

farmers impact

GF Trib Dec. 3, '89

T.J. GILLES

Illinois Agriculture Editor

Cowboys may always be heroes to Willie Nelson and others, but the farmers who settled and transmuted Montana during the early part of this century have no such legendary image.

Speaking last week following a Montana Grain Growers Association banquet, historian William Lang noted that most of the farmers the audience had donned cowboy hats for the occasion, although those who actually owned livestock were in a distinct minority.

Lang, former editor of "Montana: The Magazine of Western History," said that the cowboy era in Montana had a brief but colorful history, yet the myth and legend of the cowboy remains a dominant and heroic part of Montana's culture and mind-set.

Farmers who came to the state during the first 20 years of this century, on the other hand, had a monumental role in hemispheric history and created a civilization out of nothing. And stayed.

Yet Lang said that the concept of the Montana farmer as a hero is almost laughable. It really is.

"Do you know what historians say about farmers? Have you read it? It's horrible."

In those rare instances where historians actually mention farmers and their role in settling the West, he said, the typical description says "they came out to exploit" free land and make big money selling wheat as war profiteers during World War I.

"They say that farmers in Montana are complainers," he said.

That stems back to crises during the late 19th century, when the Populist movement included farmers as well as labor and free-silver advocates, he said. When farm policies were enacted as a result of political pressure, they usually were "half-assed laws" administered by Eastern bureaucrats who knew nothing about conditions of the West and set up programs which often backfired, Lang contended.

So, Lang concluded, the Montana farmer's image has become one of "asking for help and then complaining about the help they get."

"Is this a symbolic anti-hero? Is this a mythological figure, the Montana farmer?"

Not quite.

Montana farmers of the early part of this century had a unique role in world history. There was some farming, much of it prosperous, in the state's irrigated valleys before the homestead era, he said, but no political base. Until relaxed and expanded homestead laws came

"What came out of this homestead experiment wasn't just the farming. On this frontier these people created a society that's never been created before or since. They created a civilization, a society out of thin air."

— Historian William Lang

into effect, Lang said, "Montana was, agriculturally speaking, a vacant lot waiting to be developed."

Boosted by the government's free land and the railroads' promise of a great future that would involve supplies and home furnishings arriving in boxcars and grain being loaded in those same cars, Montana got settled but quick, Lang said.

Between 1905 and 1920, he said, some 300,000 people established 80,000 new farms.

"It was the largest single agricultural migration in North American history," Lang said. "It was the single largest five-year movement of people in United States history," including not just gold rushes but the mass migration of Southern blacks to northern states during the 1870s and 19-teens.

Lang said: "What came out of this homestead experiment wasn't just the farming ... On this frontier these people created a society that's never been created before or since ... They created a civilization, a society out of thin air."

The mass migration might also be viewed as one of the most impressive mass hallucinations in global history, although Lang didn't say that.

People believed.

"Homestead locators got a bad rap ... They were upright folks trying to sell something they believed in, which is Montana land," he said. When people started to "prove up" and erected or moved their little 12-by-16 or 16-by-24 tarpaper shacks, he added, "They weren't going to live like that very long. They came with the idea that they were going to make it."

By 1920, Lang said, Montana was "the largest purchaser of power agricultural equipment in the world."

A post-war collapse in prices and

See HISTORY, 3H

History

Farmers overlooked

FROM IH

years of drought in the 1920s spelled doom for many of the highly leveraged newcomers.

Between 1920 and 1925 the eastern plains economy centered around the grain elevator, the railroad and its towns suffered "the worst economic downturn in the state's history," Lang said, as more than half the state's banks failed and "whole towns' financial base was taken and destroyed."

A slower Montana migration, this one outward, began and many would say the process continues today.

In his interviews with old-timers about the Depression, Lang said, he has to be careful to be sure which depression his sources are talking about. The Great Depression of the 1930s that allegedly began with the stock market crash of '29 almost was unnoticed by some Montanans after what had happened in the early 1920s, he said.

The big Depression was unfathomable to many Montana farmers.

"There's less wheat and the price keeps dropping ... there's less of it and we get less for it. It made less sense than the first depression, which everybody understood," Lang said.

In 1935, 23 percent of Montana families on relief, he said, most rural families rustled for work in town or attempted to go crops and went on and off relief year after year depending on how they had fared, he said.

Lang theorized that although many Montanans may lack an image — a symbol of the Montana agriculturalist — the image exists.

"The symbol is endurance," Lang said, "and the myth — that's the story we tell ourselves because we need stories — is that that's all we need."

MHS
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The Winning of Woman Suffrage in Montana--Doris Buck Ward
MA thesis, MSU

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Table 3. Homestead Entries in Montana, 1905-1919*

Year	Number	:	Year	Number
1905	2,386	:	1913	17,844
1906	3,398	:	1914	20,662
1907	3,347	:	1915	16,146
1908	5,328	:	1916	14,486
1909	7,484	:	1917	15,197
1910	21,982	:	1918	9,429
1911	15,399	:	1919	5,462
1912	12,597	:		

*Source: Ralph H. Farmer, "Analytical Survey and Study of the Agricultural Conditions and the Mortgage Loan Experience of the Federal Land Bank of Spokane in the State of Montana, 1917-1927" (unpublished typescript, University of Idaho, Moscow, n. d.), p. 6.

Table 4. Development of Montana Population, 1900-1920*

	1900	1910	1920
Total Population	243,000	376,000	549,000
Eastern Section	93,000	177,000	314,000
Rural Population	159,000	243,000	377,000
Eastern Section	72,000	132,000	241,000
Number of Farms	13,000	26,000	58,000
Eastern Section	7,000	18,000	46,000

*Source: Mary Wilma M. Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains, 1900-1925 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 441.

Valley

Peter Doig homestead, 7/22/77:

Site is in open sage bowl, mountain crests rimming it. Pitches of gulch everywhere; everything slants, so that it's a wonder the people didn't come out of there with one leg longer than the other. Carol commented how scenic it is, with Wall Mtn. dominant.

Double windows near front door of house look out on Wall Mtn.-- an amenity not always found in these homestead, or even ranch, houses. A pole-and-woven wire fence is collapsed around the house.

House is built of 8" logs, hewn on inside but not outside, to shoulder height; then ~~to~~ 6" logs from there up. The 8" logs are diamond-notched, the 6"s flat-notched. Chinking shows reddish spots where it has been patched with material from the area's red shale or clay.

more

Valley

Peter Doig homestead

clocked mileage: 35 mi. **from** WSS

Valley

Peter Doig homestead cont./2

Roofing is boards lapped lengthwise down the pitch of roof, 3-4 boards thick in places; they're 1-inch boards, unplanned.

Ridgepole is a 12-15" diameter log, unhewn. Two lesser ~~ix~~ poles also run length of long portion of house; from them are nailed a lattice of 2x4s, which the flat ceiling is in turn nailed to -- a ceiling of plasterboard, perhaps brand name of Indian Board we found fallen to floor. I cd touch ceiling by stretching on tiptoe.

Kitchen-bedroom addition --the bar of T-patterned house--has dry rock foundation

Floorboards are unplanned 1x10s, covered with 2 layers of linoleum; dirt beneath. 1x6 boards as baseboards, dark-painted, in living room.

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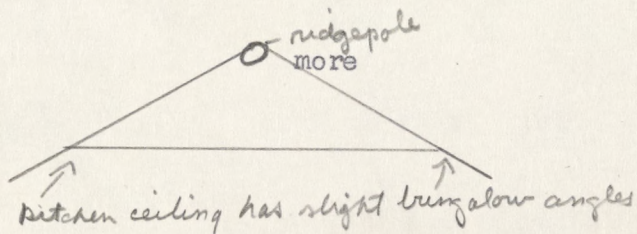
Valley

Peter Doig homestead cont./3

Occasional dark-painted lath up and down the living room walls-- almost British in appearance. 3" lath around living room windows. Wallboard on most walls of house (dividing wall in kitchen and adjoining bedroom is 2" grooved boards); beneath are the hewed logs, chinked on outside.

Stovepipe holes in NW corner of living room, SE of kitchen, NW of adjoining bedroom.

In small bedroom at NE corner of house, peach-painted cardboard on walls, and a rough-board open closet



Valley

Peter Doig homestead cont./4

House, outbuildings and all else slope south toward Wall Mtn and Paddy's Run

50 paces from house to small creek for water; no well in sight

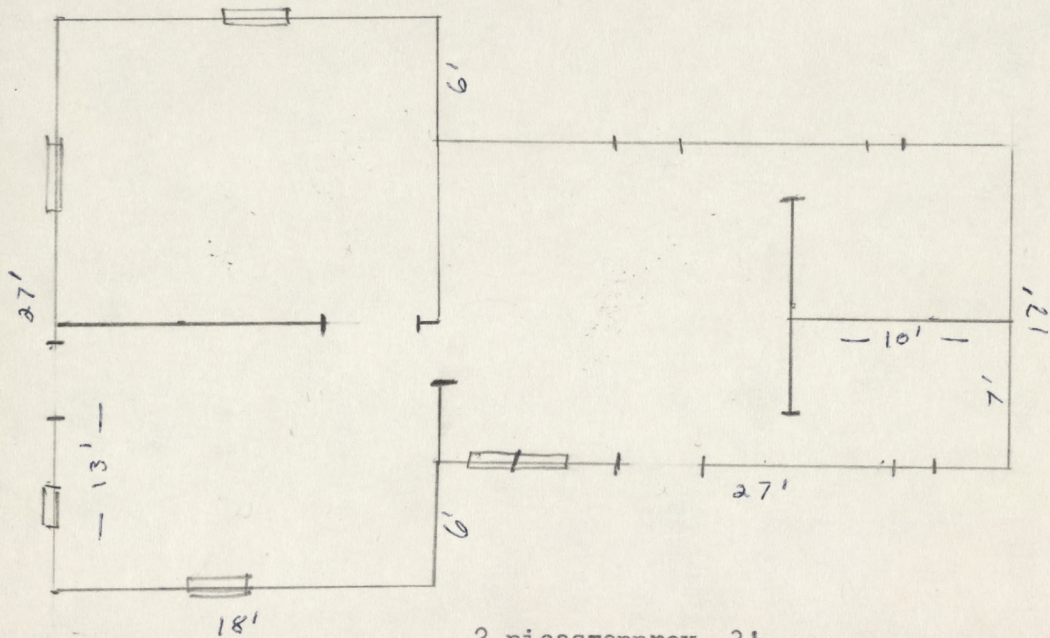
Long ridge opposite Wall Mtn. to the south has been roughly logged, skeletons of too-small trees left

6 or more wall rimrocks show on Wall Mtn. from the house

more

Peter Doig homestead cont./5

Valley



2 picas=approx. 3'

P.A.M.

80

Mont H Soc

Valier: a high grade project for high grade people
(1910)

- p. 7 - "Aridity is insurance against loss by flood."
- p. 10 - pic of Cargill elevator built "when town was 2 months old."
- p. 11 - terms: \$50 acre: \$5/acre down, balance in 14 equal yearly instalments, 6% interest.
- p. 14 - at 5 months, Valier has 600 residents; \$50,000 hotel; levee & granite banks; elevator; 2 churches; light & power plant; schoolhouse; depot.
- "No saloons are allowed on main town site south of RR tracks."

If You Get Lost In These Parts, A Map Won't Help

Itching to visit the Montana towns of Epsie, Horton and Sixteen? Well, good luck finding them in the future.

Officials at the Department of Transportation say the map of Montana has too much clutter on it. So the three frontier towns—along with 13 other tiny communities and hundreds of miles of country roads—are getting the ax to make the map easier to read.

"We just wanted to give it a good crisp look," says department spokesman Dennis Unsworth.

But while the decision seemed like a no-brainer to the DOT, the move has sparked outrage from historians and politicians like State Auditor Mark O'Keefe, who is running for governor.

In fact, says Mr. Unsworth, such "a stink" has been made that Transportation Director Marvin Dye issued a public apology for not making it clear that citizens could comment on the proposed changes. "It was a good-faith effort to clean up the map," Mr. Unsworth says, "but it has landed us in a real mess."

Mr. O'Keefe, a Democrat, says eradicating the communities will hurt tourism in the state. He thinks the towns, originally mining camps or prairie trading posts, are part of the Old West mystique that draws thousands of visitors to the state each summer.

He says he decided to adopt the issue while stumping in the state's northeastern corner. "People are enraged at the audacity of the state to take these historic communities off the map."

Mr. Unsworth says the DOT has no plans to back down. For now, it has agreed to maintain Alpine—population one—in the Beartooth Mountains, and Flatwillow, a town of two near Lewistown. But he says the other 11 will most likely still get cut. The department will unveil a draft of the map for public comment by the end of the month and, if all goes as planned, the new version will make its debut in the fall.

Meanwhile, Mr. O'Keefe promises not to let the issue die. "Why do we need to clean up the map, anyway?" he asks. "It's not like we're wall-to-wall city out here."

—Brooks Barnes

Heard in the Northwest:
*aircraft could help
subcontractors take*



WHAT'S NEWS

NORTHWEST

Cheap Tabs Are In; Amendment Is Out

Hoping to prove they feel the people's pain, most Democrats in the Washington Senate voted to protect one portion of Initiative 695—the \$30-per-car registration fee—after a superior-court judge in Seattle declared the initiative unconstitutional. But Democrats refused to take the next GOP-advocated step, which was to amend the state constitution to require voter approval of any proposed increase in taxes or fees. Gov. Gary Locke and others in his party said *that* part of I-695 was wrong-headed to begin with. If the Legislature went along with it, said Senate Majority Leader Sid Snyder of Long Beach, “we’d be destroying constitutional government as we know it today.”

That’s not how Republicans saw it. They argued that people knew exactly what they were doing when they approved the two-pronged initiative, which replaced the value-calculated motor-vehicle excise tax with the \$30 fee and also instituted the tax-and-fee-approval mandate. (The judge threw the second prong out, saying the constitution allows only single-issue ballot measures, but allowed the \$30 tab to remain because it would be too disruptive to overturn it now. The state Supreme Court will hear an appeal early this summer.)

Among those who took to the floor to express outrage was Sen. Don Benton, a Republican from Vancouver. “Why, why, why, why are we road-blocking the will of the people?” he asked.

One response from the other side was

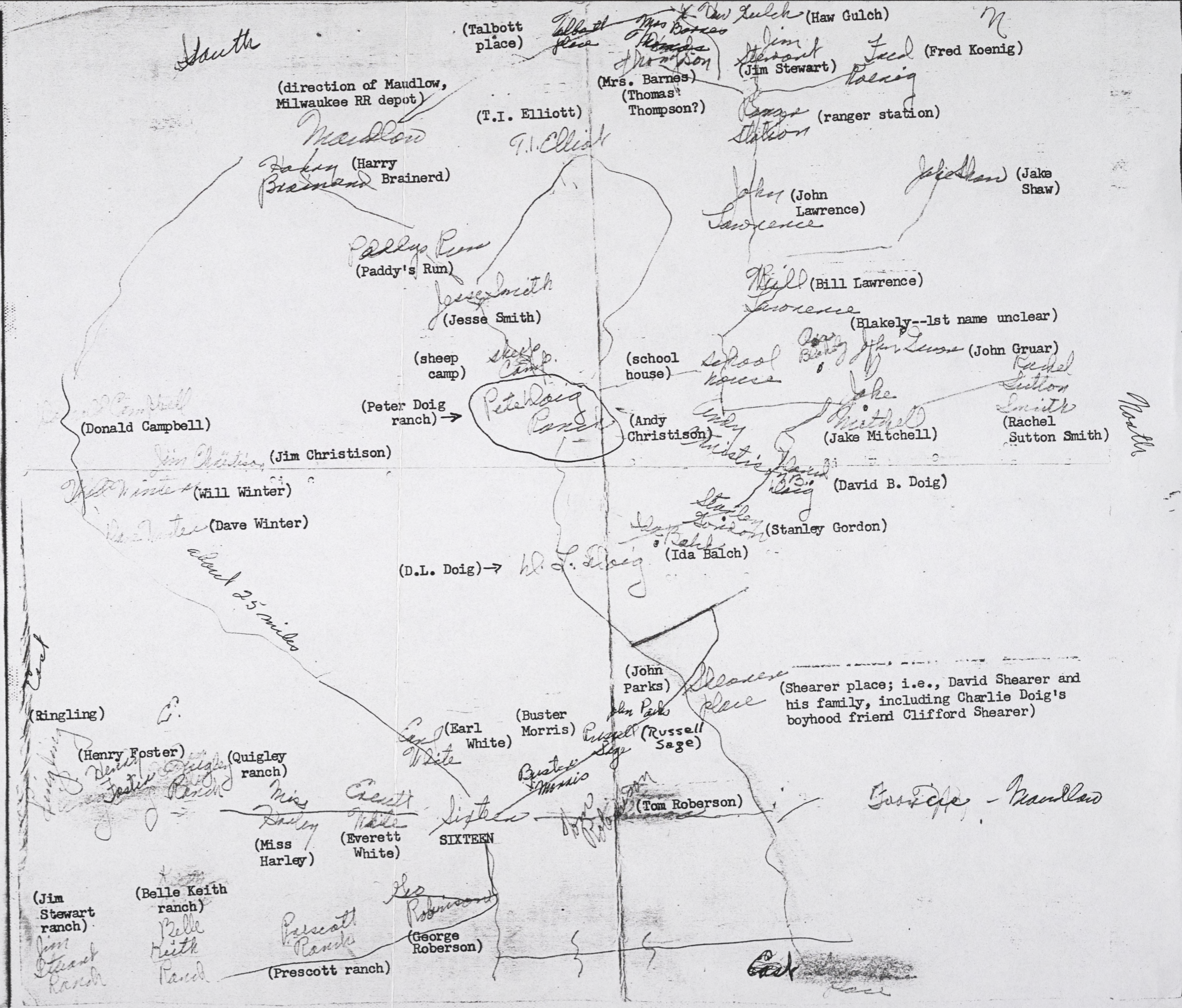
This map of the homestead community in and around the Tierney Basin, near Sixteen, Montana, was drawn for me by my aunt, Anna Doig Beetem, during my research for This House of Sky. Anna was born on our family homestead--the "Pete Doig ranch" in the center--in 1911, so her memory of who homesteaded where reflects the Tierney Basin settlement pattern from about WWI into the Depression; I believe the Basin was uninhabited by the early 1940's, when my uncle Varick Doig and his family, who were living in one of the old homestead houses herding cattle, pulled out.

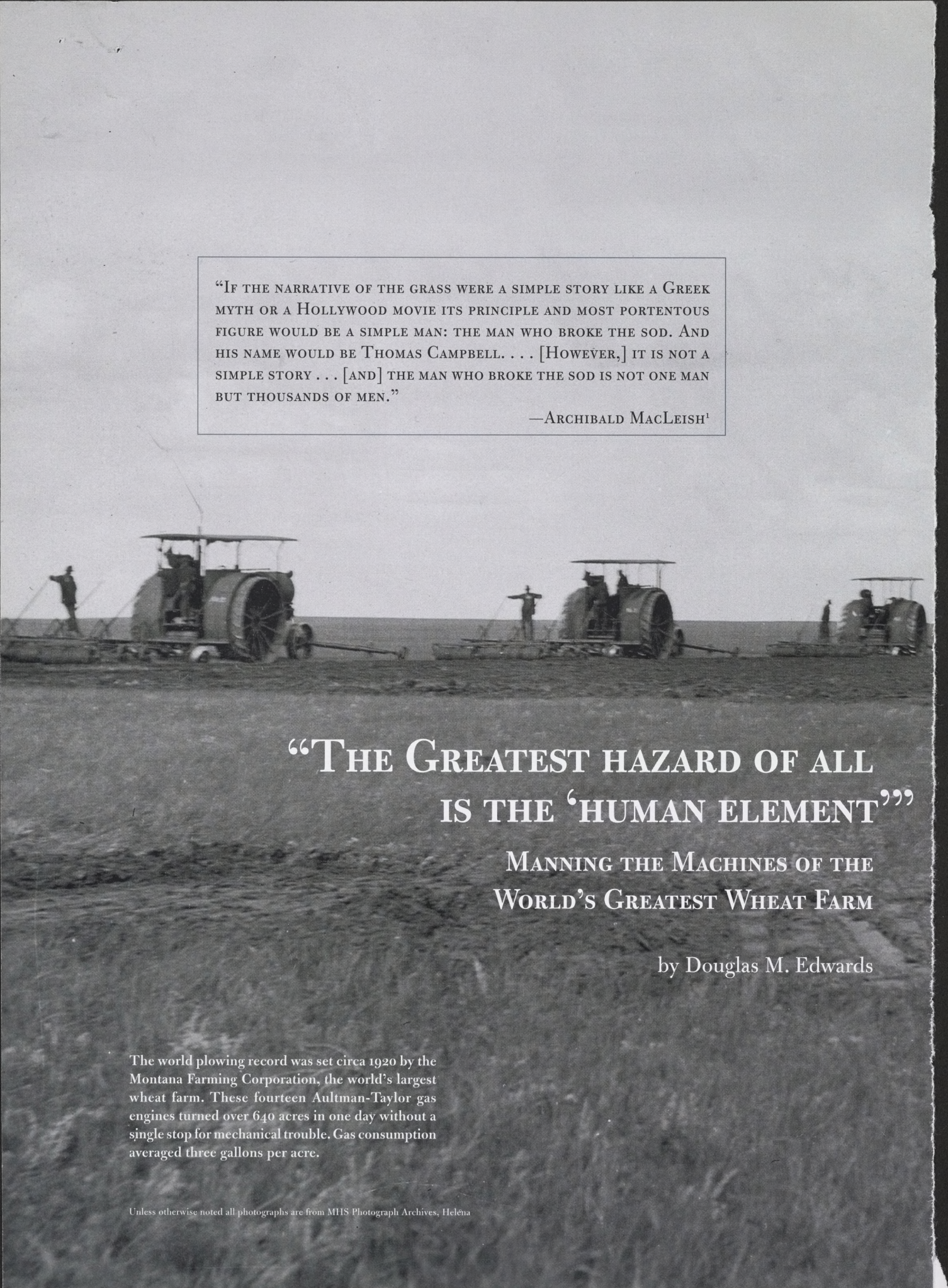
These homestead families--"mostly Scotch" as a WPA report put it--were considerably related or intermarried. The Doigs, Campbells and Winters, for instance, were linked by marriages; and I think the Jake Mitchell--John Gruar families similarly were in-laws; and the Stewart-Keith ranch families on Faulkner Creek. The Christisons I think knew the Doigs in Scotland.

Anna's map is approximate, done from memory, but it can be oriented with the USGS 1949 quadrangle map of Maudlow, Montana by finding "A Doig Ranch" in Section 8, Township 5 N, Range 5 E; that's the Peter Doig homestead, and "Doig ranch" in section 9 is the D.L. Doig homestead.

In the lower right corner, the first tier of names--Henry Foster etc.--were ranches or homesteads, some still with those names, on the back road into the village of Ringling from Sixteen. The tier below that--Jim Stewart etc.--are still-extant ranches on Faulkner Creek or Battle Creek.

--Ivan Doig
4 April '92





“IF THE NARRATIVE OF THE GRASS WERE A SIMPLE STORY LIKE A GREEK MYTH OR A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE ITS PRINCIPLE AND MOST PORTENTOUS FIGURE WOULD BE A SIMPLE MAN: THE MAN WHO BROKE THE SOD. AND HIS NAME WOULD BE THOMAS CAMPBELL. . . . [HOWEVER,] IT IS NOT A SIMPLE STORY . . . [AND] THE MAN WHO BROKE THE SOD IS NOT ONE MAN BUT THOUSANDS OF MEN.”

—ARCHIBALD MACLEISH¹

“THE GREATEST HAZARD OF ALL IS THE ‘HUMAN ELEMENT’”

MANNING THE MACHINES OF THE
WORLD’S GREATEST WHEAT FARM

by Douglas M. Edwards


The world plowing record was set circa 1920 by the Montana Farming Corporation, the world’s largest wheat farm. These fourteen Aultman-Taylor gas engines turned over 640 acres in one day without a single stop for mechanical trouble. Gas consumption averaged three gallons per acre.

Unless otherwise noted all photographs are from MHS Photograph Archives, Helena

son that once again included games against the women from the university in Missoula and the college in Bozeman as well as against high schools across the state. By 1907, of the girls who had gone to St. Louis only Emma Sansaver and Genevieve Healy were still playing basketball for Fort Shaw, the others having left school to begin their adult lives. At season's end Emma and Genevieve followed suit. That same year, having served the school for nearly a decade, Superintendent Campbell himself left Fort Shaw to take up duties as special allotting agent for the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.⁸²

In 1910, facing declining enrollment, Fort Shaw Government Industrial Indian Boarding School closed, and over the course of the century, the institution itself, along with the basketball team that had given the school a moment of international fame, was largely forgotten. Yet the legacy of the team lives on, for, in the prophetic words of a young *Anaconda Standard* reporter, the "particularly entertaining" style of the Fort Shaw girls had "much to do with making the

game so popular in Montana."⁸³

Evidence of the broader implications of the team's legacy was expressed in spring 2000 by Turtle Woman, a descendant of Genevieve Healy, who spoke for many when she noted that the Fort Shaw girls were "more than a skilled basketball team. . . . They were a rare gathering of young female warriors who, facing the same . . . [barriers] that caused many Indian people to become discouraged and defeated, chose a path that made them victors."⁸⁴ 

LINDA PEAVY and URSULA SMITH, formerly of Bozeman, Montana, are independent scholars currently residing in Vermont. They are coauthors of several books on western women's and family history, including *Women in Waiting in the Westward Movement: Life on the Home Frontier* (1994), *Pioneer Women: The Lives of Women on the Frontier* (1996), and *Frontier Children* (1999). This article is drawn from their work-in-progress, a book-length study of the Fort Shaw team.

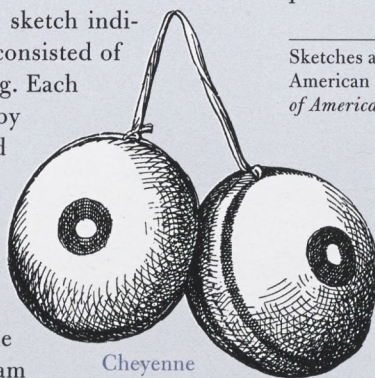
Unlike their non-Indian opponents, the girls on the Fort Shaw basketball team were from cultures for which women's participation in team sports had long been a given. Among the Plains Indians and most other tribes west of the Mississippi River, "double ball" was known as a "woman's ball game" and was played exclusively by women—perhaps by the grandmothers and great-grandmothers of some of the Fort Shaw girls. Requiring endurance, accuracy, teamwork, and a willingness to leap high, collide with opponents in midair, and take one's share of hard knocks, the game was as physically demanding as the Fort Shaw brand of "basket ball" and was based on similar principles of play.

As this 1851 George Catlin sketch indicates, the "double ball" itself consisted of two objects attached by a thong. Each player tried to catch the ball by hooking the thong with the end of a curved, knobbed, or forked stick, then immediately propelling it upward and forward toward a teammate and, eventually, toward one of two goals located at opposite ends of the playing field. Each time a team sent the double ball through the opponent's goal a point was scored, play returned to the center of the field, and

competition resumed. As the sketches indicate, the two objects connected by the thong differed in basic design and ornamentation from tribe to tribe, with most Plains tribes using sand-, dirt-, or hair-filled buckskin balls of varying sizes and shapes.

As in the case of other Indian games, double ball was often played for stakes such as moccasins, leggings, or vermilion. Frowned upon by missionaries and Indian agents opposed to all "primitive" games, especially those involving wagers, the sport fell out of favor for a while, though it enjoyed intermittent revivals in the later years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century and has now become a favorite among participants in modern tribal games.

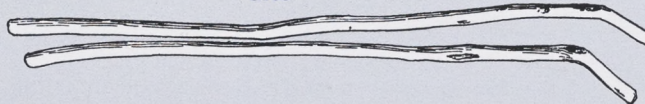
Sketches and description from Stewart Culin's "Games of the North American Indians," in *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology* (Washington, D.C., 1907), 647-64.



Cheyenne



Cree



Thomas Campbell arrived in Hardin, Montana, in fall 1918 determined to launch a wheat-growing venture of extraordinary proportions. Within a decade, the Campbell Farming Corporation had put an estimated ninety-five thousand acres into production on the arid benchlands along the Bighorn River. Accomplished with the aid of cutting-edge technology, scientific cultivation methods, and modern business practices, Campbell's unprecedented feat earned him global acclaim as a "manufacturer of wheat," and his corporation, considered by some to be "the greatest of its kind in the history of the world," became the agricultural enterprise by which others were measured. In 1928 a portrait of "The Biggest U.S. Farmer" adorned the cover of *Time*, and three years later Campbell accepted an invitation to advise Russian officials on the advantages of "farming á-la-Detroit." Tellingly, upon his induction into the Crow tribe in 1946, Campbell received the name Ahwagoda-Agoosh: "Known all over the World."²

The technical facets of Campbell's effort to indus-

trialize wheat production have tended to overshadow an equally crucial aspect: "manning the machines." Campbell once asserted that, while "drouth, hot winds, grasshoppers and so forth" posed serious challenges, the "Greatest hazard" to the success of his corporation was the "human element."³ While the industrialization of wheat production reduced the demand for low-skilled, seasonal laborers, it simultaneously increased the need for skilled engineers and mechanics. When these workers proved difficult to recruit and retain, Campbell responded with management strategies similar to those embraced by other turn-of-the-century capitalists: assembling a permanent staff of middle managers and practicing his own brand of "welfare capitalism," a business outlook that reflected the realization that compassion and capitalism were not necessarily antagonistic propositions.⁴ Workers were compensated for their professionalism, efficiency, and loyalty with above-average living conditions and competitive wages. Such inducements proved effective, and by the mid-1920s hundreds of applications arrived in Hardin each season.



Born in 1882 on a farm near Grand Forks, North Dakota, Thomas Donald Campbell learned early of the rigors and uncertainties confronting those who chose to wrest a living from the soil. Yet, he saw the potential of technology to improve farming practices and rural living conditions. Years later he would contend that the idea of industrial farming came to him when he was a boy “primarily as a result of the hours of toil and labor” suffered by his “mother and all other pioneering women in that vicinity.”⁵ The Red River Valley of the late nineteenth century also familiarized him with the “bonanza farm.” Unprecedented in size and productive capacity, these massive corporate farms, which historian Hiram Drache described as the “most advanced form of commercialized agriculture” in existence at the time, presaged how industrialization would transform the rural economy.⁶ Although most of the original bonanza farms, such as Oliver Dalrymple’s record-breaking thirty-two-thousand-acre farm, had been broken up by the time Campbell reached his teens, he no doubt knew of these highly capitalized and mechanized operations.

As he matured, Campbell became a stalwart supporter of the marriage between agriculture and industry and systematically increased his familiarity with both. Campbell completed a double major in liberal arts and mechanical engineering at the University of North Dakota in 1904 and had begun a degree in mechanical engineering at Cornell University when his

father’s ailing health forced him to return to the family farm in 1905. A year later he married Bess Bull, his childhood sweetheart, whose father, George Bull, had been one of the founders of the Cream of Wheat Corporation. After brief stints as president of the Northern Dakota Railroad Company and general manager of the Grand Forks Street Car Company, Campbell and his wife relocated to California, where, in 1912, he secured a position working for J. S. Torrance, “one of the most active capitalists of the coast.”⁷

While in the employ of Torrance, Campbell managed several engineering projects before assuming responsibility for a large-scale bean-raising venture. By this time Campbell had concluded that there were two fundamentally different types of farming: “the small farm operated by horses, on which the farmer and his family do all the work” or “the large farm operated like a manufacturing industry with very efficient management and high-priced laborers, doing the work of several men because of improved machinery.”⁸

The First World War provided Campbell the opportunity to test his vision. Upon learning that the Allies were preparing to launch a massive mechanized farming project in North Africa to grow staple crops, Campbell informed Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane that fertile, relatively flat expanses of the Crow Indian Reservation bordering the Bighorn River were perfectly suited for the deployment of the heavy, awkward equipment that would be required for such an

Thomas Donald Campbell developed his notions about industrial farming as a boy growing up in North Dakota’s Red River Valley in the late nineteenth century. There he witnessed bonanza farming like that pictured below in a F. Jay Haynes photograph of the Dalrymple Farm in 1876.



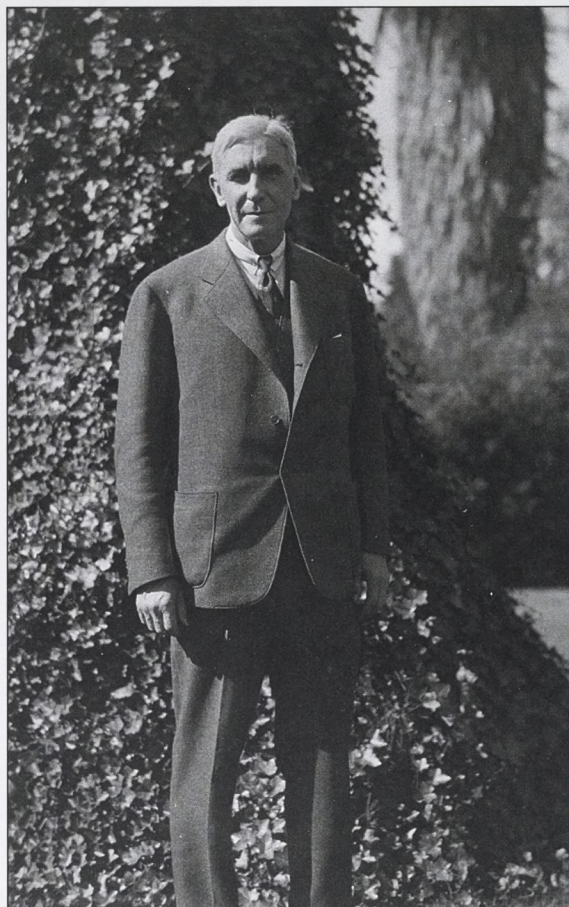
Haynes Foundation Collection

Although World War I provided the catalyst, Thomas Campbell (right) became inspired to mechanize farming on a large scale when he was a child and saw the “hours of toil and labor” suffered by his mother and other pioneering farm women.

operation. Lane and Herbert Hoover, head of the Food Administration, asked Campbell to implement the proposal to grow grain for the Allies, despite objections from Crow leaders who had been excluded from the negotiations. The federal government authorized the lease of vast tracts of reservation land, including a parcel of irrigated land on the Crow and Fort Peck reservations, for five years on extremely generous terms. In exchange one-tenth of the grain harvested would be turned over to the Crows.⁹

The federal government, however, stopped short of funding the project. Fortunately, one of the nation's wealthiest men, J. P. Morgan Jr., greeted Campbell's proposal with enthusiasm. Campbell reported that Morgan considered it “the best and most patriotic war project which had been presented to him since the war began.”¹⁰ Eager to support the Allied cause, Morgan and several other financiers, including Torrance, approved a loan of two million dollars from several New York banks to underwrite the creation of the Montana Farming Corporation.

Campbell immediately turned to the task of establishing a corporate infrastructure. Aware that the management of such extensive landholdings might prove unwieldy, Campbell subdivided the leased land into five operating units of roughly ten thousand acres, each self-contained with its own manager, crews, facilities, and equipment. Except for the two units on the Fort Peck Reservation, which were shut down in the early 1920s due to logistical problems caused by their separation from the other units, all the leased land was within



the boundaries of the Crow reservation, although over the years the location and number of units changed. The enterprise's headquarters moved into several buildings erected by the corporation on the outskirts of Hardin, Montana, a small town nestled on the northern edge of the reservation.

To oversee the operation of the corporation, Campbell, who was frequently away from Montana and in fact maintained a permanent residence in Pasadena,

1. Archibald MacLeish, “Grassland: The Broken Sod,” *Fortune*, 12 (November 1935), 65.

2. Stuart Mackenzie, “The Greatest Wheat Farmer in the World,” *American Magazine*, 96 (October 1923), 37; *Time*, 11 (January 9, 1928), cover; Thomas D. Campbell, *Russia: Market or Menace?* (New York, 1932), 75; Joseph Kinsey Howard, “Tom Campbell: Farmer of Two Continents,” *Harper's*, 198 (March 1949), 62. The best accounts of the Campbell Farming Corporation are provided by Hiram Drache, *Beyond the Furrow: Some Ways to Successful Farming in the Twentieth Century* (Danville, Ill., 1976); “Thomas Campbell: The Flower of the Plains,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, 51 (Spring 1977), 78-91; and Joseph Kinsey Howard, “Tom Campbell,” 55-63.

3. Thomas D. Campbell to Minnie E. Davis, January 11, 1924, folder 42, box 1, Campbell Farming Corporation Records, unprocessed collection, Montana Historical Society Archives, Helena (hereafter CFCR).

4. According to historian Lizabeth Cohen, “In the era of welfare capitalism, the enlightened corporation, not the labor union or the state, would spearhead the creation of a more benign industrial society.” Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge, U.K., 1990), 161.

5. Thomas D. Campbell, “Ten Years' Experience in Manufacturing Wheat on 100,000 Acres,” *Agricultural Engineering*, 10 (January 1929), 18.

6. Hiram Drache, *The Day of the Bonanza: A History of Bonanza Farming in the Red River Valley of the North* (Fargo, N.Dak., 1964), 69.

7. MacLeish, “Grassland,” 186.

8. Thomas D. Campbell to I. E. Giovanni, January 24, 1924, folder 42, box 1, CFCR.

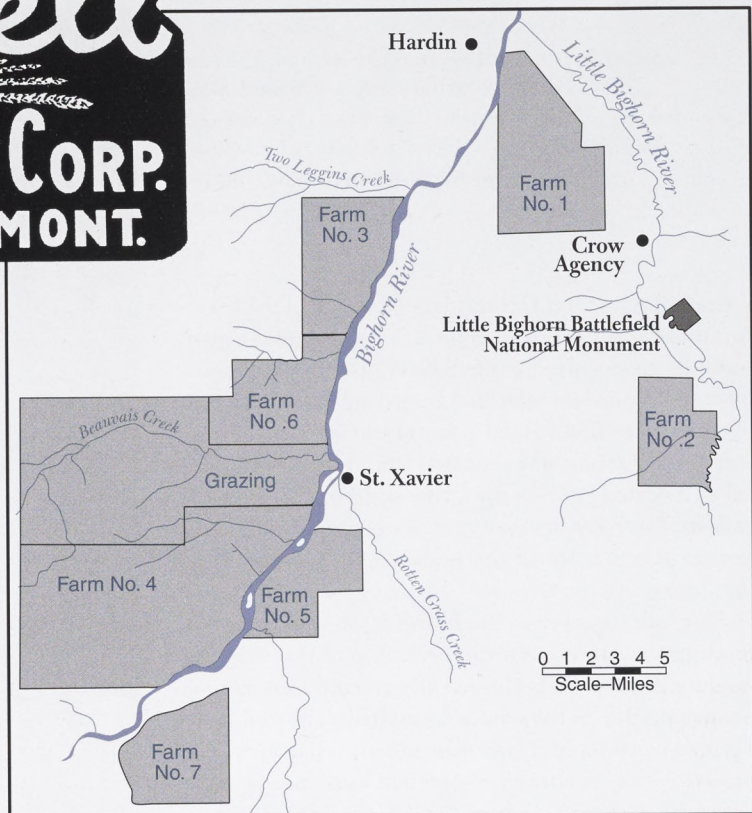
9. For more information, see Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America, 1805-1935* (Cambridge, U.K., 1995), 281; and United States Department of the Interior, “An Agreement for Leasing Certain Farming Lands on Indian Reservations,” April 6, 1918, folder 2, box 60, CFCR.

Campbell FARMING CORP. HARDIN, MONT.

Except for two short-lived units on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, the Campbell farms occupied leased land on the Crow Indian Reservation near Hardin in south-central Montana. After the enterprise started in 1918, the location and number of farming units fluctuated.

California, established a nucleus of carefully selected middle managers. Positioned at the top of the managerial hierarchy, the vice president and general manager (positions frequently held by the same person) assisted Campbell, the president, in coordinating the activities of all units. One unit manager oversaw the operation of each unit. At any given time there were six to ten people in management positions including top executives, unit managers, and foremen. Employed year-round, each received room, board, and a monthly salary that ranged from one hundred to two hundred dollars. Eventually, several key managers also earned a few shares of stock in the corporation.¹¹ Like middle managers in other industries at the time, these individuals were instrumental in shaping the corporation's success. They attended to the day-to-day business of running a farm, a responsibility that included supervising the many foremen in charge of fieldwork, and, perhaps most importantly, commanded workers during the frantic planting and harvest periods.

From the beginning Campbell surrounded himself with a corps of talented managers, many of whom stayed with the corporation for decades. Frank A. Thackery, "a man of excellent judgment" in the estimation of vice president Frederic W. Stevens, had spent nearly three decades with the Department of the Interior, eventu-



Adapted from map courtesy Big Horn County Historical Museum, Hardin, Montana

ally serving for several years as chief supervisor of farming for Indian reservations before coming to work for Campbell. No less dependable and qualified were Al Avery, who Campbell deemed "the best farmer in Iowa," and Tom Hart, "an experienced North Dakota farmer" who had worked previously for the Campbell family and who became vice president and general manager following the corporation's reorganization. (Because the Montana Farming Corporation never turned a profit, Campbell was able to acquire the enterprise and reincorporate it as the Campbell Farming Corporation in May 1922.) An Illinois lawyer who moved to Montana just prior to World War I, Dan Maddox looked after the corporation's legal needs until 1932, at which time he accepted the position of vice president. His wife Ola worked for more than thirty years as the corporation's secretary and treasurer, a position that journalist-turned-historian Joseph Kinsey Howard

10. Thomas D. Campbell to J. S. Torrance, April 25, 1918, folder 1, box 13, CFCR.

11. Managers' wages are derived from figures recorded on worker compensation reports filed in 1925, 1926, 1927, and 1929. Folders 1, 21, box 15, and folder 9, box 16, all in CFCR. Ola Maddox, Dan Maddox, Tom Hart, and J. R. Taylor each held at least one share of stock in the company. "List of Stockholders," May 21, 1927, folder 4, box 60, *ibid.*

12. Frederic W. Stevens to Board of Directors, Montana Farming Corporation, July 26, 1920, folder 3, box 13, CFCR; Thomas D.

Campbell to Theodore Rousseau, June 5, 1918, folder 1, box 13, *ibid.*; Howard, "Tom Campbell," 61.

13. Mackenzie, "The Greatest Wheat Farmer in the World," 38; Malcolm C. Cutting, "A Manufacturer of Wheat," *Country Gentleman*, 91 (November 1935), 44; R. W. Lohman to Thomas D. Campbell, March 24, 1919, folder 9, box 1, CFCR.

14. Ola B. Maddox to W. H. Carr, February 7, 1930, folder 28, box 2, CFCR; "Operating a 95,000-Acre Wheat Farm," *Mechanical Engineering*, 50 (October 1928), 751.

15. Carey McWilliams, *Ill Fares the Land: Migrants and Migratory Labor in the United States* (Boston, 1942), 92.

considered “one of the most exacting jobs held by a woman in American business.” Samiko “Sam” Okimoto, a Japanese immigrant who had been working in the area prior to Campbell’s arrival, managed the corporation’s lone irrigated unit until it was abandoned in 1921 in order to focus on dryland farming. Okimoto returned to Japan soon thereafter to care for his aging parents; however, he corresponded with Campbell for more than three decades and eventually returned for a visit in the early 1950s. Okimoto, like many of the other managers, formed a strong bond with Campbell, earning his confidence and respect through hard work and dedication to the success of the corporation.¹²

Although the war provided the catalyst for establishing the corporation, it also created obstacles that immediately tested Campbell’s resolve as well as the commitment and talents of his managers. Inflation, equipment shortages, and a scarcity of agricultural workers all contributed to making the first years of the corporation some of its most precarious. Much to their credit, managers were able to piece together a crew and enough machinery to get things rolling on a limited basis by the end of 1918. That autumn workers reportedly planted seven thousand acres of winter wheat before the onset of winter, but the corporation had to “depend on high-school boys and other inexperienced hands” to run the costly steam-powered equipment. By the time the snow had receded the following spring, everyone anticipated testing the recently acquired fleet of Aultman-Taylor engines. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of these laborsaving machines was at first diminished by a dearth of qualified engineers and knowledgeable mechanics to run the engines. “Everything is progressing satisfactory,” reported one unit manager, “except the most important thing. Viz, men.”¹³

Campbell’s corporation had considerable need for labor throughout the 1920s. Skilled hands operated and repaired the steam engines and the gasoline tractors

that came to replace them in the 1920s. Others operated the plows, seed drills, binders, and other implements hitched behind the engines and tractors. Additional crews performed a handful of demanding but less skilled jobs. Some delivered the steady supply of fuel and water consumed by engines; others gathered the sheaves of wheat littered across the fields and pitched them into threshers; and still more men hauled grain to Hardin, the nearest shipping point.

Seasonal workers began to arrive in the spring. Once the ground thawed the corporation set to work breaking new ground and planting spring wheat. Employee numbers grew as work progressed into late summer and reached their peak once the grain ripened and was ready for harvest. Hundreds of hands cut, threshed, and transported the season’s yield and sowed winter wheat for the next year’s crop. Ola Maddox estimated that as many as 250 to 350 men worked each harvest during the mid-twenties. The company still had 115 men on the payroll for the 1928 harvest, at which time it owned fifty-six tractors, twenty-one combines, seventy-two binders, and five hundred plows of various types.¹⁴

With the exception of the first year when the war made able-bodied men scarce, the problem confronting the corporation was never a shortage of laborers. On the contrary, during the early decades of the twentieth century a large population of migratory workers followed the ripening of the grain north. After bringing in winter wheat in Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska, the predominately single white male work force moved on to harvest spring wheat in Nebraska, the Dakotas, Montana, Minnesota, and Canada. Historian Carey McWilliams estimated that “when the tide of migration was at its height some two hundred thousand harvest hands were on the move, from area to area, from state to state, gradually drifting northward as the crop matured.”¹⁵ Thus, the Campbell enterprise had a seemingly bottomless pool of agricultural labor from which to draw. Moreover, by embracing technology, modifying

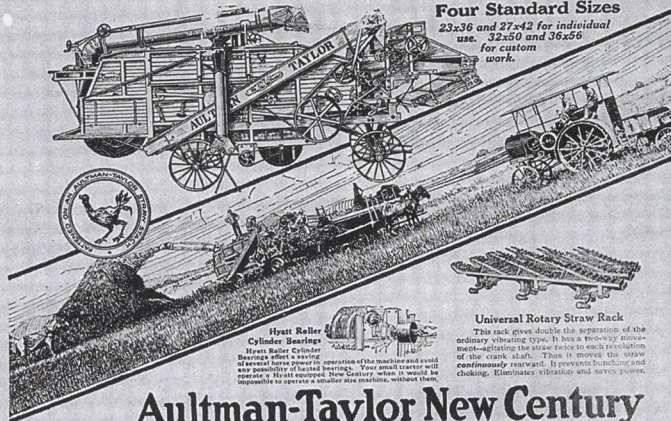
In its first couple of years, the farming operation’s office, repair shop, storage buildings, and other facilities were built next to the railroad tracks and southwest of the grain elevators in Hardin, shown at right looking west-southwest from the water tank circa 1918.



Al Bivin, photographer

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The early years of the Campbell corporation were precarious, due in part to the scarcity of agricultural workers. The efficacy of the fleet of Aultman-Taylor engines that arrived in 1919 was at first diminished by a dearth of qualified engineers and mechanics to run them. This shortage was at least partially remedied by technical assistance provided by equipment manufacturers.

machines, and reconfiguring equipment, the corporation reduced the overall number of workers it needed.

Conversely, laborers experienced with the operation and maintenance of the increasingly sophisticated agricultural equipment were in short supply. Indeed, the corporation had been in existence for less than a year before unit managers discovered that most itinerant workers lacked familiarity with the latest mechanized equipment. Tellingly, on March 24, 1919, R. W. Lohman sent a telegram to Campbell informing him that "there are plenty of inexperienced engineers at hand, but we are still short four or five good men." Three months later, he lamented about a shortage of operators and qualified mechanics. "Men are very scarce here," he wrote to Campbell, advising him to send any mechanics he should run across in California "out here at once as we are way behind on small tractor repairs." Despite contacting nearby machine shops and the Iowa State Automobile and Tractor School, Lohman found it impossible to recruit an adequate supply of experienced operators and mechanics.¹⁶

Some relief arrived courtesy of the implement companies from which the corporation purchased equipment. During the 1919 and 1920 seasons, J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company, Stinson Tractor Company, and Deere & Webber Company each dispatched mechanics to Hardin. Unfortunately, the level of their

16. Lohman to Campbell, March 24, 1919, CFCR; R. W. Lohman to Thomas D. Campbell, June 23, 1919, folder 9, box 1, *ibid.*; Frank D. Hennessy to R. W. Lohman, February 5, 1919, folder 23, box 1, *ibid.* For an excellent account of seasonal workers, see Thomas D. Isern, *Bull Threshers and Bindlestiffs: Harvesting and Threshing on the North American Plains* (Lawrence, Kans., 1990).

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talents varied widely. Some company representatives "rendered such excellent service" that managers felt compelled to send off letters of appreciation, but other "experts" revealed themselves to be nothing more than masters of the "cold chisel and hammer."¹⁷ Moreover, although Campbell pressured companies to send mechanics by referring to their competition's generosity, he could never be certain that manufacturers would respond favorably to his requests for technical assistance. If it was to succeed, the corporation would have to furnish its own mechanics and engineers.

Several managers argued that higher wages and shorter hours would go a long way toward alleviating the shortage. Responding to a memo from the president directing managers to pay operators no more than seventy-five dollars a month, Lohman claimed that he

17. Manager Unit No. 1 to J. I. Case Threshing Machine Co., July 28, 1918, folder 11, box 10, CFCR; Thomas D. Campbell to Case Co., January 4, 1919, folder 11, box 10, *ibid.*

18. R. W. Lohman to Thomas D. Campbell, March 22, 1919, folder 9, box 1, CFCR; Lohman to Campbell, March 24, 1919, CFCR; Fred Gordon to Thomas D. Campbell, September 25, 1919, folder 13, box 13, *ibid.*; Thomas D. Campbell to R. W. Lohman, March 24, 1919, folder 9, box 1, *ibid.*; Thomas D. Campbell to all managers, September 24, 1919, folder 29, box 8, *ibid.*

From Kirby Brumfield, *The Wheat Album* (Seattle, 1974), p. 148

had "been obliged to turn down men who are worth more." In a follow-up letter, he recommended that unit managers "should have the authority to pay tractor men, who are *actually worth it*, more money. At least start at \$85 per month." Another manager, Fred Gordon, warned that some men were growing disgruntled with the long hours they put in and questioned the wisdom of an eleven-hour day. "You may recall," he reminded Campbell, "that last June, when we put the eleven hour day into effect, we had to get practically an entirely new crew." Always cost-conscious and production-minded, Campbell initially insisted on the need for working long hours and refused to raise wages. "I am satisfied," he wrote back, "that we can get good men for \$75.00 per month." By the end of the season, however, as production lagged and equipment sat idle, he relented, raising wages by five dollars a month.¹⁸

From then on, Campbell realized that to compete for skilled laborers with other farms and to overcome the enticements of urban employment the corporation could not skimp on wages if it hoped to attract, motivate, and retain high-caliber workers. He would later assert that "it is impossible for any farm enterprise anywhere, large or small, to get skilled men . . . at less wages than those men can earn in town." Thus, the corporation consistently offered higher wages in hopes of recruiting the most qualified mechanics and operators available. The practice brought welcomed results. "Men come to our job from everywhere," boasted Campbell, because they can earn more money "than they can in almost any other skilled labor job in town." He also deemed decent wages essential to increasing profits through heightened productivity. As he explained to one journalist, "When we want to reduce costs, we increase wages. . . . [I]n that way we speed up our old men and attract some better."¹⁹

The level of an employee's salary depended upon the type of equipment they operated and the level of their productivity. Mechanics received high wages in lieu of bonuses. The greater skill required to operate a machine, the higher the salary. In 1919, for instance, operators of the Case, Aultman-Taylor, and Caterpillar steam engines and tractors earned eighty, ninety, and one hundred dollars per month, respectively. Because their positions required less skill, plowmen earned a monthly salary of sixty-five dollars, while those

who ran seed drills received eighty dollars.²⁰ Seasonal machinery operators also had the opportunity to earn additional income via productivity bonuses based on mileage. The amount of bonus money varied according to the type of equipment. During the 1919 season, all engine operators received a bonus of twenty-five cents for each mile driven, while plowmen and drill men earned a fifteen- and twenty-cent bonus for every mile worked. Each operator submitted daily production reports to his unit manager, who maintained a record of bonuses accumulated by the workers.

