

MOUNTAINS IN EVERY DIRECTION: A PLACE-BASED
HISTORY OF THE SELWAY-BITTERROOT
WILDERNESS AREA

by
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"Mountains in Every Direction: A Place-Based History of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area," a thesis prepared by Teresa Sabol Spezio in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Science degree in the Environmental Studies Program. This thesis has been approved and accepted by:



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In 1964, the Wilderness Act was passed into law, creating a legal definition of wilderness. Wilderness is a key aspect of the American perception of land. Historians and critics of the wilderness idea in the United States typically use Yosemite and Yellowstone Valleys as icons of wilderness. Since these places are *parks*, and are not legally designated as wilderness, problems arise if these places serve as the only examples of place in arguments about how well current understandings of wilderness represent what actually goes on socially, politically, and experientially in places of wilderness. To better grasp how current concepts of wilderness represent actual places currently designated as wildernesses, historians, activists and politicians would benefit from paying closer

attention to such places. I propose to explore the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area through the stories of the people who experienced the area. By getting back to experiences of wilderness, I suggest that reviewing the history of contact between humans and places of designated as wildernesses would provide for a better basis for understanding our current ideas of wilderness.

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*For
David McKeith, Ph.D.*

*the person who introduced me to the
ideas of wilderness*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION: THE PLACE AND IDEA OF WILDERNESS.....	1
II. THE CREATION STORY: THE TALES OF TWO CULTURES.....	14
III. THE NIMÍPU (NEZ PERCE) RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR HOMELAND.....	20
IV. EXPLORERS, FUR TRADERS AND MISSIONARIES.....	39
V. ROAD BUILDERS, MINERS, PIONEERS, AND WAR.....	63
VI. THE FOREST SERVICE AND WILDERNESS DESIGNATION.....	88
VII. CONCLUSIONS AND EPILOGUE.....	114
BIBLIOGRAPHY	119

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. The Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Area.....	2
2. The Nez Perce Homeland.....	21

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE PLACE AND IDEA OF WILDERNESS

In autumn 1964, Lyndon Johnson signed the Wilderness Act into law and created a legal and political definition of wilderness for the United States. The law initially designated 9.1 million acres of national forest as wilderness. The ideas of wilderness discussed by scholars, activists, Forest Service employees, politicians, businesspeople and public citizens now had a place officially called wilderness. Among those designated, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area consisted of approximately 1.2 million acres of mountain ecosystems of conifers, rocks, big horn sheep and alpine plants, valley ecosystems of wetland plants, salmon, and more conifers, and meadow ecosystems of shrubs, grasses, deer, elk and birds (Figure 1). It included the majority of the Selway River and portions of the Lochsa River watershed. Unfortunately, very few if any grizzly bear and wolf were living in these ecosystems when the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area was designated. Trappers and hunters had aggressively hunted them over the prior 75 years.

With this legislation and much help from Wilderness Society executive secretary Howard Zahniser, Congress created a legal and static definition of

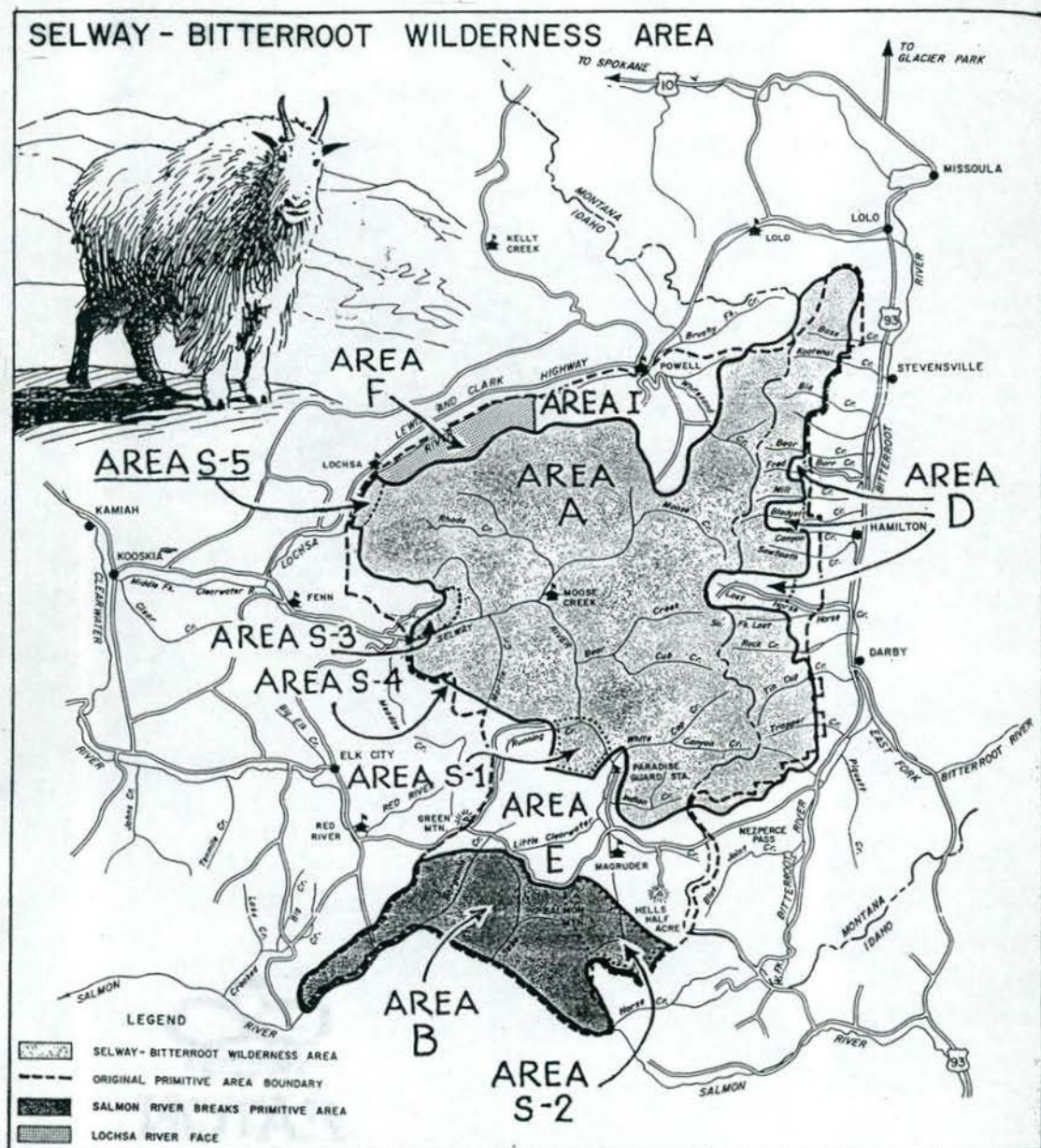


Figure 1. The Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area (Wilderness Society 32).

wilderness. The law defined it in the following manner: "A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" (US Code Sec. 2(c)).

This legal definition distilled the many varied and discordant ideas of wilderness into a single definition that tried to address the concerns and interests of a myriad of people and groups, including biologists, outdoor and sportsmen clubs, timber companies, the Forest Service, and private citizens. The debate over the definition of wilderness at times mirrored the historical development of the idea of wilderness. Thirty years earlier, biologists and other natural scientists like Aldo Leopold, who many see as the originator of the Forest Service-designated wilderness area idea, had called for wilderness areas in which they could study the interactions between non-humans and their environments in their intact ecosystems. More than ten years after his death in 1942, Leopold's legacy resonated in the natural sciences. Leopold's Wilderness Society, Muir's Sierra Club and other outdoor groups expressed their support for the Wilderness Act using language of sublime beauty and preservation of pristine areas.

The desire to find picturesque or sublime beauty in wilderness sprung from the nineteenth century concern among elite city dwellers about the built, overcrowded, and polluted conditions throughout an increasingly urban United States. This artificiality and the decline of wild places forced city dwellers to look

outside the city - to the wilderness - for spiritual renewal. Preservation of wilderness found powerful advocates among social reformers as well as rich urban people seeking sanctuary from their everyday lives. The call to preserve such areas from private commercial development began in the late 1800s with the designation of Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks and Adirondack Park. Sportsmen clubs expounded on the wonders of the big game animals such as elk, mountain goat, and cougar as well as the fish to be found in wilderness' meadows, lakes, and streams. These clubs inherited the spirit of Teddy Roosevelt's Boone and Crockett Club manifested in the desire to hunt animals to prove their masculinity and vitality as Americans.

In the 1960s, the Forest Service and timber companies fought the Wilderness Act because they thought they would lose control of these areas, which had previously been under their management. The Forest Service's argument was a continuation of Gifford Pinchot's conservation position of the early 1900s, which held that the National Forests must be managed by forest scientists for a continuous supply of timber with grazing and mining as secondary uses. As late as the 1960s, recreation and preservation remained a distant fourth and fifth in the minds and actions of the 1960's Forest Service.

At a more popular level, notions of wilderness in the United States still reflected the ambiguous relations Americans had with wild places since the colonial period. Seventeenth-century Puritan settlers perceived the forests of the New England as a place of evil where wild beasts and wild men lived. The

physical presence of these forests threatened their survival, and they sought to subdue them and make them into gardens. Over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Americans subdues their forests with a vengeance. With the advent of Romanticism and reactions toward the effects of expansion and development, new attitudes began to emerge. Some Americans found spiritual renewal in the forest wilderness. Muir, following William Cullen Bryant, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others, spoke of these places as cathedrals and many saw the hand of god in the beauty of creation.

These many conceptions of wilderness create an ambiguous and abstract notion of wilderness. While leading a discussion about wilderness at my husband's church in Eugene, Oregon, I asked everyone to close their eyes and describe what they imagined when they thought of wilderness. No one proved shy about expressing his/her idea of wilderness. Some people described particular places, others spoke generally about forests or deserts, while others expressed feelings of peace or solitude. One person described the built environment of the city. In this room of Presbyterians, which included college professors, graduate students, business people and retired people, no one definition of wilderness could be established, although everyone finally agreed that The Three Sisters Wilderness Area less than two hours from Eugene qualified as a wilderness. The Wilderness Act's definition did correspond roughly to our popular understanding of wilderness.

Like the Presbyterians in that Sunday school class, scholars have traced these changing and varied ideas focusing on specific places that they believe represent the idea of wilderness in the United States. Significantly, in their larger discussions of the concept scholars, unlike these Presbyterians, often choose to focus primarily on histories of places that were not included under the Wilderness Act of 1964, and which fail to meet at least the legal definition of wilderness enshrined in that document. Instead they frequently discuss *parks* not officially designated as wilderness, such as Yosemite and Yellowstone Valleys and the Grand Canyon as well as eastern parks in the Catskill and Adirondack Mountains, to represent American's historical idea of wilderness.¹ Focusing on these areas is important to understanding how ideas of wilderness in the United States developed historically. But problems arise if these places serve as the only historical examples in arguments about how well current understandings of wilderness represent what actually goes on - socially, politically, experientially - in areas designated as wilderness. Recall that the current legal view restricts wilderness to places where humans are visitors only, making no long-term habitations. In fact, Yosemite Valley, one of the prime examples, has been inhabited by humans for millennia. Native Americans used it for villages and many hunting and gathering activities. Later, when the area was discovered by

¹ Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind* and William Cronon's, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" are two books that trace the historical idea of wilderness in the United States and use Yosemite and Yellowstone Valleys as examples. As noted, my class also used Yosemite Valley as an example.

white men, humans used it to graze sheep and farm. Now humans use the same area to camp, play golf, and rent movies. Mark Spence in Dispossessing the Wilderness, shows how Yosemite Valley, Yellowstone Valley, and the most visited areas of Glacier Park were favored by Native Americans for their abundant hunting and gathering grounds. Spence's history illustrates one of the many "troubles" with the idea of wilderness. These places, though beautiful, in fact challenge the idea of wilderness. Not only do they not meet the legal definition of wilderness, these places lack some of the other ideas elucidated in the wilderness debate.

Yosemite Valley, for example, achieved fame, not as a "wilderness," but as a place of extraordinary beauty and peculiar geology and plant life, particularly as a home to the giant redwood. Muir did not discourage people from coming to the Valley. He led Sierra Club trips to explore the Valley and wrote many articles extolling its beauty and its virtues. White Americans generally appreciated the place and made it a State Park and then a National Park. Just like Yellowstone Valley, these park areas were developed so people could *visit* them and see the great mountains, waterfalls, and geysers. Yosemite and Yellowstone Valleys were made parks to preserve them for the public and prevent private companies from limiting access. When the Forest Service first proposed primitive areas, later to become wilderness areas, Yosemite and Yellowstone Valleys were not included since they were managed by the Park Service whose primary mission was to encourage visits to these places. For the same reason that development

and number of visitors precluded Yosemite and Yellowstone Valleys from being included in the debate regarding designated wilderness areas in the 1960s, they do not serve scholars well in current debates over the meaning of wilderness. These beautiful valleys are rightly considered icons of wilderness for their sublime beauty, but they are not wildernesses.²

If the discussions of wilderness are dominated by places that do not meet the clearest criteria for wildernesses, then our understanding of the idea of wilderness will be hampered and stunted. As illustrated in the voices of the people involved with the implementation of Wilderness Act, American's ideas of wilderness are diverse and abundant.³ As William Cronon asserts if the idealized view of Yosemite Valley does not include people, Americans need to empty Yosemite Valley of all the people, cars, roads and buildings in the valley. To many this would not be a bad idea, but to most Americans this would severely limit the number of people who can see this beautiful and American icon. Therefore, to "rethink" wilderness, one may not be able to easily redefine the idea of wilderness since the diverse ideas are entrenched in popular culture, academia and politics. But the places these disparate groups use to describe wilderness may be expanded to offer a richer and potentially less problematic idea of wilderness. Since many diverse groups were involved with the shaping of

² My thesis only addresses the idea and places of wilderness in the United States. I feel that as Americans we do not understand our own idea of wilderness so exporting it to other countries is problematic.

³ Interestingly, a few of the people in the Presbyterian Sunday school class were actively involved with the designation of The Three Sisters Wilderness Area in 1964.

the legal definition of wilderness and the creation of the subsequent Wilderness Areas, the histories of these areas have the potential to enrich the idea of wilderness.

Historians, activists and politicians need to pay more attention to those areas first designated as wildernesses in the Wilderness Act of 1964 to gain a better, more concrete understanding of both the current concept of wilderness and actual wilderness places. Unfortunately, the few available histories of these areas generally focus only on the political and legal process of their designation as wilderness. In the case of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area, the Forest Service archivist described the boundary issue documents in cubic feet. When asked about histories of the area, she stated that no inventories in the Western Region described a specific history. Americans acknowledged these wilderness areas as places of wilderness, not just as icons. Dave Foreman, along with many others, has noted in "Wilderness: From Scenery to Nature" that most of these areas were chosen because they contained monumental scenery and commercially worthless products and land and provided primitive recreation.⁴ Most histories of these wilderness areas describe how these areas were designated wilderness areas. Few histories have been written about the land prior to the original wilderness designation. These exercises, while important, are not unlike the histories of how saintly icons were painted. The viewer

⁴ Many historians and critics make this point. See Nash's Wilderness and the American Mind, J. Baird Callicott's The Great New Wilderness Debate, and Michael Frome's The Battle for the Wilderness.

understands each brush stroke of the iconographer but does not find inspiration or comfort in the icon unless the viewer knows the history of the saint. Histories of wilderness areas can perform the same function.

These areas, though "untrammeled," have a rich human and non-human history. Studying this history will help us to understand wilderness more broadly and more concretely beyond the simplistic focus on wilderness icons like Yosemite and Yellowstone Valleys. Creating a new, more specific icon of wilderness can be problematic and is beyond the scope of this thesis. I will not attempt to reconcile the ambiguous and complex idea of wilderness with the history of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. I only hope to show that the human experiential history of this designated wilderness area may provide additional insight in our struggle to understand wilderness. I will begin with the history prior to humans encountering the land. From there, I will explore the Nez Perce's interactions with the land prior to white European contact, and then examine the letters, journals and essays of people who interacted with the place later named the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area from 1805 to 1964. These people include members of Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery, British fur traders, white homesteaders, military men, government surveyors and rangers and hunters. They all interacted with and entered this place with diverse cultural constructions. As humans, we have no other option; our prior experiences make up who we are. To give the reader a better experience of this place, I will try to use the people's words as much as possible. Their stories shaped the history of

this place, and so their words should shape our understanding of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area.

The human experiences of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area are framed in terms of culture and immediate experience of the person. The way people view or perceive the utility/purpose of non-humans, the monetary value of land and its resources, the minimal requirements for basic living, and their spiritual worldview is a product of their culture. But the physical place is the same for all, and a person's basic predicament of bodily danger, hunger, thirst, immediate goal, and schedule are largely constant across cultures. Both culture and presence in the place combine to form the immediate experience. Place plays a very important part in one's experience. Across cultures, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area was not a place of long-term habitation, nor was it viewed as such. Additionally, hunger experienced in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area during the period of immense snowpack caused any person, again regardless of culture to experience fear for survival. But culture does play a role. A Nez Perce youth visiting the place for his or her *wéyekin*, a spiritual journey, can perceive hunger as an enhancement, while a miner always perceives hunger as a hindrance to finding gold.

The Nez Perce, explorers, settlers and others experienced a common place from varied cultural perspectives, which informed their experiences in the place. There are similarities and differences in these experiences. The Nez Perce consider the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area as part of their homeland,

a place of spirituality, a part of the subsistence cycle, a place to avoid during the long winter season, a barrier to the bison plains and from rival Shoshone and Blackfeet groups, and a place to be away from human contact. The white explorers who first traveled through the area experienced the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area through a different cultural lens than the Nez Perce, but their experiences in the place were not completely dissimilar. These men viewed the place as a barrier to other lands and hostile enemies and as a place away from human contact. Unlike the Nez Perce, the explorers and trappers did not consider the place a land of plenty, nor did they derive any spiritual sustenance from the experience, although among some there was some aesthetic appreciation of the place. The road builders, miners, military men, and settlers who were aware of the travels of the Corps of Discovery and their difficulties experienced the place as a barrier from easy travel and potential economic gain. Like most other travelers, they admired its beauty and were aware of the solitude granted by its geography but that was not their first impression. The Forest Service employees and modern trappers, like the Nez Perce, could experience spiritual renewal in the place, but without the reverence and tradition. They experienced moments of intense beauty and purpose away from human civilization but also at times believed that the trees were crops for house building and fuel. Unlike other travelers, the Forest Service employees thought they could manage the fires and insect infestations that raged through the area.

With some examination of the experiences described above, one can draw out the elements in the idea of wilderness as embodied in the people and cultures of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. Across cultures certain key elements of the American idea of wilderness resonate from people's experiences. These include the experience of observing the sublime beauty of the snow-capped mountains, the danger hidden in the rugged terrain, a place apart from civilization, a place of spiritual renewal and discovery, a place of misery and frustration, and the desire to protect the area from human interference. Not least among these, the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area, as enshrined in the Wilderness Act of 1964, is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is visitor who does not remain. I invite the reader to come with me as we follow the stories of the people who experienced this wilderness.

CHAPTER II

THE CREATION STORY: THE TALES OF TWO CULTURES

Coyote was building a fish-ladder by tearing down the waterfall at Celilo, so that salmon could go upstream for the people to catch. He was busily engaged at this when someone shouted to him, "Why are you bothering with that? All the people are gone; the Monster has done them in." "Well," said Coyote to himself "then I'll stop doing this, because I was doing it for the people, and now I'll go along too."

