

waters of the Rio Grande and crossed over a pass at an elevation of over twelve thousand feet in late December. Here they were caught by a new storm which drove them back over the pass after losing all of their one hundred mules, their food and supplies. Fremont attempted this crossing against the advice of the scouts who knew the country. At Bent's Fort, he secured the services of "Bill" Williams who was supposed to know the San Luis Valley which Fremont had to cross before reaching the Continental Divide. In his account he tells of reaching the summit of Mosca Pass where he overlooked the Valley saw in the distance the low pass in the mountains. The guide Williams and some of the party were in advance and when Fremont saw them taking a course which led to the left, he overtook them and then ensued a two hour argument as to the proper direction. Fremont acceded to Williams evidently feeling confident of his knowledge of the country. The pass to which Fremont refers as being visible from Mosca Pass was in all probability Cochetopa Pass of which he had doubtless heard from some of the early scouts and traders. It must be borne in mind that as one ascends the Rio Grande, the height of the mountains ahead is never visible until one reaches the region of the reservoir only eighteen miles from the very top. The Fremont party was encamped high up in the mountains while they awaited relief for which Fremont sent four of his men to Taos, New Mexico. After sixteen days of bitter suffering, Fremont decided to go himself with three more of his men. They found the camp of the first four, with

During summer daily showers drench the mountains; thunder heads gathering quickly, shedding their moisture, and as quickly dispersing, as the sun filters through with the passing motion of the clouds. Great forests of Engleman Spruce and Douglas Fir cover the mountains at this elevation, with thick, low undergrowth of ground juniper and buck brush. In the course of six or eight miles from the very top, the brook ^{becomes} has grown to a larger stream ^{and} as it winds its way around folds of mountains in its quick descent.

~~Beneath the surface of these mountains~~ much mineral wealth has been found. ^{with in this mountain} Since several regions have been mined for gold, silver and other metals. The mining town of Silverton lies just eight miles below the top of Stony Pass on the western slope of the mountains. Whether the fifteenth and sixteenth century Spaniards did reach this region of the upper Rio Grande ^{is not certainly known} does not seem to be known for certainty, ^{but} It is quite possible that they did as there are traces of Spanish mining operations not too distant. Tales of buried Spanish Gold and lost claims still abound among the early residents of this country.

Unless some unknown trapper came before, Colonel John Charles Fremont was the first of our civilization to reach this mountain wilderness. He and his ill fated party of twenty two men in their search for a new pass to the Pacific Coast, were mis-guided into following the Rio Grande to its source. This was in the very severe winter of 1848-49. According to Colonel Fremont's own account of this, his fourth ^{expedition} expedition, he reached the head-

the leader dead and the others starving. He made his way to Taos and sent a relief party to bring back the remainder of his expedition. In the meantime they had scattered in a desperate effort to find food and shelter. In all eight of his men were lost. It is certain that they encountered a year of extremely deep snow, for had it been a winter such as that of 1945-46, a year of extreme drought, they could have made the crossing easily.

THE UPLAND VALLEY

As the river drops out of the high country, its valley widens, and as the country levels somewhat, it broadens its bed, flowing less swiftly, winding its way through spreading meadows of luxuriant natural hay. Here we come to the first ranches, whose owners live in or near these meadows where they have abundant food for their live stock. A good road follows the river nearly all the way to the great basin at the source. This road, built in 1872 by Otto Meers (check date & spelling) was at that time a toll road leading over the Pass to the mining town of Silverton on the western slope of mountains. Shortly after the discovery of gold in the San Juan Mountains, it was found that the most expeditious way to reach Silverton with great wagon trains of supplies and machinery was from Pueblo, Colorado, through the San Luis Valley and over Stony Pass, a long and arduous route. There were many stations along the way for the teamsters. The remnant of one such station is the front part of this ranch house which faces the road about the middle of the Upland Valley. This valley extends some twenty five miles above Creede, a mining town which sprang to life in 1890 when gold was discovered up the steep canyon close by. Though Creede was one of the latest discoveries in the state, in those days it was one of the roughest of the gold camps. The mines are located on the high walls of a very steep canyon where the grade makes it necessary to bring the ore down to the mill at Creede in overhead cable cars. There are several famous mines at Creede, some of them are still still working.

Some eight miles farther down the river is a handsome rock formation called Wagon Wheel Gap, a region where the trout fishing is renowned, and where the followers of Isaac Walton gather year after year. Before long this may be the dam site for a large new reservoir to hold still more of the spring run off water from the slopes of the Rio Grande drainage.

Where the sun flashed from the first running water
and the high meadows are a mass of wild flowers.



