



The Wagon Tongue

Volume 6 Issue 1

Madison Valley History Association, Inc.

January 2008

From the Wagon Seat: Happy, healthy New Year 2008. The Madison River gorge reached the bridge and is above town on January 2. History keeps repeating itself! Work continues on our future museum. The MVHA Board is working on getting permission from the landowner to the east on sharing the approach and to take electricity off of the power pole which is on their land. After all this is done we can get our approach to the museum site done. The board is working on starting the forge building. Thanks to Larry Keifer, we have the architectural plans made to code for the forge building. We plan to implement these plans in the spring. When the weather gets a little nicer, we will work on the perk test and the drain field. Hopefully by late spring we will have our definite plans. The MVHA will need to have everyone's help on this project so if you can help on any phase of this project in anyway, contact a board member.

Another project announced at the December meeting is putting together a cookbook of the many old treasured recipes in the Madison Valley. The MVHA is depending on your input to put together this cook book for future sale. See the information form on page 5 of this newsletter. Don't forget that we have done the second printing of the Early Days of Madison Valley by Jimmy Spray and have copies for sale.

The board would like to give a big thank you to everyone who helped the association in anyway during 2007. This includes some of our families and friends who are not members but are supporters.

The board still needs suggestions for programs that you would like to have at monthly meetings. For 2008 we need a chairperson and committee to head up a fundraising effort to raise needed funds for building the proposed museum. Several board members are meeting with the county grant writer to get started on writing grants and interested members are invited to join in this endeavor. At the annual meeting in May, we will be electing a couple of board member to fill expired terms. Please think about participating in your organization by being a board member. The MVHA and the board will be needing your help during 2008, so plan on stepping forward and helping out. Let us proceed on. Your Wagon Master, Larry Love

History Tidbits. Dr. Mae Pankey was the Madison Valley resident who became the first woman dentist in Montana. Madison Valley resident, Paul Tillinger, was a trapeze artist for the Ringling Brothers Circus. The Tikker and Donna Jones place is an old Madison Valley school house that has been moved 4 times over the decades. William Chaloner, Madison Valley native, became the most famous cowboy of North Dakota. During the 1940's, M. A. Chuck Switzer was the oldest licensed driver in Montana at age 87. Dr. T. B. Marquis was the coach of the Madison Valley Antelopes in the 1910's. Otto Coss made the first merry-go-round in the Madison Valley. History tidbits provided by MVHA member, Don Black

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Member Application Madison Valley History Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 474, Ennis, Mt. 59729

Our Mission is to develop a museum to house and preserve collections of artifacts, tapes, photographs and stories of historical importance to the Madison Valley and interpret them through display and education.

Name _____

Telephone _____ Mailing address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

e-mail address _____ (used only for communication of MVHA info)

(____) Student \$5.00 (____) Individual \$10.00 (____) Family \$15.00 (____) Business \$50.00 (____) Patron \$100.00

Welcome to Membership The following have joined since the October 2007 issue. Please add to any membership list you might be keeping. If you need a complete list of members for your committee work, please contact Shirley Love and she will print you a complete updated list of members.

King, Fred (I)

1400 South 19th Ave.
Bozeman, MT 59718

Paugh, Robert J and Barbara A. (F)

2384 West Beall Street 1
Bozeman, MT 59718-3106

Walker, Eric and Elizabeth (F)

11433 James Grant Drive
El Paso, TX 79936

Membership Update

Please check your address label on your Wagon Tongue and you will be able to tell when your next membership is due. Your membership is good for one full year from the date that you purchase your membership. If you attend meetings and pick up your Wagon Tongue there, you may ask Smitty or Shirley and they will look up your due date.

On Nov. 23, 2007, the Madison Valley and the MVHA lost long time member, Donald O. Thexton. His son, Duane, shared the following story.

