THE CENTER OF A HOMESTEADING COMMUNITY IN NORTHWEST MONTANA: ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON THE POLEBRIDGE SCHOOLHOUSE

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THE CENTER OF A HOMESTEADING COMMUNITY IN NORTHWEST MONTANA:
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS ON THE POLEBRIDGE SCHOOLHOUSE

By

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Thesis

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In the summer of 2010, I excavated the remnants of a historic one-roomed schoolhouse near Polebridge, Montana, just outside of Glacier National Park. The schoolhouse’s recovered artifacts represent a lively community of homesteaders residing in the North Fork Valley of the Flathead River during the early 20th century. 3,704 individual artifacts in the form of metal, glass, ceramic and faunal remains, tell of life during this time period. The research goals of this thesis have three objectives: 1) the historical record often depicts schoolhouses as serving as public space for the community, the archaeological record can be used to corroborate it as well; 2) the artifacts recovered give insight into cultural attitudes and sentiments that reflect the entire North Fork Valley community, and 3) GIS facilitates a reconstruction of the how the schoolhouse was positioned on the landscape, providing another level of data to explore the role and significance of the schoolhouse, particularly its geographical position in the community. As schoolhouses are seldom investigated in the archaeological realm, I hope to build upon the platform of previous undertakings and contribute Montana’s only schoolhouse excavation to the growing study of the archaeology of institutions.
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Longing for the North Fork

Back to the North Fork,
Where I long to roam,
Where the evening shadows fall,
Where the willow, spruce and pine
Are longing for one that is gone.
I love the hills and mountain scenes,
The rippling of the brooks;
The trails that father blazed
For I and sister, dear, in 1916.

Back to the North Fork
When autumn leaves do fall.
The little cabin that father loved
Is still longing for one that is gone.
In memory dear he still is here.
The dear old trails his feet did trod
Still calling me back again.

Back to the North Fork,
When winter’s chill has come.
There is a voice, yes, far away,
Still calling me back again.
Back again in 1917 and in 1919
And in 1923 and 1924
There still a longing for the
Trails that father loved so dear.

Ida Sandall (Columbian 1924)
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

On the beautiful western edge of Glacier National Park, Montana, lies the North Fork of the Flathead River. Sparsely populated, this rugged valley is now becoming a major tourist destination and snowbird’s summer home site due to its proximity to Glacier National Park and its austere remoteness that we treasure as untainted wilderness. Today the valley is dotted with derelict cabins and dilapidating outbuildings, a subtle reminder of the area’s enduring past. These buildings are the remnants of the homesteading era that the North Fork experienced around the beginning of the 20th century.

The Polebridge School burned to the ground in 1924, preserving an archaeological record of the activities of the school. This is an opportunity that cannot be overlooked. The fire that destroyed this North Fork school also preserved materials such as utensils and ceramics that otherwise would have been taken and used at other locations to serve the public as a civic structure. This event caused the schoolhouse to become a time capsule, a sort of 20th century Pompeii. The excavations that I undertook during the summer of 2010 revealed that the domestic artifacts pulled from the school and school grounds play a role in not only telling the school’s story, but that of the entire community.

Originally I set out on this project hoping to pull life from the artifacts that would give insight into social class formation in isolated, rural areas. I was concerned with the function and variability in public space and the effect that the lack of designated communal structures would have upon homesteading communities. As discussed in the architecture chapter, settlers would often alter their residences to accommodate large numbers of people for the needed social affairs
in an area where neighbors were usually spread very thinly over the landscape. This void in public space was filled by the presence of schoolhouses. Thus, could the archaeological assemblage give insight into how social class(es) used the Polebridge schoolhouse as a communal space? With only one schoolhouse in use from 1917 to 1924, who used the school as a public space? Does having a limited amount of public space limit the amount of social classes that participated in community events? Archaeologically speaking, will the excavations upon the Polebridge schoolhouse indicate that there were multiple social classes using the building or was it one class? With these questions raised, it became apparent that another troublesome can-of-worms would be opened in trying to address them. How do we know the materials recovered from the school were actually from the community and not gifts from, for example, the Park trying to quell bad feelings for pushing them off their original homesteads? What if the North Forkers already belonged to the same social class and there was no social class diversity to begin with? While these issues of socioeconomics will be touched upon, the main focus of this thesis revolves around the notion of the cultural community rather than social classes.

As all projects go through a form of evolution, I began to shift from seeking out social class indicators to seeking out evidence of “community”. I became aware that while I was searching for social classes, I found a sense of community in a cultural landscape that was isolated, rural, and forced into conflict with one of the largest forms of public space we have: National Parks. As discussed in the history chapter, the formation of Glacier National Park (GNP) passively displaced the original homesteaders who had staked claims on the east side of the North Fork Valley, on what today is GNP.

Through research at the Polebridge Schoolhouse, I intend to address the following two issues to help explain why and how communities choose to construct and modify their public
cultural landscape. First and foremost, as the historical record depicts schoolhouses functioning as public social centers as well as institutions of education, can the archaeological record show that the Polebridge School was used as a community gathering place? Rather than assuming certain socioeconomic statuses to the array of artifacts recovered, which have many pitfalls, I intend to show that the presence of certain artifacts give insight into the social events that the written, historical record notes as taking place in the North Fork Valley in the early 20th century.

Secondly by analyzing the density of in situ architectural remains and other artifacts indicative of the schoolhouse’s positioning (door knobs, hinges, pane or flat glass, etc), it is possible to re-orientate the building as it would have originally appeared on the landscape. This allows a deeper study into how the physical space of the school and the activities (gleaned from the Columbian newspaper and discussed in the historical record chapter) that were held within its doors can reveal social ideals, sentiments, and cultural attitudes of the entire community.

From these notions I intend to examine the cultural landscape of remote homesteading communities and the dimorphic use of public structures. These questions can be used as a platform to compare and contrast the variability of public space in other American frontier communities as well as non-western societies to help achieve a deeper understanding of how public space affects community development as well as how community development affects public space.

**Literature Review and Sources Consulted**

This thesis is one of only a handful to take on the difficult task of archaeologically interpreting historic schoolhouses. Before specifically targeting schoolhouses, the principles of historic archaeology must be stated to provide a stage upon which further discussions can begin. On the broadest and most basic sense, historical archaeology is the study of cultural remains
from literate societies that were capable of recording their own histories (Deetz 1977). Fagan and Orser (1995) state that historical archaeology provides a realm in which everyday life can be examined. These are the details and truths that have been left out of historical documents and texts. The ability to extract information that is without biases is the purest form of data. It is untainted and has the potential to give insight into social, economic, and behavioral tendencies of those that lived in the past. By collaborating the unearthed cultural materials with the historical record, an even more complete picture of life can be obtained. Historical archaeology “gives us a window through which to witness the past” (Deetz 1977:11).

As one-roomed schoolhouses were designed for educational purposes, they often became community centers that functioned as the social hub for the public. “The school housed the activities that joined people into a community, and the identity of rural communities became inextricably linked with their schools” (Gulliford 1984:35). These buildings served broad array of individuals and should be studied as social institutions that reflect the public social relations with each other and their connection with the larger nation-state. The notion of “institution” has been intensely researched throughout this project. With that a compilation of articles from the book *The Archaeology of Institutional Life* edited by Gibb and Beisaw (2009) has become priceless. In the mentioned book, institutions are defined as “a ritualized system of groups in equilibrium organized around goals considered too important to trust to informality” (Turney-High 1968:346;emphasis added). The last part of this definition is very intriguing. Schoolhouses should be at the forefront of archaeological investigation, as they represent hope, future, and embody the goals of the entire community.

“Considering (that) artifact deposition…at school and church sites is extremely variable and inconsistent, it is doubtful that such sites would yield artifacts or features worthy of even the
most limited efforts” (Lacoste & Wall 1989:108). Sentiments such as this have hindered the advancement of contemporary schoolhouse archaeology. Past views of archaeological undertakings of schoolhouses haven’t looked to favorably upon the endeavor. Seeing schoolhouses as entities that “lacked archaeological visibility” (Pena 1992:18), past research has had issues with the dearth of recovered materials upon which to make any worthy assumptions about culture, society and lifestyles. “As prominent as one-room schoolhouses have been in the North American experience… these ubiquitous structures have not found a place in the archaeological literature. (Gibb & Beisaw 2000:1) Archaeological excavations on rural schools can express materiality reflected in the artifacts and represent the North Fork community’s attitudes, opinions and demographics. As Pena (1992:14) states, schoolhouses “represent community attitudes towards public education and larger social issues, such as the length and seasons of the school year, length of the school day, separation of the sexes, sanitation, and public health, and abstract learning versus manual training.”

Dickson’s 1977 excavation of the Sam Houston Schoolhouse in Maryville, Tennessee was one of the first archaeological undertakings on schools. The primary focus on this cultural property was to confirm that the state owned historic school had not been moved, which it had not. No “bigger questions” or other notable discussions were addressed and a history of the schoolhouse itself was not mentioned (Dickson 1977). This report indicates that the schoolhouse is a cultural property, but it holds a insufficient archaeological assemblage that clouds interpretation.

From the late 1970s to the present, research into the understanding of schools as a useful feature on the landscape has been slowly gaining momentum. Schools across the states have been examined with increasing interest, including: the Freeman School in Beatrice, Nebraska, a
log cabin structure built in 1871 and now part of the Homestead National Monument (Weymouth 1983); Altaville Schoolhouse, Altaville, California, a brick built building in 1858 (Napton & Greathouse 1997); Merle Beach School, Olive Township, Michigan, a Master’s thesis study on a 1863 timber framed structure (Hartzer 1998); the Oella School, Oella, Maryland, a stone constructed school that served a mill community from 1873 until 1924 (Gibb & Beisaw 2000); Monroe School, Topeka, Kansas, a property in what is now the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site (Nickel & Hunt 2002); and the Old Elliot School in Devonshire Parish, Bermuda, an island school built in 1848 (Agbe-Davies 2003). There have been a handful of other investigations, including the “gray literature”, which is usually in the form of Cultural Resource Management reports. As Beisaw (2009:50) states in an article concerned with methodology, prior research has found that 1) the architectural debris recovered dominates assemblages, 2) artifact concentrations are highest in and around the schoolhouse foundation, 3) background and archival research is needed to understand the assemblage and context, and 4), “clear research questions seldom inform excavation of these sites, leading to artifact quantification and little analysis.”

Through the literature, it is clear that archaeological undertakings upon schoolhouses can reveal a multitude of deeper understandings. Pena (1992:18) uses her study of a schoolhouse in rural New York to compare architectural styles during the late 19th century. Her study focuses on vernacular styles associated with rural schools and their disregard for Victorian attitudes of the time. “It would seem that, in matters of educational reform, the prevailing Victorian ethic failed to penetrate this part of the American rural frontier.” In another similar piece Bigelow and Nagel (1987) delve into the change in schoolhouse architecture to gain a clearer understanding of gender equality issues of the late 19th, early 20th century. Gibbs and Biesaw (2000) have
compiled research from 19 schoolhouse archaeological undertakings in the Northeastern US and investigated the architectural types, furnishings and other elements of design such as heating and lighting. Their research is beneficial in understanding local, state, and national attitudes in education by the effort that was put in to the mentioned furnishings.

As Glacier National Park has undergone a handful of cultural assessments, which has been mandated by the Section 106 Process, these reports have been utilized in this thesis. These reports are invaluable to my research, as they have compiled very useful data that fits with the homesteaders before and after the population shift to the west side of the valley once the Park was formed. Such work include (from most recent) MacDonald and Kinser’s (2008) Final Inventory and Evaluation Report, Glacier National Park, North Fork Homestead Archaeological Project, Riley’s (2003) Big Prairie Cultural Resource Survey: Glacier National Park, Karsmizki’s (1997) Glacier National Park Archaeological Inventory and Assessment- 1995 Field Season Final Report, Scott’s (1989) Evaluation of Cultural Resources Affected by the Red Bench Fire, Glacier National Park, and Bick’s (1986) Homesteading on the North Fork in Glacier National Park. Other resources that were consulted throughout this thesis include the Montana Historical Society, Glacier National Park Archives, and an informal interview with North Fork resident and history buff Larry Wilson (2010).

This thesis contains nine chapters to give context, evidence, and discuss the role schoolhouses played as community centers of public space on the American frontier. The following chapter goes over the isolated geographical area that homesteaders of the early 20th century encountered. It also discusses the historical context that is necessary to understand how the land was settled due to the formation of Glacier National Park. Chapter three gives a brief history of education in rural America, Montana, and the North Fork. To help us interpret the
archaeological assemblage and the historical record, Chapter four dives into the theoretical tenets of landscape theory and also contains a discussion of the term “community”. To demonstrate how the landscape affected the homesteaders in the sparsely populated landscape of the North Fork, Chapter five considers the modifications and alterations the homesteaders made to their architecture. Chapter six contains the methodology I carried out during this project. Chapter seven is concerned with the fortunately rich historical record from the site. Finally, chapter nine brings the thesis to a conclusion with an overview of the results from the excavation and a discussion of the larger importance and revealing nature of the unearthed objects.
Chapter 2

GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

“they homesteaded because it was a hunter’s and trapper’s paradise. And they felt they were in heaven there. No rangers…nobody to bother them, you know. They made their own laws. That’s what they wanted” Eva Beebe, wife of original westside homesteader [Mish 1976b]

Figure 1. North Fork Region (http://www.freeworldmaps.net/united-states/montana/map.html)
Geographical Context

The North Fork Valley is located in the northwest corner of Montana (figure 1 and 2). Nestled between Glacier National Park and the Whitefish Mountain range, this rugged land is far from easy to access by today’s terms. An hour north of Columbia Falls by dirt roads, the North Fork is blessed by some of the most unspoiled wilderness left in the state. Summer time brings Glacier tourists seeking a less crowded entry found on the western side of the Park. Winters are full of solitude, as the visitors are limited to dogsledders and Nordic skiers. Polebridge, the epicenter of the North Fork, is located a mile south from the western entrance to Glacier National Park. Famous for baked goods and charm, the Polebridge Mercantile is the hub of the community. It has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places, being a historic
building associated with William Adair and the homesteading that took place in the early 20th century.

The North Fork area consists of open meadows with numerous creeks adjacent to the North Fork of the Flathead River. The timber of the area contains pines, firs, spruces, and cottonwood with native grasses and underbrush intermixed with the forested areas and dominating the meadows.

**Historical Context**

The first human inhabitants of the North Fork and greater area were the Native Americans. Archaeological evidence in the form of projectile points has been associated to numerous tribes such as the Blackfeet, Cree, Kootenai, Salish, Pend Orielle, Crow, Gros Ventre, Mandan, Assiniboine, and Nakota Sioux (MacDonald & Kisner 2008). Of these tribes, Kootenai oral traditions describe extensive use of the North Fork area. Other archaeological data suggests that the area could have been used by prehistoric people as long as 10,000 years ago, evident by artifacts from the Clovis tradition (MacDonald & Kisner 2008).

The first white or Euroamerican visitors to the North Fork were fur trappers searching for lucrative pelts that could be taken from the Flathead River and the numerous creeks and streams in the region. A Hudson Bay Company trading post was erected in Red Meadow, which lies on the western portion of the North Fork presumably in the 1840’s (McKay 1994). From this, it can be presumed that hunting and trapping parties frequented the area before the establishment of the post.
The Homesteading Movement

The homesteading movement that took place in the 18th and 19th century embodied the spirit of America. Regardless of age, sex, race, or ethnic background, the Homestead Act granted free land to any man, woman or freed slave who would put in the hard work to make the land viable. The homestead movement marks a distinct time in America’s past. With the civil war ending, many families were left in shambles. As their property may have been destroyed or ruined, new opportunities were needed to accommodate the destitute. Migrations west to the recently opened up territories were seen as promises of a new beginning for tattered pasts the homesteaders carried with them. This movement, spurred out of necessity, became a contentious endeavor that altered the history of America; displacement of Native Americans for white settlers, environmental repercussions for bad land management (such as the Dust Bowl of the Midwest) and the general formation of new communities with their individual character and identity.

