



BONNER MILLTOWN HISTORY CENTER AND MUSEUM

“Keeping our local area and timber heritage alive for the enjoyment and education of the public.”

The Bonner Dam was constructed in 1885, destroyed by high water, and rebuilt before the mill opened in 1886. It was removed in November, 2005. (See story page 11)

Welcome the New Year with 2023 Roundtables

January 15, 2-4, KettleHouse Taproom: We’ll ring in 2023 by Celebrating Bonner: Past, Present, and Future. After a brief history of Bonner and the mill, Steve Nelson will recall the events leading up to the public announcement on December 16, 2011 that he and Mike Boehme were the new owners of the mill property. Steve will describe developments at the mill and future plans. Business owners and new home owners will be recognized.

February 19, 2-4, KettleHouse Taproom: Historian Leif Fredrickson of the University of Montana will discuss the social and political implications of erecting statues in 1916 and 1917 commemorating John Mullan and the construction of the Mullan Road in the 1850s and early 1860s.

March 19, 2-4, St. Ann Catholic Church: Popular speaker Bill Taylor will talk about ethnic groups involved in the construction of the railroads. “Better than Butte pasties” will be available following the presentation. Dine in or carry out.

Visioning project identifies priorities

By Judy Matson

Our mill heritage runs deep, from personal histories to creativity to organization. On the latter point, Andy Lukes has successfully guided us through the first of a series of visioning meetings.

Starting with existing committee members, we discussed three questions: what we can do better to preserve and communicate our local history, what are our strengths and weaknesses, and what should be our top three priorities for the future.

The results of Visioning, Part 1 are in!

We affirmed our mission: “keeping our local area and timber heritage alive for the enjoyment and education of the public” and developed our vision: “inspire a sense of place of a no-longer existing company town by collecting, preserving, and sharing the area’s cultural heritage. The major focus is stories of the mill, its timberlands, and community. Our stories include, but are not limited to, employees, families, transportation, religion, recreation,

women, environment, and Native American and minority-based history as it relates to the Bonner area.

We identified four priorities and leaders: recruit new members (everyone!); Bonner School outreach (Kim Briggeman, leader); continue Roundtables, programs, coffee and Old Trails meetings (everyone is good at pitching in); and focus on organizing the collection (Judy Matson and Minie Smith, leaders).

As you read our newsletter, we hope you’ll pick up on the straw that stirs the drink: working on preserving Bonner history is fun! Each committee member brings a love of Bonner history, a unique perspective, and an appreciation for the social nature of our group. Our emphasis is the STORY in history.

Interested in sharing the fun? We welcome you!! Contact any committee member (see back page), email bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com or call (406) 540-4046 and leave a message.

Old Roads and Trails group shares new insights...

Old Roads and Trails members visit areas in Gold Creek/Belmont Creek with BLM

By Tony Liane

Bob Symes, Dennis Sain, Tony Liane, and Andy Lukes, joined by Kent Bevington and Bruce Schlaebitz, provided information on historic forestry practices and roads to a BLM group led by Michael Albritton. Kim Briggeman, Robert Dunlop, Bill Weikel, and Judy Matson also made the trip.

In the spring of 2022, Michael Albritton from the Missoula Office of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) stopped by the Friday meeting of the Old Roads and Trails group. Michael brought with him some old maps and silviculture/logging reports from the Gold Creek and Belmont Creek lands formerly owned by both the Anaconda and Champion corporations. In recent years, the BLM acquired these lands from the Nature Conservancy and is in the process of doing a watershed assessment for future management planning.

Michael, having the old maps and reports and knowing that former foresters and land managers were still in the area, suggested a field trip later in the summer. The purpose would be to discuss road building and land management activities that occurred in the 1960s and 70s with the people who made those activities happen. The BLM would then share its current activities and future planning for the management of those lands.

Those of us at that spring meeting jumped at the idea of a summer field trip allowing us to get behind the many gates in the area and to see what 50-year-old management activities had resulted in.

On July 7 we met at the History Center to begin our field trip. We mixed up the attendees into several vehicles and took off for the 7-Mile Bridge on Gold Creek. Once there, we made introductions: 14 BLM employees, 6 former Anaconda and/or Champion employees, and 4 members from the History Center.

We started out talking about the past, present, and future ownership of the Gold Creek/Belmont Creek lands. The owners and managers of these lands, where actual management occurred, were Anaconda, Champion, Plum Creek, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the BLM. Future land transfers from TNC will include additional sales to the BLM and the US Forest Service.

We then began discussing some of the early homestead activities and the presence of a Forest Service Ranger Station in the Gold Creek drainage. Industrial road building and logging activities began in the early 1960s and a large forest fire also occurred at that time. We had a general discussion of past and present management activities.

On up the Cow Creek road to the Cow Creek/Belmont Creek divide, we stopped for a more in-depth discussion on past and future management activities and lunch. Michael brought out the old maps and reports and we talked about what the land managers of Anaconda and Champion days

had to work with, what we did, and why we made those management decisions. We discussed road building, logging, and reforestation activities.

Fifty years later we were able to enjoy the results of our efforts! The BLM then discussed its current activities and plans for the future.

Next it was a drive down into and up the Belmont Creek drainage. We drove on shaded roads with healthy stands of larch, pine, fir, and lodgepole preventing us from seeing far off the roads. We stopped for another discussion beneath a beautiful stand of second growth larch and lodgepole.

The BLM explained their plans for road maintenance and commercial thinning as future management activities. Even though the day had been long, we agreed to go up the Old Ern road to Wild Horse Pass and then down Wild Horse road back to Gold Creek and the 7-Mile Bridge.

