road houses were built at convenient locations. One such road house built on the west end of Squirrel Meadows was established by Jim and Jenny Nedrow ~~about~~ ⁱⁿ 1912. They only maintained it for a few years and then abandoned it and moved to Ashton. At the road house the teamsters could buy hay, grain, food, liquid refreshments and emergency supplies for their

outfits. The "Boat" Johnston family maintained a semi-road house on the Meadows for several years. They were prepared to feed any freighters who wanted to stop and pay for a meal. They also sold hay and oats to any freighter who had fed his up, especially to those on the return trip to Ashton.

The 1920's was a busy time in the area of the Meadows. Wagons were still crossing the Meadows carrying their cargo to Jackson Hole. The Bureau was working on improving the Reclamation Road. Several sawmills were in operation in the area, and it was reported that a few stills were also in operation. Tourists had discovered that they could travel from Ashton to the South Entrance of Yellowstone Park by using the Reclamation Road. It was a difficult road but well worth the trip. Of course, they would travel across the Meadows as they made this journey.

The first family to make a home on the Meadows was the Johnston family. James Elijah "Boat" Johnston filed for homestead rights on 160 acres of the Meadows and his family spent the next fourteen summers and two winters there. The family maintained their home in Marysville, but as early in the spring as possible, the family, livestock and all, moved to the Meadows for the summer. Mrs. Lamasauskis said:

... Mom would see those geese flying over and she'd say, "Dad, it's time to go to the Meadows." So he'd hook up the old wagon with us kids and Mom would load it up and away we'd go. Dad would go up to see if we could get through on horseback.

The year 1918 was a very prosperous one for "Boat". He had

good crops both in the valley and on the Meadows. He decided to expand his operations the next year and purchased more cattle. The next year, 1919, was very dry. "Boat" mortgaged his farm in order to buy \$1800 worth of hay to feed his cattle through the next winter. They decided to stay on the Meadows with the stock that winter. The snow became very deep and spring was much later than anticipated. In the hardest part of the winter, the family hauled hay three miles on skis in an effort to save the starving cattle. They broke a trail through the heavy drifts so the healthier stock could reach the timber and they worked hard to feed the weaker ones. Eventually the hay was gone and the bitter weather continued. When spring finally arrived they had lost twenty-five head of cattle. The next summer was also bad for farmers and in 1920 "Boat" had to mortgage the Meadows to meet his obligations.

The Porter family moved to the Meadows in 1916. In 1915,

Rawlston (Ross) Porter and Milburn (Milt) Porter were herding cattle near the lodge at Yellowstone Lake. They were riding from the Park to Rexburg when they first saw Squirrel Meadows. They stopped and visited with the old homesteader, Henry Toiler, and found that he wanted to sell his Homestead Rights. Ross and Milt purchased the rights, and filed on an additional 160 acres. The Porters now owned 320 acres on the Meadows.

Jack Porter, another son of Milt Porter, reminisced:

. . . It is the only place in the world to spend summer. I left the country in 1942, but all through my

childhood and up through school I looked forward every year to going back to the meadows. It was beautiful and peaceful. I guess mainly because you could just about do whatever you wanted in the summer. You had time. There were no clocks. ~~In later years after Art left home, I spent a good share of the summers out with dad and the sheep, moving the campsite and one thing or another. We always had plenty of time to take the horses and go somewhere fishing or pack up into the mountains.~~

When asked about the bears in the area, Arthur Porter replied:

. . . One night I remember in the old cabin. We had gone to bed and mother baked bread that evening. She set it out on the cupboard to cool. During the night, bears were always coming around. Dad heard something outside and thought it was the old milk cow. In a little while I heard something. The bear broke down the door in the kitchen and stole a loaf of bread. Some of us kids were sleeping out on the old back porch. Dad heard him come in and got up. It scared him so bad he took one door off the cabinet in the kitchen and broke the kitchen door on the way out. We just had the wooden latches on the door then. That old bear just lifted the latch and came in.

When asked about the elk in the area, he said:

Yes, we always had--I guess it don't hurt to tell about it now. I can never remember eating a beef steak until I went railroading. Of course, in those days the forest ranger was the game warden and everything, old Ira Latham. He knew that as soon as the elk and deer got fat enough in the summer time we had our meat. Ira would come up there and he would be disappointed if we didn't give him some.

In the late 1920's, the Johnston family became discouraged trying to make a living on the meadows and left the area. They

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The Weaver's were in the fur business in ~~Idaho Falls~~, more specifically raising silver foxes. They had a good breeding program there but needed a location in the mountains to raise their pups. They needed a cold climate to grow a dense fur and the Meadows was an ideal location. There were few trees on the Weaver's land so the Forest Service gave them a special use permit for some wooded land just north of the Meadows. They built fox pens in the shade and a big cellar type building where the young foxes could retreat in the heat of the day. They raised some very beautiful furs which were quite valuable at the time.

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Squirrel grass dominated the other grasses in those wide open fields, a foamlike grass of the genus *Hordeum*, related to barley and having long awns, the books would have us believe. The effect of a patch of squirrel grass, in terms of color is buff with mist and it is not tall enough to sway much in the wind or short enough for lawns. It is a decorative grass. Horses will eat it, sparingly, but, when other grasses are at hand, prefer others. The evergreen trees behind the road house were straight, with bare trunks reaching upward for the sun because they were so close together that the branches could not spread. The carpet of needles was several inches thick, of a cinnamon shade related to barley and buff. Some of the evergreens were cedars, others were Douglas fir, and a few were larches, and one or two the black hemlock known to Socrates. None was much taller than 100 feet. On the fringe of the meadows were bushes of mountain juniper which deer could jump and frequently did. The course of Squirrel Creek, of course, was marked by cottonwoods, as yellow as the robes of an empress, with pale taffy shades and a soupcon of attenuated blood orange. With dark Veronese green of the conifers, cottonwood yellow was in the best of landscape taste, and restrainedly effective.

In sunlight, the vistas, whichever way one turned, were radiant; before twilight they were evocative of blank

contemplation; at sunset they got out of hand, and one did not look at them too long. Then there was dusk, and would be starlight.

Mrs. Annie Ethel Lamasauskas (daughter of "Boat" Johnston, the original homesteader) said, "After you went over Indian Lake Hill, the Meadows opened up to you. It was like going into paradise. When we went up there in the spring, it would be covered with wild flowers. What I remember was how thrilled we were to get to the Meadows again."

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Soon after 1900, a few more modern Mountain Men moved near the Meadows. Dutch Schultz and Charley Purdy were the most important of these. Charlie Purdy was born in New Jersey but came west and lived in Jackson Hole first and then moved to the Meadows. Schultz and Purdy built a cabin at Loon Lake and began to trap the Meadows and the surrounding area. They lived there the year round and only went to town a couple of times a year. They would live on wild game, fish and whatever Mother Nature provided in the mountains. They were well respected, honest men who later became good friends with the permanent settlers on the Meadows. They were described as having long beards, yet were clean and neat in their appearance. Mrs. Tamasauskas related the following incident:

They used to come down to the house and have dinner every now and then. We used to go up there. I can remember a funny little incident. My mother had loaded all us kids in the wagon and we went up there to pick huckleberries. She went into Purdy's cabin and he was out on his trap line. There was some meat on the stove cooking and Mama said, "Look, kiddies. Come on--let's have some of this good stew." So we set down and ate it. It tasted really delicious. He was such a neat guy in his house. He kept his floor scrubbed and his stove blackened and the tabletop scrubbed down with lye. Before we left to pick our huckleberries, he came back and he came in and he looked in his stew pot and there wasn't any stew and he says, "God damn, somebody ate up all my dog meat. That was a coyote I had on that there cooking." Mama headed for the timbers. Us kids didn't. We thought it was good--coyote or not.

