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THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE UPPER FLATHEAD AND KOOTENAI COUNTRY

by

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CHAPTER I

THE LAND AND THE INDIANS

Northwestern Montana consists of rugged mountain terrain, the character of which restricted the growth of a large Indian population and impeded early white settlement. This region, covering approximately nine thousand square miles, extends from the continental divide west to the Cabinet Mountains. Its southern extremities have been defined as an imaginary line drawn east and west from the head of Flathead Lake. Its northern limit is the Canadian boundary. Within its confines are impressive mountain ranges, valleys and a network of waterways. Each of these geographical features has influenced to a large extent the rate and type of economic development possible within the entire area.

All important mountain ranges parallel the general direction of the main chain of the Rockies and present uniform characteristics. The height of separate peaks in each range gradually diminishes as one travels south from the 49th parallel. The rugged high mountains near the Canadian boundary have made east-west crossings more difficult there than farther south. The most centrally located of these mountain chains, the Whitefish range, is separated from the Rockies proper by the North Fork of the Flathead River. This range reaches from the Canadian border to the vicinity of the present Columbia Falls, Montana. Although quite formidable, it is the shortest of all the principal mountain groups in Northwestern Montana.

Another heavily timbered range rises near the present Gateway,
Montana, west of and parallel to the Whitefish Mountains. It terminates some distance southwest of Flathead Lake. Still farther west of this Flathead range lie the Cabinet Mountains which form in part the western boundary of Montana. Of the three ranges, the Cabinet Mountains present the greatest physical obstacles to ordinary travel.

Between the mountain formations, a few rivers have carved out valleys which provide the only good agricultural land in the whole region. Of these, the Flathead Valley, part of the Rocky Mountain Trench is the largest. This trench is one of the most remarkable physical features of the whole region. The structural depression is the result of the same folding processes which erected the majestic peaks in Glacier National Park. In this case, the result is a relatively uniform indentation of the earth's crust. The Upper Flathead Valley is only a small portion of this great crevice which stretches eight hundred miles north into Canada. The segment of the Rocky Mountain Trench north of Flathead Lake is level land with rich deposits of the glacial period. These qualities appealed to the first settlers and, in this particular locality, they first broke the sod for permanent farms.

All of Northwestern Montana outside of the trench is rough forest land with few level areas. Irregular and precipitous stream-cut gorges lead off into the mountains. Along the major rivers are found

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occasional small acreages of natural clearings. Only in one sizeable instance is there a prairie topography. "Tobacco Plains," so called from an old Indian tradition of gathering kinnikinick for smoking, is located in the extreme northwestern corner of the present day Montana. The rolling hills and open country north of Tobacco Creek extend many miles into Canada, offering open range for cattle grazing. Likewise it appealed to the Kootenai Indians because of its similarity to the buffalo country beyond the Rockies.

In some way compensating for the inhospitable character of the forested mountains are the numerous waterways. The most important for early travel was the Kootenai River.\(^2\) Rising far north of the boundary, this river pursues a course almost due south, entering Montana near present day Gateway. Beyond Tobacco Plains the river continues its southward direction through heavily wooded country for approximately sixty miles. At a point where Jennings, Montana, is now located, it turns abruptly to the northwest to form what is known as the bend. It follows this general direction through rugged mountain terrain till it empties into Kootenay Lake in Canada. Inside the river's elbow are the southern spurs of the Purcell and Buckhorn Mountains. From a short distance below the bend to the present Idaho boundary, the banks are

\(^2\) Variations are found in the spelling of Kootenai. In this paper Kootenai is used since this is accepted by the U. S. Geographical Board and numerous other writers. In Canada the Kootenay form is most generally accepted. This form is used for Canadian place names. Other variations that have been used are Kutenai, Cootenae, Kootena, Cutena and Coutesay.
constricted in many places, forcing the water through narrow rocky
gorges, and making navigation almost impossible. Where the river
crosses the main axis of the Cabinet range it falls through a deep
ravine. Here early travelers were forced to portage over an extremely
dangerous path some three hundred feet above the water. From the bend
west to Idaho the south side of the Kootenai has high perpendicular
banks, heavily forested with larch, spruce, and several species of pine.
On the opposite or north side, the land along the river is characterized
by receding benches, each covered with open timber and grass. Occasion-
ally patches of meadowland occur near the union of tributaries with the
Kootenai. These spots have recently become townsites.

Some of the tributary streams have been instrumental in providing
a guide to overland travel to the regions outside the Kootenai watershed.
One of these, the Fisher River, flowing from the south, enters the
Kootenai at the bend. An Indian trail, in early days followed up the
Fisher through the Cabinet Mountains and finally reached the Clark's
Fork of the Columbia.

The Flathead River, southeast of the Kootenai, flows through the
Rocky Mountain Trench. Its three source streams have their origin in
the main chain of the Rockies. The North, South, and Middle Forks join
in one channel near Bad Rock Canyon to form the Flathead. Rushing


4 Joseph Burr Tyrrell, editor, A Brief Narrative of the
Journey's of David Thompson in Western North America, pp. 357-388.
turbulently forth from the canyon, the river winds southwest to near
the present location of Kalispell where it receives the waters of the
Whitefish and Stillwater coming from the north. Following this
junction, the Flathead moves placidly through the lowland to the Lake.
Its slow current and wide channel for the last twenty miles proved to
be a boon to early river navigation. Before overland transportation
was available goods could be carried by steamer across Flathead Lake
and up the river twenty-eight miles. This water route, once put into
operation, tremendously facilitated settlement of the valley.

These major mountains and drainage systems run north and south
so that rapid passage from either of these directions would be held up
only by such minor barriers as fallen timber. The east-west routes
along the Kootenai River and through Marias Pass were also devoid of
insurmountable physical obstacles.

However, there were very evident reasons for early settlers
by-passing Northwestern Montana. First, pioneer travelers coming from
the east, tended to follow the established trails. These trails in
turn lay along the lines of least resistance in regard to unfavorable
topography and hostile Indians. Thus, the fact that the aggressive
Blackfeet claimed all the land east of the Rockies and north of the
Missouri made impossible a direct route across the plains to the fur
country through what is now Northwestern Montana. They not only held
up the westward movement of the frontier into this portion of Montana
but also seriously hindered the western mountain tribes' safe passage
to the bison hunting grounds. They repeatedly ambushed the Kootenais
become available. But such goods could be sold in the East. On the other hand, once a cheap mode of transportation became available, the products of the western settlements could be transported to the East easily. This made it easy for the Western settlements to export their products to the East, which had been the most important market for the products of the Western settlements.

The trade between the West and the East was characterized by the exchange of goods. The Western settlements produced goods such as fur and gold, which were in high demand in the East. The Eastern settlements, on the other hand, produced goods such as tea, sugar, and spices, which were in high demand in the West. This exchange of goods was facilitated by the existence of trade routes, such as the overland trade routes and the sea routes.

The trade between the West and the East was not only beneficial for the countries involved, but it also had a significant impact on the economy of the region. The trade routes that connected the West and the East were the main source of income for many countries, and the products that were traded were in high demand in both regions. The trade between the West and the East was also important for the cultural exchange between the two regions. The products that were traded were not only goods, but also ideas, technologies, and cultural practices.

In conclusion, the trade between the West and the East was a vital aspect of the economy of the region. The trade routes that connected the two regions were the main source of income for many countries, and the products that were traded were in high demand in both regions. The trade between the West and the East was also important for the cultural exchange between the two regions. The products that were traded were not only goods, but also ideas, technologies, and cultural practices.

However, the trade between the West and the East was not without its challenges. The trade routes that connected the two regions were often fraught with danger and conflict. The goods that were traded were also subject to theft and destruction. Despite these challenges, the trade between the West and the East continued to thrive, and it had a significant impact on the economy and culture of the region.


The Kootenai, with their neighbors, the Flathead and Bitterroot tribes, occupied the region east of the Rocky Mountains. They were a warlike people who lived by hunting and fishing. Their territory extended from the Pacific Ocean to the Rocky Mountains and from the Canadian border to the mouth of the Columbia River. The Kootenai were a large tribe, numbering over five hundred persons.

While living within the region of the Plateau Indians, the Kootenai had distinctively different linguistic habits from the Plateau tribes. They were linked by language more with the Plains tribes than with the Plateau Indians. Apparently they were a remnant of the once powerful Kootenai, although they were not as numerically large as the other tribes they came into contact with.

The Kootenai were the only tribe actually inhabiting the area. Other tribes such as the Kalispel or Upper Pendleton and Flathead tribes did not inhabit the area. Although the country was not completely inhospitable to Indian culture, the Kootenai were the only tribe actually inhabiting the area. Other tribes such as the Kalispel or Upper Pendleton and Flathead tribes did not inhabit the area.

In the early days, one Indian tribe ruled this wilderness. Although the country was not completely inhospitable to Indian culture, the Kootenai were the only tribe actually inhabiting the area. Other tribes such as the Kalispel or Upper Pendleton and Flathead tribes did not inhabit the area.
of a once powerful tribe, which, like the Flatheads to the south, were constantly engaged in a decimating struggle with the Blackfeet across the mountains. They had lived on the plains at one time but recurring attacks of the Blackfeet gradually pushed them to the eastern face of the Rockies. Finally to escape their aggressive enemies they penetrated the mountain passes. Descending into the region of the upper Columbia and Kootenai Rivers, they came in conflict with the primitive inhabitants living on the western mountain slopes. These original natives, the Snare Indians, were too timid and defenseless to make any resistance against the Kootenai attacks.\(^6\) Instead, they retreated north and left their secluded and beautiful country to the interloping tribe. The newcomers gradually spread out over the upper Kootenai watershed and west to Kootenay Lake. They claimed in the course of several generations all the land that is now southeastern British Columbia, northern Idaho, and northwestern Montana as far south as the head of Flathead Lake.\(^9\) The nucleus of their home west of the Rockies, traditionally if not actually, was at Tobacco Plains where the topography of the land closely resembled

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\(^6\) No mention of the Snare Indians is made by F. W. Hodge in his *Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico* and yet in the Alexander Henry Journals (edited by Elliot Coues) the Kootenai are said to have driven the Snare Indians out of the region drained by the headwaters of the Columbia and Kootenai Rivers. See Elliot Coues, *op. cit.*, II pp. 701-707.

the rolling plains lying east of the mountains. From the Tobacco Plains base various bands moved down the river and settled in the general area of Kootenay Lake which as the crow flies is west and slightly north of Tobacco Plains.

As population problems forced some groups to separate and move west and downstream from the parent group, these Lower Kootenais tended to develop their own peculiar speech dialects, but, a certain unity continued to exist between the two main divisions of the tribe. This unity seemed to be most forcefully exerted in the strong feeling all the tribes had in regard to the Kootenai River. It was not only a physical link between the various villages but was also an emotional tie which each individual understood. It was their river and all the land it drained was their domain.

Although all the Kootenai were recognized as of basically the same linguistic stock, essential differences between the upper and lower divisions were evident even to the first traders. In distinguishing between them the bands living around Kootenay Lake were known as Flatbows, Shalsis, or Lake Indians, while farther upstream at the headwaters of the Columbia and Kootenai rivers near the mountains they were called Kootenais.

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After their first explorations, the fur traders were not interested in the Kootenay Lake region as it was relatively poor in fur and game animals. Thus, the Flatbows retained their old habits longer than the bands at the headwaters of the Columbia and Kootenai rivers. They continued to practice their primitive way of life and were only slightly influenced by the Catholic missionaries.  

Father De Smet found them unchanged by white contacts and with a sort of sympathetic realism wrote of them:

Such are the Arco a plate (Flatbows). They know neither industry, art nor science; the words mine and thine are scarcely known among them. They enjoy in common the means of existence spontaneously granted them by nature and so they are strangely improvident, they often pass from the greatest abundance to extreme scarcity. They feast well one day, and the following is passed in total abstinence. The two extremes are equally pernicious. Their cadaverous figure sufficiently demonstrates what I here advance. 

A further examination shows that while the Lower Kootenai remained in a primitive state partly due to the unimportant role their country played in the fur trade, there existed more fundamental differences which tended to separate them from the Upper Kootenai who occupied most of the region of Northwestern Montana. The diversity is best illustrated in the type of food eaten, and the manner in which the two branches of the Kootenai tribe were accustomed

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12 Hodge, op. cit., p. 741. 

to procure it. Here the basic difference is that a dependence on fish associates the lower bands with Pacific coast tribes while the tremendous importance of the bison in the Upper Kootenai food economy tied them to a Plains Indian culture. This does not mean that the distinctive features of their food economy were completely dissimilar or that there were no over-lapping habits as to kinds of foods used. Still, geographical factors obviously made it impossible for both groups to have identical food habits.

The Upper Kootenais who lived just over the mountains from the buffalo grounds traveled east through Marias Pass to obtain bison meat and robes. Later, mountain travel was restricted to high narrow passes farther north because of the dangers of attack from the Blackfeet at the mouth of Marias Pass. The more distant down-river Kootenais, without effective means of transportation, were content to depend largely on fishing as their homeland was a network of well-stocked lakes and streams. The Flatheads, in fact, were so attached to their fish diet that they were indifferent, if not repulsed by the eating of buffalo meat. Father De Smet verifies this assumption by his observation of their annual fish festivals, which seemed to indicate to him that fish were regarded as a vital part of their food economy.\textsuperscript{11} However, the assumption that since fish was a staple food, the Lower Kootenai might be classified at least

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., II, pp. 439-440.
economically with the coast tribes is only partially true, because the
Lower Kootenai like their up-river relatives, supplemented a fish diet
with venison, berries, and vegetable plants. The deer hunts were prob-
ably as important to them as the trips to the fishing ground. They also
differed from the coast Indians in that they were willing in addition to
salmon to use other varieties of fish found in their locality. Lastly
no friendship existed between the down-river Kootenais and coast Indians.
The relations between the Kootenais and the Okanagan and other more
westerly tribes were tense at the fishing grounds and occasionally broke
out into open warfare. 16

The Upper Kootenai returned the invitation to participate in the
down-river fishing expeditions by asking the Lower Kootenais to accompany
then twice a year on the bison hunts. 17 The invitation, while not ignored,
attracted only a few warriors of the lower bands who had the necessary num-
ber of horses to successfully engage in a buffalo hunt. In their rough
mountain country, which was subject to torrential spring floods and deep
snow in the winter, horses were less of an asset than on the plains.
Therefore, even among the Upper Kootenais, where the plains traditions

15 Coose, op. cit., II, p. 710.

16 David Douglas, "Sketch of a Journey to Northwestern Parts
of the Continent of North America during the Years 1824-25-26-27,"
(edited by Sir W. J. Hooker), Oregon Historical Society Quarterly,
V (December, 1904), pp. 362-363; Turner-High, op. cit., p. 31

17 Turner-High, op. cit., p. 36.
were stronger, swift horses were scarce. This shortage of fleet, reliable mounts put the Kootenais on the defensive east of the Rockies where they met well-mounted enemies. Thus, for added protection, the Kootenais sometimes joined the Flatheads farther south on these expeditions. But, even the strength of greater numbers did not counter-balance the Blackfeet firearms. The Kootenais, although courageous, could never successfully oppose the eastern warriors until through commercial relations with the traders they obtained sufficient rifles to meet their enemies on equal terms.18 The Piegans, a branch of the Blackfeet, realised this and attempted to prevent David Thompson from establishing the first trading post in the Kootenai country.19

