

THE PIONEER TRAIL RIDERS

First Trip of the "Trail Riders of the National Forests" Great Success

Photographs by B. L. Brown

LATE in the afternoon of July 17 a young man strode into a telegraph office at Missoula, Montana. His face was bronzed by the sun and his eyes sparkled. About him was a contagious enthusiasm that fairly bubbled, like a man who had sought the fountain of youth and found it.

A busy clerk attended him, looked hungrily out of a window to where the contour of the mountains jig-sawed the horizon, and pushed the message over to the operator. "Lucky devils!" he muttered enviously.

In a few minutes the operator's instrument was clicking the message to The American Forestry Association in Washington, D. C. It read: "Entire party of Trail Riders Trip Number One has returned to Missoula safe, sound and happy. Trip was complete success and through country we never dreamed existed. We are indebted to The American Forestry Association for the privilege of being included." It was signed "The Pioneer Trail Riders of the National Forests."

This telegram, more than anything else, sounds the sentiment of the group of twenty-two men and women who on July 11 rode into the great South Fork Wilderness of the Flathead National Forest, in Montana, on the pioneer trip of the Trail Riders of the National Forest. It came after six

days of wonderment, of marvel, in an untamed wilderness where mountains lose their peaks in the clouds, where canyons sink out of sight, where virgin forests unfold as the sea, where wild life is seen in its unspoiled beauty. It came after a rendezvous with a nature unchanged for centuries.

Sponsored by The American Forestry Association, with the cooperation of the United States Forest Service and the Northern Pacific Railway, the Trail Riders of the National Forests, in six unforgettable days, fulfilled, in this pioneer group, an inherent urge for adventure and for physical exploration, a desire for mental repose and for spiritual adjustment. And for the few remaining primitive areas in America new friends have been won, new and vigorous support has been assured.

"Everyone benefited immensely from this outing," writes Miss Mary Ruffner, of Denver, one of the pioneer riders, "both in spirit and body, and when I remember the ruddy and healthful appearance of us all as we regretfully said goodbye, I really fervently hope that these trips may be indefinitely extended to many other people who have forgotten or who have never known the invigorating charm of the wilderness.



The "Pioneers" themselves!—personnel of the Association's Trail Rider Trip Number 1. Seated on ground — Dr. Walter G. Becker, Miss Grace Jones, Miss Mary Ruffner, Harold Murphy, wrangler, Ray Hamblet, wrangler, C. E. McNally, Boss Packer, Jalmer Wirkhala, Alternate Ranger. Seated—Miss Alice Pierce, Miss Margaret Jones, Miss Marian Simmons, W. M. Alderton, Fred E. Hornaday. Standing—Miss Loretta Bothe, M. L. Thomson, Miss Angela Janszen, Miss Harriet Pierce, R. P. Hutchinson, R. F. Hammatt, Pat McNally, Assistant Guide, Joe Murphy, Guide, A. E. Clancy, Assistant Cook, M. B. Goodman, wrangler, W. J. Beegen, Cook. Seated on roof—Edward Winsor, C. D. Sousley, District Ranger, Miss Carmen Haider, A. H. Hutchinson, Miss Virginia Barney, W. M. Tracy and Miss Nancy Page.

THE "PIONEER PICTURED



Second day. The entire party pausing at a snow bank on the top of Fool-hen Mountain, 8,600 feet above sea level, to enjoy the mountain scenery.

Fourth day. A group of Trail Riders enjoying the camp fire at the fourth night's camp grounds, located near the guide's cabins on Holbrook Creek.



Sixth day. Trail Riders pausing to refresh the horses before starting the ascent to Gordon Peak in the distance.



Miss Grace Jones of Moorestown, New Jersey. One of the pioneer Trail Riders, eager to get away at the start of the third day.

TRAIL RIDERS" EN ROUTE

Miss Mary Ruffner, Denver, Colorado, enjoying the trout fishing available in the numerous mountain streams passed en route.



Fourth day. Arriving at the guide's cabins on Holbrook Creek, the Trail Riders dismount and await the cook's call for supper.

Miss Marian Simmons, Albion, Nebraska, arriving at camp and prepared to set up her bunk for the night's lodging.



Second day. The party in single file crossing the snow banks on the way to the summit of Foolhen Mountain for a visit to Foolhen Lookout.

"It becomes increasingly apparent to me how much was done for us in every way, how skillfully the trip was planned and conducted and how small the cost was in comparison to other similar trips."

Another pioneer rider, Miss Angela C. Janszen, of Cincinnati, writes that "The trip was a glorious experience of which I have dreamed for years. It surpassed my expectations. I hope next year my footsteps will again point to Montana and its wonderful forests."

From Maurice Thomson, of Minneapolis, comes an enthusiastic letter. "I shall never forget cantering along through the aisles of those primeval forests," he writes, "lying at night in my sleeping bag and gazing up at the star-studded canopy of heaven, breathing in the fragrance of balsam, spruce and fir, while a babbling mountain stream lulled me into forgetfulness."

"Then those exciting moments fighting with the magnificent speckled beauties that frequent the streams and lakes of that country. Or after a hard day in the saddle to plunge into the cool, sparkling and soothing waters, and come out feeling like a king."

"It is impossible for me to express in a few words the debt of gratitude I feel to you for introducing me to this marvelous opportunity. I just hope many others can share the experiences I have enjoyed and will treasure even more in the years to come."

A. H. Hutchinson, of Chicago, "enjoyed the trip immensely and you can be sure I have talked it up and will continue to do so. I'll be there again next year."

