

Great Cache Grizzly

2—THE HERALD JOURNAL MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 1968
Logan (Cache County) Utah



OLD EPHRAIM, immense grizzly bear that roamed the Cache Forest area the early part of this century. The drawing is by Marianne Crookston Israelsen.

Old Ephraim:

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By Newell J. Crookston

Frank Clark was a little discouraged and perhaps somewhat disgusted when he arrived at his trap that he had set in a wallow a few days before. It had been removed from the muddy water and placed on the bank. The huge track of the giant bear was plainly visible in the dust around the pool. Mr. Clark knew it was Old Ephraim who had taken the trap out of the wallow so he could enjoy his mud bath without the danger of getting caught in it. He had been doing this all along for several summers. Each time removing the trap without setting it off.

As Clark stood there looking at the trap and wallow he said to himself, "Sometime I will outsmart that bear and will catch him." This was on the morning of August 20, 1923.

Mr. Clark was part owner of the Ward-Clark Sheep Co. which had helped organize. They had several herds which were grazed on the Cache National Forest each summer.

Lonely Life

Mr. Clark's home was on Cherry Creek near Malad, Idaho. He was a quiet sort of a fellow, not much given to talking. I suppose that is because he spent so much time alone. At his sheep camp he seldom had a visitor or saw a newspaper during the entire summer. The camp mover would come there every six or eight days. He would bring some grub, as they called it, and if it was advisable, move the camp to a new spot. As they moved to higher areas, they left the camp wagon and used a tent for shelter. It would be set up near a spring or a stream of clear water. Before long Mr. Clark knew these hills like a preacher knows the Bible. There was not a trail, spring or creek he was not acquainted with. He was a very versatile man as were other shepherders of that day. They had to

do their cooking, take care of their clothing, be their own doctor in case of an accident or of sickness, shoe the horses and do many other things that required training and skill, as one can well imagine. He was not entirely alone however. There were three things that were always with him. His horse, his dog, and his gun.

There were always two or three horses and dogs around the camp. The horses were for transportation, and were used every day, as he rounded up the sheep to keep them from spreading out too far and moving them onto good feed. One or two dogs always went along with him to help with the job. The others would remain at camp. They took turns with the work as did the horses. The gun was carried in a scabbard on the saddle and was used mostly to kill marauding wild animals that ventured near the sheep. Mr. Clark carried a .25-35 rifle which would hold seven bullets. He was an expert shot. He had the gun with him at all times, and kept it fully loaded. When he came into camp he would remove it from the saddle and put it inside the tent near the door, always ready for any emergency that might arise.

Many Bears

When Mr. Clark came to this area July 13, 1911, to herd sheep it was considered the worst bear infested area in Utah. Black and Brown bear were numerous and each year a number of them were trapped and killed, but Old Ephraim, he was a little too clever. Only two or three men had ever actually seen him. One of them was Mr. Clark's pal Sam Kemp from Portage, Utah. Sam was tending sheep in this area the summer of 1913. One morning Sam came almost face to face with Ephraim. As the huge bear rose

up on his hind legs, Sam became so frightened and unnerved that he backed slowly away. He was fully armed but he could not and dared not fire a shot. So they parted in a friendly manner, going in opposite directions, and never saw each other again.

Mr. Clark heard about Old Ephraim when he first came to this area in 1911 and by 1913 he knew quite well his habits and where he traveled and was always on the lookout for him. Sam Kemp told Clark about bumping into Ephraim so he had a fairly good idea of the size of the monster.

King of Forest

The great king of the Cache National Forest was widely known. His nightly killings had been going on for years. His activities were first observed in the north end of the forest near Soda Springs, Idaho. Over the years he drifted as far south as Weber County, but for the past ten or twelve years he made his home in the upper areas of the right hand fork of Logan Canyon, Elk Valley and Temple Fork canyons. He had made his wallow about half way up a hollow where water from a spring trickles down a ravine. He would make his visits to the sheep herds for meat and return to the wallow about every 6 or 7 days. Sometimes he would stay around there two or three days if the weather was hot. One day Mr. Clark came upon the wallow. It was ten or fifteen feet in diameter and had about a foot or two of water in it. He could see very large tracks in the dust on the bank and noticed that one track showed only three toes, so Frank decided they were the tracks of Old Ephraim because the herders used to call him Old Three Toes. Later he was named Old Ephraim after a great

Grizzly in California, described in a story written by P. T. Barnum. Clark decided that would be a good place to put a trap. So as soon as he could he got the largest trap he could find and put it into the wallow. Then he went about tending his sheep.

