



The Wagon Tongue

Volume 5 Issue 2

Madison Valley History Association, Inc.

April 2007

From the Wagon Seat: Winter is over, spring is here, time moves on and the MVHA keeps moving on. We have had some very good programs about the Madison Valley history and we are looking forward to continuing our good programs for the summer. The snowbirds will be back with us in May to help us out. The board has agreed to rent the front on the Altimus building again this year for our temporary museum. We are accumulating more artifacts and have one and one half storage sheds full. We acquired some mannequins to dress up in historical clothing for this summer.

Our book, Early Days in the Madison Valley by James Spray has been selling very well with only 45 left of the original order of 311 copies. Did you get yours?

In looking ahead for the next couple of months, the MVHA will need your help. On April 13, our Old Time Country Dance Fundraiser will be held at the Bear Creek School House near Cameron. Plan to attend and encourage community members to attend. The annual meeting will be May 10. It will be a pot luck meal with a meeting following the meal to approve the budget and elect two directors to the board. Please say Yes when asked to run for a director's position. Plans are being made for a Historical House Tour and a Historical Barn Tour. Committees will be formed to work on organizing these tours. We have had such a good record on our floats for the 4th of July parade and we need a float committee. The theme is Celebration of the American Cowgirl.

We need a person or persons to schedule volunteers for the Museum season. The Museum will open on Memorial Day weekend and run until after the Hunter's Feed in October. If everyone would take a couple of shifts during that time period, it would really help out. It really is fun to talk to people who stop in to see the museums. And during slow times, there is a wealth of historical materials for volunteers to read and update themselves on Valley history.

Smitty would also like to find someone to take over the program chair. Suggestions and ideas for programs and field trips are always welcome. MVHA is putting together stories of the Earthquake, the Gorge and Christmas Memories experienced by you. Write these stories down and send them in. We have two committees working on a future museum site. One committee is researching the in town possibilities and the second committee doing work on a museum on the 22 acres of donated land. We will be presenting both sets of ideas and welcome discussion at the Annual meeting in May. If you have ideas, suggestions, opinions and anything that could help in this dialog about the future museum, we need your input so let us know by writing, telephone or email. The board will take all the information and make a recommendation so that we can move on.

Help us formulate plans to build a museum for the preserving of the history of the Madison Valley and as a tribute to our early day pioneers. Your Wagon Master, Larry Love

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Member Application Madison Valley History Association, Inc.

P.O. Box 474, Ennis, Mt. 59729

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.

Name _____

Telephone _____ Mailing address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

e-mail address _____ (used only for communication of MVHA info)

(____)Student \$5.00 (____)Individual \$10.00 (____)Family \$15.00 (____)Business \$50.00 (____)Patron \$100.00

Welcome to membership The following have joined since the January 2007 issue. Please add to any membership list you are keeping. If you need a complete list of all current members for your committee work, please contact Shirley Love and she will print you a complete list.

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Stories of the Madison Valley Gorge

The Madison Valley experienced a pretty extensive gorge this winter and many gorge stories and pictures, past and present, were shared at the February meeting. Several stories will be printed in this issue. If you have gorge stories, please submit them and they will be printed in the December 2007 and January 2008 issues of the Wagon Tongue.

Gorge: A continuing Story

On Feb 9, 2007 my grandson, Jake, was crossing the bridge going into Ennis, he looked upstream and saw water, ice, debris, and a frantic deer in the middle of it all. Jake called his dad, Gary, on his cell phone and asked him where he was and Gary said he was just coming into Ennis from the North. Jake told him the dilemma of the deer. When Gary arrived the deer was close to an ice chunk North of the bridge, so Gary quickly drove to his ranch and got two ropes and hurried back. They tied a rope around Gary and he laid on the ice next to the bank and roped the deer. He pulled and pulled but couldn't budge the deer. Jake then tried but after the second pull, heard a bang, looked up and saw big chunks of ice and water coming. They managed to get the rope off the deer and crawled back to the bank. They were unable to save the deer. Shortly after that, the ice they had been lying on broke away. Gary and Jake said that the river sounded like a war zone. I have heard the same sound at the ranch when the gorge begins and when it breaks up. This will not be the only continuing story of the gorge as there will be many more stories in the future. Submitted by **Shirley Gustafson**, mother of Gary and grandmother of Jake.

