

The Wagon Tongue

Volume 13

Madison Valley History Association, Inc

January 2015

website: www.madisonvalleyhistoryassociation.org

Visit MVHA on Facebook: "Madison Valley History Association"

Our mission is to develop a museum to house and preserve collections of artifacts, tapes, photographs and stories of historical importance to the Madison Valley and interpret them through display and education.

From the Wagon Seat: Happy, Healthy New Year! 2015 is going to be another great year for the MVHA. 2014 has really gone fast and it has been kind to the MVHA.

During 2014 MVHA had programs and field trips that were enjoyed by all. We ended the year in November and December with a program by Dan and Martha Northway about the talc mine and the Christmas Potluck, gift exchange and sing-a-long of Christmas carols. Thank you to Jo and Otis Thompson, Kevin and Marty Brenneke and Devonna and Lynn Owens who prepared and served the ham and turkey for the pot luck. And thank you also to all the members who helped set up, clean up and get all the dishes washed and put away. And thank you to Madison Valley Baptist Church for generously allowing us to hold our dinner in their social hall.

The board would like to thank all the members who purchase memberships each year and who step forward to help out in various capacities.

For 2015, the board is going to build a building to be located South of the Forge Building. The new building will be used to display large artifacts that need to be under a roof. It will also house some display cases to feature additional artifacts that are now in storage. Your help will be needed starting in April and May to get this project off the ground.

The January program will be based on the 1964 Centennial Train with a video. Carol Hacker and Karen Shores are co-chairs of that program. We do not have a program for February yet and March 17, St. Patrick's Day, will be the annual fundraising dinner to honor the founder of Ennis, William Ennis, who was born in Ireland on St. Patrick's Day. It will be held at the Ennis Elementary School Cafeteria and we will need your help in setting up, serving, cleaning up and baking soda bread and blarney stones. And we need someone to step up and chair the committee for the I Like William Ennis essay contest that MVHA does with the junior high school.

Looking forward, we need your ideas for programs and field trips for Feb., May and into the summer. We also will open the Museum over Memorial Day and for the season in mid June and MVHA will be needing your help hosting at the museum. Please plan to pick a day each month or each week and volunteer to keep the museum open for the tourists and visitors. We also need a member to volunteer to be the scheduler for June, July, August and September. This person passes a sign up calendar around at meetings and field trips and calls members to make sure there is someone at the museum each day it is open,

Did anyone get to see the special on our beast on Jan. 2 on the Destination America channel? The MVHA is suppose to get a DVD of this program for helping them film it. It will be shown sometime in the future as a program for anyone who did not get to see it.

The May meeting will be the annual meeting when the budget is approved and new board members are elected. As a friendly reminder, keep the non profit 501c3 MVHA on your list for donations and for memorials for folks who have passed on.

With your continued help, the MVHA will continue to move forward. Become an active member, invite a younger person to join and in this way, we will keep the Wagons Rolling. Larry Love, Wagon Master

History of the State of Montana The admission of Montana into the Union started with the forming of the Montana Territory on May 26, 1864. The Centennial Train which was the subject of our January program was the celebration of the Montana Territory. After party politics in Washington, D.C. blocked statehood for years, Montana became the 41st. state with a population of 143,000 on November 8, 1889 and this fall on Nov. 8, 2014, the 125th birthday of the state of Montana was celebrated. To commemorate the 125th year, some Montana Trivia and facts will be shared. From the Sunday, Nov. 2, 2014 Great Falls Tribune..1841..oldest church congregation is St. Mary's Catholic Mission in Stevensville, 1849..oldest building is Old Fort in Fort Benton, 1863...Oldest bar is the Bale of Hay Saloon in Virginia City, 1882..Oldest hotel is Grand Union Hotel in Fort Benton, 1891...Oldest continually operating theater is Opera House Theatre in Phillipsburg, 1902...Oldest continually operating hotel is Kempton Hotel in Terry, and 1904...Oldest steakhouse is Mint Cafe in Belgrade. More Montana Trivia and facts in the next issue.

Welcome to Membership The following have joined since the October issue. If you know any of these new members or if they live near you, please invite them to attend the next MVHA meeting and welcome them aboard.

