

# The Wagon Tongue

Volume 11 Issue 1

Madison Valley History Association, Inc.  
website: [www.madisonvalleyhistoryassociation.org](http://www.madisonvalleyhistoryassociation.org)  
Visit MVHA on Facebook: "Madison Valley History Association"

January 2013

**From the Wagon Seat- President Don Black:** As we begin the New Year - 2013, the MVHA can look back on a little history of it's own. The board and membership have moved forward to provide the communities in the Madison Valley, our friends in many other places and YOU, the ability to enjoy our heritage fully. The MVHA has an updated website, a face book page, email announcements and postings, CD and DVD copies of our monthly programs, colored printed posters for the local community, research requests on line and plus state wide news of our special events. Access to the Museum has never been better. We also have enjoyed support from the Ennis Chamber of Commerce, the Madisonian and it's Outpost Events publications, the First Madison Valley Bank for board and membership meeting rooms and of course the regular printing of the Wagon Tongue.

My goal this year is to fully utilize our talents. In reality we enjoy three MVHA presidents on the board. Leadership from our past presidents Larry Love and Otis Thompson makes my responsibilities possible in fulfilling our mission. I love history and am eager to preserve that heritage.

My thanks go to Shirley Love who has joined us on the board, Liz Applegate who has actively promoted the MVHA, David Hoag who has accepted the duties of secretary and Kevin Brenneke who has accepted the position of treasurer.

Programs of recent months featured; October- Lemon Live with Greg Lemon editor of the Madisonian. November- Mining Life and Miners by Tom Satterly of Dillon, December – Annual Christmas Program and Dinner with Father Keith Axberg of Trinity Church – Jeffers and for January – The History of the Bear Creek School with Mona Durham and Karen Shores.

Donations, memorials, volunteer services, fund raisers and contributions from our loyal friends have made us richer in those things. Spread the word and invite someone special to join us at the MVHA.

+++++

**The Wagon Tongue is 10 years old!!**

Volume I issue 1 was published in January, 2003. It has had 4 issues published quarterly since that time. It was devised as a way to make a contact with all of the MVHA members who faithfully buy a membership each year and support the mission of the MVHA. Many live away from the Madison Valley and cannot attend the monthly programs and events.

Smitty Overstreet, who was instrumental in starting the MVHA in 1998, came up with the name-Wagon Tongue- based on our theme and logo of wagon trains of early poneers and freighting starting the settlement of the Madison Valley. It is also a "play on words" of "waggin' tongue" or gossip sheet and the MVHA hopes that you have enjoyed and appreciated all the "gossip" and historical information that has been published over the last 10 years.

Many thanks to our members who have provided articles, trivia, tidbits, memories and suggestions. And special thanks to all those people ahead of us who wrote diaries and written accounts to preserve history. The Wagon Tongue could not be published without all that help.

And as the Wogon Tongue heads into the 11th year and hopefully many more, keep the "wagons rolling" and don't forget to write your own stories and preserve all the history.

The Wagon Tongue issues are all available on the website listed at the top of the page. Copies for in library reading are also available at the Madison Valley Public Library and at the Museum during open hours in June through September. Paper copies of back issues are available upon request for 25 cents per page for printing and 46 cents per issue for mailing.

+++++

**Memorials** During 2012 memorials were given in memory of Dicky Noack, Pat Gustafson, Robin Shipman and Harry Townshend. Memorials are a great way to honor your family and other loved ones and also helps the MVHA to continue the work of preserving the history of the Madison Valley. Thank you.

=====

**History Tidbit:** William Ennis built a cabin near the Madison River the same year as Quantrill's Raiders terrorized the South in the Civil War.

**Welcome to Membership** The following have joined since the October issue. Please add to any membership list you might be keeping.

