THE MOST EFFICIENT FIBER PRODUCERS ON EARTH:
Angora Goat Ranching in Yavapai County, Arizona, 1880-1945

By Mona Lange McCroskey

Few people remember that in the interim between World War I and the end of World War II, the biggest industry in Yavapai County, Arizona, was the raising of Angora goats. At its peak in 1940 Arizona’s Angora goat population was estimated to be about 200,000, of which about one-half were in Southern Yavapai County. The balance were scattered among Mohave, Pima, Pinal, Graham and Greenlee Counties.

W. H. Hardy was reportedly the first rancher to import goats to Central Arizona, from Utah in the 1880s. The dry, brushy terrain of Yavapai County proved an ideal environment for them. Goat raising in the county centered in the Kirkland-Wilhoit vicinity, with smaller districts around Mayer, Congress, Bagdad, Agua Fria, Walnut Grove, Peeples Valley, Castle Hot Springs, the Bradshaw Mountains and the Verde Valley.

Most Yavapai County goat raisers came from the hill country of Texas, some bringing goats with them. Established cattlemen turned to goat ranching, or added goats to their cattle operations for three reasons: Arizona cattle production was beginning to surpass local market demands; buyers were demanding a better grade of beef than was produced by the longhorns that were driven into the state; and the drought of the 1890s had been disastrous to the cattle business. As one rancher put it, “Mohair was the meat and potatoes of the ranchers; cattle were a luxury.”

Angora goats are native to the Himalayan Mountains in Asia Minor. Dr. James B. Davis introduced them into the United States from Turkey in 1849, bringing them to his farm at Columbia, South Carolina, where they thrived. He eventually sold his herd to his nephew, Richard Peters of Atlanta, Georgia, who became known as the “father of the Angora industry in the United States.” Animals from Peters’ herd were shipped to California and the Southwest, where the climate suited them well. More importations of Turkish Angora goats ensued, and in 1893 the first Angoras from South Africa were introduced. By 1900 the descendants of these goats were found on ranches in the West and Southwest, and in California.

Angora goats are a little smaller than other breeds of domestic goats. They have wide set spiral horns and a silky white fleece that hangs down in curls all over the body, enabling them to withstand extreme temperatures. The males are properly called bucks; the females, does or nannies; the young, kids; and castrated males, wethers. Angora does almost always have only one kid, as opposed to other breeds of goats where the norm is twins. Their fleece, known as mohair (from the Arabic word “muhayyar”, meaning choice or select), grows eight to ten inches a year. Hair from a good band of goats averages up to three-and-a-quarter pounds per animal per semi-annual shearing or “clip.” The goats can be sheared for up to ten years, yielding the best mohair during the fourth to
sixth years. Kid mohair is of the finest, softest quality; each kid yields from one pound to a pound and a half of mohair. It is an extremely durable fiber; sound absorbing, non-flammable, and insulating from heat and cold, which led to its description as a “luxury fiber” and “an aristocrat of fibers.”

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has praised Angora goats as perhaps “the most efficient fiber producers on earth”. Although the USDA extolled the use of goat meat and morocco leather, Angora goats in Arizona were raised almost exclusively for mohair. Fabric made from mohair resists fading, is lighter and warmer than wool, and because of its elasticity it resists wrinkling, stretching and sagging. It was first used in dress and suiting goods, furniture upholstery, and military braid and ornamentation. Mohair growers received a huge economic boost with the advent of streetcars and the railroad Pullman car, where mohair was used almost exclusively in upholstery.

Made into durable plush with a pile, mohair continued to stand up even with wear, and it was almost dust repellant. It was also used in hats and hairnets, handbags, mufflers and shawls, draperies, carpeting, wigs, imitation fur, paint rollers, even clerical vestments and cinches. With the coming of the automobile the demand for mohair rose again, for auto tops and upholstery.