Goodwin, Bill & Connie F

132 Diamond Trail Rd.

Placitas, N M

Membership update Any outstanding 2014 memberships are now over due. Almost all of you have taken care of business and the MVHA has received your membership. Just check you address label on the envelop and you can easily tell if your membership is paid or which month you are due. Your membership is good for a full year from the month you purchase it and you are not penalized for submitting early. If your 2015 membership is due during Jan, Feb, or Mar. or if you are past due, you will find a membership renewal form included with this issue. Memberships are \$5.00 for students, \$10.00 for individual, \$15.00 for Families, \$50.00 for Businesses, \$100.00 for Patrons and \$500 or more for Benefactor. If you are inviting someone to join or if you 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 MVHA Board of Directors appreciates all memberships that are purchased and your support as this allows them to have funds to continue the work of developing a museum in the Madison Valley.

If anyone needs a ride to a meeting and program, please call 682-5780 and a ride will be arranged for you.

Member News

Hal Pasley celebrated his 104th birthday on Nov. 12, 2014. Congratulations, Hal, on reaching another milestone. Hal has been a member of the MVHA for 11 years.

Chuck Bennetts celebrated his 101st birthday on Dec. 15, 2015. Chuck has been a MVHA member for 15 years. Congratulations go out to Chuck.

Pearl (Neville) and Les Kilman celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on Dec. 29. They were married at Trinity Episcopal Church in 1954. Congratulations to Pearl and Les. If you would like to send a card to them, the address is: 5372 N. 20th St., Phoenix, Ariz, 85016.

Check out the new Ennis City Map displayed at the Grandma Ennis Park in the gazebo. **Zoe Todd** spearheaded the project to revise maps made in 2002 and 2007 by the late Joe Lopez. **Liz Applegate** designed the new map. This new map

outlines a lot of information for residents and tourists to Ennis and the Madison Valley. Thank you, Liz and Zoe.

Vicky Gordon and **Larry Love** participated in the Ennis Community concerts -Dec. 4 in Virginia City and Dec. 7 in Ennis. Vicky was accompanist for the choir and also accompanied Larry for his solo *Do You Hear What I Hear*.

Jan Smith had open heart surgery right before Christmas. She is home, recovery is going well and she welcomes phone calls. Just before she left to Billings for her surgery, she joined the Ennis Community Choir for the *Hallelujah* from "Messiah"

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Memories

Dick Baur, MVHA member from Broomfield, Colorado passed away in 2014. MVHA thanks Dick for his support of the mission of the history of the Madison valley.

Betty J. Hill Kelly passed away Sept. 27, 2014 in Billings. Betty was born on March 27, 1934, in Sheridan to Virginia Morris Hill and Eugie "Bott" Hill. The MVHA museum has a picture of her father "Botts" displayed at the museum.

Florence Bell Ore passed away on Oct. 17, 2014 in Bozeman, MT. She was born on May 26, 1927 in a logging camp near Mission City, British Columbia to English immigrants, John and Mildred House Bell. Florence was an author and wrote her memoir The Road Between which was published in 2011. Florence was a speaker at an annual meeting for the MVHA sharing her knowledge of writing a family history for members and guests.

Susan Ransburg McCaw, former MVHA member, passed away Oct. 21, 2014 in Bozeman, Mt. She was born in Indianapolis, Ind. to Gregg and Marjorie Ransburg on Oct. 29, 1940. After traveling around the world several times and living in many places, Susan fell in love with Southwest Montana and the people and community of Ennis where she enjoyed an amazing group of friends before moving to Bozeman. Susan left her mark in the Madison Valley as she contributed to the library and the history association.

Byram Delloyd "Dee" Owens passed away in October, 2014. He was born to James Lloyd and Katherine Byram Owens in July of 1928 in Ucon, Idaho. In June of 1957, he married Donna Lynn Barter and they lived in Missoula. In 1959, Dee moved his family to Donna's family ranch in Norris, Mt where Dee ranched until his passing. Dee is the brother to Lynn Owens, MVHA member.

Roy Leonard Reed passed away in October, 2014. He was born Oct. 26, 1923 to Edith and Henry Reed in Minam, Ore.

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Memories (continued from page 2)

Roy married Beverly Smith in October 1944 in Lewiston, Idaho. In 1963, Roy bought a ranch near Ennis and ran an outfitting business for over 20 years. In 1972 he went into the real estate business and opened Reed Real Estate in 1974.

