



*Season's Greetings*  
*from your*  
*Bonner Milltown History Center*

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

December, 2013

(Alan McQuillan photo)

## Popular Roundtable Series to Start Again January 19

Believe it or not the New Year is almost upon us and with it a new set of Bonner Milltown History Roundtables! We are excited by what's in store so hope you will mark your calendars and join us on **January 19, February 16, and March 16** at St. Ann Catholic Church in Bonner. We will send out reminder cards. Programs last from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 with refreshments and conversation following.

**Norman Jacobson** starts us off January 19 with a presentation titled "Toys and Tools Used by the Early Natives Prior to the Nineteenth Century." Norman has learned how to make many of these and is going to share that knowledge with us. If you have ever heard a presentation by Norman, a volunteer extraordinaire at Traveler's Rest State Park in Lolo, you know we are in for a real treat. Also, **Willie Bateman** will display Indian artifacts from his extensive collection.

### Memories of Hughes Gardens and the Victory Gardens

The February 16 Roundtable features Hughes Gardens. Many

will remember these extensive gardens at Hellgate Canyon's entrance to Missoula; indeed the reason why Missoula is called the Garden City! **Glenn and Sharon Smith** and **Don Felton** will start off the discussion sharing experiences of when they worked there in the 1950s. So plan to bring any memories of the gardens or working there. The **Historical Museum at Fort Missoula** will display items from the gardens.

### Stories of Bonner School Days

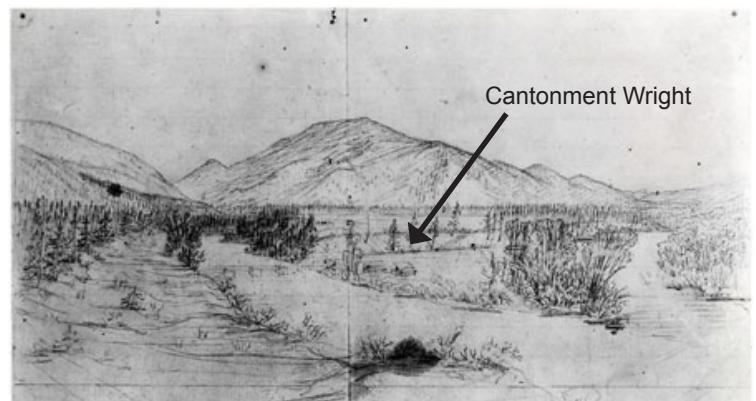
The final program in March features stories of Bonner School. The school has been an integral part of the community since its beginning in 1889, so there are sure to be many wonderful memories from former students and teachers.

MCAT will record the programs and the History Center will have copies a few weeks later so if you miss one, come to the Center for a copy or view it on our website. That goes for the old programs as well. See a list of the Roundtables at the Center or at [tworivershistory.net](http://tworivershistory.net). We look forward to seeing you in January!

## Mullan Conference Comes to Missoula

Missoula hosts the Mullan Road Conference on May 2 - 4, 2014 reports Kim Briggeman. *A planning meeting is tentatively scheduled for Saturday, January 18, 2014 at 10 a.m. at a location TBA. All interested "Mullanites" are invited.* Since most residents of the valley live within a mile of the Mullan Road, the committee is hoping for an enthusiastic turnout. Do you have digital skills? They're fishing for someone who can create a permanent website to feature all Mullan related information.

*Contact Kim for more information: phone 239-9301 or email [klbrig@aol.com](mailto:klbrig@aol.com)*



Located near the confluence of the Big Blackfoot and Clark Fork Rivers, Cantonment Wright sat about where Harold's Club is today. Sohon sketch.

# After Years of Neglect, Bonner Homes Live Again: A Stroll Down Memory Lane

By Judy Matson, Glenn Max (Hooligan) Smith, Minie Smith, Willie Bateman, and Jim Willis

Newly remodeled and leased houses along White House Lane again bustle with the activities of children and their adults. The street is familiarly known as “Silk Stocking Row” from the days when the Queen Anne style homes housed mill management. One Bonner visitor, Marci Vellutini, cherishes memories of visits to her grandparents Willis and Jessie Ross.

