

Perry W. Jenkins – “Father of Sublette County”

An article prepared by John W. Shields¹
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Perry Wilson Jenkins – known almost universally as “P.W.” to his many friends and colleagues – earned the honorary title “Father of Sublette County” by introducing and championing the legislative bill that designated Sublette County as one of Wyoming’s twenty-three counties. This title also arose from the fact that he filed numerous water right applications and performed the surveys for a considerable number of irrigation ditches in Sublette County.

P.W., who lived for fifty years at the very headwaters of the Green River, was very aware of the importance of the Green River Basin to Wyoming’s future economic growth. The Green is the largest and longest of the tributaries to the Colorado River. With an annual mean discharge of about 15 million acre-feet, the Colorado River (including its tributaries, of which the Green River is its longest) is not a giant among the world’s rivers but it traverses one of North America’s driest regions. For the past one hundred years, the River’s unmatched possibilities and opportunities for economic development and growth in this arid region have spurred myriad political contests among irrigators, businesses, civic boosters, politicians, tribes, ranchers, government officials, engineers and, more recently, environmental groups and recreational users, all seeking a voice in Colorado River allocation decisions.²

A root cause of these conflicts is the hydrological reality that although roughly 90 percent of the River’s flow originates in the upper basin states of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming, much of the demand for the River’s water emanates from the lower basin states of Arizona, California, and Nevada.³ Perry Jenkins was well aware of these facts and was personally involved in several decades’ worth of those conflicts. Jenkins fully realized that Wyoming, as a high-elevation, arid, sparsely-populated, headwaters state, needed to put much more of our water to beneficial use if it was to be successful in developing and diversifying its economy. He spent much of his political energy and capital pushing for water development – and other associated natural resource developments.

P.W. Jenkins was a most fascinating individual. His journey to being a prominent figure in natural resource politics and policy in Wyoming is, itself, a fascinating story that is recounted

¹ The author expresses his gratitude to the Wyoming State Historical Society Lola Homsher Awards Committee and to John R. Waggener, WSHS Homsher Chair at the American Heritage Center of the University of Wyoming, for the Committee’s favorable consideration of the application to research the life of Mr. Jenkins, for their financial assistance for this project and for providing a complimentary one-year membership in the Wyoming State Historical Society and for their support and encouragement of this Wyoming history research project. The author has worked as Interstate Streams Engineer for the Wyoming State Engineer’s Office since 1984 and remains currently involved with Colorado River political hydrology and interstate water issues – and with some of the same organizations – as was the subject of this paper. He may be reached by calling 307-631-0898, by fax sent to 307-632-0299 or by e-mail sent to jwshields@bresnan.net.

² Committee on the Scientific Bases of Colorado River Basin Water Management of the National Research Council, *Colorado River Basin Water Management: Evaluating and Adjusting to Hydroclimatic Variability*, (National Academies Press, 2007), p. 27.

³ *Ibid.*

here. P.W. was, in the classic sense, a 20th Century “renaissance man”⁴ who had many, many occupations, avocations and interests throughout his long and interesting life. Jenkins was himself a contributor to the “Annals of Wyoming” publication and served on the Wyoming State Historical Advisory Board.⁵ In recognition of his many contributions to his fellow Wyomingites through service in many capacities – as measured at the national, regional, statewide, county and local levels, Jenkins was awarded an honorary doctorate degree by the University of Wyoming in 1955.⁶ Jenkins’ journey to that extraordinary recognition was a most interesting one.

This paper will provide a biographical sketch of the fascinating Mr. Jenkins and explore in some greater detail his tremendous and myriad efforts – personally, professionally and politically – to encourage the construction of additional water storage and water and natural resources development (additional “reclamation” as the term has been popularly used and across the west for over 100 years) in Wyoming.

ANCESTORS, EARLY YEARS AND VARIED ACADEMIC PURSUITS

Perry Wilson Jenkins was born in Mt. Carmel, Indiana on April 5, 1867 to Wilson Ragsdale and Susan (Smith) Jenkins. He was the grandson of William and Martha (Grant) Jenkins. Of Scotch-Irish ancestry, Martha Grant was a descendent of Colonel Grant, a New Jersey officer in the American Revolution. Jenkins’ great-grandfather, William Jenkins, was born in Wales on March 1, 1762. William traveled to Ireland, and while visiting his uncle there married his cousin, Susan Walker. Owing to the uncle’s opposition to the marriage, the couple came to America in about 1782. William Jenkins went to Cincinnati in 1807 where he traded a rifle for eighty acres of land that is presently within the city. For his service in the Indian Wars under General Arthur Sinclair, William received a land grant which was settled and farmed in Butler County, Ohio. Jenkins’ father, Wilson, was born at this Butler County homestead on September 20, 1834. He was a Civil War soldier, spent many years as a merchant in addition to operating the family farm, and died in February 1917. Wilson’s wife and P.W.’s mother, Susan Smith, was born in Peoria, Indiana on December 1, 1835, bore eleven and raised twelve children (the couple adopted one daughter)⁷ with her husband, Wilson, and passed away in February 1905. Perry was the youngest child of the twelve, having five older brothers and six older sisters.⁸

⁴ The term “Renaissance Man” is used to describe a person who is well educated or who excels in a wide variety of subjects or fields. This notion developed in Renaissance Italy and was expressed by one of its accomplished representatives, Leon Battista Alberti (1404–72), as: “a man can do all things if he will.” It embodied the basic tenets of Renaissance Humanism, which considered man the center of the universe, limitless in his capacities for development, and led to the notion that men should try to embrace all knowledge and develop their own capacities as fully as possible. Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Polymath>, accessed April 12, 2008.

⁵ Jenkins, Perry W., “Kiskadden-Slade, Some Historical Incidents Recalled,” *Annals of Wyoming*, (Wyoming Historical Department, 1949), 21:1:88-92.

⁶ Jenkins was honored as one of five recipients of the University of Wyoming’s most coveted award, the honorary LLD degree, at the June 6, 1955 commencement exercise at the University of Wyoming campus in Laramie. “U. of W. Names 5 for Coveted Award,” *The Salt Lake Tribune*, May 18, 1955.

⁷ Personal communication, personal interview with Ruth Jenkins Wilson Oliver on July 31, 2008.

⁸ Beard, Frances Birkhead, Editor, *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present*, (in three volumes, American Historical Society, Inc. 1933), pp. 17-19.

P.W.' early days were spent on the family farm near Peoria, Ohio. His first eight years of schooling were in the "public schools of Ohio" and he graduated from Miami Academy High School of Oxford, Ohio. P.W. graduated with an A.B.⁹ degree from Miami University of Oxford, Ohio with the class of 1890 after completing coursework in mathematics, engineering, political science and pre-law. As a young man, he was "prominent in athletics and played quarterback on his university football team."¹⁰ Jenkins is reported to have won the university prize in debate at Miami University in 1888.¹¹ He then worked in the offices of Judge Alexander Hume of Hamilton, Ohio, and followed that employment with a year of studies from 1890 to 1891 in law and public speaking at the Ohio Law School at the University of Cincinnati. Perry's A.M. degree was awarded from Miami University in 1892. Upon graduation from Miami University, he was salutatorian of his class and was elected Phi Beta Kappa.¹²

Jenkins particularly enjoyed mathematics and astronomy and began teaching in 1891 in Sweetwater, Tennessee at the Tennessee Military Academy (through 1893), then at Amity College in College Springs, Iowa (1893 through 1896). He was President of the Amity College during the last of his three years' service there – and in that capacity was the youngest college executive in the United States at that time.¹³ In 1896 he accepted a position as Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy at Simpson College at Indianola, Iowa (12 miles south of Des Moines, the Iowa state capital). Simpson College had been founded in 1860 by members of the Iowa United Methodist Church¹⁴.

On April 24, 1897, he married Eva Clara Smith in Burlington Junction, Missouri. The couple met while Jenkins was at Amity College and Eva was attending classes there. Born April 3, 1874 to John William "Will" and Adeline (Johnston) Smith, Eva was a graduate of Drake University of Iowa in 1896. Eventually, P.W. and Eva had four daughters: Miriam A. (Barlow), Lois Eva, Helen Virginia (Kvenild/O'Neil) and Ruth Elizabeth (Wilson/Oliver). Their daughter Lois died shortly before she was to marry in August 1942. Mrs. Jenkins passed away on September 24, 1940 in the Salt Lake City Hospital as a result of a paralytic stroke suffered the previous evening at their home in Salt Lake City.¹⁵ Her remains and those of her husband of 43 years, who outlived her an additional 14 ½ years, are interred in the family plot in the Pinedale Cemetery.

During the 1899 through 1900 academic year, Jenkins spent a year at Columbia University in New York City, New York where he earned a Master of Arts degree after completing coursework in mathematics, geodetic engineering and astronomy. He then accepted a position at Lawrence College in Appleton, Wisconsin where he was a Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy and served as the Director of the Underwood Observatory at Lawrence College (photo – Figure 1) from 1900 through 1904. Jenkins then accepted a position in 1904 at the

⁹ A.B. for "Artium Baccalaureus" degree equivalent to a Bachelor of Arts degree.

¹⁰ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present, supra.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ "Jenkins Has Good Background of Education and Training for Governorship," *The Pinedale Roundup*, May 27, 1926.

¹⁴ Simpson College was founded in 1860 and was named and based on the beliefs of Methodist minister Matthew Simpson. Matthew Simpson is best known as the minister who spoke the last words at Abraham Lincoln's grave in Springfield, Illinois.

