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MEMOIRS OF A PIONEERING FORESTER IN THE WEST

An Interview with Robie M. Evans
conducted by Elwood R. Maunder

Forest History Society - Santa Cruz, California

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INTRODUCTION

Few men can retire and still be able to see evidence of their life's work right outside their windows, but such is the case with Robie M. Evans who retired as regional forester from the U. S. Forest Service in 1949. From his current residence high on a bluff in Medford, Oregon, Mr. Evans can gaze out over the fertile Rogue Valley and look with personal pride at the national forest beyond. Although Bob Evans never worked on that particular forest, he was at different points in his career actively involved with work on the Whitman, Wallowa, Deschutes, and Malheur national forests.

Born in Fryeburg, Maine in 1884 and educated in the classics at Dartmouth, Bob Evans decided in 1908 to become a forester and in 1910 received his master's degree in forestry from Yale University. Upon graduation, he joined the U. S. Forest Service and requested work on the West Coast, although he had never been there nor seen terrain quite as rugged. This action was paralleled by other young foresters of Evans's generation who were caught up in the fervor of the conservation movement and who established a spirit of idealism that has persisted to some extent in the U. S. Forest Service. Robie Evans began practicing forestry in Oregon in the days of pack mules, real mountainmen, no maps, and few trails. The solitary life of the early forester is described firsthand in this volume by a man who came from the East, donned his boots, mounted his horse, and set out to conserve and manage the nation's forests.

The easy narrative style of oral history lends itself well to the story of Robie Evans. One of his first challenges was the terrible fire year of 1910 and that he tells about in this volume. His account of experiences while participating in the first surveys and timber cruises conducted on national forests in Oregon add much to available knowledge concerning the living and working conditions of early-day American foresters. Also of major concern for researchers is Evans's account of the grazing situation on western national forests before World War I. Evans proved himself an able administrator by his ability to keep both cattlemen and sheepmen at peace with the U. S. Forest Service grazing regulations and, perhaps even more amazingly, at peace with each other.

In the established mode of U. S. Forest Service personnel transfer policy, Bob Evans in 1922 was shifted to the Eastern Region. There he became assistant regional forester of an area which stretched from Maine to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Mississippi River to the Atlantic Ocean. In the early 1930s the fourteen northeastern states became the Northern Region and Evans was named regional forester for that area. An entirely different type of work encountered him there, quite unlike what he had known in Oregon. The onset of the Great Depression raised for Evans problems not only with forest resources but also with human resources. During the New Deal era the national forests played a major role in providing employment for American youth. Civilian Conservation Corps camps were set up throughout the vast network of national forests. Evans discusses the contributions CCC made on national forests in this interview.

When he retired in 1949, Robie M. Evans had served for thirty-nine years in the U. S. Forest Service. Interviewing him in April 1975, I found the spirit which had brought him into forestry in 1910 was still vibrant. Evans has the distinction of having served under every chief forester from Henry S. Graves to Lyle F. Watts. In his early years in the West Evans had as personal friends two other young foresters, William B. Greeley and Ferdinand A. Silcox, both of whom became chief forester during Evans's career. This volume of reminiscences sponsored jointly by the Forest History Society and the U. S. Forest Service provides a personal glimpse of the day-to-day life of a true pioneer in American forestry.

This is the eighth interview to be published by the Forest History Society with a former career man of the U. S. Forest Service as its subject. Previously published interviews include those conducted with Charles A. Connaughton, retired regional forester, California Region; Richard E. McArdle, retired chief forester; Edward C. Crafts, former assistant chief for Program Planning and Legislation; Frederick W. Grover, retired director of the Division of Land Classification; Verne L. Harper, former deputy chief of Research; Earl S. Peirce, retired chief of the Division of State Cooperation; Hamilton K. Pyles, retired deputy chief for Programs and Legislation; and J. Herbert Stone, retired regional forester, Pacific Northwest Region. All these interviews were completed under a cooperative agreement with the U. S. Forest Service.

The author is especially indebted to members of his staff who have contributed importantly to preparatory research, transcribing, audio-editing,

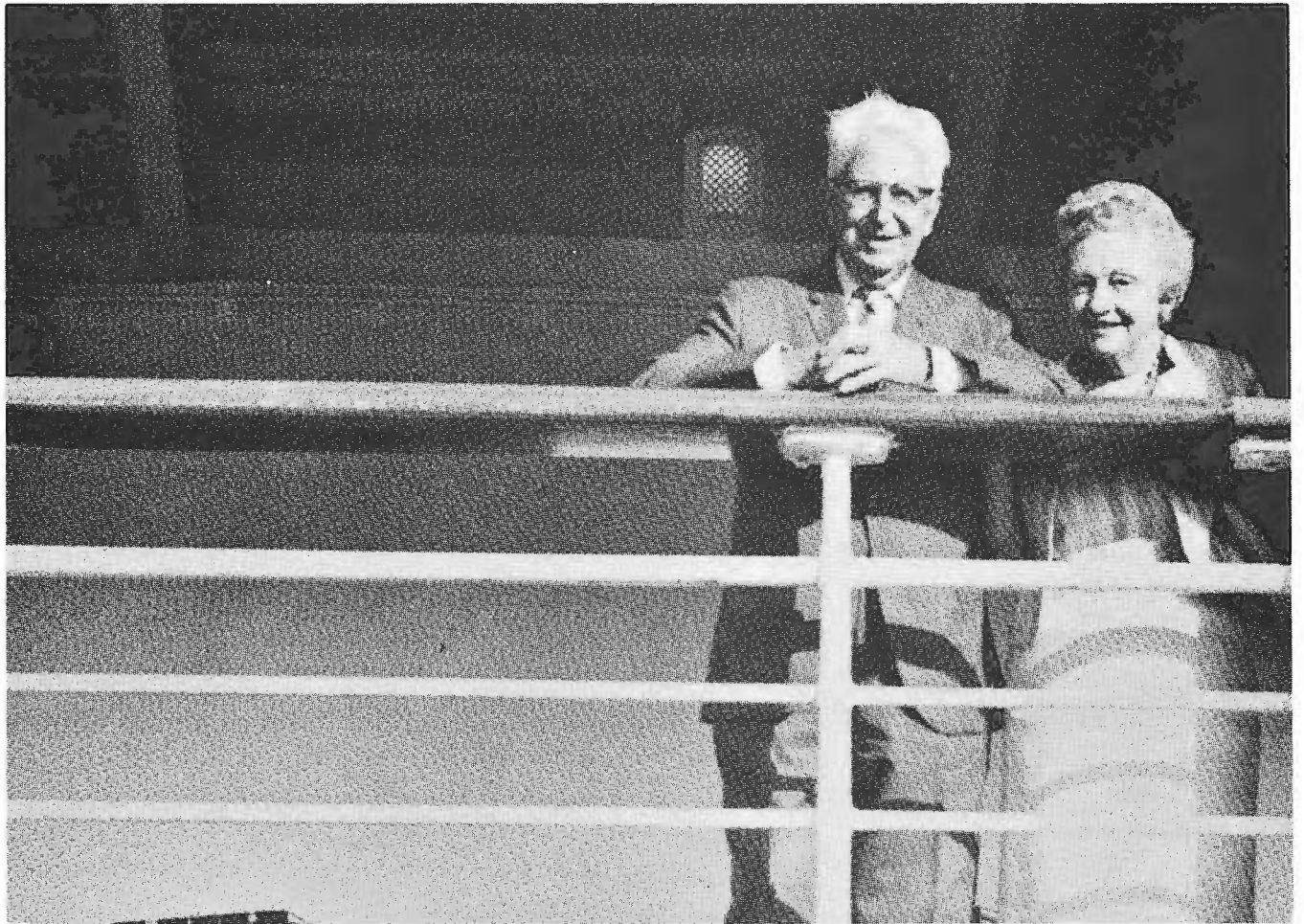
and final production of this book. They include Pamela S. O'Neal, Eleanor L. Maunder, Karen L. Burman, and Barbara D. Holman.