The importance of the homesteading movement is unprecedented. Its actions have had affects on the entire gamut of America, from a nation state all the way down to the individual township. When the magnifying glass is removed from each individual site of the North Fork homesteads, a broader conceptualization emerges. On a larger level, the entire community’s social, economic, and political agendas becomes apparent and can be used to compare and contrast other homesteading areas of America, opening up a new arena of study for the homestead movement.

With the signing of the Homestead Act in 1862 by President Lincoln, claims of 160 to 640 acres of federal land could be essentially purchased from the government for $1.25 per acre. Filing an application for a homestead required the individual to improve the land in means of
timber removal, land clearing and overall proper land management. Prior to this Act, squatters held rights to claim land upon which they had ‘squatted’ on for a period of fourteen months (MacDonald & Kisner 2008).

The Homestead Movement marks a historic event in the shaping of America and the North Fork settlers should be noted as active players in this event. With the promise of inexpensive land, immigrants as well as U.S. citizens flocked westward in hopes of making homestead claims. Most of the homesteaders who chose to reside in the North Fork where already U.S. citizens with others arriving from Bohemia and Ireland, Germany, and Holland (Bick 1986). Frederick Schultz and Louis Sommers made the first claim in the North Fork in 1898 (Karzmizki 1997). The early homesteads were purchased in hopes of an oil field opening up near Kintla Lake appropriately named the Kintla Lake Oil Company (Pilot 1906). Oil prospecting had been going on in the area for a while, with Marcus Daly of the renowned Butte mines sending oil explorers into the area in the mid 1880’s (MacDonald & Kisner 2008).

A survey completed in 1899 noted around 30 unoccupied cabins in the North Fork Valley, most in “tumble-down” condition (Ayers 1900:253-254). This survey stated that the area “would furnish good locations for forest rangers who by some farming on such lands could occupy their time when not employed on the reserve” (Ayers 1900: 284).
The turn of the century brought on the beginning stages of development for the North Fork. The first permanent settlement of the North Fork occurred in Sullivan Meadows due to the attractive open vistas and grazing opportunities. Employment opportunities in the oilfields and timber harvesting possibilities in the valley were the original catalyst for settlement in the area. Note the 1905 map of Flathead county in figure 3 and the “Kintla Lake Oil Fields”. As previously noted, trappers and hunters had been living in the North Fork for some time prior to the early 1900s, but research shows that the initial homestead immigration started in the
beginning of the 20th century (McKay 1994). The majority of the population chose claims on the east side of the valley, now GNP.

Selection of homesteading property was reasoned by a number of factors. For the early settlers of the North Fork, the most desired land was located east of the Flathead River, on what today is Glacier National Park. At this time, the only road out of the remote North Fork was a poorly kept road to Belton, which is now the community of West Glacier. This wagon road was constructed in 1901 by the Butte Oil Company to transport workers and machinery to the Kintla oil fields (Bick 1986). This limited access to the western side of the valley. Also, there was considerably more open land available for ranching and farming. From the 1898-99 USGS report on the North Fork, it was determined that there was 59 square miles on the eastern side and 10 square miles along Camas creek that deemed suitable for “ranching, and possibly valuable for wheat, oats, and hardy vegetables” (Ayers 1900:281). In 1908, Fletcher Stein, Chaunce Beebe and Charlie Wise (who donated property for the Polebridge school), established the first homesteads on the west side of the river.

With a 70-75 day growing season, gardens were in use at almost every homestead. Root vegetables were a mainstay in North Fork diets with carrots, potatoes, cabbage, and rutabagas as the most common but also evidence of other greens such as spinach, collards, beet greens, chard, peas, asparagus, leeks, onions, broccoli, kale, kohlrabi, and cauliflower (Bick 1986). The diet of the homesteaders depended on what they could grow, hunt, or trap in the early days. Therefore, personal gardens were quite large and were always noted on homestead claims in order to show “proof” of upkeep and improvements. This shows a level of self-sufficiency that was needed in the North Fork.
In interpreting the early landscape by its homestead sites, prior research indicates social and economic factors played a part in the early settlement. Bick’s (1986:11) report states that “twenty-five bachelors, ten married couples, and a total of seven children, four young girls and the three Sullivan boys comprised the community of people living along the eastside, twenty mile stretch of the North Fork River in 1910”. Of the properties chosen to homestead, it is evident by the often irregular shapes of stakes that the homesteaders themselves played a part selecting what land they wanted, primarily to encompass the maximum amount of open meadow land and locate next to a spring or creek. “House sites with expansive vistas of distant mountains were chosen by 88% of the married homesteading couples, as opposed to only 33% of the bachelors” (Bick 1986:10). Bachelors tended to choose a more secluded residence away from the mountains, either on the edge of a meadow or in forest clearings. These choices pertain to a larger scope of cultural activity that has transformed the landscape in the North Fork. As to be discussed later, the homesteaders were active participants in creating a cultural community that adapted to a harsh environment by social, economic, and political choices, and is reflected in the remains of their structures.
Formation of Glacier National Park

Figure 4. Glacier National Park (courtesy of Glacier National Park)

Until 1910, 44 claims had been taken up on what is now Park land. This sharply contrasts the 14 claims taken on the west side of the river (Bick 1986). As previously noted, this was mainly due to the only road being on the east side and the abundance of open meadow land. With the creation of Glacier National Park in 1910 (a current map in figure 4), a migration to the west side occurs. This was unintended by the Park, as their original statement in the Glacier National Park Act provided “That nothing herein contained shall effect any valid existing claim, location, or other entry under the land laws of the United States or the rights of any such
claimant, locator, or entryman to the full use and enjoyment of this land” (GNP 1910). Later the phrase “full use and enjoyment” would become hotly debated.

The overall reason for the migration was the limiting modes of subsistence Park regulations imposed on the settlers and the fact that the Park would not allow additional homestead claims to be staked on Park lands. In 1910, U.S. census indicates that over half of the homesteaders gave their occupation as “hunter and trapper” and venison was the primary source of meat (Bick 1986:21). Four years later, the Park’s official statement became “all hunting or killing, wounding or capturing at any time of any bird or wild animal, except dangerous animals when it is necessary to prevent them from destroying human lives or inflicting personal injury, is prohibited within the Park” (Bick 1986:21). This in conjunction with regulations on grazing rights and a lack of improvements on their federally taxed land, such as poor roads, led the homesteaders to relocate across the river to the west side of the North Fork. Residents of the east side felt slighted by this and signed a petition asking that 50,000 agricultural and timbered acres be removed from the Park because there was “no particular scenic value” and claimed that “it is more important to furnish homes to land-hungry people than to lock the land up as a rich man’s playground which no one will use” (McKay 1994:231). This petition was dismissed and caused an exodus into the western side of the valley.

**Homesteading life after 1910**

Following 1910, approximately 100 claims were staked on the west side (Bick 1986). The most notable structure still standing in the North Fork today, the Polebridge Mercantile, was relocated to west side in 1913 as an indication of the shift in settlements (Bick 1986). By 1922, there were more than 150 homesteads in the valley, twice as many families than single men and had an overall population at more than 300 people (McKay 1994:229, Walter 1985:12).
With this budding population of families came the need to educate their children and schools popped up wherever was convenient. Schoolhouse location changed somewhat as the concentration of settlers shifted, chronologically from a tent on Akokala Creek, makeshift facilities at Big Prairie, Red Meadow, and more formal structures at Trail Creek, Polebridge, and Wurtz’s (named after a family who donated a building) (McKay 1994). A more in-depth discussion of schools will be touched in the education chapter.

During the time when the Polebridge schoolhouse would have been in use, 1918-1924, the North Fork Valley was an isolated but growing community. This is noted by the fact that two competing stores had sprung up (William Adair’s and Ben Hensen’s) and two post offices (one at Hensen’s store and one near Trail Creek) (Bick 1986). Finally, due to much protest by the settlers, a decent road was constructed in 1918 on the west side of the valley. It has been suggested that the lack of response from the Park to improve the east side road could have been an unofficial tactic to push the east side settlers off GNP land. Regardless, a road that was once described as “a hole cut through timber… with rocks, stumps, chuck holes, tree roots, you name it”, was much improved in 1918 and encouraged settlement to the remote area (Mish 1976a). With this, about 25% of homesteaders in the area owned automobiles during this time period, which were either light trucks or touring cars that had been converted for hauling materials needed to live in rural northwest Montana (Walter 1986).

Employment opportunities were slim in the 1920’s, with a number of men running winter trap-lines in the National Forest land as well as illegally in the Park lands. Some individuals worked seasonally for the Park or the Forest as guides for hunting parties and campers, managing forest fires, or working on timber crews. A few private companies were located in the North Fork, such as the Crow’s Nest Oil Company, Culver Military Academy (which ran a large boys
camp at Bowman Lake), and Michel and Co. (road construction) (Walter 1986). Others worked independently, and used their skills to build cabins, dig wells, wrangle horses, and do other jobs associated with homesteading.

The North Fork’s landscape provided great security for moonshiners during the years of prohibition (1918-1934). Ace Powell, a settler from the Belton area, recalls that “Montana was ‘wet’ and if you were a good, clean moonshiner, as most of the North Fork moonshiners were, the local law would alert you if the “Feds” were coming. The locals would rather have good moonshiners operating… than bad ones springing up all the time who really didn’t know what they were doing” (Mish 1976c). From my research, it seems moonshining was taking place without much protest from the community. Ben Hensen, a homesteader, remembers that it was commonplace with the North Forkers, with George Grubb being a repeat offender and was usually caught by bragging about his high quality liquor (Mish 1976a). Himself and two others, Hoolie Stine and Jess Bemis, are recorded as regularly buying sugar in 100 pound sacks from Adair’s mercantile (Walter 1986). In Frank Hamor’s interview, he mentions these characters as having a still and “when groceries would run low, they would cook up a batch (of whiskey) and take it down to Kalispell and sell it until they got enough money to buy groceries. Then they’d loaf around again until they needed more groceries; then they’d make more whiskey….” (Mish 1976d). Bick also mentions that dances were incomplete without Ernest Henthorn’s homemade rhubarb wine (Bick 1986).

The community now known as Polebridge wasn’t formed until the second decade of the 20th century. The namesake arose due to Ben Hensen opening a store, gas station, and new post office near what is today the northwestern entrance to GNP in 1920. The bridge at this crossing
and entrance was constructed out of log poles, which is where the name comes from (McKay 1994).
Chapter 3

**BRIEF HISTORY OF RURAL EDUCATION**

“It seemed, as I recall it, a lonely little house of scholarship, with its playground worn so bare, that even the months of sun and idleness failed to bring forth any grass. But that humble little school had a dignity of a fixed and far off purpose… It was the outpost of civilization. It was the advance guard of the pioneer, driving the wilderness farther into the west. It was life preparing wistfully for the future.” James Rooney, in Journey from Ignorant Ridge, 1976 [Gulliford 1984:19]

**Rural Education in America**

In the early days of our nation, schools were neither standardized nor well organized before the 1830s (Rotman 2009). The first step forward to instilling education came in the colonial era; in 1674 the government of Massachusetts Bay sanctioned the first statute to establish a school system following the notion “that learning may not be buried in the graves of our fathers” (Gulliford 1996:36). As per usual for the Puritan North East, the driving force behind education was to train community children and members to read in order to spread the word of God and be able to recite the Bible.

As time went on, education became realized as a needed element in communities and different regions took different approaches to facilitating teaching. In the North East, individual communities took responsibility for organizing the whole gamut of schooling; physical location of schoolhouse and yard, selection of teachers, financing through taxes, and the curriculum. In the south, a different model emerged. Schoolmasters would travel in and out of areas and set up their schools in their own fashion and charge their own tuition rates. In this manner, certain neighborhoods or social groups could recruit specific teachers to teach a term in their school. These different styles can reflect the regions different attitudes toward education (Rotman 2009).
The North may have regard education as a necessary activity, whereas the South may have believed that extra taxes should not be endured if the individual had no attending children. Public schools in the south were never as prominent as they were in other areas of the States (Gulliford 1996).

In 1787, the Confederation of States passed the Northwest Ordinances, which declared a legal framework for education in the newly settled region which today is known as the states of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Wisconsin, and Michigan. These ordinances allowed public lands to be leased for educational purposes and as new states were formed, the federal governments allotted one section in every township comprising of 36 sections to be a “common school” allotted parcel (Gulliford 1996:38). Even though these legal ordinances were passed, issues arose from the early abundance of free land and in the mid 1820s congress approved the sale of public lands to individuals. With this, actual funds for schools were often lost due to the selling of cheap school parcels to settlers and speculators. As a result, many of communities had to rely on parents as the only reliable source for funding of the schools.

Carl F. Kaestle noted in his 1983 book entitled Pillars of the Republic that “from transient teachers, crowded rooms and stifled toddlers to community spelling bees and delightful sleigh rides, the rural school of the early nineteenth century reflected the close local control, the broad parental discipline, the parsimony and limited educational needs of rural communities in the early American republic.” Overall, “rural district schools were much the same in 1830 as they had been in 1780” (Kaestle 1983:15).

Access to education in the early days was restricted on the basis of class, gender and ethnicity, usually only accessible to wealthy white boys. It wasn’t until the mid nineteenth century that it became more common to see girls in the classroom, and even then the education
was limited to gender roles; boys were prepared for careers as businessmen, farmers, engineers, and entrepreneurs, while girls were shuffled down the path of domestic arts such as needlework and cooking as well as home economics (Rotman 2001:71).

Rural educators for these communities were usually chosen out of sheer availability and could easily have doubled as farm laborers, tavern keepers, prospectors, and craftsmen. Often, they were picked because they were “one of the few members of the community who could read or they were unemployed (and sometimes unemployable)” (Mondale 2001). Teacher wages usually reflected the relative wealth of parents whose children they instructed and varied from community to community. Placement of the school was left in the hands of the particular community that was erecting the school and usually was situated as centrally as physically possible to be easily assessable to the entire community. From a memoir, Sarah Hale remembers “The only requisite was, to fix precisely on the center of the district; and after measuring in every direction, the center had been discovered exactly in the center of a frog-pond. As near that pond as safety would permit, stood the school house” (Hale 1829). Rotman (2001) notes that other reminiscences from early settlers place the schoolhouse adjacent to a cooper’s shop or between a blacksmiths shop and a sawmill, which could be interpreted the publics indifference toward education before the 1850s.

“Rural schools were frequently overcrowded, materials were hard to obtain, and repairs and improvements were subject to the financial whims of parsimonious school boards hesitant even to replace dog-eared textbooks” (Gulliford 1996:39). With this being said, by 1913, one half of American schoolchildren were enrolled in a one of the States 212,000 rural, one-roomed schoolhouses (Gulliford 1996). These schoolhouses were given names that reflected attitudes and values of the community in which they were located such as in Douglas County, Kansas,
where names like Harmony, Apple Pie, and Good Intent hung above the front door (Gulliford 1996). Other communities gave names relating to prominent figures (national and local), geographical regions, animals, and religious icons. Examples of names from across the states include, Elk Head, Moon Hill, Fly Gulch, Bellyache School, Excelsior, Poison Spider, Elm Slough, Buzzard Roost, Pleasant View, St. John, and even Barefoot Nation (Gulliford 1996).

**Rural Education in Montana**

The first record of schooling in the newly formed Montana Territory was conducted at Fort Owen during the winter of 1861 and 1862. Instruction was given to employees of the Fort as well as children of trappers and their Indian wives (Miller 1964). From this early period, education was limited to those who had the access as well as financial ability to attend. Called “subscription” schools, these private schools sprung up as the need became more evident. In 1863 the first subscription school opened in Nevada City as well as in Bannack, where 20 pupils were enrolled. Also during this year, the first missionary school was established in St. Ignatius. In 1864, Oxford education Thomas Dimsdale opened his own school and charged $2.00 a week for his teaching (the following year he became the first Superintendent of Public Instruction of the Montana Territory) (Miller 1964). From this time on, schools sprouted up across the pioneered landscape, mostly private but with certain communities electing to tax individuals to lessen the cost of tuition.