Gorge 1947

When I was a young bride in 1947, my husband, Bud Baker, worked for the Montana Power Company and on this evening we had gone to a movie and then to Baker's Cafe for a piece of pie. The power went off so we went home and Bud got all his warm clothes on and went to Jack Rouses. Jack was the Montana Power maintenance man for the area. They did some checking by turning the power on to see what area was out. They found out it was in the gorge between Ennis and Jeffers. They put on their hip boots and got a boat with each one putting a leg in the boat and one on the outside and a long pike pole across in front of them so if they hit a hole in the ice, they maybe could keep from tipping over. They got to the area and found that a beaver had chewed the pole down. They had to send for a crew from Bozeman to come over and put the pole back up. I don't remember how they got it to stay up in that ice, but when Bud got home the next morning, he was so cold from being out all night. Before coming home, they stopped at the Drug Store to see if Hiene Rakeman need help. He was just checking to see if the furnace had come on all right. Hiene offered them a drink of whiskey and he was a man who never drank anything like that. Bud was paid \$5.00 extra for being out all night checking on the power outage.

The Montana Power Company moved the lines during the next summer to where they now stand along the road to Jeffers. Submitted by **Mary Ann (Neville) Baker Alger**

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Gorge story from the Call Ranch

This pile-up took place in February, the coldest month in Montana. One of our herders and his sheep were camped near the Madison River. The thermometer had been hovering between thirty-five and forty below zero for a week, and for hours on end a furious wind had been blowing. The wind died down at dusk on the night of the big pile-up, but the cold remained. The herder bedded his sheep near the wagon, prepared a meal for himself and his dogs and retired early.

(Continued on page 3)

Intentionally left blank for back of membership application.

Call Ranch *continued from page 2*

Shortly after he got himself comfortably settled in his bunk, the dogs began to whine with the still, deadly cold--to leap and scratch against the door. The man took pity on the animals, got up and let them into the wagon, first making sure that the sheep were safe on the bed ground.

During the night the wind sprang up again, and it began to snow. The herder was so fatigued from his day of exposure that he slept through these signals of danger. Now, there's nothing in the world that will cause sheep to become so restless as a high, cold wind. The wind penetrates their fleece, they endure the cold and discomfort just so long and then they begin thinking about seeking better shelter. When the dogs are on guard their restlessness gets no further than thinking, for the dogs start to bark at the first move and warn the herder.

Sometime in the middle of that fatal night the sheep left the bedground. They traveled with the wind and somewhere along the way the band split. One bunch went into the foothills and were later recovered with only a small loss. The other bunch followed the course of the river for several miles and came presently to a place where the river made a decided bend, almost a horseshoe bend. The land was low here and a side hill gave the sheep the protection they had been seeking, so they bedded down again.

Before morning the river gorged and cut a new channel straight across the bend, leaving the sheep marooned on what was now a small island between the new channel and the original one.

I've been told that there is only one other river in the world which has the peculiarities of the Madison River. Other rivers freeze from the top down, but the Madison River freezes from the bottom up. The bed of the river is covered with great boulders. Slush ice forms on top, sinks and clings to these boulders, and little by little the ice builds up until the river gorges. The water backs up then and floods all the surrounding country.

When our sheep were first trapped in the bend there were around one hundred acres of dry ground on the small island. As the river continued to back up this ground became flooded. At first the sheep huddled together, but as the water rose and there was no longer enough dry ground for all to have a footing, they were terrified, lost their heads and began to climb on one another's backs.

The bottom layer of sheep perished and as the water grew deeper the others kept scrambling upward, the stronger trampling the weaker beneath their hoofs, until several layers of sheep lay dead. The survivors, those on top, just managed to keep their heads above water. As the night wore on the water in this newly flooded area, which was practically free of rocks, began to freeze in the normal fashion, from top to bottom, and the upper portions

of the sheep's bodies were locked tight in ice.

Toward dawn, when the herder got up to turn his dogs out, he discovered that all of his sheep were missing. He hurried into his clothes and set out to look for them. But he was at a loss to now which way they had gone. The wind, which could have determined the general direction, at least, had stopped blowing and all track of the strays had been obliterated by the falling snow.