Elwood L. Maunder
Executive Director
Forest History Society

Santa Cruz, California
January 1, 1977

Elwood Rondeau Maunder was born April 11, 1917 in Bottineau, North Dakota. University of Minnesota, B. A. 1939; Washington University at St. Louis, M. A. (modern European history) 1947; London School of Economics and Political Science, 1948. He was a reporter and feature writer for Minneapolis newspapers, 1939-41, then served as a European Theater combat correspondent in the Coast Guard during World War II, and did public relations work for the Methodist Church, 1948-52. Since 1952 he has been secretary and executive director of the Forest History Society, Inc., headquartered since 1969 in Santa Cruz, California, and founder and editor since 1957 of the quarterly Journal of Forest History. From 1964 to 1969, he was curator of forest history at Yale University's Sterling Memorial Library. Under his leadership the Forest History Society has been internationally effective in stimulating scholarly research and writing in the annals of forestry and natural resource conservation generally; 46 repositories and archival centers have been established in the United States and Canada at universities and libraries for collecting and preserving documents relating to forest history. As a writer and editor he has made significant contributions to this hitherto neglected aspect of history. In recognition of his services the Society of American Foresters elected him an honorary member of 1968. He is a charter member and one of the founders of the International Oral History Association. He is also a member of the Agricultural History Society, the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the Society of American Archivists, and the American Forestry Association.*

*Adapted from Henry Clepper, ed., Leaders of American Conservation (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1971).



Mr. and Mrs. Evans during their 1964 South Pacific cruise.

PART I

Robte M. Evans
Medford, Oregon
April 6, 1975

Elwood R. Maunder: Let me begin by asking you, Mr. Evans, where and when you were born?

Robte M. Evans: I was born in Fryeburg, Maine in 1884.

ERM: Where is Fryeburg situated?

RME: In southwestern Maine in Oxford County.

ERM: So you are what is known as a State of Mainer or a "Mainiac."

RME: I call myself a "Mainiac," but most people here don't like that.

ERM: You went through school in Maine, I suppose.

RME: Yes. In Fryeburg there is a very old academy that was established back about 1790 or 1793, right in the vicinity of our home. It's so old that Daniel Webster was their headmaster for a short period at one time. I graduated from that academy and then went to Dartmouth. After two years of teaching, I went to Yale and got a master's degree in forestry.

ERM: What did your father do in Maine?

RME: Father was a farmer. He had quite a large farm. When he was sixteen years old and ready for college, his father died, and his mother was not well, so he had to give up his plans to get a college degree and become head of the family. He had four brothers and he sent them all to college. He stayed home and took care of whatever was needed to be looked after.

ERM: In your own college days, your first bent was toward the classics, I understand.

RME: Yes, that's right. I didn't know what I wanted to do, so I took a little of everything and obtained a B.A. degree. I had almost enough credits to get a B.S. if I had wanted it; I thought I wanted a B.A. Then, when commencement came along, my Greek professor said that the head of a private academy had come to see him looking for a Greek instructor. He recommended me and I took it. I was there two years.

ERM: Where was that?

RME: At Kimball Union Academy in Meriden, New Hampshire. That's a very old institution too, and it's still going in good shape. To tell you the truth, I was young and some of the students there were as old or older than I. I think I learned more than they did. If you really want to learn something, try to teach somebody else. I found that out very quickly.

ERM: What turned you in the direction of forestry?

RME: I discovered that I didn't want to be a teacher. It went back to my early life in my hometown where I enjoyed the outdoors very much and stayed in it as much as I could. A forester by the name of P. G. Redington came to Dartmouth to give a smoke talk one evening, and after listening to him, I had no doubt whatever what I wanted to do.

ERM: Was he one of the old Bureau of Forestry men?

RME: Yes.

ERM: What year did you get your master's in forestry at Yale?

RME: In 1910.

ERM: Did you have some classmates that went on to achieve fame of their own in forestry?

REM: I guess the man who went farthest was Frank Heintzman. He went to Alaska.

I took the Civil Service examination, of course, and at that time I asked to be assigned to the West Coast. I didn't know anything about the West Coast; I had never been there. After learning that I had passed and was going to be accepted as a member of the Service, I came out to Portland, Oregon, and

discovered that I was assigned to Alaska. I asked how long I'd have to stay up there before I could come home. "Well," they said, "three years." I said, "That seems kind of long. Have you anything else?" And they did have. They assigned me to what was then the Oregon National Forest. That was a big national forest. It extended down from the Columbia River and included what is now the Willamette National Forest. It was a tremendous thing down the Cascades.

My classmate, Frank Heintzleman, didn't go to Alaska at that time either, but about three years later he did. Much later he was President Eisenhower's appointment as [territorial] governor of Alaska at the beginning of his administration. He stayed there for seven years and then resigned as governor because he felt that Alaska was not yet financially ready for statehood. He knew that he couldn't remain there as governor and not promote statehood for the territory, so he resigned. Not long after that, he died. I am not saying that I would have had that good fortune if I had gone to Alaska, but I was glad he did because he was well worth it.

ERM: Did you know him well?

RME: Oh, yes, we were very close friends.

ERM: As a young man going into forestry, who at Yale had the most influence on you?

RME: I suppose Professor [Herman H.] Chapman did. He was a teacher of forest management and a very hard taskmaster, but he was an interesting and very capable man. I think I got more from him than from the rest there, although they were all good. I enjoyed the course very much.

ERM: Did you continue your contacts with Chappy?

RME: More or less, yes, but I got scattered around the country so much it was pretty hard to do that.