The Angora goat industry in Yavapai County prospered as new investors materialized and established goat ranchers enlarged their herds. By 1910 the goat census in Northern Arizona was over 15,000, setting the stage for the escalated production of mohair during World War I, and in 1917 Yavapai goat men had an unprecedented year. “[Mohair] shipping started early in September from Kirkland...
Valley, at a price of thirty-eight cents per pound, the highest ever paid. In 1927 the statewide goat population had increased to 185,000 and more than a million pounds of mohair were produced; prices averaged fifty-seven cents a pound. The superior market continued into 1928, when the quality fiber produced in Yavapai County was commanding high prices in the Boston Market. Government statistics show that mohair income in Arizona increased from $65,000 in 1909 to $301,000 in 1939.

In 1934 Arizona goat ranchers formed The Arizona Mohair Growers Association. It adopted the motto “For lasting beauty, use mohair.” Its goals were to promote closer cooperation among growers, collect and circulate information relating to the production and marketing of mohair, and to advance the interests of the industry. The organization held regular meetings in Prescott, with occasional meetings in Wickenburg, Safford, and Thatcher, but most of the group’s activities were centered in Yavapai County. Association members were interested in and discussed a wide range of topics, including soil conservation, dipping, livestock inspection, predators, and proposed revisions to the State Land Code.

Yavapai County goat raisers struggled during the Depression. Informants described the small goat ranches during that time as “hunter and gatherer operations” and “starvation situations.” Low mohair prices combined with a severe drought and automobile strikes in Detroit caused many ranches to fail.

In 1934 Yavapai County Agricultural Agent E. S. Turville was in charge of administering a contract for the purchase of surplus goats by the government. A drought relief meeting was held in Denver to determine regulations and terms of the stock reduction purchase, at which the USDA Bureau of Animal Industry ruled that the purchase would be of nannies only. The Mohair Growers objected to the ruling on the basis that their goat populations were about sixty percent wethers and forty percent nannies, and the sale of nannies only would result in an “unbalanced reduction of herd productivity and mohair sales.” A. A. Johns, President of the Arizona Wool Growers, enlisted the help of Arizona Congresswoman Isabella Greenway in urging a reconsideration of the ruling.

Under the 1934 National Brucellosis Eradication Program, women in Yavapai County were hired to administer USDA approved tests to goats for brucellosis. Other 1930s re-
lief legislation also provided funds for the construction of a tannery six miles north of Prescott on the Ash Fork Highway to stimulate the local economy. Arizona was one of the leading cattle, sheep, and goat-raising states in the nation, and up to that time hides had been shipped out-of-state for processing. The tannery had a daily capacity of 250 goat or sheep hides, or 125 cowhides. Tanned Angora goat hides with hair were used for rugs and robes; without hair they went into workmen’s gloves and morocco leather. The tannery was equipped with modern, up-to-date machinery that reduced the time for tanning, and “the hides [came] into the tannery in the raw state at one end of the building and [went] out the other as finished leather” in three to five weeks.9

In 1938 the Mohair Growers entered into an agreement with Phoenix Packing Company in an effort to create a market for goat meat. The growers would sell chevon to Phoenix Packing, which agreed to open a meat market to sell goat meat, and not to sell any meat “in competition to goat meat.”10 (Goat meat was called chevon until the end of World War II, and also cabrito.11) It was often sold as mutton or lamb because of the universal prejudice against goat meat. Under the agreement the ranchers were required to pay freight to get the goats to Phoenix, and they received such a low price that, in one stockman’s words, “it would have been more profitable to us to shoot the goats on the range.”12

It is generally conceded that the environment suffered from the presence of so many goats. Excessive grazing and trampling left the land bare. Although the mainstay of their diet was brush, the goats also ate grass, weeds, and forbs right down to the ground, which did not endear them to Southwest cattlemen. Statements in USDA bulletins glossed over the fact that Angora goats denuded the landscape, and justified using them to clear brushy land by keeping the foliage and buds stripped off during the growth period.”13

