Oral History 337-01

Interviewer: Dan Gard

Interviewee: Harold Hagen

January 6, 1995

Dan Gard: I'm conducting an interview with Harold Hagen. The date is January 6, 1995. So you were saying that your family came in 1864?

Harold Hagen: My grandmother was four years old when she came to Montana. She came with her father and his family. He was from Ohio. It was the Beach family. He had served in the Civil War. At that time he was signed up for three or two years. At the end of three years, your lesson was up. You could either re-enlist or quit. He had enough of war. That was about in '63 or '64. He came and collected his family in Ohio and came west over the Oregon Trail and they came up from Fort Hall. They turned off there and came up to the mining camps up at Montana.

DG: What were their names?

HH: My great-grandfather's name was Calvin Beach. His brother was the head of the wagon train. He had freighted on the Santa Fe Trail and was an experienced wagon master. He was the head of the wagon train that came out. His name was Elizur Beach. He was quite prominent in early Montana history. He was a partner of Sieben. They had the Diamond Bar Freight outfit out in Fort Benton into Helena. Helena at that time was a booming gold camp. He was a partner with old man Sieben. They ran a bunch of freight wagons. That was Elizur Beach. When my great-grandfather came out, he worked for his brother in the freighting business and freighted at Fort Benton. They also took up land around Helena. So that's where our family was from was Helena. I was born in Helena.

DG: What year?

HH: In 1909. Then we moved to the Bitterroot [Valley] in 1921. I went to school in Stevensville. I graduated up here and briefly went to the University in Bozeman. At that time, that was during the Depression years and I had to move back to help my dad on the farm. We were talking about agriculture in the valley and the influx of people. It started here with the Missouri and the early settlers. They were pretty close, a well-knit group of early pioneers. Then we had an influx of people in the early part of the twentieth century from the east in connection with the BRBI (?) development. The apple orchard boom was quite active for a period of years. Those apple trees only had a few years of productivity.

DG: Why didn't the apple boom last?
HH: Well the primary reason they went out of business was they lost their market. For a period of few years, the Bitterroot Macs, they were called. They were Bitterroot Macintosh apples and they were a superior quality. They still are. I don't know whether it's the elevation or the latitude that affects the quality of the apples, but they had a very distinct flavor. They sold them at premium prices in New York City. They had a market on Macintosh apples there. They prospered there for a few years; then a series of bad years, when they froze out year after year. The people just went broke and sold out and changed from apple farming into grain and livestock farming and dairy. We had quite an active dairy industry in here. We had a cannery. We raised different kinds of crops and all of that. The Hagen Ranch—the one that we own—was part of it.

My dad was one of the finest conservationists I ever knew. He didn't know that he was a conservationist. He told me, "Son, when you own a piece of land, the thing you got to do is to leave it in better shape for the next guy." It wasn't exactly treated the same way that the owners of the land describe it these days. It meant the same. He had a fit when we bought the ranch. He said, "This place has been mismanaged." And indeed it was. The Whaleys were not farming people. They were chiefly engaged in operating a hotel in Stevensville. The brothers had a logging business.

The story that we got from the old timers that were here at the time, they said he had a bunch of horses and would throw some seed in the ground and forget it and go on about the other business. I know that the fields had been ploughed in such a way that they would go around and around the field. It was a high bank all the way around and a hole in the middle. My dad had a fit. For years and years, we had to go backwards. We had to start in the middle and pile it in to kind of level the land up. Dad spent his lifetime leveling the land and ditching it properly so we could put water on it.

It was not very productive. As a consequence, we never prospered very much. The Depression came along and we had raised crops for the cannery. The sugar beet industry began to develop here and we raised a lot of sugar beets. My dad always liked to raise potatoes. It was a crop he loved to grow and loved to raise. It was kind of a gambling crop; some years the price would be high, some years the price would be low. That appealed to him. So some years we'd have a good crop and we'd do well. Other years it wouldn't do so bad. It would cost me a lot because we built a warehouse on the railroad and shipped early potatoes.

We were the first people in the valley to do that. We had a lot of money for the first year or two. Then we had a heavy freeze one time on July 16 and it wrecked the crop. We couldn't do anything. Another time, we were hailed out and missed the crop. As a consequence, we didn't prosper very well very much. Anyway, the ranch all had a part. We raised every conceivable kind of crop there. We started with the apple trees and the apple boom. Then later on, it got so the dairy business wasn't as prosperous as it was.