ERM: What was Chapman's advice to you?

RME: About what any good professor's advice would be, I guess. He advised you to stick your nose in hard and work.

ERM: Did he try to steer you in any direction?

RME: No, he didn't do that at all.

ERM: When you left Yale were you admitted immediately to the Forest Service and assigned out here in the West?

RME: The class spent the senior year in the field in the springtime. They always did in those days. I don't know what they do now. We were sent down to Louisiana for nearly three months.

ERM: Down at Urania?

RME: No. That was later. We worked out there pretty early in 1910. It was rough country, and the climate and everything else was very unpleasant in the places we had to stay. We didn't like it much, but we worked at it anyway and got what we were supposed to.

We took the Civil Service examination down there. In those days it was a two-day examination and it was pretty tough. They wouldn't let you out of the examination place or anything else, and it was unpleasant. But I passed it and I got home about the last part of June. By that time I had received my results of the examination and the notice that I was assigned to the Pacific Northwest where I had asked to come. Right after the Fourth of July, I headed out here. I arrived in Portland, as I told you, and they were going to send me to Alaska. But I didn't want to go, and they assigned me to the Oregon National Forest. Maybe you'd like to know what a young fellow in those days had to do.

ERM: Yes, I would.

RME: In those days the Forest Service headquarters for the Northern Pacific Region was in the old Beck Building on South Broadway in Portland. The headquarters of the Oregon National Forest was in the same building. The office force of the national forest consisted of one man. He occasionally got a temporary typist to help him, but not often. One man, mind you; that was the office force.

I reported to the headquarters. The supervisor, T. H. Sherrard, was an old forester who had been in Washington, D. C. at the beginning for a while, then he had been transferred out here as supervisor of this forest. When I arrived, he was out in the field somewhere, and the only man in the office was this

clerk, a man. The office consisted of two rooms, as I remember. The clerk didn't know what to do with me, so he finally got in touch with Sherrard in the field who told him to send me down to Detroit to scale on a government timber sale down there. Well, Detroit is on the north fork of the Santiam River. There's a good highway up it now, and a big dam at Detroit, and a good-sized town, a lot of cottages for campers around there, and everything. It's very well-developed, but when I was there, the only way to get in there was by logging railroad or on horseback. The town of Detroit consisted of a little general store. The fellow running it was a character if I ever met one. What they called a hotel, which was by the side of the railroad, was two stories. The second story was on the level of the railroad, and the first story was on the level of the Santiam River. You slept down below on the level of the river and ate up above. Well, the lady who ran the hotel was drunk about ten days out of every month, so the living got a little hard. Her poor old husband ran a packstring from Detroit up to Breitenbush Hot Springs which is about fourteen miles up a very rough road across the Breitenbush River. The hot springs were a very fine set of springs. Now, of course, they are well-developed. When his wife got drunk, this poor fellow lived hard. She would beat him up and throw everything in the world at him. Of course, that was all new to me. I didn't know anything about that sort of life.

Well, my job was to scale on this timber sale about two miles up the road from the town of Detroit. They used logging donkeys to haul these logs off this very steep hillside. In the first place, I had never seen any of that kind of timber before. I didn't know one tree from another. In the next place, I had never used a decimal C scale rule.* The forest ranger came to the hotel, picked me up, and took me up to the timber sale. "Now," he said, "this log is a Douglas-fir and this one over here is a hemlock. That one coming down the shoot is a cedar." These were long thirty-two foot logs, and big. As I said, I had never used a decimal scale rule. Then he said, "Here's this rule. These figures on the edge mean 'so and so,' and the numbers on here mean 'this and that and the other thing.' You stick it on the end of the log and then you make sure it's the right length, thirty-two feet. If it's only thirty feet, you make that adjustment. Then you read the capacity of the log and write it down in this notebook under this column. Well, I guess you'll be all right. I've got some work to do." And away he went. That was my training for that job. I stayed there during the summer. I'm quite sure the government didn't lose anything

*Scribner Decimal C rule.

on the measurements, but I'm not so sure about the owners, the purchasers.

ERM: Did you ever have any complaints about your scaling?

RME: No, I didn't, but I don't know why I didn't. As you probably know, 1910 was the first really terrible fire year. In August, fire got out from a donkey engine there on the side of the hill. It ran up the hill at a high rate of speed. There was wind and it was a very hot day. Three of the men at the donkey set tried to beat it up through the snowbrush on the hillside, but they couldn't make it and it caught them. After the fire was out, we went up there to see what we could find and we found those bodies. It was so damned steep, they had rolled down probably fifty or seventy-five feet, scattering their jackknives and any coins they had in their pockets, and their bodies were burned to a crisp. I don't believe they would have weighed seventy-five pounds apiece. It was pretty bad.

Well, just before that the supervisor, Sherrard, had showed up down there at Detroit. I heard that he was there, so I went up to make myself known. He turned around and looked at me. He looked me up and down a couple of times and finally turned aside and said, "Humpf, so you're that fellow." That was my introduction to my superior.

ERM: A warmhearted greeting.

RME: Yes! (laughter)

Ethelyn Hull Evans [Mrs. Robie]: He was one of the old-style foresters.

ERM: Was he college educated?

RME: I can't be sure, but I think he was. I don't know what college he attended.

ERM: Some of the old-time forest rangers that had never had much formal education looked with a little disdain on you college boys.

RME: Oh, yes, I know. As I recall, Sherrard was one of the few supervisors in the region at that time who was really educated.

He'd never studied forestry, but he was interested in it and knew a lot about it. The others were holdovers of the old Interior days and that was true of the rangers.* As a matter of fact, at that particular time there were very few technical men in the Service anywhere up there.

ERM: What were some of the principal problems that the Forest Service had in 1910? Obviously, one of them was fire.

RME: Yes.

ERM: What were some of the other difficult problems that you saw?

RME: Of course, one of them was living and working conditions. There were no improvements in those days. There were hardly any shacks for the rangers to live in or anything else. There were no roads and very few trails. That took up a lot of the time and then, of course, finding out where and how much timber there was and what kind it was--quality and value. There were no good maps of the forests, no type maps to amount to anything. It was rough. We had very little to go on. For example, they really didn't have any kind of estimate of how much western yellow pine--it was called western yellow pine then and is ponderosa pine now--there was in the state of Oregon. A little later I was assigned to try to find out. I traveled all over the state contacting private owners, the forest headquarters, anybody that was supposed to know anything about that to try to get at least a rough estimate of how much pine timber there might be in the state. I came up with a figure, of course, but it turned out to be very low.

ERM: Do you remember what that figure was?

RME: My figure was somewhere in the seventy billions, but it turned out to be more than that.

ERM: How much more was it?

RME: I don't remember, but it was substantially more.