**Anderson(Smith) Jennifer&** 406-539-7386  
**David(Snuffy) Smith(F)**  
 402 E. Granite Ave.  
 Bozeman, MT 59718

**Axberg, Keith (I)** 406-600-1128(cell)  
 P.O. Box 629  
 Ennis, MT 59729

**Boyd, Lem & Linda (F)** 682-3285  
 196 Hayfield Loop Rd  
 Ennis, MT 59729

**Dale, John & Bridget(F)** 406-596-1039  
 P.O. Box 425  
 McAllister, MT 59740

**Hinman Robert & Marilyn (F)**  
 4161 Glenwood  
 Irvine, CA 92604

**Storey, Ann (I)**  
 2650 West Superstition Blvd. sp 39  
 Apache Junction, AZ 85220

**Welch, Jerry (I)** 682-5010  
 152 Ennis Lake Rd  
 Ennis, MT 59729

**Membership Update** 2012 memberships are now past due. Please check your address label on your issue of the Wagon Tongue and you can tell when your membership is due or if you have not purchased it yet. Some of you have taken care of business and your 2012 membership has been received. Thank you! Your membership is good for a full year from the date that you purchased it and you are not penalized for submitting early. If your '13 membership is due during January, February or March or if you are past due, you will find a membership renewal slip with in this issue. Memberships are \$5.00 for students, \$10.00 for individuals, \$15.00 for families, \$50.00 for Businesses, \$100.00 for Patrons and \$500 or more for Benefactor.

If you are inviting a new person to join or want to purchase your membership before it is due, just write name, mailing address and type of membership on a slip of paper and mail with membership fee to MVHA at P.O. Box 474, Ennis, MT. 59729.

The Board of Directors of your Madison Valley History Association appreciates all the memberships that are purchased as this allows them to have funds to continue the work of developing a museum in the Madison Valley:)

+++++  
**Memories**

**REMEMBERING FRANK O. VETTER**

Frank Omar Vetter was a generous man and was a long time member of the M V H A. He was sent his 10 year member certificate but did not receive it before his passing. His contributions were numerous and his life experiences can be shared by us all. Frank O.Vetter was born in 1924 at Varney, Montana to parents George O. Vetter and Elizabeth Elvira "Lizzie" Daems. He 2

was the youngest of twelve children. Frank's father came to Montana from Warren, Ohio and his mother was born at Varney of the Madison Valley. John G. Vetter was Frank's grandfather as well as a Montana Territory pioneer boot maker of Virginia City. Dr. Levinus Daems was Lizzie's grandfather and the noted pioneer physician of the territory as well. Both families flourished in the Madison Valley and Madison County.

At the age of twenty(1944), Frank Vetter enlisted in the U.S. Navy and had a distinguished record serving on the Essex aircraft carrier in the South Pacific. He was proud to be a veteran. In 1952, Frank Vetter married Ann Spaziano in Rhode Island. The couple resided in Washington State, mostly in Bellevue. Their only son was Van Morgan Vetter who died in infancy in 1957. The Vettters were horse lovers and a family photo shows the couple at Churchill Downs of the Kentucky Derby. Frank also bragged about his uncle Bert Vetter who was a famed Montana bronc rider hailing from the Madison Valley.

History, family and heritage were Frank Vetter's passions. He eagerly contributed to the MVHA Varney Condensed History book and compiled an extensive genealogy of his relatives plus their pictures. Some of those families include the Vetter, Daems, Spray, McGuire, Ritchie, Dunn, Paugh and Hungerford, names all well known. Ken Card, Frank's nephew, recently shared his Frank Vetter collection of several hundred pages with the MVHA. In addition Frank published those histories on line to remember his family. We thank Mr. Vetter for preserving our history and heritage. Frank O. Vetter passed away in September 16, 2011 and is survived by his wife Ann Vetter. Memorials can be sent to the MVHA in his name.

*Memory submitted by Don Black, MVHA Historian*  
**Marcella O. Tart** passed away Oct. 7, 2012 in Ennis. She was born May 18, 1924 at Oakwood, North Dakota to Oswald and Delia (Chale) Faille. She was raised in Grafton, N. D. and after graduating from high school moved to St. Paul, Minn. She married Lambert Tart in 1952 in St. Paul. In 1972 they moved to the Madison Valley.

Marcella worked at the Madison Valley Manor as a bookkeeper. She served as the president of the Madison Valley Woman's Club, was a trustee of the Madison Valley Public Library Board, and worked at the Nearly New Shop. She also served as a city council member in Ennis for seven years and was a devoted member of the Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church.