From there he went upstream, by the way of the Salmon River country. Going along he stepped on the leg of a meadowlark and broke it. The meadowlark in a temper shouted, "*Limá, limá, limá*. What chance do you have of finding the people the way you are going along!" Coyote then asked, "My aunt! Please tell me about it. Afterward I will make you a leg of brushwood." So the meadowlark told him, "All the people have already been swallowed by the Monster." Coyote then replied, "Yes, that is where I, too, am going." From there he traveled on. Along the way he took a good bath, saying to himself, "Lest I make myself repulsive to his taste," and then he dressed himself all up: "Lest he will vomit me up or spit me out." Then he tied himself with ropes to three mountains. From there he came along up and over ridges. Suddenly, behold he saw a great head. He quickly hid himself in the grass and gazed at it. Never before in his life had he seen anything like it; never such a large thing – away off somewhere melting into the horizon was its gigantic body. (Phinney, 26-27)

In the middle to late Cretaceous, the Idaho batholith began to be formed in what is now known as east central Idaho specifically the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area (Greenwood 1). The batholith solidified at a depth of several

miles underground, and the pressure from the solidification process caused the rocks to be uplifted in some cases over 20,000 feet above sea level. The batholith area encompassed over 12,000 square miles that stretched 240 miles long and approximately 50 miles wide. This first batholith uplift consisted of grandiorite and related rock (Ross 10). Grandiorite consists of granite, quartz and other igneous rocks. Just prior to the Cretaceous period and the batholith uplift, the dinosaurs of south Idaho and Utah became extinct or disappeared. The rocks of the Jurassic period were covered and eroded by this batholith uplift. The forests surrounding this area consisted of dense stands of pines and other conifers. In addition, flowering plants expanded in number and species, including fern, willow and oak (Ross 46).

Now then Coyote shouted to him, "Oh Monster, we are going to inhale each other!" The big eyes of the monster roved, looking over for Coyote but did not find him because Coyote's body was painted with clay to achieve a perfect protective coloring in the grass. Coyote had on his back a pack consisting of five stone knives, some pure pitch, and a flint fire-making set. Presently Coyote shook the grass to and fro and shouted again, "Monster! we are going to inhale each other." Suddenly the monster saw the swaying grass and replied, "Oh you Coyote, you swallow me first then; you inhale first." So Coyote tried. Powerfully and noisily, he drew in his breath, but the great Monster just swayed and quivered. Then Coyote said, "Now you inhale me, for you have swallowed all the people, so swallow me too lest I become lonely." (Phinney 27)

In the late Cretaceous, the second major and the smallest of the three uplifts of the Idaho batholith occurred. It consisted of light colored to white quartz and monzonite (Ross 10). Monzonite is a coarse-grained igneous rock consisting

of patash felspar and sodium-lime felspar (Challinor 196). Felspar is the most important family of rock-forming minerals, which consisted of silicates of aluminum and variously potassium, sodium, calcium and barium (Challinor 112).

Now the Monster inhaled like a mighty wind, which carried Coyote along just like that; but as Coyote went he left along in his wake great camas roots and great service berries, saying, "How the people will find them and will be glad, for only a short time away is the coming of the human race." He almost got caught on one of the ropes, but he quickly cut it with his knife. (Phinney 27)

In the early Paleogene period, the topographic lows of the valleys in central Idaho began to form, the camas prairie near Weippe, Idaho for example. In addition, the Snake River plain began to form (Ross 80).

From there he walked along the throat of the monster's mouth. Along the way he saw bones scattered about and he thought to himself, "It is to be seen that many people have been dying." As he went along he saw some boys and he said to them, "Where is his heart? Come along and show me!" Then, as they were all going along, the bear rushed out furiously at him. "So!" Coyote said to him. "You make yourself ferocious only to me," and he kicked the bear on the nose. As they continued, the rattlesnake bristled at him in fury. "So! Only toward me you are vicious – we are nothing but dung." Then he kicked the rattlesnake on his head and flattened it out for him. Going on he met the brown bear who greeted him, "I see he (the monster) selected you for the last. So! I'd like to see you save your people [derogatory diatribe]."

Thus all along the people hailed him and stopped him. He told the boys, "Pick up some wood." Here his erstwhile friend fox hailed him from the side, "Such a dangerous fellow (the monster), what are you going to do to him?" "So!" replied Coyote. "You too hurry along and look for wood." Presently Coyote arrived at the heart and he cut off slabs of fat and threw them to the people. "Imagine you being hungry under such conditions – grease your mouths with this." And now Coyote started a fire with his flint and shortly smoke

appeared from the monster's nose, ears, eyes, and anus. (Phinney 27-28)

In the middle to late Paleogene, the third uplift of the Idaho batholith occurred. This uplift consists of pink quartz monzonite. In addition, Challis Volcanoes began to form and become active (Ross 10). This activity consisted of lava being thrust from fissures and vents in the earth's crust (Ross 12). These volcanic activities continued until the beginning of the Neogene period.

Now the monster said, "Oh you Coyote, that's why I was afraid of you. Oh you Coyote, let me cast you out." And Coyote replied, "Yes, and later let it be said, 'He who was cast out is officiating in the distribution of salmon.'" "Well then, go out through the nose." Coyote replied, "And will they not say the same?" And the monster said, "Well then, go out through the ears," to which Coyote replied, "And let it be said, 'Here is ear-wax officiating in the distribution of food.'" "Hn, hn, hn! oh you, Coyote! This is why I feared you; then go through the anus." and Coyote replied, "And let the people say, 'Feces are officiating in the distribution of food.'" There was his fire still burning near the heart and now the monster began to writhe in pain and Coyote began cutting away on the heart, whereupon very shortly he broke the stone knife. Immediately he took another and in short time this one also broke and Coyote said to all the people, "Gather up all the bones and carry them to the eyes, ears, mouth and anus; pile them up and when he falls dead kick all the bones outside." Then again with another knife he began cutting away at the heart. The third knife he broke and the fourth, leaving only one more. He told the people, "All right, get yourself ready because as soon as he falls dead each one will go out of the opening most convenient. Take the old women and old men close to the openings so that they get out easily." Now the heart hung by only a very small piece of muscle and Coyote was cutting away on it with his last stone knife. The Monster's heart was still barely hanging on when his last knife broke whereupon Coyote threw himself on the heart and hung on just barely tearing it loose with his hands. In his death convulsions the monster opened all the openings of his body and now the people kicked the bones outside and went on out.

Coyote, too, went on out. Here now the Monster fell dead and now the anus began to close. (Phinney 28-29)

In the Oligocene epoch, the volcanoes were very active. Basaltic lava filled in canyons near Lewiston and Kamiah, Idaho. By the middle of the Pliocene epoch, the activity of the volcanoes slowly ceased (Ross 80). No dormant volcanoes are located in central Idaho.

But there was the muskrat still inside. Just as the anus closed he squeezed out, barely getting his body through but alas! his tail was caught; but he pulled and it was bare when he pulled it out; all the tail-hair peeled right off. Coyote scolded him, "Now what were you doing; you had to think up something to do at the last moment. You're always behind in everything." Then he told the people, "Gather up all the bones and arrange them well." They did this, whereupon Coyote added, "Now we are going to carve the monster."

Coyote then smeared blood on his hands, sprinkled this blood on the bones, and suddenly there came to life again all those who died while inside the monster. (Phinney 29)

The buffalo, mastodon, mammoth and other large mammal populations increased during the Pleistocene Epoch.

They carved the great monster and Coyote began dealing out portions of the body to various parts of the country all over the land: toward the sunrise, toward the sunset, toward the warmth, toward the cold, and by that act destining and forenaming the various peoples; Coeur d'Alène, Cayuse, Pend Oreilles, Flathead, Blackfeet, Crow, Sioux, et. al. He consumed the entire body of the monster in this distribution to various lands far and wide. Nothing more remained of the great monster. And now Fox came up and said to Coyote, "What is the meaning of this, Coyote? You have distributed all of the body to faraway lands but have given yourself nothing for this immediate locality." – "Well," snorted Coyote, "and did you tell me that before? Why didn't you tell me that a while ago

before it was too late? I was engrossed to the exclusion of thinking. You should have told me that in the first place." And he turned to the people and said, "Bring me him water and he washed his hands and now with the bloody washwater he sprinkled the local regions saying, "You may be little people but you will be powerful. Even though you will be little people because I have deprived you, nevertheless you will be very, very, manly. Only a short time away is the coming of the human race. (Phinney 30)

Archaeological excavations show evidence of human settlement in the Clearwater Valley, east of the Idaho batholith, beginning over 9,000 years ago.

CHAPTER III

THE NIMÍPU (NEZ PERCE) RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR HOMELAND

Wilderness is....an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is visitor who does not remain. (The Wilderness Act)

titoqanót wétes - wilderness: "peopleless land" in the Nez Perce language (Aoki, Dictionary 763)

The land created by the confrontation between Coyote and the Monster is a part of the Nez Perce homeland (Figure 2). A portion of these mountains later became the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. The Nez Perce, who were created from the land, honor and cherish their entire homeland and believe they are connected to its many ecosystems and terrains. Because of their connection to the land, historians have theorized that Native Americans do not have a conception of separateness from the land. Therefore, Native Americans do not consider themselves "visitors" to any part of their homeland. Further, historians also have theorized that Native American groups used and managed most parts of the United States, hence the North America was not a pristine wilderness without the touch of humans when the Puritans first arrived on the Atlantic Coast.

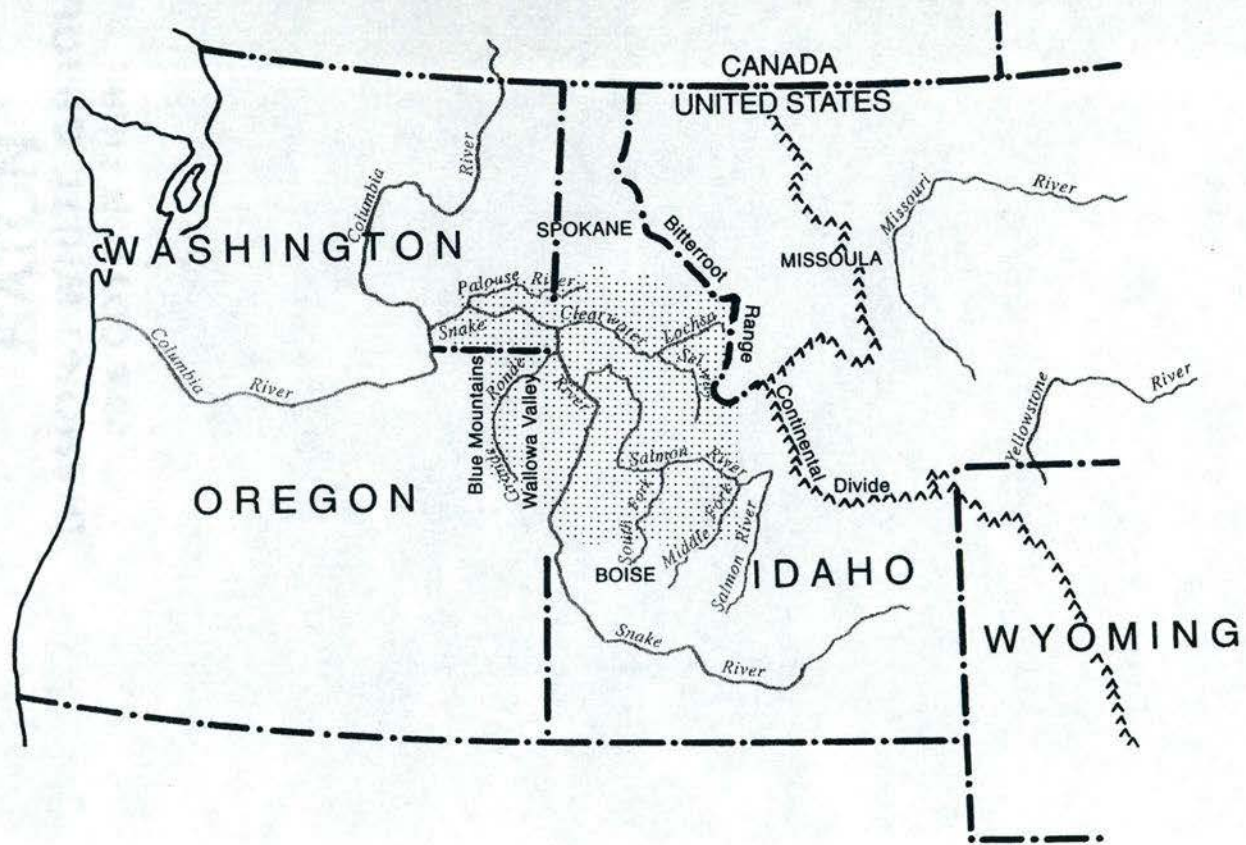


Figure 2. The Nez Perce Homeland (Moore 14).

This may have been true for Nez Perce and their homeland since each part of their homeland provided sustenance for their physical and spiritual lives. So to understand the pre-European contact Nez Perce's relationship with the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds, the Nez Perce's relationship with their entire homeland needs to be explored. While exploring this homeland, I will also describe the weather, climate and ecosystems of the area, which provided the Nez Perce with their food, shelter and spiritual awakening. Since the subsistence cycle of the pre-contact Nez Perce occurred on an annual cycle, I will explore this relationship beginning as the snow fell in the higher elevations of the mountains and the Nez Perce made final preparations for the winter.

Winter snow comes early to the land created by the confrontation between Coyote and the Monster. By mid-August, the highest elevations have received snow. The bull elk (*wewúkiye*) are in rut and have begun to move to lower elevations. The mule and white-tail deer (*tewísín*, *ye?émes*, *tipítewisin* and *tatápay*) have migrated to areas that are sheltered from the strong winds and driving snow. The birds of the area, such as the winter wren, western bluebird, and chestnut-backed chickadee have migrated south or to lower elevations (Davis 31). Nuts and berries stored by smaller mammals including ground squirrels and chipmunks will help them survive the long winter. At 7,000 feet of elevation, the average high temperature is 60°F, and the low temperature is 35°F (Finklin 25). The temperature is even colder in the higher elevations of the

mountains that reach heights of close to 10,000 feet. The monster and the geologic uplift left their marks on this area.

The Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area contains over 1.3 million acres of land. The Lochsa and Selway Rivers' sources begin at altitudes over 6,000 feet. The Lochsa River watershed's area includes over 1,880 square miles (Elsensohn 2:44). The Selway River watershed is a little smaller; it drains 1,320 square miles (Leiberg 375). This culturally constructed place was not imagined until the first decade of the 1900s. The *nimípu* (Nez Perce) considered it part of their homeland and lived in their homeland since time immemorial. Coyote's murder of the monster gave these mountains and the western lowlands their bounty and in turn sustained the Nez Perce. The Nez Perce homeland stretches many miles in the four directions.

The forests of the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers show influences of elevation, aspect, fire, and local site differences due to the geologic uplifts. Predominant stands in lower elevations consist of ponderosa pine (*la.qá*) in drier locations and western red cedar-grand fir (*tála.tat-pítxpítx*) in wetter locations.⁵ In intermediate elevations, grand fir-douglas fir (*pítxpítx-pa.ps*) predominates. In higher elevations, engelmann spruce-subalpine fir (*héslips-patóysiwey*) predominates (Finklin 10). Aspect can greatly change the character of the forest at any elevation. The understory near the Lochsa and Selway River

⁵ All translations, unless otherwise noted are from Aoki's *Nez Perce Dictionary*.

includes ninebark and other shrubs and wild ginger, arrowleaf, groundsel, queencup, beadlelily and pinegrass (BPA 3-53). The understory in higher elevations is made up of rustyleaf, Cascades azalea, and mountain Labrador tea (*písqo*), mountain ash, wild ginger, and bush chinquapin (Broncheau-McFarland 23). Large areas of grassy and brushy slopes predominate in the areas affected by both weather-related and human-made fire. The Nez Perce use these areas for berry picking and horse grazing.

With the coming of the snow, the Nez Perce no longer visited the higher elevations of the Bitterroot Mountains. The immense snowpack, lack of animals for hunting, and the unpredictability of the weather precluded any regular visits. From mid-autumn to early summer, these mountains can be covered with up to fifty feet of snow. The inaccessibility of these mountains for up to three seasons of the year contributes to the complexity of the Nez Perce relationship with the watersheds of the Selway and Lochsa Rivers. First, the Nez Perce consider it an important part of their homeland, which consists of approximately 27,000 square miles and three different ecological provinces. The Nez Perce idea of place includes all the land that they used and traveled through, except the plains of the buffalo. Second, the land was a place to find their life's path. When Nez Perce children came of age, they went through a complex rite of passage. The *wéyekin* is the most important part of the Nez Perce coming of age ceremony. Throughout their young life, Nez Perce children participated in the stories and the rituals of everyday life. During hunting, gathering and fishing activities, stories were

remembered and told. When a child was thought to be ready, s/he was sent away for approximately one week to receive his/her *wéyekin*. When deprived of food and human contact, children, the Nez Perce believed, learned independently to take the final step to maturity. One of the places for receiving their *wéyekin* was called *titoqanót wétes*, peopleless land or wilderness (Crook).⁶ Areas such as Pilot Knob (*tum.loyeetsmuhs*) and The Craggs (*tseotseopuh*) in the higher elevations of the Bitterroot Mountains were two of the primary places used for the *wéyekin* (Chance 10). Without food but educated in the stories of the Nez Perce, the child's could experience his or her *wéyekin* through sight or hearing. Their *wéyekin* might appear as a vision of a particular animal or as a powerful natural event. The absence of humans and any traces of their everyday activities were important parts of the *wéyekin*.

The Nez Perce homeland includes the watersheds of the entire Clearwater, Powder, Grande Ronde, Salmon and the lower Snake Rivers. The Nez Perce homeland encompasses parts of the Columbia River Plateau, including high alpine mountain areas and fertile river valleys. The borders of this homeland were fluid in Nez Perce history. The neighboring Shoshone, Cayuse, Flathead, and Coeur d'Alene and their interactions with the Nez Perce caused the boundaries to change based upon the strength of groups, the amount of

⁶ According to Nez Perce authorities, *titoqanót wétes* is a pre-contact word that has kept the same meaning throughout the years. In Haruo Aoki's Nez Perce Dictionary, desert is also included in the meaning of the word. The Nez Perce of the Wallowa Valley may have used the desert for their *wéyekin*.

precipitation, and the availability of game and other subsistence foods. In addition, some of the Nez Perce homeland was shared with other groups. Specifically, many groups participated in gathering activities on the Camas and Weippe Prairies on an annual basis.

In mid-autumn, as the Bitterroot Mountains became inaccessible to the Nez Perce, the Nez Perce had already collected most of the roots and berries of these higher regions. Huckleberries (*cemí.tk*) and a few other berries could be found in cleared areas in the lower elevations of the Bitterroot Mountains. Most of the gathering of huckleberries occurred in small fire-cleared areas of less than one acre. The Nez Perce created small temporary camps for these berry picking activities only when berries were abundant in a small localized area (Ames 33).

With the cessation of most root and berry gathering activities, the Nez Perce moved to their winter villages close to their hunting grounds and in places sheltered from the winter wind (Ames 30). Archaeologists believe that their main winter villages were near Whitebird Creek on the Salmon River, at the confluence of the Snake and Salmon River, at the mouth of the Grande Ronde River, near present-day Anatone, Washington, on Asotin Creek in Washington, near present-day Clarkston, Washington, at the confluence of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers, along the Snake River as far as the Palouse River, on the northside of the lower Clearwater River, at the mouth of Hatwai Creek on the Clearwater River and at the mouth of Lapwai Creek on the Clearwater River. Smaller winter villages were located below Slate Creek on the Salmon River, at the mouth of the

Lawyer Creek on the Clearwater River, and at the confluence of the South and Middle Forks of the Clearwater River (Schwede 23).

