

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

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

Milltown State Park: Our New Park Follows an Old Tradition

by Minie Smith

As we welcome the new state park to the neighborhood, we are reminded that this is actually the second park to be located in the Bonner-Milltown-West Riverside area. When Copper Baron William Andrews Clark began building the now removed Milltown Dam in 1905, he also planned a 45-acre park. Riverside Park was created in 1911 for the enjoyment of the people of the greater Missoula area. The *Missoulian* expounded on the natural beauty of the park in a front page article:

“The park is bounded on two sides by water. On the west side flows the Missoula River still boiling and bubbling after its wild plunge over the spillway of the Clark Dam. It is a beautiful stream at this point and is an attraction such as few parks possess. On the south side is the lake for boating, a body of water spreading over an area of a square mile at the confluence of the Hell Gate and Big Blackfoot Rivers above the dam at the power plant.”

There was a system of trails and a dance pavilion, a bandstand and refreshment area, and a ladies’ rest room, rustic seats and picnic tables. There was also a baseball field and a sports area. The article was written just after the opening of the park, and it noted that a full, modern playground was also anticipated.

The park in its initial stages was well used; sometimes as many as 3,000 people visited on an afternoon. It was accessible from Missoula on the weekends by a special open streetcar. Clark owned the electric streetcar line at that time so it made sense that he would accommodate usage.

Checking in the Bonner history book, *A Grass Roots Tribute*, we find that in 1911 concessions were run by Messrs. Latrielle, Karckenan and Poplinski, all of whom were laborers for the Anaconda Mill at Bonner. In that summer, a plane was brought

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BMHC History Roundtable Calendar

February 19: *Women at the Mill.* Once strictly a man’s domain, women entered the workforce and worked shoulder to shoulder with the men in addition to working in the office. Come hear their courageous, sometimes sad, sometimes funny stories.

March 18: *Stories of the Bonner Houses.* Bonner was a unique town and the houses hold numerous stories of the families of mill workers and supervisors. Take a trip down memory lane or introduce yourself to these historic homes.

May (Date and time TBA): Hellgate Lions and BMHC host the *Old Timer’s Party*. A new generation of “old timers” enjoys a local tradition.

out to the park on a flatbed on the streetcar line and assembled at the park. The pilot, Walter Beck, took off, following the river back to Missoula. It was the first time many people had seen a plane close up. Also that summer, powwows with Flathead and Blackfeet Indians were held at the Park. Bonner baseball was played at the Riverside Diamond for many years. Kelly Pine field in Bonner was established in 1937.

Although the Center does not have a lot of information about the Park in future years, we do know that it was used for several years in the 1920s for the annual picnic of employees of the Missoula Mercantile, gatherings of over 500 people. There are a few pictures of various picnics at Riverside Park in the Demmons Photographic collection. Several of the different ethnic groups in Bonner and Milltown chose the Park for annual gatherings.

If anyone has pictures or information about the Park, please share it with us. Remember we can easily scan your pictures.



Marshall Skiers’ Reunion

Smiles, hugs and stories abounded Sunday, January 15 as more than 60 members of the Marshall Ski Area Family gathered for the History Roundtable. Anna and Dennis Sain organized the program which included reminiscences from about 15 speakers including Carla Green (*photo left*) who recalled growing up at Marshall and Dave Fellin who started the Ski Patrol.