Don Thexton-Montana Moses

Don loved socializing and enjoyed talking to everyone, be they an Ennis native, or people who traveled from around the world to fish on the Madison River. His favorite story was being the "Montana Moses" by leading fishermen stranded in a boat on Spring Creek back to the promised land of the main channel of the Madison River. Following is an excerpt from the story written by one of the participants, a story which was sent to Don as a "thank you". Don shared the story with everyone during the last years of his life. (continued next column)

"...Let's anchor the boat, take a walk down there and take a look." Sure enough, we confirmed it was a diversion dam for local irrigation purposes (for the Valley Garden Ditch, about 1/2 mile from Don's house). It had posts sticking up from it every five or six feet and the water was lightly spilling over. Below it was a 4-foot drop. On our left bank, a bluff rose about 100 feet. On our right, a grassy island stretched about three-quarters of a mile to the main branch of the Madison River. The dam was cemented on both sides, with no way to pull the boat around it. We were trapped tight.

Therefore, we climbed the bluff and found a fenced pasture. We took a little walk along a fence back up the stream. We looked for a low spot, or a ravine and some vehicle access. We found a big old stone house (Thexton Ranch House) upstream but no one was home. I noticed another house further up the road (Don's house), so we went to check it out. I knocked on the door and shortly a distinguished looking old gentleman came to the door. He was ramrod straight, over six feet tall, bald as a cue ball. Without any introductions, I said, "Guess why we are here?" And he laughed. "I suppose you must be stuck at the dam." he said. "Happens a couple times a year." I didn't see the humor. "We have a drift boat stuck down there. Is there any way you know to help us?" I inquired. "Have you tried to drag it around?" he asked. I said, "No way to get around those cement corners." He laughed again and said, "Well, I forgot about those. Been a while since I've been down there. Let me get my coat and hat and we will go down and take a look."

Up came the garage door and out he drove in his old Ford Explorer. "Hop in", he said. As we arrived at the bluff overlooking the dam, he got out of the car, put on his Stetson hat, and assembled his collapsible staff, which he explained he has needed since he had problems with his legs. He was an imposing figure looking down at the dam.

(Continued on page 3)

Space intentionally left blank for the back of the membership application.

Don Thexton-Montana Moses cont from page 2
“Why don’t you just push the boat over?” he asked.
“What makes you think that will work, especially with those posts sticking up and not much water going over the dam?” I asked. He laughed again, “Well eventually everybody ends up doing that. You will be the first ones in 80 years who don’t do it. Never seen it done with a drift boat though. Go down and take a look. You can remove one of the boards in the dam to increase the flow.”

Mike reached down and tried one of the boards and to our surprise, it moved. We figured we just might be able to move it away and sure enough, we did. Immediately the flow over the dam increased. We measured the distance between the posts so we could check to see if the boat would squeeze between the posts. We slowly positioned the boat between the posts and gave it a nudge. It glided over just as gracefully as a stag leaps a fence. I glanced up and saw the old guy, standing tall, staff in hand, on the bluff above us. “Looks like Moses”, I thought.

As we reflected on our experience, we were grateful that we didn’t have to ask for help in Ennis where we knew that they would get a big laugh at two out-of-towners who got stuck in Spring Creek at the Valley Garden Diversion Dam. We were especially grateful to Moses for parting the waters, showing us the way to the Promised Land, and for giving us the advice and encouragement to make the journey. He probably is still laughing...”

SAGACIOUS BRONCHO by Charles W. Hutton
(Editor’s note-The following story is written by C.W. Hutton of Libby. Mr. Hutton lived through much of the early history and writes in an entertaining manner of those stirring days. This story is one of his own experiences. Published in *Western News*, Oct. 11, 1934 (XXXIV, No 19)

It was back in the early eighties, and I was just 20 years of age in December. It was also in the latter part of that month when I was returning from a brief stay with friends in the Gallatin valley, to my bachelor home in the valley of the Madison River, which contributes their bounteous flood to the headwaters of the Missouri in the south and western part of Montana.

