

The Wagon Tongue

Volume 14

Madison Valley History Association

July 2016

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: It is High Summer in Montana, and the Madison Valley History Museum is in the midst of another season that promises great success in sharing the past of our Valley with our visitors. At the heart of this success is our volunteer docents who take a few hours out of their summer to make themselves available to show visitors some of the interesting things that have happened between Reynolds Pass and the Bear Trap, between Ward's Peak and the Sphinx, from Cliff Lake to North Meadow Creek, from Virginia City to Sterling.

Mention of the ghost town of Sterling reminds me we are headed up there for our July field trip. I don't know how it turned out because I am writing this before the event. But if the success of our other membership events is any example, it promises to be very informative.

This spring, our informative presentations included a review of the history of Montana during the Civil War and a discussion of Paleoindians, the people who lived in Southwest Montana shortly after the end of the last ice age. Both were well attended and very successful.

The discussion of Paleoindians is a part of Conversations Montana, a program funded in part by Humanities Montana. It proved especially popular, except that I have heard a few folks expected to hear about the Indians that Jim Bridger and Osborne Russell and then the miners drove out of the Valley. Well. Ruthann Knudson, the historian who brought us the Paleoindians' story, also has prepared a similar program on who the historic Indians were, and we intend to work with Humanities Montana to see if we can have her come back sometime this fall or winter. Stay tuned.

In our May Membership organization meeting, members present elected John Gecho to the board. John joins Kevin Brenneke, Jim Carlson, Larry Love, Devona Owens, Otis Thompson, and me on the Board. We are looking forward to getting John involved.

Thanks to Marty Brenneke who has served several years on the Board and whose term ended this year.

At the Museum, we are fully engaged in our cataloging project which is funded, in part, by the National Endowment for the Humanities through Humanities Montana. As part of the project, MVHA must provide in-kind assistance, and we are looking for volunteers to help out. This project will eventually provide us with a digital list of artifacts in the museum, but will take considerably longer than the time currently funded by Humanities Montana. So as a part of our contract with the cataloging historian, we will be training volunteers on how to do the data entry. If you are interested in helping in any way, please contact me or other Board Members.

Informative field trips, interesting history discussions, a great history museum (recently visited and praised by MSU historians from the Museum of the Rockies), not to mention this extremely interesting and informative newsletter (thanks Shirley). And all of this wouldn't happen without our members' volunteering time, paying dues, making other contributions, and generally participating to ensure the success of the endeavor. Thanks to you all!!! Your Wagon Master, Lee Robison.

A little history of Sterling: Located in Madison County was once a thriving mining town—more than 500 people lived there in the 1860's. There were 4 quartz mills made of square stones cemented together with a mixture of lime and horsehair. The remains of one is still standing. The town was 3 miles west of Norris on Hot Spring Creek. The post office opened in 1867 with Andrew Hall as postmaster. from *Names on the Face of Montana* by Roberta Carkeek Cheney

Membership The following are new members since the *Wagon Tongue* went to print in April. Add them to any membership list you are keeping and welcome them to membership. Remind them of the meetings and special events of the MVHA.

Dale, John C & Bridget (F)

P.O. Box 425 McAllister, MT 59740

Membership update 2016 memberships are now due as you receive your renewal application. Almost all of you have taken care of business and the MVHA has received your membership. Just check your address label on the envelope 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 2016 membership is due during July, August or September 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, call 682-5780 and a ride will be arranged for you.

Member News

Ginny Ympa was honored as volunteer in the Volunteer Spotlight in the *Madisonian* for the April 7, 2016 edition. Ginny cooks for the Senior Center in Pony and helps out on the Pony Homecoming projects.

Ben Tone was remembered with a great story in the LifeStyles section of the *Madisonian* for Thursday, April 28, 2016. He will be missed as he made many great contributions to the theatre and the arts.

Janet Allestad was the grand marshal of the Virginia City parade on May 28, 2016 to kick off Memorial Day.

Janie McMillin Wasman was featured on the *Madisonian* Lifestyles page for her work for the Twin Bridges cemetery board researching the stories of folks who are buried there.

