Before My Time

Historical Sketches from the Headwaters Area

Volume One

By Patrick Finnegan
### Before My Time

**Volume 1**

**By Patrick Finnegan**

A series of short historical sketches about the Headwaters area first published in the Three Forks Herald, with additional information and photos.

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Cover design - Patrick Finnegan
Cover photos bottom left clockwise: Old cabin near Sappington, photo by Patrick Finnegan; Main Street Three Forks 1912, photo courtesy of Three Forks Area Historical Society (TFAHS); Water Tower at Logan, photo by Patrick Finnegan; Fred's Place (Block 13 lot 13 of the original plat of Three Forks) 1 to r  Fred Lane, Elizabeth Lane, Clarence Visser, Pat Roe, Chas. Shadduck, John Janssen, Tom Finnegan (grandfather of author), photo courtesy of TFAHS.
In 1912, businessmen in South Dakota envisioned a nation-spanning road that would bring tourists through their towns. The (Old) Yellowstone Trail was the first road to have markers, road maps, and helpful “Trailsmen” along the way. By 1920, the road extended to the Pacific Coast, coming through the Gallatin Valley and down the Main Streets of Bozeman, Belgrade, Manhattan, Logan, Three Forks and Willow Creek. At one time, Carpenter Road was part of the Yellowstone Trail. The Trailsmen, in addition to advising tourists of road conditions, encouraged communities to improve the roads that were, in some cases, nothing more than dirt trails.

In the early 30s, Highway 2 came through Three Forks, but veered off to the west, bypassing Willow Creek. Roy Joseph Wade was one of the members of the City Council when the decision was made to bring the highway down Main Street and round off the corner of Block 16 at Date Street. The highway then curved through the grid of blocks at an angle, disrupting the planned north / south & east / west streets along the way. The new, well-traveled and well-maintained highway brought travelers and tourists through the heart of Three Forks, causing a plethora of gas stations to spring up along the route. US Highway 10 brought even more cars and tourists through the small towns it wound through.

76, Carter, Conoco, Exxon, Husky, Lightening, Mobile, Phillips 66, Shell, Sinclair, Standard, Texaco, Union, were just a few of the providers of that precious commodity that let Americans go places faster. It is surprising how many gasoline stations in Three Forks have given drivers the freedom of the open road.

Service stations along Old Yellowstone Trail

Service station locations in Three Forks over the years include; McLees’ property just outside of town, the north parking lot of the Sacajawea Hotel, 2 S. Main (Sinclair), 5 S. Main (Thriftway), 23 S. Main (Christian Center), 104 S. Main (D&D Auto), 124 S. Main (June’s/Lands West), 201 S. Main (TF Physical Therapy), 220 S. Main (TF Motor Supply), Jenkin’s Garage, Longhorn (West End) Cafe, and one on south Front Street.

Some of the owners and operators of these stations include; Jim Kolokotrones, Lee Temp, H.L. Clack, Makoffs, Betty Davis, Fred, Bob, & Phyllis Norman, Chet Schendel, George McPhail, Aquistepace & Robinson, Rod Frick, “Grandma” Tinsley, the Jenkins family, Ted Schlepp, Ray & Louise Arnold, Art Cooper, Larry Wilcox, Ed Avery, Hughie Byrd, Clarence & Liz Elgen, Bill Cramer, and I’m sure there are more!

With its controlled accesses, I-90 replaced US 10 and bypassed most towns, making most of them dream up ideas to lure the now fast moving tourist off the interstate. Whatever its designation, Old Yellowstone Trail, Montana 2, Montana 205 or US 10, it is still our main street and at the heart of our City.

The Masonic Temple

Having lived in Three Forks for over thirty years, I’ve only just recently stepped inside the Masonic Lodge at the junction of Main and old highway 2. For many years I was unaware that it was the home of the Three Forks Lodge No. 73, which was chartered back in 1910. The boarded up windows gave me the impression that the building was abandoned, not noting the occasional activities that the Masons have at the lodge.

The Mason’s Lodge originally housed the First National Bank which opened its doors on February 4, 1909. The First National hit hard times during the hard hitting drought of 1917 - 1924, and was taken over by Labor National Bank in 1922-1923.

The earthquake of 1925, centered near Lombard, crumbled the decorative stonework around the eaves of the building, marring the bank’s image. Labor National Bank did not survive the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the Masons negotiated with the receivership to purchase the building. Their first meeting in their new lodge was held March 15, 1933. Previous to moving into their new lodge, the Masons used the second floor of the original school (now Bertagnolli Park), and then, later on, the second floor of the Wells Building (now the Plaza Bar).
The Ruby Theatre

The story of the Ruby Theatre, although built in 1916, starts a few years earlier with Three Forks’ first theatre, the Cozy Theatre. According to the **Headwaters Heritage History**, the Cozy was built in 1911 near the corner of Elm and Main. It was run by B. P. Graham, who was granted a special city license to operate a kinetoscope / vitascope / motion or picture show in 1911.

David Byrd later renamed it the Empire Theatre. Mr. Byrd brought in a variety of acts, one of which singer Miss Ruby Langdan of Harlotown.

Mr. R. Wells of Craig, MT, hired Peter Vreeland of the Fred Wilson architect firm to design a new theatre on lot adjoining the Three Valley Bank (Now the Headwaters Heritage Museum). Mr. Wells also hired Mr. Byrd as the manager for the Theatre.

Manager Byrd named the theatre in honor of the popular singer and future wife, Ruby Langdon. A photo in the Headwaters Heritage Museum archives shows a banner strung across the face of the building proclaiming an “Extra Special Today Ruby Theatre.” While in the Plaza Bar location, Miss. Rosa Sickmiller (Bryant) began playing the organ for silent films and live entertainers. Mr. Ed Waddell purchased the Ruby (at-the-Plaza) in 1913 shortly it was built.

A few years later, Waddell started plans for the new Ruby Theatre building, which were designed by Butte architect Wellington Smith. The first movie in the new building was shown on November 8, 1916. The landmark, controversial and racist film “Birth of a Nation” was shown in January 1917. The theatre continued to show silent films and later, “talkies,” but still provided a venue for theatre troupes, live entertainers such as “Ole the Swede,” lectures, and local band concerts. In 1920, the Ruby was also the venue for the Armistice Day observation.

Homer Charles Thompson purchased the Ruby about 1919. In 1925, the Thompson family was upstairs in the theatre inspecting the damage after the earthquake when a big secondary quake hit. The structure survived the quakes with only minor damage. The theatre closed during the depression and Mr. Thompson taught school for several years before reopening it in 1935. He sold the Ruby to Charles “Chuck” Davis in 1946.

In addition to being a theatre, the Ruby was the home of many small businesses over the years, including the Ruby Barber Shop which “Boots” Myers operated for a time. Ed and Clair Rexroat started the Dew Drop Inn which was later purchased by George and Kathryn Kanta. Various doctors and dentists have had their offices in the Ruby.

In the early seventies, the Ruby’s theatre was shut down and the building was neglected for many years. It was condemned in 1979 while under the ownership of Bill Sebena. In April 1982, while still vacant, the Ruby was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1992, Sylvia Vander Wall began renovation of the building and the doors of the 9,500 sq. ft. building reopened in 1997. It now houses a book & gift shop, an athletic club, an apartment, and a performing arts / meeting hall.
The names of the men who were influential in the early
days of Three Forks are many and recognizable; Adams,
Abbott, Miller, Parnacott, Menapace, Dorsey, and Bryant.
But one name seems to be consistently left off the list, but
played a vital role in the formation of this city nearly 97
years ago.

On September 17, 1908, 73 men and women bought
lots from the Milwaukee Land Company and began to lay
down roots in Montana. A year later, the TF Herald of
September 2, 1909 notes that “Martin Vetleson, of Ruby;
North Dakota is in town this week and looking over the
field with a view of establishing himself in the practice of
law.” The Herald goes on to say that Vetleson, who was
26 at the time, came with high recommendations from
citizens of his former state. Vetleson and his parents were
born in Minnesota, among the Norwegian immigrants of
that state.

A perusal of the local paper would make it seem that
Three Forks was the perfect place to get in on the ground
floor. The Justice of the Peace, P.M. Abbott, was busy
dispensing justice, the First National Bank had just opened
its doors, and real estate firms were booming. Seeing some
opportunities, Vetleson set up an office above the drug store (now
Joanie Marie’s) by the end of September.

Within a month, he had one of his first clients, The Three
Forks Commercial Club. The Commercial Club was a Chamber
of Commerce, a booster club, and the unofficial government
of the Town rolled into one. Vetleson was called upon to guide
the town’s incorporation process through the legal terrain. A
petition was drafted and signed by many of the residents of
the unincorporated town and Vetleson presented it to the
County Commissioners. At their November 1 meeting, the
Commissioners approved the petition and appointed Vetleson as
census taker. If the census showed more than 300 inhabitants,
the commissioners would call an election for the incorporation
of the town, which they did on December 13, 1909. The polling
place was the office of the Milwaukee Hotel and Vetleson was
the election officer. He took the election results to the County
Commission, and in a special meeting, they declared Three Forks
an incorporated town on December 15, 1909.

In January, residents of Three Forks met in a caucus to
nominate candidates for Mayor and Wardsmen. Herald Editor
P.S. Dorsey, an adamant promoter of Three Forks, was elected
Caucus Chairman. When he called for nominations for the office
of Mayor, Martin Vetleson was the first to be recognized and “in
well chosen words stated the duties and responsibilities which
would befall the first set of officers” and nominated P.M. Abbott
for Mayor.

Unfortunately, Squire Abbott did not win the Mayoral race.
William Parnacott was elected Mayor on January 17, 1910.
Joseph Menapace and L. R. Thomas were elected first ward
Aldermen, while Charles Ellison and E.C. Bryant were elected
Aldermen for the second ward.

At the February 21, 1910 meeting of the Council, Vetleson
was hired as the Town’s attorney until May. In the meantime,
he was directed to set up the annual election in April. At this
election, the Mayor and both Aldermen from the first ward
were replaced, J.W. Ross becoming the second Mayor and L.W.
Thomas and B. H. Everett Aldermen. In May, the new Mayor
and Council decided not to continue the services of Vetleson.

Vetleson did not let the loss of one client stop him. By June
1910, Vetleson was the local U.S. Land Commissioner. As
Commissioner, Vetleson oversaw the homestead claims and proof
of claims for the area. And 1910-1915 saw a lot of homesteaders
making claims or proving claims. Things got so busy, that by
1912, Miss Pearle Buchele arrived from Burlington, Colo., to
accept a position as stenographer in U.S. Commissioner M.
Vetleson’s office. Over the years Vetleson had many different
locations for his office; above the First National Bank, above the
Ruby, in the Independent Telephone Co. building, in the Herald
Office, above the Post Office Drug Store, and one door east of
the Menapace store as noted in the ad above.

Vetleson eventually married his stenographer and they had a
son, Norman. The family lived in Manhattan for a number of
years and Vetleson went on to become the Park County Attorney
in the mid 20s. Vetleson died in Tacoma, WA in 1967. So much
history is made by people behind the scenes, but for a brief time,
nearly 40 years after his death, Martin Vetleson stands in the
spotlight.
Red Devil Cement

Nearly everyone has a collection of some kind and collectors of nostalgia have some of the strangest stuff. For a small class of collectors, one of the most coveted items is an old cement bag. These particular cement bags are made of burlap or canvas and have the famous Red Devil Portland cement logo emblazoned on them.

Red Devil Cement was the brand of only two cement companies, Union Portland Cement Company and Three Forks Portland Cement Company. Union Portland Cement Company was established in 1907 near Morgan, Utah is located just a few miles from a strange rock formation called the Devil’s Slide. Both Union and Three Forks (Trident) cement companies had the same major stockholders and eventually became part of Ideal Cement (now Holcim (US)). The logo for Red Devil Cement was appropriate for both plants. The devil, trident in hand, seems to be sliding down a slope.

The Red Devil cloth cement bags saw some hard use. Cement plants asked that their clients return the cloth bags for recycling. Plant employees repaired the bags by sewing holes and patching larger holes. In the 40s, many of these bag repairers were women. Some of the women workers at the Trident plant were; Gail Winnifred Clark, Edna Pearl Knight, Bertie House, Myrtle Roundtree, Mable Scollard, Alice Tomlinson, and Ethelyn Berninger.

In 1947, the Red Devil brand of cement was homogenized with the rest of Ideal Cement Company’s brand and were no longer made of cloth. But the Red Devil cloth bags have become a rare prize. One is in the Headwaters Heritage Museum and other collectors have them framed and hanging in places of honor.

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A Christmas to Remember

*Reprinted from the December 1956 issue of the Ideal Cement Mixer*

*Chief Chemist A. D. Burkett, Trident*

The Christmas I remember the best was in 1922. It was the custom here for the Trident school to stage rather an elaborate Christmas program at the local theatre. The whole town invariably turned out for it.

At the close of the program Santa, of course, always appeared to distribute the candy and gifts which were piled high around the decorated tree.

Our Northern Pacific Depot agent [N. A. Smith] conceived the idea of adding spice to the usual routine.

When the program was under way he would dash in with a telegram from Santa, advising: “I’m now leaving Bozeman and heading in your direction.” Calm would scarcely be restored before he would appear with another telegram: “Now in Manhattan but not much snow; may be hard to come on through.”

Bedlam!

More program - then the final telegram filed from Logan - “Broken runner on sleigh, and two reindeer very lame, but will try to get to Trident.”

Pandemonium!
Santa did get through, and during a rousing welcome realized that my two year old son, Bill, who had been sitting next to me was missing. The theatre yielded no clue. On arriving home I found Bill being consoled by his mother. His first sight of a Santa had scared him stiff, and he was sobbing and muttering: “I don’t like the big fat man with whiskers.”

Thirty-three subsequent Christmases have brought their special delights and variations. But, that was a night to remember.

### The N.P. Restaurant and the Mestads

In 1908 many families had the luxury of traveling by rail to the west. Homesteaders could load all their clothing, furniture, equipment and animals in railcars and came west with the hope of starting fresh in the wide open spaces of Montana. One family that took advantage of the rails was E. M. and Jessie Mestad. The Mestads had visited many of the new towns along the Milwaukee Railroad but got off the train on September 17, 1908, the day of the first lot sales in the new town.

The Mestads were down to their last few dollars and were unable to buy any land but they were experienced restauranteers and bakers. With help of the Adams family, the Mestads built a small bakery behind the American National Bank building (on the alley behind the present day Museum). (Photo courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum)

E.M. Mestad was the postmaster for a few years, starting in 1932. He was also active in organizing “The Townsend Plan,” an old age revolving pension fund in the 30s. The Mestads were in business for 28 years and later moved to Las Vegas in the mid 1930s.

### Additional Vetleson

It seems from the newspaper articles so far rediscovered that Vetleson knew how to pick his cases. He successfully defended Tim Harrington against a larceny charge in 1910 and he represented founding father C. E. Adams in a suit against the City of Three Forks for unlawful arrest.

Vetleson’s personal life was less successful. Pearl Buchele was actually his third wife. He married Myrtle Bullock of Valparaiso, Ind. in 1911 and Miss Elizabeth Bryans of Virginia City, Minn. in 1915. The wife of his son Norman indicates that father and son had a bitter relationship for many years.

### The Kid Theatre

Much like today, entertainment was a major pursuit of the residents of the area in the 20s. During 1921, there were three venues for entertaining large crowds: The Ruby Theatre, Henslee Auditorium, and, for a brief time, the Kidd Theatre.

The Kidd Theatre in Manhattan, started around 1918, was quite popular. In July 1919, the Northern Pacific depot agent for Three Forks, one S. L. Young, and his wife purchased Manhattan’s Kidd Theatre. Mrs. Young was to manage the theatre, while Mr. Young continued as the N.P. depot agent.

The Youngs sponsored many dances throughout the rest of 1919 at the Kidd Theatre, many of which featured the local Waddell & Dunkley Orchestra. Waddell and Dunkley were also regulars at the Ruby Theatre. Within a year, the Youngs were operating theaters in Manhattan, Trident, Toston and one in Willow Creek, which was operated in a hall leased from Don Fredericks.

In April of 1921, Young leased a brick building in Three Forks formerly occupied by Shepard’s Grocery. Mr. Young went all out to provide first-class equipment, a new screen, and leather chairs. Kidd Theatre opened on May 4, 1921 and the event was dubbed “An Auspicious Opening” by the Three Forks Herald with “a crowded house at each performance, and standing room at a premium.” The opening night featured D.W. Griffith’s 1919 film “Broken Blossoms,” sub-titled “The Yellow Man and the Girl,” starring Lillian Gish and Richard Barthelmess. The image on the next page is courtesy of www.filmsite.org. Also featured was the two-reel cartoon “Bringing Up Father,” which was based on the Mutt and Jiggs comic strip by George McManus. The price of admission was 15 and 35 cents.

The next issue of the Herald reported “An Incipient Blaze” of rubbish and building materials left on the rear porch of the Kidd Theatre. The blaze was soon under control, but the theater’s curtain and portions of the City Library and water department building next door had been damaged. Another, larger fire in late October destroyed the furniture in the auditorium and the equipment in the projection room. The blaze spelled the end of the movie house and a month later the Youngs
moved to Townsend to open a theatre there, while keeping their operations in Manhattan, Trident, and Toston and shutting down operations in Willow Creek.

At this time, I can only speculate where the Kidd Theatre operated, but perhaps an artifact of this bygone era will come to light.

With the curtailment of “smoker’s rights” and the move toward smoke-free public places, smoking seems to have lost its allure and glamour. Both my parents were smokers at one time, and I could never get used to their occasional billowing clouds. My grandfather smoked too, but his smoke was much more tolerable, almost enjoyable. I don’t recall the brand of cigars he smoked, but I am certain it was not a local product, such as the Three Forks Havana Special manufactured here just a few years after the town was founded.

Between 1911 and 1918, four separate cigar factories gave the men of Three Forks a reason to leave a trail of aromatic smoke. Charles E. Faben of Lewistown was the first to set up shop. The prospects for the growth of Three Forks lured in many a businessman with the hopes of prosperity. He purchased the Mac Lane building (Frontier Club) on South Main. A month later, Walter Sevals Cigar Factory No. 7 was in place (where the Historic Headwater Café’s veranda is now). Sevals came to Three Forks from Livingston and his signature “smoke” was the Three Forks Special. Just 21 months later, the Herald editor wrote “Many of our cigar smokers regret the departure of Walter Sevals and his Three Forks Specials.”