**Robert(Bob) W. Reilly** passed away on October 21, 2012. He was born July 8, 1938 near Hereford, Ore. to Charles and Hazel (Hartz) Reilly. He married Nora O'Connell in June of 1958. In 1971 he and a friend decided they would like to run a bar in Montana and the family moved to Ennis to run the Longbranch Saloon. The family stayed in Ennis for 8 years before returning to Washington State and Bob resumed his career at Boeing Company. In 2010, after Nora had passed away in 1999, Bob moved back to be close to his family.

*(cont. on page 3)*

*Memories cont. from pg. 2*

**Maxine Croy** passed away on Oct. 21, 2012. She was born on Jan 20, 1931 in Happy Corner, Kentucky. They later moved to Ohio where Maxine attended school. She married Bill Dutiel and they were happily married for 10 years until Bill's passing. Maxine and Bill had met Holly and Flo Croy in Minnesota in 1963. Bill and Flo both died in May of 1963.

In November of 1963, Maxine married Holly Dean Croy. Holly's 13 children welcomed Maxine and her three children to a ranch in Ekalaka, MT. Maxine and Holly had five more children for a total of 21. They moved to Ennis and 1968 and continued ranching until Holly died in 1991.

**Wilbur Frisbie** passed away Nov. 2, 2012 after a short illness at the Billings Clinic. He was born on Aug. 21, 1954 in Ennis to Alden and Ione Frisbie. He grew up on the family ranch at McAllister, graduated from Ennis High School and worked on various ranches in the Madison Valley. Most recently he was hauling cattle for Ferguson Cattle Company of Bozeman.

**Ramon "Ray" John Jones** passed away Nov. 14, 2012 in Anacortes, WA. He was the son of William and Theresa (Imel) Jones, born May 3, 1932 in Ennis. Ray attended school in McAllister and Ennis and was on the Ennis High School basketball team. In 1952 he enlisted in the U.S. Army. After returning from Korea, Ray returned briefly to Montana and then relocated to Washington State where he lived until his death.

**Peter T. Combs**, long time MVHA member, passed away in Ennis on Dec. 1, 2012, just shy of his 85th birthday. Peter T. was born in 1928 in Santa Ana, Calif. to Walter and Dorothy Combs. At age 17 he joined the Navy. Between serving in two wars, he attended California Maritime Academy earning a degree in civil engineering. In 1950 Peter married Virginia (Ginny) Beardsley. In 1960 Peter and Ginny moved their family from California to the Diamond J. Ranch, up Jack Creek, near Ennis. Guest ranching was to be the first of many entrepreneurial pursuits and he had many irons in the fire to include cattle ranching, banking and town grocer.

**Schendel, Joy (Bates)** long time MVHA member passed away at the Madison Valley Manor on Jan. 2, 2013. Memory will be published in the April *Wagon Tongue*.

Memories are excerpted *Madisonian* Obituaries and the book Progressive Years

Any memories and stories of Madison Valley's departed folks is welcomed by the *Wagon Tongue* for printing in future editions . Their stories are the history of this valley.

#####

**MVHA Member News**

**Ethelyn and Gene Hanni**, long time MVHA members, were featured in the *Madisonian LifeStyle* section of Thursday, Nov. 15, 2012.

**Jack and Marjorie Kent**, brother and sister-in-law of long time MVHA member Neil Kent, celebrated **3**

their 50 years of marriage on Nov. 22, 2012, with a celebration planned for spring.

**Lula Wing**, mother of long time MVHA member, Dave Wing, celebrated her 105th birthday on Nov. 23, 2012 at the Madison Valley Manor.

**Chuck Bennetts**, long time MVHA member turned 99 on Dec. 15, 2012.

**Jimmy Carlson**, long time MVHA member and former board member recently retired from NAPA Auto Parts. He worked there for about 9 years. Prior to that he had a shop at the place in McAllister and also worked for M & W in Three Forks. Congratulations, Jimmy.

////////////////////////////////////  
The *Wagon Tongue* recently finished the printing of the **Thomas Hughes** diary which he wrote from Oct. 31, 1904 up to July 12th and 13th, 1906. Unfortunately the rest of the diary had been lost so the we are at the end of that story. But the editor checked in the Madison County Trails and Trials to find out a little more about Thomas Hughes. Thomas Sievers Hughes was born in Searsbore, Iowa on May 15, 1885, the son of J. W. Hughes, a bridge maker. Tom came West at age 16. As a young man, Tom (or T.S.) went briefly to MSU. His expense book in September 1903 listed \$1.75 for board, books and supplies for the business course he had enrolled in, 75 cents for cleaning and having his hair singed and 20 cents for theater.