¹⁵ *The Pinedale Roundup*, September 26, 1940.

University of Chicago as a “University Fellow” where he taught mathematics and practical astronomy and did research in astronomy at the University of Chicago’s Yerkes Observatory.

JENKINS’ JOURNEY TO BEING A PROMINENT WYOMING CATTLEMAN

In April 1905, Jenkins consulted with a physician who advised him that he had less than six months to live.¹⁶ While *The Pinedale Roundup* described the health issue as being due to a lung condition,¹⁷ Jenkins’ grandson, John Perry Barlow (son of Miriam Jenkins Barlow and Norman Barlow),¹⁸ was quoted in an interview as stating the health issue was incurable nephritis (inflammation of the kidney). “They removed one kidney and didn't even send him a bill because they didn't think he would live to pay it.”¹⁹ P.W. was suffering from tuberculosis,²⁰ commonly referred to as “consumption. As there was no cure, it was normal procedure for those suffering from consumption to be advised by their physicians to seek out warm and dry – arid– climates as a way to lessen the severity of their symptoms. It was for that reason that Jenkins soon relocated to the West.

Upon coming to Wyoming, Jenkins worked for two years for Amos W. Smith, his wife Eva’s uncle, a prominent rancher who lived near Big Piney.²¹ A. W., as he was known widely, was a native of Missouri who had ventured out to the “Piney country” in 1879. Foreseeing the future of the region, Smith began acquiring ranch land, including the 67 Ranch which he purchased in 1894, the Mule Shoe Ranch, and other ranches and within a few years had one of the best ranches in the West²² (photo – Figure 2). Jenkins’ brother, George, had purchased a ranch on Willow Creek near Pinedale in the early 1890s and this was no doubt a factor in P.W.’s decision to move West from Chicago as well.

Jenkins’ grandson, John Perry Barlow, commenting on P.W.’s early years in Wyoming, related that:

“P.W. ... came out West to die, but the mountain air was good for him or something - getting away from academia - I don't know what it was, but he sort of stuck around down on the Mule Shoe for a few years and then after it looked

¹⁶ “Perry Jenkins Still Going Strong After Prediction of Early Death 46 Years Ago,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, April 19, 1951.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Norman Barlow, raised in Bountiful, Utah, met Jenkins’ eldest daughter, Miriam, while both were attending college in Utah. In 1930, Barlow’s father-in-law, P.W. Jenkins, enlisted the couple to work on the Bar Cross Ranch. Jenkins inspired his son-in-law’s involvement in politics. Barlow served in the Wyoming State Legislature from 1945 to 1964, first as a Representative for two terms and then in the Senate, where he rose to the rank of President of the Senate. Barlow also served as President of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association (1955-1957). See “Barlow, Former Legislator, Dies,” *Casper Star Tribune*, February 26, 1972; see also “Barlow Service in State,” *Casper Star Tribune*, February 28, 1972.

¹⁹ Early Sublette County Brands Project, P. W. Jenkins Ranch, BAR –CROSS, Interviewer - Stuart McKinley, no date, <http://www.grvm.com/brands/jenkins.htm>, accessed April 12, 2008.

²⁰ Personal communication, interview with Ruth Jenkins Wilson Oliver on July 31, 2008. Ruth advised of her understanding that it was quite common for people living in or near Peoria, Ohio, to develop tuberculosis and that it was relatively prevalent at the time that P.W. grew up in that locale.

²¹ “Perry Jenkins Still Going Strong After Prediction of Early Death 46 Years Ago,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, April 19, 1951.

²² “The Piney Country, Wyoming,” http://www.wyominggenealogy.com/uinta/piney_country_wyoming.htm, accessed April 12, 2008.

like he was going to live after all, then A.W. said, "Why don't you get a place of your own?" and grub-staked him a little bit. ... P. W.'s brother George ... knew about a place that was right north of Cora called the Westfall Place that was for sale. That was a little homestead, not too big. And P.W. came up and bought that and moved onto the Westfall Place. And he lived there until, I believe, 1912 or 1913. And by then it was already called the Bar Cross ... That was his brand, which he had gotten because he was a mathematician, and it was a mathematical symbol, and it was also a great brand. It was a one-iron brand and it was easy to put on. He bought the Wright place. He still had the Westfall place. He'd acquired the Johnson place, and then he started to accumulate stuff, and in the meantime A. W. (Smith) had died and he had left his property to P.W.'s (Jenkins) wife and her two sisters, both of whom were farm girls back in Missouri, and they just wanted to liquidate their portions right away, and they did."

Beard's *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present* (1933) book entry describing prominent citizen P.W. Jenkins stated that his "career ... has brought him unusual honors in the public life of Wyoming." Presumably P.W.'s entry in this book was prepared in consultation with him or with his input; it described the health-necessitated transition in Jenkins' life and career with the following:

"During 1904-1905 he was fellow and research student and special observer in astronomy at the Yerkes Observatory of the University of Chicago. Just at this time his health broke down under the strain of study and he was ordered to the mountains of the West. From the pursuits of a scholar, scientist and teacher he completely changed the direction of his energies on arriving at Cora, Wyoming in 1906. Here he proceeded to 'rough it' as a ranch hand, at a salary of thirty-five dollars per month. In 1908, he bought the Seven-Bar Ranch, starting with fifty [actually 57] cows, and during the next twenty years made himself one of the livestock kings of the state, owning several ranches, comprising 8,000 acres, stocked with 2,000 head of cattle. He has developed a fine Hereford herd. Sixty-four hundred acres of his land in Western Wyoming are under irrigation. He also had a farm of 200 acres in Missouri, [and] a wheat farm of 120 acres in Canada. His ranching property has been acquired a few hundred acres at a time²³."

Jenkins purchase of the ranching and cattle interests of W.J. Wright in January 1916 was described in the local newspaper account of this sale as a "deal of considerable magnitude involving better than 1,600 acres of land and 200 head of cattle, machinery, tools, etc., placing Mr. Jenkins among the list of owners of large tracks of land and herds of cattle in this section²⁴." When his brother, George Jenkins, died, P.W. inherited the Willow Creek Ranch and it became

²³ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present, supra.*

²⁴ This article also included the following recitation of Jenkins' storied path in the Piney Country: "From a professor of mathematics and astronomy in eastern colleges, to the present classification and rating in financial circles, is the sudden transformation of approximately ten years effort. Coming west about ten years ago, or perhaps less, for his health, with small capital he has not only gained health, but becomes 'well heeled' in the phraseology of the west during his recuperation." "Large Ranch and Cattle Sale," *The Pinedale Roundup*, January 27, 1916.

part of the Bar Cross Ranch as well. By Jenkins' own accounts²⁵, he ran as many as 2,200 head of cattle and up to 200 head of horses on his ranch lands and made use of the public range and forest reserve lands as a part of his livestock operation. According to a 1950 newspaper account, the Bar Cross Ranch holdings amounted to 18,000 acres at that time.²⁶

Jenkins was elected to the Wyoming Stockgrowers' Board of Directors in May 1917 and became involved with the American National Livestock Association and represented them in Washington in 1918 in the United States Senate Investigation of the cost of food production.²⁷ He credited himself as being the originator of "The Producer" magazine that began publication in 1919. *The Pinedale Roundup* reported that Jenkins shipped the largest steer in 1919 and that the animal netted him \$345.00.²⁸ Jenkins was elected to the National Livestock Board in February 1926 and later served as Vice President of the American National Cattlemen's Association.

MANY AND VARIED WERE JENKINS' INTERESTS AND PURSUITS

In addition to his ranching interests, Jenkins was a registered Professional Engineer and Land Surveyor in Wyoming. He practiced "land and irrigation engineering and land and water law."²⁹ He was licensed to practice as an engineer in Wyoming in 1908³⁰ and was a member of the Society of American Engineers.³¹ Mr. Jenkins served as Cora's Justice of the Peace beginning in 1908.³² Jenkins filed water right permit applications and surveyed the ditch courses for a large number of ditches in Sublette County, including some on his own ranches and many more for other clients and for several reservoirs. The 1933 biographical sketch confirmed that "Mr. Jenkins has also used his engineering knowledge and skill in the construction of canals and reservoirs."³³

Jenkins had a long association with the Green River Canal Development Company and served in at least three capacities for the canal company over his many years. He was directly associated with the enlargement of the New Fork Lake, which was a natural lake known locally by the Indians as Lake De Amelia which translated as "Lake Beautiful." Jenkins evidently told his family that the dam on the New Fork River was the first retention dam built on the headwaters of the Colorado River watershed.³⁴ The original concrete dam failed in December 1927 and was replaced with a more substantial earthen dam completed in December 1930. He was involved with the Boy Scouts of America and the establishment of a scout camp in proximity to the New Fork Lake.

²⁵ "Sketch of the Activities of Perry W. Jenkins," prepared circa January 1935, to accompany United States Civil Service Commission application for employment, as found in the Perry W. Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Sublette County Historical Society, Pinedale, Wyoming.

²⁶ "Perry Jenkins, Visiting Oxford, Tells of Old Miami, New West" by Isabella Williams, *The Oxford Press*, Oxford, Ohio, June 22, 1950.

²⁷ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present*, *supra*.

²⁸ *The Pinedale Roundup*, December 25, 1919.

²⁹ "Sketch of the Activities of Perry W. Jenkins," *supra*.

³⁰ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present*, *supra*.

³¹ "Sketch of the Activities of Perry W. Jenkins," *supra*.