We had to go into the beet business and everywhere back to beef and hay again. About that time, we had gone through the Depression years and things were pretty tough. We'd been frozen out and didn't have a crop. I knew Lee Metcalf pretty well. He was a stable boy and he was a
Senator. He was very interested in environmental concerns. I called him up and talked to him. I said, "Why don't you consider this as a wetlands development area and raise some of these ducks that you talk about all the time?"

DG: What year was this?

HH: I don't know what year it was. It must have been in the early sixties I think. He was very influential in those areas. It was a committee of five in the Senate that had charge of those kinds of developments. I called him early one week and next week the head guy from the department office of Fish and Wildlife Service was here. It was the head of the office. The Senator had talked to him. So he was a very nice man. I've forgotten his name. He said, "Yes we'd be interested, but it's much too small for a wildlife refuge." I said, "We can talk to neighbors," which I did. They were amenable. I knew that if I had to sell the place, I wanted it to be in good hands.

I couldn't think of a better use for the land. It's naturally suited for water fowl and that's what it was developed for. After some difficulties, some people thought that taking the land off a tax base was undesirable. We had the support of the Stevensville Service Club and the Missoula Rod and Gun Club. We followed the rules and got it established and it was accepted. They added enough surrounding land to make 2700 acres. That's what the area of the wildlife refuge is now.

You were talking about the early settlers, the Whaley family. Peter Whaley was an interesting man. He prospered in the gold fields in Montana. He established a store at Diamond City that's near Helena. He had that operated as a general merchandise store for eight years. He sold out. Because of his influence in the territorial legislative body and because he knew so many of the old-timers, he was appointed by Phil Sheridan who was the head of the Indian Agencies for the northwest; something connected with the Indians at least.

DG: Yes that sounds right.

HH: He received an appointment as the Indian agent, the agent for the Indians at the Jocko Reservation. I don't recall the exact name of the reservation, but in that area. He was an Indian agent for years. Then he was replaced through a political appointment. He lost his appointment because he was a Democrat. The incoming administration was not. When he was replaced, I think he lived somewhere around Missoula briefly. Then he came up in the Bitterroot Valley and bought out the holdings just east of Florence in the Bitterroot Valley. He lived there, I think, four or five years.

Then he came and by that time, his family was grown. His oldest children were of legal age. They came up the valley to near Stevensville. They filed on some land and were able to homestead 480 acres. That was the ranch that we bought. The Whaleys—as we were talking a while ago about—weren't good farmers. I don't think they prospered by farming. Their interest was more in the hotel that they bought in Stevensville and operated there for a few years. Finally, it burned up. The Whaley brothers had a logging business.
DG: Which brothers?

HH: The oldest brother was David. There was a brother named Clem and Matt. There was another brother whom I’ve forgotten. I don't remember the other brother. The one that I was always interested in was the oldest daughter Julia. She was the first schoolteacher in the Three Mile area north of Stevensville. They established a school and she named it Lone Rock after a big boulder that drove down there by the glaciers. I don't remember how many students she had. She married a man named Tillman. I knew the family very well because Roy Tillman, one of their children, was a good friend of our family. He was the Assessor for the county for many years in Ravalli County. He was Assessor in the courthouse. Willie May, my wife, was County Superintendent of schools.

Before Willie and I were married, I spent a lot of time in the courthouse. I visited with Roy. He was very interested in early history of Ravalli because his grandfather had been so active in the early history of territorial Montana. He just recently passed away. There were two other brothers. I've forgotten the name of the younger brother whom we knew very well. They were old-time people. The Tillmans had a ranch just a little south and east of Florence. The old house is still there. I think of them every time I drive by.

DG: Harold, how did your father end up buying the ranch? What was he doing before?

HH: My dad came from—I spoke of my mother's people that came in '64. Dad was born in Norway. He was just a child in arms. He was just a few months old when he came over. His father had lived in Norway and had worked and heard of America. The father came to America and worked awhile. He got enough money to send back for the family. My father came there and lived in Wisconsin until he was 19 years old. He came with and worked on a ranch out of Helena. He met my mother and they were married in 1904.

