

Bonner History Roundtable #35: Celebrating Bonner: Past, Present and Future

https://youtu.be/KebzgeFTc_g?si=ZmU1jOF6IWv7_4Ec

Jan. 15, 2023, at the Bonner KettleHouse Taproom

Steve Nelson, partner in Bonner Property Development, LLC

This program has been edited for clarity.

(Intro music and credits)

[00:00:10] **Kim Briggeman:** We're gonna go ahead and get started. It's two o'clock and we've got a great show for you, as they say. My name is Kim Briggeman and on behalf of the Bonner Milltown History Center, welcome, welcome to everybody, but maybe especially to the homeowners of Bonner and the businesses of Bonner. We hope that this is the start of a good connection with the History Center for everybody, or the continuation in some cases. Today's a celebration of sorts, first and foremost, for what has developed on this iconic mill site, well, since 1886, but especially for the last decade plus.

This begins for the History Center our 15th year and this will be our 35th winter Roundtable program dating back to 2009. And all of those have been filmed and produced by MCAT, Missoula Community Access TV, and all of them, all 34 previous ones, are available on our website, the Bonner Milltown History Center website.

We sit, or in some cases stand, I guess, on the banks of the magical, mystical Blackfoot River, tucked between the Rattlesnake Mountains on one side and the Garnets on the other. Our speakers today take us back more than 135 years in the history of Bonner and its mill. But we should also acknowledge that we're gathered in the ancestral homelands of the Salish and Kalispell or Pend d'Oreille people who've lived here from time immemorial. We offer our respect for their history and culture and for their enduring care and protection of our shared lands and waterways.

Some quick notes. Most important: men's bathroom is over there. Women's bathroom is over there. The men's is a two-holer. I don't know about the women's. So, you will have to kind of weave your way to either one of them when the time comes.

Our thanks again to MCAT for providing this important gift to preserve our timber heritage history. They are here thanks to a media assistance grant that they donate to us to film these programs. And this program, while we hoped it would be live streamed on Facebook today, so far, we're having technical difficulties, so that may not be available, but it will be aired on MCAT Channel 189 about a month from now and downloaded on MCAT's video-on-demand. And subsequently will be on our history website as well.

Some thank-yous. Thanks to the KettleHouse. This is our fourth program here over the last four or five years, and the support we've received and the interest that they've shown in the history of this general place have been phenomenal. We hope you can all return this support today and in the future. It's been a wonderful addition to this town, this taproom and brewery. And today and every day they offer beer, hard seltzers, house-made root beer or water. And they also have bar snacks such as Chex mix, pretzels, bag chips, popcorn and trail mix.

Thanks also to Friends of Two Rivers, who sponsor the Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum; to our faithful sound technician, Walter Peckham; and finally to Steve Nelson, Mike Boehme, Mike Heisey for providing a home for the History Center. We're in the Bonner Post Office building and open to the public on Wednesdays from 10 till noon.

[00:05:16] On Tuesdays, we have our coffee group from nine till noon for lively conversation and cookies. And on Fridays we've started an Old Roads group and that meets at 10 o'clock on Fridays. Please stop by and join in on any of those days, and if none of those days work, give us a call and we'll open it up for you.

We will have, at the end of Steve's presentation, a traveling mic for questions, comments, stories. And that does it for me. On with the show. I'm gonna turn it over to our fearless and tireless leader, Judy Matson.

Judy Matson: It is so exciting to see all of you here. I wish I had time to come and sit down and visit with all of you. I've seen so many old friends. I may be tireless, not really, but I am not fearless when I get up in front of a crowd like this. So, here we go. I'm going to introduce the program. I'm going to introduce Steve for what is gonna be probably one of the most engaging programs we've ever had, and that's saying a lot.

So, for many of us, probably everybody here, the trip from Missoula to Bonner is a routine trip. We hop into our cars, take I-90 or Highway 200, and we're out in Bonner in about 10 minutes.

This routine trip was once an arduous journey by buggy, which necessitated a grand hotel, the Hotel Margaret, being built to house visiting dignitaries overnight before they returned to Missoula. The Margaret sat in the now vacant lot that looks like a park that's bordered by White House Lane, the White House, the mill, and the highway. We wish it was still the building.

From 1911 to 1932 the trip was made by streetcar. Bob Johnson recalled jumping on the streetcar in East Missoula as a teenager and riding to Bonner where he hopped off and ran to Lois Fuller's house to pick her up for a date. Together the two of them hurried to the road to flag down the streetcar, which had just circled the roundhouse, which is where the Post Office and the History Center are today.

And they would hop back on the streetcar for the return trip after a movie or a ballgame in Missoula. The couple would complete the journey in reverse. It was an effective courtship by streetcar. Bob and Lois were married for more than 71 years. Those transportation modes gave travelers ample time to see the icons of Bonner, icons that we speed past today on our way to our businesses, our homes.

We invite you now back to the 1920s and thirties to view those icons of Bonner. Coming around the bend, you first see the churches. First, our Savior's Lutheran Church. After meeting in homes, the congregation built their first church on this site in 1910, where the services were conducted in Norwegian. Next, St. Ann Catholic Church. The first of three church buildings on the site in Bonner was established in 1905 as the mission of St. Francis Parish and later transferred to the parish in Frenchtown. Originally, masses were given in Latin and sermons in French, and they were officiated by Father [Lionel] Legris who made the long journey from Frenchtown once a month. Still standing near the church on school property is a part of the original 1905 A. J. Gibson-designed church, now repurposed as a storage building. Next we see Bonner School, one of the first community buildings established in 1889 to educate the children of the mill managers and workers. And remember, the mill itself was built in 1886.

The first school was located in a building called the Bonner House, along with the Masonic Lodge and a meat market at the north end of Bonner in 1889, approximately across the street from here. In 1907, the school was relocated to its present site in a new two-story schoolhouse, providing more space and a shorter walk to school for children from Milltown.

[00:09:58] In the winter of 1957, former students, some who of whom are here today, recall carrying books and equipment into the new school, the school we know today, which has enjoyed several additions and improvements. The school bell that stood atop Bonner's 1907 school building is permanently displayed in the school library, and every graduating class enjoys two traditions: running in the halls and ringing the bell.

Just before you reach your destination, you pass Kelly Pine Field named for an ace pitcher on the mill's baseball team in the 1930s. When Kelly Pine was killed in an automobile accident in [1935], his friends and teammates constructed the grandstand in his honor with lumber provided by the Anaconda Company. The grandstand was rebuilt in [2007]. Land for the churches, both churches, the school and the baseball field was donated by the Anaconda Company.

And now you arrive at your home, once the home of a mill manager or supervisors. Only they could live in the company town's houses, and only as long as they worked at the mill. Perhaps you live on Stimson Boulevard or White House Lane, the original entrance to the mill. Or you're at work, turning onto Bonner Mill Road. Bonner has a long history and was established along with the mill in 1886. None of the icons we just passed would be in existence today without the mill. And the mill itself would not exist today without the vision of Steve Nelson and Mike Boehme, who in 2011 took a shuttered mill and rundown houses and revitalized them, creating a new opportunity where individuals now lead Bonner into the future.

It's my pleasure today to introduce Steve Nelson. Steve graduated from the University of Montana with a BA in Economics. He served in the Army from 1970 to 1980 and the Army Reserve from 1980 to 1990, retiring as a major. Steve has had a long career with the restaurant industry, owning and operating the very popular airport restaurant and lounge from 1981 to 2011. In addition, he has developed many recognized properties in Missoula.

Mike Boehme and Steve started Bonner Property Development LLC in December of 2011, and we're going to learn more about this venture shortly. Steve continues to be active in real estate development and is a part owner of Big Sky Mobile Catering, Inc., a catering company that feeds wildfire firefighters all over the western United States.

Steve is also active in many business and civic organizations, and he and his wife Shirley, are well-known for their philanthropic support of projects in Missoula and at the University of Montana. So please welcome Steve Nelson. (applause)

Steve Nelson: We okay? Can everybody hear me all right? Good. Good. Okay. Judy, thank you, thank you, thank you. Wow. I look at this group and I see so many folks that I know from, that have nothing to do with the mill. I'm surprised that you're here. Lisa, what are you doing here?

And I've got a nephew over here, Scotty and Kelsey and their kids. And anyway, I'm glad you're all here. This is pretty exciting. We're looking forward to it. I wanted to just recognize a couple people as we move along here. And obviously my partner Mike Boehme, we've been together since 1997, and I'm going to tell you a little story about how all this got started here in a minute. But Mike's been a super friend of mine and a great partner and a great person to collaborate with and been an instrumental part in making this all come together. In addition to that, I'm gonna recognize Mike Heisey, who is now a partner with us, and he's the guy that is the general manager now and does most of the work. We take the credit, he does all the work.

[00:14:48] I'd also like to recognize Jeff Moore. Jeff is the Realtor that brought this project to us, and it was quite a process that we went through. But he brought it to us and he's been our Realtor for the last well, since 1997. So, I'm glad he's here. And thank you, Jeff, for everything you've done.