J. D. Leighy, who arrived from Denver, was setting up a shop in the Brickson building (City Office) in March of 1913. His signature cigar was the Three Forks Havana Extra. The Herald editor put in a good plug for Leighy. The first box of TF Havana Extras was sold to “L.C. Wright, foreman of the Herald, who was married last Sat. L.C.’s friends who sampled the cigars (and the box did not last long) will hereafter smoke “Three Forks Havana Extras.”

The same day that Leighy started selling his “Extras”, Frank H. Dixon and a man named Barringer were setting up a manufacturing shop in the Palace Building (now the empty lot next to Stageline Pizza). Leighy did some heavy advertising for several months to offset the competition. But shortly after, Leighy left Three Forks and started a ranch near Manhattan.

Marjorie Peairs, daughter of Frank Dixon, recalls watching her dad shaping and molding the tobacco, then wrapping it all in a thin silk-like Havana Wrapper. Then they would be snipped, labeled and properly boxed. Dixon got his tobacco from Schuster Brothers in Kentucky. In 1913, machine-made cigars were making headway in the market and by 1918 Dixon sold out his business and took up a homestead south of Three Forks, bringing an end to the era of home-town stogies.

The Cigar Factories

Photo courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum
The Sidewalks of Three Forks

High hopes for the growth of Three Forks in its early days provided many of the amenities that we still enjoy today. In January of 1911, with an eye on the future, the Town Council authorized a census of the Town. The results of the census, 1018 residents, gave the Council the numbers they needed to advance the Town to a City (3rd Class), which was done in February of 1911.

But 1,000 people was not the goal. Some of the more optimistic residents were joining the 15,000 Club. The members of the 15,000 Club were so impressed with the explosive growth of the town that they were hoping for 15,000 residents by 1920.

Businesses were popping up everywhere. There were two newspapers in town (the Herald and the News), and there were so many businesses asking for liquor licenses that the Council denied many because of (then) limit on the number of allowed saloons.

Just as any other city experiencing growth, the Town / City Council beefed up its infrastructure to handle the future growth. Many wells were dug for fire protection, and when the first Fire Engine arrived in October 1910, lots for the fire station were purchased. In 1912 the Two Miracle Company completed sidewalks from 5th Avenue East to 1st Avenue West that are still in use today.

Above: Parade goers and business patrons enjoy the new Main Street sidewalks during a 1912 summer holiday.

Below: A large crew with lots of wheelbarrows from the the Two Miracle Co. lays down 6,000 sq. ft. of concrete sidewalk a day in 1912.

Inset shows the Two Miracle Company imprint on sidewalks.
Photos courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum
The American National Bank & Headwaters Heritage Museum

The solid sandstone and thick masonry walls of the Headwaters Heritage Museum have seen a lot of changes since it was built in 1910. The building first housed the Three Valleys State Bank and the door into the building was on the left side (instead of where it is now, in the center). It was purchased in 1917 by American National Bank, but by that time farmers were beginning to feel effects of the drought and the American National failed in 1923.

The upstairs of the building housed many professionals, including Dr. Reed & Dr Stephans, dentist J. T. Symonds, and Dr. Larson. The back of the building was the home of the Montana Land and Livestock Co.

The building next to the bank, now housing the Plaza Bar, originally imitated the architecture of the bank building and housed the Ruby Theatre before the Ruby Theatre building was built down the block. In the early days of the bank, the area behind the bank had two other businesses, the OK Vulcanizing Shop. and Mestad's Bakery.

J. Q. Adams’ son, Benjamin, used the building for his real estate office until 1942 and a variety of businesses were housed there until 1960, when Security Bank of Three Forks moved in after over thirty years without a bank in town. The building was purchased by the Three Forks Area Historical Society in 1982.

The building is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places and a brief plaque unveiling ceremony was held Saturday, July 16, 2005 after the Rodeo Parade.

The Herald and the Higman Building

The building next to the Masonic Temple was the Higman building. Frank Brabec moved his harness shop from its location at 118 S. Main Street to there in 1916. Brabec ran his shop out of there for a while then purchased a shoe repair business from Paul Rudock and moved in 1918.

In the thirties, a garage was running out of the building. But, according to some sources, the business was not completely legit. It is alleged that the proprietors ran what today would be called a chop shop. Cars would be stolen and brought to the building to be dismantled and sold as parts.

The Three Forks Herald’s first solid office was located next door to the Higman building. Prior to the building, Paul Dorsey had been running the Herald out of a tent.

Frank Brabec sold out to Logan businessman John King in June 1922. Paul Dorsey sold the Herald to Lyle Williams in 1927. It is interesting to note, according to the Headwaters Heritage History, that both the Brabec and Dorsey families moved to Gig Harbor, Washington.

Some of the people that have owned these lots include; Ann P. Martin, James Kolokotrones, who built the house, Bill and Clare Kolokotrones, David and Bernice Schott and Shirley and Catherine Walbert.

The photo (below) is taken from a vintage postcard provided to the Headwaters Heritage Museum by Vera Wilcox. It shows the Herald office, Higman building and First National Bank.

Photo courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum
Esteem. A rarely used word outside the political arena, where the spirit of the word is worn away. But esteem is the best word to describe the awe and respect given to the late George Oiye.

I had the opportunity to interview George while he was in Three Forks to sign his new book “Footprints in my Review Mirror.” In researching for the interview, I was very impressed with his lifetime of accomplishments, starting with a strong work ethic. He was the quarterback for the 1939 6-man Three Forks football team, a Bronze Star recipient, a liberator of Dachau, all before the age of 23. His life after the war was filled with impressive engineering work, as well as helping to heal the wounds of the war in himself and others.

I only spoke with George that once, but his friends held him in such high esteem, it raised my level of respect another degree for the modest gentleman. Being an amateur historian, as I look into the life of George Oiye and read his autobiography, my esteem continues to rise. In that interview, he said “I’m decorated, but I’m not a hero.” I have to disagree with that.

I am saddened that we have lost such a rare soul. May he rest in peace, but I also hope his soul is reborn to continue to bring enlightenment to the next generation.

George Oiye
1922 - 2006

Photos above courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum
As towns become cities and cities grow, the businesses change, move, expand or disappear. Some buildings, once built, house the same business or type of business for most of their lifetime. In others, a new business renovates the interior and exterior to suit the needs of the business. Some businesses move from building to building, but remain a part of the community through several generations.

One of the buildings that has housed the same type business from generation to generation is now the Historic Headwaters Restaurant. It seems like that building has been the home of a restaurant since its inception. The clinking of glasses, the chatter of patrons, the smells of enticing food have emanated from that building, whether it was The State Cafe, Jimmy’s Cafe, the Headwaters or the Historic Headwaters.

Other businesses seem to move around, and are sometimes hard to keep track of. The Headwaters Heritage History book is a fantastic resource for an amateur historian such as myself. However, when the Three Forks Area Historical Society completed the book in 1983 there was one flaw. Time. A lot of the stories relate the relation of a building to what business was there in 1983. And of course, time has moved on and so has the business.

A case in point is the Montana Power office. It is amazing how many times the Montana Power office has changed locations. Montana Power had its first office in the Ruby Theatre, as shown in a 1916 photo of the building. Montana Power has had offices in at least four different locations since then. In the 1930s, the office was where Wildflower Designs is today, seen in the photo provided by the Headwaters Heritage Museum. It was also located in the Three Forks Motor Supply office. It was later moved to the Land West Realty office (twice). But in 1983, the office was located next to the Frontier Bar, where 3 Rivers Salon now resides. Of course, today, the Montana Power office is no more.

Years from now, someone reading the Headwaters Heritage History book will wonder at the phrase “where the Montana Power office is today.” To help this situation, while writing these stories I have been making notes as to who was where and when, and hope to give future writers a helping hand when looking for old businesses.
Many experienced adventurers know that it’s hard to move up a river, but sometimes it is down-right dangerous to go down river. When Sgt. John Ordway and Captain Clark parted ways on July 13, 1806, his party’s major irritation was the mosquitos. 170 years later, the Great American Flatboat Expedition of Montana’s centennial year met with near disaster just a few miles downriver from the headwaters when the cabin of the flatboat was severely damaged while trying to navigate under a bridge.

But one of the more obscure river adventures took place in 1915 when Herman Johnson and Craig B. Whitehead, both of Trident, decided to boat from the “Cement City” to the Gulf of Mexico. They started out on July 1, 1915 in a small canvas canoe, intending to camp along the way and stop in Fort Benton. In Fort Benton they planned to trade in the canoe for a motor boat and finish the trip in style. They chronicled their adventures with letters to the Three Forks Herald.

The rapids for the first few days were just warm-ups for the “dead-man’s rapids” near Hardy, MT. The pair floated into the deadly zig-zagging current strewn with boulders before they realized it, but “Herman handled the boat like a veteran and we made it without hitting a rock.” From there to Great Falls, the duo rowed most of the way because of the slow currents.

Writing from Oswego, MT, the pair were aboard a lightweight motor boat, but still had to deal with sand bars. Finding anyone to buy supplies, especially gasoline, made getting through the Little Rockies somewhat difficult. “We will be in Oswego all day and rest as it is a hard trying trip through the badlands of Montana and we deserve a rest.”

The duo arrived in Bismark, ND on August 15, passing several steamboats along the way. A falling bank just below Poplar nearly had them, but the motorboat was able to avoid being capsized. While in Bismark they met Captain Marsh, a river pilot of over forty years, who spun tales of the past for the pair.

The pair had apparently met up with one of the most famous riverboat captains on the Missouri River. Captain Grant March was skipper of the steamboat Far West which had brought wounded soldiers down river from Custer’s defeat at the battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876. Marsh had worked with Samuel Clemens onboard the A.B. Chambers and served on 22 riverboats in his career. One his boats, the North Alabama, which sank in 1870 near Vermillion, SD, was found in 2003 by a local farmer.

The intrepid adventurers reached New Orleans about October 23, 1915. Nothing appeared in the Herald to chronicle their adventures between Bismark and New Orleans, but Herman Johnson stayed on in New Orleans and took a “contract of laying pipes for the city and has supervision over a crew of colored brethren” for the winter. His second in command, C. B. Whitehead (brother to Dr. Whitehead of Logan), headed back to Montana immediately, with a brief stop-over in St. Louis.

1892 Missouri River Commission map shows North Alabama Bend, named after a steamboat wreck that occurred at that location.
Elephants and Apes

Circuses make for memorable experiences, and being at transportation crossroads, Three Forks has had its share of circus performances. But occasionally, a circus will make a memorable event outside of its traditional three rings. Two such incidents can be titled the Fallen Elephant and the Escaped Apes.

The Escaped Apes

In 1912, Kit Carson’s Buffalo Ranch Wild West touted itself as the Largest Wild West Show on Earth. With Russian Cossacks, bands of Sioux, Cheyenne, and Comanche to replay the Battle of Wounded Knee and a Menagerie of Trained Animal Exhibits, it certainly sounded impressive. But only one story made the next week’s paper. Below is the complete 1912 text in its anecdotal style;

Two wild and wooly monkeys escaped from the wild west show Tuesday and went over to the round house to visit their old friends. Tucker, Bartsch, Stumme and Baker failed to recognize them as acquaintances but had visions of free tickets to the show and chased them all over the shop but they got away and hiked up the yard with the four after them. The prospects looked pretty good to see the show and they stayed on the job until they captured them in a stock car in the extreme east end and brought them back to the owners who didn’t even say have a drink, let alone comps for four. If there are any more monkeys to be captured, the round house force will let Georgie do it in the future.

Three Forks Herald, June 6, 1912

The Fallen Elephant

Ralph E. Wilcox recalls a story told to him by his father. In the late spring of 1934 or 35, or thereabouts, Tom Mix, the famous cowboy, had his own circus [he had purchased a major interest in the Sam Dill Circus and renamed it]. It was traveling to Three Forks from Butte for an engagement here, using the old road along the Jefferson River. Near the spot where the highway is squeezed between the Jefferson River and “Alligator Rock” (near Al Anderson’s home), the trailer carrying an elephant was upset and spilled into the river. Escaping the mishap with only minor injuries, the elephant made it to the island across the river. News quickly spread of the mishap and a crowd began to gather. A few local men were recruited to help round up the errant pachyderm, including Ralph Sr. They had a dickens of a time, and the folks on the river bank had free ring-side seats. Eventually they did capture the elephant and the show went on. In appreciation for the assistance, the circus manager gave Mr. Wilcox an elephant hook. The hook, which is used to guide an elephant, is now hanging in the Headwaters Heritage Museum.

Trident’s First Murder

What is news? It never ceases to amaze me, when looking at the old newspapers, as to what makes the front page and what gets buried in the back pages. Perhaps, as the news became more of a business, editors got smarter about what should be on the front page. Pride could be another factor. One paper scooping another tends to make the lagging paper not to follow up on a story. Take for example the first murder in Trident, Montana.

In August of 1913 the editor of the Three Forks News, W. E. Ballard, was on hand at the arrest of Dominic Romeo, main suspect in the fatal shooting of Jesse Crago, a mill foreman at the cement plant. He covered the story and the court case like white on rice. On the other hand, the Three Forks Herald got scooped and the only mention of the incident was an editorialized version a week later.

The story itself would make a good episode of “Law and Order.” Dominic Romeo, an Italian immigrant living in shanty town Little Italy or WOP (without papers) town near the Trident Plant, apparently got upset at Jesse Crago for disparaging remarks made by him. Romeo left work and returned shortly with a gun and shot Crago in the plant’s mill building in front of two witnesses, then fled into the hills behind the plant. Plant Manager Helmuth Krarup organized a search party to track down Romeo. In the meantime, Crago, who had been shot through the left lung and stomach, was moved to the Northern Pacific depot and Dr. Whitehead of Logan was summoned. When Dr. Whitehead arrived and doubting the recovery of his patient, encouraged him to tell those present, what happened, one of whom was Krarup. When the next train arrived, Crago and the Doctor were put on
When I think of union towns in Montana, I usually think of Butte, but the Three Forks area has its own union history. I was surprised to find out that the first union in Three Forks was a carpenter’s union formed a few months after the initial sale of lots in 1908. “Watch us grow” was the fledgling town’s slogan, as buildings and homes went up at a phenomenal rate. However, the carpenters who worked on those buildings did so at various pay rates. Carpenter’s wrangled for standard and better pay rates and, to that end, formed the Carpenters Union.

In the nearby company town of Trident, just one year after production first started at the cement plant in 1910, the plant was unionized. The contract was made between the Three Forks Portland Cement Company and the Montana Federation of Labor, which was affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). It is unclear if that union survived, but by 1921 the Cement Makers’ Union No. 14061 was the bargaining unit representing the workers at Trident. The Three Forks Herald reported “The Cement Makers’ Union has given a number of social events in the past and has gained an enviable reputation as being first class entertainers,” Labor Day being one of their biggest celebrations.

Sometime in the late 20s or early 30s, the Cement Makers’ Union fell from grace and, for a time, the plant had no bargaining unit. In 1939, the International United Cement, Line and Gypsum Workers (CLGW) was formed, and they sent representative Mel Ferron to the plant that same year, but plant management was able to dissuade the workers from organizing. Mel Ferron went back in 1946, and the CLGW gave a new charter to the original fifteen brethren and Local 239 was formed. In the mid-60s, the workers at the Sierra Talc plant (now Luzenac) organized and joined the Local 239.

In 1984, the CLGW merged with the Boilermakers Union and the local became D239 of the International Boilermakers, Iron Ship Builders, Blacksmiths, Forgers and Helpers, with 117 charter members. One of the local’s most honored members is William Blakely, who signed the original charter back in 1946 and held every office in the local by the time he retired. Blakely was honored in 1977 with a plaque presented by District Representative John Haladay, State AFL-CIO Exec. Sec. Jim Murray and Local President Arnold Plowman.

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The recent work on the Three Forks Physical Therapy building at the corner of Main and Cedar has spurred a rush of nostalgic images for me and I remember the exceptional milk shakes made at the Dew Drop Cafe once housed there.

We moved back to Montana in the fall of 1968. The next spring my grandfather, Tom J. Finnegan, introduced me to the time-honored tradition of mowing the lawn. This was a new experience for me since Arizona was not kind to green lawns.

Grandpa Tom kept his shiny Ace Hardware lawn mower in the basement, so I had to drag it up the stairs. Grandpa meticulously showed me the process of mower maintenance. If his lawn mower was any indication, Grandpa’s farm equipment must have been immaculate! There was a specific pattern to mowing the lawn, too, and deviations from the path were frowned upon.

Once I got the lawn mowed and the mower back to the cool basement, Grandpa would pay me five dollars and we would head down to the Dew Drop Cafe for lunch in his white Ford Ranchero. Grandpa rarely cooked, and was a regular breakfast, lunch and dinner patron of the Dew Drop Cafe. I mostly remember I loved their milk shakes. At that time, Alice Stewart and Martha Stockburger owned the Dew Drop. Mary Stockburger, former waitress at the Dew Drop, recalls several regulars besides my grandfather; Jerry Allen, Bob Kilgore, and Mrs. Rector.

The original Dew Drop Inn was located in the northern portion of the Ruby Theatre Building. Previously to that, according to a 1937 photo, it was the office of Dr. L.D. Barbour, Osteopath. Paul and Tina Baxter owned the the Dew Drop Inn in 50s. Mr. Baxter work at the Trident cement plant for a number of years, and he and his wife lived in the Trident village.

The Dew Drop Inn

In an earlier issue of this column, I wrote of the Mestad’s, who witnessed the auction of the first lots of the newly formed town of Three Forks on that rainy day of September 17, 1908. Five years later, during an anniversary celebration of that day, E. M. Mestad said “Why you could set that same bunch of pioneers in the midst of the desert and they would build a city and develop the country in spite of all the obstacles.” He was proud to be a part of the town’s growth and how its pioneers worked together to make things happen.

This is not in conflict in his political views as a democratic socialist. In the years before WW I, the Socialist Party was an accepted, if not respected, political party in the United States. The Socialist Party had been founded in America in 1876, by German immigrants who were Marxists (but not communists).
Most Socialists in the US were revisionists or democratic socialists whose goal was to give control of major industries to their respective employees, relinquishing “capital to those who create it,” as well as establish a welfare state, universal suffrage, and politically empower the [oppressed] working class... a mix of democracy and utopian anarchy. 1912 was the peak of socialism in the United States. 33 City Mayors and several seats in state legislatures were held by the Socialist Party.