Then he bought a farm. He worked and saved his money on a farm. He bought a farm in Helena and ranched there and prospered. Dad was a good operator. In those days, you could start farming with a team of horses and a plough and a mowing machine and a rake. You were just about in business. It's a lot different now. The equipment to ranch now takes 100,000 dollars. Anyway, he was able to buy a farm. Unfortunately, Ravalli is not well watered. It's a dry area. There was always trouble with irrigating water. So he sold the farm and started looking for another farm. He looked all over. He looked in the state of Washington and finally selected this one in the Bitterroot Valley.

He always kind of regretted that he came because the farm was not very productive. It took a lot of work to get it in shape. The upper part of it was too wet. We had to drain it. The lower area was rough and required a lot of leveling and ditching to put water on it, but he did it. He made a nice stretch out of it. I don't know. From your point of interest, you want to talk a little bit about the refuge and the history of the land and how it came into being and how it was used. At the present time, it's used probably for the purpose it was intended to be used for—a national habitat
for water foul. There's an area there where there's about 11 to 1200 inches of water raises within a short distance, perhaps a mile. The water doesn't freeze in the wintertime and is fed by underground springs. It's been developed into a very fine area.

DG: Were all those ponds there when you lived on the farm?

HH: Well the upper part, yes. They've been dammed up to create lakes. The part where the road goes through, that was fields that we farmed. We leveled that and farmed it. When we sold it to the wildlife refuge, they put a dam in and dammed it up and made a little lake there. The lower part of the refuge now is not on our place. It was on the adjoining ranches. They spent a lot of money creating ponds down there. Maggie Anderson, have you met her?

DG: I haven't talked to her yet.

HH: She's a very fine manager. She had a vision. She developed some nesting areas down in the northern part of the refuge. They excavated a lot of ponds there and created a fine environment for water foul.

DG: Did your family use those ponds in any way?

HH: Well yes, to a degree. For a few years, about three years, we raised head lettuce. My dad was quite a... he was a fellow that liked to try new things. We found that we could raise head lettuce in the valley. So we raised a few acres of head lettuce and did very well. Then the following year, we put in a large acreage of head lettuce. We sold it in a commission house that sold it. They never paid my dad for it and we lost money on it. To do that, to ship the lettuce, you had to pack it in ice. At that time, they didn't have artificial ice making machines. You relied on natural ice. So down on the lower part on the adjoining ranch below ours, there were some ponds that would freeze over. In the winter time, we would go down. I'm sure you've never seen it put in, but a trade in one time (?).

They had what they called an ice plough. You pulled it with horses. The ice would be frozen about 14 inches thick. This ice plough was just a series of saw teeth on an enormous scale. There was a straight line and you'd pull the team of horses. You'd go on and it would plough a little seam through the ice. We did it every 16 inches, as much as we could tell. We'd saw the ice down about eight or 10 inches from the surface, leaving about two or three inches on the bottom so the horses wouldn't fall through the ice. Then we'd come along with a little spud, we called it, and would break them off into the water. We'd head them onto a trough and pull them up in these wagons. Then we'd haul them and store them in ice houses.

We converted a large grain building into an ice house and went to the nearby sites of old sawmills and got sawdust. We packed tons and tons of ice. Then we had an ice grinding machine. We'd have a little packing shed and we'd pack crates and put them on the cars to ship them east. It was quite a little industry for years. Yes, we used it. It always kind of played
(unintelligible) with fish. There were a few fish in there, but algae grew a little bit and it wasn't good for fish. So we didn't do that.

DG: Did you hunt out there at all?

HH: Oh, yes. Of course, when we first came to the valley—that's been 70 years ago—we were right in the heart of a migration. They called it the Pacific Flyaway. In the fall of the year there would be huge hoards of ducks flying through. In later years, maybe 20 or 30 years later, there weren't very many ducks. Whether or not the Flyaway had been diverted westward or on the other side of the mountains, we never knew. They never seemed to fly up the valley. That was one reason we established the refuge here at Stevensville. We thought that maybe by producing feed for the water fowl that we could entice them back. We did. It really made a difference.

There's a resting area there. After the refuge was there for four or five years—after we sold the land to the refuge—I rented it back and farmed it. The purpose of the cropping was entirely different. We went into town (unintelligible). We raised mostly winter wheat. We harvested two thirds for raising the crop and left a third of our crop interest; payment for the year. We never harvested it. We left it for feed for the birds. After a few years, the ducks did become accustomed and we had a lot better place. Some of the botanists and naturalists that study this say that in the meantime, they had created better nesting grounds up in Canada and there were more nesting areas and better areas for the propagation of ducks. So that made a difference.