Perhaps the most innovative component of the wage system, bonuses attracted skilled workers, prompted them to work efficiently, and encouraged them to stay until the end of the season. To implement the bonus system, the corporation required that "one man, and one man only, shall have entire and continuous charge of the operation of a given machine." By this method, individuals could be held "liable for all unnecessary repairs to, and breakages" of equipment and any lost tools. Furnished a set of "regular engine tools," each operator was responsible for "oiling and minor repairing of the engines, trucks, or other farm equipment" assigned to him. Specific days were set aside for the general overhauling of equipment, but operators did not receive additional time on the clock to perform preventive maintenance or minor repairs. These tasks had to be accomplished "before or after working hours or on Sundays." When it was judged that a breakdown had occurred due to operator neglect or abuse, the cost for repairing the problem was "charged to the operator and deducted from his accumulated bonus, but not from his salary." Bonuses were paid only at the end of the season, a policy designed to discourage employees from abandoning the corporation in mid-season. Those who left voluntarily before the end of harvest or were "discharged for inefficiency, carelessness or disloyalty" forfeited accumulated bonus money. Such a policy was aimed at "floaters" who packed up their belongings and moved on at the first rumor of higher wages being offered somewhere else.²¹

Employees who left before the end of the season not only risked losing their bonuses but also faced the

19. Campbell, "Ten Years' Experience in Manufacturing Wheat," 19; Cutting, "A Manufacturer of Wheat," 18.

20. Campbell to all managers, September 24, 1919, CFCR.

21. Thomas D. Campbell, "Notice to Operators," August 12, 1919, folder 29, box 8, CFCR; Campbell Farming Corporation, "Notice of Employment Opportunities," 1926, folder 26, box 15, *ibid*; Thomas D. Campbell to W. M. Wooster, August 17, 1926, folder 14, box 2, *ibid*.

22. Information on Canadian wages is included in John Herd Thompson, "Bringing in the Sheaves: The Harvest Excursionists, 1890-1929," *Canadian Historical Review*, 59 (December 4, 1978), 467-89; average wages advertised by Campbell Farming Corporation computed from company job descriptions for 1926 and 1928 in folder 26, box 15, and folder 33, box 2, all in CFCR. Thompson lists Canadian wages in Canadian dollars; however, the currency exchange rate for 1926 and 1929 differed by less than a cent.

challenge of securing a position elsewhere that paid a comparable wage. In 1926, for example, harvesters working in the Canadian provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta earned an average daily wage of \$3.40. That same year, the Campbell Farming Corporation advertised daily wages that averaged \$4.33. Two years later, Campbell offered employees an average daily wage of \$4.55, while those north of the border earned only \$3.48.²² Even without the bonuses, Campbell's corporation offered one of the best opportunities.

Middle managers were integral to employee retention and the operation's success. Internal memoranda indicate that Campbell expected his managers to execute their duties with precision, professionalism, and pride. "You will never succeed," he advised Al Avery, "unless you are complete master of the situation and have full confidence in yourself." According to the president, effective leadership depended upon a supervisor's ability to move beyond simply ruling by decree. He insisted that those in charge, including himself, should always lead by example. To this end, Belton W. Evans was instructed to "be efficient yourself and you will find that the men will soon be the same." Committed to practicing what he preached, Campbell liked to boast that he kept his car well maintained, both mechanically and aesthetically, in order to provide workers with "a sample of neatness and efficiency from the top down."²³

Convinced that responsibility ultimately rested with those in charge, Campbell routinely judged employees' poor work practices to be an indication of poor management. "Every time I see a broken down truck,

or engine, my first inclination is to be provoked at the driver," he explained in a tersely worded 1919 memo to all managers. "But," he continued, "the fault is not with the driver, but with you." Extending this philosophy further, Campbell said that damaged equipment was ultimately a reflection upon him. It is not surprising, then, that Campbell confronted managers when, on one of his frequent tours of the units, he witnessed examples of inefficiency, neglect, or sloppiness. "I took a friend to visit your camp last Friday and was so ashamed and humiliated from the general appearance of your shop, yard, and bunk houses that I left without seeing you," he once wrote to Evans. Not only did such incidents jeopardize the success of the corporation, but they also "greatly embarrassed" the man who "bragged so much about the clean manner in which we keep our camps and bunk houses."²⁴

On the other hand, Campbell rewarded good work with kind words and financial rewards. When manager Avery and his wife retired to the Midwest after a few seasons with the corporation, the president sent them on their way with five hundred dollars cash and two months paid vacation "as evidence of our appreciation of what you have done for the Company." A telling example of Campbell's concern for his managers occurred when Tom Hart began to suffer from sharp pains in his side in 1920. Upon learning of his condition, Campbell ordered Hart to cease working immediately and to visit a doctor at the company's expense. "I don't know what I would do without you in harvesting and threshing," admitted the president, who then confided that "aside from this, my warm friendship makes me insist you do this irrespective of business reasons." As a mat-

Campbell expected efficient management and hard work from his managers and crews, especially in matters related to the maintenance and operation of farming machinery. Below, a 75 Holt Crawler pulls a Holt Combined Harvester that is picking up a grain swath for threshing.



ter of course, Campbell made a concerted effort to recognize the contributions of his managers and he appears to have been truly interested in their well-being. He understood that the corporation's success was largely due to their dedication and resourcefulness.²⁵

Life with the Campbell Farming Corporation, however, was not idyllic. Like most agricultural work, the hours were long, the work taxing, and the conditions often extreme. As Campbell once described it, "The days are very hot. We work long hours, the fields are dusty, and it is rather disagreeable unless the fellow is of the right type." Hot summer afternoons gave way to frigid fall and winter nights. Robert Maxwell Upson learned firsthand of the austere conditions workers often had to endure. "Until you have experienced the piercing, bitter winds in the middle of the night with the thermometer at 15 degrees or more below zero," he wrote, "you can little conceive of the fortitude necessary to stick to the job sometimes continuously for 16 to 20 hours, fixing with bare hands broken chains and gears often without food and always without shelter." Perhaps even more exacting than the climate, however, was Campbell's unrelenting demand for accountability, efficiency, and professionalism. Industrial farming, claimed the president, required a new breed of agricultural worker.²⁶

The extent to which Campbell attempted to shape the habits of his crews was evidenced by his opposition to smoking and drinking, pastimes he considered personally destructive and counterproductive. In 1928 unit managers received a notice ordering them to prohibit smoking in any of the company's buildings. "This is a very small request for the Corporation to make," insisted the president, "as no man can work as efficiently if he is constantly lighting a cigarette, finding some place to get the cigarette or keep it lit. It is impossible to do accurate or fine work with cigarette smoke constantly in your eyes and, furthermore, there is a serious fire hazard." He cast an even more critical eye toward drinking, making it clear that the consumption of liquor, on or off the job, was "one thing which the company will

not tolerate." A stalwart supporter of Prohibition, Campbell held that "no man who drinks is absolutely responsible three-hundred and sixty-five days in the year and it is much better business for us to have men in responsible positions who do not find it necessary to bolster their courage or their constitution with a drink of liquor." Workers who were more interested in raising hell at night than growing wheat during the day were not welcome on the world's greatest wheat farm.²⁷

On the other hand, those who secured employment with the corporation benefited from Campbell's desire to transform the nature of agricultural employment. In addition to decent paychecks, Campbell's crews appear to have enjoyed better-than-average living conditions. The corporation initially provided room and board at no additional cost. By 1926, however, workers paid \$1.50 per day for accommodations and meals. By most accounts the money was well spent. "There is nothing that any one would call extravagance anywhere," admitted the corporation's first vice president, Frederic W. Stevens, "yet employees are treated a little better than farmers generally treat their employees—little better places to eat and to sleep, little better food and plenty of it." After touring the operation for the first time, most visitors expressed admiration, "greatly impressed with the excellence of the camps which have been provided for the help." Journalists seldom failed to comment on the pleasant accommodations. "The old-fashioned 'bunk house' is unknown on his lands," averred one writer, contending that "neat, modern buildings, with hot and cold shower baths, bedrooms furnished with white iron beds and honest-to-goodness sheets on them, provide living quarters undreamed of in the old West and rare enough in the new."²⁸

Among the most heralded amenities were solar-heated showers at several units, which Stevens considered "worth a lot in efficiency and good will." The president insisted that men shave each day and strongly

23. Thomas D. Campbell to Al Avery, July 29, 1919, folder 2, box 8, CFCR; Thomas D. Campbell to Belton W. Evans, May 9, 1925, folder 50, box 1, *ibid.*; Thomas D. Campbell to Fred Gordon, April 26, 1919, folder 12, box 13, *ibid.*

24. Thomas D. Campbell to All Unit Managers, August 13, 1919, folder 13, box 13, CFCR; Thomas D. Campbell to Belton W. Evans, April 23, 1925, folder 50, box 1, *ibid.*

25. Thomas D. Campbell to A. M. Avery, October 25, 1919, folder 2, box 8, CFCR; Thomas D. Campbell to Mrs. A. M. Avery, October 25, 1919, *ibid.*; Thomas D. Campbell to Tom Hart, June 29, 1920, folder 9, box 8, *ibid.*

26. Thomas D. Campbell to Walter S. Case, April 29, 1927, folder 46, box 1, CFCR; "Report of Robert Maxwell Upson," 1920, folder 2, box 13, *ibid.*

27. Thomas D. Campbell to managers, August 15, 1928, folder 5, box 16, CFCR; Thomas D. Campbell to Minnie E. Davis, January 11, 1924, folder 42, box 1, *ibid.*

28. Campbell Farming Corporation, "Notice of Employment Opportunities," CFCR; Stevens to Board of Directors, Montana Farming Corporation, July 26, 1920, CFCR; J. S. Johnston to Board of Directors, Montana Farming Corporation, September 28, 1920, folder 3, box 13, *ibid.*; "Thomas D. Campbell, Business-Farmer," *World's Work*, 49 (January 1925), 248. For an informative survey of the conditions facing seasonal workers, see Evelyn Pickett, "Hoboes across the Border: A Comparison of Itinerant Cross-Border Laborers between Montana and Western Canada," *Montana The Magazine of Western History*, 49 (Spring 1999), 18-31.



Farm hands enjoyed decent wages and better-than-average living conditions in Campbell Farming Corporation camps that provided modern buildings, beds with sheets, hot showers, clean dining rooms, and good meals.

encouraged them to make use of the showers provided by the company. Such “psychological devices,” explained one journalist, were “designed to prevent the old fashioned ‘farm hand’ attitude from creeping into the Campbell organization.” Although showers were an added expense, the corporation’s treasurer, J. S. Johnston, recommended that they be installed at every unit, insisting that “the satisfaction the employees get from the shower baths . . . more than compensated the Corporation for the slight addition of cost.”²⁹

Dining arrangements also contributed to the morale of the seasonal work force. Only on rare occasions were workers left to fend for themselves; most of the time fatigued and hungry crews enjoyed meals prepared by contracted cooks at unit dining facilities. Visitors, too, spoke highly of their dining experiences. An investigator from the Public Health Service, for example, enjoyed a “delightful lunch” in the “spotlessly clean kitchen.” Likewise, a writer for the *Case Organ*, observing that “cleanliness is the order of the day in the

camp and on the field—the dishes being spotless,” proclaimed that the fact “the meals served are cooked to the queen’s taste is evidenced by the alacrity with which they are assailed in unusually large portions.”³⁰

Considered by many observers to be a welcome departure from the deprived conditions too often a part of rural life, the living arrangements and working conditions garnered considerable attention. Impressed by the novelty of the sights they witnessed, reporters wrote voluminously about the merits of the corporation, and articles appeared in many widely circulated periodicals. Campbell also took matters into his own hands by penning articles, delivering radio addresses, and providing tours of the operation. The cumulative effect of all this positive publicity was the eventual elimination of Campbell’s labor problem.

Between high wages, suitable accommodations, and the opportunity to become familiar with industrialized agriculture, the corporation offered inducements that

29. Stevens to Board of Directors, Montana Farming Corporation, July 26, 1920, CFCR; “Thomas D. Campbell, Business-Farmer,” 258; Johnston to Board of Directors, Montana Farming Corporation, September 28, 1920, CFCR.

30. Russel, M.D., field agent, United States Public Health Service, to W. F. Cogswell, n.d., folder 29, box 2, CFCR; Leon Shaw to Thomas D. Campbell, enclosing “Faster, Faster, Faster,” draft of Shaw’s article to be printed in *Case Organ*, ca. 1925, folder 42, box 1, *ibid*.

31. Arnold Iglauer to Thomas D. Campbell, March 21, 1928, folder 34, box 2, CFCR; Peter Milivojevic to Thomas D. Campbell, January 26, 1928, folder 33, box 2, *ibid*.

32. Information concerning applicants gleaned from 128 letters in folders 33, 34, box 2, CFCR; “Operating a 95,000-Acre Wheat Farm,” 751.

33. The corporation continued to farm in Montana until 1987 when a general agricultural depression led to its closure. During the 1930s, it acquired vast holdings in New Mexico, some of which it still holds and is currently subdividing as San Pedro Creek Estates. In the late 1960s Campbell’s daughter, Ann Campbell Knapp, donated two hundred thousand acres near Socorro, New Mexico, for use as a wildlife refuge. According to the corporation’s web page (www.campbellfarming.com), the donation, which became the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, is “the largest ever received from a private landholding in U.S. history.”

excited prospective employees. Much to the delight of Campbell and his managers, applications began to flood into Hardin by the mid-1920s. Like seventeen-year-old Arnold Iglauer, many applicants explained that they had become familiar with the corporation through the press. After reading “with great interest the article in TIME,” the young man from Cincinnati had become “greatly interested” in working for the corporation “in order to get a close view” of Campbell’s methods. Peter Milivojevic wrote all the way from Yugoslavia “to beg” for the opportunity to work on what he considered to be “the most practical and perfect University in the agriculture.”³¹

Iglauer and Milivojevic were but two of thousands of people who sought work with the corporation that once experienced such difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified personnel. In 1928 alone, the company received no less than 196 employment inquiries from people residing in twenty-six different states and several countries. Thus, ten years after the corporation’s founding, a writer for *Mechanical Engineering* could state correctly that Campbell “has not lacked for good men, applications coming to him from all over the country.” It took some time, but Campbell and his able managers successfully overcame perhaps the “greatest hazard” they encountered in their efforts to turn wheat fields into industrial factories.³²

As the example of the Campbell Farming Corporation illustrates, the industrialization of agriculture was not simply a story of larger, faster, and more powerful machines. The dynamics of the rural bunkhouse, like those of the urban shop floor, underwent significant transformation as a result of industrialization, but machines did not immediately remove workers from the production process. While some low-skilled laborers

found their opportunities for employment increasingly limited, those skilled in the operation or maintenance of the newest types of equipment experienced increased status and earning potential. And still others entered the nascent ranks of middle-class management, charged with the task of supervising a multiskilled labor force and implementing the policies of astute businessmen.

Until his death on March 18, 1966, at the age of eighty-four, Thomas Campbell continued to apply modern technology to agricultural practice. On extensive corporate holdings that eventually stretched from Montana to New Mexico to North Carolina, he continued his efforts to make farming an industrial pursuit equal to any other of the nation’s core industries.³³ In this stage of his career, however, Campbell did not have to contend with the personnel issues that challenged him during the early years. The corporation’s need for seasonal workers decreased steadily through the years—dropping most precipitously about 1930 with the widespread introduction of the combine—and the available labor force was increasingly better equipped to deal with new agricultural technologies. Consequently, nature’s vicissitudes came to eclipse personnel issues as the greatest obstacle to the success of the Campbell Farming Corporation. *m*

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Below, in 1945, disking after harvest breaks up the soil and makes it more receptive to moisture.



In early June 1908, the Missouri River breached its banks, turning Fort Benton into “a Montana Venice.” Henceforth, June 6 would be known as “Flood Day,” the *Fort Benton River Press* declared, the day on which local residents watched in dismay as “wrecked buildings, hay stacks, trees, saw logs, broken water wheels, and other debris” floated down the town’s main streets borne on flood waters befouled by smelter waste. Most witnesses to this unseemly flotilla knew full well that the pollution in the water and much of the “wreckage” besieging Fort Benton originated forty miles upstream at the Boston & Montana smelter in Great Falls. Indeed, the flood served to emphasize what local residents, riverfront ranchers, and smelter managers already realized—the growth of concentrating, smelting, and refining operations in Great Falls spelled long-term environmental damage for those downstream.¹

Although the Great Flood made visible the environmental catastrophe that was slowly eroding water quality, it did not, however, fundamentally alter corporate strategy for dealing with downstream residents like the citizens of Fort Benton and rancher William Witt who threatened nuisance lawsuits claiming that the Great Falls operation was destructive of property and public health. Both before and after the Great Flood, the Boston & Montana and the Amalgam-

ated Copper Company—the holding company that had owned the Anaconda Copper Mining Company since 1899 and the Boston & Montana since 1901 and which shared legal counsel on matters of mutual interest in the area—together engaged in deliberate and systematic “damage control” efforts aimed at avoiding litigation at all costs.²

The issue for them was less one of money and more one of corporate survival. Corporate counsel and management knew that litigation might reveal that slag and tailings in the Missouri River impaired the federal government’s navigational servitude (broad powers derived from the Commerce Clause of the Constitution to govern the use of navigable waterways and their beds). If the smelter debris on the river’s bottom gradually raised its level and thereby impeded navigation, just as hydraulic mining debris had done in the American River in California, then the federal government could step in to protect its navigation servitude, as Judge Lorenzo Sawyer of the United States Circuit Court in San Francisco had done when he granted a perpetual injunction against California hydraulic mining in January 1884.³ The power of the federal government was to be feared, and the memory of the California injunction was very much on the minds of the mining industry managers, as was the national campaign of Progressives against corporate abuses.⁴



The Goldfish Died

Great Falls, Fort Benton, and the Great Flood of 1908

by Gordon Morris Bakken and J. Elwood Bakken

↓ You had the ~~no~~ choice of having the drayman bring water to your home in his tank wagon drawn by horses, or go and get ~~your~~ it yourself in your own container. One of my chores at home was to get our drinking water ~~in~~ in two ten gallon milk cans on my coaster wagon. When there was snow on the ground it was necessary to use a sled and the tank valves would be frozen so had to climb on top of the tank and get water out by bucket through a trap door after breaking the ice. ~~was~~ Needless to say, little water was wasted. Also, it is pretty apparent that the whole operation was not too ~~hygienic~~ hygienic - but I don't recall any epidemics caused by contaminated water.

Now that the Milwaukee has abandoned the stretch of road through that country I understand that those few remaining residents bring water in by tank truck from Forsyth or Musselshell.

Water for purposes other than drinking and cooking was obtained from a cistern filled by roof drainage from the house. Of course in winter we had melted snow water.

near Ingomar's
I guess one of the reasons ~~the~~ establishment was that a section crew was stationed there for maintenance of RR roadbed. In view of the lack of water I've never figured out why it ~~became~~ became the center of the ranching activity as well as the shearing center and stock shipping center, rather than one of the other section towns which may have had better water supplies. At one time a well was drilled for water, but the water it tapped was so alkaline it could not be used and so far as I know that was the only attempt.

During the early 30's I would estimate the population in town at about 100 and possibly another 100 outlying who used Ingomar as a post office. This is strictly a guess. Today, I suppose it is more like 25 - mostly the Seward family and I wouldn't know what to guess for the outlying area.

Your mention of the fact that your new book is to be about the Depression years leads me to recall something of that era which has really stuck in my mind.

↓ Almost twice daily a freight train would be switched on a siding to allow a passenger or some other through train to pass. During those depression times each time a freight would be sided - no matter which direction it was headed - there would

be anywhere from 20 to 40 men who would fan out through town looking for a handout. Since our house was situated only about fifty ~~yard~~ yards from the track we almost always had one or two at the back door asking if there was some job to be done for a little food. We weren't too well off ourselves but my mother always tried to have at least a slice of bread and butter for each. These were not bums - they were ~~desperately searching~~ on their way east or west desperately hoping they could find work at ~~night~~ either end of the journey.

Mention of the RR reminds me of something else - in a lighter vein. One of the high lights for us kids was to watch the silk trains go rocketing through town on occasion. They would be ~~made~~ made up of about 10 or 12 baggage or mail cars, with armed guards in the doorways of each car. They ~~was~~ were transporting silk which had come into Seattle from the orient and bound for the fabric mills back east. They must have had the highest priority since I ~~never~~ recall even seeing passenger trains on siding or them. One of life's early ambitions for many of us kids was to grow up and be a guard on a silk train.

I'd better wind this up - or you will not be able to afford the time to wade through it. There is ~~no~~ no need to hurry in returning the book and photos - but of course, would like to get them back some time. Possibly we could even ~~be~~ stop by some time when we are in Seattle sight-seeing and pick them up. Please let me know if any of this ~~stuff~~ stuff needs ~~clear~~ clarification.

Best wishes to you for the coming year, and above all, for a successful ~~new~~ new novel.

Sincerely
Howdy

Boy!! my typing is lousy - but Mary says my handwriting is worse.

In view of your early experiences with the Blackfeet Reservation I am sending you a few manufactured in a plant established a few years ago on the edge of Browning. Before I retired I was involved in helping arrange for a contract whereby colleges and universities across the country could buy pens and pencils from the Blackfeet ~~in connection with the effort to establish minority enterprises~~

WOMEN ON MONTANA'S HOMESTEAD FRONTIER

In recent years historians have begun to place women within the westering experience. Included in this effort are some excellent studies of women on the agricultural frontier of the trans-Mississippi West.¹ That no one has done much with the agricultural history of Montana leaves a large geographical and chronological gap. Montana was the foremost homestead state. Pioneers took up more land under the various public land laws in Montana than any other state.² The greatest burst of activity occurred in the period 1914-1918.² Unlike the earlier frontiers of stockraising and placer mining, the homestead movement included a large proportion of women. These participants, and their daughters and sons, have left behind a body of first-person, reminiscence literature which provides some clues to the nature of their experiences. There is, of course, the possibility that such accounts reflect the experiences of a literate middle class not necessarily representative of settlers.³ There is also the likelihood that accounts written long after the fact will be distorted by the memory's after-glow. Nevertheless, these accounts deserve to be read, and where they reflect convergences will permit the reader to make observations about the lives they recount. *push & pull factors - no evidence of eco. response to grain prices*

Recent literature on the westward movement has brought a new slant on our notions about the decision to move. One traditional view sees the woman as the weak, worried, even cowering female who reluctantly accompanied her mate when he unilaterally made the decision to strike out for a new home.⁴ This stereotype is now open to serious question. The sources on the Montana experience are not so explicit as one should like, but they convey the im-pression that the decision was made on the basis of a partnership. There is

*Does not reveal
much more about
lives of women than of men*

no evidence of a woman complaining that she was abused by a husband who made the decision without consulting her. In one instance a Minnesota woman who hankered to be a pioneer told her wavering druggest husband that she was going, and he could come along if he wished.

Furthermore, settlers included a significant number of unmarried women, both widows and single women. Some of them, probably a minority, were unattached women who hired much of the farm work done and spent part of the year in a city working for wages. Other single women took up homesteads in conjunction with teaching school. Perhaps most commonly, single women ⁵ accompanied parents, brothers, or other relatives.

Unlike earlier frontiers, arrival did not involve the experience of extensive overland travel in a covered wagon. Women arrived in Montana by passenger train. The journey from the railroad stop to the new home was generally by wagon. Sometimes this might be only a few miles from the railroad siding. Twenty miles was a remote site. The nature of this part of the trip depended upon the weather as well as distance. Most of the time arrival at the homestead meant days of rough camping out until some sort of house could be built since only a few of the pioneers moved onto locations with structures on them.

For some women arrival in the new land was a shock. With her bucolic Indiana frame of reference, Maggie Gorman Davis complained that eastern ⁶ Montana was "just hills and hollows and sage brushes." The cry of a wild animal beneath her window sent one newly arrived woman into hysteria and a nervous prostration which lasted several days. Milton Shatraw remembered a real difference of opinion within his family when they located near Dupuyer:

My father and I loved this beautiful land... But my mother hated the loneliness of the long winters and

feared the dangers of the untamed country. She deplored the lack of good schools, comfortable houses, adequate medical care, and future opportunities for her children.

Milton's mother had been born and raised in London, England. But eventually even she came around to share to some extent her family's love of the land.

After returning from an operation and convalescence in Conrad, she said, "I would never have believed that this godforsaken ranch could be so beautiful."⁷

But she never could feel completely at ease on it.

For some the wind was a problem, especially its ceaselessness. Lillie Hall Hollingshead remembered that when the wind blew for several days with no let-up, members of the family got irritable. "I used to get so tense and nervous," she recalled, "that I'd go in our bedroom and shut the door and cry. I would wish with all my heart that we were back in Saskatchewan in our lovely mountains..."⁸

Perhaps the ambivalent response of Pearl Price Robertson comes closest to being a common response to the land:

I loved the prairie, even while I feared it. God's country, the old-timers called it. There is something about it which gets a man - or a woman. I feared its relentlessness, its silence, and its sameness, even as I loved the tawny spread of its sun-drenched ridges, its shimmering waves of desert air, the terrific sweep of the untrammelled wind, burning stars in a midnight sky. Still in my dreams I can feel the force of that wind, and hear its mournful wail around my shack in the lonely hours of the night...

In the earliest years of settlement women had to keep house in structures which were small, primitive, and often cold. Depending on the location and availability of materials, the first houses could be dugouts, sodhouses, log cabins, tarpaper shacks, or various combinations of several of the foregoing. They were commonly about 15' by 20', crowded, and lacking in privacy. The

door and few windows had no screens. Heat for the room came from the cook stove. Like the construction materials, fuel depended upon location. Wood and cowchips were common. Probably most burned soft coal or lignite both of which are widespread in eastern Montana. The latter could be dug with one's own labor and often was a factor in the choice of locations. As compared with the candles and dishlamps of earlier frontiers, light came from kero-
10
sene lamps and gradually from the far brighter gas mantle lamps.

Women tried to improve the comfort and appearance of the house. For insulation they stuffed holes with rags, papered the walls with newspapers, and banked the outside walls with sod or manure. In their efforts to improve the appearance of the inside, women tacked muslin on the walls and ceiling and decorated them with pages from magazines. Naturally, families wanted to escape such primitive housing. Some graduated to substantial homes, some even with central heating from a coal fired basement furnace. Unfortunately, the temptation to invest in better housing sometimes created a debt from which the family never recovered.

Pests added to the usual problems of housekeeping. Besides the usual flies and mosquitoes, bedbugs were a common complaint especially in houses made of unpeeled logs. For those without a cat, mice were bothersome and made holes through which rattlesnakes could make their entrance. These usually had to be dispatched by the woman of the house. One woman who prided herself on her walking ability never left her house without her sharp hoe over her shoulder. Near serious snake incidents formed part of the lore of most families living in the plains area of the state.

For those who did not live near a stream or river, the most common complaint among women was the lack of an adequate supply of good water. In

some places on the plains they had to dip it from potholes or temporary natural reservoirs in coulees, an expedient which yielded a plentiful supply of bugs along with the water. In the first year of settlement most had to haul water, in some cases as far as ten miles. A haul of two to two and a half miles was commonplace. A task of high priority was digging a well. This was not always successful. When hauling could not be avoided, settlers built cisterns to hold their water supply and to utilize snow and rain. Even where a sufficient quantity of water could be had, its quality often left much to be desired. Sometimes it was so hard it was almost impossible to clean with it. One woman near Vida in the northeastern part of the state found her ample water to be "so strong of alkali that it was almost unbearable to the taste. In fact the water was so bad it even turned our clothing yellow."¹² Women in such situations jarred snow water or caught rain water in order to have the pleasure of an occasional good shampoo.]

Compared with settlers on earlier frontiers, Montana homesteaders relied heavily on store bought necessities. Ready made clothing, dry goods, and shoes came from the mail order houses and canned vegetables and dried fruit came from the local store. Women still used their sewing machines to produce some of the family's clothes. The flour sack proved particularly useful. Women showed great ingenuity in bleaching the sacks and making a variety of articles of clothing and household goods from them. Much of the sewing, mending, quilting, hooking of rugs, and crocheting was done at night by lamp light.

Every kitchen was still the scene of the processing of a variety of foods. Most women canned vegetables and fruit, and some put up meat and fish as well. Others made sauerkraut and stuffed sausage. Much of this was

the processing of wild food such as antelope, venison, grouse, rabbit, and trout. Families made the gathering of wild fruit - plums, currants, gooseberries, buffalo berries, chokecherries, raspberries, blackberries, and strawberries - a festive time with camping trips and picnics. Some families, of necessity, secured a large portion of their living from the land. This was particularly common in the western portions of the state where returns from agriculture were limited. For one family the only things on the table that came from the store were salt, pepper, sugar, and coffee. But most families were much more dependent on the store. Especially important was the fall trip for a winter's supply of food and goods. Since by November (and even October in some years) the weather could not be trusted for trips across open country, careful calculations were needed to determine what and how much to buy. This was generally the woman's task, and she carried the worry of running out of food and kerosene.

Among the domestic chores laundry day was the most burdensome. For most women this meant scrub boards and washtubs and heating the water on the stove. Some measure of relief came with the washtub with a hand operated agitator, whose pumping was assigned to one of the older children. By the end of the homestead period the gas powered washing machine was available. Women who could afford this appliance regarded themselves as among the most fortunate. Ironing was still done with stove heated flat irons.


Since homesteading was largely a family affair, child birth was one of the constant rhythms of life. When at all possible families sought the aid of a doctor, especially for the first child. If this was out of the question, the next best step was to secure the help of a nurse or midwife, either by having one move in with the family near confinement or moving the mother-to-be

to town. Sometimes ill-timing or bad weather disrupted well laid plans and the only assistance came from the husband. And sometimes even this was not available. One teenaged mother in Garfield County gave birth to her first all alone. On the other hand, confident mothers sometimes did not bother to seek help for births subsequent to the second or third. The literature surveyed indicates a wide variety of family sizes. One couple chose to have no children while two others had eight and nine children. ¹³
Three to five children was most typical.

In most families the mother played the primary role in rearing the children, particularly when the father was engaged in field work or was absent. As soon as they were old enough to help out mother had to direct the children in sharing the family work load. In the earliest years of settlement the woman's responsibilities included teaching school for her own children, although fathers often helped out when field work was slack. The establishment of a local school gave the mother some relief but also brought new concerns. Maiden school teachers "from back East" provided welcome company when they boarded out with families. Mother could also welcome the fact that teacher and children could go to and from school together. The children's going and coming from school was a constant source of worry. * When possible they went by horseback, or wagon if there was a group. Children afoot were an additional source of concern because of wild cattle. Getting lost or bad weather were constant prospects. Where distances were especially great, schools had dormitories. Sometimes the teacher prepared food for her students, while in other instances mothers accompanied the children and cared for them in the evening.

In addition to the usual domestic chores, woman's work included a wide variety of tasks. It was her responsibility to put in and take care of the

garden, raise the chickens, milk the cows, and churn the butter. Some learned to shoot and killed and dressed game for their families. When help was short, women had to fill in in doing field work. There were those who took great pride in learning to handle teams of horses for harrowing or even freighting. Women were also the front line of defense in matters of health. As the doctor and nurse for the family, the woman applied home remedies. Whiskey was an almost universal item in the medicine cabinet. When an illness or injury was more than the woman could handle at home, it was necessary to haul the sufferer to the nearest railroad station for transportation to a hospital. When all efforts failed, it was woman's work to lay out the dead and even conduct the funeral services.

Without question the various tasks homestead women performed had a crucial economic significance for the family. ¹⁴ It was her ability to handle the farm chores which permitted the husband to leave to work for wages. Most families had to have supplementary incomes. The family was fortunate when the father was able to pick up cash income without leaving the farm which some did by blacksmithing, carpentry, or even taking and developing pictures. In the western mountainous portion of the state working out of the home men  could pick up money running trap lines, hacking railroad ties, cutting cord wood and fence posts, or splitting cedar shakes. In the plains portion of the state the husband might be gone short stretches of a few weeks with a custom sod breaking or threshing business. More commonly he, and perhaps an older son as well, would leave the farm for months at a time to work for wages in seasonal jobs such as county road and Forest Service trail work, freighting, logging, mining, haying, and harvesting.

The growing and processing of food and, in some instances, the making of clothing were absolute necessities. Women traded the chickens and other

poultry, eggs, butter, and vegetables for groceries, cloth, and cooking supplies or sold them for cash which provided a small measure of prosperity. Mothers and older daughters occasionally hired out as domestics at \$25 to \$30 a month plus board. More commonly they took in boarders. When the location of the farm was favorable, the woman ran a store or post office or combination of both. Finally, it was common for the farm wife to teach, generally at a nearby school; but when necessity dictated, she moved to a distant school for the term. More often than not, the wife's teaching provided the wherewithal for hanging on to the homestead.

Of course life was not all work and no play. In this world before radio people had to provide their own entertainment and amusements. For some families music was an important factor in their lives. A few of the better heeled brought hand crank phonographs with them. More commonly, families sang together usually with mother accompanying on the piano or foot-peddled harmonium. Much time was devoted to reading. The fare included women's magazines and the standard middle class periodicals of the day. In the evenings members of the family took turns reading aloud. In some families children took their turns, and this gave parents the opportunity to instruct the children in words or matters they did not understand.

When the seasons of farm work permitted, settlers put together an active social life. Obviously, the degree of compactness of settlement significantly influenced the social lives of people. The more compact the settlement the more likely neighbors were to share an active community life. The vibrancy of community life was also increased when members were part of the same group or religion. Numbers also had a bearing on mail service, an important factor in diminishing the sense of isolation. Especially significant in this

respect was the fact that as early as 1913 and 1914 telephones began to appear as families cooperatively built systems using their barbed wire fences as the lines.

Until the auto and improved roads disrupted older patterns of existence,¹⁵ the center of life was the community hall. The most important event was the dance. The whole family attended; and because of the distances travelled and for safety of travel, these were usually all night affairs. Settlers used box socials to support special events such as financing the building of the school or community hall. Where compactness of settlement allowed, card parties and literary and debating societies met on a regular basis. Social life included athletic activities. This was mostly for the young men who organized boxing and wrestling clubs. Women were sometimes included in mixed volley ball games when the community hall was sufficiently equipped. In summer baseball was the game. Every town and settled area supported a team. The Saturday afternoon games were true occasions. Farm work was put aside and families travelled as much as twenty miles to attend games. Cheering on the home team was combined with picnicking. Not just ball games, but most social events were accompanied with the consumption of great quantities of food and coffee. Other social affairs included mock trials, speeches, debates on current events, and games of checkers and chess.

Historical and fictional literature about agricultural frontiers frequently depict women as suffering from isolation and loneliness.¹⁶ These are difficult hardships to evaluate. In a sheer physical sense as well as in life style, isolation was probably far greater for the wives of stockmen¹⁷ than for farm women. Floyd Hardin pointed out that when his family worked a ranch on the bend of the Mussellshell, his mother and another ranch woman were the only women in a fifty mile radius. And they never met. This degree

of isolation did not generally face homestead women because often settlers had filled half sections for whole townships. However, women did complain about infrequent trips to town, and winter storms could make even short distances a matter of isolation for days or even weeks. Understandably, many women testify that the impact of loneliness was severest when the husband was absent. Probably most women for at least part of the year were isolated and experienced loneliness, especially when deprived of the company of other women.¹⁸ But there are wide individual differences in the extent to which this produced a debilitating or even pathological degree of loneliness. Many must have shared the experience of Pearl Price Robertson. "At times for days I saw no one;" she wrote, "and then the terrifying loneliness and silence of the great prairie appalled me, and I sobbed aloud to shut out the eerie sound of the coyote's wail, or the dreary sougning of the wind beneath the eaves of my shack."¹⁹

The literature on Montana homesteading is largely the output of Anglo-Americans and fails to reflect adequately the fact that settlers came from a variety of cultures.²⁰ The few references to Blacks puts them in an urban rather than rural setting. The one account of a Czech family makes a few references to the presence of other Czech families but provides no other evidence of ethnic awareness. Similarly, the one account by a member of a German family notes that his parents did not use German except when speaking with Grandfather who homesteaded an adjacent claim. The only other references to the presence of numerous Germans was the fact that their clergy had to stop preaching in German during World War I.]

The one exception to this lack of the ethnic dimension is the story of Anna Pipinich.²¹ Anna's husband preceded her to Montana by seven years during

which time she came to share his optimism about Montana's future which he conveyed in his letters home. However, shortly after her arrival from Croatia in 1910 she was destined to undergo "a series of shocking cultural disorientations" when the family took up a 160 acre homestead ten miles east of Lewistown. She was upset by the small crude house, confused by the coal stove and oven, and frustrated by the inadequate water supply and the tough sod which made working the soil difficult. The vastness of the country was so unlike her native land. Its sheer space added to her loneliness. About a hundred Croatian families lived in Lewistown. But she seldom saw any of them since visits to town were infrequent. Perhaps most serious of all was the deprivation of the Church. Once a year, at Easter, the family managed to attend mass. She had never worked harder in her life. When apart from her husband, "she shed tears from physical pain and keen disappointment with her new home in America." When the family sold out in 1922, she vowed never to return to the site because she never wanted to see the place again. She never did.

As in the case of Anna Pipinich, many women had to assume new and sometimes demanding roles on this frontier. Some did so with alacrity. Maggie Gorman Davis said she hated domestic chores and would much rather do farm work. Milton Shatraw's mother delighted in raising chickens and taking care of the garden. Still another woman was proud to show her husband that she could handle a six horse team. However, there is no evidence at this point that these frontier experiences changed the woman's habits of mind about
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what it was to be a woman. The closest thing to this are references to the fact that some women were interested in the suffrage question. But this is hardly evidence of the frontier's impact on the inner landscape of the

mind. In fact, suffrage can be viewed as an expression of the very tra-
ditional conception of woman as purifier.²³

Most references to suffrage appear in conjunction with discussions of prohibition and the necessity of attacking gambling and dance halls. One western Montana woman, in her opposition to Heron's saloons as wet stops for people from dry Washington, proudly proclaimed that she and other cut over pioneer women were leaders in building a better way of life. Were, then, women the principal civilizers? Perhaps to some extent. Most teachers were women. They appear to have taken some of the initiative in establishing schools, churches, and Sunday schools and saw to it that the children had music lessons. One wife turned her considerable private collection of books into a lending library. But most of her patrons were young men. While women may have taken the lead in some aspects of community building, they generally had the active support of men. Building a community was not just woman's work. It was a group enterprise.

The crest of the homestead boom occurred during a wet cycle. By 1919 a drought which had begun as a spotty one in 1917 was state-wide and devastating. Some left the land as a matter of physical survival. Where a choice existed, it sometimes created real tension between husband and wife. Maggie Gorman Davis said that before she and her husband had been reduced to the harshest of circumstances, she wanted to give up and return to Indiana. This her husband could not do because he could not face returning home a failure as a farmer. Furthermore, in cropless years they could not afford to leave because they did not have enough money to freight their stock and belongings back home. Unlike many neighbors, they refused to "take the cure", that is simply walking away and abandoning everything, including the livestock. The Davises felt morally bound to care for animals that had

helped sustain their own lives. On the other hand, when they got a crop, Maggie's husband insisted on trying it for one more year. By this time, settlers had long since begun to call Montana "next year country."

How does one assess the human impact of the homestead frontier experience? Those who have written about it have portrayed it as a terrible tragedy for both the land and the people.²⁴ The reminiscence literature does record examples of terrible strains, of the indelible bitterness of Anna Pipinich, and even death as in the case of two women homesteaders who froze to death when they ran out of matches. But as one daughter put it, pioneering always entailed risks. That is why we honor pioneers.

The impact has to be related to expectations. Probably the disappointment was greatest for those with expectations of getting rich and least for those with a "nothing ventured, nothing gained" attitude. If for some it was a shattering experience, for others it was a passing episode in their lives. For most it was something they looked back on with nostalgia and a sense of accomplishment. Most of literature, whether written by those who "failed" or "succeeded", reflects positive feelings. Some of this must be discounted by the memory's trick of recalling the pleasant and forgetting the painful experiences. Perhaps Pearl Price Robertson's bitter-sweet memory strikes close to the mark. She admitted that her family's loss of their place was "the frustration of a man's hopes and a woman's dreams." But she ended on a positive note: *Trials & errors lead to defeat*

We have no regrets; life is fuller and sweeter through lessons learned in privation, and around our homestead days some of life's fondest memories still cling... I feel that creating a home and rearing a family in Montana has been a grand success, and my cup seems filled ^{to} overflowing with the sweetness and joy of living.²⁵

*One big family when on upsewing - the
reflected by suspicion - hospitality reserved
for outsiders
Readjustment to gardening culture → VII*

FOOTNOTES

1. In the past decade or so the literature has grown rapidly: T. A. Larson, "Dolls, Vassals, and Drudges - Pioneer Women in the West," Western Historical Quarterly, 3 (January 1972), 5-16; T.A. Larson, "Women's Role in the American West," Montana: the Magazine of Western History, 24 (July 1974), 2-11; Mary W. M. Hargreaves, "Homesteading and Homemaking on the Plains: A Review," Agricultural History, 47 (April 1973), 156-163; Mary W. M. Hargreaves, "Women in the Agricultural Settlement of the Northern Plains," Agricultural History, 50 (January 1976), 179-189; Sheryll Patterson-Black, "Women Homesteaders on the Great Plains Frontier," Frontiers, 1 (Spring 1976), 67-88; Glenda Riley, "Women Pioneers in Iowa," The Flimpest, 57 (March/April 1976), 34-53; Glenda Riley, "Images of the Frontierswoman: Iowa as a Case Study," The Western Historical Quarterly, 8 (April 1977), 189-202; Glenda Riley, "Women on the American Frontier," The Forum Series, (1977), 1-16; Glenda Riley, "Women in the West," Journal of American Culture, 3 (Summer 1980), 311-329; Glenda Riley, Frontierswomen: The Iowa Experience (Ames; The Iowa State University Press, 1981); Julie Roy Jeffrey, Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979); Joanna L. Stratton, Pioneer Women: Voices from the Kansas Frontier (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981); and Sandra L. Myres, Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).
2. Total acreage taken up in Montana was more than thirty-two million acres. Nebraska and Colorado were second and third in total acreage with slightly more than twenty-two million acres each. Bureau of Land Management, Homesteads (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1962), 2, 3. Paul F. Sharp, "The American Farmer and the 'Last Best West,'" Agricultural History, 21 (April 1947), 65-75 claims that western Canada was the last homestead frontier. This distinction may rest with Montana. Sharp says that the ebb tide of settlement in western Canada "was in full evidence by 1913." (p. 73) By then the movement into Montana had not yet reached its peak. Mary Wilma M. Hargreaves, Dry Farming in the Northern Great Plains 1900-1925 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), 376-377. It may seem strange to use the word "frontier" at a time well into the twentieth century and a generation after statehood. The use is with Isaiah Bowman's definition of it in mind: "It is one of the outstanding characteristics of a frontier or pioneering people that they live a life of experiment. Instead of doing the same thing in much the same way from year to year and stabilizing its life to correspond with a settled agricultural practice, the frontier community is in a state of unsettlement. With unending change in strongly accented climatic and economic conditions an entire region may not be able to cease experimentation. The pioneering type of life then becomes not a stage of development but an ultimate result." Isaiah Bowman, "Jordan Country," The Geographical Review, 21 (1931), 22.
3. The following is a list of such literature I have read to date:
Josephine Goldman Anderson, Golden Reflections of By-Gone Days (Tumwater, Washington: Quality Printing, 1973);

James Banks, Wing of Scarlet (Washington, D.C.: Pioneer Publishing Co., 1946);

T. Eugene Barrows, Homestead Days (Chicago: Brownstone Books, 1981);

Edward J. Bell, Jr., Homesteading in Montana, 1911-1923: Life in the Blue Mountain Country (Bozeman: Big Sky Books, 1975);

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Jens L. Scarpholt, As I First Saw Glendive and Eastern Dawson County (n.p.: n.p., n.d.);

Warner Woodson, Pioneering Tales of Montana (New York: Exposition Press, 1965). Unless individuals are quoted, these sources will not be recited. Hargreaves cautions that the value of such narratives is limited "by the coloring inherent in reminiscence, the afterglow through which age views the past." Mary W. M. Hargreaves, "Homesteading and Homemaking on the Plains: A Review," Agricultural History, 47 (April 1973), 158. Another argues that study of autobiographical literature is necessary to balance the stereotypes created by fictional literature. Robert C. Steensma, "'Stay Right There and Toughly It Out': The American Homesteader as Autobiographer," Western Review, 6 (Spring 1969), 10.

4. On the question of who made the decision to move, the literature on earlier frontiers is divided. Faragher and Stansell note that "the husband and father introduced the idea of going West and made the final decision." Johnny Faragher and Christine Stansell, "Women and Their Families on the Overland Trail to California and Oregon, 1842-1867," Feminist Studies, 2 (1975), 153 Schlissel says the "decision to make the journey was always a determination made by men." Lillian Schlissel, "Women's Diaries on the Western Frontier," American Studies, 18 (Spring 1977), 88; and "the decision to leave was reached by husbands and fathers, often over the protests of wives and daughters." Lillian Schlissel, "Mothers and Daughters on the Western Frontier," Frontiers, 3 (1978), 30. On the other hand, Patterson-Black maintains that the picture of the woman as a reluctant pioneer is itself a stereotype and adds that pioneer women were often "partners in a family undertaking rather than reluctant pioneers." Sheryll Patterson-Black, "Women on the Great Plains Frontier," Frontiers, 1 (Spring 1976), 67, 72. Riley says that for every woman who passively followed her husband there was another who sought adventure. Glenda Riley, "Images of the Frontierwoman: Iowa as a Case Study," The Western Historical Quarterly, 8 (April 1977), 199. Jeffrey and Myres make much the same point. Julie Roy Jeffrey, Frontier Women: The Trans-Mississippi West 1840-1880 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1979). 29-33; and Sandra L. Myers, Westering Women and the Frontier Experience 1800-1915 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982), 102.
5. Patterson-Black, "Women Homesteaders" has several estimates on the proportion of women homesteaders. She found that it varies over time. She found it as low as 4.8% in one area in 1891 and as high as 18.2% in 1907 in another area. (68) Several of the Montana accounts include hand drawn maps. They show that women were present in every township. On the basis of these admittedly inadequate pieces of evidence, I estimate that between 1914 and 1918 single women accounted for about 13% of the filings.
6. Davis, The Montana Years, n.p.
7. Shatraw, Thrashin' Time, 3, 89.
8. Hollingshead, Years of No Return, 38.
9. Robertson, "Homestead Days," 230.
10. For comparisons with an earlier frontier see Riley, "Women Pioneers in Iowa."

11. Barrows, Homestead Days, 139-140 tells a gruesome tale: "A young mother, with three children aged five, three, and a baby just learning to walk, was holding down the homestead while the father was away working for needed cash. The mother was doing the laundry while the two older children played outside. They came into the house complaining that the setting hen . . . had pecked them. When the mother went to investigate, she found a huge rattlesnake in the coop attacking the little chicks. She killed the snake and then realized it was probably the snake instead of the hen that had struck the children. She rushed to the house to try to save them. When she got in the house, she found that the baby had apparently pulled himself up to the tub of water sitting on the floor, toppled in, and drowned. In a short time, the two older children died from the poisonous bites. She was so overcome with grief she nearly lost her mind."
12. Vine, "320 or Bust," 7.
13. Jeffrey points out that childbirth was a "female ritual" that required other women's presence. "To be alone at such a moment was a dreadful fate to be avoided." Frontier Women, 69. One federal government survey of maternity care in western Garfield County found that survival rate of the children was surprisingly good. However, inadequate post-natal care for the mothers resulted in a death rate that ranked the area as the worst of the sixteen countries for which the study had data. U.S. Department of Labor, Children's Bureau (Viola I. Paradise), Maternity Care and the Welfare of Young Children in a Homestead County in Montana (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 42.
14. The economic significance of frontier women is discussed in Patterson-Black, "Women Homesteaders," 79; Jeffrey, Frontier Women, 59-62; Dorothy Schwieder, "Labor and Economic Roles of Iowa Farm Wives, 1840-80," in Trudy H. Peterson, ed., Farmers, Bureaucrats, and Middlemen (Washington, D. C.: Howard University Press, 1980); and Glenda Riley, "'Not Gainfully Employed': Women on the Iowa Frontier, 1833-1870," Pacific Historical Review, 49 (May 1980), 237-264.
15. By 1917 perhaps one family in seven or eight had an automobile. There was as yet no real road system. It was in the course of the twenties that the homesteaders evolved what Isaiah Bowman called "A Gasoline Culture." Bowman, "Jordan Country," 48.
16. The tendency to stereotype western women is discussed in Beverly J. Stoeltje, "'A Helpmate for Man Indeed': The Image of the Frontier Woman," Journal of American Folklore, 88 (January-March 1975), 25-41; Glenda Riley, "Images of the Frontierswoman: Iowa as a Case Study," The Western Historical Quarterly, 8 (April 1977), 189-202; Joan M. Jensen and Darlis A. Miller, "The Gentle Tamers Revisited: New Approaches to the History of Women in the American West," Pacific Historical Review, 49 (May 1980), 173-213. Stereotypes in fiction, including the theme of loneliness, are examined in Carol Fairbanks, "Lives of Girls and Women on the Canadian and American Prairies," International Journal of Women's Studies, 2 (September-October 1980), 452-472; and Annette Atkins, "Women of the Farming Frontier: The View from Fiction," Midwest Review, 3 (Spring 1981), 1-10.

17. The Montana ranch woman classic is Nannie Alderson and Helena Huntington Smith, A Bride Goes West (New York & Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, 1942).
18. The importance of sororial life is discussed in Christopher Lash and William R. Taylor, "Two 'Kindred Spirits': Sorority and Family in New England, 1839-1845," New England Quarterly, 36 (March 1963), 23-41; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1 (Autumn 1975), 1-29; Nancy Cott, The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Jeffrey, Frontier Women, Ch. IV; and Blanche Wiesen Cook, "Female Support Networks and Political Activism: Lillian Wald, Crystal Eastman, Emma Goldman," in Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds., A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979).
19. Robertson, "Homestead Days," 233.
20. For ethnic settlement see Frederick C. Luebke, "Ethnic Group Settlement on the Great Plains," The Western Historical Quarterly, 8 (October 1977), 405-430.
21. Anna Zellick, "Immigrant Homesteader in Montana, Anna Pipinich," Environmental Review, 4 (1977), 2-16.
22. As Robert F. Berkhofer observed, "For the frontier to have influence it must change the conception of what is desirable as well as behavior."]
Space, Time, Culture and the New Frontier," Agricultural History, 38 (January, 1964). Did women's performance of non-traditional tasks force them to change their ideas about proper sex roles? The literature does not answer this question with complete agreement. It is one of the themes of Jeffrey, Frontier Women that what women did did not significantly alter what they thought, and that evidence for the West as a liberating force is weak. June Sochen, "Frontier Women: A Model for all Women?," South Dakota History, 7 (Winter 1976), 36-56 says rebels were few. Christiane Fischer, "A Profile of Women in Arizona in Frontier Days," Journal of the West, 16 (July 1977), 42-53 says circumstances on the Arizona frontier "tended to reinforce women in their traditional roles..." (46) Myers in Westering Women strikes a middle ground when she says "that most Western women were not revolutionary. Like Western men, they did not completely break with tradition nor, with very few exceptions, attempt radically to change women's lives and role in society. They did enlarge the scope of woman's place, however, and countered prevailing Eastern arguments about woman's sphere and the cult of true womanhood." (239).
23. Montana women gained the suffrage in 1914 but within a very traditional framework. Suffragists argued the improvement in society could come only with the aid of woman's purity. Doris Buck Ward, "The Winning of Woman Suffrage in Montana," (unpublished MA thesis, Montana State University, 1974). Jeffrey in Frontier Women says community building and reform activity "were not rooted in a new conception of their sex but in an expansive vision of themselves as community moral arbiters...." (189).

24. See the discussions of homesteading in Joseph Kinsey Howard, Montana High, Wide, and Handsome (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1943); Carl Frederic Kraenzel, The Great Plains in Transition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955); and K. Ross Toole, Montana: An Uncommon Land (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959).
25. Robertson, "Homestead Days," 241-242.

THIS MORTGAGE, Made the 9th day of November, A. D. 1926, by D. A. Stone

of Valier residing in the County of Pondera State of Montana,

mortgagor, to the PONDERA VALLEY STATE BANK, a corporation at Conrad, Pondera County, Montana, mortgagee:

(Words used in this instrument in the masculine gender include the feminine and neuter, the singular number includes the plural and the plural the singular.)