Mr. A. C. Nichols described them this way:

. . . I ate meals they cooked and I will say they were very clean in their culinary work. I liked to eat with either one of those men because I thought they were very clean and very sanitary about their cooking. They definitely wouldn't eat anything that was not fit to eat. They were very careful about what they killed in the line of game. They didn't ever waste any game that I ever knew about. They ate everything and never caught an extra fish or killed an extra sage grouse or blue grouse. My father and I always had a very high regard for both men. They were very honest men. My father had lots of dealings with them one way or another. He said they were very honest, straightforward men.

These trappers traveled entirely on foot. In the winter they used long cross-country skis. They were made as long as possible, almost twelve feet long. They would have nothing to do with horses, but always had sled dogs for winter traveling. They lived and trapped in the mountains until the 1940's when age forced them to move to town. Charlie Purdy died in Pocatello, Idaho from complications following surgery. Dutch Schultz spent his last years in Ashton. In his eighties he made one more trip to the mountains. When he didn't reappear for several days a searching party went looking and found him dead under a tree by the Meadows.

The cabin built by Schultz and Purdy was later dismantled, after the logs had been carefully marked, and rebuilt by the Porter family on the Meadows. The Porter family lived in it for many years.

Another early settler on the Meadows was Henry Toller. As remembered by the people of the area, he was an elderly German who came from Prussia to this country. He moved to the Meadows about 1910 and applied for Homestead Rights on 160 acres. He lived year round on the Meadows for several years. He had some

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I will have to tell you what occurred. My father arrived there one cold winter night. I think it was 30 or 40 below zero because all of our horses bits were frozen in their mouths. We had a horrible time. After we got there (they just had a little old lean-to for us to put the horses in), my father said to leave the harnesses on them. We didn't have any horse blankets. We left the harnesses right on them for a certain amount of protection. Father said to leave the bits in their mouths for awhile until the frost got off from the horses plunging through the snow to get us there. While we were doing that, my mother would make up a bunch of stuff for us to give to Mr. Toller. We were getting that ready to carry over through the deep snow. I remember my dad was wading with snow clear up to his hips. It was loose snow. It hadn't settled hard. I was trying to get in my dad's footsteps, and I was just wallowing. I had something to carry, and I was just having a horrible time. He was quite ways ahead of me getting to old Mr. Toller's one-room cabin. The most beautiful, strange music--as little and as dumb as I was--I knew that was real music. In those years there was no such thing as a radio. I knew it must have been Mr. Toller, of course, because it was in his cabin. By the time I caught up to my dad I thought he would be inside. I think I was bawlin' a little bit. I was cold and hungry trying not to lose what I was carrying. When I caught up to my dad he was around this pile of wood on the porch by the old homemade door. He was just standing there. He held his hand up for me to shut up. Whenever my father did that I shut up. I didn't say a word. I just stood there shivering and

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. . . My father talked to my mother about his violin. Mrs. Red Aldridge told my dad and mother that Mr. Toller was a concert violinist. He was one of the world's greatest. She told my mother, "That's a true Stradivarius."

Mr. Toller must have been a fine gentleman. Everyone spoke highly of him. He was a big tall man with a beautiful beard. He was very stately and spoke English with an accent but it was good English. Mr. Nichols continued:

Someone said that in Germany he was Professor Toller and had played in Bismark's military band. He came to this country to get as far away from the military as he could and located on Squirrel Meadows.

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of Reclamation immediately made plans to reconstruct a much bigger and better dam on the Snake River.

Jackson Hole, Wyoming is one of the most remote places in this nation. Especially difficult are the supply roads into the area. Victor, Idaho is forty-nine miles from the Moran Dam site, but the route goes over the steep Jackson Pass, which has an elevation of 8429 feet. The Bureau selected Ashton, Idaho as the railhead even though it was seventy-five miles from the dam construction site, but the route lay much flatter and traversable. In order to use the Ashton supply center, the Bureau constructed the Reclamation Road that ran directly across Squirrel Meadows. The Bureau also built a large warehouse in Ashton and hired many people from the area to work for the Bureau. The warehouse helped Ashton grow from a very small village to a large town. At the warehouse on the north end of Ashton could be seen thirty horse-drawn wagons waiting to be loaded for their trip.

It took seven days to make the round trip to Moran and return, four days over and three on the return trip. On the return trip they would be empty and would travel faster and easier. Squirrel Meadows was twenty-five miles from Ashton and was the stopping place the first night. At night outfits could be seen camping across the meadows.

The Dam construction led to the creation of the Ashton, Idaho-Moran, Wyoming Horse and Wagon Freight Line to haul the materials for the Jackson Dam. The freight line which ran from mid July of 1910 to October 15, 1927, was the last major horse

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and wagon freight line in the United States. It carried all the supplies for the construction of the Jackson Lake Dam and also the supplies needed by the ranchers of Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

The standard freight unit was either four or six horses pulling two wagons in tandem. Each outfit carried all the equipment and food needed for the seven day journey. A few of the things needed would be horseshoeing equipment, hay and grain, food and bedding as well as extra heavy winter clothing for the cold months. Two or more wagons would usually travel together for safety.

The road across the Meadows was flat with no trees or rocks to dodge, so it was easy to cross. One bad feature of the freight road on the Meadows was the boggy spots. The Johnston and Porter families kept snap teams available to assist the wagons through the mud. Mr. A. C. Nichols of Ashton, Idaho recalled crossing the Meadows on his father's freight wagon about 1910. When asked if the wagons were ever stuck on the Meadows he replied:

Every trip. As you would cross the open part of the meadows, between there and the next little tongue you would come out in, the mud would be on the meadow itself. When you would get to the tongue of timber, you would get to a little gravel and harder stuff. They would have their buildings in the edge of the timber. The freight road went right across the meadows. We would go through the little tongues of timber and then through the meadow again. It was boggy. Those big wagon tires would cut down. The freight wagon tires were wider. Some of them were the little narrow high wheelers and they would cut down to beat the dickins. They were a lighter wagon and an easier team to pull. The narrower the rim on the wagon and the bigger the wheel the easier it was for the team to pull. The freight wagon with the wider rims were heavier built and were harder on horses and had smaller wheels in order to stand under that much load. It was tough for the horses. There were also a lot of rocks.

Often the freighters would corduroy the logs by laying logs close together to keep the wagons from sinking in the mud. The teamsters usually slept out at night, but when the road was the busiest, road houses were built at convenient locations.

One such road house built on the west end of Squirrel Meadows was established by Jim and Jenny Nedrow about 1912. They only maintained it for a few years and then abandoned it and moved to Ashton. At the road house the teamsters could buy hay, grain, food, liquid refreshments and emergency supplies for their outfits. The "Boat" Johnston family maintained a semi-road house on the Meadows for several years. They were prepared to feed any freighters who wanted to stop and pay for a meal. They also sold hay and oats to any freighter who had fed his up, especially to those on the return trip to Ashton.

The 1920's was a busy time in the area of the Meadows. Wagons were still crossing the Meadows carrying their cargo to Jackson Hole. The Bureau was working on improving the Reclamation Road. Several sawmills were in operation in the area, and it was reported that a few stills were also in operation. Tourists had discovered that they could travel from Ashton to the South Entrance of Yellowstone Park by using the Reclamation Road. It was a difficult road but well worth the trip. Of course, they would travel across the Meadows as they made this journey. In the mountains several miners were trying to find valuable ore, but none was ever found. The Porter and Johnston families were ranching. Perhaps the Meadows had more activity then than at any other time.