The distracted herder hunted for hours before he located his sheep, and then he was too shocked to believe his eyes. He looked out on what appeared to be a solid lake of ice, into which several hundred live sheep were frozen to the neck. It was a sight that might have dazed a more imaginative brain than his. I saw this phenomena several hours later and I know just how he felt. I shall never forget that expanse of rigid, bodiless heads, the wild, staring eyes or the feeble bleats that came from too few exhausted throats.

The situation was one the herder could not hope to cope with alone. It was foreign to anything he had ever experienced and he set out immediately for help. He was ten miles from the home ranch but less than five from the county road, which he reached in a couple of arduous hours. He was lucky enough to encounter a rancher who was hauling hay. The rancher got to a telephone as quickly as possible and relayed his message.

We had reason to thank the country telephone that day. When we arrived at the river with a truckload of men--armed with shovels, sheep crooks, and pickaxes--we found a number of our neighbors had got there before us. The rancher who lived nearest had driven down to the river, looked the situation over and rushed back to his ranch for a number of lambing panels and some lengths of rope. These panels were tied together and made into rafts, upon which the sheep were lifted as fast as they could be chopped out of the ice.

The rescue of those icebound ewes is something nobody present will ever forget. It began in early afternoon and was completed by lantern light around ten o'clock that night. As the day wore on the storm increased in velocity. The driving, swirling snow beat against the faces of the rescue party, all but blinding them.

The rafts had to be dragged out to the sheep by hand (and when darkness came, on hands and knees). It was a tricky and dangerous procedure. The ice in the bend had frozen less than a foot from the top. Beneath this ice there was several or more feet of treacherous, rushing water. One false step or careless shifting of weight could easily break this ice and plunge a man to his death before help could reach him. In spite of precautions, two men did break through to their waists, but they managed to scramble out and worked along with the rest in stiff, frozen clothing until every last sheep was hauled to high dry land.

(continued on page 4)

Call Ranch continued from page 3

Those ewes were the strangest sight I have ever see. They could scarcely walk because chunks of ice weighing easily twenty-five pounds still clung to their backs and bodies, and they were forced to carry this fantastic burden about for weeks before it finally melted and came loose from their wool. The unbelievable part of this pile-up is that not one sheep rescued was any the worse for her experience. But the pile-up cost us dearly, nevertheless, because the dead sheep were locked tight in the gorge and when the ice broke in the spring, the pelts were worthless.

A pile-up heads the list of sheep calamities, but strayed sheep can get into more trouble than it's possible to foresee or guard against. I never think of the lines of the nursery rhyme,

*Leave them alone and they'll come home
Wagging their tails behind them,*

without smiling. Lost sheep seldom come home, and if they should it's an accident. You go after them. Excerpted from **Golden Fleece** by Hughie Call, pages 170-174, Published 1942

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Laraine McIntyre of Calgary, Canada visited the MVHA museum last summer inquiring about O.C. Whitney. She is the great, great granddaughter of O. C. and has shared a tremendous amount of material with the MVHA about the Whitney family. Following is an article by George Shepherd of stories told by Tom Whitney, son of O.C. Whitney From the *The Western Producer*, Sept. 23, 1965

Shooting Sheriffs in Montana

Shooting sheriffs got to be quite a hobby in Montana in the 1880's and 1890's, although I never indulged in the pastime myself. First to be killed was Bill Reader of Meagher County. Three or four of his deputies went as well, trying to capture a couple of old buffalo hunters--Bill Gay and Goos. Gay was afterwards captured and strung up. Goos made good his escape. I knew Gay well, as I had rented his corrals for two summers for my night herd

A man was shot on a train at Logan and the murderer rode the train through Bozeman to Livingston. The sheriff at Livingston had been notified but was shot to death while trying to make an arrest. The murderer escaped with all kinds of posse in pursuit He was supposed to have perished because of the extreme weather conditions at the time.

Another time two cowboys got into a mix-up in the Red Light district in Bozeman. A warrant was sworn out for their arrest. The sheriff, Chas Frenchman, and his deputy followed them to Cherry Creek in Madison County. They didn't expect any trouble as the charge was only creating a disturbance by gunshot. This meant a fine or a short time in the coop. They caught up to the boys in a little cabin and when the deputy opened the door he 4

was shot and killed. The two started to throw lead at the Frenchman. He was shot though the collar of his overcoat as he was trying to get out of range of the lead. He went back to Bozeman and raised a posse which came to our town of Ennis. The description fit two boys who had worked for the VF horse outfit. Their names were Whitton and Morgan

The trail was now hot. The Frenchman wanted Bill Ennis and I to go with the posse as I was familiar with the country and knew the escape routes. We could find no trace of the murderers but the search was carried as far as Arizona where Whitton was finally captured. I had quite a visit with him in the jail down there.