At age twenty in 1909, a young Willis Ross went to work for Anaconda Copper Mining Company (ACM) and worked at the mill in Bonner until age 75, retiring after more than 50 years with the company. A top notch band saw filer, he supervised the Filing Room and frequently traveled all over the Northwest teaching the craft to young filers.

The Ross’s life on Silk Stocking Row is first recorded as residents of House 5 (see map). Built prior to 1908, in ACM records the house is named “the Clynick House” after the first known tenant. Willis and Jessie settled into their home for the next 25 years. During their life in Bonner, Willis was active in community life serving on the library committee and Bonner School Board of Trustees.

Willie Bateman worked as a saw filer for Willis. He recalls that the Ross porch was covered by climbing clematis vines producing beautiful pink and purple blossoms each summer.

Willis and Jessie raised daughters Peggy and Betty in the Bonner house. Peggy’s daughter, Marcia Kurtz Vellutini, fondly remembers visits: “I spent most of my life here until 1961, visiting my grandparents – skating on the wooden sidewalks and having pie at the restaurant by the post office.”

## Moving Up...

Next we come to House 7, also built prior to 1908. It was known as the “Lubrecht house,” home from 1913 through 1949 to the family of William C. and Nellie Lubrecht, its first recorded occupants. Lubrecht enjoyed an illustrious career with the Anaconda Company, eventually rising to mill manager. His name lives on in Lubrecht Experimental Forest, a 19,058 acre donation from the Anaconda Company to the University of Montana School of Forestry that he facilitated with Professor Thomas Spaulding.

Living in the Bonner houses was not a permanent situation with families moving to bigger or nicer houses as they became available or when management changed. So it was that in 1949 after William Lubrecht’s retirement, House 7 became the home of the Jack Root family and the source of fond memories for their grandson Bill Wilborn.

## ...Or Staying Put

Before leaving White House Lane and turning the corner to head up the Blackfoot, we pass welcoming House 9 which now graces the end of the street. Glenn Smith and Jim Willis recall that while managers traditionally moved into the

Lubrecht house, the ascension of Howard R. Dix to manager in 1957 was an exception. The new manager’s family stayed put because Mrs. Dix had the house remodeled and loved her home too much to move.

Along Highway 200, four remodeled homes on the mill side have welcomed new Bonner residents. The remaining houses are being remodeled with occupancy planned for next year.

## More Memories: “Life just didn’t get any better”

Amid the new life the houses enjoy, fond memories of former residents are recalled by History Center volunteer Glenn Max Smith, aka ‘Hooligan.’ “What an incredible experience to actually see this old house get a second chance at living!!” exclaims Hooligan of the first house from the corner, #9410.

“My favorite memory of this house is when ‘Dornie’ Dornberger and his wife Faye lived here. I remember Dornie as a watchman for the mill and his great Puzzle Board where he assembled the most elaborate of intricate puzzles. Dornie was also the baseball coach of the Bonner Highlanders, not to mention possessing a remarkable talent for telling the most humorous and exaggerated stories imaginable. Those stories left me totally amazed, as Dornie’s wife Faye stood smiling in the background.”

Of the next house, #9422, Hooligan writes, “My favorite memory of this house is when George Laforge and his wife Mary lived here. I remember George as a supervisor for the mill’s Power House. His wife Mary was a very talented piano teacher and loved by all her students. For 25¢ she would teach a lesson then provide a ride home during times of bad weather. George and Mary also paid me 10¢ to fill their firewood box during winter months. The profits of my labors were quickly spent at the soda fountain for a double-decker orange sherbet ice cream cone. Life just didn’t get any better than that.”

## Special Thanks

Thanks to Marci Vellutini and to Western Cultural, Inc.’s text of the Bonner Company Town for the National Register of Historic Places for background on the houses and to Steve Nelson and Mike Boehme, Bonner Property Development LLC for saving these icons of Bonner.

The Bonner Milltown History Center is compiling a book about the houses and residents. Stop by to browse the book and share your stories and pictures of the Bonner houses.



The Roundtable program “Stories of the Bonner Houses” can be viewed online at [tworivershistory.net](http://tworivershistory.net). *View more pictures of the transformation of the houses on the website.*

*Houses on blocks, 2012*



The houses have been restored. House 5 in 2013.