The Mohair Growers were striving to be good stewards of their grazing lands when in 1938 the Land Use Committee addressed a letter to the Federal Forest Service, the Soil Conservation Service, and the Agricultural Extension Service at the University of Arizona in Tucson in 1938. Wanting to arrange “for a more profitable long time use of their ranges,” the stockmen requested a survey to determine (1) to what extent and under what grazing conditions goats were inclined to injure the range cover; (2) a proper method of appraising the carrying capacity of different types of range when used for goats; (3) how far it was practical to pasture goats and cattle on the same range; and (4) how the carrying capacity of the range would be determined.14

The Agricultural Extension Service, in cooperation with the Mohair Growers, the Southwest Forest and Range Experiment Station of the U.S. Forest Service, and the Soil Conservation Service, agreed to conduct a survey to demonstrate whether or not goats could be handled on a profitable basis over a period of years and still maintain the maximum productivity of the natural resources of the land.15 The land had previously been appraised on a cow basis and the conversion ratio determined to be five goats to one cow, which the goat men felt was too low on brushy range. Range areas were selected on the Scott and Young ranches in Peeples Valley and the Maddox and Rainey and Resley ranches in Skull Valley. The ranchers agreed to cooperate in keeping stocking records on these ranges, to determine to what degree goats could use the ranges and still continue in their usefulness as a watershed and producer of range forage.16 Preliminary findings of the survey, released in April 1939, were that the average grazing capacity of the monitored areas was about fifty goats or eight
and one-half cows per section year round, taking into consideration that the range was in varying stages of deterioration due to past disturbance, and that the same range in good condition could support a larger number of livestock per section.

The Mohair Growers also established range study plots on the Charles Rigden ranch in 1939 to study goat grazing and make plans to use the range to their best advantage.

Some Yavapai Family Goat Stories
A few goat raisers, and many of their descendants, still have Yavapai County connections. A. G. Walker began ranching in Arivaipa Canyon, raising registered bucks. After his wife succumbed to the 1918 flu epidemic, Walker drove a small herd of Weathersby bucks on foot to the Wagoner area, a distance of over two hundred miles, where he settled on the abandoned McKinley mining claim. His five children rode the train from Safford to meet him in Kirkland. In Yavapai County Walker added does to his Yavapai operation in order to raise mohair. His daughter Cassie married Roy George, also a goat rancher. Ora, a few years younger, vowed she would never marry a goat rancher, then married Clifford Gray and lived with him on a goat ranch near Bagdad for thirty-two years.

In 1925 Nathan Tenney moved his large family from the Wilcox area, where he had been in partnership with his father and brother in a 25,000-head goat raising enterprise, to a location off the Senator Highway near Prescott, where he converted an old barn into living quarters. A big goat shed and corrals were constructed just to the east of the house. Tenney’s children herded goats on his range, which extended east from the homestead to north of “P” Mountain, south two to three miles, west to the White Spar Highway, and north to the homestead. Tenney also acquired a goat dairy from his neighbors, the Herrings. Some milk was delivered to Prescott homes, but most of it went to Fort Whipple for tuberculosis patients. Goat milk has a high

![Nannies clearing jump board on their way to graze.](image)
fat content, does not separate easily, and is therefore easily digested. Tenney was one of the few ranchers who successfully sold goat meat. He marketed it from the back of a covered truck at the forks of the road from Jerome to Clarkdale and Cottonwood. In the 1930s Jerome was a booming mining town with a lot of Mexican workers who liked cabrito.

Nathan Tenney’s son Boyd later served twenty years in the Arizona Legislature with distinction. As a young man Boyd raised goats also. He recycled materials from his father’s old goat-milking shed into a barn and lived on the property for many years.