What I hope to do today is we're gonna talk a little bit about the past and you've seen all these, this loop that we've got going of photographs and things of the way, way past. (refers to slide show on the screen) And then what I'd like to do is talk to you a little bit about the time we took over the mill, and then once we get to that, we'll see kind of a progression, I think, through some of these photographs and things what has occurred over the last 10 years. And then we'll talk a little bit about the future of what we've got planned out here. And then we'll open it up for some questions and maybe even some stories. If any of you have some of those, we'd be interested to hear 'em and be glad to share.

So, we're gonna talk about the past. (to projectionist) So, Jason, (starts slide show) Okay. What I wanted to do is kind of show folks what we saw when we got here. And when we started to put this little project together, I am amazed at ... you know we see it every day. So it's kinda like watching yourself grow old in the mirror. You never think you're gonna get old. And then you look at a picture 10 years ago and you say, "Wow, who's that young guy?" And the mill's kind of that way. When we took it over, we were kind of wide-eyed and thinking, you know, what we were gonna do, but we had no idea that we were gonna end up where we are. And I look now and I look at some of these pictures and I look at where we are now, and I think, "Wow, we really have, there has been a transformation." And it hasn't been simple. It's been hard.

Couple things that I do, that I forgot to do, that I wanted to recognize is two or three things. One, I talked about Jeff. The community of Missoula, and that includes MEP [Missoula Economic Partnership], the newspaper, the citizens, the commissioners, the county commissioners -- everybody has helped us along with this project and been so supportive and helpful in allowing us to move forward. And, you know, we never could have done it without all that support and people, it just... you could just feel the uplifting of support from all the people in the community. It's remarkable and we genuinely appreciate that.

Lastly, you guys don't realize what Judy Matson does for this community. You probably do, but it is unbelievable. I mean, if you didn't have this star that's willing to, every day it seems like, go out and lead and show us the way as far as the community, it's phenomenal. She's very, very special. You, we, are very lucky to have her.

So here we are. (First slides, overview of the mill in 2011) This is about the time that we bought the mill. And just to kind of give you an idea, we've talked a little bit about the history and you've seen all these old pictures. But for those of you that don't know, there was a gentleman by the name of A. B. Hammond that started the mill in 1886, and he's the guy that started the Mercantile in downtown Missoula.

A. B. Hammond became like a Bill Gates or a Dennis Washington. I mean, he, in the time that he was around in the early 1900s, he was what we would think of as a billionaire today, and he was a very astute businessman, very aggressive. And he started the mill. Somehow or other, he was able to get a contract with the railroad coming across Montana to provide the railroad ties for that whole railroad. And he built this mill based on that. And then did dimensional lumber and things like that besides. But he was sort of the beginning of all this.

The Anaconda Company, which we've all heard of and know about, they were part of the Butte mine and that sort of thing. They purchased the mill in [1898], about [four] years after Hammond left. And interestingly, they paid \$1.5

million, we're told, for the mill at that time. Well, the Anaconda Company then ran this mill for years, and then in 1972, around there, is when Champion International, used to be part of the plywood... What's it called? [U.S. Plywood] But anyway, Champion International bought it and in 1972, they paid \$117 million for the property. That included timberlands and things like that too. But they ended up, they're the folks that started the mill or I mean, started the plywood plant. They built it. I have a friend that was telling me the other day, and I was like, "What?" But he, in 1972 was helping put those big curved beams up. That was, I think, the largest wooden structure in North America at that time. And they were the largest plywood producing plant in at least North America, maybe the world. But it was a big deal. They had over a thousand people working here at that time. And then they left in 1993 and that's when Stimson became the owner of the mill at that time.

[00:21:20] And it's interesting. I remember that 'cuz we had just started our catering company not long before that. And we actually did the picnic when that changed. We sat out here on the concrete pad out where, oh, kind of where Willis Enterprise is, the logging chipping operation is [on the far west end of the mill site]. And we served people. I think there was 1,500 people came to that picnic, and that was in 1993. It was a pretty cool experience. I had no idea at that time that we would end up with this mill at some point.

So then we... and Simpson closed the thing down, the mill down, in 2008, and then we hadn't even heard about it. And then one day we're having a glass of wine at Finn and Porter and Jeff comes to us, Mike and I, and says, "Hey, I got a deal for you. What do you think?" And at that time he said, "I think I could sell you the planer building." And he gave us a number; I don't even know what it was. And we're kinda like, "Whoa, that's a little more than we're thinking about." And then my partner Mike Boehme said, "Is there any chance we could get the White House too?" And so we were starting to get sucked in right away.

And then before long, Jeff came to us a couple days later and probably over another glass of wine, and said, "I got a... how about just buy the whole mill?" And then we were like, "Woo! What are we doing here?" And we, in the process, of course, we had a wonderful bank that was helping us out. And we went to them, and I see my good friend Bill Bouchee's over there in the corner now, and I was gonna tell this whether he was here or not, but Bill said, "Don't do this. You guys are crazy. I mean, you're 65 years old, you've done okay, just leave it alone. You don't need to mess around with this." And that was one of the few times in my life that I haven't followed Bill's recommendations. So anyway, we then decided that we were gonna try to, and I'm gonna diverge a little bit here, but I think it's kind of an interesting story.

So we started to do the due diligence and figure out what we could do, whether we could buy this mill or not. And my friend Dennis Lind, who's an attorney in town and their firm was really good at environmental stuff. So we had them working on all the environmental side of what we were trying to do or what was out here.

And Stimson, to their credit, had an agreement already with the state of Montana, the Department of Environmental Quality, and they basically said, [Stimson], "We're gonna clean up whatever's here." And so we had Dennis making sure that that was all gonna happen. In the meantime, we were looking at all the other kinds of things that could be an impact or what are the possibilities? And I think there was 800,000 square feet of building at that time. They were all pretty tough shape. (Slides showing mill) And, yeah, the roofs were all getting ready to be replaced and we were looking at this thinking, "Well, what are we gonna do? How can we make this thing happen?"

[00:24:39] And just tell you a little bit about the purchase. So we ended up with a... we got an agreement with Stimson and we were gonna give 'em a third down in cash and then they were gonna finance the rest of it over a period of time. And we thought, "Well, if we can get started and get rolling with this thing, with this financing in place, we should be able to get some people, some renters in here and get this thing rolling and we'll make it happen." And so we're going along and all of a sudden in about... this is in probably March, April, something like that... about August, some guys flew in from Wichita, Kansas. And they had been buying some property and things, Timberland properties from Stimson. So they kind of knew what was going on. And we didn't know this, but they came in and looked at it. They made Stimson an offer and it was \$600,000 more than our offer, plus it was all gonna be cash. And we were like, "Oh my God, what are we gonna do here?" And there was a guy by the name of Jeff Webber who was the operations manager for Stimson at the time, and he had given us his word that he was gonna sell it to us under the conditions that we had talked about.

So we went back. We know this is on the table. We think it's all gonna go away, and we're gonna lose it and not have the opportunity. And anyway so we [were] over in Dennis Lind's office, I'll never forget it. We're sitting there and we called Jeff Webber on the phone and said, "Jeff, what do you think? This is what we hear is happening, where are we at on this deal?"

And Jeff said, "Well, you could still buy it for the price that you offered, but you gotta pay cash. But otherwise we're not gonna... We're gonna stick with it. We'll stick with you." And this was like on a Thursday or Friday. And we're looking at each other and we're thinking, "Man, where are we gonna come up with this cash?"

But we took a chance and we said, "Okay, we'll do it." So Monday we got all the paperwork signed and now we're on this new deal and we're ready to go. So we spent from August till December trying to figure out where we're gonna get the money to make up the difference. And Jeff knew about Willis Enterprises and they had been looking here and they had been looking out at Frenchtown, the mill out there, to do their chipping operation. And so anyway, we got a deal with him to sell part of the property. So that gave us some cash. And then we went to the bank and Bill and his crew... we mortgaged everything we had and we raised enough cash. I think we were \$150,000 short. And Barb Callaghan, the banker there, said, "Steve, if you'll just sign this piece of paper, I'll give you the other \$150,000."

So we got it and now we got it, what are we gonna do with it? And so we're out trying to find people to raise money to help do whatever. And I think most people thought like Bill did in the beginning that this wasn't a very smart deal. But somehow or other we got through the process. We got the deal closed.

Interestingly, Paul Willis, the guy that has the [chipping] operation... we had a deal. We shook on it. We had the paperwork. He had never signed it. Three days before, I'm calling Paul and I'm trying to get ahold of him. He's down in Mexico on his yacht. I said, "Paul, when are we gonna get this money? We gotta close in three days."

And he laughed and he said, "Steve, the money will be there." Sure enough, the next day the money was in the account. So we were able to get this deal done. And when we started out... the way Stimson was running it, there was about \$750,000 a year in negative cash flow. And we, and I'm not terribly proud of this, but we had to let all the employees - there was just a security crew - but we had to let them go.