In order that I might complete my journey of 60 miles before nightfall, I must slacken the pull at my pony’s reins and let him travel a little faster. He was a hardy, half wild broncho, and his smooth shod hoofs had clattered rhythmically and unceasingly under his springing gallop over the hard mountain roads since the first appearance of the rising sun that morning, and he was still doing his utmost to quicken his rate of speed, for he was quite desirous of the comfort of his warm stable as I was for the positive cheer that my log cabin and its open fireplace had never failed to impart.

The weather was subzero and the sky was

clear. On either side of the sun’s disc appeared a bright light, tinged with the colors of the spectrum, indicating that the following evening and the next day were to be exceedingly cold.

I drew up at the cabin of an old-time prospector, whom I asked if there were any trails leading over a high ridge, by which I might make a short cut to the place at my journey’s end.

“Hurry home on the main highway an’ git ready for a beastly cold night!” was the answer that did not all free my mind from suspense. Being, in some degree, stocky in bodily structure, he quite occupied the space within his doorway, and was smoking a pipe that seemed to have been of long duration. However, I envied the man the perfect satisfaction he seemed to derive from its use, in spite of the presence of nicotine within its bowl and stem evidenced by an odor, not fit to mix with that of the rose, in the air about, and the dark blue smoke shooting forth in reaction and spiral fashion from its bowl.

“Do you see them sun dogs up thar?” he asked, pointing the moist end of his pipe toward the sun.

“I can see them,” I said, and I can still see them with all their vivid brightness--even with my eyes closed.

“Say young man,” he responded after taking three vigorous puffs at his pipe, “I know you’re a pilgrim in the country; you don’t speak good old United States like we old timers do, an’ because your’re a pilgrim is just why you don’t want to take no short cuts ‘cross country. You’d git onto an elk trail that would lead you to--God knows whar.”

I accepted the old man’s advice and reined my pony back into the road when his restless spirit seemed greatly relieved, and already his feet were beating fast and yet faster upon the hard ground when I heard a call at my back which I took to be slightly overbearing. I brought my pony to a sudden standstill. The impetuous little animal flicked his ears back angrily, as though he himself had had quite enough of the old man’s diatribe

“Hey!” he called again, even after I had turned my pony around and was looking at him. “The crossing of the Madison at Ennis is going to be bad for you. The bridge is all right but I doubt that you can git to it. The river is gorged above with ice, an’ water is runnin’ all over the country on this side an’ freezin’ over. A narrow ravine you’ll have to cross near the bridge is running full of water. It’s all froze over by this time an’ I reckon if you try crossin’ that ravine on the ice, you’d better watch your step or it’s good-bye to you an’ your buzzard.”

He had given my hardy, half-wild brute of the hills and prairies a name that was not at all to my liking. “Buzzard” is a name in the West, applied to any stupid, dead-on-his-feet sort of horse, and I feel that it should be known that my untamed beast was worthy of special regard--for his high spirit, his courage and his power of endurance. (continued pg 4)

The Sagacious Broncho(cont from page 3)
I patted his shoulder to remind him that he was again free to go, and immediately his iron-shod hoofs were again beating tumultuously upon and along the hard road of mountain highway. I turned in my saddle to get a hurried, and parting view of my elderly counselor, and to wave a wish of health and happiness to him. He was still standing in his doorway, fixed and impassive, while smoke from his pipe rose and coiled freely about his head, and risine still higher, it gave form of a giant corkscrew.

Soon my mettlesome broncho had carried me to the summit of the divide, and here I dismounted from my saddle and stood at his head, sweeping the frost from about his eyes and nostrils with my gloves. I could see the formidable gorge 10 miles beyond and below my position--and not less formidable was an ice-covered area upon which water had spread over large tracts of meadow land, covering immediate highways, byways and fences. In due time we reached the ice sheet where I again dismounted, slipped the reins over my pony's head and bade him to follow me which he did with an opposing spirit and strong desire to turn back.