Morgan laid low with friends for a couple of weeks and finally one of them spirited him out through one of the passes, disguised as a woman. They stopped at a friend of mine, got a bottle and went on to put Morgan on the train at Chestnut. He made good his escape. Coming back, they told Lattas who the supposed dame in the buggy was and caused quite a laugh.

Then came the shooting of Jim Summers, the sheriff of Madison County. He had served under Sheriff Joe Haines, as popular a sheriff as ever held the office. A complaint was made that sheep camps were being pilfered. A young fellow by the name of Wolff was suspected as he had a layout close by. Jim went out with a search warrant. Wolff saw him coming, took up his gun, locked the door and stepped into the bush to watch the proceedings.

Jim tried the door, took a look around and started to walk toward the bush where Wolff was. As Summers turned, Wolff shot. The bullet passed through one arm, through the heart and into the other arm. Summers took 10 steps from the spot where he had been hit and died. Wolff threw the shell out, put in another and shot again. Wolff later showed Bill Ennis the exact spot where it all took place.

Bill Ennis had asked me to go with him to work the summer range to gather cows needing to be hand fed during the winter. This summer range was about 20 miles from the home ranch and we had just returned from a long day's ride when Wolff appeared afoot, trailing his rifle. I knew him a little although I was quite unaware what had happened. I says, "Where is your horse, Johnnie?"

"Got bucked off." he says. "Why didn't you shoot him? He'll have your saddle all to hell and gone." Wolff says, "I threw my gun to make a ride and when the horse bucked me off, he was out of sight before I could gather my gun." Bill Ennis says, "Come on in, you're just in time for chow." We went into the log house where supper was made by the chowman, Lew Haughton. That was his real name. His alias wouldn't look good in print. Few people would recognize his real name as he always went by his alias.

Continued on page 5

Shooting Sheriffs in Montana cont. from pg 4

After washing up for supper, Johnnie took the seat facing the door and sat at the table with his rifle beside him. After supper, we visited and opened a few old cans as was customary in our camp. It was then dark and Johnnie says, "Guess I'll va-moose." Bill Ennis says, "Stay all night." "No, I have to be going." I went outside with Johnnie and nearly offered him my overcoat as it was chilly. After Wolff had gone Bill Ennis says, "That kid is gun crazy. Did you notice him take that gun right to the table."

We then retired with a full belly and our day's work done. Early to bed and early to rise was the cowman's motto. Lew was shaking the sour dough can to make a batter and thicken it at 4 o'clock that morning when there was a heavy pounding on the door and I heard a voice asking if Tom Whitney was there. I jumped out of bed and ran to the door in my shirt tails, thinking some of my folks were sick or in trouble.

On opening the door the light from the house revealed two men with guns in their hands pointing in the general direction of my belly and me in my socks and underwear and nothing else. They asked if Wolff was there and said that he had killed Jim Summers. They wanted me to join the posse so Bill Ennis asked them in for breakfast. In the meantime I had dressed and gone to the stable to investigate to see just how Wolff had gotten away. I found that he had taken my favorite horse, a Blue Ridge runner, one of the best, and also Bill's new saddle that had set him back a century. There was no doubt but that Wolff was well equipped to travel. Bill and I joined in the hunt as we were acquainted with the country and knew the escape routes a man would be likely to take. But I had no rifle. Says Bill "My old reliable is sure death at close range, you'll never get close enough to waste ammunition, but take her anyway."

Bill and Dick went by Curly Hill to the Wall Creek escape and Plum and I headed for Hutchier Ridge leading to Idaho. My horse had lost a shoe the previous day. Being something of an Injun, I commenced to look for the tracks. I was pretty sure Wolff would take the shortest route instead of following the wagon trail. I soon found the tracks of a horse minus a shoe, where it had crossed the ice. Following this telltale sign we kept to the track, which often crossed sloughs and small streams.

