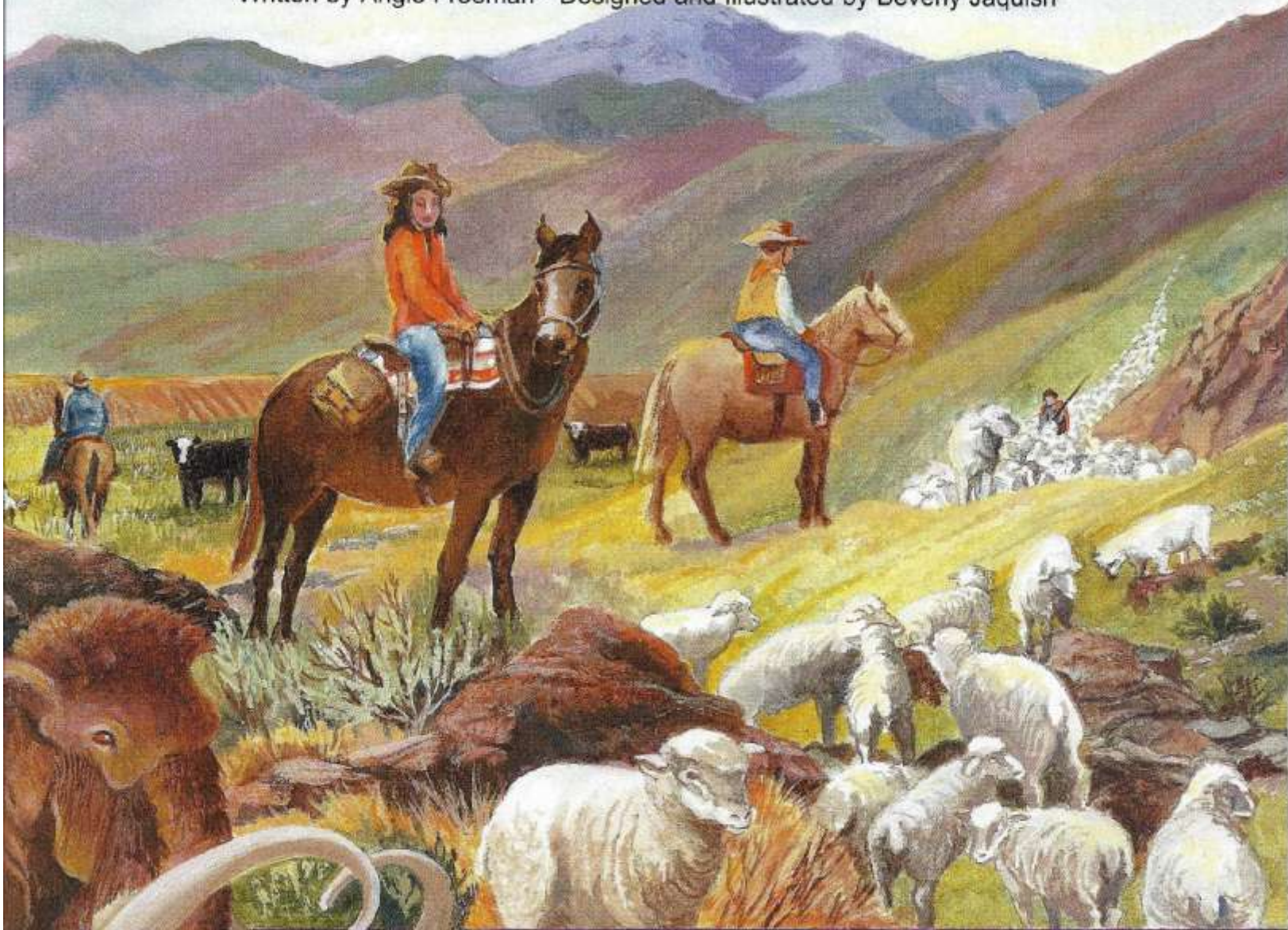


RANGELAND

IDAHO'S ROOTS

Written by Angie Freeman • Designed and Illustrated by Beverly Jaquish



Mammoth



Buffalo



Grizzly Bear



Wolf



Musk Ox

WILD OPEN SPACES

Rangelands are wild open spaces! Nearly half of Idaho is wild land called "rangeland." These huge areas of grasses, shrubs, wildflowers and scattered trees might seem empty, but they are bursting with life.