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Shirley and Larry Love celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on June 11, 2016 with a reception at the El Western conference Center hosted by their children.

Jan Beekman was recently published in the *Madisonian* in the *Writing the Wind Stories* from the Tobacco Root Writers. Her *Living in the Madison Valley* was a delightful read.

Ann and John White just recently returned from a trip to Africa. They will have some interesting stories to share.

Please keep the editor up to date on any news of our members. History starts yesterday so awards, honors, celebrations or anything that our members do is of interest to history.

Memories

Jean Marie Love Marshall passed away Nov. 22, 2015 at her son's home in Big Fork, MT. Jean was born in 1922 to Elwyn Kingston and Ella Myrtle Berning Love and raised in Preston, Minn. After graduating from St. Olaf College in 1939, she attended the University of Minnesota and received a degree in Nursing Education in 1944. She married Rodney Albert Marshall in 1946 in Preston. The family opened Cousin's Candy Shop in Virginia City, MT. She loved her summers working there. Her husband, Rod, served as Montana State Legislature Representative for two terms from 1994 to '98. Her daughter is MVHA member, Anne (John) White.

Ruth Hunt Paige Passed away Feb. 5, 2015 in Helena, MT. She was born on May 1, 1924 to Mr. and Mrs. Ben Hunt. She grew up in Ennis and graduated from Ennis High School. She married Henry Paige on Nov. 1, 1947. Ruth and Henry had three adopted children: 2 sons, Richard and Duane, and 1 daughter, Helen "Chadine" Franklin. Ruth and Henry raised their family in Butte where Ruth was a homemaker, loved to crochet, was a great cook and talented seamstress making clothes for her daughter and her daughter's friends. Ruth was active in the Butte community, generous with her time and charity work, member of TOPS, supporter of the Salvation Army, and member of the MVHA. Ruth will be most remembered for being a foster parent for many years, taking in children awaiting adoption. Her parents and young brother are buried at the Evans Cemetery in Jeffers. Ruth's final resting place will be in Anaconda, MT. *Special thanks to Patsy Eckert for writing this memory of Ruth Paige.*

Editor's note. Ruth was a member of the MVHA for 10 years and received her award certificate last May.

Nancy Stahr Beardsley Leadbetter passed away April, 2016. Nancy was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on March 22, 1931 to Robert and Mildred Stahr. She married her life long friend,

(cont on page 3)

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David Edward Beardsley whose parents owned a cabin up Jack Creek Canyon. After a brief assignment in the Navy in Hawaii, they moved to the Madison Valley in 1954 where David and Nancy ran the Beardsley Stock Ranch on Varney Road. After David passed away, she married Alfred A. Leadbeater.

Marjean McAtee Tezak passed away April 3, 2016 in Missoula. She was born June 21, 1935 to Edward Leonard McAtee, Jr. and Dorothy Doyle McAtee. She attended school at Bear Creek School, Ennis Schools, Bozeman Catholic Schools and graduated valedictorian from Ennis High School in 1953. She attended Western Montana College in Dillon, MT and married her high school sweetheart, Joseph Allen Tezak of Sheridan.

Claire Lucie Wachtler passed away at University of Utah Medical Center on April 11, 2016. Her parents are Margaret (Lloyd Jones) and Joel Wachtler. Her grandparents are Chester and Joan Lloyd Jones and she visited them in the Madison Valley from the time she was a small child. Her aunt is Lucie (Lloyd Jones) Murphy from Deer Lodge and uncle, Tikker Lloyd Jones of Ennis. Her parents reside in the Jones family home in Jeffers.

Ben Tone passed away April 13, 2016 in Bozeman. Ben was born in Prineville, Ore, on April 18, 1921 to Bernard Leslie and Helen Elizabeth (Summers) Tone. Ben's theatre career started at Bennington College in Vermont and then he served in WWII. In the post-war years he finished his degree at Portland University. A friend introduced him to Larry Barsness who had a connection to Virginia City. He, Larry and Harry Smith launched the Virginia City Players in the summer of 1949. During his VCP summers he met Nina Miller and they married in 1958. With a young family, they moved to Bozeman where Ben was offered a full time position in MSU's new theatre department where he worked until his retirement in 1985. Ben was a member of the MVHA until just before his passing. For more on Ben Tone check out the Lifestyles page in the Madisonian.

