

Not for publication  
during Mr. Behring's life  
Do not send to  
other old timers

Mr. Hans Behring  
told to  
Doctor McGill  
10-11-39

Mr. Hans Behring of Helena, the State Land Agent, called at my office today. I had written him three weeks ago, and told him how I was interested in the history of the upper Gallatin. He came in today to talk about it and let me know some of his experiences.

Says he thinks his first trip up the West Gallatin was about 1892. He came to Montana at 19. Said he had plenty of money to get him to this country, but he loaned to almost anyone who asked him on the way; and when he arrived in Bozeman had 50 cents in his pocket and gave that to someone who asked him for it before he got far from the station.

He homesteaded Section 20 near Fort Ellis. Said he only slept on the homestead about one night out of every six months, and during the time worked for the United States Topographical Survey for four years. They made maps of Butte, Deer Lodge, Missoula, and Helena, all of which maps are still in use to the present time. Said a neighbor of his homesteaded a desert plain. He was supposed to have some growing on his claim, so he dragged in by saddle horse a cottonwood from the valley, took off all the branches and stuck the green branches down into the ground. Then he went into Bozeman and took out the inspectors and showed them his growing crop, and they approved the claim.

In 1898 he sold his claim to Judge Armstrong for \$2500. Didn't even go back to get his property on the claim, in fact he had never been back to the place since. He wanted the \$2500 to invest with Cunningham in cattle. Said when the mine excitement was going on up the Gallatin about the Michener claims that he grubbed staked. Deward and another man gave them two saddle horses and they were to share the claim with him. They went up as far as Black Butte and found the whole thing a hoax. They stayed up the valley and ate and fished until the grub stake was gone. Came back in two months and all he got out of it was his saddle horses back.

Said there were many fights over the reservation property from Fort Ellis. Said Alderson had homesteaded his claim. He first fought over the claim and finally turned it over to Behring. The first section west of him Rose Story and Doctor Hogan homesteaded. The one north and west to Dam Lee was contested afterwards. Someone who claimed it came out and thrashed the wheat, took the 80-acre crop of fine wheat and were hauling it to Bozeman when someone else stole two-thirds of it.

Says he and Cunningham started in 1898 before there was a forest reserve. Then when the forest reserve was declared they waited at first for permission and then moved in.

Fred Anger, Rhesis Fransham were among the first rangers. eleven men started the Taylor Fork Cattle Company. Among these were Ed Blackwood, Henry Monforton, the old man, O. L. Ward, O. P. Davis, someone by

the name of Potter, the other three he couldn't recall just now. This cattle company operated from 1900 until 1920 when it was put with the Ringling interests and then known as the South Montana Live Stock Company. The first eleven men all had some cattle. It was about 1500 head all totaled. Cunningham and Behring had been running about 1000 from 1898 to 1900 alone. Three years after they started, that is about 1903, Cunningham and Behring bought out the rest of the partners and ran it alone. Until 1920 they simply moved their cattle into the Taylor's Fork, West Fork, Tepee, and Daly, and so forth. It was considerably later before they got permissions and leases from the Northern Pacific Railroad, but in the meantime they had to do a great deal themselves to make the range safe. There was a great deal of poison in the range. They constructed over forty miles of drift fence to fence off the poison areas. Up Cash Creek there were steep places where the cattle would slip down, get caught in the creek, dam it up and drown. These places had to either be fenced or graded down so it would be safe for the cattle. In all, they spent a great deal of time making the range safe.

Mr. Behring said that as long as their company ranged the West Gallatin that they never overpastured. When they got more cattle, they saw to it that they got more range. When they drove the cattle out in the fall at least a half of the range was left for game, and that the elk and deer prospered during that time. Said when they started they grabbed as much range as they could get, but 1900 they bought 543 acres of the J. H. Nicholson place. Henry Border one of the finest of the old timers in the valley bought the other 480 acres. The Cunningham and Behring portion of the range was used as their main headquarters for many years. Mr. Behring said that Mr. J. H. Nicholson was a very picturesque character. He came into the country with Nelson Story. Their company used all of the range in the West Gallatin. He says that Daly from the Yellowstone never pastured cattle in the Gallatin.

When Cunningham and Behring started, Still Huling was pasturing cattle in the upper basin in Tepee and Daly Creek as far as Black Butte. Hulings cabin was in Tepee Creek. Early they had no range down around West Fork, later they got it. For many years they used all of the Holter land without lease, but later leased it as they did the Northern Pacific Lands.

As some of their cattle began to drift across into the Madison they lost a good many cattle, and also horses by thieves so that they got started over into the Madison and began to buy up and lease land there. If they bought more cattle, they would lease more land.

Thinks they took over the Bear Creek Ranch about 1914 or 1915. They got the West Fork in a peculiar way.