³² "P.W. Jenkins of Cora, Republican Candidate for the Legislature," *The Pinedale Roundup*, October 13, 1910.

³³ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present*, *supra*.

³⁴ Ruth (Jenkins) Wilson Oliver, personal correspondence, June 14, 2007.

Jenkins was engaged in other commercial business interests as well. He was the proprietor of the Shirley Drug Store in Pinedale in 1929. He owned the Western Drug Store and Western Cash Grocery and was associated with the Cora Mercantile Company. He was “financially interested” in the State Bank of Big Piney.³⁵ He was a co-owner of the first gas station in Big Piney. For many years he was the County Chairman of the Sublette County Chapter of the American Red Cross. He served on the Board of Directors of the statewide Wyoming Tuberculosis Association. During World War I, Jenkins “volunteered in the Twenty-third Engineers, but was rejected on account of physical disability,” though he was awarded a “certificate for services in the Public Service Reserves.”³⁶

Mr. Jenkins had a deep and abiding interest in history. He was the founder and was elected the first President of the Sublette County Historical Society on July 4, 1923. Jenkins “... and others created a special organization to promote and stimulate interest in history. The history they so profoundly wanted preserved was that of Sublette County’s fur trade era, and its ties to past rendezvous held in the area.”³⁷ Accordingly, the Sublette County Historical Society began holding a recreation of the annual “Green River Rendezvous” each year.³⁸ Jenkins was the chief planner of the initial Rendezvous held in 1935 and he and his family members remained active in the event for many years (photo – Figure 3).³⁹

Jenkins contributed a July 1949 article to the “Annals of Wyoming” publication concerning the life and exploits of Jack Slade, a Division Chief for Ben Holladay’s Overland Stage Company, and his wife Virginia, (for whom Virginia Dale, Wyoming was named). Jenkins was a member of the Wyoming State Historical Society and also served as a Member of the Wyoming State Historical Advisory Board.⁴⁰ Jenkins’ earlier historical pursuits were dealt a severe setback in May 1928 when a house fire destroyed their home, including Jenkins’ library, wherein “Jenkins had collected a number of rare old books now out of print which had been obtained at considerable expense and search as an aid in his extensive research on the early history of Wyoming and the West. This loss will no doubt be keenly felt by Mr. Jenkins, as he had not yet completed some valuable contributions on historic lore which were in the course of preparation.”⁴¹ Nonetheless, Jenkins did not allow this tragedy to interfere with the laying of the cornerstone of the new Sublette County building on June 1st, 1931, where Jenkins, in regalia, as Grand Master of the Masonic Grand Lodge of Wyoming presided over the ceremony and “...

³⁵ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present, supra.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Swain, Rhonda, “History in the Making,” *Sublette Examiner*, April 4, 2002.

³⁸ <http://www.pinedaleonline.com/RendezvousDays.HTM>, accessed Jun 13, 2008. This site also notes: “the Green River Rendezvous was an annual event in the 1830’s. Mountain men, trappers, travelers and Indians all gathered in a valley ‘below the Green’ River and bartered, traded, sold, and swapped various items such as skins, pelts, guns, jewelry and whatever else they needed. All knew the place where Horse Creek flowed into the Green in the Upper Green River Valley, the site of six Rendezvous. The Rendezvous lasted anywhere from a few days to several months and was a time for getting new supplies, renewing friendships, story swapping, drinking and general rowdiness.”

³⁹ “The Pinedale Roundup,” June 20, 1935.

⁴⁰ Jenkins, Perry W., “Kiskadden-Slade, Some Historical Incidents Recalled,” *Annals of Wyoming*, (Wyoming Historical Department, 1949), 21:1:88-92.

⁴¹ “Jenkins’ Lose Residence at Big Piney By Fire,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, May 28, 1931

gave a very interesting talk on the early history of the Green River Valley and of Sublette County.”⁴²

Jenkins was instrumental in having the skeletal remains of Pinckney Sublette returned to Wyoming. Sublette was one of five brothers, all eminent mountain men, who trapped for the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, of which Pinckney’s brother, William Sublette, was part owner. He was reported killed in 1828, but Perry Jenkins “pieced together” much historical evidence and concluded that Pinckney may have “sold out” to Peter Skene Ogden’s Hudson Bay outfit and spent some years trapping in northern Idaho and Canada. In 1897, during a St. Louis lawsuit to establish the heirs of Pinckney’s brother Solomon, a grave on Fontenelle Creek, southwest of LaBarge, was identified as that of Pinckney. His bones were exhumed and taken to St. Louis to establish his death. For nearly 40 years they were shunted about in the vaults of the court clerk’s office; then the court ordered them returned to Wyoming, where they were reinterred July 4, 1936 on the Prairie de la Messe, in the county that bears the family name.⁴³ The March 22, 1928 issue of *The Pinedale Roundup* reported on the decision of the Missouri Supreme Court that led to Mr. Sublette’s remains being returned to Sublette County and reinterred as part of the 1936 Green River Rendezvous event.⁴⁴

Jenkins interest in history naturally extended to his own family’s genealogy as well. According to a newspaper article documenting Jenkins’ accomplishments as a noted college alumnus of Miami University published in 1950: “Perry Jenkins is a specialist in the genealogical history of his own family, and his researches have given him a great deal of information about many other old Butler and Franklin county families, and insight into some of the early events in the history of Miami University. His library of Butler County history is probably as complete as any in the United States.”⁴⁵

In September 1955, over 700 volumes in Jenkins’ library at the time of his death three months previously were presented to the University of Wyoming Library by the Jenkins family. At the time of their donation, the University’s Archivist stated that “Jenkins’ Western Americana collection, one of the most outstanding in the Rocky Mountain region, is so valuable and select that it greatly strengthens the University’s research facilities on western history and can be put to use immediately.”⁴⁶

Jenkins conducted archaeological investigations and surveyed the historic the Fort Bonneville site within a few years of coming to Wyoming when irrigation ditch construction that he was overseeing exposed site features.⁴⁷ A rather humorous newspaper article recounted Jenkins

⁴² “Corner Stone of County Building Laid by Grand Lodge A.F. & A.M. of Wyo. June 1, 1931,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, June 4, 1931.

⁴³ Larson, T.A., Writers’ Program of the Work Projects Administration in the State of Wyoming, Writers Program, Federal Writers’ Project, “Wyoming – A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People,” (University of Nebraska Press, 1941, reprinted 1981), <http://www.questia.com/PM.qst?a=o&d=23304769>, accessed online on April 12, 2008.

⁴⁴ *The Pinedale Roundup*, March 22, 1928.

⁴⁵ “Perry Jenkins, Visiting Oxford, Tells of Old Miami, New West” by Isabella Williams, *The Oxford Press*, Oxford, Ohio, June 22, 1950.

⁴⁶ “Perry Jenkins’ Library Given to State University,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, September 29, 1955.

⁴⁷ Vlcek, David, “Archaeological Investigations at Fort Bonneville,” A Paper presented at the Rocky Mountain Fur Trade Symposium September 10-12, 1992, Pinedale, Wyoming, information accessed on the Internet at

having found prehistoric creature bones on the bank of the New Fork Lake in August 1922.⁴⁸ Indicative of his characteristic vision for opportunity, Jenkins invited the Boy Scouts of the state to spend two weeks in July, 1923 and 1924, at his ranch on the New Fork Lake. "The invitation was accepted by a large number and the time was spent between excavating the fossil remains, lectures on astronomy and other subjects, and the general good time that boys enjoy."⁴⁹ At the time of his running for the Governorship of Wyoming in 1926, *The Pinedale Roundup's* article endorsing Mr. Jenkins' bid included the following: "Deeply interested in young people, he has taken an active interest in the Y.M.C.A. and Boy Scout movements, conducting a camp for the latter for four years."⁵⁰

Informative in expressing the breadth of P.W.'s varied accomplishments, the June 1950 Oxford, Ohio newspaper article recapping the storied Mr. Jenkins' accomplishments related:

"Eighty-three this past April, Mr. Jenkins looks on life with zest, and flies to his many committee meetings, and to Oxford for his visits here. Honors which have been heaped on him in recent years include the Bishop Medal at Miami [awarded to him in 1940 by the Miami University Alumni Association⁵¹], election to membership in the Phi Beta Kappa,⁵² and listing in *Burkes Landed Gentry*, an English publication which includes only 800 Americans. The P.W. and C.T. Jenkins scholarship for sophomore men at Miami University was a gift of himself and his brother in 1945."⁵³

That same newspaper article continued by noting Jenkins' "... own life illustrates how the history of one generation may be duplicated in a later. Jenkins' great grandfather, Captain James Dunn of Cincinnati represented Hamilton County in the first legislature held in the newly created

http://www.blm.gov/wy/st/en/field_offices/Pinedale/arch/fort_bonneville.html, accessed on May 28, 2008. In this work, Vlcek notes that Fort Bonneville was established in 1832 by Captain Benjamin Louis E. de Bonneville on the banks of the Green River on a dry terrace of the Green River just above its confluence with Prairie Creek, five miles above the Green's confluence with Horse Creek. Fort Bonneville, sometimes called Fort Nonsense due to the severe winters at the site, was intermittently occupied from 1832 to 1836. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was the first historic period building locale known for Wyoming.

⁴⁸ *The Pinedale Roundup*, August 3, 1922.

⁴⁹ "The Piney Country, Wyoming," http://www.wyominggenealogy.com/uinta/piney_country_wyoming.htm, accessed July 8, 2008.