These winter villages were located on the banks of major rivers, at lower elevations that receive little snow. Because of their nearness to both hunting and gathering sites, many of the winter villages were inhabited throughout the year. The confluence of the South and Middle Forks of the Clearwater River, the closest of the major winter camps to the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area is approximately thirty river miles from the wilderness boundary. The majority of the villages are located in the Columbia Plateau Province. The average mid-winter temperatures are just below freezing (Gould 20). The vegetation consisted of bunchgrass prairie with only wetter areas consisting of trees and shrubbery (Gould 24). Smaller hunting camps used in autumn were located at higher elevations on the Lochsa and Selway Rivers and their tributaries and on other major rivers. These smaller camps permitted the hunters to store equipment that was difficult to transport (Gould 69). The larger main villages allowed the Nez Perce to prepare for and survive the winter. Very few plants could be harvested during the autumn season; therefore the roots and berries were dried and made into cakes for food during the winter. Historically, fall chinook salmon (*nacó. ?x*) could be caught as late as October in the lower Selway River, but otherwise hunting was the only subsistence activity that occurred in late autumn (Gould 39). In autumn, the Nez Perce finished drying the camas (*qémes*), huckleberries, chinook salmon, and silver salmon (*kállay*). These foods were combined with the

many varieties of berries and roots gathered throughout the area. The men in their small hunting villages hunted the elk, mule deer and white tail deer that were migrating to their winter ranges. This hunting activity was important to the Nez Perce since the meat from these animals made up between ten and twenty-five percent of their subsistence diet (Gould 71). The meat was preserved and later mixed with the already dried berries and roots so that the Nez Perce had another source of protein in their diet during the cold winter months.

In addition to hunting for elk and deer, the Nez Perce hunted other animals for food and other uses. When encountered, mountain goat (*caxisxis*) and mountain sheep (*tinun*) were killed. The horns of the mountain sheep were straightened and made into bows for hunting (Joseph 19). In addition, the hunters stalked moose (*sáslaqa*), black bear (*yá.ks?*) and small game birds. Most specifically, ruffed grouse (*waswásno*) and fool hen (*?é.ni*) were hunted throughout the winter to supplement the dried food diet (Gould 75).

In these hunting villages, the hunters experienced cold rainy days in which the temperatures ranged from highs of 35°F to lows of 15°F in mid to late autumn (Finklin 25). In addition, as autumn progressed the precipitation increased from less than three inches per month in early autumn to over eleven inches per month in late autumn (Finklin 21). The advance of autumn also caused the precipitation to change from rain to snow. If the precipitation in the summer months was low, the fire season could be extended until late mid-autumn. Therefore, the Nez Perce hunters needed to be prepared for many temperature

and precipitation extremes. During snowy, cold autumns, the snow levels can be as low as 3,000 feet. The trails over the Bitterroot Mountains to the plains were blocked from early winter to late spring or early summer.

As autumn turned to winter, the level of subsistence activity decreased. The large snowpack fragmented the elk and deer populations into their winter territories. The upper Lochsa and Selway Rivers were frozen over, and the salmon fry only begin to hatch in early winter and then emerge from the gravel in late winter (BPA 3-27). The Nez Perce relied on their stored foods and any game that was available near their villages during the winter months. The Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area was rarely visited when the snow height was extreme. During mild winters, hunters may have hunted for elk or deer in the foothills since the snowpack was not quite as large.

Since the Nez Perce dried and stored many types of food, they were not as dependent on the land during the winter for food, only for shelter. The stockpile of food allowed the Nez Perce to tell stories and participate in religious ceremonies. The *wéyek wécet*, an annual winter celebration, allowed the Nez Perce to reveal and present their "tutelary spirit" to the community (Deward 2-3). Their tutelary spirit could also be a guiding animal, thunder, lightning, or a body of water. For children, the *wéyek wécet* may be the first time they were presenting their "spiritual assistant" (Deward 2). The spirit dance could last up to fourteen days. It involved dancing in the *wéye.s* (the dancing area in a large tent or temporary structure) and depicting one's guiding animal or spirit with their

characteristic dance (Deward 3). Sweat baths were also performed in the winter. These activities educated the younger children about the Nez Perce belief system and ethics, and their importance, and reinforced the beliefs of the adult Nez Perce.

In addition, the Nez Perce used this time to tell their stories and save their energy. During the winter, the Nez Perce had to ensure that the food dried and stored would last until the salmon spawned and the roots and berries grew in spring. If the winter was long and cold, the food stores would dwindle. Therefore, the amount of activity was minimized. During the winter months, men and women mended dip nets and baskets, repaired fish ladders and bows, and made blankets, tents and utensils from newly preserved deer, elk, and bison bones and skins.

As early as a few weeks after winter solstice, some roots were gathered and fish were caught. Whitefish (*címey*) gathered on sandbars of the Clearwater and Snake Rivers and chiselmouth (*titéwxc*) congregated in sidestreams of these rivers (Gould 40). These fish, although not a large part of the Nez Perce diet, supplemented the dwindling winter food stores. In addition to these fish, some species of the *Lomatium* genus began to sprout. In early winter *titálam* and *ilqú.lx* were the first sprouting foods. They bloomed on the slopes of the major rivers of the area in mid-winter. Since the Nez Perce winter villages were in most of these valleys, these roots were readily accessible. Both of these roots were considered part of a starvation diet since they did not taste good and the roots were not

close to the surface. The leaves of the *ilqú.lx* were served with the dried food to provide fresh greens to their starvation diet (Gould 48).

As the spring came to the lower elevations of the Nez Perce homeland, the higher elevations still were in the grip of winter. The average high temperature is approximately 25°F and average low temperature is approximately 15°F (Finklin 25). The small difference between the high and low average temperatures is evidence of the cloud cover in the higher mountains. The average sunshine duration is only approximately 20% of the maximum in the winter (Finklin 37). The snowpack can reach over 600 inches in the mountains above the Selway River (Finklin 19). Between their starvation diet and the severity of the average winter, the Nez Perce did not venture into the higher elevations.

As the temperature increased, days grew longer, and the amount of sunshine increased, the Nez Perce began to gather roots and plants and fish such as salmon and steelhead (*hé.yey*). The Nez Perce, like many other Columbia Plateau groups, traveled to Celilo Falls to trade for items unavailable in their homeland and to obtain silver and other species of salmon. Prior to the arrival of horses in the early 1700s, the Nez Perce traveled to Celilo Falls and other large trading areas by canoe or on foot. Dogs were sometime used to carry heavy loads. The arrival of the horse allowed greater mobility to the Nez Perce. In addition, the Nez Perce bred their horses for the specific attributes required for their subsistence activities. The Nez Perce were the only indigenous group that

practiced this skill (Joseph 29). The lower elevations of their homeland contained vast grassland areas for grazing, and as a result the Nez Perce were able to accumulate large numbers of horses.

Horses permitted the Nez Perce to more easily travel to other areas outside of their homeland. For many centuries, small bands of Nez Perce traveled on foot over the Bitterroot Mountains to the plains to hunt for bison (*qoqálx*) with the Flathead. Without horses, transporting the bison meat and skins was a daunting task. The advent of horses added bison meat, skins, bones and other parts as a component of their subsistence activities. The Lolo Trail that skirts the northern boundary of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area became the major route from the villages of the Clearwater River Valley to the plains. The Nez Perce Trail that skirts the southern boundary of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area became the major route from the villages of the upper Snake River Valley and the Wallowa and Blue Mountains to the plains. A central trail through the Bitterroot Mountains by Lost Horse Pass was rarely used. In addition to travel over the mountains, these trails were used to journey to hunting camps and berry meadows in the higher elevations in mid to late summer. Though horses increased their mobility, the Nez Perce primarily stayed in areas close to their historical villages. These trails did not become accessible for travel until early summer.

As spring approached the lower elevations of the Clearwater River Valley, many species of roots, plants and berries began to sprout and blossom. *Qeqít*,

cicí.ta and *wewí.m*, three plants from the *Lomatium* species, bloomed in early spring. Their roots were also available for food. These plants were found on the slopes of ridge tops near the mouth of the Clearwater River. Because of the abundance, groups closest to the mouth of the Clearwater River dried and stored *qeqí.t* for winter use (Gould 49). The higher elevations remained in the throws of winter. The average high temperature was only above freezing, while the low temperature still barely reached 25°F (Finklin 25). These daytime non-freezing temperatures began to melt the snowpack and brought additional water to the lowland rivers and prairies to water the wetland prairies but also made traveling in the mountains impossible.

In mid to late spring, balsamroot sunflower (*pasx*) and hackberry (*katámno*) began to bloom. Balsamroot sunflower bloomed on the higher ridges near canyons. This plant's roots were baked, not dried, prior to eating. Both the root and stems were one of the first fresh foods after the winter stores were spent. Hackberry grew abundantly at lower elevations near streams that flowed into the Clearwater River and was primarily found south of the Clearwater River. Even though it was only mid-spring, the Nez Perce processed and dried the hackberry fruit for winter consumption (Gould 51).

As spring advanced, the hills and prairies of the lower elevations became pregnant with flowering plants and shrubs. The Nez Perce gathered the edible roots and berries for both fresh food and for preparation for the winter. They gathered golden currant (*ka*), two species of biscuitroot (*qámsit* and *laqáptat*),

wild hyacinth (*cátoxc*), serviceberry (*kayapásx*) and another species of *Lomatium* (*peqíy*) were gathered. The Nez Perce moved to the lower elevations in canyons to gather golden currant and serviceberry. Wild hyacinth root, used as a supplemental food, was found in canyons and plateaus. The Nez Perce set up camps for the collection of *qámsit*, the most abundant of the biscuitroot species. These camps were located northwest of the Clearwater River in the area created by Coyote's struggle with the monster. *Peqíy* was collected in same places but was not as abundant (Gould 51-54).

In mid to late spring, the Nez Perce populated fishing villages on the Clearwater, Snake and Salmon Rivers to facilitate the catching and drying of salmon. In addition, larger tributaries such as the Lochsa and the major forks of the Snake and Salmon Rivers were also prized. As the rivers drained of waters from the dwindling snowpack, lower water courses were visited to catch salmon. The principal streams used included the Little Salmon River, as far south as Big Payette Lake, including its tributaries, the Rapid River and Boulder Creek, the South Fork of the Salmon River and its tributaries, the Snake River as far south as the Boise River and the middle fork of the Clearwater River as far as the fork formed by the Selway and Lochsa Rivers. The lower reaches of the Selway River were sometimes used for salmon fishing during combined hunting and fishing season in late summer.

The Nez Perce used dip nets, conical fish traps, and weirs to catch fish. Dip nets positioned on major rivers and streams caught the majority of fish during

the spring spawning runs. Individual conical fish traps located near small rock and earth dams caught small fish in streams. Other methods to catch fish included stick fences, nets, gaff hooks and spears.

As spring waned and summer advanced, the abundance of the lower elevations of the Nez Perce homeland peaked. By mid-spring, the higher elevations were increasingly experiencing temperatures above freezing. These increased temperatures in the higher elevations melted the snowpack. These annual freshets overflowed the riverbanks and brought water to the wetlands of the lower elevations. This cycle increased the growth and diversity of the wetlands. *Qámsit*, serviceberry, golden currant, and thirteen other edible berries and roots were found in the wetlands along the Clearwater River and its tributaries. The most plentiful of the plants was camas. The Nez Perce homeland, west of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area contained many bounteous camas growing areas. The most famous meadows were located near present-day Weippe, Idaho and the Camas Prairie north of present-day Grangeville, Idaho. Camas also grew profusely in the marshy areas of the Palouse River near present-day Moscow, Idaho and Pullman, Washington. The Nez Perce took advantage of this diversity. The Nez Perce gatherers established camps near these large prairies so that the roots and berries could be processed for winter use. A good digger could collect over 80 pounds of camas roots per day (Gould 55).

The fertility of these prairies sustained many other types of wetland plants. *Frasera* (*ku.yá*) and spring beauty (*capcí.lay*) grew less abundantly, but they were collected as supplemental food during the gathering of camas and *qámsit*. As summer progressed, in the lower plateaus and foothills, sunflower (*cilílx*), gooseberry (*pílus*), chokecherry (*tíms*), and wild onion (*se.x*) were collected. Wild onion roots and sunflower seeds provided supplemental food in higher elevation wetlands for the Nez Perce gatherers.

By mid-summer, as the run-off from the mountains decreased, the higher elevations became more accessible. Elk thistle roots and mountain serviceberries (*kikéye*) began to bloom. Mountain serviceberries were favored over lowland serviceberries because of their sweet taste. In the lower foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains, camas could also be found. Camas could be found in late summer in the mountain's higher elevations.

As the summer progressed, more berries became available for gathering. Elderberries (*míttip*), thimbleberries (*taxtáx*), mountain elderberries (*mexséme mittíp*), huckleberries, and fireberries (*?ala?ala*) grew in the foothills and higher foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains. The Nez Perce gathered these berries for drying, storing and eating. Each of these berries was found at elevations below 6,000 feet in fire-opened areas. Some of these areas were maintained using fire started by the Nez Perce to ensure an adequate production of winter food stocks. Studies have shown that in the last 1,000 years the number of fires in the Northern Rocky Mountain Region has increased dramatically (Karsian 4). These

fire-opened areas allowed the Nez Perce to gather berry species into early autumn. As the snow began to fall at higher elevations, the women dried and roasted the collected foods of the spring and summer cycle. The men increased their hunting activities. This food was expected to last throughout the winter until the first greens sprouted or the salmon spawned in the territory of the Nez Perce.

The Nez Perce did not just think of their homeland as a place to supply food and water. The *wéyek wécet* performed in the winter was only one manifestation of their spirituality with the land. Since the Nez Perce derived almost all of their sustenance directly from their homeland, their everyday activities were inseparable from offering thanks and praise to their creator and sustainer. Each activity had a prayer or story associated with it. In addition, Nez Perce children prepared themselves for their *wéyekin*. The Nez Perce derived their identity as people from their homeland. Their trips to the "peopleless land" gave the Nez Perce their individual identities.

From this depiction of the activities of the Nez Perce prior to European contact we can glimpse their interactions with the watersheds of the Selway and Lochsa Rivers. The weather, climate and lack of food precluded the Nez Perce from setting up large, permanent villages in the Bitterroot Mountains. Nevertheless, the Nez Perce did visit the Bitterroot Mountains to hunt elk and deer and collect berries in the autumn, perform their *wéyekin*, and travel to the buffalo plains. The Nez Perce used fire to facilitate their hunting and collecting

activities, but this most probably occurred in the steep valleys and small meadows of the Bitterroot Mountains near the three main trails.

The use of the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers as a place to be away from and to learn from other beings touches on some of the American ideas of wilderness. The Nez Perce visited this area for food, travel and spiritual direction; no permanent villages were built. The ambiguous European idea of wilderness did not complicate their vision and perceptions of the place. Regardless, the Nez Perce still thought of the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers as a "peopleless" land. While the Nez Perce understood this area to be a place where humans could not survive they nonetheless still believed they were connected to the land for both spiritual and physical reasons. By the early 1700s, the Nez Perce were beginning to trade for white European material, but it would be another 100 years before white explorers came in contact with the "peopleless land " of the Nez Perce. These explorers viewed the land in much the same way as the Nez Perce but without the reverence and tradition.

CHAPTER IV

EXPLORERS, FUR TRADERS AND MISSIONARIES

Over the many millennia that the Nez Perce lived in their homeland, the plant, animal, and human life in the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers interacted with each other. Fires burned areas of trees and shrubs, which allowed meadows of tender grass to grow for the deer and elk to feed and birds and ground squirrels to find shelter. The Nez Perce set up camps and hunted these high meadows for elk and deer. In these meadows, berry bushes grew. Birds, humans and bears ate these berries. The seeds from these berries traveled with these eaters, and the seeds were deposited for growth in other areas. The high mountains slowly eroded and uplifted. Snow melted and rivers formed freshets that cleansed the river banks and added large trees and stumps for pools for spawning salmon.

The cycles of life in the Nez Perce culture changed and remain constant. Wars with the Shoshone and the Blackfeet restricted the expansion of their hunting grounds. The cessation of the wars allowed these hunting grounds to again expand. Trading at Celilo Falls and other areas brought new goods to

their culture, including horses, metal objects, and guns. These items allowed for faster travel, easier hunting, and more efficient cooking and cleaning. These items were supplied to the Nez Perce and other groups from European explorers and fur traders. At the same time, the Nez Perce continued to dig for camas bulbs and other tubers and berries in the Camas and Weippe Prairies. Children performed their *wéyekin* and the creation stories were passed from generation to generation.

The white explorers, fur traders, and missionaries did not enter the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers until the early 1800s. These men were seeking easy passage across the continent, beaver pelts for the fur trade, and heathens for conversion to Christianity. Because of these circumstances, their perceptions of the place contrasted with the Nez Perce people discussed in the preceding chapter and with each other. The lack of spiritual and physical connection to these lands contributed most to the differences with the Nez Perce. The explorers discovered a place that was a barrier to their travels but was also striking in its beauty. Alternately, the fur traders only viewed the Bitterroot Mountains as a boundary line between nations and as an obstruction to monetary gain. While most of the missionaries did not speak of the mountains, Samuel Parker spoke of its romantic and awful beauty. Regardless of these differences, these explorers, fur traders and missionaries' views were similar to the Nez Perce since they all perceived the land as a hostile place that

did not allow easy habitation; as a place to travel through on a journey and as a place away from humans.

The first explorers to experience the area were Thomas Jefferson's Corps of Discovery. Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and the Corps of Discovery followed the Missouri from its mouth in Saint Louis to its headwaters in the Rocky Mountains. They were hoping to find a fast route from the headwaters of the Missouri to the rivers that flowed to the Pacific Ocean. Instead they found the Bitterroot Mountains and no easy passage by water to the rivers that flowed to the Pacific Ocean. From Beaverhead Rock to the Clearwater River, the Corps of Discovery traveled for sixty days over mountains that formed the Continental and Bitterroot Divides. The mountains that were created by Coyote's struggle with the monster blocked the easy route from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. The Corps of Discovery followed the trail hewed by the Nez Perce for travel to the buffalo plains, hunting camps and the berry picking meadows. Even with their Shoshone guide, Old Toby the Corps of Discovery became lost during their days in the Bitterroot Mountains. This route, the Lolo Trail, would later influence the northern boundary of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area.

The Corps of Discovery entered the Lolo Trail near Traveler's Rest in late summer in 1805. The mountains had already experienced snow for close to three weeks, and the average low temperature at the pass approached 35°F. The elk and deer favored by the Corps of Discovery had already migrated to lower elevations for mating and winter shelter. In late summer while at the

headwaters of the Salmon River, Lewis described in his fractured English a morning where, "the ice [is] 1/4 inch thick on the water" and "the ink feizes in my pen" (Moulton 5:133). The travels of the Corps of Discovery only became worse. They began to climb over and through the Bitterroot Mountains. The scarcity of game required the killing of colts for food. The trail "appears to head in the Snow topped mountains Southerley and S.E" (Moulton 5:205). As the Corps of Discovery followed the Lolo Trail, "the Mountains which we passed to day much worst than yesterday the last excessively bad & Thickly Strowed with falling timber & Pine Spruc fur Hackmatak & Tamerack our men and horses much fatigued" (Moulton 5:205). Patrick Gass wrote, "The country is poor and mountainous" (Moulton 10:140).