To augment their supplies of meat and fish, the squaws of both branches of the tribe dug bitterroot and camas in the spring and early summer. These roots were the most important vegetables known to the Kootenais; and, some bands who did not have access to Tobacco Plains where the bitterroot was plentiful moved south into Flathead country to get it.20 After gathering camas and bitterroot the Kootenais baked their harvest in a manner similar to the Flatheads with a mixture of black moss and wild onion flavoring. When prepared this way the mixture could be preserved for two years. Although they used the vegetables extensively,

18 Ross Cox, Adventures on the Columbia River, p. 233.


the Kootenais never attached religious significance to the digging of
the plants as did the Flatheads. Even though they used a variety of
food, the Kootenais were often on the point of starvation. Apparently
their country offered a meager diet so they used every food available.
On trips through this region the traders often were forced to eat their
horses and barter for food from Indians who were no better off than the
starving traders.21 Father De Smet remarked on one occasion that the
Kootenais expressed great joy at his arrival and listened to his teach-
ings attentively even though they "were much in want of food."22 In
1855, approximately ten years later, Major John Owen states in his
journal for May 7:

Coutenay's over to trade find them very poor in a double
sense poorly off for what they need and poorer off in means to
pay for what they absolutely require—they have no furs they say
they brought over some Apichanons but they were miserable things
old, hard, dirty and worn out. I refused to trade gave them to
understand I could do nothing with them.23

The Kootenais showed no unusual originality in culture but devel-
oped much as did their neighbors. Their lodges were ordinarily construct-
ed on the same plan as the Blackfeet tipi. The Upper Kootenai modified

22 DeSmet, op. cit., II, p. 494.
23 John Owen, The Journals of Major John Owen (edited by
the plan using four basic poles arranged in the shape of an inverted cone with about fifteen poles as additional supports over which skins were securely stretched. Like the Blackfeet, they used the bison skins; and sometimes deer hides, but unlike their traditional enemies they did not decorate the tipi covers. Among the Lower Kootenai, because of a shortage of tipi skins and the long distance to the buffalo grounds, vegetable matting was used on their tipis in summer, and long houses with grass covers were built for winter use. These long lodges were made to accommodate as many as eight families, with an opening full length of the apex to allow the smoke of several fires to escape. The Upper Kootenai on rare occasions built long-houses, but usually preferred the conical skin covered type.24

In sharp contrast to the Plateau Indians, the Kootenais were tall, handsome, and of high mental ability. Even more impressive to the traders than their outstanding physical appearance was their absolute honesty. In a letter Father De Sast wrote of them:

Their honesty is so great and so well known, that the trader leaves his storehouse entirely, the door remaining unlocked often during his absences of weeks. The Indians go in and out and help themselves to what they need, and settle with the trader on his return. He assured me himself that in doing business with them in this style he never lost the value of a pin.25

24 Turney-High, op. cit., pp. 61-64.
Thompson, in his journal, describes the courage of one Kootenai, Chief Ugly Head. Thompson and his party were unable to find a route back from Kootenay Lake to their post on the upper Columbia because of torrential spring floods. None of the Indians could be persuaded to act as guides. Ugly Head, humiliated by the lack of bravery of his warriors, offered to guide the trappers himself. He managed to conduct them safely to the headwaters of the Columbia and then returned to his own country.26

The Kootenais apparently did not flatter themselves as to the motives that the traders had for entering their country. They knew the white men wanted beaver pelts and would exchange ammunition and firearms for them, which was exactly what the Kootenais desired. The Indians, unaware of the latter consequences for themselves of the white man's advance, readily began to trade. Within fifty years however, their primitive way of life was inadequate to compete with the aggressive white civilization in their homeland.

CHAPTER II

EARLY FUR TRADERS IN NORTHEASTERN MONTANA

The fabulous wealth resulting from the fur trade motivated the
great fur companies to seek new and richer beaver country. Thus, by
1800, merchants in Canada and the United States were interested in
beginning trade west of the Rockies.27 John Jacob Astor, one of the
greatest of American business men, realised the possibilities of a
lucrative trade between the Orient and the Columbia River Basin. In
an effort to eliminate all competition in the Northwest, Astor proposed
an agreement with his nearby Canadian rival, the Northwest Company.
His greatest desire was to enter the Columbia River Basin without op-
position from the British traders who were steadily extending their
trade westward.28 The Northwest Company, in advance of its mighty ad-
versary, the Hudson's Bay Company, was also trying desperately to open
the fur trade west of the Rockies. It had no intentions of allowing the
new American competitor to cut it out of the Columbia area.29

Being a youthful company, it depended on aggressive action to make
up for stability and financial power. In the decade before 1800, the

27 Kenneth Wiggins Porter, John Jacob Astor, Business Man,
I, pp. 164-166; William L. Lewis and Paul C. Phillips, editors,


29 Ibid., p. 36.
struggle between the two companies had become vicious and unregulated, but the competition also provided the impetus for extending the trade routes rapidly to the west. Previous to the organization of the Montreal merchants into the Northwest Company, the Hudson's Bay Company fur traders had been content to have the western Indians bring their pelts to posts located on the Bay. However, once consolidated, the Northwest traders began to intercept the incoming Indians and bargain for their furs. As a result, the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to take to the field or allow the more aggressive Montreal traders to absorb the fur business. Both concerns established posts farther and farther west in an attempt to hold the trade of the Indians. Usually these forts were located close together so that the employees of one company might spy on the movements and activities of the other.

In this undeclared warfare, the Indians suffered most. They were thrown into association with unscrupulous traders, who won them with liquor and cheap trinkets. Their primitive mode of life became less attractive and also more difficult to maintain. In their endeavors to obtain weapons and other goods the Indians became virtual slaves of the traders. The result was an amazingly rapid decline of independent and self-sufficient tribes. Though the Pacific Fur Company, chartered in 1808 by Astor, made the initial settlement at the mouth of the Columbia, the Northwest Company actually opened trade on the headwaters and northern tributaries of the Columbia before it. Efforts of the Northwest Company to enter the Oregon area were initiated by David Thompson who led the first party of white men into Northwestern Montana.
Thompson, a self-taught geographer and explorer of rare ability, had, prior to 1807, made several short trips into the Rockies. In June, 1807, he actually crossed the mountains by way of what was later

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29 David Thompson was born near London April 30, 1770. The early death of his father resulted in David being placed in the Grey Coat School at Westminster. This school was established for the education of poor boys. In 1783 David Thompson was bound over to the Hudson's Bay Company for seven years. The instruction he received at the school was meager yet sufficient for Thompson to become an outstanding geographer without further formal training. He was first sent to Churchill factory on Hudson's Bay and remained in the vicinity of the Bay for several years. After his term of service had expired and because the Company was not appreciative of the services he could render Thompson applied for employment elsewhere. The Northwest Company, the greatest rival of the Hudson's Bay Company, eagerly employed the young surveyor. Under this company Thompson explored far to the west, going beyond the Rockies and down the Columbia. The establishment of the fur trade in the Columbia and the mapping of that territory was of great importance to the "Northwesterns" as they were competing for the region against both the Hudson's Bay Company and American traders under Astor. In 1812 Thompson returned to eastern Canada and never again returned to the country beyond the Rockies. For a number of years following his retirement from the fur trade he spent his time drawing an excellent map of the Columbia region and making some boundary surveys. Later pathetic because of blindness, and impoverished by the unfortunate business undertakings of his sons he was forced to live in wretched poverty until his death in 1857. In 1785, he had married a half-breed Chippewa woman with whom he had thirteen children, none of whom distinguished themselves to equal their father. In his life Thompson was a devout Protestant, an energetic trader, and a competent explorer. His maps and note books are amazingly accurate and informative. From him we get the best information of the earliest fur trade activities in western Montana. See Tyrrell, op. cit., xxiii—lxiv.
known as Howse Pass. 31 Leaving the summit he descended a small stream later known as Blasberry Creek to the Columbia. 32 Going south and ascending the headwaters of the Columbia, he built his first post west of the Rockies a short distance north of where the river flows out of the lower Columbian Lake. Thompson referred to the Columbia River in this area as the Kootenai, north of a point where Canoe River joins it; and, Windermere Lake near which his post was built he called Columbia Lake. 33 Thompson was accompanied on this first trip over the mountains by his family and one clerk, Finan McDonald. 34 Of his six voyageurs,

31 Thompson applied the name Howse to this pass in honor of a rival trader, Joseph Howse, of the Hudson's Bay Company. Howse followed Thompson through the pass so it could more correctly be named after Thompson. This name is still used. See Elliot Coues, op. cit., II, p. 508n. T. C. Elliot, "The Discovery of the Source of the Columbia," Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, XXVI (March, 1925), p. 26.

32 Loc. cit.


34 Finan McDonald, a huge red-haired Scotchman, joined the Northwest Company in 1804. Although he never attained the highest positions in the company he was an outstanding clerk. An intrepid explorer, he was with David Thompson on his first trip across the mountains. Probably he was as well acquainted as any trader in the Columbia area with the Oregon country, particularly the region of the Flathead Indians. He joined the Hudson's Bay Company after its amalgamation with the Northwest Company, and remained in the Columbia basin until 1826. When he retired he took his wife, a Spokane woman, and children back to Canada with him. In his later life he participated in the legislature of west Canada. See J. A. Mayers, "Finan McDonald—Explorer, Fur Trader and Legislator," Washington Historical Quarterly, XIII (July, 1922), pp. 196-208.
two were known to have been Michel Boulard and Bercier.\textsuperscript{35}

At the Kootenai post, time must have passed quickly during the winter of 1807-1808, for Thompson wrote "In my new dwelling I remained quiet, hunting the wild horses, fishing and examining the country..."\textsuperscript{36} Through the long months, he engaged in trade with Indians as far south as the country now included in northwestern Montana. From this trade he gained valuable information of the country, but at the same time made himself the object of Blackfoot hatred. Early that winter his post was besieged by the Piegan Indians, a branch of the Blackfoot tribe. The Piegans hoped by this action to prevent the Kootenais from obtaining weapons from the traders. However, by tactful firmness Thompson got rid of the Piegans and continued his trading, and shortly the heavy winter snows prevented intrusion on his mountain camp.\textsuperscript{37}

Early in the spring of 1808, James McMillan, a subordinate trader, crossed the mountains from Rocky Mountain House on the North Saskatchewan


\textsuperscript{36} Tyrrell, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 377.

\textsuperscript{37} Elliot, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 214; Tyrrell, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 375, 380-383.
River to Thompson's post. He brought additional supplies and trading goods; and then returned east with the winter's furs.

During the mild April weather Thompson placed McDonald in charge of the post while he, with the new supplies, and accompanied by Mousseau, Lussier, Beaulieu, and La Camble, started on an expedition to the south. He crossed the portage to McGillivray's River, now called the Kootenai, and descended by canoe into what is at the present time Northwestern Montana. On this first trip south he was particularly interested in the geography of the region and in making contacts with

38 James McMillan was closely associated with Thompson in the Columbia trade. In March 1808, he journeyed over the mountains to Kootenai post and returned east with the furs. In autumn of 1808 he again went west of the mountains and stayed during the winter with Finan McDonald on the Kootenai. Late in 1810 he followed Joseph House into Upper Flathead Country. He made several more trips back and forth over the mountains. He was an intelligent man, rising in the business to the position of Chief Factor. He is definitely known to have held various important positions in the Columbia district until 1829. Although he apparently did not keep a journal he contributed much information about the geography of the Kootenai and Flathead areas. See Tyrrell, op. cit., pp. 145-146.

39 Elliot, op. cit., p. 244.

40 Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 385.

41 There is a possibility that Thompson sent Finan McDonald down the river in 1807. J. A. Meyers in a letter to B. R. Atkins found in the Sam E. Johns Collection, II, p. 102, and in another letter to Mrs. John Erickson in "Local Community History of Libby," states that Finan McDonald established a trading post near present day Bonners Ferry, Idaho, in November, 1807. T. C. Elliot also supposes that McDonald may have preceded Thompson down the river. See his article "In the Land of the Kootenais," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXVII (September, 1926), p. 254. Evidence is insufficient to prove conclusively that McDonald went ahead of Thompson down the Kootenai River.
the Indians. Impressed with the landscape as the party paddled down-
stream, he wrote:

Along the river, in places are very fine woods: of the
Larch, at five and a half feet above the ground I measured
one thirteen feet girth and one hundred and fifty feet clean
growth, and then a fine head. This is one of many hundreds...
The other woods, fine Red Firs, Pine, Cypress, White Cedar,
Poplars, Aspens, Alders, Plane and Willows.\(^2\)

The expedition had rather unexpected difficulties; first, few
contacts were made with the Indians and these only with small camps.
This made the trip unproductive from the trader’s viewpoint. Secondly,
and even worse than the few beaver obtained, was the scarcity of food.
In his journal Thompson makes repeated references to their scanty meals.
On April 25th, he wrote "...a very fine country—Beaver very scarce
indeed today—and no animals." And again on the 29th, "...we shall
remain hereabouts [near the present Tobacco River] and do the best
we can for our livelihood...Our hunting has procured us nothing—as to
fishing we have often angled but never once had a bite."\(^3\)

By May 6 the party had managed to descend the river as far as
the Falls. Here again Thompson accurately described what later travelers

\[^{2}\text{Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 307.}\]

\[^{3}\text{David Thompson, "Manuscript Journals," (photostatic copy),
Toronto, Canada: Department of Public Records and Archives,
found to be a most difficult portage:

...we had to carry everything on the right side up a steep bank of Rock, and among the debris of high Rocks, apparently rude basalt, the slope to the River Bank was at a high angle, and our rude path among loose fragments of rock was about three hundred feet above the river, the least slip would have been sure destruction, having carried about one mile, we came to a Brook where we put up for the night.

Thompson's trip took him all the way through present day Idaho to Kootenay Lake in Canada. Near the present site of Bonner's Ferry, he met a camp of Flathead and Kootenai Indians traveling along what he called the "Lake Indian Road." He, himself, later used this well worn trail on his trips to Pend d'Orielle Lake. Trading on this trip was much less important than the first-hand information Thompson gathered about the country. He observed and meticulously noted the type of vegetation, the important Indian trails leading south to the Columbia Basin, and the best fur localities. Undoubtedly, in view of his later activities, he was impressed with the necessity of shifting commercial activities farther south into more productive fields, and of pushing down the Columbia as quickly as he could to precede the Americans in the same area.

The spring flood hindered the party in procuring an Indian guide for the return trip to Kootenai Post. However, under the direction of a Kootenai chief, they finally reached their destination June 5 by going north from the present site of Bonner's Ferry along Moyie River. Thus, on the return trip they did not pass through what is now Montana.

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†† Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 365n.
to 1811. p. 375. I. C. WILLOUGHBY, in the land of the Kootenai, p. 289.

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K. 1. C. WILLOUGHBY, the poor trades in the country. Read.

By informations of the western Kootenay. In the next summer (1809), Thompson had collected enough

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James HEATH, in the winter, joined Kobemal at his post.