W. J. “Will” Satathite moved his family to Arizona in 1911 from Texas by way of New Mexico, for his wife’s health. Satathite worked on the Dysart Ranch near Glendale for a year before buying land and goats in western Peeples Valley from Bill Dearing of Prescott, and a few acres on Kirkland Creek from Bob Cannon. In 1926 Satathite moved his operation to Thompson Valley. His daughter Pearl worked goats with her three brothers as a family crew; holding the animals’ horns as they were branded on the nose, and “tromping” mohair into the big sacks to be loaded onto flatcars.

John Resley gained his start in the Angora goat business in New Mexico, where he took goats in exchange for his $30-a-month wages. When he had acquired a small band he drove them to Bumble Bee, where he herded them on the open range for about a year. When Resley moved to Ferguson Valley he was one of the few growers who rotated his goats from one pasture to another, thereby providing “an occasional change of bed grounds” as advised by the USDA to prevent overgrazing, although the ground around his goat corral and sheds was badly trampled. Resley fenced four one-mile-section pastures and ran about five hundred wethers.

**A Labor-Intensive Occupation**

Raising Angora goats was a labor-intensive process, repudiating the USDA’s claim that they were “a robust, elm-peeling, can-eating, neglectable [sic] animal.” The animals were divided into bands of about 1,200, each tended by a Basque or Mexican herder and a couple of dogs. Some growers did their own herding, a few on horseback. As a general rule, a minimum of at least one band was required for success. Good breeding stock was vital, and the stockmen traveled to Oregon, New Mexico, Utah, and Uvalde, Texas, to buy top-notch bucks, for which they paid five hundred dollars or more. The bucks were pastured and given supplemental feed during the breeding season, since the quality of mohair was dependant upon them.

The browsing goats required close supervision. Unguarded, they wandered off and became prey to predators. The stockmen trapped year around to protect their animals from coyotes, bobcats and lions. The Predator Animal Control Program managed the poisoning of predators when dogs and goats were off the range. Almost every goat man could relate incidents in which they lost numbers of goats to predators that sometimes appeared to kill multiple animals “just for fun,” leaving the dead goats uneaten. The Bureau of Biological Survey in Arizona was perennially short of funds and personnel to provide effective predator control, with the result that while field men were working one part of the state, predators were building up in other locations. Compounding the problem, the predators became wise to traps and lures used by unskilled private trappers and the price of pelts dropped so low that trapping was uneconomic.

Kidding season, from about April 15 to June 15, was the busiest time of year for goat raisers. In the early years some of the ranchers moved their goats to the desert floor around
Congress and the Harquvar Mountains to take advantage of the warmer weather. Nannies, kids, and “kid boxes,” or baby goat shelters, were scattered all over the desert and the hillsides. These boxes were numbered and arranged in rows eight to ten feet apart. Each morning the nannies that appeared ready to kid were kept in a corral. As soon as the kid was born and up on its feet, nanny and kid were staked beside a numbered box.

By April when the kids were born the nannies had been sheared. Many ranchers painted a number on them to match the box, and when the kid was born it was immediately painted with the same number, to keep it from getting mixed up. When the kids and nannies had bonded sufficiently that they could find each other, usually two or three days, the kids were moved to a corral where they could exercise. After foraging all day the nannies came down the trail in an orderly line, “like beads on a necklace,” bleating, and each nanny went right to her own box. A few had to be “mothered up,” but they soon all went directly to their own kid. At night the nannies often lay in front of the boxes to protect their kids.

“Jump boards” were placed across open corral gates to keep the young kids in. As soon as they were able to jump over the board, they were allowed out to graze with the band. During this time the herders watched closely for tired kids that lay down to sleep; they were “real coyote bait” if left behind. Aside from the hard work involved, everyone agreed that the young goats were a joy to watch. The kids were incredibly agile, able to go most anywhere, getting along better in the rocks than on flat ground. They ricocheted off buildings, hitting the walls with all four feet and then bouncing in another direction. Sometimes their antics left a vehicle in shambles.