Jonnie N. Wiedenmeyer Bigelow passed away April 18, 2016 at her home in Apache Junction, Ariz. She was born on Feb. 15, 1937 to Jacqueline and Roy Wiedenmeyer. She married Clifford Bigelow. She moved from Montana to Arizona in 1989 to be closer to family. She and Clifford were married for 59 years.

Terence A. (Ted) McDonnell passed away on April 20, 2016. He was born to Terence J. and Gladys (McAtee) McDonnell and spent his early years on the family's Cedar Creek, Hyde Creek

and Wall Creek ranches south of Ennis. Tom attended school until in Ennis until 1942 when the family moved to Bozeman. In his early years, Ted worked summers for the United Forest Service and wintered as a cowboy for various ranches in Madison and Gallatin counties. He also spent 5 years in the Navy and in 1955 returned to Montana and went to work for Mountain Bell Telephone. In June of 1955, Ted married Cora Lee Richardson in Livingston, MT. In 2002 Ted purchased a home in Alder where he could hunt and fish in his beloved mountains and streams of Madison county.

Lois Marie Walsh passed away at her home south of Cameron, MT on April 23, 2016. Lois was born on October 23, 1932 to George D. and Cora (Millsaps) Shields in Smyrna, Ark. When Lois was very young, the family moved to Linden, Calif. where she was raised and graduated from Linden High School. Lois met her future husband, Gene Walsh, at a wedding in Stockton, Calif and they were married in December of 1950. In 1957 the Walsh family moved to Montana. They started their ranch and later summer pasture in the Centennial Valley.

Lois loved horses and enjoyed trailing cattle and riding in the Madison County Side Saddle Club for 25 years. Lois was a member of MVHA and was instrumental in donating side saddle memorabilia to the Museum.

Elizabeth (Betsy) Wesley Shirley passed away at her home on April 27, 2016. She was born in 1923 and grew up in Monroe, Mich. She graduated from high school and went to Arizona in 1942. There she met and married Forrest Shirley. In the summer of 1948 they moved to Montana and settled on Cold Springs Creek near the Madison River. Betsy was special to the MVHA by donating a rocking horse that her special sons played with while growing up. One day Johnny France visited the museum and showed us his spur marks on the shoulders of the rocking horse.

Betty L. (Althouse) Anderson passed away on July 8, 2016 two weeks after her 87th birthday. She was born on June 21, 1929 to Clarence J. and Anna C. (Krebs) Althouse in Ennis, MT. She grew up on the ranch on Indian Creek and attended grade school at the Bear Creek School. Betty graduated from Ennis High School in 1946 and attended Montana State College. On July 24, 1949 she married Herb E. Anderson in Choteau, MT. She began her career at the ASCS office in Choteau. In 1954 the family moved to Lewistown, Mt and after raising her children returned to work a secretary at Lincoln and Lew and Clark schools in Lewistown.

Nathan Miller Adams passed away on July 10, 2016 at the Madison Valley Manor *(cont on pg 4)*

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in Ennis, MT. He was born on April 7, 1934 to Alvin Philip and Elizabeth Miller Adams. In his younger years, Nathan lived in Kenya, India and England as he traveled the world for his investigative reporting. He often visited Ennis with his father who taught him fly fishing. Otis Crooker, who was a friend of his father, gave Nathan his first flying lesson off the air strip behind the Sportsman's Lodge. He moved to Ennis in 2000 with his wife, Annelids 'Hasi' Pirchner Adams.

Sharron Lynn Gecho , MVHA member, passed away July 11, 2016 at the family home near Cameron,MT. Sharron was born in Butte,MT on Oct. 15, 1942 to Edwin and Vivian (Richards) Holverson. She attended school in Ramsey, MT and graduated from Butte High School. Sharron ended up in Ennis, MT where she met John Gecho and they were married May 4, 1963. She worked at the Ennis Cafe and Chuck Wagon Cafe and at the talc mine all the while working along side of John at the family ranch.