So we didn't have any security. We kept one guy, Tony Hubbard, some of you probably know Tony, and he was great. And then we went without any insurance. We didn't have any insurance on the site, and we were lean and mean. And we were in the position that if you walked on this site and you were looking for some space, we were gonna rent it to you. Didn't matter what the price was, we were gonna rent it to you. You could not leave. It's kinda like Hotel California. Anyway, we started, and then with the help of Missoula Economic Partnership, the commissioners ... All the people in our community started pushing people our way. And we just gradually started renting to people. Today Mike and I laugh about it. We say, "Why did we rent it so cheap?" But we needed it. We couldn't have made it without that. And as we did it, we started getting better cash flow.

[00:29:47] And then about that time, and that's when I first met Mike [Heisey]. He had some folks from Mississippi that were gonna build man camps for all the stuff that was going on in North Dakota. And we know how all that went. But anyway, it never happened. And we got to know Mike and we liked what he was doing and how he went about things. And so we hired Mike and his cousin, a lady by the name of Marla, and we started remodeling all the homes on this side of the street. And we, and as you guys will recall... and show, (indicates to change slides) maybe start to show couple pictures.

Well, the houses were in pretty terrible condition. Bad shape. But Mike... And we knew that if we could get those houses rented, now we had cash flow. And so we started one by one. I didn't, he did, (gestures toward Mike Heisey) he and his cousin. And we'd get a house ready and we'd put it on the market, get it rented, go to the next one, go to the next one. After about a year, we had all 16 houses rented. And then not long after that Britt Fred, who had Northwest Paint... They were renting from us. They were one of the first renters out here for us. They were probably the only tenant we had when we started. And Britt ended up buying that space.

Well, we took that money, some of that money, and we bought the houses across the street and that was more cash flow. And so that was our mode. We weren't gonna spend a nickel unless it was gonna get us two nickels back. And we just worked our way through that whole process and, I think we've kind of kept that attitude about it. I mean, I don't like to think we're cheap, but we're very, very careful about how we spend our money. And so over the years, good grief, we've probably put \$10 million back into the property. But I think as you'll see by some of the photographs and things like that, that things have improved.

So, I got off on a tangent there. (slide of mill in 2011) So you can see this is what, and this is a little bit before we bought it, 'cuz some of you'll recall these two barrels [roofs] fell down in 2010. But everything, as you notice, all the roofs are black. And if you see any of the close-ups of the walls and things like that, they're in pretty tough shape.

And now, and we'll show you a little bit later, but you'll see white roofs on everything, which just means they're new. The walls are all metal. Jason, (to projectionist) what's next? (new slide)

Yeah, let's just walk through this a little bit. So these are just pictures of what the mill looked like when we got here. And the reason I show this is 'cuz this is all metal. And you'll see inside some of the buildings as we move along, you'll see that there's a lot of metal. Well, we got lucky. Metal prices were quite high at that time, so we knew that we needed to tear these down. They were not useful anymore. So we ended up taking all this metal and sending it to Tacoma. And I think at that time they were sending it overseas, but we got pretty good prices for it. And here's the old A-frame. You guys, I mean, some of you folks here probably worked out here at that time. But there's the old A-frame, tore all that down. That roof on that A-frame we sold to Heritage Timber. They resold it and people have it on the sides of their houses and in their houses and that sort of thing now. But all of this came down and we were, like I say, we were very lucky. Prices of scrap were very high at the time. And I don't know how many... I think we sent out about \$500,000 worth of scrap during that period of time. And then we were able to use that money to continue to survive and to develop more of the property. Go ahead Jason. (new slide) These are just conveyors. Probably there's people here that know what they were all for. I don't. They were moving, I think, moving a lot of materials and things into the boilers and that sort of thing. And that's where they got all their heat. And there was no insulation in any of the buildings when we took over. They didn't need it. They had all this excess heat that they generated.

(new slide) More of the same. Now this is the sorter building and you know, it's right over here. I had forgotten how bad it looked and now you look today and I'll show you some pictures of it today, but it's now home of, and I'll get to that later too, but it's the home of a fulfillment center.

Okay, Jason. (new slide) Okay. And then here was the repository and that finally got removed just a year ago. About a year ago, we got all that removed. And so now the site is basically clean and we don't have any storage of any contaminated material on site. And it's a clean industrial site.

(new slide) This is just inside of the sorter building. And it's kind of hard to see, but lots of metal and conveyors and that sort of thing. But if you could look down there, you'd see lots of dirt floor, no insulation. And now it's got a nice concrete floor and it's all insulated, got heating in it and new doors and that sort of thing.

[35:45] (new slide) This is upstairs in the sawmill building. And now that's office space - looks really nice. That's where the offices and that sort of thing are for the Big Sky Fulfillment.

(new slide) And then just an overhead shot to give you an idea of what it was like. This is the forge building. And you can see what the roofs looked like and all these different colors and patchwork and all that. And all that's new now. New roof on the stone building. By that time, we'd gotten the new roof put on the plywood building.

(new slide) Just to show you up here is the water tank. It's a 500,000-gallon water tank. Provides all the water for the fire suppression system. (new slide) This is looking from the river at the plywood building. No metal, just all old plywood. Doesn't show up great, but anyway, it's now all metal siding.

(new slide) Same thing here. Now you're moving into ... like right here. This is Northwest Paint, which is now owned by Universal Forest Products. Go ahead. (new slide) More of the same. And this is this is all steel clad now, but this is the maintenance building for Willis Enterprises. (new slide) And then we're looking down at Northwest Paint. That's all changed color, got siding on it.

(new slide) And then this is the end of the plywood building. And I bet somebody in here... This is where they brought all the logs in and peeled them. You can see there's a little peeling machine back here where they peeled it. And that's where the veneer came from and plywood was made after that. (new slide) And the good thing for us was it was scrap metal that we could sell.

(new slide) And then now we're looking at the inside of the planer building. And this lower portion down here, that's where Bob and Planetary Design are located in there. These tracks are now gone. There's a big dust abatement system. Lots of wood and lumber and that sort of thing stacked out there. (new slide) Another end of the planer building. Now these, we used to run rail cars in there, and now the rail cars don't go in there anymore. They've got everything filled in with concrete and there's systems in there where they're re-sawing lumber. It's incredible what they've got going in there. (new slide) A little more of the same. And all these offices have been redone. Offices on the top floor in here. It's very cool. Very nice.

(new slide) Then that's just a picture of the inside. You saw on the loop where this was being built in 1962. This is what's in there now. But this was before we got it rented to Universal Forest Products. (new slide) Okay. We always thought these big cranes that they had were gonna be a big deal for us and we were gonna be able to really capitalize on that. And I don't think we've ever used one. They're so big and heavy that we can't get 'em off of there so we can turn 'em into scrap. So they just sit there.

(new slide) And this is looking over to the White House and this is before the repository was put on here. So this was probably 2000. I think the repository was built just about the time that we bought. So that fall of 2011. But that's looking across there. That's where the old dry kilns used to be.

[00:40:05] (new slide) Then looking down, just wanted to point out... I don't know whether Andrew or some of the [homeowners] ... At one of these points towards the end I'm gonna ask the homeowners to just stand up, but this was that house on the corner right across from the Post Office. (new slide) Little bit different now. When I reviewed those and looked at those I was like, "Oh, my God, that's quite a change."

(new slide) Kelsey, you're not here, are you? But anyway, you can see what they were like. Some of 'em were jacked up and we put new foundations under 'em. (new slide) OK. I've got a little drone footage here that we've taken and, is that where we are now, Jason? Okay. We're gonna get there.

We did a little drone footage of the site. It's probably two or three years old. But it'll give you a feel as to some of the things that have been accomplished, and some of the things that even been accomplished the last three or four years.

So over the years we've put, I'd call it lipstick on a pig, we put metal siding on an old plywood siding. It looks better, makes it last longer. But there are so many things that ... you see that, but what you don't see is the fire system, for example. Mike, what have we changed? Fifty, 60 leaking joints in the fire system. We've replaced some of the fire system that was... the underground water system that nobody ever sees, nobody thinks about, but you have to have it. We probably had the old valves, I bet somebody here used to work on 'em, but the old fire valves. 60? Probably 60 or 70 of those have all been replaced. The only one that has not been replaced is the one in the [Hellgate] Forge building and we plan on doing that this year.

(42:34) And those make you no money but you've gotta have it in order to be able to lease it to the people, responsible people, and that sort of thing. And then if you're going to insure it, which we do insure now, you've gotta have fire systems.

Power: At one time they used so much power they were in kind of a different system than we are now. Now we're with NorthWestern Energy, they provide all of our power, so we've had to go through most of the units and put in new metering, new power systems, that sort of thing. We've got almost the entire site ...

(4-minute slide show) it'll just give you an idea what's going on. (shows old black-and-white pictures) I don't think any of you guys are in here (laughter). There's the old Margaret Hotel. (color slide) And this is kind of new. This is the Willis' operation. You can see all the roofs – not all, but almost all the roofs are new now. This is the old plywood building that fell down, and then right in here now, interestingly, Universal Forest Products has built two buildings. They've got one here and another one here that they just finished up.