As with other rural schools throughout America, Montana’s “pioneer public schools” were the typical one-roomed school which usually operated four to five months a year during the winter when the student’s help wasn’t needed on the farm. Schoolhouse construction was limited to crudely built sod and log structures with the first framed schoolhouse erected in Deer Lodge in 1872 and the same year Missoula built a brick schoolhouse (Miller 1964).
As Montana’s population began to climb, so did its number of schoolhouses across the landscape (see table 1). In 1868, the territory had been divided up into 25 school districts, 15 schoolhouses, 27 teachers and 1,359 students. By 1881, the territory had 144 districts, 132 schoolhouses, 177 teachers, and 9,479 children in the school census (5,112 actually enrolled) and 300 more students enrolled in private schools. Of these 132 public schools, 91 were log built, 29 were framed and 12 were brick. On an average, in 1881 school was in session 110 days a year and could vary from a 8-9 month duration in city oriented communities to as little as 3 months in agricultural areas (Miller 1964).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>NO. OF CHILDREN</th>
<th>SCHOOL ENROLLMENT</th>
<th>NO. OF SCHOOL DISTRICTS</th>
<th>NO. OF SCHOOLS</th>
<th>NO. OF TEACHERS EMPLOYED</th>
<th>AVER. MONTHLY SALARY</th>
<th>AVER. LENGTH OF TERM</th>
<th>VALUE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY</th>
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<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>1,359</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1872-73</td>
<td>3,517</td>
<td>1,881</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>$68.41</td>
<td>110 days</td>
<td>$21,192.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2,498</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>$61.45</td>
<td>125 days</td>
<td>$48,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>4,271</td>
<td>2,734</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>$63.50</td>
<td>110 days</td>
<td>$56,080</td>
</tr>
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<td>4,561</td>
<td>2,625*</td>
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<td>87</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>$61.02</td>
<td>116</td>
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<td>3,277</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>116</td>
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<td>3,909</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>145</td>
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<td>5,112*</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>177</td>
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<td>110 days</td>
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<td>125 days</td>
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<td>160</td>
<td>226</td>
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<td>198</td>
<td>292</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>249</td>
<td>337</td>
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<td>377</td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>23,165</td>
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<td>289</td>
<td>266</td>
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<td></td>
<td>316</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>442</td>
<td>$62.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>$646,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>36,803</td>
<td></td>
<td>344</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>507</td>
<td>$66.56</td>
<td></td>
<td>$698,798.23</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>27,821</td>
<td></td>
<td>361</td>
<td>314</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$994,378.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>1896</td>
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<td></td>
<td>565</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>$51.16</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,447,581</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>57,210</td>
<td></td>
<td>696</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>1,214</td>
<td>$59.67</td>
<td></td>
<td>$2,531,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>70,814</td>
<td>48,386</td>
<td>817</td>
<td>907</td>
<td>1,663</td>
<td>$83.00 (Men)</td>
<td>6.1 months</td>
<td>$2,531,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
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<td>66,141</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>2,250</td>
<td>$112.24</td>
<td>7.9 months</td>
<td>$2,531,942</td>
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<tr>
<td>1961-61</td>
<td>205,729</td>
<td>163,857</td>
<td>1,018</td>
<td>1,157</td>
<td>7,504**</td>
<td>***</td>
<td>180 days</td>
<td>$218,678,866</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not all counties reporting.
**Includes teachers, librarians, guidance and supervisory personnel and administrators.
***Average annual salaries- Elementary-$5,321, High School- $5,930.

A main issue during this time period was the limited number of school districts and the vast distances between children and their school. In 1901, Montana had only 696 school districts. When compared to the states 94,000,000 acres, it puts a school district at one per
135,057 acres. This fact made accessibility a real problem and low attendance numbers reflected it. In response to this issue, the Superintendents of Public Instruction lobbied for more funds to consolidate one-room schools into larger schools and offer transportation assistance for the children of rural settlers. In can be noted that this solution markedly altered school attendance from the first compulsory attendance law of 1887 to the revamping and inclusion of state funds to the same law in 1903. During this time period, the overall average for both men and women teaching salaries was $51.56 a month, which is comparable to other states according to Miller (1964). From there, the county Superintendents salaries were based on numbers of students in the district and vary accordingly.

In Schloss’ *Rural School Districts of Dawson County, Montana* (1973:14), a narrative is given that can be presumed to fit the average description of an one-roomed schoolhouse anywhere across Montana:

“Many early schoolhouses were built of sod or logs. They were poorly lighted through small, square windows, which allowed winter darkness to come early in the afternoon, casting a shadowy gloom over the cheerless, poorly heated interior. These windows usually had four small panes; the overall size was approxmiately one-half that of an ordinary single window used in homes today….During cold weather it was necessary to find a place in the room away from chilling drafts. This was usually around the stove, which needed constant feeding to keep a roaring fire. Chilblained feet were propped up on lunch boxes and away from the cold floor. Also, lunches froze solid anywhere else in the room. During summer sessions these same small windows offered no relief from oppressing heat. But then, the door could be open except on windy and dusty days. This open door, without screen, let in swarms of flying ants and flies—several varieties of flies, besides grasshoppers that landed off course.”
Education in the North Fork

Figure 5. Polebridge Schoolhouse ca 1921 (McKay 1994)

It should be noted that the schoolhouse that I excavated had different names throughout its short life. It was originally called the Lower North Fork School and the earliest photograph was taken in 1921 (figure 5). It is possible that it was called the Forest Glen School, as this school shows up on the school registry and is mentioned in the Columbian, but lacks evidence to completely tie the two together. It was finally called the Polebridge School once the small community became known as that around 1920.

There were many schools in the North Fork throughout the homesteading period. Bick notes that the first summer of formal schooling occurred in 1913 near Indian (Akakola) Creek in GNP land (figure 6) (1986). A large canvas tent was brought down from Charlie Schoenberger, a key homesteader in
the development of the North Fork, from the I.N. Dally coal mines that were just across the Canadian border (Bick 1986). Bick (1986) states that the first log structured schoolhouse was built in 1915 by the homesteaders themselves on a bench in GNP’s Big Prairie and was instructed by Jesse Deford for the short two month term. As the population had shifted to the west side of the border by 1916, “some westsiders came over one dark night and removed all the desks, etc.” and built another schoolhouse on Red Meadow Creek, a west side drainage (Bick 1986:13). Bick (1986) also notes, from an interview with Edwin Brewster, that when school was held during the winters, children from the east GNP side would commonly board at Adair’s store (Polebridge Mercantile) or with west side families.

In an interview with Larry Wilson (2010), a local historian who was raised in the North Fork, a chronology of the schoolhouses is given; first as a school tent in Akakola Creek in 1913, then on to Red Meadow creek just north of Polebridge about 5 miles, Polebridge Schoolhouse from 1918 till 1924 (figure 8), Wurtz’s cabin (figure 7), and finally at Fords cabin, which is now a Forest Service rental cabin 11 miles north of Polebridge.

There are many conflicting arguments for the placement of schools and the chronology through out this time period. The History of Flathead County School District (N.A. 2008) puts all of the North Fork schools in the Valentine district (#19). This piece notes that the
district had its first elected trustee in 1897, which doesn’t make sense if school wasn’t held until 1913. It states that the Upper and Lower North Fork school operated between 1919 and 1920, the mysterious “Forest Glen” running from 1921 till 1923, and the school at Trail Creek in operation from 1928 to 1939. This conjecture falls within the registry I found at the superintendents office in Kalispell. As I am mainly concerned with deciphering the Polebridge Schoolhouse’s existence, I explored the registry summaries from 1916 to 1923. During this period, 10 registries were consulted. Schools mentioned were “North Fork”, “Upper North Fork”, “Lower North Fork”, “Forest Glen”, and “Polebridge”. Enrollment during these years varies from 3 students to 11 students. Multiple schools were in session in a handful of those years, such as 1918-1919 and 1919-1920 (Upper and Lower), 1921-1922 (Upper and Polebridge). From the registry, schools were mostly in session for 9 months a year. In the ten consulted, six were for nine months, two were for four months, one for eight months and one had the dates left blank.

Figure 9. Columbian Dec. 7th, 1918

Figure 10. Columbian May 15th, 1919
It is frustrating trying to get a concise chronology and makes one wonder which schools were actually in session during this period. Construction on the Polebridge Schoolhouse started in November of 1918 (figure 10), noted as the schoolhouse being built on Charlie Wise’s property, but wasn’t up and running as a school until May 12th, 1919, when it was first called the Lower North Fork School (figure 9). Mrs. Harry Keith, a student during this time, recalls the Polebridge Schoolhouse as a little log cabin across from Dode Miller’s place (originally Charlie Wise’s) (Mish 1976e). School plot allotment will be retouched in the methodology chapter. School was taught by Mrs. Ingham, whose family homesteaded inside the Park. “Mrs. Ingham stayed at the little schoolhouse during the week…she fixed up a small bedroom with curtains drawn around it in one corner of the school” (Mish 1976e).

Some teachers would stay for more sessions, notable teachers are Alice Ingham and Mr. Bowman and his wife, M.C. Bowman, who are mentioned numerous times throughout the Columbian articles. It is unsure if Miss Bowman was the teacher for the whole term or just a fill in; the Lower North Fork School was instructed by Alice Ingham for the 1919-1920 school year. Miss Bowman isn’t on any of the registries until 1921, when she is listed as the teacher for the Polebridge School.

Children in the North Fork would attend the nearest school, be it the Upper or Lower in most years. Ben Hensen Junior remembers walking 4.5 miles each way to the Red Meadow School in 1913 or 1914. “We put on 900 mile’ that summer!” (Mish 1976b) Even though schools were centrally located, access to schools became an issue in the North Fork. Frank Hamor, a student at the Red Meadow school around 1914 recalls how the Caroline Schoenberger was rowed across the Flathead River by her father each morning. She would walk to Frank’s homestead and meet Frank and the Moore children and continue on, meeting the Sanseverre girls.
on the trail and travel all the way to school (Mish 1976b). “The Sanseverre girls, who were Indian, would never come down to their cabin, but would join the children a short way down the trail” (Mish 1976b). Frank reminisces how they were stalked by a mountain lion one day, which changed the walking arrangement and were then chaperoned by Mr. or Mrs. Hamor (Mish 1976d). Miss Weide was the teacher, although she knew little more than the students, Mish (1976) recants from a 1976 interview. “Miss Weide, he says, had advanced Ben to the fourth or fifth grade level; but when Mrs. Stanley took over, Ben was put back at grade one level!” The presumed Polebridge school was built “three or four years later” (from the Red Meadow Schoolhouse) and was a “donation” log school. (Mish 1976d). This notion reverberates community ideals of self-sufficiency, of a collective, independent group of people that recognize the importance of education and take initiative to make sure their children have all the opportunities available to them. Also and more importantly, a discussion of the type of education given and received in the North Fork will be introduced in the historical record chapter.
Chapter 4

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Without context, artifacts are lost in translation. They have no deeper meaning than the observable physical material they are. If a projectile point is found eroding out of a river bank and is picked up, pocketed, and taken home to live in a shoebox, it loses its context and it becomes useless. The same goes for interpretation. Without a theoretical framework to analyze the assemblage through, artifacts become as useless as any looted relic in a shoebox.

What did the schoolhouse mean for the homesteaders living in the North Fork during the early 20th century? As a shared public space, what role did it play in the lives of individuals living in a remote, isolated community. To better understand these questions, more must be asked. How do we as a species understand and use social spaces? How do these spaces influence human behavior? How do we differentiate between places and spaces? Taking an even further step back, what exactly are the underpinning notions of “community”? I aim to apply current anthropological assumptions from a Cultural Landscape theoretical paradigm to better understand the archaeological investigations I undertook on the schoolhouse. This will allow the schoolhouse to be seen as a cultural entity with spatial relationships that give breadth to the artifacts recovered. It should be noted that while an extensive amount of literature exists concerning vast and broad landscapes, such as studying settlement patterns across large areas, I aim to target the post-processual tenets of Landscape theory that root themselves in the concepts of “space” and “place”. Due to the vastness of the north fork, the landscape played a direct part in shaping social relations. Be it in the architecture or how the schoolhouse became a social public space, it was in direct correlation with the grandness of the landscape. The landscape forced the culture to modify their planned landscape. Analyzing “space” and “place” in context
to the landscape allows a deeper investigation into the notion of “community” to help decipher how we as a species organize and construct our world upon the landscape.

**Landscape Theory**

“Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form… the cultural record we have “written” in the landscape is liable to be more truthful than most autobiographies because we are less self-conscious about how we describe ourselves.” [Peirce F. Lewis 1979:12]

Cultural Landscape theory is based in the belief that landscapes are a cultural entity and that these entities reflect attitudes and cultural values of the individuals living on the landscape. Landscape research in a human orientation has been vigorously examined throughout the past 50 years by academics in the field of geography, anthropology, and archaeology (Ashmore 2004; Clark & Scheiber 2008; David & Thomas 2008), but I aim to extract a pertinent framework through the works of historic archaeology. Landscape Theory is the dynamic study of the physical landscape and of human culture (Hood 1996). It has been employed to help tackle the difficult task of interpreting class, gender, and race from the archaeological record. It implies a framework that melds the physical world into the ideational world upon which we construct our world and has been heavily utilized in historical archaeology (e.g. Anderson & Moore 1988; Beaudry 1986, 1989; Harrington 1989; Kelso & Most 1990; Mrozowski 1987; Paynter 1990; Reinke & Hood 1984; Yentsch et al 1987). By analyzing the spatial relationship between the found artifacts and the context upon which it is in, a fuller picture can be viewed to glean information on the social aspects of past life.
Branton (2009:51) defines a landscape as simply “bounded spaces in which human behavior occur(s).” Landscapes are physical, geological areas that serve as an arena for human culture to express itself in. That being said, they are not simply a fenced area in which life happens, but a dynamic stage upon which social, economic, and political realms of human behavior acts upon. They exist in the ever present and ever changing dynamic of human perception and usage. Landscapes should be independently analyzed of one another to be fully understood (Hood 1996). The landscape can be thought of as the context for how we learn culture. A great example of this is given by Hood (1996:123): Native Americans and English immigrants occupied the same New England landscape, but whereas the Natives regarded it as “a productive realm that needed to be maintained both in ecological and spiritual balance”, the English believed it to be “howling wilderness that required improvement to bring it from a state of nature to one of productivity.”

Landscape, like the “natural” and “imagined” concept of community discussed later, has been discussed in two realms, the natural and the perceived. With this, the “natural” landscape appears before us in an untainted and pure form, unaffected by humankind. In an example close to the heart of this thesis, Glacier National Park would be considered a prime example of a “natural” landscape. But, with a closer look, it can be understood that this nomenclature is completely a subjective call. As mentioned earlier in the history of the North Fork, the first settlement of the area took place on the eastern side of the valley, in what is now GNP. The dilapidated homesteads that still remain are evidence of this past community, a community that staked claims and planned their homesteads in accordance to the landscape. Before this, Native American tribes mentioned earlier camped and used the North Fork as a travel corridor for hunting expeditions. Therefore, the notion of selecting a “natural” landscape compared to a
cultural one is not an objective process, it is a matter of cultural definition and contextualization and the overall concept of “landscapes” “exist in a continuum of human perception and usage, and they can only be individually understood in the context of one another” (Hood 1996:122).

A “perceived” landscape is on the opposite spectrum of the “natural”. In this sense, a landscape is composed by empirical feelings and thoughts by the observer. “It is, therefore, a selective impression of what the real landscape is like. The impression may be very close to reality, or it might contain some important misconceptions” (Muir 1999:115). Regardless of validity in telling the “truth” to a landscape, I believe it is this body of thought that one must probe in order to extract cultural expressions and attitudes to progress the study of archaeology.