As they traveled along the Lolo Trail, the Corps of Discovery became lost and was compelled to retrace its steps. Five days before the autumnal equinox, after injury to many of their horses because of the narrowness and ruggedness of the trail, they reached a high point in the trail on a sunny day. Clark described the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. "From this mountain I could observe high rugged mountains in every direction as far as I could See" (Moulton 5:207). Clark's map noted "High Mountains" to describe the Bitterroot Mountains (Moulton 5:220). "We renewed our march early, though the morning was very disagreeable, and proceeded over the most terrible mountains I ever beheld" (Moulton 10:143). Although, the Corps of Discovery viewed the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers from the higher reaches of the Lolo Trail, they

most probably never did enter the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. The Lewis & Clark Trail is north of the Congressional-designated boundary line.

At this high point, it began to snow. Eight inches of snow fell on a late summer day. They were able to find a little grass for their horses in a small meadow. Clark remarked that this is "a thickly timbered Countrey of 8 different kinds of pine" (Moulton 5:209). They killed a second horse for food and found that it was "fine meat" (Moulton 5:209). Clark observed a black-tailed deer, but his gun did not fire due to wetness and lack of use. "To describe the road of this day would be repetition of yesterday except the Snow which made it much worse to proceed" (Moulton 5:209). The limbs were so pregnant with snow that the men and Sacagawea had to slip through the trail with caution and slowness. Clark described the rubbings of trees from the packs of previous groups of Nez Perce who traveled the narrow trail. This was one of the only signs of human presence on their journey. Over the next few days, Clark, Gass, and Lewis described slow travel plagued with horse injuries and lack of game animals. Gass noted that "The men are becoming lean and debilitated, on account of the scarcity and poor quality of the provisions" (Moulton 10:144-145). The situation became so desperate that Clark and six men proceeded ahead to find deer and elk on "level country" (Moulton 5:211). The Corps of Discovery were unable to find deer until they reached the mouth of the North Fork of the Clearwater River.

As Clark's group traveled ahead of Lewis and the remaining Corps members, Lewis philosophized that their reliance on "portable soups" is "a poor

dependence in our present situation where there is nothing upon earth except ourselves and a few small pheasants, small grey Squirrels and a blue bird of the vulture kind about the size of a turtle dove or jay bird" (Moulton 5:211, 213). A few days later, Clark's party observed Weippe Prairie and showed no emotion. He simply stated that it was at a "great distance" (Moulton 5:213). The realization that these mountains had crushed Jefferson's dream of an easy trade route to the Pacific Ocean seemed to weigh heavily on Clark's mind along with the constant hunger of the last few weeks. Lewis, who viewed the prairie the next day, wrote of his "inexpressable joy" (Moulton 5:215). Gass compared the observation of the meadow to "passengers at sea, who have experienced a dangerous and protracted voyage, when they first discover land on the long overlooked coast" (Moulton 10:145).

Clark's group observed a stray horse, killed it and hung it on a tree limb for the following Lewis party. Clark described the breakfast meal of horse as "fine" (Moulton 5:216). The Bitterroot Mountains provided sustenance for the small mammals who hibernate or store seeds and nuts for the long winter and for the conifers that were able to take the moisture from the air to grow, and for the plants and shrubs that lay dormant until the snow melts and spring returned. The people of the Corps of Discovery did not fit into any of these niches. Clark, Gass, and Lewis noted the trek through the Bitterroot Mountains as the toughest part of their long journey.

On the autumnal equinox, Clark finally came into contact with three Nez Perce boys. The Corps of Discovery had traveled almost three weeks without coming in contact with a single human and seeing only a few large mammals. Clark and his men traveled to a Nez Perce village near present day Weippe, Idaho with Nez Perce elders, who had come to meet them. The men were so hungry they gorged themselves on berries, camas, and salmon given to them by the Nez Perce and made themselves sick. The rich food from the fertile prairies and rivers of the valleys of the Clearwater and Snake Rivers after the starvation in the mountains of the Lochsa River was too much for their systems. Lewis and the remaining members of the Corps of Discovery arrived two days later. The Corps of Discovery's contact with the mountain trail north of Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area was finally over. These mountains finally destroyed Thomas Jefferson's dream for an easy connection between the headwaters of the Missouri River and the Columbia River. It would take the Corps of Discovery only twenty-five days to travel from the mouth of the Clearwater River to the mouth of the Willamette River (about 500 miles), only twice the amount of time it took them to travel from Traveler's Rest to the Weippe Prairie (160 miles).

On their return trip in late spring of 1806, the Bitterroot Mountains again frustrated the Corps of Discovery. Their first try over the trail encountered snows too deep for travel. Lewis and Clark had never experienced a landscape that contained mountains that held snow until mid-summer. The Corps of Discovery had not learned from its first experience with these mountains. They turned back

and camped with the Nez Perce near the Weippe Prairie. Clark, Gass, and Lewis described snow over eight feet deep in places. Lewis stated, "this is the first time since we have been on this long tour that we have ever been compelled to retreat or make a retrograde march" (Moulton 8:32). In late spring, Clark wrote, "here was Winter with all its rigors; the air was Cold my hands and feet were benumbed" (Moulton 8:33). Gass added, "Here there was not the appearance of a green shrub or anything our horses to subsist on" (Moulton 10:240). As the Corps of Discovery camped on the Weippe Plain, spring slowly came to the Bitterroot Mountains. Both Lewis and Clark described increased elk, deer, and bear activity. Finally, five days after summer solstice, the Corps of Discovery began their return trip on the Lolo Trail. When Clark arrived at a high point on a sunny day he described the view as "from this place we had an extensive view of these Stupendous Mountains principally Covered with Snow like that on which we Stood; we were entirely Serounded by those mountains from which to one unacquainted with them it would have Seemed impossible ever to have escaped, in short without assistance of our guides" (Moulton 8:57).

Just as for the Nez Perce, this part of the Bitterroot Mountains did not provide for easy travel or huntable game for Lewis and Clark. The Lochsa and Selway River watersheds provided abundant food for the mammals, trees, humans, birds, and insects during the short summer season. The Corps of Discovery's travels did give them the opportunity to experience this land during the time of limited abundance. Their perspective was derived from two short

episodes, which contrasted from the Nez Perce perspective that was nurtured over millennia. As the first white explorers, their experiences spoke of a land of beautiful mountains that contained little food and water for either humans or animals and that was devoid of animal life during much of the year. The next explorers (fur traders) from the United States set out to find a more accessible route across the country.

About the same time that the Corps of Discovery was returning from their expedition, fur trappers were beginning to travel further up the Missouri River and across the Great Plains. The Astorians of the American Fur Company traveled across the continent by way of the Platte and Snake Rivers to the Columbia River. David Thompson of the Northwest Fur Company traveled across Canada and traveled down the Columbia River with a detour up the Clark's Fork River. In addition, Manuel Lisa traveled up the Missouri River to mouth of the Bighorn River. Lisa's Missouri Fur Company partners included William Clark. There is no written evidence that Clark cautioned Lisa from traveling to the Bitterroot Mountains; one can only surmise that the Yellowstone and Bighorn Rivers were more promising rivers for beaver trapping, therefore Lisa stayed away from the Bitterroot Mountains. These three major expeditions were searching for beaver-rich rivers and for easier trails around these mountains. Two men from the Corps of Discovery, James Colter and George Drouillard, traveled and worked with Lisa to locate areas that contained beavers for trade with Britain. Colter and Drouillard had twice traveled through the

Bitterroot Mountains and were aware of the lack of beaver and the treacherous travel. In addition, these men knew that the hostile Blackfeet populated the upper Missouri River. These factors did not allow for easy trade routes for beaver and other animal pelts in the upper Missouri River region. During the boom years of the beaver trade (1805-1834), many trappers set traps in the streams, creeks and rivers of the Missouri River watershed, but few entered the Bitterroot Mountains.

During the early years of the American beaver trade, many factors played a part in few fur trappers or traders traveling to or through the Bitterroot Mountains. The hostility of the Blackfeet toward white trappers and traders was one factor for the absence of American trappers in the Bitterroot Mountains. The Blackfeet violently attacked most trappers or traders who entered their territory which included the northeastern foothills of the Rocky Mountains and the northern tributaries of the upper Missouri River (Chittenden 854). With most large fur trapping groups from the United States traveling from St. Louis, the trappers of the American Fur Company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company trapped beaver, mink and other fur bearing animals on the Yellowstone, Bighorn, Wind, and upper Snake Rivers and their tributaries since trapping on the Marias, Teton and Three Forks Rivers of the Missouri River was considered too dangerous.

The closest trading post of the American Fur Company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company to the central Bitterroot Mountains was located at the

Three Forks of the Missouri River. This post (which did not have a name) was built in 1810 and abandoned later that same year due to Blackfeet attacks. In the late 1830s, after peace with the Blackfeet, a post was erected at the mouth of the Marias River. Bonneville erected a post near Lemhi Pass at the headwaters of the Salmon River, but it was only active for a few years. Most United States-based trading posts located on the upper Missouri River tributaries were located on the Yellowstone and Bighorn Rivers

Along with the blockade created by the Blackfeet, the second factor attributing to the absence of American and British traders was that the Bitterroot Mountains were the boundary line between United States and United States/British territory. The Louisiana Purchase included the waters of the Mississippi River up to the 54th parallel. The high peaks of the Bitterroot Mountains constituted the eastern boundary of the Oregon Territory, which included the present states of Idaho, Washington, and Oregon. These mountains, at times, were thought to be the Continental Divide. The southern part of the Bitterroot Range near the Snake River drainage makes up the Continental Divide, but in the central and northern parts of the Bitterroot Range, the Continental Divide is over 100 miles to the east. The Convention of 1818 allowed the joint occupation of the Oregon Territory by both the United States and Britain. Since the American traders considered these boundary lands too hard to travel to, they were left to the British traders who had trading posts on the Columbia River and the Pacific Ocean. Most American traders also

complained about the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company in this region of the continent. Captain Bonneville lamented that "any close competition with them is hopeless" (Irving 144).

In addition, the failure of the American Fur Trade in Astoria on the Pacific Coast allowed the watershed of the Columbia River to be trapped and traded by the Hudson's Bay and the Northwest Fur Companies without American competition. These British trading companies had easier access to British markets both physically and diplomatically. The War of 1812 halted the American fur trade with the British, while it only hindered the fur trade of the British territories in Canada. The war contributed to the failure of the Astorians and halted the expansion of the territories of the American fur traders in the northern Rocky Mountain West and Columbia River region. The Astorians were the first to travel through the South Pass in 1811, which became part of the Oregon Trail. This southern route around the Bitterroot Mountains allowed easier travel for traders and explorers, and later, pioneers and missionaries.

The Hudson's Bay Company, the most powerful of the British trading companies, controlled the majority of the fur trading on the Columbia River and its tributaries for the first thirty years of the 1800s. Trading posts were located on the Clark's Fork River near Thompson Falls, near Flathead Lake, on the Spokane River, and at the mouth of the Walla Walla River. In the early trading days of the 1800s, Fort Nez Perce was located five miles above the mouth of the Clearwater River, but it was moved to the mouth of Snake River since the

Nez Perce did not actively trade beaver pelts and the post was considered too far inland for easy trading. The Nez Perce subsistence activities did not include beaver trapping for food, trade or clothing, therefore they were hesitant to participate in beaver trapping.

In addition to the Nez Perce's reluctance toward beaver trapping, few beaver streams were located in the Clearwater, Selway, and Lochsa River watersheds. The narrow river valleys of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers and their tributaries were not optimal habitat for beaver ponds. In 1812, during Donald Mackenzie's exploration of the Clearwater and Snake River Region, Alfred Seton noted in his diary, "The country is plain, not a tree to be seen, a barren sandy desert producing a little wormwood [sagebrush], & in some places a few miserable tufts of grass-scarcely affording sustenance to the numerous herds of horses that are everywhere to be seen; not the least appearance of a beaver" (Thompson 25). Seton also included a note about fur trapping two days up river from the mouth of the Clearwater. "The country he has been through afforded no sign of Beaver, to which all our enquiries were directed, & as it was now found that we must lay aside hopes of getting beaver from this quarter, he thought it best to remove down to the Forks" (Thompson 25).

Twenty years later, John Work, a Hudson's Bay Company trader, traveled over the Lolo Trail in 1831-1832 searching for beaver-rich streams and other fur-bearing animals. His journal read much like the journal of Lewis and Clark of twenty-five years earlier with few exceptions. Work's travels took him from the

Nez Perce Villages of the Clearwater River Valley to the Bitterroot Valley. Coincidentally, Work traveled along the Lolo Trail during the early autumn, as the Corps of Discovery first did. Work's party entered the western end of the Lolo Trail at the same time that William Clark encountered the Nez Perce boys during their western journey. Since Hudson's Bay Company posts were located west of the Bitterroots, his party traveled easterly through the mountains. Work's mission was to find beaver streams that had not been depleted during the thirty years of constant trapping and to stop the migration of American traders into Hudson's Bay Company's territory. The United States fur trappers were able to enter the eastern foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains since a peace treaty with the Blackfeet had been signed. Work traveled through this area at this time since beaver furs were considered to be in their best conditions during the autumn. As with the Corps of Discovery, snow had covered the higher elevations for over three weeks, and most nights had freezing temperatures.

Work described the western foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains as "excellent grazing here for horses" (Lewis, John Work 81). Heavy rain hindered the travel of Work's party and required them to remain encamped for two days. They encountered a Nez Perce village at the mouth of the North Fork of the Clearwater River and decided to stay there since "it would have been too long to go to another good encampment" (Lewis 82). Five days after the autumnal equinox in 1831, Work's party "did not raise camp in order to allow the horse more feed before taking the summits" (Lewis 83). During travel through this

portion of the Columbia Plateau, Work did not mention the presence of beavers in any of the streams and rivers.

As Work encountered the steep inclines of the Lolo Trail, he began to describe the ruggedness of the Bitterroot Mountains. He traveled through "Continual thick woods and up several steep hills" (Lewis 83). He encountered "very little grass for the horses, and very little water" (Lewis 83). The spring snowmelt and the lack of rain during the summer months caused the streams and creeks to slow to a trickle. Four days after entering the Lolo Trail, the snow began to fall on Work's party. Work's party traveled "over very steep hills and through thick woods" (Lewis 84). Most days began by "all hands seeking the horses...some of them could not be found during the day though the people went in search of them till late" (Lewis 85). The horses were drifting to areas far from the nightly camps to find grass for feed. Many horses died during their travels through the Bitterroot Mountains. Because of the time required to locate the horses each morning, the party separated into three and four groups.

In mid-autumn 1831, Work's party reached the Bitterroot Divide, and four days later he reached Lolo Pass. During the approximately two weeks traveling through the western Bitterroot Mountains, Work did not mention the trapping of any beaver or the killing of any animal. One wonders what the party ate during its journey. His journal entries only described the trail, the weather and their trouble in finding grazing areas for their horses or the horses themselves. Work never mentioned the stupendous mountains that were part of the Corps of

Discovery's journal entries. As the party descended into the Bitterroot Valley, Work described encounters with large mammals for hunting, specifically deer, elk, and bear. For the first time in over six weeks, beavers were trapped successfully. The presence of Blackfeet, other native groups, and American trappers in the area caused Work to station night guards to protect the horses from theft. During their travels along the Lolo Trail, theft of horses and raids by native or trapping groups were not a concern. The tone of the journal changed as they entered the fertile and more populous Bitterroot River Valley. The weather was rainy with little snow and the valley was rich with "fine grass" (Lewis 90). Work's party came in contact with Flatheads and "a large party of Americans" only after they left the Bitterroot Mountains.

From 1805 to 1831, Americans and British heavily trapped the rivers and streams of the Missouri and Columbia River watersheds. The journals of many trappers discussed travel on the Yellowstone, the lower Missouri, Bighorn, Columbia, Snake, and Green Rivers. None of the large and famous trapping expeditions traveled to the land of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. No records have been published except for Work's and Seton's journals, which show that independent trappers not affiliated with Hudson's Bay, American, Rocky Mountain, or Northwest Fur Companies ever visited this portion of the Bitterroot Mountains. Finally, if large quantities of beaver were found there, the larger expeditions would have traveled to this area. The major streams of the Bitterroot and Lemhi Valleys were the closest areas heavily trapped.

The autumn journals of Clark, Gass, Lewis and Work described an area without people and with very few signs of inhabitation by animals. The early summer journals of Clark, Gass, and Lewis described an area that was slowly showing presence of mammals, insects, birds, and plant growth. Visits to the area in mid to late summer would have showed that elk, deer, and bear actively lived in the area. Smaller mammals and birds would have also been actively interacting with the plants and animals. Small hunting and fishing camps of the Nez Perce would have been inhabited. Instead, the journals described an area with minimal human and large mammal activity. The Lolo Trail upon which they traveled was one of the only marks of human activity. Even this trail was covered with fallen trees, steep slopes and over ten feet of snow at times. Most telling of these travels was that none of the journals described any people crossing into the area now known as the Selway Bitterroot Wilderness Area. Some travelers most surely did find wandering horses. Into the mid-1800s, few if any European explorers entered the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. The first explorers and fur traders interacted with the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area through viewing the mountains and hunting animals that lived in the area for food during their journeys. These mountains were seen and most importantly experienced as places that could not support people for daily inhabitation. Another culture was beginning to see the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers as a kind of "peopleless land."

One white person who did travel through the later-named Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area was Reverend Samuel Parker. In 1835, Parker traveled through the Bitterroot Mountains while Marcus Whitman returned to New York to bring more missionaries to the Columbia Plateau. At the beginning of his trip, Parker traveled with members of the American Fur Company. At the traditional fur trading rendezvous, Parker went north with Jim Bridger and some Nez Perce and Flatheads. Parker and the Nez Perce and Flatheads broke away from Bridger party and headed west into the Bitterroot Mountains. Bridger and his men knew that the mountains did not contain beavers, so they continued heading north. Later when Parker left the Salmon River, he wrote, "the scenery was grand. While there was some level bottom-land along the river, in every direction mountains were rising above mountains, and peaks above peaks, up to the region of perpetual snow" (Parker 116). During the journey across the southern Nez Perce Trail, Parker became sick with a cold and most probably the flu. Although ill, he wrote, "So much sublimity and grandeur, combined with so much variety, is rarely presented to view" (Parker 116). He described the mountain trail: "Parts of the way the ascent and descent was at an angle of 45° and some places even more steep; and sometimes on the verge of dizzy precipices; sometimes down shelves of rocks where my Indian horse would have to jump from one to another" (Parker 120). He asked, "can this section of country ever be inhabited, unless these mountains shall be brought low, and these valleys exalted?" (Parker 120). Parker's descriptions were enhanced by

his continuously bleeding himself. He wondered whether he "shall perish in these wild, cold mountains." When Parker finally arrived at Fort Walla Walla, he "never felt more joy" (Josephy 138). When he returned to the Clearwater Valley again in 1836, he chose to explore the upper Columbia and return to the east by ship through Vancouver rather than to return using the Nez Perce Trail. In 1838, Parker published a narrative of his journey, similar, but at times different to the views of Clark, Lewis, and Gass about the Bitterroot Mountains. Unlike the prior men, Parker spoke of the aesthetic beauty of the place using romantic language of the period.