Tom got the wanderlust: for a trip to St. Paul in 1904, the expense books records most meals and rooms at 20 cents. But when he and his buddy, Army Adams, journeyed to California in 1905 they found it "a most inhospitable place." The two took turns eating whenever they had a dime for a meal. Crackers on the table were a bonanza.

The trip started out in style with three mounts and three pack horses, all green broke. Packing an out-of-season elk killed in Idaho on these broncs gave them trouble. They sold the illegal meat for 50 cents a pound.

When that money ran out, they sold the horses, getting beaten on the deal. On the return trip in March 1906, they worked as bronc twisters for Jake Cauffman at Williams, Arizona. It was probably at this time that Tom and seven other cowboys rode into Santa Fe country to bring back 1500 head of cattle for the boss. Tom broke out about 200 head of horses.

June of 1908 brought Tom to the calmer life of matrimony with his marriage to Emily Mackel at Meadow Creek Post Office, the home of his sister, Florence Gibson. Florence's husband, Guy, and his mother, Ellen opened the first post office for the valley.

The young couple lived in a cabin on Leonard Creek and homesteaded. Tom took any kind of work to support his rapidly growing family. He hauled freight, taking supplies to mines like the Sunnyside and Revenue, returning down the chute-like roads with a load of ore. He ran the Savage grade with six to eight horses and a two ton load, the sled and wagon rough-locked.

One day on the steep Norris hill road, the brake pole snapped. Tom tried to keep his head and *(cont. pg. 4)*

**Thomas Hughes from page 3**

hoped the horses kept their feet. Ahead of him on a slow nag, he saw the rather ladylike figure of his lifelong friend, Deb Stanley. Deb looked back and took in the situation at a glance. Kicking her ancient white horse into a gallop, Deb managed to beat Tom to the bottom of the hill. When the wild, out of control ride came to a halt, the wheel team was under the wagon.

Tom jumped to the ground to rescue them. Luckily they were only scratched and bruised. When Tom told this story, he loved to mimic Deb, pretending to wipe his streaming brow and saying in a squeaky voice, "Well, we made it, Tom!"

On Sundays baseball was the entertainment after a hard day's work. Tom was a noted pitcher. According to his cousin, Walt Vincent, a game was extended until the following Sunday to allow Tom time to recover from a broken jaw he received from a bad ball.

Tom was also in demand as a fiddler for the Saturday night dances. Often as he came home through the timber, he would notice a mountain lion accompanying him. He would get out his fiddle and play "Arkansas Traveler" or "Pretty Red Wing" and the cat would fall back. Tom used to say that was one audience he never tried to capture.

Tom's daughter, Margie Cowan, finishes his story by saying, "The strong tree that was our father toppled on April 28, 1964. He was not a gentle man and I often judged him tyrannical. He would have scorned women's lib. Yet when he died, it was as if a sturdy wind-break went down and we stood flinching as the sleet hit our faces."

Tom lies in the rocky little cemetery on a hill overlooking the lake he loved, its waters covering the meadows of the first ranches in the Madison Valley. Margie Cowan Madison Valley Trails and Trials p82-3.



**February 1949** by Jack Kirby

In 1949 there were 13 family ranch operations south of Indian Creek, 2 west of the river and the rest scattered between the river and the Madison Range. Most did not have easy access to the highway and expected to be occasionally snowbound.