⁵⁰ "Jenkins Has Good Background of Education and Training for Governorship," *The Pinedale Roundup*, May 27, 1926.

⁵¹ Established in 1936, the Bishop Medal is named in honor of Robert Hamilton Bishop, Miami's first president. It is given to individuals who have distinguished themselves in service to fellow human beings. <http://www.miamialum.org/awards.htm>, accessed May 27, 2008.

⁵² The Phi Beta Kappa Society is an academic honor society with the mission of "fostering and recognizing excellence" in the undergraduate liberal arts and sciences. Founded at the College of William and Mary on December 5, 1776, it is the oldest and most prestigious honor society in the United States. Phi Beta Kappa was also the first collegiate organization to adopt a Greek-letter name. Today there are 276 chapters and over half a million living members. Phi Beta Kappa (ΦBK) stands for "Love of learning is the guide of life." http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phi_Beta_Kappa, accessed May 26, 2008. Jenkins' obituary, as printed in the June 23, 1955 edition of *The Pinedale Roundup* noted that Perry Jenkins was one of only 200 Americans who was elevated to the rank of Phi Beta Kappa Associates in 1948.

⁵³ C.T. here refers to Charles T. Jenkins whose occupations included service as the Assistant Dean at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. "Perry Jenkins, Visiting Oxford, Tells of Old Miami, New West" by Isabella Williams, *The Oxford Press*, Oxford, Ohio, June 22, 1950.

state of Ohio. Dunn was much concerned with the formation of Butler County, and afterwards he moved to Fort Hamilton and represented Butler County at Chillicothe, then the state capital. Later Dunn was appointed a county judge.⁵⁴

Further, Jenkins was a thirty-second degree Scottish Rite Mason (past Master of Franklin Lodge No. 1 A.F. & A.M. and member of Wyoming Consistory No. 1), member of the Order of the Eastern Star and was at one time the President of the Epworth League (affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church, the League was organized to promote an earnest, intelligent, practical and loyal spiritual life in the young people of that church)⁵⁵ in Wisconsin. He was a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon, the National Geographic Society, a Director of the Wyoming Health Association and a member of the Woodsmen's Association and of the National Council of the National Economic League.⁵⁶

POLITICAL LEADER

Jenkins interest in politics led him to seek political office in the State Legislature. Jenkins began his quest to serve in the Wyoming Legislature in October 1910, when he ran for the State House of Representatives (photo – Figure 4). The article announcing his candidacy made note of Jenkins "...always taking an active interest in politics and of his having had considerable experience in public speaking."⁵⁷ He announced a second bid for the Legislature on August 1, 1912.⁵⁸ Jenkins again filed his candidacy as a representative in the Legislature from Fremont County in July 1918, and received support and praise in *The Pinedale Roundup* newspaper article which included: "The west end of the county needs representation in the legislative body of this state in the framing of laws that will be of benefit to the stockman of this section and Perry Jenkins is just the man to represent us." The article concluded by noting that "To P.W. Jenkins is ascribed a considerable amount of credit for ... the lifting of the embargo and ban on the beef ... placed as a precautionary war conservation measure ... which has resulted in great good to the entire west."⁵⁹

With this support and that of the electors, he was elected to the Wyoming House of Representatives where he served 5 terms beginning in 1919 and rose in the leadership to the rank of Speaker Pro-Tem in 1925. P.W. followed his service in the House with two terms in the Wyoming State Senate beginning in 1925. He served as the President of the Wyoming State Senate in 1927 (photo – Figure 5). His son-in-law, Norman Barlow, who married Perry's eldest daughter Miriam in March 1930, served as the President of the Wyoming Senate in 1959 as well and it is clear that they coordinated on a multitude of political matters over many years. P.W.'s daughter, Miriam, served as an alternate delegate to the Republican National Convention from Wyoming in 1960.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Chambers, Talbot Wilson, Samuel Macauley Jackson and Frank Hugh Foster, *The Concise Dictionary of Religious Knowledge and Gazetteer*, (The Christian Literature Company, Second and Revised Edition, 1899), downloaded from <http://books.google.com> on July 11, 2008, p. 988.

⁵⁶ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present, supra.*

⁵⁷ "P.W. Jenkins of Cora, Republican Candidate for the Legislature," *The Pinedale Roundup*, October 13, 1910.

⁵⁸ "P.W. Jenkins Candidate for 12th Legislature," *The Pinedale Roundup*, August 1, 1912.

⁵⁹ "Throws Hat into Ring," *The Pinedale Roundup*, July 25, 1918.

⁶⁰ <http://politicalgraveyard.com/bio/barlow.html#0RY15RHZH>, accessed July 11, 2008.

As noted earlier in this article, Jenkins introduced the bill in the Wyoming House of Representatives to create Sublette County as a separate county out of what previously had been Lincoln and Fremont County. Sublette County was named for William L. Sublette, a fur trapper and trader who operated in the area in the early 1800s. Perry W. Jenkins named the County after Sublette when he introduced the bill to form the County in 1921. In a recorded interview, Jenkins' grandson, John Perry Barlow, related that:

“He got elected to the legislature and he didn't like riding to the county seat all the way over in Lander. And he also didn't like the fact that the county line went right through his house. It went right down through the middle of his house, between Fremont and what was then Uinta Counties and so, then Lincoln County was created and that still went down through the middle of his house. So he went down to the Legislature and got this county put together on the basis of a watershed.”⁶¹

In fact, the citizens of Big Piney and Pinedale had been hoping that they would be favored with their own county when the Wyoming State Legislature added seven new counties to the State in January 1911. Although petitions were drawn and circulated, however the petition proposing a new county for the Green River Valley failed to be introduced at the 1911 State Legislature.⁶² Pinedale remained a part of Fremont County, while Big Piney became a part of Lincoln County, one of the seven new counties formed. County division remained an active issue within the Legislature during the next four sessions, especially for those citizens living in the northern section of Fremont County, in what would later become Teton County.

On January 13, 1921, P. W. Jenkins of Cora, the Wyoming State House Representative from Fremont County, introduced House Bill 17 to create the county of Sublette. It would consist of the western portion of Fremont County on the west side of the Wind River Mountains and the eastern portion of Lincoln County, but not to include Kemmerer. Supporting Mr. Jenkins was Representative Oscar Beck of Big Piney, representing Lincoln County. Both men supported the creation of the new county in the legislative committee's consideration of the bill and met with little resistance.⁶³ The January 20, 1921 edition of *The Pinedale Roundup* explained the bill's intent with the following:

“Messrs. Jenkins and Beck showed that Sublette will take 2000 square miles from Lincoln and 2400 square miles from Fremont; that, with an assessed valuation of nearly \$9,000,000—almost \$4,000,000 more than the legal minimum—it will be a county of the second class and at the same time leave its parent counties sufficient valuation and population to retain their rating of first class. They further showed that they proposed to include a natural subdivision—the Green River watershed—taking in, to be more exact, all that portion of Fremont lying west of the Wind

⁶¹ P. W. Jenkins Ranch, Early Sublette County Brands Project, Interview with John Perry Barlow, no date provided, <http://www.grvm.com/brands/jenkins.htm>, accessed May 27, 2008.

⁶² Noble, Ann Chambers, *Pinedale, Wyoming: A Centennial History 1904-2004*, (Sublette County Historical Society Museum of the Mountain Man, 2005), pp. 77-79.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

River mountains, together with a slice from the east central portion of Lincoln. This slice will run south as far as a continuation of the southern border of Fremont, north as far as the Gros Ventre range, but not quite as far as the town of Jackson, and west as far as the approximate center of Lincoln ... When the bill gets thru it will become merely an enabling act, as under the law the matter of creating a new county must be referred at a special election, to the voters within the confines of the new territory. A majority vote of these electors must be secured before the action of the legislature is ratified.⁶⁴

House Bill 17 was enacted by the Wyoming State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Robert Carey on February 15, 1921. A separate act enabling the creation of Teton County was also passed and signed into law at this same time.⁶⁵

Jenkins pursued other elected offices as well. He announced his candidacy for Governor of the State of Wyoming in May 1926, although he then withdrew from the race a little more than a month later. The May 27, 1926 issue of *The Pinedale Roundup* included a sterling endorsement of Jenkins for the office of Governor when, at the end of a lengthy biographical sketch, the article stated, "In view of these facts, Perry W. Jenkins seems to have the foundations of a good executive and that he is ever alert to the needs of the people of this state is attested by his act creating the Distribution of Oil Royalty Fund, appropriations of funds for good roads and many other bills, including several which aid in the preservation of one of Wyoming's biggest assets, fish and game." In 1928, he ran for the Congressman at Large seat to represent Wyoming in the U.S. House of Representatives (described in more detail below).⁶⁶ Jenkins again announced his bid for that post in June 1932. This latter bid truly was an announcement - in the form of a printed "Announcement" that appeared on the front page of *The Pinedale Roundup*. Jenkins thoroughly set forth his principles, views and objectives in his announcement (which still ring true to centrist principles supported by many in this State to this day) that read as follow:

"TO ALL REPUBLICANS, THE REPUBLICAN CENTRAL COMMITTEE
AND THE STATE CHAIRMAN:

Not having reached a decision in time to present my name to the State Convention at Casper, I take this means of announcing my candidacy for the office of Congressman at Large, subject to the decision of the Republican Electors at the August Primaries.

If elected, I will devote all my time and attention to the requirements of that important office and will safeguard the interests of Wyoming, both in Committee and on the floor of the House. Having had several years experience in our State Senate and House of Representatives, I am sure I can serve the people with efficiency and to their satisfaction.

