

## **Frank Clark and Old Ephraim**

Clark was born in 1879, in Cherry Creek, Oneida County, Idaho. Nobody knows where or when Old Ephraim was born. But the story of the two actually begins after grizzly bears were supposed to be extinct in the state of Idaho. Arguably, the most famous grizzly bear in America, and the last one in Idaho, he was named "Old Ephraim" after a California grizzly in a P. T. Barnum story. His fame was such that even President Theodore Roosevelt considered hunting him for a time.

Old Ephraim terrorized herds of sheep from Soda Springs, Idaho, all the way to Weber County, and settled in an area known as Logan Canyon. Frank Clark was one of the owners of the Ward Clark Sheep Company in the same area. In the year 1911, he found over 150 sheep that had been killed by bears, so he started a crusade and killed more than 50 of them. But Old Ephraim was a long way from being counted amongst his kills.

By 1914, Old Ephraim had become Clark's number one objective, and he pursued it with a vengeance. Everywhere he went his faithful sheepdog Jenny and his trusted .25-.35 caliber rifle was with him. He used every trick he had learned in killing all the other bears. Every trap he set was either sprung or avoided by Old Ephraim who was also getting bolder and wiser ever year.

On August 21, 1923, after almost ten years devoted to his quest for the huge grizzly, Clark was awakened by a terrible noise. He grabbed his seven-shot rifle and went to investigate what he thought was a horse caught in his trap. He discovered that it was Old Ephraim who was caught in the trap, but was well hidden in the brush. Clark was not about to approach the angry grizzly in the dark, waited and watched all-night. At daylight he got a glimpse of a patch of hide and in his own words, "I fired at it and grazed the shoulder. Now for me to get the biggest thrill of my life. Ephraim rose up on his hind legs with his back to me, and a 14 foot log chain wrapped around his right arm as carefully as a man would have done it and a 23-pound bear trap on his foot, standing 9 feet 11 inches tall. He could have gone that way and gotten away, but he turned around and I saw the most magnificent sight any man could see. I was paralyzed with fear and could not raise my gun. I was rooted to the earth and let him come within six feet of me before I stuck the gun out and pulled the trigger. He fell back, but came again and received five of the six remaining bullets." Clark then turned and began to run. He realized that Old Ephraim was still coming and that his faithful companion Jenny was snapping at Ephraim's heels. Ephraim turned on Jenny and Clark turned back and as he neared the badly wounded bear put the last bullet in his brain. On April 23, 1923, Old Ephraim was not only the last grizzly in Idaho, he was the last bear killed by Frank Clark.

Old Ephraim was skinned, the pelt kept and the remainder thrown in a fire in an attempt to incinerate. The remains, mostly bones were then buried in a shallow excavation and marked with telltale stones. Evidently, the grave was found by vandals who removed most all of the remains that were still there. The only thing that

remains today of the old giant is the skull which is on display at Utah State University, Logan, in Merrill Library, Special Collections Reading Room resting in a glass case.



### **Old Ephraim's grave, monument and road sign (Authors Collection)**

The memorial to Old Ephraim and his grave site is located in the Cache National Forest in Cache County Utah at GPS coordinates N41.76360, W111.54310. It is located in a gorgeous site and the drive to it is also beautiful, but it is several miles on a rough, gravel road.

Clark, who never married, told his niece and only surviving relative, Thelma Clark, that after it was over, he was sorry he did it because he was a magnificent bear.

Clark died in 1960 and is buried in the Malady Cemetery in Malad, Idaho.



**Frank Clark's Tombstone**