Reddy creek, a small northern tributary of the Kootenay.

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Indians farther down the Kootenay. Kobemal was probably a station on

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those and because of the proximity of the southern country, Thompson

into the present day Kootenay country. As a result of these expeditions

which traded in the vicinity of 1806 was the first white exploration

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obtained horses from the Indians and proceeded to follow the "Lake Indian Road" to Pend d'Orrielle Lake.

That fall Thompson and his party built two posts to handle this new trade among the Flathead, Pend d'Orrielle and Coeur d'Alene Indians. One, Kullyspell House, was built on Pend d'Orrielle Lake and to the east up the Clark's Fork of the Columbia "Saleash" post was begun. 67

Although Thompson was extremely busy locating and constructing the two posts, he continued to make short trips out from Pend d'Orrielle Lake to investigate the nature of the country and discover new or more direct routes back to his original base at Kootenai House. On one of these excursions, he deviated to the left as he ascended the Clark's Fork traveling almost due north. This route brought him into the present northwestern part of Montana, and although his notes are not clear as to his exact trail he probably started north following a small stream in the Cabinet Mountains to the divide which separates the watershed of the Clark's Fork and Kootenai Rivers. Then proceeding as rapidly as the hilly country along the Fisher River would permit he struck the Kootenai at the present site of Jennings, Montana. The mountainous route he had been following was another old Indian trail, parallel with the "Lake Indian Road" farther west. 68 Thompson seemingly was impressed by the

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67 Ibid., pp. 408-413.
68 Ibid., p. 415.
inaccessible timberland he wandered through for he noted:

We went about ten miles to the top of the river Hills, the first part had very fine woods, the white Cedar was often four to five fathoms girth, clean and tall in proportion, the Larch and Red Fir very fine. On the 20th, October we arrived at Mc Gillivray's River [Kootenai], having come about 201 miles over hilly country, with many small meadows, and finely wooded with the Red Fir, Larch, Pine, Poplar, Aspen and a few others. 49

When after hard traveling, on October 20, 1809, Thompson came out of the woods at the Kootenai River he perceived two canoes and an Indian tipi on the opposite bank. The Indians immediately came across and carried over the trader's supplies. Much to Thompson's pleasure he recorded in his journal at the same time: "...here we found also Lussier and Roberge who informed us Mr. McMillan and canoes were 3 points below. I immediately set off with Roberge and in the evening arrived where I found Mr. McMillan and all the people well—thank God." 50

By making this detour to the Kootenai, Thompson had apparently hoped to meet McMillan coming over the mountains with fresh supplies. He could not have timed the meeting more accurately, for the same day that he struck the Kootenai he met his clerk.

After joining McMillan, Thompson traveled down the Kootenai on his return to Kullyspell House. At noon on October 23, he reached the north end of the "Lake Indian Road." Here he dispatched a letter to

49 Coues, op. cit., II, p. 673n.

50 Thompson, op. cit., October 20, 1809, p. 9.
Finan McDonald and also sent some Salish Indians after horses to transport the goods to the Post on Pend d'Orielle Lake. One week later they reached Kullyspell House. In his notebook he recorded for that day "...The men and Mr. McMillan decamped at 2 1/2 P. M. arrived at the House all well thank Heaven—but most of the goods very wet as well as all our own Baggage—gave the men some flour and Roots."52

During the fall of 1809 Thompson built Salesesh House up the Clark's Fork approximately seventy-five miles. In the hurriedly constructed post he and McMillan spent the winter with occasional visits from Jacco Finlay who was at that time a free trader in the Flathead country. Finlay's arrival at the post on these occasions was much appreciated for he brought considerable provisions to the camp. Especially during the construction of the cabins the traders had little time to hunt. That winter (1809) Kootenai Indians, eager

51 Ibid., October 23, 1809, p. 9.
52 Ibid., October 30, 1809, p. 10.
54 Jacques Raphael Finlay was born 1768 of a Chippewa mother. His father was a prominent Montreal trader. Finlay was active in fur trade for many years, usually in the capacity of a free trader. He preceded Thompson across the Rockies in 1806. Apparently there is no accurate record of his movements but it is evident that he traversed much of the Flathead and Kootenai country. Jocko River, on the Flathead reservation is named for him. He was with Thompson at Kootenai House 1807-08, and probably was a free trader again in 1808-09,
to trade traveled south to the Saleesh Post. Apparently the weather was not severe enough to stop travel from the northwest in the early part of the season.\footnote{55}

The next spring, Thompson re-engaged Jacco Finlay, in his old capacity as clerk and interpreter.\footnote{56} He was to push westward into new territory during the summer while Finan McDonald was left to handle the Flathead trade at Saleesh House.\footnote{57} Meanwhile Thompson, accompanied by James McWillan, started north to the Kootenai River. He carried with him the winter's furs to be delivered at Rainy Lake House. This trip proved extremely laborious. The scarcity of grass for the horses and the often miserable weather impeded the party. Game was also hard to find along the Kootenai, necessitating short rations for the men along the way.\footnote{58}

\begin{footnotes}

\footnotetext[55]{Thompson, op. cit., Nov. 20, 1809 - Jan. 24, 1810, pp. 14-19.}
\footnotetext[56]{Ibid., March 28, 1810, p. 31.}
\footnotetext[57]{T. C. Elliot, "Fur Trade in Columbia Basin Prior to 1811," pp. 248-249.}
\footnotetext[58]{Thompson, op. cit., May 9-June 13, 1810, pp. 40-45; Tyrrell, op. cit., xcii.}
\end{footnotes}
On his return from Rainy Lake House, Thompson found his usual trail over the Rockies blocked by hostile Pieans. Forced to find a new way through the mountains, he turned north. Striking the Athabaska River in December, he managed under the most difficult circumstances, to cross the height of land early in January, 1811. Hindered on his southward journey west of the mountains by bad weather and the mutinous mood of his men, he finally reached McGillivray's portage May 14. From there he again followed down the Kootenai to the Indian trail at the bend.59

The rest of 1811 and early part of 1812 was spent in various explorations; one trip to Kettle Falls, another south of Saleesh House, and most important, the expedition to Astoria in July, 1811. During February and March of 1812, Thompson investigated the country as far east as the vicinity of the present Missoula, Montana, and Flathead Lake.60

In addition to the actual expeditions undertaken when Thompson was in command of a party, his men made excursions into the wilderness. There is, however, no record of where they went or what they saw. The only knowledge we have of such trips comes from Thompson’s own journal and it is highly probable that he made only a few notes.

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59 Ibid., February 27 to May 22, 1811, pp. 32-51; Tyrrell, op. cit., xcii.
60 Tyrrell, op. cit., xcvii.
concerning these explorations. For example he wrote the following:

November 19th, Tuesday...Thank good Providence arrived at the House – found Houseau and La Paquice just arrived from wandering about 5 days in search of the Kootenai Road to McGillivray’s River, when getting alarmed they returned here living on horse meat. Mr. F. McDonald and the others are up the River to trade Provisions with the Salish Indians...61

The activities of Finan McDonald on the Kootenai during the winter of 1808-09, Jacco Finlay in the Flathead country during summer of 1810, and as a free hunter previously, are almost completely matters of conjecture. Probably, these subordinates of Thompson, many of them French Canadian, were the first white men who journeyed into much of the unexplored portions of western Montana. However, trips such as these and the various hunting excursions brought new territory within the knowledge of the trading parties.

Thompson spent the winter of 1811-1812 on the Clark’s Fork. In the spring of 1812 he went to Spokane House and Kettle Falls. Busying himself at the Falls, he waited until McTavish and McMillan arrived with the furs from Spokane House before beginning the journey east. May 8, 1812, he crossed Athabasca Pass never again to return to the Columbia area.62

Thompson’s work was by far the most outstanding of any trader in mapping and bringing under control the Columbia territory for the

61 Thompson, op. cit., November 19, 1811, p. 27.

Northwest Company. He directed the first white explorations into Northwest Montana. He established the routes through that area for brigades traveling back and forth across the Rockies. Thompson's posts located on the headwaters of the Columbia were strategically placed to handle the trade coming from the Flathead, Kootenai, Kalispell and Spokane Indians.

Since the Kootenai River was an important route of travel during Thompson's sojourn west of the Rockies, it is supposed that some of his men maintained a post near the present Bonner's Ferry. On his map of 1812 Thompson locates a Kootenai Post at the north end of the "Lake Indian Road." Some writers such as T. G. Elliot feel that Michel Kinville may have been in charge of this trade for a short period. However, shortly before his departure, Thompson stationed Nicholas Montour in the Kootenai area.

Motivated by fear of the great Hudson's Bay Company, and exerting every effort to precede the Astor Company into the Columbia trade, the Northwesterners had quickly taken possession of the upper Columbia region. However, the new field of trade was not gained without opposition from the other concerns. During the period of Thompson's greatest

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63 David Thompson, *Map of the Northwest Territory of the Province of Canada.*

64 T. G. Elliot, "In the Land of the Kootenais," p. 287.

65 Nicolas Montour came to Rocky Mt. House in 1806. Thompson placed him as a clerk in charge of a post in 1811, presumably Kootenai
activity the Hudson's Bay Company made one attempt to invade the trans-montane region. Keenly interested in the activities of their old employee, Thompson, they tried to keep abreast of his explorations. They spied on all the movements of the Northwestern, even though they did not take the initiative themselves in pushing the fur trade west. In 1809 the council of the Hudson's Bay Company sent out Joseph Howe, a writer for the company, to discover Thompson's mountain trail and the extent of his activities. In August the two men met at the eastern base of the Rockies, Thompson returning to the Columbia and Howe on his way back east. What Howe reported to his superiors is not known but they apparently wanted more information. The next year Howe was again sent west. This time he was supplied with trading goods. He crossed the mountains and spent the winter of 1810-11 in the Upper Flathead region where he set up a trading house just north of Flathead Lake near the present city of Kalispell. Possibly he may have traveled south of the Lake too. Complete records as to his actual operations that winter are lacking.66

There is a tradition that a half-breed squatter, Joe Ashley, made use of several small buildings which he found in 1857 southwest

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House. In the fall of 1812 he was still at Kootenai House when he was opposed by F. B. Millet. Later in 1814 he was briefly at Fort George, Okanagan, and Spokane. April 1816, he was sent to Spokane from Okanagan with Mr. A. McMillan. See Coues, op. cit., I, p. 413n; II, 671n, 788n.

66 Tyrrell, op. cit., pp. 1-11, 450n.
of Kalispell. The ruins of these cabins were still seen in 1882. Some pioneers thought that they were built by either David Thompson or Joseph Howse for trade with the Kootenais and Flatheads.67

However, the journals of David Thompson prove conclusively that he never traveled into the Upper Flathead Valley, therefore, it would have been impossible for him to have erected the buildings. According to a letter from Duncan MacDonald..."Billy or William Irvine of Irvine Flats,...built a cabin near where Ashley Creek connects with Flathead River. This was in 1847-48 and was abandoned for the Stampede to California in 1849."68 If Duncan MacDonald's statement is true the buildings supposedly built by Thompson or Howse may have been constructed by one of the first temporary settlers in the region. At any rate, if the cabin was put up hurriedly for a winter's trade by Howse in 1811 it seems unlikely that it would still be of any value to Joe Ashley in 1857. Thus, there seems to be no positive proof at the present time of where Howse camped that winter. Certainly, though, after the initial attempt of Mr. Howse, the Hudson's Bay Company was content to remain east of the Rockies.

After the departure of Thompson and the end of Hudson's Bay Company competition by Howse, the Northwest Company continued its trade

67 Mrs. E. E. Day and Mrs. Emery Ingalls, "Extracts from the History of Flathead Valley," Sam E. Johns, Collection, IX, pp. 32-33.

68 "Letter from Duncan MacDonald," Sam E. Johns Collection I, p. 35.
among the Kootenais. John George MacTavish took over the administrative duties of the whole Oregon country, of which the region now known as Northwestern Montana was a part. Probably due to the uncertain returns from the Kootenai fur trade the post established there was shifted east and north. Even at that time the Northwest Company concentrated their major operations much farther south in the rich beaver area of the Clark's Fork and Lewis Fork (Snake River) of the Columbia. The British fur traders were also changing their route through the Rockies from Horse Pass at the headwaters of the Columbia to the more northern Athabaska Pass. This took most traders out of the Kootenai country.

At the time of Thompson's retirement the Northwest Company realized that the American owned Pacific Fur Company intended to make its bid for control of the Columbia River trade. Their opposition west of the Rockies involved a greater threat to the Northwesterners than had the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1812 the Astorians pushed their activities to the western base of the Rockies. Their trade expedition into the Kootenai country was entrusted to Francis Benjamin Pillet. Nicholas Montour maintained his control over the Kootenai against his rival but

69 Francis Benjamin Pillet was one of the original Astorians to come round the Horn on the Tonquin. He made several trips to the interior in 1811 and the next year went to Kootenai country to oppose Nicolas Montour. He was unsuccessful and shortly returned to Spokane. He was living near Ottawa in 1817 and was still alive in 1854. See Coues, op. cit., II, p. 788.
Pillet succeeded in taking a large number of skins before he was forced to retire. The two traders fought and traded vigorously for several months. Ross Cox, a contemporary trader wrote of their competition:

Mr. Pillet fought a duel with Mr. Montour of the Northwest, with pocket pistols, at six paces; both hits; one in the collar of the coat, and the other in the leg of the trousers. Two of their men acted as seconds, and the tailor speedily healed their wounds.  

Apparently their enmity was only superficial for Alexander Ross wrote: "They therefore fought and traded alternately, but always spared the threat of life, and in the spring parted good friends." With abandonment of the Astorian enterprise the Northwest Company was supreme in the Columbia region. They exercised a complete monopoly in the whole area until their amalgamation with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821.

After the amalgamation, the enlarged Hudson's Bay Company found the fur business decreasing in the Columbia district. Due to the heavy slaughter of beaver and new competition by Americans, the British were forced to adopt new techniques. They resorted to the American practice of traveling brigades, and in consequence, many of the old posts were

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abandoned. The trading brigades traveled wherever furs could be found and met the Indians in each region at annual rendezvous. This rejuvenated trade brought hitherto unknown traders into prominence.

It is probable that during this period the Kootenai post was abandoned although some trading activities continued to be conducted in Northwestern Montana. Governor Simpson of the Hudson's Bay Company during his inspection of the Columbia district in 1821, reported in his journal on October 28, "The appropriation of officer's and men as follows: Spokane House Messrs Ogden and Work with 7 men; Couteenais Mr. Kittson with 5 men..."73 John Work, in his journal written at about the same time asserts that the post was not permanently maintained but that William Kittson did most of the trading there. 74

73 Frederick Mark, op. cit., pp. 474,110, 477. William Kittson was a fur trader in the Columbia district as early as 1813 with the Northwest Company. Later he joined the H.B. Co. He married a daughter of Finan McDonald an early associate of David Thompson in the Oregon country. After his death in 1841 at Vancouver, his wife Helene married Captain Richard Grant a prominent figure in western Montana history. She is buried at St. Ignatius, Montana. See T. C. Elliot, "Richard (Captain Johnny) Grant," Oregon Historical Quarterly, XXXVI (March, 1935), p. 5. See also John Work, "Journals Sept. 7, to Dec. 14, 1825," (edited by T. C. Elliot), Washington Historical Quarterly, V, No. 3 (July, 1914), pp. 171n, 176n.