*The Act of February 1, 1905 (33 Stat. 628) transferred the administration of the forest reserves (renamed national forests in 1907) from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture.

ERM: Was the grazing problem with you then?

RME: Yes. Going clear back to 1910 and on up until the next half-dozen years or so, it was very rough. I mean, the permittees were given a permit and a map of their permit area and they were supposed to stay within that. But the knowledge which the government had of the carrying capacity of the range inside that area really was a guess. It was pretty low, and the ranges were very much overstocked. That was one of the worst things. There is no question about that. For example, later when I was supervisor of the Whitman National Forest, which was a big national forest in those days--I guess around a million and a quarter acres or more--we were grazing, as I recall, a hundred thirty-odd thousand head of sheep and goats and about thirty thousand head of cattle and horses. Well, I don't think there are that many sheep and goats or that many cattle and horses in the whole of Region 6 now.

ERM: And you had them all on one forest?

RME: Yes, that was all in one forest. We lacked knowledge both about quantity and forage itself.

ERM: And, of course, this heavy overgrazing had been going on for many years.

RME: Oh, yes. Before the Forest Service came along, they grazed wherever they could maintain their flocks of sheep or herds of cattle.

ERM: To what extent were you able to restrict grazing in 1910? Were you able to exert any restrictive influences without the legislation that came later?

RME: Well, we probably took more authority than we really had and the grazers didn't like it, of course.

ERM: Can you give me a few examples of that?

RME: Let's see. Of course, on the Whitman we had an awful lot of permittees; I've forgotten now how many. When we began trying to restrict the number of animals per acre that we would allow on a given area, many of them didn't like it. They would fuss about it both in writing and verbally. It was sometimes pretty difficult to explain to them what we were trying to do. Stanfield [U. S. Senator Robert Nelson] was one of those. He fussed

about it quite considerably. I've forgotten how many bands of sheep he ran in those days. I think it was not less than three nor more than five, but I can't remember exactly.

ERM: That he owned and ran himself?

RME: Yes, he himself. When we began to tie him down a little bit, he didn't like it. He'd fuss in writing or verbally. There were three Stanfield brothers. Bob was the bossman and there was Hugh and Gerald. They were more quiet and a little more reasonable than Bob was. He used to come in and fuss quite a bit.

ERM: You mean that he would come into your office?

RME: Occasionally, yes, but not very often. Mostly he'd raise Cain with the ranger who was in charge of the particular area where he was grazing, or he'd go to somebody else perhaps in the field. Sometimes he'd see the supervisor out there. Stanfields' was quite an outfit. They were really headquartered in Idaho, but they did a lot of business in Oregon. Of course, the town of Stanfield in eastern Oregon was named after him. The power in that outfit was really a female. They had a clerk that wrote memorandums of what they should do, and if the Stanfield brothers saw a memorandum that had her initials on the bottom of it, they knew that was what they should do.

ERM: Do you remember her name?

RME: No. I was thinking of that just the other day. I think the initials were JK, but I can't remember what the name was. She was a real power in that Stanfield thing.

ERM: Was she a power because of financial interest she had in the operation, or was she a power just because she was a strong-minded person?

RME: I think she was a strong-minded person and knew what she was doing. That was my impression, anyway. I don't know whether she owned anything in the outfit or not. I don't believe she did, but I wouldn't say definitely that she didn't.

When we began finding out more about forage, what was happening to it, and trying to restrict the number of animals per acre, we finally began tying Stanfield down. He didn't like that.

ERM: Was this the result of Forest Service research studies made on the land?

RME: Yes, indeed. They were showing how much overgrazed a lot of the area was where all these animals were. Of course, the grazers, the men who owned the animals, didn't like that. Finally, it culminated with Stanfield when we had restricted a number of animals that he could graze on a definite area. He came into the office one day and blew up. I didn't happen to be there, but a couple of the other men were, and this is the report I got from them. I had a memorandum from them on it, but that burned up like all the rest.* He called me everything under the sun. It was just after he was elected to the Senate and he said, "I'm in power now and I'm going to see that he gets what's coming to him"--talking about me; I wasn't there. He called me every name he could think of.

ERM: Who did he say this to?

RME: To the clerk. [Walter L.] Dutton and another one of my men were out in another room and heard all this, and they gave me a memorandum of what went on. He was talking to the head clerk, administrative assistant, or whatever we called him then, who was in charge of the office when I was gone.

ERM: Now all this that you are telling about occurred when you were supervisor of the Whitman, is that right?

RME: Yes.

ERM: Dutton was then grazing chief on the Whitman, wasn't he?

RME: No. Well, I guess so; he was grazing assistant. He was assigned to these grazing studies.

ERM: In other words, he was working in that capacity under you?

RME: That's right.

*In 1950, all the Evans's possessions were destroyed by a deliberately set fire in a storage warehouse in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania.

ERM: I get the impression that Stanfield was like many other stockmen and sheepmen, very disdainful of the college-trained men that were coming out to the range and finding things not as they ought to be.

RME: Absolutely, that's right. He said that his impression was that he'd been grazing sheep for practically all his life, and he knew more about that business than anybody who went to college to learn something about it. He wanted to make it stick and he said, "When I get back to Washington, I'm going to see that this man here is taken care of." He did go back there and tried to get what he wanted through Congress, apparently, but he didn't get it that way. Instead of having me and what was going on in the Whitman investigated, he got a study of the whole Forest Service. Two men came out there to the Whitman, and they went to various places. One was from the House and one from the Senate from a joint committee doing all of this investigating. I don't remember their names now, but I took them all over the forest and showed them what we were doing, what we were trying to do, and what we wanted to do if we could. Everything was very pleasant--no hard feelings or anything else. Not much came of the whole investigation, so he didn't get what he was after.

ERM: All this was taking place at just about the time that Gifford Pinchot was leaving the Forest Service.

RME: He left in 1910, and that was the year I went in.

ERM: What was your attitude toward that event?

RME: Of course, I didn't know much about it. But from all I had known of Pinchot, I couldn't believe that he'd done anything that was very wrong because I had great admiration for him. He was a very fine man and well respected by most of the men in the Forest Service.

ERM: Do you have any personal recollections of the man?

RME: Well, no. Of course, I was too far down the line to have had very much contact with Pinchot. Although in 1922 I was transferred to Washington to what was then the Eastern Region, and the Pinchots had a very large and beautiful home in Washington on Rhode Island Avenue. He used to have gatherings at his home



The photographs on these pages were taken in the year 1911 during a field survey trip made by Robie M. Evans in the Wallowa National Forest in northeastern Oregon bordering on the Snake River. His sole companion was a man named MacWillis (first name unknown) hired by the Forest Service to assist Evans. MacWillis was a hunter and trapper and general outdoorsman. He was also keenly interested in photography and took these pictures developing and printing them on the trip. Pictured above are the two companions (Evans in front), with their horses and MacWillis's dog.

which we all went to. They were very interesting. All kinds of people went to them; I mean the high-ups in government service. Everybody that I knew had great respect for Gifford Pinchot. He did a fine job starting the Forest Service and in the policies that he advocated. They never proved that he did anything that was out of the way in his Alaska work.