The Socialist party had close ties to the unions of the day, especially the Industrial Workers of the World or Wobblies. The idea of collective bargaining and strikes were relatively new and the goals of the unions and the Socialist Party were aligned in giving power to the working class.

On the local front, the Socialist met with some success. Socialists began to have meetings in Three Forks as early as 1911, and E. M. Mestad presided over many of the meetings. In fact, two Socialists ran for Alderman seats in Three Forks that year and won. In that election, none of the candidates were representing the traditional parties. There were no Republicans or Democrats, there were only Citizen, Independent, or Socialist candidates.

In 1914, Mestad and a hand full of other Socialist in Three Forks were put forth as state and county candidates. E.M. Mestad & H.C. May for State Rep., Crist Stumme for County Commissioner, E. Van Horsen for Clerk of Court, M. L. Lewis for Treasurer, Mrs. Mabel May for Supt. Of Schools. None of them won. In fact, after the election, Mestad lodged a complaint with the election committee saying that Socialist Party candidates did receive votes despite the reported counts.

A number of constrictions and attacks brought an effective end to the Socialist Party between 1917 and 1921. The IWW was destroyed, immigrants (a major base for the Socialist movement) were discriminated against, and hundreds of Socialists were in prison because of their seemingly seditious acts. Socialists became the lunatic fringe and still are. The 2004 Socialist candidate for President received 10,303 votes, while the 1912 Presidential Socialist candidate received 900,369 votes.

All this is not to belittle the beliefs of E. M. Mestad or others of that era. “Boots” Myers has told me of Mr. Mestad’s personal generosity. Despite having no party to back him, Mestad remained active in politics, being very active in pushing the Townsend Plan in the mid-30s, an old age revolving pension fund.... He was still pushing for a utopia for the working class.

If you’re living in a city
Where it’s hard to make ends meet,
Where the money that you’re earning
Won’t buy what you’d like to eat,
Then come out to Old Montana
Where there’s Trout and Buck and Doe,
Free – enough for ev’rybody –
Where the big red apples grow.

If you’re working in a fact’ry
Where the air is filled with smoke,
Where your lungs are growing weaker,
And at night you cough and choke,
Then come out to Old Montana
Where the air is clear and pure;
You will live a great deal longer,
And need no consumption cure.

If you’re farming in the country
Where the soil is poor and light
Where the droughts and floods and cyclones
Keep you guessing day and night,
Then come out to Old Montana
Where crop failures are unknown,
And you’ll reap a goodly fortune
From each acre you have sown.

If you’re tired of rainy weather,
Mud and fever, grip and chills,
And it keeps you busy while you’re well
To pay your Doctor bills,
Then come out to Old Montana
Where such things are never found,
Where’s there’s Health and Wealth and Sunshine
Ev’ry day the whole year round.

If you’re tired of your position,
And you don’t know what to do,
Just buy yourself a ticket
On the old Milwaukee through;
Have it read “Old Montana,”
And if you would have it nice,
Stop off at GOOD OLD THREE FORKS
And taste of Paradise.

C. E. Wendel ----Northwest News
Three Forks Herald, Thursday July 23, 1914
The Ruby Ridge Oil Company

With oil at sixty dollars (plus) a barrel, it may be time to tap into the oil reserves just a few miles south of Three Forks. At least that might be the impulse if you had just read the April 14, 1921 issue of the Three Forks Herald. The headline was “Ruby Ridge Oil Company Spudded in April 11, 2 PM.”

The oil rush of 1921 made a big splash in the valley. The Ruby Ridge Oil Company, formed in early 1921, asking the public to open their wallets and spend $100 per share to “Help the Well Go Down.” H. F. Erb, William Veach, Clark Maudlin, Sr., Mrs. M. M. McCulloch and Edger Ewers, all of Three Forks, were listed among the incorporators. Several oil companies (some with the same directors) were formed in the spring and early summer of 1921, each hoping to become the first wildcatter to find oil in the valley.

In the first week of drilling, the hole was down 180 feet. The May 19, 1921 issue of the Herald reports that the hole was down to 230 feet, “with splendid indications of oil”, but the drilling had stopped to wait for the delivery of machinery. Just look at the headlines through the summer;

6/23/1921 “Showing Considerable Oil”
6/30/1921 “Ruby Ridge Oil Co. puts on another crew”

7/7/1921 “Pushing work at Oil Well” with the report that “barring accidents, Gallatin County should know if there is oil in the locality south of town within the next thirty days.”
7/28/1921 “OIL. Excitement increases with each foot the drill goes down.”

But then, strange things began to happen. Breakdowns were frequent, field manager W.D. Inman resigned in mid-September to take a job elsewhere, and the footage reports seem to be a lot shallower than earlier footage reports. By November, the Herald was relegating news about the oil company to page five.

In the January 12, 1922 edition, Herald editor Dorsey wrote “They Want to Know,” asking the seemingly defunct oil company to make a statement regarding the progress of the well site. The directors had not met for some time and were directing their efforts on another, newly formed oil company.

By April of 1923 the well depth was 1545 feet going to a depth of 1800 or 2000, but expectations were not high. And the outcome is now known, since Gallatin valley has no well pumps nodding up and down. So it seems we are stuck importing all our oil and gas from somewhere else. Maybe somebody should try again?
In 1914 baseball was the number one game in the land. The “Miracle” Boston Braves, who were in last place on July 4th of 1914, went all the way to win the World Series in a four game sweep of the Philadelphia Athletics. George Herman Ruth earned his nickname during spring training of 1914 when his teammates on the minor league Baltimore Orioles began referring to him as the owner’s new “babe.” And Montana even had one of its own sons debut as a relief pitcher in the majors. Rees Gephardt “Steamboat” Williams of Cascade, MT stepped in to pitch on July 12, 1914 for the St. Louis Cardinals in a losing game (5-12) against the Boston Braves. Also, the American and National leagues had a rival league with the new, but short-lived (1914-1915) Federal League of eight teams stepped into the major league baseball picture.

1915 saw Babe Ruth in his first World Series with the Boston Red Sox playing against the Philadelphia Phillies. On the local level, town teams, supported by private fundraisers, played each other from May to August. Belgrade, Bozeman, Harrison, Logan, Manhattan, Three Forks, Toston, Townsend, Trident and Willow Creek all sported teams. 1915 was the last wet year before the drought era and games were frequently rained out but when the teams played, it was a serious competition. Willow Creek correspondent to the Three Forks Herald, Mrs. Hankinson, wrote of the May 16 game between Three Forks and Willow Creek; Willow Creek was highly elated as this is the first time our team has been able to get Three Forks far enough away from home to show them how to play ball the way it should be played.

She gave a good account of the 3-2 victory over Three Forks and even wrote a poem “To The Ball Team” which opens; Listen, my friends and you shall hear, / A story, tho’ it may sound queer, / How the farmers, called the Willow Creek Club / Made Three Forks look like one big dub. The next weekend, back at the Three Forks field, Willow Creek lost 8 to 4.

Memorial Day weekend 1915, Three Forks and Trident played two games and came out even. The July 4th Celebration in Three Forks featured a four team tournament with Willow Creek vs. Three Forks and Manhattan vs. Trident with a $150 purse at stake. In the finale, Manhattan beat Willow Creek 9 to 5 with “fully two thousand people being on the grounds before the close of the contest.”

E.W. Waddell (who later built the Ruby Theatre) was the Three Forks team manager. The roster of players in those years was a who’s who of early Three Forks. The Herald editor was prone to nicknaming some players and thus some accounts have players like Emery “Bullet” Van Horsen, Ted “The Dakota Wonder” Anderson, “Marvelous” Ed Gravatt, Frank “Speed Ball” Martinka. Other players on the town team of 1915 were Harry Salki (later became a bar owner), Ben Reynolds (merchant who died in 1917), Ray Matter (worked at Porter’s Three Forks Mercantile), Tommy Young, Harry Gustine (an attorney), Bob Chambers and Dave Edwards.

### Base Ball Season is Opened (1916)

Game between TF and the “Turkey Reds” of Nigger Hollow

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Other TF Players

Hurley, Bothnar, Friedman, A. Sautter, Young, B. Sautter
Three Forks Wins From Trident

In one of the best ball games seen on the local diamond this season, Three Forks defeated the hard hitting Trident bunch 4 to 3 on the home grounds Sunday afternoon.

The weather was ideal for base ball and a good crowd was out to see the local team win. It was a pitcher’s battle from the start between Reynolds for the locals and Hardy for Trident, with Reynolds having the best of it. Both pitchers kept their hits well scattered and got good support.

Reynolds pitched in masterly fashion and was a puzzle to the hard hitting Trident bunch. He struck out Whitehead, Trident’s heaviest hitter three times and allowed only five scattered hits.

Hardy for Trident pitched his usual heady game and kept his hits well scattered.

Edwards did the receiving for the locals and caught a fine game and will be a good addition to the team.

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Trident 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 2 - 3
Three Forks 0 1 0 0 3 0 0 0 - 4

Struck out - By Reynolds 11; by Hardy 5.

Willow Creek Warbles

Throughout the years, the Three Forks Herald has had numerous columns dedicated to news related to small communities. Many of the locations have lost their identity over time. Some of those communities include; Cavern / Alaczar, Copper City, Happy Valley, Mockel, Nigger Hollow, Valley View, and Rattlesnake. Others have endured like Harrison, Madison Valley, Milligan Canyon, Pony, Trident, and Jefferson Island. Some of these columns would have alliterative titles such as Logan Laconics, Pony Nuggets or Rattlesnake Rattles. The authors of these columns were never named directly, as newspapers of the day rarely used “by lines.”

Between 1908 and 1912, news from Willow Creek was titled Willow Creek Ripplings and the correspondent for that time was Cephas Inabit (or more likely, his wife), a merchant in Willow Creek. It is difficult to pin it down, but there are indications that Mrs. Dorenda (Powell) Mulderig was the correspondent starting around October 1913, when the WC Ripplings became WC Warbles.

Michael and Dorenda Mulderig came to Willow Creek sometime about 1906 from Butte, where Michael had been a miner in the Anaconda Mine. He was a survivor of a fire at the Anaconda Mine in about 1891, but it left him in a weakened physical condition.

The Mulderigs acquired some acreage outside of Willow Creek where Michael made a go at farming. In 1912, Dorenda started a restaurant “in the Joseph Building,” which eventually became a boarding house. Dorenda sold the farm in 1913 to John O’Connor and they moved into Willow Creek permanently and Michael helped out in the restaurant.

The Mulderigs had two daughters, Cecily and Nellie. Cecily married E. C. Sinnette and moved to Butte. Nellie was quite popular at the Willow Creek School and would sometimes fill in as a correspondent to the Herald for her mother. Michael died in May 1916 at the age of 59.

On September 16, 1917 Dorenda married James Hankinson, a 55 year old bachelor. Dorenda and James were engaged to be married more than 32 years earlier, but some misunderstanding between them caused them to separate and Dorenda moved to Butte and married Michael Mulderig.

Four days after the Hankinson wedding, Dorenda's daughter, Nellie, married local farmer Charles Friedeman.

Besides being a correspondent, Dorenda was quite a poet. One of the first poems she contributed to the Three Forks Herald was in 1910 and was entitled “In Sympathy with Burnie,” where she champions a colored boy who is being made fun of. The opening stanza is “Oh, what are the people saying, / When bad thots in their hearts they employ; / Do they know of the heartaches they are causing, / To make fun of a colored boy?

She seemed to be a champion of the downtrodden, unlucky and unmarried. During World War I, her poems inspired patriotism and sacrifice. She wrote many poems in memorial of those passing.
The Hankinsons had no children and eventually moved to Butte where Dorenda died in 1956 and James in 1959.

Although I cannot attribute every poem in the Willow Creek Warbles to Dorenda, most of them are wonderful and well written. Below are of some of the poems published in the Willow Creek Warbles column;

My Brothers

You ask me why upon my breast
Unchanged from day to day
Linked side by side in one broad band
I wear the blue and gray.

I had two brothers long ago
Two brothers young and gay
One wore the a suit of Northern blue
The other a suit of Southern gray.

Each fought for what he deemed was right
And fell with sword in hand
One sleeps beneath Virginia hills
And one by Georgia’s strand.

But the same sun shines on both their graves
Amid valley and o’er hill
And in the darkest of the hours
My brothers do live still.

TFH Nov. 1, 1917

Thrashing Signals

1 for stop and 2 for go
3 for water, 4 for straw
5 for sacks, 6 for bundles
7 to wake the boys from their slumbers

TFH Nov. 8 1917

OUR MOTHER

Father works from sun till sun
Puts in a good long day
But mother’s work ain’t never done
And she don’t draw no pay.

Sister she goes out a lot
And has to have good clothes

But mother she don’t need much
Cos mother never goes.

Brother’s in the high school
And has to put on style
But mother’s old last summer hat
Will last her yet awhile.

Father has to go to Lodge
Just has to pay his dues
Mother’d like a pair of gloves
But baby needs new shoes.

Then to I must have good shoes
Because I might catch cold
No matter just about the house
If mother’s shoes are old.

Seems like just what we have to have
Is all we can afford
And Ma she don’t need nothing
You see she gets her board.

But when it comes to passing out
The love we bear each other
We like one another well enough
But the big share goes to mother.

TFH – Nov. 8, 1917

CAN WE FORGET

Here’s to the memory of the man
That raised the corn
That fed the goose
That bore the quill
That made the pen
That signed the Declaration of Independence

TFH – Nov. 29, 1917

BE THE FELLOW THAT YOUR MOTHER THINKS YOU ARE

While walking down the street one day
I heard a little urchin to his comrade say
Say Jimmie let me tell you I’d be as happy as a clam
If I only was the feller dat my mudder tink I am.
Gee Jim she tinks dat I am a wonder And she knows her little lad
Could never mix wid nothin’ what was ugly, mean or bad.
Lot of times I sets and tinks how nice twould be gee-whiz
If a fellow was de fellow dat his mother tinks he is.

My friend be your’s a life of toil or undulated joy
You still can learn a lesson from the small unlettered boy
Don’t try to be an earthly saint with your eyes fixed on a star
Just try to be the fellow that your mother thinks you are.

XYZ

TFH – Dec. 13, 1917

TOM MURPHY’S TROUBLES
(Dedicated to our friend TOM, of Galen Springs)

I used to have in olden times
   A roll of greenbacks handy,
I always could dig up some dimes,
   To buy the children candy.
And when my wife reared up and said
   “I have to have a bonnet!”
I just peeled off a ten and said,
   “Go blow yourself, dogonit!”

But now I never have a plunk
   For anything we’re needing,
My money goes for costly junk
   To keep my auto speeding,
But yesterday I waked the Lyre
   That I so long have hammered,
That I might buy a rubber tire
   For which an off wheel clamored.

We’re out of flour, out of coal
   My wife is in a panic,
Because she sees me us my roll
   To pay the bum mechanic.
I need a haircut and a shave,
   I need a shirt and collar,
But how the dickens can I save
   When spark plugs cost a dollar.

My auto takes my every red
   And clugs with fiendish laughter,
’Twill keep me broke until I’m dead,
   And forty years thereafter;
And when I quit life’s griefs and pains
   I can’t afford a casket
They’ll have to rake up my remains
   And plant ‘em in a basket.

TFH – Jan. 31, 1918

O U HOOVER

My Tuesdays are meatless
My Wednesdays are wheatless
I am getting more eatless each day
My home it is heatless
My bed it is sheetless
They are sent to the Y.M.C.A
The bar rooms are treatless
My coffee is sweetless
Each day I get poorer and wiser
My stockings are feetless
My clothes lack in neatness
Oh gosh how I hate the Kaiser.

TFH – Feb. 14, 1918

MOTHER IS DOING HER BIT
(Complementary to Mrs. W. Hilke)

Mother can’t join the army
Nor mother can’t go to sea
But mother can do her bit you bet
Whatever that bit might be.

She’s up in the morning early
She is late to her bed at night
She handles her broom like a gun
And shows she is ready to fight.

She sends the children to school
With a flag upon each ones breast
A symbol sweet she tells them
Of the land they love the best.

Then mother gets her housework done
And hurries off to town
There to do a woman’s part  
In Red Cross cap and gown.  
When this cruel war is over  
In contentment she can sit  
She knows she did her duty  
We know she did her bit.  

The furniture is moved around  
Some is on the lawn  
Father looks dyspectic  
And poor Ma is pale and wan  
And grub – no time to cook it  
And I got a sorter hunch  
There’ll be sardines and crackers  
All we’ll get today for lunch  

The family always hate it  
But it has to be, by ging  
This topsy turvy mix up  
When Ma’s cleaning house for spring  

TFH – Feb. 28, 1918

ESPECIALLY JIM

I was not good looking when I was young  
But I was peert, black-eyed and slim  
With fellows courting me Sunday nights  
Especially Jim

The likeliest one of ’em all was he  
Pleasant and handsome and trim  
But I tossed us my head and made fun of ’em all  
Especially Jim

I said I had no opinion of men  
And I wouldn’t take stock in him  
But they kept on a coming in spite of my talk  
Especially Jim

I got so tired of having ’em around ’specially Jim  
I made up my mind I’d settle down  
And take up with him  
So we “wus” married one Sunday in church  
’Twas crowded to the brim  
’Twas the only way to get rid of them all  
Especially Jim

TFH – Mar. 14, 1918

MRS. BERGGREN’S TROUBLES

Mother got the dust rag out  
She bought a brand new broom  
She makes that everlasting dust  
Skiddadle from the rooms  
The cat he beats a mad retreat  
The dog he runs away  
For all the family is upset  
Ma’s cleaning house today

The family always hate it  
But it has to be, by ging  
This topsy turvy mix up  
When Ma’s cleaning house for spring

TFH – Mar. 21, 1918

THE SOLDIER OF THE SOIL
(Complimentary to Chas. Friedeman)

Oh he hears the bugle calling  
And the rolling of the drums  
And the steady tramp and rumble  
Of the army as it comes  
And his eyes are bright and wistful  
As he straightens from his toil  
But he holds – he is enlisted  
As a soldier of the soil

His the drill of seed and harvest  
For the soldiers must be fed  
For they look to him to furnish  
Beef and bean and daily bread  
So besides the soldier’s sabre  
Hangs his implements of toil  
For the power behind the army  
Is the soldier of the soil.