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Memories of your family members and friends are welcome for printing in the Wagon Tongue.

The editor does not print full obituaries from the newspapers and uses the Madison County histories and other sources to find additional information but cannot find special stories of our departed unless you submit your stories. The memories column is intended to be a genealogical record of our departed.

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Jess Armitage History We left Jess after he thought he had retired but son, Brian, wanted to open a real estate office under the name Armitage Real Estate.

While I was in the FNI Real Estate there were several popular, and/or executive type of people that inquired for property. Just to drop a few names there was Michael Keaton, Joe Montana, several CEO's of large companies such as Diamond Shamrock, Union Oil Co., US Steel, a Shau from Sudi Arabia and others from other companies. Anyway, it was interesting to visit with them.

Frank Shaw from Cardwell, MT passed away and his wife, Dorothy, wanted to sell the ranch before fall shipping time and the cattle were still in the mountains on summer range. I hadn't had any luck selling the ranch that quick, so I inquired of a couple friends of mine over coffee one day if they would be interested. John Baush was a cattle buyer and had been for numerous years and Joe Vujovich was an energetic, honest and knew ranching and the livestock business. I had sold his Dad several ranches and was good friends until he passed 4

away, so I knew Joe's background and respected his integrity. They discussed it for a short time when John said "Let's go look at it." I did not have any money to put into it but I told them that if they would buy it, I would put my real estate commission in on it. We all agreed and we were on our way. I advised Mrs. Shaw what I had in mind and she thought it was all right. I wrote her accountant and lawyer to advise them that I would eventually go with them on the ranch and they all agreed that it would be all right. We wrote the offer with John and Joe and/or assigns as buyers, which allowed me to be added to the contract. It turned out to be the best investment I had ever made. Joe did most of the hands on running of the ranch, John knew cattle buyers and ranchers that would be interested in leasing the grass. I wondered what I did? In a few years Joe wanted to sell out and do something on his own to make more money and he did. He invested in property in the Gallatin Canyon. John passed away. That left me and John's widow to run the ranch. We got along fine, but I didn't feel comfortable having the responsibility of operating the ranch so I convinced Donna to sell the ranch in the spring of 2002. We sold the ranch in two parcels. I had the acreage on the river which I sold to the Montana Fish and Game. Donna owned the pasture land and sold it to a conservation buyer that would not allow any subdivision.

I tried not to tell too many lies as I wrote my history, although I might have embellished it a little. I guess I forgot to tell about my personal problems but nobody would be interested in that anyway.

Editor's note: Thanks to the Armitage family for sharing their father's history. Hopefully it gave some of you an idea of the stories and histories that you can write and share as the MVHA preserves the history of the Madison Valley.

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School in the Madison Valley Continued from the January 2016 issue. The 7th school listed in the Jimmy Spray history was in Jeffers, started in 1880 and remodeled in 1887 with 12 pupils and the teacher was John Carr. The 8th school was Spring Creek in the Varney area started in 1889 with 10 pupils and first teacher was Kate Swanstrom. 9th was the Maynard school started in 1890 located at the southeast corner of the T.B. Switzer homestead with 10 pupils. The Bear Creek School was 10th started in 1891, west of Kilner ranch on Bear Creek with 10 pupils and first teacher was Pearl Howe. 11th was the Upper Meadow Creek in 1891, north of the John Baush ranch with 15 pupils and first teacher Abbie Morris. 12th was Jack Creek started in 1895 about three quarters of a mile (cont on page 5)

(cont from page 4)

from the Hutton home on Jack Creek with 9 pupils and Barbara Wilson as first teacher. 13th was Farrellton in 1907 nicknamed the "Irish College" located between Ennis and Cameron where the road crosses Bear Creek at the foot of a little hill. There were 12 pupils and the first teacher was Bessie Farrell. The 14th school developed was the Ennis school in Ennis. The first four years were taught in the Woodman Hall (currently the old Economy Grocery Store now an empty building on Main Street.) Then it was moved to a building on the hill owned by John Northway and then a frame building was built on the county road under the hill north of the Chamberlin home in 1908. The 15th school was the Lyon School built on a rise above Squaw Creek near the George Barnard ranch. There were 11 pupils and the first teacher was Mrs. Joe Pearson. 16th was the Cliff Lake School in 1912 located on the road to the lake with 11 pupils and the first teacher was Lucy Barter.