We made a pit stop and had our final discussions, agreeing that the BLM had more questions and the industry land managers would like to provide more answers and assistance. Our day ended back at the History Center. A great day had by all.

As a former Anaconda/Champion forester, it made me feel proud to see that what was once described in a local publication as a moonscape was once again a healthy forest. Mother Nature, with the help of Anaconda, Champion, Plum Creek, TNC, and BLM land managers, had recreated a vibrant landscape that is providing clean water, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and future forest management potential.



Dennis Sain, center, explains the construction of a road during the BLM tour. Also pictured are a BLM representative, foreground, and Bob Symes, right.

Old Roads and Trails group shares new insights... (cont.)

Ninemile Prairie Mystery Tour

By Kim Briggeman

On a rainy Oct. 21 a group of Lewis & Clark and Blackfoot history buffs converged on the west end of Ninemile Prairie. Our purpose was to come to grips with two flat piles of mystery rocks that John Maclean described in his 2021 book *Home Waters: A Chronicle of Family and a River*. They are a few hundred yards west of an aspen grove at which Meriwether Lewis and his small group are believed to have stopped for lunch on July 5, 1806.

We were lucky to meet Dan Hall of Western Cultural in Missoula, along with Ron Cox of Seeley Lake, who found the rock piles years ago. The rest of the group consisted of Bruce Mihelish of Travelers' Rest; Gary Little and I from the Friday Old Roads group at the History Center; and Jerry O'Connell, founder of the Big Blackfoot Riverkeepers, who lives just up the road. Maclean sent regrets that morning that he couldn't join us; he'd left the family cabin in Seeley Lake to return home to Washington, D.C., a few days before.

The rockpiles were flatter than most cairns of the ancient world. Hall, who has identified and interpreted historic

rockpiles before, put to rest the notion they were "farmers' piles" stacked while clearing the field. He believes they predated white settlement in the area based on a specific type of lichen that grew on many of the rocks. He thinks they'd sat in that position for a couple of hundred years at least.

Why the rocks were stacked there remains a mystery: Piles that travelers of long ago would add onto for good luck or religious reasons? Directional signs? Perhaps burial sites, though Hall said excavation under such rocks rarely produces anything but earth.

The accompanying stories and other shared expertise made for intriguing discussions. Maclean was satisfied when he got the report in D.C.

"Fantastic," he texted. "I am so glad you did this. Antiquity confirmed! To be corny, that is a real thrill."



Two piles of mystery rocks on the Ninemile Prairie. Dan Hall, left, believes they predate white settlement based on a specific type of lichen that grew on many of the rocks. The purpose of the rock piles? A mystery to this day.

History Center offers the best free coffee - Get yours on Tuesday!

By Andy Lukes

The History Center, next to the Bonner Post Office, is open every Tuesday morning from 9 to 12 for coffee, tea, cookies, and stimulating conversations.

Jimmie Willis started and hosted this informal neighborhood gathering to share stories and memories of those who lived, worked or just love the Bonner area. In Jimmie's memory this regular, but informal weekly gathering, is hosted on a volunteer basis. Feel free to drop in for fifteen minutes or stay for three hours.

If you are new to the area and have questions about the unique Bonner community and why it is one of the best

areas to live in Montana, stop in and enjoy some fine Bonner area hospitality as well as the History Center's detailed information on our area.

Six-10 regulars usually drop in for a regular Tuesday morning coffee session.

The Center is also happy to boast the "best free cup of coffee in the area," so take your first opportunity to drop by.



Bob Lamley honored as a Forestry Pioneer by DNRC

By Tony Liane



Bob Lamley presents the history of Anaconda forestry at a Roundtable in 2015.

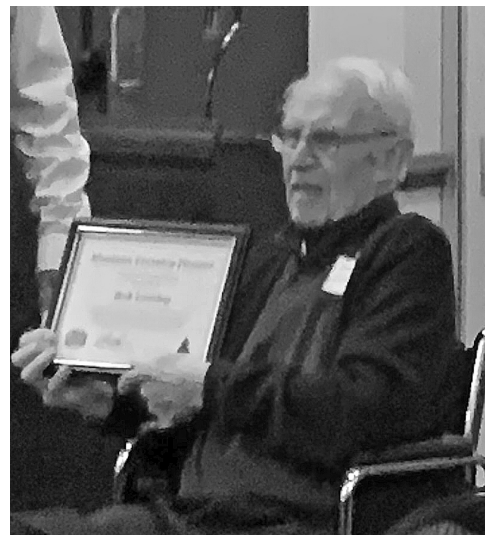
On October 21, 2022 the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) presented Bob Lamley with a Montana Forestry Pioneer award. Bob graduated from the University of Montana Forestry School and his professional career was spent working for the Anaconda and Champion corporations as a forester and later as manager of foresters and loggers. During Bob's long career he was involved in many innovations and improvements to the profession. Bob is remembered for his efforts to plan for and build the Thompson River Haul Road and his support in creating the most effective radio communication system in Montana. He was joined at the awards ceremony by family, friends and former co-workers, several of whom told their stories of interactions, respect for and friendship with Bob. When Bob retired in 1990, he was General Manager of Champion's Montana Timberlands.