Between 1821 and 1830, British brigades traveling in the Flathead country were drawing many of the Kootenai Indians to the rendezvous in that region. Thus, in August 1825, John Work, one of the principal traders in the Columbia district, 75 journeyed to Thompson Falls at the suggestion of William Kittson to trade with the Flatheads and Kootenais who were waiting there. 76 On August 17, he wrote:

It was from the Flatheads and Kootenais that the trade was principally obtained. These are remarkably fine Indians and easily dealt with...Beaver and dressed skins were far short of last year, the deficiency in beaver is owing to a great many of the Kootenais having gone off to their own lands before our arrival... 77

Later in the month, William Kittson left the Flathead camp to go into the Kootenai country for a summer's trade. On September 6, he returned

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75 John Work, an Irishman, became an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1814. He served east of the Rockies until 1823. From 1823-1832 he was stationed at various posts in the Oregon country. Work was a remarkably keen observer so that his journals are of particular interest for those interested in the fur trade. He was appointed a chief factor in 1846, which he regarded as a tardy recognition of his long services. He stayed with Hudson's Bay Company until his death in 1861 at Victoria, British Columbia. He was married to a Spokane half-breed and had six children. His journals during the period that he was actively trading were kept with business-like accuracy. See William L. Lewis and Paul C. Phillips, op. cit., pp. 55-69.


77 Ibid., p. 109
to Spokane House. In his journal, Work recorded this trip as follows:

Mr. Kittson arrived from the Kootenais and has made a pretty good trade, 99 beaver, 62 deer and 3½ elk skins and 2 horses, he changed some of his horses which were jaded for others. Kootenais desire a Post to be in their country this season though some of those we saw at the Flat Heads said it would not be necessary. 78

In November of 1825, Kittson left for the Kootenai country with a trading outfit and orders to reestablish a post there. According to John Work, this post was to be located a short distance down river from the old fort. This would place the old fort near the bend, and the proposed building between it and the Falls. Unfortunately, navigating the Kootenai River was too difficult for the heavy laden canoes, so the project was abandoned for that year. 79 Work reassured the Kootenais with the promise of a permanent post the next year. He definitely felt that this was necessary for, in December 1825, he wrote:

In different conversations with the Kootenais since their arrival they express a particular wish to have a fort in their own country...They were told that they might depend on having an Establishment on their lands next season either by land or by water. Every means should be adopted to keep them on their own lands as they make much better hunts there than elsewhere. Their unprecedented trade this fall is to be mainly attributed to their hunting in the summer and fall on the upper waters of their own river and the Columbia. 80

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The competition of American companies based at St. Louis was becoming more and more threatening to the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company by the early 1830's. For some time they had aggressively employed every device to win the Indians away from the British control. These American efforts seem to have been partially successful in the Flathead country since, in that region, Hudson's Bay Company suffered a slight decrease in volume of business. The Hudson's Bay Company continued to oppose their American rivals for a few years, but eventually gave way. The shrewd and daring Americans, in less than four years, pushed their way into the Flathead country. However, they did not enter the Kootenai country since it was so much farther north and, in their opinion, of small value in the fur business.

In the late 1830's the fur business in the Columbia River Basin had ceased to be highly profitable. Therefore, in a few years trading activities were conducted by free traders with varying results. Northwestern Montana, during this time, reverted into a wilderness and only occasional references are made to the country. In 1858, approximately twenty years after the virtual end of the fur trade william T. Hamilton

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Harrison Clifford Dale, editor, The Ashley-Smith Explorations and the Discovery of a Central Route to the Pacific 1822-1839 with the Original Journals, p. 277.

engaged in a trading and reconnaissance mission east of the Rockies during which he joined the Kootenais in a battle against the Blackfeet. The Kootenais were very short of ammunition and so several young men were dispatched to the Hudson's Bay Company post "situated on the north side of Tobacco Plains..." At this late date the post was probably in the vicinity of Tobacco Creek or a few miles beyond the present Gateway, Montana, in Canada.

Actually, Northwestern Montana remained largely an isolated area until the gold rushes in the 1860's. Specific information of the natural resources and topography was lost until government surveys for a railroad in 1853-1854 brought the area before the public. However, only the prospects of gold from the Canadian diggings initiated the movement of people into the country again.

86 William T. Hamilton was born in the northern part of England in 1822. While still a child he migrated with his parents to New Orleans and later to St. Louis. To improve his health he went with a trading expedition to the west thus starting a career as a frontiersman. He traversed most of the west from California to the Oregon country. He spent considerable time in Montana. He located a trading post on the confluence of the Rattlesnake and Clark's Fork, where he came in conflict with the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1864 he left, establishing himself at Fort Benton. Later he was sheriff of Chouteau County. Again he moved to the Yellowstone in 1869, and engaged in the Sioux war. His proficiency in the Indian sign language made him particularly valuable as scout and guide. See Montana Historical Contributions, VI, pp. 33n-37n.

CHAPTER III

INDIAN AND WHITE RELATIONS 1800-1900

Even after the earlier exposures to white influences the Kootenai culture was simple or even crude. This was particularly true in matters of religion. The primitive Kootenais were nature worshipers. Their mythology was not highly developed and much of it had been borrowed from other tribes. Many of their stories reveal connections with the coast Indians and also show Siouan characteristics. 88 Animals acting as spiritual guardians were the basis of much of their beliefs. They regarded the coyote as the most powerful of their protectors. 89 In their struggle with the Blackfeet however, the Kootenais found their supernatural helpers inferior to the Gods of their enemies. So it was, that these Indians were ready to turn to other Gods. It is probable that as early as 1800, Kootenais, visiting posts on the North Saskatchewan River, learned something of the white man's religion. Their God had, in the eyes of the savage, given his people the power to overcome their enemies. Thus, from the time of their earliest contacts with the traders these Indians showed a keen desire to adopt the new faith.

88 Hodge, op. cit., p. 741.
Possibly, David Thompson, a devout Christian, told the Indians something of his God. The references to matters of religion are very few in his journals and it seems likely any instructions to the Indians were made in an informal manner.\textsuperscript{90}

Likewise, Joseph Howe of the Hudson's Bay Company may have related the doctrines of the Protestant faith to the Kootenais during the winter of 1810-1811, which he spent north of Flathead Lake.\textsuperscript{91}

However, it is more probable that they learned most about Christianity from the Iroquois free hunters employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. These Indian hunters, sent out to instruct the western tribes in trapping methods, had been indoctrinated in the Christian faith by Catholic priests in the East. Their Christianizing efforts however, were of more consequence among the Flatheads than among the Kootenai tribe.

In April, 1825, when Governor Simpson was returning to Hudson Bay from the Pacific coast posts he had an interview with representatives of the Flatheads, Kootenais, Spokanes, and other tribes, in which they requested missionaries.\textsuperscript{92} As a result of this interview,

\textsuperscript{90} T. G. Elliot, "Religion among the Flatheads," \textit{Oregon Historical Quarterly}, XXXVII (March, 1936), pp. 6-7.

\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 4.
two boys were sent back to the Red River Missionary School. One was from the Spokane tribe and the other was known as "Kootenai Pelly." In June, 1827, the Reverend David T. Jones at Red River reported that he baptized a number of Indian boys including "Kootenai Pelly," an Indian boy of the Kootenay nation..." In 1829 the boys returned to their tribes for a visit and on this occasion probably spoke a good deal of the new religion. Unfortunately in 1831, at the age of eighteen, "Kootenay Pelly," died. Some doubt exists as to whether he was actually a Kootenai Indian or if the name "Kootenay Pelly" had been applied to another Spokane boy. At any rate his missionary efforts among the western Indians could have covered only a limited number of years.94

For the most part, during the first half of the century the eager enthusiasm of the Kootenais for religious instruction went unheeded. Only the haphazard teachings of the Iroquois, the possible influence of "Kootenay Pelly," and the uncertain missionary endeavors of the Jesuit fathers at St. Ignatius mission near Coeur d'Alene Lake reached them. Yet, even with eager information absorbed from periodic missionary visits, the Kootenais were responsive to the teachings of the Christian faith. Their religious favor and interest

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has been most completely recorded by Father De Smet. He visited them several times and each time related their keen delight in learning of Christianity. Arriving at Tobacco Plains in 1845 he said:

I was received with every demonstration of joy and filial affection by those who remained in the lodges. They hailed me with a long and boisterous discharge of musketry...though these poor people were much in want of food, they pressed me to remain some days amongst them, whilst they listened with avidity to my instructions relative to their future conduct.95

The hopes of the missionaries were partially rewarded during the next few years, by a superficial acceptance of Christian dogma. In 1854, Lieutenant Hulan met a number of Kootenais traveling to the Pend d'Orielle country. Each one made the sign of the cross as he shook hands with the explorers.96 And as late as 1858 William T. Hamilton reported that a Catholic mission was situated near the bank of the Kootenai River on Tobacco Plains.97 Other reports say that a Catholic mission was maintained by Father Fouquet for many years among the Kootenai tribe. The chances are that this particular church was in British Columbia west of Kootenay Lake. Thus, a priest residing there

95 Chittenden and Richardson, op. cit., II, pp. 493-494.


97 William T. Hamilton, op. cit., p. 100.
would have been unable to instruct regularly many of the eastern
and southern Kootenai bands.93

Once in contact with the white civilization, the Kootenais
followed the all too familiar pattern of degeneration. The moral
lessons of Christianity were never deeply engrained in them. Real-
izing the gradual decimation of the buffalo, and the destruction of
their salmon industry they became hostile, sullen, and uncooperative.
The necessary adjustment to a settled life was difficult and agrarian
living seemed unsatisfactory in the eyes of the Indians. Their nat-
ural independence and pride disappeared rapidly after the decline of
the fur trade. The Lower Kootenais, who had never attained a high
culture, were in a particularly destitute condition by 1852. When
Lieutenant Hallan met them in that year he described them thus:

They are poor in horses, have few or no skin lodges,
make but little meat for their sustenance, and, in a word,
dive a miserable existence. We found them poorly and
thinly clad, traveling with few horses, each horse carry-
ing two and sometimes three persons; their lodges were
made of mats formed of a tall rush found growing in marshes.
Their chief article of food when traveling is roots, and
fish when at home.99

The next year, in July of 1855, the Kootenais joined the
Flatheads and Upper Pend d'Orielles in negotiations with Governor
Isaac Stevens of Washington Territory. The purpose of the conference

93 Hubert Howe Bancroft, The History of British Columbia, p. 718.
99 Stevens, op. cit., 1, p. 522.
from the governmental viewpoint was to persuade these tribes to
consolidate as one nation and to move to a designated reservation.
The selection of a satisfactory reservation was extremely difficult
since Victor of the Flatheads did not wish to leave the Bitterroot
Valley. Nor was Chief Michelle of the Kootenais willing to share
a reservation with the other tribes unless it was located somewhere
on the Flathead River.

Finally, after long discussions the Peni d'Orielle and
Kootenais agreed on the Jocko Valley and adjacent territory as a
reservation, but the Flatheads refused to move. By 1872, the white
settlers in the Bitterroot Valley had gradually taken up the best
land, which left the Flatheads in abject poverty. In August, 1872,
Garfield by tactful conferences persuaded Arlee to bring the remnants
of his band of Flatheads over to the Jocko Valley. Not until the
nineties however, did all the Flatheads come to the reservation.

Meanwhile, the reservation Kootenais were recognized as being
in a deplorable condition, but the records seem to indicate that an
expedient policy of temporary relief was the only solution attempted

100 Charles J. Kappler, compiler and editor, Indian Affairs,
Law and Treaties, II, pp. 722-725. See also Albert J. Partoll, "The
Flathead Indian Treaty Council of 1855," Pacific Northwest Quarterly,
XXIX (July, 1938), pp. 239, 240n.

101 Ibid., pp. 309-310.
by the early Indian agents. The comments of the various agents concerning the Kootenais are interesting in that they indicate a gradual change of opinion of that tribe. Over a period of years they were coming to be regarded as a nuisance and a burdensome responsibility. R. H. Lansdale wrote in 1857 shortly after the reservation was opened:

The Kootenays have not so many horses as the other Flathead tribes, neither do they go to the buffalo chase so universally, being more confined to elk, deer, and mountain sheep, to fowls, and to fish; they do not cultivate the soil, except a few at the Mission of St. Ignatius.102

Ten years later in 1868, the Kootenais had reached a new low point in the regard of the Indian agents. They were obviously viewed with both pity and contempt. For while they were definitely the poorest tribe on the reservation they also had only a casual regard for white authority. They participated in numerous petty larcenies against the whites. These acts were only cases of minor thievery, but the white population became increasingly impatient with them.103


While reservation Kootenais chose to live most of the year along Dayton Creek, near Flathead Lake, they spent considerable time just wandering as nomads. Chief Boxes urged them to take up farming, but with little success. Since they seldom visited the agency they continued to live on roots, berries, and fish. In the winter months they existed by begging from the agency or from white settlers. 104

By 1873, after nearly twenty years of partial governmental supervision the Kootenais had made the least progress of the three tribes. They owned only four farms totaling sixty acres as opposed to one hundred seven farms of over one thousand acres cultivated by the Flatheads and Pend d'Orielle. 105 In that same year a new agent was assigned to the reservation and in his first report he emphasized the deplorable condition of the whole agency. He may have exaggerated the miserable conditions of it but undoubtedly the situation was far from satisfactory for he wrote:

The condition in which I found the agency was as poor as could be described, the work-cattle were worthless, three of them having since died, and the balance of the herd are not expected to survive the coming winter. There was only one serviceable wagon, no serviceable plow, and the harrow consisted of a few pieces of iron driven through some bars


of rotten wood. The only property which could at all be utilised (except the mills) was a span of horses and the wagon, neither of which were first class.

