



# The Wagon Tongue

Volume 6 Issue 2

Madison Valley History Association, Inc.

April 2008

**From the Wagon Seat:** Transition is in the making again. The sandhill cranes are back, the meadowlarks are singing, the blue herons are checking out their rookery nests, the geese are pairing off, blue birds have been sighted, red wing blackbirds are back in flocks and the snow birds are on their way back from the South. Spring is here and the MVHA is awaiting some challenges.

The challenges that face the MVHA are very important one if we are to continue to meet our mission statement. The board and your members need your help in the following areas:

1. Serve on the board of directors and become an officer
- 2.. Help plan programs or do a program yourself
3. Serve on a building committee for building the forge and museum building
4. Serve on the nominating committee
5. Serve on a fundraising committee to organize and promote our fundraising projects
6. Serve as a scheduler for the museum for a month or two
7. Be a volunteer at the museum a couple of times a month
8. Help get recipes and stories for our cook book project
9. Promote and help sell copies of Early Days in the Madison Valley by Jimmie Spray
10. Attend meetings and field trips
11. Write or submit an article for the Wagon Tongue
12. Encourage people in the community to become an active member or supporter of the MVHA to help preserve the rich history of the Madison Valley
13. Help on a grant writing committee
14. Help out with the actual building of the museum...hammering, sawing, pouring cement, etc.
15. Volunteer to be chairperson or member of the Float committee
16. Let us know of anyone you know who would be a good contractor for building the museum
17. Help out with the oral histories. Older Madison Valley folks are passing on before we get histories.
18. Always keep in mind the the MVHA is a 501C3 non-profit organization and think of the MVHA when making a Memorial contribution or a donation for a worthy cause

This is just a short list of items that come to my mind as the MVHA looks into the future. No one person can do all of the above but you can pick out one or maybe two things that you can do to help. With your help, the MVHA will preserve and save the history of the Madison Valley.

Let a board member know what you can do for the MVHA and they will get you on the committee and actively working. Your Wagon Master, Larry Love

**History Tidbit** Lawrence Jeffers and Lawrence Rose caught the famous Madison Valley Albino Skunk. What ever happened to this famous skunk? Tidbit by 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 January 2008 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 a complete updated list .

**Brenneke, Marty and Kevin(Williams) (F)**

35 Cottonwood Lane  
Ennis. MT 59729  
682-3742

**Brown, Jane (I)**

P.O. Box 60  
Ennis, MT 59729 (winter)  
P.O. Box 92  
GlenAllen, AK 99588 (summer)  
907-82-5520

**Grace, Stan (I)**

3365 Tizer Rd.  
Helena, MT 59602  
443-0093

**Hayden, Jim (I)**

912 Ahoy Apt. A  
Billings, MT 59105-0173  
252-5568

**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 a full year from the date that you purchased your membership. If you attend meetings and pick up your Wagon Tongue there rather than have it mailed to you, you may ask Smitty or Shirley and they will look up your date. Thank you for supporting the MVHA.

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The MVHA lost a former member and the Madison Valley lost a long time resident on January 25,2008 when Catherine Armitage passed away. This article is exerpted from the **Progressive Years Madison County, Montana Volume II** page 806-7 and is printed in Catherine's memory. Catherine Emma Potter was born Nov. 10, 1911 in Missoula, Montana, the only child of Jesse Alfonso and Clara Barbara Potter. They lived on their homestead near Arlee, Montana until WWI. (continued next column)

Shortly after Catherine started first grade, Potters moved to Camden, New Jersey where Jesse was a chemical plant foreman. War over, they built their home in Missoula. Catherine graduated from Missoula County High School in 1930.

The Potters traveled the USA and Canada. While attending the University of Montana, Catherine played cello in the university and civic symphonies. She entertained groups with her musical ability and declamations.

After graduating in 1934 with an English major and music minor, Catherine taught at several small Montana schools before coming to Virginia City in 1939, boarding with John Tolsons. Miss Potter's mother imagined her daughter would marry a rich Virginia City lawyer, but Catherine jested that she would rather marry a rancher.

When called for jury duty, Bill Armitage stayed with Tolsons, longtime friends of the Armitages. Jest became reality when Catherine and Bill married on June 12, 1941. They continued to live in the ranch house built in the 1890's and use the horse barn which was raised in 1914.