I first met Bob in 1971 when I was a young forester working for the Anaconda Company. Bob managed the Anaconda house plant. I just figured he was an old mill worker and didn't know of his long history as a forester with the company. I was in my early 20s and "old" Bob was probably in his mid-40s! I finished my college education in 1972, spent four years in the Army and then returned to work for what was then the Champion International Corporation. By then Bob was in charge of logging and log delivery to the Bonner mill and other company mills. The forester's job was to make sure that timber on company lands was ready to be logged when Bob and his loggers were ready to go to work. I think most of the young foresters were intimidated by Bob and tried hard not to disappoint him. Over the following years, Bob gave the young foresters the opportunity to become more involved in logging and timber sale procurement. He and other old foresters became mentors to those of us who wanted to learn

and do more to advance our careers. During the late 70s and early 80s our big boss was Ernie Corrick, who we all respected. Ernie would fire someone but expect them to be at work the next day. We were pretty sure we didn't want to get fired by Bob Lamley! When Ernie retired and Bob was to become manager of the timberlands operations, we were somewhat concerned about what changes might occur!

Bob Lamley proved to be a very good successor to Ernie Corrick and in some ways better. For some reason, Ernie didn't think that foresters needed 4-wheel drive pickups and that our old snowmobiles were just fine. When Bob became the Timberlands manager we were happy to find out that he thought differently about what foresters need to be more effective in doing their jobs. New snowmobiles and 4-wheel drive pickups were soon on order! Foresters were given more responsibility in sale administration, contract negotiation and timber sale evaluation and bidding. Bob let us and helped us grow in our chosen profession. By the time he retired we believed that he was not only our boss but was also a friend.

After Champion sold the Bonner mill and its timberlands in 1993, many of the now not so young foresters were off looking for new jobs. I believe that with the training and experience we were given by Ernie, Bob, and many other former employees, we were successful in finding new employment in the forestry profession. I eventually became the Area Manager of DNRC's Southwestern Land Office and was fortunate to stay involved with Bob on various land management issues. I retired in 2013 and joined the Old Foresters' group meeting for lunch once a month and also got involved in the Bonner Milltown History Center. Bob is an honored member of both groups. I know that I have been fortunate to have worked for and with Bob Lamley.



Bob Lamley was honored as a Forestry Pioneer in October, 2022.

Bonner first graders take a stroll through history

By Kim Briggeman

Like too many things, Covid-19 took a toll on BMHC's annual first-grade history walks in 2020 and 2021, forcing cancellations in both years. In 2022 the walks made a comeback. On April 19, students in Kristin Vogel's class were treated to a stroll through Bonner history, comparing long ago and today. The expected snow held off as small groups of 6-year-olds rambled from the school to the History Center and Post Office at the far end of Bonner.

After introductory remarks in Ms. Vogel's classroom, where Kim Briggeman reminisced on his own first-grade experiences at Bonner School and showed photos from the archives of first-grade classes long ago, the groups stepped outside to the bus shelter. There Linda Briggeman demonstrated the lost art of marble shooting and each participant was rewarded with a couple of marbles of his or her own.

Then it was on to Kelly Pine Field. Gary Matson briefed the boys and girls on Kelly Pine, the man, a millworker and crack ballplayer in the 1920s and '30s who died tragically in a car crash in 1935. The original grandstands and bleachers were built and dedicated to Mr. Pine in 1937. The students then took turns batting a ball off a tee and running the bases.

On to station three, at the grassy island in front of the first row of houses. Andy Lukes introduced the kids to the tools of a woodsman - chainsaws, pulaskis, hardhats and logging boots. The kids listened raptly, most of them, and Andy made sure there were no industrial accidents.

The final stations were clustered at the History Center and Post Office. Rick Swanson patiently demonstrated the method of washing clothes with an old-time scrub board, of the type the mothers of kids his age used throughout the first half of the 20th century.

Glenn Smith and Fred Beyer had a great time showing off the History Center's vintage wringer-washer, donated by one of the founders of the History Center and Museum, the late Jimmie Willis. Water was involved for authenticity's sake, as was a clothesline (remember those?) that the eager students got to put into action.

Inside the Post Office, Robert Dunlop showed off another household favorite from the misty past, a strange thing called a rotary dial phone. It required an unnatural finger motion for each number dialed, something many of us old-timers struggled to master before touch-tones and those new-fangled cellphones came into vogue.

Finally, Tony Liane and Dick Anthony manned the History Center itself, drawing attention to, well, whatever drew the kids' attention – photos and mill implements, maps and artifacts.

With the help of Mrs. Vogel and parent volunteers, the final stop featured the old-fashioned game of hopscotch in front of the Post Office. Then they were off down the sidewalk that was once a boardwalk, back to Bonner School to make their own kind of history. ✨



First Grade Visit Highlights



Jack Demmons was a giant in preserving Bonner history

By Kim Briggeman



As a young man, skiing was a passion of Jack's. The caption of this photo reads "From left to right Donald Rooney, Bill Demmons, and Jack Demmons on top of Sheep Mountain with Grant Higgins, March, 1945."

lead the school. During his tenure he initiated the annual Old Timers' Day reunions and led the project that resulted in the 1976 local history publication *A Grass Roots Tribute: The Story of Bonner, Montana*. That was accompanied by the unparalleled collection and mounting for display of some 1,600 photos from current and past residents of the area. The photos have since been digitized and the full collection is online at the Montana Memory Project. They're easily accessed with a search for "Demmons Bonner School collection."

In his later years, Jack spent most days in the Montana Room at the Missoula Public Library, poring through old Missoulians on microfilm, capturing and sometimes annotating articles that applied to Bonner. On July 16, 2014, he presented six boxes of such stories to the Bonner Milltown History Center for research and enjoyment.

Bonner history lost a giant on Sept. 18, 2022, when Jack Demmons passed away at his home in Missoula at age 92.