I do know that we never—only on occasion would we see wild Canada geese. After a while, the geese got so they migrated there. A few of them would stay over the winter. Now we've got quite a population of native Canada geese in winter in the valley. A large part of it was due to the feed base that we established on the refuge. It grieves me to think that now there's less emphasis placed on raising feed. I'm afraid that's going to reflect in fewer and fewer geese in the area. In thinking of the use of the land, I remember a story that I told. We dedicated the refuge a few years ago. We had quite a ceremony. People from Denver came up and a few dignitaries appeared. I was asked to give one of the speeches.

In the speech I talked of the use of the land and how it was originally used and how the only thing produced on the land was in the farm, wild game, fur bearing animals, and fish. Then I told of the uses of the land of how we farmed, how we went from horses to tractors and better equipment and gradually that went out now that the land has been returned to its original use. And that I thought some of the first people—person—who lived on the refuge was half-blood Indian. His name was Francois La-Mousse (?) was his name. When we first came to the valley a long time ago, they referred to it as the Francoisioux. His name was Francois. They didn't call him that. They called him Francoisioux. So it's always been known as Franciosioux.

There was no cabin down along the—what we call the middle road now; it's been long gone. It's close to the road that goes by there now. He had a cabin there and he worked for Major Owen. John Owen had a trading post that he bought from the Jesuit fathers in 1850, I think. He hired this Francois as a guide and interpreter. He had an Indian wife and he could talk to the Indians.
He was the first settler on the land that's now on the refuge. I said in my speech that if he could come back, he would probably be more amazed at any of us, the first people that used the land, because he would say he couldn't understand. Why people spent so much money to harvest the product to the land because he could harvest everything that the land produced—and the farm—with a string of traps and a fish line and a rifle and shotgun. He harvested what it produced. I said, "It seems strange now the land is back to its original use." That's kind of the story of the refuge.

DG: You were telling me on the phone that you thought there was a pit or an area where they took clay out to make bricks for adobe.

HH: A quarter of a mile south of the house, the old house we lived in down there, there was an area probably 50 yards long and 10 yards wide. It looked like there had been a cut in the surface of the land there. My neighbor to the south, when I was married, was a Mr. May. The May family had moved to the valley in the eighties or the seventies, I don't know which. He was an old-time resident. He was an interesting old man. The old gentleman liked me. We used to visit a lot. I asked him about that, why that little indentation would be there. It wasn't a waterway or anything. He said, "Well that was where Major Owen had exposed a vein of heavy clay. That's the clay they used to build his fort. He hired men to go down there."

There's an area of clay that extends from that point on east about half a mile, a little bit to the north. He said, "That's where they exposed it and got the material for making the adobes for the fort." It was interesting; they would water, and they had forms that they would mix this mud and these little blocks of wood that they had. They would put some straw with it to hold it together. After it dried, they would put it on wagons and haul it on up to the fort. They would take it out of the boxes and use it as bricks to build the fort. That was very interesting to me.

When I was in school in Bozeman—Dean Hamilton, we called him, was the first president of the University of Montana at Missoula, and was later president at Bozeman; he'd written a book on early Montana history. He was very interested in this. I told him this story.

I had been sent to him because I hadn't appeared to class for several days. In those days, if you didn't go to class, you were sent up to the Dean of Men. He was the Dean of Men. I told Dean Hamilton, "Well, I have to work at this restaurant for room and board. They want me to get down to work at five o'clock. I go to work and work for the breakfast hour and then I come to school. I'm so darn sleepy, I sometimes sleep in." He said, "Oh, well, we can worry about that." He took me in his office and we visited for about a half hour. He always asked about the early times in the Bitterroot because as a young man, he would come west.

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HH: I don't know. They shouldn't have been. The mother wanted to give her husband a son that she said, "Well I'm just going to name that baby Will anyway. So I'll just call her Willie." She had a sister May. Her name was Willie May and all her life she's been known as Willie May.
DG: Her maiden name was Beach?

