

# The Wagon Tongue

Volume 8 Issue 1

Madison Valley History Association, Inc.  
website: [www.madisonvalleyhistoryassociation.org](http://www.madisonvalleyhistoryassociation.org)

January 2010

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## From the Wagon Seat:

A new year has started and this promises to be an exciting year for your Madison Valley History Association. Our museum building is fast approaching completion. Other than some landscaping, the outside of the building is completed. We have had great support this past year from several of the local contractors who have helped us get the building in "tiptop" shape. All of the plumbing and electrical work is completed and now volunteers from our membership are working to finish the inside walls, then clean and paint each of the rooms, and install some carpet in the main area. We plan to move our display items into the museum during the month of March, so we will be soliciting help your help to make this move.

The "Walk of Names" project is doing very well, with over 40 boards already purchased by individuals and more coming in everyday. This is an excellent way to honor your family or business, so look on page 5 in this issue for an order blank to make your name a part of this project. Remember, your contribution is tax deductible.

We recently acquired an old X-ray machine from the Manhattan museum. This will become part of the permanent display in our "medical room."

Our fall programs were wonderful. In October, Janet Zimmerman presented "Songs We Used to Sing" and everyone enjoyed themselves singing along with Janet. In November, Dr. Jeff Safford from the MSU history department gave a presentation on the gold camp of Sterling. We so enjoyed his program that we invited him back to do another program in April. Our Christmas potluck dinner was a rousing success with everyone enjoying the delicious foods provided by our membership. By the time you read this, Jacqui Marotta will have given the January program *The Women of the Bozeman Trail*. This program was funded by Humanities Montana, the Montana Cultural Trust, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In February, we tentatively have scheduled Steve Morehouse, the co-author of the Beaverhead County history picture book, to give a presentation on how that book was put together. This should assist us as we work with Gary Forney to create the Madison Valley picture history book. On March 17, the MVHA will again honor Ennis's founding father, William Ennis, with an Irish Stew dinner. As mentioned earlier, Dr Safford will be our April featured speaker. And then in May, we will have our annual potluck dinner with the election of new board members.

Speaking of new board members, we need to elect three board members in May; two for three year terms (Jimmy Carlson and Otis Thompson's terms expire) and one for a one year term (to replace Smitty Overstreet.) If you are interested in serving on the board, let any board member know and your name will be passed on to the nominating committee when it is appointed.

As most of you know Smitty Overstreet is in the Pioneer Medical Center in Big Timber where her son, Jim, lives. Her address is printed on page 6 under member news. She loves to hear from her MVHA friends, so send her a note or give her a call.

MVHA has received several monetary donations this past year and we really appreciate the support we continue to get from our members. Remember, we are a 501(c)(3) organization, so all donations are tax deductible. The board is pursuing several grant possibilities to assist us in getting our new museum up and running. If you have any ideas as to how our new museum should be organized, contact any board member with your ideas. This plans to be an exciting year, so "let's keep the wagons rolling."

Your Wagon Master, Otis Thompson

**History Trivia** The first commercial TV station west of the Mississippi River was KTLA, Hollywood, CA which began operations Jan. 22, 1947 at 8:30 pm from a converted garage. Just 63 short years ago tomorrow.

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

**Diede, Connie Segota (Benefactor)**

P.O. Box 801 (682-4188)

Ennis, MT 59729

**Segota, Steven (Benefactor)**

P.O. Box 801

Ennis, MT 59729

MVHA member, **William E. Poole** passed away of cancer on Oct. 21, 2009. He and his wife, Ingrid, sold the Sun Ranch in 1993 and retained the undeveloped Hutchins homestead property. Stories and memories are welcomed about these two gentlemen.

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**Snowdrift Hospitality-More on the winter of '48-'49** by June Haigh, MVHA member

If you want to know how long someone has been in southwestern Montana, just mention the winter of '48-'49: 1900 of course. I was in the middle of my junior year at Montana State College (now University) in Bozeman, Montana. It was Christmas vacation and my younger brother, Bob, and I decided to put in our elk hunting camp at Trail Fork of Bear Creek, near the Ranger Station southeast of Ennis, Montana. We had hunted some there before, but had not camped.