In 1837, the first Europeans settled in the Clearwater Valley. Eliza and Henry Spalding believed they traveled at the request of four Nez Perce/Flathead people who traveled to St. Louis asking to bring the Christian religion to the Nez Perce of the Clearwater Valley.⁷ The Spaldings along with Marcus and Narcissa Whitman established missions on the Columbia Plateau. In 1839, Sara and Asa Bowen Smith established a mission near Kamiah, Idaho. The Spaldings traveled to the Clearwater River Valley along the Oregon Trail to Walla Walla, to Fort Vancouver, and then back up the Columbia River to the Snake River. The Spaldings eventually settled near the mouth of the Lapwai Creek. Not only did the Spaldings introduce the Christian religion to the Nez Perce, but they also introduced agriculture and cattle grazing (Drury 234). Henry believed that the

⁷ Interestingly, the Spaldings were commissioned for their ministry with the Nez Perce in First Presbyterian Church, Ithaca, New York. Approximately 170 years later my husband was ordained in the same church.

introduction of agriculture would facilitate the Nez Perce's conversion to Christianity. His diary included entries like the following: "continue to work at fence, make good progress" (Drury 258). The cattle brought from the east needed to be fenced in and the wild animals fenced out. In a letter to David Greene, Secretary for Correspondence of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, Henry requested "A quantity of strychnia or Nux Vomica sufficient to kill 1000 wolves" (Drury 268). His diary entries for the spring and summer of 1839 consisted mostly of notes about fields plowed and corn, peas, and potatoes planted.

As the spring turned to summer, the number of Nez Perce attending Sabbath services decreased. The Nez Perce's subsistence activities moved them to the Camas and Weippe Prairies for camas digging and the larger tributaries of the Clearwater for salmon fishing. In mid-autumn 1839, Henry wrote, "Sabbath. Not quite as many as usual. Many have left for roots, game, fish &c. Nothing effectual can be done for this people till they are settled. Oh hasten that day, Gracious God" (Drury 278). Henry's prayers were answered. The onset of winter in the foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains increased the number of Nez Perce staying in the Clearwater River Valley during the spring and summer months. More people attended the Spaldings' Sabbath services.

In addition to agriculture and grazing, Henry also built a sawmill. On mid-spring 1840, Henry wrote, "The saw today cuts through the first board. Thank the Lord for this great favor. May this mill prove an important means in settling

the Lord for this great favor. May this mill prove an important means in settling the people on their lands" (Drury 287). In 1840, Henry taught the Nez Perce how to plow land near the Lapwai Mission and plant vegetables and wheat. The number of Nez Perce that came to Sabbath services in the spring of 1840 did not decrease as much as in 1839.

A review of the diaries of both Eliza and Henry Spalding show that they did not ever travel to the Bitterroot Mountains. The Spaldings stayed on the Columbia Plateau. They did travel to the Whitman Mission at Waiilatpu and to the foothills of the Blue Mountains. Henry only traveled as far east as Kamiah twice to visit the Asa Bowen and Sarah Smith's Mission. Henry traveled to Kamiah in early summer 1839 to welcome the Smiths and then in 1841 when the Smiths began to find the Nez Perce troublesome. He wrote "mountains exceedingly difficult to descend, arrive about dark at Mr. S[mith's]. Feet very wet and very cold" (Drury 301). The mountains Henry wrote about were the Clearwater Mountains that make up the foothills of the Bitterroots in the Clearwater River Valley.

In late spring 1839, Asa Bowen Smith established his mission near Kamiah. As a linguist, Smith was interested in translating the Bible into Nez Perce and learning the Nez Perce language. Smith disagreed with Spalding's method of settling the Nez Perce. Smith believed that the American Board of Commissioners did not have the resources to supply the Nez Perce with seed, agricultural equipment, and cattle (Drury 121). In mid-autumn 1840, Insinmalakin

and Inmtamlaiakin, two Nez Perce men, came to Smiths' mission at Kamiah and ordered him to leave the land. The Nez Perce realized that the missionary's presence encouraged more white settlers to homestead on Nez Perce land. The isolation of the Kamiah Mission away from other white settlers allowed the Nez Perce who camped in the Kamiah Valley to force out the Presbyterian minister. During Smith's short stay, he worked with the Nez Perce to create a written alphabet and to publish a Bible in their Sahaptin dialect. Six months after the trouble with the Nez Perce, the ill health of Sara Smith and the hostility of some of the Nez Perce forced the Smiths to leave the mission without permission from the Board. The Kamiah mission was too isolated for Sarah Smith to receive medical treatment, and the hard winters exacerbated her many physical and emotional ailments. The Smiths left for the Sandwich Islands because of the hostile climate of the Pacific Northwest in summer 1841. No records exist of Asa Bowen Smith traveling to the foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains. Smith would have been aware of Samuel Parker's experience with the Bitterroot Mountains.

The missionaries' successful crossing of the Oregon Trail and the settlement of the missionaries near the foothills of the Blue and Bitterroot Mountains brought many settlers over the Oregon Trail. The majority of settlers continued onto the Willamette Valley, but a few settled near the Whitman Mission at Waiilatpu and the Spalding Mission near Lapwai. These settlers began to farm and raise cattle and sheep on traditional gathering areas. In

encouragement of Henry Spalding. These farming activities pressured some Nez Perce to abandon their annual travels to their traditional hunting and gathering areas near or in the Bitterroot Mountains. In addition, the arrival of white settlers brought diseases to the Nez Perce, which caused many to die of measles, small pox, and influenza. These factors lessened the impact the Nez Perce had on elk, deer, and moose populations. In addition, fewer berries were gathered in the Bitterroot Mountains. The white settlers also considered the wolves and other predators varmints, and therefore they killed many to protect cattle and sheep in the meadows of the Clearwater River Valley. With these significant changes in the human population, the transformation of the Clearwater and Bitterroot Valleys from prairies of camas and other wetland plants to a land of wheat and cattle grazing began.

The forty-five years of the land's contact with white settlers, although few white traders, trappers and settlers ventured into the mountains, changed the interaction of humans with the Bitterroot Mountains. Fewer Nez Perce trekked in the area for hunting and gathering. Fewer wolves, mountain lions, and other predators hunted the deer and elk due to predator extermination programs. The diminishing number of predators increased the population of elk and deer in later years. These modifications continued the constant cycle of change in the valleys of the Selway and Lochsa Rivers.

The first Europeans perceived these valleys of the Selway and Lochsa Rivers as barriers to their desires and goals evidenced by the frustrations

described in their journals. Each person spoke or alluded to the lack of human habitation observed during their travels through the mountains. A few, specifically Clark and Parker, wrote of the beauty of the snow-covered peaks. These perceptions, though similar to the Nez Perce, did not carry with them the Nez Perce tradition and respect for the land. The Lochsa and Selway River watersheds were seen only as a place to journey through or around, not as an important place of a group's homeland. The last five decades of the 1800s would bring new people to the valleys of the Bitterroot Mountains, and these people would begin to perceive this place in similar but distinctly different ways.

CHAPTER V

ROAD BUILDERS, MINERS, PIONEERS, AND WAR

The fur trade and white European settlement in the valleys to the east and west of the Selway and Lochsa River watersheds caused substantial changes in these valleys. Throughout these changes, trees, plants, animals and humans continued their relationship with each other. The smaller population of Nez Perce and the increased population of white settlers and trappers changed the interactions between humans and the plant and animal communities. The tree, plant and animal interactions continued, but as before they were constantly changing due to the complex web of connections. Snow, rain and wind caused erosion of the soil and growth of plants and animals. Late summer and early autumn thunderstorms generated lightning that caused fallen trees and dried shrubs to catch fire. The wet years of the early 1800s brought increased growth to the trees and shrubs of the higher elevations. As time moved into the sixth decade of the 1800s, more dry years came to Lochsa and Selway River Valleys (Habeck 25). Substantial areas burned, which allowed shrubs to grow on the floor of old growth forests and new tree species to thrive where crown fires occurred.

The increased population in the West brought road builders, settlers, miners, and military men to the valleys surrounding the Bitterroot Mountains. These people were searching for an easy railroad route to the Pacific, looking for fertile land to grow crops and support their families, seeking quick wealth, or providing protection for settlers. The road builders determined that the watersheds of the Selway and Lochsa Rivers provided a barrier to railroad construction, just as the Corps of Discovery determined that a water-based route was impossible. The settlers, like the fur traders and the Corps of Discovery, considered the Bitterroot Mountains as a barrier to travel. The high elevations and enormous snowpack hindered the gold miners from a constant supply of gold. The military men perceived the mountains as a barrier to apprehending the escaping Nez Perce. These people were different from the first explorers since they considered the monetary value of the resources an important aspect of the Bitterroot Mountains. Nevertheless, the land continued to be a place without human settlement that was a barrier to their desires, while at moments of contemplation the visitors wrote of the beauty of the land. Alternatively, the Nez Perce continued to view the Bitterroot Mountains as a place of spiritual and physical renewal and growth, and most importantly as their homeland. In the 1877, the Nez Perce would journey along the Lolo Trail to escape from the people who had taken their land.

The presence of the missionaries and the increased travel over the Oregon Trail brought eastern settlers to the West. In 1818 and 1827, the United

States and the British government agreed to occupy the Oregon country jointly since so few British and American citizens lived in the area. The Oregon country encompassed lands west of the Continental Divide, south of the 49th parallel and north of the 46th parallel. With the increased travel on the Oregon Trail in the 1840s, more and more American settlers began to settle in the Willamette Valley and other river valleys. The presence of settlers in these fertile river valleys changed the interactions between animal and humans. The first law enacted and tax collected in the Oregon Territory funded bounties for the killing of wolves that killed livestock (Schwantes, Pacific Northwest 114). These laws and the increased presence of American settlers pressured the British government to ratify a treaty with the United States government, which created the international border at the 49th parallel.

The travel of white and a few black American settlers did not escape the notice of the entrepreneurs and monopolists of the East. In the fertile valleys, east and west of the Bitterroot Mountains, settlers homesteaded their 160 to 640 acre parcels allowed by the Donation Land Act of 1850 and other homesteading laws. Settlers claimed approximately three million acres of land in the Oregon Territory from 1850 to 1855 (Schwantes 121). Railroad, timber, and banking institutions began to buy land for future profits.

The success of Spalding in converting Nez Perce to Christianity in the Clearwater Valley later encouraged other Presbyterian missionaries to live and work in the Clearwater Valley. The McBeth sisters established a church in

Kamiah, which is still active today. During their tenure in the foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains, the McBeth sisters traveled across the Bitterroot Mountains to the Lemhi Valley to minister to the Shoshone. Kate McBeth described the journey by stating, like others before her, "It was a rough road over the mountains" (McBeth 209). She further described the mountains above Kamiah in the following way: "Mountain ranges are on both sides of the river, not bare steep mountains as you might imagine but made up of buttes (little hills), one rising back of and higher than the other one until the fifth, sixth, or seventh, with its pretty fir trees, makes heaven seem but a step farther away" (McBeth 257). The influence of the Spaldings and the McBeth sisters and the Christianity they brought to the Nez Perce had a substantial effect on the Nez Perce and their interactions with the white settlers and the land. As Kate McBeth noted, Nez Perce adults "tell yet how afraid they were to go alone to the mountains for their Wyyakin" (McBeth 261). The Christian Nez Perce no longer believed in the importance of the mountains for spiritual growth. Christianity had brought a different view to the Nez Perce who converted to Christianity. This new religion changed their spirituality and their view of the land that shaped this spirituality.

A few homesteaders settled in the valleys surrounding the Bitterroot Mountains. In 1849, the military brought John Owen to the Bitterroot Valley of Oregon country. In 1850, Owen became a trader in Bitterroot Valley and built Fort Owen. During his early days in the Bitterroot Valley, Owen described the Bitterroot Mountains as "The tremendous tumult of peaks constitutes what is

perhaps the most difficult area of equal size within the continental limits of the United States and is still, in parts, virtually unknown and unpenetrated" (Dunbar I:26).

From 1851 to 1863, Owen's journals described in detail sixteen successful trips across the Bitterroot Mountains for trade and other reasons. Of these sixteen trips, Owen successfully traversed the Lolo Trail three times (and failed once), as well as the Middle Nez Perce Trail once. In Owen's journal, he also mentioned two trips in autumn 1851 and early late spring 1854, which were unsuccessful due to excessive snow (Dunbar I:80). In each of these journeys, Owen described the troubles of finding the trail and the frustration with climbing over downed trees and navigating steep trails. Owen never was able to easily negotiate the Lolo Trail. Owen's first trip over the Lolo Trail began in mid-autumn 1852. During this trip, Owen wandered near the Lolo Trail and was lost numerous times. Owen required fourteen days to travel from the Bitterroot Valley to Weippe Prairie. He traveled through heavy snow. Sometimes as much as twelve inches fell during the day. Before reaching Lolo Hot Springs, one of Owen's horses lost his balance and fell over 1000 feet. "With some difficulty we reached the horse and got the packs loose & Carried them to the Summit left the animal for dead" (Dunbar I:52). Later in the trip, they left another horse for dead because of injury. He commented, "No small job to day to drive hungry animals through the timber" (Dunbar I:53).

During many of the days, Owen was unable to reach sufficient camps at night and was forced to camp on the trail. Also, many times he was separated from the women in his party. Since the women carried the bedding, Owen was forced to sleep in the snowy mountains without shelter three times during his two week trip. Throughout the journal, he described "long & sharp ascents" and crossing many mountain streams (Dunbar I:52). As he left the Bitterroot Mountains, his daily journal entries become one line statements. Only during his trip through the mountains did his journal describe the terrain and problems encountered. Owen's journal did not include the return trip.

Owen's second recorded trip began at The Dalles in mid-spring 1854. Just as Lewis & Clark before him, Owen tried to cross the Lolo Trail in spring before the snow melted in the high mountain passes. As with the Corps of Discovery, the Nez Perce "give me but little encouragement" (Dunbar I:59). Owen remained in camp near Kamiah for four days until he believed that the warm weather of the river valley melted the snow of the mountains. Owen believed his theory that due to the swollen streams of the Clearwater River and Lawyer Creek, the mountains would be devoid of snow. On Owen's third day on the trail, he encountered "a long & rocky ascent [which] brought us to the foot of the Mt. We have had some trouble from fallen timber which had completely barricaded the road in many places which we could only move using the axe latter part of the day snow banks which are not strong Enough to bear the

animals" (Dunbar I:59). Owen observed, "we are now fairly in the Mts. & their white frosty heads are to be seen in Evry direction" (Dunbar I:59).

The next day after less than five miles of travel Owen's party encountered "another long drift some two Miles in length & about five or six feet deep & not hard [enough] to bear [the horses]" (Dunbar I:60). Owen commented that he was "Egregiously Mistaken" to think that he could travel over the snowy mountains (Dunbar I:60). Owen refused to give up and on the next day he scouted the mountains to find an easier trail. He wrote in his journal, "we measured the depth of the snow in several places and should think it about four feet or upwards the Spring appears to be backward & the snow disappears but slowly I think there is nothing left for us but a retreat to take the road to the Spokan River" (Dunbar I:60). The similarities between the Corps of Discovery and Owen's experiences were remarkable. Instead of waiting for the snow to melt, Owen's journey was different than Lewis and Clark's since he chose to travel to the Bitterroot Valley across what was to become the Mullan Road. The awareness of Owen and the white settlers of this easier route brought fewer people into the watersheds of the Lochsa and North Fork of the Clearwater Rivers.

In early autumn 1854, Owen used the middle Nez Perce Trail over the Bitterroot Mountains. This trail took him through the watersheds of both the Lochsa and Selway Rivers. This trip took Owen twenty-one days to complete. During the majority of the trip, Owen was lost. During three days of the trip,

Owen wandered through the forests of the Bitterroots. At one point, Owen got turned around and traveled in circles looking for his "old wife" (Dunbar I:81-83). During these three days, Owen encountered "a beautiful Prarie with a beautiful Stream of Water...the road in places bad from fallen timber...Some Very Sharp ascents & descents but Not long trail open & good Except where I found rock Which was hard on the Animals feet" (Dunbar I:82-83). After twelve days on the trail, Owen began to be fearful of snow. He pushed his party of people, horses and mules. After two weeks in the Bitterroot Mountains, Owen began his journal with "Well if one did Not Care about telling the truth he Would Say last Night & to day fair but Not So" (Dunbar I:84). Owen remained in camp due to snow and rain even though "I am getting Short of provisions My Meat has been out for two days I have Still a little corn meal & some pounds of rice I have been Much longer than I Expected" (Dunbar I:84).

Owen also had run out of provisions for his horses and mules. Therefore, the party walked five of the last ten days on the trail. After close to three weeks in the mountains, Owen began to compare his travels through these mountains with the Hebrews journey through the wilderness with Moses. Owen encountered "Some three ridges the last of Which was high with a very long & Sharp descent down on to a Small Mt. brook at the foot of Mt. Jordan" (Dunbar I:85). Throughout the last ten days in the Bitterroot Mountains, Owen never noted encountering game animals to feed his party.

Most probably due to the difficulty of this trip, Owen did not travel through the Bitterroot Mountains for the next three years. Owen made four trips over the Bitterroot Mountains using either the Mullan Road or the southern pass near the Oregon Trail. In 1857, Owen decided to travel to Vancouver using the Lolo Trail. He described a "Road Mountainous with fallen timber travelling bad" (Dunbar I:177). As he traveled to Vancouver for saddle repair, he got lost twice in the "sharp & tedious Ascent...tedious & sharp descent...Several tedious ridges" of the trail. "In fact it has been Mt. Ridge after Mt. ridges" (Dunbar I:177). Interestingly, during his travels through the Bitterroot Mountains, Owen wrote in his journal daily. His travels from the Craig's Ranch in the Clearwater Valley to Vancouver and back to Fort Walla Walla were described in only one journal entry.

Owen's travels showed the difficulty of traveling through the central Bitterroot Mountains. During every trip, Owen wandered off the trail and lost his way for up to a few days. Like the earlier journals, Owen described a land that was not suited to human habitation. The trail was steep and there were very few grassy meadows for the horses. In addition, travel from late autumn to early summer was treacherous due to blinding snowstorms or heavy snowpack. The similarities of Owen's journal entries with the earlier explorers were remarkable. In addition, his inability showed that the Lolo Trail was a poorly marked trail that required knowledge of and respect for the terrain, something that the Nez Perce developed in their traditions.

The presence of John Owen and other homesteaders in the Bitterroot, Clearwater, Palouse, and Clark's Fork River Valleys, along with the settlers in the Willamette Valley and other Oregon Territory valleys, did not escape the notice of eastern railroad men and other capitalists. In the early 1850s, approximately fifty years after the travels of Lewis & Clark, Isaac I. Stevens and thirteen men, in conjunction with railroad interests, began to survey a northern route across the country. In 1854, Congress appropriated \$30,000 to survey a northern military route across the country (Dunbar 180). Stevens identified two passes through the central Bitterroot Mountains. These trails were the traditional trails of the Nez Perce used for travel to the plains. John Mullan surveyed the Lolo Trail made infamous by the Corps of Discovery and A.W. Tinkham surveyed the southern Nez Perce Trail.

In 1854, Mullan surveyed two trails through the Bitterroot Mountains. In early autumn 1854, Mullan explored a pass north of the Bitterroot Mountains which is now the path of Interstate 90 from Missoula to Spokane. In mid-autumn (about the same time of year as Lewis & Clark), Mullan followed the route taken by Lewis & Clark approximately fifty years before. Before Mullan started on his journey, he was ambivalent about the route. He described it as "very rugged and difficult," but he also believed it "feasible and practicable" for railroad travel (Stevens 530).

During the eleven days of travel from the Bitterroot Valley to Weippe Prairie, Mullan characterized the route as "high and steep mountains, obstructed

by much fallen timber, which proved fatiguing to our animals" (Stevens 530). On their first night on the trail, their horses strayed back to their camp in the Bitterroot Valley since there was no grass at the camp. On their second day on the trail, Mullan described the days to come from a high vantage point. "Gaining a high point of view, we had a prospect in every direction, where nothing was seen save an immense bed of high, rugged, pine-clad mountains" (Stevens 530). Because of the ruggedness of the terrain, Mullan did not even describe these pines as merchantable timber as he had during his other travels in the northern Bitterroots. Finding the Lolo Hot Springs allowed the starving horses a chance to feed on the meadow grass around the springs. They encountered the Lochsa River and Mullan described it as having "an exceedingly rapid current, over a rocky, stony bed. It is bounded on each side by high, steep, rugged pine-clad mountains" (Stevens 531).

