

Jane Reed Benson's Ninemile Remount Depot oral history project, 1977

Overview of the Collection

Title	Jane Reed Benson's Ninemile Remount Depot oral history project
Dates	1977 (inclusive) 1977 1977
Quantity	14 interviews
Collection Number	OH 086
Summary	The thirteen interviews recorded for Jane Reed Benson's 1977 oral history project describe the Ninemile Remount Depot in western Montana from the 1930s through the 1960s. These descriptions include daily activities and responsibility for personnel and animals, procedures for training and moving supplies to remote areas, the history of the facility itself and seasonal changes, and the position the Depot held in the Forest Service.
Repository	University of Montana, Mansfield Library, Archives and Special Collections Archives and Special Collections Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library University of Montana 32 Campus Dr. #9936 59812-9936 Missoula, MT Telephone: 406-243-2053 Fax: 406-243-4067 library.archives@umontana.edu
Access Restrictions	Researchers must use collection in accordance with the policies of Archives and Special Collections, the Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, and The University of Montana-Missoula.
Languages	English.

Historical Note

From 1930 until 1953, the Ninemile Remount Depot north of Missoula, Montana, provided experienced packers and pack animals for fighting fires and for back country work projects throughout the vast roadless areas of the Northern Rockies. Modeled after the U.S. Cavalry Remount Depots, the Ninemile Remount Depot could provide as many as twenty pack trains during the peak fire season.

The standard pack train consisted of nine mules and a horse for the packer to ride. The packers preferred riding a horse, but considered a mule to be a better pack animal. A mule can carry between 250 and 300 pounds so nine mules could haul enough equipment to set up a base camp for a 25 man fire crew. However, the Ninemile pack trains were known for their ability to haul anything anywhere. In any given year, they might haul bed springs, culvert, dynamite, gravel, lumber and cement.

Getting to the trail head was a trip in itself. For the first few years, it took two trucks with each carrying five animals. Later they switched to a Kenworth chassis with a specially designed body that could carry all ten animals and the necessary equipment. In the twenty plus years of operation, Ninemile trucks carried pack trains to trail heads as far away as Yellowstone and northern California.

Located just over the hills behind the Remount Depot was Ninemile's sister facility, the Winter Range. The Remount Depot was a working ranch, with a square mile of surrounding land and the ability to irrigate the hay fields and pastures. With that resource available, the Forest Service decided to give the facilities the responsibility for providing winter quarters for all the animals in the Northern Region. Fifteen hundred horses and mules called the Winter Range their off-season home.

Content Description

The thirteen interviews recorded for Jane Reed Benson's project in 1977 as part of the U.S. Forest Service History Project, describe the Ninemile Remount Depot from the 1930s through the 1960s including daily activities and responsibility for personnel and animals, procedures for training and moving supplies to remote areas, the history of the facility itself and seasonal changes, and the position the Depot held in the Forest Service.

Benson was also contracted to write a report for the Forest Service. That report, preceded by a detailed account of her interview and research process, became her 1978 thesis at The University of Montana-Missoula.

Use of the Collection

Restrictions on Use

Researchers are responsible for using in accordance with 17 U.S.C. and any other applicable statutes. Copyright not transferred to The University of Montana-Missoula.

Preferred Citation

[Name of document or photograph number], Ninemile Remount Depot Oral History Project, Archives and Special Collections, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula.

Administrative Information

Custodial History

The interviews were held by Jane Reed Benson prior to donation.

Acquisition Information

Donated by Jane Reed Benson.

Related Materials

This institution also holds Jane Reed Benson's 1978 thesis titled *The U.S. Forest Service Remount Depot and Winter Range: Oral and Written History Prepared for a Government Agency* and Mss 774,

Jane Reed Benson's Ninemile Remount Depot oral history project, 1977
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv98919>

the Lolo National Forest Records, which contains Benson's research files, correspondence and some Ninemile Remount records.