Jack was born in 1930 and raised in West Riverside and Piltzville. He carried that upbringing fondly throughout his life. From 1974 to 1989 he served as Bonner School superintendent, the only Bonner graduate to return to

A sample of that work:

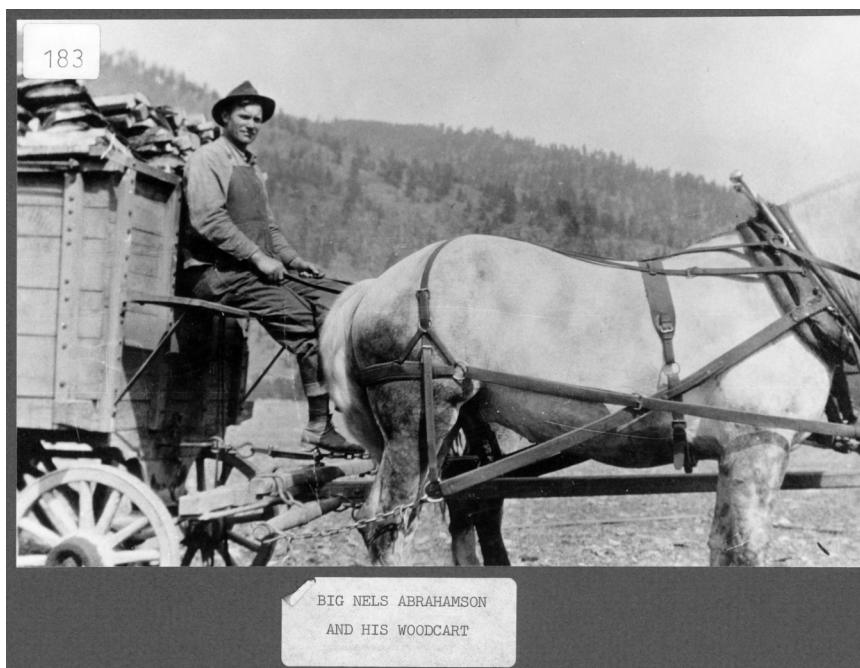
Jack typed out an article from the *Daily Missoulian* dated March 31, 1922. It told how one John Hathaway, Bonner blacksmith, had pleaded guilty to assaulting Nels Abramson, a teamster, at the Milltown Bridge. Both men were employed by the Western Lumber Co. mill. Hathaway was miffed because he'd just received his walking papers from Western Lumber due to "reports circulated that his horseshoeing had been such as to cause lameness among the company's teams." He blamed Abramson for circulating said reports.

With his trusty typewriter, Jack added insight into "Big Nels" Abramson:

"Some years ago, when I was working on history of the area, old-timers told me about Nels Abramson. They said he was a hard worker who liked his liquor on weekends. He stood about 6'4" and was from Norway. Later, he grew homesick for his old home and returned to Norway. Then, it wasn't long before he wished to return to the Bonner-Milltown area, according to friends who corresponded with him. He could not afford to return and died in Norway. ...

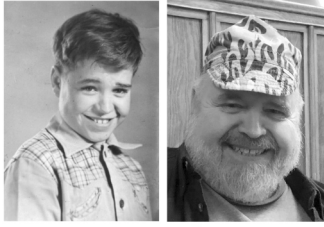
"Nels returned to Norway sometime during 1955-1956. The last time he was mentioned in Polk's Directory is 1955. I remember him very well. He worked for the ACM Company at Bonner after the Western Mill closed down."

RIP and thanks, Jack, for your lifelong devotion to the Bonner story. You are missed.



Bonner Memories: A Hooligan Recollection

By Glenn "Hooligan" Smith



The year was 1955 - Ike Eisenhower was thirty-fourth president of the United States and Jack "H.F." Root was manager of the ACM Lumber Mill at Bonner. I assumed the role of "Hooligan" and Albert Dufresne operated a small Red & White food store located where the current post office is today. Plans for a cafe would replace the store, and company carpenter crews started the renovations as soon as the store was vacated.

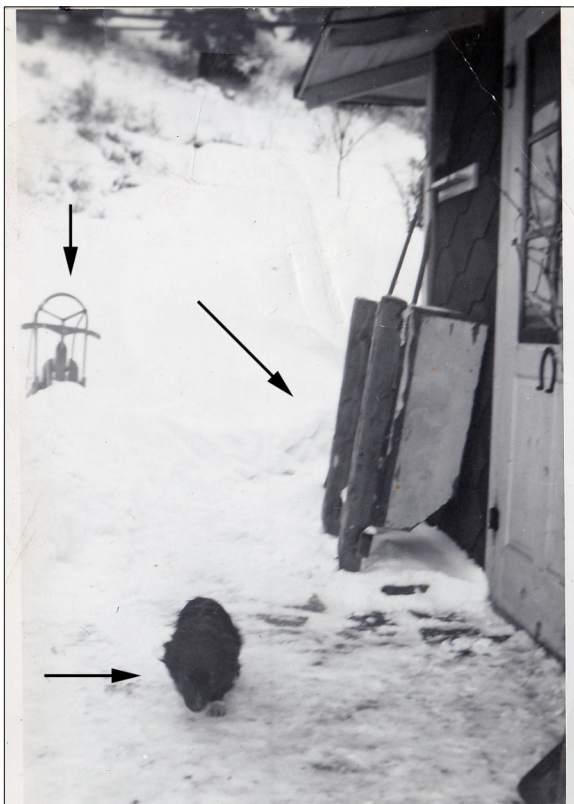
Many of my neighbors were of Scandinavian decent and boasted of their belief in an "Honest Day's Work for an Honest Day's Pay." This prompted me to start a firewood hauling business during the harsh winter months. A wheel barrow was the accepted tool to haul the firewood from the wood shed over wooden sidewalks to the back porches of the houses. Snow covered wooden sidewalks and wheel barrows were a treacherous combination which could be easily solved with a Heavy Hauler Wood Sled.