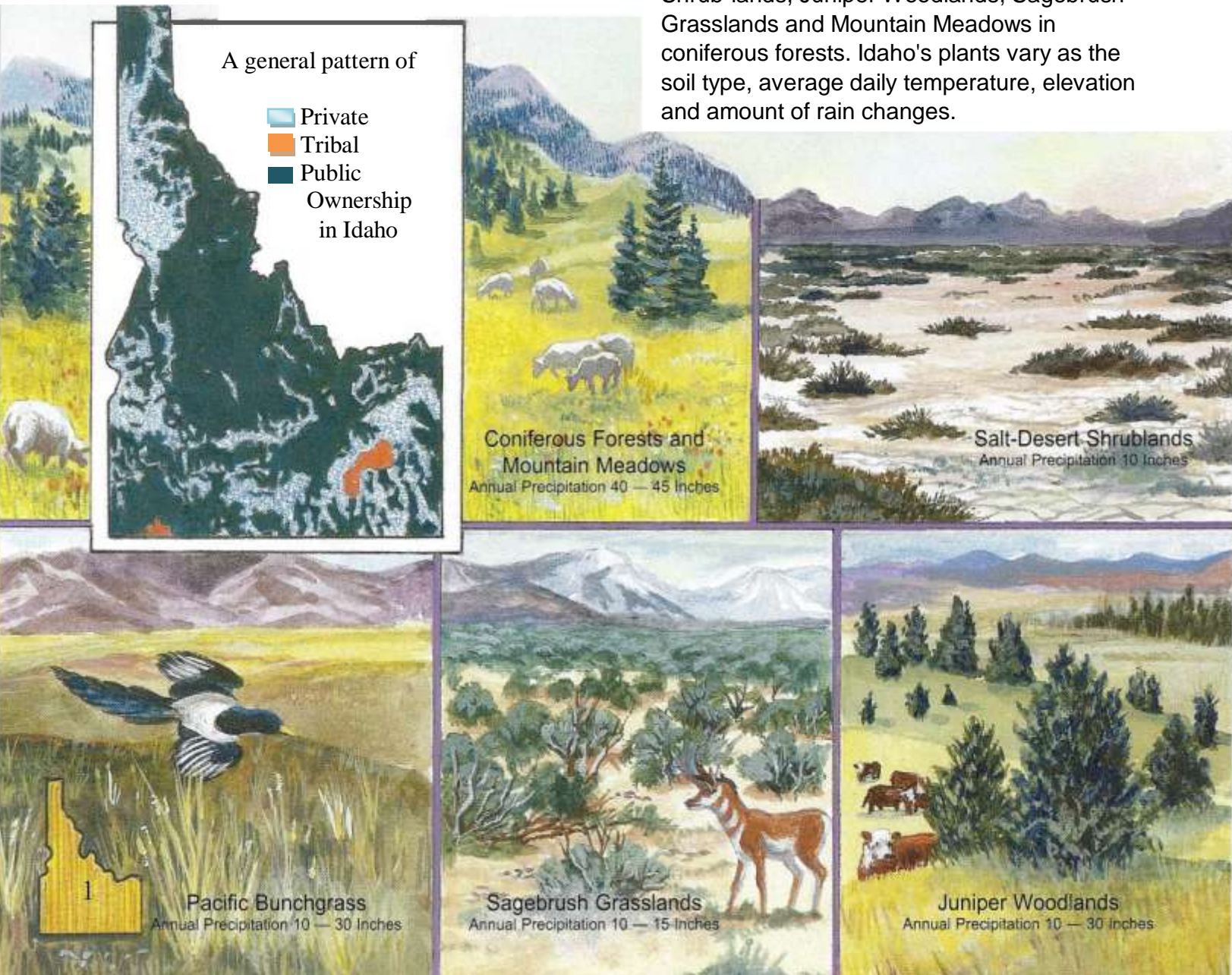
Idaho's rangelands have gone through several cycles. They have supported many different kinds of plants, animals and people. Let's travel through time from the prehistoric woolly mammoth and saber tooth cat to modern day cattle and sheep grazing managed by cowboys and rangeland scientists!

