

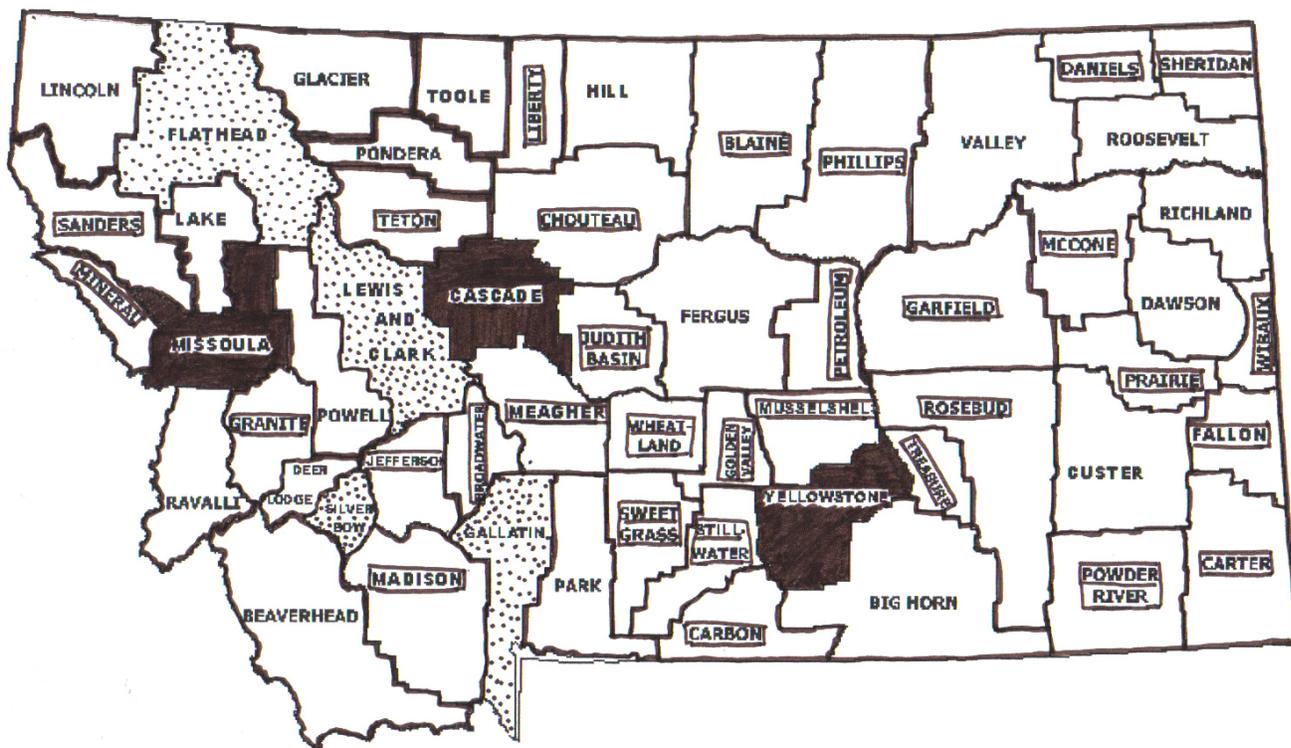
## Introduction

### Historic Preservation in Deep Rural Places

The great settlement of the American West took people to nearly every corner of the nation in pursuit of gold, land, and a better life. One of the ways these people made their mark on the land was by constructing buildings and structures. After drought, depression, and hardship, most of those in the Great Plains and Mountain West regions departed for the cities while the structures they built remained to tell their stories. The exodus to the cities left behind deep rural communities that are today witnessing the disappearance of their historic built environment. These insufficiently understood, sparsely populated regions lose historic resources at an alarming rate and preservationists continue to struggle with finding solutions to prevent this loss. The most commonly addressed issue of rural preservation is that of suburbanization and urbanization plaguing rural areas adjacent to cities. Deep rural places, on the other hand, are characterized by remoteness and shrinking population. This combination leads to a general absence of preservation understanding or action at the local level and a lack of understanding of rural places and people by professionals at the state and national level.

Focused on the ordinary and vernacular, rural preservation appeared late on the agenda of historic preservation. It was not until the 1980s that preservation's focus on cities and high style architecture began to shift to include the countryside and to

incorporate rural landscapes and resources.<sup>1</sup> The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines rural preservation as “... the protection of the countryside, including the preservation of buildings and villages of cultural significance, the protection of their surroundings, and the enhancement of the local economy and social institutions.”<sup>2</sup>



**Montana County Population Map (based on 2005 populations) 56 Counties**

	Rural = 49 counties (88 %) (counties with towns less than 10,000)		Micropolitan = 4 counties (7 %) (counties with cities of 10,000 – 50,000)
	Deep Rural = 31 counties (56%) (counties with towns less than 2,500)		Metropolitan = 3 counties (5%) (counties with cities of >50,000)

**Figure 1**

The majority of the U.S. population lies within urban areas; however, the majority of the land in the U.S. remains rural. Rural lands comprise between 70 and 80 percent of the nation’s total land mass and hold approximately 25 percent of the nation’s

<sup>1</sup> Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000, p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New York: John Wiley & Sons., 2006, p. 120.

population.<sup>3</sup> These lands contain significant numbers of historic resources important to our nation's past that are quickly disappearing due to sprawl, neglect, and misuse.<sup>4</sup>

The Census Bureau defines metropolitan (urban) as places with at least one city of over 50,000 people and micropolitan (rural) as places without a city of over 50,000 people, but with at least one of 10,000 or more. Deep rural places are those remaining, generally they contain towns of less than 2,500 people. The majority of deep rural counties exist today in the Great Plains and Mountain West Region.<sup>5</sup> According to the

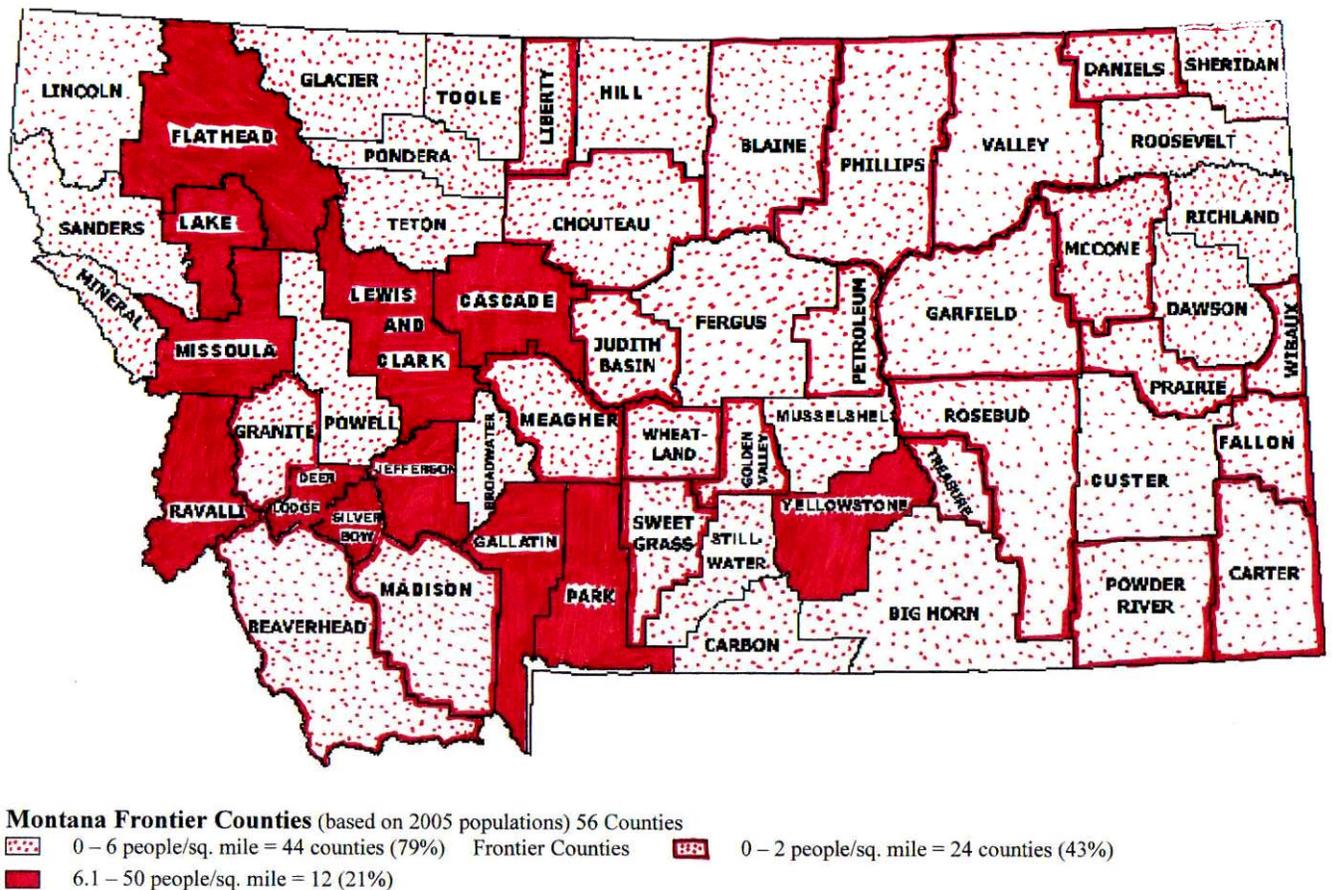


Figure 2

<sup>3</sup> Don Macke, "Understanding Rural America," *Center for Rural Entrepreneurship*, Monograph 11 (June: 2003).

<sup>4</sup> James Lindberg, "Rural Development Trends and Opportunities for Historic Preservation," *Forum Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 2006): 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> Area Resource File, 2005: US Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Health Professions, Rockville, MD.

1890 Census, many of these places would still be classified as “frontier” – less than six people per square mile.<sup>6</sup> Montana lies within both of those geographic areas and, according to the now defunct 1890 definition, frontier counties make up 79% of the state’s 56 counties. Furthermore, 43% of Montana’s counties contain less than two people per square mile. When the overwhelming majority of a state’s land contains so few people, an extreme kind of remoteness exists. This remoteness feeds the economic, social, environmental, and cultural issues that preservationists must address. Figures 1 and 2 depict the metropolitan, micropolitan, and rural counties and the “frontier” counties in Montana respectively.

Home to only 500 residents, Petroleum County is the least populated county in Montana, and the third least in the United States. Only one town, Winnett, remains from the exciting time of homestead and oil speculation in the 1910s and ‘20s. For seventy-four years, the town proudly boasted a splendid school building that survived the area’s decline, which began in the 1920s. This magnificent Spanish-mission style building



**Figure 3 Winnett High School, National Register photo, 1995**

(figure 3) served the town and surrounding community since 1921. Eventually, it became the only historic school building still in use as a school within the district. It stood as a landmark structure and source of pride for the community. The unique style exhibited by the

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<sup>6</sup> Lindberg, p. 7.

building impressed visitors to this small town and provided it with a marker for exceptionalism. In 1994 this building failed to meet safety code requirements. Unwilling to let the building disappear, residents looked for options. They achieved National Register listing of the school in 1995 (the only listing in Petroleum County), but due to failures in the foundation, the building was demolished in 1998. Without finances, trained people, or viable options, this deep rural community suffered an experience common to many rural areas.

While the preservation movement continues to refine the programs developed during the 1980s and '90s to address preservation issues in rural places, the same problems that have always faced rural preservation persist in the extreme rural corners of the nation. Historic preservation gets moved to the back burner in rural areas because the majority of those living in rural areas suffer from poverty, declining population, and struggling economic systems.<sup>7</sup> Deep rural areas cover large swaths of land filled with few people, making it difficult to offer public services. Tax bases are smaller, resulting in fewer professional staff available for planning and economic development, much less historic preservation. Counties avoid land-use regulations, including preservation, in rural communities because there are often few opportunities for growth. Inhabitants in deep rural areas are traditionally conservative, which leads to an independent, agrarian, self-reliant view of the world.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the difficulties found in the rural places themselves, the federal government still struggles with how to establish policy for preserving rural places.

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<sup>7</sup>“Rural America at a Glance,” U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Rural Development Research Report, Number 97-1 (September 2003).

<sup>8</sup> Lina Cofresi and Rosetta Radtke, “Local Government Programs: Preservation Where It Counts,” in *A Richer Heritage*, Robert E. Stipe, editor, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, p. 150; Charles E. Roe, “The Natural Environment,” in *A Richer Heritage*, p. 238.

Defining and categorizing rural historic resources pose one of the largest issues. Individual landmark structures and the landscape itself make up the significant historic resources in rural places and the majority of these resources are vernacular in character. Vernacular remains an elusive concept with many debates concerning its definition. Difficult to define, evaluate, and classify, rural vernacular resources do not fall within the auspices of traditional historic preservation programs.<sup>9</sup> In a speech given at the 2007 National Trust Conference, Brenda Barrett praised the National Register program stating, "... the National Register of Historic Places, the most widely recognized framework for evaluating the significance of heritage resources, has over time shown an ability to adapt to new scholarly questions."<sup>10</sup> Yet, the National Register refuses to recognize the term vernacular, thus either excluding the majority of rural resources or forcing them to fit into a more accepted category.

Adding to the situation is a lack of understanding by professionals for the places, the people, and their needs. William Murtagh, known to some as the "keeper of the National Registry," provides an example of this misunderstanding. As author of *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, he wrote, "Thus, the primary difference between the rural historical landscape and the historic district of an urban area is generally the greater distance between identifiable historic components in the rural landscape." He makes no mention of completely divergent social histories, economic systems, traditional lifeways, or current issues that impact urban and rural areas differently. Norman Tyler, another preservation expert and author of *Historic*

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<sup>9</sup> Lina Cofresi and Rosetta Radtke, "Local Government Programs: Preservation Where It Counts," in *A Richer Heritage*, Robert E. Stipe, editor, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, p. 150; Charles E. Roe, "The Natural Environment," in *A Richer Heritage*, p. 238.

<sup>10</sup> Brenda Barrett, "Valuing Heritage: Re-examining Our Foundations," *Forum Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Winter: 2008), p. 33.

*Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practices*, relegates rural preservation to the chapter on “Other Issues,” where it occupies three pages.<sup>11</sup> All of these factors make historic preservation in deep rural communities difficult.

Nonetheless, these problems are being realized and addressed. Brenda Barrett also stated that increasingly, “Definitions of significance can incorporate rural regions, cultural landscapes, and resources of under-reported groups.” The foremost preservation organizations in the US, the National Trust and the National Park Service, continually build on and expand their programs to include those communities and their resources found in deep rural places. The National Trust’s Rural Heritage program remains a leader in developing successful rural preservation techniques and the National Park Service continues to update bulletins and brochures and provide technical assistance for rural residents. As programs adapt and update preservation extends further into deep rural places where it strives to create a better understanding of the past and a better quality of life for the future.

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<sup>11</sup> Tyler, p. 208-211.

## Research Methods

### Statement of the Problem:

Historic preservation remains an occupation practiced mostly in urban areas or national parks. The main bodies that teach about historic preservation and attempt to gain popular support for it concentrate in the larger towns and cities. Historic preservation activities and therefore, formal preservation awareness are rarely practiced in the “deep rural” communities of the western United States. These communities often possess excellent examples of rural vernacular landscapes with working landscapes and rural heritage still intact.<sup>12</sup> The chosen site for the case study explored in this inquiry, Petroleum County, exemplifies a working landscape within a rural vernacular landscape. With only 500 residents, the county epitomizes deep rural and the preservation issues that accompany most deep rural communities. The historic resources have not been identified and there are currently no preservation policies or procedures in place in Petroleum County.

### Research Methodology

The purpose of this study was to develop a framework for initiating historic preservation strategies in deep rural communities in the West through using a case study design. The purpose of the case study was to understand and describe the local history and the historic resources in Petroleum County, Montana. This understanding was used to develop historic preservation management strategies. Archaeological and Native American historic resources are not included in this study.

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<sup>12</sup> James Lindberg, “Rural Development Trends and Opportunities for Historic Preservation,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 2006): 7-8.

The terminal project has produced a Historic Resources Study (HRS) for Petroleum County, Montana. Usually, an HRS is conducted by the National Park Service on its own historic properties that have previously undergone documentation and are part of a preservation plan already in place. While each HRS is unique depending on the place and its resources under investigation, each Study generally contains three parts: an extensive history of the place, a discussion of historic resources, and preservation management strategies and/or recommendations. Because the historic properties in Petroleum County have had little or no documentation and investigation, this HRS emphasizes the historic resource discussion, which includes an identification of resources, and the preservation management strategies, which constitute some of the first preservation planning in the community.

The format of the Historic Resources Study was chosen for a variety of reasons. A community must first understand their local history before they can properly understand their historic resources. The HRS format allows for a more lengthy investigation of local history than many other preservation documents. The HRS also allows for flexibility in discussing historic resources and preservation management strategies. This created an opportunity for not only identifying the historic resources, but also discussing their role as seen by the National Park Service along with their individual histories and significance. The first two portions of the HRS set the stage for introducing preservation management strategies. This will work especially well in places with little or no previous preservation activities. The HRS provides an excellent framework for introducing historic preservation to a rural community.

This study has laid the groundwork for introducing historic preservation practices, policies, and benefits to the community. This was done through a written document of the County's history, an identification of their historic resources, and an outline of preservation management strategies that includes a *Teaching with Historic Places* lesson plan for the local high school. This model can be adapted to other rural communities in the west, and in particular, those in the Great Plains and Mountain West regions.

### Methodological Paradigm

An interpretivist/constructivist methodological paradigm has guided the research for this project. The interpretivist paradigm best directs the research because it is based on the belief that multiple realities exist, that individuals represent their realities through symbols and language, and that we can only understand these realities through observation, interviews, and participation.<sup>13</sup> This was a very practicable project that requires an understanding that multiple realities exist depending on the subject's situation. I believe this was the best approach to understanding and describing the history of a place, its people, and its historic resources.

### Research Questions

Research for this terminal project was directed according to the following research question and sub-questions. Sub-questions are grouped according to the concept clusters of local history and historic resources, rural vernacular landscapes, public history and heritage education, and historic preservation strategies.

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<sup>13</sup> Dr. Patricia Dewey, Research Methods Class, from Dr. Patti Lather, unpublished Qualitative Methodology Research Methods Class Notes, The Ohio State University, fall 2001.

1. What informational and educational approaches and programs might be implemented to enhance preservation awareness and activities in rural western communities?
  - a. What is the historic context for Petroleum County?
    - i. How has the history affected the historic resources?
    - ii. What are the historic resources?
  - b. How has the history created a rural vernacular landscape?
    - i. How can a rural vernacular landscape be beneficial to the present community?
  - c. What programs are in place (nationally, statewide, and locally) to teach and create a preservation awareness?
    - i. Which of these programs are most applicable to rural communities?
  - d. How can new programs be implemented?
    - i. What are the historic preservation needs of the community?
    - ii. What programs are currently in place to address those needs?

### Delimitations and Limitations

The scope of the study was delimited by the location (Petroleum County), participants (Petroleum County school, local government, Library History Board, MT SHPO), and audience (rural western communities, MT SHPO, Petroleum County). Additionally, the historic resources chosen within Petroleum County were delimited by their location and accessibility. The resources studied are located along county roads, or property owner permission was granted for access to the resource. The resources studied in Winnett, the county seat of Petroleum County, were chosen because they were historically commercial or public buildings, residences were not included in the survey of Winnett. Non-generalizability and researcher biases constitute the major limitations of the study.

## **Research Design**

### **Research Approach**

The main question guiding the research for this terminal project was “What informational and educational approaches and programs might be implemented to enhance preservation awareness and activities in rural western communities?” This question has been addressed using a qualitative approach and a single in-depth case study strategy of inquiry.

### **Strategy of Inquiry**

The major strategy of inquiry was a single in-depth case study. While the field of historic preservation and rural vernacular landscapes applies everywhere, each place is unique and requires a specific set of management principles and strategies.<sup>14</sup> For this reason, a case-study has most effectively determined the proper approaches and programs needed in the more specific area of rural vernacular landscapes in the rural west. In addition, heritage education works at its optimum in a case-study setting, as shown by the *TwHP* framework.<sup>15</sup> The case-study has implemented this strategy to promote historic preservation in a rural community.

## **Research Design Overview**

### *Question*

Rural western communities lack preservation awareness and preservation activities are rare, this study seeks to discover and describe information and educational approaches, as well as programs that will address this issue.

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<sup>14</sup> Charles Birnbaum, “Protecting cultural landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes,” *National Park Service Preservation Brief* 36, 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Carol D. Shull and Beth M. Boland, “History in the Hands of Tomorrow’s Citizens,” *CRM*, vol. 23, no. 8 (2000): 3-4.

## Site and Participant Selection

The site of Petroleum County, Montana was chosen because of its deep rural status and its lack of previous historic preservation activities. It is a typical agricultural community found throughout the Mountain West and Great Plains. It also has a need for identifying its historic resources and developing strategies for their future. Key informants have been purposively selected to be participants in the study. Participants were chosen based on their knowledge of Petroleum County history, local history education programs, and preservation needs and desires as well as their knowledge of historic preservation practices. The participants included the members of the Petroleum County Library History Board, the Winnett Schools Superintendent and history teacher, the Petroleum County Manager, and the Montana SHPO CLG and survey officer.

The participants are all residents of Montana and most are residents of Petroleum County. They are adults who vary in age and gender. They are all professionals in their field, except the members of the Library History Board, who are volunteers with varied occupational backgrounds. They were chosen for their specialized knowledge pertaining to the project at hand. Other possible subjects were excluded due to time constraints on the project.

## Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This terminal project utilized a variety of data collection techniques and analysis procedures. Data collection methods included fieldwork, document analysis, literature review, interviews, and participant observation. The majority of research, and all of the initial fieldwork, took place in Petroleum County, the location of the case study. Other

research on preservation procedures and heritage education took place at the University of Oregon. Key informants, selected through purposive sampling, from the Petroleum County Library History Board, the County Government and the City of Winnett Government were interviewed while in Petroleum County. Much assistance was also provided by members of the Montana State Historic Preservation Office. Collection sources included the Petroleum County Library, the Montana Historical Society Research Library, the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, the Winnett Schools, the National Park Service, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and other historic preservation databases. Grounded theory guided data analysis procedures through the use of comparative methods and coding.

This project implemented validity techniques throughout the process of collecting and analyzing data. The researcher spent an extensive amount of time at the location of the case study previous to the project, and spent more time there while doing research. Therefore, the researcher used both prolonged engagement and persistent observation to validate the findings. In addition, beginning with fieldwork and document analysis during the first stages of data collection through the final stage of data analysis, triangulation, referential adequacy, thick description, dependability, and confirmability were practiced.<sup>16</sup> Each of these techniques helped to guarantee the reliability of the final document by showing that the researcher has taken the necessary steps to corroborate and authenticate the data collected as well as providing a trail for following the researcher's path in collecting the data. As data collection and analysis progressed, peer debriefing and member checks also validated the findings. These last two methods help to ensure that the researcher has properly collected and analyzed the data.

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<sup>16</sup> Y.S. Lincoln and E.G. Guba, *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1985.

## Research Results

This terminal project has addressed the need for greater preservation practices, knowledge, and management in deep rural communities. Specifically, the case study worked to fill the gap in research on Petroleum County, as well as to identify the community's historic resources, and to create preservation management strategies for the area. Petroleum County, as one of the least populated counties in the United States, provides an excellent model for which preservation needs are present in rural communities. The project created preservation management strategies and recommendations for how to address those needs. This plan is applicable to other rural western communities and therefore, has helped to build preservation attention and activity in these areas. The project also contributed to the literature on rural vernacular landscapes, heritage education, and the preservation of rural communities.

## Literature Review

This terminal project seeks to explore rural preservation and rural historic landscapes in the sparsely populated areas of the Great Plains. Petroleum County, the least populated county in Montana, will serve as the case study for this project. The project will produce a Historic Resource Study which results in preservation management strategies that include a *Teaching with Historic Places* lesson plan. The issues important to understanding the basis for this terminal project are rural America and the Great Plains and the stage they set for rural preservation, rural historic landscapes and their preservation, and heritage education.

### Rural America

Generally, urban and rural areas are defined using the terms metropolitan (metro) and nonmetropolitan (nonmetro). Traditionally, metropolitan areas contained at least one city with over 50,000 residents and nonmetro contained one with less. In 2003, the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) revamped the system for classifying areas and added a new micropolitan area classification. Under this system, nonmetro territories are divided into either micropolitan and noncore. This category attempts to explain a portion of the diversity of the nonmetro areas. Rural remains loosely defined as those open areas or towns with less than 2,500 people.<sup>17</sup> As you can see, the definitions eliminate as much confusion as they create.

As a greater understanding of rural America emerges, more descriptive definitions of rural also emerge. These definitions help to explain the diversity that exists within the

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<sup>17</sup> "Measuring Rurality: New Definitions in 2003," August 21, 2003, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/rurality/WhatisRural/>, January 8, 2008.

open spaces and countrysides and emphasizes that more than one rural America exists.

Karl Stauber uses four categories for rural,

*Urban periphery* – rural areas within a 90-minute commute of urban employment, services, and social opportunities.

*Sparsely populated* – areas where the population density is low and often declining and therefore the demand for traditional services, employment, and social opportunities are limited by isolation.

*High amenity* – rural areas of significant scenic beauty, cultural opportunities, and attraction to wealthy and retired people.

*High poverty* – rural areas characterized by persistent poverty or rapid declines in income.<sup>18</sup>

Americans like to separate and categorize, however the relationship between urban and rural has always been interconnected. This interconnectedness leads to the difficulty in defining specific urban or rural areas and their roles.

For the first two centuries, rural and metropolitan America co-existed by means of social contracts. From the end of the American Revolution until the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, the “Frontier” social contract governed the relationship between urban and rural. Under this system, rural America produced food to support the growing urban population and in return, nonmetropolitans received government support for claiming new lands in the form of military support, displacement of Native Americans and other federal programs.

As the nation moved into the Industrial Revolution in the 1890’s, the “Storehouse” social contract took hold. The population of rural America began to move

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<sup>18</sup> Stauber, Karl. 2001. “Why Invest in Rural America – And How? A Critical Public Policy Question for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” In Center for the Study of Rural America, *Exploring Policy Options for a New Rural America*. Kansas City, MO: Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City.

to urban areas. These growing areas were supplied by commodities originating in rural America and large scale investments were made by the public sector to ensure the easy flow of materials and the efficiency of production. Social contracts ceased to exist by the 1970s, and few feel the need to articulate a new, appropriate contract for today's conditions. These feelings are magnified due to the fact that since the 1970s, America has become a suburban nation. This suburban population balks at subsidizing others, rural or urban, and as Nicholas Lemann wrote in *The New American Consensus: Government of, by, and for the Comfortable*, "any project that entails government acting in the broad national interest (rather than the narrower interests of the suburban middle class) probably won't get done."<sup>19</sup>

Preservationists, along with rural advocates, continually work at developing arguments for the preservation of and investment in rural America. Again, an understanding of the place and its people is imperative to creating successful strategies. Contrary to popular belief, several industries, and not just agriculture, anchor rural America's economy. These include other natural resource industries as well as manufacturing, and natural amenities for tourism and retirement. However, the areas discussed in this project, the Great Plains and Mountain West regions, for the most part continue to lose population because of declining employment in agricultural and other natural resource industries.<sup>20</sup> A variety of options exist in these areas for developing successful economic structures. Rural places contain three basic opportunities, described by Robert Atkinson, to help stimulate their economy: lower costs, clean air, and safety

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<sup>19</sup> Stauber, p. 13-14.

<sup>20</sup> Leslie A. Whitener and David A. McGranahan, "Rural America: Opportunities and Challenges," Amber Waves, U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/Feb03/features/uralamerica.htm>.

make rural areas more attractive than metro to live; retirees prefer to live in small towns; and business location flexibility brought about by information technology.<sup>21</sup> Stauber suggests the following:

- Redefine and restructure the rural-serving college and university so as to increase human capital in sparsely populated and high-poverty rural areas.
- Create new market demands and linkages so as to increase regional competitive investments in urban periphery and sparsely populated areas.
- Develop and use new technology to overcome remoteness to create infrastructure that expands competitive advantage in sparsely populated and high-poverty areas.
- Encourage immigration to rural communities to increase human capital in sparsely populated and high-poverty areas.<sup>22</sup>

Preservationists need to perform their work with these options in mind in order to find the right balance between preserving the past and moving ahead.

Some basic demographic statistics about rural America help to further understand this enormous area and the issues circling within it. On average, rural residents are three years older than their metropolitan counterpart. Twenty-five percent of all rural population growth is Hispanic, which is growing ten percent faster than in urban areas. Household incomes are approximately twenty-five percent less in rural regions than in urban and of the nation's 250 poorest counties, 244 are rural. Nearly one in five children live in poverty with a comparable number living in food-insecure households.<sup>23</sup> Poor places also tend to have poor education.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the number of drug-related homicides

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<sup>21</sup> Robert D. Atkinson, "Reversing Rural America's Economic Decline: The Case for a national Balanced Growth Strategy," *Progressive Policy Institute*, Washington, D.C. (February: 2004), p. 7-8.

<sup>22</sup> Stauber, p. 23-26.

<sup>23</sup> "Rural America at a Glance," U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, Rural Development Research Report, Number 97-1 (September 2003).

<sup>24</sup> Stauber, p. 20.

tripled between 1990 and 2000 in rural areas while it fell by fifty percent in urban places.<sup>25</sup>

The previous issues draw a bleak picture of rural America, which narrowly describes the places and completely dismisses the human factor of the equation. While the above statistics portray mostly the economic status of the rural regions of the country, they tell nothing of the character of the people, they reveal only that those residents are older, poorer, and most likely less educated. University of Nebraska rural sociologist, Dr. John Allen has analyzed extensive research and compiled a set of urban versus rural cultural values. This research is summarized below.<sup>26</sup>

<b>Value Attribute</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>
Community Interaction	Mandatory	Voluntary
Roles	Ascribed	Achieved
Sanctions	Particularistic	Universalistic
Orientation	Group	Individual
Leadership	Traditional	Rational

Each rural area possesses a different blend of cultural values, just as each area operates under different economic structures and contains different demographic mixes. The problem in understanding rural America is that it is usually done by analyzing economic statistics. Few travel to the countryside, see the open spaces, or meet the people who occupy these places and who represent the stats in pages of various government sponsored reports. While the economy continues to be scrutinized, the people and their everyday lives continue to be largely overlooked. Historic preservation presents a perfect opportunity for connecting the people to the place and creating a living document about their work and its results.

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<sup>25</sup> James Lindberg, "Rural Development Trends and Opportunities for Historic Preservation," *Forum Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 2006): 6-14.

<sup>26</sup> Don Macke, p. 2.

### The Great Plains

Amazing people with captivating tales lived, and still live, in the rural places of the high plains. Euro-American history in the west comprises the last two centuries, and only the last century for many places in the “great American desert” of the Great Plains. Literature abounds in the form of novels based on true stories, western history books, and other non-fiction books. These books inform, but also remove the events discussed on their pages to places seemingly far away and far into the past. When this history becomes localized, people will develop a better understanding and a greater interest for their immediate surroundings. A lack of funding and people make it hard for small places to maintain their own history files and quite often state or regional archives house these important documents, making access difficult and inconvenient. The Petroleum County Public Library, on the other hand, maintains excellent history files and also possesses an almost complete set of the *Winnett Times*, the newspaper that operated in the county seat of Winnett from 1914 – 1986. However, the only published material available for check-out or in places outside of Winnett is the *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County, Montana*.<sup>27</sup> While rural areas possess fascinating histories and are often home to magnificent story tellers, documentation of that history is often non-existent or difficult to access. This creates a problem for preservationists trying to develop a preservation awareness and excitement about local history.

### Rural Preservation

Rural preservation, the relatively recent movement within the field of preservation continues to grow, develop, and learn from its past preservation approaches. At the 2006

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<sup>27</sup> Petroleum County Public Library. *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County*. Lewistown, Montana: New-Argus Printing, 1990.

Preserve America Summit, Carroll Van West emphasized the changes within historic preservation that include the changing notions of what qualifies as significant. She stated that recently, “Definitions of significance can incorporate rural regions, cultural landscapes, and resources of under-reported groups.”<sup>28</sup> These three groups make up the majority of resources in rural places across the country.

While literature concerning Rural America and Historic Preservation both abound, there is little that combines the two. Thousands of local or state-wide historic preservation organizations exist, and many operate their own rural preservation programs, but their publications and studies largely remain available only to those living in the immediate area. Much material on National Trust for Historic Preservation (National Trust) programs and their specific stories exist, however, the state of historic preservation in rural America on a national level remains limited. Part of the problem can be attributed to the lack of understanding of rural places, and even of what rural is. Writings available to a national audience consist mostly of the connection between rural development and historic preservation. This reflects the amount and type of preservation taking place in rural places, and especially in deep rural communities. The impacts of preservation on community identity and pride, strengthening social values, and in understanding a community’s present situation remain little discussed. This results in the representation of these issues as not important.

In 1991 the results of the study, “A Thirst for History,” were published. This study, prepared by the National Trust for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Agriculture Rural Development, and Related Agencies, and the Committee on

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<sup>28</sup> Brenda Barrett, “Valuing Heritage: Re-examining Our Foundations,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Winter:2008) p. 33.

Appropriations, assessed the compatibility of federal rural-development programs and historic preservation. Their results were discouraging. The study reported that a lack of leadership in federal agencies hampered the promotion of compatibility between rural-development programs and historic preservation. Other conclusions supported this blanket finding.<sup>29</sup> Preservationists worked hard at saving rural heritage; in 1992 the theme “Building from Our Roots: Heritage and Rural Development,” led the Seventh Annual Midwest Regional Preservation Conference in assessing the connections between rural development and rural heritage. Participants at the conference developed four types of activities for organized historic preservation groups to encourage the advance of rural preservation: “(1) Strengthen the rural preservation message, (2) get the rural message out, (3) strengthen local leadership organizations, and (4) build rural-development coalitions.”<sup>30</sup> In the last fifteen years, many efforts have been made to advance rural preservation. Resources continue to be lost, however, due to a lack of preservation awareness in most rural communities and a lack of sources, financial and human, to implement historic preservation strategies.

The National Trust continues to search for the most appropriate and successful means of introducing and maintaining thriving rural historic preservation programs. The *Forum Journal*, published by the National Trust, recently devoted a whole publication to the issue of rural heritage and rural landscapes. The majority of contributors agree that the best way to preserve rural resources and landscapes is to make agriculture economically viable. This emerging plan is discussed by Judith LaBelle. Promoting

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<sup>29</sup> Various authors, “A Thirst for History: An Assessment of the Compatibility of Federal Rural-Development Programs and Historic Preservation,” *Forum News*, Vol. 5, No. 6, (November/December: 1991).

<sup>30</sup> John Kuester, “Heritage and Rural Development,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (March/April: 1993).

within nearby communities and focusing producers locally instead of globally will create a better market for locally grown products.<sup>31</sup> Additional suggestions for improving local economies through historic preservation include implementing Main Street, Barn Again!, and cultural heritage tourism programs. In addition, focusing on working landscapes and working to preserve them will also reap economic benefits. At the root of each solution lies “place-based development,” which encourages development strategies that build on the existing assets of rural communities (human, cultural, historic, and environmental) instead of focusing on specific economic zones. Historic preservationists have long agitated for this appreciation of the local character of communities.<sup>32</sup> With continued growth of the field, educational programs and implementation of programs at the community level for preservation action will lead to greater preservation awareness in rural places. Programs such as the certified local government and Main Street programs are aimed at smaller communities.<sup>33</sup> Still, these communities usually fall in the micropolitan population category and contain a significantly larger population than deep rural communities.

The deep rural communities scattered throughout the nation demand a greater effort than can be mounted through programs such as Main Street, heritage tourism, and certified local governments. While programs such as Rural Main Street Iowa address the issues faced by deep rural regions, most have yet to adapt to the variety of needs found in rural America.<sup>34</sup> As programs adapt, more literature will become available. In addition,

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<sup>31</sup> Judith Labelle, “Slaughterhouses and Sprawl: Supporting Local Agriculture as a Key to Preserving Local Heritage,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 2006): 35.

<sup>32</sup> Lindberg, 10-13.

<sup>33</sup> Debra S. Flanders, “New Life for Iowa’s Small Towns Thanks to a Main Street Approach,” *Forum Journal*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Summer 2006): 26-32.

<sup>34</sup> Debra S. Flanders, “New Life for Iowa’s Small Towns Thanks to a Main Street Approach,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer: 2006), p. 26-34.

most programs focus on building the local economies through historic preservation.

Other important results of preservation, such as community identity and pride often float to the side in order to concentrate on the economy.

Alanen identifies another key issue preventing the preservation of rural places, “...In these places, local governments, groups, and individuals may not possess the necessary awareness, expertise, or monetary resources to carry out preservation activities – when and if they are warranted or deemed necessary.”<sup>35</sup> Many authors discuss the success of projects when the local community is involved, however, how to involve the locals and create enthusiasm for preservation rarely receives mention. Progress continues in this area. A report in the *Forum Journal* indicates that rural development leaders, local community members, farmers and ranchers, and preservation and conservation groups are coming together with the goal of preserving working landscapes.<sup>36</sup> Bugey briefly states, “conservation approaches must respond primarily to the community’s needs and values rather than to the expert’s craft or the outsider’s vision.”<sup>37</sup> This needs to be carried in the back of every preservationist’s mind. At the National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference in the fall of 2007, Brenda Barrett’s speech on valuing our heritage mentioned Carroll Van West’s advice, “By being committed to the truth and by asking for input from the people who live in the community, preservation will become more relevant and make a difference.”<sup>38</sup>

### Landscapes, Rural Historic Landscapes and Their Preservation

The lens of rural historic landscapes provides much of the context for

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<sup>35</sup> Alanen, 140.

<sup>36</sup> Lindberg, 12.

<sup>37</sup> Bugey, 42.

<sup>38</sup> Brenda Barrett, “Valuing Heritage: Re-examining Our Foundations,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Winter:2008) p. 33.

understanding rural places and for developing effective preservation strategies. Landscape preservation studies draws from a variety of fields ranging from natural resource conservation to archaeology and from historic preservation to anthropology. Cultural landscapes more specifically apply to preservationists and others within social sciences. The National Park Service describes a cultural landscape as an area that contains both cultural and natural resources and all of the wildlife and human-made resources within its boundaries that is associated with a significant activity, event, or person.<sup>39</sup>

The field of landscape preservation continues to grow as the knowledge base and support system expands. Conservation of landscapes arrived relatively late in the world of historic preservation, not really emerging as its own entity until the 1970s. Prior to this, landscape preservation existed mostly in the form of “colonial gardens” inspired to a great extent by preservation work in Williamsburg in the 1930s.<sup>40</sup> Yet, no methods or standard practices to guide landscape preservationists resulted from this work. By the 1980s a variety of public and private groups coordinated their efforts to create standard operating guidelines for landscape preservation. In this decade, rural preservation began to receive more attention, with Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve, established in 1978, leading the way.<sup>41</sup> In 1984, Robert Melnick and two others prepared, for the National Park Service, *Cultural Landscapes: Rural Historic Districts in the National Park System*, which served as the first manual for vernacular and agricultural

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<sup>39</sup> Charles Birnbaum, “Protecting cultural landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes,” *National Park Service Preservation Brief 36*, 1994.

<sup>40</sup> Hugh C. Miller, “The Family Tree: Looking at the Roots of Historic Landscape Preservation,” *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Managing Cultural Landscapes. (2000): 54.

<sup>41</sup> Susan Buggey, “Historic Landscape Conservation in North America: Roaming the Field over the past Thirty Years,” *APT Bulletin*, vol. 29, no. 3/4, Thirtieth-Anniversary Issue. (1998): 37-38.

landscapes.<sup>42</sup> The surfacing of ecological and cultural tourism in the 1990s helped to increase the base of landscape preservation. In 1994, the NPS published *Preservation Brief 36: Protecting Cultural Landscapes: Planning, Treatment and Management of Historic Landscapes*, providing those in the field as well as the public with a guiding document for landscape preservation.<sup>43</sup>

Terminology within landscape preservation becomes imperative to understanding exactly which kind of landscape is under examination. All landscape preservation falls under the rubric of “cultural landscapes” of which there exist four sub-groups. It is assumed that these are all historic landscapes. These groups and their definitions follow:

*Historic Designed Landscapes* – A landscape that follows a plan drawn up specifically for that area. The designer could be a landscape architect, gardener, horticulturist, etc. Aesthetic values are of great importance. Examples include parks, cemeteries, or school campuses.

*Historic Vernacular (or Rural) Landscape* – A landscape that people have altered because their livelihood depends upon the land. The landscape reflects the beliefs and culture of the residents through its appearance. Examples include agricultural landscapes, rural communities, or industrial complexes.

*Historic Site* - A landscape that is significant for its association with an event, person, or activity. Examples include battlefields or towns.<sup>44</sup>

*Ethnographic Landscape* – “...a relatively contiguous area of interrelated places that contemporary cultural groups define as meaningful because it is inextricably and traditionally linked to their own local or regional histories, cultural identities, beliefs and behaviors. Present-day social factors such as a people’s class, ethnicity, and gender may result in the assignment of diverse meanings to a

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<sup>42</sup> Arnold R. Alanen, “Considering the Ordinary: Vernacular Landscapes in Small Towns and Rural Areas,” in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, ed. Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000) 129.

<sup>43</sup> Buggey, 40.

<sup>44</sup> Birnbaum, 1.

landscape and its component places.”<sup>45</sup>

Throughout the literature the terms are used interchangeably, when in fact, they each have specific definitions. Care needs to be taken in using the correct language. Rural landscapes have come to be synonymous with vernacular landscapes and both terms will be used throughout this document. The term, agricultural landscape, will be used as a sub-group of rural landscape.

The literature pertaining to landscape preservation and more specifically vernacular landscape preservation has been mostly published within the last thirty years. An emerging concern with working landscapes and rural heritage has produced an influx of literature within the last five years. Vernacular landscape preservation continues to be a small field, however, and the number of publications remains limited.<sup>46</sup>

The relatively new field of landscape preservation means that the proper method to saving these important historic resources is still unclear. A variety of approaches exist to preserve historic vernacular landscapes, however, the negatives of each approach are rarely discussed. The specific case of Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve arises frequently, however Lisbeth Cort seems to be the only one to address the problems of joint public-private ownership. At Ebey’s Landing, the NPS owns very little property and functions more as an advisory board than a landowner.<sup>47</sup> In other places, the NPS owns the entire historic landscape. At Cades Cove in Tennessee, the NPS exercised their right of eminent domain to seize agricultural lands in order to preserve them. The removal of residents and their traditional work practices created a different landscape.

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<sup>45</sup> Michael J. Evans and others, “Ethnographic Landscapes,” *CRM: Journal of Heritage Stewardship*, Vol. 24, No. 5 (2001): 54.

<sup>46</sup> Alanen, 140.

<sup>47</sup> Lisbeth Cort, “A new Approach to Rural Preservation: Observations 27 Years Later,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 2006): 15-25.

Often times, land trusts become the most successful way of preserving historic landscapes. By 1998, more than 1,200 land trusts existed throughout the nation. The majority of landscape preservation tends to focus on soil conservation and other natural resource factors.<sup>48</sup> Land trusts effectively conserve landscapes in general; however vernacular landscapes contain the tricky component of residents trying to continue to make a living off the land. While overall, the land's appearance remains stable, the changing approaches to successful agriculture require the landscape to evolve. This issue is beginning to be widely addressed.<sup>49</sup>

Although the Preservation Brief provides a guide, the preservation of landscapes is quite site specific and the brief deals in generalities. It has also become dated and does not include some of the newest lines of thinking. Rolf Diamant and others address questions that arise over whether a rural landscape can be preserved without also preserving the life ways that created the landscape. Limiting residents to activities of the past leaves them few options for making a living. Those on the forefront of landscape preservation agree that, "the key to the successful conservation of these landscapes lies not in recreating the past at these sites, but in building on that past and crafting an economically viable future for these special places."<sup>50</sup>

The more recent literature focuses on techniques for preserving vernacular landscapes and less on defining cultural landscapes. The National Trust For Historic Preservation has instituted a Rural Heritage Preservation Initiative that encourages more

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<sup>48</sup> Alanen, 127-28.

<sup>49</sup> James Lindberg, "Rural Development Trends and Opportunities for Historic Preservation," *Forum Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 2006): 10-11.

<sup>50</sup> Rolf Diamant and others, "Place-based and Traditional Products and the Preservation of Working Cultural Landscapes," *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship*, Vol 4, No 1 (Winter 2007): 15.

exploration in this area. The *CRM* journal and the *Forum Journal* both recently published articles that discuss developing rural heritage and landscape preservation approaches.<sup>51</sup> The literature will continue to increase with the expansion of cultural and vernacular landscape preservation programs.

### Heritage Education

The rural preservation movement struggles, in part, because of a lack of popular public support and awareness. The key to a preservation movement anywhere, but especially in rural areas, lies in education.<sup>52</sup> Heritage education reaches wide audiences of all ages while also encouraging cultural stewardship. While heritage education follows no set definition; generally, it means the study of local or community history.<sup>53</sup> The National Trust for Historic Preservation has developed a much more precise definition,

Heritage education is an approach to teaching and learning that integrates information preserved in the natural and built environment and the material culture with other sources of evidence, such as written documents, oral tradition, graphic materials, music, and folkways. Its purpose is to expand and enrich understanding and appreciation for the ideas, themes, issues, events, and people which compose our historical experiences and cultural expressions. It is an interdisciplinary approach to teaching and learning that draws upon the research and practice of many fields of study, including archaeology, anthropology, sociology, history, geography, economics, science, and the arts.<sup>54</sup>

Heritage education serves to incorporate a vast spectrum of disciplines into lessons of local culture and history. This leads to an awareness of one's immediate surroundings

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<sup>51</sup> *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship*, Vol 4, No 1 (Winter 2007) and *Forum Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer 2006)

<sup>52</sup> Max A. van Balgooy, "Heritage Education and Historic Preservation: Partners or Acquaintances?" *Forum Journal*, Vol. 19, No. 1, (Fall 2004).

<sup>53</sup> Caneta S. Hankins, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, *Focus on 2000: A Heritage Education Perspective*, 1997.

<sup>54</sup> Kathleen A. Hunter, in Hunter and White, *Teaching with Historic Places: A Curriculum Framework for Professional Training and Development*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1995.

and recognition of their role in determining the present events.<sup>55</sup> Again, the amount of available literature remains limited to National Park Service or National Trust publications while the work of smaller, more locally focused groups continues to be difficult to access.