And then moving along. This is all Willis, of course, and their chipping operations. This is Northwest Paint. Different color now, and that was Britt Fred at the time and they've sold to Universal Forest Products. We'll get into each of those as we move along. This is the planer building. This is about the time that the bitcoin mining operation was in there. They have since gone, obviously. Probably we just got lucky again, but Universal Forest Products comes along and now they lease that entire 240,000 square feet.

[00:45:16] (stone warehouse building) This is where Coaster Pedicabs. We'll talk about them in a little bit. That's kind of in their operation where they build these pedicabs.

(big green building) This is the sorter building, which is now the Big Sky Fulfillment. We painted this, 'course we really smart. We painted it 'cuz we thought we could make it look good. Then we ended up putting metal on top of the paint. (laughter) (river) Then going along the shoreline here. This is where we are right now. Obviously that's Kettlehouse and behind that is the amphitheater, and we'll talk to you about that little bit later.

(houses) Then we'll be able to see coming up here, the houses, and these are about the time we started to sell 'em and get 'em ready for sale. (White House) This is the White House, and right now we have Bravo Catering in there.

We'll announce today, I don't know if Ana is here. We've got somebody else to fill the rest of that, so we're going to remodel the rest of that for Posh Chocolat.

So what have we got: Credits coming? So just so we give everybody credit, the people that put this together. We've got some names on here. I think it's the responsible thing to do, to make sure that people ...

(Slide) "Bonner Property Development. 224 N Higgins Ave., Missoula, MT. Michael Boehme: 406.370-6603; Steve Nelson: 406.370-0349. Mike Heisey: 406.552-8422"

47:40 These are a lot of the tenants that are on site.

(New slide list) "Alcom --Blue Dog Design – Bravo Catering – Coaster Pedicab – Freestone Concrete Works – Full Circle Biofuels Recycling

Hellgate Forge – Hyperblock --Kettle House Brewing --Majestic Bus Service --Mesa Logistics Group -- Montana Grow Fertilizer

North West Interiors – North west Pain – Perma Floors – Planetary Design – Rob Ames Cabinetry –Willis Enterprise –WMA Specialists"

(new slide) My plug for Jeff again

"For leasing information call Jeff Moore. NAI Crowley Moore LLC. 406-721-1111. jeff@naicrowleymoore.com"

(new slide) "Historical Photos Provided By: Jack L. Demmons Photo Collection. O'Lean Family Photo Collection. Jimmie Willis Photo Collection."

And then the photos. We've had collaboration from all kinds of people to help us. And Elizabeth put this together for us.

[48:00] OK. How we doing for time? So you're going to give us a picture of the overhead of the mill, Jason? Is that where we're going? [Jason: Yes] (new slide) So as you can see this is kind of the mill as it is not too long ago. And lots of white roofs so we've been able to get that all taken care of, get it up to date. As you can see this is all metal clad, and probably by the end of this year [2023] you'll have metal clad on everything.

What I'd like to do now is talk about the present – where we are today, who's here, and maybe if I could just ... the folks that are tenants, I know we've got some here. If you'd raise your hands. And then what I'm going to do. There's Bob of Planetary, Ana of Posh Chocolat. Dan ... So when I get to these I'm going to ask, and I'd rather have Dan Torti tell me what's going on at the KettleHouse than me trying to tell you. We'll start through that process and if we don't have a representative then I'll go ahead and tell you what I know about what they're doing.

[00:50:00] Just a quickie before we start. When we took over the mill we had North West Paint and they probably had 15 employees. It's shocking to me that today there's probably over 650 people working out here every day. It's phenomenal. (applause) They're not our employees but that's what these wonderful companies have done, and we'll talk about how much each one of them, you know, employees and the numbers and that sort of thing a little bit, what they do. But it's pretty cool for little ol' Bonner, Montana. I think it's very cool.

(zoom in on overhead slide) So, Jason. Can we start with the firehouse? We'll just start, we'll work our way through the mill. Here is the new, the old Piltzville firehouse is now there. It's first class. They have 5 or 6 people working there all the time, staying there 24/7. Willis Enterprises was kind enough to sell them that 1½ acres. And we absolutely love that they're on site. So if we did have a problem they can be on top of it in a heartbeat. I've talked to Chris Newman about it. They're excited about it. It's great for the community, the entire community, and it's great for us.

Right over here. You guys see the yellow buses? They're all there. That's Majestic Bus. They provide all the transportation for the kids out of the Bonner School.

Moving along we've got Willis Enterprises. Anybody? Rob? Anybody here from Willis? OK. So Willis Enterprises probably got about 10-12 people working, depending. And they are as probably you know, they're taking lots of beetle-kill timber, that sort of thing, that can't be used in the dimensional sawmill and they chip it. And right now they're taking about 12 rail cars a week over to Walulla, which is a paper plant in Washington around the Tri-Cities. And then they run truckloads down to Lewiston, Idaho. There's another paper plant down there. I think they're doing fine. They own that roughly 40 acres and Paul was the one I told you about earlier that came at the last minute with the money that he promised us, and did do it.

Moving along next we'll go to, let's do, Universal Forest Products. (Zoom in on two rounded-top buildings) These two barrels, plus these buildings, that's Universal Forest Products. This one over here, this is mainly the painting where they take siding and they bring in siding, repaint it, and then bake the paint on and then ship it back out. They probably have close to 60 people working there now.

Then I'll just continue on, with the old plywood building. So to continue with UFP, Universal Forest Products has this entire building now (points to the largest building). That's 240,000 square feet, and I'd love some of you guys that worked in there. But it's full of saws, chains moving lumber along. It's what a mill ought to look like. But they have about 80 people working in there now. They want to get to 170, plus the 60 over here. So pretty exciting, good for Missoula, good for us. I think all of these guys have figured out that they've gotta pay a little better, and they're all paying probably in the 18 to 20 dollars an hour for starting, and benefits. So it's exciting.

Back over here, then you've got this flat portion of the building. Northwest Paint has probably about there back, then the rest, this whole end here is Paramount. The tenant that we deal with is called Fire and Ice, but it's Yellowstone. It's the folks that make the sets and things. They build the sets in here, then they take them across the river to that big building that's over there, and that's where they get ready for Yellowstone, and they have probably 30 people or so. Kind of an interesting thing that, I was watching them, I drive by there, and I saw this nice porch that was being built. Brand new. It was beautiful, and I'm thinking, wow, that's pretty cool. And the next week or something I drive by - it's on fire. Sitting out ... and they've obviously had a fire in Yellowstone, wherever it is, and that's how they did it. I mean, what they build is so cool. It's beautiful stuff, but it's not very substantial. It's gotta be thrown away right away, but anyway, pretty cool. But anyway so they lease about 26,000 feet in there.

[00:55:35] Our original tenant was in here with Hellgate Forge. But one of our very early ... 2013, Alcom came in and they'd rented just this portion right here, and they had 25 employees. Missoula Economic Partnership brought them to us. And the reason they came, I think, once they got here and got to know people in Missoula they knew they needed to be here. But the guy that was the CEO at the time, the reason -- he was from Maine. And they needed something in the Northwest or something out here to expand their business. But he played hockey in Helena, and he remembered Missoula, and he remembered how beautiful Western Montana was, and he thought, "We need to be here."

And then once the Missoula Economic Partnership got a hold of them, they weren't leaving, and when they came and saw us, we weren't going to let them go either. But they started out with 25 people in there building trailers; 289 people work in there in a day. They used to be kind of, I would call... is there anybody here from Alcom? I better be careful. So anyway they were great, but they were always on the low end of the spectrum as far as pay, and then about a year ago, one Tuesday I remember they said, you know what we're going to do? Everybody in our plant gets a \$4-an-hour raise.

And they used to have, like, a tardiness on Mondays, like 15 people or so out of 150. They had one after that, and now they're paying well and they're taking care of their employees. They don't have the turnover. Pretty exciting. They can build about, being nobody's here, they can't tell me I'm lying to you. But they build somewhere in the neighborhood of 35 trailers a day, they can build. What are we talking? I know at one time they were talking 70 to 80, I think now they're talking over 100 million dollars worth of trailers coming out of there. Am I close? Somewhere in there? OK.

So that's how many trailers are being produced out of there. And if you're around you see the trucks going out on the highway all the time. Every day there's 8, 9, 10 trucks, so it's very, very exciting and I think they would like to get closer to 300 people, so we're excited about that. (Pan the picture) You can see all the trailers parked. That's their excess, and they're moving them out in a heartbeat, but pretty exciting to see all those trailers out there.