The first family to really live on the Meadows was the James Elijah "Beet" Johnston family. They moved from the Snowville, Utah area to Marysville, Idaho on May 12, 1903. He was a cattleman and in the course of finding summer grazing for his cattle found Squirrel Meadows. He filed for a Homestead on the west end of the Meadows in 1912. He built a cabin that year and began the process of "proving up" on the property. He built a barbed wire fence around his land and grazed his cattle. ~~The~~ ^{start} family maintained ^{their} a home in Marysville, but as early in the spring as possible, the family, livestock and all, moved to the Meadows for the summer. Mrs. Lamasauskis said:

. . . Mom would see those geese flying over and she'd say, "Dad, it's time to go to the Meadows." So he'd hook up the old wagon with us kids and Mom would load it up and away we'd go. Dad would go up to see if we could get through on horseback.

In the summer time Mr. Johnston stacked prairie hay. The winter of 1919-1920 the family attempted to spend the winter on the Meadows and keep their cattle there. It began to snow in August and the winter didn't let up until late the next spring. Mr. Johnston ran out of feed and lost his cattle. They never spent another winter on the Meadows. Mr. Johnston struggled through the 1920's but never recovered financially. ~~They~~ ^{He} raised pigs on the Meadows for several years. They took the pigs up in the spring and turned them loose. The pigs would root up the Meadows for the camas root. By fall when they rounded up the pigs, they were so fat they could hardly waddle. ~~The family left the Meadows in 1926 when they could no longer pay their property taxes. They moved to the Ashton area where Mr. Johnston passed~~

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~~away July 31, 1934, of cancer of the liver.~~

Mrs. Lamasauskis recalled her summers:

We'd go in there and there was that beautiful meadows laid out and the timber then (the pole pines) was just a green wall all around it. It looked like a fort. I know us kids--off would go our shoes. We didn't have any more shoes for the rest of the summer from the first when we got there. We'd kick our shoes off and take off through the timber and climb pine trees and go round up the horses so we could go for a horseback ride.

Yes. Oh, there were skunks. I got shot by one. There were the skunks and the porcupines. I used to follow a porcupine because he'd go chugging off through the timber--talking to himself (growling). They were comical little animals. Then we had our squirrels. Even when Mama and I were up there alone, I could go out in the timber and lay down under a pine tree where a squirrel had eaten and he'd get up above me and just chatter, chatter, chatter at me. He'd throw pinecones down at me. Oh, kids don't know what's beautiful nowadays.

The Porter family moved to the Meadows in 1916. In 1915, Rawlston (Ross) Porter and Milburn (Milt) Porter were herding cattle near the lodge at Yellowstone Lake. They were riding from the Park to Rexburg when they first saw Squirrel Meadows. They stopped and visited with the old homesteader, Henry Toller, and found that he wanted to sell his Homestead Rights. Ross and Milt purchased the rights and the Porters were then in possession of 320 acres on the Meadows, but it was not until 1919 that they had a patent on their land.

They fenced the Meadows and where the Reclamation Road crossed the freighters had to open gates. The freighters would also stop to eat and have refreshments at the Porters. Mr. Arthur Porter, son of Milt, said:

I can remember them coming through there (the Meadows) all the time. . . . They would always go down to the old root cellar for Mother's buttermilk. Years

ago I found out that Mother would say it was her buttermilk, but this old Charlie Purdy was an old bootlegger. Dad always kept a jug of his bootleg whiskey down in the cellar. The freighters would always go down there and have a sip before supper.

The Porters had a home in Ashton where the family lived in the winter so the children could attend school. As soon as school was out the Porters moved to the Meadows.

Squirrel Meadows was a popular place for tourist's traveling between Ashton and the South Entrance of Yellowstone Park even though the road was unimproved much of the way. In fact, many of the creeks had to be forded because of the lack of bridges. The Meadows was also a popular location to visit in the summer time. Mr. Porter remembered:

Of course we always had a lot of company up there all the time, especially on Sundays. People would come and leave their kids up there on Sunday until the next Sunday.

There were relatives and school friends who enjoyed outings to the area. There were many things to do: fishing, hunting, horseback riding, swimming in the swimming hole and just enjoying the beauties of the area.

Ross Porter was never married and he lived on the Meadows year round. In the wintertime he fed the cattle and trapped for furs. The Porters grazed their cattle on the Meadows and in other areas. They plowed part of the Meadows and planted timothy and clover hay which had to be mowed and stacked in the summer time. Buck rakes and slings were used to stack the hay. Arthur Porter said:

I can remember that timothy used to be as high as the back of a horse. I would be out there mowing the hay. I would be on one side and all I could see of the

other side was the horse's ears and head above the timothy.

In 1929, just as the Great Depression was beginning, the Porters sold many of their cattle and bought a band of sheep. After they purchased the sheep, they never stacked hay again, but used the Meadows for sheep pasture. They had a summer range near Survey Peak, just east of the Meadows and a winter range near Kilgore, Idaho.

Jack Porter, another son of Milt Porter, reminisced:

. . . It is the only place in the world to spend summer. I left the country in 1942, but all through my childhood and up through school I looked forward every year to going back to the meadows. It was beautiful and peaceful. I guess mainly because you could just about do whatever you wanted in the summer. You had time. There were no clocks. In later years after Art left home, I spent a good share of the summers out with dad and the sheep, moving the campsite and one thing or another. We always had plenty of time to take the horses and go somewhere fishing or pack up into the mountains.

As soon as the snow was gone in the spring they would move their sheep from the winter range to the Meadows, then, as the snow line retreated, to the higher summer range.

Just as World War II was beginning, the Milt Porter family moved away from the Meadows. The year 1941 was the last year they were there. They moved to Portland, Oregon but Ross Porter continued to live on the Meadows until he passed away in 1950. Ross leased the Meadows to various cattlemen. Glen Orgill ran cattle there until after Ross died. Arthur Porter, who lived in Pocatello, then attempted to operate the Porter property. He tried to maintain the fences but it wasn't easy. Every fall the staples had to be removed and the barbed wires placed on the

ground because the heavy snow fall would break the wires. In the spring all the wires would have to be restapled to the fence posts. Frank Beattie of Rexburg, Idaho ran cattle on the Meadows until 1959 when the Porters sold their interests to Mark Weaver.

When asked about the bears in the area, Arthur Porter replied:

. . . One night I remember in the old cabin. We had gone to bed and mother baked bread that evening. She set it out on the cupboard to cool. During the night, bears were always coming around. Dad heard something outside and thought it was the old milk cow. In a little while I heard something. The bear broke down the door in the kitchen and stole a loaf of bread. Some of us kids were sleeping out on the old back porch. Dad heard him come in and got up. It scared him so bad he took one door off the cabinet in the kitchen and broke the kitchen door on the way out. We just had the wooden latches on the door then. That old bear just lifted the latch and came in.

When asked about the elk in the area, he said:

Yes, we always had--I guess it don't hurt to tell about it now. I can never remember eating a beef steak until I went railroading. Of course, in those days the forest ranger was the game warden and everything, old Ira Latham. He knew that as soon as the elk and deer got fat enough in the summer time we had our meat. Ira would come up there and he would be disappointed if we didn't give him some.

In the late 1920's when the Johnston family became discouraged trying to make a living on cattle and milk cows, they abandoned the Meadows. In 1931, Mark Weaver took possession of the Johnston property. The Weavers paid \$2,000 for 160 acres. The buildings were dilapidated and they were burned.

The Weaver's were in the fur business in Idaho Falls, more specifically raising silver foxes. They had a good breeding program there but needed a location in the mountains to raise their pups. They needed a cold climate to grow a dense fur and

the Meadows was an ideal location. There were few trees on the

Weaver's land so the Forest Service gave them a special use

permit for some wooded land just north of the Meadows. They

built fox pens in the shade and a big cellar type building where

the young foxes could retreat in the heat of the day. They

raised some very beautiful furs which were quite valuable at the

time.