I pledge myself to cooperate with the national administration in all its efforts to reduce the cost of government. By the consolidation, and coordination

⁶⁴ "Bill to Form Sublette County Explained," *The Pinedale Roundup*, January 20, 1921.

⁶⁵ *Pinedale, Wyoming: A Centennial History 1904-2004, supra*.

⁶⁶ Larson, T.A., *History of Wyoming*, (University of Nebraska Press, Second Edition Revised, 1978), p. 426.

of departments, bureaus and offices, I believe the number of officials can be reduced by 150,000 thereby eliminating from the budget at least \$200,000,000.

I will endeavor to secure in the State all its rights under the Constitution, including the ownership of the public lands, mineral resources, water and water power, and will urge the reclamation of Wyoming lands by the expenditure with our State of all royalties collected therein. I am opposed to further federal encroachment upon the sovereignty and jurisdiction of the State and the enlargement or extension of federal reservations.

I believe in full protection to agricultural products such as grain, meats, sugar and hides. I advocate the establishment of a more flexible system of national currency by increasing the coinage of silver which is the workingman's money; also an international currency agreement which would facilitate and encourage foreign commerce.

I will support the enactment of all laws for the moral uplift of our people and the welfare of children. I will work at all times for the reduction of taxes and the strictest economy in the administration of state and federal affairs.”

It is apparent that, despite the fact that this announcement framed the issues upon which Jenkins intended to campaign, one of the issues which Jenkins had to deal with in his campaign against Vincent Carter of Cheyenne, the incumbent who was eventually re-elected, was the issue of prohibition. Jenkins, as a Presbyterian, was encouraged by a number of folks from across Wyoming to mount his campaign as a “dry” candidate who did not favor the repeal of prohibition.

NATURAL RESOURCES AND WATER DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE

A more in-depth overview of Jenkins' influential role in local, state and regional politics with regard to natural resources is necessary for several reasons. First, Jenkins was passionately interested and devoted to growing Wyoming's economy through development and use of our State's natural resources, including and in particular Wyoming's water. Second, this interest and devotion was translated into planning, implementation and action across many fronts in the State of Wyoming and across the West, as will be described in more detail below.

Indicative of his views in these matters, Jenkins, who had risen to the very prominent role of President of the Wyoming State Senate during the 1927 Wyoming Legislative Session, told his fellow State Senators that our “natural resources are seized by special interests and conveyed into richer and stronger neighboring states [and] ... our state is drained of its life blood and our development is long deferred.”⁶⁷ Jenkins “mentioned specifically iron ore, oil, timber, phosphates, water and water power. Whether Jenkins properly identified the cause of the state's slow growth or not, the export of raw materials continued.”⁶⁸

Beginning in 1927 his interest in western reclamation led him to accept a position as the Manager of the Green River Basin Development Company. Jenkins held at least three different titles during his many years of association with the Company – including Executive Director,

⁶⁷ Larson, T.A., *History of Wyoming*, (University of Nebraska Press, Second Edition, Revised, 1978), page 461.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

General Manager and Irrigation Engineer. Jenkins was also a gubernatorial appointee and served for a number of years on the Wyoming State Planning and Conservation Board,⁶⁹ including service as Vice-President of the Board during the administration of Governor Nels Smith, who under the organizing statute, was designated as the Board's President.⁷⁰

A short digression to provide context and setting with regard to Jenkins' important and extensive role in the western United States water resources development advocacy movement – known more precisely as the “reclamation” movement is offered at this point. The effects of the Great Depression on the Nation were profound, however, Wyoming historian T.A. Larson observes in his *History of Wyoming* that historians usually concede that agriculture and coal mining, along with the oil industry, suffered setbacks and did not share in the overall prosperity during the “decade of prosperity after a short depression in 1920-1921.” Due to deflation and the 1919 drought, the livestock business in Wyoming and across the intermountain West suffered extraordinary distress. The wool industry fared no better. The Union Pacific Railroad laid off one-third of its men during the four months beginning in December 1920. With three of the state's major economic supports—agriculture, coal mining, and petroleum—showing substantial weakness, the 1920's must be regarded as years of depression for Wyoming, despite the apparent prosperity of the middle and upper classes in the nation's big cities.⁷¹ These troubled times were followed by the requirement of further belt-tightening during the Great Depression of the 1930's and the agony was considerable.⁷²

In the early 1930s, federal reclamation hit rock bottom. When the Depression hit, crop prices plummeted, declining 50 percent between 1930 and 1932. In 1932, the average value of crops fell to \$20.69 per acre, the lowest in the history of federal reclamation. Abandoned farms and the number of renters testified to the hard times. The Bureau of Reclamation's income from repayments and other sources of revenue dried up. The Great Depression added to the dilemmas Commissioner of Reclamation Elwood Mead and his Bureau of Reclamation faced in the 1920s: how to balance costs and benefits; how to assist states desperately in need of federal aid without worsening conditions on the existing projects; how to maintain some semblance of rational management amid this turmoil; and how to plan for the future in a constitutional order that disbursed rather than concentrated power. One additional, but central question also demanded attention: in a Nation desperately seeking work, how could the Bureau prevent the approval of unnecessary projects when it had been unable to control western politicians during the 1920s, a decade known—perhaps inaccurately—for “fiscal restraint.”⁷³

As noted above, repayments to the Reclamation fund from the projects fell off sharply after 1929. Congress further reduced this source of income for reclamation projects by passing moratoria on repayments. During the days leading up to the reorganization of the program in the Fact Finders' Act, Congress passed moratoria for the period 1921-1924. The election of a new

⁶⁹ “Perry Jenkins, Visiting Oxford, Tells of Old Miami, New West” by Isabella Williams, *The Oxford Press*, Oxford, Ohio, June 22, 1950.

⁷⁰ Letter from L.R. Tyson, Jr., Assistant Secretary of the Wyoming State Planning and Water Conservation Board to Perry Jenkins, July 5, 1939. Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

⁷¹ *History of Wyoming*, p. 413-423.

⁷² *History of Wyoming*, p. 443.

⁷³ Pisani, Donald J., *Water and American Government, the Reclamation Bureau, National Water Policy and the West, 1902-1935*, (University of California Press, 2002), pp. 149-151.

President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1932, whose campaign had seemingly established a mandate to confront the problems of the Nation's failing (or failed) economy was anticipated to mean severe cutbacks in all parts of the federal government, if not the complete dismantling of the national reclamation program. As the Great Depression struck, Congress again passed moratoria for the years 1931 to 1936. This leniency on the repayment issue doomed the Reclamation Fund as a source of funding to keep Reclamation alive in those hard times.⁷⁴

Faced with such uncertainty, Reclamation's Commissioner Elwood Mead promoted the formation, in 1931, of the National Reclamation Association. He was well aware of the key role the National Reclamation Congresses had played thirty years earlier in the promotion of national reclamation. Mead particularly felt the need for a supportive organization as the Bureau of Reclamation faced the economic disaster of the Depression and a new national Administration bent upon change and reform. It was time to resurrect support from a local and regional base similar to early movements that had enthusiastically supported national reclamation.⁷⁵ Mead urged the Governors of the western states to form the organization to provide a unified and influential "voice of reclamation." Mead viewed the creation of the Association and its becoming a principal force to lobby Congress for an expanded reclamation program to be a critically important means to counter the agricultural establishment's retrenchment brought on by the Depression.⁷⁶

P.W. Jenkins was elected as a Director of the National Reclamation Association at its organizational meeting held on December 5-6th, 1932, in Salt Lake City, Utah.⁷⁷ At the time of his receipt of an honorary LLD degree in 1955, the Salt Lake Tribune stated "Mr. Jenkins was the organizer of the National Reclamation Assn., which now headquarters in Washington, D.C."⁷⁸ Whether entirely true or not, Jenkins' name appeared first and prominently as a member of the "Executive Committee" on the National Reclamation Association's first letterhead, which noted, "The National Reclamation Association was organized at Salt Lake City by delegates appointed by the Governors of the Western States." The tagline under the organization's name on the letterhead pointed out that "Without irrigation western progress stops."⁷⁹ The NRA (renamed as the National Water Resources Association in 1970) was organized to represent the interests of the seventeen western states and became, and remains to this day, an influential lobby for Federal water resource programs.

Reclamation Commissioner Mead appealed directly to Jenkins very shortly after his election as a Director of the newly-formed National Reclamation Association - in January 1933 - for additional and personal assistance in supporting Reclamation appropriations - in the form of a bill introduced in the Senate to provide a \$5,000,000 loan/advance to the Bureau of Reclamation

⁷⁴ Rowley, William R., *The Bureau of Reclamation: Origins and Growth to 1945*, (Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2006), p. 308.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Lee, Lawrence B., "100 Years of Reclamation Historiography," *Pacific Historical Review* (University of California Press, Berkeley, CA, Volume 47, 1978), p. 535.

⁷⁷ Letter from J. Kent Kinniburgh, Secretary-Manager of the Chamber of Commerce of Casper, Wyoming to Perry Jenkins, December 23, 1932. Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

⁷⁸ "U. of W. Names 5 for Coveted Award," *The Salt Lake Tribune*, Salt Lake City, Utah, May 18, 1955.