Different Foods

Bears feed on a great variety of wild fruits, pinion nuts, rodents and fish. They also like to eat grass and clover and other green plants; in fact, they will eat almost any kind of food, but once they get a taste of a cow or sheep and learn how easy they are to get, they are not content to leave them alone. Old Ephraim could break the back of a cow or an elk with a single blow of his huge paw, but preferred to kill sheep rather than cows.

Bears can't see very far, but do have a very keen sense of smell and can hear fairly well. They can run fast too. They can easily out run a horse in the woods. They locate the sheep herds as soon as they come onto the range, and follow them all summer, killing sheep whenever they like. They don't always wait until it gets dark. They like to kill at daybreak as the sheep start to graze. After they have eaten what they want coyotes come along and clean up the rest, leaving a few scraps for the birds.

Not Afraid

Frank Clark was not afraid of bears. He killed 43 in 34 years he spent on Cache National Forest. Government trappers were trapping in this area trying to get rid of some of the bears. They were getting too numerous and were killing a large number of sheep every summer. Mr. Clark counted 150 dead sheep the first summer he came here. The bears were bad killers and scared the herders until they would not stay on

the job. The sheep owners were having a hard time getting men to go up there to tend the sheep. Just the day before Clark set his trap in the wallow, eight sheep were killed in the Reese herd. The bears were not content to kill one or two sheep and eat them, but would run through the herd and knock over as many as they could hit and then start eating them. They would roll the sheep over on its back and rip its body open and eat the tender parts of the inside, and then leave it alive struggling for its life and go for another sheep. Almost every day Clark would find a sheep or two still alive and would have to shoot them to put them out of their misery. One day he found 23 left that way. He also saw a bear eating a fawn while its mother was a distance away helping looking on. He saw bears pulling down bird nests, looking for eggs or birds that might be in them. Seeing these incidents every day exasperated Frank no end. He swore eternal vengeance on the bears and was determined to kill every one he could.

Wiley Bear

For ten years Clark tried every way he could think of to get Ephraim into the trap, but every time the bear went to the wallow he would take the trap out and put it up on the bank without setting it off. Then take his mud bath and leave before daylight.

Even though Clark was discouraged, he was going to keep on trying to catch Ephraim. He put the trap back into the wallow, covered his tracks, also the log chain and log that was attached to the other end of the chain, then went back to his camp which was about a mile down the hollow, near the head of the right fork of Logan Canyon. He knew Old Ephraim would be killing more sheep in that area and would return again to his wallow and maybe step into the trap.

It was strange to Clark that an animal as large as he could keep out of sight in the daytime. In all these years he had been seen only two or three times. Clark saw him one morning carrying a sheep up the side of a mountain.

He shot at him several times but did not hit him. He was too far away. However, he made him drop the sheep and scamper for cover.

New Wallow

The next morning Clark went to the bear wallow to see if any thing had happened. There was the trap up on the bank again. This time, however, it had been sprung, but it didn't catch the bear. It must have made him suspicious because he had dug a new pool below the old one and water had drained into it. He had taken his bath in it and gone on his way. Clark was not surprised to find that Ephraim had visited the wallow because sometimes when the weather was hot he would stay in that area two or three days. His large tracks were easily seen where he had gone in and out of the pool, so there was no doubt in Clark's mind who removed the trap and made the new wallow, which must have kept him busy most of the night. Clark wasn't about to give up and decided to make another try at catching. He set the huge trap into the new wallow. He stirred the mud good, let it settle over the trap, then covered the log chain and log which was on the outside of the pool, attached to the far end of the chain. The log was about a foot in diameter and nine feet long—heavy enough that the bear could drag it if he got caught in the trap. Trappers don't attach the chain of the trap to a solid object because in such a case the bear, if caught in the trap, would chew his foot off or break it off at the jaws of the trap. Clark then got some willows and made a brush with which he removed his tracks from around the pool and made the area look as if it had not been disturbed, then went about tending the sheep.

Awful Roar

The night of August 21 was a beautiful starry night. After supper Clark sat alone gazing at millions of bright stars so familiar to him in his outdoor life. He could hear the tinkling of bells on the necks of

the horses as they were feeding in the meadows and hillsides nearby and now and then the sad call of the lonely coyote — all else was still. The sheep had bedded down for night, the birds had gone to rest and his dogs were curled up on saddle blankets near the tent. It was getting late so Clark went to bed as usual. He had been asleep two or three hours when he was awakened by a strange sound up the hollow. It was an awful roar mingled with pain and misery. It would ring around the hills and between screams it seemed like everything in the hills was listening for the next roar. He tried to go back to sleep, but couldn't.