WHAT IS RANGELAND?

The term rangeland describes a kind of land, not how the land is used. It is land that is not covered by ice, rocks or thick forest. It is not farmed or built as a city. Management of Idaho's rangelands requires communication across property lines. Rangelands are managed by the Federal Government, the Idaho State Government, Native American Tribes and private individuals. Rangelands are important for water, wildlife, mining, ranching and recreation.

RANGELAND TYPES

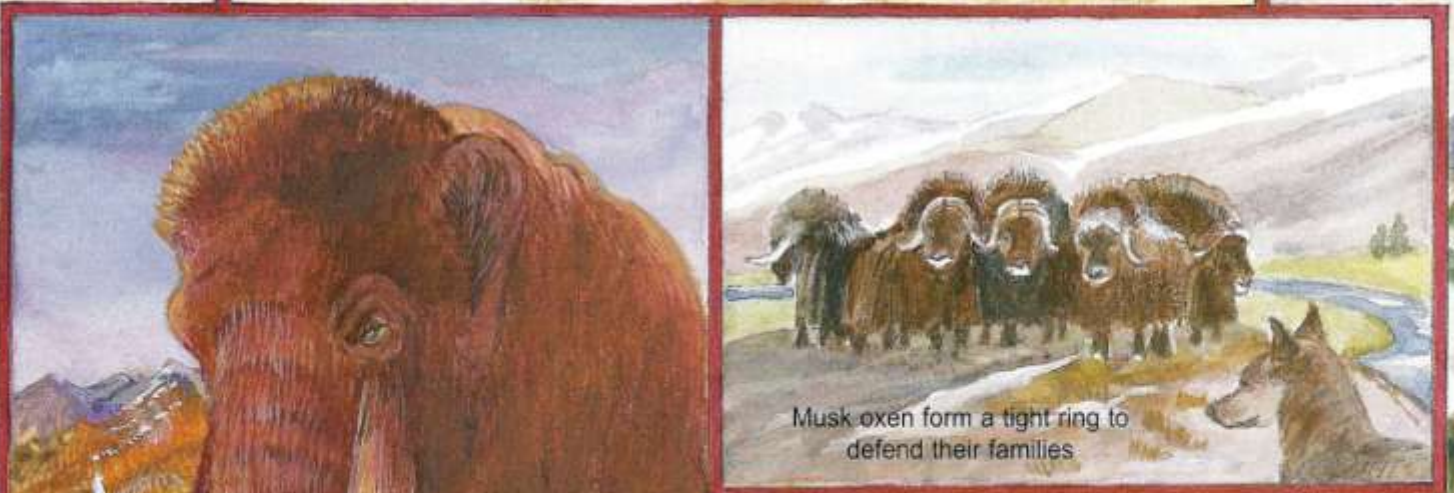
There are five different types of rangeland in Idaho: Pacific Bunchgrass, Salt Desert Shrub-lands, Juniper Woodlands, Sagebrush Grasslands and Mountain Meadows in coniferous forests. Idaho's plants vary as the soil type, average daily temperature, elevation and amount of rain changes.



WOOLLY MAMMOTHS AND SABER TOOTH CATS IN IDAHO?