⁷⁹ Letter from Kenneth C. Miller, Secretary, National Reclamation Association to Perry W. Jenkins, February 17, 1933. Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

for its construction program. He urged more action on the part of the National Reclamation Association in the West. This approach was necessary because the moratorium on payment of construction charges thus meant there was insufficient revenues in the Reclamation fund to pay the construction expenses.⁸⁰

Jenkins was a personal friend of Dr. Elwood Mead, in that the two men had worked together in 1929 and 1930 while both serving on the Commission on the Conservation and Administration of the Public Domain (described below). Mead had been the Wyoming Territorial and State Engineer during the period from 1882 through 1897. In November, 1897, Wyoming Senator Francis E. Warren approached U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Wilson about reestablishing the Division of Irrigation in his department. Secretary Wilson hired Dr. Mead as a part-time consultant until U.S. Congressional approval of the plan was obtained early in 1899. Mead then resigned as State Engineer and moved to Washington, D.C. to direct irrigation investigations. Between 1899 and 1907, Mead served as full-time expert-in-charge of irrigation investigations for the Office of Experiment Stations in the Department of Agriculture. In April, 1924, Dr. Mead became the Commissioner of Reclamation of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and he held that position until his death on January 26, 1936.⁸¹

Jenkins recognized in accepting election to the National Reclamation Association at the Salt Lake meeting that he would be expected and directed to form a “Reclamation organization” in his home State of Wyoming. Kenneth C. Miller, Agricultural and Livestock Agent for the Spokane, Portland and Seattle Railway Company, who had been elected as the National Reclamation Association wrote to Jenkins in February 1933 wanting to know what steps had been taken to form an organization similar to the recently formed Oregon Reclamation Congress and how soon would a state organization in Wyoming be set up.⁸² In large part the pressing desire on the part of the Association to form other western states’ reclamation organizations was being driven by the need to cover the expenses associated with lobbying efforts in Washington, D.C. by the National Reclamation Association’s President, Marshall N. Dana, Associate Editor for the *Portland Journal* (at that time the largest daily newspaper in the Pacific Northwest) by organizations and entities other than just those involved with the Oregon association.

FOUNDER OF THE WYOMING RECLAMATION ASSOCIATION

In July 1933, Jenkins directly and personally instigated the formation of the Wyoming Reclamation Association. The July 20, 1933 issue of *The Pinedale Roundup* noted:

“... a movement was launched Monday to combat Eastern sentiment against reclamation with the opening of the first Wyoming reclamation congress. It is aimed to affiliated with the National Reclamation Association.

Perry W. Jenkins of Big Piney, director for Wyoming of the National Reclamation Association, who called the congress, was named permanent

⁸⁰ Elwood Mead, Commissioner of Reclamation, Bureau of Reclamation, to Perry W. Jenkins, January 31, 1933, Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

⁸¹ Kluger, James R. *Turning on Water with a Shovel. The Career of Elwood Mead*, (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), pp. 26 -27, 115.

⁸² *Ibid.*

chairman ... Jenkins urged cooperation to fight the steps of opposition coming from the East in which he said Western reclamation would be cut off to Eastern agriculture. He charged that there is a movement to take federal reclamation funds to recover marginal or worn out lands in the East.”⁸³

The Wyoming Reclamation Association’s Constitution specified that the “governing body of this Association shall be a Board ... consisting of one director from each county in which there is located a federal, Carey Act, or private irrigation project, and one director at large from the State.”⁸⁴ Jenkins directly corresponded with and requested various prominent agriculturalists, civic leaders and businessmen from around the State to serve as Directors for the new organization.⁸⁵ He astutely developed and prominently displayed the tagline “We Serve the State” below the new organization’s name on the Association’s letterhead and had no difficulty in lining up the support of prominent Wyomingites. In his solicitation to prospective Board members, Jenkins stated,

“Your friends have recommended your appointment as a director of the Wyoming Reclamation Association. With the concurrence of the Executive Committee I am pleased to offer you the appointment and hope you will notify us of your acceptance ... The loss of water to the State of Wyoming has become an alarming issue. The Wyoming Reclamation Association was organized for the purpose of defending the State from eastern opposition to reclamation and against the aggression of neighboring states. We also have the problem of aiding the promoters of deserving projects in their attempts to secure aid from the Public Works Administration. We hope to have your assistance by representing your county in financing these projects.”

Jenkins served as President of the Wyoming Reclamation Association from its inception through the annual meeting held in 1945, when H. Melvin Rollins of Cheyenne was elected to the post. The organization was renamed as the Wyoming Development Association in 1952. Ten years later it was renamed once again as the Wyoming Water Development Association and continued as the “WWDA” until 1998. It continues today as the Wyoming Water Association.⁸⁶

Jenkins was also directly involved in efforts to obtain the transfer of the public lands in the eleven western “public land” states back to those states. Noted Wyoming historian T.A. Larson

⁸³ “Sublette County Man Heads New Reclamation Group,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, July 20, 1933.

⁸⁴ Constitution, Wyoming Reclamation Association, Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

⁸⁵ Perry W. Jenkins to S.A. Nelson of Powell, August 22, 1933; J.M. Ellis of Continental Oil Company, Glenrock, to Perry W. Jenkins, August 23, 1933; Joseph A. Elliott, Vice-President and Manager, Wyoming Development Company, Wheatland, to Perry W. Jenkins, August 28, 1933; William I.N. Cox, Manager, Tribune Publishing Company, Cheyenne, to Perry W. Jenkins, August 28, 1933; J.W. Pulliam, Livestock and Farm Auctioneer, Worland, to Perry W. Jenkins, August 28, 1933; L.C. Bishop, Board of Control, Douglas, to Perry W. Jenkins; August 29, 1933; E.C. Gwillim, County Engineer, County of Sheridan, to Perry W. Jenkins, August 31, 1933; Cyrus C. Blair, Kaycee, to Perry Jenkins, September 2, 1933; Nels H. Smith, Proprietor, Pride of the Prairie Farm, to Perry W. Jenkins, September 4, 1933; W.P. Parks, Woolgrower, Rocky Point, Wyo., to Perry W. Jenkins, September 4, 1933; all found in the Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

⁸⁶ Wyoming Water Association, “Wyoming Water Association’s 70th Anniversary Commemorative Program” downloaded from <http://www.wyomingwater.org> on July 11, 2008, p. 9.

in his *History of Wyoming*, states that Wyoming Congressman Charles E. Winter launched a campaign in 1926 to transfer the public lands in the eleven western “public land” states to those states. Larson relates that Perry W. Jenkins, President of the Wyoming State Senate, joined Winter’s campaign, and steered through the 1927 Legislature a memorial to Congress for the “return” to the states of “all vacant and unappropriated lands, together with all resources, including water power, power sites, forest and minerals, now held in trust by the Federal Government within the borders of any of the said states.”⁸⁷

Winter spoke repeatedly on the subject, in Congress and elsewhere. A lawyer, he used involved legal arguments in an attempt to establish that the states had absolute rights to the lands within their borders and that the federal government was merely a temporary trustee. Using a less sophisticated argument, he told the Wyoming Wool Growers Association in July 1927: “The four sons of Uncle Sam, North, East, South and West, were entitled to their equal inheritance. North, East and South duly received theirs. Now when the West comes of age and asks for its equal share, North, East and South step up and say, ‘Now we’ll divide the last quarter among the four of us for the benefit of all the people.’”⁸⁸

In 1928, Congressman Winter, who was in his third term in Congress, tried to unseat Democratic United States Senator John B. Kendrick, while Perry W. Jenkins aspired to Winter’s vacated seat in Congress. The two Republicans made public-land cession their principal campaign plank. Early in the year, Jenkins set out to visit the governors of the other ten public-land states in an effort to win their support. He soon had support from the Governor of Utah and Arizona Governor George Wiley Paul Hunt, as well as from Governor Frank C. Emerson of Wyoming, but the other governors were less enthusiastic. Likewise, Winter in the summer of 1928 could not organize the united front that he had hoped for among the senators and congressmen of the public-land states.

Senator Kendrick rejected the cession proposals prior to the 1928 election. Similar bills, he said, had been introduced over a period of many years and had always been referred to committee and allowed to die. Whatever the merits of the respective arguments may have been, Kendrick trounced Winter by six thousand votes. Vincent Carter, who won the Republican primary nomination over Perry Jenkins, was elected to Congress, defeating W.S. Kimball by three thousand votes.

