

DICK ROCK'S ZOO AT HENRY'S LAKE

SPORTSMEN OF THE EIGHTIES MAY REMEMBER THIS INTERESTING OLD TIME HUNTER AND THE UNIQUE COLLECTION OF WILD GAME HE KEPT AT HIS RANCH

By HENRY BANNON

HENRY'S LAKE is located in Idaho, about eighteen miles west of the Yellowstone National Park. A tributary of Snake River bears the name of Henry's Fork. Irving, in *Bonneville's Adventures*, is authority for the statement that Henry's Fork is "called after the first American trader who erected a fort beyond the mountains." As Henry's Lake is not far from Henry's Fork it would seem that the lake was named after the same trader. During the eighties and early nineties, Henry's Lake was famous as the center of a big game region about which the wapiti, deer, bear, antelope, moose and big-horn were abundant. In their spring and fall migrations the antelope passed just north of the lake so it was a favorite place for antelope hunters. Today it is well known for its trout fishing in the summer and duck shooting in the autumn.

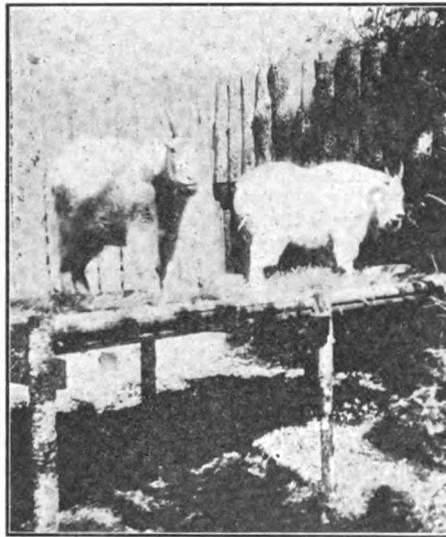
Even during the depth of winter there is much fishing through the ice at Henry's Lake, and a story is told of an old fisherman there who uses grubs, taken from decayed logs, for bait. During a severe cold spell, when the mercury is from twenty to forty below, these grubs freeze hard and cannot be put on the hook, so the old fisherman devised a simple plan for keeping them warm and active. He keeps them in his mouth until they are needed!

The postoffice bears the designation Lake, Idaho, and at the store where the postoffice is located there is quite a collection of antlers, mounted specimens of animals and birds, Indian relics and old photographs of western scenes.

Two of the early settlers at Henry's Lake were Dick Rock and Vic Smith, both being well known hunters. They came to the Lake from the Yellowstone River country about 1885, and before that time worked together as buffalo hunters, Smith doing the shooting and Rock the skinning.

Dick Rock built several corrals at Henry's Lake and spent considerable time and effort in collecting specimens of the native game which he kept in captivity in these corrals.

He obtained two mountain goats near Darby in the Bitter Roots and brought them to his ranch. The time necessary to bring these goats



Mountain goats at Dick Rock's ranch

from Darby to Henry's Lake was at least from five to six days. A platform was built in the goat corral, and the goats much preferred even that slight elevation to the surface of the ground. These goats were considered by Rock to be more dangerous than any of the other animals kept by him. Rock finally sold them and in all probability they are the captive goats described by Dr. Hornaday in "Camp Fires in the Canadian Rockies."

ROCK also had quite a herd of buffalo. He collected several buffalo calves on Warm River, a tributary of Snake River, during early May and brought them on sleds along the western line of Yellowstone Park to Henry's Lake. From this nucleus he formed quite a herd, some of the descendants of which are still kept in enclosures not

far from Henry's Lake. One of the buffalo owned by Rock would permit him to mount his back and ride him; but one day, as Rock had often been warned by his friends, the wild instinct of the animal returned and he gored and trampled Rock to death.

Some of the descendants of a buffalo herd established by Dick Rock are still kept under fence not far from Lake. A few years ago the herd escaped and wandered about over the prairies and mountains without restraint. Employees of the Yellowstone National Park, learning of the presence of some buffalo at large in the vicinity of the Park, concluded that they had escaped from the Park, rounded them up and drove them into the Park. But later it developed that the herd was privately owned so it was returned to the owner.

While these buffalo were at large, Glenn Conklin took some photographs of them, two of which are quite characteristic of the buffalo. Incidentally, these pictures will illustrate certain habits of the buffalo described by Audubon. In volume 2, at pages 36 and 124 of Audubon and his *Journals* may be found the following notes made by that famous naturalist:

"The buffalo, old and young, are fond of rolling on the ground in the manner of horses, and turn quite over; this is done not only to clean themselves, but also to rub off the loose old coat of hair and wool that hangs about their body like so many large, dirty rags. . . . When buffaloes are about to lie down they draw all their four feet together slowly, and balancing the body for a moment, bend their fore legs and fall on their knees first, and the hind ones follow."

In one of the pictures taken by Mr. Conklin the dust created by the buffalo in pawing is shown and also the head of the herd with all four feet together, the body balanced and about ready to fall. In another picture the same animal was rolling in his wallow, almost on his back, and a shaggy foreleg in the air.