HH: Sherwin. That was my mother. Now, my mother's mother's name was Beach; the Beach Family. Willie May came to the valley in 1908 as a small child. Her mother was widowed. Her mother had two children and taught school all her life, taught at Darby. She was highly regarded. I don't have much sympathy for these people that say despairing things about their mother-in-law. My mother-in-law was the best friend I had. She was a marvelous person. When I first knew her, she was in agony with arthritis. She had rheumatoid arthritis. She had to move around in a wheelchair.

Yet, she was cheerful and she was so much help to my wife. My wife had never been on a ranch before. When we were married, she had been County Superintendent of schools. She had taught in schools and was County Superintendent of schools. She didn't know about cooking for men. It was pretty hard for her. Her mother, bless her soul, was able to cope. She would say, "Now you've got 10 men to cook for. You've got to have so much meat and so many potatoes." We were very happy. My wife and I had one of the finest marriages that any two people could ever have. We have three marvelous kids. When she was 70 years old, she got Alzheimer's. I took care of her as long as I could. She broke her hip and I couldn't do it anymore. I had to put her in a nursing home.

DG: How did you meet her?

HH: Well, I had gone to school and come back and was helping on the ranch. I had to work awful hard. We had a dairy. I didn't get to go around much. I went to a sale in Hamilton. She was there campaigning for re-election. I knew the girl who was helping her. So I talked to this gal that I knew from high school days in Hamilton. She introduced me to Willie May. I don't know, I've heard of this love at first sight. It just about was. I thought, "My gosh that woman's pretty." She was pretty old at the time. She was five years older than I, but it didn't seem to make any difference to us. We went together for five years and then we got married.

DG: I was looking at this picture on the wall.

HH: I was going to show you that.

DG: It's a nice picture.

HH: We were married in 1939.

DG: Here in town?

HH: We were married in Hamilton. That's where her mom was. There is some more background to the land on the refuge that you might be interested in. Mr. May was telling me this story. I've always been interested in it and it's something that you don't read about in history books. This is
true because Mr. May was a fine old gentleman. He lived through it. The ranch was sold by the Whaley to Mr. Plummer. Ben Plummer was his name. It was called Plummer and Carol. He had a partner by the name of Carol. Ben Plummer was a man who lived in Butte. I don’t know where he came from or anything, but he worked in Butte for—was it called the Amalgamated Copper Company? Or perhaps it was called the Anaconda Copper Company, I can’t remember.

There was a great deal of rivalry and competition between a group of investors and Boston primarily. They had bought out. They were the ones that bought out Mr. Marcus Daly and his partners. Marcus Daly and W.A. Clark were two primarily competing industrialists in Butte that owned mines. There was a third man that came in by the name of [F. Augustus] Heinz. There was a great deal of competition between the two giants and this man named Heinz. Heinz was a mining engineer and knew about the Apex Law, which holds that you could drill straight down and then branch out from the shaft and mine the land as long as it comes up through your land. That was called the Apex Law.

He caused them a great deal of trouble. He caused them all kinds of trouble. He was able to make it stick because of a judge. There was a federal judge there by the name of Heinz (?). You’ve probably studied this so you know what I’m talking about. Anyway, Mr. Plummer was able to get the ranch in the Bitterroot Valley because the company had undertaken to get rid of this judge. The only way that the judge could be fired or removed from his position was on moral causes primarily. They set the old judge up. They had some prostitutes in a room and arrested him on moral charges one of the witnesses that testified against the judge was a man named Ben Plummer.

Plummer testified that he had peeked through the keyhole and saw the judge there with these prostitutes and as a consequence, he was guilty. They awarded the man. They gave him this ranch in the Bitterroot Valley. He only had 20 percent interest and the company had the rest. At least he operated it for a period of years. He was not a man who knew a thing about farming. He put on a white collar every day and had an office. He hired men and they built buildings. When we acquired the ranch, it had a lot of hog houses built all over it and a bunch of old buildings we had no use for. He fenced it off and bought 12 acre tracts and hot wire fence (unintelligible) pig business.

Well, it didn’t work out very well. Eventually it was sold to the BRBI Company. They used it for a nursery. It was in the hands of a corporate farmer and was not very well handled. By the time my dad got a hold of it—who was a real farmer—it had been mismanaged to some extent. That’s how Mr. Plummer acquired the ranch according to Mr. May.

DG: Who did your dad buy the ranch from?