Mullan's illustration of his experiences of these mountains read entirely like the experiences of Lewis, Clark, Gass, Work, and Owen. He referred to Lewis & Clark's route as different from his own. He believed that his route was easier, but he stated "they took the left-hand trail, which proved, by their description, as difficult, if not more so than the one we followed" (Stevens 531). During these travels, Mullan did not observe or hunt any animals. Only on his first day, while still in the Bitterroot Valley, did he described "The many signs of elk tracks seen through this prairie, [which] shows that this is a great resort for animal" (Stevens 530). No doubt Mullan also used the Lewis & Clark journals to

ensure that he packed enough food for his men, so that they would not have to kill a colt for meat. The palate of the military man of the 1850s was probably more refined than that of the explorer of 1805.

Over the final nine days of travel, Mullan described "cold and windy" nights with the horses straying throughout the "many miles into thick timber" (Stevens 530). Mullan's description of his surroundings continued with the following statement: "along the sides of the mountains, rendered difficult by the great quantity of fallen timber along the trail, which at times led over the steep and rugged mountains proved fatiguing to our animals" (Stevens 530). Mullan was describing a trail he considered easier than the travels of the day before. Mullan's travels became "a labyrinth of mountains, all clad with pine, balsam fir, mountain ash, honeysuckle, cedar and willow, with much underbrush and some of the higher peaks covered with perpetual snow" (Stevens 532).

After one week on the trail, Mullan observed mountain grouse, blue jays, rock squirrels, rabbits, weasels and mink. On the next day, Mullan "caught a glimpse of the distant prairies which was a sight truly refreshing after our rugged toiling through the mountains" (Stevens 532). The next day, Mullan and his survey crew rose early to arrive at the Weippe Prairie and the hospitality of the Nez Perce. Unfortunately, Mullan did not embrace the Nez Perce as the Corps of Discovery did. He expected the Nez Perce to give freely of their time and food without payment or trade. Mullan's opinion of the Nez Perce most probably

colored Stevens' view of the Nez Perce during his negotiations with the Plateau Indians in 1855.

A year prior to Mullan's trip on the Lolo Trail, Tinkham surveyed the southern Nez Perce Trail. Tinkham's party began the journey in late autumn 1853 and completed it three days before winter solstice. During this expedition, Tinkham met snow depths of over six feet, which required them to travel on foot, and abandon some of their survey equipment, including his barometer and thermometer. While on foot, Tinkham's party averaged less than seven miles a day. As Tinkham left the Bitterroot River Valley and entered the eastern Bitterroot Mountains, "the wooded hills immediately closed in upon the stream; the valley narrowed until it was not over a quarter of a mile wide; patches of snow discovered themselves, and the air grew chilly. A few miles farther the snow was several inches deep, the streams were partially or wholly frozen" (Stevens 279-280). As they traveled further into the mountains, the trail attained "a summit elevation of 7,040 feet, the trail keeping mostly on the open hill-tops, and its ascent and descent, and the snow, gave us three days of hard labor." As with most of the other travelers across the Bitterroot, Tinkham remarked that most of the time "our animals had nothing to eat" (Stevens 280). Tinkham described steep descents of over 2,000 feet with subsequent ascents of over 5,000 feet. As all of the travelers before him, Tinkham got a chance to describe the Bitterroots from a high summit. "The views which I did gain discovered mountains of remarkable sameness, most of them wooded nearly or quite to their summits; no

sharply-obtruding peaks; few with gray-brown ridges breaking the monotonous evenness of dark. Rounded summits, and no open valleys, pleasant lakes, or mountain prairies, such as distinguish the main range of the Rocky mountains" (Stevens 280). In the middle of his report, Tinkham remarked the trail is "not promising as" a railroad route (Stevens 280).

These surveys performed by General Stevens and his men proved successful. The northern railroad route across the country travels north of the Bitterroots near Coeur d'Alene Lake and through Missoula, Montana was chosen as the best route for the railroad. Even today, no railroad route runs from the Clearwater River Valley into the Bitterroot River Valley. Route 12, which closely approximates Mullan's journey across the Lolo Trail, would not be completed for another 100 years. Even today, the Selway River watershed remains a barrier to easy travel across the mountains.

In 1855, General Stevens, who became the governor of Washington Territory after Oregon became a state in 1859, returned to the Columbia Plateau to negotiate a treaty with the Nez Perce, Cayuse, Palouse, Flathead and other Indian groups of the Columbia Plateau. During these negotiations, the Nez Perce were able to keep the majority of their land. Less than five years after this treaty was signed, Elias Pierce illegally crossed the Nez Perce land and began to pan for gold near Orofino Creek. In 1861, Latah County, near the Palouse River, became the most populous county in Washington Territory. Miners discovered gold in the foothills of the Bitterroots on tributaries of the North Fork of the

Clearwater River. As the gold discoveries became scarce in this part of the Clearwater Valley, miners found gold in the Salmon River watershed and in the Boise Basin. The uplifts caused by the battle between Coyote and the Monster did not leave behind concentrations of metals considered precious by the white miners. In 1898 when John Leiberg surveyed the Bitterroot Mountains he noted, "The Bitterroot Range is deficient in mineral-bearing areas throughout the granite sections" (Moore 84). Therefore, the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers were not extensively mined, if at all. Even today, these watersheds are not earmarked as potential mining sites.

Travel from Portland to the gold mines required a steamboat ride up the Columbia River with two portages around the Columbia Falls. In the spring with the water level high the steamboats transported miners to Lewiston. During other times of the years, miners traveled by stagecoach from Walla Walla to Lewiston. Lewiston was the supply town for the miners. Many miners spent a few days in Lewiston to buy mules, food, and supplies prior to traveling to the gold mines. The road from Lewiston to the Salmon River mines required over seven days of travel. Most travel occurred from mid-spring to mid-autumn since snow made traveling treacherous during other seasons. Most miners described the trail from Lewiston over the Camas Prairie as "very fine" (Berry 11). As the miners left the prairie and entered the mountains, the traveling became slower and the road turned "rough" (Berry 11). One traveler who made the journey in mid-Spring stated, "Road bad. We made our camp to night in Snow 3 feet deep; but we got a

tolerable good place by shoveling the snow away and piling fir brush on the ground" (Berry 11). After spending approximately one month in the Salmon River mines and finding no gold, one miner described the beauty of the area. "From where I am sitting the scene is a magnificent one. On the south is seen the snow clad peaks of the Rocky Mountains, on the West the Salmon Mountains, On the North and East the Salmon and Craig Mountains. The mountains and valleys are covered with the rich verdure of summer" (Berry 15).

One prospector traveled the Lolo Trail from Missoula in the winter of the gold rush days. As he and his party traveled through the Lolo Pass and into the western Bitterroot Mountains, the prospector related that he and his team ran out of "grub." So they decided to abandon the trail and head straightaway to a lower elevation. He wrote the following about the next few weeks' travel:

We took off right down a mountain draw, supposing we would strike a cabin or other civilization in a couple days, but in this we were mistaken, for we were in a vast country where travel was slow on account of brush and fallen timber. It was a beautiful country, completely wild. Great stands of white pine clothed rugged ravines from which we crawled up onto ridges where we could look out at more timber as far as we could see. Our only hope was to continue downward, following the creek beds and hoping eventually to find our way out. Instead of a couple of days, it took us a couple of weeks. In a few days we getting terribly hungry. When we finally killed a pine squirrel and roasted it by hanging it over a fire, we pronounced it good, but it didn't do much toward stopping our hunger (Munson 80)

Florence, Pierce, Elk City, and Warrens sprang up during these gold rush years. Located near the placer mines, these towns supplied the miners with

equipment, food, and liquor. In addition to these towns near the placer mines, Lewiston supplied the placer mining towns with staples. The trails from Lewiston to the placer mining towns became areas for robberies and murders. Legend has it that Henry Plummer, considered the most famous of these bandits, and his gang operated out of Lewiston and Virginia City for a short time and robbed many miners and businessmen coming out of the mines and mining towns with their gold. The majority of thefts occurred in the western and eastern foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains (McConnell, Early History 107). The lack of people traveling these trails allowed these legends and tall tales to proliferate.

One true story involved the murder of Lloyd Magruder and five other men in mid autumn 1863. Magruder, a merchant in Lewiston, who was returning from a successful trading expedition in Bannack and Virginia City carried over \$18,000 in coin, scrip and gold dust. The murders occurred on the southern Nez Perce Trail deep in the Bitterroot Mountains. This location was chosen because of its distance from settlements, and for the ease in hiding the body. Five of the men were killed with an axe, and one was shot in the head. The bodies of the men, horses, and mules were rolled down a deep ravine near the camp. The hilly terrain of the Bitterroots allowed the bodies to be concealed fairly easily. Billy Page, one of the murderers, brought the authorities to the camp in late spring 1864 to find the bodies (Hamilton, Bloody Deed 222). One wonders if Page would not have turned on his companions whether the bodies would ever have been found. Magruder's murderers chose a place where the bodies would have

been hard to find. This mining route was abandoned when the gold mines of Montana dried out and the gold miners moved to the Boise Basin and the Coeur d'Alene mines.

While most of the small towns near the placer mines emptied of miners after the gold supply was exhausted, Lewiston continued as a trade route on the Snake River. As the Bitterroot gold rush occurred, Idaho Territory was created from Washington Territory. Since Lewiston was the largest town in the territory and had the most politically connected residents, it was named the territorial capital. With the discovery of precious metals in the Snake River Valley, the capital was moved to Boise less than two years after creation of the territory. With the movement of territorial capital to southern Idaho and the discovery of gold in southern Idaho, the major trade routes from Portland and Walla Walla were along wagon routes from Boise to Bannock. Lewiston was no longer a major trade route for gold mining supplies or to other population centers.

In 1865, Congress appropriated \$50,000 to construct a wagon road from Lewiston to Virginia City in the Bitterroot Valley to help the economy of the Clearwater Valley. Wellington Bird, supervisor of the road building team, began to survey for the road in late spring 1866. Just like the Corps of Discovery, Bird and his party waited on the Weippe Prairie for the snow to melt. During his first crossing of the Lolo Trail, Bird encountered a well-worn wagon road from Lewiston to Orofino and from Hell Gate to Virginia City. The route from Orofino to Hell Gate over the Bitterroot Mountains needed to be built. Bird described the

valley bottoms of the Lochsa River and Lolo Creek as "narrow gorges or cañons with nearly perpendicular rocky sides many times a thousand feet or more feet high rendering them impassible for a road" (Baird 18). White settlers' increased use of the trail had opened up larger meadows for horses to graze. White noted, "Over the open country of course grass is abundant and through the timbered region open places are found among the mountains of from a few to several hundred acres in extent where an abundance of excellent grass for feed can be obtained" (Baird 18). After Bird realized that a wagon road could not be built for \$50,000, he decided to upgrade the Lolo Trail for loaded pack trains (Baird 16). These road builders cleared fallen timber and removed brush through the high elevations of the Lolo Trail.

Bird traveled with George B. Nicholson, an engineer, and Oliver Marcy, a botanist. Nicholson traveled both the Lolo Trail and the Southern Nez Perce Trail in the summer of 1866. Nicholson's maps noted that the southern watershed of the Lochsa River and the entire Selway River watershed were "unexplored masses of rugged mountains - deep cañons and dense forests of spruce, hemlock & pine" and "tangled masses of mountains" (Baird 22, 30). In his diary, Nicholson observed that the Southern Nez Perce Trail has "the same character of country found on the mountain section of Lolo Trail" (Baird 31). Marcy described a beautiful landscape of plants, trees, and lakes. While on the trail, Marcy described a spectacular sight. "We saw a lake some seven hundred feet below, inclosed by a rock rim, and fastened to the side of the precipitous ravine

like the nest of the chimney swallow with ice but the blue water appeared about the margin. It was a strange and beautiful sight - a lake in mid air" (Baird 40). Marcy noted the presence of white fir, red fir and douglas fir at mid elevations. Marcy also noted that at the higher elevations, "the flowers seemed in haste to bloom" and "dwarfed to fit their condition" (Baird 50-51).

The plant and animal communities in the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers continued to interact with each other but the areas surrounding the watersheds were changing rapidly due to increased activities such as mining, farming and grazing. The fallen timber and cleared brush from the trail nurtured new growth in the vicinity of the Lolo Trail. The passage of more white settlers caused more fires along the trail. In addition, the snows and freshets caused timber to fall over the trails improved by miners and road builders. Wolf, mountain lion, and grizzly bear populations decreased due to increased hunting to protect sheep and cattle. The elk and deer populations did not decrease proportionately with the population increase since the both white settlers and the Nez Perce supplied the gold mining towns with meat from cattle raised on the plains of the Clearwater River Valley. Men raised in the valleys surrounding the Bitterroot Mountains guided easterners and other city folk into the mountains for big game hunting. This hunting decreased the population of elk, deer, grizzly and brown bear, cougars, and mountain goat and sheep.

In 1863, after the discovery of gold, Stevens again began treaty negotiations with the Nez Perce. Stevens and the U.S. Government wanted the

gold and other precious metal-filled Bitterroots. Through much coercion on the part of Stevens and negotiations with the American-friendly portion of the Nez Perce, the Nez Perce gave title to the Bitterroot Mountains and other areas to the United States. The treaty did not extinguish the rights of the Nez Perce to fish, hunt, and gather in the Bitterroot Mountains and other released lands. Nez Perce bands located in the Wallowa Valley and on the lower Salmon River did not sign this treaty, which created further conflict amongst the Nez Perce and contributed to the Nez Perce War of 1877.

In 1877, the United States government gave the Joseph band of the Nez Perce who were living in the Wallowa Valley thirty days to relocate to the Lapwai Reservation. The Joseph band needed to cross Hell's Canyon of the Snake River and then the Salmon River to reach the Lapwai Reservation. Since the order came in late spring, the Nez Perce were required to cross these rivers in their most swollen state. When young warriors killed four white settlers who were hostile to the Nez Perce, the Joseph and White Bird bands fled from the United States government. Their means of escape from General Oliver O. Howard's troops was over the Bitterroot Mountains using the Lolo Trail. The Nez Perce still used this trail for buffalo hunting trips to the plains and to elk and deer hunting grounds in the Bitterroot Mountains. The decrease in the buffalo population on the plains did reduce the frequency of travel over the Lolo and Nez Perce Trails. Yellow Wolf's description of the journey across the Lolo Trail was short and to the point: "For about six days, coming through the mountains we saw no more

fighting" (McWhorter 106). As the Nez Perce approached the Lolo Pass with the United States soldiers blocking their way, Yellow Wolf only stated, "There are high mountains and a narrow pass where the soldiers are camped" (McWhorter 107). The Nez Perce knowledge of the terrain and contours of the trail allowed easy access through the mountains.

When General Howard's troops came through the mountains a few days later, the troops described a much different landscape. Howard and his men portrayed the trail: "exceedingly difficult and passed mostly over wooded mountains. The woods were filled with fallen timber. This condition of things enabled the Indians to form ambuscades with ease" (O.O.Howard 130). Howard and his men would never have believed that eleven years prior to their journey Bird and his men removed brush and cleared fallen timber. Howard also noted, quite differently from Yellow Wolf that "They (the Nez Perce) were closely pursued through the ravines into the deep canyon, thence to the river - over rocks, down precipices, and along trails almost too steep and craggy to traverse" (127). The trail was so troublesome for Howard and his men that civilians were recruited to clear the trail just as Bird's party had done eleven years earlier. Significantly, the trail building activities of Bird's party had been erased by the winters of the high elevations. Howard remarked, "after twenty-one miles of the roughest country, with Spurgin's pioneers ahead cutting out the trail, we came into camp in the twilight...Then we spurred the weary animals into a tired trot and along this narrow trail descended for miles through the almost impenetrable

forest until we came into the narrowest of valleys. Here we found not a mouthful of food for horse or mule - but the nicest of salmon for men, in water about knee-deep and clear as crystal, rushing and splashing over the rocks" (Howard 141-142). When troops encountered Lolo Hot Springs, Howard described it as "a charming place. The wilderness was speedily changed into a beautiful village" (Howard 142).

Letters written by Howard's troops also report a rugged area. John Fitzgerald wrote to his wife, Elizabeth, "It was a hard mountain trail. They had been all going 15 miles. It is a zigzag, winding, steep trail, in many places impossible for two to walk abreast with either rocks or a dense pine forest close on all sides" (Fitzgerald 292). Like almost every other white traveler through these mountains, Fitzgerald wrote, "We were so high up that the whole extent of mountainous country was spread around us" (Fitzgerald 291). The condition of this trail was so well known that William Tecumseh Sherman called the Lolo Trail "one of the worst trails for man and beast on this continent" (Philips 3).

The Nez Perce's knowledge of the Bitterroot Valley and the plains and mountains of the Montana Territory allowed them to escape from the army's pursuit. In the Bear Paw Mountains, the Nez Perce fought their final military battle with the U.S. Army. The U.S. government finally forced the Nez Perce onto the reservations. The Christian Indians settled at Lapwai, while Joseph and White Bird's bands were exiled to Indian Territory and were not allowed to return

until 1885. The returning Nez Perce settled on the Colville Reservation in north central Washington or on the Umatilla Reservation near the Wallowa Mountains.

The increased settlement in the Clearwater Valley curtailed the hunting and gathering activities of the Nez Perce. White farmers began to homestead in the Camas and Weippe Prairies. These areas were found to have fertile soil for wheat farming and cattle and sheep ranching. The whites further encroached on the remaining lands of the Nez Perce with the passage of the Dawes Act in 1887. This act required the Nez Perce to give up tribal ownership of their reservation and allotted to every male head of the household 160 acres and each other person over the age of 18 years 80 acres and to each child 40 acres of land on the reservation. The Nez Perce lost many of their traditional gathering prairies to the white settlers. Alice Fletcher managed the allotment of the reservation. Historians claim that she was fair with the Nez Perce. Many white farmers and ranchers wanted her to allot land to the Nez Perce "down in canyons where they belong" (Morrill 4). An editorial in the *Lewiston Teller* endorsed mass meetings with the Nez Perce to ensure compliance (James 12). Chief Joseph and other Wallowa Valley Nez Perce refused to accept allotments since "he will remain landless and homeless if he cannot have his own [land] again" (Morrill 10). By 1923, the Nez Perce owned less than 100,000 acres, while the white settlers owned over 650,000 on the reservation (James 19). To travel to the Camas Prairie and the Bitterroot Mountains required travel on roads and trails created by the white settlers since the traditional routes across the prairies were now private

property of white settlers.⁸ A few Nez Perce still traveled to the Bitterroot Mountains to hunt and gather.

The settlers, miners, road builders and military men who traveled in the central Bitterroot Mountains viewed the area as an impediment for easy travel. These men and women described a place much like Lewis and Clark since the Lolo and Southern Nez Perce Trails provided no easy travel. Just as the first explorers who traveled the land, the miners, road builders, settlers and military men wrote of steep descents and ascents and downed timber. The road builders and miners diverged from the first white explorers' perceptions since they spoke of efficiency and monetary value. The gold miners wanted gold, while the road builders wanted a cost effective road for easy travel. The Nez Perce's perceptions continued to deviate from the Europeans' observations since their tradition provided them the knowledge of and respect for the mountains.