TFH – Mar. 28, 1918
The Gym-Stormers

The 1920's were famous for those daring aviators that barnstormed across America with death defying stunts. The 1930's had their own version of barnstorming: exhibition basketball. Three Forks, having built a gymnasium in 1931, took advantage of the many teams touring the west. Among the teams invited to play the hometown team were C.M. “Ole” Olson’s New York Harlemites.

Olson was the owner / manager and player for a successful exhibition team called the Terrible Swedes. Olson and a host of other promoters were taking advantage of the wild success of the Harlem Globe Trotters and sponsored their own teams with similar names. In 1935 Olson and the Harlemites toured Montana. Olson cancelled a February 5 game against the Great Falls Great Northerners because the contract said his team would be the first negro club to play in Great Falls. He found out that Pullin’s Globe Trotters and the original Harlem Globe Trotters had already played there. The Harlemites went on to have successful engagements in Billings and Anaconda.

The Harlemites played two games in Three Forks in 1935 and, according to the Herald “their basketball wizardry far surpassed the exhibitions put on by other traveling teams which played here,” and Pot Cannon was one of the wizards (photo below). They came back in January 1936 to play the second game of a double header versus the Three Forks All Stars. The first game was the Three Forks Wolves versus Holy Rosary. Unfortunately, the Herald did not have a sports section like today’s papers and no accounts of the game were published.

(Photograph: Pot Cannon)

A year in Willow Creek 1920

A curious thing about 1920; February had five Sundays, a rare occurrence, since it occurs only once every 28 years. As it was a leap year, the Willow Creek correspondent to the Three Forks Herald, Mrs. Dorinda Hankinson wrote:

Young ladies this is Leap year
I have told you o’er and o’er
And if you don’t propose girls
You’ll wait just four years more.

Entertainment was a group effort in that era. The Ladies Aid Society was active the whole year, giving surprise parties of appreciation to various women of the area. The Willow Creek Study Club, started in 1914, gave a “delightful Valentine party Saturday afternoon at the home of Mrs. E. D. Thorndike.” The Commercial Club held regular dinner meetings and “smokers,” dinner, smoking and skits or recitations. They also worked during the year to improve the streets and sidewalks of the town. Groups met regularly to play 500 (card game) and entertain and the Willow Creek Homestead B.A.Y., “The Yeomen,” met the last Saturday of every month.

School was held in a building built in 1911 and it was beginning to get a little tight. Parents were urging the school board to consider building a new school and the $60,000 bond for the school passed in March.

There was no gym available, so the basketball team had to pray for good weather in order to practice outside with THE basketball. By February, the team had enough practice in to take on the Married Men team and beat them handily 22 – 4. In March, Willow Creek traveled to Cardwell and ended up with a loss 11-10. The players were;

Alvin Cleveland – Center, Francis Cleveland – Right Forward, Frank Cook – Left Forward, Charles Noble – Right Guard, Richard Hilke – Left Guard. Ross Parks changed places with Frances Cleveland in the second half and Lyle Williams was a substitute.

(Photograph: Pot Cannon)

“REO”
The Gold Standard of Value.

MACK & BLACK,
Willow Creek Garage and Machine Shop

Images this page from the Headwaters Heritage Museum Newspaper Microfilm Archives
The next game turned out much better for the team, as Willow Creek ran over the Pony team 23 – 8. A dance was held after the game featuring Miss Agnes Brabec and Stewart Avery of Three Forks.

Things were looking well in Willow Creek in 1920. The Willow Creek Bank was thriving, the Kid Theatre was showing pictures and while the rains had stopped in most of the state, crops around Willow Creek had not been hard hit. The last bouts of the dreaded Spanish Flu were over a year in the past. In April, the contract for the new school house was let to Mr. Stanton. And a group of men were leasing land in the pursuit of a new oil drilling project. Mack & Black, down at the Willow Creek Garage and Machine Shop, were selling the latest model of the REO.

May - The class of 1920 graduates were Pearl Woodside, Viola Noble, Lyle Williams and Alvin Cleveland. Mr. Cleveland notes (in a later letter to the reunion committee) that this was the first graduating class from Willow Creek.

In June, the cheese factory had started up again. And Frank Cooper’s team and men were kept busy hauling in materials for the new school. During the summer, the Business Men, the Married Men and the “Kids Nine” were crossing bats on the local diamond.

A series of Revival Services, led by Pastor Milton F. Hill, were held at the Willow Creek Church during July, “with good music and a brief, but earnest message.”

But progress wasn’t made in every facet of life in Willow Creek. “Very few business houses in town have any telephone at all, and those that have, find them dead usually.” And of course, Prohibition was on.

In August, three Boy Scouts from New York were hiking their way to Seattle. As they were traveling up Willow Creek hill, one of them was accidentally shot through the knee and the group had to lay over until the lad healed.

With the opening day of school, many new families arrived in town. Students were eager to move to the new school, but in the meantime, the old facility was having difficulty handling 35 high school students. The road from Table Mountain to Willow Creek was improved, but the bus nearly overturned on one rainy and slick day, so further improvements were made.

Basketball practice between bouts of bad weather prepared the new team for new season. Team members for the 1920-1921 season were Frank Cook – Right Forward, Hobart Price – Left Forward, Francis Cleveland – Center, Charles Noble – Right Guard, Richard Hilke – Left Guard with subs Byron Parker and William Walbert.

In October, William Mack and family moved into the Walter Mack house after a blaze destroyed their ranch home. The Women’s Study Club sponsored a community wide celebration of Armistice Day on November 11.

After school on Friday December 10, the high school boys stayed over and moved classroom desks and chairs to the new $60,000 school building. The slate blackboards had been moved two weeks earlier (making it difficult for teachers to teach in those few days).

The last opportunity for ladies to ask the men for their hand in marriage was a Leap Year dance on December 18. The school Christmas cantata was canceled on the account of two students (children of Homer Thompson) coming down with scarlet fever.

Marriages during the year:
Miss Irene Harwood to Mr. R.G. McPherson both of WC.
Miss Cosa Hankinson and Mr. Ben Houston. Miss Nelly Walbert and Mr. Howard Collins. Miss Bessie Powell and Mr. Ewart Thrisithick of Butte. Miss Vernice Cooper to Mr. Therson Torgrinson of Valier. Miss Pearl Woodside to Mr. William Smith.

Births: A daughter to Mr. & Mrs. William Kelly, June 25. A daughter to Mr. & Mrs. Tom Waggoner – Nov. A son to Mr. & Mrs. William Peterson – Nov. 30.


Photo by Patrick Finnegan
The Area’s Postal History

In this day of electronic mail, there is still a lot of regular mail that arrives at your door or post office box. While most of it is junk, the occasional birthday or Christmas card is a welcome sight. Although not as central as it was in the past, the post office still plays a vital role in the community it serves. Many peoples’ routines include a daily stop at the post office.

At one time, post offices were a way to legitimize a town. Since people began settling Montana, a post office was a way to communicate with the world and a plethora of post offices sprang up to serve the need. In the Headwaters area there have been eight different postal stations: Clarkston, Gallatin, Hyde, Logan, Madison, Three Forks, Trident and Willow Creek.

Willow Creek is one of the oldest continuously operating post offices, first commissioned in 1867 (except for an 18 day interruption of service in 1869). Gallatin City’s post office opened the same year, but shut down in 1890.

Three Fork’s post office opened in 1882. That would be Old Town Three Forks Post Office, which operated until 1903. It was re-established in 1907, but was moved about a mile shortly after the new town of Three Forks was established. For many years, the post office was housed in various stores and drug stores until it got its own building in 1961.

Madison Post Office was short-lived and there is no record of its postmasters. According to records, it operated from 1870 to 1873 a mile or two northeast of Old Town. I speculate that it was established by James Shedd, our area’s most prolific bridge builder.

Canyon House, built in about 1867, was a mail stop on the stage coach road before there was a Logan, Montana. It served as a mail drop for the Northern Pacific from 1875 until Logan’s post office became official in 1891. The post office, along with the general store that housed it, burned down in the devastating blaze of July, 1919. Postmaster Louis Bevier lost all of his merchandise and turned to farming and stock raising. Logan’s post office was closed in 1960.

Trident’s post office was established in 1909 and was run out of various homes until it was firmly established in the Trident Store run by the Carver family. Jennie Andriolo moved the post office to the front porch of her home until it was closed in 1978.

Clarkston’s post office operated from 1910 to 1958. For a time, the post office was housed in the Circle S Store run by Jim and Mabel Corbett.

The Hyde Post Office, located up the Madison Valley was officially recognized to be open 1892 to 1911, although there is a newspaper excerpt in the Headwaters Heritage History book telling of the marriage of the Hyde postmaster dated 1921. The marriage was performed with the bride and groom sitting in a buggy in front of the parsonage, the groom being so badly crippled by rheumatism.

Today just two post offices serve the area, reflecting the efficiency of our national transportation system. But they are no longer a social center, housed in neighborhood stores, where one could pick up the mail and the local “news” in a single stop.
Squeezed into the unfinished freight room of the Milwaukee depot on September 17, 1908, men and women from all over the United States were bidding on the newly platted lots of Three Forks, Montana. Who among them would be the first to build, the first to go bankrupt, or be the first criminal? There is a first time for everything and here are a few firsts for Three Forks, Montana.

Two lumber companies were the first to purchase lots in Three Forks in anticipation of the furious building activity to come; The Flint-Lynn Lumber Co. and the Clark Lumber Co. Both companies experienced delays in getting materials to keep the town’s contractors going. Many tents were used to house the workers and businesses of the day, and a 12x19 wall tent was the first item in what today would be a classified ad.

In the first issue of the Three Forks Herald on September 24, 1908, a list of the first lot buyers is given. The first person to buy a lot on that rainy day auction the week before was Mr. T. A. Levinson of Chicago. The seventh buyer was the first woman to buy a lot, Mrs. Emma Belstrom of Harlowton. The first person in the list to give their address as Three Forks was D. P. Brower. His construction crews built many of the first homes and businesses in Three Forks.

Thomas J. Candler purchased the ninth lot up for sale and built the Kentucky Club bar and pool hall. He was the first Justice of the Peace. His first court case involved a drunken fist fight behind the Dance Bros. Saloon between George Davis and Fred Riggins. Candler was also the first businessman to go bankrupt in Three Forks, having quite the stock of liquor and cigars to sell off to pay his debts.

The first union in town was the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. The first President of the Commercial Club (forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce) was Ben Reynolds. He was a partner with William Hunt in a hardware business before moving to Manhattan.

The first fire in Three Forks was set by its first arsonist, E. L. Thomas. Thomas owned a small paint shop in the rear of the Silver Dollar saloon and was disappointed that he was unable to sell it. After indulging in a bit of “corn juice,” Mr. Thomas set fire to his shack.

The first true native of Three Forks was the eight pound baby boy of Mr. and Mrs. Booth. The boy arrived at two o’clock on the morning of February 22, 1909, and was delivered by Dr. Stroyer. Mr. Booth was an Engineer on the Milwaukee Railroad.

Miss Rachel E. Murry of NY and Mr. Enoch Marvin Brooke of Pony were the first couple to be married in Three Forks on June 1, 1909 at the Catholic Church (which had been moved from Old Town).

Three Forks organized its first baseball team in April 1909, and had their first practice game. The game was held on “the new grounds south of the city.” Could this be the where the rodeo arena now stands? Thomas Thompson was the first manager of the team which was first financed by the Commercial Club.

Firsts in Three Forks

First National Bank was the first bank in Three Forks. This building later housed J.C. Menapace General Merchandise, Hamilton Grocery, and Three Forks Saddlery. The bank moved into its new brick building (now the Masonic Lodge) in late 1909.

Photo courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum

Below - C. E. Adams, brother of founding father, J. Q. Adams, was the first to use the “3 forks” logo in his real estate advertisement in the Three Forks Herald.
99 railcars, a caboose and three engines of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company Train 263 departed the Harlowton, Montana rail yard on May 23, 1966 at 8:20 p.m., but never completed the trip. All four members of that train crew survived the wreck in Sixteen Mile Canyon, but today only one remains to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the derailment.

Jim Satake, 76, of Three Forks, has kept records and pictures of that night as well as other Milwaukee memorabilia. But a head injury caused his memories of the actual wreck to be lost forever. “I had a knot on the side of my head there, and Ringling is as far back as I remember. The order board should be dark at Ringling, I remember saying black board, I remember saying that to Del. He responded by saying “Yea, he’s on a birthday, so there’s no orders.”

“You got Ringling, then a couple of stations, then Sixteen. And the next thing I know, Skornogoski’s helping me out of the engine. I says, What the heck’s going on, John?”

“Why you dumb son-of-bitch, you wrecked the train!”

But Skornogoski, in the caboose at the time of the derailment, had no idea as to the real cause of the Milwaukee’s largest wreck up to that time. In fact, while the thirteen and a half hour formal investigation found fault with the crew, the real cause may never be found.

Engineer Del Hart, Conductor E. L. Eck, Rear Brakeman Jim Skornogoski and Head Breakman Jim Satake were all experienced railroaders at the time of the derailment. Excessive speed in the 10 degree curve with a downhill grade caused the three engines of the train to lay over on the outside of the curve, but Engineer Del Hart insisted that he had applied braking without result and had hopes that the train would hold to the track up until the last thirty seconds, when he threw the train into emergency braking. Little Joe No. E-78 left the track only 41 feet into the curve.

In an electified unit, there are two means to reduce speed. The primary means is to let the air pressure bleed off. A positive air pressure keeps the brakes off and acts as a deadman’s switch if the air lines are punctured, which would immediately blow the air and apply the brakes. The other method is to “regenerate” which is, in essence, the opposite of “motoring” or drawing power from the grid. Regeneration “pushes” electricity into the grid and the resistance somewhat slows the engine.

Both Hart and Satake were still in the engine when Skornogoski arrived. Hart was trapped in the cab, but Skornogoski was able to get Satake to the ground.

“Then I started coming to then. Then I realized my back was sore. Oh, man that thing hurt. He was trying to slide me off the engine, to get me down on the ground. And my back started hurting, that when I started coming-to. That was was 11 o’clock. Until daylight, 8 o’clock, I was out, plumb out.”

Hart, still in the cab, complained of being cold, so Skornogoski

Left - The engines and cars derailed in the first group.
Below - The cars derailed in the second portion of the train.
gathered the debris of telephone poles and built a fire nearby so that it reflected on the back of Del's head, enough to warm him. By the light of the bonfire, Skornogoski was able to free Hart's leg trapped between the seat, brake pedestal and control stand.

Meanwhile Eck walked back along the track about two miles to the station at Sixteen to a telephone. There was some difficulty in reaching the doctor in Three Forks, so the yard master in Harlo called out Dr. Jones. He was driven to Ringling, then put on the diesel engines of Train 261 and rode them west toward the wreck.

Dr. E. E. Bertagnolli, of Three Forks, was eventually reached and put on a trolley truck operated by Tom Fairhurst and headed east to the wreck. Bertagnolli arrived first. They were able to extract Hart from the cab and Bertagnolli administered first aid then loaded them on the truck and departed for the hospital at about 3:30 am. The engines of Train 261 arrived on the east end of the wreck about the time the trolley truck left.

The train, originally about a mile long, was now only 6/10th of a mile long. The two electric's E-78 and E-73 and the diesel booster No. 263 were laid out on the north side of the curve. Directly behind them, 24 cars were compacted into a 300 foot space. The next 22 cars were upright and on the track, followed by another 26 cars crunched into a 353 foot area. The last 27 cars and the caboose were upright and on the rails. It was a mess.

Jim's brother, John, was a member of the clean-up crew and it was a week before he could visit Jim in the hospital. Jim's sacrum (triangular bone at the base of the spine) had been impacted by something sharp and caused an unseparated break. It was eight months before Jim could get back to work. Although he had been dismissed from service in July 1966, he was eventually reinstated and worked on the Milwaukee until they pulled up the track in 1980.

This strange configuration of wrecked and un-wrecked cars, a spontaneous uncoupling at the Hamen station, placement of a lighter rail on the outside of the 10 degree curve, combined with no working speedometer in the lead engine could all have contributed to the wreck that night. And 40 years after the fact, little can be gained by rehashing the evidence or laying blame. We can marvel, that in this case, a derailment was only a brief obstacle on the tracks of the crew's lives.

Top Right - E-78 and E-73 after they were uprighted and brought into the Harlowton yard.

Middle Right - two views of the railcars crammed into the cut behind the engines.

Left - Jim Satake, May 2006 by Patrick Finnegan

Other photos in this article courtesy of Jim Satake
Headwater Plats

With both the Milwaukee Land Company and the Manhattan Company selling lots in 1908-1912, the “M” section of the county’s grantors deed index is huge. And wouldn’t you know it, this book, along with its sister book of Grantee’s are the only books not digitized in the Clerk and Recorder’s Office.

But it is nifty that most of the deed books of the county all the way back to 1865 are digitized. It makes things easier for an amateur historian and computer geek like me. The Clerk and Recorder’s office also has a massive collection of maps. Maps have always been a fascination to me and the C&R has digitized many of the large scale maps, including the original plats of Three Forks, Old Town Three Forks, Willow Creek, Logan, Gallatin and Gallatin City.

Logan’s original plat of October 20, 1892, nine years after the NP railroad came through the area, shows that William and Mary Flowers were the owners of record. Front Street was the business district while Flower Street led from the County road to the NP Depot. The Northern Pacific Addition, across the tracks from the original plat, doubled the size of Logan. The 1911 Milwaukee addition added several blocks up on the hill close to the Gallatin Valley Electric Railroad’s line.

The original plat of Willow Creek is a bit of a wonder. Willow Creek is one of the first areas in the valley to be settled, but its plat wasn’t filed until 1910. According to the Headwaters Heritage History, when the Northern Pacific Railroad built its line to Butte in 1887, “the town moved nearer the tracks for convenience.” But apparently no one but the Hales and Woodwards bothered to buy the land. Ben S. Adams, son of Three Forks’ founding father, was the landowner who finally filed the town plat. There was a bit of a problem with the Hale property smack dab in the middle of town tilted at an angle to the grid, but it got worked out in the end.

