

Past History and Impacts on High Creek Fen

I. Geologic Time

- a. Glacial Activity and Fan
 - i. Glacial rock is evident in the fen
 - ii. A glacial alluvial fan did reach into the fen area. This means the material carried by the glacier spread out and changed the soil type by covering the existing material.
- b. Volcanic activity
 - i. Evidence of volcanic ash is also found in the soil of the fen, especially the eastern portions
 - ii. Thirty Nine Mile Mountain eruption would have sent ash to this area

II. Native American

- a. The Utes would have traveled through this area mostly in the summer and may have used some of the plants found in this area rich in plants not found elsewhere
- b. They may have used the peat

III. Homesteads were first granted here in 1864

- a. <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act/>
- b. One of the homesteaders settled after his wife died in the east; they had only been married 6 months. This was Edmond Stephens who claimed his homestead in 1864
- c. Another homesteader had lost a young son 2 months before they settled in 1894

IV. There were two land patents on two other sections close to the fen

- a. Serial Patent: Beginning in July 1908 with Serial Patent Number 1, serial patents were assigned numbers consecutively, regardless of State, and filed numerically. A patent is the original document issued for the purpose of granting public land to an individual
- b. One of the patents was to a man of an influential family, here is a short excerpt from this family's history:

"A large gathering of the clan occurred in 1916 at the "Old Brick House". The occasion was the 50th wedding anniversary of Uncle Henry and Aunt Elizabeth Luers. About 120 members of the clan gathered there for the celebration. At this gathering the writer compared the coming of the family to America with the Biblical story of Abraham leaving Ur of the Chaldees and going into a far country to find a land flowing with milk and honey. Uncle Herman Luers, [Johann Dietrich's father], immediately arose and said it was literally, as well as figuratively, true that the family came to America and found a land flowing with milk and honey. That cows which pastured along the creeks furnished milk in abundance, and a plentiful supply of honey was obtained from the bee trees in the woods.

V. There was also one mining claim – only evidence of anything being mined was peat

VI. There is one school section to the southwest

- VII. Evidence of one homestead can be found as you come into the fen from Hwy 285 with the fence line and remains of a cabin; there is also a well structure farther down the fen, with old cedar posts and barbwire in this area as well
- VIII. Rock & Mineral Observations
 - a. Many of the rocks show calcium deposits coating them
 - b. Rocks with evidence of lava are found
 - c. Some granitic rock is found as well
- IX. Plants
 - a. Evidence of extensive peat mining can be found
 - i. Old roads
 - ii. Trenches
 - b. There is a change in the wetlands zones from the very wet fen area to a desert zone
 - c. In the high plains/desert zone there is a lot of difference between areas where groundwater is close to the surface and others that are drier – this may occur in a circle about 10' x 10', perhaps indicating a spring
 - i. Selenium fixing plants such as Indian Paintbrush are evident
 - ii. Lichen, which indicates a poorer, less fertile fuel type, is evident
 - iii. Barrel cactus are found
 - iv. Blue fringe sage is also evident
 - d. A more peaty soil and more grass is found in the transition zone
- X. Wildlife
 - a. Evidence of pronghorn, elk, coyote, fox (dens) and ground squirrel were found
- XI. Domestic Animals
 - a. Evidence of cattle are found – this area has been leased for grazing
 - b. Evidence of dog (scat) was found probably from a fen visitor's pet
- XII. Human evidence
 - a. In present time there are:
 - i. Tire tracks
 - ii. Trash

RESOURCES:

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/homestead-act/>

<http://www.nps.gov/home/forteachers/curriculummaterials.htm>

https://www.google.com/search?sourceid=navclient&aq=1&oq=blm+land+patents&ie=UTF-8&rlz=1T4ACEW_enUS453US453&q=blm+land+patents+search&gs_upl=0l0l0l1873985l1111l1110&aqi=g2g-K3