This sled dilemma was easily solved as the company carpenters started the cafe remodel. They threw the unusable lumber out the back door. Sorting through this pile provided the Hooligan with the necessary materials to build a heavy hauler wood sled with the same load capacity as a wheel barrow.

Three sled loads of fire wood would adequately fill an average wood box. A wood box was a wooden box located inside the back porches of the houses. It held the fire wood and caught splinters of wood and other debris. It took at least three sled loads of fire wood to fill each wood box with enough fire wood to keep the house cozy and warm for about 24 hours. As the years passed, the Hooligan crunched some numbers and determined that the average company house, heated with firewood, would consume about seven cords of fire wood a year. Ten cents to fill a wood box was the Hooligan's way to give an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.

Ten cents was the cost of a double-decker orange sherbet ice cream cone at George's Cafe in Bonner. George and Clara Buckhouse operated George's Cafe for sixteen years, while the Hooligan's fire wood hauling only lasted for two years. The sign hanging over the entrance door to George's Cafe is currently on display at the River City Grill, next door to the Town Pump Travel Plaza in Milltown. I was very fortunate to have been involved with many of the countless activities hosted by Clara and George Buckhouse.

My personal favorite activity was when Lee Farrell would bring brand new Chevrolet automobiles to the front door of George's Cafe and display them during the saw mill lunch hour.



Hooligan shared this picture illustrating life as a kid in Bonner. Front and foremost is the heavy hauler wood sled built from cast off lumber from the George's Cafe remodel. Three loads of wood delivered earned him 10 cents and a double-decker orange sherbet cone!

The arrow in the upper left points to his beloved Flexible Flyer sled that made many trips down the sleigh riding hill behind the History Center.

The lower arrow points to Hooligan's dog Peanut. Peanut's claim to fame was getting thrown off the set during the filming of the Timberjack movie as well as being a pal of Hoagy Carmichael!

Roundtables and programs make welcome return post-pandemic

By Minie Smith

Covid-19 impacted the Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum and the Center was closed from March 2020 to spring of 2021. As a result our programs were canceled for more than a year. (All of our Roundtable programs, including those discussed here are available at <https://bonnermilltownhistory.org/roundtables>)

The 2022 Roundtables were held in the Bonner School as we wanted to reach out by Zoom - a new experience for us! Bonner School officials generously provided their stellar facilities and technical help to make our Zoom meetings possible. With that assistance, the programs progressed smoothly.

January meeting a victim of Covid-19

Covid-19 struck again early in 2022 when a surge caused us to change our January Roundtable setting to a walk and talk at Milltown State Park in August.



Dusty Deschamps and Kim Briggeman study maps in preparation for the Marshall Grade Roundtable.

Therefore, District Judge Robert L. “Dusty” Deschamps went first in February, giving an engaging story of the “History of Marshall Grade Area and its Environs.”

The Deschamps family moved onto the Thomas Ranch in 1945. Over time, the Deschamps Ranch extended over all of Bandmann Flats to Milltown Dam and from Brickyard Hill to Mount Jumbo. Using old maps, Dusty traced the development of various roads in this area including the Mullan Road and the several relocations of the Northern Pacific Tracks.

Dusty still maintains cattle on Mt. Jumbo but does not currently lease land on the Flats. His talk delved into the geology of the area as well as the making of bricks, primarily at Brickyard Hill.

We were pleased with the Zoom process – not only did we talk with the 30 who were allowed in person, but there were more than 70 watching by Zoom including one from England!

March fellowship and pasties return

The March Roundtable, “The Big Blackfoot Milling Company: A Family Affair” by Mary Mulrone Pitch of Helena, was also held at the Bonner School. Mary, a Missoula native, is related to the Hammonds as her great-great grandmother was Sarah Hammond Beckwith, the Hammond brothers’ older sister. She passed out two handouts, one illustrating the family tree (Hammonds, Coombs, Fenwicks and Beckwiths) and a page from the *Grass Roots* history of Bonner, by Georgina Fenwick, “Bonner Remembered.”

Mary described the evolution of the mill, built by A.B. Hammond, and run by his brother Henry whom she said was “the face of Bonner until the mill sold to Anaconda” in 1898.

Many of the family came from St. Leonard, New Brunswick, and had worked together before they came west.

Following the Roundtable presentation, we reconvened at St. Ann Catholic Church to enjoy to revival of a March tradition: Butte pasties and good conversation.

We are grateful to Bonner School and Superintendent Jim Howard for not only providing the space, but for all their help in making the Zoom experience work. Special thanks to Bill Wilsonoff and Al Simons for their help with the logistics and technical aspects. Also thanks to Walter Peckham, “our faithful sound guy,” who made the programs able to be heard across the electronic waves, and to Ron Scholl, who through MCAT has recorded more than 34 programs for BMHCM. Also, a special thanks to Molly Stockdale at Travelers’ Rest who willingly shared her experience with Zoom programs with us.

A fateful day in history: Anaconda sale remembered

On June 26, 2022 the Center commemorated the 50th anniversary of the announcement in 1972 that Anaconda had sold the mill to US Plywood-Champion Papers Inc. of New York.