Idaho has always had grasses and grazers to eat them. Can you imagine giant bear-like ground sloths, wild horses and burros, musk oxen, bison and even woolly mammoths grazing in Idaho? Predators like bears, wolves and saber tooth cats hunted these grazers and kept their populations under control. Fear kept the grazers constantly moving in scattered herds and this kept the plants and the grazers in balance.

Scientists have found fossils showing that most rangeland plants haven't changed very much, but the grazers have changed a lot.



PEOPLE ON THE RANGE

Native Americans or "Indians" were the first people to live in Idaho. They fished, and gathered wild plants, seeds, and nuts. They managed Idaho's rangeland by setting fires, pasturing horses and hunting for animals especially deer, elk, antelope and bison.

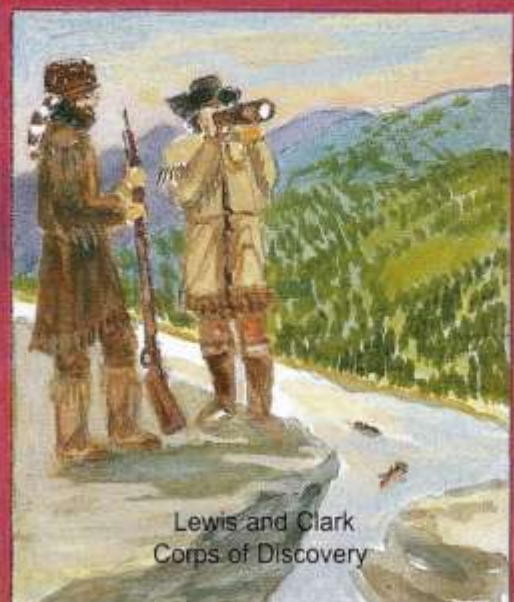
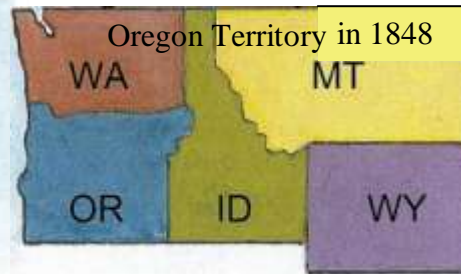
IDAHO EXPLORED

President Jefferson asked Lewis and Clark to explore the western rivers to the Pacific Ocean in 1803. They entered what is now Idaho in August of 1805. Endless mountains and impassable rivers disappointed their hopes of continuing by canoe. Horses grazing the bunchgrass of the Lemhi Valley were their only hope. They bartered with Shoshone Indians for a guide and for the horses that carried them across the Bitterroot Mountains. They successfully reached the ocean and returned home in 1806. Many new plants and animals were discovered.

Peaceful contact was made with many Indian tribes. The bravery and endurance of the "Corps of Discovery" opened the way west for mountain men, traders and eventually settlement.

WHO OWNS IDAHO?

The United States was anxious to explore the West quickly in order to secure ownership of the wild open spaces. Spain claimed Idaho until 1819. England claimed Idaho until a treaty was signed in 1846. Congress established the "Oregon Territory" in 1848. It included Idaho, Oregon, Washington, Montana and Wyoming. The territory shrank each time a new state was formed until the Idaho we know today became a state in 1890.