HH: It was owned by the Bitterroot Valley Irrigation Company. It was a large group of people in the east. A man named Moody had come up here from Chicago and was so impressed with the valley’s beauty and its potential for raising what he thought were apples. It was not watered, but we needed to put water on the bench lands to the east because it was not adequately watered. So
he conceived the idea of putting a large irrigation canal along the foot of the mountains right into the north from Darby down to Florence, the whole length of the valley. From that irrigation canal, they could irrigate the lands to raise the apples. The company sold bonds. They eventually lost between 11 and 12 million dollars. The company went broke a time or two and went into receivership.

A Mr. Robinson was sent here to liquidate the assets. He too fell in love with the valley. He eventually became a banker in Stevensville and was a dear friend of mine. He was a man I respected very highly. He was a grand old guy. He liked it so well that he interested his brother-in-law Mr. Davis, who possessed quite a sum of money, to come in and pick up some of the mortgages or liens on the property. One of which was one they acquired from Plummer. There were some other lands up on the bench. I'm a little bit fuzzy as to the relationship, but he was a relative of the Davis' and Davis was Mr. Robinson's father-in-law. I don't know what his connection was.

I do know that they owned a factory that canned peas, a canning factory. It was located just exactly west of the ranch on the west side of the river. It burned down the year that we acquired the ranch. I think that was in 1921. There were a lot of cases of peas that were caught in the warehouse there and burned. I can remember for weeks afterwards, you could hear those cans exploding. It got hot and steam would get in there. They would go bang like a stick of dynamite. We could hear those things popping over there for a long time. Anyway, they sold the ranch. They put it up for sale and so Dad bought it through a real estate agency. That's how we had it. I lived down in the house for 68 years. The Whaleys only had it for 25 years. Mr. Plummer, I don't think, was there for more than maybe four or five years. It wasn't for very long. He was there long enough to erect some buildings.

DG: Did your family put any buildings up?

HH: Well, yes. When we got the place, there were several of the old buildings. There were two or three bunkhouses there. There was a large granary. It burned down several years after we had it. There was a horse barn there because in those days they farmed with horses. In later years, we built a milking parlor system. We milked a lot of cows. We had a lot of cows. We had the largest dairy in Montana except the Erscher Dairy (?) in Great Falls for several years. We milked about 100 cows for many, many years. We did that during the Depression years and that's the only thing that saved our bacon. We had a ready market for the milk. We started milking by hand and we got milking machines.

Then my dad and I kind of invented a milking parlor system, one of the first in the country. It was kind of a revolutionary idea. We brought the cows to the milking machines rather than taking the machines up to the cows as they did in an ordinary barn. We had a loafing shed and ran them through this milking parlor, as it was called. We devised a stanchion that if we brought the cows in and then raised the stanchion up on them, they walked into another passage. The cow (unintelligible) in Bozeman was quite interested in it. They got a bulletin out on it and Mr.
Tetson (?) told me in later years that the bulletin was called for more than any other bulletin that they had ever produced in the college because it was all over the country.

It was just at the time when milking parlors became popular. The Surge system developed one and the Laval system developed one. The principle was the same and ours was the most efficient of any of them. Then later, they improved the idea and the system. I was always kind of proud of that. We had a nice milking parlor. In later years, we converted that to a little factory where we processed potatoes and we made french fries and sold them to the restaurants and drive-ins in Missoula. It was a nice business for about 16 years. I finally sold that and went to raising sugar beets and didn’t worry about that.

DG: Is that milking barn still standing?

HH: Yes, well—

DG: Is it out on the refuge right?

HH: Yes we moved it off the refuge land and put it on to the 40 acres that we retained to the ranch to the east side of the highway. Then we just left it to go rack and ruin. We moved it up on the forty, as we called it. It’s east of the highway. See, when we sold the ranch to the Fish and Wildlife Service, I didn’t sell it all. I just sold the lower part of the ranch. The upper part—the 200 acres by the railroad track we still have. I deeded it to my son. It’s out directly east of the refuge there on the highway. There's 150 acres there. There's 40 acres on the east side of the highway. We still have that. Well, I don’t because I deeded it to my son Douglas. He still owns it and rents it out.

DG: There's a large building out on the refuge that I saw when I was out there. It looks like a cattle—it looks like a big barn of some type. The Fish and Wildlife still uses it.

HH: Oh, that was on the Reynolds place.

DG: That wasn't part of your property?