This dialectical categorization has been disregarded by such scholar as Thomas (1993) who believes that this separation is actually based in a preconceived Western notion that focuses the idea of landscape into ownership and development. Thomas emphasizes that when one applies the term “landscape” to a specific physical area, it implies cultural significance. Therefore, “cultural landscape” is unnecessarily redundant. Also worth mentioning are “planned landscapes” where a great amount of recent archaeological literature has spent time digesting (Kelso 1984; Leone; 1984, 1987, 1988; Yentsch et al. 1987). Examples of planned landscape are formal gardens and grandiose estates such as Monticello, where the landscape represents the owner’s power and authority.

The concepts of place and space are the main forerunners of this realm of thought and should be used as the building blocks for landscape theory. “Place refers to this common human tendency to attach cultural meaning (often connected to individual or group memory) to discrete locations” (Branton 2009:52). Home, university, church, are just a few examples of “places”, which can be thought of as culturally loaded structures/areas. Each of these locales invokes a
certain type of feeling, an attitude that is culturally enforced by the community in which it lies.

On the other end of this spectrum lies space. I interpret space as a filler, a blank chunk of mass that fills the voids between places. Meskell and Preucel (2004) offer that space can be thought of as a natural science concept, a physical setting or arena where everything occurs. It is within this “space” that places occur, which are entities that can be regarded as the outcome of the social process of valuing space.

With these thoughts, I believe that interpretation lies within the community in study that is occupying the landscape. For that, I think it is relevant to take time and discuss what exactly a “community” is. By doing this, the cultural, spatial relationship between the homesteaders themselves and the North Fork Valley can be examined.

The construction of schoolhouses can be seen as a primary element in the formation of community. Historically speaking, the erection of a schoolhouse indicates solidarity within the residents of an area. I believe this act shows an unwavering level of commitment and dedication to the reproduction of social values of a particular group of people. The reproduction of social values is a keystone to the vertical transmission of culture and is discussed further by such human behavioral ecologists as Cronk (1991) and Voland (1998). It is in this arena that opportunity lies to challenge our perception of what “community” truly is and by which interpretation alters the progress of future anthropological undertakings.

As the definition of a “community” differs from ethnic group to ethnic group, there are some presumed traits and principles that appear as foundations to the term. Isbell (2000) describes the term in a twofold-shared relationship among people in residence or space that share life experiences, knowledge, goals, and sentiments. Community is a purely cultural phenomenon that is a necessary element in our species. Social communities depend on, but are not limited to,
a number of fundamental factors: ethnicity, geographic location, population size, time period, etc, to help interpret the social dynamics of the particular group.

It should be stated that “community” is a product of human social interaction. It is by this that we form identities and bonds in which we consider ourselves as members or non-members of the specific community. In this fashion, we become agents in culturally constructing our world by the simple interactions we make within our daily lives. In borrowing the notion of *habitus* from Bourdieu (1977), our worlds are structured as well as structuring. As agents, we socially inhabit a community by creating a pragmatic, principle-based cultural structure that individuals subscribe to according to common perceptions of their world. While realizing that the community is at the whims of its member’s choices and activities, it is the unconscious habitus that dictates the actions to be simultaneously structured by those practices. With this, the microscope lies firmly in “understanding the community as a socially constituted institution (and) requires a close examination of the practices by which people produce, reproduce, and transform their community, especially those in which people explicitly represent affiliations and commonalities with others” (Yaeger 2000:136).

Understanding that the community is a culturally constructed product, it is through the “practices of affiliation” (Yaeger 2000) that define the community as unique through commonalities within the physical and social/cultural landscape. But the question lies within the perception of how we define community through the “natural” and the “imagined” scopes of view.

How do we as a social species perceive “community”? What are current implications of focusing frameworks around a “natural” community or “imagined” community? Is “community” specific to particular individuals who are based by common ethnicity? By
common geographical boundaries? By shared attitudes and sentiments? Seeking to understand what community is and what role it plays in the individual, the group, or the overall larger nation state is a critical analysis in uncovering its abilities and hindrances.

There are multiple ways to view community, as a natural bounded entity complete with fixed borders or the perceived community, entailing a shared sense of being and attitudes. With this, the notion of community can be broken into two modes of thinking, as a physical space and as a social body. Isbell (2000) describes these two lenses of understanding as being the choice between applying the version of “community” in an emic or etic sense. The notion of community has been described by the anthropological community as a trait or physical reality that can be observed, implying an etic approach to the term. In doing so, the observer sees the “community” as real and natural, homogeneous, living within certain boundaries, and characterized by a shared collective consciousness (Isbell 2000). This has problematic conditions. When the “community” is defined in a natural sense, it becomes a static and insular entity due to the boundaries that are superimposed upon it and fails to be an appropriate unit upon which studies have previously, and still are, based on. When research is conducted and is based on these limiting factors, I believe the outcome will reflect the primitive anthropology of the past rather than the needed progressive contemporary field. By analyzing community in a “natural” frame of mind, an us vs. them mode of observation is produced, which hinders the analysis. Prior anthropologists such as Redfield (1953, 1955, 1956) and Murdock (1949) described the community in a “natural” light and as a having inherent and innate tendencies, as Isbell (2000: 246-247) explains:

The universal community unit was homogenous, slow-changing, and small enough for the anthropologist to treat any individual as representative of all of the members of the same age and sex. The community provided all the needs of its members, from food and shelter to socialization, religion and sex, although in the
throws of acculturation little communities sometime satisfied a few needs by going beyond their circumscribed boundaries. Finally, the community was an integrated whole without segmentation or factionalism.

On the other side of this paradigm lies the “imagined” community. Seen as dynamic, ever changing, malleable, heterogeneous, and as a key player in shaping identity, the imagined community is a perception of being without borders. An example of “imagined” communities are those based in recreation such as surfing, skiing, fishing, and many others. Similar to other imagined communities such as the academic community or a labor union, these recreationally based communities are diversified across realms of age, sex, and ethnicity. Viewing the fishing community as a ”natural” community would be a difficult task, as it is based in recreation, has no real utilitarian purpose and occurs across nation/state borders. But, it contains members from multiple social classes, has vertical and horizontal cultural transmission, has unique linguistical jargon and lives in the minds of the individuals who share the same attitudes and sentiments for prime fishing conditions.

Relating back to Bourdieu (1977) and agency theory, the imagined community employs decisions made by actors. As our communities are socially constructed, it is by the choices individuals make that form the community into which they subscribe. “The ‘imagined’ community is fluid and changing as actors select alternatives available, strive to create new ones, and pursue the goals they perceive” (Isbell 2000:249).

These notions of community reflect ideas of space and place explored in Gupta and Ferguson (1992). Following lines of postmodernist and feminist theory, these authors note that instead of “assuming the autonomy of the primeval community, we need to examine how it was formed as a community out of the interconnected space that always already existed” (Gupta & Ferguson 1992:8). These authors are vying for the use of the imagined community as well,
stating that the natural view of “community” embodies static boundaries and does not account for such social groups as immigrants and the displaced, which may identify with an imagined community of their “homeland” (Gupta & Ferguson 1992:11). “We need to give up naïve ideas of communities as literal entities, but remain sensitive to the profound “bifocality” that characterizes locally lived lives in a globally interconnected world and the powerful role of place in the “near view” of lived experience” (Peters 1992:42).

The definition of community is and will always be an elusive social and cultural term. I internalize it as a socializing agent that has vertical as well as horizontal cultural transmission and is perceived as a group of individuals acting as a larger social unit who share similar attitudes, values and beliefs. I believe that the past notion of the “natural” community has problematic tenants, such as homogeneity and stagnancy, which can be detrimental elements to future research. By focusing on the described “imagined” community, greater insight can be uncovered and be related to a progressive world where the notion of community no longer lies purely within ethnic, racial, stagnant boundaries.

**North Fork as a Rural Historic Landscape**

In National Register Bulletin 30, “a rural historic landscape is defined as a geographical area that historically has been modified by human activity, occupancy, or intervention, and that possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of areas of land use, vegetation, buildings and structures, roads and waterways, and natural features” (NPS 1999:2). By the past research that has been done, the homesteads have been considered independent sites. While this is true, it could be viewed on a larger scale with the landscape in the North Fork as continuing fabric that represents the homesteading culture. “Large acreage and a proportionately small number of buildings and structures differentiate rural historic landscapes from other kinds of
In the case of the majority of homesteads in the area, the detrimental loss of much of the architectural integrity should be understood that these properties can now be viewed as landscape archaeology.

Bulletin 30 outlines certain landscape characteristics that define a landscape as “the tangible evidence of the activities and habits of the people who occupied, developed, used and shaped the land to serve human need; they may reflect the beliefs, attitudes, traditions, and values of these people” (NPS 1999:3). These areas are noted as processes and components and are the deeming qualities upon which a landscape can be approved or disproved for eligibility. The 11 elements in this thought are: land uses and activities, patterns of social organization, response to the natural environment, cultural traditions, circulation networks, boundary demarcations, vegetation related to land use, buildings structures and objects, clusters, archaeology sites and small-scale elements. Through the application of the North Fork’s physical and cultural attributes, it becomes apparent that the area could be viewed as a rural historic landscape. Its land use was agricultural and had a small amount of cattle ranching as well with boundaries demarcated by terraces and wooden fencing. As MacDonald and Kisner (2008) notes in his research, there is evidence of past gardens in the now-wild rhubarb that grows around the some of the old homesteads. The homesteads and out buildings are still visible, some are still standing and some have fallen into disrepair. There is even one National Register listing for a historic district, the Polebridge Mercantile and the Northern Lights Saloon, which fills the “clusters” characteristic component. As mentioned previously, most of the area falls into the category of archaeology and has been researched by MacDonald & Kisner (2008), Riley (2003), Scott (1989), Bick (1986) and Karsmiziki (1997). In the social realm of the North Fork, circulation networks appear through historical evidence of the post offices that were in the area,
Kintla, Polebridge and Belton. The Kintla Post office, for example, was located at the Schoenberger's and was reported to be receiving 80 separate families mail at one time. This would require settlers to make the trip to the Schoenberger's and collect their mail, transforming it into a social hub as well as a post office (Bick 1986). Cultural traditions seen in the area could be viewed as the lifestyle of homesteading with fur trapping and hunting influences; a cultural tradition of “living off the land” and being as self-sufficient as possible.

I believe that the North Fork possesses traits that can be deemed eligible for listing with the NRHP as a rural historic landscape through Criteria A: association with a historic event; homesteading. The Homestead Act spurred on the homestead movement, which was a monumental event for the settlement of the American west. Even though establishing the North Fork as a rural historic landscape isn’t needed, as is already eligible without the designation (it would still be classified as a site), it would establish a wide-angle lens of viewing for the importance the homesteaders brought to this area. By viewing this valley as a larger complex, it becomes a community of interrelated players that worked within a larger arena of social and economic forces.

The landscape can be seen as a determining element affecting the settlers of the North Fork in many ways. As the landscape was rugged and vast, it altered the traditional forms of vernacular architecture, as mentioned in the architecture chapter, to accommodate harsher winters and the lack of public space for social functions. Schools became a dual purpose structure due to this landscape; the amount of space between homesteaders created the need for a public building not only to educate their children but to be used to serve the community in a number of fashions.
Due to the grandeur and beauty of what is now Glacier National Park, the political powers that be sanctioned the land to be public property in the hopes that everyone to have the chance “to the full use and enjoyment of this land” (GNP 1910). This was in conflict with the interests of the settlers, as mentioned, who viewed the space as their bucolic home; they valued it as a place rather than a public park that had to be shared with the masses.

The landscape of the North Fork can, and should, be viewed as a rural historic landscape. By doing this, the “bigger picture” becomes more apparent and the entire valley can be seen in all modes of past life. In a rural historic landscape, the natural environment is used and altered to make a living. This reflects the adaptations of the specific region as well as the political, economic and social forces mentioned above. As the area was so remote, it was extremely interconnected out of necessity for survival. This makes it imperative that the whole of the North Fork be viewed as a one specific player in the American homestead movement. When this is done, it can properly be compared and contrasted to other homesteading area’s tactics and strategies in modes of living.
Chapter 5

ARCHITECTURE AND THE NORTH FORK

The North Fork lacked a visible infrastructure, such as separate buildings for a post office and community meeting structures, which was common in small rural communities. With this in mind, how did the perception of public space affect the architecture in the budding community?

Homestead Construction and Historical Architecture

“In passing through the country one may see cabins, barns, chicken coops, pig pens and woodsheds, each in some stage of construction. Despite the obstacles one encounters in freighting in material, no fewer than 12 buildings have gone up in the past year. Most of these are not the ordinary squatty little dirt-roofed cabins, but trim looking buildings with two stories, full sized windows, real doors and neatly and cozily furnished inside” [Columbian, Dec. 28, 1912].

Due to the remote location that these homesteaders were living, the inaccessibility of conventional building materials such as milled lumber was an obstacle that had to be overcome. The natural environment encouraged the North Forker’s to use what was on hand in housing construction. “The remarkable extent to which the log buildings in the North Fork exhibit similar construction (to framed houses) characteristics may be attributed to the fact that more than a half-dozen settlers were noted cabin builders and had a hand in the construction of most of the major buildings” (Bick 1989:29). It is an impressive feat to consider that the average North Fork settler had five substantial log buildings, as well as extensive pole or log snaked fencing built within five years to meet the requirements to “prove up” on a claim (Bick 1989:29).
These buildings had unique design to cope with the harsh climate. Bick’s (1986) study found that the unique construction of these dwellings had distinct elements to combat harsh climate that this northern area experienced (figure 11). She notes that the settlers developed ways to modify the typical gable roofed, log cabin in manners such as smoothing the tops and bottoms of wall logs to ensure a tight fit and be better insulated, extremely well chinked, again to help keep warmth in, and have roofs sturdy enough for heavy snowfall. With this, she comments on some practices are rarely seen outside of Montana and Idaho; most houses featured log infill on the gable ends, which gave more support to the roof purlins, logs would extend past the eave line to provide more support for wide, side-roof overhangs, and construction of exaggerated roof projections reaching 4 to 8 feet over the main entrance were given for snow clearance (Bick 1986). Also the roofing shakes, which were long, hand-split, cedar or tamarack, were 2½ - 3 feet and were longer than normal shakes. This handsome design was an “inessential luxury” and
spanned the distance between the roof purlins and the roof planking in one shake. Bick notes that this style of shakes is rarely seen outside of northwestern Montana and Idaho.

The needed insulation came from a tight connection between the logs. Chinking in the North Fork took a handful of different forms. Mud and animal hair can still be seen at standing residences such as Johnnie Walsh and J.K. Miller (Bick 1986). Cabins that were located more towards the meadow utilized the wet moss that was available. Poles were then fashioned on top of the chinking to provide an extra blanket of insulation. Overall, the first homesteads in the area comprised of generally one or two room cabins with steeply pitched gable roofs. The first generation cabins all used single saddle or lap notch corner timbering with foundations consisting of sill logs set on rock alignments. As mentioned earlier, logs were the most plentiful material and were used whenever possible. Floor joints, roof purlins, and framing were used with logs. It wasn’t uncommon to see hand hewn log flooring as well, but plank flooring was more popular. Windows were small, multi-paned casements and the interiors were unfinished hand-hewn log walls. It should be noted that no historic buildings in the North Fork have evidence of plastered walls.

Bick explains that instead of adding additions to homesteads, many build completely new residences. This date of new construction marked the tail end of the first world war when fortunes improved due to prospective oil exploration, tourism, and ranching, and better roads were constructed.
for hauling supplies to the home sites. In this new era of house construction ("second
generation"), all but one settler stayed with the log building tradition. It is noted that a similar
design was kept but on a larger scale, with most cabins reaching 1 ½-2 stories (figure 12). Also,
with the better built road in 1918, more modern materials used such as the use of more milled
lumber, larger windows, shingled roofs, and a few concrete foundations (Columbian 1921).