In those years, elk would migrate west from the Gallatin River Drainage and Yellowstone National Park through Manley Pass into the Trail Fork of Bear Creek. The famous Sphinx Mountain (locally called 'Old Red') is to the northeast of the Manley Pass. The migration seemed to be triggered by cold and snow and this year it happened to coincide with the time off from college books. Cars were not too plentiful at that time but Bob and I found a 1928-1932 model A Ford two door coupe. After some new piston rings and different tires, we were able to get around. We removed the back seat cushions to make room for our camping gear: stove, tent, bed-roll and food. We pitched our tent beside the creek at the foot of the mountains. For a couple days we found signs of elk movement in the Trail Fork but no elk. On Dec. 31, we caught up with a small herd in the south fork of Bear Creek. The south fork of Bear Creek was our name for it, not to be confused with Trail Fork where we camped. It is not named on recent maps. We had our meat supply for the winter but it was still up the creek a small distance.

We slept in a bit on New Year's morning, had breakfast, dragged the elk into camp and started to break up camp. The smaller of the two elk we managed to squeeze and jerk past the front jump seat into the back seat area. It had been nearly full when we arrived but we managed to stack our gear on top of the elk. No more use of the rear view mirror! The larger cow elk fit just right on the front bumper which would be hard to do on our modern cars.

It was late afternoon before were ready to leave but only about sixty miles to our family home in Three Forks. The weather was nice there at the foot of the mountains. A little cool but a little sun coming through the broken clouds. We looked around to see if we had picked up everything, the car started right up  
*(continued on page 3)*

**Membership Update**

There are still 21 memberships outstanding. Please check your address label on your issue of the Wagon Tongue and you can tell when your membership is due or if you have not purchased it yet. 2010 memberships are now due, Your membership is good for a full year from the date that you purchased it. Memberships are \$5.00 for students, \$10.00 for individual, \$15.00 for families, \$50.00 for Businesses and \$100.00 for Patrons. If your membership comes due before the next Wagon Tongue, you will find a membership application enclosed. If you are inviting a new person to join or want to purchase your membership before it is due, just write out name, mailing address and type of membership and mail to MVHA at P.O. Box 747, Ennis, MT. 59729. The Board of Directors of your Madison Valley History Association appreciates all the memberships that are purchased as this allows them to have funds to continue the work of developing a museum in the Madison Valley:)

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**Memories**

The Wagon Tongue has been getting favorable feedback on the memories of our members and long time Madison Valley residents and natives who have passed on. Please help by sending your stories and memories about deceased members or residents to the Wagon Tongue. Obituaries from the local newspapers will not be reprinted. We are looking for stories that will expand on the deceased lives, genealogy, and contributions, etc. to the history of the Madison Valley. The Madison County Trails and Trials and Progressive Years have helped but not everyone's family history is included there and sometime there are good stories out there that have never been printed. So help out if you have information to share. The Wagon Tongue does not want anyone excluded because of lack of new stories.

No Memories to print this issue.

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**George B Rowe** passed away on Nov. 27, 2009. He was born Jan. 5, 1916 in Pony and was associated with the Rowe Brothers Ranch at Red Bluff.

**Snow drift Hospitality** *Continued from pg 2.*  
and off we went down the road, past the Alice Orr ranch. By the time we approached the Bear Creek School House there was an abrupt change in the weather. We were not new to the abrupt change nor a full blown blizzard. New snow was in the air and old snow was sweeping across the ground. The wind was fierce and periodic gusts would completely block out the road. Looking above the ground, toward the valley below, you could see for a mile or two. A beautiful site from a limited perspective. There was a small snowdrift forming at the corner across from the school and we turned north. We were pushed by the south wind but mindful of the fence posts sticking out of the snow on both sides of the road. Somewhere between the fence posts would be a good place to drive.