Lewis and Clark Corps of Discovery

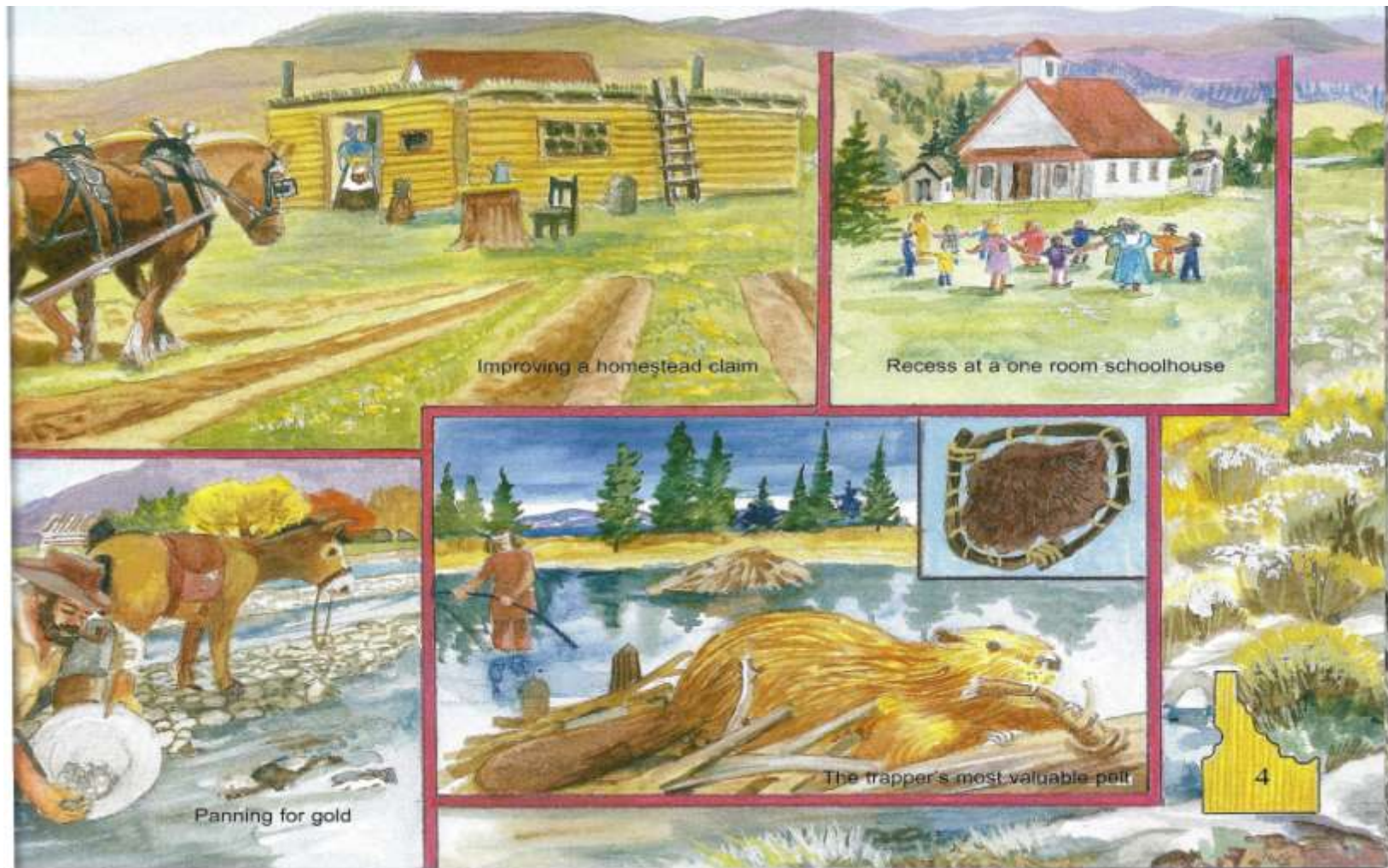
STAKING A CLAIM

David Thompson was one of the trappers who followed the explorers into Idaho. Thompson established the North West Company fur-trading post in northern Idaho in 1809. Henry Spalding, a missionary, came to the region in 1836 and established the first church. During the gold rush from 1860-1870, Idaho's population grew quickly! Miners often lived in tents or rough log huts and spent all their time panning for gold. Farmers and ranchers moved in and worked hard to grow food for the hungry miners. Many people left when the gold ran out but others decided to settle in Idaho permanently.