Anaconda had been in Bonner since 1898 when Copper King Marcus Daly acquired the mill from the Hammonds, who had constructed it in 1886. The Bonner mill changed names several times, but by the time it was sold to Anaconda it was known as the Big Blackfoot Milling Company. It sold for \$1.5 million, which included the lumber mill, Bonner Dam, and 500 million feet of lumber!

BMHC's outreach enhanced by generous grants

By Kim Briggeman

Grant launches planning for Mullan Road Conference

Word came down in late July that the History Center was the recipient of a \$2,000 Preserving Missoula County's History Grant to be used toward the 2023 Mullan Road Conference in Missoula next spring. We were one of four non-profits to share in the \$10,000 grant awarded annually by the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula (HMFM).

Preliminary plans are underway for hosting the conference, which in recent years has attracted 100 or more history enthusiasts. Lt. John Mullan's crew built the military wagon road from Walla Walla through the Missoula Valley to Fort Benton from 1859 to 1862. They stayed the last winter at what became Milltown, improving the road and constructing the first bridge across the Blackfoot River.

Missoula previously hosted Mullan Road Conferences in 2008 and 2014. Our History Center also served as the conference's funding mechanism in the latter conference.

Continued from page 8

Anaconda built the company town and ran the mill and associated timberlands for more than 70 years, so it was a shock when the Company announced it was selling!

The BMHCM event recognized the significance of the sale to those who lived through the event. Center committee member Glenn Smith spoke at the public reception held at the KettleHouse Taproom in Bonner. He worked at the mill for 45 years under Anaconda, Champion, and Stimson.

Dennis Sain, another long-time worker and committee member, also spoke. He had started on the green chain in 1960 and worked several years on the river before moving to Timberlands in 1963. Finally, in 1972, he moved to building roads, eventually ending back with Champion. Tony Liane was another longtime employee who worked as a forester for the ACM and later for Champion.

The event was well attended and a reunion for many former workers who shared their stories which were recorded by the Center.

The history of the Mullan Monuments

In late August, the postponed January Roundtable was revived, but this time in conjunction with Milltown State Park. Historian and professor Leif Fredrickson recognized the efforts, beginning in 1916, of historians and boosters to erect monuments across Montana and Idaho to honor Lt. John Mullan. Mullan and his men built the Mullan Military Road from Walla Walla, Washington, to Fort Benton in north-central Montana. The 624-mile rough road took most of four years to build (1859-1862) and crossed the Rocky

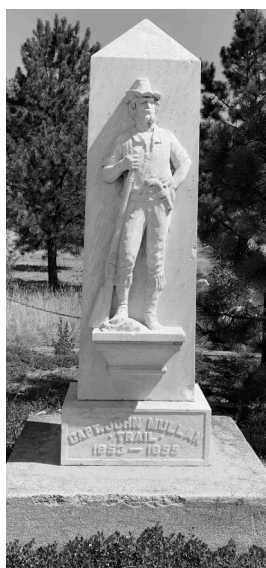
Many thanks to the board at HMFM, which has been a generous source of expertise and grants over the years for our little museum. Check Facebook pages for the Mullan Road Conference and the Bonner Milltown History Museum for periodic updates on the 2023 conference.

The History Center also partnered with Bonner School to successfully win a grant for an ongoing project based on John Maclean's 2021 book *Home Waters*. Funded by the Library of Congress and the Museums Association of Montana and championed by friend of the museum Cheryl Hughes of Montana, the project paired museums with educators to develop local themes presented in *Home Waters* and Norman Maclean's *A River Runs Through It*.

It came with consistent support from the sponsors and a \$750 stipend, which will help develop a self-guided history tour of the Bonner area, replete with QR codes. Social studies teacher Dylan Huisken, Montana's 2019 teacher of the year, is at the helm on the school's end.



Mountains (no easy feat!). It was used primarily by gold miners, not the military.



1990s.

Missoula was the first place where a statue was erected in October 1916. There were 13 more, six in Montana, including one on the Blackfoot River in 1917.

Milltown State Park was a good location for the program, as the mouth of the Blackfoot was Mullan's winter camp, Cantonment Wright, in 1861-62. Leif explained that as railroad travel decreased the monument became less visible and was moved into Missoula in the 1950s. It was returned to West Riverside at its present location at Two Rivers Memorial Park in the

Leif Fredrickson teaches history at the University of Montana and he and his students researched the project extensively. The talk involved a walking tour of the park from the Confluence area pavilion along the Blackfoot River to the Mullan statue, which now resides in Two Rivers Memorial Park opposite Town Pump's Travel Plaza.

It was a sunny summer day and perfect for a bit of a walk for the more than 20 people in attendance. ✨

Recent donations enrich our collection

By Minie Smith

Despite Covid-19, we received several donations - and we are most grateful. In June, 2021 Tony Liane donated a large wooden object and thanks to his research, we now know what it is! It is the intake pipe to the water tower at Belmont Creek, and it dates back to the days of the Big Blackfoot Railway about 1911. According to an accompanying label, steam locomotives on the railway needed locations where they could get more water. "One of these was at the mouth of Belmont Creek where a water tank was built. The tank was filled by building a long wooden pipe system from higher up Belmont Creek downhill to the water tank." Tony found the pipe after the tank and the railroad tracks had been removed in the 1980s.

Tony also donated Champion forestry markers and three books of maps collected by Sally Thompson and published by the University of Montana which will go into our library.