Still not mesmerized by the whirling snow, we knew we must turn left toward the valley at the next corner. The wind and snow would be going across the road instead of swirling down the road. With snow all around and daylight about gone, we turned left. There in front of us was a massive snow drift. Even before I could throttle up, our stop was abrupt. Reverse, hardly a wiggle. I stepped out of the Model A. It should have been out and down, with 19 inch wheels on the front and 21 inch wheels with chains on the back. My father, who died when I was fourteen, had taught me well. We had a shovel even as I still have today. Looking ahead, we could see that backing out was our best choice. Clean out behind one wheel, then the other. The first one was full again. Try to back up--no luck, we were high centered up front.



Bear Creek Elk and 1928-32 Ford Model A  
Photo Three Forks MT by Robert E. Haigh

It was dark by now when here came a man from the log house across the road. With shoveling and a little push, we were able to back out. This man was Karl Warburton. He said, "you're not going to get through that drift tonight. Get your bedroll and come to the bunk house." He later invited us to share the leftovers from New Year's dinner. I remember having a drumstick.

Soon after eating we noticed car lights from the corner drift area. It was Alice Orr coming from town and was stalled in the drift. At this point I went with Gene Warburton, the oldest boy of Karl and Hazel, to the barn where we harnessed up a team of

horses. He pulled her car over the drift and she continued her snowy drive to her ranch. She called a little later saying that she had made it home.

Karl and Hazel Warburton had bought the Albert Werner Ranch in 1948 and moved there with their children. Later the house was bought by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks and moved to Nevada City where it still is located. (see The "Old Werner House" in the next article.

In the morning the storm was over and we were treated to breakfast. I wonder if we were predestined to encounter the drift and experience such hospitality at the Warburton Ranch. We never would have made it home that night. We found out that the State Highway Dept. had plowed many huge drifts on the way to Three Forks (Highway 287) It could have been one of those snowdrifts where we might have spent the night or even worse.

On our way home, as we passed the Cafe in Ennis, the game warden, Toughy Cole, who was having coffee, saw us go by with the elk on the front of the car. By the time he caught up with us we were about two miles north of town. It was easy to find the tag on the bumper elk. The one in the back of the car was a different story. I think he thought we were trying to hide it with all our gear. It was quite a sight, standing on the running board and leaning over the jump seat. He had what we then called a pot belly. As he came up for air, he said "If I hadn't started this, I'd give up." After we moved a few things out of the way, he found the tag.

I now live in Ennis and occasionally go past the Warburton Ranch (formerly the Albert Werner ranch). Although it has been sixty years, I will never forget those great people and their generosity. Karen Warburton Dringale and Gene Warburton, children of Karl and Hazel, live in Ennis at the present time. I knew the Dringales even before I moved to Ennis in 1972 and our children grew up together, but I had no thought that Karen's parents were the ones who had helped us so much that night.

Thanks to Karen Warburton Dringale, Karen Shores, Jane Rybus and Vi Haigh for their help in preparing this story.



Early photo of the Warburton (former Albert Werner) Ranch House.

**The "Old Werner House"** by MVHA member Karen Shores

Found on the back of a painting by Catherine Barr of this (the Albert Werner) house was a note from Winifred Jeffers which said the following:

*Older Werner Home near Cameron (razed by Ray Carkeek) Two story part was built for storage by "Auntie" and "Uncle" Woodworth later made into a home when Ennis Lake formed and took most of Woodworth's acreage. When they built their lake home bought by Albert Werner.*

The lake was formed around 1905. Albert, Mable and sons, Elwood and Erwin, lived in the house and were an integral part of the Bear Creek community. The boys attended the Bear Creek School House.

