

## BAIROIL HISTORY

The early history of Bairoil, Wyoming as recalled by Norman Peterson who lived there from 1923 to 1943.

The site of Bairoil in the early 1900's was an unspoiled and unsullied valley still in its pristine state. A few sheep herders grazed their herds there, antelope roamed at will. An occasional bear visited the site.

Four or five miles to the West was an abandoned stage coach station by the name of Lost Soldier, receiving its name from two cavalry couriers sent from Fort Fred Steele on the Platte river to Fort Lander, who perished in a sudden blizzard a short distance from the station. Fort Steele is 20 miles east of Rawlins.

North and west the valley was bordered by the Green Mountains, with Whiskey Peak the eastern terminus of the mountains, elevation 8900 feet which stood guard over the valley. Northeast the Ferris Mountain were an enclosing barrier. "Believe it or Not Ripley" said this range was one of the very first in the U.S. that ran from East to West without any passes to mark the unbroken range. In between Whiskey Peak and the Ferris Mountain, the two mountains were divided by Muddy Gap and Whiskey Gap. Whiskey Gap and Whiskey Peak got their names from a prohibition raid ordered by a Colonel Young in command of a group of cavalry passing through Whiskey Gap and camping there one night. It seems that he got so tired of always sending out someone to pick up drunks when they camped, that he ordered all the whiskey dumped from the whiskey wagons into the creek there. This occurred in the mid 1800's and became known as the first prohibition raids in the U.S. The little spring fed Cold Creek, lined with wild water cress and inhabited by wild native trout was there after called Whiskey Creek. Thus we have three things named after the prohibition raid.

The first road or trail from Rawlins, Wyoming to the Sweetwater River went through Whiskey Gap. It was so rocky and boggy that the new road went through Muddy Gap a couple of miles east was chosen in preference to Whiskey Gap. This new road #287 was built about 1924 or 1925. To the East about 25 miles were extensive sand dunes where Camp Ferris was situated. Station Three a pipeline station and oil field camp were subsequently located in the sand dunes.

The stage coach from Rawlins to Casper went through this area down Sand Creek Canyon to the Buzzard Ranch, Independence Rock and on to Casper. There were a lot of small sand dune lakes on the southeast side of Ferris Mountains that all had ducks in them but their meat was so bitter one could not eat them, caused from feeding on sour red berries that grew in the water or something else they fed on. The small lakes all dried up about 1930 because of dry year with little or no snow. To the South of Bairoil were the Separation Flats, on the west side of the flats was a long bare ridge which the east side sloping toward the red desert were found a number of petrified trees some 2 to 3 feet in diameter. Mike Lynch had a goodly number of these specimens exhibited outside of his store at Lamont.

Lost Soldier Valley was bounded on the Southwest about 25 miles to the Southwest by the east corner of the Red Desert. This semi desert was about 50 miles wide and

about 100 miles long. It extended from Crooks Gap to Wamsutter to Rock Springs at its western extremity. Crooks Gap was 25 miles northwest at the western end of the Green Mountains. It was here that Wyoming jade was discovered in the 1940's. There was so much of it that it literally flooded the market.

Further north beyond Green Mountain and Ferris Mountains was the famous Sweetwater River which was the route of the Oregon Trail, Mormon Trail, Pony Express and for other groups such as Astorians (trappers), missionaries, California Gold Rush, U.S. Military forces and others. Famous landmarks were Lankin Dome, Split Rock, Devils Gate and Independence Rock. So Bairoil or Lost Soldier field was surrounded by historic settings.

The first ranchers must have been Tony Stratton whose ranch was near Lost Soldier Stage Coach Station and Jimmy Lamont who ranch was just east of Lamont. Mr. Stratton dug an irrigation ditch from the creek that ran just north of Bairoil on the north, to a mesa like flat just north of Bairoil, but it was never used for lack of water, I presume, the summer road of the Rawlins Lander Stage Coach Line ran through Tony Stratton's ranch just west of his ranch house. It went of Green Mountain to Willow Creek and on the Rongis which was a stopping place. It was run by a man named of Signor, Rongis is Signor spelled backwards.

In the late 1860's Hans Larsen rode the box cars or rods from Nebraska City, Nebraska to Rawlins. He eventually went into the lumber business and other sidelines connected with the lumber trade. Since he sold coal he was always looking for coal out in the mountains surrounding area. He and some of his sons would make exploratory trips in early 1900's to Green and Ferris Mountains. By observing the rock formation and outcroppings they obtained a small knowledge of geology. In 1916 they brought out Frederick Park a geologist from Utah University, to look over the Lost Soldier country, Mr. Park said about the vicinity of what is now Bairoil that here was an oil dome and told Mr. Larsen to get several men to file on the land for oil and I suppose mineral rights. Mr. Larsen didn't ask anyone but just put their names down on paper of about 10 or 15 men in Rawlins and filed them in the courthouse.

While there were staking out their claims they met another group of men from east of Bairoil and asked them what they were doing? They said the same thing you are doing getting ready to stake out some claims. So to settle the arguments as to who was to get what they tossed a coin to decide the issue. Red Wertz from the group from the eastern side of the valley won what become known as the Wertz Field which turned out to be all gas wells. Hans Larsen and group got Lost Soldier Field which turned out to be all oil wells. They were so eager to get started drilling that they had a Star drilling rig expressed by train to Rawlins. The drillers name was Mr. Bair and the name of the area took its name from him.

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OIL FIELD IN CARBON COUNTY  
(Report U.S. Geological Survey)

The Bair Oil Co., drilling in 1916 on the Lost Soldier Dome, in Wyoming struck a gusher in the shallow sands of the Frontier formation, about 1,500 ft. below the surface. This dome was mapped in 1907 by E. E. Smith, a geologist of the Geological Survey, Department of the Interior, in the Survey's Bulletin 341, published in 1909. The map showed structure favorable to the accumulation of oil, and its suggestion was verified by the strike made by the Bair Oil Co. in 1916.

Geologists then swarmed into the region and altho the structure over great stretches in the Lost Soldier Basin is concealed by beds of surface gravel and dune sand they studied intensively such outcrops as they could find and dug test pits thru the gravel and sand at many places to learn the structure indicated by the dip of the underlying beds.

These investigations not only confirmed the presence of the Lost Soldier dome but led to the discovery of other domes and anticlines that seemed suitable for trapping oil. Nine anticlines and domes were found, altho the exact outlines and limits of some of them could not be determined. Drilling on several of these anticlines was begun immediately and resulted in the discovery of three oil fields in addition to the Lost Soldier field.