Marci Vellutini visits a boarded up House 5 in 2010.



House 7 in 2013



Mrs. Dix would be happy to see her house restored. House 9 in 2012 before restoration.

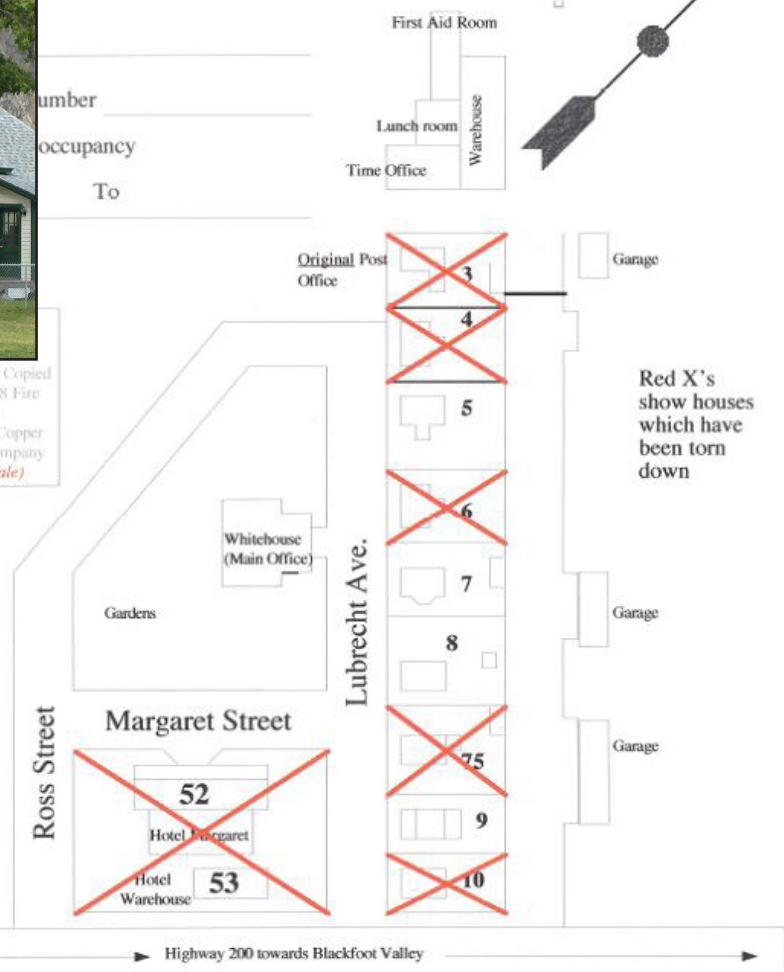


White House Lane, 2013. House 9 in foreground.

Photos by Glenn Max Smith, Alan McQuillan, and Judy Matson.

### Bonner Employee Housing (Silk Stocking Row)

Anaconda A. Copper Mining Company



document. Copied from a 1918 Fire Map of the Anaconda Copper Company (Scale)

Highway 200 towards Blackfoot Valley

Current Post Office Bonner History Ctr.

## Good Friends - Old World Customs - and Black & White Snow

Good friends and neighbors was the magic formula which made Bonner such a great place to live. This small company town was like a melting pot of people from various nationalities who joined together with one common goal: Give an honest day's work to the Anaconda Company's sawmill for an honest day's pay. Housing would be provided to those who qualified, at a reduced rental fee. Fire wood for heat and cooking purposes was also cut and delivered for about \$1.75 per dump truck load. A load of planer blocks for kindling wood cost a staggering 75¢ per load. The millworker's houses all had board sidewalks which were kept clear of snow with an interesting looking wooden hand plow.

As the Christmas season approached, simple single lighted candle decorations would appear in the windows of each house along with door wreaths made of pine boughs and pine cones. The exception to this was a more elaborate light display in front of the White House (Main Office) on Silk Stocking Row. Outside Christmas bulbs in the 1950s were large, colored, fist size contraptions which emitted a lot of heat. It was many a cold winter morning that I would stop to warm my hands on one of these bulbs as I delivered the morning newspaper. It is interesting to note that these light displays adorned the two huge spruce trees which border the entryway to the White House. During the 1950s the spruce trees were about 25 feet in height.