The 17th school started was the Corral in 1912 and located on Deer Creek below the George Armitage ranch home. There were 11 pupils and the first teacher was Margaret "Maggie" Kiser. 18th school was the Indian Creek School in 1920 located upstream from the Althouse ranch with 16 pupils and the first teacher was Mae Hanna. The Maynard school and Jeffers school consolidated in 1920.....

Now the editor and the *Wagon Tongue* would like stories of these schools from history and community members so the rest of the stories can be recorded similar to the story that follows. Please send to Wagon Tongue P.O. Box 474, Ennis, Mt 59729.

Cliff Lake School History by Deb Townshend

Before the large influx of Missourian homesteaders to the upper Madison Valley in 1911 and 1912, the few pioneer families who had settled in that general area had to send their children to Lyon School near Squaw Creek.

In examining the school records and checking with old-timers, one finds a discrepancy as to attendance in the schools. Many of the children listed as going to Lyon School in actual fact went elsewhere—to Cameron or Pony in the winter. It seems that the school census taken in that district took credit for all the children living within its boundary in order to get enough money for the schools needs. The clerk also counted pre-schoolers and "children" already now young men and women.

In 1913, the eight-grade Lyon School was discontinued in favor of Cliff Lake School, District 29 further south in a location more central to the fast growing school population.

Al Womack from Missouri, one of the original homesteaders and the key promoter of the so-called Missouri Flats, worked hard to get the authorities in Virginia City to set up a school district in that part of the country. Most of his neighbors were kinfolk from Missouri with large broods of children.

When permission was granted, Al and a number of others hauled lumber in and built a commodious, one room school house and installed a big brass bell on the peaked shine roof. The building sat by the narrow county road near the Cliff Lake turn off on a corner of Grandma" Dennis land. (Al Womack's mother who had remarried.) Unfortunately the site was not a happy choice because of lack of water. Children, living at some distance, had to ride to school. The horses were left unwatered all day. Many of the pupils hiked over the dusty sage flats, lugging their lunch pails and canteens. Fortunate were the ones whose family boarded the teacher. They could ride with her in the buggy.

Lucy Barter, the first teacher, boarded at the Al Womack's. Some of the later ones boarded with the Neely family.

The school year depended greatly on the weather. It could be April or May before the roads were passable and the teacher was alerted to pack up her books and come. She would stay at least through September and sometimes right up to Christmas if the heavy snows held off.

The parents on the Missouri Flats were determined their sons and daughters would get an education. Big, bull necked "Dutch Henry" Florin (everyone agreed that he was the biggest man they ever saw), whose cabin stood on the wrong side of the Madison River from the school, had a strong hankering for his kids to learn the three R's. So he built a bridge across the river. The narrow, precarious plank bridge provided a convenient crossing for others too, especially lake bound fishermen.

What the students thought about schooling was another matter. "Wes" Womack taught for one year, in 1914, and got disgusted. It seems like the girls were just getting the "teen age stuff"—dancing and the like—and wouldn't do what he wanted. He got mad and quit..told them they could work it with their feet because they wouldn't do it any other way. The bigger children had a respite from the teacher's "dirty looks" at haying and thrashing time when they had to skip school to help their parents.

The families contributing youngsters most regularly to the school were Carter, Conklin, De Winner, Du Berry, Edwards, Dennis, Gillespie, Haldorsen, Hester, Huggins, Mathis, Neely, Ollie, Rogers, Schoenek, Stalcup, Womack and Young.

For Your Reading Pleasure

The Mechanics of Optimism Mining Companies, Technology, and the Hot Spring Gold Rush, Montana Territory, 1864-1868 by Jeffery J. Safford This superb history covers the discovery, flourishing, and eventual collapse of the Hot Spring mining district, a part of Montana's exceptional 1860 gold boom.

Looking Ahead

July to October Madison Valley Museum open Tuesday to Sunday from 1:00pm to 4:00pm. Volunteers are still need to keep the museum open during these hours.