Clark didn't know that Ephraim had gone to his new wallow and in a moment of carelessness had stepped on the trigger of the trap. The mighty jaws of the steel trap had snapped shut on his right leg in a viselike grip.

Ephraim roared, jumped out of the wallow and started to run. He was terrified when the chain that was fastened to the trap stopped him. Old time bear hunters say there is nothing that will enrage a grizzly bear so much as to be caught and held in a trap. The next worst situation is when a mother grizzly is defending her cubs when they are in danger.

Gnaws Chain

The enraged Ephraim fought and gnawed at the trap and chain as he dragged the log down the hollow. Finally the log caught between some trees and held him fast, then he was furious. He roared and plunged and fought with all of his savage fury. The jaws of the great trap held his leg in its solid grip. He could not get it off. So he started to work on the chain. He followed it to the log and tried to break it loose, but it was fastened securely. There was a ring in the end of the chain and the chain had been put through it as it was placed around the log. Ephraim bit at the ring, twisting, crushing and turning it until it broke in two. His mouth was bleeding and one of his great teeth was broken off.

Now he was free of the log, he stared down the hollow again. He was badly hurt. He had been tricked by man and was going to get revenge.

It is written that the grizzly bear in his primitive state was a very peaceful animal—one that would not start a fight. But man with his rifle had changed the nature of the grizzly and made him the most ferocious fighter of all animals. They all fear him and keep out of his way.

Ephraim bit at the trap and chain but could not get free from its powerful grip. The more he tore at the trap, the more severe the pain became. He was raging mad. He knew where Clark's camp was. He had seen it many times and seemed to know that it was Clark who set the trap for him and he was going down there and fight it out with him. He screamed with pain and roared with anger as he smashed through the trees and brush in the darkness of the night.

Starts Search

After listening to the roaring and screaming for some time, Clark thought it might be a horse down. They make an awful noise in their agony when they get down. He realized the noise was getting close. He got up, put on his shoes, got his rifle and in his underwear went up the trail three or four hundred yards. It was dark and too cold for BVD's. He hadn't gone far when he heard the chain rattle. Then he realized that Ephraim was in the trap, because no other bears went to his wallow.

The roaring stopped for a few minutes as Clark went up the trail. When it started again, Clark stopped to try and find out where he was. He was down in the wash in the brush between Clark and his camp. Clark had walked within about ten feet of him as he was going up the trail. He was now shaking from fear and cold, mostly fear. For once he was really scared. He had killed many bears, but this was different. This was a fierce, raging, wounded grizzly—the largest one ever seen in this country, and it

was dark. He was sure there were seven cartridges in his .25-35, all steel balls. What should he do now? Both sides of the hollow were covered with brush. He couldn't get off the trail in the darkness so decided to crawl up on the side hill a little way and keep quiet, and listen to Ephraim's groans and bellows the rest of night.

First Shot

Daylight came at last and Clark, plenty mad and ready for battle, went down where he had last heard the bear. It was under some willows in the wash. Clark couldn't see him very well so he got a pole and tried to poke him. Ephraim slipped away and went down near the camp and hid in a patch of willows. It was getting lighter now so Clark went down there and got a sight of him and took a shot at him, hitting him in the top of his back.

Ephraim rose up in all of his greatness, with the 23 pound bear trap clamped on his right foot and a 14 foot log chain wound neatly around his leg, held high above his head.

His back was toward Clark. He turned around and started for Clark still holding the trap above his head. Clark became paralyzed with fear as he faced the huge monster.

He was rooted to the earth, and let Ephraim come within six feet of him before he could lift the gun and pull the trigger. The first shot staggered him back a little. Another shot. Again he staggered. Three more shots did not knock him down. Still on his feet holding that trap up he faced Clark. In front of him was a four foot bank which kept him from coming any closer.

He turned around, went back to the wash and walked up it about 15 to 20 feet to a place where a trail crossed it. Clark could see his head and the trap above the willows and thought Ephraim had had enough and was going away, but not so. For him the battle was still on and he was looking for a way to get at Clark.

Old Ephraim: Great Grizzly Of Cache National Forest

Great Bear

He came up out of the brush and onto the trail Clark was on. Clark was filled with amazement as he got his first view of the entire body of the great bear. He appeared to be at least ten feet tall with trap held above his head. His right leg, head, neck and breast were smeared with blood from the wounds on his mouth and his foot and the six balls of steel that had entered his body. Clark could see blood squirting from his snarling open mouth as he started for him.