Rural living required certain out buildings for ventures in farming and ranching. These
outbuildings could have been hay barns, animal corrals, wood shops, log spring houses, privies,
root cellars, and in some cases bunk houses. Bick has noticed common characteristics in the out
buildings of the North Fork, such as unusually large root cellars and extremely well constructed
privies. The root cellars were a necessity due to short growing seasons and the privies had to be
durable because of frequent relocation. The privies’ mark what Bick calls extremely well
constructed buildings being that they show dovetail corner timbering, which is the most difficult
type of notch to cut (figure 13).

All the structures discussed, cabins and outbuildings alike, would have dotted the landscape of the North Fork. A
traveler would have encountered these well constructed log buildings along meadows, next to creek beds and other open
areas of land. A testament to quality craftsmanship can be seen in the McCarthy homestead which is still standing today (figure
14 and 15). In the next section, the building methods and raw
materials where used in the same remarkable caliber discussed here
to serve the community as a whole rather than a purely personal use.
Figure 14. McCarthy Homestead (courtesy of Glacier National Park)

McCarthy Homestead, figure 14, oldest homestead still retaining architectural integrity and one of only two homesteads claimed by women. Photo taken in mid 1910’s

Figure 15. McCarthy Homestead (MacDonald & Kinser 2008)

The still standing McCarthy Homestead, 2008 (figure 15).

Public space

When dealing with public space in a homesteading frame of mind, the idea of a formal shared piece of land is hard to conceptualize. When filing for a homestead claim, as discussed
earlier, the individual understands that the land that one would be settling would be without any form of infrastructure. Plots were given to anyone who had intent to “prove up” and better the land in terms of development. That said, there was little reason for a homesteader to file for land other than the purpose of development in a homesteading fashion. In fact, an oral interview by Ben Hensen, an early settler reminisces about trying to acquire a homestead that had been relinquished by a previous Forest Service Ranger. Since this plot had been used as a Ranger station, the land was under the auspices of “administrative use” and unobtainable for development as a legitimate homestead (Mish 1976a). Therefore, homestead claims were only sought after for what could be thought of as personal use. This led the homesteading community to use or informally donate parcels of their own land for use in public affairs, usually in the construction of schools which could also be used for other purposes than just education. Also, certain residences had specific additions built to accommodate large groups of people for public social events as well as certain residences constructed to function as a post office for the region. I believe that this notion of community public space, or lack of it, influenced the type of architecture that was used in the North Fork.

A fine example of a private residence turned into a public building is the Charlie Schoenberger homestead. Charlie’s original structure was a traditional first generation one story log cabin where he and his family lived and served as the Kintla Post Office (unofficially for the first two years) from 1914-1918. It become official in 1916 and Charlie built an addition on the front of his cabin to serve as the post office, which served approximately 80 families. When the Post Office moved to the nearby Walsh homestead, the Schoenberger’s built a two storied log residence that became “a popular spot for all-night community dances” in which 40 to 50 people would usually attend (Bick 1986:18). The Schoenberger homestead’s privy was that of a two
hole type, suggesting that the large social events would have demanded to accommodate these needs on a larger capacity. This building exemplifies the need for a large structure to accommodate social functions in the North Fork.

The Walsh homestead has a similar story as that of the Schoenberger’s. When the Post office moved from the Schoenberger’s to the Walsh’s in spring of 1918, Johnnie Walsh built a 16’ x 15’ addition to the front of his log cabin to accommodate his wife’s position as postmistress. This homestead became a social hub for the community, serving mail to approximately 250 people on both sides of the river. Johnnie also constructed a guest lodge in 1922 to host tourists and travelers, but never quite finished the building. Bick (1986) notes that it is the largest building of its time on the Park side of the North Fork and even has a privy that was equipped with a men’s and women’s showers.

On a final note relating to community built projects, McKay (1994) discusses problems that the homesteaders encountered as the population shifted to the west side of the river. With the community being split, the homesteaders themselves constructed two “flying Dutchman” cable cars to transport themselves and goods across the Flathead River. Also, they constructed a 400’ polebridge from which the community still bears the name “Polebridge”. Although not exactly a type of architecture, this shows a level of self sufficiency that was needed in the North Fork and relates to the overall community structure that the settlers depended on for survival (McKay 1994).

I believe that these certain architectural designs that were incorporated into the community formed a degree of co-dependence as well as distinct social networking that could be extremely beneficial in stressful times. These designs were not just utilized in the Glacier area, but were types of accommodation that can be seen in homesteading areas across the west. The
North Fork homesteading community falls under the umbrella of a larger entity that has historical importance on a larger, nation wide agenda.
CHAPTER 6

The Historical record

This excerpt (figure 16) brings life to the Polebridge Schoolhouse. The above poem evokes jolly feelings of a festive, silly event put on by the community. This event is one of many that has been recorded as taking place in the small log schoolhouse. Social events like this help us envision the recovered artifacts as having an animated existence, an existence that promoted community togetherness and a break from the difficult nature of homesteading. For any historical archaeological endeavor, the written record is an indispensable tool. It gives life to the fallen down homesteads, breath to the living souls that resided in our past communities, and personal sentiments to the space they occupied. By reviewing such records as school registries, newspaper articles, censuses, and other documents, a more detailed story can be told than the excavated materials could ever tell on their own.

For the undertakings of this project, the most comprehensive were newspaper articles from the *Columbian*. The Columbian reported on local and nationwide events that played a part
in the lives of the North Fork settlers. These clippings that I excerpted from microfilm give detailed information on “North Fork Happenings”.

I aim to explore all social functions that happen throughout the North Fork valley between 1917 and 1925. By doing this, I believe that a more well rounded picture of social events can be painted that can reflect attitudes and sentiments of the whole valley instead of those localized around Polebridge. Common social events throughout this time period include dances, Christmas, Thanksgiving, and other holiday programs, plays, science based lectures, community meetings, wedding receptions, PTA meetings, and Sunday school events. Also, the *Columbian* reports on economic conditions in the North Fork, such as the waxing and waning interest in oil extraction, seed prices, and various shifting employment opportunities in the form of mail carriers, needed sawyers, and horse packers for the Park.

As persistently stated throughout this thesis, schoolhouses in rural communities served as a venue for social gatherings as well as their designed educational purpose. To illustrate this, a break down of all the social events held in schoolhouses throughout the North fork from 1917 to 1925 has been compiled. For dances/balls, 20 of them took place in a schoolhouse. The schools also held most of the annual holiday events such as Thanksgiving and Christmas programs (which usually consisted of singing by the students, plays by students and community members, dinners and dances) New Years and Easter parties. Of these, 11 were held in schools and none were mentioned to be held in private residences. These get-togethers could be quite elaborate, with different themes pertaining to the event and hard to get food items would be there (oyster Christmas dinners, New Year party awards given to the tackiest dressed). There was one religious service held in 1917, the first time a minister had visited the North Fork. There were
three mentions of Sunday School services, but it can be presumed there were more (one article talks about holding it at a certain time each week). See figure 17.

The Columbian also reported of social events held in the private residences of the homesteaders. During this time period, there were 14 dances/parties/celebrations in private homes reported by the periodical. The largest mentioned was held at the Trail Creek Post Office, which was a homesteaders home, and amazingly, had 147 people attend.

The most valuable piece of information that comes from these clippings is irrefutably the evidence of community involvement in building the schools. Balls and dances were held to raise money for building material and school supplies. This shows that the homesteaders were active participants in forming a collective community that represented their social attitudes and cultural beliefs.

Settlers of the area are congratulated for their charity when they donate school supplies, as well as commended for superior craftsmanship. Money was given by the school district, the North Fork falls under district 19 of the Flathead County school district, but added time and effort by the homesteaders to make the schools a public space that was of the upmost quality can be gleaned from the newspaper.

There were 6 PTA meetings reported, but it was also noted by a school inspector that PTA met once a month in the Upper North Fork School. It can be said that the Parent Teacher Association was visible in all the schools, but much more apparent in the Upper North Fork School (see figure 18). PTA was involved in setting up certain social events, raising money for their “flying machine” which was a cable and cart system to get over the Flathead river. “It is
now possible for everybody to get to the Upper North Fork school building and enjoy a hearty and welcome part in the school and community work” (Columbian 1919).

“This organization works to promote school and community projects. The association has built a good fence around the school grounds; purchased dishes for the use of the school serving hot lunches, as well as for use in their meetings. It has assisted in their school garden, and in cleaning up the school grounds. The programs are varied from time to time. They usually consist of a business session, a program by pupils and parents, music and dances. It has purchased rope to be used in the “Flying Machine”, which crosses the river. The officers are backed by a live community” [Columbian March 2, 1919]

This article also gives breadth to diet by the community. PTA tried to make hot lunches a normal occurrence during the winter months of school. They facilitated school gardens upon which could be made into these hot lunches. The school garden at the Upper North Fork School grew carrots, rutabagas, cauliflower, beets, onions, radishes, turnips, lettuce, cabbage, parsley, peas and potatoes. The school also had a flower garden.

More information about diet can be gathered from Mish’s oral interviews conducted in the mid 1970s. As a child, Frank Hamor ate sourdough pancakes and fresh fish for breakfast everyday in the North Fork. As a result, he lived out the rest of his days unable to eat either one (Mish 1976d). Venison was the main meat source and North Forker’s depended on it as a staple, especially during the long winter months. Mrs. Harry Keith, step daughter to Bill Adair recalls “Game wardens sort of closed their eyes on the people of the North Fork because they wouldn’t have had any meat if they didn’t have venison… We were ravenous for a mouthful of good beef in the spring” (Mish 1976e). Pork was often kept through the winter, but ran the risk of spoiling. As a young child, Mrs. Keith had the unpleasant task of washing mildew and mold off of ham and bacon with a vinegar solution (Mish 1976e).
These clippings give an indication of what type of education was being given. There was “manual training” which was taught boys basic carpentry. This is evident in an article concerning curtains that were donated to the Upper North Fork School, which was “to be used for the cupboard used for the hot lunch work and the book case, both made by the Fourth grade boys during manual training periods of this term” (Columbian 1918a). The girls participated in “bread-baking and garment making work” (Columbian 1918a) and both genders helped out cooking during school and community events. The vegetables from the school garden would be used for hot lunches when appropriate and each student would take turns cooking for the class. Student clubs were formed, such as an alfalfa club and a bread club. The alfalfa club was for the boys, each member was in charge of one acre of alfalfa. Once it was raised it was taken to competitions. Similarly, the girls would bake bread and take it to the competitions.

From Montana’s State Department of Instruction report, State Course of Study for Rural Schools, 1919 (1919), a glimpse of what type of curriculum was being taught in the North Fork. Reading, language, spelling, arithmetic, history, civics, hygiene and physiology, geography, physical education, nature and agriculture, music, industrial arts (handwork), sewing and junior red cross work, and cooking and homemaking were the subjects defined as needed courses of stud for rural schools in Montana in 1919. This is a bit different from the register (figure 19), where the students were graded in the following: reading, spelling, arithmetic, grammar, physical education, history, geography, civics, agriculture, penmanship, music, and art. It seems subjects such as industrial arts, sewing and junior red cross work, hygiene and physiology, and cooking and homemaking may have been incorporated into daily life and not specifically graded upon.
In an interview with Frank Hamor, a student at the Red Meadow School in 1914, he recalls there being an unwritten law in the classroom: “Whenever a pack train came by, all the children could run out to see it and wave to the packers as they went by” (Mish 1976d).

Reminiscences such as these paint a brighter, more vivid picture of how life as well as schooling was for those in the North Fork. By this statement from Frank, it is evident that the area had very few travelers. Frank also recalls having class outside on nice days and being responsible for carrying the water pail to the schoolhouse everyday. He remembers all night parties, parties where older folks would play cards till the morning and the kids would have to sleep cross-wise on a bed in order to accommodate all of them. He remembers his Father telling his Mother to shoot any draft dodgers on their way to Canada if they came up to the house while he wasn’t there; “Whenever I’m gone and one of those fellas comes this way, get the rifle and tell him to go back. If he doesn’t, shoot, kill ‘im” (Mish 1976d).

In relating the schoolhouse to the larger culture of homesteaders, Montana’s State Department of Public Instruction’s *State Course of Study for Rural Schools, 1919* (1919) curriculum also gives its individual rural schools a report card. On Standardization Day, a day mentioned in the *Columbian*, focused on nationalism and worked to motivate pride in small one-room schoolhouses across Montana. I believe this has to do the closing of World War I and the sensitivity America endured through this difficult time. Standardization Day included eight main

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**Figure 19. 1921-1922 Polebridge Schoolhouse register (courtesy of Kalispell Superintendents Office)**

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points that could help the day promote national pride and build community solidarity. These eight suggestions are 1) the event be an outdoor festival or picnic, 2) the school trustees explain to patrons the things needed to change for a better school, 3) an inspirational speech on “better schools, rural health, cooperation, or some other topic of general interest” be given, 4) “that there be an exhibit of garden products, canned fruit and vegetables, bread, etc. representing the work of the children”, 5) children’s programs consist of regular schoolwork, story telling, dramatization, debate, and primary reading class, 6) “that there be community music of patriotic and folk songs, 7) simple games are played by young and old, and 8) results from the standardization report be sent to county newspapers.

Dave Walter, a writer for the Montana Magazine, received a box of receipts and records from William Adair’s Polebridge Mercantile. The mercantile ran from 1914 till 1942 and was a key player in the formation of the North Fork community. As mentioned in the Historical context chapter, Adair’s mercantile was first built on the eastern portion of the North Fork, within GNP land in 1904 (Bick 1986). Sensing a changing of tides with settlement in the valley, he relocated his business to the western portion to cater towards the influx of homesteaders to the area. From 1914 to 1920, Adair’s Mercantile false fronted building was the only commercial store located in the North Fork (Walter 1986). The mercantile served as the commercial and social hub for the North Fork during its operation and the store

![North Fork Ball Was a Big Success](image.jpg)

Figure 20. Oct. 3rd, 1918
Columbian
records illuminate the cultural and social tones of the area (see figure 19).