Township 2 North, Range 2 East seems to be a jinxed area, as far as towns go. In the township that holds the headwaters of the Missouri, five towns have been planned but only one still has residents. Gallatin City I was laid out in 1862 and incorporated in 1865. Section 8 that it sits on has been in the domain of four different counties over the years and the original plat seems to be lost in the shuffles. The plat for Gallatin City II (in Section 17) was recorded in 1872 and the land owner of record is Jarvis Akin. As if in memorial, the last remaining building in that city, Gallatin Hotel, was built by him.

Below is the layout of the Trident village in a document dated 1950. The houses to the north (right) were the larger homes reserved for management personnel.
Gallatin (in Section 16) is a city that never was. Frank Dunbar had Gallatin surveyed and platted on the north side of the Northern Pacific Railroad in hopes that a station there would bring prosperity to the flagging town of Gallatin City II in 1883. A station / section house was built, but the town itself managed only to be a tent city while the railroad workers were in the area. The station was abandoned altogether when the Trident depot was built.

Trident’s village plat (in Sections 4 & 9) was never recorded at the County, but its 47 residential lots, four commercial lots and one school lot are laid out in documents on file at the plant. Riverside and Pacific streets are parallel to the river while Morrison Street (named for D. A. Morrison, a founding father of Trident and its first postmaster) intersects them at the depot, where the rail crossing was some years back.

Bridgeville, Bridges, or Madison had been in existence since 1864, having been a village growing up around the toll bridge built by James Shedd. Asher Paul and Michael Hanley purchased the section (19) and their 1882 plat named it Three Forks, but it is now called Old Town. It was at one time in the mid 1880’s the center of a small British invasion, who later sold out to the Anaconda Company. Its hotel was moved to the new town of Three Forks, renovated, enlarged, and renamed The Sacajawea.

Above is an enlargement of Gallatin City I. Note that the ferry is marked.

Right:Gallatin City I and the beginnings of Gallatin City II can be seen in this 1869 survey map. An overlay shows the location of Frank Dunbar’s 1883 plat of Gallatin on the Northern Pacific Railroad.

1869 map courtesy of Broadwater County Clerk & Recorder.
The Limestone Man

In a recent road trip, I rediscovered Whitehall’s Jefferson Valley Museum and was happy to chat with its curator, Roy. Among the wonderful items on display was a tribute to Dan Morrison and the Lewis and Clark Caverns. Of course, Mr. Morrison has close ties to our end of the Jefferson valley too.

Donald “Dan” A. Morrison was born in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia in June 1852. Early in his life he was involved in various limestone related business, first in Rockland, Maine. He spent a number of years in New York, and became an ardent Mason. He attained the “sublime degree of Master Mason on April 23, 1873.” He later moved on to Wyoming and finally to Montana. He continued his Masonic duties and was a charter member of Mystic Tie Lodge 17 (of Whitehall) in 1897.

Morrison started the Lime and Flux Company and had an extensive mining operations on the Jefferson River, just a few miles downstream from Whitehall, known as Limespur. A small railroad spur line was built to accommodate loading railcars. And not far away, was a most wonderful natural delight, the Lewis and Clark Caverns.

According to the Gold West Country web-site, These caverns were actually discovered by two area ranchers who were hunting in the area. On a November day in 1892, these two men were hunting near the entrance to the cave. What caught their eyes on that particular day was an area on the hillside which was clear of snow, although the rest of the area was completely covered. Upon further investigation, they discovered a hole in the rock, which turned out to be the opening to the caverns.

Dan Morrison, a local area miner was the first individual to begin giving public tours of the caves. He built wooden staircases in the caverns to improve accessibility. Some of these stairs can still be seen on tours today. He named the cave “Limespur Cave”.

Although Tom Williams may have found the cave, Morrison styled himself the discoverer. Jefferson Valley Museum Curator Roy Millegan believes that Morrison felt that he and his nephews, using mining techniques, had “discovered” more of the cavern complex than anyone else.

Whether seeking more caves or more lime, Morrison made a survey of the limestone around the headwaters of the Missouri starting about 1906. Ever the promoter, there are indications that Morrison formed the Butte Cement Company to begin building a cement plant at the three forks. However, when money became a problem, new investors were invited in, which led to new management and a new company name, Three Forks Portland Cement Co.

In the process of getting a post office at the construction site, Morrison is credited with the naming of Trident, having discarded “Portland and “Cementville.” He was Trident’s first Post Master. For a time, he was a salesman for the product. Today, the cement plant at Trident, Montana now operated by Holcim (US), has been in existence for nearly 100 years.

About 1910 or 1911, Morrison and some of the original investors of Butte Cement Co. formed the Montana Concrete or Moncrete Company, purchased 125 acres between Logan and Three Forks and built a cement block manufacturing plant. The bricks turned out were of a wide variety of colors. The plant experienced a fire in 1915, but was rebuilt with newer equipment. It closed sometime in the early 20’s.

Morrison’s exploration of the Caverns and his passion for opening it up to the public has given us a national treasure. His promotion and investment into the limestone deposits near the headwaters started one of the oldest businesses in the valley that continues to contribute to our economic success. Clearly, “Dan” Morrison’s influence and discoveries still affect us today.

Limespur Mine a mile west of the entrance to the Lewis and Clark Caverns.
Architectural Styles

In the first few years of Three Forks, the pace of construction may have rivaled even today's building frenzy. Carpenters were so in demand that they formed the first union in Three Forks. Contractors were doing a booming business, both on Main Street and off Main Street.

Driving around town you may notice that a lot of the really old homes fall into two or three styles, but the most striking thing is the size of the homes. On First Avenue, behind the Sacajawea Hotel, you'll notice a plain, small square house with a pyramid-shaped roof on the corner. Next to it is a two-story house with stone columns on the porch and decorative eave braces. Although they were built at about the same time, these two houses represent the two of the major styles of older homes in Three Forks.

The small square home falls into what architects call the National-Style. It satisfies the fundamental need for shelter, not much more than a roof and walls. The style is characterized either by rectangular shapes and side-gabled roofs or square layouts with pyramid roofs. Variants of the Nation-style include side-wing gabled, hall and parlor, and the I-house. All of these are unadorned and utilitarian. Birch Street, behind Magpie Books, has three typical National Style homes in a row, and a few more are along First Avenue.

The larger home fits into the Craftsman or California Bungalow architectural style. This style has low-slung gabled roofs, wide front porches framed by pedestal columns, and has its roots to the English adaptation of the India's *bugala* or *bungla* homes of the 1860's. Craftsman building plans were widely dispersed in Gustav Stickley's magazine *The Craftsman*.

Perhaps the very best example of the Craftsman home tradition in Three Forks is on the corner of Birch and Third. In 1921 the fifty women of the Three Forks Women's Club held their Valentine's celebration meeting at the “palatial” home of Mrs. William Veach, just a year or two after it was renovated, adding the solarium and the L wing at the back, keeping the same style throughout the additions. William Veach and his brother Frank owned and operated the Three Forks Flour Mill and later a grain elevator. The Batchelders, Hamiltons, and Millers have lived in the house since the Veaches, each making changes to the interior, but only minor changes to the exterior. It is now occupied by Bill & Lauri Mack and family.

The pyramid roof and square shape of this home on First and Ash is the indications of a National style house. Sold at auction to Van & Myrna Schmidt about 1980, the house is now occupied by Mike Crom. Photo by Patrick Finnegan

Another example of a pyramidal National style home located on West Birch.

An example of a Craftsman home, with porch framed by stone columns, is located on Third Avenue.

The Veach / Batchelder / Hamilton / Miller / Mack House - circa 1930. A 1914 panaramic photo at the Headwaters Heritage Museum shows this house without the solarium and the L addition at the back of the house. Photo courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum
If one looks close enough, and with enough hindsight, the signs of the future can be found in news articles of any period. Exploring the early issues of the Three Forks Herald, I’ve found many signs of the future. Here are just two.

In 1917, the First National Bank (housed in what is now the Masonic Temple) installed the most wondrous “steel brain,” the new Burroughs Automatic Bookkeeper. It “can’t make a mistake. His “steel brain” are mathematically error-proof…. The precision with which the internal mechanism operates insures an exactitude heretofore unknown in figure work.” Banks were probably just as proud of their first computer system they installed, but humans still put the numbers into the machines.

In 1908, the Commercial Club raised a billboard with the high hopes of reaching a population of 10,000 in just seven years. Today, 10,000 seems absurd. A few years later, the Milwaukee Land Company was still advertised “Room Enough for All,” while today many residents would have you know that we are running out of elbow room. And yet, the Growth Policy recently adopted projects an almost reasonable population of 3,500 in the next 20 years, double our current size.

With new water and sewer rates being raised and the wastewater lagoon renovation project looming on the horizon, let’s hope that history does not repeat itself. The bonding of the City’s first water and sewer works was so contentious that three Aldermen were arrested, and the Mayor and Marshall were sued.

Trouble began to brew in 1913 when the issue was first brought up and continued to grow as the cost of the system was estimated. The 1915 election split the Council in two. E.R. Roe, Al Dance, and Dr. Hoy on one side of the table of many issues and Wm. Sauer, Dr. W. E. Young and Orlando Robson on the other side. Mayor Ralph Robinson was most likely to break the tie on the Roe / Dance / Hoy side. The appointment of Jerry Hoyt as City Marshal was one of the first cases where Robinson broke the tie, and it came back to haunt him.

Monday, Nov. 22, 1915 was the date set to consider bids for the proposed waterworks bonds, but a quorum was not present and the meeting was rescheduled for the next day. In the morning, Marshal Hoyt arrested Aldermen Sauer, Young and Robson and they were held nearly all day to ensure they would be present at the
meeting. About 5pm the three tendered their resignations. When
the meeting was convened, the resignations of Young and Robson
were accepted but Mr. Sauer's was not acted upon. The Council
elected G. M. Hayden to replace Robson and proceeded to award
the bond bid to a Chicago firm.

At the end of the meeting, Sauer asked prominent citizen C.
E. Adams to accompany him home. Marshal Hoyt halted the
pair and Sauer was forcibly taken to jail. Mr. Adams says he in
no way interfered with the action but Hoyt struck the 72 year old
Adams across the chest and later arrested him for obstructing
an officer. The charges against Sauer were dropped later that
evening, but he later complained of pain in his arm and shoulder
from the rough treatment.

Martin Vetleson represented Mr. Adams at his hearing with
the Police Judge, but he was found guilty of interference and
obstruction. The case was appealed to the District Court. Sauer
also brought action against Mayor Robertson and Marshal Hoyt,
seeking $16,000 in damages. The Mayor was made a defendant
as it was alleged that Hoyt was working under the direction of
Robertson, without due process of law.

The City Police Judge, E. W. Wullenwaber, was forced by
the District Court to certify the transcripts of the C. E. Adams
trial. District Judge Law found the Wullenwaber had willfully,
maliciously and without cause, hindered the Adams appeal.

In the end, both Sauer and Adams were exonerated in their
cases, and Sauer was awarded $1500 in damages. Security and
Bridges Company of Minneapolis installed the sewer lines, many
of which are still in operation today.

A Time Capsule

When you think about it, nearly everyone over the age of
twenty wants to give something to the future. Parents give their
DNA, writers give their words, pack-rats leave their chests, attics
and garages full of stuff. Anthropologists are always finding
unintended gifts to the future, what they call posteriori time-
capsules: the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Pyramids, and an untold
number of “foundation deposits.” Museums, which have only
been around for 200 years, could also be called time-capsules.

But it is difficult to deliberately create a time-capsule and
ensure that it will be found and opened at the right time by the
right people. It has been said that George Washington conducted
a foundation deposit ritual at the cornerstone of the new capitol
building in 1793. Unfortunately, it's now lost. Many time-
capsules were prepared in 1999 for the new millenium, including
one for the New York Times. While chronicling the progress
of the “Times capsule,” writer Jack Hitt recounts the follies of
past time-capsules, including: “Tragically, the 1976 bicentennial
wagon-train capsule, which was to hold the signatures of 22
million Americans, is lost to posterity. Moments before burial, the
capsule was stolen from a van.”

Fortunately, sometimes things work out. For instance the
foundation deposit placed in the cornerstone of the Three Forks
School built in 1916 was found and opened after the building was
demolished in 1978. In the time capsule was a small 48 star flag,
a gold coin purchased with the pennies of students, the names
and signatures of all the students attending school in 1916, and a
copy of the Three Forks News (apparently someone foresaw that
the Herald would outlast the News).

With the upcoming City centennial, I get more enthused
about creating a time-capsule only to get discouraged by the issues to
face; Does one rely on a society or technology to ensure a time
capsules survival? Is it placed in the hands of a series of keepers
or placed on or in “sacred ground?” Is the capsule itself beautiful
or just a box? Buried or on display?

And what goes into it? In the past it has always been analog,
paper and mechanical. Newspapers, phonograph albums, and
toys. Even NASA knew the value of analog recording when it
sent the golden albums into space. Today’s electronic media
would not last in a time-capsule intended for more than 20 years.
Danny Hillis, an inventor of some renown, has described this
era as the digital gap. “It's really the first time that the basic
creations of civilization are being stored on media that won’t
last a lifetime,” Hillis says. “The digital gap will span from the
widespread use of the computer till the time we’ve solved this
problem.”

So we will probably still be putting analog, paper and
mechanical in our time capsule, but what and how much?
Unfortunately, we must first answer all these pesky questions first.
Any suggestions?

Photos courtesy of Headwaters Heritage Museum
Postcard Histories

When it comes to antiques or antiquities, I've got a lot to learn. For instance, I did not know that cash registers before a certain date have labels not only who manufactured it, but who it was manufactured for! I recently learned some interesting things about postcards. Thinking back to the county fairs and other events, there has always been an antique post card vendor, selling the black and white or sepia vintage card of people or places. Penny Postcards have quite a history and are still in high demand.

Up until 1898 only the U.S. Post Office could manufacture postcards. They were very plain, blank on one side for the message, postage and address on the other side. Congress then allowed manufacturers to produce Private Mailing Cards (not postcards, which was reserved for the government produce) from 1898 to 1901. These cards had pictures and writing space on one side, and address and stamp on the back.

The undivided back postcards of 1901 to 1907 had the words Post Card, a place for a stamp and address on one side and a full sized picture on the other. Often, the sender would write their message across the photo.

In 1907, Congress allowed the design that is still used today, the divided back postcard. Postage and an address on the right side and room for a small message of the left side, while the other side was taken up in a full sized picture. From 1907 to 1915, most of these cards were printed in Germany. It is amazing the number of postcards from this era that are still around, including the one featured below.

In 1911 a group of Three Forks residents hopped a train to the Limespur siding for an excursion into Morrison Cave (now Lewis and Clark Caverns). It was a mile and a half walk up a steep hill to the cave entrance with not a lot of luxuries along the way. The event is not only mentioned in the Three Forks Herald of August 17, 1911, but a postcard was printed to commemorate the event and one made its way into the collection of the Headwaters Heritage Museum, with some of the adventurers enumerated.


During World War I, U.S. postcard publishers tried to fill the void in the market while conserving ink, so from 1915 to 1930 most post cards have a white border around the edge. After WWI, Germany's printing industry never recovered.
Today, one takes for granted that if a switch is flipped, lights will come on or music will play. But, it was just 100 years ago that the Gallatin Valley got powered up.

The Madison River Dam was constructed in 1903 and it was two years before the power plant was completed. Part of the difficulty was getting materials to the relatively remote location just a few miles from Norris and Redbluff. After the dam, flues and power plant building were constructed, one last challenge remained to finish the plant, getting four rotor/turbines to the plant and installed. Each rotor weigh several tons and had to have a special wagon to move it. It took 24 horses and five men to get the four rotors, one at a time, from the rail station at Logan to the mouth of the Madison Canyon. There, the rotor was transferred to a scow and floated up river to the construction site.

Power lines were run to Bozeman and they had their first electricity in 1906. Power lines reached Trident and Three Forks about the same time. To help give impetus to the idea, J. Q. Adams, founder and patron of the City, pledged the funds to buy and install six street lamps. The two banks in town, Three Valleys Bank and First National Bank, pledged one street lamp each. So, on December 8, 1912 the fancy five-globed electrified lights of Three Forks were turned on for the first time.

The Madison River Power Company paid a annual $25 business license fee to the City in 1911. Only the bars and hotels paid higher annual fees ($50+).

Butte Electric and Power Company merged itself and its three subsidiaries to form the Montana Power Company on December 12, 1912. Madison River Power Company was one of the subsidiaries, along with Billings and Eastern Montana Power Company and the Missoula River Power Company. By 1917, Montana Power had an office in town (at the Ruby Theatre), and through the years the office changed locations.
Among the prosperous self-made businessmen at the turn of the twentieth century was Charles Boettcher. Boettcher arrived from Germany in 1869 and became a partner in his brother's hardware store in Cheyenne, Wyoming at the age of 17. As the economy moved, Boettcher followed the boom, and changed or added new businesses to his empire as he went along. By 1899 Boettcher had been involved in mining, banking, mercantile, cattle, real estate, meat packing, sugar beet farming / sugar mill, and he had even retired for six months.

After his retirement, he started building one of the biggest cement manufacturing companies in the United States. In 1924, Charles Boettcher, a major shareholder of Three Forks Portland Cement Company, and his partners consolidated their various cement manufacturing interests, forming Ideal Cement Company. Boettcher was the president of Ideal and his son, Claude, was vice-president. The two plants of Three Forks Portland Cement Company (Trident and Hanover, near Lewistown) became a wholly owned subsidiary of Ideal Cement.

By 1933 Charles Boettcher, now in his early eighties, was still going to work every day. He owned Denver's famous Brown Palace Hotel and lived there. Each morning he was chauffeured to the Ideal Cement Building not far away. His son, Claude, oversaw the majority of the Boettcher empire, while Claude's son, Charles II, was part of the upper management of several firms and heavily involved in the Ideal Cement Company.

Charles II had been born in 1901 and had married a girl from Helena, Montana, Anna Lou Piggott. Charles II and Anna Lou had a daughter in 1927. On the evening of February 12, 1933, Charles II and his wife Anna Lou returned to their home in Denver after a dinner party. Two men were hiding in the garage as the couple drove in. One held Charles II at gunpoint while the other handed a note to Anna Lou. They then sped away with Charles II. Anna Lou called her father-in-law, Claude, who called the police. Charles II was held for two weeks. Claude paid $60,000 in ransom and Charles II was released.