Jenkins however, was not through with the issues and arguments for public lands cession. As a personal friend of President Herbert Hoover, Jenkins was appointed by President Hoover in October 1929 as one of a twenty-three member Commission on the Conservation and Administration of the Public Domain. The Commission, appointed with the approval of the 1929 Western Governors’ Conference, was commonly called the Garfield Commission, after its chairman, James R. Garfield, Secretary of the Interior under President Theodore Roosevelt.⁸⁹ Former Wyoming State Engineer and now Commissioner of Reclamation, Elwood Mead, was also named to the Commission. During Jenkins’ service on the Commission, by his own account

⁸⁷ *History of Wyoming*, p. 426.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Clements, Kendrick A. "Herbert Hoover and Conservation." *American Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No.1 (February 1984), pp. 67-88.

he travelled more than 9,000 miles (photo – Figure 6).⁹⁰ His travels included inspections of national parks, national forests, Indian reservations and other portions of the public domain in the fall of 1930.⁹¹ In the summer of 1929, the Commission came out tentatively for cession to the states of the surface rights only on 190,000,000 acres of public domain land for the benefit of the public schools. In the proposed cession were 17,035,537 acres in Wyoming – 27 percent of the state’s area.⁹²

On January 16, 1931, after numerous hearing and conferences, the Commission recommended cession of the grazing lands to states which would accept them. The Commission’s report, signed by all but one of the Commissioners, gave President Hoover, exactly what he wanted: the recommendation that, after some additions to national parks, forests, wildlife refuges and mineral reserves, the remaining rangelands should be turned over to the states willing to accept them or placed, for states unwilling to assume responsibility for the lands, under the direction of a new federal range administration.⁹³

With respect to minerals, the Commission offered a compromise which was unacceptable to vocal elements in Wyoming. The federal government would retain rights to minerals known to exist and specifically named at the time of the grant and would retain control of its defense areas, parks, forests, monuments, reclamation and reservoir sites, and migratory-bird refuges. Cession of the grazing rights only was not what Winter, Emerson, Jenkins and their Wyoming cohorts wanted. Governor Emerson soon issued a formal statement recognizing Hoover’s proposal as “in the right direction” but requiring the addition of mineral rights to be satisfactory. Fenimore Chatterton, former acting Governor, took the position that it would be unwise to acquire merely the surface rights. A Worland attorney, C.F. Robertson, who spoke often on the subject, expressed the opinion that the states would lose money trying to administer only the surface rights.⁹⁴

Hoover’s request of the Congress in 1932 to act on the Commission’s recommendations met with no success whatsoever. The proposals were roundly attacked. Those who supposedly benefited from the plan were divided over it. Stockmen split over whether they preferred federal or state administration. States with large mineral resources, including Wyoming and Colorado, wanted the subsurface rights to the lands more than the rangelands themselves, while states like Oregon, with few known mineral deposits, feared that transfer of mineral rights to states would cut off the mineral royalties that provided the main source of federal reclamation funds. In short, as Montana’s commissioner frankly admitted, most of the Western states favored the transfer only if it did not “have the effect of curtailing Federal Reclamation, road-building and other government activities.”⁹⁵

Jenkins served as Western Vice-President of the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Tidewater Association and as Regional Vice President of the St. Lawrence River Association from 1946 to

⁹⁰ “Sketch of the Activities of Perry W. Jenkins,” *supra*.

⁹¹ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present, supra*.

⁹² *History of Wyoming*, p. 426.

⁹³ Clements, Kendrick A., *supra*.

⁹⁴ *History of Wyoming*, p. 426.

⁹⁵ Clements, Kendrick A., *supra*.

1955.⁹⁶ The organization was concerned with securing a deep-water channel between the Great Lakes and the Atlantic Ocean.⁹⁷ In 1932, he was appointed by Acting Governor Clark to represent Wyoming at the International Trade Conference in Detroit, Michigan in mid-November to consider the pending treaty between the United States and Canada providing for the construction of the St. Lawrence seaway. The conference was also concerned with improving the harbors of the Great Lakes, international trade relations between the two countries and the establishment of an international currency agreement.⁹⁸ In 1946, Jenkins was appointed as a member of the Advisory Committee of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, a non-partisan organization dedicated to “the conservation and development of our water and land resources for all beneficial purposes.” based on the recommendation of Wyoming Senator E.V. Robertson as “one who is interested in the problems of flood control, navigation, irrigation, and land and water conservation.”⁹⁹

Jenkins was at the organizational meeting of the Committee of 14 of the Colorado River Basin held in Phoenix, Arizona on June 22-23, 1938.¹⁰⁰ State Engineer Bishop relates that Jenkins acted as one of Wyoming’s representatives on the Committee during July and December meetings that year.¹⁰¹ Jenkins was involved with the development and negotiation of the Upper Colorado River Basin Compact as a Wyoming Advisor to the State Engineer.

FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE COLORADO RIVER WATER USERS ASSOCIATION

Jenkins was one of a group of people directly invited by Nevada Governor E.P. Carville,¹⁰² who called and attended the 1945 organizational meeting of the Colorado River Water Users Association held on January 12-13, 1945 at the Last Frontier Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, and was elected to serve as the first Secretary of the organization.¹⁰³ Jenkins was elected President of the new organization at its special meeting at the City Hall in Las Vegas on August 23, 1946.¹⁰⁴ This seven-state organization of entities and individuals from across the seven states who use the Colorado River and all its tributaries, including the Green River which has its headwaters in the Wind River Mountain Range in Wyoming, began as conference among individuals and organizations opposed to the proposed water treaty between the United States

⁹⁶ “Memorial – Perry Wilson Jenkins,” an *in memoriam* resolution adopted by the Wyoming Reclamation Association as contained in “Resolutions Adopted at the 1955 Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Development Association at Green River, October 3 and 4, 1955,” “Wyoming Reclamation Association, 1955,” Wyoming Water Association Files, Cheyenne, Wyoming, accessed July 13, 2008.

⁹⁷ “Perry Jenkins, Visiting Oxford, Tells of Old Miami, New West” by Isabella Williams, *The Oxford Press*, Oxford, Ohio, June 22, 1950.

⁹⁸ “Piney Man Delegate to Detroit Meeting,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, November 17, 1932.

⁹⁹ Letter from William H. Webb, Executive Vice President of the National Rivers and Harbors Congress, to Perry Jenkins, February 7, 1946, Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

¹⁰⁰ Bishop, L.C., “Memorandum of Information In Re Colorado River Basin (Green and Little Snake River Basins in Wyoming) Made at the Request of Governor L.C. Hunt By L.C. Bishop, State Engineer,” June 1, 1944, Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Telegram to Perry Jenkins from E P Carville, Governor of Nevada, December 22, 1944, Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

¹⁰³ *River of Many Returns*, 50th Anniversary booklet prepared by the Colorado River Water Users Association, December, 1995, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

and Mexico concerning the waters of the Colorado River. Being at the “head of the river,” the Wyoming delegation was asked to go first in presenting its views and positions concerning the proposed treaty with Mexico. Jenkins began his remarks with the following:

“Of course, we are at the head of the river when it comes to the flow of the water. On behalf of Wyoming, I would like to say that I come from the Green River Valley. I use the water of the Colorado River. I would like to say that I believe that we should come to understand that the Colorado River question is but one question. There should be no upper or lower division when it comes to the handling and the use of the water at the present time.

The people from California must know that they should be as deeply interested in the development of the use of the water in Wyoming as we are interested in the development of the use of water in California. Their problem is our problem.”¹⁰⁵

Not only did P.W. Jenkins play a large role in the initial debates and discussions among the group of over fifty people attending this session and in the drafting of the two resolutions produced by those participating in the conference, he made the motion to “proceed to develop plans for the organization,” that is, to form a permanent organization. A few minutes before making that motion, Jenkins had stated to those assembled:

“It has been my opinion and that of many other water users that there should be organized throughout the basin a water users association that would continue to work in all the interests of the basin [in] the future, and I have been of the opinion, and I am representing Wyoming, that there should be such an organization, and at this meeting it might be well to appoint a committee of one from each of the States to draw up a plan or constitution or bylaws, and appoint a temporary director, if such might be, from each of the States that will take up the matter in their respective States and effect this organization. I think that you men will feel that the work of this body is lost if, when we adjourn *sine die*, it finishes the work of the Colorado River Basin along these lines. I would like to know from the other States as to whether they would care to join with Wyoming in fostering an organization or association at this time.”¹⁰⁶

For years there had been talk of a treaty between the United States and the Republic of Mexico that would guarantee the latter a specific yearly amount of the river’s water. The 1922 compact dividing the water between the upper and lower Colorado River basins had skirted the Mexican issue, making only a vague reference to the future possibility of a treaty. In the interim, Mexico would receive any surplus waters that were above and beyond the claims of the seven states. Then-Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who helped negotiate the Compact, in speaking of Mexico’s place in division of the use of the river’s waters, voiced an often unspoken feeling of the day: “We do not believe they ever had any rights.” The subsequent Boulder Canyon Project

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ “Proceedings --- First Regular Conference --- Colorado River Water Users Association, Las Vegas, Nevada, January 12-13, 1945,” printed booklet version, Jenkins Papers Collection, Museum of the Mountain Man, Pinedale, Wyoming.

Act of 1928 had simply stated, “Nothing in this act shall be construed as a denial or recognition of any rights, if any in Mexico to the use of the water of the Colorado River system.”¹⁰⁷

Since 1938, a group called the Committee of Fourteen, composed of two members appointed by each of the governors of the seven basin states, had been dealing with Colorado River issues and most water users assumed the best interests of the states was their No. 1 priority. In 1943, the International Boundary Commission began work on a treaty covering both rivers. Terms of the proposed treaty had become known, and the “real” water users gathered at the Last Frontier were hopping mad, their individual conflicts, for the moment, shoved aside. The treaty provided, among other things, that Mexico would be guaranteed 1.5 million acre-feet per year of Colorado River water and Texas would be guaranteed 325,000 acre-feet per year of Rio Grande River water that had previously been under the control of Mexico.¹⁰⁸

Jenkins had been vociferous in expressing his opposition to the proposed treaty with Mexico through correspondence with the Wyoming Congressional Delegation (Senator O’Mahoney and Senator E. V. Robertson and Representative Frank Barrett) and with individuals and entities (including the Colorado River Commission of Nevada, the Colorado Water Conservation Board and the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California) from across the Basin. Jenkins, with the assistance and support of his son-in-law, Norm Barlow, actively worked with the Wyoming Stock Growers’ Association and the Wyoming Wool Growers’ Association to obtain resolutions opposing the treaty’s provisions. While ultimately the Treaty was approved by the United States Senate, the activities of Jenkins and the other members of the Colorado River Water Users Association (CRWUA) did result in eleven amendments to the proposed Treaty being adopted.¹⁰⁹ The CRWUA continues to meet each year, in December, in Las Vegas, and has become a prominent gathering for water folks from across the Basin. It continues to be guided by the theme of Perry Jenkins’ sentiments expressed at the organizational meeting in 1946 that Colorado River stakeholders need to share a common vision and “... recognize that no one can stand alone and prosper.”¹¹⁰

FIFTY YEARS AFTER ITS PREDICTION, JENKINS SUCCUMBS TO OLD AGE

Despite enjoying good health into his mid-eighty’s,¹¹¹ Jenkins succumbed to “causes incident to age” in a Salt Lake City, Utah hospital on Sunday, June 18, 1955. He was 88 years old. Funeral services were conducted at the First Presbyterian Church of Salt Lake City on Wednesday morning, June 22, 1955, with Masonic Services held in the Pinedale Community Hall that afternoon beginning at 3:00 p.m. by the combined lodges of Pinedale and Big Piney. Interment occurred in the family plot in the Pinedale Cemetery, next to the remains of his wife, Eva, buried September 1940, and his daughter, Lois Eva, buried September 1942. He was survived by three of his four daughters and five grandsons.¹¹²

¹⁰⁷ *River of Many Returns*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *River of Many Returns*, p. 5.