August 27, 2016 Field trip to the old O.C. Whitney homestead with presentation by Larry Love and then on to Gayle and Danette Clark's home north of Jeffers. Meet at Lion's Club Park for car pooling at 10:00am. Participants are asked to bring sack lunch and a chair.

September 17, 2016 Tentatively planned to have an open house and BBQ at the new MVHA Museum addition. Lots of work still needs to be done so stay tuned.

October 20, 2016 Back to meeting and program to be announced.

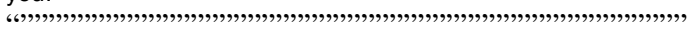


Historic Plaques for Downtown Ennis Business Buildings

Zoe Todd and Liz Applegate, both residents of Ennis and members of the Madison Valley History Association, are seeking your help with our Historic Plaques Project. Beautiful plaques containing historical information will be mounted on the outside of the old buildings in downtown Ennis. The exterior placement of the plaques will make it easy for everyone, residents as well as visitors, to appreciate the architecture and story of each building.

We are currently researching the old buildings of Main Street. If you have any information to share such as ownership or tenant names and dates, old photos of interiors and/or exteriors, we'd love to hear from you. We can scan your photos and return your originals, and welcome digital images via email. Another way you can contribute is by making a donation to the Ennis Main Street Historic Plaques account at First Madison Valley Bank.

If you would like to share historical information, or have any questions, please contact us: Zoe Todd (682-4360) Liz Applegate (682-3288 or email: liz.billapplegate@gmail.com). We look forward to hearing from you!



Mining in Sterling The culmination of every miner's dream was to locate a mine comparable to the Monitor on Richmond Flats. Someone had grubstaked two miners to drive a tunnel and they worked all winter unknowingly along side of this rich vein. Then one day, while they were outside in the sunshine eating their lunch, a cave-in occurred, exposing this vein. It was four feet in width with six inches of gold wire in the center. The ore assayed at \$6,000 a ton after all specimens were picked out and at the old price of \$19 an ounce. A sample of the ore sent to the World Fair in San Francisco in 1895 received first prize. It took 4 years to mine this body of ore. Cecil M.Reel, reported that his Dad hauled seven tons of ore per trip to Norris

MVHABoard of Directors

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Director: Larry Love
Historian and researcher: Don Black
Graphic Design and Facebook: Liz Applegate
Meeting and programs held monthly on the **third** Thursday of each month or as scheduled. Watch the Madisonian, posters and your email for details of time, place and program. Board meetings are held on the **first** Wednesday of each month at 10:00am, Museum building from May to September. *The Wagon Tongue* will be published quarterly. Next issue will be October 2016. Articles of historic interest and memories of the departed are welcomed.

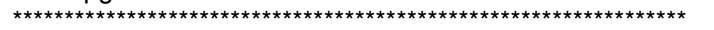
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Madisonian Obituaries, Lifestyle, and Volunteer spotlights
Jess Armitage History by Jess Armitage

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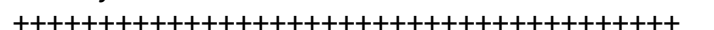
Cliff Lake School by Deb Townshend Pioneer Trails and Trials pg 911



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and a ton and a half of coal back to the mine. Old Rock and Him were the lead horses of the six horse team. Many a cold day, his Dad would tie the reins to the dash board and get down out of the wind. The horses knew just where to go. By 1872 most of the ore had been mined and people had left Sterling. W. R. Reel, a Montana miner, bought the land and claims including the townsite where he built his ranch home. The land is now in hay and pasture. The Sterling Post office closed in 1883. Names on the Face of Montana page 244 by Roberta Carkeek Cheney



Don't forget to sell your raffle tickets for the Larry Zabel giclee print "High Mountain Brunch" #1 of 250. You received a printout of the picture in your April issue of the Wagon Tongue. Tickets are \$5.00 each or 5 for \$20.00. Use the order blank enclosed in this mailing to order your tickets. Drawing will be held on August 13, 2016 after the Art's Festival. This is our summer fund raiser for the museum so do what you can to help out.