Glen Louis Gallentine passed away in Ennis on Nov. 9, 2014. He was born June 13, 1941 in Cody Wyo. to Norris and Hulda Gallentine. The family moved to Montana and purchased the McLeod Resort south of Big Timber. In 1964 he married Jeanne Arlee. His love of the outdoors drew him to Ennis where he worked as a ranch real estate agent and partnered with Roy Reed in an outfitting business, Later he purchased the outfitting business and partnered with his son, Rob. He also owned and managed the Camper Corner R.V. Park.

Murray "Mick" A. Welton passed away Nov. 12, 2014 in Billings. He was born in Lovell, Wyo. on Dec. 31, 1936 to Murray Wright and Delma Mae (LaFollette) Welton. He married Jayne L. Peterson on June 20, 1959 in Billings. After his career and living in many places, he retired in 1993 and they moved to Virginia City, Mt to be near children. Mick was an Elder at the Shepherd of the Hills Church, active in snowmobiling and did a lot of volunteering including preparing taxes at the Madison Valley Public Library.

Bradley Rex Bradshaw passed away Dec. 7, 2014. He was born Aug. 16, 1956 in Ely, Nv. to Karl and Mae Bradshaw where he grew up on a ranch. He married Barbara Maupin on April 11, 1981. In 1994 the family moved to Cameron, Mt. where Brad worked on the Bar K Ranch and became manager. A family tragedy took its toll and in 2004 he left the ranch and purchased a small engine repair business in Ennis. From there he moved to Lindsay, Mt. to work for a ranch there,

Dale Francis Sisel passed away Dec. 21, 2014. He was born on June 26, 1937 in Kewaunee, Wis. to Gordon Patrick and Laura Rubens Sisel. He married Karen Wehr on Oct. 28, 1960. Though he spent many years in the corporate world, his love of the outdoors never left him and in 1993 he bought the Sphinx Mountain Ranch in Cameron, Mt.

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History of Jumping Horse Ranch(continued) by Robert Beck and Nancy Lein Griffin with research by Helene Beck. In the October issue, we left off with Phil and Jane Yeckel becoming the new owners of the Jumping Horse Ranch.

Wetmore and Dorothy Hodges were both very conservation conscious, and managed the ranch accordingly. His sons remember that Wetmore imported from Yellowstone National Park

the first herds of antelope to the ranch. Bill recalls that their father had built an earth filled dam near the family's cabin by Ulrey's Lake to protect trout spawning habitat but a vandal or a person opposed to the dam closed the gates and filled the dam. The dam burst in 1983 and caused a tremendous flood down Jack Creek doing extensive damage. Bill said the breaking of that dam "broke his father's heart" because of the erosion and other damage. Wetmore never hunted the game on his ranch, although occasionally would allow others to do so.

The Hodges employed a variety of different ranch managers, horse trainers and jockeys. Some locals recall a Russian race horse trainer who held the position for a number of years. Wilson Clark, a former ranch hand, remembers that the Hodges shipped a black thoroughbred stallion from England, who at one time almost killed his trainer. The Hodges didn't skimp on the purchase of horse flesh and are reputed to have spent as much as \$30,000 on two mares, a very high price in 1935.

The Hodges' chauffeur, Ralph James, became well known in the community and married the daughter of a local Madison Valley family. In addition to vehicle maintenance, James' job was to care for the lawns and property. For many years James lived all year at the ranch, and some local residents blame him for the elimination of the native population of Hungarian Partridges, because he had "nothing to do but shoot birds". Fortunately, the population of partridges on the ranch is now recovering.

Wetmore apparently felt a great moral inclination to support the workers of the Madison Valley. His sons recall his regret at "not being able to do more" to rebuild the economy during the Great Depression which followed the fateful stock market crash of 1929. Locals recall that he occasionally talked about doing all he could do to provide work in the Madison Valley. His sons believe it was this desire to rebuild the economy that motivated him to return to the business world full time after World War II. His friend, President Roosevelt, had started a massive building reconstruction program. The face of industrial America was changing from war production to the development of peacetime markets and Hodges was determined to do his part.