The heritage education movement grew from the increasingly popular public history movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. By mid-century the National Trust for Historic Preservation and the American Association for State and Local History had been founded to help study and preserve local history. In 1959 the University of Virginia began a preservation course as part of an undergraduate degree in architectural history. Cornell's departments of architecture and planning offered a joint graduate seminar and began teaching preservation as a cross-disciplinary field. Columbia established the first degree program in preservation in 1964.<sup>56</sup> The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 resulted directly from the work of groups such as the NTHP and growing academic programs and helped to raise awareness about the importance of historic places. With the national, state, and local bicentennial celebrations of the 1970s, heritage education became even more popular within museums and preservation organizations. The National Council for Preservation Education, formed in 1978, worked to reform education curriculums and create a greater awareness of preservation practice. Since that time, a variety of national programs developed, including *Teaching with Historic Places*, a joint venture between the National Park Service and the National Trust.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Coppin State University, Goucher College, Morgan State University, and the National Park Service in cooperation with Participants in Curriculum Forum, *Teaching Cultural Heritage Preservation: Historic Preservation Cultural Resource Stewardship and Related Fields, A Course Outline*, September 2002.

<sup>56</sup> David G. Woodcock, "Historic Preservation Education: Academic Preparation for Practice," *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 29, No. 3/4, Thirtieth-Anniversary Issue (1998), pp. 22.

<sup>57</sup> Hunter and White, p. 3.

Many independent heritage education programs exist within local history and preservation organizations across the country. Historic preservation education, heritage education, and cultural heritage preservation education all function to impart conservation and preservation knowledge to the public in order to create a greater awareness and concern for the nation's historic resources. Hands-on preservation training forms a separate component of heritage education. Vocational training in preservation trades teaches a wide array of people the skills needed to perform preservation treatment. Students of preservation-trades education gain knowledge of traditional buildings and their materials and combine this with craft skills and with current preservation theory and practice. Simon Herbert, the director of the Arkansas Institute for Building Preservation Trades states, "One of the roles of preservation education is to pass on information and skills that allow the fabric of historic structures to be preserved."<sup>58</sup>

Historic preservation has gradually become more diversified and aligned with other disciplines to develop more encompassing heritage education programs. Increasingly, heritage education programs have focused on implementing curriculum within grade school and secondary education courses. Max van Balgooy, the director of interpretation and education in the Department of Stewardship of Historic Sites at the NTHP says, "Education should be an integral part of every preservation project and historic preservation must be a part of every heritage education program , from beginning to end."<sup>59</sup>

In the early 1990s, the National Park Service created *Teaching with Historic*

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<sup>58</sup> Simon Herbert, "Passing on the Legacy: Vocational Training for the Preservation Trades," *APT Bulletin*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (2002), pp. 46.

<sup>59</sup> van Balgooy.

*Places*, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation published the lesson plans that accompany it. These outline how to create a curriculum that revolves around historic places.<sup>60</sup> *Teaching with Historic Places (TwHP)* uses National Register listed properties to teach local history. However, as outlined earlier in the discussion of rural preservation, most rural communities lack the resources to list their buildings on the Nation Register. Nevertheless, the *TwHP* is constantly improving their program to help “people become more aware of their resources.”<sup>61</sup>

### Conclusion

Historic preservation contributes to solving some of the issues faced by rural Americans. Many poverty-stricken areas lie within the boundaries of rural America, and historic preservation has shown its contributions to revitalizing the local economy. Historic preservation can do much more than that, however. Rural historic landscapes comprise much of the rural areas of the country and provide an excellent context for understanding rural resources. Heritage education grooms good cultural stewards and ensures that historic preservation will continue in rural places. Preservationists must continue to record their activities in rural places and provide literature about their findings and programs. In addition, more literature needs to be produced on the impact of preservation on community identity and pride and how that leads to the recognition of local history and its role in determining events of today.

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<sup>60</sup> Brenda Kelley Olio, “Creating Place-Based Classroom Resources, Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plans,” *CRM*, vol. 23, no. 8 (2000): 10-11.

<sup>61</sup> Boland, 6.

# **Chapter I**

## **Historic Resources Study: Petroleum County, MT**

### **History of Petroleum County**

#### **Introduction to Petroleum County**

#### **The First Occupants (prehistory – 1860)**

Plains Tribes

Europeans in Montana

Euro-Americans in Petroleum County

Native and Euro-American Interactions

#### **Early Settlement Attempts (1860s – 1880s)**

The Musselshell River

Kerchival City

Muscle Shell City

Carroll

Flatwillow

#### **Stockmen and the Open Range (1880s – 1910s)**

Walter J. Winnett

The Town of Winnett

'79 Cattle Ranch

Teigen Ranch and the Town of Teigen

Winter of 1886-87

The Cowboy

Cattlemen

Open-Range Culture

#### **The Homesteading Era (1910s – 1920s)**

The Possibility for Farming

Transportation on the Prairie  
Staking a Claim  
Water  
Building a Home  
Food and Supplies  
Medicine on the Prairie  
Schools  
Community Halls  
Women Homesteaders  
Irrigation Projects  
Making it Work  
The End of Small Farms

### **Oil and County-Busting (1920s)**

The Cat Creek Oil Discovery  
The Oil Fields Develop  
The Town of Cat Creek  
Oil Speculation Brings Change to Winnett  
Petroleum County Emerges

### **The Great Depression (1930s)**

Drought  
FDR and the Alphabet Soup  
The AAA, the RA, and the WPA  
The CCC

### **The 1940s and After**

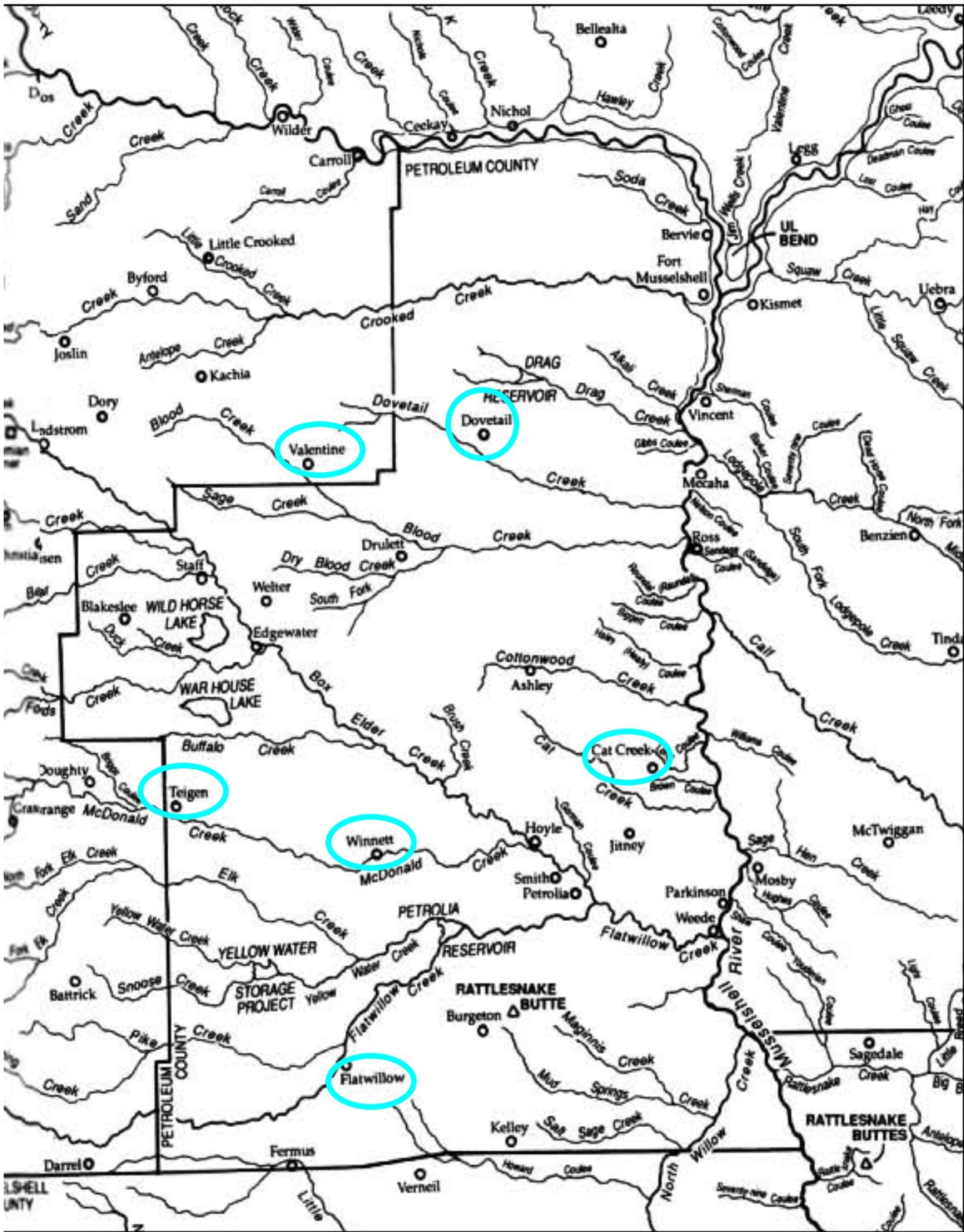
A County Manager  
Time Moves On  
The Winnett Schools  
Montana Freeman  
Torosaurus Discovery  
Petroleum County Today



“Seldom has a new community suffered the handicaps this one has labored under. No sooner had the country been settled by hopeful and hard working settlers than the war came. Scores were collected from the plow, the sales counter ... Too few were left to carry on. Vast tracts of fine grass lands that had gone under the plow were abandoned to noxious weeds; the breeding place of insect pests. Then came the oil boom to draw away still more from the development of their lands. The hectic craze of speculation and promotion absorbed the community’s funds and interests. A crushing burden of debt, begun during the war, and now added to by this boom, held down the best efforts at recovery toward normality. The fly-by-night boom element soon left, leaving only deserted tar-paper shacks and unpaid bills.

Then came the big deflation and the real economic storm. **That the community has carried on, and built up, speaks well for the character of the people ...”**

- Jake Vogel in “History in the Making: The Winnett Irrigation System,” *Winnett Times*, May 1, 1942.



### Historic Map of Petroleum County, Montana, 1875-1925

Map courtesy of Carol Schafer  
Circled towns are frequently referred to in the text.

## History of Petroleum County

### Introduction to Petroleum County

Deep in the heart of east-central Montana the sagebrush rises from the prairie, the billowy clouds roll by, the big blue sky their backdrop, and all is silent. In this place where cattle greatly outnumber people, one can go for days without seeing another soul. The high plains of Petroleum County shelters wildlife of all kinds, but only 3/10 people per square mile. The epitome of deep rural, Petroleum County harbors only one town, which comes alive the nights of local high school sporting events and during hunting season. In the following pages, you will learn of a fascinating place and about a community where there are only six members in a graduating class. In this place everyone knows everyone and people wave on the road. Low school enrollment has led to a District Prom and sports cooperatives showing that Petroleum County and its neighbors join together to give their children the same opportunities afforded those in more populous places. People here have always had to work extra hard to make their living and they are stronger, better people because of it. But why do they have to work so hard, and what brought settlers to a place that is so demanding and why did they stay – or why did they leave? The story of how Petroleum County came to be and how it got to be

the way it is today is also the story of those who dwell on the prairie within its boundaries.

Petroleum County is located in eastern Montana, in the more central area of the



photo, Levi Nowlin

region known to some as “the Big Open.” The land is a large, semi-arid place with a small population, dominated by agriculture, mostly untamed, and a relatively young history. One eastern Montana resident described

his home by saying,

Eastern Montana has a hidden beauty equal to the panoramic beauty of the West (western Montana). That beauty is harder to see, more subtle to the eye – the antelope moving across the grasslands, the gorges and gullies with their small rivers and streams, and green life struggling to survive the heat of the summer or icy blast of the winter winds. Eastern Montana is a land that looks barren to a foreigner, but holds many beauties to the native.<sup>62</sup>

The story of eastern Montanans is embedded in the rise and fall of water levels and cycle of market prices. This area saw development last and the disappearance of vital growth mechanisms, such as the railroad, first (the last train to Winnett was in 1972). Remote and isolated, eastern Montana is a “rangeland setting in which signs of scattered human occupation are quickly engulfed by the spaciousness of the encompassing and largely

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<sup>62</sup> John A. Alwin, *Eastern Montana: A Portrait of the Land and Its People*, *Montana Geographic Series*, No. 2., Helena, Montana: Montana Magazine, Inc., 1982, p. 4.

unworked landscape.”<sup>63</sup>

Petroleum County runs approximately 110 miles north to south and sixty miles east to west. It encompasses about 1,680 square miles, 400 more than the state of Rhode Island. The borders enclosing Petroleum County are the Musselshell River to the east, the Missouri River in the form of Fort Peck Reservoir to the north, and political boundaries to the west and south. At its northern end, the county contains approximately thirty-six miles of Missouri River shoreline in an eighteen mile wide stretch as the crow flies. The northeastern corner of the county is created by the confluence of the Musselshell and Missouri Rivers. At this juncture, a six mile long peninsula, known as the UL Bend, juts into the Missouri. At the UL Bend, riverboat captains sometimes unloaded their passengers and allowed them to walk across the two mile wide finger while the steamboat made the thirteen mile river trip around the corner.<sup>64</sup> The southern and western borders were determined when Petroleum County separated from Fergus County during the era of “county busting” that took place in Montana during the 1910s-20s.

Winnett, the county seat, and only town, sits in the approximate center of the county. Two paved roads provide access to Petroleum County. Just to the north of Winnett, Highway 200 runs east to west and one must get off the highway in order to enter the town. Highway 244, classified as an “Other Highway,” branches off of Highway 87 and ends in Winnett. Other transportation routes are gravel or dirt county or private roads. The population of Winnett hovers around 200 and the county population

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<sup>63</sup> John A. Alwin, *Eastern Montana: A Portrait of the Land and Its People*, *Montana Geographic Series*, No. 2., Helena, Montana: Montana Magazine, Inc., 1982, p. 62.

<sup>64</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County*, Lewistown, Montana: New-Argus Printing, 1990, p. 417.

around 500. In the 2000 Census, Petroleum County was the sixth least populated county in the United States, and the least populated in Montana. The closest metropolitan area, Billings, is over one hundred miles to the south. The closest medical facilities are located in Roundup, population 1,931, forty-six miles south. Lewistown, fifty-five miles west, boasts the closest movie theater.

Present day Petroleum County occupies the northwestern reaches of the vast and desolate Great Plains. This semi-arid zone receives an average of 12.75 inches of precipitation per year and experiences extreme weather conditions that range from fifty degrees below zero in the winter to 110 degrees or more in the summer. Vicious thunderstorms in the summer bring hail and grass fires. Fierce snow storms in the winter reduce visibility to zero and bring ice storms that freeze power lines or trap people in their homes. Located east of the Rocky Mountain Front, Petroleum County lies within the “Chinook belt”, a weather phenomenon in the form of winds, that causes drastic temperature warming and usually produces flash flooding. The landscape includes Missouri River Breaks, sandstone rimrocks, creek beds lined with cottonwood and willow trees, and wide open expanses. Large coulees feed shallow lakes and reservoirs, mountains emerge in the distance to the west, and the land extends for miles to the east.



photos, Laura Nowlin

The early history of a place, the character of its people, the construction of their buildings, and their choice in occupation results, in large part, from the weather and landscape that shape their home. Beginning one hundred and fifty years ago, the non-native settlers to eastern Montana arrived and immediately began attempts to alter the land and harness Mother Nature. Their history will show how residents continue to be affected by the weather and landscape and that these attempts at control have been largely unsuccessful and led to the sparsely populated landscape visible today.

## The First Occupants

### **Plains Tribes**

While the journals of Lewis and Clark comprise the first known written records of Montana, archaeological evidence places mankind in Montana as early as 13,000 years ago. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a vibrant Plains Indian culture inhabited the Northern Great Plains region east of the Rockies. The period from 1650–1805, known as the Protohistoric Period, saw changes in the Plains culture due to the arrival of European trade goods. These trade goods and especially the introduction of the horse, which reached Montana in 1700-1750, led once separate groups to follow the same subsistence patterns and compete for the same resources. With the ability to move further and faster on horseback, intertribal conflicts became more common. In addition, the ability to carry more belongings contributed to the accumulation of wealth and created a more elaborate status and social ranking system. At the time of full scale European contact with explorers Lewis and Clark in 1805, a variety of tribes inhabited the area that eventually became Petroleum County. These groups were the Assiniboine, Atsina, Blackfoot, Blood, Chippewa-Cree, Crow, Piegan, Sioux, and Shoshoni. Also occupying the region

for short periods of time were the Arapahoe and Cheyenne. These nomadic Plains tribes were all horseback hunting groups that pursued bison herds.<sup>65</sup>

While the tribal groups of the plains left relatively few changes on the landscape, some of their actions resulted in alterations to the land. They cut trees for firewood and other uses, they hunted the wild animals which had a reciprocal effect on the success of vegetation, and some may have engaged in fire burning. Much evidence exists to support fire burning regimes by Native Americans in other parts of the west, however little exists in the northern plains and Rocky Mountains. The Sioux are known to have used fire in hunting in the Black Hills area and it is possible that they continued the practice in Montana as well. If the Native Americans did in fact engage in fire burning, it was along major travel routes and happened infrequently.<sup>66</sup>

### **Europeans in Montana**

European claims to the Montana territory began with France; however the region remained largely unexplored and undefined through the 1840s. In 1762, after the French and Indian War between France and Great Britain, Spain gained control of what had come to be known as the Louisiana Territory. They used the vast region mainly as a buffer between the French and British and Mexico. French-Canadian fur traders, mostly working for the Northwest Company, and British working for the Hudson Bay Company, entered the area in the late eighteenth century, regardless of Spanish control. In October of 1800, France regained ownership of the Louisiana Territory, only to sell it to the

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<sup>65</sup> Stephen Aaberg and Steven Davenport, "Carrell Oil Company," Lewistown BLM District Proposed Land Exchange, Petroleum County, Montana, Class III Cultural Resource Survey Results, April 1997, p. 16.

<sup>66</sup> William L. Baker, "Indians and Fire in the Rocky Mountains: The Wilderness Hypothesis Renewed," in *Fire, Native Peoples, and The Natural Landscape*, Thomas R. Vale, editor, Island Press: Washington, 2002, p. 41-76.

United States in 1803.<sup>67</sup>



**The Musselshell River Valley today, photo Laura Nowlin**

Thomas Jefferson wasted no time in organizing the Corps of Discovery, and by May 20, 1805 Lewis and Clark set up camp near the mouth of the Musselshell River along the Missouri River in present day Petroleum County. In the first recordation of Petroleum County, Lewis wrote in his journal,

We halted at the entrance of the river on the point formed by it's junction with the Missouri determining to spend the day, making the necessary observations and send out some hunters to explore the country. The Muscle Shell river falls into the Missouri 2270 miles above it's mouth, and is 110 yards in width, it affords much more water than streams of it's width generally do below, it's courant is by no means rapid, and from appearances it might be navigated with canoes a considerable distance ... it's banks abrupt and about 12 feet high yet never appear to overflow; the waters of this river is of a greenish yellow cast, much more transparent than the Missouri ... the Missouri opposite to this point is deep, gentle in it's courant, and 222 yards in width. The hunters returned this evening and informed us that the country continued much the same in appearance as that we saw where we were or broken ...<sup>68</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Michael P. Malone, Richard B. Roeder, and William L. Lang, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, revised edition, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991, p. 27-30.

<sup>68</sup> Meriwether Lewis in *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County, Montana*, p. 417.

Records left by explorers describe this land south of the Missouri and west of the Musselshell as full of bison herds and other game, the waterways teeming with fish and beaver, and a broken landscape alternating from evergreen trees to sagebrush and cottonwoods to prairie and back to evergreens.

### **Euro-Americans in Petroleum County**

After the initial exploration of the Missouri River, it was quickly established as a transportation route to the West. In order to satisfy a variety of curiosities, steamboats and others began to explore up the river. Fur trappers continued to exploit the area, establishing trading posts along the river's banks. In the winter of 1822, the first buildings in Petroleum County were constructed by a group of trappers, including the famous western characters Jedediah Smith and Jim Bridger. They were two of a party of twenty-one fur trappers led by Major Andrew Henry that built four rough log huts connected by a palisade at the mouth of the Musselshell. By 1845, Fort Benton stood at the edges of the mighty river, below the Great Falls of the Missouri. It soon became an important river port and steamboat traffic increased. Following the first gold strikes in western Montana in 1863, Fort Benton docked thirty to forty steamboats a season by 1865. In 1864, Montana became a recognized territory with modern boundaries.<sup>69</sup>

### **Native and Euro-American Interactions**

Native Americans and fur trappers co-existed in an unpredictable relationship of peace and violence. Small pox epidemics in the 1830s swept across the northern Plains, killing thousands of Indians. The Blackfeet made gains against the encroaching whites in 1855 with Lamé Bull's Treaty. This treaty established Blackfeet Territory in the area extending from the Rockies east to the mouth of the Milk River, and from the Canadian

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<sup>69</sup> Malone, p. 57. and Petroleum County Library, p. 3, 418.

border south to the Three Forks of the Missouri and the Musselshell River, an area encompassing all of present day Petroleum County. The gold strikes and increased Missouri River traffic soon led to the dissolution of this treaty. The bison herds diminished and cattle took their place. In 1876, the Battle of the Little Bighorn in southeastern Montana saw the Sioux crushing General Custer; however, by the 1880s most Native American tribes were forced to reservations.<sup>70</sup>

Native Americans had lived on the northern Plains for thousands of years before European arrival. European contact irreversibly altered their lives as well as the landscape in which they dwelled. Spurred by the fur trade, whites settled Montana in a wave from west to east. Occupants consisted mostly of fur trappers following beaver populations. While fur companies built trading posts along the major waterways, the interior of the massive region remained mostly unsettled and unexplored. It was not until the 1860s that a white presence became more permanent in the form of struggling settlements and overland transportation routes.

#### Early Settlement Attempts (1860s-1880s)

*After initial exploration up the Missouri River and through Montana, various groups of adventuresome men set out to create more permanent settlements. These men usually harbored business intentions and most established trading posts that served both the Native Americans and fur trappers. From the 1860s through the early 1880s, points of settlement developed in what became Petroleum County but what was first Meagher County and later Wheatland and then Fergus Counties along the mouth of the Musselshell River and to the south, along Flatwillow Creek.*

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<sup>70</sup> Malone, p. 57-59.

### **The Musselshell River**

The mouth of the Musselshell River appeared to provide an excellent place for the founding of a new town, and in this area at least three attempts were made at settlement. Those who chose this location did so for three main reasons: to establish an overland supply route to the gold fields, the location was optimum for docking steamboats, and to challenge Fort Benton. Supply transportation in Montana was limited to the Missouri River or freight roads. Beginning with the gold strikes in southwestern Montana in 1862 at Bannack, 1863 in Virginia City, and 1864 in Helena, freighters hurried to find new and better routes to the booming mining camps. While all of these towns lay over 225 miles from the mouth of the Musselshell, regular freight service to and from the river lasted for some time.<sup>71</sup>

The Musselshell provided a suitable place for steamboats to dock and unload their goods. Freighters reasoned that a debarking point further up the Missouri than Fort Benton allowed for a better land route through Montana. Also, this new route ran through the Judith Mountains, where speculators hoped to discover gold (which they eventually did). An ample supply of timber was another reason for the Musselshell location. Woodhacks (woodchoppers) soon set up camp cutting and selling wood to the steamboats.<sup>72</sup>

However, the biggest reason for locating on the mouth of the Musselshell was to establish a challenger port to Fort Benton, "... the center of the wildest life on the upper 'Big Muddy' was at the mouth of the Musselshell. It was here that a handful of optimists

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<sup>71</sup> Dan R. Conway, "Muscleshell City: Stalked Daily at the Elbow of Both White Man ...," unidentified newspaper article, Petroleum County Library, vertical file *Musselshell River*, c. 1920.

<sup>72</sup> Conway, p. 1.

set out to establish a city that would rival Fort Benton.”<sup>73</sup> Since 1845, Fort Benton monopolized trade and traffic on the upper Missouri River, however, from late July or early August until October the Missouri waters were too shallow past the mouth of the Musselshell for the larger steamboats. Those enterprising businessmen knew that the Musselshell provided a more optimum location for steamboats hoping to travel up the Missouri later in the season.<sup>74</sup> They set up their doomed settlements, as one of the descriptions of the early settlements says,

there are few spots in Montana, which are surrounded with so sinister an atmosphere of bygone tragedy; of bloody acts of vengeance by both the redman and white. If in spirit life, the dead ever revisit the scenes of their ending on this earth, the mouth of the Musselshell must often be haunted by the spectral forms of white men whose life blood flowed as a sacrifice to the hatred of the hostile Sioux: and by the scores of Indians whose lives were cut short by fast traveling bullets from Henry rifles in the hands of white adventurers who sought to gain a foothold in the domain of the native.<sup>75</sup>

### **Kerchival City**

The Rocky Mountain Wagon Road Company made the first attempt to establish white civilization. In 1866, they launched a freight route across the mountains south of the Missouri River to the mouth of the Musselshell. They built a town at the end of the road and named it Kerchival City, after an old steamboat captain who was also a partner in the company and was among the first to support the new town. Two years went by and the settlement remained small and struggling. When the freighting business stagnated the townspeople moved on to better opportunities elsewhere. The Musselshell River soon

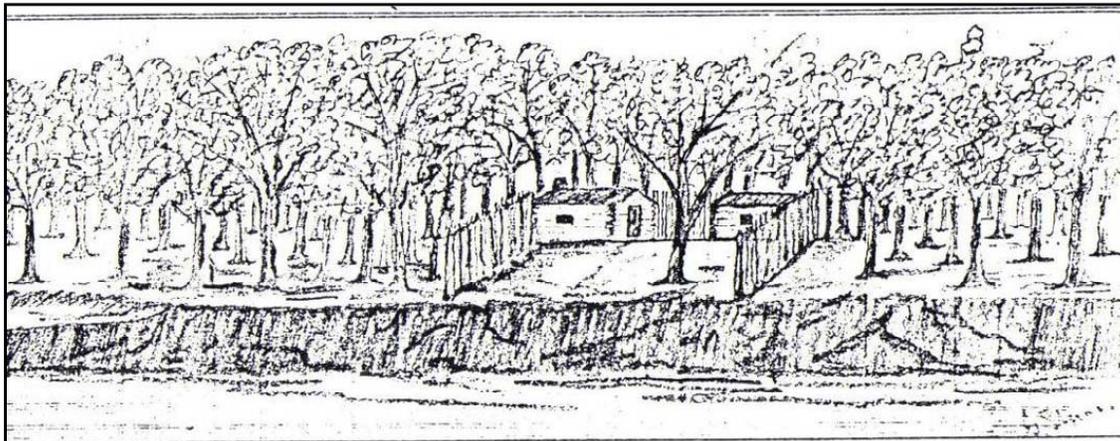
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<sup>73</sup> Conway, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> “History of the Settlements at the Mouth of the Musselshell River,” unpublished document compiled from Lieutenant James H. Bradley, “Account of the Attempts to Build a Town at the Mouth of the Musselshell River,” and Peter Koch, “Life at Muscleshell in 1869 and 1870,” Petroleum County Library, vertical file *Musselshell River*, c. 1920, p. 1.

<sup>75</sup> Conway, p. 1.

washed away the little town.<sup>76</sup>



Sketch of Kerchival City, from Montana State Historic Preservation Office files, original caption reads, "The gay and festive town of "Kerchival City" at the mouth of the Muscle Shell River ... June 2, 1866."

### Muscle Shell City

In March of 1868, the Montana Hide and Fur Company of Helena sent a nine member party, led by James Brewer, to establish a town and build a warehouse. They named this new settlement situated on a bluff above the river, Muscle Shell City. Shortly after the town's establishment, Colonel George Clendennin, his brother Richard, and James McGinnis arrived from approximately ten miles upriver. They set to constructing buildings for the trading industry. By the winter of 1868, at least eight buildings, two trading posts, a gun shop, two saloons, and other log cabins, existed in the new little town. Three classes of whites occupied the settlement, which housed about fifty people. These were the woodhawks, wolfers and trappers, and traders. Wives of some of the men also lived in the village. The Gros Ventre and Crow tribes traded frequently at the posts. Camp Cooke, the first military outpost in Montana, located at the junction of the Judith and Missouri rivers, sent Captain Nugent with the 13<sup>th</sup> Infantry to Muscle Shell City. Upon arrival, they built a stockade with bastions just south of the town, creating Camp

<sup>76</sup> "History of the Settlements at the Mouth of the Musselshell River," p. 2.

Reeve.<sup>77</sup>

Hostile Indian tribes, especially the Sioux, harassed the white settlement on a regular basis and stories abound of their attacks and white retaliation. After one such attack and the killing of two soldiers, the army at Camp Reeve withdrew, although this was also due to the difficulty in receiving winter supplies. The townspeople stayed, relying on the rumor of a military road being built from Fort Ellis, near Bozeman, and the creation of a military reservation at the mouth of the Musselshell. This plan never materialized. By the end of 1869 the town's future looked bleak. A small amount of freight was unloaded at Muscle Shell City and most of the trade took place with the Gros Ventre and Crow. Additionally, the transcontinental Northern Pacific railroad now crossed Montana, reducing the need for freight lines. The Montana Hide and Fur Company, along with most of the town's residents, left in the spring of 1870. Colonel Clendennin remained to trade. He tore down most of the abandoned buildings and used the materials to create additions to his own trading post. He named this new building Fort Sheridan. Clendennin left in 1874, taking Fort Sheridan with him to the last establishment, Carroll.<sup>78</sup>

### **Carroll**

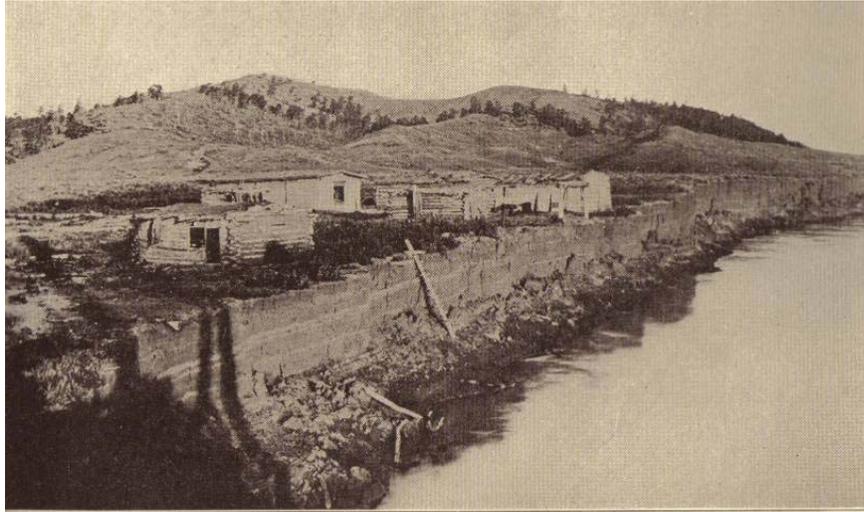
In 1874, the last attempt for settlement took place about thirty miles up the Missouri from the Musselshell. The partners in the Diamond R Transportation Company, Matt Carroll, E.G. Maclay, George Steele, and Colonel Charles A. Broadwater, chose this site for the same reasons that Kerchival City and Musselshell had been chosen. The Diamond R, "the greatest freighting company between the Missouri River and the Pacific

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<sup>77</sup> "History of the Settlements at the Mouth of the Musselshell River," p. 2-3.

<sup>78</sup> "History of the Settlements at the Mouth of the Musselshell River," p. 4-13.

Ocean in its day,” carried freight to every mining camp, town, army post, and Indian agency in Montana.<sup>79</sup> During the mid 1870s, the Diamond R was the largest single enterprise in Montana. The Carroll Road connected the port to the mining camps and the rest of Montana. The town of Carroll consisted of buildings for trade, warehouses,



**Carroll in 1881, photo by F.J. Haynes found in Granville Stuart, *Forty Years on the Frontier*.**

cabins, and Fort Sheridan. Colonel Clendennin eventually became the manager for the Diamond R at Carroll. Like its counterparts, Carroll thrived for only a few years. The freight wagons traveled on a poor road through hostile Indian territory, coming under frequent attack. By the late 1870s, the Northern Pacific and other railroads succeeded in breaking up the freighting business. Carroll became insignificant and its residents abandoned it entirely. All three settlements near the mouth of the Musselshell River were later covered by Fort Peck Reservoir.<sup>80</sup>

### **Flatwillow**

Early Montana pioneer, Granville Stuart, traveled through central Montana in 1880 looking for suitable cattle ranch lands. He described his stop at Flatwillow

<sup>79</sup> “History of the Settlements at the Mouth of the Musselshell River,” p. 13.

<sup>80</sup> “History of the Settlements at the Mouth of the Musselshell River,” p. 13-14.

Crossing, where Powell “Pike” Landusky and Joe Hamilton operated a trading post. May 12, 1880,

Buffalo by the thousands in every direction ... Landusky and Hamilton have three log cabins of one room each; dirt roof and dirt floor. They have a picket corral of box elder logs about seven or eight feet high and sixty square feet where they corral their horses every night and put a boy, Harry Morgan, out to watch them day times. The Sioux Indians raid this country regularly ...<sup>81</sup>

Stuart made no mention of other buildings or settlers until he reached further west.

By the 1880s, a more permanent settlement grew up next to Flatwillow Creek, southwest of the mouth of the Musselshell. The first substantial community, the town of Flatwillow, survived well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While large cattle and sheep ranches quickly encroached on the area, their headquarters were usually located far away, closer to the mountains and towns, and therefore contributed little to the early settlement of the area. The exact dates for the beginning of Flatwillow are unknown; however, the Junction City-Maginnis Stage Road traveled through the area to where gold was discovered in 1879 in the Judith Mountains. The Flatwillow Crossing, which developed into the town of Flatwillow, served as a station on this route.<sup>82</sup>

Pike Landusky, a wolfer, woodhawk, trader, saloon keeper, miner, and Montana legend regaled visitors with his many escapades and adventures with Indians. He and his partner, Joe Hamilton, sold their property on Flatwillow to Fred Lawrence and his wife, Mattie Sawyer Lawrence, in 1882. The couple built a hotel and a large house, and ran the trading post. They helped to establish a post office in Flatwillow on March 27, 1883.

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<sup>81</sup> Granville Stuart, *Forty Years on the Frontier as Seen in the Journals and Reminiscences of Granville Stuart, Gold-miner, Trader, merchant, Rancher, and Politician*, ed. Paul C. Phillips, Cleveland: the Aruthur H. Clark Company, 1925, p. 125.

<sup>82</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County*, Lewistown, Montana: New-Argus Printing, 1990, p. 263.

When Fred died in 1890, his grave was the first in the Flatwillow Cemetery.<sup>83</sup>

Besides the large cattle and sheep outfits, a smattering of other settlers tried their luck on the prairie in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. One early settler on Yellow Water Creek, northwest of Flatwillow, met with a mysterious end. Jim Duffy worked with survey crews and the army building roads. He was in charge of a mule string that carried supplies. He wintered these mules on his forty acre place on Yellow Water. Here he built a two room house and barn, all with dirt roofs and floors. Duffy, unfortunately, “squatted” on the land and cattlemen, especially, harassed squatters or nesters, as they were called. In 1883, Jim Duffy disappeared. Some speculated he met his demise at the hands of Indians. Others thought the cattlemen ran him off.<sup>84</sup>

From 1860 through the 1880s, white settlement in what was to become Petroleum County struggled to gain a foothold. Attempts at establishments in the northern part of the county failed after only a few years. In the meantime, Flatwillow, in the southern portion of the county slowly developed out of a trading post on a stage line. With the arrival of a post office in 1883, Flatwillow officially became a town and helped to support other settlement throughout the county. The cattlemen and sheepmen comprised the initial settlement in the area by establishing their headquarters on the prairie in the late 1870s and early 1880s.

### Stockmen and the Open Range (1870s – 1910s)

*During the open range boom of the 1880s, cattle replaced bison on the ranges of eastern Montana. Stockmen, mainly from southwestern Montana and Texas, moved their*

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<sup>83</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 323-24.

<sup>84</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 295.

*herds into a land being vacated by both Native Americans and bison herds. They claimed homesteads or bought property on rivers and streams and let their stock loose on the grassland, taking full advantage of the free grass on the public domain. The cattle boom of the 1880s owes its beginnings to the rising urban population and greater demand for beef. The ability to get beef to the market by railroad assisted in satisfying this demand. Other factors included the continually shrinking Indian reservations, which freed up rangeland for cattle, and the decimation of the bison herds eliminated the competition for grass.*<sup>85</sup>

*The majority of people that first called the area that became Petroleum County home were sheepmen. Traditionally, these men camped closer to their herds than cattlemen and therefore extended their headquarters further onto the prairie. In 1877, Mr. Fred Lawrence trailed 400 sheep from Idaho to Flatwillow. At least seventeen sheep ranchers located in the region by 1880, and by 1884, approximately 38,000 sheep roamed the prairie. The first cattleman to settle was Frank Chamberlain in 1877.*<sup>86</sup>

*Controlled by stockmen, the lands of eastern Fergus County housed the iconic culture of the American Cowboy. The great cattle boom gave way to the era of the western roundup and the legend of the cowboy. Roundups generally took place twice a year. The spring roundup served to gather the cattle after they scattered during the winter and sort them according to ownership. New calves were branded and herds were trailed to summer pasture. The fall roundup served to select the animals ready for*

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<sup>85</sup> Michael Malone, et al, *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, revised edition. Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1991, p. 145-159.

<sup>86</sup> Joanne Marie Hassing, "The Creation of Petroleum County: A Case Study in 'County Busting,'" Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1964, p. 26-32.

market.<sup>87</sup>

### **Walter J. Winnett**

A number of men established large cattle and sheep ranches on the land of eastern Fergus County, which was created out of Wheatland County in 1885. The country on McDonald Creek, below the sandstone rimrocks, provided the perfect location for Mr. Walter J. Winnett to start his ranching operation. Mr. Winnett arrived in 1879 (some reports say 1883).<sup>88</sup> His closest neighbors, the Lepper and Garl Ranch, operated near Flatwillow. A trading post conducted business at the east end of his property, near the confluence of Box Elder Creek and Flatwillow Creek. This future founder of the county seat of Petroleum County arrived in the area at just twenty years old and after eight adventure-filled years on the Montana plains.<sup>89</sup>

The story of Walter John Winnett begins in Toronto, Canada, where he was born in 1859. His family owned and operated the “Crystal Palace” there. His head filled with stories of the west, Winnett ran away from home at age twelve to find his own adventures.<sup>90</sup> Arriving in Montana about 1870, Winnett,

... viewed the falls of the Missouri, shot buffalo, drew a man’s wage freighting with a bull team, and within a short time invested his savings in a 44 Henry rifle and several thousand rounds of cartridges, and proceeded to qualify as an expert marksman, trapping and hunting for a livelihood.<sup>91</sup>

Winnett met and began traveling with Captain Fowler, an old trapper who had previously been employed by the Canadian Government to supply meat for the railroad crews. The

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<sup>87</sup> Malone, p. 159.

<sup>88</sup> According to a Winnett Times article quoted in the Pages of Time, Mr. Winnett arrived in 1883, however, multiple other newspaper articles and short histories written on Mr. Winnett, including one by his daughter, Mirth Keihl Hedman, claims he arrived in 1879.

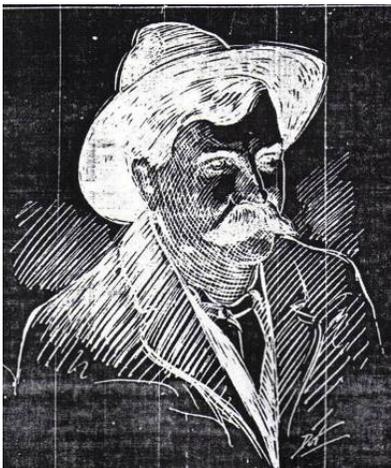
<sup>89</sup> “The Life of W.J. Winnett: Winnett, MT,” Petroleum County Library, vertical family file, *Winnett, Walter J.*, p. 1.

<sup>90</sup> “The Life of W.J. Winnett: Winnett, MT,” p. 1.

<sup>91</sup> “Winnett, Founder of Oil Metropolis, Talks of Time When He Was With Sioux and in Confidence of Sitting Bull,” *The Fergus County Argus*, Montana Historical Society Research Library, vertical file, *Winnett*, c. 1920.

two adventured up and down the Missouri River, trapping and hunting.

The explanations for the period of Winnett's life between joining Fowler and arriving on McDonald Creek vary (one story is recounted in a poem written in tribute of Walter Winnett which is reproduced at the end of this section). The stories all share some consistencies, which are that he lived with the Sioux and adopted their ways for a few years, where his expert marksmanship earned him the Indian nickname of "Eagle Eyes." He left the Sioux about the time of the Battle of the Little Bighorn.<sup>92</sup> Winnett first settled in the Moore area, east of Lewistown, but found the winters at the higher elevation too cold and moved east to McDonald Creek.<sup>93</sup>



**Walter J. Winnett, sketch from "Winnett, Founder of Oil Metropolis, Talks of Time When He Was With Sioux and in Confidence of Sitting Bull," *The Fergus County Argus*, c. 1920.**

After building a one-room log cabin on the creek, Winnett set about building up his spread. Neighbor Benjamin Lepper encouraged his start in the sheep business; he also engaged in the freighting business. His first cabin washed away in a flood so he relocated about a mile east of the first site, at the southeast end of what is today Main Street in Winnett. At this location he built a three-room log house, a barn, corrals, and

<sup>92</sup> Some stories claim Winnett was gone with a hunting party when the battle took place. They heard it and went back to the camp, only to find Custer and his men dead. Winnett is rumored to be the first white man to see Custer's body. His daughter, Mirth Keihl Hedman, however, believes he left the Sioux prior to the battle.

<sup>93</sup> "The Life of W.J. Winnett: Winnett, MT," p. 1; Petroleum County Public Library, p. 808; "Winnett, Founder of Oil Metropolis, Talks of Time When He Was With Sioux and in Confidence of Sitting Bull," p. 1.

sheds all clustered together within the shadows of the majestic sandstone rimrocks rising above McDonald Creek. Unlike many early stockmen, Winnett realized the importance of irrigation and feed for his stock. He built an irrigation system on the creek that watered approximately 3,000 acres. He plowed the fields and leveled them using a railroad rail pulled by four teams of horses. He was also instrumental in the development of the Winnett Irrigation Company discussed in the next section. In 1882, the famous cowboy artist, Charlie Russell, spent the winter, during which he and Winnett developed a lasting friendship.<sup>94</sup>

In 1898, Winnett met and married Mary Jenkins, who had arrived in Musselshell from St. Louis, after being advised by her doctors to move west to a drier climate due to lung problems. Winnett took her to the ranch and added two rooms to the three room cabin. Their first three children, Pearl, Bertha, and Mirth entered the world in this cabin. In 1900, lumber began to be sawn for a new Winnett house. Winnett owned a sawmill located west of town on a ridge above War House Lake. All but the finish lumber was sawn here. The large logs came from the Missouri River Breaks. This two-story eleven-room home was the largest, and first, two-story house in the area. In addition, four rooms were added to the rear for the Winnetts' female servants and for Mr. Winnett's office. The last three Winnett children, Arthur, Edith, and Lewis were born in this house. The Winnett house provided a center for community activities ranging from funerals, weddings, and church meetings, to dances and business gatherings. It also housed the first school in Winnett in 1907.<sup>95</sup> The Winnett House no longer stands.

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<sup>94</sup> "The Life of W.J. Winnett: Winnett, MT," p. 1-3.

<sup>95</sup> Petroleum County Library, p. 808.

### **The Town of Winnett**

About 1909, the Winnett ranch buildings began to give way to a struggling homestead town. Walter Winnett constructed the first buildings, a saloon, general store, and post office. Winnett built the famous Log Cabin Saloon, it is said, to prevent his cowboys from traveling the distance to Grass Range to go to the bar. He at least saved the miles on his horses by building a saloon nearby. Oscar Badger and Winnett formed a partnership and started a general store to supply the newly arriving homesteaders. Winnett's freight business brought the supplies from Musselshell or Lewistown. Tony Rasmussen bought the business in 1913 and moved it to his own building after a year. The post office, named Winnett, came into existence on October 4, 1910. John Hughes served as the first postmaster and the mail was delivered from Flatwillow. After the first few years of school in the Winnett house, the Winnett children went to Lewistown for school. By 1912 community growth necessitated the construction of a designated schoolhouse. Known as the little white schoolhouse, this building served about twenty-five students in one 20 x 40 foot room, 20 x 40 feet. This building still stands and serves as the Methodist Church.<sup>96</sup>

The Milwaukee Land Company purchased a portion of Winnett's ranch lands for a town site around 1913 and the town of Winnett was platted in 1914. On July 18, 1914 the first sale of Winnett town lots took place, \$64,000 of town lots were sold. By September of 1914, the first issue of the *Winnett Times* newspaper ran the headline, "Thirty-two Business Houses in Winnett." By the time the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad chugged into town in 1917, Winnett was a growing and thriving little

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<sup>96</sup> Petroleum County Library, p. 597, 629.

community.<sup>97</sup> The railroad brought new hopes and opportunities with it,

The growth and development of our town and county for the past three years has been wonderful. We have waited patiently and now our dreams are realized. A new era dawns. Our town will take on new life while the farmer who will have a home market will redouble his energies in the cultivation of the soil and in stock raising.<sup>98</sup>



**Winnett in 1913 or 1914, the Log Cabin Saloon is the first building on the right, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library (PCPL)**

The community struggled to establish and develop its schools. In 1914, Miss Amanda Swift began teaching senior high classes for those interested after the grade school day ended. In 1915-16 formal high school classes took place in the Masonic Rooms above the Moll Pool Hall, a building that still stands on Main Street. In the 1917-18 school year, the upper grades moved their classes to the first Eager Mercantile building, which also still stands on Main Street. The first dormitory for country kids was designated in 1917 also. In 1921, the senior grades finally received a real school building. The old school housed all the grades and the little white schoolhouse was used for shop classes.<sup>99</sup>

Walter Winnett remained involved in the development of the community named

<sup>97</sup> Petroleum County Library, p. 598-600.

<sup>98</sup> *Winnett Times*, November 4, 1921, in Hassing, p. 39.