We were separated from the bridge by an eighth of a mile and at times my pony would press his nose upon the ice at his feet and express his feelings by snorting a disapproval of any further movements in the direction of the bridge.

I turned about and placed my arm about his neck and talked to him as I would have talked to a child; assuring him that once we reached the bridge, we would have only to proceed to a point a mile further at which he would be enclosed in his snug stable and I,settled comfortably under the roof of my cabin

But the little animal was still possessed of an involuntary prompting to draw back; this he did with trembling shoulders and limbs,but he finally yielded to my bidding and followed quickly behind me as though he were anxious to reach the bridge and be clear of exposure to extreme or dangerous chances.

We were within a hundred yards of the nearest approach to the bridge when the ice over the deep ravine broke suddenly into many parts beneath us, letting us down into a deep current of water that was chilled almost to the freezing point.

An inner impulse prompted me to lay hold of and cling to my pony, wherever I might find him. He had already been swept some distance down stream and why I had not at first been swept along with him, I could never perceive. I saw him rise upon his hind legs and thrust his fore feet high upon he surface of ice yet unbroken. He could stand in that position only, and keep his head above water. But for him there was no relief from the pressure of a swift current with its menacing blocks of ice which were persistent in bumping against him.

I found myself drifting in his direction, and while striking wildly to keep my head above water,

my hand finally touched and grasped a stirrup by which I pulled myself to his side where I held fast to the pommel of his saddle with the grip of a drowning person.

Evening had fallen, and I had given myself up absolutely to despair. Water had thundered in my ears and stunned me with its furious roar. I wondered if I could hold to my horse much longer. All my clothing above water was frozen stiff and my hands were void of feeling.

My bold and courageous broncho had not given up, although he was now coughing violently and trembling with cold. As with a sudden shock, he turned his head sharply around and with a wild, far way look over the top surface of the ice sheet, neighed frantically and lustily. He could see what my foam splashed eyes could not--hence his characteristic cry of distress.

Children, skating upon the ice in the distance, heard and answered his call and hastened to the Ennis ranch for help.

A lane was chopped through the ice from shallow water to the ravine, into which we were hauled and brought to the top by strong men with strong ropes.

We were cared for at the Ennis ranch by acts of hospitality which were tenderly ministered.

Mr. Ennis, taking me to his room, unclothed me of my soaked and frozen garments and reclothed me in spare garments of his own; he, a man weighing over 200 pounds, and I, 145 pounds,the garments he invested me with, fit wherever they happened to touch but they were warm and comfortable.

Mrs. Ennis, by her own hands, took the saddle from my pony's back and covered him with two heavy blankets, placed him before a well filled manger in a warm stable, and carried him water that had been slightly warmed over the kitchen stove.

I sat the evening through within the family circle, with a feeling that my face was as red as the blazing fire before me.

Story contributed by Jeff Jeffers, MVHA member and William Ennis descendent.

^^

Answers to October 2007 Montana Trivia.

1. Ancient Greek wreath worn by heros-- Laurel
- 2.A closing for clothes with a D instead of B- Dutton
3. Easy chair-- Rocker
4. Abundance of timber-- Plentywood
5. A famous cannery-- Libby
6. To hit a girl-- Decker or Stryker
7. Sugared hay-- Sweetgrass
8. A wild animal and a place to stay-- Deer Lodge
9. A famous composer-- Wagner
10. A breezy piece of meat-- Windham
11. To take a trophy-- Winnett
12. A brand of cigarettes-- Winston
13. A small boy friend-- Wibaux
14. An oven-- Baker
15. A kind of tree-- Popular

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR MADISON VALLEY HISTORY ASSOCIATION AND PEOPLE OF THE VALLEY

As evident from the October cookbook gathering, many local residents have cooking treasures that inform of the past and bring new light to today's recipes and cooking.

We propose developing a special cookbook for that purpose.

This book will contain these elements and design format.