HH: It was not, no. We owned the property up to the road in front of it. That belonged to Mr. Reynolds. When we moved there—I think that Mr. Reynolds came there in 1914 or ’15, somewhere about that time. In the account that I’ve recently read written by Albert Tillman of the history of his family that owned it, he stated that in the early days, it had a connection with the vigilante days in Virginia City.

Whiskey Bill was one of the highway men that the vigilantes came and lynched. You know the story, of course. Mr. Reynolds told me that that’s the tree that they lynched old Whiskey Bill. It was a pine tree. There was part of the original place (unintelligible) is included and Eighty Clem, one of the brothers, bought from a man named Bennett. We always called it the Bennett Eighty. It’s now where the golf course is. Do you know where the Stevensville golf course is?
DG: Yes.

HH: Well, the adjoining line between the golf course and the refuge land, the 80 acres there that lies there and between the road is called the Bennett Eighty. This tree was a large pine tree, as I recall, when it was still standing; was probably 36 [feet] or so in diameter. It was an old tree. A branch had been sawed off about 10 feet up from the ground. We were fixing fence down there and Mr. Reynolds told me, "This is the tree that they hanged old Whiskey Bill from." Whiskey Bill was caught in Stevensville and was taken down on a trail toward Missoula and hanged. I think it was in January and they scratched out a narrow grave and dumped him in there.

I always wanted to go down there and take a shovel and see if I could dig up old Whiskey Bill. I never got around to it. It must have been, I suppose, in the thirties sometime. There was a very strong storm that came through there and blew the tree down. I've forgotten whether we harvested the tree or who dragged it off. Maybe Mr. Reynolds did. I don't know. Anyway, the tree is no longer standing. Most of the accounts that you read of the lynching of Whiskey Bill, they spoke of a Cottonwood tree, or at least in this account. I don't think it was. I think that the old trail that existed up and down the valley at that time was through that Bennett Eighty.

The remnants of that old road is there. There's a field across a little draw there. It went straight north from—you ask about the old barn that's on the refuge; there was a road that went north and it fjorded the river. Ed O'Hara told me, and his folks came here in '98. He said this is about where the fjord is. That's where they used to fjord the river. The road went on down on the west side of the river to Missoula. So the tree that it would have been [would be] off of that trail going down there. The tree—maybe it was about 150 yards or so. It seems reasonable that they would have looked for a tree and it would have been off on the other side of the gully there out of the way. I think that Mr. Reynolds' story is probably the right story.

Since we're talking about—this is digressing, but another favorite history story I love to tell I got from an old timer, Charles Amos Book. Amos Book was an old-time resident of Stevensville; in fact, almost one of the first founders of it. He came here in '64 or '65 or something. His son, Charles Amos, was a good friend of mine. He owned the store in Stevensville and he was a local historian. He was interested in history and he told me stories. He told me the story of Lolo, Montana. Now it's generally said, according to this historian in Oregon who writes history books, it was an Indian word. Charles Amos Book told me, "No. That is not where the word came from. It was named for an early French trapper by the name of Leau-Leau." L-E-A-U, L-E-A-U: Leau-Leau was his name. Have you ever heard the story?

DG: I've read about it.

HH: Have you heard that part of it?

DG: I think.
HH: You're thinking it's an Indian word; all the books say that it is. Charles Amos Book swore that it was not. He said it was named for this old French Canadian trapper. Whether he was partying, I don't know. His name was Leau-Leau. He was up there with a group of trappers and he ran into a bear, a grizzly bear. The bear attacked him and he defended himself with a knife. According to the story, he was able to pierce the hide of the bear and hit his heart; it killed the bear. In the meantime, the bear had killed him. His hunting party found him there locked in the arms of this bear and the both of them were dead. They took old Leau-Leau and buried him there. They called it Grave Creek where they buried him. I think they call it Graves Creek now. Anyway, that's his story of the nomenclature Lolo. I hadn't heard that story. He was the only one who ever told that to me. I put a lot of credence into it because Charles Amos Book was a great historian.

DG: Did you ever hear stories from the old-timers about the Nez Perce coming through?

HH: About what?

DG: Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce when they came through the valley?

HH: Oh yes. See, when we first came here, we raised potatoes every year. Dad raised them and he loved to raise them. We had the potato digger. When I was quite young, in my teens, we raised potatoes and we always got the Indians to pick the potatoes for us. They would make an annual migration up here to pick potatoes. Old Willy Nine Pipes (?) and the Adams family and...I can't remember the names now. There were several families that always came.