ERM: He had prestige among the top people in government.

RME: You're right. I can imagine no better way the Forest Service could have been started than by a man of Pinchot's capacity and reputation.

ERM: Going back again to those early days, what was it called then, the Whitman National Forest or the Oregon?

RME: The first national forest I was on was the Oregon and that's in the Cascades. The Whitman is over in northeastern Oregon in the Blue Mountains.

ERM: When did you go to the Oregon and when did you leave?

RME: I went there in July 1910, and I left the last of the following February--that would be 1911.

ERM: You were there less than a year?

RME: Yes. And I went from there to the Wallowa. As I said awhile back, nobody knew how much timber there was on the national forests or what kind it was, except in a very general way, so the Forest Service started two types of forest surveys. The first type was called the extensive survey of the forest. That meant that somebody got on a horse and rode over the region with his map and tried to make some type maps of the timber on the forest and a rough estimate or guess of how much timber of various kinds was in these separate areas over the forest. That was kind of something to work from that hadn't been done before. Following that, in the places where the heavy timber was indicated on the maps, they ran these intensive timber surveys. Those were estimates made as accurately as they knew how to make in those days, which wasn't too accurate, I can assure you. But it was better than they had ever had before.

In March 1911 I went to Wallowa, in the extreme northeastern corner of the state, in the Wallowa Mountains. Incidentally, this has always been an interesting thing to me. The Wallowa



Evans and the outfit climbing up a hill considered mild next to the many steeper ones encountered on the 1911 survey expedition.

Mountains over there in the northeast part of the state, and our Siskiyou right here, are the oldest mountains in the Oregon area. They were above water when the Cascades and the coastal ranges and the rest of the mountains around here were under the sea. Those two are the only ranges whose major axis is east and west instead of north and south. They are very interesting ranges, particularly the Wallowa. It's beautiful country, more or less isolated.

The first job over there was to join a crew of six men who were running the north boundary over the Wallowa Forest. It was twenty-five miles from Horse Creek across four canyons that were from a thousand to two thousand feet deep to the Snake River. It took us about a month to do it. That's real rough country. That was my introduction to that kind of country. I had never seen any of it and didn't know anything about it. But it was a transit survey and we finally made it.

ERM: How large was your party?

RME: There were six men. I was assistant to the transit man and the two of us had some education. Then there were two chainmen and two axemen. That took a month.

After that, I was assigned to make the first extensive timber survey of the Wallowa area forest. I left Wallowa on Memorial Day with a companion. Fortunately, they knew enough to put a local man with me who knew about horses and so forth. We left with a saddle horse apiece and three packhorses well-loaded, and we got back the last of October. During that time I was in town a half day. That country was so primitive that part of it wasn't even surveyed. All the maps I had were G. S. quadrangles, and on some of those the areas were just blank--there wasn't a thing in them. They had never been surveyed, so I had quite a time trying to sketch in any timber, but I did. When I came back, I spent that winter making up a type map of the forest with a guess at the timber. It was only a guess, of course.

That was a very interesting experience because I was a greenhorn out of the East; I didn't know anything about roughing it in the West. I didn't know anything about horses, but I had to learn quickly. And I didn't know much about firearms, but I learned that. The fellow that was with me was a man in his late fifties, I guess. He had spent most of his life hunting and trapping in Alaska and prospecting too all over the Northwest. He was a

woodsman, if I ever saw one. He was a fine man. I had bought a six-gun and a thirty-thirty rifle, and he taught me to shoot that six-gun. I got so I could hit a grouse in one of those tall trees. I was paying the bills, of course, and at the end of that long period--just to show you how we lived off the land--I sent in an expense account of seventy-five dollars. We lived on fish, game, deer, birds, and so forth during that time. It was a very interesting experience.

ERM: There was no shortage of game then?

RME: No shortage at all. This was pretty wild country.

ERM: What evidence of previous occupation by man did you encounter?

RME: There wasn't any.

ERM: Not even of the Indian people?

RME: No, not that we found anyway--well, the Indians, of course, north of Joseph around Wallowa Lake. Wallowa Lake, incidentally, is one of the finest examples of a glacial lake you can find anywhere. It is six miles long, over a mile wide, and approximately rectangular. High mountains are on one side and on the other side the glacial moraine about two hundred feet high. At the lower end another moraine goes across which is almost as high, but not quite, with a channel for the river that cut through--a beautiful area. Well, that had been Indian country and there were some artifacts of one kind or another. You could pick up little things but nothing of any consequence.

ERM: Were any people living there at that time?

RME: Yes, around there, but not in the mountains, and there aren't yet. Even now the only way you can get into the mountain area is by foot or horseback. It's now designated as a wilderness area. But the lower parts of it have good timber, and that is being logged or has been logged--a part of it anyway.

ERM: Was this area being used for grazing at that time?

RME: Yes, most of it was. The high area above timberline is covered with a growth of mountain bunchgrass which is the most wonderful forage that you can possibly imagine. It is much better than the ordinary bunchgrass that is down lower. It's richer. The season is short up there because the snow doesn't go until late and comes again early. But they certainly use the grass during that short period and it's excellent forage. The rest of the country is like all the country around there. Cattle and horses are in it now. But in all the country, the stock has been reduced to the point where it's not like it used to be.

ERM: Did you ever encounter Basque shepherders ?

RME: Yes, a few of them, but not many. A few of them used to be on the Whitman. They were good hunters. They knew how to get along in the woods out there.

ERM: Were they law-abiding ?

RME: As far as I knew, yes, they were. I never saw anything to indicate the contrary.

ERM: You never had any difficulties with them ?

RME: No, none.

ERM: You came along after the great cattle-sheep wars of an earlier day.

RME: Yes. Well, they sometimes happened. Here's an incident on the Wallowa. Back in the late nineties, I guess it was, a man came out from New England and he hunted around until he found the most isolated spot that he could learn about. He went down in there and built a little log shack, bought a few hundred head of sheep, and settled down there. Unfortunately, he had picked cattle range and the cattlemen didn't like that. In due course, they tried everything they could think of to drive him out of there, but he wouldn't be driven.

ERM: Was he squatting on their land or was this public land ?

RME: He was squatting on public land. They finally bore down on him, killed a lot of his sheep, set his shack afire and burned

that down, and they thought they had done the job. They didn't kill him, but I guess they tried to scare him to death. Instead of that, he rebuilt his shack and replenished his flock and stayed there.