(58:17) (Zoom in on red building in front of stone warehouse) This is the Hellgate Forge. Darin [Wicks]? Brian [Martin]? Either one of you guys here? OK. So they were absolutely, other than Northwest Paint. They were our first tenant. Darin does all kinds of metalwork. Let me make sure I get this right, and I've gotta go back to the soap

deal. I missed that. But back to Hellgate. He's got about 10 employees. He has one of the things that I think's neat, other than all the metal fabrication that he does, and he does some real cool forge work and decorative kinds of things, but in fact all these tables, he built these, and then these tops came out of the river. They were logs that were submerged in the river, so Darin built all these for KettleHouse, which is pretty cool. The other thing they do that I think is kind of cool, is they do the blanks, they take 4 by 8 sheets of steel, and they do the blanks for Zombie swords. Now who would have thought? We have become, Missoula is one of the highest producing Zombie [swords] in the world, I guess. Who knows?

The other thing is they cut blanks for Ruana Knives, which you guys all know about. There's these other knife manufacturers, I don't know much about them. If I tried to say them, I'd have it wrong, but there's several others that they do that for.

So it's a pretty nice business that he's got going there, and we're really excited to have Darin there.

[01:00:00] So go back to the soap building. Okay. (new slide) So this is the new building that's right across from the churches. And right now there's another smaller 4,000 square foot added onto that, and that's Botanie Soap. And Tim, did you make it? I'll turn it over to you. You tell us how many people and how many thousands of bars of soap and the new products you're doing and that sort of thing. You want to come up? Oh, he's got a microphone even.

Tim Ludicello : Tim Ludicello, president of Botanie Soap: Looks like there's a mobile mic. Sure. I'm Tim. I run a company that manufactures bar and liquid soap. We sell to small businesses and medium-sized businesses that then brand it as their own. So we're a custom manufacturing shop. And on average, I think what we said our normal monthly output is somewhere between 75 and 100,000 bars of soap a month. In peak seasons we can go higher.

We also do liquid soap. I don't have those numbers for you. One we might capture is that everything we make comes from plant-based vegetable oils or plant oils as a whole. That's the basis for everything. And last year we went through 190,000 pounds of oil. So we have 20 employees. We started as a Farmer's Market booth, worked our way up. I loved hearing Mike's story because that's everybody's story, right? I mean, you never know what's coming the next day. You sort of go for it. You sort of wing it.

And I remember meeting with Jeff and with Mike Heisey, and, eventually it came together, but we're thrilled to be here. We have the only new building on the site, which is phenomenal. Came in right at the right time. So no improvements or repairs. I do have to talk to you about the ice though. (laughs) I'm sorry, I'm just giving a rough time. Yeah. Okay. It's been lovely. We're thrilled to be here, thrilled to be part of this community, thrilled that we have 20 people full time, and this is a wonderful place to be. So thanks to everybody who's been part of it. (applause)

Steve Nelson: Thanks. Later we've got, and we might have more than that, but we have another company that's here, going to be here, and they started, am I right, Ana, at the Farmer's Market?

Ana Willenbrock: Yes.

Steve Nelson: Yeah, I'll come back to you. But, that's how things happen. That's how things happen. And no, that's pretty exciting.

So, Planetary Design is right in here. And where these offices are, they used to be the offices for the old lumber mill and we remodeled them. And Bob is here and can we get him a microphone? Do you wanna just say a couple words, Bob, about Planetary Design, what you do and where you're going?

[00:01:03] **Bob Ballengee:** So I'm the GM at Planetary Design and on my business card it says Chief Historian. So I'm glad to be part of this history thing. And the only reason I have that title is 'cuz I've been there the longest, I guess. Been there 15 years. But we moved into the Bonner, into that section that Steve was just pointing at, six years ago. And it's been such a good experience for us. And we've grown. I think we were at seven employees at the time. We're at 20 also now. And filled up our 17,000-square feet of warehouse space. We're renting a little bit next to you (gestures) 'cuz we need some overflow. And we've just seen good growth, and we just feel like this is a place where we really feel community.

And then May of 2021, we bought a house, one of the houses. The one just to the, I guess, the south of the Post Office there. So, we use that for our owner, who still is out of state, getting ready to move back to Montana full-time, spends time there as well as... It's been a good place for us to, when we've hired younger people who are having a tough time finding housing, we've been able to use that house for that. So, been a great experience and we just want to continue to grow in our community relationships here. (applause)

[1:04:55] **Steve Nelson:** Okay, thanks, Bob. So also in there real quick is called WMS Contracting. Will Andrews. So Will, he's not here, is he? No. Will does spraying. He's got 10 or 12 of these quad bikes and things like that, and they go out and they have government contracts. They do private contracting besides, so they've got a pretty good-sized space in there. In addition, back over in this corner is Permafloors and Fraser [Johnston] has big trucks. They do this liquid kinda like Gyp Crete, if you know what that is. But they can pour concrete in high rises and things like that. It creates good insulation and the floor is level. You can pre-level floors, do things like that. So he's been there for quite a while.

I talked to you about Fire and Ice, Coaster Pedicab, which is in most of this building [stone warehouse]. And they build bikes for not only transportation, for moving around, like, baseball stadiums and things like that. People moving because parking's quite a ways away. And then they've got into building bikes for delivery for people like, I think they've done some with Amazon. They're doing some with FedEx and things like that. UPS and that sort of thing. Also in this building, right?

Jason Vaughn: Sorry.

Steve Nelson: That's okay. You will not get fired. I'll tell you. Right in here is a little company called Freestone Concrete. They've only got two or three employees, but concrete countertops, all the kind of things you can imagine to do with concrete. Fancy stuff for nice houses. It's kind of an alternative to granite and some of those kinds of things.

In the back of this building back here, there's a young fella, Gen [Shimizu]. YAMA [Mountain Gear] is the name of his company. It's only online. There's him and then sometimes he has a second person. He builds backpacks and tents. Like if you were an overnight camper and you're a backpacker, that sort of thing. He builds that kind of gear. You buy it on online.

And interesting story about... again, it always shocks me when I find out why people move to Missoula, Montana. But he had his business in Charlottesville, Virginia. He was driving through and he stopped to do some biking, ran into some people, and he said, "I'm doing my business here." And he came and talked to Jeff and Mike and talked to us about it and we said, "Well, yeah, we can do this ... So we remodeled some space for him, put him in there. And he's been there, what, three years now? So why you would leave Charlottesville... But anyway, he loves it here and it's great for us and great for him.

So now let's move to, am I right in here? But this is the old sawmill building and it used to go clear out by the river, and now it's cut off there. But anyway, we have a company in there called Montana Bullet Works, right? And they don't create ammunition. They just create the lead bullets. So you see big pallets of bars of lead coming in, and they're in there and they're melting it and turning it into bullets. And they've got these little machines in there that do it automatically, and then they box 'em up and put 'em in (unclear) and sell 'em to, I think the ammunition outfit down in Stevensville and probably all over, right? Yeah. But anyway, they have three or four people.

Then this is Big Sky Fulfillment. They're kind of an Amazon-type thing that you would think about. Some of the things that I think about what they do... if you go to... I'll say it wrong, but it's either QVC or QMC or somebody like that, the television network where you can buy stuff online, whatever that is.

And, okay. So anyway, I watched them one day. I was like, "What the heck are you doing?" And they have these pitchers, big, nice pitchers, water pitchers or something. And I'm looking at 'em and they're breaking down great big boxes of maybe 15 or 20 of these pitchers. And they're putting 'em into little boxes and then they send them out. And so when they get the orders, they just roll 'em over, put 'em in little boxes and send them out. Another one they do is keto food diet stuff. You can tell I don't use it. I need to be on a diet, but I'm not. (laughter) So they bring all this stuff in in semi-loads, and then they package it and mail it out. So, it's a fulfillment center and they're leasing 60 some thousand square feet from us and they've been here about two years now. They're a company that started out about five years ago. He's a University of Montana grad and young fella, probably in his early thirties. And he started out at about five or 6,000 square feet, went to 20, and now he's at 60-some thousand feet and there is some discussion about he wants to grow. So we're excited about that.

[1:10:58] Then over here in the White House is Bravo Catering and he's got about 10 employees. Bravo Catering just bought... We used to be Big Sky Mobile Catering. We owned a big portion of his company or part of it. And now Ryan [Boehme] has bought us out of that. And that's his deal all by himself, which we're excited for him and excited for that whole thing to go ahead. He has anywhere from eight to 15 to 20 people working, depending on what's going on.

I'm gonna wait, Ana, just for a little bit with you, but KettleHouse. I think Tim's got about 25 people working here. Is there anybody who wants to speak for KettleHouse or shall I just go ahead. Okay. So they've got about 25, 30 people working here. We all know what a success Cold Smoke is and the different kinds of beers and things that they do here. And they've built this fantastic facility and we're just really, really excited to have 'em here. And then next to them is the amphitheater. And Dan, I'll let you, would somebody hand Dan the microphone? Dan is CEO, whatever you are, the boss. Tell us a little bit about the amphitheater.

Dan Torti: So my name's Dan. I'm the Vice President of Operations for Logjam. So I oversee all the events happening in that venue right there, as well as Missoula and Bozeman. We're honored to be a part of this community. It's been great. Being here since 2017, the venue continues seeing growth.