WITNESSETH, That the said mortgagor mortgages to the mortgagee the following described personal property, situated in the county of Pondera, State of Montana, to-wit:

One wooden work horse;

Eighteen head of cattle consisting of 6 cows, 2 two year old steers, 3 two year old heifers, 1 one year old steer, 1 yearling heifer, 4 calves and 1 Shorthorn bull;

One set double work harness;

Said property above described being all of the property of the kind described, owned by the mortgagor at the time of making this mortgage; and this mortgage includes, also, all property of like kind, hereafter and during the life of this mortgage, acquired by the mortgagor by either increase, or purchase, or by exchange, or substitution for property herein described, also all of said mortgagor's undivided interest in all the crops of every kind, nature and description, including grass, which have been, or may hereafter be sown, grown, planted, cultivated or harvested during the year A. D. 1927, on the following described real estate, situated, lying and being in the County of Pondera, and State of Montana, to-wit:

S. 31, T. 20N., R. 6E., Sec. 13; N. 2, S. 20, and

of Section No. 24, Township No. 20, Range No. 6 West; all of the above as security

for the payment to the mortgagee of Seven hundred DOLLARS, according to the terms of 200 promissory notes, bearing even date herewith, payable to the order of the mortgagee, and described as follows:

One note for \$100.00, payable Nov. 1st after date; One note for \$, payable after date; One note for \$, payable after date; One note for \$, payable after date;

said notes being for value received, with interest at the rate of eight per cent per annum from date until paid. The said makers, endorsers and guarantors of the notes agree to pay a reasonable attorney's fee, if suit is brought, and hereby severally waive presentment for payment, notice of non-payment and protest.

And also, as security for such further payment and additional sums of money as may, from time to time, hereafter, during the life of this instrument, be advanced and loaned by said mortgagee to said mortgagor, together with the interest thereon, which said further advances when made are to be evidenced by notes from said mortgagor to said mortgagee and are to be as fully secured hereby as though the same were specially described and set forth herein; but for no greater amount, however, than

DOLLARS.

AND THIS MORTGAGE shall be void if such payment be made.

BUT IN CASE DEFAULT BE MADE in payment of the principal or interest as provided in said promissory notes, then the said mortgagee, his agent, attorney, or assigns are, or the Sheriff of any County in which the above described property or any part thereof may be, is hereby empowered and authorized to sell the said goods and chattels, with all and every of the appurtenances, or any part thereof, and out of the money arising from such sale to retain the said principal and interest, together with the costs and charges of making such sale, and reasonable attorney's fee, and the over-plus, if any there be, shall be paid by the party making such sale to the said mortgagor, heirs or assigns. The sale under the said power of sale shall be advertised by notice posted in five public places in said County, one of which shall be posted at the designated place of sale at least five days prior to such sale, giving the time and place of sale and a description of the property to be sold. Such sale must be at public sale and the mortgagee may become a purchaser thereat. The seizure and sale of a part of the said property, if insufficient to pay all indebtedness hereby secured, shall be without prejudice to the right of said mortgagee to hereafter seize and sell the residue of said property or any part thereof.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, That the said mortgagor, heirs, or assigns, shall have the right to remain in possession of the above described property until default be made herein by said mortgagor; provided expressly, however, that if default be made in the payment of the principal or interest, as provided in said promissory notes, or if prior to the maturity of said indebtedness, said described property or any part thereof, shall be attached, seized or levied upon, by or at the instance of any creditors of said mortgagor or claimed by any other person or persons, or if the said mortgagor or any person or persons shall remove, or attempt to remove, said property, or any part thereof from the said County, or shall conceal, make away with, sell, or in any manner dispose of said described property, or any part thereof, or shall attempt so to do, or if the said mortgagee shall at any time consider the possession of said property, or any part thereof, essential to the security of the payment of said promissory notes, then and in such an event, or in either of such events, said mortgagee, his agent or attorney, assigns, or such Sheriff, shall have the right to the immediate possession of said described property and the whole or any part thereof, and shall have the right at his option to take and recover such possession from any person or persons having or claiming the same, with or without suit or process, and for that purpose may enter upon any premises where said property, or any part thereof, may be found, and may at his option, regard the debt secured by this mortgage due and payable and may thereon proceed and sell such property as above provided and apply the proceeds of sale to the satisfaction of said debt as above provided. The exhibition of this mortgage, or a copy thereof, shall be sufficient proof that any person claiming to act for the mortgagee is duly made, constituted and appointed agent or attorney, as the case may be, to do whatsoever is herein authorized to be done by or on behalf of the mortgagee, agent, attorney or assigns.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, In event this mortgage covers a crop, either cereals, roots, or otherwise, either sown, planted or growing, or to be sown, planted or grown, that when the said property hereby mortgaged is gathered or harvested, the said mortgagee, or his assigns, shall be entitled to the immediate possession of the same, and shall have the right to transport and haul the same from the premises wherein the same have been grown and to sell and dispose of the same for the best price obtainable therefor; and that the cost and expense of such hauling and transporting shall be borne and paid by said mortgagor, and shall be covered by the lien of this mortgage, and that until such property is so sold and disposed of by said mortgagee or his assigns, the lien of this mortgage upon said property, wherever the same may be, shall continue and remain in full force and effect, it being understood that any moneys received by said mortgagee, or assigns, upon the sale of said property, less the amounts secured by these presents shall be returned to the said mortgagor, heirs or assigns.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, That the powers conferred by this mortgage are in addition to and not in substitution of the right of the mortgagee to foreclose this mortgage by a suit as in the case of a mortgage on real estate.

THE MORTGAGOR hereby declares and represents to the mortgagee, that the mortgagor owns said property, and possesses lawful right and authority to sell, mortgage and dispose of the same, and that the same is free and clear of all liens and incumbrances, and the loan secured herein is obtained by these representations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said mortgagor hereunto affixes the signature and seal of said mortgagor, the day and year in

On this..... day of..... in the year 19....., before me.....
a Notary Public for the State of Montana, personally appeared.....
known to me to be the person..... whose name..... subscribed to the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that..... he
executed the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at my office in said place the day
year first in this certificate written. August 30th, 1927

Notary's Commission expires.....
Notary Public for the State of Montana
Notary residing at.....

CORPORATE AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }
Pondera } ss.
County of
..... Bell

..... being first duly sworn, on his oath says: that he is an officer of
Pondera Valley State Bank, a corporation at Conrad, Pondera County, Montana, the corporation named in the foregoing mortg
viz: its.....
and makes this affidavit for and on behalf of said corporation: That the said mortgage is made in good faith to secure the amo
named therein, and without any design to hinder, delay or defraud creditors.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this..... day of....., 19.....
Notary's Commission expires August 30th, 1927
Notary Public for the State of Montana
Notary residing at.....

INDIVIDUAL AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }
County of } ss.

..... the mortgagee named in the foreg
mortgage of personal property being duly sworn, says: That the said mortgage is made in good faith, to secure the amount na
herein, and without any design to hinder, delay or defraud creditors.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this..... day of....., 19.....
Notary residing at.....
Notary's Commission expires.....
Notary Public for the State of Montana

CERTIFIED COPY

STATE OF MONTANA, }
County of } ss.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true, correct and complete copy of the original Chattel Mortgage remaining on file in
office, together with the endorsements thereon contained.

Dated at....., Montana, this..... day of....., 19.....
County Clerk and Recorder.

MORTGAGOR'S RECEIPT FOR COPY

I hereby acknowledge that at the time of the making, execution and delivery of this Mortgage, the mortgagee delivered to me a
true and complete copy of the foregoing Mortgage, with acknowledgments shown thereon, without additional cost to me, and th
received said copy of Mortgage.

..... Mortg

No.....
CHATTEL MORTGAGE
.....
TO
Pondera Valley State Bank
CONRAD, MONTANA
.....
STATE OF MONTANA }
County of } ss.
Filed on the..... day of.....
A. D. 19....., at.....
o'clock..... M.
County Clerk and Recorder
By..... Deputy Recorder

HELENA BRANCH

Regional Agricultural Credit Corporation of Spokane, Washington

GENERAL LOAN APPLICATION

HELENA, MONTANA,

DATE June 14th, 1933

ALL QUESTIONS MUST BE ANSWERED FULLY.

- The undersigned hereby applies for a loan of \$ 600.00 for a term of one year (Not to exceed 1 year)
- Name John Parkison Age 49 Wife's Name Chloe Parkison Age 45
 Children (number) 6 Ages 1 to 26 How many boys over 12 years old at home? none
- Firm Name (if Partnership) _____
 Names of Partners _____ Wife's Name _____
- P. O. Address Hanson County Pondera State Montana
- State reason why you are transferring present credit relationship All accounts past due
- State fully purpose of loan and how proceeds will be used To pay up present debt
- CHATTEL MORTGAGE CONVEYING A FIRST LIEN WILL BE GIVEN COVERING THE FOLLOWING PROPERTY:

Number	Kind	Breed	Brand and Its Location	Value Per Head	Total Value
<u>1</u>	Steers 1's	<u>Shorthorn</u>		<u>30 00</u>	<u>30 00</u>
	Steers 2's				
	Steers 3's and over				
<u>1</u>	Heifers 1's	<u>mixed</u>		<u>25 00</u>	<u>25 00</u>
<u>3</u>	Heifers 2's	<u>mixed</u>		<u>40 00</u>	<u>120 00</u>
<u>12</u>	Cows 3's to 7's	<u>mixed</u>		<u>40 00</u>	<u>480 00</u>
	Cows over 7				
<u>10</u>	Calves	<u>mixed</u>		<u>15 00</u>	<u>150 00</u>
<u>1</u>	Bulls	<u>Swiss</u>		<u>50 00</u>	<u>50 00</u>
	Yearling Ewes				
	Breeding Ewes (2's to 6's)				
	Old Ewes (Over 6's)				
	Lambs, Ewes (193)				
	Lambs, Wether (193)				
	Bucks				
<u>3</u>	Hogs			<u>35 00</u>	<u>105 00</u>
	Horses (Work)				
	Horses (Other)				
	Mules				
	Other Livestock				

HARVESTED CROPS ON HAND FOR SALE: TOTAL \$ 925 00

Quantity	Kind of Crop	Have You Whse. Receipts?	Unit Price	Total
	<u>None</u>			

GROWING CROPS: TOTAL \$ _____

Your Share (%)	Number Acres	Kind of Crop	Estimated Yield per Acre	Average Yield Per Acre Past 5 Years
<u>50</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>wheat</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>25</u>
<u>50</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>oats</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>30</u>
<u>50</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>alfalfa</u>	<u>3 tons</u>	<u>new field</u>

FARM MACHINERY AND EQUIPMENT (Total Only) \$ 100.00

FINANCIAL STATEMENT AS OF June 14th, 1933
 Rendered to THE REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL CREDIT CORPORATION OF SPOKANE
 All items in the Financial Statement must be true, correct and answered fully

RESOURCES	Dollars	Cents	LIABILITIES	Dollars	Cents
Cash on Hand and in Bank.....	none		Unsecured Notes Given To:		
Accounts Due (Current).....	none		<u>Pondera Valley St. Bk</u>	803	00
Notes Receivable (Good).....	none				
Stocks and Bonds.....	none				
Farm Produce for Sale:			Chattel Mortgage: (Show security and to whom payable)		
@.....	none		To Whom <u>Valier M.L. & W. Co.</u>	80	00
@.....			Covering <u>1935 crop</u>		
@.....			To Whom		
@.....			Covering		
Livestock: (Total from page 1).....	925	00	Conditional Sale Contract		
Poultry: (State number and kind)			Covering		
<u>20 hens</u> @ <u>50¢</u>	10	00	To Whom		
@.....			Crop Mortgage		
Feed on Hand:			To Whom		
<u>Chicken feed</u> @.....	10	00	Accounts Payable (Give Names):		
@.....			<u>Riggs Merc.</u>	19	00
@.....			<u>Hennessy Lbr. Co.</u>	15	00
@.....			<u>Drs. Power & Patterson</u>	20	00
Other Items:					
<u>Due me for 1935 water</u> @.....	80	00			
@.....					
@.....					
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS.....	1025	00	TOTAL CURRENT DEBTS.....	937	00
REAL ESTATE			Mortgages on Real Estate:		
A. No. Acres Cultivated			Balance Due Mortgagee(s).....		
B. No. Acres..... Pasture or Grazing Land			Unpaid Interest		
C.			Taxes Unpaid		
Machinery and Equipment (Item 8).....			Other Debts		
Automobile					
Other Assets (List Below).....					
			TOTAL LIABILITIES(Y)		
			NET WORTH (Y subtracted from X)	88	00
TOTAL (X).....	1025	00	TOTAL (Same as X).....	1025	00

REAL ESTATE

Description	Sec.	Twp.	Rge.	No. Acres	Value of Land	Mortgaged to (give address)	Amt. of Mtge.

Liabilities as endorser for others? none Are any assets pledged other than mentioned? none
 Life Insurance carried \$ none To whom payable?

Fire Insurance on personal property \$ none On buildings \$

Are any law suits pending or judgments standing against you? Details: none

29. State your estimated income from all sources in 1933.
 Cattle \$ 260.00 Sheep \$ Hogs \$ Grain \$ 200.00 Dairy Products \$ 260.00
 All other products (state kind).....
 Other Income (state source).....

8. UNDERLINE each of the following items of farm machinery which you OWN: Combine , thresher , tractor , truck , plow , disc , drill , weeder , three section harrow , mower , rake , stacker , wagon , feed mill , cream separator , spraying equipment , shop equipment , gas engine , electric motor , binder , header , 1 sets of harness.

Value of Machinery, \$100.00

9. How long have you lived at present address? For 18 years except 4 years in Kalispell
10. Place of previous residence? Stewart, Iowa.
11. How long have you been engaged in farming? All my life
12. From what products do you get your principal income? Cows
13. To whom do you usually sell your products? Creamery
14. How many acres of land owned, title in own name none How many being bought on contract? none
15. How many acres owned, unencumbered, or "clear"? What is their value? \$.....
16. Give the legal description of the LAND YOU OWN: (If buying land on contract, so state.)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION	In Whose Name Is Title Held?	Value of Land and Improvements	Amount of Mortgages or Liens	When Due
		\$	\$	

17. Of the LAND YOU OWN:
 How many acres IRRIGATED? How many CULTIVATED? How many PASTURE?
18. Of the LAND YOU OWN, described above, state the NUMBER OF ACRES, and KIND OF CROP:
 In winter wheat on summer fallow In winter wheat on fall plowing
 In summer fallow to be seeded this crop year Kind of crop
 Stubble land plowed or to be plowed for spring crop Kind of crop
 In other crops (Give acreage and kind of each)
 To be summer fallowed this crop year

19. Give the legal description of the LAND LEASED BY YOU:

LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Owner's Name and Address	Number Acres
<u>N$\frac{1}{2}$ NE$\frac{1}{4}$ Sec. 29-29-3 W.</u>	<u>Pondera Valley St. Bk.</u>	<u>80</u>

20. Of the LAND LEASED BY YOU:
 How many acres IRRIGATED? 76 How many CULTIVATED? 76 How many PASTURE? 4
21. Of the LAND LEASED BY YOU: State the NUMBER OF ACRES, and KIND OF CROP:
 In winter wheat on summer fallow none In winter wheat on fall plowing none
 In summer fallow to be seeded this crop year Kind of crop
 Stubble land plowed or to be plowed for spring crop 32 Kind of crop wht. & Oats.
 In other crops (Give acreage and kind of each) 25 acres alfalfa
 To be summer fallowed this crop year 19 acres

22. What rentals do you pay? Share rent 1/2 to landlord. Landlord furnishes all seed and pays half thresh bill.
 Cash rent \$ per acre. Total cash rent \$
23. Are rentals paid to date? yes If not, amount delinquent \$
24. Are real estate taxes delinquent? have none For what years? Amount \$
25. Are personal property taxes delinquent? no For what years? Amount \$
26. Are there any delinquent water assessments? landowner pays Amount \$
27. Is real estate mortgage interest delinquent? When due? Amount \$
28. Are there any mortgages or liens on your crops or personal property? yes If yes, on what, to whom, and for what amount? 80.00 on 1933 crop to Valier Montana Land & Water Co.

30. From what sources do you plan to repay this loan? Proceeds of sale of cattle
31. From what part of your operations do you make your current living expenses? From cows and some extra work for neighbors.
32. Is the loan applied for sufficient to take care of all your farming and harvesting needs for the current crop year? yes
 If so, what amount of the loan do you want now? \$ all When will the balance be required?
 If more funds will be needed, in addition to the amount applied for, state fully the amount, purpose, and when needed.
none will be needed
33. Does any of the livestock belong to wife or children? none
34. Is there any livestock on farm other than shown in this statement? none
 If so, explain fully.....
35. How much and what kinds of feed do you raise for livestock? alfalfa and oats
36. How much and what kinds do you buy annually? none
 What would the approximate cost be, at present prices? \$.....
37. Are you willing to insure your growing grain against fire, with loss payable to the Corporation? NO Against hail? NO
38. Do you understand that sales proceeds of all mortgaged property must be remitted to the Corporation? yes
39. In what County and State will the mortgaged property be located? Conrad County, Montana.
40. Have you previously applied to us for a loan? yes Amount \$ 50.00 for water fountain
 Approximate date? few days ago, 193..... What was the security offered? crop
41. With what bank do you transact business? none
42. Give names of three persons or firms, with their addresses, with whom you have had accounts. (Banks and merchants.)

Name	Occupation	Address
J.C. Price	Merchants	Conrad, Montana.
H.L. Nowman	Implements	Conrad, Montana.
Peerless Store	Merchants	Manson, Montana.

Applicant is over the age of twenty-one years, in peaceable possession of the above property and his title thereto has never been questioned. There are no judgments outstanding or settlements pending against him in any Court of Record of this State or of the United States of America, except as above stated. There are no unrecorded deeds, mortgages, contracts, executions, attachments, or claims at law against the above property.

The undersigned hereby certifies that he has read the above instrument and knows the contents thereof and that each and every statement contained therein is true of his own knowledge.

FOR INFORMATION OF APPLICANT:

Section 16 (a) of the R. F. C. Act provides:
 Whoever makes any statement knowing it to be false, or whoever willfully over-values any security, for the purpose of obtaining for himself any loan, or for the purpose of influencing in any way the action of the corporation, or for the purpose of obtaining money, property, or anything of value under this Act, shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$5,000 or by imprisonment for not more than two years, or both.

Dated June 14th, 1933

John Parkison
 Signature of Applicant.

(This space for copartnership only)
 A copartnership organized and doing business under the laws of the State of.....

By
 (Copartner of and agent for the copartnership)

The undersigned hereby certifies that he is acquainted with the applicant and to his best knowledge and belief the above financial statement is a full, true, and correct statement of the applicant's financial condition as of the above date.

.....
 (Cashier or Secretary)

 (Name of credit corporation)

NOTE: Give phone number none through telephone exchange at (town).....
 Please give distance and direction of ranch from town, and any other information to help inspector in finding your farm
 Farm is known as 7 miles NW of Conrad and 1 mile NW of Manson, Montana.

 Can livestock be inspected conveniently any day? Yes.

1930's details - mortgage

22nd December 25

THIS MORTGAGE, Made the day of A. D. 19, by E. L. Stokes of Valier residing in the County of Pondera State of Montana,

Mortgagor, to the PONDERA VALLEY STATE BANK, a corporation at Conrad, Pondera County, Montana, mortgagee:

Words used in this instrument in the masculine gender include the feminine and neuter, the singular number includes the plural and the plural the singular.)

WITNESSETH, That the said mortgagor mortgages to the mortgagee the following described personal property, situated in the County of Pondera State of Montana, to-wit:

- Twenty head of mixed cattle consisting of eleven milch cows, three coming two year old heifers and six calves all branded - E U on right ribs; One grey gelding about 8 years old, weight about 1550 lbs; One bay gelding about 9 years old, weight about 1300 lbs; One bay gelding about 9 years old, weight about 1250 lbs; One bay mare, white face, about 9 years old weight about 980 lbs; One Peter Scheuttler farm wagon complete with triple box, seat, neckyoke and eveners; One 8 foot McCormick binder complete with eveners, canvas and sickles; One 10 foot McCormick hay rake; One 10 foot Superior drill complete with eveners and all attachments; One 4 section steel harrow complete with eveners; One Osborne disc; One Emerson disc plow complete with all attachments and eveners; One McCormick mower complete with sickles eveners and all attachments; All small tools and farm utensils of all descriptions; One John Deere sulky plow complete with breaker bottom; Three sets of heavy work harness complete with lines, bridles and collars;

Said property above described being all of the property of the kind described, owned by the mortgagor at the time of making this mortgage; and this mortgage includes, also, all property of like kind, hereafter and during the life of this mortgage, acquired by the mortgagor by either increase, or purchase, or by exchange, or substitution for property herein described, also all of said mortgagor's

one half interest in all the crops of every kind, nature and description, including grass, which have been, or may after be sown, grown, planted, cultivated or harvested during the year A. D. 19, on the following described real estate, situated in the County of Pondera and State of Montana, to-wit:

SW 1/4 sec. 13, Twp. 30 north of range 6 west; NE 1/4 SW 1/4

of Section No. 24, Township No. 30 N, Range No. 6 west; Four hundred twenty seven and 43/100 DOLLARS,

the payment to the mortgagee of one promissory notes, bearing even date herewith, payable to the order of the mortgagee, and defined as follows:

note for \$ 427.43, payable 11-1-26 after date; One note for \$, payable after date; note for \$, payable after date; One note for \$, payable after date;

notes being for value received, with interest at the rate of eight per cent per annum from date until paid. said makers, endorsers and guarantors of the notes agree to pay a reasonable attorney's fee, if suit is brought, and hereby irrevocably waive presentment for payment, notice of non-payment and protest.

And also, as security for such further payment and additional sums of money as may, from time to time, hereafter, during the life of this instrument, be advanced and loaned by said mortgagee to said mortgagor, together with the interest thereon, each said further advances when made are to be evidenced by notes from said mortgagor to said mortgagee and are to be as fully secured hereby as though the same were specially described and set forth herein; but for no greater amount, however, than five hundred DOLLARS.

AND THIS MORTGAGE shall be void if such payment be made.

BUT IN CASE DEFAULT BE MADE in payment of the principal or interest as provided in said promissory notes, then the said mortgagee, his agent, attorney, or assigns are, or the Sheriff of any County in which the above described property or any part thereof may be, is hereby empowered and authorized to sell all the said goods and chattels, with all and every of the appurtenances, or any part thereof, and out of the money arising from such sale to retain the said principal and interest, together with the costs and charges of making such sale, and reasonable attorney's fee, and the over-plus, if any there be, shall be paid to the party making such sale to the said mortgagor, heirs or assigns. The sale under the said power of sale shall be advertised by notice posted in five public places in said County, one of which shall be posted at the designated place of sale at least five days prior to such sale, giving the time and place of sale and a description of the property to be sold. Such sale must be at public sale and the mortgagee may become a purchaser thereat. The seizure and sale of a part of the said property, if insufficient to pay all indebtedness hereby secured, shall be without prejudice to the right of said mortgagee to hereafter seize and sell the residue of said property or any part thereof.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, That the said mortgagor, heirs, or assigns, shall have the right to remain in possession of the above described property until the principal and interest be made herein by said mortgagor; provided expressly, however, that if default be made in the payment of the principal or interest, as provided in said promissory notes, or if prior to the maturity of said indebtedness, said described property or any part thereof, shall be attached, seized or levied upon, by or for the instance of any creditors of said mortgagor or claimed by any other person or persons, or if the said mortgagor or any person or persons shall remove, or attempt to remove, said property, or any part thereof from the said County, or shall conceal, make away with, sell, or in any manner dispose of said described property, or any part thereof, or shall attempt so to do, or if the said mortgagee shall at any time consider the possession of said property, or any part thereof, essential to the security of the payment of said promissory notes, then and in such an event, or in either of such events, said mortgagee, his agent or attorney, or such Sheriff, shall have the right to the immediate possession of said described property and the whole or any part thereof, and shall have the right to enter upon any premises where said property, or any part thereof, may be found, and may at his option, regard the debt secured by this mortgage due and payable and may thereon proceed and sell such property as above provided and apply the proceeds of sale to the satisfaction of said debt as above provided. The exhibition of this mortgage, or a copy thereof, shall be sufficient proof that any person claiming to act for the mortgagee is duly made, constituted and authorized agent or attorney, as the case may be, to do whatsoever is herein authorized to be done by or on behalf of the mortgagee, agent, attorney or assigns.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, In event this mortgage covers a crop, either cereals, roots, or otherwise, either sown, planted or growing, or to be sown, planted or growing, that when the said property hereby mortgaged is gathered or harvested, the said mortgagee, or his assigns, shall be entitled to the immediate possession of the same, and shall have the right to transport and haul the same from the premises wherein the same have been grown and to sell and dispose of the same for the best price obtainable therefor; and that the cost and expense of such hauling and transporting shall be borne and paid by said mortgagor, and shall be covered by the lien of this mortgage; and that until such property is so sold and disposed of by said mortgagee or his assigns, the lien of this mortgage upon said property, wherever the same may be, shall continue and remain in full force and effect, it being understood that any moneys received by said mortgagee, or assigns, upon the sale of said property, less the amounts secured by these presents shall be returned to the said mortgagor, heirs or assigns.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, That the powers conferred by this mortgage are in addition to and not in substitution of the right of the mortgagee to foreclose this mortgage by a suit as in the case of a mortgage on real estate.

THE MORTGAGOR hereby declares and represents to the mortgagee, that the mortgagor owns said property, and possesses lawful right and authority to mortgage and dispose of the same, and that the same is free and clear of all liens and incumbrances, and the loan secured herein is obtained by the representations.

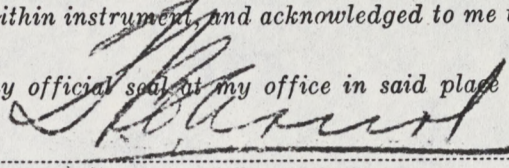
IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said mortgagor hereunto affixes the signature and seal of said mortgagor, the day and year in

STATE OF MONTANA }
ty of Pondera } ss.

On this 22nd day of December in the year 1925, before me, W. D. Arnot
Notary Public for the State of Montana, personally appeared E. L. Stokes
to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that he
knew the contents of the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at my office in said place the day and
first in this certificate written.

Notary's Commission expires August 30th, 1927



Notary Public for the State of Montana.
Conrad, Montana

Notary residing at

CORPORATE AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }
ty of Pondera } ss.

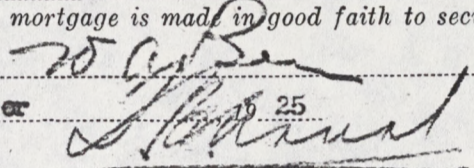
W. A. Bell being first duly sworn, on his oath says: that he is an officer of the
Prairie Valley State Bank, a corporation at Conrad, Pondera County, Montana, the corporation named in the foregoing mortgage,
its Vice President

makes this affidavit for and on behalf of said corporation: That the said mortgage is made in good faith to secure the amount
named therein, and without any design to hinder, delay or defraud creditors.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 22nd day of December

Notary's Commission expires August 30th, 1927

Notary residing at Conrad, Montana



Notary Public for the State of Montana.

INDIVIDUAL AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }
ty of Pondera } ss.

the mortgagee named in the foregoing
mortgage of personal property being duly sworn, says: That the said mortgage is made in good faith, to secure the amount named
therein, and without any design to hinder, delay or defraud creditors.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 19____

Notary residing at _____

Notary's Commission expires _____

Notary Public for the State of Montana.

CERTIFIED COPY

STATE OF MONTANA, }
ty of Pondera } ss.

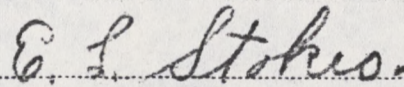
I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true, correct and complete copy of the original Chattel Mortgage remaining on file in my
office together with the endorsements thereon contained.

Dated at _____, Montana, this _____ day of _____, 192____

County Clerk and Recorder.

MORTGAGOR'S RECEIPT FOR COPY

I hereby acknowledge that at the time of the making, execution and delivery of this Mortgage, the mortgagee delivered to me a full,
true and complete copy of the foregoing Mortgage, with acknowledgments shown thereon, without additional cost to me, and that I
received said copy of Mortgage.



Mortgagor

CHattel MORTGAGE

TO
Prairie Valley State Bank
CONRAD, MONTANA

STATE OF MONTANA }
ty of Pondera } ss.

the _____ day of _____
A. D. 19____, at _____

M.

County Clerk and Recorder

Deputy Recorder

THIS MORTGAGE, Made the 2nd day of January A. D. 1925, by D.A. Stokes of Williams residing in the County of Pondera State of Montana,

Mortgagor, to the PONDERA VALLEY STATE BANK, a corporation at Conrad, Pondera County, Montana, mortgagee: Words used in this instrument in the masculine gender include the feminine and neuter, the singular number includes the plural and the plural the singular.)

WITNESSETH, That the said mortgagor mortgages to the mortgagee the following described personal property, situated in the County of Pondera, State of Montana, to-wit:

Twenty seven head of mixed cattle consisting of nine mich cows, three 2 year old heifers, three 2 year old steers, two yearling steers, four yearling heifers and six calves.

One grey gelding, about 7 years old, weight about 1550 lbs;

One bay gelding, about 8 years old, weight about 1300 lbs,

One bay gelding about 8 years old, weight about 1250 lbs;

One bay mare, white face, about 8 years old, waight about 900 lbs;

One Peter Scheuttler farm wagon complete with triple box, seat, neckyoke and eveners;

One 8 foot McCormick binder complere with eveners, canvas and sickles;

One 10 foot McCormick hay rake;

One 10 foot Superior drill complete with eveners and all attachments;

One 4 section steel harrow complete with eveners;

One Osborne disc;

One Emerson disc plow complete with eveners;

One McCormick mower complete with eveners and all attachments;

All small tools and utensils of every description;

One John Deere sulky plow complete with breaker bottom;

Three sets heavy work harness complete with lines, bridles and collars;

Said property above described being all of the property of the kind described, owned by the mortgagor at the time of making this mortgage; and this mortgage includes, also, all property of like kind, hereafter and during the life of this mortgage, acquired by the mortgagor by either increase, or purchase, or by exchange, or substitution for property herein described, also all of said mortgagor's divided one half interest in all the crops of every kind, nature and description, including grass, which have been, or may hereafter be sown, grown, planted, cultivated or harvested during the year A. D. 1925, on the following described real estate, situated, lying and being in the County of Pondera, and State of Montana, to-wit:

S1SE1, SW1 section 13, twp. 30 north of range 6 west: NE1SW1 and

W1SE1 of Section No. 24, Township No. 30 N, Range No. 6 west; all of the above as security

for the payment to the mortgagee of Eleven hundred ninety four and 15/100 DOLLARS,

according to the terms of one promissory notes, bearing even date herewith, payable to the order of the mortgagee, and described as follows:

One note for \$1194.15, payable Nov. 1st after date; One note for \$, payable after date;

One note for \$, payable after date; One note for \$, payable after date;

Said notes being for value received, with interest at the rate of eight per cent per annum from date until paid. The said makers, endorsers and guarantors of the notes agree to pay a reasonable attorney's fee, if suit is brought, and hereby generally waive presentment for payment, notice of non-payment and protest.

And also, as security for such further payment and additional sums of money as may, from time to time, hereafter, during the life of this instrument, be advanced and loaned by said mortgagee to said mortgagor, together with the interest thereon, which said further advances when made are to be evidenced by notes from said mortgagor to said mortgagee and are to be as fully secured hereby as though the same were specially described and set forth herein; but for no greater amount, however, than

Five hundred DOLLARS.

AND THIS MORTGAGE shall be void if such payment be made.

BUT IN CASE DEFAULT BE MADE in payment of the principal or interest as provided in said promissory notes, then the said mortgagee, his agent, attorney, or assigns are, or the Sheriff of any County in which the above described property or any part thereof may be, is hereby empowered and authorized to sell the said goods and chattels, with all and every of the appurtenances, or any part thereof, and out of the money arising from such sale to retain the said principal and interest, together with the costs and charges of making such sale, and reasonable attorney's fee, and the over-plus, if any there be, shall be paid to the party making such sale to the said mortgagor, heirs or assigns. The sale under the said power of sale shall be advertised by notice posted in five public places in said County, one of which shall be posted at the designated place of sale at least five days prior to such sale, giving the time and place of sale and description of the property to be sold. Such sale must be at public sale and the mortgagee may become a purchaser thereat. The seizure and sale of a part of the said property, if insufficient to pay all indebtedness hereby secured, shall be without prejudice to the right of said mortgagee to hereafter seize and sell the residue of said property or any part thereof.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, That the said mortgagor, heirs, or assigns, shall have the right to remain in possession of the above described property until default be made herein by said mortgagor; provided expressly, however, that if default be made in the payment of the principal or interest, as provided in said promissory notes, or if prior to the maturity of said indebtedness, said described property or any part thereof, shall be attached, seized or levied upon, by or at the instance of any creditors of said mortgagor or claimed by any other person or persons, or if the said mortgagor or any person or persons shall remove, or attempt to remove, said property, or any part thereof from the said County, or shall conceal, make away with, sell, or in any manner dispose of said described property, or any part thereof, or shall attempt so to do, or if the said mortgagee shall at any time consider the possession of said property, or any part thereof, essential to the security of the payment of said promissory notes, then and in such an event, or in either of such events, said mortgagee, his agent or attorney, or such Sheriff, shall have the right to the immediate possession of said described property and the whole or any part thereof, and shall have the right in his option to take and recover such possession from any person or persons having or claiming the same, with or without suit or process, and for that purpose may enter upon any premises where said property, or any part thereof, may be found, and may at his option, regard the debt secured by this mortgage due and payable and may thereon proceed and sell such property as above provided and apply the proceeds of sale to the satisfaction of said debt as above provided. The exhibition of this mortgage, or a copy thereof, shall be sufficient proof that any person claiming to act for the mortgagee is duly made, constituted and appointed agent or attorney, as the case may be, to do whatsoever is herein authorized to be done by or on behalf of the mortgagee, agent, attorney or assigns.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, In event this mortgage covers a crop, either cereals, roots, or otherwise, either sown, planted or growing, or to be sown, planted or growing, that when the said property hereby mortgaged is gathered or harvested, the said mortgagee, or his assigns, shall be entitled to the immediate possession of the same, and shall have the right to transport and haul the same from the premises wherein the same have been grown and to sell and dispose of the same for the best price obtainable therefor; and that the cost and expense of such hauling and transporting shall be borne and paid by said mortgagor, and shall be covered by the lien of this mortgage, and that until such property is so sold and disposed of by said mortgagee or his assigns, the lien of this mortgage upon said property, wherever the same may be, shall continue and remain in full force and effect, it being understood that any moneys received by said mortgagee, or assigns, upon the sale of said property, less the amounts secured by these presents shall be returned to the said mortgagor, heirs or assigns.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, That the powers conferred by this mortgage are in addition to and not in substitution of the right of the mortgagee to foreclose this mortgage by a suit as in the case of a mortgage on real estate.

THE MORTGAGOR hereby declares and represents to the mortgagee, that the mortgagor owns said property, and possesses lawful right and authority to execute this mortgage and dispose of the same, and that the same is free and clear of all liens and incumbrances, and the loan secured herein is obtained by the representations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said mortgagor hereunto affixes the signature and seal of said mortgagor, the day and year in

STATE OF MONTANA }
County of Pondera } ss.

On this 2nd day of January in the year 1925, before me, H.L.Gourley
Notary Public for the State of Montana, personally appeared D.A.Stokes
known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at my office in said place the day and year first in this certificate written.

Notary's Commission expires April 22nd, 1927

H.L.Gourley
Notary Public for the State of Montana.
Conrad, Montana
Notary residing at _____

CORPORATE AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }
County of Pondera } ss.

W.A.Bell

being first duly sworn, on his oath says: that he is an officer of the
Pondera Valley State Bank, a corporation at Conrad, Pondera County, Montana, the corporation named in the foregoing mortgage,
viz: its Vice President
and makes this affidavit for and on behalf of said corporation: That the said mortgage is made in good faith to secure the amount
named therein, and without any design to hinder, delay or defraud creditors.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 2nd day of January, 1925

Notary's Commission expires April 22nd, 1927

Notary residing at Conrad, Montana.

W.A.Bell
H.L.Gourley
Notary Public for the State of Montana.

INDIVIDUAL AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }
County of _____ } ss.

the mortgagee named in the foregoing
mortgage of personal property being duly sworn, says: That the said mortgage is made in good faith, to secure the amount named
therein, and without any design to hinder, delay or defraud creditors.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 19____

Notary residing at _____

Notary Public for the State of Montana.

Notary's Commission expires _____

CERTIFIED COPY

STATE OF MONTANA, }
County of _____ } ss.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true, correct and complete copy of the original Chattel Mortgage remaining on file in my
office, together with the endorsements thereon contained.

Dated at _____, Montana, this _____ day of _____, 192____

County Clerk and Recorder.

MORTGAGOR'S RECEIPT FOR COPY

I hereby acknowledge that at the time of the making, execution and delivery of this Mortgage, the mortgagee delivered to me a full,
true and complete copy of the foregoing Mortgage, with acknowledgments shown thereon, without additional cost to me, and that I
received said copy of Mortgage.

D.A.Stokes Mortgageor

No. _____
TEL MORTGAGE
TO
Pondera Valley State Bank
CONRAD, MONTANA
STATE OF MONTANA }
the _____ day of _____
A. D. 19____, at _____
M. _____
County Clerk and Recorder
Deputy Recorder

Mont. Hist. Soc. Archives

Mont., Dept. of Banking Bot #19

Closed Books, 1925-33 Mortgages

Conrad-Valley Pondera St. Bank

STATE OF MONTANA }
County of Pondera } ss.

On this 12th day of May in the year 1924, before me, W.E. Arnot

Notary Public for the State of Montana, personally appeared C.H. Drake
known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within instrument, and acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my official seal at my office in said place the day and year first in this certificate written.

Notary's Commission expires August 30th, 1924

Notary Public for the State of Montana. Conrad, Mont.

Notary residing at

CORPORATE AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }
County of Pondera } ss.

Wm. A. Bell

being first duly sworn, on his oath says: that he is an officer of the Pondera Valley State Bank, a corporation at Conrad, Pondera County, Montana, the corporation named in the foregoing mortgage, Vice President

and makes this affidavit for and on behalf of said corporation: That the said mortgage is made in good faith to secure the amount named therein, and without any design to hinder, delay or defraud creditors.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 12th day of May 1924

Notary's Commission expires August 30th, 1924.

Notary residing at Conrad, Montana.

Notary Public for the State of Montana.

INDIVIDUAL AFFIDAVIT

STATE OF MONTANA }
County of } ss.

the mortgagee named in the foregoing mortgage of personal property being duly sworn, says: That the said mortgage is made in good faith, to secure the amount named therein, and without any design to hinder, delay or defraud creditors.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this _____ day of _____, 19_____

Notary residing at _____

Notary Public for the State of Montana.

Notary's Commission expires _____

CERTIFIED COPY

STATE OF MONTANA, }
County of } ss.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true, correct and complete copy of the original Chattel Mortgage remaining on file in my office, together with the endorsements thereon contained.

Dated at _____, Montana, this _____ day of _____, 192_____

County Clerk and Recorder.

MORTGAGOR'S RECEIPT FOR COPY

I hereby acknowledge that at the time of the making, execution and delivery of this Mortgage, the mortgagee delivered to me a full, true and complete copy of the foregoing Mortgage, with acknowledgments shown thereon, without additional cost to me, and that I received said copy of Mortgage.

Mortgagor

No. CHATTEL MORTGAGE

TO Valley State Bank CONRAD, MONTANA

STATE OF MONTANA } ss.

_____ day of _____, A. D. 19_____ at _____ M.

County Clerk and Recorder

Deputy Recorder

THIS MORTGAGE, Made the 10th day of May A. D. 19 24, by C.H. Drake
of Conrad residing in the County of Pondera State of Montana,
mortgagor, to the PONDERA VALLEY STATE BANK, a corporation at Conrad, Pondera County, Montana, mortgagee:

(Words used in this instrument in the masculine gender include the feminine and neuter, the singular number includes the plural and the plural the singular.)

WITNESSETH, That the said mortgagor mortgages to the mortgagee the following described personal property, situated in the county of Pondera, State of Montana, to-wit:

Ten head of work horses consisting of 6 head about 10 years old, and 4 head about 5 years old; Three saddle horses about 8 years old, one 2 year old colt, one yearling colt;

Twenty two head of cattle consisting of 9 milch cows, one 2 year old steer, two 2 year old heifers, 6 yearlings and four calves;

One 12 foot Superior drill complete with neckyoke and eveners;

One 8 foot Deering binder complete with canvas, sickles and all attachments;

One disc gang plow;

One 14 inch sulky plow complete;

One 2 section harrow;

One 8 foot double disc, tandem;

One Martin ditcher;

One sausage mill;

One Weber wagon complete with grain tank;

All neckyokes, double trees and

One sulky rake;

eveners. All small tools of every description.

One farm wagon and hay rack;

One Fanning mill complete;

One 6 H.P. gas engine and feed grinder complete;

One DeLaval cream separator complete;

Four sets double work harness complete with lines, bridles and collars;

One set buggy harness;

The above property being all property owned and being located on what is known as the Drake ranch;

Said property above described being all of the property of the kind described, owned by the mortgagor at the time of making this mortgage; and this mortgage includes, also, all property of like kind, hereafter and during the life of this mortgage, acquired by the mortgagor by either increase, or purchase, or by exchange, or substitution for property herein described, also all of said mortgagor's undivided interest in all the crops of every kind, nature and description, including grass, which have been, or may hereafter be sown, grown, planted, cultivated or harvested during the year A. D. 19....., on the following described real estate, situated, lying and being in the County of....., and State of Montana, to-wit:

.....of Section No....., Township No....., Range No.....; all of the above as security for the payment to the mortgagee of ~~Eight thousand~~ Three thousand DOLLARS, according to the terms of one promissory notes, bearing even date herewith, payable to the order of the mortgagee, and described as follows:

One note for \$ 3,000.00, payable On Demand after date; One note for \$....., payable..... after date;
One note for \$....., payable..... after date; One note for \$....., payable..... after date;

said notes being for value received, with interest at the rate of six per cent per annum from..... date..... until paid. The said makers, endorsers and guarantors of the notes agree to pay a reasonable attorney's fee, if suit is brought, and hereby severally waive presentment for payment, notice of non-payment and protest.

And also, as security for such further payment and additional sums of money as may, from time to time, hereafter, during the life of this instrument, be advanced and loaned by said mortgagee to said mortgagor, together with the interest thereon, which said further advances when made are to be evidenced by notes from said mortgagor to said mortgagee and are to be as fully secured hereby as though the same were specially described and set forth herein; but for no greater amount, however, than

Three thousand DOLLARS.

AND THIS MORTGAGE shall be void if such payment be made.

BUT IN CASE DEFAULT BE MADE in payment of the principal or interest as provided in said promissory notes, then the said mortgagee, his agent, attorney, or assigns are, or the Sheriff of any County in which the above described property or any part thereof may be, is hereby empowered and authorized to sell the said goods and chattels, with all and every of the appurtenances, or any part thereof, and out of the money arising from such sale to retain the said principal and interest, together with the costs and charges of making such sale, and reasonable attorney's fee, and the over-plus, if any there be, shall be paid by the party making such sale to the said mortgagor, heirs or assigns. The sale under the said power of sale shall be advertised by notice posted in five public places in said County, one of which shall be posted at the designated place of sale at least five days prior to such sale, giving the time and place of sale and a description of the property to be sold. Such sale must be at public sale and the mortgagee may become a purchaser thereat. The seizure and sale of a part of the said property, if insufficient to pay all indebtedness hereby secured, shall be without prejudice to the right of said mortgagee to hereafter seize and sell the residue of said property or any part thereof.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, That the said mortgagor, heirs, or assigns, shall have the right to remain in possession of the above described property until default be made herein by said mortgagor; provided expressly, however, that if default be made in the payment of the principal or interest, as provided in said promissory notes, or if prior to the maturity of said indebtedness, said described property or any part thereof, shall be attached, seized or levied upon, by or at the instance of any creditors of said mortgagor or claimed by any other person or persons, or if the said mortgagor or any person or persons shall remove, or attempt to remove, said property, or any part thereof from the said County, or shall conceal, make away with, sell, or in any manner dispose of said described property, or any part thereof, or shall attempt so to do, or if the said mortgagee shall at any time consider the possession of said property, or any part thereof, essential to the security of the payment of said promissory notes, then and in such an event, or in either of such events, said mortgagee, his agent or attorney, assigns, or such Sheriff, shall have the right to the immediate possession of said described property and the whole or any part thereof, and shall have the right at his option to take and recover such possession from any person or persons having or claiming the same, with or without suit or process, and for that purpose may enter upon any premises where said property, or any part thereof, may be found, and may at his option, regard the debt secured by this mortgage due and payable and may thereon proceed and sell such property as above provided and apply the proceeds of sale to the satisfaction of said debt as above provided. The exhibition of this mortgage, or a copy thereof, shall be sufficient proof that any person claiming to act for the mortgagee is duly made, constituted and appointed agent or attorney, as the case may be, to do whatsoever is herein authorized to be done by or on behalf of the mortgagee, agent, attorney or assigns.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, In event this mortgage covers a crop, either cereals, roots, or otherwise, either sown, planted or growing, or to be sown, planted or grown, that when the said property hereby mortgaged is gathered or harvested, the said mortgagee, or his assigns, shall be entitled to the immediate possession of the same, and shall have the right to transport and haul the same from the premises wherein the same have been grown and to sell and dispose of the same for the best price obtainable therefor; and that the cost and expense of such hauling and transporting shall be borne and paid by said mortgagor, and shall be covered by the lien of this mortgage, and that until such property is so sold and disposed of by said mortgagee or his assigns, the lien of this mortgage upon said property, wherever the same may be, shall continue and remain in full force and effect, it being understood that any moneys received by said mortgagee, or assigns, upon the sale of said property, less the amounts secured by these presents shall be returned to the said mortgagor, heirs or assigns.

IT IS FURTHER AGREED, That the powers conferred by this mortgage are in addition to and not in substitution of the right of the mortgagee to foreclose this mortgage by a suit as in the case of a mortgage on real estate.

THE MORTGAGOR hereby declares and represents to the mortgagee, that the mortgagor owns said property, and possesses lawful right and authority to sell, mortgage and dispose of the same, and that the same is free and clear of all liens and incumbrances, and the loan secured herein is obtained by these representations.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said mortgagor hereunto affixes the signature and seal of said mortgagor, the day and year in

4 Teacher's Pets

NYT, Nov. 1 '03

CARTWRIGHT, N.D.

The Stevenson School is a one-room schoolhouse here in the badlands along the North Dakota-Montana border. It has four students — and that's assuming that Lexie Russell and Josh Rockeman, both 8, can canoe across the Little Missouri River to get to school.

When the river is too choked with ice to cross safely, Lexie and Josh stay on their ranches, and school attendance drops by half.

Public one-room schoolhouses like this one are disappearing, with fewer than 400 today, compared with 196,000 in 1917. But just as they're fading away, there is also a growing recognition that they offer important lessons for schools everywhere — not just about teaching children, but also about raising them.

America has gone too far in creating huge schools with fine facilities — but no sense of belonging. One-room schoolhouses are a reminder that what makes a great education is often those intangibles in which small schools excel: close bonds among students and with teachers, parental involvement and a cozy atmosphere that builds self-confidence and ensures that no one slips through the cracks.

"These are more like my kids than my students," said Jan Bergstrom, Stevenson's teacher. Mrs. Bergstrom once taught at a Florida school with 300 students per grade, and she says the one-room schoolhouse is incomparably the best approach she has seen.

Of course, there are disadvantages. Stevenson kids have a team name, the Rattlesnakes, but it's impossible to compete in soccer when your entire student body, grades one to eight, consists of two boys and two girls.

After World War II, America rapidly consolidated schools. But education experts now agree that we went too far, so we're belatedly trying to recreate smaller, more intimate institutions. I heartily endorse the suggestion of one expert who told me that the simplest way to improve American education would be to blow up large schools (note to students: don't take on this task yourselves).

I come to my enthusiasm for small schools because I attended one in Yamhill, Ore. True, my wife regards me as only marginally educated because I never really learned calculus, but it was wonderful for building self-esteem and encouraging us to try things we weren't good at. I have

been a lifelong runner because Coach Turner begged me to join cross-country so he could have a full team.

There are other pluses: a friend boasts of graduating second in her high school class. She doesn't add that her class had only two students.

Some elements of one-room schoolhouses are being adopted around the country, including keeping students with the same teacher for two or more years, mixing students of different ages and encouraging older students to help younger ones — there's no better way for a child to learn something than to teach it. Moreover,

Lessons of a little school on the prairie.

while public one-room schoolhouses are disappearing, variants like charter schools, home schools and tiny religious schools are booming.

At another one-room schoolhouse, Horse Creek, I met the three regular students: a second-grade boy, Kelby Indergard, and fifth-grade twins, Layton and Jordan ("I'm 14 minutes older") Oian. They wanted to know what large schools were like, and they were floored to hear of a high school graduating class so vast it had 43 students. Literally floored, in the case of Kelby, who dramatically clapped his forehead and keeled over.

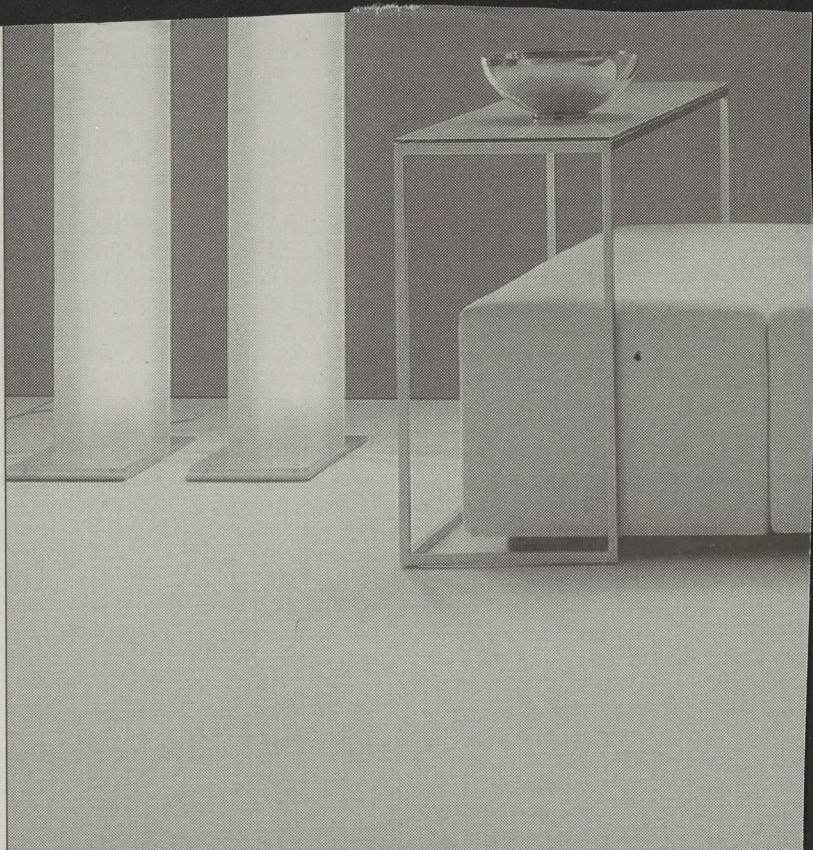
"That's a lot of people," Layton said soberly. "I've never been around that many people."

Perhaps I'm drunk on nostalgia, but I believe we should push harder to recreate small schools. Surprisingly, a pioneer in that effort is far from the Great Plains: New York City, where Mayor Michael Bloomberg is breaking up some large high schools and trying to open 50 charter schools as part of an effort to create 200 small schools.

Good for Mayor Bloomberg, and for Los Angeles, which is thinking about following his lead.

"The smaller the school," says Andrew Gulliford, author of an admiring book about one-room schoolhouses, "the more parental involvement, the more the sense of belonging, the less vandalism, the better things work."

Oops. In Wednesday's column on the Buffalo Commons, I misspelled the name of the town of Rawson in the last paragraph. Sorry, Rawson. □



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Side table \$675

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MANHATTAN

WASH

whistling

Angus's voice?

Kissing

The Spooning Season

opening scene: Mother plunked; pregnant?

- keeps her back to Susan, not a good sign

- diary pp. mark Susan's 1st person sections

scenes for either books:

- train in winter

- noodle claim

- school house / Duff family life

- Susan/Wesley

spend summer '99 creating Susan Duff.

