

BONNER MILLTOWN HISTORY CENTER

KEEPING OUR LOCAL AND TIMBER HERITAGE ALIVE FOR THE EDUCATION & ENJOYMENT OF THE PUBLIC

BONNER POST OFFICE BUILDING - PO BOX 726, BONNER MT 59823

HRS: TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY 2 - 4:30 P.M.



History Roundtable Calendar

Programs are held on Sundays at 2 p.m. at the St Ann Catholic Church in Bonner. Audience participation is welcome. Free admission.

Jan. 16: “Remembering 3038” Panel: Jim Hill, Charlie Long, Dennis Sain, Lee Legreid

Feb. 20: “Fire” Fire fighting in the mill, the origin of MRFD Station #4, fighting wildfires

March 20: TBA

Bonner Milltown History Center welcomes your tax-deductible donations!

The all-volunteer center uses donations for postage, printing costs, and office and media supplies used in our oral history and photo scanning projects. A special Thank You to Scott Cooney, Blackfoot Land and Water, for donating space for the History Center.

Boots: Manly Footwear - Millworker's Choice - or Attitude Adjusters

By Glenn Max Smith

Rumors concerning a major rebuild were running rampant at the Bonner Mill during the late 1950's. Everyone seemed to have his own theory, but no one had any idea of the magnitude of this undertaking. Three years later the project was completed with a state of the arts Planer Complex, Lumber Shipping Department and other improvements in the Sawmill and Dry Kilns. The local newspaper featured an entire advertising supplement explaining this modernization project.

The Old Planer

Some important items not mentioned in the Missoulian supplement were “weather” and “Supervisors” with inflated egos. This is where my story begins, so let's go back to the old Planer Complex which was located much closer to the Blackfoot River. This complex was housed in a drafty old structure which kept the planers out of the weather, but offered very little else to the hourly employees who operated the machines and sorted and packaged the finished lumber. After all--*This was where the MEN worked-it is not a Country Club!* It did, however, have a heated restroom which was considered to be the ultimate extravagance compared to the old restrooms which were suspended on floating log booms on the hot pond in the river.

Winter on the Blackfoot River

Winter winds could rage down this river with a wind chill

factor that would easily rival Siberia. On a calm winter day it was not unusual to see temperatures of 20 and 30 below zero. Working in these conditions would inspire the most hardy of workers to seek out a few minutes of warmth during an eight hour shift.

Loitering in the lunch room was forbidden, so the next best place was the restroom. You could go into the restroom, sit on the commode, close the privacy door, then soak up a little heat. Great Idea?? Not if you worked with an egotistical Buffoon for a supervisor. The Supervisor at this time made a special point of keeping an eye on the restroom and took great pride in charging inside to browbeat any potential loiterer.

To be continued. Next issue: “Setting Up the Buffoon”

Western Lumber Company: Do you have photos or stories about the Western? Little is known about this early mill.

Did you know: To date, 16,500 logs have been removed from the Blackfoot River!

Recording Stars: Thanks for being interviewed for oral histories to Don Skillicorn, Manx Skillicorn, Dick McEwen, Lu Waddington, Lois Fuller Johnson, Glenn Smith, John Barnhart, Mike Waddington, Joanne Froelich, Hank Flores, Roy Robinson

Call Judy Matson (370-5929), Dennis Sain (549-5782) or Glenn Max Smith (825-6478) to schedule your interview. *Every story is important!*

Friends of 2 Rivers ■ PO Box 376 ■ Milltown MT 59851 ■ Ph. 370-6584

Learn more about Friends of 2 Rivers at www.friendsof2rivers.org

We welcome your help. See an activity you'd like to help with? Call us! Donations to Friends of 2 Rivers are tax deductible.