

Alice and Helen Dickerson grew up on one of the last homesteads in the lower 48 located up the Buckhorn Canyon. They worked hard throughout their life on their homestead starting from a young age. They were put to work pulling teams of horses to remove tree trunks. This would make space for food to grow. Listen to some of the other chores the Dickerson Sisters would do on their property.



Alice (1908-1997) and Helen (1909-1992) Dickerson

In an oral history recorded by Jill Boice and Jonathan Anderson in 1974, Alice and Helen Dickerson described some of the chores they would do on their property.



Earl Dickerson, cousin Cecil Smith and one of the Derby boys building homestead house.

Helen Dickerson- "Well, I started milking cows when I was six years old. We just kept adding more milk cows. I got to where I milked thirteen cows."



Allen Dickerson (left),
early 1930s, haying in
Buckhorn. Allen was
Alice and Helen's
uncle.

Alice Dickerson - "We'd go out and help in the hayfield. Sometimes we had sixteen or eighteen people up to board and had a herd of cattle and running a saw mill and people say, 'What in the world do you do with all your time?'"



Dickerson's barn built circa 1911

Anderson - "How did you cut hay?"

Alice - "With a team and a wagon. A mowing machine drawn with a team. Then there was a rake drawn with a team. Then you'd have to pitch the hay up on the truck and that wasn't the easiest thing in the world. We worked like men all our lives."



Dickerson cabin in 1935, photo by Helen Dickerson

Helen - "I think when I was about five years old I led the horse to the stump puller to clear this land out here and the brush was piled up and burned. Alice and I drug what we could handle to that."



Wagon road near Horsetooth in early 1900s. Looking north to Horsetooth Rock.

Alice - "They'd bring the green poles down and we'd peel them with a draw knife."



Dickerson's house (left) where they lived when went to school. Masonville store (1/4 mile west of present store). Moved circa 1928.

As they grew older, they operated the family saw mill after their father suddenly passed away. He had just started work on a large order. The girls picked up where he had left off and finished the job.



Allen, Alice and Helen Dickerson at
sawmill in 1950s

Aside from their hospitality, the Dickerson Sisters were best known for their artwork. Alice painted, and Helen wove pine needle baskets. They learned the arts from their mother and grandmother, but also taught themselves their unique style. They operated a store from their property where they sold their crafts. They also worked other jobs: Alice ran a mail route and they both worked at Glen Echo resort up the Poudre Canyon.

In their 1974 oral history, they talked about work they did, along with starting the craft stand.



Helen Dickerson in 1950s
at their commercial stand
across from house.

Alice Dickerson - "I like to read in the daytime, but she doesn't look at anything."

Helen Dickerson - "I'm generally building a basket or fixing antlers."

Alice - "I used to be a bird watcher for Ron Ryder down at the college. I banded birds for several years. I banded 100 of those little tiny humming birds."

Boice - "Do you still see any of them coming around here, the ones you banded?"

Alice - "I haven't lately; I did for several years. I haven't banded for several years. I banded 1000 of all kinds of birds."



Baskets in FCMoD's collection by Helen Dickerson

Boice - "What did you do when you worked in Glen Echo?"

Alice - "Hash slinging."

Helen - "Baking."

Boice - "Did you enjoy that?"

Helen - "No."

Alice - "It didn't bother me as much as it did her. Somebody would want some gasoline and she'd starting making a cake."

Helen - "Then somebody wanted me in the store."

Alice - "She forgot what she was putting in the cake. I just kept right on stirring and yakking."



Baskets in FCMoD's collection by Helen Dickerson, painted by Alice Dickerson

Alice - "We made 1000 pies while we were there."

Anderson - "That's a lot of pies."

Boice - "What made you decide to try that for a summer?"

Helen - "We decided saw milling was more than we could handle anymore."

Alice - "We thought we'd try something else. That was too much work, too, so we quit there and came back home again. I said I'd just as soon be in prison."



Paintings in FCMoD's collection by Alice Dickerson

Boice - "That's when you decided to try the crafts?"

Helen - "That's when I went back to crafts. I started with the stand in 1931 for selling crafts. That year we decided we'd get away from saw milling. This is all we do anymore."



Crafts in FCMoD's collection by Alice Dickerson

Boice - "Do you spend a lot of your day making things?"

Helen - "Yes."



Alice Dickerson with painting

The Dickerson Sisters lived the pioneer lifestyle throughout the inventions of modern technology. They are well remembered by those who knew them and visited them up the Buckhorn Canyon and their artwork is known all over the world. They set an example as two caring and tough women. In their oral history, they shared their thoughts about living up the canyon.



Alice Dickerson's mail route truck, Eggers Post Office.

Alice - "It's one of the prettiest places up here I think. People are always wanting to buy it, but we didn't want to sell any of it. Or sell it period."

Helen - "Somebody was wanting to know about the ghost town all the time."

Anderson - "Which one?"

Alice - "These buildings. They called this up here a ghost town. Our property."

Helen - "I got to where I'd answer them when they asked if I knew anything about this 'ghost town' up here. I said, 'Yes, I'm one of the ghosts!'"



Dickerson cabin in 1985, photo by Alice Dickerson

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