- * Photos of the recipe contributors
- * Biography and relevant cooking/history stories or anecdotes from contributors
- * Replica or copy of original recipes
- * Renewed recipes updated by Amanda with currently available ingredients
- * Photos of prepared dishes

Once completed, this cookbook can be sold in local shops, at museums, through Chamber of Commerce, and over the Internet. This cookbook will serve to publicize the history and stories of MadisonValley cooks and chefs. It will enable tourists to carry home a local treasure from their visit. Proceeds will benefit the Madison Valley History Association.

YOU ARE INVITED TO SHARE old family recipes, stories, new recipes, interesting short anecdotes or stories about history and cooking. Tell us things like when your ancestors/family came to Montana?? How did your grandparents obtain staples, garden, preserve, cook, celebrate?? How do you do these things now??
Do you have historic cookbooks?

Return this questionnaire and/or call and we'll come out to interview you (probably in the spring when Shay returns from teaching)

Committee:

Karen Shores.....MVHA coordinator and research.

Shay Sayer...professor marketing & textbook author ...(if not comfortable with writing, tell your story to her and she'll write it up)

Amanda Strolin...Culinary Institute of America, certified chef

Shelly LeFerre and Bob Celecia..... professional photographers

Your name _____ Phones _____

address _____

E mail _____ best time to contact you _____

Please copy this questionnaire from the Wagon Tongue and write additional information on reverse side. Copy and distribute these questionnaires to everyone you know who might have an interest. For more information contact the following: Submit your Questionnaire to the following:

Karen Shores --- 682-4935 cell 431-0714
15 Carkeek Lake
Cameron, Mt. 59720 email... kshores@3rivers.net

Shay Sayre--- 949-939-1299
43 Hilltop trail
Ennis Mt. 59720
shaysayre@cox.net

Amanda Strolin ---- 682-5238 cell 714-273-9283
90 Diamond Back road
Ennis, Mt. 59729
amanda@ 3rivers.net

Montana Trivia Part 4 Montana is a huge state and there are lots of clues. If you find an answer to any clue that you feel is just as good as the given answer please share and we will add yours to the trivia. Get your Montana maps out! Here are 15 more. Answers will be at February meeting and printed in April Wagon Tongue.

1. A fortified place
2. To separate
3. A medicated pool
4. A crippled wild animal
5. A famous president
6. A kind of berry
7. Widest
8. A greater amount
9. Alley Oop's girl friend
10. An animal steam
11. A kind of sheep
12. Many lads
13. A wide sight
14. A shape with no beginning and no end
15. A black bird's bureau

Looking ahead The editor needs names and authors of good books you have read about Montana or about history for the **For Your Reading Pleasure** column.

February 14 4:00pm. **First Madison Valley Bank** Meeting room. John Ellingson to speak

March 13 Daylight savings time starts March 9 so meeting time goes to **7:00pm. Location TBA** March 17 is Founder of Ennis, William Ennis', birthday and MVHA would like to honor him at our monthly meeting. Any ideas for a program, location, event ?

April 10 7:00pm Location, and program TBA

Madison Valley History Association, Inc. Board of Directors

President: Larry Love

Vice President: Jim Carlson

Treasurer: Neil Kent

Secretary: Mary Ann Alger

Director: Shirley Love

Director: Smitty Overstreet

Director: Otis Thompson

Meetings held monthly on the second Thursday of each month. Watch Madisonian for details of time and place and program.

Board Meetings are held the 1st Wednesday of each month.

The Wagon Tongue will be published quarterly.

Next issue will be April 2008.

Editor: Shirley Love

Contributing Editors:

Duane Thexton *Don Thexton Montana Moses*

Jeff Jeffers *Sagacious Broncho* by C. W. Hutton

Zoe Todd "Montana Trivia"

Don Black History Tidbits

The Wagon Tongue welcomes articles of historical significance from any of the MVHA members or interested public.

Madison Valley History Association, Inc.
P.O. Box 474
Ennis, Montana 59729

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