<sup>99</sup> Petroleum County Library, p. 629-30.

for him, “W.J. Winnett was a handsome, 210 pound man, forceful in character, a man of strong personality, shrewd, and by this time (c. 1918) acquired enough wealth sufficient to back up his determination to make a city of Winnett, MT.”<sup>100</sup> He constructed the opera house in 1916 and the Winnett Block in 1917, which later became the Petroleum County Courthouse. Due in large part to Mr. Winnett’s efforts, on August 5, 1918, Winnett was formally incorporated as part of eastern Fergus County. In addition, he explored new avenues for business. With the arrival of the railroad, Winnett’s freighting business became insignificant, so he pursued the building of a Great Western Sugar Company refinery. Blue prints drawn up, site selected, and work about to commence, World War I began and halted forever the plans for the sugar refinery.<sup>101</sup>

### **’79 Cattle Ranch**

Other large sheep and cattle outfits operated in Petroleum County including the ’79 Ranch in the northern part of the county and the Teigen Ranch in the eastern. John R. Murphy, president of the Montana Cattle Company, started his cattle operation on Sweetgrass Creek in 1879. It became known as the ’79 Outfit because of its year of inception and also because Murphy used 79 for his brand. His ranch trailed cattle and sheep along the 79 Cattle Trail, across the Musselshell and back to the west in the days of open-range cattle ranching. Also, wagons carried supplies for the ranch from steamboats at the mouth of the Musselshell on the trail through Valentine, over the Judith Mountains, to the ranch headquarters near Harlowton. The entire spread of the 79 Ranch stretched from the Yellowstone River northeast to the Big Dry near Jordan, Montana. Today’s 79

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<sup>100</sup> “The Life of Walter J. Winnett: Winnett, MT,” p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> “The Life of Walter J. Winnett: Winnett, MT,” p. 3.

Cattle Trail is a part of the original 79 Cattle Trail used by Murphy's ranch.<sup>102</sup>

### **Teigen Ranch and the Town of Teigen**

Mons Teigen, with his cousins, Knute and Ole Opheim, trailed 3,200 head of sheep from Bozeman, MT to the eastern edge of Petroleum County in July 1884, becoming the eastern most sheep ranch in Montana at the time. His son Bard Teigen said, "They wanted a place where the land was free and wide, with wood, water and shelter."<sup>103</sup> The three took a pre-emption claim of 160 acres and let their sheep spread out over the open range. Eventually, the Teigen Ranch came to run 12,000 head of sheep.



**The Teigen Ranch house in 1908. and the town of Teigen in 1915. photos courtesy of the PCPL**

In 1912, the Milwaukee Land Company laid out a town site to be named after the nearby Teigen Ranch headquarters. A grocery, two restaurants, a livery stable, blacksmith shop, and saloon were built shortly thereafter. Mons directed the building of a hotel to shelter the many travelers. Like Walter J. in Winnett, Mons took an interest in the developing town. In 1914 he built a schoolhouse. 1915 and 1916 were years of

<sup>102</sup> Petroleum County Library, p. 204, and George C. Armitage, p. 305-15, and Roy History Committee. *Homestead Shacks over Buffalo Tracks: History of Northeastern Fergus County*. Bozeman, MT: Color World Printers, 1990, p. 10.

<sup>103</sup> "Take a Trip Back in Time to the Start of the Teigen Ranch," *Mid-Rivers Magazine*, Vol. 17, No. 2, (March/April 1997): 6.

bumper crops and the Western Lumber and Grain Company built a lumber yard and grain elevator along the railroad which was under construction on its way to Winnett. At the height of activity, approximately eighty people received their mail in Teigen. A drought moved into the area and homesteaders already began leaving by the time the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul finished completion in 1917. By the 1920s, the town of Teigen consisted of only the hotel, grocery, school, and post office.<sup>104</sup>

### **Winter of 1886-87**

As the cattle boom spurred ahead in the 1880s, the numbers of both cattle and sheep continued to grow and the range became overstocked by the summer of 1886, leading to one of the worst disasters in the history of the cattle industry. The winter of 1885-86 was unusually warm and dry, giving way to a hot dry summer. Stockmen continued to trail in more cattle from southern states, many of them arriving trail weary and in poor condition. A glut in the market and falling prices led to the carry over of many steers, which added to the already overstocked range. The winter of 1886-87 began with cold and heavy snows in November and, except for a brief Chinook in January, lasted until March. When the snows melted and ranchers ventured out to assess the damage, they found thousands of dead cattle. The entire Montana territory lost approximately 60% of its cattle, while some outfits in eastern Montana lost 90% of their herds. Granville Stuart, manager of the DHS Ranch in the Judith Basin area wrote, "A business that had been fascinating to me before suddenly became distasteful. I wanted no more of it. I never wanted to own again an animal that I could not feed and shelter."<sup>105</sup> The Teigen sheep fared well during the winter of 1886-87 because Mons cut hay in preparation, however, he told of the cattle he came across after the snowmelt saying he,

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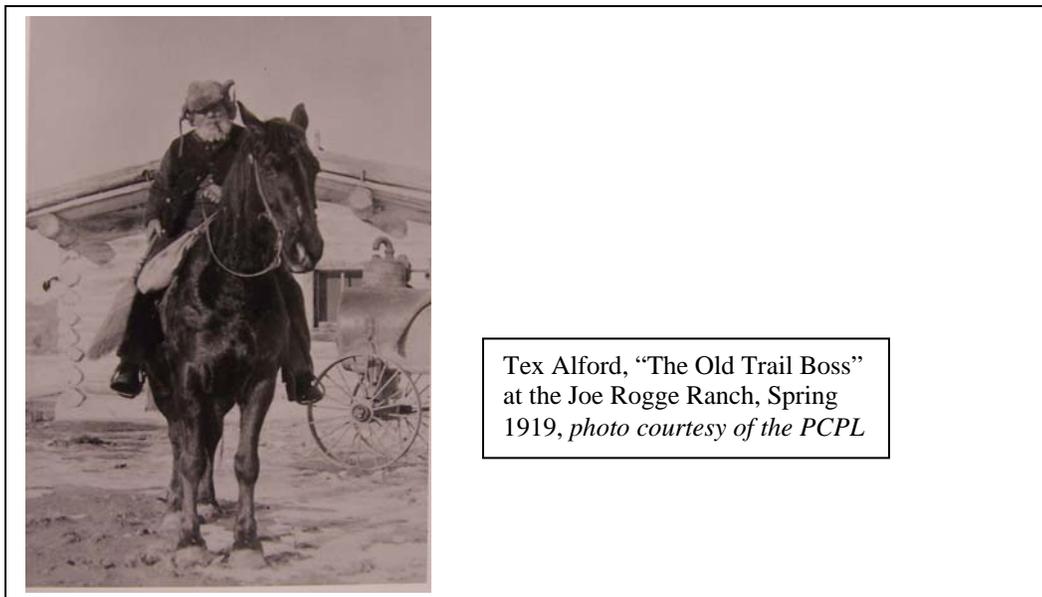
<sup>104</sup> "Take a Trip Back in Time to the Start of the Teigen Ranch," p. 6-8.

<sup>105</sup> Malone, p. 169.

“could have walked on them for several hundred feet.”<sup>106</sup> The range recovered quickly with lower numbers of animals and ample rainfall in the next few years. By 1890, a larger number of ranches, but with smaller acreages existed in eastern Montana than before the hard winter. Ranchers learned from past mistakes and ran smaller herds and provided hay for them in the winter.<sup>107</sup>

### **The Cowboy**

Controlled by stockmen, the lands of eastern Fergus County housed the iconic culture of the American Cowboy. The great cattle boom gave way to the era of the western roundup and the legend of the cowboy. Roundups generally took place twice a year. The spring roundup served to gather the cattle after they scattered during the winter and sort them according to ownership. New calves were branded and herds were trailed to summer pasture. The fall roundup served to select the animals ready for market.<sup>108</sup>



Cowboys quickly became an American symbol; however, their lives were usually far less romantic than the stories told of them. Most cowboys were young, in their

<sup>106</sup> “Take a Trip Back in Time to the Start of the Teigen Ranch,” p. 6.

<sup>107</sup> Malone, p. 165-167.

<sup>108</sup> Malone, p. 159.

twenties, and quite often Mexican or African American. They worked hard, long hours for low wages in all types of adverse weather conditions. Charles M. Russell, famous western artist and cowboy himself described his fellow cowboys plying the range,

If they are human, they're a separate species. I'm talking about the old-time ones, before the country's strung with wire and nesters had grabbed all the water, an' a cowpuncher's home was big. It wasn't where he took his hat off, but where he spread his blanket. He ranged from Mexico to the Big Bow River of the north an' from where the trees get scarce in the east to the Old Pacific. He don't need no iron hoss, but covers his country on one that eats grass an' wears hair. All the tools he needed was saddle, bridle, quirt, hackamore, an' rawhide riata or seagrass rope.<sup>109</sup>

Cowboys traveled thousands of miles on the backs of their horses. They were expert horsemen and knew the antics of cattle well.

### **Cattlewomen**

Women also lived on the range, helping to tame it and assisting their husbands and families. Theodore Roosevelt, who ranched in the Dakotas said, "There is an old and true saying that 'the frontier is hard on women and horses.'"<sup>110</sup> Women worked as hard, or harder, than their male counterparts feeding and clothing their families and creating a home. They hunted, cleaned, cooked, and worked cattle in order to make the ranch a success.<sup>111</sup>

### **Open-Range Culture**

A unique culture developed on the range, created by the wide open spaces and lack of people. George C. Armitage, cowboy for the '79 Ranch described his experience in 1909. A new hand for the outfit, he was heading north of Billings to join the cowboys trailing the '79 herd north to summer pasture, "we drove (on a buckboard) most of that

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<sup>109</sup> Michael S. Kennedy, editor, *Cowboys and Cattlemen*, New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1964, p. vii.

<sup>110</sup> Malone, p. 169.

<sup>111</sup> Malone, p. 169.

afternoon across the vast prairie, the horizon fading to infinity in all directions with practically no sign of civilization.”<sup>112</sup> Armitage and his companion, John Wood, came across an empty cabin sitting solitary on the prairie at dusk. The two found the key left in the cabin door. Following the customs of range hospitality, the cabin owner, old-timer Jim Moore, left his home open and ready for any passers-by. Armitage and Wood entered the cabin, cooked a meal with the food and utensils they found there, and stayed the night in the cabin bunks. Fulfilling the entire custom, upon leaving, the two visitors left everything as it was found, filled the woodbox, put the fire out, cleaned the dishes, swept the floor and tidied the beds. No payment was left, nor was it expected, for old Jim Moore may have been doing the same thing somewhere else that very night.<sup>113</sup>

The 1880s saw the open range boom as well as developing settlements in Petroleum County. The cattlemen and sheepmen ran their stock on the wide open grasslands with few competitors. By the turn of the century, however, a small stream of homesteaders began to flow into the area. These nesters, as the cowboys and cattlemen referred to them, spelled the end of the open range, and naturally an animosity developed toward them. Armitage wrote, “Cowboys generally had little time for talk with nesters or “honeyockers,” since these new farmers were gradually closing the range with their homesteading and fences.”<sup>114</sup> The small flow of homesteaders turned into a river beginning in the 1910s and stockmen like Walter Winnett and Mons Teigen adjusted. They helped the new settlers by supporting struggling towns. While Teigen lasted only a few years, Winnett became the most substantial settlement in the area and the center of

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<sup>112</sup> George C. Armitage, “Death of the Great 79,” p. 305-315 in *Cowboys and Cattlemen*, Michael S. Kennedy, editor, New York: Hastings House, Publishers, 1964, p. 307.

<sup>113</sup> Armitage, p. 307.

<sup>114</sup> Armitage, p. 313.

growth in the quickly filling area which later became Petroleum County.

### The Homesteading Era (1910s – 1920s)

*For three centuries, beginning at Jamestown in 1607, farming steadily marched westward, carrying the Jeffersonian yeoman farmer ideals with it. The area between the Rocky Mountains and the Mississippi River became known as the Great American Desert and settlers traveled through this area on their way to the more fertile lands of the Pacific Coast. The Montana plains became desirable to homesteaders only after 1900, with the development of new farming machines and techniques, new land policies, and large land promotional campaigns. Following a long series of public land laws enacted between 1862 and 1912, more people claimed more land in Montana than any other state. From 1909-1923 114,620 homestead claims were filed; approximately 32 million acres passed into private hands. Two thousand of those people filing claims did so on property that would later become Petroleum County.<sup>115</sup>*

### **The Possibility for Farming**

A long succession of land acts led to making homesteading and farming in east-central Montana possible. In 1862, the original Homestead Act went into effect. It promised 160 acres of land to any man or single woman who paid a small filing fee, worked, and improved the land for at least five years. While the homestead boom had its beginnings with the original Homestead Act, the Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 provided much better incentives for settling the wild land of central Montana. This act offered homesteaders 320 acres of non-irrigable land, one-fourth of this needed to be cultivated. A five-year residency requirement applied. However, the provisions in this

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<sup>115</sup> Malone, p. 232, and Petroleum County Public Library, p. 5.

act still seemed to be based more on the fertile lands of the Midwest than the semi-arid land in Montana. In 1912, the Three-Year Homestead Act amended the existing laws to be more favorable for farmers in drier areas. The residency requirements changed to three years with up to five months of leave allowed out of every year. The land cultivation expectations also changed. They required 1/16 of the land to be cultivated by the second year and 1/8 in the third year. If hardship could be claimed, then an extension clause of twelve more months was added. With the Act of 1909 and the extension of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, the homestead rush took place. The act of 1912 added more incentive and the rugged lands of the Missouri River Breaks and the high plains filled with hopeful homesteaders.<sup>116</sup>

Homesteaders needed more encouragement than the changing land laws, however. Numerous other factors, such as the development of dry land farming and machinery to perform the tasks attracted farmers to the semi-arid region previously thought suitable only for grazing.<sup>117</sup> Another major aspect in the homestead boom came in the form of massive promotional campaigns. These were led mostly by the railroad companies, and the Milwaukee Railroad in particular. The Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul served a large portion of eastern and central Montana, the lands still overwhelmingly vacant in 1910. They stood to gain a great deal of business if these lands became populated. Newspapers, bankers, and realtors also participated in the campaign, which reached its climax in 1911. A 1914 state promotional brochure advertised land in Montana as, “an assured future” and “there is no place where failure is so remote.”<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Malone, p. 237-38, and Petroleum County Public Library, p. 1-7.

<sup>117</sup> Malone, p. 235-37. additional note: Dry land farming is agriculture without irrigation in places of little precipitation and usually on larger tracts of land.

<sup>118</sup> Malone, p. 238-240.



### **Transportation on the Prairie**

In 1910, when the Homestead Boom began, Fergus County still encompassed all of present day Petroleum County. Routes to the area consisted of a few roads, passable only in good weather. The largest waves of settlers rolling into eastern Fergus County happened during 1910 and again from 1912-1918. Most new arrivals came by rail, which reached Lewistown, the major town of the region, in 1903. Connecting rails were completed to the towns of Grass Range in 1913 and Roy in 1914. These towns lie to the west of the present day Petroleum County line. Melstone and Musselshell to the south received rail lines in 1908. The railroads greatly aided new homesteaders in reaching the remote lands of present-day Petroleum County. 1912 saw the largest influx of settlers in a place that previous to 1910 contained only four post offices (Flatwillow, Edgewater, Weede, Valentine). It grew to at least twenty-two known post offices by 1922 (found in Appendix A). These new homesteaders came from all over the world, but most were native born Americans. One area in the western part of the county, near the community of Blakeslee, came to be known as the Minnesota Bench due to the number of Minnesotans who settled there. The homesteaders arrived from various places and with various life experiences, but once settled in the area they all shared the common struggle of surviving on the unrelenting plains. The hard times required close-knit communities that possessed a strong sense of unity and community identity.<sup>119</sup>

Referred to as nesters, or “honeyockers,” a slang term deriving from the corruption of a German expression meaning “chicken chaser,”<sup>120</sup> homesteaders faced more than the unwanted looks and discouragement from large stockholders (no known

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<sup>119</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 5, 52, 102, 203.

<sup>120</sup> Malone, p. 242.

instances of violence occurred between the two groups in Petroleum County). Traveling to the interior of Montana created an adventure all its own, and for some the toils of their new life began before they even reached their new home.

Most rode the train, which also carried their belongings. Those who settled in the Valentine and Dovetail areas of the north rode the train to Roy. Then they went by wagon east, re-supplying in the town of Valentine, established around 1903. The Carrell and Garrison families arrived on their claim via this route about 1914. The extended family consisted of twenty-six members, originating in the southern United States. They followed a brother, who had settled in the Dovetail area the year before and encouraged the rest to join him. In the spring, he met his large family in Roy with a single wagon and team, who were weak from foraging all winter and unable to travel very fast. The eldest and youngest members rode in the wagon with all of their household goods while the rest of the family walked about thirty miles to their homestead. The trip took three days. Some slept on the ground, enduring the March frost to the fullest in their first days in the north.<sup>121</sup>

The Gairrett family worked on ranches in Montana for a year before building a boat and floating down the Missouri River to the mouth of the Musselshell. They homesteaded near the river.<sup>122</sup> Others made the entire journey by horseback and wagon. The Charles W. Brady family moved from Dixon, Montana over 400 miles to north of Winnett in 1914. A total of ten people moved in a caravan of two wagons, one of them covered, a two-seated hack, and two boys rode horseback driving seventeen head of workhorses and one colt. They left in May, traveled over the Rocky Mountains, and to

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<sup>121</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 215.

<sup>122</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 446.

Box Elder Creek in two weeks.<sup>123</sup>



**The Brady Family leaving for the Winnett area in 1914, photo courtesy of James and Diana Brady**

### **Staking a Claim**

Once the homesteaders arrived, they looked for a choice piece of property to claim. Forefront in their decision was the availability of water and wood. Some chose land close to friends or family already settled. Others used “locators.” These men found prime farm lands for a fee. The settlers using this service were subject to the honesty of the locator.<sup>124</sup> The first to enter the empty prairie surveyed their own claims. In 1917, Floyd Maine described the first to locate in Cat Creek Basin in April 1910, “They staked their squatters claims of 160 acres by means of a rude compass and 100 feet of baling wire. As this part of the country was in its virgin state and still unsurveyed, they were compelled to hunt for the nearest of the old township stakes, some six miles away, and run lines to their chosen claims, in order to get the approximate number of the section.”<sup>125</sup> The earliest farmers settled on the river bottoms and raised crops of hay, corn, grain, and later, alfalfa seed. The rough country in the Missouri River Breaks was used mostly for

<sup>123</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 21.

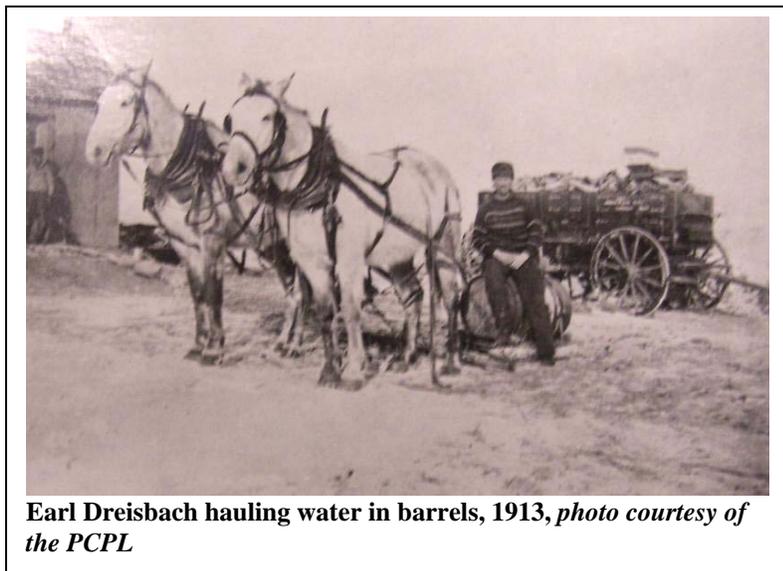
<sup>124</sup> Malone, p. 243.

<sup>125</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 135.

grazing, as one resident said, “You get more land (in the breaks), because it all stands on end and they can fit more in that way.”<sup>126</sup>

### **Water**

The availability of water dictated the decision for where to stake a claim and then later controlled everyday life. Because precipitation averaged only ten to twelve inches per year, most streams ran with a reliable flow only in the spring, after the snow melt. A few lucky homesteaders found good springs. More often, however, springs contained alkaline water unsuitable for human consumption. This water went to the stock and was used for washing. Some people dug wells, but most hauled water from springs and



**Earl Dreisbach hauling water in barrels, 1913, photo courtesy of the PCPL**

streams when they ran, they also stored water in a cistern that caught rain. The Hough family, who settled in the Cat Creek Basin dug a twenty-nine-foot well about three quarters of a mile from their house. They hauled water from their well in fifty gallon wooden barrels on a stoneboat pulled by a team of horses. This provided enough water for all household uses and to water the stock. Maintaining an ample supply of wood for heat, cooking, and washing also consumed much time.<sup>127</sup>

<sup>126</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 204.

### **Building a Home**

The land filled quickly and soon a variety of buildings dotted the landscape. Floyd Maine also described the first homes being built in the Cat Creek Basin in 1910. Each member of the small group of settlers built a cabin with logs from the Missouri River Breaks, about five miles to the north of the basin. These were hauled with a team of horses borrowed from their closest neighbor, a rancher fifteen miles away. The cabins were covered with split poles and the cracks between the logs were daubed with mud. A foot or more of sod covered the roof to keep the rain out. “Those who desired the more elaborate comfort of a plank floor and door hauled their lumber from Lewistown, 75 miles away, requiring 4-6 days to cross the mountains.”<sup>128</sup>

Other homes varied according to the resources nearby. Those who claimed prairie land with no timber nearby built a variety of structures. The dug-out house consisted of a hole dug into the side of the hill with supports to keep the roof from falling into the dwelling. A door was fitted to the front. The dug-out allowed for later exterior additions. Constructions of layers of sod laid like bricks that formed walls up to three feet thick were known as sod huts. One of these remained in use in the Dovetail area until the 1940s. Very few bought rough cut lumber from Lewistown and built a frame house. The fourth type, which proved very popular as a starter home, was the wooden shacks covered with tar paper ordered from Lewistown. Sod roofs covered most buildings, regardless of wall construction. The Wadman children recalled a bull snake falling through their sod roof onto their bed.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 171, 413, 204.

<sup>128</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 135.

<sup>129</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 47, 51, 205.



**Tar-paper shack**



**Sawn lumber homestead**



**Log homestead with sod roof, labeled "the parlor"**

*All photos courtesy of the PCPL*

### **Food and Supplies**

Most homesteaders nurtured gardens for fresh and canned vegetables. They also picked wild berries and made jam and syrup. In addition, families generally owned a milk cow, chickens, and one or two hogs. They hunted antelope, deer, rabbits, sage hens and grouse for meat. Large game animals were hunted so heavily that by the 1930s, deer or antelope sightings were rare occurrences.<sup>130</sup>

Trips to town to stock up on store-bought supplies also took place, usually once or twice a year. Long, rough and either dusty or muddy, the adventure to town deterred many. Additionally, most could not afford to purchase supplies more than once or twice a year. A trip took place in the fall to take grain to town to sell as well as to buy groceries. A grocery list commonly consisted of kerosene, flour, sugar, salt, dried beans, rice, dried fruits, spices, soda, baking powder, and numerous ingredients for home remedies.<sup>131</sup> Often, the children received a sack of candy courtesy of the storekeeper.<sup>132</sup>

William F. Geibel and his wife, who lived on the Musselshell River, received their groceries by the mail stage running between Melstone and Mecaha during the hard winter of 1914. The snows and weather made normal travel impossible, so Geibel sent

<sup>130</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 52, 204.

<sup>131</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 204.

<sup>132</sup> Ruth Freburg, written notes, April 28, 2008.

his list for “grubstake” with the mailman. In Melstone the merchant filled in the blank check and organized the order. After waiting for better weather, the mailman got the goods as far as Mosby, where the Giebels rode on horseback to retrieve them.

Occasionally, a cattlemen would kill a beef and take it around by horseback, leaving what was needed, along with a bill. The homesteaders paid when they were able, the cattlemen trusting everyone to be honest.<sup>133</sup>

### **Medicine on the Prairie**

The first physician, Doctor Alexander, arrived in Winnett in 1915 and serviced all of Petroleum County; however, the distance to Winnett by horse and wagon discouraged many from utilizing Dr. Alexander’s services. Instead, many families practiced home remedies passed down through the generations. For a cough or cold, Mrs. Loesch and Mrs. West of Dovetail used onion syrup, egg whites whipped with alum, oil of eucalyptus, kerosene with sugar or lard as cures. A bad chest cold was treated with mustard plaster on the back while the front was rubbed with Mentholatum or goose grease. Then the patient went to bed to sweat the cold away. Midwives came on call and stayed as long as they were needed. They cooked, washed and cared for the other children.<sup>134</sup> Gloria Hubert Johnson recalled, “Mama never had a doctor for any of her pregnancies; all three of us were born at home. She had a midwife, Mrs. Bridger, trained in England, to help. I was born two months premature and weighed only two and one-half pounds. Mrs. Bridger didn’t think I would survive, and she put me in the oven to keep me warm while attending Mama.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 446.

<sup>134</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 205.

<sup>135</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 33.

## Schools

With the homesteading push into Montana in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the land of central Montana filled with hardworking men and women. These people created communities, at the heart of which one-room schools were quickly established. The first school district was officially formed at Flatwillow in 1899. School operated in various locations near Flatwillow for three-month periods. Frank Moshner built two schoolhouses in 1912, one for Winnett and one for Flatwillow, in the first known instance of constructing a building to be used specifically for school purposes.<sup>136</sup>

Constructing a schoolhouse proved to be a difficult endeavor in a place lacking timber. In order to build the Blakeslee School on the Minnesota Bench, lumber had to be procured from Lewistown, about 50 miles away. Several community members agreed to take teams to Lewistown and spend the five to six days going and coming in order to get the supplies. Warner Kruger described the process once the materials arrived, “The day the lumber arrived everyone in the community dropped what they were doing, and all assembled on the present spot to put the school together. ... Putting the building up took just five days. The wives made a big picnic out of the affair, so stacks of food were brought for everyone, and what a gay time!”<sup>137</sup>

While schoolhouses varied in size and materials (in 1930 Petroleum County operated 48 one-room schoolhouses, 41 of these were frame and the remaining 7 were log) all had essentially the same lay-out.<sup>138</sup> In every township existed one section of land specifically for school use. One corner of the school section held the building. Most buildings contained a cloakroom just inside the door for students to hang their coats and

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<sup>136</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 272.

<sup>137</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 55.

<sup>138</sup> Superintendent of Public Instruction. *Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of Montana*, The Tribune Printing Co.: Great Falls, MT, 1931, p. 96.

store their lunches. The schoolroom was spacious, usually with large windows on one side to provide light. The teacher's desk stood on the far side with a blackboard and pull-down maps behind the desk and across the back wall. A pot-bellied stove sat in the center or the corner to provide heat.<sup>139</sup> Outside, two outhouses stood to service the children's needs, or provide a little recess fun for the boys who loved to lock the girls inside. A water pump, a flag pole, and sometimes playground equipment stood out front. Some schools provided a teacherage. This was either a separate building or a partition off of the original school building. Sometimes a barn to shelter the horses children rode to school also appeared.<sup>140</sup>

The schoolhouse was used for numerous social functions. It provided a center for the community, both physically and socially. The people of central Montana lived far from their neighbors with poor roads and transportation to reach each other, and the schoolhouse provided a meeting place and a building for fun community functions. Adults and children alike appreciated the social connection the school gave them, "The school housed the activities that joined people into a community, and the identity of rural communities became inextricably linked with their schools."<sup>141</sup> Socializing in a place of isolation kept people connected and this connection often times took place in the schoolhouse. In the days before extensive automobile travel, dances, church services, card parties, holiday parties, and voting were often held in the schoolhouse.

### **Community Halls**

In larger communities, they built halls for entertainment and gatherings. Plans for Flatwillow Hall began in 1920. At this time about 150 families lived in the Flatwillow

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<sup>139</sup> Michael Webb, *My Folks and the One-Room Schoolhouse*, Capper Press: USA, 1993, p. 1-2.

<sup>140</sup> Jack Hanson, interview by Laura Brady, Winnett, MT, December 29, 2005.

<sup>141</sup> Andrew Gulliford, *America's Country Schools*. University Press of Colorado: Colorado, 1996, p. 35.



**The first Lepper Memorial Hall, c. 1925, photo courtesy of the PCPL**

area. Benjamin F. Lepper donated \$1000 in memory of his nephew H.W. Lepper who died of the flu in 1918. His only stipulation was that the building be named Lepper Memorial Hall. By 1921, the community organized a donation drive, ordered materials and built the hall with volunteer labor. An all-day grand opening was held on July 4, 1921. Over 300 people attended. By 1925, the building was debt-free.

Also by 1925, a small group of people in the area were unhappy with the activities taking place at the hall. Henry Hawkins came forward as the spokesman for this group of people. They wanted the Hall closed to dances after midnight on Saturdays. The situation escalated when Henry Hawkins had the secretary-treasurer, Bob Bessay, of the Hall board arrested for violation of the Sunday Dance Law. A trial was held and the jury found no wrong doing on the part of Bessay. After the trial, Bessay received an anonymous typed note that read “Better Lay Off the Sunday Dances – This is a Warning.” Shortly thereafter, the Hall burned to the ground. The Fire Marshall determined the fire was deliberately set. Rumors flew, but no persons were ever arrested for the crime. As soon as the insurance money came through after the fire, the community began construction of a new hall. By July 23, 1926 the Flatwillow Hall once

again held dances.<sup>142</sup>

In the northern part of the county in 1926, community members began construction on the Valentine Community Hall. The building is actually a large addition to the much smaller schoolhouse that was not adequate in size for large community gatherings. The timber all came from the nearby hillsides and were rough sawn at the Neil Harris sawmill which operated close-by. The finished lumber, doors, and windows were the only materials purchased for the project. When completed, the schoolhouse opened into the hall and also served as a kitchen. The north end of the hall was constructed as a stage area and provided the space for many talent shows and plays.

### **Women Homesteaders**

The prairie filled with families and single men from all walks of life, but single women also filed claims and worked the land. These women were young and single, middle-aged with children, schoolteachers, and mothers accompanying their grown children. Amelia Schoeneche arrived in the Dovetail area in 1912 or 1913 with her three young daughters, "... she was a hard worker, and after living on a cotton farm ... she was not afraid to do any job that would help provide a living for herself and her children. She would even pull the wool from the dead sheep she found on the range. She acted as midwife ... and baby-sat." She later married James Turner and assisted him on the mail stage between Dovetail and Valentine.<sup>143</sup> Hallie Marie King, a schoolteacher who came to earn her fortune at Flatwillow making \$60 a month in 1912, arrived and after contemplating her surroundings made the commitment to stay long enough to prove up on her homestead. Her plans changed when she met Harry Tripp, fell in love, married,

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<sup>142</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 267-69.

<sup>143</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 246.

and never left.<sup>144</sup>

### **Irrigation Projects**

While the promotional campaigns for the lands of eastern Fergus County advertised the land as profitable grounds for dry-land farming, a number of people pursued large-scale irrigation projects. A project at Flatwillow, proposed and approved in 1911 never came to fruition.<sup>145</sup> Another project utilizing water from Fords Creek in the western part of the area became a huge undertaking with less than desirable results. What is known today as War Horse Reservoir was originally named War House Lake by Mr. Walter Winnett. Reportedly, War House Lake got its name from the nearby War House Butte. Mr. Winnett gave the butte this name because it looked like the large tepees where the Indians, with whom Mr. Winnett had lived, planned their raids on other tribes.<sup>146</sup> The Winnett Irrigation Company was incorporated February 1, 1911 with the purpose of watering the lands on both the north and south sides of the Buffalo Creek valley and some of the Box Elder Creek valley. Mr. Walter Winnett was instrumental in the organization of the company and held the post as first president. The company contained a membership of thirty-two stockholders; many were Lewistown businessmen and women who were absentee owners on their property in the eastern part of the county. One share equaled one acre; 10,500 shares were sold.

A succession of four engineers worked on the project, originally estimated to cost \$7.50/acre but ultimately costing \$18/acre. Fred Akins was the final engineer, “to Fred’s genius, engineering skill, and administrative ability, the eventual success of the project is

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<sup>144</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 318.

<sup>145</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 270.

<sup>146</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 57.

attributable.”<sup>147</sup> The project diverted water from Fords and Buffalo Creeks into War House Lake. An intake canal, six miles long with a width of thirty feet at the bottom, channeled the water from Fords Creek. In order to cross Fords Creek a metal flume with the largest cross section in the state, was carried on a wooden trestle and put into place. A ditch from War House fed into Little Bear Lake, which watered the north side of the Buffalo Creek valley. A ditch from War House approximately twenty miles long watered to the southeast. In total, ditches stretched for fifty-five miles. These are still visible on the landscape today.

Many settlers took jobs working on this project. Tent cities followed the crews building the ditches with horse pulled plows and fresnos. From 1917-1924, the project worked ideally and thousands of acres received water. However, the lake drained in 1926 and never refilled enough for use. In 1935 the State Water Conservation Board approved an application to repair and renovate the intake ditches and dam. The Civilian Conservation Corps rebuilt the supply canal and put in a massive reinforced concrete headgate with the latest improved steel radial gates.<sup>148</sup> However, the dam never again functioned in its original capacity. Today a variety of wildlife occupy the habitat in this area designated War Horse National Wildlife Refuge.

### **Making it Work**

Even during the prosperous years the inhabitants of eastern Fergus County struggled. Many ranchers found additional work on the irrigation projects or with their workhorses; women cooked and/or cleaned for large operations, or they worked in town. The Gairrett family took their horses and wagons to Canada at harvest time. The women

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<sup>147</sup> Jake W. Vogel, “History in the Making: The Winnett Irrigation System,” *Winnett Times*, May 1, 1942.

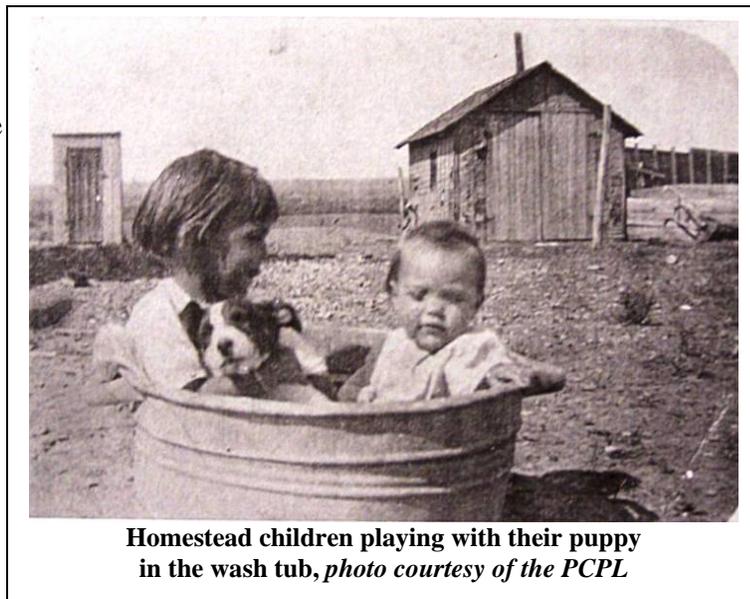
<sup>148</sup> Jake W. Vogel.

cooked and the men worked in the fields.<sup>149</sup> Ruth Iverson Laugeman, a child of homesteaders wrote, “I didn’t know we were poor until I went into Winnett to High School and some of the smart-mouthed town kids informed me we were poor ... We had pride in ourselves and our family and we knew that we could find a way to weather whatever came along.”<sup>150</sup>

### **The End of Small Farms**

A variety of factors led to the short-lived success of these unlucky

farmers. Most were young, adventurous and possessed a positive ambition fed by the belief that farming families and small towns created the soul of America. The years 1909-1916 provided ample rainfall at opportune times, creating a false sense that the land would provide. World War I began in 1914 and increased both the demand and price for food. When the United States entered the War in 1917, they rose even more. In addition, the formation of new government programs encouraged farmers to grow and expand even more. The Lever Food and Fuel Control Act gave the President power to set the price of wheat at not less than \$2 per bushel. In 1917, under Herbert Hoover, the U.S. Food Administrator, the new Food Administration program directed farmers to produce at their maximum, rallying behind the cry, “Food Will Win the War!” The young Federal Reserve System extended easy credit to national banks, which then offered loans to



**Homestead children playing with their puppy in the wash tub, photo courtesy of the PCPL**

<sup>149</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 446.

<sup>150</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 205.

farmers on appealing terms. As a result, farmers expanded their operations by mortgaging their land, buildings, and machinery with the readily available credit and then buying more. In addition, they plowed pastureland to plant grain.<sup>151</sup>

While homesteaders continued to arrive in eastern Fergus County until the 1930s, an exodus began in 1918. In just six years since the majority of homesteading began, the land filled, people began to leave after realizing the impossibility of surviving on 320 acres or less of unforgiving lands. Drought, the end of World War I, the falling market prices, and the flu epidemic of 1918 all contributed to this mass departure.

As a farmer, nothing is more difficult to recover from than a drought and, “the drought came and stayed. It became a bitter joke that ‘next year’s’ crops were the only good ones. Homesteaders tried to find jobs ... some mortgaged their land, spent the money and then left.”<sup>152</sup> The majority of farmers not only grew crops, but also owned stock for cash as well as farm use. The drought affected their animals as much as their harvest. Martha Cornue, a homestead wife living southeast of Winnett, described the situation during the winter of 1919-20,

The wheat crop was a complete failure; there was not enough to cut for winter hay ... A heavy snow fell in October which did not melt until April. In January there were several feet on the level so stock could not get even sagebrush to eat ... Stock became poorer and poorer. The ranchers had to go to the railroad in Winnett to buy hay ... there was not enough to go around ... Hundreds died ... In the spring, the losses were so great that many homesteaders loaded their few household goods on a wagon and left, for I do not know where, but I hope it was to better places.

The Cornues survived, staying to become successful ranchers.<sup>153</sup> For those that endured, land again became cheap, some bought up more property for only \$0.50/acre.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Malone, p. 242-53.

<sup>152</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 557.

<sup>153</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 519.

The authors of *Montana: A History of Two Centuries* wrote, “Like American farmers of the previous three centuries, Montana homesteaders valued a farm of their own above all other earthly possessions. Their determination to remain on the land, to turn the land to their own will, make them the last, the most important, and ultimately the most tragically afflicted of all the Montana pioneers.”<sup>155</sup>

Ironically, the railroad, which pulled into Winnett in 1917, arrived in time to transport homesteaders and their belongings back out of the region. Few continued to gamble in the farming game, and fewer still moved into the area. In 1920, an oil strike in the Cat Creek Basin waylaid the flow of people out of the region and provided a short period of growth and excitement.

### Oil and County-Busting

*Drying grass, crops, soil and the resulting economic hardships lead to bleak years in eastern Fergus County prior to 1920. Homesteaders piled onto railroad cars, heading to new lives at an alarming rate and it appeared that Winnett’s heyday would be over almost as quickly as it had begun. The tides turned in February 1920, however, when an oil discovery again brought hope and excitement to the young western town. The discovery, located just west of the Musselshell River near the communities of Mosby and Cat Creek, stemmed the flow of outgoing homesteaders and created boomtowns of Winnett and Cat Creek.*

### **The Cat Creek Oil Discovery**

The tale of the Cat Creek oil discovery begins in 1915 with a U.S. Geological

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<sup>154</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 527.

<sup>155</sup> Malone, et al., p. 246.

survey report which concluded that the east slopes of the Judith Mountains possibly favored accumulations of oil deposits. A follow-up survey in 1918 briefly looked at the Devil's Basin, Flatwillow, and Cat Creek areas. W.P. Kerr, a geologist living in Melstone, took special note of these reports and became particularly interested in Cat Creek. The Musselshell Valley Oil Company resulted from Kerr's organizing of local businessmen in Melstone. In February of 1919, the company financed a test well in the Cat Creek area. Kerr moved to Winnett, opening the first oil office there. He continued his search for financing and caught the eye of the Cosden Oil Company in Oklahoma. They sent geologist Charles T. Lupton to Winnett to investigate. His report deemed the area favorable for oil, but Cosden lost interest. Lupton, however, felt strongly about the area's potential and recruited Frank Frantz, the chief of the land department for Cosden. Frantz and many other Cosden officials formed the new Frantz Corporation, which financed the discovery well at Cat Creek.<sup>156</sup>

On October 11, 1919, four men, including Charles Lupton, stepped off the train in Winnett. These Frantz Company men checked into a hotel and prepared for their twenty-two mile trek to Cat Creek. The winter of 1919 hit early with debilitating blizzards that trapped the men in Winnett for seven weeks. They prepared during the snows and when the weather broke, the men quickly constructed a cookhouse to be moved by wagon to the drill site. They organized the rig, casing, and other drilling equipment to be hauled by horses. Shortly after Thanksgiving, the equipment arrived onsite and the men reassembled it. Drilling commenced slowly. In January, the Frantz Corporation hit water and then on February 19, 1920 in the flows of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Cat Creek Sand formation the men

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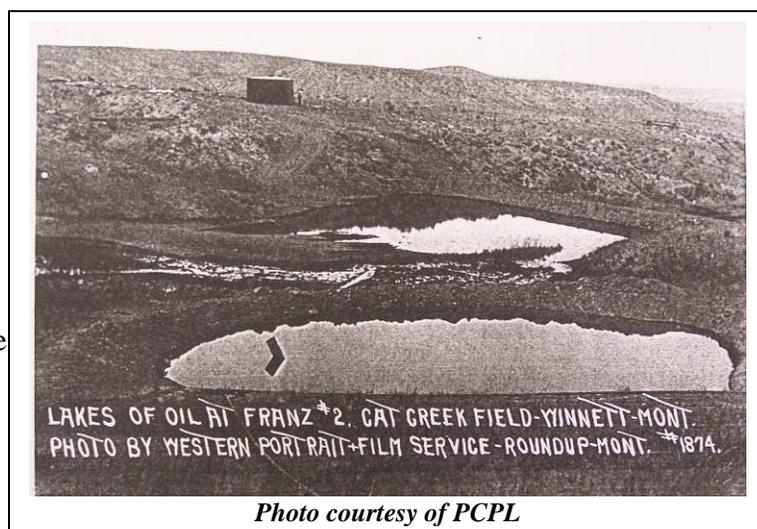
<sup>156</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County*. Lewistown, Montana: New-Argus Printing, 1990, p. 139-40.

found the first oil well in Fergus County. This well produced fifty barrels a day.<sup>157</sup>

### The Oil Fields Develop

Despite fervent efforts to keep the oil strike secret, word leaked out and a *Winnett Times* headline for February 25, 1920 read, “First well in Fergus County Comes in with Green Oil Production Monday.” The Cat Creek strike produced the first commercial oil field and the second oil strike (the first being in the Devil’s Basin) in Montana. Later in the spring, the Frantz Corporation tore down the rig and moved it to a new lease. They

again struck oil, this well producing 200 barrels a day. The strike ran into numerous road blocks, among them the lack of a market for the oil. At the time of discovery, oil sold for \$1/barrel, while the water to run the field boilers cost \$1.25/barrel. Storage tanks had not yet



*Photo courtesy of PCPL*

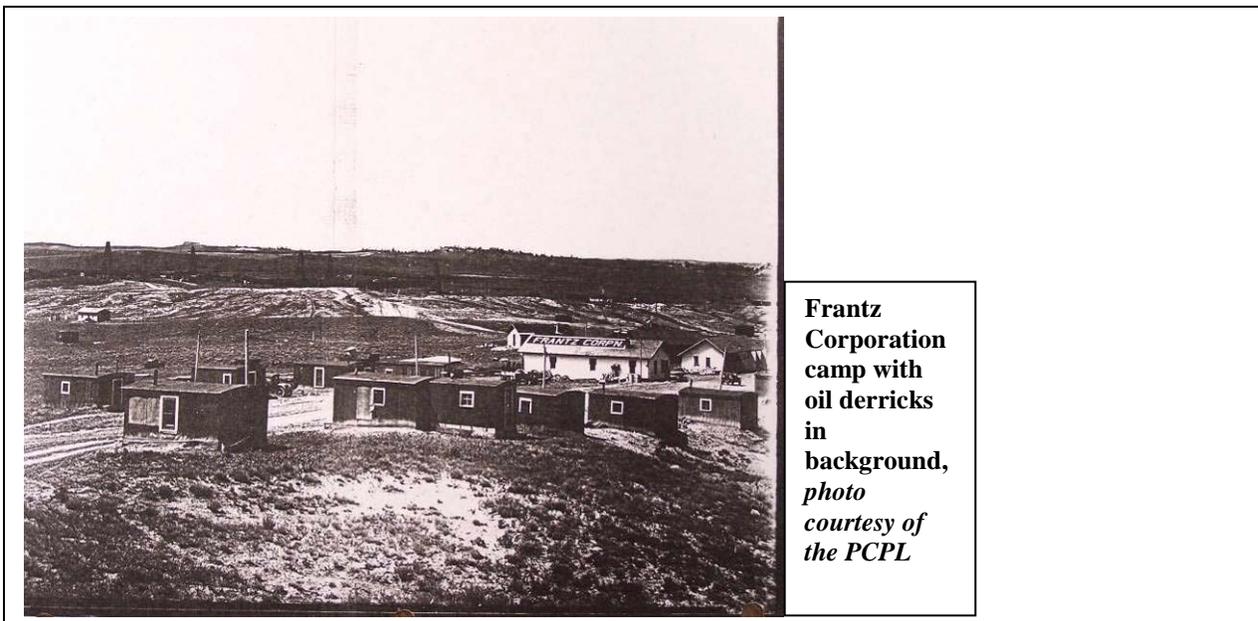
been built, so nearby coulees were dammed and the oil flowed down the coulee, creating lakes of oil. People came from all around to take advantage of this free, high gravity oil that could be put directly into vehicles. Ranchers also used it as cattle dip. Drilling continued and on March 28, twenty-two four horse teams left Winnett with supplies for the Frantz wells.<sup>158</sup>

Ramshackle camps quickly sprang up on the broken prairie to accommodate the drillers’ needs. The drilling camp for the discovery well consisted of two tar-paper shacks, one for the drilling crew and one for the cookhouse and mess hall. Numerous

<sup>157</sup>“Lest We Forget ... Incredible Cat Creek Saga Recalled by Lantz’ Death,” Petroleum County Library, Vertical History File, *Cat Creek*.

<sup>158</sup> “Lest We Forget...”

companies rushed to the oil field, and 1920 saw much development in the eastern region of Fergus County due to the oil strike. Homesteaders took advantage of the new jobs and moved closer to Cat Creek to work in the fields. Drillers made \$10 per day plus board.