SETTLING IN

The United States government passed the Homestead Act in 1862 to encourage people to move west and start producing goods for the nation. Families could claim 160 acres of land if they would live there and improve it. Settlers in the arid West soon found that a homestead this size could not produce enough crops or livestock for them to make a living. Several laws were passed to adapt homestead legislation to the conditions in the West. Claims were eventually increased to 640 acres, but it was still difficult to make a living on a homestead.

- Land was also granted to the Idaho State Government to finance schools and irrigation projects. The railroad companies were also granted land to encourage the expansion of transportation.



ALL ABOARD FOR IDAHO

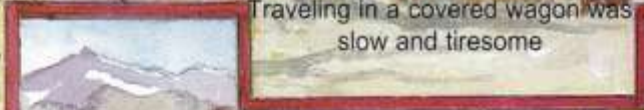
The first settlers traveled west over two thousand miles of dangerous country in covered wagons that could only go two miles per hour. Transportation was transformed when the first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1862. It stretched from one end of the North American Continent to the other. The railroad reached Idaho in 1873 and by 1880 four railroad lines crisscrossed Idaho. People and crops could be moved in and out of the area quickly and easily.

TRAIL DRIVE

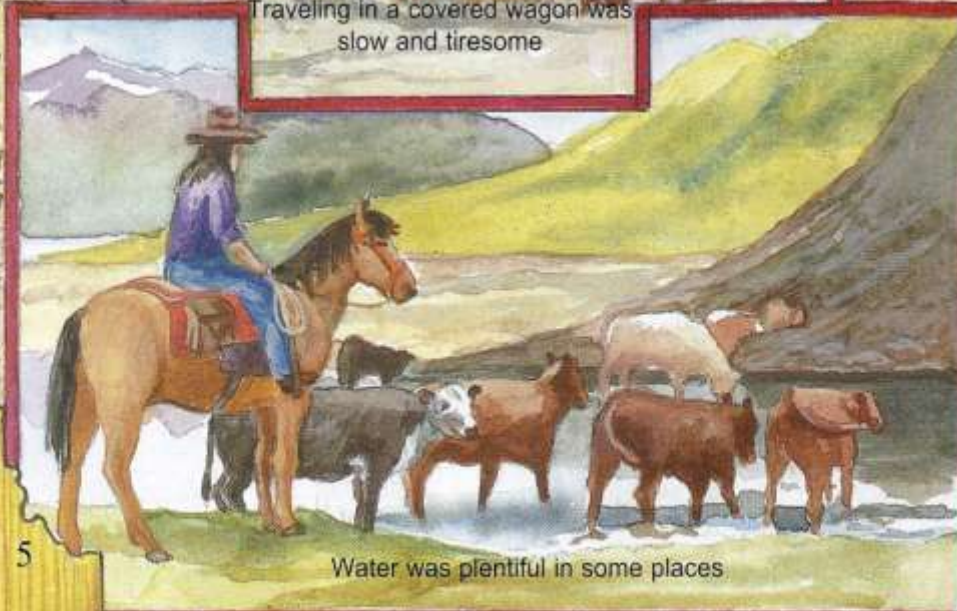
In the early 1880's large numbers of cattle and sheep were herded into Idaho. Prices and hopes were high. Early Idaho ranchers would graze their herds in the cool mountain meadows in the summer and then drive them down to graze the dry bunchgrasses they called "hay on the stem" in the winter. Large areas of good grazing land were never claimed since they were too dry and cold to be farmed. The government had no way to manage this "open range" and people fought and sometimes even killed each other over the valuable grazing and water rights.