The Weaver family lived in Idaho Falls during the winter but

as soon as school was out the family moved to the Meadows and

remained there until school would begin in the fall. Mr. Van

Weaver, son of Mark Weaver, remembered his summers on the

Meadows:

That was a wonderful place to grow up and I would

always thrill when we came off from Indian Lake Hill.

The road was different than it is now. It would come

right down through the woods. . . . It was a deep-

wooded area all the way and then you'd drop off at

Indian Lake Hill and get that view of the Meadow. It

would just thrill you every time you did it. It still

does today, every time I see it. . . . The place is

entirely surrounded with woods and you have this

beautiful view of the Tetons right behind the Meadows.

The family lived in tents the first summer. One of the first

things the family did the second year was dig a well. They dug

it by hand using a pick, shovel, bucket and rope. They dug down

ten or twelve feet and found delicious, cold water, described by

Van Weaver as: "the best water I've ever tasted--probably ever

will taste!" When the well was completed they built their cabin

over the well. When the cabin was completed they built a trap

door going down into the well and built shelves on the sides of

the enclosure to keep butter, cream, milk, vegetables and fruits.

It made a good refrigerator. It was also good in the winter time

when the streams were frozen solid. They built a sod roof on the cabin which was warm in the winter, but in warm wet weather, it leaked. The parents slept in the cabin, but the children slept in tents and never in the cabin during the years they were there.

They built a saw mill powered by a tractor engine to cut their logs, cut lumber for a better roof and for other buildings. During the summer they pastured a few cattle, had some milk cows, put up hay, built buildings, and tended the foxes, and then later mink and beaver. They hired a caretaker to spend the winter on the Meadows to tend the livestock, shovel the snow off the roofs and care for what fur animals were left on the ranch.

About 1942, Mark Weaver became interested in raising beaver domestically. A few people had tried to do this and Mr. Weaver had tried to do so several times. He reasoned that Squirrel Meadows would be an ideal location to attempt this again. They built a log building with a water trough running through with individual pens about six feet square. The water trough was made of tin and the walls were logs lined with fox wire. The building would not hold the beaver. The beaver chewed through the log walls and then tore through the fox wire. They did have success trapping for beaver but it was difficult to breed them in captivity. They finally found a way to breed the beavers and built stronger cement-cinder block pens to hold them. They constructed a building of thirty pens with an enclosed nest box where the animals could get out of sight and keep warm. It was a big project with a potential for great profit. Beaver pelts were bringing sixty to seventy dollars at the auction. Squirrel

Meadows is the first place in the world that beaver were raised successfully in pens. They kept the project going the year round and it appeared to be a successful operation.

Problems began to emerge in the operation and it was difficult to find sufficient trees, usually aspen, for the beaver to eat. They began clearing the forest and the Forest Service became concerned! Another difficulty was heating the buildings in the winter time to keep the water from freezing. One winter the chimney on the fireplace blew over and it burned the building, the beaver and everything. All that was left was a skeleton of a building. The beaver all died and the project was over. Squirrel Meadows was a good place for the beaver growing project, but the problems of distance, especially in the winter time, food for the animals and a decline in price for beaver helped end this project.

When they were raising the carnivorous foxes and mink on the Meadows, it took a lot of meat to feed the animals. In the 1930's tractors were replacing horses on the farms, so they could purchase horses quite cheaply. Soon they were driving large herds of horses to the Meadows. Several times a year they would have rodeos. Cowboys would come from local areas and attempt to ride these horses, many of which were quite wild. There were some wild times on the Meadows.

The Weavers finally had to abandon their attempts to raise fur bearing animals on the Meadows primarily because of the great expense of maintaining a winter operation. It was too inaccessible and in a normal year the road was closed by

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Halloween and after that it was either tractors, dog teams or skis. They had purchased the two Porter homesteads in 1958 and had ownership of all 400 acres. They eventually sold the Meadows to Oather Vance, an accountant from California for \$250,000.

Several cattlemen pastured their cattle on the Meadows for many years. Ed Rindlishbacher ran cattle there from 1949 to 1983. At first he grazed only the Weaver property that had been the Johnston property. When the Weavers purchased all the Meadows, he then grazed all the Meadows. He ran cattle on the Weaver property and when Oather Vance purchased the Meadows in 1968, he leased the Meadows from him. Mr. Rindlishbacher did not have enough cattle to graze all the Meadows so several other ranchers sent their cattle there for the summer.

Mr. Rindlishbacher managed the Meadows and supervised the irrigation. About one-third of the Meadows had to be irrigated and then the sub, or water table, would rise and take care of the rest. He also took care of the fencing, which was a big undertaking, especially when all the wires had to be lowered in the fall before the winter snows began. If they weren't lowered they would break between every post. There were five miles of fence line around the Meadows. In the spring it would take four men three and a half to four days to put it up. Mr.

Rindlishbacher explained driving the staples in the fence posts:

" . . . In the spring you would drive them in just enough for one summer. They always asked me how far, and I said that really has nothing to do with how far. You drive them in until they are firm for one summer. You get a post that is half rotten and you drive it clear in. You get a brand new post that is a year old and you only drive it in a 1/4 inch or 3/8 inch because they are firm. This is the way we always determined

how far to drive the staples. We had four wires. It is easier to go from the north side, go east and across and down if you are right handed. Your right hand has the pliers and you carry your loose staples in your left. You carry a staple apron, and then when you get a double handful, you stop at a stump and leave them. Then you try to fence the opposite way. Then you see, you left staples here and then go down to here and left some more and then when you come this way, those staples will fit. You only need about 7 or 8 percent more. There is usually 5 percent bent or gone by fall. Then you lose one or two in the spring. You don't have to buy that many. About 5 pounds will go all around that fence. That is about all you lose per summer.

They kept their cattle there until the winter weather forced them out. That usually was in October. In the fall of 1960 the snow came early and very heavily. In just a day or so there was over three feet of snow. They could only drive their trucks to the forest boundary and then ride horses ten miles to the Meadows. They were able to round up their cattle and drive them out of the Meadows, but only with great difficulty.

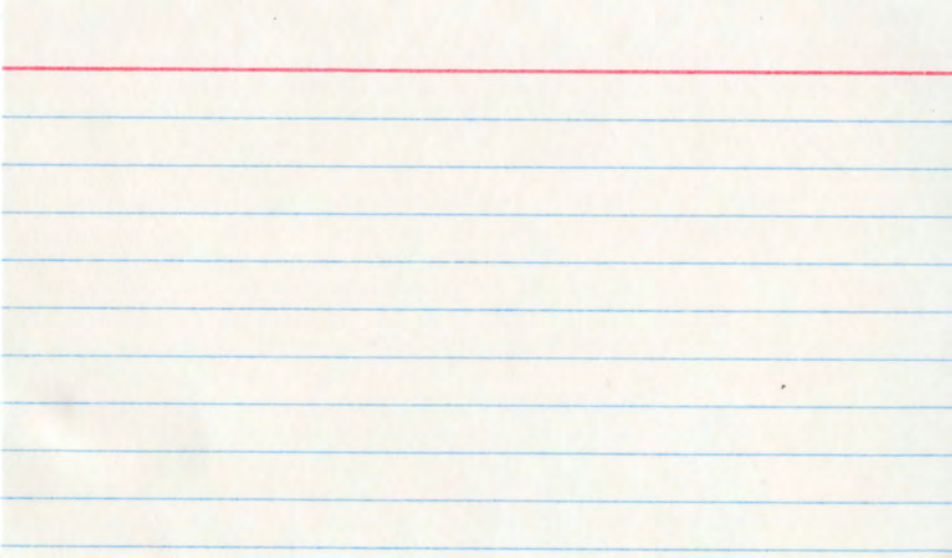
Mr. Rindlishbacher operated a small sawmill on the Meadows for several years. He also built one of the small lakes by the cabins. There are two man-made lakes near the cabins on the Meadows. Mark Weaver built one for his beaver ponds and Mr. Rindlishbacher built the other. A part of Squirrel Creek was diverted for irrigation and this stream ran through the ponds and then spilled back into the main creek.