**Frantz Corporation camp with oil derricks in background, photo courtesy of the PCPL**

Companies established permanent camps, power houses were built to pump the wells, and service rod lines were erected to connect the several wells to the power. They also constructed two storage tanks each holding 100,000 barrels and a steam plant in the field. Construction began on August 28 on a two inch pipeline to Winnett. Judged insufficient shortly after completion, a four inch line was built in just twenty-one days. This line lay on the ground as it rolled, climbed, and fell, with no grading or leveling done. Winnett prepared for the oil by building a fifteen car loading rack, storage tanks, and offices for shipping clerks and car loading employees. At the end of 1920, six companies operated eleven producing wells in the field. By April of 1921, just over a year after the first oil find, the field produced 2200-2600 barrels of oil each day.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>159</sup> Aaberg, Stephen and Steven Davenport. "Carrell Oil Company," Lewistown BLM District Proposed Land Exchange, Petroleum County, Montana, Class III Cultural Resource Survey Results. April

1921 witnessed significant changes on the fields. Approximately seventy wells operated by about sixty leasing companies filled the field by the end of the year. Local companies such as the Midnorthern (a subsidiary of Standard Oil Co.), Homestake Oil, and 56 Petroleum worked among the many outside companies. The Frantz Corporation sold out to what became the Continental Oil Company under the direction of Sid Keoghan who drilled the well one foot deeper and created a well producing 2160 barrels daily. While the companies may have been from other parts of the country, many of the workers were local homesteaders and, “the field was just one big family.”<sup>160</sup> The oil business was not limited to men as the *Winnett Times* reported on June 24, 1921,

Mrs. G. F. Zollers and associates in the Montana Bell Syndicate have completed plans to commence drilling operations on their holdings in SE1/2 SW1/4 Sec 22-15-19. Quite a number of Winnett people have holdings in this vicinity and are much interested in the drilling of the well, and in as much as Mrs. Zollers is the first woman operator in the field further interest is added.<sup>161</sup>

### **The Town of Cat Creek**

The town of Cat Creek developed alongside the fields. Vernon Peterson owned and ran a store and pool hall. Ira Johnson owned a garage. A brother and sister by the name of Curren ran the Curren Hotel, a one-story tar-papered building. A community hall brought everyone together for events, and in 1922 a school opened. The school district ran a bus around the fields to pick up children for the first five or six years after the school’s opening. Also in 1922, the Canfield Trading Company opened a store and post office. Each oil company ran its own cookhouse, although eventually they all consolidated into one. As production became more stable, trucks replaced horses, rotary

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1997, p. 22, and Mrs. Ben H. Stone, “History in the Making: Cat Creek Oil Field,” *Winnett Times*, 1942, and Joanne Marie Hassing, “The Creation of Petroleum County: A Case Study in ‘County Busting,’” Master’s thesis, University of Montana, 1964, p. 58.

<sup>160</sup> Mrs. Ben H. Stone, “History in the Making: Cat Creek Oil Field,” *Winnett Times*, 1942.

<sup>161</sup> *Winnett Times*, June 24, 1921.

rigs replaced cable tool rigs, internal combustion engines replaced steam, portable derricks replaced the wooden ones, and graded roads replaced the old trails. In the 1930s, Cat Creek assumed the appearance of a company town under the direction of the new Continental Oil Company president, Dan Moran. He commanded the rebuilding of the camp. Three room frame houses painted white and green replaced the tar paper shacks. The oil excitement, like the homesteading excitement quickly faded. The Cat Creek fields peaked after five years and the oil industry refocused elsewhere. While oil derricks continue to operate in the Cat Creek fields today, the boom lasted less than a decade.<sup>162</sup>

### **Oil Speculation Brings Change to Winnett**

However, oil excitement made permanent impressions on the eastern region of Fergus County. The atmosphere in Winnett changed dramatically as soon as news of the oil strike spread. Tent homes and businesses sprung up immediately, as did the real estate prices. Reports tell of a lot on Main Street selling for \$300 the day before the strike and \$600 the day after it. In the second and third days after the discovery the same lot went to \$900 and increased again to \$2500. Hotels capitalized on the excitement and influx of people by charging guests for eight hour increments. Those who slept more than eight hours encroached on other guests' time and were charged accordingly. In March 1920, the *Fergus County Argus* reported on the new importance of Winnett, "out of Lewistown, all roads in Fergus County lead to Winnett and the remarkable find that has been made in the Mosby oil well."<sup>163</sup>

By the end of the summer of 1921, approximately 200 businesses operated in Winnett, thirty of those being hotels. One six week period during the summer saw the

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<sup>162</sup> Mrs. Ben H. Stone, "History in the Making: Cat Creek Oil Field," *Winnett Times*, 1942, and Joanne Marie Hassing, "The Creation of Petroleum County: A Case Study in 'County Busting,'" Master's thesis, University of Montana, 1964, p. 65.

<sup>163</sup> *Fergus County Argus*, March 1920, in Hassing, p. 56.

construction of forty-eight new homes. The railroad, which ran a thrice weekly schedule prior to the strike, began running up to three times daily. Winnett held three oil refineries. The construction of the first, the Great Northern Refinery, began on June 6, 1921. The first tank car of gasoline shipped from Winnett left on November 1, 1921. The Weowna Refinery was originally constructed in Cat Creek by Batchler and Miller and was moved to Winnett in October 1921. In just nineteen days the building sheltered the refining of gasoline, kerosene, naphtha and fuel oil. It operated into the 1930s. In 1936, the Yale Oil Company won the contract to refine the oil discovered on federal lands they built a refinery that was demolished the next year when the Continental Oil Co. won the contract. Montana's first oil field journal, the *Oil Fields Bulletin*, located its headquarters in the Winnett Block. The population of Winnett jumped to 1,213 in 1922 and Winnett was reclassified as a city of third class. Estimates put the population at 2,000 in 1923. All of this growth led to city improvement projects such as the building of sidewalks, grading and graveling city streets, constructing a sewer system and improving the water system.<sup>164</sup>

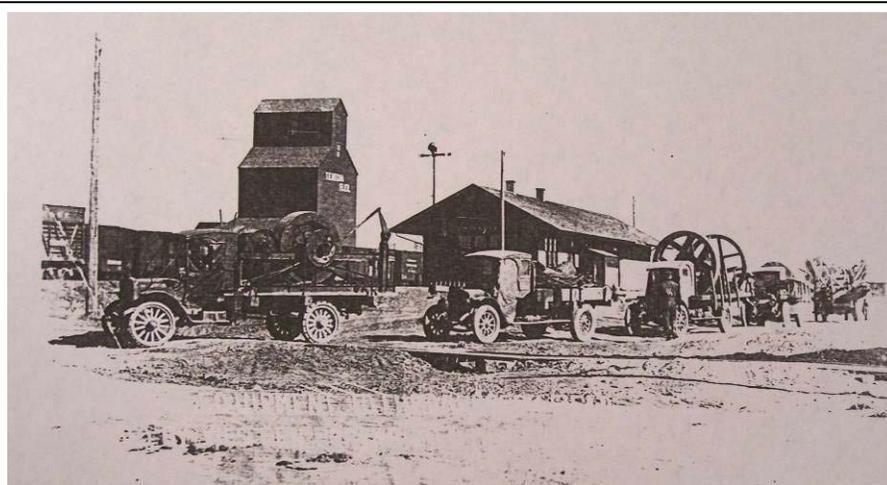
### **Petroleum County Emerges**

The oil strike led to city improvements as well as county improvements and to long lasting and significant changes in eastern Fergus County. Long an unsatisfied part of Fergus County, the residents of the eastern lands began to agitate for separation beginning in 1919. After six years of attempts, ultimately it was the discovery of oil at Cat Creek that made the separation possible. The years from 1910-1925 constitute the era of "county-busting" in Montana. During this time the number of counties increased from twenty-eight to fifty-six. The arrival of the railroad into difficult to access areas and

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<sup>164</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 614-617.

the rise of wheat production contributed to the splitting of counties, which took place mostly in eastern Montana.<sup>165</sup>



**Equipment at the railroad depot in Winnett headed for the oil fields,**  
*photo courtesy of the PCPL*

Eastern Fergus County residents supported the division cause for three major reasons. First, they felt their distance of approximately fifty miles from Winnett to Lewistown, the county seat, hindered the amount of attention the county paid to its eastern citizens. In particular, they pushed for better roads that would lead to better accessibility and development in their region. They were entitled to these roads, they felt, as the “gate city to the oil fields.”<sup>166</sup> Better roads bring more people and goods at a faster rate and also help decrease the crime rate. Second, they wished to spend the tax dollars from eastern Fergus in eastern Fergus. Finally, they rallied around the traditional cry for self-determination, independence and representation. Many underlying issues also fed into the movement for separation. For example, many felt that Lewistown was trying to overshadow Winnett during the oil boom, especially after papers ran headlines

<sup>165</sup> Joanne Marie Hassing, “The Creation of Petroleum County: A Case Study in ‘County Busting,’” Master’s thesis, University of Montana, 1964, p. 1.

<sup>166</sup> Hassing, p. 135.

that read, "Lewistown Oil Fields Make Montana Famous."<sup>167</sup> The *Winnett Times* wrote in August of 1921,

The immense loss of valuable trade is going to other towns because the people (sic) cannot get to their nearest city, Winnett, on account of the roads. The fault is not wholly ours, we being unfortunate enough to belong to a county which has continued for a score of years to take the tax money from one part of the county and build the best roads and bridges money can buy for another part. A new county will solve the difficulty but in the mean time the business men of this town are losing a good many thousand dollars every month because people cannot get to this town.<sup>168</sup>

C.J. Doherty used his position as editor of the *Winnett Times* to make the voice and cause of the divisionists well heard; this contributed greatly to increasing awareness and voter turn-out for the movement. In the end, the oil discovery produced the name of the county and the greatest impetus for division. From 1917-1920, Montana suffered from a drought that resulted in an economic depression and delinquent taxes; the oil strike afforded eastern Fergus County with enough valuation, by law, to separate.<sup>169</sup>

In no way united on the issue, residents of eastern Fergus County battled for six years over the subject of separation. The first attempts to divide were in the forms of bills presented to the state legislature. Four separate bills to create another county out of eastern Fergus hit the House and Senate floor from 1919 to 1921. These attempts failed mostly due to the disagreement among residents over the boundaries of the new county. In addition, especially as the campaign continued, the anti-divisionists of the region feared that a split would lead to bankruptcy because of the economically depressed agricultural lands. The divisionists, on the other hand, feared that Lewistown would not allow a separation after the oil fields were fully developed.

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<sup>167</sup> Hassing, p. 160.

<sup>168</sup> *Winnett Times*, August 12, 1921 in Hassing, p. 136.

<sup>169</sup> Hassing, p. 164-175.

In April of 1921, well known professional county splitter and agitator, Daniel McKay, arrived in Winnett. The following portion of an editorial ran in the Fergus County Argus, “Dan McKay visits the oil fields ... Presumably from this report the industrious Dan is becoming interested in oil. Our guess is otherwise, however. Having just completed the creation of Banner county ... we believe that Dan is looking around for other spoils...”<sup>170</sup> The new tactic of petition and election, where the residents present a petition to the county commissioners for approval and then a vote by residents was adopted. From April 1922 to June 1924, eastern Fergus County presented the county commissioners with three petitions for separation. The first two petitions never made it to vote for a variety of reasons. Finally, in June of 1924, the commissioners set a date for a vote on the split. On November 4, 1924 residents of eastern Fergus County voted to break away from the larger county. The new county government began operation on February 22, 1925.<sup>171</sup>

Excitement and pride exuded from Winnett during those first few years as the new county seat. However, by the eve of the Great Depression trouble had already stuck its foot in the door. The common problems faced by new counties everywhere also existed in the newly formed Petroleum County. New governments, their courthouses and employees cost money. In addition, Petroleum County, in its fervor to show its legitimacy invested heavily in new roads and fell deep into debt. During the boom times, property tax hikes covered many costs, but during the busts, counties seized lands for delinquent taxes and Petroleum County, just as many others, devoured its own property

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<sup>170</sup> *Fergus County Argus*, April 8, 1921 in Hassing, p. 92.

<sup>171</sup> Hassing, p. 68-92.

owners in the years following its creation.<sup>172</sup>

### The Great Depression

*By the time the Great Depression hit Petroleum County, its residents had been hardened by previous years of depression caused, for the most part, by Mother Nature's refusal to rain. The drought lasting from 1917-1922 spurred hundreds of homesteaders to move on to better lives elsewhere. The post World War I recession doubly impacted the region's farmers. During the "roaring '20s," Montana was the only state to decrease in population. From 1920-1926 over half of Montana's banks failed, taking thousands of families' savings with them. The state that only a decade before proclaimed an assured successful future issued a document in 1921 to discourage homesteaders stating, "... no good homestead opportunities are to be found in the state."<sup>173</sup> Dust storms that became famous in the 1930s got their start in the 1920s due to deep plowing that led to wind erosion. The average value of farmland dropped by 50%.<sup>174</sup>*

*Petroleum County farmers suffered the same as their neighbors; however, the Cat Creek oil strike curtailed the tide of escaping homesteaders during the first years of the 1920s. For a time, Winnett and the surrounding communities experienced a boom and thrived. Eastern Fergus County finally broke away becoming Petroleum County with Winnett as the county seat. This growth and the accompanying optimism lasted only briefly. Winnett went from an estimated population of 2,000 in 1923 to 408 in 1930.<sup>175</sup> So it was; that on the eve of the Great Depression, Petroleum County residents had*

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<sup>172</sup> Malone, p. 252, and Hassing, p. 180.

<sup>173</sup> Malone, p. 252.

<sup>174</sup> Malone, et al., p. 281-283.

<sup>175</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 616.

*already suffered the adversities of drought and depression, however, none of the previous experiences would amount to the devastation wrought during the '30s.*

### **Drought**

The Great Depression in Montana began with a severe drought in 1929 that by 1931 reached disastrous proportions. Governor John Erickson wrote that the people were “in rather a desperate condition. The grain crops and feed crops are practical failures.”<sup>176</sup>



**Dust Storm, 1937, photo courtesy of the PCPL**

Farm numbers and value fell along with food prices, forcing many to sell their property. The number of farms fell from 47,495 in 1930 to 41,823 in 1940.<sup>177</sup> Industry also dropped. Montanans became a part of the great exodus to the West Coast. Grasshoppers, Mormon crickets, and dust storms combined to create an even more desperate atmosphere for Montanans in any profession. The rains refused to fall for nearly a decade, with brief and insufficient respite. The world-wide depression led to decreasing food purchases and rising crop surpluses, which resulted in lower markets for the farmers. The situation worsened and, “slowly, inexorably, the rural depression squeezed the lifeblood out of the parched Great Plains.”<sup>178</sup>

### **FDR and the Alphabet Soup**

Soon after assuming office in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt began implementing changes. His basic rationale included using the spending and regulatory

<sup>176</sup> Michael P. Malone and Roeder, Richard B., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, University of Washington Press: Seattle and London, 1976, p. 226.

<sup>177</sup> Malone and Roeder, p. 226

<sup>178</sup> Malone, et. al., p. 293.

powers of the federal government to fight against the Depression. This basic principle led to increased roles of both state and federal governments in the everyday lives of the people. The Alphabet Soup Agencies were instrumental in the relief effort in Petroleum County, as they were throughout the rest of Montana. A major program in the County was the Civil Works Administration which employed local men in public works projects including graveling county roads, installing indoor lavatories, and a sewer system in the school, building an airport, and constructing reservoirs. In April, 1934, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration took over for the CWA with a new emphasis on employment of all able-bodied individuals who applied for aid. In June, 1934, the FERA was the largest single employer in Montana. The Works Progress Administration replaced the FERA in Petroleum County by 1935. Local WPA projects included building a county jail, improving city streets, building prefabricated outdoor toilets, and eradicating grasshoppers and prairie dogs. The National Youth Administration, which provided part-time employment for eligible school-age men and women also operated in Petroleum County.<sup>179</sup>

### **The AAA, the RA, and the WPA**

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA), and the Resettlement Administration, which later became the Farm Security Administration directly helped agricultural workers. The AAA purchased stock and made direct cash benefit payments to farmers who agreed to restrict their crop acreages, a plan partly credited to Montana State College (MSU) professor M.L. Wilson. The plan tried to raise farm prices and deplete the huge crop surpluses that glutted the market. For the first time, farmers received huge federal aid, which led to an increased reliance on Uncle Sam. The cattle

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<sup>179</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 8, 9.

appraisal and buying office opened in Winnett in early September 1934. Sellers qualified for the program by proving that they did not have sufficient feed to winter their livestock. They received from \$4-\$20 per animal depending on its age. In its first year in Petroleum County, the AAA sponsored the purchasing of 1,631 head of cattle with only a few being condemned. Nearly 11,000 sheep at \$2/head left the county, 5,000 of these were condemned.<sup>180</sup>

The Farm Credit Administration offered low interest rates to farmers and ranchers and the 1934 Taylor Grazing Act allowed for the creation of grazing districts.<sup>181</sup> Grazing districts consisted of organized groups of stockmen who leased federal land to use cooperatively for grazing. In Montana, the first grazing districts started in 1933. By the end of the next year eight districts had been established in Petroleum County. Under the Taylor Grazing Act, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes oversaw the retirement of farming land. He created a massive federal land classification program that encouraged large-scale irrigation projects that aimed to retire five acres of submarginal lands for every acre irrigated. The government allowed the owners of these submarginal lands the first option to resettle onto the irrigation projects. The Resettlement Administration emerged out of this project. They had broad powers to develop water projects, to stop soil erosion, to organize grazing districts, and to issue grazing permits on approximately 80,000,000 acres of public grasslands across the nation. Many Petroleum County residents sold their property to the government for \$.50-\$2 per acre and resettled on the irrigation lands through the Resettlement Administration. Many neighbors and families from Petroleum County relocated to the Fairfield Bench Project west of Great Falls, MT.

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<sup>180</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 10.

<sup>181</sup> Malone and Roeder, p. 229.

The WPA directly benefited more Montanans than any other program and by 1935 was working closely with the RA. The WPA offered work to all employable men who could find no job. The WPA gained praise because it provided work and not just cash relief. The WPA provided mostly construction jobs for roads, public buildings, and privies. In November of 1935, the Resettlement Administration and the WPA reached an agreement on rural rehabilitation programs, which included relocating farmers.<sup>182</sup> Evert Brady, a homesteader in eastern Montana worked with the WPA during the drought years of the 1930s. He discussed the resettlement project in this manner:

The government opened up a farming project on the Fairfield Bench. All of us who were on welfare and working for the government were told to sign up for these places. No one wanted to sign up and move to Fairfield, so the government got so mad and therefore we lost our welfare, as well as our jobs. That making it impossible to stay at Winnett, we had to give up our places and move in order to live. ... In the fall of 1938 the rains started. 1939 and 1940 were dandy years. If we could have managed to stay just a little longer, we would still have the homestead.<sup>183</sup>

Brady remained bitter about his forced resettlement for the rest of his life, despite becoming a successful farmer in Fairfield.

### **The CCC**

The last major New Deal program in effect in Petroleum County was the Civilian Conservation Corps. The CCC taught skills and provided jobs to young men between eighteen and twenty-five. Thirty to forty camps were maintained throughout Montana during the Depression. Many young Petroleum County men joined the CCC and worked in the camps across Montana. The CCC's occupied one such camp just east of Winnett at a bend in McDonald Creek below the rimrocks. In November 1935, the camp to house

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<sup>182</sup> Malone and Roeder, p. 230-231.

<sup>183</sup> Charlotte Brady, *Evert and Myrtle Brady's Family*, 1886-1991, Great Falls, MT, 1991, p. 2.

200 was completed for \$30,000. It consisted of two barracks, each containing showers,



**Winnett CCC Camp, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Courthouse**

washrooms, and lavatories; an officers' and technicians' building; an infirmary; a recreation hall; a mess hall and a garage.

The CCC worked on two major projects in the County. Both projects were in partnership with the State Water Conservation Board. The first took place at War House Dam. The CCC boys built a new intake ditch to the reservoir and did comprehensive repair work to the dam itself. They also built Yellow Water Reservoir southwest of Winnett. They came from Winnett and worked all day in three shifts. Two Caterpillar tractors, a grader, scarifier, scraper and other large machinery were provided by the State Water Conservation Service. Between 1937-38, laborers and equipment moved 200,000 cubic yards of dirt and 90,000 cubic yards of rock.<sup>184</sup>

The camp provided a brief revival for the town, but in September of 1938, the camp received orders to move to the Lewistown-Winifred area. Fifty CCC members arrived from Jordan and Lewistown at the end of the year to dismantle the buildings. Camps in Winifred, Jordan, Lewistown, and Bozeman reused the salvaged material.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>184</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 9, 271.

The Great Depression took its toll on the people of Petroleum County, with many more leaving to escape the interminable suffering. The county experienced a 47% population decrease going from 2,045 people in 1930 to 1,083 in 1940. The county's assessed valuation also decreased from \$4,875,000 in 1926 to \$2,398,600 in 1942. As people fled, most sold property to the federal government with its New Deal programs. This resulted in a reduction of local property tax collections. In addition, Montana law in 1942 limited to sixteen mills the tax which could be levied for county purposes. This restricted the county's operating budget to \$12,028 from the needed \$22,000.<sup>186</sup> The Depression further hardened those still living in Petroleum County. In twenty short years, the optimism of the homesteaders gave way to the toughened and cynical attitudes developed by those few survivors remaining on the unyielding high plains.

### The 1940s and After

*The 1930s and the Great Depression gave way to World War II and more prosperous years. The local government in Petroleum County continued to struggle, however. The debt it accrued during the 1920s by building roads and other services multiplied during the Depression. The decrease in privately owned property led to a drop off in property tax operating revenue for the county. At the start of the 1940s, the county asked Roland R. Renne, president of Montana State College (now Montana State University), to investigate another form of government for the struggling region. He suggested the county manager form and the county adopted it in 1942. Petroleum is the only county in Montana that operates under a county manager form of government.*

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<sup>185</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 9.

<sup>186</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 10.

## **A County Manager**

The county manager form of government revolves around a manager appointed by the county commissioners. The manager, in turn, appoints positions that otherwise are elected. Offices and duties are condensed to limit the number of personnel and to save money. The duties of the County Superintendent of Schools and the assessor had already been combined in 1938, as had the duties of the public administrator and coroner, which were placed under the responsibilities of the sheriff. In 1946, after adoption of the county manager plan, the manager assumed the responsibilities of the superintendent of schools and the assessor. Appointed positions, formally elected, included the clerk and recorder, auditor, assessor, treasurer, superintendent of schools, and surveyor.

The county manager plan reduced expenditures as well as debt. In the first year under the county manager plan the personnel costs for the county fell dramatically, resulting in considerable savings. Before, the county personnel consisted of three county commissioners and thirteen officials who made a combined \$14,283 per year. After, the three commissioners remained, but the county operated under the direction of just five employees being paid \$7,690 per year. At the time of adoption of the county manager plan, the county had \$20,706 in outstanding warrants and \$40,000 bonded indebtedness. By 1946, the bond debt had been paid off and the county had only \$131 in outstanding warrants. The county manager form of government came into question quickly and a petition called for a vote on whether or not to keep the local government in the same form. On July 20, 1948, the citizens of Petroleum County voted to retain the county manager form of government 274 to 119.<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> Harold G. Halcrow, Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, *County Manager Government in Montana*, Montana State College Agricultural Experiment Station, Bozeman, MT,

### Time Moves On

Time moves slowly in Petroleum County, however, major changes continued to take place. Electricity, indoor plumbing, and telephone lines reached rural residents during the 1940s and '50s. A mini oil boom at Cat Creek in the mid-1940s caused excitement and brief speculation. By 1950, however, the anticipation once again passed. The *Pages of Time*, the local history book, states, "By 1950 the town's population was noted as 390. There has been no activity to stimulate growth since that time."<sup>188</sup>

However, every fall with the beginning of hunting season, an onslaught of hunters arrive in the region to take advantage of the fresh air, wide open spaces, and plentiful game. In 1936, President Roosevelt created, by executive order, the Charles Marion Russell National Wildlife Refuge (CMR) along the Missouri River. The CMR includes all of the 250,000 acre Fort Peck Reservoir, itself a New Deal Project, and 760,000 acres of prairie, badlands, and river bottoms surrounding the river. Access points to the CMR and excellent hunting exist in northern Petroleum County.<sup>189</sup> The refuge draws hunters from across the country, but so does the rest of the county. From September to November, hunters fill the local hotel, RV park, general stores, bars, and cafes, giving a much needed, and now expected, economic boost to the area.

While the economy and growth may have stagnated, the resilient citizens of the county continued to improve their community. The first attempt at a municipal pool (other swimming holes existed prior) took place in 1943. This pool lasted only a few days however because its dirt walls and floor soaked up more water than the city water

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September 1949, and Gail Shaw and Sandy Hanson, "Factual History of Petroleum County," Petroleum County History Files, vertical file, *Winnett*.

<sup>188</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County*. Lewistown, Montana: New-Argus Printing, 1990, p. 621.

<sup>189</sup> *Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge*, January 30, 2008, [http://gorp.away.com/gorp/resource/us\\_nwr/mt\\_charl.htm](http://gorp.away.com/gorp/resource/us_nwr/mt_charl.htm).

system could provide. In 1962, the Phillips family donated property at the west end of Main Street for a pool. A group of volunteers donated time, money and materials and a concrete pool was constructed. This pool deteriorated and in 1981, with the help of the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation funds and after the creation of the George Ore Memorial Park next door, the pool that hosts so much activity during today's summers was built. The town government moved into the Soil Conservation Service building in the 1950s, for the first time the Winnett City government had its own building. A public library was also opened in this building. In 1974, the library (the state's first school-community combined library) moved into the new school building. Also, construction began on a new City Hall in 1989. This building now houses the city offices, ambulance, and fire equipment. In 1960, the town built its first sewer lagoons to eliminate the dumping of raw sewage into McDonald Creek; within ten years they built a third lagoon to meet environmental protection laws. In 1984, the town built a complete new water and sewer distribution system.<sup>190</sup>

The residents lost some of their legislative power in 1965 when the federal court reapportioned districts in an attempt to comply with the U.S. Supreme Court's "one-man one-vote" ruling. Petroleum County became part of a voting district that also included Fergus and Judith Basin Counties.<sup>191</sup>

### **The Winnett Schools**

The K-12 Winnett Public School, the only school in the one school district in Petroleum County, gradually moved into the spotlight at the center of the community. The community passed a bond election to finance the building of a new high school in

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<sup>190</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 618-621.

<sup>191</sup> Michael Malone, et al., *Montana: A History of Two Centuries*, revised edition, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991, p. 391.

1951. In 1965, the Methodist Church purchased the original little white schoolhouse that faithfully served the community since 1912. A new building to house grade school classrooms, the school-public library, a kitchen and multi-purpose room, and a regulation size gymnasium finished construction in 1974. Most of the one-room country schools closed between the 1940s and '60s. Although the Ross School on the Musselshell River, and technically in Garfield County, still operates. Its school children travel to Winnett, or stay in town, to attend their high school classes. The beloved old Spanish-mission style school, built in 1921, was condemned in 1995 and demolished in subsequent years. A new addition, finished in the fall of 1998, replaced the old building and provided new junior and senior high school classrooms and a new music room with practice rooms. The Winnett Schools works tirelessly to raise their standards and ensure a top-notch education. In 2006, Winnett Public School received the honor of being named one of the nation's 200 Blue Ribbon Schools. Of 120,000 schools nationwide, this distinction was awarded to less than one-tenth of one percent of the schools.

### **Montana Freeman**

In 1996, a small group of people, who called themselves Freeman, holed up at a ranch compound near Jordan, Montana, the closest town to Winnett to the east. The Freeman refused to recognize the authority of the U.S. Government and began printing their own money and issuing arrest warrants. When authorities arrived at their ranch, the Freeman refused to leave their house. An eighty-one day stand-off began March 25, and ended peaceably June 13. Some of these Freeman lived in the Winnett area, and the frenzy surrounding the standoff affected Petroleum County. The Winnett School and Sherriff's Department received threats from the Freeman prior to and during the standoff. Michigan militiamen, another group with views similar to the Montana Freeman, arrived

and camped on the Musselshell River. Also, the FBI and U.S. Marshalls, and members of the media traveled back and forth through the county.

### **Torosaurus Discovery**

National media attention again turned to Petroleum County in July 2001 when a dinosaur skull was airlifted out of a hillside thirty miles north of Winnett. After months of preparation by excavation crews from the Museum of the Rockies in Bozeman, Montana, the largest torosaurus skull yet found was ready to be transported. Camera crews from NBC's "Today Show" rolled as the Montana Army National Guard used a UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter to move the 35,000 pound skull. A cast of the skull now hangs in the Petroleum County Public Library, while the real fossil remains at the Museum of the Rockies.<sup>192</sup>

### **Petroleum County Today**

As people continued to move away and schools and post offices closed, transportation routes improved. While distance and difficult traveling conditions once separated people, gravel roads allowed them to decrease travel time from a day or days to hours and minutes. Gradually, the many separate communities gave way to a county-wide, close-knit, neighborhood. Angelu (Lu) Pugrud, a lifetime Petroleum County resident says, "people really do care, we found that out ..." when Lu's daughter, Sig, was severely burned in a butane explosion. People rally around each other and operate on a, "set of morals without even thinking about it."<sup>193</sup>

Agricultural endeavors occupy most residents, but two general stores, two bars, one café, and various other businesses service the community. The current county population hovers around 500 and the town of Winnett around 200. All 500 people know

<sup>192</sup> Martin J. Kidston, "Head of its class," *Lee Montana Newspapers*, 29 July 2001.

<sup>193</sup> AngeLu Pugrud, interview, Laura Nowlin, Thomas and AngeLu Pugrud Ranch, August 4, 2007.

each other; this creates an environment of safety and neighborliness. Occupants reacted disgustedly to a 1986 Harvard School of Public Health study that found Petroleum County to be second on their national list of “hunger counties.” The study based its findings on income and the ability to get food stamps. Mayor at the time, Burt Bevis stated, “If there was somebody around here that was going hungry, there would be someone on their doorstep with a bag of groceries. We don’t let our neighbors go hungry around here.”<sup>194</sup>

The residents of Petroleum County remain tested, strong individuals, many of them descendants of those first adventurous homesteaders. The population continues to be overwhelmingly Euro-American with less than ten people being of a minority ethnicity. According to the 2000 census, 23.2% of county residents lived below the poverty line and 50 to 70% of the school students qualified for free or reduced lunch; the entire student population qualifies for free breakfast. However, the per capita income is on the rise. The crime rate is 0% and the drop-out rate is 0%.

Large ranches once again occupy the land with areas of dry land farming and minimal irrigated land. However, the landscape retains the mark of the past homesteaders and small farms that once occupied every 320 acres. The story of Petroleum County, that of initial adventure, investment, development and speculation, failure, and a return to the originally successful large cattle spreads reads like a book across the landscape.

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<sup>194</sup>Associated Press, “ ‘Hunger county’ residents deny label,” *The Billings Gazette*, January, 21, 1986.



North end of Winnett, 2007, *photo Laura Nowlin*

**A Beautiful Tribute to Walter Winnett**

By Lone Eagle, the Sioux Interpreter and Scout.

Should you ask me, why this story,  
 Why these sketches of adventure,  
 Of a lad who traveled westward  
 To a land of free and plenty;  
 How by chance he came to live here,  
 In a place he knew not whether  
 Or how soon it would be settled  
 By a thousand more such people  
 With the love of freedom ever –  
 But not the latter shall I dwell on,  
 'Tis the pioneer I speak of,  
 'Tis of him I wish to tell you.  
 Should you ask me whence he came from,  
 I should answer, I should tell you,  
 From the far northeast he ventured,  
 From the ville of London town.  
 It was in his 'teens, they tell me,  
 That this lad from London town  
 Traveled west to seek adventure,  
 Later on to find renown.  
 He left his early home, I've heard it,  
 And traveled toward the west alone.  
 Through many frontier towns he traveled,  
 Saw many villages on the prairie.  
 But not content was he to linger  
 Where the white man long had tarried;  
 Newer land he wished to gaze on,  
 Where the pale face dare not venture.  
 So he journeyed westward, westward,  
 Left the settlers home behind him,  
 Left the plowed fields in the distance,  
 Crossed the rushing Minnesota,  
 Passed the mighty Mississippi,  
 Past the land of Sac and Foxes,  
 Past the sand hills and the prairies,  
 Past the home of the Shoshone,  
 Came clear to the Little Big Horn,  
 To the hunting grounds of red men,  
 Of the Crows and fierce Sioux warriors.  
 Here he found the broad prairies  
 Still unbroken by the white man.  
 Such had been his heart's desire.

By chance he met up with a stranger,  
 Hunter, trapper, scout, was he,  
 So our young adventuring hero  
 Strove to gain his company,  
 Consented he, this ancient trapper,  
 To take this youthful lad along,  
 O'er the prairies still to westward,  
 Then by river to the mountains,  
 To trap the ermine and the beaver.  
 Thus they traveled in their ---- boats  
 Up the winding Yellowstone,  
 All the while the young adventurer  
 Hoped to find adventures real.  
 But his ancient friend, the trapper,  
 Hoped to dodge them if he could,  
 As he knew full well the danger  
 If they were captured by the Sioux.  
 So 'twas while they slowly paddled  
 'Round a big bend in the river,  
 That they came full view in showing  
 Of a thousand white Sioux teepees.  
 Then the old scout knew their danger,  
 Tried to quick row out of sight,  
 But the eyes among the lodges  
 Were as quick to see their coming.  
 So with war cries and confusion  
 Came these feathered, painted warriors,  
 To surround the two white trappers  
 And to cut off all retreat.  
 So it was our youthful hunter  
 Took in their trouble at a glance.  
 Not to be daunted was he by this chance of  
 their surprise.  
 He thought to make the better of it,  
 So decided in this wise:  
 "Row toward the camp," he ordered,  
 "draw near the largest group that stand."  
 Thus they made this journey purpose  
 To pay a visit to their land.  
 Thus they addressed the wily chieftain,  
 Who believed their words were true.  
 He was Ta tanka iyo tanke,  
 Better known as Sitting Bull.  
 Mighty was he with his warriors  
 This medicine chief of the war-like Sioux.  
 While still in friendly gestures talking,

A wild fowl fluttered near the group,  
 The youthful lad with gun uplifted,  
 Shot it dead within its tracks.  
 "Ah, Wamble Ishta!" cried the chieftain.  
 "Wamble Ishta! Eagle Eye!"  
 "You should bear that name for ever,  
 "Wamble Ishta! Eagle Eyes!"  
 And thus it was our young adventurer  
 Came to live among the Sioux,  
 Who saved his life by strategy,  
 He soon made friends with all the warriors,  
 And dwelt within the chieftan's teepee.  
 With them he hunted, fished and trapped.  
 For three long summers did the linger  
 In the tepee of the red men,  
 Seeking new adventures ever,  
 Probably dreaming in his slumbers  
 Of his home in London town.  
 There came a day he went with hunters  
 To timbered hills in quest of fir,  
 And while returning to their tepees  
 Heard the sound of rifles booming  
 In the valley of the Big Horn.  
 Then as they approached the nearer,  
 Ghastly scenes befell their eyes,  
 Many soldiers they saw lying,  
 The valiant dead of Custer's men,  
 The warriors with their scalps as trophies,  
 Had vanished to the northland far.  
 So free at last was Eagle Eye  
 To go where e'er he chose,  
 To a land of more adventurer,  
 Or a place of more repose.  
 Adventures he had seen a-plenty,  
 So he chose to travel eastward,  
 To the land from whence he came,  
 And recalled of all the places  
 He had wished to make his home.  
 He remembered fertile prairies  
 Near the Judith mountains gloom.  
 Here he ventured down McDonald,  
 From the land of pine and birch tree,

Till he found a place of grandeur,  
 Where he chose to build his home.  
 Surrounded by cold cliffs on one side,  
 On the other rolling prairie;  
 Here he lived for many summers,  
 Lord of all that he surveyed,  
 Raising stock of all description,  
 Fair and fat as could be seen.  
 Thus he ranched for thirty summers,  
 Herding stock on many hills,  
 Until the last few years he ruled here,  
 The sole monarch of the plains.  
 Then the settlers came in number to claim  
 his range their future home,  
 Until in less time than sees credit  
 It was a thickly settled plain.  
 Then the hero of this story  
 Thought to aid them in their venture,  
 Built a warehouse on his holdings,  
 On his ranch which gained renown,  
 Called it after Wamble Ishta,  
 Called the village Winnett town.  
 Since the founding of this village  
 It grew beyond his wildest dreams,  
 Until at present, I must tell you,  
 It's a prosperous, growing town.  
 And with the coming of our railroad,  
 It will gain by leaps and bounds.  
 Thus a young lad from the east land  
 Left his home to seek adventure,  
 And found it true, both wild and plenty,  
 In the shining mountain land,  
 On the prairies of Montana.  
 Since then he has been industrious,  
 Since then he has won renown,  
 He has builded in his honor  
 A city known as Winnett town.  
 Should you ask me, Why this story?  
 Sketched in these few lines above,  
 I should answer, I should tell you,  
 'Tis a tribute to our founder,  
 Walter J. of Winnett town.

# **Chapter III**

## **Historic Resource Study, Petroleum County, MT**

### **Discussion of Historic Resources**

Rural Historic Landscapes

Explanation of Historic Resources

#### **Introduction to Historic Resources**

Historic Eras

Brief History of Petroleum County

Historic Resources from the Era of the Stockmen (1870-1910)

Rural and Winnett Historic Resources of the Homestead

Era (1910-1930)

Historic Resources from the Great Depression (1930s)

#### **Description of Historic Resources**

Resource Type Descriptions

##### *Rural Resource Types*

Community Halls

Schoolhouses

Structures

Commercial Buildings

##### *Winnett Resource Types*

Commercial and Public Buildings

Resources Considered

“It is not necessarily those lands that are the most fertile or most favored in climate that seem to me the happiest, but those in which a long struggle of adaptation between man and his environment has brought out the best qualities of both.”

- T.S. Eliot in *After Strange Gods*

## Discussion of Historic Resources

The discussion of historic resources portion of the Historic Resource Study serves to identify, describe, and explain a portion of the historic resources in Petroleum County. A historic resource is a prehistoric or historic site, landscape, district, structure, building, or object. These resources represent and help to tell the history of a place. This discussion of historic resources first explores rural historic landscapes and the landscape present in Petroleum County. Then it includes an explanation of terms used by the National Park Service in defining and describing historic resources. This explanation is followed by a brief history of Petroleum County and historic contexts statements that serve to position the resources within the history of the area. After the history, resource type descriptions explain the significance of certain types of resources found throughout the county. The last part of the section identifies specific resources and provides a brief history and statement of significance for each of them.

### Rural Historic Landscapes

Few inhabited places in the United States offer the opportunity to stand atop a vantage point with views for fifty miles in every direction without the obstruction of buildings, vehicles or people. The wide open spaces, the big sky, and the grasslands of Petroleum County provide that opportunity. The view remains little changed since the arrival of the first settlers. However,

the very presence of the stockmen and farmers on the prairie exacted some change, visible when observed closely. People settled, and in order to maintain their livelihoods, they attempted to harness the land. These attempts left lasting imprints on the landscape viewed today.

The word landscape inspires many thoughts, each one unique to each person. The dictionary defines landscape as, “an expanse of scenery of a particular type, especially as much as can be seen by the eye.” From urban to rural, a variety of landscapes exist all around us. The National Park Service has broken significant historic landscapes into categories in order to better understand them and their role in history. These categories are: Historic Designed Landscapes, Historic Rural Landscapes, Historic Sites, and Ethnographic Landscapes. Each type of landscape reveals different aspects of the past, but each says something about the people who inhabited it. One landscape enthusiast said, “Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form.”<sup>195</sup> The diverse historic resources spread throughout Petroleum County combine to create a rural historic landscape.

A rural historic landscape, as defined by the National Park Service, is “a geographical area that historically has been used by people, or shaped or modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features.”<sup>196</sup> These landscapes are also referred to as vernacular landscapes and most are also traditional working landscapes. The term vernacular, like the term rural, possesses a variety of definitions and heated debates continue over specific definitions. Vernacular tends to describe

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<sup>195</sup> Pierce F. Lewis, “Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides for the American Scene,” in Meinig, D.W. ed, *The Interpretation of ordinary landscapes : geographical essay*., New York: Oxford University Press, 1979. p. 12.

<sup>196</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, et al., *Guidelines for Documenting and Evaluating Rural Historic Landscapes*, *National Register Bulletin # 30*, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1999. p. 2.

those common things that result from the practice of everyday customs and traditional work and from finding the most practical short-term solutions.<sup>197</sup> Agricultural landscapes, such as those seen in Petroleum County, comprise a large portion of rural historic landscapes.

Rural historic landscapes reveal the living record of the past. Over time, the relationship between humans and nature and the historical land uses and management practices shaped the landscape observed today. The characteristics of the landscape, including land use patterns, vegetation, buildings and structures, boundary delineations, and transportation routes, generate visual patterns and serve as documentation of those who came before. Many features located on the Petroleum County's landscape speak to this relationship between the environment and the people living within it.

As the importance of appreciating landscapes and their contribution to understanding the past became more prominent, the National Park Service created a classification system for reading rural landscapes. In order to better understand the natural and cultural forces that shaped the land, eleven landscape characteristics were developed. "Landscape characteristics are the tangible evidence of the activities and habits of the people who occupied, developed, used, and shaped the land to serve human needs; they may reflect the beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and values of these people."<sup>198</sup> Most rural historic landscapes contain each characteristic.

These eleven characteristics and possible application in Petroleum County are as follows:

1. Land Uses and Activities: these are the key human influences that form and organize rural communities.

Land uses and activities that affected the landscape in Petroleum County were largely farming, ranching and oil drilling.

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<sup>197</sup> Robert A. Melnick, "Considering the Ordinary," in Arnold R. Alanen and Robert Z. Melnick, eds., *Preserving Cultural Landscapes in America*, Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins University Press, 2000, p. 114-115.

<sup>198</sup> McClelland, p. 3.

2. **Patterns of Spatial Organization:** the relationship among the major physical components along with politics, economics, and technology control the organization of communities by influencing settlement patterns, closeness to markets, and the accessibility to transportation.

The arrival of the railroad and its terminus in Winnett, along with Mr. Winnett's power and influence dictated the settlement and success of Winnett. Other smaller communities were organized around similar powerful men and influenced by the boom and bust cycle of crop prices.

3. **Response to the Natural Environment:** the location and organization of rural communities are influenced by major natural features.

The majority of communities were located along major creeks or near natural water systems. Community's relationships to each other were dictated by the terrain and the ease with which people could travel back and forth to visit each other. Natural features, such as the rimrocks above Winnett, also contribute greatly to the community's identity.

4. **Cultural Traditions:** the ways that land is used, occupied, and altered is a result of cultural traditions.

The American cultural tradition of the yeoman farmer followed the homesteaders to Petroleum County. The new arrivals altered the land according to the traditional farming practices in place in the United States.

5. **Circulation Networks:** the systems for transporting people, goods, and raw materials.

Transportation routes snaking across the terrain of Petroleum County reveal where people traveled and how they traveled.

6. **Boundary Demarcation:** mark large areas of ownership and land use as well as smaller areas with specific functions.

Boundaries exist across the land in the forms of fences, hedgerows, roads, and creeks. They show the division of space, ownership, and function. Significant buildings remain enclosed within barbed wire fences to separate them from their surroundings.

7. **Vegetation Related to Land Use:** long-established patterns of land use are directly related to certain types of vegetation.  
 Example: Many homesteaders planted trees near their homes, the buildings may be gone, but the small group of trees remains.
8. **Buildings, Structures, and Objects:** the people who constructed and used them left behind clues to their historic activities, customs, tastes, and skills in the functions, materials, dates, conditions, construction methods and location.  
 These resources provide a wide variety of information on the past inhabitants of Petroleum County. A few examples:  
 Vernacular buildings reveal the skills of the craftsmen, as well as the inability to hire builders trained in high-style architecture. Schoolhouses and community halls give evidence to the values of education and neighborliness. Irrigation structures show the importance of water and the attempts to control it.
9. **Clusters:** groupings of buildings, fences, etc.; information about historical and continuing activities in addition to the impact of varying technologies and the preferences of particular generations are revealed through the arrangement of clusters.  
 Example:  
 Ranch headquarters and major road intersections.
10. **Archaeological Sites:** provide information about the methods of land use.  
 Just as the above ground resources enlighten us to the activities of the past, so do archaeological sites. These sites are not discussed in this study.
11. **Small-scale elements:** these add to the historic setting of a rural landscape, some are long-lasting and others (like hay bales) are temporal or seasonal.  
 Examples:  
 Foot bridges, cow paths, road markers, gravestones, isolated vegetation, fence posts, trail ruts, culverts, and foundations.

The rural historic landscape of Petroleum County contains all of the eleven landscape characteristics. Vernacular resources including roads, fences, hedgerows, corrals, bridges,

cemeteries, houses, barns and other farming and ranching structures and irrigation projects that consisted of ditches, canals, and dams exist across the land. Through the reading of these resources, the careful observer learns about the lifeways, traditions, and values of the past inhabitants of Petroleum County. The landscape tells the story of a remote open-range ranchland being turned into small farms. Roads, trails, and railroad beds expose where and how people traveled and transported goods. Remnants of communities show where people gathered to socialize, worship, and learn. They worked the land, following a plow and digging ditches. They built homes, planted trees and gardens, and dug wells. And they buried their friends and families. As Mother Nature bared her teeth and struck with tough winters and dry summers, people vacated the land, leaving behind vestiges that tell the stories of their everyday lives.

## Explanation of Historic Resources

### Introduction to Historic Resources

The stories of those who inhabited the high plains and broken prairie of Petroleum County lie within the numerous fantastic historic resources scattered across the landscape. These resources exist as reminders of the days gone by and of the people who poured their tears and sweat into creating a better life for their families. They tell the troublesome tale of Petroleum County and of the people who gambled on their 320 acres of land. Their visibility along deserted county roads and the disappearing Main Street in Winnett mark past population centers and a once thriving settlement town.

As these resources continue to disappear, so do the stories of the past. The National Register of Historic Places developed by the National Park Service maintains a list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant to American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture on the national, state, or local level (*for a more complete explanation of the National Register please see the section on Preservation Management Strategies*). The National Register documents properties and evaluates their significance as a way of preserving history. As part of creating the register, the National Park Service developed methods for evaluating the significance of historic properties; these methods can be applied even in situations where the National Register is not involved. In addition, the National Register program has developed definitions pertaining to the preservation of American history. Important definitions are as follows:

*Historic Resource/Property:* Any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object. These are also often referred to as a *cultural resource*.

*District:* A significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

*Site:* Location of a significant event or activity related to the importance for which a property meets the National Register criteria.

*Building:* A resource created principally to shelter a form of human activity, such as a house.

*Structure:* A functional construction made for the purposes other than creating shelter, such as a bridge.

*Object:* A construction primarily artistic in nature or relatively small in scale and simply constructed, such as a statue or milepost.

*Evaluation:* Process by which the significance and integrity of a historic property are judged and eligibility for National Register listing is determined.