Charles II was a friend of Charles Lindbergh and an avid pilot himself. While in captivity, Boettcher paid attention to overhead flight patterns and was able to lead police to a house in rural South Dakota where he had been held. The police were later able to apprehend the kidnappers. The leader of the kidnapping gang, Canadian born Verne Sankey, hung himself in a South Dakota penitentiary while waiting for arraignment. He was tied to at least one other kidnapping.

The kidnapping was just a year after the Lindbergh baby kidnapping. There were 18 high-profile kidnappings from 1930 to 1933. One Time Magazine article blamed all the kidnappings on the winding down of Prohibition:

*The return of beer has similarly forced the nation's underworld into evolution. As amply evidenced last week, the defunct beer racket is swiftly being superceded as a source of criminal revenue by the uglier, more desperate crime of kidnapping.*

Substitute for Beer, Time staff, *Time Magazine*, July 24, 1933

As I finish this story, I realize that super-rich have a completely different set of problems than we normal people. But I’m still going to buy a lottery ticket tomorrow.
Lost from the Lexicon

Doing research through the microfilms of the Three Forks Herald, I occasionally see new words, or rather old words that are rarely used today. One of these is Chautauqua (pronounced sha-ta-kwa) which Merriam-Webster On-line defines as: any of various traveling shows and local assemblies that flourished in the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, that provided popular education combined with entertainment in the form of lectures, concerts, and plays, and that were modeled after activities at the Chautauqua Institution of western New York.

The start of Chautauqua can be traced to Methodist Minister John Heyl Vincent who began to train Sunday school teachers in an outdoor format at a campsite on the shores of Chautauqua Lake in New York. Two years later in 1874, he and Lewis Miller organized the New York Chautauqua Assembly.

The summer camp lecture and training format was widely copied and became the successor to the Lyceum (lecture series) movement of earlier years. From 1874 to the mid 20’s, most of rural North America was craving entertainment, education and culture beyond what its own community could supply. Chautauqua troupes brought the world to their rural cousins.

But like our summers today, there were a lot of summer events for folks to attend in Three Forks during its early years; Town team baseball, Town Band concerts, Women’s Temperance lectures, Brotherhood of Railroad Engineers dances, Ladies Aid socials, Odd Fellow events, bridge club, 500 club, high school and grade school plays, church programs, etc. as well as both the Ruby and Kidd Theatres. Fitting a five to six day Chautauqua into the summer, and still pay for it, was a difficult proposition.

Lecturers, some associated with Lyceum (Chautauqua’s predecessor) had been sponsored by local organizations for a number of years. And Chautauquas played in Bozeman before World War I (1914 & 1915).

It wasn’t until 1919 that the first Chautauqua was organized in Three Forks. Twenty six volunteers and guarantors led by H. O. Frohbach organized the advertising and ticket sales for the six day event. Advanced season tickets for adults were $2.75, $1.65 for high school students and $1.10 for grade school students. This fee included the “war tax.”

Acts for the event included; Major Thornton A. Mills - Lecture on the war effort, Dr. William Rader - Lecture on travel and world affairs. Antonio Minervini - Piano Accordion recital, E.J. Kemme - Lecture on education, Mrs. A. C. Zeher - Lecture “Anglo-Saxon Ideals”, Edna Lowe - Lecture on physical education, The Merrilees Entertainers - music and song, and The Metropolitan Artists - music and song. The closing acts of the event were the Royal Hawaiian Quintet and a travel lecture called “Rambling through Paradise,” by Mildred Leo Clemens (a cousin to Mark Twain).

One of Chautauqua’s most famous lecturers, William Jennings Bryan, came through Montana in 1920, and there is a notice in the Herald that he gave a lecture in Pony that year.

Chautauqua in Three Forks only lasted four years. In 1924, after 50 years of entertainment and education, the luster had worn off. The last Chautauqua troupe in Montana appeared in Plentywood in July 1928. With the advent of roads and radio, the popularity of Chautauqua declined and the word Chautauqua never made it into the lexicon of baby-boomers.

But there may be a resurgence of Chautauqua in the next few years. A Washington-based troupe called the “New Old Time Chautauqua” has been doing shows since 2002, one of which was in Troy, MT. The Chautauqua summer camp format is being used to train college teachers about class management. And if you look at it, the idea behind the new summer youth recreation program is “Chautauqua-like” - education and entertainment in an outdoor summer format - sounds like fun! Perhaps the word Chautauqua will be part of the next generation’s vocabulary.
Many aviation heros got their acclaims during the 1920’s and 1930’s, Lucky Lindy and Amelia Earhart, being just two figures of flying fame. Because of the publicity received for numerous record breaking events during that era, the public’s interest in aviation and commercial travel was sparked. 1930 was the year that Charles Lindbergh made the record books with his speedy flight across the United States, from Glendale, CA to Long Island, NY in 14 hours and 45 minutes. His new wife, Anne Marrow-Lindberg, was on board as the radio operator and navigator. She was also seven months pregnant at the time.

Also in 1930, Navy Test Pilot Lieut. (later Admiral) Apollo Soucek broke the world’s altitude record by flying a Wright Apache biplane to 43,196 feet, over eight miles up.

Before 1930, barnstormers and other planes would land in the fields surrounding Three Forks. The Three Forks Chamber of Commerce, seeing a potential for new businesses and growth, decided to back the creation of a nearby air field. It was hoped that Mamer Air Transport Co. would use the airfield as a mail stop for its Minneapolis to Spokane runs. According to the April 1930 Three Forks Herald, “The site was chosen and work started on the Three Forks airport September 9th of last year (1929). Four men with tractors were employed on the air port by Mr. Adams for about two weeks.” Enthusiasm was running high, but a tragedy struck and that enthusiasm was nearly smothered.

In late March 1930, Thomas LaFever purchased a dual control Travel-Air plane. LaFever had the notion to open a training school, and brought in a pilot, H. W. Carlson to Three Forks. At the time, Dick LaFever, Tom’s son, was a student of at Bert Mooney’s Butte Aircraft School and Dick planned on finishing his schooling under Carlson’s supervision in the newly formed Three Forks Aircraft School. The Chamber of Commerce was working with Tom LaFever to complete the airfield and get the school up and running.

Carlson and Dick LaFever flew the new plane to Three Forks from the factory in Wichita, Kansas. They went on to Butte, where the motor was tuned up for flying at these altitudes. The plane and pilots were back in Three Forks by April 10. There were tentative plans to bring a few other planes for an exhibition in the near future, perhaps even the upcoming Easter weekend.

That Saturday afternoon, Dick LaFever had been out “to practice his work in spins” and returned the plane to the airport. Bill Gordon, a Three Forks high school youth had been, along with other youths, helping out and hoping to get a ride. Gordon earned a ride and he and Carlson took off for a flight around the area. As the pilot and passenger were returning from a trip over the Missouri, the plane stalled and was spotted going down behind Cemetery Hill.

Fearing the worst, Dick LaFever and several other youths jumped in LaFever’s car and drove out. The found the plane, nosed into the ground, pilot and passenger dead.

Herman Carlson, a World War vet, was buried in Butte. Bill Gordon, 17, was an outstanding athlete and well known in the community. LaFever’s aircraft school went no further.

In June, the airport was the host to two barnstormers, who showed their aviation prowess and took passengers up for flights. In late June, the “West Wind” came to town and spent the weekend flying passengers around the area. Passengers could opt for the two and a half hour flight over Yellowstone Park for $20 or a quick scenic trip for $2. The flight over Yellowstone Park carried twelve passengers, including E. M. Mestad, Jack Sustello, Mr. and Mrs. Knalves, A. E. Barnes, Mr. & Mrs. C. P. Bales, Mrs. Coffin, August Kunze, John McCulloch, Homer Hayes and Mr. Murphy.

This visit was part of the “Mamer Tour,” a 60 stop tour to stimulate aviation interest and promote the early establishment of a proposed northern airway passenger route. When the tour left for Ennis the next day, Dick LaFever joined the touring group. He was able to get some practical experience in airplane maintenance and piloting during his
month long stay with the tour. Dick La
Fever received his pilot's license in October
1930.

In the fall of 1930, a battered airplane
didn't make it to the airport, but landed
along the Madison River. Stanley Cavill
and his passenger George Moore, both
of Harlowton, “roused the ire of one
of national birds while flying near here
recently.” A bald eagle apparently
attacked their plane and tore a sizable
piece of canvas from one wing of the
plane, leaving behind some blood and
feathers in the process.

Above The Call of Duty

An article in a 1924 edition of the Herald relates the story
of heroics performed by law enforcers during the Prohibition.
Charles “King of the Bootleggers” Hansen was spotted driving
through Three Forks by local authorities. Deputy Howell and
Under-Sheriff Jones gave chase. Hansen spotted his pursuers and
sped his car to the maximum.

However, Howell and Jones were able to pull alongside the
criminal’s auto. In the best tradition of Buster Keaton, Jones
boarded the racing vehicle and forced Hansen to stop his vehicle.
Hansen and his consort, Etta Bennett, were immediately arrested.
20 gallons of 110 proof moonshine whiskey were found in the
vehicle. Hansen’s still was found in the Maudlow area and
destroyed.
While the Gallatin Valley was famous for its agricultural output during the years that Montana was a territory, many of the valley’s farmers were still seeking the mother lode. Those pioneers that settled Gallatin City had a diverse portfolio, including several that got involved in nearby mining ventures.

In neighboring Broadwater County, 307 hardrock mining patents have been filed since the 1872 Mining Law, compared to the 33 in Gallatin County. According to the website “Who owns the West” (www.ewg.org), about 13,508 acres of land are or were held by mining concerns. Quartz mines are the most prolific in Broadwater County, but gold, silver, copper and other precious metals have also been mined there. Just a few miles north of Three Forks, not far off Highway 287, is a series of mining patents that were collectively known as Copper City.

As early as 1864, settlers in the area noticed outcroppings in that area that showed “color.” One major marker was a boulder of copper quartz six feet high and twenty feet in circumference. Several men went together and filed a claim on the “Green Eagle” mine. Samples of the boulder were assayed and gold was found. At that time Samuel Seaman, an associate of Judge Gallaher, was the only man with mining experience. But it was experience with Utah quartz mines, not Montana quartz mines and the first venture fell through for lack of progress.

J. O. Hopping was the next interested party. His wife wrote an article about Copper City to the Three Forks Herald in 1916 that provides much of the information herein. Hopping bought into the “Green Eagle,” moved the boulder and sunk a shaft. The thirteen foot wide lead yielded several cars of high grade copper ore. This caused much excitement and a number of other claims were staked in the area. Claims called the Stella, Electric, Antelope, Butte and Copper Star, Silver, Iron and Crystal Canon were filed by various prospectors around 1883. About this time, Seaman, Hopping, and the Thorne brothers formed the Three Forks Mine and Milling Company, but the panic of 1883 forced them to quit the company.

The Green Eagle group continued digging the shaft and at 35 feet the ore petered out. A crosscut shaft was dug but nothing was found. Hopping continued the vertical shaft down to eighty-two feet but the shaft flooded and the mine was abandoned.

By 1887 Seaman and Hopping were the only remaining partners. They filed another claim, called the Burlington, and started a sloping shaft to intercept the Green Eagle at 65 feet. Just a few feet down, they struck a rich vein of quartz with a good yield of gold. One of their miners, Jack Thorne took a bag of ore over to the Jefferson River and $4.00 of gold dust was washed out of the bag. $4.00 in 1887 was a lot of money and Seaman and Hopping were soon offered $100,000 for the claim, but turned it down. Unfortunately, they never found the mother lode and Hopping spent a fortune in the attempt. Hopping died of sudden heart attack in 1894 on his way home from a debating society meeting.

Herbert Dunbar, a prosperous farmer and rancher, and Carl Hopping (son of J.O. Hopping) formed the Three Forks Mining Co. in 1906. By 1915-1916 the silver and iron mines in the area had changed hands too, the iron mine being under the control of the English Remittance Colony centered at Old Town.

On December 31, 1915, Frank Dunbar (Herbert’s cousin) and Frank Brown were placing timber in a shaft to eventually renew development of the mine when several timbers gave way and plunged the pair to the bottom of the shaft. Brown was killed instantly and it took rescuers four hours to extract Dunbar, who had facial lacerations, broken ribs, and a bruised leg and ankle. Dunbar returned to reopen the mine but, again, the dreams of a rich strike were never realized.

For the last 100 years, interest has waxed and waned, ore values have rose and fallen, investors have been found and lost, and the mines have changed hands. “There’s gold in them thar’ hills,” and there it remains until the next round of investors can be lured by the glint of metallic riches.
Hacks, Drays & Model Ts

Since the origin of trading until the rise of the motor truck, horse-drawn wagons, and the men who drove them were the backbone of wealth and prosperity. The heavy wheeled wagons used were called drays and the firms that used these wagons were dray lines. Hacks carted people around in carriages or surreys (touring carriages with springs at the front and back of the cab for a better ride). The multi-purpose Model T eventually replaced both.

In the early days of Three Forks, a number of dray lines were based here. Martin Larson had the first dray business. His advertisements in the Three Forks Herald told patrons to leave a message at the Milwaukee Hotel (which was near the railroad tracks before it was moved to where the Lewis and Clark Hotel is now). Three hack lines (taxi services) were also in town. Thomas Francis Lane advertised his livery and hack service in the Herald in 1909, operating “two doors south of the Herald” (or where the First Security Bank is now).

Charles Ellison, a early resident, got a view of the dray business from several angles. When he arrived Ellison operated the first cafe in Three Forks, serving meals from a tent, and getting supplies from freighters. Ellison was elected an alderman to the second ward in January 1910, but resigned in May 1910 so he could be appointed Pound Master and Marshall by the City Council in June. It became his duty to enforce the newly enacted ordinance to regulate the speed of autos, horses and other vehicles in the City. (There were only about 14 ordinances on the books when Ellison was hired.) Ellison and Wallace Burrell later ran a dray business for a time.

Lee Henslee built the Henslee Garage and Auditorium in 1912, was a Ford dealer, and at times ran the ambulance, horse-drawn hearse, taxi and drayage. Mert Williams and Leslie West drove Model T taxi for Mr. Henslee, often picking up passengers from the Northern Pacific depot in Old Town and driving them to the Sacajawea Hotel on the north end of town for 25 cents. West later drove a three-seat surrey for J.J. Broderick.

Sherlock Nave started work as a mechanic and taxi driver at the Henslee Garage in about 1916, building on things he learned from his father. Sherlock’s father, Errendel F. Nave, was a soldier from Missouri serving in the Confederate Army. Errendel made 22 trips between Missouri and Montana with oxen and wagon. He also operated a freight service between Fort Benton and Bozeman in 1864.

Across the street from Henslee (where M&W Repair is now) was the City Garage and Auto Livery. E.R. Avery purchased it in 1915. Henslee and Avery competed in the business of storing and parking automobiles. Avery also repaired vehicles, sold parts and sold trucks for prices ranging from $575 to $2000 in 1915. In 1917, Avery built the Avery Garage, now the Thriftway Conoco. In its early years it was an auto livery and had an elevator that took cars to the second floor for storage! The building was heavily damaged in the 1925 earthquake.

Today’s die-hard Chevy or GMC fanatics will find it appropriate that in 1916 Three Forks was a home to the Ford Hospital, an auto repair and auto livery service.

Others in the dray business:

George Dunkley and Earl LaFever started a new auto service dray and baggage business called the Star Bus and Transfer Line in 1920.

John Watson managed the city dray service and drove school bus for 23 years. The Watsons later purchased the Gambles Hardware store and ran it until 1975.

Today, trucks have taken over the duties of drays. According to the American Trucking Association, trucks haul nearly 70% of the tonnage carried by all modes of freight transportation in the US, nearly 10.7 billion tons of freight in 2005. Imagine the amount of clean-up if horses were still used to haul that much freight!

Photo above courtesy of the Headwaters Heritage Museum
Image below from the H. H. Museum Newspaper Microfilm Archives
After many years of debate among its executives, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad decided to expand northwest in 1905. Key to the success of the expansion was ensuring that the tracks were kept busy. To do this, the railroad launched a tremendous promotional campaign that brought people west to seed new towns and homesteads.

John Quincy Adams (no relation to the President) was the General Land and Townsite Agent for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railway. It was his job to buy land for the railroad and also to set up new towns along the right-of-way that would generate traffic. Three Forks was but one of these towns. Dozens of towns west of St. Paul got their start and names from the agents of the Milwaukee Land Co. Adams County in North Dakota was named after J. Q. Adams.

A.D. Jones was an Immigrant Agent for the Chicago, Milwaukee & Puget Sound Railway Co. It was his job to lure homesteaders to sites along the railroad. Brochures, discounted fares, and exclusive excursion tours were used to promote the west. Dry land farming was touted as the next best thing and many a lecturer or seminar was given, again to lure farmers to western homesteads.

A.D. Jones, C. E. Adams (J.Q.’s brother) and the Crowley brothers were also proprietors of the Three Forks Land Co. For a short time the Three Forks Land Co. was the local agency working with the Milwaukee Land Co. The second automobile in town was purchased in 1909 by the Three Forks Land Co. It was “a Buick touring car of the latest model.” Jones and the Crowley brothers (Michael and William) could give touring excursions of the area to potential buyers.

But Jones and the CM&PS Ry were not the only ones to promote the west. The Northern Pacific, with a spur line to Butte just south of the City, did its share of promoting. Shortly after the founding of Three Forks, the N.P. upgraded its track-side storage shed to a full fledged depot, so that by June 1910 the “Better Farming Special” had a nice place to stop. The Special was loaded with new farming implements, and a number of professors that gave demonstrations and lectures on agronomy, horticulture, husbandry, and veterinary medicine. The turn out in Three Forks was low since many farmers were in the middle of hay season.

In 1916, the Three Forks Herald hailed A. D. Jones as “one of the vigorous men who had an important part in establishing the new City of Three Forks, and in bringing to the attention of eastern farmers, capitalists and laborers the great opportunities for investment here, and it was due largely to his efforts that the Three Forks country has been settled by a sturdy, progressive people.”
Dreams for Sale

On the dreary morning of September 17, 1908 a special train of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul stopped to let off passengers at the still incomplete depot at the northern end of the newly platted town of Three Forks. On the southern end of town, the Northern Pacific railroad passengers were unloaded at a small depot not much larger than a two-hole outhouse. The N.P. had given these passengers special excursion rates to reach Three Forks. Town lots were for sale and people came from around the country to buy them.