Here Mr. Behring stopped and said, "I am talking to you just as though I were thinking aloud. I seldom talk this much. I know you will make proper use of the information I am giving you. Once I started in the Sheridan Hotel to talk this way to a young man who seemed interested in Montana history, and when I got through he said, "Yes, I am very much interested, I am a reporter." Mr. Behring said

as long as he was in business he never talked his business to others, that he always tried to keep his name out of the papers, and that their company was never written up in all the years they ran it. I assured him that I would see that his report on early conditions was never published in my time.

Going back to West Fork, Mr. Behring said Clide Tedrick had leased or homesteaded land just below them on Taylor's Fork. They heard that Mr. Tedrick had traded his place to Tom Michener for mining stock, about the same time heard that Tom Michener was wanting to go into the cattle business. He was trying to organize a company to run cattle on Porcupine Creek and Buffalohorn Creek.

The Cunningham and Behring company held a council of war, promptly put in a thousand head of cattle into Porcupine and Buffalohorn and Michener gave back the Tedrick place???. Later bought the Tedrick place for the taxes. They wanted no more companies grazing up in that section.

About 1915 they began to take cattle down into the Crow reservation. Said at one time they had altogether a 120 acres of land for grazing purposes. John Kirby homesteaded what was their main range up Taylor, now known as the Rising Sun and later sold it to the Taylors for the cattle company.

The winter of 1919 was a terrible winter. The company had twenty-three people and 6,000 cattle to winter. In Montana it had been a very dry season and it was very hard to rassel feed. It cost something like \$45 a head to winter cattle that year and was so staggering that the company had to reorganize.

Then Ringling came in and sheep were brought into the company. These sheep were the Story White. The cattle were taken to the Crow reservation, the sheep put into the Madison and Gallatin County. Ringling was given a half interest in the company. Up to 1920 Mr. Behring had been president of the company and wanted a controlling interest. After 1923 it began to become disorganized. Ringling offered Behring the outfit back and \$50,000. It was all in such bad shape. Mr. Behring left the company in 1923 and after that has known practically nothing about its organization.

Cunningham and Behring were together with a very loose organization closely associated for many years, handling their own business. Mr. Behring said he would never be in any organization in which he had a minority stock where he couldn't have absolute control of the business. One of their Madison properties was what is now known as the Buffalo Ranch. A man by the name of Baker settled it originally. He sold to someone by the name of Sherman from Butte, and later Hample and Granger from Butte took it over, but he thinks that Tom Hodgen had the place after Sherman; and that it was Hodgen who sold to Hample and Granger. He said Sherman bought it purely with a notion of speculation. He was going to exploit it and sell stock to Easteners as a fruit farm. Said the pictures of the orchard that he took to send with his pamphlet were taken in the Hyde Orchard down near Bozeman, and that he included in

his pamphlet pictures of Rippling Crane which he new had been taken in the lower Gallatin Valley. He thinks Butler bought the range direct from Granger. Mr. Behring said it was the most perfect place for growing cattle that he had ever seen. Said that one could cut hay on almost any portion of it. At the time they took it over it was leased from Hodgens to his nephew, Jim Chatman, many years. A while there were sheep on it, which he thought a very bad thing. He said when they moved the cattle out and put sheep in 1919 it was something that never should have been done, but said their losses on cattle was so heavy. Sheep were cheap and they hoped to make back their losses.

As an aside he told me of an interesting old timer in the upper Madison named Lou Fowler. He is rather inclined to think that Fowler was just an assumed name. Said that Fowler was a deserter from Gibbons Army. He deserted at the time of the Nez Perce raid out of the Yellowstone Park, and came down into the Madison Valley and homesteaded. No one ever found out that he was a deserter until 1918 when he was brought up as a Pro-German sympathizer. He was on the Bear Creek Range under Cunningham. Says that Cunningham and Behring also had cattle up into Grailing Creek, the upper basin where Hebgen now is, and over into Antelope Basin.

When it came to leasing the N. P. lands, Mr. Behring decided the thing to do was to go to someone who was a friend of the Nothern Pacific Railroad. So he went to Charles Anceny. When the forest service found that the Nothern Pacific was willing to give them leases, they objected very strongly to giving 70,000 acres of land into control of one company; and told the Nothern Pacific that they had presumed to lease to them. They could not lease, so Mr. Behring consulted Mr. Anceny and asked for a letter of introduction to Cooper who was the Nothern Pacific Land Agent. Mr. Behring said Mr. Cooper was a very picturesque man, very fine looking. He had been at one time the commandant at Fort Assinibone and came from there to be in charge of all the Nothern Pacific lands. Anceny said, "Childs is the man you want to see." The next day Anceny made an appointment for him to see Childs in Charles Hartman's office at 2 o'clock in the morning to give him a letter to Cooper. In place of that Childs pulled out his card and wrote on the back of it, "This is to introduce H. C. Behring a friend of Charles Anceny. Do all you possibly can for him." He told him not to go to Cooper, but to the President of the Nothern Pacific. He then got on the train for St. Paul. The President said he was in the operating department, but he would call three chiefs to go and find out. The traffic chief said that Cunningham and Behring were their heavy shippers and that Childs was behind them, so called Cooper in and told him to O. K. the leases.