We opened in 2017. We did seven events. Last year we did 31 events, well over a hundred thousand tickets. Since we've opened, we've done, I believe, 107 events there, have sold over 300,000 tickets to residents of all 50 states. And every year rank in the top 50 amphitheaters in the world. 2021, we also, (applause) Yeah, 2021 we were nominated for Outdoor Venue of the Year. That's up against the Greek Theater in Los Angeles and some major venues in the country. We didn't win. We were nominated. But seeing Bonner, Montana, up against those other venues is really cool.

It takes about a hundred employees a show to run that, and that's local staff. That's from the box office all the way to backstage. I'd say, you know, anywhere on average 90 to a hundred people to manage one of those shows. And yeah, we look forward to many more years of music on the Blackfoot. (applause)

Steve Nelson: Excellent, thanks.

unidentified speaker: Where do they park? Where do they park?

Steve Nelson: Right here. (indicates on slide) (unknown voice: That's the primary.)

Steve Nelson: All in there. They lease some space from us over here, all along here. And once in a while they might park in front of your house. (laughter)

Okay, so Ana. Would you, Gary, give Ana that real pretty lady back there? So this is Posh Chocolat, and they're not here yet, but they just signed a lease and they're gonna be in the upper floor of the White House and guess what? They make chocolate. But tell us a little bit about what you've got going on, Ana.

[1:14:56]**Ana Willenbrock:** Right now, Valentines. So I own Posh Chocolat and my husband Jason, he's in Vegas right now. Probably gambling. No, no, he's in a chocolate show. We're looking at new equipment and everything because we're very excited to move to the White House. And we want to turn this into not only our factory, but a place where people can come and see what we do, do tours, classes, birthday parties, and just, we're very excited.

Funny enough, we first started in '05. We had our first kitchen in the Wilma, historic building. So do Logjam. Then we had another kitchen. We were just growing. And then we had our retail shop in the Florence, another historic place. And now we're moving here, another historic place. And we are just ready, hopefully by, I would say next fall we'll be here, and we welcome all of you with lots of chocolate. (applause)

Steve Nelson: Thank you. So, put it, can you get it on the houses? (Zoom in) Is that where I'm at next? (new slide) I never introduced Jason. Jason Vaughn is our technical guy. He works for Bonner Property Development, and he can do anything. He's really, really good at the technical kinds of stuff. It's phenomenal. And he's an invaluable resource for us, but he can also swing a hammer, drive a dump truck, do whatever he needs to do. So, thank you, Jason.

So now are there any homeowners here? You don't have to speak. So we got a few. Yeah. Cool, cool. So, yeah, Jay. So, we decided a couple years ago that we were gonna start selling some homes. The market looked right and we were frankly not very good probably at being landlords for houses. I think we're pretty good at the commercial side of it, but we were chasing our tails and making some mistakes. And we just decided that we ought to, and the market was really good at the time and I think still pretty good. And so on the other side of the street, we sold all those houses last year and then this year... 'cuz they were subdivided so we could sell those immediately.

And then this side, probably the last year we've been working on getting a subdivision approved so that we could have what we call Bonner Homes West. That's these houses on the mill side. And we've sold almost all of them. We have three houses left, right? Yeah. There's three houses left. One of 'em we're gonna keep and have our security girl stay in that. We like her so much that we don't want to have the potential of losing her because she might, you know,

not be able to find a place to live. So we're gonna make sure that she has a place to live and that we're gonna have her there.

And then on the other side of the street, the old, what we call Bonner Homes, we have one house at the very back over there by the railroad tracks that we still own. And then we own the Post Office. Annelise, is she here? No, but Annelise Hedahl, well, Jeff helped too and helped us pick Annelise, and Annelise did most of the real estate sales. And so we were really fortunate to have somebody with that kind of pedigree and of the quality that Annelise is.

So now we've talked about the past and the present, and we'll just talk a little bit about the future. And this we don't have a whole lot, but we'll talk about it and then we'll open it up for any questions or somebody wants to tell a story, they can tell a story.

So the future, obviously Posh Chocolat is and I think we said that they started in the Farmer's Market. And we're gonna renovate the upper floor of the White House and hopefully, don't hold me to this, but maybe June, July, something like that. She's saying prayers and we are too, but hopefully we can get them in there by that time. So we're excited about that.

Right at the end of White House Lane, we're gonna probably put an electronic gate in there 'cuz they need deliveries. So does Bravo. And you'd have trucks getting locked in there and couldn't get out. And that way the homeowners that live on White House Lane will have a place to come in and turn and get back out without having to do a three-point turn every time.

[1:19:56] We have pretty much replaced the entire water, and I talk about potable water this time. We did it on the Bonner Home side. We replaced all of that. Now we've done it pretty much all on this side of the mill. And we've probably got another hundred yards of waterline that we need to replace and we're gonna do that this year.

We're hoping, and then, Jason, can you go to that overhead again? (overview of mill and Bonner) Okay. So back here, we're looking at building a couple 20,000 square foot buildings. We've got some potential. We think we can move some people around and that's sort of on the books. We've got a couple regulatory kinds of things that we're dealing with that we've gotta figure out, but we think we can make that happen. And then right about in here, we're gonna build another drain field or a sewer system for 250, somewhere in there. So that would handle these two buildings.

If we ever got bigger in this building with employees more than 40, we could probably accommodate that. And then at the same time we do plan on building something at some point on the repository. And then we would have a sewer system. That's the thing that we have to look at first. When you go to decide a building, first thing you really gotta look at is, well, first of all, does it fit within the parameters of setbacks and all that? But the other thing is you gotta make sure you got a place for sewer. And so that's why we're gonna do that. We're in the process of that. We've been... It's at DEQ? Yeah, it's at DEQ. It takes quite a while to get the process done, but as soon as that's done, probably in the spring. If everything else works out and we can figure out how to get these buildings back there, then we'll go ahead and build that sewer system.

Then around UFP, if you notice now there's just lumber stacked everywhere, and we're probably gonna end up, we've been talking to them about it, but I think we're gonna end up having to pave a lot of that stuff because with forklifts and all those kinds of things moving around you can't just do it on gravel. And so I think probably in the spring you'll see us doing a pretty major deal there.

And then lastly, and there's other things that we're thinking about, but lastly, this property back behind here, behind these houses. There's probably nine or 10 acres back there. It's zoned neighborhood residential. And we're gonna explore the possibility of maybe doing some kind of a multi-family deal in there. Very, very preliminary. But there again, the biggest issue is gonna be sewer. How do we negotiate and figure out how to find enough space? 'Cuz every time you have a sewer system, you gotta have a replacement for it. So it takes up a lot of property. But that's one of the priorities of the county. It would be one of our priorities too, is to try to figure out how to maximize that space. So that's one of the things we're looking at.

So, that's all I got. So let's open it up to questions. I think we've probably got a little bit of time, so if anybody has any... Way in the back.

[01:23:38] **John Rimel:** So one thing you didn't mention is last year you and your partners purchased "B" Hill [Bonner Mountain] and put a conservation easement on it with Five Valleys Land Trust.

Steve Nelson: Yes.

[00:54:53] **John Rimel:** I'm on the board of Five Valleys [Land Trust]. Thank you very much for that. And I think the community certainly appreciates that endeavor to keep that as a space available to the community. So thank you. (applause)

Steve Nelson: Thank you. Yeah, we were excited to do that. And I just left it out. I'm sorry, but I,

Unknown speaker: You had the water tower in it.

Steve Nelson: It does. And so we had a little bit of a fiscal reason to buy it, but no, we just knew that it was, you know, the right thing to do. And by the Five Valley Land Trust getting involved with the conservation easement, it allowed us to be able to do that. And now it'll just be like that. No condos up there. It's just gonna be like it is. And we're really, really excited about that.

And, I think... Mike [Heisey], help me a little bit, but I think that there's some discussion about at this end, right across here, (points to screen) we're gonna have some kind of a... Rather than go to the road or whatever, there's gonna be a way that if you were walking behind the houses, you could go and get on that road. And then you could walk up by the water tank and go up all through that property. Come out back over by, not quite Piltzville, but over by those houses along there. There's trails that run along and then come down through Garnet and that sort of thing. And Five Valleys [is] helping us with that. They're doing a lot of the work, or most of the work. But anyway, we're excited about that. That'll be real cool for the community.

Anybody else? Yes, sir.

unidentified speaker: Any thought of developing along the riverfront, some sort of public path or whatever?

Steve Nelson: Well, so, no. But, see, what we're finding out... We just learn stuff all the time, but we understand now, and it's right. There's a riparian 50-foot buffer, or not buffer, but a riparian zone that's 50 feet from the high watermark, and then there's another 125 feet that's what they call a riparian buffer. But to talk about the trail, that gets us over the top a little bit. In fact, it gets us to where it kind of squeezes a little bit on whether we can build buildings behind there. But we're working on that and the county's being really good about listening to us and being creative. Can I talk about the back? The trail? So what we've talked to some of the folks in the trail business about is, maybe behind the houses on Bonner, where the alley is, maybe doing something back there so that it would connect with the other parts of the trail system. We've even talked about maybe getting something going with the railroad, that old rail track that runs back there. Maybe that could be where the trail runs. So that's what we're talking about. But we think with the riparian and the riparian buffer that it's going to, it'd be difficult to do something along there. So I hope that answers your question.