¹¹⁰ Colorado River Water Users Association, “2006 CRWUA Annual Report and Membership Directory,” p. 1.

¹¹¹ “Perry Jenkins Still Going Strong After Prediction of Early Death 46 Years Ago,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, April 19, 1951.

¹¹² “Perry Jenkins Dies in Salt Lake City,” *The Pinedale Roundup*, June 23, 1955.

The newspaper obituary carried in *The Pinedale Roundup*, which had chronicled much of Jenkins adult life since he had moved west to the Green River Valley of Wyoming from Chicago 50 years previously, succinctly summed up with the statement: “Educator, astronomer, stockman, reclamation expert and Wyoming political leader, Mr. Jenkins lived an active life up to within a few days of his death.”¹¹³

The Wyoming Development Association (the organization that Jenkins had founded as the Wyoming Reclamation Association when he called the first Wyoming Reclamation Congress in 1933) in its Memorial Resolution honoring Perry Jenkins, adopted at the October 3-4, 1955 Annual Meeting in Green River, noted “The State of Wyoming and the West lost a man who for fifty years has been a dedicated and untiring worker and an outstanding leader in the development of the water resources of Wyoming and the whole West.”¹¹⁴

CONCLUSION

As noted at the beginning of this article, Perry Wilson Jenkins came to be known and honored throughout Wyoming as the “Father of Sublette County.” Based on the partial inventory of his interests, activities and accomplishments, this article has made a compelling case for recognition of P.W. Jenkins as a true renaissance man. Living in a small, close-knit community, as Jenkins did after moving westward from Chicago in 1905, provides greater opportunities to be involved in many activities and pursuits both by virtue of necessity as well as sheer opportunity. By all accounts and measures, P.W. Jenkins took full and complete advantage of his many opportunities. As noted in *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present* (1933), Jenkins’ “career ... brought him unusual honors in the public life of Wyoming.”¹¹⁵

Jenkins recognized the fundamental role that Wyoming’s abundant natural resources would play in our State’s prosperity and steadfastly advocated wise use and development of Wyoming’s water and mineral resources. His strident belief in the necessity “to preserve Wyoming water for Wyoming people”¹¹⁶ continues to be the credo and mission of the state-wide Wyoming Water Association which he founded seventy-five years ago.

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¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ Memorial – Perry Wilson Jenkins,” an *in memoriam* resolution adopted by the Wyoming Reclamation Association as contained in “Resolutions Adopted at the 1955 Annual Meeting of the Wyoming Development Association at Green River, October 3 and 4, 1955,” “Wyoming Reclamation Association, 1955,” Wyoming Water Association Files, Cheyenne, Wyoming.

¹¹⁵ *Wyoming From Territorial Days to the Present, supra.*

¹¹⁶ *The Big Piney Examiner*, May 25, 1939.

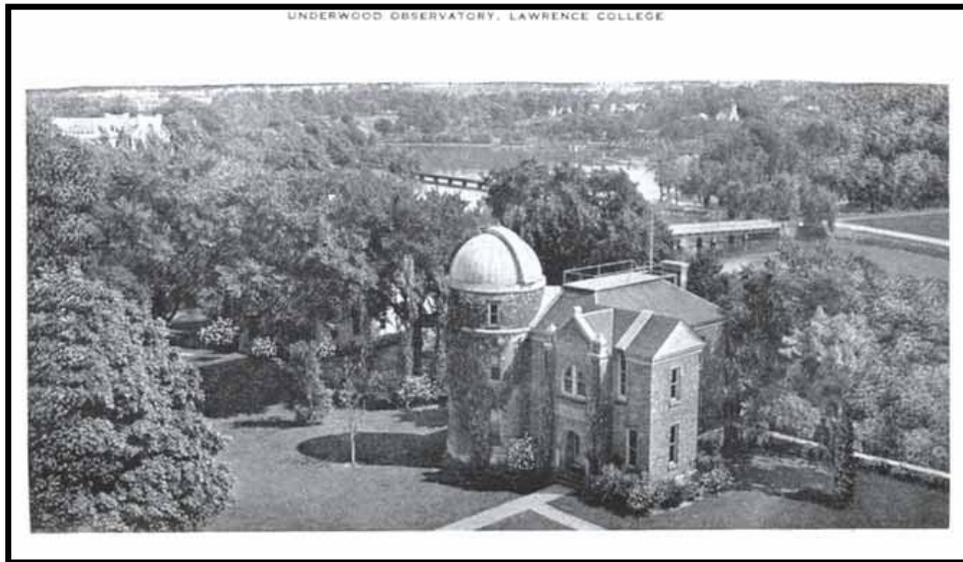


Figure 1 – Underwood Observatory on the campus of Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. Postcard sent in 1950. Obtained at www.foxvalleymemory.org/. (A collaborative digital library managed by the Appleton Public Library and the Outagamie County Historical Society).



Figure 2 – Amos W. “A.W.” Smith with his Pierce Arrow motorcar at a ranch house near Big Piney, Wyoming, no date. Obtained at www.sublette.com/photohistory/collections/PaulAllen/mm026367.htm (Sponsored by the Sublette County Historic Preservation Board).



Figure 3 – P.W. Jenkins, left and Lew Hennick, right, in costume at one of the first “Green River Rendezvous” events celebrated annually since 1935, no date. Obtained at www.sublette.com/photohistory/collections/PaulAllen/People/Groups/mm026299.htm (Sponsored by the Sublette County Historic Preservation Board).

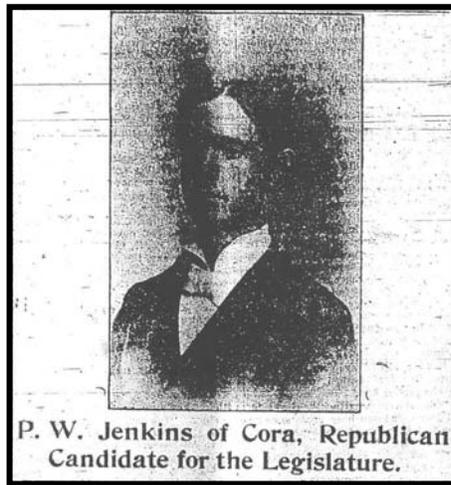


Figure 4 – P.W. Jenkins' October 1910 Announcement of Candidacy for the Wyoming House of Representatives, *The Pinedale Roundup*, October 13, 1910.



Figure 5 – P.W. Jenkins while serving as President of the Wyoming State Senate, 1927. Wyoming State Archives, Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources

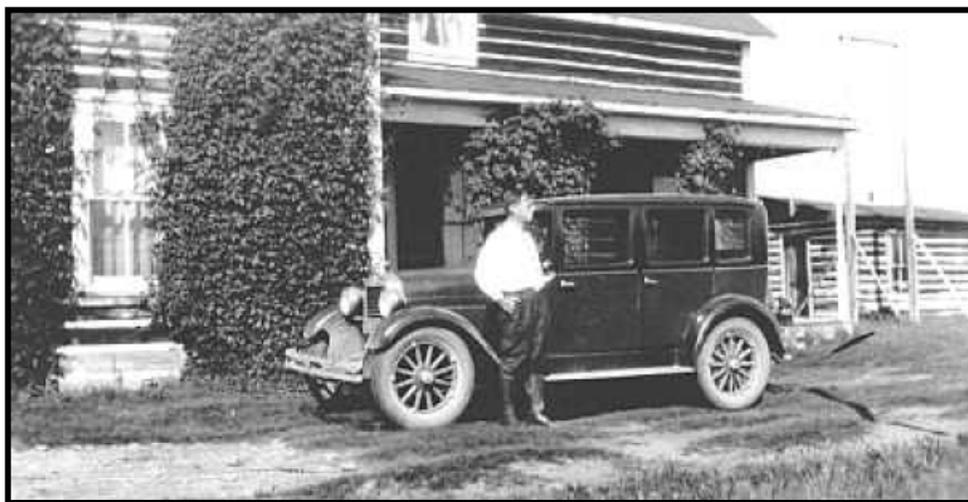


Figure 6 – P.W. Jenkins with his Buick automobile at the Bar Cross Ranch headquarters near Cora, Wyoming, 1929. Photograph provided by Ruth Jenkins Wilson Oliver.