Herders lived in small tents, or in board and tin shacks furnished with a bed and a wood stove, often putting up fences to keep the gentle, curious goats out of their camps. In 1930 herders’ wages averaged thirty dollars a
month. It cost the growers an additional fifteen dollars to board them on staples including coffee, canned milk, flour, lard, salt pork, beans, chilies, canned tomatoes, raisins, dried apricots, and of course, goat meat. It was a solitary life, with only their dogs for company.

Starting at the age of about six months the goats were sheared twice a year, once during the last of February to the middle of March, and once during the last of August to the middle of September, giving their protective hair a chance to grow back before the onset of cold weather. Timing of the shearing was crucial, since Angora goats have no body fat layers and are especially vulnerable to the cold until their hair grows back. Keeping them dry and warm necessitated the use of long, low sheds with metal roofs, boarded on one or two sides. Summer showers were known to have killed whole bands, and bunching up in their attempts to keep warm smothered many more. Herders were required to get in the sheds and “loosen up the packed goats.”26

To maintain the health of the band and produce maximum weight, the goats were dipped for lice and scabies at least once a year, after shearing. Every rancher had a long dipping vat filled with “Cooper’s dip.” The goats were driven in at one end and forced to swim through the dipping trough to the other end where they emerged onto a draining platform. A few goat raisers did their own shearing. Most, however, preferred to bring in contract crews of perhaps four to six men. Some shearers were local, but crews of Mexican or Texas shearers regularly started in Southern Arizona and worked their way northward, using different methods of shearing.27 Inevitably there were nicks and cuts, which were doctored immediately to prevent screwworm infestations. A skilled worker could shear 150 to 200 goats in an eight-hour day. One of the Morales sisters from Octave was reputed to be able to shear more goats in a day than most men. The clips were sorted into two groups, kid and doe/wether and then rolled up, cut side in, and tromped into six-by-four-foot wool bags placed upright in a frame. Full, these bags weighed 350 to 500 pounds each. It took three or four men to roll them onto a truck for transport to the railhead at Kirkland or Wickenburg.

At the mills the mohair, in standard lengths of six inches, went through a series of steps before it was ready for use: sorting and grading by hand into seven degrees of fineness,28 washing (there was a twelve percent shrinkage), mixing from different geographical areas for uniformity, straightening, combing (twice), carding, and spinning. Men who sorted took extra safety precautions not to inhale the dust from the fleeces, which sometimes contained anthrax bacillus and caused “wool sorters’ disease.”29

After clipping, the mohair was taken to central locations where the growers and buyers met, and sold at auction. (There was an auction barn at Kirkland Junction. If mohair prices were low, the stockmen often stored their clips in the barn until the following year.) The day after the auction the growers worked together to transport the mohair to the nearest shipping point, where the loading dock would be stacked high with big sacks of mohair, branded with the grower’s initials.

Viola “Vi” (Irving) Warren was a mohair broker for many years. She owned and oper-
ated the Skull Valley store, where she extended credit to goat ranchers. Their accounts were paid up twice a year, after shearing. Mrs. Warren traveled all over Arizona, contracting for mohair to be shipped to mills in the East.

**More Yavapai Goat Raising Stories**

Twelve-year-old Dona Leffingwell was living on the old Walker ranch in 1930 with her mother and her siblings when she met Richard “Dick” Whitehead. Whitehead was a Virginian who came to Fort Whipple as a gravely ill tuberculosis patient, having been gassed in World War I. While hospitalized, he became interested in goat ranching and began learning about the business. Upon his recovery (he lived to be ninety-two), Whitehead homesteaded in the French Gulch area and bought goats, then acquired more land and more goats until he had established Yavapai County’s largest goat ranch. Dona was interested in horses, and she began caring for Whitehead’s horses on the Walker ranch.