Anybody else? Yes, Burt. I would be surprised if you didn't have a question. (laughter)

Burt Caldwell: I didn't want to disappoint. (laughter) Just out of curiosity. Out of the six or 700 employees you've got, how many are from the Bonner-Milltown area? You got any idea?

Steve Nelson: I don't. I do know, I don't know, but I do know that there are... well, Jay. Where's Jay? Where's he at? Okay. And is it Tracy?

Stacy: Stacy.

Steve Nelson: Stacy. They bought a house over here and she works at the Big Sky Fulfillment. I know there are other people that are living in the houses that work here. I just don't know the number. We should probably try to figure that out. It'd be nice to know. Mike, go ahead. Oh, hey, boss.

Jim Howard: Hi there. I don't really have a question, but my name's Jim Howard. I'm the superintendent at Bonner School, and I'm not really wearing my uniform today, I guess. Didn't expect to be at the mic, but I guess want to express on behalf of the school what good neighbors Steve and Mike and Mike have been to Bonner School, to Bonner students, our staff, they just, any time we need anything I know I can come sort of hat in hand and they're just so generous. And they also have connected us to so many of the other entities here on the site that support our school and our students, so we're really grateful for the relationship and the vision of progress and doing things right for our community. We appreciate you a lot. (applause)

[1:29:30] **Steve Nelson:** Is this a two-part question, Burt?

Burt Caldwell: Again, it's not a question. Ok? I want to support what Jim just said, and say as the past president or chair of the Bonner Milltown Council, I've said this a number of times. Steve and Mike have done a great job of

being community partners, members. We had a problem with the Bitcoin. Steve showed up every day, every time there was a council meeting he showed up to help. And you can't ask for a better neighbor.

Steve Nelson: Thank you. (Applause)

Kim Briggeman: I've got two things. One is a concert story. We at the St. Ann Catholic Church sell parking in our parking lot and we are three-quarters of a mile from the front gate. We've measured it off. But sometimes we get it filled. One of those concerts was the Billy Strings concert, this past summer, and my wife and I were parking for the first. They had 'em back to back and they sold out immediately. So who the heck is this Billy Strings? And we found out. We took our bikes after we got done parking and the concert was just beginning. We took our bikes from the church up to the post office basically and counted license plates from different states, and there was a lot of Montanas, of course, but we counted license plates from 25 different states parked along the highway there. I don't know what that means other than Billy Strings has a broad appeal probably.

The other thing is, when you're showing these buildings and what they've become, I'm watching guys in this table right – Fred [Beyer] and Max [Smith] – and they're shaking their heads, well, not only them, but they're shaking their heads and I wonder if there's not a way if we can kind of portray what they used to be. What these buildings used to be. I don't know if we can get those pictures back. Like the stone building, is just a fascinating looking building, but what did it used to be? With that I might hand the mic over to that table.

Max Smith: OK. I think the best information resource would be Rick Swanson. I know I've seen him in here. But he worked in there. We had a warehouse in there, but that building has always been here. The earliest pictures I've ever collected, you'll see that building, but I think Rick, I hate to put you on the spot, but I think you're more knowledgeable on that building than anybody here.

[01:33:03] **Rick Swanson:** Well, I can give you a little on the warehouse. I was there for must be 30 years anyway. And in there I had a job where I had to receive all of the products that were brought in by truck or on the railroad car. When I first started, [Fritz] Thibodeau was our boss. We also made houses, built houses. And they were shipped all over. I think one of the biggest was the one to Alaska that was shipped on a barge and they had some trouble with the pieces weren't right, but they sent Fred Treichel up and he straightened it out to his knowledge, and also being shipped up there entailed very many of the, should I say, problems going from barge to a boat that would go up there.

Down here it was everything that came in I had to check in to see everything was there. And there were times when we had two, three trucks and I also had to get the UPS when they came in, and everything that was brought in, I had to check it. All the local people that were in Missoula that were bringing the material, they had to be checked too, so I was quite busy. And then when [U.S.] Plywood got here to build they had all kinds of trucks coming in, and each one I had to check out. And we put it over in the old, well, I don't know what you call it now but it was in the planer building on the far end where the railroad came in. It was quite the job, and I enjoyed it. So I guess that would be enough.

Steve Nelson: Thank you. Thank you. (applause)

[1:36:56] **Mary Ann Buckhouse:** Okay, I'm just gonna ... hopefully not talk too long. But Rick is an old-timer, he said he had 30 years. Well, I'm an old-timer also. I had 37 years with Anaconda and then Champion International. The Margaret Hotel, that beautiful hotel, I started in 1956 and I think they tore it down in '57. But I remember they told me it was going to be torn down. And so I did get a tour of that beautiful hotel. And I thought that was the worst thing in the world that they should have done. It should have been kept for a historic building, whatever. But anyway somebody in Butte, Montana, made that decision, so I had nothing to say about it. (laughter) One other thing I wanted to mention, Jerry and I. I started in 1956, August 1, and then I think in '58 Jerry and I were able to rent a company house, and we lived there for 12 years. And I don't mean to offend you ...

Steve Nelson: You won't. (laughter)

Mary Ann Buckhouse: (laughing) But we started, I think it was 25 dollars a month when we started renting. We rented for 12 years and the rent was 56 dollars a month.

Steve Nelson: How'd you afford it? (laughter)

Mary Ann Buckhouse: Well, I was a little old secretary, I really wasn't making that much money, but we were very pleased to live in a company house. And, you know, they were pretty nice houses. We lived right across from

the post office, and I know you've done a lot of maintenance, you did most of them. And that's a compliment to you.

We're very pleased to have you in our community. We did build our new home is on the Bonner Pines just off of Garnet, you mentioned that the trail and so on was going in there. We've been in that house, it'll be 50 years in October, so we're kind of old timers around here. We've seen a lot of history over the years. I'm just, we're just, I think everybody in the community here we're very, very excited to have you here, and I cannot believe what you've made out here. What your plans are. I think it's just great. And we welcome you to our community.

Steve Nelson: Thank you. (applause)

[1:40:20] **Ken Peers:** Hi, this is Ken Peers. Something I wanted ... might bring up some bad feelings. [Kenny is mistakenly referring to a proposal for mixed-use in the West Log Yard, not the Bonner Mill. The Community Council always supported the Bonner Mill development.]How this all started when I was on the Community Council and Gary [Matson]and two other fellas. It came to our attention that they wanted to just do houses on this property, and I brought that up and we voted on it. Gary was the only one who voted against it. I understand that. [At this time the Community Council voted to reject an EPA Smart Growth grant. Gary Matson was the only council member who supported it.]

And we ended up killing that project, and we had another meeting [Later a community visioning project to envision the future of the entire community was held at Bonner School] where we had all the people in this community come together. They each pulled a tag and put it on so we'd know whether they wanted to make it commercial, residential or something else. Anyway, everybody kind of agreed that we should retain this as an industrial site,[West Log Yard] and I made mention that it was probably the last industrial site of this size east of the coast, so it was something worth saving as I saw it, and that's how that turned out. So I'm glad we worked our way through it, and I'm certainly glad we saved it.

Steve Nelson: Yeah. We agree. (applause)

[1:42:20] **Dick Shimer:** Yes, I'm Dick Shimer, and I was the central maintenance manager here at the mill site for about 20 years under Stimson and for about 5 or 6 years under Champion. And the warehouse, we called it the warehouse, the stone building was truly a warehouse at the time. And office buildings, used for storage. But the original purpose, one of the original purposes, was that when this mill started up all the lumber was moved on wagons. They were pulled by horses, and this warehouse building was a stable for the horses, and the upstairs was the haymow). And this portion of the roof has windows all the way around that open, and that was to allow ventilation so heat didn't build up there in the hay.

Steve Nelson: Hadn't heard that. That's good.

Dick Shimer: And the upstairs, the beams on the upstairs near the roof, people have written and inscribed notes and notations over the years. One of them was for a roommate of mine from college from 1965, but there are dated comments that go back to 19... World War I, that are etched in the wood, painted in the wood up there. So it's quite a fascinating old building.

Steve Nelson: Yeah. (applause)

[1:44:10] **John Rimel:** Well, a couple of other brief comments. I think the gentleman from the Kettlehouse just left, but there was a comment about the parking of the cars and Logjam has been very generous in coordinating with the Missoula Kiwanis Clubs, who are a volunteer operation here in Missoula, to have them help them park cars. And two clubs, Sentinel Kiwanis and Missoula Kiwanis, rely on the funds raised from that as a big part of their fundraising efforts, so hats off to Logjam for helping us with that.