The forest service was still very much incensed about this and asked him to meet Hughes, their forest man, in Missoula to try to prevent the leases. They finally got their leases. The policy of the railroad was to charge a fee of \$50 for range land, but Cunningham and Behring said the range declared it half timber and half grass, so that the leases really cost them \$25 a section for the 70,000 acres they leased.

When Cunningham and Behring first proposed leasing the Nothern Pacific land they went to the State Land Agent, Tom Cooney, and he told

then they could have it. Then they went and talked to the local forest supervisor, and he told them yes, it was all right; but promptly wired Washington and told the forest service there that something terrible was happening, that this company wanted to lease 70,000 acres from the railroad. Adams was in charge of the ranger office at Missoula during all of this trouble. Cunningham and Behring just couldn't get at him at all. He fought them more bitterly than anyone else except Hughes.

In 1919 or 1920 after the very hard winter of 1919 the forest service tried to get even with the company for having beaten them about these leases. After the severe winter of 1919 the finances of the company were not so good. It had cost them so much to winter their stock. It cost them about \$45 a head for cattle. Cattle were high. Sheep cost only about one-fourth as much and could be pastured where the cattle pastured. They planned to take all of their cattle over to the Crow reservation and put the sheep in their upper Gallatin County. This the forest service said they would not permit. They had at this time 23,000 sheep of the old Story and White Company. By this time C. H. Adams had fallen out with the forest service. Behring knew what a good fighter he was, and thought if he could fight so hard against them; he could also fight well for them. So he and Adams went down to Washington and were there over three months.

Graves was head of the forest service, Ed Merriman was Secretary of Agriculture, having been appointed in Hustons place, Walsh and Myers were the Senators, Charles Hartman was Representative; and he and Adams helped Behring a great deal. Graves remained absolutely against letting them have sheep on the forest. Finally they decided to have Bruce Kramer, who was the Vice-Chairman of the Democratic Committee, at that time Cummings was Chairman, come to their help. They had a great meeting in Graves' office, as Mr. Behring said a magnificent gallery. Kramer was all dressed up in the coat that fit him tight in the middle, a cane, and a derby hat. Graves got up stated his opposition and then Kramer asked to question him and outworded him in every way. Graves got purple, blue, and green; and still remained firm about his opinion. About this time Kramer had to go down to visit his relations, but Myer and Walsh worked hard for them; Walsh doing most of the heavy work. Kramer called Merriman Ed as though he knew him. It was Ed this, and we'll see Ed for that; but finally when at the meeting they discovered he had never met Ed before. Adams knew all of the ins and outs of the forest department in Washington, because he had worked there. Finally Graves said go on out to Montana and we'll try to get this straightened out; but Behring and Adams had already been there nearly three months so they said that they were not going until it was settled. Finally Merriman gave them permission so Adams had to turn out the sheep.

During these three months that they were in Washington very exciting things were happening. Wilson was making Lansing his Secretary of State. Now Behring and Adams had a chance to go to all of the Senate meetings where the League of Nations were discussed, and it was all a very interesting time for them.

By 1920 they had sold half interest in the company to Ringling, and when the majority of the stock was out of Mr. Behring's hands the

company began to go to pieces rapidly. By 1923 Mr. Behring had retired entirely. Many years before after Cunningham and Behring started their company some Beasman people tried to take sheep up through the Gallatin Canyon. This, of course, the company very bitterly opposed. They had nothing but cattle at that time, and knew if sheep were driven up they would eat off all the pasture and make it impossible for them to drive their cattle through.

Mr. Behring went right to Charles Hartman, who was then their representative in Washington, got his support and they talked to Clifford Pinchot who had helped \_\_\_\_\_ establish the forest; and told him what a terrible thing it would be to have sheep in the Gallatin Canyon. Emphasizing merely what a bad thing it would be for the scenery, and the tourist trade; and never mentioning that it would be a disadvantage to their cattle company. They made their case so strong that from that day until this, sheep have never been driven up the lower canyon. All sheep that they took into the county were taken in over Indian Creek to the Taylor's Fork Basin. Mr. Behring feels still that it was a mistake for them to take sheep into that fine mountain country, but said at the time they did not know how they could recover from their bad fortune during the winter of 1919 in any other way.

I then spoke to Mr. Behring about the Bear Creek ranch. He said, "Yes, it is a very fine ranch, but for it to be a success it needs unlimited range." Then he spoke briefly of how he would often go traveling through the State and pick up cattle, and instead of trying to crowd the range they had; he would wire to Cunningham and say I picked up 1500 range cattle, find some place to put them. Cunningham would go out and lease or in some way get enough extra range for the cattle. They never did in all the time they were up the canyon overcrowd their range.