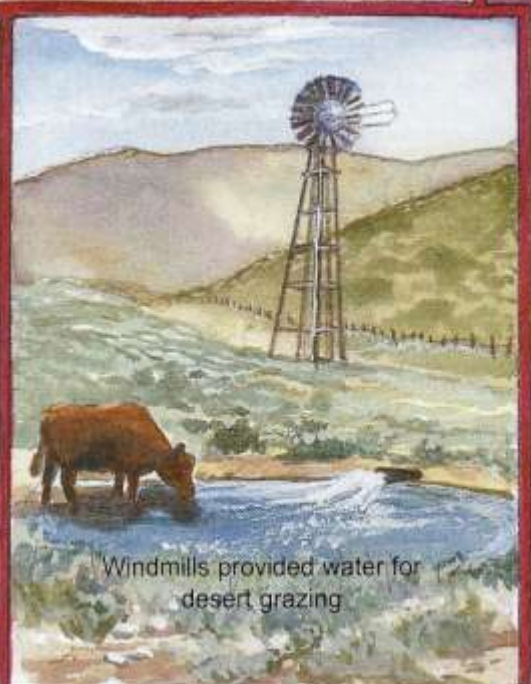
Railroads brought more people and new markets for produce



Traveling in a covered wagon was slow and tiresome



Water was plentiful in some places



Windmills provided water for desert grazing

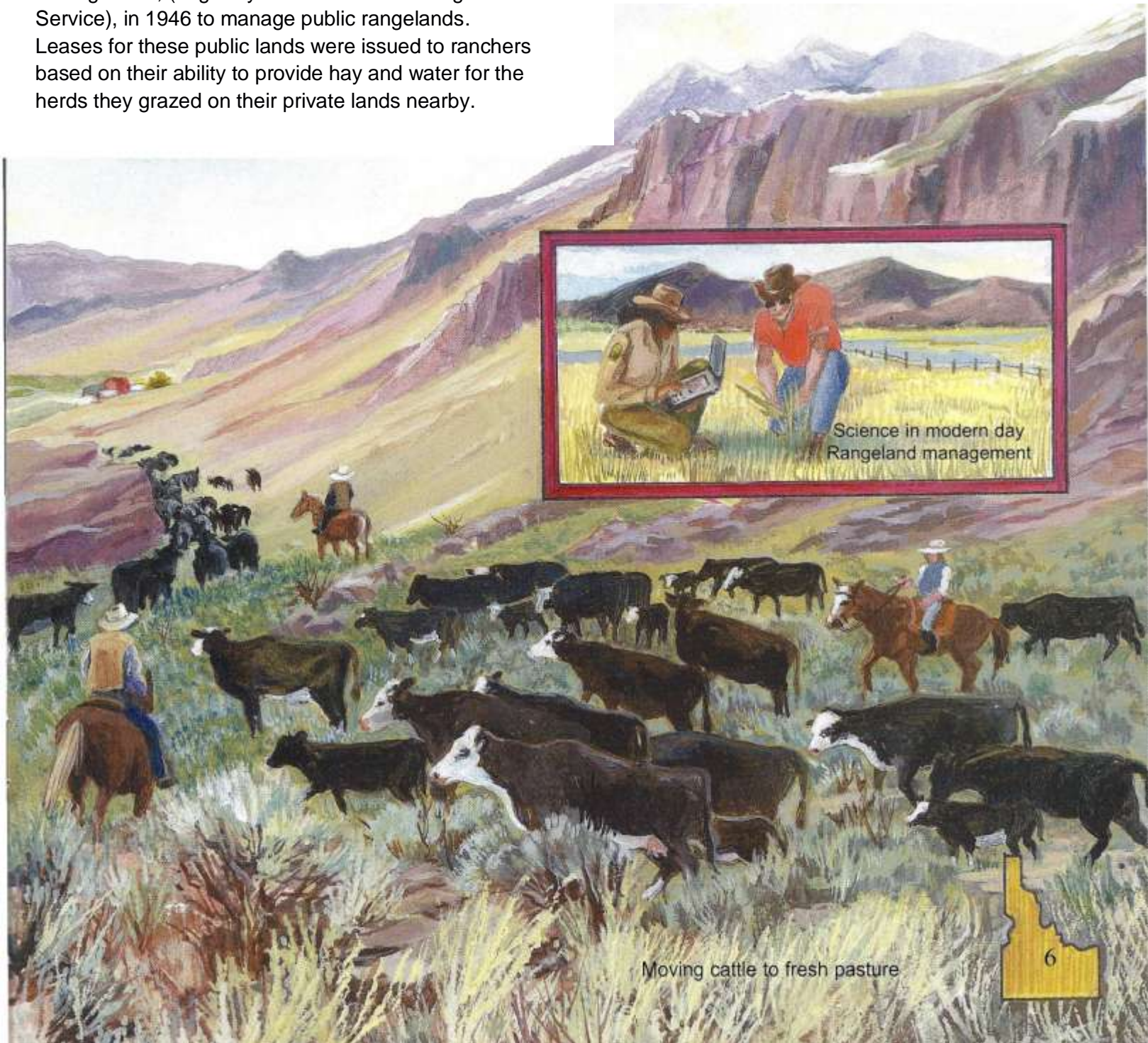
GRAZING CHANGES

By 1886 drought, falling cattle prices and several bad winters drove many ranchers out of business. The ranchers who survived changed their grazing to fit the land. They ran smaller herds of better cattle. They developed more water sources to allow for better distribution of animals. They raised hay to feed in the winter. The fences they constructed controlled livestock access to pastures and allowed the rangeland to rest.

The government, with the encouragement of many western ranchers, established agencies like the US Forest Service in 1905 and the Bureau of Land Management, (originally known as the Grazing Service), in 1946 to manage public rangelands. Leases for these public lands were issued to ranchers based on their ability to provide hay and water for the herds they grazed on their private lands nearby.

RANGELANDS TODAY

Humans have been a part of the rangeland food web since the first Native Americans harvested, burned and hunted the grasslands. Livestock and wildlife now graze where the woolly mammoth and saber tooth cat used to roam, but land managers still use grazing and fire as tools to keep Idaho's rangelands healthy. Properly managed grazing is used to improve habitat for wildlife. It can help manage weeds and maintain native plants. Today rangelands are managed for many diverse values and Idaho's wild open spaces continue to adapt and thrive.



Moving cattle to fresh pasture

WORDS TO KNOW

ARID LAND: Arid lands receive very little precipitation.

