

“Teddy Roosevelt” Helps Crail Ranch Celebrate 100 Years of the US National Park Service

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*Originally published in the Lone Peak Lookout,
“Crail Ranch Corner,” September 3, 2015*

Twelve years before he led his Rough Riders up San Juan Hill, Teddy Roosevelt, like all Gallatin Canyon’s intrepid travelers, truly had a rough ride on his expedition to hunt southwest Montana’s big game.

Roosevelt’s hunting partner was Buckskin Charley aka Charles Marble, who left a record of the Gallatin excursion in his memoir, *Fifty Years In and Around Yellowstone*, available through the Teddy Roosevelt Center (Dickinson, ND) Digital Library. According to Marble, he guided Roosevelt through the Gallatin Canyon in 1886, a date which coincides with Roosevelt’s seclusion at a ranch near Medora, North Dakota, after the simultaneous deaths of his wife Alice and his mother.

Marble’s memoirs recount camping at Sage Creek and the westward trek up the creek from the Gallatin to the Madison Range, where they encountered a band of Crow out on a traditional hunt that was not approved by their reservation agent. The Roosevelt group entered the Yellowstone National Park and then traveled down the Madison River to Cedar Mountain and the Jack Creek area just west of Big Sky, returning to the Gallatin Canyon via Spanish Creek. Taken 17 years prior to his 1903 western presidential stump tour, perhaps this trip, full of first-hand observation, was significant for Roosevelt, as he formulated his conservation and wilderness management ideals.



On Sunday, September 6, 2015, the Crail Ranch celebrated the 110th birthday of the U.S. Forest Service by hosting Arch Ellwein, impersonator of Teddy Roosevelt, the conservation president. Ellwein, who wowed a crowd at Crail Ranch some years earlier as Yellowstone Vic, took the stage at 1 p.m. at the Crail Ranch on Spotted Elk Road in Big Sky, in an event sponsored in part by Humanities Montana.



Roosevelt became president in September 1901, after McKinley's assassination, and he quickly charted a course to preserve our country's natural resources.

By 1905, the progressive Roosevelt had convinced Congress to transfer management of the forests from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture. Roosevelt created the United States Forest Service and extended like-minded naturalist Gifford Pinchot's role in maintaining a sustainable forest by elevating him to Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. When Congress voted to restrict forest expansion and land preservation in six western states, Roosevelt quickly extended federal protection to millions of western acres before Congressional laws took effect to limit his powers.

Although the Gallatin Forest had been created in 1899, Roosevelt enlarged it in 1906 by creating the Gallatin Forest Reserve. According to Phyllis Smith in *Bozeman and the Gallatin Valley: A History*, some canyon entrepreneurs resented Roosevelt's intrusion, believing that it would stymie their business interests.

Today, the Gallatin Forest continues to protect the area from over-development, but it also contributes recreational and tourist dollars to the economy, living testament over 100 years later of Roosevelt's belief in the economic power of conservation.

Good reads:

- *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America* by Timothy Egan, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009.

- *The Bully Pulpit: Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and the Golden Age of Journalism* by Doris Kearns Goodwin, Simon and Schuster, 2013.