While my companion and I were on this first long trip trying to find out where the timber was in the Wallowa, we found ourselves about ten miles from our camp late one afternoon. We were on horseback and we remarked that it was pretty late and too bad to have to go clear back to camp. We were on the brinks of Joseph Creek which is in a very deep canyon with grass and timber part of the way down. I inquired whether he knew if there were any settlers anywhere in that part of the country. He said, "Yes, I've heard that down here in the canyon a man is living." I said, "Well, why don't we go down there, and maybe he will keep us." So we went down and finally came to this log cabin which was very rough--the sides were not even chinked. We could hear some sheep blatting out in back of it, so we went around and looked. In back was a very tall, white-haired man who rose up all covered with blood from marking lambs. We were a little bit shocked, but when he opened his mouth I was so astounded that I nearly fell off my horse. He spoke in the choicest English accent and manner that you could imagine. I told him our situation and wondered if there was any possibility that we might spend the night there. "Why," he said, "of course, if you are willing to take what I have." So he left his sheep and washed up a bit, and we went into the cabin.

It was a tough place. Part of the floor was just packed dirt. The food he had was a part of a side of bacon hanging from a rafter and a twenty-five pound sack of flour sitting on the floor. I don't think there was anything else that night. Well, the bacon had a little bit of animal life in it and so did the flour. He cooked that stuff and we didn't eat much. But during the time we were trying to eat and afterward, we got him talking. I tried to bring up every subject that I could think of--politics, philosophy, education, literature, and what not. He was just like a lecturer. It came out of him in the choicest language and accent you could possibly imagine. We talked until about midnight. I wasn't in any hurry to go to bed anyway because when we went to bed he pulled out a couple of blankets that were pretty bad and we slept on the pungent floor. It was not very good.

Later I asked about him. I didn't know who he was. It seems that sometime in the 1800s he had appeared in Wallowa and tried to find out where an isolated place was, and they told him he might look over here, which he did. He had been the headmaster of a very fine private school in central Massachusetts. He was a graduate of a college in Maine, had a Ph.D. from Harvard, and degrees from several European universities. He had been headmaster of this school for quite a while and then something happened. I don't know what it was. He had dropped everything, come out there, gone down in that hole, and there he had stayed. I understand he stayed there until he finally died. He was an old man when we met him. So you do occasionally find that kind of people scattered around.

ERM: Did he ever explain to you why he moved there?

RME: No, he didn't talk about that. He just talked about things in general. It was an interesting experience, I must say.

ERM: You must have had some other interesting experiences in those days in the Forest Service. Can you think of any others offhand?

RME: Well, first I'll tell you a little about my companion, and I have some pictures that he took.

ERM: You are showing me some very interesting pictures that were made on this trip with the pack train in the Wallowa.

RME: Yes, all those pictures were in the Wallowa.

ERM: What was the name of the man you went with?

RME: MacWillis.

ERM: What was his first name?

RME: I don't know. I called him Mac. I expect he was a Scot.

ERM: Was he a regular employee of the Forest Service?

RME: Oh, no.

ERM: You employed him then.

RME: Yes, they employed him for me. I didn't employ him, but the supervisor got him to go with me and they picked a good man.

Woodsman MacWillis



ERM: Was he a hunter and trapper?

RME: Yes, he could do anything. For example, we camped one night at an old abandoned mining claim. This was all gold country, so it was a gold mining claim. The next morning he was hunting around--it was the weekend--and he found this old broken down forge. He tinkered around until he got it to work. He found about six inches of octogon drill steel, brittle and broken off, and he found an old broken hammer which he stuck a handle in so that he could pound with it, and a little charcoal. I don't know how that happened to be left there, but it was. The place had been abandoned for years. Out of this octogon drill steel, he made me a hunting knife. I've never seen anything like it. It was perfect in all its contours, everything. He put a handle on it with a guard so that your hand wouldn't slide up and get cut. Then he found an old abandoned shoe, and he cut the sole off and put some leather rings on that handle. It was the most perfect knife I ever saw, with a blade about six inches long and tempered so you could have cut wood with it.

He was that kind of fellow. One evening we had a hard time finding a camping place. We always wanted to camp where there was water. We'd been going a long time and we couldn't find any. We finally came to a place where there was some water and it was pitch dark then. It was cloudy and dark as Sam Hill. He was unsaddling and unpacking the pack animals and so forth while I went up to make a fire near the creek. It was pitch dark, as I said, and I was chopping wood and I missed the wood and cut into the bone of the big toe joint of my foot. It bled like everything, of course, and I hollered at him. He came up and got my boot off. The only thing that we had to put on the cut was something which he carried for wire cuts on his horses. It was a saturated solution of camphor in carbolic acid. You can imagine what that did to me when he put it on. Five days I lay on a blanket in an old abandoned mining shack we found there. It was all down except about half a roof over this room. I crawled in there and amused myself by shooting pack rats with my six-gun. After five days, I found that I could ride but I couldn't walk very much. for the next month, I rode all the time and Mac did the work.

ERM: But you stayed on the job in spite of being injured?

RME: Stayed out, oh, I didn't go anywhere. And you know that darned

stuff that he put on hurt like sin but it did the job. We had all kinds of things like that happen to us.

ERM: Was this while you were making the survey to determine how much ponderosa pine there was?

RME: No, this was when we were trying to find out where the timber of any kind was and making a very rough sketch of the types on a map. Part of this was on land on which there was no survey.

ERM: Did you ever hear or see MacWillis again?

RME: No.

ERM: But on this trip he made these pictures that you've shown me.

RME: Yes, he made them right there. He was a photographer and would set up his darkroom under a blanket, and wash his film in the running stream, and print these postcard pictures. That was in 1911 and these are probably the only copies in existence.

ERM: Now, after this what transpired in your career?

RME: That winter, of course, I remained in Wallowa to make my report and the maps. Of course, the mapping job was a pretty big thing. All this area was over a million acres of which there were not many maps of any kind. I did that, and then the next spring I was sent to Bend as part of an organized crew of technical men that they drew from all over the states of Washington and Oregon--the region takes in both states--to learn the details of intensive timber surveys. None of us had ever done much of that before. During that time we studied the process and actually cruised the timber from timberline to sagebrush for about, I guess, fifteen miles up and down the east side of the Cascades. Our headquarters camp was at Breitenbush Springs. That's at the head of the Breitenbush River. The river comes full-blown right out of the side of a hill.

What a beautiful place! Nobody had ever camped there. Now, of course, it is all different, but then it was pristine. That took the spring and then after that I thought I was going back to Wallowa. Instead of that, they sent me over to the Malheur at John Day where I teamed up with the deputy supervisor, and we finished the extensive timber reconnaissance of the Malheur National Forest, which is a big area too, below Strawberry Mountain and the rest of the ranges over there.