Bill and Catherine were Eastern Star members. Catherine has spent extensive volunteer hours with Rainbow, 4-H, Red Cross, and Madison Valley and Montana Woman's Clubs. Even her grandchildren knew "Grandma is at the Nearly New on Friday. (Woman's Club Thrift Shop)

Catherine has devoted her share to the ranch--cooking for hired men, feeding bum lambs, giving financial and especially moral support.

Creativity is Catherine's forte. She believes the only reason you can't create something is because you haven't tried and seldom made anything without adding personal changes to the directions. She had all of patience with her children, taking time at Christmas time to help them make gifts. Besides whistling while working and playing the piano, Catherine enjoyed sewing, needlework, weaving, painting and other crafts. Her homemade bread is remembered by ranch visitors. When young her children thought it a treat to have "boughten bread" because they ate homemade bread everyday. Written by Martha Armitage Klauman, daughter of Catherine Armitage.

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## **Ennis, Montana founding father celebration**

During the March 13, 2008 MVHA meeting the birthday of William Ennis who was born on March 17, 1828 was celebrated. Behind every successful man, you will find an equally important woman.

**Katherine Shriver Ennis** was this woman and it is appropriate that in our April issue of the Wagon Tongue we acknowledge her as she was born on April 2, 1835 in Columbiana County, Ohio, the daughter of John and Rachel Summer Shriver. She lived on the farm of her parents while attending public school in Oneida. In 1861, she and William Ennis were married in Oneida. Mr. Ennis was at that time freighting into Pikes Peak Colorado. Mrs. Ennis accompanied him on some of his trips.

In March to 1863, Mrs. Ennis returned to her father's home while Mr. Ennis prepared to go to Bannack, Idaho Territory, to the gold diggings with freight. He sold his ranch and small store in Colorado loaded up with about 80 tons of freight and came West, arriving about June 10, 1863.

Mr. Ennis filed on a homestead in the Madison Valley on August 13, 1863, the exact day that his wife gave birth to their first child, a daughter Jeannie Winifred, in Ohio. He built a one room cabin on the homestead, and in 1865 brought his family to Alder Gulch. The first winter, Mrs. Ennis taught school in Virginia City. In 1866 they moved to the cabin on the Madison, where a son, William John, was born on January 29, 1867.

In 1872, Mr. and Mrs. Ennis took their children and accompanied by the family of William I. Marshall, went on horseback to see the wonders of Yellowstone National Park. The two Ennis children rode double. As far as it is known, they were the first white children in the Park.

In 1868 a four room log house was moved from Virginia City for a more roomy home. This house had two stories, and a "lean-to" was added for a kitchen. Mrs. Ennis often kept large amounts of money for Mr. Ennis. She hollowed out a place in the log wall, put the money in, and pasted paper over the place, so it looked just like the rest of the wall.

In 1881 and 1882, the Ennises built a large home of 13 rooms, with 11 foot ceilings. Mrs. Ennis designed the building, which had a large masonry cellar beneath the kitchen. A hand driven well supplied water, with a pump in the kitchen. Materials for this home were hauled from Franklin, Idaho, as well as the fine furniture that furnished the five bedrooms, parlor, sitting room and dining room. The house burned in 1917, but some of the furniture downstairs was saved. (Editor's note. The Ennis house was located on the land now occupied by the Ennis Homestead house and cabins.)

Mrs. Ennis was confirmed into the Episcopal Church, the church of her husband, and was a charter member of Trinity Guild. The ministers who came to hold services in the valley were most often her guests; but preachers, or ministers, of any 3

denomination were welcome in her home. She was an excellent cook and a fine seamstress and needle worker. Her dining room table was always covered with a linen cloth, hand hemmed, yet she could do most any of the ranch tasks, and did, if occasion required it.

One neighbor told of coming to visit and finding Mrs. Ennis out in the corral, holding a horse's head to the ground, which Mr. Ennis had thrown in order to get some part of the breaking harness on.

On many occasions Mrs. Ennis served as a midwife and helped nurse the sick.

Mrs. Ennis was widowed in 1898. She continued to run the part of the ranch that Mr. Ennis willed to her. She was a woman of true pioneer spirit, and nothing daunted her. She was not afraid of Indians and some who made regular trips through the valley were her friends. She loved to milk a cow and in spite of entreaties by her family, she kept a cow until she broke her hip, when on a visit to Washington in 1919. The doctors were amazed that the hip began to knit. She was not put into a cast, and was able to massage her hip, which she did with regularity and when allowed to return home by train, she sat on a straight chair as was transferred from train to train, as necessary. In a few months, she was on crutches, which she used for about a year. She was able to use a cane around the house, or on a level walk. Eventually, she walked with just a cane, but that leg was a trifle shorter.