In 1948 the house was sold to Karl and Hazel Warburton. At this time Albert Werner said he thought that the house was about 75 years old. The Warburton family had seven children. Karen Warburton Dringle remembers that "it was very cold in there. The boys slept out in a bunk house. Both Karen Dringle and Karen Cheney Shores remembered a wonderful floor in the long one story part dining/living room because the floor slanted about a foot from one end to the other. It was such fun to slide down on an old rug. The upstairs was mostly for storage as the floor was unstable.

In 1957 Karl Warburton offered the place to his neighbors, but no one could afford to buy it. He then sold it to Fish, Wildlife and Parks.

Later neighbors Ray Carkeek and his father George Carkeek bough the crop land, house, barn and out buildings. This was beautiful and productive crop land because of the alluvial fan. The upper part remained as game range.

This wonderful old log house was later donated to Charlie Bovey and John Ellingsen and was moved to Nevada City. The house was not "razed"...just moved.

In place of this old log house, a bunkhouse was added onto extensively for the family of Anita and Hank Gates, ranch managers and so the corner continued to have a family home. The Gates children who grew up in this house were Mary Gates Oliver, David Gates and Marie Gates Reinoehl. In the 1980 this complete house was moved down on to the old Carkeek place, restored and became a summer home for Dick, Karen, Kevin and Eric Shores.



Current Werner House in Nevada City

**From the Mail Box**

Dear Wagon Tongue

Regarding Ennis Woodman Hall (old Economy Store)

Some Memories by Robert L. Foreman

When I as about 10 years old in 1939, I remember attending movies shown at the Woodman Hall. This was used as the community theater previous to the movie theater on main street near the old post office. The theater was operated by Bob Gohn. He operated theaters in different towns even though he was blind. My dad had told me that he lost his eye sight when cannon powder exploded in his face. In Virginia City on the 4th of July they would fire cannon balls across the ravine. Then after the occasion, the young men wold find the cannon balls that had not exploded, screw the cap out and pour the powder out.

I also remember when the movie theater was built. My folks and I were watching the movie "Gone with the Wind" when the electricity went off. My dad left to repair the power line which had gone down with a severe wind. The rest of us sat in the dark theater for three hours before they got the power on.

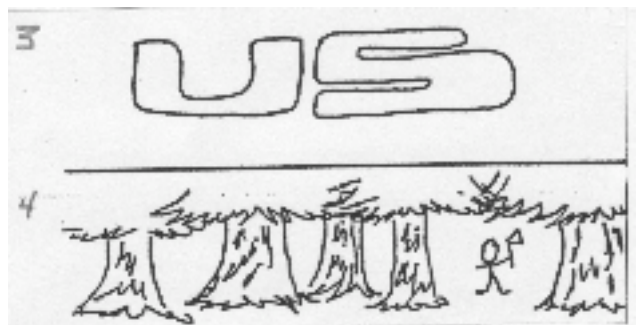
I also remember the Woodman Hall being used for Box socials. Another time the Foremans, the Storys, the Huttons, the Thextons, the Nevilles the Stalcups and the Chamberlins all had a family get-together there.

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**Montana Trivia**

Answers to October 2009 issue:

1. Horse Prairie
2. Twin Bridges



**Researcher needs information**

Vicky MacLean is researching the old Forest Service ranger stations on the Beaverhead and Deer Lodge National Forests. She is looking for old photographs of these stations or the rangers that worked there. If you perhaps had a relative that worked for the forest service or lived near any of these ranger stations and happen to have a photo of it that you would be willing to have scanned, Vicky would be appreciative. She is also looking for information on the old Vigilante range experiment station on the Ruby River south of Sheridan. Contact Vicky MacLean, 2065 Colorado Gulch, Helena, MT 59601 email agillabs@mcn.net

# GIVE THE GIFT OF HERITAGE

The Madison Valley History Association

## WALK OF NAMES



Preserve your family's legacy on the boardwalk to the new Madison Valley History Association Building

- Gift a walkway board in the name of a loved one, your family, your ranch or business
- Add your family brand for no additional charge
- Support Your Museum
- Hand routed six foot composite board