Through the short summer months, the backbone of the Continental Divide is covered with rich grass, and here, High above timber line the lonely sheep hereder pitches his tent, while his sheep grow fat on the pasturage of the slopes and little meadows.

Emerging from this winding canyon, the river reaches its first real meadow where rising above the immediate hills two handsome peaks may be seen, the Rio Grande Pyramids. Here now, is the upper end of the first large reservoir built to catch and hold the first spring run off of melting snow. By damming the narrow valley, a lake six miles long, containing over a million acre feet of water has been created. Late in summer, when the natural flow ~~is running low~~ is running low water is released in measured quantity and allowed to flow down the river to designated points in the San Luis Valley some eighty miles below where it is diverted from the river bed in large ditches and used to irrigate the Valley's fertile farms. Below the reservoir for many miles, the river winds through landscape of unsurpassed beauty. The valley widens, and at an elevation of eighty five hundred feet, are broad meadows of fine natural hay. Here are the first ranches where people live the year round. They all raise cattle which are pastured in the high country during the summer and are fed during the winter from the bountiful yield from these fine hay meadows. Here two, less than forty miles from the source, the first irrigation ditch diverts water from the river to these hay meadows. From this point throughout the entire course of the river, a distance of nearly eighteen hundred miles, the water of the Rio Grande is constantly turned upon the land. Only one other river in the world is used so completely for irrigation- that river, the Ganges of India. Small wonder that people are disappointed in the size of this river, for it is hard to realize the ^{quantity} amount of water ^{diverted} taken from the Rio Grande.

THE SOURCE

The source of the Rio Grande lies high in the rugged mountains of Colorado on the eastern slope of the Continental Divide. At the very top of Stony Pass the flow from a group of springs and the trickle from perpetual snow banks unite to form the first small brook, the Rio Grande. The great crescent shaped basin in the San Juan Mountains, which forms the first drainage area of the river, is flanked by some of Colorado's most magnificent peaks, many of them soaring over fourteen thousand feet into the clear blue sky of the high country. In winter the snow lies deep on this extensive watershed- eight to ten feet in normal years- and in spring the quick run off of the winter's gathered supply sheds a rushing torrent down the mountains. Through the summer rich, succulent grasses carpet the high backbone of the Rockies, and the slopes and meadows are covered with masses of ⁱⁿAlpine ^{usually colored} ~~wild~~ flowers of all shades and hues, and nature's own rock gardens border the little brooks.

In summer an occasional ^eshep herder, miles from his nearest companion, pitches his lonely tent while he watches his flocks grow fat on the nutritious grasses that grow above timber line. Here too, are the summer grazing pastures of mountain sheep, elk, and deer.

Timberline is not imaginary;- it is clearly visible when one looks down upon that twelve thousand foot elevation. Some irregularities may be seen caused by protected areas where the winter wind is not quite so sharp nor the air quite so cold.

By the time the river reaches the timbered region it has already grown to a brook of size rushing down the steep slopes, with the happy sound audible for long distances in the thin, quiet, air. During summer daily showers drench the mountains, thunderheads gathering quickly, shedding their moisture and as quickly dispersing, as the sun filters through with the passing motion of the clouds. Great forests of Engleman Spruce and Douglas Fir cover the mountains at this elevation, with thick, low undergrowth of ground juniper and buck brush. Soon the quaking aspens appear, those lovely white trunked, shimmering trees which are such a beautiful contrast to their sedate evergreen companions. In the course of a dozen miles from the very top, the brook has grown to a ^{large} stream as it winds its way around folds of mountains in its quick descent. Small canyons appear where hard granite has been more difficult to wear away by the constant movement of the water, and the slopes are more firmly held by the forest as it grows thicker and more dense. The greater part of the high country is a part of our National Forest Reserve and is under the wise supervision of the United States Forest Service through its local rangers. The Service directs the cutting of timber and allocates the grazing permits for cattle and sheep on the summer ranges.

Designated numbers of both cattle and sheep are permitted to pasture in the high mountain areas, the sheep usually in areas above timber line while the cattle seek a lower altitude where they secure protection from the timber.

(The high country cow boys and sheep herders must be mountaineers

about
this?

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as well, knowing the country as scholars do their books. They have acute knowledge of all that pertains to the out-of-doors; are skilled woodsmen as well as masters of their live stock.