There was not subsistence and forage enough to keep life in employees and stock for one week. The buildings were dilapidated and few, and everything wore an appearance of gloom and decay; even the Indians appeared to have no confidence in any statements made to them.106

After 1874, for a number of years the agents took a more impartial view of the Kootenai tribe. They apparently recognized that the long distance which separated them from the agency had prevented these Indians from benefiting by whatever agricultural instruction and assistance the authorities could provide for nearby Indians. Peter Whaley, agent in 1874, recognized that they were basically a reasonable and peaceful tribe who were left to shift for themselves on the outskirts of the reservation. As they were free to associate with the more disreputable white population, they had become shiftless, gambling individuals. Without the necessary farm implements and instructions they were compelled to subsist by whatever means they knew.107

The arrival of a large quantity of agricultural equipment in 1879 was a source of some encouragement to the Kootenai bands living on Flathead Lake. However, they probably received only a small part of the supplies and made little use of those they did get. In the

106 Ibid., p. 249.

following years they continued their destitute living. 108

A few years later, in 1832, the confederated tribes secured
the promise from an honorary commissioner that in exchange for a
railroad right-of-way he would urge the government to cede the
territory in Montana north of the reservation back to the Indians.
This included the present Lincoln and Flathead counties and would
have added a rich hunting and trapping domain to the Indian lands.
The Kootenai bands, camped at Dayton Creek formerly lived in this
territory and some of them expressed the wish to return to their
old habitat. However, the grant was never made and, in the 30's,
the Upper Flathead Valley was taken over by small numbers of white
settlers. 109

At the end of the 30's the situation of the Kootenais was
not improved. Their living conditions were squalid. The majority
of the tribe spent their time loitering and gambling at the nearby
white settlements. Agent Ronan in his annual report for 1890 wrote
of them:

Generally the Kootenai Indians are a thriftless, lazy, and
filthy tribe, addicted to gambling, drinking, and immorality.
Some of them spend their time in wandering about, fishing and

hunting, and loitering around white settlements where whiskey can be found and a filthy living eked out. This class brings the whole band into disrepute, until they are all looked upon as vagrants. In fact, such is the case to a great extent, and unless the Government reaches out a helping hand they are doomed to destruction.110

In the decade after 1890 due to severe punishments inflicted upon lawbreakers they became more humble. Their standard of living, however, remained about the same. In 1897, Joseph T. Carter reported:

This tribe has made the least progress of any upon this reserve. Despite the fact that a farmer has been placed among them little progress has been made. They live largely by hunting and fishing, and they spend their large leisure in drinking and gambling. Their Chief, Kness, strange to say, is far better than his people, but seems to fear his own, and is therefore of little assistance in the enlighten-ment and civilization of this tribe. They are the only tribe living here who do not respect the marriage vow.111

In spite of such efforts as the Indian agents were able to make, there remained throughout this period a considerable amount of lawlessness. This arose from difficulties between the settlers and Kootenais which culminated in several murders and, in 1887, in the lynching of two Indians at Demersville near the head of Flathead Lake. These Kootenais were, according to old timers, the confessed


murderers of three prospectors on Wolf Creek. A mob overpowered the acting deputy, J. E. Clifford, and took the Indians across the river from Demersville and hanged them. The flames of inter-racial hatred were fanned higher in 1889, when Lurra Finley, a mixed-breed Kootenai, killed another Indian at the head of the Lake. By this time as a result of the numerous murders, the whole reservation population was intensively excited. The climax was reached late that same year when the son of Chief Kootenai was shot at Demersville. The account which appears in the annual report from Flathead Agency differs in some respects from the reminiscent stories of pioneers. Whether the victim was being led away from the scene of trouble by another Kootenai when he was shot down by a white resident as Kootenai testified; or whether he was shot as he attempted to break into a settler's home seems to be unknown. However, the official opinion of the commissioner, John T. Morgan, investigating the case, partially supported the Indian testimony. If the conclusions of the commissioner are accepted as to the basic causes of the Indian troubles, the


white settlers who sold whiskey to the Indians were more than partly responsible. In addition, the long distance which separated the Kootenai Indians from the restraining influence of the agency left the reckless young men almost completely uncontrolled. Adding to their general discontent was the fact that the Indians felt white outlaws never were dealt with as harshly as Indian criminals. 111

In 1890, following a long manhunt, conducted by Sheriff Houston of Missoula County, the most notorious Indian criminals from the Flathead Reservation were apprehended and taken to Missoula for trial. Sentenced to hang, Pierre Paul, La La See, Pascals, and Antlay, accepted the pronouncement without complaint. Antlay, who was a mere boy, probably did not comprehend the significance of the situation, but the others felt some justification for their acts. The revenge which prompted them to kill indiscriminately, resulted from repeated unwarranted transgressions by white settlers against the Indians.

At the execution, the men were composed and their last words as heard by observers indicated that they did not feel repentant for their crimes. Actually, Pierre Paul, who, from reports, appears to have been a magnificent Indian, appealed to the sympathy of some

persons present. His complete self control and confidence in the
rightness of his own actions impressed bystanders. The other men
reflected the same attitude, although Pascale showed signs of under-
standing the gravity of his position more than his companions.
Antley, only by facial signs showed his last moment distress.

Although most of the settlers expressed their approval of
the execution there were a few who realized that responsibility
should be partially assigned to unthinking white men. The newspa-
pers, however, generally accepted the view that the executions
were justified. The Missoula Gazette reflected the general sentiment
as follows:

Sympathy has been expressed for these red-handed murderers
but it should not have been...Sentimentality for then expressed
or felt is nauseating, unhealthy, unnatural and has no home in a
well balanced mind. Mercy, gazing upon the deeds these wretches
did fled from the sight of men.117

A hundred years of association with white men destroyed much
of the Kootenai culture. Originally, they were regarded as a peace-
ful, simple tribe, but after fifty years on the reservation these
Indians were only filthy beggars. They had failed miserably in their

115 "Bill Houston's Story," San E. Johns Collection, III, p. 166.

116 Ibid., p. 167.

117 News item in the Missoula Gazette, December, 1890.
attempts to adopt a settled agrarian life. Their few farms were poorly stocked and unproductive. The work of the missionaries among them brought very little change in their behavior for the lessons of Christianity did not penetrate deep into their fiber. The criminal record of the Kootenais shows their casual respect for authority and also indicates their unhappiness. Even the other Indians on the reserve regarded them as an inferior tribe.

118 Palladino, op. cit., p. 176.
CHAPTER IV

EXPLORATION AND SETTLEMENT 1850-1892

The building of railroads proved to be the impetus to settlement in Northwestern Montana as it did in many regions that previously were known only to prospectors and hunters. In the 1850's this isolated corner of present day Montana began to take on strategic importance in the plans of railroad surveyors. The first official action for a possible railroad route to the Pacific was undertaken in 1853-1854. Under the general direction of Isaac I. Stevens explorations were made throughout the West. Several of these government parties traversed the whole area of the present Upper Flathead and Kootenai Valleys in search of low mountain passes and gradual grades.

Unfortunately, most of Stevens' subordinates who traveled in this region, failed to locate or to appreciate fully the significance of Marias Pass. This defile located along the southern boundary of the present Glacier National Park was the lowest, widest, and most direct passage through the northern American Rockies. However, the general disuse of the trail because of Indian superstitions, and the cursory surveys made at the entrances, allowed the Pass to remain unknown. On September 18, 1853, Isaac Stevens with uncanny intuition expressed his opinion in a letter:

It is with great reluctance I abandoned the survey of the Marias Pass. I am sanguine that it will prove the best pass, and it more naturally connects with the line of Clark's fork of the Columbia river. The great obstacle to the survey of
all these passes, and especially the Marias Pass is in the
imense forests which in all directions obstruct the way.
The super- abundance of nature has to be done away with in
a measure before the full measure of her gifts can be known.
The Indians pursue the best trails they can find; but they
have not axes to hew their way, nor, finding one pass
practicable have they the patience to search for better ones. 119

The first party coming from the east failed to locate Marias
Pass, although, Stevens, himself, felt that there must be an opening
through the mountains in the north. In October 1853, he again sent
one of his subordinates to explore the possibilities of the Marias
route. This time A. W. Tinkham in charge of the expedition was to
approach the pass from the west. He traveled around the west side
of Flathead Lake, up the Flathead River following its most eastern
tributary into the mountains. After crossing through a mountain
basin about fourteen miles long he followed another eastern branch
of the river. Thinking he finally had found the true pass he
described it as follows:

The valley is narrow and always wooded; the trail is
sometimes laborious and difficult, and grass for camping
is always scarce, and so continues until the summit is
passed. A bare, rocky, circular ridge closes the valley,
over which the trail crooks and winds, and is often just
wide enough for the feet of the horse. It is wholly im-
practicable as a wagon pass.120

119 Isaac I. Stevens, Report of Explorations for a Route
for the Pacific Railroad, I, p. 27.

120 Ibid., p. 277.
If I walked through the door i thought that I could never have seen anything else in my life. I thought that life was filled with joy and happiness, and that every moment was a precious one.

I walked past the door and entered the room. The walls were painted in bright colors, and there was a large window overlooking the garden. I felt a sense of peace and contentment.

The garden was filled with flowers of every color. I could hear the sound of birds singing in the distance. I walked around, taking in the sights and sounds. It was as if I had stepped into a different world.

I walked back towards the door, feeling content and at peace. I knew that I would come back again, to bask in the beauty of this place and to find solace in its beauty.
Doty made only a sketchy survey of the eastern approaches, but intimated that it might prove a good route. In his report he said:

This pass is not vouched for as a good railroad or pack-train route, yet it is believed worthy of further examination; and I only regret that I cannot make it, as your instructions require me to be at Fort Benton in the last days of this month. The trail which I followed continues up the valley, and a deserted encampment of last summer indicates that this pass is occasionally frequented by the Flatheads or the Kootenais, for the purpose of hunting elk and deer, which are numerous here.\(^\text{123}\)

As a result of its not being explored and pronounced satisfactory for railway construction, the first transcontinental route swung wide of Northwestern Montana. West of the defile the country continued to be undeveloped; while the canyon itself remained a mystery.

Finally, in 1890, over thirty years later James J. Hill brought the Great Northern Railroad into the valley through the long sought Marias Pass.

Indirectly however, these first surveys did bring the area to the attention of individuals living in other localities. The explorations of Lieutenant Mulvan in the spring of 1851, north to the Kootenai River foreshadowed the route of pack trains going to gold fields in British Columbia. On this expedition Mulvan left the Stevens encampment in the Bitterroot Valley, proceeding north to the

\(^{123}\text{Ibid., p. 550.}\)
Hell Gate River. The time of the year made the trip extremely dangerous, the rivers being swollen so that the men crossed at the risk of their lives. However, after consulting the Indians, they camped at Canash Prairie as to traveling conditions in the mountains approaching the Kootenai River, Mullan was satisfied that the party could make the trip. He struck north to Flathead Lake, then followed the west shore to the north end. Here he viewed "a broad, open, level, and beautiful prairie, that extends from the north end of Flathead Lake for a distance of thirty or forty miles to the north and twenty miles to the west."124

The group continued up the Flathead River then followed an Indian trail along the Maple River, known at the present time as the Stillwater. This part of the journey proved to be extremely difficult because of fallen timber and the shortage of grass for the horses. They contrived to pursue a route constantly north until on April 25, they reached the summit dividing the affluents of the Kootenai from those of the Flathead River. The next day they reached the Kootenai River. Here, Lieutenant Mullan seemed favorably impressed by the landscape for he wrote:

The soil along the Kootenai river is very fertile, and at the point where we struck it was carpeted by a beautiful green sward, upon which was growing an exceedingly great number of beautifully colored and varied plants...This place

124 Ibid., p. 521.
is a great resort for the Kootenay Indians when not hunting in the mountains, as here is found at every season an abundance of excellent and nutritious grass; the winters are represented as being mild, and the waters of the Kootenai river afford fish, at all seasons, a bountiful supply of the salmon-trout. 125

The exploratory purposes of the trip having been accomplished when they reached the river, the party returned to the Bitterroot Valley. Backtracking themselves, they ascended Tobacco Creek which is the present Fisher River, to the divide, hence they proceeded in a southwest direction by a new route to Camas Prairie. 126

In summarizing the results of his trip Lieutenant Mullan was quite emphatic that west of the Flathead Valley there was no pass which could be utilized by a railroad. He strongly recommended that any transcontinental route be located farther south in the vicinity of Hell Gate Pass. 127

However, the area was not destined to remain very long in complete isolation, once gold was discovered in the Canadian Kootenai district. One of the first of several gold discoveries in the southern Canadian Rockies was made by a half-breed Kootenai Indian. Late in the fall of 1862 he came down to the Hudson's Bay Company post on Tobacco Plains where he told of his discovery. James Manning, a prospector from Colville, heard the story and decided to try his luck there the next season. Accompanied by a number of men from the

125 Ibid., p. 523.
126 Ibid., pp. 523-525.
127 Ibid., p. 526.
Montana diggings, Manning started north to locate his claim. Fifty
miles north of the boundary on a tributary of the Kootenai he found
the best prospects. 128 The Wild Horse Creek mines, which took their
name from the large number of Indian cayuses found there, produced
immense quantities of gold. Miners panned from twenty to thirty
dollars per day. Almost immediately a typical mining town sprang up.
In June five hundred claims had been staked out and people continued
to pour into the area. Most of the gold seekers came from the United
States, wandering north from the gold fields of Idaho and Montana.
Many went to the gold field by following the general route of Lieuten-
ant Hullah from Hall Gate to the Kootenai River. This trail took
prospectors through the Upper Flathead country and made it familiar
to many people.

In addition to being populated by Americans the British Columbia
mining communities drew almost all their supplies from south of the
border. The transportation lines connecting with Victoria were com-
pletely inadequate and much longer than those roads south to Walla Walla
and Spokane. This meant that in spite of custom duties, the major part
of all commerce flowed north and south. 130 While most of the Canadian

128 F. W. Howay, W. H. Sage and H. F. Angus, British Columbia
and the United States, p. 266.

129 William J. Trubles, The Mining Advances into the
Inland Empire, p. 57.

130 Ibid., p. 58.
traffic was shipped from Spokane, west of the Cabinet Mountains, some of the pack trains came from Missoula. In 1867, X. Beidler reported having seen one pack train leave Major Owen's mill in the Bitterroot Valley with 10,000 pounds of flour destined for the Kootenai mines.131 This freight was carried to Flathead Lake and around the west shore to the north end. From here packers followed the foothills on the west side of the valley till they struck the Stillwater River. They made their way up that river to the Fisher which they followed to the Kootenai. Then they proceeded across Tobacco Plains to the Canadian gold fields. By 1866, the spectacular gold lodes of the Kootenai district were panned out and the later claims required considerable machinery before they could be exploited profitably. However, old claims on Wild Horse Creek continued to be worked by Chinamen. Even after the initial diggings dwindled, supplies had to be brought in to the remaining populace.

The Upper Flathead country and the area along the Kootenai River were slowly being brought to the attention of outsiders by the packers and prospectors who passed through it on their way to and from the Canadian mines. In 1867, prospecting on Libby Creek created a minor gold rush into northwestern Montana which helped sustain a

flow of people into that general region. The majority of men were merely transients, but a few of these individuals attempted to make permanent homes farther south in the Upper Flathead Valley. Their first efforts were largely unsuccessful since the region was far enough removed from Missoula, the closest commercial center, to make farming or stock raising unprofitable. The reports of heavy snow in winter, and springtime mosquito hordes from the numerous sloughs near the head of the Lake, discouraged settlers.

Joe Ashley, a half-breed, erected a cabin and took up squatters rights in 1857, north of the Lake. A small stream running into Flathead River a few miles south of Kalispell takes its name from him. Ashley, the first known settler, relinquished his claim many years later and moved to the reservation. At approximately the same time a prospector and guide, Jack Fisher, came into the Flathead country. He placer-mined along the Kootenai River from Libby Creek to the Wild Horse mines. The southern tributary of the Kootenai joining it at the bend was named in his honor. Fisher continued to travel through the country but being a bachelor all his life he made no concerted effort toward establishing a home.