A few of the mill workers living in Bonner emigrated from Old World countries, and loved to reminisce over Christmas celebrations and customs in their native lands. It was a delight to hear these stories related in a heavy Swedish or Norwegian accent, not to mention enjoying Old World cookies and other pastries as Christmas Day drew closer.

Most of Upper Management lived on what is known as Silk Stocking Row. These folks were fine people and a little bit competitive. As a newspaper boy, I worked this to my advantage. When I collected for the month's deliveries, I would start with the low man on the totem pole. At the next house I would mention the generous tip I had received from the previous house. Not to be out-done, I would receive a slightly larger tip here. This process was repeated until I reached the home of the Mill Manager. By this time I managed a handsome amount of tip money.

Christmas at Bonner was filled with school plays, church activities, and fun filled nights on the sleigh riding hill, located behind the present day Post Office and History Center. This hill played host to a wide variety of sleds, toboggans, and even a saucer shaped Coca-Cola sign. Ed Olean was the most skilled operator for this contraption and gave most of us a wild and harrowing ride before crashing into a snow drift. Our nights on the sleigh riding hill were further enhanced with a large bon fire located about mid-way on the run. Sparks would fly up into the dark night air and a cheerful glow of fire light illuminated the sled run.

Little did we know that we also contributed to the black and white snow which blanketed the surrounding area. The two large teepee burners from the mill pumped tons of cinders into the air, but at the time it was just an accepted way of life in a company owned sawmill town.

It was tradition to cut and smoke a stalk of milkweed on the last sled run before going home. Far up the draw on Bonner Mountain you could see the small red milkweed glows and hear the whoosh of sled runners as each sleigh rider made a dash for home.



## Coffee at the Center

Every Tuesday morning, the aroma of hot coffee and freshly baked cookies emanates from the History Center, drawing in folks to share stories and old times of Bonner and Milltown. Anywhere from two to ten gather; many are regulars. Jim Willis, whose idea it was, hosts the group. He notes that conversation is lively!

Sometimes it is the old school photos that start the conversation; sometimes the progress on the houses brings up memories of the folks who once lived in them. All are glad to see the houses come back to life. One week someone stopped in to obtain some historical information; another week, children from the 4th grade class came by (see related article). There never seems to be a lack of topics. And it is true that some just come for the cookies...Jim bakes a different kind each week! So if you find yourself in Bonner on Tuesday morning between 9:30 and 11:30, be sure to stop by. It is an experience you will surely enjoy.



## Collection Growing Thanks to Your Donations!

This year saw a significant number of historical items added to the collection of the Bonner Milltown History Center. Thirty-four different donors, gratefully acknowledged below, made more than 71 separate gifts of items. Several of these gifts were collections: Robert Lamley gave cruising tools and maps relating to Champion Timberlands; Dayna Zimmerman donated many items relating to Roland Verne Imboden's H & I Wrecking Service in West Riverside, and Glenn Smith donated equipment training manuals for heavy equipment, several of which he helped write while at Champion and Stimson.

In addition, several people shared their stories and were recorded in oral histories that will ultimately be added to the Montana oral history collection in the K. Ross Toole Library at the University. Thanks to Judy Matson's efforts, portions of these interviews are being added to the website as well. Check them out there at [tworivershistory.net](http://tworivershistory.net).

The Center is able to copy old photos so that if people want to keep their photos, we can scan them and return them to their owners. Early views of the Anaconda mill and a picture of the Duck Bridge were obtained in this manner.

And we are always delighted by the finds of Mike Heisey of the Bonner Homes Management as his crew refurbishes the Bonner houses, even to finding a matching ladies slipper for one found earlier, and mill gate keys dating from Anaconda's ownership. As hard hats kept appearing, but in different colors, we learned that these colors had meaning and were associated with the mill, the woods, safety and electricians, or supervisors.

Mike Nelson, Chuck Erickson, and Brent Shaffer provided three different early scrapbooks which we were allowed to copy, and which have provided much interest about the Bonner Milltown area. They are available for perusing when you stop in. Thanks to the Hellgate Lions we now have the baseball uniform that belonged to Arnold "Ode" Odegard, which, thanks also to a loan of a manikin from the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, is on display at the Center.