Beneath the surface of these mountains much mineral wealth has been found. There are known and worked mining regions for gold, silver and other metals. The mining town of Silverton lies just eight miles below the top of Stony Pass on the western slope of the mountains. Much mining activity has gone on in ^{the past since} ~~days~~ ^(years) gone by, and there are still tales of buried Spanish gold, and lost claims. Whether the sixteenth or seventeenth century Spaniards did reach this region of the upper Rio Grande does not seem to be known for certainty. It is quite possible that they did as their zeal for exploration and their lust for gold were great indeed and there are traces of Spanish mining operations not too distant.

Unless some unknown trapper came before, Colonel Fremont was the first of our civilization to reach this mountain wilderness. He and his ill fated party of twenty two men in a search for a pass to the Pacific coast were mis-guided into following the Rio Grande to its source, and in the middle of an extremely severe winter. In his own account of this, his fourth expedition, he speaks of reaching the headwaters of the river and crossing over a pass at an elevation of over twelve thousand feet. Here they were caught in a new storm which drove them back in desperation after losing all their mules, food and supplies. It seems probable that Fremont had heard of Cochetopa Pass from the

scouts and traders whom he knew. ~~and~~ His account tells of his hiring "Bill" Williams who was supposed to know the all the country of the San Luis valley. ^{Fremont tells} Of crossing Mosca Pass into the Valley where he could see in the distance the low pass in the mountains, and of a two hour argument with his guide who wished to "turn to the left"; and of his final consent to follow Williams in whom he evidently felt confidence. This attempt to cross in dead of winter, one of the highest passes, met with disaster, with the final result of the death of eight of his men. There seems to be some disagreement as to the location of Fremont's camp, where he waited for 16 days for relief to be brought by four ^{whom he} his men sent back for help. On the 16th day he and three more set ^{to follow the path} out for help, and after their departure the remaining men ^{in a frantic effort to find shelter} finally scattered. It seems possible that because some remains have been found at several different points that confusion over the exact location has arisen. Fremont himself finally reached Taos, New Mexico where he sent aid back to the survivors of his expedition. It is certain that he encountered a year of extremely deep snow, for had ^{a year of extreme drought,} it been a winter such as that of 1945-46, he could have made the crossing easily.

The river ruffles the mountains' feet at the far side
of the Upland Meadows.

Comma^{daa}
The ~~agmothy~~ mine high on the canyon wall.

pletion of his appointed rounds", these couriers of another sort who are the guardians of our great natural resources.

The butt end of the forester's axe, bears the U.S. seal for stamping logs.

RIN

nutritious grasses that grow in the open glades and grassy slopes of these great mountains. The sheep are always accompanied by a herder, who lives with his charges, protecting them from predatory animals and moving them to new areas before they exhaust the close cropped grass. In September he drives them down out of the high country to be shipped to market or wintered on the ranches in the valley below. Later in the fall, the cowboys go through a similar procedure with the cattle from the summer ranges.

Among the ^{four} Ranger's other duties are a service for the sports loving American Public. In collaboration with the State Fish and Game Department, which raises trout by the millions, he plants them in the smaller tributaries as well as in the river itself. He watches and counts the big big game, doing much of this by airplane when the elk and deer gather in the winter in the open high valleys in search of food. It is through his tally that the length and area of the big game hunting season is determined and because of his careful vigilance, the upper Rio Grande is one of the most enjoyed regions by fisherman and hunter alike. One might truly apply the famous quotation from the New York City Post Office, "Nor rain, nor sleet, nor threat of storm, can keep these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds", these couriers of another sort who are the guardians of our great natural resources.

Most of this high country, which ^{is} ~~is~~ the source of our river, is in the Rio Grande National Forest. There are magnificent areas of Engleman Spruce and Douglas Fir, all under the control and wise jurisdiction of the United States Forest Service. Through the constant vigilance^a of the Rangers, every thing possible is done to protect the great timber areas, our valuable natural resources, which help to hold and preserve the river's water. The activities of the Forest Ranger are many. He supervises the cutting of timber from indicated areas, where he marks with the U.S. Seal of approval, trees of the age of 150 to 200 years, and it is only three times during the course of 125 years that a given area is worked over. The ranger visits the lumber camp after the ~~tree~~ ^cress have been cut, to scale the logs (measure them) record them, and examine them for their soundness and quality.

The Forest Service also allots the grazing permits for both cattle and sheep, and the Ranger watches to see that the stock does not over graze the natural ranges which, were they not protected, would commence that devastating, depleting act of nature, soil erosion. The ranger goes on pack trips to the timberline area several times during the short summer season to check the sheep herders and to keep track of all the stock in his area. To save many long miles on horseback, he now uses the modern method of transporting his horses by trailer to the nearest point of access to his allotted route. The cattle scatter during the summer months, ranging in small groups, peacefully waxing fat on the rich