The winter of 1948-49 I spent at the Kirby Ranch, 35 miles south of Ennis, helping my dad feed cattle and with other ranch chores. The winter had been exceptionally snowy with lots of wind and since we were hauling loose hay from the haystacks on the bench, lots of snow shoveling had been necessary. Even though we were using horses and a hay rack on bobsled runners, many trips we had to shovel our way up the hill and then clear more snow on the way down. February 4th came on a Saturday night and, of course, my presence in town was a necessity. Due to the drifting and low visibility on the Armitage Flat, I did not travel home at night. I usually stayed at Cloe Paugh's home, in the basement room I had lived in during high school. That night more snow and wind closed the road at the "26 Mile Hill". This was the downgrade 26 miles from Ennis where the highway dropped down toward the Hippe Ranch at

Wolf Creek. The Highway Department had a one way snow plow mounted on 1 - ton dump truck. There was one stationed in the valley with Joe Wood as the only employee. He operated on a 40 hour weekly schedule so anything that happened after Friday afternoon was dealt with Monday. By this Monday it would have taken much more than a simple snow plow to open the hill. Therefore, the end result was that I was snowbound in Ennis.

My dad had several unused hay stacks in the bottom meadows that were easy to access without shoveling snow. He also had a tractor loader for clearing driveways and corrals. With milk cows, chickens, and a storeroom full of groceries they were in good shape to be snowbound at their location.

Ennis was cut off from the rest of the world in all directions. The high school ski team (Bill and Titus Bry, Aldrich Saier, and Dean Matzick) were ferried to Norris in a Montana Power "weasel" to attend the State Ski Meet. Gil Hansen used cross country skis to go to Virginia City and pick up yeast for his bakery. A native of Minnesota, he was experienced in cross country skiing and had the necessary equipment. The Ennis Cafe, operated by Eleanor Bennetts, kindly allowed me, and several others, adequate credit for our meals. With no deliveries coming in, we did express concern to her citing the decline in the number of cats that frequented the areas behind the cafe.

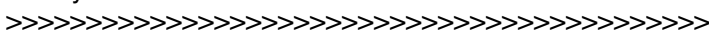
As time passed there did not appear to be any break in the weather. The whole northern half of the country was at a standstill while wind and more snow closed highways and railroads. Harold Helt and I worked on a solution to several problems. The existing telephone line ended at the Kirby Ranch. Further south, the Olliffe family, Jerry and Winnie Womack, Andrew Schuster, the Haldersons at the Cliff Lake Post Office, Maurice Staggers, and the Neely Ranch were without communications. Ed McAtee offered us the use of horses and tack to try to reach these families. At daylight the morning of February 21, Leonard McAtee trucked us to the top of the "26 Mile Hill" with 3 horses, saddles and a pack saddle for the trip. The accumulated mail for all the families plus the Sun Ranch and Shelton's was loaded onto the pack horse. As we led our horses over the drift covering the road, we noted that the snow was packed so hard that hoof prints barely showed. We followed the highway where there were bare spots, used ridges when necessary, cut several fences as needed and arrived at the Kirby Ranch at dark. By highway, the distance was 9 miles, but how many more we traveled would be hard to guess. After spending the night at the Kirby's, Harold rode on to the Cliff Lake Post Office, checked with the Womacks and Olliffes and returned by evening. All the families were in good shape having plenty of food and other supplies. These were experienced people, used to being snowbound during various winters over the long years they had lived in the Upper Valley. The next day Harold returned to the "26 Mile Hill" leaving the other two horses with us until the road would be opened.

The snow and wind had let up after the 20th leaving clear skies and temperatures in the 20°- 30° range. By February 27 the Highway Department managed to open the roads

**Winter of 48-49 (cont. from page 4)**

as far as the mouth of the Upper Madison Canyon. They bypassed the "26 Mile Hill" by opening an old dirt road to the east, abandoned when the highway was rebuilt and paved in the early 30's. A bulldozer, operated by Bert Lockhart, spent a week clearing the big drift from the hill. When the pavement was reached the measurement from the centerline to the top of drift was over 40'.

Writing this now, in the winter of 2010-11, I am impressed with the equipment and accompanying manpower that keep our highways clear and relatively safe. The increase in the amount of traffic now necessitates this. In 1949 there was no paved road across Reynolds Pass and traffic via West Yellowstone was infrequent. There was no regular attempts to keep the road from Ennis to Duck Creek open before the end of World War II. School busses did not operate south of Cameron, either on the state highway or county roads.



**William Ennis Birthday**

On March 17, 2013, the MVHA will celebrate the birthday of William Ennis who was born in Ireland on March 17, 1828. In preparation for that celebration, the *Wagon Tongue* is printing "Mrs. Ennis sketch of her coming to Montana in the early 1860's."