- physical descriptn



LIFE ON THE MARGIN
THE EVOLUTION OF THE WANING WEST

by William Wyckoff

In the end, though, the miners' radicalism and united strength backfired. Marttunen's joy in the miners' victory in 1922 did not last long. A relatively minor player in a much larger national operation, Red Lodge miners had clout only so long as they provided needed material for the operation of the Northern Pacific Railroad. Frustrated by workers' demands and the high cost of taking coal out through underground tunnels, the Northern Pacific decided in the early 1920s to shift part of its operations to Colstrip in southeastern Montana. Coal near the surface there yielded more easily to mechanized strip-mining techniques that required fewer workers. Also, in this new operation the railroad company could subcontract for the coal through a separate firm, skirting union agreements and establishing Colstrip as a firmly nonunion operation.³⁴

In 1924 the Northwestern Improvement Company closed down the West Side Mine and Red Lodge lost a large chunk of its corporate payroll. Some miners found

work at the East Side Mine or over the hill at the Bearcreek and Washoe operations; many had already given up after the prolonged series of strikes. Red Lodge, the Coal Metropolis, began to shrink and draw in upon itself. The East Side Mine held out until 1932, but then the NWIC pulled out of the little town completely. The coal identity that had marked Red Lodge for over four decades was gone, leaving residents to work out new ways of defining themselves and their town in the middle years of the twentieth century. *M*

BONNIE CHRISTENSEN grew up in Great Falls, Montana. She received her B.A. and M.A. from the University of Montana and her Ph.D. from the University of Washington. She now teaches in Honolulu, Hawaii. This article is adapted from *Red Lodge and the Mythic West: Coal Miners to Cowboys*, forthcoming in autumn 2002, by permission of the University Press of Kansas.

In 1924 the Northwestern Improvement Company closed down Red Lodge's West Side Mine and the coal metropolis began to shrink. The East Side Mine, pictured below in 1925, held out until the company pulled out of Red Lodge completely in 1932, leaving the coal-mining city in need of a fresh identity and a new economic base.

Flash's Studio, Red Lodge, Montana

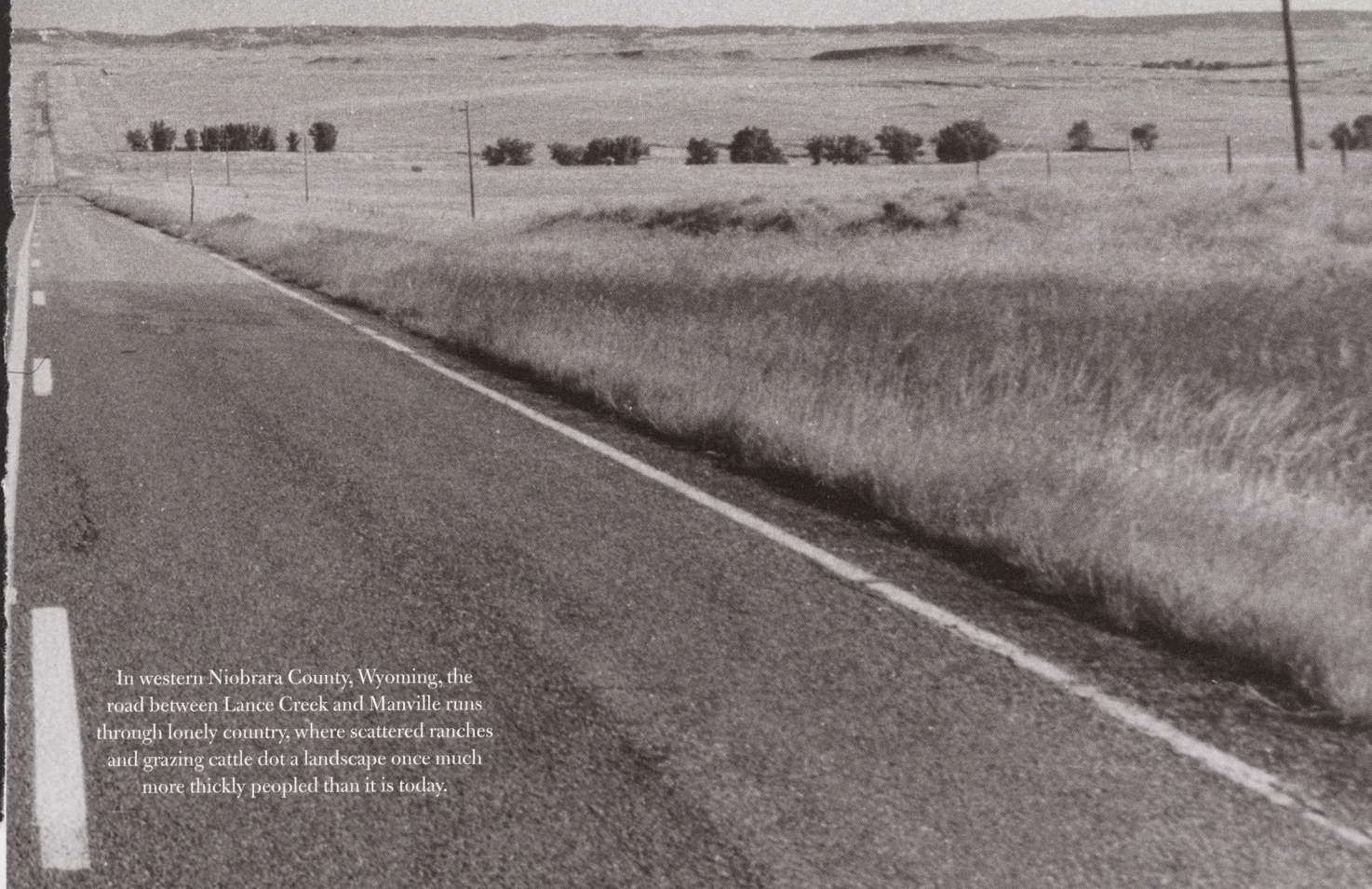


THE 2000 CENSUS REVEALS DRAMATIC CONTRASTS WITHIN THE AMERICAN WEST.

Parts of the West continue to see spectacular population growth as people flock to the region's major metropolitan areas and to a growing assortment of recreational and retirement settings. But other parts of the West have followed a very different path. This is the West that the early-twenty-first century has largely forgotten about, a "Waning West" that has *lost* population for decades, where closed schools, retiring doctors, and For Sale signs are the all-too-common realities of everyday life. Indeed, dozens of western counties have fewer people today than they did eighty years ago.¹ Each of these western places has its own character, a personality born in optimism but later weathered by misfortune and toughened by time.

Where is the Waning West? Walk the quiet streets of Manville, Wyoming, for example, and it is easy to listen to the wind. You can listen to it whispering through the empty schoolyard, pulling at the awning above the vacant general store, and wandering among now-forgotten neighborhoods. Weeds reclaim the buckled sidewalks and tangled undergrowth has appeared between scattered, long-abandoned buildings. Summer sun and winter blizzards have peeled once brightly painted homes, leaving roughened textures on the landscape. The earlier days of boom farming, oil drilling, busy train schedules, and a bustling local economy have long passed. While a few residents remain in Manville, most of the town is orphaned from another time. Its landscape, created when people and money flowed into the area a century ago, is now only a quiet relic of an earlier era, a lingering afterimage that, once burned upon the western scene, is painfully slow to disappear.

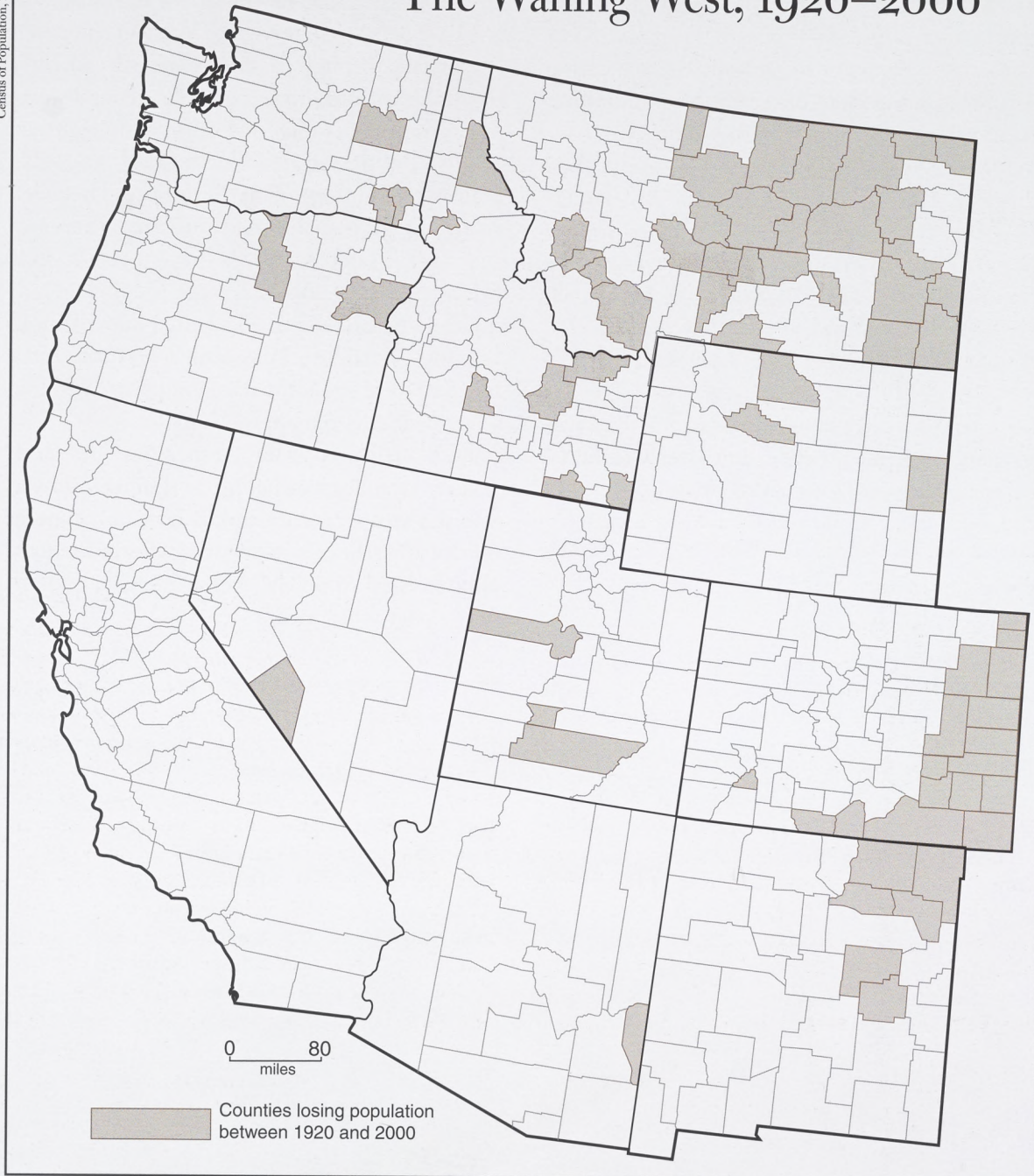
Unless otherwise noted, photographs are courtesy the author



In western Niobrara County, Wyoming, the road between Lance Creek and Manville runs through lonely country, where scattered ranches and grazing cattle dot a landscape once much more thickly peopled than it is today.

Census of Population, 1920, 2000

The Waning West, 1920–2000



The regional geography of the Waning West reveals no simple pattern, but it hints at some of the underlying processes at work. Not surprisingly, the West's larger urban areas have all gained population since 1920. Indeed, every California county, both urban and rural, is more thickly peopled today than it was at the end of World War I. Elsewhere, twentieth-century surges in population greatly boosted numbers across many areas of the intermountain West as well as

coastal portions of the Pacific Northwest. Remarkably, however, there are still seventy-five counties in the eleven western states that have fewer people today than they did eighty years ago. Typically, these are settings where an extractive economy has not produced the new jobs necessary for sustained population growth. The agricultural settings of the High Plains and inland Pacific Northwest provide one obvious example.² The legacy of mining has produced similar results in areas of Colorado, Utah, and



Manville, Wyoming's quiet streets, empty storefronts, and older homes (left) typify the Waning West. As the map on page 32 shows, dozens of counties in the American West have fewer people today than they did in 1920. Many of these places depended upon natural resource-oriented economies that never shifted from the extractive sector in later years.

western Montana. Rich veins of gold, silver, copper, and coal once drew thousands to such places, but as resources petered out, people left.³ The West has a long heritage of such economic booms and busts. Fevered promotions of western farmlands frequently yielded nothing but withered crops and unpaid mortgages, and the ghost town often lurked but one step beyond the mining rush.

As historian William Robbins and others have argued, these dramatically different patterns of population gain and loss across the West remind us of the larger historical and geographical impacts of capitalism within the region.⁴ Indeed, the human geographies of the twenty-first century West continue to express capitalism's shifting imprint. Capitalism's story has played out differently in different settings. The complex forces that draw money and people to a place often change through time and once-pivotal localities can become marginalized as economic conditions change. Investment dries up, hopes for economic gain fade, and populations dwindle. The result is a deeply divided regional landscape in which some westerners

struggle to handle the influx of people while an hour or two away streets and businesses sit empty and population loss persists.

Population losses in the West need to be seen in the context of earlier unsustainable gains. The period between 1870 and 1920 saw the region's population surge almost nine-fold to about 9 million residents. Millions of acres of cropland were occupied, both in dryland farming operations and in ever more ambitious irrigation schemes. Elsewhere, mining, petroleum, and lumber sparked hundreds of other new western settlements. Dynamic cities such as San Francisco, Seattle, Butte, and Pueblo saw their skylines rise atop the bounty of the region's natural resources. Smaller towns often boomed as well. For example, in Montana, between 1900 and 1920, Miles City blossomed from 1,900 to 8,000 residents and Lewistown and Havre grew more than five-fold from populations of around 1,000 to more than 5,000 people each. Across much of the West, sawmills hummed, smelters belched their telltale fumes, and grain elevators brimmed with ever-larger annual

1. Invaluable assessments of the Waning West include Dayton Duncan, *Miles from Nowhere: Tales from America's Contemporary Frontier* (New York, 1993); Robert E. Lang, Deborah Epstein Popper, and Frank J. Popper, "Progress of the Nation: The Settlement History of the Enduring American Frontier," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 26 (Autumn 1995), 289-307; Richard E. Lonsdale and J. Clark Archer, "Emptying Areas of the United States, 1990-1995," *Journal of Geography*, 97 (May/June 1998), 108-22; Thomas M. Power, *Lost Landscapes and Failed Economies: The Search for a Value of Place* (Covelo, Calif., 1996); and Jonathan Raban, *Bad Land: An American Romance* (New York, 1996).

2. The story of agricultural decline in rural America is assessed in a variety of settings by Bradley Baltensperger, "A County That Has Gone Downhill," *Geographical Review*, 81 (October 1991), 433-42; Emery N. Castle, ed., *The Changing American Countryside: Rural People and Places* (Lawrence, Kans., 1995); and Richard Rathge and Paula Highman, "Population Change in the Great Plains: A History of Prolonged Decline," *Rural Development Perspectives*, 13 (June 1998), 19-26.

3. For perspectives on economic declines in mining, see Richard V. Francaviglia, *Hard Places: Reading the Landscape of America's Historic Mining Districts* (Ames, Iowa, 1991); Patricia Limerick, "Haunted by Rhyolite: Learning from the Landscape of Failure," in *The Big Empty: Essays on the Land as Narrative*, ed. Leonard Engel (Albuquerque, 1994), 27-47; Michael P. Malone, "The Collapse of Western Metal Mining: An Historical Epitaph," *Pacific Historical Review*, 55 (August 1986), 455-64; and William Wyckoff, "Postindustrial Butte," *Geographical Review*, 85 (October 1995), 478-96.

4. William G. Robbins, "In Pursuit of Historical Explanation: Capitalism as a Conceptual Tool for Knowing the American West," *Western Historical Quarterly*, 30 (Autumn 1999), 277-93; and William Wyckoff, "Postindustrial Butte."

5. Statistics in this and following paragraphs taken from the United States Bureau of the Census, *Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900* (Washington, D.C., 1901-1902), Census of Population; and United States Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States, 1920* (Washington, D.C., 1921-1922), Census of Population.

harvests, all signs of a prosperity that few felt would end.⁵

Indeed, there were many reasons to be optimistic. By 1917 more than 250,000 miles of railroad track crisscrossed the United States, and most of the country's new construction lay in the West, vastly increasing the region's accessibility to the world beyond. Demand for many western commodities skyrocketed between 1900 and 1920. Rising prices for grain and livestock encouraged farmers to expand their operations, and a series of generally good growing years added to the enthusiasm. Total farm profits in the West more than doubled between 1914 and 1918, and more than 25 million acres of western farmland went into wheat production during the same period. Many western mining ventures also prospered, propelled by growing demand for industrial metals such as copper, lead, and zinc. The fruits of industrial capitalism brought similar opportunities for coal mining and oil and gas drilling elsewhere in the region. A supportive federal government spurred population growth as well. More liberal land disposal policies, investments in western irrigation, World War I price supports for strategic agricultural and mining commodities, new national parks and forests, and funding for highway construction all exemplified the growing federal largesse. A rising tide of immigrant populations as well as a thriving "back to the land" movement among disaffected eastern urbanites also sent growing numbers of people into the more sparsely settled West.

In hindsight, it is amazing that so many people became convinced there were so many opportunities in places where so few really existed. Indeed, after the early 1920s, the "unsettling" of many corners of the West accelerated, and with it came a recognition that yesterday's lands of unlimited opportunity were destined to be tomorrow's communities of struggle and decline. American capitalism was evolving, and the growth sectors of the economy were shifting. These shifts benefited some locations in the West but harmed others. The result was highly uneven economic growth, not only through time but also from place to place. Generally speaking, farming and natural resource extraction became less important in the post-1920 economy while those communities oriented around value-added manufacturing, urban services, mass consumption, and recreational activities prospered.⁶

Jobs and people followed the trend: many older districts in the resource economy lost laborers as techniques of natural resource extraction changed and fewer workers

were needed. These western settings were left with excess laborers who migrated to greener economic pastures elsewhere, typically to growing urban locations where factory and service jobs beckoned. Better transportation and communications infrastructure often made the exodus easier and made many smaller western towns unnecessary as once-isolated residents could easily motor to distant larger cities.⁷ World War II also sent thousands of young people away from many western hinterlands, and many of these itinerants never returned.⁸ The results of these shifts were dramatic. Between 1940 and 1990, the population of Los Angeles more than quadrupled to over 14.5 million and those of Seattle, Denver, and Salt Lake City each grew five-fold. Just as importantly, dozens of other western places shrank in size, a process that, once initiated, proved difficult to reverse.

What has been left behind in the wake of these momentous twentieth-century changes?

The Waning West is still home to many residents who have strong ties to their communities, who have endured job losses, business closures, falling land prices, and economic hardships that create a way of life very different from that of the growing cities or high-amenity recreational areas.⁹ Unemployment remains high, the local café has fewer customers, and leaner paychecks are cashed at the bank. Gradually, residents begin to shop elsewhere as smaller local retailers struggle to survive. Young, skilled workers in these communities leave town as they witness the downward spiral. In agricultural settings, poorer cropland often goes out of production, and in similar fashion, economically marginal mining and lumbering operations are also caught in painful economic adjustments. It is a frustrating process for such communities because the root economic causes of such structural declines are often far removed from the localities in which they are played out. "Market conditions," new corporate initiatives, or economic competition from thousands of miles away remain beyond the control of these communities. These hinterlands are small cogs in a global economy that is shifting gears in ways that favor one part of the world over another.

People in the Waning West have responded in different ways to these changing economic conditions. Mobile residents simply vote with their feet. But those residents who remain behind, those perhaps more rooted in place or simply unable to move, must economically and psychologically adjust to the reality of fewer jobs, fewer

6. For background on these important post-1920 shifts, see Carl Abbott, *The Metropolitan Frontier: Cities in the Modern American West* (Tucson, 1993); and Michael P. Malone and Richard W. Etulain, *The American West: A Twentieth-Century History* (Lincoln, 1989), 87-126, 219-63.

7. Some of the geographical consequences of technological change in the West are assessed in Abbott, *Metropolitan Frontier*, 149-72; and William Wyckoff, *Creating Colorado: The Making of a Western American Landscape, 1860-1940* (New Haven, Conn., 1999), 259-63.

8. The impact of World War II on western places and population trends is examined by Abbott, *Metropolitan Frontier*, 3-29; and by Gerald D. Nash, *World War II and the West: Reshaping the Economy* (Lincoln, 1990).

St. Anthony's Parish Church in Aguilar, Las Animas County, Colorado. A part of the Waning West, southern Colorado's Las Animas County was once home to more than 40,000 people, including coal miners, Hispano farmers, and cattlemen. Today, only 15,000 residents remain in the county.



services, lower home values, and less money. An optimistic minority sees the downturn as temporary and argues that rising commodity prices or new resource discoveries just around the corner might well rekindle the traditional economy. More commonly, a coalition of local government officials and businesses push for attracting new jobs and industries to the community.¹⁰ Sometimes, a single large employer is sought to dramatically turn around local fortunes, while in other settings boosters argue that small businesses, tourists, and retirees should all be attracted to preserve a sense of community but still spark the economy. For many, however, fatalism prevails, and they are resigned to accept a less healthy economy in exchange for what they regard as a better quality of life and a slower pace of change.

The social fabric of the Waning West is also vulnerable. For many, the psychological stresses are considerable. After all, these communities were founded in an earlier generation of rising expectations, only to see that myth dissipate in failure and frustration. One fundamental demographic fact is undeniable: more people are dying in such localities than are being born. Families cope with children living far from home after they leave high school for distant universities and jobs. Schools see declining numbers, and many are forced to close. (There is nothing more painful to a community than seeing its high school boarded up.) The result is that dwindling numbers of children are bussed to distant schools where they mingle with others who live many miles away. Church congrega-

tions suffer a similar fate.

In myriad ways, many of the small conveniences of everyday living disappear, and these gradual changes can diminish the quality of life in the Waning West. Movie theaters close, the daily newspaper becomes a weekly, and the once-easy trip to the neighborhood doctor or dentist becomes a 150-mile drive. Ironically, in the age of jet travel and Internet commerce, such communities become ever more isolated from many of the daily conveniences that urban residents take for granted.

Western landscapes tell this story of life on the margin and reveal a predictable pattern of creation and decline. As settlers initially rushed into such localities, they created a landscape designed to extract wealth from a seemingly inexhaustible natural environment. As growth continued, substantial brick and stone buildings replaced frontier tents and shanties. Schools, churches, bank offices, business blocks, and tree-lined avenues soon followed. In portions of the West where economic expansion has continued unabated to the present, little remains of this earlier visible scene because subsequent growth has swept it away. But such is not the case within the Waning West, where the lack of sustained economic growth and population losses have ossified an older townscape, poignantly preserving a picture of earlier, more promising times.

These signatures of decline are certainly visible within the Waning West.¹¹ Wander the back roads of central Utah, eastern Wyoming, or north-central Montana where

9. The economic impacts of decline are examined in Castle, ed., *Changing American Countryside*, 213-28; Art Gallaher, Jr., and Harland Padfield, eds., *The Dying Community* (Albuquerque, 1980); Tim Knapp, "Rust in the Wheatbelt: The Social Impacts of Industrial Decline in a Rural Kansas Community," *Sociological Inquiry*, 65 (February 1995), 47-66; and Lonsdale and Archer, "Emptying Areas."

10. A number of studies illustrate the joint role played by politicians and entrepreneurs in stimulating local economic development. For example, see David Harvey, "From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism," *Geografiska Annaler*, 71, no. 1 (1989), 3-17; J. R. Logan and H. L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place* (Berkeley, Calif., 1987); and Wyckoff, "Postindustrial Butte."

It is a quiet day in Dilia, Guadalupe County, New Mexico (right). Vacant houses, farms, and businesses are common in this county east of Albuquerque, where population has fallen from more than 8,000 people in 1920 to less than 5,000 today.



An abandoned home (left) near Segundo, Las Animas County, Colorado, shows how capitalism's shifting winds have shaped the rural landscape of the Waning West. Many farmers and ranchers in southern Colorado's Purgatoire Valley have seen their sons and daughters migrate elsewhere.

the sparseness of human settlement is a tangible, almost haunting part of the scenery. Look how far away the nearest farmhouse is and ponder the empty road ahead. One often forgets that such farm and ranch country was much more thickly settled in our great-grandparents' time than it is today. The clues are there: side roads to nowhere, closed post offices and shuttered schools, scattered heaps of weathered boards and leaning fences, former fields now home to grass and a few cows. Main Street and small-town landscapes also reveal the face of tough times.¹² Vacant storefronts, empty lots, and quiet downtown intersections reflect the affluence of another time and a different set of economic rules that just do not play out the way they once did. All of these settings within the Waning West are at once a testimony to human endurance, faded optimism, and the realization that the West is still very much a region

in the making, a land and people actively adjusting to the unprecedented changes of the past century.

Eastern Wyoming's Niobrara County superbly exemplifies the Waning West. It remains the least populated county in the nation's least populated state. It is a quiet rectangle of grass that spans the great open spaces between the Black Hills and the North Platte River. Early in the twentieth century, more than 6,000 residents called the county home, and they believed its natural resource base guaranteed a bright and prosperous future. Such hopes, however, flickered in later years, and the 2,400 people who remain in the county today bear witness to a bittersweet past.

Niobrara County was born in the same spirit of optimism that peopled many corners of the West in the late

11. The imprint of population decline upon the cultural landscape is examined in Kenneth I. Helphand, *Colorado: Visions of an American Landscape* (Niwot, Colo., 1991), 29-64; K. C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape: Folklore, Writing, and Sense of Place* (Iowa City, Iowa, 1993); and Wyckoff, "Postindustrial Butte."

12. The impacts of population change on the urban and small-town landscape are assessed by John C. Hudson, *Plains Country Towns* (Minneapolis, 1985); Paula M. Nelson, *The Prairie Winnows Out Its Own: The West River Country of South Dakota in the Years of Depression and Dust* (Iowa City, Iowa, 1996), 64-66; and John W. Reys, *Cities in the American West: A History of Frontier Urban Planning* (Princeton, N.J., 1979).

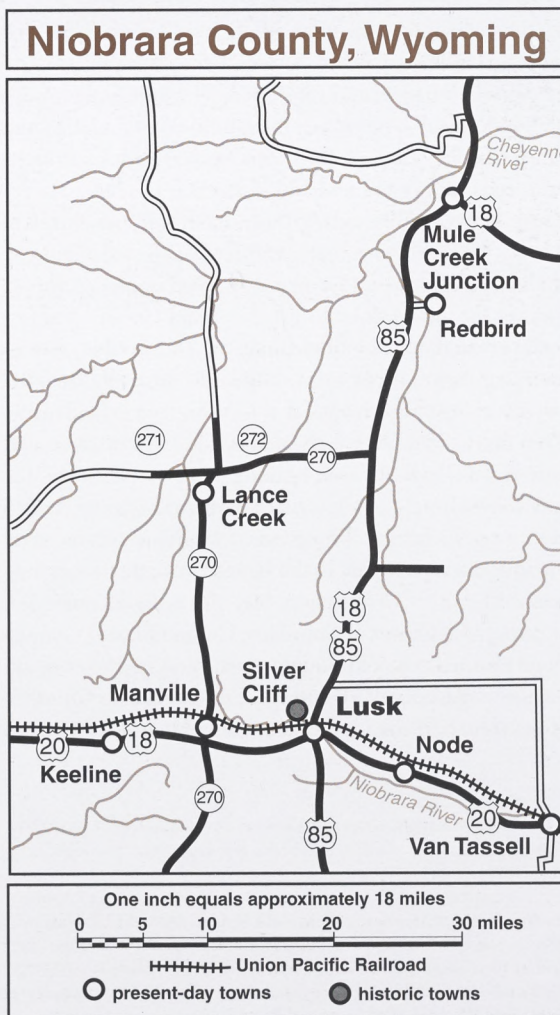
Junction, a small central Utah town in Piute County with its defunct gas station, is another manifestation of the Waning West, a world apart from bustling Salt Lake City to the north. Decades ago, mining and farming supported almost 3,000 people in the county while today fewer than 1,500 residents remain.

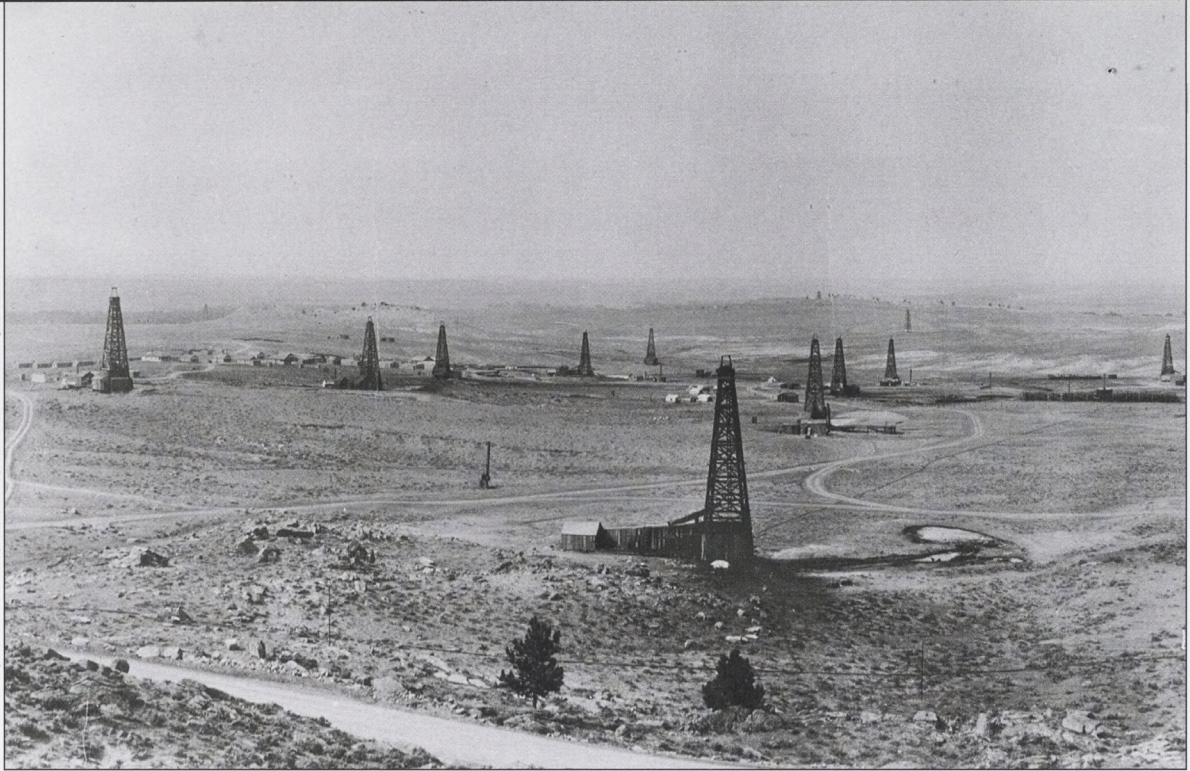


nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹³ During the 1870s, the trail drivers moving cattle north from Texas noticed the region's rich grasslands. By late in that decade, a stage road ran through the region, linking Cheyenne with blossoming gold towns in the nearby Black Hills. Mining within the county began shortly thereafter. By 1885 the "tent town" of Silver Cliff appeared, and there were more than 200 miners and mill workers in the vicinity, many of them employed by the Great Western Mining and Milling Company. Just a year later, a branch of the Chicago and Northwestern Railway arrived from western Nebraska, generating more sustained growth.

As the mining boom faded, Frank Lusk donated land for a new town along the railroad, and a growing number of ranchers began settling the region, often purchasing surplus stock from trail herds that still passed through the area. By 1890 the town of Lusk boasted the usual frontier amenities: bank, newspaper, hotel, and church. In addition, a string of smaller settlements appeared along the railroad both east and west of Lusk. Later in the decade, a growing number of dryland farmers tried their hand at raising corn and wheat. Their small farms and new fences challenged the rangeland dominance of the ranchers and suggested the multiple ways in which the local resource base offered opportunities for new settlers.

13. The best published history of Niobrara County's past is a collection of valuable reminiscences found in the Niobrara County Historical Society's *Our Heritage: Niobrarans and Neighbors* (Lusk, Wyo., 1987). Also useful is the Wyoming State Archives, *Wyoming Blue Book: Guide to the County Archives of Wyoming* (Cheyenne, 1991); and the Clippings Files, Niobrara County Historical Society, Lusk, Wyoming (hereafter NCHS).





The Lance Creek oil field, pictured here circa 1920, exemplifies the natural resource-based boom economy that peaked across many portions of the West between 1910 and 1920.

Between 1900 and 1920, Niobrara County witnessed more economic expansion, succeeded in reaching its highest population ever, and set the stage for subsequent population losses.¹⁴ Several factors combined to fuel the good times. Strong markets for crops and livestock attracted hundreds of farmers and homesteading boomed, particularly between 1911 and 1917. Indeed, bumper crops of corn, wheat, potatoes, oats, and hay suggested that both dryland agriculture and irrigation offered immense opportunities for immigrants. In 1911 Niobrara County was formally created, and by 1920 Lusk, the county seat, saw its area population triple to 2,000 people. A stroll down the town's main street revealed a bustling retail landscape. Even railroad hamlets such as Manville, west of Lusk, and Van Tassell, east of Lusk, boomed, and boosters saw the small-town hotels and new brick banks as harbingers of an even grander future. The greatest excitement came with the 1918 discovery of oil in the Lance Creek district, northwest of Lusk.¹⁵ By 1920 over fifty rigs were in operation and soon the Ohio Oil Company, Union Oil, and Conoco came on the scene. The 1920 census counted over 6,300 people in the county. Few realized that Niobrara County's population had already peaked (probably in 1917 or 1918)

14. Early twentieth-century expansion can be followed in *Our Heritage*; Clippings Files, NCHS; and in the *Wyoming State Business Directory*, 1920 (Denver, 1920).

15. Many biographical references to the oil boom are found throughout *Our Heritage*. Further background is summarized in E. T. Hancock, "The Lance Creek Oil and Gas Field, Niobrara County, Wyoming," *Bulletin of the United States Geological Survey*, 716E (Washington, D.C., 1920), 91-122; and Work Projects Administration (WPA), *Wyoming: A Guide to Its History, Highways, and People* (New York, 1941), 223.

and that the coming decades would bring a long and painful economic adjustment.

The 1920s and early 1930s brought early economic troubles to Niobrara County.¹⁶ Although Lusk continued to bustle as the county seat, several elements of the natural resource economy faltered. The oil business deteriorated as prices softened and some of the early wells played out. In fact, many would-be local oil barons left the area or returned to their farms. Unfortunately, falling prices for grain and cattle also hit the agricultural economy hard. Making matters worse, the grasshoppers and droughts of the early 1930s devastated Niobrara County and drove even many die-hard optimists into bankruptcy.

Conditions improved some in the late 1930s and during the war years. Most dramatically, new oil discoveries reignited the petroleum economy.¹⁷ Over fifty new wells went into production between 1934 and 1939, and during World War II, the Lance Creek oil field was one of the largest in the Rocky Mountain West. In Lusk, Roy Chamberlain and James Hoblit built the C and H Refinery, and a new pipeline linked the operation directly with the Lance Creek fields. Agricultural conditions improved as well: crop and cattle prices firmed and weather conditions improved. More broadly, the economic stimulus of the New Deal and of the wartime economy offered Niobrara County significant support.

16. Many references to the hard times of the Depression are noted in *Our Heritage*. Further insights into Depression-era conditions in the West and in the county were provided by Darryl and Ruth Manning, conversation with author, July 1998; and Gerald and Jane Bardo, conversation with author, July 1998.



Niobrara County lies in eastern Wyoming and has the distinction of being the least populated county in the country's least populated state. Few residents of 1927 Lusk (above) would have guessed that Niobrara County's population was already declining from its pre-1920 peak. As the county seat, Lusk remained best equipped to survive the long demographic and economic downturns of the post-1920 period. Though many rural post offices across the Waning West closed between 1950 and 1980, Node, Wyoming's (right) remains open for business. The hamlet sits eight miles east of Lusk along U.S. Highway 20.



The postwar years, however, told a sobering story often replayed in the Waning West.¹⁸ Much of the West's economic growth became increasingly focused in its larger metropolitan areas. The cities grew at the expense of the countryside. Many Niobraran servicemen relocated after the war, preferring to find jobs in Denver, Casper, or even Los Angeles. On the other hand, fewer workers were needed on local farms and ranches, and gradually this translated into less demand for groceries, hardware, and services in towns such as Lusk and Manville. While the oil economy continued to offer support for awhile, rising production costs and depleted wells gradually led to the industry's decline by the 1960s. People simply had little reason to stay as jobs disappeared in the local economy. By the mid-1970s, the Niobrara County Planning Commission pondered the sober reality that the number of jobs in the county had fallen from 1,730 in 1960 to 1,350 in 1970. Thirty years later there were fewer than 1,200 jobs reported in the county.¹⁹

How have residents adjusted to this slow and painful pattern of decline? First, they have seen the widespread consolidation of their community institutions in ways that have redefined their everyday lives. In Niobrara County, post offices, schools, and churches have closed in many of the county's quieter corners. Rural post offices began closing after World War II, and the process continued into the 1970s because declining neighborhood populations simply could not justify keeping them open. Even today, the post office at Node in the eastern corner of the county is not much more than a wide spot in the road. School closures are another common symptom. The national trend toward consolidating school districts has made the change even more dramatic. The result is that the county's sixty-one elementary and two high schools in 1921 shrank to eleven elementary and one high school in 1964. Since then the tally has continued to fall. Today the county contains two elementary schools (in Lusk and Lance Creek) and a single high school (Lusk), and children are bussed into Lusk from throughout the county, a round-trip that can run more than eighty miles per day. In parallel fashion,

17. Some of the temporary recovery in the oil industry can be reconstructed from Clippings Files, NCHS; *Our Heritage*; WPA, *Wyoming*, 223; and Gerald and Jane Bardo conversation.

18. Postwar economic challenges can be assessed in *Our Heritage*; and in the Niobrara County Planning Commission's "Niobrara County Land Use Plan," 1977, Clippings Files, NCHS. Other details were provided by Gerald and Jane Bardo, James Barrett, Doyle Davies, Darryl and Ruth Manning, and Teresa Poage, conversations with author, July 1998.

19. Wyoming Department of Employment, Research, and Planning, "Civilian Labor Force, December 2000 statistics," at lmi.state.wy.us/news.htm



Lusk's commercial heart struggles to retain businesses as many residents drive elsewhere to do their shopping. The former Ranger Hotel, once the focus of local business activity, is still visible at the end of the block on the far side of the street. In earlier days oil deals were struck at the hotel's Oasis Bar and the county's prospects pondered at the billiard hall next door. Today, the hotel contains many memories but no guests.

some of the county's churches also have consolidated and centralized. Outlying communities such as Van Tassell, Keeline, and Manville have seen churches close as shrinking congregation increasingly pool their numbers in the county seat of Lusk.

The daily fabric of rural and small-town life has been fundamentally transformed in the process. The new geographies of these critical social institutions have redefined the sense of community. Ruth Manning, once married to a rural schoolteacher from the northern portion of the county, recalled the intimacy and insularity of earlier times. The rural school served an average of fifteen students per year in grades one through eight who were drawn from ranches within a radius of two to four miles. Manning lived at the school and her family worked without benefit of electricity or telephone service until the 1940s. Everyone knew everyone else and a sense of mutual dependence and reciprocity promoted a close sense of community. Following consolidation in the 1950s, however, the same students faced "those long bus trips, forty

miles each way," to distant Lusk. The trip meant many new faces, many hours on dusty and snowy highways, and a lessened focus on the social integrity of the immediate neighborhood. The once dense, geographically concentrated social ties to locality were replaced with much broader, but more diffuse, social networks that connected distant residents of the county together in new, yet more ephemeral ways. It is an all-too-common tale in the Waning West.²⁰

The realities of the changing agricultural economy have reworked Niobrara County's rural settlement landscape and downsized the employment opportunities in farming and ranching. Several trends have been in place since 1920. Overall, county agricultural land that was once in crops has increasingly shifted to pasture and cattle ranching. Successful ranchers have generally tended to enlarge their operations and to make investments in their land that has increased its productivity. The Ellicott family ranch along the Niobrara River in the eastern portion of

20. Ruth Manning conversation.

21. *Our Heritage*, 240-44.

22. Don Whiteaker, conversation with author, July 1998.

23. Many details from life in Niobrara County's smaller towns can be gleaned from *Our Heritage*; and Clippings Files, NCHS. Additional details were provided by Gerald and Jane Bardo, Twila Barnette, and Teresa Poage, conversations with author, July 1998.

the county exemplifies the strategy.²¹ Over time, family members purchased neighboring ranches along the river and added value to their land by employing center-pivot irrigation systems to increase annual alfalfa production. Even surviving ranches, however, have struggled because livestock prices have remained low. Ranches do not create many jobs so Niobrara County's ranching families continue to see their sons and daughters leave for employment opportunities elsewhere. Most palpably, the county's empty rural roads and widely spaced ranches tell the story of more than eight decades of agricultural adjustment.

Painful economic adjustments have also rippled through the county's retailing economy and inexorably reworked Niobrara's small-town landscapes. Parking is rarely a problem along Lusk's main commercial street. Fewer people has simply translated into fewer retailers, even in the county's leading town. The car and truck dealerships have slowly left the scene. Four grocery stores have shrunk down to one. Although it was once a bustling center of local business and deal-making, the still-imposing Ranger Hotel has closed, no longer offering a night's sleep to passing travelers. Nearby, the Silver Cliff Hotel also has closed, and the Hells Angels purchased the property. Two of the town's three clothing stores are gone. Fewer than 300 retailing jobs can be counted in the entire county. People have turned to catalog and Internet shopping for some goods, along with a growing number of long-distance shopping trips to towns such as Torrington (57 miles), Casper (101 miles), or Scotts Bluff, Nebraska (94 miles).

Local businessman and former mayor Don Whiteaker witnessed many of these painful adjustments between 1982 and 1996. He remembers that Lusk was still doing a healthy retailing business in the 1960s, but never recovered from the recession of the early 1980s. His two children left for better opportunities in California and Arizona. While optimistic that the town can attract small businesses, particularly those that could benefit from Lusk's outstanding fiber-optics network, Whiteaker is frustrated that downtown has not witnessed a greater economic renaissance.²²

Smaller hamlets within the county have fared demonstrably worse than Lusk.²³ Without the benefit of county-seat status, their schools downsized or moved elsewhere, these towns of fewer than 500 residents have lost much, if not all, of their commercial activity. Nearby residents must travel to Lusk for even everyday conveniences. Lonely Lance Creek, well off the county's main highways, once supported several thousand residents, many in the oil industry. Today, fewer than 250 people live in the area and the main commercial street is a broad swath of pavement. Elsewhere, Manville, Node, and Van Tassell, even though they lie along U.S. Highway 20, no longer can offer local residents the services that were once part of the local community's daily life. West of Lusk, the town of Keeline has withered from 440 residents during World War I to fewer than 10 today. Thus life in the Waning West has entailed living in a vastly different world than is found on the burgeoning fringe of so many of the region's growing metropolitan areas.

Ranger Hotel, circa 1940



Wyoming Division of Cultural Resources, Cheyenne



At one time Lance Creek, Wyoming, was one of the busiest petroleum-producing centers in the intermountain West. Today, the Lance Creek area is a quiet reminder of how regional economic shifts have reworked western landscapes.

The remaining Niobrarians have not been idle in the face of this demographic and economic slide. Indeed, a common response across the Waning West has been to identify new economic opportunities to replace the old. Where such approaches work (Kalispell, Montana, Aspen, Colorado, and Taos, New Mexico), amenity-driven growth has often transformed the local scene in dramatic ways. Niobrarians, however, continue to struggle. For example, attempts to boost tourism began in the late 1940s with local businesses sponsoring a "Highway 20 Association" designed to promote transcontinental travel through the county. In addition, residents initiated the annual Rawhide Pageant in 1946. It is an elaborate outdoor show celebrating the frontier era in which a dozen covered wagons and more than 150 costumed settlers, cavalry, and Indians (all local residents) reenact an epic tale of western history. Although the pageant continues today, new interstate high-

ways completed in the 1960s and 1970s (I-80 to the south and I-90 to the north) effectively removed the county from tourists' travel routes. Another boost arrived in the mid-1980s when the Wyoming Women's Center, the state's only female prison, was successfully brought to Lusk with the help of local officials. With between 90 and 120 inmates and 40 and 50 workers, the prison became one of Niobrara's leading employers, but the government payroll was not large enough to turn the county's economy around. Even higher hopes surrounded Microsoft Corporation's effort in the 1980s to make Lusk one of the "most wired small towns in America." Indeed, local schools continue to boast extraordinary computer resources and broadband connections, but the anticipated rush of small high-tech companies to the county simply never happened.²⁴

No single event or cataclysm produced Niobrara County's lengthy economic and demographic decline. Rather,

24. Details on the Highway 20 Association and early Rawhide Pageants can be found in Clippings Files, NCHS; local perspectives on the arrival of the Wyoming Women's Center were provided by Gerald Bardo and Dee Johnson, conversations with author, July 1998; efforts to upgrade the local telecommunications infrastructure were detailed by Twila Barnette and Don Whiteaker conversations.

25. For a good overview of the "rural rebound" phenomenon in high-amenity western settings, see Kenneth M. Johnson, "The Rural

Rebound," *Population Reference Bureau Reports on America*, 1 (September 1999), 1-19; William B. Beyers, "Employment Growth in the Rural West from 1985 to 1995 Outpaced the Nation," *Rural Development Perspectives*, 14 (August 1999), 38-43; Raye C. Ringholz, *Little Town Blues: Voices from the Changing West* (Salt Lake City, 1992); and Gundars Rudzitis, "Amenities Increasingly Draw People to the Rural West," *Rural Development Perspectives*, 14 (August 1999), 9-13.

26. *Lusk (Wyo.) Herald*, July 21, 1999.

the years after 1920 brought a series of deep and persisting changes in the regional and national economy that challenged its economic base and encouraged many of its residents to leave. Similarly, hundreds of other localities within the Waning West bear the stamp of capitalism's shifting winds. The population declines between 1920 and 2000 often have been even more dramatic than in Niobrara County. From Montana's remote and rural Garfield County (5,368 people in 1920; 1,279 people in 2000) to the former coal mining country of Colorado's Las Animas County (38,975 people in 1920; 15,207 people in 2000), the shifting economic fortunes of the Waning West have left a palpable signature upon the landscape and the lives of remaining residents. Making matters worse, in the past twenty years, most of the Waning West has also been largely bypassed by the so-called "rural rebound" that some higher-amenity settings have witnessed.²⁵ While a few Coloradans are snapping up Niobrara ranches at reasonable prices, there has yet to be a rush for real estate in downtown Lusk, and one of the county government's biggest problems is how to deal with falling assessed valuations and the declining tax base.²⁶

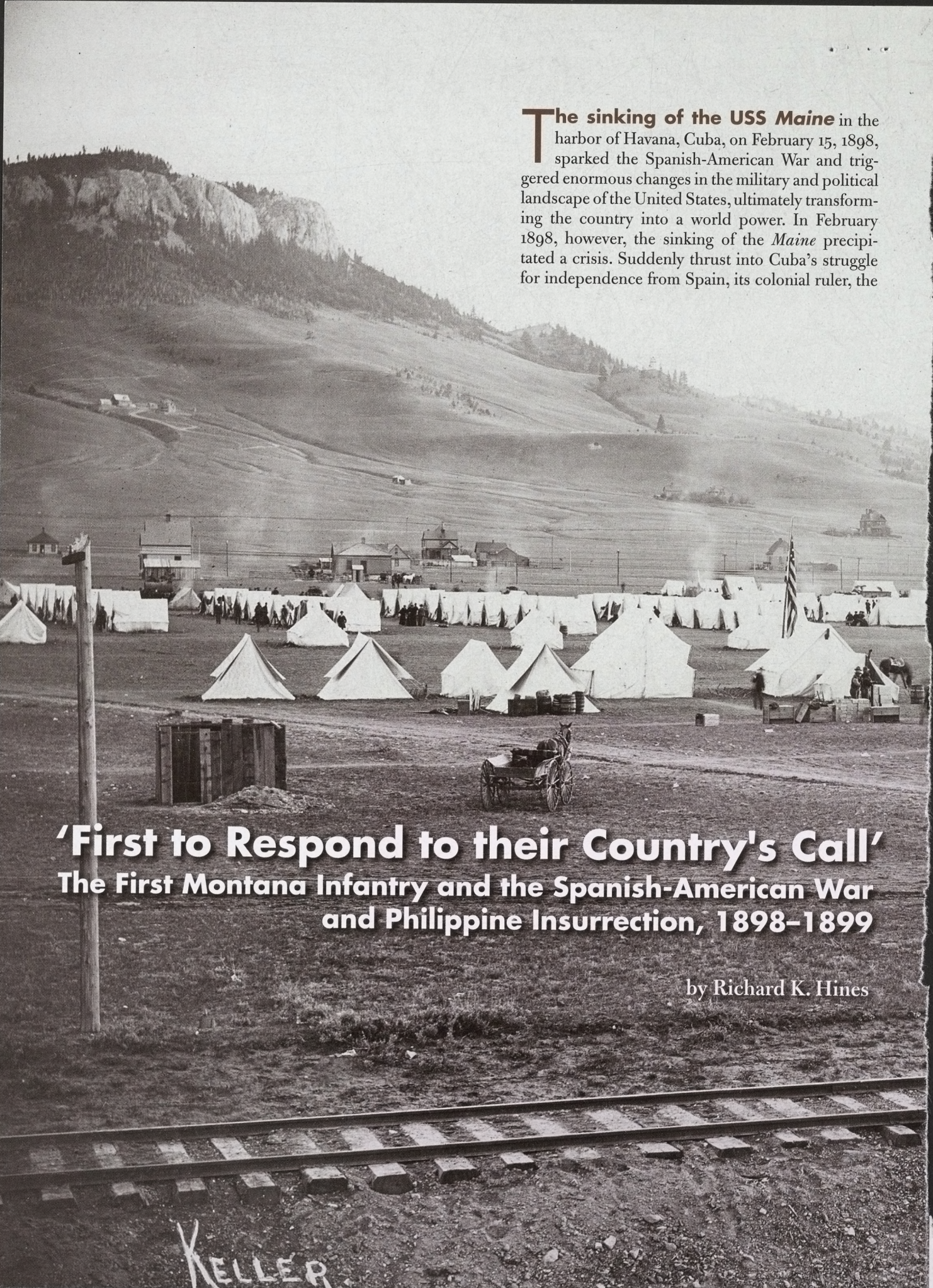
Life in the Waning West often remains a compromise between a leaner economy, fewer services, and declining populations on the one hand and a way of life that many

remaining residents still hold dear. Low crime rates, a reasonable cost of living, and neighbors whom you know and trust are also a legacy of the Waning West and represent in many ways an adjustment to the local setting far more sustainable and irreplaceable than the fleeting boom times of former years. What remains in the Waning West is a poignant landscape rich in local meanings, a reminder of a past that never quite produced sustained material abundance. Still, residents who live in these localities often possess a sense of place that is being lost all too quickly elsewhere in the West. The Waning West thus contains many lessons. It reveals capitalism's fickle nature, the hand of serendipity, once extended, now removed. It reveals the pain of people coping with leaner times and myriad daily adjustments to life on the margin. And finally, it reveals a portion of the West that has matured greatly, if not always elegantly, since the initial, but unsustainable settlement booms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. *M*

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This silent screen just outside of Lusk symbolizes a bygone era in many small towns. Only weeds, a few meadowlarks, and faint echoes of the "last picture show" remain.





The sinking of the *USS Maine* in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, on February 15, 1898, sparked the Spanish-American War and triggered enormous changes in the military and political landscape of the United States, ultimately transforming the country into a world power. In February 1898, however, the sinking of the *Maine* precipitated a crisis. Suddenly thrust into Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain, its colonial ruler, the

'First to Respond to their Country's Call'
**The First Montana Infantry and the Spanish-American War
and Philippine Insurrection, 1898-1899**

by Richard K. Hines

KELLER

I think times are going to be better and every thing will turn out right in the end and then we will be back where we can at least see you all once in a while and enjoy a little of life. For such a thing we haven't had much of in the past, we have been too busy trying to accumulate wealth and the best part of our lives is slipping by. When you have death look in the face a couple of times it rather makes you think that a small thing, wealth is compared

From Dennis Gorman letter to "Brother, Sister, and Niece," December 21, 1919

Indiana natives Maggie and Dennis Davis, who homesteaded northeast of Great Falls, Montana, left a moving account of their sixteen-year farming effort in letters sent home to their families in Burnettsville. Pictured are the Davises and their horses.