The other thing is a lot of stuff over the years has left the Bonner mill. So one thing that the Bonner mill used to do, they used to have the box plant, and some of you guys may remember the box plant, and that dated probably from the Hammond days [1886-1898], but if you have an old house in Missoula and it has panel doors in it, those were likely made at the boner mill, and the box plant, most of the woodworking machinery, turn of the century, not the last century, but the century before is now residing at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula.

In addition thanks to Shorty Helm and I think the box plant maybe is thanks to Shorty Helm too, how it landed there too, and Marvin Troutwine. But the other thing that's out at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula is a firetruck that has Anaconda painted on the side of it that used to reside out here for many years. It's about a 1950s vintage Chevy. And those are all out at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula. When Stimson... when Champion moved to

Stimson, they also had an auction. And I acquired a library, huge library table. I don't know what building it was in, but the thing is four feet wide and 10 feet long, and weighs about 300 pounds. Oak table. It is now in the conference room at Mountain Press Publishing. So if anybody ever wants to visit it, I'm happy to give you a tour.

unidentified speaker: There was a conference table in the White House

[1:47:00] **Leo Nagel:** Yeah. Pat McDonald and Billy Younger and Mike Nelson and us, we all grew up out here. I'll be 80 next Tuesday, so I've been here a long time. But anyway, that Margaret Hotel that Mary Ann had mentioned... when I was a kid, my mom used to work there and there was a cook there named Mabel Sowre. She made best lemon pies and she put about that much meringue on it. And it's still with me. It's still with me right here. (pats belly. laughter) That's how good they were. But us kids would come over from West Riverside and eat those pies over here. They were really good. But anyway, he's talking about that box factory. We've, the wife and I, Elaine have got some of those old breadboards they made in there. They were stamped Anaconda. We've still got them up the house. So it's pretty good. And we're happy to have you guys here and we're glad you got rid of those noisy airplane fans (in the Bitcoin building).

Steve Nelson: Our pleasure.

Ana Willenbrock: Just, I'm going to have to leave. I have my little kids here, but I left some chocolates here at the end, so feel free to get, grab a little piece and there's more to come. (applause)

Steve Nelson: Yes, sir.

[01:48:50] **Unidentified speaker:** While you were going through all the businesses, you talked about quite a few of them expanding, a couple of them doubling in size. Will they be able to stay on the grounds with the increase that they're looking at?

Steve Nelson: We think so. And I don't want to get too deep in the weeds, but these buildings, these new buildings that we would like to build, we think we can maybe either accommodate them or accommodate somebody else then, they would move from someplace on site, maybe to the new building, might open up some space next to them. And so that's kind of our hope. And but yes, we'll move mountains to keep 'em around here and make sure that we're able to accommodate what they want to do. And, you know, they've been amazing.

I don't know whether we're... well, we're probably lucky, but they will kind of tell us. Alcom, they had the one barrel and then they were kind of telling us, well, you know, we might get a little bigger. And then pretty soon they had the next barrel and then..., and we've kind of kept our ear to the ground. And Mike [Heisey], I think, talks to everybody probably once a week at least. And we try to keep a good feel for that 'cuz we want 'em to stay here. We don't want 'em going anywhere else. So I think we can, yeah. Yes, sir. Pat.

Pat McDonald: Steve, question. Do you hear any rumblings? Do you hear any rumblings from city, county as to if and when the sewer would ever be extended out into this area?

unidentified speaker: Never. (some laughter)

Steve Nelson: Pat, I, to be honest, we, some of us got involved. But some, (lady commenting on sewer in the background)

[01:03:35] **Pat McDonald:** That's funny. I thought I asked Steve this question. (laughter)

[01:03:39] some traction. Maybe we can get some interest. Boy, there's just a lot of issues with that. It's so far from... I think when it finally came down to it, you would eventually, someday you're probably gonna have to have some kind of a localized system or something that maybe that the county or the city's involved in, but I don't see it happening for a while.

And the other thing is, you'll be surprised to know, that this group that lives out here, they're a pretty independent bunch. (laughter) And they basically, they don't want to get annexed into the city. They're happy with where they're at. And the other thing that happens is because of our geography and the way we are, we do a pretty good job of dealing with sewage and that sort of thing and with the drain fields. And they're pretty careful now. We have to ... I think, we don't have anything on site that's not county-approved now. When we got here, there were lots of 'em that were just a hole, and that's where it went. But because of the soils and the way it percolates and stuff, it's amazing how good all that is in this whole community out in this end of town.

But, personally, I don't see it happening. Maybe, I don't know, somebody... Down the road, something might happen, but I'd be really surprised in my short [time] left of my lifetime. I don't think it's gonna happen. But what do I know?

Kim Briggeman: We have time for a few more questions. Couple minutes. Anybody? Or stories?

[01:52:53] **unidentified speaker:** You haven't thought about how the traffic has gotten a lot more and it's... Have you thought of that? About the traffic or anything? You know, like maybe a temporary light or something sometimes?

Steve Nelson: We have.

unidentified speaker: Because that corner over there gets a little dangerous, you know. We live off of old Highway 10 or 210, and there's like afternoons, evenings, you know, just the traffic is awful.(receives microphone) Oh, I'm supposed to talk in this? I only wanted Steve to hear me. Well, this was just our conversation, okay?

Steve Nelson: I can tell you that we have thought about it and you know, it's,

unidentified speaker: What was the question?

Steve Nelson: The question was traffic control. 'Cuz there's so much traffic up and down 200 and then even going down towards Piltzville, you know. And some of it's a product of the success we've had. 'Cause in fact we're going to one of these days, get somebody to set in the guard shack and just count. We don't, but I... it shocks me how many vehicles go in and out. You know, delivery vehicles. And then you've got probably 600 cars going in and outta here every day. And sometimes twice a day, you know, and a lot of times, I don't know whether you're ever around at lunchtime, but, man, it's a big zoo going out of here running down to the Town Pump. And so, we have thought about it. We've talked about it, and, but we don't necessarily want to ...

unidentified speaker: We don't want another light, but ...

Steve Nelson: I don't think so. How about a roundabout right in front? (laughter) No! I'm just kidding. I'm kidding! I'm kidding! Don't shoot! (laughter continues)

unidentified speaker: He's joking. But we have

Steve Nelson: I just think the school ...Jim probably left, but the school has more kids. There's just so much going on. And up the valley there's all kinds of stuff. Down, there's lots going on. And probably one of these days there's gonna have to be something done. I don't know exactly what, but probably gonna have to be something done.

unidentified speaker: Well, we live on old, on that highway there on 210. In the last five years, the traffic has just gotten so bad. But then, does anybody know where the little caboose went, that was on Old Highway 210, and now the, oh, you do. And now they're rebuilding... the railroad went in there and now that's all blocked off and

Ken Peers: That's railroad property. That's railroad property. And the Bonner Development Group put the car on there and we wanted to get rid of it, so we sold it to a gentleman down there in Turah and he's got it down there now. But, yeah, that all belonged... so we had to clean that property all up just like it was before because it does belong to the railroad.

unidentified speaker: So did you go and reclamate and then put the brand new fence up? That just happened in the last two months or so.

Ken Peers: No, they must have done that. We just brought it up to the standards it was when we took it over.

unidentified speaker: Yes. So they fenced that all off. They cleaned it all up. And we were wondering if they were gonna use that for some, I mean, railroad, it's hard to say. Yeah. We can't even, you know where the horse arena is underneath? Yeah, that's all blocked off.

Ken Peers: Well, that property now, anyway, on the right hand side going, that's all part of the park down there. And we donated that property too. (lady continues talking in background) What's that? Yeah. We donated that to the Fish and Game. So they own that now and they're taking care of it.

Steve Nelson: Okay. Mary, did you have ...)

Mary: No, I was just gonna answer that question. Okay. So were we.

[01:08:49] **Kim Briggeman:** Okay. I think that is it? And boy, was that good. (applause)

[01:56:49] **Steve Nelson:** The only thing I would say is thank you, thank you, thank you. You folks are incredible. That's what makes this community so special is all you people. And we respect and appreciate all of you very, very much. Thank you. (applause)

Kim Briggeman: Thank you, Steve. And I thank you too. We crammed a lot of people in here and, and I think this is a great venue for these things.

Next month, on the third Sunday of next month [February], we will have a presentation here on the Mullan statues and their place in, I guess, American history, but also Bonner history. And our third program will be at the Catholic Church in Bonner. And it features Bill Taylor and the building of the railroad and the ethnicities that built the railroads through here. And it should be fascinating.

So, third Sunday of January, February and March every year. Thank you all.

(Outro music and credits)



Transcription of this recording was funded by a Missoula County Rural Impact Grant.

The Bonner History Roundtable is a project of the Bonner Milltown History Center, 9397 Hwy 200 E, PO Box 726, Bonner, Montana 59823. Since beginning in 2009, programs are normally held the third Sunday of January, February and March, excluding March 2020 and all of 2021 due to the pandemic. The project has also been called The Bonner Area History Roundtable and the Working at the Mill Series.