Oather Vance passed away in February of 1980. His wife attempted to run the Meadows for one year but found it too difficult. In 1982 she sold her interests in Squirrel Meadows to the Big Hole Investment Company. This company owned the Meadows for one year and sold it to Victor Merrill who still owns most of Squirrel Meadows.

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SQUIRREL MEADOWS: PAST AND PRESENT

By Max Atkinson

Ricks College

1987

SQUIRREL MEADOWS

There is a strange fascination about Squirrel Meadows, even a certain mystique. It is nestled deep in the beautiful forests of western Wyoming, just three miles east of the Idaho border, five miles south of Yellowstone National Park, and at an elevation of 6443 feet. The Meadows has left an imprint on the lives of all who have lived there or who have just passed through. The author, Elliot Paul, traveled through the meadows in 1910 and wrote:

The "Meadows" considered as scenery, had some qualities that remained intact in the mind, composed like a Corot landscape, but the atmosphere was strictly Idaho-Wyoming. There were broad fields of grass where, by some freak of nature, the woods had been cleared without the aid of man, so no trace of fallen trunks or uprooted stumps was visible.

Squirrel grass dominated the other grasses in those wide open fields, a foamlike grass of the genus *Hordeum*, related to barley and having long awns, the books would have us believe. The effect of a patch of squirrel grass, in terms of color is buff with mist and it is not tall enough to sway much in the wind or short enough for lawns. It is a decorative grass. Horses will eat it, sparingly, but, when other grasses are at hand, prefer others. The evergreen trees behind the road house were straight, with bare trunks reaching upward for the sun because they were so close together that the branches could not spread. The carpet of needles was several inches thick, of a cinnamon shade related to barley and buff. Some of the evergreens were cedars, others were Douglas fir, and a few were larches, and one or two the black hemlock known to Socrates. None was much taller than 100 feet. On the fringe of the meadows were bushes of mountain juniper which deer could jump and frequently did. The course of Squirrel Creek, of course, was marked by cottonwoods, as yellow as the robes of an empress, with pale taffy shades and a soupcon of attenuated blood orange. With dark Veronese green of the conifers, cottonwood yellow was in the best of landscape taste, and restrainedly effective.

In sunlight, the vistas, whichever way one turned, were radiant; before twilight they were evocative of blank contemplation; at sunset they got out of hand, and one did not look at them too long. Then there was dusk, and would be starlight.

Mrs. Annie Ethel Lamasauskas (daughter of "Boat" Johnston, the original homesteader) said, "After you went over Indian Lake Hill, the Meadows opened up to you. It was like going into paradise. When we went up there in the spring, it would be covered with wild flowers. What I remember was how thrilled we were to get to the Meadows again."

One comment made by all the people who have lived on the Meadows was concerning the abundance of wildlife. They spoke of the elk, moose, deer, coyotes, bears and all other animals of this eco-system. The snow became very deep in the Meadows in the wintertime and most of the wild animals would leave for better winter forage, but in other seasons, great numbers of wildlife lived on or near the Meadows.

When the Johnston's first built their cabin, they could stand in the door and watch the deer come out of the timber to eat on the meadows. The freighters commented on the cry of the coyotes during the night and the almost constant bugling of the elk. Everyone had bear stories to tell.

The first white man to have passed through the Meadows would have been a Mountain Man, perhaps John Colter in his travels of 1807-1809. If the Colter Stone is authentic and he was in Teton Basin and also the Yellowstone Park area, he would have crossed the Meadows in his wanderings. The Mountain Men made no mention

of the Meadows as such because they were not yet named. Beaver Dick Leigh most assuredly crossed the Meadows. In his journal he mentioned the creeks of the area during his hunting and trapping trips. He described the abundant wildlife of the area, especially the beaver. He often traveled from the Snake River Valley to Jackson Hole and would also have crossed the Meadows.

Soon after 1900, a few more modern Mountain Men moved near the Meadows. Dutch Schultz and Charley Purdy were the most important of these. Charlie Purdy was born in New Jersey but came west and lived in Jackson Hole first and then moved to the Meadows. Schultz and Purdy built a cabin at Loon Lake and began to trap the Meadows and the surrounding area. They lived there the year round and only went to town a couple of times a year. They would live on wild game, fish and whatever Mother Nature provided in the mountains. They were well respected, honest men who later became good friends with the permanent settlers on the Meadows. They were described as having long beards, yet were clean and neat in their appearance. Mrs. Tamasauskas related the following incident:

They used to come down to the house and have dinner every now and then. We used to go up there. I can remember a funny little incident. My mother had loaded all us kids in the wagon and we went up there to pick huckleberries. She went into Purdy's cabin and he was out on his trap line. There was some meat on the stove cooking and Mama said, "Look, kiddies. Come on--let's have some of this good stew." So we set down and ate it. It tasted really delicious. He was such a neat guy in his house. He kept his floor scrubbed and his stove blackened and the tabletop scrubbed down with lye. Before we left to pick our huckleberries, he came back and he came in and he looked in his stew pot and there wasn't any stew and he says, "God damn, somebody

ate up all my dog meat. That was a coyote I had on that there cooking." Mama headed for the timbers. Us kids didn't. We thought it was good--coyote or not.

Mr. A. C. Nichols described them this way:

. . . I ate meals they cooked and I will say they were very clean in their culinary work. I liked to eat with either one of those men because I thought they were very clean and very sanitary about their cooking. They definitely wouldn't eat anything that was not fit to eat. They were very careful about what they killed in the line of game. They didn't ever waste any game that I ever knew about. They ate everything and never caught an extra fish or killed an extra sage grouse or blue grouse. My father and I always had a very high regard for both men. They were very honest men. My father had lots of dealings with them one way or another. He said they were very honest, straightforward men.

These trappers traveled entirely on foot. In the winter they used long cross-country skis. They were made as long as possible, almost twelve feet long. They would have nothing to do with horses, but always had sled dogs for winter traveling. They lived and trapped in the mountains until the 1940's when age forced them to move to town. Charlie Purdy died in Pocatello, Idaho from complications following surgery. Dutch Schultz spent his last years in Ashton. In his eighties he made one more trip to the mountains. When he didn't reappear for several days a searching party went looking and found him dead under a tree by the Meadows.

The cabin built by Schultz and Purdy was later dismantled, after the logs had been carefully marked, and rebuilt by the Porter family on the Meadows. The Porter family lived in it for many years.

Another early settler on the Meadows was Henry Toller. As

remembered by the people of the area, he was an elderly German who came from Prussia to this country. He moved to the Meadows about 1910 and applied for Homestead Rights on 160 acres. He lived year round on the Meadows for several years. He had some money coming to him from Germany on a regular basis for living expenses.

While Mr. Toller lived on the Meadows, he began to put up wild hay for sale to the freighters passing through the area and for sale to the ranchers of the Ashton area. When the Nichols family journeyed to the Meadows in the wintertime for a load of hay, they would travel up one day, spend the night with Mr. Toller and then return the next day. Mr. A. C. Nichols remembered:

Old professor Toller played for our Christmas doings at the old Green Timber school house. There was only one person there at the time who really could totally appreciate that man's ability and that was the ranger's wife, Mrs. Retta Latham. She was a good pianist.