Dona’s family moved to nearby French Gulch and her mother commuted to Kirkland, where she worked as a cook at the hotel. As a teenager Dona began helping the Mexican herders on the Whitehead ranch, packing in supplies on horseback and learning the intricacies of shearing, herding, and kidding. When Dick acquired some polled Hereford cattle in the 1930s, Dona began riding with him. They married in 1936 when she was eighteen. The Whiteheads lived in a rock house built by Dick in one of the most remote parts of Yavapai County, where Dona broke horses and raised two sons in addition to helping with the goats. She remarked, “I didn’t get out much socially. I was too busy trying to keep everything fed up.”

Mattie Sorrells and her husband David, a health seeker, homesteaded in Peeples Valley. When she was widowed in 1925 and left with three small children, Mattie moved to Yava and carried the mail from the Hillside station. Meanwhile, she astutely added property to her holdings, buying parcels from neighboring miners and ranchers. Sorrells went into the Angora goat business with the help of her brother, Will Satathite. When she needed herders, she sat in her car along “Whiskey Row” or on North Cortez Street in Prescott to recruit them as they came out of the bars. When she was short of herders her daughter, Minnie Mae, helped herd on horseback. Mrs. Sorrells hauled supplies from Wickenburg in the winter, and from Prescott in the summer. When the introduction of synthetic fibers ended the mohair market in the mid 1940s, she sold and shipped her goats to Texas.\(^3\)

**Fashion Plays a Negative Role**

“Flat fabrics” were displacing pile fabrics in automobile upholstery for two reasons. One, women “whose tastes and preferences dictate the sales of automobile and of household furniture,” complained that the mohair fabrics were hot and uncomfortable, and that the pile surface irritated their skin through the sheer stockings and thin clothing they were wearing as fashions changed. Two, the advent of rayon and cotton blended fibers provided an attractive variety of textures and colors for upholstery. “Texture rather than service dictated the selection.” Mohair growers were urged to consider both an educational campaign and a research program in an endeavor to stay in the market.\(^3\)

Nel Sweeten Cooper knew a lot about goat raising and the selling of mohair, since she was born in the Angora country of Texas. Nel was a regular visitor on the Aubrey Gist ranch in Skull Valley when she met Roy Cooper, who with his father John Thomas and his brother Will were in business as Cooper and Sons. In 1923 the Coopers had ten bands of goats and five bands of sheep, which she said,
“they moved about over the country much as did one of the nomads of Eastern Europe.” Nel and Roy were married in Prescott in February 1923, and they boarded the train to Congress Junction. Nel’s two-week “honeymoon” was spent in the Henderson Hotel, until the shearing was completed, the mohair and wool sold and shipped. She wrote: 

“All this time, in the midst of the hectic shearing, a place for me to live was being prepared. It was a lovely camp, which was to be temporary. It was two tents, eight feet by ten feet, walled up with lumber two feet high. Our bedroom tent was floored with one-by-twelves. The kitchen tent faced the bedroom tent with a space between, shaded by a large palo verde [tree]. There I began my cooking “career.” I knew how to cook, but I didn’t know how to cook in great quantities . . . Now there was the kidding and lambing crew, the herders—twenty to twenty-five men. I made many mistakes, but I finally learned to put enough chili tepines [sic] in the beans to burn the bottom out of any herder’s cast-iron stomach.”

After their marriage, Roy Cooper homesteaded near Wagoner, attracted there by the abundant Hassayampa River water and good grazing forage. Nel filed on her own homestead, giving them more range. Cooper kept some goats and added cattle to his enterprise. Soon he began buying out neighboring ranchers along the river, and he built cattle-shipping pens that doubled as shearing corrals for the goats.

Catherine Janes worked beside her husband Cecil, who ran 6,000 goats between Wilhoit and Wild Horse Basin on unfenced range. She remembered that in 1943 it took three days for them to drive a band of goats from Wilhoit to the Basin. Janes herded them on horseback and she drove a pickup truck which served as their chuck wagon. Janes not only herded and sheared his own goats; he sheared for others. Catherine tromped the mohair into sacks. She related that one year they were asked to help with shearing at the Cooper ranch. When the Coopers discovered that Catherine and her one-year-old son were living in a camp under a tree, they insisted that she move into their home.