The day we got through with that and we got into the town of John Day which was the headquarters, the clerk of the forest met us. He said, "Oh, I've been looking for you. They want you to come to the regional office." I tried to find out what it was about, but all I found out was that they wanted me to come right away. So the other poor fellow was left to make up all the maps and reports on what we had done all that summer. I went into the regional office in Portland and it seemed that Max Rothkugel was out there--an Austiran, the third generation of Austrian foresters. He had left Austria and come over here and got a degree in forestry from Cornell and then joined the Forest Service. At that particular time they had assigned him the job of finding out how much western yellow pine there was in the state of Oregon--something new. I didn't mention that before, but this is how I got into it. The Argentine government had asked Washington through the diplomatic service, to recommend a forester so that they could establish an Argentine Forest Service, which they did not have. Washington had recommended him and he had gone, so they assigned his job to me to complete. He hadn't done much, so I had to discard everything that he'd done and start all over again. I traveled all around the state to find out how much timber was there contacting everybody I could find who would know anything. That lasted the winter, and the next spring I was assigned to the Whitman National Forest.

That was spring of 1913; I was a forest examiner which was one step up from the forest assistant, the lowest thing then. Incidentally, my salary when I entered was \$100 a month. When I got this promotion to the next grade, it was \$125 a month.

ERM: Were you married yet?

RME: No, I wasn't. I went over there, and that summer I did some odd jobs that didn't amount to much. The supervisor was Henry Ireland, another one of those holdovers from the old Interior

Department. He had no education to speak of, but was a very fine man. I mean he was a good man to work for; he treated me all right. That winter I spent my time in the office cleaning signboards--nothing else to do. The snow was deep. Then the next spring, I was promoted to deputy forest supervisor.

In 1913 the forest road program passed Congress and they got their first money.* The Whitman got a little bunch of money that they wanted to spend, so in the summer we went out to Desolation Butte beyond Olive Lake. Ireland wanted to build a road from Olive Lake around Desolation Butte to the north fork of the John Day River. Our equipment consisted of a wagon--I mean a real wagon--with four horses attached to it, a plough, one of these hand scrapers that they pull along, and some picks and shovels. And, let's see, I believe there were seven or eight men, including myself. No road had been surveyed so a man went ahead with an Abney level, running the outline for the road. It was primitive road building.

When we got out there, he sent me ahead to investigate about getting around Desolation Butte. It was a rather high butte with one side which was fairly level, and he wanted to see whether I thought we could get around it. Of course, I had never built a piece of road in my life. I was on horseback. I came out at the edge of a little open place, and way over there I saw a big set of horns coming down through the brush. I waited a minute and this big buck stepped out in the open about a hundred and fifty or a hundred and seventy-five yards ahead of me. So I stepped off my horse. I always had a rifle in my scabbard under my right leg. I pulled that out and killed him before he took a step. I was so surprised that I kind of stood there and stared. Then I went back and told the supervisor about it. He came right away. We cut the throat and dressed it there, and he wanted to get some of it back to his old home in Sumpter. So he packed the horse with meat and sent me back to Sumpter.

I finally returned, and they had laid out and started about a quarter of a mile of road. In those days that kind of road was nine feet wide and was in-sloped so the water went in instead of out. It wouldn't wash the road all away. Well he said, "Bob, I've got some awfully important business back home that I've got to take care of, so I'm going to have to leave you in charge," so I took over the job. As I said, I didn't know anything about road building, but we stayed there until sometime in the latter part of October and built a road of a kind. We all slept in one big tent. In the middle it had a pole to hold the ridgepole up, and we all slept

*Act of 4 March 1913, 37 Stat. 828, 843.

on each side of that. We had about a foot of snow one night. It came down to beat sin. It broke the ridgepole, and the doggone ridgepole came down and stuck into the earth on both sides of my head, which upset me a little bit. So the next day we broke camp and went back to Sumpter. That was the end of my road building, but that was enough.

ERM: I would like to talk with you in particular about the management of the forests out here as related to the grazing issue. What can you recall about the early attempts by livestock men in Oregon to convert grazing privileges into proprietary rights? This has been a serious issue from the beginning of the forest reserves and, of course, still comes up today in bills introduced in Congress and applies also to summer home leases.

RME: Yes; I know. Strangely enough, I never experienced very much of that back there. They fussed about the way we handled it, but they didn't fuss about not being able to graze at all, because apparently they didn't think there was anything to that. They didn't seem to anyway.

ERM: Who is "they"?

RME: I'm talking about the grazers, the cattle and sheep people.

ERM: One of the most determined efforts was made on the Whitman National Forest in eastern Oregon in the 1920s. Evidently, that was Stanfield's effort, wasn't it?

RME: That's true, Stanfield was fussing all right.

ERM: I interviewed Dick McArdle.*

RME: I know Dick very well.

ERM: He told me that you and Walt Dutton are probably the best qualified to speak from personal experience and observation about this development in Oregon.

RME: Have you talked to Walt?

*Richard E. McArdle, An Interview with the Former Chief, U. S. Forest Service, 1952-1962, conducted by Elwood R. Maunder (Santa Cruz, California: Forest History Society, 1975).

ERM: He's not well and neither is his wife, so I haven't been able to see them.

RME: Is that right? I'm sorry to hear that. I've always thought a great deal of both of them. She was the daughter of one of his grazing cattlemen over in the Powder River country on the Whitman. You see he started out as a ranger there and she was a daughter of one of those grazers.

ERM: How do you feel about the efforts made by the grazers to establish proprietary rights on the national lands?

RME: I think it's rotten.

ERM: How would you define it?

RME: I don't know if I could define it. From my standpoint it was all wrong. That's government land and we ought to have the right to control it the way we think it should be controlled. To turn it over to somebody else, I couldn't go along with that.

ERM: But were efforts made and did grazers come forth in your presence and say, "Damn it all, you ought not to be telling us what not to do. We ought to be doing what we want to do."?

RME: I can't remember a time when that happened, except with Stanfield. Of course, all of them fussed some. Sometimes they'd come into the office and would sit down and fuss a little bit because they couldn't have this piece up here attached to their tract of land that they were going to graze on, or their permit was cut or something or other. But it was usually due to something specific.

ERM: How well organized were they as a group to act in concert?

RME: In my experience, I can't remember that they were organized at all. Well, they did have all kinds of cattlemen's associations. There were more than twenty organizations on my forest over there on the Whitman.



Evans was supervisor of the Whitman National Forest in Oregon from 1916 until 1922. Oftentimes in the winter the forest headquarters at Sumpter would be snowed in and it would take several days for the narrow-gauge railroad to get through from Baker.

ERM: These were organizations the grazers had formed to accomplish their ends, were they not?