She was a long time member of the Society of Montana Pioneers and attended the yearly meetings if at all possible. On her birthday, she held open house, assisted by her daughter, Mrs. Chowning, and niece, Mrs. Hattie Angle. She liked to meet the new school teachers especially.

She donated land for the school, Methodist Church, Forest Service Buildings on Hugel Street and the V.F. W. Buildings.

Mrs. Ennis attended the Pioneer meeting in August 1931. Her death followed on November 4, at the age of 96.

Written by granddaughter, Winifred C. Jeffers.

Story taken from **Pioneer Trails and Trials,**

**Madison County, Montana** (Editor's note: Mrs. Ennis donated to the city of Ennis, the land on Main Street commonly referred to as the "Gazebo Park" but now named in her honor as "Grandma Ennis Park".

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**Quotes from the 50's** "Their music drives me wild. That 'Rock Around the Clock' thing is nothing but racket." "I am afraid to send my kids to the movies any more. Ever since they let Clark Gable get by with saying "Damn" in 'Gone with the Wind', it seems like every movie has a 'hell' or 'damn' in it. "Do you suppose television will ever reach our part of the country?" "Pretty soon you won't be able to buy a good 10 cent cigar." Quotes taken from *Montana Senior News* August/September 2004

The MVHA has completed the second printing of the **Early Days in the Madison Valley** By James S. Spray and have copies of the book available for sale. Cost is \$18.00 plus \$3.00 for shipping and handling. Orders and check can be sent to MVHA, P. O. Box 474, Ennis, MT 58729. Mother's Day & Father's Day are coming and this makes a great gift for a pioneer parent or relative. Proceeds from the sale of the book go to the building fund for the future Madison Valley History Museum.

Jimmy Spray was an interesting person and the **Short Sketch of My Education by Jimmie Spray. January 22, 1875-August 1, 1956** taken from his book gives you some insight into this author.

If I tell briefly how I obtained what little knowledge I have, you will not only have a little more history of the Madison Valley, but you will also realize some of my difficulties in writing this history and excuse some its deficiencies.

My father's name was James H. Spray. He was born in Ohio, in the year 1829. He married my mother, whose maiden name was Anna L Newcomm, in Missouri. Mother had been born in \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ in 1835.

My father was very much opposed to having his children educated, and he would not let me go to school until I was nine years old. This was in the summer of 1884, and my first teacher was John C. Mahoney.

Mr. Mahoney must have had a terrible time with me at first. One afternoon he asked me to tell him what state we live in. I shook my head dumbfounded. My sister, Martha, made a noise to call my attention, and when I looked at her, she was spreading her hands out and then not only trying to put her head between them, but also her whole body. She was trying to make me think of her middle name which was "Montana". "Come, Jimmie, can't you think?" asked Mr. Mahoney. I was getting pretty nervous, and Martha's actions made it worse.

"It is Missouri," I finally said. "What made you think that?" asked the surprised teacher. "Because my father said that when he left Missouri he left the states." I answered meekly. "Well, then, tell me tomorrow what state Sam Smith came from." said Mr. Mahoney, laughing.

On our way home from school my sister said, "Jimmie, I was trying to make you think of my middle name." "What's a girl's name got to do with it?" I asked. Hattie Smith was with us, and her name was Hattie May, so I asked if there was a state by the name of "May". All they would do was laugh, and I thought I had caught on, really thinking there was a state by the name of May.

I knew Sam Smith's name was Samuel Richard, so the next morning when my class was called to recite and Mr. Mahoney said, "Well, Jimmie, what state did Same Smith come from?" I was very prompt to reply, "Richard". "No", he said, shaking his had. I looked at Martha to see of she was trying to help me but she was sitting there with a delighted smile on her face. Mahoney saw I was in hot water, and he told me it was Michigan and instructed me to tell the name of another state the next day. I had often heard my father say that Sam Smith came from England, so that evening while my brother Jack was chopping the evening's wood and Martha was standing near, I asked him if Montana were the

Martha and Martha looked at him and neither said a word. My mother told me the names of several states, and I remembered them all, and the next day was able to tell the teacher the names of a dozen states.