The records, discovered in an old Bon Ami Box, give insight into the social fabric of the North Fork community. Walter notes that the order books and duplicate charge slips from day to day transactions from the mercantile show a heavy reliance on credit rather than cash. “The use of credit accommodated a clientele often scattered far from the store, but it also indicates the nature of subsistence homesteading, in which income is very seasonal” (Walter 1985:14). In his analysis of these records, it becomes apparent that settlers could trade for goods as well as work off tabs in the store; Johnny Walsh sold “ranch butter” (as opposed to “creamery butter”) for 35 cents a pound, Howard Miller traded 1,000 board-feet of lumber for a $25 store credit, and Earl Ballard worked in the mercantile for 11 days to pay off a $33 bill (Walter 1985). These records tell of employment, and recreation as well. In example, George Grubb purchased 25 pounds of shake nails and 25 pounds of #20 spikes; indicating he is involved in the building of cabin, Earl Ballard bought 21 pounds of oyster shells; most likely he is raising laying hens, Bill Turner bought “one White Wobbler” for a dollar in early June; probably going fishing for the large Bull Trout run that is coming on, and lastly, the large number of #4 and #0 traps sold show that a great deal of trapping is still present in the North Fork (Walter 1985:14). For those pursuing ranching and farming in the area, timothy, Dakota wheat, oats, sweet and Alaskan clover, and rye were the most commonly ordered feed seeds, while packaged seeds requested in late April or early May involved rutabagas, beets, turnips, onion sets, radishes, carrots and cabbages (Walter 1985). One of the most interesting items found in Walter’s research is the lack of meat ordered. At Adair’s Mercantile, the only meat one could buy was slab bacon and ham (Walter 1985). This reinforces the dependency on wild game and locally raised livestock.
A glimpse at wealth can be seen in Columbia (1918b) clippings concerning Red Cross donations (figure 21). These donations were given to help the Red Cross in their WWI efforts. The Columbian listed the North Fork donation numbers as well as the Columbia Falls numbers. By finding an average donation we can see how the rural countryside compares to the more populated city. When tallied up the average amount given from each individual North forker was $1.92 ($36.50 / 19). Columbia Falls weighs in at $3.07 given per individual ($666.60 / 217). I’ve taken out a $50 donation from the James A. Talbott bank, but there are still other business donations from Columbia Falls which have skewed results. Regardless it can be seen the North Fork is on a lower economic scale than that of Columbia Falls. The demise of the Polebridge Schoolhouse happened on the night of July 4th, 1924 (figure 22). The individual or party that had a “clear case of the fire bug” was never found. I visited the Kalispell County Courthouse and searched their records for any indication of an investigation into suspected arson on the date. With no luck there, I searched a name that was told to me by Larry Wilson (2010), long time resident and history buff of the North Fork. The story that he has heard was that Dottie Thayer, wife of the early Park Ranger Ralph Thayer, was said to have hated children. The Thayer house was adjacent to the school (plot 2A) and, in attempts to rid her
homestead of noisy children, she burned the school down (Wilson 2010). There are no records that indicate that this is true whatsoever, Dottie’s name is clear of any criminal mischief. This excerpt gives reassurance that the Polebridge Schoolhouse was located at the spot where I excavated. The descriptions of items lost in the fire are items that I recovered during the excavation and will be discussed in the following chapter. The destruction of the schoolhouse is interesting question that has been left unanswered. It isn’t confirmed, but the historical record suggests that it is highly likely that the schoolhouse was destroyed by an act of arson. Why would someone burn down a schoolhouse? With all the notions of group solidarity and of what a tight knit community the North Fork was, what would bring an individual or individuals to destroy the area’s only communal structure? There is another case of the “firebug”, but it is much more unfortunate than the loss of a small log building. The Wurtzes owned a homestead north of Polebridge. Now registered in the NHRP, the Wurtz’s cabin is now a Flathead NF rental cabin. Frank and Ella Wurtz moved to the North Fork in 1914. By 1919, the Wurtzes had proved up on their homestead claim, cleared brush and cultivated the rugged land, and built three structures. The same year, the original family cabin burned down in the heat of July, 1919. When the flames were put out, two of the
Wurtz’s children, Marie and Harold, were nowhere to be seen (Montana History Wiki 2012). It was believed to be an act of arson designed to cover up the abduction of the two small children. With all the glowing references to the upstanding citizens that were the North Forkers, we need to remember that it also had skeletons hiding in its thick, forested closets. The Wurtzes, overcome with grief, left the North Fork with their remaining child, nine-year-old Louise, and donated a building to the community to be used as a schoolhouse (figure 23). They eventually returned to the North Fork a decade later.

Figure 23. Wurtz Cabin/Schoolhouse (Caledonia McNeely)
Although schoolhouse archaeology is an emerging topic of anthropological dialogue, there have been theoretical discussions on the most useful framework to analyze schoolhouses as an archaeological entity. In April Beisaw’s (2009) article “Constructing Institution-Specific Site Formation Models”, she has derived a model that can help guide one’s interpretation through a streamlined process. The one-roomed schoolhouse site formation model identifies six key processes, rebuilding, relocation, renovation, con-current uses, consolidation or abandonment, and reuse. By arranging schoolhouse potential through these processes it is possible to “target areas of higher artifact deposition, interpret the large quantities of architectural debris, and relate recovered data to a variety of historical sources, contributing to the history of the schools and their communities” (Beisaw 2003:64). Through this institution specific site formation model, the identification and interpretation of schoolhouse sites have and can be utilized in a beneficial way towards the understanding of public spaces.

Figure 24. Location of Polebridge Schoolhouse
The Polebridge School Site, site number 24FH0258, is located approximately a quarter mile northeast of the Polebridge Mercantile. It lies just west of the North Fork Road before Vance Hill (figure 24). This Smithsonian number was given on November 15th, 2011. The site has significance under Criteria A., for its association with a historic event. As discussed earlier, the schoolhouse holds archaeological information that can be used to better understand late stages of the Homesteading Movement.

Fieldwork started on June 24th, 2010. John Fredrick, the property owner, and I walked around the site (figure 25) and he recalled as much information as he could. He showed me areas of raised earth where he believed the school used to be, a small depression thought to be the remnants of an outhouse and some school related artifacts that he had found. John bought the property where the schoolhouse now lies in 1991. He has bought other parcels in Charlie Wise’s
homestead, which Charlie staked in 1914 and patented in 1917. As Charlie’s property was broken up and sold in parcels, John now owns 2L (figure 26). It now has a few cabins that John rents out as well as pastures and barns to accommodate the most full time residents, horses Jelly Bean and Skippy.

Figure 26. Platt record

These two have actually helped out quite a bit. Thanks to the horses, the grass on the site was very short and made identifying features a simple task. John told me that the area had been logged before it was turned into a horse pasture. When this was done, they piled all the slash into a pile, where he had found some artifacts. Namely, the cylinder canister of a large map and some of the desks fragments. John also pointed out a cluster of round river rocks, which he
believed could have been where a flagpole was situated. From chatting with John and conducting my own preliminary survey, I created a rough sketch map. This was later digitized and enhanced, seen in fig. 27. From there, I overlaid the digitized features onto an overhead satellite image (figure 28).

Figure 27. Plain view
Figure 28. Polebridge Schoolhouse site map
I began excavations on the first of July, 2010. Before digging, the schoolhouse was measured: 9 x 7 meters. My first one by one meter excavation unit was placed on what I believed to be the front of the schoolhouse. In the end, I put in 18 one by one meter units throughout the schoolhouse, all but one focusing on the foundation of the absent structure. It has been noted in Beisaw (2003:56), the “excavation within schoolhouse foundations has proved very fruitful and should be a main focus of future excavations.” Throughout all of the excavation I found this to be true and spent most of my time on the “inside of the schoolhouse” (see figure 31). Depth of each unit varied on amount of artifacts encountered, but levels changed every 10 cm. I labeled each unit with a number and then gave each level a letter, i.e. 1A= 0-10 cm., 1B=10-20 cm, etc. It should be noted that there weren’t any artifacts encountered past 40 cm. in the schoolhouse feature and no prehistoric artifacts were found in the entire site.
In order to sample as much as possible and get a relative idea where the highest artifact concentrations were located, I bounced around from one side to the schoolhouse to the other frequently. All material was excavated from its unit and screened through ¼ in mesh and separated into three main categories; metal and glass, ceramic, and special finds (figure 30). Special finds included cutlery, buttons, tin cups and other items that were particularly unique. Every unit was photographed. If a unit’s sidewalls were particularly interesting, they were photographed and a profile sketch was completed of each side.

![Figure 30. Screening](image1)

![Figure 31. Excavation](image2)

The following two photos (figure 32 and 33) show the before and after of the excavation.
It should be noted that a positive structure foundation was not encountered during the excavation. There were cobble sized stones encountered that could have been part of the foundation at one time, but were found too infrequently to make a positive determination.
Lab Methods

Laboratory analysis began in the fall of 2010. After a process of trial and error in search of the best format to enter my data, I decided to use a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for all of my different features and categories. The outcome was five separate spreadsheets; School Artifacts, Privy and Midden Artifacts, School Ceramics, Privy and Midden Ceramics, and Privy Faunal Remains. The artifact spreadsheets included the following categories for all recovered items: unit, material, description, additional information/ color, weight, size, count, thickness, and notes. As some artifacts could not be classified in certain categories, such as size of glass shards, the column was left blank. I attempted to separate flat or pane glass and bottle glass the best I could, but as the schoolhouse had burned, a large portion of glass had melted and become ugly, indiscernible, globular chunks that were hard to sort with 100% accuracy. Therefore, glass that was presumed to be flat glass, burned or not, wasn’t individually counted. Instead, I relied on its weight to glean information from. This was also the case for other materials encountered that were troublesome when a precise count was sought, such as chunks of daubing and the highly degraded fragments of tin.

Due to the nature of deposition, objects that once were whole often become broken once entered into the archaeological record. One glass bottle easily turns into 50 fragmented shards. As Barbra Voss puts it, “People don’t use sherds, they use vessels” (Voss & Allen 2010:1). To better understand how many original vessels were at the site, a quantitative minimum number of vessel (MVC) assessment was made in the lab. By lumping artifacts into groups by color and type, i.e., round, cobalt base with round, cobalt body sherd, a more accurate representation of how the site was used can be seen. MVC count is explored deeper in Voss and Allen (2010), Colton (1953), Shepard (1956), Rye (1981), Chase (1985), Miller (1986), Rice (1987), Sinopoli
For the purpose of this project, MVC was conducted for ceramics, glass bottles, tin cans as well as certain artifacts such as the school desk and victrola. Tin can fragments were very numerous, which made it difficult to estimate whole can numbers. Therefore, if cans were not recovered in their whole, original state, then an estimated count was given from the amount of bases and rims found. Another issue encountered was estimating MVC when matching sherds lie in multiple units. To counter this with glass and cans, I made two spreadsheets; one with count of individual sherds and one with an estimated MVC count. With the ceramics, I recorded the original provenience on a spreadsheet and then mixed all the base, rim and handle sherds in each individual feature together in hopes of cross mending to get a more accurate number of total vessels.

Metal artifacts were cataloged by the previously mentioned categories. The most commonly encountered object, nails, were classified on the pennyweight system and organized into categories for purpose, such as common, framing, finishing, etc. A large amount of tin cans and associated can fragments were also recovered. If found intact, the cans were measured and weighed, with extra attention given to the method of opening (i.e., knife pry, can opener, church key, etc.) which gives indication of what could have originally lied within the can. Instead of being counted as individual artifacts, all cans and associated can scrap was weighed. All other metal objects found were cataloged by weight and size with an extra effort given to describe the item as best as possible.

Glass was examined in two groups, pane or flat glass presumed to be from window glass and glass remains from vessels. Bottle glass was identified and recorded by color, type (finish,
shoulder, base, etc.) and unique features, such as seams. As mentioned above, only bottles and bottle shards were individually counted. Pane glass was simply weighed.

All of the ceramics recovered were of the same material, earthenware in the form of ironstone with an alkaline glaze. Ceramics were organized by type; rim, base, or body. From there, the rims were measured for an estimated diameter as well as percentage found from a template found in Arkush and Sutton’s (1998) *Archaeological Laboratory Methods*. From here, the ceramic vessels were further analyzed by examining the thickness and shape of the rim.

Artifact identification was usually done by consulting the world wide web. Web searches provided a great deal of help to pin down what the artifact in question actually was. This will be evident in the results and discussion chapter, where the fragment/item recovered has been compared to photos found on the web. Sears and Roebuck Catalogs from 1897 (1897), 1902 (1902), and 1927 (1927) were consulted to identify certain artifacts, such as utensils. Faunal remains were painstakingly identified due to the help of Matt Walsh and David Dyer, as well as through consulting *Mamalian Osteology* (Gilbert 1990). An email correspondence was struck up with Paul Edie (2010), a renowned Victorla expert, who helped greatly with discerning the Victorla remains.

For a simple visual representation of the assemblage, as well as an appropriate grouping to help answer my research questions, artifacts were further lumped into seven categories for charts: nails, hardware, domestic, serving, school related, bottle glass and unknown purpose. Nails were just that, nails in the form of carpentry (2d-5d), common (6d-16d), framing (20d-60d), and finishing nails. Nails were counted and classified but not used in the some of the artifact discussions in the results chapter. Hardware consisted of screws, door and window materials (doorknobs, latches, hinges, etc) springs, washers, and other hardware that wasn’t
considered nails. Domestic materials included cans, button, tobacco tag, pliers, and the victrola. Serving materials were artifacts that could be associated entertaining and serving, such as metal cups, coffee pot, spoons, and forks. School related artifacts were objects that are associated with education, such as desks, ink jars, chalk, and pencils. The unknown category was all the miscellaneous metal objects that couldn’t be appropriately categorized.
Chapter 8

RESULTS

The excavations on the Polebridge Schoolhouse site revealed a total of 3,704 metal, glass, ceramic, faunal/flora artifacts (figure 34). These artifacts represent a community living in a remote, isolated landscape and can be used to gain insight upon their cultural attitudes and daily lives.

![Artifacts by Individual Count](image)

**Figure 34. Artifact chart**

The following table (table 2) gives breadth to the artifacts found by analyzing their provenience. This allows a closer study of the patterns found relating to the schoolhouse, 2 middens, and the privy. The table is broken up into the following categories: architecture, serving ware, bottles, domestic, school related, flora and fauna, and other. By addressing the features by their specific finds, we see that the schoolhouse contained the majority of artifacts. Nails in the schoolhouse dominate the assemblage ($n=1584$), as would be expected in an
architectural setting. Other architectural materials such as door and window parts (n=23) and screws (n=37) were found only in the schoolhouse. The schoolhouse contained most of the ceramics (n=926) and all of the serving ware (n=54) as well as domestic items such as the button and tobacco tag. School related objects were found in the schoolhouse (n=15), the privy (n=7), and the feature with the highest count, midden 2 (n=181). Also visible is the difference in the 2 middens; midden 1 seems to have been the primary can dump (9.25 lbs, higher than any other feature) whereas midden 2 contained much more glass than any other material (n=273). This suggests that patrons of the school and community affairs deliberately separated their household waste into respective areas. The privy was found to contain two deer carcasses and evidence of one grouse as well as a peach pit (n=99).

This table speaks to the type of community the North Fork fostered. Through the artifacts we can envision a tightly knit group of individuals electing to live away from the busy city streets and under the majestic curtain of Glacier National Park. A community that came together for celebrations and danced to records played on the community purchased victrola. A group of people that brought in their own canned goods to share with everyone, served coffee and coco on a variety of serving vessels, and disregarded prohibition and drank beer. This chapter will further discuss the found objects that give light to homestead communities.

In processing the artifacts, organizing can fragments and flat glass shards became problematic. With both, identifying each fragment or shard as an individual artifact wouldn’t have given any additional insight and would have been incredibly painstaking. Instead, flat glass, or pane glass, and all tin fragments found that could be associated with cans were weighed.
TABLE 2. PATTERN ANALYSIS OF POLBEBRIDGE SCHOOLHOUSE SITE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact Group</th>
<th>SCHOOLHOUSE</th>
<th>MIDDEN 1</th>
<th>MIDDEN 2</th>
<th>PRIVY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Count</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARCHITECTURE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nails</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>1584</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Screws</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tacks</td>
<td>.01%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Door and Window Parts</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat Glass</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVING WARE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ceramics</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin Vessels</td>
<td>.01%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utensils</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOTTLES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canning Jars</td>
<td>.01%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ale</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>Unknown</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOMESTIC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cans</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Button</td>
<td>.01%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victrola</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tool</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Tag</td>
<td>.01%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL RELATED</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ink Vessels</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamp Glass</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pencil</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalk</td>
<td>.01%</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desk</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FLORA/FAUNA</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2699</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Bulk weight for flat glass- 13.28 lbs  
**Bulk weight for Schoolhouse cans- 1.63 lbs  
***Bulk weight for Midden 1 cans- 9.25 lbs  
****Bulk weight for Midden 2 cans- .17 lbs  
*****Bulk weight for Privy cans- 5.68 lbs
The Polebridge Schoolhouse site is now recognized as site 24FH0258. As mentioned, the site contains four features all together; a schoolhouse, one privy and two middens. Most of the soil in the schoolhouse feature consisted of a light brown silty loam with about 15% gravel content. Charcoal flecking was present in almost all units and a large number of burned timbers were recovered. The depositional environment in this area is alluvial and the site has little to no slope. Other soil types were encountered but are believed to be present due to the decay of some of the building materials, such as sandy deposits from foundational materials, large cobbles placed around the outside of the foundation, and orange-ish soil due to the daubing and possibly a brick like substance. Soil in the privy as well as midden 1 were of the same type mentioned but lacking in the charcoal flecking. Midden 2 exhibited a great amount of gravel content approximately 15 cm. below the surface.