It was 1954 when the Hodges sold their Madison Valley property to pursue a new family business. The grown sons seemed anxious to pursue careers far removed from ranch management. In addition to capitalizing the son's business ventures, Wetmore began a research and development business based in Redwood City, Calif. The new business was responsible for taking the development of other companies and making them continued on page 4

Jumping Horse cont from page 3

commercial. He developed ideas which made the transportation and preservation of food more convenient for the consumer. In addition to refrigerated truck containers, Wetmore's company developed the first piggyback air, land and sea containers and a meat aging rack. Wetmore, used to being major player in the national economy, was always remorseful that he had not been active in war production. His sons say that, contrary to local rumors that he "went broke", after twenty years of isolation on the ranch, their father probably just missed the fast track of the business world.

Phil and Jane Yeckel

Phil and Jane Yeckel and their young family came to the Madison Valley from Texas, where Phil had acquired capital from successful ventures in the oil business. The Yekels purchased all of Hodges' property, with exception of the Valley Garden ranch. Phil was an active manager during the 13 years they owned the Jumping Horse Stock Ranch. Except for a period of six years when his children, Tody and Carl attended school in the valley, the Yeckels lived the ranch only during the summer months. The remainder of the time, the Yeckels spent at their Arizona winter home.

The Yeckels are credited by the Madison Valley residents with being good stewards during their tenure at the the JHSR., and some say that the ranch "has always had good care." Phil is responsible for modernization of ranch work through the purchase of mechanized haying equipment. It was during post war America that the methods of agriculture, was well as all national industries, was under going rapid transformation, it was a new era of industrialization, and Phil participated in that trend by planting hardy hay and grass species and using newly developed fertilizers. The ranch staff was pared to an efficient crew of five to eight workers and the ranch was converted down to a basic hay and cattle operation with hardy ranch livestock.

Changes in ranching in the Madison Valley were never as evident as in this period of the valley's history. Carl Yeckel, Phil's son, wrote a thesis to fulfill a thesis requirement for a Masters of History at the University of Montana entitled "History of the Cattle Industry in the Madison Valley". Carl claims in his study that ranching in the mountain valleys of western Montana has not always followed the trends in other ranching communities. Yeckel asserts in his thesis that unlike his eastern counterpart, the mountain rancher had, from the very start, claimed or purchased his tracts. As opposed to the open range history of eastern Montana, the mountain ranching has always involved claiming or purchasing land 4

title and fencing the acreage. The 1950's were marked with instability for the cowman, and Phil, like other producers for the time, experimented with grazing ratios and stock accumulation only to find that supply and demand had very little effect on the price of beef. It was a time when the agricultural industry saw abandoning ranching and farming for more lucrative and secure occupations in the city.

The Yeckels were responsible for the sale and removal of three of the houses on the ranch. One of the houses, the Ernest Vetter house, is now the home of Madison Valley attorney Chester Jones in Jeffers. Another home, which was the original home of William Maginness, located almost directly across the county road from the Fay Jeffers home, is now the home of Wade and Susan Miller in Jeffers. The third house was built for ranch foreman, Jess Armitage when he was employed by Wetmore Hodges. It was then located in the apple orchard near the horse barn at ranch headquarters. When the Yeckels purchased the ranch, Armitage, who was no longer a ranch employee, purchased the house for \$1800 and had it moved to it's present site along the Madison River. Phil also dismantled several grain and hay storage facilities to reduce the ranch's property tax burden. Some valley locals claim that Phil considered cutting the show barn in half for demolition, but was talked out of it by his ranch manager, Bob Cunningham. There is agreement that the decision to keep the barn was a wise one, because the next winter brought intense spring storms. The big barn, used as a calving barn, is credited with saving the calf crop.

A kitchen and dining room addition was added to the present main house at the ranch during the period it was occupied by Phil and Jane Yeckel. During its ownership by the Hodges, the house had no kitchen, as it was built solely as a private residence for Mrs. Hodges. The Hodges family ate their meals at the present Cookhouse and Sunday dinners in what was originally the Ernest Vetter house which served as the main house for the Jumping Horse Stock Ranch.

Many local residents recall that the Yeckels made good use of the outdoor swimming pool built by the Hodges. It was located west of the main ranch house. They recall family barbecues, where the children of the community were encouraged to use the pool. The pool was abandoned by Robert Beck, who claimed the pool, filled from an irrigation ditch, was not a "luxury" in the cold mountain climate.