After seventy years of white people's interactions with the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds, the area not only contained no human settlements; but few explorers had traveled through the area. Most travelers wandered outside the future wilderness area's boundary. "Peopleless" land still described these lands. The first five decades would challenge this perception of "peopleless" land.

⁸ While taking a break during a class in Clark Fork, Idaho, I overheard a woman extolling the immense wealth of the Nez Perce due to their ownership of the wheat fields of the Palouse and Clearwater Valleys. Even neighbors of the Lapwai Reservation fail to understand that the majority of reservation land was stolen from the Nez Perce under the Dawes Act. Most of the wheat fields are now owned by white Idahoans.

CHAPTER VI

THE FOREST SERVICE AND WILDERNESS DESIGNATION

The Lolo Trail is no more. The bulldozer blade has ripped out the hoof tracks of Chief Joseph's ponies. The trail was worn deep by centuries of Nezperce and Blackfeet Indians, by Lewis and Clark, by companies of Northwest Company fur traders, by General Howard's calvary horses, by Captain Mullan, the engineer, and by early-day forest ranger. It is gone, and in its place there is only the print of the automobile tire in the dust...Only ten years ago it was just as Lewis and Clark saw it. Elers Koch (1935)

As the Nez Perce were being driven from their land and the United States was determining the correct boundaries of the new state of Idaho, the watersheds of the Selway and Lochsa Rivers continued to evolve and change. The dry years of the last five decades of the 1800s became the even drier years of the early 1900s. Large fires spread throughout the Bitterroot Mountains. These fires left large expanses of dead trees which, slowly became meadows of beargrass, bitterroot and other meadow plants, and hills of shrubs and opportunistic trees. Bark beetles, woodpeckers and other cavity nesters made these dead trees their homes. Throughout these meadows, huckleberry,

serviceberry and elderberry also grew. These grasses and bushes contributed to the growth of the mule and white-tailed deer and elk populations.

During the first five decades of the 1900s, the number of people encountering the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds increased. Trappers continued to snare mammals for their pelts, but the number of hunters increased because of the increased number of elk and deer in the area. The increase in population brought rich Eastern interests to the forests and valleys to extract trees, metals and nutrients from the soil. The men who traveled to the Bitterroot Mountains perceived a land of limitless timber and other resources. Unlike the Corps of Discovery and earlier explorers, beauty and impenetrability were not part of their observations. The advancement of technology, including automobiles, trucks and airplanes, in all aspects of the United States allowed timber and mining interests to quickly extract trees and ore from the Bitterroot Mountains. In response to these technological changes, the U.S. government designated forest reserves and eventually wilderness areas. The Forest Service rangers who managed the newly designated forest reserves perceived the mountains as a place of beauty that supplied resources to the United States. To this end, unlike any other group that interacted with the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds, they tried to manage the ecosystem by suppressing fire and exterminating native insects. On a more personal level and like most of the people who interacted with mountains, these Forest Service employees, along with modern trappers, perceived their sublime beauty and physical danger.

During these years, white settlers who trapped for fur-bearing animals inhabited the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers. These trappers were solitary figures who patrolled eighty mile traplines with small cabins or lean-tos, one-day travel by snowshoe apart. These trappers killed marten, mink, lynx, fishers, otters, wolverines and foxes during the winter months. In early spring, these trappers brought their furs to market in Missoula or Lewiston. In late spring, they hunted for bear. In the summer and early autumn, they cut wood, repaired their cabins, and packed their cabins with food for the long winter months. Only a few trappers were known to trap in the boundary between the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds. Wes Fales set up a trapline near Elk Summit and built a cabin on White Sand Lake in late 1899. Milt Savage trapped in the vicinity of White Sand River. John Nolan trapped on the North Fork of Moose Creek. Some trappers, like Beaver Jack and Martin Stanley, entered the Lochsa Valley and never returned. Stanley's remains were found near Stanley Butte, a few years after he disappeared (Moore 67). As one author has noted, these trappers met grizzlies more than they met each other (Moore 72). The presence of buried garbage and well-stocked cabins precipitated the sightings of these bears (Kovalicky).

Fur trappers stayed in the area until the late 1940s. In 1937, long-time trapper Bert Wendover stated on the eve of his retirement, "I liked it alone in there. I didn't get lonesome. I spent them twenty years. And they were happy for me too. I enjoyed it all" (Moore 246). This trapper was the first person to

articulate the enjoyment of solitude in the mountains. Bud Moore, a Forest Service employee, trapped in the vicinity of Indian Post Office north of the Lochsa River. In early winter 1937, Moore described the first major storm. "For twenty-one days snow fell with little letup. It piled up seven feet deep on the river, with more than double that depth in the high country. For twenty-one days I mushed [snowshoed] each night into line cabins, leaving a deep trail snow so loose its fluffy crystals looked blue in the wintertime light. For twenty-one mornings I climbed from the cabin's interior up to the snow's surface to find the trails buried by more snow that had fallen in the night" (Moore 256). Later that same winter, after a nighttime snowstorm of thirty-six inches of snow, Moore was forced into a narrow canyon to travel from trap to trap. As he traveled, he realized that the avalanche danger was high and later wrote of the physical danger that reverberates in the journals of Owen and others. He remembered:

I was forced to venture into a narrow canyon upon whose steep, treeless slopes hung tons of loose snow. Sensing danger, I mushed into the edge of the great white amphitheater...Ten yards, twenty yards-the canyon slopes menaced like impending storm clouds...Suddenly, fifty yards beyond the timber, I triggered a small slide. I was buried waste deep, my snowshoes pinned down. With its foundation cracked by the small avalanche, the whole mountainside began to move. Hopelessly trapped, I watched rivers of snow sweep down upon me from the slopes above. I felt no fear just resignation, as if I had played my hand and found that the spirits of the Lochsa held all the aces. As the slide swept over me I covered my face with my arms so that I wouldn't smother in the snow...When the slide stopped, I was buried alive. The weight of the snow was tremendous. Engulfed in darkness but unwilling to surrender life, I thrust both arms upward to make more breathing space. When my mittened hands broke through the slide's surface, I looked up at the most beautiful sky in the world. (Moore 260)

In addition to trappers, more white settlers traveled to the Bitterroot Mountains for hunting. Tales from soldiers who fought in the Nez Perce War brought people to this mountainous area. Yearly, the white settlers from the valleys east and west of the Bitterroot Mountains hunted for elk, deer, grizzly and other animals for both food and trophies. In 1893, the presence of mountain goat and sheep and grizzly enticed William E. Carlin, son of Brigadier General William P. Carlin, A.L.A. Himmelwright and John Harvey Pierce to hire Martin P. Spencer, Missoula-based guide, to take them big game hunting. In addition to Spencer, Carlin's party hired George Colegate as cook for the five-week autumn trip into the Lochsa River watershed. During this journey, Carlin's party left behind Colegate to die on the bank of the Lochsa River. Unknown to the members of this expedition, Colegate was seriously ill prior to the journey. As autumn deepened and the weather worsened, Carlin's party tried to quickly return to the Clearwater Valley, but the snow and travel conditions stopped them. Heavy mid-autumn snowfall covered the Lolo Trail with up to six feet of snow. Spencer, the guide, was unable to find the trail. Therefore, the party traveled to the Lochsa River and tried to raft down the raging Lochsa River; this plan failed. As the party hiked down the Lochsa River without horses, Colegate became unable to walk. The party was forced to leave him on the banks of the Lochsa to save themselves. Two months after leaving Kendrick, Idaho, a military search party near Canyon Creek encountered Carlin's party. Colegate's body was found

in the summer only after three parties had tried unsuccessfully to locate it (Hamilton, Snowbound 198-202).

Like Martin Stanley, many other men guided hunters into the Selway River Valley. In the early 1900s, Alvin Renshaw and his family owned a dude ranch near Bear Creek. Many hunters arrived at the ranch by plane. Hunters killed primarily big game animals, such as grizzly and brown bear, elk, deer and mountain goat. Since grizzly bears were favored among big game hunters, many bears were hunted during the autumn and winter. In addition, many settlers viewed the bears as predatory varmints who killed grazing sheep in the meadows of the Bitterroot foothills. By the mid-1930s, the grizzlies were nearing extinction. Grizzly bears had lived in the Bitterroot Mountains since time immemorial. They had dined on spawning salmon and abundant berries in both the lowland and mountain meadows, and killed grubs and other insects. Like the wolf, no longer did these animals contribute to the diversity of the ecosystem of the Bitterroot Mountains.

The actions of the humans in the plains around the Bitterroot Mountains also changed. More of the plains became farmland and ranchland. The cold winter of 1888 stopped the growth of cattle ranches in the Clearwater and Bitterroot Valleys, but many ranchers held on (Idaho State Historical Society 12). Farming became the preferred homesteading activity in the valleys surrounding the Bitterroot Mountains, although sheep raising still occurred in the valleys, and miners still worked in the Coeur d'Alene region north of the Clearwater River

watershed. The Nez Perce continued to use the remnants of the prairies for camas gathering and the foothills of the Bitterroots for hunting.

These settlers required better and faster transportation methods for timber, food and people. The Union Pacific Railroad laid tracks from Spokane to Moscow in 1885. Not until 1898 did the Northern Pacific Railroad reach Lewiston. The 2,000-foot descent from Moscow to Lewiston required tracks to be laid in the narrow canyon of the Palouse River. From Lewiston, the Northern Pacific built railroad lines to Lapwai Creek and finally to Camas Prairie. At the time, this line of tracks included one of the highest steel trestles in the world. The draw of wheat and timber profits from the meadows and foothills of the Bitterroot Mountains brought the railroads to this secluded area.

More and more public land became private land through homestead acts and legal and illegal maneuvers. Timber frauds occurred throughout the West. Timber companies were reportedly paying \$50 to \$125 for a dummy entryman and \$25 for a witness (Steen 24). Homesteaders cut down young trees for home building and fuel. Government foresters began to see that some of the land should be preserved for later generation's use for fuel, homebuilding and other uses. An 1884 Department of Agriculture document stated that in Idaho forests "One practice which is now universal should certainly be stopped; it is the wholesale destruction of young trees. I very much fear that anything which might now be done to prevent this practice will come too late for our region of country" (Egleston 263).

In 1881, the Division of Forestry was created within the Department of Agriculture. After five years of reports pertaining to forest conservation, Congress gave full statutory authority to the Division of Forestry. After many years of trying to pass legislation in the Congress, the Forest Reserve Act of 1891 passed. With this act, Benjamin Harrison created fifteen reserves of over thirteen million acres, and subsequently Grover Cleveland created over twenty-one million more acres in 1897 (Steen 28). Among these reserves, the Bitterroot Forest Reserve was created. This forest reserve encompassed over 4,147,200 acres (Pinchot, Forest Reserves 7). The Bitterroot Forest Reserve included the entire drainage of the Lochsa, Selway, and North Fork of the Clearwater Rivers, the majority of the northern watershed of the Salmon River and the majority of the South Fork of the Clearwater River watershed.

The Organic Act allocated funds to survey forest boundaries and the state boundary of Idaho and Montana. Leiberg of the U.S. Geological Survey surveyed the area and observed that "the primary divides here designated, with the great number of lateral spurs to which they give rise, form a perfect maze of bewildering ridges" (Leiberg 318). Like most other explorers, he reported the difficulty of the trail in the following way: "curvings, windings, ascents, and descents are incessant and confusing, and in every case only actual travel can determine the exact point at which any particular canyon or spur originates or ends" (Leiberg 318). He also noted that precipitous peaks divide the Selway-Lochsa divide while the Lochsa-North Fork is less broken and easier to travel

through. As if seeing the future of trail and road building in the area, Leiberg commented, "No roads can be built up any of the canyons or valleys, small or big, except by blasting out the way through slopes of the mountains" (Leiberg 322). Less than ten years later, the Forest Service and the railroad companies would be blasting rock up the Lolo Trail.

Leiberg performed a tree and shrub survey of the Bitterroot Forest Preserve. He identified twenty-eight species of trees and mapped their locations. Leiberg observed how the alpine fir regulated snowmelt and water flow and the extent of fire-burned timber (Leiberg 333). He also described many of the qualities of the trees in the Bitterroot Forest Preserve. Leiberg saw fire as "evil" since it adversely affected economic interests of both local and national communities (Moore 99).

The majority of these forest reserves were created in the western states and territories, as the forests of the northern Great Lake states were being denuded by the private timber companies. Frederick Weyerhaeuser and his associates began to set their sights on the forests of Idaho. Weyerhaeuser purchased scrip from Northern Pacific Railroad that entitled him to 40,000 acres of land in the Clearwater River watershed (Idaho State Historical Society 4). Weyerhaeuser needed someone to survey the land before he could claim it. C.O. Brown and his son, Nat Brown, paid local trapper, Wallace Felter, to show them some good timber. As C.O. Brown looked out at the watersheds of the Clearwater River, he stated, "we will select all the good timber that can be seen

from this rock to be ours" (Space, "The Race" 2). Brown only saw board feet of timber. Unlike all other visitors, Brown saw the watershed of the Lochsa River no longer as a barrier, but as a potential economic boom for the Midwestern timber companies. Over the next two weeks, Brown and his men cut trail and surveyed over 30,000 acres of white pine in the Beaver Creek watershed, just north of the Lochsa River watershed. Brown's party encountered steep hillsides, fallen timber and little grass for the horses. After filing scrip for these lands, Brown's party cruised timber for another week for an additional 20,000 acres. This Potlatch Timber Co still owns this land (Space 5). Four other timber holding companies were also cruising for timber in the northern Columbia River watershed.

These five companies, Clearwater Timber Company, Humbird Lumber Company, Edward Rutledge Timber Company, Bonners Ferry Lumber Company, and Potlatch Lumber Company bought timberlands in the North Fork of the Clearwater, Priest, Coeur d'Alene, Kootenai and Palouse River watersheds (Space 4-5). The State of Idaho and Northern Pacific Railroad sold scrip to these companies for purchase of timberlands. Since the southern watershed of the Clearwater was already designated the Bitterroot Forest Reserve, these companies were unable to buy the land of the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds. Timber production remained off these lands. Prior to these purchases, the lumber industry was a growing part of the Idaho economy which, Idaho cut 65,363,000 board feet from 87 sawmills. Most of this timber supplied boards for home construction and fuel for homes and mines.

As the numbers of employees increased at the Forest Service, professional forest rangers began to manage the massive Bitterroot Forest Reserve from the Bitterroot Valley since the Bitterroot Valley grew in population faster than the Clearwater River Valley. This population growth caused over 5,000 acres of timber to be cut near Lost Horse Pass and all the yellow pine to be harvested from Tin Cup Creek. Much like the Corp of Discovery and Work, Bud Moore, retired Forest Service employee, believed that the early rangers "viewed the peaks and canyons as obstacles to transportation and to the development of resources" (Moore 149). In 1898, The Forest Service stationed ten rangers in the Idaho portion of the Bitterroot Forest Reserve. These men spent most of their time trying to control illegal timber cutting near the mining camps of Elk City, Florence and Warren.

In 1900, the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers continued to change as it always had. The presence of the Forest Service grew in the Bitterroot Forest Preserve. In 1902, the forest rangers opened the Lolo Pass, again. The plants, animals and trees continued their growth on this trail. Less than forty years before, Bird widened the trail and removed fallen trees. In addition, in 1877, the military removed trees for Howard's troops. The plants, animals and trees continued to claim the area. The early rangers almost exclusively used the Lolo and Nez Perce Trails for travel and patrol. Few, if any, people lived or traveled in the more remote regions. The first ranger explored the

boundary between the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds in 1904. They arrived at Fish Lake and wondered at the beauty of it all (Moore 241).

Not until 1907 did the Forest Service begin to create trails and build ranger stations outside the shadow of the Lolo and Nez Perce Trail. Elers Koch, Forest Superintendent for the Bitterroot National Forest in Montana decided to build a trail along the Montana/Idaho border. He and Ranger Watson began their trip at Lolo Pass through thirty miles of trail-less country. On the first day, he described "rough going...riding the high divide in glorious weather, with the whole world of endless peaks and ridges on either side" (Koch, Forty Years 74). The next day, Koch realized that they had taken a spur ridge. Instead of retracing his steps, they decided to travel through the valley to the main range. Like many other travelers, Koch "got into the worst country I ever took a horse through, thick alder brush over broken rock, down timber, steep slopes, and every obstacle the mountains can offer a horseman" (Koch 75). They traveled the thirty miles in five days. They almost ran out of food except for two boiled potatoes and bacon rind for their last day on the trail.

A year later in mid-winter, Koch traveled the Idaho/Montana border again from Lolo Pass to Elk Meadows. Without compass, Koch and Karl Woodward traveled on snowshoes with the trail blazes and border monuments buried deep under the snow. They got lost on the trail and ended up on a ridge north of the border. That evening the temperature dropped to 40°F below zero. As snow began to fall, they ran out of food and due to the excessive snow, up to twenty-

five feet, they were unable to find wood for a fire. Their exhaustion "kept [them] bearing to the left to stay on the crest. We continued in this way for half an hour, making fairly good time, when to our utter discouragement we ran into a fresh snowshoe track" (Koch 139). They had traveled in a circle. During this trek in mid-winter, the men observed a few scrub jays, one mouse and a raven. The big game had already retired to the lower elevations for shelter. Two days later, hungry and tired they made it to their destination.

In early summer 1909, Adolph Weholt and his men traveled to Elk Summit to develop a ranger station. This journey of less than 80 miles required seven weeks of travel. The entire Bitterroot Forest Reserve was part of the public domain. The trappers and the prospectors had not claimed fee title to land (Moore 123). Many a trapper had built lean-tos and cabins over the last few decades, but few structures remained. The snow and rain of the slowly decayed these structures. Fire reduced the wood and other materials to ash and nutrients for growth of trees and plants. Grizzly and brown bear, ground squirrels, birds, and other small animals raided the stocked kitchens for food and bedding for shelter and nest material. In addition, bushes and grasses grew from the roofs and walls.

In addition to the Forest Service, settlers continued to desire an easier route through the mountains. Settlers and merchants organized surveys to ascertain a quicker, easier and lower elevation trail to pass through the Bitterroot Mountains. Not until 1908 did the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company and

the North Pacific Railroad Company begin to survey the Lolo Trail for railroad travel. Both companies created pack roads, blasted rock in the Lochsa River canyon and built temporary bridges for their crews and pack trains. This competition for surveying the trail lasted through the winter. The pack animals floundered through snow over twelve feet deep near Lolo Pass. As spring came to the foothills of the eastern Bitterroot Mountains, Northern Pacific Railroad began to grade road for railroad travel. Just as quickly as the surveying and grading began, it stopped with the death of E.H. Harriman of Union Pacific Railroad (Moore 138). Just as before, the trees, plants and animals began to grow over the trail as soon as they quit. Even in the area of rock blasting, erosion slowly erased the presence of jack hammers and drills.

As the forest rangers moved into the area and set up cabins and ranger stations, they did not see that fire was a natural and healthy process for these forests. The Forest Service believed that fire destroyed and wasted trees that could be used for timber. As the seasons of 1910 progressed, the brush and trees of the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds and many of the other watersheds of the Bitterroots became dry from lack of late spring and early summer rains. These conditions were prevalent throughout the West. In addition, increased human activity and settlement in the Coeur d'Alene region and the Bitterroot Valley caused additional fire hazards. Settlers used fire to clear brush and stumps. As summer advanced into autumn, no rain fell on the Bitterroot Mountains. Every day thunderclouds convened above the mountains but no rain

fell. Lightning from these gigantic clouds instead rained down on these mountains and produced small fires in the forests. In addition, freight and passenger trains sent out sparks that caused the dry shrubs near railroad tracks to catch fire. The forest rangers and their limited manpower tried to contain the fires in small areas.