We welcome your donations, large or small and your stories as well. We encourage you to come and see what folks have shared with the Center. Our sincere thanks to these individuals who have donated historical items, monetary contributions, and/or support during the past year.

Hank Flores, Dennis and Anna Sain, Rich Hamma, Minie Smith, Wally Otterson, Gary Matson, Jim Willis, Brent Shaffer, Mike and Linda Nelson, Chuck Erickson, Rick Swanson, Ken McMillan, Rainer Komers, Hellgate Lions Club, Robert Lamley, LaVonne Otto, Danya Zimmerman, Neil (Shorty) Thompson, Alan McQuillan, Lefty Pleasant, Frank Hebert, Bob Bateman, Bob and Lois Johnson, Mike Heisey-Bonner Home Management, Kim Briggeman, Glenn and Sharon Smith, Keith Lerback, Willie and Alice Bateman, Ruana Knife Works, Maybelle Bonnet, John Benum, Bill and Jan Taylor, John Price, Kirt George, Dick Anthony, Tom Johnson, K. Ross Toole Archives, Shirley Olson, Nina Petroff, Floyd Cheff, Albert and Norma Knutson, J.R. and Jane Alford, Don and Germaine Trenary, Steve Schombel, Victor and Ilona Hansas, Dale and Coburn Johnson, Pat and Judy McDonald, Ed and Judy Olean, Sheila Long, Lee Legreid, Paul and Peggy Layton, Jim and Pat Habeck, Jard Hirsch, Karl Uhlig, Rudi Miller, Donna and Lowell Anderson, Don Felton, Norman and Maurine Jacobson, Ken and Maureen Peers, Jack L. Demmons, Chuck Teague, Sam Berry, Steve Nelson, Mike Boehme, St. Ann Catholic Church, Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Friends of 2 Rivers, Montana History Foundation, MCAT, Historical Museum at Fort Missoula, and to many anonymous donors.

*Jim Willis, Dennis Sain, and Glenn Max 'Hooligan' Smith entertained Mrs. Torri Dayley's Bonner School 4th grade class at the History Center recently. It's hard to say who enjoyed the experience more - the presenters or the class. We gave 'Hooligan' Smith the assignment to "Write a report for the newsletter about the Bonner Fourth Grade Class field trip to the Bonner Milltown History Center." Here it is, as only the Hooligan could do it!*

## Bonner School Field Trip

Put the past and present in a bag and shake it up.

(Photos from Demmons Collection)

What if you could down shift the mind of an "Old Geezer" fourth grader from 1954, and cruise with the minds of fourth graders from 2013? An interesting concept, I thought, as I prepared for a field trip with Mrs. Dayley's fourth grade class. After all, Bonner School is the home of the "Lumberjacks" and in my day, tall tales of Paul Bunyon and his faithful blue ox Babe were almost believable.

Hang on now, and imagine, if you can, the fourth grade



of Miss Hazel Splan leaving the west entrance of a large two story gray school house in 1954 and waiting for the fourth grade class of Mrs. Dayley from the red brick school house of today. Together both classes will walk to the Bonner Milltown History Center and compare what we see today to that of what was.

I'll start my story about how I came to live in Bonner and what I experienced at that time. My first memory of Bonner actually began in the late 1940s when I moved here from Anaconda, Montana. My step dad worked for the Milwaukee Railroad and was checking on a job position as steam locomotive maintenance man for a Class C oil-fired steam locomotive (No. 1246). This old steam engine was used to haul logs into the Bonner mill from the surrounding forests and log landings.

The road trip from Anaconda, Montana to Bonner, Montana was a grueling trip on a narrow winding highway with an average speed of less than 40 MPH. One of my life's most amazing memories was when we finally reached the Bonner turnoff and started our drive into the Bonner townsite. My early childhood was spent in the Anaconda area

where the huge Anaconda Company Copper Mining Smelter literally destroyed most of the living green vegetation. In some places it looked as if you were living on the moon. The first thing to catch my senses and attention at the Bonner turnoff was two small white churches followed by a huge gray multi-floor school house.

Much later, I would learn that there was an earlier school house, which was also known as the Masonic Lodge and Bonner Hall. The red brick school house had not been built yet.