Mrs. W. B. “Hattie” Young was active in the Arizona Mohair Growers. She authored an article in which she described the goats in terms of personality:

“What sort of creature is this goat with his sudden snorts of distaste, his insatiable curiosity, this animal which cans the sunshine, wraps [it] into the long staple of his Mohair and holds it safe for ages, this animal with is beautiful long, curly, white coat of hair, this creature which is so fastidious and yet such a roughneck?

“If he is being herded and you remain perfectly still, curiosity will get the best of him and back he will come to investigate. If you’ll continue to remain still he will be nibbling your clothes in a few minutes, but he will not allow you to touch him . . . He is happiest when playing on large rocks, bending trees or your automobile.

“If he is accustomed to being herded, he loves his shepherd as his shepherd loves him. He requires a lot of attention but repays his master by producing a fiber, which has no substitute for quality and durability.”

In 1931, 32-year-old Katie Van Cleve and her husband Manuel moved from Casa Grande to a 640-acre homestead east of Congress Junction, which took in Antelope Canyon and the surrounding hills. In their first year of goat ranching, the Van Cleves dealt with sheep encroachment on their grazing land, contentious miners, rustlers, inclement weather, and “baby goats everywhere” during kidding sea-
son. In addition to canning, cooking, sewing, raising chickens, and fixing up a 13-by-14-foot cabin hauled in from Casa Grande, Katie hauled mohair to the warehouse, repaired fences, and helped in the branding, dipping, and shearing. She wrote in her diary, “Have been too busy and too worn out to write”; “Worry and hard work have made me look older”; and “A quiet depression of helplessness settles over all of us.” Not surprisingly, it was reported a couple of years later that Katie had run off with the postmaster at Congress Junction.

Press releases from the USDA document the upswing of the mohair industry after the disastrous year of 1934. In 1935 the outlook was favorable; consumption of mohair was up; prices advanced; surplus stock was reduced; goat numbers declined; and feed was plentiful. 1937 again brought higher prices and consumption, lower production costs, and higher goat prices. The outlook was for increased production. In 1939 prices were even higher and the clip had been sold by November 1. The war situation and the automobile output were “important strengthening influences on mohair prices.” 1940 saw the peak of the mohair industry in Central Arizona.

**The Effects of World War II**

In the early part of World War II the demand for mohair increased when restrictions were placed on the use of wool for civilian use. Mohair, too, was restricted, but was deregulated in 1942. At that time it was estimated that the War Production Board released twenty-five to thirty million pounds of mohair, “fibre [sic] unsurpassed in beauty, warmth, color values, and adaptability.”

In 1942 the future of mohair was more uncertain, as alluded to in an article in the American Wool Council newsletter: “War time [sic] elimination of automobile manufacturing, drastic changes in furniture manufacturing, and the cessation or limitation of other industries consuming mohair, have resulted in destroying a market for between 60 and 70 per cent of the total annual output.”

**The End of an Era**

By 1945 the mohair market was still declining because (1) The OPA removed price ceilings on meat and the importation of cheap Argentinean wool. (2) There was uncertainty as to the continued use of mohair in manufacturing. (3) the predator problem on goat ranges was increasing.

As a result, most of the remaining goats in Arizona were sold to individual buyers and shipped to California or Texas. Yavapai County rancher Boyd Tenney ingeniously entered into a contract whereby he delivered fifty goats a week to feed the Navajo workers at the Bellmont Ordnance Depot fifteen miles west of Flagstaff.