133 "Partial list of first settlers Arriving and settling end of 30's," Sam E. Jones Collection, IX, p. 160.
In the early 70's a number of men came into the valley from Frenchtown with the expectations of grazing cattle on the prairie north of the Lake. In this first group, who came in 1871, were Gaspard Deschamps, Joseph Marion, Louis Brown, Jean Baptist Le Beau, Francis Grevelle, Harry Birney and John Cunningham. Only the latter three remained through the winter. Between 1878-1880 several miners turned cattlemen, entered the Upper Flathead country in an attempt to push the cattle range north of the reservation. A few who are known to have run stock in the Upper Flathead during that period were Cassimier and Henry Rimeau, Mich Moon, Thomas McGovern Sr., and Jr., John O. Leary, and Thomas Lynch. 134

Apparently, the possibilities of developing a cattle industry were never realised. It was only for a few years in the 70's that the country around the head of the Lake was used as cattle range. 135 The exodus of cattlemen may be partially attributed to fear of Indian attacks, and the fact that the land was more suited to farming than grazing. By 1890 much of the land suitable for pasture had been converted to agricultural purposes.

In 1880, one of the most prominent of the first settlers, John Dooley, arrived in the valley with Jack Fisher acting as his guide. The following year he opened a small trading post on the


135 News item in The Pioneer (Missoula, Montana), February 17, 1872.
Flathead River, five miles east of present day Somers, Montana. This settlement known as Salish was the site of the earliest post office. In 1882 the first elections held in the Upper Flathead country took place in Dooley's store. 136

Shortly after Salish was opened to business, some buildings were erected on Ashley Creek at a point where the various pack trails branched out. At the crossing in the later 80's, there was a dry goods store operated by Laneau and Daggett, a drug store owned by D. J. Flume, and Swaney & Walkup had set up their store at that place. 137 In 1885, a post office was built to take over some of the mail which had formerly gone through Salish. 138 Later events, however, proved that Ashley was not the strategic point for a town, but, until 1887, considerable retail business was conducted there.

The next spurt of migration followed construction of the Northern Pacific through Missoula in the mid 80's. Many men who came west with the railroad once their jobs were discontinued began to look for places to locate. A number of those men, with their families, began their search for good farm land at Missoula. As early


137 "Tyson D. Duncan Account," Sam E. Johns Collection, III, p. 22.

as 1882 a few of them began to drift into the Flathead country, but
the greatest influx occurred the next spring.  139

One Frenchtown merchant, Telesphore J. Demers, had been con-
sidering for some time the establishment of a general store in the

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139 A fairly accurate list of 1882-1883 would include the
following persons: Asher Brothers, 1883; D. Atterbury and wife, 1882
or 1883; Martin Bennett and family, 1882; William Bellofleur and
family, 1883; James Booth, 1883; Bowser and family, 1883; Charles
Duch, 1883; William Darnold, 1882; Edward and Eugene Despin, 1883;
Tyson D. Duncan and wife, 1883; W. J. Egan 1881 or 1883; Elliot and fam-
ily, 1883; Chris Finlayson and family, 1882 or 1883; John M. Foy and
family, 1883; Joseph Gangmer, 1882 or 1883; David, James and Michael
Gregg, 1882; Richard Gregg, 1883; William Hadsell, 1883; Joseph A.
Hamilton and wife, 1882; Mrs. J. A. Hamilton's sister, 1882; George
Heller, 1882 or 1883; James Hight, 1882 or 1883; Steve Jarvis, 1882 or
1883; James Kinserly and wife, 1882; George Labin, 1882; Felix Landry,
1882; John Lang and family, 1883; Fred Lindgren, 1883; Alex Le Beau
and family, 1882 or 1883; Joseph Long and family, 1882; Eugene McCarthy,
1883; Seth McFarren, 1882; Frank McKisson, 1882; William Mooring, 1883;
Anderson Murcial and wife, 1882; George Nelson, 1883; Cobe Ronselle,
1882; John Sall, 1882; William Sharpe, 1882; H. C. Sheldon and family,
1883; Hugh Sinclair, 1882; John Sinclair, 1883; Milton Small, 1883;
Philip Smith, 1883; Frank Tetrault, 1882 or 1883; Henry Therriault,
1882; J. O. Wells, 1882. See "Partial list of first Settlors Arriving
and Settling End of 80's," op. cit., IX, pp. 160-176; "Statement
of Andrew W. Swaney," Sam E. Johns Collection, III, p. 7; "Statement
by Tyson Duncan," Sam E. Johns Collection, III, pp. 16-17; "Statement
of James K. Lang," Sam E. Johns Collection, III, pp. 25-26; O. M. Houts,
"Some Pioneers of the Eighties," Sam E. Johns Collection, IX, pp. 26-32; Society of Montana Pioneers, Register, (edited by
James U. Sanders), I, pp. 94-95.
Upper Flathead Valley. Packing supplies to the Kootenai mines, he had been impressed by the fertility of the soil north of the Lake. He shrewdly realized that in a relatively short time, the upper country would be sufficiently settled to assure good business for a retail store. On one of his trips he stopped at Ashley to inquire about the price of a lot at that place. Fear of competition prompted the several merchants there to put a price of $5,000 on a lot 50' x 150'. Such an exorbitant figure discouraged Demers and he was on the point of abandoning the project. On this same trip however he met one William Craig who offered to give him a block of land 300' x 300' out of his homestead. Craig's farm was located near the river at a point which came to be accepted as the head of navigation. A store there would have an advantage in transportation and would be a center for retail trade for miles around. Demers sensed the possible profits and the following year, in 1887, shipped materials and supplies to the site of the future Demersville. Instead of a lot, he purchased eighty acres which later became the townsite. Here, he left two Canadian Frenchmen, William Barron and John Gill in charge of construction and sales. Somewhat later the management of the store was assumed by Demers's son-in-law.

Telaphone J. Demers, was a Canadian by birth. He had become a prosperous merchant at Frenchtown, operating a general store and flour mill. He married a half-breed woman, and had several children. The eldest son, Marion, lived for many years at Camas, and his daughter, Delina, married J. E. Clifford, first mayor of Demersville. A large sepulcher in Frenchtown cemetery contains the tomb of various members of this family. Sam E. Johns Collection, X, p. 1.
John E. Clifford. George Stannard was employed as a bookkeeper in March, 1888. The establishment was valued at $75,000, and carried on an extensive cash and credit business. Two years later the business was sold to the Missoula Mercantile Company which sent H. C. Keith up from Missoula to manage the new branch. By this time, Demererville possessed a post office, real estate office, hotel, and a small cash store. In August, 1889, the *Inter Lake* made its appearance and one C. W. Houts started another newspaper, the *Journal.*

The valley was rapidly being settled with an estimated population in 1890 of three thousand people. Andrew Swaney took the first school census in 1885 which showed approximately fifty school children; by 1892 the number had increased to eight hundred sixty-four. Demererville was able to boast of nearly fifty buildings including residences, stores, and saloons.

During the period of its greatest growth Demererville and the surrounding area was protected against Indian attacks by a small encampment of soldiers sent from Fort Missoula under the command of


112 Mrs. Emma A. Ingalls, *op. cit.* II, p. 126.

The intersection of a part of the station reached the city by 1866. The west side of the population there had been large enough to maintain culture. Ready to succumb the farmers homesteaded all over the cattle ranch and open their farms to the development of agricultural settlement. The farms, however, located in the same vicinity, passed from one to another, and the key moved there instead of the old one. A new reservoir was then also begun the development of the reservoir, the east side of the river, for a short time, and the reservoirs proved superfluous, and most of the time, the reservoirs were abandoned, except for the reservoir of two counties at the reservoir. The people at the head of the lake needed reservoir from the reservoir.
agricultural developments lumber mills dotted the Valley wherever water power was available. The first mill was erected a few miles west of the present Kalispell on Foy's Lake in 1884. \[147\] It had a capacity of about ten thousand feet per year. A combination saw and grist mill, located on the east side of the river, was built by Yenne and Eccles in 1888. \[148\] F. and D. C. Coates ran another lumber business about eight miles north of Demersville. This mill furnished lumber for the construction of steamers on the Lake.

The boom of Demersville in the period from 1887 to 1891 was the direct result of steamboat traffic on the Lake. In turn the steamer business was largely dependent on the shipment of railroad materials for the construction of the road across the Upper Flathead Valley. Very early in 1883, the Nelson brothers began steamer travel by converting their small sail boat into a steam power craft. Three years later Captain Kerr built another boat. In 1887 the "Pocohantas" was constructed and put into operation by a man named Stillinger. By this time steamboating was established as the easiest and cheapest way to bring goods into the Upper Flathead Valley. A few years later, in 1890, steamers were carrying large quantities of railroad supplies to Demersville. Here, at the head of navigation, the railroad built a

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\[148\] Ibid., p. 25.
warehouse to store the cargoes. That year traffic increased so much that another boat was launched. Captain Kerr also enlarged his business by constructing the "Tom Carter" and buying out the Nelson brothers. The next year, in April, work was completed on the "Crescent" at the head of navigation. Earlier in the spring the boiler and other parts were hauled by team from Ravalli to Demersville. A month later Houston and Stillinger launched a much larger craft, the "State of Montana." Shortly thereafter, Gene Hodge put the "City of Kalispell" into operation. The completion of the railroad decreased steamer travel on the Lake. When railroad supply shipments ended, the traffic could not support the number of boats in service. Some were abandoned and in the case of the "Crescent" the machinery was dismantled and freighted to Bonners Ferry, Idaho. There Laneau and DePuy reassembled the parts and launched the craft under the name "Idaho." They carried supplies for some time on the Kootenai River between Bonners Ferry and Kaslo, British Columbia.

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149 David Creig, "Narrative of the Era of Steamboat Days on Flathead Lake," Sam E. Johns Collection, II, p. 117.

150 Ibid., p. 118.

151 Ibid.
Even though the railroad reduced the steamboat business, the road around the west shore of the Lake was so difficult that many persons continued to travel by boat into the Upper Flathead country. In 1911 there were sixteen men licensed to operate steamboats on the Lake. The largest of these, the "Klondike," had a one hundred ten-ton freight capacity and could accommodate four hundred twenty-five passengers. 152 The next five years showed a slight increase in freight vessels and barges due to lumbering operations of the Somers Lumber Company. 153 By 1918 railroad transportation had absorbed almost all of the business which formerly had gone by steamer across the Lake. In a hearing before the Montana Board of Railroad Commissioners three of the largest steamboat companies petitioned for rate increases. They reported that for the past year they operated at a loss. According to the investigation findings:

The short crop last year is undoubtedly responsible for a portion of the loss. The greater percentage of the decrease, however, is due to the fact that many bulk commodities, such as carloads of grain, coal, hay, and live stock, which heretofore moved via the Lake and the Great Northern railway, are now being diverted to the Dixon-Polson branch of the Northern Pacific railway. 154

152 Montana Board of Railroad Commissioners, Fourth Annual Report, 1911, p. 135.
154 Montana Board of Railroad Commissioners, Twelfth Annual Report, 1919, pp. 18-19.
That same year the legislature failed to appropriate money for the inspector of steamboats. Steamboat traffic on Flathead Lake dwindled to minor importance in the next few years and finally disappeared entirely.

The accelerated business in Deasesville and large traffic on the Lake began about 1888. That year rumors were spread that James J. Hill planned to route his transcontinental line through the Upper Flathead Valley. During the next winter, the rumors became more real when C. F. Haskell, a railroad engineer, came up to Deasesville looking for a mountain guide. He procured the service of Ed Boyle and started north to make surveys of the grades between Whitefish Lake and the summit of the Rockies.

As Haskell traveled toward Marias Pass from the west, John F. Stevens was making his way through heavy snow to the continental divide from the eastern side. Stevens arrived at the summit on December 11, 1889, and the Great Northern Railroad credits him as the official discoverer of Marias Pass. It had been known for years, however, to trappers and Indians. On the western slopes Haskell and

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155 Ibid., p. 65.

156 "The Manitobah Railroad," Sam E. Jones Collection, X, p. 131; News item in the Inter Lake, March 28, 1890; Sam E. Jones Collection, III, pp. 105-106.

Once the force was in place, the instructive take in

point. In a short time, these were sailing at high

enough, and the committee of the railroad were present at the

meantime, in the summer of 1879 the news From

commissioners continued to exist, but not because the railroad

and commission officials were not the same men, the nature of the

attempt were made to establish stronger ties between the

committee continued to resist this high pressure from the state of New

be the most significant point. It is the third "come up" and the

some thought that the commission might get the mouth of the rock canyon would

done for some time. There are several special places where it would be

over the great protection of the railroad point was not known to exist.

as the work proceeded the enemy route by-passed Iâ€™d suggested. The

consultation now decided to regard the mountainous community would present the

the railroad company. Since the railroad was established in the

west through the force of railroad several hundred yards north of the

democratize. As a result of these efforts the railroad started the

shortage of food. Several months elapsed before they got back to

Bayfield had a most difficult trip due to the end-sear weather and a
Throughout the year, business boomed at the head of navigation and people poured into the area. Of lesser importance but contributory to its disappearance was a series of fires at Demersville in 1891. Some were accidental and some were cases of arson, but at any rate many of the buildings were destroyed. And as time approached for the Great Northern to reach Kalispell most of the remaining businesses in Demersville undertook the task of moving to the new town.

Thus, Demersville boomed and vanished, having had only one mayor, J. E. Clifford. Unfortunately, it was dependent almost entirely on river traffic to sustain its life, and with the collapse of steamboat

159 Demersville must have hoped for a long life even after events showed that the railroad would by-pass it for not until July 16, 1890 was it officially platted and approved by the Commissioners of Missoula County. See Plat of Demersville, Drawer 3, Envelope 4, County Clerk and Recorders Office, Flathead County, Kalispell, Montana.

160 George Stearns, "The Early Story of Flathead Valley, Montana," Sam E. Johns Collection, X, pp. 96-98.

161 "Last Days of Demersville," Sam E. Johns Collection, X, p. 250; ..."Fire! Fire! Fire!," Sam E. Johns Collection, X, pp. 208-211.

162 News of the day as published in the Journal in 1891 and January 1892, Sam E. Johns Collection, X, pp. 221-222, 224, 248-249.
travel and the substitution of railroad transportation, what remained of the old town disappeared. The river channel was allowed to fill up with debris until navigation was completely impossible. 163

The Kootenai country was far overshadowed by the developments in the Upper Flathead Valley. However, considerable numbers of miners were going to the placer diggings on Libby and Vermillion Creek in the late 30's. The returns never assumed such proportions as to precipitate a major gold rush. However, silver, lead, and gold mines were discovered all the way from the bend to the Idaho boundary. In most cases inadequate transportation and average returns prevented intensive developments of the mines. 164 Most of the prospectors stayed in the Kootenai country for only a short time, but a few remained to start clearing small ranches along the river. 165

163 United States Engineer Department, Flathead River, House Doc., No. 2032, 61st Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol. 22 (Serial 7137).


The real impetus to settlement along the Kootenai was the prospect of railroad construction in the early 80's. A short time after the first survey was made, Libby made its appearance as a typical frontier community. In May, 1892, the tracks were laid to this point and on the third of the month, the first train arrived. Libby was only one of several small towns which appeared in the Kootenai country after the Great Northern passed through that region. Each owed its existence mainly to the railroad and each was dependent on this transportation for future developments.