My father was so bitterly opposed to education that he wouldn't buy us any school books. Mr. Mahoney gave me a primer. This gave the names of the letters, and a few short words. Pretty soon I caught on to the sounds of the letters and how they should be run together. After that I did all right.

My mother died in the spring of 1885, and my father would not send me to school. He said he despised "a damn educated fool." "To this I said that if we were fools we might as well be "educated" but he told me to "dry up." By this time I had acquired a spelling book, an arithmetic, a reader, a history and a geography. Mr. Otiis Whitney gave them to me and told his daughter, Rie, to help me. I set to work to go through these books and studied them as diligently as anybody ever studied. In about two months I succeeded in getting three-fourths through them. Rie was real good to assist me. When Martha saw that I was getting along faster than she was, she told my father to make me quit studying. Without any coaxing he said, "You stop that." To disobey him sure meant a good licking, so I stopped. I did go to school a little while during the winter of 1889-1890 but only went over what I already knew.

In 1886 a dentist came to our house. If I remember right his name was John Hagerty. His wife was with him, and they stayed about a month or better. They had a horse and buggy, and the back of the buggy was full of books. They were true, fiction or fable. Maybe there were six or seven hundred, perhaps a thousand of them. Most of these books were about the northwestern states and territories. They told in a romantic way about how these states got their names, how they were explored, of the exciting adventures the explorers had, of Indian fights, and how brutally the Indians tortured their captured victims. All this was so exciting that I sure did want to read them, especially the true ones.

One day while the dentist was telling my father about the books, my sister picked up one and got to read it for a couple of hours. She evidently read about John Colter and how he was captured at Three Forks, for in a few days she was taling about a man who escaped from the Indians and concealed himself in a pile of driftwood in the river. When I asked her to tell me more, she would not say a word.

Sometimes people would come to the house to buy books. The dentist would almost always read some thrilling episode or section of the book that he could tell would please his prospective buyer. Of course I listened to him, and was just famished to read them for myself. I knew it would be entirely useless to ask my father to buy a book for me. Therefore, I laid plans to take some books secretly and to return them the same way. For three or four days I watched for an opportunity to sneak some books but it actually appeared that he was on to me, and guarded them so well that I feared I'd have to give up the stunt.

One day as the dentist was leaving to peddle, my father

(Continued on page 5)

asked him to leave "Custer's Massacre" behind for him to read.

"I could," he said, "but Mr. Spray, why don't you buy it?"

He quickly made his way to the back of the buggy took the key out of his pocket, unlocked the box where the books were, took out "Custer's Massacre," and began to work on my father. He sure was a good book seller. He seemed to know the place in every book which would win for him a sale. He talked a blue streak and almost as fast as lightning. He even suggested that my father take the book as partial payment for his accommodations.

"Oh, hand it here, and if I want it, I will buy it." my father said. He reluctantly gave it to father to read for the day, saying "When I get back this evening you will buy it. Gee Whiz, I must be going." and locking up his books in the back of the buggy, he went off pell-mell.

When he returned that evening he was overly happy, and was singing a great deal as he often did when he had had a good day of selling. Alas! Dad had read to where it told of Reno deserting Custer. He pounced upon Mr. Hagerty saying, "If he hadn't have did it, Custer could of licked them Indians. If I ever see that damn Reno, I will tell him so" So father did not buy the book.

Mr. Hagerty had nine different kinds of books, and he had these stacked upon each other and about seventy five or eighty of those stacks. I was going to borrow one of those stacks, read them, and return them without him knowing it. One day my father, the dentist and I went fishing, he leaving the books in the care of his trusty wife. When we got a mile or two from home, I thought it might be my chance to sneak the books. I slipped back and hid behind a tree when I saw Mrs. Hagerty come out of the house, Sure enough, she went to the buggy, got a book, and returned to the house saying, "Martha, here is the book I wish you to see." In a jiffy I was at the buggy, grabbed a stack of those books, and as I was making my get-away I could hear her trying to sell a book to Martha.

I had already made calculations to cache them down in the brush where the willows were so thick one could hardly crawl through them. With great delight I started then and there to read them. At that time I was a very slow reader and didn't get along nearly as fast as I wanted to. I still believe that the old dentist was on to me but he never said a word.

Before I was halfway through reading them, the dentist and his wife "spread their white wings and flew far, far away, never more to return" as the dentist sang in the song he had composed about the Ugly Duckling. If I had known he would go away without them I would have returned them, but they left when I did not know of it. If I had returned them in that fashion, I knew my father would not have let him hurt me, but Father might have licked me. After they had gone, returning them was an impossibility.