'Well I have lived in Montana almost a week and like it fine'

Letters from the Davis Homestead, 1910-1926

by Seena B. Kohl

one of the Lakotas' last realms of plenty. Contrasting the two settings, and adopting the Indians' understanding of the reasons for the scarcity, Hackney's chilling entry for July 21 takes on a morally complex meaning: "[This] Afternoon we reached the north fork of the Powder River and camped. Good water and grass. Found the scalp of a man belonging to the last train that passed here."¹⁷

The more we know, the muddier our viewpoint. A diary entry like this from Richard Owens, a member of Hackney's company, leaves us with lots of questions but no clear answers:

This day there was a motion put forward and carried in the morning for the indiscriminate slaughter of all Indians, but was reconsidered and acted upon in the evening and resulted in favor of letting them alone so long as they did not intrude on us.¹⁸

But who are the intruders, we wonder, and who the violated? Standing with the Lakotas and Cheyennes, watching the advance of Owens's train, remembering lessons taken from the past generation and feeling the perimeter of usable country tightening every year, the direction of threats and thievery is quite the other way around. Yet Owens is no villain. The forty-year-old Welshman is understandably frightened and indignant at having his life at hazard merely for crossing a pleasant country: "Traveling is very dangerous now . . . on account of the Sioux Indians, who are bent on murder and theft." He had risked his life to save the Union in

the bloodiest war the continent would ever see. Didn't that earn him a chance for a better life for the family who waited back in Pennsylvania? "The Indians are very wicked," he wrote.¹⁹ So it must have seemed.

The myth's uplifting vision is no more at home on the historical Bozeman Trail than an ox in an opera house. Certainly progress, the centerpiece of the myth, becomes the shiftiest of terms.²⁰ Historic trails, like mythic ones, pull us onto their course. But if we follow them with an honest imagination and with what we can honestly know, they draw us into stories as convoluted as the myth is simple.

Both ways of walking these American pathways have their rewards, and both have the power to teach and move us. We are travelers in a collective continental experience. Our responsibility is to make sure that we do not deceive ourselves into thinking we are on one trail when in fact we are walking another. *M*

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Travelers in a collective continental experience, Mormon immigrants posed in 1866 at South Pass, Wyoming, to record their participation in what would become the mythic story of white expansion into the West.



American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming, Laramie

In a June 1924 letter, written just at the time when farming conditions on the Montana High Line were improving, Maggie Gorman Davis despaired:

We haven't any plans. It isn't any use to plan. We hate it here. We never know when we will have a total failure again and be caught with a lot of stock. We were getting pretty nervous when this rain came.

This letter is one of more than forty written by Maggie Gorman Davis and her husband Dennis Davis to their family in Indiana between 1910 and 1926 from the Davis homestead near Carter, Montana.¹

In many ways, Dennis and Maggie Davis were representative of midwestern homesteaders who claimed land in Montana during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Like other Montana homesteaders, they were both young, only twenty-three and twenty-five when they took up a claim just as the state's twentieth-century homesteading boom was beginning.² Both were hardworking, experienced farmers with good educations.³ Neither, however, saw

homesteading as anything but a means of acquiring money to purchase a farm in Indiana.

The Davis's letters are those of "leavers"—homesteaders who gave up their attempt to farm, and they reflect homesteaders' all-too-common experience of unbridled hope diminished by weather, loneliness, family pressures, and unending hard work. Statistics enumerate that the majority of homesteaders failed, but rarely have the voices of leavers been heard other than mitigated through the glow of memory.⁴ Detailing the day-to-day impact of drought, windstorms, cold, hail, grasshoppers, and cutworms, the Davis letters' immediacy contrasts with the almost formulaic memoirs of settlement found in community histories, where writers balance bad times with good times and good friends soften hardships.⁵

Leavers have been considered victims or dupes enticed by railroad propaganda, speculators out to make a buck, or incompetents without experience or knowledge of farming. And just as K. Ross Toole refuted these characterizations so, too, does the particular case of Maggie and Dennis Davis.⁶



Unless otherwise noted, photographs and illustrations provided by niece Rosemary Gorman Litke and great-nieces Cynthia McQuinn, Angela Litke, and Rosetta Rider.



Courtesy Jack Castor

When Maggie Gorman Davis stepped off the train in Carter, Montana, in early June 1910, it must have looked much as it does in this photograph of the town taken two months earlier. As the crow flies, the Davis homestead was approximately fifteen miles northwest of Carter.

A favored oldest child, Maggie was the first to marry and leave for what was for her an unknown land filled with promise and uncertainty. One can well imagine her family's hunger for news. Many of her letters—which were rediscovered in 1977 after the death of Mae Gorman Johnson (Maggie's younger sister and one of the recipients of the letters)—contain exchanges about topics common to most families: marriages, births, illnesses, fashion, and, of course, work.

The letters also reveal Maggie and Dennis's close and affectionate relationship. In an intriguing letter from May 1912, Maggie wrote about a woman named Davison who had had a baby: "Some people out in the country got us mixed and thought I was the one. I am so glad that my man thinks so much of me and don't want me to raise babies."⁷ And, in one of his few surviving letters, Dennis Davis wrote in 1910 with evident pride:

Maggie is writing to you people but I know she won't tell you all so I will tell you myself. . . . She always told me she couldn't bake bread or keep house or set hens and I supposed she could not but she has been making fine bread and pancakes. . . . I don't see how I could prove up this claim without her. In fact she puts the life in all of us and keeps up our courage.

This regard and concern for one another appears throughout the letters.

Dennis and Maggie married March 26, 1910, in Burnettsville, Indiana. Eight months earlier, Dennis and his three brothers—Ray Charles, Arthur Marco "Mark," and Albert Eugene—had traveled to Montana. The brothers each filed for a half section on adjoining land fifteen miles north of the newly established town of Carter, two miles north of the Teton River, and they returned to Indiana in December. Other members of

1. The letters from the Davises, from which the excerpts in this article were taken, were transcribed and compiled by Maggie's niece, Eva Gorman Finnell, and privately published as *The Montana Years Chouteau County, 1910-1926* (Owensboro, Ky., 1980). A copy can be found in the Montana Historical Society Library, Helena. It is impossible to know if the lapses between letters (there is only one letter for some years and none for others) reflect the absence of correspondence, illegible or lost letters, or editorial decisions.

2. K. Ross Toole noted that youth was homesteaders' one common denominator. K. Ross Toole, *Twentieth Century Montana: A State of Extremes* (Norman, 1972), 187.

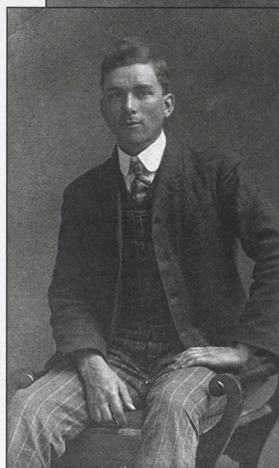
3. After graduation from high school in Monticello, Indiana, in 1906, Maggie attended Indiana State Normal College for Teachers at Terre Haute and returned to the Burnettsville area to teach. There is no record of Dennis's formal education other than his school atten-

dance in Cass County, Indiana, but he was an experienced farmer. The four letters written by Dennis in *The Montana Years* show that he was a literate and thoughtful man.

4. Between 1919 and 1925, half of Montana farmers, who farmed about 20 percent of the state's land, lost their farms. The Davis's neighbor Jack Castor estimated that 80 percent of Carter-area farms failed. Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* (Seattle, 1991), 283; Jack K. Castor, *Carter, Montana Homestead Boomtown 1909-1930's* (n.p., 1991), 6.

5. Seena B. Kohl, "Memories of Homesteading and the Process of Retrospection," *Oral History Review*, 17 (Fall 1989), 25-45. For a discussion of the use of community history books, see John W. Bennett and Seena B. Kohl, *Settling the Canadian-American West* (Lincoln, 1995), chap. 1.

In contrast to many settlers who lived in tents or stayed with other families until their homes could be built, Maggie arrived to a three-room house constructed by Dennis (center) and his brothers. At right Maggie poses at the reins in front of the Davis home, and below is her high school portrait.



the Davis family, Dennis's mother Sarah Hitchens Davis, her daughter Roxanna, and Roxanna's husband William Frank Criswell took up homesteads near Dennis and Maggie in 1917.⁸ Of all these homesteaders, only Mark Davis farmed his parcel until retirement.⁹

The Davis brothers were among the first to file for homesteads in northern Montana under the provisions of the 1909 Enlarged Homestead Act, which increased the size of claims from 160 acres to 320 acres. In 1912 Congress passed the Three-Year Homestead Act allowing homesteaders to prove up in three years instead of five and to live off the claim for five months of the year. These measures and railroad promotional campaigns advertising the fertility of the northern plains and the success of dry-farming techniques brought a rush of land seekers to the state. In December 1910 the *Great Falls Leader* remarked on the rapidity of settle-

ment, noting that in the Great Falls land office "Since January 1, 1908, there have been over 22,000 filings or a rate of 7,000 per year, whereas eight filings in a day would be considered a land rush in most Land offices."¹⁰

Eager to begin farming, Dennis and his brothers returned to Montana shortly after the wedding, and Maggie followed in June 1910. The heedless optimism that characterized the initial period of Montana's twentieth-century homesteading was in the air. New settlers came with great hopes recalled Agnes Diefenbaugh:

After a trip through the Eastern states in the fall of 1909, my dad and mother, Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Fishbaugh, decided to see what the West was like. They liked what they saw, came home full of ideas for young folks in the West; all that land just for the taking, raise wheat and live like kings, no thought of rainfall, weather or distance.¹¹

Dennis and Maggie Davis shared that sense of limitless opportunity.

Maggie's first letter home on June 4, 1910, recounted her train trip from Indiana to Chicago, then along the Mississippi River and across the northern plains. She

6. Toole, *Twentieth Century Montana*, 27-30.

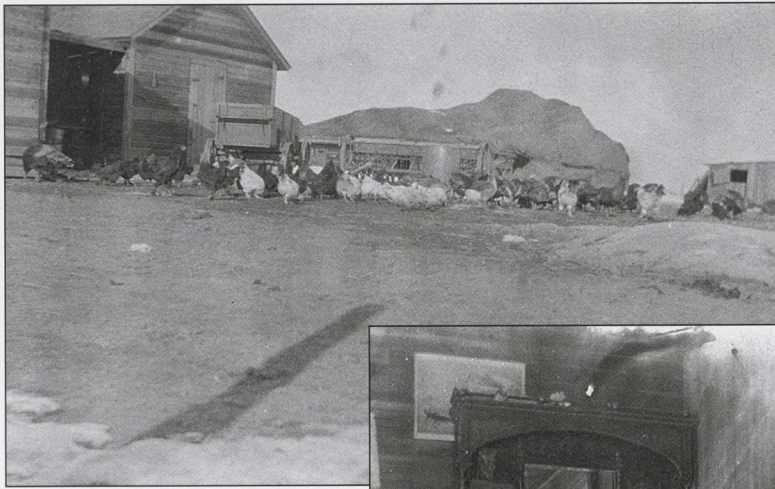
7. Apparently Maggie and Dennis believed in some form of family planning. There is ample evidence in the letters that Maggie and Dennis enjoyed being with children, and some of their reluctance to have children of their own perhaps stemmed from mixed messages from the family. In September 1917 Maggie's brother Ted wrote, "I guess they had not intended for me to read it, but Mama accidentally mentioned you, and papa said something about the prospective visit of the stork, and so I had to know all, then. . . . As to your mention of the Stork, I can not say that I am overjoyed over it for I thot [sic] that you would be the *one* in the Gorman family to refrain from such occupation but then thats your business." We do not know if Maggie returned to Burnettsville at the end of November 1917 to recuperate after a miscarriage or if she miscarried in Indiana.

8. Family or kin group settlement enabled sharing of resources and was an important feature of homestead settlement. Bennett and Kohl, *Settling the Canadian-American West*, 242.

9. Ray Davis left for Washington in 1921, and four years later Albert Davis moved to California and later Washington. Roxanna Davis Criswell and Frank Criswell remained in Montana, first renting their land then selling it to a neighbor who continues to farm it today. Mark Davis farmed his 320 acres until he retired. It is unclear why he stayed; perhaps as a bachelor he was content with a minimal standard of living or perhaps he saw no other place to go. The Davis family had sold their Indiana farm when they moved west.

10. *Great Falls (Mont.) Leader*, December 14, 1910. For a synopsis of the homesteading boom, see Malone, Roeder, and Lang, *Montana*, 281-83, 280-85.

11. Agnes Diefenbaugh reminiscence, in *Paths of the Past on Teton Bench*, comp. Ruby Allen Craig (Great Falls, Mont., [1956?]), 1.



In her letters Maggie described domestic chores, including raising chickens and sewing. At right, with scissors, pattern, and fabric at hand, she paused long enough to have her picture made inside her Montana home.



arrived in Havre and stayed overnight before departing for Carter. The letter described the fellow homesteaders she met on the train, the help of the conductor, food eaten, and her views about Chicago. Omitted was any indication of her feelings about leaving, any apprehension or excitement about homesteading, or, other than not sleeping, how she withstood the trip. Unlike many retrospective accounts that emphasize the space and the open miles of grass, Maggie wrote one brief comment about the landscape, the same landscape in which she would live for the next fifteen years:

Of all the land I saw I liked the land of N. Dak. and East Mont. least of all. It is just hills and hollows and sage brushes. Through Montana the railroad goes between two ranges of foot hills. Someplaces the hills are far enough apart for a good many farms. Some few of the houses were the cheapest looking shacks that could be built, a few were box cars, about one third were good frame houses but the most of them were made of logs, good ones, too.

12. Eva Gorman Finnell, introduction to *The Montana Years Chouteau County*, 1.

13. See, for example, Clyde Sullivan reminiscence, in Craig, comp., *Paths of the Past*, 50; and Fred Iddings reminiscence, in Pleasant

In contrast with many settlers who lived in tents or stayed with another family until some sort of dwelling could be built, Maggie arrived to a three-room house constructed by Dennis and his brothers. Her first letter from the homestead began, "Well I have lived in Montana almost a week and like it fine." Dennis had met her in Carter, and after a two-hour ride, they arrived at the homestead, where Ray and Albert Davis were making dinner.

They had just got the house finished and moved in the day before. I guess they hustled some to get fixed up before I got there. . . . You would never have thought by the way things were straightened up that boys had done it. They had the pictures hung and the clock up and nails for everything in the kitchen and everything in its place too.

Maggie's letter nine days later was filled with questions about family events and described their activities in Montana. Both Albert and Dennis were working for wages, Albert for a rancher and Dennis hauling coal for a steam-plow outfit. She loaned a neighbor eggs for his hens to set with an agreement to share the hatchlings. She also gave an account of the surrounding countryside:

There are houses all around us. Coming in from the river one night I counted over forty. . . . I think that story we read was a pretty true picture of Montana life. The boys say that all the people they have met who are coming in are nice but the people who already lived here are the ones to look out for. There are several big ranchmen near here. Some are friendly and some of them went to Fort Benton and tried to get the merchants to promise not to sell to the dryland farmers as they call them.

Judging from her letters, neighbors' visits were rare, and Maggie seldom commented on other homesteaders. Without exception, she did not name neighbors unless they were already known by her family. In October she wrote that she planned to "exchange books with a girl this winter," and she told of joining Dennis in hauling water from the Teton River and visiting with a man's wife while Dennis conducted some business a few days after Dennis's twenty-sixth birthday.

Valley Home Demonstration Club, comp., *Footprints through the Valley* (Fort Benton, Mont., 1956), 11.

14. See Mrs. Thurlow Brown reminiscence, in Craig, comp., *Paths of the Past*, 4.

What can one make about the absence of names? Perhaps Maggie felt that there was no reason to name people her family would not know, but from the tone of her letters it seems more likely that she did not see neighbors as an integral part of her life. Her social network remained in Indiana. About two months after her arrival, Maggie wrote to one of her sisters: "We don't have lots of company but we have some. The women met with their sewing every Thursday. But I don't like to go. Dennis made me go once." Although she never explained her dislike, Maggie, according to family accounts, was never interested in or skilled at sewing or cooking.¹² Nevertheless, her behavior was a far cry from that of other homesteaders, who in reminiscences and local history books commonly placed great importance on the camaraderie and social support of neighbors.¹³

In fact, Maggie's letters reflected little interest in social life and community activities. With the exception of family friends and relatives, her relationships were always in the context of accessing scarce resources, for example, her July 11, 1911, account of berry picking:

I put up 29 quarts, all the empty cans I had and about 20 glasses of jelly. . . . I was berrying five times. Dennis and I went once last Sunday a week and I got so many I got a girl to go with me. We walked once but the next day we rode Prince and Frank. . . . Last Sunday Dennis and Albert both went with me and Monday morning early two women came and we both went with them. There are so many rattlesnakes it isn't very safe for a woman to go alone.

In the same letter, she wrote that "a woman" had given her a dress pattern and that she spent two afternoons and walked two miles to use a sewing machine. Much of this long letter (which included a diagram of her house and placement of furniture) was a response to events in Indiana. After writing that she would

Maggie described the interior of the Davis house to her parents in a letter dated July 11, 1911, reproduced at right from the typescript published by her niece Eva Gorman Finnell in *The Montana Years Chouteau County* (1980). Eva was the daughter of Maggie's brother Ted.

like her parents to visit, she added: "I like it a lot better than last summer. I don't like some of the people and some of their ways. But there are some very good people."

Festivities on the homestead frontier, for the most part, consisted of visiting, dancing, card playing, baseball games, and picnicking. None of these called for spending money and all included the entire family. "We had lots of good times, socially, and otherwise," one homesteader remembered. "About every Saturday night, we would go to some ones house and they would move most of the furniture out, and we would dance and eat till daylight."¹⁴

Dancing for Maggie and Dennis was precluded by their affiliation with the Christian Church. Dennis had been raised as a Baptist, and although he did not dance, he did play cards. Maggie was raised in the Christian Church in Burnettsville, which her parents had helped found. At the time, both religious groups proscribed dancing, drinking alcohol, and card playing. In February 1911 Dennis wrote about going to a "neighborhood party, (or dance rather)" where his new pair of shoes bruised his foot. He added that he did not think they would attend any more of these. This small note must have created some consternation back in Indiana, since the Gormans adamantly opposed dancing. Maggie's letter less than a month later made it clear that they did not dance.

Dennis had on a new pair [of shoes] that he had just put on and had walked several miles and it was

I got my house cleaned a week ago yesterday. We cleaned it all one day. We had to move in twice before we were ready because it rained. I didn't try to have flowers out of doors because of the chickens but have some in cans. Here is how my house looks.



- 1 bed
- 2 trunk
- 3 two shelves and books under the lower one for clothes.
- 4 cabinet
- 5 stove
- 6 table
- 7 cot
- 8 book case
- 9 table with flowers
- 10 stand
- 11 diploma
- 12 oval picture
- 13 fruit picture
- 14 shelf clock
- 15 big picture
- 16 shelf with fancy cup mugs etc.

That isn't very good but its our home anyway. Dennis writes a letter all right but always forgets to sign his name. I told him if he didn't I wouldn't get up at 4 oclock so he signed it Dad and I have to explain. I always like the name of Dad and as papa wouldn't hear to it I had to do next best and call my man that. He calls me "Ma".

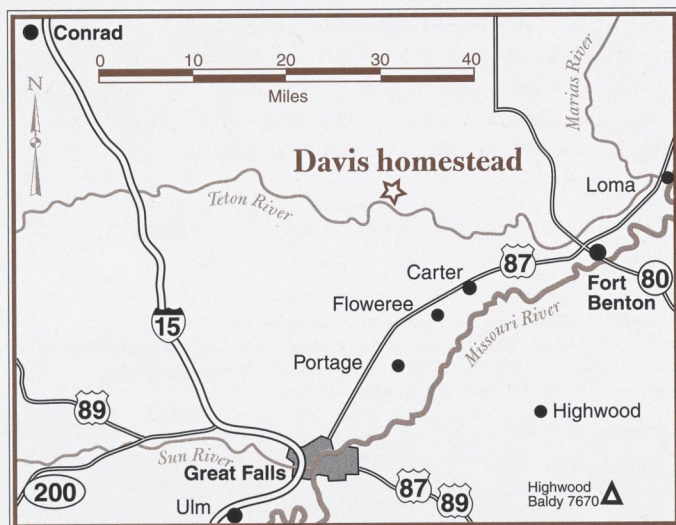
Well I must close and
go to bed
Write soon
Maggie.

half past four when we got home. It was wearing the shoe so long I think that bruised the toe. Not quite everybody goes [to the dances].

While her letters do mention visits with people she had known in Indiana and with family members, Maggie wrote that she rarely went anywhere. In July 1915 she thanked her mother for a new dress but added:

Don't try to make any more for me as it is hard enough to fit me when I can try them on. I never go any place any way to wear such pretty clothes. Dennis scolds me all the time because I don't go more with him. But I tell him I get it honest.

Without participating in the major diversions of the Carter area, the couple found their social support network quite constricted. Maggie wrote, albeit in 1924 during the low point of their stay in Montana and after they decided to return to Indiana, that Dennis, after reading the Burnettsville newspapers her brother Ted had sent, remarked that there was "a lot doing there [in Burnettsville]."



Map shows modern roads and highways.

Here there is nothing but an occasional dance and card party. Play cards till midnight and dance until morning. As we don't do either it isn't much inducement to go 12 miles through storm and mud to watch somebody else.¹⁵

Letters from 1910 to 1912, the Davis's first years on their homestead, reported big changes in their vicinity and in the town of Carter. Not quite two months after her arrival in 1910, Maggie remarked, "Carter is getting to be quite a place."

They have two stores now and a graveyard started. . . . You wouldn't believe in the changes that have been made this summer. When Dennis came and even yet when I came, when we wanted to go to town we went towards the highest mountain in the Highwood and when we started home we came towards the middle one of the three "knees" in the north. Now we can't cut across country. We have to follow the road for it is nearly all fenced up.

The town's newspaper, the *Carter Herald*, in 1912 headlined the area's growth in its first edition.¹⁶ Two years after Maggie's arrival, Carter boasted three general stores, two lumberyards, a hotel, restaurant, blacksmith shop, pool hall, barbershop, livery and feed barn, saloon, real estate office, meat shop, post office, telephone office, and a schoolhouse with four teachers, one of whom was Maggie. There was an organized Presbyterian congregation, and several other denominations held services in homes or the schoolhouse.

While Maggie taught in the Carter school in 1911, the couple lived in Carter during the school year, where they had leased a lot and built a small house. Their

When times were lean, Maggie taught in the Carter school (right) or in Ulm, south of Great Falls.



Harvest season has always been a period of uncertainty in Montana. Maggie commented on the back of the photograph at right that seventy-five acres had yielded 1,600 bushels of spring wheat—a little over 21 bushels per acre. The yield was bit low compared to 1915 when production ran as high as 35 to 50 bushels an acre.



July 16 letter, the last one of 1911, was filled with optimism. They enjoyed high hopes for a good harvest and Dennis had work with neighbors. In December the *Burnettsville News* published a letter Dennis addressed to “Editor and Friends” with the headline: “No Regrets for Leaving Hoosier State for West.” The letter announced “their good health and fair prosperity with bright hopes for the future” and explained their situation:

There were thousands of acres [of wheat] sown in our vicinity this fall and prospects for a bumper crop are fine so far this winter. I am one of the small farmers, of course, but I have sown 120 acres of winter wheat and expect or at least I am planning to put in about 70 acres of spring grain.¹⁷

Dennis also wrote that one need not fear Montana winters; aside from “some very disagreeable winds at times” they were “much better than the winters in Indiana.” He ended his letter by encouraging readers to consider coming out to Montana to visit or buy land.

Similarly, the Carter paper described the area’s climate in true booster terms:

The climate conditions in the Carter section are not excelled anywhere in the northwest. The clear dry air is extremely invigorating and combined with the large percentage of bright days, makes the climate one of the most healthful and pleasant in the world. There are few days during the entire year in which out-door work cannot be done with comfort. No one need fear winters here.¹⁸

Although 1911 and 1912 were good crop years, the Davis’s personal lives were not altogether rosy. Dennis fell ill in winter 1912, Dennis’s brother Albert suffered an appendicitis, and Maggie’s teaching position in the Carter school was less than satisfactory. In

her letter of May 2, 1912, Maggie wrote from Carter, where she was staying until school was over, that she was getting tired and “nervous.”

The kids got so mean and I whipped till I was tired and you can’t expel without the consent of the board so I left the matter with them and they gave me permission to expel any one who wouldn’t behave and obey me.

This is the one reference in Maggie’s letters indicating her feelings about teaching.

However, in the same letter Maggie felt it necessary to defend the decision to come to Montana:

I can hardly wait to come back and show them all I knew what I was doing when I came to Mont. There is nothing sure about our coming back next winter. I may have to work again. . . . If I could just coax you folks to come that would do just as well and you need the trip more than we do. I think I could promise you a good time. . . . Tell papa if we never come till we come to stay it may be a long time. Now mamma, honest which way would you rather it would be that we were settled down on a little rented farm or be out here on a farm so big that we can have fields half a mile long and four hundred acres in pasture? Of course I would like to see you folks but aside from that I am well and happy.

There is only one letter from 1913, written by Maggie to her younger brother Ted, and it detailed items of interest to a thirteen year old, animals she observed, and hunting. However, in the first letter of 1914, written February 22, Maggie mounted another defense of Montana in response to sarcastic comments from her family. Her concern stemmed from a report by a Mrs. Wagoner who

15. Homesteaders remembered dancing as an important part of their social life. People rode for miles to attend a dance. Bennett and Kohl, *Settling the Canadian-American West*, 136-39.

16. *Carter (Mont.) Herald*, February 21, 1912.

17. *Burnettsville (Ind.) News*, December 21, 1911.

18. *Carter (Mont.) Herald*, February 21, 1912.

had visited the Davises. "We were so mad at what she (Mrs. Wagoner) said," Maggie wrote in defense of their decision.

You don't need to worry about our looking poor. Dennis weighed 183 the last time he was at town and I am not far behind him.

You don't need to think there is any danger of Dennis getting discouraged out here for wild horses couldn't drag him away from here. He says for the first time in his life he has an opportunity to make good. Mr. Wiley [a neighbor and Burnettsville family friend] was offered a loan of \$4,500 on his farm and I see no reason why we could not get that much so you see we could get that anytime and pull out, *but we'll never get another farm give to us* so we had better stay with it till land advances to \$50 to \$60 then we can sell and retire or travel or something.

In the letter of March 15, 1914, Maggie continued to encourage her parents to visit to see for themselves what Montana was like.

We are just planning and planning on your coming this summer. I hope we won't be disappointed again. There are so many things we want you to see and to ask your opinion on. We are not forgetting any of you.

She also mentioned the development of a telephone company, a sure sign of progress:

Each farmer pays to build the line and whenever he can afford it he buys a phone and hooks on. They are using the wire on the fences and raising the wire over the roads. We will not get a phone for awhile yet anyway. There has also been a petition signed and sent to Washington for a mail route. Don't you think we are in a progressive country?



And she reinforced her point by listing her magazine subscriptions: *McCall's*, *Homelife*, *American Woman*, *Housewife*, *Woman's World*, and Dennis's—*Successful Farming*, *Dakota Farmer*, and three weekly newspapers.

There was no correspondence until Maggie wrote on January, 5, 1915, to thank her family for Christmas presents and respond to family news. Her letter contained little about their lives other than descriptions of visits with friends from Indiana. In February Maggie wrote that Dennis was not very "strong" that winter but did not want anyone to know. She also made clear her intention to "vote 'dry' at the election in 1916." The opportunity to vote against alcohol was for Maggie, as it was for many women, apparently the primary factor that led her to register. Although women were enfranchised in the state and local elections, as of 1914 Maggie was not registered, though Ray, Albert, and Dennis had been registered voters in Precinct Four since 1910.¹⁹

The letter of July 17, 1915, related Maggie's poultry successes and failures, berry picking, her hopes to visit the family in Indiana, her wish that her family would visit, and the Fourth of July celebration with "nothing much doing."²⁰ For the first time Maggie mentioned anxiety about the erratic rains and hard work:

It was dry, not a drop of rain in April, one rain in May but on the first day of June it began to rain and has rained nearly every day since. . . . It isn't supposed to rain in July on account of harvest and never has before. Gardens, corn and oats are not very good.

However, 1915 was a good year, a "miracle year," with wheat production as high as thirty-five to fifty bushels an acre. Grain fetched high prices due to the war in Europe, and the harvest was bounteous thanks to sufficient rain at the right time.²¹

In the same letter Maggie also noted land prices were rising:

There have been two ranches sold for \$8500 each. Do you think that is a good price or not? One of the men is sorry already that he sold. Dennis has 130 acres of summer fallow ready to sow. But we have to work awful hard and help is so hard to get,

Whenever possible, the Davises associated with family and friends who shared their Indiana roots. Their goal was not to make Montana their long-term home, but to sell their homestead for a good profit and return to Indiana to buy a farm. Maggie identified the people in the photograph at left as "Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Wiley" (who were family friends from Burnettsville) and "Agnes, and Cecil, Floweree, Mont." She mentioned Agnes Wiley Plank in an October 29, 1919, letter to her mother, by which one may deduce that Agnes and Cecil were, mostly likely, the Wileys' daughter and son-in-law.

In her July 17, 1915, letter Maggie wrote, "We went to Carter July 3 but there wasn't much doing.

On July 4 Rays, us and Wileys ate dinner along the banks of the Missouri." On the Fourth of July the next year, they went to Carter and took the photograph at right, but no letters survive to describe the festivities.



that is good help and so expensive. We now have the third man this summer and none very good and the one we have now wants \$3 per day through harvest so I think we'll have to let him go. I think some times we are foolish to work so hard. By the time we get enough ahead to buy an automobile we'll be too old to enjoy it.

Despite good crop yields, Maggie was not a "booster." Never entering into the social life of Carter, she continued to miss home:

In 1917 I think we'll have a good crop and then maybe I'll get to come home providing some of you come here first and we don't lose any more horses or get hailed out or the cut worms dont eat us up or any other bad luck come.

There are no letters for the rest of 1915 or 1916 or any information about how the Davis enterprise fared during that period. Weather records show that 1916 was a record cold year, with the lowest mean temperature since 1880, but rainfall exceeded expectations. The total precipitation for 1916 was 20.7 inches, 7 inches above the annual average. Disaster followed, however, when drought and widespread crop failure struck the High Line in 1917.²²

Maggie's only letter for 1918 was to her brother Ted. She related that she was teaching in Ulm, south of Great Falls, and that Dennis had a job on a ranch. There is

no explanation for these circumstances in the letter, but it is likely that they needed cash to pay debts brought about by crop failures. Paying debts was important to both Dennis and Maggie, and it was a quality admired by Gorman descendants, who stressed its importance in interviews.²³ In a December 1921 letter, written after Dennis's brother Ray had declared bankruptcy and left for Washington, Maggie asked if he had told the family about his bankruptcy. She wrote that "no one here knowing conditions think any worse of them for it. But they weren't forced into it." She then listed the family's cash assets to make her point.

Things went from bad to worse in 1919. "The winter wheat and rye had all been ruined," Maggie wrote from Carter on June 19. There had been only one shower all spring and a succession of sandstorms.

And of all the poor horses I ever saw ours were the poorest. . . . We were over south of Benton and a little cloud came up. Well it rained quite hard. It was pathetic to see the joy of the people. . . . It rained even harder out here. Dennis had already sowed 48 acres of spring wheat and reseeded most of 56 acres to oats and wheat and we went right to work and sowed 34 acres of flax. That was all the seed we had and we were afraid to risk buying more. There were 14 acres more in the field. There have been several more good rains since. The flax is looking nice and the wheat was until Monday and we had a dreadful sand storm and when it was over

19. Jack K. Castor, *Carter, A New Town, Making Good* (n.p., 1991).

20. Mrs. Andrew Larkin's recollection of the July 4, 1915, celebration gives a very different picture of a two-day July Fourth complete with horse racing and dancing. Participants brought an old organ from Carter and built a dance platform. "We sure thought it was wonderful and different from anything we had ever seen. I met people from all around that day." Mrs. Andrew Larkin reminiscence, in Craig, comp., *Paths of the Past*, 22.

21. Malone, Roeder, and Lang, *Montana*, 191. The United States' entry into the war in 1917 increased the demand for food and increased commodity prices. The 1917 Lever Food and Control Act

guaranteed the price of wheat at not less than two dollars a bushel. *Ibid.*, 252-53.

22. *Fort Benton (Mont.) River Press*, January 10, 1917.

23. Rosemary Gorman Litke, Monticello, Indiana, Clyde A. Davis, Burnettsville, Indiana, and Mary and Wilbur Criswell, Lewistown, Montana, contributed information about the Davis and Gorman family histories in 1997 interviews. Conversations with Carter residents Doris and Jim Reichelt and Ray Castor and Great Falls resident Kay Wiley in 1997 provided much information about Carter and its environs.

Maggie and Dennis visited Burnettsville in 1921. They wanted to move back permanently, but crops and prospects for selling the Montana homestead were poor due to drought that had started in 1917. Thus, they faced another year of trying to raise the capital to pay for their return.



the field looked bare again. We have millions of grasshoppers again. They are taking the garden as fast as it comes up. . . . Dennis is trying to get a piece of ground ready for millet. But he is so crippled and the horses are so poor and the thistles grow so fast it is uphill business. . . . Dennis says all we lack of selling is to find a sucker. . . .

They say the dry years are over for Montana now for four or five years but I don't know what to think. We have land that ought to be summer fallowed now. I wanted him to get 45 acres ready but he gets discouraged so easy and gives up. We have 6 heifers and cows that will have to go I guess. But we cant get rid of the horses unless we eat them.

Writing October 29, 1919, from Ulm where she was again teaching and Dennis was working on a nearby ranch, Maggie described the drought and its consequences:

Not a thing except a three or four year old straw pile occasionally for the stock. Not one family in a hundred has potatoes and not a bite from the garden. . . . If Dennis could have got some one to have kept the cattle he would have gone to work in [Great Falls]. . . . The Unions are howling for more money all the time but from \$5 to \$7 a day looks pretty good to a poor farmer who hasn't had a crop for 3 years.

Other letters written from Ulm that December and the following May hint of a decision to sell out and return to Indiana as soon as possible. Maggie wrote that the Ulm school wanted her to return for the next winter term, but she hoped "something will turn up so we can get away before then." If they were still in Montana in June, she planned to take more training because the qualifications for teaching were being

increased and she "may have to keep the farm going again next winter."

Maggie traveled to Burnettsville in July 1921 and returned to Montana in September, taking a teaching job in Carter. "It seems like a dream that I was back there this summer," Maggie commented in her December 12 letter:

Yes I realize that we could make a living there at least. But Dennis is all built up on "next Year." . . . This is great next year country.

After noting the people who have left their area, she wrote:

We'll soon be monarch of all we survey. Gee though but it's lonesome. I dont know what I would do if it wasn't for the school and I get so behind with my work and so rushed sometimes I wish I had never heard of it. . . . But as only half the taxes were paid they don't know if they can keep the schools going. The county is bonded so heavily now that its credit is gone.

An editorial from the *Fort Benton River Press* echoed her concerns about school funding:

The inability of Chouteau county citizens to pay the recent high cost of public service is indicated by the fact that about 3,800 of the 8,000 owners of taxable property are delinquent on taxes that were levied last year.²⁴

There are no letters for 1922; on April 23, 1923, Maggie wrote:

25. *Ibid.*, July 11, 1923. The *Fort Benton River Press* reported that three Chouteau County banks, including the Carter State Bank, had folded. In November federal officials ordered the First Bank of Carter to close, and Carter had no banks thereafter.

24. *Fort Benton (Mont.) River Press*, January 25, 1922.

Our prospects in every way were never poorer. We have had a dry winter. Winter wheat is going or gone. Fields that should be green are brown as can be. Everybody that was left is planning on going now. . . . Even the bankers have nothing encouraging to say anymore. . . . I don't know what will become of us. If we could sell the land I would be for coming back but as it is I don't see any hopes of ever coming.

Dennis wants to go over south where they get rain and rent land and I suppose we'll have to do that for we can move there without so much expense. It is something terrible the way this country has gone to pieces and the way the people have suffered.²⁵

The next letter, written September 26, 1923, listed a series of disasters: grasshoppers ate the heads off the rye, rain while they were harvesting, problems hiring help for the harvest (only two threshing outfits were left in the area), the burden of boarding and feeding the threshers, and a windstorm that destroyed the grain stacks. She listed the work needed to be done, Dennis's exhaustion, and then asked:

So how are we to come home? I think we should be encouraged to stay instead of to leave for it sure takes courage to stay. But mama I know you and papa wouldn't give up and leave everything. We have debts and couldn't pay them if we went and I can't bear the idea of taking "the cure" as they say here like the rest most all are doing.

"Taking the cure" was the derogatory term for the actions of those homesteaders who walked away from their debts or who filed for bankruptcy. The March 7, 1923, *Fort Benton River Press* reprinted an excerpt that reportedly appeared in numerous bank magazines, apparently in response to a midwestern bank's inquiry regarding Montana farmers' use of bankruptcy courts:

We have been afflicted with quite a number of settlers, now happily vanishing. . . . Where they came from they were "ne'er-do-wells." The propaganda went forth to them that the government would give them a double-sized home on the public domain for nothing—double-sized because the land was considered to be semi-arid, and one-half should lie fallow while the other was cropped each year. This

something for nothing appealed to them. One portion of them, probably the laziest and shrewdest, mortgaged their easily acquired donations for as much as they could get and took the next train out. . . . The next portion, probably the largest one, likewise mortgaged and then duly sluggardized over a pretense to cultivation. . . . They got the land for nothing why not get the crops for nothing? The poor foolish banks, like cornucopia, emptied their coffers into the laps of these people on the supposition that they were the last word in the sturdy progress of building up the new country. Then bankruptcy.

"Taking the cure" by the farmers has been largely a matter of fashion. One will start it and others follow until in some cases nearly the entire community has taken advantage of the bankruptcy act. They were bankrupt when they came, and they are adjudged bankrupt when they leave.²⁶

Maggie Davis's use of the term suggests its commonness at that time, although current Carter residents interviewed were unfamiliar with it.²⁷

A more balanced view of leavers is expressed by John Heinen, a sympathetic neighbor:

Just about [1917] . . . the business of raising wheat seemed to run into all kinds of difficulties. As drought, cut worms, and wire worms continued to take their toll, most of our neighbors left us. Probably some of them should have stayed with their homesteads but I never could blame them for leaving. During the bad years every family got more or less in debt. By leaving the homestead, the accumulated debts were also left behind, creating a situation in the business world that called for closing banks; and, of course, discontinuing the extension of credit by business people.²⁸



"All of us but Ed," noted Maggie on the Gorman family photograph taken during her 1921 visit. From left are Sara, Maggie, Ted, Mae, Emma (Mama), John (Papa), and Fred.

In October 1923 Maggie's younger sister Sara and her husband Virden Graham visited for a month. Maggie wrote to her parents on November 2 that they had enjoyed having guests and would miss them. She also informed them that she and Dennis planned to stay another year:

We have a lot of stock we can't sell and we can't hear of anything there that is desirable and reasonable to rent and we would like to get another good crop or two or three and then we will have money to move with. I think you will realize after they [the Grahams] get back more of the true state of affairs here and that we were not the only ones that are broke.

On December 3 Maggie wrote to her sister Mae Gorman that "it is so lonesome since everybody is gone that I can't stay out there alone so I go with Dennis about every place he goes." Although concerned about her parents' health, she was torn about returning and leaving Dennis to manage by himself. She still hoped that "maybe by another fall we could have enuf to pay Fred [her brother] and get moved back. Its been a hard struggle and we've all lost but it can't be helped now."

Maggie explained to her sister Mae on March 24, 1924, that she was sorry everyone was disappointed she did not come home for a visit, but it would have "taken a lot of money for both of us to come and now it would have been over and we would be facing a dreary cheerless future again."

The trip . . . only makes me more discontented and dissatisfied here, and as long as Dennis is bound and determined to stay in Mont. it isn't much use for me to be making visits back there. . . . I hope we have a crop too but I have no faith in it. If we don't have a crop we can't come and if we do have Dennis will want to stay and try it again so prospects are slim. And I hate the thot of giving up broke, too. And of course with nothing in sight there [in Burnettsville] either.

By summer farming conditions seemed to be getting better, and Maggie wrote on June 8 that people were returning. There was even talk about opening school again. A good crop in 1924 made it possible for Maggie and Dennis to drive to Burnettsville for a visit.

Upon Maggie and Dennis's return to Montana in March, it seems clear they had resolved to move back to Indiana. Subsequent letters included reports about the stock and crops, responses to family events, and

questions about a teaching position for Maggie in Indiana and about moving the stock back since there would be few, if any, buyers in Montana.

Maggie returned to Indiana in fall 1925 and took a teaching position. Dennis stayed in Montana that winter making final arrangements to leave, returning to Indiana July 1, 1926. The *Burnettsville News* reported his return:

Dennis Davis arrived here yesterday morning from Carter, Montana, with all of his cattle, horses, farming tools and household goods to make his home in Hoosierland again. He left here sixteen years ago and took up a 320 acre claim near Carter and has met the same fate that has befallen all of those who settled in that semi-arid region. The soil is extremely fertile and produces immense crops when there is enough rainfall, otherwise they are a failure. Unfortunately the barren years outnumber the fruitful ones and the farms in that locality are being rapidly deserted and their owners are seeking other localities in which to recoup their ill fortune.²⁹

Maggie and Dennis stayed with Maggie's parents until February 1927 when they bought a 110-acre farm south of Burnettsville. Over time they repaid their debts.

Getting their own place had been the Davis's primary goal, as Maggie frequently reminded her parents in her defenses of their move to Montana. On June 8, 1924, in one of her last letters before returning to Indiana, Maggie repeated, "We came out here to get money for a farm there so we wouldn't be renters and maybe if we stay long enough we'll win out yet."

Would Maggie and Dennis have stayed in Montana if there had been no drought? It seems doubtful. They failed to develop close ties with their Montana neighbors, and there were strong pulls to return east. A common explanation given by those who stayed during the years of drought and after was that they had few alternatives. As Clyde Sullivan wrote:

I came to Montana in May, 1913, primarily to find a climate a little more beneficial to my health; I saw a new land of great spaces and new homesteads and I stayed because, - well, I liked what I saw and I had no money to go back where I came from.³⁰

Unlike Clyde Sullivan, Maggie grew to dislike what she saw. And the Davises did have alternatives. With

26. *Ibid.*, March 7, 1923.

27. Doris and Jim Reichelt interview; Ray Castor interview.

28. Pleasant Valley Home Demonstration Club, comp., *Footprints through the Valley*, 27.

29. *Burnettsville (Ind.) News*, July 1, 1926.

30. Clyde Sullivan reminiscence, in Craig, comp., *Paths of the Past*, 49.

31. Rosemary Gorman Litke interview; Clyde A. Davis interview; Mary and Wilbur Criswell interview.

the end of the drought, they were able to leave Montana, in debt but with sufficient cash from the 1924 crop to ship their stock. When considering their options, Maggie and Dennis weighed the Gorman family's entreaties, the Montana climate, and the fact that they were familiar with Indiana farming conditions and made a rational decision to return. Maggie's teaching salary, along with financial support from her family, gave them a means of escaping the absolute financial ruin that struck many homesteaders. Just as homesteading was an economic decision so was leaving—they would be better off returning than staying.

It is also important to keep in mind the dynamics of Maggie's relationship with her family. She had a unique place in the family because she was the first child who lived beyond infancy after four stillbirths. Although Mrs. Gorman eventually had five babies, Maggie was always her father's favorite. Growing up, Maggie disdained housework. She preferred to be outside with her father, a preference her mother tried to change by sending her to an aunt for the summer to learn to clean, cook, sew, and knit. These were women's skills, which Maggie did not enjoy or value. Possibly her lack of interest in such tasks was at the root of her apparent isolation in Montana from neighbor women who placed a great emphasis on domestic talents.

What is more of a mystery is the absence of any mention of church activities, since both Maggie and Dennis had strong church ties in Indiana. Carter had a Presbyterian church as well as other less formally organized congregations, and in Fort Benton, approximately twenty miles from their homestead, there was an organized Christian Church. Maggie's letters de-

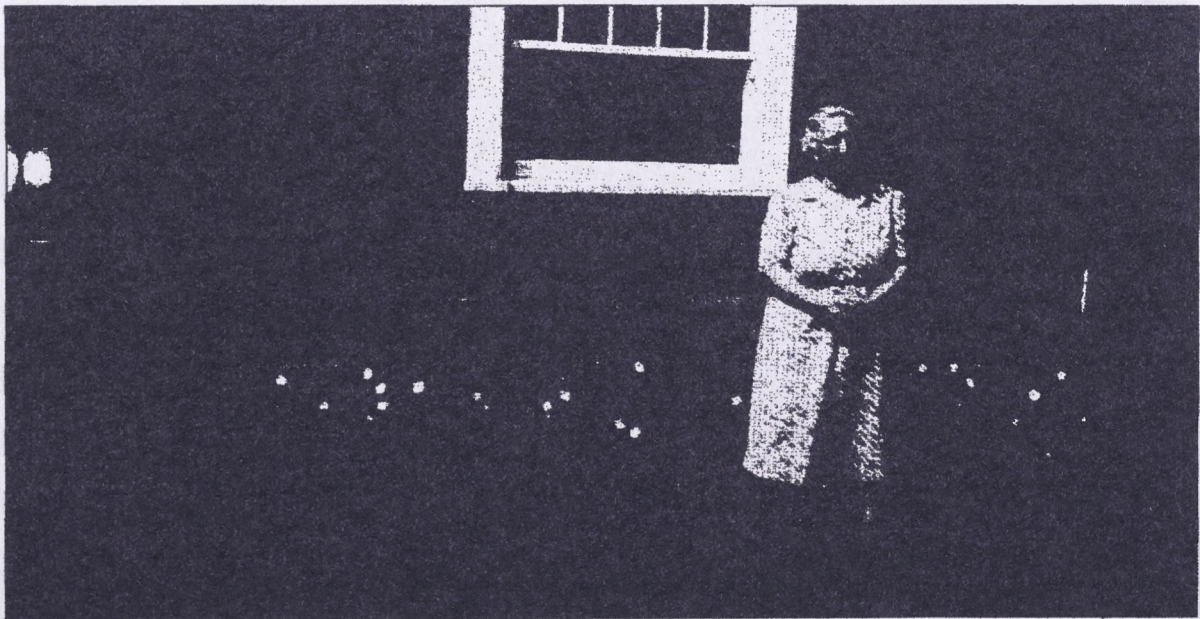
scribe visits to Fort Benton but do not mention attending church.

Eva Gorman Finnell wrote that her aunt would tell stories about the West, but when asked to write her reminiscences, Maggie refused, saying that "they were so hard she wanted to forget them." While descendants thought that "Maggie's Irish pride" made her hide from her family the hardships she and Dennis endured, it seems they never fully appreciated the despair her letters reveal. Indiana descendants considered Maggie a "workhorse" but a "complainer" and a "stone around Dennis's neck."³¹ Although she was likely both, what emerges from the letters is a loving marital relationship facing relentless pressure from the Gorman family for the couple to return to Indiana.

Leavers have been considered failures. Such a characterization, however, conflates an individual's goals with the desire of communities for political and economic growth. Homesteaders' goals varied. Maggie and Dennis Gorman had no intention of settling the West or taming the frontier. Their community remained in Indiana and their goal was to earn an economic stake out west to pay for a farm of their own near family and friends. *M*

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In 1925 Maggie took a teaching job back home in Burnettsville and Dennis followed the next year with their cattle, horses, farming tools, and household goods. In 1927 they bought a 110-acre farm south of town, fulfilling their dream. Maggie is pictured below at age eighty. Eva Gorman Finnell recounted that her aunt would tell stories about the West but refused to write her reminiscences, saying that "they were so hard she wanted to forget them."



Westering

by Ivan Doig

The surveyors as they are respectively qualified shall proceed to divide the said territory into townships of six miles square, by lines running due north and south and others crossing these at right angles as near as may be....The plats of the townships respectively shall be marked by subdivisions into lots of one mile square or 640 acres...

--The Land Ordinance of May 20, 1785

Square the land into dreamscape.
This strong country
westering beyond all experience
takes taming
marking
squaring down
to our size.

Thomas Jefferson's boxlike mind
knows it well.
Knows miles in chunks
can be whittled into dreams
farms
nation.

So men with squaring tools go
and put chains on the land.
Straight lines of trunk road railroad westering road.
Lines to say what is mine
and yours and his and theirs
and the horizon we all crave.
Lines knifing the sod into crops.
Town lines squaring our energy
into streets lots plots paths
routes of habit made indelible.

Lines to pierce the problems
nature insists on.
Curve of hills, thrust of peaks
Groping of time-blind rivers
Waver of grass that makes the prairie dance
Straight lines are false here
but dreamscape ever needs new boundaries.

Westering
we trace our lines
claim our square against tomorrow
carry our idea of the right order of things
to the unsuspecting places.

###

Your books have always reminded me so strongly of my grandfather's memoirs that he wrote in the 1970's when he was in his 70's. Here's one scene that especially reminded me of This House of Sky.

Grandpa's name was Robert W. Leonard and he followed the wheat harvest to Montana in about 1915^{1/2}, the year before he enlisted in the navy during World War I.

~~His article~~

A complete copy of the memoirs was given to the Montana Historical Society in the 1980's or so.

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If one went north along the range, they told me, one would be in Glacier Park after 40 or 50 miles, so I suppose the humps to be 9 or 10 thousand feet above sea level.

Choteau was and still is a cattle and sheep ranching, as well as wheat, country. There were real cowboys in high heels and wide hats in town, with saddle broncs hitched to rails along the street, but not as many as one would think after seeing western movies, and nobody offered to shoot the heels off this tenderfoot. George got a glad hand and a job with his brother, the St. Anthony Lumber Yard manager, who said there was still some threshing to be done, on account of a very heavy crop and more acreage. The rust had hit, but not here.

Around town in the bars I found men in khaki uniform, entirely or partly. Choteau had a national guard company that had just got back from the Mexican border, where they had been all summer with units from other states and some regulars, sent by President Wilson, and where there was friction between Pancho Villa and other revolutionaries against the Porfirio Diaz dictatorship. Our oil and mining interests felt injured, and a group of Mexican irregulars had shot up the county seat town of Columbus, New Mexico. The Choteau company had only had border guard duty and seemed bewildered at what it had been about. The cook at the lunch counter in one of the saloons had just returned, and was wearing some parts of army attire. I think all the government issue was to have been turned in, but some didn't

have anything else to wear with winter coming on, and I guess the company officers looked the other way. I bought a good army overcoat from the cook later, and he handed it over wrapped in a bundle rather furtively, as he pouched my \$10. I also acquired a wool shirt or two and a couple of khaki blankets for nominal sums.

Some of the company had not been locals, but bums or drifters who had enlisted as it was being mustered in to national service. I got into a conversation with a couple of these, one a hobo from Salt Lake City named June Collins, and another from all over, Barnes, who had had a hitch or two in the regular army, and had the regular army habit of getting drunk on payday. They said they were working for a thresher, 6 or 7 miles west on Burton's Bench, and sure, he needed hands, walk out there with them. Al Shibsted was threshing after most had quit. He had rented a tractor and separator from someone and was going around to the people who had despaired of being threshed out of the shock and had stacked their sheaves, so they could be safe all winter if necessary. The St. Anthony Young told me that Shibsted was honest, safe enough to work for. It seems he only furnished himself and fireman, the engine and separator, and charged so much a bushel. The farmer hired the crew, paid them, and gave them board and sleeping room if he saw fit. The outfit was at the place of a sour-looking Scandinavian bachelor, and with my two new friends there was crew enough on the ground, instead of what they had told me. I was

disappointed but not alarmed, as I still had quite a stake from Dakota and Saskatchewan, and I stuck around a little while on a busman's holiday, watching the threshing.