The railroad construction along the Kootenai also precipitated pioneer steamboating between the bend and Fort Steele, British Columbia. As soon as the railroad reached Jennings, at the bend, B. Walter Jones and Harry Dopey energetically undertook the passenger and freight service up the Kootenai. They built their landing on the Fisher River and started the head of the first steamer to navigate upriver from the bend. The boat was not particularly successful since it drew too much water for river navigation. However, it continued to operate until 1897. The next attempts were made by Tom Flowers who constructed two steamers, the "Fool Hen" and the "Libby" both of which were built.

166 Montana Federation of Women's Clubs, op. cit., pp. 34-35.
167 Ibid., p. 72.
168 Ibid., pp. 63-64.
without a real understanding of the engineering problems of river transportation. They were entirely unsuccessful and never saw service. In 1897, the steamer "Ruth" which had been running between the mines at Fort Steele, British Columbia, and Jennings was wrecked in a canyon about five miles above Jennings. A few minutes later the "wendoline" piled on top of the "Ruth" and was badly damaged. One of the last and most successful boats navigating the Kootenai above the bend was built by the International Transportation Company after the destruction of the "Ruth." This boat christened the "North Star" made large earnings, and after better railroad facilities were available in Northwestern Montana was launched on the headwaters of the Columbia in Canada.

Steamboating on the Kootenai was always a dangerous business and most of the steamers launched apparently had construction defects which impaired their ability to run the river's course.

Once the Great Northern completed the road along the Kootenai River and the feeder lines into Canada, steamboat travel ceased. The railroad offered much safer and more efficient service. Actually most of the small towns in this area sprang up along the route and owed their existence entirely to the railroad. They could now profitably

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ship bulky commodities to distant markets. Thus the lumber industry began the wholesale exploitation of the timberland all along the Kootenai and mines in the same area began more extensive operations.
CHAPTER V

ADVENT OF THE GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD

January 1, 1892, was the great day in the Upper Flathead Valley as the first train of the Great Northern steamed into Kalispell. People from all over the Valley were on hand to welcome it. Two of the first settlers, Mrs. J. J. Kimmerly and Nicholas Moon, drove the silver spike amid riotous cheers of the crowd. The arrival of trains meant new life for the whole region. However, the initial profits of the invigorated economic activity did not go to the pioneer settlers. The first harvest was reaped by the Kalispell Townsite Company which sold lots at greatly inflated prices. The same month the railroad reached Kalispell, preliminary elections were held for the incorporation of the city. Later in April the final election showed that public sentiment still favored

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173 Mrs. Emma A. Ingalls, op. cit., Sam E. Johns Collection, II, p. 132. The Townsite Company was composed of James J. Hill, president of the railroad; Mr. Comstock and Mr. White, Great Northern Townsite men; and C. E. and W. G. Conrad of Fort Benton. Later the Conrad Brothers bought out the other partners. See George Stannard, op. cit., Sam E. Johns Collection, X, pp. 96-99. Kalispell Townsite had been approved by Missoula County Commissioners on April 21, 1891. See Plats, Drawer 5, Envelope 10, in file at County Clerk and Recorder Office, Flathead County, Kalispell, Montana.
incorporation. City officials were chosen and Benton D. Hatcher became the first mayor.  

The constantly increasing population north of Flathead Lake was what the people living near Missoula considered an unnecessary drain on county resources. The task of apprehending criminals in the outlying sections of Missoula County was expensive and time consuming. Thus, some persons advocated a new county whereby the population north of the Lake would assume the responsibility of its own affairs.  

174 Mrs. Emma A. Ingalls, op. cit., Sam E. Johns Collection, II, p. 134. It seems that the Upper Flathead did not reach political maturity without its share of crooked officials. Benton D. Hatcher, first mayor of Kalispell and John E. Clifford, first and only mayor of Demersville, are both reported to have spent some time in the Montana State Penitentiary. Judge Charles Shepard, Justice of Peace at Demersville, was somewhat the prototype of the notorious Judge Roy Bean in the southwest. He was finally driven out of the Flathead country by irate citizens. See Sam E. Johns, "Demersville," Sam E. Johns Collections, X, pp. 73-74; "A Little Plain Talk," Sam E. Johns Collection, X, pp. 117-119; News item in the Inter Lake, May 22, 1892, Sam E. Johns Collection, X, pp. 115-117; Mrs. Emma A. Ingalls, "Early Flathead History," III, pp. 110-111. The first district judge, Dudley Dubose, after Flathead County was created, later became famous as the corrupt judge in a novel by Rex Beach on the looting of Alaska. See Mrs. Emma A. Ingalls, op. cit., Sam E. Johns Collection, II, pp. 135-136.  

175 Flathead County in the course of a half century, was included in several political units. First as part of the Oregon country, all of the region now part of Northwestern Montana was placed in the Vancouver District by the Provisional government June 27, 1846. This included all the land from the Pacific to the Rockies, and from the Columbia River north to latitude 54° 40'. The following year the area was reduced but still embraced present
day western Montana. See University State Historical Society, "Northwestern History Syllabus," Washington Historical Quarterly, VII (January, 1916), p. 90. See also Frederick V. Holman, "Oregon Counties," Oregon Historical Society Quarterly, XI (March, 1910), pp. 65, 67. In August, 1846, the Oregon territory was established by Congress. See Francis Newton Thorpe, Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters and other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies now or heretofore forming the United States of America, 7 Vols., 59th Cong., 2d Sess., House Doc. 357, V, p. 2936 (Serial Set 5194). At the territorial legislature 1850-1851 the old Vancouver County was retained, but under the name Clarke County. This change was made in honor of Captain Clark of the Lewis and Clark expedition. See University State Historical Society, op. cit., p. 90.

A few years later, in 1853, Washington Territory was created which embraced the area now included in Northwestern Montana. See Thorpe, op. cit., VI, p. 3963. Clarke County included most of western Montana. See Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, 1815-1889, pp. 61, 62n. At the first legislature a new county was created known as Walla Walla, for the westernmost portion of the territory. Later in 1858 Shoshone County was carved out of Walla Walla County with the seat of government "on the land claim of Angus McDonald." Ibid., p. 460. In 1860 the name was changed to Spokane County but the boundaries remained the same. The following year another change was enacted creating Missoula County. The latter included all land east of 115 line of longitude and west of the Rockies. The county seat was to be at Missoula. Ibid., p. 460.

In 1863 the area now included in the states of Idaho, Wyoming, and Montana was set up as the territory of Idaho. Thorpe, op. cit., II, p. 905. Missoula County continued to include the area of present day Northwestern Montana.

The next year, 1864, Montana Territory was created. Bancroft, op. cit., p. 612. The legislature retained Missoula County, with the county seat at Missoula. Even after Montana reached statehood all the territory of Northwestern Montana remained in Missoula County until 1893. Montana Territory Legislative Assembly, Laws, Resolutions, and Memorials, 1st Sess., 1861-1865, p. 528.
In 1891, Missoula representatives in the State Legislature proposed a county to be created out of the northwestern portion of Missoula County. However, they planned to retain almost all of Flathead Lake in Missoula County. Immediately, citizens at the head of the Lake objected, mainly because they wished to have a voice in determining the division lines. The bill failed to pass.\textsuperscript{176} Shortly thereafter representatives from the northern part of Missoula County again proposed a division.\textsuperscript{177} This bill was passed in the 1893 session. The new county was considerably larger than proposed in 1891. The area included all of present day Lincoln County and a large part of Lake County.\textsuperscript{178}

Within a few months the county officials, appointed by the state legislature, began the plans for buildings and roads.\textsuperscript{179} In March, as part of their first business, the commissioners opened bids for the moving of the jail building to Kalispell from its former

\textsuperscript{176} Mrs. Emma A. In\textsuperscript{a}alls, \emph{op. cit.}, II, p. 134.

\textsuperscript{177} Scott N. Sanford, "The Subject of County Division...", \textit{Sam L. Johns Collection}, X, pp. 236-238.

\textsuperscript{178} \textit{Montana Session Laws}, 3rd Sess., 1893, pp. 198-212.

location at Demersville. 180 The next fall at the general election Kalispell was chosen as the permanent county seat with a comfortable margin over Columbia Falls. 181 At the same time county officials were elected to replace those appointed in 1893. 182

The first few years following the political organisation of Flathead County were spent attempting to overcome the physical obstacles to transportation. The commissioners' journals in this period make repeated references to petitions, bids and plans for roads and bridges. The rugged character of many outlying sections made the task formidable. Nevertheless, considerable progress was made to knit the county together even though most roads were of a primitive nature. On the matter of getting a county court house the commissioners must have felt some reluctance about acting rapidly. The financial status of a new county probably could not stand a heavy burden for building purposes. Ten years elapsed before the court house was finished. Hastie and Doughtan got the contract for $14,500, a sum insignificant by present day prices.

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180 Ibid., p. 2.
181 Ibid., November, 1894, pp. 113, 115.
182 Those elected were William R. Ramsdell, state senator; J. J. Ryan and W. J. Sparks, state representatives; Michel Therriault, county clerk and recorder; Horace Baldwin, sheriff; Andrew J. King, county treasurer; Sidney N. Logan, county attorney; J. B. Gibson, county assessor; P. H. Bernard, superintendent of schools; Hugh Swaney, public administrator; A. J. Bradley, county coroner; C. F. Smith, county surveyor, Ibid., p. 111.
183 Ibid., Vol. B, June 17, 1902, p. 403; March 4, 1903, p. 468.
With the completion of the great Northern lumbering in Northwestern Montana, increased tremendously. An illustration of this is the following item in the *Inter Lake* for May 27, 1892:

In November, 1891, the Butte and Montana Commercial Company, a corporation backed by abundant capital, purchased extensive timber belts in the Flathead country and commenced preliminary operations for the development of their lumbering interests. They have secured some very valuable water rights which will prove very advantageous in the development of their properties. Their mills are located on the Stillwater, three miles east of Kalispell. A boom has been placed at this point to receive logs from the Whitefish Lake country where the company has 6,000,000 feet of saw timber tributary to the lake and river above, while to the north for a distance of 100 miles, logs can be run down the stream that feed the lake where they can be held ready for a drive to their mill at this place.184

The sawmills along the Kootenai undertook large scale developments later than those near Kalispell, but they reached peak production by 1916. Even the huge acreage lost in the forest fire of 1910 did not retard the lumber boom. In the period between 1906-1916 a series of plants were erected along the Kootenai River at Troy, Libby, Warland and Bureka.185

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184 *News item from Inter Lake*, May 27, 1892, Sam S. Johns Collection, VII, p. 79.

The prosperity which occurred to the lumber business was also reflected in an expanding agriculture along the Kootenai. Beginning with approximately a dozen farms in 1892 the number grew to nearly three hundred in 1910. Mining activities in the area of Libby and on the West Fisher gradually increased their productivity with the use of heavy machinery. The Snowshoe mine near Libby produced $1,000,000 worth in silver-lead ore. Gold fields on the West Fisher were being reworked in 1910 with the hope of making rich returns.

The increasing wealth and population prior to World War I prompted the people living in the northern part of Flathead County to urge the establishment of a new political unit. In 1909 this was accomplished when the State Legislature carved Lincoln County out of Flathead County.

Around Kalispell there continued a steady growth in population and wealth. In 1900 Kalispell had 2,497 inhabitants. However, the emphasis in this area was on agriculture rather than lumbering.

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In the fall of 1901 rumors were circulated that the railroad route would be shifted to take advantage of lower grades and Whitefish would then become the division point. These reports and the actual change in 1904 did not materially alter life around Kalispell. The railroad payroll which had previously been spent in Kalispell was now largely consumed at Whitefish. This meant an increase in business and population in that town, but Kalispell also continued to grow.

About the time Flathead County was created, Northwestern Montana had come to the attention of people living in eastern states. Their interest was not primarily in the economic potentialities, but in the natural scenic beauty and hunting opportunities to be found in the rugged mountain country. These eastern sportsmen began the agitation for a national park to preserve the wilderness found in this northern most portion of the Rockies. George Bird Grinnell, one of the most vocal of the advocates of conservation, led his first hunting party into the area in 1891. The wonderful vacation land he found on this and later trips prompted him to write of the region. With fine descriptions of the natural topography he also emphasized the need for a program of conservation to preserve natural watersheds. However,

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191 News item in The Missoulian, October 11, 1901.

192 John F. Duffy, "How Kalispell Got the Main Line of the Great Northern Railway and How She Lost It," Sam E. Johns Collection, VIII, pp. 158-160.

the desire for a national park achieved very small results until
Senator Thomas Carter of Montana introduced in Congress a bill for
the establishment of Glacier National Park. This bill of December 11,
1907, was unsatisfactory so a second one was introduced and passed
through the Senate. Unfortunately the Congress adjourned before
the House of Representatives took action on the matter. Therefore,
Senator Carter was obliged to reintroduce the measure June 26, 1907.
With the cooperation of Senator Fenrose from Pennsylvania, Carter
succeeded in pushing the bill through the Senate. In the House,
however, Representative Fry had to work diligently to get the law
enacted. On May 11, 1910, President Taft signed the bill making
it a law. Thus, after a decade of active pressure on the government
the park was established.

194 U. S. Congressional Record, 60th Cong., 1st Sess.,
(December 11, 1907), p. 269; (February 21, 1908), p. 2366;
(May 15, 1908), pp. 6309-6310.

195 U. S. Congressional Record, 61st Cong., 1st Sess.,

196 U. S. Congressional Record, 61st Cong., 2nd Sess.,
(April 13, 1910), pp. 1606-1610; E. T. Scogin, "Twenty Five Years

197 Madison Grant, "Early History of Glacier National Park
pp. 1-12; Hillory A. Tolson, compiler, "Laws Relating to the National
In 1910, the first superintendent, Major W. R. Logan, began his duties. With a very small force of assistants he reached the Park in the autumn at a time when forest fires were sweeping over large sections of timberland in the Northwest. Almost immediately after their arrival the park officials were involved in a desperate effort to save the park forests from the advance of the fires. A shortage of men and equipment made the work difficult, but the absence of pack trails in remote forest areas complicated further the almost hopeless task. Before the season was over, one hundred thousand acres of timber had burned in the park.

The rugged terrain which seriously impeded fire fighting also forced the park officials to keep highway building at a minimum. The cost of building first class roads in the mountains was prohibitive. In the first twenty-five years, therefore, only seventy miles of hard surfaced highway was constructed.

The problems of tourist accommodations were more easily settled due to the interest of the Great Northern Railroad. Louis W. Hill, president of the company, undertook much of the planning and financing.


\[199\] E. T. Souven, op. cit., p. 15-16.

\[200\] Ibid., p. 17.
of hotels. His suggestion of log structures in the style of Swiss chalets was accepted and several were built in the next few years. 201 Hill was primarily concerned with increasing passenger travel on his railroad but Glacier National Park benefited from his publicity. 202

The creation of Glacier National Park took another large area out of Flathead County and the reducing process had not yet reached an end. For in 1923, Lake County was established from Flathead County lands lying south of Flathead Lake. This political unit was created as a result of the increase in population following the opening of the Flathead Indian Reservation to white settlers. 203 This left the territory north of Flathead Lake entirely within the boundaries of two counties, (Lincoln and Flathead) and Glacier National Park. Although the region was by the 1920's highly productive and had transportation links with the rest of the state, it was still politically and geographically a distinct unit within Montana.