The auction was to be held on Main Street, which looked much like a wide-open prairie. Between the two depots there were only a few tents and two lumber yards. The number of people wandering the prairie that day was estimated between seven hundred and a thousand. Unfortunately, it was drizzling rain and the hopeful masses crowded into the freight room of the C.M.&S.P. depot for the auction.

One can imagine the mix of people in that room: bakers, bankers, businessmen, contractors, farmers, painters, land speculators, lumber yard managers, railroad executives, real estate agents, reporters and many spectators and family members. Of the hundreds gathered around the auctioneer Col. Harry Hilman of Sioux City, IA, there were only 72 people who ended up with lots that day. Among the spectators were E.M. Mestad, who later opened a bakery, and Fred Studebaker, an itinerant painter, who became the manager of the town baseball team only to disappear shortly afterwards.

As one would expect, many of the lot buyers were from towns and cities to the east of Three Forks, especially from towns down the Milwaukee line. Buyers from “Harlowtown” were predominant, but Lombard, Terry, Martinsdale, Lavina, Miles City, Roundup and Ruby, MT were represented. Out-of-staters mostly came from North and South Dakota; Bowman, Dickinson, Edgeley, and Marmarth, ND, and Armour, Haley and Lemon, SD.

Butte was the most represented with thirteen lot buyers including E. A. Barrett who was moving to Three Forks as the new Superintendent of the Rocky Mountain Division of the Milwaukee.

The original plat of Three Forks had 130 lots on Main Street and, according to the next week’s Three Forks Herald, all but 11 of those lots were sold at the auction. Lots went from $160 to $1000 each and the auction lasted well into the evening.

Mrs. Emma Bilstrom, of “Harlowtown,” bought eight lots, selling most of them within a few years for a profit. She stuck around and built the Bilstrom building (now the southern portion of McCreanor’s) which housed the Traveler’s Cafe, where she was the proprietor.

Ida R. Wolfe, of Miles City and apparently a not a triskaidekaphobic, purchased lot 13 of block 13, where Fred’s Place and the Big Sky used to be.

The Three Forks Centennial Committee is planning a re-enactment of this event during rodeo weekend of 2008. We’ll see how much lots will go for these days. Who wants to be the auctioneer?
The Independent Telephone Co. of Butte and the Home Telephone Co. of Bozeman both looked at extending lines to Three Forks in 1909. The Home Telephone actually had 52 subscriptions for phones, but failed to deliver service in a reasonable time. On February 1, 1909, the Three Forks Telephone Co. was organized. Dr. Stoyer was president (he was still building the first drug store in town), Dr. Willard was vice-president (local surgeon), J.L. Broderick was Secretary and Treasurer, Ben Reynolds was Managing Director. On the Board of Directors were J.J. Russell, Wm. Parnacott, and H. Gillingham.

They had raised capital stock of $2,500, with shares valued at $1.00. They expected to have service within 90 days. By early March, materials were purchased and arrived in mid-April. A line was constructed by the Montana Independent Telephone Company from Butte to Logan and the Three Forks Telephone Company would tie into that line for a toll. A electrician named C.J.R. deClemenceau was in charge of construction and stringing the wires. The exchange was located in the building where “Outa Ware” is today. The system was not automated, so when a call was made, the caller would tell the operator or “Central” who they were calling and the operator would plug a wire into a bank of receptacles to make the connection.

Dr. Stoyer died just a few days before long distance connections were up and running on June 29, 1909. His wife Martha was the exchange’s first chief operator. By 1912, the exchange was moved to 12 E. Cedar (Headwaters Food Bank building) to accommodate the 260 subscribers with a potential of handling 2000 subscribers.

Across Montana small independent local exchanges were soon gobbled up by larger firms. Ohio-born Thaddeus S. Lane came to Montana in 1906. By 1912 he was the President of ten telephone companies in the Washington, Idaho and Montana region, including those in Butte and Bozeman. He soon consolidated his holdings into Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co which eventually became Mountain Bell or Ma Bell. By 1916, the local exchange was part of the Bell system.

While renovating the building at 12 E. Cedar, a small piece of history was found inside the walls. A rather worn, somewhat moldy 1916 telephone directory was discovered and preserved. It contains the exchange numbers for Belgrade, Bozeman, Clyde Park, Livingston, Manhattan, Salesville, and Three Forks, all in less than 30 pages! This telephone directory is a unique and interesting bit of local lore.

Dr. L.P Gaertner, Physician and Surgeon, had his office upstairs from the Three Valleys Bank (now the Heritage Museum) and his exchange number was 28-J. 100-w was the exchange number for the school, located at 4th Ave and Cedar (now Bertagnolli Park). E.C. Waddell, the man who was having the Ruby Theatre built that year, resided at Main and Grove and his exchange number was 154-J. The Mike Lane ranch was connected to the world via exchange number 85-J-1.

Recent television ads proclaim Cingular as the “New AT&T.” It seems just another turning of the wheel...
In the spring of 1930, RKO and Director George Seitz came to Montana to create a film with the working title of “The Railroad Man.” Filming took place along the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad from Lombard to Chicago. The May 8, 1930 Three Forks Herald reported that the movie troop stopped in Three Forks for a photo op. A later edition reports that the “Purposeful wrecking of a freight train in a landslide in Sixteen Mile is the task of (local railroaders) Engineer Shaw, fireman Gosnell, conductor Coffin, and brakemen Dixon and Davis. The 85 members of crew and cast spent eight days in the Lombard area.

During the filming, many Three Forks residents traveled to Lombard to view the movie troop. One such group stayed with Mrs. Leib and included Mr. & Mrs. Avery, Mr. & Mrs. Ted Lane, and Mrs. Vanmeter, whose brother was a unit director on the film.

The Ruby Theatre, under the management of Homer Thompson, was renovated to handle “talkies” in early 1930, making it the most “ultra-modern” theatre between Bozeman and Butte. The RKO film, now titled “Danger Lights,” was shown at the Ruby in late October.

The film opens with a train in the Sixteen Mile Creek canyon. A landslide blocks the tracks and sends Miles City Division master Dan Thorne (played by Louis Wolheim) into action to keep the coast-to-coast Olympian Limited on schedule.

While desperately trying to clear the track, Thorne recruits the hobos hitching a ride on the now stuck train. Among them is Larry Doyle (played by Robert Armstrong), a down-on-his-luck ex-railroad man. Thorne takes Doyle under his wing and when they return to Miles City, Doyle and Thorne are caught in a love triangle with Mary Ryan (played by Jean Arthur). A spectacular six minute sequence toward the end of the film is a life-or-death race to Chicago.

“Danger Lights” is in the public domain and can actually be downloaded from www.archive.org. It’s an interesting film. There are several good shots of steam locomotives in full speed action, especially an excellent shot of the train speeding through Lombard and across the Missouri. Only locals would know that the train, which is supposed to be headed to Chicago, is going the wrong way! What is really off, is that the train supposedly started out at the Miles City division yard.

There’s also a great line delivered by one of the hobos before they get recruited, “Boy, it’s looking at labor like that, that’s made a hobo out of me.”

The film was shot in both regular and wide screen format. According to the Three Forks Herald, “Projection of the wide film gives the illusion of depth to the characters on the screen, something entirely new in motion picture entertainment.” Unfortunately, all the wide screen formats of the film were lost, a tragedy for us spoiled wide-screen film buffs.

For train buffs, there are some great shots of the Miles City train yard and a plethora of steam locomotives. If you look closely, you can see that many shots of the trains in the the Montana Division have the overhead electrification lines that were touted by the Milwaukee, but the train is being pulled by a steam locomotive. Another case of a Hollywood make-over.

Above: Homer Thompson, Ruby Theatre manager.

Left: Jean Arthur

Below: Scene from Danger Lights where the train headed to Chicago crosses the Missouri River (going the wrong way).
On December 13, 1909, the County Commissioners adopted a resolution that created the new municipality known as the Town of Three Forks. A little over a year later, in February 1911, the Aldermen of the Town of Three Forks passed a resolution that advanced the town to a city. The resolution states the population at that time as 1018. Municipalities with population of more than 1000 could “advance” to the status of third class city and thereby have more governmental power and expand to three wards.

1911 was a busy year in the City of Three Forks. The Commercial Club (forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce) was revitalized in January 1911, after a call of assistance from the Council and Mayor J.W. Ross. Charles Caldwell (owner of The Emporium located in the southernmost lot of the Ruby Theatre) became the President.

Mrs. Smith opened the Park Hotel in February while Mrs. Bilstrom sold the Traveler’s Café (the lot on the north side of the Frontier Club) to a gent from Chicago.

The Women’s Christian Temperance Union, one of the driving forces behind the Prohibition movement, organizes a local branch with Mrs. Rose - Pres., Mrs. Patterson - VP, Mrs. Henslee - Secretary, Mrs. McFarland – Treasurer. This is probably in response to the eight saloons or bars (The Eagle, The Owl, Ted’s Place, The Mint Bar, Dance Brothers Palace Bar, Kentucky Club, the Milwaukee Club, and the Sacajawea Club), the Hamm’s beer wholesaler, and three pool halls in town.

Two parties nominated candidates for the April 1911 election; the People’s Party and the Citizens Party. The People’s party seems to lean toward a socialist platform while the Citizen Party was lauded as a progressive party. The Citizen’s Party candidates swept the election, with O.L. Bryant garnering 112 votes to incumbent J.W. Ross’s three votes.

A man named “Dutch” Smith may have been upset with the election results. Soon after the election, he apparently got drunk and went on a “rampage” with a butcher knife. No one was seriously hurt and Smith was arrested. However, he escaped with the help from Albert Cline and H.J. Purdy. Smith was caught and sentenced to six months in prison. Cline and Purdy also spent time in jail.

Also in April of 1911, the remains of small girl were found while digging a foundation for a home in the Buttleman addition. Old settlers recall a sheep man and family in that area in 1878-79 and a little girl fell sick. According to the Herald of the day, the body was re-interred at Logan Cemetery.

The next month “Young” Tom Lane and William Kelley found bones in a cave in the rocks a half mile south of the Lone Tree on the Kelley place. The bones had been gathered, placed in a cleft, and covered in stones. A femur bone measuring 28 inches had been found, leading experts to believe that the bones belonged to a race of pre-historic giants. The skull was not found, but old timers of the day recall the finding of a large skull some years previous that could match the bone found.

1911: When a Town Grows Up

The Pekin Café is sold to Lee Chin & Charlie Hong. They renamed it the Montana Café and expanded the menu to include western selections. Lane Brothers (Mac & Francis) sell out their meat market to Rowe & Chaffin, after realizing the town was not ready for two meat markets.

Pioneers and Progress

John Stovenour was born in May 1831, and in his early days he had performed with the Dan Rice Circus and later toured with the Yankee Robinson Circus in various capacities, often taking the part of the lead clown. He became the trusted friend of F. L. “Yankee” Robinson, a great showman of the 1850-1880’s. Robinson gave the Ringling Brothers their start in the business when he gave them second billing during the 1884 season, “Yankee Robinson and Ringling Brothers Circus”, the only time the seven Ringling brothers ever had second billing.

Stovenour joined the gold rush to Montana in the 1860’s and was in the fur trapping business for a number of years, growing prosperous and buying land around the Headwaters area. Late in his life he married Frank Aken’s second wife, Emily.

In his later years, Stovenour often came into Three Forks from his home near Gallatin City (II) to visit the businessmen up and down Main Street and frequently dropped in to chat with the editor of the Herald. On July 8, 1911, the eighty year old Stovenour was returning home from such an outing, when...
his buggy overturned while driving over an embankment just west of the Sacajawea Hotel. He was thrown from his buggy and struck his head. Stovenour was quickly brought into the Sacajawea Hotel to await a doctor. Upon arriving at the hotel, the doctor pronounced Stovenour dead.

Two days later, the first three ring circus came to town for a one night performance on the evening of July 10, 1911. The circus happened to be the Yankee Robinson Three Ring Circus, Stovenour’s former circus from sixty years earlier. It was one of the rules of the late “Yankee” Robinson that no man who ever worked for him would be neglected, and in that regard, Mr. J. Delmar Andrews, press agent for the circus, attended Stovenour’s funeral.

In August 1911, the Three Forks Herald listed all the business licenses issued by the City. The total fees garnered by these licenses were a little over $980. At that time there were: five real estate or insurance agencies, nine places to buy alcohol, one bank, three barbers, one blacksmith, two doctors and a dentist, three pool halls, a box ball alley, a motion picture theatre, two laundries, three lawyers, three lumber outlets, a feed mill, four restaurants, eight rooming houses or hotels, 20 various mercantiles and shops, two newspapers, and six dray or transport lines.

In late July 1911, the City approved the plat for the Milwaukee Second Addition which added 18 new full blocks and 3 partial blocks to the south side of town, creating Grove and Hickory streets.

President William H. Taft made a whistle stop at the Northern Pacific Depot while on a 31,000 mile tour of the country in October 1911. Three Forks turned out en masse and hundreds flocked to the depot from the surrounding area. The Herald states “Professor (Homer) Thompson and his corps of teacher marched the school children down to welcome the Executive.” The President was introduced by Sen. Joe Dixon, and praised the “youngest city in the state.”

At 5 a.m. on December 2, 1911, the Lane family patriarch, Patrick Lane, passed away. He was 23 days short of being 89 years old and had been in Headwaters area for 33 years. His obituary states “He was a man of strong character and exemplary habits and was held in high esteem in the country as a substantial and deserving citizen. Few men were better known throughout the county or had a larger circle of friends.”

Prominent pioneer Frank Dunbar also passed away in late December. Born in 1837 in Brecksville, Ohio, Frank and his brother, Thomas, came to Montana via Pike’s Peak, Colorado during the gold rush, arriving at Bannack in August 1862. In November, they moved on to the Headwaters area. Frank built one of the first cabins near Gallatin City on the western bank of the Missouri. He later moved across the river and married Anna Campbell, daughter of Major James Campbell.

The 1911 government of Three Forks was just as topsy-turvy as it is today. In December, the Three Forks Herald reported that the City Council & Mayor are “Considerable Shuck Up” over sidewalk improvements. The last month of 1911 is filled with resignations, appointments and more resignations. But one thing got done during the month - gambling was outlawed in the City.

Early Eateries

In 1906 the Pure Foods and Cosmetics Act was passed by the federal government. It was one of several consumer protection laws passed that year. It took several years for Montana to enact and administer a similar law. On January 1, 1912, all the eating establishments in Three Forks were required to have a license from the state Board of Health. In 1912 there were five cafés or restaurants.

The Mint Café was first run by P. A. Fauver in 1909. John Eck and Al Anderson were great bar owners, but were not restauranteurs. The restaurant was closed for a time in 1912 before they could find someone to take over. Mrs. Stella
Wrightington leased the property (located on the south lot of Seiler’s Hardware) and took charge in September 1912. A series of owners ran the establishment until it and several other buildings in the vicinity burned down in the huge blaze of March 1929.

The Star Café (where the TF Café is now) was started by Roy Nakagami. The February 1, 1912 issue of the Three Forks Herald relates; Roy Nakagami, who had been chef at the Sacajawea for some time, has organized a company and furnished a building on Main street, formerly occupied by the Three Valleys State bank, where he will conduct a restaurant. Roy was educated in English schools in Japan, as well as those of his own country, and had many friends and acquaintances in Three Forks. He ranks in the first class in the art of preparing luxuries for the table, and will without doubt score a great success in his business venture.

Nakagami sold it to Jim Nakamura in June 1912. By September S. Hamaguchi was the proprietor. Several months later, the Herald reported that “The Japanese Star Café reopens as the State Café after a Japanese cashier decamps with $200. Proprietors Kratzas & Billas.” It was later operated by Harry Itoh. About 1926 Harry moved his business across the street. There, the State Café was sold to Jimmie Thain about 1939. Over the years it was named Slim’s Café, Mike’s Café, and was renamed the Headwaters Café in 1953 by Ed and Marj Scanlan.

The Montana Restaurant (located in the Coast to Coast / Gambles building) was run by Quan and Company. “Louie” Quan Tong ran both a restaurant and laundry service for several years before selling out in 1917 and setting up business in Bozeman.

Mrs. Bilstrom, who came from Harlotown to purchase lots at the 1908 Three Forks land auction, started the Travelers Café and Hotel. It was located just north of the Frontier Club and has since been a deli, antique store, jewelry, hardware store and grocery store.

E.M. Mestad came to Three Forks on the first lot sale excursion train and stayed at the hotel in Old Town that first night. They worked there for several months until they had enough capital to start the Pioneer Bakery. Eventually they caught the sweet tooth of Ben Adams, who helped them build the Home Bakery located where the cabin is behind the museum. In 1911, Ben’s father and founder of Three Forks, J.Q. Adams provided financing for the Mestad’s to build a 25’ x 80’ bakery. It was dubbed the N.P. Restaurant and furnished a building on Main street, formerly occupied by the Three Valleys State bank, where he will conduct a restaurant. Roy was educated in English schools in Japan, as well as those of his own country, and had many friends and acquaintances in Three Forks. He ranks in the first class in the art of preparing luxuries for the table, and will without doubt score a great success in his business venture.

In the Year 1919

On the front page of the first issue of 1919, the Three Forks Herald has the following “Obit;”

“John Barleycorn” as he was familiarly known, had many votaries who will miss his smile and smell, nose only a memory, and let us hope, soon to be forgotten. He was perhaps the best known and most universally acquainted character in the state — mixed at social functions, business affairs, and even had a place in our political life. And now, as a licensed and privileged character, he will function no more among us. Amen! And again, Amen!

It was of course, the beginning of Prohibition, but Montana never became an absolutely dry state, unlike Tennessee. In this “bone-dry” state, a new fire engine in Nashville was christened with Coca-Cola instead of champagne.

Local law enforcement was cracking down on alcohol sales and gambling. Otto “Ted” Anderson had converted his tavern (now the Town Club) to a pool hall, but went on the lam in early February, when it was alleged that he was running a gambling house. Claud B. Conant, employed in the water department of the City of Three Forks, borrowed various sums from the city funds throughout 1918 to feed his gambling habit. Finally, after losing more than $800 to Anderson’s gambling house, Conant confessed to his wife and others. Charges of embezzlement were filed with the D.A. and Mrs. Conant filed a suit against Anderson, asking for damages in the amount of $4,540.