Detailed Description of the Collection

Description	Dates
<p>OH 086-001: Interview with Jerry Coball and Tom Reese Sound Recording, audio cassette This interview was deaccessioned from the collection because it isn't part of the Ninemile Remount Depot Oral History Project. The audio quality was extremely poor and the speakers were inaudible.</p>	August 1981
<p>OH 086-002: Interview with Alma Thompson Sound Recording, audio cassette Alma Thompson discusses her husband, Boyd Thompson, and his work at the Nine Mile Remount Depot. She describes Boyd Thompson's work with mules and horses at the Depot, where he was a supervisor or pack strings and an overseer of saddle horse breeding. Thompson also discusses her husband's work at the Big Draw Ranch, individuals and families at the Depot, and her children.</p>	30 August 1977
<p>OH 086-003: Interview with Clyde Fickes Sound Recording, audio cassette Clyde Fickes discusses founding the Nine Mile Remount Depot, including the difficulties he faced getting the project accepted, fires in the area, and undependable hiring stock. He describes the Perma Ranch used for wintering stock, hiring Boyd Thompson as a saddle horse breeder, the transition from renting trucks to purchasing, and early recruits who were ranchers and loggers, not foresters. Fickes also discusses the invention of the lookout house on the property.</p>	3 May 1977
<p>OH 086-004 and 0055: Interview with Marion Duncan and Beulah Duncan Sound Recording, audio cassette Marion Duncan discusses his various occupations with the U.S. Forest Service, mainly as it pertained to the Nine Mile Remount Depot. He describes working in the warehouse where many supplies for firefighting were stored, the construction of the Nine Mile Remount Depot in 1930, techniques for loading and hauling mules, and changes to the Depot over time. Duncan also discusses driving stock trucks, the designing of the trucks, and how the trucks ran and were operated. He describes how the use of airplanes and smokejumping replaced the use of mules in fighting fires.</p>	25 July 1977
<p>OH 086-006: Interview with Henry J. "Hank" Viche and Bernice Viche Sound Recording, audio cassette Henry Viche discusses his numerous roles as the superintendent of the Nine Mile Remount Depot and the Winter Range during the 1940s. He describes</p>	7 July 1977

Description	Dates
<p>the difficulties that the Montana climate posed on tending horses and mules, the transportation of livestock, and the saddle shop. Viche also discusses the student fire camp that ended in 1942 due to World War II, his wife Bernice Viche, and what it was like to live at the Winter Range.</p>	
<p>OH 086-007: Interview with William B. Russell Sound Recording, audio cassette William B. Russell discusses the various projects that he oversaw during his time working for the U.S. Forest Service at the Nine Mile Remount Depot during the 1930s. He describes his experiences supervising and directing Civilian Conservation Corps crews stationed at the Depot during the Great Depression, delivering supplies to camps during forest fires, and early firefighting equipment.</p>	29 July 1977
<p>OH 086-008: Interview with Donald R. "Don" Harrington Sound Recording, audio cassette Donald "Don" Harrington discusses his experiences working as a truck driver for the Nine Mile Remount Depot north of Missoula, Montana. He describes his experiences hauling mules and horses to forest fires in Montana, Oregon, and California during the 1940s and 1950s. He discusses the types of trucks used, the horse and mule breeding program that existed at the Depot, and the various breeds of horses used. He also briefly discusses driving livestock to the Winter Range.</p>	5 May 1977
<p>OH 086-009: Interview with Eugene Polette and Marian Polette Sound Recording, audio cassette Eugene Polette and Marian Polette discuss their respective work as a truck driver and as a secretary at the Nine Mile Remount Depot north of Missoula, Montana. Eugene Polette describes driving livestock to northern California during the 1950s, haying for the Winter Range, and visitors that came to the Depot. He also discusses the film Red Skies of Montana, which was partially shot at the Depot and nearby areas, and the changes in firefighting he witnessed after the introduction of airplanes and smokejumpers. Marian Polette describes her day-to-day duties as a secretary at the Depot, as well as her experiences working as an assistant to the Depot chef.</p>	8 August 1977
<p>OH 086-010: Interview with John Christenson Sound Recording, audio cassette John Christensen discusses his experiences working as a packer for the U.S. Forest Service at the Nine Mile Remount Depot north of Missoula, Montana for two seasons in the early 1950s. He describes responding to fire calls, how mules were used around camp, and how livestock were trained, cared for, and wintered. He also discusses working at the Winter Range, ranching, and breeding horses.</p>	3 August 1977
<p>OH 086-011 and 012: Interview with W. C. "Cap" Evans and Frieda Evans Sound Recording, audio cassette</p>	27 June 1977