My sense of smell was captured next by the aroma of fresh sawed pine lumber which was stacked in huge piles for air drying in an area directly across Highway 200 next to the present day Bonner School.

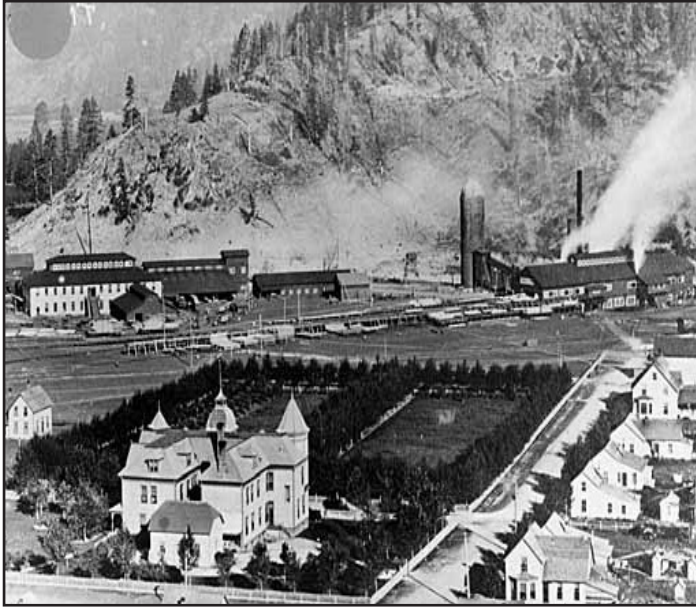
The next amazing sight I saw was a regulation size baseball field and spectator stand built for Bonner's two baseball teams, the Bonner Lumberjacks and the Bonner Highlanders. Today a more modern spectator stand has replaced the original. The best baseball game I ever saw played there was a game called Donkey Baseball. It was played like regular baseball with one exception. When you made a hit, you were required to jump up on the back of your assigned donkey and run the bases. By the end of the game, the ball players and spectators were rolling on the ground with laughter! I never did figure out how well the donkeys liked the game.

The next striking sight I saw was rows of meticulously maintained family dwellings surrounded by magnificent shade trees of birch and maple. Green lawns were in abundance and everything was connected by quaint wooden board sidewalks.

Just when I thought I had seen everything, an amazing castle-like building came into view. It was the Hotel Margaret, perhaps named after an early Bonner School teacher, Margaret Robinson. For a modest price, mill workers could purchase a hot home-style lunch served in the ornate dining room. Some of the best cookies I ever tasted, with the exception of Jim Willis's and my wife Sharon's, were made in the kitchen of this marvelous hotel.

The next point of interest in this quaint little sawmill town was the white building that is currently home to our History Center. A delightful little soda fountain occupied the area where our History Center now sits, and a small grocery store

named the Red & White Store, which was operated by Albert Dufresne, occupied the center part of this structure. The Bonner Post Office sat on the south end of the grocery store.



Many more mill worker's houses occupied both sides of Highway 200 up to the Milwaukee Railroad crossing. The Victory Gardens were tucked in slightly east of the Sawmill. These gardens were maintained by the Anaconda Company and divided up into plots which were rented by mill workers and other locals. As you neared the railroad crossing you could detect the strong odor of bunker crude oil and hot steam. The Milwaukee Railroad had their Bonner Maintenance Shops located here, and bunker crude oil was used to fire the boilers on the mighty old steam engine (No. 1246).

After settling into our railroad house, the following Monday morning a blast of a mighty steam whistle, which could easily rival the whistle on the H.M.S. Titanic, startled us. It was 8:00 a.m. and this was a signal to the mill workers to begin work. This huge whistle would signal the start and end of the lunch hour as well as the end of the day shift at 5:00 p.m. Just when everything quieted down, this giant steam whistle would once again signal the start of the night shift at 6:00 p.m.

While growing up and attending school in Bonner, I had the privilege of going on several field trips through this enormous sawmill. The department supervisors would slow down the production processes so we could observe every detail about how logs were converted into lumber. In order to further simplify these trips, cat walks and observation points were built for us as we made our tours. These trips were fascinating to me personally and inspired me to work here for the next 45 years.