***New Museum opening this spring, come visit us!***

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### My Walk of Names board should say:

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Approximately 24 letters max

- I have a Brand and/or Branding Iron to be used. Brands will be applied at our Branding Party in 2010.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Send your tax deductible check for \$50 and this order to:

Madison Valley History Association PO Box 474 Ennis, MT 59729-0474
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For more information call (406) 682-7415 or email [othompson@wispwest.net](mailto:othompson@wispwest.net)

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## The Roundup A True Story--year 1939

by Charles G. Crump MVHA member

I really didn't sleep much as the plans for the next day kept bouncing around in my mind. The ground was hard and uneven beneath the old sleeping bag and it was cold, damned cold when I crawled in the night before. Sleeping or trying to sleep, with most of your clothes on doesn't add up to a restful night.

As the first glimmer of light pushed over the jagged peaks on the horizon east of the ranch, I knew it was going to be a day I'd remember forever.

The boots were dry and felt warm as I fished them out of the lower fold of the sleeping bag and in a fast physical surge I rolled out, pulled on the boots and grabbed the well worn Stetson I called mine.

Shivering in the early May chill, I could see lights in the cookhouse close by and smoke curling from the standpipe on the roof. Mixed with the picture was the smell of dry pine burning and the tang of sliced slab bacon.

Looking expectantly for the three sleeping forms of my friends, I was dismayed to find their bags rolled and thrown hastily near the cookhouse door. Three great friends!! They didn't even nudge me with a boot toe as they went by

The sounds of horses churning around in the pole corral just over the hill made me realize those characters I called "buddies" were already saddling up.

Hurriedly I rolled my bag, dumped it with the others and jogged, as well as high heeled boots let you, to the corral. Jenkins and Ted were leading their horses through the gate as I arrived. George's loop was settling over the pinto mare's head as I quietly moved, with my rope, into the milling bunch of Sun Ranch horses. All this without a word spoken. No "good morning" or useless talk to disrupt the tricky job of swinging a loop over one selected horse head from among fifty or more spooky and reluctant horses.

The plans had been casually laid over coffee cups the previous night and each of us had picked four horses we like best to start the eventful day. It would take the best and most reliable mounts to round up almost four hundred domestic buffalo that had wintered unmolested on the windswept table lands of Montana's Madison Valley Sun Ranch. This, in 1939, was one of the largest privately owned herds of American bison in the United States.

Hot oatmeal, fried eggs and bacon washed down with steaming black coffee capped the morning ritual for four cow-wise, but not buffalo-wise hard working cowboys. The first rays of Montana's "big sky" sun brought life to horses and men alike and the cold chill faded as we mounted cold saddles and headed for the draw north of the cookhouse.

Moving into the upper pastureland we were looked over carefully by early rising pocket gophers. Some atop their mounded earth homes and others peeking, big eyed, around rocks and sage brush. I wondered what these furry creatures thought as the frost covered buffalo grass splintered like broken glass, projected in all directions by the legs of the four horses.

The first picture of that herd of four hundred, as we crested the tableland, was to me nothing more than a blob

of brown in the distance. It was like a single moving animal, slowly, without feeling of direction. In a way it didn't look any different than the usual cow herd. It wasn't until we had moved within three hundred yards that the blob fragmented into individual shaggy, dark brown buffalo. The large bulls were bigger than our horses and had heads which seemed as big as their bodies. Some already shedding, with tangled lighter colored patches of hair hanging like tattered shag rugs thrown out to broom. Numerous leggy calves, some just weeks old, were working on a warm breakfast. As we approached, there was an air of suspicion, but not fear, as the animals were seeing their first human since midwinter feeding. As much as they looked and acted like a cow herd, there was one special difference. Buffalo just don't like humans, especially those on foot. Julius Butler, Sun Ranch owner, had said to us the night before "Now just be sure you keep them moving until they tire. Then they'll go into the big corral for water and hay. Remember one thing. As long as you are on horseback they won't bother you. Just don't get afoot because those old buffalo just seem to have a real hate for two-legged creatures. Especially ones that smell as bad as you birds do!"