Description	Dates
<p>W. C. "Cap" Evans discusses the founding and history of the Nine Mile Remount Depot north of Missoula, Montana, spanning from its inception in 1930 to its closure in the 1960s. He describes how the Depot became the showplace of the Northwest for the U.S. Forest Service, as well as how the Depot housed the only horse breeding program in the history of the Forest Service. Evans describes working with the Civilian Conservation Corps, the saddle repair shop, and the Forest Service's use of Kenworth trucks. He also discusses Evan W. "Major" Kelley and raising a family at the Depot.</p>	
<p>OH 086-013 and 014: Interview with Johnny Breazeal Sound Recording, audio cassette Johnny Breazeal discusses his experiences working as a fire control officer and with the smokejumpers who were located near the Nine Mile Remount Depot north of Missoula, Montana. He describes the use of pack mules in fires, detailing the coordination required to make sure all the necessary components of firefighting were ready at all times.</p>	13 July 1977
<p>OH 086-015 and 016: Interview with Walter "Walt" Peery and Mabel Peery Sound Recording, audio cassette Walter "Walt" Peery discusses working as a horse and mule trainer at the Nine Mile Remount Depot north of Missoula, Montana during the 1930s. He describes livestock breeding, the traits of different breeds of horses, training practices, and handling mule stock in general.</p>	5 August 1977
<p>OH 086-017 and 018: Interview with William "Bill" Longpre and Lena Marceau Longpre Sound Recording, audio cassette William Longpre discusses the history of the Nine Mile Remount Depot, including the land the Depot was built on, the Depot itself, and people such as Lucky Stewart, Ed MacKay, Evan W. "Major" Kelley, W. C. Evans, Hank Viche, Jesse "Jake" Williams, Hugh Redding, and Harold Dunn. He also describes his experiences with rodeos, bucking contests, and breaking mules.</p>	26 July 1977
<p>OH 086-019 and 020: Interview with McCoy "Coy" Rice and Imogene Rice Sound Recording, audio cassette McCoy "Coy" Rice discusses his experiences working as a packer and blacksmith at the Nine Mile Remount Depot from 1943 to 1953. He describes working on the film Red Skies over Montana, breaking mules, horse breeding, loading packs, and problems he faced with predators and livestock.</p>	18 May 1977

Names and Subjects

Subject Terms :

Forest fires--Montana

Forest fires--Montana--Prevention and control

Horses--Breeding--Montana

Livestock workers--Montana--Biography
Livestock--Breeding--Montana
Livestock--Handling
Livestock--Transportation
Mules
Mules--Breeding--Montana
Mules--Transportation
Muleteers--Montana--Biography
Pack transportation
Red skies over Montana (Motion picture)

Personal Names :

Breazeal, Johnny, interviewee
(interviewee)
Christensen, John, interviewee
(interviewee)
Duncan, Marion, interviewee
(interviewee)
Evans, Cap, interviewee
(interviewee)
Fickes, Clyde P., 1884- , interviewee
(interviewee)
Harrington, Don, interviewee
(interviewee)
Longpre, William, interviewee
(interviewee)
Peery, Walt, interviewee
(interviewee)
Polette, Eugene, interviewee
(interviewee)
Polette, Marian, interivewee
(interviewee)
Rice, McCoy, interviewee
(interviewee)
Russell, W. B. (William B.), interviewee
(interviewee)
Thompson, Alma, interviewee
(interviewee)
Thompson, Boyd
Viche, Henry, interviewee
(interviewee)

Corporate Names :

United States. Forest Service. Northern Region Ninemile Remount Depot--History
Civilian Conservation Corps (U.S.)--Montana--History
United States. Forest Service--Officials and employees--Biography

Form or Genre Terms :

Sound recordings

Other Creators :

Personal Names :

Benson, Jane Reed, interviewer
(interviewer)

Finding aid prepared by Teresa Hamann

Jane Reed Benson's Ninemile Remount Depot oral history project, 1977
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv98919>

2012



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Creative Commons Licenses in Archives West:
<http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/cc-attr.shtml>