**Dating the Site**

The following table is a breakdown of diagnostic artifacts that were recovered during the excavation.

**TABLE 3. DATING ANALYSIS OF DIAGNOSTIC ARTIFACTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>MVC/ Whole Artifact Count</th>
<th>Date Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wire nail</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Post 1880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironstone plain white ceramic vessels</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Post 1815, most likely 1900+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle glass, SCA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1880-1915</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle glass, Owens Suction scar</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Post 1904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle glass, Obear-Nester mm</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1915-1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle glass, Diamond Inks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Post 1920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle glass, Foster Preserve</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1908-1926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bottle glass, Drey Perfect Mason</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1917-1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utensils</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Post 1902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanitary can</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Post 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hole-in-top can</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Post 1900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victrola</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>July 1917-1925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The archaeological record confirms the *Columbian* dates of use for the Polebridge Schoolhouse from 1917 till 1924. There were no recovered artifacts that gave a manufacturing date after 1924.

**Metal**

As seen from table 2, nails make up the majority of the site’s assemblage. As with most burned buildings, metal architectural materials are going to be the only artifacts to become entered into the archaeological record. For this study, nails do not offer much help in answering my research questions. For that reason, I’ve taken the 1903 nail count out of later analysis. Also, I’ve applied a MVC count to account for whole vessels and artifacts, not fragmented individual artifacts. This will be discussed later in this Chapter.

In the schoolhouse, door and window hardware, screws and tacks were the next contenders for most numerous \(n=64\). These artifacts are quite helpful in understanding the layout of the structure and will be discussed later in the chapter. Hardware recovered includes hinges, latches, door handles, screws, hooks, washers, and other door and window related material.

An assortment of cans were uncovered during the excavation. All together there was
16.73 lbs of cans found on the site, relating to 100 cans. “The tin can is a perfect example of an artifact type that reflects the interrelationship between man and one attribute of his material culture” (Rock 1984:1). The MVC for cans the schoolhouse is 7, where midden one has 63, midden two has only 3 and the privy contains 27. This class of artifacts located at the Polebridge school site include primarily sanitary cans and hole-in-top cans but also show the use of other various sizes, such as the sardine can seen in figure 35 (identified through Rock 1987). If this is true, then the presence of the sardine can speaks to the function of the schoolhouse as a social environment. As mentioned in Walter (1985), the only meats Adair’s Mercantile sold was slab bacon and ham. It may be unlikely that Adair’s sold any canned fish, and if so, the presence of it at the schoolhouse may mark a special occasion that fits the function of the schoolhouse as a public social space. Also, the suspected aspirin can seen in figure 35, found in the schoolhouse, suggests a community that would leave medication out for any of its members. If it were a more personal item, it is more likely that it would have ended up in one of the middens or privy.

Only two cans in the entire assemblage had embossing on them; one sanitary can reads "PS 08/ 4M.125" and the other reads “Walter Baker and Co Inc/Breakfast Cocoa”. It is unclear what first embossing means, but the latter speaks of the schools role as supplying cocoa to the students and/or community members.

An area of great interest is not just the cans themselves, but how they were opened. “The way cans are opened and discarded can suggest a great deal about how the people who used the contents were living, just as the contents may suggest how well they were living” (Rock 1987:113). This assemblage shows evidence of contemporary can openers, nail and knife
punctured, knife pried open, church key opened cans and a unique, distinct mark found on three cans (figure 36). These three cans are believed to have been opened by the little known can opener patented by M.C. Lilly in 1887 (figure 37). As the shape of the opening is tapered and not symmetrical to the others, it is thought to have been opened by this unique device. Cans opened by puncturing the top of the can on opposite sides by a nail or knife, as well as the presence of a vent-hole, is usually indicative of evaporated milk cans (Rock 1987:47). Cans that were only partially opened and then folded up are likely fruit and vegetable cans, as it wasn’t until the late 1920’s and early 1930’s that complete removal of the can became popular (Rock:1987:113).

A lot of artifacts were recovered that fit into the metal serving category. These objects were cups, mugs, spoons, forks, and pieces of a believed coffee pot. Excavation revealed 32 forks and 14 spoons (figure 38). Both styles have been found in the 1902 version of the Sears, Roebuck Catalogue (1902) and are silver plated, plain tipped utensils. The forks are 7.5 in. medium sized dinner forks and the spoons are 5.75 in teaspoon. Both the spoons and the forks are embossed with “900/WB/W” and “MADE IN THE USA”. These utensils were manufactured by the WBW Flatware Company (Replacements 2012). Other encountered items are believed to include three gray enameled cups, a mug, a possible coffee pot and another type of pot. Two of the cups were found together, with a smaller one inside the larger one (figure 39). The other cup was recovered in fragments; a base, rim and a body fragment. The
mug is a larger and has two handles. The gray enameled coffee pot is thought to be so due to the handle; it has a lever that would pop up the lid. No lid was recovered that would have matched it, but a separate gray enameled lid independent of any levers was found.

School related metal objects recovered include 12 desk fragment pieces (figure 41), the metal frame of an inkwell (one that would have been set in the desk)(figure 40), and the metal end of a pencil. It is thought that all the desk related artifacts are pieces of one desk. The desk is believed to be a bench style. It is fairly ornate with a “2” embossed on one of the legs. The desk most likely resembled this found image in figure 42.
One of the most interesting objects found was the remains of a Victrola phonograph (figure 43). Originally, I had classified all of these pieces as miscellaneous hardware. But upon a deeper inspection, I found one small, engraved metal plate with the words “SPEED INDICATOR” and the following “TO ADJUST USE SCREWDRIVER IN SHAFT _______SHAFT FROM TURNING _______AT 78 ON DIAL WHEN TURNTABLE IS RUNNING” Through much internet searching and consulting with Paul Edie (2010), a renowned Victor Phonograph collector, it became apparent that the Polebridge Schoolhouse site had the remains of a Victrola within the schoolhouse. By sending Paul pictures of the found Victorla parts he was able to tell me a few of the possible models they could have been. From the parts recovered, it could have been from one of 22 possible models of Victrolas. This was primarily taken from the speed control cover, the previously mentioned engraved artifact. This part dates the machine after July of 1917 till late 1925 when it was discontinued. Paul notes that it can be sure that it would have been a lidded internal-horn Victrola because of the “hidden” style hinges, which also match the dates above. From the 22 possible models the Victrola could have been, here are four common types (figure 44):
In the time of production, 1917-1925, these models would have cost anywhere from $40 to $375 to the consumer. The presence of the Victrola speaks to the duality of the schoolhouse. As mentioned in *The State Course of Study For Montana Rural Schools, 1919* (1919), Victrolas were an encouraged item in schools. With the help of the “talking machines”, teachers could introduce a variety of new material, be it science based, songs, or educational games, that they may have little experience with. The above publication lists specific records that would be advantages for rural schools.

The final artifact worth discussing in the metal category is the recovered tobacco tag (figure 45). Small and easily confused with scrap metal can fragments, this artifact is key in discussing the schoolhouse’s role as a community public space as well as a place of learning.

Recovered inside the school, this small metal tag is one of the most telling artifacts to the plurality of the schools function. It has no paper residue left over from the brand of tobacco due to the fire, but could have been originally located on chewing or smoking tobacco.

**Glass**

There were 371 individual glass artifacts recovered from the site. When a MVC count is given, it is estimated that there were originally 21 bottles, and one kerosene lamp globe. Pane glass was analyzed in terms of weight, which the site yielded 13.28 lbs. The pane glass will be touched on
later in this chapter. Of the bottle glass found, 3 were amber, 7 were sun colored amethyst, 8 were colorless, 2 were aqua, and one was cobalt. All of these bottles appear to be machine made. The presence of sun colored amethyst (SCA) or solarized glass gives yet another indication of appropriate dates for the schoolhouse. SCA glass suggests that the vessels the shards were once from were manufactured before 1920 (Lockhart 2006:54). It should also be noted that any one of these bottles could have been refilled with liquid other than its intended purpose and these vessels merely give a high probability of what their contents originally contained. This act of bottle reuse is discussed further in Busch (1987). A representation of the recovered glass artifacts are in figure 46. As this is a school site, it isn’t surprising that there were vessels related to ink. Five of the found glass vessels are believed to have contained ink at one time, with one them being a large round, amber colored bottle that could have been used to refill personal ink wells. This bottle was recovered from the privy and has been identified as “Diamond Ink” from the Diamond Ink Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin and helps reaffirm the date of the site at around the 1920’s (1001 Ink Bottles 2012). Another Diamond Ink bottle that is identical to the one found in the privy is in figure 47. The other 4 ink bottles found, two were from Midden 2, one from the privy, and one was from the schoolhouse, were all short and squatty, personal ink wells.

There were no slate recovered from the site. Even though there was some probable chalk found (3 pieces from the schoolhouse), it could have been related to a large chalkboard that was removed after the fire and taken to another school site if it wasn’t damaged. Regardless, the presence of ink jars suggests that the Polebridge School could have been considered up to date. In Molly Swords thesis concerning slate, she states that by the early 20th century slate was out of
fashion as the price of paper became cheaper as well as from the social stigma that disease could be spread from children spitting on their slate to clean their writing boards (Swords 2003).

Another school related glass artifact recovered was a kerosene lamp globe. 143 thin shards were recovered from midden 2. These shards were difficult to identify until a few small pieces revealed the logo of the “Three Feathers Brand”. In consulting the world wide web, I found a picture of a “student lamp globe” that was an identical match to the pieces recovered from midden 2. These were kerosene lamps that were very transportable and had one to two lighting elements. The “student” element of the lamp relates to the movable feature of the lamp; it could be raised or lowered by sliding it along an upright support rod. This was designed to be set on a desk and used for writing and other school related activities (Maril:1999:31). This artifact speaks to the designation of the schoolhouse. As it was a school, the community elected to supply their future generation with the appropriate tools, rather than equip the building with old personal lighting fixtures that the school could “make due” with. A similar lighting type of artifact was found at the Oakland School site in Maryland. “Lamp chimney glass” was recovered during a 1993 investigation, which Gibb and Beisaw (2000:122) “relate to issues of lighting….issues of considerable concern to students, parents, teachers, local and state school officers, and writers on education.” Indeed, artifactual remains pertaining to lighting, heating furnishing, and sanitation are key pieces of an assemblage that can give insight into the community’s thoughts and involvement in the education of their children.

There were two possible “ale” bottles recovered. This is suggested primarily because of shape and amber color. Both of the bottles were amber with a crown finish. Amber has always been the best color for bottling beer due to its ability to block harmful light that can cause adverse photochemical reactions and leave beer “skunky” (Papazian 1991). The two bottles
differ in size and each were located in separate middens. The bottle recovered in midden 1 has a
base diameter of 2 ¼ in., the same diameter of standard beer bottles today. It also has a
comparable weight to a fully intact beer bottle. Judging from the makers mark, the bottle was
manufactured by the Obear-Nester Glass Company and was in use from 1915-1980 (Whitten
2012). This bottle has “do not return-do not refill- no deposit” embossed on the lower portion of
the bottle, which suggests that it was a disposable bottle and intended for a one time use. The
bottle recovered from midden 2 is thought to be an ale bottle as well due to its amber color,
cyndrical body shards, and crown finish. No base was found associated with this bottle. Even
though the site only yielded two ale bottles, these artifacts still bolster the opinion that the
schoolhouse was a public space as well as an educational establishment.

Four canning jars were encountered during the excavation.
Toulouse (1969) states that US cookbooks began including recipes for
canning around 1880, and it isn’t a surprise that the homesteaders of the
North Fork were canning food. Three of the jars were found with
embossing. A large Foster Seal Fast jar and a Drey Perfect Mason jar were
recovered from the privy, as well as a Foster jar found in midden 1. The
Foster Jars found only contained bases, but it is believed that are of the wire
bale type closure due to historic photos as well as wire bales recovered at
the site. They have been referred to online as “fruit canning jars”. Another
Drey Perfect Mason jar is pictured in figure 48 and believed to resemble the one found in the
privy. This recovered canning jar has a screw top. Foster jars were manufactured by a handful
of different glass companies for the AM Foster Co. of Chicago from 1908 till 1925 while Drey
jars were produced by the Schram Glass Manufacturing Company of St. Louis about 1917 through the 1920s (Hinson 2002).

The remaining glass bottles recovered lie in the form of undiagnostic shards. Midden 2 produced two bases, one of which being a SCA colored, oval shaped bottle. The base on this bottle is about half complete and makes identification tough. This bottle exhibits an Owens machine suction scar. From this blemish, it can be dated by this as well as by the SCA glass to be around the late 1910s. The other bottle found in midden 2 is evident by a base and represents a smaller, colorless oval shaped bottle with either a “6” or a “9” embossed on the bottom of the base. Unfortunately, there is too little of this base to make a clear call on the possible style this bottle originally held. In midden 1, an aqua colored full base was discovered. This bottle could be categorized in a couple of different categories. Its base could be classified as a Monarch or Erie Oval style as well as a Baltimore or Manhattan Oval which makes it a candidate for being a flask style of bottle as well as a medicine bottle (Fike:1987). It is embossed with a “C” and has a distinct Owens suction scar, dating the bottle to after 1904. The other four bottles encountered were based off of undiagnostic body shards, which makes it impossible to tell form or style from.

**Ceramic**

![Figure 49. Ceramic Sample](image-url)
All together 1115 ceramic artifacts were recovered in the three features, with most found in the schoolhouse (n=926). An MVC count puts the total recovered amount of vessels at 22. All of the vessels and the 1 lid were made out of ironstone with an alkaline glaze. Of the vessels 13 are believed to be teacups, 3 are thick mugs, and 5 are thought to be comparable to teacups in size, but there weren’t handles of the same size as the teacups to positively confirm. In the schoolhouse, three different sizes were discovered: teacups (9), mugs (2), and a vessels with a flared rim (2). Almost all of these artifacts contained evidence of being burned. With these findings, handles were cross mended to estimate these figures. A representative sample of the schoolhouse ceramics can be seen in figure 49. The privy held one intact teacup, which was used to positively identify teacups in the other two features. Midden 1 contained 2 teacups, 1 mug, 1 unknown hollow ware vessel similar to the teacups but with a painted gold band around the rim, 1 cup with a flared rim. This midden also contained the site’s only non-vessel ironstone ceramic; a lid (figure 50). This artifact has a hole in the middle where a knob could have once been. Midden 2 had quite a bit of spalling on the vessels, but there were 2 teacups and one gold-banded cup identified (figure 50). Unfortunately, there weren’t any maker’s marks on any of the bases to bring more insight into the vessels. The only ceramic objects recovered that wasn’t ironstone were fragmented pieces of a stoneware doorknob (see figure 51).
All in all, three distinct forms were recovered; teacups, mugs, and a flared lipped cup very similar to the tea cups. All of these vessels reinforce the schoolhouse’s dual purpose for the community of the North Fork. Also, as the cups are not seemingly part of any set, they speak of the collaborative social network that the homesteaders lived in. As seen in the historical record chapter, student enrollment was anywhere from 6 to 11 children. This figure wouldn’t require a schoolhouse to have more than dozen cups if it were only to serve the students. Therefore, as the historical record shows, the archaeological record reinforces; the Polebridge schoolhouse served the community as an institution of education and a public social space. The settlers themselves donated their own materials to allow this dual function to happen, speaking to the high amount of social cohesion among residents of the vast valley.