I followed the tracks when they went down a cow trail into the Madison River, which was then pretty high. I let my pony take a drink and then he took off into the river like a duck. The tracks on the other side headed for the Conray horse ranch, which had recently been sold to a man by the name of Nicker-son, who I had never met. As I quietly approached the place, I saw two men coming from the house. (to be continued in July 2007 Wagon Tongue) **5**

Montana Trivia Answers to January 2007 trivia

1. A small horse.....Pony
2. Union General....Sheridan
3. A large tree.....Big Timber
4. A section of New York.....Manhattan (or Harlem)
5. Sheriff of Dodge City....Dillon
6. A kind of bean....Lima
7. An African explorer....Livingston
8. A red gem...Ruby (or Garnet)
9. A large rock...Boulder
10. Double crossing...Twin Bridges
11. Some table utensils....Three Forks
12. A man who works in a flower bed....Gardiner
13. A girl's town...Virginia City (or Marysville)
14. A devil's tool....Trident
15. A wash bowl.....Basin
16. Great learning....Wisdom

If you found other good answers, please submit them to the editor!!

Continuing Montana Trivia Get your Montana Road Map or Atlas out. Find the Montana town that fits the following clues:

1. A person leaving a place
2. Monthly charges
3. A large snake
4. City limits
5. A learned stream
6. Prime minister of Great Britain during W.W.II
7. A bush or shrub in a small stream
8. British government or its policies
9. A steep hill, standing alone
10. Where Napoleon met his match
11. A tree usually growing in a moist area
12. Good card player
13. Bright point of light in sky at night
14. A small, narrow valley
15. A famous sailor

Answers will be available at May meeting and in the July Wagon Tongue. Thanks again to Zoe Todd

From the Mail Box In going through membership applications I came across these notes that were interesting and share a bit of history:

From Edna Schoenek Lay:

I was born in the upper Madison Valley on a homestead and grew up in Ennis.

My maiden name was Edna Schoenek. My parents owned the Fitzgerald Hotel and Cabins. They sold it to Maurice and Gen Hickey about 1950.

And from Myrtle Hunt Hendricks:

Many years ago I used to hike up to my father's homestead. There used to be two houses below his cabin. His homestead was below Otis Thompson's. My father was Ben Hunt. The cabins were his brothers' from Glade Hill, Virginia. One brother was John Hunt who later settled in Missoula and the other was Ike Hunt. I think the Court House in Virginia City burned and all records burned. I left Ennis in 1938.

For Your Reading Pleasure

Golden Fleece by Hughie Call. Hughie grew up on the Call Ranch (now the Bar 7) and this book is a wonderful story of her life there. Many Madison Valley residents have a copy and the Madison Valley Public Library has a copy.

This House of Sky:Landscapes of the

Western Mind by Ivan Doig. This memoir was the One Book Montana selection for '06-'07. Beautifully written memoir of growing up in Montana on the eastern slopes of the Rockies. Available at most libraries or by interlibrary loan.

The United Postal Service mutilated a January 2007 issue of the Wagon Tongue but sent it in a "We Care" envelop back to us. Although the return address was intact, the mailing address was gone. If you did not receive your copy of the January 2007 Wagon Tongue, please let us know and we will get your copy to you immediately. We do not know who did not get it, so please let us know.

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Looking Ahead

May 10 Annual Meeting Potluck Dinner, election of board members and approval of budget. Watch for publicity as to time and place. MVHA plans to have Field Trips during the summer months but at WT publication date none have been confirmed.

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Madison Valley History Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 474
Ennis, Montana 59729

**Madison Valley History Association, Inc.
Board of Directors**

President: Larry Love & Zoe Todd
Vice President: Jim Carlson
Treasurer: Neil Kent
Secretary: Mary Ann Alger
Director: Shirley Love
Director: Smitty Overstreet

Meetings held monthly on the second Thursday of each month. Watch Madisonian for details of time and place and program.
Board Meetings are held the 1st Wednesday of each month.

The Wagon Tongue will be published quarterly.
Next issue will be July 2007.

Editor: Shirley Love
Contributing Editors: Hughie Call from Golden Fleece
George Sheperd from *The Western Producer*
Zoe Todd for Montana Trivia

The Wagon Tongue welcomes articles of historical significance from any of the MVHA members or interested public.

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