The old Indians, my dad just loved them; they were good people. They would tell you something and you'd believe it. The younger Indians were inclined to be a little bit evasive and they'd cheat you if they could. We paid so much per sack for picking potatoes. The old Indians had a little string and they'd tie a knot. Every time they filled a sack of potatoes, they'd tie a knot on their string. So they'd count the string. They were accurate. The younger ones would cheat. We'd have to count the sacks on them.

Anyway, they would tell us stories about their parents. There was a Big Springs, they called it, right west of the house on the refuge there about quarter of a mile. There's a Big Springs. It's covered with water right now because they've dammed it up. When we came there, it was probably 30 or 40 inches of water. It was good water. That was one of their favorite camping places. When we'd be ditching and ploughing down there, I always looked for arrowheads but I never found any. I found a war club one time with the grooves all around it. It had been a war club. I never found any Indian arrowheads. I was always disappointed in that.

Anyway, that was one of their favorite spots. They would camp there. Every fall they'd have a camp. They'd go on a big hunt in the spring and one in the fall. When they went, they kind of went up and crossed the mountains. They never seemed to use Hell Gate, the gates of Hell. I guess the Blackfeet had them scared out. They went around the other way. The level land above the bench there between—well, where the railroad is now—that was race tracks. They would
come and race their ponies there. I used to hear stories about the Indians having big races up
there.

Old Ted Briscoll (?) is a friend of mine. He just recently died. He was born in the valley. His
folks were old, old-timers. They were some of the first families. His mother was telling him that
the Indians would have races. They found out that if they rode double, they'd be running pretty
hard, and the one behind would slide off the back of the horse and then only one rider would be
left. He would go like hell. He said, "They'd go like hell and win the race." The Indians were
awful bad about betting. They'd gamble 10 or 30 horses. Sometimes they'd go back out there
and they'd come from these races and they wouldn't have any horses. I've heard stories about it
like that. They loved to camp and we always made it a point to haul wood up for them. A lonely
Sioux just below the house there; they'd camp down there. I couldn't figure it out. They hauled a
bunch of rocks in there, big piles of rocks. They'd make a little hut. They took branches of the
willows and put them in the ground. They'd put sacks over the top of it. They'd put a fire in there
and—

DG: Make a sweat lodge.

HH: Yes. They'd get those rocks hot and put wet sacks on there and just steam. They'd go run
and jump in the creek and they'd holler and yell. I remember them yelling when they'd jump in
the water down there. It was in their blood or something. They just loved yelling. They were nice
help because in the rain, they didn't care. We'd pay them at the end of the week and then we
wouldn't get any work out of them. (Unintelligible) cans that you'd light and it would make a
fire, I don't know if it was alcohol. They'd heat that stuff. I don't know how in the world they
ever were able to do that.

DG: That stuff will kill you in a hurry.

HH: You would think so. By gosh, these guys were pretty tough.

DG: Did they ever talk about when Chief Joseph came through back in 1877?

HH: I never heard stories from the Indians about that. Charles Amos Book was telling me about
old Fort Fizzle and—of course, that's a well known story. You've read that many times. Mr.
Baggs was one of the Stevensville citizens. Amos Book was another resident that was down
there. They asked for the citizens to help them down there at the fort, Fort Fizzle. They waited
and waited for the Indians to come through there. It's an interesting thing. I never knew until
about two or three years ago where they went. I always assumed that they skirted the fort and
would come on the south side. They didn't. They went up Stevens Gulch.

They went to the north up that gulch and came into the valley. I was down there just a month or
so ago. A friend of ours has a sawmill up there. He owns 30 acres. (Unintelligible). He has a
little mill. He and my son are good friends. We were up there. I told him, "I knew Mr. Stevens."
That's the name of the gulch. He said, "Oh really?" He was kind of interested and I said, "When we moved to the Bitterroot they owned a farm north of where the house was."

Mrs. Stevens was a fine old lady. She and my mother were quite good friends. When Mr. Stevens died, my mother stayed with her. They were old time settlers. They first came there and sold that, I guess, and came and bought this farm just north of ours. My mother went shopping with Mrs. Stevens in Missoula. At that time, the Missoula Mercantile Company was the dominating store.

[END]