**Faunal/Flora**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Taxon/ID</th>
<th>Privy MNI</th>
<th>Midden 1 MNI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.f Artiodactyla, Odocoileus virginanus</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.f Galliformes, Tympanuchus cupido</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.f Artiodactyla, unknown</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number of individual specimens (NISP) found at the schoolhouse site was 98. There was also one flora artifact discovered. In the faunal category, the minimum number of individuals (MNI) was found to be 4. Except for a few rib and vertebra fragments from midden 1, all of the faunal and flora remains were found in the privy. Most of the faunal assemblage compares favorably to Artiodactyla and can be identified further to Odocoileus virginianus, the
white tailed deer (Gilbert 1990). The remains suggest that two individuals are present in the privy. This was deduced by pairing certain faunal elements, such as matching two mandibles on one individual and matching two other mandibles to the other individual. Both individuals seem to be fairly young, as a large portion of their bones were not fused. Also, both individuals had been butchered. Visible cut marks were found on ribs, vertebrae, cranium (see figure 53), humorous, and metacarpals. The cranium’s cut marks suggest that it was a male and its horns were removed. The other faunal remains compare favorably to Galliformes, more specifically Tympanuchus cupido, the Greater Prairie Chicken (Gilbert 1990). It is believed that the remains discovered were actually another type of grouse, such as the Blue, Ruffed or Spruce, which are all species of forest grouse and native to northwest Montana.

One of the most interesting items recovered from the faunal remains was a tibia that has a metal wire band wrapped around the distal end (see figure 52). Perhaps it could have been used in the butchering process, but it is unknown what type of purpose it would have served. The white tail deer remains were found on the upper potion of 300C, making it likely that the deer was killed, butchered, and deposited into the privy just prior to it being filled in. While it is unsure if this could have been a school related event or just a convenient place to discard the unwanted remains by an opportunistic hunter, the bones are telling to the subsistence lifeways of homesteaders. It can be presumed that
the lack of pig, cow, and chicken remains show that the North Forkers relied on local wild game for a majority of their diet. This thought is derived from early mentions of Walter’s (1985) study of Bill Adair’s mercantile (which only sold ham and bacon) and the lack of other faunal remains found at the side.

Another indication of diet is told through the discovery of a single peach pit (figure 54). Peaches could have been grown in the valley or imported, as it is known from the census reports that fruit orchards were present in the area. When a homestead claim is staked, it is noted what improvements have been made to the land. East side settlers Jesse Miller, Chester Gephardt, and Norman Lee reported that they had apple trees, cherry trees, “22 fruit trees”, and “1/4 acre (of) orchard” (Bick 1986:18). It can be presumed that peach trees could have been the area. The North Fork has two USDA agricultural zones, 3b and 4a, making it an appropriate climate for hardy peach trees as well as other fruit trees.

The results from the excavation at the Polebridge schoolhouse gives an insight into the lives of not just the children that attended the school, but from the entire community of North Fork homesteaders. “Schools were, and remain, important means of transferring cultural practices that promote community survival while maintaining social hierarchies and inculcating ways of thinking about the individual’s role in his or her community” (Gibb & Biesaw 2005).
The large amount of serving ware and the tobacco stamp tell of a public use structure that would have played a key role in facilitating dances, public meetings and theatrical events put on by the community members. The chart in figure 55 gives a visual representation of just how high the artifact frequency was relating to serving ware. As the highest category serving ware consisted of spoons, forks, and ceramic and metal vessels. The domestic category primarily contained cans (with MVC) but also the button, tobacco tag, pliers, and other items that could have been recovered from a residence. The bottles category comprises of glass in the form of jars and bottles, excluding school related glass such as inkwells. From this, it is evident that midden one was used primarily as a can dump, whereas midden two held mostly glass refuse. This in itself shows how the landscape was organized purposefully planned.

In 2004, Purdue University excavated the Wea View Schoolhouse as part of their archaeological field school through their Anthropology and Sociology departments (Rotman 2009). This investigation provides a great comparative collection for interpreting the Polebridge
Schoolhouse. This excavation was quite larger, 57 1x1 m units were put it in. The school had also been more established and with a longer life span than the short lived Polebridge Schoolhouse. The Wea View Schoolhouse was established in 1866 and educated children of the rural Indiana township of Wabash until the mid 20th century. Understandably so, the artifacts recovered were a lot more plentiful as well as diverse.

Relating to serving ware, the Wea View Schoolhouse held an MVC of 72 different ceramic vessels. In viewing the structure as a community space, the presence of a punch cup, serving spoons, and a cake knife bolster this idea. Also, as the Polebridge Schoolhouse held a tobacco tag, pipe fragments were recovered at Wea View. The Wea View School also contained education related objects such as fragments of slate, pencils, chalk, eraser, and an ink bottle (Rotman 2009). These school specific items were found in a much larger fashion than Polebridge, where as I uncovered a single pencil butt, Wea View revealed 39 pencils in the form of slate, graphite, and wax (Rotman 2009). Also, shards of chimney lamp were recovered at the Wea View as well as Polebridge.

An interesting topic worth discussing is what artifacts where not found as well as what features where not on the landscape. In comparison with the Wea View School, there are certain items that were not found in Polebridge. Where were all the toys? Why is there so little artifactual evidence pertaining to manual arts, home economics, agriculture and other homestead related modes of life? The only conceivable item found that would possibly fit in this category would be the broken pliers. Wea View had marbles and jacks, rubber balls, and even a bicycle license plate. It also contained numerous items associated with sewing, including straight needles, sewing needles and buttons found in one unit, which skirts the fine line between an
educational activity and a social event. In an assessment made by Catts et al (1983:55) on a Delaware schoolhouse, the lack of artifacts could be

primarily due to the policing of the yard by students and to the rural nature of the site. Few artifacts were recovered, possibly because the students had few material items to lose. This could be indicative of rural schools in general. The lack of activity areas might be expected at future schoolhouse sites, if investigated, and therefore detailed testing may not be necessary.

With the lack of features on the schoolhouse landscape, I turn my attention to the fact that the Polebridge Schoolhouse only had one privy. There is a possibility that another privy was obscured from the record; however, after intensive survey only one was discovered. Previously in the North Fork, schools did contain separate privies. Frank Hamor recalls the Red Meadow school as having two, “both tiny cabins” (Mish 1976d). As the recovered privy on the Polebridge school site was wood-lined and approximately four feet deep. The presence of only one bi-gendered outhouse potentially speaks to the North Forkers attitudes concerning gender equality. As will be discussed further in the structural repositioning section it was common in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century for schoolhouses to be very gendered; two privies, two entrances (one for boys, one for girls), two cloak rooms, and even a fenced schoolyard with a boy/girl side (Pena 1992). These Victorian era thoughts on schoolhouse gender segregation fizzled out around the early 20\textsuperscript{th} century (Pena 1992). The Polebridge Schoolhouse reflects an early 20\textsuperscript{th} century schoolhouse, but the presence of a single outhouse is peculiar. Even today, most public buildings contain a men/women restroom. Does the single privy on the schoolhouse site indicate that the North Forkers were not concerned with gendered outhouses? As it was a small community, maybe they didn’t feel they needed to build two separate privies if they would only need one. There are multiple ways to interpret this situation and allows for further discussion and fodder for other analysis.
Structural repositioning

Architectural designs for schools are among the best sources, short of direct observation, for discovering what actually happens in the classroom. Any well designed school should embody what is to go on within it. The designer takes into account the number, age, and character of the students and the instructional techniques the teacher will probably employ; hence the differences between individualized instruction, group recitation, the monitory system, and departmentalized schooling are palpably exposed in the layout of classrooms designed for their use. [McClintock and McClintock 1970a:1-2]

Understanding the spatial relationship between structures and landscapes has the potential to gain clarity on the past as well as help build a better future. As human beings, our cultural imprint is left behind on everything we do; the way we dress, the manner in which we speak, and the homes and communities we create. To fully understand the schoolhouse as cultural element, its position on the landscape to be re-created. We know that the Polebridge Schoolhouse was a vernacular log structure with dimensions roughly around 9 by 7 meters. It is presumed that the school had only one door, the front, and with at least two windows judging from historic photos. I analyzed items that give spatial information about the schoolhouse. These materials were: flat glass (window pane), doorknob fragments, door hinges, coat hooks, whiteware ceramics, tin vessels (cups and mugs), door and window hardware, forks, spoons, and pieces of a victrola phonograph. By using ArcGIS’ s density tool, I was able to relate the artifact provenience with its appropriate unit number and calculate its density. The darker the color in the representative circle indicates a higher density. See figures 56-65 below:
Figure 56

Flat Glass

1 x 1 Meter Units

Figure 57

Ceramics

1 x 1 Meter Units

Figure 58

Forks

1 x 1 Meter Units

Figure 59

Tin Vessels

1 x 1 Meter Units

Figure 60

Coat Hooks

1 x 1 Meter Units

Figure 61

Spoons

1 x 1 Meter Units

"Dark the color, higher the density"
It should be noted that these findings are approximations, as there is always a chance of the artifacts being out of situ due to people pilfering through the burnt remains and tossing them around. Looking at the artifacts in relation to the units, it’s apparent that most of the food associated items, dishes, cutlery, tin cups, were all kept next to the only presumed door located at the front of the building. This is believed to be due to the high frequency of door related items
such as door and window hardware, hinges, and doorknob fragments. Other items that are indicative of a front door are the coat hooks, as one would most likely hang up a coat right after he or she walked into the building. The Victrola phonograph is one of the most interesting items recovered. As was noted earlier, the phonograph is both school related as well as public. Positioned in the rear of the building could have possibly kept it in a more safe spot out of the flow of foot traffic. The windows on the schoolhouse appear to be next to the front door, on the north side, and on the south rear of the structure.

These findings can be checked with a historic photograph from 1922 (see figure 66). I believe this indicates that the school was positioned with the front entrance facing west, towards the road. From this photo it is apparent that a stove was located in the north west corner. Unfortunately there were no positive identifying artifacts associated with a stove. It is very likely that the stove could have survived the fire and was taken to be used in someone’s own residence.

With the schoolhouse repositioned on the landscape, cultural attitudes of the homesteaders can be seen. In the late 19th century, schoolhouses were predominantly designed around a Victorian ethical stance. As mentioned earlier, this purposeful design was made to facilitate the ideal teaching and learning environments in a manner which separated the sexes, limited disturbances, and trained students to be obedient and practice self-control (Bigelow & Nagel 1987). Figure 67 depicts the Letchworth Park School, which operated from 1874 until the 1930s (Bigelow & Nagel 1987). This structure was built as a state of the art rural school
specifically modeling Victorian ethics with segregated privies, entrances, and playgrounds. This segregation was in effect to protect females, as it is “in that seclusion which the natural delicacy of the sex requires, and which should not only be observed, but encouraged” (Barnard 1876:303). The entrances were positioned in the front of the classroom, designed to limit distractions of students. Also it was suggested that desks not be shared as the prevailing thought of the time was that “An industrious scholar placed beside an indolent one at the same desk, may lose the benefit of instruction during the whole term, by reason of his close proximity to a profitless and possibly mischief-making companion” (Barnard 1876:303).

The 20th century marked a cultural change in schoolhouse architecture. Victorian mores subsided and the architecture of the time reflected that shift. Women’s suffrage, an increase in employment opportunities for women as well as a radical revision in general education theory which pushed teachers to focus less on obedience and self-control and more on creative expression and initiative weakened Victorian influences on schoolhouses during the beginning of the 20th century (Finkelstien & Vandell 1984:78,85, Riegel 1970:240-306). Although the Polebridge Schoolhouse was a rural institution, it seems that it was built in a progressive fashion. Its community members constructed and placed the schoolhouse on

Figure 67. Letchworth School design (Bigelow & Nagel 1987)
the landscape in a way that reflects the educational philosophy and social values that were of the time. These cultural attitudes can be seen in the micro landscape of the schoolhouse itself. Found items through this archaeological investigation encourage this, such as the one single privy, bench style desks (suggest students shared desks), one front door, un-segregated coat hanging area, and its vernacular log construction. These remnants of life in an isolated, rural homesteading community show that the schoolhouse embodied the notion of modernization that was sweeping through America in the first quarter of the 20th century.

I believe the rugged landscape of the North Fork played a role in the formation of the dispersed community that occupied it in during the beginning of the 20th century. Due to the fickle nature of settlement and the constant threat of faltering economic prospects, schoolhouses were expedient, vernacular structures. As landscapes are determining stages upon which people act, the North Fork Valley cultivated a particular type of community. This community had stepped away from Victorian ways of thought and choose to build schools as convenient, functional and simple structures.
Chapter 9

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main focus of this thesis was to add to the ongoing archaeological discussion concerning rural schoolhouses and their ability to reveal community social ideals and cultural attitudes. Through the archaeological investigation conducted the summer of 2010, objects that had been tragically lost in the arson of July 4th, 1924 have been revived and had life breathed back into them. They tell a story that corroborates the historical record, a story of lively dances, active PTA meetings, student plays and recitals, masquerade balls, and of earnest students gaining an education concerned not only with the rural life in the North Fork but of gaining skills designed to allow them to pursue a life wherever they may choose. As mentioned numerosly throughout this thesis, schoolhouses are a relatively untouched realm of archaeology. But with the appropriate methodology, theoretical perspective, and analysis, their buried ways of life have the ability to reveal insight into communities across the American landscape. Investigations upon schoolhouses can indicate a multitude of information concerning diet, social and economic climates, and most importantly education.

Through this thesis, I aimed to show how a landscape can influence architecture and the culture of communities residing on them. As suspected the schoolhouse was used not only for academic purposes but for a public space as well. This is indicated primarily by the large amount of serving vessels, as well as the tobacco tag and possible ale bottles found in the archaeological record at the Polebridge Schoolhouse. The landscape of the North Fork is vast and isolating. This forced early homesteaders to alter their personal residences to accommodate the need for social space as well as opting to use schoolhouses for a public space as well as an institution of education.
By combining the historical record with the archaeological record, cultural attitudes can be seen in the Polebridge Schoolhouse that reflect the North Fork community. The Colombian Newspaper mentions a community that is very involved in their children, socially active, and tight knit. Dances, balls, holiday dinners, PTA meetings, plays, recitals, are mentioned as taking place in the schoolhouse. These schools were built by members of the community in a vernacular style that was distinctly different than the Victorian designs popular in the late 19th century. This suggests that the North Fork was modernized. The discovery of only one privy has multiple interpretations. It could have been that there were too few students to deem it necessary to have two outhouses or North Forkers could have believed highly in gender equality and thought that both sexes should share the same seat. This question is still open for interpretation. There were no locks found in the assemblage, fostering an opinion that schoolhouses were open to the entire public and a large amount of trust was given. The finding of the Victrola, a valuable and desirable item, which was left in the schoolhouse prior to the fire bolsters this thought. The presence of local fruit and game as well as the found canning jars suggests that the homesteaders ate primarily off the land. Special occasions brought in more exotic meals, such as oysters on Christmas.

Very few schoolhouses have been excavated in the western United States. To my knowledge the Polebridge Schoolhouse is the only school in Montana that has even been investigated. In the west there have only been four schoolhouses excavated. These sites are in Idaho, Oregon, California, and Arizona (Connolly & Schablitsky 2003; Lindauer 1996; Napton & Greathouse 1997; No Author 1984). The lack of investigations in the west is startling and has created a large data void. Concerning the Polebridge Schoolhouse, it has caused difficulty to do any cross comparative studies with other western or “frontier” schools. If more attention were
given to schoolhouses in the west a multitude of topics could be broached. Investigations like the Polebridge School site have the potential to answer questions about socioeconomics, educational curriculums, community related issues; the possibilities are almost limitless for further studies.

Much more research and critical thought is needed to understand institutions. Schoolhouses, prisons, insane asylums, orphanages, all of which we incorporate into the category of “institutions”, are beckoning more deliberation. The conversation started in the 1960s, by individuals such as Turney-High (1968), has been taken and analyzed in an archaeological paradigm by Gibb and Beisaw (2000), Pena (1992) and others mentioned throughout this thesis. The discussion has a sturdy foundation upon which to stand but calls for more attention and interpretation. “Institutions are places where material culture—architecture and landscape, furnishings, tools, dress, art, texts, food, all of it—is consciously as well as unconsciously planned to play a proactive role in accomplishing the institution’s goals and purposes.” (De Cunzo 2009:208) As these structures and their associated landscapes are ubiquitous in our everyday lives, they are rarely given any archaeological attention. By doing this we can learn more about how community ideals are formed in the specific landscape in which they arise.
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