I will have to tell you what occurred. My father arrived there one cold winter night. I think it was 30 or 40 below zero because all of our horses bits were frozen in their mouths. We had a horrible time. After we got there (they just had a little old lean-to for us to put the horses in), my father said to leave the harnesses on them. We didn't have any horse blankets. We left the harnesses right on them for a certain amount of protection. Father said to leave the bits in their mouths for awhile until the frost got off from the horses plunging through the snow to get us there. While we were doing that, my mother would make up a bunch of stuff for us to give to Mr. Toller. We were getting that ready to carry over through the deep snow. I remember my dad was wading with snow clear up to his hips. It was loose snow. It hadn't settled hard. I was trying to get in my dad's footsteps, and I was just wallowing. I had something to carry, and I was just having a horrible time. He was quite ways ahead of me getting to old Mr. Toller's one-room cabin. The most

beautiful, strange music--as little and as dumb as I was--I knew that was real music. In those years there was no such thing as a radio. I knew it must have been Mr. Toller, of course, because it was in his cabin. By the time I caught up to my dad I thought he would be inside. I think I was bawlin' a little bit. I was cold and hungry trying not to lose what I was carrying. When I caught up to my dad he was around this pile of wood on the porch by the old homemade door. He was just standing there. He held his hand up for me to shut up. Whenever my father did that I shut up. I didn't say a word. I just stood there shivering and listening. Pretty soon the music on the inside stopped. Then my father rapped on the door. We went in and here the old fellow had been playing all by himself. He had a long beard. We gave him the food. I was tired. He had quite a fire in the old wood stove he had. My father got to talking music to him. My father knew quite a bit about classical music. My dad asked him to play certain things that he knew. The old fellow went into it and I will tell you what--I was totally enthralled.

. . . My father talked to my mother about his violin. Mrs. Red Aldridge told my dad and mother that Mr. Toller was a concert violinist. He was one of the world's greatest. She told my mother, "That's a true Stradivarius."

Mr. Toller must have been a fine gentleman. Everyone spoke highly of him. He was a big tall man with a beautiful beard. He was very stately and spoke English with an accent but it was good English. Mr. Nichols continued:

Someone said that in Germany he was Professor Toller and had played in Bismark's military band. He came to this country to get as far away from the military as he could and located on Squirrel Meadows.

In 1915 a nephew came from Germany and spent the winter with Mr. Toller and the next spring the nephew convinced him to move to Oregon or Washington. He and his nephew had had enough of the long winters on the Meadows. Before he left he turned his homestead rights over to Ross Porter and soon the two Porter families owned much of the Meadows.

A very important aspect of the history of Squirrel Meadows was the Reclamation Road that ran directly through the Meadows. Located in Jackson Hole, Wyoming was the Moran dam which had been built in 1906-1907. The dam impounded the waters of the Jackson Lake Reservoir. The winter of 1910 had an unusually heavy snow fall. The extremely heavy spring runoff was too much for the poorly constructed temporary dam and when it failed, the Bureau of Reclamation immediately made plans to reconstruct a much bigger and better dam on the Snake River.

Jackson Hole, Wyoming is one of the most remote places in this nation. Especially difficult are the supply roads into the area. Victor, Idaho is forty-nine miles from the Moran Dam site, but the route goes over the steep Jackson Pass, which has an elevation of 8429 feet. The Bureau selected Ashton, Idaho as the railhead even though it was seventy-five miles from the dam construction site, but the route lay much flatter and traversable. In order to use the Ashton supply center, the Bureau constructed the Reclamation Road that ran directly across Squirrel Meadows. The Bureau also built a large warehouse in Ashton and hired many people from the area to work for the Bureau. The warehouse helped Ashton grow from a very small village to a large town. At the warehouse on the north end of Ashton could be seen thirty horse-drawn wagons waiting to be loaded for their trip.

It took seven days to make the round trip to Moran and return, four days over and three on the return trip. On the

return trip they would be empty and would travel faster and easier. Squirrel Meadows was twenty-five miles from Ashton and was the stopping place the first night. At night outfits could be seen camping across the meadows.

The Dam construction led to the creation of the Ashton, Idaho-Moran, Wyoming Horse and Wagon Freight Line to haul the materials for the Jackson Dam. The freight line which ran from mid July of 1910 to October 15, 1927, was the last major horse and wagon freight line in the United States. It carried all the supplies for the construction of the Jackson Lake Dam and also the supplies needed by the ranchers of Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

The standard freight unit was either four or six horses pulling two wagons in tandem. Each outfit carried all the equipment and food needed for the seven day journey. A few of the things needed would be horseshoeing equipment, hay and grain, food and bedding as well as extra heavy winter clothing for the cold months. Two or more wagons would usually travel together for safety.

The road across the Meadows was flat with no trees or rocks to dodge, so it was easy to cross. One bad feature of the freight road on the Meadows was the boggy spots. The Johnston and Porter families kept snap teams available to assist the wagons through the mud. Mr. A. C. Nichols of Ashton, Idaho recalled crossing the Meadows on his father's freight wagon about 1910. When asked if the wagons were ever stuck on the Meadows he replied:

Every trip. As you would cross the open part of the meadows, between there and the next little tongue

you would come out in, the mud would be on the meadow itself. When you would get to the tongue of timber, you would get to a little gravel and harder stuff. They would have their buildings in the edge of the timber. The freight road went right across the meadows. We would go through the little tongues of timber and then through the meadow again. It was boggy. Those big wagon tires would cut down. The freight wagon tires were wider. Some of them were the little narrow high wheelers and they would cut down to beat the dickins. They were a lighter wagon and an easier team to pull. The narrower the rim on the wagon and the bigger the wheel the easier it was for the team to pull. The freight wagon with the wider rims were heavier built and were harder on horses and had smaller wheels in order to stand under that much load. It was tough for the horses. There were also a lot of rocks.

Often the freighters would corduroy the logs by laying logs close together to keep the wagons from sinking in the mud. The teamsters usually slept out at night, but when the road was the busiest, road houses were built at convenient locations.

One such road house built on the west end of Squirrel Meadows was established by Jim and Jenny Nedrow about 1912. They only maintained it for a few years and then abandoned it and moved to Ashton. At the road house the teamsters could buy hay, grain, food, liquid refreshments and emergency supplies for their outfits. The "Boat" Johnston family maintained a semi-road house on the Meadows for several years. They were prepared to feed any freighters who wanted to stop and pay for a meal. They also sold hay and oats to any freighter who had fed his up, especially to those on the return trip to Ashton.

The 1920's was a busy time in the area of the Meadows. Wagons were still crossing the Meadows carrying their cargo to Jackson Hole. The Bureau was working on improving the

Reclamation Road. Several sawmills were in operation in the area, and it was reported that a few stills were also in operation. Tourists had discovered that they could travel from Ashton to the South Entrance of Yellowstone Park by using the Reclamation Road. It was a difficult road but well worth the trip. Of course, they would travel across the Meadows as they made this journey. In the mountains several miners were trying to find valuable ore, but none was ever found. The Porter and Johnston families were ranching. Perhaps the Meadows had more activity then than at any other time.