Shibsted, I think it was, someone anyway, took the farmer aside and pointed to an elderly man on one of the stacks, and pointed to me. The farmer got up on the stack and told the old fellow to get off, brought me his fork, and said, "You're hired." I demurred a little at taking the old boy's job, but he said the man was too slow and had to go, and if I didn't want the job, he'd get someone else. So I took it, but felt rather uneasy about it. The old fellow hung around waiting for a ride on a grain tank going to town, and I had a little talk with him. He seemed to bear no grudge, it was the way the world wagged. He was a genuine sheepherder, 60 years old, the first I had ever met that I knew of. He was a little overweight, with a stupid but harmless face, and at that point in time at least did not intersperse his words with "Ba, ba," as a herder is supposed to. He said he was a very good herder, and had worked for several large ranchers, whose names I did not of course recognize. He had finished his season's work in the mountains, as the band was returned to the home ranch for wintering, and had taken his paycheck to Choteau and performed his duty as a citizen and sheepherder by blowing it all on whiskey and women. He was either an optimist or was trying to cheer himself up - he said he could visit any one of several ranches and eat, and had performed a

remarkably shrewd stroke of business - he owned a \$60 bearskin overcoat for winter work, and had neither sold, lost, nor hocked it, but left it in safekeeping with a friend. This was my first real confrontation of the shoving aside of the elderly and unfit and uncircumspect; I couldn't help, for some days, seeing the old fellow with his head kind of hanging, waiting for his ride to nothing much. So far as I know there were no charities nor governmental help for indigents, and I tried to forget, but remember it yet.

Shibsted was a big, reddish Norwegian who had been raised near Green Isle, Minnesota, where, he said, his father had a real reputation among the Irish of that place as being the Fighting Norske. I don't think he ran or owned a farm - he and his young wife Betty lived in a rented house in town, and he seemed to be part mechanic and part trader, one of those who service the farmers for hire, but didn't run the price-weather risk integral with farming. His present enterprise seemed foolproof to me - he knew how to operate a steam tractor and grain separator and had only one person on his payroll, the fireman. The farmers paid and boarded the crew, paid cash by the bushel, and I suppose he paid rental on the machine by the bushel also.

Moving from place to place, I saw many contrasts of farming - some had rather poor crops in this year of large yields; some had shabby buildings in this area of big white houses and large red barns. Eating at the family table, sleeping on the premises, collecting pay from each farmer,

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June 7, 1940

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A Pioneer Doctor and His Messengers

Mark D. Hoyt, M.D. located in Glasgow in 1891 and for years was the only physician in that town and was one of the few doctors in the whole northeastern Montana. Only at the following places in that region could the services of a physician be secured: Poplar, Glasgow, Chinook, Havre, and Williston, over the line in North Dakota.

In the 1890's and the early 1900's most of the roads in that region were only trails. There were no automobiles. The only means of getting out to a sick or injured person on a ranch was by saddle horse, team and buggy, or team and wagon. Sometimes the sick or injured person was brought to the doctor but in many cases it was necessary for the physician to visit the patient. A long trip under the circumstances encountered sometimes proved to be a hardship for the doctor. The population in areas away from the railroad and rivers was sparse but a cowpuncher or broncho buster might get badly hurt any time. These visits to distant patients took much time and in case of illness other visits were necessary or desirable. To assist him in his work Dr. Hoyt resorted to the use of homing pigeons.

In the Valley County News of Sept. 30, 1904 the following item appeared.

"Dr. M. D. Hoyt has found his homing pigeons useful as well as a source of pleasure. He was called

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out to a ranch some distance from town the first of the week, and on his return he sent out the necessary medicine and also three pigeons to bring in reports of the patients condition from day to day."

When asked about his pigeons Dr. Hoyt enthusiastically told of their usefulness. He said the pigeons were of good stock and were banded. Some were lost but most of these losses occurred when they were being trained. In this way the poor birds were eliminated. When starting birds in training they were taken in a buggy and released a short distance from town. The distance was gradually increased. Sometimes a bird failed to return. The best birds were developed into "homers" that could be relied on to carry back an important message. Sometimes the doctor would get a railroad man to take a pigeon with him on his run and release it at a certain place. Some were released as far away as Williston and arrived home safely. Whenever he was called on a case distant from town he took one or more pigeons along.

Once the doctor was called to the Mack Hunter ranch about 15 miles southeast of Glasgow. He remained through the night. One of the Hunter children had died of diphtheria. At daylight the doctor released one of his pigeons bearing a message telling of the child's death and requesting that funeral arrangements be made.

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When they arrived in Glasgow all funeral arrangements had been completed.

The entrance to Dr. Hoyt's pigeon cote was arranged so that a returning pigeon could enter between two wires but none could get out. The entering bird made a contact that rang a bell in the house announcing its return, whereupon Mrs. Hoyt or some one would go out and get the message it had brought.

On another occasion when Dr. Hoyt was attending the Hunter children, who were critically ill, he felt the need of calling Dr. Atkinson of Poplar in consultation. Very early in the morning a pigeon was released with a message telling what he wanted. Mrs. Hoyt obtained the message it bore. As there was no long distance telephone service available at the time the call to Dr. Atkinson was telegraphed. He caught the first west bound passenger train to Glasgow and proceeded from there to the Hunter ranch by team and carriage, arriving there about 9 A. M.

Dr. Hoyt was called to the old N-N ranch, a few miles from Oswego and south of the Missouri River. On his way back, just before boarding the train at Oswego, he released a pigeon bearing a message that told of small-pox at the N-N. When he stepped off the train at Glasgow he was met by friends of the ranch boys who were eager to find out who had the small-pox down there. The bird had beaten the train to Glasgow. ?!

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With a physician so far away a serious sickness or injury created quite a problem. Such was the case with the Parent family on one occasion. The Parents were living near Milk River between Vandalia and Hinsdale. John Parent was planning to slaughter a steer one day and started out on his favorite horse with his rifle intending to round up the critter and shoot it. Billy De Bray, John Parent's step-son, who told about the incident was a boy at that time. Billy did not think as much of the horse as his step-father did; said it could not run any faster than a man anyway. While rounding up the steer the horse pitched or bucked, causing Parent to come down on the wrong part of the saddle, the horn. He went to the house and was made as comfortable as possible but his injury was very painful. In the evening Mrs. Parent decided to go to a neighbor for something to alleviate the pain. As she was leaving home she tripped over part of a mower near the house, fell and broke a leg. Billy got Dr. Hoyt to come out and he administered to the needs of the injured people. It was night when his work was done. Parent told Billy to guide the doctor across the river to the railroad where he planned to catch a train back to Glasgow. Crossing the river was not so pleasant as there was about a foot of water on the ice. They slopped through this to the railroad track where they gathered fuel and made a fire. Billy returned home. Dr. Hoyt got

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what comfort he could from his fire while waiting for the first east bound train, a freight, which he flagged and boarded to return to Glasgow. No doubt his close acquaintance with the railroad men made this accomodation possible.

Asked about the foregoing incident, Dr. Hoyt said he did not remember it very clearly but he did remember having a similar experience crossing the Missouri. He was called to the N-N ranch. The ice in the river was melting and was covered with water. Dr. Hoyt and the man who accompanied him to the ranch each tied an end of the same rope around his body and each carried a long cottonwood pole. These precautions were to prevent either one from going clear through the ice and if he did , to enable the other one to help him out. They got across safely and when they reached the ranch the doctor found that Cal Williams, a cowpuncher was a victim of pneumonia. He concluded that if the man's life was to be saved it would be necessary to take him across the river where he could have better care and continued medical attention. He also realized that if he was to be taken across it had to be done at once as the ice would soon break up. So with the help of some other men they rigged up a sled, put the patient on it and made the return trip. The ice was rotten and the slush up to their ankles. The man

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taking the lead broke through the ice twice but all reached the north shore safely. Dr. Hoyt said to his patient, "That's the last time I'll risk my life for an old cowpuncher like you." Williams replied, "I don't blame you, Doc."

In those days there were no bridges spanning the Missouri in eastern Montana. After the river froze over it was necessary to cross on ice if one crossed at all. More than one man had a close call in crossing. The Valley County News of March 10, 1905 stated that L. D. Handcock, who carried the mail between Oswego and Blackman, lost his horse, saddle and mail pouch while crossing the Missouri March 7, 1905; and that W. G. Davis, who was hauling a 3,000 lb. load with a four-mule team only about five yards behind Handcock, managed to turn around and return to Oswego.

One of the longest trips Dr. Hoyt made to see a patient was to a point about 25 miles west of Woody Mountain in Saskatchewan, and about 125 or 130 miles from Glasgow. While "busting" a broncho a rider had been thrown and his head had struck a pole, rendering him unconscious. On the way down, the man who came for the doctor had arranged with ranchers along the way for a relay of teams to carry the doctor as rapidly as possible to the patient. Even with this arrangement the trip took 36 hours. Drivers were changed as often as the teams so the doctor was the only one who

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had to make the complete journey. He was a very tired man when he reached his destination. The trip was not in vain for the man recovered from the injury.

Referring to the pioneer ranching days of north-eastern Montana, Dr. Hoyt said that all the business places on Front Street (now First Avenue) had hitching rails out in front. Incidentally nearly all these business places were saloons. At roundup time all these hitching places were fully occupied by cow ponies. Each cow outfit had a fast race horse, or thought it had one anyway. Most of the races were for short distances. Of all the horses the cow outfits brought forth none could beat "Black Chief", the doctor said. He was a beautiful black with a star in his forehead who was owned by John Handcock, a saloon-keeper of Glasgow. He was a 600-yard horse. He had been the property of Joe Butch, who broke him to ride and rode him while serving as an army scout. This horse lived to be 26 years old and then suddenly dropped dead.

Dr. Hoyt asserted that at one time more beef cattle were shipped from Glasgow than at any other point on the Great Northern Railroad. He said that many of the beef herds were held up along Cherry creek while waiting for shipment.

Among the local gunmen that he knew, Dr. Hoyt rated "Long Henry" as the best of the lot. He said, Shufelt shot "Long Henry" eight times in the back, and

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yet they turned him loose. But after being locked up in a Canadian prison at Stoney Mountain he went insane and died."

Dr. Mark D. Hoyt is the present mayor of Glasgow. He is and has been for many years one of the leading citizens of the city. As a physician and surgeon he has rendered a great service to the people of Glasgow and to those of a large area surrounding the town.

Dr. Hoyt furnished much of the material for this article. Some was obtained from copies of the Valley County News and William De Bray furnished a part.

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RECEIVED
JUN 10 1940
VALLEY COUNTY

Title: **A Pioneer Doctor and His Messengers**
 Informant: **From interviews and newspapers**
 Subject: **Livestock History, Valley County**
 Res. Wkr.: **Ralph Cumming, Glasgow, Montana**
 Date: **June 7, 1940**
 Wordage: **1,850** Pages: **8**

Contents: **Dr. Mark Hoyt in Glasgow in 1891 was the only doctor there. Great difficulties were encountered in getting to his patients, so he made use of homing pigeons as messengers. They carried daily reports as to condition of the sick. How he trained the birds. A bell announced the return of a pigeon. Cases cited where pigeons were useful. Other thrilling experiences in his medical calls. Hitching posts and horse races. The doctor is now Mayor of Glasgow.**

"CRAZY QUILT FARMING ON ROUND LAND":
THE GREAT DEPRESSION, THE SOIL CONSERVATION
SERVICE, AND THE POLITICS OF LANDSCAPE
CHANGE ON THE GREAT PLAINS
DURING THE NEW DEAL ERA

NEIL MAHER

This article examines the interrelationship between environmental and political change on the Great Plains during the Great Depression. It illustrates how ecological change initiated in one farming community's fields, first by the Great Depression and then by the New Deal's Soil Conservation Service, had economic, social, and political influence beyond the farmers' fencerows, and ultimately reoriented local citizens toward the federal government.

ON 8 OCTOBER 1941, a crowd of more than two thousand gathered on a small farm in Mormon Coulee, Wisconsin, to watch six so-called "dirt farmers" plow a soggy cornfield. The plowmen—along with most of the spectators—hailed from various mid-western states, were thankful the rain had let up and waited anxiously for the contest to begin. When a sudden cannon blast signaled the start of the event, the plowmen revved their tractors while the crowd cheered enthusiastically. The six farmers then began plowing in curves. Each man rounded out an opening furrow on his section of the field, carefully paralleling the slope of the land, and then circled back to arc another row, again along the hillsides. As the tractors continued to coil across the field, judges from the New Deal's Soil Conservation Service scurried up and down the rows inspecting the plow work to determine which contestant had best "lapped a furrow properly on the curve." After 80 minutes of such plowing, which local reporters labeled "crazy quilt farming," the judges awarded first

NEIL MAHER, a Ph.D. candidate in American history at New York University, is writing a history of the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps.

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prize to Wisconsin dairy farmer Bill Moy and crowned him "American Contour-Plowing King."¹

Plowing competitions were not new to farmers such as Bill Moy; the agricultural communities of both the Midwest and the Great Plains held similar events throughout their history. Yet traditionally these matches had tested skills very different from those on display at Mormon Coulee. In earlier contests, judges awarded points for "straightness of furrow" and "even lands ends," rather than for "furrows on the curve." Moreover, such events had been primarily local affairs. As one Kansan put it, prior to the Great Depression "farmers would brag about how they could make a straighter row than their neighbor. That was the sign of a good farmer . . . that was something to be proud of." The contour-plowing match won by Bill Moy in 1941, the first of its kind in the nation, was therefore quite novel. It also launched something of a fad. Organized and publicized widely by the Roosevelt administration's Soil Conservation Service, this event encouraged many sponsors of straight-row plowing contests to add a "contour" class to their events. Soon, whole competitions were being held "on the curve."²

The sudden popularity of contour-plowing matches during the New Deal era indicates not only the acceptance of a newfangled spectator sport by western Americans, but also that broader political transformations were taking place on the Great Plains during the Great Depression. Throughout the 1930s, as more and more farmers across the region plowed under their straight crop rows and began planting curvilinear fields on the contour, they likewise increasingly turned to the federal government for aid. In other words, as the agricultural landscape all around them took on a new appearance, so too did the political terrain, which began reorienting Great Plains farmers away from their local communities and toward Washington, D.C. Bill Moy's victory in 1941 at a contour-plowing match sponsored by the Soil Conservation Service thus suggests that a pair of interrelated forces—one involving landscape, the other politics—were altering the communities of the Great Plains during the New Deal era.

Historians have failed to rule on the political implications of this agricultural shift. Scholars of the Depression-era plains too often emphasize the most visible and publicized event of this period, the Dust Bowl, which affected only a minority of the nation's agrarian population. Almost as alarming is the scholarship, or lack thereof, regarding the rise of the modern welfare state during the New Deal era. While a number of historians and social theorists have convincingly argued that Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal represented a historic period of autonomous and expansive state activity, they have refrained from analyzing the role of the natural environment in this important twentieth-century development. This historiographical gap is all the more

¹ Glennon Loyd, "Singing Plowboy Plows Crooked to Win," *Soil Conservation* 7 (January 1942): 169–70.

² Lyle Rightmeyer, interview by author, Mankato, Kansas, 13 March 1996. On traditional straight-row plowing contests see Hildegard Binder Johnson, *Order Upon the Land: The U.S. Rectangular Land Survey and the Upper Mississippi Country* (New York, 1976), 197; and Loyd, "Singing Plowboy," 171.

surprising considering the plethora of New Deal programs aimed at restoring the country's natural resources, such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Soil Conservation Service. There is a need, then, to understand both the experiences of farming communities not inundated by dust during the Great Depression, as well as how such experiences altered the relationship between these agricultural communities and the federal government during the New Deal era.³

This essay is attentive to such community transformations. It explains them by examining interrelated changes in the natural and man-made landscape, or cultural geography, of an agricultural community located in north-central Kansas during the 1930s and early 1940s. It shows that ecological changes initiated in this community's fields, first by the Great Depression and then by the New Deal's Soil Conservation Service, had influence beyond farmers' fencerows and in fact affected the economies of grain elevators and banks as well as the social system located around courthouse square at the very center of the community. Furthermore, it argues that much like the process whereby curvilinear crop rows replaced rectilinear furrows, this community change was neither neat nor sudden. Rather it occurred gradually during the 1930s and influenced some communities, as well as some people within certain communities, more intensely than others. New ecologies, economies, and social forces mixed, mingled, and blended with older forms before replacing them to a great, yet never complete, extent. Community, therefore, is understood here less as a place in time than as a process of social interaction. This essay concludes that a new agricultural landscape, sown by both the economic insecurities of the Great Depression as well as the technological innovations of the New Deal's Soil Conservation Service, blossomed into a reconfigured political geography that helped tie the farming communities of the Great Plains more closely to the federal government.⁴

³ Histories examining community change in the Dust Bowl region during the Great Depression include Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York, 1979); Paul Bonnyfield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt, and Depression* (Albuquerque, 1979); Douglas Hurt, *The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History* (Chicago, 1981); Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, *Rooted in Dust: Surviving Drought and Depression in Southwestern Kansas* (Lawrence, KS, 1994). Scholarship on the rise of the modern welfare state during the New Deal includes Theda Skocpol, "Political Response to Capitalist Crisis: Neo-Marxist Theories of the State and the Case of the New Deal," *Politics and Society* (1980); Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Reuschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol (New York, 1985); Alan Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War* (New York, 1996); Alan Brinkley, "The New Deal and the Idea of the State," in *Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton, 1989).

⁴ My approach to cultural geography has been influenced by Carl Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape," *University of California Publications in Geography* 2 (12 October 1925): 19-54; J. B. Jackson, "A New Kind of Space," *Landscape* 18 (Winter 1969): 33-5; D. W. Meinig, ed., *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (New York, 1979). For the interrelationship between agriculture and culture see also T. H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of the Revolution* (Princeton, 1985). In considering community change, I have relied to a great extent on Thomas Bender, *Community and Social Change in America* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1978), 43.

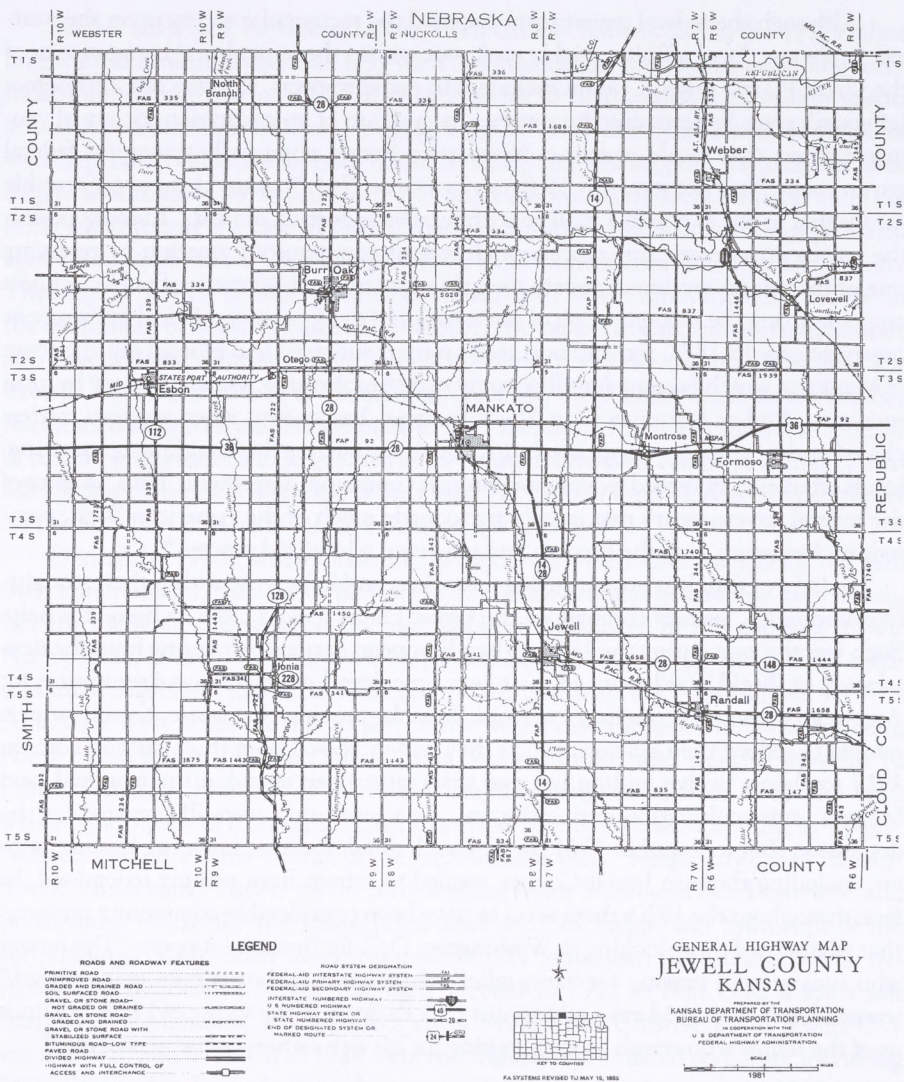
Jewell County, Kansas, is particularly fertile ground for generalizing about the experiences of western farmers during the Great Depression and New Deal era. Similar to many agricultural communities in the West during the 1930s and early 1940s, Jewell County experienced its share of economic hardship and was also the site of much work by the Soil Conservation Service. It therefore allows an extended analysis of the New Deal program's influence on local farming practices during the Great Depression. Perhaps more important, due to Jewell's location in an agricultural transition zone between the corn belt of the eastern plains and the wheat producing area in the high plains to the west, the county was in many respects ecologically representative of the Great Plains as a whole. It is precisely because Jewell farmers straddled this agricultural fault line that the changes they underwent during the Great Depression and New Deal era can help shed light on the experiences of fellow agriculturalists residing throughout the entire Great Plains region.⁵

Prior to the stock market crash of 1929, the farmers of Jewell County, Kansas, like most inhabitants of the trans-Mississippi West, maintained a mental map of their communities that was shaped to a great extent by the Land Ordinances of 1785. Not only did the United States Rectangular Survey divide up the American West for efficient settlement, but it also shaped the communities that settlers built upon that landscape. For instance, the survey determined the size and shape of counties and townships, influenced the location and density of homesteads, and even prescribed much of the Great Plains road network when Congress, after realizing it had forgotten to specify the location of public thoroughfares, simply ran them along section lines regardless of the natural terrain. A farmer wishing to travel diagonally across Jewell County was thus forced to zigzag along roads oriented toward the cardinal compass points. The location and main axes of Jewell County's towns were likewise determined by this rectangular road system. (See map 1.) Having ignored the warnings of those who understood that the survey failed to account for the curvature of the earth, Congress had authorized the superimposition of a flat graph-paper-like grid upon round land.⁶

The overall influence of the national survey in shaping the cultural landscape of Jewell County extended to agriculture as well. Not only did the survey's grid inadvertently determine both the size and shape of Jewell's fields, but it also affected the system of land use practiced by farmers in this and other counties throughout the Great Plains. For example, due to the survey, farm properties in Jewell ran north-south and east-west along section lines, as did the fences bordering each homestead. Because fields within

⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Soils, "Soil Survey of Jewell County, Kansas," by A. E. Kocher, J. P. Stack, E. H. Smies, and R. I. Throckmorton (Washington, DC, 1914), 6; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, *Soil Survey of Jewell County, Kansas*, by Vernon Hamilton (Washington, DC, 1984), 1-3.

⁶ For the influence of the United States Rectangular Survey on the American cultural landscape, especially in the West, see Johnson, *Order Upon the Land*, 40; John Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America, 1580-1845* (New Haven, 1982), 101; Carl Sauer, "Homestead and Community on the Middle Border," *Landscape* 12 (Autumn 1962): 5.



Map 1. Jewell County, Kansas.

homesteads ran parallel to property boundaries, they too were oriented toward the cardinal directions. So were the furrows within these fields, which farmers plowed in straight lines along their fences regardless of topography.⁷

⁷ On the National Survey's influence on land-use practices see R. Burnell Held and Marion Clawson, *Soil Conservation in Perspective* (Baltimore, 1965), 278; and Vernon Carstensen, "Patterns on the American Land," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 18, no. 4 (1988): 37.

Although the federal government imposed the rectangular survey upon the western landscape, local affinity quickly took root within the agricultural communities of the Great Plains, Jewell County included. In many respects, this was one of Thomas Jefferson's goals in designing the survey: the creation of an egalitarian society of yeoman farmers that would ensure independence from a potentially tyrannical federal government. "It is not too soon," Jefferson wrote in 1784, "to provide by every possible means that as few as possible shall be without a little portion of land." To some extent, the survey encouraged this process of close-knit community formation by reserving one of the center sections in every township for the establishment of public schools and permitting the incorporation of townships and the formation of local government organizations. In 1872, for instance, three settlers surveyed and plotted out the town of Mankato, which became Jewell's county seat the following year after a vote by local residents. And as historian John Mack Faragher has shown, when western settlers chafed under regulations associated with the survey, such as those outlawing squatting, locals often circumvented federal law through communal agreement. Thus, in spite of the federal government's role in helping to settle much of the American West, community formation atop the survey's grid remained a localized process.⁸

In light of this, it is not surprising that when problems arose within their straight-furrowed fields, farmers throughout the Great Plains looked close to home for help. Such was the case during the 1920s, when European nations recovering from the devastation of World War I resumed their own agricultural production and sent prices for American wheat and corn into a tailspin. To make the situation worse, Kansas farmers refused to reduce their acreage, which they had increased from three million acres in 1917 to almost twelve million just two years later, or to abandon the marginal land brought under cultivation during the war. As a result they were ill-prepared for the depression that followed in 1921. During such difficult times, however, Kansas farmers, including those in Jewell County, tended to refrain from seeking federal aid. In fact, throughout the 1920s there seem to have been considerable community pressures that stigmatized those looking to Washington, D.C. for financial support. "The farmer who runs around praying for 'farm relief' when his neighbor is busy going ahead," warned *Jewell County Monitor* editorialist J. O. Rodgers in the spring of 1929, "reminds us of the fellow who stands around waiting for his rich father-in-law to pass on."⁹

⁸ Jefferson as quoted in Johnson, *Order Upon the Land*, 39. For discussions of localism, the National Survey, and the American West, see John Mack Faragher, *Sugar Creek: Life on the Illinois Prairie* (New Haven, 1986), 53-60; Carstensen, "Patterns on the American Land"; J. B. Jackson, "Life and Death of American Landscapes: Jefferson, Thoreau and After," *Landscape* 15 (Winter 1965-66): 26. Jackson writes, "The National Survey of 1785 was not merely inspired by Jefferson, it was a clear expression of the Jeffersonian dislike of powerful government, centralized in cities." On local community formation in Jewell County see "Mankato the County Seat," in *A Commercial and Industrial Survey of Jewell County*, (Mankato, KS, 1929), 3.

⁹ Mary Scott Rowland, "Kansas Farming and Banking in the 1920s," *Kansas History* 8, no. 3 (1985): 189-90; J. O. Rodgers, "I've a Notion," *Jewell County* (Mankato, KS) *Monitor*, 10 May 1929, 2.

Rather than look for federal relief, Jewell County farmers during the 1920s relied on the local extension agent for help with their rectilinear furrows. By providing technical information that could be applied directly to fields, county extension agents served as teachers and advisors to local farmers. And because extension farm programs were dependent on locals for both financial and emotional support, these agents were largely independent of Washington and often controlled by local political factions. Such was certainly the case in Jewell, where extension agent Ralph Ramsey provided agricultural information and ran projects for local farmers from his office in Mankato. Through his weekly column in the local newspaper, which often included details on the eradication of farm pests such as oxwarble grubs, canker worms, and gophers, Ramsey also disseminated information to farmers unable to make the trip into his office. He likewise recommended crop diversification, especially the planting of alfalfa, as a strategy to enhance soil fertility and never once in 1929 mentioned contour plowing as a means of retaining soil moisture. Regardless of its content, however, Ramsey's column faithfully championed local interests, as on 3 May 1929, when it provided a detailed report on the activities of Jewell County's numerous 4-H clubs.¹⁰

During the 1920s, when Great Plains farmers traveled from their fields out into their communities, they drove past other important cultural geographic sites which, like the roads they zigzagged upon, also had been influenced by the national survey. For instance, after converting their crops into capital, farmers deposited these earnings into local banks that often reflected the rectilinear survey lines laid out over the American West. This was due in part to the widespread influence of Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, William Purcell, and George Elmslie, who together gave rise to Prairie School architecture. The banks these men designed between 1905 and 1920 were simple, square or rectangular structures whose horizontal lines, according to Wright, "echoed the spirit of the prairies of the great Middle West." Frequently called "strong-boxes," these banks usually sat on corners along Main Street and faced east-west and north-south much like the roads, homestead sections, fields, and townships of the surrounding county. Such structures undoubtedly influenced the architects who designed Jewell County's banks. The bank erected in 1912 in Burr Oak, a town just northwest of Mankato, was a perfect cube, while those constructed in Jewell City around 1910 and in Esbon in 1924 were rectangular and situated on corner lots along Main Street. The banks built in the town of Formoso sometime around 1910 and in Randall in 1912 also reflected this prairie style of architecture.¹¹

¹⁰ On the power of local extension agents see J. C. Headley, "Soil Conservation and Cooperative Extension," *Agricultural History* 59, no. 2 (1985): 292. On the Mankato location of the Jewell County extension office see Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13 March 1996; Ralph Ramsey, "Help the Farm Situation with Diversification," *Jewell County Monitor*, 28 June 1929, 6; Ralph Ramsey, "Farm Bureau Notes," *Jewell County Monitor*, 3 May 1929, 6.

¹¹ Irving K. Pond and Frank Lloyd Wright as quoted by William T. Morgan, "Strong-boxes on Main Street: Prairie-Style Banks," *Landscape* 24, no. 2 (1980): 36. On widespread acclaim for prairie banks see *ibid.*, 35-40.

While the architecture of Jewell County banks embodied the gridiron of the national survey, most of the business conducted within their walls focused on the local community. Because Kansas, like most of its neighbors throughout the Great Plains, was a unit-banking state that prohibited branch banks from extending their jurisdiction over state lines, the industry remained unregulated and decentralized during the 1920s with over one thousand small independent banks in operation statewide. Due to such regulations, banks like those in Jewell County were only too willing to promote their own provincialism. In advertisements published in local newspapers prior to the Great Depression, Mankato's First National Bank emphasized its role as "depository for county, township, school district, and city funds," while the State Exchange Bank down the street boasted, "we are not a depository of any Federal or State Funds."¹²

When funds in local banks ran short, as they often did in agricultural communities during the 1920s, many farmers sought help around their county seat's courthouse square. Often built during the nineteenth century and comprised of a grand court building surrounded by a grid of streets extending outward into the countryside, courthouse squares were a common element of county seats throughout the Midwest and Great Plains region. Jewell County's courthouse square was typical. Located in the center of Mankato, which was itself situated in the very middle of the county in aptly named Center Township, Jewell's courthouse square included an imposing court building bordered on all sides by perpendicular streets that ran east-west and north-south. In Jewell, as in most counties throughout the Great Plains, courthouse square mirrored the extended landscape, which was patchworked with straight-rowed fields and dotted with square and rectangular banks.¹³

For Jewell farmers experiencing hardship, all county roads led to courthouse square. Here, gathered inside the courthouse and on the perimeter of the square, were the social institutions that local farmers relied on in good times and in bad. The court building itself housed the county courts as well as a host of government offices, while just outside the courthouse were other equally important relief organizations. For instance, on the periphery of the square facing the courthouse stood religious institutions that represented the first and often only source of community welfare for local farmers. During the late 1920s these included the Methodist, Christian, and United Brethren Churches of Mankato, each of which maintained ladies' aid societies to help members of the community in times of need. Thus, along with reflecting the

¹² On the decentralization of Kansas banks see Rowland, "Kansas Farming," 186; and David Wheelock, "Regulation and Bank Failures: New Evidence from the Agricultural Collapse of the 1920s," *Journal of Economic History* 52, no. 4 (1992): 815. For an example of Jewell County banks advertising their own provincialism see *Jewell County Monitor*, 11 January 1929 and 18 January 1929.

¹³ Edward Price, "The Central Courthouse Square in the American County Seat," *The Geographical Review* 58, no. 1 (1968): 29.

rectilinear character of the national survey, Jewell's courthouse square also oriented local farming communities inward toward the center of the county.¹⁴

As with Jewell's fields, banks, and courthouse square, the Land Ordinances of 1785 influenced the spatial arrangement of the county's grain elevators as well. After harvesting their fields but before depositing the revenue from their crops into local banks, farmers had to transform their corn and wheat into capital. They did this at the local grain elevator. Like most grain elevators throughout the western United States, the dozen or so in Jewell were situated alongside railroad lines, in this case one of three—the Missouri Pacific Railroad; the Chicago, Rock Island Railroad; and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad—each of which ran their tracks as straight as possible along county section lines. Because the elevators in the towns of Mankato, Formoso, Montrose, and Esbon each loaded grain onto the Missouri Pacific Railroad, they stood at intervals across the Jewell landscape in a near-perfect row from the eastern to the western edge of the county.¹⁵

Although the location of Jewell's grain elevators reflected the rectilinear character of the national survey, the business conducted within these structures had the potential to be controlled by extra-local forces. While all of the elevators in the county were so-called "country elevators," meaning they received most of their grain from farmers living within a ten-mile radius, they were nevertheless linked by rail to terminal elevators, which in turn shipped Jewell grain to distant domestic and foreign markets. This connection to far-off economies was quite evident when large grain-buying syndicates, aided by railroad companies, began buying up country elevators throughout the Great Plains during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. So successful were these syndicates in gaining control of local grain elevators that by 1910 they were able to essentially dictate the price paid to local farmers for crops. As one commentator explained in 1914, "the farmer with grain to sell was no longer master of his situation."¹⁶

In an effort to reestablish control over their local economy, farmers throughout the Midwest and Great Plains began banding together to form grain elevator

¹⁴ On Great Plains county roads leading both figuratively and literally to courthouse square see Price, "The Central Courthouse," 56; and J. B. Jackson, "The Almost Perfect Town," *Landscape* 2 (Spring 1952): 5–6. On Jewell County's religious institutions see "History of the Church Organizations of Jewell County," in *A Commercial and Industrial Survey*, 22, 27.

¹⁵ Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13 March 1996. For additional information on Jewell County grain elevators during the 1920s see "Annual Report of the Public Service Commission, Labor Department, State of Kansas," (Topeka, 1926–1942). On railroads in Jewell County see Kocher, "Soil Survey of Jewell County, Kansas," 7. On the role of the National Survey in determining railroad routes, see Stilgoe, *Common Landscape of America*, 341–2.

¹⁶ John Hudson, "The Grain Elevator: An American Invention," in Frank Gohlke, ed., *Measures of Emptiness: Grain Elevators in the American Landscape* (Baltimore, 1992), 89; O. N. Refsell, "The Farmers' Elevator Movement," *Journal of Political Economy* 22 (November 1914): 878.

cooperatives. The resulting movement, often called the "farmers' grain elevator movement," reached Kansas in 1892 when residents of Wilson, Kansas, organized the state's first cooperative grain elevator. Although the movement spread slowly throughout the rest of the state in the 1920s, it grew dramatically during the following decade when farmers established two-thirds of Kansas's nearly 300 cooperative elevators. Farmers organized five such grain elevators in Jewell County, one of which, the Farmers' Union Co-operating Association, was created in 1917 and located on the outskirts of Mankato along the Chicago, Rock Island Railroad. In Jewell as elsewhere, cooperative elevators succeeded in providing farmers with local marketing agencies that assured reductions in grain-handling charges as well as the elimination of questionable practices in grading and weighing grain. The other grain elevators in the county remained locally owned during the 1920s. Thus, even though grain elevators posed a potential threat to local economic autonomy, Jewell County farmers were quite successful in insulating their community from these extra-local forces.¹⁷

Prior to the Great Depression, then, Jewell County farmers relied on the nearby help of their county extension agent for guidance with their straight-furrowed fields. In many respects the nature of both—local aid and rectilinear furrows—extended beyond farmers' crop rows to influence the structure and functioning of Jewell's banks, courthouse square, and grain elevators. The stock market crash in October 1929, however, and more importantly the severe drought that followed on the Great Plains three years later, called this coexistence between a rectilinear landscape and a reliance on local institutions into question. In response, Jewell farmers began reassessing their rather square relationship with a land beginning to flex its curves.

The economic shock of Black Tuesday was slow to reach Kansas. As one Jewell County resident wrote, "farm prices were not high anyway and they did not immediately plummet . . . And besides, there were no skyscrapers from which ruined farmers could jump." Mankato journalists were at first equally optimistic. In his January 1930 New Year edition, the editor of *The Jewell County Monitor* boasted, "never before in the history of this town and vicinity [were] prospects better for a prosperous year . . . business conditions are gradually improving and altogether times are ripe for a good year ahead." In 1933, however, when a drought also struck the Great Plains, Jewell County farmers were faced with the ecological equivalent of the 29 October stock market tumble.¹⁸

¹⁷ On cooperative grain elevators in Kansas see Farm Credit Administration Cooperative Research and Service Division, "Operations of Cooperative Grain Elevators in Kansas and Oklahoma 1931-32 to 1936-37, Bulletin No. 30," by Harold Hedges, (Washington, DC, 1939), 1-2. For specifics regarding cooperative grain elevators in Mankato see "Mankato Map," Sanborn Map Company, 1923, located in The Kansas Collection, University of Kansas, Lawrence. On cooperative grain elevators in Jewell County see Farm Credit Administration, "Membership, Financial, and Operating Status of Cooperative Country Elevators in Kansas, 1931-1934," by Roy Green (Washington, DC, 1934), 8; Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13 March 1996.

¹⁸ Dick Judy, "An Era Passes," *The Jewell County* (Mankato, KS) *Record*, 29 September 1977, 5; "A Prosperous New Year," *Jewell County Monitor*, 3 January 1930, 1.

The drought of 1933 scorched the Great Plains for three consecutive years. Precipitation in Jewell County, which had averaged 23.25 inches per year during the 1920s, dropped to 18.1 inches annually between 1932 and 1936, a decrease of more than 22 percent. While this dry spell proved one of the worst on record, the Depression-era drought was far from unprecedented. As longtime Jewell resident Lyle Rightmeyer explained, "we'd eaten a lot of dirt around this country." Yet unlike those from southwestern Kansas, who either endured or fled the infamous Dust Bowl, the great majority of farmers throughout the Great Plains faced a different, though related, set of ecological problems. Rather than dust, what these farmers found most extraordinary about the 1933 drought were the giant gullies that accompanied it. As one visitor to Jewell put it, "most of the damage here comes from runoff . . . there are many ugly gullies in this semiarid area."¹⁹

Severe runoff had a number of ecological consequences for Jewell County's fields. As water moved downhill, it carried topsoil along with it and thus cut deeper into the earth. The increased slope transported rainfall at an even faster rate, giving it less time to seep into the soil. The result was a never-ending spiral of steepening slopes and faster moving water that left Jewell's fields drier and less fertile. Wheat yields per acre, for instance, which averaged 15.2 bushels between 1927 and 1931, declined by 50 percent to 7.6 bushels per acre during the drought. Other Jewell County crops more dependent on moisture suffered an even worse fate. "You couldn't raise any corn," explained Lyle Rightmeyer. "It dried up and burned up and died."²⁰

While many Jewell farmers cursed the burning sun and lack of rain for their poor harvests, others also began blaming their rectilinear furrows. They did so because on those rare occasions when it did rain, farmers were forced to watch helplessly as their straight crop rows channeled much needed water quickly off their fields, washing valuable topsoil along with it. These furrows, local farmers knew only too well, often deepened into gullies. Jewell farmer Roy Phillips publicly expressed concern as early as May of 1934 that straight-row "soil washing" was decreasing yields on his Odessa Township farm in the eastern part of the county. The local newspaper also ran front page articles on the problem, explaining to its readers that "crops planted in rows up and down the

¹⁹ Rain statistics maintained by Jewell County Soil Conservation District, Jewell County, Kansas. For a list of previous Jewell County droughts see Kocher, "Soil Survey of Jewell County, Kansas," 9. On Jewell County dust storms see Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13 March 1996. For a description of gullying in Jewell County see U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, *To Hold this Soil*, by Russell Lord (Washington, DC, 1938), 86; and U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, "Physical Land Conditions Affecting Use, Conservation and Management of Land Resources, Jewell County, Kansas," by Robert Eikleberry, July 1990, File SP 630.7ZEX7PH, Jewell County Folder, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka.

²⁰ Kansas State Board of Agriculture, "Soil Erosion by Wind in Kansas," by J. C. Mohler (Topeka, KS, 1937), 16. This report's title is misleading with regards to Jewell County, where water, rather than wind erosion, was the main problem. On corn cultivation see Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13 March 1996.

slope are washed out in some places and buried in others." Even those just passing through Jewell quickly realized that rectilinear furrows were causing severe soil and water erosion throughout the county. As one visitor said of Jewell farmers during the height of the drought, "they like to farm 'on the square,'" with the result that "slopes keep creeping higher . . . and the speed and gnawing power of water has increased accordingly."²¹

Along with losing faith in their straight-furrowed fields, during the early years of the Great Depression Jewell farmers also lost confidence in their local extension agent. When drought hit the Great Plains in 1933, county agents throughout Kansas continued to advocate crop diversification as the best strategy for trapping moisture in soil, much as they had in the 1920s. Jewell County extension agent Ralph Ramsey recommended that local farmers increase their acreage in alfalfa. Yet according to Glenn Grout, who farmed a quarter section in Jewell during the 1930s, Ramsey's suggestion was highly impractical during prolonged dry spells. "Alfalfa," Grout explained, "is probably the crop that would be most affected by drought." Fellow farmer Lyle Rightmeyer put it more bluntly, adding that the county extension agent in Mankato "didn't have any training in soil conservation." Still another indication of the county agent's waning influence is found in the pages of a local newspaper, the *Western Advocate*, which ceased regular publication of Ramsey's extension news column on 9 May 1934. Thus, while Ralph Ramsey experienced broad community support for his programs during the 1920s, enthusiasm for his extension work, like Jewell County's crops, began to wither as the depression and drought deepened.²²

The loss of confidence expressed by Jewell farmers with respect to both their straight-furrowed fields and their county extension agent was characteristic of a more broad-based anxiety concerning the inability of their community to help them weather the Great Depression. For example, when county farmers deposited revenue from their meager harvests into local bank accounts, it was difficult for them to ignore the changes affecting the Jewell economy. Most obviously, during the 1930s there were simply fewer banks in which to make deposits and from which loans could be drawn. The State Bank of Webber shut its doors on 25 September 1930 due to a run and insufficient funds, and banks in nearby Formoso and Montrose soon followed suit. And although the two banks in Mankato remained solvent throughout the Great Depression, bankers from both institutions were less willing to invest in the local community than they had been during the 1920s. J. P. Fair, president of Mankato's First National Bank,

²¹ On soil washing see "Soil Erosion Notes," *Western Advocate* (Mankato, KS), 1 March 1934, 1 and 14 May 1936, 1. For visitor comments on soil erosion see Lord, *To Hold this Soil*, 86.

²² On loss of confidence in county extension agents in southwestern Kansas see Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, "From the Horse's Mouth: Dust Bowl Farmers and Their Solutions to the Problem of Aridity," *Agricultural History* 66 (Spring 1992): 138-9. On loss of confidence of Jewell County extension agent see Glen Grout, interview by author, Mankato, Kansas, 13 March 1996; and Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13 March 1996.

admitted to following "a conservative banking philosophy" during the 1930s that often denied local farmers credit but which kept his bank solvent in the long run.²³

When banks tightened their fiscal belts or went belly-up altogether, Jewell County farmers instinctively turned to their courthouse square for help. But here changes of a social nature were altering their community. Between 1929 and the early months of 1933, the burden of providing relief for Kansas farmers fell upon local welfare groups; the state of Kansas provided only one percent of all relief dollars spent in the state during the 1930s. Not surprisingly, as the depression and drought continued, these grass-roots civic organizations simply lacked the institutional resources necessary to aid their own people. In Jewell, for instance, the growing number of farm families seeking relief quickly overwhelmed the county's ladies aid societies, which from churches around courthouse square had successfully catered to the community's poor during the 1920s. The two community relief committees that Jewell residents established in Mankato during the early 1930s proved equally inadequate. "The local government couldn't help," explained Bradley Judy, who taught high school and farmed in Jewell County during the Great Depression, "And there wasn't any help in the form of community groups." Yet another indication that local relief efforts were insufficient was Jewell's dwindling population, which plummeted by more than 20 percent between 1929 and 1938.²⁴

Along with faltering fields, broken banks, and overwhelmed welfare organizations, during the early 1930s Jewell County farmers also experienced the weakening of the cooperative grain elevator movement they had established to insulate their community from extra-local grain markets. During the Depression era, cooperative grain elevators across northwestern Kansas, including Jewell County, experienced on average a 12 to 15 percent decline in active membership. In Jewell proper, the situation was similar. Whereas during the three years prior to the drought, 1930 to 1932, county farmers produced on average more than 1.3 million bushels of winter wheat per year, much of which passed through local cooperative elevators on the way to freight trains, during the three-year dry spell production declined throughout Jewell to just over one-half million bushels per year. As a result, a number of the county's cooperative grain

²³ "Webber Bank Closed," *Jewell County Monitor* 26 September 1930, 1; "Formoso Bank Quits Business," *Western Advocate*, 2 July 1936, 1. On the closing of the bank in Montrose see Rightmeyer interview by author, 13 March 1996. On J. P. Fair's banking policy during the depression see Dick Judy, "An Era Passes," *The Jewell County Record*, 29 September 1977, 5.

²⁴ On the failure of state and local relief in Kansas see Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, "Hard Times, Hungry Years: Failure of the Poor Relief in Southwestern Kansas, 1930-1933," *Kansas History* 13, no. 3 (1992): 156-66; Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 12, 35; Peter Fearon, "From Self-Help to Federal Aid: Unemployment and Relief in Kansas, 1929-1932," *Kansas History* 13, no. 2 (1990): 107-22. On failure of relief organizations in Jewell County see "Local Relief Committee Met and Made Plans for Work," *Western Advocate*, 24 November 1932, 1; and Bradley Judy, interview by author, Mankato, Kansas, 13 March 1996. For statistics on Jewell's dwindling population see Kansas State Board of Agriculture, "Biennial Report" (Topeka, KS, 1929-1938).

elevators were forced out of business. As Jewell farmer Glen Grout explained, "a lot of elevators went bankrupt" in the "dirty thirties."²⁵

During the early years of the Great Depression, then, when drought aggravated an already dire economic situation, Jewell farmers began questioning their reliance on both straight-furrowed fields and the county extension agent. This loss of confidence extended beyond the ecology of Jewell's fields to include the economics of its banks and grain elevators and the social network of its courthouse square. In response, local farmers abandoned their rectilinear, local orientation and sought replacements. The first step in this search involved the presidential election of 1932, when Jewell residents, along with the majority of their fellow Kansans, forswore their decade-long allegiance to the Republican party's belief in a small federal government little involved in local affairs and voted by plurality for the Democratic nominee.²⁶

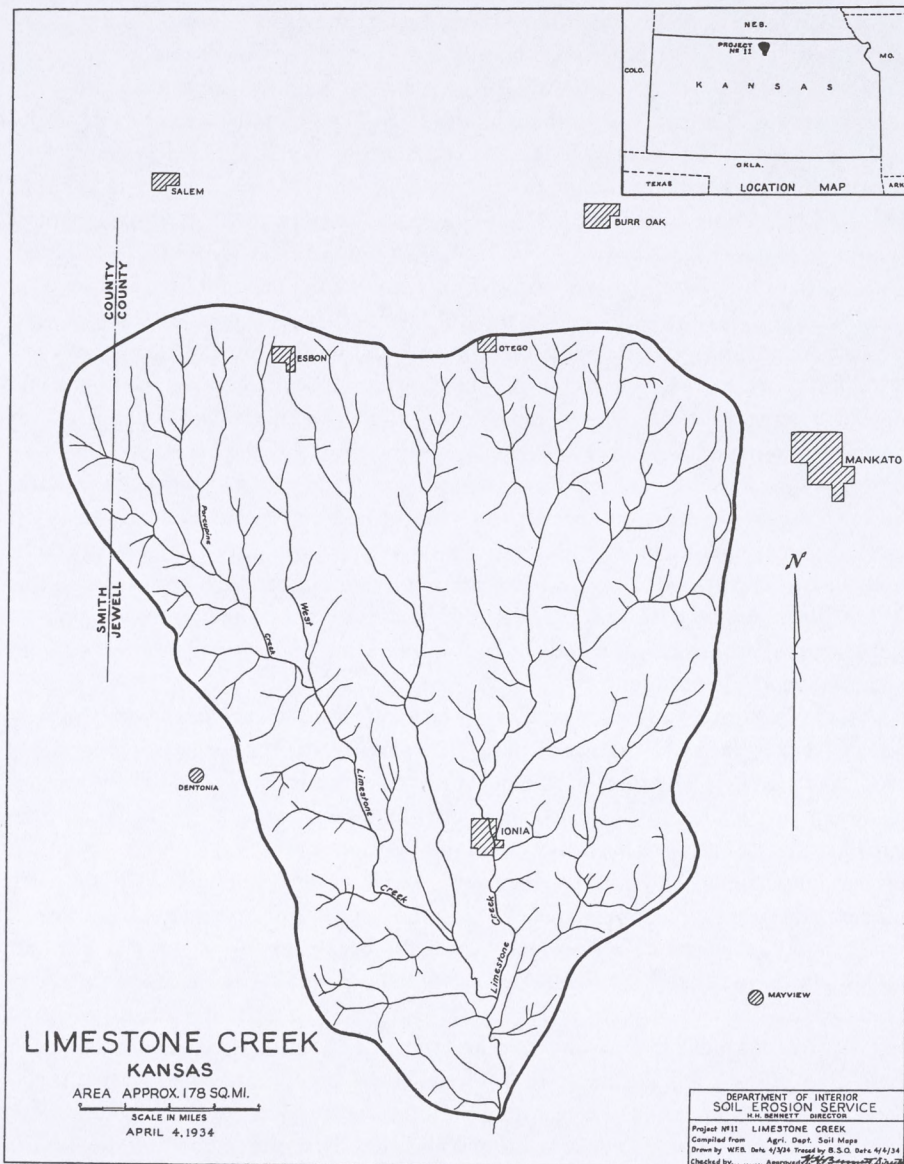
One of the first signs that Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal had arrived in Jewell was an airplane that buzzed back and forth over the western half of the county on a clear Saturday afternoon in December 1933. After considerable speculation, local residents learned that the Soil Conservation Service had hired the plane to take aerial photographs of what was soon to become the Limestone Creek Demonstration Area. As the *Western Advocate* explained to its readers, "instead of having a flat appearance, as one would expect in a photo taken looking straight down, the maps show clearly every gully and slope, even small rises showing up like mountains." A new community map, one that took into account the curvature of the earth, was being prepared by the federal government for superimposition atop Jewell County's rectilinear and locally oriented grid.²⁷

The Limestone Creek Demonstration Area was one of 175 projects established nationwide by the Soil Conservation Service during the New Deal era. The concept behind these projects was to convince farmers within a concentrated geographic area to work with the Soil Conservation Service in implementing soil and water conservation techniques. These farms would then be showcased so that other farmers from outlying regions could visit and learn how to implement such agricultural practices on their own land. The service would provide the technical expertise and machinery while those residing in the area would supply the labor. Unlike the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the Soil Conservation Service did not pay farmers to

²⁵ For a description of Kansas elevator cooperatives see Floyd Smith, "Grain Cooperatives: Their Growth and Structural Changes," Kansas Agricultural Experiment Station (Manhattan, KS, 1973), 1-5. On the impact of the drought on cooperative grain elevators in northwestern Kansas (Jewell County included) see Farm Credit Administration, "Membership, Financial, and Operating Status of Cooperative Country Elevators in Kansas, 1931-1934," by Roy Green (Washington, DC, 1934), 2. On winter wheat harvests in Jewell County and their relation to the closing of cooperative grain elevators see Kansas State Board of Agriculture, "Biennial Report," and Grout, interview by author, 13 March 1996.

²⁶ June Cabe and Charles Sullivant, *Kansas Votes: National Elections, 1859-1956* (Lawrence, KS, 1957).

²⁷ "Took Photos From the Air," *Western Advocate*, 1 February 1934, 1.



