

Provoan Reminisces About Mammoth Grizzly Bear Killed Near Antimony

(Editor's note: J. W. Humphrey resides at 729 E. 500 N., Provo. Still spry at the age 90 (he kept both his own and his neighbor's walks free of snow during the recent storm) he is a retired forest ranger and forest supervisor. His reminiscence of the killing of a mammoth grizzly bear near Antimony in 1916 are contained in what he calls a "bear story." It follows.)

By J. W. HUMPHREY

In July 1915, I was transferred from the LaSal Forest with headquarters in Moab, to the old Sevier Forest, now the Dixie Forest. The headquarters then were in Panguitch. In the middle of March in 1916 I read in the Deseret News a report of the killing of a huge grizzly bear near Antimony, then known as Coyote. The item mentioned that the bear weighed a ton. The size of the bear was so unusual that I decided to drive over there to learn the facts. So accompanied by my assistant Wallace Riddle (who was well acquainted with the people of that community) I drove over to the little town, made up mostly of scattered ranches, a small store, a school, and church.

Huge Hide

We drove directly to the ranch home of Sil Riddle. Here we saw the bear hide hanging lengthwise on his corral fence, the skin touching the ground on both sides of the fence. There were at least two other ranchers besides Sil Riddle present, and they soon let us know that they thought the newspaper report was no exaggeration as to the size of the bear. A large Belgian stallion in a near by stable weighed 2000 pounds. They had placed the bear hide on that horse and it covered the horse completely from head to tail. We accepted their story, and they proceeded to tell us of the actual killing of the bear.

It seems that the bear had recently emerged from his long winter's nap. It knocked down a cow belonging to C. T. Rowen. (father of the late Chas. E. Rowen of Provo.) The cow was not dead but had all the meat on the top of the shoulders, and part of the back torn off and devoured. The bear, still hungry, had found a horse that one of the ranchers had killed because it had broken its leg and had recently been dragged up in the foot hills above the ranches. It was a large workhorse, and the bear had eaten all the meat off the hind quarters of the dead animal, estimated to be at least 200 pounds of meat. The bear had then gone up into some pinyon pines, where it lay sunning itself.

Take Up Trail

Sil Riddle, Jess Jolley, and another man took up the bear's trail, killed the suffering and partly eaten cow, and found the bear and started shooting at it. Every time the bear was hit, and that was practically every shot, it would chase after the hunter from which the shot had come. I believe it was Jess Jolley that was riding a colt, he dismounted and shot the bear which immediately gave chase. He ran to get on his horse but the colt, frightened at seeing both rider, and the bear bearing down on it, bolted and ran. Fortunately for

Jolley at that moment Riddle hit the bear from a different direction, causing it to abandon the chase of Jolley, and start for Riddle.

Light Calibre

They were using rifles of light calibre, and did not seem to be able to kill the bear, so they sent one of the men back to the store for more ammunition. This proved to be unnecessary as the man had scarcely got started when it was hit in a vital spot and was dead. When the man got back from the store, the skinning job was almost finished. Four other men had returned with the man from the store, so there were seven men in the party. One of the men with a long bladed knife, cut a strip of fat across the back for each member of the party. They estimated there was about 60 pounds of fat, taken by them. Later Mrs. Riddle salvaged more than 150 pounds of rendered oil from the carcas which she used in making home made soap.

Published Paper

At our office in Panguitch we got out a small mimeographed paper which we called the "Sevier Ranger." It contained

items of interest in Forest work from the different Ranger districts. Copies were sent to all the Forest personnel, a copy to the Regional Foresters office in Ogden, and to the Foresters Office in Washington, D.C.

When the copy reached Washington, a Dr. Griffiths, reading the bear story, wrote and asked us to ship him the skull of the bear, this was done and he frankly admitted that the skull was the largest he had ever seen. He also mentioned that the bear could have been between 50 to 60 years old. I checked my encyclopedia and found that Grizzly bears had been known to have attained a weight of as much as 1400 pounds and a length of nine feet from the tip of the nose to the tail. The hide of this bear of this bear was shipped to Denver to be tanned and mounted in a rug. The Denver people in turn sent it to Portland to do the mounting. Both Denver and Portland reported that it was the largest bear hide they had ever come across. It is barely possible that the rug may still be found in some home in Antimony. That is the story. Draw your own conclusions.