Young antelope were frequently caught in the vicinity of Henry's Lake, but they could only be caught when a day or so old. An antelope mother



Showing the head of the herd with all four feet together and body balanced, about ready to roll as described by Audubon



An encampment of Shoshone Indians near Dick Rock's ranch at Henry's Lake

leaves her young lying in the grass while she goes off to feed, but returns occasionally to nurse it. By watching the doe antelope go to nurse her young the location of the young can often be found. Even then it was difficult to find them as the little ones lie close in the grass, with ears laid back, thus rendering them quite inconspicuous and hard to detect. When a day or so old they may be easily picked up, but if four or five days old they cannot be run down, even with a horse. When caught very young they remain about a ranch well contented, even to the extent of coming into the house and climbing onto the beds.

A few years ago there were thousands of these beautiful animals on the plains, but civilization has crowded them from their natural homes into the mountains. There they cannot survive, as they are peculiarly adapted to level land, running with marvelous speed, but unable to jump as does the deer. Thus in the mountains they can make little progress where gulches, rocks and down timber are encountered and they become an easy prey for hunters and predatory animals.

The antelope were ruthlessly slaughtered during the eighties and early nineties. In one winter the Indians near Henry's Lake killed over three thousand for their hides and the ranchmen formerly killed them for dog feed, hog feed and coyote bait.

WITH moose, Rock was not so successful. At different times, covering a period of a few years, he caught about fifty-two moose, principally calves, but only succeeded in raising two or three. One of these he could drive to a sulky. Nearly all the moose he succeeded in capturing died before he got them to his ranch.

Rock was as successful in keeping bear and elk in captivity as with the buffalo. But it is well known that both bear and elk will stand reasonable confinement very well.

Elk may be captured in the early

spring when the snow is deep and upon being caught they kick viciously with both fore and hind feet; but when striking with the fore feet the elk rears, and the blow can be avoided easily as the fore feet separate as the animal comes to the ground. One ranchman captured and kept nine elk in a corral for several weeks. A blizzard piled the snow up to the top of the fence thereby affording a convenient way for them to escape and they were not slow in walking across the snow drift.

Dick Rock was an unusually hard worker, a fast traveler, wonderfully adept at snow shoeing and ate but little meat. Vic Smith did most of the hunting for the outfits that he and Rock would take into the mountains. Smith used a .38 caliber Winchester, Model '73, and was one of the best and quickest shots that ever hunted in the west. He could hit an empty rifle shell thrown into the air and has been known to alight from his horse as grouse were rising from the ground and kill two with his rifle before they could get out of range. His favorite rifle was given to him by the Marquis de Mores, who was a well-known ranchman in Dakota. Medora was named for the wife of Mores.

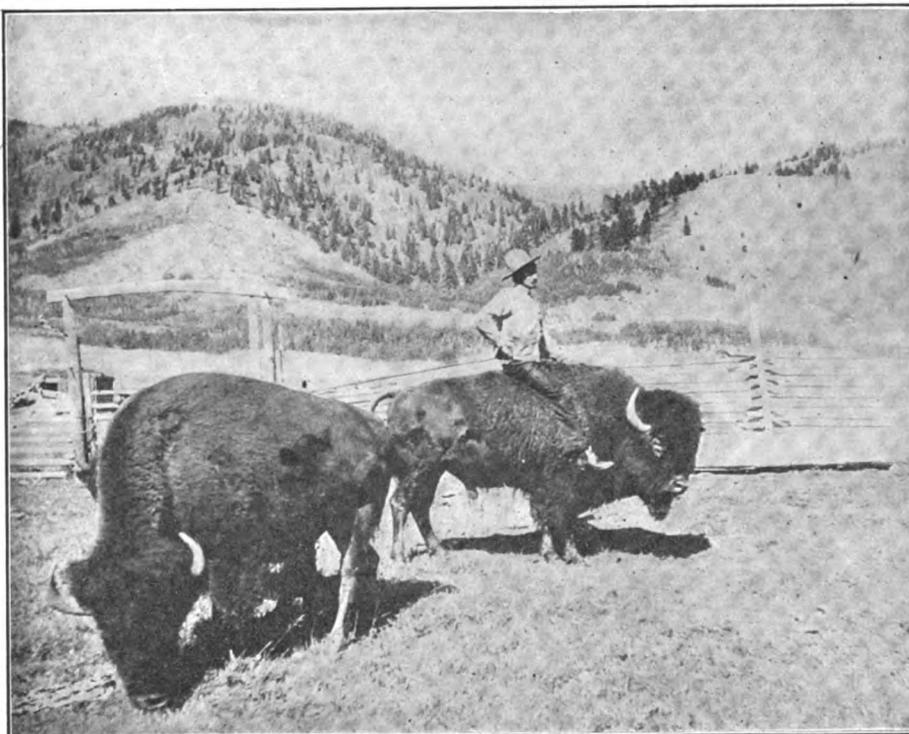
Both Dick Rock and Vic Smith were fine exponents of that hardy race of pioneers who pushed across the mountains a half century ago and delved into a region of game, the like of which will never be seen again on this continent.

Sportsmen of today love to picture what that land must have meant to the men who loved the wild creatures of the wilderness. What wonderful chances for observation they must have had and what a limitless field for the naturalist!

Just to have lived in that unbounded range was indeed a glorious heritage.



Antelope are fast disappearing from their former haunts in the west



One of the buffalo owned by Rock would permit him to ride on his back. This picture was taken shortly before one of these buffalo trampled him to death.