On the word from Jenkins, the four of us spurred our horses in typical cow chasing fashion, hollering as loud as possible to get the herd fully on its feet and moving.

It wasn't until the sea of huge animals got under full running power that I sensed the thrill that every Indian hunter must have experienced. There wasn't any dust as I'd always seen in movies, but everything else was there only this time it was for real.

The most amazing performance was embodied in the calves, probably weighing several hundred pounds compared to the half-ton weight or more of the mother, racing along side, as agile as an adult. It was all my horse could do to hold his own and it was top speed all the way.

Ted and George fell behind as planned and swapped horses. In the meantime, Jenkins and I kept the herd running, as much as possible towards the draw where the big corral stood. This routine kept up, swapping horses, gulping sandwiches and thermos tea, until two o'clock. The pace was telling on the winter weary animals. They probably hadn't traveled faster than a walk since last September! It seemed a cruel way to accomplish a job but nobody had yet invented some way to communicate with the buffalo and have them accept invitations to corrals!

At last the leading big bulls, knowing full well the water was there, veered down the draw, the rest of the herd following, into the 12 foot high long corral. Their excitement was over and they'd now settle, exhausted, but willing to nibble the hay Julius had provided. The following days would be spent in branding, vaccinating, castrating and selecting choice two year old steers for butchering.

The sleeping bag that night held no broken dreams, only ones of satisfaction with a day ended which few other men in the world would experience.

Story provided by Deb Townshend who says that Charlie is now in his 90's but remembers his cowboy days in Montana.

## For Your Reading Pleasure

**A Bride on the Bozeman Trail** The Letters and Diary of Ellen Gordon Fletcher 1866. Edited by Francis D. Haines, Jr. The MVHA has a copy to check out to members. Also available at Sheridan and Three Forks Libraries.

## Looking Ahead

**February 18, 2010** 4:00pm Madison Valley Bank (tentative) Steve Morehead co-author of the Beaver-head County history book to help us get started on the Madison Valley Book.

**March 17, 2010** Second Annual William Ennis birthday party and Irish Stew Feed. Location TBA. Mark your calendar and figure out a way you can help the MVHA make this a yearly event in the Ennis and the Madison Valley.

**April 15** 4:00 pm Madison Valley Bank Dr. Jeff Safford will return and share more stories about Sterling.

## Member News

**Smitty Overstreet** (MVHA founder and Board Member) is now living in Big Timber and would love to hear from you. Her address is: Pioneer Medical Center, 301 West 7th Ave. #8, Big Timber, MT 59011 phone 406-932-6229.

**Eula Thompson Wing** (Mother of Dave Wing) celebrated her 102nd birthday on Nov. 23, 2009.  
**Hal Pasley**, MVHA member, celebrated his 99th birthday on Nov. 12, 2009.

**Lucy Hoag Pasley**, MVHA member, celebrated her 91st birthday on Dec. 10, 2009.

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

## Madison Valley History Association, Inc. Board of Directors

President: Otis Thompson  
Vice President: Jimmy Carlson  
Treasurer: Neil Kent  
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Director: Larry Love  
Director: Smitty Overstreet  
Director: John White

Meetings held monthly on the **third** Thursday of each month. Watch Madisonian for details of time and place and program. (Note the change from 2nd to 3rd Thursday)

Board Meetings are held the 1st Wednesday of each month at 10:00am First Madison Valley Bank conference room

The Wagon Tongue will be published quarterly.

Next issue will be April 2010.

Editor: Shirley Love

Contributing editors:

June Haigh *Snowdrift Hospitality-More on the winter of '48-49.*

Karen Shores *The "Old Werner House" from Virginia City Nugget, Vol 14, Issue 2 Summer 2009*

Charles Crump *The Roundup A true Story-year 1939*

Kevin Brenneke *Montana Trivia*

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