CHAPTER VI

SINCE THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The prosperity of Northwestern Montana since 1900 has depended almost entirely upon two major resources, timber and farm land. Shortly after it was separated from Missoula County, Flathead ranked second in lumber production. The sawmills in the northwestern part of the state were cutting nearly eighty million feet of lumber. This figure was only slightly lower than the output of mills in Missoula County. In a few years Flathead County succeeded in outstripping all other parts of the state in lumber production. By 1906 it led with 14% of all timber cut. Kalispell, in 1910, was considered the center of the state's lumber industry. When Lincoln County was created it included a large part of the timberland formerly within Flathead. In the period 1910-1916 Lincoln County gradually pushed herself to the foreground in the manufacture of timber products. The peak was reached in 1916. This tremendous output was largely the result of the war boom. In a few years this level of operation

POINTS OF INTEREST IN THE
UPPER FLATHEAD

1. GLACIER PARK HEADQUARTERS.
2. BELTON—West entrance to Glacier National Park. Lakes and stream fishing. Charter fishing trips. (Dr. Rod Houston, guide, Belton Ski Club.
4. CORAM—West entrance to Glacier Park, 7 miles, Highway No. 2. Hungry Horse Dam (third largest in U.S.A.) 4 miles.
5. MARTIN CITY—In the heart of Hungry Horse area. "The best dam town by a damsite."
6. COLUMBIA FALLS—20 miles from west entrance to Glacier National Park; 7 miles from Hungry Horse Dam site. Entrance to North Fork primitive area for fishing, hunting, and boating. Dude ranch area. Half mile to Flathead river for boating, swimming and fishing. Try a thrilling ride down the river in a boat.
7. WHITEFISH—G-N streamliner regular stop. Division point on G. N. railroad. Whitefish golf course is one of the most beautiful in Northwest. Municipal park on beautiful Whitefish lake has facilities for picnicking, swimming, boating. Whitefish lake offers a rare sport—Mackinaw fishing. Annual water festival and regatta. All facilities for sport and rest in the Whitefish area.
9. HELL ROARING SKI COURSE—Observation point in summer.
10. HUCKLEBERRY PATCH—A good one, too.
11. UPPER WHITEFISH LAKE—Camping, fishing, picnicking.
12. RED MEADOW LAKE—Camping, fishing, picnicking.
13. FISH LAKE HATCHERY—Cabins.
14. WERNER PEAK OBSERVATION POINT—Rough road, breath-taking view.
15. BLANCHARD LAKE—Bass fishing.
16. LONE PINE MOUNTAIN—State forest scenic view point.
17. CRESTON FISH HATCHERY—One of the most modern in United States—visitors welcome.
18. BIGFORK—Hydro-electric plant.
19. SOMERS—Large lumber mills.
20. FISH HATCHERY—Visitors welcome.
22. Bear Hunting.
23. SOUTH FORK PRIMITIVE AREA—Elk hunting, mountain goats.
24. TALLY LAKE—Fishing, deer hunting.
Kalispell, Montana

County Seat of Flathead County, is thriving, progressive city, of over 16,000 population, including the immediate suburbs, and is the focal point of a large trading area. Situated only 10 miles from famous Flathead Lake, third largest body of fresh water west of the great lakes, Kalispell is in the center of a "Land of Enchantment," with scenic drives, excellent fishing and hunting readily accessible. Headquarters for Flathead National Forest is located in the city.

HOTELS—TOURIST COURTS—RESORTS
Hotels: Kalispell Hotel, Montana Hotel, Monitor Hotel, Norden Hotel, Pine Grove Hotel—Tourist Courts: Blue & White Auto Court, Calabick Cabins, Cornell Cabins, Kalispell Motor Inn, Kirkpatrick Court, Loney's Tourist Court, McGarvey Auto Court, Merritt Cabins, Noble's Cabins, Peterson's Auto Court, Ray's Deluxe Court, S & W Auto Court, South Main Cabins. Resorts—Pleasure Island, Foy's Lake.

Rooms in private homes, supplementing the above accommodations, are available in cases of emergency. Please call at the Chamber of Commerce, Elks' Temple Building, for information, service, and assistance.

HIGHWAY NO. 2, WEST:
Boisvert's, Lake McGregor
Happy's Inn, Thompson Lake
Meadow Mountain Ranch, Thompson Lake

LAKESIDE:
Stoner Cabins
Dahlia Cabins
Walker Cabins
Lakeside Cabins

WEST LAKE SHORE:
Scenic View Cabin Camp, Rollins.

Whitefish, Montana

Aptly known as the center of Montana’s Vacation area. Variety entertainment for Vacationists of all ages. Youngsters, Teenagers, Honeymooners on up to the Golden Wedding Celebrants, will find the mountain charm and appeal of this town such as to compel the vacationist to return each year and to bring his friends with him.

You will find good food, splendid sleeping accommodations, the finest of hunting and fishing.

The state’s finest golf course lies on the southwest edge of the famous lake. Speed boat river races in June, Fourth of July Golf Tournament and a Labor Day racing regatta on Whitefish Lake highlight the planned entertainment during the summer.

Hell Roaring Ski Run north of town boasts the finest snow conditions in the Northwest, together with the longest ski season.

You can Swim, Golf, and Ski in Whitefish on the same day. Vacation time is all the time in Whitefish.

Our Cabin Camp Association Offers Every Type of Accommodation
Kamp Carefree—Joe & Gerald Monagan
Alamak Cabins—Lowell McKeen
Bay Point Cabins—Edwin McKenzie
Glenwood Park—J. Brad Seely
South Shore Cabins—H. H. Shiere
Reno Cabins—Geo. C. Cowie
Terrace Lawn Courts—O. A. Knutson
Mobil Station Courts—Johnson & Johnson
Snappy Service Courts—Taylor & Frank
Whitefish Courts—Norman & Jim Bjornstad
Hiway Cabin Courts—William Cheevers
Rest Haven Cabins—O. L. Reeves
Bonny View Court—Dexter Reiman
Nelson’s Cabins—Ray G. Nelson
Kenneth E. Hall—Fish Lake Hatchery and Camp, Stryker, Montana.

Bigfork, Montana

Is situated on the northeastern extremity of Flathead Lake. It is the point at which the Flathead and Swan rivers empty into the lake, and is on the western boundary of the Bob Marshall Primitive Area of the Flathead National Forest, in which good fishing and hunting can be enjoyed.

Hotels: Bigfork Hotel.—Tourist Courts: Elm Park Camp, Matthew's Cabins, North Wings, River's End Camp, Seisman Cabins, Sugar’s Cabins and Boathouse, Bosworth Cabins, Swan Lake; Echo Lake Cabin Camp.—Resorts: Flathead Lake Lodges, Rocky Bar O Ranch, Covington Lodge, Swan Lake; Larson’s Lodge, Swan Lake; Ike Blaine Resort, Lake Blaine.

Columbia Falls, Montana

Estimated population, January 1, 1947, 1400. Situated at the junction of the main line of the Great Northern railway and Kalispell branch. At the mouth of the celebrated Bad Rock Canyon, through which no road was built until recent years. At the junction of the north, south, and middle forks of the Flathead river.
Seven miles from Hungry Horse dam. The chief resources of the country surrounding are lumber, coal, minerals, lime, farming and grazing lands. Has Catholic, Episcopal, Methodist, Baptist, and Holiness Methodist churches, high and grade schools, with unexcelled school dormitory, a bank, three restaurants, two hotels, three sawmills, water works, electric lights and every line of mercantile business is represented. Express and telegraph service. Montana Soldiers' Home, one mile out. Thirty-two-unit Veteran Housing project.

HOTEL AND CABIN CAMPS
Cabins—Columbia Heights, River Haven, Hanson
Hotels—Cory Corner, Lyonias Rooms, Bank Hotel
Trailers—Honeymoon Lodge, Peck's Place.

NORTH FORK DUKE RANCH FACILITIES
Kintla Guest Ranch, Moose City Lodge, M Quarter Circle Ranch. Address, Polebridge, Montana.

Columbia Heights
Located at junction of Highways 2 and 37. A brand new town established by Rex Worrell in 1946. Has modern cabin camp, tavern and restaurant, radio shop, store and garage. Many more building business places.

Martin City
Best dam town by a damsite. Largest and oldest of Hungry Horse boom towns; 53 businesses either open or under construction as of April, 1947. The "nite life" spot of Hungry Horse area. Entrance to South Fork area.

ACCOMMODATIONS
May 1st, Rediker's hotel—nearly finished. Several Cabin Camps under construction. Ryan Apartments and Rooms.

Coram, Montana
Seven miles west of entrance to Glacier National Park, located on highway No. 2. Four miles to Hungry Horse dam, third largest in U.S.A. Gateway to primitive sportsman's paradise for hunting, fishing, skiing and recreation. Located on main line of Great Northern railway and with ample bus service. Lumbering the main industry, and great possibilities for mining, dairying, and truck farming. Good roads, school and church.

CORAM CABIN CAMPS

KNL Spotted Bear Resort
Spotted Bear Lodge
Wilderness Pack Train near Spotted Bear Ranger Station.

Belton, Montana
West entrance to Glacier National Park. On Great Northern railway and U. S. No. 2 and Going-to-the-Sun Highways. Centrally located for trips to the most scenic sections of the Rockies and the Flathead Valley. Excellent fish. Innumerable lakes and streams available to auto camping and fishing parties.

LIST OF CABIN CAMPS FOR WEST GLACIER AREA AND THEIR LOCATIONS
Apgar Cabins, Apgar; Belton Cottages, Belton; Birch Land Cabins, Belton; Blair's Cabins, west shore Lake McDonald; Cooper's Cabins, McDonald Creek. Apgar; Greenwald Cabins, Apgar; Greve's Cabins, east shore Lake McDonald; Houston's Camp, south shore Lake McDonald; Lewis Lake Shore Camp, south shore Lake McDonald; Moose Cabin Camp, Apgar; Jansen's Cabins, south shore Lake McDonald; Hindle's Cabin Camp, north shore Lake McDonald; Inwood Cabins, east shore Lake McDonald; Kelly's Cabin Camp, west shore Lake McDonald; Lake Shore Cabins, north shore Lake McDonald; Powell's Cabins, Apgar; Retiro Cabins, Lake Five; Murrilla Hotel and Cabins, Belton; River Bend Ranch, Belton; Tourist Home and Cabins, south shore Lake McDonald; Wonderland Lodges, Foot of Lake McDonald; River Cabins, Middle Fork of Flathead.

POINTS OF INTEREST IN WEST GLACIER
1. West Entrance Glacier National Park.
2. Chartered Fishing Trips. (Dr. Rod Houston)
4. Stream and Lake Fishing.
5. Glacier Ski Club.
fell off. All during the 1920's mills along the Kootenai River were abandoned. The most serious setback came with the Panic of 1929 when the small towns of Sandpoint, Burena and Troy found themselves in desperate straits. Their whole economy was so dependent on the sawmills that shut-downs were disastrous. Only at Libby, where the J. Mells Company plant continued to run, did the lumber business hold its own.

Farther south in the Flathead country the manufacturing of forest products almost equalled the production of mills on the Kootenai. In 1918 the income from lumber in the Flathead area was over $2,000,000. However, as agriculture became more productive in the Flathead area lumbering was relatively less important than in Lincoln County. In recent years the average cutting shows that Lincoln County consistently exceeded by a small margin the lumber output of Flathead County.

While sawmills operated very profitably in Northwestern Montana for many years the scientific management of forestland was largely ignored by private timber owners. The practice of cutting certain desirable species reduced them beyond the normal replacement point. More serious are

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207 S. Blair Hutchison, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

208 Montana Department of Agriculture and Publicity, Resources and Opportunities, (1918), p. 171.

209 Forest Survey Statistical Service, Forest Statistics for Flathead County, Montana, (1941); Forest Survey Statistical Service, Forest Statistics for Lincoln County, Montana, (1941).

the social consequences to the sawmill towns which are dominated by one large lumber company. In Lincoln County the dependence on lumbering has created a one-sided and somewhat unstable economy. The people living in communities along the Kootenai have sensed their predicament but only in the last few years have they made plans to remedy the unbalanced community life. The National Forest Service in that area has worked out a program for sustained yield timber cutting which is a partial solution. In addition to this, residents have developed with the help of The Montana Study, research organization from the University of Montana, a tentative plan for integrating economic, political and social activities of the region. 211

In the field of agriculture the greatest progress, since the time of the first pioneers, has been concentrated in the Upper Flathead Valley. At the turn of the century there were 767 farms in Flathead County. 212 Approximately a decade later, after Lincoln County had been created, the number had grown to over one thousand. The value of all farm property had increased to $10,000,000. 213 Lincoln County did

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not make a similar gain. In 1911 it had only 298 farms. After World War I the first census showed that farm values in Flathead and Lincoln counties doubled. However, the area north of Flathead Lake produced over $5,000,000 worth of crops while along the Kootenai all crops raised did not value $1,000,000. During the 20's the bubble of wartime profits burst and many farmers were forced to give up their land. In the two counties the farm area was reduced by 23,362 acres. The greatest loss was sustained by Flathead County. Even so it retained twice as much land in farms as Lincoln County. By this time Flathead County had established its reputation as an agricultural area. In 1927 it led the state in potato yield. During the depression of the 30's overall farm production decreased. In this decade, farmland under cultivation showed an increase of 32,750 acres, but at the same time farm property valuation declined by about one million dollars. There was a considerable influx of

214 Ibid., p. 281.


217 Montana Department of Agriculture and Publicity, Resources and Opportunities (1928-1929), p. 223.

farmers to Northwestern Montana from the dust bowl. However, they contributed very little to increasing the farm output. The second World War again proved to be a boon to agriculture. The land at the head of the Lake during the war period illustrated its productivity by above average yields of wheat. 219

In 1943 Northwestern Montana's economic potentialities were brought to the attention of the whole state. At that time the proposal was made to raise the water of Flathead Lake for power purposes. This would benefit mainly plants farther downstream and at the same time would flood valuable farm land in the Upper Flathead Valley. Immediately farmers and business men around Kalispell raised vigorous protests. Mass meetings were held to hear the objections of Flathead residents. Finally government officials abandoned the plan and accepted as a substitute the Hungry Horse Dam project. 220 This dam located on the South Fork of the Flathead River offered potential power for regions farther downstream on the Columbia River. At the same time the available power could be utilised for development in the Upper Flathead.


220 Flathead Monitor (Kalispell, Montana) July 29, 1943.
In June 1944, Congress passed a law authorizing construction of Hungry Horse Dam. The work at the dam site was started in October, 1947, and should be completed in 1954 at a price of $93,500,000.

Since the recent war, economic development in Northwestern Montana has gone ahead rapidly. New businesses and increased population have resulted from the work on the Hungry Horse project. High prices for farm produce have maintained the war level output. The Christmas tree business has become increasingly profitable. The cherry orchards on the Lake have had record crops. While the economy has expanded, Northwestern Montana has become more closely associated with the nation as a whole. Thus, it is subject to the ups and downs of the nation's business life. Northwestern Montana is now dependent on the rest of the country to provide markets for its products.

221 **Kalispell Times**, December 8, 1947.

222 **Loc. cit.**
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