The first family to make a home on the Meadows was the Johnston family. James Elijah "Boat" Johnston was born in Ogden, Utah on December 16, 1869. His family moved to Stone, Curlew Valley, Idaho where he grew to manhood. "Boat" married Annie Householder September 23, 1890. In 1902, Annie inherited 160 acres of land at Marysville, Idaho. They moved to this farming area where they began to prosper in both cattle and land. In 1911 he became interested in some summer grazing land at Squirrel Meadows, twenty miles east. In 1912 he filed for homestead rights on 160 acres of the Meadows and his family spent the next fourteen summers and two winters there. The family maintained their home in Marysville, but as early in the spring as possible, the family, livestock and all, moved to the Meadows for the summer. Mrs. Lamasauskis said:

. . . Mom would see those geese flying over and she'd say, "Dad, it's time to go to the Meadows." So he'd hook up the old wagon with us kids and Mom would load it up and away we'd go. Dad would go up to see if

we could get through on horseback.

The year 1918 was a very prosperous one for "Boat". He had good crops both in the valley and on the Meadows. He decided to expand his operations the next year and purchased more cattle. The next year, 1919, was very dry. "Boat" mortgaged his farm in order to buy \$1800 worth of hay to feed his cattle through the next winter. They decided to stay on the Meadows with the stock that winter. The snow became very deep and spring was much later than anticipated. In the hardest part of the winter, the family hauled hay three miles on skis in an effort to save the starving cattle. They broke a trail through the heavy drifts so the healthier stock could reach the timber and they worked hard to feed the weaker ones. Eventually the hay was gone and the bitter weather continued. When spring finally arrived they had lost twenty-five head of cattle. The next summer was also bad for farmers and in 1920 "Boat" had to mortgage the Meadows to meet his obligations.

They raised pigs on the Meadows for several years. They took the pigs up in the spring and turned them loose. The pigs would root up the Meadows for the camas root. By fall when they rounded up the pigs, they were so fat they could hardly waddle.

"Boat" was never able to recover from his financial problems and in 1927 he lost the Meadows. He passed away July 31, 1934 and all his remaining possessions were sold to pay his debts.

Mrs. Lamasauskis recalled her summers:

We'd go in there and there was that beautiful meadows laid out and the timber then (the pole pines)

was just a green wall all around it. It looked like a fort. I know us kids--off would go our shoes. We didn't have any more shoes for the rest of the summer from the first when we got there. We'd kick our shoes off and take off through the timber and climb pine trees and go round up the horses so we could go for a horseback ride.

Yes. Oh, there were skunks. I got shot by one. There were the skunks and the porcupines. I used to follow a porcupine because he'd go chugging off through the timber--talking to himself (growling). They were comical little animals. Then we had our squirrels. Even when Mama and I were up there alone, I could go out in the timber and lay down under a pine tree where a squirrel had eaten and he'd get up above me and just chatter, chatter, chatter at me. He'd throw pinecones down at me. Oh, kids don't know what's beautiful nowadays.

The Porter family moved to the Meadows in 1916. In 1915, Rawlston (Ross) Porter and Milburn (Milt) Porter were herding cattle near the lodge at Yellowstone Lake. They were riding from the Park to Rexburg when they first saw Squirrel Meadows. They stopped and visited with the old homesteader, Henry Toller, and found that he wanted to sell his Homestead Rights. Ross and Milt purchased the rights and the Porters were then in possession of 320 acres on the Meadows, but it was not until 1919 that they had a patent on their land.

They fenced the Meadows and where the Reclamation Road crossed the freighters had to open gates. The freighters would also stop to eat and have refreshments at the Porters. Mr. Arthur Porter, son of Milt, said:

I can remember them coming through there (the Meadows) all the time. . . . They would always go down to the old root cellar for Mother's buttermilk. Years ago I found out that Mother would say it was her buttermilk, but this old Charlie Purdy was an old bootlegger. Dad always kept a jug of his bootleg whiskey down in the cellar. The freighters would

always go down there and have a sip before supper.

The Porters had a home in Ashton where the family lived in the winter so the children could attend school. As soon as school was out the Porters moved to the Meadows.

Squirrel Meadows was a popular place for tourist's traveling between Ashton and the South Entrance of Yellowstone Park even though the road was unimproved much of the way. In fact, many of the creeks had to be forded because of the lack of bridges. The Meadows was also a popular location to visit in the summer time. Mr. Porter remembered:

Of course we always had a lot of company up there all the time, especially on Sundays. People would come and leave their kids up there on Sunday until the next Sunday.

There were relatives and school friends who enjoyed outings to the area. There were many things to do: fishing, hunting, horseback riding, swimming in the swimming hole and just enjoying the beauties of the area.

Ross Porter was never married and he lived on the Meadows year round. In the wintertime he fed the cattle and trapped for furs. The Porters grazed their cattle on the Meadows and in other areas. They plowed part of the Meadows and planted timothy and clover hay which had to be mowed and stacked in the summer time. Buck rakes and slings were used to stack the hay. Arthur Porter said:

I can remember that timothy used to be as high as the back of a horse. I would be out there mowing the hay. I would be on one side and all I could see of the other side was the horse's ears and head above the timothy.

In 1929, just as the Great Depression was beginning, the Porters sold many of their cattle and bought a band of sheep. After they purchased the sheep, they never stacked hay again, but used the Meadows for sheep pasture. They had a summer range near Survey Peak, just east of the Meadows and a winter range near Kilgore, Idaho.

Jack Porter, another son of Milt Porter, reminisced:

. . . It is the only place in the world to spend summer. I left the country in 1942, but all through my childhood and up through school I looked forward every year to going back to the meadows. It was beautiful and peaceful. I guess mainly because you could just about do whatever you wanted in the summer. You had time. There were no clocks. In later years after Art left home, I spent a good share of the summers out with dad and the sheep, moving the campsite and one thing or another. We always had plenty of time to take the horses and go somewhere fishing or pack up into the mountains.

As soon as the snow was gone in the spring they would move their sheep from the winter range to the Meadows, then, as the snow line retreated, to the higher summer range.

Just as World War II was beginning, the Milt Porter family moved away from the Meadows. The year 1941 was the last year they were there. They moved to Portland, Oregon but Ross Porter continued to live on the Meadows until he passed away in 1950. Ross leased the Meadows to various cattlemen. Glen Orgill ran cattle there until after Ross died. Arthur Porter, who lived in Pocatello, then attempted to operate the Porter property. He tried to maintain the fences but it wasn't easy. Every fall the staples had to be removed and the barbed wires placed on the ground because the heavy snow fall would break the wires. In the

spring all the wires would have to be restapled to the fence posts. Frank Beattie of Rexburg, Idaho ran cattle on the Meadows until 1959 when the Porters sold their interests to Mark Weaver.

When asked about the bears in the area, Arthur Porter replied:

. . . One night I remember in the old cabin. We had gone to bed and mother baked bread that evening. She set it out on the cupboard to cool. During the night, bears were always coming around. Dad heard something outside and thought it was the old milk cow. In a little while I heard something. The bear broke down the door in the kitchen and stole a loaf of bread. Some of us kids were sleeping out on the old back porch. Dad heard him come in and got up. It scared him so bad he took one door off the cabinet in the kitchen and broke the kitchen door on the way out. We just had the wooden latches on the door then. That old bear just lifted the latch and came in.

When asked about the elk in the area, he said:

Yes, we always had--I guess it don't hurt to tell about it now. I can never remember eating a beef steak until I went railroading. Of course, in those days the forest ranger was the game warden and everything, old Ira Latham. He knew that as soon as the elk and deer got fat enough in the summer time we had our meat. Ira would come up there and he would be disappointed if we didn't give him some.

A few miles north and paralleling Squirrel Creek is a beautiful river called Falls River. In _____ the Bureau of Reclamation decided to build a dam on this stream at Grassy Lake. The Reclamation Road was the main access road to the construction site and for a few years the Meadows was again a heavily traveled area. The Bureau made more improvements on the road, but the increased traffic brought problems. Mr. Arthur Porter stated, "before the construction of Grassy Lake, we never had a lock on the place. After that dam started to go in with no one around,

they just raided the whole thing. We had elk horns, deer and bear hides in the cabin and someone took them all." After the dam was completed, traffic across the Meadows decreased and the Meadows became a quieter place.