*Significance:* Importance of a historic property as defined by the National Register criteria in one or more areas of significance.<sup>199</sup>

The significance of a historic resource is based on its association with one of the four National Register Criteria. These criteria are summarized as follows:

*Criterion A:* Association with events, activities, or patterns.

*Criterion B:* Association with important people, or person.

*Criterion C:* Distinctive physical characteristics of design, construction, or form.

*Criterion D:* Potential to yield important information, usually in the form of an archaeological site.<sup>200</sup>

Through association and representation, historic resources symbolize important events, patterns, people, architecture, engineering, and/or pieces of the past now found only by archaeological investigation. Historic resources find their significance in their ability to convey the stories of the past.

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<sup>199</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, National Register, History and Education, *Glossary of Terms*.

<sup>200</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997, p. 3.

## Historic Eras

The historic resources considered in this study fall into specific historic eras within the history of Petroleum County. These eras highlight the important events and people during a specific time period or across a geographic region; they provide a better understanding of the resources' significance and how they contribute to the region's history. The following summarizes the history of Petroleum County and describes three important historic eras that help to explain the importance of the resources present in the county.

## Brief History of Petroleum County

Located only fifty miles from the exact geographic center of the massive state of Montana is the tiny town of Winnett, county seat of Petroleum County. While not officially designated a county until 1924, settlers arrived in Petroleum County much earlier. Scattered settlements, mostly trading posts, established on major travel routes sprouted up beginning in the mid-1860s. From then until about 1910 the stockmen ruled the range, developing it enough to establish a few small communities with post offices. Homesteaders flooded into the area beginning around 1910. Winnett received a post office in this year.

From 1910-1919 homesteaders staked their claims on 320 acres of land advertised as perfect for farming. Approximately twenty towns and communities grew up to support the surrounding population. After a debilitating drought beginning in 1917 worsened in 1919, those who had arrived only a few short years before realized that the prairie of Petroleum County would not allow survival on only 320 acres. The exodus began in 1919. It slowed for a few years due to an oil strike at Cat Creek, twenty-two miles east of Winnett. The Frantz Corporation struck oil in February 1920 and by 1922 Winnett's population increased from 316 to

1,213. The strike resulted in a brief five-year boom. By 1930 Winnett's population dropped back down to 408.

The Great Depression hit the area hard, although many New Deal programs helped people survive. Still, many more residents left. In 1942, Petroleum County adopted the county manager form of government in an effort to cut costs and reduce debt. The county continues to slowly lose people and today the population stands at around 500 people; Winnett is the only surviving town and is home to about 200.

*For a more complete history refer to the History of Petroleum County section of this Historic Resource Study.*

#### Historic Resources from the Era of the Stockmen (1870-1910)

Stockmen, mainly from southwestern Montana and Texas, moved their herds into a land being vacated by both Native Americans and bison herds. They claimed homesteads or bought property on rivers and streams and let their stock loose on the grassland, taking full advantage of the free grass on the public domain. The area that became Petroleum County first became home to the sheepmen. Traditionally, these men camped closer to their herds than cattlemen and therefore extended their headquarters further onto the prairie. By the mid-1870s, sheep and cattle shared the range. The stockmen built houses, barns, corrals, dams and roads for better management of their herds.

Few historic resources remain from this early and sparse settlement in Petroleum County. However, many towns got their start from ranch headquarters and their placement and subsequent growth is owed to the first stockmen and women in the area. In addition, many trails and other earth structures date to this era. The 79 Cattle Trail began in 1879 as a route for

trailing cattle and transporting ranch supplies. It serves much the same purpose today as it did at its inception.

#### Rural and Winnett Historic Resources of the Homestead Era (1910-1930)

While stockmen and tradesmen occupied the high plains of Petroleum County, it was the homestead boom that unleashed the flood gates of settlement. In 1910, when the Homestead Boom began, Petroleum County remained the eastern most portion of Fergus County. Routes to the area consisted of a few roads, passable only in good weather. The largest waves of settlers rolling into Petroleum County happened during 1910 and again from 1913-1918. Most new arrivals came by rail, which reached Lewistown, the major town of the region, in 1903. Connecting rails were completed to Grass Range in 1913 and Roy in 1914. These towns lie to the west of the present day Petroleum County line. Melstone and Musselshell to the south received rail lines in 1908. The railroads greatly aided new homesteaders in reaching the remote lands of Petroleum County. 1912 saw the largest influx of settlers in a place that previous to 1910 contained only four post offices (Flatwillow, Edgewater, Weede, Valentine). It grew to at least twenty-two known post offices by 1922. These new homesteaders came from all over the world, but most were native born Americans. One area in the western part of the county, near the community of Blakeslee, came to be known as the Minnesota Bench due to the number of Minnesotans who settled there. The homesteaders arrived from various places and with various life experiences, but once settled in the area they all shared the common struggle of surviving on the unrelenting plains. The hard times gave way to close-knit communities with a sense of unity and community identity.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 5, 52, 102, 203.

All over the region, new communities cropped up out of the prairie. These people built homes of sod, log, tar-paper, wood frame, and very few of brick or hollow clay tile. At the centers of land settlement, towns emerged. These towns contained schoolhouses, hotels, community halls and stores. While some, like Teigen, vanished almost as quickly as it began; others, like Flatwillow, held on and today still maintains a community hall. The homesteaders left behind more than buildings; they made their imprint in the land as well as on it. They constructed dams, ditches, and trails that remain as clues to their agricultural practices.

The prairie filled with irregular 160-320 acre claims and soon a variety of housing structures dotted the landscape. Log cabins were covered with split poles and the cracks between the logs were daubed with mud. A foot or more of sod covered the roof to keep the rain out. “Those who desired the more elaborate comfort of a plank floor and door hauled their lumber from Lewistown, 75 miles away, requiring 4-6 days to cross the mountains.”<sup>202</sup> Other homes varied according to the resources nearby. Those who claimed prairie land with no timber nearby built a variety of structures. The dug-out consisted of a hole dug into the side of the hill with supports to keep the roof from falling into the dwelling. A door was fitted to the front. The dug-out allowed for later exterior additions. Constructions of layers of sod laid like bricks that formed walls up to three feet thick were known as sod huts. One of these remained in use in the Dovetail area until the 1940s. Very few bought rough cut lumber from Lewistown and built a frame house. The last, which proved very popular as a starter home, was the tar paper shack, usually ordered from Lewistown. Sod roofs covered most structures, regardless of wall construction.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 135.

<sup>203</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 47, 51, 205.

The availability of water dictated the decision for where to stake a claim and then later controlled everyday life. Because precipitation averaged only ten to twelve inches per year, most streams ran with a reliable flow only in the spring, after the snow melt. A few lucky homesteaders found good springs. Often, springs contained alkaline water unsuitable for human consumption. This water went to the stock and was used for washing. Some people dug wells, but most hauled water from springs and streams when they ran, they also stored water in a cistern that caught rain. Remains of these attempts at a water supply also exist in the landscape.

The town of Winnett emerged out of the Winnett Ranch buildings at the beginning of the homestead boom. Walter Winnett constructed the first buildings, a saloon, general store, and post office. He later constructed the Winnett Block and the Montana Hotel. The post office, named Winnett, came into existence on October 4, 1910. After the first few years of school in the Winnett house, the Winnett children went to Lewistown for school. By 1912 community growth necessitated the construction of a designated schoolhouse. This building was one room, 20 x 40 feet, white, and served about twenty-five students. This building still stands and serves today as the Methodist Church.<sup>204</sup>

The Milwaukee Land Company purchased a portion of Winnett's ranch lands for a town site around 1913. On July 18, 1914 the first sale of Winnett town lots took place, \$64,000 of town lots were sold. By September of 1914, the first issue of the *Winnett Times* newspaper ran the headline, "Thirty-two Business Houses in Winnett." By the time the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad chugged into town in 1917, Winnett was a growing and thriving little community.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Petroleum County Library, p. 597, 629.

<sup>205</sup> Petroleum County Library, p. 598-600.



*Photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library*

The community struggled to establish and develop its schools. In 1914, Miss Amanda Swift began teaching senior high classes for those interested after the normal grade school day. In 1915-56 formal classes took place in the Masonic Rooms above the Moll Pool Hall also known as the Temple Billiard Parlor, a building that still stands on Main Street. In the 1917-18 school year, the upper grades moved their classes to the first Eager Mercantile building, which also still stands on Main Street. The first dormitory for out of town kids was designated also in 1917. In 1912, the senior grades finally received a real school building. The new Spanish Mission style school housed all the grades and the little white schoolhouse was used for shop classes.<sup>206</sup> In the meantime, communities throughout the region constructed one and two-room schoolhouses for children in grade school and junior high.

The majority of the historic buildings and resources scattered throughout Petroleum

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<sup>206</sup> Petroleum County Library, p. 629-30.

County as well as those that remain standing in Winnett date from this homestead era. Most resources were constructed during the first half of the era, 1910-20, when the area experienced growth and development on a great magnitude. As the homesteaders who persevered through the terrible drought of 1919 became more entrenched in the county, they built community halls and moved schoolhouses to better serve the changing population, as evidenced in the Dovetail Schoolhouse and Valentine Community Hall, as well as others. An oil strike in 1920 and the subsequent influx of speculators led to more building in Winnett especially. Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps mark the height of development in Winnett in 1922 and the decline by 1929. The Great Depression marks the end of the homesteading period in central Montana, as well as the construction of the last of many of the historic resources in Petroleum County.

#### Historic Resources from the Great Depression (1930s)

The Great Depression in Montana began with a severe drought in 1929 that reached disastrous proportions by 1931. Soon after assuming office in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt began implementing changes. His New Deal introduced a number of agencies, known as the Alphabet Soup Agencies, which were designed to create jobs and provide assistance. They were instrumental in the relief effort in Petroleum County, as they were throughout the rest of Montana. The major programs in the County were the Civil Works Administration, the Works Progress Administration, the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the Resettlement Administration, and the Civilian Conservation Corps.



**Members of the Brady Family plowing a road for the WPA, *photo courtesy of James and Diana Brady***

The Great Depression struck Petroleum County relentlessly. In response, many New Deal programs began operating in the region. These programs built many roads and dams, the remains of which still survive. Those large-scale projects still in place and evident on the landscape serve as reminders of the attempts to survive the Great Depression.

## Description of Historic Resources

### Resource Type Descriptions

A variety of property types exist throughout the county, such as community halls, schoolhouses, earth structures including dams and ditches, and commercial buildings. Homes, barns, and other related structures also abound, however, since their construction and styles vary greatly, they are not generalized and discussed in this section of the report. Specific houses and barns are studied in the *Resources Considered* section of Chapter II.

Each resource type is associated with a historic era, and each type contributes to the history of that period in time. Each resource reveals the mindset and intentions of those who built and used them. While each resource has a specific history, generalizations can be drawn about resource types and the significance based on their functions. The pieces of the past revealed through careful examination of these resources explain more than Petroleum County's past; they also help to explain what takes place today.

Once home to over 2,000 people and twenty post offices, Petroleum County still harbors many remnants of those early homesteaders. While not every post office marked a town, they did mark population centers of distinct communities. These people built structures according to their needs and capabilities. The structures helped to define the areas and create centers for social, political, and cultural growth within each community.

Resources in Winnett consist mainly of false-front and parapet roofed commercial buildings. Residences were not considered due to time constraints on the project, however, an overwhelming majority of residences in Winnett date to the Settlement Era (1910-1930). 1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps show Winnett during the oil boom period and maps from 1929 show the town already in decline. As time went on, fires and age took their toll with many

buildings disappearing. Very little infill has taken place; this results in buildings that date mostly from the late 1910s and early 1920s.

Following is a compilation of resource types with a brief description and an explanation of their significance based on their associated historic context.

### *Rural Resource Types*

Community Halls – The high plains of Petroleum County hold the remains of many past community centers. Even though each building was constructed for the same purposes, each hall possesses different physical characteristics. For example, the Dovetail community used two wood frame one-room schoolhouses pushed together. The Valentine community built a massive wood frame building with wood siding specifically for a community hall. The Flatwillow community also built specifically for community social functions. Their building is one-story with a full basement and has a stucco siding. Therefore, typical of vernacular architecture, community halls in Petroleum County do not follow a set architectural design.

Once home to too many small towns and communities, Petroleum County witnessed the construction of several community halls. Many of those remaining today were at one time located within a town, although many schoolhouses and other structures located in the center of a populated region and not necessarily in a town also provided space for social gatherings. While the physical characteristics vary depending on the community's resources; each area that constructed a community hall did so as a neighborhood effort. People joined together in time, money, and materials to construct these buildings essential to the social structure of the region.

The buildings used as community halls are understood within the context of the Settlement Era (1910-1930) in Petroleum County. These buildings represent a growing

community ready to invest in itself and its future. In a remote place with poor roads and transportation, isolation became a huge obstacle to survival. Community gathering places, whether they were schoolhouses, post offices, or designated community halls, provided a space for important social interaction. These halls held among other things, dances, talent shows, holiday parties, card parties, and parties after softball games. These buildings offered the surrounding community a place for fun, interaction, and the development of community identity.

Schoolhouses – Schoolhouses account for the highest number of historical building type on the “Historical Map of Petroleum County.” Similar to the community halls, these important places



**Flatwillow School, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library**

for early education also vary in physical make-up. The Lone Prairie Schoolhouse is small with few windows, while the Dovetail Schoolhouse is long with many windows, and the Ross Schoolhouse is log while many others are of wood frame construction.

Long an icon of American settlement and expansion, the lone schoolhouse standing proud on the prairie, or tucked safely into the woods, grew and developed similar to the process of settlement it represented. Beginning in the early-mid 19<sup>th</sup> century the design and construction principles of the schoolhouse underwent a wave of improvement. Initiated by Henry Barnard,

schoolhouse architecture came to follow a new set of standards that resulted in the well-known one- and two-room schoolhouses of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. While schoolhouses varied in size and materials (in 1930 Petroleum County operated 48 one-room schoolhouses, 41 of these were frame and the remaining 7 were log<sup>207</sup>) all had essentially the same lay-out. In every township existed one section of land specifically for school use. The corner of the school section held the building. Most buildings contained a cloakroom just inside the door for students to hang their coats and store their lunches. The schoolroom was spacious, usually with large windows on one side to provide light. The teacher's desk stood on the far side with a blackboard and pull-down maps behind the desk and across the back wall. A pot-bellied stove sat in the center for heat.<sup>208</sup> Outside, two outhouses stood to service the children's needs, or provide a little recess fun for the boys who loved to lock the girls inside. A water pump stood out front with a flag pole and sometimes playground equipment. Some schools provided a teacherage, this usually consisted of a partition off of the original school building.<sup>209</sup>

The schoolhouse functioned to stabilize an area and provided a building within which the community could develop. The schoolhouses became the center of the community; in places without a community hall, they often served as churches and meeting houses and hosted dances or holiday parties. The meaning of these buildings' arises from their association with the homestead boom and settlement era in Petroleum County (1910-1930). They represent the dedication to education shown by the rural citizens of the area and the development of towns and communities. In addition, the constant moving of schoolhouses symbolizes in physical form the changing population demographics and the people's response by simply moving their necessary

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<sup>207</sup> Superintendent of Public Instruction. Twenty-Second Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of Montana. The Tribune Printing Co.: Great Falls, MT, 1931, p. 96.

<sup>208</sup> Michael Webb, My Folks and the One-Room Schoolhouse, Capper Press: USA, 1993, p. 1-2.

<sup>209</sup> Jack Hanson, interview by Laura Brady, Winnett, MT, December 29, 2005.

buildings to more convenient locations. The existence of country schoolhouses represents the difficulty in traveling long distances, the commitment to education of the homesteaders, and a once populous place that readily reused buildings.

Structures – A structure is a functional construction made for the purposes other than creating shelter, such as a bridge, ditch, dam, or road.

From the very beginning of white settlement in the area, man began to manipulate the earth to aid in their agricultural endeavors as well as to make transportation and communication easier. Countless roads, dams, and ditches stretch across the landscape, a lasting imprint of human resilience.

Most historic structures in Petroleum County are constructed of dirt and gravel. The Winnett Irrigation Ditch, the War House Dam, and Yellow Water Dam are all constructed of earth, as is the 79 Cattle Trail. These larger-scale irrigation projects are located near major creeks in the area while private dams and ditches are scattered across the prairie.

The historic structures in Petroleum County can be understood through their association with a variety of historic periods from the Era of Stockmen (1870-1910), the Settlement Era (1910-1930), and the Great Depression (1930s). This shows their enduring importance to the people of the area and the long-term use of the land. In addition, a flurry of waterworks projects took place in the American West during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>. The Petroleum County irrigation structures represent some of many groups pursuing the control of water and seeking a dependable water source for their crops. These projects are representative of many in the West in the ambition driving the projects and also of their limited success. The resources from the settlement era represent a time of excitement and progress in a place that

would later suffer from extreme drought and depression, leaving behind a hardened portion of the population. They are large and cross miles of prairie, reminding those who pass of the will to harness the environment shown by their predecessors, and of the unrelenting power of nature.

Commercial Buildings – Few commercial buildings remain from past towns. They remind those passing of the once vibrant and lively places that supported the first settlers. These buildings are wood frame and were originally false-front. They are rectangular, but vary in window placement, siding material, and other descriptive features.

The significance of these buildings lies in their representation of past settlements. In the case of the Teigen Hotel, it is the only building left of the once growing and thriving town. The buildings serve as a reminder that these places were not just outliers for larger towns; they provided all the essential services of stores, post offices, hotels, and other necessities. They are associated with the Settlement Era (1910-1930) and symbolize the sudden growth and subsequent decline of the region.

#### *Winnett Resource Types*

Commercial and Public Buildings – The overwhelming majority of commercial buildings, or those that were historically commercial, in Winnett are Western false-front or parapet roof commercial buildings. They are wood frame with wood horizontal siding. The public buildings are also wood frame with wood siding. A few exceptions exist in the Winnett Block and the Masonic Hall.

The historic buildings in Winnett are understood through their association with the Settlement Era (1910-1930) in Petroleum County. While Winnett experienced a population

boom due to the Cat Creek oil discovery in the 1920s, construction of most of the historic buildings that remain today took place in the 1910s. The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The surviving buildings represent the early growth and development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.

### Resources Considered

For purposes of this Historic Resources Study, a survey was conducted in order to understand the resources and history of Petroleum County. A survey is simply the process of gathering information on and identifying those historic resources important to the character of the community. Resources chosen for the survey were, for the most part, commercial and public buildings throughout the county. A map, "Historical Map of Petroleum County, MT" was consulted for the existence and location of past communities, schools, post offices, and other structures. The rural properties surveyed exist along county roads and those on private roads received special permission. The survey is intended to be only an overview and has by no means covered all of the significant historic properties in Petroleum County. In Winnett, only those buildings originally constructed as commercial or public buildings were surveyed. Many residences in Winnett are historic; they however, were not included due to constraints on time and survey resources. Archaeological resources were not included in this study.

The survey consists of an architectural description, a history, statement of significance, and photographs of the building. The survey results in an inventory, which is a document that contains the information that has been compiled on those buildings evaluated as significant. The inventory goes on file at the State Historic Preservation Office in Helena. Owners often inquire

about these inventories when they want to learn about their buildings. Researchers use them to determine historical context of the area. Historic resources provide a link to the past and a survey will help maintain that connection. A survey contains information for study in the future about the place's past. A survey also identifies what is there, so when it is gone, photographs, descriptions and histories are documented. The resources identified and evaluated reveal much about the community's past, its settlement, development, and its people. The portions of the inventory relating to the history and significance of the studied properties are reproduced below in brief. Historic resources are referred to by their historic name. Because many buildings served more than one purpose, the names for the resources located in Winnett were determined based on the historical map on the back flap of the Petroleum County history book, the *Pages of Time*.

Rural Resources:

Southern Petroleum County  
 Flatwillow Community Hall  
 Flatwillow Store  
 Flatwillow Schoolhouse  
 Lone Prairie Schoolhouse  
 Yellow Water Dam  
 Northern and Western Petroleum County  
 '79 Cattle Trail  
 Akins' Farmstead  
 Dovetail Schoolhouse  
 Old Brick House  
 Ross Schoolhouse  
 Teigen Hotel  
 War House Dam  
 Winnett Irrigation Company  
 Ditch  
 Valentine Community Hall  
 (Fergus County)

Winnett Resources:

City Food Lockers  
 Central Billiard Parlor  
 Doctor Alexander Clinic  
 Eager Mercantile  
 First National Bank  
 Harness Shop  
 Little White Schoolhouse (first  
 Winnett schoolhouse)  
 Marti Brothers Grocery  
 Masonic Hall  
 Monarch Lumber Company Building  
 Montana Elevator  
 Montana Lumber and Hardware  
 Building  
 Northrup Barber  
 Temple Billiard Hall  
 Winnett Block  
 Winnett City Hall  
 Winnett Times



## Rural Resources

### Flatwillow Community Hall



Second Flatwillow Hall, c. 1926, *photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library*

#### History

Plans for Flatwillow Hall began in 1920, at this time about 150 families lived in the Flatwillow area. Mr. B. F. Lepper donated \$1000 in memory of his nephew H.W. Lepper who died of the flue in 1918. His only stipulation was that the building be named Lepper Memorial Hall. By 1921, the community organized a donation drive, ordered materials and built the hall with volunteer labor. An all-day grand opening was held on July 4, 1921. Over 300 people attended. By 1925, the building was debt-free.

Also, by 1925, a small group of people in the area were unhappy with the activities taking place at the hall. Henry Hawkins came forward as the spokesman for this group of people. They wanted the Hall closed to dances after midnight on Saturdays, the situation escalated when Henry Hawkins had the secretary-treasurer, Bob Bessay, of the Hall board arrested for violation of the Sunday Dance Law. A trial was held and the jury found no wrong doing on the part of Bessay. After the trial, Bessay received an anonymous typed note that read "Better Lay Off the Sunday Dances – This is a Warning." Shortly thereafter, the Hall burned to the ground. The Fire Marshall determined the fire was deliberately set. Rumors flew, but no persons were ever arrested for the crime.

As soon as the insurance money came through after the fire, the community began reconstruction of the Hall. By July 23, 1926 the Flatwillow Hall once again held dances. This new hall added a stage on the east side.

While constructed and operated by the community, the building sat on property owned by the Wilson Ranch. When they sold their ranch to the Nebraska Feeding Company in the 1940s, the building transferred with the property. Unsuccessful attempts by the managers of the Nebraska Feeding Co to get the owner to deed the ground to the community followed. In 1983 the feeding co sold to the First Continental Corporation. By 1985,

John Greytak, the president of FCC, succeeded in transferring the property to the community.<sup>210</sup>

## Significance



Flatwillow Hall,  
2007, photo Laura  
Nowlin

The Flatwillow Community Hall meets the requirements for National Register Criterion A for the role it played in the development of the community of Flatwillow and for serving as a social gathering place for the entire Petroleum County.

The Flatwillow Community Hall was originally constructed in 1921. It burned due to arson in 1925 and was rebuilt in 1926. It has served continuously as a community gathering place, first for the Flatwillow community and later for the entire county. The Hall provided the area with a large gathering place for community activities and events as well as church services. The hall provided a space for important social gatherings that contributed to the community's social and cultural growth as well as helping it to find a common identity. It played a central role in the small town of Flatwillow until that town's decline in the early to mid-twentieth century. It is only one of three buildings left of the former town of Flatwillow, yet it remains in use, today serving the whole county. The Flatwillow Community Hall stands as a reminder of the past vibrancy of the Flatwillow area and its continued use remains a testament to its importance in the community.

<sup>210</sup> Petroleum County Public Library. *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County*. Lewistown, Montana: New-Argus Printing, 1990, p. 267-69.

## Flatwillow School

### History



**Flatwillow School, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

The Flatwillow schoolhouse was built in 1912 by Frank Moshner, who also built the schoolhouse in Winnett. These were the first schoolhouses constructed in the county. Hallie King served as the first teacher in this new school building at Flatwillow. She walked back and forth from her homestead to school to teach about 30 children. She received \$65 a month. The schoolhouse held church services and community gatherings until the community hall was constructed nearby. The 1968-69 school year was its

last. Tom and Lou Pugrud, nearby Flatwillow ranchers, bought and moved the schoolhouse to their ranch in 1969. The Pogruds maintain and use the building for social gatherings.<sup>211</sup>

### Significance

The Flatwillow Schoolhouse meets the requirements of National Register Criterion A for its role in the early development of Flatwillow as well as its representation of the importance of education to the homesteaders.

Flatwillow created the first school district in Petroleum County and also built one of the first two schoolhouses. The Flatwillow schoolhouse was built by the same man as the new schoolhouse in Winnett. Throughout the county, buildings were converted to or designated as schoolhouses. These two school buildings represent the first effort to construct a building solely for school purposes. The Flatwillow area flourished and the schoolhouse was used until the 1960s. It was one of the longest, continuously used school buildings in the county.

<sup>211</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, pg. 271-73; Sharkey, Mrs. Andrew, "History of Flatwillow," *Winnett Times*, Winnett, Mont. P. 3, Thursday, July 16, 1964 (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition).

## Flatwillow Store

### History



**Flatwillow Store 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

Redd operated the store on his own. For some of the time the Redds lived in the basement of the store. The store closed in the summer of 1935. It stands with the Flatwillow Community Hall and the Jimmy Wilson house as the last buildings in Flatwillow.<sup>212</sup>

The first Flatwillow Store was built in 1892 and was owned by W.J. Wells and Co. The store had multiple subsequent owners, and in 1927 it burned. Jim Wilson, a local rancher, wanted a store in the community so he hired Ted Swindland to build a new building. Swindland constructed the stucco covered false front building that stands today. The Winnett grocer, Elmer Eager, stocked the store and his employee, O.H. Redd and his wife Mabel, ran it. From 1930-35,

### Significance

The Flatwillow Store meets the requirements for National Register Criteria A and C.

Flatwillow was the first established town in Petroleum County. It held the first post office, created the first school district, and the store is one of only three remaining buildings in the town today. It is the only commercial building to serve as reminder of the once thriving population center. The Flatwillow Store signifies the determination of members of the Flatwillow community and the importance of a general store in a developing town. The first Flatwillow Store burned and prominent members of the community ensured that it would be rebuilt. They understood the contribution the store was to the town and surrounding area. The store helped members of the community continue in their everyday business and supplied them with all important goods. The store also represents other businesses that once occupied the streets of Flatwillow. While the Flatwillow Community Hall and the Jimmy Wilson house also remain in Flatwillow, the store helps to create a more complete picture that a town once occupied this place below the rimrocks. It was a place of business and commerce as well as a community gathering place for the rural community surrounding it.

In addition the Flatwillow Store is a classic example of western false-front architecture in a pioneer town. The store contains the common characteristics of a gable roof with a false front, large store front windows, and small windows high and on only one side. It is unique to area in that it has stucco siding. The Flatwillow Store represents the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century development of Petroleum County.

<sup>212</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 265-66.

## Lone Prairie Schoolhouse

### History



Lone Prairie School, 2007, photo *Laura Nowlin*

1945, the Lone Prairie School was moved for the last time by Carl Brindley, who jacked it up, placed skids under it, and pulled it with his Cat to where it sits today on Upper Flatwillow Road. At this time, the school district had a cistern dug out beneath the entryway that was filled once a week and then water could be pumped out of it. An oil furnace was also installed. The Lone Prairie School operated until 1963-64.<sup>213</sup>

The Lone Prairie School existed in six different locations and as two different buildings. The present day Lone Prairie Schoolhouse began as the Wallview Schoolhouse, built in 1912, and located six miles southeast of the original Iverson homestead. In the 1930's, the building was moved five miles north to a more central place for the population at that time. In 1942, it was moved with Stanley Eliasson's semi-truck. The children of Andrew Iverson and Mr. Monsma occupied the schoolhouse. Approximately

### Significance

The Lone Prairie School is significant under National Register Criteria A and C. It is a symbol of the Homesteading Era and the changing demographics in Petroleum County from 1912-1965. It also is architecturally significant as a representative rural one room schoolhouse from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The Lone Prairie School was constructed when the population in Petroleum County was growing and it was moved according to the location of school-age children. It represents the early commitment to education shown by the homesteaders and their dedication to ensure that the school remained open and used.

In addition, the schoolhouse is built in a style typical of one room schoolhouses on the Great Plains. Structurally the school remains stable. The design and form of the school are easily visible, providing a text from which researchers can learn.

<sup>213</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 271-76; Sam Dembek, "The Lone Prairie School," unpublished Social Studies class project, Winnett, MT, Fall 2007.

<h2>Yellow Water Dam</h2>	
<h3><u>History</u></h3>	
	<p>After years of attempts at an irrigation project in the Flatwillow area of Petroleum County, the Yellow Water Reservoir was finally completed in the years 1937-38. Previous efforts at building a reservoir had taken place on Flatwillow Creek, but in 1935, E.J. Parkinson surveyed and chose a dam site on Yellow Water Creek. The Civilian Conservation Corps camp from Winnett worked all day in three shifts. Two Caterpillar tractors, a grader, scarifier, scraper and other large machinery were provided by the State Water Conservation Service. Between 1937-38, laborers and equipment moved 200,000 cubic yards of</p>
<p><b>Northwest side of Yellow Water Dam, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin</b></p>	<p>dirt and 90,000 cubic yards of rock. The Yellow Water Irrigation District formed in 1940 with Glen Stroup as president, William Youderian as vice-president and Albert Mlekush as secretary-treasurer. The group began the process of surveying and building ditches, finally in 1948, the irrigation dam served its purpose. The Yellow Water Water User's Association was formed at this time. They handled the process of purchasing water rights from the State Water Conservation Board, determined individual water shares and planned the building of more ditches. The Association is still in existence. The State Fish, Wildlife and Parks Department now maintains the reservoir as a recreation area.<sup>214</sup></p>
<h3><u>Significance</u></h3>	
<p>Yellow Water Dam meets the requirements for National Register Criterion A for its role in the event of creating a system for water management in Petroleum County and its association with the Great Depression Era and New Deal programs in place in the county. It also meets the requirements for National Register Criterion C for its engineering significance.</p>	
<p>Petroleum County suffers from semi-arid conditions and the control of water came to play a significant role in the success of certain members of the county. Yellow Water Dam served to provide those living in the southwest portion of the county with a reliable water source. This considerably altered their agricultural methods and production. The dam represents the New Deal efforts in the county and is a good example of waterworks projects completed during the Great Depression.</p>	
<p>In addition, men from the Winnett Civilian Conservation Corps camp constructed the dam in an amazingly short amount of time using large machinery and moving enormous amounts of material. The engineering and construction of the Yellow Water Dam was on a much larger scale than other projects yet seen in Petroleum County. It is one of only three large-scale irrigation projects built in Petroleum County.</p>	

<sup>214</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 271.

## '79 Cattle Trail

### History



Looking east on the '79 Cattle Trail, 2007, photo  
Laura Nowlin

John R. Murphy, president of the Montana Cattle Company, started his cattle company on Sweetgrass Creek in 1879. It became known as the '79 Outfit because of its year of inception and also because Murphy used 79 for his brand. His ranch trailed cattle and sheep along the 79 Cattle Trail, across the Musselshell and back to the west in the days of open-range cattle ranching. Also, wagons carried supplies for the ranch from steamboats at the mouth of the Musselshell on the trail through Valentine, over the Judith Mountains, to the ranch headquarters

near Harlowton. The entire spread of the 79 Ranch stretched from the Yellowstone River northeast to the Big Dry near Jordan, Montana. Today's 79 Cattle Trail is a part of the original 79 Cattle Trail used by the Murphy ranch. It is maintained by Petroleum County.<sup>215</sup>

### Significance

The 79 Cattle Trail is significant under Criterion A for its association with the Era of the Stockmen and for its continuous service as a transportation route up to the present.

The 79 Cattle Trail has been used continuously since 1879. It served first as a trail for cattle drives imperative to the success of open range cattle ranches. Trails such as this were an instrumental cog in the wheel of a large ranch. Later, the trail served as a major transportation route for homesteaders coming into the area. Still later, the trail served as an access point to the upper portion of the Musselshell River.

It marks early traveling routes for people and goods and continues to be used today. Cattle can still be seen being herded down the 79 Cattle Trail and travel along the Trail remains difficult. The landscape is still largely untouched, with few signs of ranches and the Trail being the only indication of humans.

<sup>215</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 204; Armitage, George C. "Death of the Great 79." p. 305-315 in *Cowboys & Cattlemen*. Michael S. Kennedy, editor. Hastings House, Publishers: NY. 1964; Roy History Committee. *Homestead Shacks over Buffalo Tracks: History of Northeastern Fergus County*. Bozeman, MT: Color World Printers, 1990, p. 10.

## Akins Farmstead



**Akins House, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

### History

The Akins house and barn are believed to have been constructed between 1913-1920. According to the Montana Cadastral Mapping program, both the barn and the house were constructed in 1913.

The property on which the house and barn sit was homesteaded by Fred Akins in 1913. He and Elizabeth Crighton married in 1914. The Akins originally lived in a tar-papered shack. The Akins

property contained the then under construction Winnett Irrigation Ditch. Akins was hired by the Winnett Irrigation Company as the fourth engineer for their project. He worked for them until the project was finished in 1916. With irrigated land, Akins built up his ranch. Fred Akins was a relative of Jefferson Akins, who operated the Golden Rule Store in Lewistown and also relocated to Petroleum County. Because of their store name, their ranch was referred to using the same name. They owned the property on which the brick house and barn were built, while Fred and his family lived there and eventually came to own it. Both the Fred and Jefferson Akins properties were called the Golden Rule Ranch at times. Jefferson Akins was married to Louise Cresap, who was the sister-in-law of a builder in Lewistown. Bob (no known last name) constructed their house in Lewistown, and it is assumed that he also built the house north of Winnett.

Fred Akins and his family relocated to Helena in 1936. Earl Brady acquired the property in the 1950s and his son, Jerry Brady owns the property today.<sup>216</sup>



**Akins Barn, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

### Significance

The Akins' House and Barn are significant under Criterion A for their representation of a cattle and sheep ranch headquarters.

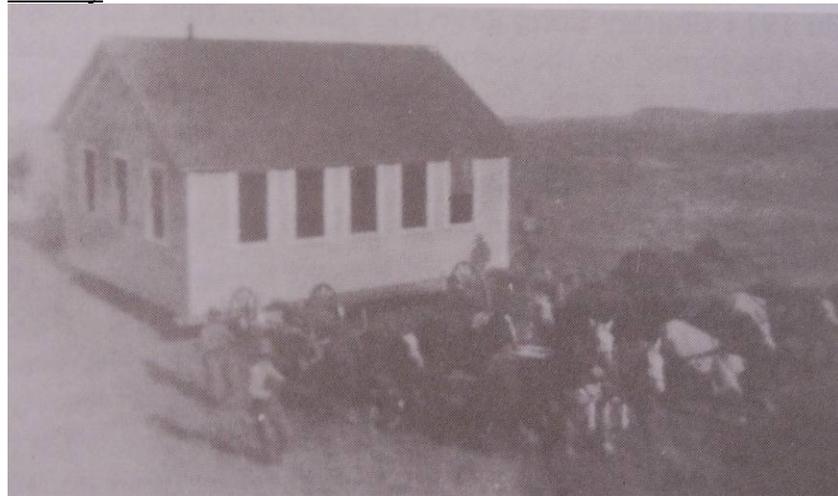
Fred Akins homesteaded in this place in 1913 and built up his ranch from that time. For the last ninety-five years the Akins' Place has been a typical operating ranch. The house and barn were built between 1913-1920 and served as the

headquarters for the Akins' and subsequent ranches. These buildings and other associated historic structures, such as the corrals, wind belts, and a small dam support the ranch and create a nearly complete picture of the ranch control center. The Akins' House and Barn are an accurate representation of the ranching industry and ranch headquarters in Petroleum County and other rural areas of Montana.

<sup>216</sup> Montana Cadastral Mapping Program, parcel search; Petroleum County Public Library. pg. 103; Vogel, Jake W. "History in the Making: The Winnett Irrigation System." *Winnett Times*. May 1, 1942.

## Dovetail Schoolhouse

### History



*The Connelly school being moved to the Dovetail School location, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library*

The first school district in the Dovetail area was formed in 1916. The schoolhouse that sits in the Dovetail location today was originally two buildings, the Connolly school, built approximately 1920, and the Franklin school, built in the same year. As people moved away, schools began to close. In 1923, members of the community decided to move the Franklin schoolhouse to a more central place. Tom Iverson donated land and the school was moved to the present Dovetail location along the 79 Cattle Trail. In 1928, the school board decided there needed to be a larger building at Dovetail for student activities as well as community functions. They moved the Connolly schoolhouse in and attached it to the Franklin school in this year. The school operated until 1965. It is currently owned by the Chain Buttes Grazing District and hosts the occasional birthday party, card party, or graduation party.<sup>217</sup>

### Significance



**Southwest corner of Dovetail School**      **Northeast corner of school, 2007, photos Laura Nowlin**  
The Dovetail Schoolhouse meets the requirements for National Register Criterion A for

<sup>217</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 208-10.

its role in the development of northern Petroleum County. The schoolhouse also signifies the community's commitment to education and reuse of buildings typical of the rural west.

Today, the Dovetail School sits in a remote part of Petroleum County. It serves as a reminder of the past population. At one time, this area contained enough children to warrant their own schoolhouse. The schoolhouse represents not only the number of people that used to live in the area, but also that the population was constantly changing. The schoolhouse was originally two different schoolhouses in different locations. They were moved and combined when the population in the vicinity shifted. Through its very existence, the schoolhouse represents the homesteading era and the people that time period brought to Petroleum County. The schoolhouse has been in continuous use as a community gathering place since its creation in the 1920s.

In addition, the schoolhouse shows the commitment of the surrounding community to education. In the 1920s, with horses and man power the community went to great effort to move the two buildings and connect them. This proves the investment people had in their community and their dedication to educating their children. People also recycled buildings at a high rate and the Dovetail School is a perfect example of this practice.

## Old Brick House

### History



**Old Brick House, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

Built for Evan Holmboe in 1918, the Old Brick House was an impressive structure for the area. Local tradition states that this home was built by a traveling builder who specialized in kit homes. Holmboe arrived in Winnett in August of 1911 and became the secretary for the Winnett Irrigation Company. He never lived in the house; instead he rented the farm property first to Mr. and Mrs. Will Ninneman and later sold it to Albert and Minnie Sandman. They sold the property to Gene and Marcia Stewart, who recently sold to Hans and Brenda Marks. In the 1980s, all except for two of the windows were removed. At the time of the field recording of this building, a sheep barn stood to the west of the house. A grass fire during the summer of 2007 burned the barn to the ground. The house was unharmed.<sup>218</sup>

### **Significance**

The Brick House is significant under National Register Criterion C.

The Brick House meets the requirements of criterion C as a unique example of a homestead home in Petroleum County. The majority of buildings built, both past and present, in Petroleum County were wood. This house was built in 1918 from hollow clay tile, a very unusual building material for the area. In addition, it is the only example of a stepped gable building in the county. Tradition states that this house was constructed by a trained builder who specialized in kit homes. This is also unique to the area. Most of the buildings, and the majority of the rural homes and farm buildings, were constructed by the property owner with the help of neighbors and friends.

<sup>218</sup> Petroleum County Public Library. *Pages of Time: A History of Petroleum County*. Lewistown, Montana: New-Argus Printing, 1990, pg. 116.

## Ross Schoolhouse

### History



**Ross Schoolhouse, c. 1995, photo Karen Browning**

The current Ross Schoolhouse was built in 1930, although the Ross school had been in operation since 1908. The story of the school's beginnings says that in this year twelve-year-old Knute Nordahl traveled 75 miles by horseback to the school board meeting in Giltedge, MT. He requested that the school board establish a school for the children in the Ross area. While

technically in a different school

district, the board members, impressed by Knute's conviction, agreed to establish a school and pay the teacher's wages. Miss Jessie Belcher served as the first teacher in a small log cabin. The Ross school was moved frequently from the east to the west side of the Musselshell River, depending on the number and location of school children. The present Ross schoolhouse was built in 1930 and operated until 1948, when it closed for a short time. After being remodeled in 1958, it again opened and has remained in operation until the present. Currently, the Ross schoolhouse is again being remodeled and receiving an addition.<sup>219</sup>

### Significance



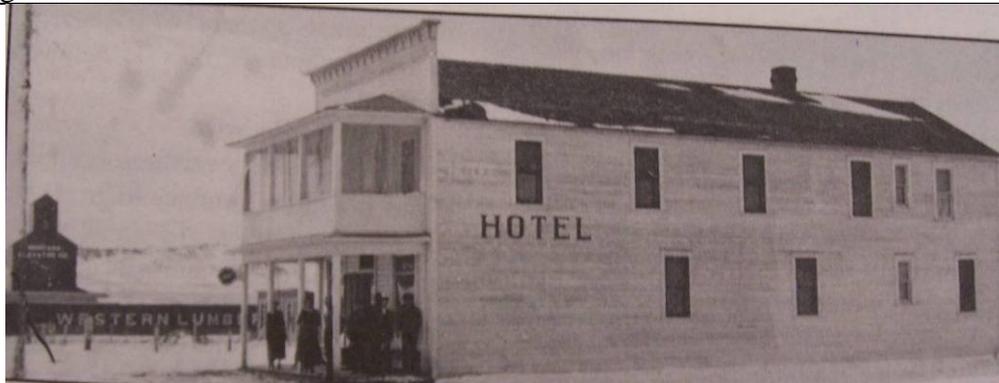
**Schoolhouse, 2007, photo Levi Nowlin**

The Ross Schoolhouse is significant under National Register Criterion A for the role it played in the settlement and development of the northern Musselshell River area.

The Ross school has been in continuous operation since its beginnings in 1908, and the current Ross Schoolhouse has served the community since 1930. The building represents the settlement and growth of the area, as well as the continued importance of education to the inhabitants along the Musselshell River. The building has been moved, typical of buildings in the West, but has remained a vital part of the Ross area community.

<sup>219</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 425.

## Teigen Hotel



Teigen Hotel, c. 1915, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library

### History

The last vestige of the town of Teigen is the Teigen Hotel, built in 1917 and used until about 1930. Mons Teigen owned and operated the ranch nearby the new town of Teigen in the teens. Travelers and other visitors often stopped and stayed at the ranch house, so Mons Teigen decided to build the hotel. The Teigen family operated the hotel until 1924 when Frank and Mary Boyd took over. They also moved in a building to serve as a store next to the hotel. The hotel was also run by Nels and Martha Oswick, and Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Carr. Pete, son of Mons Teigen, and his wife, Edna lived in the hotel until approximately 1930. They were the last occupants of the hotel.<sup>220</sup>

### Significance

The Teigen Hotel meets the requirements of National Register Criterion A for the role it played in the development of the town of Teigen and Petroleum County.

Teigen developed as a town beginning in the late 1910s. During the Settlement Era many new towns and communities grew up across the prairie. These small towns provided the nearby homesteaders with necessary supplies and services. On a major travel route across central Montana, Teigen provided a great location for a hotel. When Mons Teigen opened the hotel it contributed to the growth of the small town fed by the railroad. It is the only remaining building in Teigen today but stands a reminder not only of Teigen, but also of the once numerous towns throughout the county.



Teigen Hotel, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

<sup>220</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 589-92.

## War House (War Horse) Irrigation Project

### Looking east across War House Reservoir



### History

Homesteaders began to arrive in the Winnett area in great numbers beginning in the early 1910s. These people were led to believe that the land could support dry land farming. Settlers flocked in, believing the word that the area was ripe and ready for the taking. At a time when few others saw the need for irrigation in order to raise crops, Mr. Walter Winnett instituted multiple irrigation projects.

What is known today as War Horse Dam, was originally named War House Dam by Mr. Walter Winnett. Reportedly, War House Lake got its name from the nearby War House Butte. Mr. Winnett gave the butte this name because it looked like the large tepees where the Indians Mr. Winnett lived with planned their raids on other tribes. Mr. Winnett also named Wild Horse Lake just to the north of War House. The circumstances around the changing of War House to War Horse are unknown.<sup>221</sup> In 1911, the Winnett Irrigation Company was incorporated for \$100,000. Thirty-seven land owners, led by Mr. Winnett, built a 4 mile long, 6 foot deep canal with a metal flume to carry water from Ford's Creek into a large natural saddle. At the west end of this saddle, they built a dike and at the east end, a large earth dam at a construction cost of \$145,000. This created War House Reservoir. An irrigation ditch was constructed that ran mostly east and south of the dam, crossing the lands of Irrigation Company members. Larger than average rainfall in the several years following construction of the dam led to the successful irrigation of approximately 6,500 acres. Drought set in and not enough water could be diverted down the canal into the reservoir, however, in the spring the canal frequently ran at bank level. This created breaches and eventually, the breakdown of the metal flume. Members of the Irrigation Company suffered considerable crop losses.

In 1934, the Winnett Irrigation Company transferred ownership for the project to the Montana State Water Conservation Board (MSWCB) by Quit Claim Deed. It was understood that the MSWCB would rehabilitate the dam and associated sites. In the mid-1930s the Winnett Civilian Conservation Corps camp worked on the project under the direction of the USDA Soil Conservation Service with the materials and equipment provided by the MSWCB. The CCC constructed a new canal and an earth diversion dam to the west of the reservoir on Ford's Creek. A reinforce concrete intake structure accompanied the new construction on the canal. The MSWCB and the Winnett Irrigation Company agreed upon a Water Marketing Contract in 1947. In 1958, the area became a National Wildlife Refuge for migratory birds and other wildlife and is currently operated as such under the Unites States Fish and Wildlife Service.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>221</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 57.

<sup>222</sup> <http://russell.visitmt.com/listings/9688.htm>, War Horse National Wildlife Refuge; Christian, Spring, Sielbach & Associates, "War Horse Project Dams: Petroleum County, Montana," prepared for:

### Significance



*West end diversion dam, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin*

War House Dam is significant under Criterion A for its representation of a waterworks project in the American West and for its contribution to and symbol of the growth of Petroleum County.

When the Winnett Irrigation Company formed in 1911, Petroleum County was just beginning to be settled. At the time, the Winnett country was believed to be bountiful and that the rain did indeed follow the plow in this grand place. A small group of men, including Mr. Walter Winnett, realized the necessity of an irrigation system in Petroleum County when most others did not. The irrigation project was large and completed using only horse and man power. Homesteaders flowing into the region gained much needed employment on this job. The dam demonstrates the ambitiousness of the early settlers and the growth of the area as it began to be settled and developed.