The Yeckels owned a unique pair of mules, which they named Ed and Ollie, an affectionate reference to the Yeckel's friends, Ed and Ollie Beardsley. (Continued on pg. 5)

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Robert Beck owns a favorite picture of the mules. Ed and Ollie were pulling a sled across a bridge when their footing began to slip on the ice covered timbers. The photo depicts the mules leaning against each other, pushing away from the edges of the bridge, in mutual panic.

In 1967 the Yeckels, their children then grown, sold the Jumping Horse Stock Ranch and established another cattle operation in Wyoming. Local residents remembered that Phil Yeckel, presumably disenchanted with the changing cattle industry, was attracted by the price his ranch would bring. He, according to some valley locals, signed sale agreements without telling his family. Some recall Jane Yeckel's horror when she discovered that her beautiful home was to be sold out from under her.

Robert and Helene Beck

The Jumping Horse Stock Ranch, a ranch credited with a history of good management, was fortunate with the acquisition of Robert Beck as an owner. He purchased the property after searching in several western states for ranch property. Upon the sale of his ownership share in a successful and pioneer computer business, Robert Beck, who grew up on a farm near Lincoln, Nebraska, sought to fulfill a long-time dream of returning to agricultural life.

In addition to the Yeckel's property, Beck added the Crandall and Paugh ranches (known as the Judy ranch) to the Jumping Horse Ranch and significantly expanded the hay production capacity of the property. In 1987, to prevent the sale of adjacent property in 100 acre parcels, Beck purchased a portion of the Watkins Ranch from the Ben Johnson Property Development Corporation.

Three years after purchasing the ranch, Robert Beck married Helene, a love match sparked by compatibility and acceptance. The Becks spent the winter months on their fruit farm in Fallbrook, Calif. near San Diego, and during the remainder of the year were active in the management of the Jumping Horse Ranch. A highlight of their ranching experience was called the "Incident at Big Sky" when the mountain men, Nichols and his son, undertook to kidnap a young female athlete in the Jack Creek drainage basin where the Jumping Horse cattle were grazed in the summer. The father hoped that the girl would keep his son content to live off the land year round in the mountains. An attempt to rescue the girl went awry with one rescuer killed and the girl wounded.

Everyone living along Jack Creek moved out for several days in case the mountain men might try to escape along that path. There were radio and TV interviews of the displaced people. Months

later the sheriff captured the outlaws single-handed in a bravura performance followed by his book Incident at Big Sky by Johnny France. The ranch cowboys found that Nichols and his son shot about six ranch cows for sport which took off some of the romance of the mountain men saga.

The Becks have initiated many projects at the ranch aimed at the protection of the land and conservation of it's resources. Although the decision has often meant that cattle grazing may suffer or herds must be cut back, the Becks have offered protected grazing for the elk herds of the Spanish Peaks, which often find their winter range increasingly encroached upon by man. The area has been designated as a wildlife protection zone. Concerned about the potential extinction of the western bluebird, the Becks have placed a trail of bluebird houses on fences throughout the ranch.

Robert Beck began, almost immediately upon purchase of the Jumping Horse Stock Ranch, to install modern irrigation systems, and introduced the first center pivot system to the Cedar Creek Bench. Efficient and modern farming operations allow the Becks to maintain maximum ranch production with a small staff. The modern Jumping Horse cowboy must be as versed in irrigation, nutrition and calf production as he is in riding and roping.

In 1996 the Becks decided to scale back the ranch operation by selling the original Crandall and Paugh lands on the Cedar Creek Bench to Terry Braxton to become part of the Cedar Creek Ranch. The Becks are pledged to the protection of the Jumping Horse Ranch as an operating cattle ranch. Many of the original ranch buildings have been restored with the authenticity of their original builders. Helene Beck, an avid historian and protector of artifacts from past generations, has preserved the original homestead house of the McKee family. The house, a one and half story, balloon frame structure, was moved from the McKee family ranch when that property was sold by Isabelle Jeffers. The technique of balloon frame construction, which is now nearly obsolete, sets a heavy timber frame along the upper perimeter of the structure.

The JHSR history will be continued in April 2015 issue with the rest of the Beck's ranch history continuing with the McKee house.

Check the MVHA website to find back issues of the Wagon Tongue and read the other parts of the Jumping Horse history if you have missed any of the history. The website is listed on the first page.

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Answers to the last two **Montana Trivia**
32 Whitefish #33 Anaconda
This is end of this trivia. Thank you, Kevin Brenneke