I continued to read them just the same, and as days, weeks and months went by, Martha got to wondering what kept me out of the way. One nice cool day while I was lying on my side with my head in one hand and a book in the other, I thought I heard a little bird make a very faint noise, but did not pay any attention to it. Upon, again hearing it, I looked around and there was my sister within two feet of me.

How she was able to sneak up on me in this fashion she said she did not know herself.

"Oh." Did you steal them from the old dentist" "No" I said. "Yes, you did." and her voice seemed to scold, but to my surprise she added, "How in the world did you do it? I tried so hard it almost made me sick."

Without saying more she plunged her nose into one and was reading with as great interest as I.

When it was time to go to the house, Martha wanted to take them with us, but I balked saying, "Father will whip me." "No he won't," she said.

Finally with much coaxing, I consented. Father was not in the house at the time we got there and I wanted to hide them, and read them when he was out, but Martha would not agree to that and sat at the table reading one when he came in.

"Why, Marthie, where did you get them books? Did they give them to you?"

"I found them." said Martha with a big smile.

"Let me have one." said Father as he put on his glasses. "Did they give Jimmie one too?"

"No." said Martha, "The Day you folks went fishing, the old lady hid them out and forgot them. We found them."

"A whole set of nine?" Father asked.

"Yes." said Martha as she peeped up to me to see what kind of expression I had on my face. I smiled back and soon we three were all contentedly reading to ourselves. Father couldn't see very well at that time, and I had a hard time to read intelligently, but Martha was a fairly good reader. Therefore she read aloud from the books in rotation. Then at meal times or other times while we were doing something else, we would discuss what she had read. In the course of a month or so we had devoured those histories of the West.

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**Montana Trivia Part 5** 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 it and we will add yours to the trivia. Get your Montana maps out and here are 15 more. Answers will be at the May meeting and in the July Wagon Tongue.

1. Warning to a child about to touch something hot.
2. A long legged bird
3. A young flower
4. A small car
5. The posterior of an aquatic animal
6. A foreign village
7. A famous circus
8. A Warm wind
9. A single tree
10. To ask a blessing
11. An area between hills or mountains
12. A colon
13. Hikers's town
14. A grain and a closure
15. On what the early settlers squatted

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**History Tidbits** The Big Trees School was located in David Smith's field. Ray Swart died at the Manley Rodeo grounds in 1927. Susannah (Walter) Switzer, an early pioneer woman, was called *Gammie*. Tidbits by Don Black

## Answers to Montana Trivia part 4 January 2008

1. A Fortified place...Garrison
2. To separate..Divide
3. Medicated Pool..Medicine Lake or Hot Springs
4. A crippled wild animal..Lame Deer
5. A famous president Lincoln, Jefferson, Clinton
6. A kind of berry..Alder, buffalo, Straw
7. Widest..Broadus
8. A greater amount...Moore
9. Alley Oops Girl Friend..Missoula
10. An animal stream..Wolf Creek, Bear Creek
11. A kind of sheep..Big Horn
12. Many lads...Boyes
13. A wide sight... Broadview
14. A geometric figure with no beginning or end..Circle
15. A black bird's bureau...Crow Agency

**For Your Reading Pleasure** Will continue next issue.

**Looking Ahead** The membership of MVHA has decided to continue having 4:00pm meetings at the First Madison Valley Bank. 7:00pm is not an option at the bank and there was no interest in going back to the VFW Hall.

**Thursday, May 8, 2008** Annual Membership Meeting will be at 4:00pm at Trinity Church in Jeffers with approval of budget and election of board members. Potluck dinner to follow .Last names starting A to J please bring a main hot dish, K to Q bring a salad and R to Z bring a dessert.

**Thursday, June 12, 2008** 4:00pm Program TBA

**July and August** will hopefully be field trips.Dates and times TBA. Trip to historic Pony is in planning stages. Any other locations???

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

## 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:OtisThompson

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 July 2008.

Editor: Shirley Love

Contributing Editors:

Martha Armitage Klauman Armitage Family

Progressive Years Madison County, Montana Vol II

Winifred C. Jeffers Ennis Family Pioneer Trails and Trials Madison County Montana

Jimmie Spray Short Sketch of My Education from Early Days in the Madison Valley

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.

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