A flurry of waterworks projects took place in the American West during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>. The Winnett Irrigation Company was one of many groups pursuing the control of water and seeking a dependable water source for their crops. This project is representative of many throughout the west with its great ambition in driving the project and also through the ultimate failure of it. The War House Reservoir held enough water to irrigate for only the first eight years of its life. Since 1926, the man-made lake has been so unreliable that the dam and ditch have both been abandoned. The dam and its intake canal and diversion dam represent a time of excitement and progress in place that would later suffer from extreme drought and depression, leaving behind a hardened portion of the population. It also signifies the difficulties faced by the area during the Great Depression. The Civilian Conservation Corps worked on the dam and intake canal as one of the major projects. They reconstructed many portions, hoping to make the water project usable again. It never was. Today, the project has become a wildlife refuge, symbolizing the decline in

population and desire to invest in creating a workable water project.

## Winnett Irrigation Ditch

### History



WIC Ditch, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

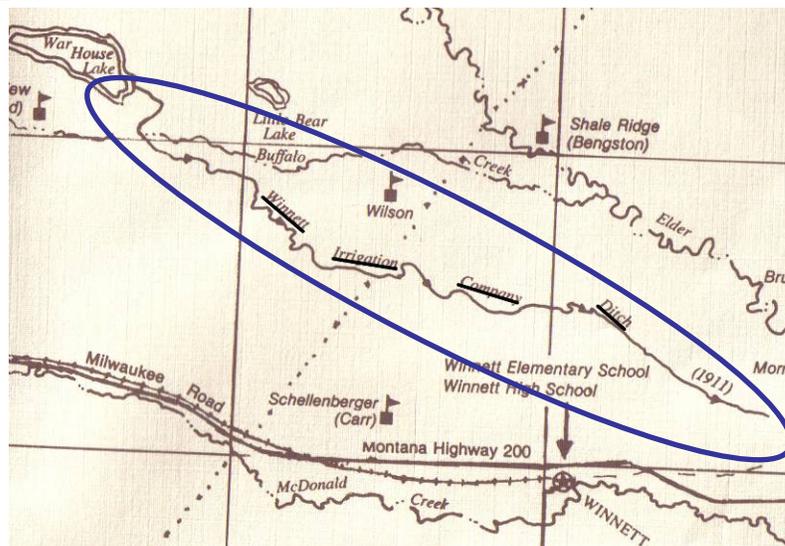
The Winnett Irrigation Ditch shares the same history at the War House Dam. Homesteaders began to arrive in the Winnett area in great numbers beginning in the early 1910s. These people were led to believe that the land could support dry land farming. Settlers flocked in, believing the word that the area was ripe and ready for the taking. At a time when few others saw the need for irrigation in order to raise crops, Mr. Walter Winnett instituted multiple irrigation projects.

What is known today as War Horse Dam, was originally named War House Dam by Mr. Walter Winnett. In 1911, the Winnett Irrigation Company was incorporated for \$100,000. Thirty-seven land owners, led by Mr. Winnett built a 4 mile long, 6 foot deep canal with a metal flume to carry water from Ford's Creek into a large natural saddle. At the west end of this saddle, they built a dike and at the east end, a large earth dam at a construction cost of \$145,000. This created War House Reservoir. An irrigation ditch was constructed that ran mostly east and south of the dam, crossing the lands of Irrigation Company members. Construction crews and their families lived in small tent cities that moved according to the progress of this ditch. Larger than average rainfall in the several years following construction of the dam led to the successful irrigation of approximately 6,500 acres. Drought set in and not enough water could be diverted down the canal into the reservoir, however, in the spring the canal frequently ran at bank level. This created breaches and eventually, the breakdown of the metal flume. Members of the Irrigation Company suffered considerable crop losses.

The years from 1917-1924 saw irrigating success. However, 1926 marked the final complete draining of the lake. The irrigation ditch has not been used since that time. The irrigation project received much attention, but the main problem of an inadequate storage basin was never fully addressed and the project was never a long-term success.<sup>223</sup>

<sup>223</sup> Vogel, Jake W., "History in the Making: The Winnett Irrigation System," *Winnett Times*, May 1, 1942; Christian, Spring, Sielbach & Associates, "War Horse Project Dams: Petroleum County, Montana," prepared for: Honorable Ted Schwinden Governor, State of Montana and Montana State Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Bozeman, MT, July, 1981.

## Significance



The Winnett Irrigation Ditch is significant under Criterion A for its representation of irrigation systems so prevalent in the West during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and as a representation of growth and settlement in Petroleum County.

When the Winnett Irrigation Company formed in 1911, Petroleum County was just beginning to be settled. At the time, the Winnett country was believed to be bountiful and that the rain did indeed follow the plow in this grand place. A small group of men, including Mr. Walter Winnett, realized the necessity of an irrigation system in Petroleum County when most others did not. The irrigation project was large and completed using only horse and man power. Homesteaders flowing into the region gained much needed employment on this job. The ditch demonstrates the ambitiousness of the early settlers and the growth of the area as it began to be settled and developed.

A flurry of waterworks projects took place in the American West during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup>. The Winnett Irrigation Company was one of many groups pursuing the control of water and seeking a dependable water source for their crops. This project is representative of many in the West in the ambition driving the project and also of the ultimate failure of it. The War House Reservoir held enough water to irrigate for only the first eight years of its life. Since 1926, the man-made lake has been so unreliable that the dam and ditch have both been abandoned. The ditch represents a time of excitement and progress in place that would later suffer from extreme drought and depression, leaving behind a hardened portion of the population. It is large and stretches for miles, reminding those who pass it of the will to harness the environment shown by their predecessors, and of the unrelenting power of nature.

## Valentine Community Hall



**Valentine Hall, c. 1927, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library**

### History

The Valentine Community Hall sits today amidst old cars and falling in buildings, but it once serviced the bustling community of Valentine. This community was first the headquarters of the Benning Bean Ranch. When Mrs. Bean established a post office in 1903, she named it Valentine and the surrounding community adopted that name also. Valentine was one of the first post offices in the area.

Construction began on the hall in 1926 as a community effort. The building is actually a large addition to the much smaller schoolhouse that was not adequate in size for large community gatherings. The timber all came from the nearby hillsides and were rough sawn at the Neil Harris sawmill which operated close-by. The finished lumber, doors, and windows were the only materials purchased for the project. When completed, the schoolhouse opened into the hall and served as a kitchen as well. The north end of the hall was constructed as a stage area and provided the space for many talent shows and plays.

The Valentine community hosted a large party to celebrate the completion of their hall in 1926 or 1927. Lester Bevis describes that first dance in the *Pages of Time*, “It was initiated with a bang up, wall-to-wall dance. People came from all around for the celebration – Dovetail, Winnett, Roy and all the other communities near enough to come – and I can tell you that was one humdinger of a dance.” During the Great Depression the Civil Works Administration and then later the Works Progress Administration did construction projects nearby and used the hall as housing for the workers. The kitchen swung into high gear to feed these men during the years 1933-1936.

The Great Depression and a long lasting drought took their toll and most homesteaders moved. Today, the remains of the Valentine community are once again ranch headquarters.<sup>224</sup>

<sup>224</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 206-07.

Significance



**Valentine Hall, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

The Valentine Community Hall meets the requirements for National Register Criterion A for the role it played in the developing community toward the end of the Settlement Era.

The Hall was built during the height in population in Petroleum County. It represents this important era in the County's history that brought people to the region. The community members around

the small town of Valentine were optimistic about their future and assumed

that things would continue to grow and develop. For this reason, they built a massive community hall for dances, plays and other gatherings. The Hall served the community well, eventually also becoming a schoolhouse. It was in use through the homesteading era and signifies the end of this movement with the last of its uses being as housing for WPA workers during the Great Depression.

The Valentine Community Hall stands today as a reminder of the past vibrancy that existed in the northwestern corner of Petroleum County. It represents the growth the county experienced from the 1910s through the 1920s. It last served as housing for WPA men working on the nearby Valentine Dam, thereby representing also the downturn in the county's population and growth.







## Winnett Resources

### City Food Lockers



City Food Lockers, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

#### History

City Food Lockers opened March 21, 1947 after almost a year of construction under the supervision of World War II veterans, Arnold Hansen and James

Dundom. Originally it was a 30' x 50' rectangular building that housed lockers, food processing equipment, and electrical appliances. Floyd Hill purchased the property in 1948 and ran it until 1949, when he sold all but the rights to the appliance franchise to Charles and Louise Allen. They stocked the former appliance display area with groceries. Bob and Cecelia Clark bought it in 1952. The Clarks expanded the store three times in an attempt to provide a wide array of goods to the community. Ronald and Lurene Olson bought the store and meat processing building in 1988, it continues to be run by Lurene today.<sup>225</sup>

<sup>225</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p.674, 762; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Central Billiards Parlor

### History



Winnett Bar, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

The present day Winnett Bar began its life as the Central Billiard Parlor in 1914 under the ownership of Joe Shumate. He provided candy, cigars, tobacco and soft drinks as well as billiard tables. Elmer and Lillie Eager owned the building from 1918

– 1945 when Harold and Merry Tunncliff, who had been operating a bar in the building, bought it. Harold's daughter, Idamae, gave the building to the Town of Winnett as a memorial to her father. She intended it to be used as a recreational hall for the community. Art Moore purchased it in 1978 and opened the Winnett Bar. The building continues to serve the community as the Winnett Bar today under the ownership and supervision of Kendra Kahnke.<sup>226</sup>

### Significance

The Central Billiard Parlor is significant under Criterion A for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett.

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The Central Billiard Parlor was constructed shortly after the first sale of town plots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and more settlers. Joe Shumate owned and operated the building with a succession of bars occupying the building until the present. The Central Billiard Parlor represents the early growth and development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922

<sup>226</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 600, 794; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Dr. Alexander Clinic



**Dr. Alexander Clinic, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

### History

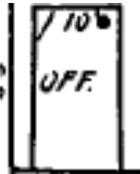
The Dr. Alexander clinic was built approximately 1915 and served as a medical office for Dr. Alexander. The doctor bought it in 1933 from Petroleum County. He used it as his clinic the majority of the years 1915 - 1940. Dr. Alexander was the only physician in the Winnett area. He also helped to build a golf

course and organize a community band. Dr.

Alexander sold the house in 1940 to Edward Stauffacher. Since this time the building has been used as a residence and owned by Wilford Nadeau, Adolph Teie, Erna Vogel, Art Moore, and Dave and Kendra Kahnke.<sup>227</sup>

### Significance

Dr. Alexander's Clinic is significant under Criteria A and B for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett and its association with Dr. J. L. Alexander.



**Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922**

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. The Clinic served as a medical office through the early years of settlement and represents the growth and development experienced in the homesteading town.

The Clinic is also significant under Criteria B for its association with Dr. Joseph L. Alexander, the first resident doctor in Winnett. Dr. Alexander arrived in 1915 and, except for a three month break during 1919, treated Petroleum County patients until his death in 1948. While the Dr. Alexander home still stands, the clinic is a more accurate representation of his contribution and importance to the community. Multiple stories and memories revolve around the work of Dr. Alexander. The Clinic was used by the Doctor for more than thirty years, from his arrival in Winnett until his death. The building symbolizes the need for medical attention and the significance of Dr. Alexander to the community.

<sup>227</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 646; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Eager Mercantile

History

The present day Catholic Church began life as the Eager Mercantile in 1914. Elmer Eager moved to Winnett from Beaver Crossing, Nebraska and operated general stores in Winnett for decades. He moved from the original building to a larger one after a few years. The original Eager Mercantile then accommodated high school classes from 1917-1920, the Valley Lumber Company, and a land office for A.W. Ogg.

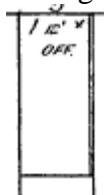
Eager Mercantile, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

The Catholic parish purchased the building in December 1924; they had been using it previous to this and remodeled the interior into a church during 1923. It housed the first Catholic wedding in Winnett, that of Anna Kleiman and Joseph Solf on April 10, 1923. Father Aloysius Mueller, from Hilger, Montana, was transferred to Winnett and regular church services were held every Sunday. In June, 1929, the congregation began work to remodel the exterior to more resemble a church. They removed the store front and reshingled the roof. Additional windows were cut and the two large stained glass windows on the front were placed. These windows came from the old Lewistown Catholic church. A small steeple appeared on the roof and lap siding appeared on the walls. The carpentry work was performed by Ted Svindland and the wood refinishing and painting was done by Otis Hewes.

In the 1960s, a new foundation and sidewalk was poured. In addition, the building was moved back from the sidewalk.<sup>228</sup>

Significance

The Eager Mercantile building is significant under National Register Criterion A. It is the epitome of reuse of buildings in small towns in the west.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922

<sup>228</sup> Petroleum County Public Library. pg. 634; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

The Eager Mercantile building served five different purposes in the first ten years of its existence. It is the perfect example of people in the west reusing their buildings. It also represents growth, and then stagnation, in the town of Winnett. Mr. Eager vacated the building because he constructed a larger store to accommodate the growing town. The high school classes used it until they could move into a new school building. These first two uses show the development of the town as it needed a larger store and constructed a school building. It also served as a land office and office for a lumber company. These uses show the presence of buying land and building homes and business that was taking place in Winnett in the late teens and early twenties. As homesteaders left and land speculation played out, the town began to stagnate. The Catholic parish purchased it in 1924, and while they made improvements and remodeled it in the early years, they never expanded it. The population of the area has been dropping since they bought the building and they never needed more room.

The major changes the Catholics made to the building have now become historic and contribute to the story of the building. It represents the unwillingness to dispose of buildings that were still usable by the early settlers of the region. It also tells the tale of Winnett's population explosion and then rapid decline by the rapid changeover of occupants and who those occupants were.

## First National Bank

### History



**First National Bank, c. 1920, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library**

The First National Bank building was constructed in 1914 for the Winnett State Bank, they sold to the First National Bank in 1919. The First State Bank and the First National Bank merged in 1923. They reorganized as the Farmer's and Merchants Bank in 1924 and operated until 1930. Petroleum County assumed ownership of the building between 1933-1954. T.N. Sandaker bought it at this time. In 1980, Lillian Moore purchased the building. Over the

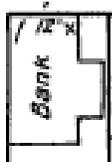
years the building housed the Mint Bar and Café, Winnett's State Liquor Store and a woodworking shop for Art Moore. It served as a youth center for a time during the '80s. Dave and Kendra Kahnke bought it in 1998 and use it for storage.<sup>229</sup>



**First National Bank, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

### Significance

The 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank building is significant under Criterion A for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett.



**Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922**

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank was constructed shortly after the first sale of town plots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and more settlers. The Winnett State Bank owned and operated the building with a succession of banks occupying the building until 1933. The 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank represents the early growth and development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.

<sup>229</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 600; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## The Harness Shop

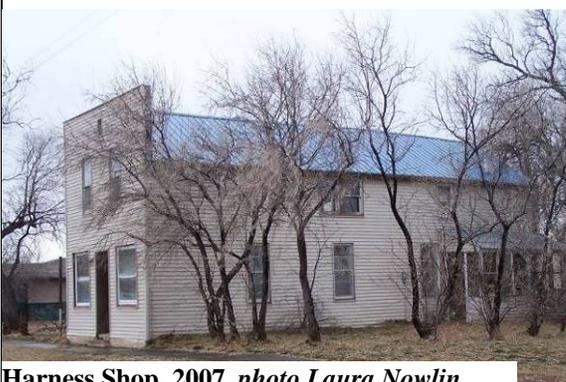


### History

**Harness Shop, c. 1915, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library**

The Harness Shop was built approximately 1914 with Dan Sommerfield as the owner-operator. Multiple harness shops opened in Winnett, this is the only building left standing as a reminder of those past occupations. The two-story

Harness Shop served also as the Sommerfield residence. Ernest and Ethel Freburg lived in the house with their daughter Mavis after the Sommerfields. The Sommerfields owned the building until 1942, when they sold it to George D. Ore. Ore became the Petroleum County Attorney in 1943. The law office on the second floor of the county courthouse still bears his name. George also volunteered as the janitor and maintenance man at the Methodist Church and his wife, Jessie, taught at the rural Weede School. Subsequent owners have been Clinton and Maxin Arthur, Richard and Marion Tripp, Paul Schmidt and Dennis Carmony; all have used the building as a residence.<sup>230</sup>



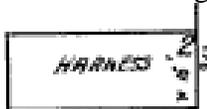
**Harness Shop, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

### Significance

The Harness Shop is significant under Criterion A for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett.

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The Harness

Shop was constructed shortly after the first sale of town plots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and more settlers. Dan Sommerfield and his family operated a harness shop and made their home in the building. It continued to be a residence after the Sommerfields left right up to the present. The Harness Shop represents the early growth and development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.



**Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922**

<sup>230</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p.608, 756; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Little White Schoolhouse

### History



**Little White Schoolhouse, c.1912, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library**

Constructed in 1912 by Frank Moshner, the Little White Schoolhouse served as Winnett's first schoolhouse (the first school was located in the Winnett House) and is the oldest building in town today. It stood at 101 South Broadway, the location of all future school facilities. It was one-room and 20 X 40 feet in size. Around twenty-five students filled the building in its first year under the direction of Agnes Jones. Alma Frye (later Edwards) finished the year when Ms. Jones died.

The Little White Schoolhouse held grade school classes until the construction of a much larger school building in 1921. It then provided space for shop and mechanics classes. In 1965, the school sold the building to the Methodist Church.

The Little White Schoolhouse was moved from Block 27 to Block 15, Lot 18. It was remodeled into a church. An entryway was added to the south of the building, and much later a multi-purpose room and kitchen were added to the east. When the old school building was condemned, this multi-purpose room held music and home economics classes for the Winnett Schools. So, for a few years in the late 1990s, the Little White Schoolhouse again heard the voices of schoolchildren.<sup>231</sup>

<sup>231</sup> Petroleum County Public Library. pg. 636; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

### Significance

The Little White Schoolhouse is significant under National Register Criterion A for its role in the early development in the Winnett area.

The Little White Schoolhouse was the first building constructed for school purposes in Winnett. Built in 1912, it is also the oldest surviving building in Winnett. It represents the importance of education to the early settlers as well as the growth being experienced in the area. It's different uses for the schools, first as the main schoolhouse and later as a shop also symbolizes the growth of the school. It served the Winnett Public Schools for over fifty years before being sold to the Methodist congregation in 1965.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922, at original location on Broadway



Little White Schoolhouse, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

## Marti Brothers Grocery

### History



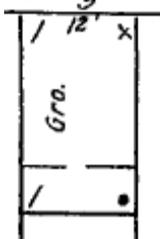
**Marti Brothers Groc., 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

The Marti Brothers' Grocery building was built approximately 1921. The grocery operated in the building until 1926, when it became the post office. Members of the Marti family continued to own the building until 1946, at which time Elmer Eager became the owner. Elmer's son, Rex, bought the building in 1963. In 1971, the Town of Winnett converted the building into a fire hall and the post office moved into a new building across the street in 1972. The Town purchased it in 1979. The Emergency Services Building, constructed in 1989, became the new fire hall. The old building now serves as vehicle storage for the Town of Winnett.<sup>232</sup>

The Marti Brothers' Grocery building was built approximately 1921. The grocery operated in the building until 1926, when it became the post office. Members of the Marti family continued to own the building until 1946, at which time Elmer Eager became the owner. Elmer's son, Rex, bought the building in 1963. In 1971, the Town of Winnett converted the building into a fire hall and the post office moved into a new building across the street in 1972. The Town purchased it in 1979. The Emergency Services Building, constructed in 1989, became the new fire hall. The old building now serves as vehicle storage for the Town of Winnett.<sup>232</sup>

### Significance

The Marti Brothers' Grocery building is significant under Criterion A for its role in the growth of Winnett during the oil boom.



**Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922**

The town of Winnett had been experiencing growth due to homesteaders; however, in 1920 the discovery of oil in an outlying town brought a much larger rush of people to the area. Refineries, hotels, homes, and businesses sprouted all over town. The Marti Brothers' Grocery was built in 1921, during the middle of the oil boom excitement. It represents the anticipation, growth, and development that took place during the early 1920s due to the Cat Creek oil strike. The enlargement during the '20s was the last population growth experienced in Winnett and Petroleum County.

<sup>232</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 598, 738; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Masonic Hall

### History



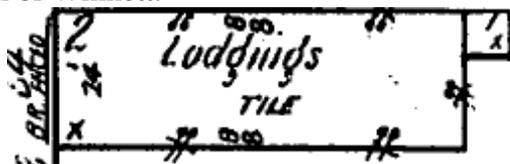
Masonic Hall, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

The Masonic Temple was built before 1920 by John Valach. Frank Minato owned it from 1920-1925 and operated it as the Park Hotel. It contained 23 rooms that were all lighted and heated. It also served as the high school dormitory in the 1920-21 school year and as a hospital in 1924. The Farmer's and Merchant's Bank took possession of it in 1925 and shortly thereafter Petroleum County became the owners. It began serving as the Masonic

Temple in 1926 and the Grand Lodge of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons of Montana purchased it in 1928. The Jerusalem Lodge bought it in 1943 and sold it to private individuals in 1997 that turned it into a residence. It is currently owned by Robert Tyler Alexander and functions as a home.<sup>233</sup>

### Significance

The Masonic Hall is significant under Criterion A for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett.



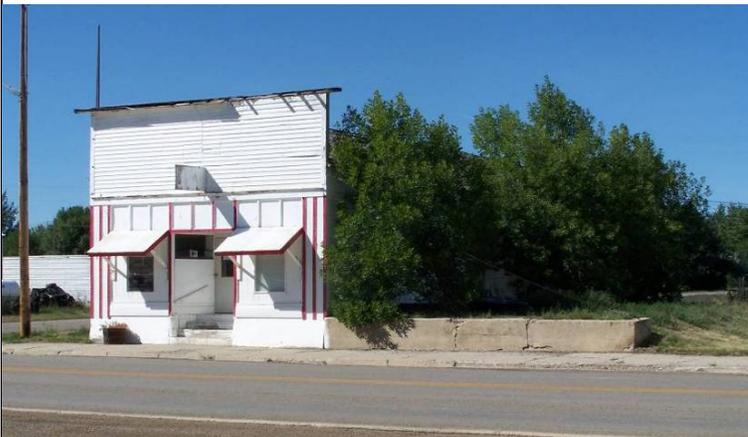
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The Masonic Hall was constructed shortly after the first sale of town plots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and more settlers. The building has been in continuous use since its construction. In its first ten years of existence, Frank Minato operated it as a hotel, it served as a hospital, high school dormitory, and a Masonic Hall. It served as the Masonic Hall for sixty-nine years. The Masonic Hall represents the early growth and development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.

<sup>233</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 605, 609, 747; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Monarch Lumber Company Building

### History



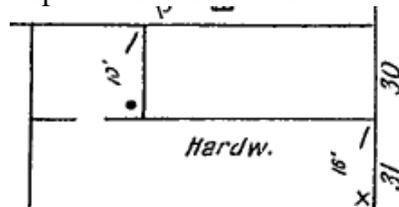
The Monarch Lumber Company building was constructed in 1916 for the Basin Lumber and Implement Company. They became the Monarch Lumber Company in 1921. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1922 states, "Monarch Lumber Co. stock being sold off." The company ceased business in Winnett and sold their stock to the Montana Lumber and Hardware Company in

### **Monarch Lumber Co. Building, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

1942. Former manager for the Monarch Lumber Company, T. Sandaker, owned the building briefly in 1945. Lloyd Lafond and his wife, Mildred, purchased the property in December of 1945 and made it into the Rimrock Theater. Mr. Lafond also helped to build the new school building in the 1950s. When Bob and Cecilia Clark bought the building in 1961, they remodeled it into a laundry, a barbershop and beauty salon, and used the back as a warehouse.<sup>234</sup> Today, it still serves as a laundry and various businesses utilize its space from time to time.

### Significance

The Monarch Lumber Company building is significant under Criterion A for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett.



**Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922**

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The Monarch Lumber Company building was constructed shortly after the first sale of town plots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and more settlers. The building has been in continuous use since its construction. First, it served as a lumber company building, in the 1940s – 60s it was a theater, and from the 1960s on it has been a variety of offices and also a laundromat and beauty salon. The Monarch Lumber Company building represents the early growth and development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.

<sup>234</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p.604, 674, 730; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Montana Elevator

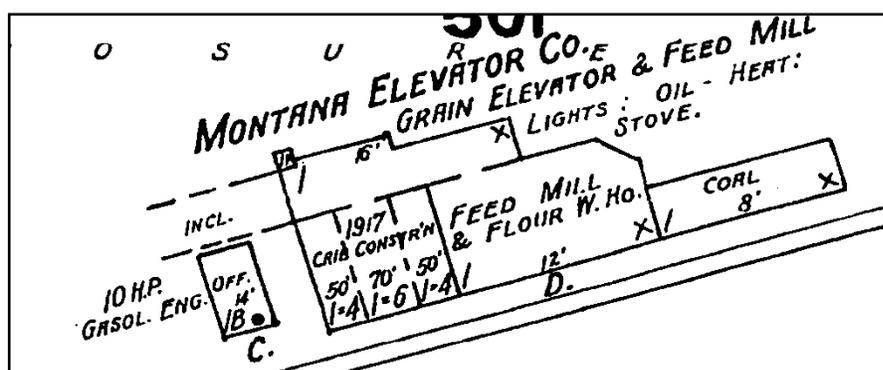


Montana Elevator, c. 1920, photo courtesy of the Petroleum County Public Library

### History

George Conrad opened the Montana Elevator in 1917 and ran it until 1921. Austin Saylor operated the Elevator briefly in 1929-30. The railroad tracks ran directly north of the Elevator. It was used until the discontinuation of the railroad in 1972. It is owned by Jerry Bohn today and used as storage.<sup>235</sup>

### Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922



<sup>235</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 677; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.



**Montana Elevator, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.

### Significance

The Montana Elevator is significant under Criterion A for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett. It is also significant under Criteria C for its crib construction unique to grain elevators.

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The Montana Elevator was constructed shortly after the first sale of town plots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and more settlers. The building has been in continuous use since its construction. It was instrumental in the agricultural development in the region. It also helped to encourage train operation to Winnett into the 1970s. The Montana Elevator represents the early growth and

Grain elevators utilize a unique type of construction, called crib construction. For this reason, the Montana Elevator is significant for its construction technique.

## Montana Lumber and Hardware Building

### History



**MT Lumber and Hardware Building, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

The Montana Lumber and Hardware Building, known more widely as the Hardware Store, was built in 1929 by the Montana Lumber and Hardware Company. The Montana Lumber Company, owned by George Wiedeman, purchased property from Mr. Walter Winnett in 1916 on which they later built their hardware store. They

operated in the east third of the Winnett Block until 1929, when they moved into their new building. In 1971, the Montana Lumber and Hardware closed. They sold to Jessie Girvin in 1971 who sold to Vernonika Bauer later in the same year. Vernon and Janet Bauer operated the Trading Post hardware store until 1979. The building stood mostly empty, but was opened occasionally for dances and community gatherings until the late 1990s. Since then it has served a variety of functions. It was a vet clinic for a few years. Today, it is owned by T.J. and Shauna Clark and houses a few different businesses. Plans are underway to open a food venue in the building.<sup>236</sup>

### Significance

The Montana Lumber and Hardware Building is significant under National Register Criterion A for its representation of the end of the boom period in Winnett and Petroleum County.

The era experienced significant growth in the late 1910's and again in the early 1920's when oil was discovered at Cat Creek. By the late 1920's the boom was over and building ceased. The Hardware Store was the last building to be constructed during this era that still stands today. It represents the end of growth and development in the area.

<sup>236</sup> Petroleum County Public Library. pg. 604; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Northrup Barber

### History

The Northrup Barber building was built in 1914 and was one of the first buildings in Block 10 on Main Street. William Northrup purchased the property on which the Northrup Barbershop sits from the Milwaukee Land Co in 1918. Northrup ran the barbershop in addition to giving women's manicures and facials. He did all this while crippled. Northrup died in 1919 and H.B. Greene bought the property from his estate in 1920. The building then served as a furniture exchange, a dress shop and millinery for Mrs.

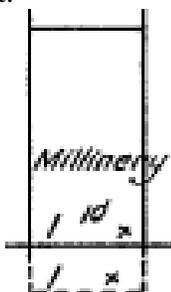


Northrup Barber, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

Walker, the Winnett Bakery and the Eager Mercantile store. It has been in the possession of a member of the Bauer family since 1945. Today, it is used for storage and people call it the Bauer building.<sup>237</sup>

### Significance

The Northrup Barber is significant under Criterion A for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and the trains reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The Northrup Barber was constructed shortly after the first sale of town plots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and more settlers. William Northrup purchased the property on which the Northrup Barbershop sits from the Milwaukee Land Co in 1918. Northrup ran the barbershop in addition to giving women's manicures and facials. He did all this while crippled. Northrup died in 1919 and H.B. Greene bought the property from his estate in 1920. The building then served as a furniture exchange, a dress shop and millinery for Mrs. Walker, the Winnett Bakery and the Eager Mercantile store. The Northrup Barber represents the early growth and development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.

<sup>237</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 755; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Temple Billiard Parlor

### History

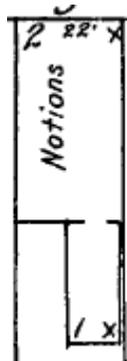
The Temple Billiard Hall was built prior to 1916. Ray Moll owned and operated the building. The second story served as a classroom for the Winnett 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders and the first high school students. This building housed many businesses including Scotty Spear's restaurant, Buhler Café, Bauer Café, Williams Restaurant, Winnett Meat Co., Scheurman Store, Winnett Drug, Winnett Pharmacy (1942-59), Winnett Drug and Gift Shop with Gladys Long as the manager, and Sugar Shack. Winnett Lodge #129 of the IOOF purchased the building in 1932. They sold it to Ralph Corbett and Carol Schaffer in 1986 who use it as storage.<sup>238</sup>



Temple Billiard Parlor, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

### Significance

The Temple Billiard Parlor is significant under Criterion A for its role in the early development of the town of Winnett.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922

The homestead era began in the Winnett vicinity about 1910. The railroad sold off town lots in 1914 and reached Winnett in 1917. Many businessmen took part in the early excitement and speculation surrounding the boom town. The Temple Billiard Parlor was constructed shortly after the first sale of town plots in anticipation of the arrival of the railroad and more settlers. Ray Moll owned and operated the building, allowing the second story to be used for junior high school classes before a school building was constructed. The Temple Billiard Parlor represents the early growth and development experienced in the homesteading town of Winnett during the 1910's.

<sup>238</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, pg. 747; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Winnett Block

### History



**Petroleum County Courthouse postcard, c. 1950**

The Winnett Block was reportedly built by stonemasons from Croatia for Mr. Winnett in 1917. The sandstone came from the nearby Rimrocks and the lumber came from Grass Range by wagon. When originally built, it was known as the Winnett Block. Three businesses split the first floor, these divisions are visible in historic photographs. The First State Bank, the Winnett Times print shop and the Montana Lumber and Hardware Company occupied the first floor. The basement housed a restaurant and the third floor contained business offices. Unconfirmed reports claim that the basement also housed a place of ill repute during the 1920s oil boom.

Mr. Winnett sold the building to Benjamin Lepper in 1928. He remodeled it and leased it to Petroleum County for \$200 a month as the county courthouse. The county received the option to buy for \$31,000 with lease money applied to the price. Gunda Lewis, a child during the thirties who lived in the Dovetail area, recalls that during the Depression the basement of the building stored goods before they were distributed. It also held a library. The County bought the building in 1942 and it continues to serve them today. In 1977, Frank Valach and son, Robert, remodeled the basement into a hospitality area that the Senior Citizens utilize. They put in a kitchen, two bathrooms, and a fireplace. Bricks in the fireplace came from the Walter Winnett house<sup>239</sup>

### Significance

The Winnett Block is significant under Criteria A, B, and C for its significant role in the

<sup>239</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 626; Petroleum County Deeds and Records; Jim Dullenty "Petroleum Co. Courthouse is an important building with colorful history." *Lewistown News Argus*, 2007.

history of Petroleum County.

The Winnett Block is significant under Criteria A for the role it played in the homestead boom era of Winnett and also for the service it provided later as the county courthouse. Originally known as the Winnett Block, the building was finished in 1917 and provided many businesses with places of operation. This large business building represents the growth and development resulting from the homestead rush into the area.



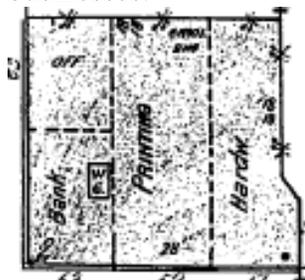
Winnett Block, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

The Winnett Block is significant under Criteria B for its association with Mr. Walter Winnett. Mr. Winnett was a successful cattle rancher who established the town of Winnett. He started a school in 1907 and a post office in 1910. He was involved in major water works projects in the area and helped to develop the town of Winnett. He

contracted stonemasons from Croatia

to build the Winnett Block in 1917. The building served as offices, a restaurant, and a bank. He sold the property to Benjamin Lepper, who later leased the building to Petroleum County for use as a courthouse. Mr. Winnett was instrumental in the development and growth of the town of Winnett, as well as the county. This is the last remaining building associated with him. His home and other places of business have been torn down or burned. As the property owner, the Winnett Block was built for him, and he was involved with the building process. The Winnett Block is significant for its connection to the founder of Winnett and local leader during the early days of the town.

The Winnett Block is significant under Criteria C for its unusual architectural style and construction in the county. The Winnett Block is the largest historic building in Winnett and the only building built as a business block. Its scale is much more massive than any other building that remains today. It was also constructed of stone. There are no other stone buildings in Winnett. Other commercial buildings were frame construction and meant to house one business while the Winnett Block was intended for multiple businesses.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922

## Winnett City Hall

### History



**Winnett City Hall, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin**

The “Winnett City Hall” was built prior to the 1950s, probably circa 1935. It was first used by the United States Soil Conservation Service. The Town of Winnett government acquired it in the mid-50’s under the condition that the building be used for education or health purposes. In addition to the town clerk’s office, the mayor appointed a committee to make the necessary building changes for it to house the public

library. The main portion of the building housed the library and the clerk’s office sat in the small north addition. The library moved to the new school in 1974 and the town office occupied the main floor. In 1989, Winnett constructed a new Town Hall and the old building became storage space.<sup>240</sup>

<sup>240</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 621-22; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## Winnett Times

### History

The Winnett Times building was built sometime before 1922. Beginning in 1918, early



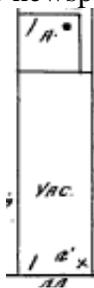
Winnett Times, 2007, photo Laura Nowlin

owners of the property were Walter Sevalls, Theodore E. Hegna, Lotta H. Wilson, Mrs. Ora L. Wilson and John E. Wilson. On the 1922 Sanborn map the building is vacant, but by March of 1925, Henry Stenson purchased the building from John Wilson and used it as a salesroom for the Chevrolet Company. A service station was also installed. The

*Winnett Times* moved into the building in November, 1925 and remained there until the last publication of the newspaper in Winnett in 1986. Rudy and F. Bernice Glatz began operating the *Winnett Times* in 1940 and bought the property in 1949. They stored their furniture in the back of the building until Bernice made livable the storage area in the back and the Glatz' lived there until 1997. After a remodel, the building housed Donna Troutwine's hair salon in the front and the Bill and Donna Troutwine residence in the back. Currently, it is a residence for Levi and Kate Johnson.<sup>241</sup>

### Significance

The Winnett Times building is significant under Criterion A for its association with the influential *Winnett Times* newspaper.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922

The building was built before 1922 and occupied by a variety of people for a variety of uses. The *Winnett Times* moved into the building in 1925 and stayed until the last publication of the paper in 1986. The *Winnett Times* was the only newspaper serving the community from the time of its inception in 1914 until 1986. It was an instrumental tool in eastern Fergus County's fight to break away and become Petroleum County as well as providing information and entertainment for seventy-two years. The Winnett Times building is significant for its connection to the major regional newspaper, the *Winnett Times*.

<sup>241</sup> Petroleum County Public Library, p. 603-604, 697, 783; Petroleum County Deeds and Records.

## **Chapter III**

### **Historic Resource Study, Petroleum County, MT**

#### **Preservation Management Strategies**

##### **Historic Preservation Overview**

Introduction

Historic Preservation Defined

Why Preserve?

Methods of Preservation

History of Historic Preservation

Historic Preservation Laws

Preservation as a Part of Rural Development Strategies

##### **Historic Preservation Programs, Organizations, and Initiatives**

United States Federal Government

Montana Programs and Organizations

National Trust for Historic Preservation Programs

Others

##### **Examples of Preservation Strategies**

##### **Recommendations for Petroleum County**

Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan

“Connecting us emotionally and intellectually with the past, historic sites and structures remind us that we are part of a continuum that encompasses the past and projects into the future. This connection creates a sense of wholeness and gives us our identity.”

- Jay D. Vogt and Stephen C. Rogers in *Picturing the Past*

## Preservation Management Strategies

This portion of the Historic Resource Study begins with a brief overview of what historic preservation is and how it is structured in the United States. A brief statement of preservation as part of rural development strategies leads into an explanation of well-known preservation programs and organizations that work in rural communities. These are followed by various approaches taken in other rural and deep rural communities. These approaches are viable options for the residents of Petroleum County and many of them result from alterations of larger national programs, such as Main Street. Following the examples are recommendations for specific action that may be beneficial to Petroleum County. These recommendations apply to both buildings and landscapes and vary in degree of involvement. A Teaching with Historic Places Lesson Plan is located at the end of this section.

## Historic Preservation Overview

### Introduction

Certain places possess an inexplicable power to express through their mere presence what we find difficult to describe in words. “Historic preservation seeks to protect the uniqueness, and therefore the identity, of places. With place preserved, we

can recognize where we belong and understand more fully who we are.”<sup>242</sup> These places, whether a cave in the mountains or a statehouse, inspire us. And, just as each individual person relates to an extraordinary place, so to does each community, state, and nation. It is from these special places, and the concern over their survival, that historic preservation finds its roots.

Brenda Barrett states in her article on valuing heritage that historic preservation is a, “multivalent approach to the value of place – economic, historic, cultural, environmental, and social values.”<sup>243</sup> From anthropologists to developers, from architects to historians, and everyone in between, historic preservation brings together professionals and interested persons from a wide range of disciplines. Preservation draws these people all for the same reason – to save important pieces of the past from demolition, alteration, or neglect. It is through the preservation of the past that we understand the present and learn for the future.

### Historic Preservation Defined

Historic preservation is formally defined by the Montana State Historic Preservation Office as follows,

(Historic Preservation) Includes identification, evaluation, recordation, documentation, curation, acquisition, protection, management, rehabilitation, restoration, stabilization, maintenance, research, interpretation, conservation, and education and training regarding these activities or any combination.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Jay D. Vogt and Stephen C. Rogers, *Picturing the Past: South Dakota’s Historic Places*, Pierre: South Dakota State Historical Society Press, 2006, p. 88.

<sup>243</sup> Brenda Barrett, “Valuing Heritage: Re-examining Our Foundations,” *Forum Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Winter:2008) p. 33.

<sup>244</sup> Rolene R. Schliesman, *Preservation Commissioner Training, Presentation Handout*, Montana State Historic Preservation Office, [montanahistoricalsociety.org/shpo/CLGTraining/clgtraining.asp](http://montanahistoricalsociety.org/shpo/CLGTraining/clgtraining.asp).

All three definitions of preservation found in the dictionary provide a more clear explanation,

- (1) *the guarding of something from danger, harm, or injury;*
- (2) *maintenance of something, especially something of historic value, in an unchanged condition;*
- (3) *the keeping of something intangible intact.*

Historically, preservation worked to save physical pieces of the built environment, referred to as tangible heritage. Increasingly, preservationists have worked to include the nonphysical pieces of culture such as traditional crafts, folklore, and dance; these are known as intangible heritage. The National Register defines intangible heritage as the traditions, practices, lifeways, and beliefs, as well as arts, crafts, and social institutions of any given culture.<sup>245</sup>

Historic preservation operates on the local, state, and national level, with each division performing designated duties. The maintenance of the national inventory of historic properties, protecting them through an established planning process, providing financial assistance for public and private sectors, and constructively managing federally owned resources comprise the major components of the federal preservation program.<sup>246</sup> The National Park Service, which operates under the auspices of the Secretary of the Interior, is the guiding entity for historic preservation in the United States.

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 allowed for the creation of State Historic Preservation Offices. Their main duties are to maintain an inventory and coordinate the updating of this inventory. They also dispense historic preservation

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<sup>245</sup> William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2006, p. 139.

<sup>246</sup> John M. Fowler, "The Federal Preservation Program," in *A Richer Heritage*, Robert E. Stipe, editor, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, p. 41.

information, manage financial incentives, and provide technical assistance. The states operate as the central and critical mechanism for administering the national-state-local historic preservation partnership.<sup>247</sup>

The majority of preservation work happens “on the ground” with the crucial help of local volunteers or professionals. Not every local government participates in preservation activities, they have the option of becoming a Certified Local Government, in which case, they receive the regulatory authority over preservation related projects. The local governments are the, “most important engines of preservation activity because of their close proximity to citizens most directly affected.”<sup>248</sup>

In the private realm the major preservation organization operating on the national level is the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The National Trust “provides leadership, education, advocacy, and resources to save America’s diverse historic places and revitalize our communities.”<sup>249</sup>

### Why Preserve?

Historic preservation serves a multitude of purposes on a variety of levels. It creates an awareness of the past, revitalizes local economies, and helps to protect the environment. Preservation builds on community identity and pride, strengthens social values, and creates an understanding of a community’s present situation through its exploration and representation of past people, events, and places.

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<sup>247</sup> Elizabeth A. Lyon and David L. S. Brook, “The States: The Backbone of Preservation,” in *A Richer Heritage*, Robert E. Stipe, editor, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, p. 81.

<sup>248</sup> Lina Cofresi and Rosetta Radtke, “Local Government Programs: Preservation Where It Counts,” in *A Richer Heritage*, Robert E. Stipe, editor, Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003, p. 117.

<sup>249</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, [www.nationaltrust.org/](http://www.nationaltrust.org/), February 12, 2008.

As Robert Stipes states, “we seek to preserve our heritage because our historic resources are all that physically link us to our past.”<sup>250</sup> Historic resources stand as concrete, living examples of the past and trigger our memories of the events, people and trends represented by them. The physical presence of these resources provides something tangible for people to see and touch. They provide the opportunity for people to experience an “historical imagination” or relive the “spirit” of the historical person or event that happened in a specific place. With the demolition of historic places, those opportunities die, resulting in the situation described by the director of the Joint Council on Housing and Urban Development in 1965. The director says,

We do not use bombs and powder kegs to destroy irreplaceable structures related to the story of America’s civilization. We use the corrosion of neglect or the thrust of bulldozers... Connections between successive generations of Americans ... are broken by demolition. Sources of memory cease to exist. Why then are we surprised when surveys tell us that many Americans ... lack even a rudimentary knowledge of the national past? We ourselves create the blank spaces.<sup>251</sup>

What the director illustrated in 1965 continues today.

Today, historic preservation also makes economic and environmental sense. Dozens of studies have proven the positive impact of preservation on economic revitalization, especially in urban downtowns. The reuse of structures also minimizes waste, reduces the energy required for new materials, and eliminates demolition costs. Table 1 contains a list of reasons to engage in historic preservation developed by the Montana State Historic Preservation Office.

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<sup>250</sup> Robert Stipe, *Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003, p. xiii.

<sup>251</sup> W. Brown III. Morton, “What Do We Preserve and Why?” In *The American Mosaic: Preserving a Nation’s Heritage*, edited by Robert Stipe and Antoinette J. Lee, Washington, D.C.: International Council on Monuments and Sites, 1987, p. 169.

**Table 1: *Why Preserve?***

\* From the *Montana Certified Local Government Preservation Commissioner Training Program Packet*, Compiled by Rolene R. Schliesman, MT DSHPO, 2007.

- Community awareness and recognition of local heritage and historic architecture.
- Historic buildings often reflect the image of high-quality goods and services, small-town intimacy, reliability, stability, and personal attention.
- Historic buildings create a sense of place, a recognized ingredient in a high quality of life.
- Rehabilitation is environmentally responsible as it conserves more than it consumes or tosses in the landfill.
- Historic building stock is the key to Main Street efforts and downtown revitalization.
- \$ Rehabilitation creates new jobs during construction and later in new offices, shops, restaurants, and tourism activities.
- \$ Revitalized buildings and historic districts attract new businesses, tourists, and visitors, stimulating retail sales and increasing sales tax revenue.
- \$ Federal and state tax advantages are available for rehabilitation.
- \$ Less energy is required to rehabilitate existing buildings than to demolish and replace them with comparable new construction.
- \$ Reusing old buildings saves demolition costs.
- \$ Rehabilitation is labor intensive and thus is not as influenced by rising costs of materials as new construction.
- \$ Rehabilitation often uses local labor, keeping salary dollars in the community longer.
- \$ Rehabilitation may require less time than new construction and can take place in stages.
- \$ Old buildings often can be acquired for low prices.
- \$ Tax dollars are saved through reuse of buildings served by in-place public utilities, transportation, and other public services.
- \$ Historic district designation does not lower property values.
- \$ Property values may increase with historic designation, particularly in revitalized areas.
- \$ Rehabilitated buildings returned to the tax rolls raise property tax revenues.
- \$ Historic district designation often stimulates private investment.
- \$ Rehabilitated buildings may command higher rental and sales prices because of their prestige value.

### Methods of Preservation

Historic preservation encompasses a multitude of techniques for saving our tangible and intangible heritage. These approaches include community planning, heritage outreach and development, heritage education, and technical application and assistance.

Under the direction of the NPS, four standard methods for the technical application of

preservation have been developed and defined according to the Secretary of Interior Standards. All preservation projects dealing with tangible heritage and hands-on work with a resource fall into one of these categories.<sup>252</sup>

Preservation - the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction.

Otherwise understood as proper ongoing maintenance that has kept the resource in good condition.

Restoration –the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period.

Otherwise understood as returning a resource back to its period of significance.

Rehabilitation - the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

Otherwise understood as reuse.

Reconstruction - the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

Otherwise understood as new construction.

### History of Historic Preservation

The first widely known preservation treatment in the United States occurred in 1816 at the Old State House in Philadelphia. In a quickly deteriorating state and no longer needed because of the construction of the new national Capitol building in Washington, D.C., the future of the building hung in the balance. At this time, the city of Philadelphia purchased the significant building from the Commonwealth of

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<sup>252</sup> Definitions from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction.

Pennsylvania. Architect William Strickland undertook the task of restoring the building's tower and returning it to its former prestige. Strickland, therefore, is credited with being the nation's first restorationist.<sup>253</sup> The preservation movement was slow to gain momentum, however, as can be seen in Table 2, which contains a timeline of significant dates in the historic preservation movement.

The Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, founded and driven by Ann Pamela Cunningham organized in 1853 with the goal of raising enough money to purchase Mount Vernon, George Washington's home, and restoring it. The first recognized preservation group, the Ladies' Association set three early trends in preservation. First, preservation was mostly undertaken by private individuals with little interference or guidance from the government. Second, women played a prominent role in preservation activities. Third, saving individual landmark buildings associated with prominent political or military leaders centered the goals of the preservation movement.<sup>254</sup>

For the first 150 years, the preservation field operated in two separate spheres. The private sphere focused on important historic figures and the structures associated with them, such as George Washington's home. The public sphere centered on the conservation of natural features and establishing national parks. In 1872 Yellowstone National Park became the nation's first national park and in 1889 the Casa Grande ruin in Arizona became the first National Monument. Casa Grande also holds the distinction of being the first historic resource to have federal money appropriated for its protection. The Antiquities Act of 1906 instituted penalties for destroying federally owned sites. This first historic preservation legislation encouraged the surveying and identification of

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<sup>253</sup> Murtagh, 12.

<sup>254</sup> Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000, p. 33-34.

historic resources nationwide. With the creation of the National Park Service in 1916, historic preservation began to establish a role within the federal government.<sup>255</sup>

Historic Preservation gained attention and support in the 1920s and 30s due mostly to John D. Rockefeller and Henry Ford. Rockefeller donated funds to help restore colonial Williamsburg in Virginia back to its eighteenth century glory. Ford created his own outdoor museum, known as Greenfield Village near Dearborn, Michigan. The village is comprised of buildings from all across the country and was intended by Ford to be an, “animated textbook.” The efforts in both Williamsburg and Greenfield Village continue today.<sup>256</sup>

The Great Depression provided the circumstances for some of the most important and widespread preservation work in the United States. The Civil Works Administration, created through the New Deal program implemented by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, employed otherwise out-of-work architects and photographers to document the nation’s historic structures. Out of this program came the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). HABS architects and photographers operated under the guiding principle that, “buildings of every description are to be included so that a complete picture of the culture of the times as reflected in the buildings of the period may be put on record.”<sup>257</sup> In 1969, the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) became a partner entity to HABS. It documents historic structures significant for their technology and engineering such as canals, railroads, and bridges.<sup>258</sup>

The National Council for Historic Sites and Buildings, formed after World War II,

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<sup>255</sup> Tyler, 34-35.

<sup>256</sup> Tyler, 37-38.

<sup>257</sup> Tyler, 41.

<sup>258</sup> Entire paragraph, Tyler, 40-42.

evolved into the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1949. The National Trust finally brought the private and public worlds of preservation together. It “was created with the purpose of linking the preservation efforts of the National Park Service and the federal government with the activities of the private sector.” Historic preservation continued to gain public interest and received a large upswing of support in the 1960s due partially to the environmental movement, the loss of historic resources because of urban renewal, the interstate highway system, and other massive public works projects. In 1966, the National Trust’s published, *With Heritage So Rich*, which revealed the massive loss of American architectural heritage and included recommendations for an historic preservation expansion with support by the federal government. Following this publication, Congress passed the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966.<sup>259</sup> The Act, discussed under the Historic Preservation Laws portion of this section, served many functions, but it’s most outstanding result was establishing a federal strategy for the preservation of cultural and historic resources in the United States.<sup>260</sup>

Through the 1970s and ‘80s preservation became a tool of urban revitalization. Programs, such as the tax incentive program created through the Tax Reform Act in 1976 and the National Trust’s Main Street Program created in 1980, helped to fund preservation projects and improve urban downtowns. A 1980 amendment to the NHPA allowed local communities to create Certified Local Governments, making them eligible for federal funding of preservation projects.<sup>261</sup> The National Trust adopted four clear

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<sup>259</sup> Tyler, 42-44.

<sup>260</sup> Julia H. Miller, “A Layperson’s Guide to Historic Preservation Law: A Survey of Federal, State, and Local Laws Governing Historic Resource Protection,” *Preservation Information*, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1997, p. 4.

<sup>261</sup> Tyler, 44-51.

objectives in 1983 that continue to guide all preservation organizations and their activities.

1. Identify and act on important national preservation issues
2. Support, broaden, and strengthen organized preservation efforts
3. Target communications to those who affect the future of historic resources
4. Expand private and public financial resources for preservation activities.<sup>262</sup>

At the 2007 National Trust Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota, National Trust President

Richard Moe summarized the history of historic preservation,

Our movement has gone through many phases in its history. In the early years, the emphasis was on historical and cultural values; preservationists saved iconic landmarks as patriotic shrines. Later, the focus shifted to preservation's economic aspects; we preached the dollars-and-cents benefits of adaptive use, Main Street revitalization, and heritage tourism. More recently, we've emphasized social values, stressing preservation's value in enhancing community livability, combating the rootlessness of modern society, celebrating the contributions of diverse segments of our population, and strengthening the bonds that unite and identify us as Americans.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Tyler, 42.

<sup>263</sup> Richard Moe, "President's Report," *Forum Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (Winter: 2008), p. 6.

**Table 2: Timeline of Important Dates in Historic Preservation**

From Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to its History, Principles, and Practice*

- 1816 – Philadelphia State House (Independence Hall) saved from demolition.
- 1853 – Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association formed to save Washington’s home.
- 1872 – Yellowstone National Park made a federally protected area.
- 1889 – First national funding for historic preservation: Congress appropriated \$2,000 to preserve Casa Grande ruin in Arizona.
- 1906 – Antiquities Act, the country’s first national preservation legislation, passed, designating monuments on federal land and establishing penalties for destroying federally owned sites.
- 1910 – Creation of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.
- 1916 – National Park Service established to administer areas too large to be preserved privately (e.g., Colonial National Historical Park in Virginia, including Jamestown; and Yorktown)
- 1926 – John D. Rockefeller Jr. begins funding the restoration of Williamsburg, Virginia.
- 1929 – Henry Ford establishes Greenfield Village.
- 1931 – Charleston, South Carolina establishes an “Old and Historic District,” the country’s first locally designated historic district.
- 1934 – Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) authorized by President Roosevelt.
- 1935 – Historic Sites Act passed by Congress to establish historic preservation policy; it “established policy ... to preserve for public use historic sites, buildings and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States.”
- 1949 – National Trust for Historic Preservation established.
- 1966 – National Historic Preservation Act passed; major provisions established preservation roles for federal, state, and local levels of government.
- 1976 – Tax Reform Act removed incentive for demolition of older buildings and provided five-year rapid writeoff for certified rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- 1978 – Revenue Act established investment tax credits for rehabilitation of historic buildings. U.S. Supreme Court upheld New York City’s permit denial under local preservation law in *Penn Central Transportation Co. v. City of New York*.
- 1980 – Main Street Program established by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Amendment of National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and inclusion of provision for Certified Local Government status.
- 1981 – Congress passed Economic Recovery Tax Act (ERTA), providing 25 percent tax incentive for rehabilitation of historic buildings.
- 1986 – Tax Reform Act cut back some historic preservation tax incentives.
- 1988 – Federal Abandoned Shipwrecks Act authorized state management of significant shipwrecks, and encourages maritime preservation.
- 1998 – National Trust for Historic Preservation becomes independent of federal funding.

### Historic Preservation Laws

Through the passage of a handful of laws, the federal government is obligated to balance historic preservation priorities with other governmental objectives and private property rights. The laws governing public property generally exist at the federal and state level and do not necessarily require that preservation be performed. They do, however, require that a process for balancing preservation concerns with other government goals be conducted. Laws that influence private property and actions generally exist at the local level. They regulate alterations, demolitions, or other changes that can destroy historic fabric or impair the integrity of the resource with the simple guiding goal of protecting significant historic resources.<sup>264</sup>

*National Historic Preservation Act of 1966* – This act established a national preservation program and a method of procedural safeguards. It also encourages the identification and protection of historic resources. It has three major components:

- 1) Creation, expansion, and maintenance of the National Register of Historic Places
- 2) Federal agencies are obligated to consider the effects of federally supported, regulated, or funded actions on historic properties listed or eligible for the National Register. A review process makes certain that consideration is given to such properties. This is known as the Section 106 process (Section 106 of the NHPA calls for the review).
- 3) Federal agencies are required to find, inventory, and recommend properties to the National Register, adopt the responsibility for protecting and preserving historic properties, and ensure the maximum use of historic buildings.

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<sup>264</sup> Miller, p. 1-3.

The NHPA also created the Historic Preservation Fund with allocates money to the states through annual appropriations approved by Congress.<sup>265</sup>

*National Environmental Policy Act* – This act states, in small part, “It is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practical means, consistent with other essential considerations of national policy to ... preserve important historic, cultural, and natural aspects of our national heritage.”<sup>266</sup>

*Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act* – Historic preservation laws at all levels of government serve as guides and call for review, but they do not prohibit or require direct action on the historic resources. Section 4(f) on the other hand, forbids federal approval or funding for transportation projects that demand the “use” of any historic site, recreation area, public park, or wildlife refuge. There are two exceptions; if there is “no feasible and prudent alternative to the project,” and if the project includes “all possible planning to minimize harm to the project.” “Use” is defined as, “the direct physical taking of a property, and indirect effects that would ‘substantially impair’ the value of the protected sites.”<sup>267</sup>

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<sup>265</sup> Miller, p. 4-5.

<sup>266</sup> Miller, p. 6.

<sup>267</sup> Miller, p. 6-7.

## Preservation as a Part of Rural Development Strategies

The idea of “place-based development” guides most rural development enterprises. Place-based development operates by focusing on the existing human, cultural, historic and environmental assets of rural communities instead of specific economic sectors such as agriculture. Historic preservation is already organized around this theme of appreciating the unique local character of a community and can easily magnify the positive effects of place-based development.<sup>268</sup>

Historic preservation contributes to place-based development through the supporting the emerging sustainable agriculture and protecting working landscapes movements. The Barn Again! program directly benefits farmers and ranchers looking to continue the use of their historic barns. Preservation efforts lead to conservation easements and community supported agriculture operations that save working landscapes. Main Street programs have helped local businessmen and women to identify market niches and align their needs with affordable spaces in historic structures. This program has also given way to many community-owned enterprises. Cultural heritage tourism is also encouraged through historic preservation efforts. Agritourism is becoming a viable option for farmers and ranchers to supplement their incomes.

As outlined in the programs discussed below, historic preservation plays a much larger role in communities than just saving old buildings. Preservation contributes to the long-term planning in a community and helps to revitalize local economies. Preservation also assists rural regions in identifying their “cultural elements” and using these elements as a source of community identity and pride.

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<sup>268</sup> James Lindberg, “Rural Development Trends and Opportunities for Historic Preservation,” *Forum Journal*, vol. 20, no. 4 (Summer 2006): 10.

## Historic Preservation Programs, Organizations, and Initiatives (applicable to Rural Areas)

Thousands of historic preservation organizations exist throughout the nation, and each runs various programs and institutes initiatives to help their mission. The major national programs and organizations as well as those in Montana are outlined below. Also discussed are nation-wide strategies for preserving historic property that can be used by any group or individual, but are not necessary overseen by a specific organization. A list of relevant program contact information can be found in Appendix B.

### *United States Federal Government:*

#### National Register of Historic Places

Significant historic properties deemed worthy of preservation are put on an official list known as the National Register of Historic Places. Created through the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is administered by the National Park Service under the auspices of the Secretary of the Interior. The primary goals of the National Register are “to foster a national preservation ethic; promote a greater appreciation of America’s heritage, and increase and broaden the public’s understanding and appreciation of historic places.”<sup>269</sup> The National Register strives to create livable and vibrant communities through encouraging private individuals, businesses, and organizations to recognize and use historic places.

#### Properties

The National Register list contains historic properties significant to American history for their representation of history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture. These

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<sup>269</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “National Register Brochure: The National Register of Historic Places,” 2002.

properties exist in the forms of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects. The definitions of these properties are as follows:

*Historic Resource/Property:* Any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object. These are also often referred to as a *cultural resource*.

*District:* A significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.

*Site:* Location of a significant event or activity related to the importance for which a property meets the National Register criteria.

*Building:* A resource created principally to shelter a form of human activity, such as a house.

*Structure:* A functional construction made for the purposes other than creating shelter, such as a bridge.

*Object:* A construction primarily artistic in nature or relatively small in scale and simply constructed, such as a statue or milepost.<sup>270</sup>

### Results of Listing a Property

- Listing in the National Register honors the property by recognizing its importance to its community, state, or the Nation.
- Federal agencies, whose projects affect a listed property, must give the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation an opportunity to comment on the project and its effects on the property.
- Owners of listed properties may be able to obtain Federal historic preservation funding, when funds are available. In addition, Federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation and other provisions may apply.
- Owners of private property listed in the National Register have no obligation to open their properties to the public, to restore them, or even to maintain them, if they choose not to do so. Owners can do anything they wish with their property provided that no Federal license, permit, or funding is involved.

### Preservation Planning

The National Register encourages and supports the process of identifying and evaluating historic properties. Once historic resources have been evaluated, a planning process that incorporates these properties can begin. Federal agencies must plan for the proper preservation of the historic resources under their ownership. The State Historic

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<sup>270</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, National Register, History and Education, Glossary of Terms.

Preservation Office develops a statewide historic preservation plan based on the identification and evaluation of historic resources statewide. The National Register also provides guidance for local governments and organizations engaged in preservation planning.

### Nomination and Listing Procedures

The National Register documents properties and evaluates their significance as a way of preserving history. As part of creating the register, the National Park Service developed methods for evaluating the significance of historic properties. The significance of a historic property is evaluated based on the National Register Criteria for evaluation. Important definitions are as follows:

*Evaluation:* Process by which the significance and integrity of a historic property are judged and eligibility for National Register listing is determined.

*Significance:* Importance of a historic property as defined by the National Register criteria in one or more areas of significance.<sup>271</sup>

The significance of a historic resource is based on its association with one of the four National Register Criteria. These criteria are summarized as follows:

*Criterion A:* Association with events, activities, or patterns that have made an important contribution to history.

*Criterion B:* Association with a person, or people significant to the past.

*Criterion C:* Properties that display distinctive physical characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or distinctive characteristics of design, construction, or form that display high artistic values, or properties that represent the work of a master.

*Criterion D:* Potential to yield important information, usually in the form of an archaeological site.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Cultural Resources, National Register, History and Education, Glossary of Terms.

<sup>272</sup> Linda Flint McClelland, How to Complete the National Register Registration Form, US Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997, p. 3.

There also exist seven Criteria Considerations that apply to properties otherwise ineligible for the National Register. These can be found in Appendix D, the “National Register Brochure: The National Register of Historic Places.”

A National Register nomination is commonly prepared by private citizens, consultants, or the appropriate SHPO officer. The nomination is sent to the SHPO office for them to review before sending on to the State Historic Preservation Review Board. The Review Board meets and recommends that the SHPO either approve or disapprove the nomination. If approved, the SHPO sends the nomination to the Keeper of the National Register for official listing.

#### Other Activities

The National Register is involved in many other activities that enhance the knowledge of and concern for historic resources. A database for accessing nomination forms, bulletins, videos, other publications and technical assistance is maintained by the National Register. In addition, it provides information and assistance for education and tourist programs in the form of the *Teaching with Historic Places* lesson plans and the *Discover Our Shared Heritage Travel Itinerary Series*.<sup>273</sup>

#### **Preserve America**

This Administration initiative is designed to assist and promote community efforts to preserve and enjoy significant pieces of our heritage. First Lady Mrs. Laura Bush, is the Honorary Chair of Preserve America. The goals of the initiative revolve around the increase in shared knowledge of the nation’s past, greater regional identities and community pride, more local activism and participation in preserving cultural and natural resources, and aid for the economic strength of our communities. Important elements of the Preserve America Initiative are:

#### Preserve America Presidential Awards

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<sup>273</sup> Entire National Register section, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, “National Register Brochure: The National Register of Historic Places,” 2002.

Organizations, businesses, and government entities are eligible to receive an award for the exemplary accomplishments in preserving, interpreting, and/or reusing historic resources.

#### Preserve America Communities

Communities that protect and promote their heritage, use their historic resources for economic and community growth, and encourage experiencing and appreciating heritage through education and tourism programs receive recognition and designation as a Preserve America Community. This distinction warrants many benefits which include eligibility for Preserve America Grants. Montana currently has thirteen Preserve America Communities: Anaconda-Deer Lodge, Billings, Butte-Silver Bow, Fort Benton, Great Falls, Havre, Hill County, Lewistown, Missoula, Stevensville, Red Lodge, Terry, and Virginia City. Lewistown is the closest one to Petroleum County. Two of these towns, Terry, and Virginia City, have less than 700 residents.

#### Preserve America Grants

Grant money is awarded to Preserve America Communities to support local efforts to engage in sustainable uses for their historic resources and to support economic and educational opportunities in connection with heritage tourism.

#### Preserve America History Teacher of the Year Award

#### Educational Outreach

#### Executive Order 13287: "Preserve America"

Implemented in March, 2003, the order seeks to encourage and enhance preservation programs and policies both within the federal government and in the private realm of preservation.<sup>274</sup>

### Save America's Treasures

Save America's Treasures (SAT) was established by Executive Order in 1998. The National Trust for Historic Preservation, the National Park Service, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities, and other federal cultural agencies combine to form this public-private partnership. The program "celebrates America's great historic and cultural legacy by identifying and raising resources to preserve historically significant sites and collections."<sup>275</sup>

Current chairs of the SAT Committee are First Lady Laura Bush, Richard Moe, National Trust President, and Susan Eisenhower, granddaughter of Dwight D. Eisenhower. Other members of the Committee include professionals from the fields of business, academia and philanthropy, as well as cultural resource management.

Save America's Treasures sponsors one of the largest and most successful cultural resource grant programs. Federal challenge grants are awarded annually to Federal, state, local, and tribal governments as well as non-profit organizations that are responsible for eligible historic resources. Eligible projects include preservation work on nationally significant intellectual and cultural artifacts and historic resources.

Currently, nine Save America's Treasures projects are in place in Montana in Helena, Butte, Virginia City, Missoula, West Yellowstone, Black Eagle, and Great Falls.

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<sup>274</sup> Overview of Preserve America, January 17, 2008, <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/overview.html>, February 13, 2008.

<sup>275</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, Non-profit Organizations or Public Agencies, <http://www.nationaltrust.org/funding/nonprofit.html>, February 18, 2008.

### Federal Tax Incentives

Tax incentives are given by the federal government as one form of encouraging the preservation and rehabilitation of historic properties. A credit from tax owed can allow taxpayers to recover dollar for dollar expenditures on eligible rehabilitation projects. Also, the value of a donated historic property can be deducted from taxable incomes in the form of a “charitable tax deduction.”

The Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit gives property owners either a 10 or 20% tax credit on rehabilitation expenses. This depends on the classification of the building – a “certified historic structure” (residential investment and commercial property) can qualify for the 20% credit. The 10% credit applies to noncertified, nonresidential properties placed in service before 1936. A number of specific conditions apply; these are found in Table 3. The NPS certifies the property and the rehab project. The SHPO reviews the project and recommends it to the NPS.<sup>276</sup>

Table 3: Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Conditions.

- The building must be historic (more than 50 years old).
- The building must be income producing (not an owner occupied residence).
- The building must be “placed in service” before the beginning of the rehabilitation (before being rehabilitated, the property must have been obtainable for its planned use)
- The building must be “substantially rehabilitated.”
- The rehab costs must be more than the adjusted basis of the building or \$5,000, whichever is greater
- The rehabilitation must be a “qualified rehabilitation.”
- The work must meet preservation/rehabilitation standards set by the Secretary of the Interior.
- The tax credit can not be taken until the Secretary of the Interior certifies that the building is historic and the rehab project met specific standards.

<sup>276</sup> Miller, p. 28-29.

## *Montana Programs and Organizations*

Appendix C contains the *Dollars for Historic Preservation* from the Montana State Historic Preservation Office Services Directory document. This outlines various laws, incentives, and organizations that provide possible funding for historic preservation activities.

### Montana State Historic Preservation Office

Under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the structure was created to establish state historic preservation offices (SHPO) in every state. These SHPO offices became the official storehouse for the documents relating to historic resources, they provide leadership for technical preservation assistance, and supervise preservation funding for the better management of historic and prehistoric resources. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office is an entity of the Montana Historical Society. The Montana SHPO, encourages “people across the state to identify, document, recognize and protect the heritage sites of Montana, preserving our rich cultural landscape for generations to come.”<sup>277</sup>

### Certified Local Government

The Certified Local Government (CLG) program is just one of the many programs sponsored and directed by the Montana SHPO. The program strives to create a base for appreciation and understanding of a community’s significant people and events, historic patterns, archaeology, architectural styles, and influential architects and builders. This program operates through a partnership with the NPS. Under the National Historic Preservation Act, SHPO offices can certify local governments who commit to preserving their region’s heritage. The SHPO then dedicates 10% of the funding they receive from the federal government to the CLGs. Dependent on the amount of preservation activity

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<sup>277</sup> mt.gov, Montana’s Official Website: Historic Preservation, <http://www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/default.asp>, February 18, 2008.

and federal funds available, each CLG can receive \$1,000 to \$5,000. Currently fifteen CLG programs exist in Montana: Anaconda-Deer Lodge County, Billings-Yellowstone County, Bozeman, Butte-Silver Bow County, Carbon County, Deer Lodge, Great Falls-Cascade County, Hardin-Big Horn County, Havre-Hill County, Helena-Lewis & Clark County, Lewistown, Livingston, Miles City, Missoula, and Virginia City. Except for Virginia City (population 175), all of these programs operate in counties or towns with well over 5,000 inhabitants.<sup>278</sup>

#### Montana Preservation Alliance

Founded in 1987, the Montana Preservation Alliance (MPA) is the only statewide, not-for-profit organization that works to save and protect Montana's historic resources, including landscapes and cultural heritage. The MPA sponsors preservation team workshops, Preservation Excellence Awards, lobbying efforts, and published the annual list of Montana's Most Endangered Places. An executive committee of up to fifteen members directs the activities of the MPA.

#### MPA Projects

The Last Best Barns: A Pictorial History – Since 2003, the MPA has been collecting information and photographs on Montana's historic barns with the goal of publishing a book.

Southwest Montana Heritage Tourism Initiative – This project contains two components; the *Of Sage and Stone: A Guide to Southwest Montana's Rural Treasures* and *The Copperway Guide to Butte-Anaconda History and Culture*.

Rosebud Battlefield State Park Protection Plan – This project created a preservation plan

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<sup>278</sup> mt.gov, Montana's Official Website: Historic Preservation: Community Preservation and the Certified Local Government Program, <http://www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/default.asp>, February 18, 2008.

to protect the Rosebud Battlefield.

The Tongue River Digital Archive Project – This project created a digital archive of the cultural landscape that comprises the Tongue River Valley.

Educational Program, Advocacy, and Technical Assistance

Preservation Excellence Awards

*National Trust for Historic Preservation Programs:*

**Rural Heritage Preservation**  
Rural Heritage Collaborative

The National Trust’s range of expertise, experience, and resources in the form of current programs and new initiatives are working with local, state, and national partners to preserve rural heritage and encourage “heritage-based” rural development.

Main Street

The National Trust Main Street Center works with communities to maintain or redevelop their commercial areas in order for them to be competitive. The Main Street program was established in 1980 and has assisted over 1,800 communities by operating according to the Main Street Four-Point Approach. The Four-Points, organization, promotion, design, and economic restructuring, are intended to address any needs that might arise in a commercial district. The Main Street Approach “advocates a return to community self-reliance, local empowerment, and the rebuilding of traditional commercial districts based on their unique assets: distinctive architecture, a pedestrian-friendly environment, personal service, local ownership, and a sense of community.”<sup>279</sup> The Main Street program is tailored for all sizes of downtowns, but has been especially successful in

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<sup>279</sup> National Trust for Historic Preservation, Main Street, <http://www.mainstreet.org/content.aspx?page=3&section=2>, February 19, 2008.

smaller cities and towns. Seven National Trust Main Street programs exist in Montana: Anaconda, Butte, Libby, Livingston, Polson, Red Lodge, and Stevensville.<sup>280</sup>

The Main Street program continues to adapt new ways for implementing thriving programs in deep rural communities. In Iowa, the program was expanded to include Rural Main Street Iowa, which works in communities ranging from 458 to 4,659 people. The program has identified the major differences between urban and rural communities and has incorporated a more flexible approach. These differences between smaller towns and their larger counterparts are identified in Table 4.

Table 4: From *Debra S. Flanders, "New Life for Iowa's Small Towns Thanks to a Main Street Approach."* Forum Journal, vol. 20, no. 4 (Summer 2006).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is little room for failure from economic and human resource perspectives, as there is a scarcer pool.</li> <li>• A greater impact, both economically and emotionally, is felt by positive and negative changes.</li> <li>• As a unit, the downtown commercial district is generally the largest employer in the community.</li> <li>• Downtown's health has a more immediate and direct influence upon the entire community's well-being.</li> <li>• There is a greater degree of volunteerism. Pride and passion translates into more ownership, and personal connectedness factors into residents' willingness to be involved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are less staff driven and rely on volunteer involvement.</li> <li>• Hiring a local person for the director position seems to work best because he or she is more readily accepted.</li> <li>• Often the program is the only economic development entity in the community.</li> <li>• When there are multiple economic development organizations, they frequently share office space, merge organizations, and/or the director serves dual roles.</li> <li>• They rely more heavily on financial support from individual residents.</li> <li>• Special fundraising activities account for a larger percentage of the operational budget.</li> </ul>
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Barn Again!

This program assists farmers and ranchers in finding solutions to barn maintenance and ways to continue to use historic barns. Barn Again! was created with the *Successful Farming* magazine and they continue to be a partner in managing the program. The

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<sup>280</sup> Main Street

program publishes sources on technical assistance, coordinates educational workshops, and operates an annual Awards Program.

### Heritage Tourism

Established more than fifteen years ago, the National Trust Heritage Tourism program used its experience working in communities throughout the nation to create steps for getting started in implementing a successful and sustainable heritage tourism program.

Heritage Tourism works with Partners in Tourism to help develop, promote and manage cultural heritage tourism programs.

### Community and Countryside Workshops

These workshops are coordinated by the National Trust and focus on such issues as community revitalization, historic preservation, land use and design issues in rural communities. The workshops last for two days and present case studies, presentations, and small group activities. Attendees of the workshops are generally local elected and appointed officials and community leaders.

### *Others*

#### Direct Acquisition

Government entities or non-profit organizations often purchase significant historic properties in order to ensure its survival. These properties then tend to be operated as house museums. Other options exist that will also protect historic resources, some of the most typical strategies are outlined below.<sup>281</sup>

### House Museums

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<sup>281</sup> Miller, p. 27.

Many of the nation's significant historic buildings survive in the form of house museums. Restoration usually returns the building to the prominence it once enjoyed. House museums attract tourists, school groups, and interested members of the general public and in this way help to educate the public.<sup>282</sup>

### Revolving Funds and Land Trusts

Typically, a revolving fund is established through donations, grants, or loans. This money generates enough income to purchase, rehabilitate, or sponsor another group to preserve a threatened historic property. After purchase, the property is either rehabilitated and sold or sold as is. Protective covenants or protective easements are placed on the property to ensure its preservation. After the sale, the money replenishes the original fund. Revolving fund money can also be used to lend money.<sup>283</sup>

When organizations acquire land and/or partial interests in property in order to be the long-term stewards of important historic resources, they have created a land trust. Land donations, development rights, and conservation easements are usually attained through a direct working relationship with private landowners.<sup>284</sup>

### Easement Programs

A preservation easement is a voluntary agreement between a property owner and an easement organization that protects a significant historical, archaeological, or cultural resource. An easement is an excellent way of blending land conservation and preservation goals. A property owner who donates an easement becomes eligible for certain Federal tax benefits. For Federal tax benefit purposes the IRS defines an

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<sup>282</sup> Miller, p. 27.

<sup>283</sup> Miller, p. 27.

<sup>284</sup> Miller, p. 27.

easement as something that protects a certified historic structure or historically important land area. There are a variety of easements and each is tailored to a specific property and task. Types of easements include conservation (usually a general term for preservation easements), scenic, agricultural, and façade. The owner of a historic resource chooses a specific organization to receive their easement donation. The two parties then outline the terms. These are drawn up on a case-by-case basis and vary, but most easements restrict development or changes of any kind that will harm the resource. The easement is recorded as a legal document and becomes part of the property's chain of title and "runs with the land," binding the owner and all future owners to the agreement.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>285</sup> Jennifer Goodman, "Using Easements to Protect Historic, Cultural, and Natural Resources," *forum news*, Vol. XIV, No. 3, Jan/Feb 2008, p. 1-2, 6.

## Preservation Management Examples and Recommendations

### Examples

#### Colorado Ranches

A grassroots movement throughout Colorado has been working to not only save ranch land, but to also keep it as a working ranch. Many concerned groups across the state have formed their own organizations and their success is attributed to a partnership between ranchers, communities, local preservation groups, land trust organizations, and colleges and universities. Graduate students in architecture, landscape architecture, and planning from the University of Colorado in Denver have been instrumental in the accomplishments of these groups. They gain hands-on preservation experience by conducting surveys and inventories which lead to nominations of historic properties for recognition, completing building assessments, documenting ranch complexes, submitting grant proposals, obtaining preservation easements, and researching tax and other preservation incentives. The movement tries to be flexible and allow owners to choose the best preservation options for their situation.<sup>286</sup>

#### Rural Main Street Iowa<sup>287</sup>

The Main Street Iowa program began in 1985, but it's framework applied only to towns or cities of 5,000 – 50,000 people, this excluded 92% of Iowa's towns. After requests by Iowa's small communities, state legislators approved the expansion of the Main Street program and appropriated funds to establish Rural Main Street Iowa in 1990. Nineteen rural communities remain active in the program; their populations range from 458 – 4,659.

The Rural Main Street program operates according to a plan of flexibility that allows each community to personalize the Main Street approach and take advantage of their attributes and resources. The program dispenses information, gives assistance, and provides incentives for new business start-up. Business retention and expansion is a priority. The long-term success of Rural Main Street relies on establishing a sound

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<sup>286</sup> Kat Vlahos, "Preserving Ranches: Not Only Possible, but Imperative," CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship, vol. 2, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 6-12.

<sup>287</sup> Debra S. Flanders, "New Life for Iowa's Small Towns Thanks to a Main Street Approach," Forum Journal, vol. 20, no. 4, (Summer 2006): 26 – 34.

organizational foundation, educating stakeholders, and changing attitudes with engaging the public as a primary goal. Since 1990, 635 businesses have gotten a start, expanded, or relocated through assistance from the Rural Main Street program. This business support resulted in 1,006 new jobs.

Rural Main Street Iowa suggests three primary strategies for success in small towns. First, develop a niche. Merchants know their customers and can market to a target audience (this applies more in areas that are close to big box stores). Second, offer incentives. Many communities used a Community Initiated Development approach created by the National Trust Main Street program to provide incentives for businesses. Third, use promotional activities and special events to encourage preservation. Introduce heritage education activities and celebrate historical events to get people excited about their community.

#### Kansas and Explorer Tourism

Kansas, not a getaway destination for most, has successfully adopted an “explorer tourism” program to encourage Kansas residents, and others, to learn more about the little known places in their home state. Explorer tourism is based on the idea that “exploring is about enjoying the journey, about becoming engaged in the search, and about not judging a town on its first appearance, but appreciating the culture and ongoing drama of daily life.”<sup>288</sup> Marci Penner was instrumental in developing explorer tourism through the Kansas Sampler Foundation ([www.kansassampler.org](http://www.kansassampler.org)), whose mission is to preserve and sustain rural culture. The Foundation established the We Kan! program, which serves as a network for bringing rural communities together to share their issues, solutions, and resources. They target volunteer-led communities with 1,500 people or less. Information is exchanged through a newsletter and various gatherings. In addition, the Foundation helped to create the Kansas Explorers Club, which is designed to inspire, educate, and encourage the discovery and appreciation of Kansas. Currently, the club has more than 4,500 members. Through bi-monthly newsletters, the Club provides members with things to do and see in out-of-the way parts of the state. They market concepts like

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<sup>288</sup> Marci Penner, “Looking at Kansas with New Eyes through ‘Explorer Tourism,’” *Forum Journal*, vol. 20, no. 4, (Summer: 2006): p. 43.

“dare-to-do-dirt,” “feel good about spending money in small towns,” “enjoy the journey,” and “make a difference.”

The Kansas Sampler Foundation claims that tourism can be an applicable tool for rural development if the notion of exploring can be taken advantage of. Explorer tourism thrives on those who want to get off the beaten path, and there are plenty of these people. They prefer authentic places that have not changed or built something in order to attract tourists. They realize that many rural communities contain architectural gems, they enjoy engaging in conversation in the shops, post offices, libraries, and cafes, and they understand the impact and importance of their dollar in a small town.

The Foundation has identified eight elements of rural culture that can be capitalized on and marketed for explorer tourism. The Foundation believes that every town contains at least one of the eight elements. The elements are: architecture, art, commerce, cuisine, customs, geography, history, and people. Marci Penner says, “Once a town has identified its own unique cultural elements, it can promote them in a collaborative effort with other rural communities.” She recently co-authored *The Kansas Guidebook for Explorers* and the belief that there exists a certain audience with the desire to find and experience out-of-the-way places was reinforced by feedback from her book.<sup>289</sup>

Penner summarizes how communities can take advantage of explorer tourism,

... But the one rural development tool that can be most readily put in place is the one that caters to explorers. Explorers are curious about all aspects of a town, but junky and unfriendly towns will probably move an explorer down the road quicker than anything else. Towns that have friendly, welcoming, and preferably knowledgeable front-liners, people on the street, or eye-raising town characters can keep an explorer in town longer. Clean or historic buildings make a difference too. Primitive or professional signage that helps describe a building, historic site or event, or a custom is a plus.

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<sup>289</sup> all of the above from Penner, 43-49.

Being the best it can be at being itself isn't always easy but it gives an achievable standard for every town. The best it can be might change from year to year but it is a goal the town can set and strive for. Communities have the chance to progress incrementally, at a pace that is comfortable for them.<sup>290</sup>

Harlowton, Montana, population 899 (2006 estimated)

About 1990, the City-County Preservation Committee was established as a 501c3 with the goal of preserving historic resources of significance in Harlowton and Wheatland County. The old Milwaukee Railroad Depot has been the center of the group's activities. They developed a long-range plan that includes converting the depot and its adjoining properties into an indoor-outdoor museum. In the first few years, with much enthusiasm driving the project, the Committee secured several grants and numerous donations to fund preservation efforts. The last year has seen the project stall with the passing of many of the original founders of the Committee and dwindling numbers of remaining volunteers, who are ready to help, but in need of a passionate director.<sup>291</sup>

Virginia City, Montana, population 130 (2003 estimated)

Virginia City is a unique case for its size. The city has been a National Historic Site since the 1970s and city and community activities are based in large part on its popular history. The State of Montana owns much of the town and has created the Montana Heritage Commission (MHC) to oversee preservation, museum, archaeological, and interpretive and educational activities there. In addition to the professional presence provided by the MHC, Virginia City is also a Certified Local Government (CLG) through the Montana SHPO. The CLG program can be very beneficial, but often times, it requires another committee be formed and is not always the best option for smaller towns and counties. The Virginia City Preservation Alliance, a 501c3 non-profit group, also ensures the proper preservation activities are taking place in the town. Virginia City has

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<sup>290</sup> Penner, 48.

<sup>291</sup> Dane Elwood, City-County Preservation Committee member, e-mail interview, January 2008; Harlowton, Wheatland County, Montana, Honoring the Past, Exploring the Future, <http://www.harlowtonchamber.com/milwaukeeerr.html>.

an amazing group of extremely interested residents, most who live there because of its historic importance to the state, region, and nation. This type of specialized population is not typical of most rural agricultural communities in Montana.

The Virginia City Artists' Group provides a good template for other small places struggling to provide a cultural outlet. This artist group owns the historic Adobetown school located at the west end of Wallace Avenue. Each summer, the schoolhouse operates as a gift shop/gallery. Members of the group each pay \$25/month for insurance and building maintenance expenses, those who are not members of the group operate on a regular consignment arrangement. Members of the group work one day a week in the store. This is an excellent way for local craftspeople to showcase their work as well as providing the community with a cultural outlet and source of local pride.

Manfred, North Dakota, population 56 (2000 Census)

In 2000 a group of volunteers interested in preserving the legacy of rural America founded Manfred History and Preservation, Inc (MHP, Inc.) with assistance from Preservation North Dakota. They strive to compile and share Manfred's history, including its traditional trade area, and to encourage community pride and the restoration of historic structures. In the first year, the group also set up a website ([manfrednd.org](http://manfrednd.org)) and published *The New Manfred News*. By 2001, MHP, Inc. achieved listing a local church on the National Register, began restoration work on a property they obtained, and brought their projects to the public through the celebration of Manfred Days. The Manfred Heritage Museum, which operates in three historic properties, was dedicated in July, 2003. In 2004, the organization established four divisions which are run by a board of nine elected directors. MHP, Inc. continues preservation work and has secured grant funding and an endowment along the way.

## Recommendations for Petroleum County

A wide variety of historic preservation programs and approaches exist to help revitalize the economy and encourage community identity and pride. Some of these work better in rural places than others. While most programs can be adapted, the programs outlined in the *Historic Preservation Programs, Organizations, and Initiatives* section explain those that have been the most successful in rural communities. In addition, the specific examples given above have already been attempted, with varying results. These are a good place to look for ideas and have inspired some of the recommendations for Petroleum County. Manfred, North Dakota has proven that deep rural communities can have successful preservation programs. Below, incentives for rural areas to engage in historic preservation activities are outlined, more reasons for preserving can be found in Table 1 of this section.

### ***Incentives for engaging in historic preservation activities:***

- From Donovan D. Rypkema, *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide*, Washington, D.C.: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994.
  - Quality of life is becoming the critical ingredient in economic development, and historic preservation is an important part of the quality of life equation.
  - The quality of historic buildings and the quality of their preservation says much about a community's self-image. A community's commitment to itself is a prerequisite for nearly all quality of life elements.
  - Historic preservation promotes active community participation.
  - Historic preservation creates a bond between a community and its citizens.
  - Historic resources are among the strongest community assets for attracting visitors.
  - Historic character attracts visitors to small towns.
  - Historic preservation has significant and ongoing economic impact beyond the project itself.
    - New businesses formed
    - Private investment stimulated
    - Tourism stimulated
    - Increased property values
    - **Enhanced quality of life, sense of neighborhood, and community pride.**

Following are recommendations and suggestions for historic preservation activities in Petroleum County. These have been developed after research and analysis of the area and discussions with the residents. While the county government and Winnett Schools are in the greatest positions for instituting preservation activities and encouraging others, any group or individual can spearhead any of the following projects. Each recommendation is followed by specific incentives for pursuing that recommendation. It is always a good idea to consult with the SHPO or another organization with experience before beginning a project. Important contact information can be found in Appendix B.

### 1. Heritage Education

The key to a preservation movement anywhere, but especially in rural areas, lies in education.<sup>292</sup> Heritage education reaches wide audiences of all ages while also encouraging cultural stewardship. While heritage education follows no set definition; generally, it means the study of local or community history.<sup>293</sup> Heritage education serves to incorporate a vast spectrum of disciplines into lessons of local culture and history. This leads to an awareness of one's immediate surroundings and recognition of their role in determining the present events.<sup>294</sup> Implementing a heritage education course at the high school will reach a broad audience and educate the community's young people about their own local history. Other heritage education activities consist of workshops, conferences, exhibits, events, and many other proceedings. Following are just a few of the many ways heritage education can be incorporated into the community.

- *Teaching with Historic Places* Lesson Plan
  - A completed lesson plan follows this section
  - The Winnett Schools has received this lesson plan for implementation in their Social Studies curriculum
- Brochures/pamphlets
  - Winnett Historic Building Walking Tour

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<sup>292</sup> Max A. van Balgooy, "Heritage Education and Historic Preservation: Partners or Acquaintances?" Forum Journal, Vol. 19, No. 1, (Fall 2004).

<sup>293</sup> Caneta S. Hankins, MTSU Center for Historic Preservation, Focus on 2000: A Heritage Education Perspective, 1997.

<sup>294</sup> Coppin State University, Goucher College, Morgan State University, and the National Park Service in cooperation with Participants in Curriculum Forum, Teaching Cultural Heritage Preservation: Historic Preservation Cultural Resource Stewardship and Related Fields, A Course Outline, September 2002.

- Petroleum County Historic Resources Guide
- Petroleum County Scenic Drive
  - This can be combined with the Centennial Farms and Ranches Program.

***Incentives:***

“The vital need in this shrunken and fast-moving world is to get to know and understand both other peoples and ourselves. This is not the time in world history to send ignorant Americans abroad, nor to tolerate their domestic counterparts at home. It is the time to be better informed about--to understand--both others and ourselves.” – Clifford Lord, 1964, in *Teaching With Community Resources*

Heritage education can involve all members of a community.

An increased understanding of local history and historic resources leads to a greater appreciation of one’s surroundings.

A greater appreciation at the local level leads to more attention and recognition at higher levels.

Heritage education encourages good cultural stewardship.

Publications reach a wider audience.

2. Promote Special Events

Utilize one of the three strategies in use by the Rural Main Street Iowa program and take advantage of special events already in place to promote heritage education, community history, and community identity. Or create new events. Use these events to produce and/or distribute brochures and pamphlets.

- Winnett’s 100 year celebration (post office – 1910, incorporated – 1918)
- Petroleum County 100 year celebration (1924)
- Winnett All-School Reunion
- Softball Tournament

***Incentives:***

Community awareness and recognition of local heritage and historic architecture.

An opportunity to reach a wider audience and enlist volunteer help.

Preservation is a key factor in quality of life, which is critical in economic development.

3. Survey of Resources

A survey is simply the process of gathering information on and identifying those historic resources important to the character of the community. The survey consists of an architectural description, a history, significance to the community and photographs of the building. The survey will result in an inventory, which is a document that contains the information that has been compiled on the buildings evaluated as significant. The inventory will go on file at the State Historic Preservation Office in Helena. Owners often inquire about these inventories when they want to learn about their buildings.

Researchers use them to determine historical context of the area. The survey will contain information for study in the future about the place's past. A survey identifies what is there, so when it is gone, photographs, descriptions and histories are documented. The survey also assists in developing a community preservation and/or development plan. This will help leaders determine how to incorporate the protection of significant historic resources in future decision making.

A partial survey has been completed already; however, it is only an overview of the historic resources in Petroleum County. Most of the residences in Winnett still need to be considered, along with ranch buildings, and rural historic landscapes.

***Incentives:***

The survey will identify historic properties throughout the county.

The survey will result in an inventory that evaluates the significance of those properties and determine whether or not they are eligible for the National Register.

The inventory will help owners and the public learn more about their properties.

The process will provide a base for future preservation planning and activities.

4. Establish a Nonprofit Preservation/Historical Organization, or Work with an Existing Nonprofit

Many of the communities outlined above have established a nonprofit 501(c)3 to organize and spearhead projects. These groups take the pressure off of one person and can accomplish a great amount. Also, already established clubs and groups could take on preservation projects.

***Incentives:***

Nonprofit groups are eligible for a wide variety of grant monies.

Group recognition contributes to recognition of the place.

5. Preservation Easements

Easements are one of the most successful ways of preserving open spaces, ranch land, and farm land. This is one way the ranchers in Colorado have found to protect their lands. Most easements restrict development or changes of any kind that will harm the resource, including ranch land. The easement is recorded as a legal document and becomes part of the property's chain of title and "runs with the land," binding the owner and all future owners to the agreement.

***Incentives:***

Preserving the character of the land preserves the character of the place and its people.

Maintain community identity.

Preserves the foremost element drawing people to the area.

## 6. National Register Listing for the Courthouse

The Petroleum County Courthouse retains excellent integrity and is one of the last remaining landmark structures in Winnett. The courthouse is historically significant because of its association with Mr. Winnett and its service as the county courthouse, as well as its unique commercial construction compared with other Winnett buildings.

### a. Restoration of the Courthouse

The best approach for inspiring preservation interest and action is to engage in a preservation project that will gain much attention. The interior of the building retains excellent decorative details, including a skylight into the courtroom that is presently covered. Currently, the courthouse is in fair shape; however a bat infestation and leaking roofs will quickly wear on the building. Restoration or rehabilitation will return the building to its former glory, as well as make the second story useable again.

### b. Reuse of the second story of the Courthouse

The best way to maintain a building is to keep it in use. The second floor of the courthouse has excellent spaces with a variety of options for use.

- Museum
- Apartments
- Businesses

### c. Encourage National Register listing of other eligible properties

### ***Incentives:***

A National Register listing will provide the building with the recognition it deserves as well as making it more eligible for grants and other funding for restoration or rehabilitation work.

Rehabilitation/Restoration work creates jobs.

The life expectancy of rehabilitated historic buildings is most often longer than that of new structures.

Rehabilitating historic buildings is both cost effective and energy conserving.

Historic public buildings, properly managed and maintained, save public dollars.

Reuse of the 2<sup>nd</sup> story will provide space for new/expanded businesses.

The quality of historic buildings reveals much about a community's self-image.

Private properties qualify for the federal rehabilitation tax credit.

## 7. Multiple Property Submission for Winnett or Petroleum County

Complete a Multiple Property Documentation Form in order to evaluate and organize the properties documented in the survey. The National Register of Historic Places accepts Multiple Property Documentation forms. These forms nominate multiple significant properties that are organized according to themes, trends, and patterns of history. The Multiple Property Documentation form is only a cover document and not a nomination, however, it serves to evaluate the properties for National Register eligibility and may be used to register properties in the future. Information that is shared by

multiple properties is documented on the form, and information specific to one property is documented on a separate Registration form. This document will provide a basis for future National Register nominations for several eligible properties.

***Incentives:***

The Multiple Property Documentation form provides structure for the organizing of survey information and research for registering properties.

This thematic approach provides essential information for future preservation planning because properties are evaluated on a comparative basis within a specified geographic region. Preservation priorities can be established based on historical significance of properties in comparison to one another.

**8. Craftsmen's Guild**

Establish a group similar to the Virginia City Artists' Group to open a gallery/store/gift shop (preferably in a historic building on or close to Main Street, or in the restored second floor of the courthouse, where travelers will see) to market the goods created by people of the community. This will not only provide a supplemental income for people, but will also add to the cultural atmosphere of the community.

***Incentives:***

Provides a place for local people to showcase their talents.

Creates another business/jobs.

The arts contribute to quality of life.

Contributes to community identity and pride.

**9. Centennial Farm and Ranch Designation**

The State Historic Preservation Office in Wyoming operates a Centennial Farm and Ranch Designation. Their website states, "Wyoming's ranch and farm lands are disappearing at an alarming rate. Farmers and ranchers have withstood development pressure, drought and mining threats and yet they have managed to preserve these important pieces of Wyoming's rural heritage. Agriculture produces more than food; it also maintains open spaces, contributes to the state's economy and supports family businesses. These ranches and farms are not just history but remain vital today and highlight the importance of agriculture to Wyoming." This program recognizes farming and ranching families through signage and a ceremony at the State Fair (find out more at <http://wyoshpo.state.wy.us/cfr/index.asp>). Petroleum County could create their own similar program to acknowledge the centennial families in the area.