The stockmen were happy to return to cattle ranching since it was much less labor-intensive, and few vestiges of the goat-raising period survive. There were a few feral goats in the Skull Valley area until the late 1940s. The overgrazed rangeland has long since recovered. In March 1952, the Arizona Mohair Growers treasury balance in the amount of $798.36 was donated to the Arizona Boys Ranch and the group was dissolved because there was “no prospect of needing an organization for this industry in Arizona anymore.”

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**ENDNOTES**

built square boxes with a floor. Stacked for storage between seasons. Some stockmen frame, with a back. They had no floors and were easily one-half inch boards nailed at the top to make an A-frame, with a back. They had no floors and were easily stacked for storage between seasons. Some stockmen built square boxes with a floor.

"Mohair: Most Versatile of Fibres Gains a New Wartime Importance," Unidentified article Mohair Growers Association (MGA) Papers, c. 1942.


Outstanding Projects of Arizona C.W.A., E.R.A. ERA Collection, Photo Box 19, Sharlot Hall Museum Archives, Prescott, AZ.

Agreement between Mohair Growers Association of Arizona and Phoenix Packing Company. August 1938. MGA.

“little goat” in Spanish.

J. Verne Pace, letter to Cooper. June 3, 1939. MGA Box 2, F.7


“Cooperative Range Goat Study Working Plan, Background and Objectives” April 1939, Box 2, F.7. MGA:18.

Ibid. 1.

Ibid. 3.

Jacob Prospect Weathersby and his son, Neuel O. Weathersby, of Klondyke, Arizona, raised some of the finest registered Angora goats in the country.

“Weathersby Angoras’ commanded good prices throughout the nation, with $1,500 sales for an Angora sire not unusual. A Weathersby bred and owned Angora buck was the nation’s grand champion one year.” Richard G. Schaus in The Arizona Cattlelog, n.d. Box 12, Schaus Collection, MSS 6, Arizona Historical Foundation.

Tenney built a milking shed with feed troughs on each side of an “alley,” and installed a pasteurizing plant. In the shed were benches for the nannies to stand on while they were being milked.


Ibid.

The salaries of hunters employed by the Biological Survey were paid one-half from state funds and one-half from matching federal funds.

The boxes were usually made from two twelve-by-one-half inch boards nailed at the top to make an A-frame, with a back. They had no floors and were easily stacked for storage between seasons. Some stockmen built square boxes with a floor.

Virtually all Arizona mohair growers used the “stake method” as opposed to the “corral method” where nannies and kids were all kept together.

Pearl Satathite Ethridge.

Made of a two-inch plank eighteen inches high with a four-inch strip on the top for a “nanny step,” the jump boards were too high for the kids, but they allowed the nannies to leave the corral.

Lyman Tenney.

Will Satathite had a “shearing plant” where the contract crew stayed and worked. Neighbors brought their goats to his ranch for shearing. Belt-driven gasoline engines powered shearing machines fitted with combed cutter heads. Some shearsers constructed board troughs, tied the goats up, and rolled them around in the troughs as they sheared. Another technique was to cut a square hold in the shearing-shed floor so that the shearer’s right leg would fit into it to the knee. The goats were put into small pens so that the shearer could reach out, catch one, and throw it over his knee. Others sheared by the “sheep” or “Mexican” method, setting the animal on its rump, shearing the belly and between the front and hind legs, then quickly tying all four legs and rolling the animal on the floor to finish the job.

Mohair sorters served a three-year apprenticeship and, with their delicate sense of touch, were able to determine the diameter of individual hairs. They also considered the length and color of the mohair. “Just A Hair’s Breadth.” Unidentified newspaper clipping, MGA.

Practical Angora Goat Raising. ibid. 33.


Kathy Moore. Correspondence with author, March 6, 2003.

Ibid. 2-3.


Catherine Janes. Letters to author, 1996.


USDA Press releases, 1936-1939. MGA Box 2, F.8.


“Mohair: most versatile of fibres gains a new wartime importance.” MGA.

Ackerman: 1.