BUNCHGRASS: A type of grass with stems growing in a tight cluster from what is called a "root crown." This gives it a "bunched" look.

DROUGHT: A period of years when the land receives less precipitation than usual.

FOOD WEB: Many overlapping food chains create a food web. A grass eaten by a grazer, who is eaten by a predator, is an example of a food chain.

FOSSIL: The remains of a plant or animal that died many years ago found preserved in rock.

GRASS: A family of plants with hollow stems, narrow leaves, but no showy flowers.

GRAZERS: An animal that eats grasses. Animals that eat mostly shrubs are called "browsers."

HABITAT: The place where an animal lives that provides food, water, shelter and space.

LIVESTOCK: Animals raised by humans for milk, meat, leather and wool such as cattle, sheep and goats.

PRECIPITATION: Water that falls as rain or snow.

PREDATOR: An animal that kills and eats other animals.

SHRUB: A short, woody plant with several stems coming from the ground. Shrubs do not have one main trunk like a tree.

TRAPPER: A person who makes a living trapping wild animals and selling their fur.

TRADING POST: A location where trappers, Native Americans, settlers and merchants bought and sold goods from each other.

WEED: A plant that interferes with the management objectives for a piece of land. A weed may take the place of native plants and disrupt the food web.

WILDLIFE: Untamed animals living in their natural habitat.

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**IDAHO
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In cooperation with the University of Idaho,
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Management, Moscow, Idaho



Dawn Horse

Saber Tooth Cat

Giant Sloth

Hagerman Horse