And so will Miss Virginia Barney, of Denver. "The subject of the trip has fascinated many of my friends," she writes, "and I have found a great deal of pleasure in going over it with them. In all probability there will be a number of us from Denver to join you next year."

The same sentiment has been expressed in letters from other members of the pioneer group, but space will not permit their reproduction. They will, however, to properly interpret this sentiment, meet again on the wilderness trail.

The interesting "logs" of Fred E. Hornaday, who represented The American Forestry Association on the trip, and Maurice Thomson, of Minneapolis, reveal some of the joys the pioneer riders found in this land "back of beyond."

"After leaving Missoula," Mr. Thomson noted, "We followed the Clark Fork, the headwaters of the Columbia River. On both sides of the road rose high rolling

mountains, clothed with pine and spruce. Then through Hell-Gate Canyon and along the Blackfoot River, with its narrow canyons. Then Monture Ranger Station, where civilization was left behind."

Here the party had first sight of "the fifty-five horses and mules which were to make up our party," Mr. Hornaday recorded, and also "Joe Murphy, our guide and packer, his son, and Bill and Whitey, the cooks, and three wranglers."

Then "boots and saddles" and the wilderness trail! Up Monture Creek to Burned Cabin, the first campfire, and a good sleep. For on the morrow the trail would lead to Foolhen Lookout, 8,600 feet above the sea.

At eight o'clock the party was on the trail, climbing up,

ever up. "Much of the climb was through huge snow drifts," Mr. Hornaday recorded. "This was quite a sensation for most of the party and it was an interesting sight to see mountain wild flowers peeping up through the snow. From the lookout we obtained a magnificent view of the Continental Divide and of the peaks that make up Glacier National Park."

That night they camped near the Danaher Ranger Station, having covered a distance of eighteen miles. But during the day, according to Mr. Thomson, "we saw a number of elk" and around the campfire there "were stories of grizzlies." Though tired, "every one is revelling in this wild beauty and outdoor life."

On the morning of July 13, while the whole country was sweltering in blistering heat, Mr. Hornaday wrote in his log: "This morning our

sleeping bags were covered with a sheet of frost." Mr. Thomson did not notice the cold, although "Bill Tracy's bathing suit, which had been left in a tree to dry, was so stiff that he could hold it straight out." He did, however, become fascinated by the early morning sun. "It is interesting to watch the sun rise in the mountains," he noted. "At five-thirty I could see it on Foolhen Peak. Next time I looked it was half way down the mountain. Then suddenly it seemed to flood the whole valley."

On to Big Prairie through meadows of lupine, blue flax and daisies. And that night "we sat around the campfire and sang to the accompaniment of a banjo which one of the rangers had with him." The Big Prairie Ranger Station fascinated the group, especially the large landing field for airplanes. It is to this station that all provisions and equipment are flown in to the rangers (*Continuing on page 424*)



PIONEER TRAIL RIDERS OF THE NATIONAL FORESTS, JULY 11-17, 1933

William Alderton, Chicago, Illinois
 Mrs. William Alderton, Chicago, Illinois
 Miss Virginia Barney, Denver, Colorado
 Dr. Walter G. Becker, Baltimore, Maryland
 Miss Loretta Bothe, Cincinnati, Ohio
 B. L. Brown, St. Paul, Minnesota
 Miss Carmen Haider, New York City
 R. F. Hammatt, Missoula, Montana
 Fred E. Hornaday, Washington, D. C.
 A. H. Hutchinson, Chicago, Illinois
 Dick Hutchinson, Chicago, Illinois
 Miss Angela Janszen, Cincinnati, Ohio
 Miss Grace Jones, Moorestown, New Jersey
 Miss Margaret Jones, Moorestown, New Jersey
 Miss Nancy Page, Moorestown, New Jersey
 Miss Alice Pierce, New York City
 Miss Harriet Pierce, New York City
 Miss Mary Ruffner, Denver, Colorado
 Miss Marian Simmons, Albion, Nebraska
 Maurice Thomson, Minneapolis, Minnesota
 Bill Tracy, Ithaca, New York
 Edward Winsor, Oakland, California

THE PIONEER TRAIL RIDERS

(Continued from page 404)

and their protection force.

Then came a day of rest. Mr. Thomson with a number of others followed the fishing stream. "Decided to try a grasshopper on a small trout spinner," he put down. "Dropped it close into the water and it was only a second before I saw a big fellow come up out of the shadows and pick him off. I fed him four more, all nice fat hoppers, before I hooked him. He gave me a battle royal for five minutes and then Bert Brown came along and tried to help me take him in. I brought him in close, but no sooner had Bert touched him than 'swish'—he was gone."

On around Big Salmon Lake, five miles long, and fishing good. Five Dolly Varden trout of exceptional size were caught. Many of the party followed a favorite sport of swimming. All were on hand for a dinner of "trout, potatoes, tomatoes, beans, bread and butter, strawberry jam, apricots and coffee. A wilderness camp was made on Tango Creek."

And then the greatest climb of the entire trip—"up to 10,000 feet elevation over Holland Peak and through Gordon Pass," Mr. Hornaday pictures, "out to the most spectacular view of the entire trip—a sheer drop down the mountain side with a marvelous view of Holland and Lindbergh Lakes."

Then the end of the trail—back to civilization. But not before a night at Captain Laird's Lodge, one of the most picturesque ranches in the Northwest.

And as the pioneer trip of the Trail Riders of the National Forests becomes history, as the story of fascinating days and nights on the wilderness trail is being recited by those who lived them, another party of Trail Riders is venturing deep into the romantic Sun River Wilderness of the Lewis and Clark National Forest. The riders left Helena, Montana, on August 16.