We have received a number of photographs. One from Irene Harrington of Clinton, is a photo of the log jam caused by the 1908 flood at Bonner. She got this treasure at a yard sale! Several 3 x 5 black and white photos of the Bonner streetcar and of the old town of Clearwater came from Norma Hughes of Ovando.

Ken McMillian gave the History Center a collection of Anaconda Co. gift items, frequently in boxes, such a lighter, tape measures and thin bread boards different from the ones given to the general public which Center member Andy Lukes described as "very unique and a valuable collection." Ken also passed on the *Missoulian Entertainer* (August 11, 1979) which has a full-page photo of Hazel Karkanen, former Milltown librarian. The article inside describes how she persuaded the Missoula Public Library to open a Milltown branch and got money from Anaconda to pay for it. Why did the *Entertainer* write about her? Because *Readers Digest* wrote about it, thanks to Emil Petaja, a Milltown native and

science fiction-fantasy author, who told them about her years of dedication to the library.

Note: The Milltown Library, which was separate from the Bonner Library, closed in 1972 due to lack of use. It was built in Milltown in the early 1920s and was later moved across Highway 200, where it remains today as the home of Grizzly Insulation.

Bill Weikel, retired Missoula surveyor, has joined the Old Trails group and donated forestry and surveying equipment, including two large tree calipers, a big Warren Knight compass with tripod, an 11' measure, a tree borer and tape, a d-tape (circumference measurer), and a scribe, used for marking trees with numbers and letters, especially witness trees, which are survey points to establish section and quarter corners.

Peter Nielsen donated two metal railroad rails - 9' and 11' long - that were used to anchor the timber cribs in the original construction of the Bonner (mill) dam. The dam was removed in 2005. (*See story page 11*)

Jan Leary Madison of Florida, daughter of Jack Leary, donated a collection of Anaconda papers including the purchase agreements with Champion in 1972.

Last but hardly least is a small 1924 cookbook titled *Cook Book of Popular Norse Recipes* that belonged to Helen Lien Otterson, mother of Wally Otterson, who is now 94. She lived continuously in Bonner, except for two years, from about 1901 to the mid-1960s. The book comes complete with her notes, and Wally's letter of enclosure. (He notes "lefse was my favorite.")

Please stop by and see these items for yourself!



Thank You!

Tony Liane, Irene Harrington, Norma Hughes, Ken McMillian, Bill Weikel, Peter Nielsen, Jan Leary Madison, Wally Otterson, Elaine Nagel, Tuesday coffee bunch, Old Roads and Trails group, Rick and Judy Gendrow, Mary Pitch, Richard Black, Bill and Jan Taylor, Rick and Pat Swanson, Karl Uhlig, Dean Goodrich, William and Keeley Wills, Kris and Bill Unger, Sam and Kathy Milodragovich, Jim Hill, Lee Legreid, Sandy Wilborn, Stan and Doreen Olean, Pat McDonald, Maurice and Cathi Darrington, Joan Sipherd, Norman Jacobson, Ray and Jan Anthony, Dave and Vicki Otto, Lavonne Otto, Ed and Judy Olean, Tom Johnson, Nina Seaman, Ken and Maureen Peers, Ruana Knife Works, River City Grill, Gerry and Mary Ann Buckhouse, Russell and Roberta Bemis, Robert Dunlop, Don and Germaine Trenary, Steve Schombel, Sheila Long, Chuck and Mary Erickson, Land Lindbergh, Don Felton.



Dennis Sain and Tony Liane with the wooden intake pipe from the water tower at Belmont Creek.

Bonner History Tidbit

Each month BMHCM presents a history tidbit at the Bonner Milltown Community Council meeting. The Bonner Dam was November's topic. (See cover photo)

In September, 1884 the Montana Improvement Company announced plans to build a 200-foot dam constructed of rock-filled wooden cribs and planks on the Blackfoot River to hold logs that would be cut from lands up the Blackfoot. First they would collect a supply of logs in the river and then build a mill (or a series of mills from there to Missoula).

The dam was constructed by one of A.B. Hammond's relatives, his maternal uncle, Walter Coombes. The initial dam structure did not survive the spring floods of 1885, but it was rebuilt in time for the opening of the mill in 1886. In the spring of 1886, it held 20,000 board feet of lumber behind it. A steam-powered generator and a water powered turbine generated electricity for the mill itself. Power generation was limited to the mill lights. (Peter Nielsen donated 2 rails from the early construction.)

Various electric plants were built in Missoula during this time. Missoula interests were soon to eye the potential the water power at the Bonner dam offered for their growing electric needs.

In 1895, ownership of generating facilities passed to Hammond's newly incorporated company, Missoula Light and Power (ML&P). Hammond then proceeded to merge this company with the existing water service. In 1898, after obtaining an acre of land from the Big Blackfoot Milling Company for \$1, ML&P constructed a powerhouse adjacent to the Bonner mill. This electric generating station sent 3,400 volts to Missoula, replacing the previous generation facility on the island in Missoula.

After Clark's Dam was completed in 1908, the Bonner Dam's power component was no longer used to supply

electricity to Missoula. Clark's Dam produced much more electricity and at full pool the new dam just about inundated the older dam. Clark purchased Hammond's Missoula Light and Power in 1906, so he owned both facilities. According to the cultural report prepared prior to the removal of the Bonner Dam, "What is known is that in the years following the decommissioning of the Bonner Dam's powerhouse in the early 1900s, the pool behind the dam was used mainly for log storage and as a water source for general mill use."

The Bonner Dam was removed as part of the Federal Superfund cleanup of the Milltown Dam site because it blocked the passage of native bull trout. The removal was completed on November 5, 2005.