***Incentives:***

Acknowledgement of local families.

Contribute to the preservation of open spaces, which contributes to the community sense of identity.

Local recognition often times leads to regional and state recognition.

Tourists are drawn to historical and authentic places.

## 10. Eastern Montana Sampler

Follow the Kansas Sampler Foundation example and create a comparable regional sampler foundation in Montana with other interested communities. The Sampler Foundation could be as large or small as those interested want to make it. This will create a wider network for information and other resources. In addition, use the eight elements of rural culture to identify which apply to Petroleum County and capitalize on them. The eight elements follow. Remember, these can apply to the entire county and not just Winnett and the community only needs to capitalize on one element. For more information visit [www.kansassampler.org](http://www.kansassampler.org).

### 1) Architecture

To assess the architecture in your town look at such structures as residential homes, downtown buildings, churches, barns, the courthouse, post office, library, bridges, and mills.

Ask these questions to help see the story of architecture in your town. The answers may lead you to interesting findings!

- a. What building materials were used and where did they come from?
- b. Are these materials unique to the area?
- c. What year or era was the structure built?
- d. Who was the architect or contractor?
- e. What was the original use of the structure?
- f. Does the structure have a well-known nickname?
- g. How is the building used now?
- h. Is there a connection to similar structures around the state?

### 2) Art

- a. Do you have sculptures, murals, or grassroots art?
- b. Do you have a performing center, coffeehouse, art gallery, or art museum?
- c. Is there a place where you can see an area artist at work?
- d. Is there ethnic art displayed in the community?
- e. Think about people, places, or events to find music, fine art, drama, literature, or dance in your town.

### 3) Commerce

- a. The town was probably founded due to a certain business. What was it in your area?
- b. What were some of the other early businesses?
- c. Is your town known for a certain kind of business, i.e. agriculture, manufacturing, cottage industries, etc.?
- d. What are your specialty shops?
- e. What retail shops are located in historic or unique buildings?
- f. What is the lineage of businesses in each building?
- g. Is there a story to tell about the economic drama of your town -- past or present?

- 4) Cuisine
  - a. What are the ethnic or specialty foods served in your restaurants?
  - b. What kind of food is served at church suppers or other food events?
  - c. Are you famous for a certain kind of food that is produced in your town?
  - d. Do you have a local cafe or unique restaurant?
  - e. Do you have ethnic or local traditions about certain foods, mealtimes, how you eat?
- 5) Customs
  - a. What annual events do you have? Are they unique to the area?
  - b. What are things that people do every day? What do they wear, what kind of vehicles do they drive, what do they talk about, what are some quirky things that happen regularly in your town?
  - c. Do you have a soda fountain?
  - d. Do you park in the middle of the street?
  - e. What do people do for recreation?
  - f. Does your town have a nickname or special phrase? (I.e., are you a "[capital](#)?")
- 6) Geography
  - a. Natural landmarks
  - b. Physiographic region(s)
  - c. Hiking, biking, or equestrian trails
  - d. Lakes and rivers
  - e. The sky
  - f. Trees, shrubs, grasses, wildflowers, gardens, and arboretums
  - g. Wildlife and birds
  - h. Scenic drives - scenic byways
- 7) History
  - a. What significant events surrounded the founding of your town?
  - b. What significant or infamous events made an impact upon your town?
  - c. What present-day physical evidence helps tell the story of your town?
  - d. Peruse old newspapers and genealogical records, and go through the local museum as if for the first time.
  - e. Use each of the rural culture elements to help you think of every aspect of your town's story.
- 8) People
  - a. Who are the historically significant people from your town?
  - b. Who are the present-day characters or contributors?  
*Note: Use all the rural culture elements to help think of people. For instance, considering commerce might help you think of inventors from your town.*
  - c. Which ethnic groups contributed to the formation of the town and still have an influence?
  - d. What is the story of the population of your town?

***Incentives:***

Gain recognition at a more regional level for community qualities.

Draw those tourists interested in exploring “off the beaten path.”

Boost the local economy.

Contributes to building community identity and pride.

Working with outside sources increases contacts, funding, and support for projects.

**Further Suggestions**

The following are only suggestions. They have been shown to be successful approaches in other areas.

1. Establish a Certified Local Government (CLG)
2. Become a Main Street Community, or adopt the Main Street Approach
3. Prepare a preservation plan
4. Create a county/town website
5. Apply to become a Preserve America Community

## Recommendations Hierarchy

Recommendations are arranged by subject. The top subject represents the first steps in implementing community-wide preservation, and so on down the list.

This graphic also represents preservation activities according to cost. Many activities will range in cost depending on how extensive the program or project is, but generally the activities are listed from lowest cost with the *Teaching with Historic Places* lesson plan (because it is already being provided to the Winnett Schools) to highest cost with the Courthouse restoration.

### Historic Preservation Education and Promotion

Teaching with Historic Places

Promote Special Events:

*All School Reunion, Winnett's 100 Year Celebration, Brochures/Pamphlets*

Survey of Resources

Establish a Nonprofit Preservation/Historical

Organization, or Work with an Existing Nonprofit

### Encouragement of Community Identity

Preservation Easements

National Register Nomination for Courthouse

Centennial Farm and Ranch Program

Multiple Property Submission for Winnett or  
Petroleum County

Explorer Tourism (Eastern MT Sampler)

Craftsmen's Guild

### Hands-On Preservation Action

Courthouse Rehabilitation

Courthouse Reuse

### **Recommendations**

Recommendations broken down according to the “A Vision for Montana Preservation 2008-2012: Goals and Objectives” found in the Montana Historic Preservation Plan 2008-2012.

#### **EDUCATE: BUILDING A FOUNDATION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE AND AWARENESS.**

Teaching with Historic Places, Support/Organize Special Events: *All School Reunion, Winnett’s 100 Year Celebration*  
Publish/Distribute Brochures and Pamphlets

#### **CELEBRATE: PROMOTING PRESERVATION WITH RECOGNITION, PRAISE, AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.**

Centennial Farm and Ranch Program, Non-profit Group Designation, Preservation Easements, Craftsmen’s Guild, Explorer Tourism (Eastern MT Sampler)

#### **LOCATE AND EVALUATE: IDENTIFYING AND DOCUMENTING MONTANA’S SIGNIFICANT HERITAGE PLACES WORTHY OF PRESERVATION.**

Survey of Resources, National Register Nomination for Courthouse, Multiple Property Submission for Winnett or Petroleum County

#### **ADVOCATE: SEEKING SUPPORT OF PRESERVATION THROUGH FUNDING, INCENTIVES, AND PROTECTION.**

Restoration/Rehabilitation of the Courthouse  
Apply for Grants for Preservation Projects

#### **COLLABORATE: WORKING TOGETHER TO PRESERVE MONTANA’S HISTORIC, PRECONTACT, AND TRADITIONAL CULTURAL PROPERTIES.**

**Petroleum County History**  
*Teaching with Historic Places*

Introduction to the Lesson Plan  
Lesson Plan  
Discussion Questions  
Assignments (2)  
Visual Survey Forms (2)  
Maps (4)  
Readings (4)  
PowerPoint (2)  
PowerPoint Outline (2)

Entire lesson plan, including maps and PowerPoint has been copied to CD and provided to the Winnett High School.

The lesson plan, with supporting documents, can be found on the cd at the back of this document.

## Conclusion

### Historic Resources Study: Petroleum County

In Petroleum County, the blades of grass continue to wave in the wind and the sage brush still stands guard over the reminders of the past as they slowly melt back into the earth. Without action, only the prairie will remain where once thousands of people lived and worked. This Historic Resources Study (HRS) has laid the groundwork for future preservation activities in Petroleum County in three ways. First, it presents a broad history of the area from which to gain knowledge of the local history and understanding of how and why the historic resources are there. Second, it supplies an identification and explanation of a selection of both rural and urban historic resources. Finally, it provides an overview of historic preservation and many of the programs that have been successful in rural places. In addition, it gives a list of recommendations for historic preservation action in Petroleum County and contributes to a heritage education program by providing a lesson plan for the Winnett High School.

The HRS provides a general history of the county. While the *Pages of Time* already addresses the history of the county, it is formatted to present individual and family histories. Chapter I of this document gives the county a broad base from which to build education, interpretative, and planning programs.

In the next section, the HRS identifies and explains over thirty properties found in Petroleum County. This discussion of historic resources presents the significance of property types as well as the individual properties. Through Chapter II, the residents of the county are provided with a base for evaluating their wide variety of historic resources.

In Chapter III of the document, an overview of historic preservation and active programs serves to give the county a base knowledge of the workings of the preservation field. Specific examples of how the programs are implemented along with recommendations for Petroleum County provide residents with a guide for getting preservation activities started. In addition, a complete *Teaching with Historic Places* lesson plan is supplied and can be easily integrated into the Winnett High School curriculum. The lesson plan is intended to establish a base for preservation awareness and appreciation for local history among the county's youth that will help to encourage preservation action among county residents.

#### Areas for Further Research

Further research can always be conducted to learn more about a place and its people, this is also the case in Petroleum County. The short list below highlights some broad areas for further research.

##### Rural Historic Landscapes

This document provides a broad overview of deep rural historic landscapes and how Petroleum County qualifies as one. The topic of rural historic landscapes is very large, however, and should be an entire project in itself.

##### Native American History in Petroleum County

The Native American presence in Petroleum County is an understudied topic. This large, important portion of the area's history is therefore

underrepresented in all types of documents. An investigation of Native American history, traditions, and land use will provide a more complete picture of Petroleum County's past.

#### Archaeological Resources

This document does not address archaeological resources, however, they are an important piece of the record of the past and should be addressed in further research. The amount, type, and dates of the archaeological remains will help to fill in details about the area's history. In addition, residents of the county should be made aware of the kinds of archaeological finds taking place in their region.

#### History of Winnett

How/why did Winnett become the center of the community and survive while all the other towns vanished?

Winnett quickly rose to prominence and remains the center of the community today. It deserves to be the focus of its own historical investigation.

### Historic Resources Study: A Model for Rural Communities

The HRS can be modified for any community, but it is formatted especially well for deep rural places because of its flexibility. Rural areas rarely have city or county planners or preservationists; therefore, they must develop their own strategies tailored to suit their specific situation. Through providing a history, identification and discussion of historic resources, and preservation management strategies and recommendations, the HRS begins the process of introducing preservation to a community. The document orients the community to common preservation practices and supplies much of the information needed to get started.

It has been shown that the citizens of the United States possess a poor understanding of their nation's history. Tying national or state-wide events to local history makes it all more tangible and relevant. Only after a sound understanding of the local history can historic resources and their significance to the community be fully understood. Chapter I, Local History, of an HRS establishes the context for the founding, development, and often the decline of a specific rural place. This context supplies information that can be used for educational, interpretive, planning, and preservation programs.

After establishing a historic background, historic resources are more easily identified and understood. Through an identification of notable and/or easily accessible historic resources, the HRS provides a community with information and a starting point for further identification and for the process of evaluation, registration, and treatment of the properties. These steps are found in Chapter II, Discussion of Historic Resources, of the HRS and create the beginning for preservation planning.

In Chapter III, Preservation Management Strategies, the HRS gives a basic overview of historic preservation and the programs that go into its operation. This provides communities with an introduction and fundamental understanding from which to develop their own programs. Recommendations allow the community a variety of options and places from which to begin their preservation activities.

Petroleum County's history and situation of fast disappearing historic resources today is not unique among the deep rural places of the Great Plains and Mountain West. The HRS model can be transplanted to any rural community as a beginning step for implementing historic preservation awareness and action. Through the three parts of an

HRS, a community is provided with a broad base from which to begin preservation planning and action.

#### Areas for Further Research

The topic of historic preservation in rural places deserves much further investigation. Rural America is the focus of many studies and investigations; however, within the field of historic preservation, deep rural communities continue to be pushed to the periphery. Research in all arenas containing historic preservation and rural places is ongoing because of the continually changing approaches and programs. Outlined below is a short list of topics for further research, additionally research should continue to examine preservation programs, organizations and initiatives.

##### The Results of Historic Preservation in Deep Rural Places

Because historic preservation is relatively quiet or nonexistent in deep rural communities, the results of historic preservation programs or organizations are not well known. Successful programs need to receive more attention and more research can be done to find these successful programs. In addition, further examples of rural places adopting and/or adapting historic preservation strategies would be useful.

##### Zoning/Ordinances and Historic Preservation in Deep Rural Places

This document only discussed federal laws that impact historic preservation practices, however many options exist at the local level. Further research will determine which laws are the most appropriate and most successful for implementation at the local level in deep rural communities.

##### The Impact of a State or Local Register in Deep Rural Places

Many larger cities and towns implement a local historic landmark designation program. This serves to recognize historic resources at a local level and often, these places also attach protective ordinances to places

with a historic designation. More research needs to be done to determine the effectiveness of local historic landmark designation in deep rural places.

### Recommendations for Historic Preservation Strategies in Deep Rural Places

Each community is unique, and therefore requires a unique set of specific strategies. There are, however, many general approaches to historic preservation that can be beneficial in deep rural communities. Drawing from the recommendations for Petroleum County, the following suggestions can apply to most deep rural communities. For more information on each approach refer to *Chapter III, Preservation Management Strategies, Preservation Management Examples and Recommendations*.

#### 1. Heritage Education

Work within the community to raise awareness of local history and knowledge of historic properties by conducting workshops, implementing a lesson plan at the local school, creating brochures and pamphlets, and creating exhibits.

#### 2. Promote Special Events

Capitalize on milestones in the community's history and hold special celebrations. Examples could include 100/150/200 year birthday of the town, its founder, or other important people. Also, use events already in place to promote local history and the preservation of historic resources by distributing pamphlets, holding workshops, lectures, etc.

#### 3. Survey of Resources

A survey will identify historic properties in the area and evaluate them according to their significance. The survey assists in developing a community development plan or outlining a preservation plan.

#### 4. Establish a Nonprofit Preservation/Historical Organization, or Work with an Existing Nonprofit

Nonprofit organizations will help to guide and organize preservation activities. In addition, these groups are eligible for a variety of grant funding and other awards that will assist in preservation activities. Reach out to surrounding communities and work together to form a nonprofit group. This will provide more knowledge and people to contribute and creates a wider network for information and resources.

5. Preservation Easements

Easements are one of the most successful ways of preserving open spaces, ranch land, and farm land. Most easements restrict development or changes of any kind that will harm the resource, including ranch land. The easement is recorded as a legal document and becomes part of the property's chain of title and "runs with the land," binding the owner and all future owners to the agreement.

6. National Register Listing for Properties Significant to the Community

Every community has at least one historic property that is significant to them. Listing this property on the National Register of Historic Places will give this property the recognition it deserves. In addition, restoration or rehabilitation of the building will be much easier with the building being listed. It will qualify for grant funding and possibly federal tax credits. This is also a good way of getting the community's attention and involving them in a preservation project.

7. Craftsmen's Guild

Every community has a group of people who practice traditional crafts or engage in other artistic activities. Create a group and place for these people to display their talents. This will not only provide a supplemental income for people, but will also add to the cultural atmosphere of the community.

8. Promote/Capitalize on Explorer Tourism

Explorer tourism is based on the idea that "exploring is about enjoying the journey, about becoming engaged in the search, and about not judging a

town on its first appearance, but appreciating the culture and ongoing drama of daily life.”<sup>295</sup> Explorer tourism thrives on those who want to get off the beaten path, and there are plenty of these people. They prefer authentic places that have not changed or built something in order to attract tourists. They realize that many rural communities contain architectural gems, they enjoy engaging in conversation in the shops, post offices, libraries, and cafes, and they understand the impact and importance of their dollar in a small town.

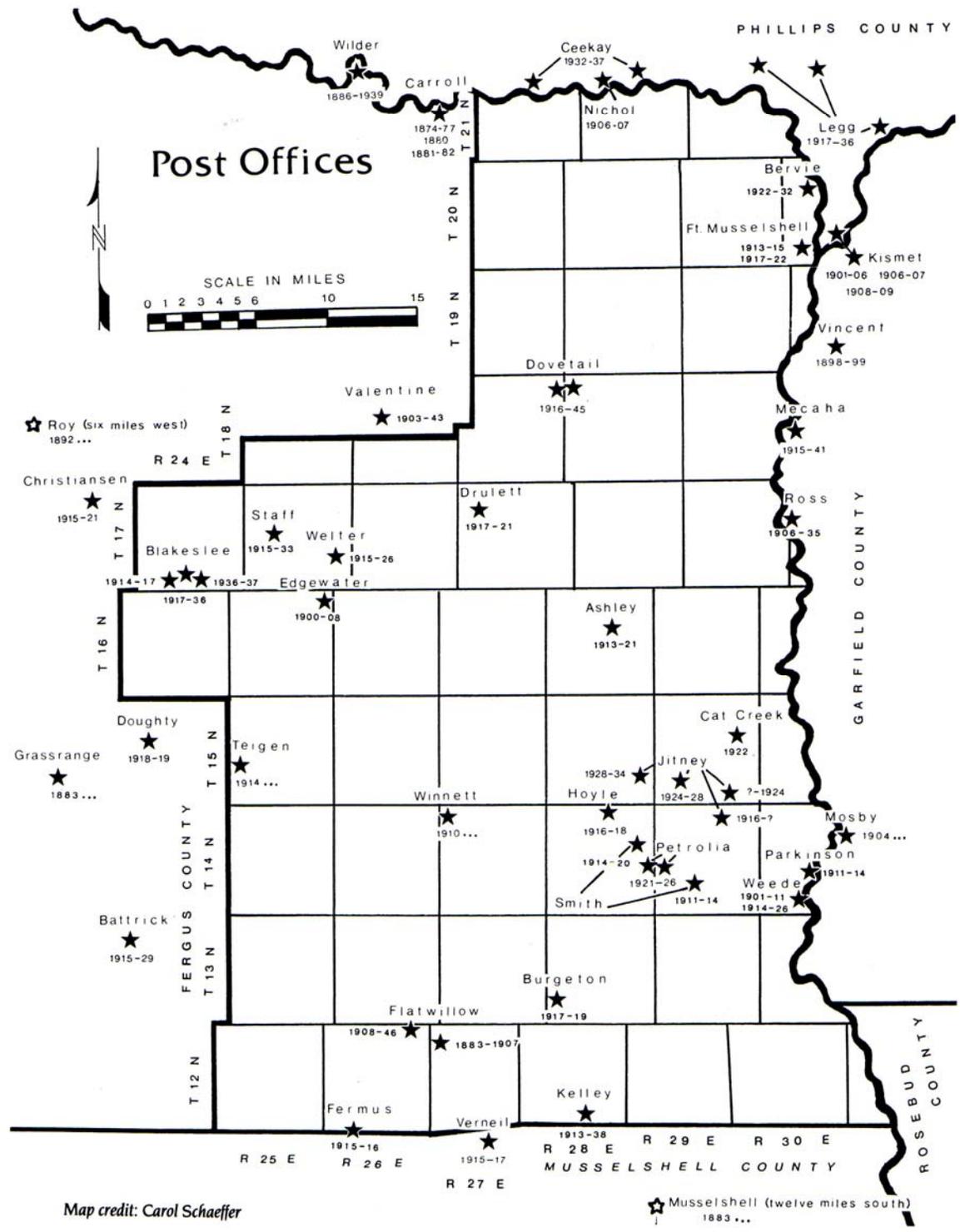
The Kansas Sampler Foundation, which works with rural communities in Kansas, has identified eight elements of rural culture that can be capitalized on and marketed for explorer tourism. The Foundation believes that every town contains at least one of the eight elements. The elements are: architecture, art, commerce, cuisine, customs, geography, history, and people. Find which elements (or elements) apply to the local community and promote it.

9. Combine the City/Community Library with the School Library  
Petroleum County has already combined their County Library with the Winnett Schools Library. This approach has been very successful in getting the library the personnel and financial resources it needs to operate properly. For more information on this approach, contact the Petroleum County Community Library at P.O. Box 188, Winnett, MT 59087 or (406) 429 – 2451.

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<sup>295</sup> Marci Penner, “Looking at Kansas with New Eyes through ‘Explorer Tourism,’” *Forum Journal*, vol. 20, no. 4, (Summer: 2006): p. 43.

# Appendix A: Petroleum County Post Offices



## Appendix B:

### Organization and Program Contact Information

#### National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places

Address: 1201 Eye St., NW  
 8th Floor (MS 2280)  
 Washington, DC 20005  
 Phone: 202-354-2213  
 Website: <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/index.htm>

Historic Preservation Tax Incentives  
 Website: <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/tax/>

#### Preserve America

Phone: (202) 606-8503  
 E-mail: [Paacommunities@achp.gov](mailto:Paacommunities@achp.gov) or [Paawards@achp.gov](mailto:Paawards@achp.gov)  
 Website: <http://www.preserveamerica.gov/>

#### Save America's Treasures

Phone: (202) 588-6012  
 E-mail: [saveamericastreasures@nthp.org](mailto:saveamericastreasures@nthp.org).  
 Website: <http://www.saveamericastreasures.org/>

#### Montana

##### Montana State Historic Preservation Office

Address: 1410 Eighth Avenue  
 Helena, MT 59620  
 Phone: (406) 444 – 7715  
 Website: <http://www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/default.asp>

##### Montana Certified Local Government Coordinator (at the MT SHPO)

Rolene Schliesman

Website: <http://www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/communitypres.asp>  
 E-mail: [rschliesman@mt.gov](mailto:rschliesman@mt.gov)  
 Phone: (406) 444-7742

##### Montana Historical Society, Education and Outreach

Address: 225 N. Roberts  
 P.O. Box 201201  
 Helena, MT 59620-1201  
 Phone: 406-444-2694

Website: <http://www.his.state.mt.us/education/default.asp>

Montana Preservation Alliance

Website: <http://www.preservemontana.org/>

E-mail: [info@preservemontana.org](mailto:info@preservemontana.org)

Address: 516 N Park Ave.

Helena, MT 59601

Phone: (406) 457-2822

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Montana

Website: <http://sanborn.umi.com/>

Account Name = bitterroot

Password = welcome

National Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 1785 Massachusetts Ave, NW

Washington, DC 20036-2117

Phone: 202.588.6000 • 800.944.6847

Website: <http://www.preservationnation.org/>

Kansas Sampler Foundation

Website: [www.kansassampler.org](http://www.kansassampler.org)

Virginia City, Montana

Website: [virginiacitymt.com](http://virginiacitymt.com) or [virginiacity.com](http://virginiacity.com)

Manfred, North Dakota

Website: [manfrednd.org](http://manfrednd.org)

Others

University of Oregon, Historic Preservation Program

Website: <http://hp.uoregon.edu/>

The Heritage Education Network (THEN)

Website: <http://www.mtsu.edu/~chankins/THEN/page2.html>

PreserveNet

Website: <http://www.preservenet.cornell.edu/index.cfm>

**Appendix C: *Dollars for Historic Preservation***

**Part III of the Montana State Historic Preservation Office Services Directory. The entire Services Directory can be found online at**

**<http://www.his.state.mt.us/shpo/servicesdir.asp>**

## III. DOLLARS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### Introduction

Historic preservation activity is an important element in our state's economic base. It is part and parcel of many business enterprises and home ownership. It is a component of public resources management and overall community development. We no longer assume that historic preservation does not pay its own way and must rely solely on grants and other incentives to be viable. Efforts to revitalize Main Street, for example, are reflective of the notion that preservation can simply be good business. Efforts to preserve and interpret historic resources are closely related to efforts to create a sustainable heritage-based tourism economy for the State of Montana.

However, preservation activities do continue to require innovative approaches that make use of diverse funding sources and programs. This chapter includes a description of some funding sources and mechanisms that are available to further historic preservation projects. In some cases, the suggested sources are not necessarily focused on historic preservation but may be tapped for projects that have multiple objectives.

### Federal Programs

### U.S. Department of the Interior

#### **Historic Preservation Fund (HPF)**

The Historic Preservation Fund was established in 1966 as part of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). A portion of this fund is passed through from the National Park Service to the Montana State Historic Preservation Office for a number of purposes including the following:

- Providing information and technical assistance to communities, state and federal agencies, organizations and individuals.
- Maintaining a statewide inventory and conducting survey and planning studies to determine the nature, condition and significance of various historic and prehistoric resources.
- Monitoring undertakings and activities, which require review under state and/or federal statutes governing historic preservation.
- Establishing and maintaining a system of Certified Local Governments with local preservation officers.
- Assisting in the preparation of National Register nominations and applications for federal preservation tax incentives.

The NHPA also authorizes the use of the Historic Preservation Fund for acquisition, stabilization and development of historic resources. **However, adequate funds have not been appropriated in recent years for these categories of activity.**

### Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)

The Department of Interior is authorized to distribute funds under the Land and Water Conservation Fund program for parks, trails and other recreation-oriented sites. Occasionally such sites are developed in conjunction with historic and prehistoric resources. Approximately 75 percent (or \$60 million) of these funds is allocated to federal agencies and about \$25 million is allocated to the states. Montana's share of these funds has been small, but communities and other political subdivisions are eligible to apply for assistance on a 50/50 cost share basis through the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, (406) 444-3750.

#### ***Bureau of Land Management (BLM)***

The Bureau of Land Management provides Challenge Cost Share Funds on a matching basis for projects which result in partnerships between local communities and the BLM to improve cultural, natural and recreational resources on or adjacent to BLM Lands. Fund allocation follows the federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Contact the BLM District office in your

region of the state to learn about Challenge Cost Share opportunities and the range of available funding,

## **U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration, (EDA)**

The EDA provides funds for technical assistance, planning and the development of projects that result in the creation of new employment. Technical assistance grants usually average about \$25,000 and require a small cash match. Capital grants and revolving loan funds are available on a 50/50 matching basis and vary in size from hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars. EDA funds may be applied to economic development projects that make use of historic resources. The Montana State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) for compliance under the NHPA must review projects. Assistance is available through the EDA office, Federal Building, Helena, (406) 449-5074.

## **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)**

### **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)**

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) makes grants available for housing, infrastructure improvement and economic development. Projects are typically large (hundreds of thousands to millions of dollars) and must serve the interests of low and moderate-income people. Great Falls and Billings receive CDBG funds on an entitlement basis. Other communities must compete for funds under the Small Cities Program that is administered by the Montana Department of Commerce. As with EDA, CDBG funds may be used for projects associated with historic properties. Such projects must be reviewed by the SHPO.

### **Other HUD Programs**

HUD is the principal federal agency responsible for addressing the nation's housing needs. In carrying out its responsibilities, the Department administers a wide variety of programs including: Federal Housing

Administration mortgage insurance programs that help families become homeowners and facilitate the construction and rehabilitation of rental units. Often this may involve historic homes. They also grant rental assistance programs for lower-income families who otherwise could not afford decent housing. The Government National Mortgage Association, (a mortgage-backed securities program), helps ensure an adequate supply of mortgage credit in programs to combat housing discrimination and affirmatively further fair housing. These programs aid community and neighborhood development and preservation with programs to help the homebuyer in the marketplace.

The Low Income Housing Tax Credit has been used in conjunction with the Rehabilitation Tax Credit (see Chapter II) to keep affordable housing in many historic districts. It can cover any size project, from one rental unit to many.

### **Low Income Housing Tax Credit**

The Montana Board of Housing should be contacted for updated information on the Low Income Housing Tax Credit. In 1990, Congress passed the National Affordable Housing Act. The Act includes a number of programs which address housing issues associated with the homeless, persons with disabilities, and low income individuals and families. These new programs include the HOME Program that seeks to expand the supply of decent, affordable housing for low and very low income families, and the HOPE Program that has been created to increase home ownership for low income and working poor families. For further information on these and other housing programs, contact:

HOUSING ASSISTANCE BUREAU  
 MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
 1424 NINTH AVENUE – PO BOX 200501  
 HELENA MONTANA 59620  
 PHONE: (406) 444-2804

## **U. S. Department of Agriculture**

### **Farmers Home Administration**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture offers a number of programs in the area of housing and rural community development that can be of assistance to preservation efforts. These include the programs of the Farmers Home Administration that provides assistance for rural housing preservation and funding for low and very low-income housing and rental units in smaller communities. Further information can be obtained from the Farmers Home Administration Office in Bozeman.

### *U.S. Forest Service*

The U.S. Forest Service has two significant programs that can be applied to preservation projects. The first is the 1990 Farm Bill fund appropriation that provides matching funds to communities for projects in rural economic development. Recipient communities must meet certain threshold requirements in the area of unemployment particularly as it relates to changes in the forest economy. Funds are available on an annual basis and applications are typically due in early spring.

The Forest Service also provides Challenge Cost Share Funds on a matching basis for projects that result in partnerships between local communities and the Forest Service to improve cultural, natural and recreational resources on or adjacent to Forest Service lands. Funding cycles reflect the federal fiscal year (October 1 through September 30). Contact the District Ranger in your area for further information on Forest Service programs and the range of funding available.

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### **Institute of Museum Services (IMS)**

IMS is an independent agency within the Executive Branch of the federal government. The agency was established by an Act of Congress in 1976, to encourage and assist museums in modernizing their methods and facilities so that they may be better able to conserve our cultural, historic and scientific heritage and to ease the financial burden borne by museums as a result of their increasing use by the public. IMS provides funding for conservation assessments and projects and is the only federal agency that provides general operating support for museums of all disciplines. For many museums, IMS is the only source of federal support. The 15-member National Museum Services Board, appointed by the President determines the policies and programs of IMS. For more information, contact:

INSTITUTE OF MUSEUM SERVICES  
 100 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE- NW ROOM 609  
 WASHINGTON D.C. 20506  
 PHONE: (202) 606-8539

### **Native American Programs**

A number of federal agencies administer programs in economic development, housing, training, technical assistance and research specifically for Native Americans. Specific program information may be obtained by contacting the offices listed in the following sections:

### **Historic Preservation Fund Grants to Indian Tribes, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiian Organizations**

Supports historic preservation projects and programs and promotes the continuation of living cultural traditions. Categories of funding include, in priority order: Historic Preservation Projects; Non-Construction; Cultural Needs Assessments; Documenting Your Community's Traditions; Historic Preservation Projects & Construction; Collections Management and others. Contact:

JOE WALLIS  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
PRESERVATION ASSISTANCE DIVISION  
1201 "I" STREET, NW  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20013-7127

ASSISTANT REGIONAL DIRECTOR  
CULTURAL RESOURCES AND PARTNERSHIPS  
INTERMOUNTAIN REGIONAL OFFICE  
12795 W ALAMEDA PARKWAY  
PO BOX 25287  
DENVER CO 80225

PROGRAM MANAGER  
CULTURAL RESOURCES AND NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAMS  
SANTE FE SUPPORT OFFICE  
PAISANO BUILDING  
2968 RODEO PARK DRIVE WEST  
SANTA FE NM 87505

### **Native American Programs**

Promotes self-governance, business and economic development through the provision of training, technical assistance, research, demonstrations and evaluation activities to public and private non-profit organizations. There is available funding up to \$1.2 million. Contact:

ADMINISTRATION FOR NATIVE AMERICANS  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
ROOM 344-F, 200 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE SW  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20003  
PHONE: (202) 690-7727

#### **Indian Grants for Economic Development**

Improves Indian reservation economies by providing seed money to attract financing from other sources for developing Indian owned-businesses. There is available funding up to \$250,000 per project. Contact:

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS; DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
1849 C STREET- NW ROOM 4060  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20240  
PHONE: (202) 208-5324

#### **Indian Housing Assistance**

Intended to substantially eliminate substandard Indian housing. There is available funding: up to \$45,000 per project.

#### **Indian Loans-Economic Development**

Provides Indians, Alaska natives, tribes and Indian organizations with assistance in obtaining financing from private and government sources that serve other citizens. Available funding is in excess of \$1 million per project.

#### **Public and Indian Housing**

Provides housing for Indian families and individuals using various HUD programs.

Contact:

ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC AND INDIAN HOUSING  
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT  
451 SEVENTH STREET-SW  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20410  
PHONE: (202) 708-9590

## MONTANA PROGRAMS

### **Community Transportation Enhancement Program (CTEP)**

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDOT) has made funds available for projects under the National Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act. The Act provides for 10 percent of all surface transportation funds to be used for enhancement projects including historic preservation. Funds have been made available on a per capita basis to counties for local enhancement projects under the CTEP program. Contacting MDOT in Helena (406) 444-6201 or local county commissions may obtain further information.

### **Montana Cultural Trust**

The state makes grants to cultural and aesthetic projects from interest earned in the investment of coal tax revenues in the Cultural Trust. Funds are available in operations, capital, special projects and endowment development categories for historic preservation activities. Applications are reviewed bi-annually by a 16-member Cultural and Aesthetic Projects Advisory Committee. Their funding recommendations are submitted to the Montana Legislature for final approval. Applications are typically due during the summer prior to the legislative session. Eligible applicants include local government entities, state colleges and universities and Indian Tribes.

For information about Montana Cultural Trust grants, or consultation about proposals or assistance in completing grant forms, contact the Montana Arts Council, (406) 444-6514; the Montana Historical Society, (406) 444-2694; the Montana State Historic Preservation Office, (406) 444-7715; the Montana State Library, (406) 444-3115, all in Helena, or the Montana Committee for the Humanities, Missoula, (406) 243-6022

### **Resource Indemnity Trust**

The Montana Department of Natural Resources makes grants from the Resource Indemnity Trust Fund every two years. Grants are reviewed by the Department and then referred to the Legislature for approval. Funds for this program come from severance taxes associated with mining activity in the state. Historic preservation projects that emphasize renewable resource management and community development are eligible. Applicants must be a unit of state government, such as a municipality, or an Indian Tribe. For information contact the Department of Natural Resources, (406) 444-6700.

### **Montana Committee for the Humanities**

The National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities provide funds to the State of Montana for regranting purposes. National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funds is administered through the Montana Committee for the Humanities in Missoula, (406) 243-6022. Funds may be used to help finance historic and prehistoric surveys, public forums on preservation issues, research, oral history, public speakers on preservation and other related topics. Project planning and implementation must involve humanists and those groups (such as Native Americans) who might have a direct interest in the particular resources that are at issue.

### **Montana Arts Council**

The Montana Arts Council in Helena, (406) 444-6514, administers regrant funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Funds may be used to undertake cultural resources planning, to sponsor activities and events (folk festivals, art shows, indigenous craft shows, and apprenticeship programs). NEA also supports funds in the field of art and architecture and supports the activities of local arts agencies.

MONTANA ARTS COUNCIL

PO BOX 202201  
HELENA MT 59620-2201

Application for funding may also be made directly to the national offices of both NEA and NEH in Washington. For example, NEA provides funding for community projects that address certain aspects of historic preservation, landscape design and cultural resources planning.

### Montana Board of Housing

The Montana Board of Housing (406-444-3043), was created by the Montana Housing Act of 1975 in order to alleviate the high cost of housing for lower income persons and families. The funds to operate the programs administered under the Act are generated through either the sale of tax-exempt bonds or administrative fees. The Board's programs that may be applied to historic preservation efforts include:

- Low Income Housing Tax Credit Programs makes use of federal tax credits to provide incentives to developers to provide low income multi-family housing.
- Reverse Annuity Mortgage Loan Program for Elderly Persons enables persons 68 years or older to use home equity to obtain funds to make repairs or improvements to their homes.

### Center for the Rocky Mountain West

The Center for the Rocky Mountain West was authorized by the Board of Regents and created at the University of Montana in 1992 as forum to explore, examine and articulate an inclusive regional history population. The Center examines the region, identifies patterns of history and culture and provides the opportunity to shape the regional identity and values in the growth of the region. For information about this contact:

CENTER FOR THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST  
MILWAUKEE STATION, 2<sup>ND</sup> FLOOR, U OF M  
MISSOULA MT 59812-1158  
PHONE: (406) 243-7700

### Travel Montana

Travel Montana (406- 444-2654), a division within the Montana Department of Commerce, is charged with the development and promotion of tourism related economic development for the State of Montana. Their funds are primarily derived from the Montana bed tax, an accommodation tax of four percent levied on users of Montana's lodging facilities.

Travel Montana has a **Tourism Infrastructure Investment Program** which awards grants to tourism-related non-profit groups for activities such as project construction costs (bricks and mortar) associated with building new and/or rehabilitating older tourism and recreation attractions, historical sites or artifacts; costs associated with purchasing new and/or existing tourism and recreation attractions, historical sites or artifacts and equipment purchased for a specific tourism project operation. Grant application materials are available from Travel Montana in late spring of each year. The applications deadline is August 1.

The state is divided into six tourism "countries," such as Gold West Country, Custer Country, etc., to which monies are allocated primarily for promotion. Eligible activities can include informational brochures and other materials that can assist in interpreting cultural resources. Application for projects must be made to the regional tourism "country" associated with your locale. This information can be obtained by contacting the Travel Montana office in Helena and/or the nearest Chamber of Commerce.

### The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP)

The National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) provides funding for historic preservation projects in a number of categories. Funds for NTHP programs derive from Trust memberships, charitable contributions and Congressional appropriation through the National Historic Preservation Fund. The financial assistance programs of NTHP include the following:

**National Preservation Loan Fund (NPLF)**

The NPLF promotes the revitalization of commercial and industrial centers, the conservation of neighborhoods and rural communities, and the preservation of archaeological and maritime resources. Through the NPLF, the Trust provides financial and technical assistance to help preserve historic resources as well as strengthen the real estate development capabilities of recipient organizations. The Fund provides non-profit organizations and public agencies with low-interest loans, loan guarantees and lines of credit to help establish or expand local and statewide revolving funds and loan pools, and to undertake development projects involving historic buildings, sites and districts. The Fund also offers special assistance for buildings and sites certified National Historic Landmarks (NHL) or that meet NHL criteria.

**Preservation Services Fund (PSF)**

PSF grants are intended to increase the flow of information and ideas in the field of preservation. They help stimulate public discussion, enable local groups to gain the technical expertise needed for particular projects, introduce students to preservation concepts and crafts and encourage participation by the private sector in preservation. Eligible applicants must be non-profit organizations or public agencies and members of the NTHP Forum program. Maximum awards are \$5,000 and all grants must be matched on a dollar for dollar basis, using primarily cash contributions. Contact the regional office for application materials and deadlines.

**Johanna Favrot Fund**

This fund was established in 1994 for the purpose of saving historic environments across the United States in order to foster appreciation of our nation's diverse cultural heritage and to preserve and revitalize the livability of the nation's communities. Eligible activities include hiring consultants in areas such as architecture, planning, economics, archaeology, fund raising, media relations, education, graphic design, organizational strengthening; sponsoring conferences and workshops; designing education programs. Application deadline is February 1. For more information, contact the regional office of the National Trust

**Critical Issues Fund**

The Trust provides matching grants to local, state and national non-profit organizations, universities and local government entities seeking support for research or model projects that pursue broadly applicable solutions to pressing preservation problems.

**The Inner City Venture Fund**

This program provides financial assistance for projects that benefit low and moderate-income residents of older neighborhoods facing displacement pressures. Based on regional funding sources, this program is geographically targeted.

**Information on NTHP Programs**

For more complete information on the National Trust and its programs contact:  
 NTHP MOUNTAIN/PLAINS REGIONAL OFFICE  
 910 16TH ST.- SUITE 1100  
 DENVER CO 80202  
 PHONE: (303) 623-1504  
 FIELD REPRESENTATIVE: ROBERT NIEWEG

**Private Foundations**

Hundreds of private foundations nation-wide have grant giving programs in the areas of historic preservation (capital, education, interpretation, advocacy), archaeology, paleontology, museum development and management, economic development, local capacity building, housing, and other related programs. Specific information regarding foundations interested in these activities can be found in various foundation catalogues. The State Library in Helena and many local and college libraries maintain a grant

collection that includes foundation catalogues and various grantsmanship publications. Local and regional planning and economic development organizations often provide grant information. Often these institutions will provide grant searches for a set fee. Various private and public entities offer courses and seminars in grant proposal preparation. Further information can be obtained from local county extension agents, and various library and university representatives.

### Local Initiatives

Montana statute provides for a series of local funding mechanisms that can be used for historic preservation and related activities. These mechanisms require the approval of the local governing body and in certain cases, the taxpayers that might be affected by the program.

#### *Tax Increment Financing*

Under the Montana Urban Renewal Law, communities may establish tax increment districts to revitalize blighted neighborhoods and central business districts. Tax increment financing means that new property tax dollars resulting from increases in the market value of real property may be directed to the neighborhood where the real property is located. The base property tax (before any improvements to real property) continues to be distributed to the local government and school districts. However, tax dollars accruing from increases in property values (from rehabilitation, new construction, etc.) are available for reinvestment in the neighborhood and can only be spent in the neighborhood where they are generated.

A tax increment program is authorized for 15 years or longer if the revenue is pledged to the payment of urban renewal bonds. A community must identify the neighborhood or business district where the program will be implemented. Funds have been used to improve the neighborhood infrastructure, for grants and loans to improve historic buildings, to manage Main Street programs and for events. Tax increment programs depend on substantial investment in property but can work in small and medium-sized communities that are experiencing some growth. Tax increment financing can assist communities in directing growth to older, historic areas where infrastructure is already in place and patterns of use have been established.

Information can be obtained from communities that have tax increment financing in place including Missoula, Great Falls, Billings, Kalispell, Butte and Helena.

#### *Special Districts for Business Improvement, Parking & Other Infrastructure*

Neighborhood residents and downtown property owners can elect to levy special taxes on themselves for special activities and capital improvements. Business Improvement Districts, for example, can fund downtown revitalization activities, promotions and events. Parking Districts can assist development efforts in locating parking lots in a manner consistent with good community design and respectful of the historic streetscape. Older Neighborhoods can benefit from improvements to streets and sewers, lighting, public parks through this self-funding mechanism.

To date, Helena and Great Falls have adopted Business Improvement Districts. Local Government Assistance Division of the Montana Department of Commerce, (406-444-3757), can provide assistance in the establishment of special districts for infrastructure improvement.

#### *Local Mill Levy*

Montana law permits a local government to levy up to two mills (1/1000 of the taxable value of a community) for any museum, facility for the arts or collection of exhibits. Funds can be used for operations, capital improvements and program development. For information, contact the Montana Arts Council, (406-444-6514).

### Notes

**Appendix D: National Register Brochure:**  
**The National Register of Historic Places**

# **Appendix E: Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties**

## **Preservation**

PRESERVATION IS DEFINED as the act or process of applying measures necessary to sustain the existing form, integrity, and materials of an historic property. Work, including preliminary measures to protect and stabilize the property, generally focuses upon the ongoing maintenance and repair of historic materials and features rather than extensive replacement and new construction. New exterior additions are not within the scope of this treatment; however, the limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a preservation project.

1. **A property will be used as it was historically, or be given a new use that maximizes the retention of distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships. Where a treatment and use have not been identified, a property will be protected and, if necessary, stabilized until additional work may be undertaken.**
2. **The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The replacement of intact or repairable historic materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.**
3. **Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate, and conserve existing historic materials and features will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.**
4. **Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.**
5. **Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.**
6. **The existing condition of historic features will be evaluated to determine the appropriate level of intervention needed. Where the severity of deterioration requires repair or limited replacement of a distinctive feature, the new material will match the old in composition, design, color, and texture.**
7. **Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.**
8. **Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.**

### Preservation as a Treatment

When the property's distinctive materials, features, and spaces are essentially intact and thus convey the historic significance without extensive repair or replacement; when depiction at a particular period of time is not appropriate; and when a continuing or new use does not require additions or extensive alterations, Preservation may be considered as a treatment.

## **Restoration**

RESTORATION IS DEFINED AS the act or process of accurately depicting the form, features, and character of a property as it appeared at a particular period of time by means of the removal of features from other periods in its history and reconstruction of missing features from the restoration period. The limited and sensitive upgrading of mechanical, electrical, and plumbing systems and other code-required work to make properties functional is appropriate within a restoration project.

- 1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use which reflects the property's restoration period.**
- 2. Materials and features from the restoration period will be retained and preserved. The removal of materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the period will not be undertaken.**
- 3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Work needed to stabilize, consolidate and conserve materials and features from the restoration period will be physically and visually compatible, identifiable upon close inspection, and properly documented for future research.**
- 4. Materials, features, spaces, and finishes that characterize other historical periods will be documented prior to their alteration or removal.**
- 5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the restoration period will be preserved.**
- 6. Deteriorated features from the restoration period will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials.**
- 7. Replacement of missing features from the restoration period will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence. A false sense of history will not be created by adding conjectural features, features from other properties, or by combining features that never existed together historically.**
- 8. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.**
- 9. Archeological resources affected by a project will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.**
- 10. Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.**

### Restoration as a Treatment

When the property's design, architectural, or historical significance during a particular period of time outweighs the potential loss of extant materials, features, spaces, and finishes that characterize other historical periods; when there is substantial physical and documentary evidence for the work; and when contemporary alterations and additions are not planned, Restoration may be considered as a treatment. Prior to undertaking work, a particular period of time, i.e., the restoration period, should be selected and justified, and a documentation plan for Restoration developed.

## **Rehabilitation**

REHABILITATION IS DEFINED AS the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

### Rehabilitation as a Treatment

When repair and replacement of deteriorated features are necessary; when alterations or additions to the property are planned for a new or continued use; and when its depiction at a particular period of time is not appropriate, Rehabilitation may be considered as a treatment.

## **Reconstruction**

RECONSTRUCTION IS DEFINED AS the act or process of depicting, by means of new construction, the form, features, and detailing of a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object for the purpose of replicating its appearance at a specific period of time and in its historic location.

- 1. Reconstruction will be used to depict vanished or non-surviving portions of a property when documentary and physical evidence is available to permit accurate reconstruction with minimal conjecture, and such reconstruction is essential to the public understanding of the property.**
- 2. Reconstruction of a landscape, building, structure, or object in its historic location will be preceded by a thorough archeological investigation to identify and evaluate those features and artifacts which are essential to an accurate reconstruction. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.**
- 3. Reconstruction will include measures to preserve any remaining historic materials, features, and spatial relationships.**
- 4. Reconstruction will be based on the accurate duplication of historic features and elements substantiated by documentary or physical evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different features from other historic properties. A reconstructed property will re-create the appearance of the non-surviving historic property in materials, design, color, and texture.**
- 5. A reconstruction will be clearly identified as a contemporary re-creation.**
- 6. Designs that were never executed historically will not be constructed.**

### Reconstruction as a Treatment

When a contemporary depiction is required to understand and interpret a property's historic value (including the re-creation of missing components in a historic district or site ); when no other property with the same associative value has survived; and when sufficient historical documentation exists to ensure an accurate reproduction, Reconstruction may be considered as a treatment.

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