Map 2. Limestone Creek Demonstration Area.

participate. The Limestone Creek project, one of the first, longest functioning, and largest demonstration areas in the nation, encompassed more than 125,000 acres or nearly 200 square miles.²⁸

²⁸ On Soil Conservation Service demonstration projects nationwide see Hugh H. Bennett, "A New Farm Movement Takes Rapid Root," *Soil Conservation* 6 (February–March

The Soil Conservation Service's Limestone Creek Demonstration Area stood in stark contrast to the rectilinear community farmers had constructed upon the Jewell County landscape. The project, similar to other demonstration areas throughout the nation, was established on a watershed basis, meaning only farms located within the Limestone Creek drainage qualified for inclusion in the federally-funded program. "Erosion and its accompanying evils do not stop at fence lines, or farm boundaries. Neither do they stop at state lines," argued Soil Conservation Service Chief Hugh Bennett. "They are, in general, watershed . . . problems . . . [that] must be treated on that basis." Thus, rather than adhering to township or county boundaries, the Limestone Creek Demonstration Area was shaped like a raindrop and literally seeped over into neighboring Smith and Mitchell Counties in the west and south. (See map 2.)²⁹

Along with redrawing maps of the western portion of the county, the Limestone Creek Demonstration Area transformed Jewell's fields as well. Only a few months after snapping photographs of Limestone Creek by airplane, the Soil Conservation Service announced to Jewell County residents its primary strategy for halting soil and water erosion. "Fields are planned to be cultivated on the contour," wrote Soil Conservation Service agricultural engineer John Glass on the front page of the local newspaper. On fields with a gentle slope of less than four percent the service would help farmers replot their furrows parallel to hillsides, while in steeper regions contoured furrows would be supplemented by terraces, also laid out on the curve, and built with machinery on loan from the federal government.³⁰

In the beginning, many Jewell County residents were suspicious of both this new type of agriculture as well as the organization promoting it. "My father was skeptical at first," admitted Lyle Rightmeyer, who explained that farmers disliked contour-plowing because it involved more point rows and thus increased the time it took to farm an acre of land. According to Rightmeyer, locals also "didn't want some government man coming out there and saying 'now here's the way you ought to do this.'" Yet as more and more farmers living within the demonstration area began visiting fields contoured by the Soil Conservation Service, they gradually began signing up to have contour guides laid out on their own fields. By December 1935, only two years after the Soil Conservation Service arrived in the county, farmers within the demonstration area had constructed more than twelve hundred miles of contoured terraces, and in 1935 alone they contour planted more than fifteen thousand acres of small grain. As the *Western Advocate* proclaimed soon after the Soil Conservation Service began its work in Jewell County: "There's a new fashion in farming! Straight rows are out; the object now is to plant crops across the slopes paralleling the terraces as nearly as possible."³¹

1941): 193-4; and Phoebe Cutler, *The Public Landscape of the New Deal* (New Haven, 1985), 113. On the size and shape of the Limestone Creek Demonstration Area see "Soil Erosion Project for Kansas," *Western Advocate*, 28 December 1933, 1.

²⁹ As quoted in Robert Parks, *Soil Conservation Districts in Action* (Ames, IA, 1952), 2.

³⁰ "Terracing in the Limestone Valley Area," *Western Advocate*, 31 May 1934, 1.

³¹ On local opposition to contour farming see Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13

Those living within the demonstration area were not the only farmers in Jewell County abandoning their rectilinear furrows for curvilinear crop rows. The Limestone Creek project also convinced many farmers from the surrounding region, as well as those beyond the county, to practice contour farming. The Soil Conservation Service accomplished this by holding "Field Demonstration Days" throughout the year, during which visitors toured the project area. One such event held on 9 and 10 August 1934, attracted approximately 1,000 people from 43 Kansas counties and 5 states; even Kansas Governor Alf Landon attended. At a similar event the following year, touring tenant farmers from adjacent Cloud County were so taken with the contour farming on exhibit along Limestone Creek that they decided on the spot to survey their straight-rowed fields and plant on the curve. "Many farmers who are not in the area or are non-cooperators have adopted the practice," explained a local newspaper reporter.³²

As farmers and the Soil Conservation Service gradually replaced straight furrows with contoured crop rows, they slowly transformed the ecology of Jewell County's fields. Unlike rectilinear furrowing, contour plowing slowed water runoff and thus decreased both the washing away of fertile topsoil and the severity of gullying. Perhaps more importantly, the practice kept the occasional rain from running off farmers' fields. "The rows seem almost to run themselves dizzy going across or around the fields in half circles," wrote one visitor to the Limestone Creek Demonstration Area in July 1934. "It is obvious to the naked eye that only during a cloudburst could water find its way out of the system of terraces and corn rows listed 'on the contour.'" Because of such practices, Jewell County's soils were more moist and fertile, and farmers who had difficulty diversifying their crops prior to the arrival of the Soil Conservation Service were now planting a whole host of new species, including sweet clover, alfalfa, kafir, cane, milo, and a variety of grasses. In 1935 alone, acreage in sorghums increased 55 percent throughout Jewell County as a whole and 72 percent within the demonstration area as compared to the previous year.³³

Along with altering the ecology of Jewell County's fields, the Soil Conservation Service also replaced Ralph Ramsey, the county extension agent, as the main source of agricultural information for local farmers. Like Ramsey, Limestone Creek project manager F. L. Duley also resided and maintained an office in Mankato, the county seat. Yet

March 1996. On the expansion of contour farming in Jewell see "Soil Conservation Notes," *Western Advocate*, 12 December 1935, 1; "New Fashion in Farming," *Western Advocate*, 18 October 1934, 7.

³² "Soil Erosion Notes," *Western Advocate*, 16 August 1934, 1 and 21 March 1935, 1; "Soil Conservation Notes," *Western Advocate*, 20 June 1935, 1.

³³ F. E. Charles to R. Gordon Brown, 13 July 1934, Folder "Mankato Correspondence," Box 381, Record Group 114 "Records of the Soil Conservation Service," National Archives, Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Missouri (hereafter NA). For additional descriptions of increased moisture remaining in Jewell's fields see "Soil Conservation Notes," *Western Advocate*, 6 June 1935, 1 and 11 April 1935, 1. On increased crop diversification see "The Banner Corn County Plants 55% More Drought Crops—Soil Erosion Area 72% More," *Western Advocate*, 22 August 1935, 8.

whereas Ramsey's extension column ceased to run regularly in local newspapers in May of 1934, Duley's "Soil Erosion Notes" became a weekly front page item in February of the same year. Even more indicative of this New Deal agency's ascendancy at the expense of the local extension office was Ralph Ramsey's decision in 1935 to abandon his post for a job with the Soil Conservation Service. Such a shift in allegiance was not lost on county residents. According to former Jewell farmer and Soil Conservation Service employee Lyle Rightmeyer, sometime during the mid-1930s local farmers lost confidence in the extension program and turned instead to the federal government's Soil Conservation Service. "We had many more visitors into the Soil Conservation office, coming in for information or assistance, than the traffic to the extension office," explained Rightmeyer. "Somewhere back there . . . the trend began to go that way."³⁴

When residents of Jewell County left their homes to tour the Limestone Creek Demonstration Area, or to visit friends, or to shop in town, they found that the ecological changes taking place in their fields were causing economic and social transformations that were likewise shifting their community away from its rectilinear and local orientation. To begin with, the Soil Conservation Service's contour farming helped transform the economic relationship between farmers and local bankers, not just in Jewell County but throughout the country as a whole. Nationally distributed Soil Conservation Service articles with titles such as "Conservation Practices Receive Approval of Bankers," and "Bankers Put Cash Value on Conservation Program," were, as one writer explained, "important messages to the farmer from the banker, by way of the Soil Conservation Service." The Service acted similarly as a conduit for communication flowing in the opposite direction, from farmers practicing contour plowing to local bankers who had money to invest. For example, Limestone Creek project manager F. L. Duley not only invited local and statewide bankers to tour the demonstration area in order to encourage local investment, but he also wrote numerous letters on behalf of Jewell County farmers working with the Soil Conservation Service in an effort to help them secure loans from regional banks. "The Soil Erosion Service of the Department of the Interior has done, during the past year, a considerable amount of improvement on this farm in the way of an erosion control program," Duley explained in a letter to a Wichita banker. "It is my belief that this farm is in much better condition than it has been in the past, and the improvement which we have made should add materially to the value of the farm."³⁵

³⁴ On the location of Soil Conservation Service project manager residence see "Federal Project to Control Soil Erosion," *The Jewell County (Mankato, KS) Graphic*, 21 March 1934, 6. Duley's column begins to appear regularly in the 22 February 1934 edition of *Western Advocate*, 1. On Ramsey replacing Duley see "Soil Conservation Notes," *Western Advocate*, 24 October 1935, 1; Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13 March 1996.

³⁵ "Conservation Practices Receive Approval of Bankers," *Soil Conservation* 7 (November 1941): 124; A. E. McClymonds, "Bankers Put Cash Value on Conservation Program," *Soil Conservation* 7 (September 1941): 65. On invitation to bankers to tour demonstration area see F.

While establishing itself as an intermediary between Jewell County farmers and their banks, the Soil Conservation Service also transformed the economic relationship between local farmers and their cooperative grain elevators. Although the promotion by the Soil Conservation Service of the cultivation of nongrain crops, including sorghums and grasses, did little to increase the volume of corn and wheat flowing through Jewell County's elevators, the service did succeed in promoting another type of cooperative relationship that aided local farmers financially. The Soil Conservation Service initiated this relationship late in 1933 when it mailed flyers, addressed "Dear Cooperator," to local residents explaining that the success of the Limestone Creek project depended on "the co-operation of the farmers in this area." Such terminology was not restricted to Jewell County; farmers throughout the nation were required to sign a "Cooperative Agreement" before the Soil Conservation Service performed any work on their land. Jewell County farmers responded enthusiastically to this cooperative approach. By December 1934, 335 of the 629 farmers living within the Limestone Creek Demonstration Area had signed such agreements, while 3 years later the number of cooperators had risen to 583, 92 percent of those residing within the project area. The Soil Conservation Service had thus helped replace cooperation among farmers regarding local grain elevators with cooperation between farmers and the federal government in the plowing of contour furrows.³⁶

Finally, the Soil Conservation Service also transformed farmers' relationships with the social welfare system centered around Jewell County's courthouse square. This process began during the mid-1930s, when community residents realized local relief organizations such as the ladies aid societies were unable to help them through the Great Depression and turned instead to the Soil Conservation Service. For instance, in January 1934, nearly one dozen Jewell County residents sent a petition to Limestone Creek project manager F. L. Duley stating that "we the undersigned unemployed men with families . . . wish to file our application for work with you on your Limestone

L. Duley to L. E. Call, President, Federal Land Bank Wichita, 26 July 1934, Folder "Mankato Correspondence," Box 381, Record Group 114, "Records of the Soil Conservation Service," NA. For example of loan recommendation see F. L. Duley to Federal Land Bank, Wichita, Kansas, 14 December 1934, Folder "Mankato Correspondence," Box 381, Record Group 114, "Records of the Soil Conservation Service," NA. In 1935 the Soil Erosion Service was renamed the Soil Conservation Service and transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Department of Agriculture.

³⁶ Grout, interview by author, 13 March 1996. On Soil Conservation Service cooperators see Ralph Ramsey to Dear Cooperator, 7 December 1933, Folder "Mankato Correspondence," Box 381, Record Group 114, "Records of the Soil Conservation Service," NA. On the number of Jewell County Soil Conservation Service cooperators see "Soil Conservation Notes," *Western Advocate*, 12 December 1935, 1; and Soil Conservation Service, "Number of Agreements Signed in Region #7," Box 176, Folder "Statistical Correspondence," Record Group 114, "Records of the Soil Conservation Service," NA. In a similar vein, in his study of Dust Bowl farmers Donald Worster writes, "accepting the welfare state's support involved a partial but significant substitution of the government office for the grain elevator and marketplace in the county's life." Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 154.

project." Even the Jewell County Poor Commissioner admitted that the Soil Conservation Service had to a great extent superseded the local welfare organizations situated around courthouse square in providing relief to county farmers. "The Soil Erosion Project . . . is doing a great thing for Jewell," wrote the Poor Commissioner's office in June of 1934. "They have taken up about 25% of the relief load of the county."³⁷

Thus during Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, as Jewell County's fields, banks, grain elevators, and courthouse square gradually gave out under the stresses and strains of depression and drought, the Soil Conservation Service arrived in the nick of time. The federal program replaced county extension agents, mediated between farmers and bankers, created alternatives to the cooperative grain elevator movement, and took over many responsibilities of the community's relief organizations. At each point federal was substituted for local. Just as important, this federal presence was linked physically to the curvilinear furrows that were gradually spreading throughout Jewell County's fields. As longtime resident Lyle Rightmeyer explained, "when a farmer drove by a field that had contours on it, he immediately knew that that individual farmer had been involved with the federal government."³⁸

The 1941 crowning of Bill Moy as "American Contour-Plowing King" in Mormon Coulee, Wisconsin, signified an important historical development in twentieth-century America. Prior to the Great Depression, plowing matches on the Great Plains had been local affairs, with neighbors often competing against one another at town gatherings or county fairs. As one reporter at Mormon Coulee explained, back then "a man's ability to plow straight determined whether or not he was considered a good farmer in his community." The Soil Conservation Service changed this playing field. By organizing, publicizing, and judging a contour-plowing contest, it introduced Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal to the farmers of Mormon Coulee, Wisconsin. By teaching westerners, such as those in Jewell County, Kansas, how to contour plow their own fields, the Soil Conservation Service did likewise for farmers across the Great Plains. The "American Contour-Plowing" crown therefore symbolized less the beginning of Bill Moy's reign over Wisconsin's "crazy quilt" kingdom, and more the coronation of an expansive federal government throughout the American West.³⁹

While the seeds of the modern welfare state were sown in Washington, D.C., they took root in places like Jewell County, Kansas, and were dependent to a great extent upon local circumstances for growth. Ironically, like many drought-ridden counties throughout the Great Plains, Jewell proved incredibly fertile for such a development. The Soil Conservation Service, for example, successfully altered the ecology of Jewell


³⁷ Esbon residents to F. L. Duley, 23 January 1934, Folder "Mankato Laborers," Box 380, Record Group 114, "Records of the Soil Conservation Service," NA. On replacement of local welfare agencies by Soil Conservation Service see "Notes From the County Poor Commissioner's Office," *Western Advocate*, 28 June 1934, 1.

³⁸ Rightmeyer, interview by author, 13 March 1996.

³⁹ Loyd, "Singing Plowboy," 169.

County's fields in an effort to increase crop yields for local farmers. Such was the primary goal of this New Deal agency. Yet as the experiences of local residents indicate, the Soil Conservation Service also transformed the economy of the county's banks and grain elevators and the social system centered around Jewell's courthouse square. It was this cross-fertilization with local institutions, not merely the changes occurring up and down county crop rows or far off in the nation's capital, that helped this New Deal program blossom. And while many Jewell farmers embraced these ecological, economic, and social changes, they also paid a political price. By welcoming the New Deal into their fields, locals invited the federal government into their lives, and in doing so further reoriented their communities toward Washington, D.C.

This reorientation from the local to the federal demonstrates that landscape change on the Great Plains during the New Deal era could be a complex political process. In Jewell County these transformations—one in landscape, the other politics—did not involve two separate yet parallel transitions, one from rectilinear to curvilinear and the other from local to national. Rather, the two continually influenced each other and represented less a neat shift from one orientation to another and more a layering of landscapes, an overlapping of new ecologies, economies, social systems, and ultimately political relationships, onto an older community map. Thus as Bill Moy plowed under the agricultural terrain of a soggy cornfield in Mormon Coulee, Wisconsin, with "crazy quilt" furrows, he was also helping to superimpose a new political landscape onto the American West.





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He leaves footprints in state

Versatile Dennis' work included Boeing camouflage

The past is among us — in the personages of our older citizens. They have seen remarkable changes: The world has speeded up, old taboos have come tumbling down. They have known boom and bust, war and peace, grim times and glad. They have seen the world grow, and only they truly know what we have lost or gained in the process. The Scene Section is presenting their "Extraordinary Lives" as a way of looking at history through the eyes of those who saw it and those who made it happen.

by Frederick Case
Times staff reporter

In many ways, his personal story also is a portrait of the development of Washington State. For George Dennis is one of a vanishing breed of pioneers.

He's stooped and ailing now, but his eyes twinkle and his slim-fingered hands still have a powerful grip.

Wearing casual at-home dress of checked bush shirt and battered pants, Dennis, 77, stands slightly shakily in front of a stone fireplace which he quarried and built. In a low, reflective voice, he begins reminiscing about a life-style not much different from that of the 17th Century New England Pilgrims.

"We carried our water from a spring. There were no refrigerators or washing machines. Washing was done in a washtub with a washboard and hand-operated wringer.

"In town there were electric lights, but we had only kerosene lamps and lanterns, and occasionally candles.

"Some people had telephones, but we didn't. Radio had barely been discovered, and would not be in common use for years to come. Television had not yet been invented.

"There were perhaps several cars in Republic, but we were not to have a car until some 20 years later."

A pioneer had to be versatile, and Dennis' lifetime of employment is so varied that it reads like the roster at an employment agency.

He's been a farm hand, dairy hand, fur trapper, miner, railroad salvage laborer, photographer, gardener, Forest Service road builder, fire lookout, designer and builder of ski lodges and ranger stations, wartime camouflager of The Boeing Co., Army airfield design engineer and a Corps of Engineers designer who worked on Chief Joseph Dam and many other important projects. Dennis even designed the bear cages at Woodland Park Zoo.

Few Washingtonians of recent vintage realize how primitive were the lives of their country grandparents. A life of extraordinary hardship was considered normal.

Born in 1904 in a 12-by-20-foot log cabin near Chesaw, Okanogan County, Dennis was the seventh of 10 children of an English farmer and his wife who emigrated in 1895.

The mother died shortly after the 10th child was born, and that last child soon followed her.

In 1905 the family moved by wagon to Republic, Ferry County, and Dennis' father built another log cabin for the family. The cabin was constructed of larch logs, chinked with clay, and was somewhat larger than the previous one. It was all handmade.

"There were no chain saws then, so timber was cut with a crosscut saw, a buck saw or a drag saw," Dennis says.

Personal hygiene was a special challenge. Dennis says with a chuckle:

"Saturday night was bath night, and as the saying goes, it didn't matter whether you needed the bath or not. Extra water was carried from the spring and put on the kitchen range to heat. The fire was built up and the wash boiler was used for heating. The washtub normally used for washing clothes was brought in and set before the stove. We usually got three baths from each change of water as we all went through the bath. Water had to be carried outside and new warm water provided for each change."

Dennis has affectionate memories of his

EXTRAORDINARY LIVES

father's resourceful ways of easing their hard life. For example:

"Last thing at night, my father would fetch out his pocketknife, which he always kept razor-sharp. From the kindling box he selected some dry pieces of pitch pine. Then he would make shavings, which he left on the oven door as a starter for the fire next morning. We didn't have any newspapers then. He would be up first in the morning and within a few minutes would have a roaring fire in the kitchen stove to heat our big pot of breakfast oatmeal."

Their beds in the log-cabin loft were of mattress ticking filled with straw or wild hay, which was changed twice a year.

Schools were primitive, but the school-lunch program was ingenious. Dennis says: "My recollection is that the school board hired a 'can-do' woman cook who worked with the home-economics class and put out good lunches of soups, stews and so on. Supplies came from the parents. I remember our contribution was, at times, a sack of potatoes, carrots, rutabagas and frequently a quarter of beef. I suppose those who didn't have farm produce were assessed beans, rice or other store-bought food."

Dams had not yet been built on the Columbia River, so the Sanpoil River near the Dennis ranch was full of king salmon. The locals would go there at night with hayforks and lanterns and pitch salmon onto the bank like bales of hay.

"I expect that if there had been a fish and game department, it would have frowned on that," Dennis remarks dryly. "Anyway, the fish was a welcome change in our diet, and I can remember salmon steaks that would fill a dinner plate."

During World War I, the Dennis family took over a dairy, and they used an ingenious method of refrigeration. Dennis says:

"There was a spring in a draw below the house, and Father had dug it out some 3 feet deep and 3 or 4 feet in diameter. He lined it with large, flat rocks, and it was always overflowing with clear, ice-cold water. We cooled our milk and cream by lowering cans into the spring. The cream was kept there until shipment.

"In winter there was about 2 feet of ice on the Sanpoil Lake. We sawed out blocks about 2 feet square and loaded several tons of them on a horse-drawn sleigh. Then we packed them in sawdust in the ice house, so we had ice right through the year. Nearly every weekend we made ice cream."

The life that Dennis recalls highlights how quickly America has switched from venerable farming methods to mass agriculture by industrial conglomerate corporations.

Dennis says: "At first, Father had to farm without modern amenities. There was the single plow and sometimes the single sidehill plow. There also was a steel harrow, but the grain was sown by hand-casting as we walked along, much as in Jean-Francois Millet's famous paintings of 19th Century agricultural life.

"For harvesting, we used the hand scythe and horse-drawn mowing machine. The only fertilizer we had was manure."

Dress was informal.

"We children shed our shoes on the last day of school and, except on special occasions, did not put them on again until we went back to school," Dennis says.

"On frosty mornings I would tuck my feet under Old Jerry's mane (Jerry was a strawberry-roan farm horse), and they were warm and comfortable.

Then, as now, a farm boy's day started early.

"Usually the cows were in and milked by 7 a.m.," Dennis says. "Then we had an hour for feeding calves, pigs, etc., separating the milk, eating breakfast, and then off to school — which was a walk of several miles."

When he was ready to attend college, Dennis raised his fees by working for about 20 cents an hour on a gang salvaging railroad steel. And, on arrival at



George Dennis with hand press he built from spare parts.

Alan Berner / Seattle Times

Washington State College (now University), Pullman, he paid his way by doing janitorial work. Then he worked at a local photographic studio.

Later he joined a Forest Service crew building the Boulder Creek Road, then worked as a farm hand before getting a job lead mining at Wallace, Idaho.

Subsequently he hired on as a fire lookout in Wenatchee National Forest. For a while his wife, Pauli, whom he had met in an art class at W.S.C., was his relief. A mail plane would zoom low over the lookout each day and deliver a newspaper.

Later, for a month, he worked alone in the Icicle River country selecting sites for new fire-lookout stations.

Dennis earned a master's degree at the University of Washington, but found that 1929, the first year of the Great Crash, was a bad year for an art graduate to be looking for work. So he settled for a job as a gardener.

However, he'd had architectural training, and by the mid- and late 1930s was designing and supervising the erection of various ski lodges and ranger stations in the Wenatchee National Forest. They include the Leavenworth Ski Lodge and the Stevens Pass Ski Lodge.

In 1942 he joined the Corps of Engineers and helped design camouflage for The Boeing Co.

They built models (in the basement of the Central Building, on Third Avenue) and painted a street system over the top to make the plant look like a housing subdivision.

The actual camouflage project, done mostly with chicken wire and painted cotton fabric, cost several million dollars and was concluded in 1944.

Then he was an office engineer helping build Air Force bomber training bases at Ephrata and Moses Lake, followed by helping to build Madigan Hospital and McChord Air Force Base.

Nearing 60, Dennis took a dream-of-a-retirement cruise with his wife. Boarding an Italian freighter in Yokohama, Japan, George and Pauli sailed around the world, stopping at the Philippines, Borneo, Ceylon and other exotic destinations.

Surely this idyllic voyage should have been prelude to a couple of decades of peaceful pottering and meditating in the sunset years?

Not for George Dennis!

The year was 1962, and Dennis was intrigued and stimulated by all the hectic building activity he saw overseas.

Back home, he began planning to build a prestigious housing development on 16½ acres of prime waterfront property he owns on Bainbridge Island.

It would have been a prodigious task even for a man only half his age. Yet Dennis built his Brackenwood Lane development with the help of only one man and a tractor.

He bulldozed the top off a hill, built blacktop roads, a water tower and a ¼-acre artificial lake. And he poured 800 yards of concrete to construct a protective bulkhead projecting 90 feet into Puget Sound.

Dennis also designed and built three graceful, modern houses on his property, one of them for him and Mrs. Dennis.

He did everything, including the plumbing and electrical work, and even quarried the stone for floors and fireplaces. One of the three houses he built completely unaided.

Sixteen of the 22 lots now are filled. Dennis probably still would be building if he had not been weakened by pneumonia he contracted in 1977.

So he returned to making exquisite watercolors and etchings, as he has done since graduating from the U.W. (He also has a master-of-fine-arts degree from Washington State College.) He does his etchings "on a \$1,000 press I improvised for about \$20."

Dennis doesn't want those early days in Washington to be forgotten. In fact, he has reached page 106 in writing family memoirs dedicated to his sons, Ben and Jim, and to other descendants, living or yet unborn.

(We're looking for people to profile in "Extraordinary Lives." Maybe that person is you — or someone you know. Please send us the name, address and telephone number, along with a few words on why others might be interested in knowing more about this "extraordinary life." Address to: Scene Section, c/o The Times, P.O. Box 70, Seattle 98111.)



The Roast of a Happy Cooker was a toast to Ruth Fratt, known to generations of listeners as Katherine Wise.

The Happy Cooker is roasted for her wise ways

by Alf Collins
Times staff reporter

When Ruth Fratt gets angry, her eyes get a little sparkly and her face gets red, Marty Wilson observed. They shared many a television set when Ms. Wilson was doing "What's New In the Schoolhouse" and Ms. Fratt was Katherine Wise, KOMO's resident cook and home economist.

Ms. Wilson was recalling an incident when a new detergent product arrived for approval packaged in what looked like a milk carton. The possibilities of a child confusing it with a soft drink upset Ms. Wise so much, she wound up taking on a minor federal bureaucracy to get it taken off the market.

But, yesterday, her red face and sparkly eyes signaled happiness during the "Roasting of a Happy Cooker" surprise 75th birthday luncheon at the Westin Hotel.

The roasting was a gentle tour through a career in Seattle which began in 1938 as The Times' Dorothy Neighbors (food-and-fashion) editor and ended at KOMO-TV in 1974.

In between, as Len Sampson, who shared her "Good Morning" television program for years, remarked, "she affected the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in this state."

Larry Nelson, KOMO radio personality who announces the recipe of the day she still provides for the station, put it more specifically. Since 1952, 11,000 recipes have generated 4.8 million telephone calls to the station. And she

Charles Royer and Lieutenant Governor John Cherberg simultaneously proclaimed her an Ambassador of Good Will, a Distinguished Citizen and an Honorary General of the state.

Katherine Wise has "mounted the ramps and blown the bugle" on behalf of consumer issues long before most advocates were even aware of them, Ms. Wilson said.

The list of consumer-issue boards and commissions Ms. Wise has been a member of ranges from the state Furniture and Bedding Council to the Childbirth Education Advisory Council.

It wasn't just consumer problems that brought the sparkle to the mythical Ms. Wise's eye, Ruth Walsh, news anchorwoman, remembered. Once, before an interview with Pat Nixon, wife of the then vice president, the Secret Service tore the KOMO kitchen set apart in a security check. Mrs. Nixon was greeted with the famous Wise sparkling eye and the opening question, "Do you know what your men did to my kitchen?"

"And I never apologized, either," Mrs. Fratt added as the laughter died.

Much of the reminiscences revolved around the meals prepared for television and other foods the KOMO staff was pressed into preparing that went to nursing homes, drug rehabilitation programs and other places for persons who needed brightening up.

And, of course, the crock of brandied fruits that constantly

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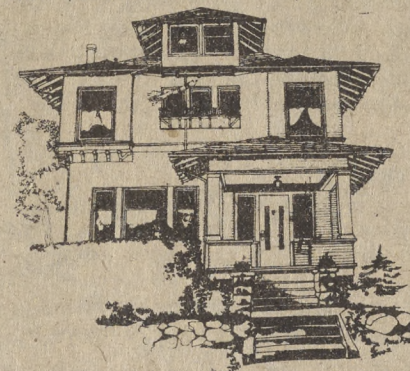
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4. Whirlpool	3.7%	(22)	TOTAL	100.5%	(593)
5. Maytag	3.1%	(18)	(more than 100% due to multiple responses)		

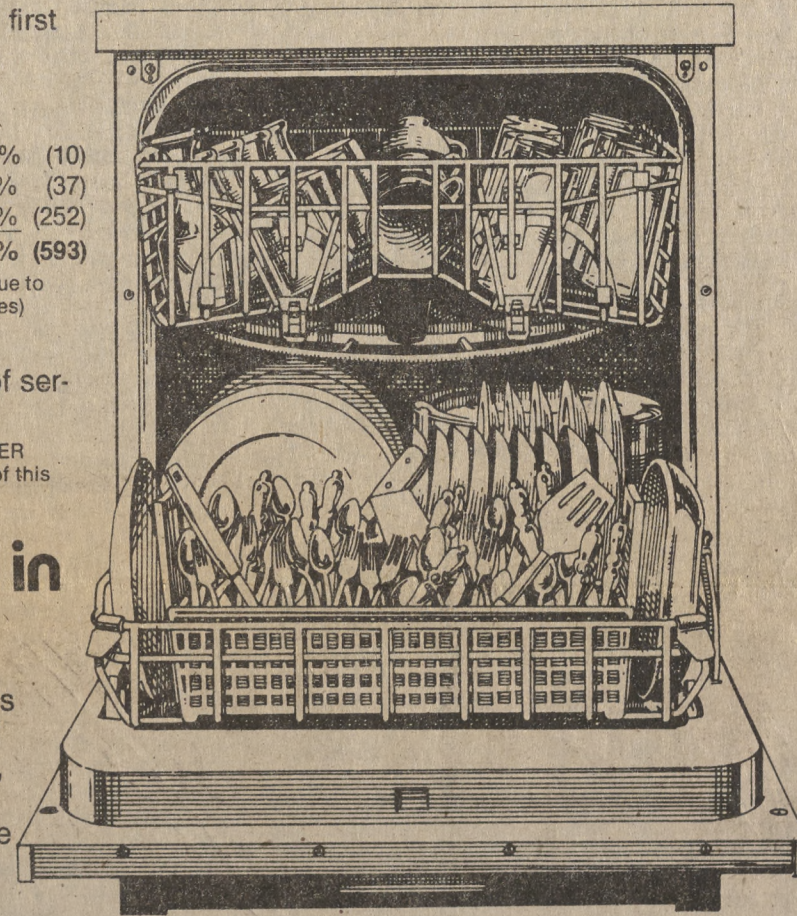
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Based on consumer study conducted for APPLIANCE MANUFACTURER Magazine by National Family Opinion, Inc., February, 1981. Reprints of this study are available from KitchenAid upon request.

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2/21/2000

A. Bing
1148 5th Ave
NYC 10128

Dear Mr. Doig:

I have recently read English Creek and enjoyed it immensely.

I am a native New Yorker who was taken to Montana in 1935 when I was 3 yrs old by my parents to vacation on the Diamond J dude ranch near the town of Ennis. Since then, I have spent some time in Montana in all but four summers. Currently, my wife and I own about 40 acres and several buildings about 18 miles east of Ennis.

During my teens, I spent all my time with the wranglers at the dude ranches where my family stayed (in addition to the Diamond J these included the Ox Yoke out of Emigrant and the Diamond L Bar out of Seeley Lake). In my late teens and early twenties, I hited on as a wrangler. My experience with forest

Fires was limited to one called the Tango Fire in the Bob Marshall Wilderness in 1953. In that instance, I was hauled out of bed by a friend, Jerry Underwood, who had a three horse pack string loaded with hay bales and who asked me to go into the fire area with him to bring the horses back so he could stay on and tend to the stock which would be coming & going to the fire from and to Holland Lake.

I will always remember the scene when we arrived at the fire late in the afternoon. The smoky sky and hordes of fire fighters most of whom had come off the fire line for dinner.

The next morning, Jerry and I loaded his string with parachutes which made wonderful uniform packs. The fly in the ointment was a large heavy wooden box containing a radio. We were "cargo packing" rather than using the diamond hitch and decided foolishly to top pack the radio. By the time I had gone two miles I had reset the radio twice.

The third time the load shifted off center, I declared victory per the radio and rewarded it by leaving on the ground just off the trail. Thereafter, the trip was uneventful until late in the day when I caught up with a forest service packer leading 8 or 9 mules each loaded with parachutes. I shouted to him that the load on one of his animals was listing dangerously. He looked back and decided that the situation wasn't desperate. So on we went. As we were moving along a narrow ^{section of} trail cut into a steep side hill several hundred feet above Hilland Lake, gravity took over and the listing pack swung around leaving the load under instead of on top of the mule. Hearing this from me, the packer stopped. We got off our horses and clambered around that steep slope to right the pack. The man on the up hill side towered over the mule while the person on the down hill side had his eye balls somewhere between the mule's knees and belly. Somehow we managed to right the pack and cinch it down and I came to appreciate mules. Had horses been involved, we almost certainly would have had live stock and parachutes scattered all over the country.

My Tango fire adventure wasn't all that dramatic, but your fire story brought it all to mind.

What I most liked about English Creek were the memories it evoked of the old timers who were my teachers, fellow workers and friends in the late 1940s and early '50s. Your book captured their way of talking and the feeling they conveyed that gave a special character to my summer time life in those days. The book also reminded me about the feeling of a 14 year old when he is almost but ^{usually} not quite included in the adult world.

Sincerely,

Alexander (Sandy) Bing

P.S.

My old friend Dick Lyons gave me your address. I am a stockholder of The Lyons Press which I know would love to publish one of your books.

11 July 2000

Dear Alexander Bing--

This is a very tardy response to your fine letter; I can only plead concentration on trying to get my next book done--manuscript and mail always seem to be at odds, around here. But I wanted you to know I appreciated your packstring stint. In the research for English Creek I found a lot of packers' tales strewn in the holdings of the Montana Historical Society, and they were always seductive to me.

And yes, I'm very much aware of the Lyons Press--I've just lately written a blurb for one of my contemporaries, Mary Clearman Elw, whom they're publishing.

Sorry to dash this off in haste, but I'm about to go off to Stanford to try to tell their Silicon Valley alumni about homesteads. Again, thanks for troubling to put down your words about my words.

Best wishes,

Harold Gustave Stearns

1515 Highland
HELENA, MONTANA 59601

Jan. 19, 198⁵/₄

Dear Mr Doig:

Thank you for "English Creeks" and "House of Sky".

I relate so intensely to both because I was raised in Deer Lodge valley on a ranch founded in the 1859 era close to Grant Kohrs place. Johnnie Grant, Bielenberg and Kohrs were neighbors.

You brought back so many memories-I envy you your marvelous talents for recollections and interpretations .

Having been at Harlowton 1940 through '73 the White Sulphur Springs ties were near.

Have you ever thought of writing about the inability of the ranch founder to relinquish operation and responsibility to the son who became known as "Junior" even after Dad died and was unable to be a complete confident person. It seems to me that in every bar in ranching country there are such (or more) pathetic bar flies who aren't taken seriously even after their forbear has passed on, ?

Carl Kraenzel who wrote "Great Plains in Transition" called it the "Junior Syndrome".

Thank you again for writing about Montanans.

We are all proud of you

Hal G Stearns

LAND OF THE BIG SKY

Charles Stearns

1000 1/2
1000 1/2

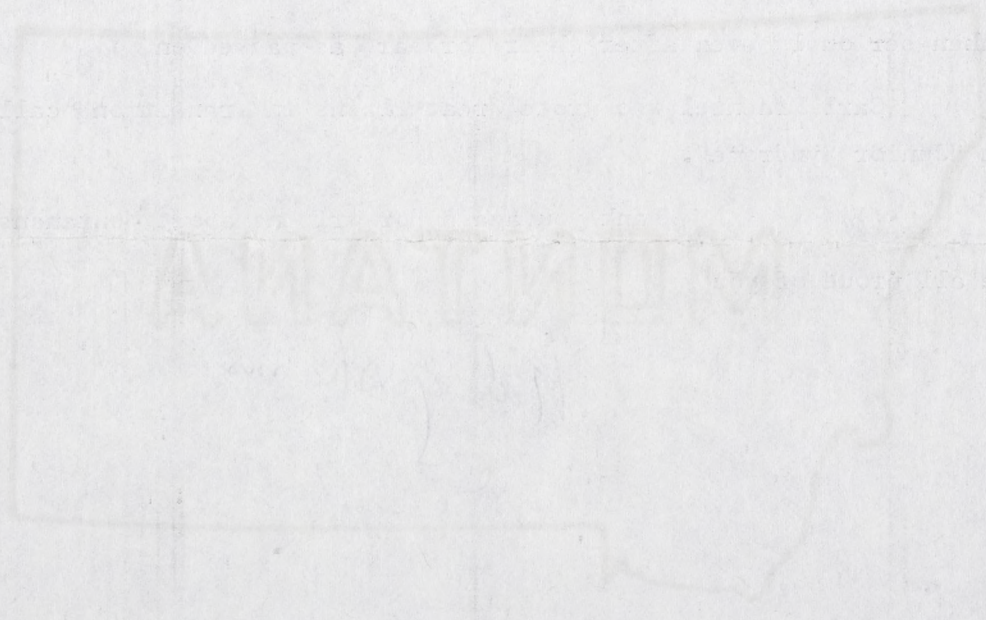
31 Jan. '85

Dear Hal--

It means considerable to me to have Hal Stearns in favor of my books. Many thanks for troubling to tell me so.

"The Junior syndrome" is a good idea, which I'm going to file away. I've thought sometimes about family back sheep--boozing brothers or brothers-in-law seemed to be the White Sulphur style--but the Jr. situation is more interesting. I may look you up sometime, too, to talk about what weekly newspapering was like.

best regards



LAND OF THE BIG SKY

Jick and OO could see down into chute where the bronc crew was trying to keep Conniption still long enough for Reed to settle onto him. Reed did not seem any soberer than when he met the McCaskills; his face was red and his hat was on the back of his head.

"Out of chute number six!" the announcer from Havre cried, and Conniption sprang into the arena. Jick ^{saw} ~~heard~~ Reed Culver suck in breath and his eyes go large as the surprise of the horse's force came up through the stirrups to him. Then Conniption seemed to rise straight in the air, all ~~his~~ four hooves above the arena dirt, and somehow dived so that his full weight struck on the front hooves. The jolt snapped Reed's head back. His hand ~~slipped~~ let go the bucking rope and he slid more than fell to the dirt.

could be, generally when writing eastward, he most often ended up as he did now in final lines to Matilda. All these islands have something of interest attached to them which is well worth the time of the curious to investigate and I never yet found that information was useless to any one. . . much pleased with the result of my voyage and hope I may never be doomed to meet with worse people than I have parted with . . .
Faithfully & Affectionately, your Husband. . .

Back from that Hawaiian sojourn, Swan at once settled again into a dockside way of life in San Francisco, through the rest of 1850, and through 1851, and through most of 1852. Money always slid through his pockets almost without stopping, and he evidently found life sufficiently interesting by just being away from Massachusetts and alongside the rougher torrent of California waterfront traffic. This routine indeed seems to have been very like the career he had left in Boston except that he could do it at about half-speed and without regard for hometown opinion: laxities which have been among the traditional rewards of the west ever since there was an America. Then, late in 1852, down from the Oregon country arrived Charles J. W. Russell.

A self-described oyster entrepreneur, this visitor from the shaggy north was better portrayed by Swan as possessing a good deal of the romancing spirit of the Baron Munchausen. Russell had gone to Oregon Territory in dream of some real-estate

As a town, Gros Ventre has always looked as if it has more site than it knows what to do with. The good ample main street--wide enough to turn a freight wagon and a six-horse team around in, in the early days-- seems to want more than its half-dozen blocks of buildings. Even the first and last of those blocks have houses mixed with stores

Similarly

high old
the ~~canopy~~ of cottonwood trees, some with trunks as thick and wrinkled
walks
aligned along both sides of not only

fingering out
downtown but the residential streets ~~east and west~~ along English Creek

could be the canopy for ~~a lot~~ ^{much} more than the current population of eight

hundred or so. ^{small town} But nowadays I suppose a place like Gros Ventre is lucky

look any more
not to have dwindled than it already does.

The different geographies the townsites buttons together--

the ranch country of benches and valleys which builds west to the mountains,

the ~~farmland of the plains~~
plaid of graincrops and brown fallow fields waiting their
eastward farming!

turn-- are big enough

1359 Juniper Dr
Logan UT 84321
Aug 19, 1993

Dear Mr. Daig,

Re: the diary entry of David Todd Wilkie and the short letter I gave you in 'A Book Store in Logan' - David died from influenza in Dec, 1918.

After I told my daughter about copying the old diary entry, she asked for a copy of it & my letter. In my haste to get it done, I made the mistake in rewriting the letter.

John has already read "Heart Earth" - as a matter of fact the Tuesday evening of your visit here. He thoroughly enjoyed it & read snatches of it to me - I am anxious to read it myself.

I heard Lee Austin's interview with you this morning. We

are so lucky to have him here.

I grew up with both my parents
quoting 'a bra' bicht modnlicht
bicht + the night jock!

Keep up your wonderful
work.

Sincerely,

Margaret Wood

Aug. 17 1993

Dear Mr Doig,

My mother's four brothers came to Montana from Duffnock, near Glasgow, in the early 1900's. One brother was a pharmacist. The eldest probably a ranch hand. They all came to the Rosebud MT area. The two youngest served in the AEF from Rosebud. David was the youngest - from whose diary this copy was made. He contracted diphtheria just after the diary was written and died in France. The man, whom he left in the shell hole was saved by the Germans and became a prisoner of war. At Uncle Jim's funeral after Nov 20, 1965 (his death) in Forsythe, I met George Davison his buddy that was left for dead. My uncle is buried in the forenoon corner, Veterans plot, in Forsythe.

The eldest brother was caught in one of those horrid blizzard, suffered

hip damage from the exposure. It wasn't repaired and had ^{for a while} the remainder the rest of his life. He left Montana and spent the rest of his life in Portland ME.

My mother's sister and her husband homesteaded out of Great Falls for not too many years.

My mother married in Scotland, and after WWI moved to Winnipeg Manitoba where I was born. We came to NE Pennsylvania in 1924; I spend my first 23 years there.

Stories and letters were shared - those from Montana - it was so far away. Your books and descriptions have brought wonderful memories back to me.

We made two trips through the eastern side of the Rockies in western Montana a few years ago - after reading your books - all the towns you wrote about.

We toured the Bison Refuge

but had no encounters with
buffaloes as Mariah did.

We took the boat tour on the
Missouri, saw the Gates of the
mountains and the Mann Gulch.
Have since read 'Young Men & Fire'.

Thank you for writing such
wonderful books.

Sincerely,

Margaret W. Wood
(Mrs. J. L. Lusk.)

From diary amongst David's personal effects
It is copied exactly from the diary with the exception
of the town Malancourt. This was marked Minute court
in diary and may be correct. The comrade referred to
was probably Leop Davidson who was wounded on 30th
Sept. placed in a shell hole and the retreat of his
company left him in the German lines as prisoner

Started over top 26th August, made approximately 8 kilometers
by night, tried to make hill two, but had to retreat to hill
one for night.

In morning made first mentioned hill.

August 27th, made 4 kilometers, then dug in and made that town,
then dug in at bottom of hill, so had to stop over night.

At 6:30 next morning, 28th, made the cross roads in spite of
heavy resistance from artillery and machine guns.

On 29th came out of woods formed skirmish line, our Company as
liaison bunch.

On 30th left our holes, then proceeded on the big drive toward
our objective. We returned for a fresh start, as our left and
right flanking companies did not keep up. About 3 o'clock P.M.
we left slope and by dint of great courage on all sides thru
shrapnel, machine gun fire, and snipers, the gallant 91st made
it to town of Malancourt. It was on this rush that my comrade
and friend of the K Company unit fell. As far as I know at
this time, he passed away into the Great beyond. Then we dug
in the road side, but our superiors that at best we return to
a better position, so we proceeded back carrying many wounded
on blankets and such improvised stretchers as could be got.
One poor fellow from our Company got his right hand blown off
by shrapnel, however, we put him on a blanket and he sure
showed pluck, as our road was rough, and my three helpers and
self all in, down and out.

The date of action should be Sept. 26 to 30 David
must have erred in dating it August.

from diary of

Coop David T. Wilkie

Co. I. 362nd Infantry

A. E. F.

My Homestead

There was a stagecoach that came out to the post office from the railroad at Roy, and the stagecoach driver took me from the post office out to my place which was a distance of seven additional miles. He helped me to unload the stuff I had taken with me. I had a little cot, a small stove, and the carpenter had built a fold-up table. I had a couple of folding chairs and the carpenter had made some shelves, and he had made a hole in the ceiling and roof so I could put the stove pipe through. There were enough stunted pine trees growing nearby so I could have fuel. Among my tools I had an axe, hammer, saw, and tools for most any emergency. At this time there were homesteaders on every half section so there were neighbors all around me. How this changed before three years had passed!

There were no requirements in the law as to the size of the building, as long as it was habitable, and as I was alone, my shack was only ten feet by ten feet. When spring came I had a cellar dug out under the house, almost as big as the house, just leaving enough foundation so it would not cave in. It was about seven feet deep and it made a very cool place for me to stay in greatest heat of the summer days. The entrance was with a ladder down from a trap door inside the house.

When I moved in on January first I had no worry about summer heat, but instead had the freezing winter weather to contend with. Nevertheless, I had a feeling of home-coming, this my very first own home here in America. Although I was all alone and didn't know any of my neighbors, it was pleasant to spread out my belongings and set up and make up my bed. The carpenter had left a big supply of wood so I did not immediately have to go out and chop down trees for fuel. I had brought such foods as would not freeze, because everything froze solid at night. I sometimes got up at three o'clock in the morning to build another fire in my little iron heater because as soon as the fire went out it became the same temperature inside as it was outside.

My neighbors came and called on me and they were pleasant and I got along fine with them. It has never been difficult for me to like people if they were at

all likeable.

When spring came, I was not required to plow up the forty acres to plant this first year, so I started out by having just enough land broken for a big garden. I hired a man to do this. As he did the breaking I worked it down and planted the vegetable seeds I had sent for. We had late snows and all the things I planted came up, but after the spring rains, it never did rain a drop again all summer. The plants all came up and grew four or five inches, then withered back onto the ground. All the neighbors experienced the same misfortune because that was the first year of the Drought in that locality—the beginning of the bad years. I only lost a large garden, but those that had had their forty acres or more put into flax or wheat or corn, lost all their crop. Most of them were family people, they had cows and horses with nothing to feed them. The dams they had built held nothing more than mud puddles which soon dried out. These families had to leave their homesteads in order to make a living, and only bachelors or school teachers like myself who had taken up land, but had other sources of income, could stay on, so the first summer I was not all alone in the area.

After I had my cellar dug, I would go down there to escape the heat of the sun. When it wasn't too bad outside, I would follow the shade of the cabin around, * sitting and reading, crocheting and doing fancy work. In those days I had excellent eye sight. I was very fond of reading which passed the time pleasantly and I carried on a great deal of correspondence with friends and relatives. The mail was received twice a week at the post office and twice a week I walked the seven miles in to get it, fourteen miles round trip. The postmaster there was a gentleman by the name of Montgomery Marshall. He was a Zionist from the Chicago area and was the only person with any interest in culture in the whole vicinity. I had many interesting conversations with him and remember one of his quotations: "The cultured person wishes to do things in the right manner and say things in the right way and the uncultured doesn't give a damn." }

Mr. Marshall was also an enterprising man. He had gotten the people together to construct a communal dam which held water covering an acre or more, and after the drought struck, those people who stayed on could haul water from there on a stone boat or wagon. I had no horses so I had to pay a man to bring me two barrels of water every two weeks. Later on I will relate a rather harrowing experience I had when the man failed to bring me the water.

The Dance

While I was living on my homestead I had become acquainted with many of the other homesteading families, especially before the Drought drove so many away. One of my neighbors was a family who had come from Iowa and were of Swedish descent, they had a large number of grown children who had taken up homesteads in the surrounding area. This family happened to be backward, dirty and the poorest housekeepers imaginable, but they had the improbable talent of being musical.

One of the girls, who was big and fat and sloppy with holes in her stockings used to come to my cabin to visit me, and she told me that she and her brothers played for the dances at the community hall. The homesteaders had gotten together and built this community "hall" near the post office. It had an oaken floor for dancing, paid for at extra sacrifice by the donors. One lady had donated her piano for the dances because she couldn't get it through the door of her homestead shack. This girl and her brothers were the "music" for the community dances. She said she would dearly love to have me go along in the family lumber wagon the next time there was a dance.

I, having been brought up in an extremely religious atmosphere, never did learn to dance and I always regretted it. This is about the only thing concerning my youth that I wish I could have had differently. Although I had no moral scruples against going to the dance, I knew I wouldn't be able to dance and I felt I would be bored to death sitting there just watching. But diversions were few and far between and I finally accepted her invitation.

When they called for me to take me to the dance they came in a Big lumber wagon.

It was already filled with children from the twenty-three year old girl down to a youngster of about two. I thought there couldn't possibly be room for me to squeeze in, but they insisted without assisting. The boys and young men of the family sat stolidly and watched me climb up on the hub of the wheel, throw one leg over the side of the wagon and vault in in an awkward fashion as I had had very little experience getting in and out of such a conveyance.

This dance proved to be a great revelation to me. I had not only never learned to dance but I had never attended any dance. People kept arriving, they thought nothing of driving thirty miles to get there. One corner of the room had been set aside for the children. Finally the musicians started to play. I realized there really was musical talent in the family. The lady who owned the piano played it. The boys in the family of musicians played the violins and the large, buxom daughter sang. I had been taught that dancing was so sexually stimulating that it led to all the lustful sins of the flesh. But here in this little homesteading community gathering I was to have my opinions changed. As I watched everyone moving rhythmically to the music I thought how lovely it was that these poor hardworking people could find expression to some inner urge for beauty of movement and enjoy themselves so wholesomely at their dances. An older boy showed great ability in calling the square dances and his sister shone when she joined the orchestra with er beautiful voice. There was a transcendant quality of her singing and the dancers moved as though they were in an ecstasy.

After awhile, Mr. Marshall, the postmaster, cooked the coffee in a wash boiler in his house and it was carried over by a couple strong men. After the midnight lunch the dancing continued until day break. After hearing the girl sing so beautifully at the dance, I suggested to her that she should go away to school to train her voice, but she only laughed and replied she had no desire to go anywhere and especially not away to school.

An Overnight Visit

After being invited to the dance, another expression of sociability was offered

to me by the musical family. Perhaps the monotony of the days was catching up with me, or not wanting to rebuff their hospitality, I accepted an invitation to spend the night with them. They had the strangest house in the whole area. It was a two storey house that stood out like a landmark on the flat prairies, and it simply consisted of one log cabin set on top of another log cabin. All the young people slept upstairs in the one large room which was divided by curtains for the section for the boys and for the girls. It wasn't long after going to bed that I discovered the bed was alive with bedbugs. Apparently, I, being a guest, offered a fresh and new supply of blood to the voracious little creatures. As early as possible the next morning I got up and wanted to leave immediately, but they insisted that I stop for some breakfast. They served oatmeal and I scarcely could swallow a few mouthfuls, because even that tasted to me of bedbugs.

The Canyon on My Homestead

The very first spring I was on the homestead I chose a little plot for a garden which was described earlier. I hired a man to plow up this quarter acre plot and he said to me, "I have never found in so tiny a breaking as this so many arrowheads, when I was harrowing it." I thought this was quite interesting although I had never bothered to look for arrowheads, since they were so common before the 1920s. But I did ask him if he would give me a couple which he did.

Between the steep, perpendicular cliff of the canyon and my cabin lay the plowed garden. One day when I was down in the canyon I came to the steepest side of the canyon which rose like a precipice. For some reason I poked around at the foot of the cliff and I found two or three arrowheads, not far beneath the surface, and I compared them with the ones Max had found on top, and they were exactly the same kinds. I decided to take them over to Montgomery Marshall at the post office, since he had quite a collection of arrowheads. I told him Max had found more in my patch than he usually found in forty acres and they matched the ones I found at the bottom of the cliff. Mr. Marshall felt the similarity was significant and when I queried him as to why there should be so many in those two places he suggested that there

might have been a little buffalo jump there. This was all new to me. I had never even heard about buffalo jumps before. He explained to me how the Indians would drive a small portion of a herd of buffalo, very, very cautiously close to the brink, then suddenly they would wave blankets, hollaring and shooting arrows at them, scaring them over the edge of the cliff. Although it was but a small jump in comparison to other jumps in Montana, it apparently was effective and I accepted that explanation by Mr. Marshall. On the seven mile walk back to my cabin, I pictured for myself how these Indians had carried out their strategy and I could imagine it very clearly.

Another phenomena of my little canyon is worthy of note. I had noticed damp spots in the bottom of the canyon. Some of the areas were greener than other places and it seemed to me that if there were to be any water found on my homestead, the floor of the canyon would be the most logical place to look for it. So one day I took my post hole auger, my shovel, a pail and a tin cup and went down into the canyon and walked until I came to what seemed to me a likely spot to dig. The black top soil came away easily. After that I struck clay and sand and the deeper I dug the wetter it got, which seemed very encouraging. I lost all track of time and the damper it got the more excitedly I augured and dug. After I had excavated to the depth of about three feet, I scooped out an extra little hole and sat down and watched the beautiful, crystal clear water seep very slowly into this bowl-like depression. When sufficient water had gathered in the hole so that I could dip my tin cup in and partilly fill it, I did it with high hopes, raised it to my mouth and took a swallow. But what a shocking taste and terrible disappointment! This liquid was just like a very strong solution of Epsom salts. This water was full of alkali and of no value whatso ever.

As I dejectedly sat there staring into the little hole I noticed a faint glimmer. I began to clear out the hole and enlarge it, and underneath all the sand was hard rock. When I had all the sand cleared away I could see the rock was shaped like a fish—a fossilized fish. And the more sand I cleared away the more fossilized fish were exposed. These fish were all contained in what resembled a large round kettle.