Regretfully, you cannot actually experience the sights and sounds of 1954 as this grand old sawmill has been shut down and decommissioned. All is not lost, however, as I have joined the ranks of some very good friends who have devoted themselves to preserving the memories of the mill at Bonner through pictures, stories, and movies. Our History Center is one way for us to share some of these adventures and we encourage everyone to return for many more stories and a great window to view our past.

Thank you, Jim Willis and Dennis Sain, for helping me spin this story. - *Hooligan*

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## Life at the Confluence - Riverside Stories, a New On-line Book by Sam Berry

This project features *Lois Fuller Johnson, Richard Hamma, Chuck Teague, Jack Demmons, and Grant Higgins.*

Sam Berry is a young artist with a love of history. *Life at the Confluence – Riverside Stories* is his second history publication. His first, *Picture the Swan*, presents historical impressions of the Swan Valley. Through his artwork, oral history stories and historic photos engage the viewer in a new dimension. Sam's media, lithographic prints and relief prints, are themselves historic processes. His description:



*The artwork I created for this project are lithographic prints and relief prints. These are historic print making processes of producing multiple reproductions of the same image. Each print exists in an edition of 6-9 and once the edition is established no more can be printed.*

*To create a lithograph, the original image is drawn onto a prepared limestone block. Then the block is processed and hand inked and printed onto paper. To create a relief print, an image is drawn on a piece of wood and the area that is to be white is carved away. Ink is rolled onto the higher portions and the image is transferred to paper.*

*Stone lithography and relief printing were once the most commonly used ways of mass producing images and communicating to wide audiences in the forms of books, newspapers, posters, etc. The democracy of this proliferation, easier access to the work, and historic legacy are key elements that I wish to carry into this project.*

View the book on-line at <http://issuu.com/samberry01/docs/confluence>. The original prints and some of the wood cuts are at the Bonner Milltown History Center. In October, 2014 **Life at the Confluence – Riverside Stories** will be on exhibit at the Historical Museum at Fort Missoula.

## Photos at River City Grill

Have you ever been eating a meal at the River City Grill in West Riverside and wondered about the photographs on the wall? Now there is no need to wonder. There is a loose-leaf notebook at the Grill which identifies all the pictures (even the ones in the restrooms!), that you can look at over lunch. The History Center started the project, but it would not have gotten off the ground without the persistence of Glenn and Sharon Smith, Center volunteers, who helped identify the pictures not in the Demmons Collection, photographed them, and collected all the information in the notebook.

Most are part of the Jack L. Demmons Bonner School Collection of photos which he began collecting for the

school's 1976 bicentennial observance. Thanks to the Milltown Redevelopment Working Group, the Archives at the University of Montana digitized these photos (about 1600 of them). They are available to view on-line in the Montana Memory Project: <http://cdm15018.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15018coll37>

However, that information is for later when you are back with your computer and internet, not enjoying tomato soup and a sandwich!

So we encourage you to check it out and, of course, let us know if some of the information is incorrect or if you have a story about one of the pictures.

## tworivershistory.net Offers Local History On Demand

Can't make it to the History Center? Have a relative in California wondering about the cleanup of the Milltown Reservoir? Miss a Roundtable program that you really wanted to attend?

Our website [tworivershistory.net](http://tworivershistory.net) is open 24/7 and is being constantly updated. It features an animated timeline map of the area's history, videos of the Roundtable programs, local history, and links to important sites such as the Demmons Collection on-line. Visit today!



### BMHC Goes Social

The Bonner Milltown History Center has a Facebook page. "Like" us for occasional announcements.  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bonner-Milltown-History-Center/349797901794668?ref=hl>

**BMHC Volunteer Committee:** Jim Willis, 258-6134; Judy Matson, 258-6335; Minie Smith, 543-5115; Dennis Sain, 549-5782; Glenn Max Smith, 825-6478; Willie Bateman, 258-6620; Lee Legreid, 549-2270. *We'd love to see your name here too!*

The Bonner Milltown History Center is located in the Bonner Post Office Building, 9397 Hwy 200 E., Bonner MT 59823.  
Hours: Tuesday morning, 9:30 - 11:30; Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, 2 - 4:30.