In mid-summer, these small fires combined with dry trees and brush were confronted with hurricane-force winds. These winds blew burning branches into the air and pushed the fire to new areas. A beautiful pink glow extended across the sky. As late afternoon came to the Bitterroot Mountains, the animals, plants and humans in the vicinity of Moose Creek experienced a strange phenomenon. Darkness closed down on the forest. The smoke from the fire obscured the sun. The remaining moisture in plants evaporated as the fire advanced. Animals and humans ran for their lives. Forest Service fire crews and animals sought shelter in streams to protect themselves from smoke and fire (Spencer 55). In the Clearwater River, humans and grizzly bears shared the saving deep pools of river water. In some shallow streams and creeks, fish cooked in the heated water (Spencer 89). Forty-eight hours later, the Clearwater River watershed from Weitas Creek to Kelly Creek, and much of the upper Selway River watershed burned. Ten square miles of land contained only small islands of living trees and brush. Many thousands of animals died. No humans died on the Clearwater River, but over one hundred humans died in northern portions of the Bitterroot Mountains. For the plants, bushes, insects and animals in these mountains, this

cataclysmic fire continued the process of change. Their ancestors experienced these fires many centuries before.

Insects proliferated and fed on the bark of these now dead and dying trees. Specifically, the spruce budworm (*Cheristoneura fumiferana*) and the spruce bark beetle (*Dendroctonus engelmannii*) population expanded exponentially. The insects provided food for bears, woodpeckers and other birds. The fire allowed new growth throughout the region. In some areas, the sterile, burned ground did not allow any growth. Nutrients then were brought to these areas by wind, birds, mammals and insects. Some areas required fifty years to regenerate. In addition, these fire areas stopped the spread of fire in the dry years to come. With nothing to burn, these dead areas extinguished the fire. Over the next century, the Forest Service struggled with the issues of fire.

Most Forest Service personnel in the Bitterroot Mountains were involved with fire. Norman Maclean, author of *A River Runs Through It*, manned a lookout tower on Grave Peak in the summer of 1919. "There were more mountains in all directions than I was ever to see again - oceans of mountains," he noted from the Elk Summit Ranger Station (Maclean 125). After his stint in the lookout tower, Maclean traveled back to the Bitterroot Valley through Bloggett Canyon. During his walk, he turned back to look at Grave Peak and noted "From the divide the mountain I had lived on was bronze sculpture. It was all shape and nothing on it, just nothing. It was color and shape and sky" (Maclean 166). He never crossed the Bitterroot Mountains again.

The 1910 fire in the Bitterroot Mountains changed the way the Forest Service and its forest rangers and the timber companies viewed fire. They determined that fire was a natural occurrence that needed to be stopped to save the forests. Fires caused by railroads, homesteaders and natural occurrences needed to be suppressed as soon as possible. In the Bitterroot Mountains and throughout the Pacific Northwest, the Forest Service and the timber companies agreed that fires must be stopped. In order to achieve this objective, the Forest Service built over twenty-five lookouts in the area between the Lochsa and Selway Rivers in the years after the 1910 burn. No trees could be lost to fire, insect infestation or disease. The Forest Service employees believed that the forests of the Lochsa and Selway River watersheds could be managed for efficient timber production.

In addition to the fire lookouts, the Forest Service realized that new technologies were integral to the suppression of fire and disease. Over the next few years, the Forest Service ran telephone lines from Lolo Hot Springs to the Powell Ranger Station on the Lolo Trail to Elk Summit. These telephone lines allowed the forest rangers to communicate to the supervisors in the major ranger stations located in the Bitterroot and Clearwater River Valleys. The Forest Service installed thousands of miles of telephone lines from the ranger stations to the over twenty lookouts in the area. This technology allowed rangers to know when and where forest fires broke out in the Selway and Lochsa River watersheds. The Forest Service first utilized smokejumpers in the forests of the

Selway River watershed. These men parachuted from airplanes to stop fires soon after lightning started them. The smokejumpers minimized the numbers of roads that needed to be built in the Selway and Lochsa watersheds, but they did stop the natural occurrence of fire in the forest. In addition, Project Skyfire was first instituted in the Lochsa and Selway watersheds. These Forest Service-sponsored programs required fire lookout crews to measure cloud types and movements to ascertain the lightning potential of a storm. When a cloud's lightning potential was favorable for starting a fire, the Forest Service flew planes over the clouds and dropped silver iodide into the clouds. The silver iodide was believed to hinder the formation of lightning. Needless to say after a few years this method of preventing fires was abandoned (Kovalicky).

In addition to lookout duty, Forest Service employees performed many dangerous acts to suppress fires. A group of smokejumpers arrived at a fire on Higgins Ridge in 1961. While fighting the twelve-acre fire, a cold front caused the fire to move in a counterclockwise direction and engulfed the men. Luckily, the men had planned an escape route. They gathered near a pile of rocks with no vegetation and waited six hours for the fire to move. They were rescued three at a time by helicopter; one man as a passenger and two men hanging on the skids (Kovalicky).

The first three decades of the 1900s were dry. In addition to the fires of 1910, large fires burned in 1919, 1924, 1926, 1931 and 1934. Throughout these years, the Forest Service built more roads and hired more men to prevent,

control and suppress fires. These methods did not curtail the amount of area consumed by fire. In 1935, Elers Koch, Supervisor of the Lolo National Forest stated, "so far as results are concerned there is little difference between 1919, when crews of thirty or forty men, in a vain but courageous gesture, were trailing the leeward end of each of five or six gigantic fires, and 1934, when firefighters were counted by the thousands and the fires swept 180,000 acres" (Koch 99). Fire suppression infrastructure included making the rugged Lolo Trail a gravel road. Trucks and cars traveled from the Bitterroot Valley to Lolo Hot Springs and Powell Ranger Station. Forest Road 500, completed in 1934, allowed trucks to travel from Powell Ranger Station to the Clearwater Valley. These "improvements" enabled fire crews to reach backcountry areas quickly but a few Forest Service rangers began to question the reason for these trails. Koch, the foremost forest service employee, suggested the elimination of fire suppression activities in the Selway and Lochsa River watershed of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area.

In "The Passing of the Lolo Trail," Koch questioned the saving of low-value timber lands. Koch maintained that the area "owing to altitude, rugged topography, permanent inaccessibility or inferior timber growth will never, so far as best present judgement indicates, come into the picture as timber producing lands" (Koch 99). More specifically, Koch stresses, "It seems obvious that whatever value the area may have, it is not for timber production" (Koch 99). Although it is doubtful that Koch knew the creation stories, he succinctly noted:

"The upper reaches of the North Fork of the Clearwater, the Lochsa, Selway and Salmon Rivers form a great solid block of yellow Zone 3 on the map, covering 3000 square miles, or two million acres in round numbers. This is a different geological formation" (Koch 99).

In the midst of the dry years and the incredible changes caused by the rise of fire suppression and the transportation systems that supported fire suppression, the Forest Service acknowledged that some portions of the national forests were wild places that needed to be preserved. The first wilderness area was designated in New Mexico in 1922. In 1929, the Forest Service decided that regulations needed to be created to identify areas that did not need roads or where the building of roads would destroy the wild character of an area. These regulations identified the 1,875,306-acre Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area. These L-20 regulations, as they are called, stated "The Chief of the Forest Service shall determine, define, and permanently record...a series of areas to be known as primitive areas, and within which will be maintained primitive conditions of environment, transportation, habitation, and subsistence, with a view to conserving the value of such areas for purposes of public education, inspiration, and recreation (Cunningham 23). With these regulations, the Forest Service acknowledged that timber production was not the only use for the forests. These regulations did nothing to change the method of fire suppression and road building in what was now named, the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area, but they

did begin the process that one day would classify the area as a Congressional-designated wilderness area.

Both fire suppression crews and hunting parties increased their use of automobiles and trucks. The fire of 1934 facilitated the construction of a low standard road along the southern Nez Perce Trail, now known as the Magruder Corridor, by the Civilian Conservation Corps. Automobiles could now travel from the Bitterroot Valley to Elk City. These roads enabled Forest Service rangers to use motorized vehicles to get to the Magruder Ranger Station, the Paradise Guard Station, and to a fire lookout. These caused a depressed Koch to observe that, "The moose at Elk Summit lift their heads from the lily pads to gaze at the passing motor truck" (Koch, Forty Years 98).

In addition to the trails inside the wilderness area and the roads outside the wilderness area, dams and airfields were built inside and outside the wilderness area. Montana farmers built small dams for irrigation on creeks and streams flowing east from the Bitterroot Mountains. Most of these dams remain inside the wilderness area. Larger dams built on the Columbia, Snake and Clearwater hindered the movement of salmon to the ocean and their spawning streams. Just as the wolf and grizzly bear no longer roamed the Selway and Lochsa River watersheds, some species of salmon no longer returned to their spawning streams. In the 1950s, a proposed dam near the mouth of the middle fork of the Clearwater River would have flooded both the lower Selway and Lochsa Rivers. Hunters, fishers, and backpackers successfully fought this dam

proposal. The presence of smokejumpers and the desire for Forest Service employees to be transported to the backcountry quickly for the suppression of forest fires caused airfields to be built as early as the 1920s. These airfields are still in use for Forest Service crews and private packers and were specifically allowed under the Wilderness Act.

One additional change caused by the Forest Service occurred in early summer 1956. Spruce budworm infestations, which had infiltrated the dying stands of trees in the Lochsa River watershed, were sprayed with DDT. The DDT not only killed the native spruce budworm, it killed most insects, frogs and fish and later the offspring of birds. Bud Moore described a night in the Bitterroot Mountains less than one month after the initial spraying: "the horses and mules scarcely switched their tails as they grazed. As cold air settled from the crests of the mountains into the valley in the evening, a faint antiseptic smell, instead of no-see-ums, spread over the land. I missed the airborne insects because, I suppose, they had always been there before" (Moore 351). Luckily, the Forest Service rangers noticed the changes in the land and, DDT was never sprayed again in the Bitterroot Mountains.

These areas, where early forest rangers required over seven weeks to negotiate now could be traveled through in less than one day. Bob Marshall, the wilderness enthusiast and one-time Forest Service employee, spoke of the beauty of the America's wilderness areas in national magazines and called for the protection of the land from bulldozers and motorized vehicles. Marshall

visited the area in late 1920s or early 1930s. Like most travelers, he arrived at Lolo Trail in late summer/early autumn.⁹ While traveling to Castle Butte, he wrote: "[B]arkless lodgepole pines stood gauntly in the fog. This was so dense that visibility was limited to little more than a hundred feet" (Marshall 11). Marshall, like the Corps of Discovery and Owen got lost. "I stopped in the soggy twilight to look at the map, and observed with concern a discrepancy between my imagined position and the compass. With a cold, shrinking reaction in my stomach, I went over in mind all the instructions, every fork in the trail and could not recall a single dubious turn. Yet here I was, almost at timberline, soaked and chilled through, and the only shelter within fifteen miles lost somewhere in a howling snowstorm" (Marshall 11). When he reached his shelter he commented, "It was exhilarating to calculate that the nearest settlements were 65 miles to the west and 97 miles to the east" (Marshall 11).

As Marshall arrived at a high peak on a sunny day, he pondered "the...immense wildness. There is not a single remote trace of civilization. Needlelike peaks...spacious plateaus suddenly dropping into gloomy gorges...wooded basins...deep blue ponds and bright parks alleviating the harshness of granite" (Marshall 12). Later in his trip, Marshall encountered a pair of grizzly cubs and was treed by the mother. In his panic he fell from the tree but

⁹ Marshall did not publish his experiences in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area during his life. This article was published posthumously in 1951.

somehow the bear did not attack. Marshall lived to tell his tale and become actively involved in the creation of the wilderness area.

To this end, Marshall facilitated the development of the U -1 regulations. These regulations required the Secretary of Agriculture to designate wilderness areas in a more formal manner than the L-20 regulations. Within the Selway-Bitterroot Primitive Area, "no roads or other provisions for motorized transportation, no commercial timber cutting, and no occupancy under special use permits for hotels, stores, resorts, summer homes, organization camps, hunting and fishing lodges, or similar uses" were allowed. These regulations did not require field surveys of the boundaries of the new Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. Marshall and Regional Forester Evan Kelly drew the boundaries on a Forest Service Map in 1936 in Kelly's office (Wood 11). The actual review of boundaries began in the 1940s but was interrupted by World War II.

During the 1950s and early 1960s, the Forest Service argued with timber interests and activists on the legal boundaries of the wilderness area.¹⁰ Very few people in the Bitterroot and Clearwater River valleys protested the designation of the area. As the wilderness act made its way through Congress, public hearings were scheduled in areas near wilderness areas. The timber interests observed

¹⁰ Senator Frank Church, Idaho, was the floor manager for the bill. Due to an electrical fire at Boise State University and time constraints, I was unable to view his personal papers to reveal his experience, if any, of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area.

the wilderness proposal purely from an economic standpoint. In their proposal, the Inland Empire Multiple Use Committee claimed that over 50 percent of the original area contained 6,916,480,000 board feet of merchantable timber (Inland Empire 1). Not surprisingly, the Inland Empire Multiple Use Committee recommended reducing the size of the area to 803,490 acres as opposed to the Forest Service proposal of 1,163,550 acres (Inland Empire 2). The reasons for this reduction include fire protection, insects and disease, motorized recreation use, big game management and, of course, timber production. Since this is a capitalist society, the report determined that the withdrawal of the additional 360,000 acres of forest would "conservatively" cost the area \$3,759,349 in tax revenue.¹¹

The Wilderness Society recommended a larger area than the Forest Service. They believed that only roads, like the Magruder Road built by the Works Progression Administration, should be removed from the wilderness areas. The Wilderness Society wanted the area north of the Magruder Road to be included to create a wilderness area that contained 1,445,000 acres. The Forest Service believed that the entire Magruder Corridor should be removed from wilderness classification. Representatives of the Wilderness Society and the Forest Service held meetings and went on field trips to discuss the boundary

¹¹ This is beyond the scope of my study but it would be interesting to determine how much "tax revenue" was generated by the 600,000 acres withdrawn by the Forest Service proposal using the same method used in the report.

issues. After many meetings, the Forest Service did not change its position; and the designated area stayed the same.

A review of the other commenters during the public hearing in 1961 and 1963 shows that no one discussed their experiences in the proposed wilderness area. The majority of comments concern boundaries and the reasons for and against the Wilderness Act. The politicians needed to be convinced that the land inside the wilderness area did not contain roads or other permanent structures or that the Wilderness Bill did not violate the Multiple Use-Sustained Yield Act of 1960. The actual wilderness area seemed to have disappeared from the debate.

This movement from wilderness debate to wilderness boundary debate emphasized the economic and management issues surrounding the Wilderness Act. The politicians, scientists, activists and private citizens agreed that the land encompassed in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area met the definition of wilderness as articulated in the Wilderness Act. Therefore, the politics of amount of acreage designated became the sole bargaining chip of the people involved. The people's experiences were unimportant in this political debate.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSIONS

The Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area has been and continues to be influenced by the many animals, fish, birds, plants and humans who have experienced it. The elk, deer, ground squirrels, mountain lion, now wolf and hopefully soon grizzly bear and the many other animals, birds and fish experience the area as a place of food and shelter during the short summer season. In the winter, the ungulates retreat from the high meadows to the lower snow-free meadows, the bear hibernate, and the predators search for prey. Salmon wait until the rivers melt before they begin their long route to the ocean. Hawks and other birds fly south or travel to lower elevations. Beargrass, serviceberries, and high alpine firs survive in their particular niches and use the short growing season to grow and produce seeds and pollen. In the winter, they lie dormant and conserve their resources.

Unlike the on going dynamic cycle of the animals, plants and trees, the history of humans in this place is characterized better by discrete points of contact. As shown in the preceding chapters, human experiences of the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area have been and continue to be framed in terms of

culture and immediate experience. The people experienced a common place from different cultural perspectives. These cultures informed their experiences in the place. A review of each group's experiences can allow one to ascertain whether the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area can form general ideas of wilderness. The Nez Perce considered the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area as part of their homeland. At the beginning of their adult lives, they traveled to the high mountain peaks without food and human contact to prepare themselves for maturity and find their *wéyekin* in this "peopleless land." During the short summer season, Nez Perce men and women journeyed to high alpine meadows to hunt for elk, deer and other animals and to gather choice berries for drying. In addition, Nez Perce hunters ventured over the Lolo and Southern Nez Perce Trails to hunt bison and to return from the plains with bison meat and skins. Finally, the immense snowpack brought life-sustaining water to the valleys so that camas and other wetland plants grew in abundance. The Bitterroot Mountains were a place of spirituality, a part of the subsistence cycle, a place to avoid during the long winter season, a barrier to the bison plains and from rival Shoshone and Blackfoot groups and place to be away from human contact.

Unlike the Nez Perce, the white explorers who first traveled through the area experienced a land foreign to them; they had no knowledge and respect for these mountains. The men of the Corps of Discovery, who wrote journals, described a rugged place with little food for survival that provided views of beautiful mountains in every direction and lacked any sign of human presence.

Additionally, these mountains provided the barrier that destroyed the dream of easy travel to the Pacific Ocean. The first fur traders avoided the watersheds of the Lochsa and Selway Rivers because of their inaccessibility from trading centers and the lack of beaver in rivers and streams. The one fur trapper who trekked across the Lolo Trail complained of hard travel and lack of grass for his horses. Like the Corps of Discovery, Work's journey did not include observing any humans or hostile trappers. These men, like the Nez Perce viewed the place as a barrier to other lands and hostile enemies and as a place away from human contact. Unlike the Nez Perce, the explorers and trappers did not consider the place a land of plenty nor did they derive any spiritual sustenance from the experience, although there was some aesthetic appreciation of the place.

Aware of the difficulties of Lewis & Clark, the road builders still expounded about the difficulties of the Lolo Trail and other trails. The high mountains and canyons denied any cost effective road building and impeded any planned travel by train or wagon through the Bitterroot Mountains. The miners although they cursed the cold and snow of the foothills took time to view the mountains and wonder at the beauty. The Nez Perce used the mountains to escape from the military troops while the United States military troops slowly fell behind on the rocky, tree-filled trail. Like the Nez Perce and the early explorers, these people experienced the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area as a barrier from easy travel and a place of beauty. But still the Nez Perce's honor and reverence of the place differed with these people.

The Forest Service employees and trappers experienced the place as a place of spiritual renewal. They experienced moments of intense beauty, danger, and purpose away from human civilization but also at times believed that the forests were tree farms that needed to be cultivated. To this end, they created a system of fire suppression that required massive numbers of men to fight fires in the rugged country. This desire to suppress and prevent fires demanded that they acknowledge the difficulty of travel through the mountains and build permanent roads and communication systems with the latest technologies to reduce travel time. As these roads began to proliferate through the mountains, Forest Service employees lobbied to stop the construction of roads and protect the land from permanent human encroachment. Unlike the prior groups, the Forest Service observed what they thought were permanent changes in the mountains in and near the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area. Like the prior groups, the Forest Service and trappers experienced a place of beauty that was a barrier to their desires. Nevertheless the Nez Perce, unlike any other group considered these mountains a place away from people, but still considered it an integral part of their life and homeland.

Across cultures, the people who interacted with the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area distill the elements of the idea of wilderness out of lived experience. These include the experiences of sublime beauty of the snow-capped Crag Mountains, danger hidden on the rugged Lolo Trail, a place apart from civilization and people, a place of spiritual renewal and discovery, and

desire to protect these roadless areas from human interference. Not least among these The Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness can be considered an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is visitor who does not remain. Rather than assuming a separation between humans and the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness Area, this last element comes out of paying close attention to both within their historical relationships.

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