Submerged, or sinker logs, which had dropped to the bottom of the river during decades of log drives and had been buried in the silt of the riverbed began appearing immediately once the Blackfoot Dam and later the Milltown Dam were removed and the Blackfoot became free flowing. "There could be as many as 3,000 or 4,000," Jon Hayes Department of Natural Resources and Conservation observed in a *Missoulian* story on Oct. 7, 2006.

By 2008 6,300 logs had been removed. One structure built with the sinker logs is a shelter located in Missoula in Silver Park.

Because the logs can present a hazard to recreation and damage bridge abutments, the state and county have removed close to 20,000 sinkers from the Blackfoot and Clark Fork rivers in the years since the dams came down. *Missoula Current*, October 16, 2019.



History buffs talk Old Roads and Trails on Fridays

By Tony Liane

In 2021, a few members of BMHC started a new group to research and discuss Old Roads and Trails in Bonner and the Blackfoot Valley.

Soon we attracted more history buffs and discussions ranged from the Trail to the Buffalo, old Missoula County roads, the Mullan Road, and railroad logging in the Blackfoot to anything else that perked our interest. Members of the group bring a wide knowledge of forestry and logging, land survey, Native American history and travel, Lewis and Clark, Montana railroad development and Western Montana historical events.

This summer, our research and discussions led to several field trips into the Blackfoot Valley to search for

evidence of old trails, roads and bridges, and railroad grades.

Research into historical events led us to rediscover the history and evidence of the long lost community of Clearwater, Montana at the confluence of the Clearwater and Blackfoot Rivers. How much more is there still to discover?

We meet weekly on Fridays from 10 AM to noon and sometimes longer. We welcome anyone with information to add or just interest in learning more about the history of our old roads and trails. We anticipate more meetings and field trips to increase our knowledge of the fascinating history that abounds in the place that we live.



The Bonner spirit carried us through hard times - we appreciate your support!

Preserving the past means taking a leap into the digital future. The pandemic rammed that lesson home as we were forced into physical isolation for months. By embracing the “can do” attitude of our forefathers and mothers, we learned to accept that we can come together while remaining separated; a mountain stream can coexist with a digital stream and there’s a place in our lives for both. For our friends living in distant places, this new attitude offers exciting ways to connect.

BMHCM now has a phone and internet connection! Please call and leave a message (406) 540-4046: leave a memory, arrange for a museum visit, ask a question. With internet and WiFi connectivity, we explore places and events previously unattainable. The Old Roads and Trails group rides the magic carpet of Google Earth to virtually visit trails established long ago that are now inaccessible or, this season, snow covered.

With internet, we are exploring ways to share our stories - watch for notices about Facebook live streaming where you can tune into our Facebook page at an announced time, hear stories live, and contribute by posting your comments on the topic of the day! The expense of connectivity is \$100/month, the largest commitment we’ve made in our 13 years! We believe it’s worth the cost and hope you will too as you consider a donation to keeping Bonner history alive.

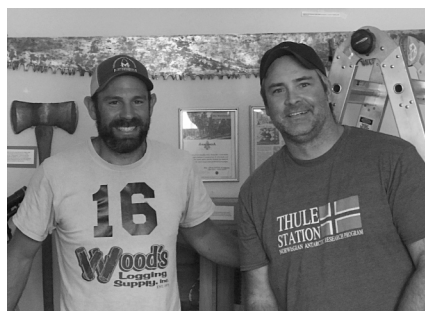
BMHCM received a SHARP grant for Covid-19 relief. We would like to share with you how much the grant meant to our little museum. Because 100% of our volunteer staff were in the high risk category, we closed the museum for 14 months and lost income and programming for more than one year.

As a result of the grant support, BMHCM was able to ultimately increase our outreach through adding Zoom conferencing, to mail updates to our supporters who don’t use email, to quickly add programming for the general public and our local schools once the pandemic eased, and to replace hardware thus preserving our irreplaceable collection and digital files.

We are grateful to Humanities Montana, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, for distributing the grant and to Cheryl Hughes, a good friend who informed us of the grant opportunity.

The commitment of Mike Boehme, Steve Nelson, and Mike Heisey of Bonner Property Development, LLC allows us to preserve the history of the mill site and surrounding area. Maintaining BMHCM would be impossible without their support. THANK YOU!

Tony Liane watches as Eric and Sam scale ladders to install the Bonner Junction sign near the 10’ ceiling. The sign was donated by Bill and Jan Taylor.



Special thanks to Eric Hoberg and Sam Milodragovich for volunteering to install our Bonner Junction sign. Thanks too to Linda Briggeman and Gary Matson for their cheerful willingness to pitch in on their spouses’ projects!

BMHCM Planning Committee Members

Kim Briggeman
Judy Matson

Robert Dunlop
Dennis Sain

Lee Legreid
Glenn “Hooligan” Smith

Tony Liane
Minie Smith

Andy Lukes
Rick Swanson

BMHCM is social!

The Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum has a Facebook page. “Like” us for occasional announcements and photos recalling our historic past.

The Bonner Milltown History Center and Museum is located in the Bonner Post Office Building

Physical address: 9397 Hwy 200 E., Bonner MT 59823 Mailing address: PO Box 726, Bonner MT 59823

Public Hours: Wednesday 10 - Noon

Call (406) 540-4046 and leave a message to arrange for a visit at another time.

Coffee and conversation: Tuesday 9 - Noon; Old Roads and Trails meets Friday 10 - Noon

Email: bonnermilltownhistorycenter@gmail.com

Website: <https://bonnermilltownhistory.org/>