RME: I suppose so, yes.

ERM: How did they work through these organizations?

RME: Well, whatever they did, they didn't do it through me.

Mrs. Evans: They didn't put any pressure on you?

RME: No, they didn't.

ERM: Did they put pressure elsewhere?

RME: It's possible that they did, yes.

ERM: But weren't you aware that they were putting it elsewhere, such as on their congressmen and senators?

RME: Well, they never said anything to me.

ERM: You don't think they did then?

RME: I can't say that they didn't, but that didn't make an impression on me.

ERM: And you never felt any pressure at any time from your superiors or from congressmen or senators or chambers of commerce or any quarter in the community that tried to get you to do what they wanted you to do?

RME: No, I can't say that I did.

Mrs. Evans: You see, he left in 1922. When did you go to Washington?

RME: 1922.

Mrs. Evans: I understand that a lot of pressure came in the twenties and Bob was gone by that time.

RME: It could have been later, you see. That was pretty early.

ERM: I see. What was the impact in your area of the coming of World War I?

RME: There was an impact on our organization. Of course, the men that they wanted to stay were asked to do so. When I say they, I mean superiors in the Forest Service, and I was one of them. I was supervisor of Whitman then. They asked me very specifically to please stay there, but some of my crew resigned. A few of them resigned and went into the service--not many, but a few. That happened all over the region; a few resigned and went into the service. Then in order to save the organization money, they combined forests under one man. I happened to be one of the supervisors, and they added to the Whitman, the Malheur, the Wallowa, and the Wenaha. I don't know whether there was another one or not, I can't remember now. And I was to be the man in charge of that group of forests.

ERM: In other words, you were no longer supervisor just of the Whitman, but supervisor of all of them?

RME: Of that group, yes.

ERM: How many other men were working under you?

RME: I can't remember, but all the positions were filled.

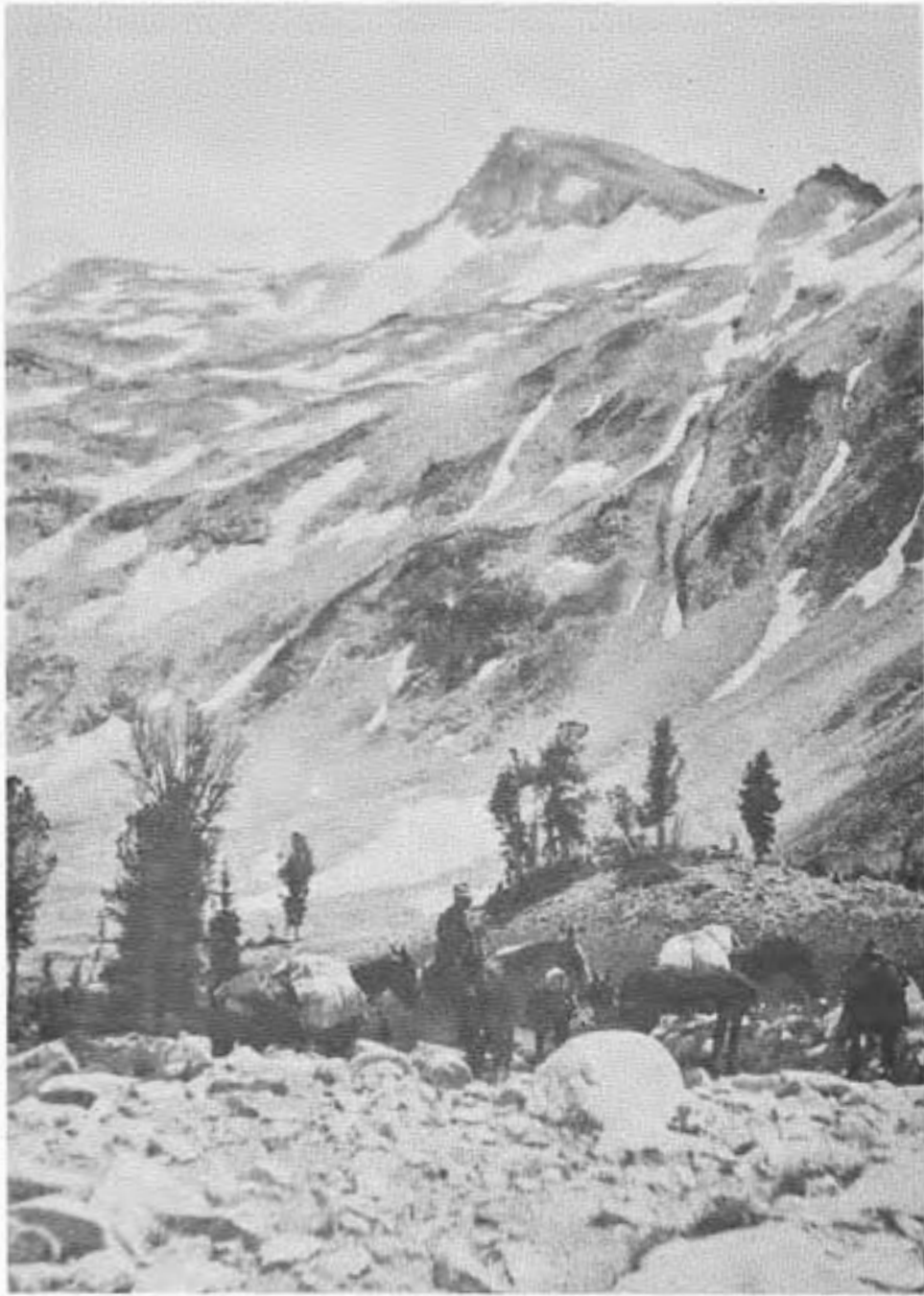
ERM: In other words, many of the positions that were left by people going into the service were not filled.

RME: Some of them were not, no. So I still held my residence on the Whitman and we were then in Baker. Any business that had to do with the Whitman, I couldn't write a letter about. Somebody else had to write it. If there was such a letter to be signed, I would sign it as somebody else. I've forgotten what my real title was then after I got that group. So while I ran the Whitman, I couldn't sign anything that said I did. That was true of the rest of the forests too. I was in charge of the group of forests, while someone else, under me, supervised the Whitman.

ERM: Did the forestry crusade seem to stop during those war years?

RME: We didn't progress very fast, no, but grazing went along just the same. And the timber sales went along too. But few new things

were started, except for grazing studies which began about that time. That's when Dutton got into it. He was a ranger, but when he had gone to Corvallis to take a course in forestry, he spent a lot of time with the grazing work. So when grazing studies developed on the forests, he was placed in charge of such studies on the Whitman. He made a lot of studies of the ranges which we thought were deteriorating. And they were; they were overgrazed. We had too much stock on them.



Evans with the outfit at Eagle Cap.