In the late 1920's when the Johnston family became discouraged trying to make a living on cattle and milk cows, they abandoned the Meadows. In 1931, Mark Weaver took possession of the Johnston property. The Weavers paid \$2,000 for 160 acres. The buildings were dilapidated and they were burned.

The Weaver's were in the fur business in Idaho Falls, more specifically raising silver foxes. They had a good breeding program there but needed a location in the mountains to raise their pups. They needed a cold climate to grow a dense fur and the Meadows was an ideal location. There were few trees on the Weaver's land so the Forest Service gave them a special use permit for some wooded land just north of the Meadows. They built fox pens in the shade and a big cellar type building where the young foxes could retreat in the heat of the day. They raised some very beautiful furs which were quite valuable at the time.

The Weaver family lived in Idaho Falls during the winter but as soon as school was out the family moved to the Meadows and remained there until school would begin in the fall. Mr. Van Weaver, son of Mark Weaver, remembered his summers on the Meadows:

That was a wonderful place to grow up and I would always thrill when we came off from Indian Lake Hill.

The road was different than it is now. It would come right down through the woods. . . . It was a deep-wooded area all the way and then you'd drop off at Indian Lake Hill and get that view of the Meadow. It would just thrill you every time you did it. It still does today, every time I see it. . . . The place is entirely surrounded with woods and you have this beautiful view of the Tetons right behind the Meadows.

The family lived in tents the first summer. One of the first things the family did the second year was dig a well. They dug it by hand using a pick, shovel, bucket and rope. They dug down ten or twelve feet and found delicious, cold water, described by Van Weaver as: "the best water I've ever tasted--probably ever will taste!" When the well was completed they built their cabin over the well. When the cabin was completed they built a trap door going down into the well and built shelves on the sides of the enclosure to keep butter, cream, milk, vegetables and fruits. It made a good refrigerator. It was also good in the winter time when the streams were frozen solid. They built a sod roof on the cabin which was warm in the winter, but in warm wet weather, it leaked. The parents slept in the cabin, but the children slept in tents and never in the cabin during the years they were there.

They built a saw mill powered by a tractor engine to cut their logs, cut lumber for a better roof and for other buildings. During the summer they pastured a few cattle, had some milk cows, put up hay, built buildings, and tended the foxes, and then later mink and beaver. They hired a caretaker to spend the winter on the Meadows to tend the livestock, shovel the snow off the roofs and care for what fur animals were left on the ranch.

About 1942, Mark Weaver became interested in raising beaver

domestically. A few people had tried to do this and Mr. Weaver had tried to do so several times. He reasoned that Squirrel Meadows would be an ideal location to attempt this again. They built a log building with a water trough running through with individual pens about six feet square. The water trough was made of tin and the walls were logs lined with fox wire. The building would not hold the beaver. The beaver chewed through the log walls and then tore through the fox wire. They did have success trapping for beaver but it was difficult to breed them in captivity. They finally found a way to breed the beavers and built stronger cement-cinder block pens to hold them. They constructed a building of thirty pens with an enclosed nest box where the animals could get out of sight and keep warm. It was a big project with a potential for great profit. Beaver pelts were bringing sixty to seventy dollars at the auction. Squirrel Meadows is the first place in the world that beaver were raised successfully in pens. They kept the project going the year round and it appeared to be a successful operation.

Problems began to emerge in the operation and it was difficult to find sufficient trees, usually aspen, for the beaver to eat. They began clearing the forest and the Forest Service became concerned! Another difficulty was heating the buildings in the winter time to keep the water from freezing. One winter the chimney on the fireplace blew over and it burned the building, the beaver and everything. All that was left was a skeleton of a building. The beaver all died and the project was

over. Squirrel Meadows was a good place for the beaver growing project, but the problems of distance, especially in the winter time, food for the animals and a decline in price for beaver helped end this project.

When they were raising the carnivorous foxes and mink on the Meadows, it took a lot of meat to feed the animals. In the 1930's tractors were replacing horses on the farms, so they could purchase horses quite cheaply. Soon they were driving large herds of horses to the Meadows. Several times a year they would have rodeos. Cowboys would come from local areas and attempt to ride these horses, many of which were quite wild. There were some wild times on the Meadows.

The Weavers finally had to abandon their attempts to raise fur bearing animals on the Meadows primarily because of the great expense of maintaining a winter operation. It was too inaccessible and in a normal year the road was closed by Halloween and after that it was either tractors, dog teams or skis. They had purchased the two Porter homesteads in 1958 and had ownership of all 400 acres. They eventually sold the Meadows to Oather Vance, an accountant from California for \$250,000.

Several cattlemen pastured their cattle on the Meadows for many years. Ed Rindlishbacher ran cattle there from 1949 to 1983. At first he grazed only the Weaver property that had been the Johnston property. When the Weavers purchased all the Meadows, he then grazed all the Meadows. He ran cattle on the Weaver property and when Oather Vance purchased the Meadows in

1968, he leased the Meadows from him. Mr. Rindlishbacher did not have enough cattle to graze all the Meadows so several other ranchers sent their cattle there for the summer.

Mr. Rindlishbacher managed the Meadows and supervised the irrigation. About one-third of the Meadows had to be irrigated and then the sub, or water table, would rise and take care of the rest. He also took care of the fencing, which was a big undertaking, especially when all the wires had to be lowered in the fall before the winter snows began. If they weren't lowered they would break between every post. There were five miles of fence line around the Meadows. In the spring it would take four men three and a half to four days to put it up. Mr. Rindlishbacher explained driving the staples in the fence posts:

. . . In the spring you would drive them in just enough for one summer. They always asked me how far, and I said that really has nothing to do with how far. You drive them in until they are firm for one summer. You get a post that is half rotten and you drive it clear in. You get a brand new post that is a year old and you only drive it in a 1/4 inch or 3/8 inch because they are firm. This is the way we always determined how far to drive the staples. We had four wires. It is easier to go from the north side, go east and across and down if you are right handed. Your right hand has the pliers and you carry your loose staples in your left. You carry a staple apron, and then when you get a double handful, you stop at a stump and leave them. Then you try to fence the opposite way. Then you see, you left staples here and then go down to here and left some more and then when you come this way, those staples will fit. You only need about 7 or 8 percent more. There is usually 5 percent bent or gone by fall. Then you lose one or two in the spring. You don't have to buy that many. About 5 pounds will go all around that fence. That is about all you lose per summer.

They kept their cattle there until the winter weather forced them out. That usually was in October. In the fall of 196_ the

snow came early and very heavily. In just a day or so there was over three feet of snow. They could only drive their trucks to the forest boundary and then ride horses ten miles to the Meadows. They were able to round up their cattle and drive them out of the Meadows, but only with great difficulty.

Mr. Rindlishbacher operated a small sawmill on the Meadows for several years. He also built one of the small lakes by the cabins. There are two man-made lakes near the cabins on the Meadows. Mark Weaver built one for his beaver ponds and Mr. Rindlishbacher built the other. A part of Squirrel Creek was diverted for irrigation and this stream ran through the ponds and then spilled back into the main creek.

Oather Vance passed away in February of 1980. His wife attempted to run the Meadows for one year but found it too difficult. In 1982 she sold her interests in Squirrel Meadows to the Big Hole Investment Company. This company owned the Meadows for one year and sold it to Victor Merrill who still owns most of Squirrel Meadows.