This ancient pot hole was filled with the same kind of fish and all were the same size. As they lay in the hole they glistened like jewels with the rainbow colors of mother-of-pearl, but when I lifted them out and laid them on the ground, their iridescent patina changed to ash grey. As soon as the air touched them, they not only lost their brilliant color, but the beautifully shaped fish fell to pieces exposing the impression of their vertebrae and rib bones. One after the other, as I lifted out the colorful, glistening fish they faded and crumbled into clay. This was a profoundly moving experience. I was dumbfounded and elated at the same time.

I was so moved and excited with this discovery, despite the fact I was greatly disappointed in not finding water, and I hastened to tell my neighbors about it. My first visitors were the young wife and two little daughters, but when I burst out with my exciting news, she merely laughed and said, "If they had been live fish, that would have been something worth while." When her husband came to take his family home, he told me that when the men were working to make the dam at the Post Office, they had found petrified fish, larger than the ones I had found, but not as many together, one by one they had uncovered them. These fish also, well preserved when found, had fallen apart when exposed to the air.

After the alkali water, the fossilized fish, there was yet to be one more rather unusual event connected with my water hole. In the fall before I left to go to Kendall to teach, I decided to go down in my canyon for one last walk before I left. As I walked along I saw in the distance a bright yellow color near the spot where I had dug the well. I quickly hurried over to see what it could possibly be. Here, before my eyes was a vast array of golden sunflowers, blooming in great profusion. Somehow, my digging had turned up seeds and loosened the soil in such a manner that as nowhere else in the canyon bottom, there was now this luxuriant flowering of wild, golden sunflowers.

Slow Elk and Poverty

One young neighbor used to bring his wife and two little girls over to visit me whenever he was going "hunting." It was revealed to me only after I had lived among these homesteaders many months, that what he called "hunting", was simply going out

and butchering some creature belonging to the big cattle ranchers whose herds grazed all over the vast prairies. These animals were branded and belonged to the cattle barons. The homesteaders didn't know whose brand belonged to whom in every case, but would get together with other homesteaders, go out and rustle an animal, butcher it and divide the meat and take it home. If it hadn't been for these "slow elk", none of them would have had any meat to eat. They were very careful not to tell me what their hunting actually consisted of, because I was a stranger and they suspected that I might think what they were doing was against the law. They felt they were justified in doing what they did because they were keeping their families from starving.

Perhaps the first time the poverty of my neighbors struck me was when the young mother and the two little girls first called on me. I was busy making a patchwork quilt. It was not a crazy quilt but was made of square blocks from dress remnants. Although I was not adept at dressmaking for myself, I still had my dresses made for me as one did not buy as many ready-made dresses as now. So I was working on these many pieces of material left over from the dress-making, the pieces being about eight inches square. I was nearly finished and there were two small squares left over. The young mother asked, "May I have them?"

"Why of course," I answered, "but what use can you find for two little patches like that? They don't even match, one is blue and one is green."

"Well" she said, "they are big enough so that they would make two sleeves for a little dress. When I get hold of another piece of material I can use them for sleeves."

I must have shown how flabbergasted I was. She said, "You know with us, it isn't a matter of how a garment looks, just to keep them covered is what we are worried about!"

I realized that although I had grown up in poverty in Sweden, it was not of the sort that was found in the drought stricken areas where the homesteaders had taken up

dry land farms. In Sweden they could have garden patches, pick wild berries in the woods, fish in the many lakes or ocean. It wasn't the absolute destitution you found in this dry land farm area.

Last Summer on My Homestead

By the last summer, my third, the drought had driven everyone away. The only one left was the postmaster seven miles away at Little Crooked. The bachelors had been called into the Army for the First World War, and the families who had left the first or second year had no reason to return.

So I was all alone, and in order to get water I had to make arrangements with a man who lived on the other side of the post office in what was called the "Missouri Breaks", and he promised to bring me my water. However, he said he would have to charge more since he had to make the trip for me alone rather than for several customers. So knowing it was absolutely necessary for me to have this water, the man promised that he would come without fail every two weeks. And he did keep his word and come punctually every two weeks, except for one time.

On that particular occasion the man did not come on the appointed day, so I boiled the water left in the barrel, which I usually had to do anyway towards the end of the two weeks. And neither did he show up the following day, but I thought, "I am in not too bad a shape, I still have some of this boiled mess that I can use in an emergency, and I have some canned tomatoes and some canned milk, so I did not worry." But when you are afraid you are going to run out of water you get thirstier. I drank my canned liquids and I drank the boiled dregs of water although it was nauseating, but I got through the next couple days. It was not until the water was absolutely gone did I think I had better do something about the situation.

The first thing I thought about doing was going down to the abandoned farm that was at the mouth of my canyon where it opened out into the valley. I would see if there would be any water left in their cemented dams. They also had drilled a well on their place. Now the main reason so many of the homesteaders had left is because their horses had laid down and simply died. The owner of the valley farm had opened

up one of the dead horses to see what had caused its death. He had found the belly of the horse full of gravel. The horses had eaten the roots of what little grass there was until they had also filled their stomachs with gravel. Such was the case of my neighbors, the young couple with the two little girls. They had had five horses, four for hauling and one for riding. The last time I saw the husband he had come riding over to my place. He sat bowed down in the saddle like an old man, his four draft horses had died of the gravel and he saw no way except to take his family away. They were the last to leave.

I took a bucket and a rope and set out to see what I could find in the valley. Previously I had not ventured down there, the people were gone and I had no wish to face the oppressive heat down there. At least up on the bench where my place was, there was, at times, a slight breeze to cool the air. When I got down to the dams, to my horror I found the dams were completely dry, so I went over to the well. I threw a pebble in and heard it "splash" so I was quite encouraged and lowered the pail. I could tell the water was not very deep, but I swished the pail around, got as much water in it as I could and pulled it up. In the stagnant water I had drawn up floated a dead mouse.

The well had been left uncovered and animals in search of water had come to it, so it was not only thick and unappetizing but seeing the dead mouse in it too, I knew very well I would have to be terribly thirsty before I could drink anything like that.

There was nothing to do but go back to the house. I began to think I would have to walk to the dam at the post office where Mr. Marshall had a filter for the water found there. The only trouble, if I went for water, I would drink up, probably, what water I could carry on the trip home. It was late in August and very hot. I considered walking in the cool of the evening when I could carry the water better. But when I thought of that I remembered that the rattlesnakes had a liking for stretching out in the wagon ruts and if I walked in the dark, and the snakes were over-nighting in the tracks, I couldn't see them until I was upon them, so that did not seem to be

a good idea either. There was nothing to do except wait just one more day. I had nothing except some of that boiled water, which was so horrible, I would just barely moisten my dry lips with it.

Finally I went to bed and I slept fitfully and I had dreams. Dreams all about water and all extremely vivid. The first dream I had was that I was at a banquet table, there were chandeliers hanging over the table, there were goblets at every plate and lackeys went around with crystal pitchers pouring water into these goblets and I was so anxious for this lackey to come and fill my glass with water, but before he reached me I awakened. What a nightmare! I resolved not to think any more about water and finally went back to sleep.

I had another dream, this time I was by a waterfall and the water came down like the pictures of Niagara Falls and a river flowed away from the waterfall. I hurried to the river, leaned down to drink and woke up again.

Again I slept and I had a third dream. This time I was back in Sweden and I was on the way to a little spring that flowed into the lake by which we lived. This spring was noted for having exceptionally good water. As children we went there with our water pails, following a path along a field, then the path cut down to the spring which was quite close to the edge of the lake. It had a sandy bottom and the water was so clear you could see the two holes where it bubbled up. In my dream I was on the path along the oat field, hurrying to the spring. I was so thirsty and I leaned over to drink, but again I awoke. Those three dreams about water I had in succession that night, were a sort of psychic experience to me.

(In 1971, I was home in Sweden and remembering how the spring figured in my dream, I again took the path to see if the spring were just like I remembered it but through disuse it had become overgrown with water plants and the sandy bottom was no longer visible.)

The next morning I had no choice except start out for the post office. I wore high laced elk hide walking boots, a wide brimmed hat and long sleeves as protection against the merciless August sun. Just as I started out, in the distance I saw the water man coming. Words could not express my relief.

I was anxious to learn what had detained him. He explained his horses ^{had} ~~bet~~ gotten lost and all these days I had been without water, he had been out hunting his horses along the Missouri river. Among the horses' hoof marks along the river his horses were shod and he was able to track them down that way.

Rattlesnakes

The very first time the agent had taken me around to show me the markers and corners of the land, he had stopped short as we were walking along, turned and ran to his car and got his revolver and shot a rattlesnake. This is the first time I had seen and heard a rattlesnake. J

My most memorable experience with a rattlesnake came during my very last summer on the homestead, and whether it was before or after my experience with the thirst, I do not recall. I was sitting and crotcheting by my one window in my ten foot square house, in the forenoon before the day's oppressive heat was upon me. I heard something on the outside of my house, as if someone were scratching their fingernails along the rough surface, a scratchy sound on the bottom shiplaps. Out here in the * silence where I was aware of every sound, I was instantly alerted. I looked out the window and I could see coming over the raised platform that was my doorstep, a huge triangular snakehead. I immediately got up to see if I had my screen door latched, and it was. So I sat down again and just watched. And this huge flat three-cornered head, which I recognized at once as a rattler's, was followed by a thick, thick body. Very, very slowly he wriggled across the door step, right against the threshold, went down the otherside, close to the building, and I saw he was going to go under my window, so while he passed under the window I didn't see all of him, but I was startled by the thickness of his body. I had read up on rattlesnakes in the encyclopedia and according to what I had read, it was seldom that they were more than three or four feet long. So I kept thinking that after awhile I would see the tail of this one and see his rattlers. He did not rattle, the only sound was the scratching, scraping noise. He just continued to slide along, so slowly and so majestically, taking his time, and I kept looking for what should be the end of him but I didn't see an end. He just

came and came and came, still unbelievably thick. I thought to myself, "There are no rattlesnakes like this, there are no such rattlesnakes as this one. They can't be this big according to what I have read." But the thick body kept coming and coming, and finally I saw the rattlers coming, but by that time I was so stunned I didn't think of counting them.

This snake just went on and on and his tail never came in sight until he had turned the corner and his head was out of sight. He must have been longer than the ten foot house. He was so regal and so awe-inspiring I thought to myself, "This is the king of all the rattlesnakes, and with all the people gone he is just surveying his domain again." The incredible size of the snake, the slowness with which he crawled along left me weak. From all I had read and from those I had seen, I was not prepared to believe there could be such a monstrous one. When he disappeared, I did not dare to go out. It was a frightening thought to imagine encountering him outside. I stayed in a long, long time before I dared to venture out to look around, but by that time he had completely disappeared.

I don't think I have ever been so shaken by the sight of any animal as by this stupendous snake and the majesty of his movements. I realized I must not keep this *
fright, I must not let it keep me from walking around as I had always done, so towards evening when it cooled off I forced myself to walk around outside. I never saw him again and I never knew what became of him. Needless to say, when I later told people about my encounter with this mammoth snake, it is doubtful if they believed me.

End of Homesteading

Then when fall came, because of the drought I had permission to leave my homestead. Ordinarily, the law stated you had to live there constantly for three years. But every summer the drought persisted and I was permitted to leave to teach during the following two winters. I taught in the gold mining town of Kendall. It was there I began working with primary grades only, enjoyed it and was successful in it. I taught in Kendall for four years and in 1920, I married S. A. Vontver, who had been one of my neighbors, six or seven miles distant from my homestead.

Several years afterwards, the Government, realizing what an injustice had been

done to those who had lost three years of their lives and wasted whatever they had borrowed to live on, offered to buy back the homesteads from those who wished to sell them. So I listed mine, but the official who replied to my letter said they only bought back homesteads from those who had families. I, who had a profession, was not in need and they would not buy it back. So I still own the land. I have not been back for years and years and I have no desire to go back. The shack eventually blew down and fell into the cellar underneath, so there are no remnants of it. The huge trees that grew in the canyon were subsequently cut down for lumber and fuel, so they also are gone.

1918 Flu Epidemic

As I mentioned before, I spent only the three summers on my homestead proving up on the land, since the government did not require I stay there twelve months of the year. In the fall of 1918, I returned to Kendall to teach as I had done the year before. At that time Kendall was an active gold mining town with a population of twelve hundred, although today it is a ghost town.

Besides the tragedy of the war going on in Europe, a sweeping illness spread across the country. Apparently the flu started in France, crossed the Atlantic and hit the Eastern seacoast first and soon penetrated to Montana. We had had no cases in Kendall, but there were cases in Lewistown, the nearest town to Kendall, and immediately all the schools were closed. It was such a new disease the doctors did not know how to treat it, but they know that any gathering together of people was to be avoided at all costs. So all the schools in Fergus county were closed.

The Red Cross Organization in Lewistown had turned the Fergus County Poor Farm into a flu hospital so the flu patients could be isolated. They needed practical nurses, or anyone who would be willing to go to help. People were so afraid of this contagion so they had great difficulty finding volunteers.

I had previously contacted the Red Cross in Lewistown and filled out the forms for applying to be a Red Cross Nurses Aide in France. One day, while I was still in Kendall, I received a message from the Red Cross headquarters in Lewistown inquiring if I would consider going out to the Flu Hospital while I waited on a

clearance on my application to go to France. I was glad to do it. Never for a moment did I have any fear of this contagion and I felt that this was something I could do while I waited on a clearance on my application to go to France. So I told the man I would be glad to go. He said, "You have answered this almost too quickly, do you realize that once you get there you will not be able to leave and go into town at any time? You must be content to stay right there. We haven't been able to get any volunteers except one trained nurse, but the matron of the Poor Farm, Mrs. Capron, is also a trained nurse, but they have no help with the patients."

I reaffirmed that I was not afraid to go. I packed my suitcases with what I thought I would need and took a taxi out to the Poor Farm. When we got there the taxidriver dumped my suitcases and drove off in a hurry as if he did not want to hang around those premises any longer than necessary.

They were glad to have me come out to help and I was given a small room next to the cook's room. The cook was a Swedish born woman named Miss Lund. The fear of contagion had not scared her off when the flu patients began to arrive and she stayed on to do the cooking. The regular inhabitants of the Poor Farm were all men and they had been transferred to out-buildings to sleep, and they continued to do their chores of taking care of the many farm animals, fields, stables, barns and chicken houses.

As I remember, they had between forty and fifty patients when I came there, and the trained nurse, whose name was Miss Clark, immediately took me on her rounds and taught me how to take temperatures and pulse. Besides this, I could carry in trays, wash the patients who needed washing and grooming, and I fell in with this routine very readily. I had never seen sick men before, had never realized how their whiskers would grow and how really repulsive they might look after a few days. With the flu, one of the things that happened was that their lips would crack. Besides the men patients there were a number of pregnant women, concerning whom Miss Clark was heart-broken, they had been told that they could not survive the flu, so she said they just would lie there with their hands folded on their high stomachs, quietly awaiting the

end, having given up all hope. And they all did die.

I had never seen anyone die, but that fall during the time I spent in the flu hospital, I got very well acquainted with death. The main dining room of the Poor Farm had been turned into the main ward. The patients were lying along the sides in the single beds turned over to their use by the inmates of the Farm. When a patient would become so ill that we knew he was dying, there was no place where we could put this person. It was very distressing and traumatic to the rest of the men to lie there and listen to the ravings and moanings and final breath difficulties of the one dying. Miss Lund and I discussed this matter, and since we each had a separate room we offered to move together and use the vacated room for a place to put the dying person. Sometimes they would die quickly, sometimes they would lie there for days. This plan was approved and we promptly moved together and thus provided a secluded room for the dying. However, the partitions were thin and the sounds of moanings and groanings could still be heard rather easily. This could be unnerving after a hard days work, so I remember Miss Capron came in one evening with a big jug of port wine and she advised us to take a hearty slug of it when we went to bed so we could fall asleep more readily. She or Miss Clark took turns being on night duty, I was never asked to take a night shift. After awhile I got so used to it that the sounds of the dying did not bother me. We even got used to the matron's dog who invariably would go and lie before the door of the "dying room" and howl at the event of each passing life. Then too, in the mornings when I would get ready to go on the rounds with the nurse to take pulse and temperature, there would sometimes be this long basket in front of the door where they were taking out the latest casualty. Even this, I got used to.

One time the police in Lewistown brought out a man they had found wandering around, seemingly mindless, and suspecting him to be a flu victim they brought him out. The matron asked him if he thought he could walk to the bathroom and take a bath by himself. The man nodded and walked to the bathroom, took his bath and came out wearing the robe that had been provided for him. He was taken to a vacant room

where he got into bed and I showed him there was a bell if he wanted any more attention. He didn't say anything to that and I left him shortly before noon. Ten minutes later I came in with his tray of lunch. He was sitting up in bed with his eyes open. I talked to him but he did not answer. He was dead. This did shock me. No identification was found upon the body or clothing, he was taken away and although I often wondered about this man the mystery surrounding him was never cleared up.

Seven doctors from Lewistown came out once a day to see the patients. They did not know any specific treatment for the flu itself. If pneumonia had set in they prescribed that mustard plasters be applied. I would stand at a long, long dining table, roll out yards and yards of cheese cloth and spread prepared mustard on this cloth. These were cut and applied to the patient's chest and back. Then a very warm vest cut from a wool blanket was put over the mustard plaster. After pneumonia set in the doctor's knew what treatment to prescribe. Until then, usually the only thing they prescribed was whiskey. I remember one old soak saying, "I've loved this all my life, but now I can hardly stand to drink the stuff."

During the course of time, we had acquired two volunteer male nurses-aides, who were most helpfull in caring for the men.

There was another startling case, somewhat similar to the one mentioned above, that I also remember distinctly. The police had found a well-dressed man lying in the gutter, and since everyone was so flu conscious, the police brought him out to us. Somehow, he too was permitted to get a room to himself. In time we came to find out this man was just dead drunk and did not have the flu at all. As he was recovering from his drunk he began to desperately need some "hair of the dog that bit him". So, everytime I came to his room for whatever reason, he would say to me, "You must bring me a little whiskey. I know the doctors prescribe whiskey for the patients here and you surely know where the supply is kept. I am not asking that you should pour me so much that the matron would find you out, but "just up to the church windows". I had never heard this expression before, but still I was not moved to comply. He further said, "You do that, because if you don't, I'll do something to you that you will be sorry for."

I did not see how he could carry out any threat to me and I continued to refuse point blank. I told him, "I will not help you get any whiskey. If you are going to get whiskey in an underhanded manner you will have to get someone else to help you. I will not do it." He continued to beg and threaten, but finally gave up. He said, "A person like me who has this craving is not responsible. I could even choke you." I backed out of the room. Soon they found out what his real trouble was and he was dismissed.

I cannot remember the exact percentage that died, but of the fifty or so that we had, almost every morning one or two had passed away. I remember the men patients more than the women patients because they were given more to complaining and groaning over their aches and pains. And the pregnant women of course, all died. I soon understood what Miss Clark meant when she said, "It is hopeless, for they have given up from the start."

Lazarus

One day, over the 'phone, the matron heard that a whole threshing crew had been stricken with flu up in the Denton country, and had lain in barns and out-buildings in that locality for two or three days without any care, and she was asked to make room for them immediately and there was something like sixteen of them.

So we hurried and got the beds ready. Fortunately, the laundries in Lewistown did accept the laundry from our flu hospital so we had fresh supplies.

As they came, most of them had to be assisted. They had lain so long without any care they were in bad shape. The youngest one was a lad of sixteen who did not yet grow a beard and he looked beautiful among the rest of the whiskery crew. There was one man who was so far gone, the matron immediately put in a room by himself. He suffered from some other malady in addition to the flu, and I have always thought it was probably syphilis, his lips were so full of sores that the straw through which he drank always had a coating of dried matter around it, and when Miss Clark cleaned him up mornings, she put on rubber gloves to handle him. This man was conscious although many other members of the crew would fall into a coma and that would be the end of

them. This man on the contrary remained wide awake and would talk to me. He found out that I had homesteaded and he said that he, too, had homesteaded, but not in my community.

The man did have a name, but the doctor who had first checked him had scribbled down an unintelligible scrawl of a word on the identification card that hung at the foot of his bed, and no one could figure out the name. I asked him what his name was and he said, "That is something for you to figure out, I am not going to tell you." So I said, "If that is the case I am going to call you Mr. Lazarus." This patient reminded me of the Biblical story of the man full of sores lying at the rich man's gate. I called him that when I had occasion to talk to him. He was always very talkative and wanted to visit with me because I had more time with him than the nurses who had to rush away to the next patient.

Every morning he greeted me with the words, "Well, I didn't die last night either." For some reason he suspected that he was not expected to live. So I would reply, "Why no, you'll beat the Old Fellow yet!" And for a time he did rally, so that even the nurses were hopeful. He kept asking about the other members of the threshing crew and several of them had died. It seemed a great source of pride to him that he continued to live. I asked him if he would like to have something to read, that I would bring him some magazines. But as he paged through them, just looking at the pictures, I began to doubt that he could read, and I didn't ask him any more questions.

One day when I was going to get him a glass of water, which he usually drank through a straw because the condition of his lips would not permit him to do otherwise, this time he just chewed the glass. I could see he was not himself, he seemed to be delirious and I thought, Good Heavens, if he bites me with those lips! I am not going to expose my hands too close to that face of his! But he overcame even this particular spell. I told him what had happened, that he had been out of his head, that he had bitten the glass until his lips were bleeding. He could not remember anything about it and he began to think that death would come. I asked him, "Is there some one you would like to have me write to?" This I had done for other patients. "No," he said, "I don't have any relatives or anyone to notify. I did have a pal once, a young man

that I liked very much. And you know," he said, "he took part in a rodeo and his horse threw him, he broke his neck and I watched him die." He said, "That was terrible. One moment he was so full of life and the next moment he lay there dead. He was my only pal, so I did go to his funeral. And I didn't like that funeral," he said. "The man that read over him said, 'From dust thou came and to dust thou returneth.'" The man I called Lazarus continued, "I didn't like that. He wasn't going to turn into dust. I just couldn't stand that. I just couldn't take it, that he who was so full of life would come to nothing."

So I said to him, "You have heard of Jesus the Christ".

"Yes," he said. "And he taught that when you die, your soul lives on," I explained. "Ch," he said, "you mean that you don't really die forever then?"

"No," I said, "it is my belief that we do live on after this body of ours is gone."

"Tell me more about that Jesus who taught like that," he said.

"I think I had better go and get my Bible and read to you about a man who was named Lazarus," I said.

"Ch," he said, "was there really someone named Lazarus?" So I got my Bible and I read to him about Lazarus covered with sores who lay at the gates of the rich man. I opened my Bible to Luke, Chapter 16, v. 19-25: "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table; moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, . . ."

"He died, the poor beggar!", said our Mr. Lazarus, "I don't think that he was like me. You shouldn't have named me after him. He died. He didn't put up the fight I am putting up."

"Well," I said, "I named you that before I knew what a good fighter you were. And then, when I found out how you held out, I found no reason to change your name, because the Bible tells of another Lazarus that Death did not get a grip on, even though he

did once have a real strangle hold on him."

"Ah hah, read me about that one. That is the one I want to hear about," he said.

So I turned to John II, Chapters 1-46. "Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha...Therefore his sisters sent unto him saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick. When Jesus heard that, he said, This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby...Jesus said, Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep. The disciples thought he was talking of sleep that is restful, but Jesus said to them plainly, Lazarus is dead. So they went there and found that he had lain in the grave four days already. Then Martha went out to meet Jesus and said to him, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died, But I know, that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee. Jesus saith to her, Thy brother shall rise again. Martha saith unto him, I know he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believesth thou this? Then Mary came out to Jesus and tells him if he had been there Lazarus would not have died...They come to the cave and Jesus orders the stone taken away. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days...They took away the stone... And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father I thank thee that thou hast heard me...And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go."

I read all this story of Lazarus, but I ended with the climax of the miracle. The man on the bed lay still and quiet. Even at the end he made no comment. It was I who had to break the silence. "To be named after that Lazarus doesn't make you mad does it?" I asked him. "No, Miss. If the Master had told me to come from the grave I would have done exactly as he did." He continued, "But the priest who stood

over my Pal, Jack Atticus' grave, he did not call him to come out. Dust thou art and to dust thou return, he said, and threw dirt down on him. If the Master in the Bible had stood over Jack's grave he wouldn't have said that, would He?"

"No," I answered with absolute conviction, "Jack Atticus", he would have called out in a loud voice, "Out of Life thou art come and into Life thou shalt return."

That evening when I brought him his supper, he showed no interest in his food. "To eat or not really makes no difference any more," he mumbled. But he realized that if he did not eat, I would immediately leave him, so very, very slowly he ate a few mouthfuls and sipped some milk through the tube. That his thoughts still milled around what I had read was obvious when he spoke. "If the Master in the Bible had called me, I too, would have come out. And in another way, too, I am like that Lazarus," he said. "In what way do you mean?" I asked. "Don't you remember where his sister Mary says to Jesus, 'He stinks already'. I have been stinking ever since I came here, a whole lot longer," he said with a slight smile.

He made no further effort to detain me and I had a feeling that he was satisfied now to give up. There had been a change in his attitude and he had heard what he needed to hear.

That night I slept fitfully and when the alarm clock awakened me, I dressed and felt I must go and see what had happened to Mr. Lazarus during the night. The door was standing wide open, the bed was empty and down the end of the long corridor I could see the big wicker basket being carried away.

The Youth Recovers

The sixteen year old boy who was a member of the threshing crew, recovered very quickly in comparison with the others. This he did even though he did not follow the nurses' orders to keep covered and sweat a lot. He fought the blanket "Sweat jackets" and all the covers, he was too hot and uncomfortable. He complained to me because I was not one in authority, he would tell me that if they did not let him lie uncovered he would get out of the bed and leave the place. I pulled up the blind and let him look out the window, I said, "You better not do that, look, there is snow

out there on the ground, and you have nothing to put on except your hospital gown.

On night, Miss Clark, the nurse, came and shook me and awakened me and asked, "Do you know anything about young _____. He isn't in his bed and we have searched everywhere here in the hospital where he could possibly be and we can't see any sign of him." So I answered, "He has talked about running away, so he might be outside." She hurried out to the porch and sure enough there were prints of naked feet in the snow. They followed these tracks and located the youth. The nurses were very apprehensive because they said, "When the doctors find out they will give us hail Columbia for letting this happen." However, no one mentioned the incident so no one was reprimended, but there was a great fear that the boy would have a relapse and die. Luckily, the young fellow suffered no ill effects, he lived through it.

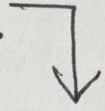
The Death of Miss Clark

Things went on very smoothly, we seemed to have reached a plateau, we had a fairly constant number of patients and the help of the two male nurses eased the work load.

Then there came a change over Miss Clark. She had always been very kindly and considerate of me, never waking me at night for extra duty or other chores. Then one day she called me and spoke to me very crossly. "I want you to go out in the kitchen and make me a sour lemonade, and hurry." She was in the office at the time lying down on a couch. I was taken aback by the sternness of her tone, but I hurried to the kitchen and made the lemonade. In my haste and wondering about her grouchiness, I accidentally sweetened it. I rushed back with it and Miss Clark took one sip of it, "I said sour lemonade and you bring me sweetened." I apologised and promised to go back and make it over. She accepted the second attempt and didn't say any more, but from that time on she never was on her feet again, she was stricken with the flu and died within a day's time. She was overworked and run down and didn't have a chance.

The matron was able to get a nurse replacement for Miss Clark. A lady who in many ways was as kindly and thoughtful as Miss Clark, but she was there scarcely a week until she too was stricken with the flu and died within a very short time.

The Deline of the Epidemic

Finally, there began to be a decrease in the patients. One night we could hear a tremendous noise from Lewistown. We pulled up the blind and there seemed to be a conflagration over Lewistown, so much light, so much driving around in cars and tooting of horns. All this was a very unusual nighttime activity and we could not figure out what in the world was going on. In the morning when the ones with the baskets came and the supplies were brought out we were told of the Armistice, of the end of the First World War. They had been making such a tremendous affair of it at Lewistown ^{noise} that the ~~noise~~ had reached clear out to our Flu Hospital at the Poor Farm. 

I realized then that my plans to go to France with the Red Cross would never materialize. About the time of the Armistice the patients began to get better, fewer and fewer people were stricken with the flu, and I realized that the epidemic was practically over and that my school in Kendall would be reopening soon. And it did reopen before the end of November and I went back to teaching.

My first reaction to the end of the epidemic was a personal let down. For throughout this experience I had really lived. I had lived deeply. A great truth came to me and I realized that the best use you can make of your life is to be involved in something greater than yourself and outside your own concerns. The let down was when I could no longer be of service to that extent. This was my first experience of working with something outside my own personal life, greater than myself, it was something of a readjustment to go back to normal duties of teaching.

A Civil War Headache

There were naturally few lighter moments during those dark days of the flu. One that I do remember involved one of the old men at the Poor Farm. The old men who had been sent to the out buildings to sleep came in to the huge kitchen to eat their meals and then went back to their temporary quarters. I had never seen so many old men together, I do not remember their number but they filled two long tables when they sat down to eat. Among the old men there was one that I was drawn to pay attention to because every single day he complained aloud of her terrible headaches.

After I had heard him complain of these headaches for weeks, I finally said to the old fellow, "Well, uncle, how long have you had this headache anyway?" He looked up at me and answered, "For fifty years now." "Oh," I said, "You are spoofing me now, nobody could have a headache for fifty years!"

"Huh! That shows how much you know. I was hit in the head with a bullet at Shiloh and it has been aching ever since!" the old soldier replied.

So it was that my experience at the Flu Hospital was over, and it soon proved that my days of Kendall school teaching would be finished too.

Cat Creek, Montana's First Oil Field

One of my homesteading neighbors, a Norwegian bachelor, Cy Vontver, persuaded me to marry him in 1920. I had suffered some financial loss from those years of drought but his losses were greater as he had invested in horses and machinery. He had then worked for awhile in the Kendall gold mines, but after our marriage we moved to Petroleum County and he got work in the newly discovered Cat Creek Oil fields. The drilling for oil opened up opportunities for employment better than either farming or mining.

When we first moved to newly established Cat Creek, everyone lived in small ^{Shacks} shacks, some of which were covered with tar paper. There was a water pump by the office and we could carry in what water we needed. The water was very soft, terrible for making coffee but lovely for washing clothes. My husband built a lean-to entry on the front of our shack for water and the kerosene stove. He also built on a storage place to the back. We lived in this one room cabin for a couple of years then we moved into a two room house. The company furnished the housing and we used as fuel the crude oil just as it came from the wells. This crude oil was of such high gravity that even unrefined it could be used as heating fuel in the houses, it went into the car radiators as an antifreeze in the winter; was used in heavy duty engines and even filled the gas tanks of the Model T Fords and other cars. Although it did "knock" more than refined gasoline, the cars ran well on it. One bad quality, it was so highly inflammable there were many household fires.

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The Montana Years - Davis, Maggie Gorman
Chouteau County 1910-26

opp. copyright p. - top pic

8 - "Days are so long." (6-11-1910). Grasshoppers.

9 - "3 girls near here who have taken claims alone...."

10 - some big ranchmen tried to get merchants to promise not to sell to displaced farmers.

*11 - mice eat onions as fast as they come up.

13 - steam plow - 6 furrows at a time;

"changes made this summer" - detail to + from town.

14 - eggs sell at 25¢ per dozen - in trade.

15 - horses sink at water hole; farm dinner of roasting ears, new potatoes + "all the milk we could drink."

*16 Rocky Mt. fires: "we could not see the sun from Friday until Tuesday."

*Husband "chilled" + I put hot stove lids around him.

Grocery prices.

17 - Farm hands get \$40 to \$45 a month + board.

OVER

- 19 - husband's birthday = buffalo berry pie, ginger cookies
 + 3 wild ducks, fried.
- 20 - "caught a nice mess of fish w/ his hands."
- 21 bot. - food prices
- 24 - Sears & Roebuck + Co. shoes
- 29 - drawing + list of furnishings
- 32 bot. - crops
- 39 bot. - organizing a telephone co.
- 40 - magazines subscribed to.
- 46 - livestock prices.
- 48 - 12 qts of canned gooseberries (+ jelly) -
- 49 - teaching school
- 50 - influenza - (Nov. 1918.)
- * 51-6 June 1919 - draught, rain, grasshoppers
- 57 - instruction for curing animal hides
- 64

} Copied

car & Sara & Mama on the big bridge, No 2 is Sara & I on the bridge. No 3 is Tessie Timmons of 10 mi. s. of Wolcott, Ind. & myself. No 4 is myself in the car taken one Sun. morning last spring when I started to town after Tessie, No 4 was taken the same day. Please dont fail to send them back as they are all I have. Dont forget--Ted. Please ans at Once & send pictures back.

The above letter was addressed to Mrs. Dennis S. Davis, Carter, Chouteau Co. Montana from J.T. Gorman (my father, aged 17 years) Burnetts Creek, Indiana R.R.#1.

News item from the Burnettsville, Indiana NEWS issue of December 6, 1917: Mrs. Dennis Davis of Carter, Montana, came last week for an extended visit with her parents, John Gorman and wife.

News item from the Burnettsville, Indiana NEWS issue of February 28, 1918: Mrs. Maggie Davis, who was here visiting her father John Gorman and other relatives, has returned to her home at Carter, Montana.

Ulm, Mont. Nov 7, 1918.

Dear Brother Ted. Have you got your questionairre yet? I want you to write as soon as you know where you are classified. Dennis has not heard yet and has never been called yet. They didn't call any from here in October because of the Influenza. It is the most awful disease that ever struck the country. I am so worried about you folks in that damp climate. Did you and Papa get your hoghouse done? How many sows will you keep? The car is in disgrace now. On Monday night at seven oclock we started home (50 miles) through the worst snow storm. Went to Great Falls and stopped and put up the top and the curtains on. We made it pretty well until about a mile from home when the thing stopped. He worked about an hour before it started. Then it banged and jerked so he opened the hood and the distributor was wet and the sparks were flying all over, We finally got to our gate and it stopped again. We pushed it the rest of the way. It was just 12 oclock when we got into the house. Dennis went into Carter on Tues. to vote through snow above the axles. Some snow I tell you. The worst we ever had at this time of year, Some think freezing will stop the Influenza. If that is so it ought to stop. It was 10 below yesterday morning. We came back down here yesterday. Only stuck twice.

Have you worked Dan any this summer? I cont see how Charlie could be much poorer than he was. Poor old faithful fellow. I don't look for Prince and Frank to pull through the winter. I never will forgive our selves for bringing them out here to starve half of the time. Our Ted colt is a dandy. He is only a two year old. The second time he was hitched to the wagon Dennis put him on the wheel team in a four horse team. I worked him on the disc. We have two four horse teams now and are going to sell the engine if we can. You will keep four horses. Do you still think of selling Dan? Dennis thinks he doesn't want the Roland place but of course he doesn't know much about it. The ranch where Dennis

is working is along the Missouri and he brought his rifle along. He said maybe he could get something for you to mount but I don't know for you have most all kinds that we have. I suppose you wont see the youngsters so often when they move. Are they still afraid of you skulls and hides. I wrote to Mamma some time ago and have been expecting to hear from her for some time. Cant some of you write once a week (until) this disease if over.

Lovingly yours
Maggie.

Send mail to Dermis here at Ulm, Mont.

The above letter was addressed to Mr. J.T. Gorman, Burnetts Creek, Indiana from Mrs. D.S. Davis, Ulm, Mont. and mailed at Ulm on November 9, 1918.

Carter Mont
June 19 1919

Dear Homefolks; Received your letter about a week ago. Am glad to know you are getting along as well as you are. My, if we only had to do with out rain for 11 or 12 days we would be flying. Such a looking farm as I found when I came over May 26. They had had only one shower all spring and sand storm after sand storm. The winter wheat and rye had all been ruined. And of all the poor horses I ever saw ours were the poorest. Well the sand blew and on Thursday we started out to find pasture. But everywhere it was the same story, even up in the mountains where the pasture was always green it was dry. We were over south of Benton and a little cloud came up. As it is pretty hilly around there we hurried to town and drove into a garage and just in time. It rained quite hard. It was pathetic to see the joy of the people. Well it rained even harder out here. Dennis had already sowed 48 acres of spring wheat and reseeded most of 56 acres to oats and wheat and we went right to work and sowed 34 acres of flax. That was all the seed we had and we were afraid to risk buying more. There were 14 acres more in the field. There have been several more good rains since. The flax is looking nice and the wheat was until Monday and we had a dreadful sand storm and when it was over the field looked bare again. We have millions of grasshoppers again. They are taking the garden as fast as it comes up. We have plenty of moisture. Dennis is trying to get a piece of ground ready for millet. But he is so crippled and the horses are so poor and the thistles grow so fast it is uphill business. He is harrowing today and that is so hard on him. I wanted him to let me change off with him this afternoon but he thought I couldnt drive six horses. They had a picnic this afternoon on the river for the soldiers. It looks rainy and he wanted to get the field done so badly. It is so hot today and yesterday too. Otto's are having tough luck aren't they? How old is Lola's baby? I guess we are not to get any of the good prices for wheat. Well I suppose back there pigs are more valuable than mushrooms but out here we would take the mushrooms. You had better not be promising to divide up for you might get the chance. Dennis says all we lack of selling is to find a sucker. Well I haven't heard from Sara so she has probably

drought

thot better of getting married.

Dennis has been doctoring with the osteopath and I think he could help him but money is so scarce and it costs so much to go to the Falls. He hasn't been down for three weeks so of course we can't expect it to get well. I didn't know I said anything about Christian Science. At least I didn't mean to.

They say the dry years are over for Montana now for four or five years but I dont know what to think. We have land that ought to be summer fallowed now. I wanted him to get 45 acres ready but he gets discouraged so easy and gives up. We have 6 heifers and cows that will have to go I guess. But we cant get rid of the horses unless we eat them. Well I see him coming in so I had better quit and help him.

Ulm Mont Oct 29, 1919

My Dear Mother; I was so glad to hear from you once more. I had looked and wondered and waited every since I had been over here to hear from you. You probably think you have a tough time but you should see this country. Not a thing except a three or four year old straw pile occasionally for the stock. Not one family in a hundred has potatoes and not a bite from the garden. One woman, who lives about a mile from here and sends two children here, has 4 more at home. Her husband is working at Great Falls getting \$6.50 a day but she had to stay here alone to look after the stock; 2 cows, 2 calves, some horses, a pig and some poultry. Last Tuesday night it began to rain and snow and kept it up for 3 or 4 days. It was the worst storm I ever saw so early. There is still lots of snow on the ground. Well Saturday she lost one cow and one calf, frozen. So her husband came out and butchered the other calf and next Sunday they are going to move into the Falls. But there is more moisture now than any fall for 3 years so I am in hopes next year will be better. The trouble is that people were so hard up and discouraged that lots of them put in no crop at all this fall. If your potatoes were out here yet they would have been frozen. I certainly would enjoy your sweet potatoes. I was out of luck when I was there. I was just telling the children today that I was to have gone to see you this winter but they say I can't go. If I had got your letter before I took this I would have come. Dennis started over here to tell them I come and got your letter on the way but he came ahead. I scolded him but he said he couldn't stand for me to go that far for so long. Then Sara only gets \$75 per month. I wouldn't have taken it for that. I never kept account here but I think it takes less than \$14 a month for board. I have coal and kerosene furnished. Wouldn't it be nice if they had a teacherage there? It is certainly nice. A teacher can do as she pleases and it saves so much time too. I have 9 children 4-2nd, 3-4th, 2-8ths. Yes I have plenty to eat thanks to my dear man. He is so afraid I'll starve he comes over once in a while to see. We had one hog left which we killed before I came away. I fried it down. So I have meat and lard. There is hardly a week some of the people here don't give me something. But it is lonesome as the dickens. I have a cat though.

I haven't heard from Dennis since the storm. I am so worried for he was out of feed when he wrote and if he was caught I dont know what he would

do. He found a man who would winter the horses but no one that wanted the cattle. We only have 6 head left. We lost 2 cows this summer. But it is more provoking to stay and take care of 6 than if a person had a lot. We have decided to kill our poor old faithful blacks. They were so poor that we thot it would be more merciful to do that than to let them suffer. I don't know if he got it done but if not they wouldn't last thru this I don't believe.

He sowed a hundred acres of fall wheat. I hope we'll hit it this time. I didn't want him to sow any but since it has rained and snowed so much maybe its a good thing. Seed for 100 acres at 2.00 per bushel cost \$150. Albert sold him seed at market price or it would have cost more. Most people had to pay 2.25 or 2.50. They are talking 3.50 for spring wheat. I wish we could live close enough you could go with us places. Dennis had a notion to load the stock and ship them back there but as you all had poor crops its a good thing we didn't. Did Ed come out even on what he bought of R.? I haven't heard from them since in August. I had begun to think you had all deserted us in our trouble. Yes everything is awful high. I think we are going to have a terrible time before these labor troubles are settled. It is certainly awful what these poor western farmers had and are having to take for their stock. One man came here and bought a 1000 horses for \$2 each. A woman near here sold 9 cows for \$360 and threw in 6 calves. The meat markets in Great Falls are bragging that they have meat enough in storage to last two years and lots of it only cost 3¢ a pound.

Well Mama I can't get done laughing at Sara. I suppose nobody else sees the joke but to think she got married to get out of teaching and right at it again. I would like to hear them howling! When I was at Carter we saw each other once a week but now! Tell them to be thankful for they are fortunate indeed. Tell Sara not to think of resigning. Its too funny! I was here four weeks and over and I guess I was pretty homesick. At least the letter I wrote sounded that way and he came over. He has been over once since and I probably won't see him again till Thanksgiving. But that \$891 is not to be despised and I wouldn't think of quitting. But we have agreed to never live this way again. It seems we girls were intended for teachers. Tell Mae to take a lesson from her sisters and let the men alone. They are only something more to worry about.

If Dennis could have got some one to have kept the cattle he would have gone to work in the Falls. There is lots of work there. They are going a lot of sewer work and street paving and building two new bridges across the Missouri. The Unions are howling for more money all the time but from \$5 to \$7 a day looks pretty good to a poor farmer who hasn't had a crop for 3 years. His foot bothers him a lot and always will I guess, especially when it is threatening weather. I had heard Albert was back in Ind. He went to Wash. but didn't stay long. Its news to me that their mother is going to take land. I heard her say that you couldn't give her a farm here. You mustn't expect us to get a \$100 yet for a long time. Montana has received a setback for 10 years anyway. But of course land booming in other places helps to keep it up here. But I am afraid now that will never be able to buy there. It seems pretty hard to think that 3 years ago this fall we could have cleaned up \$15000 anyway and now we couldn't sell and square up. Did I ever tell you we sold \$14 worth of rhubarb this summer from what you gave us.

I am so glad to get the pictures. Yes they are the ones. I had begun to think I was never to get them. Agnes Wiley Plank was up to see us before I left up there. They have never had a crop since they were married. He was working in the Falls and they thought they would move in. Last winter she nursed and made quite a lot. She left the baby with her mother. He (the baby) got sick and they had a big doctor bill. I do hope the flu won't come back. We have been scared all fall with it and typhoid. The river was dry from the last of June until October. Dennis hauled water 12 miles, from a well for us to use. But if people won't have the flu but once how can it come back for nearly everybody had it. Tell Papa land will never go down as long as other prices are so high. Every thing has advanced out of reason. But people were better contented and happier when they used to work for a dollar a day and buy shoes at \$1.50 a pair.

Yes airplanes are quite common. They are using them to detect forest fires. It is some thing terrible the way the forests have been destroyed. Whenever they are all gone and nothing to hold the snow, Montana will be a poor state indeed.

Well Mama you don't know how glad I was to get your letter this evening and I hope that you will find time to write soon again. I suppose Ted is too busy to write. Tell Sara I wrote her a letter of congratulations recently and as I haven't heard from her I am thinking seriously of following it up with one of condolences. Shall I? She still has a bedfellow anyway. I never was used to sleeping alone and she knows what cold feet I get. I have been sleeping with an iron but it isn't very much comfort along towards morning. I tell Dennis that I was always afraid if I got married I would have to get up and make fires and it has come to that at last. But since somebody else pays for the coal, I keep both fires going, so it isn't so bad. I turn on the furnace when I first get up and it is soon warm in the schoolroom. Carrying out ashes is the most work. The coal and kindling are in the basement and the pump is in the schoolroom. The basement stairs go down from inside too. Tell Sara to be a widow is all the style in Montana. Well this long letter surely deserves a reply soon doesn't it? Hoping you are well and keep well I remain Lovingly Yours.
Maggie.

Many thanks again for the pictures. My but it is a pretty picture of May in the flowers.

News item from the Burnettsville, Indiana NEWS issue of November 6, 1919: Word received from Mrs. Sarah Davis and son Roy who left here several months ago for Montana, to make their future home, says that they are enjoying the best of health and on October 26th there was a foot of snow and the temperature ranged from 15 to 20 degrees below zero. The prospect for crops the coming year are fine and the outlook is very bright in that locality. The crops the past year were a failure because of the heavy drought in that state.

Ulm Mont Dec 8 1919.

My Dear Mother,

Was so glad to hear from you. Yes 2 years ago I was there and this was the year I was to come back, but the chances are pretty slim.

Dennis says if he sells out he wants me to start for Ind. with him. I tell him I never resigned yet; he'll have to go without me. He says he won't play me such a trick as I did him. Well we enjoyed our Thanksgiving at being together but I'm afraid you wouldn't have called it much of a dinner. It's an awful trip there and back and costs so much too. But I'll go again Xmas, as he can't leave there. I am sorry to hear of Ted's being sick but hope he soon recovers. We had quite a laugh at the girls' resigning but I'm glad Mae is there with you. We are having an awful cold winter but lots of snow and that is usually a good sign for us. We are doing the only thing we can do. This is the history of all new countries. The truth is if they had farmed better and less this wouldn't have been so bad (altho bad enough). I am glad Ed got out of his trouble so well and hope he gets along well.

1919
winter

They are losing an awful lot of stock. Some say it's the hay they get and some say it's the hay they dont get. Old Prince and Frank went the first cold spell. They were of no value but I felt pretty bad that they had to go as they did altho Prince kicked the others out, ate their feed and died of the colic. But I do hope we can save the others. If I stay over here alone all winter to buy feed for them and then they die I'll never go near the old place again. Dennis wanted me to look them over. They looked pretty tough but I tried to encourage him but I wouldn't stay there for any money. Poor fellow he gets so homesick to see me. I'm afraid I couldn't write a book if I did it would be so blue nobody would read it. Why don't you get a base burner if not a furnace? You surely are not using yet the stove you bought when Sara was a baby. We hear some of the sugar shortage but we can always get as much as we can pay for. You had better send the box to Carter as I will go there. They are so mean here at Ulm about getting into things. As to what you got last year you might as well keep for we hope to be with you some time next summer. I have been sorry I brought those dishes back with me. Dennis is more anxious than I even. So all that stops us is selling out but I think things will boom in the spring. Land is staying up pretty well. One man sold for \$25 and threw in the horses but his place wasn't as good as ours. He was an old bachelor from Terre Haute and his girl had gone back on him so he got discouraged. Write soon for its awful lonesome. Mama is Clarence La Tourette married again and got a baby?

This is answering pretty quickly but I don't have a very good chance to send mail.

Maggie.

Ulm Mont
May 3 1920

My Dear Sister,

Was certainly surprised and pleased too, to hear from you once more. I was very sorry because of Edd's illness but am glad he has had that tumor removed and I'll bet he is too not thats its over. I was reading yesterday about having nerves killed in teeth and I have just about decided that just as soon as we thresh our 1920 crop to go and have the ones pulled that have no nerves. Well I hope Edd is still improving and Thelma too as I got a letter from Wanda recently saying she was sick.

Why did Sara and Virden buy? Have they decided to remain in Burnettsville for some time? Sara owes me a letter. That isn't where they live now is it? If not will they move? Will Powell sell the places separately? I don't think Dennis would sell that place on account of the ditch and being located where it is. But there's no harm in keeping our eye on it. But I wouldn't have the stock at any price.

We didn't have such an Easter storm as you did but April has been cold and snow. It snowed Saturday and some yesterday. I don't think there will be over 6 fair days in April. I never saw as much moisture in April. There is no spring work done at all yet and to cap it all people cannot get hay and stock pulled thru on high feed are dying now. I haven't heard from Dennis yet this week but the last I heard he couldn't get hay and had only 3 bales. He said they were losing worse than all winter. It is terrible. But if it ever gets so we can get in any crop there is plenty of moisture. Sang sold his place but I couldn't get from Dennis' letter just what he did get. He had used his last dollar and all he could borrow and they wouldn't live like we do so he let go (just when things are picking up). If we had 15 or \$20 000 besides that place we'd hold it for the oil prospects but when it's all we have we'll let the other fellow do the speculating as soon as we can persuade some body to give us a good price.

Wanda said you had a sick horse. Which one was it? I hope it is better now. My gracious if you get tired of what you have to eat there I don't know what you would do here. Papa was always fond of eggs. Well so am I but at 45¢ a dozen it counts up to buy them. I get so tired of (this word chewed away by mouse who nibbled on letter) and on nothing I don't (words gone) to do.

Are the little pigs from the registered sow? I would like to see her. Well they are lucky to have corn and wheat to sell. But wheat will be higher later if crop prospects are as reported.

School closes May 14 but they wanted me to stay for the grand ball they are going to have on the 15th. I thought they might have had it on the 14 but they wanted it on Sat. night so they could sleep Sunday.

They would like to have had me back next winter but I keep hoping "something" will turn up so we can get away before then. They have raised the training qualifications now so a teacher has to have at least 2 years of high school and 12 weeks normal training and that will let out about 1/3 of the present teaching force so there will be a shortage for a few years. But if we are here in June I think I'll try for a certificate as I may have to keep the farm going again next winter. Suppose Mae will go to school. Will she go to Indianapolis again this summer? I must have insulted Ted that he never writes to me or is he busy trying to make two stalks of corn grow where one grew before? Hope to hear from you all again soon

I remain

Yours lovingly

Maggie B. Davis

If you write after the 10 or 12 send to Carter.

Tues. Got a roll of papers this morning. Many thanks.

The above letter was addressed to Miss Mae Gorman, Burnetts Creek, Indiana and was mailed from Ulm, Montana on May 8, 1920.

Spring
1920

NOTE OF EXPLANATION: The following is a part of a letter written in December 1920 to his sister, Maggie Davis of Carter, Montana. My father, then 20 years of age, was a taxidermist and most of this letter contains instructions for curing animal hides.

Apply a solution (good and warm) of the following,

Soft soap 1 qt.

Neats foot oil 1 qt.

Alcohol 1 pt.

I brush this on, as often as necessary, or all skin will take up. When dry, resoften and beat, & wash off all extra oil in gasoline. If you do not have soft soap or alcohol, warm neatsfoot oil will do, only the other will not let it evaporate. Do not let skin get too dry before softening and working it, and use plenty of elbow grease & work for this is what really makes the skin soft. Another thing I forgot. After you take the skin out of the liquid before you stretch it, wash thoroly in a solution of 2 gal or so of water &, say 1 lb of soda. This kills the injurious effects of the acid, & washes out the unused alum. The borax opens up the pores, softens, & whitens the skin, makes it tan quicker and makes it moth proof. Now, if you have a nice soft hide, you will want it lined. You can do this yourself tho it will take time, patience & extra strong twine thread. I am enclosing samples & prices of linings from one of my dealers in supplies, & I think they are very reasonable for the quality. Or you can send it to a Tannery, but they will charge a plenty. Well, I have gone into detail, & still I can not tell you all; but I hope you get a good job. I would like to do it for you. The materials, including oil, should not cost over \$2.00, anyway. I mounted a nice coon last spring. I recently mounted a small opossum, and also a weasel, on a cork bark stand.

Well, I really must go to bed. We are sending you a little Xmas box. Hope you get it OK. We are having revival at the Christian Church now. Have a wonderful minister, Rev. Lee Jackson (just married). Baptist got 1 in their revival. They're pretty unpopular, and are fussing among themselves. Well both please write soon.

Will write more next time---Ted.

We have Atwater Kent ign. now. I put on a bumper, spot-lite, curtains now open & close with the doors, new battery, etc.

News item from the Burnettsville, Indiana NEWS issue of July 21, 1921: Mrs. Dennis Davis of Carter, Montana, arrived yesterday morning for a visit with her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Gorman.

News item from the Burnettsville, Indiana NEWS issue of September 8, 1921: Mrs. Dennis Davis returned to her home last Thursday at Carter, Montana after being the guest of her parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Gorman and other relatives for several months.