The war in Europe was over, but the treaty took several months of the first part of 1919 to be ratified. Food was the on the mind of everyone. Food rationing in the States was still going, as the United States had pledged millions of tons of food to her allies. However, the Food Administrator, Herbert C. Hoover, told German supplicants to “Go to Hell.” In July, Art Wade wrote a letter to James “Shorty” Althouse, saying he was on the destroyer U.S.S. Ellis delivering food to Batum, Russia, to aid the Armenians.

On the local front, the ceasing of hostilities opened up the coffers of the government and the Gallatin County Good Roads Committee was one recipient of funds, laying the way to begin the improvement of what was later to become the Yellowstone Trail. Other projects included the construction of the Madison dike on the east side of Three Forks. The contract went to Nelson Story, Jr. and cost about $60,000. The dike lasted until 1948, when it broke and 700 feet of Highway 10 was covered by a foot of water.

Soldiers that returned from their duties in 1919 were; Douglas
Influenza was still running its course through the area. Well wishes, recoveries and death notices filled the early 1919 Herald issues. There were a few cases of scarlet fever too, but by the end of the year, the danger was over.

On May 18, 1919, Harry Darlington of the Madison valley was knocked to the ground by a nearby lightening strike as he was entering his barn. The family in the house and the men in the bunkhouse received severe shocks.

The roll of the deceased for 1919 starts off with former President Theodore Roosevelt. Locally, the area lost one of its most beloved benefactors, the founding father, John Q. Adams. Others taken to their maker that year were: Thomas B. Lane, Robert Lee Lane, John Walbert, Susanah Parker, John Morrison, James Crowley (101 yrs old), Fannie Campbell-Thornberg, Mary Dunbar-Alexander, Charles W. Thompson, Cyrus Sterling, and Prof. A.D. Hall.

1942-First Year of the War

“Defending Our Way of Life” was the title of the editorial in the first edition of the Three Forks Herald in 1942, just a few weeks after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Many locals were already in harm’s way, while others would soon join and the rest geared up and continued the American way of life during war-time, or as the next issue announced, “Free Enterprise Goes to War.”

At the time of Pearl Harbor many sons of the Headwaters area were already in harm’s way. Walter Klahr was at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, W.J. Gilbert was on the USS Detroit at Pearl Harbor, George Kirk, Francis Dupuis, Willis Meyers, Harley Phillips, Olney Hacker, and Jasper Knowles were in the Philippine Islands. Schofield Barracks received some strafing from Japanese planes on their way to Wheeler field. The Detroit had a near miss when an aerial torpedo passed astern by only ten yards, but otherwise suffered little damage. Olney Hacker was reported KIA on April 30, while George Kirk on Corregedor and Francis Bataan were reported MIA in May. Russell Menapace survived the sinking of the merchant ship he served on after being torpedoed in March.

The first registry for the selective service was held February 16 for all males 20 to 45 years old and the second registration was for 45 to 65 year olds in April. Defense Bonds, ration plans, Red Cross drives and instructions for what to do during an air raid were all implemented by March 1942, as well as the restriction of travel for those of Japanese descent.

In August, the Herald announced that it would send papers to all service men and women for free and began printing their addresses. By the end of the year over 134 addresses were listed for those enlisted or drafted from Manhattan, Three Forks, Willow Creek and Trident, including several women; Pvt. Myrtle Verwolf, Aux. Audrey Hamann, and Aux. Connie Kolokotrones.

But life in Three Forks went on. Two high school plays were put on in 1942. The first was presented in April 1942; “Here Comes Charlie”, starring Pat Ruggles as Charlie, Ralph E. Wilcox as Larry Elliot, Archie MacDonald as Uncle Aleck. The plot of this comedy is Larry adopts an Ozark hill-billy named Charlie, and is later surprised to find out the Charlie is a girl! The second play, presented in Dec. 1942 was “I’m in the Army Now” with Eugene Kremer, Wilma Carlson, Kate Carlson (now Mrs Ralph E. Wilcox), Bob Jenkins, Joe Brand and Lois Beckman playing the Robertson family in this comedy in three acts.

The Methodist Ladies Aid, Milwaukee Women’s Club, Girl Scouts, Catholic Welfare Society, Federated Women’s Club, the Chamber of Commerce, Eastern Star, Lady Firemen and other social and civic clubs continued their meetings.

One new organization came on the scene; American Women Volunteer Services (AWVS) managed scrap drives for rubber, steel, cotton, wool, silk and nylon, cancelled postage stamps, tires, razors as well as providing magazines, card decks and other small gifts to service men passing through on the railroads.

Mike Mansfield won his bid as a Representative and his first stint in Washington, D.C. Sheriff Lovitt Westlake won in a landslide. Abbot and Costello, Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Tommy Dorsey, and Lum & Abner were staples on the radio. Playing at the Ruby Theatre in 1942 were classics such as Walt Disney’s “Dumbo,” “Woman of the Year” with Tracy and Hepburn, “The Courtship of Andy Hardy” and Charley Chaplin in “The Gold Rush.”
As a consequence of steel and aluminum shortage, Kvalnes Variety Store (where the Jefferson Building now stands) was advertising Pyrex glassware. Jimmy’s Café (now the Headwaters) advertised “Steaks and Chops a Speciality – Creamy thick malted milk – ice cream for Every Occasion” and Althouse & Co (northeast corner of Date and Main) advertised Sego “irradiated” canned milk.

On December 6 and 7, 1942, the Office of War Information (OWI) sponsored a nation-wide observance of the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. “Remember Pearl Harbor – Work…Fight…Sacrifice” was the rallying cry. As if to emphasize the cry, it was noted that while the hour of the attack (2:20 pm, EWT) was to be specially marked, no ceremony should delay war production.

The Odd Stuff

One never knows the odd facts that turn up while doing research for these articles. Below are a few of the little puzzles and odd facts I have turned up so far;

A small tidbit in the November 28, 1912 issue of the Three Forks Herald states that Persia Chupich of Butte died at that place from tuberculosis contracted on the Titanic. This is a bit of odd news because the various extensive and informational web-sites regarding the passengers of the Titanic do not list Mr. Chupich as a passenger or survivor!

In another article, someone who was not a survivor of the Titanic disaster was much admired by the editor of the Herald, P. S. Dorsey. In December of 1912, Mr. Dorsey endorsed “Elusive Isabel,” a novel by Jaques Futrelle, of Atlanta. Mr. Futrelle and his wife had traveled to Europe to promote his books and short stories there. They cut their holiday and work short to travel back to America on the RMS Titanic. Futrelle's works include several stories that featured the popular detective Professor Xavier Van Dusen, nicknamed “The Thinking Machine.” Mr. Futrelle perished in the wreck but his wife, May, survived. Some of Mr. Futrelle’s works can be found at the Project Gutenberg web-site.

Disappearances

In July of 1918, Fred Chandler, who had gone out on horseback to find a missing cow on Dr. Mason’s ranch fifteen miles northwest of Three Forks, returned on the Butte train two weeks later and could give no account of his movements in-between times. He said he had traveled about the back country in his search and laid down somewhere to sleep and when he woke up, he was in Butte. The horse was never found. This was back before the alien abduction theories came to account for many amnesiacs.

“Uncle Tom” Gribbon, was reported missing in October 1923. He built a small grain elevator near Willow Creek and was renting a cottage from Mrs. James Hankinson. One day he came to Mrs. Hankinson to say he was unable to pay the rent and she was welcome to have some of his household goods instead. He has not been seen since. An investigation of his home revealed his gun standing near the door and his automobile out front. Messages sent to various relatives and friends were to no avail.

Here is one with the headline of “A Modern Miracle.” In March 1924, the four year old son of Mr. and Mrs. Berghone, who lived about twelve miles northwest of Three Forks, disappeared one afternoon. He was last been seen playing with his dog in front of the house. He was not missed for about two hours. Neighbors were notified and nearly 150 people began a search. It started snowing about 10 o’clock that evening. At four o’clock in the morning the searchers returned to their homes for a break.

Frank Martin, who was one of the searchers, noticed a strange dog in the yard upon his return home, but thought it a stray. A little after 5 o’clock, he was ready to resume the search and his wife was headed to the telephone when she spotted a child on the front porch. It was the Berghone child, found nearly twelve miles from his home, his shoes worn through at the toes from the journey, and being faithfully watched over by his shepherd dog.

In August 1924, Joe Hadley was doing some work in his pasture near the Madison River and spotted a skull. Authorities were notified and all but a few small bones of the hand and feet were found. It seemed to be a Christian military burial of a man of about 5 foot eight inches tall (Christian because of the remains of a coffin and nails, military because the coffin was buried laying east-west). At that time, there was speculation that it was a member of the Lewis and Clark expedition who had died near the headwaters. One wonders at the true story behind these skeletal remains.

Animal Oddities

A December 1912 issue of the Herald reports that “an Albino game duck was recently killed about two miles from Pony.” The duck was pure white, with pink eyes, feet and bill and a little larger than a teal duck. The bird’s “likeness has never before been seen by some of the state’s best taxidermists and sportsmen.”

“Because there are so many bears in Yellowstone Park, especially grizzlies, authorities intend to kill off not less than 50 of the animals this fall.” This was in 1912, back before the Endangered Species Act.

In May 1941 a headline read “Old, Grizzled, Stock-Killer Finally Taken.” Two men, under the direction of the US Fish & Wildlife Service tracked and killed a prairie wolf on the bench about 12 miles south of TF Sunday afternoon. Only one toe remained on his left front paw (probably taken off by a trap). The right leg had a 4” piece of stovepipe wire imbedded in the flesh, probably from a coyote trap. Standing 33 inches high at the shoulder, six foot two from tip to tip and 106 pounds, the animal was the first wolf killed in this part of the country for many years. Four pups were found in a nearby den. Al Johnston, one of the hunters, had had no reports of wolf-kilings of livestock in
a long time. It was later announced that the “largest wolf ever to
be killed in Montana” was mounted in the Museum of Natural
History in Washington, D.C.

The killing was authorized through the WPA Predatory
Control Project, which started in 1936 and by 1942 had taken
19,100 coyotes, 250 bobcats, and 125 lions.

And the most surprising...

After the June 1925 earthquake, the editor of the Herald
estimated that the damage to the Three Forks Methodist Church
was so extensive that it would have to be taken down to the
foundation and rebuilt. Fortunately, it was not necessary and by
December of that year dedication services were held to reopen
the church. Generous donations by the congregation and friends
made the feat possible.

But the church continued to receive additional aid and
sympathy after the building was reconstructed. Perhaps the
strangest donation story was told on the cover of the January 21,
1926 edition of the Three Forks Herald. Rev. W. P. Jinnett was
just beginning his farewell sermon when the door silently opened
and fifty members of the Bozeman Ku Klux Klan marched in
singing “Onward Christian Soldiers.” After all had arranged
themselves in the church, one handed the Reverend a purse and a
letter, which he was urged to read aloud.

The heart of the letter read thus; “We wish to express our
sympathy for you in the severe trial which has resulted to
your church by reason of the earthquake last summer; and we
commend you for your heroic efforts to reconstruct
your building, keeping together your congregation and
carry the banner of the Protestant Church ever onward.”

Once the letter was read, one of the hooded men recited J.
G. Holland’s soul-stirring “God Give Us Men.” Despite
being invited by Rev. Jinnett to join the congregation for
the remainder of the service, the Klan members marched
silently out of the Church. The headline for the event read
“Bozeman Ku Klux Klan Pays Visit to Our City - Their
Mission Was a Peaceful One However and Their Visit
Will be Gratefully Remembered.” It was noted that purse
contained $53.75.

The Boxcar Battalion

In late January 1931, the Milwaukee No. 264 pulled into the
Three Forks Depot and Mr. Pat Stoker and a number of other
men were on hand to greet it. On board a single unheated
boxcar was the self-named “Boxcar Battalion,” a group of
disabled World War I veterans on their way to Washington, D.C.
to endorse the passage of a World War veterans compensation
measure pending in Congress at that time.

132 men had left the bread lines in Seattle, Washington to
make the journey to the nation’s capital in a boxcar provided
free by the CM&SP railroad, but only 25 arrived in Three Forks.
The rest were too ill or impaired to deal with the cold and were
turned back or dispatched to hospitals along the way. Under
the command of D. Thomas of Spokane, the remaining 25 men were
determined to make the rest of the rigorous trip.

In the early 30s, America was awash in the unemployed. Men
would travel hundreds of miles on just a rumor of work. Because
of the two rail lines coming through, Three Forks saw a lot of
these kinds of men, even though Montana had enough of its
own. Not hobos, but men in desperate need of a job. It was this
desperation that drove veterans to Washington, D.C. to seek relief.

When Pat Stoker, an active member of the Lewis and Clark
Post of World War Veterans, heard that the group was coming
through Three Forks, he immediately organized a petition drive
in support of the compensation measure and enlisted the help of
the community to provide lunch and supplies for the Battalion.
Other members of the local post included; William Ennis, Dick
Griffith, Bob Burns, Hans Sater, Francis Lane,
and J. T. Murphy.

The Battalion reached Chicago on February 9th, “shivering
from cold and hunger.” They were put up at the Salvation Army
for the day and expected to continue the pilgrimage the next day.
A month later only 23 veterans returned through Three
Forks. The remaining two men could have been among the first
recruits of the “Bonus Army.” The Bonus Army, which grew
to over 17,000 people by the summer of 1932, gathered at a
“Hooverville” on Anacostia Flats across the river from the D.C.
core. Veterans and their families were desperate to receive their
Adjusted Service Certificate monies. Congress had authorized
the Certificates in 1924 with a pay out date in 1945. The ravages
of the depression urged the “Bonus Army” to campaign for an
earlier date to redeem the Certificates.

On June 17, 1932, the House approved the Patman Bonus Bill that would have moved forward the redemption date, but it was blocked by the Senate. President Hoover lost control of the situation when General Douglas MacArthur, fearing the gathering was a communist plot to overthrow the government, had the 12th Infantry Regiment and the 3rd Cavalry Regiment under the command of Major George S. Patton move in on the shanty town that summer.

The Army forces cleared the camp and burned the shacks. The action taken exacted a horrible price from the vets and their families as at least two veterans were shot and killed, and two infants died of tear gas asphyxiation, and other men, women and children were injured or exposed to tear gas.

It was another four years before the bonus was paid, but the Bonus Army’s gathering and the action at Anacostia Flats proved to be the impetus for the passage of the G.I. Bill of Rights in 1944 and formation of the Veterans Administration.

The Three Forks Hospital

When the Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad made a town a division point, many railroaders and their families came to that point to make their homes. The company had a vested interest in its employees and made accommodations to keep them. Many of the homes built in Three Forks were built by or commissioned by the railroad. The company also made accommodations for single men by building the Milwaukee Hotel, of which portions have been moved to the Lewis and Clark Hotel. The company also felt some obligation for the health of its employees and to this end they built the Milwaukee Hospital.

Three Forks had been a division terminal since February of 1909, with a roundhouse to repair cars and locomotives being built that year. With the roundhouse, section house, division point and depot, Three Forks swelled with railroad men and their families. Seeing a need, J. Q. Adams donated some land on the south side of town for a hospital. Construction on the Milwaukee Hospital began in 1914 to provide for the injured and sick of the area. As safety was not up to today’s standards, there were many injuries and deaths to rail workers and passengers at both ends of town (as the Northern Pacific had a depot on the south end of town for several years).

Dr. Clinton Hoy, who had a home on the corner of First and Cedar, and Dr. Goertner were the first medical directors at the Milwaukee Hospital. Other doctors at the hospital were: Dr. C. V. Reed (who died in England during WW I of pneumonia), Dr. W. H. Shepards (who moved on to Dillon), Dr. A. H. Winkel, Dr. E. Zeck, Dr. C. R. Larson, Dr. John Dimon and lastly Dr. H. L. Koehler.

A nurse training school was organized at the hospital and sponsored by Washington Hospital Training School. Miss Ruth Wilkens, RN, and Miss Cora Viewig, RN, were the nurse supervisors that ran the program. Graduates of the six month training course include Jessie Stearns (Mrs. H.C. Hudson of Three Forks, and Jeanette Mattison (Mrs. Wm. Fraser of Three Forks).

Many residents of the area were born at the Milwaukee Hospital, the first being Roy McKenney on June 15, 1915. Other local residents include John Arnold, Laura and Robert Lane, James Elmose, Harvey and Wilma Carlson, Betty Gee (Lamach), and Mary Lou and Madeline Lane (Todd).

During 1917-1918 at least a dozen patients succumbed the Spanish Flu epidemic while at the hospital.

By the end of World War I, Three Forks was no longer as prominent as it once was, having lost the roundhouse. And the droughts and depressions of the 20s and 30s ate away at the population. In 1931 the hospital closed due to a lack of patronage, and the hospital superintendent Cora Viewig Barnes advertised that all accounts due to the hospital would be received at her home at #5 First Avenue North. Dr. Dimon moved to Polson in late 1930 and set up a practice there. Dr. Koehler was still using the hospital for emergencies and x-rays only. Eventually, Dr. Koehler moved on too.

In 1940, according to the Herald, the hospital was sold to a California firm to be converted to a sanitarium. It would be used for the treatment of various ailments by the vegetable juice method, but apparently the plan went awry, because the Pages took over that same year.

Ralph and Margaret Page purchased the building with the intention of providing “homes for the elderly,” a rather new concept at the time. The Page family operated the rest home for many years, and Margaret Page was influential in the Nursing Home Association of Montana. The rest home was closed in 1974. For a few years it was haunted by teenagers as a place for a private party.

Some years ago, the hospital was renovated and converted to apartments.
Before My Time is a series of historical tidbits that were first published in the local newspaper, The Three Forks Herald, now with additional facts and pictures. While the local historical society had published a fairly comprehensive history in their Headwaters Heritage History, facts and interesting tidbits fall through the cracks. The Three Forks Area Historical Society has made available microfilm of the early newspapers and author Patrick Finnegan has perused the microfilm archives to ferret out those interesting stories missed by local history books. For Patrick it’s fun to research and he hopes residents to new the area will be interesting in learning more.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Patrick Finnegan is a native Montanan who, while researching his family tree, became intrigued by an early census of the area and the interesting historical tidbits that went with it. Patrick enjoys reading, movies and solving puzzles, including piecing together historical tidbits into a bigger picture.

Patrick is the co-author of *Passages*, a book of poetry and short stories and author of *Taylor Made: Gallatin County’s First Census*, a “window” into what was happening in the Gallatin Valley in 1870 during the first Montana Territorial Census.