He had never before backed away from a bear, but this blood smeared charging monster was too much for him to face with only one bullet in his rifle. He started to step back and caught his foot on some brush and fell flat on his back.

He scrambled to his feet as quickly as he could and started for Logan, 20 miles away, with Ephraim, close behind him roaring with anger.

Dog Comes

As he rounded a turn he heard his dog Jennie barking. She had appeared on the scene for the first time and was biting at the bears heels. Ephraim did not like that stopped to fight. Clark turned back and urged the dog on. As Clark got close the bear started for him again. Clark could see he was badly hurt. He was waddling along on his hind legs, blood spouting from his nostrils at each breath. He turned again to hit the dog. Clark stepped up as close as he dared and fired the remaining shot into the side of the bear's head, with a prayer in his heart it would finish him. It did. The massive form of the great beast fell forward, rolled a little and hit the ground with a thud just in front of Clark.

A strange, faint feeling came over Clark. His knees were shaking and buckled as he sat down beside the trail and watched the great spirit depart from the great body. It seemed like a long time. Finally, Ephraim's head raised just a little, he looked Clark in the eyes and fell to the ground again and was still.

Regret Death

Was Clark happy? No, he was not happy—only thankful it was over and he was still alive. He decided then and there he would never kill another bear. Every summer for ten years he had tried every way he could think of to annihilate that bear, because he thought it had to be done. Now he felt sorry that had to do it.

Clark now had an urgent desire to see a human being. He went to his camp, dressed, reloaded his gun, got a rope and went to find his horses which had been frightened away by the terrifying roaring during the night. He went on and on, finally finding one horse on its back in a wash with its hind foot caught in the hobbles which were on its front feet. He removed the hobbles and got the horse on its feet, then rode three miles up to Sheep Creek to the camp of Joe Brown. He had breakfast with Joe, and rested a while. He told Joe about his battle with Old Ephraim and asked him to go back there with him.

When they got to Ephraim, Joe was not about to get off his horse, but finally did after Clark assured him the bear was dead. It measured almost ten feet. They estimated him to weight well over 1,000 pounds. They removed the trap and hide, leaving the head on the body. The hide was almost an inch thick and weighed about 200 pounds. They dragged it to

Clark's camp and spread it out to dry. Later on Mr. Clark gave the claws and pieces of the hide to souvenir hunters.

The men wanted to get the bear's body away from the creek and camp, so mounted the horses and with ropes attached to the saddle horns and the bear's neck tried to drag it away but couldn't move it, so covered it with brush and set fire to it. For three days whenever Clark was in camp, he continued to burn the body. Then he buried what was left of it.

News Spreads

The news of the killing of this great grizzly, the last one known in these parts, soon spread from sheep camp to sheep camp. The herders rejoiced in the fact that they would not have to worry about him anymore.

Dr. George R. Hill, who was Scoutmaster of Troop Five of Logan, heard about Ephraim being killed and reported the incident to the Smithsonian Institution at Washington, D.C., indicating that the bear was a very large grizzly. The officials at the Institution doubted that the bear was a grizzly and offered \$25 for its head if it proved to be one.

Dr. Hill suggested to his scouts that they get the head and send it to the Institution. It was now mid-October. The group included Henry Aebischer, Alma Burgoyne, Harold Rosengreen, Lester Dunford, Fred Hodgson, Henry Daines, Herbert May, Horace Bunce, Ezra Cardon, J. Clare Hayward, Ivan Burgoyne, Jack McGee and probably others.

They finally arrived at the mouth of the hollow where the grave was. Dr. Hill soon located the mound and they began digging. They had with them a pick and shovel and a sack to put the head in. The grave wasn't very deep so they soon found the body and recovered the head. The hair on one side had been burned off, otherwise it was in good condition. Some of the boys wanted a vertebra to make into a neckerchief slide, so they dug back a little farther and removed part of the spinal column and took it with them.

After filling the grave they took the head, which was large enough to fill a bushel basket, back to their camp. Dr. Hill took it home, cleaned it up, prepared it for shipment and sent it to the Smithsonian Institution, where it now rests.

Dr. Hill subsequently received information from the Institution that Old Ephraim was truly a grizzly, and that his weight was approximately 1100 pounds, his height standing, nine feet, 11 inches. Dr. Hill also received a check for \$25 which was used by his Scout Troop.

A new monument has been placed near Ephraim's grave designating the time of his death and other facts about him.



MONUMENT TO Old Ephraim erected near the spot where he was killed by Frank Clark in 1923. Seated left is Newell J. Crookston, author of the story of Old Ephraim; standing Derrald Watkins, scout executive, and Will Watkins.

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