I left my home in Carroll County, Ohio on May 1, 1865, to join my husband in Omaha, Nebraska where he had preceded me by a month in order to get ready the necessary equipment for our long trip.

To digress somewhat, will state that the winter of '62 and '63 my husband and I spent in Denver, Colorado. In the spring of '63, I returned to my old home in Ohio and Mr. Ennis came West with merchandise to sell, arriving in Alder Gulch in July of that year. Early in August he came to the Madison Valley and located a "squatters right" on the Ennis ranch. That same summer, he put up hay and hauled it to Virginia City and sold it for \$100 a ton.

The winter of '63 and '64 he spent in Salt Lake City contracting supplies to bring to Virginia City early in the spring. One item he brought was "Side Meat" (or bacon) at 10 cents a pound which sold for sixty cents in Virginia City.

The following winter, '64-'65, he returned to Ohio, and in the spring we prepared for our Western trip.

After completing our preparations, we left Omaha via Plattsmouth and went to a Military Post some distance up the Platte River.

The Indians were so bad in Western Nebraska and had killed so many travelers, the military authorities did not allow single wagons or small outfits to start West. Only when there were thirty outfits or more, would they be permitted to start.

We waited three or four days until the required numbers were ready and in fact there were three trains finally ready to go at once.

Some had ox teams and some horses and mules. In our train were horses and mules. It took ninety-six days for us to make the trip--not insight of a house in that time. We followed up the Platte River till we reached Julesberg, Colo., from there we went North until we came to the Lander Cut-off. There the party divided, some of them going to California, some to Oregon and some to Montana.

On our trip we were attacked in Nebraska by Indians-they attempted to stampede and drive off stock, and did succeed in getting the oxen from the train following us, but most of them were recovered. There being so many people in these three trains, the Indians were afraid to venture to close, but they followed us many days trying to get a chance to drive off the stock, but when the train stopped to camp the wagons were run close up behind the other, forming a circle with wagon tongues on the inside of the circle, and only one opening into this circle, where the stock were driven to keep during the night or when Indians were especially threatening.

The cattle and horses had to be pastured each day or whenever camp was made and if it was by night two herders for the first part of the night and two for the second part were "put on herd." A sad incident occurred while we were yet in Nebraska. One of the young men on night herd was coming in from his herding and the night being cool he wrapped a blanket about him and rode into camp. One of the men who was to go out "on herd" being rather short sighted, mistook him for an Indian and shot him. I cannot recall his name, but we buried him on the hillside near our camp.

The trip at last ended when we reached Virginia City about the middle of August 1865. The next day after our arrival, Mrs. Blodgett, our landlady, called me to the door to see three men who had been hung the night before. I saw their booted feet sticking out beyond the back of the wagon and it was a sickening sight.

My home for the first three or four months on the ranch was a log cabin with a fireplace in one corner, a dirt roof, one window, a dirt floor and buffalo robes for a carpet.

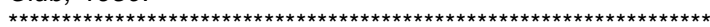
My next home was a larger house one and one half stories high of hewn logs. My husband often had considerable money from his freighting trips and cattle sales and I recall we chiseled out a space in one of the logs near the floor to use for secreting our money and gold dust. After placing the money in this opening we fitted in a piece of board and then papered over the place with newspapers which happened to be our first wall paper. My husband and I were personally acquainted with a number of the Vigilantes and Captain Williams, (Captain of the Vigilantes) visited at our home a number of times.

Our home was first made on unsurveyed land on the Madison Valley, but when the land was later surveyed, our fences were within a few feet of the section lines.

We lived on this homestead and raised our two children. In 1898 my husband died and since then I have been living on the old homestead alone. I am now in my 95th year, do my own housework and read a great deal.

I have lived to see many changes. Ox teams supplanted by automobiles and fine schools and churches erected where wilderness formerly existed. Railroads and highways thread through our noble Commonwealth.

*from History of the Madison Valley compiled by Mrs. (M.D) Florence E. Jeffers, Historian Madison Valley Woman's Club, 1930.*



**History Tidbit** Robert T. Smith (Aug.12,1922-Mar. 6, '08) long time Montana resident, known to many as Banker Bob was the founder of First Madison Valley Bank.

